

The Mulvihill Voice

Autumn 2010 Issue Number Nineteen



HERALDRY AND THE MULVIHILL CLAN

by James M. Mulvihill, Chieftain

Heraldry is the art and practice of creating a distinctive emblem identifying an individual. Developed from the practical need for identifying individual military units in the field, it grew into a more detailed motif, regulated and recorded as a formal grant to individuals by local authority.

Heraldry was first instituted on a wide scale by the Normans in the 11th Century as a means to identify individuals and their military forces, and as a badge of merit. The grant of arms was principally to individuals of high station, and as such was bequeathed following the rules of primogeniture. Individuals other than the grantee had no right to possess or display the arms. The arms attested to the proper lineage of the owner and the fact that he was a person of some standing among his privileged peers.

The design incorporates elements unique to the owner. Those elements, such as specific colors and items such as crosses, lions, battle axes, etc., are believed to derive in many instances from far earlier battle flags or totems.

Most of the early Irish heraldic devices were granted to the Norman and English conquerors, of course, but a few Irish lords of note possessed arms.

The Office of the Chief Herald in Ireland was established in 1382 under the aegis of the English crown. In 1943 its duties were assumed by the Irish state. The Office today is part of the National Library of Ireland. *(continued on page 7)*

The Mulvihills of Longford, Westmeath

by Elizabeth Manweiler

My family came down the Shannon from Newtowncashel to the market and garrison town of Athlone, trading in wool, flax, fish and wicker baskets. Possibly under the First Catholic Relief Bill of 1771, they got about ten acres of land near the Shannon in Coosan. They cultivated that ten acres as a market garden, selling milk, eggs, vegetables and fruit to the citizens of Athlone. Sir John Ennis, Ballinahown Court, was their landlord. His niece married the Gaelic-speaking O'Donohue, a nephew of Daniel O'Connell from Kerry, and inherited the estate. The Mulvihills married into the O'Connor family in Coosan. Their headstones are in the graveyard of the old Abbey in Athlone which closed in 1870.

My ancestors also worked the quarries in Newtowncashel and carted cut stones to Athlone for the building of the bridge and St. Mary's R.C. Church. Much of the stone from the church however came from Caen in France. In my great-grandfather's time, it was believed that the Longford branch of the clan came to Ireland with the Benedictine monks from Mont Saint Michel in France to St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall, England and from there to Ireland. The Normans built in stone, hence the Mulvihill association with the quarry in Newtowncashel.

The education in Athlone was excellent from about 1880 when two French congregations (La Sainte Union and Our Lady's Bower) and the Marist Brothers set up schools with the blessing of Bishop Kilduff, who was a native of Athlone. He had come from the Irish College in Paris to reform the church in Ardagh and Clonmacnoise after The Catholic Emancipation Act was passed. The Mulvihills, like other Athlone families, attended those schools. It was a change for the better. My grandfather Martin Mulvihill, his brother Tom and sister Brigid attended the hedge school in Coosan bringing 6d each to pay the fee and a sod of turf for the fire in winter.

Martin was sent to Canada by his family when he got into trouble for membership in a secret agrarian society plotting against the landlords. He sailed from the port of Derry. He spent two years there, fishing until the Saint Lawrence River froze and the rest of the year felling trees. While many of his ten children stayed in Ireland, Elizabeth emigrated to California and Mary, Bertha and Pat emigrated to Rhode Island, U.S.A. [Bertha was a Titanic survivor. See issue number three of *The Mulvihill Voice* for her story.] When the Easter Rising failed, Pat traveled under an assumed name, joined the U.S. Army and fought as a gunner in World War I. He was honoured for valour by Marshall Foch of France who was the Supreme Allied Commander. He is buried in the military cemetery in Bristol, Rhode Island. *(continued on page 2)*

The Mulvihill Voice

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upon request*

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(continued from page 1) **Mulvihills of Longford**

The women of the family joined *Cumann na mBan* and the men joined the volunteers in the struggle for independence. The Gaelic Athletic Association, the Gaelic League, boating on the Shannon and loyalty to the Church, especially the Franciscans in Athlone was the lifestyle of the family. The Mulvihills celebrated their feast days instead of their birthdays; my grandfather Martin had his feast day on the 11th November, always with roast goose for dinner and lots of poteen, with homemade lemonade for us children. This is still a custom in Normandy, France.

The Mulvihills of Longford, Westmeath are now part of the Irish diaspora across the world. Those at home in Ireland still have a great love of the land, although they have now entered all the different professions and craft trades and many have moved to urban living. Wherever they went in the world, we have a pride in the contributions they made. *O Maoilmhicil Abú!*

■

2 Researcher and world-traveler, Elizabeth Manweiler now lives in Berkshire, England.

The Westmeath Mulvihills, A Historical Perspective

by Elizabeth Manweiler

Rory O'Donnell made submission to Carew and Mountjoy in the name of Queen Elizabeth I in Athlone Castle in 1602, ending The Nine Years War. She was succeeded by James I. The Flight of the Earls to Spain and France proceeded, leaving Ireland bereft of Clan leaders. Lord Chichester was appointed deputy to proceed with the confiscation of lands from the Irish clans. Lands held in the time of Connor McThomas O'Mulvihill were seized and granted by the King to Garrett Fitzgerald, gentleman. Approximately six hundred acres of arable, wood and bogland in the barony of Rathcline were forfeited. From then on, the Mulvihills were tenant farmers paying rents to landlords—King-Harman, Shulldham, Ledwith, Pakenham and Newcomen, who replaced Fitzgerald. The fishing rights and islands of the Shannon were also confiscated.

Under the Brehon Laws, society had been organized in clans with a chief. Brehons (judges) and bards (scholars and poets) were supported by the clan. The poor, the old and the disabled were cared for by the clan. Bog, mountain and forest were used by all the members of the clan. Criminals were punished by fines, such as surrender of cattle or crops to the clan or expulsion from the clan. The Norman barons introduced their system of law and order which was different but fair. They were Catholic and like the Irish were suppressed during the Penal Laws. It is often said of the Normans that they became more Irish than the Irish themselves, adopting the Irish language, laws and customs and intermarrying with the Irish.

By the time Charles I (1625-1649) came to the throne, the Irish and Norman clans had begun to live with the Protestant system, however unjust and resented. All was to change when Oliver Cromwell snatched power in England. He began a reign of terror on both islands, destroying church property and confiscating lands. Catholic Irish land owners and tenants were transplanted "to Hell or to Connaught". Many young men and women were sold into slavery in Barbados to work the sugar plantations. Some landlords were benevolent



Market Day

Mary Mulvihill Fallon, Newtowncashel, Longford 1880, who bequeathed her farm to Elizabeth's father, T.J. Mulvihill

and cared for their tenants, but countless people suffered under the oppression of landlordism and Protestantism.

The language, laws, education system and religion of the Longford, Westmeath Mulvihill clan were suppressed as severely as anywhere else in the country. This led to rebellion and agrarian agitation against the landlords. The Mulvihills remained loyal to "Faith and Fatherland". There are Mulvihill headstones in the graveyards attached to Protestant churches, but I could find no evidence that they converted. They resented payment of the tithes to the Protestant church while they had to support their own church and clergy which were underground. The Franciscans usually read Mass from the Mass Rock. Carrigedmond is a townland near the River Inny where the rock is still commemorated and the path on the banks of the Shannon to Athlone is still referred to as *Sli an Aifreann*.

The First Catholic Relief Bill of 1771, known locally as The Bogland Act, permitted Catholics to take leases of fifty acres of land for sixty-one years. It had to be bogland, or a river valley which flooded and they had to show improvement in drainage and cultivation or it would be re-confiscated.

The hedge school master had a price on his head too. They were often young men who had been to the seminaries of France and Spain and who returned giving a classical education to the youth. There is a letter in the National Archives from Bernard Mulvihill, a hedge school teacher in Longford, who applied for assistance to equip his school when the National School Education Act was introduced about 1830. My grandfather spoke of how much poetry he learned by heart. At parties I remember him reciting verses from Goldsmith's "Deserted Village", Percy French, Pádraig Colum, Maria Edgeworth and Leo Keegan Casey, who wrote "The Rising of the Moon".



The French landed in Killala Bay in 1798 and fought their way through to Longford where they were confronted by Cornwallis who had returned to Ireland to take command of the British Army after the defeat in the American War of Independence. Longford was devastated again and all the local families suffered. With the passing of the Act of Union in 1800, the campaign led by Daniel O'Connell for Catholic Emancipation and repeal of the Act of Union began. He held "monster" peaceful meetings all over Ireland, including at the Hill of Tara. They were really the first civil rights marches! The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 gave Catholics the right to sit in Parliament and to apply for jobs in governmental departments and commissions in the Army. That act restored their pride in themselves and gave them the ambition to agitate for agrarian reform which came by the end of the 1800s.



The landlords prospered and built their great houses. The tenants worked hard to pay their rents. John Mulvihill was a steward on the estate in Westmeath in 1880. The Mulvihills with great skill cultivated their land, traded in cattle, sheep and horses. They practiced their crafts and fished the Shannon. Women and girls did the spinning and weaving of flax and wool in their homes. The Great Famine in 1846 caused great hardship. In the

Clann Mulvihill Officers & Staff 2010

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Music Director:	Jerry Mulvihill, IRL



Longford area, it was not so much the failure of the potato crop as the cholera and typhoid epidemics which took many lives. Some Mulvihills emigrated to England. The last pub at the North Wall, Dublin and the first pub in Liverpool were in the name of a Mulvihill family. Some went to the U.S.A., Canada, Argentina and Australia. There is a bay in Australia named Mulvihill Bay. They sawed down a tree and carved Longford on it when they acquired land. Others struggled on and eventually acquired ownership of their land under the Land Purchase Acts.



We thank Elizabeth Manweiler very much for her numerous contributions to the clan newsletter and for her years of dedicated research into Irish and Mulvihill history. She has become an invaluable resource to us.



Angela Mulvihill Buckley (on left) and her late sister Eithne Mulvihill Hogan at Coosan Point on Lough Ree



Easter 1917, Coosan, Athlone, Co. Westmeath
at the Mulvihill home

Back row (left to right): T.J. Mulvihill, Harry Waters, Bill Concannon with daughter Maura (Mrs. Fox) in arms, Peter Mulvihill, Kitty Concannon, Andrew Heavey, Maud Mulvihill (Mrs. Mitchell), Jack Mullaney with Lily Concannon (Mrs. Sleator) in arms, Nan Mulvihill (Mrs. Crampton) and Brian Mulvihill.

Front row: Matt Mulvihill, Lily Mulvihill (Mrs. Jones), Larry Benson, Lisa Benson Mulvihill with Mary Mitchell in arms and Martin Mulvihill



The following is an incomplete list of Mulvihill tenants and landowners from the Griffith Valuation 1854, County Longford. (Contributed by Elizabeth Manweiler.)

Griffith Valuation 1854		
Peter Mulvihill	House & Land	68 acres
Bernard Mulvihill	House	4 acres
Thomas	House	3 acres
Martin	House	1 acres
Mary	House & Garden	
Patrick	House	11 acres
John	House	21 acres
Catherine	House	28 acres
Bridget		
John	House	11 acres
Christy and John	Meadow & Bog	15 acres
Peter and Edward	House & Land	24 acres
Patrick and James	House & Land	15 acres
Anne	House & Land	17 acres
John, William and Thomas		82 acres
Patrick	House	30 acres
Owen	House & Garden	
Bernard	House	36 acres
Mary and Bernard	House	29 acres
Edward	House	66 acres
Ellen	House	4 acres
Bernard	Herd's House & Land	32 acres
Francis	House	9 acres
James	House	26 acres

BOOK TOUR

A Rope and a Prayer

The Story of a Kidnapping

In our Summer 2009 issue, in the form of a dedication, we reported on the abduction and seven-month imprisonment by the Taliban of New York Times reporter **David Rohde**, husband of **Kristen Mulvihill** of New York City. They had only been married two months at the time of his kidnapping.

Last fall, David wrote a five-part article for The Times which was beautifully written and told the harrowing and amazing tale of his capture and eventual escape.

Kristen and David have now collaborated on the new book, *A Rope and a Prayer*, which came out on November 30. It is available in book, e-book and audio formats.

David was attempting to interview a Taliban commander when he was kidnapped along with two colleagues and brought to the tribal areas of Pakistan. The book tells his story and that of the endless efforts of his wife, the rest of his family and The New York Times to secure his release.

We look forward to reading the book and learning more about how our clansfolk coped with this horrific and terrifying experience. We also are eager to ponder their insights into the Taliban, Pakistan, and Afghanistan as well as into western efforts and presence in the area.

From December 1-12, Kristen and David will be on a six-city tour promoting the book. They will be speaking on December 2 at The Politics and Prose Bookstore in Washington, D.C. and at The Open Society Foundation in New York on December 16. They will also appear in Boston, Seattle, Los Angeles and San Francisco. They will be guests on "The Diane Rehm Show", "All Things Considered" (NPR), "Newshour" and on "Good Morning America" (ABC-TV, November 29), among other shows.

The book was recently cited by NBC's "Today Show" as "one of the eight must-read books for the fall and holiday seasons." NBC's literary critic called the book "riveting and mesmerizing".

Kristen is a fashion and photography editor. Her chapters in the book will be excerpted in the December issue of Vogue magazine.

David has now won two Pulitzer Prizes in journalism and is author of *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica*.

A Rope and A Prayer is published by Viking Press; Audio book by Penguin.

ISBN 978-0-670-02223-6

Please support your local, independent booksellers.

DEDICATION

Our Autumn issue is dedicated to **Mrs. Mary M. Mulvihill**, wife of the late William Patrick Mulvihill. Mrs. Mulvihill is the head proofreader for The Mulvihill Voice and has been since its inception. A retired professional proofreader, she formerly was head of the department for a chain of Long Island newspapers, Anton Community Newspapers. We know that her sharp eye and attention to detail, along with her ideas and devotion, have helped enable our clan newsletter to be a popular and high quality publication.

Novelist and essayist William Mulvihill, along with Father Cathal Stanley, initiated plans for the first Mulvihill Clan reunion. Sadly, he died eight months before the first gathering.

Mrs. Mulvihill was also instrumental in typing, copy-editing and helping her husband with his many novels and articles throughout a fifty-eight year marriage. We are honored to have her assistance and appreciate it very much.

CHERISH THE LADIES

"A CELTIC CHRISTMAS" TOUR

12/02 Tarrytown, New York - The Tarrytown Music Hall
12/03 Manchester, NH - Koonz Theater at Saint Anselms College
12/04 Jackson, Tennessee - The Civic Center with the Jackson Symphony
12/05 Madison, Alabama - Bob Jones High School Auditorium
12/09 East Haven, Connecticut, Irish American Community Center
12/11 El Dorado, Arkansas - Municipal Auditorium with South Arkansas Symphony
12/12 Pawling, New York - The Towne Crier
12/16 East Hampton, New York - The Guild Hall
12/17 Cumberland, Rhode Island - Blackstone River Theatre
12/18 West Long Branch, NJ - Pollak Theater, Monmouth University
12/19 Geneva, New York - The Smith Opera House

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE TOUR DATES, GO
TO
WWW.CHERISHTHELADIES.COM



Leo Mulvihill of Danbury, Connecticut, (1886-1924).

Leo was the son of Patrick Mulvihill, Civil War Veteran and hatter, originally of Woodford, Co. Galway. If anyone has any information about Leo and/or any of his many siblings and their descendants, please let me know. My grandfather, Daniel Francis, was his older brother. Thank you.

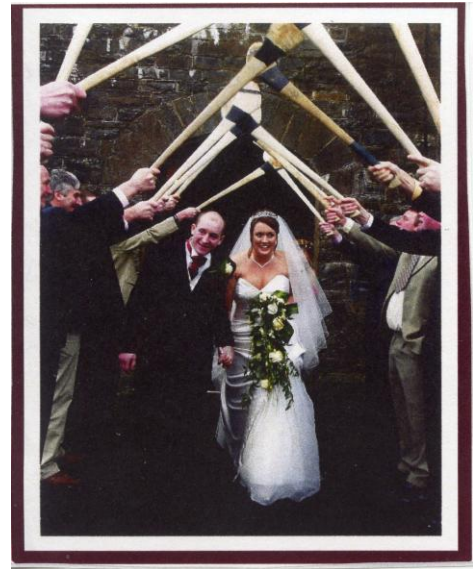
-Editor

Rites of Passage



Muirín Mulvihill

On May 8, 2010, at Coosan Church, Athlone, Co. Westmeath, she celebrated her First Communion. Muirín is the daughter of Aiden and Tara Mulvihill. Aiden is Tánaiste for Europe, Clan Secretary and Co-Administrator of the Mulvihill Clan DNA program. Muirín is eight years old. Congratulations Muirín!



Theresa Mulvihill weds Brendan Killeen

Milltown Malbay, Co. Clare
2007

Guard of Honour by The Clare Hurlers



Ruth Mulvihill of Athlone, 1980
With her awards for Irish dancing



Muirín takes cousin Jack Mulvihill on a ride on the big day. Jack is the son of Rowan and Carol Mulvihill and grandson of Seamus and Sheila Mulvihill.

Please send us your Mulvihill family announcements!
Weddings, engagements, births, deaths, confirmations, graduations, initiations, retirements, honors of *any* kind are all respectfully requested.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Many, many thanks once again for all of your hard work and obvious talent in putting together the newsletter. I always look so forward to reading these issues, and appreciate all of your efforts!

With gratitude and best wishes,
Janet Mulvihill Swotek
Olympia, Washington

Thank you for the newsletter. Just a note on your article on the history of our common family name written by Denis Maoilmichil....my grandson is named Gabriel Mitchell and has both the names of the angels mentioned and is indeed an angel in our eyes.

Slán,
Doug Mitchell
State Road, North Carolina

Hi there,

Thanks for the latest copy of The Mulvihill Voice. It is always an interesting read.

I have found that I am linked to the Mulvihills from Rahoonagh, Co. Kerry. But my research has only gone as far back as the 1911 census. I would be keen to find out more.

I have managed to track a Michael Mulvihill born about 1879, married to Debora (née Kissane). Children were Michael, Patrick, Sarah, John, Ellie, Debora A. and William. Debora A. Mulvihill, born 6 Jul, 1910 is my grandmother.

Please send me a link/invite to the private clan website. Maybe I can find some more info to help me on there. My tree is loaded on ancestry.com.

Regards,
Anthony Clarke
Australia

Hi Mary Ann,

What is the matter with me? I'm hooked on your newsletter! Not a Mulvihill--not even Irish. I think it is the content of your newsletter plus the great contributions your family has made to Sag Harbor.

I noted your contribution message and will respond to Thomas.

Jean Held
Sag Harbor, New York

Thank you very much, Jean, for your interest and for your contribution! And thanks to all those who have thus far contributed. We really appreciate it!

Heraldry (continued from page 1)

Although the regulation of heraldic arms remains in force today, the popular perception of history, ownership, possession, and display has changed markedly. Heraldic art is viewed as representative of broad surname groups, i.e., the "Family Crest", and is widely marketed as such. This practice, most notable in the Irish community, is part of a much larger change in the popular view of many features of Irish history and culture.

Ireland never had a widespread system of formal clans, badges, heraldry, or tartans such as those in evidence in Scotland, for example. Most of the Irish items seen for sale as representing a specific "clan" were developed during a surge in Celtic popularity during the 19th Century. In fact, our "own" heraldic device was granted to Charles Mulvihill, Esq. of Knockanira, Co. Clare on May 16, 1836. The grant specifically states that the grant is to him "and the descendants of his said grandfather, respectively, forever hereafter". I obtained copies of the original grant from the Office of the Chief Herald in Dublin.

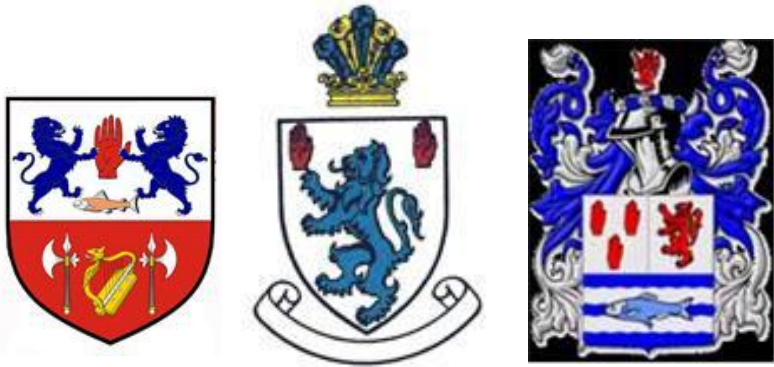
Charles was the last (albeit, self styled) Chieftain of the Mulvihills. His family tree, published with the armorial grant, indicates that his family may have been the forebears of the majority of the Mulvihill population in North Kerry. This has yet to be proven conclusively with a Y-DNA test of one of his descendants.

Charles was obviously quite familiar with the history of the Mulvihills, and it is reflected in his choice of the elements used in the Arms. In the shield portion of the graphic on page 8, the "two blue lions rampant" are the historical element of the province of Connaught, within which the ancient homeland of Co. Roscommon resides. The red hand is emblematic of the *UiNeils*, the political and military power during the Middle Ages, and the progenitor of the Mulvihills, according to the ancient annals. We know now, by Y-DNA analysis, that the story is not that simple, but the presence of the "red hand sinister" accurately reflects what was known in the 19th Century. The origin of the fish...some say salmon, some perch...is more obscure. It may represent an occupation as fishermen, a reference to the Mulvihills' early involvement with Christianity, or simply their long association with the Shannon River. Similarly, the harp may have many meanings, real and symbolic, from a musical heritage, to a symbol of reasoned temperament and contemplation. There is no ambiguity in interpreting the battle axes, however. The Mulvihills garnered considerable respect for their martial abilities, crowned by the exploits of "Mulvihill of the Battle Ax" in 1232.

Two other parts of the heraldic arms are important: the crest, which surmounts the shield; and the motto. On "our" shield, the crest reemphasizes the fighting history of the Mulvihills, with the crossed battle axes. The motto is "*Pro Aris et Focis*", or "For Altar and Home". The balance of the decoration that you see on most depictions of heraldic art is "*fal-de-rol*"...a bit of gaudy extravagance.

Heraldry (continued from page 7)

Heraldic devices can illuminate bits of history for us. The commonly seen heraldry for the Brennans, seen below, is a real match for the Mulvihill shield, albeit simpler. The relationship between similar devices can be remarkable, as evidenced by the similarities with the Kevlihan shield, below right.



Mulvihill

Brennan (Roscommon)

Kevlihan

This was discovered after a number of Kevlihanes were found to be nearly exact Y-DNA matches for our North Kerry group of Mulvihills! The exact nature of our former association is still under study.

The bottom line is, that while a largely modern creation, heraldry does contribute to our understanding of Irish history in many ways. And together with all the other creative constructs of modern Celticism, they raise the appeal and interest level that supports our Irish Pride!

Request from the Editor:

Help us expand!

Currently, The Mulvihill Voice is being distributed on six continents, to people in the following countries: Argentina, Australia, Canada, England, France, Kenya, Ireland, Japan, Scotland, Spain, Wales, and the United States of America.

We can't tell where most of you are by your email address. We'd love to know where you live! If you are in a country not listed, we especially want to know. Please also tell us if you are forwarding the clan newsletter to someone in another country. Help us extend our list and grow our global family!

Also, if you are planning an international vacation, please consider going to Ireland. The folks there could really use the tourism due to the economic downturns. Our prayers are with Ireland during these hard times.

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Please recycle or pass around to other
Mulvihills

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Mulvihill's Bar & Lounge

Main Street, Castlerea, Co. Roscommon

The proprietors are Dermot and Bernie Mulvihill. The pub has been in the family for 42 years. There is a small shop (newsagency) in the front which the Mulvihills also maintain.

Photo by Aiden Mulvihill

THE HEDGE SCHOOLS OF KERRY

by Pat Mulvihill

Times were difficult in County Kerry in the 1800s. The Penal Laws came into practice. As most of the Kerry towns and villages were strongly Catholic, the people suffered great hardship during the penal times. This was especially true in terms of education. Catholic schools were officially closed and Catholic children refused an education.

Local teachers throughout Kerry came together and decided to start up illegal schools which became known later as "Hedge Schools". Classes were held outdoors in barns and houses. One writer noted "school houses are in general wretched huts, built of sods in the highway ditches. They have neither door, window nor chimneys, a large hole in the roof serving to admit light and let out smoke". George Kohl, a travel writer, wrote an account of a visit to a Kerry school in 1842 where he witnessed children learning the alphabet while sitting on hard stones. There wasn't a chair for him to sit on, he noted. He said, "The children were very poor, scantily clad and had very little food, but were still cheerful about learning." The master was paid by the parents. Some boys were prepared for priesthood. Some went to the continent to join foreign armies.

But above all, being able to read and write gave them a chance to succeed in life. On all of the early Mulvihill family census record forms under the section "Education", in perfect hand-writing it states "Yes-read/write".

Pat lives in Northampton, England. His father Michael immigrated to England from Ireland after WWII, working on clearing beach defenses along the southern coast of England, as did many Irish. Pat's grandfather Patrick lived in Rathgoggin North, Charleville, Co. Cork, along the Limerick border.