

## A GLIMPSE OF DRIPSEY 40 YEARS AGO

IN 1977 Ballincollig journalist Michael Kelly wrote an article about Dripsey for Licensing World, the national journal of the Vintners Federation of Ireland.

He received considerable help from the late local historian Tim Sheehan. The article, headlined "A Pleasant Evening", focused mainly on the history of the licensed premises in Dripsey at the time. It read as follows:

The village of Dripsey Co Cork is unique. Imagine being all prepared for a hard evening's work and have somebody come along and offer to do it for you.

Yet, that is exactly what happened when I visited Dripsey, about 10 miles from Cork City to do a story on developments

### A Sup for Dan

'Keep a sup of that for Dan' was an urging comment heard in the Dripsey countryside over 150 years ago whenever the bottle of poteen seemed to be in danger of being consumed. The reference was to Daniel O'Connell, self-styled Liberator who was then a regular caller at different houses in Dripsey when on his way to court in Cork in the Southern Law District or whenever he called on his way to address meetings of his Repeal Movement in Cork.

In those days there were a number of shebeens in the locality from Dripsey Cross to where the present ESB Hydro Electric Station is in operation at Curraleigh, Inniscarra.

Following the second Catholic Relief Act, better known as Gardiners Second Act for the easement of repressive penal measures against Catholics in Ireland, industries mushroomed. In fact they were ubiquitous in the area of east Muskerry. Among those local industries was the paper mills at Dripsey.

The fact that Dripsey was the first place to make continuous sheet paper, the first place to make lined paper and also that it made treasury notes for the Bank of England shows its importance in the industrial upswing of the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when there were almost 400 mud cabins around the paper mills housing workers, artisans, and others employees.

In consequence, three shebeens cropped up in the vicinity - one almost in front of the paper mills, one 400 yards down the road nearer to Cork and the third at Faha where Daniel O'Connell often stayed overnight. One of those three shebeens became a licensed premises but was closed by Government order following the 1926 survey aimed at limiting the amount of public houses in Ireland.

That survey, or rather the results of it, based licensed houses on a capitation basis, and as the population decline of Dripsey in 1926 revealed a disproportion of heads per public house it was obligatory that one of the then three pubs should close and

at the Dripsey Tavern which was taken over nearly two years ago by Jerry O'Callaghan and Tadhg McCarthy. Since then it has been extended and refurbished - so much so that now even wedding receptions are held there.

Once I met local historian, Tim Sheehan, I knew that any attempts on my behalf to adequately do justice to a story on his beloved Dripsey would be entirely inadequate. Tim is the unofficial P.R.O. for the village and the surrounding areas and when he learned that an aspect of the village's tradition was being investigated for publication in a licensing magazine he was immediately eager to help.

A writer for the "Corkman" newspaper as well as a frequent contributor to the 'Evening Echo' and other periodicals, Tim Sheehan gave the following details on the Dripsey area with particular reference to its licensing tradition:

consequently it closed in 1931 or '32. By then there was a change of Government.

The last surviving shebeen in Dripsey was situated close to Dripsey Cross within a few yards of the present Dripsey Tavern and did business side by side with two pubs at the cross. One of those houses, now the Dripsey Tavern, was first licensed to a Catherine Connor, a relation of the present Connor family of Kilblaffer, Dripsey and the same family line as former hurler Gerald O'Connor, one of the Cork minor team of 1928 that contested and won the first ever Minor All Ireland hurling final.

Since Catherine Connor's day the house has had six owners and while up to recent times it has been a predominantly Beamish House, Lanes Porter was sold there in the past side by side with



Beamish and Crawford.

Lanes Brewery once stood directly across from Beamish and Crawford on the South Main Street in Cork city.

### Godfrey's Visit

Kanturk born Charlie Feeney owns the Weigh Inn, the second pub at Dripsey Cross. He purchased the place in 1969 and immediately recognised the potential tourist value of the area. Having reconstructed the premises to make it serviceable for meals as well as drink, the Weigh Inn attracted the bulk of the passing tourist trade which included world celebrities such

as the late Godfrey Winn, who in fact wrote an article on 'Woman's Own' on the fare and hospitality he received at the Weigh Inn.

The present owners of the Dripsey Tavern, Jerry O Callaghan and Tadhg McCarthy, have expanded the premises and now drink, meals, ballad sessions, socials, luncheons and wedding breakfasts are available.

Encased on the wall of the Dripsey Tavern are a number of blackthorn sticks. These are exhibition models or the apotheosis of the skill of a local stick maker, Jeremiah Noonan, who has been cutting, seasoning, polishing and finishing blackthorn sticks for many years. Jeremiah inherited the craft from his father.

Trained in the observance of spotting a good stick in growth, Jeremiah on his evening strolls around the Dripsey countryside earmarked some good shoots for cutting at a given time.

When right for truncating, he brought the sticks home, seasoned them with some formula of his own, regulated the required number of thorns and then polished the stick. But he does something more, he attaches a furze knob, or handle, at the end which gives the finished stick a two-tone effect. Jeremiah Noonan's contribution to tourism is immeasurable in the sense that his sticks have gone around the world. Tourists from America and from several continental countries have purchased his blackthorn sticks.

***\*Note: There have been a number of changes in Dripsey since the above article was written, the most significant being the closure some years ago of the Dripsey Tavern. Of interest is that the eight volunteers captured by British Forces in the tragic Dripsey engagement of 1921 were brought to the premises before their transfer to Ballincollig Barracks and, later, to Victoria Barracks Detention Centre where five of them were executed by a firing squad following a court martial.***