

Mysterious Shamrock

By MIKE WHELTON of Ballea Writers Club

Danny wore his shamrock with pride. His grandmother had sent a box of shamrocks to New York as she did every year. As an Irish-American Danny was proud of his heritage although he had never met anyone of his own generation actually born in Ireland. Ellen, Danny's mother had come to America by boat as a fourteen year-old. She'd often told Danny and his brother Sean about her voyage, the cramped conditions in steerage and her brief time at Ellis Island. It became a goodnight story for the brothers as they grew up. Ellen had married Luke, another Irish emigrant. The boys found it difficult to understand how their extroverted red haired mother could have come from the same country as their introverted and somewhat dour father. Ellen was the livewire that jolted her husband when times were hard. She encouraged Luke to relax by playing his accordion at night. Danny and Sean were carried along by their parent's emotion for Ireland and accompanied their father in singing Irish rebel songs with gusto without understanding the content or context. Danny could still recall the first time he saw his father cry. It was on one St Patrick's Day morning and during a rendition of the song 'Kevin Barry.' Ellen had held a finger to her lips to silence the boys while the tearful moment passed. Before they went to the parade Ellen told her sons that Kevin Barry was a young Irish medical student who was executed as a terrorist. The boys danced with their parents as the St Patrick's Day parade passed through New York and their hearts swelled with pride at the sight of so many people wearing shamrocks and the middle line on 5th Avenue painted green. Danny wore his shamrock to school the following day and was bombarded with questions about it. 'Why do you wear that moss thing?' asked a classmate. 'It's not moss, it's a shamrock,' said Danny. 'Shamok, shamok,' mocked another classmate. 'What's a shamrock for?' 'It's the emblem of Ireland and its worn by us Irish on St Patrick's Day,' said Danny. 'But you're from Brooklyn not Ireland.' 'Yes, I'm Irish-American so I celebrate St Patrick's Day,' said Danny. 'But who's this St Patrick geezer anyway?' 'An important saint who converted Ireland to Christianity,' said Danny. 'But what's that got to do with the moss.' Danny went quiet and blushed while he thought of an answer. 'It's like pizza is to the Italians,' he said. 'But the Italians don't wear Pizza.' 'Can you eat shamrock?' The questions and teasing continued until Danny ran home from school and asked his mother about the shamrock. 'Mam what's the meaning of the shamrock?' 'St Patrick used it to explain the Holy Trinity. The shamrock showed that there could be three in one. St Patrick likened each leaf to the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.' As Danny grew older, he found the concept of the Trinity difficult to grasp and asked his mother more about it. 'It's a mystery, a matter of belief not understanding,' assured his mother. Danny studied hard and went to Cornell University to read history but the matter of the Trinity still puzzled him. One day he read something that would have really upset his parents. He read that the doctrine of the Trinity was promulgated by a council set up by the Roman Emperor of the East in the fourth century. Theodosius copper fastened the Holy Trinity as an item of faith and a later Emperor made non-acceptance of the doctrine a crime of heresy. Danny never enlightened his parents on the more probable history of the Trinity, as his parents would have been shattered to learn that St Patrick almost certainly couldn't have used the shamrock to define the Trinity to the Irish. But as a pragmatic New Yorker and a confirmed Irish-American, Danny still wears a shamrock on March 17th every year. He passed the tradition on to his own children and if they ever think to ask Danny what the shamrock means he'll tell them what his mother told him about St Patrick and the Trinity and tell them that it's a matter of belief not understanding.



Ballygarvan Will Suffer If Mistakes Of The Past Are Repeated

Deirdre Clune TD and Councillor Tim Lombard have called the proposed development of 140 houses in the village of Ballygarvan totally unsuitable for the area.

"Ballygarvan is a small village and needs to be developed as such. The last thing the village needs is to be overdeveloped while the local infrastructure continues to lag behind what the current population of the village require. To introduce hundreds of new residents into the area would put even more pressure on the local school, roads and sporting facilities which are already stretched to breaking point," stated Deputy Clune after meeting local residents to discuss the proposed development.

"Ballygarvan School is yet another example of a Cork primary school which was promised a new school over a decade ago and is still waiting. In the years since the promise was made the population of the village has exploded, in 2000 there were 28 houses in the village but now there are 170 and this development would increase that to 310. The number of children attending Ballygarvan School has jumped from 132 in 2000 to 224 today but this does not seem to matter to the Minister for Education. Instead of seeing a new school being built locals face the possibility of another massive housing project aimed at attracting young families which will put more pressure on the school" commented Deputy Clune.

"Ballygarvan is in danger of following in the footsteps of other small towns and villages around Dublin and Cork where houses were built without proper infrastructure or schools being built. These areas are now suffering a school's crisis as there are no schools for the thousands of young children who are now turning school age. The Government's response to the crisis has been to ignore the promises made to areas like Ballygarvan and Passage and to concentrate on areas they call "rapidly developing." What they mean are areas where mindless development policies have led to a school's crisis. If they do not learn from their mistakes and repeat the policy of building houses without the necessary schools and infrastructure then we are sowing the seeds for a future disaster in areas like Ballygarvan" stated Deputy Clune.

"At a very well attended public meeting held on Wednesday night in the local GAA Club in Ballygarvan one resident after another made it clear that they are not against the growth of their village but they want sustainable growth. There is nothing sustainable about this proposed development. Even the playing pitch that they have been forced to include as part of the development is being placed at the opposite side of a busy road to the current sporting facilities and this is totally unsuitable" commented Cllr. Lombard.

LOCAL NOTES

By Cllr. SEAMUS McGRATH



Deferral On Passage Dockyard Proposal

The planning department of Cork County Council have issued a request for further information on the planning application by Howard Holdings for the development of the dockyard site in Passage West. The would be regarded as the normal practice on an application of this magnitude. This proposed development is vital to the future growth and enhancement of Passage West as a vibrant harbour town in Cork County. I very much welcome that the council are seeking further clarification on several aspects of this large scale proposal.

In their request the planning department have outlined that "In order to achieve a well balanced development that would integrate successfully into this established area of Passage West... revised drawings should be submitted showing a revised scale and design compatible with that of existing development, particularly at interface areas." A traffic impact

assessment is also sought for the Main St./Strand St./Railway St./ Church Hill Junction. This is highly significant as there are serious issues surrounding the capacity of this junction to cater with the substantial increase in traffic volumes. The letter from the council also clearly states that the number of parking spaces for the development appears "inadequate".

In a seven-page document the planning department have outlined many other requests for further clarification, including more information on the extent of road widening resulting from the development. Clearly, these plans by Howard Holdings represent a once off opportunity for the town of Passage West to address some of its current problems, while also planning for the future growth and prosperity of the area. It is vital that Cork County Council take a considered view of these proposals and ensure that the best possible benefit is derived for the entire community.

Youth Cafe Meeting With County Manager

On Monday last, I, along with other councillors for the Carrigaline area, met with the County Manager to discuss plans for a youth cafe for the town. The meeting arose from a committee recently formed to drive this project forward. The key role, which the council must play in this process, is the provision of a suitable site. The meeting with the County Manager essentially focused on this issue, and the Manager undertook to investigate the feasibility of a number of sites, which we suggested to him. Broadly speaking, he was favourable to the concept of a youth cafe and fully accepted that a populated town such as Carrigaline has a strong need for youth facilities. Clearly, any location would have to be in close proximity to the main street and the possibility of a long-term solution being found in any future development of the town centre must be fully explored. However, the need for such a facility is there now, and the young people cannot be expected to wait for years to come. In this regard, a temporary location is initially seen as the way forward. I am confident that the County Manager will give priority to this project and I will keep you posted of any news in the future.

FASHION EVENT

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(KOST is working to restore a Georgian schoolhouse in Tracton and so provide a community centre for all age groups.)