

Motion

“To rename Hole 16 of our Course as “Comharsain Phiarais” from its present name of “An Túr”

Proposed - Austin Ó Briain / Seconded - Muiríde Uí Chruadhlaóich

The present name “An Túr” traces its origins to the time of extending the Course from 9 holes to the present 18 holes and is based on the very obvious topographical feature on the landscape at the summit of Ceann Sibéal. The tower was constructed during the Great War between 1914 and 1918 and was intended as a look-out post for German naval movements in that part of the north Atlantic off the west coast of Ireland which, for centuries, had been an Achilles heel in Britain’s military defences.

According to one version of tradition, the name Ceann Sibéal is derived from that of the Galway girl, Sibéal Ní Loingsigh (daughter of a Galway merchant, Roderick Lynch), who was reputedly the love of Piaras Feiritéair’s (c.1600 - 1653) young life and was drowned in tragic circumstances probably in the 1620’s. Another, and probably a more credible tradition, traces the provenance of the name Sibéal or in its Anglo-Norman form, Sybil, back through and before the 16th century to a woman who is unknown to us but may have been an heiress who married into the le Fereter family (to give them their original or something close to their Norman name). There are extant documents which pre-date Piaras’ time and record the place-name ‘Sibell Town’ in the locality and incline one toward the latter proposition.

The Ferriters were Anglo-Normans whose presence in Ireland was first recorded in the early 13th century in the north Dublin area. Following the advance of the FitzGerald settlement in the southwest one or more of them followed and by the mid-13th century they were subordinates to the FitzGeralds (the 6th generation in Ireland of whom was created Earl in 1329) and later ruled over part of Corca Dhuibhne from their Norman style tower house castle, built in the 1460’s. The castle may have been destroyed at the time of the second Desmond Revolt in 1579 possibly during the Smerwick Massacre in November 1580. It is believed by some historians that Piaras grew up in the nearby village of Buailtín na nGealbhán (a place where sparrows gather), now Baile an Fheirtéaraigh to where the family moved when the castle became uninhabitable. Alternatively, the castle was later destroyed by the Cromwellians, as occurred in Minard.

At the time of the Cromwellian Wars, Piaras had reached manhood and like many others had to choose which form of English domination best served Irish interests – the parliamentary forces of Oliver Cromwell or the Stuart monarchy of Charles I. In 1641 together with Lord Muskerry (Donnchadh Mac Cárthaigh) he joined the Catholic Confederacy against the New Model Army of Oliver Cromwell and fought for the next 12 years in defence of his lands and people. In Baile an Fheirtéaraigh he planned his military campaigns, handpicked from amongst his own people the soldiers who fought with him. He led sieges against parliamentary supporters successfully capturing Castlemaine (1641). They fought an almost year-long successful battle for Tralee (1642) where he was wounded in action. Characteristically, in victory he treated his prisoners with chivalrous dignity and spared lives of those in captivity. While Sir William Petty was busy carving up the country with the Down Survey in the early 1650’s towards the closing stages of the Cromwellian Wars, Ross Castle, Killarney which had been taken by Lord Muskerry was re-taken by parliamentary forces and Piaras went to parley for peace terms. While terms were not agreed, he was assured of safe conduct to west Kerry, but the assurance was unscrupulously betrayed. He was arrested on his journey home at Castlemaine while he was attending Mass celebrated by his maternal uncle, the Dominican priest, Thaddeus (Tadhg) Moriarty OP. Both of them were taken back to Killarney and held in Ross Castle for several months before being hanged at Sheep’s Hill, the site of the present day Franciscan Friary. The execution of Fr. Moriarty followed the issue of a government ordinance requiring all Catholic priests to leave the country within 21 days on penalty of death for failure to do so. Following the surrender of Ross Castle, Piaras could have escaped to Spain as did his 2 sons, Dominick (probably named for the Dominican Order of his granduncle) and Richard, each of whom later distinguished themselves as officers in the Hapsburg

armies in the Spanish Netherlands where Dominick was killed (c. 1672). For reasons which are today not precisely known, Piaras choose to remain in Ireland.

Piaras Feirtéair is commemorated on the 1928 Memorial to Four Kerry Poets - Piaras Feirtéair (1600 – 1653), Séafradh UíDhonnachadha (Geoffrey O’ Donoghue of the Glens) (c.1615 – 1678), Aodghán Ó Rathaille c.1670 – 1726), and Eoghan Rua Ó Suilleabháin (1748 - 1784) which is located opposite the Sheep’s Hill site of his execution in Killarney. He lived during one of the darkest periods of Irish history when our people, at the edge of extinction, struggled to maintain a foothold in land. Their struggle was against an enemy which greatly outnumbered them, which had come well-armed with ruthlessness, greed for land and the technology of war and conquest which eventually succeeded, but not fully. Petty’s Down Survey and the expropriation of 11 million acres of land (Petty’s own estimate) brought about the most fundamental reshaping of society in Irish history. Where the conquest did not reach and what it failed to extinguish was the soul of the Irish people. The attempts at genocidal destruction by the Cromwellian hordes was lamented by writers of the time. In Piaras’ case, his lament *Do Chuala Scéal ar Chéas Mé Lá*, (“I Heard a Tale that Tormented Me One Day”) (written the year before his execution) he says in part of it:

*Is bíoghadh báis lion cás mo chomharsan,
Na saoithe, sámha sásta, seolta,
‘Na dtír ba gnáthach lán do thóbhacht
Ite, vade, da rá leo-san.*

*Is gan acht cáirde ó ló go ló aca,
Dá gcur uile i dtuilleadh dóchais,
So mbeith ábar dá fagháil dóibh sin
Is gan ann sin acht till further orders.*

Which in translation reads:

The trouble of my neighbours is a death spasm to me
The happy, satisfied, accomplished masters,
In their country, where they could feel their own importance
Ite, Vade, being said to them.

And without a friendly gesture given them from day-to-day,
Which might give them hope,
That favour might be found for them
But now it’s only ‘till further orders’

Piaras’ struggle and that of his people and neighbours, whose lot under the Cromwellian hordes he laments, was one of keeping their independence and the land they had owned for generations but was taken from them in the Cromwellian Settlement. Most of the old Ferriter lands, which stretched from Cill Maol Chéadair to Marthain, Baile Uachtarach, Árd na Cathne, Ceathrú an Fheirtéaraigh (Dunquin) and out to the Blasket Islands were expropriated under the Down Survey and given to Jane Coote, wife of the murderous Cromwellian, Sir Charles Coote (Earl of Mountrath). Soon after the expropriation, Jane Coote sold the land to the Cromwellian soldier, William Mullins in whose family it remained until 1913 when, along with a further 75,000 acres, it was sold to the Congested Districts Board for £225,660. The name we are proposing, “Comharsain Phiarais” (or Piaras’ Neighbours), is intended to commemorate Piaras Feirtéair, his writings and the people whose lives and culture he, his family and neighbours sought to protect and in defence of which he was brutally killed.

Part of his land is where we now play and enjoy golf and commemorating Piaras and his people and what happened to them is an appropriate testament from Galf Chumann Ceann Sibéal.