

OFFALY HISTORICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Bury Quay, Tullamore, Co. Offaly

JANUARY 2010 NEWSLETTER

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WHY NOT SEND US YOUR MOBILE NO AND EMAIL FOR CHEAP AND EFFICIENT NOTIFICATION OF EVENTS. EMAIL IT TO AS ABOVE HEADED 'EMAIL LISTING OHAS' CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR NEWS AND HISTORY – NEW ARTICLES ARE UPLOADED REGULARLY

18 January 2010 8pm at OHAS Bury Quay, Tullamore

Terry Clavin on **Famous Offaly people and the new Dictionary of Irish Biography**

An illustrated lecture /all welcome/free of charge

Terry Clavin, educated at CBS Tullamore he later studied at UCD where he received a BA in Economics and History in 1998 and an MA in Early Modern History in 1999. He worked as a research writer for the *Dictionary of Irish Biography* specialising in the 16th and the 17th centuries. Since 2006 he has served as an associate editor for the *Dictionary of Irish Biography*.

Terry's talk will begin with a short general discussion of the DIB before proceeding to deal with those DIB entries that pertain to Offaly. This will mainly involve subjects born in the county but also subjects born elsewhere who made a contribution to the county in some way. The lives dealt with will be grouped thematically with a focus on early Irish monks and scholars, Gaelic chieftains, scientists, engineers, literary figures, politicians and emigrants. He will also make some general comments on the sort of Offaly people who appear in the DIB and what this says about the county's significance during a particular period of Irish history. The subjects dealt with will include: John Warneford Armstrong (1770–1858), a captain in the loyalist militia and

informer on United Irishmen; Genevieve O'Farrell (1923–2001), nun and educationalist in Belfast during the Troubles; Michael Crotty (1794–1862), a priest who led a schism from the catholic church in Birr; William Parsons (1800–1867), astronomer and builder of the largest telescope in the world at Birr; Patrick Joseph Egan (1876–1960), businessman and politician; Murtagh King (1562–1639), first translator of the Old Testament into Irish; Alan Bell (1857–1920), RIC officer assassinated by the IRA; and Michael Larkin (1835–1867), Fenian martyr.

Offaly in the Dictionary of Irish Biography

The *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, edited by James McGuire and James Quinn, was launched on 14 November 2009 by An Taoiseach, Brian Cowen, and reveals much about Offaly people's influence on history. At over 8 million words, it is the biggest work ever published on the lives of Irish women and men. The Dictionary is made up of 9,700 biographies written by over 700 contributors, and spans over two thousand years of Ireland's history. It includes the lives of deceased Irish men and women who made a significant contribution in Ireland and abroad, as well as those born over-seas who had noteworthy careers in Ireland—from St. Patrick to Patrick Pearse, Grainne O'Malley to Maud Gonne MacBride, Daibhi O Bruadair to Samuel Beckett, Shane O'Neill to Eamon de Valera and Edward

Carson to Bobby Sands. The Dictionary reveals much about Offaly's men and women throughout history – biographies include those of Mary Ward (1827-69) of Ballylin, an artist, naturalist and astronomer; James Lynam Molloy (1837-1909) of Cornalour, a songwriter whose most famous compositions include "The Kerry dance" and "Love's old sweet song"; and Patrick Joseph Egan (1876-1960) of Tullamore, a businessman and politician. Biographical subjects include artists, architects; scientists, lawyers, journalists; actors, musicians, bankers, sporting figures, writers, engineers, criminals, public servants, politicians and philanthropists. Contributors are principally professional historians but many are from diverse fields and include: TK Whitaker; Gerard Hogan SC; Colm Toibin, writer; Adrian Hardiman, Supreme Court judge; and Peter McVerry, social worker. The Dictionary is a joint project between the Royal Irish Academy and Cambridge University Press and is being published simultaneously in nine volumes and online. The online version of the Dictionary will be an ongoing project, with new biographies being added twice a year. The first set of new entries will appear from May 2010. The biographies are arranged alphabetically from Jacques Abbadie (d.1717), a Huguenot refugee who became dean of Killaloe, through to Zozimus (aka Michael Moran) d. 1846) the Liberties-born balladeer. The nine volume Dictionary of Irish Biography costs €730 if purchased before January 31, 2010. For order details see www.dib.ie. The Society has purchased a copy for its library so why not call to see it.

In January 2010 we again hold a European History Course this time on Russian cinema and the Russian revolution commencing on Thursday 28 January 2010. This is the third course in the series. The first dealt with the impact of the first and second world wars in Germany and the second course on the Spanish civil war. This year we are confining ourselves to three nights only, so why not come along.

There is a vast literature on the Russian Revolution from the journalistic accounts of John Reed, *Ten days that shook the world* to recent studies by Robert Service and Simon Sebag Montifiore (see his *Stalin* books). The cinema opens a unique and special window and an introduction to one of the most innovative. You are invited to come along and to participate after the film in any contribution you wish to make from the floor so as to form a discussion around the film. You can check on the internet for details of each film and its impact on world cinema.

28 January at 8 pm at OHAS, **Battleship Potemkin**, Eisenstein (1925) – some say the greatest film ever made.

04 February at 8pm at OHAS **Alexander Nevsky** (Eisenstein (1938) – the patriotic war picture and allegory of Nevsky attacking Germany was Eisenstein's most spectacular film and American in style. The film was played down after the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939.

11 February at 8pm at OHAS – Further viewing – what's available in **The documentaries**- footage from the 1917 revolution to the Nazi Soviet Pact and the death of Stalin and the Cold War.

Policing in West Offaly, 1814-1922 by Brendan Ryan, was launched in the Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society, Bury Quay, Tullamore on Friday 11th December at 8 p.m. by Garda John Egan, a native of West Offaly and a past President of the G.R.A. Folk memory has not been kind to the men of the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). A picture has emerged down the years depicting them as a traitorous native police force, ruthlessly enforcing English law on a sullen and hostile population. Popular folklore recalls their conduct at evictions and of their sometimes ruthlessness in carrying out the wishes of heartless landlords. Many stories can be recounted of their support for an alien government.

The reality is much more complex. For most of their existence the RIC performed the duties of any national police force, most of the time to the best of their ability. Those duties consisted mainly of keeping the peace, especially at fairs; quelling faction fights; enforcing the licensing laws; dealing with drunkenness and settling rows about rights-of-way between neighbours. Later on, however, during the Land War and for a decade prior to Independence their image changed radically and they became associated with the Crown Forces and became targets for Republican forces.

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 €3 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 propose to have 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 8p.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.

Christmas Draw December 2009

1st Hamper Helen Bracken, Arden Vale
2nd Hamper Matt Mooney, Lynally
3rd Bottle of whiskey Dorothee Bibby, Cappancur
4th Christmas cake Darrell Hooper, Screggan
5th Book token Conor Buckley, Roscore
6th Free membership 2010 Elizabeth Buckley, Roscore.

Thank you for your support

Edenderry Historical Society news

Lecture on William Bulfin 1864-1910: His Life and Times. Friday 5th Feb 2010 in the Parish Centre (beside St Mary's RC Church). It will be by Tom Harris a PhD student, Trinity College Dublin.

Annual subscription

Please note that the annual subscription is €30 (euro)

See Banker's order on next page.

Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society

Membership Form (Standing Order Payment)

Please return the completed form to the Society Treasurer, who will note your name, address and e-mail, for journal mailings and e-mail circulars.
The OHAS Treasurer will then forward the form to your bank.
Please notify future change of address and/or e-mail to the Society

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The sum of €30 commencing 1 January _____

Return form to: Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society, Bury Quay, Tullamore, Co. Offaly