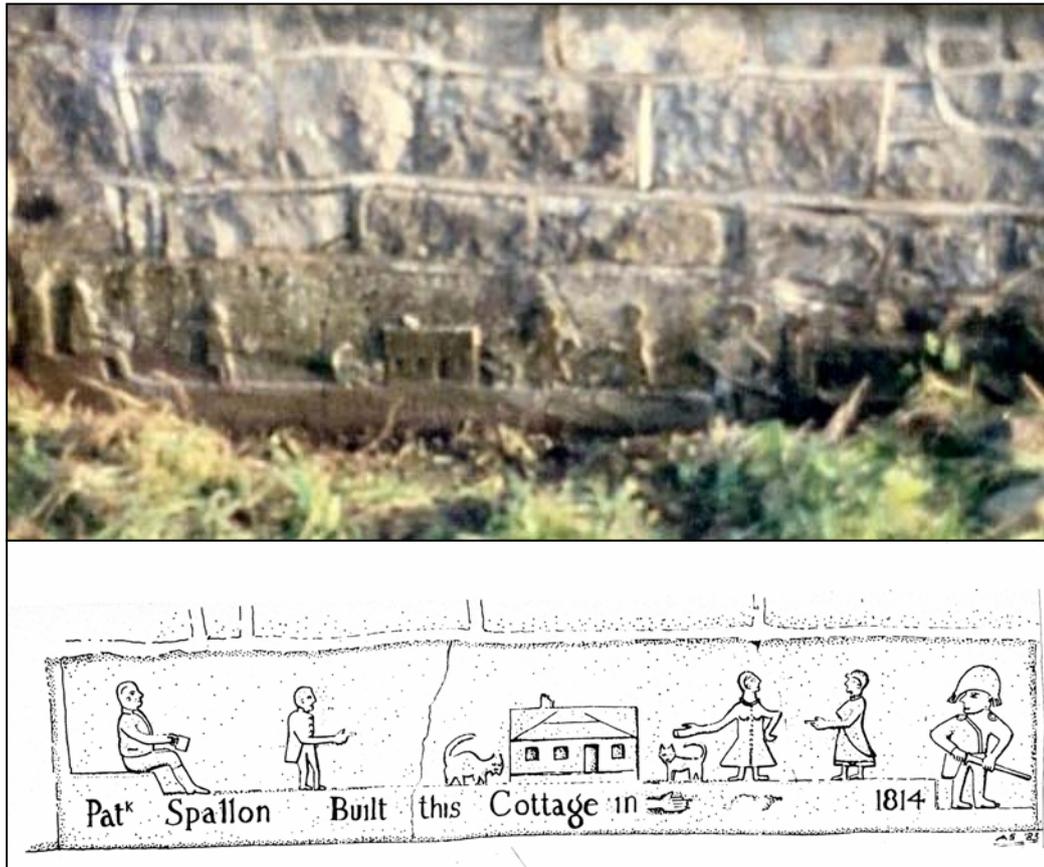


Hidden gems and Forgotten People

COUNTY ROSCOMMON ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The Weakfield “Eviction Slab”

This carved stone is set low down in the outside boundary wall of Weakfield national school. Local people believe it to be a commemorative depiction of an eviction attempt that took place at a house not far away on the other side of the main road. This carved stone formed the lintel of the fireplace in the house and it appears that in the early 1950's the house had become a ruin leaving the stone in danger of being damaged or, even worse, lost forever to historic examination. Through the good offices of Fr Joe Kilmartin P.P. and Miss Mary Fox N.T. the lintel was saved and brought to the grounds of the school where it lay for some years. Eventually, in the early sixties, when the new school was being built, the lintel was inserted in the wall where it still stands today.

The stone measures 145 cm by 35 cm and is of limestone. Below a number of carved figures an inscription reads: “Patk Spallon built this cottage in 1814”.

Starting from the left of the of the slab the scene is composed of what appears to be an old man, in profile, sitting and holding out his hand that grips a mug or wooden mether. His dress includes a high collar jacket showing pocket, and his boots are clearly shown. The next figure is a man standing erect with hand raised and finger pointing forward. His clothing includes a swallowtail jacket showing 3 buttons. Next, a cat stands with tail raised and head towards observer beside a finely executed rendering of a house which has three windows, doorway and chimney. The house is of the full gable wall type, but a later crude attempt at making it a hip roof variety was made, thus spoiling the original work. A dog stands on the other side of the house with his face towards observer. Further on a woman stands with her head raised, front of her body to observer, her left hand on her hip, her right hand raised and open hand in pointing fashion towards the house. She wears a long dress buttoned in the

centre from top to bottom with about 15 buttons, and it is embellished with a pronounced neckline. The next figure is of another woman, in profile, somewhat similarly dressed, but she also wears a necklace. She is looking towards the house with outstretched arm and finger pointing towards animals and house.

Both women appear to have caps on their heads. The last figure is of a soldier, apparently of high rank, in the process of drawing or replacing his sword in its scabbard. He is looking towards the other figures and his uniform includes cocked hat with tassels, doubled-breasted jacket with epaulettes on the shoulders.

His legs are set a little lower down from the level of standing of the other figures, which looked like a corrective attempt by the mason to get the right proportion for the figure. Notable in the overall carving is the accurate detail of the early 19th century dress rendered by the mason.

To affect an eviction all humans and animals had to be removed from the premises.

Local tradition about the stone is that an eviction, on behalf of the landlord, assisted by the military was in progress at the house. Despite removing the dog and cat on several occasions and sealing all possible re-entry points to the house, they were unable to keep them out. The people, who probably comprise one family, are drawing this fact to the attention of the military. This amounted to a failed eviction attempt. Some locals believe that the military were frightened by this “supernatural event” and that the tenants were allowed to resume residence thanks to the dog and cat. Every detail of the carving is of outstanding workmanship.

This stone must have been the focus of great attention in the house down the years, commanding maximum attention from family and visitor alike and is a strong reminder of less happy days in Irish history. Great credit is due to the individuals involved, Fr Kilmartin and Miss Fox, for the relocating of this stone in the interests of preservation.

Albert Siggins