

As soon as you can, you steer the family group toward some Old Friend of the Family (the older the better) and then slip away unnoticed amidst the chorus of "Conas ta tu's" and what have you's before they get to the "How is ____" - down to the tenth degree of relationship.

Now you are on your own, and this is the only way to navigate the Feis field.

Look through the clutch of pipers in various stages of undress in the traditional manner; beyond the cluster of old-timers, smoking the pipes and chewing the fat over a friendly can of beer; over the heads of the little children scampering madly in every direction over the once green grass; and finally to the stands filled with exhausted mothers, each an isolated raft in a sea of dancing shoes, musical instruments, the remnants of picnic lunches, sweaters, unwanted costume accessories, bottles of suntan lotion, and the two or three little ones too young to dance this year. Sooner or later you will see someone you particularly want to avoid; then you can begin to walk in the opposite direction. This is as good a way as any of deciding where to begin since you refused to buy a program. No matter which way you go, you will eventually arrive at the dancing platforms, where the 5- and 6-year-olds were doing solo reel steps when you came in. You do arrive, and the stages are unaccountably empty.

Then you realize with horror that, despite your premeditated delay, the Dedication Exercises are only just beginning. Unless you can get far enough away over the field, you will have to listen to the former assistant mayor (c. 1907) commend the Society for approximately 25 minutes, for its herculean efforts culminating in this very field day, an inspiring display contributing and attesting to the spread of Irish Culture.

Your headlong dive for the indoor gymnasium is arrested by the strains of the national anthem, sung by a soloist chosen, no doubt, for volume. With some help from the crowd in off-key undertone, the Irish national anthem starts.