

North Mayo Heritage Centre

NEWSLETTER

Tel: 096 31809

www.northmayogenealogy.com

Email: nmhmanager@gmail.com

Email: northmayo@gmail.com

Vol. III Issue 12

20th March 2022

Check out our



Follow us on
Facebook and Twitter



TRACE YOUR ROOTS

Are you interested in
professional help to
**Research Your
Family History**

Let us do the work for
you. All work can be
done remotely.

For more information,
Email
northmayo@gmail.com

Book of the Week

ÉIREANNACH
Celebrating Native Plants of
Ireland

Buy online from our ebay bookstore
€25 (+postage)



Feature Article
**THE ROLE OF THE
HORSE AND DONKEY**
in rural Ireland



Cover image H. Deshkar (Pexels)

**We Profile
Folklorist**



**Kevin
Danaher**

The North Mayo Heritage Centre is dedicated to preserving and promoting the rich heritage of the region

KEVIN DANAHER



Over the last few months, our articles have referenced 'The Year in Ireland' by Kevin Danaher (1972). Danaher was one of Ireland's foremost collectors of folklore in the 20th century.

Kevin Danaher was born in Athea, Co. Limerick in 1913. He began to collect folklore while a student at UCD. He won a travelling scholarship to Leipzig and was present in Germany as Hitler rose to power. At the onset of the war, he returned to Ireland and enlisted in the Irish army. At the end of the war, he left the army, but it never fully left him. He brought a military neatness to his work as a folklorist and ethnographer, and one of his particular talents was in mapping the location of various customs.

In the 1950s, his work with the Irish Folklore Commission took him all over Ireland, recording and photographing traditions and dying crafts. Among his friends was Páig Sayers, and he often visited her in the last months, when she was in hospital in Dublin. He wrote several books throughout the 50s and 60s, and 'The Year in Ireland' (1972) was a culmination of these, reflecting his belief that calendar customs were the essence of Irish folklore.¹ A lecturer in Folklore in UCD, he devised Bunratty Folk Park and was an advisor on the Muckross House development.

A festschrift in his honour, *Gold Under the Furze*, was published on his 70th birthday in 1983, which was also the occasion of his retirement from UCD.²

Kevin Danaher died on the 14th March 2002, the 20th anniversary of death having occurred this week.

¹ Mahon, B. 1998. *While Green Grass Grows; Memoirs of a Folklorist*. Mercier Press, 74-77.

² *The Irish Times*, the 23-March-2002

The role of the HORSE and DONKEY in Rural Ireland in the early 1900s

Horses and donkeys played an important role in easing the workload of the small holding farmer in the early 1900s.

After the Land Acts of the early 20th century, the land was returned to its tenants and farmers began to improve their land, farmyards, housing and livestock.

Small farms in the west of Ireland invested in horses to help with this task. Individual farmers could not afford a horse or team of horses and in order to purchase them they had to get together with their neighbours to make it possible. The horses were used by the farmers for ploughing, harrowing and tilling their land as well as haymaking and harvesting. They were also used to carry goods such as turf, timber and hay on and off the farm and when they were not on the land they were used for transport by the family pulling a cart or trap.

Donkeys were also very important on the smaller farms where they were used to carry turnips or hay to cattle in the fields and carry barrels of water from the well or river. Donkeys were often used to carry turf from the bog as they could travel over soft ground where horses would sink.

Horses had the capability to manoeuvre in the small fields and narrow roads of the early 1900s but their numbers were already decreasing due to the use of the tractor. From 1939 to 1948 the number of horses had dropped from 442,000 to 420,700 and tractors had increased from 1,176 to 9,211. Horse numbers continued to fall and by 1962 this figure had reduced to 200,000.

Today it is rare to see farmers using horses or donkeys on their land as their ancestors would have done in the early 1900s.

As the horse played a major role in the lives of many Irish people there were superstitions associated with them. It was said that if a person finds a horse-shoe he believes he will have good luck. It was also a custom to cover the horse-shoe with silver paper and hang it over the door to keep the devil away. The hanging horse-shoe was to face upwards in a 'U' shape for good luck and if it faced downwards it was said that luck would flow out of the house.

Resources: *Farmersjournal.ie* *Duchas.ie* *Irisharchaeology.ie*

A brief history of TONYBAUN

(*Tonaidh Bán*, white bottom-land)

Located in the west portion of the parish of Backs (Ballinahaglish), and contains 293 acres, 3 roods, 11 perches*, including 11 acres, 0 roods, 30 perches* of water.

The property of John F. Knox, Esq. Let to 11 occupying tenants, some with leases of one life, the remainder at will, at 25 shillings per acre yearly, including Co. Cess**, Tithe and Church money.

Size of farms, from 3 to 8 acres. Soil, limestone, gravelly and stony, producing oats, barley, wheat and potatoes. The tenants pay £3 per acre for bog in the townland of Carrowkerrilly, Attymass parish.

Prevailing Names – Conner and Lyren (sic). The Moy is on the east boundary. In this townland is a small graveyard for still-born and unbaptised children.

* There are 40 perches in a rood, and 4 roods in an acre.

** The County Cess was a form of local taxation. It is derived from the word 'assessment'.

Above extract is from the Ordnance Survey
Namebooks of 1838

A brief history of the surname FAIR/PHAIR

Fair or Phair, is one of the adjectival surnames, in this case a translation of *fionn*. It is scattered and not numerous.¹

Fair, Phair, Fionn; Irish '*fionn*,' fair; a descriptive epithet which supplanted the real surname.²

Of the 6 Fair births in Ireland in 1890, including variants, two occurred in Leinster, none occurred in Munster, two occurred in Ulster, and two occurred in Connacht.

¹ 'The Surnames of Ireland' by Edward MacLysaght

² 'Irish Names and Surnames' by Rev. Patrick Woulfe, 1993 edition