

Gathering of the O'Dea Clan by Dick Cronin

Clan members came from all over the globe for the seventh international O'Dea gathering in Ennis recently.

This is a triennial event, which began in 1990 and was organised by Noreen and James O'Dea of Clontarf. It attracted over 160 members - O'Deas, Deas, O'Days, Days and O'Dyas - from all over the world, including delegates from places as far away as Poland, Costa Rica and Canada.

Locally, clan members from Ennis, Kilfenora, Shannon, Lissycasey and Cooraclare were also there.

There was a civic reception from Ennis Town Council, which was held in the re-furnished Butter Market. Following this, the inaugural dinner was held in the Great Hall of The Old Ground Hotel.

The after dinner lecture was given by Risteard Ui 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, *The Influence of Women on the Politics and Community of Medieval Clare*. During the lecture, Mr. Ui Cróinín outlined the equality enjoyed by women under the Gaelic Brehon Laws and how they used their skills and independence to influence all aspects of political and social life, during the period 1200 to 1700 AD.

On Saturday morning, the clan was transported by three coaches and numerous cars to Dysert O'Dea Castle, where an Irish coffee and smoked salmon reception was held, hosted by Breda Considine, the castle manager and her staff. Because of the high numbers this year, the group had to be divided into three and were treated to a tour of the historic monuments of Dysert by local historian, cartographer and publisher, Martin Breen.

On the steps of the castle, the clan chief, Sue Poole of South Australia, handed over her chain of office to John B O'Day III of Wisconsin Rapids, USA, who will remain in office until 2011. John is the son of the owner of the castle and O'Dea hereditary chieftain, John B O'Day II.

Anderson O'Day and Sue Poole presented cheques to the Dysert Castle Restoration Fund, which had been collected from members in the USA and Australia, respectively.

Saturday afternoon was spent shopping in Ennis, while a large group took up an invitation from Sonia Schorman, local author and historian, to view the historic sites of the town.

At five o'clock, the clan descended on John O'Dea's pub in O'Connell Street, where John and his family hosted a barbecue for over 150 clansmen and women.

The number of O'Dya families in the Gdansk area of Poland now stands at 900, descended from two O'Dea brothers from Dysert, who sailed to join the Russian Navy in the 1660s but were ship-wrecked in the Baltic and settled in Poland.

Last year, they held their second Polish clan gathering, attended by 120 O'Dyas. Until 2005, the O'Dyas didn't even know of the existence of the O'Dea Clan Association. This branch of the clan was represented by Hanya, Misha, Mietec and Kasia.

On Saturday night, the clan was treated to an evening of entertainment and singing, at Bunratty Castle where, for a change, the O'Briens and MacNamaras were replaced by O'Deas. They were treated to a piece of music written especially for O'Dea at Dysert by Traolach O'Caralon, the blind 17th century harper and composer which was played by the resident harper, Maebh de Buitléir. This tune is commonly known as "*O'Carolan's Receipt for Whiskey*."

Sunday morning mass at St Flannan's was attended by a huge number of clan members of different faiths, who were treated to a warm welcome by Fr Tom O'Dea, who is ministering in Ballynacally, after many years in Arizona. Sunday afternoon was spent touring the North Clare area, including the Cliffs of Moher and the Burren where James O'Dea, Shane O'Dea and James O'Sullivan acted as tour guides for the trip.

A final farewell dinner was held in The Old Ground on Sunday night and musical entertainment was provided by Martin Breen, Conor Keane and friends. A new Tainiste, (chieftain elect) Bill Dea from Avoca, Iowa was elected in a closely contested election held on the night.

On Monday morning, those members of the clan who were still among the 'walking-wounded' attended the international clan meeting, where tributes were made to Noreen and James O'Dea, who organised the event, as well as, to Breda Considine and John Ryan, who maintain the castle at Dysert.

The weekend finished with a visit to the Clare Libraries Local Studies section and the O'Dea Clan golf outing at the Woodstock Golf Club. Charles Van de Motter and James F Day won the men's competition, while the women's trophy was won by Jeannette Van de Motter and Eleanor O'Dea.

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Group photo at the Clan Gathering 2008 & our new Chieftain John B O'Day III pictured below



We hope you enjoyed reading our newsletter. As always we welcome any articles on travel, unusual hobbies, candidates for 'spotlight on' interviews and more. If you have any items to be included please send them to Ann Dea Hogan at toygoose@bellsouth.net.

Many thanks to Joan Koechig & Pat Britt for the kind contribution of photos!

