



Famine Walk 2010

Hunger in a World of Plenty: Sowing Seeds of Hope

Saturday, May 22nd 2010

From Doolough to Louisburgh, Co. Mayo

Beginning at 2pm

Walk Leaders

Justin Kilcullen
Felicity Lawrence
Jo Newton
and
Emer Mayock



Organised by Afri

In partnership with Trócaire and the
Irish Seed Savers Association



**This year we are asking each participant to raise at least €20
to ensure Afri can continue its important work**

Lumper Potatoes (the variety grown in Ireland at the time of the
Famine) will be planted en route during the Famine Walk

Introduction

When Afri initiated the Famine Walk in 1988 it was said we were living in the past: it was time to move on, the Irish Famine was irrelevant to people of the late 20th Century. We always believed otherwise of course, and with the passage of time the message of the Great Famine resonates as ever more relevant and important.

This year Afri is proud to organise the Famine Walk in partnership with two sister organisations whose work is a reminder that famine is a constant reality for millions of people throughout the world. The work of the Irish Seed Savers Association and Trócaire also reminds us that food insecurity will intensify unless we tackle issues such as loss of biodiversity, the detrimental effects of global warming, corporate control of food production, and the patenting and aggressive marketing of Genetically Modified (GM) seeds.

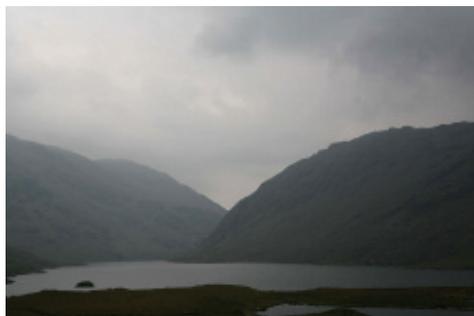
In Trócaire's 2010 Lenten Campaign we learned that one in six - a staggering 1 billion people - in our world are hungry, and that approximately 5 million children die of hunger every year. We also learned that, despite the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number who are hungry by 2015, malnutrition and hunger-related diseases continue to cause 60% of children's deaths in the Global South.

The Irish Famine was caused by many factors, including colonialism, laissez-faire economics and over-dependence on one crop, the potato. Today, many of those same forces are still at play. Neo-colonialism, neo-liberal economics and corporate control of food result in the obscene reality highlighted by both Trócaire's Lenten Campaign and by Afri's Famine Walk.

The Irish Seed Savers Association (ISSA) is counteracting one element of this injustice by conserving seed varieties suitable for Ireland's unique growing conditions, thus promoting biodiversity for food security. The ISSA are not focused on Ireland alone and, conscious of global food insecurity, donate 1% of their income to support other organisations with similar aims within Ireland and in the Global South.

Whether it is the advocacy work of Afri, the overseas programmes funded by Trócaire or the conservation efforts of the ISSA, we are all engaged in a long-term set of actions for justice, honouring the memory of the Irish dead of the Great Famine by tackling the root causes of famine and hunger in our world today.

Joe Murray



Biographies

Justin Kilcullen was appointed Director of Trócaire in 1993. An architect by profession, Justin worked for many years in Africa and Asia. From 1976 until 1981, he worked in low cost housing in Tanzania and on the design and construction of refugee camps for Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees. In 2002 he was awarded the Robert Matthew medal by the International union of Architects for his work on human settlements. Justin joined Trócaire as a project officer for Africa in October 1981. He served as Trócaire representative in Laos from 1988 until 1992. He is current President of Concord, the confederation of European development NGOs, representing more than 1600 such organisations across the European Union.

Felicity Lawrence is an award-winning special correspondent and investigative journalist for the London-based Guardian. She has written extensively on the politics of food and is author of two bestselling exposes of the global food industry, 'Not on the Label' and 'Eat Your Heart Out'. Her campaigning writing about the impact on the poor of corporate control of the food chain has inspired numerous TV and film projects and influenced changes in government policy.

Jo Newton is from Newcastle and has been working at Irish Seed Savers since 2001. In the beginning she worked side by side with Seed Savers founder, Anita Hayes, learning the skills of growing and saving seeds. Jo is currently the Seedbank mentor and has experience working in many aspects of horticulture and gardening, including orchard work, market gardening and workshop tutoring. Over the years she has become more aware of the need to increase food

security in Ireland, and of empowering people to become more self-sufficient in the full cycle of growing from seed to seed.

Emer Mayock is a musician and composer from Co. Mayo. She began to play traditional music during her childhood on a range of instruments including the Flute, Low Whistles, Fiddle and Uilleann Pipes. She has produced two solo CDs: 'Merry Bits of Timber' and 'Playground' - the latter continuing her interest in writing new music and containing mostly her own compositions.

Emer is currently recording tunes from the Goodman manuscripts collected in Munster in the 1880s with Uilleann Piper Mick O' Brien. She will also spend much of this year exploring Turkish and Arabic music with Tarab the band she has formed with jazz musicians Francesco Turrisi, Nick Roth, cellist Kate Ellis and percussionist Robbie Harris.

For this event Emer will be joined by special guest Donal Siggins on Mandola

Hunger and the Millennium Development Goals

As confirmed by Trócaire and the United Nations, over one billion people are hungry in the world today. We have the extraordinary anomaly whereby hunger and malnutrition are the number one risk to health worldwide, while at the same time there is enough food to feed 12 billion people - double the world's population. The Millennium Development Goals, aimed at giving the highest priority to achieving sustainable development and the elimination of poverty, were agreed by world leaders in 2000. The first of the eight goals is to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty. 191 UN members have pledged to reduce by half the number of people suffering hunger by 2015. Despite these pledges, since 2000 the number of hungry people in the world has dramatically increased.

The Death March at Doolough, 1849

Anyone who goes on the Famine Walk along Doolough Lake from Louisburgh to Delphi Lodge is retracing a journey of horror which the local people made on the night and morning of 30-31 March 1849. Although that 'death march' has been given little publicity until recent times, it has remained fresh in the mind of the people of the area. The place has been well named 'A Road to Remember'.

The year 1849 was probably the worst of those famine years in the Louisburgh area. The immediate cause of the death march was the expected arrival in Louisburgh on Friday 30 March of two 'commissioners', Colonel Hogrove and Captain Primrose. They were to inspect the poorer people and certify them as paupers, so entitling them to a ration of three pounds of meal each. For some reason the inspection was not made, and the hundreds of people were told that they must appear at Delphi Lodge (ten miles away) at 7am the following morning if they were to be certified. They set out on foot along the mountain road and pathway. The night and morning snowed. A writer ('Ratepayer') to the Mayo Constitution on April 10th 1849 complained that seven people died on that journey, nine more never reached their homes and several of those who did 'in a short time ceased to live'. He identifies nine victims: three members of a Dillon family, Catherine Grady, Mary McHale, James Flynn, Mrs Dalton, her son and daughter. According to this account the total number of deaths was no more than twenty on the road and an uncounted number in their homes.

There is, however, a strong folk tradition in the local Louisburgh community that the numbers who died that snowy night on the Doolough Road should be counted in hundreds. So there is quite a

divergence of opinion. In favour of the smaller numbers it can be said that contemporary newspaper accounts establish only these. Further, in her major work, 'The Great Hunger', Mrs Cecil Woodham-Smyth (1961) has no account of hundreds of lives being lost in such a march. The folk tradition can hardly, however, be discarded out of hand. In view of the remoteness of the area and the lack of communications at the time, it is possible that the full extent of the tragedy was not reported. An editorial comment in the Mayo Constitution of 24 April, 1849 states that reports from the locality say that descriptions have fallen far short of the frightful scenes that were witnessed.

That the people of the parish were starving there can be no doubt. The Church of Ireland incumbent at Louisburgh, Rev. P.J. Callinan, had written to the Evening Packet on 10 February, 1849 to say '... I am hourly beset with crawling skeletons begging for food'. Against such a background one must allow the real possibility, if not indeed the probability, of hundreds of deaths on the fatal journey less than two months later.

One further point is worthy of mention: the only written source which favours the theory of hundreds of deaths on the 'Doolough March' is that of James Berry in 'Tales of the West' (Ed. Gertrude Horgan). Reputable historians would look askance at his writings as embellished social history. There are, then, two conflicting lines of opinion about the numbers who died on the fateful journey on a snowy March night in 1849. Written contemporary accounts mention twenty or more deaths. Local folklore often speaks of hundreds. Perhaps the truth lies between.

Leon O Morchain.

Famine Walk 2010

Transport

Shuttle buses will leave Louisburgh from 1pm, taking walkers to the start point of the walk. We ask for your patience and cooperation during this process - it takes time to ferry several hundred people on narrow roads to the edge of the lake. We strongly encourage you to wait for the opening talks and music before starting the walk and we advise you to bring warm clothes for this part of the day.

If there is sufficient demand for seats, a bus will be organized to leave from Parnell Square in Dublin at 8.00am on the morning of May 22nd, returning the same night.

Please confirm this on the week before the walk.

Afri is a justice, peace and human rights organisation, which was founded in 1975. Afri's first 'Famine Walk' took place in 1988, with the aim of linking the experience of Ireland in the 1840s with contemporary issues of famine, hunger, food insecurity and human rights abuses. Since our first famine walk, we have taken up themes of injustice in the Philippines; in Central America; South Africa and East Timor; the exploitation of the Maya people in Guatemala and of banana Workers in Belize; the legacy of colonialism; Ireland's 'Welcome to the Stranger'; 'War is Terror is War'; the rights of Migrant Workers; 'Land for People not for Profit'; 'Erris, Gas and Global Warming'; 'Water, Oil, Weapons: resources and conflict at home and abroad'; 'Power Concedes Nothing without Demand' and, this year, 'Hunger in a World of Plenty: Sowing Seeds of Hope'.

**Saturday night - Gathering in McNamara's,
Louisburgh from 8.30pm for *ceol agus craic***

**IN THE INTEREST OF HEALTH AND SAFETY, PLEASE WALK ON THE RIGHT
HAND SIDE OF THE ROAD FOR THE DURATION OF THE WALK.**

Please help Afri to continue its work by getting sponsorship and taking part in this walk.



Afri gratefully acknowledges the support of Irish Aid, Trócaire and
The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

Afri has signed the Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages.

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