# SOME NOTES ON MINING IN KERRY

By: JOHN McCARTHY

Muckross House

MINING in Kerry dates back to pre-historic times. The bronze Age began in Ireland about 2000 B.C. and during this period Kerry's copper deposits were discovered and prospected, notably at Kilcrohane, Kenmare and Killarney. The miners are thought to have been the Beaker people, named from the decorated bell-shaped pottery beakers found in their graves. Their origins were on the northern shores of Africa and they established a main culture in the Iberian peninsula based on copper mining. In Ireland they settled as miners, metal workers and traders over a wide area of the north and east but those who settled in Kerry are thought to have arrived there directly by sea.

Sir William Petty (1623—1687), who came to Ireland as an army physician in 1652, became the owner of 270,000 acres in Kerry in the baronies of Glanerought, Dunkerron North and South, and Iveragh. Iron was in increasing demand and he opened (or re-opened) the iron mines. One of these was the Glanerought Iron Works near Kenmare, opened about 1666. The iron was of poor quality but manufacture continued until 1688 when political upheaval forced a shut-down. Smelting was resumed later. When coin was scarce Petty struck his own iron coins. Several of these marked Glanerought Iron Works, dated 1667 and 1669, may still be extant. Blackstones Bridge, above Caragh Lake, was the site of another of Petty's foundries as was Muckross. Smith's History (published 1756) records the importing of iron ore through Castlemaine for the smelters at Muckross. Another Kerry landowner, Sir Francis Brewster, had ironworks at Brewsterfield near Killarney.

The local woods were felled to provide the charcoal necessary for smelting and the iron industry ceased when no more trees were left.

The slate works at Valentia were opened in 1816 and gave constant employment to 150 men. The very fine quality slate was usually cut into flags of considerable dimensions which were chiefly exported to London where they were in great demand for flooring cellars and warehouses and in making billiard tables. The quarry closed in 1883.

The quarries were open again from 1899 to 1904 but competition from Welsh slate output forced them to close.

Weld's Illustrations of the Scenery of Killarney and the Surrounding Country, published in 1812, mentions a quarry a short distance from the mines on Ross Island which annually yielded a considerable quantity of marble used for the manufacture of hearths, chimney-pieces and tombstones. Reddish marble was quarried at Lisheenbawn near Castleisland.

Stone hammers used by the earliest miners were discovered at the Ross Island, (Killarney) Copper mine.

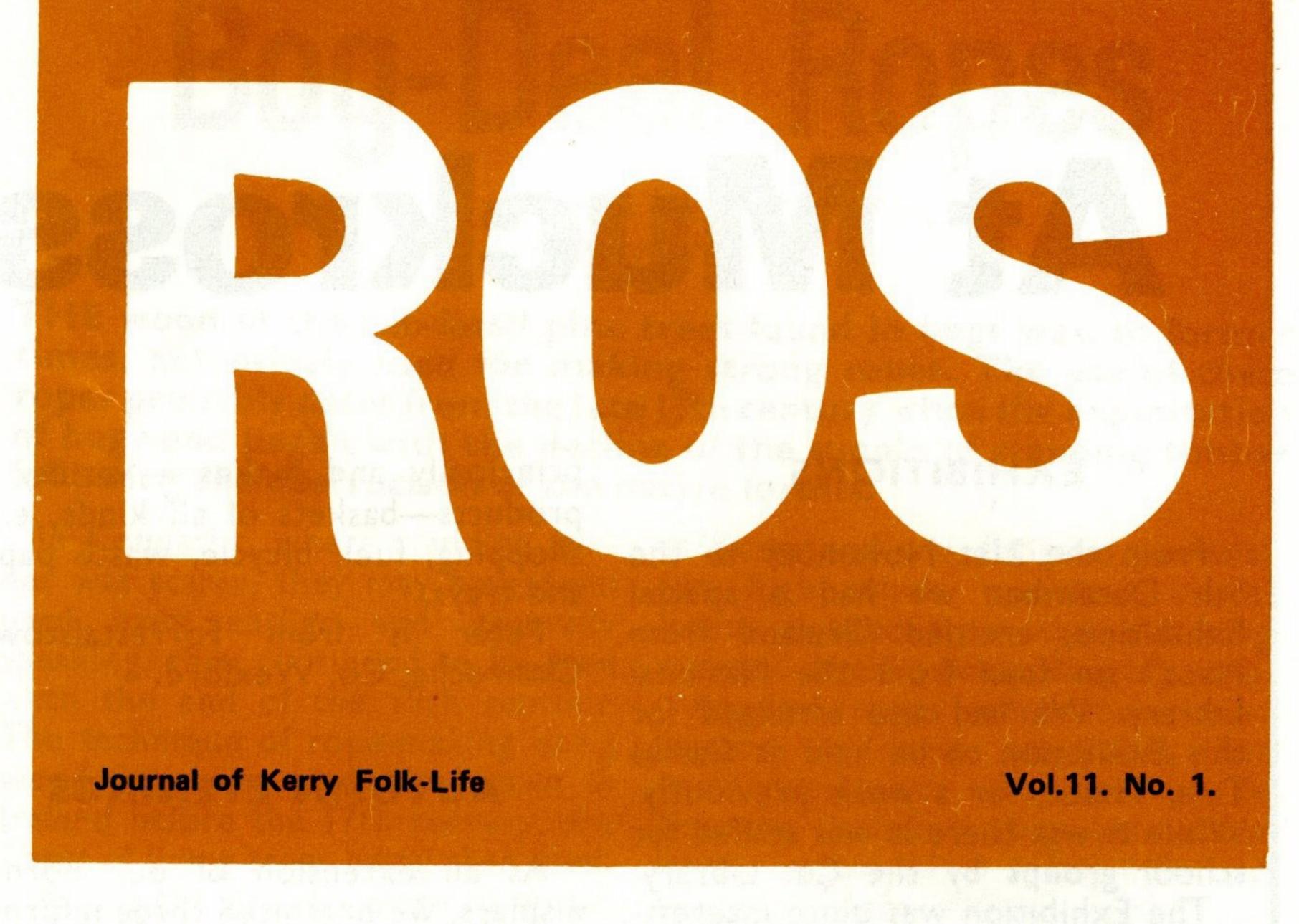
There is reason to think that this mine was again opened in the reign of James 1st (1603—1625) as some coins of that monarch were found in another and a distinct part of the mine.

Between 1804 and 1810 the mine was worked on an extensive scale. Five hundred miners were employed and 3,220 tons of ore, valued at £69,487, were exported to Swansea. Between 1827 and 1829 another £18,090 worth of ore was obtained.

A copper mine on the Muckross estate yielded £30,000 worth of ore between 1749 and 1754. This mine was also worked in 1785, 1801 and 1818. Here there was also a rich vein of cobalt, combined with arsenic, of about two or three inches wide but from the smallness of the quantity little notice was taken of it as an article of value; cobalt was then used in making blue glass.

Copper and lead were mined at Ardtully near Kenmare. In 1844 about a hundred were employed. The Ardtully mine was last worked between 1910 and 1914.

Early in the 19th century, certainly before 1824, veins of lead and copper were partially worked at Milltown. The lead ore contained eighty-two per cent lead and forty ounces of silver to the ton.



## THE LATE Mr. lan O'Leary

It is with deep regret that we announce the unexpected death of the Editor of ROS, Mr. Ian O'Leary, which took place on the 27th February, 1981 after this issue had gone to press.

lan O'Leary was a professional journalist—one of the best known and most respected members of his profession in the south of Ireland. But Ian was a man of many parts who immersed himself deeply in practically every cultural and sporting activity in the community. To name but a few of his involvements: he was a founder member of Dochas and was deeply involved in all its activities, personally teaching swimming and gymnastics to its members; he was prominent in the Pan Celtic movement and in the Bach Festival; he was Secretary to the Fitzgerald Stadium Committee a job to which he brought great enthusiasm and professional competence.

It was as a fellow Trustee of Muckross House that we got to know him best over the last three years. From the start he was convinced that the Muckross Folk Museum had a large part to play in the preservation of our cultural heritage

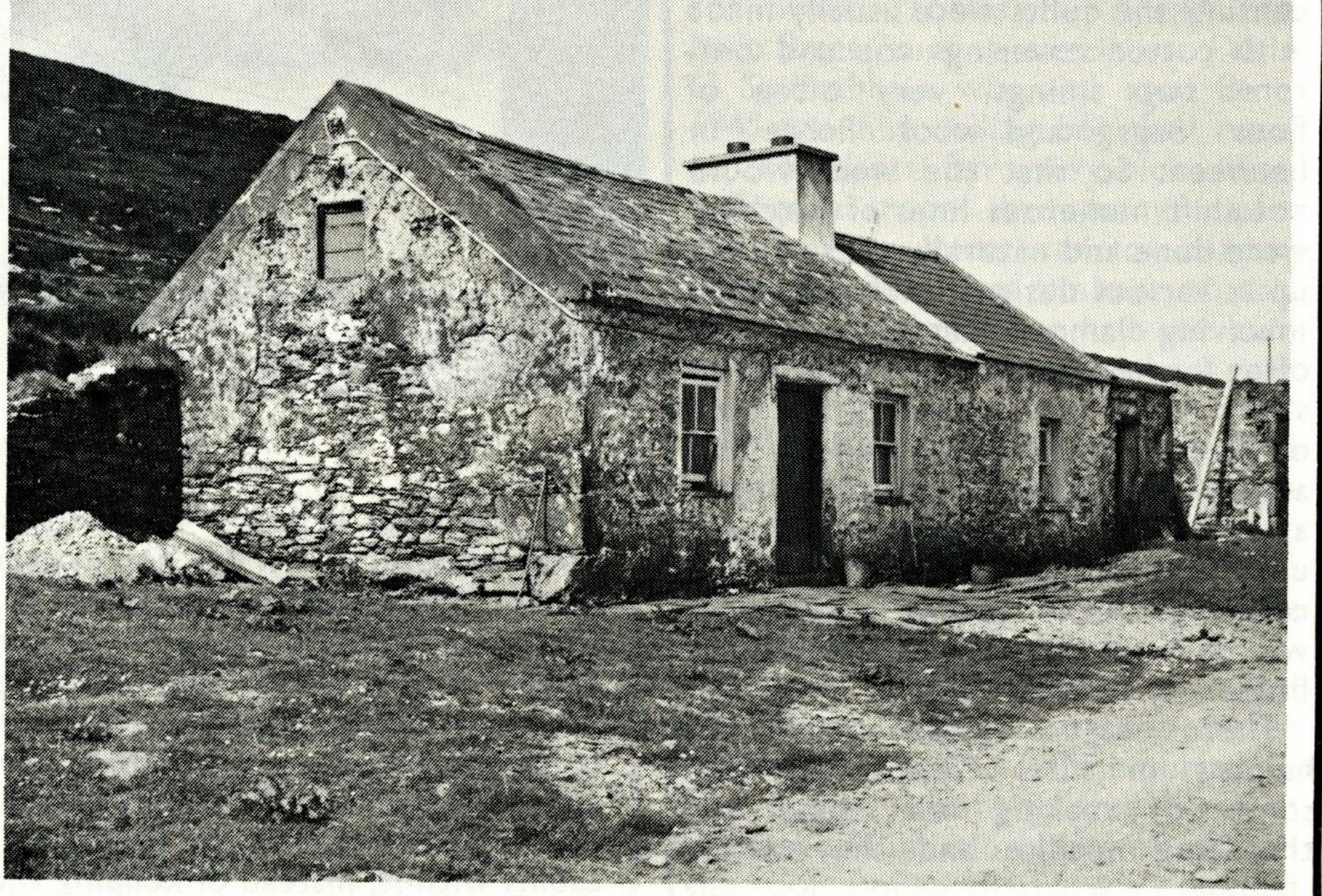
and he concerned himself with all its activities. He was keenly interested in the folk-life exhibits and in the development of the traditional crafts. He was largely responsible for the production of this journal ROS. But perhaps his greatest contribution was the collection of traditional music which was his brain-child and to which he devoted much of his time and energy. The fine collection of tapes which we expect to have in the music library of Muckross house will forever be a monument to his memory. He was a man who was brimful of ideas. He was articulate and persuasive, sometimes provocative and always well informed.

lan O'Leary's sudden death at the early age of 42 came as a great shock to all who knew him and has created a void in the community which it will be difficult to fill. It might be argued that he shortened his life by overwork, much of it in the service of his fellow man. Still, we would like to think that the words of Scripture are nearer to the truth: "The number of years is not the true measure of life", and, "Coming to perfection in so short a time he achieved long life" (Book of Wisdom). lan, himself, would probably agree with the poet, Thomas Mordaunt, that:

"One crowded hour of glorious life is worth an age without a name".

Mention must be made of one outstanding fact about lan, namely his dedication to his family. He neither smoked nor drank. His wife and his family were the centre of his life. It was perhaps symbolic that his death came at a time when he was performing a simple family service—buying a pair of shoes for his ten year old daughter.

To his wife, Mary, his four children, Margaret, Conor, Derek and Karl, his sister, Mrs. Honor Doyle, his brother, Muiris, his uncles and aunts and a whole host of friends we extend our deepest sympathy. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.



Slate Miner's House, Dohilla, Valentia.

## At Nuckross

#### **EXHIBITIONS**

5th December we had a special Exhibition, entitled "Ireland from Maps" on loan from the National Library. We had also arranged for this Exhibition to be held at Siamsa Tire, Tralee, for a week previously. While it was there it was staffed for school groups by the Co. Library.

The Exhibition was quite interesting in that it showed the amount of local history which can be got from maps.

In recent years we have had a number of Exhibitions from the National Library and the National Museum. We see great results from this co-operation and that with the Co. Library and Siamsa. It means that we can increasingly have interesting exhibitions available to the County and usually at more than one centre.

#### **EDUCATIONAL PRIZE**

The Hilliard Prize, presented to the school groups whose projects in relation to their participation on our Educational Programme are adjudged best, was this year awarded to Kilgobnet N.S. and Lixnaw N.S. obtained second prize. The presentation took place at Muckross House on the 19th September, 1980 when the children and their teachers Pat O'Connor, N.T. of Kilgobnet N.S. and Treasa O'Sullivan, N.T. Lixnaw N.S., paid a special visit to the House.

#### ADULT EDUCATION

Our weaver, John Cahill, has been teaching hand-weaving to an Adult Class every Wednesday night since project. late October. This gives a new and very welcome dimension to our Craft-Workshop. We are grateful to Mr. John Kennedy, Adult Education Officer, Mr. Pat Favier, Killarney Vocational School and the Kerry V.E.C. for the opportunity to cooperate with them in this way. We look forward to a development along these lines in the future.

#### **APPRENTICESHIPS**

apprenticeships in hand-weaving to a number of young ladies. So it looks as if our weaving workshop under the guidance of John Cahill of Knockna- often formed part of a girl's gift when hoe, Killarney is well under way. she married and so quilts, as with Miss Mary Twomey was the first of other bed clothes etc., made in one these to join us on the 5th January. area often ended up in homes miles

We have also an apprentice in Basket-making-Mr. Michael Casey used more than cotton for the who joined us on January 5th also.

#### BASKETMAKER

principally and makes a variety of products-baskets of all kinds, e.g., From the 21st November to the shopping, fuel, bicycle, waste paper

> Peter is from Forrestalstown, Clonroche, Co. Wexford.

#### **AUTUMN EVENINGS**

As an extension of our normal displays, we organised three informal evening talks and demonstrations to illustrate aspects of Kerry life at the end of August and early September. They were well attended and the reaction was good.

Mr. Seán O'Connor, the well known Kerry Landscape Artist demonstrated Watercolour techniques; Fr. Tom Egan C.C., Firies, together with Misses Geraldine Cotter and Catherine Foley, our Music Collectors, 'explored' the Folk Music of Kerry; Dr. Kevin Danaher, Lecturer in the Department of Irish Folklore, U.C.D. illustrated what life was like on the Blasket Islands in the time of Tomas O'Criomhthain.

It is hoped to have further talks during 1981.

#### QUILTING

We co-ordinated the recording and filming of 'a quilting night' in the house of Patrick and Nora Cronin, The Square, Kilgarvan. Mrs. Laura Jones, Assistant Keeper, Department of Material Culture, Ulster Folk and Transport Museum; Mr. John C. O'Sullivan, Keeper of the Folklife Division of the National Museum of Ireland and Mr. Brendan Doyle, the photographer in the National Museum of Ireland co-operated in the

Traditionally, quilting was done in the area and elsewhere in the Winter, when it was both a social occasion and a practical job. A group of women would go to each others house and 'put out' a quilt or more if necessary over a number of nights for the woman of the house. In this century the quilts were usually made with cotton coverings top and bottom, two linings, very often of flour bags, and wool fleece in between. So that the wool would We have also recently offered not shift numerous lines of stitching were done and naturally these ended up in various designs, the most usual involving diamond shapes. Such quilts away. In the last century flannel was coverings and so the one in Kilgarvan was covered on top with red and in bottom with white flannel.

There was a great crowd of Since June of 1980, Mr. Peter helpers in Mrs. Cronin's house, Dunne has been working as Basket- some for making tea, some for maker with us. He uses willow rods threading needles and the needle



At the interval during one of our Autumn Evenings. Dr. Kevin Danaher of U.C.D. and Mr. Sean O'Connor a trustee, included in this picture, were Lecturers at two of the Evenings.

workers who in this case were Mrs. Cronin and her 23 year old daughter Abbie, Miss Julia May Callaghan, Mrs. Commissioner Burke was told that Han O'Sullivan and Mrs. Mary the Trustees envisage Muckross Kelleher.

#### **EXTENSION**

the Trustees about possible sources like to be able to provide permanent of finance for the further develop- exhibition centres in the main towns ment of the folk museum with a of the county.

particular emphasis on an open air museum.

House remaining as the centre of the Kerry Folk Museum. They would like to see preservation both in the house and elsewhere of the traditional The plans for the extension of the trades or crafts of the county. They Kerry Folk Museum, now centred at would also like to see the preserv-Muckross House, Killarney, were ation of the most typical of the mandetailed to Mr. Richard Burke E.E.C. made features of the landscape of the Commissioner for Taxation, Trans- county both through a central relocport, Consumer Affairs and Relations ation, or the creation of an open air with Parliament, when he visited the museum, and through the presermuseum on November 13, 1980. vation in situ of certain buildings. He Commissioner Burke was asked by was also told the Trustees would

### Land Workers' Houses



A Land Worker's House

In the areas of larger farms there also were the small houses of the poor labourers who did not have any land of their own. Usually they rented the site of the house and a small potato garden from a farmer, paying for it by "working out" the rent by so many days' labour for the farmer at so much per day. Writing in 1776, Arthur Young said of this system in County Kerry: "Such being the case, the farmers are enabled to charge the price of labour as low as they please and rate the land as high as they like. This is an evil which oppresses them cruelly, and certainly has its origin in the landlords, when they set a farm, setting all the cabins with it, instead of keeping them tenants to themselves". (Tour in Ireland, 1892 edition, i, 369).

## Geist?

We wish to thank Maire Nic Mhaolain, 105 Taobh an Chnoic, Deilginis, Co. Baile Atha Cliath for translating what follows, the subject of Ceist? in our last issue, and Mr. Oliver Snoddy of the National Museum who passed on the information.

Tarrach sléibhe—coarse mountain grass.

Búrlach (brollach), chimney breast.

Saluídí (solaoidí)—solutions, explanations.

Baighreán—flummery.

Nialfartaighe (néalfartach), tormentil—a herb used by tanners.

Brideog spléir—trawl-line.

Bóiricín (buaircín)—cone, guard on tip of animal's horn.

Ar ceulacan—fasting.

Stakeman—context is cooking utensils. May be steakpan.

Bruinnleog—Twig.

Ana umard—great stress, strain.

Beaifití, baft—a course fabric usually of cotton.

Anaflaig—angel-fish.

Fréic-whim, amusement.

Cochall—scoop-net, landing-net.

Sgiathán—hurdle for trapping salmon.

Cailleach an iascaigh—a ghost seen at sea.

Go treamhaidmhear-troubled.

Goushnaith—basting thread for loose sewing, tacking.

Drom-taoide,—spring tide.

Tréasleán—plaited rushlight.

Culucs (collach)—male, the male crab-fish.

Graidhnp-forefoot of boat.

Taoscán an fhiléara—ballast.

Poll duibh—where magnesium for dyeing is found.

Núig na n-iast—a general name for shell fish.

An giorráinín Spágach—a broad footed nag.

Lútharnach—weeds.

Umanothar—the day after tomorrow.

Leath éasáid—any implement which lightens the work load.

Leaca, (leacaithe)—flattened, crushed.

Cró-fhranncach—an edible sea weed.

Raimh (rú)—rue, a plant used by dyers.

Dagha—dye.

Dinnc (ding)—a wedge.

We give another list below in the hope that our readers may be able to provide the translations.

Bheist mhurailí (Caherdaniel 1951)

(fiche) bounnlá (prior 1951)

Cístí steaimpí (Prior 1951)

(Maidí rámha) ag souráil (Caherdaniel 1951)

Munairtlí (an t-saighne), (Caherdaniel 1949)

Graiflín (fishing tackle) (Caherdaniel 1949) Úmacha (prátaí), (Múrach Corca Dhuibhne 1949)

Gréasaithe galla (Múrach, Corca Dhuibhne 1949)

Aidhléirithe (Dun Chaoin 1940)

Drabhalaí (made by Cooper (Kilmalkedar 1943)

Oulhach (magician?) (Caherdaniel)

Garamain (Spinning and Weaving Flax) (Prior 1945)

Coirriughadh (cattle disease) (Prior 1947)

Peirceanna (saghas bróg) (Múrach 1941)

Na bácanna (seawrack) Prior 1951

Sardí (sea weed) (Caherdaniel 1944)

Colatán (lasc a bhíonn fé chlocaibh na trá) (Caherdaniel 1949)

Rouch (seaweed) (Caherdaniel 1944)

## Bog-Deal Ropes

By: JOHN McCARTHY Muckross House

THE wood of the sub-fossil pine trees found in bogs was, in former times, extensively used for making strong ropes. The use of these ropes probably dates from the late 17th century when the exploitation of bogwood began with the decline of the supply of standing timber following the destruction of the native forests.

speaking, they continued to be used material itself quickly disintegrated. until the end of the 19th century. The technique of rope-making using wood fibre was probably known in Ireland before the 17th century, the fibres of living trees being then used.

A straight grained piece of wood, replaced for the Winter. four to five feet long, was necessary. From this long thin strips were peeled or split with a knife. These towel, that the rope was sold by the strips were more or less one millimetre thick. They varied in width, towing lighters on the Tralee-Fenit strips ten millimetres wide being not canal. In the Caherdaniel district a unusual, but the average was two to woman, aged 70 in 1942, recorded, three millimetres. It was held that 'Siad a bhíodh ag na h-aonne they could be best cut from the parent log while the timber was still na mbád agus b'shin iad na tiada moist from the bog. Sometimes the maithe. strips were moistened prior to twisting. Pounding the strips to hay and corn stacks. Large stones to reduce them to a more fibrous hold them in place were tied to the condition was resorted to in some ends of the two ropes used. When places. In Listowel a beatle of ash or the stack was exhausted the ropes elm was used. In Galway they were were stored in a wet ditch until beaten with a hammer and then torn required the following season. into strings.

prepared they were twisted into a rushes, reeds and wool to be carried ply of suitable thickness. The par- on a person's back or across the back ticular type of sugan—rope twister of a beast of burden. common to the locality might be Tadhg O Murchadha, Waterville, used but, in Kerry, the twisting was writing in 1939, mentions that his often done by hand. Descriptions grandfather made two-ply rope to from Sneem and Caherdaniel col- tether cattle: "Thugadh na téadáin lected by the Irish Folklore Com- giumhaise seo ana chaitheamh go mission, where the rope, according léir uatha ach do bhíodar ana thugtha as it was made, was first fastened to ar adharca na mbó a chaitheamh". the back of a chair and gradually Its use for this purpose was rare

about one centimetre. The rope was seats. of single ply on itself and twisting. If century. ply was included.

have been such a specialist. Donal Murchadha, Waterville. Ó Suilleabháin who was aged 86 in 1945 saw him selling bog deal ropes at Caherdaniel fair every November.

Bogdeal ropes had many applications. They were used for cording beds, fastening roof timbers, thatching, boat cables, tying hay and corn stacks, burden ropes, tethers and chair seats.

When cording wooden beds a series of holes was bored in the side boards and end boards and the rope was threaded through these to form a network which supported the

straw, chaff or feather tick.

Bogdeal rope was sometimes used instead of wooden pegs to fasten roof couples and to tie the purlins to to the Atlantic seaboard from Derry November, 1980.

In Connacht, where standing tim- to Kerry and was designed to resist ber was scarce, they may have been the high winds prevalent there. used even earlier and generally Ropes twisted from the thatching

> Bogdeal ropes were more permanent in damp conditions but could deteriorate when too dry. In Summer, therefore, they were taken down, immersed in a bog-hole and

The Irish Folklore Commission has information, from Banemore, Lisyard in Tralee where it was used for laisteas sa t-saoghal san a' ceangal

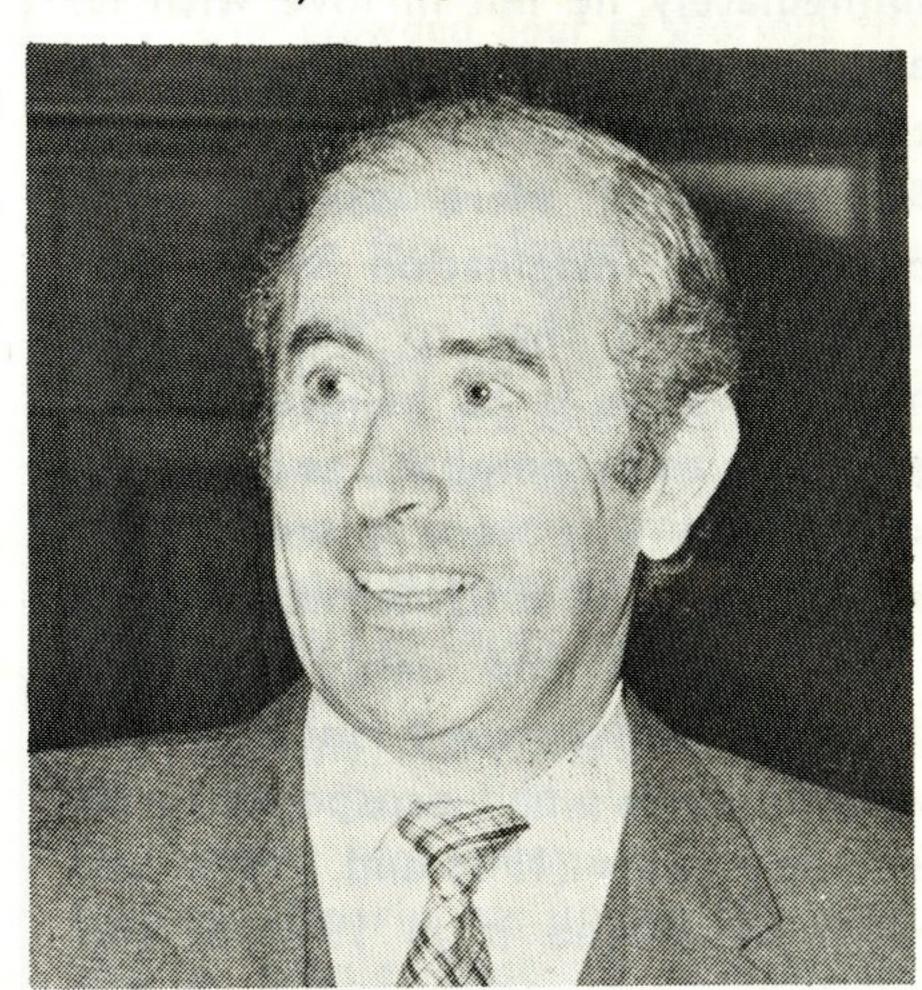
Three-ply ropes were used to tie

Bogdeal ropes were used for tying When enough strips had been packs of firewood, osiers, hay, straw,

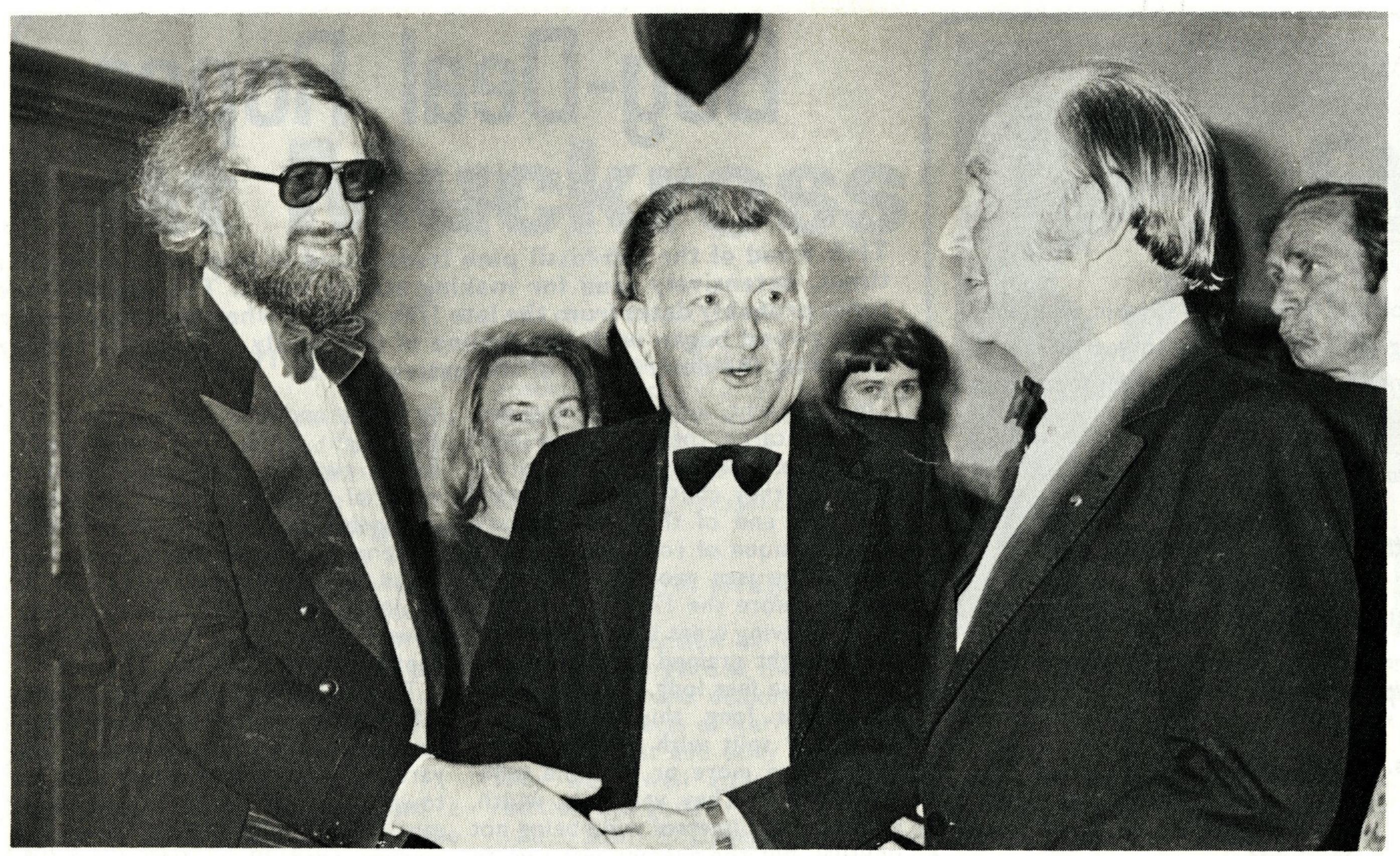
wound around it, imply hand-twisting. outside of Donegal and equally rare, The average diameter of a ply was apparently, was its use for chair

apparently never used as a single ply. The story of Bogdeal rope illus-The most common type was two-ply trates the homespun economy of made by doubling a suitable length the rural poor up to the present

a stronger rope was needed a third I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr. A. T. Lucas article, Most men in the districts where Bogwood, a study in Rural Economy the rope was used probably made (Bealoideas, Vol. 23, 1954, PP. 71-135) their own but some, more skilful and to Irish Folklore Commission than others, tended to specialise in Main MSS. relating to County Kerry the work. Tómas na dTéad may recorded by the late Tadhg Ó



the couples. It was also used to sew in Mr. Richard Burke, E.E.C. Commissionet place the foundation layer of sods on Mr. Richard Burke, E.E.C. Commisthe roof. Roped thatch was confined sioner, when he visited Muckross in



President Hillery, at the opening of the 1980 Bach Festival, with Sean O'Keeffe, Chairman and Vincent Counihan of the Trustees of Muckross House.

#### THE PEARSE MUSEUM: ST. ENDAS PARK by PAT COOKE

The Pearse Museum and the grounds in which it stands at St. Enda's Park, Rathfarnham, is a place rich in atmosphere and full of associations that rarely fail to impress the visitor in some way. It is possible to sense this atmosphere almost immediately after coming through the entrance gate. As one walks up the avenue the house is at first concealed from view by a clump of trees. As one rounds this brow the house comes quite suddenly and quite dramatically into view. To discover for oneself in this way the elegant facade of this eighteenth-century porticoed mansion, set against a backdrop of the Wicklow Hills, is to gain a special insight into the kind of visionary Pearse was.

For one day in the early summer of 1910 Pearse too had come up that avenue and discovered the quiet nobility of the Hermitage. Almost immediately he fell in love with it; and almost as quickly still, resolved that he must have it as the setting for his school. Here was a man of compulsive imagination who 'constantly found that to desire is to hope, to hope is to believe, and to believe is to accomplish', as he wrote later from this very place in the school magazine at Christmas of 1910.

As a small and easily managed school at Cullenswood House, Ranelagh, St. Enda's had prospered in its first two years (1908 and 1909); but when he moved it in 1910 to the grand but expensive setting of the Hermitage, Pearse committed himself to a financial burden which he struggled to carry for the rest of his

Today, those days of struggle are long over, and the ordered calm of a suburban museum has taken its place.

Senator Margaret Pearse bequeathed the school and its grounds to the nation on her death in 1969. In a ceremony on April 23rd, 1970 the late President deValera formally accepted possession of the key on behalf of the nation. The property was placed under the care of the Office of Public Works and is managed by the National Parks and Monuments Service of that Office. Extensive restoration work was carried out in the following years, the house having fallen into considerable disrepair since it had closed as a school in 1935. Finally, the museum was opened to the public by President Hillery for the centenary of Pearse's birth on November 10, 1979.

At present the museum consists of Pearse's study, the family drawingroom and one of the dormitories restored as nearly as possible to their original condition. At the Hermitage Pearse's mind was filled with imaginings of Robert Emmet who as a friend of the Hudsons, the original owners of the place, had frequently been a visitor there. Many times, it was reputed, Emmet and Sarah Curran had taken refuge from 'the terrible eye' of Sarah's father (as Pearse put it) by strolling in the grounds of the Hermitage. Sitting in his study one evening in the late autumn of 1910 Pearse fancied that Emmet 'must often have sat in this room where I now sit, and, lifting

his eyes, have seen that mountain as I see it now (Kilmashogue) bathed in a purple haze as a yellow wintry sun sets, while Tibraddon has grown dark behind it'.2

What St. Enda's commemorates is the lesser-known and in many ways more substantial aspect of Pearse: an enlightened educationalist with an intense love of nature. Consequently, it is fitting that St. Enda's should continue as a museum to make an active contribution to the education of current and succeeding generations. This it does primarily through providing, in an imaginatively stimulating context, a body of artefacts and information which forms the basis for a deeper understanding of this complex man who has become such a central and symbolic figure in modern Irish history. Complementing the atmosphere of the place is a comprehensive display of documents, facsimile documents and photographs outlining the various stages of Pearse's career.

Also, but no less importantly, the Parks and Monuments Service has laid out a Nature Walk through the park, accompanied by a booklet describing the animal and plant life of the region and their relation to the geology of the surrounding by a Nature Study Centre, housed in a renovated classroom of Pearse's school. Here, more extensive botanical, zoological and geological information is provided on illustrated wall-charts. Tables, chairs and a blackboard are provided, allowing children to carry out exercises under

#### NEW MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

Early in October the Trustees of Muckross House, and the Office of Public Works signed a new management agreement for the House after some four or five years of negotiation. The agreement was signed in Muckross House by Ms. Joan Forde, Parks Officer, Office of Public Works, and by Sean O'Keeffe and Rev. Fr. Luke OFM on behalf of the Trustees. The new agreement came into force on January 1, 1981.

Mr. Sean O'Keeffe, chairman of the Trustees speaking on the occasion of the signing of the agreement said it was truly an historic occasion, the foundation stone of which had been set back in 1964 when the Trustees first opened the doors of Muckross House to the public. "It took a lot of courage by those early Trustees to set out, without experience and little more than a lot of faith to start up the Folk Museum 16 years ago", he said. "That first year brought 19,500 visitors, and fully vindicated the actions of the Trustees, who in the following year negotiated a ten year lease of the House with the then Minister for Finance, Dr. Jim Ryan.

He pointed out that it was then this ten year lease ended that the renegotiations on a new management

agreement started.

Mr. O'Keeffe said it had been a very successful sixteen years in the house and the Folk Museum has been firmly established and has been accepted by the Minister of State for the Department of Education as one of the museums in the country which could be part of an integrated Museum service throughout the whole country.

Under the new agreement responsibility for the upkeep of the house will be with the Office of Public Works. As well a number of the staff, formerly directly employed by the Trustees will now become civil servants, while the Trustees will maintain responsibility for the shop, tea-room and crafts and their

operatives.

the supervision of their teacher. Other developments are planned.

These include expansion of the museum display, and provision of an audio-visual room where historical and educational films and slide-shows may be shown.

But when all is said a museum without visitors can be little more than a collection of lifeless objects. A steady and constant patronage is the lifeblood of a museum. As the recently appointed curator of the Pearse Museum I am confident that the kind of atmosphere, associations and facilities I have tried to give some hint of here, amply repay the active cultivation of anybody interterrain. The Walk is complemented ested in education, the recent history of Ireland, or simply in the pleasures of nature.

#### NOTES

- 1. A Significant Irish Educationalist— The Educational Writings of P. H. Pearse, Séamus Ó Buachalla (ed), Mercier, 1980, p. 335.
- 2. ibid., p. 337.