

## KILGANNON'S ALMANAC FOR NORTH CONNAUGHT 1906

### Volume 1. Alphabetical Directory of Sligo and Sligo Business Directory

Until my cousin Sean Foley trustingly let me borrow his rare copy of Kilgannon's 1906 Almanac for North Connaught I had not known of its existence. It is yet another example of Thady Kilgannon's many enterprises. Thaddeus, Thady or Tadhg Kilgannon, born 1862, was indeed an enterprising man for not only was he a well-known Sligo photographer with a studio at 1 Thomas Street which he established in 1884, he was also a printer, publisher of local postcards and a short-lived local advertising newspaper, *The Sligo Advertiser*, 1890-1893, followed by *The Sligo Star*, which also had a short life and first appeared in 1899\*; in the 1920s he was the owner of Sligo's first cinema or picture house, *The Picture Theatre* in Thomas Street, and later *The Pavilion* also in Thomas Street; in 1926 he published a history of the town "Sligo and its surroundings: a descriptive and pictorial guide to the history, scenery, antiquities, and place of interest in and around Sligo." He was also a patron of the Arts and in the 1920s he regularly allowed the Sligo Choral and Operatic Society to use *The Pavilion* for their performances.

When Sean's battered and dog-eared pocket-size 7 ¼" x 5" paperback arrived, minus its front cover and the first ten pages, I was struck by what a treasure trove it would be for anyone interested in family and local history. Kilgannon's 1906 Almanac contains a month by month calendar of historical events, times of courts sittings, train timetables, a list of fairs in North Connaught, advice for farmers, contributions on local subjects including a fascinating history of Sligo Harbour from 1881 to 1906, histories of the places of worship in the town, detailed information on the town's clubs and societies, schools, the Military Barracks, poetry, full page advertisements showing shop fronts in the town as they were one hundred and seven years ago and most importantly a directory of inhabitants and businesses in Sligo town and county. In scanning the 180 page book I decided because of its size to split it into two PDFs the first dealing with Sligo Town and the second with Sligo County. Because some of the Sligo streets given in the directory have disappeared, e.g. Vernon Street, or their names have been changed over the years, Pound Street now Connolly Street, I have included an 1888 map from O'Rourke's History of Sligo which might be of some help to those who are not familiar with those changes.

Kilgannon's Almanac is a wonderful source of social and political history of that period. Ireland was still an integral part the United Kingdom with allegiance to the Crown and a Lord Lieutenant deputizing in Dublin Castle; law and order was kept by the Royal Irish Constabulary – the R.I.C. and there was still a British Military Barracks in Barrack Street. The Boer War had ended just a few years before; the First World War was eight years in the future with many Irish men fighting and dying under the British Flag in both conflicts. The Easter Uprising was another ten years away when Irish men would fight and die under their own flag. Feis Shligigh had been founded three years earlier under the auspices of the Sligo Branch of the Gaelic League to promote the Irish language and culture. A car driver was someone who drove a horse-drawn vehicle but it would not be long before a car driver was someone who drove a motor car. There were cars about because James Perry of Knox's Street – O'Connell Street – advertises Motors and all classes of Accessories and Repairs. Telephones were not yet the norm and businesses had a telegram address. Many names of Sligo families and businesses appear which were still familiar fifty years later and are still

familiar yet another fifty or more year later. In the Town Hall in 1906 Nationalists were in a majority on Sligo County Council but as is normal in politics different rules appear to operate once people are in power. Tadgh Kilgannon had the last word when he reproduced a newspaper report SCENES IN SLIGO on the last page of his almanac on the goings on at a council meeting to decide on who should get the Co. Council printing contract. Despite Tadgh Kilgannon's tender being the cheapest the contract went to a certain Mrs P.A. McHugh. Mr Kilgannon, was threatened by a County Councillor with being thrown down the stairs if he opened his mouth while they were giving the contract to Mrs McHugh.

Thanks to our new digital age and to the generosity of Sean Foley this piece of Sligo's heritage can be shared with a wider readership. Once again we can read it in our own homes. Tadgh Kilgannon I am sure would have approved. One wonders what other gems of Sligo's past are gathering dust in people's cupboards and drawers somewhere. Hopefully we will be able to find out more about this enterprising Sligo man's life when more 20<sup>th</sup> century newspapers become digitally available online.

A few years ago when Roly Sleater of Treacy Avenue was out walking at Finisklin he found about 2000 old glass negative plates from Kilgannon Studios dumped in The Marshes - the old Sligo dump. Mr Sleater had the presence of mind to recognise their historical value and brought them home carrying as many as he could at one time over many days. When Roly died his sister Miss Ivy Sleater from England had to deal with disposing of his effects and while clearing the contents of his house she found the Kilgannon glass plates. She placed an advert for them in the Sligo Champion which fortunately was seen by Alec Foley, a Sligo Photographer and after meeting him Miss Sleater decided she would donate the collection to him. In order to scan the glass plate negatives, which were mainly portraits, and to make positive images of them, Alec needed to buy a special scanner. In 2012 with a grant of £500 from Sligo County Council Heritage Officer Alec was able to buy a suitable scanner for €750. He spent many hours scanning the glass plate negatives and eventually put all the images on YouTube and Vimeo.com so that they could be freely viewed online by anyone and can easily be found by googling Tadgh Kilgannon. He has also deposited a DVD of the images with Sligo County Library. Alec, who is descended from Foleys the Brewery family, said the whole exercise had been a labour of love. Tadgh Kilgannon's photos are now there for future generations. Despite taking thousands of photos of others in his lifetime I have not yet seen one of Tadgh Kilgannon.

Jim Foley 2013

\*Fiona Gallagher's book The Streets of Sligo.