



*Top: view from Knockfennel of the ruin of Croker Great House.*

*Above: L-R Willie Bourke, Moira Collins, Donncha Ó Dúlaing and Sam Bourke at Collins Foodstore.*

*Right: signpost at Glenogra Bridge.*

# PLACES

By Various Authors

*Introduction (by Brian Gallagher)*

Within the Parish of Grange and surrounding localities, there are many ‘places’ of relevance to the people of the parish and beyond. Some of these are important nationally and internationally. These ‘places’ are hugely significant having regard to several dimensions of human life in the past and in more recent times. A place may be notable and important for one or more than one of several reasons, including rich history, Ireland’s fight for freedom, the involvement and sacrifices of local patriots, archaeology, architecture, culture, folklore, education, religion, environment, leisure pursuits and the practicalities of living.

Some ‘places’ are the subject of individual articles in this book, such is the significant extent of the story to be told in each case. These include the Great Houses of Rockbarton and Caherguillamore, Lough Gur House, The Grange (Crokers), Lough Gur (lake), Grange Stone Circle, Ancient Monuments, Grange National School and Grange Church. Of course, ‘places’ are important because of their associations with people: those who built them, acquired them, lived there,



carried on business there, convened there, prayed there, fought there and died there. Hence, most ‘place’ stories are about people predominantly, as well as the physical places themselves.

This article provides a collection of shorter stories about additional places of significance for the people of Grange.

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*Thomas Conway, who died all too young on 13th June 2015, was a well-loved and valued member of our community. He wrote the following article for this book some months before his sudden passing. A tribute to Thomas is [to be found elsewhere](#) in this book. May his Gentle Soul Rest in Peace.*

*Rahin House (by Thomas Conway)*

Rahin House locally referred to as “The Castle”, is situated beside the family home of Catherine and Dan Conway, in the townland of Rahin in the Barony of Small



The remaining wall of Rahin Castle.

County. The house was built prior to the Reformation, and most of the materials used in the building were provided locally while the slate was brought from Killaloe in County Clare. The ruddy brown coloured bricks are thought to have been quarried from a local farm, where one field is still known as “The Brick Field”. The south wall is now all that remains of this once magnificent building; it was shown to be mainly in ruins on the Ordnance Survey Map, 1940.

The avenue leading to “The Castle” connects to the Rahin bye-road; initially this avenue served as a public road, but in famine times, a roadway was cut through an adjoining bog and so the avenue became a private entrance. The avenue was lined by a row of beech and elm trees, which at the time, served as a status symbol of the upper classes. Regrettably, due to Dutch elm disease, all of the elm trees died – only the stately beech trees now remain.

The first occupants of Rahin House were a Catholic family – O’Grady, originally from Ogonnelloe in County Clare, a branch of the O’Grady family of Caherguillamore. At the time of the Reformation, John O’Grady, who then occupied the Great House,

refused to renounce his Catholic faith and was ordered to vacate the house and its lands, which were then bestowed upon a Casey family from Rathcannon, near Bruff.

During his religious life, one member of this Rathcannon family (*Casey*) had the unique distinction of being the first Protestant Bishop of Limerick.

Several generations of the Casey family lived in Rahin House or sections of it. Over the years, the Casey men married Catholic women and so eventually the occupants of the house were once more Catholic. It was a member of this family, Alice Casey and her husband, Edmund Fitzgerald, who donated the magnificent high altar in Grange Church.

The last member of the Casey family to live at Rahin House was James Casey, who lived in the west wing until his death in 1940, when the house and lands fell to Paddy Casey on whose land in Holycross, now owned by his son, Tim Casey, stands the famous and ancient Grange Stone Circle.

The Rahin House ruin and lands are now in the ownership of Paddy's grandson, Patrick Casey. Patrick together with his wife Edel and children, Gráinne, Tom and Méabh, now live in a newly built house on the lands of the former Rahin House.



Ruin of Grange Castle.

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*Grange Castle on "Casey's Rock"*

*(by Brian Gallagher)*

In the townland of Grange, situated on top of a rock, about thirty-five feet high, sits the remains of an old castle, the walls of which are very much injured. The external dimensions of the structure were approximately forty feet in length and thirty feet in breadth. Owing to the shattered condition of the walls, neither the internal or external dimensions can be taken with any precision.

The west wall remains to the height of about ten feet and small portions of the rest of the walls also remain; these walls were about six and a half feet in thickness and built of rather small grouted limestone. The rock on which this castle was erected is called "Cahercon Rock" in the *Name Book*, but this name is not known to local people, who say that Carraig A Mhéara (Mhiara) is the name of the 'Rock'.

“The Shop” (by John Fitzgerald)

The following is taken, with permission, from an article, penned by John Fitzgerald, Old Road, Grange and published in *The Dawn*.

As we move ever closer to the Millennium [2000] and a new century beckons, it is a good time to reflect on the passing of an institution in Grange, known lovingly by all its patrons as “The Shop”.

The shop was originally built by James Shinnors before the end of the last century [prior to 1900]. He developed it into a general mercantile where provisions such as meal, both fine and course, pollard, parata, paraffin oil, turpentine, bread soda, sugar, dried fruit, papers and milk, to name a few, could be purchased. Upon his death in 1908, his son, Joseph Shinnors, took



Unusually shaped old house in Lower Grange, wedged between the Main Road and the Old Road. Once the property of the Moriarty family, well-known surgeons. Now the property of Mary Kate Normoyle.

over at the helm and the business went from strength to strength until 1922, when the Black-and-Tans came raiding.

They discovered a safe in the shop and probably thought they had struck it lucky. However, despite a lengthy attempt [to open it] and the firing of three shots into it, the safe stood firm with its contents intact. Whether out of frustration or by design, they burned the shop to the ground.

Shortly afterward, when the “troubles” had abated, Joseph Shinnors set about re-building the shop and within a year, it was back to its former glory. Joseph died in 1950 and “The Shop” was passed down to his eldest son James. James, sensing a new technological age, saw the potential of electricity and began selling radios and cookers, including repair services where necessary.

This, along with the existing grocery business was creating a fine income for James's family, until his untimely death in 1958.

Despite the huge loss that they had experienced, James's family ably led by their mother, Kitty, continued the business until 1966 when ill-health forced her to sell the shop to her brother-in-law, George Shinnors.

George and his wife, Helen, ran the business as a grocery shop for two years until January 1968, when the shop was leased to Edward Drew. His tenure ended in November 1970. The shop was then sold out of the Shinnors family, who had owned it for over seventy years. The new owners were Joe Ahern and his wife, Joan. They proceeded to develop the grocery, the attached living quarters and a garage on the premises, where Joe had his own tractor dealership. Despite the ongoing development of superstores and shopping centres in Limerick city, the shop continued to be the focal point of the community, where people met and exchanged views on the weather, sport, farming, local gossip and more. "The Shop" satisfied the palate of the community and everything from milk and bread to newspapers and fuels could be purchased.

The final phase in the history of "The Shop" came on 10th October 1988 when it was bought by Brendan and Moira Collins. This young and enthusiastic couple quickly became known and well liked in the community. They introduced some new products to their shelves, including a home fuel system and delivery service. Many of my own best memories of the shop come from this period.

However, despite their best efforts and the ever present goodwill of the community, the consumer marketplace had radically changed. Our Celtic Tiger economy which has lured so many from the land to better-paid jobs in the city had made it more convenient to shop in the city. The consumer had been ever increasingly tempted into the larger shopping centres by the promise of low prices, greater product variety and choice, all under one roof. As Shakespeare said, you cannot halt "Times thievish progress to eternity". The Collins family finally closed their doors and ceased trading on Saturday 5th September 1999, and so another chapter in the history of Grange came to a close.

John Fitzgerald concluded his article by wishing well into the future to Brendan, Moira and family, and he appropriately quoted Edward Fitzgerald (1809-1883), as follows:

"Ah, Fill the cup:- what boots it to repeat;  
How Time is slipping underneath our Feet,  
Unborn Tomorrow and dead Yesterday  
Why fret about them if Today be sweet."

*Note by Tommy Hourigan*

How well John Fitzgerald has set down the history of “The Shop”, it brings back fond memories. While many of John’s best memories come from late 1988 onwards, mine come from the period of the mid-1950s through the early 1960s. Indeed, in [our article](#) to be found in this book titled “*We Grew Up in Grange*”, there was occasion for Brendan Madden and I to recall “The Shop”, as there was for me, while writing an article on my father, John Joe Hourigan. One of my enduring memories is the rush by people after Mass at Grange Church on Sunday mornings to get to the shop, which opened for a period to facilitate the Mass attenders. The younger people, and indeed, some of our elders too, used a couple of ‘cross-country’ routes to get there quickly. One ‘short-cut’ was through the field upon which the home of Francis O’Dwyer and his family now stands – the other was over a stile on the Old Road (roughly opposite the home of Seirse Clancy and family) and through the field, arriving at the main road. There was always a buzz in and around the shop on Sunday mornings and on church holiday mornings.

Another clear memory is of the six-penny ice-cream being cut with a knife from a block of ice-cream and then encased by two wafers, for immediate consumption. Ann Shinnors (wife of John Sheahan, Holycross) often prepared those ice-creams at the shop counter. During the period mentioned by me, and indeed, for many years before and after, “The Shop” provided an accessible community service when motorised transport was scarce. It would not be unusual to find several bicycles, most with a front carrying basket or a ‘carrier’ over the rear wheel, parked outside the shop while their owners purchased groceries and other merchandise.

*References and Notes:*

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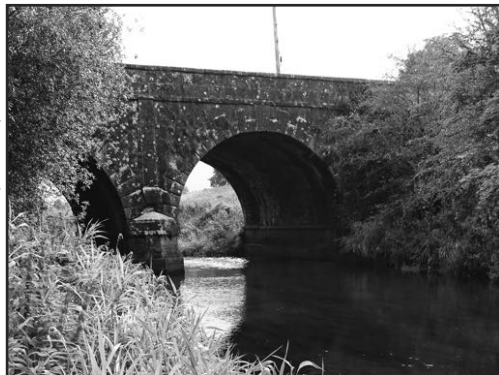
(1) <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/495422/Reformation>

*Reformation, the religious revolution that took place in the Western church in the 16th century. Its greatest leaders undoubtedly were Martin Luther and John Calvin. Having far-reaching political, economic, and social effects, the Reformation became the basis for the founding of Protestantism, one of the three major branches of Christianity.*

(2) [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great\\_Famine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Famine)

*(Ireland) The Great Famine (Irish: an Gorta Mór) was a period of mass starvation, disease and emigration in Ireland between 1845 and 1852. It is sometimes referred to, mostly outside Ireland, as the Irish Potato Famine because about two-fifths of the population was solely reliant on this cheap crop for a number of historical reasons. During the famine approximately 1 million people died, and a million more emigrated from Ireland, causing the island's population to fall by between 20% and 25%.*

(3) Grange Castle – Source: John O’Donovan, Ordnance Survey letters 1840.



View of bridge at Lower Grange.