

Rambling Down Memory Lane

Reflections by John Candy



My Road, My Journey, My Memories.

Profile



A native of Clonmore, Co. Carlow and later Bennekerry, Co. Carlow John Candy was educated in Clonmore national school and Hacketstown secondary school. John has had a lifelong interest in both local and national history. He also has a huge interest in traditional song and music.

John has a great love of storytelling and is a frequent visitor to storyhouses throughout the South East; he has performed in many venues in Ireland including Westport, Killarney, and Club Na Muinteoiri Parnell Square Dublin. John has taken storytelling courses in Dublin and at Bere Island, West Cork.

Introduction

“Céad Míle Fáilte”

*A hundred thousand welcomes
to my ramblings down memory lane.*

The following songs, recitations and tributes were written over the past twenty five years or so and are my personal thoughts about many beauty spots in my own county of Carlow. They are also a testament to the admiration and respect for the many people, past and present, that I have met and forged lifelong friendships with in the South East Storytelling Groups. Since my schooldays I have always had a huge interest in history, traditional song, music and storytelling, so the rambling houses in the South East and further afield are just the ticket for me.

The following writings were not, of course, a continuous work over the period mentioned above, but rather a stop/start project as time passed. Many things changed over time such as the Celtic Tiger era, the Peace Process, and so on. Since the project was solely the work of one person, it took some time to research and tell each piece as truthfully and honestly as I could.

I suppose one could say that storytellers down through the years are part of the reason why people are drawn to Ireland on the edge of Europe. A storyteller is a dreamer of dreams reliving our past history. Some stories are fact; others are the imagination of the storyteller cutting loose with a fantasy that his or her audience is led to believe is almost true.

I hope I will be forgiven for centring most of my rambles in County Carlow as it is the place I have lived all of my life. As a proud Carlovian, it gives me great pleasure to mention but a few places of historic interest, and also some charming and captivating beauty spots throughout County Carlow.

Layers of history are spread across Carlow, and indeed our neighbouring counties of Wicklow, Wexford, Kilkenny, Laois and Kildare. Perhaps at a later time we might explore the history of these counties, but for now I will leave you with a flavour of my ramblings down memory lane.

*My golden memories
Best wishes to all,
John*



Homestead of John McCall, Father of the poet P.J. McCall, thatched cottage, Killalongford Hill, Clonmore

This is a song about my native village of Clonmore. It was perhaps so easy to write because all my memories of childhood came flooding to my mind, and the memories experienced exploring my native village and surrounds, and also the history of this ancient place, brought this song to life.

“Time is the greatest storyteller of all.”

Clonmore

**There's a spot in north-east Carlow: it's a place of great renown,
Close by the Wicklow border, just three miles from Hacketstown.
It's an ancient little village steeped in history and folklore.
Sure it's there I spent my childhood, in the village of Clonmore.**

**Fond memories come flooding back – in my mind I see them still,
Of the moat above the village on the road to Eagle Hill.
The castle ruin and old schoolyard I remember oh so well,
The Bullaun Stone, the old stone cross, and Saint Mogue's Holy Well.**

**My thoughts drift back in history when Cromwell was our foe.
He marched upon this hallowed ground and our castle he laid low.
These facts are etched in history – and will remain for evermore,
Of the hardships that were once endured by the people of Clonmore.**

**As we pass down the Chapel Road, it's the place I know the best,
Past the chapel and the graveyard where my parents take their rest.
There we stop awhile and bend our knee, as we did in days of yore,
At Our Lady of the Wayside Church in the village of Clonmore.**

**Then up to Killalongford hill, a place I still recall,
Where once lived the ancestors of the great P.J. McCall,
He who penned some mighty ballads, Boolavogue and many more.
He will forever be remembered by the people of Clonmore.**

**There are many places in this land that some may call the best,
But there's a spot in County Carlow that outshines all the rest.
It's that ancient little village that I long to see once more,
Someday I know I will return to the village of Clonmore.**



John and Eddie standing in the doorway of Eddie McDonald's House

There is a group of people in the South East – of which I am one – who are keeping the old traditions alive in the rambling houses in our area. Again, if one has a love of storytelling, music and song from a bygone era, there is no better place than one of the many rambling houses to visit and enjoy. So this is where the following recitation comes from.

“Common sense is genius dressed in its working clothes.”

The Rambling House

**In search of entertainment to a rambling house I went.
With kind and friendly people the next few hours I spent.
There were no amplifiers or drums to blow your ears,
Just good clean entertainment as we rolled back the years.**

**As each performed their party piece, a silence filled the air.
With respect we all just listened to talents that are rare.
If you want fine entertainment with songs and music so sublime,
Just call to any rambling house – it's a lovely way to pass the time.**

**These events, they don't just happen, so our glasses we should raise
To the people who organise these nights; they deserve our utmost praise.
We all know who these people are; they don't look for thanks or glory.
But without them we all know full well, there'd be no house of story.**

**So here's to all who organise and all who entertain,
These evenings must be special – we keep coming back again.
As we refuse to let the old ways die, and recall our former glory,
My parting words to you my friends are: "Long live the house of story."**



A scene from bygone days

I'm quite sure that all of us from time to time reflect on our past, and for any of us born before 1960, we remember a much different Ireland than the one we live in today. Farmers' threshings, animal fairs in the country towns, the stacks of oats and barley, the house dances, the rambling houses and so on. These are just a few thoughts of my childhood days in the 50s and 60s.

“There’s no use boiling your cabbage twice; once something is done, there’s no need to revisit it; leave the past behind.”

Bygone Days

I'm sitting alone in my parlour tonight
Reminiscing of times now long past.
My eyes become misty and I'm feeling quite sad
As I reflect on a world that is moving so fast.
My mind wanders back to the days of my youth.
Our lives were different in so many ways.
No television or laptops and no mobile phones
As I look back on those past bygone days.

The old village mass path is now overgrown,
And our old school has long since closed down.
The local shops and rural pubs are struggling to survive
As modern life is centred in the town.
The stacks of oats and barley are no longer to be seen;
Turf cutting in the bog has long since past.
The old black Raleigh bike is gone for evermore.
I guess we knew the old ways would not last.

Still those memories remain so very precious
When we danced around the May Bush full of glee.
Those long hot summer days I still remember
And the snowdrifts were piled high in '63.
Still the rivers will keep on flowing,
And the darkest night will always turn to day.
No matter how we try, we can't hold back Father Time,
And for tomorrow's generation, the past will be today.



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