

Wellington Death Mask



Item: Death Mask

Date: 1852

Find Location: London

Current Location: Privately Summerhill. Mask came from the Castle Leslie.

Description:

Wellington Death Mask by George Gammon Adams plaster cast of death-mask, 1852 9 3/8 in. (238 mm) high. This is the death mask of the Duke of Wellington, a plaster model of his face taken on the day he died, on 14 September 1852. The Duke was 83 years old at the time of his death, probably from a stroke. Although over 30 years had passed since the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, and his political career had not been popular, the Duke was still a national hero, and his death led to widespread mourning.

During the 19th century it was common to make a model of the face of someone who had recently died. This could be used to produce plaster casts, like this one, as a memento or commemorative item for the friends and admirers of the deceased. This cast, unlike some, was not widely distributed – perhaps because it shows the Duke as an elderly and fragile man, rather than as the young, dashing war hero of popular imagination.

The Duke died in Walmer Castle, Deal, England, which had been his official residence as Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. This post was the last of many military and government offices he had held since his victory at Waterloo in 1815. The Duke had been, in turn, Warden of the Tower of London, Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, and Prime Minister. In the last position, he became for the first time ever unpopular with the public, by opposing attempts to reform the British system of parliamentary representation.

The Duke of Wellington, Arthur Wellesley grew up in Trim and spent most of his childhood at Dangan castle. The young Arthur Wesley was educated in Trim and at Drogheda Grammar School before going to Eton. In 1789, he was elected MP for Trim.

Further Information:

<http://www.patrickcomerford.com/2015/04/wellington-irish-hero-at-waterloo-who.html>

<http://atriptoireland.com/2013/11/11/the-wellington-monument-a-controversial-statue-in-a-small-irish-town/>

<http://www.irishtimes.com/life-and-style/the-duke-of-wellington-s-drunken-dublin-years-1.2244707>

Flagon



Item: Flagon

Date: 1855

Find Location: Trim

Current Location: Trim

Description:

Flagon inscribed “The gift of the Very Rev. Richard Butler, Dean of Clonmacnoise and for 35 years vicar of Trim. Easter 1855”.

Richard Butler, Dean of Clonmacnoise, was born near Granard, County of Longford, in 1794. He was educated at Reading; in 1814 he entered Oxford, and in 1819 received priest's orders, and was inducted vicar of Trim. There his life was passed in attendance on the duties of his cure, and in literary and antiquarian investigations. He was intimate with the best minds of the day in his own party: Maria Edgeworth was an occasional visitor at his house. He was one of the founders of the Irish Archaeological Society, for which association he edited *Clyn and Dowling's Annals*. Before 1840 he had brought out two editions of his work on the *Antiquities of Trim*. Possibly one of the first books to have been produced on the medieval history and antiquities of an Irish town which was first published in 1835. Four editions of Butler's book were published in his lifetime and it has remained an important source on medieval Trim. He died in 1862, aged 67, and was interred beside the church where he had ministered for forty-three years.

Further Information:

Martina Quinn, *Dean Richard Butler Historian of Trim 1794-1862 150th Anniversary of his Death* (Trim)

Rules of Croquet



Item: Rules of Croquet

Date: 1850s

Find Location: Oatlands, Durhamstown, Navan

Current Location: Worldwide

Description:

Croquet is a game that involves using a mallet to hit a ball through a hoop. The origins of the game of croquet are obscure; but it is clear it was developed in Ireland in the early part of the nineteenth Century. The Field of 1858 (quoted by Betty Prichard in The Croquet Gazette of April 1976) mentions “meetings of the County Meath Croquet Cracks”. They were mostly young and met at each other's houses, and the reporter was George Annesley Pollock of Oatlands and Newcastle, Co Meath. Later that year he sent a copy of his rules under the pseudonym of "Corncrake" and called them "The Rules of the Oatlands Club". That is the first mention of a croquet club." The noted croquet historian Dr Prior, in his book of 1872, makes the categorical statement "One thing only is certain: it is from Ireland that croquet came to England and it was on the lawn of the late Lord Lonsdale that it was first played in this country". This was about 1851.

George Pollock held Oatlands, Durhamstown, Navan. George Annesly Pollock was the son of Arthur Hill Pollock of Mountainstown. George married Louisa McKay of Stephen's Green, Dublin in 1846. George died in 1867 leaving three sons and three daughters.

Further Information:

<http://www.croquetireland.com/node/4>

Medal for Gallantry



Item: Papal Medal for Gallantry

Date: 1860

Find Location: Clonalvey

Current Location: In private hands

Description:

In 1860 the Pope faced the loss of his territory to the emerging state of Italy. An Irish Battalion was organised and despatched to the Papal States. The war lasted less than a month. The Papal War of 1860 ended with the fall of Ancona where as many as 100 Irish soldiers in the Battalion of St. Patrick were killed or wounded during those few weeks in September. For their service, each officer and enlisted man was awarded the Medal for Gallantry “Pro Petri Sede Medaglia” by Pope Pius IX. The medal is a circular, silvered nickel-silver medal with hollow centre with inverted Latin cross. With a circular ring in the form of a scaled mythical creature swallowing its own tail, on ornate swivel suspension with ribbon bar; the face circumscribed ‘PRO PETRI SEDE’ (literally ‘for the seat of Peter’, meaning for the Vatican) above and ‘PIO*IX*P*M*A*XV’ (= Pius IX Pontifex Maximus 15th year, for the 15th year of the reign of Pope Pius IX = 1860); the reverse circumscribed ‘VICTORIA OVAE VINCIT MUNDUM FIDES NOSTRA’ (The victory of our flock conquers the world with our faith). One such medal is recorded in Clonalvey in 1993.

Further Information:

<http://www.elegantetruria.com/history-page/irish-soldiers-in-italy-1860/>

Olive C. Curran, *History of the Diocese of Meath 1860-1993* (Mullingar, 1995) Vol. 1 p. 108

Letter from American Civil War

Additional evidence
Pension Case 14231
Near Frammuth Va
Dec 17/62
Mrs. Briody,
Dear Madam,
I don't
wish to address to you, the
common words of condolence
merely - I feel, myself, as well
as you, too much the great
ness of the loss. The first time,
I saw James Briody, I was
struck with his honest, manly,
cheery face - I found him to be
one of the two best of all the
recruits who joined my com-
pany - It gave me a great
pang when I saw him ly-
ing dead in the street. He
was killed instantly. A board
with his name on it, marks
his grave in a vacant lot in

Item: Sympathy letter

Date: 1862

Find Location:

Current Location: National Archives of
America

Description:

James Briody was part of an emigrant family from Castlerahan area, Co. Meath, who left Ireland for North Andover, Massachusetts. An express driver before his enlistment, he joined up the 20th Massachusetts on 11th August 1862. The 24 years-old was described as 5 feet 7 inches tall, with blue eyes, light hair and a fair complexion. On the night of 9th December, two days before the fight for the streets of Fredericksburg, he wrote to his widowed mother, seemingly with little idea of what was to come. On the evening of 11th December 1862 the 20th Massachusetts Infantry – the “Harvard Regiment” – was one of the units engaged in driving the Confederates from the city of Fredericksburg. The city was eventually taken by the Federals, but for the 20th Massachusetts it had come at a staggering cost. They had suffered 97 casualties in the space of just fifty yards including James Briody.

His Captain, Henry Livermore Abbott penned the letter to James’s mother on 17th December 1862: “I don’t wish to address to you the common words of condolence merely- I feel, myself, as well as you, too much the greatness of the loss. The first time, I saw James Briody, I was struck with his honest, manly, cheery face. I found him to be one of the two best of all the recruits who joined my company. It gave me a great pang when I saw him lying dead in the street. He was killed instantly. A board with his name on it, marks his grave in a vacant lot in Fredericksburg. Believe me that I sympathize most deeply with you, in your awful loss.”

Further Information:

Widow’s Certificate WC9732 of Margaret Briady, Dependent Mother of James Briady, Company I, 20th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry.

<https://irishamericancivilwar.com/2016/12/09/communicating-death-creating-memory-on-fredericksburgs-streets/>

O’Reilly, Francis Augustin 2003. *The Fredericksburg Campaign: Winter War on the Rappahannock*.

[Fredericksburg & Spotsylvania National Military Park.](#)

[Fredericksburg Civil War Trust Page.](#)

Meath in the later 19th century - Meath Virtual Museum – Noel French

A rhinoceros horn knobkerrie



Item: A rhinoceros horn knobkerrie

Date: 1863

Find Location: Associated with Dardistown Castle

Current Location: Sold at auction by Bonhams Auctioneers

Description:

Southern African oval head above tapering bowed shaft, 86cm along the outer curve Capt. Henry Osbourne, Dardistown Castle, Co. Meath, Ireland. Acquired during hunting trips throughout 1863.

This rhinoceros horn fighting club *Izintonga* was carved from a single horn. It would have been made only for the use of a Zulu king. The club would have been both prestigious and also powerful; the strength of the animal from which it was taken gave it enormous potency and therefore only a King, a great medicine man, could own it.

Clubs with heads of this size were outlawed by the British who passed a law stating that the diameter of the head had to be of a size small enough to fit into the owner's mouth.

RDS Cattle Show Medal



Item: Royal Dublin Society Spring Cattle Show medal

Date: 1867

Find Location: Dublin/ Priesttown

Current Location: Sold by auction by Whytes Auctioneers

Description:

Early silver 1867 RDS Spring Cattle show medal. Engraving on reverse notes that it was awarded to "Thomas Butler Best Kerry Heifer Calved in 1865 No. 261" Thomas Butler lived at Priesttown House, Priesttown, Kilbride, Dunboyne. A well known farmer and member of the RDS he was one of the principle cattle breeders in Ireland. Thomas Butler JP of Priesttown House died 19th Feb 1900 in his 77th year.

Further Information:

Fairy Coat



Item: Fairy Coat

Date: 1868?

Find Location: Llyod, Kells.

Current Location: Unknown

Description:

Discovered (?) during the summer of 1868 by John Abraham ffoliott as he went for a morning walk near a 'fairy ring' at Llyod, Kells. The coat measures 6.5 inches from collar to hem, with long sleeves 5 inches on outside, 1.75 inches across the shoulders. Coat is fully lined with a velvet collar. Coat made of brownish-grey material in a style for the late 18th century. On the left lapel, was a metal button advocating the Repeal of the Union. Coats shows sign of wear.

Further Information:

Rosemary ffoliott, 'ffoliott of Co. Meath' in *The Irish Ancestor* Vol. 1, No. 1, 1969

Trade Banners



The Brick and Stonelayers Banner



The Boyne Fishermen's Banner

Item: Trade Banners

Date: c. 1873

Find Location: Drogheda

Current Location: Drogheda Museum, Millmount.

Description:

Situated within Millmount Museum in Drogheda, one of the first items or artefacts that the visitor is presented with on entering the museum is the Trade Banners of the 19th century which represent the various different trade societies that were in operation at this period including the banners of the Brick and Stone Masons, the Carpenters and Weavers Banners and that of the Labourers Society among others. William Reynolds painted all the Drogheda Trade Union banners along with some thirty more Guild banners. Reynolds was born in September 1842 at Dowth and lived at Oldbridge. He died at the young age of just 39 in December 1881 and was buried in Donore Graveyard. The processional banners of the 'Boyne Fishermen', a splendid nine by seven foot, oil on canvas, depicts three fishermen on the Boyne, at Tom Roe's Point, downstream from Drogheda. The Drogheda Society discovered this banner in an outhouse, at Miss Murphy's residence in Francis Street. In 1873 Bernard Finglas of Francis Street and the brothers Matthew and Edward Murphy, Scarlet Street, on behalf of the fishing community, commissioned William Reynolds.

Further Information:

Moira Corcoran and Peter Durnin *The Drogheda Banners* (Drogheda, 2001)

<http://slanehistoryandarchaeologysociety.com/index.php/famous-people/12-william-reynolds-the-banner-artist>

<http://www.independent.ie/regionals/droghedaindependent/news/william-reynolds-and-trade-banners-27158828.html>

<http://www.independent.ie/regionals/droghedaindependent/localnotes/banner-artist-william-reynolds-27105422.html>

Spirit Measure



Item: Pewter measure

Date: Victorian

Find Location: Drogheda area

Current Location: Drogheda area

Description:

Pewter measure, Victorian quarter-gill, standard spirit measure (35ml), stamped by Inspector of Weights and Measures. The gill (jill) is a unit of measurement for volume equal to a quarter of a pint. It is no longer in common use, except in regard to the volume of alcoholic spirits measures. In Ireland, the standard spirit measure was historically 1/4 gill. In the Republic of Ireland, it still retains this value, though it is now legally specified in metric units as 35.5 ml. Thank you to John McCullen for this item.

Further Information:

Raffle Ticket



Item: Raffle Ticket

Date: 1874

Find Location: Drogheda area

Current Location: Drogheda area

Description:

Raffle ticket, 7th March 1874, with 32 prizes for raising funds to rebuild Siena Convent Chapel, Drogheda, signed on reverse by James McCullen, Beabeg. Some prizes supplied by Meath residents. The convent, dedicated to St Catherine of Siena and popularly known as Siena Convent was founded in the 18th century. The Dominican Order in Ireland wished to found a new convent of Dominican nuns so Dr Hugh McMahon, Dominican Provincial, recalled from Brussels Catherine Plunkett, a close relative of Blessed Oliver Plunkett to found a convent in Drogheda in 1722. For 200 years Dominican sisters of Drogheda were custodians of the head of St Oliver and in 1921 the head was transferred from Siena convent to St Peter's. Thank you to John McCullen for this item.

Further Information:

The Empress's Riding Crop



Item: Riding Crop

Date: 1875

Find Location: Rahinstown, Rathmolyon

Current Location: Private Collection, Channel Islands. Sold by Adam's Auctioneers.

Description:

The Empress of Austria's riding whip, c.1875 with ivory simulated cord grip, silver band with the imperial crest. The pommel is in the shape of an imperial crown and the whip is contained in a glazed mahogany presentation case with a silvered crest plate engraved with the imperial Hapsburg Arms on the back.

Empress of Austria presented the whip to the Master of the Meath Hunt, Captain Robert Fowler, during a visit in 1879.

In February 1879 Elisabeth, Empress of Austria, popularly known then and since as Sisi, arrived in County Meath. In the early spring of 1880 the Empress again visited Ireland, going straight to Summerhill. Unhappily married, restless and inclined to melancholy, she found distraction in hunting and it was this sport which brought her to Ireland. Throughout her six-week stay in the country she followed the hounds almost daily with the Ward Union and the Meath and the Kildare Hunts. Her own animals not proving suitable for the Irish terrain, local owners lent or sold the Empress their mounts. During her 1879 visit and on a second occasion the following year the Empress stayed at Summerhill House.

Further Information:

<http://www.historyireland.com/18th-19th-century-history/erin-cordially-welcomes-the-empresselizabeth-of-austria-hungary-in-ireland-1879-and-1880/>

<http://www.mkheritage.co.uk/eoa/docs/Summerhill.html>

<https://theirishaesthete.com/tag/summerhill/>

https://archive.org/stream/elizabethempres00burggoog/elizabethempres00burggoog_djvu.txt

Daniel O'Connell Centenary Medal



Item: Daniel O'Connell Birth Centenary Medal

Date: 1875

Find Location: Drogheda area

Current Location: Drogheda area

Description:

Daniel O'Connell (Centenary of Birth)- Bust to right; Inscribed Daniel O'Connell M P.; Born Aug 6TH 1775 Died May 1847. *Reverse.*- Round tower, harp, and wolf-dog, with sun rising over the sea. Back: Catholic Emancipation Repeal / Centenary 1875. Daniel O'Connell born 6 August 1775 was often referred to as The Liberator or The Emancipator. He campaigned for Catholic Emancipation—including the right for Catholics to sit in the Westminster Parliament. Thank you to John McCullen for this item.

Further Information:

Rules of Polo



Item: Rules of Polo (Photo: John Watson on polo horse)

Date: 1870s

Find Location: Bective

Current Location: Worldwide

Description:

In 1891, John Henry Watson, one of the most famous equestrian sportsmen in Ireland and to this day known as the 'Father of Polo', went to live at Bective Demesne, later purchasing the estate. Watson pursued a military career as a Cavalry Officer and in 1874 travelled to India where he saw the game of polo as it had been played in India for centuries. It is said that his commander-in-chief, General Frederick Roberts, asked Watson to formulate a set of fundamental rules for the game. It was actually in Meath that the first ever game of polo was played in Ireland on Gormanstown Beach in 1870 between a Meath team and a team from the 9th Lancers. . Watson is said to have played in this game.in 1870. After Watson retired from the army in 1884 he returned from India to Bective and devoted himself to equestrian sports, breeding hunters and polo ponies, and set up polo playing pitches at Bective. His passion for the sport let him to teach players a new way of playing the game of polo, introducing the now familiar 'riding off' and the positional play that is still used today. He achieved international status when he memorably captained the winning All Ireland Polo Club at the inaugural Westchester Cup final in Rhode Island in 1886. He was Master of the Foxhounds and used Bective Demesne as home for the Meath Hunt, erecting kennels within the demesne that are still in use today. His polo playing career came to an end in 1905. He died suddenly at Bective in November, 1908. His remains were interred at Bective Church.

Further Information:

Cheque to Parnell



Item: Cheque to Charles Stewart Parnell

Date: 1880

Find Location: Drogheda area

Current Location: Drogheda area

Description:

Cheque to Charles Stewart Parnell, 1880 in support of the Land League. Signed on rear by Parnell. Meath launched Charles Stewart Parnell onto the political stage in 1875 when he was elected as Member of Parliament for the county. John Martin, M.P. for Meath died in 1875 and Parnell sought the vacancy. Parnell visited Kells to see the Bishop of Meath, Dr. Nulty, who gave him his support. Parnell canvassed in all the towns and villages of the county and was accompanied on many of these visits by the Kells Brass Band. Parnell topped the poll and bonfires blazed in celebration and the successful candidate was carried around Market Square, Trim in triumph.

In his maiden speech he declared that Ireland was not a geographical fragment of England but a nation in its own right. By 1879 Parnell, M.P. for Meath had become the leader of the Irish Home Rule Party. In that year Parnell's success was greeted by a crowd of twenty two thousand supporters in Market Square, Navan and a banquet.

Parnell became heavily involved in the land reform, perhaps influenced initially by Bishop Nulty. Parnell advised tenant farmers to "keep a firm grip on their homesteads." The Land League was formed in 1879 with Parnell as President, perhaps an unusual position for a Protestant landlord.

In 1880 Parnell was elected for three constituencies, Meath, Mayo and Cork and he selected to represent Cork. The following year Parnell was imprisoned in Kilmainham Jail for his Land League activities. Various tenant purchase acts were passed which eventually sorted out the land problem. Thank you to John McCullen for this item.

Further Information:

Irish National Land League membership card



Item: Irish National Land League membership card

Date: 1880

Find Location: Drumconrath

Current Location: Sold by Whyte & Sons Auctioneers

Description:

Letterpress with manuscript on card. A scarce Land League membership card issued by the Drumconrath Branch to James Lynch. With objects of the League printed on reverse.

The Irish National Land League was an organisation of the late 19th century which sought to help poor tenant farmers. Its primary aim was to abolish landlordism in Ireland and enable tenant farmers to own the land they worked on. The Irish National Land League was founded at the Imperial Hotel in Castlebar, Co. Mayo, on 21 October 1879. At that meeting the MP from Meath Charles Stewart Parnell was elected president of the league. As a result of the Land War, the Irish National Land League was suppressed by the authorities in 1882.

Further Information:

Bull, Philip. *Land, politics and nationalism: A study of the Irish Land Question* (Gill & Macmillan, 1996).

Cashman, D.B. & Davitt, Michael *The Life of Michael Davitt and the Secret History of The Land League* (1881)

The Ashes



Item: Block of Enamel

Date: 1882

Find Location: Associated with Athboy

Current Location: The Lords MCC

Description:

Ivo Bligh, the eighth earl of Darnely, was captain of the England cricket team in 1882 and made the throwaway remark joking that he had come "to regain the ashes".

A mock obituary had appeared in the *Sporting Times*, following Australia's inaugural Test match victory in England. "In affectionate remembrance of English Cricket," it read, "which died at the Oval on 29th August 1882. Deeply lamented by a large circle of sorrowing friends and acquaintances. RIP. NB The body will be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia."

A fellow passenger on the long voyage had been Sir William Clarke, a wealthy Australian who'd been in England collecting his knighthood from The Queen. Clarke invited the England team to Rupertswood, his estate near Melbourne, to play a friendly prior to the Test matches. And it was at Rupertswood where Lady Clarke and her close friend Florence Morphy, the Clarkes' music teacher, playfully handed Bligh a small urn. Here, they told him, were the ashes he'd come for.

Bligh took a considerable fancy to the young music teacher who had handed over the urn. He returned to England a few months later not just with the Ashes, by now deserving of a capital A, safely in his luggage, but also to ask his parents to approve his proposed marriage to Florence. They refused. So he returned to Australia the following year and married her anyway.

Florence was the present Lord Darnley's grandmother, and she later told his mother, her daughter-in-law, that it had been a veil, easily enough mistaken for the word "bail", that she and her friend Lady Clarke burnt that day. As for the venerable urn itself, Lord Darnley thinks it was a scent bottle, probably taken from Janet Clarke's dressing table. "Grandfather stayed in Australia for a few years after getting married," he added. "My father was born there in 1886. But shortly after that he came back to England, and the Ashes sat on his desk until he died in 1927. Two years later, Grandmother gave them to Lord's, basically for safe keeping."

Further Information:

GAA Sporting Cup



Item: Co. Meath G.A.A. 1887 Sporting Cup

Date: 1887

Find Location: Associated with Kells

Current Location: Meath County Library

Description:

An unusual Chalice type Cup, with bright cut design and inscribed "Kells G.A.A., 1887," approx. 21cms (8 1/4") high, not marked. This may have been presented by the Meath G.A.A. Council to the members of the Kells Team, beaten in the First County Championship (under the G.A.A. auspices) to mark the occasion. The first Meath County Final took place on 17th April 1887, and was won by Dowdstown who defeated Kells 1-0 to 0-0

Further Information:

Virtual All Ireland Medal



Item: All-Ireland medal

Date: 1896

Find Location: Navan

Current Location: Whereabouts unknown. Sold at Auction by Whytes Irish art Auctioneers.

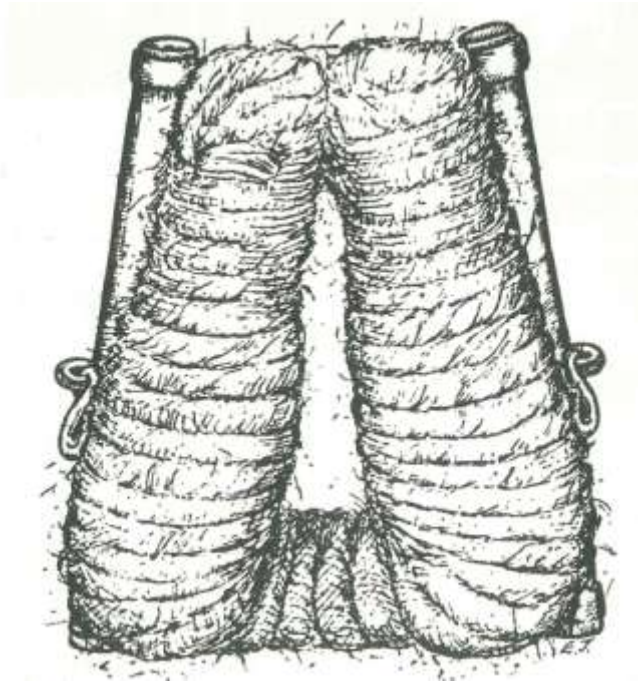
Description:

9 ct rose gold by Moore & Co. Grafton Street Dublin. PC monogram to obverse surrounded by shamrock and floral decoration, "Virtual Championship of Ireland 1895" engraved on reverse. Medal presented to Peter Clarke of Pierce O'Mahony's club from Navan for the 1895 All-Ireland Senior Football Championship Final, played on 15 March 1896, the first final to be played in Jones' Road (later Croke Park) and also Meath's first appearance in a final. Peter Clarke, a butcher from Trimgate Street, Navan played as part of the full back line against Tipperary Club Champions, Arravale Rovers, who won by 0-4 to 0-3 in controversial circumstances. Dublin referee, J. J. Kenny noticed that he had a mistake when adding the scores and the result of the game was in fact a draw. The match was over and the result declared but the referee wrote to the Central Council and to national newspapers pointing out his error. Despite this, Pierce O'Mahony's announced they would not seek a replay and were happy to have the result stand and an All Ireland "Virtual Championship" winners medal was presented to the members of the club who played that day. The match is commemorated by a plaque on the Hogan Stand at Croke Park.

Further Information:

http://whytes.ie/13Main1WIDE.asp?Auction=20110416&Lot=437&IMAGE=437_1

Ox Collar Ballygarth



Item: Ox Collar

Date: 19th Century

Find Location: Ballygarth, Julianstown.

Current Location: National Museum of Ireland – Country Life

Description:

The last place in Ireland where oxen were used to ploughing was the Pepper estate at Ballygarth where they worked up until 1907. This ox-collar made by Thomas Oonan of Julianstown was presented to the National Museum. Kit Traynor of Smithstown, Julianstown, who died aged 99 in 1966, remembered ploughing with oxen. Four animals were yoked to the plough and the oxen had names Bony, soldier, Ranger and Dandy. The animals were imported from France.

Further Information:

Michael Ward, 'The Parish of Ballygarth', *Ríocht na Mídhe* IV, 2, (1968) pp 79-87.

Grand Jury Plates



Item: Grand Jury Plates

Date: Late Nineteenth century

Find Location: Rahinstown House

Current Location: Various places including some in the County Library, Navan.

Description:

A Victorian Staffordshire part dinner service, 'Persiana' each piece printed "Meath Grand Jury". Some Lord Lieutenants of Meath had a set of these plates and there was a set in the Courthouse, Trim, where the Grand Jury sat.

The Grand Jury was the forerunner of the modern County Council. It was made up of members selected by the High Sheriff from the leading landowners in the County. Its primary role to raise money for a variety of local public works by means of the county cess or rates.

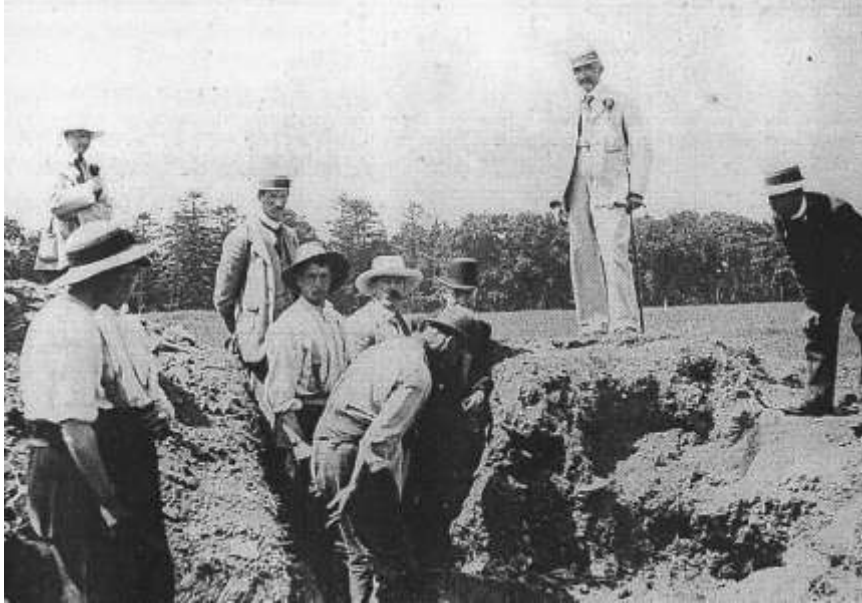
Catholics were not permitted to serve on grand juries until 1793. Although after that time the jury lists were still predominantly Protestant. Presentment Sessions were held prior to the assizes, at which the jurors considered presentments - grants for the construction and maintenance of roads and bridges, as well as other items. Grand Juries were in existence since Norman times. Landowners made up the Grand Jury itself, selected by the Sheriff of the County. Services provided and paid for by Grand Jury Cess, a rate payable by occupiers, included making and repair of roads and bridges, construction of courthouses and levying for support of district hospitals, schools and prisons. Meath Grand Jury, as an administrative body, was replaced by Meath County Council under the 1898 Local Government (Ireland) Act.

Further Information:

<http://www.askaboutireland.ie/reading-room/environment-geography/transport/growth-of-transportation-/roads-and-toll-roads/the-grand-jurys-responsib/>

<http://www.askaboutireland.ie/reading-room/digital-book-collection/digital-books-by-county/westmeath/the-grand-juries-of-the-c/>

Ark of the Covenant



Item: Ark of the Covenant – Not found – Photo shows excavations underway by British Israelites

Date: Associated with 1899

Find Location: Hill of Tara

Current Location: Unknown

Description:

Arthur Griffith, William Butler Yeats, George Moore and Douglas Hyde campaigned against the British-Israelites when they sought to destroy the Hill of Tara in search of the Ark of the Covenant between the years of 1899 and 1902. In a letter published in the London *Times* on June 27th, 1902, and signed by Douglas Hyde, George Moore and W.B. Yeats, the trio voiced objections “All we can do now under the circumstances, is to draw the attention of the public to this desecration. Tara is, because of its associations, probably the most consecrated spot in Ireland and its destruction will leave many bitter memories behind it.” Arthur Griffith protested on Tara in the company of William Butler Yeats, George Moore and Douglas Hyde, despite being ordered off the site by a man wielding a rifle.

The British Israelites believed that the Ark of the Covenant was buried on the Hill of Tara. The Ark of the Covenant contained a copy of the Ten Commandments given to Moses by God.

In June 1899, Walton Adams and Charles Groom arrived at Tara to commence explorations. They approached the landowner of the Hill who was Gussy Briscoe of Bellinter House and he allowed them to rent part of the Hill from him on a weekly rent.

Lady Gregory and William Butler Yeats objected to the Hill of Tara being destroyed by these religious maniacs and serious archaeologists also objected but there were no laws which could have prevented the dig going ahead. Destroying the Rath of the Synods all the diggers discovered were some rock trenches and a number of bracelets which they threw into the Boyne. They also uncovered a number of wooden boxes buried by Gussy Briscoe. Apparently there was a curse on whoever found the Ark of the Covenant and when a digger came upon one of these wooden boxes everyone scarpored and only came back when they thought it was safe. Briscoe would also go up and bury pieces of coal for them to find. The excavations came to an end in 1903, largely due to the pressure exerted in the media by Maude Gonne and other nationalists.

Further Information:

Mairéad Carew *Tara and the Ark of the Covenant* (Dublin, 2003)

Meath in the later 19th century - Meath Virtual Museum – Noel French