

# A Memoir of Some 19th Century Residents of Newcastle, County Limerick and its Vicinity

## Introduction



Amongst the many papers in the Brian de Breffny Collection, recently given to the Irish Genealogical Research Society and used here with the kind permission of George Chartres, the Honorary Librarian of that Society, was a four-page handwritten memoir relating to people who had once lived in or around Newcastle, County Limerick. The memoir is undated and unsigned, but the handwriting appears to be that of the late 19th century and mentions people who had lived in Newcastle between about the 1820s and 1900. The anonymous author states that he was born in 1821 and that his sister-in-law is Eliza Maria Adams; from this information, the probable identity of the author is revealed as Nicholas Upton D'Arcy, son of Nicholas D'Arcy of Churchtown, Newcastle (see notes below). From other information given in the memoir, one can put its date at 1892 or shortly after. It is not known to whom the memoir was originally sent.

The author's memory also sometimes plays tricks on him, but like most family history stories, his reminis-

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cences carry a thread of truth - enough anyway to identify most of the people he is writing about. The spellings, abbreviations and underlinings in the verbatim text below are his. All in all, this memoir paints a sometimes amusing and down-to-earth picture of some of the personalities who lived in Newcastle at this time. Would that more of these memoirs could be found to enhance our genealogical researches and to throw the spotlight onto the characters of times long ago! In 1837, Newcastle was a market and post town and a parish in the Barony of Upper Connello, County Limerick, 20 miles south west from Limerick city, with 4436 inhabitants, 2908 of them in the town (Samuel Lewis, *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, 1837). Bearing in mind the political agitation mentioned in this memoir, it is interesting to note that William Smith O'Brien MP lived at Cahirmoyle House, Newcastle (Slater's Directory, 1846); is it stretching the imagination too much to think he might have inspired, however obliquely, The Red Hand Felon Club?

## The Memoir



The O'Briens of Newcastle were an old and respectable family of the farmer class. I knew several. Terry O'Brien<sup>1</sup> was a partner in McCarthy's brewery<sup>2</sup> and they were doing well when Father Mathew shut them up.<sup>3</sup> James O'Brien and his brother Miles were apothecarys in N.Castle.<sup>4</sup> I don't recollect anything of James's family. But Miles had 3 sons and 3 daughters. The eldest Tom got to be Surgeon in the Army and I think died unmarried.<sup>5</sup> James also got into the Army and married a rich widow and drank himself to death.<sup>6</sup> Miles the 3rd son emigrated to United States in the early sixties, he was a very wild goodnatured fellow and an ardent sportsman and liked by everyone. He got into a Carpet House in N. York. Never left until he became head of the firm and as I heard 10 days ago is one of the wealthy ones of New York and is now the Honourable Miles O'Brien. He has a large family, is a great nationalist. Most popular and ever ready to help a countryman and I am very glad to

be able to tell you of his good luck. Henry O'Brien, the elder branch was a Clerk in the Castle Office for over 40 years, he had a very nice farm, Lissurland<sup>7</sup> with a good House within 3 miles of N.Castle and was in their family for generations. He had no son, his wife a most extravagant woman ran him into difficultys. His daughter married Charles McCarthy,<sup>8</sup> the Solr [solicitor] you mention. He was a pauper in the workhouse, an exceedingly sharp fellow & Mr Leahy<sup>9</sup> Solicitor to the W.House made him his clerk and eventually his apprentice and he became Solr and as I said married H. O'Brien's daughter who went too fast and ruined him. He was a capital Atty [attorney] and straight - he has no son but has several daughters. I forgot to tell you of Miles the elder O'Brien's daughters. He had 3 - Mary, Anne and Fanny - a queer story. At the times of the Crimean War a schoolmaster (John Norris) lived in N.Castle, who had a stepson called Sexton about 18 or 19 years old in very poor circumstances. In fact not a shoe to his foot and like Bryan Olinn<sup>10</sup> had no breeches to wear or very little of it. However he enlist-

ed in the 90th went through the war and so distinguished himself that he came home a Captain and married Mary O'Brien who was a fine and very clever girl.<sup>11</sup> She went to India with the regt and became the most popular and best liked lady in the 90th. They remained there for several years and Sexton got an appointment of £2000 or £3000 a year and became a Colonel and I believe is now a General and commands a wide district in India, and has a large family. One of his sons was mauled by a Tiger and died of his wounds (Irish Times about 2 years ago). The 2nd daughter Anne<sup>12</sup> married an Excise officer - she died and I cannot say if she left a family or not. Fannie, 3rd daughter went out to India and married an officer, Butler of Co Clare<sup>13</sup> and died in a year or two, I think and had no family.

You write of Geo Leake,<sup>14</sup> the father of him who died at ODellville. The distich you quote is different from one I heard. Hoskins<sup>15</sup> is going, and Going<sup>16</sup> is gone and Yellow George Leake is sure to come on - He was called Geo Lime Leake as it was said he had thrown lime on the bodies of some Whiteboys who were hanged near



Bridge Street, Newcastlewest, c.1900

(Limerick Museum)

Rathkeale. Geo whom I knew was a grand fellow, very clever and witty, and wrote a lot of hunting songs and sang them well. I wish I could get them but I only remember a few verses. Charlie Ahearn<sup>17</sup> had a lot of them. I wonder if his nephews know of them.

Dr Thos. Ralleigh Phayer<sup>18</sup> who lived for a long time in NCastle wrote some nice verses on his death. I can send them should you like to see them. The Dr was a queer fellow and told me he had tried many experiments on the patients when cholera came to Ncastle.<sup>19</sup> Amongst the rest that he bled 9 patients one night and they were all dead in the morning. He said he felt quite justified in trying to find a cure for the disease. The Sullivans of Camass, 3 miles from NCastle, were of the same family as that of Major Sullivan of

Chesterfield,<sup>20</sup> an old and highly respectable one. You can see their tombstone at Clouncagh,<sup>21</sup> I think close to old church wall. The last member of the Camas Sullivans was Peppard Knight Sullivan,<sup>22</sup> a near relative of the Ashgrove Uptons<sup>23</sup> he was a dirty drunken horse jockey a bad man died unmarried and unlamented. Camas is now occupied by a farmer and much like Mt Plummer.<sup>24</sup> The Camass Bevans<sup>25</sup> were closely related to my sister-in-law Eliza Maria Adams.<sup>26</sup>

Thos P. Vokes<sup>27</sup> lived in the disturbed times in NCastle in the house Dr Peirce now occupies and where I was born in 1821.<sup>28</sup> Vokes and my father were great friends and he asked him to allow two of his horses to graze at Churchtown.<sup>29</sup> My father said he might, but it was risky, Vokes said he would run the risk. He

accordingly sent two old broken down horses there and a few nights after their ears and tails were cut off, for which Vokes got I think, £150 at the next Assizes – Recollections of a Police Magistrate does not state that.<sup>30</sup>

The Rd Thomas Locke<sup>31</sup> was father to Mrs Lloyd<sup>32</sup> of Heathfield and grandfather of Geo Peirce.<sup>33</sup> The other Peirces were no relatives of Dr Peirce whose father came from Tullamore got the dispensary & fever hospital in NCastle – he married Affra, sister to Mrs Lloyd.<sup>34</sup>

Private The Leahys<sup>35</sup> were from Abbeyfeale. They were nothing. They, as I have heard originally kept a carmans stage and lodging house there. Michl Leahy<sup>36</sup> was bound apprentice to John Hartnett,<sup>37</sup> Solr and when sworn in settled down in NCastle. In 48 he became president of The



Devon Castle, Newcastlewest, c.1900

(Limerick Museum)



Newcastlewest: north shore of the Arra River

(Limerick Museum)

Red Hand Felon Club. Meeting room at Wm Fuller Harnett's shop. And 2 days after Richd O'Gorman<sup>38</sup> & Ml Leahy were preaching rebellion in NCastle, a reward of £300 was offered for O'Gorman's arrest, and I was arrested for him by a strange [in this context meaning one from another part of the county] policeman. I only laughed at the fellow but in two hours after, a troop of dragoons trotted into town and drew up at Hartnetts door and opened every bale of Goods in the house for papers but they did not get any, having been burned two hours before.

They hand cuffed W. F. Hartnett, put him on a car and trotted him off to Limk jail where he remained for 13 months and was then let out without a trial. I never saw anything like the consternation. All the Club vanished in terror, amongst the rest Ml Leahy made his way to the Isle of Man where he stayed for several months and was in a great measure cured of extreme patriotism, became a loyal man and was rewarded by a grateful Government.

#### NOTES ON THE MEMOIR

1. Terry O'Brien is not identified.
2. Denis M'Carthy, brewer and maltster, Newcastle (*Pigot's Directory*, 1824).
3. Father Theobald Mathew (1790-1856) promoted temperance and total abstinence from alcohol.
4. James O'Brien, apothecary, Newcastle (*Pigot's Directory*, 1824). Miles O'Brien of Main Street, Newcastle, apothecary (*Slater's Directory*, 1846).
5. There are two possible candidates in the *Army Lists*; Thomas Michael O'Brien who became an Assistant Surgeon 22 June 1858 retiring in 1889 and Thomas Butler Power O'Brien who became an Assistant Surgeon 29 September 1855, was Hon Brigade Surgeon and who retired 2 June 1886 (he served in medical charge of the expeditionary force against the hostile Indians of the Yucatan in 1858 and served with the troops engaged in the supervision of disturbances throughout the Northern districts of British Honduras that year).
6. This may be James Aloysuis Joseph O'Brien MD who appears to have entered the service 31 March 1868 (*Army List*, 1869). However there is no sign of him in the Army Lists for 1880 or 1890 so his career appears to have been a short one.
7. Lissurland was in the possession of Cornelius O'Brien, Esq., (*Pigot's Directory*, 1824) and in possession of Mr Henry O'Brien, (*Slater's Directory*, 1846).
8. Charles McCarthy, son of Eugene, Newcastle, Co. Limerick, farmer, under 22, aft father, M.1855. (Edward Keane, Beryl P Phair, and Thomas U Sadlier, editors. *King's Inns Admissions Papers 1607-1867*).
9. Two possible candidates: David Leahy only son of Thomas, Newcastle, Co. Limerick, merchant, deceased and Ellen Harnett, educated T.C.D. T. 1824, and Michael Leahy, 2nd son of David of Abbeyfeale, Limerick and Catherine Harnett, over 16 years, educated Killarney; aft. father E.1833. (*King's Inns Admissions Papers 1607-1867*).
10. This is from the nursery rhyme "Brian O'Lin had no breeches to wear, So he bought him a sheepskin and made him a pair, with the skinny side out and the woolly side in; "Ah, ha, that is warm!" said Brian O'Lin."
11. According to the *Army Lists*, John Sexton was in the 95th (The Derbyshire) Regt of Foot. In the *Army List* 1890 he is listed as John Malone Sexton with the Bombay Staff Corps – his last regiment being the 95th. The *Army List* 1890 gives his career as follows "Major General Sexton served through the Eastern Campaign of 1854-55 as Adjutant of the 25th Regiment from June 1855, including the battles of Alma, Inkerman, siege and fall of Sebastopol and sorties of 26th October (promoted to be Ensign, Medal with three Clasps, Knight of the Legion of Honour, and Turkish Medal). Served also in Indian Campaign of 1858-59 as Adjutant of the 95th, including the siege and capture of Kotah (accompanied the 3rd assaulting Column on 30th March as Staff Officer to Colonel Raines commanding), battle of Kota ke Serai (acted as Staff Officer to Colonel Raines commanding the Infantry, and mentioned in despatches), general action resulting in the capture of Gwalior (severely burnt by the explosion of powder while serving a gun captured from the enemy and turned on them, and mentioned in despatches), siege and capture of Pourie and surprise of the rebel camp at Koon-drye (Medal with Clasp)." He spent most of his career with the Bombay Staff Corps and was promoted to Major General on 10th December 1892. John J O'Brien Sexton, a Wing Officer to the 12th Bombay Native Infantry, previously with the Royal Dublin Fusiliers, who had reached the rank of Lieutenant in 1886, and by 1890 has only 14 years service, may be a son of John Malone Sexton, especially with the use of O'Brien as a middle name.
12. Anne O'Brien – is not identified
13. Walter Christopher Albert Blake Butler of Laurel House, Allhampton, Somerset, Indian State Railways (1862-69) born 25 September 1841, married 8 September 1869 Frances Agnes (died 21 March 1870), daughter of Myles O'Brien MD, of Newcastle W, County Limerick and dsp 24 April 1912. (Butler of Clare and Tipperary in *Burke's Irish Family Records*, 1976).
14. *The Church of Ireland Parish Register of Rathkeale* has many entries for the Leake family. There are four relevant burial entries:-  
13th May 1798: Mrs Ann Leake, wife of George Leake senr, of Rathkeale Abbey, Esq.,  
25th Dec 1804: George Leake, snr, of Rathkeale Abbey, Esq.,  
7th Oct 1820: Mrs Alice Leake, the

- wife of George, of Rathkeal (sic) Abbey, Esq.,  
28th May 1823: George Leake, Esq., late of Rathkeal Abbey, Esq.,
15. Hoskins – This family is of the Castle at Newcastle. The following newspaper extracts provide more family information:-  
*Ennis Chronicle*, Wednesday 5th January 1820: married by the Lord Bishop of Limerick at Newcastle Church, Thomas Henry Royle, Esq., to Margaret, daughter of Alexander Hoskins, Esq., of the Castle, Newcastle.  
*Limerick Chronicle*, Saturday 4th August 1821: Advert Whereas Mr Thomas Hoskins of the Castle of Newcastle, aged 16, was murdered between Abbeyfeale and Newcastle – a reward offered of £100 for information.  
*Clare Journal*, Monday 6th August 1821: died at Newcastle on Wednesday from the wounds he received on Friday sennight, W.E.Hoskins, junior, Esq., (Rosemary ffolliotts' Biographical Notices from Limerick, Ennis, Waterford and Clonmel Newspapers 1758-1821). The family are not listed as residing in the Castle (Pigot's Directory 1824) when the Right Honourable Lord Courtenay is shown as in residence although he may just have been the head landlord – the above two murders may have been instrumental for the line in the ditty that "Hoskins is going".
  16. See "Going of Munster" by Rev C.C. Ellison in *The Irish Ancestor*, Vol IX No 1 1977 pages 21-43.
  17. Charlie Ahearn is not identified.
  18. Thomas Phayer was an apothecary in Newcastle, also listed is Thomas Rawleigh, a painter and glazier, at Newcastle (*Pigot's Directory*, 1824). Phayre, Thos Raleigh, of Bridge Lane appears in the list of Physicians and Surgeons; also listed is Pierce (sic), John MD of Devon Square (*Slater's Directory*, 1846).
  19. There was a bad cholera epidemic in Ireland in 1832 but there were other outbreaks of cholera at other times so it is impossible to date this accurately.
  20. Major James Sullivan of Chesterfield, Newcastle (*Pigot's Directory*, 1824). James Sullivan JP, of Chesterfield (1778-1830) was a major in the 83rd Regt. He married Mary Anne, eldest daughter of Rev William Ashe, Prebendary and Rector of Croagh in the Diocese of Limerick. He was the uncle of Peppard Knight Sullivan (Sullivan of Tullilease in *Burke's Landed Gentry of Ireland*, 1912).
  21. Parish of Cloncagh, Barony of Connello Upper, County Limerick.
  22. Peppard Knight Sullivan was the 2nd son of John Sullivan (1765-1839) and Elizabeth, daughter of Christopher Knight of Brickfield, County Limerick.
  23. John Upton Esq., Ashgrove House, Newcastle (*Slater's Directory*, 1846).
  24. B. Plummer Esq., of Mount Plummer, Newcastle (Lewis 1837). This was Brudenell Plummer, eldest son of the Rev. Richard Plummer and Alice, daughter of Thomas Lloyd by his wife Elizabeth Fitzgerald, daughter of Thomas Fitzgerald, Knight of Glin (*Burke's Landed Gentry of Ireland* 1912).
  25. See "Bevan of Co. Limerick" by Brian de Breffny in *The Irish Ancestor* Vol VI No 1.1974. pages 1-6.
  26. The Registers of St Mary's Cathedral, Limerick, records the marriage on November 9th 1832 of Conyers D'Arcy and Eliza Maria Adams, by Licence. A notice of the marriage in *The Kerry Evening Post* 14th November 1832 states that Eliza Maria is the only child of Samuel Adams.
  27. This would appear to be Thomas Phillips Vokes, Police Magistrate for the city and county of Limerick in the early 1800s. The following newspaper extracts identify the Vokes family:-  
*Faulkners Dublin Journal* 24th January 1767: married in Limerick, Mr Thomas Vokes the younger, to Miss Susanna Phillips, sister to Stumbles Phillips of Mount Phillips, Co. Tipperary.  
*Limerick Chronicle* 26th December 1785: died last Thursday Mr Thomas Vokes, the elder, formerly an eminent merchant of this city. *The Cork Evening Post* 29th December 1785 gives his date of death as 22nd December, aged 75 years.  
*The Ennis Chronicle* January 1807: died a few days since Mrs Vokes, wife of Thomas Phillips Vokes of the county of Limerick and daughter of Richard Brew, Esq., of Clonkerry, Co Clare. The entry in the *Cork Mercantile Chronicle* records the date of death as 19th January 1807.  
Mr Vokes appears to have married again for the *Clare Journal* Monday 12 June 1809 has the following entry: married Wednesday last Thomas Philips (sic) Vokes Esq., to Miss Anne Walsh, 3rd daughter of Philip Walsh of this city and niece to Peter Walsh of Bellisle [normally Belline], in the county of Kilkenny. There are subsequent birth announcements for two sons and five daughters from this marriage. (Rosemary ffolliott's Biographical Notices from Limerick, Ennis, Waterford and Clonmel Newspapers 1758-1821).
  28. This statement, and note 26 above, identifies the probable writer of this memoir .  
Nicholas D'Arcy Esq., is shown as resident at Churchtown (*Pigot's Directory*, 1824). The prime suspect for authorship of this memoir would appear to be Nicholas Upton D'Arcy, son of Nicholas Conyers D'Arcy, Churchtown, County Limerick (Nicholas Upton D'Arcy listed as under 21; ed. Middleton College; aft. Father. M 1841 in *King's Inns Admissions Papers, 1607-1867*). Nicholas D'Arcy, Devon Street, Newcastle, is shown as an attorney (*Slater's Directory*, 1846).
  29. Townland of Churchtown, Barony of Glenquin, Parish of Newcastle, Co Limerick.
  30. Addison, Henry Robert. *Recollections of an Irish Police Magistrate*. Maxwell and Ward Lock. London circa 1862. This book is mainly set in Limerick and is mostly about Thomas Phillips Vokes.
  31. The Reverend Thomas Locke, Rector, is shown as resident at the Rectory, Newcastle (*Pigot's Directory*, 1824). In 1846 both Thomas Locke of Castleview, Esq., and the Rev. Thomas Locke of Devon Square are shown as residents in Newcastle (*Slater's Directory*, 1846). The Locke family produced at least two Rectors of Newcastle; The Rev Thomas Lock (sic), Rector of Newcastle, County Limerick (Prerogative Will of 1789) and the Rev Thomas Locke, 50 years Rector of this parish who died at Newcastle (*The Kerry Evening Post* 2nd January 1847).
  32. The pedigree of Lloyd of Limerick shows Edward Lloyd of Heathfield JP (born 1793) married first Mary Anne Taylor of Foynes, Co Limerick (died 1830) and had issue; he married secondly 1831 Anne, daughter of Rev Thomas Locke, Rector of Mahoonagh, and died 1867 having had issue by her as follows: - Thomas Edward Locke Lloyd (1838-1927), another son killed in a duel circa 1900, and a daughter Aphra Locke Lloyd born 1833. (*Burke's Irish Family Records*, 1976) *The Kerry Evening Post* 3rd August 1831 records the marriage of Rev. Edward Lloyd to Anne, eldest daughter of the Rev. Thomas Lock (sic), County Limerick.
  33. George Peirce not identified.
  34. *Waterford Herald*, Thursday 4th October 1792: married on Monday last at Castle Langford, Co Kerry, the Rev. Thomas Locke, Rector of Newcastle in the said co (sic) to Miss Aphra Langford, 3rd daughter of the late John Langford Esq., (Rosemary ffolliott's Biographical Notices from Limerick, Ennis, Waterford and Clonmel Newspapers, 1758-1821).
  35. The following Leahys appear as Newcastle merchants and tradesmen: Daniel Leahy, publican, Ellen Leahy, grocer, John Leahy, general dealer (*Pigot's Directory*, 1824)
  36. see note 9.
  37. Harnett, John, 1st son of William, Newcastle, County Limerick and Mary, otherwise Harnett, over 16, educated Newcastle, aft father. T 1814 (*Kings Inn Admission Papers 1607-1867*). John Harnett, Esq., is listed amongst the Newcastle Nobility, Gentry and Clergy (*Pigot's Directory*, 1824).
  38. Richard O'Gorman, the Young Irishlander, went on the run after the 1848 rebellion and eventually escaped to America, where he died in 1895.