

Grist to the Mill

The Newsletter of the Mills & Millers of Ireland



40 Autumn 2021

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The Society of Mills and Millers of Ireland was launched in 2001 to encourage and assist in the preservation and appreciation of mills as part of our industrial, architectural and landscape heritage. There are hundreds of mills and mill sites spread across the country and while many are beautifully refurbished or put to good use, there are also many others which could be restored or renovated while preserving their traditional context. The Society aims to promote interest and awareness in this aspect of Ireland's industrial heritage by building up knowledge and expertise in areas such as law, architecture, renewable energy and manufacturing and making information available through publications, lectures and events.

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Editorial

A fourth wave of Covid-19 has been mitigated by an effective vaccination programme. As the country slowly moves towards re-opening and while infection numbers are again rising, hospitalizations are currently proportionately less. The vaccines appear to be preventing much serious illness if not totally preventing transmission.

Increasingly we seem to hear of those concerned about ‘getting back to normal’, while the cycle of life, love and loss continues apace – loss, not only of loved ones passing, but of personal fun, freedom and fulfilment.

Our concerns probably should not be so much about getting back to the place where we have been, but about the new place where we’ve never been before - the new normal. While something is allowed, it does not mean it is always safe. Discretion, and the taking of personal responsibility is generally of greater value than the expectations of fuller Governmental clarifications.

Changing subjects, I recently came across a mantra, used in an era when there was little wasted, little dumped, and landfills were a rarity. Leftovers from meals were fed to hens and pigs, and clothes were handed down the line or repurposed. It read -

*“Use it up, wear it out,
Make it do, or do without”*

I thought it a pity to pass up on such a mantra, so I reworded it to reemphasise that we always need mill related articles and material for future Newsletters.

*“Ask about, seek one out,
Write it down, or do without”*

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Annual General Meeting, October 2021

The 2020 postponed AGM of Mills and Millers of Ireland took place in Bective Mill, County Meath, on 16 October last where our host was Oliver Delaney. A marquee erected on the banks of the River Boyne proved an ideal location for our meeting on a mild autumnal morning.

Acting Chairperson James Tallon welcomed members and thanked Ronan Jacob, outgoing Chair, for his service to the organisation over many years. Reports from the Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary were followed by the election of the 2021-2022 committee. Noel Killen, Ballydugan Mill, Downpatrick accepted the position of Chairperson, with John Lynch as Vice-Chair. The full committee list is on page 2 here. It is hoped that public events can be organised in the months ahead and the AGM has been a first step. The society's archive was discussed under AOB in response to recent donations, several members present highlighting the dearth of accommodation nationally for archives.



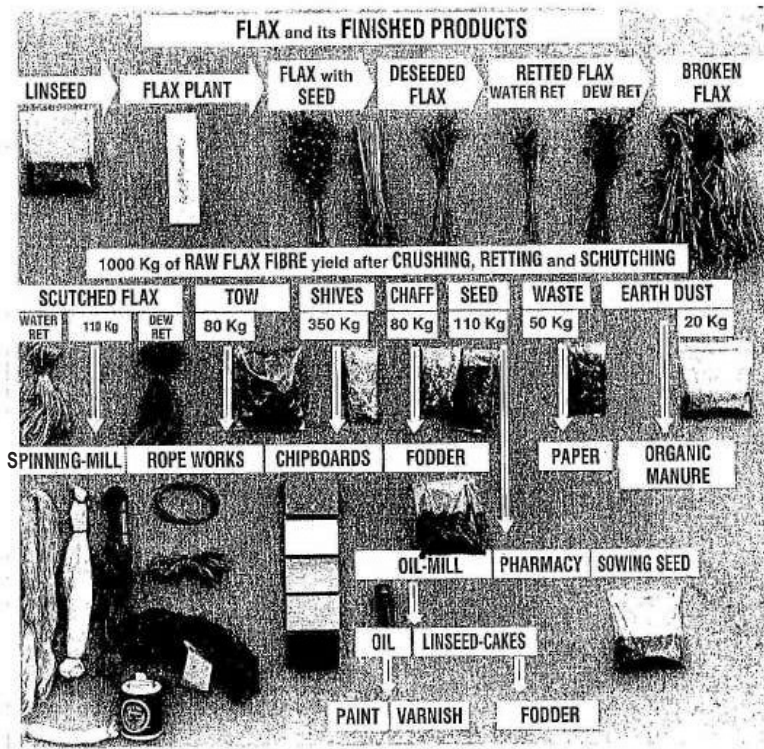
Thomas Carolan, LAWPRO, in action.

We were joined after the business of the AGM by Thomas Carolan, Community Water Officer with Midlands and East Local Authorities, on behalf of LAWPRO, the Local Authority Waters Programme which is a national shared service

working on behalf of the 31 local authorities in Ireland. Thomas described the work of LAWPRO, which is coordinating the response of Local Authorities in the context of River Basin Management Plans as part of the EU Water Framework Directive. One of the themes of that response is working with communities and Thomas outlined his role supporting communities and stakeholders to get involved in caring for rivers, lakes and other water bodies and he shared some easy-to-do ways of monitoring water quality. A remit of LAWPRO is to encourage community-led water related initiatives and projects for which a certain amount of funding is available. The website is well worth a visit: www.lawaters.ie.

Flax and its Finished Products

In Newsletters 38 and 39 two Articles were carried on the flax scutching Mill at Lough Eyes, Lisbellaw, Co. Fermanagh - Part I on its history and context while Part II addressed the survey that was carried out. As an addendum the chart below on Flax and its Finished Products is of interest.



Source: Bert Dewilde, author and founder of the National Flax, Lace & Linen museum in Kortrijk, Belgium

While the quality of the image may not be the best it still provides insight. The table uses average numbers. With selected varieties for example the amount of scutched flax can be 130 kg and with seed flax the amount of linseed can be 10 kg higher.

The numbers in the table only total 800 kg. The difference can be explained by the fact that in water retting the flax loses 20% of its weight as a result of the dissolved gums. In dew retting this loss only amounts to 16%, but the amount of seed loss can be higher.

Werth Tower Windmill –

Thorsten Huebers -Germany

The old tower windmill in Werth (Turmwindmühle Werth) is one of the oldest existing mills in Germany, close to today's border with The Netherlands. In 1260 there is the first mentioning of the knights of Werth. In 1318 the castle was mentioned for the first time, but it is believed that the castle was already there earlier. Werth was an independent regime at the border between the prince-bishopric Münster (Westphalia) and the dutchy of Kleve (Rhineland).



Werth mill from the River Issel

Werth was built as a border town, including the castle, between Westphalia and Rhineland and was granted town privileges in 1426. Here there was a bridge crossing the river Issel – a valuable source of revenue.

The mill is located near the river Issel in the style of a brick tower mill (Dutch Windmill) with a wooden gallery and a tower built from stone. Originally this was defense tower, as part of the fortress of the formerly independent town of Werth. In the past there was a secret

underground passage that ran from the castle towards the defense tower, now the windmill.

Later the tower was converted into a grain mill. While it's not exactly clear when this conversion was carried out, there is a painting (an altarpiece c1480) by Derick Baegert (c1440-c1515), now on display in the Landsmuseum in Münster, which appears to show a picture of the mill in Werth. The mill has an almost completely preserved drive and grinder from 1554.

According to dendrochronology, based on analysis of the Werth mill beams, the trees for these beams were cut in 1529. To put this date into context, these beams were part of a functioning mill at the time when Anne of Cleves (Kleve), the Duke of Juliers-Kleve's sister, became Henry VIII's fourth wife and Queen of England in 1539.

A watermill and a horsemill have been operated close to the windmill in the past as well. The watermill appears to have been less than effective due to the Issel's water levels and appears to have been abandoned around 1650.

The brick, conical windmill tower has six floors with a cap height of around 23 meters. You can still see the purpose of a defending tower in the thickness of the walls and of the existences of arrow slits in the lower part of the tower.



East side - ground floor entrance and external stairs to second floor



Arrowslit exhibiting wall thickness and oblique angle of cutaway to increase the defender's field of vision

The boat-shaped canopy is turned into the wind by two mechanical constructions in order to rotate the cap with the blades into the right position. The windmill was driven with sail gate blades.



External stairs to main milling floor

The second floor of the mill (main milling floor) could be entered via an external staircase (fortified tower). The first floor was mainly used for storage in the past. Around 1900 perhaps 1910, preparations were made to install an electric motor in the foundation of the first floor. This motor was

supposed to drive an additional grinding gear. Some years later a diesel engine was installed. In 1964 the mill's grinding activity was discontinued.



Drive to turn the mill cap

The inside of the mill still has most of the original components. The lift for the flour sacks is driven by wind as well. It can lift the sacks from the carriage to the upper floors. At the second floor you can still find the original grain elevator that was installed in a later stage, to lift the grain to the milling floor. The still existing and operational crank of the millstone shows



Gearing at the top level

impressively Newton's law. An eight-year-old child could lift up the 1.6-ton millstone easily.



Johann Radstaak supervising Luthien and Connor Huebers on the millstone crank

In recent years the mill has been restored. It got a new wooden gallery and new blades. Two of the old blades were blown away during a storm. To avoid a repeat of this in the future the main beams were now made of steel. For the future it is planned to make the mill operational again, if this is possible, in accordance with the monument protection rules.

Special thanks to Johann Radstaak, a grandson of the last Turmwindmühle Werth miller, and now one of the three trained millers for this mill, who gave my family and me a great tour through the mill and its history.

News from Mill Societies

Stephanie Bourke



Sussex Mills Group

www.sussexmillsgroup.org.uk

Tivoli Mill, Silverhill, St Leonard's has been researched by Bob Wilcock as part of his forthcoming publication, 'The Millers of Hastings; their lives and their mills'. July 2021 Newsletter no. 191 from the Sussex Mills group contains an abridged abstract from the book. The cover of no.191 is a striking image of Lurgashall Watermill, which was relocated in the early 1980s to the Weald and Downland Museum. Lucy Hockley is the author of a piece on 40 years of milling at the museum in which she praises the contribution of the many volunteers who keep the mill machinery in working order. In the October newsletter, Chairman Philip Hicks gives his opinion on the many difficulties brought about by Covid-19; the Group will not return to public meetings or events until 2022. Sections on news from mills around the county in both newsletters describe how individual owners or volunteer groups have responded to the changed circumstances. Sussex Mills group newsletters, like *Grist to the Mill*, feature news from other mill societies. In newsletter 191, *Grist* no. 39 gets a warm mention from Bob Bonnett who writes this column, and in particular the articles 'Colony to Capital', contributed by Michael Tedge.



Cymdeithas Melinau Cymru/Welsh Mills Society (WMS)

www.welshmills.org

John Crompton, from the WMS committee sends their quarterly newsletter to us and the July and October 2021 issues have landed over the last months. WMS held a spring meeting on zoom in April and we in MMOI were invited to join that event. We heard from Polly Davies, Slade Farm Organics, Glamorgan, which supplies grain in bulk and in smaller quantities to millers and members of WMS, such as Emma Williams, Chair of WMS who also spoke at the event. The third speaker was Richard Hayman, an independent heritage consultant, who shared his knowledge of the Listing process and of mill buildings which have been considered for Listed status. The spring meeting also produced a new vision statement for the society; a statement of what WMS offers to members and a new logo, the latter produced digitally by newsletter editor, Dafydd Wiliam. The furrows on the millstone, which is overlaid by an outline map of Wales, have become wider to facilitate use on different types of social media platforms. An article on Talgarth Mill, Powys, which ceased functioning in 1980, describes the community restoration project which allowed the mill to reopen in 2011, bringing social and economic gains and breathing new life into the town. The October issue announces the AGM for 23 October via zoom and includes the regular items of news from mills and mills for sale.

PS MMOI was delighted to participate in a July event on zoom for WMS. Michael Madigan and Marcus Sweeney were the volunteers; Michael spoke on the subject of GE Gas Turbines, with some initial comparisons to Wind/Water wheels and Marcus on Fancroft Mill, Past and Future.



TIMS International Molinology (IM) No.102, June 2021
www.molinology.org

The front cover image on International Molinology (IM) no 102, June 2021, features the restored Upminster Windmill in the London Borough of Havering. The inside front cover carries a reproduction of V. Van Gogh's 1887 oil on canvas of 'Rue à Montmartre', Paris and shows the 'moulin à poivre' or pepper mill, one of the three windmills which then stood overlooking the City, at Montmartre. The painting was sold for €13m at a Sotheby's auction in March 2021. Six original papers are published in no 102: Grain Mills in Dakhla Oasis, Egypt; the Bohnsdorf Post mill, Berlin; a 19th saw-mill in Greece; Tide mills of Portugal; the Perg (Austria) millstone industry and a satellite survey of horizontal-wheeled watermills of the Shetland Isles. Also in no 102 is a contribution by Etienne Rogier on a 16th century publication, written in baroque Latin by Jérôme Cardan. The work is titled: *De Rerum Varietate*. Book XXII, chapter X, *Elementorum Artificia, & Molendina venti* and is a rare ancient text on windmills and includes a drawing of a post-mill.



FDMF Federation of French Mills *Le Monde des Moulins*
www.fdmf.fr

Historical essays feature in each edition of *Le Monde des Moulins*. David Redon and Philippe Rallion are co-authors of an article on the transition to industrialisation of mills on two rivers in the Dordogne Basin, the Isle and the Dronne. Mills dating to the 15th century were transformed in the 19th century to disappear as working mills in the 20th century. In the October issue, Willem Van Bergen, who is the current Presidents of TIMS, contributes on Sugar Mills. The front cover of no 78, October 2021 is of a windmill sugar mill on the island of Guadeloupe, from a 19th engraving. If you are planning a visit to France at some point, a mill for making brushes in the Oise region north of Paris might well be worth a visit. The Moulin Brosserie Saint Félix can be dated to the 16th century and formed part of the one of the Abbeys at Beauvais. From the late 19th century, the mill produced brushes, beginning with tooth-brushes, hair-brushes and for shoes. The Mill is opened from May to October each year thanks to volunteers. www.moulin-musee-brosserie.fr FDMF member associations continue to engage in the discussion around the EU Water Directive and how to bring about improved water quality; restore fish life, preserve wetlands and the consequences for mill owners in particular. When considering the need to restore the quality of water courses, are mills, weirs a factor and can multiple interests be accommodated.

NB Newsletters and Journals received are conserved in the MMOI archive, Fancroft Mill, Tipperary and over time will be available to members and researchers.

Mill Music: Folk Songs of the Mills

Part 1: Mills as Inspiration

Niamh Madigan

Introduction

“Do you know any tunes about mills?”

Little did I know, when I sent that message to my banjo teacher, that I was starting on a voyage of discovery, one that would take me from Irish country towns, to industrialised England and Scotland, to the cotton mills of America.

I love folk music – music of the folk, of the people. It expresses and gives insight into a way of life, connecting me to people and bringing their experiences to life for me in a way that no history book can. Mills are full of people – people who own them, people who use them, people who work in them, people whose lives are impacted by their presence and by their absence. With so many people, I reasoned, there must also be mill folk songs, and I set out to learn more about them. I’ve divided what I have learned into three sections.

Part 1: Mills as Inspiration discusses songs and tunes which feature the mill or the people who inhabit it as the subject.

Part 2: Mill Working Songs discusses songs sung by mill workers to help them work together and enliven their working day.

Part 3: Mill Life discusses songs which describe how people’s lives were affected by the mill, either while it was there, or after it was gone.

Music, of course, is meant to be heard. I have included footnotes for each song which include, if possible, a location where you can hear it and links to lyrics and sheet music. I encourage you to listen, and even sing or play, and carry on the tradition of mill music.

Part 1: Mills as Inspiration

The mill plays an important role in Irish history. We have archaeological evidence of grain-rubbers and querns or hand-mills from ancient Ireland, and some manuscripts credit the first watermill in Ireland to the King Cormac mac Art (reigned AD 254 to 277) who commissioned the construction of a mill at Lismullin (the ‘fort of the mill’) near Tara.¹ Certainly, from around the fifth century, watermills were in general use throughout Ireland, and were an important factor in daily life.

In the 17th century, Ireland’s industrial revolution resulted in an expansion – indeed, almost an explosion – of grain stores, flour mills, and linen and cotton mills across the country, close to the crops that supplied them.²

Mills continue to play an important role in modern society, both as a source of historical information about our past and as the source technology for renewable energy such as wind and hydro power. Ireland’s 250 wind farms accounted for 85% of renewable electricity generated in 2018, and Ireland had the second largest share of wind energy after Denmark³. As mills historically used transformed wind and water to power to drive millstones and heavy equipment, the latter seems like a particularly fitting transition.

With such an impact on the lives of the Irish people, the folk, it is hardly surprising to see a cultural impact too. As P.W. Joyce notes, “Mills and millers are mentioned in the oldest Irish literature”⁴ and many traditional Irish tunes are named after mills or millers - *The Mills are Grinding*⁵, *Hall's Mill*⁶,

¹ P.W. Joyce, Corn Mills and Querns in Ancient Ireland, From A Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland, 1906:

<https://www.libraryireland.com/SocialHistoryAncientIreland/III-XXI-1.php>

² The Irish Times, 2015, “Ireland’s industrial heritage: the past you might not know we had”: <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/ireland-s-industrial-heritage-the-past-you-might-not-know-we-had-1.2324451>

³ SEAI, <https://www.seai.ie/data-and-insights/seai-statistics/key-statistics/renewables/>

⁴ P.W. Joyce, Corn Mills and Querns in Ancient Ireland, From A Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland, 1906:

<https://www.libraryireland.com/SocialHistoryAncientIreland/III-XXI-1.php>

⁵ <https://www.itma.ie/digital-library/score/roche-vol-1-140>; The Mills are Grinding (Reel): https://youtu.be/QcdZNc8HC_Y

⁶ <https://www.itma.ie/digital-library/score/pw-joyce-old-irish-folk-music-532>

*In Came the Miller*⁷, *The Miller of Drone*⁸, *Jem the Miller*⁹ and *The Lass of Patty's Mill*¹⁰ to name a few.

I am particularly charmed by a tune called *The Dusty Miller*¹¹, a bouncy dance in $\frac{3}{4}$ time. The second half of the tune (known as the turn), contains rising scales that evoke, to me, the clouds of rising flour dust surrounding the titular miller as he dances. A caveat: it is possible that it refers to the alternative name for the plant Silver Ragwort or *Senecio cineraria*, but I prefer my interpretation!

The Miller

As we turn to song, we see the miller emerge as a character archetype – a typical character that represents specific actions, nuances, and characteristics. This works as a shorthand for songwriters and singers to build a narrative, allowing them to communicate a lot of information in a short time.

The archetypal miller is the villain in folktales or folk songs. Millers are often linked with thievery, greed, and general wickedness¹². We see this in *The Two Sisters* (also known as *The Twa Sisters*, *The Cruel Sister*, *The Wind and Rain*, *Dreadful Wind and Rain* and many other names) that dates back at least to the mid-seventeenth century. An interesting twist on the traditional murder ballad, it features a miller as a (somewhat) innocent victim, wrongly hanged for the murder a woman killed by her sister, due to his greed. The song tells of a younger sister drowned by her elder sister out of jealousy. The victim floats downstream until she comes to “the miller's dam”. The miller pulls her out, steals her gold ring, and pushes her back in

⁷ <https://www.itma.ie/digital-library/score/pw-joyce-old-irish-folk-music-709>

⁸ https://www.itma.ie/digital-library/score/grier_ms_bk_02_150; Mari Black & Troy MacGillivray - *The Miller of Drone*, Sandy Cameron, Squirmy's - Acadia Trad 2019: <https://youtu.be/KSHczuSKBwc>

⁹ <https://www.itma.ie/digital-library/score/pw-joyce-old-irish-folk-music-163>; Máire O'Keeffe | *Jem the Miller* ; *The Piper's Wife*: <https://youtu.be/4K4aB9zOtvC>

¹⁰ *The Lass of Patty's Mill*:

https://scores.itma.ie/goodman_vol_2/goodman_vol_2_pdf/goodman_vol_2_118.pdf

¹¹ *The Lass of Patie's Mill*: <https://youtu.be/XPWa9ScCVCA>

¹² <https://www.itma.ie/digital-library/score/hime-4>; *The Chieftans*, *The Dusty Miller*: <https://youtu.be/jUTliqsMZ0g>

¹² Ben Parsons, “Trouble at the Mill: Madness, Merrymaking, and Milling”, *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2018.

again. The song implies that the ring becomes evidence for an accusation of murder against the miller, and he is hanged for the crime. In some versions the elder sister gets away with murder, while in others she is discovered and punished.

We also see the greedy miller in *The Miller's Three Sons*¹³. On his deathbed, a miller asks each of his three sons how much flour they will take from the grain brought to the mill by farmers to be ground. The eldest says he will take a quarter and the middle a half. The miller calls them fools and tells them "Thou has not well learnt thy trade". The youngest, replies "Before I will a good living lack, I'll take it all and forswear the sack" and inherits the mill.

Where did this this resentment and suspicion of greed stem from? Mills and mill-owners have historically been in a position of comparative power in their community, and as such were often oppressors of the poor. In *From A Smaller Social History of Ancient Ireland*, P.W. Joyce notes, "mill-owners who ground the corn of the people for pay looked on the use of querns [hand-mills] with great dislike, as taking away customers. Quern-grinding by the poorer people was regarded as a sort of poaching; and where the mill belonged to the landlord, he usually gave orders to his miller to break all the querns he could find; so that the people had to hide them much as they hide a still nowadays."

Joyce describes laws in Scotland and England between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, compelling the poor people to abandon querns for watermills, all in the interests of landlords and other rich persons. It may not be much revenge, but perhaps hanging a miller in song was cathartic for their customers!

Another murder ballad is *The Cruel Miller*¹⁴ (also known as *Ekefield/Ikefield Town*, *Hanged I Shall Be*, *The Prentice Boy*, *The Oxford Tragedy*, *The Oxford/Wexford Girl* and other names), which tells the tale of a "prentice to a mill" who promises to marry a girl and subsequently murders her. Murder

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Miller%27s_Three_Sons; Jackie Oates -The Miller and His Three Sons - Songs From The Shed: <https://youtu.be/OmO6546JVSE>

¹⁴ http://mysongbook.de/msb/songs/r_clarke/cruelmil.htm; <https://mainlynorfolk.info/lloyd/songs/theoxfordtragedy.html>; Jon Boden & The Remnant Kings perform "The Prentice Boy" at Cecil Sharp House on 23/06/11: <https://youtu.be/FyMiXR3EHQc>

ballads are a subgenre of the traditional ballad (a song that tells a story) form dealing with a crime or a gruesome death. These were usually based on or inspired by real events – *The Cruel Miller* is suspected to be based on events in Oxford in the 17th century – and so we could think of them as the tabloids of the day, full of juicy gossip about infamous characters!

There is also a connection in folksong between milling and madness. Ben Parsons' article "Trouble at the Mill: Madness, Merrymaking, and Milling" contains many examples of this connection – "mad millers can be found in popular poetry from the late fifteenth century, with "My Ladyes Water Myll" (ca. 1500) and the climax of the Mylner of Abyngton (ca. 1533)".¹⁵ In *The Lusty Miller's Recreation*¹⁶ (17th century), a girl tries to dissuade her mother from visiting a miller by telling her that he is "wild" and "distracted".

All in all, the miller of folk song is not someone you'd like to meet!

The Miller's Daughter

Child of the "wealthy miller", celebrated in poetry by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, the miller's daughter is an object of love and desire. Her charm and beauty are praised in songs like *The Queen of Sion Mills*¹⁷ ("I'm going to tell you all about a charming maid of mine") and *The Flower of Corby's Mill*¹⁸ ("It's all in praise of a pretty maid I'm going to use my quill / She's the blooming Rose of Antrim and the flower of Corby's Mill").

We can speculate that as, as her father would have money, she could afford finer clothing than some other women in the area, and possibly may have had fewer manual chores so could take more care over her appearance. Perhaps, as the daughter of a wealthy businessman, she held a position in society just high enough to symbolise social advancement, but not so high as to cause trouble for her admirers (as may be the case with a lord's daughter).

From *The Taming of the Shrew* to *Mean Girls*, popular entertainment loves to show a proud woman humbled. We see this in mill songs too – *The Miller's*

¹⁵ Ben Parsons, "Trouble at the Mill: Madness, Merrymaking, and Milling", *The Chaucer Review*, vol. 53, no. 1, 2018.

¹⁶ See footnote 15.

¹⁷ https://www.itma.ie/digital-library/sound/queen_of_sion_mills_george_peoples

¹⁸ https://www.itma.ie/digital-library/sound/flower_of_corbys_mill_paddy_hegarty

*Daughter*¹⁹ begins with a “cold and proud” maid who mocks and scorns the love of a fisher-lad, only to find herself alone and “not so youthful as of yore.”

The Mill Itself

When the mill itself is referenced in song, it is often evoking an emotion – nostalgia for a past love, for example, as in *The Old Rustic Bridge by the Mill*²⁰, or for days of youth as in *The Old Threshing Mill*²¹. *Cloghamon Mill*²² celebrates the building of a mill, the “magnificent structure of divine architecture”. *Belfast Mill*²³, recorded by The Fureys and Davey Arthur, is a version of a song first written about the closure of Aragon Mill in Georgia, USA. It describes the changes to the town resulting from the mill closure and the fear and uncertainty of a worker who is “too old to work and...too young to die”.

I wondered whether I could find a modern folk song inspired by a wind farm. Alas, so far the best I have discovered is a YouTube video of what a wind farm in Tasmania would sound like with normal background noises²⁴. If there are any songwriters amongst the Mills and Millers of Ireland, I invite you to provide your contributions!

Though the mill and its inhabitants provided a rich cast of characters for mill music, it was more than merely a source of inspiration, but also a venue for performance. I’ll explore that in more detail in *Part 2: Mill Working Songs*.

Acknowledgements

I received help and information from many people while writing this article. I’d particularly like to thank Anne Altringham, Barry Parsons, Bridget McVennon-Morgan and Margaret Bradshaw for their assistance in identifying mill-related folk songs.

¹⁹One version recorded by Frank Patterson can be heard here:

<https://youtu.be/kPu5u3RL0g0>

²⁰ The Old Rustic Bridge by the Mill: <https://youtu.be/eA4eHvIiO1o>

²¹ https://www.itma.ie/digital-library/sound/old_threshing_mill_johnny_collins

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloghamon_Mill

²³ Fureys and Davey Arthur : Belfast Mill: <https://youtu.be/Jme-IatH5tQ>

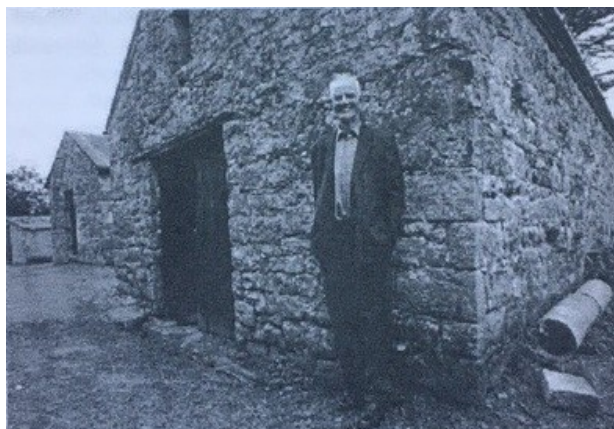
²⁴ The sound of wind farms: https://youtu.be/v-sUDSwsE_w

Memories of a Miller*

Malachy Canning

To be a miller, I believe it must be in your blood, because as far back as 1775, Loughlin Canning, my great great grandfather had this mill and kiln erected. It was from this that my great grandfather, my grandfather, my father and myself kept this mill running until it closed down in 1966. My first and most memorable day in the mill was the occasion when our kilnman, Jack Cassels, RIP, carried me into the mill – I was just 4 years old. From that day onwards, from Sept until March, I started my work in the mill.

My first duty was to unlock the doors and it was always the practice to have a prayer said before work started. My instructions to the kilnman were to light the fire and have the oats drying while I was getting the mill ready for work.

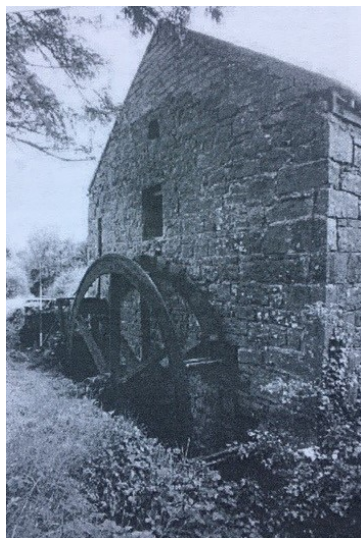


Malachy Canning outside his cornmill, Co. Leitrim

My next job was to have the sluice gate lifted to fill the mill race and get the wheel turning. I also had a helper with me and he filled the oats into the hopper. Next I put the on the belt and set the stones for shelling the oats. I then lifted the sluice at the wheel and it started turning.

Back to the hopper to lift the little wooden 'shoot' on its face and the grain starts to run down the sieve and down between the stones. This is where the experience of the miller comes in and it is vital that he checks the shelling to see if he has to make a change or must he rest the stone. I instruct my helper in what he has to do to fill the shelling into bags. Before I leave the mill I check to see that everything is ok – now out to the kiln to see how the oats are drying and have a word with the kilnman to see if he needs help as there is always an agreement between us to work together.

Here comes a tractor load of bags of oats. I step back into the mill to get my mill book and check with the driver what he has and requires. He has 6 bags of oats for 4 different farmers. I check the bags and at the same time I am listening to the stroke of the ‘damsel’ – that is how I know the mill is milling correctly. The tractor driver comes into the mill with me and I explain to him when I want the turf to have their oats dried and roughly when they will have their oatmeal. My first farmers’s oats are now shelled and I now start again for the next customer.



Waterwheel at Canning's Mill

It is now time to have a meal break but the mill continues to work. Here comes another customer to collect his oatmeal that is ready for him. I explain to him the outcome of the work I did for him, and he feels good and this leaves me happy. He pays his bill and is loaded up and off he goes. After the ‘shelling’ is finished, I stop the mill to get the belts on for grinding. The helper fills the ‘shelling’ into the hopper and I now set the stone for grinding. Again, turn on the water to the wheel, lift the hopper shoot to let the grain run down to the stones via the sieve and the mill is grinding. I now have to go downstairs to check the meal to see if it is fine or course and depending on the result I may have to reset the stone. I was always particular about the cleanliness of the bags that the oatmeal went into, as it was for human consumption. Once one man’s work was completed you would start for the next person and hope to get it finished reasonably early. Then comes the fun of carrying the oats into the mill for the next day’s work – all the boys that were around the yard competing to see which of them would be able to carry the heaviest sack. It is great to get home to see my wife Lena and children. Goodnight – tomorrow is another day.

* *This is a reprint from our very first MMOI Newsletter, April 2002, to commemorate two decades as an active organization, and the commencement of the next.*

Sultana Cake

It has been a while since we featured a recipe – and for those of you who do not like icing or marzipan this is the recipe for you. This cake has proven pedigree and has graced many tables over the years. I cannot disclose how this recipe came into the family, but it is a family favourite, passed down and it conjures up many cherished memories in its making as well as its eating. It works as a cake for Christmas or throughout the year. It's versatile too and when well wrapped holds for months but make sure it has been well cooled first. It can even be eaten directly from the freezer when it has been pre-sliced and separated.

Ingredients:

- plain flour: 22 oz or 624 gms
- self-raising flour: 4 oz or 114 gms
- castor sugar: 1 lb or 454 gms
- butter: 1 lb or 454 gms
- ground almonds: 4 oz or 114 gms
- sultanas: 2½ lbs or 1.14 kg
- eggs: 12 eggs
- whiskey/brandy: 1 glass - 2 oz or 60 mls
- cake tin: 10" round or 9" square (25.4 cm or 23 cm).



Method:

- Line the cake tin in advance so its not an issue on the day. This includes a brown paper and greaseproof inner liner inside the tin sides and base with an additional newsprint wrapping externally tied outside the tin as shown.
- Soak the sultanas for a few days in advance and add more alcohol to the mix when making the cake. Soaking the fruit in advance is a critical factor!



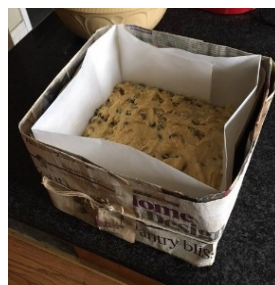
Brown paper and grease proof inner lining

- The cake is made using the creaming method, so cream the butter and err on the over creaming versus the under creaming side.
- Add the sugar and continue creaming.
- Mix in a tablespoon of the flour into the pre-soaked sultanas and stir in well – this to coat the sultanas and so stop them sinking in the cooking.
- Mix the plain and self-raising flours together and set aside.
- Add the eggs, one by one, beating well after each addition so to incorporate air into the mix.
- After adding a number of eggs add the flour sparingly (to inhibit curdling) after each subsequent egg – continue to add the flour little by little until all consumed. Do this either by the mixers speed adjustment or by folding in by hand in one or two lots.
- Then add in the ground almonds & fold in.
- Finally add the pre-soaked fruit & fold in.
- Do not forget to add in that extra dash of alcohol now for taste and preservation purposes.
- Pour into the pre-lined cake tin and level the mix.
- Place into pre-heated oven at Gas mark 2/150 deg C /130 deg Fan for 3½ to 4 hours.

Options are possible – the above mix also makes 3 x 1kg loaves in 3 x 8” (20 cm) rectangular tins – cooking time would then change to 1½ to 1¾ hours.



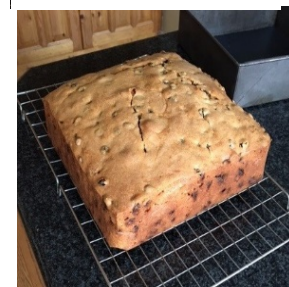
Mix in pre-lined tin



Outer lining tied in place



Cooked



MMOI Matters – Acknowledgements

MMOI has recently been gifted two important sets of documents for which it is most grateful – MMOI is proud of its substantial archive and the addition of the following two collections will enhance its breadth and depth for future reference. Further detail of the archive is available via the following link <https://www.millsofireland.org/archive>

The Conlon files

The MMOI acknowledges receipt of a body of work, gifted by Mrs. Grainne Conlon to the Society. The works are those of her late husband, Micheál, who upon his retirement delved into various forms of historical research that continued over the next 25 years. Micheál supported the MMOI from its inception.

Initially piqued by the lack of available information on an 1832 event in Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath, he set about discovering the facts and their context. The interest in mills followed. A keen genealogist and historian, Grainne recalls that their Sunday drives invariably ended up in either a cemetery or a mill site. They combined their respective talents and vision in pursuit of the mission. Mill sites where there was no longer a stone to be found, fuller detailed research followed to validate and document. Overall, the files contain documented information on approximately 250 mills of his Co. Westmeath.

The files show Micheál's research led him to Griffith's Valuation, OS Maps, Larkin's Map of 1808 and contemporary newspapers. He consulted deeper sources of information such as the Priory of Tristernagh 1181-1300AD, Inquisitions of Charles 1, Elizabeth 1 and James 1, Piers Chorological Description of Westmeath, 1682, the Royal Canal Papers of 1806 with details of mill owners awarded compensation for the loss of water rights at the time the canal was built, the papers and writings of John Buchanan 1185-1960 held in Longford and Westmeath County Library.

These files provide a comprehensive insight into the mills of Co. Westmeath and a valued asset in the MMOI's archives for which the MMOI is most grateful.

The Shackleton Ledgers and Journals

The MMOI also acknowledges receipt of 79 ledgers and journals recently gifted by Jonathan Shackleton to the Society for its archives, and for which the MMOI is most grateful. These books are beautifully part leather bound, and their spines titled with gold block print.

These ledgers and journals are associated with the Anna Liffey and Grange Mills, Lucan, Co. Dublin as follows –

Anna Liffey Mill Ledgers (1st Series):

19 Ledgers numbered 11 to 29 from 1886 to 1904

Anna Liffey Mill Ledgers (2nd Series):

Ledgers numbered 1 to 30 (1904-1933); 36(1939/40);
47(1947)

Letter Books numbered:

2-7 (Oct 1910-Jul 1914); 9-16 (Oct 1914-Jul 1918);
22-23 (Oct 1921-Jun 1923); 26(Oct 1924-Jul 1925);
42-43 (Mar 1936-Sep 1937).

Anna Liffey Time Books – (Lists of employees):

1. 5th June 1924 – 19th Nov 1925
2. 30th Nov 1934 – 15th Oct 1936
3. 21st Jan 1943 – 19th Nov 1945

Anna Liffey Day Books:

1. Jan 1933 – Jul 1936
2. Apr 1964 – Apr 1972
3. Apr 1967 – Feb 1972
4. Feb 1972 – Jun 1978

Grange Mills Day Book:

1. Mar 1964 – Apr 1967



Typical sample of the Ledgers and Journals

Mill Matters

- Water-Power Valuation

In mills and manufacturing facilities that used water-power, it was necessary to obtain its value, and to add it to that of the buildings. I am indebted to William Hogg, who provided me a copy of the relevant section of Griffith's Instructions to Valuers he received courtesy of a Director of the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). On reading the document I suspect Valuers must have been welcomed, by those to be assessed, with the same enthusiasm as a visit from Revenue would today.

The valuation process assessed three areas within the overall valuation –

- i) the nature of the water supply
- ii) the type and configuration of the waterwheel, and
- iii) the equipment operation and condition, its scale and location

Simply put, the Valuation was a calculated number for the water-power consumed through the waterwheel by the facility, the product of multiple calculations and qualifiers. Water-power (the amount of water) was generally estimated in horsepower (itself a defined unit) and defined as the capacity to produce a mechanical effect per minute. It is determined by i) *the mean velocity* of the stream; ii) *the section of water* (the breadth by the depth of water in the trough to the wheel) and iii) *the fall* (perpendicular distance from the centre of water delivered to the level of the wheels lower periphery. From velocity and section, the volume of water discharged is calculated and so its weight derived. Weight discharged per minute, multiplied by its fall, provides the power available expressible in horsepower.

Now power available is not power applied (consumed) - a Modulus is applied to address the type of waterwheel: – overshot, 0.75; undershot, 0.33; breast shot with buckets, 0.65; breast shot with boards, 0.55. To clarify, if 4 horsepower is available then the useful effect of an overshot wheel would be 3 hp, while for an undershot wheel it would be 1.32 hp.

Other factors too had to be considered and applied, as the Valuation Act stipulated that the water-power be only valued in so far as it can be actually used. Consequently, there were tables for operation hours/day and months/year for areas where water might become scarce. Mill equipment and millstone conditions were also to be assessed for condition and capability – new, medium, old. There was also a Value Added Tax table, applied on a sliding scale, for the mill's location to the size of a market (city vs town) or its distance in miles from a market.

Castlegrace, its Mill and Enterprise

Michael Madigan

It's not often that a mill is brought to market together with an estate that includes a 13th century Norman castle in a spectacularly beautiful landscape.

In May 2021 national newspapers and websites¹ carried Castlegrace – one of those rare yet quintessentially Irish country estates that included not only the Georgian main house but also the ruins of a Norman castle, a mill with its own hydroelectrics, a mill house, a gate lodge adjacent to the mill, over 2 km in fishing rights and 120 acres of pasture and orchards. The estate has been in the Grubb family for 200 years.

Castlegrace is so called from the ruins of the 12th century Anglo-Norman castle built by the Norman Raymond Le Gros, son-in-law of Strongbow, on the banks of the river previously known as the Ountearr, now shortened to the Tar, a tributary of the River Suir. Although a ruin, the Castle's outer walls are still remarkably intact as the image shows.



13th century Norman castle

Castle Le Gros in time evolved to Castlegrace including its lands, and had at different times, up to 2,000 acres that ran from the Golden Vale's lush pastures up into the north face of the Knockmealdown Mountains.

The first Grubb family came to Ireland in 1656 - John Grubbe (1620-1695) an anabaptist preacher from Ravensthorpe, Northamptonshire, and soldier in Cromwell's New Model Army in the English civil war, was rewarded for his services with a castle in Co. Kilkenny just a few miles from New Ross. Later he embraced Quakerism, or to be more correct became a member of The Society of Friends. After the death of his first wife, when he remarried, he dropped the 'e' on Grubbe. They had one son, John Grubb (1682-1731) who, through circumstances, found his way towards Clonmel. It was his son Joseph Grubb (1709-1782) who became the miller of Clonmel, and the builder of the Grubb family fortunes.

It should not be forgotten that the exclusions of the Penal Laws of that time also affected non-conformist sects, including the Quakers. Consequently, many Quakers entered ‘wholesome’ businesses where they were known and respected for the probity, including the milling and brewing industries.

Joseph’s youngest (and 7th) son Samuel (1750-1815) was a corn and butter merchant in Clonmel. As the Grubbs prospered and multiplied several concerns bubbled up to cause Samuel to up roots and move to Clogheen – there was a limit to the number of mills the Grubbs could own and viably operate in Clonmel; the unsettling foreign news of activities in USA, France and England; internal Quaker discord; local discontent among workers; but most significantly it was the impact of the measures to counter the rebellion of 1798 that directly impacted Samuel and his family - when their family French tutor was falsely accused and publicly flogged to near death, without trial, on unverified information.

The late 18th/early 19th century was an especially prosperous time in Ireland and particularly in the Clonmel and Clogheen areas, particularly prior to the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815. Grain was in great demand and bounties were paid per sack delivered to Dublin. At their peak, the Grubbs had up to five of the seven mills in operation in Clogheen town and neighbourhood which were worked by fourteen waterwheels.

From 1800-1815 Samuel settled in Clashleigh, Clogheen and here he began establishing Mills for his sons to work as they completed their schooling – first adjacent to Clashleigh, and later near Coolville on the other side of town in 1807. Some 12 years later in 1820 he bought Castlegrace, 2 miles outside of Clogheen, on the marriage of his 3rd son Samuel (1787-1859) and over the next 10 years he constructed a new mill² 5 storeys high and



Main mill building with slate hung south gable

20 bays long and its associated buildings as well as a substantial Georgian residence adjacent to the old Norman castle. The Mill arch keystone bears the date 1825 and it is recorded the mill was completed by 1829 at the supposed cost of £6,000.

Then came change – the Corn laws introduced in 1815, post Napoleonic Wars, to stimulate domestic production by applying import duties on ‘foreign’ grain, were repealed in 1846 largely because of the ongoing great famine. Additionally, cheaper grain imports would be processed more effectively closer to the points of import – near seaports and by the canals; the railways too had now arrived in Ireland by 1850s so river transport was under pressure; new grain roller technology introduced in the 1860s quantumly improved production and dominated the industry by the 1880s. Decline had commenced; now location, technology, scale and diversification were all critical factors to survival. By 1880 only one of the seven Clogheen area mills remained in operation, and all milling had ceased in the area by 1900.



Extension added in 1860s to north rear for kiln drying

On the Knockmealdowns, just above the famous ‘Vee’, there is a cyclopean cairn - the grave of one Samuel Richard Grubb (1855-1921). He would have



Samuel Richard Grubb's grave overlooking the Castlegrace estate and 'the plains of Tipperary'

lived through the decline and discontinuation of milling in Castlegrace. His express wishes were to be buried overlooking his beloved Castlegrace and indeed overlooking the broader plains of Co. Tipperary.

On the cairn it simply states –

**SAMEL RICHARD GRUBB
OF CASTLEGRACE
BORN 26th SEP 1855
DIED 6th SEP 1921**

Castlegrace however had a second coming. In 1939 Raymond Grubb (1886-1970) established Tipperary Products Ltd. He was later joined by his son Patrick (1917-2002). Altruistic in nature, their enterprise was wide ranging and diverse, providing much needed employment in the area while the products they exported supported



The company sign as it is today



Egg trays, wicker fruit baskets and fruit boxes still in the mill



Tipperary Products Ltd. Castlegrace – Rose and Shamrock Brand

Britain's 'war effort' through the rationing years into the 1950s. Not only did it give local employment, but they gave the broader rural population of Munster the opportunity to earn money when poverty, unemployment and emigration were all too common. They had a network of agents across Munster, to whom the individual wild fruit pickers sold their pickings. They then sent their lorries out to the various parts of Tipperary, Cork, Kerry, Waterford and Limerick to collect farm products and the various wild fruits which they then processed in Castlegrace and exported to England and Wales. Everything possible was explored. Eggs were bought and boxed for home and export markets. All classes of fowl, hens, turkeys, geese were bought across the region, plucked and processed for home and export markets. Plucking

was said to be hard work – 1½d to 2d for each chicken and hen. Rabbits too were processed. Prior to 1954 and myxomatosis there was an abundance of

rabbits with Ireland exporting up to seven or eight million a year. Rabbit skins were cured, dried, and exported along with many thousands of rabbit carcasses.



Barrels for repair and reassembly



J Robertson & Sons Ltd.

All types of wild fruit were collected as they came into season, such as elderberry and lime blossoms, bilberries, elderberries, blackberries, wild damsons, sloes, crab apples and holly berries, and prepared for export. While the processing of blackberries formed the bulk of the business, preserving them and cooping them into barrels for export, there was a most interesting enterprise with the gathering and processing of elderberries. The concentrate was shipped to the US East coast where an enterprising operator used it to turn cheaper acquired white port, imported from the Douro Valley in Portugal, red, for his near

monopoly of the religious altar wine market in the USA. This initiative lasted for a time until the Church realized the wine wasn't exactly the real thing and the contract was cancelled. Honey too was processed for export as well as some other herbs and mosses. There were apple orchards too where geese were highly effective security, kept the grass short and trees fertilized. Orchard apples were stored in cold rooms until required generally in the following year.

WWII caused major disruption for Britain. Sources of supply from eastern European countries such as Poland were cut and so demand here increased and prices soared, later to abate over time. The money earned from bilberries and blackberries (the poor man's harvest) provided much needed supplementary income for families to survive, to put food on tables, clothes on backs and shoes on feet. There remains universal acknowledgement of the contribution that the Grubb family made to the economy of the region in general and to Clogheen in particular.

The mill still provides ready evidence of the above activities – egg trays, jam jars, wooden boxes, wicker baskets, and barrels for coopering; the various signage such as egg dept, apples, granary, box repairs, box making section remain, representative of an Irish business history and a testament to the industry of the Quakers.

Turning now to the main mill buildings, they can be summarized as follows - the main building is a twenty-bay five-storey with attic block running full length north-south. There is an additional four-bay five-storey block extension to the rear of the north end added circa 1860s for kiln drying. Both blocks have two-bay end elevations. There are pitched slate roofs throughout, with eaves course, the main building has partly rendered brick chimneys and hipped dormer windows with slated roofs and sides. The walls are rendered rubble sandstone and slate-hung to the south gable of the main mill block. All mill window openings are square headed, with slate hanging lintels but without sills. All attic windows are blocked on both north and south gables. There is an elliptical-headed carriage arch to in the east elevation, with cut stone voussoirs with engraved date 1825 at its top centerstone. A rubblestone boundary wall to the road frontage forms a courtyard in front of the mill with the mill manager's house to the north and outhouses to the south.



Detail of large transverse baulks



Detail of inner roof and dormers



Wages office reinforced door with gun hole in centerboard

This is an imposing mill complex; its heritage value has been acknowledged by the Heritage Council and the building itself is a protected structure. The main building is remarkably large, facilitated by the size and length of the main

traverse timber baulks believed to have been shipped from Newfoundland. These and the longitudinal joists remain remarkable sound and dry. The roof is watertight. Slate shingles to weatherproof and protect sidewalls, gables and lintels are a common feature in the South Tipperary area and indeed across many Grubb buildings that previously lined the quays in Clonmel. The crafted attic dormer windows add a pleasing aspect to the mill's roofline. The gate lodge and mill wages office, offer insight into its purpose and the times in which it operated – it has a reinforced front door and hole in its front centre panel for discharging a shotgun.

Meanwhile, above it all from his hillside vantage point, Samuel Richard Grubb maintains his watch - over this place where he too lived the cycle of life, love, and loss.

Notes:

¹ <https://www.daft.ie/for-sale/detached-house-the-castlegrace-estate-clogheen-co-tipperary/1177247>

² The Civil Survey of 1656: a Capt. Thornhill had a Grist Mill at this site.

Ref. texts: i) *The Grubbs of Tipperary* by G.W. Grubb; ii) *Picking Bilberries, Fraocháns and Worts in Ireland* by M.J. Conroy and iii) *The Rabbit Industry in Ireland* by M.J. Conroy.

I wish to acknowledge the cooperation and support of Nicholas Grubb in generating this article.

There is an interesting link between this article on Castlegrace and the earlier Werth Tower Windmill article. When Anne of Cleves left the castle associated with Werth mill as we know it today, to marry Henry VIII in 1539, she only spoke German, so there were interpreters within her entourage of 200, including one young Richard Grubbe. As the new queen was known to favour religious change, 'known' English and Irish protestants were appointed to court, including a Sir Piers Butler and his German wife (a Von Grubbe) from Castlegrace/Cahir whose two daughters were already at the royal court. A marriage was arranged with Eme, Sir Piers' daughter, and Richard Grubbe. Because Anne's marriage to Henry VIII lasted less than six months, the marriage of Richard and Eme occurred, not in the environs of the royal court, but at Ravensthorpe later in 1539, where there were other Grubbe relatives. How that Richard Grubbe was related to John Grubbe, who arrived in Ireland in 1656, is yet to be fully clarified.



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