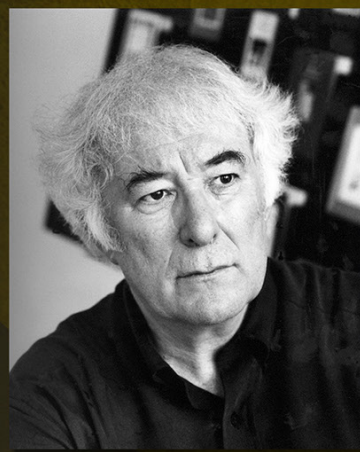


THE FORGE.

BY SEAMUS HEANEY (1939-2013)



SEAMUS HEANEY WAS AN INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED POET AND WRITER WHO WAS BORN IN CASTLEDAWSON AND WAS AWARDED THE NOBEL PRIZE IN LITERATURE IN 1995.

THIS POEM WRITTEN IN 1969, CAN BE READ AS AN ELEGY TO THE PAST, AND A LAMENT TO THE LOST TRADITION OF THE BLACKSMITH.

ALL I KNOW IS A DOOR INTO THE DARK.
OUTSIDE, OLD AXLES AND IRON HOOPS RUSTING.
INSIDE, THE HAMMERED ANVILS SHORT PITCHED RING.
THE UNPREDICTABLE FANTAIL OF SPARKS,
OR HISS WHEN A NEW SHOE TOUGHENS IN WATER.
THE ANVIL MUST BE SOMEWHERE IN THE CENTRE,
HORNED AS A UNICORN AT ONE END AND SQUARE,
SET THERE IMMOVABLE; AN ALTAR
WHERE HE EXPENDS HIMSELF IN SHAPE AND MUSIC.
SOMETIMES, LEATHER APRONED, HAIRS IN HIS NOSE,
HE LEANS OUT ON THE JAMB, RECALLS A CLATTER
OF HOOVES WHERE TRAFFIC IS FLASHING IN ROWS;
THEN GRUNTS AND GOES IN, WITH A SLAM AND FLICK
TO BEAT REAL IRON OUT, TO WORK THE BELLOWS.

NMA wishes to thank

Seamus and Collette Quinn for generously hosting our event on their property.

John Loughran who, very professionally, carried out the groundwork.

Mallon's Hardware for their kind sponsorship, help and support.

For his specialist input on the project, Chris Cassidy, (Newry City Library).



REMEMBERING TIMES LOST

"FINNEGANS FORGE"



SATURDAY
1st October 2022
@2.30pm



A TRIBUTE
TO THE BLACKSMITHS OF
CLOUGHOGUE AND KILLEAVY

TEXT BY JAMES MCAREVEY

THE FORGE



THE LAYOUT OF THE FORGE WAS SIMPLE WITH THE HEARTH AND FIRE STANDING AGAINST THE GABLE WALL AWAY FROM THE DOOR. THE MUCH NEEDED DRAUGHT FOR THE FIRE WAS PROVIDED BY HAND OPERATED BELLOWS AND OFTEN VISITORS, EITHER CUSTOMERS OR THOSE IN FOR A CEILIDH, WOULD BE PREVAILED UPON TO WORK THE BELLOWS !!!

THE BLACKSMITH HAMMERED THE RED HOT IRON INTO SHAPE ON THE ANVIL WHICH WAS MOUNTED ON A WOODEN BLOCK TO ABSORB THE IMPACT. A WATER TROUGH FOR COOLING AND TEMPERING THE IRONS WAS SITUATED BENEATH THE FIRE AND LEGEND HAS IT THAT THE WATER IN THESE TROUGHS HELD A CURE FOR WARTS.



MASS PRODUCTION METHODS OF THE 20TH CENTURY UNDERMINED THE TRADITIONAL TRADES AND SKILLS WHICH WERE HALLMARKS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND CREATED SO MUCH EMPLOYMENT. THE TRADITIONAL, LABOUR INTENSIVE, ECONOMY WAS DECIMATED BY LOW COST MACHINE MADE GOODS WHICH FLOODED THE MARKETS.

THESE TRENDS AND OF COURSE THE ADVENT OF THE MOTOR VEHICLE HASTENED THE DEMISE OF MANY SKILLS AND OCCUPATIONS.....INCLUDING THE TRADITIONAL BLACKSMITH AND HIS INNER SANCTUM, THE FORGE.

PEOPLE SUCH AS FINNEGANS AS BLACKSMITHS, HAD AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITY AND THE SURROUNDING RURAL HINTERLAND.

THEY MADE AND REPAIRED A VARIED RANGE OF DOMESTIC AND AGRICULTURAL ITEMS FROM IRON AND STEEL WHICH INVOLVED WORKING LONG DAYS, FROM EARLY MORNING TO VERY LATE AT NIGHT. A TYPICAL FAMILY HOME WOULD CONTAIN A HOST OF ITEMS FORGED IN THE FIRES OF THESE FORGES. MOST HEARTHS FEATURED A "POT CRANE" AND HOOKS FOR COOKING ON THE FIRE. THERE WOULD BE SPATULAS, TONGS, TABLE FITTINGS, DOOR HINGES AND EVEN NAILS.



OUTSIDE TOO, THE BYRE WOULD HOLD SPADES, HOES, GRAPES AND OTHER IRON MADE IMPLEMENTS. PLOUGHS AND HARROWS WERE ALSO MADE AND REPAIRED AS REQUIRED. THE IRON COMPONENTS OF THE CART OR TRAP, SO ESSENTIAL TO RURAL FAMILIES FOR BUSINESS OR TRAVEL, WERE ALSO MADE AND MAINTAINED BY THE BLACKSMITH. GATES FOR FIELDS, YARDS AND HOMES WERE ALSO PART OF THE SMITHS PORTFOLIO.

THE HORSES AND PONIES OF COURSE NEEDED SHOD AND THE FRIENDLY FARRIER DELIVERED THIS SERVICE ALSO.

THE BLACKSMITH WAS SOMETHING OF AN EXPERT WHEN IT CAME TO WORKING WITH METALS. HE KNEW HOW HOT TO HEAT HIS IRON FOR EACH DESIGNATED TASK, HOW TO WELD IRON AND STEEL AND HOW TO TEMPER AXES AND CHISELS. THE BLACKSMITH WAS AT THE CENTRE OF THE COMMUNITY, A SERVICE PROVIDER AND A MUCH SOUGHT AFTER MAN.



Pictured is our artistic blacksmith, Mickey Mallon, creating the replica hull for our "SS Alder" Tribute