



THE NOLAN

The Newsletter of the O'Nolan Clan Family Association



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Childhood Reminiscences in Carlow

My father, Matthew Nolan or Matt as he was better known, was born in 1910, the eldest son of Michael Nolan, Ballaghmore (three miles from Myshall) Co. Carlow.

His chosen career was secondary teaching and as a result we spent three wonderfully happy months of every summer holiday during the 1940's and early 1950's in Ballaghmore. Matt was a historian and I'd like to share some of the stories he told me as a child.

Matt, his siblings and all the local children from neighboring farms and cottages around walked the three miles to school in Myshall every day. In winter they wore boots, in good weather they walked barefoot. Footwear was expensive and was often passed down, much repaired, from one child to the next. All the children did the same, whether from farms or labourers' cottages. Matt often boasted that as a result, they all had very healthy feet, no athletes' foot, etc.

He showed me the spot, near his own home, where in Penal times there was a hedge school and it was said about two thousand children over the years had attended it.

The population was much larger then and many eked out a miserable existence with their potatoes and whatever bit of seasonal work they could get from local farms. He pointed out the fields in his own farm, where, when ploughing, they had discovered the remains of the miserable homes of these poor and landless. These people

disappeared in Famine times, presumably with their passage paid to America by landlords wishing to clear the land. The landlords only wanted those who could pay rent!

Matt spoke with deep affection of the schoolmaster Mr. Molyneaux. This caring, scholarly man had a good knowledge of Latin and ancient Greek and was willing to pass on this learning to any interested child. Matt was one such child.

He stayed in every evening after school and by the time he was twelve, he had a good grasp of those languages then necessary for entrance to university.

As a result of these studies, he was awarded a scholarship to Knockbeg. His very religious mother would have had hopes of the priesthood. From Knockbeg, he got another scholarship to Rockwell and thence one to University College Dublin.

When he got his first scholarship, the old schoolmaster was so delighted, he carried Matt shoulder high around the school play yard.

Large families are a thing of the past. The roads and country lanes no longer ring with the voices of those barefoot children walking the miles to school. Mr. Molyneaux had long, long, even before I was born, gone to his reward.

Ar dheis De go rabh a anam.

Mary (Nolan) Fitzsimons

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this publication are not
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Clan association.

Greetings to all clan members!

Beannachtai na Feile Nollag,
is gach dea-ghui i gcomhair
na h-athbliana.

Christmas blessings and Best
wishes for the coming year.

Looking forward to keeping in touch
with you all in 2007.

From your Clan Chief,

Mary (Nolan) Fitzsimons



In Brief ...

In this Issue ...

The dominant theme of the current newsletter is our recollections of the past and the sense of union we feel with those who came before us. Our new chief, Mary Fitzsimons, provides us with some of her childhood reminiscences from growing up in Carlow and my cousin Paul, in “A Message through Time”, reflects upon the feelings that his emigrant ancestor might have felt upon leaving Ireland and settling in Atlantic Canada.

For my part, I have included a research article on the early history of the Shangarry Nolans of Carlow which I believe sheds new light on the origins of the three Nowlan brothers, John, James and William, who emigrated to Virginia around 1700.

This being Christmastime what would the Newsletter be without a good Christmas story and I am happy to oblige with a “A Christmas for Grandmother”, a wonderful story

written by Michael O. Nowlan, one of our members from Atlantic Canada. The New Year will also soon be upon us and, in that spirit, I have included a short reflection on living life to the fullest entitled “Now Never Waits”. It is not from me but it is one which my wife, Rosie, and I once clipped out of a school newsletter – source unknown.

A review of Nolans in Professional Sports by David Bryan Nolan, a primer on DNA Testing for Nolans by myself and a report on our September 2006 Clan Gathering round out the Newsletter.

I hope that you will enjoy reading the newsletter and that you will consider submitting an article for the next Newsletter. You will find my particulars in the border column on the left side of this page. In the meantime, I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Roger Nowlan - Newsletter Editor



My Homeland

It is 1818, Spring time in Ireland

For the people of my village, this is just another day of spring
for me and my dear brother, it is the end, and the beginning
For on this day, we are bound to leave our home forever

At the very first sign of dawn, softly I tread across the floor of wood
Obeying an urge I'm drawn, to converse with the land of my childhood
I step outside, and wrap myself in a woolen sweater

The morning dew chills my bare feet, and outlines a web where it is hung
The air is crisp and moist and sweet, and feels so cool and fresh within my lungs
It carries forth, all the familiar scents of my homeland

I breathe in deep the morning air, and grow my chest beyond its measure
I hold it in this air of home, and long to take it with me for my treasure
Twenty-two years, it has sustained my life here where I stand

I gaze upon the deep green hills, the grass and stones, common things I'd ignored
I gaze intently at the land, as if my eyes had never seen before
This land in which my roots have grown, I know I shall not see again
For I must pull my roots where sown, and shake away the earth and chains

The Shamrock

As I displace my tender roots, I bring with me some shamrock too
I place them in a small clay pot, still fresh and wet with morning dew
I feel a comfort in my soul, to know they shall journey with me

I dream of planting them in soil, somewhere upon a brave new land
Their roots shall intertwine with mine, and there together we shall stand
Together we shall grow the roots, of a new Ireland o'er the sea

Within this fragile plant I bring, the symbol of this emerald isle
Within its leaves St. Patrick said, the trinity of God is filed
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, shall guide me to my destiny



Leaving

As a young boy yes I was taught, a man must be so brave and strong
For years I covered up my tears, with a false smile and cheerful song
But on this day, I weep

I hold my mother close and tender, feel her clinging her eldest son
Her tears and mine flow together, upon our cheeks they mix as one
one river of sorrow, that runs so deep

Then from the timbers of the ship, we wave but cannot speak a word
Their faces fade to memory, their voices now no longer heard
The sea and waves my tears do swell, beyond the sea she fades away
That emerald isle I know so well, surrendered on this fateful day

Letting Go

We cannot stop the hands of time, the wheels of change and life and death
We cannot chain the souls we love, we cannot hold the land and breath
We are mere stewards chosen by God, to work the land but for a while

That fateful day I let all go, and trusted God to guide my way
I found a soil so rich and pure, I found a love that blessed my days
I found a land where shamrock grew, my children ran and sang and smiled

And here today two centuries past, I speak to you through my descendant
And from afar I raise a glass, and send a toast from God's great banquet
I Peter, son of Ireland
I Peter, son of God

Paul Nowlan ~ August 2006



Paul Nowlan

Paul, a communications architect working in Moncton, New Brunswick (NB), Canada, gives free-hand to his artistic side in his spare time, creating for example, the above poem about his emigrant ancestor, Peter Nowlan who left Ireland in 1818 with his brother Edward. Both brothers settled in the area of Buctouche, NB. The drawing accompanying the poem, albeit small as shown here, originally formed the background for the poem written on document paper and framed for presentation as a door-prize during a recent reunion of descendants of Peter Nowlan which took place in Moncton, NB, in August 2006.

Shangarry Nolans – an ocean apart, 300 years ago ...

By Roger Nowlan

Introduction

This article deals with the Shangarry Nolan family of County Carlow and explores the historical context which led to the emigration of three Nowlan brothers to the English Colony of Virginia around the year 1700. Based upon information found in the Nowlin-Stone genealogy published in America in 1916 by a descendant, James Edmund Nowlin, and new information found in the Nolan book by Father John Nolan and Art Kavanagh published in

2000 it is now possible to reconstruct the likely events which led to the eventual emigration of the three brothers.

The article also documents, for future research, an updated genealogy for the Shangarry O’Nolans starting with an O’Nolan chief in the early 1500s and ending with the first generation in Virginia and the cousins in Ireland

Historical Context

In Ireland, the early 1500s was a time of transition which saw the old concept of tribal lands disappear to be replaced by that of land ownership and stewardship as practiced in England. After centuries of fighting, the Gaelic lords, seeking to alleviate the hardships endured by their people, finally agreed to surrender their lands to the Crown and have them regranted under the terms of a Treaty of Peace signed in 1536 by the McMurrough (Charles McInnycross Kavanagh), “principal captain of his nation” (Leinster) and Lord Grey, the king’s “Deputy” in Ireland. However, an undesirable side-effect of the introduction of land ownership was the climate of competition and open hostilities that it created. In Carlow, the two main parties seeking to acquire land were the Earl of Kildare (the Fitzgeralds) and the Earl of Ormonde (the Butlers).

The early Plantations, mostly in northern Ireland, did not have any significant impact on life in County Carlow, however, in the 1620s, the Plantation of much of the north of Wexford had a direct impact. Many of the dispossessed (e.g. Murphys, Kavanaghs, Hanricks, Keoghs, etc.) fled to the “Mountains” then still under the control of the Donal “Spainnaech” Kavanagh and his band of rebels. Moving into areas like Clonmullen, Barragh, Kilbranish and Myshall, the displaced put pressure on the already established local population and local economy. Unhappy with the general state of affairs, the native chiefs who had lost so much in so short a time soon revolted. The Irish Uprising of 1641 marked the beginning of years of civil war which would only cease in the mid-1650s after the incursion into Ireland of Cromwell’s forces, and much devastation.

The early 1500s also saw the beginning of the Protestant Reformation and, by the mid 1500s, the concept of planting English settlers in Ireland had become widely accepted, Queen Elizabeth I being one of its chief proponents. Church lands, crown lands and the lands of presumably disloyal subjects were confiscated and used to settle new arrivals from England and Scotland, thereby displacing people who quite often had been in possession of their lands since time immemorial.

At the cessation of hostilities, trials were held and anyone found to have been a party to the killing of Protestants or Englishmen was executed. Irish landlords, who were not found guilty of murder but who had actively rebelled against government forces, were ordered, under the Resettlement Act of 1652, to leave their lands and move to Connaught. Only those landlords and tenants who could prove that they had not taken part in the rebellion or had been

too young at the time to have participated were allowed to hold on to their lands.

Cromwell died in 1659 and soon afterwards, in 1662, Charles II was restored to the English throne. For many Irish this brought new hope, hope that old wrongs would be righted, hope that religious discrimination would become a thing of the past. Their hopes, however, would soon be dashed. The soldiers, adventurers, and others who had been granted lands in the mid 1650s, fearing that they would be driven from their lands, petitioned the king directly to leave things as they were, and their petition seems to have had the desired effect. Out of the thousands of petitions for the restoration of confiscated lands to former Irish landowners

Early Family History

According to the Fitzgerald rent book of the early 16th century, Murrough 'ne dowre' O'Nolan was "captain of his nation" in 1518, in other words Chief of the O'Nolans, more popularly referred to as "The O'Nolan" or simply "O'Nolan".

Based upon the information found in the Nolan book, it would further appear that Murrough 'ne dowre' had two sons, Edmund and Donough, who were alive in the early to mid 1500s.

Edmund, presumed to have succeeded his father as "The O'Nolan", had three sons:

- Cahir of **Ballykealey** who had 10 sons all born during or before the mid 1500s: Gerald, Brian, Teig, Donough, Edmund, Muiris, James, Phelim, Shane Duff and Owen
- William of **Kilbride** who had 7 sons: Fiach, Cahir, Lesagh, Maurice ne Dower, Thady, Murrough ne Dower and Dermot.
- Rosse of **Kilknock** who had one son: William

less than 900 were successful and this usually after years of wrangling in the courts.

The bureaucratic climate of petitions and long drawn-out court hearings was the perfect opportunity for those familiar with the court system to acquire even more land. The Earl of Ormonde, created Duke of Ormonde in 1661 and thereby the de facto governor of Ireland, was one of the first former landlords to regain his family's (Butler) lands confiscated in the mid 1650s. By 1670, in County Carlow, he and his third son, Richard, who later became Viscount Tullagh (sic Tullow) and Earl of Arran, had acquired ownership of most of the Barony of Forth including the lands of Shangarry.

Donough had at least one son Donal, who in turn appears to have had 2 sons:

- Morgan of **Rosslee** from whom are descended the Nolans of Ballaghmore, Cappawater and Rosslee
- Hugh of **Shangarry** from whom are descended the Nolans of Shangarry, Knockendrane, Ballinrush and Tinnaclash; he had four sons: Cahir, Donell, William and Hugh.

Donell/Daniel (c1592-1647) seems to have inherited half of Hugh's Shangarry lands while his brother Cahir inherited the other half. Daniel had at least two sons:

- Edmund (????-1647), by his first wife
- Patrick (c1600-c1670), by his second wife, Anastace Byrne.
[Note: The Nowlin-Stone genealogy gives her name as Anastase O'Brien.]

Prelude to Emigration

In September 1640, by “enfeoffment”, Daniel settled Patrick, a son by his second marriage, on lands he held in Shangarry. In the course of the following year Daniel seems to have participated in the Uprising of 1641 and, in October 1641, was seized in fee of the lands he held in the Barony of Forth, Co. Carlow. This would seem to imply that he had not given all his lands to Patrick.

During the ensuing civil war which lasted into the mid 1650s, Donell and his two sons, Edmund and Patrick, actively opposed the government forces. In 1647, Donell and Edmund were killed. Edmund’s son, James, stationed at Clonmullen and later known as Captain James, was also quite active finally accompanying the king into exile as part of Captain Daniel Kavanagh’s regiment after the defeat of the royal forces in 1652.

Sometimes after the Restoration to the throne of Charles II (1662), Captain James, believing that he had a legitimate claim to lands in Shangarry which formerly belonged to his grandfather Donell, leased them out to tenants. However, in 1664, during a court review of the extent of the lands owned by the Duke of Ormonde, the Shangarry lands were judged to belong to the Duke. Patrick Nolan, the former landowner and Captain James’ uncle, even testified to that effect. The legal argument used was that Patrick, having taken lands in Connaught in exchange for his lands in Carlow, no longer had a right to his former lands in County Carlow. Captain James, however, doggedly believed that he had a rightful claim on parts of the Shangarry lands and continued to lease to tenants until 1669 when he allegedly murdered a Thady Nolan and fled to England.

A year later, in 1670, Captain James appealed to the Duke of Ormonde for the return of his lands but was summarily dismissed with an offering of eight Guineas and told to go back to Ireland. Staying on in London, at the urging of a Colonel Talbot, James petitioned the king directly for the restoration of the Shangarry lands. His petition was referred to the courts and, after first

reading, the case dragged on for 7 weeks but, in the end, the case was dismissed due to lack of evidence. Captain James, wanting to be given the opportunity to bring forward credible witnesses, asked leave of the king to have his case heard in Dublin but was refused. At the time of the case, Captain James was married with 9 young children and reportedly destitute.

Captain James’ cousin, John, son of Patrick Nowlan, does not seem to have had as much trouble recovering his part of the Shangarry and Ballinrush lands, probably arguing that he was an “innocent”, too young at the time of the civil war to have participated in it. In 1669, Richard, Earl of Arran and son of the Duke of Ormonde, leased the lands of Shangarry and Ballinrush to Thomas Bagenal to hold “in trust” for a John Nowlan. This was probably an arrangement made just before Patrick’s death (circa 1670 according to the Nowlin-Stone genealogy) securing lands for his presumed eldest son John.

Based upon an analysis of the information in the Nolan book, Patrick seems to have had 2 sons:

- John Nolan of Shangarry and Ballinrush who, in 1669, was granted a lease of 3 lives on the lands by Richard, the Earl of Arran
- James Nolan of Tinnaclash whose will was proved in 1742; this will is assumed to be the one by which Luke, a great-nephew, inherited Tinnaclash “from an uncle James”.

In 1700, a Lawrence Nowlan, presumed to have been John’s eldest son, was occupying the Shangarry and Ballinrush lands and was forced to forfeit the lands, seemingly for having been a soldier in King James’ army during the Williamite wars. This is probably when the three brothers, brothers of Lawrence, left for Virginia.

However, within the year, John, the father, appealing the forfeiture based upon the 1669 lease for 3 lives he held from the Earl of Arran, was able to regain possession of the lands he and his son Lawrence had been occupying.

