



OUR PEOPLE OUR PLACES OUR PAST

Local History Through Song

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Local History Through Song

Balbriggan • Balrothery • Balscadden
North County Dublin
Ireland

This book and its accompanying album of twelve original songs, written and performed by local musicians, is dedicated to everyone from our three communities, at home and abroad, who cherishes our people, our places, our past, and of course, our future...

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This book and songs album are a community resource for the communities of Balbriggan, Balrothery, Balcadden, and our diasporas. They are free of charge and not permitted for sale or resale in any form.

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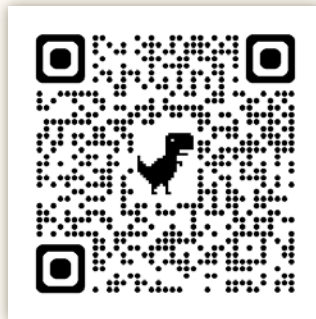


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WHITE SORENSEN CARDIFF



**Scan the QR code for a direct link to the website to
Download the Songs Album and the Book PDF**

Website: acousticmisfitsandfriends.com
Email: acousticmisfitsandfriends@gmail.com

Messages of welcome for this book and its accompanying album of twelve original songs written and performed by local musicians

Well done to everyone involved in the new twelve song album and book entitled 'Our People, Our Places, Our Past'. I am a History teacher in Loreto Secondary School Balbriggan and in 2006 I introduced a Local History class to Transition Year which runs to the present day. I will definitely use the songs from the book to complement the Local History classes. Whether learning about the Hamiltons, the harbour, lighthouse, Smyco or the Sack of Balbriggan, the songs will enhance the lesson and appeal to everyone in the class. I wish you all the very best with this project.

Denise Richardson, Loreto Balbriggan

These remarkable local musicians have gifted our community something truly special: a collection of twelve songs that bring the rich history of Balbriggan, Balrothery and Balscadden vividly to life. Through melody and story, they capture the spirit of our people, places and past, preserving memories while inspiring renewed pride in where we come from. Their creativity and dedication shine in every note, reminding us that our heritage lives not only in books but in song, shared and celebrated together today. Their work will echo to future generations, connecting young and old through music that honours our places we call home and our past. Balrothery, The Town of the Knight, has rich heritage and history, and now has its own song!

Kevin Tolan, Chairperson, Balrothery Community Association

The delightful book "Our people, Our Places, Our Past" weaves together local history and song in a way that sparks curiosity and pride in children for our local area. It is a joyful and engaging resource that helps children to connect with the place they call home, and the beautiful artwork further enhances this resource.

Mairéad Murphy, Principal, Balrothery NS

This book and its accompanying album is a treasure trove of local stories told in music and song. What a wonderful resource it will be to the teachers and pupils of our school, now and into the future. It captures stories and adventures from the past and brings them back to life. It illuminates part of our local shared history that would otherwise be lost in the annals of time. Well done to all involved. Is leabhar iontach é ar fad! Go n-eirí libh!

Christopher White Principal, Balscadden NS

I have always been a big sports fan and a lover of music so I suppose this project ticks all the boxes for me. The material covered by the songs is a revelation to me. I grew up in the area and as time slips by we tend to forget pieces of our history, but this project brings it all back and more. I really can't wait to chat with all my friends while listening to these twelve great songs written and performed by members of our community and discussing the contents of the accompanying book. Best wishes to all involved.

Anthony Pyne, Balscadden

Congratulations to all involved in compiling "Our People, Our Places, Our Past". Long before the written word, tribes all over the world recorded their past through different methods. The Native Americans used shell beads to pass on their history. The Māori have always used carvings and waiata (songs) to record their stories and history. In Ireland we use song and folklore. As I live in Baile an Ridire, steeped in history, I am immensely proud of you all in your recording of our past, places and events through our traditional methods (song). Maith thú.

Patrick Hickey, Balrothery

This cornucopia of centuries of our history in song is a wonderful feat. Its recounting, from the arrival of the Celts and, later, St Benignus, and of the Vikings, brings the past to life. This sung history reminds us how the little rivers and the sea influenced the development of our town, from harbours and lighthouses, to factories. It voices the horror of the Sack of Balbriggan, and celebrates and welcomes the arrival of the newcomer. Well done all.

Céiliúrann an corn na flúirse seo stair na háite i gceol agus amhránaíocht. Ó teacht na Ceiltigh agus, níos déanaí, Naomh Binég agus na Lochlainnaigh, téann an t-am atá thart ós ár gcomhair arís leis an stair canta seo. Cuireann sé i gcuimhne dúinn an tionchar a bhí ag na haibhneacha agus an fharraige ar an bhforbairt sa bhaile. Ón gcuan go dtí an teach solais agus na monarchana freisin. Insíonn sé dúinn an uafáis díreach de bharr Creachadh Bhaile Brigín agus céiliúrann sé agus cuireann sé fáilte roimh na glúnta nua atá le teacht. Comhgairdeas libh go léir – is iontach an gaisce é.

Pauline O'Hare, Balbriggan

The local is the universal, and in this timeless collection of songs, you will be blessed with both. Every song is the rarest of things, contemporary and traditional. Like James Joyce's Ulysses, the writers and performers have achieved something almost magical and mystical with the old forms: they have created new legends and stories, and unearthed something poignant, vital and thrilling in the telling. The stories and heroes of this historic town, so long bypassed like express trains rattling over the viaduct, have been given a modern platform. This collection of songs is a new destination - and definition - of what it means when you say, Balbriggan.

Kevin Curran is a teacher and writer from Balbriggan.

Is mór dom an deis teachtaireacht ghairid a scríobh don tionscnamh iontach tábhachtach seo, Our People, Our Place, Our Past. Tá bua ar leith ag muintir an oileáin seo a gcuid sceálta agus staire a roinnt ó bhéal agus go ceolmhar. Sa saol nua aimseartha tá eolas ar fáil ar gach rud agus gach áit ar an bpointe boise, ach ní hionann eolas agus tuiscint. Tagann tuiscint ar áit, a stair agus a mhuintir tríd foinsí áitiúla agus ealaíontóirí áitiúla, scéalaithe, filí agus ceoltóirí.

Is cnuasach álainn í seo do scéal agus stair an cheantair, Baile Brigín, Baile an Ridire agus Baile Scadán, tríd amhráin nua-chumtha ó mhuintir na h-áite a mhaireas go deo.

**Fiachra Ó hEochaidh, Príomhoide Tánaisteach Gníomhach,
Coláiste Ghlór na Mara, Baile Brigín**

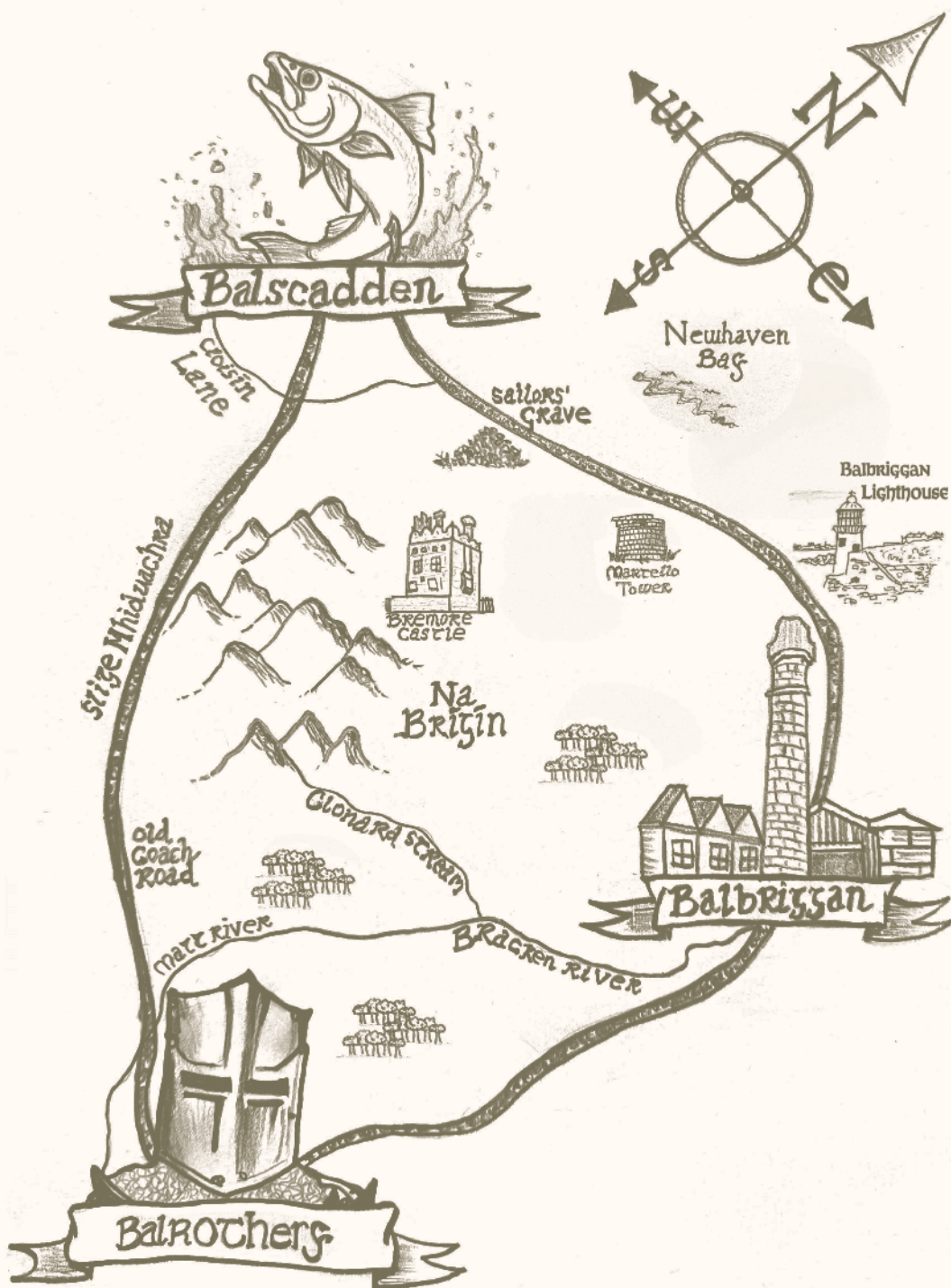


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Cúpla focal ó Declan O'Rourke

As one to have spent a great many hours at the passionate task; exploring and reassembling those vital moments of lives past and gone: then, through song or solid word, trying to revive and bring them to life anew, so that others may yet know their voices, learn from their stories, and find themselves reflected among the rekindled faces, I greatly value and appreciate the work of the local historian and the amateur historian.

The storied past that literally carpets our feet is a tapestry of knowledge and fascination. Something akin to forgotten treasure just inches below the soil, ready to be re-discovered afresh by one searcher at a time, through the portal of a page or in the shadow of a landmark, what we find nearest to home, grounds and inspires us, if we are brave enough to venture there.

This beautiful book is the culmination of a truly remarkable and innovative project commenced during the pandemic and continued for over five years by a small, seasoned, session group of musicians from Balbriggan called 'The Acoustic Misfits', closely partnered with many of their friends and neighbours and community-based organisations. The book accompanies an album of twelve original songs written and performed by the 'Misfits', aided and guided as they were by my dear friend and fellow songwriter Ollie Cole, who also beautifully produced and recorded the album at his studio in Balrothery.

The Misfits' project exemplifies that ancient Irish community-based tradition of '*an meitheal*' whereby people come together to share their talents, skills, labour and knowledge, in a generous spirit of mutual support and reciprocity. The result is a truly eclectic album of original songs with engaging melodies and powerful story-telling lyrics that convey a vibrant sense of the rich history, across centuries, of this small enclave of North County Dublin. A humble pride, resilience, adaptability, openness, inclusivity, and community are among the points that most notably characterise the collective approach of the contributors to this work.

And as if an album of original material to honour their heritage was not impressive enough a goal to attain, the Misfits also enlisted and brought together local historians, artists, school-teachers and townspeople to imbue this book with their expertise, skills, talents and knowledge. With the support of Fingal Libraries and Creative Ireland, this dedicated group designed their entire project with a vision to see it utilised in local schools: to teach children and, by extension, their families, aspects of the seminal history of their home turf, and that of their ancestors too in many cases. With both the book and the album offered on the shelves of all the libraries in Fingal, and sent electronically around the world in an accessible e-format to reach the diaspora, the depth and reach of the Misfits' project is a most worthy achievement, and one deserving of recognition and replication.

Anyone not from this region of North County Dublin who listens to the album and reads the book will be charmed and informed in a manner both engaging and entertaining. Present and future generations resident to Balbriggan, Balrothery, Balscadden and their adjacent townlands, as well as those native to the area who have made their lives abroad, have, I believe, been gifted with a unique and timeless treasure.

Declan O'Rourke – 2026

Declan O'Rourke is a critically acclaimed Irish singer-songwriter and novelist well known for his poetic, folk-influenced song-writing, and incorporation of epic historical themes in his compositions.

Cúpla focal ó David Sorensen



It is a great honour and privilege to be invited to write a foreword for this book. This year, 2026, marks my 48th year as a “blow-in” to Balbriggan. When I first came to live in Balbriggan in 1978, the population was 3,641. Most of the inhabitants were born and bred “Balbrigganers”, who learned the town’s lore at a grandparent’s knee.

Over the last three decades, Balbriggan has experienced major changes. The population has swelled to more than 30,000 and is still increasing. Today’s town population encompasses a multiplicity of nationalities, ethnicities, languages, religions and cultural affiliations. For many, Balbriggan is a new town about whose past they know little.

For much of Balbriggan’s history, The Square had been the administrative, commercial and social hub of the town, with small artisan shops radiating out to nearby streets, in what might be termed “Old Town Balbriggan”. The global trend towards outer town and out of town shopping centres, has had its impact on Balbriggan, leading to a diminution of commercial life in the older, historic quarter. The reduced footfall has also led to less familiarity with some of the historical and cultural markers of the town.

In this era of *time compression*, where constant digital updates lead to a sense of *permanent now*, how are we to inspire young people’s interest in, and engagement with, the past? Where written texts may not always appeal to them, music and song may be far more accessible and attractive – a form of “history by stealth”. This song book, through its lyrics, touches on all of the important aspects of Balbriggan’s development over the last three centuries and does so in an enjoyable and memorable way.

As a former primary school teacher and latterly teacher-tutor in Dublin University College, I see particular value in placing the song book in schools. While the primary purpose of school-based education may be cognitive advancement, the schools also act as strong agents of cultural transmission. I have no doubt that songs and music heard in the school setting will also be transferred to the home and thus get Balbriggan’s heritage out into the wider community. One of my main aims in life has been to preserve and promote Balbriggan’s proud heritage, through presentations and the establishment (with my colleague, Petra Skyvova) of the Balbriggan Town Heritage Trail. The Song Book will provide another extremely useful resource in this endeavour.

The populations of Balbriggan, Balrothery and Balcaddan, of all backgrounds, have in common the local natural and built environments that surround them, the lanes and the streets they walk upon, and the buildings and memorials, and indeed the ruins, that they pass by on a daily basis. I believe that this song book and music album project, by illustrating and illuminating the rich history and heritage of “*our places, our people and our past*”, can act as a binding force that will help to provide a true sense of time and place for all who live here.

David Sorensen, Ed.D.

Cúpla focal ó Alice Davis



When the Balbriggan-based Acoustic Misfits music session group contacted us at Balbriggan Community Council seeking to discuss their plans to record an album of original songs, it is fair to say that our committee was somewhat intrigued. Such a venture would not have been typical of our core portfolio which typically focuses on local community issues and interaction thereupon with government authorities at local and national level. However, having gotten to know these fellows and many other groups of musicians and friends with whom they play, on a number of occasions, when they ran several busking events throughout Balbriggan to raise much needed funds for various community-based activities in the Community Council's remit, our committee kind of knew that something important and substantial was afoot.

The unique project being undertaken by the 'Misfits and Friends' was to write an album of twelve original songs which would cover many aspects of local history, embracing the town of Balbriggan, and the villages of Balrothery and Balscadden. At our first meeting, it was obvious after five minutes that their emphasis was on our community history and that the scope of their project would be far-reaching. The songs and accompanying historical materials span centuries and recall in a vivid and, where appropriate, entertaining way, many key developments and events through which our ancient townlands were forged into the modern communities and public places where we now live. They also encapsulate the enormous range and rate of changes to community life that have brought us to being such a young, vibrant, and inclusive community today. With the additional core objective set by the Misfits to bring their project into our schools, they have combined art, music, history and education into a truly unique, inspirational and accessible composition – with a transparent, pragmatic template that can surely be used across many communities.

So indeed the 'Misfits' were onto a really big and worthwhile idea when they came to meet us – which is no surprise really, and Balbriggan Community Council has been delighted to partner with them towards realising this wonderful project. In listening to this album of original music and songs, and reading the accompanying historical material, one really does get a true sense of place, and an understanding and appreciation of the genuine love of our three communities that exists today.

Alice Davis is Chairperson of Balbriggan Community Council, whose core roles include representation and advocacy as a voice for the community, on local interests, with local and national government.

Cúpla focal ó Cora Mc Donagh



I was sincerely honoured when invited to contribute a foreword for this publication devoted to the innovative *Local History Through Song* project, produced by The Acoustic Misfits and Friends. As chairperson of the Balbriggan & District Historical Society, I lead a dedicated team whose aim is to promote an interest in the local history of Balbriggan and surrounding areas through lectures, publications, and exhibitions, along with establishing a museum dedicated to our local history and heritage. This publication *Our People, Our Places, Our Past – Local History Through Song - Balrothery, Balbriggan, and Balscadden*, adds a new dimension to learning about the important history of our locality through music and song written and performed by local artists.

Ireland's oral tradition of telling and retelling our history through songs and music has always been integral to our culture and this publication and accompanying album will continue this tradition for both young and old in our locality and beyond. Some of the songs are interspersed with Irish, inviting many to learn about our history through Gaeilge agus Béarla, especially as they listen to the closing lines of song nine 'Baile na Scadán'

***As Gaeilge 'sé Baile na Scadán, Herring landed in old Bremore Bay
As Béarla 'tis the "Town of the Herring", still a small country village today***

The lyrics capture the essence of our history from the Town of the Knight in *Baile an Ridire* to casting a stone to honour the brave in *The Sailors' Grave*. The importance of the Hamilton family is retold in *Hamilton's Legacy* and the world-famous Balbriggan hosiery with the last line of *Balbriggans* informs all that 'Balbriggans were so famous, they are in the diction'ry'. Our sporting heroes are recounted in the *Seven Celtic Crosses* and *Century* documented the events of 2020 where 'we cowered in our homes, our shield was a bar of soap'. *No Justice* relates the horrific events of the Sack of Balbriggan and the destruction of our town as the chorus opens with

***In the Sack of Balbriggan no justice can be found
As the homes of the innocent were burned to the ground
When the RIC and the Black and Tans in guilty shame withdrew
We proclaimed our freedom in nineteen twenty-two***

This project brings the history of Balbriggan, Balrothery and Balscadden to a new audience and many congratulations to Eugene, Tommy and all the Acoustic Misfits and Friends on this wonderful publication and the accompanying album of original songs by local musicians. We share a common goal in enlightening all about our local history and I wish you all the best in this innovative endeavour.

Cora Mc Donagh, Ph.D. (History)
Chairperson
Balbriggan & District Historical Society
Email: Balbrigganhistsoc@gmail.com
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Introduction

This book, in hardcopy, softcopy and smart PDF format, its website, and its accompanying album of twelve original songs about seminal aspects of the history of the town of Balbriggan and its neighbouring villages Balrothery and Balscadden, are the product of a community-based project running over five years.

Eugene White, a founder member of local music group 'The Acoustic Misfits', came up with the idea (during the pandemic) to write songs about our three communities' history. He asked his good friend and fellow 'Misfit' Tommy Cardiff to collaborate on developing the idea into a realisable goal. Early on, the pair recognised that a full album of songs would be needed given the amount of historical material to be covered. Tommy believed that a book containing nuggets of historical texts, along with song lyrics, chords, and music scores, would complement the album and enable distribution of the project through our communities, and the pair saw that putting the project on-line would enable its distribution to our three communities' significant diasporas.

Eugene and Tommy realised that a lot of peoplepower, and a wide range of skills and expertise, would be needed. Early on, song ideas were shared by the Misfits and friends by dropping computer memory sticks in each other's letter boxes and sending sound clips to each other on WhatsApp. As soon as lockdowns were over, the entire Acoustic Misfits group got enthusiastically involved in song development work in The Warehouse. The group partnered with Balbriggan Community Council who immediately provided community-wide reach, enabled a successful application to Fingal County Council/Creative Ireland's Grant Scheme which encourages and supports creative opportunities in the community, and took on the publisher role for this book. Singer/songwriter of national repute Oliver ('Ollie') Cole signed up as musical director, producer and recording wizard. Local historian of long standing repute David Sorensen became the official historian for the project.

Readers can meet the whole team of twenty-two people who contributed to the realisation of the project in the Biographies Section of the book. Eugene and Tommy remain lost for the words (a very rare event!) to properly acknowledge the generosity of everyone involved in giving so freely of their commitment, skills, talents, expertise and so much of their time to the project, and they feel greatly honoured to have received the unstinting support and trust of the team to lead it.

With such a spirited and talented crew working closely together, there were many moments of brilliance, even genius, on the creativity side – producing musical riffs, bridges, harmonies, and melodies that are fresh and engaging through the album's 46 minutes of playtime, ranging over 1,600 years of history. Our artists, designer, and photographer produced some really beautiful, evocative images. There were some very funny moments, a few of which we share here. As the first unedited draft of the 'Balscadden' song contained fourteen verses

starting in 420 AD, and played for over twelve minutes to the blushes of its writer, one of the witty, senior musicians remarked: “in my forty years playing gigs, this is the first song I have encountered that requires its own (expletive) interval...”. Our musical director observed without fear of contradiction that the song ‘Century’ will be the only song ever written that includes the scientific terms ‘micron’ and ‘RNA! The fact that ‘Balbriggan’ means ‘underwear’ in the Oxford and Cambridge dictionaries, and the somewhat ‘intimate’ connection to ‘Royalty’, elicited some choice observations and song name suggestions that we will have to leave to the readers’ imaginations here. Another musician observed that the word “derision” in the song ‘Our Places’ would not usually come to a song lyricist’s mind. While working on difficult themes in songs like ‘No Justice’ and ‘The Sailors’ Grave’, another witty musician observed that inflicting the near zero temperatures during rehearsals in ‘The Warehouse’, on musicians’ fingers and singers’ lips that were already blue with the cold, was a novel way to infuse the appropriate sense of suffering and hardship into the feel of the music! A question arose during finalisation of some of the songs’ musical arrangements as to what is the essential difference between a violin and a fiddle. Blessed with two talented players of the instrument in question, our group was happy to accept their considered and concurred opinion that when the instrument finds itself within ten feet of a pint of Guinness, it is most definitely a fiddle. It is noteworthy that both are very happy, indeed occasionally ecstatic, to be known as “fiddle players”.

The core objective for the project from the outset was to combine music, song, story-telling traditions, nuggets of important and interesting local history, art, and education, in a readily accessible composition that commemorates and celebrates our three communities’ rich history in a way that is honest, respectful, and engaging. Our team’s hopes for the completed project are that it is welcomed as a valuable community resource for our schools, our people native and new, and our very significant diasporas, and is, therefore, also memorable and preserved. We encourage you to read and assimilate the book and listen to the album a few times, and to share the book and the album among your family and friends – home and abroad. If our team has succeeded at least some way towards our objectives and our hopes for the project, our book and our album will have reminded our communities and our diasporas about our people, our places, our past, and hopefully contributed something thoughtful and valuable towards our future. The team would love to receive your feedback and thoughts via the email address provided at the front of the book and we will get back to those who contact us with details of events and performances from time to time.

Eugene White & Tommy Cardiff
on behalf of The Acoustic Misfits & Friends

Past Echoes...

The Hamiltons

*Throughout Balbriggan town
Their buildings did survive
From factories to harbours
Schools they did thrive
Woodlands and pastures green
Structures standing still
Their legacy lives on
In this town of hills*



The establishment of the town of Balbriggan can be almost solely attributed to a single family: The Hamiltons. Three generations, in their turn, left their mark upon the town. Records from the 1640s show no indication of any township in Balbriggan. The nearest Clachan (small settlement) was a group of ten fishermen's dwellings on the cliffs at Newhaven Bay, a little to the north of the present day "Sailors' Grave". Although Balbriggan was later to become the dominant population centre of the area, two nearby villages had a much longer provenance and influence.

In 1656, there were only 30 people scattered along the banks of the Bracken river at this time, while the nearby village of Balrothery, to the south of Balbriggan, had a population of more than 300 and a number of industries, including biscuit-making, distilling, tanning and chair-making. One of the Irish versions of its name, Baile na Ridirí (The Town of the Knights), indicates its links with the Knights Hospitaller. One of the oldest parishes in the diocese of Dublin, its connection to an even earlier settlement can be deduced from elements of ancient archaeology revealed in recent exploratory digs at Rosepark. The importance of this village can be seen in that it gave its name to the administrative area surrounding Balbriggan until the early 1900s – The Barony of Balrothery East.



To the north of Balbriggan was another small village, Balcadden. This village has long ecclesiastical connections. It is said that in the days of early Irish Christianity, a local man named Benignus, encountered St. Patrick on the banks of the nearby Delvin river, was baptised by him and became the patron saint of the parish. He is still remembered in the name of the local national school. In the late 12th century, Balcadden church was listed as a possession of Holy Trinity (later to become Christchurch) Cathedral. The name of the village itself often puzzles people. In the Irish language, Balcadden is translated as *Baile na*

Scadán, meaning “the Townland of the Herrings”. As the sea is several kilometres away, this is somewhat odd. As already mentioned, there was a fishing village in Newhaven Bay. A path led overland to Balscadden, where the herring were gutted and shipped onwards to Dublin, Drogheda and beyond.



The Hamilton family were to alter the social, industrial and commercial centre of gravity of the area. Originally a Scottish family from Dumfriesshire, the Hamiltons were granted land in County Down, Ulster, for services to the Crown. Involvement in politics caused Alexander Hamilton to seek a home closer to Dublin city. From 1736 onwards, he began to acquire townlands around what was to become Balbriggan town. Originally living in Inch, near Balrothery, he later purchased Straw Hall House, subsequently renamed Hampton Hall.

His third son, George Hamilton, 3rd Baron of the Exchequer, inherited ownership of the Balbriggan lands in 1757 and became what might be termed an “Improving Landlord”, establishing initiatives both for family prestige and the benefit of the local people.



One of his first major projects was the building of a new pier to replace the existing rudimentary “Kay” (quay), in order to increase commercial life in the district and provide a refuge for shipping. Building began in 1762 and the pier was completed in 1769, with the construction of a lighthouse at the pier’s end. This lighthouse, said to be the second to be erected in Ireland after Poolbeg, was unique in having a minister of the church, Rev. George

Hamilton (son of Baron George), as Lighthouse Attendant for over forty years. The original building was replaced by a more robust structure in the early 1800s. Baron George also invested money in the local fishing fleet, financing the construction of twenty-three fishing boats, each employing seven men. Increased fishing activity about the harbour brought prosperity to the area and helped to expand the still small village.

When Baron Hamilton had completed his work on the construction of the new pier, he then turned his attention to improving the indigenous textile industry. As in most parts of Ireland, there had been a long established cottage industry of spinning and weaving. Hamilton initially financed more modern equipment and organised the cottage industry into more productive workrooms. In addition to establishing local industry, George Hamilton also saw his mission as assisting in the inculcation of best practices in the skill of weaving, establishing a weaving school in Balbriggan, in order to “spread the craft to the four corners of Ireland”.

Being ever an “Improver” (Arthur Young’s description of the Baron), Hamilton then set his mind on the factory-based industrialisation of textile production in the forthcoming cotton mills of Balbriggan. In the late 1770s cotton spinning and printing had become the Cryptocurrency or Dot.Com “get rich quick scheme” of the time. This, however, required industrial plant and industrial knowledge, something new to Irish entrepreneurs and landlords. Many cotton mills in Ireland faltered due lack of management skills related to mill or factory enterprises.

The Cotton Mills of Balbriggan



There is much truth in the statement: “Water made Balbriggan”. The topography of Balbriggan greatly influenced its industrial growth. High ground to the north, south and west of the town resulted to water draining to the sea, providing motive force for mill wheels. The nearby Bog of the Ring, containing many natural aquifers, gave rise to numerous streams, the most prominent of which was the Matt. From the surrounding high ground

came the Stream of Clonard and along with the Matt and other small streams, joined in confluence to form the Bracken river. A natural reservoir, Knock Lake, was located in nearby Balrothery. A reliable water source was needed not only to power the mill wheel, but also for other industrial processes such as fabric washing and dyeing.

Baron Hamilton was directly involved in two of the cotton mills established in Balbriggan. In 1781, he founded a cotton mill on a lane which took its name from that industry: Mill Street (The Lower Mill). His engagement with politics and business meant that he had little to time to manage the mill personally and in 1783 he sold the concern to two Dublin businessmen, John Comerford and Dennis O’ Brien. In that same year, he commenced the building of another cotton mill (opposite the Balbriggan Primary Care Centre), known as the Upper Mill. To complete and run this concern, George Hamilton sought the services of an experienced mill manager, a Mr. Joseph Smyth, late of Mesney, Lancashire. Records indicate that there were also three further small cotton mills in the town. The transformative effect of the cotton industry on Balbriggan can be seen from an article in a newspaper of 1783 claiming that: “The cotton mills have transformed the sleepy fishing hamlet of Balbriggan of some 300 souls to a thriving industrial town of 3000 people”.



While the Upper Mill faltered in the early 1800s, the Lower Mill, with its large building complex continued to produce textiles of various kinds until the late 1990s. Initially producing extremely high-quality printed cotton, under the stewardship of Comerford and O’Brien, the building went on to serve as a flour mill, a silk factory and latterly as a linen

factory. In addition to providing employment, the mill complex also benefitted Balbriggan in

other ways. It provided the town's first commercial bakery. Unlike other mill owners, Mr. and Mrs. O'Brien displayed a philanthropic attitude towards their child employees. Some time was set aside each week for educational tuition and free books were provided. This "school room" acted as the progenitor of Balbriggan's first National School. One aspect of the building's industrial past can be easily seen on a walk down Mill Street. The bell used to summon employees to work has been returned to its bell-tower.



In the 1830s, the factory turned to linen production. Originally run by the Drogheda Linen Company, the mill was taken over by a young Belfast Business man named Charles Gallen, when it went into receivership in 1887. An indication of the quality of the linen produced can be seen in that when other textile factories were struggling during the Second World War, Gallen's were kept busy producing linen for covering the wings of Hurricane fighter aircraft. Although the factory itself closed in 2003, the name and the quality live on. Located now in Termonfeckin, Co. Louth, Charles Gallen & Co. produces exquisite bed linen. Amongst its customers today are King Charles and Queen Camilla – therefore we can say the Balbriggan textile connection to Royalty has continued!

The Harbour



During the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815), when there was the threat of a French invasion through Ireland, the British Admiralty constructed twenty eight Martello Towers on the north Wicklow and Dublin coasts. The northernmost, *Balbriggan No. 12 Tower*, was constructed in 1805 on land purchased from John Rotton and Alexander Hamilton for £11,176., "*for the defense of the Pier and Cove of Balbriggan*". It had a complement of one Officer and 15 Other Ranks and was armed with a 24-pounder cannon.

The Reverend George Hamiton was to continue his father's tradition of marine construction in Balbriggan. Although the "old" pier offered shelter and some berthing for ships, it also had some defects. In easterly or north easterly gales, a heavy swell entered the harbour, resulting in the docked boats knocking into each other, with damage to their rigging and sails. In such weather, crews had to stay aboard their vessels to fend off other boats that might collide with them. Reverend George was instrumental in bringing



about the building of the “new” pier in 1826, which gave Balbriggan an Inner Harbour and transformed the seas “from stormy weather to smooth water and security”. The additional docking facilities greatly increased the commercial life and fishing trade of Balbriggan.

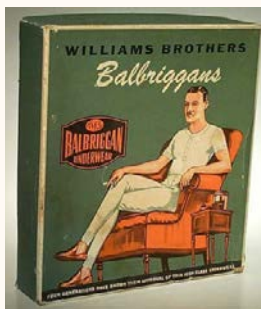
Balbriggans



A dispute at the mill in 1787 caused Smyth to strike out on his own and set up what would become the iconic industry of Balbriggan, making its name famous throughout the world. And here we must look back in time a little to set the scene. As early as the 1740s, there was a tradition of high-quality hosiery making in the Balbriggan area. A local man, Mr. Matthews, formed a cooperative from the indigenous cottage industry and began selling the stockings in the surrounding districts and in

Dublin. The enterprise was expanded in 1760 by Mr. Fulham and in 1775 by a Mr. Hatton. The high-quality hosiery produced became known as “Balbriggans” and were much sought after. Having left the Upper Mill, Joseph Smyth relocated to Hamilton Row (now Railway Street), initially setting up a “finishing” concern, washing and dyeing fabrics for other textile producers. However, Smyth’s business acumen and knowledge of the textile business, allowed him to take charge of a number of hosiery concerns on the street, consolidating them into what would become known as one of the foremost hosiery producers in Ireland – Smyth & Company (abbreviated to Smyco in latter years).

The fine hosiery produced by this factory garnered many famous patrons, including Princess Eugenie of Austria, the Tsarina of Russia and most famously, Queen Victoria. The Queen was well served by one local Balbriggan man – a Mr. Thomas Mangan, Master Hosier with Smyth & Co. For over 60 years, he created exquisite stockings for the Queen on a hand loom. His skill and dedication were recognized in 1897, when he was presented with a personally signed photograph of the Queen – a rare honour indeed.



In addition to the fine hosiery, Smyth & Co. also produced more robust items such as long-sleeved vests and “long johns”, putting the name of Balbriggan in the dictionary: *“Balbriggan: a knitted cotton fabric used for underwear”* etc. *from Balbriggan in Ireland, where it was originally made.* (The Concise Oxford Dictionary). It is said that these “Balbriggans” were worn by adventurers from Alaska to the South Atlantic. In the 1890s, the United States Army put in a significant order for “Balbriggans” to keep its troops warm in the chillier climes.

Alas, unable to compete with cheaper imports from abroad, this famed factory ceased trading in 1980.

The Railway



By the early 1830s commercial trade in Balbriggan, as in many towns on the east coast, had declined. The textile trade in Balbriggan and Drogheda had suffered through difficulties with the transport of raw material and finished products. In 1835, a Mr. Thomas Brodigan, of Piltown House in nearby Co. Meath, published a pamphlet: *On the Establishment of a Northern Railway*. A committee was established to further this aim. The

Chairman of the proposed Dublin & Drogheda Railway Company was George Alexander Hamilton, M.P., son of Reverend George and grandson of Baron George. Construction began in 1838 with the Dublin & Drogheda Railway officially opening on May 25th, 1844. Sir John McNeill, the engineer in charge, commented that the eleven-arch viaduct in Balbriggan was the section of construct of which he was most proud. Balbriggan, along with Malahide, were considered among the most important stops, with their stations given the designation of “1st Class Category” and granted an allocation of £1,000. In order to fuel the trains, coke ovens were established under the some of the arches of the Viaduct.

When in operation, these ovens glowed white hot. Complaints were made by seafarers that these lights could be mistaken for the navigation lights at Mornington. The Dublin & Drogheda Railway Company was forced to brick up two of the arches. They were not re-opened until 1984. Much negotiation was needed to acquire land on which to run the tracks. One of the more interesting was that of Ardgillan Castle. The Taylor family gave permission for the use of their land on the condition that a request stop be sited on their property. Thereafter, a man with a signal flag was sent down to a little platform near the tracks to indicate that the Taylors wished to board the train. Hamilton had a big influence on the preferred route of the rail line. The railway coming into the centre of Balbriggan, near both the harbour and indigenous industries greatly boosted the prosperity of the town.



Wrecks and Rescues

As a maritime town, Balbriggan has witnessed shipwrecks over a long period of time, many going unrecorded. These ships simply failed to return to port. The earliest shipwreck reported in a newspaper was that of the ship *Providence* in 1749. The coastal area around Balbriggan proved hazardous for ships in difficulty. Rather than being able to run ashore on sand or shingle, struggling ships encountered jagged rocks – “The Devil’s Teeth”. These rocks impaled the hull of the wooden vessels, which were then pounded and pulverised by the raging seas. The foaming waters surrounding the ship made rescue by small boats very difficult. Although shipwrecks occurred at almost all points within view of Balbriggan, two areas posed particular danger. The Carrabate Rocks, near the Martello Tower and Newhaven Bay, near the Sailors’ Grave, were the site of many tragic losses of ships and lives.



In the 1870s, there were two major shipping disasters which stuck forever in the peoples’ minds. Due to the ships going aground close to shore, the people on the coast could see and hear the poor sailors on the stricken ships crying for help. Increase in newspaper readership brought these events to the attention of a much wider audience on both sides of what was then St. George’s Channel (now called the Irish Sea).



In the year of 1873, the *Sarah Ann* from Runcorn in Cheshire, near Liverpool, ran onto the rocks near the Martello Tower. Attempts were made to get a rope onto the ship by means of a rocket apparatus but to no avail. Word was sent to the Skerries Lifeboat, whose crew attempted to row their boat to Balbriggan. The Skerries Lifeboat, the *Admiral Mitchell*, launched with a volunteer crew of four Coastguard and five local men. The sea was so rough that some of the men’s oars snapped near the area known as The Bower, near Balbriggan. With new oars, they rowed on. However, when passing Balbriggan harbour, a large wave capsized the lifeboat. Five of the volunteers lost their lives as did five crew members on the *Sarah Ann*. The remains of the recovered Skerries Lifeboat volunteers were interred in Holmpatrick cemetery in Skerries.

In February of 1875, another shipping disaster shocked the people of Balbriggan and the nation at large. The *Belle Hill*, with a crew of sixteen, sailing from Liverpool to Valparaíso, lost control off the coastline of Balbriggan. She went aground at Newhaven, near where the Sailors’ Grave mound now stands.



The new Skerries Lifeboat, the *Laura Platt* was summoned. Remembering the disaster of 1873, the boat was conveyed on a horse drawn carriage to Balbriggan, with the intention of bringing it down Bell’s Lane and over the beach to Newhaven. Unfortunately, it had been forgotten that

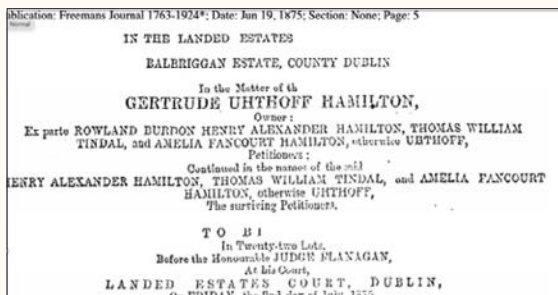
the Dublin & Drogheda Railway had constructed a bridge over the lane, which prevented the lifeboat carriage from passing through. Thereafter the lifeboat itself (but not its crew played) no part in the attempted rescue. The jagged rocks on which the Belle Hill beached made rescue very difficult, as it was nearly impossible for small rescue boats to reach it, or for the sailors on board to swim away from it. The Coastguard succeeded in getting a rocket line onto the ship but the rope became entangled on the rocks between shore and ship. Three brave Balbriggan fishermen, John Carton, John Carvin and James Murphy sailed a small boat out to the stricken vessel. They succeeded in getting three of the sailors onto their little boat, but after their long exposure in the freezing water, only one of the crew survived – James McDonnell. Eight of the sailors were subsequently buried in Balrothery graveyard.



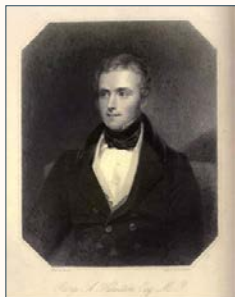
The people near the home ports of the shipwreck victims were deeply shocked and saddened. A wealthy British philanthropist, Mrs. Sarah Langworthy of Manchester, was of the opinion that Balbriggan Town needed its own lifeboat for a speedier response to shipping disasters. With that in mind, she donated the considerable sum of £1,000 for the construction of a Lifeboat House, fitted out with the official lifeboat and its conveying carriage. With considerable difficulty, the Hamilton family secured a plot of ground near the Martello Tower for the Boathouse. In all, Mrs. Langworthy financed three lifeboats. At a time when many lifeboat sponsors named the boat after a member of their family, Mrs. Langworthy was unusual in requesting that all three boats be named *The Maid of Annan* (no reason was ever forthcoming). A change in the lifeboat specifications meant that the third lifeboat would not comfortably fit in the original Lifeboat House and a new Lifeboat House had to be constructed under the Viaduct in 1889 (now refurbished by Fingal County Council for tourism-related activities). The old Lifeboat House was bought by two Balbriggan businessmen Thomas and William Cumiskey for £80 and transformed into the Balbriggan Sea Baths Company.

The End of an Era

Although the Hamilton Family were the predominant political and social force in the town of Balbriggan (Baron Hamilton deemed himself “Lord of the Soil of the Town of Balbriggan”), their finances were never secure. They frequently had to remortgage properties and depended on marriage dowries to clear debts. In the year 1835, the marriage between George Alexander Hamilton and Amelia Fancourt Uthoff, of the City of Bath, England, brought a very welcome dowry of £43,000 to the Hamilton coffers.



The Great Famine (1845 – 1852) caused the deaths of millions of Irish people and the forced emigration of millions more. On a far lesser scale, it also caused difficulties for Irish landowners and landlords. Many tenants could not pay rents to landlords, who were themselves striving to service mortgages on their properties. Many of these landlords fell into cumulative debt and often sought relief through the courts.



George Alexander Hamilton died in 1871 but his estate continued to be administered by his widow Amelia and her niece Gertrude. Debts and family disputes forced the Hamilton Estate into the Landed Estates Court in 1875. The auction that became known as the Sale of Balbriggan, took place on July 2nd 1875. In all, twenty two Lots were sold, transforming land ownership in the town. Control now moved from what might be termed the Protestant Ascendancy class to the new Catholic mercantile entrepreneurs. The death of Henry

Alexander Hamilton in 1901 marked the end of the family seat, Hampton Hall. The legacy of the Hampton family is still to be seen by anyone who might stroll around the streets of “old” Balbriggan – the harbour, the cotton mills (still in use as apartment buildings), St. George’s Church, Balbriggan School for Protestant Boys (the former St. George’s National School), the railway, the Market House, the Millpond Park (formerly “The Canal”, a cotton mill reservoir).

The Sack of Balbriggan

The Irish War of Independence (1919-1921) was a turbulent period, where recurrent attacks by rebel forces on the Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.) and the British army led to reprisals against the local population, none more savage than the Sack of Balbriggan.

On Monday, 20th September 1920, following the shooting dead of Peter Burke, Head Constable of the Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.), in a public house in Balbriggan, Black and Tans from nearby Gormanston Military Camp were summoned to investigate. The discovery of the body led to a rampage of revenge in the town.



On the night of The Sack, newspaper reports indicate that at approximately 11 p.m. the Black and Tans embarked on an orgy of shooting and arson. On Clonard Street, shots were fired through some front doors, with the inhabitants ordered to leave the premises. Up to thirty houses on this street - mainly thatched cottages - were set on fire. Two houses on the corner of Market Green were also put to the torch. Five licensed grocery premises, spanning Clonard Street, Bridge Street, Drogheda Street, Chapel Street and Dublin Street were set on

fire. A grievous blow was inflicted upon the employment and income of the townspeople when the Balbriggan Sea Mills Hosiery Co. (known locally as Deedes Templar) was put to the torch. Worse than any destruction of property was the murder of two innocent local men. James Lawless, aged 40 and father of eight children, was a barber with premises just a short distance away from the R.I.C. barracks. His house was also burnt down during the sack. John Gibbons, a young man in his twenties and an only son, was a dairyman living in nearby Hampton St. and supplied the R.I.C. barracks with milk.

These atrocities not only made national news but also generated front-page headlines in international newspapers. Some compared it to the terror visited upon Belgian villages in the First World War. The New York Times described “scenes of the wildest disorder”. Such was the level of concern in the United States that a delegation from the American Commission for Relief In Ireland was dispatched to Balbriggan on a fact-finding visit.



The orgy of shooting and arson instilled fear and panic in the people of the town. The night of the Sack itself witnessed a large exodus of people from the town, many only in their night attire, carrying whatever they could from their houses. Some streamed up the Hill of Clonard, to spend the night in the open fields. Others fled towards Skerries or Drogheda. Local benefactors provided some

shelter for the terrified citizens. The Upper Mill (now operating as a flour mill) was pressed into service as a temporary hostel. A newspaper report noted the high tribute paid by the people of Balbriggan to Miss Louisa Bankhead of Fancourt (Terrace) on the Cliffs (Isaac's Bower), “who gave shelter to 40 families during the awful orgy on the night of Monday – Tuesday”. The following days saw townspeople still fleeing the town. Chaotic scenes ensued at Balbriggan railway station as “crowds of men, women and children were departing from the town, many of the latter in tears”.

Questions about the Sack were addressed to the Secretary of War in the House of Commons. The British Government eventually accepted full responsibility for the incident and was forced to make significant compensation awards to those who suffered losses in this outrage.

A Vibrant Community

This Sporting Life

For a small town, Balbriggan has long acquitted itself extremely well in the world of sport, both nationally and internationally, across many disciplines. Ireland's first World Cycling Champion, Harry Reynolds, was known as ‘The Balbriggan Flyer’ from when he used to race against the train from Balbriggan to Skerries. Born in 1874, his parents died young, and Harry

and his siblings were raised by relatives. His paternal grandfather was a hosier from Dublin, and his maternal grandfather was a Balbriggan Sea Captain, professions steeped in the town's history. From age 18 to 32yrs, Harry won over two hundred competitions and every Irish cycling championship he could enter. In August 1896, in Copenhagen, as the King of Denmark was presenting Harry with his World Championship gold medal, the band struck up with "God save the Queen" as the Union Jack was raised. Harry demanded the hoisting of a green flag and the playing of an Irish tune for him as an Irish man representing his country. A reception was held for Harry in the Royal Marine Hotel where Balbriggan Cycling Club presented him with a gold medal from his fellow townspeople to honour his achievement. Harry's cycle and motor-cycle dealership in Clonard Street was destroyed in the Sack of Balbriggan and many of his trophies, awards, memorabilia and records were lost. Today, the original ring road around the town is named after Harry, and at the time of writing, John Kindness, a well-known artist, has been commissioned by Fingal County Council to create two pieces of sculpture to commemorate "Balbriggan's" famous son.

The skills of our cricketers from Balrothery and Balbriggan are recognised in Ireland and internationally. As early as 1825, cricket matches were arranged between the "Great Houses" of Ardgillan and Hampton Hall. North County Cricket Club in Balrothery won five Irish Senior cups between 2001 and 2008, and five Premier Leinster Senior Leagues titles between 2003 and 2010. Balbriggan Cricket Club won the 2022 premier league and the Irish Senior Cup in 2025 in their debut final, establishing it as a top force club in Irish Cricket. In January 2025 the club opened its indoor centre of excellence. Building for the future, its training facilities are among the best in Ireland.

Balbriggan Rugby Club formally came into existence in 1925, winning many honours along the way. The club has gone from strength to strength with a current membership of more than three hundred. With Men's and Women's senior teams playing in the Leinster Leagues, and junior teams at Mini and Youth levels for boys and girls, and a Disability Tag team for over-12s, the club welcomes people of all ages join its growing membership who train and play at their grounds in Balrothery. Anyone who would like to be involved in coaching or refereeing is also welcome to join the club.

With a strong community of 800 members, Balbriggan Golf Club is proud to be ranked among Ireland's Top 100 Golf Clubs in the 2026 Irish Golfer Magazine, a true testament to the Club's commitment to excellence. Founded in 1945, the premier parkland course has been expertly redesigned by Eddie Connaughton, featuring USGA-standard greens and strategic water hazards that offer both a challenging and enjoyable experience for golfers of all levels. The Club offers a range of membership options, professional coaching, event hosting, and a fully stocked pro shop. The Club's mission is to continue growing its membership and sponsorship opportunities, while delivering an exceptional golfing experience in a truly stunning setting.

Soccer was always popular in Balbriggan. Long before any official amateur club was formed, players turned out for their factory teams. It is said that the Smyth & Company name was abbreviated to “Smyco” as the full title would not fit on the jerseys! Balbriggan’s first town-wide based football club – Glebe North – was founded in 1945. The club grounds are situated adjacent to the Lidl supermarket but it derives its name from the area in which it first played its matches, the townland of Glebe North, opposite the Wavin factory. The word “glebe” indicates a piece of land granted to the Rector of the local church for agricultural use. This land was associated with St. Peter’s Church of Balrothery. Another portion of land, Glebe South is situated on the Dublin Road approach to the village. Among the club’s many achievements were the gaining of international caps at junior level by Anthony Guildea and Michael Reid. Glebe North has had great success down through the years, crowned FAI Intermediate Cup Champions in 2023-24 season – for the first time. The club also won the FAI 1 Star Club Mark in 2025 while celebrating it’s 80th Anniversary.

Two soccer football clubs, Balscadden Blues FC estd. in the 1970s, and Clonard Celtic FC, estd. in 1982, amalgamated in 1998 to form a new club – Balbriggan FC, with an objective to consolidate a playing path for local people from nursery to senior level within the same club. With over 30 teams catering for children and adults, the club was proud to receive the prestigious FAI Club Mark Award in January 2026, official recognition of the club’s commitment to best practices in governance, child welfare, and football development. Balbriggan FC’s clubhouse and playing facilities are based near Lambreecher estate and the Martello Tower to the north of the town.

In 1990 a club emerged under the Balscadden name to accommodate children from Balscadden, Naul, and the surrounding areas. Home matches are played in the Ring Commons Sports centre where the club still has a presence today.

Balbriggan and District Athletic Club re-formed in 2012. Acknowledging that Balbriggan is the youngest large town in Ireland, the club encourages and promotes the participation and enjoyment of athletics by people of all ages and abilities, at all standards, in a supportive, friendly community. The club eagerly awaits an eight-lane running track and associated field facilities in Bremore Regional Park, which is currently being progressed through public consultation and planning by Fingal County Council.

Tommy Caffrey is a legendary Irish Table Tennis champion. With 151 senior caps, he is the most capped Irish athlete in Ireland’s history. Born in Gormanston and living and working most of his life in Balbriggan, Tommy represented his country in multiple World and European Championships in a career spanning the 1950s-1990s. He was nicknamed the “Boy Wonder” for winning a clean sweep of the Boys’, Men’s, and Mixed Doubles titles at the 1957 Irish Championships in Drogheda at just 14yrs old. He won the Irish Open in 1963, defeating former World Champion Johnny Leach, and reclaimed the title in 1967. Tommy continued a highly successful veteran career, remaining as a dominant force into his 80s,

winning numerous Six Nations and Irish Veterans titles, including gold in Over-70s Singles in 2019. Recognising his indelible legacy, Table Tennis Ireland (TTI) awarded him Honorary Life Membership on his 80th Birthday, and TTI's perpetual "Player of the Tournament" interprovincial series trophy is in Tommy's name. A long standing member of Balbriggan Table Tennis Club, based in the Sports Hall of St. George's School, Tommy still plays regularly, giving generously of his time towards encouragement and expert coaching of the young club members.

Gaelic Football has a long and proud tradition in Balbriggan. In the early 1900s, Balbriggan Wanderers won the Gold Medal Tournament. A short few years later, Balbriggan Rovers took up the torch. The current club, O' Dwyer's, came into existence on March 26th 1918. Initially, catering only for males playing football, it later encompassed hurling, and ladies' football and camogie teams. Among its many achievements are winning the Dublin Intermediate Championship, the Junior championship twice, and of course, the Dublin Senior Leagues Div. 1 in 1970, and Div. 2 in 1980. In 2026, the club completed its relocation to their new state-of-the-art clubhouse and playing facilities at Bremore Regional Park, just to the north of Balbriggan town. The winning of seven Senior All-Ireland medals by both male and female players who were selected over a number of years to play at the highest level for the Dublin County team is acknowledged in the song 'Seven Celtic Crosses'.

Community Life in Changing Times

For much of its modern existence, Balbriggan's population was about 3,000 people, nearly all "born and bred Balbrigganers". All of that has changed over the past three decades. The town's population is now more than 30,000 of which over one third are other-ethnic Irish, with a goodly number of people originally from the suburbs of Dublin City. This has made Balbriggan a more cosmopolitan town, with new languages to be heard and new customs to be enjoyed. The "newcomers" have been very much drawn in to the local culture through sport, music, art etc., and they in their turn have enriched the town by expanding the horizons of the existing town population, exposing them to vibrant new cultural practices. Time never stands still – the only constancy is change. As noted in one of the song lyrics, we are simply people moving through history, trying to make a good life and leaving our mark as we go.

*Now I'm not the first to fetch up on her shore
There were Normans, Saxons, and Danes-
All leaving their mark, some blessings some scars
Some brought freedom and some brought chains
We thought we'd try to start a new life
Together work on our dream
To raise our own brood to be salty and rude
In the town of Baile Brígin.*

In conclusion, now over 100 years since the devastation and horrors wrought by the Irish War of Independence and the ensuing Civil War that gave us our free, independent country, Balbriggan, Balrothery and Balscadden are home to three thriving, interconnected communities, identified as among the youngest and most diverse places in Ireland.

Collectively, as summarised above, and as can be seen at the web-links below, we are blessed with a huge array of strong, dedicated, community-based clubs and organisations and committed local public representatives. Some of our organisations are run with the support of State institutions, and very many are run on good will by volunteers who live and work among us. Our unsung heroes, these people care about the needs of our rapidly growing populations – young and old, commemorating and respecting our past, building our future, and looking after our people and our places across all aspects of community life from the cradle to the grave.

Our small project is our music group's celebration of the love of our people, our places and our past, as shown and shared in our three communities every day.

We are all deeply indebted to all of our community-based clubs and organisations, and wish them all the best for the future.

Táimid go léir faoi chomaoín mhór ag ár gclubanna agus eagraíochtaí pobail go léir, agus guímid gach rath orthu don toadhcháí.

Balbriggan Community Council Facebook and Instagram [@Balbriggancoco](#)

Fingal County Council – Balbriggan: www.balbriggan.ie/community-platform/

New Refrains...

Album Track 1 **Baile Brígin**

Songwriter's notes on song ideas and meaning

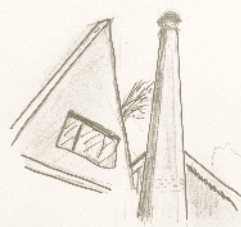
I had the opening verse lines "Where Ardgillan's fields sweep down to the sea..." rattling round in my head for a couple of months during the Covid period and maybe even before, but a second verse didn't come until later. I think the thing that got it going again was hearing about some of the difficulties experienced by people coming to Ireland seeking refuge and wanting to start a new life here. Enjoying a keen interest in history I was aware of the origins of the name Fingal and of the many other previous peoples who had settled in this part of the world.



Bremore Castle

"Safe harbour" and "Perilous Journey" emerged as metaphors as the verses took shape, and Hamilton's candles beckoning over the waves was an image of a sanctuary lamp too evocative to resist. The swing of the lyric suggested a rolling ballad style and the chords came easily enough. With Ollie's (Oliver Cole) helpful suggestions, I trimmed the verses down to the final few and we set about recording ably aided and abetted by Teresa Gorman's whistle.

In many ways the song spilled out easily like one that was there, just needing to be taken down. As such it almost didn't seem to have very much to do with "me" or being "mine", so I'm delighted it has been chosen to be shared in this current collection and as part of the "Our People, Our Places, Our Past" project.



Convent Lane hosiery stack

Le meas,
Denis Carolan



Savoy Cinema

Baile Brigín

Written by: Denis Carolan

Arranged & Recorded by: Ollie Cole Studio

Balrothery

Time Signature: 6/8

Tempo: 162 BPM

Original Key: F Major (Capo 3rd fret, D Major Form)

Duration: 3m 20s

Performances on the recording:

Denis Carolan: Vocal

Ollie Cole: Guitars and Piano

Teresa Gorman: Whistle

Intro: F//Bb//Dm//Bb//C//F////

Verse:

(F) Bb F
Where Ardgillan's fields sweep down to the sea
C
There with the tide and the foam
F Bb Dm
In a sea-faring town I let anchor down
Bb C F
And vowed no more to roam
Bb
Within her harbour walls
F
To be safe from the squalls
Bbsus F C
Leave the rover behind that I've been
F Bb Dm
Live out my days by her beach and quay
Bb C F
In the town of Baile Brigín

Instrumental:

F// Bb//C//F////

Now I'm not the first to fetch up on her shore
There were Normans, Saxons, and Danes-
All leaving their mark, some blessings some scars
Some brought freedom and some brought chains
We thought we'd try to start a new life
Together work on our dream
To raise our own brood to be salty and rude
In the town of Baile Brigín.

Bridge

(F) Bb Dm
Baile Brigín, Baile Brigín
Bb C F
in the town of Baile Brigín

Instrumental:

F///// Bb//F/////C////////F/////Bb//Dm//
Bb//C//F////

(F) Bb F
Now on her windy streets kind faces you'll meet
C
Of every nation and tribe-
F
all doing what they can
Bb Dm
Whether humble or grand
Bb C F
To manage and provide

(F) Bb F Dm
By cottages low or chimney stacks high
Bb C
As the towers of lofty Bremore-
F Bb Dm
Or the Martello round or the lighthouse so proud
Bb C F
Where Hamilton's candles once glowed

Bb

Sending their beacon out over the waves
F C
Out through the night and the storm
F Bb Dm
That all sailors return unscathed and unharmed
Bb C F
To the welcoming arms of home

Repeat Bridge

(F) Bb Dm
Baile Brigín, to Baile Brigín
Bb C F
to the town of Baile Brigín

Final Bridge

(F) Bb Dm
Baile Brigín, to Baile Brigín
Bb C Dm
to the town of Baile Brigín
Bb C F
to the town of Baile Brigín

BAILE BRIGÍN

(♩ = 162)

Intro 4 bars

Key of F

Words and Music by

Denis Carolan

Where Ard-gill-an's fie-lds sweep down to the sea-

7 - there with the tide and the foam - in a sea-far - ing to - wn I let an - chor do - wn and vowed no

12 mo - re to roam with-in her har - bour walls to be safe from the squalls leave the ro -

16 ver be - hi - nd that I've be - en live out my days by her beach and quay in the town of Bai - le Brig -

21 in now I'm not the fi - rst to fetch up on her shore there were Nor-mans Sax-ons and

27 Danes all lea-ving their ma-rk some bless-ings some sc-ars some brought free-dom and so-me brought chains

32 we thought we'd try to start a new li - fe to-get-her work on our dreams - to raise our

37 own bro-od to be sal-ty and rude in the town of Bai - le Brig - in Bai-le Brig - in - - Bai-le Brig - in

43 in the town of Bai - le Brig - in - **Outro 8 bars**

48

Album Track 2 **The Sailors' Grave**

Song ideas and meaning

The Sailors' Grave was written to be a typical Irish ballad that tells its story while bouncing along at a brisk 96bpm, and it really engages the listener with a lovely chorus.

The writer believes that the song should really resonate with local townspeople as the Sailors' Grave is a well-known site for visiting while out for a beach walk on the north side of the town.

The lyrics recount the disaster that fell on the area on February 26th 1875 when the Belle Hill, a 1,000-ton 3-masted cargo barge, sank at the Cardy Rocks, just north of the town. From its crew of approximately 14-15 sailors, there was only one survivor. The story is conveyed with honest emotion and sensitivity, availing of poetic licence to use a fictional name for the sailor who survived.



St. Peter's Church, Balrothery

On the coastline apposite to where the tragic sinking occurred there is a mound of rough stones – a cairn - built as a respectful memorial landmark. This cairn has grown over the years as local people toss a stone onto the mound while passing on their walks, and some people inscribe messages on the stones before placing them on the mound. Situated at the base of the cairn there is a small black plaque which informs visitors of the tragedy.

Unfortunately the Belle Hill is only one of many ships lost to the sea along this stretch of water, but for the people of Balbriggan, the Belle Hill seems to be the one most talked about. Eight of the sailors lost during the tragic sinking were laid to rest in the cemetery in Balrothery.



Stone cairn marking the Sailors' Grave

The Sailors' Grave

Written by: Martin McEvoy

Recording by: Ollie Cole Studio Balrothery

Time Signature: 4/4

Tempo: 94 BPM

Original Key: C Major

Duration: 3m:31s

Performances on the recording:

Vocal: Seán Kiernan

1st Guitar: Martin McEvoy

2nd Guitar: Ollie Cole

Banjo: Seán Kiernan

Whistle: Seán Kiernan

Uileann pipes: Seán Kiernan

Intro: C F C G C///

(C) F C
There's a place they call the Sailors' Grave

G C
Where you cast a stone to honour the brave

F C
A pile of rocks and a small black plaque

G C
To mark the spot where only one came back

F C
His name was McKenzie and he came ashore

G C
Because his ship it was no more

F C
It sank at the place called Cardy Rock

G C
And the whole damn town was in total shock

Chorus

F C
There's much to do at the Sailors' Grave

F C
As you're walking past just cast a stone

F C Am
On a summer's day then sit a while and contemplate,
D G

For the sailor men who didn't make it home

'Cause all the crew were dead and gone

Washed overboard in that terrible storm

A hurricane came across the sea

And took the whole ship's company

The people rallied from far and near

Their rescue attempts were so sincere

But the rest of the crew all perished and died

The men did their best while the women all cried

Chorus

Instrumental - C F C G C F C G C

Repeat first verse

Chorus

Outro:

C F C G C

THE SAILORS' GRAVE

Intro 5 Bars
Ke of C Major

Words and Music by
Martin (Bounce) McEvoy

The musical score is written in 3/4 time and consists of 34 measures. It includes guitar chords (C, F, G, Am, D) and lyrics. The lyrics are: "There'e a place they call - the Sailors' Grave where you cast a stone - to hon-our the brave - a pile of rocks - and a small black plaque to mark the spot - where on-ly one came back - his name was McKen-zie and he came a shore - be-cause his ship - it was no more - it sank at the place - we call Cardy Rock and the whole damn town - was in to-tal shock - there's much a do - at the Sailors' Grave if your'e wa-lking past - you can cast a stone - on a sum-mer's day - you can sit a while and con-tem plate for the sail or men who didn't make it home".

6
There'e a
place they call - the Sailors' Grave where you cast a stone - to hon-our the brave -

11
a pile of rocks - and a small black plaque to mark the spot - where on-ly one came back

16
his name was McKen-zie and he came a shore - be-cause his ship - it was no

21
more - it sank at the place - we call Cardy Rock and the whole damn town - was in

26
to-tal shock - there's much a do - at the Sailors' Grave if your'e wa-lking past -

31
you can cast a stone - on a sum-mer's day - you can

34
sit a while and con-tem plate for the sail or men who didn't make it home

Album Track 3 **Matt Bracken**

Song ideas and meaning

Musically, the style influences for this song were Josh Ritter (Homecoming) and Tom Waits (Old Shoes) - Americana, with a folk story-telling feel. Its 6/8 time and lilting melodic rhythm seek to evoke the meandering gentle flow of the two rivers that are the subject of the song. The device used in the song to tell the story of the two rivers – the Matt and the Bracken, was to imagine them as being a local man, named Matt Bracken, who has lived his life through the historic period and events dealt with in the song, and up to the present day.



From a history perspective – and meeting the objectives of the whole album project, the song heralds the foundational role of the rivers in both the creation of the town of Balbriggan and the basis for its growth and prosperity – as succinctly set out in David Sorensen's piece Past Echoes.

Today, the rivers still serve the community with key roles – notwithstanding '*come storms or the sun's angry burn*' i.e. Climate Change. The Matt helps to irrigate lands from The Ring Commons through to the Bracken and provides water for livestock and wildlife.



The Bracken takes all of the surface rain and waste waters from the town and its districts away to the sea. Both rivers – long retired from their industrial roles - now provide valuable amenity areas for walks, picnics, nature trails and angling.

Matt Bracken

Written by: Eugene White & Tommy Cardiff

Arranged & Recorded by: Ollie Cole Studio Balrothery

Time Signature: 6/8

Tempo: 178 BPM

Original Key: F Major, Capo 3rd Fret – D form

Duration: 3m:38s

Performances on the recording:

Tommy Cardiff: Vocal & Guitar

Laura O'Sullivan: Harmony

Emma Giles: Harmony

Jennie Moles: Harmony

Ollie Cole: Guitar & Harmony

Joe Sheehan: Mandolin

Jimmy Moles: Bass

Harmonies in blue text – repeat phrases twice after end of verse

Intro picked in 6/8 time (1-2-3-4-5-6) D G D A

NC D G D
Matt Bracken's my name, I come in from the bog

A
I run free through the marshes and fields

D G D G
Then I head through the town to the call of the sea

D A D G D A D
And the clouds take me *home on a breeze* (repeat phrase twice)

Three Mill wheels I turned for a hundred long years
Giant looms and big grindstones I powered
Using artisan skills and hard-working hands
With new families *Balbriggan town flowered* (repeat phrase twice)

In Stephenstown Mill we ground barley and wheat
Scanlon's Mill ground the flour for our bread
We ran Gallen's Mill when I could fill the Mill Pond
Making lacework and linen from the *finest of thread* (repeat phrase twice)

Though my work days are over, I still run my course
All the wild creatures thrive where I flow
To our crops and our livestock I'm the water of life
My streams catch the rain and the snow

Sing Bridge

Instrumental verse

I see lovers hand-holding making their plans
Young mothers with buggies and prams
Children laugh as they play along my green banks
Their innocence *enraptures and charms* (repeat phrase twice)

All the mists and the fogs and the rainbows are mine
For faeries in forts casting spells
They whisper their secrets to the grass and the trees
And the wind brings them *to me to tell* (repeat phrase twice)
So I'm 'Matt' in the bog, and I'm 'Bracken' in town

In your time here you know me as one
For those who have gone and those still to come
Please know that my river still runs

Repeat Bridge

Repeat first verse

G A D G A D
Yeah the clouds take me home on a breeze

Bridge (oooohs for harmonies)

Bass walk down –

F E D (A Chord)

And so come good times or bad

Bm

Come change as it must

G

D

Come storms or the sun's angry burn

A

There's not much in life

Bm

To take now on trust

G

A

D

But you know I'll be there come the dawn

MATT BRACKEN

(♩ = 185)

Key of C Maj

Words and music by
Tommy Cardiff
Eugene White

Matt Bra-cken's my name I come
in from the bog I run free through the mar-shes and fields Then I head through the town to the
call of thesea and the clouds take me home on a breeze home on a breeze home on a breeze three
Mill wheels I tur-ned for a hun-dred long years gia-nt looms and big grind stones I powered us-ing
ar - ti - san skills and hard wor-king hands with new families Bal brig-gan town flowered Bal-
brig-gan town flowered Bal-brig-gan town flowered in Ste-phens-town mill we ground
bar - ley and wheat Scan-lon's mill ground the flower for our bread weran Gal-len's mill when I could
fill the Mill pond mak - ing lace work and li - nen from the
fi - nest of thread fi - nest of thread fi - nest of thread

Album Track 4 No Justice

Song ideas and meaning

The song 'No Justice' sits musically in the traditional Irish story-telling ballad genre, recounting its subject matter in honest lyrics and a tone that leans more towards stoic forbearance than anger. It plays at a slightly up-tempo pace, depicting the horrors of the Sack of Balbriggan – an attack on innocent townspeople and the brutal murders, while in custody, of Séamus Lawless and Seán Gibbons, by rampaging Black and Tans – essentially mercenary Crown forces. The lyrics deliver stark imagery, with a haunting melody, and a chorus that nudges the listener to sing along.

The context in Ireland in 1920-21 was the War of Independence (Wol), and indeed the seeding of the ensuing Civil War. The song depicts what in today's world would arguably be a war crime for which Great Britain would be accountable under international law. As David Sorensen sets out in his piece, there was rudimentary accountability at the time thanks to

the intervention of the American Commission on Conditions in Ireland (also referred to as the American Commission on Atrocities in Ireland) which was established to investigate British reprisals and atrocities. Balbriggan man John Derham was brought to America to give his eyewitness testimony to the Commission of what took place in the Sack. Highly critical coverage in world press also brought pressure onto the British Government which was ultimately forced to pay compensation to those who suffered loss.

None of the perpetrators of the travesty, neither the foot soldiers, their local Commanders, their Generals, nor their political leaders who condoned the Sack "as a necessary reprisal to check crime" (Lloyd George) – none of them encountered legal justice – hence the title of the song 'No Justice'

Women pushing prams with belongings - Clonard St Sack of Balbriggan Sept 1920. © National Museum of Ireland

Family with salvaged belongings in cart Clonard St Sack of Balbriggan Sept 1920. © National Museum of Ireland

To this day, over a hundred years on, notwithstanding the enormous change through which our community continues to evolve and thrive, the Sack of Balbriggan is commemorated annually. Townspeople, local historians and the Fingal Old IRA Commemorative Society gather and stand respectfully with descendants at the memorial plaque for Lawless and Gibbons in the town centre, and also place a wreath on their resting place in Balscadden cemetery.



Lawless and Gibbons memorial plaque



*Headstone for Lawless and Gibbons,
Balscadden cemetery*

No Justice

Written by: Eugene White

Arranged & Recorded by: Ollie Cole Studio Balrothery

Time Signature: 4/4

Tempo: 136 BPM

Original Key: C Major

Duration: 5m:32s

Performances on the recording:

Eugene White: Vocal

Ollie Cole: First Guitar

Eugene White: Second Guitar

Teresa Gorman: Whistle

Joe Sheehan: Mandolin

Jimmy Moles: Bass and Harmonies

Intro: C G F G C

Verse:

C C7 F
Smoke filled skies and frightened eyes on a hill at the edge of town
C G
Staring at the shameful acts of a mob in Black and Tan
C C7 F
Our seaside town was burning and nothing could be done
C G C
To stop the perpetrators that represent the Crown
C C7 F
Morning brought a picture no one should ever see
C G
As houses pubs and factories were razed unto the ground
C C7 F
But the biggest shock of all was the loss of two young lives
G G7 F G C C7
Séamus Lawless and Seán Gibbons, oh what an awful price

Chorus:

F C Am
In the Sack of Balbriggan no justice can be found
G G7 F G C
As the homes of the innocent were burned to the ground
F C Am
When the RIC and the Black and Tans in guilty shame withdrew
G G7 F G C
We proclaimed our freedom in nineteen-twenty-two

Two stones tell the story of that long and fateful night
One on Bridge Street in Balbriggan on a wall for all to see
And in the 'Town of the Herring' in a graveyard on the Crest
A Celtic stone marks the spot where Lawless and Gibbons rest
Revenge for two RIC men shot does not wash at all
As the scale of the Tans' brutal acts reached our neighbouring towns
Sherlock, Hand, and Rover McCann were singled out that year
For the same barbaric treatment as the two Balbriggan men

Repeat Chorus; Instrumental: C C7 F C G C C7 F G G7 F G C ; **Repeat Chorus;**

Our town now has expanded and the population's grown
We're now a diverse society from all around the globe
People come with friendly faces unlike those Black and Tans
When they sacked our small community a hundred years ago

Repeat Chorus; Repeat last line of Chorus

NO JUSTICE

(♩ = 120)

Key of C Maj

Intro C G F G C

Written by Eugene White

Arranged and Recorded by

Ollie Cole Studio Balrothery

Smoke filled skies_ and frigh - tened eyes on a hill on the edge of town Star-ing at the shame

ful acts of a mob in black and tan Our sea-side town was bur - ning and no-thing

could be done To stop the per-pe-tra - tors that rep-re sent the crown Mor-ning

brought a pic - ture no one should ev - er see As hou - ses pubs and fac - tories were razed un - to

the ground But the big-est shock of all was the loss of two young lives Séamus Lawless

and Seán Gib-bons oh what an aw - ful price In the sack of Bal - bri-ggan no

jus-tice can be found_ as the homes of - the in-o cent were burnt to the ground

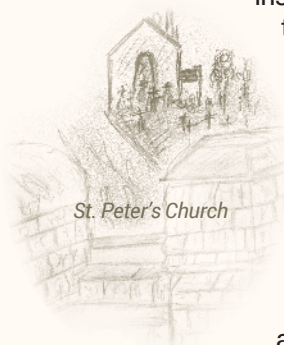
When the R I C and the Black and Tans in gui lty shame with drew

We pro claimed our free dom in nin teen twen ty two

Album Track 5 **Baile an Ridire - Balrothery**

Song ideas and meaning

Musically ambitious objectives for this song were to depict the romantic, scenic, geographical setting of the village of Baile an Ridire¹ by devising an introductory section sung *a capella* as Gaeilge, in duet with an airy melody and chorus in English, to deliver a gentle folk-ballad feel. The writers included mediaeval-tinged riffs, harmonies and instrumentation in the solos in a proud homage to the town's ancient heraldic heritage. A future-leaning chorus celebrates the vibrant community that lives in the village today. The writers are delighted with what Conall and Ollie achieved with their captivating duet performance.



St. Peter's Church



Tree-carving in Balrothery

From a history perspective as, succinctly outlined by David Sorensen in his piece Past Echoes, there is an enormous amount of historical material to cover in relation to Balrothery. Founded in the 1100s as an Anglo-Norman settlement, it became a key part of the mediaeval Barony of Balrothery East, and survived and developed, due to its industrious, highly innovative and inventive culture, through several centuries of power shifts and political upheavals, to remain as an influential Administrative centre until the early 1900s. It was impossible to encompass all of this rich history in one song, so the writers looked to concentrate on a couple of big themes that suggested or indicated the depths of history there to be explored. A number of additional, colourful verses that can be sung in performance are provided in Appendix 1.



Artwork at Balrothery National School



¹ After considerable research, advices, and evidence from several eminent sources, and much to-ing and fro-ing, for the purposes of this book and the accompanying album of songs, the authors adopted 'Baile an Ridire/Balrothery' as valid, dominant, and locally accepted Irish/English Place names for the village. When researching the history of Balrothery for this song, the writers encountered eight different names for the village of Balrothery viz. Baile an Ridire (sing.) – believed to derive from the Anglo Norman Robert de Rosel who was granted local lands for the first settlement in 1170, Baile na Ridirí (pl.) – believed to derive from the wider Administrative area that was formed - the Barony of Balrothery East, and the existence of Knights' (pl.) plots in the area (for the stabling of the Knights' horses and food growing, Baile Ruairí – believed to derive from a 'Red (haired) King or Chieftain who pre-dated the Anglo-Norman era, the English name, Balrothery – formerly Balrudery, Barudery, Ballinrudery or Ballinriddery (ref. logainm.ie, Trinity College Map Room, and the Ordnance Survey Field Books of Place-names around the 1840s).

Baile an Ridire - Balrothery

Written by: Tommy Cardiff & Eugene White

Recording by: Ollie Cole Studio Balrothery

Time Signature: 6/8

Tempo: 129 BPM

Original Key: D Major

Duration: 4m:28s

Performances on the recording:

A cappella: Conall Campbell

Vocal: Ollie Cole

Guitars: Ollie Cole

a capella (to the verse air:

Ar an sean-bhóthar cóiste
i dTuaisceart Áth Cliath
ag bun na gcnoc dubh
síochánta luíonn sí
Fadó ann bhí Lochlannaigh
agus bhí Normannaigh
tá a n-oidhreacht araltach
beo bródúil inár gcroí

Sean-ainm don áit
'sé "Baile an Ridire"
rúndiamhraí faoin talamh
snoite domhain i Rosepark
A rúin staireach
cosanta tríd aoiseanna
inár gcúram anois iad
sábháilte go deo

Guitar Intro:

D

On the old Coach Road in North County Dublin
At the foot of the black hills she peacefully lies
Long ago, there were Vikings and Normans
Her heraldic heritage lies proud in our hearts
And our mediaeval village we cherish with pride
Ancient and modern embraced side by side
Today our Knights are our young girls and boys
As towards a bright future Balrothery strides

The Town of the Knight is this place's old name
With underground mysteries carved deep in Rosepark
Her history's secrets protected through the ages
Carved in our hearts now for time evermore

Chorus

Solo and melodic bridge

Repeat chorus

BAILE AN RIDIRE - BALROTHERY

Written by

Tommy Cardiff and Eugene White

Key of D Maj

(♩ = 140)

On the old coa-ch road in North Coun - ty Du-ub - lin at the foot

of the Black Hills she peace-ful - ly lies Long a-go there were Vi-kings

and No-or-mans her her-ald-dic her - it-age lies proud in our hearts and our medi

aeval vill-age we che-rish with pride An-cient and mo-dern em-braced side by side

to - day our knights are young girls and boys

As to-wards a bright fu - ture Bal - roth - er - y strides

Album Track 6 **Hamilton's Legacy**

Song ideas and meaning

Musically, the song 'Hamilton's Legacy' has a mercurial, floating quality – it swooshes through its lyrics in 6/8 time at 141bpm. The singer/songwriter's dramatic vocal style grips the listener from the opening line, visualizing an iconic image from Balbriggan – its Lighthouse, and then continues with strong visual imagery to tell its story about the Hamilton family's legacy.

From a historical perspective, the Hamilton family essentially founded Balbriggan, and was mainly responsible for its infrastructural development and growth into a relatively powerful and influential industrial town in its heyday. The song recognises these indelible legacy factors in its pithy lyrics.

Working conditions in Balbriggan during the 1850s were characterized by a transition from manual, small cottage industries to mechanized, factory-based production of cotton, hosiery, and textiles. While the town was renowned for producing high-quality goods (such as those by Smyth & Co.), workers endured many hardships, including long hours, low wages, and a reliance on child labour – conditions typical of the era, and by no means exclusive to Balbriggan or indeed Ireland. The song cryptically laments the fact that Balbriggan's "rivers did bleed", a powerful metaphor that relies on the fact that just as the water from these rivers was exploited by the industrialists to power the factories' machines, the workers - who often also "did bleed" from serious injuries - were exploited for their skills and labour to produce the goods, upon the sale of which sustained prosperity was built – evidenced today by the many surviving buildings around Balbriggan. The song does not explore how fairly or otherwise the new prosperity was shared, but it does record the demise of the Hamilton 'empire' and its breakup into auction lots for public sale – in 'unfortunate' circumstances which are set out in David Sorensen's piece.

The song grabs the listener in its end section, after it repeats the observation that 'history is written by those succeed'. A sudden, custom-written, rousing Irish trad.-style instrumental that exudes confidence and a swaggering, powerful, vitality rattles the song to its crescendo-like conclusion.



St. George's Church, Balbriggan



Sunshine House, Balbriggan

Hamilton's Legacy

Written by: Joe Sheehan, Teresa Gorman
Recording by: Ollie Cole Studio Balrothery
Time Signature: 6/8
Tempo: 141 BPM
Original Key: Cm (Guitar Capo 3rd fret, Am form)
Duration: 3m;38s

Performances on the recording:

Vocal: Joe Sheehan
Whistle: Teresa Gorman
1st Guitar: Joe Sheehan
2nd Guitar: Ollie Cole
Harmony: Ollie Cole

Intro:

G// Em//// G//// Am// G////Em//// G/////

Am

Lighthouse on the pier

G Em

Safety from the storm

G Em

Our Textile and weaving

G Am

Worldwide they were worn

Am

Seat in Parliament

G Em

Use of their British vote

G Em

Our town and its history

G Am

Hamiltons rewrote

Chorus

G Em

The Hamilton Family

G Am

Laid down their trail

G Em

Courthouse and Boathouse

G Am

Lighthouse and Rail

G Em

Balbriggan Town

G Am

its rivers did bleed

G Em

History is written

G Am

By those who succeed

Throughout Balbriggan town

Their buildings did survive

From factories to harbours

Schools they did thrive

Woodlands and pastures green

Structures standing still

Their legacy lives on

In this town of hills

Chorus

Centuries the family name

Was met with their demise

Auctioned fourteen lots

Their empire saw divide

Hamilton's vision can be seen

Reaching far and wide

They now have all passed

Can't stop the time of tide

Chorus

Instrumental outro:

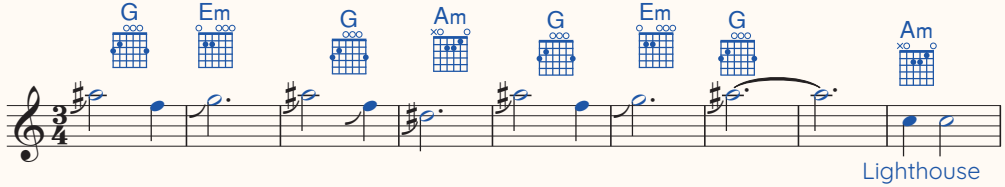
Am G Am G Am Em Am G Am G Am G Am Em Am Em Am Em Am G Am G Am

HAMILTON'S LEGACY

(♩ = 141)

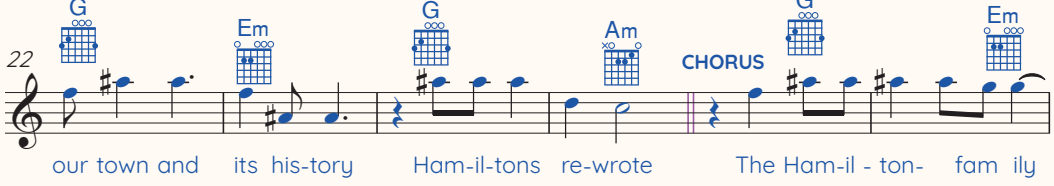
Capo 3rd Fret

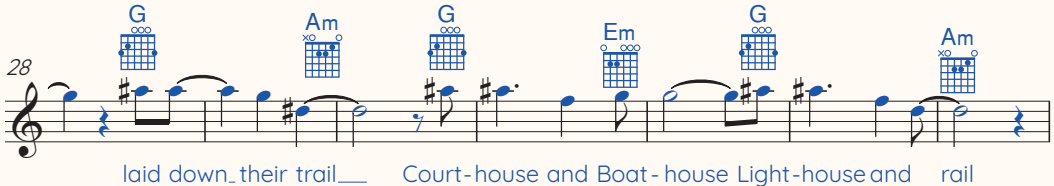
Written by Joe Sheehan & Teresa Gorman

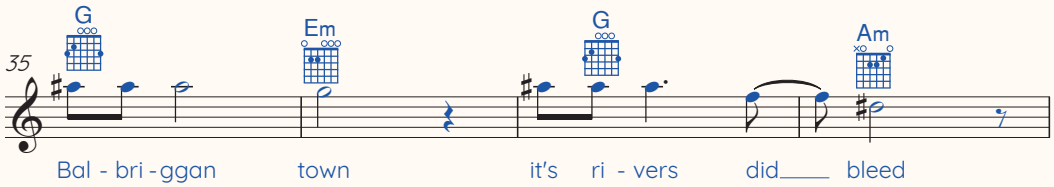


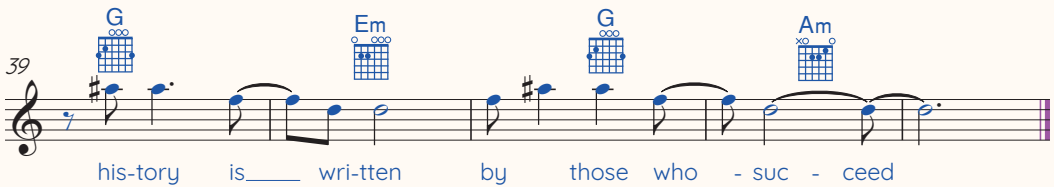












Album Track 7 **Balbriggans**

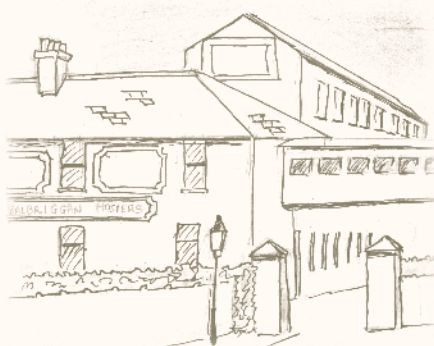
Song ideas and meaning

Musically speaking, the song 'Balbriggans' is a real sing-along ballad in 4/4 time, with a rousing, humorous chorus, and runs at a fast 206 BPM.

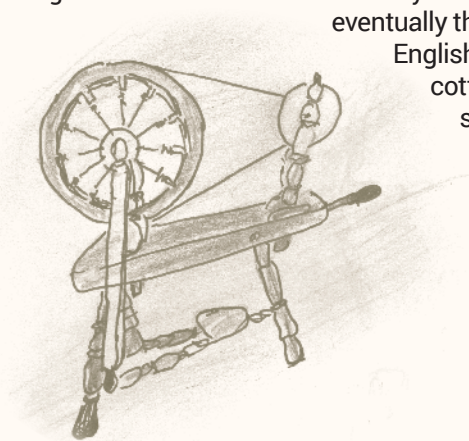
From a historical perspective, the song recounts with admiration how highly skilled, artisan cottage industries from many local areas, but mainly from Balrothery to Balbriggan, developed and transformed over the years into major industries with large factories that were powered in the early years by the motion of water from local rivers. To quote from David Sorensen's piece Past Echoes, "Water made Balbriggan". The transformation was complete when Smyth and Co. opened in the 1780s, selling its products locally and across the world. With the success of the mills, the town expanded from a cluster of homes to a town of over 3,000 inhabitants.

The title of the song 'Balbriggans' refers to specialized garments produced in the Smyth&Co (Smyco) factory. The lyrics "*Balbriggans in Paris, Balbriggans in Vienna, Balbriggans in London worn by the Queen*" celebrate the facts that these garments, mainly stockings and underwear, were so popular due to their very high quality, that they won medals at different competitions and exhibitions all over the world, and were worn by many of the Royalty and aristocrats of the day including Queen Victoria of England.

Recognition of many of these international awards is still on display in the form of plaster relief artwork integral to the walls of the old factory building. Indeed Balbriggans became so popular that eventually the word "Balbriggans" was incorporated into the English dictionary as meaning a type of "fine unbleached cotton fabric used for making underwear, hosiery and stockings".



Smyco factory, Balbriggan



Balbriggans

Written by: Eugene White

Arranged & Recorded by: Ollie Cole Studio Balrothery

Time Signature: 4/4

Tempo: 206 BPM

Original Key: C Major

Duration: 3m:25s

Performances on the recording:

Eugene White: Vocal

Ollie Cole: Guitar & harmony

Teresa Gorman: Whistle

Brendan Ingoldsby: Fiddle

Joe Sheehan: Mandolin and harmony

Jimmy Moles: Bass and harmony

Tommy Cardiff: Harmony

Intro: C F C G C

C F C
Cottage industries from Balrothery to Balbriggan

G
Honed a set of skills renowned throughout the world

C F C
There was sewing there was stitching, embroidery and knitting

G C
Passed down by generations with humility and pride

When SMYTH & Co. did open, to make their hosiery
With all those skills on board from a fine community
With a workforce employed the machines they started rolling
All nicely now in place to take the world by storm

Chorus G G7

C F C
Balbriggans in Paris, Balbriggans in Vienna

G
Balbriggans in London worn by the Queen

C F C
Balbriggans in Philly, Balbriggans in Vancouver

G C
SMYCO hosiery, the best the world had seen

From Victoria Queen of England to Nick the Tsar of Russia
Many blue-blood royals did flaunt Tom Mangan's fame
And it's said the bould John Wayne while on the film set
So loved his snug Balbriggans that he mentioned them by name

Chorus

In 1882 disaster struck the town
As the hosiery building burned to the ground
The community did suffer as unemployment soared
No work in the factory, no money in the door

Key change to D Major

As in times gone past resilience shone through
As SMYCO opened up again more powerful than before
For two hundred years the factory soldiered on
As Balbriggans won medals all around the world

Chorus A A7

D G A D
End last chorus with - Balbriggans were so famous they're in the diction'ry.

BALBRIGGANS

Words and Music by
Eugene White

Intro 4 bars
C,F,C,G,C.

(♩ = 108)



Cot-tage in-dus



6 tries from Bal-roth -ery to Bal- brig-gan honed a set of ski-lls re-nowned through -out the world there was



10 sew-ing there was stitch-ing em - broi-der - y and knit-ting passed down by ge - ner - a-tions with hu -



13 mil-it - y and pride - when Smyth and Co did op-en to make their ho - sier-y with all those skills



17 on bo-ard from a fine comm-u - ni-ty with a work force em-plied the ma-chines they star-ted ro-lling



21 all nic-ely now in place to take the world by storm Bal-brig-gans in Par - is



26 Bal-brig-gans in Vie-nn - a Bal-brig-gans in Lon-don worn by the Queen Bal-brig-gans



30 in Phi-ly Bal-brig-gans in Van-cou-ver Smy-co hos-ier - y the best the world has seen



Album Track 8 Century

Song ideas and meaning

The writers of Century opted for a pulsing rhythm with uncompromising lyrics in a story-telling style, a plaintive protest in a melodic style influenced by early Bob Dylan songs.

This song focusses on a declining British Empire's ruthlessness and cruelty towards the Irish civilian population during the War of Independence (Wol, 1919-2021). It spotlights the political circumstances and the cynical policies pursued at the time, as examined by Michael Portillo in his documentary series for RTE². Of the five members of the British Government concerned with the 'Irish Question', Prime Minister Lloyd George was preoccupied with the Treaty of Versailles after WWI, but his coalition with the Conservatives was adamant about preserving the 'Union'. Hamar Greenwood, the last Chief Secretary for Ireland 1920-22, in charge of British security policy, was responsible for policies to suppress the 'insurgency'; he frequently denied use of excessive reprisals against civilians by Crown forces in Ireland to Parliament, leading to the phrase "*to tell a Greenwood*". Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for War (1919-1921), took a hard-line approach to Ireland, supporting the deployment of the "Black and Tans". General Sir Nevil Macready, Commander-in-Chief of British forces in Ireland (Apr. 1920 – Dec. 1922) advised Lloyd George to go "all out" with massive force to defeat the 'insurgency', or to "get out" by negotiating a solution. Major General Sir Hugh Tudor, Chief of Police (R.I.C.), commanded the infamous "Black and Tans" and created the Auxiliaries, the 'special forces' recruited from British WWI veterans and officers which became synonymous with official reprisal burnings of homes and businesses throughout Ireland. The reprisal policy failed to suppress the insurgency, and the brutality towards the Irish civilian population – dealt with in track 4 'No Justice' - exposed in international media lead to intense international political pressure on the British, especially from America, to negotiate a solution.



American Commission inspecting the burned out Deedes Templar Hosiery Sack of Balbriggan 1920. Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

² Hawks and Doves: The Crown and Ireland's War of Independence, presented by Michael Portillo as part of a series for RTE covering Irish - British History from the Rebellion in 1916 to the Civil War 2022-2023.

The song then makes a blunt comparison between the oppression by the British Empire and the oppression caused by the pandemic - the virus's 'Global Empire'. The aim of this comparison is to prompt today's generation to imagine what it must have been like during the Wol:

"This oppressor (virus) had no guns or bombs...It deprived us of our freedom, our culture, and our wealth, It forbade us all our human touch, it threatened life and hope, and again we cowered in our homes, our shield was a bar of soap..."

The song asks the listener to ponder whether people ever learn the lessons about war that are embedded in our shared humanity and history. Looking at State-sponsored wars and violence across our world today, and considering honestly and bluntly whether our world leaders are a true reflection of our societies, it seems that the answer to that question is still **"blowin' in the wind"**.



Maude Gonne's delegation inspecting the burned out Deedes Templar Hosiery Sack of Balbriggan 1920. © National Museum of Ireland

Century

Written by: Tommy Cardiff & Eugene White

Arranged & Recorded by: Ollie Cole Studio Balrothery

Time Signature: 4/4

Tempo: 184BPM

Original Key: B minor – (Capo 2nd Fret, Am Form)

Duration: 3m:52s

Performances on the recording:

Tommy Cardiff: Vocal

Ollie Cole: Guitar

Tommy Cardiff: Guitar

Brendan Ingoldsby: Fiddle

Teresa Gorman: Whistle

Jimmy Moles: Bass

Intro melody on violin

Am x 2

Am G F Am
Well a hundred years is but a blink of the eyes of Father Time
C G Am
We live through war and pestilence, for no reason, 'nd no rhyme
C G Am
Scars run deep from cruel crimes, we forgive but don't forget
G Em Am
Though hope may spring eternal boys, fear's grip is a-tightening yet

Her veterans of the Great War, Britain coldly cast aside,
Gave them no heroes' welcome, meagre pensions to survive
Black Tudor was their General, Lloyd George he called their tune
Their policy of "cringing fear" racked Irish towns to ruin

They hired ten thousand dogs of war - in Ireland let them loose
Ten shillings was their daily pay, to pillage, burn, and shoot.
Black 'n' Tans hit Balbriggan, 'nd with a vengeance sacked the town
And without a shred of mercy, they burned the houses down

Yes a hundred years is but a blink of the eyes of Father Time
We live through war and pestilence, for no reason, 'nd no rhyme
They called the Sack 'reprisal' for our freedom's beating heart
And our families cowered in their homes fearful in the dark

Instrumental Verse (Violin, Bodhrán, D Whistle)

Now a century has come and gone since those dreadful days
Again we faced a cruel foe, more deadly in many ways
Just a fraction of a micron long, but its Empire spanned the globe
This undead scrap of RNA stole life from young and old

This oppressor had no guns or bombs, just a molecule with stealth
It deprived us of our freedom, our culture, and our wealth
It forbade us all our human touch, it threatened life and hope
And again we cowered in our homes, our shield was a bar of soap

Yes a hundred years is but a blink of the eyes of Father Time
We live through war and pestilence, for no reason, 'nd no rhyme
Is it not now time to stop and think, to change our destiny
Did the virus not show that our strongest bond is our shared humanity?

F G Am
Our shared humanity x 2
F G Am (high doh) F G Am Violin outro
Our shared humanity

CENTURY

Written By

Tommy Cardiff & Eugene White

(♩ = 184)

Capo 2nd Fret

Am C F Am

Well a hun-dred years is - but a blink in the eyes of Father Time

6 C G Am

we lived through war and pes-til-ence for no rea-son 'nd norhyme

11 C G Am

scars run deep from cru-el crimes we for-give but don't for - get

16 G Em Am

though hope may spring e-ter nal boys fear's grip is-a tight-ening yet her

21 Am G F Am

vet-er-ans of the great war Bri-tain cold-ly cast a side Gave them no he-roes'

26 C G Am C

wel-come mea-gre pen-sions to sur-vive Black Tud-or was their Gen-er - al Lloyd

31 G Am

George he cal-led their tune their po - li - cy of

34 G Em Am

"crin - ging fear" racked Ir - ish towns to ruin

Song ideas and meaning

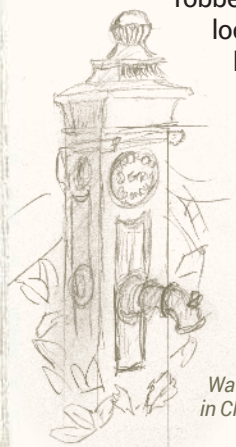
This song was written specifically as a slightly swung, traditional, country style waltz, with guitar, accordion and a rugged vocal, in $\frac{3}{4}$ time at a sprightly dancing pace of 201bpm. Its lyrics acknowledge the resilience and ingenuity of the Balscadden community, and are 'no-nonsense' style, robust and permeated with wit and humour.

From a history perspective, Baile na Scadán – Balscadden has such a rich history that the first draft of the song had twelve verses and ran for twelve minutes! Understandably, the edited version is condensed down to four verses and a refrain, playing for just under four minutes. However the writers decided to include additional verses in the Appendix, covering their fascinating and dramatic research material as summarised here:

Balscadden's history reaches back in folklore to the early 400s and St. Patrick's time, with tales of an 'ordeal of fire' called for by the High King Laoighre to settle which was the true faith, Druidism or Christianity, and the bravery of local man Benen in facing and surviving the ordeal – as St. Patrick's favoured companion, later to become Saint Benignus. Balscadden experienced Cromwell's violence as his forces used the ancient church of St. Mary to range their cannons while on his march to besiege Drogheda. Apparently a superstitious man, legend has it that Cromwell would not enter the Preston (Catholic Royalists) lands at Gormanstown farm because there was a white horse in the field. It is said that he defiled the holy well at Tobersool deliberately to desecrate local culture and religion. During the 1800's Balscadden and its environs were accustomed to daring robberies by highwaymen, one of whom was reputed to distribute – in the style of Robin Hood - much of his booty to local people, who it is said, reciprocated with safe lodgings and comforts. Balscadden suffered tragic violence during the War of Independence when the small village Inn Landy's was robbed at gunpoint by two masked RIC men, who shot and killed Patrick Howard, a local farmer who tried to escape from the pub because he was carrying monies he had made selling produce at the Drogheda market; although the perpetrators of the robbery and the murder were caught, tried and sentenced, they got off scot free as part of the Treaty deal. Two Balbriggan men, Séamus Lawless and Séan Gibbons, who were murdered by the Black and Tans during the Sack of Balbriggan, are buried in Balscadden cemetery.



Mass bell, Balscadden

Water pump
in Closin LaneBalscadden
church

Baile na Scadán - Balscadden

Written by: Tommy Cardiff & Eugene White

Arranged & Recorded by: Ollie Cole Studio Balrothery

Time Signature: 3/4

Tempo: 201 BPM

Original Key: A Major; Capo 2nd Fret, G Form

Duration: 3m:57s

Performances on the recording:

Liam Timmins: Vocal

Ollie Cole: Guitar

Joe Sheehan: Mandolin

Peter McCoy: Piano Accordion

Jimmy Moles: Bass

Intro: G C D G

Verse:

G C G D
Our young childhood days in Balscadden are fresh in my mind like a dream
G C G D G
Though three score and ten years have passed now, like yesterday's just how they seem
C G C D
We played in your streams and your river, ran free through your lanes and your fields
C G D D7
Through our village set quiet in the hills there, down the old Clóisín lane to the sea
G C G D
Balscadden you are such a jewel, held deep in my heart 'til this day,
G C G D G C D G
And it's there that I always will keep you, while roses keep blooming in May
We've historical legends in abundance dating back to 420 AD
When Benen son of Chieftain Sesenen, 'fore the Cross he went down on his knees
Bishop Pádraig baptised him in the Delvin, God's message they brought to the poor
Later both elevated to Sainthood, doing miracles and blessings and cures
Well they travelled the country as pilgrims, chanting psalms and converting the Druids
Young Benen was Sainted Benignus, 'nd his name is on Balscadden School C D G

Bridge

C G C D
We had ritual sites since the Bronze Age, we had Chieftains, and High Kings and Druids
C G D D7
We had pagans and monks and devout saints, invaders and highwaymen too
As Gaeilge 'sé Baile Na Scadán, Herring landed in old Bremore Bay
As Béarla 'tis the "Town of the Herring", still a small country village today
Their catch was pulled home on a long dray, white horses were used for the load
Fish gutted and salted in barrels, for sale on the Dublin Coach road
Generations were resourceful and handy, with the know-how to meet any task
With a grin, a scowl, a song, or a growl, and a pint and a yarn at the ask! C D G

Repeat Bridge

God in heaven gave Ireland Naomh Pádraig, from Hell Satan sent us Cromwell
'nd they both pitched their tents in Balscadden, and the history's there for to tell
Our Patron Naomh Pádraig is toasted worldwide, Oul' Ironsides's back roasting in hell
Now we're all still a little bit pagan, and the pious have mellowed as well
Ah the days of the Herring are long gone, the scars from old wars all but healed
There's a calm sense of place in Balscadden, and I pray that there always will be C D G
C G C D
As Gaeilge 'sé Baile Na Scadán, Herring landed in old Bremore Bay
C G D D7 G G C D G
As Béarla 'tis the "Town of the Herring", still a small country village today

BAILE NA SCADÁN - BALSCADDEN

(♩ = 105)
Capo 2nd Fret

Words and Music By
Tommy Cardiff and Eugene White

Our young child-hood-days in-Bal-sca-den are

8 fresh in my mind like a dream though threescore and ten years have pas-ed now li-ke

12 yes-ter day's just how they seem we played in your streams and your ri-ver

16 ra-n free through your lanes and your fields though our village set quiet in the hills there

20 down the old Clóisín lane to the sea Bal-al-sca-den you are such a jew-el

24 he - ld deep in my heart 'til this day and it's there that I

27 al-ways will keep you wh - ile ros - ses keep bloo-ming in May

Song ideas and meaning

Musically speaking, the Song 'Seven Celtic Crosses' is a folk-style ballad, with a jaunty melody and a charming, catchy chorus – which people find themselves humming after just one listen. It saunters along at the gentle tempo of 90bpm and its lyrics get across the story in a way that hold the listener's interest to the end of the song.

Dave Sorensen's piece Past Echoes takes a summary look at Balbriggan's impressive sporting history and achievements over many decades in many sporting disciplines. This song recounts the direct involvement of Balbriggan's O'Dwyer's GAA club and the players – male and female – who played key roles in the success of Dublin County Senior GAA Football teams – 'the Dub's' - down through the years to the present day. The song's title 'Seven Celtic Crosses' is a metaphor for the seven Senior All Ireland medals won by the Dubs' Balbriggan players – a cause for great pride and celebration, and very fond memories and conversation pieces, which really unifies the vast majority of sport supporters, notwithstanding whatever sporting discipline they normally follow.

The song also tips a respectful nod to the achievements of players who won medals in all the other grades, and the progress of the club to the full realisation of its major development plan earlier this year as it moved to its new premises and state of the art facilities. *"We can all walk tall to the beat of our hearts until our next senior medals come around".*



Seven Celtic Crosses

Written by: Jimmy Moles and Eugene White

Recording by: Ollie Cole Studio Balrothery

Time Signature: 4/4

Tempo: 90 BPM

Original Key: E Major

Duration: 4m25s

Performances on the recording:

Vocal: Jimmy Moles

Guitar & Bass: Jimmy Moles

Guitar & Synth: Ollie Cole

Harmony: Ollie Cole

Intro:

E E A B x 2

E A B
This town has lost so much down through the years
E A B
Many businesses and factories have disappeared
A B C#m
Unemployment hit so hard and many had to stray
A B E E A B
But our crosses they could never take away

E A B
'74 the start of Heffo's great run
E A B
Stephen Rooney and George Wilson they were part of his plan
A B E C#m
To bring Sam Maguire home, after many barren years
A B E
And our first Senior Medals appeared

CHORUS

A B E
Seven senior medals won for our town
A B E E7
Seven celtic crosses of gold
A B E C#m
Won playing for the Dubs the pride of O'Dwyer's
A B E
Made the town of the little hills so proud

E E A B x 2

For seventeen years John O'Leary held the line
Saving shots from the best in his time
When he took those steps to lift the Sam Maguire
The whole of Balbriggan shared his pride
Aoife Curran won again with the Dublin Ladies team
Another two celtic crosses won for Baile Brigin
Our four local heroes can all take a bow
They played with such passion and pride

CHORUS

We should never forget many more lit the flame
Winning many medals in all other grades
Their names will stay in the club's hall of flame
To ensure that their memories don't fade

As the club moves on to surroundings more grand
To build a home that can match any ground
We can all walk tall with pride in our hearts
Until our next senior medal comes around

Chorus

We can all walk tall with pride in our hearts
Until our next senior medal comes around
Until our next senior medal comes around
Until our next senior medal comes around

SEVEN CELTIC CROSSES

Written By
Jimmy Moles and Eugene White

(♩ = 90)
Capo 2nd Fret

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 90. The score consists of nine staves of music, each with a line number (1, 5, 8, 11, 15, 18, 21, 25, 29) at the beginning. Above the notes, guitar chords are indicated with letter names (E, A, B, E7) and small diagrams showing the fretting hand positions. The lyrics are written below the notes, with some words hyphenated across lines. The score ends with a double bar line on the final staff.

1 E A B E A B

5 E A B E

This town has lost so much down through the years ma-ny busin-es-ses and fac-tor-ies

8 A B A B

have dis-a-ppeared un-em-ploy-ment hit so hard and ma-ny had to stray

11 A B E E A B

but our cro-s-ses they could never take aw-ay

15 E A B E

se-ven-ty four the start of Hef-fo's great run Ste-ven Roo-ney and George Wil-son they

18 A B A B E

were part of his plan to bring Sam Magui - re home af-ter ma-ny bar-ren years

21 A B E A B E

and our first sen-ior me-dals a-ppeared se-ven sen-ior medals won for our

25 A B E E7 A B E

__town se-ven Cel-tic cro-s-ses of gold won play-ing for the Dub's the pride

29 A B E

of O'Dwyer's made the town of the lit - tle hills so proud

Song ideas and meaning

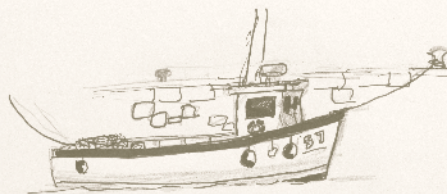
Musically speaking, this song delivers a traditional ballad-style 'no frills' story with hearty, robust lyrics and an evocative melody and chorus that gives the listener an insight to the hard, tough and often dangerous life, and the sense of camaraderie, that is generally the common lot of our sea-fishing community. The many men who were lost at sea over centuries are commemorated with great respect and sadness as 'silent ghosts we cannot see', in very strong, deep-seated community memories that are also recounted in the song 'The Sailors' Grave'.



Balbriggan lighthouse

From a historical perspective, human settlement around Balbriggan's natural harbour dates back to the Neolithic era 4,000 years ago whence fishing originated as a small-scale subsistence activity. Before the mid-18th century, Balbriggan was described as a small, quiet fishing village. It was largely overshadowed by the nearby population centre of Balrothery, which served as the primary agricultural and manufacturing hub. As set out by David Sorensen in his piece *Past Echoes*, the true industrialisation of the fishing trade began when the Hamilton family purchased the local estates and in the early-mid 18th century, went on to build the harbour pier, the lighthouse and the salt-works. By the early 1830s, nearly 1,000 people were employed in the harbour area. However, the industry was already beginning to be eclipsed by the town's booming textile manufacturing industries. In 1831, the government withdrew fishing bounties (subsidies), leading to a significant reduction in the local fleet. By 1837, only 10 small fishing boats (wherries) were officially registered to the port. Early Balbriggan fishermen primarily used open yawls and practiced long lining—towing lines with hundreds of hooks baited with whelks. Their catch was either sold fresh at local markets or transported by cart to Dublin.

Since the 1940s, the modern trawler fleet in Balbriggan has transitioned from small, traditional wooden vessels to highly specialised, industrial fleets primarily focused on the export market. The introduction of the *Bord Iascaigh Mhara 50 Footer* bridged the gap between traditional sailing hulls and fully motorised vessels. By 1961, records show eleven boats were operating across Balbriggan, Skerries, and Loughshinney. In a significant piece of maritime history, the *Ovoca* was the first motorised fishing boat in the British Isles. It operated successfully out of Balbriggan until it was eventually broken up and removed in the late 20th century. Boats based in Balbriggan such as *The Eiscir Riada*, *Budding Rose* and *Girl Nancy*, to name but a few, were renowned as "*famed fishing boats of Fingal*," representing a golden era of commercial fishing for the North Dublin region, proudly remembered in Balbriggan. These boats are frequently celebrated in local maritime history, and fondly remembered at ceremonies like the *Blessing of the Boats*, serving as symbols of Balbriggan's transition back from a textile town to its earlier roots as a thriving working harbour.



Lighthouse on the Harbour

Lyrics Written by: Michael Vincent O' Callaghan

Music written by: Martin McEvoy

Recording by: Ollie Cole Studio Balrothery

Time Signature: 4/4

Tempo: 123 BPM

Original Key: D Major

Duration: 3m:20s

Performances on the recording:

Vocal: Seán Kiernan

1st Guitar: Martin McEvoy

2nd Guitar: Ollie Cole

Banjo: Seán Kiernan

Whistle: Seán Kiernan

Intro: D A G A x 2

D Em G A7
Lighthouse on the harbour - silent ghosts you cannot see
D Em G A7
From tales of woe from years ago and - all those we lost at sea
D Em G A7
And sailing boats with their sails afloat - we can see them from the strand
D Em G A7
But our hearts are with the trawler boys those - proud and tough fishing Irishmen

1st Chorus

G/ D A7 D
Crew hands in the galley - singing songs and telling jokes
G F#m Em A7 A7
With one share for the Skipper - and another one for the boat

From Killybegs in Donegal to - Balbriggan on the strand
And Skerrie goats with Loughshinny boats and - those who fish the Isle of Man
And then we see the Flying Spray and - she is safe in her return
But our hearts are with the trawler boys those - proud and tough fishing Irishmen

Repeat first chorus

2nd Chorus

(A7) G D A7 D
They earn their pay the fishing way - mending nts and pulling ropes
G F#m Em A7
Our hearts are with the trawler boys those - proud and tough Balbriggan men

Instrumental – Repeat Intro

Lighthouse on the harbour - guarding coast both day and night
And Master at Arms will sound his alarms in - bad weather fog and plight
And then we see the Flying Spray and - she is safe in her return,
On the crest of a wave with the seagulls at play those - tough proud and tough Balbriggan men.

Outro

D A G A x 2

D

LIGHTHOUSE ON THE HARBOUR

♩ = 110
Intro 8 Bars
Key of D Major

Words by Michael Vincent O'Callaghan
Music By Martin (Bounce) McEvoy

6 Light-house on the har-bour
 11 si-lent ghosts you can not see from tales of woe from years a-go and a - ll those we lost at
 16 sea now sail-ing ing boats with their sails a - float we can see them from the strand
 20 but our hearts are wi - th the trawler boys those proud and tough Bal-bri-ggan men
 24 Crew hands in the ga-lley sing-ing songs and tel-ling jokes
 29 with one share for the Ski-pper and a-noth-er one for the boat they earn their pay
 34 the fi-shing way men ding nets and pu-lling ropes our hearts are with
 38 the tra-wler boys those proud and tough Bal - bri - gg - an men

Album Track 12 **Our Places**

Song ideas and meaning

Musical objectives for the song 'Our Places' were to create an upbeat, folky, confident and optimistic feel – to reflect our young, vibrant, inclusive community today, and the ongoing major rejuvenation of Balbriggan's public spaces. With a fast tempo of 178bpm and a chorus melody that lilts with wave-like cadences, the song is designed to suit either a solo singer and/or a choral arrangement.



The song draws together the key themes present throughout the album. It reminds us of our reliance upon and our pride in our 'home place' for our sense of security, stability, cultural identity and belonging - especially through difficult times, but also in normal times through expression of culture, music, art, education, sport and the ordinary life rhythms of "work, rest and play". It reminds us that our history, over centuries, is replete with very difficult times when our people fled **"places struck by famine, bombs, war and strife, derision for our differences and threat's upon our lives"**. In homage to the other eleven songs on the album, this song tips a nod and a smile to our peoples' resilience, kindness, generosity, good humoured nature, talents and ingenuity - all such strong qualities brought to the wider world by our young people who have emigrated, and by those who continue to emigrate today. Our diaspora is estimated to be between 70 and 80 million people world-wide who claim Irish heritage – a phenomenal number from such a relatively small country.

The song recognises the harsh world of today where so much of our lived experiences as a people, for generations – prolonged difficult times, oppression and hardships – is the daily reality for millions of people around the world, with many forced to flee as our people once did, for the same or worse reasons as ours did. The song encourages us to show the wisdom and compassion that we can draw from our nation's experiences, to people who are being oppressed, terrorised and displaced today.



The Lark venue, Balbriggan

It is not a coincidence that, despite the difficult themes explored in the album, that in this the last song, the last word sung, in an uplifting cadence, is 'hope'.



Our Places

Written by: Tommy Cardiff & Eugene White

Recording by: Ollie Cole Studio Balrothery

Time Signature: 4/4

Tempo: 178 BPM

Original Key: A Major

Duration: 3m:31s

Performances on the recording:

Vocal: Catherine Noorlandt

1st Guitar: Ollie Cole

2nd Guitar: Tommy Cardiff

Intro: A, picked

A
Our way of life is mostly set
D A
To learn, work, and play
Bm
Sometimes bound by struggle
D E
By sadness or dismay
D A
But when a place around us
D A
Feels like another skin
D A
We recreate a sense of home
E E7 A
And we once again begin

The home place knows the hard knocks
Protects all childish things
Takes wisdom from the old ones
As the young ones spread their wings
Some emigrate some immigrate
To seek a better place
For love or for a new life
Sometimes to just escape

Chorus

D Em
So our places aren't just spaces,
F#m A
just concrete, streets and roads
D A
They are havens, they are wellsprings
D E
For our culture and our lore
D Em
For our heroes some with medals gold
F#m A
For folks who can't go home
D A
For those with kin who've had to leave
D E
And for a welcome hope

We flee places struck by famine
By bombs, war and strife
Persecution for our given faiths
And threats upon our lives
Derision for our differences
Our born identities
Just hoping that the place we reach
Is a safer place to be

Human heritage is a common bond
By which we all are bound
Best know and understand it
For its lessons to resound
So cherish all the good of old
Set bitterness aside
Guide every single choice we make
With the innocence of a child

We commemorate the sad times
And celebrate the good
Places where we live our lives
Run through our flesh and blood
Our humble pride in our home place
Gives strength to heart and soul
Our history shapes our future
That's why it must be told

Last Chorus, repeat last line as follows

D E A (resolve to high doh)
And for a welcome hope

D E A

OUR PLACES

Capo 2nd Fret
Key of A Maj
(♩ = 80)

Words and Music by
Tommy Cardiff

Our way of life is most-ly set to learn work and play some-times bound
by stru-ggle by sad-ness-or dis-may But when a place a-round us feels like an-ot-her skin
we re-cre-ate a sense of home and we once ag-ain be-gin The home place knows
the hard knocks pro - tects all chil - dish___ things takes wis - dom from
the old ones as young ones spread their wings Some em-ig rate some imm-i grate
To seek a bet-ter place For love or for a new life Some-times to just es-cape So our pla-ces
aren't just spa-ces just con crete streets and roads They are hav-ens they are well springs for our culture
and our lore For our he roes some with med-als gold For folks who can't go home
for those with kin who've had to leave_ and for a wel-come hope

Biographies

Conall Campbell

Just ten years old, the eldest of Claire and Glen Campbell's three children, and a pupil of Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín, Conall loves music and singing, and has very eclectic taste. He is currently learning to play the tin whistle in a junior group in O'Dwyer's GAA club, where he also plays Gaelic Football and Hurling. Conall was delighted to be asked to sing a cappello as Gaeilge on the song Baile an Ridire in a duet with professional singer/songwriter Ollie Cole.

Díreach deich mbliana d'aois, an té is sine de thriúr clainne Chlaire agus Glen Campbell, agus dalta i nGaelscoil Bhaile Brigín, is breá le Conall ceol agus amhránaíocht, agus is aoibhinn leis gach saghas ceoil. I láthair na huaire tá sé ag foghlaim an fheadóg stáin i ngrúpa sóisireach de chuid Chlub CLG Uí Dhuibhir {Bremore, Baile Brigín}, áit a n-imríonn sé peil Ghaelach agus iomáint leis. Bhí áthas an domhain ar Chonall nuair a niarraidh air cappello as Gaeilge a chanadh ar an amhrán Baile an Ridire i ndiséad leis an amhránaí/scríbhneoir amhrán Ollie Cole.



Brian Cardiff

Forty years knocking around. Proud husband and father. Balbriggan man, living in Rush. I know a little bit about a lot. Love family, music and good food. Old soul.



Tommy Cardiff

Tommy and his wife Moira 'blew into' Balbriggan in 1980, where they raised three sons, and (to date!) have seven grandchildren. At age fifteen, Tommy saved commission from a 'Pools Round' to buy his first guitar for IR£90 in Goodwin's, Capel Street. In his twenties, work demands took over. Tommy resumed his '*music career*' on retirement, soon after which, he says, he was fortunately destined to meet the 'Acoustic Misfits and Friends', with whom he enjoys great music and craic.



Denis Carolan

Denis is a musician, multi-instrumentalist, songwriter and teacher. His first album *All Summer Long* was released in 2011, and he is at present writing for a second one to be released in the coming year. While originally from Slane, Co.Meath, Denis has been a resident of Balbriggan since 2005. Settling here after a period of rambling abroad, he has been playing trad and roots music for over 25 years. Occasionally moonlighting with The Acoustic Misfits, he is regularly to be heard with "The Scarecrow Union" and The "Fortune Few" folk and blues collectives.



Paul Coffey

Paul, a native of Balbriggan, has tried his hand at numerous occupations including archivist, shelf stacker and art tutor before settling on medical photography. He keeps his skills sharp at weekends through portraiture, graphic design and event photography.



Ollie Cole

Ollie Cole, a Kells native now living in Balrothery, is a songwriter and producer with a rich musical history. He has released four critically acclaimed solo albums, and his latest - 'Wingspan' - is currently receiving widespread praise. His previous band TURN is also renowned for its musical output and energetic live performances. Ollie has a Masters in Music from DCU in Dublin and is currently working full time as a musician and producer from his home studio in Balrothery Village.



Jennie Delacy (née Moles)

Jennie is married to Kieran Delacy. Jennie is a secondary school teacher who likes to run and workout in the gym. She loves to perform with her brother and sisters, and also performs solo as a spoken word artist.



Tommy Gallagher

Originally from Raheny, Tommy has lived in Balbriggan for most of his adult life. He and his wife of 47 years Christine have three grown up children and five granddaughters from the age of 3 to 24 years. Tommy's interests include Futsal coaching, weight training, and being Chairperson of FLAG - a local art group who work alongside the Balbriggan community to brighten up areas that have been vandalised by graffiti. Tommy's work as a Caretaker in Balrothery National School has given him the opportunity to express his love of upcycling and sculpture by taking discarded everyday waste and transforming it into artwork, all of which can be seen in the school grounds.



Emma Giles (née Moles)

Emma is married to Colin Giles, and has one child, Alice. Emma is a Speech and Language Therapist. Emma is very active playing tennis and working out in the gym. Emma loves singing and performing with her brother and sisters especially in family sessions.



Teresa Gorman

Teresa fell in love with traditional Irish music aged seven after listening to Mr Ray McKenna, a local fiddle player, at Ceoltas, and to the Gavins, who were founding members. From there she picked up a tin whistle and never left it out of her hands. Teresa is learning to play uilleann pipes and always likes a challenge. She is a member of the local musicians' group 'An Bhailiù', which she enjoys.



Brendan Ingoldsby

Brendan used to be a civil servant, but says he is alright now. Originally from Clontarf, he has been living as a blow-in for over 50 years in Balbriggan, where he and his wife Catherine have been blessed with four wonderful daughters. Having played fiddle over the years with showbands, country bands and ballad groups, Brendan considers himself to be more of an entertainer than a musician. He reached the peak of his career when he joined The Acoustic Misfits.



John Keely

Originally from Crumlin and educated in Drimnagh Castle CBS. John discovered music and singing sessions during his early years with An Óige. John went to sea as a Radio Officer and bought his first guitar, a real banger! He is married and has two children and three grandchildren. On retirement, John took up watercolour painting and classical guitar which took him to local music sessions as he is particularly interested in folk music. He sings with the Lusk community choir and the ukulele band in Balbriggan. When asked to come on board and sketch for the book he was delighted to get involved.



Katie Kidd

Katie is an art director who was born and raised in Balbriggan. She is now residing in London after a brief stint in Sydney. She studied graphic design at the National College of Art & Design, Dublin, and now makes ads for a living. Katie loves a good side project; especially ones that get her off the computer and making things with her hands – like this one. She has no musical skills, so has instead lent her visual ones to this wonderful song book.



Seán Kiernan

Seán's musical journey began at family house parties when he was young – where there was always that one relative who could play an instrument or sing. Having been on the road gigging at home and abroad for the past thirteen years, Seán's arsenal of instruments includes tin whistle, five-string banjo, guitar, flute, bodhrán and uilleann pipes. Seán is a qualified luthier of the pipes through an apprenticeship with Na Píobairí Uilleann. He has known his fellow musicians on this new album for many years, and they have played everywhere and anything together. He regards collaboration on this album as an honour, and hopes it will be a real treat for those who get to listen to it.



Rory McCrystal

HDip, BSc, PGDip, MSc Cyber Security; born in Belfast, graduate of Trinity College Dublin. Having paid the price for early academic failure made the Dean's list of honours. Currently on second career or third (to run concurrently) if you include parenting. Sports coach, can definitely swim, married to Lorraine and parents of Aoife and Dylan. Life can be described as developing a sense of humour! SLAYER!!



Martin McEvoy

Born in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda 24/Jul/1951, Martin went to School in St Peter & Paul's in Chapel Street, Balbriggan. He didn't attend Secondary School, and started work in Lamb's Fruit farm in Donabate aged 13 years for £3.10 per week - in today's money that is less than €5. Martin learned to play guitar at 16 and played with a local band called Blackbird. He joined the Defence Forces in 1974 and did 3 years in Collins Barracks Dublin, and worked as a lorry driver for a few years after that. Martin got married to Hilda Geraghty in 1980, and they have two daughters Elaine, an Accountant, and Amy, a Civil Servant. Martin has been a member of St Patrick's Brass & Reed Band since 1985.



Jimmy Moles

Jimmy and his wife Margaret moved from Raheny to Balbriggan in 1980. They have a son, Gareth, and three daughters, Laura, Emma, and Jennie and three grandchildren, Faye, Liam, and Alice. Jimmy worked as a mechanic and in residential care, and is now retired. The Moles family all enjoy playing music and singing in different settings, including in many choirs and bands over the years. Jimmy has been playing music for over fifty years and still enjoys playing with The Acoustic Misfits among others. Jimmy really enjoyed his roles in making the recordings songs for the History in Song album.



Catherine Noorlandt

Catherine is a local Balbriggan woman. She has had a love of music since childhood. She studies singing with Jackie McNally and has played guitar for many years, previously under the tutelage of Angela Morgan and Tommy Cardiff. Currently, she sings with the award-winning Maynooth Chamber Choir under the direction of Dr. Michael Dawson, and has previously been a member of the Blingmasters.



Michael (Sam) O'Callaghan

Living in Boston Massachusetts, Michael grew up in Derham Park, Balbriggan, where his family still resides. He travels home to visit as often as possible. In his profession as an engineer in the Bio-Pharmaceutical industry, Michael travelled many continents before settling in America. He sometimes puts pen to paper and writes about whatever topic comes into his thought process. One such piece was "Lighthouse on the Harbour", remembering those we lost at sea from the Balbriggan fishing families. Michael posted the words to Martin McEvoy – they were childhood friends growing up in Balbriggan - and Martin put the arrangement and music to Michael's prose to make the song.



Laura O'Sullivan (née Moles)

Laura is married to Will O Sullivan and has two children, Faye and Liam.

Laura is a Primary school teacher. She has a passion for music and has performed many different styles through the years. She really enjoys a family session.



Joe Sheehan

As a native of Balbriggan, Joe enjoyed growing up in the town and being involved in various groups, committees and, of course, music. He has been playing mandolin for 40+ years and loves the sound that this little instrument brings to all forms of music. Joe believes that performing with various artists is a great way to explore all kinds of songs and tunes and he wouldn't have it any other way.



David Sorensen

David is a former primary school teacher and teacher-tutor in Dublin City University. Coming to live in Balbriggan in 1978, he always had an interest in the history of the town. One of the founder members of the Balbriggan Historical Society, he was involved in several publications by the Society. In 2017, with his friend and colleague, Petra Skyvova, he founded the Balbriggan Heritage Group. With the assistance of Fingal County Council, the Balbriggan Heritage Group established the Balbriggan Town Heritage Trail, with an accompanying guide booklet. David has made numerous presentations on local history topics such as The National Schools of Balbriggan, Stockings for the Queen, The Courthouses of Balbriggan, Wrecks and Rescues off Balbriggan's Shores and most recently, Loreto Convent 1857 – 2025. He has also led guided heritage walks of the town, focusing on aspects such as the cotton mills, street names and historical leisure activities.



Liam Timmins

Grew up in Inchicore in a family with strong GAA links. First moved to Hampton Cove in 1979 and have lived there ever since, apart from a nine year hiatus in Snowtown, Naul. Participated in some very enjoyable Trad. sessions in O'Connor's of Ballyboughal and Killian's of Naul in the 80's and 90's. Fell in with some dubious company after moving back to Hampton Cove in 1994. Total bunch of misfits.



Eugene White

Eugene and his wife Helen have two children, Stephen and Karen, and three grandchildren. He grew up just out the road in the Ring Commons and attended National School there before attending the Technical School in Balbriggan. He grew up with a great interest in GAA and played at all levels for O'Dwyer's. In later life his two main interests have been history and music, so it was no surprise that he combined both in this project. Eugene observes wryly that 40 years living in the town doesn't qualify one as an "OUR".

Acknowledgements

As we sit to write these acknowledgements, we are mindful of the old African proverb that it takes a village to rear a child. We have so many people to thank – a veritable village - that we can't list everyone individually here or we will exceed our page budget for the book. If you have enjoyed this book and its accompanying album of songs, all of our efforts will have been worthwhile. If you have been stimulated to further explore our community's history, or indeed to have a greater appreciation of Our people, Our places and Our Past, we are delighted. Our eternal gratitude belongs to these people:

- the musicians and singers who gave their time, skills and talents generously to all of the meetings, rehearsals and recording sessions that went into making the album
- Oliver Cole, the wizard who produced and recorded the album so beautifully, and played and sang along with us as he himself fell in love with the project
- our very own '*Miss Marple*' aka Alice Davis, Chair of Balbriggan Community Council, and her Committee, who had the blind courage to partner with us from the 'idea stage'
- the team at Fingal County Council/Libraries Division and their partners in Creative Ireland who stage-funded the project, and without whom we could not have succeeded
- the team in the 'Our Balbriggan' Hub who generously hosted our presentation of our completed album in their offices on The Square in Balbriggan
- the schools' principals and teachers who took the time to understand the scope and objectives of the project, advised us, and have undertaken to use it in their classrooms
- our designer of the book's cover Katie Kidd, who managed to capture and reflect the project's essence and present it in a simple, elegant, beautiful form
- our dedicated local historian David Sorensen who wrote a custom piece for the book to complement the many historical themes and events covered by the songs
- our talented sketch artists, Tommy Gallagher, John Keely, and Brian Cardiff, who provided such evocative images to complement the texts in the book
- our fluent gaeilgeoirí who helped us to largely overcome the challenge of correctly pairing an Gaeilge with the vocal and harmonic rhythms of dár liricí amhráin Gaeilge

- Eamonn Donlon who went out of his way to facilitate us in The Warehouse in the early days when we were just framing the project's scope and needed a 'laboratory'
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- David Pratt and his staff at Dempseys, who accommodate our informal trial sessions and have us in the bar for gigs from time to time
- Our families and friends who put up with endless conversations, exchanges of ideas, offered advice and corrections to material, and often re-fuelled us with their enthusiasm
- Noel Smyth of Silverbark Creative who designed and published this book for us, and who was welcoming, insightful and totally committed to our project whence we met.

Tommy Cardiff & Eugene White

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Appendix

To write engaging songs – with different catchy melodies - from the huge abundance of interesting and important historical material that belongs to our three communities over many centuries proved challenging. At times, the editing process in particular was quite painful. Really good material and many verses that we knew would catch listeners' imagination, ended up on the cutting room floor. As one example, the first draft of the song 'Baile na Scadán – Balscadden' had a dozen verses and played for just under twelve minutes. One witty musician remarked that it was the only song he had ever encountered that would require an interval. He was right of course.

Below are just a few of the verses that were cut in the editing process. A musician who decides to learn and perform the songs can re-use these verses – vocal and harmonic rhythms will fit snugly into the final versions of the songs.

Outtakes from 'Baile na Scadán – Balscadden'

The High King of Tara Loíguire, he demanded an ordeal of fire
The true God would protect his disciple, and the imposter would die on the pyre
Lucet Máel Chief Druid of the pagans and Benen stood bound in the blaze
The Druid was burned into ashes, young Benen walked forward unscathed
So the King and his pagans turned Christian, into exile he banished the Druids
And Benen was Sainted Benignus; today his name is on Balscadden School

1200 years later came Cromwell, his forces came ashore in Bremore
With his Roundheads and New Model Army, into Ireland those savages tore
In Balscadden he sequestered the Big House, and he lined up his cannons and guns
He ranged cannon fire on the old Church, the Saints' graves to craters he churned
To profane Tubersool well he bathed his feet and his black steed he let defecate
But Gormanston farm kept a White Horse, and that's why he stopped at the gate

In the 17 and 18 hundreds, when fine coaches travelled the road
Ireland's most famous highwayman, robbed the rich of their banknotes and gold
His life-story reads like a blockbuster film, with tales of great derring-do
He cheated the hangman, by escaping Trim Jail, made a fool of the Excise man too

Our fight for our freedom is marked here on the graves of two Balbriggan men
They're both laid to rest in St. Mary's and we come every year to commend
Gibbons earned his wage as a dairyman, and Lawless was a barber by trade
The Black and Tans killed them in cold blood, two innocent martyrs they made
We remember their two young lives taken, two families who suffered great loss
We must never take freedom for granted, or forget the high price that it cost

In Ellen Landy's small Inn in the village, people met up to drink and converse
Two masked RIC came to rob it, and committed a crime most perverse
Pearson with his gun out cried "hands up", Patrick Howard made a run for the door
Smith was on look-out and stopped him, Pearson shot him three times or more
Poor Howard crawled away and escaped them, but succumbed to his wounds the next day
Despite witnesses sworn in the Court House, Smith and Pearson walked scot-free away

Outtakes from 'Balbriggans'

Powered on by the steam as the stack billowed smoke
The machines were in tune like the finest symphony
Conducted by the fettlers whose skills none could deny
That factory ran like clockwork to create our finery

Outtakes from 'Baile an Ridire - Balrothery'

I gcroílár Brega ar príomhbhóthar go cnoc na Teamhrach
Chuireadh capaill Rí Séamas i stáblaí ár n'óstán, an oíche roimh na Bóinne
Cé gur sheol longanna an domhain le ár gcoinnle agus brioscaí
Chuir an nua Bhóthar Chóiste 'is geata dola siar sinn tamall gearr

In the heart of Brega on a main road to Tara
Our Inn stabled King James' horses, on the eve of the Boyne
While the ships of the world sailed with our candles and biscuits
The new Coach Road and toll gate set us back a short time

Contacts, Ideas, and Notes

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines.

Contacts, Ideas, and Notes

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines.

Contacts, Ideas, and Notes

Contacts, Ideas, and Notes

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines.

Contacts, Ideas, and Notes

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines.

Contacts, Ideas, and Notes

Handwriting practice area with 20 horizontal dotted lines.

Contacts, Ideas, and Notes

Handwriting practice area with 20 horizontal dotted lines.

Contacts, Ideas, and Notes

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal dotted lines.



In a unique blend of Folk, Country and Ballad music traditions, this book presents and accompanies an album of twelve original songs written and performed by local musicians, titled 'Our People, Our Places, Our Past' (Local History Through Song).

An accurate historical text is provided in the book to complement the key themes and events depicted in the songs.

Original pencil sketches drawn for the book by local artists are included to illustrate scenes, buildings and objects of historical interest and importance.

Readers are invited to explore seminal aspects of the history of Balbriggan, Balrothery and Balscadden, three Irish communities in North County Dublin.

Instructions for how to download the accompanying music album are provided inside the book.

