

Lament for Staker Wallis

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A mhic Ui Walsh an leon
A chuaigh da bhathadh ins an moin....

O son of Walsh, the hero,
Who went drowning in the bog.....

But for the man who took Wallis there were hard words indeed:

A mhic Ui Shioda, nar bhuai Christ leat,
A lean e trid an gceo.

O Son of Sheedy, may not Christ grant you victory,
Who chased him through the fog.

The beautiful air of 'The Lament for Staker Wallis' remains a firm favourite with pipers and violinists.'

note: The above extract is from 'A Portrait of Limerick'
P.168 'In The Ballahoura Country'.

The late Leo Rowsome has a beautiful version of the air on his record with Claddagh Records... 'Ri na bPiobairi'....'The King of the Pipers'. Cernini Cladaig CC1. There is also another version by the Dublin piper Tommy Reck on an RTE record produced by Sean O'Riada ... 'Our Musical Heritage' Sean O'Riada. RTE. FR. 001/002/003.

Not far from St.Molua's Well, in the townland of Tiermore was born, in the year 1733, the man whose name, more than that of any other, has come to be associated with Kilfinane. Staker Wallis - his real name was Patrick Wallis - was a small farmer who, well past middle age, wholeheartedly subscribed to the then revolutionary proposals of the newly founded United Irishmen, that Irishmen of all creeds and classes should unite for the purpose of securing the freedom of their country.

Wallis became the leader of his local company of United Irishmen, thereby attracting the attention of Captain Charles Oliver, a tyrannical magistrate who lived in Kilfinan was a law unto himself in the district, and under the pretext that Wallis was plotting to kill him, he decided to arrest him and charge him with planning his murder. And so, on a foggy March morning in the year 1798, Oliver and a troop of Yeomanry rode out from Kilfinane and headed northwards for Tiermore.

Wallis saw them coming and fled into the Red Bog.

The yeomanry force included some local men who had been pressed into service by Oliver because they had good horses. Oliver now ordered these local men to ride after Wallis across the treacherous surface of the bog.

A man named Michael Walsh had the best horse and soon found himself gaining rapidly on Wallis. Walsh, however, had no wish to capture the fugitive; at the very first opportunity he jumped his valuable horse into a bog hole and only barely escaped being sucked down into the mire himself. It was another local man, Roger Sheehy who finally caught up with Wallis and held him until the remainder of the party arrived on the scene.

Wallis was taken the United Irishmen; and when Wallis refused to talk, Oliver had him tied to the heels of a cart and flogged up and down the main street of Kilfinane. Wallis, still refusing to inform on his friends, was hanged a few days later. He was then beheaded, and his head was set on a spike above the market house in the square.

The heroism of Staker Wallis, and his tragic fate, made a tremendous impact on the local people, and he became, and has ever since remained, one of the great popular heroes of this part of County Limerick. In a fragment of a contemporary caoineadh, or lament, for him that has survived there are words of praise for the action of Michael Walsh. FH

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