

SOME GURTADERRA FOLKLORE

Long ago, there were two giants, Connaun, who lived in Cappacannaun, and Oscar who lived in Cloonusker. Oscar was the younger of the two and when he grew up he challenged Connaun. They fought with swords and shields and the noise of the fight could be heard in Downherr, but they were such good swordsmen and so well able to defend themselves that neither could kill or even wound the other and after fighting all day they gave up as night began to fall and Connaun said "You're good for a young lad" and Oscar said "you're not bad for an owl lad". Tom Conway told me that story about fifty years ago. He said he heard it from Paid Minogue of Gurtavrulla, who was born in Gurtaderra.

When the Danes were being hunted out of Ireland, this Dane was seen in Gurtavrulla making his escape with a bag of gold.

He was seen again at Coolagoree bridge and killed, but he had no gold. It is buried somewhere in Gurtaderra. A leprechaun was seen one summer evening counting gold in Jonny Horans place. I heard Ann Mungavin telling this story over fifty years ago.

About eighty years ago, a number of men came from Slieveanore and spent the night digging a hole in the roadside outside Tommy Harans near where Poulbwee was, in the hope of finding the gold. About fifty years ago, Matt Ward, Johnny McMahon (the Grey) and Pat McMahon (Delmidge) spent the night digging at the old bridge, between Gurtaderra and Gurtavrulla. Matt Ward had dreamed that the gold was buried there. Gurtaderra is in the valley of the black pig.

The last battle for Ireland will be fought there. This will happen after the third Sunday in which there will be no Mass in Cloonusker Chapel. Two of those Sundays have already passed. The enemy will meet the Irish at Cloonusker and Sruthaunalunacht will run blood. The Irish will be driven back through Gurtaderra and Gurtavulle but the tide will turn at Aughaderreen (Brittsbridge) and the enemy will be driven back and defeated. In the morning it would be as easy to pull an oak tree out of the ground as to knock the enemy off his horse but in the evening a woman in labour could knock him with her shawl. I heard this story from Mrs. Mungavin.

Sruthaunalunacht was said to have run milk but a woman washed her feet in it and it turned to water. It was milk, is water and will be blood. Many traces of the old pre-Christian religions of the early Irish survived in the beliefs of the people up to comparatively recently, and indeed some of those beliefs may be still held by some of the older people. In the early years of this century, fairies, the banshee, the leprechaun, the pooka and pishogues were believed by most of the people. I heard Nevilles say that the fairies disappeared during the Black and Tans time. People out at night had more to think about than the fairies, they were more afraid of meeting a Black and Tan patrol.

SOME ODDS AND ENDS OF GURTADERRA

LORE

"Going in Courth"

When I was a child I went up to Mungavins on most Sundays to play with the young Mungavins. When I got a bit older I went to Patsy Mungavins "in courth". In Gurtaderra, before the advent of the car and television, it was the custom to visit neighbours houses especially during the long winter evenings. It was called going "in courth". I heard a lot of old tales from Mrs. Mungavin (Ann McMahon) most of which, unfortunately, I have forgotten. Certain houses were favoured as courth houses; people did not usually go to houses in which there were young children. The same group of three or four would go to the same house for perhaps three or four years until something happened to cause the group to break up. I remember going to Guilfoyles for a year or two. Tom Guilfoyle, who had been in the Dublin Metropolitan Police in Dublin had brought home a couple of sets of boxing gloves and taught us young lads the rudiments of boxing. My father, Tom Harch (Morris) and Bill McGrath went to Campbells. Bill Moroney, Martin Lynch, Paddy Jones and Tom Guilfoyle went to Martin Rogers (Teasles). Pat Mungavin and Michael McMahon (Red Mick) usually went to Batty McMahons. The night was spent in talk and sometimes in card playing. The weather, the fairs, the price of cattle, the state of the crops, old stories of the land war and the Black and Tan time, the news in the latest paper and the doings of neighbours were the subjects of conversation. 45 was the

usual card game but whist, nap and 110 were also played.

CATTLE JOBBERS.

There seems to have been a jobber or two in Gurtaderra in every generation. Paddy Mungavin, Paid McMahon and Matt Haron of the 1901 census were jobbers. Matty Haron, Tom Mungavin, John McMahon and Son McMahon did some jobbing in the next generation. Tommy Haron is the only jobber in 1978. They dealt in weanlings and yearlings, young cattle which they bought at the fairs in Kerry and West Limerick and sold at local fairs. They usually walked or perhaps got a lift to Limerick, 25 miles away, stayed the night in a lodging house in Limerick, usually McMahons of High Street, went to West Limerick or Kerry the next day by train stayed the night in a lodging house in the town in which the fair was to be held and went to the fair early next day usually about six o'clock in the morning. All going well they railed the animals to Limerick or Birdhill, stayed the night in Limerick or Killaloe and walked the cattle home next day. The round trip took at least four days.

3
Pishogues:

I heard the following from Mrs. Mungavin nearly sixty years ago. Water from where the boundaries of three townlands met was supposed to have magical qualities if collected on May night. Gurtederra, Gurtavrulla, and Coolagoree met at the Garrivaw at the mouth of the Coarse river. One May eve a number of young men were passing the time at a cross-roads in Gurtavrulla and one of them suggested that they should go to the Garrivaw and see if anyone came to collect water. As it became dusk they went to the Garrivaw, hid in the sallys and after a while a woman came and filled a bottle. They all recognised her as the mother of one of their number. They were so embarrassed that none of them said anything and next morning the woman's son cleared out and went to Australia. From Mrs. Mungavin's telling of the story it would appear to have happened about the eighteen sixties.

May night was a favourite night for pishogues. There was a belief that a crop could be taken by pishogues. Despite being well tilled, manured and weeded, the pishogued crop would have a very poor yield and the man who made the pishogue would have a bumper crop. I never heard exactly how the pishogue was done, but it was the custom with some people in the last century to stick a piece of quickbeam in each garden on May Eve as this was supposed to protect the crop from the evildoer. Others sprinkled the crop with holy water.

If a young girl went to a limekiln at midnight on May Eve and holding on to one end of the thread, threw a ball of yarn into the kiln and then rewound it, it was believed her future husband would appear before she had the yarn all rewound. I remember Mrs. Mungavin telling a story

about some young men who overheard some girls planning to visit a limekiln on May night. The young men got there earlier, and lowered a pair of goats, which were tied together at the necks with a short length of chain, into the kiln. When the girls got there the goats bleated and rattled the chain and the poor girls ran for their lives quite sure that the devil was in the lime kiln.

Tommy McGrath told me that when he was a child he saw

Johnny Haron setting fire to a furze bush, one St. John's eve, and with a burning twig driving the cows through the smoke saying "buailim, buailim, buailim bay, bulled or bulled not you'll calve before May." I never did find out what "buailim bay" meant.

FUNERALS AND WAKES.

Horse drawn hearses were used up to the 1920s.

A funeral in the 20s consisted mainly of sidecars with a few traps, a number of middle-aged men on horseback and the young men on bicycles. The sidecars were replaced by traps in the late 20s and motorized hearses came in the 30s.

During the 30s and 40s funerals consisted of an uneasy mixture of traps, bicycles and motorcars.

Nevelles remembered seeing women keening at funerals.

Clay pipes, tobacco and snuff were distributed at wakes up to World War II. During WWII tobacco and snuff was scarce and could not be got in the large quantities required for wakes and the custom died out and was not reintroduced after the war.

WEATHER SIGNS.

The part of the Graney river between Tom Nugents and Johnny O'Briens place is known as the Garrivaw. At certain times it murmurs loudly and can be heard a mile away. When the Garrivaw was heard "roaring" during fine weather, it was

taken as a sign that the weather was about to change and that rain was on the way. If the Asnas, a series of waterfalls on the Curragh river, was heard it was believed to indicate that fine weather would continue.

EXTRACTS FROM 1901 CENSUS OF GURTADERRA

21 INHABITED HOUSES

81 MALES - 68 FEMALES
TOTAL - 149

NO.1.

| | |
|------------------------|----------|
| Patt Jones | 60 years |
| Catherine Jones (wife) | 58 " |
| Thomas Jones (son) | 28 " |
| Patt Jones (son) | 26 " |

NO.2.

| | |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Martin Nugent | 50 years |
| Bridget Nugent (wife) | 46 " |
| Mary Nugent (daughter) | 24 " |
| Kate Nugent " | 22 " |
| Delia Nugent " | 16 " |
| Gretta Nugent " | 8 " |
| Edmond Nugent (son) | 20 " |
| Tom Nugent " | 18 " |
| John Nugent " | 15 " |
| Joe Nugent " | 6 " |
| Martin Nugent " | 3 " |
| Patt McNamara (servant) | 30 " |

NO.3.

| | |
|------------------|--------------|
| Patt Mungavin | No age given |
| Ann (wife) | 40 years |
| Thomas (son) | 21 " |
| Maria (daughter) | 19 " |
| John (son) | 17 " |
| Ellen (daughter) | 14 " |
| Annie (daughter) | 11 " |
| Patt (son) | 9 " |
| Delia (daughter) | 7 " |
| Margaret " | 2 " |
| Kate " | 2 months |

NO.4.

| | |
|-----------------------|----------|
| Bridget Haron (widow) | 55 years |
| Matt | 28 " |
| Thomas | 22 " |
| Nora | 18 " |
| Mary | 15 " |
| Batt | 12 " |

NO.5.

| | |
|-----------------------|----------|
| Bridget Haron (widow) | 50 years |
| Michael | 30 " |
| John | 23 " |

EXTRACTS FROM 1901 CENSUS OF GURTADERRA

-Contd.

NO.6.

| | | |
|-------------------|----|-------|
| John Noonan | 65 | years |
| Ann Noonan (wife) | 37 | " |
| Thomas | 16 | " |
| Michael | 14 | " |
| James | 13 | " |
| William | 11 | " |
| Frank | 7 | " |
| John | 5 | " |

NO.7.

| | | |
|-------------------|----|-------|
| John Horan | 54 | years |
| Mary Horan (wife) | 43 | " |
| Patt Horan | 20 | " |
| John | 18 | " |
| Mary Ann | 16 | " |
| Kate | 13 | " |
| Thomas | 10 | " |
| Hannah | 7 | " |
| Margaret | 5 | " |
| Matt | 3 | " |

NO.8.

| | | |
|---------------------|----|-------|
| John Conway | 52 | years |
| Ellen Conway (wife) | 49 | " |
| Bfidget | 16 | " |
| Thomas | 14 | " |
| John | 12 | " |
| * Mary | 10 | " |

NO.9.

| | | |
|---------------------|----|-------|
| Thomas McGrath | 65 | years |
| Mary McGrath (wife) | 54 | " |
| William | 30 | " |
| Winifred | 17 | " |
| Helena | 15 | " |
| Annie | 12 | " |

NO.10.

| | | |
|-------------------|----|-------|
| Matt Horan | 67 | years |
| Mary Horan (wife) | 56 | " |
| John | 30 | " |
| Mary | 23 | " |
| Patt | 19 | " |

NO.11.

| | | |
|--------------------------|----|-------|
| Michael McMahon (single) | 40 | years |
| Patrick (Brother) | 39 | " |
| Ellen (Mother) | 70 | " |

EXTRACTS FROM 1901 CENSUS OF GURTADERRA

- Contd.

NO.12.

| | | |
|----------------|----|-------|
| Thomas Moloney | 50 | years |
| Mary (wife) | 49 | " |
| Ann | 14 | " |
| Margaret | 12 | " |
| Michael | 10 | " |
| John | 8 | " |

NO.13.

| | | |
|-------------|----|-------|
| James Horan | 50 | years |
| Ann (wife) | 46 | " |
| John | 16 | " |
| Margaret | 15 | " |
| Mary | 13 | " |
| James | 10 | " |
| Dan | 8 | " |
| Matt | 5 | " |

NO.14.

| | | |
|------------------|----|-------|
| Thomas Guilfoyle | 44 | years |
| Bridget (wife) | 38 | " |
| John | 8 | " |
| Tom | 7 | " |
| Kathleen | 6 | " |
| Mary | 4 | " |
| Ann | 1 | " |

NO.15.

| | | |
|-----------------|----|-------|
| Thomas Campbell | 60 | years |
| Ann (wife) | 54 | " |
| Tom | 21 | " |
| Patt | 18 | " |

NO.16.

| | | |
|----------------|----|-------|
| Patt McMahon | 53 | years |
| Bridget (wife) | 31 | " |
| John | 11 | " |
| Patt | 12 | " |
| Tom | 10 | " |
| Batt | 8 | " |
| Ann | 9 | " |
| Julia | 3 | " |
| Matt | 2 | " |
| Bridget | 1 | " |

EXTRACTS FROM 1901 CENSUS OF CURTADERRA

- Contd.

NO.17.

| | |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Matt Moroney | 35 years |
| Bridget (wife) | 26 " |
| Mary (daughter) | 2 " |
| Margaret (mother) | |
| Dennis (father) | |
| Martin McNamara (servant) | 20 " |

NO.18.

| | |
|-------------|----------|
| Ned Malone | 48 years |
| Mary (wife) | 46 " |
| Patrick | 20 " |
| Dennis | 17 " |
| John | 15 " |
| Kate | 13 " |
| Ellen | 11 " |
| Margaret | 9 " |

NO.19.

| | |
|-----------------|----------|
| Thomas Mungavin | 50 years |
| Margaret (wife) | 48 " |
| Hanora | 14 " |
| Delia | 10 " |

NO.20.

| | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Batt Riordan | 64 years |
| Mary (wife) | 50 " |
| Mick | 20 " |
| Batt | 13 " |
| Bridget | 17 " |
| Hanora | 16 " |
| Julia | 10 " |
| Ellen | 7 " |
| Ann | 6 " |
| John (brother - widower) | 74 " |
| Mick (brother) | 66 " |
| Margaret Curran (sister) | 64 " |

NO.21.

| | |
|------------------------|----------|
| Michael McMahon | 60 years |
| Hanora (wife) | 58 " |
| Patt | 28 " |
| Batt | 24 " |
| Matt | 22 " |
| Thomas | 20 " |
| James | 18 " |
| Honora | 14 " |
| Pat Delahunty (Nephew) | 4 " |