

# SOME INTERESTING HEADSTONES IN LOCAL CHURCHYARDS

BY FRANK WATTERS

*“The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,  
The lowing herd winds slowly o’er the lea’  
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way’  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.”*

Those are the famous atmospheric opening lines of a poem written in the eighteenth century by Thomas Gray entitled *“Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard.”* In the poem the poet reflects on life in general and on the ordinary people whose remains lie in the churchyard. He muses about their roles in the local community and about their potential if their circumstances had been different. In their own small world, *‘far from the madding crowd,’* there were those whose lives mirrored the activities of the great and famous on the world stage.

There are approximately 40 graveyards within what we might consider our ‘catchment area’, the area stretching from Tandragee, to Mullabrack, Loughgilly, Mountnorris, Lissummon, Jerretzpass, Barr, Donaghmore, Loughbrickland and Scarva. If we allow for a modest average of 150 headstones in each graveyard and that there may be three or more inscriptions on each stone, you will appreciate that the following selection could best be described as eclectic, erratic and eccentric.

Headstones are in fact public, historical documents and a headstone can contain a wealth of information. In particular, headstones dating from the period before records were uniformly kept, can sometimes be the only source of information about an ancestor.



Thomas Henry Headstone - Cremore Presbyterian Church.

It is surprising how much one can infer or deduce about a family from their headstone. This is the Thomas Henry headstone in Cremore Churchyard. Using just the information on this stone one can with some confidence tell Thomas Henry’s story.

*Thomas Henry was born in 1823. When he was about 26 years of age, he married a lady called Elizabeth, who was 6 years his senior. In 1853, when he was 29 and Elizabeth was 35, their first child, a daughter, was born. She was christened Maria. Seven years later, in 1860, their second little girl was born but, sadly, Elizabeth then aged 42, died at, or soon after, the birth. The little girl survived and was christened Elizabeth after her mother. She was probably a delicate child and was affectionately known as Bessie.*

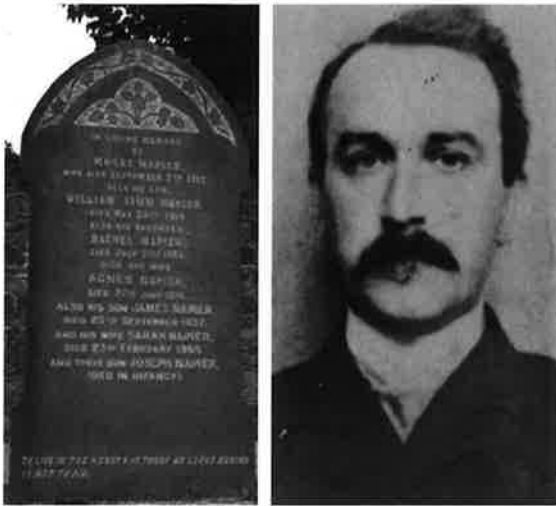
*So a grieving Thomas Henry was left with a delicate little baby and a seven-year old child. It was impossible for him to manage alone so in due course he married again. His new wife was a young woman called Maggie, 20 years his junior and a full 27 years younger than the late Elizabeth.*

*Thomas and Maggie had two children. Sarah Jane was born in 1870 and David born in 1873. However double tragedy was again to befall the family in 1875. In August that year at the age of 30, Maggie died and just a month later Bessie, the little girl whose mother had died in 1860, passed away at the age of 15.*

*So for the second time, a grieving Thomas Henry was left with two infants to care for. However, this time help was more immediately at hand in the form of his eldest child Maria. Maria was by then 22 and it would appear that she took on the task of rearing her 5 year-old half-sister Sarah Jane and little David who was just two.*

*Thomas Henry, who was then 51 didn’t marry again and died in 1901 aged 77 years. Neither Maria nor Sarah Jane married and died aged 74 and 71 respectively. David Henry did marry. He died in 1941 aged 68 years.*

**Tandragee Presbyterian Church**



**W.J. Napier**

In Tandragee Presbyterian Churchyard is the grave of William John Napier. While the name may not be immediately recognised, many locals will be familiar with his work, for William John Napier was the photographer who published many of the postcards of our area in the years before the Great War. His postcards have featured regularly in our journals over the years as illustrations and as cover photographs. William John Napier, the second son of Moses and Agnes Napier, was born in the townland of

Mullaghglass close to Ballyargan Chapel in 1871. A very bright young boy, he attended Glebe National School, in the building which is now Tullymacann Orange Hall. In his early teens he won a scholarship to Portadown College where he specialised in chemistry, as he had ambitions to become a chemist.

However, this wasn't to be for, at the age of 19, he developed a disease in his hip which led to his leg being amputated. Since the amputation was at the hip he was not able to use an artificial leg and as a result had to use a crutch. He was forced to abandon his education but after a while he decided to put his chemistry knowledge to use and embarked on a career, firstly as a photographer and later as a postcard publisher.

Despite his handicap, he travelled round the area in a pony and trap, the trap being specially adapted to suit his needs. While he was largely independent, his travels were restricted and his postcards are all of places within an easy day's round-trip from his home in Mullaghglass.

He was not a robust person and apart from his amputation had other health problems. Around the outbreak of the war he developed severe kidney problems. Two of his sisters were nurses and owned Parkgate Private Nursing Home in Lytham-St-Anne's, Lancashire. At the start of the war the nursing home was up-graded to Parkgate Hospital and in 1919,



**Tandragee**



**Gilford**



**Scarva**



**Poyntzpass**

**Napier Postcards**

William John travelled there for an urgent kidney-operation. Unfortunately he died in the course of the operation. He was 49. His remains were taken home and interred in the family plot at Tandragee Presbyterian Graveyard.

It is thanks to William John Napier that more than a century later we have a glimpse of our villages in that age before the car.



*The House at Mullaghglass townland where W.J.Napier was born.*

**St Mary's Drumbanagher**



**St. Mary's Drumbanagher**

St. Mary's Churchyard Drumbanagher contains many interesting headstones. There are graves of men and women of distinction, Members of Parliament, landlords, land agents, clergymen and, although they are unmarked, the graves of several Cornish miners who died during the construction of the nearby Lissummon tunnel.

I know nothing more about the individual whose headstone I have chosen other than what we are told on the inscription. It is his address that is of interest.

*Sacred to the memory of Reid Boothe of Tuskin's Pass who departed this life on the 17th Octr. 1840 aged 37 years. His nephew William Henry died 3rd Jan 1944 aged 96 years*

*"Tho' lost to sight to memory dear"*



'Tuskin's Pass' was an old name for what we now call Jerrettspass. It is sometimes spelled 'Tuscan's Pass'. Before that this area was known as 'Lamb's Pass'. If we take the origins of the name of Poyntzpass as an example, it would seem that the strategic importance of 'passes' through the marshes and bogs led to garrisons being posted here in times of unrest. Each pass took its title from the surname of the commanding officer and the name changed as the commander changed. In the case of Poyntzpass, Charles Poyntz followed someone called 'Fenwick', so the name changed from 'Fenwick's Pass' to 'Poyntz's Pass'. So here we can speculate that Tuskin or Tuscan followed an officer called Lamb as commander in times of war.



Immediately beside Reid Boothe's headstone, is one erected in memory of members of the Gerrard family who were in charge of the local post-office at one time and from whom it is thought the name Jerrettspass has somehow evolved. On the headstone, members of the Gerrard family who moved to Liverpool are also commemorated, which is interesting in its own way.

### St Joseph's Poyntzpass and Poyntzpass Presbyterian



This is the headstone marking the grave of William – Billy - McGivern in St Joseph's Churchyard in Poyntzpass - but perhaps, in a way, Billy should have two memorials.

Billy was born in 1888, the son of Thomas and Sarah McGivern. In 1904, when he was sixteen, he was seriously injured in a farming accident involving a mowing machine, in a meadow he called 'Moody's meadow' somewhere down the Tandragee Road. As a result of the injuries, his left leg was amputated below the knee. The operation was carried out by the local doctor, William R. MacDermott, without the use of anaesthetics and must have been horrific. At the time there were several families called McGivern living in the Poyntzpass area. Two belonged to the local Presbyterian Congregation, another were members of the Church of Ireland and yet another were Catholics. To add to the complications there were three or four called William.

In the confusion, which undoubtedly followed the accident, the amputated leg was taken and buried in Poyntzpass Presbyterian Churchyard. Later it was discovered that the young man was in fact a Catholic. However the question of exhuming the leg never arose and in later life Billy, who was for years gravedigger at St Joseph's, was extremely proud of the fact that, as he put it, "*When I go, I'll have a foot in either camp!*"

When Billy died in 1964 (the remainder of) his remains were interred in St Joseph's Churchyard.



*Billy McGivern*



*Poyntzpass Presbyterian Church with St. Joseph's in the background*

Most of the inscriptions on the headstones in our local graveyards are rather predictable and it is only occasionally that you come upon one that is different or unique. In St Joseph's Churchyard there is one such, erected in memory of Patrick Downey, who died in August 1825 aged 35 years. The inscription includes the following lines by his son John, who was apparently a sailor and a would-be poet:

*Oh father, lie in rest and sleep  
While thy son doth plough the deep.  
Though poor in means you were rich in spirit,  
I hope a better place than earth you now inherit,  
A place where sorrow is no more,  
The next to this place is freedom's shore.  
John Downey.*

The oldest person whose age is recorded on a headstone locally, as far as I discovered was one Edward McGill of Federnagh who died in January 1843 aged 102 years. Amazingly he left a grieving widow!

### St John's, Mullabrack



Another similarly unique headstone is in the churchyard at St John's Church of Ireland, Mullabrack. It marks the grave of Selina Williamson who died in November 1858 aged 74 years:

*Here lies the body of Selina Williamson  
Who nobly battled through life,  
Paid all her debts and left the residue to her relatives.*

I know nothing of the late Selina but I love the image of her honesty and of her noble life-long struggle. If only the relatives had inserted 'grateful'! But then that was probably just too expensive.

Also in St John's churchyard is this macabre memorial to James Acheson Galbraith who died in 1618. The symbols are intended as a 'Memento mori' or a reminder to all of the inevitability of our death.



As in life, there is a definite 'hierarchy' in the headstones in many graveyards. Here and there in old graveyards, such as Donaghmore or Old Acton, large uncarved lumps of stone were sometimes set up to mark a family plot. They have no inscriptions and are just as they were quarried. Headstones from the 18<sup>th</sup> century are often granite or some other local

stone while during much of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Bangor-blue slate was the popular choice, generally easy to read but difficult to photograph.

### Ballenon Reformed Presbyterian Church

In the churchyard at Ballenon Reformed Presbyterian Church is the grave of a lady, famous in her own way, and known far and wide on account of her strange and eccentric behaviour. This is the last resting place of Annie Qua.

I am very grateful to George Clarke and Alphia Lonergan, neighbours of Annie Qua for the following information.

Annie Qua was the third of five children and the only daughter of well-to-do farmer James Qua and his wife Susan. She was born in January 1889 in the townland of Bolton, Mountnorris. As a young girl she was said to have been very pretty. At Loughgilly National School her teacher was Miss Redmond and Annie was a very bright and intelligent pupil.



She was devoted to her parents and her siblings and in particular doted on her youngest brother Jimmy, the baby of the family. When in her teens, she was greatly grieved by the death of her beloved father. Then on the outbreak of the war in 1914, her brothers Sandy and Jimmy enlisted. Jimmy was killed on the morning of the first day of the Battle of the Somme, July 1<sup>st</sup> 1916.

Jimmy's death had a devastating effect on Annie and she never really recovered from the grief and shock of his loss. She suffered what we would call a 'nervous breakdown' and spent some time in St Luke's in Armagh. When she was eventually discharged, because of other family members living in the family home, she found herself virtually homeless. She eventually moved into a small house in the townland of Cornagrally, known locally as Lough Speil.

George Clarke told me, "She was kindly, intelligent and religious. She was a Covenanter and attended Ballenon, never missing a Sunday. She described anyone who belonged to a church but didn't attend as 'an adherent'."

Alphie Lonergan told me, "*Annie Qua had a deep knowledge of the Bible. Father Pat Loughlin, Poyntzpass man, was curate in Tullyherron. He and Annie were very friendly. If they met they would discuss religious matters for an hour. On a Sunday, Father Pat would regularly begin his sermon with the words, "I was talking to Annie Qua the other day and she was telling me .....". You were never quite sure whether the sermon was Annie Qua's or Father Pat's!*"

As the years went by, she became more and more eccentric in her ways and allowed both her appearance and her house to become dilapidated. She was fond of animals but could be neglectful of them too. She kept goats and would take them into the house in cold or wet weather but would sometimes go off for several days leaving them inside with neither food nor water. If she found a dead bird or animal on the road she would take it and bury it. She was a great attender of weddings and funerals of all denominations and was held in considerable affection by the people round Loughgilly.



*Annie Qua attending a wedding, a dead crow in her hand*

Alphie Lonergan told me his mother had been a classmate of Annie's at Loughgilly School and she and Annie were friendly. He told me that Annie would often come into their house at night and sit beside the range. In due course the family would go to bed and leave her sitting there. She would often be sitting at the fire when they rose next morning. She regularly attended Dublin Horse Show, cycling to Goraghwood to get the train. When asked about accommodation she replied that she 'lay with the horses'.

Drew Clint told me that he knew Annie well. Early one morning in the autumn of 1966 he came upon Annie sitting under a tree at The Mall, Armagh. He asked if she was all right and she said she was

waiting for a bus. She said she was going to Dublin to get a piece of Nelson's Pillar, which had been blown up a day or two before.

She was vehemently opposed to capital punishment and became greatly interested in the trial of Robert McGladdery who was charged and found guilty of the murder of Pearl Gamble in January 1961. Annie Qua attended the trial and visited McGladdery in Crumlin Road Jail. She also visited the Gamble family. When McGladdery was found guilty and sentenced to death she organised a petition seeking to have the sentence commuted to life in prison. She referred to McGladdery as 'that poor man'. On the morning of December 20<sup>th</sup> 1961, the date set for McGladdery's execution, she was outside the jail when the notice stating that the death sentence had been carried out was affixed to the prison gate. She it was who took it down.

As she grew older and her house became almost derelict the neighbours became more concerned for her. The congregation of Ballenon bought her a small caravan but she kept the goats in it. The social services took an active interest in her and attempted to get her to move into a nursing home. She refused to go and on one occasion 'stoned them out of the yard'.

One day when cycling on the Armagh Road near Markethill she was knocked off her bike by a car. She was taken to Daisy Hill Hospital and treated for her injuries. When she was well enough she was transferred to St Luke's in Armagh. George Clarke went to visit her there. He hardly knew her for 'she had been washed and was shining like a pin'. She lived quite happily there till she died on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1972 aged 84.

#### **First Drumbanagher and Jerretzpass Presbyterian Church**



One of many interesting headstones in First Drumbanagher and Jerretzpass old graveyard is that on which the name of Edward Wolfenden Lockhart is

recorded. Edward Lockhart was at the centre of a dispute with the local landlord in 1888 when, as a result of disastrous harvests in the previous two years, many of the small tenant-farmers in the area were reduced to abject poverty. Lockhart was one of a group who presented a petition to the landlord, Captain George Dowglass, seeking a 20% reduction in their rents. When this was refused, the tenants withheld their rent.

Edward Lockhart, a highly-respected tenant-farmer of Kilmonaghan, Jerrettspass had written about the plight of his neighbours to various newspapers and, as a result, was identified as the leader of this protest. As a result he was one of those targeted by the landlord and his agent Joseph English. An order was obtained by the agent giving him authority to seize such property of Edward Lockhart, Benjamin Thompson and Hugh Gordon, to cover the rent they owed.

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> March 1888 was set for the auctions but on the day, when the auctioneer arrived, a very large number of supporters had crowded into Lockhart's yard. Such was the crush and the disruption they caused that the sale had to be abandoned as the auctioneer was 'jostled' and feared for his life.

When a new day was set for the auctions large numbers of policemen were drafted in and a great many supporters of the farmers, along with a marching band, attended. The auction first took place at Edward Lockhart's, then the auctioneer and his staff moved on to Benjamin Thompson's and then to Hugh Gordon's, accompanied by a 100-strong throng of policemen, the farmers' 'several hundred' supporters, led by the band playing such tunes as 'Auld lang syne'. The proceedings bordered on the farcical but arising from the trouble at the abandoned first attempted auction, a number of men were charged with riotous behaviour. In due course, two of them, Peter Byrne of Newry and W.J. Hanna of Ballydougherty, were sentenced to two months in prison. On their release in June 1888, they were greeted as heroes. A meeting was held to welcome them and at that meeting a 'Tenants' Property Defence Association' was set up. This in time became the Jerrettspass Farmers' Association.

The wording on another headstone nearby caught my attention.

**Here lieth the remains of  
DAVID ROBERT  
eldest son of Revd. Robt. McClean  
Of Mullaghglass, aged 17 years.**

*His sudden and unexpected removal while  
preparing for the  
Christian ministry, speaks emphatically to all,  
But especially to the young,  
"Watch therefore for ye know not the hour our  
lord doth come."*



This was in many ways the 'coldest' stone I encountered and I feel a great sadness for this young man. There is no grief expressed. His mother gets no mention and he was not 'beloved' of his father it would appear.

#### 'Hamilton's Folly'

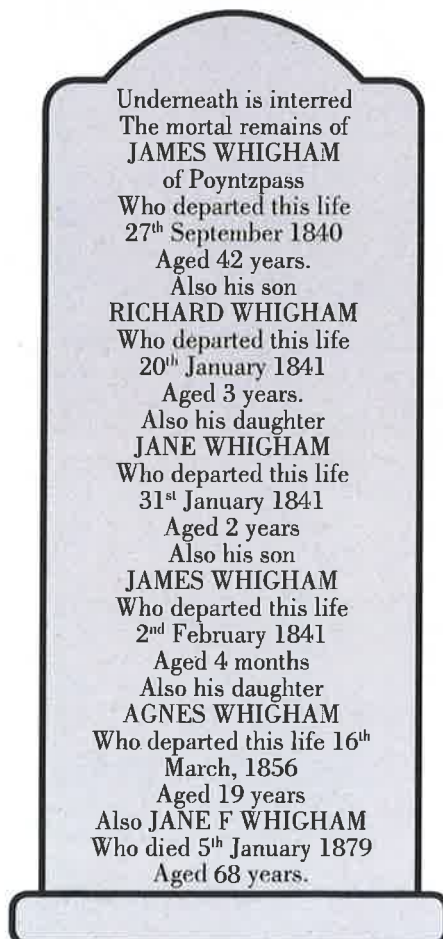


*David Baker and Frank Watters at the Folly*

One of the oddest 'headstones' in our area is not in a graveyard at all, but stands in the middle of a field in Corlusk townland. Erected by the Hamilton family, it is known today as 'Hamilton's Folly'. It seems that, because of some concern over a misdemeanour Thomas Hamilton Junior was alleged to have committed while he lived in Belfast, members of the congregation of Clare Presbyterian Church were reluctant to agree to his remains being interred there and only did so on the understanding that no memorial to him be erected. The Hamiltons reluctantly agreed, but not to be deterred, Thomas's relatives erected this monument in their own field, where it still stands today, a memento of their determination, obduracy and single mindedness.

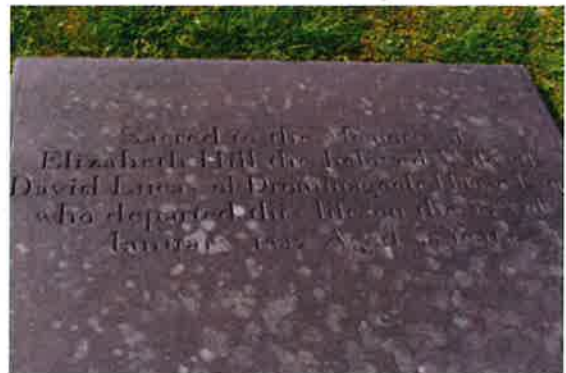
ERECTED BY THOS. HAMILTON OF CARLUST  
WHO DIED 12-3-1851. ALSO HIS WIFE  
ELIZABETH  
ALSO THEIR SON THOS. HAMILTON BORN  
14-10-1835 DIED 16-1-1903  
THEIR REMAINS ARE INTERRED IN THE  
BURYING GROUND OF  
OLD CLARE PRESBYTERIAN MEETING  
HOUSE.

### Acton Parish Church



Also in Acton Parish churchyard is what I feel is one of the saddest headstone I came across. It is that of the Whigham family.

Such a litany of misfortune to fall on a family!  
In just over four months between the end of September 1840 and the beginning of February 1841, Jane Whigham gave birth to a little boy and lost her husband James almost simultaneously. Three months later she lost her three year-old son Richard, eleven days later she lost two year-old daughter Jane and two days later her little baby James died. To cap it all her surviving daughter Agnes died in 1856 aged just 19. How Jane Whigham managed to cope with such tragedy is just beyond thinking about.



In Acton Parish Churchyard is the grave of Elizabeth Hill-Lucas mother of Charles Davis Lucas VC our most famous citizen. Oddly she is named "*Elizabeth Hill beloved wife of David Lucas of Druminagoole House Esq*". Elizabeth died before her son was three and the infant Charles Davis Lucas was reared by his mother's family, the Hills.

While many of the men in the Lucas family were most likely to serve in the army, Elizabeth's father was Captain Thomas Hill in the Royal Navy, probably influenced the future VC in that direction



## St Patrick's Ballyargan



**Kenny Headstone**

In every rural community in former times, there were individuals who were noted for particular accomplishments, characteristics, eccentricities or skills. There would be a woman sent for at childbirth, a man who could divine for water, a local 'poet' who could compose a derogatory rhyme, a man who could sharpen a saw and so on.

One such person, who was locally famous in this way, was James Kenny, who is interred in St Patrick's Churchyard, Ballyargan. James Kenny, better known as *Jemmy Kinney* was renowned as a teller of extraordinary, outlandish tales, a selection of which are appended to this article.

Jemmy Kinney was born around 1880, the son of James and Mary Kenny of Ballyargan townland. The townland of Ballyargan is not to be confused with 'Ballyargan' Chapel which is actually in Mullaghglass townland. Ballyargan is 180 acres in extent and is about a mile and a half to the south west of the chapel. It is particularly isolated in that there is no public road in the townland and access to the farms and houses there is via a series of long, narrow lanes.

I am grateful to Robert Turner for his memories of his neighbour:

*Jemmy Kinney was a neighbour of ours; a small-farmer with about 20 acres of land. He was a bachelor. There was a short-cut right-of-way across the fields to our house, with a foot-stick over a stream and he used to come over on a Wednesday.*

*Teggart's Mobile grocery van from the Row came round on a Wednesday and he would leave my mother a list of the odds and ends he needed like tobacco. Then he would come over on a Wednesday evening to collect them. He smoked the pipe and sat in our kitchen and it was there he told his stories. I think he told them that often that he actually believed them! He went to Mass in Ballyargan every Sunday by taxi from our house. Pat McGrath, a taxi-man from Tandragee picked him and his sister Minnie up at our gate. He was a very decent man, a good neighbour.*



**Kenny's House in Ballyargan today**

A selection of Jemmy Kinney's stories is appended to this article.

Finally, to go back to Tandragee Presbyterian Churchyard. The inscription her headstone reads like a reference

**Here rest the remains of Mary,  
Wife of Parker Sheppard of Tandragee  
Died April 4th 1837 aged 46 years**

***"In her were united  
the affectionate wife,  
the tender mother,  
the sincere friend  
and humble Christian"***

Thomas Gray is said to have written the Elegy in the churchyard of St Giles, Stoke Poges in Buckinghamshire in the year 1742, but the feelings and thoughts he expressed are as relevant as ever and the poem could have been written last week, in any local churchyard - although the ploughman would probably be heading home on a John Deere or a Massey Ferguson!

Jemmy Kinney's stories seem to fall into three categories; his wonderful crops; his extraordinarily intelligent dog; and his own expertise, strength and skill.