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THE O'CONNELLS OF FOSSA

Elizabeth O'Connell

Early Genealogical Records state that the O'Connells were driven out of Magunihy to Iveragh sometime before the Norman Conquest.¹ However, it is certain that they were there in 1215 when an ancient Irish Manuscript, preserved in the British Museum, informs us that in that year *'Daniel O'Connell proceeded from Kerry in the North at the head of a large troop to repel the invasion from the land of Morven'*. He conquered and victor and vanquished sat down to a large banquet whereat O'Connell was himself vanquished by the charms of *'the snowy-bosomed Agandecca'*, daughter of the hostile leader. O'Connell immediately proposed, but the lady was previously engaged. The enamoured Kerryman formed a plan to carry her off by force, but the lady discovered his intentions, and suddenly returned to her mysterious native land!

In Fossa, the O'Connells have not only been associated with Lakeview (in the townland of Maulagh) for about 200 years, but they also have connection with Grenagh (through John O'Connell) and Tomies (through Jane, Madam O'Donoghue). In addition they have established associations with Pallas, Ballycarbery and Dunloe Castle and the O'Mahonys respectively being related to the MacCarthy Mór. As O'Heerin, who died in 1420, says in his bardic topography.

*"The O'Connells of the Slender Swords
Dwelt in the Bushy Forts,
Twixt the Laune and the Maine."*

For many generations during the 13th century the O'Connells dwelt at Ballycarbery as hereditary Constables of the MacCarthy Mór, and there is the well known story of the two O'Connell brothers, both bachelors and unfriendly, who divided the Castle into two flats, the older living below. MacCarthy and his lady came to visit the Castle and both brothers were anxious to entertain their distinguished guests. In order to solve the problem, the lady suggested that they would dine with whichever had the meal ready

earliest. The elder brother promptly sealed off the upstairs flat to cut off his brother's access to water and fuel. But the younger one cooked the meal in Spanish wine and used 'Liquorish' for fuel and so won the day!² The ruins of the old Castle still *'cast their giant shadow upon the sonorous fruitless furrows on the pure-coloured sea'*. In fact the estate has never been forfeited and the 'Manorship' is still in the possession of the O'Connells of Lakeview.

The history of the Lakeview O'Connells commences with the two brothers of the Liberator, James and John O'Connell, who both benefited from legacies from

two notable ancestors, first Maurice 'Hunting Cap' O'Connell of Derrynane who hunted his ancient pack of 'bagels' (beagles), up and down the hill sides of South Kerry, amassing a huge fortune through *'import/export enterprises'* but at the same time keeping a strict hold on the Liberator's purse strings.

A second, Count Daniel Charles O'Connell was



REASON & STRENGTH



Ballycarbery Castle, home to the O'Connells in the 13th century. Photo: Valerie O'Sullivan.

the last Irish General in the French Army before the French Revolution. He was in the Court circle of King Charles X and Louis XVIII and, among other decorations with which he was presented was the Grand Cross of the Order of St. Louis, which appears in his portraits and has a curious history. He bequeathed the sash to the descendants of James and



Maurice 'Hunting Cap' O'Connell.

the order to those of John. They were reunited again when Morgan, Donal O'Connell married Elizabeth MacCarthy O'Leary (in 1953) and received the star back as a wedding present! So, family history turned full circle.

During the Famine years the family was very active in helping in any way they could to provide food for the needy. The story goes that a widow woman, instead of the usual 'Widow's Curse', blessed the land and said "the ground would never grow a bad potato" and indeed Lakeview potatoes were always good and floury!

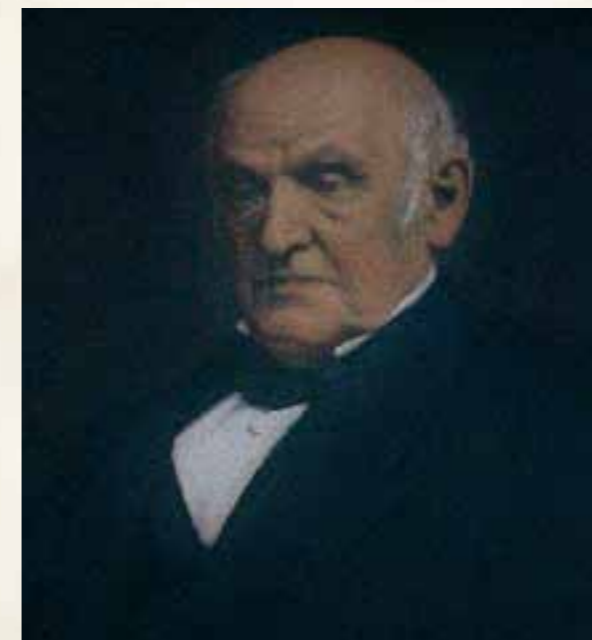
The first of the Lakeview O'Connells was James, the 1st Baronet who was born in 1786 the youngest son of Morgan O'Connell of Carhan. He married, in Killarney, Jane, daughter of Charles, the O'Donoghue of the Glens, whose wife was the daughter of Randal MacCarthy Mór and therefore an aunt of Charles MacCarthy Mór. He was the last of the direct line of his house and is commonly called the last MacCarthy Mór.

His father, Florence MacCarthy Mór married Agnes Herbert as his second wife, the eldest daughter of Edward Herbert – a large landowner near Castleisland. Soon after Charles' birth in 1750, Florence was returning from Pallas, at night near Christmas time, when he attempted to swim his horse over a swollen river and was drowned.

A few years later, Agnes was remarried to one of her Herbert cousins and seems to have passed Charles over to the wardship of his grandfather, Edward Herbert.

In the second half of the 18th century, society life around the Laune river was a very spirited affair, with hunting and constant house parties of which his grandfather disapproved, so at 12 years of age it was decided that he would not finish his education at King's Inn in Dublin as his father had, but was sent off to London to learn to become a Protestant gentleman. Little is known of his life but what we believe is that he was crossing Putney Common late at night on March 13th 1770, when he was either thrown or dragged from his horse by footpads, robbed and killed.³ By his will he left what remained of a huge fortune of a once immense estate to his grandfather Edward Herbert.

When James and his bride arrived in Fossa they initially stayed with his brother, John, at Grena (later Grenagh) nearby, but then they rented the Land Agent's house 'Maulagh' from the Herberts in 1821 and lived there until they moved into Lakeview. At that time the main entrance to the demesne was by the present back gate, as the present avenue was not created until the building was completed in 1870. The western boundary lands were sold after the Second World War, but the cliff walk was retained and is still part of Lakeview property. James was



James O'Connell (1st Baronet).



Count Daniel Charles O'Connell.

created Baronet in 1869 and died in 1872.

He was succeeded by his son the 2nd Baronet Maurice James O'Connell, born in 1821 at Kenmare Place, Killarney. In 1855 he married Emily Clunes Ross O'Connor. He was a JP and in 1850 became High Sheriff for Co. Kerry. In 1861 when Queen Victoria visited Killarney he was amongst those who welcomed her at the station, and later was invited to the State Banquet which took place in her honour at Muckcross House. His eldest son Maurice, was killed at the Battle of Ingogo River in 1881, predeceasing his father. His daughter Ellen O'Connell (Lady Tucker) was born in 1855 and died in 1945. Maurice James O'Connell died in 1896 and was succeeded by his second son Daniel Ross O'Connell, the 3rd Baronet, who was born in 1861. He was also a JP and became High Sheriff for Kerry in 1891. He was a man of considerable mental brilliance, and was a fluent linguist, speaking French, German and Italian with fluency equal to English. At Trinity College, he





Maulagh pre 1870.



The O'Connell family outside Maulagh c. 1865. Sir Maurice (standing) and Lady O'Connell née Emily Clunes Ross O'Connor with their sons Maurice, Daniel Ross, Morgan Ross and James Ross. Seated in the centre is Maurice's father James O'Connell.



2nd Baronet Maurice James O'Connell.



Emily Clunes Ross O'Connell née O'Connor.

took the highest honours in French and obtained a Gold Medal for excellence. During his years at Lakeview he collected many exotic plants creating an arboretum, but spent the greater part of his life

abroad. He died (unmarried) in Italy in 1905.

He was succeeded by his brother, Morgan Ross O'Connell the 4th Baronet, born 1862. In 1884, he married Mary Pauline Hickie of Slevyre, Terryglass, Co. Tipperary. He died in 1919 and is buried in Fossa Old Churchyard. This was a privilege allowed because the family had donated the land on which the old church was built. Three generations of O'Connells are buried there. Two of the family stained glass windows from the old church were framed (by Philip Hilliard) and installed in the new church. Though he looked frail, Sir Morgan was capable of the most amazing feats of endurance, and thought nothing of tramping the bogs from dawn to dusk.⁴ On one occasion, he was playing golf at Lahinch, and on returning to his hotel, he was told his wife had been taken ill with typhus in Dublin. He gulped down some drink and sandwiches and, the last train having left, jumped on his bicycle and set off to pedal across Ireland during the night. In all he cycled 168 miles in 14 hours and arrived at 9am the following morning.



Sir Morgan Ross O'Connell (4th Baronet).

The story goes that his bike developed a puncture two miles from home and he pushed it the remainder of the way! The doctor, who had been up all night with his patient, met him at the front door and drove





Ellen Mary O'Connell (Lady Tucker), daughter of Sir Maurice James O'Connell.

him straight to Dollymount Golf Links for another round of golf (though Sir Morgan remembered none of this) but, had he not been forced to exercise his muscles in a different way, the doctor would have had another patient on his hands. As it was, he slept for 48 hours without waking! He owned one of the earliest motor cars in Kerry, it was a one-cylinder 'Darraeg' and was built like a governess trap, it had a maximum speed of 15mph on the flat!

He was succeeded by his son, Maurice James O'Connell KM (Knight of Malta), 5th Baronet born 1889. In 1920 he married Margaret 'Maisie' Purcell of Burton Park, Co. Cork. He was seriously wounded at Gallipoli at which he earned the Military Cross for bravery. Money was short, and a big house is expensive to run, so in 1931 Lakeview was opened as a Guest House and in 1933, as The Country Club Hotel with full alcoholic licence: charge for meals not more than 5 shillings! The hotel also had, in 1936,



Top L to R: Unknown, Commander Donal O'Connell, Unknown.
Bottom L to R: Unknown, Lady O'Connell (Mary Pauline Hickie),
Sir Morgan O'Connell (4th Baronet), Capt. Maurice O'Connell
(5th Baronet) in front of Lakeview during the Great War 1914-18.



Typical aircraft which landed at Lakeview.

the first airstrip in Kerry for which several of the old beech trees along the avenue had to be cut down in order to allow sufficient room for 'take off'. This was used by many of the hotel guests including a party who were attempting to climb the 4 peaks in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales in 24 hours, ending with Carrantuohil. After this, the climbers were happy to be able to enjoy a peaceful rest at the Hotel! At one time it was hoped that it might become the first Kerry Airport, but unfortunately it proved too difficult to overcome all the problems that would entail, so the idea had to be abandoned. The airstrip was also used by Cobham's Circus in 1937.

During the Second World War, things were very difficult. There was no petrol so buying groceries involved a 4 mile each way cycle ride to Killarney. The horse and trap also came into its own, though you would occasionally see cars with huge gas filled bags on the roof although there was hardly any carbide available to make gas. Lighting was mainly by candles or paraffin lamps. There was no coal or anthracite, so cooking was mainly by turf on old coal ranges. Fortunately the Country Club had its own, generator for electricity but life was not easy.

Mountain Climbers' Own Story

Night Ascent Of Scafell —Lightless

THE party of young Englishmen who arrived at Killarney on Wednesday night on the last stage of their attempt to climb the highest mountains in England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales within 24 hours, rested yesterday at the Country Club Hotel, Killarney, having climbed Ben Nevis (Scotland), 4,406 feet; Scafell (England), 3,210 feet; Snowden (Wales), 3,560 feet, and Carrantuohil (Ireland), 3,414 feet, in three hours outside their schedule.

The climbers were: Mr. Donald Lindsey Glegg, artist, and his twin brother, Mr. Donald Glegg, engineer of Rotherham, Coombe Park, Kingstons; Dr. David Molerworth, and Mr. Keith Porter, medical student, Guy's Hospital, London.

Mr. Donald Glegg retired from the climb-against-time at Killarney.

The story of their adventure, as told to an IRISH PRESS correspondent yesterday, is as follows:

"We left our car at Glen Nevis and sauntered up Ben Nevis at our ease, doing it in about 2½ hours.

"The descent we made in 30 minutes, and then dashed by car to Scafell, a distance of 200 miles.

"It was pitch dark when we arrived there, and we tried vainly to follow the official track with the aid of torches, but, after the first 300 feet, all our bulbs went—knocking them against the rocks did not improve them.

"We finished the ascent in utter, miserable darkness.

"Dawn came as we were driving to Snowden, a 221-mile journey, and we were certainly getting weary as we climbed up the Snowden track.

"From Snowden we drove to the R.A.F. aerodrome at Pwllheli, where our plane, a six-seater Dragon Rapide, formerly the property of the Duke of Windsor, was awaiting us.

"We flew to Liverpool, where we cleared Customs and, crossing the Irish Sea, landed at Baldonnel, again cleared Customs and set out for Killarney and Carrantuohil.

PERFECT LANDING.

"The rest you know. The landing at the hotel aerodrome was perfect. We did the 2,000 miles in 24 hours."

It was 6 p.m. when the plane landed at the Country Club Hotel, this left the climbers with only an hour to make the ascent of Carrantuohil within the schedule, but, except Mr. Donald Glegg, who was too exhausted to continue, they made the ascent and returned to their beds at 11 p.m.

All their arrangements, they said, had worked perfectly, but 30 of 34 mountains since which they had previously placed in position to guide them on their night climb of Scafell had been removed.

A ditty of the time goes:-
'Bless 'em all, Bless 'em all,
the long and the short
and the tall,
bless De Valera and
Seán McEntee,
who gave us brown bread
and a half ounce of tea.'

The Country Club Hotel finally closed its doors in 1954 and Lakeview reverted to being a private house once more.

Other children of Morgan Ross and therefore brothers and sisters of Maurice James were:-

Lucila O'Connell who was born at Grenagh in 1885 and became a Sacred Heart Nun and an educationalist.

Donal O'Connell KM Captain RN (Retired), born 1893 and died c. 1960. He was an expert on pre-history and founded the Kerry Archaeological Survey by which finds could be examined and transferred to the National Museum in Dublin. He also founded the first Archaeological Society in Killarney in which he took a very active part, and was a very well known sight, driving his red Mini, somewhat erratically, throughout the country, photographing and collecting artefacts, many of which are now in both the Museums of Cork and Dublin. He was also responsible for the erection of the Ogham Stones on a special site in Beaufort. He started the first branch of the Knights of Malta in Killarney, of which he was a member, which is still flourishing.

Basil O'Connell K.M. was born in 1900. In 1935 he married Lucila Deasy of Cnoc na Faire, Birr, Co. Offaly. For many years he worked



The blessing of the first plane at Lakeview, 1937.

in the Malaysian Police Force. During the Second World War he was taken prisoner by the Japanese. On retirement he devoted his life to Genealogy and the O'Connell family tracts. He died in the States in 1972. His son, Maurice Hugh O'Connell was born in 1936 and married Ann Gillespie in 1961. Maurice was a member of the Dublin City Council (1967-1973) and of Seanad Éireann (1981-1983). His other son is Seamus O'Connell who was born in 1941.

Sir Maurice died in 1949 and is buried in old Fossa Church graveyard. He was succeeded by his son, Morgan Donal O'Connell, the 6th Baronet who was born in 1923. In 1953, he married Elizabeth MacCarthy O'Leary of Coomlagane, Millstreet, Co. Cork. Morgan spent several years at the Savoy Hotel in London, and the Hibernian Hotel in Dublin, training to take over the management of the Country Club Hotel, before joining the Royal Corps of Signals during WW2 and serving in France and Germany. He died in 1989 and is buried in old



Fossa Church graveyard.

Morgan also had a sister, Joan, who was born in 1926. She served in the Women's Royal Naval Service between 1947 and 1953 and married Lt. Commander John A.V. Hickley RN who died in 2004. In 1970, they had emigrated to New Zealand. Their son, Martin, born in 1957 married Robyn



Lakeview c. 1920.



Family group in front of Lakeview. L to R top: Lady O'Connell, Sir Maurice O'Connell, Morgan O'Connell; L to R bottom: Basil O'Connell, Joan O'Connell, Seamus O'Connell, Lucila O'Connell (wife of Basil), Maurice Hugh O'Connell (boy) and Donal O'Connell.

Jenkins and they have three children, Joanna, Cameron and Patrick.

Morgan Donal was succeeded by his eldest son and 7th Baronet, Maurice James O'Connell, who was born in Killarney in 1958. In 1993, he married Francesca Raleigh and they have a son Morgan Daniel, who was born in 2003.

Other children of Morgan Donal and Elizabeth are:- **Frances O'Connell**, born in 1954, married Roy Telling in 1986 and they have a son, Ross Telling who was born in 1989.

Susan (Sue) O'Connell was born in 1956, married Julian Glasgow in 1993.

John Morgan O'Connell, was born in 1958. John is a Ph.D of Ethnomusicology.

Katherine (Kate) O'Connell, born 1962.

Claire O'Connell, born 1967 and was married in 2004 to Edward Elton.



Jane O'Connell, daughter of John O'Connell.

GRENAGH

John O'Connell M.P., the third son of Morgan O'Connell of Carhan was born in 1778. He was a very vivid personality, more like his brother, Daniel, The Liberator, than his brother James. He was a man



The house at Grenagh as it is today.



Portrait of Daniel O'Connell 'The Liberator'.



Sir Morgan & Lady O'Connell with their daughter Katie.



Sir Maurice and Lady O'Connell née Purcell with Morgan and Joan c. 1930.

of great height and bulk, very much the country squire which was his delight. In 1806 he married Elizabeth Coppinger of Ballyvolane. After a year of living with his in-laws at Barry's Court he settled at Grena (Grenagh) where he kept open house. John led the Catholic party in Kerry whilst Dan led the party in Dublin. He was a convincing public speaker and a noted pistol shot and is credited with 18 duels. One of these, against Richard Blennerhasset, in the year 1813, nearly cost him his life, and is probably the reason that there are no portraits of him to be found.

He was a man of indomitable courage and a famous sportsman. He bred a special class of Beagle of a very large size and used them for hunting hares. He also had his own pack of Staghounds.⁵ Contemporary papers give accounts of special hunts to entertain notables visiting Killarney, though he refused to hold one for Sir Walter Scott as he believed he had anti-Catholic tendencies! The hunt followed on horseback in the usual manner in winter, but he gave occasional stag hunts in the mountains during the Summer. On these occasions, the stag being driven from his lair by beaters, was pursued on foot

and finally driven to take to the water where the principal people waited on large barges. The shores were lined with country people.

John spent lavishly, but the Great Famine with the consequent drop in the value of landed property, finally broke an ageing man, although it was said of him that *'nothing became him more than misfortune.'*



Sir Morgan Donal O'Connell.



Sir Maurice James Donagh O'Connell.



Sir Maurice O'Connell.

He died in France in 1853.

Amongst the five children that survived him was his eldest daughter, Jane Frances O'Connell who born around 1812. She was married firstly to Charles, The O'Donoghue of the Glens who died 1833 and had, posthumously an only son Daniel, The O'Donoghue of the Glens who was born in 1833, died in 1889 and is buried in Muckcross Abbey.

Her second marriage in 1839 was to John MacCarthy O'Leary, who was born in 1814 and was the son of Denis MacCarthy O'Leary of Coomaglane, Millstreet, Co. Cork.

As we have seen, these were the ancestors of Elizabeth MacCarthy O'Leary, wife of Morgan Donal O'Connell. Thus after many years, the histories of both Lakeview and Grenagh were conjoined.



Lakeview as it is today.

*There's O'Connell's famed home on the Lower Lake Shore,
Where Nature has given her beauties galore.
You may talk of Versailles and its artful displays,
And how Lake Maggiore has the sunniest days,
But, in sunshine or shade, in smiles or in tears,
There is no superior in two hemispheres,
To where lake views and mountains entwine o'er and o'er,
At O'Connell's famed home on the Lower Lake shore.*

*Cold must be the heart and dull must be the mind,
That at Lakeview contentment and rest cannot find.
Not alone has each season attractions sublime,
But each day and each hour in the passage of time,
Gives new views to delight as we wander along,
Amidst scenes to describe which how poor is my song.
'Tis a foresight of Heaven! I cannot say more,
Of O'Connell's famed home on the Lower Lake shore.*

Lines written by the late Daniel MacSweeney, Draper, Main Street, Killarney, in the late 19th century.

