

# Farewell to Eugene Bartman

**EUGENE** Bartman, who died on August 3rd, was one of the last of the Palatines of Glenosheen. One of a family of 12, he was born on August 5th, 1910, which made him two days short of his 83rd birthday when death came to him.

His people were farmers. Jobs being scarce in Ireland in the 1940s, Eugene emigrated to England and worked there until 1950, when he returned to Ireland. That same year he was married in Kilshannie church, near Mallow, to his wife, Ann, who was to share the joys and sorrows of life with him up to his death. Back in Glenosheen, the place he loved, he resumed life as a farmer.

I first came to know Eugene through his interest in traditional Irish music. He was a very fine player on the concertina, and was very much part of Scoil na Seoigheach, the Joyce Brothers School, in Kilfinane from its inception in 1984. He played at the informal nightly sessions of the School in Kilfinane Education Centre, and at the annual aeraíocht, or open-air concert, held during the School week-end in his native Glenosheen, which was also the native place of the Joyce brothers, P. W. Joyce and Robert Dwyer Joyce.

This he continued to do until ill health and arthritis prevented him from doing so. But even then, he, and his good wife, Ann, always came to the aeraíocht, and as Rev. Tom Sherlock, Farrihy, Kildorrery, said at the funeral service in Kilflynn church, "when the traditional Irish music would start you would see him really come alive, with that great glint in his eye."

In his playing of traditional Irish music, Eugene Bartman was the inheritor

of a tradition that was long rooted in Glenosheen. In his great collection of traditional music, Old Irish Folk Music and Songs, much of it collected in the Glenosheen area, P. W. Joyce (born 1827) says:

"I spent all my early life in a part of the County Limerick where music, singing and dancing were favourite amusements. My home in Glenosheen, in the heart of the Ballahoura mountains, was a home of music and song; they were in the air of the valley; you heard them everywhere — sung, played, whistled; and they were mixed up with the people's pastimes, occupations and daily life."

And in another of his works, *The Wonders of Ireland*, Joyce refers to the Palatines of Glenosheen. He says that in his early years Glenosheen had a mixture of Palatines (descendants of German Lutheran refugees) and native Irish Catholics, and adds: "in recalling the kindly memories of my boyhood companions Palatines come as well as Catholics."

Eugene played in various local centres such as Kilmallock and Mitchelstown. I remember him playing at a concert held in Bruree in April, 1985, to commemorate the centenary of Eamon de Valera's first arrival in Bruree from America, to be reared by his grandmother, Mrs. Coll, and his uncle, Patrick Coll.

And I recall in particular a very fine Cúrsaí programme on the Limerick Palatines, which was shown on RTE television in 1989, and which featured Eugene playing the concertina beside the open fire in his own home in Glenosheen. As the television crew, including Donal Farmer, were passing in and out of the house setting up their equipment prior to com-

mencing filming, Eugene said to me in a whisper as Donal Farmer went out to bring in some piece of equipment: "Isn't he very like Father Devereux in *Glenroe*?" When I told Eugene that he was, in fact, the actor who played the part, Eugene was delighted; and as soon as Donal reappeared Eugene had a specially warm greeting for him. When the filming had been completed all were treated to genuine Irish hospitality by Eugene's wife, Ann.

Besides figuring in the Cúrsaí programme, Eugene took part in several radio programmes, and his playing was specially recorded for preservation in the archives of the music department of U.C.C.

Eugene, a tall, slim man with a crown of white hair, was a gentle soul, a quiet, welcoming and shy man, a very good neighbour and a great community man. And, as the Rev. Mr. Sherlock said of him in his homily at the funeral service: "He was a very exact man, never afraid to speak; he was straight and to the point. He was meticulous in his approach in all he undertook . . . anything he did was done with loyalty and perfection; this, I think, was in no small measure due to the fact that he was a descendant of that great Palatine group who landed in this country from the Rhineland of Germany in 1709. Where they settled and worked, perfection and prosperity followed, and this was evident in Eugene."

The Rev. Mr. Sherlock referred to Eugene's loyalty as a Church member, and to his having held all the offices in the church open to a layman, and also referred to the fact that he was one to whom they could partly credit the

appointment of their present rector 16 years ago.

The Venerable Canon Brian Snow, Kilmallock, who took part in the funeral service with the Rev. Tom Sherlock, paid his nice tribute to Eugene, whom he had known well, and very fittingly, in the case of the lover of traditional Irish music, whose funeral rites were being celebrated, he ended his tribute with appropriate words in Irish.

At the conclusion of the funeral service the body of Eugene Bartman was borne from the secluded little church of Kilflynn to its final resting place, which was only a very short distance from the door of the church. In a nice ecumenical spirit of Christian fellowship, the prayers at the graveside were recited by Canon Snow, Rev. Mr. Sherlock, and Father Joseph Kennedy, P.P., Ardpatrick.

For a considerable length of time after the graveside prayers had ended, people remained on in groups, and moving from group to group, exchanging their memories of the man who had departed the scene. One whom everybody seemed anxious to have a word with was 91-year-old Miss Margaret Alton. She, like Eugene Bartman, being a worthy and highly esteemed representative of the Palatine presence in Glenosheen.

From the burial ground there was a splendid view of the Long Mountain, and of the lovely peak of Seefin, highest peak of the Ballahouras, which towers above Glenosheen. Finally, as we left that burial ground where Eugene Bartman awaits the Resurrection, ghuíomar Solas na Soilse agus Radharc na Tríonóide dá anam uasal ceolmhar.