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Annals of Athy 2021 Locals curating their own lived heritage

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Annals of Athy 2021

Locals curating their own lived heritage

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Organisation: Technological University Dublin

Abstract: This article is essentially an introduction to *Annals of Athy 2021*.

The *Annals* is a 273-page book printed by DataPrint Athy containing ten parts authored by locals and edited by Anne Murphy, Mark Wall and Clement Roche. The three main themes of the *Annals* relate to industrial heritage, agricultural heritage and sporting heritage. Additional parts are allocated to significant local personalities including J. J. Bergin, Juan Greene, John Wortley, Annamay McHugh and the Bramley family. One part considers a plan to grow flax locally to produce sailcloth for the English navy in its fight against Napoleon! The final part lists the residents of the main streets in 1916 and 2016.

***Annals of Athy 2021* pdf version is available online through ResearchGate**

<https://www.researchgate.net/project/Digital-Heritage-Local-and-Community>

Contributing authors: Frank Taaffe, Pat Murphy, Tom Handy, Tommy Kinsella, Paddy Kelly, Gregor Cox, Syl Bell, Jim Fox, Anne Murphy, John Bradbury, Con Blanchfield, Mark Wall, Aidan Kenny, Raymond Pelin, Tom Kelly, Charles Chambers, Liam Dunne, Willie Mahon, Laura Kinahan, Barry Spring, Charlie Duncan, Judy Chambers, Joe May, Mark Bergin, Sharon A. Greene, Frances Wortley, Olivia Ashmore, Mary Ashmore, Ronald Bramley, Clem Roche.

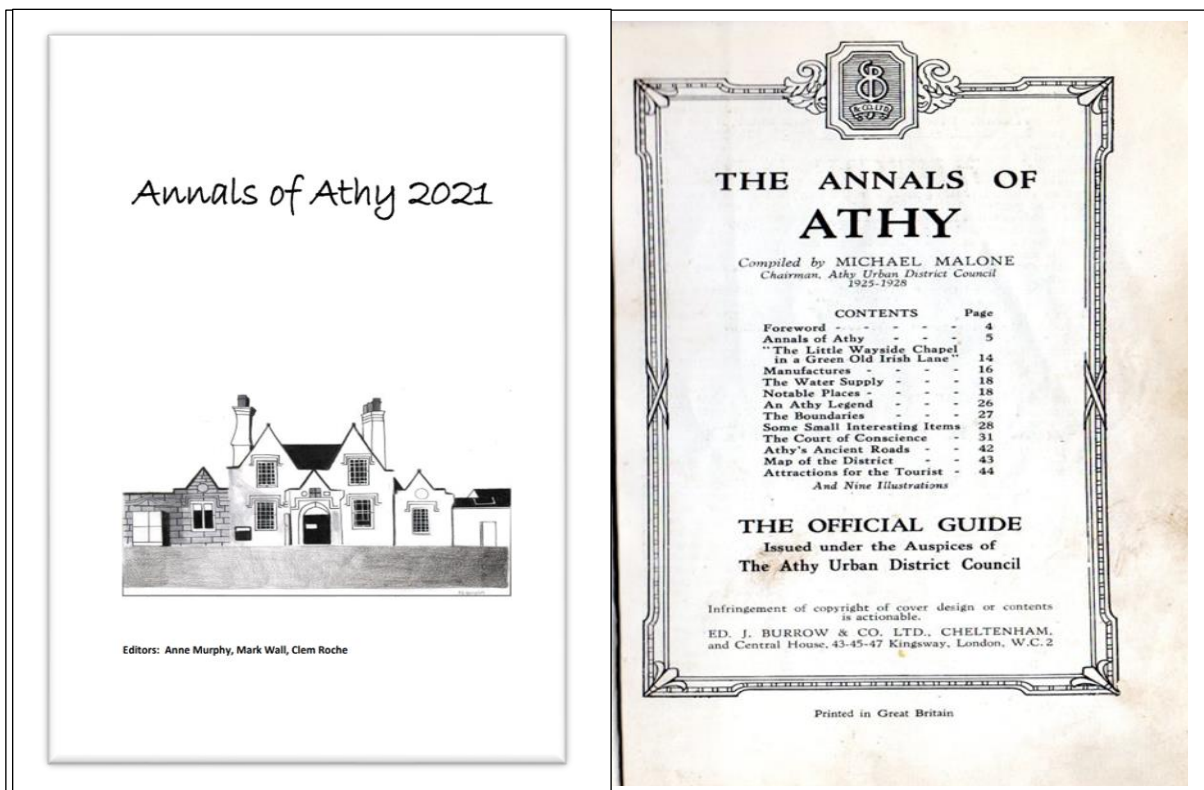
1. Genesis of *Annals of Athy 2021*

It is true to say that the *Annals* emerged organically in the Summer of 2021 when Covid 19 was still causing societal and commercial lockdowns. In the gaps between lockdowns we had organised an exhibition of local heritage for Heritage Week in August 2021, related initially to Athy's significant industrial past when mills, maltings, foundries, brickworks, engineering works, timber and wallboard, asbestos roofing, textiles, food processing and cereal farming, canals and railways supported a thriving commercial and innovative town. Locals of a certain age still retain a wealth of knowledge and understanding, as well as stores of artefacts, about those decades and speak of them with pride and nostalgia. What was evident from the Heritage Week exhibition

was that Athy was close to losing its lived memories and that capturing and curating local heritage was a matter of urgency since the local Heritage Centre run by Kildare County Council in the original Town Hall had shifted its focus away from heritage to the single-interest topic of Shackleton’s expeditions to the South Pole. Indeed, the Heritage Centre could not support a local exhibition for Heritage Week and the void was filled by local families who made the Church of Ireland Hall available for the week instead. Local organisations, particularly Kildare County Show Committee, Macra na Feirme, The National Ploughing Association, Athy Town Promoters and several sports clubs volunteered with logistics and labour.

The Heritage Week exhibition was a very surprising success given the extreme restrictions imposed by Covid 19 measures, and press coverage was more than expected. So, what was to become of the many exhibits as the Heritage Centre was prepared to accept only items proposed in writing, approved by their Board of Management, and to be viewed for a fee by visitors?

By happenstance, Fiona Rainsford, proprietor of the local printing company and a grand-niece of Michael Malone, Chairman of Athy Urban District Council in the early 1930s, author of the original *Annals of Athy 1933*, shared a copy of that Annals with us. The obvious solution to curating the heritage exhibition had fallen into our hands: thus, the *Annals of Athy 2021* was conceived. We had caught a fair wind!



Luckily and fortuitously, we could draw on three significant local resource sets: Kildare County Library supports, 'Eye on Athy' articles in the Kildare Nationalist written by local history enthusiast Frank Taaffe, and the extensive archive of local photographs curated on Facebook by local history activist Martin Thompspon. Additionally, local sports clubs, individual families and companies had curated historic documents, maps, record books, photographs and artefacts in various files, tea-chests, trunks and attics. They were willing, and indeed excited, to draw upon those treasures to author the various parts of the *Annals*.

Authors in the *Annals* are essentially the living experts in their particular stories, and their stories were theirs to write and to control. In some cases, we drafted text and suggested images for author approval before publication. In most cases the particular heritage story was being written and made public for the first time. For instance, a detailed account of the development of Minch Malt/Boortmalt had never been researched or written since the founding of the company in 1847. Nor had the records of the Hosie Brickyard in Coursetown even been made public before. We were humbled by the trust placed in us by authors to manage precious documents and information and to present it sensitively to readers.

Unfortunately, we were too late to have the benefit of the wisdom of original knowledge-holders for several industries and activities. Extensive archives of treasure are still maintained by local families. Some offered us access to those archives when they bought the *Annals* and liked what they saw.

3. Producing the *Annals*

Producing the contents for the *Annals* for printing was very much low-tech. using a home PC and mobile phone camera! Some authors were proficient graphic designers for their own sections, and we sought a coherent but flexible style of presentation in line with theirs.

The *Annals* was always intended to be self-financing as we had no grants or sponsorship. Authors understood this, and in many cases covered their own design costs before submitting their sections. All content was prepared in both Word and pdf files for DataPrint to work their magic from our naive processes.

As an adjunct to our Heritage Week Exhibition we had invited all local schools to submit black and white drawings on the theme of 'Athy – town of bricks and iron'. Three-hundred and two drawings were received and displayed in the large shop window of Sam Sunderland's store on Stanhope Street where children could see them enroute to school. Again, the Heritage Centre could not facilitate the exhibition. We selected 30 drawings to include in the *Annals* and two for the covers.

Editing was managed by myself, Mark Wall and Clem Roche with proof-reading by Frances Wortley. It is true to say that the Rainsford family was more than commercially invested in the production of the *Annals*: it was their own family heritage! Without their ever-patient support we may not have succeeded.

4. Launching the *Annals*

We printed only 500 copies, a quarter of which were gifted to all local schools, St Vincent's Hospital, nursing homes, local public representative, local employers, all libraries in South Kildare, several elder supporters and guests at the launch. Authors bought their own copies. As we had no ISBN number or barcode, commercial sales were not considered. Besides, we selfishly wanted the *Annals* to go to 'good homes' where it would be read, discussed, and argued about around Christmas 2021. To meet this target, we needed a public launch of some heritage added-value. Again, we reverted to local interest and organised a Stephen Cullinan Commemorative Lecture in the Clanard Court Hotel sponsored by Kildare County Show Committee and the Finnan family.

STEPHEN CULLINAN *educator, visionary and leader* A man of his day *and* for today?

CHAIR: Liam Dunne

Keynote: Matt Dempsey, former editor of *The Farmers' Journal*

Response 1: Joe Healy, former Macra President and former IFA President

Response 2: John Keane, Macra President

Response 3: Brian Rushe, IFA Vice-President

Again, school involvement was ensured with a presentation of a framed portrait of Cullinan by Liam Dunne, Kildare Show Committee/Macra na Feirme/NFA to Principal Richard Daly and art teacher Christina Hayden, Athy College, where Cullinan had taught agricultural science.



The launch event was restricted by extreme Covid measures, but the quality of the contributions was stunning, even for the very well-informed local audience.

Kildare Library Services recorded and streamed interviews and images.

Again, we were more than impressed with the extent of local support and interest on a cold November night. Somehow, heritage defies all elements!

In late November and December local retailers – Liffey Mills, Mahon’s Athy Stationery, The Lions Bookshop and Winkle’s Bookshop – volunteered to sell copies. Thereafter all authors were sent an e-copy, and USB sticks were distributed to all schools. In keeping with the original commitment, the Annals is now available to a global readership through ResearchGate at:

<https://www.researchgate.net/project/Digital-Heritage-Local-and-Community>

We have no plans for a reprint. However, it is fair to state that we had more than sufficient material from the Heritage Week exhibition and subsequent research to justify a second volume. Rather than printing, we are offering the exhibits and resources to schools or other accessible venues where they can be freely enjoyed and used by locals.

5. Moving onwards with the momentum

During 2022 we continued to prompt and facilitate interest in all things local-heritage.

Art installation for Garda plaque centenary

With the positive support of Kildare Library Local History Services we secured a modest County Council Decade of Commemorations grant to mark the significance of Athy in creation of the first Garda Station cast-iron plaques. The moulding for the plaques was carved in Athy Technical School on the corner of Stanhope Street and Chapel Hill and cast in the Duthie-Large foundry in Chapel Lane in 1922. The foundry site is now the car-park of Madden's Pharmacy (McCabe's) where Transition Year art students created a public art installation marking the centenary of the Garda Síochána and the foundry heritage of the town. That installation is also the subject of an article in this December 2022 Issue of Level3.

Remembering Athy Manor Mill

Athy was a major milling town, given the ever-present Barrow river and fertile tillage land in the hinterland. It is known that both sides of the Barrow bridge had mill-races, the larger of which served the Manor Mill of Athy on the west bank. The milling tradition is the subject of one part of the *Annals* and is now commemorated by an information board on the gable wall of McStay's premises, the original mill site, opposite the site of the Miller's house, now AIB Bank.

Heritage story-writing in primary schools

Like most Irish towns, Athy now has a very mixed population of 'born-and-breds' and newer residents. School profiles reflect this change and the concept of local heritage will inevitably change and evolve. In keeping with our 'lived heritage' approach we again involve schools in simple, accessible activities including a heritage story-writing activity with sixteen primary schools in the area. We provide a story title, an image and an opening line. Children finish the story in less than 400 words in their own handwriting. One story per school will be selected by

me, Athy County Librarian and local author John McKenna for authors to read for the public in Athy Library and to create a modest e-book for schools. Topics include barge horses, the coming of electricity, the farrier's work, fruit-picking, cattle fairs and meggars. The expectation is that the activity might dovetail nicely with the curriculum topic of 'writers in schools' and stimulate interest in local heritage.

Micro-information boards

Athy, a designated heritage town, is currently experiencing major roadworks to divert heavy traffic across a new bridge over the Barrow and away from the narrow town-centre streets. One micro-opportunity heritage-wise is to enhance the 'old town' with information artwork on utility boxes, such as reminders of the IVI Foundry, the Model School, Preston Gate, The Abbey, the cattle mart, the gaol, Old St Michael's. Again, it is for locals to define what is curated locally with the buy-in of local organisations and public representatives.

An information board briefly outlining the history of the Manor Mill on the Barrow will be placed on the gable wall of McStay's opposite the Miller's House on Duke Street (now AIB Bank site).

Other self-initiated and funded heritage art and information boards

It may be a side-effect of Covid lockdowns and outdoor awareness of our built heritage, but there are other spontaneous heritage installations/art works appearing in Athy since Summer 2021. Of immediate visual impact are the murals on the gable wall of St Michael's boxing club (Eric Donovan) at Townparks on the Stradbally Road, and the stunning and appropriate barge mural of the Hughes family barge on the gable wall of Minch-Norton's (Boortmalt) store in Upper William Street.

Likewise, the five information boards about Minch Maltings and the canal on the same building, sponsored by Kildare County Council, indicate a collective desire to mark significant local heritage related to the town's industrial and work-a-day past. It is essentially curating heritage outdoors and free for all to enjoy at all times rather than within a formal, indoor setting with an entry fee and restricted hours. This same approach is evident in the Curragh camp with its series of information and photograph boards alongside its splendid military museum with its expert guides.

Two other grand-scale murals have appeared in Athy. The first is the playful ballet-boxer facing Crom-a-Boo bridge organised by Athy Sing and Sign but with no obvious local association otherwise.

The second is the anaesthetically pleasing, black-and-white mural of Shackleton on the gable wall on Meeting Lane. Shackleton now has the entire Town Hall as a museum, a prominent statue and a massive mural, though it is doubted if he ever stood in Athy before leaving Kilkea with his family as a very young child of four. No doubt he is a 'unique selling point' for specific interest groups.

Users of the rail network will no doubt be familiar with the 'Turtle Bunbury histories' information boards at stations. The board in Athy station 'celebrates' three men - Robert the Bruce, Shackleton, and British Army soldier John Vincent Holland who won a Victoria Cross at the battle of the Somme, and the monkey on the Fitzgerald coat of arms. A strange selection!

6. So, whose stories are considered cultural heritage?

Writing a history book or compiling an Annals of local heritage is a risky business. The value-judgements applied shape the content, tone and impact in many ways. So, *how* did we, **or did** we, consider our own leanings and preferences in how we approached any or all heritage activities in the past year and a half? Why do we react in different ways to different representations of local heritage?

In truth, we filtered local heritage to arrive at our topics. We filtered out any topics related to military or social conflict, to the famine, to workhouses, to land wars or colonisation, to 'upsetting stories' generally. Admittedly, Athy has some expert historians on all these topics. As the main editor, my interest personally, and as a historian and educator, is in the organisation of working life, of agricultural production and land use, industry, transport, mills, mines, schools, individual entrepreneurs and innovators, in working people generally who were not born to privilege and entitlement. No doubt this coloured the initial choice of topics. But it also reflects what actually has been lived in the south Kildare area for two centuries and what still remains in the muscle memories of so many locals. This is what made compiling the *Annals of Athy 2021* so very easy and so very enjoyable. Not all stories are happy. But that is the reality of living in

societies that continue to be buffeted by change. Most authors in the *Annals* have lived through enormous change, been shaped and shaken by it, and still maintain a rational-stoic-accepting attitude to what it means to be human in a post-industrial world.

How might meta-organisations regard our ‘paradigm’ of cultural heritage? Does it matter? Perhaps we can take solace and confidence from the definition of industrial heritage in the *Dublin Principles for conservation of industrial heritage sites, structures, areas and landscapes 2011* and from the *Council of Europe Faro Convention on the value of cultural heritage 2005* below.



The Dublin Principles for the Conservation of industrial heritage sites, structures, areas and landscapes, November 2011

Definition

1. Industrial heritage consists of sites, structures, complexes, areas and landscapes as well as related machinery, objects or documents that provide evidence of past or ongoing industrial processes of production, the extraction of raw materials, their transformation into goods, and the related energy and transport infrastructure.

Industrial heritage reflects the profound connection between the cultural and natural environment, as industrial processes – whether ancient or modern – depend on natural sources of raw materials, energy and transportation networks to produce and distribute products to broader markets.

It includes both material assets – immovable and movable - and intangible dimensions such as technical know-how, the organisation of work and workers, and the complex social and cultural legacy that shaped the life of communities and brought major organisational changes to entire societies and the world in general.

2. Industrial heritage sites are very diversified in terms of their purpose, design and evolution over time. Many are representative of processes, technologies as well as regional or historic conditions, while others constitute outstanding achievements of global influence. Others are complexes and multiple site operations or systems whose many components are interdependent, with different technologies and historic periods frequently present. The significance and value of industrial heritage is intrinsic to the structures and sites themselves, their material fabric, components, machinery and settings, expressed in the industrial landscape, in written documentation and also in the tangible records contained in memories, arts and customs.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage
for Society * Faro, 27.X.200**

The Faro Convention on Cultural Heritage

The Convention was concluded and signed on 27 October 2005 in [Faro, Portugal](#).

What is cultural heritage?

Article 2 – Definitions for the purposes of this Convention, a cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time.

A heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations.

Heritage Week Exhibition, August 2021

(all photographs - other than Kildare Nationalist coverage - taken by Dr Anne Murphy)



20 NEWS Exhibition tells of Athy's industrial, agricultural and sporting heritage

By Conor Ferris
ATHY'S industrial, agricultural and sporting heritage was exhibited at the Church of Ireland Centre on the Carling Road from 19-20 August to mark Heritage Week.
Topics included past forges and furnaces, Athy Co-Op Foundry, Brickworks, Tynes, Minch Mill, Hanson's Mills, Strabury's Bakery, manufacturing industry, the Kildare Oenology Association, the National Fishing Association, crops of the past, cricket, rugby, tennis, golf, soccer, boxing and GAA. Historic maps of the town and area, as well as records of town residents, stereoscopes, crafts and trades and Churchtown school projects were exhibited. The event was organised by local voluntary enthusiasts with the support of Athy Heritage Co Ltd, Heritage Centre-Shuckleton Museum.

Dr Anne Murphy, who has been described as the initiator, told the Kildare Advertiser that "it was like pulling an open book, everyone I approached said 'good idea, what do you want?' - there is a huge reservoir of local history and heritage that people want to talk about."
She explained that "everybody did a scrapbook, a summary of their topic, and then they had a folder or a scrapbook or a journal or a book, a book of the way you got a bird's eye, helicopter or sport, and then all the details in three months were in the folders and then photographs, memorabilia and so on."
Senator Mark Wall was among those involved and described it as a great success and a very, very worthwhile event.
"It was very interesting over the last number of weeks with

gathering the information and talking to people and you know looking at the internet and various agencies, talking to various agencies to try and get information about Athy, it was very interesting."
The exhibition certainly went down well - Dr Murphy noted the hall was never empty. "Tourist people came back twice and three times, there was so much to read and look at... it was a quick way of people who are new to the town getting a flavour of the past over the last hundred years or so, since the foundation of the State."
Dr Murphy added that they're going to bring out a re-run of the Annals of Athy. The first Annals was published in 1911 by Michael Malone who was the chair of the Urban Council, and it included some historic pieces. "So, we're going to gather what we have into another Annals and then we'll publish that in November."



Dr Anne Murphy, who was the initiator of the exhibition



Frank Hendy, John Lynch and Lian Kenny



Showing off the different bricks from around Kildare were Frank Hendy, John Lynch and Lian Kenny



Pat Conlon checking out the displays



Some of the exhibits



Dearbhla and Anna May McHugh at the NPA display



Historian and Aillean Nationalist columnist Frank Taaffe



Liam Kenny with an example of a Ballyeen brick and Dr Anne Murphy with an Athy lirk

DID YOU KNOW THESE THINGS ABOUT ATHY?

1. Athy brick was used in the construction of James' Gate/Guinness.
2. The first Post & Telegraphs wall-type post boxes in the State were made in Athy.
3. The first Garraí Síochána station plaques were wood-carved by a teacher in Athy Technical School and Iron-cast in Dublin-Lagen.
4. Milch Mabings is now a vital member of Masters of Ale in a boormalt – the world's leading malting company.
5. The Athy Cricket Club won the Leinster Cup in 1894.
6. Athy Co-operative Foundry continues to contribute to restoration of major heritage sites such as the Six Castle gutterings, Lackie's Distillery water-wheel, Calow Courthouse railings and Emo Court.
7. Tobacco, flax and belladonna were grown locally in the recent past.
8. The first ploughing match was held in Hosie's field, Courstown (now Fox's) in 1971, then again in 1955, 2009, 2010, and 2011.

Eight unique facts about Athy



Senator Mark Wall and Willie Mahon



Marion Kenny and Dr Anne Murphy



An overview of the exhibition



Proud boxing tradition was featured in the exhibition



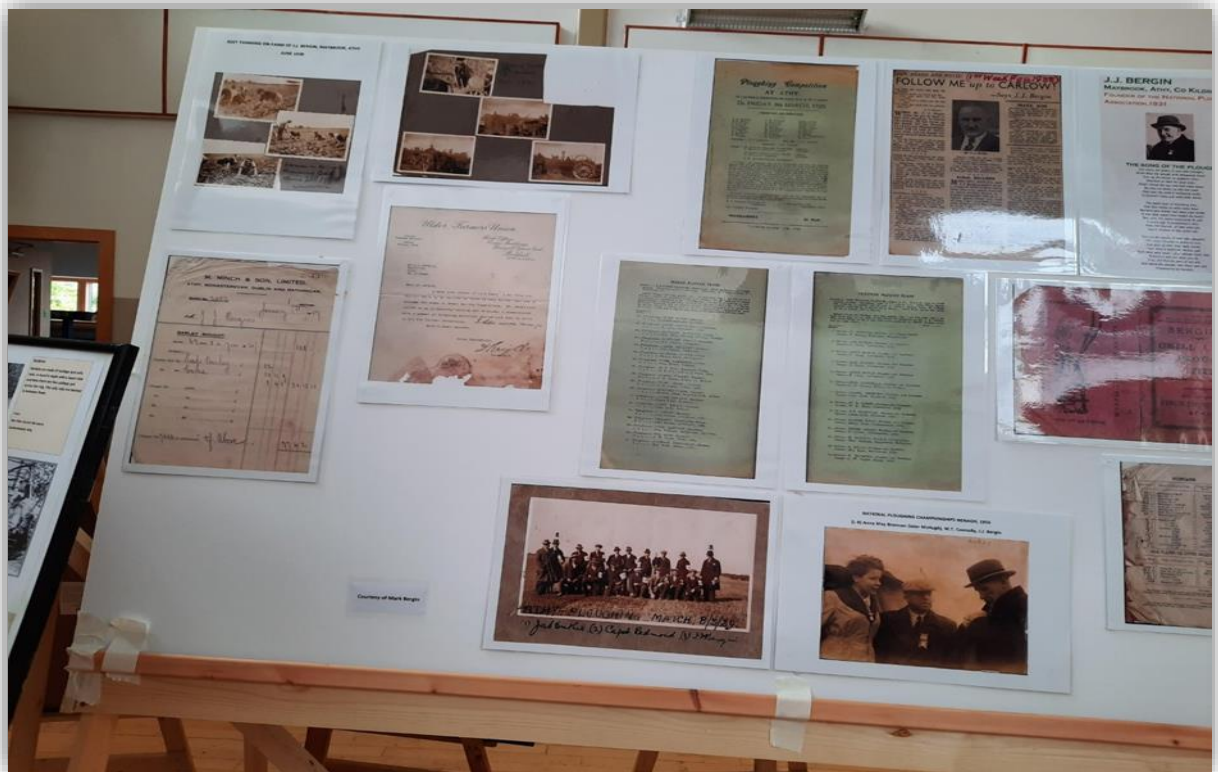
Memorabilia of Athy Cricket Club on display



Part of the NPA display



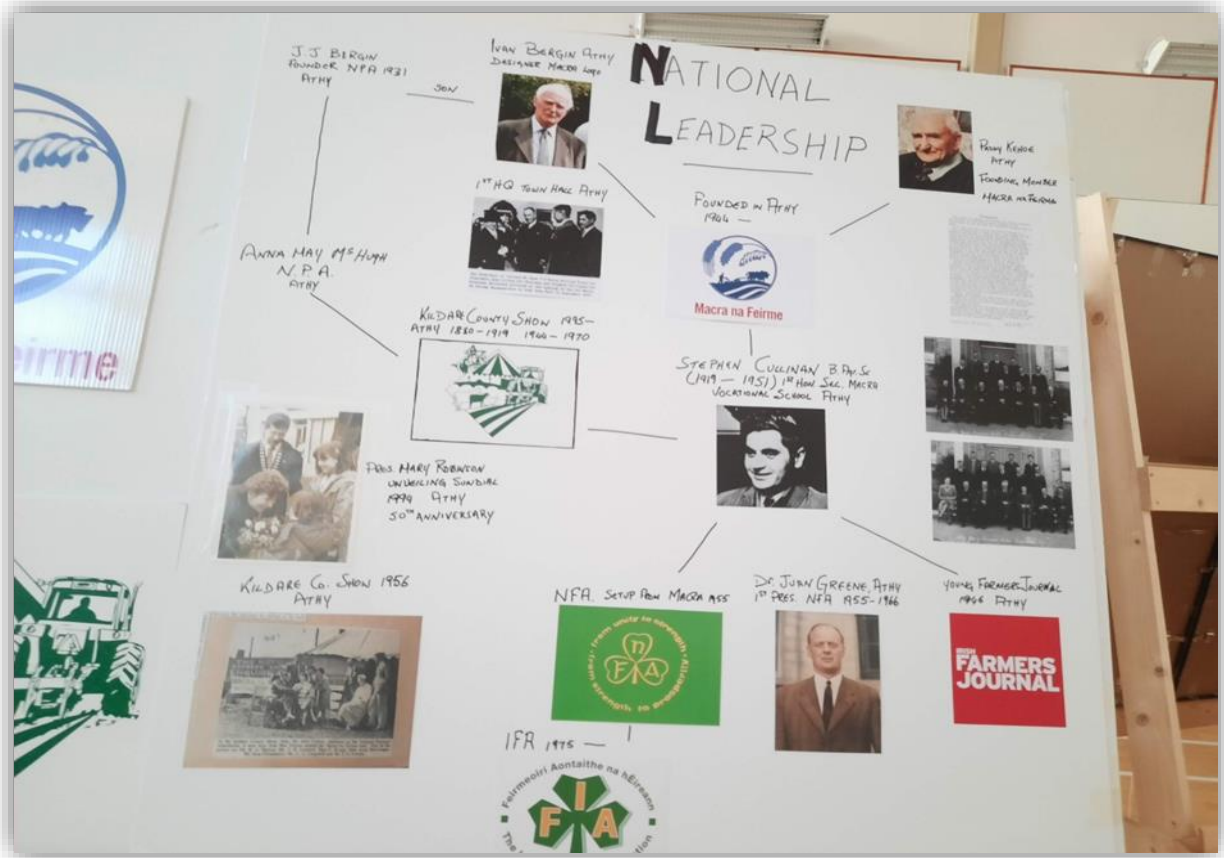
J.J. Bergin and the National Ploughing



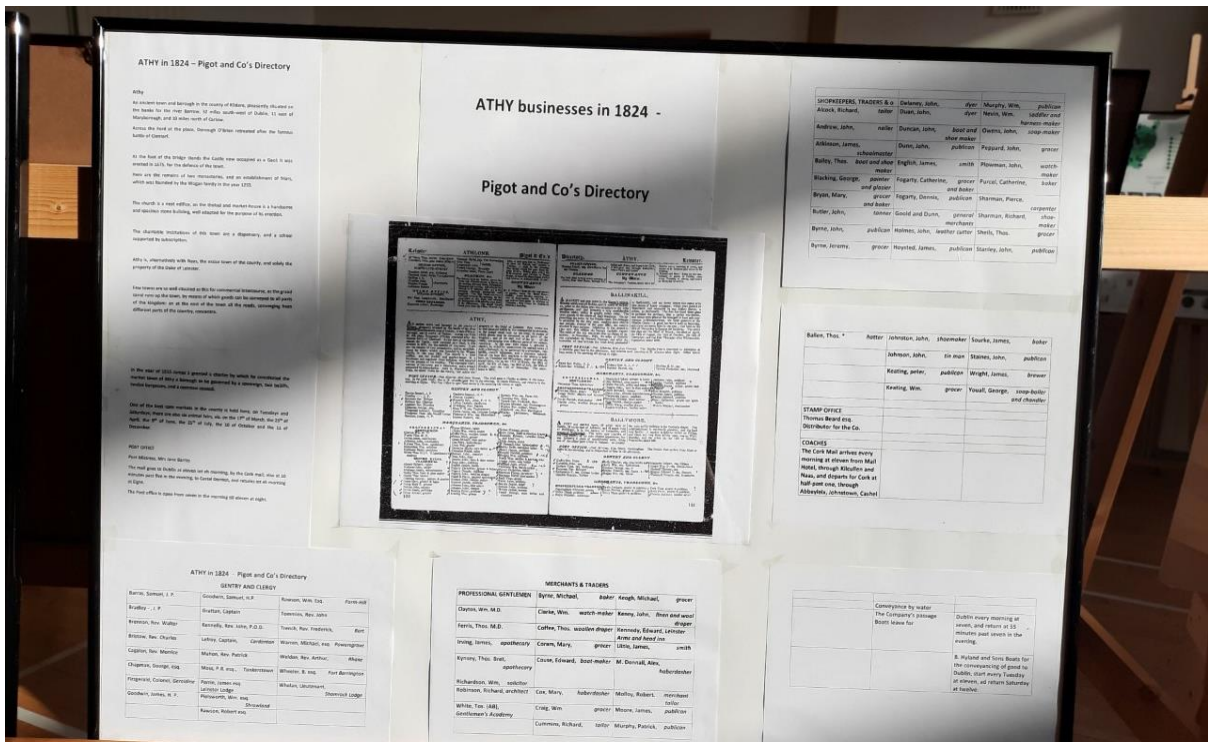


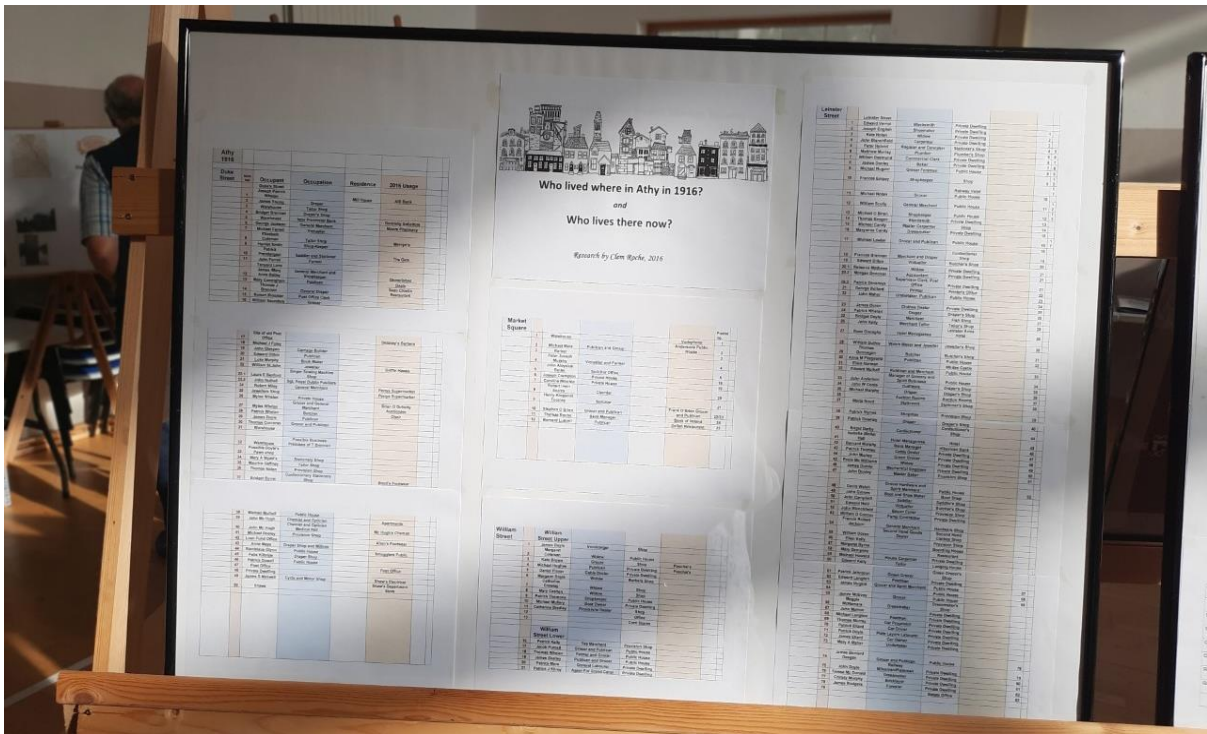
Macra and IFA - Leadership and innovation



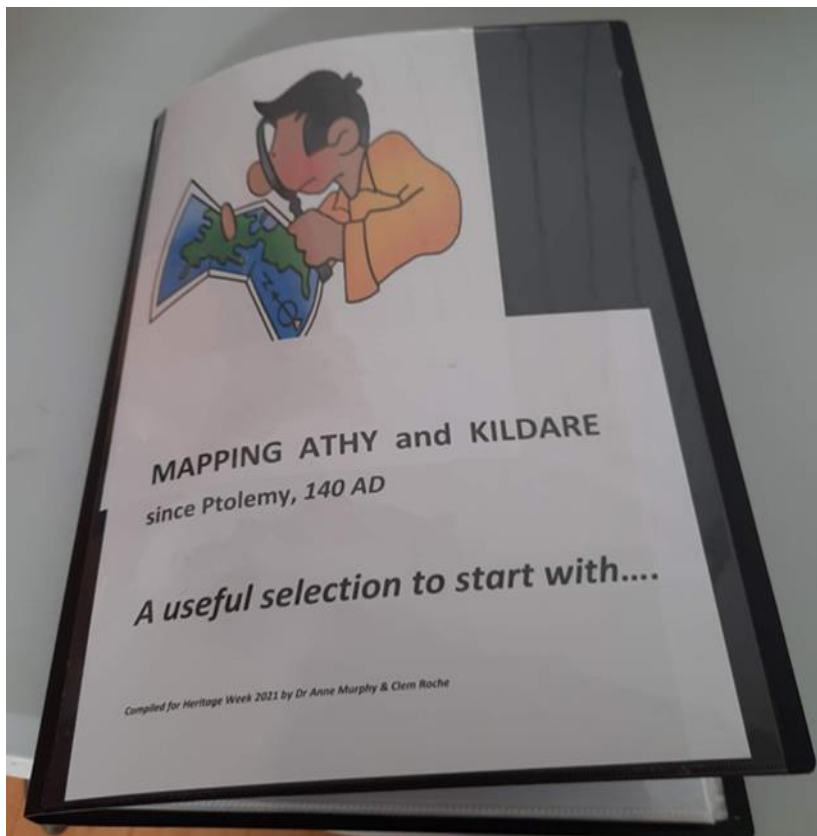


Athy businesses and residents in past times





Mapping Athy







The Yates hay-lifter (scaled model)



Kildare County Show and Mary Pelin



Minch-Norton maltings



MINCH NORTON AMALGAMATIONS & PURCHASES

1 Alfry (2)	1847	9 Carlow	1977
2 Monasterevin	1908	10 Enniscorthy	1978
3 Rathangan	1908	11 New Ross	1978
4 Newmarket	1921	12 Portlaoise	1978
5 Stradbally	1921	13 Wexford	1996
6 Levittstown	1921	14 Castlebridge	1996
7 Bagenalstown	1921	15 Tintern	1996
8 Barracore	1921		

Matthew Minch bought an inn in Duke Street in Alfry which had a large yard for hand-malting barley to supply a local market in Rathangan, close to the site of Ash.

The limited company **M. Minch & Son Ltd** was established. Two more maltings were purchased in **Monasterevin** and **Rathangan**.

A malting barley contract system was introduced by **Guinness** to guarantee supply of malting barley from farmers who had a wide market for their product.

Minch Norton bought **Roche Gibney** which had three malting sites: **Enniscorthy, New Ross** and **Portlaoise**.

1845

Minch bought two small malt houses - **William Street** and **Stavrope Street**.



1847

M.J. Minch - MD of Minch & Son c. 1887



1908

The company amalgamated with **P.R. Norton and Co.** and changed its name to **Minch-Norton and Co. Ltd** with a total of seven malting sites (see map).

Ally, Newmarket, Stradbally, Levittstown and **Bagenalstown**.

M.P. Minch - MD of Minch-Norton and Co. Ltd c. 1919



1921

M.J. Minch - MD of Minch-Norton and Co. Ltd c. 1947



1949

Up to this manual labour was used exclusively. **Minch Norton** built a mechanical malting supplied by a German company called **Wunderhufen**.

From 1959 to the 1980s, annual production increased from 35,000 to over 80,000 tonnes.

MECHANISATION

1959 - 1985

1978

M.D. Minch - MD of Minch-Norton and Co. Ltd 1983



EQUIPMENT USED IN MANUAL MALTINGS

COLLLET, BONE, LEE, EMMERTON, Bury, Edwards, South, England



PRICE OF MALT COMBINGS LATE 1800s

Grain, 1880s - 1890s

Wheat	100	12
Barley	100	10
Oats	100	8
Rye	100	11
Malt	100	15

PRICE OF MALTING BARLEY 1908-1909

Barley purchased at Stradbally - Season 1908-1909

Date	Quantity	Price
1908-10-15	100	12
1908-11-15	100	11
1908-12-15	100	10


BOST'S IMPROVED GRAIN SAMPLER



MALTING TRUCKS



BOST'S REASON FOR GRAIN, BALEY, MALT



3 GENERATIONS OF THE HANDY FAMILY WORKING AT STRADBALLY MALTINGS FOR 117 YEARS

Tom Handy 1885 - 1922



Tom Handy 1911 - 1963



Tom Handy 1952 - 2002



BOORTMALT

MASTERS OF MALT

The maltings in Athy today can produce just over 140,000 tonnes annually with a total above floor of 52 people.

Pre-mechanisation produced 20,000 tonnes annually in a number of facilities with manual labour involving 240 or more people.

Due to a depressed state in the malt market, Misch-Norwich was sold to **Food Industries Ltd.**, a Limerick company, which in 1990 got into financial problems and was bought by the high sugar company - **Greencore PLC**.

Guinness in Dublin closed their Athy maltings which was a major advantage to **Misch-Norwich Greencore Malt**, as Greencore was by far the largest malting company on the island of Ireland.

Greencore sold **Alnus's** to Greencore Malt as they exited direct barley trading from former's branches in Westford, Castlebridge and Wellingtonbridge.

Greencore Malt was sold to **Boortmalt** in 2010, which since then has invested nearly €40 million in Athy bringing annual production from 500,000 tonnes to 140,000 tonnes.

By this time the company had increased its total annual production to 300,000 tonnes. Greencore acquired two maltings in Belgium, started **Belgomalt** and negotiated to be the main malt supplier to **Interbrew** - a major brewer in Belgium.

In the longer term, this was a very important relationship as Interbrew expanded in Russia following the break up of the USSR.

Greencore Malt bought **Williams Weller Ltd** which produced 30,000 tonnes of malt in **Banagher** together with branches in **Tullamore, Berrigskane and Slane**.

As **Interbrew** had taken over **Sun Interbrew** in Russia, which had maltings attached to most of the brewers, Greencore negotiated to supervise the upgrading of these maltings and to oversee the building of a new maltings in **Kuik**. **Peter Nolan** (pictured below), who oversaw this construction, is now appointed as **Chief Operations and Agriculture Officer** in **Boortmalt**.

Boortmalt bought **Cargill Malt** to become the largest malting group in the world, with a combined annual capacity of 2 million tonnes across 5 continents.

The Athy Maltings is the most technologically advanced maltings within the group.

Peter Nolan - Chief Operations and Agriculture Officer in **Boortmalt**

A typical late 1800s malt house built in Athy

REPORT OF HONORABLE MEMBER SALES IN 'WINDMILL, NEW ATHY, 1840-1848'

MEMBER SALES... (transcription of document text)

17th Aug 1920

The last commercial barge to use the canal came from Gutbrose - May 27th 1963

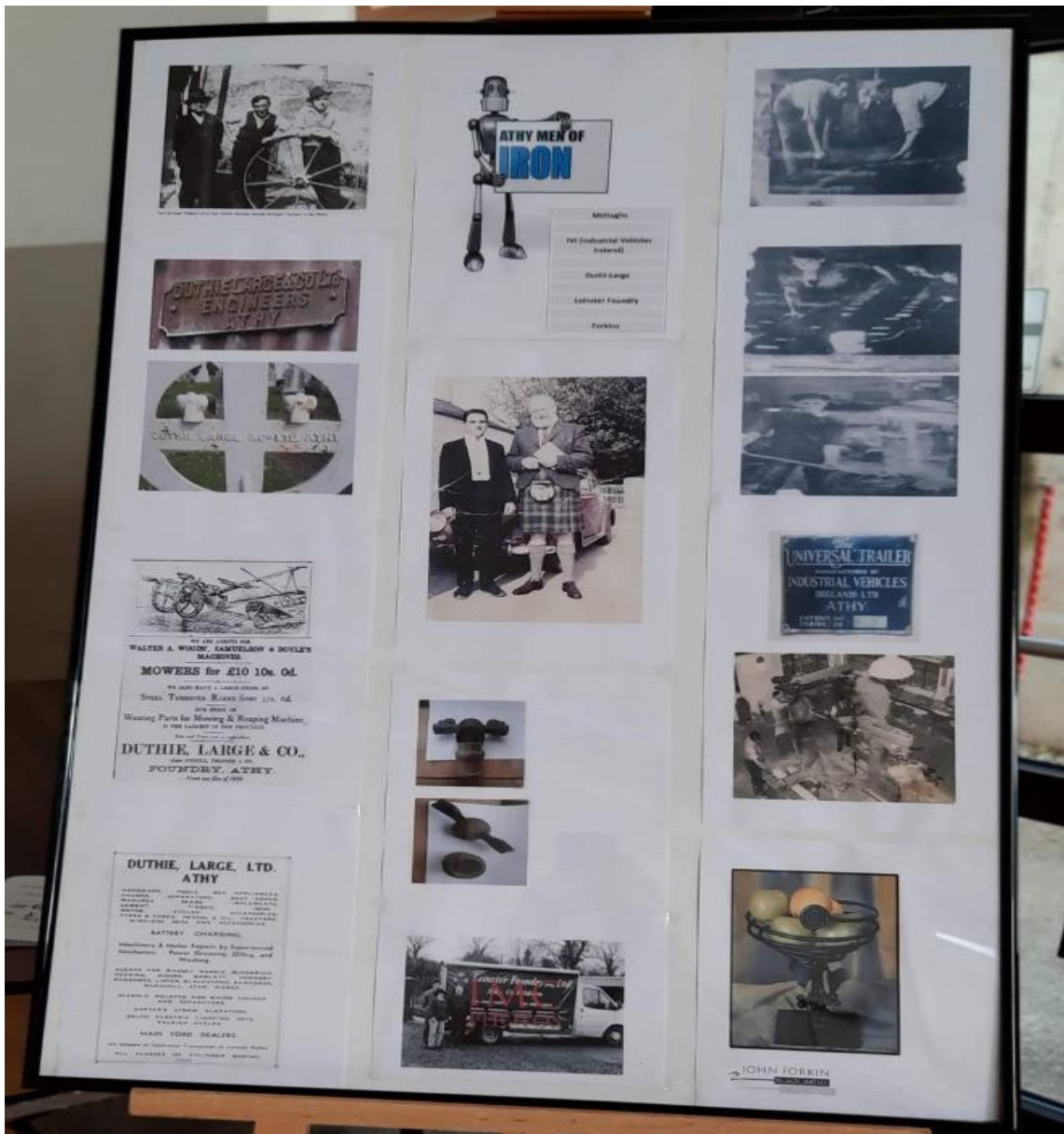
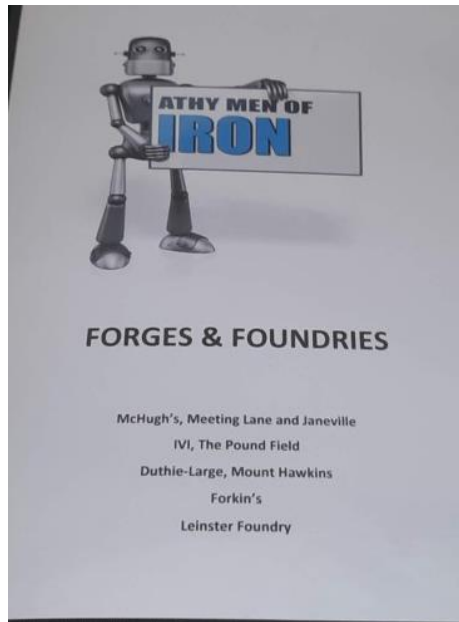
Binder (above) to modern combine (below)

High storage silo built in Athy in 1958

Modern mechanisation in Athy

Manual maltings - before modern mechanisation

Minutes of a meeting held in 1940 about the objection to the introduction of combine harvesters





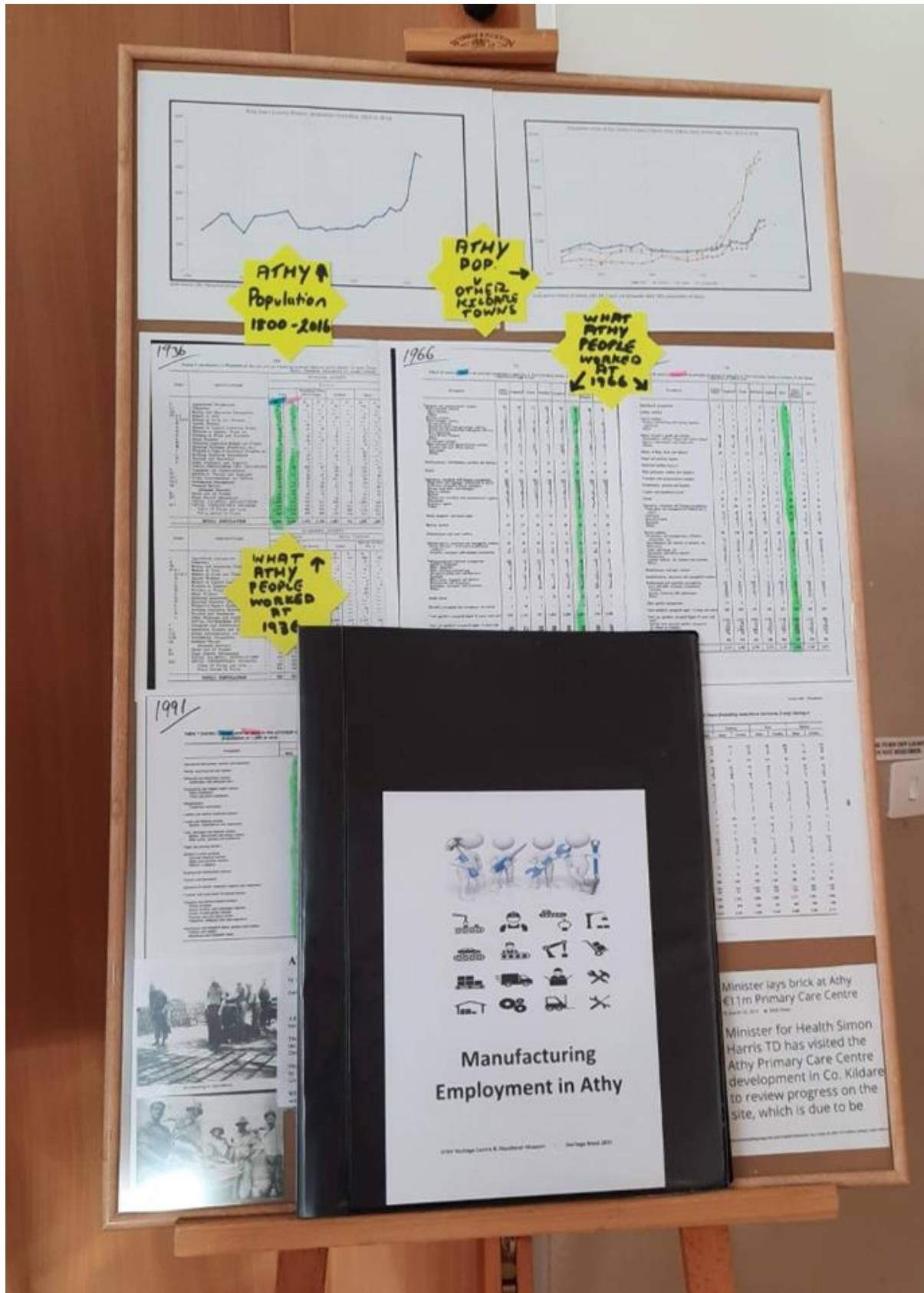
Barrow drainage, Tegral (Asbestos)/Etex, Bowater-Wallboard and Bradbury's Bakery



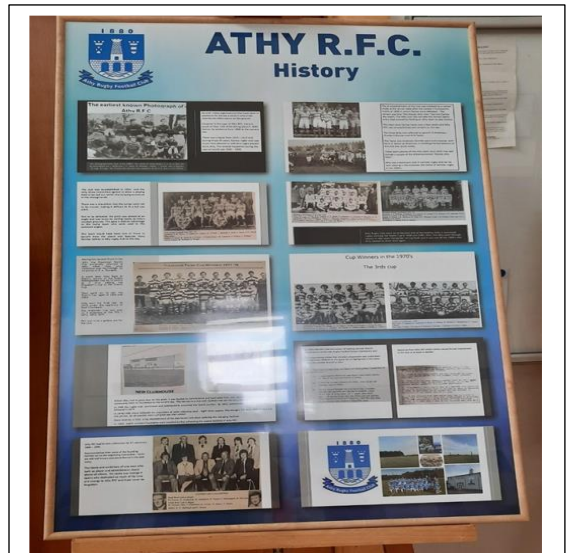
Hannon's Mills



Population and employment



Sports clubs

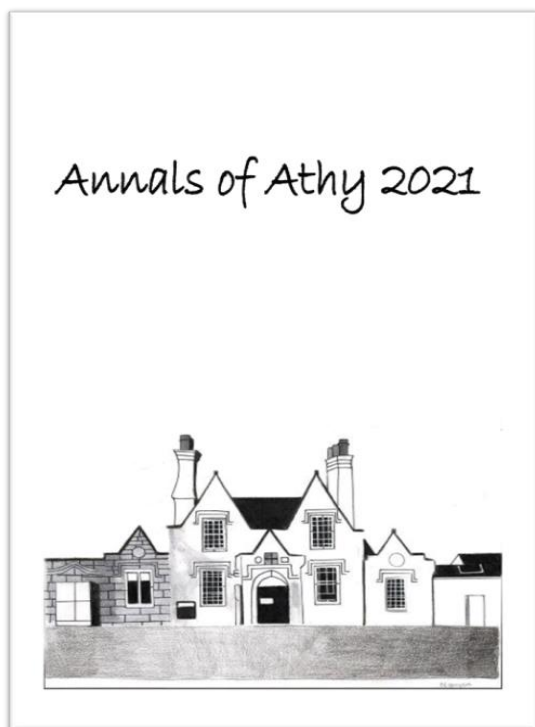


Indoors and outdoors



School drawings on the theme: *Athy – town of bricks and iron* September 2021





Front cover



Back cover

Launch of Annals of Athy 2021



6 NEWS

Annals of Athy 2021 gets official launch

By Conor Farrell

THE Annals of Athy 2021 was launched at an event in the town's Clarendon Court Hotel last Tuesday 23 November.

A fantastic repository of industrial, agricultural, sporting and more of the area's heritage, over 50 named authors, editors and artists are credited in the *Annals of Athy 2021*, which has been published just three months after a Heritage Week exhibition.

The youngest contributor was a five-year-old artist while their most senior supporter is 98 years of age. Topics covered between the pages include forges and foundries, Bradbury's Bakery, Athy Boxing Club and JJ Bergin. Anne Murphy, Mark Wall and Clam Roche edited the publication.

"The important thing is that we recognise the authors of each chapter," Anne said at the launch. "I got so much help from the families, the businesses and the connections to create the chapters, most of which were written by people themselves rather than by me."

A variety of black and white drawings from local schools was also on display that evening, with 21 selected for inclusion in the *Annals*.

The original 1931 *Annals of Athy* was compiled by Michael Malone, Chairman of Athy District Council, in a nice touch, the 2021 edition was designed and printed by Malone's grand-niece and great-grand-niece Fiona Rainsford and Eithne Rainsford of DataPrint. The next step is to prepare all

the resources to share with local schools. The editors are looking at ways of linking with Kildare Library Services to develop a free, school-managed Athy History and Heritage on the Move scheme whereby local schools can share resources among themselves and be supported by talks and demonstrations by local experts.

As part of the fascinating life and times of Stephen Cullinan – a rural science teacher at Athy Vocational School, the first secretary of Macra na Feirme, and the first editor of the *Young Farmers Journal* which preceded the *Irish Farmers Journal*.

Event chair Liam Dunne noted that "there was a time when Athy was the centre of the agricultural world in Ireland... all of the



Liam Dunne makes a presentation to Athy College Principal Richard Daly and art teacher Christina Hayden



Liam Dunne made a presentation to Anne Murphy for work on the publication

important agricultural organisations of the 20th century in this country started in Athy, from Mark Bergin's grandfather with the National Ploughing Association and Anna May McHugh to Macra na Feirme, the *Farmers Journal* and eventually the NFA."

He explained that Cullinan – who features in the *Annals* – died in 1951, adding that "he wasn't quite 32 years of age."

The keynote speech was delivered by Matt Dempsey, former editor of the *Farmers Journal*, who explained that Cullinan "took up his first job as a rural science teacher here in Athy in 1944 in the vocational school at the age of 23. But it soon became apparent that he was going to be more than a teacher operating within his own confines. He stamped himself early on as a man of vision, commitment and capacity."

Stephen Cullinan's cause, he said, "was clearly that of improving the lot of Irish farmers and farming. But that, interestingly, did not mean that he was

indifferent to his own career and the fact that he made steady and real progress in his own personal and professional development as well as commitment. In 1946, he resigned from his teaching post, to become technical advisor to Minch Norton, even then a nationally important company supplying malt to the range of Irish brewers and distillers... he then further progressed to become national agricultural advisor to United Potash."

Mr Dempsey said it's clear that Cullinan "was keenly aware of the climate of technical and political stagnation that permeated Irish agriculture and his first toe-in-the-water venture was to found the Athy Farmers Club in March 1944. He became the first honorary secretary while in the same year he founded the rather grandly named National Young Farmers Association."

The name of the National Young Farmers Association was changed in 1946 to Macra na Feirme and is



Editor and one of the driving forces behind the book, Anne Murphy, speaking at the launch

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Joe Dunne introduces the proceedings at the launch, with guest speakers at the top table

Photos: Aisling Ryland

September 1947 its headquarters moved from Cullinan's flat in Athy to Athy Town Hall. Cullinan served as its honorary secretary and treasurer until 1949. He believed passionately in education, he had a unique ability to deliver on that front," said Mr. Dempsey. "It is an extraordinary achievement for a man of 52 that he could settle in Athy and leave such an indelible mark on the history, and culture especially, of the county."

Joe Healy, former president of both Macra and FFA, FFA Deputy President. Healy farmer Brian Rushe shares his thoughts about the night.

"I was not involved in Macra for a long time when I was in it, I did have the opportunity and did have the luck of being awarded a Nutfield Scholarship in 2015," he recalled. "The scholarship was sponsored by the FBD Trust and the Journal... without



Some of the guest speakers at the launch

Stephen Cullinan, we wouldn't have those two organisations." And Macra President John Keane remarked: "To bring together from four clubs in 1944 to 400 clubs in 1951, and to bring thousands of people together with a common cause and a common good to represent the interests of farmers and young farmers across the country, I think, was a true demonstration of what real leadership is really all about."

If you want to get your hands on a copy of the *Annals*, pop into Athy Stationery on Leinster Street, Athy.



Memorabilia on display



Some of the art work created by local school children



Book exhibition



Copies of the *Annals of Athy 2021* are on sale at Willie Mahon's Athy Stationery store at Leinster Street, Athy

NEWS 7

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Athy College and the Garda Station plaque – art installation, 14 May 2022

20 NEWS

Installation details Athy's role in first garda station plaques

By Conor Ferris

ATHY'S role in the creation of the first plaques to grace garda stations throughout the country was remembered on Saturday 14 May when a large crowd turned out for the unveiling of an installation by students of Athy College detailing the town's involvement in their creation in the 1920s.

The unveiling of Athy – town of bricks and iron – took place that morning in Madden's cut park, formerly the site of the Duthie Large engineering company where the original garda station plaques were produced.

According to Kildare author and historian James Dunning, as a printed device the garda badge first appeared in the masthead of police magazine *The Garda* (February 1923). He noted that it was the subject of criticism in the Department of Home Affairs when Garda Commissioner Michael J. Staines sought financial sanction for the casting of metal station plaques.

The cast-iron station plaques were made by the Duthie and Large foundry in Athy from a mould by Herbert H. Paisting, headmaster of Athy Technical School (which would later become Athy College). This commemorative art project carried out by Athy College, in association with the *Annals of Athy 2021* (industrial history) group, also commemorates the town's very strong industrial heritage. The local school congratulated students Gabija and Jack on their presentation at the launch, adding that it's very proud of its association with the first production of the garda crest. "Well done to the students and their teachers from Athy College for all their work on this project and of course to Anne Murphy and all who helped with remembering this historic event," said Senator Mark Wall, who was among those who turned out for the unveiling.

Kildare Decade of Commemorations have supported this project, along with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media under the Decade of Centenaries 2012-23 initiative.

Retired members of an Garda Síochána along with local gardai and elective representatives

Gregor Cox and Frank Taaffe

Richard Daly, Principal of Athy College and students who were involved in the project

Eoin Doyle, Vera Doyle, Cllr Aoife Breslin and Frank Taaffe

Pat Murphy and Jim Fox

Garda Ralph Holmes, Anne Murphy and Garda Jennifer Barry

Community Garda Seán O Mahoney

Senator Mark Wall school principal Richard Daly

Leon Kenny, Claire Bradbury and Marian Kenny

Photos: Aisling Hyland

Cllr Veralouise Behan and her mother Vera

Information board – Athy Manor Mill, November 2022

Designed by Dr Anne Murphy and Frank Taaffe

ATHY'S MANOR MILL

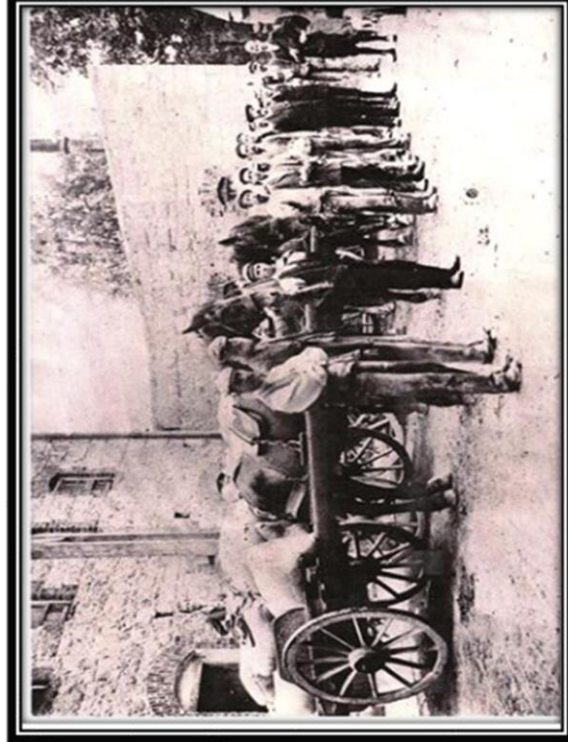
Immediately behind this building was the site of a flour mill powered by water from a millrace on the Barrow which ran under the road on this side of Croom a Boo Bridge. The millrace, and an earlier mill building, were recorded on John Rocque's map of West Athy in 1758. The mill owner at that time was Ben Racheley. That mill may have been the Woodstock Manor Mill at which tenants of the Earls of Kildare were required to grind their corn during medieval times. In a deed dated 1861 the mill was described as the Manor Mill of Athy. The mill was an impressive, rubble-stone, five-storey building with spacious stores, stables and yards.

The Mill was in the ownership of the Haughton family from the mid-eighteenth century and was later acquired by the Hannon family who had mills at Prumplestown and Ardreigh from the 1850s.

On the opposite side of Duke Street was the mill owner's house, a fine three-bay, two-storey-over-basement building which was demolished prior to the building of the Allied Irish Bank premises.

With the decline of the Irish milling industry in the 1920s many mills throughout Ireland closed, including the Hannon Mill which ceased production in 1926. The building was subsequently used as the headquarters of the Barrow Drainage Scheme between 1927 and 1935. The mill building remained vacant until it was demolished in 1986.

The mill workers shown in the photograph on the right include two young Hannon brothers, Norman Leslie and John Coulson, both of whom were killed in action during the First World War. They are pictured standing alongside their father, John A. Hannon, who died in 1924.



This storyboard was sponsored by Taaffe Solicitors and placed here with the kind permission of the McStew family

Heritage story writing in primary schools, November 2022 – January 2023



Editors of *Annals of Athy 2021* and Athy Library

Invite your school to participate in



Centenary Local Heritage Story Writing

Finish ONE story in less than 500 words

Primary school pupils in the Athy area are invited to participate in creative story-writing about local heritage through their schools in Autumn/Winter 2022.

We recommend that stories are in the pupil's **own handwriting** in either black or blue using one side of the page only. **One story per pupil only.**

Ordinary cóip leabhar pages should be used, unless a pupil normally uses assistive technology for written work.

Pupils are free to talk with teachers, family members, friends and neighbours to finish a story. Older people who helped with the story should be named.

Pupil's own drawings, copies of old photographs and other artwork are welcome within the written story, but internet images should not be used.

Pupils should write their own name, class and school name at the end of their story.

Each school should organise their stories into inexpensive A4 display folders so that the pages are easy to read. The name of the school should appear on the cover of the folder.

A list of stories and authors should be included.

COLLECTION date/s: Thursday 17 or Friday 18 November 2022

All folders of stories will be displayed in Athy Library.

One story per school will be selected for special display and for creation of a modest local heritage e-book.

Authors of selected stories will receive a souvenir gift.

Kildare Nationalist will be invited to publish some of the stories.

All folders will be returned to schools in January 2023. ***Thank you in advance!***

Selectors:

Editors of *Annals of Athy 2021* and Athy Library staff with guest author John MacKenna.

16 Primary schools are invited to participate this time:

Ballyadams, Ballylinan, Ballyroe, Ballyshannon, Barrowhouse, Churchtown, Crookstown, Gael Scoil Ath Í, Kilkea, Killberry, Kilmead, Levitstown, Model School, Moone, Scoil Mhichil Naofa, Scoil Phádraig Naofa.

FURTHER INFORMATION FROM: Dr Anne Murphy, 087 9073348 mayburyhouse@hotmail.com

Recent heritage murals and storyboards in Athy

Hughes family canal barge on Minch-Norton gable wall, Upper William Street



Maltings, Canal and Barrow storyboards on Minch-Norton wall (Kildare County Council)



One of the storyboards in the Curragh Camp



END