

ADMIRAL PENN AND HIS LADY

Ivar O'Brien

In 1646 Vice-Admiral William Penn was sent by the English parliament with a small fleet and some 700 soldiers to occupy and hold Bunratty Castle against the Confederate Catholic army. He must have already known quite a lot about the district because in June 1643 he had married¹ in London Margaret van der Schuren, who was the widow of a Dutch emigré with property, probably rented, at Rineanna and Jasper's Bridge.² Rineanna is now part of Shannon Airport but I have not found where was Jasper's Bridge; perhaps residents will know?

The October 1641 rebellion caused Margaret to flee to Bunratty and thence to London and her future 2nd husband. We do not know whether she was already a widow or the rebellion made her one. She was an English Protestant, the daughter of John Baptist Jasper, a merchant in the Strand, London and resident of Chigwell in Essex. It is not known how she met van der Schuren but presumably her first husband brought her to Co. Clare. Probably he was one of the 4th Earl of Thomond's Protestant planters.

On 21 April 1646 Penn landed a force at Rineanna on what amounted to a foraging raid for cattle and sheep, killing 30 Irish while doing so, whom John O'Brien says³ he called 'Rogues'. No doubt he thought this a reasonable description for people whom he considered had expelled his wife, stolen her lands and were then still in occupation of them.

In 1653 Penn petitioned for the return of his wife's properties but in this he was not successful. (Some years later they seem to have come into Sir Donat O'Brien's

hands, see *Inchiquin MSS*). Instead in 1654 Cromwell arranged for Penn to be compensated with lands elsewhere to

the annual value of £300; these turned out to be the castle and estate of Macroom, Co. Cork, formerly the property of Lord Muskerry, a singularly appropriate choice as Muskerry had been in command of the Irish army attacking Bunratty. Muskerry had fled to the continent where King Charles II created him Earl of Clancarty in 1658.

At the Restoration Penn was obliged to return Macroom to Clancarty but was compensated with lands at Shanagarry and Klonakilty, Co. Cork. Sir William Penn (knighted at the Restoration) and his son William, later to be the Quaker founder of Pennsylvania in America, managed their Irish estates and resided there from time to time, so it is quite possible that the son visited Bunratty out of interest but the fable⁴ that he was at the castle with his father during the siege remains just a fable. The boy had only been born in October 1644 and Penn never took his wife on campaign with him, let alone an 18 month old baby.

References

1. 6 June 1643. Register of St. Martin-within-Ludgate, preserved at Guildhall, London.
2. Lucie Street, *An Uncommon Sailor*, (London 1986).
3. John O'Brien 'The Siege of Bunratty', *The Other Clare* Vol. 2 (1978), 16.
4. e.g. *Bunratty Castle, A Young Visitor's Guide*, p. 16 and Brian de Breffny *Castles of Ireland*, p. 60.

ACTIVITIES

1988 was a busy year for the Society. Pat Costello gave a most interesting talk on 'Work' in January and the following month Yan Phillippe MacBradai treated members to an entertaining discourse on aspects of genealogy. In March *The Other Clare* was launched at the West County Inn at a function enlivened by Donncha O Dulaing's retelling of some of the experiences he had on his various walks. A novel note was struck at the launching when audio-cassettes of some of the material from the journal were presented to local representatives of the Council for the Blind.

Following the Easter outing, which had Wexford as its focus, a full schedule of Sunday and Wednesday trips was embarked upon in April. Among the places visited were: Fenloe area (12 April - Carol Gleeson and Erin Gibbons); Cashel (23 April - Pat Costello); Mungret (3 May - Sean Spellissy); Burren (15 May, with members of the Newcastlewest Soc.); Sixmilebridge (24 May - John O'Brien); Limerick City (7 June - Sean Spellissy); the Palatine country (18 June with Pat O'Connor) Corbally Mills and the Lax Weir (28 June - Bill McInerney); Doonass (5 July - Fred Bourke); Nenagh and Roscrea (16 July - Jean Mulholland); Kilkeedy, Co. Limerick (26 July - Sean Spellissy); Killaloe (20 August - Morgan Llewlynn); Stonehall (30 August - John O'Brien). The final outing was a joint one with the Thomond Society around and about Ennis with Sean Spellissy on Sun. 24 August.

The Annual General Meeting which was held on 19 October saw some sweeping changes in the composition of the Executive Committee. Since many of those who had served on the outgoing committee did not seek re-election, several new faces made their appearance. The committee now consists of: Sonia Schorman, Chairperson, Olive Carey, Secretary, Tom Chambers, Treasurer, Tony Browne, Activities Organiser, Rita Costello, Public Relations, Pat Flynn, Editor, Mary Quinn, Mary Smythe, Carol Gleeson, Pat Costello.

Apart from a successful Christmas Party, which was again held at the Show Grounds, Ennis, there was little activity before the beginning of the New Year.

APOLOGIES AND CORRECTIONS

Because of some last-minute technical hitches, two of the articles in Vol. 13 (1989) were somewhat abbreviated and consequently did not do full justice to the authors. The pieces were 'Clenagh Castle' by Ristead Ua Croinin and Martin Breen, and 'On the construction of the hearth in North and West Clare' by John Harrison and Fidelma Mullane. The editor apologises and hopes the writers did not feel too aggrieved. In the article 'Dromoland Wives' by Grania Weir, on page 13 the second paragraph should begin: 'Four years before the death of his father, Lucius, 15th. Baron Inchiquin and eldest son of Edward and Emily ...' (not Ellen, as was printed).