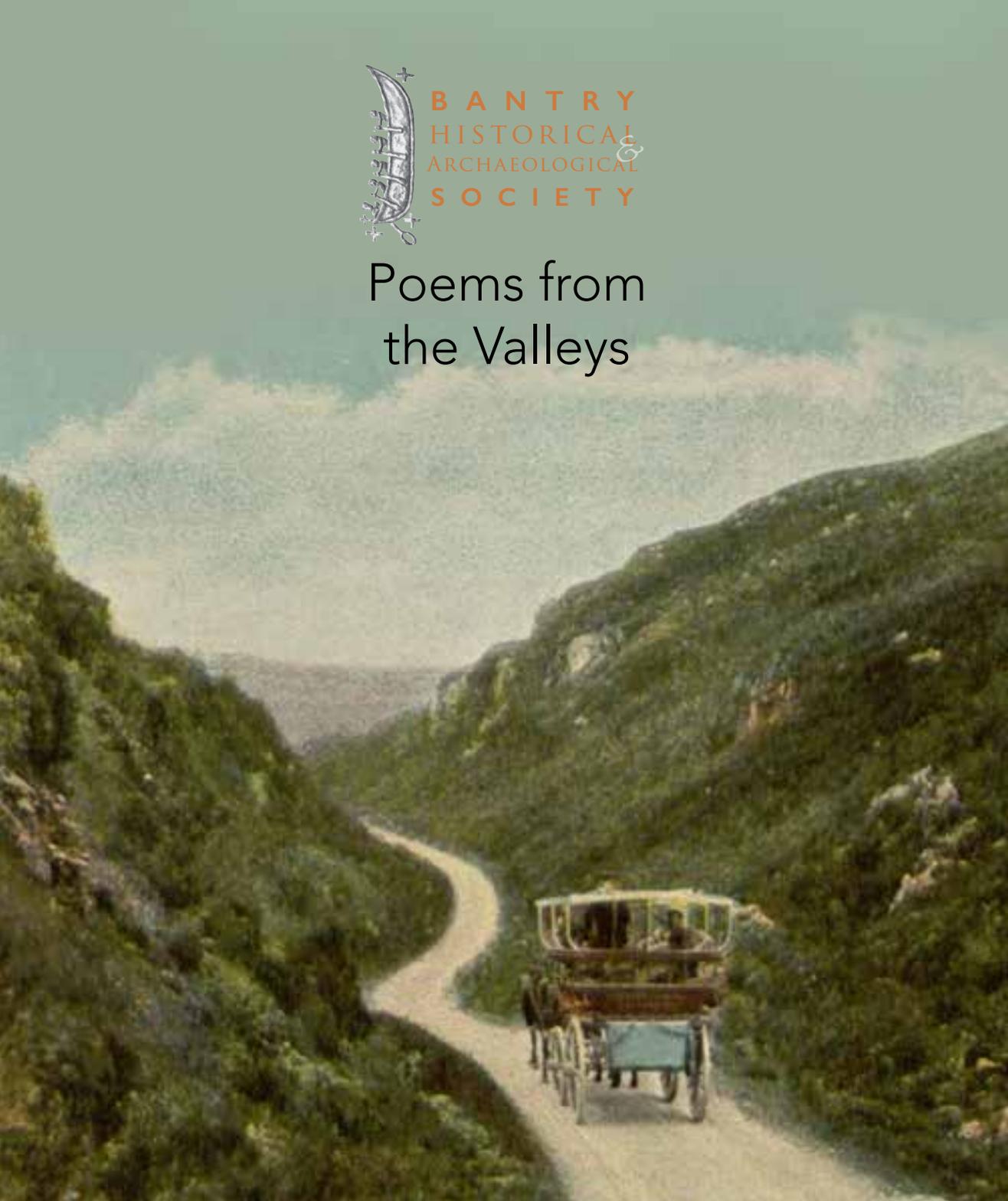




BANTRY
HISTORICAL
& ARCHAEOLOGICAL
SOCIETY

Poems from the Valleys





The Ballad of Poaching Joe

If by chance you wander on the banks of the Ouvane
When summer sun is setting and sky a warm red glow
Pause a while and listen amid the birds' refrain
You'll hear the laughing banter of Hawkeye Poaching Joe.

A noble son of Kealkill from stock of high degree
By trade he was a joiner, in wood his talent showed
Doors and roofs no problem contractors all agreed
To get the work near perfect, just call in Poaching Joe.

But Joe was called to greatness, he had a high vocation
His heart was pledged to fishing, by rod and line he swore
Night and day the salmon ruled his imagination
Fair or foul to capture, the dream of Poaching Joe.

With worm and net and strokehaul the rivers he did plunder
He paid no heed to weather in dark and light did roam
Struck the fish with terror no matter what the cover
Death came swift and silent, by order Poaching Joe.

He had no fear of bailiffs while he was on his mission
They tried their best to nab him as he was in the flow
Bold as brass he mocked them when threatened with damnation
Judge and jail he scoffed at, the outlaw Poaching Joe.

When cruel death came for him he did not ask for quarter
He finished off his coffin and made his plans to go
"Let me have my strokehaul and face me to the river
And so I'll meet my Maker", said bravely, Poaching Joe.

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The Buck from Bonane

Ye lads and gay lassies I crave your attention
'til I will tell you what happened to those
Who left Ballingearry the fourteenth of August
And set out for Borlin in search of a goat.

They travelled Coom-Ruadh and the south side of Maolach
Foilastookeen and the sweet Lackabawn
The braes of Moing Mhór and the wild cliffs of Borlin
And never cried stop 'till they came to Bonane.

In the mountains near Poka they spied their bold ranger
Said Cotter to Creedon as they raced up the slope
"In a very short time we'll soon have him cornered
And round his two horns we will put a thick rope"

Now when they had caught him for home they did start him
No doubt they were dry when they came to Gougane
So they tied their wild ranger quite safe in a car-house
And drank to the health of the Buck from Bonane.

As I speak of this ranger 'tis time for to praise him
I'll tell you his age, it was scarcely eighteen
His size was enormous, he was well shaped and formed
With all the equipment that a good buck will need"

His eyes they were shining like two sparkling diamondas
His meggal so fine hanging down to his knees
With age he was brown but his limbs they were sound
And inside his mouth was a set of fine teeth..

When they came out after drinking some porter
In Cronins hotel in the lonely Gougane,
They went to the car-house to find their bold hero
Mo léir he was that time half way to Bonane.

The neighbours came round on hearing the racket
On hearing the story the ladies all cried
"We must search far and wide for some other hero
Or the goats of the place they will surely go dry"

When the buck got his liberty out of the car-house
He cocked up his tail and he puffed through his nose
He ran up the glen like a pedigree racehorse
And thanking Mick Leahy for cutting the rope.

He rested that night in a baileck near Maolach
He thought it too late for to get back to base
And early next morning when the day it was dawning
For the wild hills of Kerry he plotted his course.

On his way home he was met by Con Tacker,
"Good morning" says he "where were you, you rogue?"
"I was taken away by the wild Ballingearys
The fee of the season being three pence a goat

When he was safe in the wild cliffs of Bonane
Raising his head it was then that he spoke
"Goodbye Ballingear, you'll ne'er again see me
At least not this season I've enough of the rope".

So now my young fellows I'll give you some advice
If ever again you require this buck goat
Go back to Murt Shea the tailor who owns him
And pay the man decent in silver or gold.

And on your way home if you want to drink porter
Leave someone to mind him if you stop at Gougane
Remember the lesson got by Cotter and Creedon
When they went north to kidnap the Buck from Bonane.





The Pass of Keimaneigh

Twas early in September in the year of '53
When I received an order to take a 10 RB
To proceed westwards with all speed and not to make delay
To help to cut a tourist road through the pass of Keimaneigh

My heart was not rejoicing as I journeyed to the west
For I was leaving many friends that I had loved the best
So I helped to drown my sorrows at each pub I passed that day
Till I reached my destination at the foot of Keimaneigh

The sun was sinking o'er Gougane when I reached my journey's end
Twas there I met Dan Kearney who soon became my friend
He was famous for his Irish songs, he danced and he was gay
And he made a brew called Mountain Dew at the pass of Keimaneigh

Ere dusk had fallen o'er the pass where deep the shadows lurk
The boys had placed me in the care of charming Sheila Burke
And since I stepped into that home and drank a cup of tay
My every wish was granted by the Burkes of Keimaneigh

Twas there I met Dan Connell a sailor he had been
He changed his mind now sits behind a Thames for CIE
And with him Jimmy Murphy they could work as well as play
As they tipped their loads to make the road through the pass of Keimaneigh

Now the work it is proceeding and the road is taking shape
From Toureen Dubh in sweeping curves to the Post Office gate
Now Katie's rock is gone for it was blown away
To make a fine straight road through the pass of Keimaneigh

There stands Paddy Donlan as cool as any breeze
Directing operations with competence and ease
For it takes a man that knows his job to make the tourists say
There's the finest road in Ireland through the pass of Keimaneigh

All credit too is surely due to the compressor team
And to Tanner bold the rocks he blew like flying autumn leaves
While Mahony Thade with his Bamford babe gently rolls away
Another stretch on the Bantry side of the road through Keimaneigh

Now Daly's men are down the glen in a place called Cappaboy
While Dick Mikey thrills as his blast shrills through the crags above on
high
And Timmy Crane sings a sweet refrain as he starts to clear away
Another stretch on the Bantry side of the road through Keimaneigh

One evening in October as the mist was falling low
A mighty landslide hit the site and completely blocked the road
Twas Healy's timely warning that saved his gang of men
From being buried neath the avalanche in that wild and rugged glen

And when all was peaceful and settled in that scene
There in the midst of all the wreck stood Dan the Bull serene
They say it was a miracle how he escaped that day
When the rocks piled up around him in the pass of Keimaneigh

When the summer sun is shining and the tourist cars they glide
Where once there leapt the noble deer up on Duachaill Side
Oh the people gaze in rapture at the work that carved the way
Between Gougane Cross and Calvary through the pass of
Keimaneigh

So now to bring a finish to my simple little song
For to mention everybody it would really be too long
But where e'er I go I always know at home or far away
I won't forget the men who built the road through Keimaneigh



St. Joseph's on the Hill

by Kathleen Murphy

The little church upon the hill, she stands so proud and tall
It's been there for two hundred years, long past our recall
St. Joseph is her patron, she is but one of three
Her diocese is Cork and Ross, her parish is Bantry

The oldest in the parish and the smallest too
Notwithstanding her humility, her influence was huge
A simple rural country church with beauty oh so rare
A mirror of the flock she serves from two valleys so fair

Down through the years, to that same flock, her loyal service she gave
And followed the life path of some from the cradle to the grave
For its here they came to be baptized and for their weddings too
And when they got the final call, its here they bade adieu

The impact of this little church is local and much more
For its influence has extended far beyond these shores
It's here the seeds of faith were sown in the men who went on mission
To spread the word in far off lands, where we have a proud tradition

That same faith was carried too, to many other nations
By the people we exported in the days of emigration
They went to far off places like London and New York
From this little patch of Heaven in the mountains of West Cork

As a wedding venue St. Josephs is renowned
For they come here on their special day from city and from town
To savour the tranquility that this quiet haven brings
And celebrate their nuptials among the Coomhola hills

Today the Church worldwide is struggling to be relevant
For prosperity and wealth have brought another element
But if small communities like ours can keep the faith alive
Perhaps we have a future and the church may well survive

And in the years that lay ahead, when we are past and gone
We hope St. Joseph's on the Hill will prosper and live on
To be a place of worship for generations yet to be
And hopefully to celebrate another century



B A N T R Y
HISTORICAL
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**Cork
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Comhairle Contae Chorcaí

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
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