

## A WINDOW TO THE PAST

By Seamus Hourigan

**T**he *Vale Star* has been an important source of news, information, consolation, support, congratulations, advice and entertainment for Grange people over a very long period. Various, news items across the spectrum from great joy to deep sorrow have been reported, always with the utmost sensitivity and respect. The “Garden” item, the lead in each bulletin, came to be regarded as the hallmark of wonderful writing over the years. The “Grange Notes” have been characterised by wisdom, humour, philosophical commentary on matters of human interest, sincere concern for people, humility and honesty on the part of the scribes.

Two prolific writers for the *Vale Star* have gone to their eternal rewards, Michael Lombard in May of 1999 and Nora Hourigan in January of 2015. It was decided to reproduce extracts from the newspaper copies from a few years approaching the end of the twentieth century, a period that overlapped their contributorship. We were kindly facilitated by the office of *The Weekly Observer* at Newcastlewest where the *Vale Star* archives are kept. We accessed some of the weekly copies in the years 1996, 1998 and 1999. The copies examined were picked at random. The selected extracts follow.

### *The New Year – Fresh Hope (11-01-96)*

There is an element of mystery in coming to the end of one of our years on the pilgrim journey. Many of our dear ones have gone to eternity. We now cross a bridge as we say farewell to the year that has gone. We enter the uncharted parts of 1996 as we reach for the gift of this New Year. Many have heard the welcoming bells for the last time. Each new morning is a resurrection. After the darkness of the night and after our restoring sleep, there is always wonder in rising to the gift of a new day. This sense of awe is much greater, “when out of darkness colour breaks” and the morning ushers in a strange new year. We rise to a song of hope. For the Christian, even amid darkness and near despair, the note of hope forever sounds at once, joy-filled, healing and serene. We lift up our hearts. We give thanks to the Lord our God.

*1995 – Warmest Year on Record (11-01-96)*

The Meteorological Office has confirmed what most of us already knew – 1995 was the hottest year since records began. Temperatures climbed to 30°C on a number of days from late June to mid-August and on August 2nd climbed to 30.8°C in Kilkenny, the record for the year. August was the warmest month ever recorded at most weather stations and it was the warmest year on record in most stations where records have been kept for 40 years.

*Letters (18-01-06)*

The school visitor found one boy in a room by himself, evidently in trouble. “What’s the matter my boy”, he inquired. “Palpitations and insomnia, sir.” “But you can’t be suffering from these things!” “It isn’t suffering, sir, it’s spelling!”

*Wise Words (22-02-96)*

If you are different from me my friend, far from diminishing me, you enrich me.

*No Danger (22-02-96)*

The cashier was paying a very junior employee his wages. “These notes are a bit grubby”, he said. “I hope you’re not worried about microbes.” “Oh not at all, not even microbes could live on the money I get.”

*Cards (22-02-96)*

The winners of the cards were Betty and Pa O’Connell, Babs Clancy and Breda Bourke. Table prize winners – Joan O’Brien and Eileen Hourigan, Paddy Wallace and Egan Clancy. Door ticket winner – Mrs B Bourke. Raffle winners – Tom O’Donovan, Bridie O’Donnell, Leo Carmody and Joan O’Brien.

Thank you all for your support for our card game every Monday night at 8:30 pm, in aid of the local church fund. We have room for many more and all are very welcome.

*Judge (21-03-96)*

The Judge asked the man “Have you ever been cross-examined before?” He answered “O yes your honour, I’m a married man”.

*Excuse Me (07-03-96)*

“Can I have the next dance, Miss?” “O sure you can, if you can find someone to dance with.”

*Proverb (11-04-96)*

Where there is smoke, there is fire, where there is fire there is heat, where there is heat the women are, where the women are there is gossip.



Men agree!

*Wise Words (25-04-96)*

“Never forget that the darkest hour is only sixty minutes.”

*Unidentified (25-04-96)*

A Garda stopped a man on the street and asked him if he would take part in an identity parade. “We’ll only keep you a few minutes”, said the Garda. “Oh no thank you”, said the man. “The last time I did that I was kept for six months.”

*Three Months of Notice to Marry (25-04-96)*

Young people have now received a warning not to rush into marriage. Health Minister, Michael Noonan, said the Government and society were very concerned about the level of marriage breakdown. From May, couples must give three months notice of their intention to wed, to the local registrar of marriages and parental consent will no longer be necessary to marry, as the minimum age has been raised to eighteen.

*Wise Words (16-05-96)*

“Few have all they need, none all they wish.”

*Visiting Hours (16-05-96)*

The flu victim's husband called to his wife as she was about to go out. “If I die, I want to be cremated and my ashes scattered around the local bingo hall. That way I’ll be sure that you will visit me at least five nights a week.”

*Winning Streak (16-05-96)*

Congratulations to Mr and Mrs Todd Shaughnessy of Grange on their great success with their greyhounds at Limerick Track recently. Their most recent winner, “Quiet Sure”, the property of Louise Shaughnessy, won a very good 700 yards race in Limerick on Saturday night last with a time of 40:20. We wish this very popular couple continued success and the very best of good luck with their greyhounds.

*What is a Spinster? (04-07-96)*

Why an unmarried woman is called a spinster? In early times, the chief occupation of women was spinning, which she laid aside when she was called upon to bear the domestic duties of a home after marriage. So, if she kept at her spinning and spurned married bliss, she was dubbed ‘spinster’ and the term has now obtained judicial sanction.

*Thanks (25-07-96)*

The disabled drivers of Ireland wish to thank the people of Grange for their generous contributions to the church gate collection on last Sunday and they wish to include a special word of thanks to the collectors, Patrick O’Dwyer and Michael Lombard.

*Sunburn (25-07-96)*

Parents have been warned to protect children from the sun's harmful rays as temperatures continue to hover in the early 20s Celsius. The risk of skin cancer is the dark cloud hovering over our born-again summer weather. Skin cancer is the most common form of the disease in Ireland and more than 90% of cases are due to overexposure to the sun.

*Instant Recognition (22-08-96)*

The elderly gentleman sitting in the over-60s club noticed a little old lady staring at him. "What is it love?" he enquired. "You remind me of my fourth husband", she answered. "Fourth husband!" he gasped. "How many times have you been married?" "Three", she replied.

*The Long and the Short of It (22-08-96)*

Taller people are more likely to live longer than their shorter counterparts, experts on ageing claim. Some research has shown that women aged 40 to 44 and up to 5'6" tall had only half the mortality rate of those seven to eight inches shorter.

*ICA (21-09-96)*

The September meeting was held in the old school on Wednesday, 13th September. Eight members attended. The Secretary read the minutes of the last meeting held in July. Gretta [Purcell] also gave us an account of the last Federation meeting and reminded us that the next Federation meeting will be held on September 25th in the Woodlands House Hotel, Adare. Our guild will be applying for an application form for a national grant scheme for sports and physical activity for older people.

The annual Milford Hospice Harvest Fair was held on the second Sunday in September and our guild contributed a substantial sum towards this very worthy cause. Maura O'Shea won the competition which was for the smallest photo frame; second was Vera O'Mahony and third was Marie O'Reilly. Marie O'Reilly won the raffle. Caterers for the next night will be Vera O'Mahony and Bridie O'Riordan.

The meeting concluded after a delicious tea was served by Nora Hourigan and her many helpers.

*Bulbs (26-09-96)*

Although bulbs are usually grown in bowls, any kind of glass or pottery dish will do, provided it's deep enough. Daffodils need a container at least four or five inches deep. Any shallower and the flowers and leaves will tend to flop over. Tulips and hyacinths can make do with a depth of three to four inches. When you're using containers without drainage holes, plant your bulbs in special bulb fibre. This is designed to stay fresh right through the growing season. Make sure the fibre is

thoroughly moistened before you start planting, it should be wet enough to cling together in a ball when you squeeze some in your hand. Place a layer of fibre in the base of the bowl. Position the bulbs and add more fibre. Make sure you plant your bulbs at the right depth. Daffodils, hyacinths and tulips should have their tips showing just above the surface. Set the filled bowls in a cool, dark place for about eight weeks to develop a good root system. Give them enough water just to keep the fibre moist. Once the bulbs have made an inch or two of growth, bring them out into the light. I keep them in cool conditions, though, until the flower heads are clearly showing. If they are put into the warmth too early, the flowering display can be spoiled.

*Wise Words (26-09-96)*

“We can never convince ourselves soon enough of how easily we can be dispensed with.”

*Force of Habit (26-09-96)*

It was a typical family evening. Father sat in his favourite chair reading the paper. The baby sat at his feet playing with a toy. Mother sat in her favourite chair, knitting. Father happened to glance down at the baby, “Baby’s nose is running”, he said. Mother dropped the knitting on her lap in disgust, “Don’t you ever think of anything but horse racing?”

*Road Rage (26-09-96)*

Drivers who fall victim to the increasing incidence of road rage have been advised to put up with it. Those who flash headlights, shake their fists or get out of their car to kick everything in sight are best ignored. The AA spokesman, Conor Faughan, told us that complaints about such incidents have soared. Don’t react he said and flash your lights for it could then develop into a dangerous situation. Road rage has tended to increase with growth in traffic volumes covering the whole spectrum of human behaviour, from flashing lights to assault or murder – as happened recently in Britain. Stay cool and ignore.

*Coronation Street (09-96)*

The ‘disaster duo’ from Coronation Street, Derek and Mavis, in real life Peter Baldwin and Thelma Barlow, will be in Bunratty on next Saturday for the official opening of the new Co-Operative Superstores at 11.30 am.

*The Garden (31-10-96)*

A border of mixed or herbaceous plants will provide flowers and foliage for cutting and plants that can be left in position for a number of years. Apart from pruning and dividing, they demand little work. However, it has to be said that these benefits

will only be reaped by those who put the initial work into the planning, designing and preparing. That might sound horrifying to the new gardener, but it can be a pleasure. Such a border can be planted anywhere. Most usually, a background wall, fence or hedge will provide the necessary frame and will also provide a windbreak which is important for taller plants.

The dedicated planner can devise a highly scented border devoted to one type of plant (such as the rose) or a theme – delphiniums, dahlias, chrysanthemums and roses are among those that immediately come to mind, but there are many others. A scented garden has its own obvious pleasures. The heady scent of wallflowers, erysimum, the lovely mignonette and of course night scented stock are all excellent choices. There are many more that can be appreciated from spring to winter, and they include many forms of lilac, lavender, lily of the valley, honeysuckle, viburnum, sweet peas and jasmine.

The best way of planning a border is to work with small groups of plants so you can concentrate on the relationship between the subjects and so gradually build up the groups into a whole border planting. Choose plants with shapes that complement each other and which make an interesting and varied effect. Spiky plants are active and lead the eye upwards and onwards to neighbouring plants, while gentle hummock-forming plants are calming and bland and lead the eye horizontally along the border.

*Wise Words (31-10-96)*

“Work is the best thing ever invented for killing time.”

*Praying for the Dead (31-10-96)*

There is a healthy and wise tradition of praying for the dead during the month of November. This is the time of year when the dark evenings are drawing in and winter is deepening. The inclination is to dwell on what lies ahead for all of us. We can do this by praying in solidarity with those who have gone before us, thereby being reconciled ever more deeply with them and with our own dying.

Perhaps if we could see, the splendour of the land to which our loved ones are called, from you or me, we'd understand.

Perhaps if we could hear, the welcome they receive, from old familiar voices, all so dear, we would not grieve.

Perhaps if we could know, the reason why they went, we'd smile and wipe away the tears that flow, we'd wait content.

*Call to Aid the Elderly (31-10-96)*

Urgent action by those responsible for delivering services to the elderly is needed; the voluntary organisation “Alone” told us last week. The group has introduced

an educational video and student work pack, aimed at encouraging young people to visit and be aware of the needs of the elderly living alone.

*Aids for People with Arthritis (31-10-96)*

Arthritis affects people of all ages; it can be mild or severe, affecting one joint or several and can restrict a sufferer's mobility greatly. Coming to terms with feelings of helplessness and dependence can be difficult for an active person, but with the variety of aids now available, it is possible to maintain a certain level of independence in many cases. Hobbies and pastimes as varied as playing cards, gardening and needle crafts need not be affected by arthritis. The Arthritis Foundation recently launched a new mail-order catalogue featuring a vastly expanded collection of useful aids and appliances for people with arthritis.

*Wise Words (12-12-96)*

“The best light on the subject of marriage is a little reflection.”

*Teenagers Join Cigs Fight (12-12-96)*

Teenage ‘special agents’ are to help in a new clampdown against shopkeepers who sell cigarettes to children. The new drive to help tackle the scourge of underage smoking is due to begin in the New Year. Protocols are currently being finalised to ensure the well-being of any youngsters who are involved with the State in tracking down unscrupulous retailers. Since the Tobacco (Health Promotion) Act of 1988, which outlawed the selling of cigarettes to under sixteens, there have been no prosecutions to date. Recent figures have shown that smoking rates among Irish primary and secondary school pupils are high by international standards and have changed little since the 1960s.

*Year by Year (16-04-98)*

Every day adds something to our life and to our past. Every day some sight or sound across our way is cast. Be it something to remember or something to forget. Something to rejoice about or something to regret, it leaves a mark upon our mind, upon our memory, enriching our experience, ennobling our destiny. Every day adds something, bound by pleasure or by tears so that life does not grow narrower, but wider with the years.

*Phantom Fare (23-04-98)*

Michael, only a week married, was working in the garden. His wife came out to the back door and called “Michael, come on in for your tea of toast, rashers, sausages and four eggs”. “Mary”, said Michael when he entered the kitchen, “you’re only coddin me?” “Oh no Michael”, replied his wife, “it’s not you I’m coddin, it’s the neighbours”.

*Shoe Laces (23-04-98)*

Every morning we do it. Every evening we undo it. And these days we have to do it several times during the day as well; it's not just you. Many people these days just can't keep their shoes tied. We are all constantly knotting and re-knotting our laces. Why? Because without telling us, shoemakers of every type have switched from flat cotton laces – which stayed tied but look twisted [*compared*] to round polyester ones that look better but don't stay tied. The familiar old cotton laces rarely come with new shoes or trainers these days. Instead, you get laces made from slippery waxed polyester and other man-made materials. Because they don't know what happened, many people are blaming themselves. They are all wondering whether their shoe-tying technique, the second major socialisation skill children learn after toilet training, is somehow deficient. But it is not us. The problem is that today most shoe makers pick their laces for cosmetic rather than practical reasons.

*Dirty Days (30-04-98)*

Dirty days hath September, April, June and November,  
From January until May, it's pretty sure to rain each day,  
All the rest have thirty-one, without much chance of any sun,  
And if any one of them had two and thirty, they'd be just as wet and twice as dirty.

*Well Connected (21-05-98)*

A husband and wife drove for miles in silence after a terrible argument in which neither would budge. The husband pointed to a mule in a paddock. "Relative of yours?" he asked. "Yes", she replied, "by marriage".

*News Flash (21-05-98)*

Hundreds of stray dogs disappeared yesterday. Gardai say they have no leads. Thieves stole a van containing bottles of hair restorer. Gardai are now combing the area. A lorry containing onions has shed its load on the Naas dual carriageway. Motorists are advised to find a hard shoulder to cry on.

*ICA (21-05-98)*

The Annual General Meeting of Grange Guild was held in the old school on 13th May. The President, Calla Putt, welcomed Mrs Betty Twomey, our CDA from Castleconnell Guild, who presided over the election of officers. The outgoing Secretary, Gretta Purcell, read the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting and also gave monthly details of the guild's activities over the past twelve months. As the Secretary's term of office had expired, a new Secretary was proposed and seconded in the person of Mrs Eileen O'Brien and the Assistant Secretary is Mrs Sheila Fitzgerald. The Craft Officer is Marie O'Reilly. All the other officers are



unchanged. Mrs Twomey congratulated the guild on its performance over the last year, especially the emphasis placed on our various social activities. Tributes were paid to Gretta Purcell, who was a wonderful Secretary over the past three years and a presentation was made to her on behalf of the guild.

The raffle was won by Nuala Fitzgerald and the competition which was for the nicest egg cup was won by Eileen Hogan, second was Maura O'Shea and third was Mena Higgins. There will be a special meeting of the guild on Wednesday, 27th May at 8:30 pm.

The competition for the June meeting will be for the nicest flower pot holder. Caterers will be Sheila Fitzgerald and Gretta Purcell. The meeting concluded after a delicious tea was served by the hostesses for the night, Catherine Murnane and Joan O'Donoghue.

*Michael Lombard, 1923-1999 (13-05-99)*

The *Vale Star* will shine less brightly now because of the passing to his eternal reward of one of its most prolific writers, Michael Lombard, the Grange correspondent.

Like all the other hard-working, selfless area contributors, the humble and brave Michael proclaimed and recorded all the activities and achievements of the people of his adopted Grange, today's news, tomorrow's history, for the glory of God and his parish.

The hallmarks of Michael's writing were, gleaned words of wisdom... the love of God and gardening... wishes of good health to all the sick and peace in Heaven to all the dead... as well as praise and encouragement to all who deserved it... and his appreciation and love of nature.

May this gentleman now till the Master's Garden. Thanks Michael and may God comfort your wife Margaret, daughter Catherine, son Pat and their families. MTH.

*A Tribute to the Late Michael Lombard (13-05-99)*

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of Michael Lombard, Lough Gur, Grange, which took place recently after a short illness at St John's Hospital, Limerick.

Michael was the very popular contributor to the "Grange Notes" in the *Vale Star*. His column was widely read by all the local people and indeed by many others further afield. His gardening notes were of special interest and we all learned a lot from a man who himself was very interested in gardening and indeed won many prizes at flower shows, especially for his sweet peas which he was a master hand at growing.



Michael put Grange on the map and gave us all a great service for many years with his wonderful contributions in his column.

Michael, who hailed from Ballyhooly, Co Cork, came to Limerick over forty years ago as farm manager of the Lough Gur House Estate. In his early days there, Michael was involved in horse breeding and travelled widely to sales, especially in England where he was very successful in securing very good prices. Later when the Estate changed hands, Michael had the honour of being in charge of the Lough Gur herd of pedigree Charolais cattle and he was very well-known at cattle shows all over the country, where he won many trophies for his efforts.

Michael was a lifelong member of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association, he was for a time chairman of the Limerick South Branch, and then he had the honour of becoming the Life President of same.

A gentleman to his fingertips, he always had a kind word for everyone. Michael was a good neighbour and made numerous friends over the years, who will miss his charm and good humour at all times.

Michael was a great family man, devoted to his wife and family, he was also a deeply religious man and was a regular reader at the Sunday Mass in Grange.

Michael's remains were removed from Butler's Funeral Home, Bruff, to Grange Church on Monday evening, 3rd May, after prayers in the funeral home were recited by Fr Joe Foley, CC, Bruff and by Fr W Winter, who travelled from his native Ballyhooly to be with the family. His burial took place in the adjoining cemetery following Requiem Mass on Tuesday, 4th May. The chief celebrant of the concelebrated Mass was Canon James Costello, PP, Bruff, assisted by Fr Joe Foley, CC, Bruff, Fr Des McAuliffe, PP, St Michael's, Limerick, Fr John Donworth, CC, Dromin, Fr Denis Browne and Fr Charles O'Neill, both from Castletown/Ballyagran/Colmanswell.

In his homily, Canon Costello paid glowing tribute to Michael, especially mentioning his deep faith and contribution to the church.

The choir was under the direction of Sheila Fitzgerald at the organ and the soloist was Michael's granddaughter Suzanne, who gave us some lovely renderings of his favourite hymns.

Huge crowds attended at both the removal and funeral Mass, testimony to the esteem in which the late Michael and his family are held in the area.

To his loving wife Margaret, son Pat, daughter Catherine, daughter-in-law Mary, son-in-law Paddy, his beloved grandchildren Derek, Suzanne, Niamh and Ciaran, his sister, brothers and other relatives, we offer our very sincere sympathy on their great loss.

May his Gentle Soul Rest in Peace.

*Congratulations (10-06-99)*

Congratulations to Frances O'Connell, Grange, who recently had the honour of attending a Nursing Conference in the Philippines. Frances is the Assistant Matron [*Assistant Director of Nursing*], Regional Maternity Hospital, Limerick.

*Sympathy (10-06-99)*

We would like to offer our sincere sympathy to the family of the late Kevin Lynch Limerick, whose unexpected death occurred recently. The Lynch family lived in Grange for many years and were very well known, as Kevin's father, the late Tom Lynch was Principal of Grange School until its closure in 1967.

*Elections (10-06-99)*

Voting in the local elections, together with voting for seats in the European Parliament will take place on Friday next, 11th June, and we urge all constituents to cast their votes on these important elections. We appeal especially to the young voters to come out in force.

In recent elections, there has been a certain amount of apathy among the young people, but now that things have improved with the "Celtic Tiger", we urge them all to use their democratic right to vote on this occasion. The polling station in Grange will be as usual at the Old School.

*The Garden – Midsummer Tasks (17-06-99)*

Feed roses and other flowering plants in open ground and in containers with a high potash fertiliser to encourage flowering. Deadhead faded flowers to promote the formation of new buds and encourage growth. Trim hedges regularly to avoid having to cut them back too much at any one time.

Weed carefully between plants in borders and beneath trees, shrubs and climbers. Layer border carnations and propagate pinks by taking three-inch long cuttings. Transplant Canterbury bells, sweet williams and wall-flowers into a nursery bed. Water in well.

Take semi-ripe cuttings of many shrubs, including deutzia and weigela.

*Cork Hurlers (16-09-99)*

Congratulations to the Cork hurling team who won the All-Ireland hurling final in Croke Park on Sunday last, defeating Kilkenny by the narrowest of margins, and in so doing won their 28th title. *[Nora Hourigan never missed an opportunity to support her native county!]*

*The 'Vanman' Retires (16-09-99)*

It was the end of an era on Saturday, 4th September when the 'Vanman' retired. Frank O'Donoghue from Ballinacurra in Limerick who was popularly known as the 'Vanman', has given people of the Old Road in Grange an excellent service over the past forty years, when he took over from his brother, Bob, who had been operating this business for the previous twenty years.

We all looked forward every Saturday to the arrival of the green van which was laden down with everything the housewife needed. Frank was a most courteous

and helpful man, and the service he rendered was invaluable. From Grange, he travelled on via Tullybrackey, Ballynanty, Camass North, Crean and Boherard before heading home to Limerick. He also covered other parts of Limerick and Clare on four more days each week.

Frank was a gentleman to his fingertips and he will be greatly missed by all his customers. It was a very nostalgic occasion for all his friends here in Grange to say goodbye to one of the nicest men one could ever wish to meet. We wish Frank and his family all the best for the future.

*Scholarship Award (07-10-99)*

Heartiest congratulations to Timmy Houlihan, Abbey View, Adare, who on the strength of his excellent results in his Leaving Certificate from Limerick CBS, qualified for one of the very valuable JP McManus awards.

Timmy is the youngest son of Tommy and Breda Houlihan. Breda [Dillon] is a native of Grange, where she resided for some time after her marriage and she is still a regular visitor to these parts. Timmy is now studying mechanical engineering at the University of Limerick, and we wish him every success in his studies. Well done to one and all.

*The Birth of Triplets (21-12-99)*

We offer our heartiest congratulations to Gerard O'Connell, formerly of Grange and his wife Kay of Ballinagarde, Ballyneety who recently became the proud parents of triplets, two girls and a boy whom they named Ciara, Anna and Jack. We understand that mother and babies are all doing very well. Well done to Gerard and Kay. All your very many friends in Grange send you their very best wishes on the arrival of your three bundles of joy.

*Not-So-Young-Group (21-12-99)*

“The Not-So-Young-Group” from Grange and surrounding areas had a great week being entertained. Firstly, on Tuesday of last week they received a delicious Christmas Dinner at O’Faolains Restaurant in Bruff, and then on Friday night, they attended the annual Christmas Party hosted by Nagles Eurospar and staff in the Bandroom, where they were again treated to a delicious meal, which was followed by a great night’s dancing and a singsong. They would like to express to O’Faolains and Nagles and staff their very sincere thanks for their generosity to the big crowds who attended both functions and which were thoroughly enjoyed by all.