

The 6th Clan Gathering July 2005

O'Dea clan lays siege to county capital

The Clare Champion, Friday, July 22, 2005

More than 260 O'Deas clansmen from all over the world assembled in Ennis recently for their largest ever international gathering. The event, the sixth since 1990, was organised by Noreen and James O'Dea of Clontarf, chairman of the Dysert O'Dea Clan Association. This four day, tri-annual event attracted O'Deas, Deas, O'Days, Days and O'Days from Poland, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Britain, Ireland, Azarbyzhan, America and Australia. They also travelled from County Roscommon while the Banner County O'Deas came from Ennis, Kilfenora, Ennistymon, Shannon, Lissycasey and Cooraclare.



The eventful and sometimes hilarious weekend began with a civic reception hosted by Ennis Town Council. An address and presentation was made to the clan by Councillor Mary Coote-Ryan.

A presentation was made by the O'Deas in return to Peter Beirne of the Local Studies Section, Clare County Library, in gratitude for setting up and maintaining the O'Dea Family Archive in De Valera Library. After the reception the inaugural dinner was held in the Great Hall of the Old Ground Hotel.

The after dinner lecture was delivered by Risteard Ua Cróinín, county conservation officer, who founded the clan association in 1989 after he had restored the O'Dea Castle at Dysert. The theme of the lecture was "Building Dysert Castle 1480 AD". He outlined the skills, materials, sources and technology employed in the building of a tower house complex during the late 15th century. He mentioned that between 1450 and 1550 over 230 tower houses were built in County Clare, which provided employment for thousands of skilled masons, carpenters and other tradesmen for more than a century.

On Saturday morning, the Clan was transported by four coaches and numerous cars to Dysert O'Dea Castle where a mulled wine and smoked salmon reception was held, hosted by Breda Considine, manager and her staff. The group visitors were brought on a tour of the historic monuments of Dysert by historians Sonia Schormann and Martin Breen.

On the steps of the castle, the clan chief, Anderson O'Dea, USA handed over his chain of office to Sue Poole, South Australia, who is the new chieftain until 2008. John Bartholomew O'Day III, son of the hereditary chieftain John B O'Day II of Wisconsin Rapids, USA was elected Tánaiste, to take office as chief after Sue Poole. Anderson and Sue Poole presented cheques to the Dysert Castle restoration fund, collected from members in the USA and Australia, respectively.

On Saturday afternoon, Seán Spellissy, author and historian, brought the clan members to historic sites around Ennis. The clan then descended on John O'Dea's pub in O'Connell St, where John and his family hosted a barbecue for over 150 people. Later, a series of talks and workshops on O'Dea genealogy and history were given by Professor Ed O'Day of the USA (clan genealogist) and others.

Mieczyslaw Oday and his daughter [corrected to second cousin] Hanya, spoke about their family who are descended from two O'Dea brothers shipwrecked in the Baltic in the 1650s [Hanya believes the date more likely to

be prior to 1640]. The number of O'Dea families in the Gdansk area of Poland now stands at 900 and last year they held their first Polish clan gathering, attended by 120 O'Deas. Until earlier this year the O'Deas didn't even know of the existence of the O'Dea Clan Association.

On Saturday night the Clan were treated to an evening of entertainment, singing, dancing and music, hosted by Seán and Mary McDermott and friends of the Cois na h-Abhna Seisúin Group, in the Old Ground.

Sunday morning mass at St Flannan's was attended by a people of many faiths and the homily was delivered by Fr Tom O'Dea, who is retired in Florida but is due to take up a position as pastor in Ballynacally soon.

Sunday afternoon was spent in Limerick visiting St Mary's Cathedral and the Hunt Museum to see the O'Dea mitre and crozier, presented to Bishop Conor O'Dea by the citizens of Limerick in 1410. These are considered to be the finest examples of late mediaeval metalwork in Ireland. That evening the clan invaded the McNamara and O'Brien stronghold of Bunnratty where they attended the medieval banquet.

On Monday morning, those members of the Clan who were still among "the walking-wounded" attended the triennial international clan meeting, where tributes were made to Noreen and James O'Dea who organised the event and Dick, Breda and the Wisconsin O'Deas who maintained the castle at Dysert.

The weekend finished with the O'Dea golf outing at Ennis Golf Club on Monday evening.

Clan elects first woman chieftain

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The new chieftain of the O'Dea clan is Sue O'Dea Poole, from Williamstown in South Australia. The first woman to lead an Irish clan, she was inaugurated at the recent O'Dea Clan gathering in Ennis.

Liz O'Dea- Clancy from Kilnaboy is a cousin of the new chieftain, whom she says takes over from Anderson O'Day from South Carolina, U.S.A. Their new leader is a descendant of Matthew O'Dea (1736-1811) from Ballygannor, Kilfenora. One of Matthew's sons, Patrick, died leaving a wife, Mary and seven children at a time when Ireland was experiencing poor economic conditions during the Famine. Mary and her children left for Australia in 1849 and there were 41 more Irish people with them on board the ship, "The Duke of Wellington", when it arrived in Port Adelaide in South Australia.



The first years were tough but Mary and her family later bought a farm there, Liz O'Dea Clancy said. Sue O'Dea Poole is a great grandchild of Patrick and Mary O'Dea. Among her cousins are Shane and Rory O'Dea, originally from the New Road, Ennis and whose father, the late Paddy O'Dea, was a health inspector, Fr. Tom O'Dea who is retired from Texas and living in Newmarket-on-Fergus, and James O'Dea, also from Newmarket-on-Fergus and now living in Dublin.

The 6th International Gathering of the O'Dea Clan was attended by 280 people from Ireland and different parts of the world. Ennis Town Council hosted a reception and the

itinerary also included socials, a medieval banquet and visits to the Hunt Museum in Limerick to view Bishop Cornelius O'Dea's 15th century mitre and crozier and to 25 archaeological and historical sites within a two miles radius of Dysert O'Dea Castle.

Ode to the 6th Clan Gathering July 2005

The troops they came from far and wide
To converge upon the castle's side
All smiling faces waiting for
The staff to open the castle door
We ambled in for mead and salmon
Did the tours of castle walls
And ventured onto look upon
The arch way and the cross thereon

Sue traveled far across the land
Her chieftain victory now at hand
She looked the part in Viking hat
Standing on the welcome mat
The castle rising proud behind her
And we all cheered as a reminder
That revellers and travellers too
Are all O'Deas, and proud ones too

Later we listen with quiet intent
To hear the story from Poland be read
Of The O'Dea brothers lost at sea
The ancestors are proud of those brothers you see
As they marked a great part of their history
We all gathered together for auctions and raffles
Poor Noreen and James were visibly frazzled!
The meetings and banquets and music all playing
The coaches take troops to castles and towns
Plenty of food and plenty of sound

The author Dick Cronin of the Rebel Clan
Signed copies of books, he's such a great man
He encourages each one of us in the clan
To dig into our past and learn what we can
The 5th clan gathering has now been and gone
We owe a huge thanks to those who have come
And most of all, for those who were there
We owe James and Noreen such a loud cheer!

By Jenny O'Dea - Canada



A Regional Clan Gathering will be held in the United States in 2006.

Locale will be Madison, Wisconsin. Planned for summer 2006

Details will be posted when available.

Keep an eye on the clan website at www.odeaclan.org for more news and updates and also to view the group photo of the International Clan Gathering held in July 2005.