

A Sheansailéir agus a mhuintir na hOllscoile

Ballybay, Co. Monaghan, in Irish: the mouth of the Ford of the Birch trees - Béal Átha Beithe was, from the Middle Ages, one of the three fording points on the Dromore River and lay at the intersection of the old Dundalk-Enniskillen and Monaghan-Carrickmacross roads. The acid soil and plentiful water supply facilitated the development of linen production introduced by its Huguenot settlers in the early Eighteenth Century. This in turn added to the growth of the town as a regional hub and trading centre. Although subsequent concentration of the linen industry in the Belfast hinterland meant that the finished fabric was manufactured elsewhere, nevertheless, Ballybay remained the marketing centre for provision of rough linen, and raw flax, to the industry's magnates.

It was to Ballybay that Patrick John McCabe (formerly of Aghabog, Co. Monaghan) and his wife Mary Kate Cunningham (formerly of Killevegha, Co. Leitrim) came in 1925. They set up a family business of licensed premises and grocery on the Brae in the Main Street, opposite the Market House. The site chosen is worth noting as it seems to highlight the keen commercial sense of Patrick John and Mary Kate. In a parish of less than 2000 souls and twenty competitors, this location optimised the transient business opportunities and guaranteed long-term trade to their premises. Their choice also confirmed as accurate in the eyes of the local people - the ancestral family tag of the Hardy McCabes.

Indeed tenacity would appear to be a feature of the clan. Elsewhere in Monaghan, Patrick Kavanagh in recording a dispute over a half a rood of rock -

heard the Duffys chanting

'Damn your soul'

And old McCabe stripped to the waist, seen

Step the plot defying blue-cast steel

Patrick John and Mary Kate raised a family of six boys who attended the local national school and who all in their time won scholarships to secondary school and University.

Francis - Frank – was born in May 1936. While he was yet at the Christian Brothers Secondary School in Monaghan, his Father died. Mary Kate, with thoughts of the family's education foremost in her mind and in a display of considerable courage for the times that were in it, moved to Dublin in 1951 where Frank completed his secondary education at C.B.C. Monkstown.

He entered U.C.D. as an Engineering student in 1953. Then the McCabes presence in the faculty was already well established with other members in each of 2nd, 3rd and Final years. Later his brother, Vincent, would become its Dean.

Frank graduated in 1957. The Irish economy had been through difficult times; the census of 1956 indicated the lowest ever population and emigration was a very painful feature of national life. Politicians invariably strove to encourage change in the marketing of agricultural products while endeavouring to sensitise native industry to the prospects of tariff reduction in a Europe where six countries had already agreed to establish a common market starting in 1959.

U.K. subsidiaries operating in Ireland did not, as company policy, compete in the export market and Irish law, affecting the operation of other international companies who could compete, was restrictive.

In an address in November 1957 on a paper *Emigration – The Challenges*, Mr Seán Lemass, Minister for Industry and Commerce, noted the difficulties facing Irish firms who wished to export but lacked resources, facilities, and trained personnel. He outlined a plan to provide investment of £20m p.a. to generate 15,000 jobs p.a. Quoting from his speech, the audience heard “it is probable that U.S. industrialists are now giving consideration to the advisability of serving the European market from plants located in European countries. We aim to convince them that Ireland is the best possible location for such plants”.

The ensuing years, now referred to as the Lemass/Whittaker era, saw the launch of the First Programme for Economic Expansion in 1958 and Professor Lynch's report on Investment in Education (1964) both of which would later impact on the environment of Frank McCabe's professional life.

Frank, upon graduation, worked in Sweden where he acquired professional experience in the field of steam turbine generation and also, for the first time, computers. Returning to Ireland he was employed by Bord na Mona and then in 1966 by General Electric to start up its semiconductor plant at ECCO, Dundalk.

This industry was to serve the border town well, coming as it did in the wake of the closure of the Great Northern Railway's engineering works and ahead of pressures on traditional manufacturing industries which would suffer under the Common Market.

In 1969 he obtained his Master of Science Degree at Clarkson University, New York. His thesis dealt with decision making models in inventory management.

He was, in 1971, appointed to a second General Electric plant at Shannon: E.I. While there he promoted the development of training facilities resulting in world class awards to EI trainees. He became Chairman of Shannon Development, at a time when his brother Joe was chairing the IDA, and served a ten year term in all.

Frank was an initiator of the Granary Development in Limerick. This was one of the first steps in the renewal of a city of which its people are justly proud.

He also met Breda O' Donovan; they later married. It is a privilege to welcome Breda here today.

The McCabe predecessors were a Hebridean clan from Inis Gall who hired as warriors to the O'Rourke's and O'Reilly's of Breffny. This trait of travelling professional marked Frank's career. Following an appointment to Digital in 1979 as head of its European manufacturing and engineering operations, he was in 1983 transferred to Boston to a series of corporate appointments culminating in appointment as executive Vice President with responsibility for the balance sheet of a \$5bn dollar industry. Boston afforded Frank and Breda the opportunity to enjoy the wealth of both its musical and artistic life.

During his stay at Digital, efforts of successive Irish governments in supporting investment in secondary and tertiary education began to pay off. Further companies serving the global information society had spread to Ireland. One of these, Intel, founded in 1968 in the U.S. had established its high technology manufacturing process in Palmerstown in early 1990. Later that year the project was transferred to Leixlip. Its employee population was to show an increase from 190 – 2,000 over 5 years. In 1994 Frank McCabe was appointed General Manager.

His dynamism in this post and as Vice President of Intel International, matched by his dignified persuasive style, exercised with national and international colleagues, resulted in the Leixlip plant becoming the foremost manufacturing base in the entire Intel system. This year it commenced the manufacture of the Pentium III chip and plans are now afoot for the next generation of this technology.

The accumulated investment of Intel in its Irish operation has been \$2.5bn to date and it currently gives employment directly or indirectly to more than four thousand people.

Frank McCabe has identified firstly the capability for rapid adaptation and secondly an outstanding education system as the features which set Ireland apart from her European competitors.

The internationally applauded achievements of his team of Irish managers and technologists in this high skills industry is a source of satisfaction to him and underlines the valuable work of our Higher Education Institutions.

His experience shows that a product development dimension fostered by him has been key to the still successful electronics manufacturing industries at both the former ECCO and EI plants.

He believes that deepening the technology base through expansion of Research and Development activity will further assure the continued economic well being of this nation.

Frank has been a key figure in both the formation and success of the Task Force on the Supply of Technicians established by the Minister for Education and Science.

He has now retired from his Intel post and the associated routine of a seventy-hour week. It is fitting that the National University of Ireland today confer its highest honour on one of its outstanding graduates, an individual of exceptional commitment who, in the words of a former colleague, has always sought the success of his undertakings but never the trappings of success.

Praehonorabilis Cancellarie, praesento vobis hunc meum filium quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, *honoris causa*, ad gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idique tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo totique Academiae.