On the afternoon of July 15th 2016 twelve Sisters from Monaghan and Maureen Reilly set off in three cars for the Wildlife and Heritage Centre on the Monaghan Armagh border outside Clontibret. The day was good and we were all in a jolly mood surveying the stunning drumlin landscape as we followed the steep and rambling road to the Centre. What a sight met our eyes and what a welcome we got on arrival! There to greet us with their ‘Céad Míle Fáilte’ were the owners and tour guides, Peadar Morgan, his wife Lily, their daughters Martina and Lorna and their adorable dogs!

The Morgans are no strangers to us. After all Peadar had four aunts with St. Louis-Srs Walburga, Linus, Ultan and Barbara. His wife Lily nursed in St. Louis Nursing Home and their daughter Martina is currently our competent and lively chef in the Motherhouse. She organised the event for us. Peadar a retired Wildlife Ranger is also a gifted historian and raconteur. On arrival Peadar introduced us to the history and development of the Centre in a most engaging and humorous manner.

With the support of Lily and his family he opened the purpose built Centre in 2003 as an educational enterprise focussed on caring for the environment and on providing rehabilitation for injured and stressed wildlife until they are ready to return to their natural habitat. The Centre is home to over 200 species of Irish fauna, some mounted and others alive and thriving. It is located on Listinny Hill, a place rich in history and lore and it boasts a commanding view of five counties. Some of us had the pleasure of a trip in a buggy to savour the magnificence and beauty of the place. Those of us still nimble afoot relished walking on the fresh earth and pretended to be young again!

In an outside building we viewed with awe numerous mounted species such as pheasants, corncrakes, swifts, swans, kingfishers, herons, plovers, hen harriers, rabbits and bats. They each rested proudly and comfortably in their newly created habitats of
water, moorland, bog, forest, countryside or garden. The oldest artefact on display is the 11,000 year old Giant Elk. In another area we saw the Ballyfin Collection showcasing the golden eagle, hare, otter, rare butterflies and some tropical species. Peadar successfully procured this Collection when the Community of Brothers were selling Ballyfin House in Co. Laois. In outdoor aviaries we were equally amazed at the sight of living and energetic cockatiels, doves and buzzards.

A Heritage area displaying farm implements and machinery no longer in use is also on site. It gives visitors and students an insight into farming methods and practices in days gone by. We acknowledged the improvements new technology brought to rural Ireland but were conscious too of how this technology contributed to the decline and in some cases to the extinction of many species of wildlife—the corncrake a case in point. New practices in farming meant that the community aspect of sharing resources and interdependence on each other—’the meitheal’—gradually disappeared also.

Our tour concluded with a delicious tea party in the dining area attached to the Centre. While Lily, Martina and Laura looked after our needs at the table Peadar continued to educate and entertain us. Not to be outdone was his six year old grandson who recited a lengthy ballad. The storytelling tradition goes on and Peadar and his family can be assured that their enterprise will continue. With grateful hearts we bade farewell to our generous hosts. The memories of that afternoon on Listinny Hill will remain with us. Gratias! Máire Cannon
When I was 30 years, I was changed to Rathmines Private Junior school, No. 7 Grosvenor Road. Sr. Reginald, a tall, elegant lady, who had already taught, till she was 65 years, in Primary schools, was on the staff. The Private school staff had the best of fun, working in an informal, and artistic mould. Sr. Reginald, an unbending woman, in any sense of the word, took a long time, to adapt to the fact, that teaching could be fun, relaxed, successful and fulfilling, now that her Cigiri days were over.

Every Sunday, her tall, elegantly dressed, perfectly -coiffed, unmarried, retired teacher-sister, came to visit her. After a cup of tea, she and her sister, complete with fur coat, bag and gloves, walked the park. These Cassidy ladies, lived when the time aura, was deference, correctness, politeness and a certain restraint.

Come 2016. We had heard that Brian Dooney – a nephew of Sr. Reginald -, was to be the guest speaker, at our assembly in Whynn’s hotel. Full of personal interest, I scanned the room on my arrival, and saw, this apparently casual young man, with shirt sleeves rolled up, sitting idly by a side wall. I decided there and then: - “This is not he, probably a mechanic, to give a hand with intricate technology.”

Then Brian, same man-, walked slowly over, and with a few words, brought the group to a physical silence, and then, through that same silence, - while showing some soothing, underwhelming scenes of nature, on the screen, - on a precious journey to the inner presence in each of us, which gives us life, energy, imagination and feelings.

Thanks to the Regional team for making available, such a healing experience, and thanks to whichever Cassidy lady, who reared Brian. Vera McGrath

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**Our Recently Deceased Sisters**

Sr Mairin Barrett  
1931 - 2016

Sr Immaculata Dempsey  
1921 - 2016

Gone but not forgotten

Sr Dolorosa Minogue  
1920 - 2016

Sr Margaret McGrath  
1924 - 2016
Recently I became aware that Mam was the last remaining parent of any St Louis Sister of the Irish Region, and decided to share a few memories of her with you all. Eithne, Mam, Mamo, the daughter of Michael Devlin and Violet McPhilemy, was born on the last day of the year in 1920 in Cullyhanna, in South Armagh, and one night shortly after she was born, her home was shot into by the security forces of the Crown. Mam’s dislike for the presence of the British Forces in Ireland, may have begun for her that night! She often spoke of seeing the Union Jack fluttering in the breeze outside the local RIC station across the road, as she was growing up.

From downstairs, she could hear her father Michael, who came from The Loup in Derry, teaching her elder brothers, the little Irish that he had….” Tá mé óg, tá tú óg, tá sé óg…..”

When she went to Primary School, the teacher there had no Irish, so she left Primary with no Irish at all. A 13, my Mam headed for Middletown, courtesy of the local milk van! The St Louis school in Middletown at that time, was hoping to get Dept of Education recognition as a secondary school……but didn’t Mam often spoke of the good memories she had of life there for 2 years, and as we grew up we were happy to tease her about having spent some time in a remand school”! …..of course it wasn’t true but she enjoyed the tease!

When Middletown was not accredited for recognition, Mam went on to Kilkeel as a boarder, and left there fluent in Irish, thanks to her great teacher, and friend to Mam till she died, Sr. M. Cyril Rafferty.

In the book” Voices of Dundalk” printed in 2004, my brother Éamonn wrote about Mam: “She was always grateful to the St Louis Congregation, not only for the comprehensive and well-rounded Education that she received, but also for the fact that she was completely fluent in the Irish language, when she left Kilkeel. She went on to UCD, which was quite unusual for women in those days of the late 30’s, and graduated in 1942 with a degree in Irish, English and even more unusual for women in those days, Mathematics! In arguments with Dad about Finances, from time to time, she always had the trump card, in that it was SHE who had the Degree in Maths!! Again, thanks to another of her Kilkeel teachers, Sr Carmel O’Reilly. I wonder if Mam is the oldest surviving Past Pupil of Kilkeel??

In 1926, Fr Lorcán Ó Muirí, from Omeath, founded an Irish College in Rannafast, Coláiste Bhride, and amongst the first group of 14 students to go there was my Father, Pádraig Ó Huallacháin. Dad was encouraged by an enthusiastic and inspiring young Christian Brother, Br Muiris Ó Cinnéide from Tipperary, to go to Rannafast. Br Ó Cinnéide was one of the first teachers to teach through the medium of Irish in 1924, in Dundalk. Mam often spoke about being sent to Newcastle Féis, from Kilkeel, and how herself and two of her friends, thanks to Sr. M Cyril, won scholarships to the Gaeltacht in Rann na Feirsde, in Donegal. It was there in 1938 that she met my Father, by then a young teacher himself. They were married in University Church in Dublin on the 20th June 1944 and from the beginning of their relationship, Irish was the language they shared, and passed on to us, their eight children. This gift of the
language has been passed on to the next generation of 20 fluent speakers and they in turn passed on to the following generation of 23!!

Dad died at a relatively young age of 62, on Good Friday April 1974, followed in 1981 by the tragic accident of their youngest son Féilimí, and yet more tragic still, the death of their youngest daughter Eithne in 1999. Mam’s faith was always strong, but she struggled with these tragedies, alongside the deaths of her parents, and all her own 3 sisters and 4 brothers, over the years...and yet encouraged all of us to live life to the fullest with faith, enthusiasm, hope, and most of all “suaimhneas intinne” …peace of mind.. She has for the past 42 years of widowhood, been the great unifying, life enhancing force in the family, and despite all the grief and sadness that life has thrown up for her, her greatest strength has been to keep going, courageously and good humouredly, and now approaching 96, is still, thankfully, very much with us. For this we are grateful - tá muid buíoch do Dhia.

Her eldest grandson, Pádraig, wrote these lines some years ago about Mamo….

CORRUAIR

Corruair, ar laethanta gruama,
foscaim ón bháisteach i séipéal na hOllscoile,
agus lasaim coinneall
Mar chosaint ar na h-uaireanta dorcha a thiocfaidh.

Sna deora céire
tchim an lá nach bpreabfaidh tú ar ais,
nach mbeidh boladh sú sa chistin,
Nó croshfocal leathdhéanta ar an table,
ná failte hairsin ar an teallach.

Corruair fosta, áfach, ar laethanta níos gile,
tchim dóchas ins an lasair
A chograíonn liom bheith buioch,
as an oiread ama a roinn tú linne
As an saibhreas a scaip tú eadrainn,
as an méid coinneall a las tú dúinne.

Is guim do gharpháisti dár gcuid féin,
gechluinfidh faoi dtaoibh diotsa
Mar a chuala muidinne faoi Nan,
agus b’fhéidir fiú go mbeidh an gean cèanna acu
dúnne,
is a bhí againne duitse.
Is iarraidh fosta
go mbeidh rúinnín bideach de spiorad do-bhriste shé agatsa
ionainne i gcónaí.

Sometimes
Sometimes, on gloomy days,
I shelter from the rain in the College chapel.
And I light a candle
as a protection against the darker days, which will surely come.

In the drops of wax
I see the day when you won't bounce back,
when there will be no waft of soup in the kitchen,
no half-finished crossword on the table,
no welcoming warmth on the hearth.

Sometimes too, however,
on brighter days,
I see glimmers of hope in the candle flame,
that whispers to me to be grateful,
for all the time you shared with us,
all the richness you spread amongst us,
all the candles that you lit for us.

And I pray for grandchildren of our own,
who'll hear about you, as we heard about Nan;
And it may be that they will have the same affection for us,
that we had for you.
And I ask as well,
that even the tiniest spark of your indomitable spirit
Will stay in us, forever.

Former Graveyard at Middletown

Mary Connellan took the two photos below on a visit to the former Middletown graveyard
We had the annual spate of Renewals of Commitment of our Irish Associates over the Summer, ritualised meaningfully, either by a single group of Associates or by a combination of a few nearby groups. It is always an uplifting experience for both Associates and the Sisters who are in attendance.

The central act of the ritual is the proclamation of the Act of Commitment by the Associates which incorporates our St.Louis mission – the text of which is read together by the Associates, and, at an appropriate point, the individual promise of each one is read by her, followed by her/his lighting of a candle. These personal promises are often very moving, testifying as they do to a life of practical holiness lived out in the reality of every day, as the St.Louis individual grapples with pastoral care within the family, care of the young, ministering to the disadvantaged, commitment to older family-members, career-work and earning of living, prayer, ecological effort, all carried out in the spirit of Sint Unum, in other words “all that Christian charity can do” in present circumstances.

Not to be outdone, the Sisters proclaim their religious vows too and give a communal blessing to the Associates and, in turn, receive a communal blessing from them. There is an effective musical accompaniment throughout. A speaker gives a talk on some aspect of the Christian life and the St.Louis Associate ideal, followed by responses from the group. The appreciation all round is heartfelt and encouraging.

There follows some table-fellowship – either in the form of “a simple cup of tea” or a celebratory “party”.

The Thank-you cards that arrive later are testimony to the fact that the event was greatly valued and appreciated, not least, the tasty delicacies. In the words of today’s gospel, “We are unprofitable servants”. Mary Jo Hand.
Birthday Celebrations

Claudine’s 90th birthday was celebrated in style in Cafe le Cheile in Knock in December. The Knock sisters were joined by Anne Murray, Ann Concannon and Uainin who were visiting the West that day.

Photo Memories of the Rathmines Whist Drive
“Beautifully written, utterly compelling, and intensely moving” ...this was the assessment from Dubray Books that caught my attention...and I bought the book!

Donal Ryan’s third novel begins with a series of cold hard facts: Martin Toppy is the son of a famous Traveller and the father of my unborn child. He is 17 and I am 33. I was his teacher. This is indeed all we really need to know about the heart breaking story that lies ahead, as we follow Melody Shee over the second half of her highly controversial, life altering pregnancy.

As Melody’s unborn child grows, so too does our knowledge of Melody’s life, up until now-a life already laced with tragedy. From her failed marriage, to that of her parents before her, to the untimely deaths of her mother and her childhood best friend, Melody believes that her life is irreparably broken…

Through her unlikely friendship with Mary Crothery, an 18 year old Traveller girl, Melody begins a whole new phase of her life…and with Ryan’s exceptional touch, this bond is a delight to behold.

This is the first time that Donal Ryan has written an entire novel from a woman’s perspective. It is clear he has taken great care to try and capture Melody’s pregnancy- both its physical and mental aspects. Likewise, the nuances of female friendships, and father-daughter dynamics, are astutely observed. More generally, having a female protagonist also affords Ryan the opportunity to scrutinise the role of women in Irish society, as we witness the sheer and utter disgust aimed at Melody in her time of need...But even the hostility Melody experiences, however, is not as strong as that aimed at the Travelling community. Dismissed here as “Tinkers” Knackers... and far worse than that, Travellers have historically been treated as the outcasts of Irish society. The insularity of their community has done little to dispel certain negative stereotypes and misunderstandings. Through Melody and her friendship with Mary, however, we are invited to see beyond these stereotypes and instead are afforded an insight into this “world within a world”…

Undoubtedly, “All we shall know” is Ryan’s strongest work to date, and a rich layered portrait of Melody and her world is conjured through the simplest of vignettes. As Melody herself reflects: “these are all bits and fragments, shards; no one can tell the story of a life or a friendship or a death or a marriage day for day....” While there are many moments of pathos and beauty in this book, it also carry’s within its pages, chasms of unspoken disappointments and pain, and is shot through with moments of shocking brutality and violence. In spite of a rushed ending, Ryan has crafted an exquisite account of womanhood, friendship, prejudice and tradition, that is both intimate in scale and awesome in achievement…

Méabh Ní Uallacháin

(With some quotes from Ruth Gilligan’s Review in the Irish Times).