



**Spring 2021**

*Maynooth University and  
St Patrick's College Maynooth (RSA)*

*Cumann na mBall Foirne ar Scor, Ollscoil Mhá Nuad agus  
Coláiste Phádraig Má Nuad (CBFS)*



*Jacinta Prunty, seen here at Solidarity Teacher Training College, Yambio, South Sudan with local labourers as they prepare the college for the new year of teaching. Photo courtesy of Jacinta Prunty.*

**Editorial Team:** Breeda Behan, Séamas Ó Síocháin, Marie-Thérèse Power, Rod Walsh, Mary Weld.

## Foreword

I am delighted to welcome and commend to you this Newsletter. It includes a rich collection of articles that I hope will appeal to all our members. The response to the first Newsletter was very gratifying. On your behalf I extend our thanks to Séamas and the editorial team. We look forward with hope and great expectations that we will be able to resume our normal meetings later in the year and plan some events for all to enjoy. We also hope to increase our membership and work more closely with the Human Resources Office of the University. We already had a productive meeting late last year.

We will all be glad to leave 2020 and the horrific month of January behind us so we can revert to more normal social interaction with our families and friends. As the days get longer and the birdsong grows louder and sweeter, we are also greatly reassured by the appropriately inspiring inauguration address of President Biden. It set the tone for a new era that will focus on finding collective solutions to the major problems facing society and the planet. The shameful politics of the Trump presidency that was characterised by anger, resentment, hatred, violence, extremism, personal vanity, the replacement of truth with lies and the arrogance of US exceptionalism will be remembered by all. More importantly, we can look forward to a new era when the values of tolerance, inclusiveness, mutual respect, collaboration, listening and seeing will be reasserted and the dark clouds of the last four years will be blown away.

I extend to all of our members best wishes for 2021 as we transition out of the current global and local calamity and once again aspire to participating more fully in a caring society, locally and globally, that will support actions to ensure that we all pass to the next generation a less endangered natural environment.

*Jim Walsh*

RSA Chairman

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## **The Archive of Memoirs**

*Mary Weld and Rose Malone*

The Archive of Memoirs is an oral Life History Archive, established by the Retired Staff Association, intended to serve as a record of life in St Patrick's College Maynooth and Maynooth University (NUI Maynooth), from the perspective of students, staff and the local community. Having established the Archive, the Association hopes that a number of potential projects may stem from the gathered material. The Project belongs to the Retired Staff Association and is managed by Dr Alison Farrell.

Funded equally by St Patrick's College Maynooth and NUI Maynooth, work on the Project commenced in January 2006, when a working committee was formed. In July 2007 invitations were issued to a number of staff/retired staff, students/graduates and people in the community to tell their stories about their association with 'Maynooth', or to contribute old photographs, video footage or recordings, or any other memorabilia that might reflect their personal experiences of life on campus.

Historian Maurice O'Keeffe, of Irish Life and Lore, was engaged to conduct and record a number of interviews. Commencing in November 2007, Maurice interviewed a total of 25 people. However, one staff member requested to have their interview withdrawn, so there are now 24. In alphabetical order, the contributors were as follows: Joe Brady; Michelle Bergin; Proinsias Breathnach; Joe Buckley; Mary Clougher; Patrick J. Corish; P.J. Gannon; Mary Hanafin; Marie T. Kelly; Margaret McCormack; Emer McDermott; Enda McDonagh; Dominic McNamara; Maureen Mooney; Vincent Murphy; Tim O'Connor; Brid O'Doherty; Tadhg Ó Dúshláine; Pádraig Ó Fiannachta; Michael O'Riordan; Mary O'Rourke; John Sauls; Bill Tinley and Mary Weld. Sadly, five contributors have passed away, may they rest in peace.

The Archive was launched by Deputy Mary O'Rourke in the Russell Library on 4 June 2008. The recordings are lodged, but not yet accessible, in the John Paul II Library.

Each participant was presented with a copy of their interview at the Launch.

The participants give a great insight into life in 'Maynooth College' over a period of almost one hundred years. Seminarians remember what it was like studying for the priesthood at various times between 1938 and 1970. A President recalls the time he was in charge, and the President's Valet talks about working with two Presidents before becoming the Butler, and later a student for the BA in Theology. Peter Denman has already lifted the lid on Vincent's long career in Maynooth, from maintaining the dairy equipment to managing the Powerhouse.

Three of the first lay students to be permitted into Maynooth recall the strangeness of clerical and lay students being educated together for the first time. In 1968 there was one girl in the class. With increasing numbers of students, and the hiring of more teaching staff, it became necessary to employ support staff. One of those recalls the Bursar saying that 'he would take a chance on hiring a woman to work on the switch'. A brave move, we are confident to presume, the Bursar never regretted.

Another employee recalled coming to Maynooth to train as a chef in the CERT Catering School in the late 1960s. He later married the head gardener's daughter and continues, at the time of interview, to work for SPCM. Changing times were also reflected when an employee of the Creche revealed that, prior to her arrival in 1979 to open a creche, the Administrative Authorities strongly objected to having a creche on campus.

The interviews reflect the changing times between 1938 and 2007, and on to where the institutions are today. The Association hopes to continue and develop this valuable work when circumstances permit.

### **Vincent Murphy in Maynooth**

*Peter Denman*

Vincent Murphy left Derrylin, Co. Fermanagh, on 20th March 1956 to take up employment in St Patrick's College Maynooth. He retired on 10th June 2005, in

his 50th year of continuous employment. He was appointed Maintenance Supervisor on 1st March 1988. Since his retirement he has been an active member of the Retired Staff Association.

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*Here we continue Vincent Murphy's account of his long association with the college, as recorded in 2007 for the MU/SPCM Archive of Memoirs held in the JPII library. The recording has been made available to the newsletter by Vincent.*

*In the first instalment Vincent outlined his background, the circumstances that brought him to Maynooth, the nature of the seminary as he encountered it in those early days before lay students began to populate the campus. He continues:*

Those were different times, restrictions and strict discipline were accepted. They [the clerical students] got only the sports sections of the newspapers. If they got parcels they were first brought up to the Dean's room to be checked that they were OK. They weren't allowed any sweets or chocolates. So the lads working on the corridors would bring in some for them, communicate in that way, give them contraband!

The arrival of lay students didn't change things too much [for us in the Power House] other than it meant more work. Every light bulb that needed changing was a job for us. The college previously had bought a farm to the north, on what is now the North Campus, that had belonged to a family, the Lanigan O'Keeffes, and the hostels were built there first, and then the Arts Building was the first building for classrooms and offices, and the Students' Union was built as well. So, from a base on the South Campus, we had to walk back and forth; we had no van of any kind and it's only in the last ten years [i.e. in 1997] that the maintenance staff got a van of their own. So we walked back and forth to deal with the heating, electrical problems, all that sort of thing. The sewage pumps had to be maintained. The North Campus continued to grow as student numbers increased, and the reverse effect happened on the South Campus

with the clerical students. As the rooms of the clerical students emptied NUI rented them and filled them with their offices and classrooms. Logic, Rhetoric and Humanity were the first to be taken over. The Junior students moved elsewhere. But the clerical students had done their degrees in the NUI college, so you had a mix which was unusual but worked pretty well. They were doing English, Irish, Science, etc. as well as Theology.

I came here as an electrician, but when I saw the way things were going I decided plumbing would be more my line, so I entered Bolton Street College of Technology in Dublin. I attended there every Monday on day release, to study plumbing and heating. I did that for a number of years, and I sat my Junior Department exam, and subsequently the Senior Department exam in plumbing. So that meant I was qualified as a plumber then, and more so than lots of people I had the practical experience of the work here along with the theory in Bolton Street. The year I sat the Senior Department exam I was the only one that passed it and I was given the Best Student award. So I did fairly well. I liked that type of work because coming from a farm I had a mechanical background so that suited me. The chap that subsequently came to the Power House as it began to grow was a man named Larry Duggan. He had worked on jobs all over the country and he had lots of experience. He was an excellent man to work under and I learned a lot from him. I was trained almost as an apprentice. It was ideal, combining practical experience with classroom learning on release.

I got married to Mona in 1963. I had met her about four years before, when I was nineteen. She's from Clonsilla in County Dublin, a McAuley. At those times people met by going to dances (and we still believe that's the best way for people to meet, it's difficult nowadays!). We met in Newcastle, County Dublin, at a parish hall there, and agreed to meet again. We went to films, and continued on from there. We married on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1963 and Mona came down to live in Maynooth. I was fortunate at that time to get



one of the two new houses built by the college, out on the Kilcock road. I approached the Bursar Fr Cosgrove, and he agreed to let me have one of those. The house was ready before we got married.

It was a big change for Mona. The buses only came as far as Maynooth, and it was well over a mile further out to the house. She had worked in Switzer's department store in Grafton Street, and she had to give up her work when she got married as was usual in those days. We set up home. I would cycle in and out to work every day, going through the farmyard, and I could cycle home for my lunch between one and two o'clock. It was an ideal arrangement for my work. We were only a year married when our first child arrived, so Mona had her hands full. We had neighbours next door, Paddy and Monica McDowell, both of them dead now, Lord have mercy on them. Paddy McDowell was another college employee, he used to drive the lorry and the President's car. Then there was another, Jimmy Pender, who was the chef in the kitchen. He and his wife Nancy lived close by. At first, we had no phone out there, but Jimmy Pender got one and we were always welcome to come and use it if we wanted to make a phone call.

## **Westport – looking back in time**

*Marie-Thérèse Power*

*Photos courtesy of Velma Maher*

In late August 2019 eighteen members/associate members enjoyed five days in and around Westport, one of the most loved towns in Ireland and voted the best place to live in 2012. We stayed in the Westport Woods Hotel, a fifteen-minute walk from the town centre. The very friendly staff went out of their way to help us on more than one occasion. On arrival I mentioned that I had accidentally left a cooler box on the train, they contacted the train station and, unknown to me, sent a staff member to the station to collect it. Live music was available most nights, our lovely member Kathleen Bennett was star singer on one of the evenings as we danced the night away with Vincent, Mona, Kathleen and Mary Weld among others showing us how it is done.

With Westport as our base we enjoyed trips to Lahardaun, the Museum of Country Life, Clare Island, Kylemore Abbey, Westport House and a cruise on Killary Fjord.

We took the train from Connolly station on August 29<sup>th</sup>. Having seat reservations we all shared the same carriage and were able to enjoy a light lunch of cheese, crackers, fresh fruit, pastries and good wine which Mary Weld and I had organised in advance. Our lunch attracted the attention of a French traveller who asked if she could take a photo to send back to her family and friends. With plenty of chat and laughter along the way the miles flew by and in what seemed no time we were pulling into Westport train station where we were collected by private coach and brought to our hotel.



*Lahardaun Memorial Park*

I had arranged a walking tour of Westport town for the afternoon but, knowing how unpredictable the Irish weather can be, I arranged with our guide to come to our hotel and talk us through the history of Westport town. In true Irish style the weather was terrible, the hotel very kindly organised a private room for us with overhead projector. Our excellent guide, a local man from Westport going back three generations brought us through the history of Westport with photos, giving us some insight into how the town has changed over the years and how it has, hopefully, overcome its flooding problems.

Our first full day started with a trip to Lahardaun. Our guide, Toss Gibbons, a local in his eighties, boarded our coach at the site of the Titanic Memorial Park, created in 2012.

The memorial shows a group of travellers setting off on their journey. It is hoped to add two figures to the memorial every seven years until the fourteen villagers are represented. Toss very movingly talked to us about the fourteen people from the village who sailed on the Titanic, eleven of whom lost their lives. Toss was an inspiration to us all and would happily have stayed the day with us if possible, it was clear to see how important recounting this story was to him.

From Lahardaun we travelled to the Michael Davitt Museum in Strade and were made very welcome by the lovely museum staff; we enjoyed a quick coffee break which was very welcome as it was a terrible day. Another excellent guide spoke to us about the life of Michael Davitt, thought by some to be Ireland's greatest patriot and the most influential international Irishman of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Our next stop was to The Museum of Country Life, home to Ireland's National Folklife Collection. We were surprised and delighted to see a photograph showing a raft of bulrushes on the River Suck; the raft had been made from memory by Patrick Gately, father of Pat Gately (retired from the Security Staff).



*Patrick Gately Senior on River Suck*



*Pat in Turlough House Museum*

On the morning of day three we enjoyed Westport town and the Famine Memorial; the afternoon took us to Clare Island. The ferry journey left a couple of us very much the worse for wear, Mary Corbally and I were delighted to see land. Once on *terra firma* we recovered and enjoyed all the Island had to offer. As it was a lovely bright day a number of us walked part of the Island before visiting the 12<sup>th</sup> Century Abbey with ceiling fresco and burial place of Grace O'Malley (Gráinne Ní Mháille), the 15<sup>th</sup> century Pirate Queen.



*Famine Ship Memorial*

We devoted our fourth day to Kylemore Abbey which was originally built by Mitchell Henry as a gift to his wife. They fell in love with the area when visiting Kylemore on their honeymoon in 1850, returned in 1860 and built their dream home. It is now the home of the Nuns of the Benedictine Order. Some of us were fortunate enough to visit the small church on the grounds where a beautiful musical recital was taking place, performed by transition year students, it was something not to be missed.



*Kylemore Abbey Grounds*

Our final day was spend enjoying a cruise on the Killary Fjord and, though the weather was not the best, we still managed to enjoy some stunning scenery while sampling tea and

scones. In the afternoon a group of us visited Westport House and Grounds and were fortunate enough to have Paddy Duffy, retired from the Geography Department and resident in Westport, talk to us about the history of the house. As we were just about to depart the hotel car park, we were greeted by Fr. Micheál MacGréil, retired from the Sociology Department; after a quick chat we had to say *slán* and head to Westport train station for our return to Dublin.

On returning to Connolly Station, we were met by Brendan our friendly coach provider who returned us to Lucan, Leixlip and finally Maynooth, tired, but I would like to think happy with all that our trip to the West provided.

### **Fine dining in Stoyte**

*Pat Watson*

The last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was an eventful one, no less than any other. Mozart died in 1791 leaving his *Requiem* unfinished, Napoleon was on the rise in France and Jane Austen's much acclaimed *Pride and Prejudice* appeared in 1797. For Maynooth, 1795 was a monumental year as June 1795 saw the establishment of St Patrick's College following the 'Act for the Better Education of Persons professing the Popish or Roman Catholic religion'. This ended a long and hard-fought campaign, against a changing political background, to gain a Catholic college for a Catholic people in Ireland. The College opened in September 1795 with 7 professors and 40 students.

Stoyte House, an elegant Georgian gentleman's house built by Mr John Stoyte, steward to the Duke of Leinster, became the home of the new College. Purchased by the Trustees from the second Duke, William Fitzgerald, it quickly took on its new role as rooms were transformed into classrooms, bedrooms and dining areas. Students and staff alike filled the house to overcapacity necessitating the building of two wings, called Long Corridor followed over time by Riverstown House, and the rest of the Georgian Square known as St Joseph's

Square. 1845 saw the building of the neo-Gothic part of the College designed by Pugin and known as St Patrick's. It contained the great Pugin Hall, a new library and far more accommodation for the rising numbers of staff and students. Stoyte House itself could now return to some of its former style and elegance as it gradually came to be inhabited solely by members of staff.

By the 1850s staff numbers had increased greatly and the new Pugin buildings provided some of the extra accommodation needed. Salaries were low and non-incremental, but a bonus was that staff were entitled to commons, their area in which to relax and to dine. Stoyte House, with its gracious entrance hall, light and space provided this facility. A visit by Sir Francis Head to the College in 1852 is of great interest therefore in giving us some insight into life and, in particular, dining in Stoyte House at this time.

Sir Francis Head was a colonial administrator in Canada but was also a very keen travel writer. In his book *A Fortnight in Ireland* he has a chapter devoted to Maynooth. His visit brought him to dine in Stoyte House, an experience which he describes vividly.

The staff common room he says, was 'elegant' and, along with the dining room, was on the south side of the house (presumably to gain full sun). The room was described as a 'small, comfortable room of three windows, handsomely furnished with scarlet and black carpet. The curtains were also scarlet, edged with yellow lace, and there was a round table with a scarlet and black cloth. There were ten dining-room chairs with 'black hair bottoms'. There was also a fireplace and brass fender.

The dining room was in 'a spacious adjoining room'. Here Sir Francis was joined by his dinner companions, the 'Principals of the College' whom he considered to be 'exceedingly clever men both in appearance and reality'. They dined at a large table, and dinner was agreeably described by Head as being 'plain, simple and homely... as promised' (an opinion perhaps not shared by



all of us today!). It consisted of ‘a large joint of mutton, a great dish full of fowls, ham and vegetables of various sorts’; this was followed by a large ‘fruit pie with cheese’ and a ‘slight dessert’. All this was washed down with ‘super-excellent port and sherry’ followed by hot whiskey. The hot water, white sugar and small decanters of whiskey together with ladle, he notes with delight, were all served separately. By all accounts Sir Francis enjoyed his fine dining in Stoyte!

Over half a century since Stoyte House, in 1795, had housed its 7 professors and 40 students in their unimaginably cramped conditions and shared facilities, it now afforded a dining experience comparable to that of the Georgian gentlemen who might have been entertained there at the time of Mr Stoyte!

## **The Thatchers from Poznan**

*Mary Weld*

*Photos courtesy of Mary Weld*

We are the proud owners of a thatched farmhouse, situated in the townland of Ballynagappagh, near the village of Clane, the house is approximately 220 years old. With rough cast rendered clay walls, single pane sash windows, there are four good-sized rooms and a small dairy under the thatched roof. Owned and inhabited by generations of the Diamond Family, my mother-in-law, Kathleen Weld (nee Diamond), was the last of the Diamond Family to live in the house. Kathleen died in 2006, and her husband Del died in March 2018.



*The Thatched House at Ballynagappagh,  
December 2020*

An oaten straw thatched roof has a limited life of about 10 years, depending on the weather it is subjected to and the quality of the thatching thereon. Jack Donoghue from Robertstown was the last to thatch our house with straw in 2006. Sadly, Jack died shortly afterwards. In the intervening years we got some patching done around the chimneys, while we tried desperately to find a good thatcher to take Jack’s place. The thatch was deteriorating before our eyes. Thankfully in Summer 2019 our prayers were answered when a friend had sourced two young men to reed thatch his aunt’s house at Digby Bridge. We were so impressed with their work we booked them to thatch our house in Summer 2020. We could hardly wait for them to start.

July 2020 came at last, and first to arrive was a cargo of reeds from Turkey. All tied up in small bundles, they were accompanied with lots of hazel scallops that would be used to keep the reeds in place. Next came the scaffolding, and when it was in place Lucas and Daniel were ready to start their great work. To begin, they had to strip all the rotten thatch off, leaving a small layer of straw underneath. Once they started fixing on the reeds, it was wonderful to see the progress they made every day. They gave a masterclass in thatching to all and sundry that passed by, and the many who stopped to watch and ask about the dying craft. In no more than five weeks we had a golden thatched roof that gleamed under the beautiful sun there was at the time.

Daniel and Lucas are from Poznan in Poland, a place I only heard of when Ireland went there in 2012 to play soccer against the Poles. Best buddies the two countries became as a result. Daniel had studied computers in university, but came in search of work to Ireland in 2005. Lucas, the farmer, followed him in 2006 with his young family. As there is a shortage of good thatchers in Ireland, intuitively both young men saw it as an opportunity. Following six years of intense training and valuable experience, they set up their own business in 2012. With a constant full diary, they believe they have thatched about 120 houses in Ireland to date.





*Left to Right: Lucas and Daniel, The thatchers from Poznan*

It was very costly to have our farmhouse thatched with reeds, but peace of mind justifies every penny we spent on it. Thanks to Lucas and Daniel, the thatchers from Poznan, the house is safe for at least another quarter of a century.

## **Update from South Sudan**

*Jacinta Prunty*

*Photos courtesy of Jacinta Prunty*

Here in Solidarity Teacher Training College, Yambio, South Sudan, the place is abuzz with preparations for the new year and the return of student teachers. Workmen are constructing a small house for the generator (bricks, etc., all made on site). A carpenter has been making bookshelves for the library and classrooms (with the best of teak, the only wood you get round here) and putting up rods along the walls to which we can nail charts and posters (something I especially welcome).

All schools and colleges were closed by government order in March 2020 as happened elsewhere. Final year primary and secondary classes have been allowed to resume; full school is supposed to start in April 2021.

And all this seems to be only words. A press release. The reality here for primary school children is truly shocking. An evaluation by the Global Partnership for

Education published May 2019 shows the situation to be even worse now than at independence in 2011 (after decades of conflict). The youth population is enormous; at least half of the estimated population of 12 million is under 18 years of age. Several million more South Sudanese live in camps for displaced persons in neighbouring countries in the hope of returning home (to what?) The civil war (between tribes) that erupted in 2013 destroyed so much; the ‘revitalized peace settlement’ signed in September 2018 thankfully holds (mostly), but the situation nationally is still fragile. The education of children is not a government priority; if you look at the 6<sup>th</sup> African Report on Child Wellbeing, issued 20 November 2020, South Sudan is ranked 52<sup>nd</sup> out of 52 African countries. On all the criteria: malnutrition, child marriage, vaccination, percentage in school, etc. – things are really poor. The COVID-19 lockdown has only exacerbated the problems. There are no known cases (and no testing) in Western Equatoria (where the college is), and practically none anywhere else – a few known in Juba (some diplomats have died, and some politicians were ill also). There is probably little of the virus here due to inaccessibility, outdoor lifestyle and heat – it is definitely not down to taking precautions advised by the WHO – only ourselves, the UN workers, some NGO staff and perhaps a handful of others, have made any effort. The people of South Sudan have enough to contend with as things stand: malaria is endemic (people die from it if not treated, especially children), there is currently an outbreak of measles; HIV infection is among the highest anywhere; typhoid is routine. A 27-year-old woman we know here died yesterday in childbirth leaving a large family; she herself was already a grandmother!

When I first came here from January to April 2019 (on sabbatical leave) I had no idea of the political or demographic realities. I simply trusted that I would be safe and (somewhat) useful, joining the staff of the college. And I quickly lost my heart to the students, colleagues and families of South Sudan. The wondering or discernment took

hold even before I returned to Ireland. I have decades of experience on the staff of Maynooth University (x 22 years in History and a year, before that, in Geography). Would any of that be relevant? Have I anything to give? How would this fit with my community? (Holy Faith sisters). My parents are elderly (Dad died the week before I travelled back), how would they take it?

I have returned, in the middle of the pandemic, and have never been happier or busier. Yes, we are without the students (non-residential workshops were held, and the modules continued online – not successful, to be succinct). But we are revving up for the new academic year, and there is much that can be done in advance. The new primary school curriculum for South Sudan, in preparation since 2012, was launched recently (the documentation is online at the Curriculum Foundation), and in October 2020, some requirements for initial teacher training were published. So, we have some official material to work into our curriculum revision.

I hope that gives you the current picture – working through impossibly long government reports as well as our own documentation, drafting ‘scenarios’/discussion documents/policies, attending staff meetings – in person, thankfully, in a large, airy library room. (And as I sit here, I note the new shelving – a fundraising event to be held in Maynooth, by kindness of Ann Donoghue and other friends, had to be cancelled, like so much else.) However, I was entrusted with some monies from History Department and other colleagues, including retired friends. These funds are being invested directly on local labour & local materials for small things that would not otherwise be possible – including the extra shelving – small money goes a huge way here.

I attach two photos. One is of teaching and is from 2019. The students come from every part of South Sudan, put forward by their local parishes and ‘on the ground’ organisations (including the UN refugee camps); following which they return to their

own villages. I look forward very much to the resumption of classes (after the students complete quarantine – you can imagine the planning for that). The other was taken today; these young friends are graduates of ours (unemployed due to Covid) who are ‘trainee gardeners’ on campus at present. And I am learning every day from the graciousness of people here, their warmth and patience.

I will end on that note and should retired MU staff like an update in 2021 you have only to ask. My email is now [jacintaprundy@gmail.com](mailto:jacintaprundy@gmail.com). The connection is poor but I do get it in time (and apologies for any neglect on this front). I enjoyed writing this memo as I could see so many friendly faces in my mind.



*Jacinta Prunty, seen here in the classroom of Solidarity Teacher Training College, Yambio, South Sudan*

## **Maynooth Green Campus – A journey towards eco-citizenship**

*Joe Larragy*

*Founding Chair Maynooth Green Campus*

In 2018, Maynooth Green Campus (MGC) joined a small but growing number of third-level colleges awarded the prestigious Green Campus Flag by An Taisce and the Copenhagen-based Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). This was followed by the award – for the first time to an Irish university campus – of the Green Flag for Parks in 2019; and last year the campus won the coveted all-Ireland Pollinator

Award sponsored by the National Biodiversity Data Centre and An Taisce.

Maynooth Green Campus is unique in several respects. Firstly, it was novel in that two colleges – Maynooth University and St Patrick’s – made one application from the same campus. MGC was also unique in being awarded the Green Flag for all of An Taisce’s original five themes – Biodiversity, Energy, Water, Waste, and Travel & Transport; indeed, we added a sixth theme, Climate Justice, which An Taisce/FEE now includes among the themes for other campuses.

The work of MGC had spanned several years before we applied for the flag, from small beginnings in 2012/13, when as a tiny committee we first registered with An Taisce’s Green Campus programme. While we could have gone for a flag very quickly for only one theme, we chose to become broader in scope and embraced more and more themes, and indeed became conscious of the value of making connections between them – joining the dots – especially in view of the nature of a university campus.

We have no regrets about the time taken from registration to the award of the flag. Why? A university campus is a very exciting place to be working on environmental sustainability, with the possibility of doing pioneering work across all subjects through teaching and learning, research, and community-engagement activities on campus and well beyond. Over the years many events, conferences, seminars, field visits and a variety of initiatives have been organised. Grants have been successfully applied for from various bodies and many energy-saving and indeed cost-saving adaptations have been made. Policy submissions have been made at the level of the campus, local government, and nationally.

Furthermore, while we focus on changes in practice, policy and design on the campus itself, the principal aim is to influence the attributes of our graduates – to promote the graduation of ecologically-minded citizens. While the manifold changes made on site have intrinsic value, the process of working for such change is even more

important to the goal of shaping the experience of our students and the attributes they will have as graduates.

One major event related to climate action, which the two colleges and our partner Trócaire hosted in 2015, was a joint conference titled ‘Climate Justice – From Evidence to Action’ ahead of the COP21 climate meeting and the Paris Agreement, and the same year as the *Laudato Si* encyclical was published (links: [From Evidence to Action: Meeting the Challenge of Climate Justice on Vimeo](#)).

In June 2015, because of our work, Maynooth University was the first in Ireland to declare a policy of not investing funds in fossil-fuel related industries. While intrinsically significant, the decision was even more important as an example to students. Later, students in other colleges campaigned for similar policies to be adopted and indeed contributed to a successful campaign to have Ireland’s Strategic Investment Fund portfolio divested of carbon related investments. We also organised a joint conference on Ethical Investment for People and Planet in 2016. We recognised that such divestment was not only ethical but ultimately rational from an investment point of view. Increasingly, divestment is high on the agenda of many organisations in state and statutory bodies and in banking and the wider corporate sector. But this is a major struggle, and, despite the potentially dire consequences of greenhouse gas emissions, there continues to be a great deal of resistance to it from vested interests.

While it might often seem like a labour of Sisyphus, our effort is more often a labour of love. Most of our activities have been rich in learning and, often, friendship and fun. Biodiversity seminars and campus biodiversity activities and walks, installing bird- and bat-boxes, holding recycling and upcycling workshops, insect hotel-making workshops, team walking events, and much more, has generated new energy and creativity and brought people together across disciplines and departments and turned us outwards to the community in Maynooth and in our local counties.



One of the great strengths of MGC has been the extent of voluntary action and buy-in among staff and students. We work through a committee and working groups for each thematic area, and through new teams as the need arises, most recently one on urban agriculture. We also feed ideas into faculties, Campus Life Committee and University management. We work with Maynooth Students' Union and with a few student societies concerned with health or science, in addition to the Eco-society.

This was small scale and hard work from the beginning but has begun to bear fruit, especially with the radical mass awakening over the past couple of years, and particularly after the leadership shown by Greta Thunberg, the now-celebrated Swedish teenager who began a school strike against climate change and spawned a climate movement among her peers – raising awareness and concern across the globe and across generations. Now at last, governments and civil society are – or were until the Covid-19 crisis! – mobilising to address climate change.

We look forward to working more closely with the retired staff, several of whom already work actively with us, but we invite more. We launched a newsletter during the pandemic called [Green Shoots](#), which was circulated to all staff and students and is also cast more broadly locally and nationally. We would welcome reports and short pieces for this newsletter and would be delighted to see all retired staff on our mail lists. For further information, contact [Greencampus@mu.ie](mailto:Greencampus@mu.ie).

## **For the Arts Building**

*Peter Denman*

*We Remember Maynooth* is a compendious and handsomely produced volume of essays on different aspects of SPCM and the NUI college. It was edited by Salvador Ryan and John-Paul Sheridan, and gathers a hundred different contributions together with an array of photographs. Some of these are personal reminiscences of time

spent as a student or staff member, others recall encounters with various personalities, while still others focus on different aspects such as the college farm, the library, the Senior Infirmary. The scope is broad; while there is, understandably, a heavy emphasis on the life and experience of the seminary and South Campus, there is also much about the developing NUI college departments – including a vivid account of the small Science Faculty as it was in the 1960s by Richard Watson. In other pieces Niall McKeith writes about the museum, David Carbery about catering, Gerard Gillen about fifty years of the carol service, Jackie Hill about the bicentenary celebrations in 1995. The book's subtitle 'A College Across Four Centuries' is justified, with the college spanning the eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries; however, the bulk of the entries draw on the lifespan of the contributors, so much of the material in *We Remember Maynooth* will in turn prompt memories for RSA members. Peter Denman's contribution is reproduced below.

*We Remember Maynooth: A College Across Four Centuries*, edited by Salvador Ryan and John-Paul Sheridan, Messenger Publications, Dublin, 2020. €45

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There it sits, – the Arts Building, low, square, and showing its age, – hunkering down on the north campus, surrounded and largely obscured by its multi-storeyed brethren. I recall a graduation ceremony some years ago when the then-president, in the course of an address promising great developments to come, referred dismissively and apologetically to the Arts Building and quoted Frank Lloyd Wright's observation that 'a physician can bury his mistakes, but an architect can only grow vines' to hide unattractive and embarrassing structures. He held out instead the prospect of its being hidden from sight by shiny new science buildings. Even as he made his architectural critique he was seemingly oblivious that he stood in the Aula Maxima, which no-one would describe as architecturally elegant.



You may have gathered that I feel protective towards the tired and too-often maligned Arts Building, and I want to present the case for the defence. Our Maynooth careers share a starting date. Goethe described architecture as ‘frozen music’, and the 1970s Arts Building is like one of those vinyl albums of the decade, enduringly attractive even if its record sleeve is creased and faded. When I arrived in 1977 as a callow temporary lecturer, I was taken across the Galway road to see where my office would be. There was the recently completed Arts Building in splendid isolation on a raised mound in the middle of the grassy expanse that then constituted the north campus. To the west, tucked against the hedge, was a steel shed that served as the students’ union building; to the east, towards the Moyglare road, was a scatter of hostels then owned by religious orders. Between those, the black and white hard-edge style of the Arts Building was a signal of modernity, a new beginning for St Patrick’s College. I took up position in an office with a sylvan view across to the ‘old’ campus, the trees and the spire beyond, my base for the next three decades.

As a creation of the 1970s, the interior of the Arts Building aimed to be open-plan, with different areas flowing one into the other. There was a loosely defined area for staff to sit and gather for coffee mid-morning, and this was just around the corner from the student restaurant, which in turn was a through-way to a reading room and library. The whiff and aroma of boiling vegetables and fried chips from the restaurant kitchen permeated the building each midday. Most notably, and futilely, there were little study and tutorial areas each consisting of a half-dozen chairs, separated by six-foot square screens but open to all passers-by on the fourth side. This fanciful design, which imagined earnest discussions between students and staff in an unfettered and unsequestered environment, did not survive a year, and it wasn’t long before those open areas were shut off to make rooms, with proper walls and doors. It was a presage of things to come. The staff area has long since

been closed in, and the restaurant area is now a hive of offices.

In those early days, the Arts Building contained multitudes under its flat roof. There were staff departmental offices, lecture theatres and classrooms, the main student restaurant, a large part of the library with a reading room attached, language laboratories, the registrar’s office, and a post distribution centre (remember, no emails in those days so a steady stream of paper communications to be moved internally and externally). Student numbers were under 2000, and the building was a natural hub for them. Staff numbers in academic departments were also small – generally ranging from three up to five. As a result, departments were grouped together and staff had frequent contact with colleagues in other disciplines. In the Arts Building there were English, Old Irish, Modern Irish, Philosophy, Sociology, and Classics cheek by jowl in neighbouring offices, with French and German also nearby. This led to real interdisciplinary exchange and understanding. Nowadays departments tend to be hived off into different buildings and different faculties, with little occasion for informal approach and discourse. Furthermore, back in the seventies and eighties, professors along the Arts Building corridor were nearly all clerical. While this may have been a somewhat skewed seniority profile, it did mean that there was a degree of interplay between the NUI university elements and the St Patrick’s staff, a feature that seems now all but lost.

At student level the Arts Building is still a locus of student contact and interaction. As other structures grew up around it – the John Hume, the science building, Callan – the layout of the Arts Building with major entrances on two opposite sides means that there is a continuous footfall through it. Because of this it has never become an unvisited backwater. And with its three-metre sheltering overhang and paved walkway around the outside, it is one of the few university buildings suitably designed to provide shelter from the storm that all too frequently sweeps in from the west. Would that other areas of the exposed campus had

been designed with similar foresight for the inevitable weather!

The Arts Building has held on to its unpretentiously descriptive name, while surrounded by the fancifully named *Iontas* and *Eolas* and Phoenix, and the honorifically named John Hume and Callan. There was at one stage an informal discussion among staff to propose renaming the Arts Building after a recent and noted leader on the Maynooth campus, but the name suggested provoked such virulent opposition in some quarters that the idea was swiftly dropped. And, on the topic of naming, I admit there were times when my efforts to communicate the worth and pleasures of literature and the humanities were so failing in reception and falling on deaf ears that I would mutter that rather than Arts Building it would be better labelled with the Freudian 'Arts Block'. But such disillusionment was momentary.

Its two lecture theatres are still in service, and for a time they were the prestige venues for guest speakers – E.P. Thompson, Seamus Heaney, John McGahern and many other writers. They also provided a forum for the Literary and Debating Society, with students such as John O'Donoghue (*Anam Cara*) and Michael Harding taking the platform.

So, as I worked in the Arts Building over three decades, I developed an affection for it and even admired many of its qualities when others became dismissive of it. Indeed, to invoke Goethe again, the story of our relationship could be described as a *buildings-roman*. The building now stands as a tangible witness to the co-location that has characterised Maynooth even as the academic centre of gravity has shifted in recent years. The building has shown exemplary adaptability, its interior elements going through their several iterations while serving in turn the recognised college SPCM, then NUI Maynooth and now Maynooth University.

## On being a Waterford hurling supporter

*Proinnsias Breathnach*

I first began working in Maynooth as a modest Junior Lecturer in October 1972. Although officially retired for over ten years now, I am still attached to the Geography Department with the grandiose title of Senior Lecturer Emeritus. It has been, for the most part, a very enjoyable and rewarding career. Throughout this lengthy period – and indeed stretching back before it started – I have had a parallel life which has also brought a high level of enjoyment, but without a corresponding level of reward – that of a Waterford Hurling Supporter.

When I was born, Waterford were the reigning All-Ireland senior and minor hurling champions. The fact that I was born exactly nine months after the day Waterford won these titles, in September 1948, may give some indications as to the circumstances of my conception.

Hurling was the only game in town as I moved (allegedly) towards the use of reason in the mid-1950s. My local club (Abbeyside, the better half of the town of Dungarvan) reached the county senior final in both 1955 and 1956. We had three local heroes on the Waterford team which lost the 1957 All-Ireland final by a single point to Kilkenny. Unfortunately for Abbeyside, seven members of that team were drawn from an unbeatable Mount Sion team on its way to eight county titles in a row.

When I was taken to my first Munster championship game in July 1960, Waterford were again the defending All-Ireland champions. I had just turned eleven. Despite the result, it was an enthralling experience which left me addicted forever. I was now an Official Waterford Hurling Supporter.

As our Morris Minor crept along in the line of traffic on the road into Limerick, a train passed us at Pallasgreen where the railway from Limerick Junction adjoins the main road. The train was absolutely festooned with Waterford supporters, waving and cheering. In Limerick, there was the long

walk out from the city centre to the Gaelic Grounds which had the appearance of a religious procession. There were numerous horses pulling flat carts doubling up as taxis, their passengers with their legs dangling on all sides. There were musicians and three-card-trick con artists rooking gullible country folk.

At the ground I was astounded by the size of the crowd (35,000) which had attended for the occasion. It was there that I vowed to grow up tall so that, in future, I could stand in front of the people who were standing in front of me that day. Unfortunately, the day did not go well for Waterford, who were well beaten by Tipperary. It was an experience that was to become only too familiar in the following years. Little did I know, as we trundled home in deflated mood, that sixty years later I would still be waiting to see Waterford win a senior All-Ireland.

The following March, Waterford were due to play a league game in Cork, 50 miles from Dungarvan. I found out that a man living across the road would be travelling through Cork on his way to Kerry on that Sunday morning. Unbelievably, my mother agreed to allow me (I was just eleven) to go to the game, telling me to find someone I knew and get a lift home from them. Everything went well on the day. I saw Christy Ring playing for the first time (he scored 2-2), Waterford won the game, and I met a family friend who took me home with him on the train. When the ticket inspector asked for my ticket, my minder told him I had lost it, I burst into tears, and was pardoned my offence.

Later that year, Waterford met Cork again in the championship. It was my first trip to Thurles, which has since become my home-from-home. Cork won this time, with Christy Ring (then aged 41) scoring 3-4. However, my main memory of the day relates to the ground's toilet 'facilities'. These consisted of two tall concrete enclosures, on either side of the ground, one with 'Fir' and the other with 'Mná' painted in large black letters on the side. As the Fir was on the far side of the ground, I was preparing for a long walk when my older brother, who was my

minder for the day, guided me to the nearby Mná. When I got inside, it was entirely occupied by men doing their thing into the drain which ran around the internal wall, apart from a single woman standing in the middle of the enclosure complaining loudly about this male intrusion into what was supposed to be a facility for women. Thankfully, times have changed, but the GAA still could do better for their army of female supporters.

Waterford finally got to the All-Ireland final in 1963 and, having beaten the defending champions, Tipperary, in both the league and Munster finals, were hot favourites to beat an unheralded Kilkenny team. However, despite scoring six goals against the Cats' legendary goalkeeper, Ollie Walsh, Waterford still managed to lose the game, due mainly to a powerhouse performance by Kilkenny's emerging superstar, Eddie Kehir, who scored 14 points on the day.

After that, Waterford entered a long period of gradual but chronic decline. They were able to produce the odd good performance, but never two in a row. Two absolute hammerings from Cork in the Munster Finals of 1982 and 1983 ushered in an even more precipitous decline which reached its nadir when Waterford fell to the third division of the National League and even lost a game to Mayo in Dungarvan.

The establishment of a new, and effective, Juvenile Board saw a reversal of fortune reflected in Waterford reaching the All-Ireland minor and under-21 finals in 1992 (and winning the latter). By the late 1990s, Waterford were back in the top tier of hurling counties, winning four Munster titles between 2002 and 2010. However, three appearances in the All-Ireland final were all unsuccessful. But, with two of these appearances occurring in the last four years, and a new crop of good young hurlers coming through, I continue to live in hope – although it might require medical miracles to keep me going until the Holy Grail is finally secured!

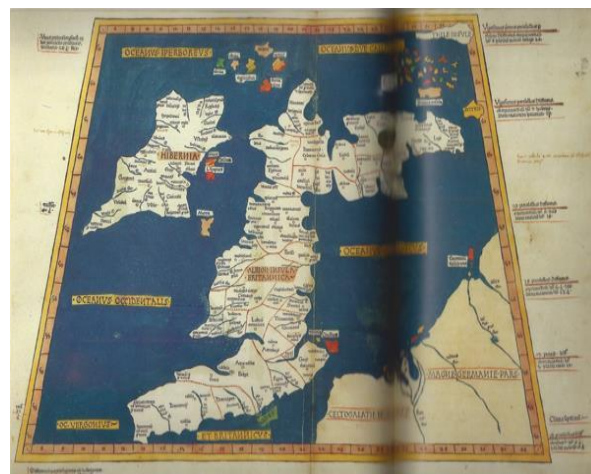
Meanwhile, I am still waiting for my beloved Abbeyside to win a senior county title...

## Mapping Ireland before the Ordnance Survey

Jim Walsh

In the last Newsletter I provided a brief overview of early maps of the world. Here I focus on some of the earliest maps of Ireland. Unlike other parts of Europe, Ireland did not have a mapping tradition and therefore most of the surviving maps provide perspectives from outside. The earliest collection of geographic data was compiled by the Greek astronomer and geographer Ptolemy in the second century AD. It was not until much later that the first map based on Ptolemy's data was published in the late fifteenth century (Map 1). The shape of Ireland is elongated, distorted and orientated more towards the northeast, but nevertheless much more accurate than the depiction of Scotland which was oriented east-west. The Ptolemy map of Ireland includes the rivers Shannon, Lee, Barrow, Boyne, Bann and Lagan along with four coastal and seven inland settlements and indications of the territories of sixteen tribes.

Prior to the Ptolemy map there were depictions of Hibernia (Ireland) on a map of Europe compiled by a Welsh scholar Giraldus Cambrensis in the late twelfth century. His knowledge of Ireland was patchy and confined mostly to the southeast so that settlements at Waterford and Wexford and the rivers Suir and Slaney are included on his map. Other notable inclusions are Limerick port and the Shannon and Liffey rivers. Ireland is also included as an island on the edge of the Hereford world map from about 1300 (it was described in the previous Newsletter). Among the four structures depicted on this map is an illustration of a monastery founded by St Brigid in Kildare.



**Map 1: Britain and Ireland prepared in 1482 from data compiled by Ptolemy in second century AD**

It was not until the sixteenth century that the first detailed maps of Ireland became available. The expert on the history of mapping Ireland, the late Professor John Andrews from the Geography Department at TCD, wrote in 2007 that 'medieval Ireland was too poor, wild and dangerous' for map-makers. However, significant advances in European map making in the early sixteenth century resulted in a number of very detailed maps of Ireland by renowned European cartographers. In 1564 the outstanding Dutch cartographer Gerard Mercator published a map with the title *Angliae Scotiae et Hiberniae Nova descriptio* (A new description of England, Scotland and Ireland). It is beautifully hand-coloured and full of detail engraved in the distinctive Mercator italic style which best suited copper plate engraving. It was undoubtedly a milestone in the development of the map of Ireland, both for the relative accuracy of the outline of the country and the amount of topographical detail included. Towns are also shown by towers and spires while many smaller settlements are named. However, the accuracy of the coastline and the level of detail on the interior diminishes in the west and northwest. For example, the two Erne lakes appear as a single lake with an east-west orientation in contrast to the shape we observe today.

The Mercator map achieved great influence as it was widely copied by other cartographers and map publishers such as Abraham Ortelius (1573). He compiled one of



the Western world's major modern atlases *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* in which Ireland was given a full page and its cultural distinctiveness from the neighbouring island was reflected in a new title that included the Gaelic word 'Eryn' and also the Flemish word *Irlandt* (Map 2). The Atlas was a commercial success with up to 6,000 copies printed, many of which were likely to have been acquired for the libraries and offices of the most influential statesmen and scholars of England and elsewhere in Europe. The significance of these maps was summed up by Professor Willie Smyth (Head of Maynooth Geography department in 1974–77) in his 2006 conclusion that 'the normalization and standardisation of Ireland's image on British, European and world maps had begun'.



**Map 2: Eryn map by Abraham Ortelius, 1573**

From the late sixteenth century the *raison d'être* of mapping Ireland was to support the campaigns of conquest, colonisation and subjugation pursued by the English Crown. In 1610 the London map-maker John Speed produced a map with the title *The Kingdome of Irland* which he published in 1612 in his atlas *The Theatre of the Empire of Great Brittain*. Speed relied heavily on the previous maps of the whole country by Mercator, Ortelius and an even more elaborate, but also less reliable, later map by the Italian artist/painter/cartographer Giovanni Battista Boazio. Speed produced his map in 1599 for the Earl of Essex who had embarked on a mission to suppress opposition from Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone and Hugh Roe O'Donnell of Donegal. Speed also made use

of more reliable regional maps for Munster, the Midlands, Connaught and Donegal which enabled him to include more detail and to achieve a more accurate representation of the Donegal and northern coastline. Donegal had proven to be a particularly hostile territory for previous map makers. Richard Bartlett who was one of the most innovative map-makers of his time was violently murdered in 1603 by some inhabitants of Donegal who were determined that their county would not be discovered.

The highly detailed *Kingdome of Irland* (Map 3) included considerably more information than on any previous map and was accompanied by separate maps for each of the four provinces that also included plans for the four main cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Galway. In Ulster the long overdue revision of the depiction of the Fermanagh lakes was completed with the separation and reorientation of the upper and lower Erne lakes. The inclusion of *The Kingdome of Irland* in an increasing number of atlases that were targeted to international libraries, rulers and scholars ensured that a standardised visual representation of the island was promoted and widely accepted.



**Map 3: The Kingdome of Irland by John Speed, 1610**

The Speed map is also notable for its inclusion of some illuminating portraits. They depict three couples representing the hierarchical social structure: a very well-dressed Gentleman and Gentlewoman of Ireland, a Civil Irish woman and Irish man, and the Wild Irish man and Irish woman. The

latter pair of course represent the majority of the population. The 'Wild' Irish man carries a spear as a reminder that everybody has not been assimilated into the new regime, in contrast to his 'Civil' counterpart who appears to be extending a hand of friendship to the new rulers from the empire of Britain while the 'gentleman' and woman convey a sense of relief that a new order has been established. The forlorn and haggard portrayals of the 'wild' men and women who appear to be emotionally connected stands in stark contrast to the elegantly attired and confident members of the 'gentle' class who, nevertheless, suggest a chasm between the squire and his lady.



**Map 4: General Map of Ireland by William Petty 1663**

The crushing of the Gaelic rebellion by Oliver Cromwell and his troops in the 1640s was followed by the Civil Survey instigated in 1654 to provide a better knowledge base for administering and managing the post-Cromwellian country. A key requirement was to identify and measure the area of lands that could be confiscated from Catholic landowners for reallocation to Cromwellian soldiers and adventurers who had invested in the military campaign led by Cromwell. In December 1654 William Petty was appointed to direct and manage the survey. It became known as the Down Survey of Ireland as the survey data was collected by

laying down a chain and relating measurements to a scale for conversion onto a map.

The Down Survey was the first comprehensive and scientific survey and mapping of a whole country anywhere in the world. The objectives included producing a new general map of the country, separate maps of the four provinces and also for each of the counties which included the boundaries of the baronies. Teams of surveyors were deployed throughout the country to map the boundaries of the townlands and parishes and for each unit the surveyors were also required to estimate the areas of 'profitable' and 'unprofitable' lands to help with determining the allocations to soldiers and adventurers. With extraordinary diligence the basic survey component of the project was completed by 1657. Petty, with the assistance of his senior cartographer Thomas Taylor, oversaw the systematic aggregation of data from the small units into county and provincial maps and a single summary map. By 1663 a new *General Map of Ireland* designed by Petty and executed by Taylor was ready for engraving in Dublin (Map 4).

In addition to the *General Map of Ireland*, Petty completed in the early 1660s a new atlas, *Hiberniae Delineatio*, but it was not published until 1685. The coverage of the most basic physical features of rivers, lakes and upland masses was considerably greater than on the Speed map. Also included were roads, castles, churches, houses and fortifications. The significance of Petty's cartographic contribution to the greatest historical transformation of life, property and landscape in Ireland has been summarised by Professor Smyth as follows: 'This detailed mapping of Ireland was a pivotal aspect of the wider process by which power was lost by the old elites and created and sustained for the new planters'. The cartographic legacy of Petty would remain unchallenged until the next systematic mapping programme, using new methodologies, was launched in 1824 by the established Ordnance Survey. The era of producing maps to primarily support military operations was about to be replaced by a scientific survey that would enable a reform

of the prevailing out-dated land valuation system and support the implementation of a more equitable method of apportioning local taxes guided by a completely new set of maps with a level of detail never before achieved. Ireland became the first country in the world to be entirely mapped using the new techniques of map-making that were applied by the Ordnance Survey.

\*I am indebted to the enormous scholarly contribution of the late Professor John Andrews to the history of mapping Ireland.

## **The second sleep**

*Robert Harris*

*Book Notice by Margaret Tyrrell*

I read this book in January 2020 but never imagined how our lives would change in a few months. *Civilisations* considers themselves invulnerable, history warns us that none is.

The story starts in what we believe is 1468 but soon find out is post-2020 after civilisation as we know it has disappeared. We don't know what caused the destruction. Climate change? Most governments shrug off dealing with this issue. Failure of technology? A prolonged general computer breakdown would lead to world food shortage within two weeks. OR a pandemic?

After the destruction there was anarchy, the church brought back order, but nothing had changed from the Middle Ages. They wanted to keep the people subservient and to do this they had to keep them uneducated and ignorant. The people who tried to gain knowledge of life in another age were burned at the stake or hanged for blasphemy.

The story is of a young clergyman Christopher Fairfax, who was curate in a small rural parish in England. He became interested in archaeology after finding artefacts and books belonging to his predecessor who he believed was murdered.

He sets out to find who murdered him, whether there was a large archaeology site nearby likely to contain key knowledge of the lost world, and who would murder his predecessor to prevent him finding this knowledge.

The other main characters are Captain Hancock, Sarah Dunston (and her relationship with both Captain Hancock and Christopher Fairfax), also Dr Shadwell, who has been condemned to death by Bishop Pole for trying to spread his knowledge of a sophisticated civilisation that had existed.

One object Christopher found was a small piece of plastic with an apple symbol with a bite taken out of it, I had not made the connection between the Apple symbol and the garden of Eden before.

I found this book an unusual thriller with some strong characters in it, worth the read to find out what happens in the end. I would score it 8 out of 10.

## **Keep Fit Club**

*Maura Haughney and Bridie Mitten*

The Keep Fit Classes commenced in 2015, facilitated by Ann O'Connor, who was invited by the RSA Committee. Ann had previously facilitated a session at one of our Workshops, and it was ideal for our members.

Ann's classes took place in the Geraldine Hall, located off the Main Street. The newly refurbished Scout Hall had plenty of chairs, and a coffee-making facility. The participants contributed towards the use of the hall, while Ann O'Connor provided the classes free of charge.

The classes were known as 'Seated' or 'Chair' exercises. Very soon classes for seniors of this nature became popular at many venues in the country. The purpose was to promote the psychological and physical well-being of older people.

Our classes started with a 'walk-around warm-up'. We were then seated and performed a range of exercises (from head to toe) whilst, simultaneously, breathing



appropriately to the movement. When the series of classes was completed by Ann, attendees expressed a desire to continue with someone else.

The classes were next held in the 'Maynooth Community Space', Unit 11 in the Tesco grounds on the Dublin Road. This room was provided with chairs and a tea/coffee making facility. Participants made a contribution towards the use of the space, and for refreshments following the class. Advance booking of the venue was necessary, as it was a popular facility for many groups in the town. We are very grateful to the staff of the Community Council Office who facilitated entry every Monday from 10–11 a.m.

We were very fortunate that our member, Bridie Mitten, volunteered to give the classes. Following on from existing routines, Bridie expanded it further by introducing additional movements. Exercises were practised to promote mobility of joints, flexibility, balance and strength. These could be done in both standing and seated positions. Participants were advised to work at their own pace, putting nobody under pressure.

In addition to some Keep Fit material, exercise bands, and light weights, the committee obtained a DVD 'Go for Life's Get Active' 'Age & Opportunity', which demonstrated six physical activity sessions. These could be followed between our class meetings. The sessions on DVD, mostly mirrored many of our own sessions, Warm Up, Sit Fit, Balance, Strength, Warm Down. If practised frequently, an aerobic level of fitness is attained. It is recommended that, if participants have a health issue or any contraindications to specific exercises, medical advice be sought in advance.

It is most important in later life to keep our joints and muscles in good working order.

Shoulder rolls, wrist rotations, squeezing hands into fists and then stretching fingers, knee joint flexing, rotating ankles and flexing feet. **ALL** of these exercises allow fluid to flow into the joints, which will keep them in good working order. Try this [Chair Exercise Class](#). Weight-bearing exercises are

very good for muscle and bone health. A walk every day is recommended.

Since we have not met for some time, it is hoped that our members continue to benefit from our sessions. Now, especially, cultivation of the health and well-being of all is paramount.

Exercises, and more, are demonstrated on the chair video clips [Morning Wake Up Stretch](#) or [Night-time Wind Down Yoga](#).

A Happy and Healthy New Year to all.

## Nature Notes: Signs of Spring

*Rose Malone*

*Photos courtesy of Rose Malone*

As soon as the days begin to lengthen, ever so slightly, we begin to look for signs of spring. While green shoots are often the first things that come to mind, the first indication of the changing seasons is probably the flush of colour that comes in the stems and smaller branches of trees such as willows and dogwoods. The willow branches have been bright orange since early in December and red dogwoods are coming into their most brilliant time of year. This happens because the tree or bush has begun to mobilise the food supplies which were stored in the roots when the leaves spent last summer making sugars and starch. This bright colour indicates that the sap is rising in the trees.

One of the first signs of spring is the appearance of catkins on trees such as alders, hazels, birches and willows. The willow catkins (or pussy willows) are the most conspicuous. The word 'catkin' actually means 'kitten' and these flower clusters look a bit like a cat's tail. Each catkin is made up of hundreds of tiny flowers, often with no petals. Most trees that bear catkins have separate male and female flowers, but poplar catkins contain both male and female flowers.

The picture below shows **alder** catkins. The purple catkins are the clusters of male



flowers, which will produce pollen, and the brown ones, that look like pine cones, are last year's catkins.



*Photos taken in St Catherine's Park, Leixlip, 05/01/2021.*

Many catkin-bearing trees flower early in spring, before most insects are stirring, and are pollinated by wind. Clouds of pollen are released into the air and some of it will land on nearby female flowers and fertilize them to produce tiny seeds. An exception is the willow, which is pollinated by solitary, mining bees (not honey bees), although the seeds are dispersed by the wind.

### **The Knitting Club**

*Mary Carthy and Mary Weld*

The Knitting Club meet once per month, September – April. The Students' Union kindly provide a room, and they are most welcoming. Due to the current pandemic, the Knitters have not met since 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020. That does not mean, however, that the knitting needles have been idle. Among completed pieces, an Aran jumper for Christmas made its way to Australia, while

another is busy knitting for a new grandchild expected in March 2021. A number have used lockdown to reduce the amount of wool accumulated, by knitting for Charity. You have to understand that a knitter cannot pass a wool shop without buying more wool or a new pattern, hence there are boxes and bags of wool lurking around every knitter's house!

The Knitting Club knit for a number of Charities on an ongoing basis: baby hats for premature babies in the Coombe and Mullingar Hospitals; baby hats and shawls for *Féileacáin's* Memory Boxes (Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Association of Ireland) at the Coombe Hospital; and in conjunction with the ICA in Maynooth, scarves for distribution by the Simon Community of Kildare and West Wicklow. Also, a huge number of our knitted squares formed part of the biggest blanket in the World two years ago, a project organised by a group in Co Clare. Once having achieved World Record status, the blanket was turned into a number of smaller blankets for charity.

If you would like to knit, and have some spare wool, we would be delighted to accept contributions for any of the above charities. It is a great way of passing the time on those dull dark days while we are being advised to stay at home. These are very general guidelines, or you may already have a pattern.

### **SCARF**

Using double knitting or chunky wool, the scarf should measure approximately 5 inches in width and 60 inches in length when finished. Casting on about 44 stitches for double knitting wool on Size 6 (5mm), or less stitches if using chunky, check your tension for width after a couple of rows. You can knit in plain or rib (2 plain, 2 purl), or whatever your pattern advises, anything goes. Adding stripes is a good way to use up small amounts of wool.

Happy Knitting!

## What's cooking in the kitchen?

*Marie-Thérèse Power*

*Taken from Darina Allen's Ballymaloe  
Cookery Course, Gill & Macmillan.*

**Butternut Squash**, thought to be the tastiest of the squashes is great for soup lovers, this recipe would make a lovely lunch along with your favourite homemade bread or scones. Serves 6/8.

50g (2 oz) butter  
600g (1¼ lb) onions, chopped  
125g (4½ oz) celery, chopped  
175g (6 oz) carrots, chopped  
35g (1½ oz) fresh ginger root, peeled and chopped or grated  
4 large garlic cloves, peeled and crushed  
750g (1½ lb) peeled squash, cut into small cubes  
Salt and white pepper to taste – if using stock cubes take care not to over season  
600ml (1 pint) water  
600ml (1 pint) chicken stock – homemade if possible  
125ml (4fl oz) milk  
125ml (4fl oz) cream  
Garnish with freshly chopped flat-leaf parsley

Melt the butter; when it foams add the onions, celery, carrots, ginger, garlic and squash; toss until well coated.

Sprinkle with salt and pepper (if using stock cubes take care not to over-season) cover and sweat on a gentle heat for 10 minutes.

Add the stock and water. Bring to the boil and cook until the vegetables are soft, do not overcook or the vegetables will lose their flavour.

Liquidise, adding the milk and cream as required. Taste and correct the seasoning. Sprinkle with parsley before serving.

*If members/associate members have a recipe they would like to share with the group, please feel free to send it on to me and we will try to publish a selection of them in future issues. It could be a family favourite or one you have put your own spin on. Please make sure there are no copyright issues.*

## Blasts from the past



*Retired staff at the Irish college in Paris,  
2015*



*Retired staff at Inis Mór, 2013*