

## **Keane's Bar Maam – Alexander Nimmo's Residence originally named 'Corrib Lodge' (1822 – to present)**

The text below is copied from a document hanging on a wall of Keane's Bar and is reproduced here courtesy of the owners.

### **History of this Place**

Early in the 1800's the British Government set up a commission to inquire into the needs of the 'Western District' of Ireland. There was no employment, the land was poor and a famine occurring in the year 1822 added to the destitution of the people. Heading the commission was a young Scottish engineer, born in Kirkcaldy Fifeshire in 1783 – his name was ALEXANDER NIMMO. In 1822 Alexander Nimmo built this house here at the point where the river Béal na mBreac enters Lough Corrib. He called it 'Corrib Lodge'. Built as his residence and pay-office\* (see foot-note) whilst supervising his works, he was to reside here until his death in Dublin ten years later at the age of 49.

He then built the bridge directly opposite, and the carriage road from Galway to Clifden via the Maam Bridge. (The road via Recess to Clifden was not completed until after his death in 1832). The bridge was built of stone with fine pillars of cut stone (see sketch). The arch was swept away in a flood in 1890. The pillars were retained and the stone arch was replaced by an iron span. This was declared unsafe in 1982 and a complete new bridge was built.

Before 1822 no roads existed in this area. All supplies were brought to Maam by boat from Galway – a very ancient thoroughfare. Boats plied regularly calling at quays along the way, so during the 18<sup>th</sup> and well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century the landing stage at Maam was a very busy place indeed.

After Nimmo's death 'Corrib Lodge' was occupied by Mr. Rourke who ran it as a Bianconi Coaching Inn. It was then called the 'MAAM HOTEL' (a name it retained until 1969 when it passed into the hands of the Keane family who now run it as a licensed premises).

From 1885 until 1969 it was owned and run by the Wallace family, closing as a hotel on the outbreak of World War II.

The large carved stone inset in the wall outside is also to be seen in the sketch. Undoubtedly, it must have been a form of 'trademark' of Nimmo's as there are four identical such stones decorating the very fine bridge where he built at Poulaphuka in Co. Wicklow.

It is worth noting here that all properties in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were in the ownership of the 'Landlord' – generally absentee. In the case of the Maam Hotel the landlord was the very unpopular Lord Leitrim. He reserved the right to occupy 'the entire hotel' whenever he and his retinue were in the vicinity regardless of an inconvenience to other travellers who

might already be there. The story is told that a Mr. Gough and party were occupying rooms one night when Lord Leitrim and his retinue arrived. Mr. Gough was ordered to leave, a fight ensued and this time the Landlord was 'evicted'.

\*N.B.

During renovations, the present owners retained as much as possible the façade of Nimmo's 'Corrib Lodge'. However, an embankment of earth and stone steps to the front of the building had to be removed. There were two front doors (now French windows), a flight of steps to each door. On pay-day the workers, hundreds in all, filed in one door, collected their pay at the bay window, and filed out the other door.