

# MOIRA

A FINE PERSPECTIVE

Moira History Presentation  
by David McFarland

In Moira, we are at the heart of some of the most amazing history. This small village has had an enormous impact on social, political, religious and military life in Ireland, the United Kingdom and across the world. Where we live, play and work was once a place where Kings and warriors fought, where Knights and Earls had their magnificent homes; where the children of nobility played. Moira has important links to the Siege of Derry and the Battle of the Boyne and other violent events in Ireland's history. A lad who ran in these meadows was a hero in the American war of Independence and another was largely responsible for the establishing of Central India as part of the British Empire.

But Moira is also a place where a host of ordinary folk, just like us, lived and worked and died. Here were hard-working people who toiled in their homes and in the fields and quarries of the district to raise their families. Some battled through the most extreme poverty and endured terribly difficult times, religiously, politically and socially. They have left a legacy of a special village for us to experience and enjoy and preserve.

A word of explanation is necessary concerning the title of this short history, "Moira – a fine perspective." In 1799 a certain Gabriel Beranger, a noted watercolour artist and antiquarian, was a visitor in the village. He is noted for his flowery language but beautifully described the Demesne and Castle. He said the view of the Castle from the wood "forms a fine perspective." Though my language will be less flamboyant, I hope these pages open up a "fine perspective" on the village we love.

Moira will always have a very special place in my heart and I hope that this account will help you know and appreciate Moira more.

David McFarland

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## *Battles and barbarism*

On the north-west corner of County Down lies a beautiful old village, know over time as Magh-Rath, Moirath, Moyrah, Moyra and eventually Moira. Some say the village of Moira was flourishing when Lurgan had only a few houses and Belfast was little more than a ford on the River Lagan,<sup>1</sup> though that may be local exaggeration. Certainly a community of sorts has existed for centuries; some evidence lies hidden from the view of all but the most knowledgeable, while other evidence is walked upon daily with little understanding of its significance.

Archaeologists talk of a crannog, a man made island or dwelling usually built on stilts in a lake or bog, in the townland of Drumbane or Risk.<sup>2</sup>

Growth in population and the ensuing development of the land over the years has left little to remind us of early life in this area except for the numerous earthen raths in and around Moira. The best preserved example and perhaps most visible is the Rough Fort on the Old Kilmore Road. The Green at Claremont is all that is left of another of these ring forts. One close to the quarry on the Lurgan Road has long since been levelled. The rath in the town-land of Aughnafosker, just behind Glebe Gardens, is called Pretty Mary's Fort. It is a good specimen of a multi-vallate ring-fort or a fort with many ditches.<sup>3</sup>



Pretty Mary's Fort



Rough Fort



The Fort at Claremont

Many such forts have long since been levelled. In 1872, Maralin Parish schoolmaster, Robert McVeagh took Dr John O'Donovan to the townland of Ballymackeanan where he pointed out the site of a former fort. "This" said McVeagh, "was one of the finest forts in this Parish, but it was levelled some years before I was born to give room to cultivation, for people can not afford here to pay rent for waste ground and in my own memory twenty-four forts have been levelled within the Parish."<sup>4</sup>

It is these forts that almost certainly give Moira its name, being anglicised from the original Irish "Magh Rath" meaning the Plain of the Ring Forts. These forts and crannogs were all means of protection in a barbarous society.

The situation of Moira village, close to Lough Neagh and close to the Lagan, was always likely to attract those who wanted to rule or destroy. Over the centuries Moira has been the scene of battles and has endured much adversity before becoming a desirable place to live.

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<sup>1</sup> Lurgan Mail article 10/11/95

<sup>2</sup> Craigavon Historical Society - Review Vol. 2 No.1

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Dr. O'Donovan's letters preserved in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

The Romans visited Ireland but did not invade. They believed this island to be a barbarian place. It was “the land where the limits of the known world should be placed” and where the “natives are wholly savage and lead a wretched existence because of the cold.”<sup>5</sup> We know the Romans mapped the British Isles, so they at least knew our coastal areas and one of their maps clearly shows Belfast Lough, with a river flowing into it. It may be romantic for a historian to imagine one of those Roman map makers sailed up Belfast Lough and explored the Lagan as far as Moira! I say this because a Roman coin from the time of Vespian (70 AD - 79 AD) was unearthed here shortly before World War 1 and is now in the Ulster Museum in Belfast. How it came to be in the Moira neighbourhood remains a mystery. There have been greater finds of coins from a later period 79 -138 AD in other parts of Ireland but this coin did not form part of a hoard and there was nothing with it of comparable age or similar origin. Perhaps it was dropped by an Irish mercenary returning home, or by a Roman deserter, or perhaps it was booty taken by Irish raiders on the Coast of Britain.<sup>6</sup>

As we move forward around 500 years, we discover more barbarous activity. Hoards came to fight in 637 AD and battled for 6 days. Hundreds of them never went home. This Battle of Moira is the earliest historical record of life here.

The battle was between Domhnall, High King of Ireland and Congal Cláen, King of Ulster. It is described as one of the most blood-thirsty in early Irish History. Congal had killed the King of Ireland in 628 but was defeated the following year at the battle of Battle of Dun Ceithirnn in Londonderry. The new High King was Domnall, of the Clan Connall. Congal fled to Scotland and sought help from King Domnall Brecc of the Dal Riada, a Scottish kingdom that included northern Irish territories. He returned with an army of Britons, Scots and Saxons, including a Scottish King and a number of Princes. He quite probably arrived through Dunseverick.

One of the five royal roads from Tara, seat of the Kings of Ireland, ran due north and ended at Dunseverick castle. This ancient road was known as Slige Midluachra or High King's Road and crossed the Lagan at a fort near Moira – probably over the ford where Spencer's Bridge now stands.

Congal and his troops marched south. Domhnall advanced from Tara, with an army of Irish chieftains and princes. The two armies comprising 50,000 men on either side, came together at Moira on 24<sup>th</sup> June 637. Congal's army was annihilated. Congal himself was killed and also a number of the Scottish Princes. Sir Samuel Ferguson considered it "the greatest battle, whether we regard the numbers engaged, the duration of the combat, or the stake at issue, ever fought within the bounds of Ireland".

He wrote an epic poem in 1872.

*Congal: A Poem in Five Books*

*'My sins, said Congal, and my deeds of strike and bloodshed seem  
No longer mine, but as the shapes and shadows of a dream  
And I myself, as one oppressed with life's deceptive shows,  
Awaking only now to life, when life is at its close.'*

The routed armies fled over the Ford Ath-ornagh (Thornford or Thornbrook), up the ascent of Trummery, and in the direction of the Killultagh Woods, near Ballinderry. When the Ulster Railway was being built, great quantities of bones were discovered in the cutting close to the ruins of the Old Trummery Church and Tower. It is quite likely that they are those of men and horses killed in the battle.

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<sup>5</sup> Strabo – Greek geographer and historian quoted in BBC Northern Ireland – Blueprint series

<sup>6</sup> Craigmavon Historical Society - Review Vol. 2 No.1 and BBC Northern Ireland – Blueprint series

Rev. Henry W. Lett, writing in 1800's, says: "At Mr. Waddell's lime quarries have been found quantities of the actual bones of the natives long ago. This was their graveyard and the mode of sepulture was some form of cremation. After the corpse had been burned, the ashes and bones were placed in a small pot or urn, made of the plastic clay, so well known by the excellent bricks and tiles now manufactured with it, and turned mouth downwards on a flat stone in a hole in the ground about half a yard deep. And just below the kilns, exactly where it was possible to ford the Lagan River there stood a mound which a few years ago was discovered to consist almost entirely of human remains, bearing marks of calcination, evidently of those who had been slain in some great battle".<sup>7</sup>

Some of the names of the townlands in the area originate from the Battle - particularly Aughnafosker, which means the 'field of slaughter' and Carnalbanagh - the ' Scotsman's grave'. Apparently there was once a pillar stone in Carnalbanagh with a crude cross and some circles on it. It marked the graves of the Scottish Princes but was destroyed by vandals 200 years ago.<sup>8</sup> An elderly native of Moira claims the pillar was in the centre of the ring fort at Claremont.

For the next thousand years after the Battle of Moira, little or nothing is to be found in the records except for the Danes coming to the area and for a visit by a King to Moira! It is quite likely that Vikings were nearby for a time. They first came to Ireland in 795 and attacked Rathlin and in 832 attacked Bangor. In 839, they reached Lough Neagh through the Lower Bann and wintered there. Later they used the area around Maralin as a base to plunder churches in the north of Ireland - particularly Armagh in 850. By 925 they had left Ireland completely.

It was around this time that a King came to Moira as a visitor and not to fight! Murtagh McNeill wrote a poem called "The Circuit of Ireland". He traced the progress of the King of Aileck through Ulster in the 10th century and lists the places where he stayed the night and the list includes Moira.<sup>9</sup>

But Moira was never far from bloodshed. Just down the road from Moira, near Glenavy, is the scene of further battles between the descendents of those who fought the battle of Moira. The battlefield was at Cráeb Tulcha or Crew Hill. On both occasions, in 1004 and 1099, the native Irish were victorious, even if they still did not gain full control of the East of Ulster for another 300 years.

The next major record of life in the area comes from the late 16th and early 17th Century. Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, was engaged in a campaign against English expansion in Ireland known as the Nine Years War. O'Neill had a Fort at Inisloughlin, just off the Hillsborough Road.



It was also close to a ford on the Lagan. Tyrone met the Earl of Essex on 7th September 1599, for a "parley" on the instructions of Queen Elizabeth 1 at a ford on the Lagan and met him again in November that year. However, the meeting is more likely to have been on another Lagan which forms the headwater for the River Glyde in Co Louth. A truce was agreed but Elizabeth was displeased by the favourable conditions allowed to O'Neill and by Essex treating him as an equal. She said of O'Neill, "To trust this traitor upon oath is to trust a devil upon his religion." Over the next couple of years, O'Neill continued the pressure on the English and a

large reward was offered for his capture, dead or alive. He continued ostensibly seeking pardon while continuing to defend his territory but English forces kept up the fight in 1601-02. Eventually

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Eileen Cousins in "Like and Evening gone" – a history of Magheralin Church

<sup>8</sup> Craigavon Historical Society - Review Vol. 2 No.1

<sup>9</sup> ibid

they besieged and captured Inisloughlin Fort on 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> August 1602. This weakened O'Neill's power and robbed him of vast treasures he had concealed in the Fort.

After Elizabeth's death James 1 came to the throne and in a short time it was clear Tyrone's power was gone. He fled Ireland in what was known as the Flight of the Earls and the English settlement began in earnest. James granted all the lands in this area to several Irish freeholders, "hoping the same would be better manured and inhabited." The territory of Moira was granted to Irish man Murtough O'Lavery.<sup>10</sup> But Lisburn and the territory around here, including the captured Fort, were given to Sir Fluke Conway in 1609 and the Plantation of Ulster in this area was under way.

Between the years 1600 and 1641 a great change took place in the appearance of the area. The Lagan Valley at that time was very sparsely populated. The new settlers that Conway brought here had to clear the natural forest from the valley floor and surrounding hills. Previously it had been so thickly wooded that it was said "A man might almost make his way from McArt's Fort (the Cave Hill) to Lisnagarvagh on the tops of trees". By 1640, a shortage of fuel was being experienced at local ironworks so the de-forestation must have been considerable. Ireland has a considerable amount of turf-bogs. Large areas of this black earth have passed through the stages of de-forestation, and moorland and become at length fertile fields; "a remarkable example of which may be seen in the parishes of Blaris, Hillsborough and Moira, which lie towards the banks of the Lagan. The whole district was known as "the Bogs".<sup>11</sup> In a poem published in 18<sup>th</sup> C. picturing the Lagan in flood, the poet describes Moira and the area:

*"But soon thy intermitted rage returns,  
As Donaghcloney opens to thy view –  
Soon Maralin her flooded pastures mourns,  
And soon the nymphs of marshy Moira too.*

*Thy bloated form askance Kilwarlin eyes,  
A mass uncouth, misshapen, and impure:  
Maze next beholds thy progress with surprise,  
And Blaris sitting on her sandy moor."* Hafiz

As you would expect, the arrival of the new settlers caused great resentment among those already living in Ulster and eventually this boiled over into rebellion. The 1641 Rising spread all over Ulster. Lurgan was burned and Lisburn was besieged. Terrible atrocities were perpetrated by both sides but soon the tide turned against the rebels.

In April 1642, one of those atrocities was close to Moira. Henry Munro leading the Scots and Lord Conway leading the English joined forces to march on Newry. Their first encounter with the rebel forces was at Inisloughlin Fort and in the Kilwarlin woods. It would appear that the Irish had seized the Fort, as they had seized so many across Ulster, and hoped to stop the British forces marching south to Newry and Dundalk. But the Irish were shown no mercy and 150 prisoners were summarily executed. Kilwarlin means wood of slaughter.<sup>12</sup>

Lisburn and this whole area had suffered badly and much of the country was left devastated by the rebellion. George Rawdon, manager of Conway's estate wrote to him on 6th November 1657 describing conditions: "Some people who had leases are petitioning to give them up, having no money to pay the rent. You cannot think what misery is caused here ...corn and cattle bring in nothing, any trade there is, is in butter."<sup>13</sup> The country was also hit by a widespread cattle disease

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<sup>10</sup> The History of Ireland. John D'Alton 1845

<sup>11</sup> Ulster Journal of Archaeology Published 1860

<sup>12</sup> Ulster Journal of Archaeology Vol.8 1860)

<sup>13</sup> Land of Linen and the Lambeg Drum by Trevor Neill

which, given the description, was possibly foot and mouth disease. This restricted export of Irish cattle into England, and losses of cattle in the Lisburn area were considerable.

As the Plantation progressed, much Irish-owned land was confiscated and Ulster was planted with Protestant families from many parts of Scotland and England. The depression continued for some time but at length some improvement was seen. This encouraged the noble Lords such as Conway to devote money to improvements on their estates. And so Moira slowly began to be a relatively more stable and settled community, with the prospect of better times ahead.

# *Landlords and labourers*

## **Sir George Rawdon**

Major George Rawdon, (1604-1684) from West Yorkshire, came to the area in 1631 as manager of the Estate of Viscount Conway at Killultagh. Conway was largely an absentee landlord. George Rawdon personally deserves enormous credit for the remarkable achievements attributed to the Conway estate in the Lagan valley area in the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Not only was he a skilful estate manager and a successful farmer, Rawdon was also an enterprising industrialist. He established an iron works, and manufactured glass, soap, stockings and potash. He encouraged the local manufacture of linen.

All of this was achieved in the most difficult of times and in a difficult area. For much of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Lisburn was a small frontier settlement in an area described by Sir Arthur Chichester in 1601 as "one of the strongest holds of the native Irish in Ireland."

The land for settlement was only claimed by defeating the native Irish, and of course they would not accept their loss without a fight. The Irish uprising eventually came in 1641, and George Rawdon added military leadership to his achievements. His town of Lisburn was of strategic importance controlling access on the river Lagan, and on the vital communication route between Carrickfergus and Dublin. Rawdon saw it as part of his life's work to fight like a proud imperialist to retain military control of the town.

In the Rebellion, the armies of Sir Phelim O'Neill are said to have massacred many Protestants in Ulster. George Rawdon, with an army of 200 Englishmen completely repulsed O'Neill's army at the Battle of Lisburn. He escaped death when his horse was shot from under him. (Exactly the same thing happened to him the following year at Armagh.)

Rawdon did much to promote the early growth and development of Lisburn after the Rebellion. He became "mayor" of the town with tremendous powers over all aspects of town life. And not just within the town was his influence felt. He is responsible for the basis of the road system we have over much of the area today. One traveller, Richard Dobbs wrote in 1683: "All the highways within eight or ten miles of Lisburn are very good - not only for the nature of the soil, which generally affords gravel and sand, but Sir George Rawdon's care, who is, I believe, the best highwayman in the kingdom, and the industry of the inhabitants."

Rawdon was also sheriff and was not afraid to exercise his power to dispense justice; even to sentence horse thieves to death by hanging.

He also set himself to be guardian of the population's beliefs. George Rawdon was required to prevent Scots ministers from preaching; his instruction, in a letter dated 16th December 1649, was "That you suffer no Scots ministers to preach in the country again."

<http://www.education.mcgill.ca/profs/cartwright/rawdon/rawdons.pdf>. George Rawdon took this responsibility very seriously and boasted that his Scots neighbours "esteem me one of the horns against the Kirk." He was most active in the Lisburn area and even as far as Ballymena in opposing Presbyterians and had no misgivings about enforcing the 'Five Mile' Act.

George Rawdon the soldier, citizen and economist was a remarkable man indeed. Within 50 years of his arrival in Lisburn the small vulnerable settlement surrounded by wood and bog had become a centre of civilisation and economic activity, largely due to his untiring efforts. All of these activities made Rawdon so busy that his wife complained in a letter to her brother, Lord Conway, that she seldom saw him except noon and night. However because Conway was away so much, the Rawdons enjoyed a rather high social standing. It was his privilege to dispense Conway's venison at intervals and entertain lavishly.

Although Rawdon had such a part, and often forgotten part, in the establishing of Lisburn, the Rawdon name is now more associated with Moira and Ballynahinch. This is surely due to the influence of the later generations of Rawdons but those developments were begun by George.

Before the Rebellion he had built the Garrison at Aghalee, commonly known today as Soldierstown. It gets its name from a troop of horse and two companies of foot soldiers being stationed there during the rebellion of 1641-2. The garrison was close to the site of the present Soldierstown church.

In the early 1650s, Major George Rawdon became the new owner of a large house and estate in Moira. Major de Burgh had built the brick house there but did not occupy it for long. Rawdon received large grants of land, particularly O'Lavery's lands and property in Dublin, as a reward for services rendered to the Crown. The lands were confiscated because of O'Lavery's involvement in the uprising. The name Lavery is still very prominent in the area and will figure again later in the history of Moira.

Rawdon also bought the Ballynahinch estate around 1660. Over the next twenty years he rebuilt Ballynahinch from scratch, erected cornmills, and laid out the market square.

Among all his other activities, Rawdon had a great interest in horticulture. He successfully imported and grafted apple cultivars from England and raised a substantial orchard at his home. Something of that interest would be passed to his descendents.

Sir George Rawdon became Member of Parliament for Belfast in 1639 and for Carlingford in 1661 and was later appointed the Governor of Carrickfergus Castle. He was made a Baron in 1665.

Although the Rawdon family would eventually settle in Ballynahinch, later generations of Rawdons had big plans for Moira and were largely responsible for the Moira we know today.

### **Sir Arthur Rawdon**

George's son Arthur, (1662-1695) was born and grew up here. Arthur suffered from very poor health. He was the youngest of three sons. For health reasons, Arthur was sent to France in 1671, when he was just nine years old. His two older brothers were there too but both were tragically killed in separate incidents five years later. In the same year Arthur's mother died too. When Sir George died in 1684, Arthur inherited the Baronetcy and the estate. He was just twenty-two years old. He set about rebuilding the Mansion, which was to become one of the most magnificent and influential Houses in the country.

Those were perilous times in Ireland. In 1685 James II had become king creating much fear in Ulster. Arthur sided with Prince William of Orange. He had been Captain of a troop of horse while his father was alive and was now appointed commander of a regiment of dragoons. Despite Arthur's health problems, he was a fiercely committed to the cause and was such an effective leader that he was given the nickname "Cock of the North." Arthur Rawdon in particular was singled out by James' Lord Deputy as one of the chief agitators against the king and exempted from the pardon offered to rebellious Protestants in the Province of Ulster.

Rawdon's troop saw battle often; however his determined leadership at the "Break of Dromore," was unable to prevent the Protestant armies being driven further north. Rawdon was seriously wounded in the trenches in Portglenone, yet still led his men through tremendous battles and eventually retreated to Coleraine and Londonderry. He played a very significant role in the events leading up to the siege there including being one of the signatories of Declaration of Union one month before the siege began. However all the exertions and injuries had a devastating effect upon him and he was forced by his friends and physicians to leave Ireland before the siege began. He spent quite a long time recovering but received a Knighthood for his services.

Arthur returned to Ireland just days before the arrival of King William's army in 1690. Already in the Maralin and Moira area was Thomas Bellingham, an officer of the King, who was recording preparations for the battle with King James. Throughout June 1690, Captain Bellingham visited Moira and the surrounding towns and villages reporting the arrival of troops preparing for battle with James. Bellingham dined in Moira on 13<sup>th</sup> and next day wrote "we fancyd we heard some great Guns off, from Belfast, wch we hope are for ye King landing." It was indeed the day of King William's arrival in Ulster. Bellingham made several more visits to Sir Arthur and described in his diary the house and demesne; "walk'd in ye afternoon to Moyragh, saw Sr Arthur Rawden's house, and walk'd wth Capt Ross to ye conservatory."

This visit gives us a tantalising glimpse into a life committed to military affairs and at the same time committed to his garden. For several years, despite his heavy military responsibilities and despite the lawlessness in the community, Arthur had been enthusiastically involved in horticulture and botany. He and Sir Hans Sloane were close friends. Sloane wrote to Rawdon in May 1687: "Sir, I hope by this you are very much advanced in your garden." Sloane sailed to the West Indies later that year and the following May Rawdon wrote asking him to send seeds from plants growing in the Jamaican mountains, believing they might survive in the colder climate here.

While still recuperating in 1689, Arthur commissioned James Harlow to go to Jamaica to bring back living plants. For some time Rawdon wondered if he had been cheated, for he wrote to Sloane in March 1692, "I much wonder wt is become of James. I fear he has a designe to cheat me for I can not hear the least thing from him." But a month later Harlow arrived in Carrickfergus with around one thousand living plants. Many survived, probably under the protection of a heated glass-house which Rawdon is built in the demesne. He generously shared duplicate plants with other gardens.

According to Bassett's History of Co. Down, frogs were first discovered in Ireland at Moira, probably in those magnificent botanical gardens. Records describe this mansion as a "commodious habitation, surrounded by a wood, which affords beautiful walks, a large lawn extends in front, where sheep feed, and is terminated by trees, and a small Lough eastwards; the rear of the castle grounds contains a wood, with large opening fronting the castle, which forms a fine perspective." Arthur Rawdon became known as the "Father of Irish gardening."



1777 map showing the castle and possible lough

Sadly Sir Arthur lived only a short time to enjoy the garden he created and loved, for he died in 1695 on his birthday, at the early age of thirty-four. This was no doubt in part due to the injuries and illnesses he suffered in the war. He bequeathed his curiosities and specimens to Hans Sloane.

But what a magnificent castle and demesne he built in such a short time! In 1774 an official record commented on "the vegetable wealth, the horticultural beauty, the botanical attractions and the tasteful and intricate disposition of the gardens and parks of Sir John Rawdon's demesne."

## Sir John Rawdon

Sir Arthur's successor was Sir John (1690-1723). He was born just months before the decisive Battle of the Boyne which had a huge impact on life in Ulster. All his life he suffered from tuberculosis. John barely remembered his father who had spent every moment either obsessed with military affairs or gardening. Arthur died when John was just 5 years old and correspondence between friends of the Rawdon family suggest that Arthur's wife died before he did. Sloane ms 4044, f.21 British Library, London.

John eventually followed his grandfather and father into politics and became a Member of Parliament for County Down but he always lived in the shadow of their achievements.

The gardens his father created continued to adorn the Castle, though many of the exotic plants had withered and died. John blamed their loss on the carelessness of the servants and the death of Mr. Harlow, the gardener. John had plans of his own for the community.

Sir John was a well-loved landlord in Moira and was recognized as a person of great integrity, religion and charity. He determined that his tenants in Moira deserved to have improved properties and began rebuilding the village.

He built houses and businesses in blackstone with narrow carriage archways leading to quiet courtyards and much of this is still standing. He also built the Parish Church, though tragically did not live to see its completion. He was buried there before its consecration.

## Sir John Rawdon, 1<sup>st</sup> Earl of Moira

Sir John's son, also John, (1720-1793) was born in the castle and inherited the estates at the age of three. He is the one often credited with the development of the village, though if dates are correct, it is more likely his father was the prime developer. It is generally accepted the village was completed in 1735 at which point young John was only 15 years old.

Even as a teenager he was taking an avid interest in botanical specimens and horticulture. Sir Hans Sloan, who had been such an inspiration and friend to John's Grandfather Arthur, wanted to trace specimens of particular plants he knew were in the possession of the Rawdon family. The specimens were from the Moira locality and from Jamaica. Through a mutual friend he contacted John Rawdon. The friend wrote back: I have accordingly applied to Sir John Rawdon who is a youth between 15 and 16 years old and of great hopes – and though he has a great taste himself for gardening and knows most of our plants, yet out of regard to the friendship which has subsisted between your and his family, he is very willing to oblige you with all the plants he has of that kind to enrich your collection." Sloane ms 4054, f. 107. British Library, London Quoted in E Charles Nelson

The same correspondence seems to indicate that John may have been reared by his aunt. The letter concludes with a PS: "*Sir John and his aunt present you their respects.*" John's widowed mother had married Rev Charles Cobb, later to become Archbishop of Dublin.

It seems John was already known as Sir John since he was 4 years old. He was made a baron in 1750 and was known as Lord Rawdon but then in 1762 he was elevated to the peerage and became Earl of Moira.

Lord Rawdon was a well-known figure in Irish Government circles. He built a magnificent House, known as Moira House, on the South Quays in Dublin in 1752. He decorated and furnished it in the most sumptuous style; the octagonal salon had large windows, the sides of which were inlaid with mother-of-pearl. Also in the 1760s he built Montalto House, Ballynahinch.

Politically he was in favour of the uniting of Ireland under its own rule. The Rawdons lived during the penal times of wretchedness and persecution for Catholics. It was an era when it was punishable by

death for Catholics to practice their religion yet the Earls seem to have been a support to Catholics. In 1178 the Monastery in Maralin had been sacked by John de Courcey. Many relics were destroyed but Ronan's Bell, called the Clough Rua, was kept hidden in the community for centuries. When two brothers responsible for keeping it safe had a disagreement, the family requested Sir John to give it secure keeping in Moira castle. It is now said to be in The National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland. (Parish of Magheralin by Kieran Clendinning) Others say it was returned to the church but is lost again.

But Sir John's attitude to the Penal laws was even more publicly demonstrated. In the mid 1730's his hospitality was extended to Father Tighe of Magheralin parish. It was illegal at time, but the priest was a regular guest at Moira Castle. This hospitality was also extended to his successor, Father Lavery, who is described as an "intimate friend of Lord Moira." (Parish of Magheralin by Kieran Clendinning.) (If the dates given are correct, then hospitality was by Sir John while he was still a teenager and not yet known as Lord Moira). These clergy were not the last "men of the cloth" to be welcomed to Moira Castle.

John Rawdon was married three times. His first wife died five years after their marriage. He then married Anne Hill, sister of the Marquis of Downshire – a strange union because he and the Downshires were political opponents. She died without having a family, and was buried in the family vault. She is said to be the Lady Moira who supposedly haunts Moira Demesne or Lady's Bridge.

The third Lady Moira was Lady Elizabeth Hastings, daughter of the ninth Earl of Huntingdon. They married in 1752. Her mother was a famous follower of John Wesley, and was the founder of the Methodist group known as the Countess of Huntingdon's Connection. By all accounts Elizabeth was a remarkable lady with exquisite taste. She is credited with making Moira Castle a splendid place but even that was eclipsed by the splendour of Moira House on the banks of the Liffey in Dublin. Just about anyone of importance in Irish history of that time dined there in what was described as a place of constant and magnificent entertainments. Her obituary says her home was "the favourite seat of taste and splendour" and describes her as "a most liberal patroness... her great income was spent in acts of charity and unbounded liberality .... Her Ladyship's death is an irreparable loss to the poor of Dublin, as well as those who daily participated of her splendid board".

It appears Lady Moira may have spent much of her time in Dublin rather than in Moira and some historians suggest that depression or incompatibility with her husband meant them living apart. There are however indications of her in residence in Moira. An example is her actions during a particularly unsettled time in the 1770s in Ulster. There was an uprising under the name "Hearts of Flint" (The movement used a variety of names) because of rent levels, evictions and local taxation. Frequently these turned violent and on one occasion the village of Moira was under threat. The warning, later believed by Lady Moira to be malicious, was that the Hearts of Flint had "vowed to hang every Moira person at their own door" unless they joined the protest. Lady Moira was in residence and she wrote in haste to ask for soldiers to come to their aid. Her concern was not that her village people might attack her for she said she was "perfectly persuaded the infatuated people who surround me are incapable of doing me an injury." She wanted military support to prevent intimidation of her villagers. (See The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing by Angela Bourke)

Eventually the Rawdon family's links with Moira were loosened. They moved their seat to Ballynahinch. This appears to have happened before 1778. (A contribution towards a catalogue of collectors in the foreign phanerogam section of the herbarium, National Botanical Gardens, Glasnevin (DBV). E. Charles Nelson). When The Earl of Moira died in 1793, his funeral was said to have been the largest ever seen in Ireland and it took place in Moira. He was buried in the family vault in St. John's, Moira. The funeral was attended by upwards of 800 carriages of various kinds, with a train of 4000 people, among whom 2000 hats and scarves were distributed." (Samuel Lewis' Topographical Dictionary of Ireland – published 1837~  
<http://www.lecalehistory.co.uk/>)

## Colonel William Sharman

The castle was leased to Colonel William Sharman. He became Irish M.P. for Lisburn. William Sharman was very prominent in the history of the area. It was the era when the Volunteer movement was growing in Ireland.

The Minister of the Presbyterian Church in Moira was a Volunteer enthusiast. On 8th March 17\_\_ a company was formed in Moira. Rev Andrew Craig told how the Moira Volunteers began: "chiefly by my exertions and advice, and in consequence of an address to William Sharman, which I drew up, he accepted of the command of the company, contrary to the expectations, and perhaps wishes, of some of the neighbouring gentlemen, who took no part in the movement. My situation as chaplain induced me to take an active part in all the concerns of the company, which were a source of activity and pleasure."

Sharman not only was the local Volunteer Captain; he was elected Lt Colonel of the Union Regiment of Volunteers. By then the Volunteers had begun to pursue Catholic Emancipation. Because of that, Lord Moira stepped down as Colonel of the Union Regiment, and Sharman took his place. The Volunteers had originally been formed as a defensive force against the threat of a French invasion, but they carried their militancy into politics and made it clear to the King's representatives in Dublin that they would welcome the abolition of the restrictions on religious worship, the holding of office, and freedom of trade.

Sharman continued to have a very high profile in the Volunteer movement and was a member of the Volunteer Committee set up to investigate methods of effecting a radical reform of the electoral system. He was Chairman of the famous Dungannon Convention and a representative at the Volunteer National Convention in Dublin in 1783 and in fact served as President at the Volunteer convention held there in October the following year. (Notes on Sharman from the Ulster Museum) In July 1791 he was president of the festivities held in Belfast by the Volunteers and others to celebrate the fall of the Bastille. In 1792 he was reviewing general for the last Volunteer review to be held in the north of Ireland at Dromore.

The Ulster Museum has a portrait showing Colonel William Sharman in full Volunteer Uniform with the Moira Castle behind him where a Volunteer Review is taking place. It is possible the portrait depicts the Volunteer review hosted by Sharman in Moira demesne on 16 Oct 1784. What is astonishing is that the portrait was commissioned by Sharman and painted by Thomas Robinson in 1798. By then Sharman had changed allegiances and had formed the Moyrah Yeomen. This placed him against former Volunteer colleagues who had now become United Irishmen, yet he was reminiscing about his glory days with the Union Regiment.

A year later on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1799 Sharman hosted an Orange Order parade in Moira Demesne and took the salute on the steps of his Castle. It was one of the very first Twelfth celebrations and is described by a visitor from Dublin who was staying at the Castle.

*"I spented time here in a most delightful manner until the 12th of July, anniversary of the Battle of Aughrim, when the various yeomanry of the country, divided in different bodies, each with their proper ensigns, males and females, adorned with orange lilies and ribbands, marched up the avenues. We went adorned in the same way upon the steps of the castle, to see them all pass before us; from whence they were to march to the various churches in the environs, to hear a sermon on the occasion, and then adjourn to the public houses, to spend the remainder of the day in merriment."*

The Sharmans were well-disposed to Catholics, and in the next generation the MP William Sharman-Crawford would support Catholic Emancipation. But in 1799 the family were savvy enough not to antagonize their guests from the Loyal Order.

## **William Sharman-Crawford**

William was born here in 1781 and became a very notable and radical politician with the name William Sharman Crawford. (1781-1861) In his first contribution in Parliament, he spoke against the Tithe system for the repair of church buildings. He said “justice was not done to the Catholic or Presbyterian population in being called on to contribute to the support of a Church to which they did not belong.” (Hansard) He fought hard at the time of the famine to protect tenant farmers from eviction and became known as “the father of tenant-right”.

## **Sir Robert Bateson**

In 1800 the Demesne was purchased by the family of Sir Robert Bateson. (1782-1863) Bateson was MP for County Londonderry and also owned Belvoir Park in Belfast. The Sharman family still lived in Moira Castle for several years, continuing to lease the property. It is suggested that Bateson then used the Castle as a second residence, though it is more likely that it was becoming a ruin by this time. It was Sir Robert who around 1810 built the Market House we know today and which is still adorned by his crest on the four sides.

## **Lord Deramore**

Robert’s son Thomas (1819-1890) became the new landlord and was made Lord Deramore in 1885.

## ***Labourers***

It is always difficult to judge how well aristocratic landlords treated their tenants but it would seem that for the most part Moira tenants were as well cared for as any and the landlords in the Castle helped provide employment and income for the villagers.

## **Linen**

It was the production of linen in Ulster that was to transform the province of Ulster from the poorest in Ireland into the richest and Moira’s poorer residents reaped some benefit from that. The development of the linen industry in the village was due to the support of Sir John Rawdon, who gave premiums, and in other ways encouraged its manufacture. In 18<sup>th</sup> C. many people in Moira were involved in the linen trade. Most homes had a loom. Small farmers, labourers and cottiers supplemented their incomes by working looms from home. The raw material was supplied and weavers got paid for the finished product. In 1740 a monthly brown linen market was established. Large quantities of linen were sold in the town and neighbourhood.



*Linen industry in Moira*

However mechanisation eventually put an end to this income. New factory looms were invented and each loom could do the work of 100 hand weavers. The result was that tens of thousands in rural Ulster lost a valuable source of income. Any weavers who lived on uneconomical farms of 12 acres, or less, suffered most. The linen industry declined even more rapidly due to population reduction following the Famine and just about survived into the 20th century. The last weaver in Moira was Mr. James McCoy whose "weaving shop was in a cottage about half a mile from the Lurgan end of the village".

### **Quarrying and other businesses**

Moira was also an important centre for limestone quarrying. There were many kilns always at work, and vast quantities of the stone in its natural state were taken by the canal and carriage to distant parts. Evidence of this industry is seen in the lime kilns on the Clarehill Road. Another similar business existed on the Old Kilmore Road. There were also quarries of excellent basalt, in great demand for building. McKinley's quarry, now covered by housing developments in the Oldfort area, was used for the stone use to construct much of the properties on Moira street. A brewery and bottling business was located near Palmer's Corner.

### **Tenant farmers**

Of course most of the population were tenant farmers who worked the land in the area and one landowner, William Sharman-Crawford MP, was very helpful. He "greatly increased the prosperity of the tenants on his large estates by extending and confirming the Ulster custom of tenant-right and the main object for which he strove during his long parliamentary career was to give legal effect to this right and to extend it to other parts of Ireland. The tenant farmers justly regarded him as their champion." (A Compendium of Irish Biography by Alfred Webb 1878) There is an obelisk erected to his memory near Crossgar bearing the following inscription. "This monument has been erected by a grateful and attached tenantry, and other friends, in memory of one who, during a long life, was ever a most kind and considerate landlord, the friend of the poor, and the universal advocate of tenant right, and of every measure calculated to promote civil and religious liberty."

### **Charity**

Evidence from the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> C. indicates the charitable nature of some landlords. Arthur Rawdon's wife, Lady Rawdon "was endowed with extraordinary virtues ... and her charities were numberless to all in distress and will never be forgotten." (The Rawdon Papers by Edward Berwick 1819) A sum of £200, bequeathed by the Waring brothers of Waringfield House was distributed by the churchwardens to the poor housekeepers of this parish. The first Earl of Moira bequeathed a sum of money, which, with some other legacies, amounted to nearly £400, the interest of which was annually distributed among poor housekeepers. (Samuel Lewis' Topographical Dictionary of Ireland – published 1837 ~ <http://www.lecalehistory.co.uk/>) A memorial tablet to Sir Robert Bateson in St John's Church, Moira is an example of the flowery Victorian style of writing, but was apparently a sincere tribute: "His hand was open as his heart was tender and on his venerable head were showered the blessings of the poor. His home was hallowed by his spotless life and happy in the sunshine of his cheerfulness," etc, etc.

But the picture is not always as rosy as monuments and obituaries suggest. Lord Deramore was still evicting tenants from Gortnamoney, Moira in April, 1868 because of their inability to pay rent.

### **Schools**

The first Earl "erected and endowed an English Protestant school for 24 poor children and done (sic) many other acts of public munificence." (A general History of Ireland by John Angel Publ. 1781) In 1837 there were parochial schools at Moira and Lurganville, supported by Sir Robert Bateson. Lady Bateson established a school for females in Moira. She built the school-house, a large and handsome edifice with a residence for the mistress attached, and by whom also the children are principally clothed; and at Battier is a national school. These schools afford instruction to about 200 children: in a private school there are about 80 children, and there is also a Sunday school. (Samuel Lewis' Topographical Dictionary of Ireland – published 1837~<http://www.lecalehistory.co.uk/>)

## Quakers

Just outside Moira was the Friends Agricultural School opened at Brookfield in 1836 though this does not appear to have had the support of the land-owners. This may have been the private school mentioned above. The School was primarily a Quaker School for “disowned” children – for those not in membership of the Society. This was at a time when Quakers marrying non Quakers were automatically disowned. Later the terms of admission were widened to include children of parents in membership, who had limited means. Eventually, carefully selected pupils, not in any way connected with the Society of Friends, were accepted. Children were enrolled from all over Ireland.

The boys were expected to work part-time on the farm (up to 22 hours per week at one point), helping with the crops, looking after the animals, providing vegetables for the school and for sale. The aim was to make the school almost self supporting in food and at the same time give the boys practical training in agriculture and farm management. Girls were not expected to work on the land but they did the milking, they helped in the kitchen, cleaned, churned butter and did dressmaking.

Elementary school subjects were taught part-time, but the main objective was "to train the children in a religious life and conversation consistent with our profession". I am not sure how one Master taught that. Legend says his punishments included compulsory cold baths in mid-winter and forcible lifting by the ears! About 1877 a separate day school was set up for "the surrounding poor" which became Brookfield Primary school on Halfpenny Gate Road. Brookfield Agricultural School closed in 1921 but the final headmaster, Charles Benington, continued a small private school there until 1930.

## Famine and disease

Around 1845-1850, the Great Famine and fever raged through the whole of Ireland. In 1851 more than 1 million people died. It is said that the population of Ireland will not return to pre-famine levels until the year 2024.



Ballunigan House

Ulster was stricken by cholera in the mid nineteenth century and Belfast was particularly affected. But it appears it even reached Moira. It appears Ballunigan House, near Moira (close to the M1 Motorway) was once a Cholera Hospital and the old ruined tomb in the graveyard at the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church records the death of a well loved local Doctor. The inscription reads. “Thomas Simpson of Moira, Surgeon, who fell victim to malignant cholera on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1832 aged 34 years.”

At the same period the potato crop was failing, as it had done on and off since 1728 and then blight killed the crop almost overnight. Potatoes had been the staple diet of the paupers and were replaced by oatmeal, buttermilk, soup made from cows’ and sheep’s heads, and bread. The poorest had porridge for breakfast and supper. There was nothing else.

The famine had some impact on Moira. Correspondence of the period suggests that individual appeals for money from English friends were made by some residents. These were to aid efforts to provide meals for local children. There were reports of “the destitute condition of the labouring classes” in Moira and a committee funded by public subscription and Government in Dublin was able to provide some food aid to 300 people. (Craigavon Historical society)

In 1847 Lurgan Poorhouse was full and seventy people died there in one day. Yet it is surprising that, in Moira, parish records give no details of distress until the following year. In 1848 the Vestry "Resolved that each person applying for a coffin shall ..... furnish a certificate ..... of their incapacity to pay .....". That year the Vestry paid £11 10s.1p. for coffins. That would be enough for about twenty

persons. The number of burials in the Registers for the years 1846 - 48 does not show a significant increase.

## **Emigration**

Drift to the towns and emigration reduced the population in the immediate post-Famine years. In 1834 the population of Moira parish was 3930. By 1911 that had dropped to 1662. (From Archdeacon Atkinson's Dromore: An Ulster Diocese) The National School in Moira records show that there were 108 children on the Roll in 1906.

Of course by the time of the famine, the aristocracy had long since vacated Moira; the castle was a ruin and the land-owners lived elsewhere. They had built and sustained the village and had given employment but they had the means to move their other homes to more secure or more prosperous situations. The future of Moira was to a large degree in the hands of those who continued to live and labour here. It was a struggle to exist but many had nowhere else to go. That we have a village today is due in no small measure to those ordinary men and women who would not give up.

## *Sons and daughters*

Some of the children of Moira have become famous for a variety of reasons, probably none more so than the one who nearly became a British Prime Minister.

### **Francis Rawdon (1754-1826).**

Francis Rawdon was born in Moira Castle. His mother was the Earl's third wife, Lady Elizabeth Hastings. In later life Francis took on his mother's maiden name and became famous as Francis Rawdon-Hastings.

On one occasion when he was ten years old, playing war games in the demesne, a gun exploded injuring him in the leg. He always had an ambition to be a soldier. Francis was educated at Lisburn, Harrow and later enrolled in University College, Oxford but he discontinued his studies during a time of national military emergency. He was 16 or 17 when he first joined the army and spent the remainder of his life in the service of his country. He may never have returned to Moira except for his Father's funeral but his story is fascinating.

In 1774 he was posted to America and fought in the American War of Independence, and was present at the battle of Bunker's Hill. He quickly distinguished himself and later became Adjutant General of the British Army in America and commanded the armies that brought victory to the colonists. He is said to have been one of the most courageous Generals in the whole war. Some of his soldiers founded towns called Moira, in memory of his exploits. One can be found in New York State, and another in Canada where there is also a river of the same name.

While Francis was in America he was voted in as member of the Irish Parliament for Randalstown. He had become a Baron in 1783 and later became the second Earl when his father died in 1793 and served in the Irish House of Lords. He was to eventually inherit his mother's titles as well as his father's, and also much of the estates belonging to the Huntingdon dynasty. In 1790 he built Donnington Hall.

The Earl was extremely critical of repression in Ireland and did more than most to expose the misgovernment of Ireland. (See *An Historical Review of the State of Ireland Vol.4* by Francis Plowden Published 1906) In a debate in the Lords in 1797, Lord Moira described the horrors he had witnessed in Ireland against the Catholic people. He declared that ninety-one householders had been banished from one of his own estates (it is unclear which estate this was) He asserted that he wished to uphold the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland as much as his accusers. He only asked that the poor Catholics be allowed to live in peace." (The Land War in Ireland by James Godkin)

Wolf Tone was often a visitor at Moira House, Dublin and Rawdon was godfather to Tone's brother, Francis Rawdon Tone. He sent his own chaplain, Rev Mr Berwick to christen him in the year 1793". (The Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone – Autobiography 1828) Tone hoped to persuade Moira "to lead the rebellion in Ireland and so become one of the greatest men in Europe." Moira refused but did encourage the rebels without totally committing himself to their cause. His estate was found to be one of the principal arsenals. (There is no record that this was Moira estate; more likely his estate at Ballynahinch. But in Moira, the inn-keeper and a guest were arrested.) (McGill Faculty of Education, Montreal <http://www.mcgill.ca/education>)

To return to Edward Berwick for a moment, he was born in County Down, probably Berwick Hall, Moira, in 1750. It is suggested that Edward's grandfather was the Duke of Berwick, the illegitimate son of James II who had fought with James at the Battle of the Boyne, though locally that is thought unlikely. [http://www.kildare.ie/leixliphistory/archives/leixlip\\_around\\_1798/](http://www.kildare.ie/leixliphistory/archives/leixlip_around_1798/) Edward went on to be Rector of Tullylish (1787-1795) before going to parishes in the south of Ireland.

It seemed the village of Moira was to be just a distant memory. Francis sold his properties in Ulster around 1800 and after his mother died in 1808, he sold Moira house in Dublin too, thus closing his

associations with Ireland. Interestingly, in 1916, some of the heaviest fighting of the Easter Rising took place in what was once Moira House, Dublin.

In 1799, an illegitimate son had been born to him and Jemima French, the daughter of an Irish Baronet. One report claims the boy was born in Moira though I believe it is more likely to have been in another part of Ireland for Jemima was probably from Galway. The Earl did not acknowledge his son and eventually the boy was fostered and given the name George Hunn Nobbs. In 1828 Nobbs became an Irish missionary on Pitcairn Island in the Pacific Ocean where he was schoolmaster and parson to a community descended from HMS Bounty mutineers.

The Earl eventually married in 1804. He had various postings including Commander and Chief in Scotland and Constable of the Tower of London. He was a very close friend of the Prince Regent, who in 1812, gave him an opportunity to be Prime Minister in London. Unfortunately he was unable to form a ministry and so as a consolation prize, he was sent to India in 1813 to act as Governor General of India and Commander of one section of the growing British Empire. (BBC Your place and mine) Rawdon held this post until 1823 and was largely responsible for the establishing of Central India as part of the British Empire. During this time he was raised to the rank of Marquess of Hastings. While in India he was also involved in the purchase of Singapore in 1819 for the British.

Although Hastings had been mostly engaged in war during his time in India, he also attended to civil affairs. Among the public welfare works that he undertook were building of roads and bridges and digging of canals. He encouraged education among the Indians, founded the Hindu College at Calcutta in 1817 and encouraged missionaries to set up a printing press and a college at Serampore. And who was in Serampore at that time? None other than William Carey, the great Baptist Missionary, known as the "father of modern missions." Carey obviously had very close associations with the Earl and Lady Hastings. He dined with the Governor and talked of conversations and correspondence he had with him. The Earl even "gave an unequivocal mark of his approbation" for the College at Serampore and became a "patron of the infant institution." Hastings wrote to comfort Carey on the death of his wife. In Carey's will, when he bequeathed his books to the library at Serampore, the one book he named was "Hortus Wobournensis – a descriptive catalogue of upwards of 600 ornamental plants" which was given to him by Lord Hastings.

The Second Earl of Moira apparently was a very generous man and much respected. "His ample fortune absolutely sank under the benevolence of his nature"; and, far from becoming wealthy as governor-general, he returned England in desperate need of employment. He always had severe financial problems and large debts.

He was later appointed the first Commander-in-Chief of Malta. He died in 1826 but had left clear instructions that he was to be buried where he fell, if his "adored wife had no objections." But in a bizarre demonstration of his love, he instructed "that his right hand be cut off and preserved, so that it may be put with her body into the coffin when it please the Almighty to decree the reunion of our spirits." This "last earthly token" of his and Lady Loudoun's "attachment", he declared, "shall not be an idle lesson for our precious children, to whom I now give my fondest blessing." He was buried in Valetta and his hand was eventually buried with his wife 14 years later! (Francis Rawdon-Hastings by Paul David Nelson)

### **Dennis O'Lavery** (no dates available)

Dennis was a native of Moira. His family had been the local land-owners in days gone by. The land was granted to them by James but was later confiscated because of the Lavery family's support for the rebellion. Dennis grew up in poor surroundings and little hope. He joined the Army and was shipped off to America with thousands of others to fight in the War of Independence. He never returned to Moira but his name is legendary and deserves its place on these pages.

Denis O'Lavery served as a corporal under Francis Rawdon. In 1781 O'Lavery was wounded while carrying an important despatch. To avoid its falling into enemy hands he hid it in his wound.

*"Within his wound the fatal paper placed  
Which proved his death, nor by that death disgraced.  
A smile, benignant, on his countenance shone,  
Pleased that his secret had remained unknown:  
So was he found."* (Tales of the Wars - Saturday March 17, 1838)

The message was saved but the result was fatal.

Sir John Fortescue, in a history of the 17th Lancers, related the details of the incident and stated that a monument to O'Lavery was erected in Co. Down. Another military historian believed the monument was erected by Rawdon. A letter written sometime in the last century says of O'Lavery, ".. in rank a corporal, he was in mind a hero ... his country Ireland and his parish Moira in which a chaste monument records at once his fame and the gratitude of his illustrious commander and countryman Lord Rawdon. (Craigavon Historical Soc) The location of the monument has never been established. Ironically, it was Rawdon's Great grandfather who had confiscated the O'Lavery family's lands nearly 150 years before.

### **Anne Lutton (1791–1881)**

A less well known child of Moira was Anne Lutton but even today her influence is felt in this village. She was born and grew up in a house on the Main Street of Moira, just below the four trees. She has an interesting ancestry. Two soldiers called Ralph and William Lutton had come to Ireland in 1690 with William III and served in his army as officers – the same army in which Arthur Rawdon served. When the war was over, the brothers elected to remain in Ireland. William, was an ancestor of the Anne Lutton.

Anne's father, Ralph Lutton, was an only son of a prosperous father also called Ralph. He inherited much land and property in and around Moira. At the age of eighteen he married his cousin Anne, and became the father of nine sons and four daughters who outlived infancy. Anne was the youngest of these and was born on the 16th of December 1791.

Later in life, Anne described her home village as consisting of one long street, each side of which was ornamented by a regular row of full-grown lime-trees. "Conspicuous in this pleasant leafy street stood the spacious, lofty family mansion of the Luttons, lifting its three-storied, many -windowed front close to the sidewalk ; its ample garden lay all in the rear." (Eminent Methodist Women (1889) by Annie E Keeling)

Mr. and Mrs. Lutton were both unusually intelligent, though Mr Lutton was partially blind. Anne can hardly be said to have been educated. "Reading, writing, plain and fancy work, household management, and the single accomplishment of dancing," were all that was required of girls at that time. But Anne was a little home-bird. The first attempt to make her attend school failed, so the youngest child was spoilt and indulged. She was passionately fond of reading, even at five years old. She wanted to be an author, so she devoured every book she could get her hands on from her father's bookshelves. Her eldest brother gave her a lesson or two in writing; the schoolmaster paid daily visits to the house to instruct her in the rudiments of arithmetic. When she was 17 years old she attended a Moravian school, where she learned "a little grammar and geography, as well as satin-stitch and embroidery." But all her education, from Hebrew and mathematics to her exquisitely neat handwriting, were due to her own unaided efforts.

In 1811, Mr. Lutton left Moira and settled with his family on a small estate he owned seven miles away in Donaghcloney. The house was so different from the one in Moira, surrounded by lawns and gardens, and half-encircled by the swift-running river Lagan. These quiet surroundings were the perfect place for study.

Anne had always coveted the power of reading languages other than her own, began boldly to study Latin without a teacher. She had discovered a tattered "Lily's Latin Grammar" on her father's upper bookshelves. The book was rather battered; "schoolboys and worms had combined to outrage and deface it;" but Anne tidied it up and, with only what help her blind father could offer, she studied until she could read the great Latin classics.

Then she did the same with Greek, beginning with the New Testament, then Homer, Plutarch, Longinus and Demosthenes. To the classic languages she then added Hebrew, Samaritan, Syriac, Chaldee, Arabic, and Persian ; " a little " of Ethiopic, Hindustanee, Paissian, and Irish ; and not a little of French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and German. Oriental languages followed and in all, it is said she could understand more than 50 languages and speak 15 accurately. In addition, she became an able metaphysician, a mathematician, a musician, and a very good poet.

What was the point of all this study? Here was a young woman living in the "backwaters" of society acquiring the most wonderful education largely by herself, but it was of little apparent use in Moira or Donaghcloney. But she later saw the purpose. "It was a training process for higher and more hallowed duties," she said. Anne became a highly respected poet throughout Ireland and Britain. Publications by her or about her include:

*Poems on Moral and religious subjects.* 1829

*Memorials of a consecrated Life.* 1882

But it was for another reason she became famous in Moira and far beyond, as we shall see in a later chapter.

### **Sir John Lavery (1856-1941)**

Lavery is not quite a child of Moira for he was not born here but somehow Moira likes to think it adopted him.



John Lavery was born in North Queen Street, Belfast. He was the son of a wine and spirit merchant. His family were desperately poor, and his father decided to emigrate to America. But the ship broke up in a gale off the Wexford coast and he perished with 386 other passengers. John was only three years old. Worse was to follow, for within three months of this tragedy, John's mother also died leaving John an orphan. He was adopted by his Uncle, a farmer from near Moira. His address was 'Trainview', Back-of-the-Wood, Moira.

John attended school in Magheralin. It is said he detested arithmetic, and he later fled to Scotland. Eventually he got a job as a checker of railway wagons. He was only able to keep the job for a short time, until he was asked to make a monthly return! His lack of arithmetic caught up with him. But he had other skills.

He replied to an advertisement for a lad "good at drawing" and got a job as a re-toucher in a studio. From these humble beginnings, he rose to be regarded as one of the greatest painters of the late 19th and 20th centuries.

His name is immediately associated with a time of Edwardian elegance, the roaring twenties, scandal and the struggle for Irish independence. All of this set against the back drop of the Great War. In 1918, Lavery witnessed and painted the surrender of the German Fleet, disguised as a naval officer!

His portraits included George V, Winston Churchill and Michael Collins. We are left with the impression that he knew everyone in high society and every one in high society knew him. He was honoured by nearly every city in Europe, and received the Freedom of Belfast in 1930.

Today his paintings are very valuable. One sold in 2008 for almost half a million pounds but there are seven more expensive paintings by Lavery!



Churchill in 1915  
by Sir John Lavery

## Castles and cottages

We already referred to the earthen forts or raths in Moira. The surrounding countryside has many of these ancient evidences of our past. But many of the structures of later generations are now ruins or have disappeared. In or close to Moira, we had at least one fort, a tower, a castle and a number of churches all of which are gone from view.

Archaeologists are still trying to unearth the exact location of the Fort of Inislochlin. It sat on high ground overlooking the Lagan at Spencer's Bridge on the Hillsborough Road. Historical records describe it situated in a great bog and commanding the pass of Kilwarlin. This fort was garrisoned by an army in 1641.

Some say there was a castle as well as a fort at Innislooughlin, (there are at least five spellings of this name but all clearly refer to the same place) belonging to Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone. The castle had a draw well which joined the Lagan through a conduit. The Fort was 40 yards square with corner bastions. It was attacked in 1602 by Sir Arthur Chichester and surrendered on the 10th of August. Great quantities of plate and valuable property belonging to O'Neill, fell into the hands of the victors.

The fort was levelled in 1803 leaving only the south-east bastion which still survived in 1837. Today only the fall of ground is discernible. (The Castles of Ireland Compiled by Lee Johnson and Lewis Topographical Dictionary, 1837) Capt. Henry Spencer was Governor of the Fort in 1623 so perhaps the nearby Spencer's Bridge was named after him.



Richard Bartlett's Map 1602



At Trummery old church there once was a round tower similar to others in Ireland, except that it was the same diameter all the way to the top. It is dated from around the early 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Records indicate it was 60 ft high and 15 feet in diameter. (A topographical dictionary of the British islands by James A Sharpe Pub 1852) Tradition says the English soldiers, probably in the nearby Fort of Inislooughlin, used the ancient round tower as a target for cannon fire. (1832 Ordinance Survey) A great breach was made in the side

next the church, but only in the outer half of the tower wall. Another article continues "Nature, as if willing to hide the breach from the eye of the curious, bestowed on it a luxuriant covering of ivy, which gave it a truly romantic appearance. Upwards of thirty years since some person wantonly destroyed the roots of this plant and this once venerable monument of antiquity became a mass of ruins." (Illustrated Dublin Journal, 1862) The ruins were flattened in 1828, and nothing but scattered fragments remain.

It is such a shame that we no longer have Moira Castle as a landmark in the village. Anne Lutton who was born and reared in Moira wrote: "A hundred years ago (circa.1780) the little town of Moira presented to the eye of a stranger something extraordinarily interesting. It consisted of one long

street, each side of which was ornamented by a regular row of lime trees. Just where the houses terminated, at the lower end of town, were two gates exactly opposite. Each gate opened into a long avenue of tall trees; each avenue led to a noble edifice. One was the Parish Church, the other the Castle of the Earl of Moira; so that from one majestic pile to the other seemed but one continued avenue, with a lovely lawn of green at either end of it.” (Anne Lutton ~ "A Consecrated Life" -1880)

We are fortunate to have several other descriptions of the Castle grounds. One writer in 1774 is described as writing “with luxurious fancy upon the vegetable wealth, the horticultural beauty, the botanical attractions and the tasteful and intricate disposition of the gardens and parks of Sir John Rawdon’s demesne.” (Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland 1846. Page 781.)



1777 map showing the castle and possible lough.

Gabriel Beranger, a noted water-colour artist and antiquarian, was a visitor there. He described “an ancient building on the estate of the Earl of Moira which the Earl got modernised and made a commodious habitation: it is surrounded by a wood, which affords beautiful shady walks; a large lawn extends in front, where sheep are feeding, which is terminated by trees and a small lough eastwards; the rear contains a wood with a large opening fronting the Castle, which forms a fine perspective.”

(see the reflections of the couple in the illustration below and the shape on the map above. Both appear to indicate that the small lough eastwards may have been behind the wall on the corner of Station Road)



© Royal Irish Academy

It was Gabriel Beranger who most helps us see what the Castle looked like. His 1799 copies of Miss Sharman’s drawings give us a wonderful depiction of the setting. This is confirmed in the background of a portrait of Colonel William Sharman painted by Thomas Robinson in 1798 and held in the Ulster Museum.

Beranger continued, “On each side of this extensive lawn are shady walks through the wood, terminated to the east by a long oblong piece of water, surrounded by gravel walks where one may enjoy the sun in cold weather. And to the west lies the pleasure and three large kitchen gardens.” (The Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland”) Though this visit took place in 1799, when the Sharman family owned the property, it seems that much of what he saw must have been planted and designed by Arthur Rawdon.

But even a century after the planting of the demesne was begun, the residents still had a pride in the place. Beranger went on to describe a “large abandoned quarry” on the west of the demesne which “Miss Sharman got planted and improved and has called it the Pelew. It forms at present a delightful shrubbery with ups and downs, either by steps or slopes and has so many turns and windings, that it appears a labyrinth and contains shady walks and close recesses in which little rural buildings and seats are judiciously placed, with a little wooden bridge to pass a small rill of water. Jassamine, woodbine and many flowering shrubs adorn this charming place.” (The Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland”)

It is possible that this was McKinley's Quarry from which stone was taken to build the village. It has now disappeared under housing developments but was in the vicinity of Oldfort. Local people who were familiar with this quarry marvelled at the unusual flowers growing around it.

In 1822 John Loudon wrote that "Moira Castle, near Moira, the seat of the Marquis of Hastings contains some old trees and also some young plantations, gardening in all its branches having been attended hereby the present owner's father, when neglected in almost every other part of Ireland."

A topographical dictionary of Great Britain and Ireland published 1833 described the town and says; "The family of Rawdon, Marquis of Hastings, derive the title of Earl from this place and their ancient and noble mansion is adjacent to this town." But another book published in 1837 says the Moira demesne was still very extensive and well wooded, possessing many large and rare trees, with a noble avenue leading to the site of the castle, long since demolished. (Topographical Dictionary of Ireland – published 1837 ~ <http://www.lecalehistory.co.uk/>)

Some sources say the demolition was in the early 19<sup>th</sup> C. (e.g. McGill Faculty of Education, Montreal <http://www.mcgill.ca/education>) and the Handbook for travellers in Ireland -1854 describes the village, saying that "near it are the remains of the demesne of the former Earls of Moira". All this seems at odds with the Northern Ireland Heritage Gardens inventory and the Northern Ireland Planning service which date the demolition as happening in 1870. (<http://www.ehsni.gov.uk> and <http://www.planningni.gov.uk>). Perhaps the latter refers to demolition of walls or ruins that had been still standing.

Before the Castle Avenue development off Backwood Road, it was possible to see the "long" and "round" ponds. The Dark Walk was (a tree-lined avenue cut down during World War II) and a well preserved ice-house have all gone. It is a shame so much has been lost.

But Moira today still has some buildings that give us a flavour of our village nearly 300 years ago.

The earliest Moira building that still exists is Berwick Hall, the two storey "Planters" thatched house on the Hillsborough Road. This dates back to circa 1700. It was owned by the Berwick family and is one of the finest examples of a yeoman's home.



*Berwick Hall*

The parish and village owe their existence to the investment policy of 1730s and 40s. The Rawdon family were largely responsible for building the houses within the village and for the village's development. Stone houses replaced mud and thatch. The Chinese Restaurant, Midnight Haunt, opposite the Market House (Pentecostal Church) bears the date 1735. It is the kind of inscription that usually indicates the date a village was completed.

The Market House we know today was a later addition to the village and was built by the Bateson family around 1810. It is a two-storey three-bay structure with the central bay breaking forward on each side. Each of these projections seems to have been topped by a pediment but only the tympanum now remains. The Bateson coat-of-arms is set into each tympanum. The Market House contained a large assembly room and a court room, Samuel Lewis described it as a large handsome building, erected by the proprietor, in which a manor-court is held, every three weeks, for the recovery of debts under £5, by civil bill and attachment; petty sessions are also held here on alternate Mondays, and it is a constabulary police station. (Samuel Lewis' Topographical Dictionary of Ireland – pub. 1837 ~<http://www.lecalehistory.co.uk/>) It was still in use by the Courts until the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century.



The Market House had other uses and one is recorded in The Bible Christian 1838 which describes the Quarterly meeting of the Presbytery of Bangor on 31<sup>st</sup> July that year. It is entitled "Tea Party at Moira". The Unitarians record that they were joined by "a sample from every religious body in the neighbourhood .... in social intercourse and the cause of Christian Unity." Upwards of 170 ladies and gentlemen were served tea followed by many speeches "at very considerable length" and "with so much urbanity, eloquence and address, as contributed very essentially to the gratification and good feeling which universally prevailed throughout the evening." The proceedings closed at 10.30 pm. How wonderful to know that the same building, now a church, resounds to the proclamation of the glorious Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Apparently there was an earlier market house, because the book "An argument for Ireland" by John O'Connell 1800, records the minutes of a meeting in Moira Market House on 8<sup>th</sup> April 1782 to "consider the Dungannon resolutions." One of which was that the Penal Laws be relaxed. Col. Sharman was in the chair. Among the resolutions were: "That it is the undoubted right of this free people to be governed solely by their own laws." and "That next to our liberties, we value our connection with great Britain, as a blessing on which the happiness of both kingdoms depends; we look forward therefore with a pleasing conviction, that the justice of Great Britain will shake hands with the liberties of Ireland."

Magherahinch House is a very notable building, though its beautiful, secluded location keeps this gem well hidden. It was built by the Marquis of Downshire in 1838 on land bordering the Lagan and used by him as a country retreat. It affords majestic views down the Lagan Valley to the village of Hillsborough where he lived, a mere 9 kilometres away as the crow flies.

Just across the meadows in the other direction was Waringfield House, another notable Georgian building. It was the residence of the Waring family who in 1876 owned more than 2000 acres at Moira. That house burned down and was finally demolished around 1980 but the perimeter of the walled garden is still visible. Waringfield was clearly a beautiful location and nearby is "Pretty Mary's Fort." Canon Rudd in his book quotes this extract from the poem –

"Pretty Mary's Fort"

*I have read about Killarney's Lakes  
I have seen Shane's Castle Hall  
But the beauty of you Waringfield  
You far exceed them all.  
Long may the name of Waring live there  
In this ancient Hall to reign  
And keep an eye unto the poor  
That live round his domain.*

*We bid adieu to Waringfield  
With it's laurels ever green  
And to the weeping willows  
Down by the Lagan stream.  
And to the Forth and Burns' house  
And pretty Mary's well -  
To describe the beauties of this place  
No human tongue can tell.*



Waringfield House

Gabriel Beranger described a visit to Warringsfield (sic) with Miss Sharman. "I saw, for the first time, glass bee-houses; they are made conical and covered with cones of straw, to make them dark, otherwise, I was told, the bees would not work. The hives stand in a kind of wooden press, in the middle of a garden. This press had small holes in the doors, to let in the bees, from whence they enter the hives. To show them, the doors of the press are opened, and the straw covers taken off, when I saw the bees at work against the sides. Mr. Warring has got the method from France of taking the honey without destroying these useful and ingenious insects."

In June 1942, During World War II, the Americans opened a 900-bed convalescent hospital at Waringfield constructed for the British Emergency Medical Service (EMS). It grew to 1000 beds the following year. The buildings consisted of nissen huts in the grounds of the large mansion. Many wounded soldiers from all parts of the world were treated at this hospital. Ambulances ferried wounded soldiers from Megaberry Airfield. For some time Waringfield was also the 'home' of a company of French soldiers. (Like An Evening Gone. by Mrs Eileen Cousins, B.A.)



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When the Ulster Military Hospital was transferred to Musgrave Park Hospital, the Royal Army Medical Corps presented their flag to Moira Parish. The buildings later became a geriatric hospital. Waringfield House was destroyed by fire and finally demolished in the late 1980's.

Moira men served in both World Wars. The War Memorial lists 9 residents of Moira Parish who fell in the service of King and Country 1914-18 and 5 who died in the 1939-45 conflict. During the Second World War, Harry Ferguson operated two small production units in the village, manufacturing parts for his world famous tractor and Bofors guns. The factory at lower Main Street was later adapted to produce hand-woven tweed fabric.



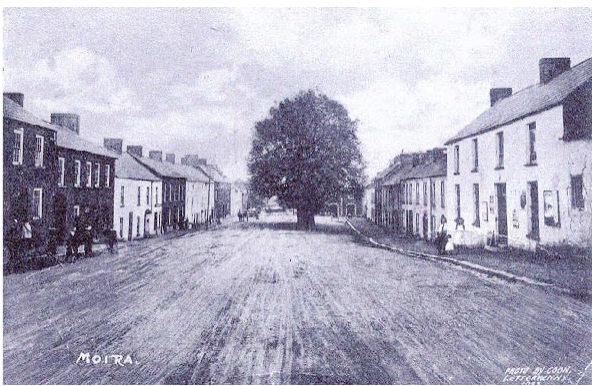
Moira was always an attractive location. There once were lime trees down both sides of the Main Street but these were removed in the early part of 20th century. There were also four lime trees in the middle of the Main Street. This landmark became unsafe and sadly, after 7 long years of debate, were cut down in 1965. The trees were said to be about 200 years old. Local residents ensured that there would be four trees for our generation and generations to come by replanting them! The Chestnut trees that lined part of the driveway to the Parish Church unfortunately also had to be taken down.

The attractive appearance of the streets was lost for a while in the 70's as the hideous barriers lined our street in an attempt to protect property from car bombers. Moira went through "The Troubles" relatively unscathed until Feb. 20th 1998, when a huge car bomb was detonated outside the Police Station. Seven police officers were among 11 people injured and the station was left a mangled wreck. Many properties were destroyed or damaged and at least one beautiful old building was beyond repair.

But that was not the first time that the Police in Moira were fortunate to escape with their lives. In September 1930 the old barracks lower down the street went on fire and upwards of 1000 rounds of ammunition exploded.

Moira today is recognised as a beautiful location and has won many competitions for its floral displays and attractive environment. Many buildings still bear the outward marks of historic Moira with their fanlights and arches. Would Sir Arthur Rawdon be pleased if he were alive today? I am sure he would appreciate our floral displays but surely he would be saddened at how we treat our Demesne.

Images of Moira  
courtesy of McCartney's of Moira  
<http://www.mccartneysofmoira.co.uk>



## *Saints and Sinners*

Time brings changes – demographic, environmental, physical, social and in every other way. But we are all much more than dwellers in time and space. There is an eternal dimension to life; so I want to conclude with a look at spiritual life in Moira. We will look at the formation and impact of the churches in the village and at a few famous preachers who passed this way.

Legend says St Patrick came up the Lagan but of course there are so many legends surrounding the man. There is no way of knowing if he did pass this way, though some believe he founded a church in nearby Glenavy

There was a Bishop with Domhall's army in 637. He was called Saint Ronan Finn. He is reputed to have established a monastery and/or a nunnery in the area. His memory is still preserved in the town-land of Kilminiogue - the 'Church of my dear young Finn'. There are still the remains of an ancient graveyard in the town-land and it has been said that the outline of the church can be seen from the air. Some of the local people claim that Kilminiogue means 'the Church of the young Maidens'. This seems possible - as the Irish translation (Cill na mna og) would support the theory that the monastic establishment may have been included a nunnery.

Ronan Finn was also associated with Magheralin where there was a seventh century monastery or a nunnery. Apparently there is still a lane known as the 'Nun's Walk'.

Later visitors to Moira district are better documented.

### **Baptist?**

The writer is a Baptist and is fascinated to discover that at one time there was a “Baptist” witness in the area. Andrew Wyke was a Particular (Calvinistic) Baptist, sometimes disparagingly called Anabaptist. He had come to Ireland with Cromwell and was first appointed in 1651 “as commonwealth minister to preach the Gospel at Lisnagarvey.” He was not popular in some circles and one writer at that time described him as “void of human learning, never educated in that way, but a tradesman and imprudent.” George Rawdon at first held a different view, saying, “a rare treat, a most powerful preacher, so that the congregation at Lisnagarvy is very great, and look upon it as a very great mercy and providence.” Three years later Rawdon’s wife disagreed and perhaps that is why Rawdon was later influential in having him replaced. Wyke went on to preach in Dromore, Lurgan, Tullylish and Donaghcloney. In 1659, in response to a petition from the English residents of Magheralin, the Government controversially sent him to preach in that parish too. Some years later he and other non-conformists were imprisoned in Carrickfergus. Wyke was eventually forced back to England and it was to be nearly 350 years before Baptists returned to Moira.

### **Presbyterian**

Because Moira was originally part of the greater Parish of Magheralin, the oldest Churches within the village are Presbyterian. A church existed at the time of the Revolution but little is known until the early 1700s. George Rawdon was required to prevent Scots ministers from preaching; his instruction, in a letter dated 16<sup>th</sup> December 1649, was “That you suffer no Scots ministers to preach in the country again.” <http://www.education.mcgill.ca/profs/cartwright/rawdon/rawdons.pdf>. George Rawdon took this responsibility very seriously and boasted that his Scots neighbours “esteem me one of the horns against the kirk.” He was most active in the Lisburn area and even as far as Ballymena in opposing Presbyterians.

The first Church building on record was erected in 1680 and the present Presbyterian Church was rebuilt in 1829. Over the years there was tension between different Presbyterian groupings which effectively divided the church into two for many years, with reports of meeting houses being seized by one group or the other. On at least two occasions, some of the clergy and congregation joined the Non-Subscribing church. The present small Non-Subscribing Church building is said to date

from 1738 though it seems more likely that it was build around 100 years later. It would appear that this is the site of the original church for the earliest gravestones are on that site.

Over the years there were also tensions between the Anglicans and Presbyterians in Moira, particularly at the time of the Rebellion of 1798. This is highlighted if we examine the census of the Parish between 1776 and 1831. In 1776 the parish was 34% Anglican and 34% Presbyterian and 32% Catholic. By 1831 the Anglicans had 53.5%, the Catholics 27.5% and the Presbyterians had dropped to 19%. By 1911, the Presbyterian figure was as low as 8%. Miller in his book "Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan" acknowledges that this may "reflect common disparities as in West Ulster between Ulster Presbyterian and Anglican emigration but also reflects the official and unofficial repression in a Parish whose Presbyterian inhabitants were notoriously rebellious in 1798." Miller suggests the reason for the decrease; "Barring wholesale conversion to the established church, surely only drastic pressure such as post-rebellion changes in landlord's leasing policies ....and favouritism to "loyal" Anglican migrants from other parishes, can account for such dramatic revisions of Moira's ethno religious composition".

Professor John Barkley in his Short History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland tells us, "After the government had succeeded in quelling the rebellion, the people, especially in Antrim, Down, Wexford, and Wicklow were treated with great brutality and cruelty. Many innocent people were put to death without trial, homesteads were burned, and property was destroyed. Hundreds fled to America." Thank God we live in a different atmosphere today.

## Anglican

The Parish of Moira was founded in 1721. A portion of ground opposite Moira Castle was given by the Hill family from Hillsborough for the building of the Church in 1723. The entry into the Church grounds and the Castle drive were in a straight line. The Rawdon Family contributed much of the expense in the building of the Church, although Sir John Rawdon himself died the same year the Church was built and before it was consecrated in 1725. It was originally called St.Inn's (an aspirated form of Finn) though it was later anglicised to St John's. In 1835 the Parish was still called The Parish of St. Inns of Moira." The church still has some communion vessels that date from those early years.

The Church building had a slate steeple but it was blown down in a freak storm in 1884 and was replaced by the present copper spire at a cost of £370. There is reputed to have been a tunnel from Moira Castle leading to the Church which was used by the Rawdon family and their servants as their means of entry to the Church. When sewers and electric cables were laid the tunnel fell into disuse and ceased to exist.

There is an unconfirmed report that the first Harvest Thanksgiving services in Ireland were held in Moira Church in 1726 shortly after it was consecrated. It will be noted that the first harvest service in England was held in Devon about one hundred and twenty years later.

Before the Church was built, the congregation had worshipped in the "Charity school," almost certainly on the site of the Old School we know today.

William Butler Yates was Curate here in 1835. He was Grandfather to WB Yates, the famous poet.

There is a very interesting story of church life in Moira in those early years. A certain lady parishioner called Abigail, wife of D McC, was directed to "repair to the Parish Church of Moira the next Lord's Day and after Evening Prayer, she is, in the presence of Thomas Waring, Rector of the said Parish, and some of the rest of the parishioners to acknowledge that she is sorry for the abusive words which she made use of against Sarah, wife of J C , in saying that she, Sarah was a \*\*\*\*\* to D McC, the said Abigail's husband." (Dromore - an Ulster Diocese by E. D. Atkinson)

## **Roman Catholic**

There is no Catholic Church in the village and local legend says that the deeds of the village exclude them from ever building one. Apparently there was an old church somewhere around but it was burnt by Royalists in 1742. Mass was then held under a tree. A church was built at Stoney Batter in 1812. The Marquis of Downshire gave a grant of the land. On 14<sup>th</sup> September he performed the opening ceremony and laid the first stone. (The Marquis was the great grandson of the man who gave the land for St John's in Moira) A second stone was laid on the former "by the united hands of the Catholic, Protestant and Presbyterian Clergy present." (The Protestant Advocate Vol. 1. 1813) The chapel was a neat, stone, roughcast, whitewashed building with a painting of a crucifix over the altar; the floor was partly boarded and partly mud. The present church was erected in 1839.

## **Sunday Schools**

Back in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century there were Sunday Schools in the village and area. On 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1814 a letter was written; "Dear Sir, I have great pleasure to send you an account of the prosperous state of our Sunday School Institution, which under God's providence, has done considerable good in the neighbourhood. About five miles for Hillsborough a Sunday School has been established in the town of Moira, under the care of some charitable Ladies, and is reported to be in a very prosperous state." The following year, the writer is grateful to the society for the books sent but they were "far from adequate to our wants; as the number of scholars have increased to above 200 and still likely to increase. We beg a further supply." (Report of the Hibernian Sunday School Society 1810-1837) (Also see Appendix 1)

## **Visiting preachers**

The Moira area was visited by a number of well known Gospel preachers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. George Whitfield preached in Lisburn, the Maze and Lurgan in July 1751. We don't know if he preached that day in Moira. John Cennick frequently made the journey north from Dublin for a preaching tour and a favourite stopping place was Ballinderry.. "On the 1st December 1751 Mr. Moore, who resided at the Manor House of Lord Conway at Portmore, showed Cennick, after hospitable entertainment: *a large hall 90' long and 20' wide which would hold 800 people, another, larger still, capable of containing nearly 2000 persons, also a third, all of which he placed at his disposal.* (Portmore Castle was famed for its ivory tables and marble halls, and even the extensive stables had marble fittings). Here he preached on the 2nd December, and the throng was so great that fears were entertained about the walls giving way. He remarks: *I never remember such a thirst for the Word of Life, though the country is not very populous yet we have astonishingly large congregations, people crowding in from Moira and beyond.*

On the 7th February 1751, Cennick preached in Portmore stables to about 1000 people in spite of the dreadful snow. On the 7th March, a Sunday, there was preaching at Crumlin and in the afternoon at Portmore, where about 500 had assembled.

On 20<sup>th</sup> May 1754 a Moravian settlement was founded at Kilwarlin with the active sympathy and support of the Earl of Hillsborough. (Hillsborough. A parish in the Ulster plantation by John Barry)

## **John Wesley**

In July 1756 John Wesley paid his first of many visits to Ulster and during this visit he came to Moira. The following account is given in 'Memorials of a Consecrated Life', the story of the life of Anne Lutton. (1791-1881). "One day in the year 1756, the Earl of Moira sent a servant to the clergyman to request the key of the Church, so that the Rev. John Wesley might preach to the people. The clergyman declined in giving the key, and was accustomed during the course of a long life, to boast in company that, even to oblige a nobleman, he would not tolerate Methodists. The Earl was greatly annoyed at the Rectors refusal, but determined that nothing should prevent Mr. Wesley from preaching; so he sent the bellman through the town, to summon all the people to the lawn

before the Castle, and Mr. Wesley stood on the top of a long flight of steps before the grand entrance hall and preached to the people". (Memorials of a Consecrated life" by Anne Lutton. Pub. 1882)

In his journals, Wesley describes preaching in Lisburn on the evening of Monday 26<sup>th</sup> July 1756 to "seceders, old self-conceited Presbyterians, new-light men, Moravians, Cameronians and formal churchmen; it is a miracle of miracles if any here bring forth fruit to perfection." He then describes the countryside "between Lisburn and Moira" as he rode to Lurgan where he preached in the Market house that evening and again the next day, Wed. 28<sup>th</sup>, when he says he had the largest congregation since he left Cork. Although Wesley does not record the visit to Moira, it is clear he passed through here on 27<sup>th</sup> July and almost certainly is the occasion Anne Lutton describes and should not be confused with his next visit.

The first Earl of Moira was still alive then, so the same man, who was so welcoming to the Maralin priests, welcomed Wesley also! Indeed Wesley carried a letter from the Earl of Moira that was to see him through difficulties faced in Monaghan in 1762. (Wesley's Journal May 1762) Another example of this man's openness to spiritual matters comes from 1759. Thomas Seccombe, a Cornishman, was one of Wesley's preachers. His father disinherited him, but he came to Ireland as a Methodist preacher in 1755. He was a very powerful preacher of the Gospel. Charles Dixon says: "His preaching was such as I never herd before, for his word was with power. It made me cry out in bitterness of soul – what must I do to be saved?" Thomas took ill with consumption while in this area. Rawdon took him into his house and treated him as his son. Seccombe asked that the Methodists might come and receive his dying benediction, so it seems possible a Methodist congregation was already gathered in the village or district. Lord Rawdon was present, and after Seccombe had addressed the people he lay down and passed away. Rawdon sent an account of his death to a nobleman in London adding, 'Now, my Lord, find me if you can a man that will die like a Methodist!'

(Atmore's Memorial, pp.379-80; Crookshank's Methodism in Ireland, [http://wesley.nnu.edu/john\\_wesley/letters/1760.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/john_wesley/letters/1760.htm) )

I just wonder what the Earl's new wife, Elizabeth (married just 4 years) thought of Wesley. Her Mother was very sympathetic to the Gospel witness and as a young woman, Elizabeth had listened to many famous preachers of that day, including John Wesley. A biographer tells us Lady Huntingdon's desire for her family was that they "would one day follow her religious sentiments. It was a battle she lost with ... her eldest daughter Elizabeth who in 1752 moved out of her influence by marrying an Irish Peer, Lord Rawdon .... It is clear a principal motive for Elizabeth marrying was to escape her Mother's religious dominance. Mother and daughter reportedly never met again and there was apparently no contact at all between them during the last 20 years of Lady Huntingdon's life." (The Countess of Huntingdon's connection by Alan Harding 2003) Indeed Elizabeth confessed to her brother that she had married to get away from home and said "my situation in Ireland is happy – extremely so, in separating us so far asunder." The same biographer quotes from a letter that Lady Huntingdon wrote to Charles Wesley in March 1752: "I am sure it will be a great pleasure to you to hear that Lady Betty was yesterday married to a most sensible and worthy man, Lord Moira of Ireland. He has a very great fortune and above all a man disposed to great seriousness and which, from the respect I have for him, I trust will end in true and exemplary piety." (Quoted by Faith Cooke in Selina, Countess of Huntingdon) But Lady Moira was not totally disinterested in religion and perhaps some of her upbringing was still influencing her. At one point in correspondence with the Bishop Percy of Dromore, she asked him to give the living of Moira to an Irish clergyman. She wrote of "the inferior clergy in England, being certainly a less polished set than those in Ireland," and "between ourselves, my Lord" hints at some delinquency of the "Rector of Seagoe." (The Gentleman's Magazine 1907) God was at work in Lady Moira and was using John Wesley.

(See appendix 1 for a letter by Wesley to Lady Moira in which he appears to believe she was a backslider and urges her to return to trust in the Lord).

"In 1760 Moira was visited again by Wesley. He was apparently a guest of the family at Moira House. (Wesley visited Ireland on twenty one separate occasions between 1747 and 1789) Wesley describes the occasion in his journal:

*Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> May 1760.*

"I rode to Moira. Soon after twelve, standing on a tombstone near the Church, I called a considerable number of people to 'know God and Jesus Christ whom He had sent'. We were just opposite to the Earl of Moira's house, the best furnished of any I have seen in Ireland. It stands on a hill with a large avenue in front, bounded by the Church on the opposite hill. The other three sides are covered with orchards, gardens and woods, in which are walks of various kinds".

In Journal No.XII, Wesley writes of a third visit just over a week later on Monday, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 1760; That morning he had preached in Ballymena and his comments are; "I preached in the market house to a large concourse of people and God was there of a truth. I found no such spirit in any congregation since I left Dublin." Presumably it was in the afternoon that he rode into Moira. A limestone pillar at the front of the Moira Church is said to be near the spot where John Wesley preached. And his comments about Moira listeners? ... "I preached to a very civil congregation but there is no life in them." These were to be Wesley's last words about the people of Moira.

Wesley was now 57 years old yet the next day he rode to Coot-hill in Monaghan (55 miles). He says, "My horse was thoroughly tired. However with much difficulty, partly riding, and partly walking, about eight in the evening I reached Coot-hill". No mention of how tired he was! He preached when he arrived and the next morning at 5.00 am and at 11.00 am in the Market house. Then with a fresh horse he rode to Belturbet! By 18<sup>th</sup> May he was in Sligo and wrote from there to Lord Moira about his spiritual communications with Lady Moira. "My Lord,--I have taken the liberty to speak to Lady Rawdon all that was in my heart, and doubt not that your Lordship will second it on every proper occasion. The late awful providence I trust will not pass over without a suitable improvement. God has spoken aloud, and happy are they that hear and understand His voice." Wesley believed that Lady Moira once believed on Jesus Christ but he had great concerns now for her spiritual condition. His words to her included this challenge. "Did not your love of God grow cold? Did not you measure back your steps to earth again? Did not your love of the world revive? .... Where are you now? full of faith? looking into the holiest, and seeing Him that is invisible? Does your heart now glow with love to Him who is daily pouring His benefits upon you? ..... Are not you a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God?" (For a copy of the original letter see Appendix 3)

But he also had some concerns to share with Lord Moira himself. "In one respect I have been under some apprehension on your Lordship's account also. I have been afraid lest you should exchange the simplicity of the gospel for a philosophical religion. O my Lord, why should we go one step farther than this, 'We love Him because He first loved us'? I am Your Lordship's most obedient servant." "Letters" Volume 4 (For more on Lord Moira and his spiritual awareness, see Appendix 1 )

Wesley was in the area on several occasions during the following years, no doubt to continue to urge those in the Castle to seek after God. He passed this way on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1762 and 14<sup>th</sup> June 1773 en-route between Lisburn and Lurgan. On 6<sup>th</sup> July 1771 he "spent two hours very agreeably in Mayra" on his journey between Ballinderry and Newry. He visited Ballinderry on several occasions between 1771 and 1778. On Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July 1771 he dined in Ballinderry House with the good man, his wife, one son and five daughters, all he found 'walking in the light of God's countenance'. There were then about fifty members of the Methodist society in Ballinderry. A far greater number than this, however, gathered around the house to hear Wesley preach from an upstairs window.

Wesley writes of that evening: "Afterward I prayed with an ancient woman; while a little girl, her grandchild, kneeling beside me, was all in tears and said, O grandmamma, have you no sins to cry for as well as me?" It seems God did a mighty work among children in Ballinderry for Wesley tells of a visit there on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1773 when he declared "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many of them experienced this and many felt their wants; several children in particular." But there is no record of his ever again preaching in Moira.

Anne Lutton was not yet born when Wesley visited Moira but her Father, Ralph Lutton, had a home "in line with the four trees". The family were owners of several properties in and around Moira. Anne was the youngest surviving child of a family of thirteen, so it was more than likely that, as a boy, her father had witnessed John Wesley's visits and if not converted then, certainly appears to have had

the good seed sown in his heart. Interestingly he called one of his sons John Wesley Lutton despite the fact that he had called an earlier son John. (That son died in infancy)

According to Miss Lutton, Ralph Lutton entertained a Methodist preacher when he arrived in Moira. She describes the day Methodism began in Moira.

"It was Sunday; the people were just returned from the morning service in church, and whilst careful mistresses were looking after due preliminaries of the approaching dinner-hour, and younger members of the household were lolling over books, or idly gazing on the occasional figures which flitted past the windows, a stranger rode up to the principal inn, dismounted, gave his horse in charge to the usual attendant, unstrapped a huge pair of saddle-bags, and flinging them over his arm, walked into the house. He was not like any one they ever saw before; plain, but not in Quaker costume. They ran off and reported the matter to their father. He immediately observed it was most probably a Methodist preacher, and as he believed those men were generally very poor, and the stranger might not order a dinner at the inn, he should wish to ask him to come in and share theirs. Half an hour later the master and mistress of the mansion, two grown-up daughters, a son, and some five or six junior members of the family, sat round the dinner table, with Mr. John Grace, the Methodist preacher, occupying the most honourable place beside the lady".

"That memorable Sabbath, she writes 'when my father invited the Methodist preacher to come in and eat bread with him, was the beginning of days to a household which hitherto 'sat in darkness'. They were all charmed with the winning manners and sweet conversation of their guest. He attracted and held them fast bound by some secret spell they never felt before. He seemed to awaken new powers of mind, and give new subjects for thought and converse. The little circle sat wondering, and delighted to find that religion was not clad in sable, repulsive and exacting. From that day the Methodist preachers were regularly entertained at my father's house; and as no chapel was then, nor for many years afterwards, built in that little town, his parlour and hall were the places where sat the congregation, whilst the laborious and pious men of God sought to save the souls of them that heard them".

The Luttons attended the Parish church in the morning and Wesleyan preaching on Sunday evening." Thus," wrote Anne, " I was preserved from extremes the arrogant exclusiveness of High Church prejudices, and the contracted bigotry of hostile sectarianism." The Luttons saw themselves as proper Church-Methodists, and never entered a Dissenting place of worship until 1813. The Wesleyan preaching they attended on Sunday evenings may have been in their own home, for there was no Methodist church in the village until around 1820.

The Lutton family was a great witness for Christ in the village. The Moira curate, described as a "mild, scholarly man who just managed not to starve on the poorest stipend," was invited to hear the humble Wesleyan minister. He was "blessed, and made a blessing, finding Christ crucified for himself, and zealously proclaiming Him to others, in the church, in barns, in cottages." (Eminent Methodist Women (1889) by Annie E Keeling) I wonder if it was the same curate who is reported to have helped Anne in her studies of Greek and Hebrew.

But despite the Gospel witness around her, Anne's spiritual interest grew less. There were no Methodists in Donaghcloney, so she had no Methodist classes to attend and that pleased her. She felt herself to be upright and holy and encouraged others to live pure lives but she was not converted. One day a great conviction of sin came upon her. The burden of her sin became intolerable and she longed to find freedom from it in Christ. Then she began to gather together a little class, to meet in her home, and persuaded a simple, pious Methodist class-leader to teach. This good man did not fail in urging the anxious Anne to seek and find pardon, without which she could have no peace. Anne began to think of nothing else. She sought incessantly for peace: she sought it with tears, but did not find it. She was almost hopeless, when her father spoke words of healing to her, pointed her to Christ and assured her that by faith in Him she would be saved. With childlike faith the young woman knelt before God and cast herself at His feet. Here is her own account of her conversion:

“ 'Mother!' I exclaimed, 'if I do not get my sins pardoned, I shall perish everlastingly!' I went to my own room, knelt down at the bedside, clasped my hands most imploringly, and with streaming eyes said, 'O Lord God, I here most solemnly and heartily, with all the faith I know how to use, cast my whole soul at Thy feet, and take the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour from this moment, and my Master and portion for time and for eternity, and will henceforth believe I am forgiven for His sake.' As I abandoned myself to Him so He gave Himself to me. There was an immediate sense of acceptance. Oh, such a love as never, never had I before conceived!"

The date was 14th of April 1815 and Anne Lutton called that day the commencement of "her happy existence." She was 24 years old. "I praise the Lord with a loud voice; I was too happy to keep silence," she said. (From *Eminent Methodist Women* (1889) by Annie E Keeling)

## **Methodist**

Anne Lutton was about to become a mighty tool in the hand of God in Moira and far beyond. Not long after she was converted, her mother died. She and her father left Donaghcloney to return to Moira, to a house across the street from where they first lived. Anne took on responsibility for running the home but she also had a growing conviction that she should be "proclaiming to her fellow-countrywomen the love of the Saviour, which was so inexpressibly dear to her own heart." Despite her great learning, Anne was a shy, retiring woman. Yet she resolved to speak for her Lord. She was resolute in excluding all men from the meetings which she conducted, believing that as a woman she should preach to only women. "Women preachers were seen as itinerant supporters in virgin territory ...and were never accepted as regular preachers to settled congregations. They generally confined themselves to preaching to their own sex. But by the 1830s male followers of Anne Lutton were reduced to dressing in women's clothing in a vain attempt to hear her preach." (From *Born to Serve: women and evangelical religion* Ch 7 *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society 1740-1890*).

Miss Lutton posted keen eyed gentlemen at the chapel door while she was conducting a service. One young man dressed up as a woman and his disguise was obviously very good, for he gained entrance to the meeting. But God spoke to him through Anne's ministry to turn to God and serve Him. He owned up and told how he was converted. Anne was encouraged to relax the rule she had laid down. But even this event would not make her change her conviction that she was called to preach to women only. Her ministry widened and she preached far beyond Moira in such places as Belfast, Banbridge, Scarva, Tullymore, Bryansford. She is regarded as the founder of Methodism in Moira.

In the Society at Moira, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> C. there were men who were mighty in prayer and exhortation, and most devoted and faithful as class leaders. A Mr. Nicholson tells of remarkable meetings in Moira when he was a boy. He speaks of prayer meetings of great "power," where "good, plain men of God poured out their souls' desires to the Lord for their families and the young," and of "the Holy Ghost falling upon old and young, mightily convincing of sin, and making plain the path of duty. He speaks also of numerous and striking conversions in Moira. The first building was in the vicinity of what is now Moira Mews. The present church building is over one hundred years old.

## **A Jew?**

Another interesting story of Moira is told by John O'Donovan. He travelled this area on behalf of the Ordnance Survey Authorities: Extract from a letter dated "Moira, Wednesday, March 27, 1834."

"After having wandered all day through the parish of Magheralin, I returned to Moira about 5 p.m. much fatigued. I went to my bedroom and attempted to write, but sleep overcoming me, I stretched myself on the bed, and fell into a sound repose, during which there was an absence of dreams and thought from my mind. I awoke - looked at my watch. It was 6 o'clock! But whether 6 o'clock in the morning or evening, I could not tell. I started up, walked out, and being attracted by a semi circle of people standing at the sheltry side of Moira market house, I went down to them. Standing on chair, I saw a venerable old man with beard hanging down to the middle button of his waistcoat, repeating aloud one of the psalms of David. His long bushy beard, his Abrahamic countenance, and his thick pronunciation of consonants characterized him a Jew. I gazed on him with wonder, thinking I would

have an opportunity of hearing him preach the Law of Moses, but I soon learned that he had abandoned the old cause of his tribe, and is now going about preaching the morality and doctrine of Jesus of Nazareth.

Yours truly,  
JOHN O'DONOVAN  
Moira”

(Dr. O'Donovan's letters preserved in the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.)

## **Evangelical Revival**

Sadly the great spiritual awakening of the 1859 revival across Northern Ireland seems largely to have by-passed Moira. I can find no record that there was any great increase in attendance or expansion of buildings in local churches as happened in communities all around us. Congregational returns from Presbyterian churches the following year make very interesting reading. Statistics show remarkable increases at communion and other services. e.g. Dundrod ~ around 100 more at communion; Donaghcloney ~ 50 more; Dromore ~ 100 more. Many congregations added additional comments to their statistical returns, describing wonderful blessing such as many conversions, including Catholics or describing the co-operation of other denominations or of dramatic changes in society. But Moira reported that there were 10 new communicants and made no comment. (The year of grace by Rev William Gibson Publ. 1860 )

The gallery in St John's Parish Church was added around 1871 but it is said this was needed because of the increased household servants in connection with the various landed gentry and aristocratic families like the Rawdons, Warings and Berwicks and various other well-known families. (Moira –a historical handbook Canon CRJ Rudd) though it quite likely that many gentry had moved away by then. Perhaps the Revival had more impact than statistics indicate.

At the same time, in Lurgan and Magheralin, God was moving mightily. Queen Street Methodist church in Lurgan saw 1000 people converted in 1859. The Rector of Lurgan, Rev Thomas Knox, said in 1860 “Congregations in church and in cottage lectures, greatly increased. The increase is composed in a great measure, of young men and women who were formerly indifferent to spiritual matters.... We require accommodation for 500 more, at least, in the church which I hope will be ready for them in about eighteen months.”

The rector of Magheralin wrote on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1860, “There is a hungering and thirsting after the Word of God, as is clearly evidenced by the full attendance on every means of grace. My church was built to accommodate 500. Yesterday morning there were 531..... Before this awakening (about three years ago) I commenced an evening service in the village; but after some time I discontinued it because I could get no attendance. Now, had I a service every evening in the week, I could command a meeting. Beside all this, morality, in every sense of the word, is the order of the day. The change indeed is a mighty one”. (The year of Grace: A history of the Ulster Revival of 1859 by William Gibson)

For reasons known only to the secret thoughts of God, Moira sat in much spiritual darkness for many years. Great preachers moved among us; great blessing fell in communities around us; yet Moira appears to have had lengthy periods when it was largely untouched by the Spirit of God.

But God builds His church and over the years faithful men have served the Lord here in the churches of our village. Other Churches have been established in more recent times within the village boundaries - Pentecostals in 1979 and Baptists in 1987. The message of Wesley and others, calling men to “know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent” is still resounding in this community.

I count it a privilege to have many like-minded friends in this community. And I count it a privilege to have ministered here in this generation when, I think it is fair to say, the Gospel is more widely and more faithfully preached in the village churches and community than in any previous generation. Perhaps it will please God to bring the dawn of new day to Moira in our generation. By God's grace we may yet see a mighty move of God in Moira.

“The longing of my heart and my prayer to God is for the people of *Moir*a to be saved.” See Romans 10:1

The author acknowledges the help of many publications in compiling this brief history and commends particularly the book, “Moira –a historical handbook” by Canon CRJ Rudd, which first inspired him to research the history. He also thanks the McCartney family in Moira for the use of many old photographs of the village. (<http://www.mccartneysofmoira.co.uk/index.htm> )

*Appendix 1. The report of the Hibernian Sunday school society for 1810 (-1837).*

No. XXI. – MOIRA, No. 1, County of Down  
July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1818.

“ ---- Were it not for the little instruction already received at our Sunday School, it is to be apprehended that the education of most of the poor in our town, but more especially of such as live in the country, would be wholly neglected. The cottager, by whose daily labour a family of six, eight or nine individuals is to be maintained, finds it altogether impossible to pay for his children at a public weekly School. The indigent weaver has almost equal difficulty in procuring the common necessities of life for his offspring; and if, by abridging himself in these, he contrives to have his boys taught to read a little, yet it too frequently occurs that the girls are growing up wholly illiterate; ignorance, thoughtlessness, and vulgarity, the leading features in the character. From such deplorable degradation, the Moira Sunday School has already, by the blessing of Divine Providence, rescued many. The hearts of those engaged in it have glowed with unutterable sensations of gratitude, when seeing in some a rapid progress in learning, an almost incredible retention of memory, and unwearied assiduity in acquiring the little knowledge within their reach.

“ Females whose age and stature rendered them capable of working hard all week at home, and whose necessities obliged them to do so, have repaired hither on the Sabbath, and from having little but the Alphabet, have advance so far as to be able to read their New Testaments with considerable ease, and apparent delight. Nor has it been a source of less pleasurable feelings to those interested in this Institution, to observe instances of reformation of conduct and change of heart in some of the scholars: this has been known; this has revived the fainting hopes, or invigorated the declining efforts of those whose main-spring of action has been love to the Supreme Being, and benevolence to his creatures; and whilst they give Him the glory to whom it is due, they rejoice in having their humble exertions crowned with success.”

Ed. The above is helpful, even though the reference to the “Supreme Being” may possibly indicate the writer’s belief in something less than the God of Scripture, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

*Appendix 2. Text of the letter by John Wesley to Lady Rawdon. LIVERPOOL March 18, 1760.*

Wesley was writing in the context of Lady Moira's mother suffering greatly at the news about her cousin, Earl Ferrers. He had murdered his land steward on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1760 and was hanged on 5<sup>th</sup> May, a matter of weeks after this letter was written. Wesley visited Moira Castle was on 1<sup>st</sup> May and he returned on 12<sup>th</sup> May. Is it possible he returned, not only to preach one more time in a hard place, but to give spiritual comfort and exhortation to Lady Moira? I am inclined to agree with Faith Cook who suggests that Wesley's letter and the family circumstances, "could well have been the means of turning Elizabeth's heart back once more to the truths she had once professed." (*Selina, Countess of Huntingdon by Faith Cook*) (Ed. However the letter to her husband on 18<sup>th</sup> May would indicate that at that point Wesley had no assurance that Elizabeth had yet come back to Christ.)

MY LADY,

It was impossible to see the distress into which your Ladyship was thrown by the late unhappy affair without bearing a part of it, without sympathizing with you. But may we not see God therein? May we not both hear and understand His voice? We must allow it is generally 'small and still'; yet He speaks sometimes in the whirlwind. Permit me to speak to your Ladyship with all freedom; not as to a person of quality, but as to a creature whom the Almighty made for Himself, and one that is in a few days to appear before Him.

You were not only a nominal but a real Christian. You tasted of the powers of the world to come. You knew God the Father had accepted you through His eternal Son, and God the Spirit bore witness with your spirit that you were a child of God.

But you fell among thieves, and such as were peculiarly qualified to rob you of your God. Two of these in particular were sensible, learned, well-bred, well-natured, moral men. These did not assault you in a rough, abrupt, offensive manner. No; you would then have armed yourself against them, and have repelled all their attacks. But by soft, delicate, unobserved touches, by pleasing strokes of raillery, by insinuations rather than surly arguments, they by little and little sapped the foundation of your faith--perhaps not only of your living faith, your 'evidence of things not seen,' but even of your notional. It is well if they left you so much as an assent to the Bible or a belief that Christ is God over all. And what was the consequence of this? Did not your love of God grow cold? Did not you measure back your steps to earth again? Did not your love of the world revive? Even of those poor, low trifles, which in your very childhood you utterly despised?

Where are you now? full of faith? looking into the holiest, and seeing Him that is invisible? Does your heart now glow with love to Him who is daily pouring His benefits upon you? Do you now even desire it? Do you now say (as you did almost twenty years ago),--

*Keep me dead to all below,*

*Only Christ resolved to know;*

*Firm, and disengaged, and free,*

*Seeking all my bliss in Thee?*

Is your taste now for heavenly things? Are not you a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God? And oh what pleasure! What is the pleasure of visiting? of modern conversation? Is there any more reason than religion in it? I wonder what rational appetite does it gratify. Setting religion quite out of the question, I cannot conceive how a woman of sense can --relish, should I say? No, but suffer so insipid an entertainment.

Oh that the time past may suffice! Is it now not high time that you should awake out of sleep? Now God calls aloud! My dear Lady, now hear the voice of the Son of God, and live! The trouble in which your tender parent is now involved may restore all that reverence for her which could not but be a little impaired while you supposed she was 'righteous over-much.' Oh how admirably does God lay hold of and 'strengthen the things that remain' in you!--your gratitude, your humane temper, your generosity, your filial tenderness! And why is this but to improve every right temper; to free you from all that is irrational or unholy; to make you all that you were--yea, all that you should be; to restore you to the whole image of God?--

I am, my Lady,

Yours,

John Wesley.

Appendix 3. Copy of the original letter by John Wesley to Lord Moira 18<sup>th</sup> May 1760 sold on the internet 2009.

My Lord

I have taken the Liberty to send to  
your Honour, all that was in my power, I mean  
not but your Lordship will receive it on every  
proper Occasion. The late unprovoked  
I trust will not pass you without sensible  
Improvement. You have spoken abundantly  
of the Liberty of the Press, but have  
In one respect I have been under some  
Apprehension, on your Lordship's Account also  
I have been afraid lest you should exchange the  
Simplicity of the Gospel, for a Philosophical  
Religion, and that you should go one Step  
farther than that, "He loves them because he first  
loves us." I am,

Place  
May 18 1760  
Your Lordship's most Obedient Servant  
John Wesley

Let us be further led to improve the same principles