

Of Ghosts, Castles, And Erin's Woe

By JOHN DASH

"Ghosts? I really don't believe in them. But ..." the Baron Brian DeBreffney said last week.

"But Leap Castle has a reputation for hauntings," he recounted. A forbidding place, Leap is, he said. "All sorts of horrible events have happened there, fratricidal murders, a father throwing his daughter's lover out a window."

It is said that a headless sheep roams within its stone walls, suffusing the air with a terrible stench.

But neither the sheep nor the stench was manifest to DeBreffney on a recent visit. Something else was.

It seems the baron was researching his latest book, "The Castles of Ireland," when it became necessary to look over Leap. He had heard and scoffed at the legends. Leap would merit a photograph or two and a few inches of commentary nothing more, in the volume to be published by Thames and Hudson.

A pleasant day. The idea was to ascend a winding stair and to view a gallery in Leap's tower.

As he began the climb, "an unbelievable occurrence," took place. "I felt as if someone were coming down the stair and brushed past me. Then suddenly it was as if there was a horde descending the stair, all brushing to get past me. It flattened me against the wall. The feeling was so terrific, I felt at once I had to get down the stair and I could barely move. It was very nasty - and fortunately it was my only experience such."

The baron, a voluble, affable man was in Rochester last week promoting another new book, "The Irish World," and helping Sibley's celebrate its Galaxy week.

Baron Brian DeBreffney is Roman Catholic. There are troubles in Ireland between Roman Catholics and Protestants. "It's easy to throw one's hands up in despair," over the situation, he said. "But what we have to do is point out there is no easy solution, no short-term solution to those problems."

He contends that there should be attempts to "take the immediacy out of the situation, to let the people feel that their civil liberties will not be jeopardized by a settlement."

With this, he said, "Denominational schools in the North should cease." He acknowledges that will not be a popular statement in the Catholic press; but, he nevertheless feels that interdenominational institutions "teaching basic Christian ethics in common," with separate classes for liturgy and doctrine should be the norm.

Third, "Protestants in the north have got to get guarantees of civil liberties," he said.

Their worries are that should Ireland become a single nation, constitutional amendments on such questions as divorce or birth control, because they are resolved by plebiscite, would diminish the rights of Protestant northerners. "The Catholic Church in the South speaks directly to the electorate, even though there is separation of Church and State," he said.

He told of another solution through an anecdote.

The baron was visiting a town official of Strangford, a small town in the north. That official told him, "We have no troubles here. Everybody has a job."

For the present the baron says it is important to "take the steam out of the situation, for the people to realize that all elements have formed a national Irish culture."

"The Irish World," published this month by Harry Abrams, which DeBreffney edited, is just such an attempt. It is a panoramic view of the elements which have contributed to an Irish national identification, from the earliest days to the present.

Halloween

Continued from Page 1

every last one of them was used by those of us who are of Celtic blood long before Christianity was announced to our peoples.

And even the custom of bobbing for apples is pagan Latin homage to Pomona, goddess of the harvest.

The Celts, it appears, celebrated the summer's end with bonfires and feasts in a rite they called Samhain. For them the observance was the beginning of the new year; and the time of the Festival of the Dead.

The ghosts of those who departed during the year would find the approaching winter too chilly for their liking and would warm themselves at Celtic hearths and bonfires. At night, if stones thrown into the embers of their fires were moved, the person who threw those stones would perish before the next celebration of Samhain.

The Druidic priests taught that the souls of evil folk were changed into cats.

Irish lore has it that on the night of Jack's demise, and he was a thoroughly despicable fellow, he was condemned to work at atoning for his misdeeds by carrying his head like a lantern about on this night. He thus became known as Jack O'Lantern.

Something still practiced in the British Isles, but not too common here is the celebration of the Corn Mother and Harvest Home.

The Druids would leave a single sheaf in the fields while reaping. This sheaf was decorated and called the Corn Mother, and supposed to hold the spirit of the harvest. It was then beaten and burned. On occasion an animal was wrapped inside it. On occasion a man.

The field fires, and the designation of a village child as the Harvest Child are still a part of rural Britain's celebration of Harvest Home.

Halloween night, as the children, dressed in their scarey finery, tromp down the street to ask admission to a brightly lit home, remember they are only carrying on something that started a few thousand years ago, only engaging in a little harmless paganism.



Photo by Susan McKinney

Marriage Encounter Convention

Some of the 500 participants in the Marriage Encounter Convention which was held at Mercy High School last Saturday and Sunday pause for a picture. From left to right are Sandy Wahl, Ray Wahl, Rita Lewis, George Sproule, Nancy Sproule, Dick Degus, Sheila Degus, Pat Zapf, Bernie Zapf and Barbara Helfert. The weekend was open to the public and all renewal groups were invited.

Teach Peace

Vatican City (RNS) — Pope Paul, in a renewed plea for peace in Northern Ireland, emphasized at a meeting here with 10 Irish bishops that it is the task of the Catholic Church "to instruct men in the ways of peace, in collaboration with the followers of other religions."

Three archbishops and seven bishops were received in audience by the pontiff on Oct. 10.

Pope Paul urged the Irish hierarchy to work with others toward "true peace," so that a society may be built "in which the rights of all individuals are recognized and in which hatred, contestation, and violence are eliminated."

He also encouraged the bishops not to be hesitant in carrying out Vatican II reforms, especially with regard to the participation "of the whole community of the faithful in the life of the Church" and with respect to the religious education of youth.

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Applause! Applause!

Photo by Terrance J. Brennan

Dignitaries on the reviewing stand applaud the performance of the Bishop Kearney Marching Kings during the opening of Sibley's Galaxy. From left, Brother Thomas Feerick, principal of Bishop Kearney High School; Dennis Bookshester, Sibley's president; William E. Lee, Sibley's chairman; actress Jean Marsh; Mayor Thomas Ryan.

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