

A  
Historical Tour  
of  
Clonrush Graveyard

Given by

Alfie O'Brien

in association with

Whitegate Community Council

Tuesday evening August 20th 2013





National Heritage Week is coordinated in Ireland by the Heritage Council in conjunction with the Department of Arts, Heritage & Gaeltacht, and is part of European Heritage Days, which is celebrated in over 49 countries across Europe.

National Heritage Week has become a very popular way for people to take part in enjoying and learning about heritage. Numerous events are organized across the County each year and this year here in Whitegate, the Community Council is playing its part in organizing a historical tour of Clonrush Graveyard.

“On behalf of Whitegate Community Council, It gives me great pleasure to welcome this eagerly awaited publication on the history of Clonrush Graveyard following our tour there last August as part of Heritage week. On that memorable evening those of us present were enthralled by the knowledge that Alfie O’Brien has of this spiritual and hallowed ground. We in the community are very grateful to Alfie for sharing his knowledge with us and for all his work in the preparation of this publication.”

Pat Burke Chairman.

Gratitude is expressed to the organizers and helpers.

The chairman of Whitegate Community Council, Pat Burke.  
Carmel Keenan and Fionnuala Collins.

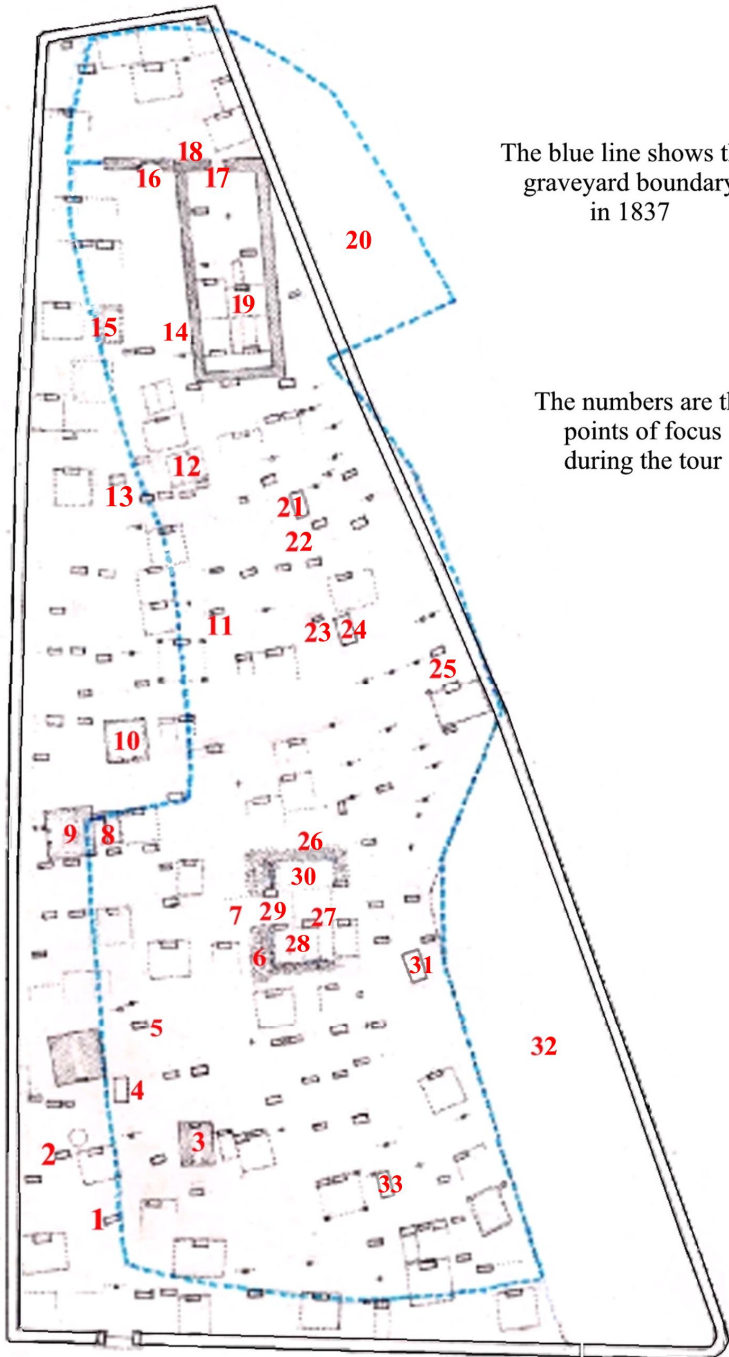
Photography by Fr. John Jones and Alfie O'Brien.  
Cover photo by Fionnuala Collins.

The preparation and maintenance of the grounds by the workers on  
the Rural Social Scheme.

Refreshments provided by John and Patricia Leigh.

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The blue line shows the  
graveyard boundary  
in 1837

The numbers are the  
points of focus  
during the tour

## PRAYER

by

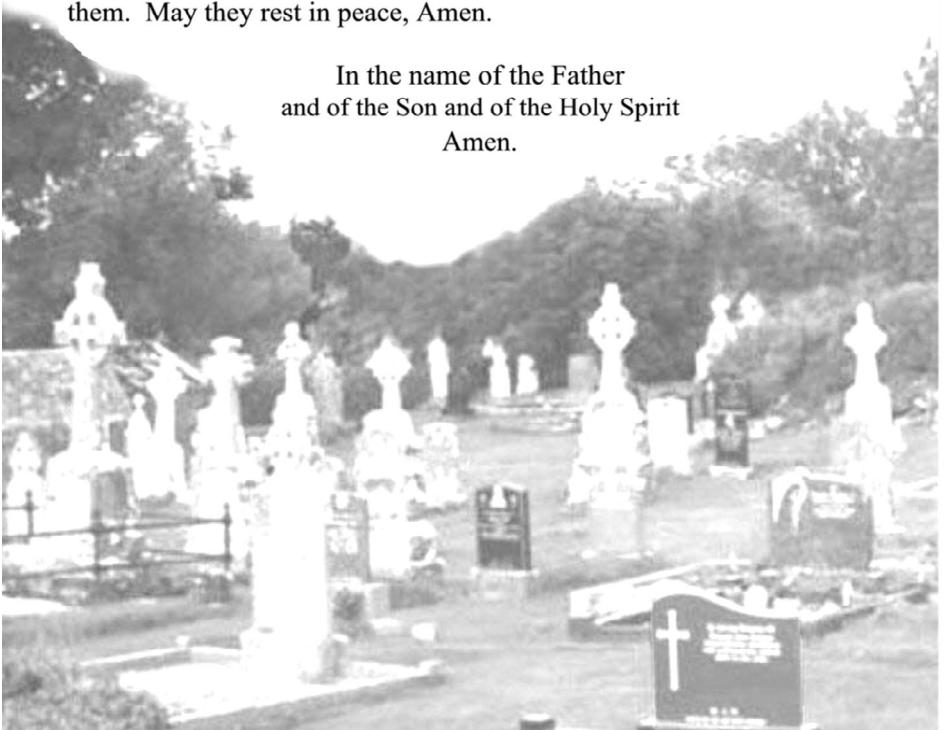
Fr. John Jones

In the name of the Father  
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

It was the Lord who said to Moses, "Where you are standing is Holy Ground", and where we are standing is Holy Ground. It is a place where we have experienced great loss and a great sadness at times, and at the same time when we come here, we become so aware of the richness of our heritage. So in this prayer now, we thank God for the blessings that we have received, especially through the hands of those who lie here. The heritage that they have passed on to us; the richness of our values and we ask God to take them into his eternal care.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace, Amen.

In the name of the Father  
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit  
Amen.



## THE GRAVEYARD TOUR

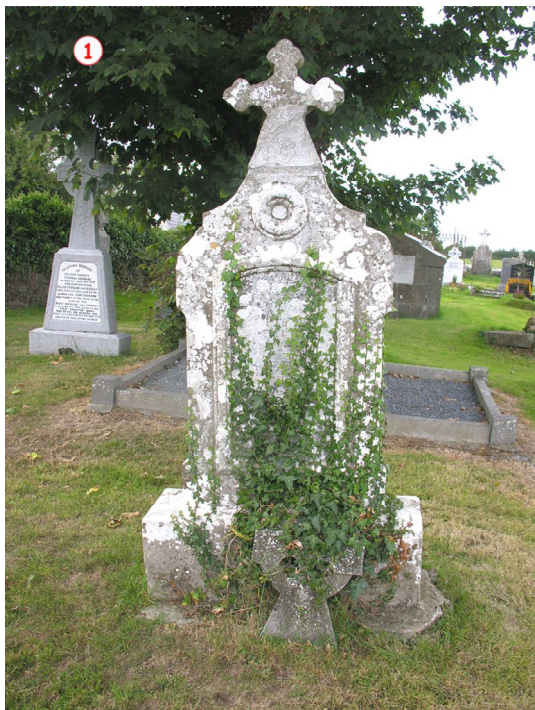
It may not be a pleasant thing to say, “Welcome to the graveyard”. It may also be strange to say, there may be a need to explain where we are. We are in the middle of Meelick townland. Clonrush graveyard is not in Clonrush townland. It is so named after the ecclesiastical parish of Clonrush. The first parish church was situated here and it later became the parish graveyard.

Prior to 1840, the graveyard was much smaller than it is today and the boundary was very irregular in outline. It was extended at that time on this (south) side and in the 1850s it was extended by one row of graves at the front when they were making the new road.

Maximum use of the available space was made in the old graveyard. The foot of one row of graves joined the head of the next row, with no provision left for erecting headstones or tombstones as they were traditionally called. This created no problem in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the recumbent limestone slab was popular together with standing stones without a base.

In later times, as the standing Celtic headstone with its large base became popular and many of the older graves were abandoned, it was usual to erect the headstone back on top of the graves in the previous row; so where there were three rows of graves once, there are usually now only two rows.

It would be people that came to live in the parish after the graveyard was extended that mostly acquired graves in the new ground, but not entirely so. Many people, who had graves already in the old section, needed new graves as the family branched out; for example, this headstone is in the extension, though the people were native to the parish long before that time.



The inscription reads:

**“Erected by Patrick Woodhouse in memory of his father John, who died March 27<sup>th</sup> 1887, aged 67 years.”**

John Woodhouse lived in Ballyhinch near the border with Derroran and worked as a herdsman. His son Patrick got employment as farm manager with the landlord of Cregg townland - Major William Cooper, who also owned Williamstown.

When major Cooper died in 1906, the Land Commission acquired the townland of Cregg and Patrick Woodhouse bought a lease of the mountain part including “Poll-na-muck” bog, which he rented to turf cutters. Many local people cut their turf there until the Forestry Commission planted the last of it in 1970.

One hundred years or more ago, it was very difficult or impossible to have new names added to a headstone once it was erected. The names needed to be inscribed in the factory before the headstone was erected here. This would explain why Patrick Woodhouse didn't have his mother's name added to the stone. She was Catherine Woodhouse, formerly McNamara, and she died in 1900.



Another name that had graves in the old section of the graveyard was Goonane (pronounced Gonaune). In Woodford parish they pronounced the name Gúnan. There were many families of that name here in the 1800s. The last, or best known of these Goonanes' were the Derrainy family, who were made better known by a daughter Nora T. Goonane Leonard, who emigrated to Connecticut and contributed much to the local history and heritage of this parish with her writings on her childhood years growing up here. When Nora's grandfather died in 1895, they got new graves over here in the extension beside the tree.



The first thing that would attract the attention of anyone entering the graveyard is this small vaulted house. There was a small monastery established here in or about the twelfth century, dedicated to St. Colman. This was called Pol Colman or St. Colman's Oratory. The doorway was reconstructed in the sixteenth century with a cut limestone surround, and the door was bolted from the inside. It was likely a place where a monk would find solitude to pray.

Many legends are associated with these monuments, usually much removed from reality. One legend states that St. Colman, kneeling inside the window in the gable end, could hear mass being celebrated in Rome. Well, if he had his mobile phone or his iphone with him, that wouldn't be an extraordinary achievement today, but I think it would be difficult in the twelfth century.

Another story was that, there was a stone flag on the floor of the oratory inside the window with the print of the saint's knees on it. It could be possible that he carved it to that shape to make it more comfortable to kneel on for long periods. I once heard an old man say that he dug up the floor of the oratory in the hope of finding that stone, but he never did find it. The oratory was also known at one time as "The Confessional".

It is presumed that the monks continued to reside here until the suppression of the monasteries in the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century, though they may have remained on under harsh circumstances for some time later. There is no record of their departure from here, only a legend that tells the story of a monk or monks being beheaded on the nearby shore, and everywhere a head fell, a spring well was formed — a fable story of the plight of the monks at that time. It alludes to a row of shallow spring wells near the shore in Church Bay.

The oratory was in a state of falling into ruin in 1989 when the local Clonrush Heritage Group, had it restored. Much of the outer stonework had fallen away and it was overgrown with ivy and an ash tree was growing from the roof. A lot of the stonework that you see is the work of Bill Tiernan of Mountshannon. You can also see some felting that divides the old masonry from the new.

Some inappropriate uses were made with the building over the years. I cannot say if it was true, but it was said that, a caretaker of the graveyard at one time, kept young pigs in it. Later it became known as the "Skull House", because some people digging graves nearby, instead of burying the bones again as they do today, just threw some of them into the oratory. It is nice to see that it is well kept today.



It was always the case that when someone died young, whether it was a child or a husband or wife, a great effort was made to erect a monument to them. Here is a stone slab placed to the memory of William Halloran of Nutgrove, Dromaan. The inscription reads:

**“Erected by Anne Foley in Memory of her husband William Halloran Jr., Nutgrove, who departed this life January 9<sup>th</sup> 1840, aged 36 years. May he rest in Peace, Amen”.**

Hallorans’ had a small farm in Nutgrove and joining them was a family called Foley. William Halloran married Anne Foley and they were obviously planning to improve their lot when in 1837 they took a long-term lease of some more land from Hollands’ nearby. Three years later William died and Anne had this slab put on his grave using her maiden name to also remember the Foley family, as most likely she knew that the name Foley wouldn’t be inscribed anyplace else in the graveyard. Anne lived to be old, and it seems she may have brought another relative called Hannah Halloran who was also a widow, to live with her, or Hannah may have been just a visitor. Hannah caused some alarm in 1871 when she was found dead on the road there, but the inquest stated she died from natural causes.

The dividing line between the old section of the graveyard and the extension is between Halloran’s grave-slab and Sampson’s vault.



Some people from Coose are also buried here, although it is not the usual graveyard for the Coose area. It usually indicates that they formerly lived in this parish or they had relatives here. This headstone belongs to one of the many Tuohy families who lived in Coose in the past. The inscription doesn't identify the family very well, it reads:

**“Erected by Delia Tuohy in loving memory of her parents, brothers and sisters.”**

Other records reveal who they were: The parents were James and Margaret Tuohy. James died in 1894 aged 80 years, and his wife Margaret (formerly Fahy), died 1897. The children were Matthew, Cornelius (Con), Mary, Delia and Patrick. None of these married and they died between 1905 and 1929. They may have had some connections with Abbertons’

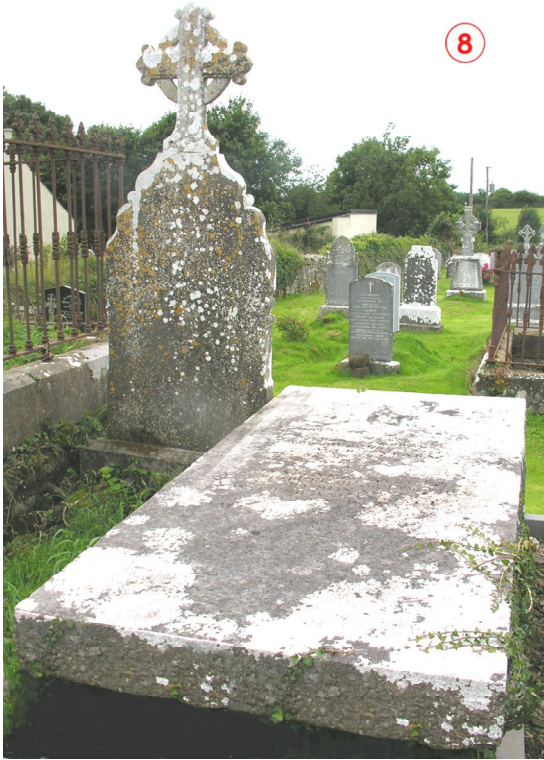


This ruin is called “Tinambraher” or “The Brother’s House”. It was also called the “Friars House” and the “Priest’s House”. It was the house where the monks lived and slept when they had a monastery here. We will return to that later.

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There were a number of families called Roughan in the parish in the 1800s. Most fell on hard times or had to leave. These graves beside Tinambraher (south side), belong to the Roughans’ of Gortnascreena. Peter, Ned and the last to live there was John. Some of the Roughan girls married locally. They were also possibly related to the Roughans’ of “Powers Cross”, Woodford parish, but they are no longer there now either.

8



This table monument and headstone belong to a Durack family that lived here in Meelick in the 1800s. They lived close to my g-grandfather's house at the time. The inscription reads:

**“Sacred to the memory of Jeremiah Durack who died May 4<sup>th</sup> 1847, aged 52 years. This stone was erected as attribute of affection by his sons Walter and Michael of New York.”**

They were a branch of the Magherareagh Duracks'. A Patrick Durack and his family also emigrated from Magherareagh to Australia. They were made famous by a granddaughter who wrote a book entitled "Kings in Grass Castles". The story of the family in Australia and their exploits in cattle farming, and their migration from NSW to Western Australia; and the task of driving 7500 herd of cattle from Queensland to Kimberley in Western Australia over a two year period and all that happened along the way. Anyone who has read the book would be familiar with the name Jeremiah, commonly known as Darby Durack. The Darby Durack here died during the famine. Five of his sons emigrated to New York, at least one daughter married locally and another member emigrated to Australia and married a Minogue from Whitegate.

The Duracks' apparently had a good knowledge of making poteen as they had a malt kiln near their house here

This headstone was erected to the memory of Darby Durack's wife Mary. The inscription reads:

**“In loving memory of Mary Durack beloved wife of Jeremiah Durack who died 26<sup>th</sup> February 1865, aged 72 years. Erected by her son Daniel Durack, Brooklyn, New York.”**

According to the New York family, her maiden name was Hackett. Michael Hackett had a shop on the hill in Whitegate and there were other related Hackets' in Cappantruhane and in Woodford parish. Some of the New York sons returned on a visit here in the 1890s and had the monuments erected then.



Cogan's vault.

The inscription, which is on a chest type monument on the roof of Cogan's vault reads:

**“Here lies repose Charles Cogan, son of Joseph Cogan and Agnes Cogan (nee Duffield) his wife. Born 30<sup>th</sup> April 1869 who died at the age of 16 months. I know that my redeemer liveth. Of your charity pray for the repose of the soul of Joseph Cogan, M.D. J.P. Tintrim House who died on the 13<sup>th</sup> June 1873 aged 44 years. Beloved in all the relations in life. Erected by his brother Bernard Cogan MD.”**

It may appear from the inscription that it was Joseph and Agnes Cogan that owned Tintrim House and estate, but that was not the case. Although Joseph and Agnes had accommodation in Tintrim House for the short time that they were here, but their own land was in Derrainy and Ballyhinch.

When Edmund Burke sold the Tintrim estate in 1867, a James Cogan bought it. He was a native of Co. Sligo where different branches of the Cogan's owned much land at that time. Cogan's were also one of the few Catholic landlords of that period. James never married and lived out the rest of his life in Tintrim and died in 1891 aged 69 years. Some of the Cogan's were also merchants and travelled abroad, and a Patrick Cogan and his wife spent some time in the East Indies, and two of their sons, Joseph and Bernard were born there between 1829 and 1831. They were sent to Scotland to be educated and both became doctors.

As the inscription states, Joseph married Agnes Duffield. She was the daughter of a wealthy man called Thomas Duffield who was a member of parliament in the Conservative party for Abingdon in Berkshire in England. The Abingdon district was joined to Oxfordshire in 1974 — a similar occurrence to the transfer of this parish from Co. Galway to Clare in 1898.

At the time of Agnes's marriage to Joseph Cogan, the landlord that owned part of Derrainy and Ballyhinch, William Blair, put it up for sale and Joseph and Agnes Cogan bought it. They were only a short time here in Tintrim when their only child died. Three years later, Joseph got a stroke and died while they were on holiday in Salthill in Galway.

Agnes then returned to England and sold the lands of Derrainy and Ballyhinch to Joseph's brother Bernard Cogan. At the same time Bernard bought the lands of Kilkittane from William Foreman and he also got Tintrim from James. Bernard never married and died in 1898 at the age of 67, with no obvious successor.

When Cogans' came to Tintrim, they brought their sister Mary to live there also. She had no particular occupation but she owned some houses in Ballymote, Co. Sligo, which she had leased to tenants. Mary was noted to wear a lot of jewellery. She died in 1880 when she was 50 years old and it is said, that after the funeral, the vault was broken into with the intention of stealing whatever jewellery she might still be wearing. Cogans' had another sister — Frances Anne who married a John McGowan in Sligo in 1870. John died a month after the marriage and Frances Anne then also came to live in Tintrim.

Back in England, Agnes Cogan may never have got the opportunity or the time to return to visit where her husband and son were buried. She was stricken with a cancer and died in Surrey in 1887 at the age of 42 years.

There is a chest monument on Agnes's grave in Marcham Churchyard in Oxfordshire. The inscription reads:

**“Agnes Cogan, daughter of Thomas Duffield esq. of Marcham Park and widow of Joseph Cogan of Tintrim House, Galway, Ireland, died 5<sup>th</sup> May 1887”.**

Because of untimely deaths and other circumstances, the branch of the Cogans' that came here have no close relatives of the Cogan name now, although distantly related Cogans' are still living in Sligo. However, Agnes Cogan's people, the Duffields', are still represented in her home place in Marcham, Abingdon by a great-grandnephew, Gervase Duffield. He was a County Councillor there until the local elections last May when he was narrowly defeated. He has a brother John, in the financial business in London. They are interested in the Cogan connection here.



The boundary of the old graveyard turned across from Durack's monuments to here. All this area formed part of the extension in 1840.



Blake's monument

We have a habit of calling this monument, Blake's Vault because it resembles Cogan's to some extent. But unlike Cogan's, Blake's monument never had a stone roof, which is the definition of a vault. There is a wall dividing it down the centre and a heavy stone slab balanced on top of it. It would be a very uncomfortable place to be digging a grave as the clay had to be thrown over the slab to the other side, and there might be the fear that something would slip and the heavy stone slab would topple in on the gravediggers. It did slip off the wall in recent times and the marble headstone fell on top of it and was badly broken but was since repaired.

It was a landlord called Burke that owned Meelick in the 1700s, and people called Yelverton succeeded them. When Matthew Yelverton died in 1833 the Yelverton family left and Dominick Blake and his family came from Menlo Castle in Galway to live in Meelick. Dominick's wife was Mary Yelverton.

Dominick was old when he came and he died in 1843 at 88 years. His son Walter Blake succeeded him. Walter was a member of the famine relief committee set up in 1846. It was Walter who had the new road made to the graveyard as part of an employment scheme then. Prior to that time, most funerals would travel over the Ballinruan road and down the avenue to Meelick House to meet a farm track that would bring it to the other end of the graveyard. The sight of the many funerals passing along in front of Blake's lawn during the famine was a good reminder that there should be a more direct road made to the graveyard.

The last name inscribed on the headstone is that of Major Cecil Bruce Blake. (pictured).



He was a grandson of Walter Blake and was in the British army. During World War 1, there was a combined English - French attempt to invade Turkey. But the Turks were well prepared for them and the English were badly beaten at Gallipoli. Major Blake lost a slice of his head to shrapnel, but he survived, though he had to wear a metal plate to cover his scalp thereafter. In his better days he was president and commodore of the Dromineer yachting club.

His daughter Joyce Blake is still alive at 102 years of age and now 9 months into her 103<sup>rd</sup> year. She is also significant as she is the oldest surviving past pupil of Lakyle National School. Joyce and her brother Valentine Blake were enrolled in the school in 1921 when they came to stay with their grand aunts at Meelick House.



She received her secondary education at Alexandra College, Dublin, but as she said, she had no particular academic ambition, being satisfied just to get by. She enjoyed horse riding and hunting and used to ride with the Nenagh harriers.

She later married Cyril Green and they were in charge of a rubber plantation in Malaya when the second world war broke out, and they had a dramatic escape from there when the Japanese overran that country.

Tony and Joyce Blake

The Greens later came to live at Ballyvolane House, Castlelyons, near Fermoy, Co. Cork. When I met Joyce there three years ago, she was still able to live a fairly independent life and could remember her time in Meelick and the people she knew and the houses she used to visit. Unfortunately, she had a fall last February and spent some months in hospital. She has since recovered but she now needs more constant care.



Joyce Blake Green 2010



11



Erected by Martin Dowd  
in Memory of his son  
Edmond Power who  
departed life May 1899  
Aged 92 yr<sup>s</sup> may he  
rest in peace Amen

This headstone reads: **“Erected by Martin Power, in memory of his son Edmond Power who departed life May 1822 aged 22 years. May he rest in peace. Amen.”**

Martin Power was a farmer in Boleynagough and as Edmond was his only son, he would have spent all he could afford to erect this monument. Martin died in the mid 1830s and his widow was evicted from Boleynagough in 1837.

The upper part of the headstone tells a story in icons or symbols, of the journey of the soul from death to eternity. It is not easy to see it at this time of the day. The best time to see it or to take a picture of it is when the sun is shining across the surface around noon. As the figures are raised, they stand out better at that time.

At the bottom are vessels of cut flowers. Some are drooping, representing death and the frailty of life. The flowers are mostly in bud or half open – indicating the death of a young person. In the centre, at the right of the crucifix is a hammer and three nails symbolizing the suffering of the cross. At the left side of the crucifix is a pincers having withdrawn the nails, signifying the removal or deliverance of the soul from suffering through the merits of the cross. The circle around the cross represents eternity – It has no end.

The cock or rooster is a symbol of awakening to the resurrection. The dove resting on the olive branches symbolizes forgiveness and peace. The other dove with an olive twig in its beak is a symbol of new life – recalling that after the deluge, the dove released by Noah to test the environment, returned to him with a young twig of an olive tree to prove that new growth or life had begun. In this case it alludes to eternal life.

The impoverished-looking being or skeleton here represents the departed soul – stripped of all its earthly gains. Having a bird’s head – in mythology it is a symbol of rebirth and resurrection. Birds symbolized heavenly beings, as they can soar higher than any other creature. The angel with the trumpet represents Michael the archangel who is calling the soul to judgement. The scales represent justice and the winged heads represents heaven.

The stone is Killaloe slate and was made at the monument works in Killaloe, later called the marble works as they also worked with marble at a later time. The factory was situated below the town beside the river. Across the river on the Ballina side, overlooking the road is Templekelly graveyard. There are a number of similar headstones there, based on the same theme or variations of it. The headstone would be transported up river by a large boat to the nearest quay and brought from there to here by horse and car.

There were other Power families in the parish at that time and later, possibly related to Martin but not closely so. The best-known family were the Powers' of Derrainy. In Derrainy they pronounced the name Poor. Nicholes Poor lived there. While they might be financially poor while they were in Derrainy, one of Nicholes's sons Denis Poor or Power married Mary Barrett from the old road in Whitegate and they went to live in Borrisokane, and their descendants in America at least are well off people now.



Brien slabs

13



The iron furnace and mill in Furnace townland provided great employment in the 1700s. The money was good but the work was hard, particularly for the men who were attending to the fire. They were noted to die young; the principal causes of death were heatstroke and asthma. This family of Briens worked there. They omitted the O from the surname at that time. The inscription on one slab reads:

**“This monument was erected by Mary Brien, alias Calanan, in memory of her son Terry Brien who departed this life November 15<sup>th</sup> 1778, aged 30 years. Also Timothy Brien died 1769. The inscription on the second slab is: Terence Brien died December 26<sup>th</sup> 1771, aged 55 years.”**

The dividing line between the old section of the graveyard and the extension is one grave at this (right-hand) side of Morgan’s headstone. There is one name on Morgan’s headstone that may not be recognized. That is:

**“Joseph’s Morgan’s daughter Julia who died January 14<sup>th</sup> 1901 aged 32 years.”**

Julia was William Kelly’s wife. William was the principal teacher in the old Lakyle School at that time. William and Julia died the same year. Because there were a number of Morgan deaths close to that time, William Kelly was brought home to be buried in the Kelly grave-plot in Clontuskert graveyard near Ballinasloe.



We have come to the ruins of the original parish church dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century and at one time referred to as Meelick Abbey. The masonry is much superior to the other buildings and it may have replaced an older, smaller church built by the monks earlier. It was built with red sandstone. That type of stone is not found naturally in any quantity in Meelick, but it is the bedrock in the entire mountain region north of Whitegate. Wherever it was quarried it had to be carted some distance. Like Colman's Oratory, The window in the gable had a cut-limestone feature added in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

There was much persecution of Catholics from the rebellion of 1641 leading up to Cromwellian conquest and the Penal Laws in 1652, and it would be during that period that the church was burned down or ruined. From that time also, Catholics could only be taught secretly in isolated places known as hedge schools. In 1782, the government passed two Catholic Relief Acts that allowed Catholics to teach. From then onwards, Catholics could hold schools without fear, and these were usually held in old vacant buildings, although they continued to be known as hedge schools. In the early 1800s the old church here was reconstructed and re-roofed for use as a school. The teacher was Patrick Treacy who had 110 pupils on rolls here in 1826.



This area may appear to be vacant, but there is, or was an underground burial chamber here. It belonged to James Watson of Garrykennedy House and estate. James was an important man in the history of the Garrykennedy area in the first half of the 1800s.

James Watson married Julia Blake of Tuam. She was a sister of Walter Blake's wife Mary in Meelick. They were different Blakes'. The Watsons' had a son born in 1844 but he didn't survive. The Garrykennedy estate was in financial trouble also at that time and the most of it was sold in 1864 to another landlord called Parker. James later lived over here at Meelick House, and when he died in 1880 aged 71 years, Blakes' had this burial place made for him.

There is a wall around a single grave here four feet deep. A stone slab originally covered it. The idea being that the coffin was placed into the chamber, there was no clay put in to cover it, just the stone slab on top. However, the slab got broken and was removed. It was like an open grave then and as there wasn't enough clay around to fill it, it was filled up with stones from the boundary wall and covered with a little clay on top.

There was always a hole coming in the ground here, no matter how often it was filled. Some years ago the Parish Council decided to investigate it and discovered then what it was. There was no expense spared with this burial. The handles of the coffin were made of heavy solid brass, and the breast plate of engraved copper, and what was designed to be one of the best burial places, turned out to be one of the worst, because when the stone cover was removed, it was like a tank that held the rainwater



People question: what was the purpose of this arch? And no one has a definite answer. All funerals traditionally have to pass through this arch from west to east. Some think that it was the entrance to the graveyard, but the graveyard never had a boundary wall good enough to justify such an elaborate entrance. It was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, later than the church.

The best explanation that I have heard is: In olden times wakes were held in the home for two nights in succession. The church then made a rule that the wake should be held in the home for one night only. A compromise was reached and a funeral house was built here to retain the coffin for the second night. Access would be from inside the church and then through a side door into the funeral house, as the door of the funeral house was bolted from the inside. There is a channel in one side of the arch that allowed a timber beam to slide through. The beam would be pushed out to allow the door to open inwards. Then when the door was closed, the beam would be drawn back behind it to fasten it.

The arrival time of a funeral at the graveyard wasn't as predictable in the past as it might be today. The coffins usually had to be carried long distances, and brakes were taken along the way, and if it was passing near a pub, there might be a longer break.

When it eventually arrived here, the coffin would be placed on the ground outside the door of the funeral house to wait for the priest or his steward to come and open the door. So the custom remains of placing the coffin momentarily on the ground outside the arch before again raising it on the shoulders of the bearers to be carried, as if it were, into the funeral house.

Funerals coming long distances from Mountshannon or from the Coose area were brought by boat, and the stile in the wall over there was made to accommodate their arrival as the coffin was carried up from the lake.



In 1990 the Clonrush Heritage Group carried out some restoration on the old church here. Prior to that, all the sidewalls and the entrance were not visible. Excavations were carried out under the guidance of a retired archaeologist from Galway to find the foundations, and these low walls were then built on them to show the complete outline of the church.



Some items were found during the excavations, such as this broken trough or saddle quern, alleged to be used for grinding iron, as there were some pieces of slag found nearby, but it could also be used for crushing corn.

18

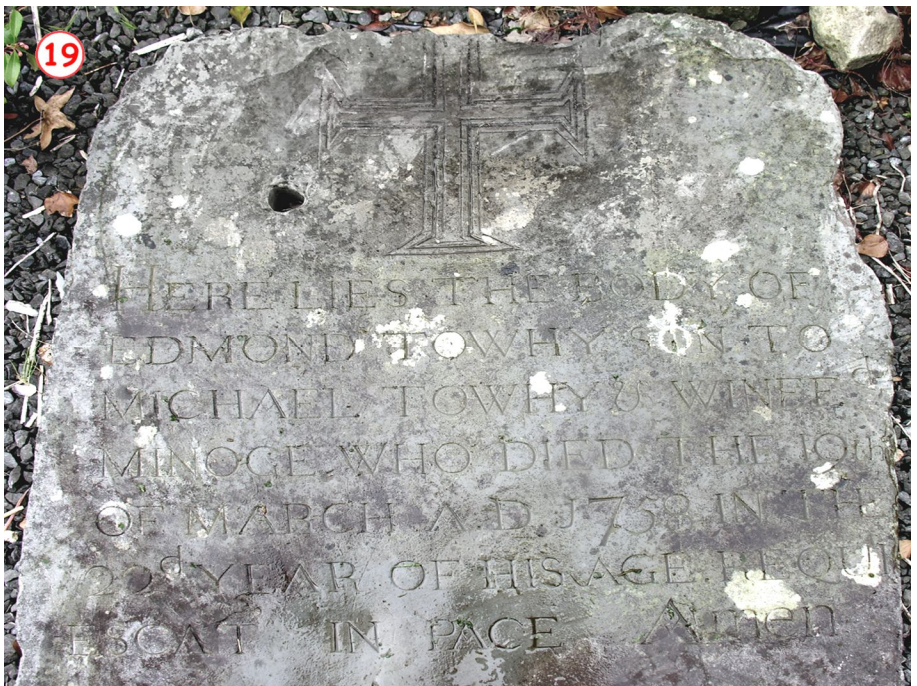
The stone cross that would have stood on the church gable once was also found.



A few years before the excavations were made, a millstone was found during grave digging close to the church.

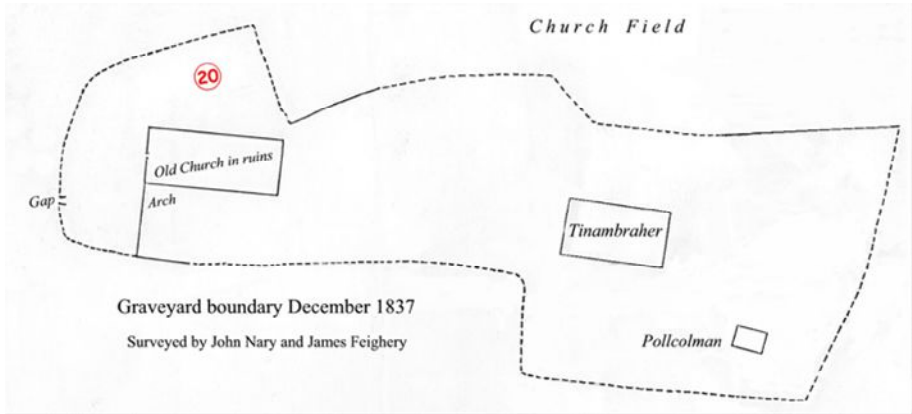
When in use, the stone on the left would be placed on top of the stationary one, pictured right. The hole near the edge was to take a timber handle. The grain would be poured into the centre hole and as the top stone was turned around the corn would work out between the two stones and spill over the edge as flour. This type of millstone was not particular to Ireland. Millstones of this type were found in the Middle East, that dates back thousands of years.

After the church was ruined some of the more influential or wealthy people of the time secured graves within the ruins. The principal names here were: Tuohy, Quirke, Minogue, the Kilcooney Maddens later Cleary, Towhy later Sullivan and Mulvihill.



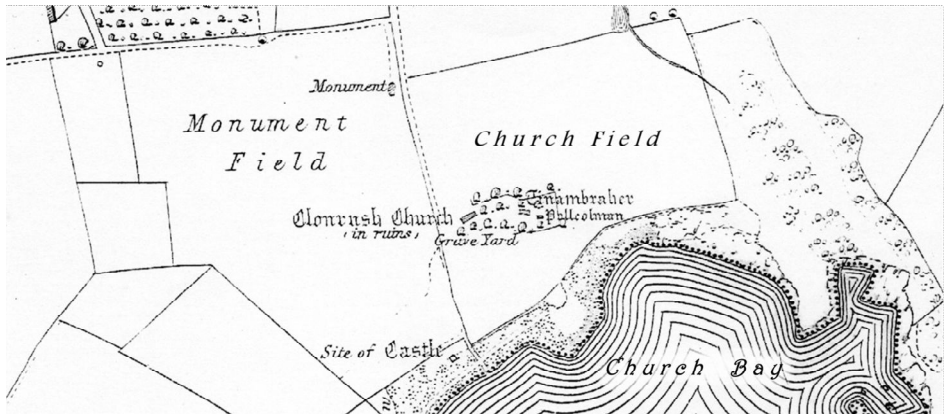
The oldest inscribed stone slab bearing date is situated here. The name Tuohy is spelled TOWHY. The inscription reads:

**“Here lies the body of Edmond Towhy, son to Michael Towhy and Winifred Minogue, who died 10<sup>th</sup> March A.D. 1758 in the 22<sup>nd</sup> year of his age. Requiescat in Pace, Amen”**



Prior to the work that was carried out when the graveyard was extended in the 1840s and the boundary wall straightened, there was a garden out here that was one with the church grounds. It extended out 40 feet into the field. They excluded most of the garden when they built this wall. The population of the parish was very large then and the church was small. It is likely that many people would have to stand and kneel out in this garden then while mass was on.

The monks had a monastery farm surrounding the graveyard. There is a well-built wall around it, and it includes this field and the one at the other side of the road, together with the field where the houses are. It was all one field then and it consisted of 12¼ acres including the graveyard.





This monument belonged to the Hartneady family of Lakyle. They lived near the school and the school was built on part of their farm. The inscription reads:

**“Michael and Ellis Hartneady of Loughhill 1850 – 1861. Erected by Rev. Dean Martin M.A. Hartneady. State of Ohio, U.S America 1879. God rest their souls, Amen”**

Martin’s mother was Ellis Goonane. Martin taught for a while as a monitor in the old Lakyle School before emigrating to America. He studied for the priesthood there and was ordained in 1875 in the Diocese of Columbus. He served in a number of parishes before finally becoming Dean of St. Peter’s Church Steubenville, Ohio. He was particularly interested in building and developing and was involved in building or expanding churches, convents and schools where he served. He purchased 130 acres in Steubenville and created Mount Calvary Cemetery there.

Although he seemed to have no problem in collecting large amounts of money for his projects, he may have become overconfident in his ability to do so. In 1904 he submitted plans for a new church or cathedral to the Columbus diocese building commission, but his plans were rejected, because the estimated cost would amount to 150 thousand dollars. Also the proposed seating capacity for 1600 people not including the galleries seemed too large for a parish which listed less than three hundred church supporters. Dean Hartneady found their decision hard to accept and he resigned and went to live in California where he died eight year later. There is a picture of him as a young priest in the Lakyle School history. In later life he grew a large beard and had no hair on top.

There was another Hartneady family here then and in later times. The last to live in Whitegate was Michael or Mick Hartneady. He died as a young man in 1944 aged 36 years. His father Thomas was a shoemaker, and they lived across the street from Solons. They were buried at the right-hand side of this monument.

22

To the Memory of  
Patrick Hogan who  
Died 7ber 1787  
Aged 61 years  
Erected by his  
son James

This is a slab that was uncovered recently. The inscription reads:

**“To the memory of Patrick Hogan who died 7ber 1<sup>st</sup> 1787, aged 61 years. Erected by his son James.”**

There are two things that may be of interest in the inscription. One is the use of what they called, the long s, which is very like the small letter f and it was the common form of the letter s used in the 1700 and the first half of the 1800s. If the letter s came into the same word together twice as in cross, then the second letter s would be written in the same form that we use today. So the word ‘cross’ might appear to be spelled ‘crofs’. Someone unfamiliar with the old script might think this inscription is: “Erected by his fon James.”

The other thing of note is in the date. It uses the old Roman calendar that had ten named months in the year instead of twelve, starting in March. So 7ber means September, or the seventh month of the year. The old Roman calendar was officially changed to the present one in 1752. As this stone was inscribed 26 years later, it shows that this Hogan family were very traditional and were slow to change with the times.

It is uncertain who this Patrick Hogan was, but it does appear that he belonged to a wealthy family. I think that he was related to the landlord Burke of Meelick. When old Edmund Burke of Meelick House made his will in 1722, he left £400 sterling to each of his unmarried daughters and £200 to each of his sons, and to Sara Hogan alias Burke, he left the yearly grazing of four callops on the lands of Meelick and Clonrush for her natural life.

Sara Hogan would appear to be a married daughter of Edmond Burke, and this Patrick Hogan may have been her son. This may also be supported by the location of the grave, which is in the old Meelick - Clonrush section of the graveyard. A callop mentioned in the will was the amount of land required to graze one cow throughout the full year on a commonage, at a time when there was no fodder made. A callop would vary in size depending on the quality of the land and excluded areas covered by trees or bushes. So Mrs. Sarah Hogan’s four callops could have amounted to a good range.



This stone was erected to the memory of another old relative of mine. The inscription reads:

**“Lord have mercy on the soul of Catherine Brien who died May 1799, aged 66 years. Erected by her husband James Larkin.”**

Larkins lived in Mountshannon around that time.



The Fahy monument.

This is an uncommon monument. The stone slab is resting on four large stone balls, so that it could be rolled aside during grave digging instead of having to lift it, as the slab is estimated to weigh one ton. The balls are resting on four smaller slabs to prevent them from sinking into the ground. They have sunk naturally, as it is 160 years since the last burial took place here. The inscription reads:

**“Of your charity pray for the souls of John Fahy of Drummaan who died 27<sup>th</sup> October 1852, aged 59 years. W. Fahy of Newtown who died March 18<sup>th</sup> 1807, aged 34 years. Darby Fahy of Islandmore died 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1848, aged 72 years. Erected by M. Fahy Tuam in memory of his father and friends.”**

John Fahy would appear to be Michael’s father. Darby and John Fahy were joint owners of land in Islandmore in 1824. They were related to the O’Mearas of Islandmore and Drewsborough. Patrick O’Meara’s wife was Margaret Fahy, a sister of the Michael Fahy who erected this monument.

Michael Fahy went to live in Tuam and in 1843 he set up a drapery shop there. A few years later he bought a 47-acre farm outside the town. He employed a man to manage the farm while he concentrated on running the shop himself. He was a married man, but had no surviving children, and when he died in 1892, his property went to his nephew Francis Meagher. Francis Meagher was born in a place called Knigh, near Puckaun, about three miles from Dromineer. Francis Meagher’s mother was Mary Fahy, another sister of Michael.

When Michael Fahy died, the Tuam newspapers gave great praise of him for all he did for the town of Tuam. He was on the town council there. He was buried in Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin.

Among the chief mourners at his funeral were his nephews: Francis Meagher, Tuam; Francis O’Meara, Islandmore; John O’Meara, Killimor, and William O’Meara, Whitegate. Michael’s wife, Marianne, died in a Dublin hospital following an operation some years before that and she got a grave in Glasnevin, so Michael’s coffin was brought up on the train to be buried with her. If it wasn’t for those circumstances, they could be buried nearer to home.

Francis Meagher in Tuam married a girl from Cavan and they had a number of children. One of their sons Francis Brendan Meagher became a solicitor, and he took over a company of solicitors in Tuam called Concannon and Co Ltd, and renamed it, Concannon and Meagher Solicitors. That company is still in business in Tuam, but not now under the Meagher ownership. The Meaghers' however, continued to run the shop and in 1957 they changed the name of it to 'Fahy and Co. Ltd, Drapers' in memory of this Michael Fahy who first set it up. The shop continued in business right up to 2006 when it was sold to Easons books.

Francis Brendan Meagher's son, Frank Meagher now lives in Dublin. Although he knew all about Michael Fahy and the shop, when I was talking to him last year, he didn't know that there was a monument here belonging to them, and intends to visit here some time.

25



When we were on the walk from the Ash Tree Cross to Williamstown, there was mention of Sosie's cross, called after Sosie Muggivan who once lived there. Sosie is said to be buried here near this (right-hand side of Fahy's) monument but there is no mark on her grave.

Sosie Muggivan's son, John Muggavin married a daughter of John Minogue — the "tailor Minogue" in Whitegate. That is the tailor Minogue's headstone. (picture left)



Denis Collins

26



Paud Collins

Postmen, whether they were popular or not, certainly gave a valuable service to the community. Here are the unmarked graves of the Collins family of Furnace, two of who were postmen in the early 1900s. There are two rows of graves here, which may appear now to be reduced to one. The inner row joining Tinambraher, partly concealed outside the ruins and at the foot of Egan's graves are Collin's graves.

Patrick Collins, better known as Paud, was a postman in his younger days. The older people here will remember him as a very tall man, very much like his first cousin Owen McGuire — one of the teachers featured in the Lakyle School history. Paud's brother Denis Collins was a postman for Whitegate and Derrainy. Nora T. Goonane Leonard wrote an article about him that was published again recently in the book "The Old Road," by Ger Madden. Denis Collins died in 1949 aged 63 years and Paud died in 1971 aged 87 years.



We are back to the ruins of Tinambraher. As it was the case in the ruins of the old church, well-off people at the time got graves here also. There is some evidence that there was another house of some kind parallel with it out there (north side of). The greater area here is occupied with the graves of different branches of the White families – Ballyhinch, Derrainy, Cappagha and Garreighter.

An exception would be the second slab in this row. It belongs to a Protestant minister, the inscription reads:

**“ Here lies the body of the Rev. Thomas Lynch D.D. who departed this life May 1809, aged 42 years”.**

The initials D.D. after the name means Doctor of Divinity, which was the Protestant equivalent at that time, of a Catholic parish priest.





Margaret Malone  
1887 - 1967

Over here are the graves of the Malone family of Gortnascreena. The name used to be pronounced Maloon in the past. They were landlords of the townland of Gortnascreena during the 1800s.

The Malones were also a talented musical family. Patrick Malone played the fiddle. Patrick's daughter Margaret was a very small woman. She was also musical and used to teach dancing in the hall called the Teach in the 1960s. Margaret Malone's sister Bridget married John Walsh and the Walsh family succeeded Malones there.



Over at this (west) side are the graves of the Burkes of Tintrim. They were landlords of a number of townlands, including Tintrim, Lakyle, Furnace and other places. The best-known member of the family was John Anthony Burke. He was also a magistrate and very concerned about law and order. He was a good writer and we learn much about the state of the parish in the early 1800s from his writings. It was John A. Burke who had the first National School built in Lakyle. He had three grave slabs laid here. The first one, on the left, he placed over his father Henry. The inscription reads:

**“Erected in memory of Henry Burke Esq. who died 16<sup>th</sup> April A.D. 1808, aged 68 years, and desired to be interred in this ground. This stone is most humbly dedicated by his son John Burke and is never to be removed.”**

The third slab on the right-hand side was placed to the memory of John Anthony's wife Fidelia (pictured). The inscription reads:



**“Sacred to the memory of Fidelia, beloved wife of John A. Burke Esq. of Tintrim, who departed this life June 19<sup>th</sup> 1836, aged 38 years. To the inexpireable grief and sorrow of her family. She was the best of wives and tenderest of mothers. Her two sons George and John are buried east of her near their grandfather Henry Burke Esq. This stone was placed here by her affectionate husband A.D. 1841.”**

The children mentioned died as infants.

But it is John A's own grave-slab that is the most odd. He had a son Edmund with whom he wasn't getting on very well, and perhaps, thinking that a slab that his family might place on his grave wouldn't have the inscription that he wanted to have written on it. So six years before his death, it appears, he placed his own grave-slab and wrote his own epitaph. This is what he wrote:

**“Sacred to the memory of John A Burke of Tintrim Esq. and his family. A magistrate and an honest man who never took a bribe or favour in his life to give dishonest judgement in any matter that came before him, and who first established petty sessions at Whitegate for the public benefit. And always prayed to God for his blessing, direction and judgement, to worship, to serve him and to obey him as in duty bound. May his soul rest in peace, Amen. October 1857.”**

John A Burke (pictured) died in 1863, aged 85 years.



Some years after John A. was buried, his daughter Catherine, Mrs. Patrick Sheehy, who lived in Allston House in Lakyle, noticed that the grave slab was broken, and probably suspecting that the grave was interfered with, she had it opened again for inspection and a new stone-slab placed.

Mrs. Sheehy's daughter Margaret, who later emigrated to America, recalled back in 1933 that she remembered coming down here as a young girl with her mother as the grave was being reopened. But there was nothing found except the bones of John Anthony. They placed the bones into a new box, and as they were doing so, John Anthony's set of false teeth fell down.

False teeth in those days weren't always made for eating. They were often a cosmetic thing that would be taken out before a meal and put in again after they had finished eating.

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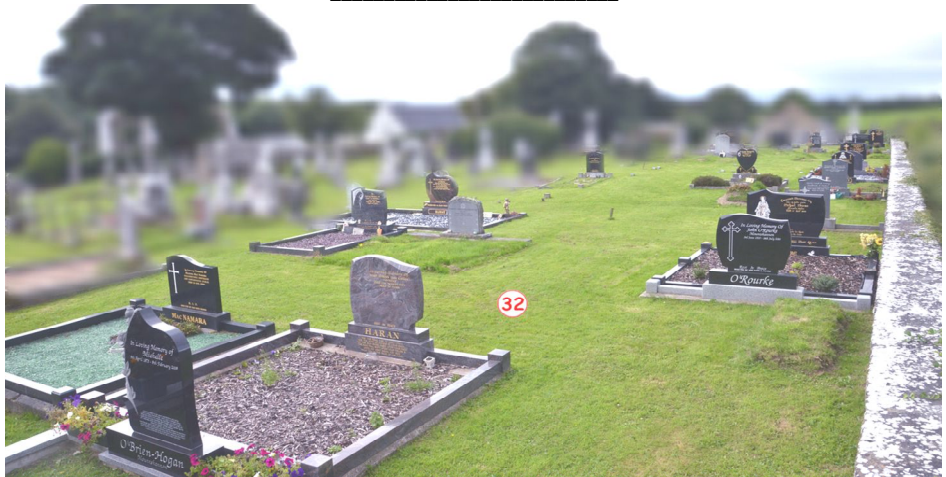
I mentioned Mrs. Patrick Sheehy, daughter of John A. Burke. These are Sheehy's graves. The monument was erected over a daughter of John Sheehy, who died in 1843, aged 14 years. John Sheehy was a businessman who had a shop where the Nightingale pub is now, and he also had storehouses along there. He was a member of the famine relief committee in 1846, and was involved in the importation, storage and distribution of the Indian corn at that time.

One of his storehouses is still there. That is where John McDermott has the workshop. That house is about 200 years old. There was a stone stairway up to the loft outside the western gable end at that time. There was also a similar size house attached to it on the Nightingale side, with a stone stairway up to the loft outside the other end also. This was obviously a much older house and was later demolished. It would be in these storehouses, most likely the better one that is still there, that the Indian corn was stored in, for distribution to the poor during the famine

There was a distant relationship between the Sheehys' and the Leahy family, so Lar. Leahy of Whitegate took one of Sheehy's graves to bury a stepdaughter of his called Eileen McCabe who died in 1934, aged 22 years.



Eileen McCabe



### The graveyard extension

Until recent times, the boundary wall of the graveyard turned across from the wall over there to here and then went straight towards the road. In 1995 the Parish Council extended the graveyard into that section. Now people are dying to get into it.



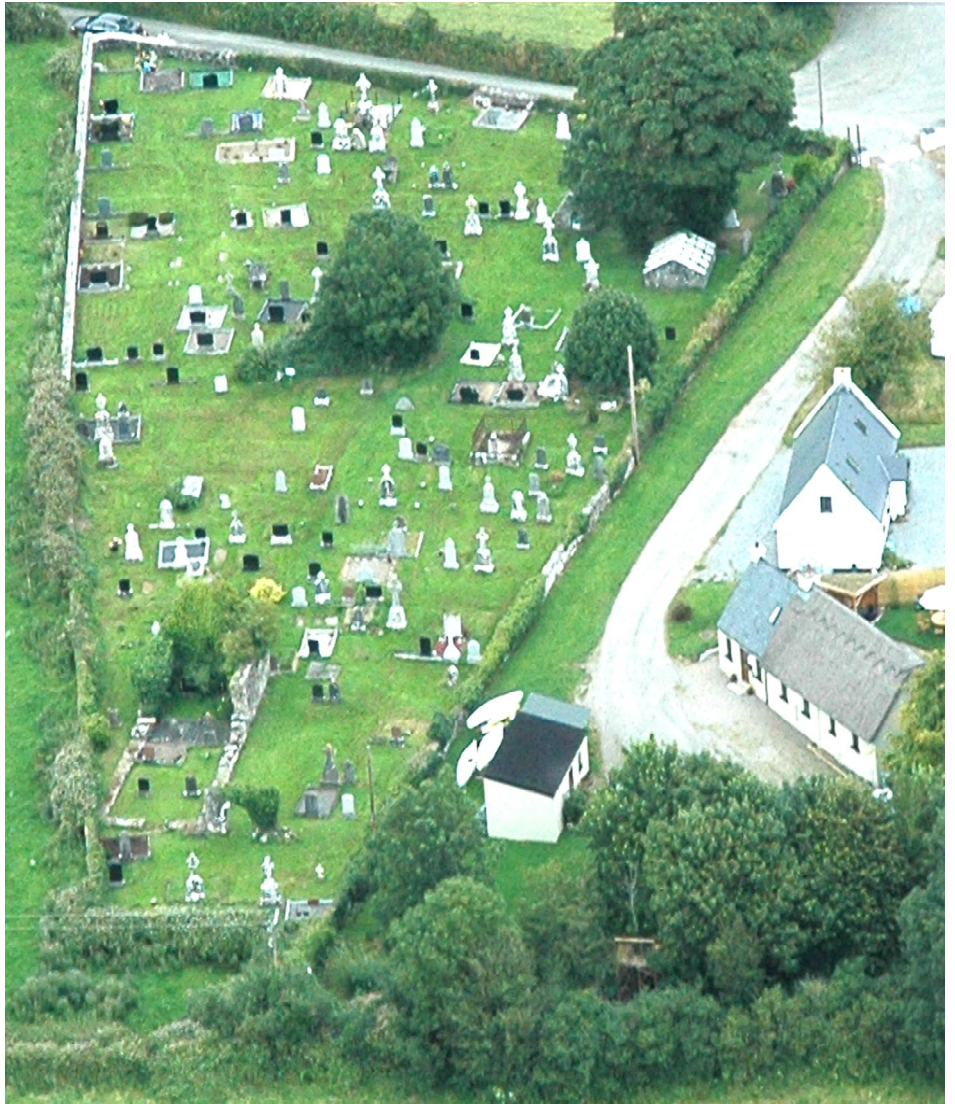
This monument was erected over drowning victims. The inscription reads:

**“Sacred to the memory of  
Ogle Nesbit Connor, 79<sup>th</sup>  
regiment, Willis Connor A.B.  
T.C.D, John Keys T.C.D.,  
The Rev. Isaac Daniel B.D.  
T.C.D. 16<sup>th</sup> July 1820.  
Erected AD 1841 by the  
survivor Shewbridge Connor  
M.D. Carlow.”**

They were a group of young Protestant men who were visiting the Glebe House in Lakyle, and on a Sunday evening they went boating over in Meelick Bay. They were out some bit when one of the oars slipped overboard, and they all surged to grab it at the same time and capsized the boat. Four of them were drowned. The youngest member of the group 17-year-old Shewbridge Connor managed to swim ashore.

The three Connor brothers were born in Dublin where their father John Connor was a doctor but he was a native of Co. Donegal. Their first cousin John Keys, also from Donegal, whose mother was Jane Connor, and a friend Isaac Daniel, a young Protestant minister serving in Portumna. Shewbridge Connor returned to college and became a doctor. 21 years later he had this monument erected to their memory. There is a long story attached to it. The full story may be read in the Sliabh Aughty journal volume 10, or on the website [clonrush.eu](http://clonrush.eu).

In our walk around this evening, I have mentioned a small number of people. But every person whether they were rich or poor had a full life history of their own. Considering the thousands of people that were buried here, it would amount to a lot of history – a lot of stories that can never be told. That completes our journey. Thank you for your attention and your patience. Thank you.



An aerial view of Clonrush Graveyard  
Photo by  
Fr. John Jones

“Elegy written in a Country Churchyard”

By Thomas Gray 1750

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea,  
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight,  
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,  
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,  
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds:

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,  
Some pious drops the closing eye requires;  
E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,  
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,  
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;  
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile  
The short and simple annals of the Poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour:-  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

The sites of other monuments near the graveyard but not associated with it, also exist; possibly dating from Norman times.

The remains of one monument was seen during the O.S. survey in 1837. It was situated on the slope of a hill north west of the graveyard, and consisted of a heap of stones 38 feet long by 23 feet wide. No information could be obtained from the local people at that time concerning it. Monument Field is so called after it.

At the same time, the O.S. recorded the remains of a castle on the nearby shore. It measured 16 feet square, and was built using mortar composed of lime and sand from the shore. The castle was surrounded by water at high water levels in winter.

Nothing remains of either monument now only the concealed foundations.