

# Correspondence

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Our Society is always glad to receive correspondence and comments from readers of our magazine or visitors to our web site. We were particularly glad to hear again from a former contributor, Belgian ex-soldier Francois Brichot who spent some time in Poyntzpass in 1945. In a previous edition we included his memories of his time here. In this issue, he recounts how, after fifty years, he made a sentimental journey back to the village to renew contact with those who had befriended him all those years before.

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September 2002

*I was always telling my wife that I should like to visit Ireland and in 1995 she said "darling go and have your ticket and go to Ireland." She did not like to travel. So at the end of May I left Izegem and travelled via Ostend, Dover, London, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stranraer to Larne where we left Ireland 50 years ago. Since 1960 I had no more news of the Hanlon family. Dear Mrs. Hanlon, my Irish mummy(sic) for nearly eight months. She was so kind and nice. Strict when it was necessary. She had such a big influence on me. I was only 17 years old. And my three little sisters. So from Larne to Belfast, Banbridge, Newry and then dear Poyntzpass. The place had not changed, specially the centre. I went into a pub. They told me Mrs. Hanlon died three years ago but that one of her daughters lived in Aughan Park. I found the house. I rang. The door went open. I asked if she was one of the Hanlon daughters. I said, 'I am Francis the Belgian.' She opened her arms and said, 'Come in Francis, we went searching by the British Legion (for you).' I could not believe it. A phone call to Armagh and I was back with my Irish sisters just like I had left a few months ago!! Irish hospitality is still what it was fifty years ago. The country still so green only the old and poor looking houses are replaced by nice looking chalets. What is not changed is the conviviality, the hospitality, the sense of humour and the interest in other people's way of life. I stayed for nearly 10 days. Since I went back every year with the same pleasure. I made many new friends. Some of them have already visited me and stayed in Izegem. I hope to be able to come back for many more years. May God Bless the Irish men and Ireland.*

*F. Brichot*

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**Jim Patterson has contacted us by email seeking information about a Patterson family from Poyntzpass. Jim tells us that the family included a David Jamieson Patterson b 19 October 1811, who arrived with family in Philadelphia on 8 December 1818 sailing from Belfast. He goes on :**

*He became a Presbyterian minister, serving as the founding minister in 1858 of the Second United Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn NY. He served there 'til his death 14 December 1899. A church biography indicates that the family was from the village of "Pointspass" Co. Armagh, where they owned and operated a mill until emigrating to America in the fall of 1818. The biography indicated that David's mother's maiden name was Jamieson (Mary) b 1777 and his father was Alexander Patterson b 1762. David had a sister Jane b 1807. Before emigrating David's father sold the mills he owned on the Manor of Acton to Col. Maxwell Close.*

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**In the spring of 2002 we received a letter from Mr Tom Lawrence, a member of The Canberra and District Historical Society, Australia and a trustee of St John's Schoolhouse Museum, Canberra. Mr Lawrence's wrote as follows:**

*"In May 1999 we received a letter from a woman resident in North Sydney who offered the Museum a Bible she had purchased 'in a second-hand book-shop some years ago' because an inscription on the flyleaf referred to 'Martha Randall of Acton Nat'l School 1853, which she thought would be St John's. (There is an area of Caberrra called Acton).... Correspondence with the letter writer revealed that the Bible was printed in 1853 and that she purchased it in about 1980 in an 'Op Shop' in Chatswood no longer in existence. We are satisfied that the inscription does not refer to St John's. .. After exhaustive enquiries we have concluded that the Bible is not in Australia in 1853. The reference to 'National' school leads us to believe that the Acton we are looking for is in Ireland where there was in the 1850 a National Board of Education (We have found some 15 'Actons' scattered throughout England) ....*

**Mr Lawrence goes on to say that the present owner of the Bible would be glad to return the Bible if she can be reasonably satisfied that Acton, Co Armagh is where it originated....**

*... Is there currently a National school in Acton?  
Was there a school in Acton in 1853?  
If 'yes' are there any records of the school and, if 'yes', do they contain any reference to Martha Randall or Julia Chesters?  
Thanking you for your interest,  
Sincerely,  
Tom Lawrence*

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