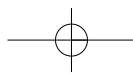
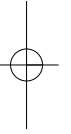
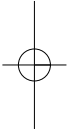
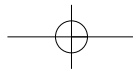


The Parish of Clontuskert

Glimpses into its Past

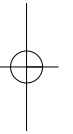
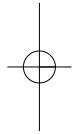






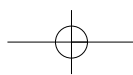
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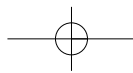
Glimpses into its Past



Edited by Joe Molloy

The Clontuskert Heritage Group





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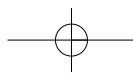
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FRONTISPIECE: Ballagh Castle and its earthworks.
FRONT COVER: Somerset Hoard *(Courtesy of the National Museum of Ireland)*



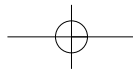
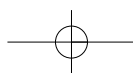
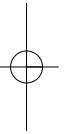
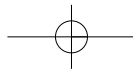


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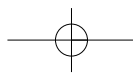
Clontuskert Heritage Group



Back Row: Gerard Tully, Frank Curley, Norman Sinclair, Eamon Lally, Douglas Rafter, Joe Flaherty, Packie Callaghan, Seamus Callaghan.

Front Row: Carmel Murray, Adeline Finneran, Sean Kelly, Joe Molloy, Eileen Curley, Ann Gately, Colette Hanrahan.

Inset: Richard Kilgannon, Ellen Brennan, Fiona Maguire



Preface

Marie Mannion

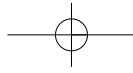
Heritage Officer, Galway County Council

This publication, *The Parish of Clontuskert - Glimpses into its Past* provides the reader with a very valuable insight into the various facets of the rich heritage and culture of the parish of Clontuskert.

The scope of the book is ambitiously extensive, covering many aspects of the built, natural and cultural heritage of the area. The scholarly group of eighteen people have dedicated over four and a half years of their lives to researching and writing up this wonderful book.

Each word within each page of the twenty one chapters presented represents hours and hours of time and effort researching primary source material such as Estate Records, Famine Commission Reports, Church records and British Army records. It may have been the first time that many of these dusty tomes have seen the 'light of day' and have been consulted. In addition to this, the Committee waded through a countless number of newspapers (both local and national), they also sourced wonderful photographs and interviewed many, many people.

The Parish of Clontuskert - Glimpses into its Past portrays Clontuskert as a dynamic and ever changing place that has a very long and varied heritage. It shows that symbiotic relationship that



| *The Parish of Clontuskert - Glimpses into its Past*

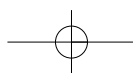
exists between the people and the place in which they live and have lived. Kellysgrove Bog, for example, has yielded a significant hoard of early artefacts such as the axe heads and the polished stone sickle that belonged to the early people of Clontuskert. The permanent structures that can be seen on the ground such as the hundred ringforts, numerous souterrains, the Augustinian Priory of St. Mary, the Church of St. Mathew in Glan, the Grand Canal, Lismanny House out-buildings, the schools, the houses and farm buildings are indeed another legacy of past generations that have etched their mark on the landscape of Clontuskert.

Another very important facet of this publication is the inclusion of an excellent photographic and pictorial record of the parish. The school photographs are particularly rich from a point of view that the names of most pupils are given and they will bring back great memories of school days and most importantly class mates. The chapter dealing with sports also has an excellent and invaluable photographic record of the people who left their mark on the sporting heritage of Clontuskert.

The final chapter dealing with the townlands is extremely well researched and is a valuable record for any person coming from the townlands listed. Researching the names of all the families that lived in the various townlands from the 1830s onwards is really laborious and time consuming, as so many records and archives have to be consulted in order to compile a chapter such as this.

Clontuskert should be justifiably proud of this fine heritage publication and the hard work and dedication of the team who compiled it.

The Parish of Clontuskert - Glimpses into its Past is a very valuable heritage resource and will help us to develop our understanding, knowledge and pride in the built, natural and cultural heritage of Clontuskert.



Foreword

by the Editor

The Parish of Clontuskert – Glimpses into its Past had its origins in the founding of the Clontuskert Heritage Group in March 2005. These eighteen people are from a variety of backgrounds. Much of their work involved the gleaning of information from personal reminiscences, examining historic maps, reading microfilm of old newspapers, researching documents in libraries and archives as well as examining family papers and photographs from the parish and beyond.

It was decided to record as much of the heritage of Clontuskert as was feasible, before it was lost forever. The best way of preserving this recorded heritage was to publish it in a book which would be available to every person in Clontuskert and the neighbouring areas. This book is predominantly a record, a series of snapshots of the past. It is not a history in the strict sense. Rather, as the subtitle of the book suggests, it is a series of glimpses into the past.

By publishing this book, the group hoped to raise an awareness of Clontuskert's rich cultural heritage and to facilitate parishioners in researching the history of their own families. The Heritage Group hopes that the book may one day lead students to undertake more professional researches into this parish's rich past.

| The Parish of Clontuskert - *Glimpses into its Past*

The chapters of *The Parish of Clontuskert – Glimpses into its Past*, present a broad panorama of life in Clontuskert down through the centuries. In the first chapter, Fiona Maguire, a member of our Heritage Group and a professional archaeologist, has written a chapter which will ensure the survival of the fascinating world of pre-historic Clontuskert. She has presented a picture of that distant era in which the burial mounds of Somerset and Ardranny were constructed and the artefacts of the Somerset, Kellysgrove, Cloonascragh and Gannaveen Hoards were fashioned.

The first recorded founder of a monastic settlement in Clontuskert was St. Baetán in the eighth century. The Canons Regular of St. Augustine heralded the demise of the earlier form of Celtic monasticism when they settled in the Abbeypark in 1180. Christianity has continued to flourish in the parish down through the years. The Reformation meant that the Catholic and Protestant traditions went their separate ways. Despite occasional tensions and misunderstandings during the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, their subsequent histories have witnessed a growing warmth in relations between the two traditions.

It may be surprising to find a chapter on the Battle of Aughrim in a book on Clontuskert's past. However, up to the late afternoon of that fateful day, the Williamite army was still positioned in Clontuskert and had not moved across the boundary river, which divides the two parishes.

Successive waves of invaders settled in Ireland down through the centuries and Clontuskert experienced the pain of these invasions and settlements. Later it experienced the struggle for tenants' rights and eventual land ownership, which continued into the first quarter of the twentieth century. The chapters on the contrasting fortunes of the Pollok and Seymour families are a graphic illustration of this theme, as are the activities of the agrarian

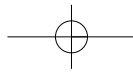
secret societies and the protracted campaign of the United Irish League for the attainment of tenant rights.

Hedge schools played an important role in the provision of education in Clontuskert prior to the opening of the 'Old School' in 1835 and the Church of Ireland School in Glenloughaun. Pupils from every quarter of the parish began to flock to the new schools. The struggles and achievements involved in the provision of education in the parish are examined up to, and shortly after, the building of the new St. Augustine's N.S. in 1958.

The opening of the Grand Canal in 1823, changes in the road systems, the arrival of the Rural Electrification Scheme in the 1950s, the opening and closing of a variety of small businesses through the years, are among the developments in the parish which are recorded in the pages of this book. The more light-hearted aspects of parish life such as sporting endeavours, music, dancing and time-honoured customs are recalled. Also acknowledged in these pages are a number of noteworthy people, some native to the parish and others who have come to live within its boundaries.

This quiet rural parish did not entirely escape the effects of war and violence during the course of its history. A number of people took an active part in the War of Independence and in the subsequent Civil War. There is very little documentary evidence of the involvement of parishioners in the former and there is a veil of silence to this day covering the latter. The Great War drew a number of our young men to the horror of the trenches and some of them never returned. The task of acquiring information on parishioners who enlisted in the RIC proved to be a formidable one. Due to the fallibility of memory and the difficulty in accessing records, we have only skimmed the surface of this topic.

The final chapter of the book proved to be the most



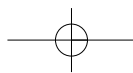
| The Parish of Clontuskert - *Glimpses into its Past*

challenging. Even though it is the longest chapter by far, the amount of material we accumulated in the course of our research would have filled several volumes. Because of the constraints of space, we were forced to confine the written output to recording the meaning of each townland name, the size of the townland, the landlords who owned the land, the tenants who farmed it and their gradual transition from tenancy to ownership.

Considerable use has been made of illustrative material in the form of photographs, maps and explanatory diagrams. It proved difficult to access photographs of school groups and events pertaining to the social life of the parish. Many of the ones we did manage to acquire were in a poor state of preservation and we apologise for the less than satisfactory quality of the reproductions in these pages.

Hopefully, this publication is only the beginning of the search for the precious links with our past. Tribute must be paid to those who have already attempted to record aspects of our heritage. Men like Paddy Hurney spring to mind at once and we must not forget the efforts of such people to pass on their own glimpses into our past

Aerial view of
Kellysgrove Bog
and the new
Black Wood lake



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All the members of the Clontuskert Heritage Group for their constant support, research work and written contributions. The group will not mind if I single out three people in particular: Sean Kelly, our Treasurer, who kept his professional eye on our finances; Eileen Curley, our Secretary, who dealt with our voluminous correspondence; Adeline Finneran, who with Eileen Curley spent so many long hours proof-reading the manuscript.

Finally, I would like to pay a special tribute to my wife Mary for her advice, understanding and unfailing encouragement while this book was in preparation.

A note on the spellings used in this book

When the writing of this book was begun, we found that there were several different spellings in use for many of the townlands in the parish. The spellings used throughout this book are the official spellings as compiled by An Coimisiún Logainmneacha, the Placenames Commission. This body, established in 1946, advises on the research of the placenames of Ireland and on providing authoritative Irish forms of those names for official and public use. The Commission reports to the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. We have also come across many variations in the spelling of people's surnames. These names are printed in the book exactly as we found them in the documents which we researched.

