

The Mooreheads

The 12th of April 1802 marks an important watershed in the history of Annaghmakerrig, for it was on this date that the estate became Moorehead property. It was also during the Moorehead period that the current house was built. Similarly much of the development of the estate would have taken place during this century.

Many accounts of Annaghmakerrig tell the story of the successful Dr. John Moorehead returning home to Monaghan with his American wife and how he bought the Leysborough estate from the Ley family. James Forsyth, biographer of Tyrone Guthrie tells the anecdotal tale of how, like a number of the landed gentry at the time, the Ley family were in financial difficulty, to such a degree that they were unable to pay a medical bill from Dr. Moorehead, so the gallant G.P. offered to buy the Ley's estate from them to ease their fiscal pressure. The reality however is a rather less romantic story. It was in fact Dr. James Moorehead of Newbliss who purchased Leysborough from William Ley in 1802 as presented in the previous chapter. The Moorehead family appear to have been quite numerous within the barony of Dartry in Co. Monaghan. It would seem that the names James and John Moorehead were especially common with many references to various people of these names throughout the region, particularly in the Ballintoppin area.

Following the Act of Union in the late 18th Century, vast numbers of the nobility and gentry abandoned Dublin and began to spend more time on their Irish countryside domains. Previously, many of these estates were without a permanent large house and as a result Ireland in the early 19th Century experienced something of a building boom. Although the Moorehead family were not among the retreating gentry, there is no cartographical evidence indicating a significant structure on the lands of Annaghmakerrig prior to Dr. James Moorehead's purchase thereof. The survey conducted by Sir Charles Coote in 1801 identifies Leysborough Lough it does not indicate the presence of a house in the vicinity. However the estate maps of Annaghmakerrig drawn up by Mr. James Reilly in 1816 clearly include a diagram of the current house. So it may be deduced that Dr. James Moorehead commissioned the construction of the house during the phase of augmented construction in the Irish countryside. Similarly, the nearby mansion of the Ker estate in Newbliss was built during this time.

Along with the expansion in rural construction came an increased interest in architecture with various designs becoming fashionable and sought after. The house built at Annaghmakerrig appears to have combined a number of varying styles while maintaining the air of functional modesty suitable for small gentry. A solid foursquare building presenting an immediate Victorian appearance with diluted elements of the Tudor-Jacobean revival that give way to Neo-Gothic details and Scots-Baronial overtones, the varying designs of Annaghmakerrig fuse together in an architectural harmony that produced an unique and appealing home. Like many houses built in Ulster at his time, the restricted classical style offers a personal and homely feel from the house. Although there have been some changes made over the years, most of the original style of the house has been maintained to the present day. Surrounding the house, the Moorehead's created a typical Victorian style knot-garden with extensive well-tended lawns and an orchard. Around the garden lay acres of land, forest and the lake, which was noted as the largest lake in Aghabog parish at this time.

In this home Dr. James Moorehead lived with his wife Martha and their children, the eldest of whom was John. Evidence for the Moorehead genealogy can be found in a memorial tombstone erected by Sir William Tyrone Power K.C.B. son-in-law of Dr. John Moorehead;

"In memory of John Moorehead, M.D., born 1785, died 1873 and his wife Susan Alibone, born 1791 at Philadelphia, U.S.A., died 6th November 1862"

"In memory of James Moorehead, M.D. born 1761, died 1836 and Martha Taylor Moorehead his wife born 1759 and died 1839"

"Of his sons, William Moorehead born 1799, died 1822. Thomas Moorehead born 1797, died 1851. Samuel Moorehead, born 1800, died 1871"

It can be seen that James and Martha had at least four sons, John, William, Thomas and Samuel. Youngest son Samuel was also listed alongside Dr. James Moorehead as landowners on the Clones estate in the Rent Rolls of 1818 and 1821. A deed of sale from 1836 involving Dr. John Moorehead mentions a Jane Moorehead of Leysborough, indicating that Dr. James and Martha Moorehead also had at least one daughter. On the death of Dr. James Moorehead, eldest son Dr. John Moorehead inherited the Annaghmakerrig estate, although he did not move there until after his mother's death.

John Moorehead attended Edinburgh University where he studied medicine and graduated in April 1806, aged 21. He seems, however to have remained on at the University either attending or presenting lecturers in medical and scientific studies until 1812. Dr. Moorehead later moved to Cincinnati, U.S.A. Where he acquired numerous properties and held the professorship chair at the Medical College, Ohio. His name appeared a number of times in the Cincinnati Gazette in 1834, including a rather public disagreement between Dr. John Moorehead and a Dr. D. Drake as to who was responsible for the death of a patient, Mr Brooke whom both had treated. It was also in Cincinnati that Dr. Moorehead met and married Susan Alibone Humphreys in 1831. It would seem that this was the second marriage for Susan although there is no mention as to whether she was divorced or widowed. Dr. John and Susan had one daughter, Martha whose portrait still hangs in the dining room in Annaghmakerrig. In 1840 Dr. Moorehead tendered his resignation from the Medical College of Ohio. The following year he brought his American family home to Monaghan.

The Mooreheads appear to have settled into Irish rural life quite smoothly. Undoubtedly the few home comforts of furniture from America would have eased the transition for Martha and Susan. Dr. John Moorehead seemed to have had little difficulty in readjusting himself to life in Monaghan. Alongside his medical practise, Dr. Moorehead enjoyed his new role as landlord. He was already in possession of 52 acres of hereditary land in Mullaghmore prior to his return. By 1860, however he had extended his estate considerably to include the lands of Mullaghmore, Crappagh and Knockcor in Aghabog parish. Dr. Moorehead was also recorded as the lessor of the National School House on part of the lands in Crappagh; it was a common practise for solvent landowners to sponsor the local schoolhouse at this time. Although not one of the major landowners in the area like the Madden's or the Leslie's, Dr. Moorehead owned a significantly sized estate on which he had a number of tenants, of whom McGonnell appears to have been the most common name.

In October 1849 the Commissioners of Public Works, as part of the English Government's plan to relieve the devastation of Ireland following the Famine, implemented a plan that created employment for the impoverished while improving the drainage and water systems in Ireland. This drainage project dramatically reduced Annaghmakerrig lake to its current size. The man sent to supervise such work in Aghabog was Captain William James Tyrone Murray Power. Here he met Martha Moorehead and despite the early attraction between the couple, their relationship experienced difficulties due to Dr. John Moorehead's paternal disapproval and Captain William Tyrone Power's nomadic career. Eventually however following a period of correspondence between Captain Power and Mrs. Susan Moorehead, William Tyrone began a written courtship with Martha in 1859. In August of that year,

the couple were reunited in Bray, Co. Wicklow. They announced their wedding the following October and together were to inherit the estate of Annaghmakerrig on the death of Dr. John Moorehead.

Thus the Moorehead period at Annaghmakerrig, giving way to their descendents, the Power family who were to spend long summers there. Although Annaghmakerrig was only in the Moorehead name for a few decades, their time there was an important epoch in the history of this house.

The Powers

Under the Powers Annaghmakerrig was a lively home full of children and a large body of staff. As the familial base for a number of years, Annaghmakerrig was to become a very special place for each of the family.

Martha Power, although born in America, was ultimately of local Moorehead origin. Having moved to Monaghan at a young age, Martha considered Annaghmakerrig as home and an important part of her life. Her husband William Tyrone Power, on the other hand came to the area in a working capacity and fell in love, both with Martha and Annaghmakerrig, and was there forever bound. William Tyrone Power's father was the renowned stage actor, William Grattan Tyrone Power from whom William Tyrone Guthrie was to inherit both his name and love of the theatre. William Grattan Tyrone Power was born near Kilmacthomas, Co. Waterford in 1791 to Maire Maxwell. His paternity however, is not definitively documented. Some accounts maintain that Maire's husband died whilst in America when William Grattan was just an infant. Various other stories allege that a landed gentleman fathered him out of wedlock, leaving Maire with little choice but to leave the area. In any case, Maire and her son moved to Cardiff and it was there that William Grattan discovered and developed his love for acting. Aged just 14 and despite his mother's concerns, he joined a group of travelling players. William Grattan Tyrone Power enjoyed international success as an actor but it was on a return trip from America that he met an unexpected and watery end when the S.S. President on which he was travelling, sank without a trace on the 11th of March 1841. He left his widow Anne with seven young children, the eldest of whom was William Tyrone, aged 22 who joined the army following his father's death.

William Tyrone Power had a successful military career during which he was appointed to numerous positions of importance including Agent General for New Zealand in 1876 and Commissioner General to the Forces in 1863. He was also awarded a knighthood for his services in 1865. Sir Power travelled widely with his work and was stationed in many places including Gibraltar, China, New Zealand, South Africa and mainland Europe. From these experiences he wrote a number of travel books but it is his personal writings that are the most revealing. He wrote regularly to his wife Martha Power with genuine affection telling her of his news and how much he misses her and the children.

'My dear Mattikins, I don't like any day to pass without devoting part of it or myself to you'

While Captain Power was working abroad, Martha remained at Annaghmakerrig with her father, Dr. John Moorehead. On his death in 1873 Martha and William Tyrone Power inherited Annaghmakerrig house and estate, in addition with Dr. Moorehead's properties in Cincinnati, U.S.A. Along with this inheritance came the responsibilities of proprietorship to a number of tenants who lived on the lands of Annaghmakerrig. Despite his worldly travels, William Tyrone appears to have embraced rural life in Monaghan and relished the necessary landed business that accompanied his new

role.¹ In the years immediately following the death of Dr. Moorehead, William Tyrone and Martha Power erected a memorial tombstone in remembrance of Dr. John and the Moorehead family. Although the Powers also had an English home, their fondness for Annaghmakerrig is evident and they spent as much time there as possible with their children; Susan Gilbert, John Moorehead, William Tyrone, Norah Emily Gorman and Anne Evangeline. The staff in England were mainly from the Aghabog area and thus travelled home to Ireland with them regularly. It was a result of the Power's large family and the number of staff they employed as was appropriate for an Officer of William Tyrone's status that it became necessary to extend the house, with an extra wing and the 'annexe' being added.

Both of the Power sons were educated at Hillside School in Godalming, Surrey and subsequently Wellington College, while a governess probably schooled the girls at home. Some of the boys' letters home survive, filled with youthful exuberance for school and sporting life signed 'Jack' and 'Ty' or 'Tie'. In one such letter from Jack he enclosed a page from a catalogue, advertising a miniature steamboat and begged his mother to buy it for him on no less than three occasions! This simple childhood wish is an aspect of documentary history is not often seen but it is a touching insight into these people as they were as children.

Retirement from the war office gave William Tyrone the opportunity to spend even more time in Annaghmakerrig with his family. Already a well-known and respected member of the Monaghan community, he was appointed High Sheriff of Monaghan in 1874 and then approached as a possible candidate for the 1880 election.

Despite the granting of the Catholic Emancipation in 1829 and the fact that only 25% of the population of the county was Protestant, many aspects of administrative life in Monaghan continued to be dominated by the descendants of the seventeenth century planters. While the Protestant gentry owned the majority of the land in the county the Catholic population were starving and poverty-stricken. Eventually however, the Catholics sought to change the situation and began to demand their rights. They wanted political representation for their interests and while they realised that there was almost no chance of a Catholic being elected, they believed their best alternative would be the election of a liberal Protestant.

On being approached in 1880 to stand as a Liberal candidate in the election, Sir Power received large numbers of letters from various people encouraging him to go forward. Although appreciative of the support he received, William Tyrone seems to have been hesitant to take on the position of such influence. Nevertheless, he proceeded with the campaign for some time, expressing his support for peasant proprietorship whereby tenants (most of whom were Catholic) would have the opportunity to own their lands outright thus replacing the system of dual ownership. However, whether due to the poor electorate response of eastern Monaghan, general reluctance or personal reasons, William Tyrone Power stood down from the race. Yet he did accept his appointments as Deputy Lieutenant and Justice of the Peace for Co. Monaghan.

Following a long period of illness, Martha Power died in 1890. This was a difficult time for William Tyrone, as can be seen from his diary entry on the anniversary of her birthday;

'Friday, 6th November 1891. My dear Mattie's birthday. Born 1831. God Bless my darling's memory and keep it ever fresh in our hearts. She has left a sad blank (?illegible), which my girls do their best to fill. A gloomy day in all ways.'

Following this William Tyrone seems to have retreated somewhat from Annaghmakerrig, spending most of his time in Tunbridge Wells, Kent, in England where he lived in a house called 'Kilmore', named after the hills in Aghabog. Although Sir Power curtailed his visits to Annaghmakerrig, he by no means abandoned it. Along with the occasional visit, he continued to invest time and money into the estate, since it was after all a Power home. This Power identity was apparent on entering the house, where guests were greeted in the stone flagged hall by a large stags head with a gold cross between its antlers. This was the Power family crest and can also be seen on Sir Power's writing paper.

For the overseeing of the estate in his absence, William Tyrone entrusted his cousin Mr James Whiteside Dane. From the vast quantities of letters that he wrote to Mr Dane, it is evident that Sir Power wished to be kept fully abreast of all Annaghmakerrig business from staff and tenant issues to interior decorating. It was under Mr Dane that the bog garden of Annaghmakerrig was created. He was also responsible for the employment of full time staff on the estate, it was important that the Power family could rely on a loyal workforce to maintain the house and estate in their long absences. In 1903, Sir Power and Mr Dane appointed Mr Eddy Thompson to the position of estate steward. Thompson worked dutifully for the Powers and reported regularly to both Mr Dane and Sir Power. His cousin, Mr Eddy Daly, succeeded him in this position.

When William Tyrone Power had moved permanently to England, his eldest daughter Susan had moved with him to keep house. She was always close to her father and never married. Susan was also quite politically active and became the first female Town Councillor in Tunbridge Wells. Staunchly opposed to Irish Independence, she was among the protestors who presented a banner emblazoned with 'Ulster is right, Ulster will fight' to Sir Edward Carson following the granting of Home Rule to the Irish Government in 1914. William Tyrone's middle daughter Norah lived close to him in Tunbridge Wells also, where she met her husband Dr. Thomas Guthrie who ran a thriving General Practise there. They had two children, Tyrone and Susan and spent as much time as they could in Annaghmakerrig. Her sister Anne Evangeline on the other hand had no interest in the old Monaghan homestead. Anne married solicitor Laurence Kesteven and lived happily in Middlesex with their two children, Mary and Norah.

The Power sons inherited their father's inquisitive interest in travelling. After a few years in England, John Moorehead who was named after his maternal grandfather, moved to Cordoba in Spain, where he worked as a mining engineer. He travelled further while fighting in The Great War. Married to Judie, there was great excitement when they announced they were expecting a child. Unfortunately, Judie went into premature labour and not only did the baby die on delivery, Judie was close to death also. Meanwhile, William Tyrone junior, another military man also travelled widely. Following a private ceremony in 1903, his wife Frieda joined him on his travels. However, she died just ten years later leaving no children from the marriage.

So it may be seen that for some time the Power children for the most part were too busy with their own lives to spend much time in Annaghmakerrig. As early as 1894, William Tyrone expressed his anxiety to Mr Dane about the future of Annaghmakerrig. He was aware that neither of his sons were interested in taking over the running of the estate and he was worried that his daughters would struggle under the responsibility. Eventually he began to ponder the futility of investing money into the maintenance of an estate that would not remain in the family. Despite these concerns, Sir Power did not sell the estate, which at a time when many people were selling their Irish homes, is indicative of the significance of Annaghmakerrig to him. On his death in

1911, Sir William Tyrone Power left an equal share of the Annaghmakerrig estate to each of his five children.

For John, William and Anne, once their father had died, all ties with Annaghmakerrig were broken and they gave the entire estate to Norah and Susan as a gift. For them, Annaghmakerrig would always be a special place. Even Susan, whose increasing anti-Irish sentiment resulted in her never returning to Ireland. She did however maintain an emotional and financial bond with Annaghmakerrig until her death. Norah Guthrie and her family in contrast, spent as much time in Monaghan as she possibly could and continued to consider Annaghmakerrig to be home.

In 1899 Norah Power married Thomas Guthrie (Grandson of the famous philanthropist and preacher of the same name). They had two children, Tyrone Guthrie, affectionately known as Tony and Susan commonly known as Peggy. On Norah's death in 1956 Tony inherited Annaghmakerrig. With the encouragement and support of his family he left the house in his will to the Irish State for use as a residential workplace for artists. The Tyrone Guthrie Centre officially opened its doors to artists on October 10. 1981.