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History Armagh

- **The man from Ogle Street who married an earl's daughter**
- **McCreesh's Cottage: an architectural and cultural landmark**
- **The Vicars Hill murder legacy—a case of Victorian institutional abuse?**

An Armagh History Group Publication

Laying of the foundation stone at the building of Emania Terrace.
If you can identify anyone in the photo please let a member of the History Group know.

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Mc Creesh's Cottage , courtesy of the family

Back Cover:
The Long Room, Armagh Robinson Library

Contents

Place-names in the Parish of Kildarton

by Gerry Oates

Kildarton Parish Church

The parish of Kildarton lies about two miles south-east of Armagh city and was formed as a perpetual curacy in 1840 out of the parishes of Armagh, Lisnadill, Loughgall and Mullaghbrack. Kildarton served as a separate parish until it was united with Lisnadill in 1940, one century after its establishment.

The parish church was built and consecrated in 1841. There is also a very old graveyard within the parish containing the ruins of a church or old abbey. Unfortunately, very little is known or recorded about this site.

There are 19 townlands in the parish: Tirnascobe, Mullyloughran (from Armagh parish); Calone, Drumbee Beg, Drumbee More, Edenaveys, Edenknappagh and Killeen (from Lisnadill); Altaturk, Legavilly, Mullaghbane, Mullanasilla and Rathdrumgran (from Loughgall); Derrynaught, Derryraine, Drumbee Cross, Drumennis, Drumsavage and Lenalea (from Mullaghbrack).

The N.I. Place-Name Project at QUB and researchers of the Ulster Place-Name Society have provided a mine of information on all of the 19 townlands in the parish. It is ironic, however, that the origin of the parish name itself, Kildarton, has yet to be satisfactorily identified.

The initial element *Kil-* represents *cill* 'church, churchyard' and occurs in well over one-fifth of all parish names, with a total of 574 throughout Ireland. In Old Irish this was *ceall*, from Latin *cella* 'a room within a building', usually a shrine to some pagan deity in a Roman temple, and in Christian times a 'monk's cell'. In place-names it has a range of meanings - 'church, monastic settlement, graveyard'. It is the most common ecclesiastical element in Irish parish names and often refers to a site which once housed an early monastic settlement. The qualifying element *-darton* has so far eluded definite identification. In Donegal Irish *dartán* (turf sod), from *dart* (a clod), could possibly refer to some kind of primitive building material of the early church but nothing similar has been attested elsewhere. The other possibility is that *-dartan* represents the personal name of the founder or someone associated with the early foundation, but again there appears to be no record of such a name.

Kildarton parish lies in the drumlin belt which stretches across south Ulster from Co. Down to the borders of Connacht where Cos. Cavan and Leitrim meet. Many of the townland names in the parish reflect the hilly nature of the landscape: *Drum-* < *Droim* (ridge), *Mullagh-* < *Mullach* (hill-top), *Eden-* < *Éadan* (hill-brow). The low land between the drumlins is also highlighted in the placenames: *Leg-* < *Lag* (hollow); *Lena-* < *Léana* (wet meadow), *Alt-* < *Alt* (glen), *Ennis-* < *Inis* (water meadow). Other elements which occur in Kildarton placenames, *Derry-* < *Doire* (oak-wood) and *Kill-* < *Coill* (wood) remind us that Ireland in the past was much more densely wooded than at present. Lowry's Lough which is situated close to the parish church was recorded as Loghdartan in a civil survey of 1654-6 and was known as Kildarton Lake in the early 19th century.

The townlands

The following notes on the place-names of Kildarton are based on research provided by the N.I. Place-Name Project at QUB (1987-2004) as set out on their web-site *(placenamesni.org)*.

Mullyloughran - *Mullach Luacharnach* (the rushy hill-top) lies on the eastern boundary of Armagh city and the name most probably refers to the high ground between the Armagh-Portadown road and the Armagh-Hamiltonsbawn road. Modern farming techniques have long since eliminated the rushes. The name is recorded in Primate Dowdall's Register of 1541 as *Mullagh Luachyrnach*.

Mullanasilla - *Mullach na Saileach* (the hill-top of the willows). This townland straddles the Armagh-Portadown road and its main feature is the prominent hill-top known locally as Ring Hill. It occurs as *Mollanesillah* on the Escheated Counties Map of 1609.

Legavilly - *Lag a' Bhile* (the hollow of the sacred tree). Legavilly is situated between Armagh and the village of Richhill a little to the south of the Armagh-Portadown road. The element *bile* 'tree' is generally applied to any a tree which had some sacred or other significance. It appears as *Legully* on Rocque's map of Armagh of 1760. Legavilly, with slightly more than 73 acres, is the smallest townland in Kildarton parish.

Altaturk - *Alt Toirc* (wild boar's glen). The townland is approximately half-way between Armagh city and Hamilton's Bawn and was probably the haunt of wild boar many centuries ago. It is identified as *Alturke* on the Escheated Counties Map of 1609.

Killeen - *An Coillín* (the little wood). Killeen lies a short distance south of Armagh city and straddles the Armagh-Newry road. The name dates back to a time when much of Ireland was covered by woods. It is recorded as *Ballekilline* on a plantation map of 1611. The prefix *Balle* (*baile* 'townland') was first discarded in 1629 as recorded in an inquisition of that year.

Edenaveys - *Éadan na bhFiach* (hill-brow of the ravens); from *éadan* (brow) and *fiach* (raven). Edenavys lies on the southern periphery of Armagh city. On a plantation map of 1609 it is described as *'the two townes of Edenefeagh'* which explains the English plural *-s* at the end of the current name.

Edenknappagh - *Éadan Cnapach* 'uneven hill-brow'; *cnapach* 'lumpy, gnarled' describes hilly ground. Edenknappagh lies to the east of the Armagh-Newry road between Armagh and Markethill. In the Armagh Inquisition of 1609 it was recorded as *Ballyedenkaapagh* and on plantation maps as *Balledenknapagh* in 1611. It first appears as *Edenknappagh* in the Cromwellian inquisition of 1657.

Lenalea - *An Léana Liath* (the grey wet meadow); *léana* 'meadow' in place-names often refers to swampy, marshy ground. This townland is situated a little south of the Armagh-Hamilton Bawn's road. In references to medieval Mullaghbrack it is recorded as *Laneleigh* in 1608.

Collone / Calone - *Call Luain* (the hazel-tree of the haunch-shaped hill). This townland is situated on high ground half-way between Armagh and Markethill and overlooks the city of Armagh. On the Escheated Counties Map of 1609 it is identified as *Culloine*.

Rathdrumgran - *Ráth Droim Gréine* (the fort of the sunny ridge) is the suggested origin of this place-name which is recorded as *Rathdromgreny* in 1610. *Ráth* 'ring-fort', *droim gréine* 'sunny ridge'; in place-names *ráth* usually denotes the settlement of an important person. The townland lies a little to the north of Hamilton's Bawn village.

Tirnascobe - *Tír na Scuab* (land of the brooms) occurs in Primate Dowdall's Register as *Tyrnascob* c.1541. It is derived from *tír* 'land' and *scuab* 'brush'. This townland is relatively large and is situated between the Armagh-Richhill and the Armagh-Hamilton's Bawn roads. It probably takes its name from the practice of collecting brushwood to make besoms. Tirnascobe, with c. 540 acres, is the largest townland in Kildarton parish.

Mullaghbane - *An Mullach Bán* (the white hill-top). Mullaghbane is a common place-name throughout Ulster. This townland includes part of Castle Dillon lake and straddles the Armagh-Portadown road. In 1609 it was recorded as *Mullabane*.

Drumsavage - *Droim Samhach* (sorrel ridge). This townland appears to be named for the sorrel plant *(Rumex acetosa)* and is unconnected to the Anglo-Norman family Savage of The Ards in Co. Down. It lies between Lowry's Lake and Hamilton's Bawn village and occurs as *Dromshaweies* in the Calendar of Patent Rolls in 1616.

Drumbee Beg - *An Droim Buí Beag* (the yellow ridge - small)
Drumbee More - *An Droim Buí Mór* (the yellow ridge - big). These two adjacent townlands were formerly united and recorded as *Drombies* (with English plural *-s*) in an inquisition relating to Armagh of 1612. *Bui* (yellow) in the Irish name is very common in place-names and most probably refers to the gorse plant *(Ulex galii)*. These two neighbouring townlands are situated between the

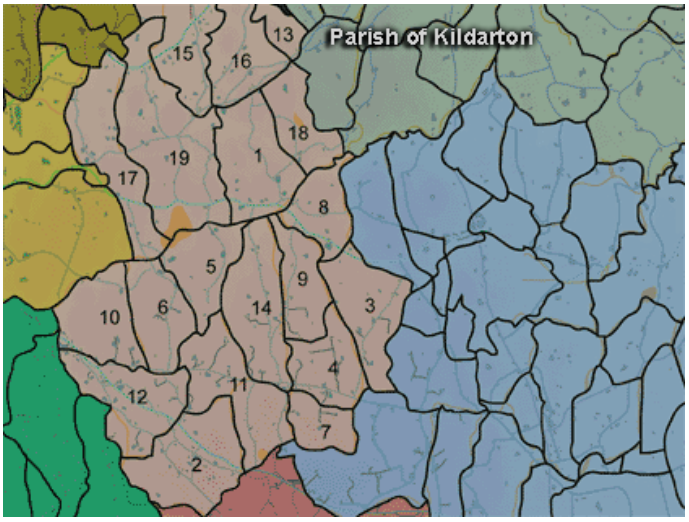
Armagh-Newry and Armagh-Hamilton's Bawn roads.

Drumbeecross - *An Droim Buí* (the yellow ridge) or *Droim na Croise* (the ridge of the cross-roads). Drumbeecross appears to be a hybrid of the above two terms. This townland was recorded as *Drumnecross* in 1608 and in 1629 as *Drombecro* and again in 1657 as *Drumbicrosse* in inventories of Church lands. The *cross* element refers either to a cross-road or an ecclesiastical cross. The townland is approximately half-way between Armagh and Markethill.

Drumennis - *Droim Inse* (hill ridge above the water meadow). The second element *inis* (island) is also used to denote 'water-meadow' often in instances where one branch of a stream has dried up, leaving what once was an island, joined to the river bank. In 1608 this townland was recorded as *Dromanish* in an inventory of Church lands. Drumennis lies north of the Armagh-Hamilton's Bawn road a short distance from the village.

Derrynaught - There is some uncertainty regarding the original form of this place-name. The initial element *Derry-* represents Irish *Doire* (oak wood) and *Doire na n-Áth* (oak-wood of the ford) has been suggested, but the absence of a river in the townland makes this unlikely. On the other hand, *Doireánach* (abounding in oak-wood) has been proposed and appears to relate to the anglicised version *Derrinagh* on the Escheated Counties Map of 1609. Derrynaught lies south of the Armagh-Hamilton's Bawn road within one mile of Hamilton' Bawn. Derrynaught was given as an endowment to Armagh Observatory by Primate Robinson (1765-95).

Derryraine - The origin of this townland name is uncertain. *Doire* (oak wood) represents the first element and the Ordnance Survey project of 1824-30 suggested the surname *Uí Riain (O Ryan)* or possibly the personal name *Rian (Ryan)* as the qualifying element. However, the surname *(O) Ryan* is not historically associated with Co. Armagh. In Sir Wm. Petty's census of c.1659 the name appears as *Derereane*. Derryraine is situated between the Armagh-Markethill and Armagh-Hamilton's Bawn roads.



Key

1 Altaturk	11 Edenknappagh
2 Collone	12 Killeen
3 Derrynaught	13 Legavilly
4 Derryraine	14. Lenalea
5 Drumbee Beg	15 Mullaghbane
6 Drumbee More	16 Mullanasilla
7 Drumbeecross	17 Mullyloughran
8 Drumennis	18 Rathdrumgran
9 Drumsavage	19 Tirnascobe
10 Edenaveys	

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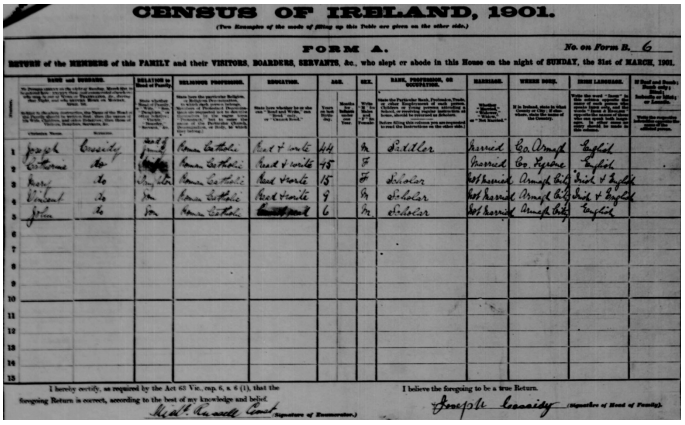
The man from Ogle Street who married an earl's daughter

by Mary McVeigh

How did the son of a saddler from Ogle Street, here in Armagh, end up dying in mysterious circumstances just ten months after marrying into the British aristocracy? The story of Vincent Francis Cassidy is indeed an intriguing one which poses more questions than answers. Quite by chance, many years ago, when I was researching local politics in the 1930s I spotted a short paragraph in a newspaper which announced the forthcoming marriage in London of said Mr Cassidy and the daughter of the second Earl of Lathom. I took a mental note of it for future reference. It was always my intention at some stage to find out more because I had family and friends living in Ogle street and I remember John Cassidy, an eccentric elderly bachelor, who lived just a few doors away from my grandparents. However, there was never any mention that I recall of his brother who married a woman from the higher echelons of London society.

When I was looking for something different to write about for this edition of History Armagh it occurred to me that I should make an attempt to do a bit of detective work on Vincent Francis Cassidy. I was very much aware that it is certainly a lot easier nowadays than in the past to access information from newspapers and other sources. Indeed, I was able to look through dozens of papers from the comfort of my own armchair but I have to confess I still do not have the whole story. There are still many unanswered questions.

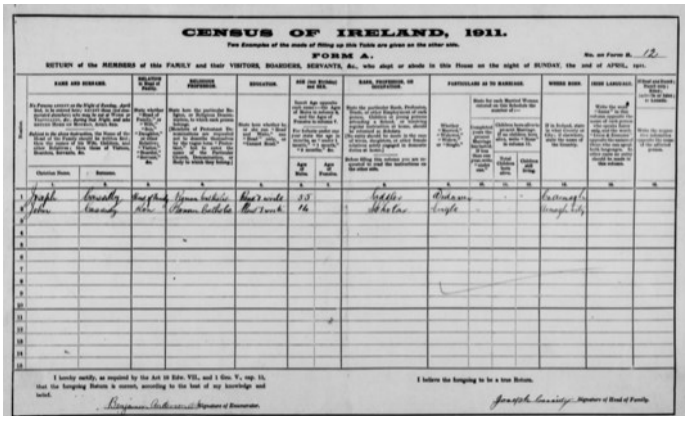
First of all, how was a man from Ogle Street in a position to be mixing with members of high society in London in the 1920s and 30s, a time when there was considerable deprivation in these islands and few opportunities for social and economic advancement? Whilst Ogle Street was not one of the poorest parts of town it was a far cry from fashionable Kensington where Cassidy lived at the time of his marriage. His father was a saddler who was probably able to make a comfortable living but was unlikely to be in a position to subsidise a son to live the highlife in London, certainly not to the extent that he could be described as a man of 'independent means' as was stated in the reports of his wedding. In the 1901 census Vincent Francis Cassidy's age was give as nine, he was still at school and spoke English and Irish. Ten years later he was not listed. Both he and an older sister would appear to have left home and there was just his father, now a widower and his younger brother, John, living in Ogle Street. [1]



CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1901.

FORM A.

1901 census



CENSUS OF IRELAND, 1911.

FORM A.

1911 census

"An abominable crime"

Six years later, 1917, he would seem to have made news for the first time. On the front page of the *Ulster Gazette* it was reported that he was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment at the Ulster Winter Assizes for having 'committed an offence in a Belfast hotel'. [2] The *Armagh Guardian* was less circumspect in its report, referring to his lawbreaking as 'an abominable crime' but neither paper gave details of what he had done. Presumably his offence was of a sexual nature, not to be discussed in newspapers viewed by all ages. A somewhat strange paragraph appeared in the opinion columns of the *Armagh Guardian*:

"*It is just possible – and it is time – that the connection of the fellow Cassidy will cause promoters of whist*

drives, dances and men's clubs to be more careful in admitting strangers. The having of money to buy a ticket for a drive or concert or readiness to sing should not be sufficient reason to let everybody and anybody sit down in a room with respectable Armagh people." [3]

Was the paper inferring that Cassidy had associations with entertainment and that he had money to spend on leisure activities? Had he an involvement in show business? The reports mentioned that he had recently returned from the USA so did he come home with pockets of money, so to speak? Surprisingly I could find no reference to him on the Ellis Island database which lists those en route to New York or New Jersey who passed through the immigration reception centre there. Unless he entered the USA via Canada he would almost certainly have had to go through Ellis Island. He could possibly have travelled under another name because prior to 1920 it was not necessary to have a passport. A search through American papers for a Vincent Francis Cassidy revealed one possibility, albeit a long shot. In the years 1915 and 1916 there were many reports in the theatrical columns of newspapers throughout the USA of a Vincent Cassidy who was part of a vaudeville touring company. It would appear that he was a member of the cast of a musical comedy, 'Nobody Home' produced by John P. Slocum who, it was claimed, had a number of Broadway hits to his credit.[4] Further weight to the supposition that Cassidy was involved in the entertainment business was references made in the press at the time of his death to his association with the film industry. Initially I assumed he had been an actor and trawled through books and journals looking for his name but 'Hopalong', the cowboy, was the only Cassidy recorded for the period specified. However, another newspaper report made things clearer. It referred to him being in the film distribution business but gave no clues as to what his actual involvement was or how he had got into it in the first place. Presumably he had to put some capital into it but where did he procure it? [5]

Moneymore connection

Sadly to date I have found little information on his whereabouts or his activities from his sojourn at His Majesty's pleasure until he popped up ready to woo the Earl's daughter in London circa 1930. I did however discover that he spent a few years in, believe it or not, Moneymore, far from the bright lights of any metropolis. Nonetheless he would seem to have made an impression on its social scene. A few paragraphs from the *Mid-Ulster Mail* on 2nd August 1930 provided this interesting tit-bit. The paper noted that there had been a 'great deal of interest in Moneymore in the engagement and subsequent marriage' and went on to state:

"Mr Cassidy resided for about a couple of years in Moneymore, in the time of the 'troubles,' about 1922, and was a popular figure in the local community. There was a certain amount of mystery about him, too, for the people were not accustomed to gentlemen of independent means, but that did not detract from his popularity. Some doubt existed as to his identity until the picture papers arrived with his portrait after the wedding. He was credited, when in Moneymore of being a man of many parts, but few expected that he would end his bachelor career as the son-in-law of an earl."

In an earlier edition of the paper, 7th June 1924, reporting on a court case relating to a disputed will it was stated that one of the executors, Vincent Cassidy, had left the country. Thus by 1924 the elusive gentleman was out of Ireland but whereabouts was another matter. When his engagement was announced he declared that it was a 'revival of an old love affair.' He said: "I knew Lady Rosemary many years ago, and then I went abroad, and had not seen her for five years until recently, quite casually, we met again." No mention was made of where in the world he was and to what purpose.

How did he come into contact with his future wife in the first place? Was it through some connection with the stage or show business? Could it have been at one of the many social activities hosted by her brother, William Bootle-Wilbraham, the third and last Earl of Lathom and Baron of Skelmersdale who died just months before the marriage. The earl was notorious for his hedonistic lifestyle and for 'lavishing his entire inheritance on the theatre, by funding productions and throwing expensive parties at his ancestral home, Blythe Hall in Lancashire'. He was a friend and generous benefactor to many prominent figures in the theatre such as Noel Coward, Ivor Novello and Sir John Gielgud. He wrote plays which were too risqué for public consumption and instead were staged on his estate which he was eventually forced to sell because of the enormous debts brought about by his extravagant lifestyle. Was Vincent Cassidy one of the Bright Young Things of the Lathom crowd? [6]

Lively Lady Rosemary

And what of the young woman who was, it would seem, swept off her feet by the mysterious Cassidy? Unlike her husband there was much written about her. She was undoubtedly a leading London socialite who was never out of the society and gossip columns of the press.

Portrait by Lafayette of Lady Rosemary Wilma Cassidy taken in the month of her marriage to Vincent Cassidy (National Portrait Gallery x70299)

Lady Rosemary Bootle-Wilbraham, was described by the *Liverpool Echo* as being a 'sketch writer and photographer for a leading London journal' and it stated that one of her sketches, 'Time', had been broadcast three times on the BBC.[7] Nevertheless she would appear to have had ample time and opportunity to avail of entertainment and fashionable leisure pursuits. Her name appeared in lists of guests at balls, diner parties, visits to Bath, the Henley Regatta and other sporting activities and, it would seem, she was 'one of the keenest motorists in London society'.

Lady Rosemary was fickle, there is no doubt, because she dispensed with two prospective life partners before she opted for Cassidy. The press made much of the fact that she had been engaged three times within four years. Her first was to Mr R. Cosmo Alderson whose father was the Clerk Assistant of Parliament. Apparently they had been childhood friends but were separated for many years. They met again at a dance in September 1926 and subsequently got engaged but by the following December the romance was at an end. It was reported that wedding preparations had been going on from the previous year and it was 'no secret that leading Parisian dressmakers were frequently in London completing the bride's trousseau'.[8] Her second engagement, this time to Mr James Watt of Abney Hall, Cheadle, Cheshire and Upper House, Hayfield, Derbyshire was announced in April 1930. Lady Rosemary converted to Catholicism because Mr Watts was a Catholic. Hundreds of guests were invited to the wedding which was to take place of 11th June but by the end of May it was cancelled and her ladyship took herself off to Paris.[9]

Just days before her wedding on 24th July her third engagement was announced to Vincent Francis Cassidy whose address was given as Emperor's Gate, South Kensington. The only information about it given by the papers was that it took place at Our Lady of Victories Church, Kensington and the officiating priest was Father A. Collingwood. It was stated that the pair had rekindled an old romance after they met again 'casually' at a party. Cassidy had just returned to Britain after several years of being 'out of the country' but his actual whereabouts were not given.[10] No mention at all was made of his Irish origins in the English or Scottish papers. The local papers did mention that he came from Armagh and that his father was a saddler from Ogle Street but added nothing to what had already appeared in the British press. Indeed, the *Armagh Guardian* got his father's first name wrong, calling him Michael instead of Joseph. Also its comment: "Ogle Street is naturally proud that a son of the street has married into the peerage" was highly debatable. Neither paper made any reference to his brush with the law in earlier years.[11]

Was it wedded bliss?

How did married life work out for the pair? All I found was just a single reference from a syndicated society gossip column published on 30th August, 1930:

"It is a sure sign of London's attractiveness that so many people have to search high and low to find a house to live in! The other morning in Bond Street – as thronged as ever – I met Lady Rosemary Cassidy who told me that she and her husband have been house hunting for weeks. This clever girl – she was Lady Rosemary Wilbraham until a month or two ago – is a brilliant short story writer. Her husband works very hard in the film distribution business".[12]

They never did move house because it was from Lady Rosemary's house at Cornwall Gardens, Kensington that he was taken to a nursing home where he died on 19th May, 1931, just ten months after the wedding. He had apparently taken ill in his bath and was removed post haste. None of the papers commented upon or queried why he has taken to a nursing home rather than a hospital and no reference was made as to the nature of his illness. The announcement of his death would appear to have been the last time Vincent Francis Cassidy featured in the press. If there was an inquest, it

went unreported and if there was speculation that his death might have been at his own or the hands of others it was never publicised. There was no mention of a funeral or his place of burial. Interestingly when the *Irish Times* gave short reports on both his wedding and his death the paragraph on his wedding made no mention of his place of birth but in the report of his death it was noted that he was the 'son of Mr Joseph Cassidy, Ogle Street'.[13]

Her husband might have been forgotten but Lady Rosemary continued to interest the press. She became engaged for a fourth time just over a year after his death. Her new fiancé was an actor, Basil Atherton, from Liverpool who apparently popped the question, so to speak, in a taxi. The *Belfast Telegraph*'s report noted that Lady Rosemary was 'well known as one of Society's younger hostesses' so presumably her mourning period was not prolonged.[14] This engagement did not end in marriage however, but according to Peerage records she did wed again, a Captain T.H. Bird who pre deceased her by ten years in 1954.

When I started out on this piece of detective work I had hoped to unearth some information on how a man from a relatively humble background with a prison record was able to break into what was essentially 'high society' and marry one of its number. I wanted to find out how he became to be of 'independent means' – had he been a gambler, a thief or a lucky investor, for example? What was the cause of his untimely death? Sadly, despite having access to newspapers at home and abroad I was unable to get satisfactory answers. One reason may have been that newspapers were just not interested or, alternatively they were fobbed off or warned off by people in high positions. I was surprised that papers on this side of the Irish Sea, particularly the two locals, did not provide any background information other than mentioning that he was from Ogle Street and that his father was a saddler. The *Armagh Guardian* could not even get the father's name right. Whilst it may not exactly have been a 'rags to riches' story nonetheless it was surely sufficiently out of the ordinary to merit a bit more investigation? Sadly, Vincent Francis Cassidy must remain an enigma unless there is some-one out there who is able to shed a light on him. I would certainly welcome further enlightenment!

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3 *Armagh Guardian*, 14th December, 1917

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5 *Chichester Observer,* 3rd September, 1930

6 *Ormisk Advertiser,* 13th February, 1930; *Independent,* 1st October, 2000

7 *Liverpool Echo, 23rd* July, 1930

8 *Western Mail,* 21st December, 1927

9 *Londonderry Sentinel,* 27th May, 1930

10 *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intellinger,* 24th July, 1930

11 *Armagh Guardian,* 1st August, 1930

12 *Chichester Observer, 3rd* September, 1930

13 *Irish Times,* 24th July, 1930 and 27th May, 1931

14 *Belfast Telegraph,* 7th July, 1932

74 Drelincourt School (Mrs. Cranston)
76 Robert Ebbitt
78 Thomas Rafferty
80 Gerald Mackey
82 James Mackle
84 James Campbell
86 Michael Gaffney
88 George Bradshaw
90 Margaret M'Kee
92 Thomas Hagan
94 Peter Mackey
96 Kate Lilley
98 Joseph Devlin
100 John M'Quade
102 James M'Anerney
104 Patrick Campbell
Jas. M'Neill (Corporation)
106 John Toal

OGLE STREET

1 Edward Slevin
3 Francis Carroll
5 Robert Parker
7 James Fearon
9 James O'Reilly
11 Thomas Hill
13 Michael Quinn
15 Phillip O'Reilly
17 John Hanratty and Francis Mallon
19 Cornelius M'Elroy
21 John Hanratty
23 Patrick M'Kee
25 James M'Kee
27 Edward O'Neill
29 Thomas Wallace
31 Patrick Corrigan
33 Charles Marlow
35 John Murray
37 James Hill
39 Arthur M'Anerney
41 Alfred W. Gray
43 Patrick M'Greavy
45 Ellen Newbanks
45a James Trainor
47 Miss E. Loughran
49 Patrick Campbell
51 Patrick Murphy
53 Margaret Nugent
55 Henry Rafferty
57 Margaret Loy
2 Lillian Duncan
4 Patrick Begley
6 Thos. M'Laughlin (76)
6a Rose O'Brien
8 Joseph Corr
8a Thomas M'Gerrigan
10 Robert M'Sweeney
12 Joseph Cassidy
14 Francis M'Keever
16 Mary Donnelly
18 Vacant
20 Eliza Rocks
22 Francis M'Veigh
24 James Kelly
26 Josephine Mallon
28 Rosetta M'Integgart
30 Sandy M'Pherson
32 Kirker & Co., Ltd. (85)
James Connolly
34-36 Henry J. M'Kee, junr.
N.I. Labour Party Branch
38 Susan M'Cartan
40 Henry J. M'Kee
42 Mary M'Keever
44 Catherine Flynn
46 Henry J. M'Kee
48 Mrs. Patrick Largey
50 Patrick Donnelly
52-52a Bennett Bros. (142)
54 Francis M'Kee
56 Thomas Allen
58 Patrick Donaghy
60-62 John Hughes

PRIMROSE HILL

1-3 Lillie Donaghy
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9 Thomas Parker
11 Gerald Gregory
13 John Convery
15 Annie Reilly
17 James Moynes
19 Bridget Hughes
21 Mary E. M'Shane
23 Phillip O'Callaghan
25 John Toal
27 Catherine Boylan
29 Mary O'Neill
31 Joseph Harney
33 Bridget Parker
35 James M'Mahon
37 Patrick Irwin
39 Rose Slevin
41 Susan Flynn

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Ulster Gazette Yearbook 1937 showing Joseph Cassidy living in 12 Ogle Street (courtesy of the Irish and Local Studies Library)

A short history of the Armagh Robinson Library (Armagh Public Library)

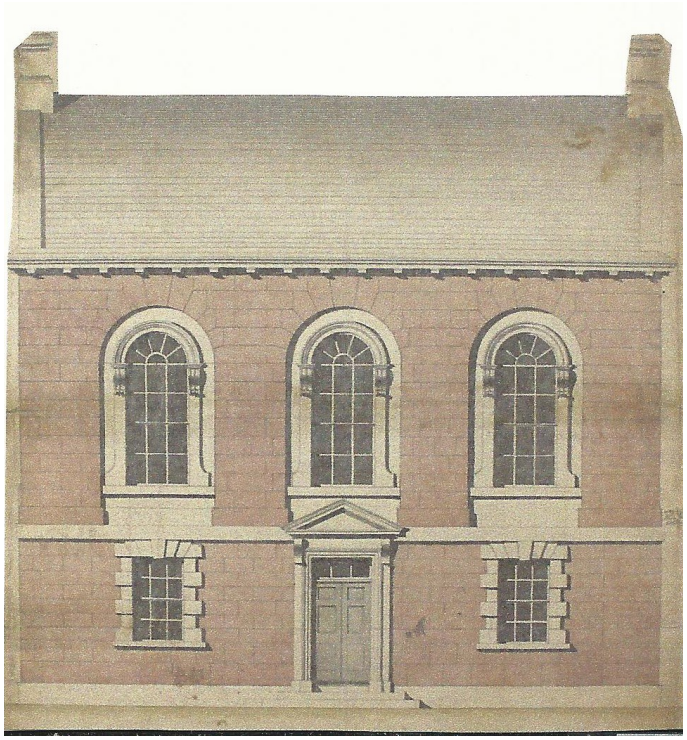
by Stephen Day

Armagh Robinson Library (formerly called Armagh Public Library until 2017) is the oldest public library in Northern Ireland. It was founded in 1771 by Archbishop Richard Robinson (Primate: 1765-1794). This building and his later project, the Observatory (1789-91) were an important part of his vision for the eventual establishment of a university in the City of Armagh. The Library is situated on the Ancient Hill of Armagh, at the top of Abbey Street, adjacent to Vicar's Hill and opposite Saint Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral.

King George III period (1760 – 1820)

Archbishop Robinson (1708-1794) has been called the 'builder of (modern) Armagh' and he had grand plans for the improvement of the city. It had recovered somewhat from the wars of the 1600s but still had few civic buildings of note. His legacy includes the Archbishop's Palace (1768-1770), the County Infirmary (1774) the Royal School (1774), the Gaol (1780) and the Observatory (1789-1791). All were built during the first half of the reign of King George III and all continue to exist today. The Primate set the standard for others to follow in Armagh during the later Georgian period.

The Library has been described as one of the most perfect architectural set pieces in the City and was built to the design of the famous architect Thomas Cooley. (McKinstry: p 38) It was established by an Act of Parliament in 1773, entitled 'An Act for settling and preserving a Publick Library in the City of Armagh for ever'. The Armagh Library Act was based on a previous one for the Free Library in Dublin founded by Primate Narcissus Marsh (1707). The preamble states: 'Whereas ... Richard Lord Rokeby Archbishop of Armagh, &c, out of his general inclinations to the public good of this Kingdom... and the encouragement of Learning, hath at his own costs and charges erected and built a house upon a spot of ground, part of the estate of the See of Armagh, and hath fitted and prepared the principal part of the said house for a publick Library for ever, for the use of all persons who shall resort thereto at the hours to be appointed for the Library Keeper's attendance, and shall conform themselves to the rules, orders and directions of the Governors for the time being: and hath also provided all things convenient for the better order use and standing of the books intended to be kept therein; and hath likewise fitted and prepared the remainder of the house for the accommodation and habitation of a person to be appointed Library Keeper and his successors, Keepers of the said Library, for ever.' The Keeper's quarters were on the ground floor and on three floors to the rear of the building and they remain so today. The entire building is in ashlar limestone and initially it was smaller than is presently seen with only three bays to the front. The first Keeper was Rev. William Lodge (1785-1813) with a continuous succession to the present Keeper, Dean Gregory Dunstan.

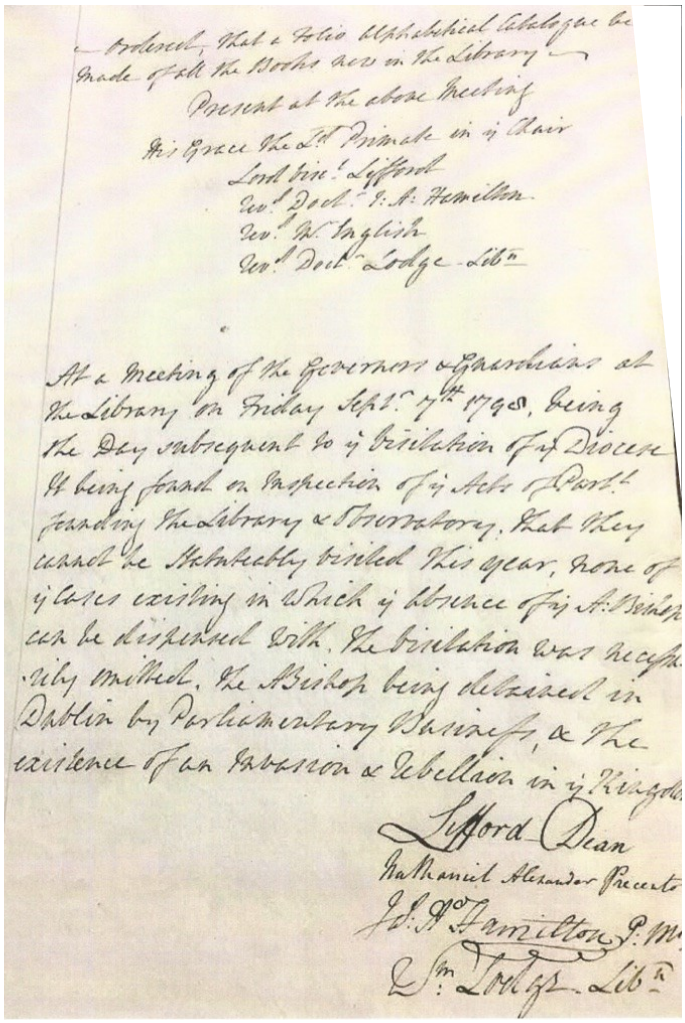


Armagh Robinson Library collection

The basis of the Library collection is Archbishop Robinson's own library of 8,000 books on theology, philosophy, classic and modern literature, voyages and travels, history, medicine and law. His legacy did not just consist of books. His collections also included ancient coins, prints, gems (seals) and medallions from various countries around the globe.

(Although described from the outset as a 'Public' library, as a general rule books were not lent out to the public and this continues to be the case to the present day. However, most books can be examined on the premises with permission from staff.)

A yearly record of Library affairs was kept from the late 1700s covering mostly routine matters. However, wider matters occasionally infringed on business. The minutes record that at the *'meeting of Governors & Guardians at the Library on September 7th 1798.....The Visitation was duly cancelled, the Archbishop (Newcome) being detained in Dublin for Parliamentary Business and (due to) the existence of an Invasion and Rebellion in ye Kingdom.'*



Ordered, That a Folio Alphabetical Catalogue be made of all the Books now in the Library

Present at the above Meeting

His Grace the Ld Primate in y Chair
Lord Visc.t Lifford
Revd Doct.r J. A. Hamilton
Revd W. English
Revd Doct.r Lodge Libn

At a Meeting of the Governors & Guardians at the Library on Friday Sept.r 7th 1798, being the Day subsequent to y Visitation of y Diocese it being found on Inspection of y Acts of Parl.t founding the Library & Observatory, that they cannot be statutably visited this year, none of y Cases existing in which y Absence of y A. Bishop can be dispensed with. The Visitation was accordingly omitted, the Bishop being detained in Dublin by Parliamentary Business, & the existence of an Invasion & Rebellion in y Kingdom

Lifford Dean
Nathaniel Alexander Precent
Jo.s W.m Hamilton P. M.
Wm Lodge Libn

Library minutes 1798

(This entry refers to the 1798 United Irishmen Rebellion. When it broke out in May it was fragmented and localised being confined for the most part to east Ulster and the south-east of the island, especially County Wexford. It had largely been defeated by August when a small French invasion force came ashore at Killala Bay, County Mayo. It was defeated at the Battle of Ballinamuck, County Leitrim in September. The French revolutionary flag was captured by the Armagh Militia and is one of the exhibits in the Library. The Act of Union, legislative union between Ireland and Great Britain, took place two years later in 1800)

The Primacy of Archbishop John George Beresford (1822-1862)

John George Beresford became Primate two years into the reign of King George IV (1820-1830). Like Robinson he had the energy and foresight to drive forward further progress in the cultural and civic life of the city. The Library had continued to accumulate books and other materials from the collections of successive Primates and other donors. By 1845 its collections had grown so large that an extension to the building was required. This was designed by Robert Law Monsarrat. The three bays were extended to five and the plans included a new entrance for visitors to the left hand side of the building. A large door opened into an elegant hallway with an impressive staircase which led into the' Long Room' – the main body of the Library. (Prior to this visitors would have gained entry via the front door and through the Dean's private residence! Today this facility can still be used on special occasions for groups being entertained by the Dean in his ground floor dining room.) Above the large door is the inscription in archaic Greek lettering roughly translated as *'The Healing Place of the Soul.'* The Keeper, Rev. William Reeves (1862-1886) recorded that *'A stone which was over the front door, til the completion of the alteration in 1848, bore the Greek numerals 1771.'*

Front of Library in the late 19th century by permission of the National Library of Ireland

Ironically the extension to the Library took place when it had become clear that Robinsons long term ambitions for a university in Armagh were not to be fulfilled. Belfast was rapidly growing bigger than Armagh even during his life time. This progress accelerated in the early 19th century and beyond but it was only in 1845 that the first university in the north of Ireland was founded by Royal Charter. It opened as Queens College, Belfast in 1849 but only achieved full university status in 1908 as the Queens University, Belfast (QUB).

Archbishop Marcus Gervais Beresford (Primate 1862-1885)

Archbishop Beresford succeeded his father's cousin, Lord John George Beresford. His Primacy occurred at a time of great but generally peaceful change: With the passing of The Irish Church Act (1869), the Church of Ireland was disestablished in 1871 resulting in a loss of its special position as the state church along with much of its property and income. Whilst these changes marked the end of an era in the church's secular authority, Beresford showed great ecclesiastical leadership and concentrated on strengthening the Church of Ireland internally. The change does not seem to have had any major detrimental effect on the Library. It continued to benefit from an endowment which Archbishop Robinson had set up in his own lifetime. This involved the purchase of parcels of land in and around the city which generated income for the maintenance and improvement of the building and the collections therein. This legacy continues in a reduced form to the present day.

(A large area of land to the west of the Library and below the Infirmary where the railway used to run was known as 'the Keeper's Field.' Cathedra: p.17)

One of Beresford's less demanding duties was overseeing the management of the Library at the Governors and Guardians Meetings. Like Archbishop Robinson before him, Beresford was a keen collector. Where Archbishop Robinson favoured classical antiquities and contemporary engravings, Beresford amassed an impressive collection of prehistoric and medieval artefacts, spanning the period 4000 BC to 1500AD, which he left to the Library on his death.

In the remaining years of the century the quiet day to day business of the Library continued. A summary of the situation in 1888 was typical: - *'The Primate and Dean and Chapter are Trustees...The Library is open to the public every day in summer from noon until four o'clock, and in winter from noon until three o'clock. New books are added from time to time. This year £150 was expended in the purchase of books, &c. The Rev. Benjamin Wade M.A. (Keeper 1887-1890), Precentor of the Cathedral, is Librarian (Keeper), and Mr. Edward Rogers is Deputy Librarian. A portion of the Library building is occupied as a residence by the Librarian.' (Bassett: p.87)*

The 20th Century

This was a turbulent century with two World Wars followed by the 'Cold War.' Civil strife in Ireland, particularly 1916-1923 and 1969-98, also blighted many lives. However, life in the Library continued much the same and for many it was indeed a 'Healing place of the soul' a calm restful place from a troubled world.

Archbishop Robinson's ambition for a university to be established in Armagh was finally and only partially achieved for a brief period in 1995 when Queens University Belfast opened an 'Outreach Centre' in the former City Hospital opposite the Robinson Library. Sadly this closed in 2004. The Library was used by students for research purposes as was the Irish & Local Studies Library, the City Library and the Cardinal O'Fiaich Library. The latter three had all opened in the second half of the century, the most recent being the O'Fiaich Library in 1999 and all four continue to have particular collection specialities which combine to provide a unique opportunity for study or browsing - advanced research or local family history.

At the close of the century significant maintenance work began in the Long Room and particularly in the area of the gallery. A large quantity of books had to be temporarily relocated for conservation purposes. The work was completed in 2001 but an up to date audit of the collection had begun which continues to the present day.

The Library which had begun with Archbishop Robinson's own collection of 8,000 books now contains some 42,000 printed works covering a wide variety of subjects as well as maps, atlases and other artefacts. Many are from the Georgian period, some are earlier. These include Medieval manuscripts, the lost books of the Second Viscount Conway's library at Lisnagarvey (Lisburn), Sir Walter Raleigh's 1614 *History of the World*, and Jonathan Swift's own copy of *Gulliver's Travels*, 1726, with corrections in his own hand. Miscellaneous items include old books relating to the major religions of the world, material relating to management of church affairs and the tradition of music on the Ancient Hill of Armagh and a variety of journals, magazines and booklets relating to art, history and politics both local and international.

The 21st Century

The new century has seen an encouraging resurgence of interest in the Library both as a centre of research and a tourist destination. Local schools, both primary and secondary, as well as local colleges and universities have become more aware of an excellent facility on their doorstep. In addition international travel to Ireland has increased dramatically and the Library has enjoyed some spin-off from this by receiving visitors from all corners of the world. Nevertheless, this and other

historic Armagh buildings remain hidden gems.

To meet this challenge recent years have seen a marked increase in publicity and promotion which has been enhanced by the increased opportunities provided by social media.

The Library gained museum status in 2001 in recognition of the artefacts in its possession. Staff work to the requirements of accreditation standards to ensure that the collections are protected and made accessible. (Border Heritage: p. 69-80) In recent years great progress has been made by the archivist, Thirza Mulder, in updating the on-line catalogue

(In March 2011 another Robinson building, the former Registry (1772) at 5 Vicars' Hill was formally opened after restoration. It is under the same management as the Library and, like the Library, it is a Grade A listed building with museum and charitable status. The theme of the building is Collections & Curiosities and a substantial part of the exhibits are a selection of items from the Robinson and Beresford donations to the Library. This small building is ideally located as a visitor hub and orientation centre to promote the Library and Saint Patrick's Cathedral. Both buildings are less than 200 metres from No.5)

On 31st July 2014 the President of the Irish Republic Michael D. Higgins and his wife Sabina were added to a long list of eminent people who have visited the Library over the past two centuries.

In 2015 consultants were engaged in advising on a Transition Project to meet the future needs and development of the Library. Central to this is increasing the opportunities to display collections and to make collections more accessible to the general public. It was as a result of this consultation that on 28th March 2017 the name of the Armagh Public Library was changed to The Armagh Robinson Library. In 2018 Dr. Robert Whan was appointed Director of the newly named Library.

Conclusions

The Library constitutes a unique record of the cultural and social history of Ireland in the 1700s, reflecting the changing intellectual climate of Europe since 1500. 'Push open the great door, climb the stairs and step into the 18th century! Light from elegant Georgian windows illuminates this classical library, lined from floor to ceiling with rare and beautiful books, the largest on the lowest shelves, the smallest on the top.' This beautiful building with its outstanding Irish heritage will celebrate its 250th anniversary in 2021.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the staff, Armagh County Museum and Armagh Irish & Local Studies Library for their assistance. Particular thanks go to Dr. Robert Whan, Carol Conlin and Lorraine Grattan, Armagh Robinson Library, for their assistance in my research.

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Alexander Lane RN MD: the adventures of a naval surgeon

by Richard Burns

This is an article I set out to write for the previous edition of History Armagh, however when I was researching it I found a number of newspaper articles relating to his time as a doctor in Armagh in the 1840s which proved sufficient for an article in their own right.

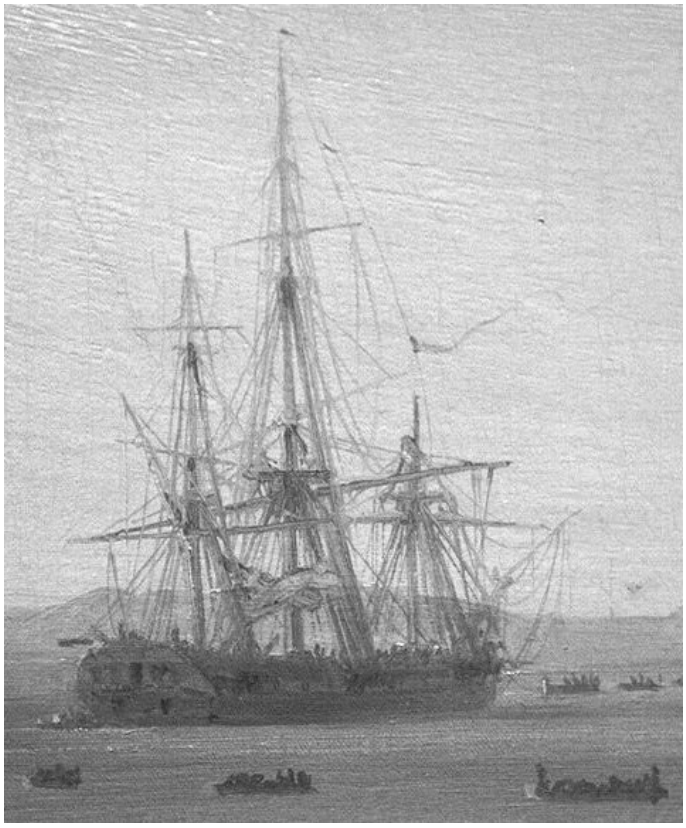
Alexander Lane was born on 1st January1803 in Co. Londonderry. He was the third son and fifth child of ten born to George and Margaret Lane. The family must have moved around the country because a letter dated 1809 finds them in Newtownstewart and a letter dated 1812 finds them in Omagh. Alexander himself records in his diary remembering the Stanley family while both of their families lived on Scotch Street. In the same piece he talks of remembering John Stanley junior playing marbles on the Mall, John Stanley junior was born in 1812, so the family were probably living in Scotch Street, Armagh around 1820.

Alexander's medical career was mainly spent in the Navy from 1818 to 1850 with spells of a year or more ashore, in the course of this career he led an adventurous life, travelling around the world. He is a genealogist's delight in that he kept a detailed diary of his adventures. My interest in him stems from the fact that he married my great, great, great aunt, Dorothea Stanley.

Alexander Lane

In this article I will describe three of his voyages i.e. aboard *HMS Iphigena*, *HMS Black Joke* and *HMS Herald*. Two of the voyages were before his marriage to Dorothea and one after. At the time of his service the Navy's role was to prevent or disrupt the slave trade between Africa and the Americas and the Caribbean.

His first voyage was aboard *HMS Iphigena*



HMS Imphigena

This is a painting of *HMS Iphigena* painted in 1810 at the Battle of Grand Port. Alexander started his career in the Navy as a surgeon's mate on the I*phigena* on 21st February 1821 at the age of 18. The voyage lasted 22 months sailing from Spithead, to Madiera, Teneriffe, the Cape Verde Islands until reaching Gambia, from there they patrolled along the West Coast of Africa between Gambia and Lagos for six months, they then sailed across to the West Indies, Cuba and then New York before arriving back in England in Chatham on 21st October 1822. Alexander kept detailed records of the trip recording the date of arrival and departure from each port on the route.

Map of West Africa

He also kept details of the diseases he encountered on the voyage. He listed 28 different diseases in the six months between March and October 1822. I have included the top eight here in terms of numbers treated.

Disease	Total	Cured	Died	Left Ship
Dysentry	269	259	16	
Pneumonia	3	3		
Hepatitis	6	5		1
Diarrhoea	14	9	2	3
Cholera	4	4		
Syphillis	6	6		
Gonorrhoea	6	6		
Vulnus	7	6		1

[Vulnus is a latin medical term meaning wound.}

Also, on board the ship was George Don junior, who was employed by the Horticultural Society of London to "*hunt for plants in three continents and scour the islands in between*". George's father and brother were also horticulturists, his brother David was an ancestor of the gardening television presenter Monty Don. In June 1822 George left the *Iphigena* and sailed to Brazil on *HMS Pheasant*, before following the *Iphigena's* route home via the West Indies, Cuba and New York. Specimens were collected, some returned to London on other ships and some retained aboard the *Iphigena*, however a hard frost in New York killed many of the specimens aboard the ship. Don had one plant named after him Memecylon Donianum and went on to be foreman in Chelsea Botanical Gardens and to write a number of texts on gardening and botany.[1]

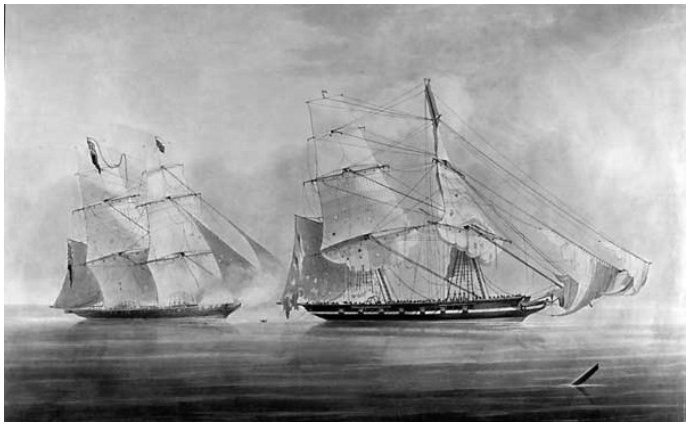
Shortly after Alexander's return to England he was promoted to the rank of Assistant Surgeon in January 1823[2]

The second voyage is aboard *HMS Black Joke*

The British navy's frigates could not match the speed of the average slaver, they were described as sailing like haystacks. So, when the slaver *Henriquetta* was captured, it was bought by the Royal Navy in 1828 and renamed the *HMS Black Joke*. Between then and when it was scrapped in 1832, with a crew of 34 and just one 18-pound gun, the *HMS Black Joke* captured nine slavers, including the 18 gun *El Almirante* after a 31-hour chase and battle. In their 16 months of active duty against the slave trade, the crew of the *HMS Black Joke* freed 466 enslaved Africans from those nine ships.

In February 1829 Alexander sailed on the *St Andrews*, a freighter from the West Indies Dock to Sierra Leone where he joined up with *HMS Clinker*, from there he sailed to Accra in Ghana where he served on *The Black Joke* for a month in the spring of 1830 and was involved in the capture of one of the slave ships *Maria de la Conception*. This is his account.

I shall never forget the slave prize we took on the West Coast of Africa. I was attached to the Black Joke. It was in the evening that she came on the Prize after a long and hard run. She had upward of 200 slaves and

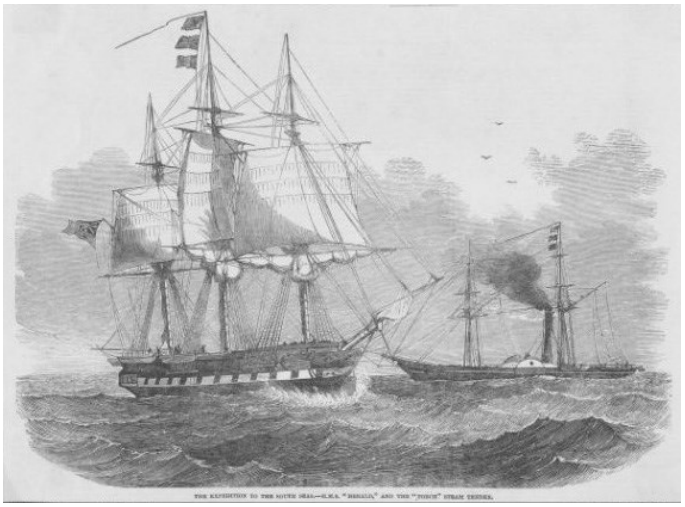


HMS Black Joke firing on the Spanish Slaver El Almirante by Nicholas Matthews
In the possession of the Royal Naval Museum.

was one of the finest and swiftest in the trade and would have escaped had we not overrun them by chance. As the evening was closing fast and there was much confusion in landing a crew on board and receiving her crew as prisoners. Four of her crew had managed to conceal themselves under some sail cloth lying upon the fore castle. Our Prize officer called Jack Ruddle was a very cross, vulgar, ignorant fellow, about 22 or 23 years of life, and brought with him three men, one of them a Creole, and a boy, his own servant. I was sent to take the Prize to Sierra Leone. Ruddle not only came on board half-drunk but became more so on prize liquor found in the cabin. The slaves were loose about the deck, and the iron bar for keeping down the hatch could not be found, and moreover, the Spaniards had led the poor creatures to believe that Ruddle would kill them, cook them, and eat them. I had not been very long on board until I hailed the Black Joke and requested them to keep close till day light, as I could not get the slaves below and I did not at all approve of their conduct. About midnight they became quarrelsome; but I was armed. I had a brace of pistols, loaded and primed and a good sword of my own. Suddenly there was a row amongst them, and I sent one of the men to see what it was about, he got knocked down and as I went forward to see and quiet them, I got knocked down also. I got on my feet as soon as I could, drew one of the pistols and fired amongst them. The man could not leave the wheel and the boy and Ruddle were in the cabin, and the two men and myself were left. I thought that this was the end of it, but the appearance of the Spaniard stowaways drove me to fury. I disputed they would kill me and retake the prize, I drew my other pistol and wounded one of them, and with my sword and the two men we soon cleared the deck, but the remaining Spaniards had attacked both men in the dark and were about throwing them overboard when I cut one of them down and disabled the right arm of another. At this precise moment, when from the shots I had fired, the Black Joke must have thought something must be wrong, ran close to and sent an armed boat on board and we examined the schooner and sent the prisoners on board of her. During all this eventful scene, Jack Ruddle and the boy were sound asleep in the cabin. Next morning, I had to repair the damage. I asked for assistance and we had to get a few men from the "Joke" to put the slaves below and clean the deck before we shaped our course for Sierra Leone. During our voyage up I had little or no sleep and Ruddle was continuously drunk.

Alexander brought the boat safely back to Sierra Leone, while six months afterward Ruddle was removed from the service. On his return to Sierra Leone Alexander transferred to *HMS Primrose* and served with her along the West African Coast from May 1830 until she completed her tour and returned to Plymouth in January 1831. Following these adventures, he was promoted to the rank of Surgeon in March 1831.[3]

Alexander married in 1834 and returned to sea in 1836. On the third of his three voyages he had been appointed surgeon on *HMS Herald* on 2nd June 1838.[4]



This is a sketch of HMS *Herald* printed in the Illustrated London News in May 1852

Alexander boarded *HMS Herald* on 9 June 1838 at Portsmouth at the commencement of a tour of duty which included calls at Madeira, Rio de Janeiro, Cape of Good Hope, Colombo, Madras, Trincomalee, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Swan River Settlement (now Fremantle), Sydney, Singapore, Java, Hobart, arriving in Port Arthur, Sydney on 28th February 1839 where they were joined by the newly appointed Lieutenant-Governor of New Zealand, Captain William Hobson. They sailed from Sydney on 18th January 1840, arriving at the Bay of Islands in New Zealand on 29th January 1840. There Hobson was joined by James Busby, New Zealand Resident (The highest British authority) and Mr. Charles Baker, a missionary, who was in charge of the Paihia Mission Station and printing press. Both men were updated about the situation and invitations were translated into Maori and printed overnight by Baker and sent by messenger to the local Maori Chiefs to meet on the following Wednesday.

Captain Hobson went ashore the next day and read his commissions before the assembled gathering. There were three items. The first extending the boundaries of New South Wales to include any territory which then was, or might thereafter be, acquired in sovereignty by Her Majesty in New Zealand. The second appointing Captain Hobson Lieutenant-Governor. The third declaring that all purchases of land from the natives

thereafter would be invalid unless supported by a Crown grant.

The next days were taken up in attempting to draft a treaty that would meet these conditions and be acceptable to all parties. Hobson fell ill in this period and much of the work was done by James Busby working from Hobson's notes. By 3rd February they had a draft document which underwent some revision as it was translated into Maori in an attempt to ensure that the text conveyed the same meaning in English and Maori. The final English version was completed on 4th February and the Maori version on 5th February.

On 3rd February the crew of the *Herald* came ashore to create a large marquee, with a framework of ship's spars and a covering of ship's sails. This huge tent structure, erected on the front lawn of Busby's official residency, was 150 feet long and 30 feet wide, with a raised platform at one end and an impressive table overlain with a large Union Jack flag.

On 5th February the Chiefs arrived, and the proposed treaty was read to them, overnight they agreed to the terms and started to sign the Treaty of Waitangi on the 6th.

The *Herald* was due to carry the Lieutenant-Governor of New Zealand, Capt. Hobson on a voyage to Stewart Island and Middle (now South) Island to obtain further signatures of Maori chiefs on the Treaty of Waitangi. On 1st March Hobson suffered a stroke (described by Alexander as 'paralysis hemiplegia'). Hobson apparently made a reasonable recovery, but had another dispute with the *Herald's* master, Capt. Nias, who wanted to proceed with the voyage and then return to Sydney en route to China, whilst Hobson, understandably wished to remain at the Bay of Islands, requiring the services of *Herald* and its doctor. Alexander apparently having taken Hobson's side in the dispute with Nias, left the *Herald* on 27th April 1840 in exchange with Thomas Frazer of HMS *Buffalo*, when HMS *Buffalo* arrived at the Bay of Islands on 16th April. The *Herald* subsequently carried Major Bunbury, who deputized for Hobson, in proclaiming British sovereignty over Stewart Island and the South Island.

The *Buffalo* had sailed from England towards the end of 1839 with convicts for Tasmania. She then proceeded to Sydney, where in compliance with Captain Hobson's request for troops, a detachment of the 80th Regiment was embarked. With Mrs. Hobson and her family as passengers, the *Buffalo* sailed from Sydney on 5th April and arrived at the Bay of Islands on the 16th. From the Bay of Islands, the *Buffalo* sailed to Mercury Bay to complete her loading of kauri spars, arriving on 22nd July 1840. The vessel sailed from Mercury Bay on 25th July, but in consequence of bad weather was compelled to return on the same day. On the 26th a strong easterly gale commenced and increased in violence until on the 28th the *Buffalo* was driven ashore and became a total wreck. Two of her crew, a man named Charles More, and a boy named John Carnie were drowned.

The government hired the barque *Bolina* to bring back the ship's crew, leaving Mercury Bay on 20th September1840 and arriving back in Spithead on 15th March 1841.

After this voyage Alexander attempted to make a life for himself ashore, setting up a medical practice in Abbey Street, Armagh. In October 1846 he was appointed surgeon to *HMS Penelope*,[5] this was to be his last voyage as a Royal Navy surgeon. In April 1847, Alexander and a number of the crew of the *Penelope* were invalided and returned to England aboard the *HMS Cygnet*.[6] On his return Alexander was pensioned out of the Navy after 25 years' service.

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McCreesh's Cottage: An architectural and cultural landmark in the heart of a ritual landscape

by Kevin Quinn

An act of cultural vandalism

Recently, this rare surviving example of a pre-famine vernacular rural cottage was very badly damaged in an arson attack. The structure was basically reduced to a shell (See Fig. 6 after acknowledgements). This mindless act not only angered and saddened the owners of the cottage, but also their neighbours and the wider local community. It is the hope that the cottage that reflects such a significant distinctive domestic architectural style and tradition, can once again be an essential part of our heritage (See front cover).

Part of the 'Navan Experience'

For most locals and sightseers over the generations, a visit to Emain Macha (Navan Fort) would not have been complete without that short walk or drive past this picturesque white washed cottage. Nestled into one corner of the T- Junction of Creeveroe and Navan Fort roads, the cottage naturally blends into the landscape. Its position makes it especially delightful for photographers who want to capture its distinctive features or use the cottage, with its climbing roses spread out along its unique kinked shaped facade, as a backdrop to a family snap.

A continual link to the ancient landscape

Standing for nearly two hundred years the cottage has become an integral part of the ancient landscape with its strong affinities with the area's archaeology, mythology and folklore. Situated among Ireland's most prominent archaeological sites, the cottage, is an unbroken connection to the centuries of human habitation in the area.

Situated in a Bronze Age Landscape

The cottage is located in the Townland of Creeveroe which was central in the mythological tales of the Ulster Cycle. It is thought that the lost palace of King Conchobar Mac Nessa which housed the legendary Red Branch Knights was built there. The name Creeveroe is derived from the Irish 'Craobh Ruadh' or Red Branch. In April 1995 Channel Four's Time Team came to Creeveroe in search of the lost palace. Their mission was to connect mythological tales to real sites. The excavation did not uncover any lost palace but did find a double linear Bronze Age ditch which was contemporary with and connected to the Bronze Age site of Haughey's Fort in the neighbouring townland of Tray (See fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Channel 4's Time Team enjoying a ceili at the cottage during their excavation at Creeveroe in April 1995 (with the kind permission of Mary Cartmill)

Cottage: Construction date and builder

The1826 (Charlemont Estate Map) and the OS 6 inch map, first edition 1835 show that the cottage was built between 1826 and 1835 (see figs. 2,3 & 4). By 1864, the cottage was occupied by a Francis Mallon (Griffith's valuation). The parish baptismal records show that Francis's father was James Mallon. So it is more than likely that James was the builder and the cottage's first tenant.

Mallon & McCreesh family lineage. (Tenants/Owners of cottage from construction to present)

Parish baptismal and marriage records: Francis Mallon was born on 10th March 1837, the son of James and Mary Mallon (nee Daly) . On Christmas day 1863, Francis married Alice Cullen. They had eleven children with nine surviving.

Griffith's valuation, 1864-1898: The valuation for 1864 records that the tenant was Francis Mallon. Francis was the son of the original owner/builder, James Mallon. It is recorded in Griffiths that Francis was leasing the house from George Leeman and by 1887 he was leasing from a John and William Leeman.

Fig. 2: Charlemont Estate map 1826 showing the location of the cottage before construction (Armagh County Museum collection 36.1960)

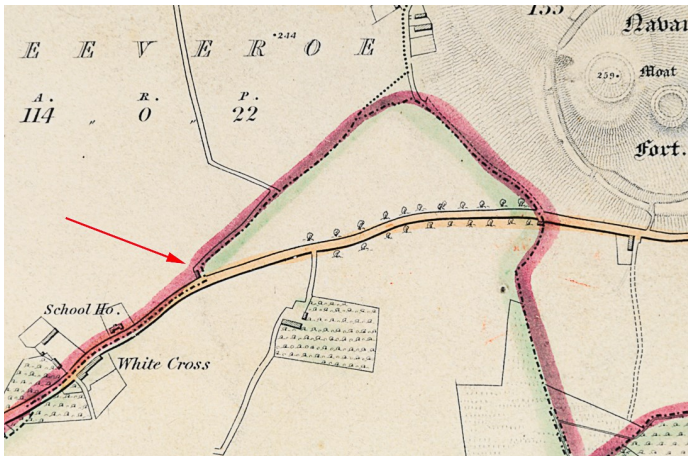

Fig. 3: OS 6 inch map, first edition 1835 showing original cottage without extension. (Armagh County Museum collection)

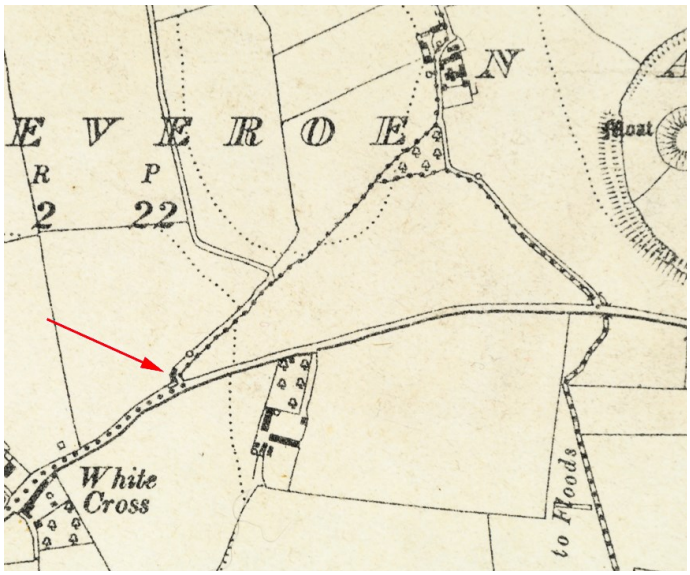

Fig. 4: OS 6 inch map, third edition 1908 showing cottage extension built to the contour of the road. (Armagh County Museum collection)

1901 census: The 1901 census records Francis as head of the household. He was aged 65 and his occupation was a house thatcher and his wife Alice who was aged 58. Their children still residing in the cottage are recorded as follows; Patrick (aged 27) and whose occupation is given as a general labourer, Francis (aged 25) a mechanic in a local weaving factory, Peter (aged 23) a quarryman, John (aged 21) a general labourer, and Alice (aged 21) whose occupation is not given. All children are recorded as not married. Other children who had left home before the census were James, Mary Ann and Elizabeth.

Griffith's Valuation 1898-1908: By 1903, Francis had passed away and his wife Alice is recorded as the occupier and the landowner was now James Leeman.

1911 census: Alice, now aged 71, is recorded as head of the family. Her son John is still residing in the family home. His occupation is given as a mason and is still single. Alice (daughter) is now married to a Joseph Ward from Donegal whose occupation is a mason. Both are recorded as residing there. The landowner has also changed to Robert Leeman.

Griffith's Valuation 1908-1929: By 1928, Alice had died and her son John Mallon is recorded as being the occupier.

McCreesh Family

Personal communication: John continued to reside there until his passing in 1963 at the age of 83. From the mid 60's the cottage was occupied by Tommy McCreesh who was three-times-great-grandson of the original owner/builder James Mallon. Tommy resided there until his passing in 2012. The cottage is now owned by James Mallon's four-times-great-grandson.

McCreesh's Cottage, an example of domestic vernacular architecture: Vernacular architecture is the term used to describe traditional types of buildings, often built by local people using local materials as opposed to formal architecture (public buildings and churches). Until the 1850s, most rural families lived in houses that they had constructed themselves. The form, plan and method of construction simply followed well-established tradition. Relatives and neighbours would have lent a hand, giving their labour for free. The materials used would have been locally sourced, such as for the walls and the roof, giving the cottage its distinctive local features.

Basic plan, characteristics and features of a vernacular rural cottage: The vernacular cottage was rectangular in plan and usually single-storey. Most

were two rooms in length with each room the full width of the building. Each room led into the other without a central hallway. The walls were thick and were solidly built of either stone or clay. An open hearth at floor level was most commonly situated in the centre of the house and occasionally at the gable. The gabled roof was at a steep pitch and was covered with thatch. Its typical size was 700 to 1000 sq. ft.

Size and location: The original McCreesh cottage was particularly small in overall size when compared to the average size of a traditional rural cottage of the period. At around 260 sq. ft. it was comparable to the small basic one room cottage found in different parts of Ireland known as a 'Bothan Scoir'. Similarly to the 'Bothan Scoir', McCreesh's cottage was built on road margins. When built on rented land, the landowner designated the location. The location of the cottage was most often on a piece of land not used for cultivation. So the cottage was using as little as possible of the fertile farmland.

Traditional crafts and features of the original McCreesh cottage

It was not possible to carry out a more detailed survey of the cottage, especially to the interior as the cottage is now structurally unsafe as a result of the fire.

Foundations: The traditional practice was to remove the soil to make a level well-drained foundation (this is the case for the McCreesh cottage also). Stone shores were laid for drainage with large stones known as footings on top to form a solid base for the walls. When the soil was backfilled the top foundation stone was left exposed in order to minimise the amount of water that could rise into the wall above.

Walls: The walls of the original cottage were built of undressed and dressed rubble or field stone probably bonded by clay mortar and were more or less the traditional thickness. The field stone walls needed to be 450 to 550mm thick unlike mud walls which needed to be 600 to 700mm in order to support the roof. As the walls rose they were tapered to give more stability, spaces were left for the door and the windows. Quarried stone appears to have been used on the inside of roadside gable, probably in order to accommodate a chimney flue which would have been a later adaptation. After completion of the build, the walls were usually given a coat of plaster and rendered with limewash providing a protective breathable layer.

Windows: Like most traditional cottages the original cottage was barely two rooms in length and a single room in width, with two windows in the front facade and one to the back all providing light for the kitchen and bedroom. Windows in vernacular cottages were small and low as the buildings tended to be squat in design. Also low doorways and small windows helped to minimise the weakening of the walls and retained heat in the winter and kept the cottage cool in the summer. Another factor was that glass was expensive and until the 1850s, a window tax was levied on houses with more than six windows.

Doors: Doorways were also low due to the squat size design of the building. Most doors were made from broad planks fixed to three batons on the inside with a bolt or latch as was the case at McCreesh's cottage. Probably one of the most distinctive features of the traditional cottage was the half door. Its function was to allow light and air into the dimly lit and stuffy interior, as well as helping to regulate the fire by creating a draft and to keep children in and animals out. It was common to have the back and front doors opposite each other to facilitate floor brushing.

Roof structure

Timber: The roof was a very important feature. It was usually at a pitch of between 35 and 45 degrees to counteract the damp climate. The steeper the pitch the longer the thatch lasted as the rain would run off faster. Like the McCreesh cottage, the gable roof was the most common form used in the north of Ireland as opposed to the hip-roof form (with all four sides sloped) used in other parts of the country. Most traditional roofs were usually constructed of coupled rafters with some clay stuffed in between to provide insulation. The width of the cottage was determined either by locally sourced tree branches or the affordability of timber. At the McCreesh cottage, roughly hewn tree branches were used. It was due to their gradual decay that the roof collapsed in 1955.

Vernacular thatch: The most prevalent type of thatch was wheat straw as it had a long life span, it was also clean, uniformed and easy to prepare. However, the type of material used for thatch was usually determined by what was available locally. In areas where there was good arable land, oats, rye, barley and wheat straw were most commonly used. In other places, rushes and flax were used, but mostly on outbuildings. It is possible that the material used for the original thatch for the McCreesh cottage were rushes from the nearby bog that straddles the border of the townlands of Creeveroe and Tray or from the not too far away Loughnashade. Regardless of the material used the thatch needed to be

well-laid and maintained to prevent the damp from penetrating no more than 3 inches.

Interior Features

Position of Hearth: Not only was the hearth the heart and soul of the traditional cottage but it also determined the type of house plan and entrance. In Ireland, there were two traditional plan types; the central-chimney and the gable-chimney cottage. The position of the chimney also determined the entrance to the cottage which would have been either through a direct or lobby entrance. The gable-chimney house would have had a direct entrance with no jamb wall and with the hearth at the opposite side of the kitchen. The central-chimney plan was entered through a lobby formed by a jamb wall positioned in front of the hearth. Direct entry was more common in the north of Ireland. However, an overlap of both plan types is found at the McCreesh cottage. The cottage plan is a hybrid as it incorporates elements of both lobby and direct entrance plans. It has a jamb wall containing a spy window and the entrance and hearth are all positioned on the same side.

Interior plan: The original cottage was particularly small in area (only approx. 260 sq. ft). As mentioned previously, most traditional cottages were 700 to 1000 sq. ft. The interior was basically no more than a single room. A partition of some sort separated the kitchen from the bedroom providing a basic level of privacy. Some families had the luxury of a loft or at the McCreesh cottage a half-loft built over and accessed by a ladder from the kitchen. The warmth of the fire would rise up and heat the children's sleeping area above.

Vernacular Furniture: Furniture was arranged to make use of the wall space and to keep the area in front of the fire clear. Furniture was very basic meeting the essential needs of the family. The kitchen would have had a front dresser holding the crockery, a rudimentary table and a scattering of different sized chairs. The table was mostly rectangular in shape and would have been commonly positioned under the front window. The spindle back chair was most commonly used. These chairs could be made from roped straw seats or wooden seats and had short legs to keep the sitter below the smoke from the hearth. The indispensable milk churn was always kept in the kitchen and also the meal bin for breadmaking. The settled bed served as a seat in the daytime and a bed at night. The chamber pot was also an essential bedroom fixture. Cooking pots, kettles and griddle for bread were suspended over the fire from a chain attached to iron crane. The utensils could then be manoeuvred over the fire by swivelling the crane.

The need for an extension: With the arrival of the Mallon children in the late 1860s and early 1870s, the need for more space was essential. With a large family of eleven basically living in one room, there was a requirement for more space and privacy. As one gable wall was positioned beside a road, the cottage could only be extended at one end. Traditional houses were usually extended in length or sometimes upwards. If the cottage was extended in width, the extension would have been further from the hearth and this would have made it very difficult to keep the cottage warm. The extension increased the square footage from 240 sq. ft. to 360 sq. ft. which was still small in comparison with similar type builds of the period.

Position of extension: Keeping with the vernacular tradition, a room with a fire to heat the extension was added creating a second gable-chimney. The extension was built at a slight angle to the original build along the contour of the road. The size and positioning of the extension probably depended on how much of a plot the landowner was willing to give. The original cottage was built in a north- westerly direction. There was a widespread taboo against extending a house westwards or in width as it was thought to bring bad luck.

Alterations and adaptations: With the changing needs of each generation, the inevitable demands could only be met with alterations and adaptations. The need for privacy was achieved by separate rooms rather than shared spaces. Over the years, the McCreesh cottage has undergone both internal and external structural changes.

Early alterations: At some stage the original hearth canopy (probably of wattle and daub) was replaced with a coal burning hearth with a red brick hood. As coal became more affordable, a flue was needed to burn coal. In the 1901 census, the cottage is graded as 'class 3' which is the grade for a mud or stone built cottage. The cottage is also recorded as having three rooms but only two windows at the front. This would suggest that the window in the extension was a later addition.

More recent alterations: The cottage lost its most vernacular feature in 1955. The thatched roof collapsed as the original roof timbers rotted away. Probably due to the cost, the original roof covering of thatch was replaced with corrugated iron. The smooth surface of the render between the front door and the curve in the facade would suggest that the rubble stone was replaced with block work. It is possible that blocks were needed as part of the roof replacement or for the enlarging of the two original windows (as the concrete sills would

indicate). In the 1960s, a flat roof extension was added to the back.

Architectural integrity: Fortunately, the cottage has never been mercilessly modernised, resulting in the retention of most of its distinctive vernacular features and historical character. It is also a rare example of the combining of the two traditional plan types; lobby and direct entry. The unusual kink in the front facade also adds to its distinctive character.

The McCreesh Cottage: A traditional Céilí house

Like a lot of rural houses, the cottage was one of the many local Céilí houses where friends and neighbours gathered in the kitchen for a quick fix of news and gossip, to play cards, to sing or to hear the local tellers and their tales. Over the years, local history and stories were told and retold around its welcoming hearth. Ghost stories were always popular, especially during the dark winter nights and it's more than likely that the local haunted occurrences, passed down, through the local oral tradition were probably recalled there (See.fig 5)

Fig. 5: Storytelling around hearth (Photographer unknown, Google image, public domain)

The Banshee: A Mallon family ghost story tells of the night that Peter Mallon was making his way home from Creeveroe Cottage to his house at the Navan when he heard the cries of the banshee. The cries followed him to the door of his house and upon entering, he informed his wife of the foreboding shrieks. Within a week, news was received that his sister had passed away in Australia.

Traditional Irish customs and superstitions pertaining to the vernacular house: It was a widespread and common belief that the fate of a new build and its occupants was determined by good or bad fortune. A ritual of beliefs was enacted throughout the construction in order to ward off the possibility of any harmful omens.

Site: The suitability of a site was often determined by the toss of a florin which had a cross on one side. If it landed 'cross side' this was a favourable sign. Another practice was to place four sticks at the corners of the proposed site overnight. If undisturbed, this was then seen as a sign of approval, almost a kind of planning permission from the fairies. The ritual was carried out for three consecutive nights and if any of the sticks were knocked over during the night, the site was abandoned. It was also believed to be an unlucky practice to build a new house to replace another on the opposite side of the road.

Construction: Stones from a ritual/sacred place, from a ruined house or which fell from the grasp of a builder were never used. Similarly, white stones were never used as it was believed that they attracted lightening. Also, the burial of a hen's head in the floor was believed to counteract epilepsy in children.

Moving in: It was believed that Friday was the luckiest day to move in but never on a Monday. A cat from the old house was not brought to the new house but a stray cat (especially a black one) was welcome. A half of a donkey's shoe was also placed above the doors and windows to ward off evil.

Extensions: Extending a house westwards or to widen laterally was believed to bring bereavement.

McCreesh's Cottage, Heritage and cultural value: McCreesh's cottage is of considerable social, historical and architectural significance. It represents an important surviving example of a pre-Famine domestic vernacular cottage in the county. Situated close to one of the most important archaeological sites in Europe, it has a natural connection with the landscape and mythology of Emain Mhacha. Its simplicity, distinctiveness and connection to our local identity and past make it an important and valued part of our architectural heritage.

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Acknowledgements

Special thanks Paddy McCreesh and Mary Cartmill for sharing their family history and memories with the readers of History Armagh.

Fig. 6 & 7: Above cottage photographed in 2011 and below after the arson attack

The Vicars Hill murder legacy – a case of Victorian institutional abuse?

by Sean Barden

The story of how twenty-year-old Bellina Prior drowned her three-and-a-half-year-old neighbour Annie Slavin in her mother's kitchen boiler at Vicar's Hill, Armagh on 27 March 1888 is well known locally and spawned the legend of The Green Lady ghost. However much of Bellina's life during her time in Dundrum asylum remains mysterious. This article concentrates on what she claimed happened during those four years of incarceration after her conviction for the murder of Annie Slavin.

When arrested she defiantly declared that in committing the crime she had paid her mother off and she supposed she would be hanged, and be glad of it. The newspapers reported her words and detached demeanour hinting that she may have been mentally ill. Most headlines also used the phrase 'young lady' to emphasise how unusual it was that despite her age and gender she had nevertheless committed a violent crime. There was also shock in the media that someone from a privileged background such as hers stood accused of such a ghastly deed. Bellina was the daughter of the late Lieutenant Colonel John DeMontmorency Prior and her mother's brother was married to Lady Ann Grenville daughter of the Duke of Buckingham. The family was part of a small circle of Church of Ireland elite in Victorian Armagh.[1]

Bellina's mental health had indeed caused concern for some time, she had suffered several fainting fits and could behave strangely. Just a week before the tragedy she had pretended to attack her sister with a hatchet. There were stories that the pressure from her mother to embark on a stage career was causing these symptoms.

After her arrest, the police, doctors and solicitors speculated that the drowning might in fact, have been a tragic accident. That the child could have toppled into the boiler and Bellina panicked and was unable to save her. Her subsequent behaviour and outrageous statements could have been triggered by witnessing the tragedy. [2]

However, while in prison awaiting her trial at the summer assizes she attempted to cut her throat and was immediately transferred to Armagh Lunatic Asylum. It was from there that she was sent for trial on 12 July. By now her solicitor was determined to use insanity as her defence rather than try to prove an accident. This strategy succeeded and Bellina was found guilty of murder but insane and within a few days she was on her way to the Central Criminal Lunatic Asylum at Dundrum in Dublin.

In 1888 Dr Isaac Ashe was Resident Medical Superintendent at Dundrum. He was responsible for 120 men and 28 women most of whom had committed violent crimes. Only five of the women were under 30 years old and just 10% were described as 'well educated'. [3]

A fellow inmate Dr Terence Brodie who had killed his wife and like Bellina was from a more privileged background; complained that he was compelled to, 'consort with criminal lunatics of the lower grades of life'. [4]

Bellina was isolated in an asylum that was going through an unhappy period. Dr Ashe was failing to keep control of an institution that was suffering from an identity crisis. Some thought it should be more like a prison while others insisted it was an asylum to care for people with mental illness who had broken the law.

These conflicting opinions are illustrated by the following examples. A year before Bellina's conviction William Corbet MP, raised concern in parliament about harsh punishments at Dundrum. A patient had his hands and feet tied and was then repeatedly plunged into a bath of cold water.

On the other hand, privileges enjoyed by patients were criticised by Visiting Physician John Nugent. He succeeded in banning Ashe's weekly dances for the patients as he thought the idea of male and female murderers waltzing together was a spectacle that 'could not be of a very edifying character'. [5]

Dr. Ashe died suddenly in November 1891 and it could be argued that Dundrum had worn him out for his obituary stated that although he was 'fifty-seven, he certainly looked ten years older'. [6]

For the next ten months Bellina would be under the care of Ashe's successor Dr. George Revington. He dramatically transformed Dundrum. Staff rules were rewritten, inefficient employees were dismissed and younger staff recruited. He overhauled the administration and began structural improvements too.

Bellina witnessed these changes and apparently changed herself, so much so that in September 1892 after four years in the Central Criminal Lunatic Asylum her mother successfully petitioned the Lord Lieutenant to get her daughter released into her care.

After her release Bellina saw Revington as her saviour and often wrote to him thanking him for her deliverance and telling him her news. However as time went on the content of the letters began to worry Revington so much so that he passed them to Office of Inspectors of Lunatics.

The rest of this article consists of brief extracts from Bellina's letters to Revington, most were written between 1898 and 1906 from London, Dublin and Warrenpoint when she lived with her mother. All the letters are held in the National Archives of Ireland among the Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers, (CSORP.1909.22281). Where a date is included it appears after the extract in square brackets. The letters contain news of her life on the London stage but at times get confused and angry, her handwriting is quite difficult but her words will, it is hoped, give a strong impression of her troubled life.

- *My thoughts often go back to Dundrum & I am so glad that providence placed you in your position [Friday London]*
- *I wish you had always been Governor of Dundrum… [undated letter]*
- *I am on and off the stage and enjoy it - I hope soon to send you a photo [24 December 1899]*
- *P.S. I am going to learn the concertina, it will be so pretty & quite unique for a lady [6 March 1898]*
- *my name was Erin I add it was my non de plume on the stage [19 July 1902]*
- *I am sending you a large photo to look at please return it & I can ask you … if you have a small ------ one that I sent you some time ago in tights, my friend has a horror of women in such costumes so I shall be only in petticoats in future [Friday London]*
- *you are interested in the stage because I belong to it, my experience is, it is a place unfit for a woman her honour is the price of her advancement & never have or will I help anyone on to it if she is poor or without influence, her fall is certain I have managed thank God to keep self-respect [Friday London]*

However the letters also had a darker side.

- *you ask me about being married, before I answer you, tell me do you know all that took place in Dundrum, when I was under the care of Dr. Ashe: I was told you did just before leaving … [1899 London]*
- *you have given me so much good advice, might I say this apropos of Dundrum, the instant you allow the slightest disregard of your authority gradually imperceptibly your powers will be undermined & you Dr. Revington will end as Dr Ashe did, they did not hesitate to openly disobey his orders, their conduct was shameful, one night I was made drink against my will & found myself dressed on the floor of my room in the morning … so help me God now I'll stop at nothing until the whole dastardly … business is publicly shown up & others ruined as they tried to ruin me. [undated letter]*
- *my curse against the officer … proposed to me, dishonoured me, offered to marry me then tried to murder me, failed, tried to get me cruelly treated made me delirious, drugged me … & did his utmost to get me confined for life. [22 July 1898]*
- *I felt furious; I must tell you I said plainly I would; when I got out; murder him. [undated letter]*
- *To a certain extent I am religious but … never have I attended communion since that time for even in Heaven (if I ever reach it) would I never forgive the deadly insults I received through that man [11 March 1898 London]*
- *he sent me a message -he will dis-honour me I begged Anne Lauder? To save Me, this is what she did - gave me a drink - <u>made me</u> take it - Next morning tells me he had kept his word… [undated letter]*
- *When I was leaving Mary Barry came Into my room & asked me to forgive her & told me she had let _____[sic] into my room, I can tell you*

the man that she had, dishonoured me [undated letter]

- *I knew I had [been] drugged for I was given drinks, I said I wished to see him and speak to him … I was asked would I marry him, I said yes the day arrived (Sunday) I went to church, Canon Hamilton was there Miss M. Ashe played the organ, just before the service he arrived the service proceeded after… [3 January 1898 London]*

- *as I have told you so much, I should tell you more, Mary Barry, Anne Lawlor Mary Burn all said the man that ruined me was Lord William Beresford, that he had paid them for access to my room & Mary Burn said before my mother that I had been drugged & ruined [April 1898 London]*

- *It is truth Dr. Ashe said it had happened & better to say nothing… [undated letter]*

- *Dr. Ashe … should have gone up to the Castle & informed them of the indignity I had suffered, on the other hand they must have known it was openly talked of [6 May 1898]*

- *my friend says it is impossible that the Castle did not know, but that of course convenience wished all hushed up [11 March 1898]*

The next two extracts are from letters written by Bellina's mother.

- *Dear Dr Revington As you know all about my daughter being seduced in your asylum, … you know what is going on [26 Sept 1906]*

- *Upon my urging her to take further steps in reference to Lord W. Beresford she horrified me by saying there was another, & that he was not the man who brought her down in the train & would have married her, … the contents of her letter to Lord W. Beresford are true as … an attendant got into the carriage after we left Dundrum & told me of it [undated letter, Saturday]*

These are Bellina's words again

- *I have made up my mind to go to court … should it happen that my relations do not support me I have done with them one and all for ever [18 July]*

- *I do feel so annoyed at … your opinion, I fully expected you would have blamed those who treated me so badly - please never say I am bitter or foolish [undated letter]*

The court case did not take place and Bellina now thought about taking justice into her own hands. She also began calling herself Violet Beresford as she believed that Lord William Beresford had married her in the asylum church.

- *that business completely changed my character & I am unscrupulous & cold & hard.. [11 March 1898]*

- *I would gladly give my life to ruin those that ruined & insulted me, … if justice is not done then in my own hands & through me shall justice be done so help me God [April 1898 London]*

- *perhaps you think I am vindictive, I am, my character is an unforgiving one & I would wait years to accomplish an end … & through time, success will be mine [undated letter]*

- *as to personal violence I would not permit it, if anyone struck me it would drive me frantic & I will certainly try to kill them [London 1898]*

- *So help me God I will go for him, … I thought I had Self control, I have none, I feel burning anger & feel wicked [undated letter]*

- *likely my doom is sealed for I shall go for one of the government Castle Officials & glory in the act [7 April 1905]*

- *of course it is not you I am going for, no, one of the Castle officials damn them all, I can choose who I like as Lord Dudly & all the minor officials know about it & justice rests with them [19 Jun 1905]*

- *I have been given the name & address of the officer who ruined me in Dundrum & tried to ruin my future God damn him I hate him … I am happy now for vengeance is in my grasp - yours sincerely Violet Beresford [9 July 1905]*

The letters survive because after Revington passed them to Office of Inspectors of Lunatics, They were then added to her file among the Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers in Dublin Castle where they can be consulted today. Here he summarises their contents.

'*...the earlier letters were … requests for advice [...] Soon, however, appeared the shadow of the delusion which [...] now dominates her life. There were doubts*

thrown on the identity of the male warder who escorted her to this asylum; this official then became to her a distinguished man who adopted the disguise of a prison warder in order to make her acquaintance [...] there then appeared the first mention of a mock marriage in the asylum church and seduction by the connivance of a female Attendant, [...] Finally the matter became critical the name of a distinguished nobleman was given, and a definite claim against him was formulated'

Still more alarming was the action of the mother, which proved conclusively that the lunatic is not under proper care, but is exposed to the worst influences, a sympatric belief in her supposed wrongs [...] The lunatic will either make a public application in court or will commit some act of violence to call public attention to her wrongs [...]'

As far as we know Bellina did not attempt to kill her real or imagined oppressors but her threats were taken seriously enough for undercover officers from Dublin Metropolitan Police to follow her movements and secretly photographed her.

After years in a frustrated pursuit for justice, rebuffed by their family and monitored by the police something had to give.

The last letter in the collection is a brief note written by Bellina's mother that mentions her other children.

- *I leave all I die possessed of to my younger son Harvey, and I would wish him if he comes across Adel to give her my fond love and some souvenir from me. Nina J. Prior*

This is Mrs Prior's suicide note written on 7 November 1909 just before she poisoned her daughter Bellina and then took her own life.

- *I destroy my daughter that no one may get her and do away with myself immediately after*

Asylum records, newspaper reports and other official papers can only go so far in allowing us a glimpse into the mind of those incarcerated in Dundrum Asylum.

It is so rare to get such a unique and important insight such as the one afforded to us by Bellina Prior's letters. Reading her words, that often emerge as unfiltered thoughts scrawled on the page is as close as we can hope to get, to those hundreds of other lost patient voices from the Central Criminal Lunatic Asylum.

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James Stuart, Historian of Armagh City

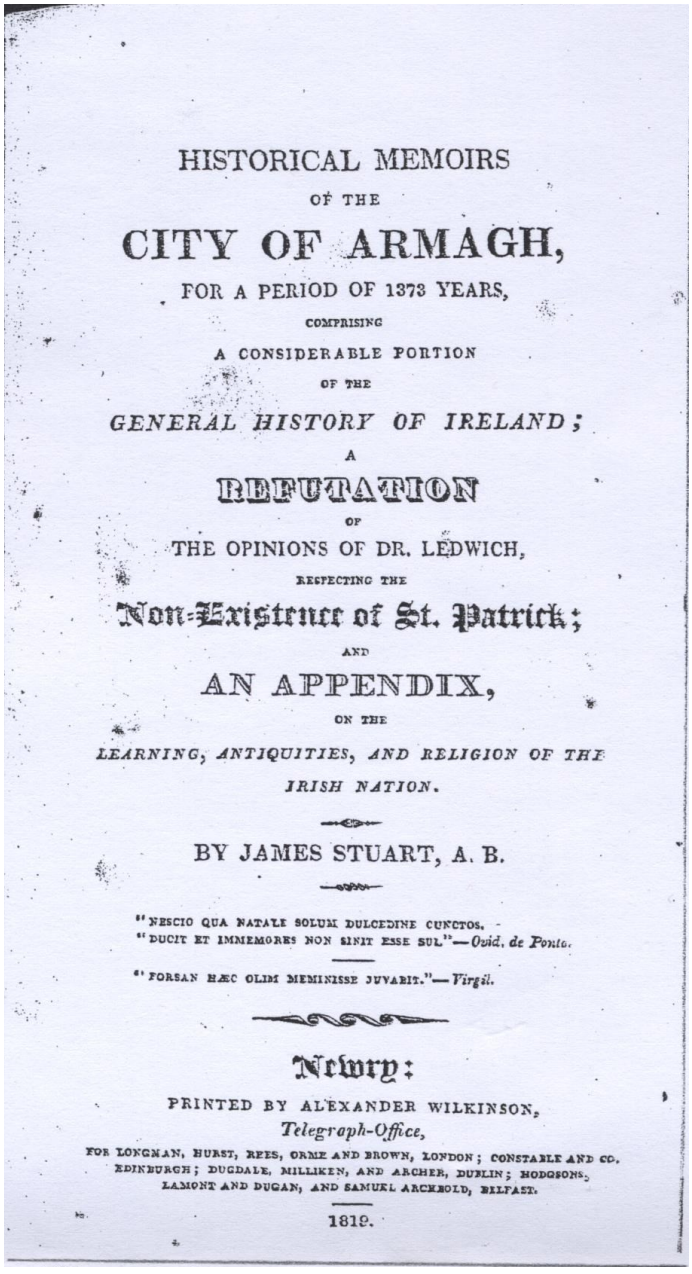
by W. E. C. Fleming

Two hundred years have now passed since James Stuart published his *monumental Historical Memoirs of the City of Armagh*, comprising 651 pages, and the product of an incredible amount of painstaking research, principally carried out in Dublin, into practically all aspects of the history of Armagh City and its environs. However, little is now known of this outstanding historian of his native city – "sic transit Gloria mundi"!

James Stuart, son of Benjamin Stuart of county Antrim, was born in Armagh in 1764, and the family must have been quite well off as they lived in one of the few slated houses then in Armagh.[1] He was educated at Armagh Royal School, and entered Trinity College, Dublin in January 1784, taking sixth place in the entrance examination, B.A. 1789; Middle Temple, Irish Bar, L.L.B., but never practised, which would suggest he had private means to pursue his historical studies in Dublin.

In 1790, the Rev. Edward Ledwich, L.L.B., rector of Aghaboe parish, Co. Laois, and historian, published his book *Antiquities of Ireland*, in which he stated, "It is absolutely asserting meridional light to be nocturnal darkness to maintain the existence, mission and primacy of St. Patrick; nor is it less creditable and absurd to affirm Armagh was the head of the Irish Church. Where is the evidence?" (p. 390). Stuart was amongst those Irish historians, who felt it imperative to disprove these assertions of Ledwich. Consequently, in his history of Armagh, he devotes the first 65 pages to refuting these claims in detail.

Towards the end of the 19th century, when copies of Stuart's history of Armagh had become virtually unobtainable, it was felt that much of his valuable historical material should be reproduced in book form, amending it where necessary and updating the text. This formidable task was undertaken by the Rev. Ambrose Coleman, O.P., S.T.L., Member of the Royal Irish Academy, at the request of his Eminence Cardinal Logue. The opening defence of St. Patrick's existence and mission was omitted, as being no longer questioned; and as the book had originally been written mainly for Protestant readers, modifications were made to broaden its appeal across the community; also it was updated to the close of the 19th century, being published in 1900, under the title *Historical Memoirs of the City of Armagh, by James Stuart, New Edition, revised, corrected and largely rewritten*. However, this valuable edition, of more than a century ago, is likewise virtually unobtainable today.



HISTORICAL MEMOIRS
OF THE
CITY OF ARMAGH,
FOR A PERIOD OF 1373 YEARS,
COMPRISING
A CONSIDERABLE PORTION
OF THE
GENERAL HISTORY OF IRELAND;
A
REFUTATION
OF
THE OPINIONS OF DR. LEDWICH,
RESPECTING THE
Non-Existence of St. Patrick;
AND
AN APPENDIX,
ON THE
LEARNING, ANTIQUITIES, AND RELIGION OF THE
IRISH NATION.

BY JAMES STUART, A. B.

"NESCIO QUA NATALE SOLUM DULCEDINE CUNCTOS,
"DUCIT ET IMMEMORES NON SINIT ESSE SUI."—*Ovid. de Ponto.*

"FORSAN HÆC OLIM MEMINISSE JUVABIT."—*Virgil.*

Newry:
PRINTED BY ALEXANDER WILKINSON,
Telegraph-Office,
FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME AND BROWN, LONDON; CONSTABLE AND CO. EDINBURGH; DUGDALE, MILLIKEN, AND ARCHER, DUBLIN; HODGSONS, LAMONT AND DUGAN, AND SAMUEL ARCHBOLD, BELFAST.

1819.

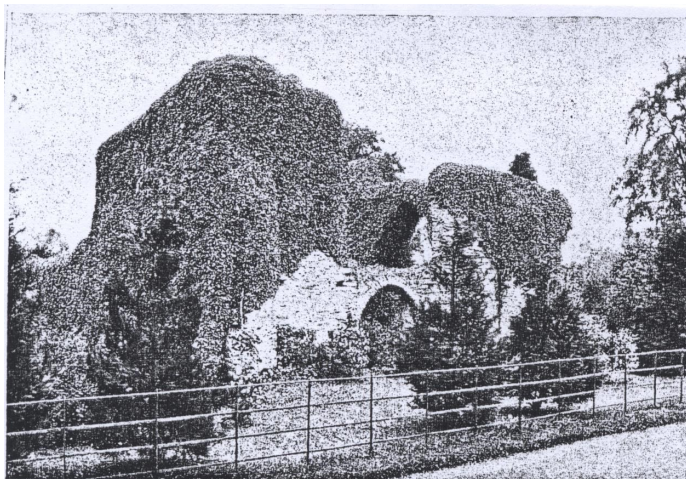
Title page of James Stuart's History of Armagh

Around the time of the 1798 uprising by the united Irishmen, rumours circulated that James Stuart had a link with them[2]; he was probably living in Dublin at that time. However, in 1825, when he was resident in Belfast, he was responsible for the production of the short-lived paper, the *Protestant Layman*.

In 1811, James Stuart, who also had a poetic flare, published a small volume entitled *Poems on Various Subjects.* Although they were not considered to have any great literary merit, they struck a chord in his appreciation of the natural world around him, and his recognition of his friends, particularly in the context of his native Armagh; the following lines are taken from his poem "MORNA'S HILL (In the neighbourhood of Armagh)":

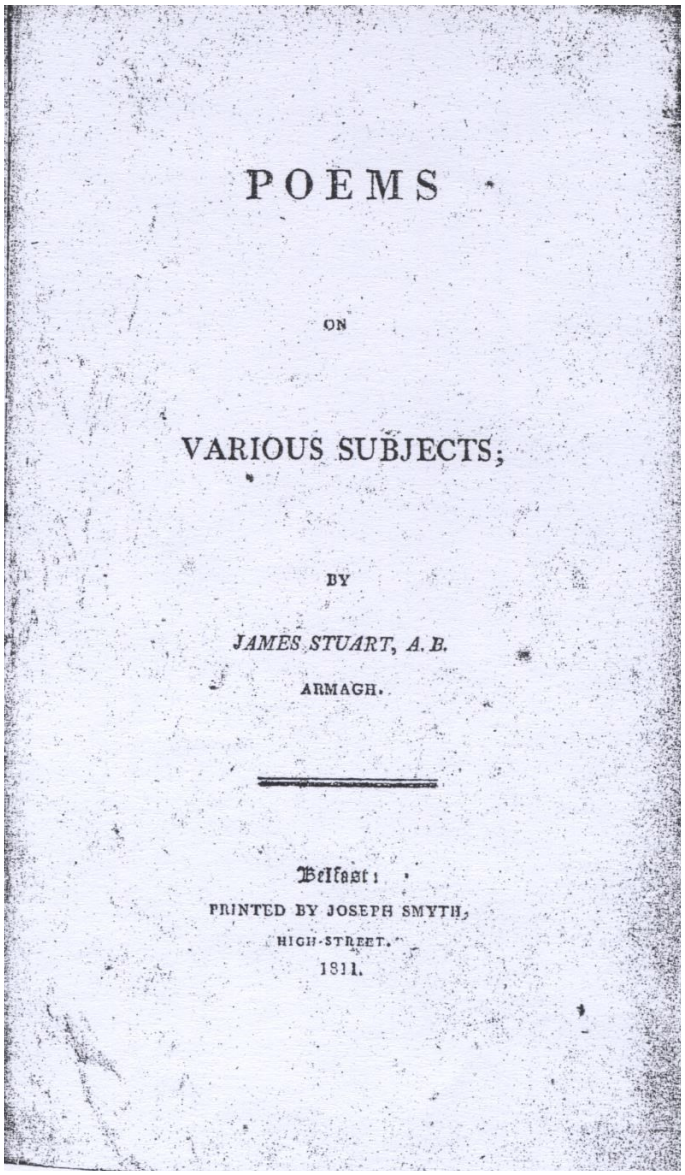
"*As round the pine-clad top of Morna's hill*
Slowly I wind, what varied scenes appear
In glorious prospect? Whether o'er the plains
Mantled in green, the eye delighted roves,
Or where yon spires peep o'er the sloping hills,
And glitter in the sun; or where aloft,
Thy column Rokeby[3]*, lifts its head in air,*
High o'er the verdant pines, transmitting down
To latest years, thy friendship and thy name!
Or thine, O Molineux[4]*, that sand sublime,*
With forms majestic, o'er thy waving woods,
Raised to thy country's glory in the day
Of Erin's fame! How lovely bloom the groves
Whose bending tops play wanton in the gale,
Mingling their varied hues! Bright through the vales
The streams soft gliding, wind their devious course,
Deep'ning the tender verdure of the fields,
And mantling ev'ry blossom of the spring
In robes of humid lustre. Round the hills
Dwell Innocence and rural industry,
And Peace, and jocund Health, and sinewy Toil,
The sire of Plenty, though the child of Want.

Later in the same poem, Stuart reflects upon the remains of the Franciscan Friary standing in the grounds of the Palace demesne:



Armagh Friary, 'that monument of former times' - Poems on Various Subjects, p.120.

"*Behold that monument of former times,*
You mouldering abbey. O'er the roofless walls,
Green ivy creeps; and through the grass-grown aisle,
Sepulchral monuments, with sculpture rude,
Tell to the passengers the simple tale
O sorrow and of death. There Science once,
Amid the splendid fabric reigned supreme.
Her, the rude turbulence of lawless pow'r
Has exiled from the venerable seats
Of philosophic lore. Yet here escaped
From the fierce tumult of vindictive war,
Secure, the nymph with calm Religion dwelled."


POEMS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS;

BY

JAMES STUART, A.B.

ARMAGH.

Belfast:

PRINTED BY JOSEPH SMYTH,

HIGH-STREET.

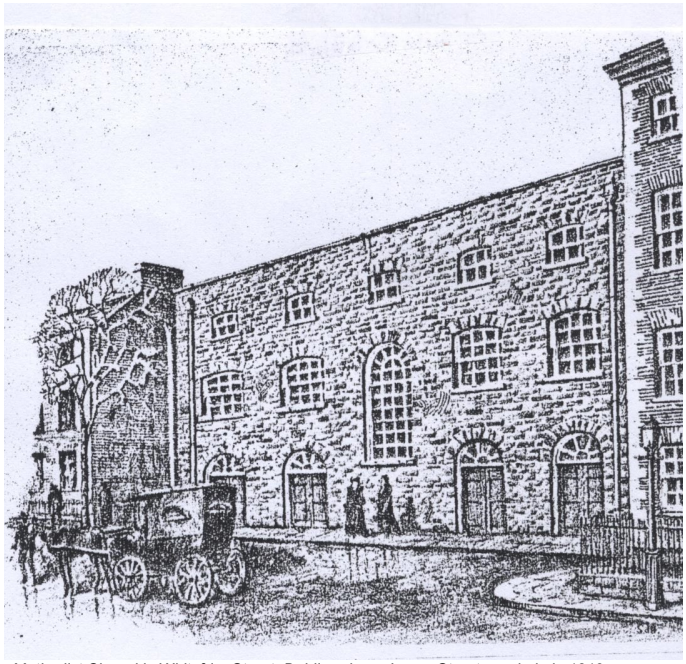
1811.

Title page of James Stuart's Book of Poems

In the following year (1812), James Stuart found his niche in life, when he became the editor of the newly established *Newry Commercial Telegraph*, owned by the Newry businessman, Alexander Wilkinson, and in its early years published each week on Wednesday and Saturday. In the pre-publication notice placed in the

Belfast News-Letter (Nov.6,1812), he promised that "through the maze of politics and tempest of jarring factions, impartiality shall be their guide, and truth their polar star."

Here Stuart worked until 1821, during which time he also edited Wilkinson's *Newry Magazine* issued in alternate months, and encourage John Donaldson[5] of Cloghog in South Armagh, to make a detailed study of the Barony of Upper Fews, which was printed in serial form in the *Newry Magazine* 1815-19, and subsequently printed in book form by the "Dundalgan Press", in 1923.



Methodist Chapel in Whitefriar Street, Dublin, where James Stuart married , in 1812

On October 28, 1812, James Stuart married his cousin, Mrs. Mary Orr, of Armagh, the ceremony taking place in Wesley's Chapel, Whitefriar Street, Dublin, and conducted by the Rev. Moore Morgan, Curate of St. George's parish[6]; they subsequently lived in Bridge Street, Newry[7].

While editor of the *Belfast News-Letter*, which had developed a leaning towards unionism, Stuart became engaged in a disputation with the sister paper, the *Northern Whig* (founded in Belfast in 1824), which took a more liberal stance on current political matters, and he promulgated his theological views in a separate volume entitled the *Protestant Layman* in 1825. Furthermore, in 1827, having left the *Belfast News-Letter,* he went into partnership with Fortescue Gregg, of Glenavy, establishing the *Guardian and Constitutional Advocate*, which sought to counteract political outlook of the *Northern Whig*, but ceased publication in 1835.

By this time, Stuart's health was deteriorating, becoming unfit to pursue his lifelong interests, and as there was then no state safety net for those who were no longer able to earn a living, he fell into poverty, and was reduced to dependency upon a charitable friend in Arthur Street, Belfast, at whose premises he died, without issue, on Monday, September 28, 1840. He was buried in an unmarked grave in Clifton Street Cemetery, Belfast, being survived by his wife Mary (nee Ogle), who died on Nov. 15, 1853, aged 73 years; neither of their deaths being reported in the local press.

Several of James Stuart's poems conveyed a sombre awareness of adversity in life, perhaps a foretaste of his own tribulations, as expressed in the poem, "Compassion, a Hymn"-[8]

"*the tears of mercy and of love,*
With more refulgent lustre shine,
Before the awful throne above,
Than all the gems of Ophir's mine.

Then seek, O seek the lowly bed,
Where Sorrow, friendless and alone,
Drooping, reclines his painful head,
And meekly pours to heav'n his mourn.

Speak to the widowed matron peace,
Sad weeoing o'er her orphan boy,
O bid her anxious troubles cease,
And let her soul expand with joy."

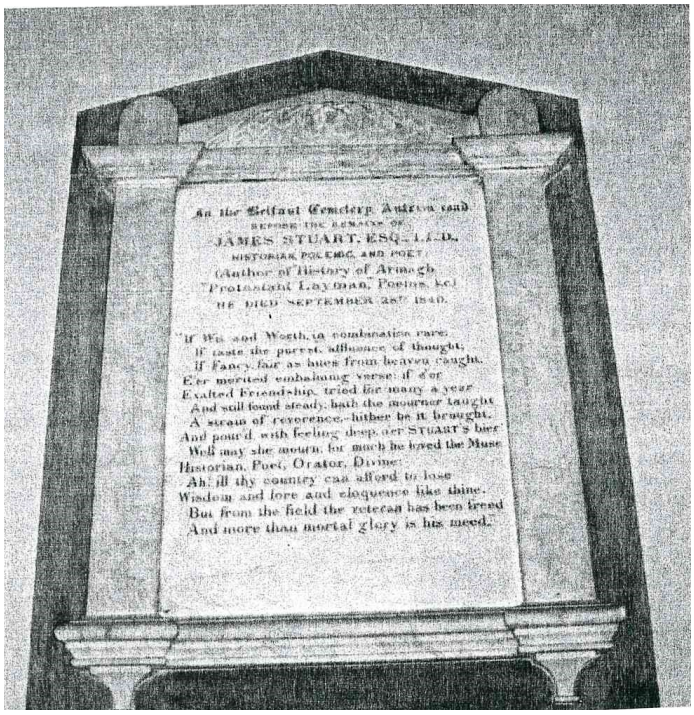
Somewhat belatedly, in 1854, some friends of the late James Stuart, wishing to perpetuate his memory, had a monument erected in Christ Church, College Square North, Belfast, when the *Belfast News-Letter* recorded:

"It gratifies us to observe that some kind of tardy justice has at length been done to the memory of a distinguished man, whose literary services were for many years devoted to the cause of law, social order, and true religion in this town – the wielder of a classical and powerful pen, in almost every department of literature. Within the last few days a mural slab has been erected in the north-east aisle of Christ Church, Belfast, to the memory of the late Dr. Stuart, who was for some time editor of the *Belfast News-Letter*. To this erection, his Grace, the Lord Primate, the Earl of Roden, Viscount Dungannon, H(enry) H(olmes) Joy, Esq. Q.C., Dr. Bryson, and others have contributed.

The following obituary inscription is from the pen of the Rev. John Hull[9], of Cheltenham:-

IN THE BELFAST CEMETERY, ANTRIM ROAD
REPOSE THE REMAINS OF
JAMES STUART, Esq., LL.D.,
HISTORIAN, POLEMIC, AND POET;
(Author of A History of Armagh, Protestant Layman, Poems, etc.)
HE DIED SEPTEMBER 28th, 1840.

"If wit and worth in combination rare,
If taste, the purest affluence of thought,
If fancy, fair as hues from Heaven caught,
E'er merited embalming verse: if e'er
Exalted friendship, tried for many a tear,
And still found stesdy, hath the mourner taught
A strain of reverence- hither be it brought,
And poured, with feeling deep o'er Stuart's bier!
Well may she mourn, for such he loved the muse;
Ah! ill the country can afford to lose
Wisdom and love, and eloquence like thine;
But from the field the veteran has been freed,
And more than mortal glory is his mood!"



Tablet commemorating the life of James Stuart, erected in 1854 in Christ Church, College Square, Belfast. When the Church was closed in the early 20th century, it was sent to Armagh, but its present whereabouts is unknown

A memorial tablet, also in white marble, was erected in Christ Church, Belfast, with an inscription, evidently from the same pen, and reading: -

"MARY, MANY YEARS THE WIFE OF
JAMES STUART, Esq., LL.D.,
DIED THE 15th NOVEMBER 1853, AGED 73 YEARS,
The wife and widow of one so gifted,
And so useful in his generation,
Herself worthy, claims remembrance.
The grave historian pens the deeds of old,
Himself to vanish as a tale when told,
The bold polemic wields Ithuriel's spear,
Then stands where crowns, and harps, and palms appear,
And love to cheer his earthly toil is given
Whose night on earth is endless day in heaven."[10]

Is it not a matter of regret, that James Stuart, who devoted so much of his time and energy to researching and meticulously recording its history, has not been accorded in his native city a well deserved reminder of his valuable legacy in *Historical Memoirs of the City of Armagh*?

References

1. Letter from R(obert) M. Young, Architect, Belfast, to John Garstin, LL. B., in a volume of Stuart's poems in the Robinson Library, Armagh.

2. No connection was ever proved – *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, Royal Irish Academy, 2007. Vol. 9, p.137.

3. The obelisk was erected by Primate Robinson on the Palace lands, honouring the Duke of Northumberland, who, when Lord Lieutenant, had supported his elevation to the Primacy.

4. The obelisk at Castledillon, erected by the Hon. Capel Molyneux, Bart., "to commemorate the glorious revolution which took place in favour of the constitution, under the Volunteers of Ireland."

5. John Donaldson claimed descent from Alex. Ben Donaldson, an early settler, who came to Lecale, Co. Down.

6. Belfast News-Letter, Nov. 3, 1812.

7. Bradshaw's Directory, of Newry, Armagh… Newry, 1820.

8. Poems on Various Subjects, (part of), p.79.

9. The Rev. John Hull, of Donaghadee, was curate of Antrim, 1826-31, and of Bangor, 1833-41, before going to England. He was author of *Lays of Many Years*, 1854.

10. Gravestone Inscriptions, edited by R.S.J. Clarke, Vol. 1, p.166.

The story of Armagh's 'bare-footed' street singer who walked with theatre royalty

by Eric Villiers

Mary Connolly—mystery still surrounds her story

A little over a hundred years ago Mary Connolly, an Armagh-born 'bare-footed' busker was lifted from Ireland's streets to overnight stardom and a new life rubbing shoulders with some of the era's top celebrities. From 1917 to 1922 her success was such that you could open almost any Irish, English, Welsh or Scottish newspaper and find her name in reviews, interviews and at the top of variety theatre bills.

In those years, especially between 1917 and 1919 as her Cinderella rise spread to every corner of Britain, tens of thousands of Irish immigrants found solace in this tale of the ragged street singer miraculously reborn as a concert mezzo soprano. Her stage appearances packed theatres, halls and cinemas from Cahirciveen to Aberdeen: no wonder music hall impresarios in almost every UK city and large town had a vested interest in keeping her rags to riches story alive for as long as possible.

And none was more adept at squeezing every drop of publicity from her background than her Dublin-based manager Barney Armstrong: he cashed in on tales of her humble beginnings in Armagh; her childhood in disease ridden Poor School Lane; her teenage years slaving in Lancashire mines, and her months wandering the streets of Ireland singing for pennies.

By all accounts Armstrong was a self-serving showman or as Joseph Holloway, the theatre diarist and architect who designed the first Abbey Theatre for its director WB Yeats, described him, "no gentleman". Dapper and overdressed he was a popular 'man about town', strikingly similar to Molly Bloom's lover, Blazes Boylan in James Joyce's Ulysses. In the novel, which plays out across one day in Dublin, Joyce places his fictional showman in Armstrong's actual office at the Olympia Theatre.

Armstrong was just one of a wide sweep of celebrities who came into Mary Connolly's life: from top comics to opera stars, and from classical musicians to business magnates. Some of them were self-serving and manipulative and others were selfless and honourable. Tracing them and their connections is an aspect of her story just as fascinating as her meteoric rise.

Since Victorian and Edwardian women's historiography is – to coin a phrase – a slim volume, a researcher must turn to the lives of those patrons and other men in Mary Connolly's life to glean information about the singer. Her public persona did not survive the 1920s, and by the 1930s she was already living on past glories, working in seaside resorts in County Down and County Cork.

After the 1930s there is simply no trace of her and even vital statistics remain to be discovered. The migratory nature of her family's subsistence-led survival does not help. There are no details of her in census data; no public or church record of her birth; no public notice of a marriage, and finally no trace of where she died or where she is buried. This all may change of course as new data yet to be released, becomes available.

Born in Irish Street in 1892 her family moved around so much in search of work that it sometimes feels as if their very existence can only be confirmed by

newspaper reports and one or two key sources. Her years in Armagh are recorded in the roll book of the Sacred Heart Convent School and her communion is listed in the files of Saint Joseph's Parish Church in Leigh, Lancashire, where her father, a labourer, went looking for a job in mining at the turn of the 19th century.

Mary herself became a pit brow lass around 1908 but in 1910 her fiancée was killed in one of England's worst mining explosions. The trauma of that day when 344 men and boys were killed stayed with her. Losing her future husband meant the only realistic career open to a working class girl like her – as a wife and mother – was also taken from her.

Unable to face mining again, and with her ailing father and invalid brother to look after, she worked on farms before returning to Dublin around 1916 to fulfil her father's dying wish to be buried at Glasnevin Cemetery: there is no trace of his grave there so it seems he was buried in the unmarked paupers plot.

The funeral and passage home used up his 'club money', the pennies he put away regularly to pay for his final journey back to Ireland. To save on expenses Mary walked from Leigh to Liverpool docks and then from Belfast to Dublin leaving her brother James to accompany the coffin. In order to complete the journey to Dublin she sang around 'Sailortown' dock area in Belfast: it is the first recorded occasion of her busking.

In Dublin she and James starved for "three days on a ha'penny cake" before he talked her into going out to sing, and it was with tears rolling down her cheeks that she walked from tenements in the Gardiner Street area to the wealthy south-side collecting money as she went. That night she earned seven shillings, a considerable sum since a labourer's wage in those days was a pound a week.

With anti-British feeling running high in the wake of the Easter Rising executions and with the ongoing Irish Literary and Cultural Revival gaining popularity, her arrival, singing haunting Irish ballads could hardly have been timelier. Suddenly she was the talk of Dublin, the mysterious singer who popped up and quickly disappeared into the darkening street. No one realised she was Irish so rumours abounded: an opera star completing a bet; a professional singer down on her luck; a Belgian refugee, were three of theories doing the rounds.

It was around about this time that Dublin's movers and shakers began taking an interest in the tiny singer who mysteriously materialised outside their homes only to slip away into the darkness, often frightened away by the slightest of innocent approaches.

Holloway was captivated by her voice and wrote several thousand words about her in the daily journal he kept during the years of the Revival. He became quite emotional as she sang outside his house on Northumberland Road, Ballsbridge, while the first time J.J. Rice – the music and drama critic for Independent Newspapers and a Feis Ceoil classical music judge – heard her he jumped off a tram to follow the singer and a trailing crowd of fans.

Holloway likened her to Count John McCormack, then the world's leading lyric tenor, because they were the only singers "… [who] bring a tear to the eye unbidden". Noting that thousands of Republicans were still interned from the Easter Rising, Holloway drew another comparison: this time to the mythical Cathleen Ni Houlahan going about the countryside rousing nationalist sentiments. A similar thought struck Rice, who wrote: "Ireland's soul sighs through her singing"

Holloway also reported a doctor in Ranelagh vainly racing after Mary offering to pay for singing lessons: it was not just that a poor girl seen talking to gentlemen at dusk could have only one purpose. Ashamed in case a neighbour should recognise her she protected her anonymity by hiding her face under a shawl.

Thanks to Holloway's dedication in recording the Revival – 25 million words and hundreds of photos, images and mementoes – we have details of Mary Connolly's impact on Dublin. For Holloway the Revival, orchestrated by Yeats and painter, poet and mystic George "AE" Russell was about much more that merely the Abbey and its playwrights.

An aesthete like Yeats would hardly have regarded s street singer as representative of the Revival, yet people like Holloway, Rice and Russell did not preclude popular performers from their definition, and both Rice and Russell contributed to Holloway's collection of theatre memorabilia. Russell – who grew up in Lurgan and spent his summer holidays in Armagh City – almost certainly heard her sing so it would be nice to think he took extra satisfaction in the rise of a fellow Armachian.

In any event her walks through the darkening suburbs brought her serious attention from wealthy patrons and opera lovers. It was only when a female resident of Ailesbury Road, Dublin's richest street got her an interview with the Evening Herald that she was finally discovered by Armstrong, owner of the Olympia

Theatre in Dame Street, and one of Britain's best known impresarios.

Armstrong who had business interests in Dublin, London and Edinburgh, would go on to open cinemas all over Ireland including the Cosy Corner Theatre in Russell Street, Armagh, now the site of a pharmacy.

As the clamour to have her properly trained grew she got a voice test with Dr Vincent O'Brien of Dublin's Palestrina Choir. As the most important figure in the Irish music world, O'Brien was voice coach to McCormack and to James Joyce – the latter once contemplated a career as a concert singer. After the test O'Brien told the press that too much damage had been caused to her vocal chords by untrained singing for her to succeed in opera.

Instead she was launched into a career on the popular stage supported by Ireland's top comedian Joe O'Gorman. Born in 1863 and educated by Christian Brothers at Westland Row, Dublin, O'Gorman started out as a plumber, while moonlighting as a song and dance comedian in city centre pubs. His father soon sensibly apprenticed him to Horace Wheatley, a popular music hall performer, one of the real life characters Joyce mentions in *Ulysses*. Joyce had seen him as Baron O'Bounder in the pantomime *Cinderella,* and later wrote from Paris requesting song sheets written by Wheatley to be posted to him.

It was around 1880 that O'Gorman moved to England and first encountered racism, which he overcame to find success in Liverpool and Manchester, before gravitating to London. Those early experiences seemed to instil in him a fondness for helping society's underdogs, and he would go on to become a trade union activist.

By the early 1900s – mentored by his friend 'Big Jim Larkin' – he was busy organising, and in 1906 established the Variety Artistes Federation, which would become the first successful trade union in the British entertainment industry. Thousands flocked to join the VAF after O'Gorman persuaded the biggest stars – including the legendary singer and comedienne Marie Lloyd – to join in boycotting theatres until management improved conditions for minor performers and stage hands.

The VAF eventually amalgamated with Equity in 1967, and at a celebration dinner Jimmy Edwards, the last chairman of the VAF, recalled O'Gorman's unique position in the history of the theatre industry. Edwards – a star of stage, radio, television and film – raised a glass to "the first chairman, founder and Number One member… Joe O'Gorman, the Uncrowned King of British Music Hall".

By 1907 with picketing only just legalised O'Gorman led a series of strikes that quite quickly won better conditions for thousands of poorly paid workers. A key element of their success was their reliance on monster meetings organised by a tiny committee who met secretly in Marie Lloyd's kitchen – that these trusted friends were also the biggest names in music hall was also key.

The secrecy was necessary because over the years the owners and theatre managers had won the friendship of every top star by regularly wining and dining them at places like the Trocadero in London – it was a divide and conquer strategy that worked perfectly until O'Gorman knocked away its foundations by convincing Marie Lloyd, Sir Harry Lauder and a dozen other top names to support the VAF.

Lloyd's role in what became known as the "Music Hall War" is well documented in history thanks to her impromptu performances for picketers outside theatres. Once, ordering the crowd to stand back as a third rate actress passed into the theatre she jibed: "Let her through… she'll close the place quicker than we can". Or again watching circus elephants troop in for a show she cried out "Blacklegs".

For all the strike's success O'Gorman's union won the battle but he lost the war in personal terms. In revenge Oswald Stoll, one of the world's top impresarios, had him blackballed from music hall, variety theatre and vaudeville shows throughout the English speaking world. He was almost instantly bankrupted and for two years was dependent on his sons Joe junior and Dave, by then a world renowned double act.

In the political arena O'Gorman had became a renowned orator, and to solve his financial problems Larkin offered him a safe Labour seat in the next Westminster election: he turned it down because he was quietly working on a comeback. By 1910 he found a way around Stoll's blacklisting, this time writing and starring in a new format known as revues – ensemble sketches and short plays which he could stage in legitimate theatres thus circumventing the Stoll ban.

In the 1910s his revue "Irish and Proud of it" became his biggest hit and before the decade was out he had amassed a fortune of £5m (in today's terms). When news of his hit reached America where his name was still a big draw, a nationwide tour was swiftly arranged.

With hundreds of theatres booked O'Gorman sailed for New York with his co-writer Wal Pink, and producer Albert de Coureville to put together an American cast and begin rehearsals. Pink, who wrote sketches for Charlie Chaplin, was another music hall legend, while de Coureville, one of Britain's top producers. The three of them were rehearsing for a Broadway opening when they got word that every single theatre on their tour had been cancelled. Stoll had telegraphed the Shuman Brothers, who controlled a thousand US theatres, about O'Gorman's background. In those days union activity or 'syndicalism' was practically a criminal offence in America: the three were forced to sail back to London empty handed.

By now Stoll's ban had been rendered ineffective by the success of "Irish and Proud of it" leaving O'Gorman – who was one of Armstrong's oldest friends – free to support Mary Connolly and guide her through her week-long stage debut at the Olympia Theatre.

For the next five years Mary created a fortune for Armstrong, and not just in music hall and variety. By teaming her on a double bill alongside his business partner, the opera manager and baritone Walter McNally, Armstrong hit on a combination that packed the Olympia for Sunday night concerts that became 'must-see' shows for Dubliners.

McNally, another pupil of Dr O'Brien, was an extraordinarily handsome man whose week-long annual operettas in the 1920s at Armagh City Hall were sells outs. In her memoirs May Hill, an Armagh-born child star, recalled – aged 14 – sitting each day of the 'McNally week' on the steps of an English Street boarding house just to catch a glimpse of McNally crossing from the Charlemont Arms Hotel for afternoon rehearsals: "He was gorgeous, I was in love with him". Knowing he was there she then went round to the back of the hall where chorus girls she knew sneaked her in to the auditorium.

The 1920s saw McNally tour the world as lead baritone with San Carlo Opera House, Naples, and become a friend of the Boston politician and movie tycoon Joseph Kennedy. Years later McNally's children would reminisce about house parties where Walter duetted with Kennedy's wife Rose, an accomplished pianist, as the kids from both families, including JFK, the future US President, gambolled beneath the baby grand.

Under the patronage of Joe Kennedy, who founded RKO Pictures, McNally became Hollywood's European representative, and emboldened by Kennedy's forecast that the 'talkies' would be as lucrative as the new telephone companies he quit the stage to build state-of-the-art provincial cinemas in partnership with Armstrong. Like Mary, Barney – whose real name as Bernard McNamee – had come along way from his roots as the son of a farmer from Drumlish on the Cavan -Longford border.

Other names who drift into the O'Gorman story are Charlie Chaplin, the dramatist Samuel Beckett, and Oscar Wilde's only loyal friend the writer Frank Harris: in his autobiography Chaplin refers to Harris as "my hero".

In 1919 when Jim Larkin was arrested in America and thrown into Sing Sing for his 'rabble rousing speeches" he was visited by Chaplin and their mutual friend Harris to assure him that his wife and children in Belfast would not go short of money while he was locked up.

Interestingly both Larkin and Harris have links to Armagh. Harris went to school here and in his memoirs not only lovingly describes Armagh as a 'wonder city' where he spent the happiest days of his life climbing "every tree on the Mall", while Larkin of course has even stronger local links through his parents who were from South Armagh.

Twenty years before Larkin's imprisonment, Harris had tried to save another close friend, Oscar Wilde, from another jail. As a barrister Harris knew the British justice system was out to make an example of his friend, and organised a yacht to sneak Wilde to freedom in France. To Harris's amazement it was an offer the great man refused.

It was back in the 1890s that O'Gorman first knew Chaplin as a family friend, and mentored him when Chaplin and Stan Laurel were starting out in 'The Lancashire Lads' comedy group. Later, as a friend of O'Gorman's sons Joe and Dave, Chaplin was in the 'Brixton Gang' a group of bright young thespians who partied and played tennis together.

Famously Chaplin refused to give any credit for his success to his early mentors, but the O'Gorman family treasure a story of a music hall audience giving Chaplin the 'bird' at the Rotherhithe Hippodrome for a Jewish impersonation that came across as racist. A dejected Chaplin, seeking advice, confided in the O'Gormans who gently guided him towards a realisation that he was not good impressionist, to which he replied, "Don't worry. I will be big in America".

While partying with the Brixton Gang Chaplin famously fell head over heels in love with one of the gang, a

young dancer from County Down called Hetty Kelly. In 1922, as the most famous man in the world, he sailed to Belfast on a quest to find Hetty but was distraught to find that she had died in the world flu epidemic of 1917.

Samuel Beckett's connection to O'Gorman is also interesting. As a student Beckett skipped lectures at Trinity College Dublin to take in matinees just up the street at the Olympia so Beckett almost certainly saw O'Gorman by then Ireland's greatest raconteur and wit. Earlier O'Gorman's cross talking double act "Tennyson and O'Gorman" was the template for subsequent double acts from Laurel and Hardy to Morecambe and Wise, and from Abbott and Costello to Burns and Allen.

A few years ago in Surrey I interviewed a grandson of Joe senior who told me that listening to Lucky's breathless monologue in Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*, always transports him right back to the cross talk and patter of his grandfather's shows, scripts of which are archived in England's National Library. The Stage newspaper once described Joe as the father of "cross-talk" and the "master" of pattering, which Beckett makes use of in his comedy dramas.

Beckett's bowler-hatted tramps in *Godot* are reflections of the playwright's fascination with comics like Charlie Chaplin, Laurel and Hardy, Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton. These Hollywood stars, with backgrounds in music hall, vaudeville or theatre would have known and been inspired by the likes of *Tennyson and O'Gorman* a duo who by conquering the London Palladium and Broadway in the 1890s had cut a path for those who followed them.

Obviously, names like Chaplin, Beckett and Larkin still resonate today but what of Joe O'Gorman, is he still relevant? Well, if establishing the VAF/Equity; changing working conditions for thousands of theatre employees; perfecting the now well known revue format; conquering Broadway and the London Palladium; arguably influencing Beckett's work, and inventing modern cross talk comedy is not enough, you could add that he also established a still thriving charity foundation to look after performers in sickness or old age.

Of all the things he pioneered it is that charity aspect of his life's work that is perhaps most relevant now. Last Christmas when the former actress Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, made an official visit to Brinsworth House, a London retirement home for entertainers, she was unwittingly paying homage to Joe O'Gorman, founder of the Brinsworth project, when he was the chairman of the VAF and the "Uncrowned King of British Music Hall".

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When election pacts by political parties prevented Armagh electors from going to the polls

by Mary McVeigh

A hundred years ago, 1919, pre-Partition, the government at Westminster decreed that local councillors were to be elected by proportional representation. However, this electoral system was to apply only to Ireland, not the rest of the U.K. The intention was to give Unionists a helping hand because in the previous year's first past the post parliamentary elections Sinn Fein had made great gains throughout the island. Ironically, it was not widely supported by Ulster Unionists. Indeed the MP for Mid Armagh, James R. Lonsdale, opposed it on the grounds that it was introducing 'a principle of elections different from that prevailing in Great Britain.'[1] Others, particularly Sinn Fein, welcomed it, seeing it as a fairer system which would allow them to make the electoral gains which would truly reflect their support.

When the local government elections were held in January in the following year under the new system, the first and only time ever used for the whole island, there were certainly significant changes in the composition of councils. In the nine counties of Ulster whilst Unionists were still the dominant force with 266 Councillors there were now 83 from Sinn Fein, 79 Nationalists and notably 90 from the Labour movement as well as Independents.[2] The *Armagh Guardian* noted: "A feature in some of the Ulster towns were the successes by Labour, particularly in Belfast, Lisburn, Portadown and Lurgan; but in Portadown the Separists [Nationalists] secured representation for the first time." [3]

Pressure or promises?

What was the position in Armagh, how was the outcome of the City Council elections affected by proportional representation? Surprisingly there was no contest, citizens who were eligible to vote did not get the opportunity to do so. Instead there would appear to have been much wheeling and dealing behind closed doors and pacts entered into by the main parties. Indeed the view could legitimately be taken that they were as much concerned about keeping others out as gaining seats for themselves. Candidates withdrew their nominations whether due to pressures or promises, it was not revealed. Exactly the requisite 18 remained, thus nobody needed to go to the polls on Election Day, 15th January. The *Belfast Newsletter* claimed that Armagh was the only town in Ireland where such a result was forthcoming. [4]

Labour sacrificed

Who were the candidates who were forced or otherwise to withdraw? Certainly those who sought to represent Labour and trade union interests were notable among them. The view of the *Armagh Guardian* was: "Labour attempted to gain a voice on the Council through its own nominees but Nationalists and Sinn Feiners joined in excluding it as a party." In the North ward, the area roughly from Abbey Street, Lower English Street to Banbrook and beyond, George Carson, the Secretary of the local branch of the Workers' Union and John Caldwell, a winding master withdrew but it would appear that another Labour candidate, William Sullivan, a railway worker remained. However, his affiliation was changed from Labour to Nationalist so it is obvious that some sort of deal was done. In the South ward which included Thomas Street, Ogle Street, Irish Street etc. Peter Collins, a Workers' Union representative also dropped out of the contest.[5]

It would seem that some commentators were of the highly dubious opinion that candidates who were not of the business or professional class, but were manual or skilled workers, must have had Labour leanings. This is the only explanation that can be taken from the claim made by the *Irish Independent* that the three new Unionist Councillors: Joseph Ballard, a tailor, W.R. Sleator, tenter and Samuel Kirkpatrick, a foreman joiner, were Unionist Labour.[6] Neither the *Ulster Gazette* nor the *Armagh Guardian* made any reference to them being anything other than Unionist. It is highly likely that mention would have been made of it if they had known Labour affiliations. Indeed an academic study of early twentieth century Sinn Fein went so far as to say all three political parties, Sinn Fein, Nationalists and Unionists 'included Labour representatives.' However, the author failed to provide hard evidence of his assertion.[7] There is no doubt that this new council had a higher proportion of tradesmen than in the past when professional and business men dominated but there were no indications that any apart from William Sullivan had links with Labour or the trade unions.

Nationalists no longer dominant

If Labour was a loser in the Armagh contest so too was the Nationalist party. Its numbers were reduced from twelve to five. Henceforth it would have to compete for support with Sinn Fein. Also, on this occasion there would appear to have been a rift in its camp between those who were associated with the A.O.H [Ancient Order of Hibernian] and those who were not involved in it. The *Armagh Guardian* commented upon it:

"*One feature of the election is that Messrs. T McLaughlin, J.P., who has occupied the chair for several years , and acted pretty fairly throughout; Mr H.J. McKee who was the first chairman of the Council since its formation and unsurpassed for impartiality; Mr Michael Donnelly, chairman for a term, and a good member of the Council since its formation; Mr Joseph Hagan and Mr Edward Cowan, all moderate Nationalists, have had their past service to the city disregarded and they have been, figuratively speaking, thrown out. Such is the ingratitude of the public and the result of intense politics."* [8]

Two of the five Nationalist candidates had not served in the previous council. One was the already mentioned William Sullivan, originally Labour and the other was John Nugent, an Insurance Agent for the A.O.H. The *Armagh Guardian* intimated that the A.O.H conferred with Sinn Fein in deciding who were to be selected. This could well have been the case because it was very active in Armagh at that time. Over the years it had grown in strength and numbers. Historian, Fergal McCluskey, described it as having 'evolved from a marginal plebeian political network in south-west Ulster to the major force within the ranks of the Irish Parliamentary Party'. It became an approved society under the 1911 National Insurance Act which greatly increased its membership as well as its finances.[9] Essentially it was an exclusively Catholic, politically conservative organisation which has been likened to the Orange Order.

The winners

Undoubtedly the winners at this time were Sinn Fein and the Unionists. Whilst Sinn Fein gained the same number of seats as the Nationalists without having to face the electorate the chairman of the new Council was to be one its members, James [Seamus] O'Reilly, a merchant tailor from Ogle Street. According to the *Belfast Newsletter,* as well as being Vice-President of the local Sinn Fein club he was President of Armagh branch of the Gaelic League.[10] The Unionist increased their number of councillors from six to eight. Previously their strength was in the East ward which included Scotch Street, Barrack Street and the Mall but now they had members in all three wards.

Conclusion

The election that did not happen in Armagh was noteworthy not just because electors were deprived of the opportunity to vote by political parties who appeared to prefer achieving power by stealth than facing their opponents in open contest. It also indicated that Labour was never going to get a look-in if the other parties had their way, that economic and social issues were going to be secondary to the so called 'national question'. It pointed too to future tension between the old style Nationalists and the newer, militant Republicans. As well, it illustrated that electoral pacts invariably favour the strongest. As it is said 'there in nothing new under the sun'.

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Lost buildings of Armagh
The Armagh Fever Hospital

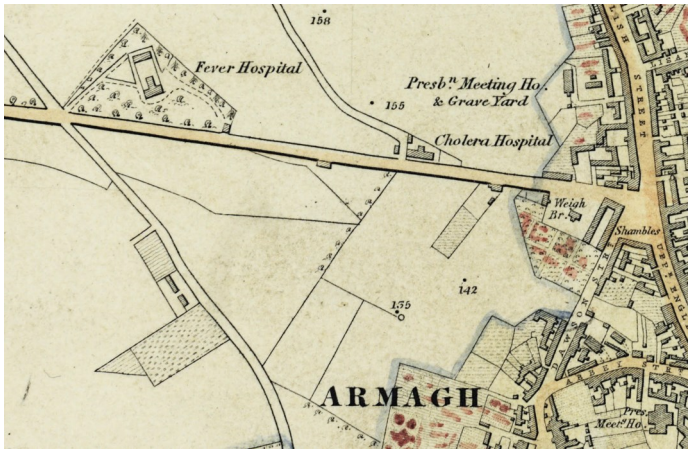
by Stephen Day

Whilst Armagh has many elegant Georgian buildings which have survived to the present day others, perhaps less well known, have not. One such is the **Armagh Fever Hospital** which was later renamed, in another role as the **Macan Asylum for the Blind.**

Macan Asylum
(Photo by DRM Weatherup on 28 Nov 1957, Armagh County Museum collection)

Origins

The Armagh County Infirmary (1774) was built during the reign of George III and marked a major improvement in health provision in the city. However, sudden outbreaks of fever and cholera were still a feature in the early 19th century. To control the spread of infection it made sense to have separate provision at a different location for these patients. In 1825, during the reign of George IV, a fine building was erected as a fever hospital by Primate Lord John George Beresford. It was constructed mainly from local limestone and was located on what is now known as Cathedral Road. A separate small cholera hospital was located a few hundred yards away as one travels towards the Shambles. At this stage the area was sparsely populated and the new Saint Patrick's Roman Catholic Cathedral was yet to be built.



Ordinance Survey 1834 map - showing both buildings and the Shambles
(Armagh County Museum collection)

The Macan Asylum for the Blind

The building was later purchased by the trustees of the Macan charity. The Macans were a distinguished Armagh family and one of their number, Arthur Jacob Macan, was a captain of the 24th Light Dragoons. He served in India where he died on the 18th September 1819.

In his will, dated 9th June 1819, he left certain bequests. The residue of his estate was then to go to the Corporation and inhabitants of Armagh;

'for building and endowing an asylum for the blind of that City on the plan of that at Liverpool, but open alike to all Religious persuasions and free from all discipline offensive to the tenets of any, yet strongly inculcating sound morals and enforcing attendance at their respective places of worship.'

The Governor and Directors of this asylum were not to act;

'from favour or affection, but solely for the good of the Institution and extend its benefits to the utmost and, in the first instance to the blind of the County of Armagh in preference at all times. Not meaning that their admission shall be of right nor that it be an asylum to indulge sloth but rather to instruct them how to earn their living. To these, the deaf and the dumb might be added if the funds admitted of it hereafter.'

This will was proved in 1823 and monies became available but Captain Macan's wish in relation to the blind was not implemented until after the death of his last surviving nephew, Richard Macan. At this time about £10,000 was added to the funds of the Charity.

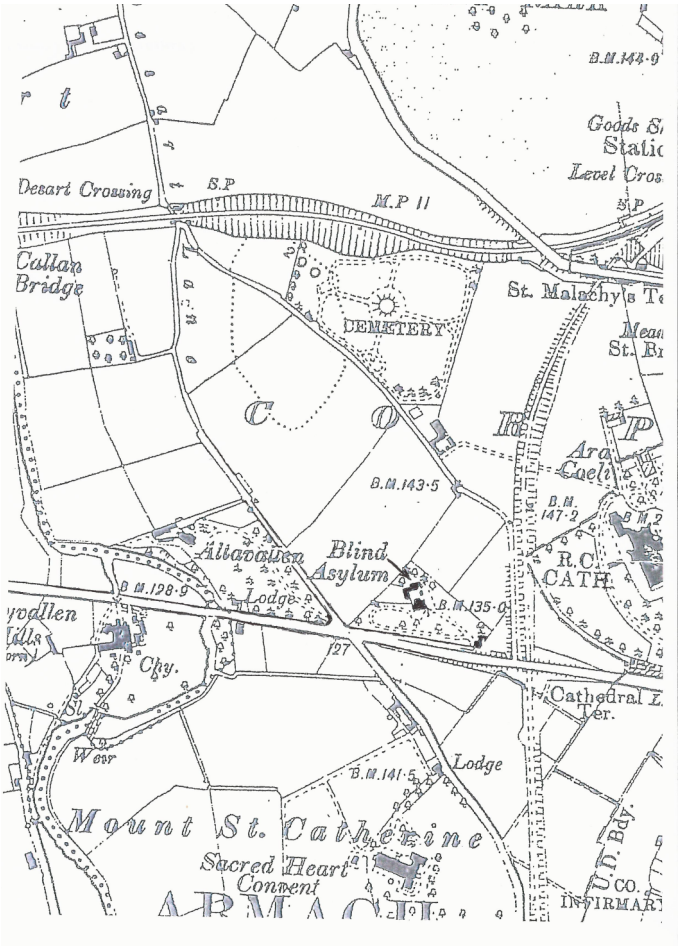
In August 1852 a Scheme was approved and confirmed by the Master of Chancery enabling the Trustees to purchase from the Primate, Archbishop John George Beresford, a building suitable for an Asylum for the Blind. The Fever Hospital which had been built at a cost of £3,500 was bought for £1,200. The Scheme also made other provisions for the staffing and administration of the Institution.

On 21st April 1855 the Lord Chancellor ordered that the five Trustees together with the Dean of Armagh, the Minister of First Presbyterian Congregation of Armagh and the Parish Priest of Armagh for the time being and three laymen representing the Church of Ireland, Presbyterians and Roman Catholics should constitute the Governing Body of the Asylum. If there were any vacancies amongst the Trustees, the gap was to be filled by the surviving Trustees. Thus the Governing Body consisted of eleven members – five Trustees, three Ecclesiastics and three laymen representing the specified three denominations.

The Institution opened for the reception of inmates in April 1854. Numbers varied but 1888 appears to have been a typical year with the number of inmates then seventeen and basket making being the chief occupation. Armagh merchants were the best customers for the work turned out. The officers were Mr. Thomas Smith, Secretary, Dr. Henry Frazer, Physician and Miss Margaret Wilkin, Matron. (Bassett: p.111)

A Changing Environment

The Institution continued on a fairly even keel well into the next century. Meanwhile the immediate surroundings had changed significantly. This included three major constructions: The Sacred Heart Order of nuns had come to Armagh in1851 and moved to establish the Convent on the Saint Catherine site in1859. External work on the new Cathedral which had commenced in 1840 was completed in 1873. The Sacristy and Synod Hall were built on the same site in 1896 and the adornment of the interior of the Cathedral was completed in the early 1900s. Then from 1903-1910 the extension of the railway from Armagh City station south to Irish Street Halt, Milford and beyond was completed.



Macan Asylum and Locality (1900) – McKinstry

The 20th Century

The 20th century saw rapid change in all aspects of life and this included the Macan Asylum. By the 1940s even the word *'asylum'* was beginning to be considered inappropriate in the modern world with *'institution'* becoming the preferred option. On 4th June 1941 the Trustees considered it desirable *'to draft a new Scheme governing all points likely to arise in the management of the Institution.'* They took legal advice and also consulted with the Blind Welfare Association, apparently having in mind the possibility of the building being taken over by that body.

The future of the original enterprise was evidently in some doubt at that time. There were only five inmates in 1942 and four of them were old men. Basket making was not the practical pursuit it had once been and the preference was for the blind to remain in their own home and/or be assisted by relatives and friends. The old three story building itself was increasingly presenting a challenge as a suitable refuge.

Further various attempts were made to have the building taken over by the Blind Welfare Association. There were many delays and Local Government was changing to adapt to the requirements of a new Health Act. With the emerging welfare state the County Welfare

Authority sought to establish a County Welfare Service but no further specific action was taken to amend the Macan Scheme. In November 1951 the National Institute for the Blind made an approach but again nothing happened.

In April 1957 the County Welfare Committee was about to establish an Old Peoples' Home in Armagh and suggested it might be appropriate to run the Asylum as a Blind and Old Peoples' Home. A detailed proposal was submitted to the Trustees & Governors in July 1957 and agreed in principle. There was considerable difficulty in running the Institution owing to reduction in numbers and increased costs in a time of rising wages. The result was that at a meeting on 13th January 1958 it was resolved;

'That the Asylum cease to function on February 28th 1958, that Mr. Williamson, County Welfare Officer, be notified so that arrangements can be made for the two remaining inmates and that the Matron be notified that her services will not be required after 28th February 1958.'

The building, though still owned by the Trust, continued to be used by the Welfare Authority for a time. On 4th October 1958 it was used to house the inhabitants of Mill Row, Armagh when the Callan River overflowed and flooded their homes. In 1964 the building was used as temporary accommodation for the inhabitants of the nearby Sacred Heart Convent School which had been extensively damaged in an accidental fire.

Difficult Decisions (1966-1981)

From April 1966 to 1969 there seems to have been a period of frustration as those involved with the Trust struggled to modernise the arrangements in line with the spirit of the original bequest. The building was now empty but kept secure. Meetings were held, instructions given to solicitors, discussions with other agencies took place but no real action seems to have come out of it.

A complication arose with the outbreak of 'the Troubles' in 1969. From being a relatively peaceful area, where police could carry out community based patrols with one or two men, by 1971 this part of Armagh had become a 'go carefully' area where some patrols had to be accompanied by the army. The Macan building which, like many other such premises, had remained intact up to 1970 became the subject of isolated incidents of vandalism. By 1971 the situation was critical. On 4th August, as a result of reports of malicious damage to the property between 26th July and that date, two RUC police officers accompanied by members of the 2nd Battalion of the Light Infantry carried out a search of the premises. The building was insecure and the interior was in very poor condition with evidence of long term damage. During the course of the search concealed (fire) arms were discovered. It was now clear that the Trust had neither the funds nor the capability to protect and maintain their property.

At a special meeting of the Board of Governors and the Trustees on 6th September 1971 it was resolved that the basis of the proposed Cy-pres Scheme should be the transfer of the property and the funds to Armagh County Council as the local Welfare Authority. (The term *'Cy-pres'* can be translated from old Norman French to English as *'as near as possible'* and the Trustees were endeavouring to comply with Arthur Macan's original intentions as near as possible.) The Ulster Architectural Heritage Society was requested to provide a report and following an inspection on 23rd October 1971 they concluded that, although the building and grounds were in a deplorable condition, the actual stone structure was in remarkably good condition after 120 years and could be used for administration if new single story wings were added. The mature grounds and fine trees could also be easily recovered. There were further legal delays but no sale took place. In the meantime further attempts were made to secure the property but continuing instability in the area was a challenge. Between 1973 and 1975 a family were living in the gatehouse at the entrance to the grounds. In December 1977 it was reported that the building was soon to be handed over to DHSS subject to no encumbrances. However, in July 1979 there was still no decision from DHSS to purchase. The Trustees now considered sale to be most urgent. As time had passed the building had again become increasingly dilapidated and, although the Department of the Environment had put a Listed Building Order on it, the building was now in such a dangerous condition that it eventually had to be demolished in the early 1980s. In reality the building had long since lost any value as a practical facility for modern welfare needs.

The Legacy

Meanwhile the legal consultations on a possible Cy-pres Scheme had continued throughout the 1970s. Finally this Scheme was formally applied for and confirmed in the High Court, Chancery Division, on 17th May 1982. The Cy-pres Scheme (High Court Order 1982) laid down what the Trustees were responsible for and what their task was.

The property had been sold for £62,000. The vast

majority of this money was subsequently invested and it is the yearly interest which is generated from these investments which creates the money which is annually donated by the Macan Trust to assist the blind and partially sighted in the Armagh area.

For many years the old grounds lay vacant but now the new housing development Cathedral Mews occupies this site. Although the Blind Asylum is long gone the Macan Trust continues to carry out the wishes of its founder 200 years later.

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2019 Outing to Slane Castle and Millmount Museum Drogheda

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