Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society

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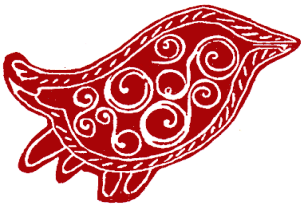

Title: Obituary: The late Mr P. J. O'Shea, Fermoy

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became president. On completing his term in that office, he was made an honorary life-member of the Society. No wonder it was said at times that Michael Holland and the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society were synonymous, for he had worked so long and so successfully for the attainment of its objects. During all those years many articles from his pen appeared in the Society's *Journal*, as well as elsewhere, sometimes over his name, very often over his initials, while many were anonymous. But it was as guide, philosopher and friend that he will be best remembered by the very many workers in the field of local history and genealogy.

It was his custom for many years with a chosen companion or two to go tramping during week-ends to places of historic or antiquarian interest. During those journeys he made much use of pen and pencil. As a result, most parts of the large county of Cork were like an open book to him. In later years when a newer generation grew up, his company was eagerly sought for on their journeys by those who were interested in the countryside and its relics of the past. It was a liberal education to have him as companion. He was able to draw on his store of knowledge of history, archaeology, architecture, field botany, and the rest, and that in no dry-as-dust, guide-book manner. 'And still they gazed and still the wonder grew'. Yet he owed nothing to University education. Municipal and University bodies would have honoured themselves in honouring him. But he was too reserved, too unassuming; he was not one who went into the market place shouting his wares.

By his death our Society has lost one of its most esteemed and learned members; and 'This Quaint Old Cork of Ours' is all the poorer by the passing of one who so eminently represented all that was best in its cultured life. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.*

He is survived by a daughter, Miss Catherine Holland, artist and illustrator of the College of Arms, London. To her the members of our Society wish to tender their sincere sympathy.

C. Ó S.

The late Mr P. J. O'SHEA, Fermoy

News of the death of Paddy O'Shea of Fermoy, who was a council member of this society, came as a very great shock to all who knew him, for he was cut off in his prime following a comparatively brief illness. His personality was such that he quickly endeared himself even to those who knew him slightly and it is true to say that he will never be forgotten by those who knew him well. His modest, unassuming nature, his mildness and humility, his kindliness and generosity and his ever-ready willingness to put his own affairs on one side in order that he might be a help to others, made him for me one of the finest characters I have ever known.

He was from boyhood filled with a boundless enthusiasm for Ireland and everything Irish and this led him to take a very active part in the fight for Independence. His work for the country during this period was ceaseless, but it was done with such a self-effacing humility that only his comrades

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in the struggle were aware of his sterling worth. When, during the late war, conditions made a call to arms once again necessary, Paddy was quickly in the L.D.F., and very soon a leading member in the Corps of Engineers. There followed a period of continuous, enthusiastic and energetic service, his reward for which was a weakened state of health and a strained heart.

In early life he developed a keen interest in archaeology and in the open-air life which he led he lost no opportunity of studying the field monuments of his district, which might be said to cover the whole of east Cork. His keenly developed observation enabled him to bring back exact reports and reliable surveys of field monuments, many of which, not being recorded on the O.S. maps, he brought to notice for the first time.

Since I first came to know him he has given me invaluable assistance in my archaeological field work and indeed it was his encouragement and unrivalled knowledge of the territory that led me to undertake a number of excavations in the Fermoy district, excavations which have produced important results. At all stages of the digging his assistance was forthcoming and nothing pleased him more than to work as a voluntary helper on the site. During these periods I learned much from him for he had an amazing fund of practical knowledge which often enabled him to recognise an excavated object the decayed state of which made its function obscure.

Since the Cork Public Museum was founded he has been a continuous donor of exhibits so that the O'Shea Collection, as it has been named, now contains over seventy individual items ranging in date from prehistoric times to 1922. In addition, his position in Fermoy and his wide circle of friends in east Cork enabled him quickly to get to know of archaeological discoveries accidentally made in the course of agricultural and other work, and as a result of his immediate reports to the Museum, two bronze age cemeteries as well as other isolated burials were scientifically examined and their contents saved from destruction.

His greatest achievement, however, was the founding of the Fermoy Field Club which now lives after him as a monument to his greatness. Having conceived the idea for such a club, his enthusiasm quickly fired others and it was not long before the club was established on firm and businesslike lines with officers and a committee to direct its affairs. The members now representative of every walk of life, have three principal interests: archaeology, history and natural history and these interests are catered for by a winter programme of lectures and by numerous field excursions in the summer. The educational value of such a club to the people of Fermoy cannot be over estimated, while archaeologists and naturalists are being provided with a corps of trained helpers and observers. The support which the club received from the beginning in Fermoy was a measure of the appreciation which the people of Fermoy had for its founder. *Requiescat in pace.*

MICHAEL J. O'KELLY

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