



# Reilig na mBocht

Saol ainnis a bhí ann d'fhormhór na ndaoine sna blianta sin roimh an Gorta Mór sa 19ú hAois. Cuireadh tús le Tithe na mBocht a thógáil nuair a tháinig an "Poor Law Act" I bhfeidhm in 1838. Ba shuarach an saol fós dos na bochtáin áfach. I ngach "ceantar" bhí ar na daoine móra le talamh nó sealúchas táille a íoc chun na tithe seo a choimeád. Thóg Sir Thomas Deane & Co, Corcaigh, Newcastle West District Workhouse. Osclaíodh é ar an 15ú Márta 1841 agus bhí spas ann do 550 duine. Ar ndóigh bhí i bhfad sa bhreis ar an bhfigiúr sin le linn an ghorta a thosaigh in 1845.

Ní fios cé mhéad a fuair bás I dTigh na mBocht san am sin nó ó shin ach tá a fhios again gur cuireadh a bhformhór sa reilig taobh amuigh den bhfalla, sé sin Reilig na mBocht. Agus bhíodh an t-ainm, Bóithrín na Plá, ar an mbóthar ann.

Ba bheag searmanas a gugadh dos na créatúir agus iad á chur. B'é an cros mór ina lár an t-aon siombal gur reili a bhí ann. Agus ba é an Earl of Devon, an tiarna talún, a thóg an cros sin sa bhliain 1861. Úsáideadh an reilig síos go dtí na seascaidí nuair a stpadh den nós. Fán am sin bhí an droch-cháil a bhain leis an "Workhouse", nó Tigh na mBocht, ag imeacht (ba e an "County Home" a bhí mar ainm air ansin) agus is é Ospidéal Naomh Íde atá ann anois, ospidéal dos na seandaoine.

Corr-dhuine a stop ag geata na sean-reilige a bhí imithe fiáin go dtí an tráthnóna Luain úd, 20ú Samhain 1989, nuair a bhailigh na céadta le haghaidh Aifrinne - seans gúrbh é and chéad Aifreann riamh sa reilig. An Canónach, Éamonn Ó Dea, a léigh an t-Aifreann i dteannta a gcúraideach, An t-Ath. Dónal Ó Liatháin agus an t-Ath. Eugene Boyce. Ansin bunaíodh Coiste Reilig an Ghorta. D'iarr an coiste ar Cliodna Cussen (níl a háit dhúchais ach cúpla céad slat ón reilig) geata cloch-dhéanta a dhéanamh ar a bhfuil samhla an Ghorta Mhóir. Beannaíodh an geata ar Fhéile Corpus Christi Déardaoin 30ú Bealtaine 1991.

De réir a chéile leagadh cosán, cuireadh crainn, tógadh altóir, agus I 1998 nochtadh plaic chomórtha. Deir nóta suntasach ar an bplaic go bhfuil Paddy Ó Flanagáin curtha san reilig. Bhí Paddy ar cheann des na daoine a tháinig ar Chailís Ard Acha in 1868. D'imigh Jim Quinn, fear a bhí leis, go dtí An Astráil. Ar ndóigh tá clú agus cáil dhomhanda ar an gcailís mar sheoid na hÉireann.

Tá Coiste Reilig an Ghorta agus Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte obair le chéile anois ag coimeád slachta ar an reilig.

The 1838 Law Act provided for the construction of workhouses where the poor and destitute would receive the bare necessities for living. The Newcastle West District Workhouse opened on 15th March 1841 and could accommodate 550 persons, a figure considerably exceeded when the country became enveloped in the throes of the 1840's potato famine. Nobody can say how many died in the workhouse during those tragic times and in subsequent years but we know that most of the deceased were interred in this cemetery, which was known as the Paupers Graveyard. Little ceremony was afforded to the misfortunate souls as they were laid to rest. The only symbol which distinguished the graveyard was the stone cross erected in 1861 on the instructions of the local landlord the Earl of Devon. Burials continued until the 1960's when the practice ceased. By that time the stigma attached to the workhouse (or "County Home" as it was also called) was ending. Today the building, refurbished and extended, functions as St. Ita's Community Hospital. The cemetery remained in a state of neglect until Monday 20th November 1989 when a congregation of several hundred people gathered for what was probably the first Mass celebrated there. Local parish priest Edmond Canon O'Dea was assisted by curates Fr's. Dan Lane and Eugene Boyce. Subsequently the Famine Cemetery Committee was formed and erected the stone gate, sculpted by Cliodna Cussen, with its symbolic representations of the Famine era. The gate was blessed on the Feast of Corpus Christi, Thursday 30th May 1991. Later improvements included constructing the internal pathway, planting of trees, provision of a permanent altar and in 1998 the erection of a plaque commemorating Paddy Flanagan, one of the finders of the Ardagh Chalice, who is buried here. The burial ground is now cared for by the Famine Cemetery Committee and the Health Service Executive.