

The Irish Folklore Commission 1937 – 1938

By Bríd O'Donnell

In the years 1937 – 1938 The Irish Folklore Commission initiated a project to collect folklore, i.e. customs, cures, stories, etc., before the memory of them had been forgotten. The old customs and methods of doing things were changing, with the introduction of machinery. Radio was being developed, so the era of the rambling house was ending.

In an effort to record these events schools all over the country were asked to collect whatever they could in their own districts. Children by questioning the old people of the area and then writing it down. This was a huge success and schoolteachers and pupils all over the country contributed an enormous amount of material. The contribution of the County Galway Schools is on microfilm in the County Library. The following are some of the contributions from the Peterswell area. They are taken down exactly as given. Judgement on the veracity of the statements or the accuracy of the memories is left to the reader. Remember that an 80-year-old then would have been born in the 1850's and their parents would have been alive before and during the famine. Some of the (family) names that appeared for the national school in Peterswell

John Broderick, Rahealy, Peterswell
Pat Burke, Ballinabucky, Peterswell
William Burke, Skehana, Peterswell
Mrs. Burke, Skehana, Peterswell
Mrs. Connors, Gardenblake, Peterswell
Pat Cahill, Ballinabucky, Peterswell
Mick Diviney, Ballycahalan, Peterswell
John Fahy, Lurgan, Gort
Michael Hassett, Dunally, Peterswell
Mrs. Hallinan, Ballycahalan, Peterswell
John Kennedy, Limepark, Peterswell
John Linnane, Coxtown, Peterswell
William McNerney, Hollymount Peterswell
Thomas Moloney, Rahealy, Peterswell
Martin O'Donnell, Hollymount, Peterswell
Pat Power, Lissadoyle, Peterswell
Mrs. Power, Lissadoyle, Peterswell
John Roche, Gortardigan, Peterswell

Stores:

Pat Power (48), Lissadoyle, Peterswell; 13-12-1937

There was a man who used to travel miles every night card playing. One night as he was returning home across the field he saw a house where he thought he never saw one before. He went to see who lived there and he saw a lovely young man sitting at the table with a pack of cards. The man called him by his name and asked him to play a game, and sure, he said he would.

So they started playing until some cards fell. When he was picking them up he saw the man had cow's hooves. At that moment he fainted, and when he was right again, the house and the man were gone and he was sitting by the wall.

William McInerney (53) Hollymount, Peterswell; 5-2-1938

One day a man was sowing wheat in a garden. After having shaken it, he was about to harrow it but a thick mist came down so he went under the bushes from it. As he was filling his pipe he saw a ciarog come out along the headland and go out to the wheat and take a grain and go back under the hedge with it. He saw him come again and do the same thing. He watched him come out for the third time and when he was going with it the man caught him and put him into a match box and put the box into his waist coat pocket. He then forgot all about it.

That night there was a woman missing in the village. Rivers, lakes and land were searched but there was no trace of her anywhere. The search continued for three days. On the third night the man went to his pocket for matches and found the ciarog in the box. He let him off. The same night, the woman came home and the man knew that it was that woman that was stealing his wheat.

Mrs. Power (48), Lissadoyle, Peterswell; 1-4-1938

Two men from Peterswell when back to Ballycahalan one night to steal apples. When they were coming home one said to the other they would go into the graveyard to divide them. When they were going in they lost (dropped) one of the apples. While they were inside the graveyard it happened a man passed the road and he thought it was fairies who were

talking, so he stood to listen. The way they divided the apples was, one said I'll take this one and you will take that one, I'll take this one and you will take that one, until it came to the last one. And he said I'll take this one and you'll take the one on the road. When the man on the road heard that, he thought it was himself so he ran off as quickly as his legs could carry him and he fell in over the half door in dead faint.

William Burke (57), Skehana, Peterswell; 28-7-1938

One night a man named Patrick Linnane was going home from visiting one of his friends. He came to a lios and there he saw many small men dressed in red. They were hurling and they told him to take part in the game. They gave him a hurley and he joined them. They played for a long time and a last one of them told him to go home and he also told him that if one of them hit against him, he would have stay with them. He watched his chance and he went home. He never saw the fairies after that.

Pat Power (48), Lissadoyle, Peterswell; 13-12-1937

Once a man and his hound went out along the mountain hunting. After a few hours they saw a hare. They followed him into every lonesome place. There was an old cabin in the place and the hare leaped in the windows. Just as he was going in, the hound caught him by the hind legs. The man went in and there was nobody inside, only an old woman in bed. He asked her did she see a hare coming in she said no. He searched the house upside down but he could not find him. As he was searching under the bed he saw blood on the clothes. He looked to see where the blood came from, and the woman let a roar, she changed back into a hare again and leaped out the window.

John Fahy, Lurgan, Gort; 4-2-1938

One evening there was a man returning from work. On his way, he passed by a house where there was a little boy very sick. Suddenly he heard a noise as if the coffin lids would clap together. Then he saw a black shadow going in over the wall. He went along and he met another man and he said to him that the little boy must be dead, and he died that night.

One day when the people were coming from second Mass there were two of them going along together. A cousin of one of them died shortly between that. When they were going to part they stood a little while

talking and they saw the dead person coming along with a basket of flowers in his hand and he dressed in monk's clothes. When he came near them he shook hands to the cousin and disappeared.