



Bantry Town Council acknowledged the significant contributions made by a number of people in Bantry over the past decades. This civic function was held in the Town Council offices on Thursday 30th May 2013 presided over by the Mayor of the Town, Kathleen Tessayman.

Amongst those whose hard work was recognised were three members of **Bantry Historical & Archaeological Society**.

The citations for each recipient of the Bantry Historical Society are recorded herewith. Bantry is so much indebted to each.

DONAL FITZGERALD

Donal Fitzgerald has been known to everyone as the “History Man” in Bantry. He took a keen interest in all that had to do with our past. When he was Manager of J Lyons & Co, then located in their original spot in New Street, we frequently saw Donal engaged in conversation with customers, especially elderly people, hearing stories and gathering facts relating to bye gone days.

Donal, like many of the earlier members of Bantry Historical Society, is a true historian – he studied the written word, but always listened to the oral history, and of course the folklore. He went around the countryside searching for archaeological/historical sites, and recording details of same. He had a lot of contacts, and he organised many interesting history talks here in Bantry, the last one was a Talk on Flax Growing in West Cork, held in Vickery’s Inn. He was known by many as the man who gave a brilliant guided tour of Bantry town. In fact, Donal had so much information in his head, that sometimes when he led local groups around the town, they ran out of time and they had to resume another evening to hear the balance of the history. And, I must add everyone was delighted to come back for more – testament to the fact that Donal always made his talks interesting. As he led people along the streets of Bantry, there was always some story or anecdote to be related. Rounding every corner, Donal had another story, and he told it with passion, about people who lived out their lives in the back streets and laneways of our town long before our time.

When the primary school children were learning about local history, they went to Donal. When second level students were doing history projects, they went to Donal. Third level students with assignments on local history went to Donal. When Bantry Tidy Towns needed a brief history of the town for their submission to the National Tidy Towns Competition, Donal did it for them, and did it in style. – Bantry’s marks started to ascend the ladder at that point. When tourists came looking for historical details, they were sent to Donal, and he dealt with them all graciously. Donal helped everyone, and Bantry’s history bank is a much richer store thanks to Donal Fitzgerald, We are truly indebted.

SHEILA HARRINGTON

Sheila has been an active member of Bantry Historical Society for a very long time, in fact, from the beginning of the Historical Society here in Bantry.

In the early years of the Historical Society, Sheila took on the role of Archivist, and she devoted her energies enthusiastically to that role.

Over the years, she attended every lecture that was organised by the society, and, on so many Sunday afternoons when field trips were on, Sheila was one of the first to turn up.

Now, not only did she attend all these events, but she came equipped with pen and paper, and wrote down all that was possible to glean from the respective speakers and tour leaders.

Of course it didn't stop at that – Sheila had a large journal, and into that journal went all her detailed notes taken from the experts, together with cuttings from newspapers which detailed events of the organisation; and also any articles written in newspapers that were of historical interest, especially this local area.

And, I must add, all this note taking was done in clear handwriting, which is, in itself, becoming a heritage item at this stage. There was no photocopy, no texting, no laptop, no electronic recording device, not to mention i pad etc available to Sheila at the time.

But that did not deter Sheila. She did her work with pride, and of course, all on a voluntary basis.

Sheila, you have done us proud, and Bantry has a richer source of history available now, thanks to you Sheila.

Well Done

KATHLEEN O'RIORDAN

Kathleen O'Riordan is one of the founding members of Bantry Historical Society, which started way back in 1978, when a small group of local people, who were concerned about preserving our history and our rich heritage here in the Bantry area, came together, formed the Society, and worked assiduously in documenting the oral history, the folklore, and any other information that was available. Having gathered that bank of information, and indeed many old historic artefacts, they then formed a base for storing this information, by setting up Bantry Museum, which is located here at the back of Aras Bheantraí.

Mrs O'Riordan served as Hon Secretary for several years, researching and collecting all the local history of this area, documenting this information, and cataloguing same in a suitable format, so that those of us, who visit the museum today, can easily find so much historic data, showing how this dear country of ours, and of course our beloved Bantry, evolved and developed into what we see today.

Mrs O'Riordan has aptly been described as the “engine” of the local historical society. She was the hub, around whom the whole history/heritage movement here evolved. She was there for everybody.

Only, just recently, when video footage was shown of a “Guided Tour of Bantry” that took place way back in the late 1970's or early 80's, we could clearly see Mrs O'Riordan frequently being consulted by the Speaker on the day – it was obvious that she was “the brains” behind the whole event, she had all the information, and humbly kept the show going.

Mrs O'Riordan, I congratulate you on what you have done for Bantry, and on behalf of.....

..... I want to thank you sincerely.



Mayor Kathleen Tussyman presenting a scroll to Mrs Kathleen O'Riordan. standing from left: Cllr Mary Hegarty, Cllr John Connolly, Seán O'Sullivan, Cllr Aiden McCarthy, Cllr Thomas Barry, Arethusa Greacen, Cllr Eugene Cronin, Angela O'Donovan and Cllr Dermot Murphy.