



# Murder in Carriganima by: Niall O'Brien

Art O' Laoire (Arthur O'Leary) son of Cornelius O Laoire was born in Raleigh near Macroom in 1747. Little is known about his early life, but he was presumably well educated, and the family lived a comfortable life of Gentleman Farmers. His father purchased a commission in the Austrian Army for Art when he turned 16 and he also paid his fare. Art proved himself a worthy soldier becoming a Captain in the Hungarian Hussars which was a regiment of Empress Marie Therese's Army of Austro-Hungary. In 1767 while on a



visit home 23 year old Eibhlin O'Connell, a widow since she was 15 (She had been previously married to "old O'Connor of Furies" who had died after six months of marriage) first noticed Art in full uniform at the Macroom town square. Eibhlin was the 5th of the 8 daughters of Daniel Mór O'Connell, thus making her an Aunt of Daniel O'Connell the Liberator, who was born in 1775. According to Eibhlin it was love at first sight and they were married after eloping on December 19th 1767. They lived with his Father at Rathleigh House (pictured on right) and it seems that Art returned to Austria



for further periods of intermittent service. In 1768 while on leave from the Austrian Army Art brought back a beautiful Chestnut Mare and entered him in the annual horse race which took place in Dunsiky racecourse. Arts horse was in a class of its own and won

the race with ease, beating the favourite of Abraham Morrison. This win stirred bitter jealousy in Morrison who was the district Sheriff of Macroom and he demanded Art sell him the mare for £5. (At the time penal laws forbade a Catholic from owning a Horse exceeding £5 in value). Art refused the sale, and struck Morrison with his horse whip, challenging him to a duel; Morrison declined. This was the start of the "bad blood" between the two men and in Jan 1773 Morris used his position as Magistrate/High Sheriff, to further his vendetta against his enemy. He persuaded his fellow Magistrates to support him, and Art was duly proclaimed



an Outlaw with 20 Guineas on his head. On May 4th 1773 Art knew Morrison was in Millstreet on business and he left the safety of his Raleigh home to intercept him on his return journey. Art stopped into the pub in Carriganima and bought drinks for everyone and boasted of his plan to murder Morrison and put an end to it once and for all. Unfortunately one

of the patrons slipped away unnoticed to warn Morrison. The two men met at Cloughula and Morrison returned to Millstreet and collected some soldiers who went with him to Carriganima and set up an ambush along a ditch bordering the pound on the east side of the River Foherish. It is said that Art, a professional soldier, misjudged the range of the muskets, and was in fact tormenting the British from beyond

the footbridge when Soldier Green fired the first and fatal shot which hit Art in the neck. Art was mortally wounded but stayed in the saddle for another hundred yards, then fell from the Horse at the point where the monument (pictured on right) now stands. The horse continued home to Raleigh. When Eibhlin saw the horse in the yard, with blood on the saddle, she knew that Art was in trouble. She mounted the horse



which brought her back to the spot where Art lay in a pool of blood with an old woman by his side. Her 26 year old husband was waked that night in the old flour mill which was located on the river side where the two lanes meet that came down out of Carriganima Village. He was waked the following day in the family home in Raleigh. Curiously, Art's body received three burials. Initially he was buried by Eibhlin in the Old Cemetery of Kilnamartyra near to Dundareirke Castle. It was however the family wish that he be buried in Kilcrea Friary in Ovens, although there is no evidence of this being the traditional family grave. At that time, burial in monastic ground was forbidden, so his body was removed to a temporary grave in the field adjacent to the Friary. Then, when the Penal Laws were repealed, his final interment (pictured below) in Kilcrea Friary took place. A Coroner's Inquest held on May 17th produced a verdict that Abraham Morrison and the party of soldiers were guilty of the wilful Murder of Arthur O Laoire in Carriganima. Art's brother Cornelius decided to revenge his dead brother and on July 7th he rode



to Mr. Boyce's lodging house in Hammonds Lane, Cork City and shot Morrison three times. Abraham Morrison survived and stood trial for murder and was "honourably acquitted". The party of soldiers involved had conveniently been sent to the East India Colonies. Cornelius meanwhile had taken passage to France and from there to America, where he had a distinguished career. Morrison died in September 1775 from complications resulting from his wounds. A 390 line lament written by Eibhlin (Eileen) for the wake became the most passionate love poems ever composed in the Irish language and this is the reason why their story of love and persecution have survived down through the generations.