

OFFALY HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Bury Quay, Tullamore, Co. Offaly

FEBRUARY 2010 NEWSLETTER

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22 February 2010 at OHAS Bury Quay at 8
pm **John Sinclair Turrell on
archaeological finds in the Offaly Bogs
with particular reference to Ballykean bog
near Geashill.**

A Peatland Habitation Site from Ballykean Bog, County Offaly Ballintemple habitation site, located in the north-eastern corner of Ballykean Bog and dating to around the 7th century AD, is an extremely important archaeological site, unique in the Irish archaeological record. The talk presents the preliminary findings of the excavations that took place here in 2007 and 2009. The site consisted of a circular house, some 9m in diameter, surrounded by a palisade 20m in diameter. The house had a central hearth, internal dividing walls, a double external wall and entrances to the east and west. The palisade, which may have been topped with blackthorn, had an entrance on the eastern side. There were traces of structures, perhaps animal pens, built up against the palisade. The area between the house and palisade was covered with a layer of wood chippings and

brushwood, in some places supporting timber walking surfaces. A variety of artifacts were recovered from the site. Amongst these was a range of wooden items, including an oar, a spatula, a small box, a decorated comb and needles. The leather items discovered included several well-preserved shoes. Organic remains recovered included a quantity of animal bone from around the hearth, as well as deposits of fruit stones and seeds.

The Offaly War Dead to be launched on Sunday 28 February at 3pm at OHAS Research Centre, Bury Quay, Tullamore By Tom Burnell, Holycross, Tipperary. This new book is published by the History Press and will be launched at 3pm on Sunday 28 February at the Research Centre, OHAS, Bury Quay, Tullamore. The launch will be more than the normal and will include actors from Athy displaying scenes from the First World War.

Records of King's County (Offaly) casualties of WW1. These men died during WW1 or just after while in the service of the British Army, the Australian Army, the New Zealand Army, the American Army, the Indian Army, the Canadian Army, the South African Army, the Royal Navy and the British Mercantile Marine. Many thanks to Miss Rosemary Edwards of the County Library in Tullamore, Ciaran Reilly, Edenderry Historical Society, and my daughter Kathlene Burnell for all her typing skills and tolerance of this doddery old

codger.

Foreword

For too long a taboo subject within Irish Historical studies and indeed the mindset of the general public, Irish involvement in the Great War, 1914-1918, is finally being recognised and understood. Such an understanding is only possible when one considers the events and climate of the time without the hindsight of the wars outcome or subsequent events in Irish history. With the centenary of the outbreak of the war fast approaching local historical studies will enlighten further our knowledge of this momentous event in history. Tom Burnell's lists of the Great War dead of various counties and which now includes Offaly (formerly King's County) leads the way in that field. From every village and town throughout county Offaly men enlisted to serve the war effort. Some of these men had previous army experience or connections to previous military campaigns especially the Boer War. For others a sense of adventure or curiosity led them to battle fields of Europe.

In 1917 it was reported that as many as 452 from the county town of Tullamore had heard the call of the bugle since 1914. The village of Ballycumber sent 72 men of whom they were extremely proud; their names erected at the nearby railways station throughout the course of the war. The imposing military barracks at Crinkill near Birr ensured that enlistment in that area was also strong where the Prince of Wales's Leinster Regiment (Royal Canadians) were stationed. For the people of Birr the enlistment of the fifth Earl of Rosse (who later died from injuries sustained in the war) was an encouraging and inspirational gesture.

Less than a month before the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, T.R. Dixon, British Army Recruiting Officer for Offaly attended a meeting of the Edenderry Town Commissioners, at which Denis Fay presided over as chairman. After hearing Dixon's

request for more troops, the town council decided to form themselves into a committee to stimulate recruiting in that part of the Kings County. Many questions remain unanswered as to why certain individuals decided to enlist and it may not be as simple as to suggest that economic necessity was the reason why many decided to go to war. Why did 27 year old Patrick Behan, of Edenderry a chair maker, secure in a thriving employment enlist to fight for the Rights of small nations? His friend and neighbour an unemployed grocers assistant Michael Foley, then aged twenty two, threw his lot in with the Irish volunteers on Easter Monday 1916 in the G.P.O.

The enduring horrors of the war were everyday lived by the people back home. Anxious parents, wives and children waited nervously on news of loved ones. In July 1918 a Mrs. Connell of Edenderry received word that her son Patrick might be alive and that he was being held prisoner. However weeks later news arrived that Connell was nearly a year dead and was buried at Cambrai. The people of Offaly were also quick to lend a hand to those who were suffering and displaced because of the war. A committee was formed to raise funds to house Belgian refugees, and in late 1914 Mrs. Nesbitt of Tubberdaly House, Rhode took in a family of four. After several fundraising events in Edenderry the sum of 37 was raised for the refugees of the war, while Aylesbury mills employed two Belgian workers in June 1915. The Great War also exacerbated the decline of the gentry around Ireland as the sons of the Irish Big House failed to return home. Such men from Offaly included the aforementioned earl of Rosse, Wilfred Beaumont Nesbitt, Assheton Biddulph and Frederick Charles Bloomfield. Today the memorials in Tullamore's O'Connor Square, the stained glass window at St Brendan's Church in Birr and the memorial at Castro Petre at Edenderry offer

everyday reminders of the sacrifices and perhaps futility of these deaths. Tom Burnell's list of Offaly's War Dead will put names to the men from Offaly who gave the supreme sacrifice in the war to end all wars. It will also act a guide for genealogical studies and will provide others with a template of useful sources for undertaking further research. If it achieves either or both of these aims it will surely have been a worthwhile venture.

Ciaran J. Reilly,
Secretary, Edenderry Historical Society,
October 2009

Terminology;

Killed in Action; The soldier was killed during engagement with the enemy.

Died of wounds; The soldier was not killed outright and may have made it back to the Regiments Aid post or Casualty Clearing Station before he eventually died of his wounds.

Died at home; Death by drowning, suicide, accident or illness in the UK. Home in these cases means back in England and not necessarily where he lived. Many times I have come across this and it turned out to be that the soldier died in a UK hospital.

Died of wounds at home; The soldier was not killed outright and may have made it back to the Regiments Aid post or Casualty Clearing Station before he eventually died of his wounds back in the UK or Ireland.

Died; Can mean death by drowning, suicide, accident or illness.

Sources; The Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Soldiers Died in the Great War. Soldiers of the Great War. The New Library and Archives Canada. The National Archives of Australia. Nominal Rolls of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. King's County Independent, King's County Chronicle, Midland Tribune, Tipperary Sentinel and King's County Vindicator. De Ruvignys Roll of Honour. The Public Records Office in Kew, UK. The National Roll of the Great

War, London, The War Graves of the British Empire, Commonwealth War Graves Commission registers for the Irish Free State and Irelands Memorial Records.

For your diary forthcoming

22 March 2010 Michael Byrne – The Fox family of Annaghmore and their friends in other 'big houses' in the neighbourhood of Ballyboy and Kilcormac

19 April 2010 Glenn Thompson on army uniforms of soldiers of the midlands

Dictionary of National Biography –Offaly people

Our thanks to Terry Clavin for his talk in January. This lecture is now available on email for those who wish to send on a request for it.

The REPS SCHEME FOR FARMERS

Its that time of year again. The 2010/11 Repls 4 Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme has just opened for applications. PDFs of the application form and booklet here (Irish versions also available if you require them) are available to download on www.heritagecouncil.ie.

The grant is available for the conservation of the external appearance of farm outbuildings, including roof, walls, window and door repairs. Conservation works to associated structures such as historic yard surfaces, walls, gate pillars and gates will be considered if they are part of the overall project to repair an outbuilding. This grant scheme does not cover works to the interior of buildings. Farmhouses, residential or domestic buildings are not eligible for funding.

Who can apply for this grant scheme:

1. A farmer who has a REPS 4 contract with the Department of Agriculture and
 2. The owner of the building for which funding is sought or applicant is acting with the permission of the owner and
 3. The building applied for is in agricultural use
- The closing date for receipt of applications is 5pm Friday 26th March 2010.
 - The process is competitive and a grant award will not be for more than 75% of the cost of the works with a maximum grant of €25,000.
 - Applications made by fax or email to the Heritage Council will not be accepted
 - The Heritage Council will inform all applicants of the outcome of their application in writing by end of June 2010.
 - Successful applicants will have until summer 2011 to complete project works.
- If you have any queries regarding the scheme please contact the Heritage Council

Anna Meenan
Project Manager
REPS 4 Traditional Farm Buildings Grants Scheme
The Heritage Council
Church Lane
Kilkenny

Tel: 056 7770777

Policing in West Offaly, 1814-1922 by Brendan Ryan,

In this 480 page work Brendan Ryan delves into the everyday workings of the force. It includes potted biographies of up to a 1,000 men and officers who served in West Offaly. His research was broadened to include men who joined the RIC from all of King's

County and includes members of the Dublin Metropolitan Police with connections in this county. This book is now available from OHAS at €20 and an extra €10 to include postage. A few hardback copies are available at €30 free of post in Ireland.

Family History Course Spring 2010

After a very successful course last year we are holding a second family history course this year to commence on Thursday the 25th of February 2010 at OHAS, Bury Quay, with the subject matters to be as follows:-

- 25 February 2010 **The family history library and reference works**, John Kearney and Margaret White- Mulligan
4 March 2010 **The internet for family historians** – Noel Guerin
11 March at 8 p.m. **Photographs for family history**, Michael Byrne
18 March at 8p.m. **Newspapers in Offaly Family History**, Stephen McNeill

Please register your interest now. Attendance will be confined to 25 and the course charge must be the cheapest available at €25 to include tea and coffee. Start time will be at 8 pm and to finish at 10 pm. All talks will be illustrated with pictures.

LIBRARY NIGHTS CONTINUE IN 2010 EVERY THURSDAY FROM 7.30PM TO 10.30PM. OPEN TO THE PUBLIC WHY NOT COME AND DELVE FOR YOUR LOCAL HISTORY