"THE SUBJECTED IRISH, THE RISEN IRISH" —A PAGEANT

"Let's put on a pageant." It sounded so attractive, so easy last February, so we all agreed, we would stage a pageant of North Leitrim history. This was at a meeting of the North Leitrim District Council of Macra na Tuaithe. Leaders and officers of the ten North Leitrim Clubs were there representing Tullaghan, Kinlough, Rossinver, Kiltyclogher, Glenade, Manorhamilton, Glenfarne, Drumkeeran, Newtownmanor — also Glengevlin, as an adopted club.

The discussion had gone on for some time, how to involve all clubs in some worthwhile enterprise, cultural if possible. Suggestions were made, discarded, some trivial, some too difficult, too expensive. Then Frank Kelly, the District Council Chairman, came out with it: "Let's put on a pageant, an historical pageant, Fr. Leaden can write it." The idea caught fire, a large open-air pageant, put on at night would be something the youth would enjoy, it had not been attempted before, with the crowd scenes, lighting, music, and free movement; and it would be very much in line with the educational programme of Macra na Tuaithe.

The Manorhamilton Wild Rose Festival would be held in late August; we thought that Manorhamilton would be a suitable venue for the pageant, we would have sufficient time to prepare. So we offered the pageant as part of the Festival. Father Quinn of Kiltyclogher mentioned at this stage that Prin Duignan of Drumkeeran had produced a pageant the previous year in Kilmainhamwood, Co. Meath, on the life of Carolan, the last of the Bards. Why not ask him to produce our pageant? Why not! Prin was most enthusiastic. Certainly it would be hard work, would demand great organisation, he would be delighted to direct it, his sister Ann would pre-record the dialogue and the background music.

So the first of many preliminary meetings took place — with the Wild Rose Festival Committee—they accepted the pageant. Next, where to stage it. At last the Bee Park, Manorhamilton, was agreed on. How much would it cost? The Macra clubs agreed to help finance the production from their funds, about £200. The North Western Tourist Board was approached about a grant. £100 was graciously given.

There were weeks and months in spring and early summer when nothing seemed to be happening. But Prin Duignan was putting the miles behind him. We often sat to a late hour discussing the scenes. How to begin was a stubborn problem. Then the idea of a gathering of the clans of North Leitrim struck one of us. It would be a crowd scene, we would have benners bearing the names of the principal North Leitrim families, the Meehans, McGowans, McTiernans, McClancys, etc., and we would introduce the greatest of them, the O'Rourkes, on horseback, riding through his clansmen into the spotlight. After the gathering of the clans we would take a particular clan and illustrate some important happening in its history, a scene where a Meehan family would be evicted from their cabin in Rossinver, this put on by the Rossinver club, a Famine scene from Drumkeeran where the Fordes and the McPartlins would mourn the death and burial of their own.

So the scenes took shape in our minds; were written, rewritten, taped o' nights in Duignans of Drumkeeran, even through the night. Then Ann Duignan would record suitable music and sound effects on a second track. At last the tapes were ready.

MASSIVE EXERCISE IN ORGANISATION

Much more to be done. Oliver Haslette and his men were asked to build the props in the Bee Park—the Hamilton Castle, the cabin for the eviction scene, the platform for the election rally, the prison wall for the execution. Horses—you couldn't have a pageant without horses, and horsemen. Jim White of Ballyshannon kindly gave five horses, and five expert riders were found in Tullaghan, from the Francie Joe McGowan School, Martin and Peter McGowan, Patrick Langan, Packy Murtagh and Frank O'Rourke. God alone knows what those boys endured during the long nights of rehearsal. Suffice it to say that the horses had to be hauled from Mullaghmore each night, and taken back at the end. The lighting — Sean McGauren, Manorhamilton, took charge of that, Paddy Eames of the amplification, his own. Banners too. Theresa McGowan, Tullaghan, made use of her art courses, helped by Andy Redican, Drumkeeran. The Manorhamilton I.C.A. made some of the more important costumes. A massive exercise in organisation. But the leaders of the clubs proved equal to the challenge. They co-opted others, Kathleen Mawn and Betty Keany, Manorhamilton, as wardrobe mistresses, Tom Fallon, Drumkeeran, for the sets, Joe O'Rourke and Jim Dillon, Kiltyclogher, for the more difficult acting parts.

By AUGUSTINE LEADEN, C.C.
Kinlough.

Came the hehearsal nights in early August, nearly all of them cold and wet, when the young of North Leitrim—and the not so young—hung about a wet Bee Park waiting for their turn, often going home without their scene coming up. There was the problem of synchronising the action on the field with the voices and sounds on the tape, the problem of mime, of correct spotlighting, of obstinate distortion in the amplification, of horses who were shy of the lights, of burning the cottage roof without burning the cottage, of hanging the priest caught at the Mass Rock without actually hanging him, of getting children used to dancing on the grass. There were moments of

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MACRA PAGEANT (Contd.)

despair, of strained relations. Inhabitants of Manorhamilton who wandered into the Bee Park during rehearsal were pardoned for their conclusions.

The first night, Monday, August 21, was a pleasant surprise for all of us I think. The weather was suddenly good again. After hectic evening hours of preparation everything went smoothly: the clans gathered behind their name-banners, the horses marched proudly into the light, the lighting was perfect, the amplification clear. Kinlough and Manorhamilton clubs took Manorhamilton Castle with fire and sword and chased Sir Frederick Hamilton. The Newtownmanor club formed a torchlight procession of Franciscan monks of Crevalea Abbey, accompanied by Gregorian Chant and a commentary on the life of the Abbey. There were two dance scenes, jigs by three Sligo dancers, and a bonfire dance by the McDermott troupe of dancers, prepared by their director, John James McDermott, Garrison. The Mass Rock scene was acted by the Glenade club, the yeomen who interrupted the Mass and hanged the priest were the Tullaghan horsemen. In the Famine scene two crude coffins were hauled in a simple ass and cart followed by members of the Drumkeeran club. The eviction scene acted by the Rossinver Club was pageantry at its best, as was the Charlie Dolan Sinn Féin Rally of 1908 with its wild oratory, its rowdies and police baton charges, this by Glangevlin and Manorhamilton clubs. The Sean McDermott scene was, of course, given to Kiltyclogher club. The final scene was to my mind one of the most imaginative. Again all the clubs crowded into the light—nearly 200 in all—behind the Tricolour which was carried in three parts, green on the right, orange on the left and the white in the centre. As the procession advanced the three parts started to come together until we had the union of the Green and Orange. With O Riada's music and **Mise Éire** type commentary this scene was a statement of hope for the youth, that no matter how sad and bitter North Leitrim history had been, the final message was reconciliation, and especially reconciliation between Orange and Green.

Well worth while, we all agreed. Certainly the pageant was enjoyed by those who saw it. The youth enjoyed it too. They are already asking " What will the Macra clubs of North Leitrim put on next year ? " It is a good sign for North Leitrim. They have proved that there are people ready to co-operate in improving life in North Leitrim. There are leaders ready and willing to work and lead. Why not, it is a land worth working for.

McCARTIN YOUTH AWARD

Last year we were pleased to introduce to the county the McCartin Youth Award. Because of many pressures it must be admitted that little was done to promote the competition which this award was set to activate. However our initial announcement was sufficient to garner the interest of such dedicated youth leaders as Frank O'Kelly, Revd. Augustine Leaden, C.C. and their District Council colleagues within Macra na Tuaithe. I was privileged to witness their historical pageant — ' The Subjected Irish—the Risen Irish '—in Manorhamilton's Bee Park, during the ' Wild Rose Festival ' and no more soul-stirring or elevating event has ever been attempted with our youth. The District Council of Macra na Tuaithe deserve our commendation on their achievement.

A recommendation that they be awarded the McCartin Award met with the unanimous approval of the Leitrim Guardian Adm. Council and the donor Tom McCartin, Assistant Director of the Los Angeles Times.

Mr. McCartin, his charming wife, and their five delightful children, honoured us with a visit earlier this year and extended their congratulations to Fr. Leaden, Frank O'Kelly and John McDermott (Macra na Tuaithe organiser).

Moreover he (Mr. McCartin) announced that he would continue to sponsor (through the medium of the ' Leitrim Guardian ' magazine) an annual youth award—with a prize fund of £100 annually —towards motivating interest by the youth of Leitrim County (all the county) in history—social or otherwise.

A special Leitrim Guardian sub-committee, representative of all the youth leaders of the county, is to be formed to adjudicate upon this award, which will be known as the ' Tom McCartin Youth Award.' Fr. Felim Kelly, C.C., Newtownmanor, a member of the Leitrim Guardian administration and Chairman of the Irish Farmers Association Rural Development Committee, has already been nominated as Chairman of this body. Fr. Kelly is well known for his involvement with youth and youth clubs.

A sincere word of thanks to Mr. McCartin for his interest and sponsorship. EDITOR.

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L. to R. : Frank O'Kelly; Tom McCartin; John McDermott, and Revd. Augustine Leaden, C.C., photographed at Tullaghan last year by Gabriel Martin.