

Introduction

English – the Historic Connection

The history of Ireland cannot truly be written until the history of the parishes is written¹

WE IN THE English Historical Society have come together as a group to help preserve the heritage of this historic area. We are not professional historians, although some of our members have qualifications in history and others have, over the years, researched and published their work in *Dúiche Néill* and other historical and cultural journals. The book could never have been completed without the people of Eglish, the Brantry, Greystone and Benburb areas and their dedication. For many this is their first time to tell their story. Our aim has been to record what might be lost and to uncover what has been hidden. This contribution to the history of Eglish will, we hope, help to inspire people to take history seriously, to be conscious of the rich heritage that is theirs – in surname and in placename, in genealogy, in traditional music, sport and in the historic language of our country. We live in little townlands which keep their Gaelic placenames, some going back over a thousand years and anglicised in variations which are dotted throughout the book – Stelloga/Stilloga/Stiloga/Stillago, Savanaghanroe/Sanaghanrow/Sanaghanroe, Tyghan/Tyhan, Clogherney/Clogherny – to name but a few. We use the names people long ago chose for these unique places – hills and glens, rivers, streams and above all, the river Oona which flows through it all. We hope that the book may inspire parents and grandparents to pass on to their youngsters the stories of the land and the people which have formed us and which support us all.

In 1805 the Catholic parish of Eglish was established when it was split off from the old Clonfeacle parish which was divided almost equally in two. At the time of the bi-centenary in 2005 a few interested people decided to form a history society in Eglish and to publish a book to mark the occasion. When we formed the Society we took the decision at an early stage that we wanted to be representative of all denominations, to make the book accessible to all while outlining the history of the parish from the earliest times. We were fortunate in that the Heritage Lottery Fund agreed, in 2009, to grant-aid our project which encompasses the book, a website, heritage trail and plaques for sites of historic interest. A series of engagements with the general public relating to the

history of the area was planned and this has been done via talks held in venues throughout the parish.

In this area watered by the Oona river, we have been a sundered society. It is the sincere wish of the committee that our book and other projects may help to bridge the divides that have existed among us, that they will enable us to understand our different stories and be a force for good. Articles in the book have been as carefully researched as circumstances allow and, where possible, references are given.

Contributors know the countryside as few professional historians can ever hope to know it – its people and byways, its historic features such as hillforts, crannógs, early church sites, holy wells, ancient stones. It has been our intention that the book be directed towards the people of the area, rather than be of academic interest alone, that it will find itself on the shelves of each home in the parish and that what it contains will be passed down through the generations. The English historical project will also be of interest to those abroad whose ancestors came from the area and who, up to now, have found it difficult to source local material. We hope that we have told the story as fairly and as accurately as possible but, while we have striven to be true in what is written, the book does not reveal the complete picture. Many stories have been lost and others cannot yet be told. A decision was made by the committee that it would be inappropriate to touch on the troubled times of the last fifty years, nor have we researched the effects of World War II. While we have tried to name people in photographs, we would appreciate any help our readers could give us regarding the identification of those omitted.

The book is dedicated to the people of Eglish, those who lived out their lives here in past times, those living here now and those yet to be. We can commend to them the words of Isaiah:

*Look to the rock from which you were hewn
Breathnaigí an charraig as ar gearradh sibh
Leuk tae the roke ye'r haggit frae.*

Brendan McAnallen
Chairman
November 2011

Rose Mary Logue
Secretary

¹ Fr. Eamonn Ó Doibhlín, Donaghmore, who was one of the first to record a parish history in Tyrone, over forty years ago.