

# Sir William Deane's Visit to Lorrha 1999

*By Seamus King*

The Governor-General of Australia, Sir William Patrick Deane, and his wife came on a state visit to Ireland in May 1999 and used the occasion to track his ancestors in the parish of Lorrha.

His grandfather, a boy of two, emigrated from the parish with his parents in 1850 and went to Australia. When the young boy grew up, he started gold-mining and eventually bought an estate, which he named Rockview, the name of the townland in which he was born in Lorrha.

Rockview is on the R438, just north of Walsh Park Cross and before one comes to the junction for Rathcabbin. Little or nothing remains of the Deane homestead and North Tipperary County Council had tidied up the place for the visit.

To meet the Governor-General at Rockview during his visit were John and Bill O'Meara, who had been involved in the burial of the last of the Lorrha Deanes in 1933.

The Deanes had been substantial people, owning a lot of land in the parish in the 19th century and presented a stained glass window to the local church in Rathcabbin at some stage. But, they came down in the world and the last of them, John, died in the County Home. It was the place where paupers died at that time.

John had a drink problem. He also died without issue, his wife having pre-deceased him. John himself was of a family of thirteen children, all of whom died of tuberculosis. It was significant then that the people who buried the last of the family in Ireland should be present to welcome the descendant of the successful Australian branch.

When he unveiled the Australian Monument to the Great Irish Famine in Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney on August 28, 1999, Governor General Deane referred to his family experience of emigration from Ireland to Australia, as a result of which the Deane name was preserved and perpetuated thousands of miles away from the ancestral home:

'As with the occasion itself, there is more than one aspect of my participation. Primarily, I am, as has been said, here as Governor-General of Australia. But, inevitably, my emotions are those of one whose Irish ancestry and heritage have been part of my consciousness from earliest days, indeed, as one whose great grandfather emigrated with his family in the immediate aftermath of the Great Famine. I shall refer to him in a little more detail not because he was unusual or outstanding. But rather because his story was in many respects a typical one.



*Pat Reddin and his sister Sally Donohue chat with Sir William*



*Fr. Joe Kennedy points out an old graveslab to the Deanes.*

‘It was in 1850 that Patrick Deane, with my great-grandmother, who was born Ellen Egan, and their eight children including my grandfather, also Patrick, who was eleven years old, left Lorrha in Tipperary to board a ship called the *Harry Lorrequer* in Plymouth to undertake the nightmare journey to a new land on the other side of the world. Their baby, Martin, died on the journey. Fortunately for me, young Patrick, made it. When the *Harry Lorrequer* berthed here in Sydney, my great grandfather got off and went looking for work. He was greeted by a sign which said ‘No Irish’. Not surprisingly, he got back on the boat and went on to Melbourne and shortly after, with his two oldest boys to the Ballarat Goldfields. My grandfather, young Patrick, grew up to marry an Irish girl, Johanna Ford, whose family had also been driven out of Ireland by the Great Famine. My father was their eleventh child.’

Incidentally, when the Governor-General went to Rathcabbin to see the church window, a local man took him by the hand and said: ‘Welcome home, Billy Dane,’ giving him the address he would be used to had his grandfather not emigrated. The Governor-General took it well!

He also visited Lorrha village, where his ancestral graves were located and where he viewed the baptismal entry of his grandfather. As usual on such occasions he called to Pat Hough’s pub, not only to sample a pint of Guinness but also to meet the proprietor, who was able to tell him more about his ancestors than anybody else.

The final part of Sir William Deane’s visit to the parish was to Redwood Castle, where he was made a presentation of some books relating to Lorrha.

Sir William Patrick Deane was born in Melbourne in 1931, studied law, was for a time involved with the Labour Party but later concentrated on Law. He became a state judge initially and progressed to the Federal High Court. In 1996 he became the 22nd Governor of Australia, from which he retired at the end of his five-year term in 2001.

<i>5th Annual Lorrha Summer Festival 5th, 6th, 7th July</i>	
Friday 5th <b>Official Opening of Festival 7.30p.m.</b> Followed by Open Air Disco Dancing - Friars Tavern Visit by Mystery Guest 9p.m. Ceili Lorrha Hall Music by <b>The Greens</b> Open Air Dancing at Friars Tavern with <b>Country Comfort</b>	Sunday 7th <b>12.30 MUSIC, SONGS &amp; CRAIC AT FRIARS TAVERN</b> Face Painting Jaunting Car Rides Mystery Guest Clay Pigeon Shoot 5p.m. Open Air Music & Dancing with <b>Tom Nugent &amp; Co.</b>
Saturday 6th 2.00p.m. Childrens Art, Poetry & Fancy Dress Competition & Parade Sponsored by Tiobraid Arann Aglabhairt Followed by Childrens Disco Dancing with Ray D.J. <b>5p.m. 7-A-Side Soccer Tournament</b> <b>8.30p.m. Street Events</b> Slow Bicycle Race Egg & Spoon Race Barmens Race & Novelty Events etc. 9.00p.m. Open Air Disco Dancing with Ray the D.J. Yard of Ale Competition Visit by Mystery Guest 11p.m. Late Night Dancing to the fabulous <b>Greese</b>	7p.m. Final Soccer Tournament Adults Fancy Dress Competition Final Visit & Unveiling of Mystery Guest Open Air Disco Dancing 11p.m. Late Night Dancing to the fantastic <b>Bog The Donkey</b> Amusements all weekend Food supplied by Lorrha Development Association Bar Extensions For a weekend of non-stop fun and entertainment <b>FUN GOLF COMPETITION</b> in conjunction with Lorrha Festival takes place at Walsh’s Par 3 Course at 7p.m. on Wednesday & Thursday 3rd & 4th July For details phone (0509) 47005 <i>Everybody Welcome</i>
Bi linn don chraic	Bi linn don ceol
<small>DIAMOND DESIGN PORTLUMNA TEL (0509) 41744</small>	

In Memory of Richie Bourke - Organiser of the many great Annual Lorrha Summer Festivals in the early 90's