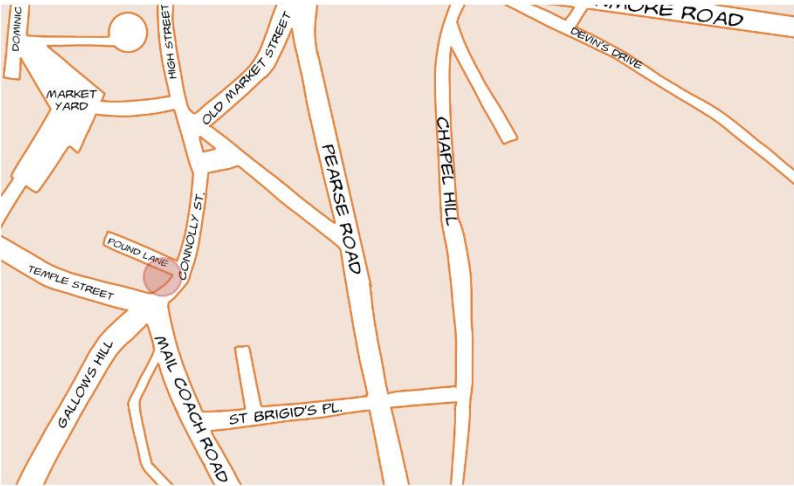


Back in the late 90s, Sligo town looked very different. For one, a butchers used to sit unobtrusively on the end of Connelly Street- a butchers that may have had a very interesting part to play in the town's history indeed...



HOW ROSWELL FINAN GOT HIS NAME

by Wyrdr Caldron

This is a story from the late 90s. I can confirm parts of it myself, but only Archie “Roswell” Finan himself knows the whole truth.

Archie Finan was an incurious child, but a nosy one too. His father being a guard, he inherited a suspiciousness and a love for rules that didn’t necessarily involve following them. He would prowl and snoop, but only to ensure the world was following its allotted course, naturally. A thickset, fair haired bundle of teenage swagger, he was in the year below me and we had been friends of a sort for some time. Once, we fished an eel of huge size out of the black water of Doorley park and he was unphased at the gasping, tormented tangle of its slimy body-distraught at its pain and weirdness I threw it back. Archie, I’m convinced, would’ve run it straight down to the Garda station and had his dad slap it in a cell until it explained itself.

I write this to illustrate how strange it seemed to me when the cocksure Archie Finan came to school one morning, shaken and insisting he had seen something that was *not meant to be* down at O’Grady’s butchers. At the top of Connolly street, there is now only an unassuming house that stretches far back from the street, but back in the 90s, this was O’Grady’s butchers. Tiled in antiseptic whiteness and smelling of iron, it seemed to stretch back endlessly when the boss would go into the backrooms to fetch out something.

It was here Archie went snooping one evening, looking to catch a glimpse of something he could get someone in trouble over. Finding the shop empty, he twisted past the counter and in the door leading to the backrooms. As he told it, a chill assaulted him, and a bright light seemed to flicker in rhythm to a shrill drilling noise just beyond the heavy rubber strips curtaining the backmost rooms. The light blinded him for a moment as he peeked through, but the scene quickly assembled itself- three men, none of whom he recognised as employees, stood around a metal operating table, all dressed in blue medical scrubs.

On tip toe, Archie tried to sneak a glance at what they were up to- oxygen tanks hissed, a heavy camcorder on a tripod whirred dimly as it recorded, they were muttering medical terms and working carefully... Archie stepped forward, hypnotised with curiosity, when as one they turned to him, dropping separators and scalpels to advance on him. What he saw on the table he has trouble explaining later- its flesh hung loosely like the wattle of a turkey, but the limbs that lay in a mess were muscly, he says, octopus like and jointless. Flaps of elephantine grey skin had been opened, revealing a jewelled flesh, kind of a honeycomb of meat. A mess of a thing. But what caught him most were the eyes- so big and so open. Jet black. They were dissecting an alien, he swears.

An alien? In the back of O'Grady's butchers? In the middle of the day on a street in Sligo? He became a laughing stock.

He told the story to all and sundry, he tried it on me several times those first few days. But by the time he was being called Roswell to his face, he'd become stony silent. He left school for good soon after, but not for any other school or any job. You'd just see him wandering about, dazed looking.

Given the bare facts, all this could be dismissed as a teenager's first glimpse of an unprepared carcass in all its disarray, showing its pearlescent innards in the harsh light, combined with a healthy dose of imagination.

However, although I hesitate to connect the facts, it was just around this time that a strange outbreak of illness happened to trouble the town.

Eventually it was explained as food poisoning- all the patients had taken home a portion of spoiled meat from O'Grady's the day before their symptoms began. This in itself is nothing, but the details are odd. The illness was hardly what you would expect of food poisoning- characterised by fainting spells and feverish dreams intruding even on the waking hours of those effected. Hard though it is thirty years later to research the particulars of such a swiftly resolved outbreak, I did chase up some fascinating firsthand detail. One restaurateur who wishes to remain nameless remembers getting meat around this time that had a "strange silvery cut to it" and a "jellified texture, no matter how well it was cooked"

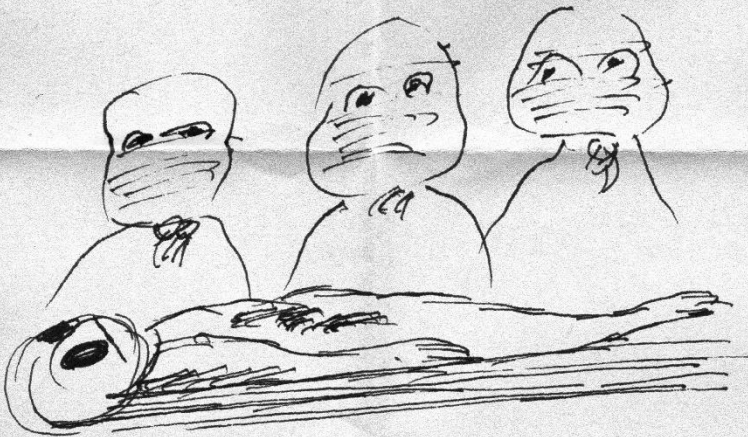
Sligo Garda Station – Police Incident Report

Reporting Officer: *DEREK CAULY*

Scene of Incident: *O'GRADY'S BUTCHER - O'CONNELL ST.*

Date & Time of Incident: *9-4-88 12-50pm*

Details of Incident:



FOR OFFICE USE

Signing Officer: *Noel Conway*

Date: **9. APR. 1988**

Signature: *Noel Conway*

More dubious reports concern the waking dreams themselves- “hellish fits of it went through the house. It was like we kept falling from above into our own bodies...” Of course, quotes like these are, by their nature, subjective recollections and tinged with the delirium of fever. Still, the oft repeated descriptions of “twisted limbs and glowing eyes” appearing in their dreams are hard to dismiss.

Convinced of having seen beyond this world, Archie “Roswell” Finan remains a shaken fellow, and to my knowledge has never since ventured beyond the limits of county Sligo. In fact, it could be speculated that in every particular of his quiet life, he has striven to be as far from anything *unfamiliar* as is humanly possible.

Archie Finan did not respond to requests to be interviewed for this piece.