

Letter from Fr. Richard J. Whyte,
S.J., to John J. A. Prim

Clongowes Wood College,
Naas.

Feb. 14th/71 (1871)

My Dear John,

Have you visited Holdenstown grave yd as yet? I should like much to hear the result of your investigations. Well as I remember there is another graveyard between Carne and the Bennetsbridge road, a little to the left of the small lane which leads from Carne to the aforesaid road and about halfway between both extremities—I should think however the grave yd I allude to is nearer to Carne than to the B.B. road. It is over twenty years since I was at the place, but at that time the walls of the old church were yet standing. I don't know but that this is Ballynoolia church to which you referred when I was with you at New Year. Donovan does not refer to it in his reports. With regard to Holdenstown grave yd (though no marks of graves are visible) old Stephen Bryan—Father of young Jemmy, yet living—used to say that he had heard his father tell of a funeral which he had seen crossing (coming) from towards Ballyreddin to the said church yd. There used to be in old times a lane leading from Holdenstown to Forestals, and so out to B. Bridge. By the way from where is the name Holdenstown taken? I saw in one of the old "inquisitions" the name "Howlingstown," were they both identical? From where the name Bennetsbridge? I heard my father tell that he heard old people say that at the time of the review at B. Bridge (1708) when the

canon were fired a lot of goats and sheep that ————— (torn) in the “deer park” happened ———(torn) the time to be standing in the shade of the walls—it was summer time it seems—soon as they heard the thunder of the cannon began in their fright to jump and at each spring cleared the wall, till they were exhausted or until the firing had ceased. By the way by whom was that interminable deer park wall built?

You recollect the tombstone of the Blanchfields in Kyle grave yard—will you tell me what is the name traced on that tomb stone—I was trying to make it out, have even taken a fac-similie of it, but can make nothing out of the strongly interlaced letters of I presume the Christian name. I suppose you have seen the bridge which crosses the River Dinan near Jenkinstown, in the middle of the parapet of said bridge I saw last summer an old inscription purporting that this (torn) had been constructed by a Mrs. D (torn). Enquiring, I learned that there used to be a lady living of old in Jenkinstown whom people spoke of as “old Lady Doyle” — of course you know all about that.

I saw in the paper your connection with the late Marshal Prim, Spain. I always somehow had that idea — knowing from having been among the Spaniards that Prim is not Spanish, and that there was but one family of the name in the world, for as you . . . (indistinct).

By the way, where could I learn (outside of tradition) something about the history of the Whytes? I can go up to 1696—but then the link between Mick, 1696, and his progenitor is wanting except in tradition — a very good thing where documentary material corroborates it.

Give my respects to Eliza and your mother, and believe me your old playfellow.

RICHARD J. WHYTE

J. A. Prim, Esq.

NOTES ON THIS LETTER: Fr. Whyte of Dunbell would have been an uncle of Mrs. Crotty of Parliament Street; great-grand-uncle of our member, Tom of Granges Road, and grand-uncle of Patrick of Ayrfield. J. A. Prim was editor of the Moderator and Hon. Sec. of the Archaeological Society, and lived in Nore Cottage, Dunbell. The Whytes and the Bryans also lived in Dunbell. On the Whyte land were the wraths excavated in 1846, from which came two ogham stones and many objects of ironage and early Christian times. Forrestal's of Ballyredding is now Mrs. Fleming's. Jemmy Bryan referred to was a cousin to the great-grandfather of the author, Colonel Dan Bryan.

The letter shows the belief in the authority of John George A. Prim on the antiquities of his district and county, and the friendship existing between all the Dunbell residents in the 1870's.

Air Remarkably Good

A letting of 18 acres of meadowing, part of the lands of Tullabrin, with good house, convenient offices and walled-in garden, four miles from Kilkenny, five from Castlecomer and ten from Carlow, advertised under date January 1, 1805, from March 25 of that year, was recommended thus:

"The air is remarkably good for Invalids; goats whey to be had in the neighbourhood during the season; an eligible tenant might have the exclusive liberty of the game of 1,200 acres."

Apply by letters, post paid, to the Rev. Francis Thomas, Tullabrin, Kilkenny, until the 20th inst., and afterwards direct to 42 Dorset Street, Dublin (January 1st, 1805).