



*Cloonclare Players present 'The Crucible'*

EIBHLÍN NIC EOCHÁIDH takes us inside one of our top drama groups —

## The Cloonclare Community Players

This is the tenth year "in action" of the Cloonclare Community Players who were brought together by Father Patsy Young. Membership of the group stretches from Glencar to Blacklion, but its base is firmly in Glenfarne.

The first festival production of the Cloonclare Players was "On Trial" by Maire Ni Grada. This play was one of the productions at the All-Ireland Theatre Festival in Ballinamore, 1986, and brought back many memories to the group of their first venture "onto the Boards" under the direction of Fr. Patsy.

I joined the group in 1981, a good year in which to join. Our two productions, "After Magritte" by Tom Stoppard, produced by Una Bredin from Rossinver, and "The Loves of Cass Maguire" by Brian Friel, directed by Fr. Patsy, both won through to the All-Ireland Finals.

That year, the All-Ireland One Act Finals were held in Wexford and the adjudicator was Paul Hatfield. He presented Cloonclare

Players with an award, but we were never too sure what exactly it was for! Translating his speech from the platform, it seemed to come down to having the "neck" to attempt the particular play in the first place.

Joe Dowling, who at that point was still firmly in control at The Abbey, adjudicated in Mullingar where the Three-Act Finals were held. He was very clear about his awards to Cloonclare. On that occasion, Cloonclare brought back the Harlequin Award to Leitrim for the Best Play in the Confined Section, Best Actress — Teresa Relihan and Best Producer — Fr. Patsy.

### Fr. Patsy Departs

It was the following year that Fr. Patsy changed residence from Glenfarne to Shercock, Co. Cavan.

I remember the feelings we had at the time. How would we continue without Fr. Patsy? Who would produce us now?

However, we didn't spend long floundering in that particular no-man's land, and Teresa Relihan came to our rescue and produced

"Shadow and Substance" by Paul Vincent Carroll. We brought the play to festivals in the North-West, and although we didn't win through to the All-Ireland that year, we had survived as a group.

At Ballyshannon Festival, the group was awarded a scholarship to Gormanston where every Summer the Amateur Dramatic League of Ireland run a week long Drama Course at Gormanstown College for people involved in Amateur Drama.

Hubert McMorrow from Glenfarne attended the course that Summer. Whatever were the experiences he underwent that week, Hubert came back with the confidence and energy to take on the nerve-racking challenge of producing the Cloonclare Players.

### Hubert In

Hubert's first production was "Spreading the News" by Lady Gregory. My memory of this play will always be the opening scene. Certain members of Glenfarne community were roped in and Terry McDermott and John McDermott became "actors" overnight. They stood in the

centre of the stage and argued and bargained over prices. This was no "playacting". This was for real! When they spat on their hands to put the final seal on the deal, the scene was set for the story of the play to develop. All the energy and excitement of the fair was present there on the stage.

Hubert's production went on to win the All-Ireland Finals which were held that year in Newcastle, Co. Down. It must be said, however, that the most dramatic moments of that weekend occurred as we made our way down thro' the North to Glenfarne on roads that were treacherous with black ice.

performance of the three act. In the 1984/'85 season, Hubert produced "Mother Figure" by Alan Ayckbourn, and "Big Maggie" by John B. Keane.

"Mother Figure" was our first exposure to the writing of Alan Ayckbourn. It is a play that I look back on with a great fondness. On the surface, it presented a very funny situation, but underneath there was a current of heartbreak and emptiness. My memory of that year was that getting to the All Ireland Finals didn't matter as much as before. It was the rehearsing and presenting of the play, the getting to grips with the characters; that was the most

Gormanston! I arrived home with the confidence to have a go at producing.

We did "The Tinker's Wedding" by J. M. Synge and had the satisfaction of bringing the production to the All Ireland Finals in Carrick-on-Shannon. This was the second time for an All Ireland Drama Final to be held in Carrick. We won no awards but our memories of the hospitality, crack and wonderful organisation are still warm.

Our three act play followed — "The Far Off Hills" by Lennox Robinson. Of all the plays I have been involved in since I joined Cloonclare Players, this is the play which audiences seem to have enjoyed most. I know of many who came to see it two and three times. And again we had the feeling of pride in being able to perform at another All Ireland Final in Leitrim, in Ballinamore in May 1986.

#### Festival Panic

What is it like to be a member of Cloonclare Community Players?

"It's a quarter to nine, and he still hasn't arrived yet!" At this stage, I stop worrying about whether he has crashed on that unexpected icy patch on the bridge. The immediate problem is a lot more pressing.

The other group have finished their performance and cleared all their props. We should be up there, putting up the tent, arranging the fire, positioning the tree trunk and scattering the potato peels. "Where the hell is he"?

I'm getting panicky. I shouldn't be. I'm the one who is supposed to stay cool and in control. "Right, we've no tree trunk — we'll use this box instead". I tie my hair back. Thank God I'm wearing trousers! "O.K. everybody, there's nothing else for it — I'll just have to read his part myself."

At this point, he arrives. I take a deep breath and shut my mouth. This is not the time or place for



*Eibhlín Nic Eochaidh, Glenfarne*

#### A Break

We stayed away from the Festival circuit with our next production. We did a comedy called "The Real McCoy". The pressure was off. At the close of the curtains, there would be no adjudicator to stand up on the stage and go through our performance critically. Cloonclare Players and their audiences relaxed and enjoyed this production to the full.

For Cloonclare Players, the drama season begins in September with the one act play and finishes in May with the last

important thing.

"Big Maggie" gave Teresa Relihan the opportunity to tackle one of John B. Keane's great parts for women. Teresa and Mary Burke (playing the role of Katy) gave audiences many dramatic moments of theatre as they brought their characters to life on the stage.

#### Scholarship

In 1985 the Leitrim Area awarded a scholarship to Gormanston to the group, and I was given the chance to attend. There must be magic in