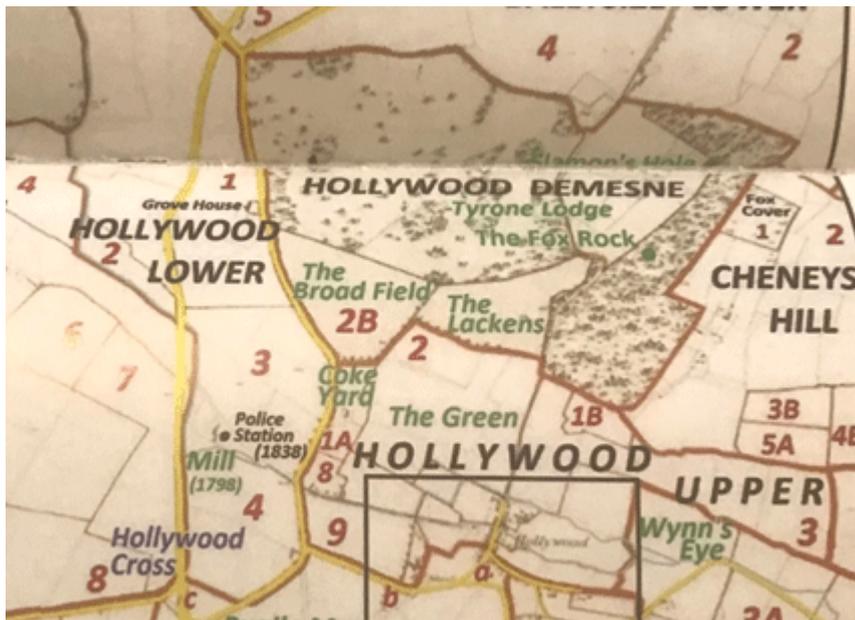


Cheney's Hill



You've come to find the hill from where your ancestors were driven.

You'll come in off the Dublin road to rest under the shadow of Wicklow's old hills. Posters of last Autumn's *Music Under the Mountains* will intrigue...a small place like this to host such artistes.. If you are inclined to play some notes or sing with the Hollywood robins and thrushes, your music too will be under the mountains.

For now stand between the two duelling pubs, facing each tensely other across the cul-de-sac. You may get a sense of 19th century horse fairs, beasts – buyers and sellers long assumed to an another place.

Close your eyes and breathe deep and you may get the aroma of dung, tobacco and porter. Listen and you'll hear the tumult of struck bargains, metallic stomp of hooves on cobbles.

You will need to head East into the wood of Johannes Bosco wherein lies your path to Chaney's Hill. but you should first detour West to visit our other holy man, Kevin, lest you leave this place unfairly judged. Where perfidy once stalked, piety walked long years before and since.

So, on by the Castle Bank and into Corrigan's Glen where, if you come at the right time of year, you'll be charmed by the yellow riot of ancient flag irises. You'll pass Kevin's Chair – where you can cure a bad back, and if, you've seen the movie *Michael Collins*, you will recognise the fateful Beal na mBlath.

Now raise your gaze up the cliff face to St Kevin's cave where he spent penitential days, before decamping for fashionable Glendalough to found a city. In reverie, it's easy to imagine our 6th Century hermit and his blackbird gazing down in serene bemusement from his Hollywood redoubt as Liam Neeson draws his last breath below.

Retrace your steps, past Madwoman's Leap and by ancient St Kevin's Church, which these days is a cradle of sweet festival music. And on over the Watery Lane and fording the Askinavadda hurtling from the uplands towards Anna Livia. And onwards into the holy wood which holds its secrets tightly. On your left, buzzards rise from beech groves where the granite ruins of Tyrone Lodge lie, razed by the men of '98.

And now you climb steadily to your right through towering beech and holm oak, some descendants of Beresford's planting in the early 1800s.

Beresford, whose prolific landscape tree planting of the hills hereabouts was matched only by his uprooting of so many hapless human weeds.

And as you progress through Kevin and John's sacred old places, you will rest at the Fox Rock where Reynard sat and sneered at Beresford's hounds in their foaming turmoil of pursuit way below.

Your quest is almost done, for sweeping upwards to your right is Chaney Hill cleared by the red-blooded Lord. Hunting parties with untrammelled run over this Wicklow foothill raised grateful bumpers with Beresford of an evening.

Archbishop Robinson of Armagh dithered while dispatches of his nephew Beresford's depredations came to appal the exalted prelate's genteel ears. Finally the crozier reached south, and thus ended the Clearances.

But Chaney's Hill was empty and wild, your forbears long since trudged away for Liverpool boats.

The Holy City had sought to rescue the Holy Wood, but too late. Acorns of hatred had already fallen to the forest floor.

Eric Greaves has been writing for approximately 3 years. A retired financial adviser but active mandolin player, occasional composer and music festival curator, he is a member of the Irish Writers Centre and regularly attends Centre courses.

In recent years he received an Irish Government bursary to attend the John Hewitt Summer School where he undertook a creative writing course with author Bernie Magill.

Eric was a member of the North Coast Writers Group during Covid lockdowns and is currently editing an historical fiction novel. Recently he has had a short story *Shades of Jack* accepted by *Impspired.com* for their August 2021 online edition and for their Print Anthology in September 2021.