

Origin and development of the Parish of Millstreet.

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“The knowledge of past times and of places on this earth is both ornament and nutriment to the human mind”
Leonardo da Vinci.

Every year as a result of demolition or decay cherished aspects of our heritage pass into oblivion e.g. ring forts, homesteads, creameries, old churches etc. Similarly much valuable knowledge and folk memories are lost when the older generations pass on. This is especially noted by people who have attempted to construct a family tree and rue the fact that they hadn't sought more information from their parents or grandparents whilst still alive. People sometimes ask whether anything can be done to halt such irreparable loss or is it an inevitable consequence of progress and change. It seems, however, that historical societies and individual amateur historians with a keen interest in their local community, can do a lot to record, preserve and interpret the transient aspects of our past history and keep alive memories of the events and leading personalities which have made our town or rural area what it is today. The landscape, local placenames and the material remains of the past can reveal to the curious observer many indications of past changes which were dictated by the social and economic needs of the community at the time.

This article attempts to trace the development of the Parish of Millstreet from early medieval times until the end of the 19th Century. It will focus on the ecclesiastical, cultural and educational aspects of the changes which have taken place. These will be considered against the prevailing political and social backdrop of the time. Much has been done already to record aspects of our local history but there are still notable gaps.

Among the contributions reference can be made to the following publications:

- **History of Millstreet** by Fr William Ferris 1937 (reprinted 1972 and 1982) originally published under the pseudonym Timothy Broker as “Sraid an Mhuilinn - a history of its people, by its people, for its people”. It lists the antiquities of the parish e.g. ring forts, gallans, stone circles, souterrains, fulacht fiadha, etc. Apparently it was compiled from information gathered at Station Masses. It is a comprehensive list of the antiquities of the area.
- **Liber Chronicus** by Canon Michael Costello (PP 1955-1967).
Notes on the development of the Church, Convent and schools at West End, Millstreet and of the clergy from the early 1800's until 1950, together with a general history of Millstreet Parish. Edited with a foreword by Msgr. Michael Manning 2001.
- **Aubane: Where in the world is it?** by Jack Lane 1999.
Treats of the political and economic history of this town-land as a microcosm of national history from the Cromwellian settlement up to the present time. It includes interesting comments of early tourists who passed through the town, on route from Cork to Killarney, as well as some local poems, songs and recitations.
- **Cullen - a brief history** by Eileen O'Connor 2007. Published on the occasion of the Church's centenary.
- **Picture Millstreet - a pictorial record of Millstreet and its environs 1800-1980** by Sean Radley, published 1997.
- **Millstreet Green and Gold** by Jim Cronin 1984. It chronicles a century of GAA activities, with a fourteen page introduction on local history.
- **Booklets available on Tubrid Well** by Tadhg Kennelly, on **St John's Well**, Musherá, by Mary O'Brien,

on **St Anna's Church** by Denis Tangney and one on **Drishane Convent**.

- **Aubane Historical Society** - a number of publications on the political and economic changes in the community.
- **Seanchas Duthalla** - has published numerous features relating to the parish of Millstreet since its inception in 1975.

Introduction to the history of Millstreet Parish and its evolution during the 2nd Millennium.

Millstreet is one of 53 parishes in the Diocese of Kerry and one of four parishes in NW Cork, included within the diocese. Since the early beginnings of the parish it has changed its name, place of worship and geographical extent at least three times:

- From 1450 until the first quarter of the 20th Century, it was known as Drishane.
- Prior to that date, it was called Kilmeedy and it is now known as Millstreet.
- The first church was located at Kilmeedy, the next at Drishane, at the north end of the old cemetery. Since the early 1800's the church has been located at the West End of the town.
- Cullen was a separate parish for over 500 years and in the past included part of Kilcorney. It was only attached to Millstreet about 1806.

Today Millstreet Parish comprises three communities - Millstreet, Cullen and Ballydaly - with churches serving each community.

What is a Parish?

In the Code of Canon law (1983), a parish is described as "a definite community of the faithful within a diocese, established on a stable basis by the Bishop and entrusted to a Parish Priest, who has responsibility for the spiritual and pastoral care of the community" (Canon 515). Prior to the Council of Trent, in the mid 16th Century, parishes were territorial entities with loosely defined boundaries. The Council decreed that they should be established with definite boundaries. In the new code, the emphasis is on the parish as a community rather than a geographical entity, thus giving primacy to the concept of a parish as dynamic and changing, an organic rather than a static reality.

This emphasis corresponds to the self-understanding of the Church which found expression in the documents of the 2nd Vatican Council. In *De Ecclesia*, one of the Council's four major documents, the primary focus was on the Church as the community of the faithful - the people of God. In fact, the concept of "communion" or community underlies all of the major documents.

In the following study we will examine how the diocesan structure took shape and was largely completed by the end of the 12th Century. Apart from a few minor changes, the diocesan structure has remained intact up to the present time. The division of the diocese into various parishes also began at that stage but has evolved significantly during the intervening centuries.

The development of the Diocesan Structure during the 12th Century.

We can trace the origin of the Diocese of Kerry to the major organisation of the Church in Ireland, on a territorial basis, which took place at two Synods during the 12th Century.

The Synod of Rathbreasail 1111 AD.

Ireland was divided into two provinces, corresponding to the historic division of the country into the northern half (Leath Chuinn) and the southern half (Leath Mhogha). A metropolitan see was fixed for each half (Armagh and Cashel) with twelve dioceses in each province.

Rath Maighe Deisceart (Ratass) was chosen as the Episcopal see of Kerry. The ruined church at Ratass can be seen within the cemetery across the road from Tralee General Hospital. Ardfert, where St Brendan had founded a monastery in the 6th Century, had been destroyed shortly beforehand by warring factions. By 1150, a new Romanesque church had been built to replace the ruins. This was an imitation of the famous chapel built by Cormac McCarthy of Desmond in 1129 on the Rock of Cashel.

The Synod of Kells 1152 AD.

Bishop O'Ronain made a plea for the See to be transferred to the fine new church at Ardfert, eight kilometres NW of Tralee, and so Ratass lost its primacy to Ardfert. The diocese was named Ardfert, a title which it retained until the middle of the 19th Century, when the See was transferred to Killarney and the diocese became known as Kerry. At Kells, the Church was organised into four provinces with 34 suffragan bishops. Apart from a few minor changes, this organisation has remained substantially unchanged up to the present time. One such instance - Cork was joined with Cloyne by Papal decree in 1429 but separated again in 1747. With the union of some other dioceses the number now stands at 26. The present diocese of Kerry includes Millstreet and three other parishes located in NW Cork as well as some parishes in the Beara peninsula.

The Norman Invasion and its impact on the Church.

In the same year as the Synod of Kells, Dermot McMurrough, King of Leinster abducted Devorgilla, wife of Tigernain O'Rourke of Breffni, and kept her for a year at Ferns. When in 1166, O'Rourke sought revenge, Dermot fled to France to seek help from King Henry II, in a bid to recover his position in Leinster. Henry gave him permission to recruit help from the Welsh Earls, thus sparking the Norman Invasion.

In 1170, Richard de Clare (Strongbow), Earl of Pembroke landed at Waterford and married Aoife, daughter of Dermot, in Reginalds Tower. He then proceeded to Dublin and when Dermot died the following year he took control of Leinster. Subsequently other Norman families settled in various parts of Ireland. In the Cork/Kerry region the prominent Norman settlers were the Fitzgeralds (East Cork, North Kerry and Limerick), the Barrys and Roches (Mallow - Fermoy and Carrigtoohill area), de Cogan and Barretts in mid-Cork and the Fitzmaurice, Stack and de Valles in County Kerry.

There were no Norman settlers in the region of West Muskerry. This was due to the fact that McCarthy of Desmond won a decisive victory over the Norman invaders at the Battle of Callan, near Kilgarvan, in 1261. His clan then established their lordship over wide areas of Cork (Muskerry and Carberry) and Kerry (Magunihy and Loch Lein) and retained it for approximately 400 years. The famed Blarney Castle became the stronghold of the McCarthys of Muskerry, who built many Tower Houses throughout the Barony. It was not until the mid 15th Century, when the castles of Kilmeeady, Drishane and Dooneen were built, that their influence extended to the Millstreet area.

The legacy of the Norman Invasion.

One of the legacies of the Normans was the introduction of several new religious orders to the diocese - the Cistercians, Canons Regulars of St Augustine and the mendicant friars viz. Dominican and Franciscan. There is no evidence of any early monastic foundation in this area, although Smith, in his *History of Cork 1756* and Gwynn / Hadcock in *Medieval Religious Houses* (1970), attribute an early nunnery to Cullen, a tradition which is not supported by documentary evidence. The nearest religious houses would have been a community of Canons Regular at Clonmeen (Banteer) and on Inisfallen Island, in the Lakes of Killarney and the Franciscan Friary at Mucross, founded by Donal McCarthy in 1440, which is a famous tourist resort today. The early community of nuns founded by St Gobnait at Ballyvourney survived into medieval times and the shrine continues to be a place of pilgrimage to the present day.

Another consequence of the invasion was the divide between the old Gaelic clans and the new Norman lords. The divide is reflected in the two Arch-deaconries of the Diocese of Ardfert; the one at Ardfert, serving the Norman interest and the other in Aghadoe, serving Gaelic interest.

Various attempts were made by the English authorities to prevent the assimilation of Norman families into

Irish Society. The Statutes of Kilkenny (1366) forbade Norman families to speak Irish, to intermarry or to foster their children with Irish families. The attempt proved ineffectual for, as we learned in our school history, many became more Irish than the Irish themselves. One such instance was the cordial relations between the great Norman family of the Fitzmaurices in Kerry and the native Irish. Maurice Fitzmaurice, the first Earl of Desmond and Justiciary of Ireland, was one of the patrons of Geoffrey Fionn O'Dalaigh, the famed bardic poet who lived in Nohoval and whom the Annals referred to as "the arch professor of poetry in Ireland". He wrote a long poem in support of Maurice Og, son of the first Earl, who died in 1358, just two years after his father. In it he expresses the ambivalence of paying court to this great Norman family as well as to the McCarthy Mores of Castlough, who were his chief patrons: "In the poetry for the English we promise that the Gaels shall be banished from Ireland; in the poetry for the Gaels we promise that the English shall be routed across the sea" (Bergin 1971 p. 73). He addressed another poem to his younger brother Gerald, who was known as Gearoid Iarla and who died in 1398. Gearoid wrote in French and Irish and his Gaelic verses are witty and playful. We recognise him as an Anglo-Norman who was completely absorbed in Gaelic culture, a figure of the axiom "ipsis Hibernis Hiberniores" - more Irish than the Irish themselves.

A further consequence was the civil divisions into counties and baronies, which reflects a post Norman administrative arrangement for secular society. These gradually replaced the older divisions of tuatha or petty kingdoms. M. Richter in his history of Medieval Ireland (1999 p.147) gives the following dates for the start of the counties - Dublin 1199: Cork and Waterford 1207: Tipperary and Limerick 1211 and Kerry 1233. It was only in 1606 that Kerry was eventually joined to Desmond to form one county.

Why Millstreet Parish is included within the Diocese of Kerry.

An intriguing question which often arises is, why are Millstreet and the three adjacent parishes in NW Cork in the Diocese of Kerry? In keeping with a modern tourist ad, which says "Kerry is a kingdom because it has many jewels", one might flippantly answer that Millstreet Parish is one of its crown jewels. However, the real answer is very simple. The diocesan boundaries existed before the county boundaries, which were a Norman innovation. The territory within the diocese was predetermined at least a half a century before the county boundaries were drawn up.

However, nothing is ever simple. It is further complicated by the fact that the townlands of Ballydaly, Kippagh and Comachoe were regarded as part of the East Fractions of Kerry for about 300 years and the townlands of Shanaknock, Annagloor and Clarathlea were part of the Barony of Duhallow, which extended south of the river Blackwater, as far as Clara mountain.

Furthermore, a proposal was made in the middle of the 19th Century to join the three parishes of Millstreet, Dromtarriffe and Boherbue with the Diocese of Cloyne as compensation for the parishes which the Diocese was proposing to give to Cork. Part of the proposal was, that the Dioceses of Kerry and Cork were being asked to give additional parishes in the Beara Peninsula to rejuvenate the Diocese of Ross, in order to make it viable. In 1863, Bishop Moriarty of Kerry strongly resisted the proposal, so nothing came of it.

How the Parishes of Cullen and Drishane evolved.

Because Cullen and Drishane developed and functioned as separate parishes for a number of centuries it is more logical to treat them separately.

Cullen Parish and its early records.

For over 500 years Cullen was a separate parish (1300-1806). It was joined to Millstreet in the early years of the 19th Century. It was part of the Parish of Drishane (Millstreet) in the earliest baptismal records held in the parish (1835). The present church was solemnly dedicated to the Nativity of Our Lady when it opened on September 8th 1907. In October last year it celebrated its centenary with a week of spiritual festivities. A commemorative book by Eileen O'Connor was published to honour the occasion. It mainly covers the history of the parish during the 20th Century.

Cullen is first mentioned in official records in 1302.

At the beginning of the 14th Century the parishes of Ireland were assessed for Papal taxation and were

expected to contribute a tenth of their valuation (a tithe). In 1296, Pope Boniface VIII issued a Bull forbidding kings and rulers to exact taxes on the Church without the express permission of the Papacy. When King Edward I of England demanded part of the clerical income to subsidise his wars in France, the Church appealed to Rome. As a result, a new tax was introduced by the Pope for a three year period (1302 - 1305), to begin with. As a consequence we have a comprehensive list of all the parishes in the Diocese of Ardfert from that time.

Aghadoe (Hacudes) was one of six deaneries in the Diocese and within the deanery were 28 parishes. Amongst those named, with their respective valuation, are the following.

N.Congill (Nohoval): 3s-4d = 1/6 of a pound sterling.

Conlumalla (Cullen): 6s-8d = 1/3 of a pound.

Drumdarril (Dromtarrife) 13s-4d = 2/3 of a pound.

The above details are taken from the "Calendar of Documents relating to Ireland" (Vol. V p.294) Ed. H S Sweetman (1886). Amongst the parishes listed there is, surprisingly, no mention of Millstreet under any of its earlier known names. Cullen is the oldest parish and can therefore be justifiably proud of its long ecclesiastical tradition. An early nunnery associated with St Laiterian (Feast Day July 25th) is mentioned in Smith's History of Cork 1750. Gwynn and Hadcock (1988 p.379) also lists Cullen as an early medieval religious house. "The ruins near the church are said to have belonged to an ancient nunnery under the patronage of St Laiterian (Lasair Fhiona)". The O'Cuivs were erenaghs in later times. A comment is added that many monasteries of early times, of unknown or doubtful order, are mentioned in books, but no authentic records are found for most of these places.

Some commentators speak of three sisters, Lasair, Inion Bui and Laiterian and associate them with Celtic seasonal festivities viz. Lasair with Imbolc (Feb.1st), Inion Bui with Bealtaine (May 1st) and Laiterian with Lughnasa (Aug. 1st). Despite the lack of authentic records there is a strong and vibrant tradition regarding St Laiterian. Her feast is celebrated each year on the Sunday nearest to July 25th, the feast of St James the former patron of the parish. Visits to her holy well, situated just outside the old cemetery, also takes place on or near that date.

Reference to Cullen in Papal letters of the 15th Century.

The parish is mentioned at least three times in Papal letters from the 2nd half of the 15th Century. The context for these is usually a petition from a priest of the diocese to the Pope, complaining about the present incumbent and asking that he be provided with the benefice, i.e. the living from the pastoral office, instead.???

The complaints varied, some related to the neglect of duty, others to using parish funds for personal benefit, or to not having a valid appointment. The usual response was to nominate three clerics to investigate the complaint and to make provisions on the basis of the outcome.

In 1468, Donal O'Curnuyo held the vicarage of Cullen and Nohoval for more than a year without being ordained and therefore had to vacate them. Maurice O'Sullivan was then collated to them by Bishop John of Ardfert.

On March 1st 1470, Pope Paul II mandated a canon at Ardfert and two others, to deal with a petition from Maurice O'Sullivan, a priest, whose contention was that on voidance of Cullynalla (Cullen) and Nochuayalla (Nohoval) by reason of the fact that Donal had held them more than a year without having himself ordained and without dispensation, the ordinary collation of them had lapsed to the Holy See, according to the Lateran Statutes. In other words, the bishop did not have the authority to confer them. The Pope ordered the three to investigate and assign them to Maurice himself (C P L Vol. XII p.802).

On June 17th 1472, John O'Murchu, clerk, was deprived of the united vicarage of Cullen and Nohoval and provision was made to Rory O'Flynnia instead.

On June 2nd 1481, Pope Sixtus IV dispensed John O'Murchu of the impediment and ordered provision to be made to him of the perpetual vicarage of Cullynalla (Cullen) in the said diocese and because it was

insufficient for his maintenance and could be more becomingly maintained if it were united to Nohoval for his lifetime (C P L XIII p.731).

As we have seen in the Papal letters, Cullen and Nohoval were joined for some years, in the 2nd half of the 15th Century, so as to provide a viable living for the priest.

16th Century Religious Reform.

In 1531, King Henry VIII broke with the Church of Rome over the Pope's refusal to grant him a divorce from Catherine of Aragon. He then declared himself Head of the Church in England and expected his subjects to take the Oath of Supremacy. Having declared himself King of Ireland in 1541, he wished to reform the church in this country also. In 1535 he began the dissolution of the monasteries in England and in 1542 he issued a commission to the Earl of Desmond to dissolve all religious houses within his jurisdiction. Mucross was dissolved immediately and Inisfallen, Killagha (De Bello Loco) and Clonmeen, near Banteer followed later.

The Council of Trent (1546-63) followed on. It was an attempt to reform the Catholic church from within and to clarify its teaching. It laid special emphasis on the provision of good bishops and the proper training of priests. The picture of the mid 16th Century is of a people poorly instructed and of low attendance at services.

In some cases priests held a number of benefices or retained them without timely ordination. This picture must be understood against the economic background of the time where the clerical income was meagre and there was a decline in the number of priests. The Franciscans were the mainstay of religious life in many rural areas until the arrival of the Jesuits and continental trained priests after the Council of Trent i.e. 1565 onwards.

There was a renewal of royal supremacy, especially under Edward and Elizabeth I, whose administration became the main agency in pursuing the Anglicisation of the newly constituted Kingdom of Ireland. England became a leading Protestant nation. Queen Elizabeth was excommunicated in 1570 and there was increasing opposition to the practice of the new religion.

Early in 1569 a convention was held in Western Duhallow, on the borders of North Cork. It was decided to secure military aid from Phillip II of Spain and the Pope, in the growing conflict with Elizabeth. James Fitzmaurice, Earl of Desmond, a man of the highest principle and religious integrity, was chosen as the envoy to carry their resolve to Spain and to the Pope. His expedition was more of a religious crusade than any other in Irish history. Whilst it is easy to be cynical about the religious motives of those who rose in rebellion at various times, it is generally acknowledged that James' primary aim was to restore ground lost by the Church as a consequence of the Reformation. He interceded with the Pope and the King of Spain to assist in returning Ireland to Catholic rule. The Spanish and Italian forces that landed in Smerwick Harbour in 1580 were massacred at Dun an Oir. The Plantation of Munster followed upon the failure of that revolt. After a hasty survey, the London Government allotted 300,000 acres to 35 undertakers, mainly English gentlemen and servitors. Amongst these was Walter Raleigh, who was granted 4,000 acres near Youghal. Queen Elizabeth also attempted to replace the Irish system of land tenure (whereby the lands returned to clan ownership on the death of a chief) with the English system of inheritance by primo geniture. This policy was called "surrender and re-grant". McCarthy More, Lord of Loch Lein, who held lands in Magunihy, accepted this and was given the title Lord Clancarty.

Once Henry VIII declared himself head of the Church, religious affiliation assumed political significance. In the eyes of the authorities it was no longer possible to be loyal to the Crown and to the Catholic Church. Catholics expected to fare better under James I but he continued with the policy of his predecessors and affirmed the tenets of the new religion. In 1604, he signed a decree banishing all priests from England and Ireland. During his reign we have the first indications of the takeover of the churches in Cullen and Drishane parishes and the appointment of Protestant vicars to their benefices.

In 1615, John Gerrot was appointed sequestrator. Tieghe McDonagh Sheaghan was presented with the parish

of Cullen in 1618 (Patent Roll of James I August 18th 1618).

In 1664, John Smith, Archdeacon, held it with Drishane and Dromtariffe and similarly with Thomas Hynde in 1679 and Ezechiel Webbe, as above, in 1671.

Owing to the absence of Catholic Church records (virtually none exist until the mid 18th Century), we have little or no information on what was happening to Catholics in the Cullen area during the 17th Century. The majority of the people remained Catholic although church buildings were now officially Church of Ireland property. This raises an intriguing question as to whether the church in Cullen was burnt as part of the Cromwellian atrocities. After the Battle of Knockbrack, on July 26th 1651, parliamentary forces led by Lord Broghill defeated the forces of Lord Muskerry. One of Broghill's men razed old Dromtariffe church and its 400 occupants were burned alive (cf. commemorative plaque in the old cemetery). The question is, whether the parliamentary forces continued with their atrocities by proceeding to burn the church in Cullen. Some writers have put forward this as a possibility but I have a problem with their suggestion because it is unlikely that Cullen church was in Catholic hands at the time.

An interesting fact of history of the time is that Cornelius McCarthy, born in Dromsicane and later PP of Currow, was hanged at Fair Hill in Killarney on June 16th 1653. His cause for beatification is currently proceeding. Dromsicane at this stage was a stronghold of the McDonagh McCarthy of Duhallow, although it is sometimes claimed as an O'Keeffe castle.

Cullen in Penal Times

Cullen is next mentioned in records during Penal times. As we will note later, priests were obliged to register during Penal times. Amongst the Popish priests registered at the General Sessions in Cork, in July 1704, was a Daniel Keeffe who was a Parish Priest of Kilmeen and Cullen. Aged 57, he was ordained by Bishop John Dorley in Limerick in 1682. He gave as his sureties Manus O'Keeffe of Knocknageehy and Owen Callaghan of Lotly. In 1714, before the Grand Jury in Cork, evidence was given that he had taken the oath of abjuration which required priests to swear that James II, or any pretender, had no title to the English crown. This requirement was introduced in 1710 as a further measure to prevent the spread of Popery. There were 1,080 priests registered in Ireland. Most priests, including Owen Keeffe of Clonfert (Newmarket), refused to take the oath. In fact, only 33 in all did so.

Teig Croneen, 43 years, is listed as Parish Priest of Cullen and Nohoval. He was ordained in France by the Bishop of Montabone in 1685. Cullen still remained a separate parish until the early 1800's. It was linked with Drishane in the first Irish Catholic Directory of 1835.

The Parish of Drishane from early records.

Drishane, or as it was previously known, is not mentioned in the Papal Taxation records of 1302. The earliest mention of the parish, in official records, is in the Papal Registers of the 15th Century. In these there are three entries in which it is named as Dressane, alias Kylmide, or Dressan Thologvig. In the earliest of these entries there is also mention of Kilmichun in the Parish of Drishane. This was the former name for Ballydaly.

The entries are as follows:

1463 Matthew O'Falvey, treasurer of the Diocese of Ardfert, was lately provided with the sinecure called Kilmichun within the parish of Drissean (March 3rd C P L Vol. XII p.197).

1466 Donald O'Suliband, said to be guilty of simony, dilapidation of the vicarage of Drissean (alias Kilmmmide) and for several years he was non-resident.

Donatus O'Conbagy, priest, informed the Pope. After the investigation mandated by him the said priest was provided to the vicarage of Drissean and also the vicarage of Raydleryn (Rathclaren) in the Diocese of Cloyne (Dec 12th C P L Vol. XII p.551).

1473 Thady O'Mulkacka, clerk, is provided to the rectory or parcel called Kilmicluyne, in the parish of Drissean Thologvig, vacant by the death of Matthew O'Falvey and also the vicarage of Killarney (May 21st C P L Vol. Xiii p.343).

What conclusion can be drawn from these entries?

Firstly, that Kilmide (Kilmeedy) was the earliest name for the Parish of Drishane and is spelt variously. Secondly, that there was a church in Ballydaly called Kilmichun or Kilmicluyn to which priests, who had other offices in the Diocese, were assigned without pastoral responsibilities.

Thirdly, it was about this time that the parish became known as Drishane, named probably after the castle built there in the mid 15th Century.

Finally, that the church in the area was experiencing some problems at the time as evidenced above.

All was not bad however, as is exemplified in the case of Thaddeus McCarthy, who lived between 1455-1492 and who in recent years was declared Blessed (Feast Day October 25th). Thaddeus was opposed as a candidate for the bishopric of Ross, so Pope Innocent VIII appointed him instead to the Diocese of Cork and Cloyne. He set out as a humble pilgrim to Rome in order to be confirmed there as bishop. He took ill on his return journey and died in Italy in 1492.

The evidence for the church in Kilmeedy.

During the 1400's there was a Gaelic resurgence and many wealthy landlords built fortified homes, four or five stories high. These Tower Houses are the most common feature of the Irish landscape and represent a notable development in secular architecture between 1400-1600. These rectangular buildings were not castles in the strict sense. They were not constructed to resist heavy artillery or to be strategic defences in the area, rather they were fortified dwellings with some defensive elements.

Their total distribution around Ireland is about 3,500. Of these, 125 are in Cork county and the McCarthys of Muskerry constructed 3 in the Parish of Drishane during the 1400's. Two survive. They are Kilmeedy, built about 1435 and Drishane, built slightly later, circa 1450. The third, at Dooneen, is shown in the *Pacata Hiberniae* map of 1600, but nothing now remains

A glance at the earliest 6 inch Ordinance Survey maps shows the co-location of church and tower house as a common feature. Most likely, the wealthy landlords were patrons of the church and provided a site for its building. My conjecture is that the church at Kilmeedy preceded the building of the tower house there and when Drishane was built, slightly later, by Dermot, son of Tadhg, 3rd Earl of Muskerry, he constructed a new church nearer the castle.

The tower was a rectangular structure with an entrance on the east face and a cylindrical tower was erected later on the south-east corner. About a quarter of a mile to the south-east is the old graveyard which marks the site of the first church. There are overgrown remains of the northwest corner, approximately 2 metres on the east west axis and 6 metres north south, to a maximum height of 1.6 metres.

This ruined west gable can still be seen between the McCarthy and Pomeroy tombs. We can surmise that the church was built by the McCarthys with their patronage and the parish name was changed from Kilmeedy to Drishane.

Earlier Parish of Kilmeedy.

The earlier church at Kilmeedy was located close to Tobar Slanan which is about 400 metres to the north of the castle, two fields in from the Millstreet-Macroom road. It is featured in the 1842 Ordinance Survey map as a sub circular area, enclosed by a field fence. It includes a holy well surrounded by a wall of loose stones, a disused graveyard defined by numerous un-inscribed standing stones or grave markers, a tomb enclosed by a railing marking the burial plot of the Leader family (Henry Leader, who died aged 62, on November 9th 1809, and his two children were the last people buried there) and the foundational remains of a church wall of about 10 metres, aligned in an east west direction. O'Donoghue suggests this was the church dedicated to St Ita (Cill mo Ide) from which the parish took its name (Archaeological Inventory of Mid-Cork, N9347).

If this is correct, it marks the site of the earliest known church in the present parish of Millstreet, which is referred in Papal letters as Drishane alias Kylmide. Its existence preceded the building of the nearby castle, built by the McCarthys circa 1435. It is unlikely that this foundation dates back to the time of St Ita, who died in 570 and whose Feast Day is January 15th. Her convent was at Cluain Credail (now known as Kileedy), County Limerick, but there is no mention of her evangelising in the Millstreet area in the medieval account of her life. There are, however, a number of churches dedicated to her, particularly in the counties of Waterford, Cork, Limerick and Kerry.

17th Century Records relating to the Church of Ireland parish of Drishane and adjacent areas.

King James, before his accession to the throne in 1601, had made repeated declarations of his desire to afford liberty of conscience to suffering Catholics. However, as soon as he found himself secure on the throne, he retracted all his promises and his proclamation of July 4th 1605 blighted all hopes of religious liberty. He declared that no toleration would be granted to his subjects in Ireland. All his subjects were commanded to attend Protestant services and priests would have to withdraw from his kingdom within a specified time.

The rectory and tithes of Dromharrasse, Dressane, Dirrivalie in Lord Roche country and of Kilbinny and Coollin in Dowallie, in the O'Keeffe McDonagh country were granted to Lawrence Esmond, knight, and his wife and son to keep up the parsonages and buildings and pay curates a grant for 21 years at a rent of £100 per annum. (Patent Rolls of James I 1603 p. 60).

List of Church of Ireland clergy who served as vicars of Drishane:

- 1615 John Proudville also vicar of Dromtarriffe, a reading minister.
- 1618 Tieghe McDonagh Sheagane instituted as vicar of both on August 28th, still here 1622.
- 1664 John Smith vicar of Drishane and Archdeacon of Aghadoe.
- 1691 Ezechiel Webbe instituted to same on March 10th.
- 1704 John Shepherd and James Bland.
- 1728 Edward Simpson - Archdeacon of Aghadoe and vicar of Drishane and Dromtarriffe.
- 1734 Edward Munne and Horatio Townsend.
- 1760 Vicarage united to Nohovaldaly by forming Union of Drishane. Tithes shared equally between the Earl of Donaghmore and the vicar.

A new church was built by the Wallis family at the east end of the town in 1789 to replace the old one in the Drishane demesne. For lists of clergy who served during the 19th Century cf History of St Anna's by Denis Tangney. In 1904 the Church of Ireland parish was joined to Dromtarriffe.

The situation of the Catholic Church during the 17th Century.

When Henry VIII raised Ireland to the status of a kingdom in 1541, his intention was that this would be the centrepiece of a political and religious reform which would bring Ireland into line with English norms. In 1560, Anglicanism became the state church under Elizabeth. But apart from the situation within the Pale and the royal appointment of Church of Ireland bishops throughout the country, the Irish as a whole preferred to worship in the old way in their homes, with help from priests trained on the continent.

Virtually no record of Catholic activities exist for the period following the establishment of the Church of Ireland and the takeover of the Catholic places of worship during the reign of James I. It is reasonable to conclude that Catholics were poorly instructed, did not have regular access to the Sacraments and that the keeping of records was a low priority.

We know that O'Sullivan Beara marched through here and crossed the Blackwater at the Boinn on his journey to Leitrim, following the defeat at Kinsale. It is not known whether the defeated Northern Earls (O'Neill and O'Donnell) passed this way on their retreat from Kinsale. Dispirited, they returned home and sailed from Lough Swilly to France in September 1607. Last year marked the 400th anniversary of their exile and the event engendered much interest. Attempts were made to find out more about these "99 noble lords" and their reasons for leaving.

Two other events of local relevance occurred during the 17th Century.

1. The arrival of the Papal Nuncio in 1645 and his passage through here.

John Baptist Rinnuccini was sent by Pope Innocent X to attend the Confederation of Kilkenny. He arrived in Kenmare on October 31st and journeyed through Kerry and Cork on route to Kilkenny. After a week spent in Macroom he yielded to the pressure of Breius MacEgan, future bishop of Ross, to go to Dromsicane, a seat of the McDonagh McCarthys. While here, he received a delegation from the Supreme Council, who sent two troops of horses to accompany him to Kilkenny. At Clonmeen he was entertained by Donagh O'Callaghan and by the Dominicans at Kilmallock. There is a detailed record of his travels and his correspondence in Latin, in which he makes mention of the hospitality he received from the local lords and the striking beauty of the countryside he passed through. An attempt at a peace between the Confederates and the Lord Lieutenant failed because Rinnuccini felt it didn't offer enough guarantees for Catholics.

2. The Battle of Knocknanuss November 24th 1647.

Knocknanuss is a townland in the parish of Castlemagner, close to Assolas house. It was the site of a fierce battle between Royalist supporters of Charles I and Parliamentary forces, the factions supporting Oliver Cromwell which had landed in Ireland earlier in 1647. The Royalists were led by Theobald Lord Taffe from Sligo, who held the commission of the Catholic Confederacy. His army comprised of 6,500 soldiers (4,500 foot soldiers and nearly 2,000 cavalry). It included a regiment of 2,000 led by the famous Dalriada soldier, Alexander McDonnell. Amongst the horse soldiers were a group of 500 led by McDonagh of Kanturk and another 500 led by Lord Castleconnel. The Parliamentary force was under the command of Murrough O'Brien, Lord Inchiquin, who was a direct descendant of the O'Briens of Thomond. The battle is noteworthy for the curious proposal by Taffe that the fighting should be done by 2,000 foot soldiers from each side, fighting more for recreation than a serious purpose. This suggestion was ignored by Inchiquin, who suddenly attacked a force, much better positioned and superior in number, and gained an overwhelming victory. During the three hour battle about 4,500 men were killed, including Alexander McDonnell, who is buried in Clonmeen. It is suggested that Lieut. Eneas O'Daly of Ballydaly fought in this battle and was subsequently taken prisoner (D. O'Murcadha: Family names of County Cork, p.115).

The Battle of the Boyne.

Charles II had come to the throne in 1660 and when he was succeeded by the Catholic king James II a nervousness ensued amongst Irish Protestants. In 1668, James' son-in-law William of Orange was invited to take over the throne of England.

James fled to France and in 1669 landed in Ireland with French support. He hoped to use Ireland as a jumping-off ground to regain his throne. He was defeated at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. The dire consequences of the conquest of Ireland during the 17th Century (Kinsale, Benburb, the Cromwellian Settlement, the Boyne and Treaty of Limerick) were intensified by the Penal Laws of the early 18th Century.

The Penal Laws.

These were a series of anti-Catholic measures enacted between 1695 and 1709 which affected their civil and property rights, access to profession, education and religion. Dr. Alan Acheson, a Church of Ireland scholar, in his recent history of that Church, comments thus: "a Protestant nation devised the Penal Laws. Their inspiration was fear, their aim was security and their method was total control". They conferred on Protestants a monopoly of civil and military offices and on Catholics a political, economic and social inferiority (1999 p.59). The first Penal Act of 1695, prohibited Catholics from carrying arms, owning horses worth more than £5 and sending their children abroad for education.

Because Art O'Laoire refused to sell his horse for £5, when he was offered that amount by Abraham Morris, he was eventually murdered near Carriganima by one of Morris' agents. His death inspired the renowned caoine by his wife Eibhlin Dubh ni Chonaill.

In the act of 1697, bishops and regular clergy (i.e. belonging to religious orders) were given nine months to leave the country. At the time there were 833 secular and 390 regular clergy in the country. This harsh measure resulted in the banishment for life of approximately 500 clergy (including bishops). The act did not include secular priests who were allowed to remain on in the country. It was hoped that they would die off for want of succession because there would be no bishops to ordain them.

Another Act prevented clergy, either secular or religious, from coming into the country. Those harbouring or concealing them were liable to penalties. As a pendant to this act, a bill was prepared for registering Popish clergy. The proclamation received Royal assent on March 4th 1704. All secular priests, resident in Ireland, were required to go before a magistrate and register their name, abode, age, parish in which they officiated, how long they resided there and the time and place of their ordination. They were ordered at high peril to do so within 21 days. A record of those registered in that year, shows 36 priests in Kerry and 60 in Cork

Listed as resident in Ballydaly was Owen McFineen Ferris. Born in 1665, he was ordained in Brabant by the Bishop of Antwerp in 1687. He was Parish Priest of Drishane. He is alleged to have brought a Bull of Pope Innocent XII to this country which appointed Dr. Comberford as Archbishop of Cashel, about 1690. Parish Priests were not allowed to have curates.

Fr. Ferris would have said Mass in the ruined Penal church in Ballydaly Upper, located about 250 metres south of Croohig's cross. We come across him again in information supplied to the Sheriff in June 1714 and an order of copias (let him be arrested) was issued against him on July 17th 1714. Details of the pursuit of this warrant are not forthcoming but in 1715 he had succeeded Anaes Lyne, deceased, in the parish of Kilcolman. In this instance Ballydaly is called the Parish of West Fractions. The above details are accumulated from State papers at the time and extracts from these can be found in "Irish Priests in Penal Times" by W Burke (1969 p.149f).

There was no bishop in Kerry during Penal Times (1656-1720) but jurisdiction was exercised by a series of Vicars Apostolic viz. John Hurley and Cornelius Daly. He was appointed in 1678, on the recommendation of Dr. Oliver Plunkett, and continued until his arrest and death in Cork gaol in 1699. Donagh McCarthy, PP Tralee, then exercised jurisdiction until the appointment of Denis Moriarty to the See of Ardfert in 1720.

The famous Irishman Edmund Burke, MP for Bristol, in 1780 supported repeal of this anti-Catholic legislation which, in his eyes, had the effect of making Irish Catholics foreigners in their own land. The Penal Code was described by him in a letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe as "a machine as well fitted for the oppression, impoverishment and degradation of a people and a debasement in them of human nature itself, as ever proceeded from the perverted ingenuity of man" (W K Sullivan: Two Centuries of Irish History. London 1907 p.389)

Millstreet Parish in the 19th Century.

The first Catholic church in the town was situated, where formerly the priests garages were, to the left of the entrance to the presbytery. It is now an entrance to the new convent. It was a thatched building which survived until 1834. It was fortunate that, when the roof fell in, a new church on the present site was nearing completion.

The new church was built in the Classical style and had transept galleries as well as an organ gallery. There is not unanimous agreement regarding the architect. Architectural historian Maurice Craig and Professor Stephen Curl attribute it to G R Pain of the Pain brothers who came to this country from Isleworth, in Essex. "They designed small, mainly Classical churches (Catholic) in County Cork during the same period (as Cork Courthouse in 1835 and Anglican churches at Carrigaline and Mallow) for example Kinsale, Dunmanway, Bantry, Millstreet, Ovens and the Ursuline Convent at Blackrock" (M. Craig p.262)

A major refurbishment of the building took place in 1931-2 when the galleries were removed and the side walls moved out to provide increased space. The wall behind the altar was maintained and the old facade, removed and supplemented with new brighter stone, was modified closer to the entrance gate and Fr.

Griffin's grave was transferred to the right of the path. Previously it was in the front of the entrance door, as evidenced in the pre 1930's picture of the church (Picture Millstreet).

Although the church had moved to the West End of the town from the beginning of the 19th Century, the parish continued to be known as Drishane until the first quarter of the 19th Century. The commemorative window to Canon Horgan, behind the High Altar, refers to him as Parish Priest of Drishane and a window in Killarney Cathedral donated by Canon Casey in 1911 refers to him as Parish Priest of Drishane (orate pro feleci statu Adm Rev James Casey Par de Drishane Can VF). The window is a representation of Patrick being sent by Pope Celestine to Ireland.

List of Clergy who served in Millstreet Parish since Penal times.

From various sources (e.g. Padraig de Brun: Lists of Kerry Priests KJAH Vol. 18; Irish Catholic Directory from 1835 onwards, dedicatory inscriptions etc.) one is able to compile a comprehensive list of the parish priests and curates who served in the parish up till 1900, the terminal date of this article.

Parish Priests in the Parish of Drishane (18th -19th Century).

- 1727-76 Denis P O'Sullivan. Studied at the Irish College in Louvain for nine years and for two years in Douai. Ordained in Malines December 18th 1734. Nephew of Bishop Eugene O'Sullivan.
- 1774-77 Thadeus O'Sullivan. PP Cuileann and Nohoval.
- 1777-1812 Thomas Plunkett. Curate in Killarney 1776. PP Drishane 1777. Lived at Kippagh. Will approved 1812.
- 1812-20 Demetrius (Jeremiah) O'Mahoney. Transferred to Killarney June 1st 1827. PP Listowel 1829 where he died in 1856.
- 1820-65 Patrick Fitzpatrick, born at Dromnahoe near Dromagh March 17th 1787. Ordained 1811. Responsible for building first church and convent on present site. Curate Rathmore, Lixnaw, Firies and Dingle. PP Kenmare, 1819. Baptised Dr Moriarty, later Bishop. Died March 6th 1865 aged 78 yrs. A dedicatory slab in Millstreet church, near former baptistery, was erected at the behest of Bishop Moriarty.
- 1865-72 William Horgan, born at Kilcummin 1824. Died aged 48 and buried in family grave. The beautiful Calvary window behind the High Altar is dedicated to his memory and gives the date of his death as October 1st 1872. He studied with great distinction at Maynooth and was curate in Kenmare and Tralee and Administrator in Killarney prior to his appointment to Millstreet. In the opinion of Bishop Moriarty he was by far the ablest and most learned he ever met among Missionary priests. He died of Bright's Disease.
- 1872-99 Arthur Griffin, born Molahiffe and for 27 yrs Parish Priest of Drishane. His grave is a plot on on the right, inside the church gate. The Good Shepherd Window in Cullen Church (right aisle end) is a memorial to him.
- 1899-1907 Charles O'Sullivan, ordained in Maynooth 1884. Curate in Lixnaw and Millstreet (1887). Administrator of parish 1900. Transferred to Tralee. Consecrated Bishop 1918. He died in 1927 and is buried in the grounds of Killarney Cathedral.

The contribution of Fr Fitzpatrick.

To him goes the credit of being the founder and longest serving parish priest of the parish as we know it today. When he came to Drishane in 1820 there was no school, presbytery or convent in Millstreet. He lived for a while with the Protestant minister at the Glebe in Drishane. A year later he moved to Drishanebeg and then to the Priest's Cross. By the time of Catholic Emancipation he was living across the road from the

present church. In the 1830's work commenced on a group of buildings comprising the church, the convent and the presbytery, for which he secured the deed in 1839. Due to the munificence and zeal of Bishop Egan who endowed it, the Presentation convent opened on May 28th 1840 with four sisters under Mother Clare Barry. The new church opened in 1838. On the wall of the right aisle, near the entrance to the baptistery, there is a plaque commemorating his achievements. This was erected by Bishop Moriarty. It makes reference to his zeal, piety, prudence and patience and his long service to the Parish of Drishane. He was born on St Patrick's Day, both his names include Patrick and the church which he erected was dedicated to St Patrick, the Apostle of Ireland, and our most illustrious saint.

List of Curates who served in Millstreet.

1828	W Moriarty CC Drishane and Cullen.
1835	Michael Enright.
1837	Richard Naughton.
1840	Edmond Walsh.
1843	Martin McMahon.
1850	Denis O'Donovan.
1855-9	Thomas Maginn.
1856-9	Denis O'Connor.
1859-66	Tim Brosnahan.
1860-65	Tom Nolan.
1863-65	J Doherty.
1860's	Denis O'Donoghue.
1866-69	C Scully.
1860's	Cornelius O'Sullivan (3yrs).
1869-70	D Lynch.
1865-70	T Carmody and J Larkin.
1872-76	James Harding.
-75	Daniel O'Keefe.
-87	Charles O'Sullivan.
-88	Denis O'Riordan.
-90	John O'Leary.
1905-	Cornelius Harding.

Education- its changing forms.

The monastic schools provided education and training in virtue, prior to the reorganisation of the church in the mid 12th Century. Famous schools were run at Inisfallen on the Lakes of Killarney, Molana on the mouth of the Blackwater, Cork, Ross, Lismore, Emly etc. Schools were also run by the friars. They were replaced by the Bardic schools which survived into the middle of the 17th Century. The professional fili or bards received their training in these schools. The bards served the upper educated segments of society and held their position in virtue of their training, knowledge of history and Gaelic traditions. A great deal of poetry consisted in elaborate panegyrics or extravagant praise poems on the occasion of births, marriages and deaths within the families of their patrons. They achieved a high degree of technical training in the skills of syllabic verse, internal and end rhyme etc. Their influence extended from the 1200's until the collapse of the Old Gaelic Order at the start of the 17th Century. The defeat at Kinsale was a watershed in their decline and the last Bardic school closed about 1641. This was a consequence of the downfall of the social system on which they depended for their livelihood.

The O'Dalys of Nohoval and Ballydaly.

The O'Dalys were the most renowned and fruitful brood of professional poets in this area. They originated in County Westmeath and moved to the Cork/Kerry area in the 12th Century. They became professional poets to the McCarthy Mores and the McCarty Reaghs. In the words of John O'Donovan "There is certainly no family to which the Bardic literature of Ireland is more deeply indebted than to the O'Dalys". The most prestigious names associated with this area are, Geoffrey and Aengus Fionn O'Dalaigh and Aengus Rua the

satirist.

Geoffrey Fionn O'Dalaigh.

Geoffrey, grandson of Tadhg, was born at Nohoval, in Duhallow in 1320 and in the Annals of the Four Masters he is described as the "Arch Professor of poetry in Ireland" at the time of his death in 1387. Although he was born in the former parish of Nohoval, Millstreet parish can lay an oblique claim to him because his clan held lands in Ballydaly, Kippagh and Curra Cahill and because he wrote a famous poem of 37 quatrains about the famed hill of Clara. There are many independent tributes to this renowned poet. Fearflatha O'Gnimh states "Geoffrey Fionn started no poem without taking pains, even at an empty shell he was always the very flower of art" (Bergin 1970). Professor Sean O'Tuama, commenting on his influence on Aodgan O'Rathaille, has this to say "Gurb e an file is mo a cuaigh ibfeidhm ar saothar agus ar mheon an Rathailig". (O'Tuama p.126) and Eleanor Knott (1957: p.41) says his poems are amongst the finest specimens of the dan direach we possess. A number of his poems were translated by Fr Lambert McKenna and Professor Bergin in the 1920's. He was a professional poet to the McCarthy More, the Anglo Norman Earls of Desmond and was ollamh to the O'Keeffes. We can ascertain a great deal of biographical detail from the contents of his poetry. He was born to the west of Clara, had a son named Eoghan, who is buried in Nohoval, about whom he wrote an emotional lyric on his death.

I have selected three of his poems as worthy of perusal.

1. A poem of 16 stanzas in honour of Colman Mac Leinin, Patron Saint of the O'Dalys.

In this poem he traces the bardic tradition of his family back to Dalach, a fostering and pupil of St Colman of Cloyne before he entered religious life. His blessing has brought profit to the family ever since.

V3 "Thou wert the fosterer of the poet from whom we come,
thou patron whose name is Colman. 'Tis a tale must be told,
that of Colman whose fostering was Dalach."

V13. "It was fitting for the race of Dalach to whom he gave the profitable craft,
to spread some verses of their art before Colman, Patron of Cloyne".

2. Under Sorrow's Sign.

This poem is about a child born in prison, is included in Kinsella's Anthology No74. It appears to have been, for centuries, the most popular religious composition in Ireland and was, according to Professor Monatgu, the favourite poem of Sean O'Riada. He asserts that it is one of the most famous bardic poems and is a parable analogous to the classic metaphor for human existence, that of Plato's allegory of the cave (The figure in the Cave: 1989 p.51).

The little boy grew up in prison for a space of years. Nothing he could see of the light of day but the bright ridge of a field through a hole which someone had made. The child who knew no better, grew happier and made playful runs, while his mother's spirits deepened. One day he beheld a tear on her lovely face and asked why she was sad. No wonder that I mourn, she said, this cramped place is not our lot. If you knew what I have seen before this dismal place you would also be downcast. A great outer world of glory was formerly mine before this darkened place. But not knowing a happier place, he did not grudge the cold desolate prison. One obvious moral is, that people in this world are like the mother and child in prison, when compared with the everlasting glory of the heavenly realms. Lest the theme may seem farfetched, it is well to remember that only a year ago a young mother, Charlotte wanted to care for her eight months old infant in jail after she was given a life sentence for the savage murder of her own mother's Kenyan partner. Prison rules allow for a child at the breast to be received into prison with its mother.

3. "O eastern hill near Ealla" - a long poem of 37 quatrains about the hill of Clara. No English translation is available in published form. I am indebted to Canon Padraig O'Fiannachta for providing one, on request, a few years ago. It is a fascinating poem, full of historical and mythological references. For the poet this lofty grassy hillock is a hill full of tears. Though he was reared close to it, the illustrious hill of Clara to the east evokes painful memories. Molann se aileact an chnoic ac is e cnoc na ndeor, cnoc na cinneamha, dar leis.

Felim McCarthy, grandson of Donal, the 3rd Earl of Muskerry was fatally wounded on its slopes in 1325. Also Fothad Canainne, ancestral head of the Owey people of NE Limerick was murdered at nearby Feic. He had desired and carried off the wife of Ailill, head of the Munster Fianna. Ailill and his battalions pursued him and a battle was fought in a nook NE of Clara. Fothad fell, having been severely wounded. Verse 35 links Clara with the O'Keeffes "O green hill of leaning verdure, you are the rightful property of Donal O'Keeffe, hail to thee with many prayers. O hill named Clara". The O'Keeffe clan originated in Cork and so firmly established themselves in the area of Duhallow that their territory acquired the name Pobal Ui Caoimh. Their lands stretched southwards towards Clara and included the town-lands of Shanacknock, Annagloor, Claratlea and the hill of Clara.

Clarach means bare. In 1950, a cross was erected on the hilltop to honour the Holy Year, and has been replaced twice since. When the parish newsletter was launched over 30 years ago it was aptly entitled "Clara News". The hill of Clara is visible from all parts of the parish and has derived its significance through time and history. It is therefore a fitting symbol of the parish itself, which is an enduring reality, a repository of a long history of events and yet a changing reality as well.

Aongus Fionn O'Dalaigh.

Aongus is the other great poet of the area who lived through the second half of the 16th Century. He is known as Aongus na diadacht because of his many religious compositions. Of the 55 poems that have come down to us, only 4 have non religious themes. Fr Lambert McKenna S J edited his poems under the title "Danta do chum Aongus Fionn O'Dalaigh".

Fr McKenna is of the opinion that he belonged to the branch of the O'Dalys long settled in Duhallow and was born in 1548, that he was chief of his clan as implied in the appellation "O'Dalaigh Fionn"; that he was a friend and tutor of Donal O'Caoimh of Duhallow. Both died around the same time, circa 1610. He probably conducted a bardic school in Ballydaly, although this cannot be verified. He was a son of Amhlaoibh, but biographical details are obscure. He wrote poems to the Blessed Sacrament, to the Holy Cross and in honour of Mary.

An interesting devotional poem entitled "Laoi na mbuadh" invites Christ to abide in his heart every day of the week, to fill his heart with great love, to redeem hostility and to save and heal the world. This is one of two poems selected by Ciaran O'Murchu (Lon Anama 2005 p.176) as an indication of the spiritual interests of the time. It is the poet's striking way of saying that those striving for holiness should seek God every day of the week, for He is our protection and safeguard.

The second poem referred to, is devoted to the Blessed Sacrament and entitled "Failte Romhat a Ri na nAingeal". It is a popular Communion Hymn, still sung in Irish, in which Christ is invoked as King of Angels, a Lily in bloom and Heir of the High King, and Mary is praised for her role in the Incarnation (cf bilingual text in Lon Anama p.172; and Veritas Hymnal no 28).

Another Communion Hymn attributed to him by some writers is entitled "Gaibh mo chomairce a chuirp Iosa". Its opening lines are:

Protect me, O Body of Jesus, Holy Wafer most precious
Free my heart from darkness of sin, nothing in the world is difficult for thee.
O Lord, who art within me, Bless me thou Shinning One,
Sever my soul from my body (now) purged from evil deeds
So that I fall not into them again".

One third of his poems are devoted to Mary - the sun of all maidens, who is The Mother of God. Other themes explored, include Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, the Holy Trinity and the confession of waywardness.

In addressing the Holy Cross he writes in the fourth stanza:

“To thee I pray with fervour
Ever, O tree of virtue
O Cross that bore the King of Kings
Protect me 'neath thy safeguard”.

Amongst his non-religious poems is one of praise of Donal McCarthy More, the last king of Desmond who died in 1596, which has a final stanza in honour of the O'Keefe. The concession of a final quatrain is interesting. Geoffrey Fionn, writing two centuries earlier in allegorical terms, describes the visit of his patron Maurice Fitzmaurice to the English king in London. To this he added a single quatrain in praise of O'Brien of Thomond.

At a party held in Enniskillen 1586, Eochaid O'Hussey was asked by Hugh Maguire “Why did O'Dalaigh make this quatrain for the Munster prince? Was it a sign of love?”. Eochaid's answer was that it was not because of his love for Conor O'Brien but because O'Brien used to give Geoffrey a horse each year for the concession. The poet was, in modern parlance, his publicity agent. Presumably, a similar arrangement applied between the poet Aongus and O'Keefe. McCarthy More was the chief patron of Aongus and, in lieu of monetary payments, the O'Dalys were granted certain rights, the most unusual being the right to the wedding garment of every girl married in Desmond and Duhallow. This was actually taken on the wedding day, as appears from a petition to a Cork jury in 1576, by an outraged Margaret ni Scully, whose clothes were taken from her by force on behalf of O'Daly Fionn, the chief rhymer, otherwise ollamh dana. (Murchada: Family Names of Cork 1985; p.116).

According to Ciaran O'Murchu he had a bardic school in Duhallow, most likely in Ballydaly. A person of that name was attained there in the early 1600's and a Scottish poet, visiting the poet Seaffraidh O'Donnchu in Killaha, called on his way to an O'Daly poet in Ballydaly.

Aongus na nAor.

Far less complimentary to the O'Keefe clan was the poet-satirist, Aongus Rua O'Dalaigh of Ballyroon. At Carew's instigation, he vindictively satirised the prominent Irish families in his work “The Tribes of Ireland”. This was translated by John O'Donovan in the mid 19th Century and published by Tower Books of Cork in 1976.

Aongus had this to say of Art O'Keefe, Lord of Clara:

“The frieze rag of O'Keefe of Clarach
is no shelter against the wind.
although his head is hoary
the lice are numerous in every fold of his raiment.
O little Robin, yonder in the bush
though little food would serve your turn:
If you were a night in the O'Keefe house
your breast would fall to your back” (O'Donovan Ed 1976: p.66)

At this time, Art Og was head of the O'Keefe clan and they held castles at Dromagh and Duarigle. In revenge for his satires Aongus Rua was fatally stabbed by a servant of the O'Meaghers in Tipperary, in 1617. He exempted the O'Daly clan from his general abuse of the Irish tribes.

What happened to Aongus Fionn?

We know from the Patent Rolls of King James I that Malone O'Daly Fionn was slain in 1600. He held lands in Noughaval and in Ballydaly which were later granted by the King to John King of Dublin. In 1601, a pardon was granted to Donal O'Daly, alias Vicar of Ballydaly, and in 1612 a grant was made to Francis Blundell of Kilmacloyne (otherwise Ballydaly) a parcel of the estates of Ennis O'Daly who was attained i.e. deprived of rights because of conviction for treason (Patent X James I). If this is Aongus Fionn, then he

must have died some years beforehand i.e. prior to 1610.

The Battle of Kinsale was a turning point in that the underlying social system, which was supported by the Bards, collapsed. In 1607, the Earls left Lough Swilly and sailed for Quilleboeuf, at the mouth of the Seine in France. This departure was known as "The Flight of the Earls". Of the 99 noble lords who departed, 61 are known by name and included O'Neill and O'Donnell.

How do we sum up this phase of education?

The bards were a professional class serving the needs of the aristocratic chieftains. They were men of letters trained in a polished literary medium. They discharged their function much in the same manner as a journalist or a PRO person would today. They were chroniclers, public officials, essayists and keen satirists at times, catering for a privileged class. But who catered for the educational needs of the ordinary folk? We don't know. Other professionals were the Brehons in law and the Medicals, but none are known from this area.

Next major changes.

After the Reformation, in the mid 16th Century, the Protestant clergy were encouraged to open parochial schools and pay teachers of English but although reinforced with Penal Laws in 1696, there were only 200 operating by the end of the 18th Century. Irish poetry remained vibrant for two more centuries. Courts of poetry replaced the Bardic schools. We have the fine poets of the Sliabh Luachra area, especially Aodhgan O'Rathaille and Eoghan Rua O'Suilleabhain in the 17th and 18th Century. One characteristic of their poetry, is the sense in which wounded pride persists and the hope of restoration was embodied in a new type of poem called the Aisling. The poet, in a state of trance, had a vision of a beautiful speirbhean who promised hope. Gile na Gile and Mac an Cheannai are two fine specimens from the pen of Aodhgan. Courts of poetry survived into the latter half of the 18th Century.

Hedge Schools.

Hedge schools operated from the beginning of the 18th Century in defiance of the Penal Laws. They were so called because the masters convened the pupils on the sunny side of the hedge of a secluded field. Many of the above mentioned poets were Hedge School teachers e.g. Eoghan Rua O'Suilleabhain in Knocknagree, Edward Walsh in Cullen and Millstreet, Liam dall O'Heifearnain in Tipperary, etc.

In the latter half of the 18th Century, as the Penal Laws became more relaxed or were not as stringently implemented, the schools operated more openly in farmhouses, barns or in the schoolmaster's home, if it was of reasonable size. Usually they provided a basic education in the 3Rs. Learning was by rote as books and materials were scarce and these Hedge Schools had to be financially self subsistent. Teachers received a weekly stipend for the task, either a small fee or reward in kind, from the parents. Despite the difficult conditions under which they operated, they had a varied curriculum. There is no one model that applied. Although hidden away and run on an ad hoc basis, it is estimated that there were 9,000 in Ireland by 1824 with 300,000 pupils. There are varying accounts of what they were like. Some writers stress the humble and clandestine nature of the enterprise and the heroic efforts of the teachers to provide basic skills in literacy and numeracy. Other accounts harp on the low standards of education and the subversive attitude of teachers.

In any evaluation there are two facts that we need to keep in mind. Firstly, during the early stages of the Penal laws Catholics were prohibited from conducting schools or sending their children abroad for education, thus leaving them with no educational provision whatsoever. Secondly, Catholics were an impoverished class and endured great hardship. The 18th Century is regarded as the era of Protestant ascendancy. The Protestant landlords grew rich and built large residences on their estates. By 1778 only 5% of Irish land was in Catholic hands even though they constituted 75% of the population, which was approaching five million by 1800. Tenant farmers struggled to pay their rent and to also pay tithes to the established church, to which few of them belonged.

Text books and Curricula of Hedge Schools.

In 2004, Antonia McManus published a book entitled “The Irish Hedge Schools and its books 1695-1831”. In it she details the educational and social context of these schools and gives a fascinating insight into the primers used and the unique education provided. This is in succession to a work by P J Dowling on Hedge Schools, in 1932.

The name Hedge Schools was used in official Government documents for the first time in 1835 though they were long aware of their existence. Frequent references are made to them by travelers in the 18th Century e.g. Arthur Young. Hedge Schools were well established in Kerry when Dr Smith wrote his history in 1756 (p.67). He mentions that classical learning (e.g. Latin and Greek) were extended to the lower and poorer classes. Many products of such schools subsequently became masters themselves e.g. Edward Walsh of Cullen and Eoghan Rua O’Suilleabhain in Knocknagree. The following verse conveys that these schools were perceived as channels of surreptitious education during Penal times.

“Crouched beneath the sheltering hedge, or stretched on mountain fern,
the teacher and his pupils met, feloniously to learn”

Location of Various Hedge Schools in the Parish.

Millstreet:

Most famous was Garibaldi O’Sullivan, who taught in Dromsicane, Kilmeedy, Cloghoola and Ballydaly. He is buried in Drishane old cemetery.

Paddy Collins, Claramore in J. Cronin’s farm.

Edward Walsh (poet) in Mill Lane.

Cullen:

Mr Berry, (not a local person) taught in a farmhouse of O’Keeffe.

Daniel Sullivan, taught in Glauntane and Mullaghroe until the 1850’s.

Thade Cronin, taught in a small house in the village belonging to Norry Roche.

Edward Walsh (poet 1805-50).

Although most biographical accounts state that he was born in Derry, Fr J J O’Riordan, in his biography of the poet, suggests Derragh, a town-land near Cullen as his place of birth (Tragic Troubadour p.24). He began his hedge school teaching near Rathcormac and Knockbrack. Nearer home, according to tradition, he taught in David King’s haggard in Cullen and also at Lislehane and in Millstreet.

Ballydaly:

Bill Desmond until 1863.

William O’Brien in Gortavehy.

Dan Buckley in Toorbona.

Thade Cronin in Coolinarne.

Aubane:

Dan Linehan from Nadd, in Dan Barrett’s yard, until 1880.

John Shine, at “Mary the weaver’s” on the Aubane side of the Kerryman’s Table, up to 1875.

John Ryan, at Eileen O’Riordan’s (then Cooper’s) farmyard in Tullig.

There is a reputed Hedge School site close to the entrance to Millstreet Country Park.

These details have been compiled from existing publications on Millstreet, listed at the outset.

The gradual relaxation of the Penal Laws and the slow growth of Catholic education.

The Penal Laws, amongst other things, restricted access to education for Catholics. The first provision of 1695 prohibited Catholics from having their children sent abroad for education. They were also forbidden to teach and run schools in Ireland. The restrictions of the Penal Laws were gradually repealed by a series of Relief Acts between 1778 and 1793. The 2nd Relief Act in 1782 permitted Catholic Bishops and Priests to live in Ireland. A Catholic could now run a school, or teach in one, provided he kept only Catholic pupils and took the Oath of Allegiance. Further easement came in the 3rd Relief Act 1792, which allowed Catholics

access to professions (e.g. solicitors) from which they were hitherto barred. Catholics might now send their children abroad to be educated. The 4th Act in 1793 gave Catholics a right to vote if they were 40 shilling freeholders.

Prior to this, Nano Nagle, born at Ballygriffin in Mallow in 1718, was smuggled to France, as a teenager, for an education forbidden by the Penal Laws. She was talented and well educated when she returned to Ireland and began teaching children in Cork prior to the Relief Bills. In 1754, she secretly opened two mud cabins in Cove Lane. At the age of 57 she founded the Presentation Order and started a new venture in Cove Lane, Cork, by opening their first school in 1777 and so became pioneers of girls education. Later the Order opened schools in many towns, including Millstreet in 1841. From the early years of the 19th Century other religious orders opened schools for boys and girls.

Following the relaxation, small Catholic schools (some fee paying) were set up on an open basis to replace the clandestine Hedge Schools.

In 1811, Mrs Helen McCarthy O'Leary donated two acres of her estate for the building of a boys school, a church and a convent at the West End of the town (Coomlegane). According to Pigot's Directory for 1854, Millstreet is described as a "smart town". A schoolhouse endowed by Mrs McCarthy was about to be built to supplement two Protestant schools, one of which was located at Minor Row. Records suggest that it was already functioning in 1825, though Denis Tagney gives a later date. The school was built of stone and lime and slated, at a cost of £156, from the bequest of the late Mr McCarthy. The rolls averaged 92 pupils per quarter. The Master was Patrick Collins. His annual income was £13-4s-9d. Mr Tadg O'Driscoll informed me that older parishioners would have recalled this as a derelict, overgrown building with a red door, which was located on the site later occupied by the West End cinema and now by the Claragh Furniture Store. In 1934, Canon Brosnan sold the site to Denis McSweeney, who operated a cinema there until 1973.

The Report of the Board of Education 1826.

Towards the end of 1824 the Board of Education undertook a survey in which they invited both Protestant and Catholic clergy to report on all schools in their parishes, both free and fee paying. The report of this survey was published in 1826 and from that account we gain a fairly accurate picture of the state of education in Millstreet Parish at the end of the first quarter of the 19th Century. There were five schools in Liscahane, two in Coomlegane, one each in Ballydaly and Cahirbarnagh, five in Cullen, two in Knockgurrane, two in Eaglaune, one in Gurteenafinoge and one in Carrigaline, which was run by Phillip O'Sullivan.

From the Liscahane group we can identify two Protestant schools listed above in Pigot's Directory 1824. One was run by William Heffernan who taught 19 pupils in hired rooms, where the Scriptures were read in Greek. His income was £20 per annum. John Leader was the Master in the other school. He taught 40 pupils (8 Protestant) in a stone walled building, roofed with timber and straw. His income was not declared. Another school, possibly Protestant, was run by James Stack in a building of stone and mortar with 70 pupils (4 Protestant). His income was £12-20s per annum. At Liscahane, John McCarthy taught 82 pupils in a thatched stone house, for £12 per annum. At Coomlegane, Jeremiah Collins taught 60 pupils in a stone walled building, roofed with straw, for £6 per annum. In the other school at Coomlegane, Timothy Sullivan taught 80 pupils in a low thatched house, for £11-12s per annum. Peter O'Riordan had 37 pupils in Ballydaly and Jeremiah O'Callaghan had 52 in Cahirbarnagh. The teachers in Cullen were Timothy O'Shea, with 10 pupils (3 Protestant), who taught in the Parish school and whose income of £20 was derived from the local incumbent and the Kildare Societies. Denis Scully, 51 pupils on £4 per annum. Henry Keeffe, 60 pupils, on £5-8s per annum. Edward Corbett, 55 pupils, at £6 per annum and Owen Riordan at Gurteenafinoge who had 35 pupils on an income of 1s-6d to 5s per quarter. These details were derived from Cumann Luachra Journal Vol.1 No XI 2003 p.87.

The National school system 1831.

The system was established in late 1831 under the principles outlined by Lord Stanley. A Board of Commissioners was set up which comprised three Protestants, two Catholics and one Presbyterian and Free

Church member, totaling seven in all. The two Catholic representatives were Richard Blake, a barrister, and Archibald Murray of Dublin. It was the wish of the English Government that clergy and laity from the different religions should cooperate in conducting the system. Most of the hierarchy approved, apart from Archbishop McHale of Tuam, who strongly opposed the system as being anti-national and non-denominational. In 1841, Pope Gregory XVI encouraged support for the system because there was no evidence that it was injurious to religion.

These schools were financed differently, dependent on whether they were vested in the Board of Commissioners, in Trustees made up of local taxpayers or were non vested. Vested schools received more State aid e.g. two thirds of the building costs. They were also more closely regulated.

A sign indicating place and date of erection was to be prominently displayed outside each building, as is still evidenced in old Cloghoola, Cullen and Rathduane schools. Rathduane which is the oldest functioning school in the parish has a slab which reads "Rathduane National School AD 1869". John McCarthy of Rathduane House, who owned lands in Knocknagullane, provided the site. The school which was later added to, was vested in the Commissioners. In all schools the teachers' salaries were paid by the Board of Education. The local Parish Priest or Clergyman was usually appointed manager. He had responsibility for ongoing maintenance costs and the appointment of teachers etc.

The various reports of the Commissioners show a rapid growth in the number of schools and in attendance, up to the end of the 19th Century. In 1833, there were 780 schools with 107,042 pupils. By 1900 the numbers had increased to 8,684 schools with 745,861 pupils.

In Cork County, the number of schools grew from 83 in 1835 to 753 by 1900. From the outset it was stipulated that a register should be kept in each school recording daily attendance and average weekly and quarterly attendance. Whilst the system helped to eliminate illiteracy and provide widespread education, it had some shortcomings. It was far from national, in that neither the history of the country nor the Irish language were taught. The medium was English. Thus in a sense, the system, together with the Famine and consequent emigration, contributed to a rapid decline in the use of the Irish language during the second half of the 19th Century. The non-national mentality is reflected in this extract from a Geography text book used at the time "Many people who live in Ireland were born in England and we speak one language and are one nation" (J J Feeney 1958 p.62).

National Schools in the Parish.

There are five National schools in the parish which will now be considered in chronological sequence, together with the Presentation Convent School.

The Girls Primary School.

The Presentation Sister came to Millstreet in 1840 at the invitation of the then P P, Fr Fitzpatrick and on May 28th the convent opened with four sisters and Mother Clare Barry in charge. The construction of the primary school followed shortly afterwards and throughout the 19th Century it consistently maintained high academic standards. A report from Dr Moriarty, following his visit in January 1866, has this comment "There are about 300 children in the school. These few women have a school not surpassed by any in the Diocese". There were seven nuns at the time and the Superior was Sr. Xavier O'Callaghan. The school registers date back to 1873.

Cullen National school.

The plot of the old school in Cullen was leased to Fr Fitzpatrick in 1846 and the first school opened in 1847 at Lislehane Cross, on the recently constructed New Line from Mallow to Rathmore. This was a two roomed school for boys and girls with an additional room added in 1873. It continued in use until it was replaced by the present school, built in 1938, a little further to the east along the Mallow road. The registers date back to 1918.

Diarmuid O'Cadhla, from Cullen, has published detailed information regarding the various teachers at the school since its inception. Many of his forebears were teachers in Cullen. The following details were

abstracted from his article entitled “The old schools in Cullen” (Seanchas Duthalla Vol. XIV 2006 p.27 et seq.). Diarmuid was a founding member of the Journal in 1975.

Hanoria Dennehy, of Millstreet, was the first Mistress. She married Denis Hickey, a publican in the village. After his death in the early 1880's, she married a police sergeant, Robert Dunne. She continued teaching until retirement in 1892. She was succeeded by Kate Cronin (nee Hickey) who was of the same family as the forebears of an tAthair Peadar O'Laoire. She moved to Cullen from Rathduane school and lived in Millstreet until her retirement in 1909 at the age of 87. Assistants during those years included Ellen O'Donoghue (appointed 1864), Hannah O'Riordan (1869) and Nanno Hurley (1871). All three were still in the school in 1892.

The first principal of the boys school was William Godsil, a native of Boherbue, who remained for only a few years and was replaced by Robert O'Dwyer, who found difficulty in securing lodgings and left for the Training College in Dublin after a few years. He was succeeded by Conal George McSweeney, from a Millstreet family of shoemakers. His intemperate ways led him to leave and emigrate to New York. The next principal was Tadhg Ring, born near Doon Bridge 1824, who was probably educated by the poet and hedge schoolteacher, Edward Walsh of Derragh. He began his teaching career in Kenmare, his wife's home place, but after some years he secured a post as principal in Cullen. He was an Irish speaker and ardent patriot. He closed the school on the morning of the 1867 uprising and set off for Cahirciveen to join the planned march to Killarney. On returning he had to satisfactorily explain his absence to the authorities with support from his generous manager Fr Horgan. One of his renowned pupils was the poet and stonemason Donal O'Connor. When Canon Griffin succeeded as PP in 1872, Tadhg felt insecure and took a job in a small school in Kenmare, where he ended his days (cf Seanchas Duthalla 2006 p.57). He was succeeded by Michael Buckley of Ahane, an assistant at the school, who died in 1883 from a hip injury. His successor was John Kiely, from Feenagh in Limerick, who was appointed in 1884. He obtained a certificate of competency in Irish in 1894. He was a great promoter of the Gaelic League and was successful in establishing the first bilingual school in North Cork, in the first decade of the 20th Century. He was succeeded by his son Roger in 1925. Roger married Elizabeth O'Keefe, daughter of a farmer in Mologhroe, where he lodged. Registers survive for Cullen National School from 1864 in the County Library and from 1918 in the current National School.

Rathduane National School AD 1869.

This is the only school in the parish operating in its original building. It began as a two roomed school, constructed on lands donated by John McCarthy of Rathduane Great House in 1869. He had lands at KnockNagullane. He had previously provided a chapel at Rathduane, for the people of the area, which was blessed and opened by Bishop Moriarty on August 13th 1864. Two further rooms were added to the school in 1882. In 1900 it had approximately 100 pupils on the roll. The earliest teachers included Phillip Moynihan, who probably was a monitor at Hollymount in 1883, Kate Cronin (nee Hickey) who transferred as principal to Cullen in 1892 and Michael Murphy of Annagloor, who taught there before going to teach in Millstreet. Although threatened with closure in the early 1990's, the school was retained and extensively refurbished in 1991. Today it has two teachers and 25 pupils. Its registers go back to 1892.

Cloghoola National School AD 1869.

The old school (now disused) was built at the same time as Rathduane. It was a two roomed school and was replaced by a new school built close by in 1968. In 1900 there were 25 girls and in 1903 there were 26 boys on the roll in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd classes. It is now a two teacher school. Earliest teachers include Denis O'Sullivan, Michael Murphy and Jim Dennehy but no dates are available for when they taught there. Registers survive from 1894 for girls and from 1903 for boys.

Millstreet Town Schools.

The Boys School:

The schoolhouse was endowed by the McCarthy O'Leary family, which opened circa 1825 at the West End, probably continued to function until the opening of the new Boys school at Clara Road in 1894. Its first principal was William O'Riordan, who became secretary of the newly established branch of the Gaelic League in 1898. This school continued in use until 1958 when it was replaced by the new school, Scoil Mhuire, at the entrance to the town park. Registers survive from 1925.

We also know from a Board of Education Report (1835) that the poet Edward Walsh ran a fee paying school at Drishane. Numbers had increased over a period of five years to 70 boys (50 during winter months).

Convent Girls School.

This school began in 1841 following the arrival of the Presentation Sisters in Millstreet. Registers survive from 1873.

Aubane National School.

This school was built on land provided by Humphrey O'Donoghue, close to Aubane cross. The builder was John Coffey of Middleton, who had previously been involved in the construction of Cullen Church. Mr Flynn was works foreman. It opened on August 12th 1913 and had a roll of 28 boys and 35 girls. Management was vested in the Diocese. The first principal was Bridget O'Shea, assisted by Mary Ellen Corcoran of Minor Row. The two roomed school, which initially segregated boys and girls, was amalgamated in 1917. Timothy Corkerry of Pound Hill became the new principal. It closed in 1974 and the building is now used as a vibrant Community Centre. The Registers have been published by the Aubane Historical Society.

Conclusion

In this publication an attempt has been made to chronicle the development of education from the Bardic Schools, through the humble clandestine enterprise which was the Hedge Schools of Penal Times, to the more open, fee paying schools preceding the introduction of State funded education which came with the advent of the National School Act of 1831. Some information is included which goes beyond the terminal date indicated, viz. 1900. The reason for this was to provide a sense of continuity with the present and for the sake of logical completion.

This record needs to be supplemented with a study of the development of Second level education and the ecclesiastical history of Millstreet Parish, together with other significant changes which took place during the 20th Century.

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