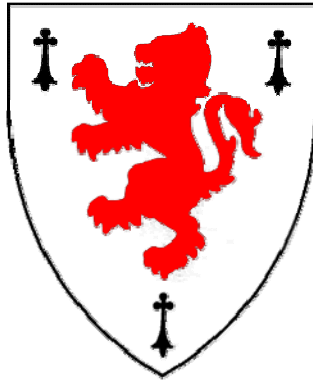


O'Dwyer Clan Newsletter



Nuachtlitir Mhuintir Dhuibhir

Volume 2, Issue 1

Virtus Sola Nobilitas Spring 2012

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Editorial1

Rally details.....2

A place of reflection.....3

Killenure Castle.....7

Joke corner8



Saddle up for Williamsburg!

As we signaled in the last newsletter, Dwyers and O'Dwyers will gather once more in 2012, this time in the U.S. at Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia from Thurs-Sat Sept 20-22nd inclusive.

The setting is indeed historic. Williamsburg, together with sister towns Jamestown and Yorktown, form the Historic Triangle and is probably the most-visited historic site in the U.S. The epicenter at Colonial Williamsburg comprises a fully restored town with many surviving original buildings as well as newly reconstructed replicas on over 300 acres, and claims to be the "largest outdoor museum in the world". With period costumes and the occasional re-enactment, the visitor gets a real feel for life in the days of the American Revolution.

A full schedule has been organized by Mike O'Dwyer of Ohio and his team, and the details can be found inside.

It promises to be a great weekend for young and old, and all those associated with the O'Dwyer name are very welcome to attend.

It will be an ideal opportunity to meet new friends, and who knows, maybe find a long-lost cousin or two.

We hope to see you there.

Tom O'Dwyer

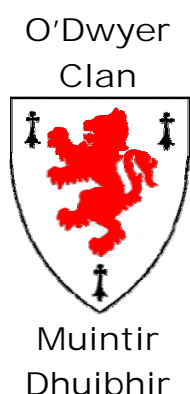


O'DWYER CLAN RALLY 2012

SEPT 20-22ND, 2012

COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG,
VIRGINIA, U.S.A

More details on the venue can be found at:
<http://www.history.org/Almanack/tourTheTown/>



International Clan Rally 2012

Sept 20-22nd 2012

Woodlands Hotel and Suites,

*105 Visitor's Center Drive,
Williamsburg, Virginia, U.S.A.*

Schedule of activities	
Thu 6pm onwards	Registration and informal social gathering
Fri Morning	Some interesting talks on the clan history, including: <i>New Avenues in Genetic Genealogy & DNA Applications to Irish Clans</i> - Ms Jane Buck <i>The origins of the surname 'O'Dwyer' and the clan's Celtic roots</i> – Mr Tom O'Dwyer <i>A case study in family history</i> – Mr Mike O'Dwyer
Fri Afternoon	Family networking
Fri Evening	Clan dinner
Sat Morning	Tour of the historic site of Colonial Williamsburg, the largest outdoor museum in the U.S. Neighboring Jamestown and Yorktown are also options for those interested.
Sat Evening	Rally close

Accommodation:

We recommend that you stay at the SpringHill Suites, 1644 Richmond Road, Williamsburg, VA 23185, where a number of rooms have been reserved to accommodate attendees. The hotel is only a short walk from the rally venue. Reservations can be made directly with the hotel (Tel: 757-941-3000), and please quote the O'Dwyer Clan Rally to receive the preferential room rate.

For further information, please contact Mike O'Dwyer [culdee2003@hotmail.com]

A PLACE OF REFLECTION

Tom O'Dwyer



Well I was finally here! For a decade or more I had promised myself that one day I would make it. It had taken a while, but it was worth the wait. A peaceful, sleepy sort of place, with its gentle hill rolling down to a bluff, and beyond that, a short distance away, the blue magnificence of the south Pacific glistening in the sunshine. The only sound was the haphazard chirping of birds, and maybe, if you strained your ears, the distant crashing of the sea. A place for reflection, a place to rest in peace.

In truth my course here started much earlier than that. We holidayed as youngsters deep in the Wicklow mountains, near Stratford-on-Slaney where our father was reared. It was here that our heads were filled with tales of the great Wicklow chief Michael Dwyer, who survived the 1798 rebellion and carried on a guerrilla war for over five years from a neighbouring valley, the Glen of Imaal, where he was born and reared. The hint that we might be related to him, given the proximity and the same surname, added spice to the stories and gave us an appetite for more.

But who was this scarlet pimpernel of the mountains and how did he end up at the opposite side of the world? His story has been told in an article in the O'Dwyer Journal published in 2006 by Máirín Uí Duibhir, but a brief account will be given to introduce this memorable character.

Early life in Camara

He was born the eldest of seven siblings at Camara in the Glen of Imaal around 1772 to John Dwyer and Mary Byrne. He was a quiet, athletic youth by contemporary reports, and no doubt had little idea of the adventurous life he would later lead. The wider world around him was changing rapidly, and would shortly affect his quiet country life. The American Revolution in 1776, followed shortly afterwards by the French Revolution in 1789, ushered in new political thinking, with royalty and inherited privilege giving way to liberty and democracy – the 'Arab Spring' of its day.

The trend did not go unnoticed in Ireland and the Society of United Irishmen was formed to further some of the new ideals. The British government was anxious to maintain its tight grip on the country, and kept a very close eye on developments. A clash was inevitable and the spark which ignited the powder keg of rebellion was the news of the arrival of a French fleet at Bantry Bay in the southwest of the country. Its mission was a failure from the start but it must have galvanized the youth of the country into action, Dwyer included. He joined the United Irishmen almost immediately, and became an active recruiter for the cause.

Rebellion

When the rebellion started in earnest in 1798, he took to the mountains and played an active role in many of the skirmishes and engagements that took place through the

summer of that year, serving under the famous Garret Byrne. He was present at the decisive Battle of Vinegar Hill in June, when the United Irishmen were finally defeated in open battle by General Lake of the crown forces. Dwyer had risen to the role of captain in charge of about 60 men by then, and continued to carry out guerilla attacks over the summer months despite the decisive defeat.

Bloodied but unbowed, the United leadership under General Joseph Holt decided to leave the safety of the mountains and head out across the plains of Kildare and Meath in an effort to rally renewed support for the cause, leaving Dwyer to defend the rebel's main rendezvous at Glenmalure. The escapade on the plains proved disastrous, and the rebels were routed at the Battle of Knightstown Bog, just north of Wilkinstown, in Co. Meath. Holt himself barely escaped with his life, and struggled back to the mountains to rejoin Dwyer.

Holt now commanded the remainder of the rebel army of perhaps 1,000 men. Their plan was to await support from the French and make a further attempt at rebellion. But he became discouraged with the defeat of a second French fleet at Killala, Co. Mayo on the west coast, and surrendered to the British government in November of 1798, leaving Dwyer in charge.

Guerilla war

Dwyer quickly adopted guerilla tactics, traveling in groups of no more than a dozen, and hiding in the homes of friends. He was a very popular figure with the locals, both Catholic and Protestant alike. He had admirers even among his pursuing army. One account of their attitude has survived:

“Several of the corps like him very well and if they could in any way avoid it would not go out in search for him....some of them hated and never ceased to abuse him, but we all would be glad not to have the good fortune to meet with him”

But he had implacable enemies too among crown loyalist who wanted to maintain the status quo, and so had to be on constant alert. He had many hiding places across the mountains, and many of them have survived in local lore.

Derrynamuck escape

He had many close brushes with capture, but probably the most famous was at Derrynamuck in the Glen of Imaal on the cold night of Feb 16th 1799. It had been snowing the previous night and Dwyer and eleven of his companions decided to take



shelter in three neighbouring houses. A government sympathizer got word of their movements and alerted Captain Roderick McDonald, a local army commander. The story of what happened next is eloquently told in the Ballad of Michael Dwyer, which can be found at the clan website (www.dwyerclan.com).

McDonald set out with his men and quickly arrived at the scene. The lookout guards were quickly overpowered and the occupants of the first two houses were taken by surprise and quickly captured. Dwyer and three of his companions were in the third house (see left). With the house surrounded, McDonald demanded Dwyer's surrender. A negotiation of sorts ensued, during which Dwyer organized safe passage for the owner of the house and his family. Then rather than surrendering, the rebels opened fire on the surrounding troops, killing one of them.

A brisk battle ensued, and McDonald ordered the thatched roof to be set on fire. The smoke and falling straw embers made it extremely difficult to reload their breech-loaded muskets to continue the battle. The situation took a turn for the worse when one of Dwyer's companions – Sam McAllister – was severely wounded in the arm. Their situation was quickly becoming hopeless. Mc Allister had deserted from the Antrim Militia and knew he faced instant death by firing squad if captured. He came up with a radical plan to give his companions a chance to break out. By pretending to make a run for it, McAllister would draw fire from the troops, and while they were reloading their single-shot muskets, the others could dash out and try to make their escape. The door was duly opened, and McAllister instantly took fire from the troops. Dwyer dashed out and made his escape. By local lore he was wearing only flannel underwear (no doubt as camouflage against the snow) and in his bare feet. Despite hot pursuit he made good his escape and lived to fight another day. It was a fatal night, though, for the rest of his party. All were later shot or hanged, with only one surviving by becoming a government witness (a most heinous crime in Irish eyes).

The house survives to this day and is open to visitors during the summer months.

Price on his head

He continued to survive in the mountains and became a thorn in the side of the government, which was anxious to snuff out the last embers of rebellion in case the French might once again provide assistance and spread their heretical ideals. A reward was offered for his capture, and a proclamation in 1800 gave his detailed description:

Michael Dwyer...five feet nine or ten inches high, very straight in the back, short neck, square shoulders, a little in-kneed, rather long legged, with a little rise on the shin bone, very long feet, black hair and complexion, broad across the eyes, which are black, short cocked nose, wide mouth, thin lips, even teeth, but stand separate, very long from nose to the end of the chin, full breasted and rather full faced, born in Imale (sic). Five hundred guineas for taking him.

Knowing every cave and wood, he remained at large in his native mountains. He even found time to get married, to Mary Doyle in 1798, and father three children Mary Ann (b. 1799), John (b. 1801) and Peter (also b. 1801). He seems to have been a master of disguise with immense courage. He could move freely around the nearby city of Dublin, and at one point mingled among government workmen constructing a strategic army base in the mountains designed to aid in his capture!

Robert Emmet rebellion

Dwyer was introduced to the famous Robert Emmet, a maverick young revolutionary based in Dublin, and they met on several occasions. Emmet was determined to make another attempt at rebellion and had hoped for support from Dwyer. Dwyer saw him as a hopeless amateur when it came to security and despite the fact that Emmet had been promised support from no less a figure than Napoleon Bonaparte in France, Dwyer only gave conditional support. His concerns proved to be prophetic – Emmet's rebellion of 1803 was crushed the day it began, and he was captured and hanged shortly thereafter.

The government now redoubled their efforts to root Dwyer out of the mountains. Most of his family was imprisoned, though his wife Mary managed to avoid capture. Anyone found guilty of harbouring him was also imprisoned, and the army placed groups of two and three troops in houses where he was known to take refuge. The pressure on him became intense, and with his wife pregnant with their fourth child, he had little option but to give himself up.

On 14th Dec 1803, he presented himself at Humewood, home of the liberal local MP, William Hoare Hume. He requested voluntary exile with his family to America as a free man, and while Hume undertook to do what he could, in the end a government decision was taken to ship him out to Australia, much to his disappointment.

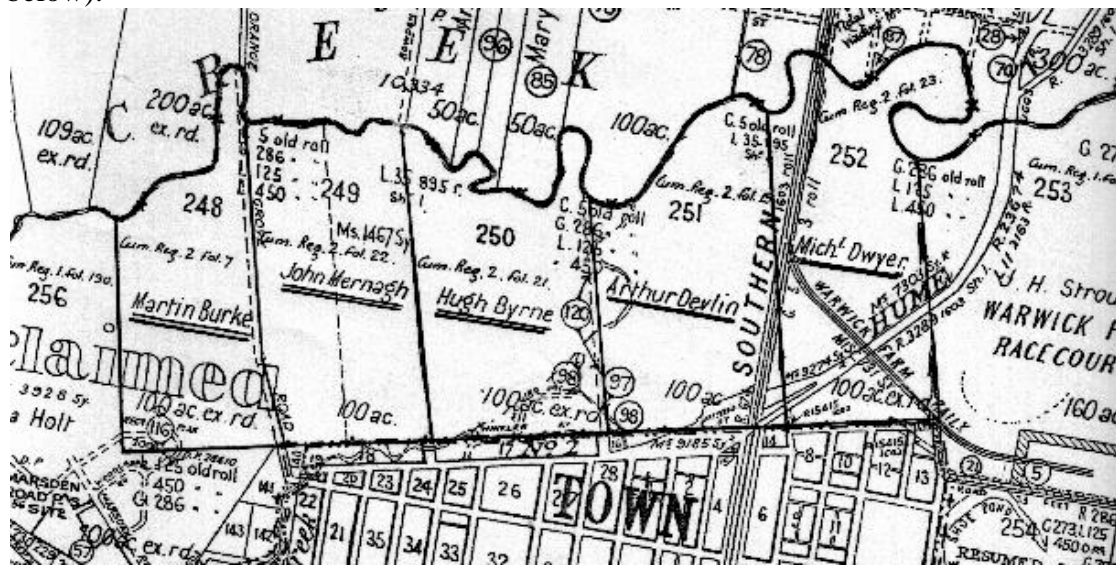
He was taken to Dublin Castle for interrogation, but true to form, gave up no useful information and was taken to Kilmainham Gaol. Although technically a free man rather than a convict, he was housed with other felons, and had to suffer the cruelty inflicted by its infamous governor, Dr. Edward Trevor, a sadistic character who had been investigated more than once for his brutal treatment of prisoners.

The time passed slowly, but eventually he set sail with his wife, Mary, and four of his companions (Arthur Devlin, Hugh Vesty Byrne, Martin Burke and John Mernagh) on board the *Tellicherry*, on Aug 28th 1805, bound for the penal colony of Botany Bay.

Off to Botany Bay

Leaving Ireland was no doubt a heart-rending time for Dwyer and his wife – they had to leave their four children behind with relatives rather than risk their lives through sickness and fever on the perilous six month voyage to Australia. The hill at Queenstown (modern Cobh) on the south coast was the last he would ever see of his native land.

They arrived safely at their destination in Port Jackson, (modern Sydney, Australia). Dwyer's party presented their letter of introduction to the governor of the colony, Gidley King, and he and his companions were granted neighbouring plots of 100 acres each at Cabramatta, (in the present day Sydney suburb of Liverpool, see below).



With £300 supplied by the government for provisions, and free labour supplied by prisoners, they set about clearing their plots, building new homes and starting new lives as farmers. After years of hardship and terror, the future finally looked optimistic for Dwyer and his family. The birth of their fifth child, James (b. 1807) at their new home reflected this optimism.

Life was not easy, though, in the colony. The weather and land were harsh, and it struggled to support itself. Supplies of food had to be brought over from England to avoid starvation. In 1805 it had a population of about 8,000, comprising a fusion of religious persuasions, many of whom were settled former convicts. It was the practice for the government to give grants of land and free starting provisions to those who

had served their time, and many took up the offer since they had little to return to back in Ireland.

Governor William Bligh

The idyllic new world of the Dwyers did not last, however.

Governor King retired in April 1806 and was replaced shortly afterwards by Captain William Bligh. Bligh, a hot-headed, vindictive character, is best known today as the infamous captain featured in the 1932 novel and later movie – *Mutiny on the Bounty*. By the time he arrived in Port Jackson, he had been court marshaled *twice* – once for the *Bounty* episode and a second for a confrontation on the *Nore*.

Bligh must have already known of Dwyer and his exploits, since he had spent time doing survey work in Dublin harbor in 1800, when the Wicklowman was at the height of his fame. When rumours of rebellion circulated in the colony in 1807, Bligh had Dwyer arrested and brought to trial. The charges were found to be groundless by the court, but Bligh refused to accept the verdict. His own idea of power is best summarized in a quote he once made:

“Damn the law. My will is the law and woe to any man that dares to destroy it!”

Dwyer was re-arrested and at a rigged re-trial, was found guilty and imprisoned in Norfolk Island, a desolate place over 1,000 miles out in the Pacific. His companions were taken care of in like manner, and sent to Newcastle and Van Diemen's Land (modern Tasmania).

Return to Cabramatta

Fortuitously, Norfolk Island was closed down within a year, and Dwyer found himself transferred to Van Diemen's Land. Though still imprisoned, the much closer proximity meant his wife Mary could join him. Their sixth child, Brigid, was born there. Further good fortune followed when Bligh suffered his third mutiny -he was overthrown by his own troops at Port Jackson. Mary seized the opportunity to plead with the mutineers for her husband's release. In Jan 1809, Dwyer and his companions were allowed to return to Cabramatta to resume their old lives.

The family seems to have thrived under the new governor, Lachlan Macquarie, an energetic visionary who has probably left his mark on Sydney more than any other official then or since.

Dwyer was appointed constable of nearby George's river in 1810 – the poacher had become gamekeeper. He even hosted Macquarie in his home while the governor was carrying out planning for the town of Liverpool where Dwyer's plot was located. He ran a successful business supplying government provisions and by 1819 was one of the largest landowners in Liverpool with 620 acres, 200 of which had been cleared. He was appointed chief constable of Liverpool the following year.

His fortunes began to fade shortly afterwards, however. In a decline which appeared to have been triggered by the arrest and hanging of one of his friends, he took to drinking heavily. Perhaps he found his official position untenable. Whatever the reason, he was removed from his post and his business affairs began to suffer. His attempts to turn things around by investing in a tavern – the Harrow Inn- only made matters worse. He was reduced to bankruptcy, and clearly low in spirits, died from dysentery after a brief stay in a debtors prison on 23rd August 1825.

Mary lived to see all her children, including those left in Ireland, re-united around her, and passed away at the age of 79 in 1860.

Epilogue

Dwyer and his wife are both buried in the impressive Martyrs Memorial at Waverley Cemetery (see left). Here they can finally rest in peace in this remarkable place. Their original farm can still be seen beside Cabramatta Creek in the Sydney suburb of Liverpool. The modern Jacqui Osmond softball centre beside Warwick Farm Racecourse is on the original lands. Alas, no plaque or marker exists to record the Dwyer connection, but perhaps we can correct this in the future.



My pilgrimage to pay my respects at Waverley was indeed a poignant experience.

oOo

Killenure Castle – a Short story

We have received word of a new booklet recently published about Killenure Castle, one of the surviving O'Dwyer castles. It was launched as part of the recent announcement of the opening of the castle grounds to the public:



“Opening its doors to the public for the first time, is a late medieval Killenure Castle, in the heart of Co Tipperary, just 5 miles from Cashel. The occasion is OAK. Open Art Killenure is a contemporary art exhibition and sculpture walk around a striking place. A book outlining a short history of Killenure and of OAK 2012, will also be launched. Opened

by Jimmy Deenihan TD, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht on Saturday 28th April 2012, the grounds will be open daily in May and June.”

“OAK comprises a contemporary art exhibition in the Georgian outbuildings, studio gallery and sculpture walk around the grounds. Over 30 artists have made work for the 2012 exhibition. According to the smart booklet about Killenure launched by the Minister, ‘OAK is the brainchild of the owners - a sculptor and industrial designer. They are assisted in the inaugural OAK 2012 by co-curator and friend to Killenure, artist Eamon Colman (member of Aosdána).’

We wish them every success with this imaginative venture.

Joke Corner



Only a Genealogist regards a step backwards as progress!

Gene-Allergy: It's a contagious disease, but I love it!

My ancestors must be in a witness protection program!

Genealogists live life in the past lane!

Have you got a story, joke, recipe or enquiry you would like published? Please forward it by e-mail to oduibhir@eircom.net. Published by the O'Dwyer Clan, a non-profit organization devoted to O'Dwyer family history - www.dwyerclan.com.