



**GENERAL THOMAS F. MEAGHER DIVISION  
SPOTSYLVANIA DIVISION NO. 1**

**August 2013 Highlights**

*In Our Third Decade of Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity  
in the greater Fredericksburg area!*

The Division met on August 20<sup>th</sup> as scheduled. Twenty three brothers attended, and post meeting, enjoyed Jim McMorrow's brats with sautéed onions along with a beverage or two.

The VAAOH State officers for 2013-2015 were installed in July



L to R: Treasurer Jay McCarthy; Secretary Bill Halpin; Vice President Gene Bransfield; and State President Bruce Denault

**New Chaplain: It's Official!** The Reverend Kevin Fimian, Parochial Vicar at St Patrick Parish, is our new chaplain. The Reverend Paul Scalia, the Bishops' Delegate for Clergy, granted permission for this appointment on August 14<sup>th</sup>. Father Fimian enthusiastically agreed to serve us and he (as we) looks forward our next meeting. Father Fimian graduated from VMI.

**Trip for Two to Ireland:** In the past two years, our raffle enabled us to donate more than \$12,000 to area Catholic entities. We cannot continue these good works if all tickets aren't sold.

**October 12<sup>th</sup> -- Halfway to St Patrick Day Celebration:** Our next big event requiring effort on your part is our 2d Annual Halfway Party. The price per ticket is \$50, but when you consider what is being offered, that isn't much:

- ø 7 PM-Midnight, October 12, at the Hospitality House, Central Park, Fredericksburg
- ø Traditional Irish buffet dinner (including Lamb, Salmon, and Chicken);
- ø **Full** AOH Commemorative Pint Glass for every guest;
- ø Many Great Door Prizes!
- ø Music by Fredericksburg's Celtic band "Moch Pryderi"
- ø Irish Dance Performance and Céili lessons by the Muggivan School of Irish Dance
- ø **Call Jim McMorrow (540-785-8371) for tickets!**

**Meaningful Employment Project:** Project leader, Brother Chuck Payne, reports that 38 men and women are participating in the program (10 added since June) and that **eight have landed jobs**. The City of Fredericksburg Department of Social Services wants to explore the possibility of AOH helping in their work with unemployed individuals. Chuck spoke on a panel for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington and that following the division report at the Biennial State Convention, several AOH divisions indicated they'd like to initiate similar programs. The Lt Col Dowd Division has contacted Brother Payne in this regard.

**Viet Nam Memorial in Ennis, Ireland:** Donations can be made using links on the project website: ([www.TheIrishVietNamVeteranMemorialProject.org](http://www.TheIrishVietNamVeteranMemorialProject.org)).

### **Coming Events:**

- ✓ **September 14:** Father Mychal Judge Division invited Meagher Division brothers to attend their Halfway Concert featuring the **Dublin City Ramblers**. A flyer announcing the concert and prices was emailed to all Meagher Division brothers on August 19<sup>th</sup>. We were also invited **to set up a raffle/halfway tickets sales table** during the pre-concert social hour and during the intermission. President Halpin asked the Halfway and Trip for Two Raffle chairmen to confer on how to best handle this opportunity.
- ✓ **September 17:** Our next meeting. I'll be appointing a nominating committee to solicit brothers to step forward for one of our eight elected positions. All positions are open for

nomination. Only the division president is required to have the Order's Major (Tower) Degree. It is important to the future vitality of our division to have our newer Brothers step up to leadership responsibility. We elect our officers in November and install our officers in December.

- ✓ **September 21:** Trip for Two to Ireland **raffle drawing** at the Blue and Gray Brewery
- ✓ **October 4:** 4-7:30PM Annual St Mary Fall Festival
- ✓ **October 12:** Second Annual Meagher Division Halfway to St Patrick Day Celebration at the Fredericksburg Hospitality House. Committee Chairman Jim McMorrow reports that he's collected several very good door prizes! These include several dinners for two and other valuable prizes. Tickets for the Halfway Party (\$50/each) are available from him (540-785-8371) for distribution. Announcements will appear weekly in the St Patrick Bulletin beginning September 8th; in the St Jude bulletin at least three times; and hopefully in the St Matthew and St Mary bulletins.
- ✓ **The Gathering Ireland 2013:** Check out <http://www.thegatheringdublin.com/>

Here is a free e-book on the *History of Ireland* Tom Evans submitted for your reading pleasure. He thought it appropriate to pass along: <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks08/0800111h.html>

**Prayer List:** Please keep in your prayers: Brothers Joe O'Connor, who is recovering from surgery; Joe Daley recovery from surgery to repair of a shattered right elbow; Dennis Ryan, recovering from a rotator cuff injury; Pat Phillips who is undergoing chemotherapy; Jim O'Donnell (heart procedure), and for me -- undergoing multiple tests to determine what it was that put me in the Moab, Utah, hospital in July.

### **Five off-the-beaten track places in Ireland you really should visit**

(There is no entry fee to any of these sites)

#### **1.The Wonderful Barn, near Leixlip, Co Kildare**



This bizarre construction was built in 1743. The work was commissioned by Katherine Connolly, widow of William Speaker Connolly. He had made his fortune from land transfers, following the confiscations by the Crown of lands belonging to supporters of James II after the Williamite War ended. He had the first Palladian Mansion built in Ireland – Castletown House near Celbridge in County Kildare.

William Connolly died in 1729 and was said to be the wealthiest man in Ireland at the time of his death, which left Katherine an extremely wealthy widow. She had The Wonderful Barn constructed in 1743 not only as a functional grain store, but as an unusual architectural feature which undoubtedly catches the eye. It is said that she also had philanthropic motivations for constructing this complex building.

There had been a severe famine in Ireland in 1740-41, she kept the local people employed working on projects like The Wonderful Barn and the 42-metre-tall Connolly Folly which she had constructed in 1741.

The Wonderful Barn itself stands approximately 22 meters in height, and has a tapering cone, encircled by a cantilevered staircase with a crow's nest viewing gallery.

The Wonderful Barn is certainly worth a trip out, and is a fine (and unusual) setting for a stroll. There are a number of allotments on the lands today, the site itself is reasonably easy to access with paths running around the main features. To get there follow the Celbridge road out of Lexlip; when you pass a large housing estate on the outskirts of Lexlip called Elton Court on your right-hand side, drive on around 50m and the gate leading into The Wonderful Barn will be on your right.

## 2. Haroldstown Dolmen, Co Carlow



This is Haroldstown Dolmen in County Carlow. This absolutely stunning example of a portal tomb is one of the finest examples of its type in Ireland. Portal tombs (also known as *dolmens*) generally date to the Neolithic period (between 4,200 – 2,400 BC), the time of the first farmers in Ireland. They are typically characterized by their huge capstones, supported by a series of large upright stones set on end to create a chamber.

They are most commonly found in lowland settings, such as near rivers or streams, though the majority of portal tombs are located to the Northern half of Ireland, there is a notable amount in the south-east and in the west in Counties Clare and Galway. Carlow has two particularly fine examples with Browns Hill Dolmen (which possesses the largest capstone in Europe, weighing in at around 100 tons) and this beautiful example at Haroldstown.

The portal tomb at Haroldstown consists of two massive and slightly tilted capstones, supported by ten vertical stones. There are suggestions that this tomb was actually used as a home for a family during the nineteenth century, with the gaps between the supporting stones plugged with turf and mud.

You can find this stunning site located near Tullow off the R727. It is just after the bridge that crosses the Dereen River and the site is free to enter, but do take care to close gates behind you as it is part of a working farm. The dolmen is certainly one of the most striking and photogenic sites I have come across so far!

### 3. The Rock of Dunamase, Co Laois



The Rock of Dunamase is one of my favorite sites in Ireland, and another that doesn't get the visitor numbers it deserves. The first historical reference to the Rock came from the Annals that record it being plundered by Viking raiders in 843AD but the site was extensively refortified after the Norman invasions of Ireland. The site was said to be part of the dowry given by Diarmuid MacMurrough when his daughter Aoife married the leader of the Norman invasions Richard de Clare (Strongbow).

It was again a wedding gift when Aoife and Strongbow's daughter married William Marshall. He carried out extensive works at the Rock and lived there from 1208 - 1213. Again through marriage the Rock passed to the powerful Mortimer family. After the Mortimer lands were confiscated by the Crown in 1330, the Rock of Dunamase was given to the O'Moore family but it was left abandoned. It is likely that the site was 'sighted' (basically blown up) by Cromwellian Generals Hewson and Reynolds in 1651.

During the late 18th Century, it had become fashionable to romanticize and restore old ruins such as these at the Rock of Dunamase, and Sir John Parnell, Chancellor of the Irish Parliament (and great-grandfather of Charles Stewart Parnell) bought the Rock. He tried to construct a banqueting hall on the Rock and even brought in many of the later medieval features (such as window frames) from other historic sites. Parnell died before the work was completed, and the site was allowed to fall back into ruin by his son.

Today the Rock of Dunamase is owned by the OPW, and is one of the most atmospheric sites to visit in Ireland, with stunning views across the landscape. It is free to enter, but do take care during poor weather conditions as the steep paths may become slippery.

It is located near Portlaoise.

### 4. Kells Priory, Co Kilkenny



You'd be forgiven for thinking that this is a castle given its strong defensive walls and towers, but Kells Priory was a monastery. It is superbly well preserved, and is one of the most striking and unforgettable sites in Ireland.

The Priory was founded in 1193 by Geoffrey FitzRobert, brother-in-law to the aforementioned Strongbow. It was given to the Augustinian Canons, the biggest religious order in Ireland at the time.

The site itself was attacked and burned on three separate occasions, by William de Bermingham in 1252, then by Edward Bruce on Palm Sunday 1326, and then by a different William de Bermingham in 1327. The large walls and towers that enclose an area of approximately three acres possibly date to this turbulent period.

The Priory is truly one of Ireland's hidden gems, a great place to visit and you'll often find you have the place to yourself. You'll find it about 15km south of Kilkenny City, near the village of Kells.

## 5. Oughterard Round Tower and Church, Kildare



Usually when we visit historical sites we have done a little bit of homework and researched the basic information in advance, this is usually the best way of finding out not only the details of the site, but also any particular feature that we should look out for to ensure we don't miss anything. However our visit to Oughterard Round Tower was an occasion that proved that sometimes it's great to just pick a site off the Ordnance Survey Discovery Series Maps and turn up without any expectations as you may get a nice surprise!

Oughterard Round Tower and Church is located between Straffan and Kill in Co Kildare. The site is accessed by a set of steps and stile in the tall wall that surrounds the site. The name Oughterard derives from the Irish *Uachtar Ard* - which translates to 'High Place', the name is very apt as one of the first things you notice about this site are the stunning views of the countryside of Co Dublin and Kildare that surround you.

A monastery was said to have been founded here some time in the early 6th Century by Saint Briga. The site was recorded in the Annals as being burned by the Dublin Vikings led by Sihtric Silkenbeard in 995 AD. Later during the Norman invasions of Ireland, Oughterard was included in the vast estates given to the Norman leader of the invasions, Richard de Clare (Strongbow), by Diarmuid MacMurrough King of Leinster as part of the dowry when Strongbow married MacMurrough's daughter Aoife.

Today you can see the well preserved remains of a medieval church (looks to date to around the fourteenth century) with a barrel-vaulted roof, its adjoining rectangular tower is in a slightly precarious position and is held up by large concrete supports. The round tower now only stands approximately 9

meters high, but what is left is in good condition. It is constructed of limestone, with large granite blocks used to frame the doorway.

The site itself is well worth a visit, with its beautiful views and peaceful air you can really get a sense of history and tranquility. The site also holds a nice surprise that I alluded to in the opening paragraph. Before you enter the church, take a look at the gravestone marking a tomb in the wall on the right hand side. This marks [the resting place of none other than the famous Arthur Guinness himself](#), founder of the Guinness Brewery and the creator of countless sore heads. The slab reads: *In the adjoining Vault are deposited the mortal remains of ARTHUR GUINNESS late of JAMES'S GATE IN THE CITY and of BEAUMONT IN THE COUNTY OF DUBLIN ESQUIRE who departed this life on the 23rd of January A.D 1803 aged 78 years and also those of OLIVIA HIS WIFE who died in the month of March 1814 aged 72 years. They lived universally beloved & respected and their memory will long be cherished by a numerous circle of friends relations and descendants*

### **In Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity,**

Bill Halpin,  
President, General Thomas F. Meagher Division  
Ancient Order of Hibernians in America