

A reprinting of Father John Hart's report
IRELAND JULY 1966

Our flight on the Irish airlines was late in leaving Lourdes on the evening of July 15, 1966. As a result, we did not land in Dublin until about 10:00pm. Taxied to the Gresham Hotel for the night. On Saturday afternoon, we hired a car and driver for a trip north of Dublin. We left the City through Phoenix Park, then to Maynooth, the seminary for all of Ireland, where the Priests for the home missions are trained. They have a very impressive plant and grounds. From there, we went to Navan, where the motherhouse and headquarters of the Columban Fathers is located. One of the two Priests who were left there on Saturday afternoon, Father Brennan, had been stationed in the Columban's Omaha House in the forties and early fifties. Our next point of interest was the locale of the Battle of the Boyne where William of Orange defeated the pro-Catholic pretender to the English throne. In the same vicinity, we visited the ruins of a 10th century Cistercian Monastery, an intact round tower, and a cemetery with 12th century Celtic Crosses. At Slane, we passed the house where Father Thomas Shaw was raised, then on to Drogheda and back down to Dublin along the seacoast. This evening at about 10:00pm, Father John J. Judge visited us, and had a run-in with a cab driver over a parking spot on O'Connell Street.

Sunday morning we said Mass at the Pro-Cathedral of Dublin which is just behind the hotel—at the main altar they were having Mass in Gaelic. After a futile attempt to get all of us into Father Judge's "small car," we rehired the car we had enjoyed the day before. It was an Austin Princess, and the driver, Martin Enright. Our destination this day was south through the Wicklow Mountains. It was a beautiful trip down the coast. Just before Bray, we turned inland and lunched at Roundwood. Next stop was at the ruins of the seven churches established by St. Kevin in the vale of Glendalough. High up on the mountain side overlooking the lake in the vale was supposed to be St. Kevin's bed. There are about ten of these in the vicinity, all supposed to be authentic, where he beat off his amorous female admirer with a bundle of thistles. She fell into the lake and was drowned, and the body never recovered. For this reason, the Irish believe that there is no bottom to the lake. "If you wish to check for yourself, you are free to do so." We came back through the Wicklow Gap and across the bog lands where the farmers had cut their year's supply of peat and had it stacked for drying. We were back in Dublin at 5:00pm. After a quick consultation, it was decided the best manner of seeing Ireland for the next twelve days was to have Martin drive a car for us. He promised a 1962 Chevy which would be very adequate.

After saying Mass again at the Pro-Cathedral on Monday morning, we left Dublin at 10:30am. (It was the cause of great admiration—the large numbers of people at Mass and Communion on the weekdays. This was not restricted to Dublin, but common in every part of the island—the six north counties excepted.) Our route was along the main road from Dublin to Belfast. Another stop at Drogheda (to view the Heart of Blessed Oliver Plunkett at the Cathedral). Then through Dundalk and Newry to Banbridge from whence Hugh Higgins (Msgr. Higgins' paternal grandfather) came in County Down of Northern Ireland. We had a nice visit with Mike Higgins, his wife, and four sons at his bar. We had to take a "small" drink in the upstairs room over the

bar, reserved for those who should not mix with the small-fry in the bar. Father Seymore, the Assistant at St. Patrick's Church was most helpful. While we could not locate the records of Hugh Higgins, he promised to check in one of the outlying parishes where the family is still very dominant. Turning west, we visited the Cathedral at Armagh, and the residence of Cardinal Conway, the primate of all Ireland.

It was a bit of a relief to pass once more through customs and back into Ireland and County Monaghan, and on to County Cavan. Following the directions given by Msgr. McStay, we stopped at Killeshandra, about six miles west of the City of Cavan. Of necessity, we stopped at the pub to seek directions to Arvagh and Coronea which are Missions attached to the Parish of Killeshandra. At Coronea is located Bruce Mountain or Hill from which Grandfather Hart came. Gerry Deere decided to test Guinness at this stop, and for the first time in his life, he left a drink half finished. The local Chamber of Commerce (three old timers on a bench outside the bar) directed us southeast towards Crossdoney, before we arrived at that village we make a right hand turn to Arvagh on a marked road. Arvagh was about five miles off the main road. On the way, we passed a settlement consisting of a fine big Church, a few houses, a bar, and two or three small stores. About a mile off to the southwest of this settlement was a high hill. It looked at the time that this would be Coronea. We went the added three miles into Arvagh and asked the local Garda where Bruce Mountain was. After a diligent study of the map, he told us there were no mountains in this part of Ireland. We then consulted a small shopkeeper who informed us that the village we had just passed and the hill were Coronea and Bruce Hill or Mountain. We retraced our steps, and as we were circling the base of the Hill, a Priest drove by going in the opposite direction. We hailed him down, and he proved to be a priest from Arvagh home from the English Missions stationed in Birmingham. He confirmed that this was Bruce and wished us to come home with him as his sister-in-law had been raised on Bruce. As it was getting rather late, we declined his kind offer. Just then, a Bruce Jackine came by with his horse and cart, and young son. We stopped him to inquire if he knew of any Harts on Bruce. After pondering deeply, he came up with, "On which side of the Mountain?" He then told us he knew Charlie Hart. When pressed, he admitted that Charlie had been dead for three years. The young Priest from England gave us the information that the Hill or Mountain is about 650 feet in height. Upon further examination, it was noted that on the East side, they are digging for lime or some other like substance, and perhaps in a few years, there will be no Bruce Mountain left. We stopped at the Church, very nice and well kept, said a prayer and then checked the cemetery. There were no Harts according to the stones, so I guess that poor Charlie (the last of the clan on Bruce) lies in one of the unmarked graves. It is to be noted that because of the poor quality of stone used, and because of the great amount of moisture in Ireland, it is impossible to read any tombstone going back over fifty years. We then made haste to Carrick-on-Shannon which is on the border between County Leitrim and County Roscommon. That evening, we celebrated Msgr. John Higgins 59th birthday with hors d'oeuvres in the room at the Bush Hotel, and a cake at the table in the dining room. We had a walking tour of the City after dinner—arranging to say Mass in the Church across the street from the hotel, inspecting the docks on the Shannon, and visiting with some young lads just back from two years in England. (N.B. Arvagh is right on the border between County Cavan and County Longford.)

At 10:30 the next morning, we had all our chores finished, as saying Mass and breakfast, and we left for County Mayo. We traveled through the southern portion of County Sligo and the Ox Mountains into Ballina in north Mayo at the head of Killala Bay. After lunch at the Downhill Hotel, we met and visited with a Father Lynch who was just entering the hotel with a wedding party. He was a nephew of old Father Lynch of Carroll, Iowa who has just died within the last year or so. We visited St. Muredach's Cathedral where Msgr. Higgins' mother was baptized. The good Msgr. visited with some distant relatives who showed him the house where his mother lived. Then a short visit and "small" drink with the sister of a friend of the Higginses in Chicago. South from Ballina to Castlebar (more in central Mayo) and on south towards Cong where we were billeted at the Ashmore Castle for three nights. East of the road which runs from Castlebar through Ballinrobe to Cong there is listed a Ballyglass which rang a bell for the Canavan territory. Since it was early, we turned off in that direction. After much twisting and turning and many consultations, we arrived at a crossroad devoid of any habitation. A young lad came by on a bicycle, and we asked directions to Ballyglass. He replied, "You're in it." Our next stop was at Ballygerres, which consisted of a fine Church and a pub operated by Patrick Hughes and two or three small shops. (Hughes was the maiden name of the wife of Anthony Canavan). There were two Fathers Canavan buried in the Church yard of this parish, and both had been former Pastors. Patty Hughes was in bed, and his wife could give us no information. With the frustration on Ballyglass, we started to look for Kallkodooy (this was the spelling I was given). It was only later that we discovered why there was no town at Ballyglass and why it was still on the maps. We stopped in the town of Hollymount where our driver consulted the Post Office. About this time, I was about ready to give up, and the other three travelers were giving me a very bad time. At the Post Office we received the information that there was a section of "townland" outside of Claremorris called Curraghadooey which we were sure was the place we were looking for. The Post Master called over to this section and discovered that there were no longer any Canavans. He was able to pinpoint the location on the map for our driver, and we would find it eventually. It was getting late, so we proceeded on to Cong and the Ashmore Castle, intending to return later on. The Castle is very picturesque, but not very practical for a hotel.

The next day we toured the justly famous Ring of Connemara which is the southwest section of County Mayo. The ring runs along the coastline bordering the Atlantic Ocean. We passed the range of mountains called the Twelve Pins after the Twelve Apostles. At recess, we stopped for lunch and viewed some of the products made of the world famous green Connemara Marble. Many of the Churches and Altars of Ireland are made of this beautiful material. On the shore of Lake Inogh, we visited a castle which an order of Benedictine Nuns had turned into a girls College. Their foundation had originally been at Ypres in Belgium, and was destroyed during the battle at that location in World War I. In the parlor of the castle, the Mother introduced us to a group of Sisters back on a holiday from the Missions in Nigeria. I asked if they had run across a Bishop R. Finn of Ibadan, Nigeria. They worked in his Diocese and knew him very well, and I asked to be remembered to him. He is a relative of Annie Finn's husband, and visited Annie in Omaha about seven years ago. At that time, I had lunch with him at Annie's, and he claimed that the Finns and the Canavans were related. We later discovered that Kiltamagh is only about ten miles from Claremorris. We visited the famous Killary Harbour (the longest in

Ireland). This is a bleak, beautiful, but unproductive country. That evening back at Ashmore Castle, we had a few drinks with Red Smith, the famous American sports writer, who was with his wife. She was most charming, and came from St. Louis. Things went well until she explained that she was a cousin of Archbishop Cody of Chicago. We exchanged many good stories of Sec Taylor and Bert McGrane of the Des Moines Register and Tribune sports staff.

On Thursday, July 21, after Mass, we took off for the Shrine of Our Lady at Knock. The town of Knock is about seven miles northeast of Claremorris in County Mayo—it is also about seven miles southeast of Kiltamagh which is Annie Finn's hometown. The village itself is small with less than a thousand population. On August 21, 1879 at about 8:30pm the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, and St. John the Evangelist appeared on the south side of the Parish Church. The three of them remained there for about three hours. The apparition was viewed by about 22 of the local parishioners. Since that time there has been a slow but steady growth of devotion and pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Knock. During the Marian Year of 1955, the Shrine of Knock was listed as one of the Twenty Major Shrines to Mary throughout the world. They are still in the process of developing this Shrine. Today, the actual spot of the apparition is glass enclosed, and there is room for several thousand pilgrims. They are in the process now of erecting another Altar in the courtyard which will be completely glass enclosed and will be visible from all sides. We picked up a few trinkets and drank some of the water and returned to Claremorris.

It was noon when we returned to Claremorris, and we stopped at the hotel for lunch. As we approached the hotel, we noticed a Priest saying his office in the front yard of the rectory just a block from the hotel. While the others ordered lunch, Martin and myself returned to seek information from the good Padre. He was most gracious, and we had to go to the upstairs parlor and have a Scotch and Soda (even though he was a Pioneer himself) before any information was given. It was with a sigh of relief that we heard he knew of Curraghadooey, and that he was sure that it was in Ballindine Parish. After lunch, we took off for Ballindine where the good Pastor informed us that Curraghadooey was in the Parish of Crossboyne which is only about four miles from Claremorris. Our next call was to the rectory of Father John Glynn P.O. of Crossboyne in the Diocese of Tuam. There is not too much to the town, but it is listed on the larger maps. There could not be over two hundred people in the whole town. Father Glynn was at first rather suspicious of the four priests and a driver with a big car descending upon him. He soon loosened up and was most congenial and delightful. He was a member of St. Matthew's Pioneers. He ushered us into the front room with a large dining type table (which was badly in need of dusting). I explained to him our quest, and that so far we had been very disappointed in our search for Curraghadooey. He struck the table with his fist, and declared that we were home. He brought out all of the records—baptisms, marriages, deaths, and even the financial ones—for us to examine. While Father Deere and I went through the records from 1830 to 1857, Father Phelan and Msgr. John Higgins had a great visit with Father Glynn. He had studied in Rome and was ordained in 1928, did not like to travel, did not smoke or drink, owns no car (he and his housekeeper's bicycles were inside the glass enclosed vestibule of the rectory). Just yesterday, he had spent the afternoon burning trash, and it was invigorating. He has never been back to Rome. The coat he was wearing was badly frayed at

the cuffs, and his rabat was turned brown. It must have been the outfit he was ordained in. He was very interested in the living standards in the States. His question was just how far could one get on a holiday on a ten pound note (\$28). He was quite upset when we told him he would probably never get out of the Railroad Station.

In our examination of the records, we were not able to come up with any records of Austin or Anthony Canavan or their immediate families. Anthony Canavan was my Great Grandfather, and Austin Canavan was his brother who preceded him to this country, and also settled in Momence, Illinois. The records were far from being complete, and in many cases, were unreadable after such a long time. In some cases, full pages had been torn out. It seemed that each year the Pastor would select another spot in the book to start his records, and there was no semblance of proper sequence of years. For example, the records for the years 1852 to 1857 were missing. Ten pages later, we came across the records of three of these missing years. There were many references to the Canavans in this period. In the 1850s, there were several children of a John Canavan baptized, which could well have been a brother to Austin and Anthony. In several cases, the maiden name of the mothers was Canavan, for example, there were several children of Hugh Seymore and Ellen Canavan baptized in that period. The records are filled with Hugheses. Father Glynn explained that about two thirds of his parish is made up of Hugheses or those related to them. He also explained that in those days, it was rather common for the child to be baptized in the home parish of the maternal grandmother or in the home parish of the mid-wife who assisted at the birth, usually in her own home. I left with him the names and approximate dates, as well as my own name and address, and he confessed that it would be a great sport some winter evening to check the records completely, and if he comes up with any information, he will let me know.

As we were leaving, Father Glynn noted the car (1962 Chevy) again, and remarked that it must cost a merry quid. He did admit that it was the only way in which we could really see Ireland. We still had not settled on just what and where was Curraghadooey. He informed me that it was the name given to a portion of the land in the parish—"townland" was the term he used. There was no Church there, and if there were any of the family buried in the cemetery, it would be in the Church of Ireland burial plot (part of the English persecution of the time), but that any stone of over fifty years would be unreadable. If we went into Crossboyne and took the main street (the only one) to the west as far as the first thatch covered cottage on the right hand side of the road, there was a road on the east side of this cottage leading into Curraghadooey. We could probably drive in a ways, but there was nothing to see, and it got worse the farther in we travelled. Following these directions, we came to the entrance to Curraghadooey. The road Father Glynn referred to was a bicycle path which at its widest part would allow two bikes to pass each other. One would have had to tear down two stone fences to get the car in, so we took Father Glynn's word for there being nothing to see. As we were checking the location, a gentleman came by on his cycle. We asked him if this was Curraghadooey, and he informed us that it was "...God bless you," and rode on down the path. I took several pictures, but will not guarantee how they will turn out. The land is rather thin and rocky—they have the typical rock fences everywhere, and the plots of land are from five to ten acres in area. As everywhere else in Ireland, they raise and milk many cows, so much of the land is used for grazing and raising

hay. The main field crops are potatoes, cabbage, melons, sugar beets, etc. Curraghadooey, as well as Coronea, is far from being the most desirable farm land in Ireland.

Later on in Killarney, I picked up a paperback book for two and six entitled, "With the Irish Republican Army in the Fight for Freedom—1919 to the Truce." This is published by the Kerryman Press, and is a collection of earlier published articles in the Kerryman Paper giving description of various isolated engagements of the Irish in their fight with the British forces from 1919 until the truce in 1921. On page 211 of this work, there is an article entitled, "Thirty I.R.A. men defied 600 British Troops at Tourmakeady." This was an action by the South Mayo Brigade on May 3, 1921. Since the Irish are not given to overstatement, we can well take these accounts as being accurate. This Brigade was made up of men from Ballinrobe (which is about nine miles southwest of Crossboyne, and about the same distance straight south of where they have Ballyglass listed on the map), under the command of Tom Maguire. The fifth paragraph of this article opens, "In South Mayo, I.R.A. actions and public opinion had been taking their toll. On the main road to Westport (25 miles northwest on the Atlantic coast) and Ballinrobe, the Royal Constabulary barracks at Partry had been evacuated. So had the barrack at Ballyglass." I believe that this is the answer to the seeming contradiction of the Canavans speaking with so much authority about Ballyglass and then to discover that it is merely a crossroads and nothing more. However, the roads do cross at a 90° angle, and it is open country where a good view of all the surrounding countryside is afforded. There is evidence there of considerable building on this location in the not too distant past. The stone fences are higher and thicker and less irregular than in the usual rural sections. Undoubtedly, this was the location of the barracks for the Royal Irish Constabulary, which was the British force engaged in the maintenance of British rule in Ireland. It was the one which had been abandoned in 1921 because of the pressure of the I.R.A., as mentioned above. It was common practice of the I.R.A. to immediately burn and destroy these abandoned barracks so that they could not be reactivated. Certainly, at the time the Canavans left Ireland, the most important town in the vicinity would have been the location of the R.I.C. barracks, and it was thus most logical for this to be given as the address of home. In the mid-1800s, Ballyglass was the important town in the locality of Curraghadooey, it is most logical that they would give their home address as Curraghadooey, Ballyglass, County Mayo, Ireland. At the present time, Claremorris has developed into the most important town in the locality, and would now be substituted for Ballyglass.