

Poet's Corner



Pat Daly

Inis Cathaigh (Aimsir na Nollag)

Seósamh Mac Ionnrachtaigh

Tá Nollaig eile buailte linn. Ar an Leanbh Naofa,
Aimsir A bhreithe, is mó a chuimhnímse, a bhí
Curtha ó gach doras gan smaoineamh ar an méid
A bhí á dhéanamh acu, nó gur tháinig A mhuintir
Go dtí fear tuisceanach. Ar nós Rí na Nollag, agus
Na réalta a bhí riamh ós ár gcionn, ní i gcónaí a
Bhíonn muid linn féin sa saol.

Mairim don oíche go dtí go bhfeicimse
Coinle soilse geala na Nollag lasta ar roinnt
Fuinneoga ar an mórthír, agus ar an mbaile
Beag araon; taobh istig na tithe a bhfuil meas
As cuimse acu ar Leanbh an tSolais.
Thíos cois na tine, ag lorg foscaidh ón bhfuacht
Aniar, cuimhním ar mo mhuintir, ar mo chuid
Cairde, ar mo chomarsana tráth den saol, agus
Orthu siúd go léir atá imithe uainn go heangach
An tsaoil eile, le cuimhne na ndaoine.

Ar mhuintir an oileáin atá bánaithe le fada, agus
Ar na seacht séipéal a tógadh in omós do Dhia in
Aon oileán amháin ó shin, a chuimhnímse anois.
Ar nós Tú féin is maith liom an Nollaig: tobair Do
Thrócaire, cuid de Do chuid fireáin, bláth Do chreidimh
Agus neart Do thuisceana, atá ag teacht chugainn de shíor
Mórthimpeall orainn, I ngan fhios dúinn féin.

Tá crann Nollag le feiceáil ar nós na gcrann eile atá
I bhfad uainn. Is cuma má tá Tú lán de fhiosracht
Na habhann, gairid don choill, nó I gcóngar Do
Chomharsain i gcomharsanacht caisleáin: tá mé
Ag smaoineamh ar ghrásta na hócáide sin, agus ar
Thodhchaí Do Ríochta go deo, agus ar alán dá bhfuil
Bainte amach agat cheana féin an Nollaig seo. Fáilte
Mór, babhta amháin eile romhatsa, a Rí na Nollag
Agus a bhronntóir na beatha.

It is our good fortune that available to us at this time of year is a highly impressive poem, in the Irish language and with a Christmas theme. It is from the pen of Seósamh Mac Ionnrachtaigh and the emphasis is strongly on the spiritual aspect of Christmas.

The poetic voice in Seósamh's poem emanates from Inis Cathaigh, or Scattery Island as it is more commonly known, which is located in the Shannon Estuary, about two miles south of Kilrush, Co Clare.

This locale is most appropriate since Inish Cathaigh has had a long association with Christianity, from the sixth century, when Saint Senan established a foundation there, right up to the time of the Reformation.

The last of the island's resident population abandoned it in the early 1960s. Seemingly then, the poetic voice echoes from a period prior to that date. The poem is dedicated to all those who like the season of Christmas.

Garry Sheehan was his Name by Kevin Kilfeather

*Bullets whispered through the pine thorns,
Bestowing on them the kiss of death
In Deradda Wood, a long route march
From Templemore and Sergeant Wall.*

*'Eyes front; by the left; quick march!'
Was instilled, but this time
There was no 'About turn!'
As a wood pigeon flew and
Whispered too through the trees,
He hugged the dirt - Garry - the soil
Of Ballinamore.*

*Then, silence: a lull, and he arose for the
Last time: but, going down went up,
At Christmas, to where angels congregate
In pacifying, eternal universality: went up
To where we all hope to go.
Remember him, 25 years on: Recruit
Garda Garry Sheehan who hugged the
Floor of a lonely wood as raindrops
Trickled down his back, among the uncut
Christmas trees.*

*Garry Sheehan was his name. Never
Will he be forgotten. He passed out before
He passed out: proud be he! And the
Pine trees still whisper in the Leitrem wind:
'WHY?'*

The years have flown by and suddenly we are reminded that a quarter of a century has passed since that dark day when Garry Sheehan died at Ballinamore. Today, 25 years on, the crushing sadness which the tragedy evoked is still recalled vividly. Undoubtedly, the time of year and the fact that when he lost his life Garry was still a trainee in Templemore were factors which contributed significantly to the poignancy which surrounded the occurrence.

On this special anniversary of the tragedy it is fitting that Poet's Corner should play a part in commemorating the occasion. Kevin Kilfeather's poem was composed just recently, while Lament for Garry Sheehan was written in the immediate aftermath of the event.

Lament for Garry Sheehan

by Pat Daly

O youthful golden hero
O hundred thousand treasures,
We are saddened by your passing:
And in the long night's darkness
We seek for crumbs of comfort
But cannot purge our sorrow.

Deradda, where you died, was an oak grove,
And you would have become a strong oak
On Irish streets: certain of your calling;
Blending the long arm with infinite wisdom;
Following a proud tradition,
The third generation to wear the blue.

Of what have you been deprived?
Some joy, much love, a share of sadness.
What have you gained by your sacrifice?
Your name in imperishable stone,
Eternal youth and the enviable opportunity
To serve with Saint Michael.