

OHS Borrisoleigh Field Trip

Our starting point this evening is the ancient monastery of St Cuilan here in Glenkeen. Glenkeen or sometimes called Glankeen takes its name from the Irish *Gleann Caoin* meaning beautiful glen and standing here with Knockanure or Cnoic an Uir behind us Coolaun and Glennanoge in front it is easy to see how it got its name.

Lewis's Topographical Dictionary of 1837 has the following description of Glenkeen; *GLANKEEN*, a parish, in the barony of Kilnemanagh, County of Tipperary, and province of Munster, on the road from Thurles to Nenagh; containing, with the post-town of Burris-ó-leagh 6585 inhabitants. It comprises 14,215 statute acres, of which 230 are reclaimable mountain. Limestone is quarried for manure, and coal is supposed to exist in the mountains.There is a glebe-house, with a glebe of 11 acres. The church is a plain building, erected about 1776, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have lately granted £147 for its repairs. The R.C. parish is co-extensive with that of the Established Church, and is called Burris-ó-leagh; the chapel is at that place, and there is another at Ileigh.

.....there are three national schools; they afford instruction to about 350 children. About 280 children are taught in seven private schools. Large horns of an elk have been dug up here. There are the ruins of an ancient church, partly covered with ivy, and containing a monument to the family of Burke; and at Kilcuilawn, situated in the mountains, the celebrated relic called *Baraan-Cuilawn* was found in a hollow tree many years since. It is composed of iron and brass inlaid with gold and silver, having some resemblance in shape to a mitre, and is supposed to have been the top of a censer belonging to St. Cuilan, who founded a church here in the 10th century; it is now in the possession of Mr. Cook, of Parsonstown, and forms the subject of an article in the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy. In 1821 the remains of an ancient mill were discovered near the church. Other sources date the monastic foundation of St Cuilan to the 7th century and it is with the monastery of St Cuilan we will begin. In the 7th Century that same beauty attracted a young monk, Cuilan, to found a monastery here. Cuilan was of local origin and was one of five brothers all of whom were revered as Saints in the early Irish church. St Evin who founded a monastery in Co Kildare and which gave its name to Monasterevin was one of Cuilan's brothers, the others being , Cormac, Beacan and Diarmuid. Glenkeen quickly became a centre of learning and other monks came to join Cuilan. It is said that the popularity and attention was not to Cuilan's liking and he moved across the valley to what is now called Coolawn and

lived as a hermit. However he was followed again and his devotees erected a church there – Kilcuilawn which gave the area its name. The ruins of the church survived until some time in the Nineteenth century when they are reputed to have been used for the construction of a house. How long the Abbey of Glenkeen continued is not entirely certain but in 1432 the first Walter de Burgo of Borres died and was interred in Athassel rather than Glenkeen. Fr Michael Kenny SJ, in his history *Glenkeen of Borrisoleigh* cites this as proof that the Abbey was still functioning. He also cites the transfer of the Vicarage of Glenkeen to the monks of Holycross in 1485 as an indication of the existence of the Abbey. The *Triumphalia* or History of Holycross written by Fr Hartry in 1640 recalls that many years previously the relic of the True Cross was taken to the Abbey of Glenkeen that “Dermot O’Dwyer of Kilnamanagh and Richard Bouke of Borris who had harassed each other in continual war might make an eternal league of friendship by oath on the True Cross”

Kenny elaborates further on this stating that a student, returning to Glenkeen in 1886 from Mungret College, copied a Latin inscription from a slab here which stated; “Walterus De Burgh et Silia O’Dwyer and listed the names of 10 sons and daughters and went on; The De Burghs and O’Dwyers having warred upon each other for several generations, and neither having been able to conquer the other, Walter, son of De Burgo married Shiela, daughter of O’Dwyer, and so they settled the quarrel. (*Et Sic Composuerunt Lites*). This was dated either 1501 or 1505, but given that it was around 1500 the Richard in question, father of the above mentioned groom, was *Richard the Red Earl*, son of the first Walter. The De Burgo’s had arrived in the *Territory of Ileigh* by way of Connaught towards the end of the 12th century and from then until the establishment of the above mentioned treaty had been in a continual state of battle with the O’Dwyers. They built their castle on what is now Chapel St and around it developed the Burgess which gives rise to the name Borrisoleigh. One of the early references to their presence in the locality is contained in the Pipe Rolls 1264-1289. XII

Edward I (1284) - Rd. deBurgh, Earl of Ulster, owes L1-6-8 rent on Glankyn (Borrisoleigh), for Easter Term.

De Burgo Tomb

The altar tomb we see here and the decorative slab above are part of the same memorial, erected to the memory of Walter De Burgo, great-

grandson of Richard. Above the tomb we have the family crests of the Norman De Burgo's and the Gaelic O'Dwyer's, with the motto "SPES MEA IN DEO EST" (MY HOPE IS IN GOD). The Latin inscription translates as; "*Whoever you be who cast your eye upon these monuments, pause awhile, read, learn to live, learn you to die. For Heaven born I have in all things the world pursued. From here expelled I should of right be from there expelled. Remember you, be wise. Shun the world's allurements and heavenly Kingdoms seek. Pray for me.*"

Patrick Kerin made me 1626

The Latin inscription on the Tomb itself translates as; "*Walter De Burgo, once the valiant and wise defender of the land of Ileigh, caused this monument to be made for himself and in it is interred. He died June 10 in the year of his age, and in the year of the Lord 1623 (scratched in later). He had for wife Sheila, daughter of O'Dwyer, from whom he begat a numerous progeny, to wit 4 sons: Theobald, William, Miler and John and many daughters, all married to distinguished husbands.*"

MY HOPE IS IN GOD

Walter also made out a will in 1623 and this will reveals that two of the *distinguished husbands* were an O'Meara and an O'Carroll. The will states "In Dei Nomine, Amen (In God's Name, Amen)

I Walter Bourke of Borris O'Leagh, in the Countie of Tipperarie, Esq., being in perfect mind and memorie, doe make my last will and testament in manner following, viz. First, I bequeathe my soul to Almighty Godd, my Maker and Redeemer, and doe will my body to be buried in the grave for me built in the high Church of Glankeyne, within the canthred of Oleagh in the aforesaid countie. Next do I appoint, name and constitute my well-beloved sonnes-in-law, William O'Meara of Lesuniskie, in the Countie of Tipperarie, Esq., and Donough O'Carroll of Ballillogha in the King's Countie, Gents, my sole and only executors of my last will and testament". He goes on to leave "L7 in discharge of my soul" and "unto the Chapter House of Borres the altar raiments and Mass Book", to his "sonne and heire, Theobald Bourke, my horse, my suit of mayle, my brewing furnace and aqua vitae pot" he went on to leave his personal property to his "well beloved wife Elizabeth ! Not to the Sheila mentioned on the tomb. This shows he was married a second time and he goes on to stipulate that she only gets this if she does not marry again for at least seven years, otherwise she only gets one-third of the property.

John Quinane Grave



Many times while visiting here I would find myself wondering how an Australian soldier from the Great War came to be buried here in Glenkeen, albeit one with the name Quinane. Recently I found the answer while browsing the Internet.

In 1847 one Michael Quinane was borne in Gortnahalla, Upperchurch. His parents were Michael Quinane and Mary Ryan. In 1879 he emigrated to Australia, as had his brother Daniel, and settled in Colac, Victoria. Michael married Elizabeth Sharp & they had 10 children, one of whom was John Quinane – borne in 1888.

On 18 February 1916, at the age of 27 years and 8 months John Quinane enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force at Colac. He was assigned Regimental Number 2225 and transferred to the 45th Battalion. John's army service history records that he departed Sydney on board the Wiltshire on 22 August 1916 and arrived in Plymouth on 13 October 1916. On 2 January 1917, he departed Folkstone on board the Princess Henrietta headed for France. John was on the battlefields in France from 3 February 1917, he was medically evacuated to England suffering from 'trench feet'. He was granted furlo in England in April 1917, then returned to France and rejoined his unit on 27 July 1917. He remained on the French front until he was wounded on 29 March 1918. John was evacuated to the 18th General Field Hospital on 7 April, embarked for England on board the H.S.

Princess Elizabeth on 13 April and was admitted to the Reading War Hospital on 15 April 1918.

John must have made some recovery from his wounds, as he was granted furlo from 21 May to 4 June 1918. During this furlo he travelled to Ireland, presumably to meet his father's family in Upperchurch. John's condition deteriorated while in Ireland and he was admitted to the King George V Hospital in Dublin on 15 June 1918 in a condition described as "dangerously ill". John died in hospital on 19 June 1918, his cause of death was listed as pneumonia. His first cousin, James Cahill sought and was granted permission to have John buried here in Glenkeen. A footnote to this story occurred in 2005 when a student, Serg Zaccaria, walking on the shore of Lake Beeac near Colac noticed a blackened circular shape in the almost black sand. He picked the object up and took it home with him. After he cleaned it up, he realised that it was a World War I service medal, bearing the inscription "2225 Pte J Quinane 45-34 AIF". Serg contacted the Quinane family and returned the medal to them.

Borrisoleigh & the Down Survey

The Down Survey of 1641 lists among the proprietors of Glenkeen seven Bourkes, four Ryans and four Shannahans, all names which survive to this day. Opposite their names are listed their respective grantees of whom the most frequent listed is the Duke of Ormond. The owners managed to hold on to their lands until 1654 when Richard Bourke, his kinsmen and all landowners of over £10 valuation were ordered under pain of death to transplant across the Shannon. Richard went to Clare but returned after the Restoration in 1660 assured that Charles II would return his lands. In this belief he made a will in 1665 entrusting its execution to his "loving friends John Meagher, Gent and John Stapleton, Gent. The will was never executed and Meagher, Stapleton and the rest of the locals soon lost their status of "Gent." As Ormond, now advisor to the King went on to seize the lands in these parts, under the confiscations of 1666. Those that managed to stay were reduced to the status of tenants.

Whiteboys

The middle of the C.18th saw the rise of Whiteboy's and this area was no exception. John O'Fogarty of Ballycahill, known as 'Captain-Fear-Not' was the leader in Eliogarty. His companions were: John Ryan of Drombane ('Capt Alcock'), the Gilbert brothers of Glenbawn, near Holycross, Dan Cunningham of Borrisoleigh, John Doran of Curraheen, John Freny of

Rossestown, Dan Ryan, John Guilfoyle, John Purcell & Stephen Burke. Rewards offered by County Grand Jury. Fogarty, Dwyer & Burke were captured by Lord Drogheda's Dragoons. Burke & Dwyer were hanged in The Square in Borrisoleigh. Fogarty was hanged, drawn & quartered in Clonmel in 1763 - the charge against him was the levelling of the demesne wall of Carden's, of Templemore.

Bearnan Cuilan

Bearnan Cuilan, or the shrine of the Bell of St Cuilan is a bell shrine which was discovered several centuries ago in the hollow of a tree in Killcuilan,



near St Cuilan's Well.

Initially it was in the possession of the O'Spillanes who placed it in some type of casing. It then transferred to the O'Dwyers of Cuilan & was used during disputes for the swearing of oaths. In the late 1800's it came into the possession of Thomas Lawlor Cooke of Birr who wrote an article describing it in the Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries. There is some confusion about how it came into his possession, in one account he states that he received it from Rev. Michael Bohan, PP of Borrisoleigh, at the time. However, another account by Maurice Lenihan, the Limerick Historian and contemporary of Cooke's describes how he was given the shrine by the O'Dwyers "with little difficulty at all". Either way he went on to sell it to the British Museum for the sum of £300.

Margaret Stokes who wrote what is regarded as the definitive work on Irish Bell Shrines devotes several pages to the Bearnan Cuilan in her book and lists it as second in importance after St Patrick's Bell Shrine, from Armagh. She dates the work to pre 1050 AD.

The Shrine measures approx 300cm X 200cm X 100cm and consists of a brass and cast metal frame with four pedestal feet. "It was richly decorated with Runic knots in gold, silver, copper and a dark blue metal, having on

it's sides six representations of eyes and on the ends two bald antique heads like those on the walls of ancient monasteries in Ireland" On the front there had been a full length cross "enriched with various coloured precious stones"(Cooke) but this had been lost about 1797.

By all accounts St Cuilan was not one to be trifled with, Cooke claimed to know of a man who having sworn an oath on the shrine was stricken with "a twisted mouth turned up to his left ear". This was taken to mean he had sworn falsely and this was a punishment. He also tells of a hurler who cut a branch from a tree overhanging the Saint's Well in Coolawn to make a hurley and on returning home he found his house in flames and it was reduced to ashes. Cook also tells of an O'Dwyer woman washing clothes in the Saint's Well in Glenkeen but afterwards the well dried up only to reappear across the valley in Coolawn.

Thanks to the efforts of local Borrisoleigh people including Mr Joe Small, the then Irish Ambassador to the UK, the British Museum presented a replica of the shrine to the parish which we will see inside the parish church.

Church of The Sacred Heart

The Church of the Sacred Heart was designed by Dublin based architect **Walter G. Doolin**, who also designed St. Mary's of The Rosary in Nenagh & the Church of The Immaculate Conception in Templederry. The church which is built in the *Early English Gothic* style dates from 1892 /1893. It is constructed of rusticated split-faced Limestone with the window and door openings dressed in Sandstone. The sandstone was quarried in Drombane and the Limestone in Drom. The church is very similar to the one in Templederry, both are cruciform shaped with five sided apses and with lofty belfries on the façade.

The foundation stone of the Church of the Sacred Heart was laid by Archbishop Croke on 17th July 1892 on the site of what had been an old malthouse. The parish priest at the time was Fr. Edmund Kendrick and the builder was Thomas Williams of Borrisoleigh, whose family derived from the McWilliam Burkes, descendants of the De Burgos who founded the town and about whom we spoke in Glenkeen. It cost in the region of £5,000 to build.

The church replaced an old chapel which had stood behind the buildings on the left hand side of Chapel St. and which had served the community from about 1802. This chapel was built by Fr. Michael Bohan parish priest

from 1802 – 1815. This in turn had replaced an earlier smaller chapel that stood on the opposite side of Chapel St. and which had been in use from 1776 when it was built by Fr. Thomas Ryan.

The stained glass windows on either side of the nave depicting St Ailbhe and St Albert are by Harry Clarke and were designed in 1922. There is a window in the gallery which was donated by Brendan Bracken and was erected in memory of his parents.

Two windows at the rear of the nave, installed in recent years depict the two missionary bishops borne here in the parish of Borrisoleigh, Bishop Joseph Shannahan and Bishop Thomas Quinlan. Bishop Shannahan (1871-1943) was borne close to Glenkeen, he was ordained in 1900 and was appointed first bishop of Southern Nigeria. He was renowned for his work in education, believing the solution to much of Africa's problems lay in educating the local population.

Bishop Quinlan (1896-1970) was borne in Pallas, and joined the Columban missionaries, serving in China (1920-33) and then in Korea. During the Korean war he was taken prisoner by the North Koreans and endured the infamous "Tiger Death March" during which hundreds died. The esteem in which he was held by his fellow prisoners and his courage in the face of atrocity are a tremendous mark of the man. When he died in 1970 he was buried in the grounds of the cathedral in Korea and his funeral was attended by a tremendous gathering of local people despite the fact it was in the middle of winter with several feet of snow.

Church of the Immaculate Conception Ileigh

Ileigh Church was built on the site of two previous chapels which existed during Penal times. The church was completed in 1826. The foundation stone was laid by Rev. Michael Slattery, appointed PP of Borrisoleigh in 1817 and president of Maynooth college in 1832. He went on to be appointed Archbishop of the Diocese in 1833 and also founded St Patrick's College in Thurles..

In 1754 Archbishop Butler visited a previous chapel on this site, describing it as L-shaped, running east-West with the wing running Northwards from the altar end. The walls were six feet in height and were whitewashed inside. There were no windows in the North side – a feature continued in the present church! This building was reconstructed and extended in 1758 by Fr. Roger Fogarty, one of the Fogarty's of Castlefogarty. Fr Fogarty who was PP of Glenkeen & Inch from 1726-1776 was the last PP of this parish. After 1776 the parish became Borrisoleigh and Ileigh, while Inch was united with Drom. The 1758 building and its predecessor were

incorporated into the 1826 building which, with its plastered ceiling and elaborate ceiling rose is typical of churches of the 1820's. The reredos which were crafted in timber in classical style are fine examples of the craftsmanship of the time also.

The stained glass dates from c.1908 and is by the Watson studios of Youghal.

Ileigh Church bears the earliest inscribed date for a post-Reformation catholic church in North Tipperary.

Famine Times in Borrisoleigh

In the manuscripts Collection of Nottingham University we have reference to the plight of the people of Borrisoleigh during the great Famine.

The first, Extract from a Constabulary report, Borrisoleigh, Tipperary, Ireland; 5 Apr. 1846- Says that members of the labouring class are living on one meal a day; believes they are only 'peaceable because the government had promised them work from the Board of Works.

Note signed 'L' [Henry P.F. Pelham-Clinton, Earl of Lincoln, later 5th Duke of Newcastle under Lyne] says that this is a sample; states he has received seven similar reports that day.

Another, Copy of report from Sub-Inspector J. Malone, Borrisoleigh [Borrisoleigh], Ireland, to Colonel [later Sir] D. McGregor; 14 Jun. 1846 Reports that potatoes are very scarce and the majority of the people are living on Indian corn meal.

Arising from these reports, Lord Portarlington, the absentee landlord was encouraged to do something to relieve the distress which existed. In October 1846 he visited Borrisoleigh and threw an extravagant banquet for the "Gentry" of the county. When leaving he presented £100 to the Poor Relief Committee - a fraction of what he had spent on entertaining his friends and a sum guaranteed to make little inroads in the momentous task of providing sustenance for the numbers starving to death in the area.

Republican Plot – Ileigh

Borrisoleigh and Upperchurch like most of Tipperary saw activity during the war of Independence and Civil War. On the Dec. 23rd 1922 a party of Free State soldiers raided Ross Cottage outside Borrisoleigh. In the house were Frederick (Freddie) Burke, Ileigh, Patrick Russel, Summerhill and Martin O'Shea, Garrangreena all known Republicans. A search of the

premises revealed a Thomson gun with ammunition, two rifles along with 95 rounds of ammunition. Under the legislation in force at the time, charges of possession without proper authority, of the material were brought against the three men. On Jan 2nd 1923 they were tried by military court in Roscrea and being found guilty, sentenced to be executed. The sentence was carried out on Monday 15th Jan. 1923 at 8.00am. Executed along with them was Patrick McNamara of Derrycastle, Portroe. In 1930 the bodies were exhumed from their graves in Roscrea Castle and transferred here to Ileigh Churchyard. Their final letter which can be viewed on the Borrisoleigh website archive is a wonderful testament to Faith , forgiveness and bravery.

Sources; In compiling this I used the following sources,

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<http://www.quinane.id.au/john236.html> - Family history website for Quinane Family, Australia

[Remembering Bishop Quinlan](#) – Audio link on page

[http://www.borrisoleigh.ie/images/file/Faces%20&%20Places%20\(Pg%20301-400\).pdf](http://www.borrisoleigh.ie/images/file/Faces%20&%20Places%20(Pg%20301-400).pdf) - Scroll to P. 323

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