Transcribing the Graves of *All Saints* Church, Fenagh, County Carlow, Ireland

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Sleeping Histories

By

Susan Ni Chuileann

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PREFACE

It all started in the summer of 2010 when I experienced an immensely enjoyable day of tours and browsing in Glasnevin Cemetery Museum, Dublin, Ireland. Recently divorced and having moved from my home town of Wexford to Carlow the previous year, I was beginning to explore the world around me as a single woman once again. I had simply driven to Dublin and ended up in Glasnevin and thought—why not? I had always wanted to do the tour of this cemetery, and this seemed like as good a day as any.

I followed my tour guide around and listened with avid interest to the story of how this expansive graveyard of 124 acres began with just nine. The very first person buried here was Michael Carey. He was just eleven years of age when he passed away. The guide informed us that Michael was buried down by the garden section of the cemetery near the Prospect gate entrance. Not far from Michael's rather humble headstone rests John Philpot Curran, a noted parliamentarian, barrister and solicitor. Mr Curran was born in Cork in 1750 and died in 1817 in London. He was buried in Brompton, but his remains were later transferred to Glasnevin. A large sarcophagus covers the grave of this noted parliamentarian and gentleman of the law. Yet, despite his education, good work and financial status, here he lies in the same earth as young Michael Carey. Death truly is a leveller.
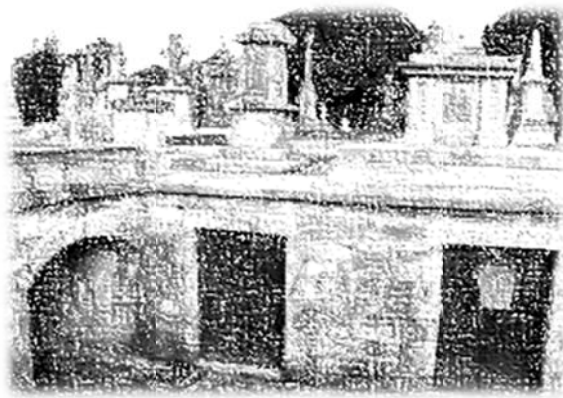
Figure 1. Pencil sketch of the resting place of Daniel O'Connell in Glasnevin cemetery

I walked in the afternoon sunshine and heard how ten men were initially employed for maintenance and digging in the cemetery. Each grave was dug using long-handled shovels and spades with eighteen-inch blades. The first grave on a particular plot was dug to a depth of twelve feet, (which took up to eight hours), while second or subsequent, shallower graves took at least three hours of hard toil. Since little Michael's burial in 1832 more than 1.5 million people have been buried in Glasnevin, keeping the gravediggers very busy indeed.

The graveyard is a mix of young and old, elaborate private tombs, and unmarked common ground. Special areas are dedicated to victims of the many epidemics or outbreaks that rampaged across Dublin such as smallpox (1871–1872), cholera (1865–1866) and typhoid (1846–1849).

The last such outbreak, the Influenza Epidemic of 1918, saw 240 funerals at Glasnevin cemetery over an eight-day period. I heard that the norm would have been twelve or thirteen funerals a day so 240 in eight days really captures the enormity of that death toll. Of course, the acreage required for the dead had to have expanded over the ensuing years, and so too did sections, or distinct burial areas for certain groups of people. For example, I walked close to a plot just for the College of Surgeons, and a number of areas reserved for members of certain religious groups such as the Jesuits and the Dominican Friars.

My main thought that evening as I drove home was how that cemetery was a place that had to be fought for. For decades, laws imposed on Ireland by Great Britain meant that the Irish Catholic were restricted in their ability to hold or attend mass, and in their choice of where to bury their dead. A man called Daniel O'Connell fought for the right of Catholics to bury their dead according to their own religious rites in the 1800s and the result was the enormous cemetery I had spent the day exploring. My mind had been awakened and my interest piqued.

When I arrived home to the village of Fenagh in County Carlow that night, it was with new eyes that I looked out the windows to the rear of my house onto *All Saints,* a Church of Ireland (COI) graveyard I had lived beside for the past year. I felt rather proud to note that while the oldest grave in Glasnevin dated back to 1832, the oldest grave in *All Saints* dated to 1708. While Glasnevin was the resting place for multidenominational individuals, *All Saints* was predominantly for the COI community. Furthermore, while Ireland has always been associated with pints, peat and priests, this was a strong religious presence in an otherwise very Catholic country. I was

intrigued, and full of curiosity about this small, old and beautiful graveyard behind my home.

I always had an interest in old graveyards. This was no small consequence of coming from a large family. There were thirteen children in my mother's family and ten in my father's, my life was a whirlwind of baptisms, communions, confirmations, and, of course, funerals. I grew up playing in churchyards, catching butterflies between the headstones and practising my reading skills on the text across tombs. I was never afraid. My uncle always cautioned me to fear the living over the dead. So, many were the days I trailed behind the legs of my uncles and aunts through nettles, brambles and long grass in ancient graveyards on a quest for a long-lost relative, or even a particularly amusing inscription on someone else's grave. I often gazed in wonder at weeping angels set in stone over a particular grave, or watched eagerly as someone used wet grass to reveal long-hidden texts on old, lichen-covered headstones. It was little wonder therefore that I fell headlong into transcribing graves in *All Saints* that summer of 2010. On the other hand, it was unanticipated that summer that I would launch myself into trying to research the history of the village I only recently came to live in, the people who once lived there, and the legacy left behind when a rural, predominantly Catholic spot in Ireland has become rich in the history and culture of a COI system!

This short book is more of a labour of love than anything else. It is not written by a historian, or a genealogist, merely a person with a great interest in both, and a love of local stories and folklore. One aim is to introduce the reader to the beauty of rural villages nestled all over Ireland, but in particular, the village of Fenagh, Co. Carlow in Ireland's South East. A second aim rests in preserving some of the narrative etched on the very old gravestones in a churchyard of Fenagh to ink, as erosion over the centuries is wearing their history away. A third and final aim is to take you with me on the journey I took as a "blow-in" to Carlow as I discovered its history and its stories through the lens of these gravestones.

The book begins with an overview of Fenagh village. The goal is to paint you a picture of its size, location, and to provide you with a context for the rest of this story. The following chapter moves us into the graveyard of the village. This chapter aims to illustrate how a specific site can become a cemetery, or a dedicated area for burial in a community. It further seeks to elucidate the history of gravestones, and what ancient headstones, particularly their design and location, can tell us about the culture of their time. This chapter elucidates the way England attempted to "right the

wrongs of a rotten Catholic Church" (Griffith, & Wallace, 2016, p. 25) in the early 1500s. The Reformation set down by King Henry VIII of England set the tone for the removal of bishops and priests from their parishes, replacing them with COI clergy. This was the start of Catholics having nowhere to worship, or, indeed, to bury their dead. This explains why Daniel O'Connell sought to campaign for Glasnevin cemetery in Dublin as a dedicated spot for Catholics (and other religions) to use this area for such requirements.

Of course, once we transcribe the gravestones in *All Saints* that date back as far as 1708, we uncover a wealth of history. Chapter three explores the history of 1700, the Great Frost, rent-racking, Whiteboys, landlords and rebellions. Slowly we begin to see profiles across the landscape of this small graveyard in Fenagh that touch on all of these elements of the turbulent eighteenth century.

Chapter four stays with the concept of landlords but delves deeper into the current architecture of the village with in-depth looks at Ballydarton House and Estate, Upton House, Fenagh Lodge and Lumclone House to name a few. The once-owners and gentry of these grand houses are among those interred in *All Saints*, and while little of any of their ancestry remains in the area, their history sleeps within this graveyard.

The fifth chapter touches on the stories of the close-knitted strands of a COI community in a Catholic county, then and now. Being part of the plantations way back in the 1700s may have had its advantages to the new settlers, but I am sure there was some psychological upheaval too. As a "blow-in" to Carlow myself, this chapter presents a unique perspective of what it may have been like to keep family and friends close, and to maximise opportunities to manage the resources at hand while also managing the sociocultural effects of living among the Catholic Irish in rural Ireland.

This is my second book venture with Cambridge Scholars Publishing. It is also my second book while working for Carlow College, St Patricks. I wish to extend special gratitude to the staff and colleagues of both institutions for their support and patience during these times.

I must extend special thanks to close friends and special people such as my Uncle Richard who is ninety-seven this year, my Mum, Dad and brothers, and to my best friend and inspiration, Helen Whelan. It beholds me to

mention the love of my life, which I lost during the writing of this book. My heart is always yours, and no time will erase the pain of losing you.

Last but not least thank you to the authors of all the books I read that helped me understand death, dying and burial in Ireland across the ages.

WHERE ARE WICKED FOLK BURIED?

'Tell me, grey-baired sexton,' said I,
'Where in the field are the wicked folk laid?
I have wandered the quiet old graveyard through,
And studied the epitaphs, old and new,
But on monument, obelisk, pillar, or stone
I read no evil that men have done.'

The old sexton stood by a grave newly made,
With his chin on his hand, his hand on a spade.
'Who is the judge when the soul takes its flight?
Who is judge 'twixt the wrong and the right?
Which of us mortals shall dare to say
That our neighbour was wicked who died to-day?

'In our journey through life, the farther we speed,
The better we learn that humility's need
Is charity's spirit that prompts us to find
Rather virtue than vice in the lives of our kind.

'Therefore, good deeds we record on these stones;
The evil men do, let it rest with their bones;
I have laboured as Sexton this many a year,
But I never have buried a bad man here.'

CHAPTER ONE

THE VILLAGE OF FENAGH, CO. CARLOW

Introduction

The aim of this first chapter is to introduce the small village of Fenagh located on the outskirts of County Carlow, Ireland. The objective is to allow the reader to see the village as I did for the very first time in 2009, recently divorced, and starting life again single, in a totally new locality combined with the challenge of a new job. Slowly the chapter expands from a rented apartment just outside the village of Fenagh, into a new home situated in the heart of the village community. We take a look at Carlow itself, its history, and we get a sense of how the lands of Carlow and its surrounding townlands became highly desired by settlers from outside Irish shores. The chapter then takes us back into the village, up its straight main thoroughfare, and back to the epi-centre, *All Saints* COI church and graveyard. Once standing among its long grass and jagged gravestones, we get ready to explore Chapter Two and the graves of Fenagh village.

Late summer, 2009

I officially arrived in Fenagh in August 2009. My first home here was a rented cottage just outside the village on the road to Newtown village. The cottage I rented belonged to Charles and Amy Nolan. They owned a large south-facing home called Clonegath House and on their lands they had converted an old dairy shed into two cottage apartments called Oak Lodge and Beech Lodge. During that August of 2009, I viewed Beech Lodge in the slanting evening sun, and knew this small one-bedroomed place with its thick stone walls and tiny leaded windows was to be my new home. A dry dust lifted from the working farmyard of Clonegath as tractors ambled in, and the lowing of cows almost dulled the tinny sound of a church bell from the nearby village of Newtown. All that month the door of my cottage stayed open from morning 'til late, the animals moved from shade

to sun, and the garden was a riot of colour as blooms seemed to applaud on behalf of nature in their warm and arid soil. I instantly felt at home in this quaint and rural area called Fenagh, but I had not been born and raised here. I was a Wexford woman, used to beaches and fishing villages. Carlow is just an hour's drive from Wexford, but it is a polar opposite, with its land-locked borders, mountains and large granite quarries. It was not my land, and I was no daughter of this earth. In Irish slang, I was a "blow-in" to the county of Carlow and its surrounds.

A "blow-in" can be described as a person who arrives with the wind, so to speak, and can leave in a similar fashion. It is not uncommon to be fifty years' resident in a part of Ireland, but still considered as a blow-in (see Viney, 2016). People who were born and raised in a locality can treat a blow-in with due caution as a result. I was aware of using the term about people who had settled in my home town of Wexford, so I almost expected the same when I arrived in Carlow.

County Carlow and all her troubles and beauty

Carlow is no stranger to "blow-ins" of a more monumental nature than I of course. She is an inland county, but she has a fine network of rivers and canals that have brought Vikings and others to her lands without invite or desire. Carlow is very beautiful, and her lands are rich with granite quarries, woodlands and pastures. In the 1600s, she would have been under far more forestry than she is now, as was a lot of Ireland. Necessarily, there would have been areas cleared for agriculture, with the result that the tilled area of a given principality may have sprawled in a series of unconnected plots. The staple crop would have been corn, which had the considerable disadvantage that it was difficult to grow and easy to destroy (by our blow-in enemies).

Cattle were the most important commodity in the country—serving as currency, clothing material and of course a food source. Such was their value, that their meat was only eaten on special occasions. The Irish poor's normal diet would have consisted of oatcakes, milk, curds, butter and cheese (again, notice that almost all these items come from cattle). In those parts of the country, the Pale around Dublin, parts of Carlow and south County Wexford for instance, where tillage was more common, the common people survived on bread and thin soup made from cereals, peas and beans. At this date the potato, in the future to be so central to Irish history, had yet to be introduced from the New World. It made its

appearance in about 1610 but did not become the staple food until the mid-eighteenth century.

I am no historian, nor am I a time-traveller, but I imagine that life was fairly precarious for the common people of Ireland at the best of times. In zones of tillage farming, the early summer, just as winter stores of food were running out and the new crop had not yet been harvested, was anecdotally known as the "hungry time." In pastoral, or cattle-raising areas, the hard season was the onset of winter, when the cows' dairy products dried up. Localised food shortages or famines caused by bad weather were regularly noted by history annals narrated to us in primary and secondary school education. However, the two major famines in Ireland in the Tudor period were primarily manmade events.

These two major famines occurred in 1582–1583 in Munster and in 1602–1603 in Ulster. Both were caused by the deliberate destruction of crops and foodstuffs as a military tactic. In both cases, such campaigns were in response to the followers of respectively, the Earl of Desmond in Munster in the 1580s and Hugh O'Neill in Ulster in 1600, waging guerrilla warfare against English forces and their local allies.

Modern armies, with road networks, motorised transport, railways, aerial reconnaissance and far greater numbers, have trouble tracking down hit-and-run fighters operating from remote locations. With none of these advantages, the Tudor commanders, Earl Grey and Mountjoy (respectively in the 1580s and 1590s) resolved instead to destroy the rebels' food supply. Grey summed it up as, "burning their corn, spoiling their harvest and killing or driving their cattle" (http://www.theirishstory.com).

Burning and spoiling an enemy's territory was standard practice in warfare in sixteenth-century Ireland. It should not be thought that the Irish themselves were above the practice. For instance, Hugh O'Neill routinely devastated the lands of his enemies, while Shane O'Neill, his predecessor, had caused famine in Ulster in the 1560s by use of such tactics. But the English scorched earth tactics, combined as they were with a determined resolve to break the military power of the Irish lordships and to civilise and Anglicise Ireland, were far more prolonged and systematic. The rural population's foodstuffs might survive, with hardship, one summer campaign of this sort, but historians would caution that famine was inevitable if scorched earth campaigns were continued through the winter and over more than one year (http://www.theirishstory.com).

In order to understand scorched earth warfare and famines better, I looked to the works of Edmund Spenser. Spenser is probably best known as a poet, but he played a hand in the Desmond Rebellion too. My recollection is that he once served under one Arthur Grey. In the 1500s, as part of a plan to devastate the Desmond Rebellions of Ireland, Grey had recruited a force of 6,000 men and was sent as Lord Deputy of Ireland to quell this trouble. Spenser served under him and was involved in a nasty massacre where Grey led an army of about 3,000 in the Battle of Glenmalure, County Wicklow in August, where he was slaughtered by Fiach McHugh O'Byrne, with casualties of eight hundred. Later in the same year, he led a force of eight hundred to *Ard na Caithne* (Smerwick) in County Kerry where he massacred sx hundred Irish/Italian/Spanish troops who surrendered, a notorious incident known as the Siege of Smerwick. According to some versions of this event, Lord Grey de Wilton promised the garrison their lives in return for their surrender, a promise which he broke—this resulted in the Irish proverb "Grey's faith."

When Lord Grey was recalled to England, Spenser stayed on in Ireland, having acquired other official posts and lands in the Munster Plantation. Walter Raleigh acquired other nearby Munster estates confiscated in the Desmond Rebellion. Sometime between 1587 and 1589, Spenser acquired his main estate at Kilcolman, near Doneraile in North Cork. He later bought a second holding to the south, at Rennie, on a rock overlooking the river Blackwater in North Cork. Its ruins are still visible today. A short distance away grew a tree, locally known as "Spenser's Oak" until it was destroyed in a lightning strike in the 1960s. Local legend has it that he penned some of *The Faerie Queene* under this tree. In any event, he left a rather detailed account of the English tactics used during the Rebellions and massacres just noted, for instance, he wrote that "the open enemy having all his country wasted, what by him, and what by the soldiers, findeth succour in no places. Towns there are none of which he may get spoil, they are all burnt; Country houses and farmers there are none, they be all fled; bread he hath none, he ploughed not in summer; flesh [livestock] he hath, but if he kill it in winter, he shall want milk in summer, and shortly want life. Therefore, if they be well followed but one winter, ye shall have little work to do with them the next summer… All those subjects which border upon those parts, are whither to be removed and drawn away, or likewise to be spoiled, that the enemy may find no succour thereby: for what the soldier spares the rebel will surely spoil" (https://celt.ucc.ie).

Furthermore, Spenser noted that rebels would be allowed to surrender if, "they come and submit themselves, upon the first summons: but afterwards I would have none received, but left to their fortune and miserable end: my reason is, for that those which afterwards remain without, are stout and obstinate rebels, such as will never be made dutiful and obedient, nor brought to labour or civil conversation."

> "The end I assure you will be very short,… although there should none of them fall by the sword, nor be slain by the soldier, yet thus being kept from manurance, and their cattle from running abroad, by this hard restraint, they would quickly consume themselves, and devour one another…" (https://celt.ucc.ie).

While just one account, it is easy to suggest that Ireland has a long history of invasion and hardship. While those rebellions were in Wicklow and Kerry, Carlow was not devoid of such troubles either, but rather than facing rebellions and famines as Ulster and Munster did, she was a county divided up almost like the spoils of war. Consider that during the 1600s, Cromwell's army arrived in Carlow, and enjoyed what locals call a "bloodless victory." In two or three years after the surrender of Carlow the disbanding of Cromwell's army took place and many of his "Ironsides," finding Carlow pleasant quarters, settled here (see Chapter Four).

Rural areas of Carlow such as Fenagh and Newtown attracted English settlers also, with Walter and William Newtown taking ownership of almost five thousand acres close to Fenagh in 1688. They found the land so good that they passed on word, and soon others came from England to relocate here. Property soon sprang up in and around Fenagh village, possibly displacing many of the original Irish people residing here.

In any event, one of the Newtown brothers married into the Bagnal family in Dunleckney. The Bruens moved into Oakpark, and the Watsons set up home in Ballydarton House, Fenagh. Other families such as the Garrett brothers who had served with Cromwell resided in Mountpleasant and Janeville close to the village, as did a blacksmith called Lummox whose wife now rests in *All Saints* graveyard (Grave No. 50) located in the centre of Fenagh village. Accordingly, this area is no stranger to the odd "blow-in" such as myself.

The psychology of home and "blow-ins"

So Fenagh village was to be my new home. And, there is of course, a psychology attached to where you live. Just like the first English and Scottish settlers in Carlow, this county was going to be my residence for the foreseeable future and it was important to note the influence of such a move on me as well as on those around me. Social psychologists such as Aronson and colleagues (2010) say that whether one moves frequently or almost never, moving home and county can be an intensely emotional experience. The underlying psychological issues involved in resettling decisions are of great interest to therapists and psychologists, because housing and moving are filled with symbolism, the hope for new beginnings, crushing disappointments, loss, anxiety and fear. Was I any different when moving to Carlow?

According to Ronnie Greenberg, a psychoanalyst based in America, panic can really set in around your home or your apartment. Greenberg states that home "is a matrix of safety, so moving is incredibly stressful and people don't realise it—they mainly talk about the packing and the external part of moving" (Greenberg, as cited by Kershaw, 2010). Others, such as Elizabeth Stirling, a psychologist who specialises in helping people make life changes, argues that no matter how much you move, you still take yourself with you. My belief rests more with this sentiment than the former—and also, those who never or rarely move can be those who are frozen by a fear of change. The prospect of leaving the place that is the centre of your universe or the one constant in your life can be frightening. Even finding a new dry cleaner, local shop or petrol station can stir up deep worries of impending isolation and loneliness. This was not how I was. I had survived a divorce, and at forty years of age, I was ready for whatever challenge life was ready to throw at me.

I rented from Charles and Amy Nolan of Fenagh for just two years before realising this county was definitely the place I wanted to live in for the remainder of my days. It was no surprise to others, or me then, when I bought a small house and gardens of my own close to the Gothic splendour of Ballydarton House on the Myshall Road of Fenagh village. I called my new home Riverfield House. Today she stoutly faces the foothills of the majestic Backstairs and Mount Leinster and backs her stone walls onto the square steeples of granite atop *All Saints* church. The windows of my bedrooms upstairs overlook the leaning, moss covered graves of this COI plot, and ravens circled the surrounding tress while ivy clambers across the walls. Some of my friends felt I was either brave or

mad to live so close to an ancient graveyard, but I felt only peace. It took me some time to tame the overgrown gardens and to make the long-neglected house a home, but over time it came right.

By the summer of 2011, I could step quietly into my small back garden to watch the mellow light of evening fall across the lawn, striped with shadows and onto the flowers I had planted there with names like little prayers and poems: *Solanum crispum* "Glasnevin," Twice in a Blue Moon roses, and *Erysimum*. It was so quiet here that you could hear the fall of a petal from the rose onto the grass below. I loved this small house and the village of Fenagh.

My two cats, Harriet (Harry) and Sally-Bee clambered over the clematis-lined garden walls and into the graveyard daily. One summers day, they slept on the cast iron set of patio chairs as I roamed around. My eyes took in the grey, square-tipped tower of *All Saints* behind my home, and the deep cool shade of the Myshall Road with its high, arched oaks, and its granite fence nestled in the long grass borders of Ballydarton House. Now summertime, the ditches were heady with foxgloves and purple woundwort with green hart's tongue fern, little cresses, mother-of-thousands all along their banks.
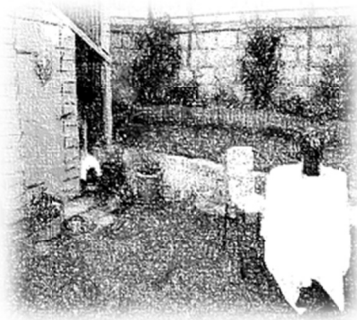
Figure 2. Riverfield House August 2011

I would often sit in my side garden and drink coffee, in the leaf-speckled light. Riverfield stood gable end to the Myshall road, the granite stone wall provided seclusion, and I was overlooked only by the window of the old sexton's cottage next door, where the wall of their kitchen formed one side of my back wall. The once neglected gardens were now mowed regularly with a manual push-pull-mower, its rotary blades making a comforting

clickety-clack as they sliced through the emerald grass. I had pots of herbs and geraniums by the open French doors, and a richly scented woodbine rambled across and over the side fence. Across from my house was a meadow, with the trickling of the River Burren ambling under a stone bridge and into its home of Ballydarton Estate House. This large Tudor-Revival style house seemed dark and cool, so secret in summer, under a dense canopy of trees.

Figure 3. The small bridge at Ballydarton House

But my favourite place was that small church called *All Saints* behind my little house. When I walked from my home and towards the church, I knew from old maps I had found of the area, that this very route from Myshall to Fenagh had not changed since the 1800s at least. High, wet hedge banks pressed in on either side of the Myshall road, adders tongue and wood anemone grew there, and blackthorn twisted through flocks of bluebell, with cowslips pale beside them, almost as though they have been soaked too long in raindrops. It truly is a beautiful place to live.

The Village of Fenagh Co. Carlow

Fenagh is, of course, just a small corner of County Carlow, a county that also dates back a number of centuries, and so far as can be collected from Ptolemy, was the habitation of the Brigantes and Cauci; or, according to Whitaker, of the Coriundi. Later, it formed the northern part of a principality called *Hy Kinselagh*. Carlow itself was distinguished by the name *Hy Cabanagh* and *Hy Drone* and only in later times was it called Ceatherlach (see Lewis, 1837; Ryan, 1833). Ceatharlach was derived from the Old Irish word "*cethrae*" that some of the locals insisted meant

"animals, cattle, herds and/or flocks" and others insisted related to the Irish word "*ceathar*" which means "four." The latter part of the word was "*lach*" which they said meant "*lake*." After the invasion of Ireland by Strongbow in 1171, this district was ruled by a family called Carew, who held the barony of Idrone in County Carlow. It is a county situated close to a number of busy cities and towns, making it an ideal commuter town. For instance, Carlow is just 84 km from the capital city of Dublin, 74.4 km from the sailing port of Wexford, and 192.7 km from the port of Cork. It is a small enough county, occupying just 841 km of the island, with a population of 56,875 people (CSO, 2016). The River Barrow flows through the town, and forms the historic boundary between counties Laois and Carlow. Of interest, Carlow served as the capital of Ireland in the fourteenth century (Ryan, 1833).

Figure 4. A map of County Carlow

As mentioned previously, Carlow has a broad history, and just like much of Ireland, it endured its share of conflict. While removed from the heavy rebellions that scoured Ulster and Munster, Carlow did witness some action associated with the sixteenth century Desmond Rebellion when Fiach McHugh O'Byrne, leader of the O'Byrne clan, ambushed English forces at Idrone and executed Gaelic allies of the then ruling Carew family. It appears that rebel forces gathered in Carlow and marched into Wicklow where they met the army of the Lord Deputy, Arthur Grey and defeated them at the Battle of Glenmalure in 1580 (see also Byrne-Rothwell, 2010). And, recall that in 1650 Carlow was besieged and forced to surrender to the forces of Oliver Cromwell during his invasion of Ireland following the English Civil War. Moreover, in 1798 a force of United Irishmen rebels was decimated by loyalist forces in Carlow town centre (see Ryan, 1833). So as you can see, Carlow was home to a rebellious, exciting, and proud group of people across the centuries.

I realise I am biased, as I live here, but I must stress the particular exquisiteness of the rural areas of Co. Carlow. Several villages such as St. Mullins, Clonegal, and Leighlinbridge are renowned for their beauty. For me, however, Fenagh (*Fionnmhach*) village is the most breath-taking. Lying on the R724 regional road between Bagenalstown and Myshall, the village is known for its architectural design and beautiful granite cottages. It is a short drive of 17.6 km from the town of Carlow, and yet the second you divert from the main Carlow–Wexford road onto the Fenagh road, it is like entering another world. Leafy lanes and arched oaks lead you down sweet-scented fields to this tiny but picturesque village that remains part of a parish with fingers in the barony of Shillelagh, Co. Wicklow, and its feet firmly situated in Idrone East. The village is just five miles from Leighlinbridge, six miles from Myshall, and 32.2. km from the medieval city of Kilkenny. It is difficult to imagine, given her sleepy appearance, but almost four and a half thousand people live in this small but beautiful part of the world that spans 11,924 acres (CSO, 2012). Those of us fortunate enough to reside here enjoy her mountains, bog lands, fine arable and pasture lands as well as quarries filled with world famous granite.

The village is compact enough. If you stand at the wall of the COI church called *All Saints* and look up towards the top of the village, you will see a small bridge that leads you into the heart of this place. On your right are sheep fields that stretch to the horizon, followed by a small council estate called Ashgrove. This semi-circular estate is set back off the road and bordered by a granite Quaker-styled fence. After a cobbled carpark lie more fields before the road veers towards Bagenelstown and Kilkenny. On your left, just after the bridge is a large shop, petrol station, undertakers and fuel store called Kearney's. Directly after this are a couple of stand-alone houses, a small estate called Granite Court, and then the original twenty-one granite cottages that snake their way to the top of the village where the road veers for Borris and St. Mullins.

The twenty-one granite cottages are relatively famous. They merit a mention in a number of books and are featured in the Mount Leinster Heritage Drive on the Failte Ireland website. It is said that architectural plans once extended to include a second row of cottages across from the existing ones, and the construction of a courthouse, but unfortunately, this never occurred. The cost of building the houses in 1860 was sixty-two pounds per unit (The Dublin Builder, 1860) and they were built in a set of three blocks that still stand today. In their original state, they mainly consisted of a kitchen, two small bedrooms, and a loft (Conry, 2006). There was a small scullery to the rear of the kitchen, with a back door that

once led to a small yard "in which is erected a privy and a piggery" (The Dublin Builder, 1860). The total living space back then was just 450 sq. feet. Today, while the frontage remains more or less intact, it is clear that a number of residents have extended and improved their living space.

One of the cottages is particularly beautiful, with a really well-maintained garden to the front. This is a bow-fronted, two-storey house in the middle of the village, and it was once the village Post Office. This house, now occupied by Marie and her little terrier "Ginger," is the largest and perhaps the most charming of that block. I was informed that for years, the son of the carpenter employed at the Beresfords, Tommy Tuthill, had the job of winding the clock in the oculus window for the original owners, the Brady sisters, Susan, Sarah, and Roseanne, who looked after the Post Office. Tommy held this job until he grew too tall to fit up the winding spiral stairs to reach the clock. Some Tuthills lie at rest in *All Saints* to this day.

At the end of the second block is a three-metre wide back entrance to the houses. This still holds the original iron gates. This is followed by a small cottage and then a fine public house called "*The Hunter's Rest.*" I believe this was originally constructed by the Beresfords not as a pub, but as a large two-storey granite co-operative store to "serve the needs of the local community" (Conry, 2006, p. 148). There are three more granite homes, then a set of five, and then what was the original forge, now occupied by the Hickeys.

Figure 5. A photo of the granite cottages circa 1900
(image Roots Web Ancestry, 2017)

These cottages were a novel idea in their day, and the Beresfords won a medal for the particularly high standard of cottages built for their labourers (Conry, 2006). Conry documented most of the original residents of these cottages, noting that Simon and Patty Maher originally lived in No. 1.

Simon worked as a tailor and he and Patty both sold groceries, cigarettes and other items. No. 2 (currently incorporated into No. 1) was once occupied by Mrs Donohue who was a dressmaker. Bill Brien lived in No. 3 and he had a cobbler's shop, while Jack Lummox was a blacksmith who lived in No. 4. There is an Annie Lummox buried at *All Saints* (Grave No. 50), and her death was in 1758 when she was just thirty-one. Her husband John died in 1788 aged 88. When this grave was originally transcribed by Denis Robert Pack Beresford in the 1800s, he documented that "The Lummoxes are said to be descended from a Cromwellian soldier of that name" which potentially relates back to those "blow-ins" we mentioned earlier.

Figure 6. A view of the granite cottages in Fenagh, Co. Carlow 2010
(photo by the author)

The forge worked by Mr Lummox was originally located down by the last house in the village. The groom from the Ballydarton Estate on the Myshall Road, Jack Whelan, lived in No. 5 and Tim "The Shepherd" Nolan, lived in No. 6. A man called Bartle Nolan once lived in No. 8, while the Langtrys once lived happily in No. 21. Tom Brennan, (another blacksmith), resided in No. 24 beside the forge, while Dinny Neill, a carpenter, lived in No. 25. There were also a set of residents known with in the village as the "Belgian Cloggers." They originally lived in No. 28 where they made clogs from alders which they "planted expressly for this purpose" (Conry, 2006, p. 149). A gardener from the Beresford establishment lived at the other end of the village, and he was renowned as an outstanding rabbit trapper. He was, however, released from his original employment by the Beresfords for holding down this second job in his spare time. A one-bedroomed house stands a little alone from the three