

THE INNES FAMILY OF DROMANTINE

BY HELEN DELAHUNTY

*"I miss Dromantine so dreadfully...I can't tell you how I long to come back.... I am so dreadfully homesick."
(Etta Innes, December, 1920)*

The above is an extract from a letter written by Mrs Etta Innes to Alec McCready shortly after the Innes family abruptly left Dromantine in 1920. Alec McCready was the gatekeeper at Dromantine House, from approximately 1904 until the house was sold in 1922. I am grateful to Jason Diamond and his cousin, Sharon, Alec McCready's great-granddaughter, for making this and other letters available to me.

1611- 1735

References to the *Manor at Glyn Wood* are found from 1611 when James I gave the lands in his Plantation of Ulster to the Magennis family, who at that time were loyal to the English Crown. Through many ups and downs the Magennis still owned Glyn Wood by 1736 but Art Magennis, who also owned Castlewella Estate, had both it and Dromantine so heavily mortgaged (having appeared in court fifty



Outside of present Dromantine House

I became interested in the Innes family of Dromantine House after visiting the house during an Open Day in the European Heritage weekend, and learning from my brother Ian, that the Innes family had left suddenly in the 'Troubles' of the early 1920s.

Why did they leave? The search for the answer to that has been the underlying motivation for uncovering the family's story in Ireland. In examining the history of the Innes family from 1735 to 1920, some clues and ideas as to why this family left, virtually overnight, in late November or early December 1920, taking no household possessions, may become apparent.

one times in twenty years for bad debts!) that the estate had to be sold.

A 1727 "*List of the Number of Acres In the Estate of Dromantine*" tells us that by this date the name of the estate is Dromantine and secondly, that its seven townlands - Dromantine, Ballyblaugh, Lurganare, Corgary, Ballilogh, Carrickrovaddy, and Dromiler - are basically those of the estate for the next two centuries.

Enter the Innes family, a branch of the Inness clan of Morayshire, Dukes of Roxborough in southern Scotland since the mid 1500s. Alexander Innes had arrived in Co. Antrim in 1661, just at the Restoration of Charles II to the English throne. Presumably he thrived and he and his sons and grandsons married



Dromantine House

into the Brices, a substantial linen family, of Ballycarry, south of Glynn, Co. Antrim. Alexander Innes's grandson Joseph, made his fortune as a merchant and shipbuilder in Belfast in the early 1700s and on his childless and wifeless death in 1734, instructed his executors to buy a "freehold of land" for his nephew William, the eldest son of his brother, the Rev. William Innes.

The executors bought the Manor of Glyn Wood or Glen Wood for William, but it was not until 1744, that he took possession, because Art Magennis had left a great number of debt entanglements, and indeed those entanglements ate most of the profits from the estate for the next fifty years.

Arthur Innes 1755 – 1820

However, the estate was making money by the time Arthur Innes inherited in 1804. He inherited because of the death of his eldest brother, Charles, earlier that year. Arthur is the first Innes to have a "great landowner" curriculum vitae, as Captain of the 9th Dragoon Guards, High Sheriff of Down and the last owner to hold Manor Courts on the estate, through which the landowner, in a system dating from the Middle Ages, had the right to impose punishment for misdemeanours and petty crimes committed on his estate.

Arthur demolished the old manor house of Glyn Wood which had stood about eighty yards due south of the present building. He built an elaborate late Georgian house, changed its name to 'Dromantine House', created the lake, and most of the stables, gardens, walks, and avenues that we know today. Father Eamonn Finnegan, in his booklet, *Dromantine*, describes the new Dromantine as "this magnificent memorial to his (Arthur's) genius, courage and good taste."

But Arthur had his dark side. In order to increase the size and grandeur of the demesne by one third, to three hundred acres, he evicted all the tenants

List of the number of Acres in the Estate of DROMANTINE.

TOWNSHIPS	Denominations in each Town			TOWNSHIPS	Denominations in each Town			
	A.	R.	P.		A.	R.	P.	
Dromantine	Demesne	49	5	24	Pierce Mackay	102	1	24
	Charles M ^o Quiln	24	0	00	M ^o Savage	42	3	24
	Bryan Ganny	14	1	24	Con Hanlan	44	2	32
	Magree	12	0	32	Copeland	42	1	08
	Edmund Heer	12	0	16	Teigue Heer	48	2	32
	James Graham	25	2	52	Bell	12	2	00
	Kate Graham	12	3	16	Derriner	12	0	00
	Edmund Hahy	13	1	08	Stewart	19	0	32
	Edm. Donnelly	7	1	08	Total	327	0	32
	Roger Rosny	24	0	00				
	Caty Magennis	2	2	00				
	Total	207	3	34				
Bathfield	M ^o David Magennis	68	0	00	M ^o William Savage	34	2	32
	Own Mortg ^{ch}	90	1	08	Terrance Murty	34	2	34
	Divided part	50	6	00	Mc Magilley	48	2	32
	Another part	12	2	00	Patrick Heer	46	2	00
Total				Maclure	61	2	00	
Ballycarry	Fitz Patrick	91	2	16	Terrance Heer	79	0	32
	Daniel Revy	27	5	10	Total	304	3	10
	John Heer	65	0	00				
Total								
Ballyvaughan	M ^o Daniel Magennis	150	0	16	Daniel Heer	25	2	00
	Mill Quarter	55	3	24	Krenir	25	0	32
	Fitz Patrick	32	2	10	Doony	51	3	08
Total	238	2	10	O'Neill	6	1	08	
Ballyvaughan				Carlson	53	2	16	
				Total	122	1	34	

1727 townlands list

living inside the demesne. These included an Alexander Harper, whose house, Arthur Innes levelled to the ground, as well as taking his thirty one acres, all without any compensation. Contrast this with Colonel Maxwell Close, owner of the only other "big house" and estate in the area, Drumbanagher. Thirty years later in 1840, doing the same thing as Arthur Innes, and increasing the size of the Drumbanagher Estate, he resettled his tenants and built two new houses for two tenants whose houses had been inside the new demesne.



Dromantine Estate Wall

Arthur died in 1820 and his son, also called Arthur, inherited the same year, at the age of fifteen. He followed the same career path as his father in the Dragoon Guards and was appointed High Sheriff of Down in 1832. In 1829 he married Mary Jervis

Wolseley, daughter and heir to William Wolseley, Senior Admiral at his death in 1842. William Wolseley had originally come from Kilkenny. Arthur and Mary Jervis Wolseley had four children, before Arthur's death at the early age of thirty in 1835. It is thought that his death was due to a recurrence of an infection contacted while abroad, presumably in the British Army. Thus, Mary Jervis Innes was left a widow with four children all under the age of six.



Map of grounds in 1860's

Through necessity, as well as through upbringing as the eldest daughter of Admiral Wolseley, Mary Jervis Innes became a formidable lady, who ran Dromantine estate for the next twenty years, through the dark days of the Famine, 1845 – 47. The lack of a “Famine Wall” around the estate is striking, especially in contrast, once again, with Drumbanagher Estate which has literally miles of wall. Its lack may reflect something of the relationship (or lack of) between Mrs Innes and her tenants, a relationship that is further highlighted by the controversy over the Glen Chapel Graveyard.

J.J. Sands described this controversy in his article on Glen Chapel in the 1993 issue of *“Before I Forget”*. Glen Chapel had no graveyard; many parishioners in the 1840s wanted a graveyard. One man illegally buried his sister in the chapel grounds in 1847. Father Ryan, the parish priest, ordered the body be exhumed, largely because Mary Jervis Innes made it known that she regarded a graveyard right at the end of Dromantine Avenue as *“offensive to her and to her family’s feelings”*. J.J. Sands wonderfully describes Father Ryan’s reaction to Mrs Innes, *“Now if Father Ryan was in awe of the bishop, he was absolutely terrified of*

her ladyship, Mrs Innes” and so, on the Bishop’s orders, he built a new parochial house but not a graveyard, which Glen Chapel lacks to this day. The parochial house won the support of Mrs Innes to the extent of a £1 donation. Father Ryan contributed £20.



Mary Jervis Wolseley Innes

The question arises here of which exit the Innes family used to reach the present Glen Road. The graveyard controversy suggests that in 1847 it was still what was known as *‘the Dark Walk’* exit, an existing path down from the lake through the woods emerging opposite Glen Chapel. Why else would a graveyard at the Chapel so rouse the anger of Mrs Innes? However, my mother once said that the Innes’s had built a straight road off the Derrycraw Road to go directly to *“their”* parish church at Donaghmore - perhaps so that they wouldn’t have to see their tenants! Fr. Finnegan wrote that in 1810, Arthur Innes had constructed the main avenue to come out at the present entrance, but, as the 1834 Ordnance Survey maps show the present avenue as less defined than the Dark Walk, it is difficult to discern which was being used, or perhaps both were.

ARTHUR CHARLES INNES 1834 -1902

When Arthur Charles Innes attained his majority in 1855 he took over the estate from his mother and in 1858 married Louisa Leticia Brabazon of Mornington House, Co Meath. Arthur Charles wanted to make Dromantine House more imposing and stately and hired a Dublin architect, a Mr Curdy, to *“build additions to and make alterations in Dromantine House”*. Mr Curdy proposed to change the house into an Italian Renaissance mansion, to be built of cut sandstone. He faced the house south with *“an ornate facade”*, now facing the lake. Fr Finnegan gives details of other alterations: *“The much admired cantilever staircase was constructed in the Great Hall and very great changes were made in the West Wing. Here the highly decorated portico, giving access to a new main hallway and*

the spacious rooms which flank it were added and merged into the wing. The main hallway had previously been on the side toward the lake. Now that it was no longer needed, it was converted into a pretty loggia with doors opening out on to the grass courts." A new avenue was added and what were called "pleasure grounds" were replanted and extended with pleasant walks through the lawns.



Dark Walk towards Glen Chapel

Arthur Charles and Louisa's only child, Edith, died at age six in 1866 and Louisa herself died twenty years later in 1886. Arthur had no heirs, so he remarried a year later in 1887, Sarah Jane Beauchamp Cross, heiress of Dartan Hall near Killyleagh, Co Armagh. He added her name to his, becoming Innes-Cross. They had three children; Arthur Charles Wolseley Innes-Cross born 1888, Marion Dorothea born 1892 and Sydney Maxwell born 1894.

In public life Arthur Charles gave the land in 1863 for the present Glen Chapel to be built. He became the Conservative MP for Newry 1865 -68. Dr Cowan in his book "*Donaghmore Past and Present; the story of an ancient Irish parish*" called him, "ever the true friend and kind patron of the writer by whom his memory is held in affectionate remembrance. He was a good and considerate landlord and always evinced a deep interest in the welfare of the tenants of the estate"

Which may be.....but around 1888, during the height of the Land League agitation in Ireland, two tenants of the estate took Arthur Charles to court to have their rents reduced. They won, their rents being reduced by 20% and Arthur Charles had to pay the court costs, another example of the strained relations between the Innes family and their tenants. A humorous instance and perhaps revealing of Arthur is his entry in the 1901 Census where, under the column "Read & Write" he wrote, perhaps petulantly, "Yes, of course"!

Here may be the place to refer to several stories still circulating in the Poyntzpass /Drumbanagher/Glen

area as to the gambling tendencies of the Innes family. Andrew Halliday in his article "*Jerretspass and*



South Face of Dromantine

District" in Vol. 2, 1988 of "*Before I Forget.*" wrote that, "*The Innes family, who then owned Dromantine House, and who were great gambling men, made bets that their Arabian ponies would beat the train from Jerretspass to Goraghwood.*"

This story originated in Judith Lockhart's university thesis - her source was an old lady who had lived in Jerretspass all her life. This local tradition was recalled in an interview by Miss Kathleen Brookes of Lurganare in 2011, "*It was believed that Innes was addicted to gambling and playing cards. In a game, he wagered the townland of Knockanarney and lost. (From then on tenants living in Knockanarney paid their rent into the Provincial Bank (in Newry) while the rest of the estate paid into the Northern Bank.*" It seems likely that this refers to Arthur Charles Wolseley Innes who died in 1902. Is that why his widow Sarah Beauchamp Innes married a man who seemed socially beneath her? In casual discussion with some older people in the area, the Innes gambling trait has arisen several times, but there is nothing that can be substantiated definitively.

Arthur Charles Innes-Cross died in 1902 and his widow, Sarah Jane Beauchamp Innes-Cross remarried in 1907, a farmer and brickmason's son from Ely, Cambridgeshire, Herbert Martin Cooke, self described as a retired schoolmaster in the 1911 Census. It would seem that she had married 'beneath' her and this may be why her eldest son, Arthur Charles Wolseley, who attained his majority and ownership of the estate in 1909, dropped the 'Cross' from his name.

Dr Cowan in his '*History of Donaghmore*' wrote that on Arthur Charles Wolseley Innes's twenty-first birthday, the tenants of the estate and the Select Vestry of Donaghmore Parish Church presented addresses to him. Yet, the same year, as a result of the Land Purchase Act of 1903, he had to sign over the lands of the estate to the ownership of the tenants. Colonel Close had completed this six years earlier as soon as the Land Purchase Act passed. As a result

DOWN.—The dispute between A. C. Innes, Dromantine, near Newry, and his tenants has been settled by arbitration. The tenants have received a reduction of 20 per cent. on the year's rent, the landlord agreeing to pay all law costs.

Patrick Boyle, James McAlinden, and Michael O'Hare were arraigned at the Newry Petty Sessions for attacking the soldiers on Hill street, recently. The witnesses showed that though the soldiers, as usual, began the trouble some of them had been roughly treated by the prisoners. Magistrate Evanson sentenced Boyle to two months' imprisonment and McAlinden and O'Hare to six weeks, each. And thus the repression of a liberty loving people goes on.

1888 Court case newspaper report

five hundred Drumbanagher estate tenants had become independent. While legally A. C. W. Innes could not do this until his twenty-first birthday, the comparison between the Innes lack of action, with the Close immediate action, must have drawn some angry comparisons from the Dromantine tenants.

Arthur Charles Innes and his younger brother Sydney Maxwell were both educated at Eton. Arthur Charles went on to Cambridge while Sydney went to Sandhurst Military Academy. In reality, neither brother had spent much time actually living at Dromantine, by the time World War I broke out in 1914. Both were already in the Irish Guards. Sydney was killed at Ypres, in the first year of war. Arthur fought through the whole war and won the M.C. in 1916. That same year he married eighteen-year-old Etta Bradshaw of Ardleyhill House in Hampshire.



Photo of Arthur Charles and Marian Innes as children c. 1894

And so Etta came at age eighteen and spent at least the first two years of her married life, alone in this strange Irish house, far from everything and everyone she had ever known. Mail was slow and censored to and from her husband and slow to her relatives in southern England. From her letters after the war, it seems, her best friends and companions at Dromantine had been the servants and the gatekeeper's family. No wonder the words and tone

of her letters when driven out in late 1920 were so desolate and lost.

Sharon McCready, Alex McCready's great-granddaughter, has three letters which Etta Innes wrote to him and his wife, in the six months after Captain and Mrs Innes' forced departure in late November/early December 1920. Alex was the



Capt Innes MC in 1916

gatekeeper at Dromantine who had fought in the Boer War and at Lucknow in India. During the Ulster Covenant years of 1912 – 1914, and possibly during 1919 and 1920 (the Black and Tan years) he had drilled the Ulster Volunteer Force in the Dromantine grounds - one good reason for the Innes family to be threatened with IRA reprisals. Etta's first letter to Alec McCready, 17 December, 1920 was from Norton Priory, Runcorn, Lancs, home of Sir Richard and Lady (Marian) Brooke (Capt. Innes' sister)

"Alec.....I have been so upset about everything I didn't feel I could write ...I expect you have heard by now that Captain Innes is trying to sell Dromantine. I told Eliza the reason he has decided to do so suddenly. As I am not able to register this I can't write it to you, but Eliza will tell you. My only hope is that we won't be able to sell it and in time the country will settle down and we will be able to come back ...I would like for the three goats to go to Dr Robinson as well as the horse, his cart and harness, that is if Dromantine is sold...Capt. Innes and I never want to lose sight of you and Mrs McCready and some day if we retire to England I want you to come over to us here, but I still hope we may come back to Dromantine.

Etta Innes.

A week later Etta writes to Alec again.

Dear Alec Did you ever get a letter from me last week sending

£1 for Johnnie and Mabel for Xmas?...Mrs Robinson wrote to me and said she was going over to Dromantine to see you about the animals going over there. Capt Innes thought it better for them to go over there before we go abroad as the house might be sold...Alec, I would trust any animal or anything to you - the only thing is that we are going abroad this week and letters take such a long time that Capt Innes thought it better to arrange all this before we went. Will you look after Jellicoe for me as I couldn't ask Mrs Robinson to take him too. And will you lock everything up in the stable, Alec, and keep the key for me. How I wish we were returning to Dromantine instead of going abroad. Yours always truly, Etta Innes



Photos of Alec McCready

Another letter, written nine months later, on October 25 1921, has survived. This was from Ledmore Lodge in Lairgs, Scotland to Mrs McCready. I have shortened this a great deal – it is full of references and remembrances to many people round Dromantine.

I would like to hear how you and Alex are and Johnnie and Mabel. I miss Dromantine so dreadfully and everyone around and about ...I can't tell you how I long to come back... We have made no plans yet as to where to get a home and to live in the future. It is difficult to know where to settle. Do you ever hear from James or Cummins? I often wonder what has become of them Write me a line sometimes, Mrs MacCready, and remember us both to the children and Alex. Yours truly – Etta Innes.

It would seem, from the varied addresses and the reference in the Dec 27, 1920 letter to “going abroad”..... “going to London within a few days”, that the Innes’s had no permanent home for at least two years. The several references Mrs Innes made to disposal of hens, horses, goats add weight to the sense that she and Captain Innes had to leave Dromantine in a hurry, likely about the end of November 1920 – in such a hurry that they made no arrangements for the domesticated livestock.

The thirty page Catalogue of the Valuable Antique and Modern Furniture to be auctioned in May 1921 revealed that as well as the expected tapestries, pictures, furniture to be sold, blankets, everyday

dishes, cutlery etc. were also listed. Captain and Mrs Innes seem to have taken only their immediate clothing, unable to plan where, how, with what they would be living in the future.

The swiftness with which the auction was arranged – within six months of their leaving Dromantine – suggests the Innes’ immediate need for money and may lend support to another persistent rumour, that the family verged on bankruptcy. Despite Etta Innes’s homesickness for the place and the people who had looked after her in the first years of her lonely married life, she recognized that they could not return to Ireland in the foreseeable future because of the virtual Irish Civil War and thus no benefit was to be gained in delaying the sale of all the household and estate possessions.

Captain and Mrs Innes’s middle daughter, Mrs Anne Rylands, born in 1929 and now living in London, in two letters to Jason Diamond in 2009 and 2010, bears out this interpretation. She wrote “*I have always been told that they left Ireland because of threats from the IRA due to the fact that he sat on ‘The Grand Jury’.* He (my father) always swore never to go back.” In contrast she wrote, “my mother often talked to me about Dromantine and what a beautiful place it was, about the garden and especially the trees” None of the last generation of the Innes family, Arthur Charles Sydney born in 1922, Anne born in 1929, and William Anthony Wolseley born in 1935 was born or lived in Dromantine. Sydney was killed in action in July 1943 and William has not married.

DROMANTINE HOUSE, NEWRY
(2 miles from Georgewood Junction, 2½ from Poyntzpass Station, and 4 from Newry).

CATALOGUE
OF THE VALUABLE

Antique and Modern Furniture

Old Flemish and French Tapestries, Oil Paintings, Decorative China, Bronzes, French Mantel Clocks, in Ormolu, Bowle, and Bronze Cases; Pianoforte, by Collard and Collard; Fine Persian Rugs, Wilton and Axminster Carpets, about 500 Yds. Miscellaneous Books, Old Sheffield and Electro-plated Ware, Table Glass and China, about 20 doz. Sherry and Claret; the Appointments of 12 Bedrooms, Servants' Apartments, and Kitchen, Vacuum Cleaner, &c. Also the

OUTDOOR EFFECTS

Including Outside Car, Harness, Lawn Mowers, Field Rollers, Garden Seats, Tamin 100-Hp. tractor (new), Chickens and Poultry, &c. &c.

To be Sold by Auction

By direction of the Trustees of CAPTAIN INNES-CROSS
ON THE PREMISES AS ABOVE

On **TUESDAY, 17th MAY, 1921,** and **Two Following Days**
Commencing at **Twelve o'clock, Noon.**
On View Saturday, 14th, Sun. Sunday, 16th May.

CATALOGUE, admitting to VIEW and SALE, price 2s. each, obtainable from
Messrs. HUNTER MOORE & BOYLE, Solicitors, Newry; and

BENNETT & SON,
Auctioneers and Valuers,
6 UPPER ORMOND QUAY, DUBLIN.

The above magnificent Mansion, in perfect order and condition, containing over 30 rooms, and Demesne of 350 acres, also for Sale by private treaty.

W. WALKER & SON, PRINTERS, 1, LOWER ORMOND QUAY, DUBLIN.

Catalogue of House Sale 1921

That Capt Innes is trying to sell
 Dromantine. I told Eliza the reason
 why he has decided to do so suddenly
 as I am not able to register this.
 I can't write it to you but Eliza
 will tell you - my only hope
 is that we won't be able to sell
 it and that in time the country
 will settle down and we will
 be able to come back.

"that Capt Innes is trying to sell
 Dromantine. I told Eliza the
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 country will settle down and we
 will be able to come back . . ."

Part of Etta Innes letter

THE WORDS WE USE

BY SEAMUS MURPHY

INTOXICATED

blootered: very drunk.

legless: unable to walk because of drink.

rozener: a stiff drink, of spirits

stocious: very drunk

palatic: very drunk

PEOPLE –DEROGATORY

clart: A through-other person, particularly a woman, usually
 'a dirty **clart**.'

gaunch: a loudmouth.

glipe: a stupid, awkward person.

gorb: a greedy person.

gulpin: an ignoramus, a know-nothing

hallion: usually 'an ignorant **hallion**,' a man lacking
 manners.

haveral: a lazy person, a drone.

kearn: a coarse rough person "A good-for-nothing
kearn"

scitter: a naughty child, - or diarrhoea. "A cheeky
scitter!"

slabber: a person who talks without much sense.

"Never let on you hear him, he's only a **slabber!**"

tiaddle: a girl or woman of questionable morals.

uppity: snobbish or arrogant; a pretentious person

LAND AND NATURE

cap: To turn or stop cattle or other animals.

chats: small potatoes.

collie/ callie: sooty fall-out from a fire in the open.

cop: a small pig in the litter often reared by hand.

cuddy: a stand for cutting sticks.

goule-pink: the goldfinch.

hames: part of a horse's harness: To spoil; make a
 hames of something.

jorey: the smallest pig in the litter, a runt.

moiley: a cow with no horns.

pissmire: an ant.

plant: an ash stick used by cattle drovers.

prescia: yellow weed found in cereal crops, wild
 mustard.

slipe: a horse drawn sledge.

stoor: very fine dust.

tartles: matted dirty hair round a cow's tail.

yelti yorn: the yellowhammer