

*My Barryroe Childhood*  
by Jerome Keohane.  
Privately printed, 157 pp.

It is a pleasure to review this book, produced by our Hon. Archivist, Nora Keohane Hickey, who took the actual words of her 98-year-old father, Jerome, and organized them chronologically into a volume with photographs, maps, and reproductions of official documents. Of special interest to us O Mahonys, there is even a genealogy chart in the book showing that Jerome's great-great grandmother was an O Mahony!

Jerome Keohane was born in 1907 on a farm in the townland of Ballinvrokig just south of the village of Butlerstown, in County Cork. After attending Butlerstown National School, he continued his education in Cork City and enjoyed a long career as a Radio Officer. His memoir covers the first quarter century of his life, and recounts the minutest details of his youth—a time long gone and preserved only in books like this. Reading the pages, one can hear the rhythm of the author's speech, as he tells of "Stations" [the custom, unique to Ireland before Vatican II, of celebrating Mass in homes], old Christmas traditions, "Wran Boys," funeral and waking traditions, and farm chores in pre-WWI Ireland. The basic diet in Jerome's early years was enriched by cured fish, and sometimes fried fresh mackerel. There is a chapter dealing with local personalities that is richly rewarding, especially for a family researcher or local historian. One gets the impression that the author is walking the fields remembering all the neighbors of his childhood who have long since left the area. Every person mentioned is identified by his townland; many nicknames are used, some better known than the real name of the individual. There are some poignant notes on romances that ended because the girl had no "fortune" [dowry] and the prospective groom needed the money. Indeed, the whole book is a delightful description of early twentieth century life in rural County Cork as told by a charming gentleman.

From the Southern Star

### **Courtmacshery Notes**

MANY of the large attendance at the launch of Jerome Keohane's book, *My Barryroe Childhood*, at Butlerstown Community Hall on Friday night, September 23, were amazed by the way the 160-page booklet reminded them of their forefathers. Most significant was the fact that he was a man of 98 years, just after producing a book reflecting life as he remembered it during his early years. Performing the launching, local historian Michael O'Brien picked some snippets from Jerome's years. Jerome's father, Jim Keohane, was born 27 years before the famine, declared Michael, which means that between them they have 185 years. The book, said Michael, opens a window of the past, reflecting on Jerome's early years, his work on the farm at Ballinorokig (known as the townland of the badgers) before his secondary education at the North Mon. and Skerries College, and after qualifying at

the School of Telegraphy, his years at sea working for the Marconi Company as a radio officer. In 1936, he was one of the pioneer officers as a radio operator at the Foynes Flying Boat Base. He afterwards transferred across the Shannon for the early years of Shannon Airport before taking up a post with the Air Ministry in Manchester, where he obtained an electrical engineering degree at the local College of Technology. Approaching the podium himself, Jerome said that he was a young schoolboy in this building, Butlerstown School, when they heard the explosion that sunk the *Lusitania* on May 7, 1915. Incidentally, Jerome attended the 90th *Lusitania* anniversary at the Old Head last May. His daughter, Nora Hickey, who was of great assistance to him in producing the book, thanked everybody who had attended the function, especially those who had prepared the hall, and Michael O'Brien for the manner in which he launched the book. One of the most gripping chapters concerned his views of the clergy, but one man by his report seemed to be a man before his time – Fr. Joe O'Sullivan, administration. His early death was sadly mourned by all the parishioners who loved him so much. This is an invaluable production which unravels much of the history of the parish.