

5th International O Dea Clan Gathering 2002: by Richard Cronin

The fifth international triennial O' Dea Clan Gathering took place on the weekend of July 5-8 at the Old Ground Hotel in Ennis, Co. Clare and at the O Dea's ancestral home of Dysert O Dea. Over 120 O'Dea's, O'Day's, Deas and Days arrived in Ennis from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Britain, the U.S.A., France and even from as far away as Taiwan!

The Irish contingent was well represented by O Deas from Dublin, Roscommon, Limerick, Waterford, Tipperary, Galway and many parts of Clare.

Festivities began at the Old Ground Hotel, Ennis where a civic reception was hosted by Town Councillors Tommy Brennan and Mary Coote-Ryan and Town Clerk, Tomás Ó Riain, who welcomed the guests to Ennis and made presentations to many prominent members of the Clan. Among the recipients was Esther Dea of Avoca, Iowa to whom a special presentation was made to mark her 85th birthday.

After dinner in the local Banquet Hall an informed and hilarious lecture on "Social Life in Medieval Dysert O Dea" was given by Dick Cronin who restored the castle in 1986 for the owner, John B O Day of Wisconsin Rapids and the Dysert O Dea Development Association.

On Saturday morning, an Irish Coffee and smoked salmon "breakfast" was held in Dysert Castle the ancestral home of the O Deas. Among those attending was James O'Dea from Australia (formerly Lissycasey) who celebrated his 85th birthday having once again flown half way around the world for the gathering. James' brother, Patrick, from London also attended. He is famous as a very successful long distance runner in the 1940's and is looking forward to returning next November to open the Patrick O'Dea Memorial athletic meeting. Also present were the family and friends of the late O Dea Clan Chaplain, Dom Bernard O Dea of Glenstal Abbey. In a fitting and moving ceremony performed by the Abbot of Glenstal, Abbot Christopher Dillon, a plaque was unveiled to his memory in the castle chapel.

On Saturday evening a barbecue was hosted by John O'Dea of O'Dea's Bar, O'Connell Street, Ennis and was attended by over one hundred people. Saturday night was taken up with some short talks on genealogy and local history given by Pat Nugent, of the Irish Studies Department at the University of Liverpool, Antoinette O'Loughlin of the Corofin Heritage Centre and Professor Ed O'Dea, professor emeritus of Southern Illinois University in the USA.

One of the highlights of the evening was the handing over of the O Dea Clan chieftainship to Anderson O'Day of the South Carolina, USA. All 13 of Andy's family in attendance sang him into office. Andy takes over from Bill O Day, son of Hereditary Chieftain, Jack O Day and will hold on to this office until 2005. Sue O'Dea Poole from Australia was unanimously elected Clan Tánaiste which proved to be a popular choice. Sue takes up the Chieftainship in 2005. Sue's election is unique in that she is the first woman to be elected as an Irish clan chieftain.

The night finished with music provided by Martin Breen and friends and dancing lessons conduct by Sean and Mary MacDermott, who were not satisfied until all 120 O'Deas were proficient at the Mullagh half set. Nár laige Dia sibh!

Sunday morning saw the O Deas assembled in the St. Flannan's College oratory where newly appointed Clan Chaplain, Fr.Thomas O Dea of Newmarket and Fountain Hills, Arizona celebrated a beautiful Mass and delivered a never to be forgotten sermon where he talked of tolerance and forgiveness in all of our dealings with others. This also afforded an opportunity to remember past and present clan members.

After Mass, the clan retired to the Old Ground where the clan's triennial general meeting was held. Bill O'Day, Chief of the Clan expressed the gratitude of all to James and Noreen O'Dea, (formerly Kilkee and Ennis) who, this year, organised the whole event.

Sunday afternoon was spent chatting, eating, drink and watching hurling and football matches at *Fanny O Dea's*, Lissycasey. The night finished with an enjoyable medieval banquet in Bunratty Castle and later a singing and music session in the Old Ground presided over by the long standing clan troubadour and bard, Danny O'Dea, Illinois and violin virtuoso, Séamus Conroy, from Bunratty Castle who had all present enthralled with his wonderful playing.

The weekend finished with the traditional golf outing for the Clan at the Ennis Golf Club on Monday morning. It was agreed by all that although numbers were down slightly on other years; it was probably the most enjoyable gathering to date. Many are already saving up for the next one in three years time.

Go mbeirimid beo ar an am seo aríst!