

# The Macnamaras of Doolin & Ennistymon <sup>1</sup>

Michael Mac Mahon

Macnamara with a small 'n', the form of the name habitually used by this family, is retained throughout.

## Introduction

The Macnamaras of Co. Clare are among the oldest families in Ireland and can trace their lineage back almost to the dawn of authentic history. The *Annals of the Four Masters* record their warring exploits from Viking times down to the storming of Anglo-Norman fortress at Quin; right down to the seventeenth century when their territorial boundaries finally collapsed in the Cromwellian confiscations. In the history of Co. Clare, they rank second only to the royal O'Briens with whom they shared a common ancestor; and, in fact, it was the privilege of the Macnamaras to preside at the inauguration of the O'Brien kings of Thomond. The territory over which the Macnamaras held sway was known for centuries as Uí Caisín, after Cas the ancestor of the Dalcassian tribes. At one time, it included almost all that part of Clare lying east of the River Fergus and south of a line extending from Ruan to the Shannon. In the final centuries of their dominance the Macnamara chiefs were known as lords of Clancullen, and in 1580 they held no fewer than forty-two castles in their territory.<sup>2</sup> In the land surveys of the following century no less than two hundred of their name held lands in fee simple.<sup>3</sup>

The Gaelic version of the name i.e. *Macconmara* signifies 'son of the sea hound' (i.e. the seal) and is traceable to the ancient Celtic custom of incorporating an animal or legendary figure into a surname. The Sheedys and Conheadys of Co. Clare also derive from the Macnamaras, taking their names from Maccon and Con 'Síoda' ('Silken Skinned')<sup>4</sup> Macnamara.

Among the noteworthy achievements of the Macnamaras was the founding of the abbey for Franciscan friars at Quin, right in the heart of their territory. In 1433 Pope Eugene IV issued a testimony in praise of Maccon, son of Sioda Cam Mcnamara "for his devotion to the order of St. Francis, and for his pious purpose in maintaining a house in the town of Quin in the diocese of Killaloe with church, belfry and other necessary buildings for the use and dwelling place of Friars Minor who shall there serve God under regular observance".<sup>5</sup> The friary continued to be endowed by succeeding chieftains of the clan, and for generations the name Francis became a favourite name in many Macnamara families.

The Macnamaras were greatly reduced by the Cromwellian confiscations in the seventeenth century, and only six of their principal families retained part of their ancestral lands, although some of them did afterwards manage to recover substantial holdings from the new owners. Writing at the end of the nineteenth century, the Clare historian James Frost remarked that “even at this day, though fallen to the rank of the common people, and air of gentility and breeding is observable in many members of this ancient family”.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Dolin/Ennistymon Branch**

The Macnamaras of Doolin and Ennistymon were descended from the lordly Cancullen and their arrival in North Clare can be put down to the dislocation caused by the Cromwellian Land Settlement in the mid-seventeenth century. According to the family pedigree which was registered sometime before 1794 with the Grant of Arms, Ulster Office, by Francis Macnamara of Doolin, this branch began with Teige Macnamara of Ballynacraggy, who settled in Sean-Mucinis, parish of Drumcreehy (Ballyvaughan) in 1659.<sup>7</sup> Teige was the great-grandson of Donough Macnamara of Moyriesk and Creevagh (living in 1594) from whose eldest son, by later descent, derived Francis of Moyriesk, a member of parliament for Clare in 1790 and the father of the famous John ‘Fireball’ Macnamara said to have fought fifty-seven duels, and to have been wounded at Vinegar Hill.<sup>8</sup>

Teige Macnamara of Drumcreehy married Ann Nugent, daughter of Edmund Nugent of Colmanstown, Co. Kildare, an ‘innocent papist’ who, like himself had been transplanted to North Clare by the Cromwellian commissioners.<sup>9</sup> They had a family of seven sons, the youngest of whom was Bartholomew, ancestor of the Macnamaras of Doolin and Ennistymon. Burke’s *Irish Family Records*, states that this Bartholomew was born in 1685 and lived at Muraghlin (Murrough?) in the Burren. He married Dorothy, daughter of William Brock, mayor of Galway, and had issue:

1. William
2. Michael d.s.p.
3. Teige of Fermoy d.s.p
4. John. Married the dau of Anthony McDonagh of Irish Brigade fame.
5. Mary m. Hugh Davoren
6. Margaret m. Robert Skerritt
7. Ann m. Laurence Comyn, Kilcorney

Bartholomew died in 1761 and was buried in the old church of Rathbourney, near Ballyvaughan.<sup>10</sup> William the eldest son was born at Gleninagh in 1714. He married Catherine Sarsfield, daughter and eventually co-heiress of Francis Sarsfield of Doolin and his wife, Arabella Martin, of Dangan, Co. Galway.

## The Sarsfields

The Sarsfields claimed descent from an old Anglo-Norman family who had come to Ireland in the twelfth century. By the end of the sixteenth century they were amongst the foremost in the country, having acquired large properties in Kildare, Cork and Limerick. Patrick Sarsfield (b. 1593) Recorder of Limerick city had extensive lands in Lower Bunratty in 1641. Like the Macnamaras he too was transplanted to North Clare and in 1653 he was assigned 888 plantation acres in the parishes of Kilmoon and Doolin.<sup>11</sup> One of his sons, Ignatius Sarsfield, became a major in Charles O'Brien's regiment of infantry and distinguished himself in one of the Irish brigades in France. General Patrick Sarsfield of siege of Limerick fame was a close relative.

The marriage of William Macnamara to Catherine Sarsfield might seem at first glance to explain the acquisition of the Sarsfield estate by the Macnamaras. In fact, the matter was not quite so simple, and the entire affair ended up in a tangle of legal proceedings in chancery. Catherine had six brothers, all of whom at one time or another served with the Irish brigades in France. They were therefore deemed to be 'forfeiting persons' under the penal laws of the time, having gone into military service outside the kingdom without a licence. In order to circumvent the law, the lands were transferred to Macnamara and others, but over time relations turned sour leading to litigation and infighting which persisted long after William Macnamara's death in 1762. The affair was further complicated by Catherine's second marriage to Nicholas Comyn of Kilcorney sometime around 1772.

William Macnamara and Catherine Sarsfield had issue as follows:

Francis  
William of Mogouhy & Moheraroon  
Mary mar Francis Martyn, Galway  
Catherine  
Anne  
Dorothy

Dorothy, the youngest daughter, married her cousin David Comyn of Kilcorney and afterwards of Bishop's Quarter who became a J.P. in 1769. Their son, Peter Comyn of Scotland Lodge, New Quay, caused something of a political bombshell when he was hanged at Ennis in 1830 for burning down his dwelling house following a dispute with his landlord, Bindon Scott of Cahercon.<sup>12</sup>

Francis Macnamara the eldest son was born in Doolin in 1750. His father's will stipulated that he receive his education from Lucius O'Brien, 3<sup>rd</sup> baronet of Dromoland, but where this actually took place is not known. His brother William became a law student at the Temple in London. In 1774 Francis married Jane Stamer of Carnelly

House, Clarecastle, grand-daughter of Christopher O'Brien of Ennistymon. They built Doolin House, the ruins of which still exist, but in 1806 they moved to Wellpark, near Galway city, where Francis died in 1821. Francis and Jane had issue as follows:

William Nugent	Sir Burton (Admiral RN)
Richard of Oughdarra	Brock (died in Jamaica)
George	Stamer (d. in childhood)
Francis (Aran View)	Honora (d. aged 20)
Henry (Roy. Navy)	Dorothy Catherine m. Capt. Calcutt
John (of Moher)	

By all accounts, Francis's wife Jane Stamer was cast in the mould of a Jezebel and ruled over her husband and family with an iron fist. After the birth of her youngest daughter, over whom she doted, her relations with the older children turned sour and she spent much of the remainder of her life trying to have them disinherited in favour of her youngest child. It is stated that she physically threw them out of the house, sometimes for weeks on end when they were obliged to seek shelter in the homes of family servants. She took upon herself the management of the estate, forging her husband's name to leases which were doled out sometimes for substantial bribes. The move to Galway in 1806 was regarded by their friends as entirely Jane's idea for the perverse purpose of putting further distance between her husband and his family and relations. It is said that the move broke Francis's heart, and there is a pathetic account of how the carriage had to be brought every day for a week to the hall door before he could be induced to leave his beloved Doolin.<sup>13</sup> Later when some of the children had gone away from home she would write to them without her husband's knowledge forbidding them to come to visit him, while at the same time she complained to him about their lack of concern for his welfare.

### **Macnamara v Macnamara**

After Francis's death in 1821 Jane sought to frustrate the terms of his will, and William Nugent and some of his brothers were obliged to take legal proceedings against her. The affair is much too complicated to be discussed here, but it discloses an unhappy saga of jealousy and family feuding. To add to her troubles Jane's favourite daughter did not live up to her mother's expectations; she ran away with a penniless young army officer named William Calcutt and caused something of a scandal when she was discovered secreted away in a barracks at Dunmore. To their credit Calcutt and Dorothy later entered into a successful marriage and their only son, Francis Calcutt Macnamara, became a popular M.P. for Co. Clare in the 1850s. He died from cancer in 1863, aged 44. He lived at St. Catherine's at Gotaclob near Doolin, a property which Dorothy

inherited on her marriage. Dorothy herself died around 1824 pre-deceasing her mother by about ten years.

Evidence adduced at the court proceedings between Jane Macnamara and her sons throws an interesting sidelight on conditions obtaining around the end of eighteenth century and particularly on the educational opportunities open to the children of landed Protestant families who could afford to pay their way. It was stated that John had boarded at Stephen O'Halloran's school at Ennis. Stamer and Burton were sent to Portarlinton to a school run by a Mr. Bonafin where they stayed at 'a heavy expense'. Burton later went to Mr. Fitzgerald's school at Ennis and remained there until he entered the navy. Stamer was removed from his school in Portarlinton to Mr. Moore's school at Donnybrook, where he became ill and died. Brock was sent to Mr. Bonafin's school at the age of four and afterwards entered Trinity College. After graduating he went to Jamaica and died there soon afterwards of yellow fever. Francis was educated at Killaloe, Clonmel and Dublin. He then came home and was given a farm free by his father. George was sent to school at Ennis. When at home all the sons had, at one time or another, received instruction from a resident tutor. Honora died of consumption at the age of 30.

The later careers of William Nugent and Burton are reasonably well known but information on the fortunes of the other sons is patchy. Francis, as we have seen, was given a farm by his father, together with a sum of one thousand pounds at the time of his marriage to Marcella O'Flaherty from Aran. The farm was known as Glasha and on it Francis and Marcella built a house which they named Aran View. Much extended and refurbished it is now the attractive Aran View House Hotel run by the Linnane family at Doolin. Marcella is said to have inherited a quantity of fine gold and silver ornaments salvaged from a wreck of the ill-fated Spanish Armada. After her death in 1856 the objects passed to her daughter Catherine Macnamara, wife of Robert Johnson J.P., who married into Aran View. After Catherine's death in 1867 the object passed once more to *her* daughter – another Marcella – who married Francis Blake-Foster of Ballykeale near Kilfenora.

Francis's brother George served in the army but apparently was obliged to leave when his father refused to pay for a commission for him. However, he was rewarded with a farm at Oughdarra and was also a beneficiary to the tune of five hundred pounds from his father's will. Henry, the fifth son of Francis and Jane Macnamara served in the royal navy for a period. At some point in later life he suffered from a mental illness of some kind and he is said to have received a conviction at Ennis allegedly for throwing a woman into a fire.<sup>14</sup>

Like his brother, George, John Macnamara, the sixth son, also took up farming after finishing his education at Ennis. In 1821 he was leasing an estate from his father at Bullane, near Liscannor. He, too, was left five hundred pounds in his father's will. Known throughout his life as 'John of Moher', he became prominent in the public life of the county chiefly through his work as secretary of the Co. Clare branch of O'Connell's Catholic Association.

Educated at Portarlington and Ennis, Burton Macnamara, the seventh son carved out a distinguished career in the navy. He received his first promotion while serving under Commodore Sir James Yeo, commander of the British Naval forces, on the Great Lakes campaign in Canada in the war of 1812. In 1825 he was appointed Inspecting Commander in charge of coastguards, vice-admiral in 1863, and in 1867 a full admiral of the reserve list. In 1839 he received a knighthood. After retiring from the navy, he served for some years as a director of the National Bank.

Sometime in the 1850s Sir Burton purchased an estate of 732 acres at Tromora, near Miltown-Malbay. A letter from his tenants in the *Clare Journal* of 19 April, 1856 expressing their gratitude for leases on generous terms would seem to suggest that he was a popular landlord. Married to Jane Gabbett of Limerick, admiral Macnamara died suddenly from a stroke at Merrion Square, Dublin, just a few months after her death in 1876. They had no children. Three weeks before his death he had been appointed deputy lieutenant for Co. Clare in place of his nephew, Col. Francis Macnamara who had died earlier that year. His obituary in the *Clare Journal*, 18 December, 1876 gives a useful summary of Sir Burton's career.

Thomas Johnson Westropp's *Folklore Survey of Co. Clare* contains an account of a curious event connected with the death of Burton Macnamara:

On the night of 11 December, 1876 a servant of the Macnamaras was going the rounds in the demesne of Ennistymon House in a wooded glen where the Inagh River falls into cascades. In the dark he heard the rumbling of wheels on the back avenue, and knowing from the hour and place that no 'earthly vehicle' could be coming, concluded that it was the death coach and ran on, opening the gates before it. He had just time to open the third gate and throw himself on his face beside it on the bank before he heard a coach go thundering past. It did not stop at the house but passed on and disappeared. Admiral Burton Macnamara died on the following day.<sup>15</sup>

### **William Nugent Macnamara**

William Nugent was the eldest son and heir of Francis Macnamara and Jane Stamer. Born at Doolin in 1775 and educated at Ennis and Trinity College, Dublin, he obtained a commission in the army and later held the rank of major in the Clare militia. He was appointed a justice of the peace and in 1799 High Sheriff of the county. In the same year he married Susannah Finucane, daughter and co-heiress of the Hon. Matthias

Finucane, Lifford House, Ennis, a justice of the common pleas in Ireland. Susannah's mother was Ann O'Brien, only daughter of Edward O'Brien of Ennistymon House. Ann had been divorced by her husband by an act of parliament in 1793, but since she was deemed to be the guilty part in the action, Ennistymon House and estate remained in the Finucane family. A generation later it passed to William Nugent's son, Colonel Francis Macnamara, on the death of his uncle Andrew Finucane in 1843.

William Nugent's wife died in 1816 at the age of thirty-nine when the oldest of her six children was only fourteen years. William never remarried though he went on to live full forty years more, dying in 1856 at ripe old age of eighty-one. Throughout his long life he had the reputation of an Irish Lochinvar, a dashing cavalier, immensely popular with his peers and tenants alike. A noted marksman and duellist, the "Major" as he was popularly known became almost a national figure after Daniel O'Connell selected him as his second in the famous duel with d'Esterre in 1816.

It is not generally known that Major Macnamara was the first choice of the Catholic Association to stand in the famous Clare by-election in 1828. The O'Gorman-Mahon and Tom Steele were delegated to approach him and try to persuade him to go forward. The major refused to stand, however, pleading that his family were heavily obligated to Vesey Fitzgerald, and he felt himself in honour bound not to oppose him. It was only after Macnamara had reached this decision that O'Connell offered himself as a candidate. The major did, however, go forward as a candidate in 1830 and represented the county as a Liberal MP for the following seventeen years. By all accounts he was highly regarded in the House of Commons, and it is said that Peel, the Prime Minister, never passed him in the corridor without extending him a friendly greeting.

Richard Lalor Shiel has left us an amusing pen picture of Major Macnamara at a time when he was obviously in middle-age:

He is a Protestant in religion a Catholic in politics, and a Milesian in descent. Although he is equally well-known in Dublin as in Clare, his provincial is distinct from his metropolitan reputation. In Dublin, he may be seen at half-past four o'clock strolling with a lounge of easy importance towards the Kildare Street clubhouse, and dressed in exact imitation of the king; to whose royal whiskers the Major's are considered to bear a profusely powdered and frizzed likeness. Not content with this single point of resemblance, he has, by the engagement of a score or two of tailors, and the profound study of the regal fashions, achieved a complete look of majesty; and by the turn of his coat, the dilation of his chest, and the aspect of egregious dignity, succeeded in producing in his person a fine effigy of his sovereign.

With respect to his moral qualities he belongs to the good school of Irish gentlemen...in the county of Clare he is chief of the clan of the Macnamaras, and after rehearsing the royal character at Kildare Street, the moment he arrives on the coast of Clare and visits the oyster beds at Pouldoody, becomes 'every inch a king'. He possesses great influence with the people. He is a most excellent magistrate. If a gentleman should try to crush a poor peasant, Major Macnamara is ready to defend him, not only with the powers of his office, but at the risk of his life.<sup>16</sup>

This account of the Major's concern for the poorer classes was apparently well-deserved for his obituary in the *Clare Journal* of 13 November, 1856, states that he was known throughout North Clare as 'the poor man's magistrate'. His funeral to the family vault at Doolin was described as the largest ever seen in the county: it extended for two miles.<sup>17</sup>

William Nugent Macnamara and Susannah Finucane had one son and five daughters. Jane, the eldest daughter, was reared with Macnamara cousins in Quin following her mother's death, but died aged nineteen and was buried in Quin Abbey. Her sister Matilda married Gerard Fitzgerald O'Connor, JP, in Co. Kerry. She died in 1857 and is buried in Tralee. Louisa, the youngest daughter, married Capt. Samuel Vignoles, a Westmeath-born magistrate who played an important part in the arrest of the Terry Alt leaders in Clare. Having emigrated to Australia where he continued to serve as a magistrate, he drowned accidentally in Melbourne. Another sister, Honora, married Edmund Armstrong of Willow Bank House, Ennis, who afterwards became a Deputy Lieutenant of the county.

### **The Colonel**

Francis Macnamara, the Major's only son and heir, was born in 1802. He became a Captain in the 8<sup>th</sup> Regiment of Hussars and afterwards a Lieut-Colonel in the Clare Militia. He represented the Borough of Ennis as an MP from 1832-35, and in 1839 he was appointed high-sheriff of the county. In 1860 at Marylebone Registry Office, London, Francis, then aged fifty-eight, married thirty-five-year old Helen Mc Dermott, the daughter of a Dublin solicitor. After their marriage, the couple lived variously at Ennis and London, but in July 1863 they made Ennistymon House their permanent home, having first carried out a major revamp which included the addition of a west wing. As a prelude to their return Francis had also carried out an ambitious building scheme in the town, laying down the streetscape that still largely exists today. On 12 September, 1857 the *Clare Freeman* reported that thirty-two new cottages were being constructed in the New Street, and various other improvements were being carried out in other parts of the town. Six months later, on 27 February 1858 the same paper carried a further gushing report on developments at Ennistymon:

A vast deal of improvement is about to take place in the town of Ennistymon in the course of the ensuing summer. In addition to 27 new cottages Colonel Macnamara is granting building ground on a liberal scale for a range of large three-storey, double-roofed houses. The range of houses is to be continued from the female schoolhouse to the post office, and all the small houses in that range, notorious in bygone days for being the habitation of all the disreputable characters in the town, are to be razed to the ground. Various other improvements will take place under the new steward, Mr Doyle. Colonel Macnamara is everyday adding to his well-deserved popularity

throughout the district, owing to the kind and liberal manner with which he is dealing with his tenants both in the town and in all other parts of his property. We need only add that if, in these days of progress the town of Ennistymon does not keep pace in improvements with all the other towns surrounding, it will not be the fault of its encouraging landlord.

After all this endeavour it is little wonder that there was great rejoicing at Ennistymon on 2 July, 1863 when Colonel Macnamara took his wife and their young children to Ennistymon House for the first time. The *Clare Freeman* of 4 July takes up the story:

At the head of Parliament Street there was a large and stately arch erected, over which was placed the Macnamara coat of arms with the inscription *cead míle fáilte*, and at the other end of the street, approaching the avenue leading to Ennistymon House there was another of these triumphal arches, over which was emblazoned in large gold letters: WELCOME TO ENNISTYMON. For miles, all around, large bonfires were kindled in the evening, around which crowds of the peasantry were grouped, to give loud and hearty expressions to their feelings of delight.

Later in the evening an expansive address of welcome prepared by Fr. Sheehan was read in public to the newly-arrived couple. It contained effusive allusions to the Colonel's 'princely ancestors', his kinship with the heroic and chivalrous Sarsfield, and how O'Connell had put his life and honour in his (Francis's) father's hands in the duel with d'Esterre:

"Such Col. Macnamara are the traditions of your house, such the immortal examples left you and your children they are honourable and deserving of praise; they are replete with great memories and deserve to be treasured up and secured against oblivion in the keeping of your children's children through all their generations".<sup>18</sup>

The Macnamara estate, which included a large swathe of North Clare stretching from Liscannor to New Quay, was large by Co. Clare standards. In 1876 it comprised upwards of 15,000 statute acres with a valuation of £6,932. There was also some property near Ennis and some sixteen acres on the outskirts of Galway city. There were houses in Dublin, Galway, Ennis and Doolin. Approximately seven hundred (700) tenants were paying a yearly rent of ten thousand pounds (£10,000). Although there was the occasional complaint the Macnamaras were by no means rack renters, and in 1863 the agent, Mr. P.E. Reilly stated that some of the tenants were paying the same rent for forty years.<sup>19</sup>

Colonel Francis Macnamara fathered two sons and a daughter, all of whom were still minors when he died at his London residence on 26 June 1873, aged seventy-one. He is buried in the Catholic section at Kensal Green cemetery beside his uncle Andrew Finucane, and his first cousin and namesake Francis Calcutt Macnamara MP.

### **Henry Vee Macnamara**

The Colonel's eldest son, Henry Valentine Macnamara, was born in 1861, two years before his parents moved into Ennistymon House. He was educated at Harrow and

afterwards at Trinity College, Cambridge where he took a BA in 1882. He held the rank of captain in the Royal Carmarthen Art Militia and subsequently that of lieutenant in the Clare militia. He became a justice of the peace and high sheriff of Clare in 1885.

In 1883 Henry Vee (that is the name by which he was known throughout his life) married Edith Elizabeth Cooper, an Englishwoman of Australian descent. Seen through the eyes of her grand-daughter some thirty years on

“...She was a formidable and capable woman who knew her rights and exercised them. Neither sensitive nor tender she barged at other people, knocked them out of her way, knocked them into whatever shape she wanted and drove them to their duty... a big, fat woman dressed in the fashion of the time in long skirts, she appeared to move on wheels, unhesitating, unstoppable. Following the custom of the period, she booked a suite at the Shelbourne Hotel in Dublin for the births of her children. From Ennistymon a horse carriage drove her up to Dublin, and during one of her pregnancies the bottom fell out, which was the explanation I always heard for the slight oddness in one of my aunts”.<sup>20</sup>

The same observer gives us her impression of her grandfather Henry Vee:

He was a fine figure of a man, stocked with the old tradition, a diehard of the old regime, and to quote the Irish phrase for blustering high spirits. If he took off your head today he would put two on you tomorrow. When out shooting the top half of my grandfather was dressed like Sherlock Holmes with a deerstalker hat and a splendid check tweed cape. His lower half sported leather gaiters and tweed knickerbockers.<sup>21</sup>

### **Agrarian Troubles**

Henry Vee lived at a time when the country was in the throes of the so-called ‘Land War’ and the United Irish League was spearheading the campaign for tenants’ rights. By the first decade of the 1900s much progress appeared to have been made through the passage of legislation which had as its object the acquisition of land by tenants by offering mutually advantageous terms to landlord and tenant alike. The government provided for the issue of certain sums of money for land purchase, but the scheme frequently floundered when the applications came in faster than the funds for dealing with them. In the circumstances landlords sometimes withheld their co-operation and continued to let their lands as before to large cattle farmers or ‘ranchers’ as they were called. The frustration of land-hungry tenants with this lack of progress frequently manifested itself in eruptions of violence and intimidation directed against landlords, farmers, cattle men and their servants and drovers. Cattle were driven onto roads, walls and fences were levelled, firearms were discharged over the heads of drovers and sometimes even into houses.

In September 1908 there were rumblings on Henry Vee’s Doolin estate. A land league official who visited the area to advise and organise the local tenants, managed to get himself arrested for what was deemed to be an inflammatory address to a meeting in Lisdoonvarna. When he refused to give sureties for his good behaviour he was

committed to prison for three days. This was the lightning rod for one of the largest cattle drives hitherto seen in the county. On 22 September about four hundred persons watched as cattle and sheep owned by 'ranchers' on Henry Vee's estate at Doolin were driven off the lands and through the streets of Lisdoonvarna despite the efforts of about sixty policemen to prevent them.<sup>22</sup> Arising out of this incident some forty persons afterwards appeared in court at Ennistymon amid scenes of great excitement, which unfortunately on this occasion degenerated into baton-charges and bloodshed. All but one of the defendants again refused to give recognisances and were duly committed to prison for fourteen days. The day of their release brought further commotion when they were greeted at Ennistymon and Lisdoonvarna by bands and fireworks.

The Doolin cattle drive, as it came to be known, was but one of many similar incidents that took place all over Ireland as part of the national campaign for tenants' rights. Due mainly to the efforts of a local ballad-maker, however, it gained a notoriety out of all proportion to its political significance. It became in effect Co. Clare's *Táin* and even today one may occasionally hear it recalled with all the melodrama of the ancient epic.

In the last days of September  
When our boys were sent to jail,  
They marched them to the station-house  
And sent them off by rail.  
The Bobbies who escorted them  
Were itching for a row  
For nothing irritated them  
Like the 'How', 'How', 'How'!

### **Political Upheaval**

In December 1919 during the War of Independence Henry Vee and some friends while driving to a pheasant shoot on his farm at Carron were ambushed near Leamaneh castle by a party of IRA Volunteers. The intention it seems was to relieve the shooting party of their arms and ammunition. Macnamara and his party, however, put up a spirited defence, turning the table on their embarrassed assailants and forcing them to withdraw empty-handed from the scene. During the encounter Henry Vee himself received gunshot in the neck and face which left him with a slight twitch in the head for the remainder of his life.

The shooting at Leamaneh was not Henry Vees only brush with the IRA. With the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty in 1921 the old order began to be dismantled. Following the treaty there was an outbreak of violence in Northern Ireland, much of it directed against Catholics, and for a while it seemed as if the fledgling Free State might be plunged into anarchy. It was against this backdrop that some remarks made by Henry Vee were latched upon by the IRA as sympathetic to the plight of Orangemen in Belfast.

While there is probably much more to the affair than is stated here, including Henry Vee's known links with Freemasonry, what is not in doubt from the following letter that he was now in effect a 'marked man'.

H.V. Macnamara Esq  
Ennistymon House, Co. Clare.

1. Resulting from the treatment of the Catholic population in Belfast and other Northern towns by the Orange gunmen, there are thousands of men, women and children homeless and starving.
2. There is no doubt in our minds that the policy of the Orangemen is to drive all the Catholics from the Northern area. We are also fully alive to the fact that the British Government is supplying the necessary cash and arms to enable the Orangemen to complete this task of exterminating all Catholics in the North.
3. Now these homeless and starving people must be attended to and all their needs supplied. For this purpose, housing accommodation is an immediate necessity. Equally immediate is the necessity for food for these people. In the absence of other resources for this purpose, the Executive Council of the IRA have decided that Unionists and Freemasons in the South be compelled to supply these needs.
4. In pursuance of this decision you are hereby ordered to leave your residence at Ennistymon House, Co. Clare, which with your entire property is confiscated in the name of the Executive Council of the IRA.

Signed on behalf of the Executive council IRA  
Frank Barrett O/C.

On receipt of this ultimatum dated 27 April, 1922 Henry Vee consulted his solicitors, Messrs Kerin & Hickman at Ennis, only to be told that Mr. Hickman's own property at Kilmore, which included cattle and hay worth upwards of two thousand pounds (£2,000) and a large amount of machinery, had been seized by the IRA. There is little doubt that Henry's mind was further concentrated by the fact that Doolin House, the old Macnamara home still used by the family in the holiday season, had been maliciously burned down some time previously. In the words of Yeats, all was now changed, changed utterly, and Henry Vee decided that it would be safer to withdraw from Ennistymon, at least until the current political ferment had settled. In the event, he never returned to Ennistymon House. He died some three years later, on 30 October 1925, aged sixty-four in a flat in Kensington, London. Meanwhile, Ennistymon House had become a temporary barracks for the Garda Síochána, the fledgling police force of the Irish Free State.

Henry Vee's only brother William James Macnamara lived at Bushy Park, near Ennis. Married to Mary Sarita Keane, daughter of Francis Burton Keane J.P., Hermitage, Ennis, he served as high sheriff of Clare in 1892. They had no family.

Henry Vee had one sister, Frances Susan. Born in 1865 she was the youngest of Colonel Macnamara's three children, and the only one of them to have been born at Ennistymon. In 1888 Frances married Robert William Twigge, son of a Protestant

clergyman from Yorkshire. At the age of twenty-four while in Rome he was received into the Catholic church and was later appointed Privy Chamberlain of the Cloak and Sword to Pope Leo XIII. Twigge was a historian of note, and after his marriage to Frances he became interested in the genealogy of the Macnamaras and the interconnected Co. Clare families. A regular contributor to historical journals, he left valuable unpublished material on various branches of the Macnamaras and other Co. Clare clans.

### **Francis Macnamara**

Henry Vee had a family of seven, three sons and four daughters. Francis the eldest son and heir was probably the most colourful of all the Doolin/Ennistymon Macnamaras, and the one most closely linked in the popular mind with Ennistymon House. He it was who sometime around 1935 converted it into the Falls Hotel, naming it after the nearby spectacular cascades on the Inagh River.

Born on 20 February, 1884 Francis was educated at Harrow and Magdalen College, Oxford. The intention was to follow a career in law, but he soon abandoned this idea to devote himself to poetry and writing. For some years Francis drifted about London, chiefly in the circle of students of the Slade School of Art, amongst them Augustus John, with whom he developed a close friendship. In 1909 a book of Francis's poems entitled *Marionettes* was published in London. It was well received and gained him recognition from poets and writers in England and Ireland, amongst them George Bernard Shaw and W.B. Yeats. Two years earlier in Paddington Registry Office Francis had married secretly Yvonne Majolier, the twenty-year-old daughter of a French father and an Irish mother – a Cooper from Co. Limerick. Part of the honeymoon was spent at Doolin and at Coole Park with Lady Gregory and Yeats. Afterwards the couple lived in London with Yvonne's parents and later in a house in Hammersmith. A son, John, and three daughters – Nicolette, Brigit and Caitlin - were born of this marriage; Francis also fathered a natural daughter named Katherine Patricia ("Pat"), who remained very much connected with the family throughout her life.<sup>23</sup>

Every summer Francis brought his family to the Macnamara house in Doolin. Augustus John and his children came along as well as several other artists and writers including Shaw. In her book *Two Flamboyant Fathers*, Francis's daughter Nicolette (Devas) describes the Francis-Augustus partnership:

Both could be extravagantly gay in company with an overflow of vitality- with flashed like bullets in a Western, laughter exploded in many roars, drink was drunk for the fun of getting drunk. The women got their bottoms slapped and were pinched in the soft places while they were flattered with poetic compliments, coupled with earthy invitations to bed....

For days on end Frances and Augustus disappeared into the wilds of Connemara riding high on a jaunting car. In the pubs, the local characters joined in the talk, the theorising and storytelling that dragged on for hours and hours, over the innocent-looking glasses of milk that made them so drunk. For to protect the stomach milk was added to the raw illicit poteen distilled from potatoes and barley.

Of handsome appearance and described by a close friend as having a first-class brain, throughout his life Francis nevertheless remained cast somewhat in the role of Dickens's Mr. Micawber, devoting whatever time there was in between his poetry, philosophy and womanising to building castles in the air. One quality that he possessed, however, and one that has been recalled by friends again and again is his prowess as a seaman. He owned a converted Galway hooker named the *Mary Anne*, which he is reputed to have sailed from Doolin to Greece on one occasion with some of Augustus John's family as crew. That he sailed it more than once from Doolin to his flat beside the Thames in Hammersmith is more firmly attested.

After about ten years of marriage Francis abandoned his wife and children in favour of Augustus John's sister-in-law Edie Mac Neil. They were married in 1928. Yvonne and the children lived on their own in a house procured for them by their grandmother, near Ringwood on the edge of the New Forest in Hampshire. Though living his own separate existence, Francis continued to keep in reasonably close touch with his family and provided them with an allowance of three hundred pounds (£300) a year.

During the following years, Francis divided his time between London, Dublin and Co.



**The Falls Hotel**

Clare. The political situation in Ireland had settled and he had recovered vacant possession of Ennistymon House. Sometime in the 1930s he began the experiment of turning it into a hotel.

This was interrupted for a time by Edie's death, but by 1935 Francis had found a third wife, Geraldine Iris O' Callaghan, the twenty-two-year-old daughter of Colonel O'Callaghan-Westropp of Bodyke, a woman less than half his age.

Francis's attempt at hotel management was by all accounts no more successful than many of his earlier grandiose schemes. His daughter Caitlin, who spent some time assisting him in this endeavour thought the layout of the place was all wrong. She believed the venture failed because Francis "was always handing out free drinks, putting on the big act and talking his head off".<sup>24</sup> Within a few years Francis had given up the experiment, and had moved a small house in the grounds known as *The Chateau*. He leased the hotel to the O' Regan family, parents of Brendan O' Regan, who later became closely identified with Shannon Airport and Duty Free. Indeed, it was at

Ennistymon that Brendan's entrepreneurial flair first came to notice when he began the novel scheme of supplying 'hot meals' in hay boxes from the hotel to the golfers at Lahinch.

By this time, Francis Macnamara had moved to Dublin living variously at Kildare Street, and Upper Baggot Street before finally settling at Sorrento Terrace in Dalkey towards the end of 1945. His health was failing rapidly and he was being cared for by his natural daughter, Katherine Patricia Macnamara or Pat, as she was always known. Visitors around this time included his daughter Nicolette and his first wife, Yvonne, with whom he had been exchanging letters for some time unknown to the family. Nicolette later discovered that she had been keeping him in touch with the family affairs. Francis died at Dalkey on 8 March, 1946. In an obituary in the *Irish Times* Joseph Hone wrote:

I am not alone in feeling that his pretensions to some superior understanding and integrity of intellect had some basis in fact...he broke a good deal of crockery on his way through life – that of others as well as his own – but I have never heard that he made an enemy. Perhaps only Ireland could have produced a Francis Macnamara: and only Ireland could have so failed to give direction to his remarkable gifts.<sup>25</sup>

### **John Macnamara**

Francis Macnamara's eldest son John was born in 1908. He took up a career in the navy, having entered via the Nautical College at Pangbourne. After his marriage to Henriette Buffard a French woman, he left the navy, a qualified engineer, and was living in Paris when war was declared. With the idea of re-joining the navy he returned to England, but impatient at the navy's slowness in calling up its reservists, he joined the army instead. He attained the rank of major, and took part in some of the first experimental Commando raids on the French coast. His knowledge of French and France probably made him an obvious choice for such ventures for his sister Nicolette said he could easily pass as a Frenchman.

John and Henriette had no children. After the war, they went to America where John again worked as a civil engineer until Henriette's death in 1962. Already suffering from cancer, John returned to England to be cared for at Blashford in the New Forest by his sister Nicolette. He died at Blashford within a month of his homecoming. "Through the pain of his illness", Nicolette later wrote, "I learnt rather late in the day what Macnamara courage really meant". On John's death, the Macnamaras of Doolin and Ennistymon became extinct in the male line.

### **Nicolette Macnamara**

Nicolette was the oldest of Francis Macnamara's daughters. Born in 1911 she was brought up mostly in the New Forest, Hampshire, where under the guidance of

Augustus John, she developed an interest in painting. After a period at school in France, she spent three years at the Slade School of Art where she met her future husband Anthony Devas. They were married at Ellingham parish church in Hampshire in 1931 and lived between Regent's Square in London, and Blashford. Anthony died in 1958 and seven years later Nicolette married another artist – Rupert Sheppard – whom she had known from her Slade school days. After the war, Rupert had gone to South Africa to become professor of Fine Art in Capetown University. After his wife died in 1962 he returned to England with his children. Three years later he married Nicolette.

Nicolette painted under the name Nicolette Macnamara and achieved considerable success mainly with landscapes and birds in watercolour and oils. She afterwards switched to writing, publishing in all six (6) books. Her autobiographical *Two Flamboyant Fathers* (1966) was an immediate success. Apart from this, her other works are - *Bonfire*, (1958) (this was her first novel. The film rights were later purchased), *Nightwatch* (1961), *Black Eggs* (1970), *Susannah's Nightingales* (1978), and *Pegeen Crybaby* (1986). She died in 1987 and is buried at Ellingham Church, Hampshire. Her husband Rupert Sheppard died in 1992.

### **Brigit Macnamara:**

Born in Hammersmith in 1912, she afterwards lived at Blashford near Ringwood on the edge of the New Forest with her mother until Yvonne Macnamara died, after which she moved the short distance to South Gorley, still with the New Forest on her doorstep. Described by friends as 'a little eccentric', at some stage she changed her name by deed poll from Macnamara to Marnier. Never well off, she worked in a local hardware store in Ringwood, and as a supervisor at a Ringwood playgroup where friends said the children absolutely adored her. Due to a riding accident in which she tragically lost one eye, she always wore a black eye patch which gave her a somewhat piratical air. A friend, who knew her for most of her life gave the following impression of Brigit:

She was not particularly tall and was quite gaunt in later years; her hair was long and always worn up, held together in somewhat untidy fashion with large numbers of hairgrips. Physically very strong, she loved being outdoors in her garden or on the Forest best of all and would walk miles at a time in all weathers, always with one of her long succession of dogs in tow. The back door to her house, *Elm Trees*, was always open to me and anyone else who wanted to spend some quality time just chatting, having a few drinks of whatever, or eating good healthy food - Brigit would always make herself a salad the French way with wonderful home-made dressing every single day and eat it with her supper, even if that consisted of sausage and mash!

Brigit never married but was the mother of two sons - Tobias and Edward. She died in August 1994, just days after her younger sister Caitlin, and is buried with her mother and sister Nicolette at Ellingham Church in Hampshire.

## Caitlin Macnamara

Born in Hammersmith in 1913. Along with the other children she too moved to Blashford with her mother after their father had abandoned them for another woman. She was educated mostly at home apart from a period spent at Grovely Manor School in Bournemouth. She also spent some time at a dancing school in London during which father and daughter relationships were again restored when she lived with Francis in Regent's Square.

In July 1937, at Penzance registry office Caitlin married the Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas. They lived first with Dylan's parents on the outskirts of Swansea, afterwards with Caitlin's mother at Blashford before finally settling at Laugharne in Carmarthenshire in the iconic 'Boat House' overlooking the estuary. This remained their home until Dylan's untimely death in 1953, aged only thirty-nine, while on a lecture tour in New York.

Four years after Dylan's death Caitlin and the children moved to Rome. There followed a period of emotional and psychological distress, marked by Caitlin's attendance at alcoholics anonymous and treatment at clinics in London, Rome and Sicily. Towards the end of 1957 Caitlin's world began to improve particularly after a chance meeting in Rome with Giuseppe Fazio, a Sicilian, with whom she began a relationship, which survived until death separated them almost four decades later. After some years in Rome they moved to Catania in Sicily to a house owned by Giuseppe's mother, and it was there that Caitlin died in July 1994 aged 80 years. At her request, her remains were taken back to Wales to be buried next to Dylan in Laugharne. Although Caitlin and Giuseppe Fazio had never married, they had a son together, Francesco, who was born in 1963 when Caitlin was 49.

Like her sister, Nicolette, Caitlin Thomas was also a writer, although of lesser acclaim. Her books include *Leftover life to Kill* (1957), *Not Quite Posthumous Letters to my Daughter* (1963) and (with George Tremlett) *Caitlin, a Warring Absence* (1986).

Caitlin and Dylan had two sons, Llewellyn ("Wellie") (1939-2000), Colm (1949-2012) and a daughter Aeronwy (1943-2009). Aeronwy, a writer and poet in her own right, began her working life as a trainee nurse, later turning to films working as a publicist for a film studio and then as a journalist in Rome and elsewhere. Her published works include *Later than Laugharne, Poems and memories and Rooks and Poems*. In 1973 Aeronwy married Trefor Ellis from Pontypridd, a tenor with the London Welsh Chorale. They lived in New Malden, Surrey, where they brought up two children. Diagnosed in

her early thirties with a bone marrow disease known as myelofibrosis, Aeronwy Thomas died on 27 July, 2009.

**A Selective pedigree of the Macnamaras of Doolin & Ennistymon**

**TEIGE Macnamara**

(4<sup>th</sup> in descent from John Macnamara 'Fionn' of Cratloe & Knappogue. (He married Ann Nugent)<sup>26</sup>)

**BARTHOLOMEW Macnamara** (b. 1685)

Of Ballynacarrgy, Newmarket-on-Fergus, and afterwards of Murrough & Gleninagh) mar. Dorothy Brock dau. of the Mayor of Galway.

<b>WILLIAM Macnamara</b> (1714-1762) mar. Catherine Sarsfield of Doolin	Michael d.s.p.	Teigue (of Fermoye)	John mar. dau of Anthony Mc Donagh of Ir. Brigade fame	Mgt. mar Robert Skerritt,	Mary m. Hugh Davoren	Ann m. Laurence Comyn, Kilcorney
---	----------------	---------------------	--	---------------------------	----------------------	----------------------------------

<b>FRANCIS Macnamara (1750-1821)</b> of Doolin. Mar. Jane Stamer, Carnelly House, Clarecastle.	William d.s.p	Mary married Francis Martin	Catherine	Dorothy mar. David Comyn J.P. Bishop's Quarter	Ann
--	---------------	-----------------------------	-----------	--	-----

<b>WILLIAM Nugent Macnamara</b> (1775-1856) MP for Clare 1830-1847). Mar Susannah Finucane dau and co-heiress of Judge Matthias Finucane.	(1) Richard (of Oughdarra) (3) George (4) Francis of Aran View (5) Henry, a midshipman, royal navy (6) John (of Moher). (7) Sir Burton, admiral Royal Navy (8) Brock, died young in Jamaica (9) Stamer (died in childhood).(10) Honoria (d. aged 20). (11) Dorothy Catherine mar. Capt. Calcutt, father of Francis Macnamara Calcutt, MP for Clare (1858-63).					
---	---	--	--	--	--	--

<b>COL. FRANCIS Macnamara</b> (1802-1873), M.P. for Ennis. Mar (1860) Helen Mc Dermott. Extended Ennistymon House (1863)	Jane (d. aged 19) bur. in Quin Abbey	Susan mar Robert Mansergh	Honora m. Ed. Armstrong	Matilda mar Gerald O'Connor, Co. Kerry	Louise (mar Capt. Vignoles)
--	--------------------------------------	---------------------------	-------------------------	--	-----------------------------

<b>HENRY VALENTINE Macnamara</b> (1861-1925), High Sheriff (1883). Married Edith Elizabeth Cooper	William James, Bushy park, Ennis. High Sheriff, Co. Clare (1892). Married Mary Sarita Keane, Ennis.	Frances Susan, married Robert Twigge, Privy Chamberlain to Pope Leo XIII			
---	---	--	--	--	--

<b>FRANCIS Macnamara</b> (1884 -1946) married (1) Yvonne Majolier (ii) Edie Mac Neil (iii) Geraldine Iris O' Callaghan. Converted Ennistymon House to Falls Hotel.	Valentine	George	Edith Elizabeth mar. Dis. Inspector Cruise (RIC)	Doreen Finola	Honor Nesta
--	-----------	--------	--	---------------	-------------

<b>JOHN Macnamara</b> (1908-1962). Royal Navy. Civil Engineer in Paris and U.S.A. Married Henriette Buffard and died s.p. in England.	Nicolette (1911-1987). married (1) Rupert Sheppard (ii) Anthony Devas.	Brigit (1912-1994) Changed her name to Marnier by deed poll.	Caitlin (1913-1994). B. at Hammersmith. Married the Welsh poet, Dylan Thomas (1914-1953). Died in Sicily in 1994. Buried with Dylan in Laugharne, Carmarthen.	Katherine Patricia ("Pat"), a natural dau. of Francis Macnamara. Married Ed. Ward-Lloyd, Co. Limerick. She died in 1991.	
---	--	--	---	--	--

- 
- <sup>1</sup> This paper is based with some revision on my article under same title in *Dal gCais*, no. 11 (1995).
- <sup>2</sup> Frost, p. 36
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 40
- <sup>4</sup> The sea hound or seal is distinguished by its silken skin.
- <sup>5</sup> Gleeson, *His. of the diocese of Killaloe* (Dublin, 1962), 490
- <sup>6</sup> Frost, p.40
- <sup>7</sup> Twigge Mss. Collection (Br. Mus. Add. Mss.No.39264
- <sup>8</sup> Burke, *Irish family records* (1976), p.763
- <sup>9</sup> Frost, *op. cit.*, p. 440
- <sup>10</sup> Twigge Papers (will of William Macnamara, Doolin)
- <sup>11</sup> Twigge, 'The Sarsfields of Co. Clare', *Jrnl. Nth. Mun. Archaeol. Soc.* Vol 3, no. 1 (1913) p.101-2
- <sup>12</sup> Enright, 'Peter Comyn: a victim of History', *Dal gCais* no. 7 (1984), pp. 111-15.
- <sup>13</sup> Twigge Papers.
- <sup>14</sup> Twigge Papers.
- <sup>15</sup> Westropp, *Folklore of Clare* (Clasp Press, 2000), p. 11
- <sup>16</sup> Richard Lalor Shiel, *Sketches legal and Political* (London, 1855), 103-4.
- <sup>17</sup> *Clare Freeman*, 16/11/1856
- <sup>18</sup> *Clare Journal* 6 July, 1863
- <sup>19</sup> Letter from agent, P.E. Reilly in *Clare Freeman* 4 January 1862.
- <sup>20</sup> Nicolette Devas, *Two Flamboyant Fathers* (London 1966),p. 18.
- <sup>21</sup> Nicolette Devas, *two Flamboyant Fathers* (London, 1966), 18
- <sup>22</sup> *Clare Journal*, 28 Sept, 1908
- <sup>23</sup> Katherine Patricia ("Pat") married Edward Ward Lloyd of Co. Limerick but the marriage broke up. Pat lived her final years at Lahinch where she died in 1991.
- <sup>24</sup> Caitlin Thomas & George Tremlett, *A Warring Absence* (London, 1986), p.12
- <sup>25</sup> Quoted by Nicolette in *Two Flamboyant Fathers*, p.268
- <sup>26</sup> Frost, *A history & topography of the County of Clare* (London, 1893), pp 300, 320.