

INTERMEDIATE CERTIFICATE

HISTORY PROJECT

ON

RATHCOOLE

BY

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## Preface

During this project I have researched the history of Rathcoole by visiting and talking with local historians and people who have local knowledge, which has been handed down from generation to generation. I have also read everything I could find, which was written about the village of Rathcoole.

I have attempted to make this short history as interesting as possible by selecting the people, places and stories I most enjoyed hearing about. I hope you will too.

Wendy Thompson

April 29<sup>th</sup>, 1987

## Rathcoole

There are many different beliefs as to the origin of the name Rathcoole. The most common is that it was derived from Rath Cumhaill, which means the Rath or Ringfort of Fin MacCumhaill, the Ossianic hero.

This name would lead one to conclude that there was a notable rath in the area and, although there are many partial raths, one large enough to warrant a village being named after it cannot be traced.

During the 1940's, road signs for the village spelt its name as Rath Connla, a form which appears to have no historical basis whatsoever and has now gone out of use. Hogan's *Onomasticon Goedelicam*, a book which defines Irish place names, claims that the name comes from Rath ua nGabhla and includes evidence from the Book of Leinster supporting this theory. This form is a tribal place name. Yet another title was Rath Coill, which meant 'The Fort of the Wood,' which would be deemed correct as the Slade Forest is just two miles up the road. This appears to be the closest we can get to a final statement as to the origin and meaning of Rathcoole. The present Irish spelling is Rath Cuil.



At the beginning of the nineteenth century the townlands of Rathcoole were as follows: (original spelling)

Badger Hill

Carrigeen, The Rocky Land.

Coolmine

Ballynakelly, The Town of the Wood.

Calliaghstown, The Town of the Nuns, Upper & Lower.

Collegeland

Broadmore Commons

Crochaunnadreenagh, The Little Hill of Blackthorne.

Crockshane, John's Hill.

Redgap

Farmersvale

Greenogue, The Little Sunny Spot.

Keating's Park

Johnstown

Rathcredon, Creedon's Rath.

Rathcoole

Slademoor, The Great Slade or Mountain Stream.

Slievethoul, Tuathal's Mountain.

Tootenhill, The Burnt Hill

Wetmantown

Poor House Meadow and The Glebe.

Details of areas of Rathcoole for which information is available are listed below:

### **Broadmore Commons**

Broadmore Commons as a name is quite forgotten. The area it denoted lies to the south of the Naas Road, behind Rathcoole House, the Church of Ireland and the ruins of the Munster Arms Hotel. It consisted of three fields and a narrow winding passage, which, on the west, bound the largest of these fields, now known as Shiel's Common. Streams almost surround this old common and one passes between two small fields. Their presence points to a possible derivation of the old name. The Irish for a watercourse is Braghaid, and big is mor, so the change from Braghaidmor to Broadmore is obvious.

### **Poorhouse Meadow and The Glebe**

The Poorhouse Meadow is the field behind the large house in the Glebe situated on the Main Street of Rathcoole. The house was known as Mrs. Mercer's Alms House for Poor Girls, it was established in 1744 and was the local girls' school. Later the house was taken over as a rectory and the school moved to Castleknock. In 1957 it was taken under the control of the King's Hospital School.

## **Coolmine**

Coolmine was owned in the thirteenth century by a family called Bermingham. By 1603 they seem to have sold it to a Mr. Peter Hackett. After his death, Coolmine passed to the Dean and Chaplain of St. Patrick's Cathedral. This 250-acre townland, which boasted a castle, was later rented by John Allen for £2 per year, a very cheap rent even in those days.

## **Raheen Park**

Raheen Park is the townland of Collegeland. The name is not used now but suggests a nearby rath.

## **Cooleenderk Meadow**

Cooleenderk Meadow is in the townland of Rathcoole. Cooeendecks, Cooleendykes and Cooleenderks are surviving pronunciations of its name. The Cooleen part of the name probably represents Cuilin, a little nook or corner and the Derks could be Deirc, charity or alms. This explanation is possible as Mrs. Mercer's Alms House for the Poor Girls was nearby.

## **Church Lane**

Church Lane is a short piece of road between the Main Street and Broadmore Commons. It was closed to the public by authority of a Grand Jury Presentment Easter Term 1821, which reads:

'John Kennedy and Laurence Clinch Esqrs., to stop up that part of the old road from Rathcoole to Rathmore by the commons of Broadmore, lying between the street of Rathcoole, and the commons of Broadmore on the townland of Rathcoole ... there

being another road that answers the purpose of the part we present to stop up.'

### **Stoney Bater**

Stoney Bater was a small road carrying on from Church Lane and running along the northern boundary of Broadmore Commons. It continued south westward as it does now under the name of Stoney Lane.

### **Trough Park**

Trough Park is a field beside the Stoney Bater, in which there is a granite boulder with a basin 23 inches in diameter and 18 inches in depth. Locally it is known as the Wart Well. The belief was that by prodding your wart with a pin in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and then putting the pin in the basin, your wart would go away. It is believed that the piece of granite was originally given as a piece to repair the church but was never used.

### **Flock Meadow**

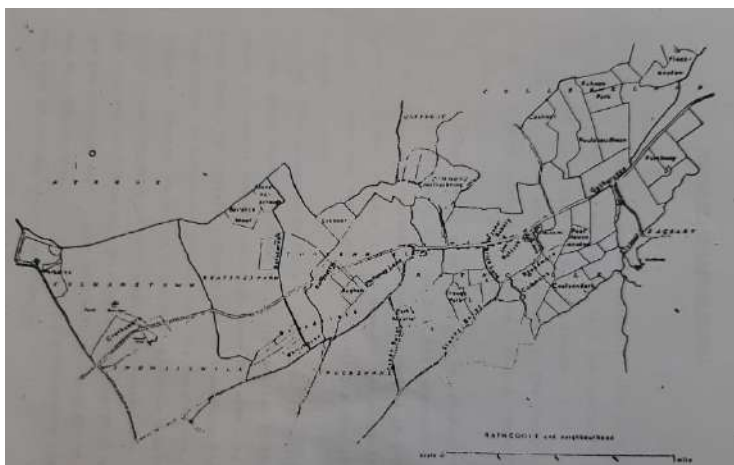
Flock Meadow is the name of the most easterly field in Collegeland townland. It is found on some of the old maps and is mentioned in leases and is still in use. An earlier form of the name, Flockmead, is also found. This meadow is low-lying and easily flooded so the name is derived from Couain meaning meadow and Fluich meaning wet being changed to Flock. On some maps the field's title is Cloonefah or Cloonetrah, the writing is difficult to read. There seems to be a partial path within this field.

## **The Commons**

The Commons is the name of a townland in the north of Rathcoole. It is approximately 27 statute acres. For £250 Baden Swinny purchased the bulk of this land from the Commissioners. Adjoining this property Swinny owned a lot of Collegeland and other areas of the neighbourhood. These Commons were enclosed.

## **Ballyvatty**

Ballyvatty in the Tootenhill townland is shown on the map with the outline of the holding, the old turnpike road and the new turnpike road. Now Ballyvatty is lost to a row of neat cottages and houses. The part of Ballyvatty to the north of the road keeps the old name with various pronunciations, e.g. Ballywatta, Ballywatty, Ballwatha and Ballawatthew (Baile Mhaitiu – The Town of Matthew).



Rathcoole and neighbourhood.

## Church of Ireland Rathcoole

### The Old Church

About 1181, Prince John granted Rathcoole, with its church and tithes, to the See of Dublin. This was confirmed by Pope Clement III in 1187 and by Pope Innocent III in 1216. The church was later assigned to the Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral and became a chapel respectful to Clondalkin.

In 1615, the church was in good repair, but the chancel was in ruins. It was stated that the dean was responsible and the clergy were supposed to keep the chancel in good order and it must be said that it does not reflect much credit on them that the chancel are invariably reported as being in ruins.

In 1713, Dean Jonathan Swift, who is believed to have had a house where Swiftbrook Paper Mills stands today in the nearby village of Saggart – although there are some disputes about this – put forward a strong plea to Archbishop King requesting, as a personal favour, that his curate, the Rev. Thomas Warburton should be appointed to the vacant Hon. Canon's position in

Saggart and the Vicarage of Rathcoole. This application was unsuccessful and the position and all that went with it was given to the Rev. Edward Drury. It was during his incumbency that the site of the old church was cleared.

## **The Present Church**

The present church was built on the same site in the early 1700's. In the church there is a beautiful east window, c.1913, of which there are only two in Ireland. The other is in Dalkey Church. The window is dedicated to the Verschoyle-Campbells, a well-known local family, one of whom was the Dean of Athlone. The aisle was tiled in 1910 and the communion chalice is dated 1737.

## **The Boxes**

There are boxes situated at the back of the church. The one on the right belonged to the Verschoyle-Campbells and the left one was owned by the Kennedy family. Nobody was allowed to sit in either of them if they were not family members or a guest of the family.

The last of the Verschoyle-Campbells, a Mrs. Alexander, now lives at Tassaggart in Saggart.

The Kennedy family are all dead and gone and their box is now used to house an electric organ used at Sunday worship as the original organ has seen better days.



The East Window in the Anglican Church

## The Graveyard

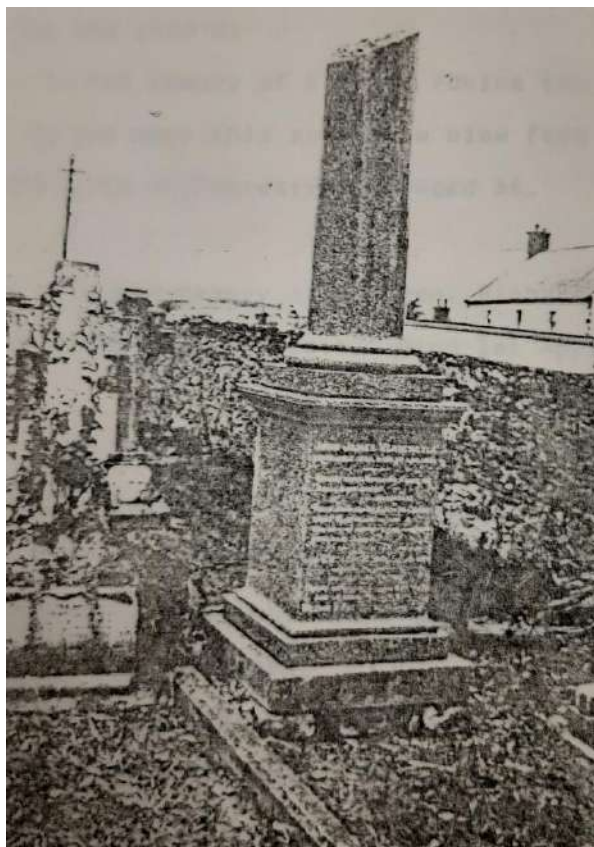
The graveyard is older than the church. In the fore there is a big vault and in it lies four generations of the Kennedy family. The lead coffins are just sitting there, and you can look through the holes of the very ornate doors and see this. Some of the coffins have, in fact, been buried but space then became short.

The Verschoyle-Campbells are also buried in the graveyard and, as you can see from the photograph, the top of their tombstone has been broken off. This was because the name died with the last male member of the family. Some of the Hollowed family, who lived in Redgap and have a lane named after them, are also buried here.

This is reported to be one of the first ecumenical burial sites in this country. The Roman Catholic part of the graveyard was closed in 1920 by the Dublin County Council.



The Kennedy Family Vault



The Verschoyle-Campbell Family Monument

## Inscriptions

The following are a few inscriptions which date back to and before the 1900's:

**Adkins** – To the memory of Richard Adkins Esq. of Athy, who was killed near this spot by a blow from a jaunting car on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 1827. Aged 56.

**Brabazon** – To the memory of the Hon. Richard Brabazon. Son of the 10<sup>th</sup> Earl of Meath. Died 1<sup>st</sup> April 1887.

**Crosby** – Here lieth the body of Mr. Daniel Crosby who departed this life 29<sup>th</sup> April 1723 aged 53 years. Also the body of Mrs. Margaret Crosby wife of Danl. Crosby of the City of Dublin who departed this life 7<sup>th</sup> of January 1777 aged 62 years. Also Daniel Crosby son of above Daniel Crosby who departed this life 29<sup>th</sup> April 1781 aged 74 years.

**Hart** – Here lieth the bodies of the Revd. Thomas Hayden who died 29<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1855 aged 85 years. He was 48 years Rector of the Parish of Rathcoole. And his son George who died 8<sup>th</sup> September 1852 aged 33 years. And two grandchildren John Hayden and Charlotte Tibbs.

**Hillard** – This stone and burial place belongeth to William Hillard of Rathcoole and his Posterity. Here lieth the body of Mary Hillard who departed this life January 20<sup>th</sup>, 1755 aged 84 years. Also the body of Christopher Hillard son to Peter Hillard.

**Hollowed** – Erected by Myles Hollowed of Rathcoole in memory of his parents Patk. and Catherine. Also of his children John who died 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1881 aged 21 years and Annie and Bridget who died young.

**Kennedy** – Mama Kennedy died 7<sup>th</sup> November 1826 aged 27 years, Sir John Kennedy 15<sup>th</sup> October 1848 aged 65. Elizabeth Anne Kennedy 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1861 aged 62. Captain Francis Kennedy 10<sup>th</sup> June 1862 aged 36. Lady Augusta Kennedy at rest November 10<sup>th</sup> 1865 aged 55.

Sir Charles Edward Bayly Kennedy born Feb. 1820. Died Dec. 1880. Gladys Maud Kennedy Born June 16<sup>th</sup> 1888. Died Jan 13<sup>th</sup> 1915, Sir John Charles Kennedy Bart. of Johnstown-Kennedy died March 21<sup>st</sup> 1939. Sir Ralph Kennedy Bart. Born April 1896 Died August 1968. Sir James Edward Kennedy Bart. 1898 – Died 1974.

**Lowe** – This burial place belongeth to Ino. Lowe of the Earl of Meath's Liby and his Posterity. Here lieth his son John who died July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1764 aged 10.

**Minehin** – This stone belongeth to Richard Minehin of Vicar Street, Dublin. Here lieth the body of his son Robert Minehin who died January 9<sup>th</sup> 1766 aged 14 years.

**Purchas** – Underneath is the body of Miss Harriet Purchas. The tender female friend of her bosem layeth this stone not to enumerate her virtue but to tell survivors it is in human nature to become perfect; thro' the means of Religion and Application she attained at an early period all that was good. All that was lovely. At the age of 22, enfolded in the arms of her sorrowing friends she departed June 9<sup>th</sup> 1782. Comforting her comforters and edifying all about her.

**Verschoyle-Campbell** – (Inscription beneath East Window).

This window is placed here to the Glory of God by Lily Campbell in memory of her husband Richard S.D. Campbell

D.D. Dean of Clonmacnoise and Rector of Athlone – died 1913.  
Of their son Richard Duncan Stuart died 1906. Of her father  
John James Verschoyle of Tassaggart died 1891 and of her  
mother Catherine Helen Verschoyle died 1901.

## **The Rectories**

The Four Districts Health Care Centre, just beside the church, was built as a rectory. Mercer's School was taken over for a rectory when the Rev. W.F.L. Shea came to Rathcoole in 1895. When he left in 1952, Canon Packham came, and he would not live there as it was too big. The drawing room was the full-length of the courtyard and is now made into two flats. They built a new rectory down on Tay Lane for him.

### **Ground Rents**

At one time most of Rathcoole belonged to the Church of Ireland. The old records show all the names which are still heard in Rathcoole such as Timmons, McNally, McDonnell, etc. and they all paid ground rent to the church up to 1963, when they were collected by the late Mr. Bob Alton who lived on the Naas Road.

### **Church School**

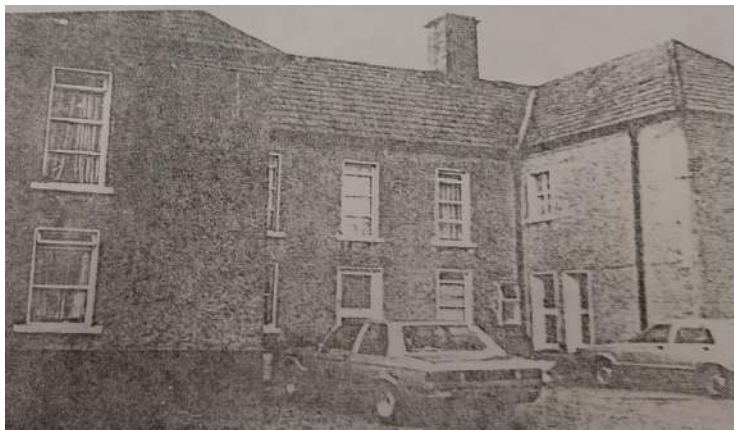
The church had a school up to the 1900's. It was in Hickey's field, just before the turn up Green Lane.

## St. Brigid's Well

The well was originally a spring in the Glebe in Tay Lane but when the protestants took the site over for the rectory of Rev. W.F.L. Shea, he had the well piped to outside the garden, presumably because the people who came to worship at the well were very bothersome. I have been unable to discover how this became a holy well in the first place.



The Day Care Centre – First Rectory



The Glebe – Second Rectory



St. Brigid's Well – showing Original Wall

## How Redgap got its Name

Up in Coolmine, beside a modern house now owned by the Lynch family, there is a curious grey chimney sticking out of the ground. This chimney belonged to an old nunnery, now buried beneath tons of rubble. This nunnery was there when the Irish rebels used to hide from Cromwell. There are various stories telling what Cromwell did when he discovered that Rathcoole House and the nunnery were connected by an underground tunnel and this was how the rebels who managed to get to Rathcoole apparently vanished.

Here are just two:

Behind O'Reilly's house on the road from Rathcoole Village to Redgap there is a field called The Wagon Field. It is so called because when Cromwell was in Rathcoole he used to camp in that field with his horses, wagons, men, etc. When Cromwell discovered that the nuns had been helping rebels to escape, he lined up his cannon and fired on the nunnery, killing all the nuns and spreading their blood on the surrounding area – Hence the name Redgap.

The second story, however, seems to be more factual.

Again, Cromwell was in a rage when he discovered the nunnery and he sent his men up to slay the nuns. It was an order of French nuns at that time and Cromwell's men went up and cut off the nuns' hands and left them to bleed to death.



Remains of Convent

Years later, Sir John Kennedy, of Johnstown Kennedy, the First Baronet, decided to build a new barn on the site, which he had purchased from St. Patrick's Cathedral. He was told the legend of the nuns, but he could not find any hard proof, so he sent in his workmen to dig the foundations. As the men dug, they found a skeleton of a hand and it was brought to Sir John. He told the men to start sifting through the soil to see if any more bones could be found. In the end, six sets of female hands were found, and Sir John agreed that this must be holy ground and ordered that the building of the barn be discontinued.

Sir John went to Dublin and bought a small casket from an undertaker. He then went to the Parish Priest of Saggart and arranged for a funeral ceremony. The hands were laid to rest in the graveyard of Saggart Parish Church. A full funeral service was held and Sir John, the workmen and various locals attended.

Whichever of the local stories regarding how Redgap acquired its name one is to believe it is definitely derived from a bloody attack on the nunnery by Cromwell's men. However, one must keep in mind that Cromwell was a puritan and was on a campaign in which he slew many Roman Catholics as a matter of course.

## Letter by a Famous Historian

21 Great Charles St.,

13th September 1837

Sir,

I went on yesterday to Rathcoole, and explored the southern angle of that parish, bordering on the parish of Saggart and on the county of Kildare.

There is a large stone of the Commons of Rathcoole which is known to the peasantry as the Long Stone and the field in which it lies, they call the Long Stone Field. The stone is eight feet long, four broad and three thick – lying on the surface, having no appearance of having ever been in an erect position.

Very near the above stone but in the townland of Upper Newtown, Parish of Rathcoole, are the ruins of a very small church, which the neighbours call Reilgin – Reilgin, i.e. the little burying place. The church was about fifteen feet long and ten wide. A piece of the old wall stands at the south west angle and the foundation of the remaining part is distinct enough. It stands on the immediate brow of a little glade or glen and is

surrounded by a back and fosse, circular on three sides, but square on the glen side. I could collect no traditional account of it but that it is still used a place of interment of still-born children. A small piece of a very strong stone and mortar wall stands very near this place.

There is a very large Rath a little to the south on the same townland, which is now called Dowd's Rath, from a man of that name having lived near it some time ago. There is another Rath on the same townland, close to the avenue leading to Johnstown House.

In the townland of Calliaghstown a field is shown which is called the Chapel Field, on which a house was built some years ago by a Mr. Armstrong. The house is now called Slademore Lodge. This house was built evidently on an old burying place as many cartloads of human bones were dug up when clearing it for its foundation. This assertion is borne out by the tradition of the peasantry and the name of the townland, which formerly must have been called Baile na cCailleach, i.e. The Town of the Nuns. The holy water font belonging to this nunnery I discovered in the kitchen garden, being directed to it by the woman at the lodge, as an old trough that nobody would use. It is like the font in the church yard at Saggart.

A little to the north west of Calliaghstown is Badger Hill, on which they shew an artificial mound called Coleman's Chair, but why it is called so I could not learn. It is an oblong heap of small loose quarry stones and earth, apparently thrown up from a deep trench or fosse at the south side of it, but whether for a moat, or to clear away for a quarry, cannot be well ascertained.

The ridge of the mound has the appearance of two low moat, one of them apparently having opened.

I do not expect to be able to make any discoveries in this part of the county, and only wish that the weather would hold up a little longer, that I may be able to get over this quickly.

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

Eugene Curry

## Rathcoole House

This huge desolate looking building now stands alongside a brand-new housing development at the Dublin end of Rathcoole. The main street now bypasses Shiel's Bank, as the short sharp hill into the village was then named, after one of the families who lived in Rathcoole House.

There has been a manor on the site since about 1300, but the house now standing was built in around 1750. It is a three-storey building. Not all of the house is visible today as there was another two-storey piece which came out at the back of the house.

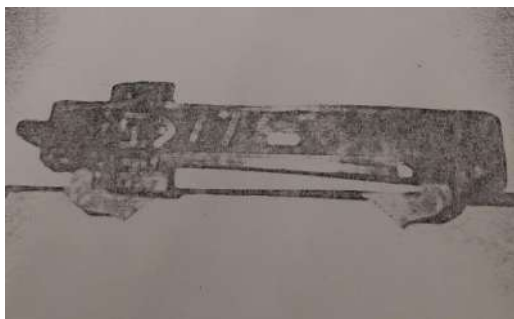
There were two main rooms on the lower level – the kitchen and the milling room, where all the flour was ground. On the second level there was a big 18 ft square hall. As you walked in through the huge folding doors the drawing room was on the left and the dining room was on the right. There were huge doors dividing these rooms which could be opened to make one massive ballroom. The families held their parties in a room off the hall called the Den which is now gone. This part of the manor was demolished in 1933 in order to help reduce the rates. It was in this part of the house that the priest's hole was located.

Many times, Father Harold hid there and his Penal Cross and Chalice were found in 1933 when the hole was re-discovered.

Upstairs there were five bedrooms. The upkeep of the house was fairly expensive, for example, they burned one ton of coal per week plus logs and turf.



Father Harold's Penal Chalice



Father Harold's Penal Cross

In the 1830's the Clinch family sold Rathcoole House to Patrick Shiel, the great grandfather of a Mrs. McNally, nee Shiel, who now lives in Brittas. The last of the Shiels to live in Rathcoole House, Florrie Shiel, sold the house to the Stassens in 1952. These were Belgians who came to Ireland after WWII. Florrie Shiel sold with the condition that she should be allowed to live in the house and continue to be Miss Shiel of Rathcoole House and to be so remembered. While she was living there, the Stassens converted one of the bedrooms into a lavatory and put in the plumbing. In 1962 the Stassens sold the house and surrounding area to a building developer. The people of Rathcoole did try at one time to acquire the house to use as a Community Centre but were unsuccessful.



The front of Rathcoole House

## John Clinch

The Clinch family lived in Rathcoole House prior to 1830 and owned a lot of land in the Rathcoole area. Memory of the Clinch family lives in tradition because one of its member's part in the 1798 Rising. The Freeman's Journal of 2nd June 1798 said a young man named Clinch, the son of a respectable farmer at Rathcoole, was arrested and held at Dublin Castle for being an officer in the Rebel Army and he was later executed.

Unfortunately, this was not true. You see there were two Clinch families, each with a son named John, one family in Rathcoole and the other lived in Newcastle and it was the John Clinch of Newcastle who was the rebel, not Clinch of Rathcoole House, who was only 19 years old. Father James Harold was hiding in Rathcoole House and the Government forces came searching for him. They started to attack the girls in the family and so Father Harold came out and gave himself up. Then they tried to arrest Patrick Clinch, the father, who was very frail and John Clinch, his son said, 'Don't blame him, I am responsible.' And so, he was arrested. According to tradition, John Clinch was

offered pardon in return for crucial information, but he refused with these words:

‘Information I deny

A gentleman I lived

A gentleman I’ll die.’

Below is a copy of the letter John Flinch, written to his father on the day of his death:

*Honoured Father,*

*I expected to have seen or heard from you ere this. I fear my fate is determined. I am told I am to suffer death this day. It would be a great satisfaction to me to see you before I die, and if you could bring or send a priest to me, I think I could then die happy. At all events I will meet my fate with faith and fortitude. I would not for worlds exchange situations with Walsh, my persecutor, who has behaved in the most base and treacherous manner and swore to several falsehoods.*

*His charges were as follows:*

*That I swore him to true to the French, and that I was a sergeant in the rebels, and that I attended a meeting of sergeants to elect a captain.*

*Dear Father, I assure you the foregoing charges are false, and as I hope for salvation, I declared the truth at the court-martial.*

*I hope dear father, you will bear this with fortitude, and comfort my dear mother on this trying occasion. I feel more for my friends than for myself. My love to my dear sister Swords, Ann, Kitty, Fanny, Alicia, Michael and Larrey, and my brother-in-law Swords. As I am preparing for that awful moment, I beg you excuse any omission on my side.*

*I am, honoured father,*

*Your ever dutiful and now unfortunate son.*

*John Clinch.*

*Provost Prison, June 2 1798.*

*Eight o'clock in the morning.*

## **Felix Rourke 1765 – 1803**

Felix Rourke was born in 1765 in Rathcoole. On finishing school, he moved to Dublin and was employed as a shoemaker and later as a clerk. However, he returned to Rathcoole and became a member of the United Irishmen.

The United Irishmen were well represented in northern and southern Dublin but in the restricted area Felix Rourke of Rathcoole was the outstanding leader. He was the son of a small farmer who also kept a livery establishment and the toll gate at Blackchurch near Naas. Felix Rourke got himself noticed by Lord Edward Fitzgerald who promoted him to the position of Colonel and presented him with a mare. For strategic reasons, the United Irishmen of West County Dublin were linked with their equivalents in Kildare and it is recorded that Felix Rourke fought at the battle of Hacketstown under Mick Reynolds, the bold and fearless Kildare leader. It is not generally known that a party of Dublin rebels who had escaped from their native city and county fought at Clonard under Felix Rourke and another Dublin leader named Rattigan. Charles Rourke, Felix's brother, was wounded in this battle.

Afterwards Felix served in the guerrilla campaign with William Aylmer in Co. Kildare and accepted the honourable terms of surrender which were negotiated with the enemy. These were not, however, kept as Rourke and some others were not released from captivity until 1800, having been detained in prison at Kilcullen and Naas.

Sometime after he was released, Felix Rourke obtained a position in Dublin and became involved with Robert Emmet and his proposed rising. Robert Emmet's first meeting when he returned from France to Dublin was held in Felix Rourke's house. Rourke was betrayed by the ever present and detested informers and the young patriot from Rathcoole was arrested and tried for high treason on the 6th of September 1803. He was sentenced to be executed at his father's door, however, this vengeful decision of the oppressors was carried out at Father Harold's House, where he was hung from the rafters, four days later.

Rourke, the condemned patriot, was brutally treated by his yeoman escort when being brought to Dublin city his place of execution.



FELIX ROURKE.

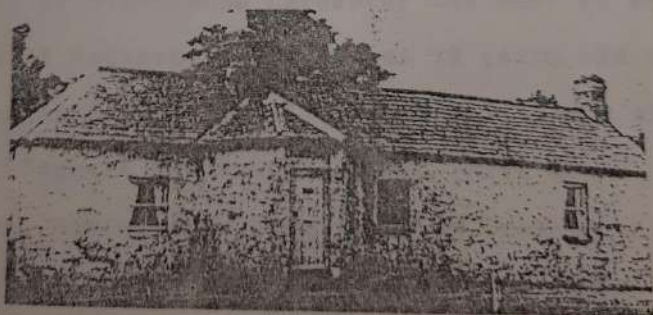


Plate XXII Toll House, Blackchurch, 1788

## **Father James Harold and the Rathcoole Yeomanry**

The Harold Clan, founded shortly after the Norman conquest of England by a son of King Harold, had been prominent in the Dublin and Limerick communities ever since as landowners, merchants and in public life.

Numerous Harolds were mayors and sheriffs of Limerick. In county Dublin generations of Harolds were guardians of the pale against the Irish tribes. The south west border of the pale was known as Harold Country. (This part of the border crosses through the present forest hills housing estate n Rathcoole).

The Harolds were involved in the 1641 rebellion and lost a lot of land and status which was restored to them by Charles II, who chartered the King's Hospital, Palmerstown in 1669. They supported King James II in 1689 and suffered again. By the end of the century very few Harolds were left in Ireland.

Father James Harold was born in 1744 near Dublin. He was educated in France and he made a late start in his studies for the priesthood. He was 30 years old when he was ordained by Archbishop Carpenter and sent to an Irish college at Antwerp. When he was 50 years old, he was inducted as Parish Priest of

Rathcoole. His chapels were at Saggart and Newcastle, but he lived in Rathcoole village. Father Harold took over from Father Barlow.

At the time Father Harold came to Rathcoole, most Irishmen were hostile towards the government and this intensified during his ministry. The local branch of the United Irishmen was formed and there was no peace or stability in Rathcoole.

Father Harold's social life deteriorated because the people he saw fit to associate with kept their distance as he was a Roman Catholic priest and they did not want any trouble.

Father Harold was not limited to a circle of parishioners with whom he could socialise, he also had a protestant friend up at Hazelhatch with whom he took refuge in June 1798. Among his friends were Felix Rourke and John Clinch of the Roman Catholic gentry.

Rathcoole was a strategic point and therefore had a considerable garrison under the command of Colonel Hunter. Sir Charles Ormsby had raised a local company of Yeomen, with himself as captain and three lieutenants – Ormsby's brother, Christopher Clinch, son of the magistrate Sir Bernard Clinch and John Clinch, second lieutenant son of a wealthy landowner of Newcastle, not related to Sir Bernard. Felix Rourke and John Walsh were sergeants. In 1798. Archbishop Troy's Lenten letter told all Roman Catholics to hand in their arms and keep the peace in order to renew their allegiance to the crown. Whilst Father Harold was publicly obeying this letter, he was secretly supporting the 1798 rebellion.

On March 12th 1798 Oliver Bonds house was raided in Dublin and United Irish leaders assembled for a meeting were arrested and papers taken. Their treasurer, Tom Reynolds, had turned informer. Felix Rourke went into hiding. Father Harold's name had, fortunately, not been on the papers for he would have been arrested immediately. The day after the Bond house incident, a Mr. Buckley, who had been drinking in Doyle's public house in Rathcoole with some Yeomen, was found at Blackchurch with a bayonet in his body. Felix Rourke was blamed because he was missing, and the body had been found near his home. Actually, he was still hiding from those who were trying to arrest him since the Bond House raid.

On the 21st of May, Ormsby's Yeomen attended Naas at Father Harold's chapels and heard two sermons in which he encouraged his flock to shun all disorder and discord. Father Harold had been in a tense situation for four years. The arrests in Rathcoole climaxed his tension and so he took leave of his parish for a fortnight and stayed with a friend, Father Leonard of Cork. His enemies interpreted his departure as a flight.

It must have seemed to so many, but had it been he would surely have stayed. Father Harold was on his way to Cork when hostilities started. His house was searched, and some pikes were found in his thatched roof. Father Harold was arrested. His house was burned, as was the custom when incriminating material was found. However, in his petition he wrote that he had been arrested 'on suspicion due to the machinations of some evil-disposed person in said Parish.'

While he was with Father Leonard, John Clinch was court martialled and hanged. Sir John Gilbert, quoted from Robert Marshall an Under Secretary to the Secretary of State, 'You will

have observed that our militia, even the King's Country Regiment, have all behaved very well. But there have been many instances of dissatisfaction in the Yeomanry, I mean those in the country, Captain Ormsby's Corps. at Rathcoole, had all agreed to desert, except the captain and two others. The lieutenant, who was a man of some substance was tried at a court martial and executed at the New Gaol. He

confessed his guilt and declared that the priest of Rathcoole was to blame for it, and he had made his escape. '

Father Harold appears to have returned in time for Sunday 12th June but learning what had transpired went for refuge to his protestant friend at Hazelhatch. From there he went to Drogheda Army Headquarters to state his case and ask for protection so that he could carry on preaching. He was granted protection and went back to Hazelhatch. He was both innocent and brave.

He was arrested the next Sunday on his way to Mass, but he was released and allowed to say Mass. He was then re-arrested on a warrant from Sir Bernard Clinch and this the protection could do nothing about. He was held without trial.

In his petition to Lord Castlereagh, Father Harold said he was arrested in June but the piece which follows is extracted from Faulkner's Dublin Journal dated 14th August:

'Saturday last, Harold, the Roman Catholic Priest of Rathcoole, who was accused by the unfortunate Clinch at his dying moment as his seducer from his allegiance, was apprehended on the bridge at Hazelhatch by one of the Rathcoole Cavalry. He made some objections to the arrest and showed at Drogheda

but was, notwithstanding, brought under escort to this city yesterday and lodged in the Castle’

Father Harold was transported in the convict ship *Minerva* from Cobh. He arrived in Sydney on 11th January 1800, after a ten-month voyage. The *Minerva* carried 191 prisoners – 165 males, 73 of whom were listed as rebels – the others just common offenders, and 26 female prisoners. Three died on the voyage and 29 of the 32 counties were represented.

When the ship docked in Rio de Janeiro, Father Harold was allowed ashore and he posted letters to William, his nephew, and other relatives. Harold’s preaching and masses, his ability to entertain and his experience in dealing with people no doubt helped keep the journey a peaceful one.

When he arrived in Sydney, he was given an invitation to dine with Dr. Dan (a man transported for his politics) which he accepted and after dinner sang ‘The Exile from Erin.’ The beach was crowded with Irish people who begged for an encore and received it. Father Harold later told a friend that the day he arrived in Sydney was one of the most pleasant he had ever had. Father Harold’s dream of being an apostle rather than a convict was disappointed for he was not allowed to hold masses, but he went from place to place and kept in touch with his friends from the *Minerva*.

In 1803 Father Harold went to Norfolk Island in New South Wales and preached his masses, assisted by Peter Ivers.

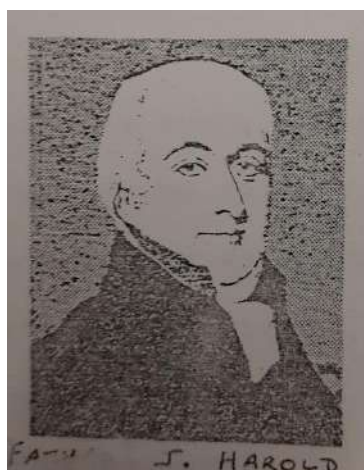
In 1810 he was on the move again, this time to Rio de Janeiro. He taught the children of Jose VI, a Portuguese Emperor, English for five months. By the middle of March 1811, he was in

Philadelphia. There was a shortage of priests and the Church organisation was lagging. Father Harold's nephew, William, was appointed to St. Mary's Church in Philadelphia, with Bishop Egan. Soon Harold joined him and as the Bishop was getting old, he decided to stop preaching and asked James and William Harold to take over. William, however, refused to preach more than every third Sunday.

After a time, the Bishop felt that James Harold was growing too popular and therefore too powerful and in the end they got rid of him with a parting gift on \$1000.

Father James Harold returned to Ireland in 1813 and is reported to have said Mass in Rathcoole during 1815. He also obtained a full pardon.

He died at 87 (not 85 as his tombstone states) and he is buried in Goldenbridge Cemetery, Dublin. The inscription describes him as 'a faithful Christian and a true friend.'



## The Kennedy Family

The house of the Kennedy family is situated in Johnstown-Kennedy. The rise and fall of the family are typical of the Irish Big House families. They came to Rathcoole fairly late and one historian wrote 'Until the ancestors of Sir John Kennedy settled near Rathcoole in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, no residence of importance was in the parish.'

The Kennedy family were of Celtic origin. They were the Kennedy chiefs of Ormond – the baronies of Upper and Lower Ormond in Co. Tipperary.

They first drew attention to themselves in 1813 by leasing over 250 acres at the annual rent of £100/ This seems fairly cheap but the small print in the agreement says that a fine of £2000 had to be paid if payment of the rent fell behind. John Kennedy who made this deal with the authorities of St. Patrick's Cathedral who, in fact, owned this land, became Sir John Kennedy on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 1836 and so started a line of baronets.

The Kennedys moved to Rathcoole in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and their lineage runs like this:

Darby O’Kennedy of Waterford married the daughter of Stephen Baron of Durrow. They had a son John of Johnstown-Kennedy and the ‘O’ (Gaelic for of) was lost. John Kennedy married Eleanor Fagan of Feltrim and died in 1758 leaving Edward Kennedy as heir. Edward was born in 1746 and married Sarah Bayly of Gowran. He died in 1811 leaving John and Charles. John was made first baronet and the family motto was ‘Adhaero Virtuti’ which means, roughly, ‘I persevere with noble conduct.’

### **The 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet**

John Kennedy was born in 1785. His first marriage, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1819, was to Maria Beaumon, daughter of William Beaumon from Rutland Square, Dublin. She gave him five sons and died in November 1828 at the age of 27 and is buried in the Kennedy vault in Rathcoole churchyard.

Eight years later Sir John married again. This time to Elizabeth Anne Beaumon, daughter of John Beaumon of Hyde Park, Co. Wexford. No children were born, and Sir John died in October 1848 aged 65.

### **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Baronet**

Sir Charles Edward Bayly Kennedy was born in February 1820 and was Sir John’s first born. In his mid-thirties he married Lady Augusta Perry, who was a sister of the Second Earl of Limerick. They had two sons, John Charles and George Edward de Vere.

This 2<sup>nd</sup> Baronet died on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1880. Lady Augusta had died in November 1865 aged 55.

### **The 3<sup>rd</sup> Baronet**

Sir John Charles Kennedy was born on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1856 and by 1884 held a degree from Cambridge, a doctorate in Law, was a Justice of the Peace for Dublin and High Sheriff of Co. Waterford. In addition, he served for a time as lieutenant of the Third Battalion of the legendary Royal Dublin Fusiliers.

In 1879 he married Maude, the daughter of Sir James MacAuley Higginson, a knight commander of the Order of Bath. The couple had two sons, John Ralph Bayly and James Edward. Because of the nature of heraldry, female children tend to be ignored. We can say, however, that one of the daughters of this marriage, Gladys Maude Kennedy, died on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 1915 from what was called ‘The Black Flu.’

In 1897 another three girls or women with Kennedy as a surname donated a baptismal font to the Church of Ireland in Rathcoole Village.

Sir John Charles and Lady Maude kept a high profile in the village of Rathcoole. He, for example, was Magistrate of the Petty Session Court in Rathcoole from 1891. The court sat on the first Friday of each month at 12 noon. For a while it was located downstairs in the building where Mr. Alan J. Redmond now has his Estate Agent and Auctioneer offices in the Main Street. At this time the building was owned by the Jacob family who ran a remarkably well-stocked shop on the ground floor. Perhaps it was felt that this impugned the dignity of the court, despite it’s having a separate entrance. In any event, what we

now call 'The Library,' opposite the Bank of Ireland, was built in 1914 to house the Petty Sessions Court of Rathcoole.

The most regular visitors to the courtroom were the inhabitants of Hazelhatch in Newcastle. The large number of charges brought against them gave them the reputation of being highly boisterous and fond of drink.



The Library – Originally built for Petty Court Sessions

By 1923 the court had moved to Kilmainham, perhaps because of Civil War tensions, perhaps as a result of the death of the very well qualified and experienced 3<sup>rd</sup> Baronet.

While Sir John was busy with his career in law and his land, his wife performed the duties of the Lady of the Manor. Lady Kennedy presented prizes for needlework and so on at the local school and sent the children apples at Halloween. She also gave clothing and fuel to old people regardless of their religion. She was greatly influenced in this work by the trend of the time. It was expected that ladies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century would have the idea that the world could be improved by human efforts. In the late 1800's the Kennedys purchased the estate from the church authorities and in 1900 it comprised 1477 statute acres and was valued at £1183. Sir John Charles Kennedy died on the 21<sup>st</sup> March 1923.

### **The 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet**

Sir John Ralph Bayly Kennedy succeeded his father in 1923. The elder son, he had been born on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1896 and baptised in Rathcoole Church on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June of that year. Both he and his brother were baptised by the Rev. William F.L. Shea who was living in Glebe House. Sir Ralph was educated at Uppingham and the Royal Military Academy at Woolwich. He served in the First World War from 1914 – 1918 and as a lieutenant in the Royal Artillery in the Second World War from 1940 – 1942. He is remembered as a very friendly man who always had lots of time for children. He worked on the stock exchange for many years. Sir John Ralph Bayly Kennedy did not marry and when he died, he was succeeded by his brother, James Edward, the second son of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baronet.

### **The 5<sup>th</sup> Baronet**

Sir James Edward Kennedy succeeded his brother at the age of 70 years and the fact that he was only the second born

combined to prevent him having the privilege of his inheritance for any longer than six years. He inherited the title of the 9<sup>th</sup> of August 1698 and died on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1974. Perhaps it was all for the best as he did not relish the 'Sir' he acquired in later life. He used to exclaim in a very exasperated way, 'I'm James' when addressed as Sir James.

As Mr. Kennedy he led a very full life. He had been educated in Malvern College and he used to love to shoot game. In fact, he was generally fond of the great outdoors and was a top breeder of Hereford cattle. Like his brother he did not marry so his successor was his cousin Derrick.

### **The 6<sup>th</sup> Baronet**

Sir Derrick Edward de Vere Kennedy was born on the 5<sup>th</sup> June 1904. He was a son of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baronet's brother. His mother was Julia Ellen Beatrice, a daughter of Sir John Craven Corden, himself a 4<sup>th</sup> Baronet. Sir Derrick was educated at Clifton College and at Trinity College Dublin. He spent many years as a Tea Planter in Sri Lanka (1923 – 1939 and 1945 – 1946) and served in the Second World War as Major in the Royal Ulster Rifles. He was a hotelier in Ireland from 1947 – 1966, the year of his retirement. He married twice, in 1926 to Phyllis Victoria Levine Fowler, the daughter of the late Gordon Fowler but this marriage was dissolved in 1945. He married again in 1945 to Barbara Mary Worthington, who died in 1959. The first marriage produced two sons and a daughter and the second a son and two daughters.

Sir Derrick's connection to the local Kennedys was not very close. He had stronger associations with Co. Galway than he had with Co. Dublin and perhaps as a result the Johnstown –

Kennedy Estate passed into the hands of people other than the Kennedys.

Sir Derrick died on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 1976 and his son George Ronald Derrick Kennedy, born on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1927, received the title of 7<sup>th</sup> Baronet.

In recent times the Kennedy house has been seen on television on many occasions. People who have never been near the house can recognise the front porch and grounds through watching an R.T.E. series called 'The Irish R.M.' as it was filmed there. The Irish R.M. was based on short stories written by two ladies Edith Somerville and Martin Ross (pseudonym) and refers to Major Yeates, played by Peter Bowles, who was the resident Magistrate of the fictitious Skebawn. Coincidentally, you may recall that one of the Kennedy family was also a magistrate – Sir John the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baronet. The grounds of the Kennedy estate are being used as a Golf Club, Beech Park, but the house is uninhabited.



The Kennedy House

## The poisoning at Rathcoole

On Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1798, Captain Hewan of the Angus-Shire Regiment, marched with seventy men from Tallaght to Hazelhatch to reinforce a party there. They stopped in Rathcoole. They wanted refreshments so they went into Doyle's Public House and drank their fill of neat Irish whiskey, or perhaps Poitin, as there was a still in the village.

Thus intoxicated, they went to Fyan, the Village Baker, and although Fyan protested they ate all of his half-baked bread. Between the alcohol and the bread, they were all violently ill and the accused the baker and his assistant of poisoning the bread and then shot them both outside Father Harold's house.

## When Transport was Slow

Rathcoole played an important part in the days when it was usual to transport persons and things by horse-drawn coach. At that time there was a Coaching Inn in the village by the name of The Old Munster Arms Hotel and it stretched from the present Garda barracks across the shopping centre and the entrance to Coolamber estate right up to Dr. O' Malley's house, which was originally built as a Presbytery and is sited on the ruins of the Old Munster Arms Hotel. The hotel was, in fact, burned down but had actually ceased to be of any importance from about 1840 when the railways were built. The coaches used to run from Dublin to Cork and other southern cities.

It was the Coaching Inn for the Royal Garter Stables which were situated where Airmotive Ireland Limited is now, on the Naas Road. Brown's Barn, as the stables were known locally, was a big yard with big stone buildings. The horses were sent up to the Red Cow from Brown's Barn and when they had changed, the old horses were brought back to the Barn to be

fed, shod and rested. The same was done at Blackchurch, the next changing stage.



Pic of Doctor O'Malley's house – originally built as a  
Presbytery.

## The cost of living in the late nineteenth century

Bridget Christian came from Ardclough. The Christians were highly respected tenant farmers in the Lyons Estate. It is possible that Biddy worked in other houses in the area of Kill, Straffan and Celbridge before coming to Hillview, a large house in Rathcoole, when she was 29 in 1893.

At that time, she had inherited a small holding at Crocknadrinagh, known as the 'Rook' from a relative. The holding was a tenancy of the Johnstown-Kennedy Estate. The lease of the property was transferred to her in November 1893 and the acting solicitor received a £1 fee.

Biddy's employment as a servant at Hillview House gave her an annual salary of £6; she also appears to have kept some stock on her holding.

Biddy kept an Account book from 1893 to 1904 and the entries she made give a very good record of the cost of living at that time.

Hired		L	S	D	Bridget Christian on after wife Mary Shill		L	S	D
1893. 9 <sup>th</sup> August	@	6	0	0	Hired 1893. August 9 <sup>th</sup>				
1894					1893				
Salary due		6	0	0	Going to Dublin with Doyle		2	0	
1895					Material for Mary's skirt		1	6	
9 <sup>th</sup> Aug Salary due		6	0	0	Nov Paying Hook's rent		1	2	6
1896					Jacket and jersey		11	0	
9 <sup>th</sup> Aug " "		6	0	0	Cash to Mr Shannon (Ente getting less)		1	0	0
1897					1894 March To Coonan		12	0	
9 <sup>th</sup> Aug " "		6	0	0	1895 21 June Paid for calf		3	10	0
1898					22 Nov Paid for jersey		2	11	
9 <sup>th</sup> Aug " "		6	0	0	Boots in Tydals		5	6	
1899					1896 26 June In Dublin		12	8	
9 <sup>th</sup> Aug " "		6	0	0	21 <sup>st</sup> Oct For Pouch mending Boots		1	6	
1900					1 <sup>st</sup> Nov Going to devotions		3	6	
9 <sup>th</sup> Aug " "		6	0	0	14 Dec In Raas for jersey		3	6	
1901					Clasp for stays		8	9	
9 <sup>th</sup> Aug " "		6	0	0	Carried Forward				

Carried Forward		L	S	D	Carried Forward		L	S	D
1897					1899				
2 March Mr Coonan			1	6	29 <sup>th</sup> April Going to Dublin		1	0	
11 April For Mr Jacob			10	0	2 June Saggart Fair			2	
14 May Skirt			5	0	13 Aug Going to town		1	0	
July going to Dublin with James Lenson		5	2	6	Oct Going home			2	
12 Sept going to devotions			2	0	Dec Rent		2	3	
8 Nov Mr Coonan P. Kate			8	3	Boots and Stocking			6	
1899 9 <sup>th</sup> March Mr Coonan J. Leo			2	0	2 <sup>nd</sup> Kate in Dublin			5	
30 - Mr J. Coonan Leamy Kate			12	0	17 Jan De Post Order				
15 April 1/2 gloves				7	Dec Hat			1	
28 June Paid for boots			6	6	17 Jan Notes			2	
9 July Going to Dublin Cash			10	0	12 June Cash			2	
12 Dec Paying Hook's Rent	2	0	0		Cash going to Dublin				
" Fur tie		2	11		1901 12 <sup>th</sup> Nov Dead List				
" Jacket			18	6	Dec Rent			1	
Brought Forward		19	8	10	Notes				

Carried Forward L S L			Carried Forward L S L		
1902	Going to Dublin	10 0	1903	36 4 4	
8 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Income Tax	2 0	6 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Going up hill	5
28 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Keogh's Rent	3 5 0			1 7
28 Mar	Easter Monday going up hill	10 0	3 <sup>rd</sup> Mar	Income Tax	3 6
21 <sup>st</sup> June	Balance of boots brought at Jacobs	6 0	13 <sup>th</sup> April	Easter Monday going up hill	2 6
	Umbrella and lace	2 8	30 <sup>th</sup> April	L Dublin	1 0
	M. Shannons Account	1 0 0		Going to Dublin Whit Sunday	10 0
22 <sup>nd</sup> Oct	Rates	1 0 0	14 <sup>th</sup> June	Sunday	1 0 0
	Boots made by Crossdale	10 0	20 June	Saturday (Synnott)	12 0
16 <sup>th</sup> Nov	going up hill	1 0	24 June	Before Bazaar (Saturday)	10 0
	Calico	1 0	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sept	For Synnott	6
21 <sup>st</sup> Nov	Mending boots	1 6	12 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Rates in Dublin	4 4
1 <sup>st</sup> Dec	Keogh's Rent	1 6 0	12 <sup>th</sup> Sept	For Synnott	6
31 <sup>st</sup> Dec	Going to Helys	7 6	20 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Saturday for Synnott	10
	Brought Forward	£ 36 4 4	1 <sup>st</sup> Oct	Saturday for Synnott	4
			11 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Parnell Sunday	6 0
				brought Forward	42 15

Carried Forward L S L			Carried Forward L S L		
1903	42 15 4		1904	49 16 4	
1 <sup>st</sup> Mar	Mending boots	2 0	16 May	For P. & J. & Co.	5
26 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Cash to Shown Green	6	19 <sup>th</sup> May	Bazaar	4
28 <sup>th</sup> Mar	F. Petticoat	1 7	2 June	Saggart Fair	5 0
29 <sup>th</sup> Mar	(Sunday show) Cash	1 0 0	5 June	going up hill	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Dec	going up hill	10 0	18 June	Bought Blouse in Dublin	5
5 <sup>th</sup> Dec	For Connor	1 0 0	26 July	For P. & J. & Co.	5
9 <sup>th</sup> Dec	Cash (shown in Green)	1 0	29 <sup>th</sup> Aug	going up hill	
20 <sup>th</sup> Dec	going to town Sunday	3 0 0	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sept	Crossdale	
1904	10 0		26 <sup>th</sup> Sept	to Kitepatrick	
19 <sup>th</sup> March	to Kitepatrick	1 0		Kettles in Lucan	
26 <sup>th</sup> March	Silk Tie	1 0		Bed	
27 <sup>th</sup> March	going to Keogh's	1 0 0		Table	
29 <sup>th</sup> March	Connor's	2 7		Blankets	
26 <sup>th</sup> March	For Connor	10 9		Quilt	
	Brought Forward	42 16 0		Blouse	
					6 2

04. Carried Forward £ 0 10 63. 1. 2

pot 1-0

Tin basin 6

Cash for chair 3-0

" going away 1-0-0

£

64 " 5 " 8

£ 3 20

66 0 0

64 5 8

1 " 14 " 4

10 0

2 " 4 " 4

1 " 13 " 0

3 " 17 " 4

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