

# Muckross House has Record Year

## KERRY FOLK LIFE CENTRE ADDS NEW EXHIBITS AND ANNOUNCES FUTURE PLANS

Over 75,000 people have visited Muckross House, Killarney this year. This is an increase of over 10,000 on 1970. The House had 19,500 visitors in 1964 — the year it was first opened.

The 100 roomed mansion was built in 1843. In 1932, with 11,000 acres, it was presented to the Irish nation as the pivot point in the largest national park in Ireland. From 1932 until 1964 the House was unoccupied. During that time much of the original furniture was taken for use in other state buildings.

Through the years the fabric and roof of the house have been preserved excellently by the Board of Works. In 1964, the late Dr. James Ryan, the Minister for Finance, leased the House to a group of Kerry people to open it as a museum which would collect and exhibit material on the folk life of County Kerry.

The growth of the museum at Muckross House is a story of co-operation. The Trustees of the House all give their time voluntarily. Down through the years they have been assisted by people from all parts of Kerry in collecting items for display, in advice on new development and in any other needs for help.

### What has happened in Muckross?

- \* Attendance has grown from 19,500 in 1964 to 75,000 in 1971.
- \* Income has grown from £3,070 to £26,000 (up to two years ago all income came from the admission charge, the tea room and the souvenir shop. During the past two years there has been some grant assistance from Bord Failte and the Kerry County Development Team).



Muckross House

- \* Expenditure has grown from £2,800 to £26,000.
- \* The number of people employed has increased from two full-time and ten during the summer to fourteen full-time and twenty-five during Summer.
- \* Sixteen weeks opening in 1964 has developed to all-year opening (only closed on Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day).
- \* The greatest change is apparent in the exhibition material:

### 1964

- eight rooms dealing mainly with the Great House with one room devoted to national monuments and ferns.
- 1971**
- complete basement (16 rooms) devoted to folk life.
- three craft workers — a weaver, blacksmith and potter — working full time in their own workshops. Their produce are being made and sold in the house. One practical result of this is the thirty jarvey horses that are shod here each week during the Summer.
- an apprenticeship scheme is at present being worked out so that these crafts will continue.
- extensive displays of mapping, prints botany, geology, church history, etc.
- educational tours are bringing more and more young people to the house each year. Now special programmes are being developed for them — this includes audio/visual presentations.
- a new Tea Room.
- during the past twelve months, heating and lighting by electricity have been installed.
- two floors devoted to the Great House of the 19th century.
- a folk theatre is well on the way to being finished.

### In the future:

- \* a quarterly news sheet on folk life in Kerry.
- \* a folk park with one of each of the traditional dwellings peculiar to different trades in Kerry.

# ROS

Journal of Kerry Folk Life

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## OPEN AIR MUSEUM LATEST NEWS

In our lead story an open air museum at Muckross is mentioned as a future plan. This has always been regarded as a logical second stage development. When a policy outline was submitted to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance in 1967, it was clearly indicated that at a later date there would be a request to make some land available in the Bourn Vincent Memorial Park for this project.

At the recent meeting of the "Friends of Muckross House" it was decided to press ahead with this second stage. A meeting was arranged with Mr. Noel Lemass, T.D. and Commissioner McCarthy of the Office of Public Works. The delegation was introduced by Mr. J. O'Leary, T.D. led by Dr. F. M. Hilliard and included Mr. S. Keating, Kerry County Manager; Mr. S. McDwyer, Chief Education Officer in County Kerry; Mr. Kevin Danaher; Rev. D. Earl; Mr. S. O'Connor and Mr. N. Myers. A reasoned and logical case was put forward by a very competent group of people.

The reception by the Parliamentary Secretary and Commissioner McCarthy was, to say the least, most discouraging. No attempt was made to reply to the points put forward. In fact, the strong impression was given that a venture like that at Muckross House must be discouraged. It must be sincerely hoped that it is not government policy that the activities of voluntary bodies are to be restricted in the future.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Editor of ROS, Muckross House, Killarney, acknowledges photographs in this issue from Bord Failte, Killarney Printing Works Ltd., and Captain Kevin Danaher.

The Irish Thatched Cottage is a fast disappearing dwelling.





# Ros Edition One

This is the first edition of a publication on Kerry folk life. We intend to have four editions each year, roughly corresponding with the seasons. It is intended to provide a platform for those interested in folk life and its preservation.

We hope that copies of this paper will be held so that they can be referred to from time to time. To help keep them we suggest that you have a special folder or binder where you will automatically put copies after you have read them.

ROS will include articles on different aspects of Kerry folk life. In each edition we will list items that are becoming rare and need to be preserved, and we will indicate where we feel particular action is needed to preserve things of special interest.

We would like you as people who are interested in folk life to participate in this work. You can do this by writing to us and letting us have suggestions for articles that you would like to see us printing and letting us have for publication letters on any particular aspect of folk life that you consider important.

All of these letters for publication will have to include names and addresses without which we will not publish any contribution.

As Dr. Hilliard mentions in his article, Muckross House was called the centre of Kerry folk life and history because it was intended from the beginning that it would have a really active function in all parts of County Kerry. The publication of ROS is an attempt to further fulfil this ambition.

The preservation and development of the best of the past is particularly important at this time as Kevin Danaher stresses in his article and, for this reason we want you to co-operate with us in helping to do everything possible to keep the best of Kerry.

The first Edition devotes a great deal of time and space to Muckross House. We feel that what has been going on there is an example of the kind of thing that can happen in folk life throughout the county. In future editions we will deal less with the material happenings in Muckross House and more with information on folk life in Kerry.

## SAVING THE PAST

KEVIN DANAHER, M.A. IS A LECTURER IN THE DEPARTMENT OF FOLKLORE IN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN. HE IS ONE OF THE FOREMOST FOLKLORISTS IN THIS COUNTRY, AND IS A WELL KNOWN AUTHOR. MR. DANAHER WROTE THIS ARTICLE SPECIALLY FOR ROS. IN IT HE EMPHASIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESERVING THE BEST OF THE PAST.

So great a change in so short a time as that which has come about in the present century has never before been known in the history of mankind. A hundred and fifty years ago, a majority of the inhabitants of western Europe lived in much the same way as their ancestors of a thousand years before, and this was true especially of the country people. Now, as the twentieth century advances, the great change has come, a change which is evident not only in new materials and new techniques but in new ways of thought and a whole new outlook on life.

Among the causes which have contributed to this change in idea and outlook none is more important than the advance of popular education and the development of modern methods of spreading knowledge and information. Books, periodicals and newspapers, cinema, radio and television all combine in bringing the newest ideas without any delay into even the most remote places.

There is a wealth of difference between this and the time so recently gone when ordinary homely people learned almost everything by word of mouth and by example from the elders of their own community. They were cut off from the world of books, and for the most part, were denied the formal education of the time, which in itself was quite removed

from the humble problems of farm and fishing boat.

### UNIVERSITY OF THE HEARTH

Thus, they turned to the university of the hearth and received their information from the tradition handed down from the past, information which guided their daily work, brightened their leisure hours and regulated their individual and social life. Every age and generation has contributed something to the body of tradition handed on in this way. The memories and experience of the older people became veritable treasure houses of fact and fancy, of custom and belief, of ritual and observance, stored with a range of knowledge, both fanciful and practical, which covered every aspect of life from the cradle to the grave, the possession of which gave the older people a place of respect and importance in the community far different from that of a mere burden on the social services of the State.

### PAST EFFECTS PRESENT

THIS OLD TRADITION still survives in many ways. It can be seen on the face of the landscape which grew from the work of many generations of farmers. It appears in old methods of work, in trades and crafts and skills. It still colours our daily lives, our festive celebrations, our occasions of joy and

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. F. M. HILLIARD, CHAIRMAN OF THE TRUSTEES OF MUCKROSS HOUSE.

## THE BACKGROUND TO MUCKROSS

"For Muckross House, I would suggest one or two of the best rooms be restored to a stage of Victorian elegance such as it was when Queen Victoria stayed in the House. Side by side with this could be an interior of a Kerry farmhouse with open hearth, pot hook, bellows, oven, etc. It would be so easy to collect all this today but in a few years all may be lost. Clothes, furniture and the usual fittings of such a home could all be represented. A good donkey cart polished and painted may be hard to find in a few years time. Much can be had for the asking today".

Old Mill Wheel



This paragraph comes from a letter written by Dr. Hilliard to An Taisce (The National Trust) on November 23rd, 1963. Dr. Hilliard was replying to a letter from the Trust inviting him to act as their Correspondence Member in Co. Kerry. "These ideas of mine for Muckross only came to mind when plans were put forward by sectional interests for the future of the house", Dr. Hilliard said recently. "I was afraid that if Muckross were to become a research centre or a youth hostel or a luxury hotel that a large number of people would be excluded from enjoying the house and its environments. Muckross was given to the whole nation. In my opinion, it is good enough, it is interesting enough, and it has possibilities enough, to appeal to every person in the country".

### INTEREST IN FOLK

During his years in England, Dr. Hilliard had a continuing interest in museums and art galleries. He was involved in starting the folk museum at Salmesbury Hall in the north of England. In his very busy medical life he made a point of collecting maps and prints of Kerry and particularly of Killarney.

The initial idea was taken up by the Co-ordinating Committee for the Killarney Tourist Industry and on their behalf Dr. Hilliard saw "all sorts of people". These included Dr. Lucas at the National Museum; Dr. I. Peate of St. Fagan's Museum in Wales; Dr. Jewell of Reading University in England; and had a

Continued next page—col. 3

of the past, when the ways of our people may be forgotten and our ancestors, because of our ignorance of their skills and their achievements, remembered with shame rather than with pride.

### KERRY'S YESTERDAYS

The development of Muckross House as a show place of all that is good in the past of County Kerry is therefore not only to be praised but to be helped actively in every possible way. Already it has shown that the good will and co-operation of a large number of Kerry people can overcome the obstacles of meagre resources and of — dare it be said? — the indifference which springs from a lack of understanding of the situation.

We are becoming daily more alert to the dangers of pollution in our environment. We should be equally alert to the fact that a people which has suffered such grievous cultural losses in the past cannot afford to lose anymore. The collections at Muckross House are being built up from the bits and scraps of the material remains and of the traditional knowledge of County Kerry's yesterdays. We owe it to ourselves as well as to our forefathers that not the smallest bit or the least scrap will needlessly be thrown away.

sorrow. It breaks out in our beliefs and our customs, our sports, our songs, and our stories. There is, indeed, scarcely a single aspect of our lives which is not in some degree affected by it, even if only by a nostalgia for the old ways or a feeling of guilt for our neglect of them.

It is quite clear that the change from the old ways of our fathers to the new ways of the modern world has come more abruptly in Ireland than in many other parts of western Europe. Social and economic conditions in Ireland during the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth centuries were not such as might encourage the widespread adoption of up-to-date ideas and methods in country districts, while the language spoken by a large part of the population was despised or ignored by the rulers of the land; thus many older ways of thought and action, some good, some not so good, which under other circumstances might have long vanished were fossilised by the exigencies of the time and remained in familiar use almost up to the present, when modern development which sees in them no immediate practical value, is sweeping the old traditions away, good, bad and indifferent alike.

### CHANGE GOOD ?

While there is no doubt that the change is in the main for the good, as it will bring to so many people a richer, fuller life, there remains the imminent danger that we may find before long that we have thrown out the baby with the bath water, that we have lost the good with the bad. The day may come when all our prosperity cannot buy a picture



# La na nlasmaí La Coille

Do chur Mícheál O Guithín (mac Pheig Sayers), File, an cur síos seo ar nós a bhí ag mhuintir na h-aite fadó, ach atá dearmhata ar fad anois. (Le caoinchead eagarthora "Misneach" nuachtlitir Chomh-archumann Forbartha Chorca Dhuibhne).

Lá tábhachtach i saol Gael ab ea Lá Coille, nó Lá na nlasmaí, mar thugadh ár sean mhuintir air. B'é an chéad lá de'n bhliain nua é. Le saolú na nua-bhliana bhí dóchas láidir acu go leagfadh an tArd-Mháistir Naofa a bheannacht anuas orthu, go mbeadh an ráth orthu féin is ar a gcuram i rith na h-aithbhliana. Neart an chreidimh fé ndeara é. Tuigeadh doibh ní nach íonadh gurb é Dia féin an fear ab fhearr chun iasma a lorg air, Dia na Trócaire nár chlis riamh in aon chruachéim orthu, trí ímpí na Maighdine Muire is an Leinbh Naofa.

Théadh gach ceann tí ar a ghlúine go h-omósach go moch maidin Lae na nlasmaí. Bhaineadh sé fíor na croise céasta ar chlár a éadain, ag rá na bhfocal seo amach ó dhoimhneas a chroí le teann creidimh is dóchais. Thugadh sé é féin agus a theaghlach suas do Dhia an lá san agus gach lá ar feadh na h-aithbhliana. Gach a mbíodh amuigh agus istigh, idir bheo agus marbh agus gach éinní a ghoillfeadh nó a fhóirfeadh air, idir bhuaidh is chaoire is ghamhna dá raibh ina sheilbh.

D'fhreagraíodh an líontí é le cráifeacht "A thiarna, Amen", ós ard.

Ansan labhradh fear an tí go deamh-óideach, a dhá láimhín fáiscthe le chéile aige mar bheadh leabhar, a dhá shúil dlúite ar a chéile mar bheadh leanbh in a chodladh i gcliabhán cois teine. Chluinfeá na focail uaibhreacha ag dul suas fé frathacha an tí.

## AN GHUI

"Iasma a loirgím ort a Athair na nGrást. Bí fial. Dein an trócaire ar m'anam, is maith dhom a ndearnas riamh. Osclaím an croí cruaidh agam anseo i láthair mo Thiarna uile chomhachtach. Maithim óm chroí amach dom' chomharsain gach dochar dár dheineadar dom so tsean-bhliain atá caite agam; gach cúlchaint is formad éad agus mioscáis do chorraíodh m'intinn is m'aighe chun feirge; gach maoidheamh a dheineadar orm féin is ar mo chuid do bhí faoin a súile ar gort is ar sliabh, go mórmhór mo líontí. Maithim doibh d'fhonn is Dia do mhaitheamh dom féin, mar tá fhios aige ná fuilim saor ach oiread le cách ós na lochtaí seo".

Ba dea shompla don aois óg a bheith ag féachaint ar a n-athair is ar a máthair ag cur a nguí chun Dé ar son síocháin is deamhéin a gcomharsan a gnóthú.

## SEAN NOSANNA NA h-OIGE

Do ghlac an t-aos óg chuchu an lá iontach san. An lá do bheannaíodh Críost sa Teampall dheineadar cosúil le Lá Féile Bríde é. Bhídís ag dul ó thigh go tigh ag bailiú pingíní. Bhíodh a gciall cailte ag na daoine óga chun an aráin seo go mbíodh rísíní agus siúcra ann, is é déanta le dúthracht ag bean a' tí i gcoir an lae. Nuair a thagadh na páistí go dtí an doras ní dheinidís dearmhad gan an bhéarsa beag seo a chanadh go binn ceolmhar roimh dul isteach doibh:

Fógraím iasma ort, Móra thoir agus Móra thiar duit,  
Is Móra ó Mhuire gach maidin so bhliain duit;  
Ná tuig gur le bochtaineacht atá-imíd do iarraidh,  
Is go méadaí ár nAthair Naomha fairsinge is bia chugat.

"Amen a leanaí" adéarfadh bean a' tí; "theastódh san uainn". Thugadh si foiscealach beag dóibh a dhéanfadh iad a shásamh. Is iad a bhíodh go móiréiseach ag chur na slí dhoibh. Is luachmhar an tseoid í an óige.

# The Friends of Muckross House

The starting of the folk museum at Muckross was a very big undertaking. There was no source of income except what was taken at the door, and there were no ready sources of exhibits.

Muckross has succeeded because it has been helped by a large number of people — people in the Bord of Works, people in the National Museum and particularly a dedicated bunch of people from all parts of County Kerry. Through the years they collected items for display, went out and got information and in general offered all possible help entirely voluntarily.

These people from around County Kerry have now banded together in a group called "The Friends of Muckross House". They meet a few times a year at Muckross. Throughout the year they act as contacts with the House — They are :

- Mr. Eoghain O'Sullivan, N.T. Scoil na mBuachailli, Kenmare.
- Mr. Dan Cronin, Muckross, Killarney.
- Mr. Dan Cronin, Auniskirtane, Rathmore, Co. Kerry.
- Mr. Larry Keane, N.T., Knocknagoshel, Co. Kerry.
- Mr. Michael O'Connor, P.C., Springmount, Duagh, Co. Kerry.
- Mr. Bryan McMahon, N.T., Ashe St., Listowel, Co. Kerry.
- Mr. Eamonn Keane, B.Agr. Sc., Greenville, Listowel, Co. Kerry.
- Mr. Eamonn Moriarty, N.T., Asdee, Listowel.
- Mr. Peter Coghlan, N.T., Beaufort, Co. Kerry.
- Mr. Seamus Murphy, B.Agr. Sc., Tralee, Co. Kerry.
- Mr. Donncha O'Conchuir, O.S., Seachnoc, Baile'n Fhirtearaigh.
- Mr. K. Kennedy, N.T., Moorestown, Feonagh, Dingle. Co. Kerry.
- Mr. T. C. O'Coileain, "Avondale", Dingle, Co. Kerry.
- Mrs. M. O'Shea, N.T., Glenmore, Waterville, Co. Kerry.
- Mrs. M. Hickey, N.T., Kilgarvan, Co. Kerry.
- Mr. D. Lynch, Clonkeen, Killarney.
- Mr. Sean Scannell, Bouleenshere, Ballyheigue, Co. Kerry.
- Mr. P. C. Cremin, Shrone, Rathmore, Co. Kerry.
- Mr. J. M. Egan, Main St., Castlegregory, Co. Kerry.
- Mr. E. J. Herbert, N.T., Ballyduff, Co. Kerry.
- Mr. Teddy O'Sullivan, N.T., Asdee, Listowel.
- Mr. B. Burns, N.T., Sneem, Co. Kerry.
- Mr. Pádraig O'Siochru, O.S., Baile 'n Goilin, Daingean Uí Cuise.

If you would like to help in our field work, write to us, the address is Ros, Muckross House, Killarney.

## (The Background — Continued)

number of meetings with various government departments. All of this resulted in the beginning of what we've traced in our lead article on page one.

## FUTURE OF MUCKROSS

"I would like Muckross to be involved even more with the whole of the county" Dr. Hilliard said speaking on the future of the house. "I see it in the future as a preservation centre which can help folk life in all parts of Kerry".

"We need to develop a balanced folk museum. To do this it isn't sufficient to develop the House itself, though we still have need for a comprehensive library and librarian in the House, but more especially I would like to see us now

going outside the House and, in an area that can be controlled from the House we should construct one of each of the different kinds of houses that Kerry people have lived in down through the years".

"I would like us also to have an illuminated map of County Kerry on the floor of a special relief map room in the House". Dr. Hilliard sees this as a vital part in the total county function of the House.

In 1952, Dr. Frank Hilliard came back to Killarney a sick man. It was said that he might not have much time to live. This month he is 74 and has the ambition and the will to live and do an awful lot more.



Peig Sayers cois teine



**THE SPIRIT OF MUCKROSS**

"I want especially to have the young people come to Muckross, to trail those mountains and to enjoy nature in all its aspects. I hope that Muckross will be made a real garden of friendship, and that it will be the greatest playground in the world — there is not another in the world like it and I know them all". These are the words of Mr. Arthur Vincent when he was presenting Muckross to the Irish Nation. Are they not also a very effective banner for the future of an active folk life? If we are to keep the best of the past we must convince our young people that it is something that must be preserved. Already at Muckross a comprehensive programme of educational tours has been set up to do this. The House will also be starting apprenticeship schemes for a number of the craft workers in the near future. It is also our hope to have a folk theatre school in the House so that we can foster and encourage the development and preservation of our music, song and dance.



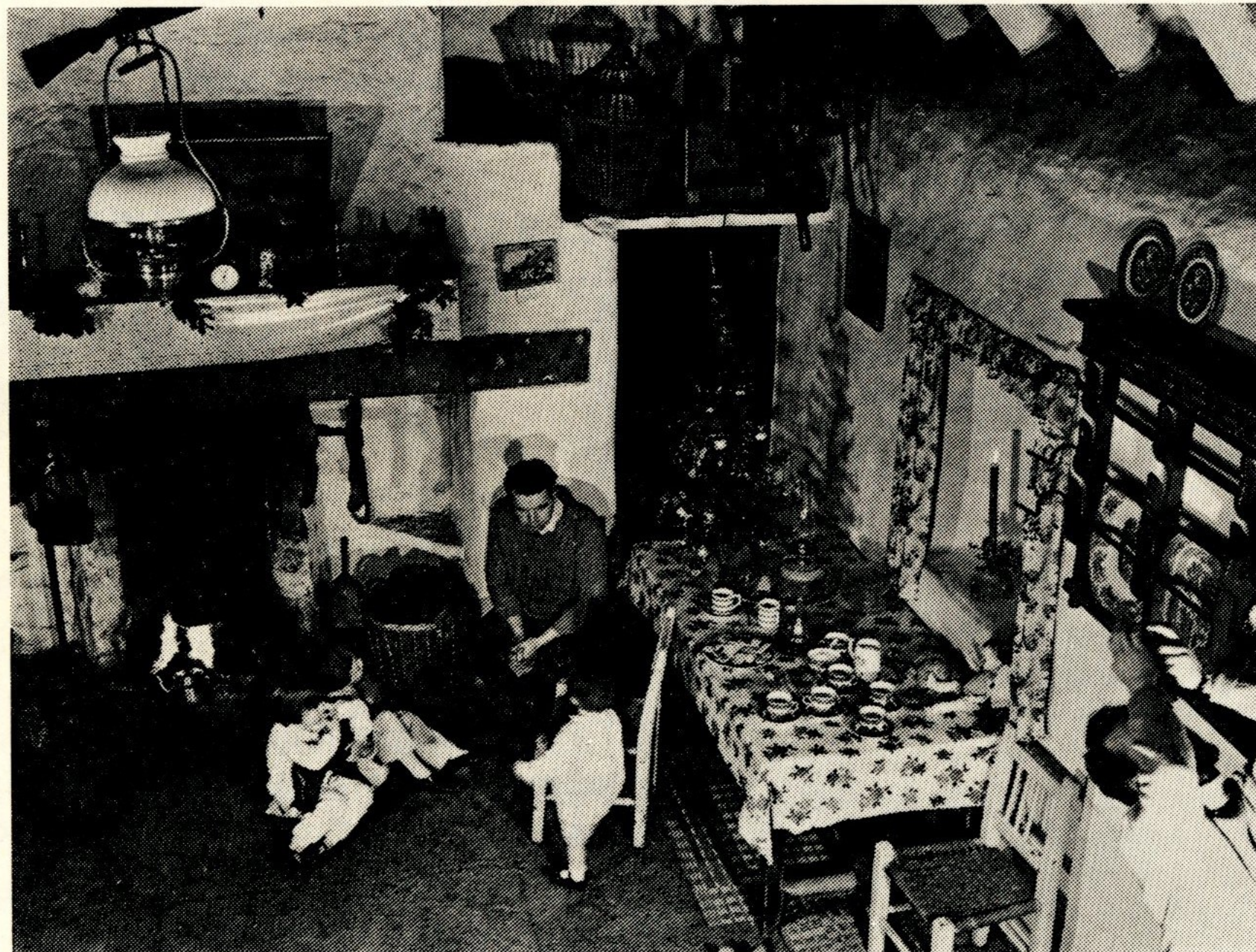
Dr. Frank Hilliard was born at the Lake Hotel, Killarney, in December 1897. As a young man he got to know and love Killarney extremely well. All eleven of his brothers and sisters visited every island on the lake and climbed every mountain that you can see from Aghadoe.

He was educated at St. Brendan's College, Killarney; Midleton College and Trinity College, Dublin, where in 1922 he took his degree in medicine. From 1922 to 1952 he worked in England, eventually retiring from the post of consultant physician to the Victoria Hospital, Blackpool.

In 1952 he came back to Killarney a sick man. He spent two years resting and fishing and wandering a little. He started to practice a little cardiology and in a short time he was completely cured.

Throughout his life he has had much committee experience. He served on the famous Beveridge committee which set the foundation for the modern welfare state in Britain. Active again in Killarney in his own words he served in "every church and school committee". He became the first president of the newly activated Kerry Historical and Archaeological Society, president of the Past Pupils' Union at St Brendan's and vice-chairman of the Governors of Midleton College.

Dr. Hilliard's personal library now runs to several thousand volumes, and his collection on Killarney must be unique. During the past number of years he has written extensively on Kerry folk life and history particularly in the journal of the Kerry Historical and Archaeological Society, and Midleton College magazine.



Nollaig fé shona is fé mhaise dhíbh.

Our two photographs describe the very active link between Christmas and folk life in Kerry. The happy wrenboy band on their colourful, musical, merrymaking rounds in North Kerry and the intimate festive atmosphere in the interior of an Irish cottage are scenes deeply associated with Christmas.

The wrenboy band, dressed in a thousand motley colours, bring music and dancing and singing and a full measure of Christmas spirit as they tour from house to house on St. Stephen's day.

"The wren, the wren, the king of all birds . . ." is no longer heard in every parish in Ireland. In Kerry, we are luckier. This tradition, this happiness, is something we should not lose.

The twinkling candle in the window of the Kerry cottage is the traditional way of saying to the traveller on the lonely, cold road "come hither you are welcome". The candle, the open hearth, the wren's cage, and all of the other things that go to make up the festive spirit are there in our homes.

All people who are involved in the study and preservation of folk life will see Christmas as a time when their message has particular relevance.

On behalf of the Trustees and Friends of Muckross House we would like to wish you a traditional Kerry Christmas and happiness and prosperity in the year ahead.



**MUCKROSS NEEDS . . .**

In each edition of ROS we will publish a list of the needs of the folk museum at Muckross. This may include all sorts of things, but would particularly refer to items needed for display, information needed on a particular subject or craft workers that we would like to hear about. Needless to say, anything we look for will be of particular importance and we will appreciate getting your help.

At the moment we need:

- \* **Craft workers:**
  - A cooper to work at Muckross.
  - A wood carver to work at Muckross.
  - A harness maker to work at Muckross.
  - A basket maker to work at Muckross.

- \* **Information:**
  - Illegal capture of (a) Winter Salmon,
  - (b) Summer Salmon

—were (a) and (b) widely practised in an area you know.

—how were the salmon caught; nets, gaffs, tailers, stroke-hauls, spears; any other method?

—have you details of any lighting used at night?

- reason for decline:
  - (i) stricter supervision?
  - (ii) lack of interest among young?
  - (iii) no young people left?

- \* **Exhibits.** source confidential if wished. Any articles connected with legal or illegal capture of salmon:

- Nets, Spears, Torches, Stroke-hauls,
- Any other items.

**KERRY LONG AGO**

"On this island were compiled the famous Annals of Innisfallen, probably to a large extent the work of Mael Suthain, known as the 'Chief Scholar of the Western World' and one of the community. He was confessor to Brian Boru and responsible for his early education at Innisfallen. Indeed for many centuries this small island was a centre of learning whose fame extended throughout the civilised world".

These are the words of Dr. Frank Hilliard writing on Innisfallen Island, Killarney, in the 1971 Annual Newsletter of the Soroptimist's International Association.

This sort of wealth is thrown up again and again, at all sorts of levels in the history of Kerry. The highlights of our past — of our scholarship, of our missionary spirit, of our religious perseverance — should be remembered.

Folk life studies are normally taken to begin about 1800. The past 170 years has been a time of high drama, of smashing religious and political barriers, of undreamt economic advancement.

Folk study considers all of these, it preserves what was unique or best, and it encourages the continuing of that which should not be allowed to die.