

HISTORY OF SAINTFIELD AND DISTRICT

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A lecture delivered in Saintfield on 8th October, 1971.

Publication sponsored by the Anderson Trust, Saintfield.

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*Thanks are due to Colonel
M. C. Perceval-Price, D.L., J.P.,
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Aiken McClelland

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HISTORY OF SAINTFIELD AND DISTRICT

Prior to the plantation of this parish by English and Scottish settlers about the middle of the seventeenth century, the history of the area is scanty. The medieval parish of Tamhnach Naolmh lay in Slut Neales, one of the nine sub-divisions of South Clannaboy. It was thinly populated, and in 1552 Sir Thomas Cusack, lord chancellor of Ireland, wrote — "The next country to Ards is Clannaboy, wherein is one Moriortagh Dulenaghe, one of the O'Neills, who hath the same as captain of Clannaboy. But he is not able to maintain the same . . . They cannot make past twenty-four horsemen."

In 1575 Sir Henry Sydney, Lord Deputy of Ireland, visited Clannaboy, and found it in the possession of Neill MacBrian Ertaugh, who was unfriendly to the English, "yet that day he offered me no skirmish." A few years later, in 1586, Sir Henry Bagenal visited South Clannaboy, and described it as mostly a woodland stretching from the Lagan to Killyleagh, and owned by Sir Con McNeill Oge O'Neill, who lived in his castle at Castle-reagh.

Sir Con, the last of the O'Neills to rule North Down, was falsely accused in 1602 of "levying war against the Queen" (Elizabeth) and fled to Scotland. Here he met Sir Hugh Montgomery, who agreed to ask Sir James Hamilton, another Ayrshire landlord and a friend of King James I (Queen Elizabeth was now dead) to intercede for him. The king, in 1605, granted all O'Neill's lands (over two hundred townlands) to Hamilton, with orders that he would divide them equally among Montgomery, O'Neill and himself. The two Scots were also ordered to plant their portions and O'Neill's with settlers of British stock. Few settlers came from England, and the vast majority came from Galloway, Lanark, Dumfries, Renfrew and Ayrshire. The early planters settled near Holywood, Bangor, Killyleagh, Killylinchy, Comber, Newtownards, Ballywalter and Donaghadee.

The Rev. Andrew Stewart, who was presbyterian minister in Donaghadee from 1646 until his death in 1671, has left this unflattering description of the first settlers — "From Scotland came many, and from England not a few, yet all of them the scum of both nations, who for debt, or breaking and fleeing from justice, or seeking shelter, came hither, hoping to be without fear of man's justice in a land where there was nothing, or but little, as yet of the fear of God. And in a few years there flocked such a multitude of people from Scotland, that these northern counties of Down, Antrim, Londonderry, etc., were in a good measure planted, which had been waste before; yet most of the people, as I have said before (and, it is strange, of dif-

ferent names, nations, dialects, tempers, breeding, and, in a word, all void of godliness) who seemed rather to flee from God in this enterprise than to follow their own mercy. Yet God followed them when they fled from him — albeit at first it must be remembered that they cared little for any church."

Robert Blair, presbyterian minister in Bangor, 1623-1634, confirms Stewart's statement when he wrote "The part of Scotland nearest to Ireland sent over abundance of people and cattle, that filled the counties of Ulster that lay next to the sea; and albeit amongst these, divine providence sent over some worthy persons for birth, education, and parts, yet the most part were such as either poverty, scandalous lives, or at the best adventurous seeking of better accommodation, set forward that way."

The Saintfield district, part of the regal grant to James Hamilton, was heavily wooded, and Hamilton and Montgomery quarrelled over the ownership of the forest. A commission was appointed in 1626 to decide the ownership, and Hamilton was awarded the woods in Oughley, Craigy, Tonaghmore, Ballyknockan and Lisdalgan, to mention but a few of the townlands. The commission also noted that "John King did cut upon Lisdalgan and other inland timber towns, with sundry workmen with him, for a year and a half great store of timber trees, converting the same to pipe-staves, hogshead staves, barrell-staves, keeve-staves, and spokes for carts." Also, "one John Makinlas, with others in his company, were set on work in the said woods of Lisdalgan, and the rest of the towns adjoining, by the Lord of the Ards, where he made roofs for the church of Greyabbey and old Comber, and some other store of timber for his lordship's buildings at Newtownards and Donaghadee." Even with all this timber cutting, it was recorded that 8,883 trees, at least six inches square at the butt, were still standing.

The Scots did not settle in Saintfield until about the middle of the seventeenth century, and Raven's map (1625) shows settlement inland only as far as Derryboy. The 1631 muster roll gives the names of all the male settlers in Co. Down between the ages of 16 and 60 who were able to carry arms. Though over 4,000 were enrolled, there is not a name from an inland parish, except a few from the parish of Dromore. Further evidence of the scantiness of population during the early seventeenth century is shown by the fact that a bishop's visitation for the year 1622 does not even mention Saintfield. A vicar was ordained in 1634, but as he soon transferred to Ballywalter it is probable there was no congregation here.

On the 23rd October 1641 the native Irish rose in rebellion, in an attempt to recover the lands from which they had been dispossessed. Peace was not restored until Oliver Cromwell put down the rebellion with a ruthless hand, and immediately the Scots began to move inland. In 1657, a commission was set up

to give an account of each parish in Co. Down, and it reported on Saintfield as follows — "Aforesaid parish hath in all 21 towns. We know not who serves the cure. Church in the middle of the parish, without repair. We know no glebe." The same year the government appointed Alexander Hutcheson as minister with a yearly salary of £60. As the usual salary was £100 it is very probable an indication that his hearers were few.

Hutcheson, who was evicted from the parish church after the restoration of Charles II, became the first presbyterian minister in Saintfield.

Two years after Hutcheson's arrival in Saintfield the first census was taken, which shows how thinly populated the countryside was —

	Eng. & Scots	Irish
Ballyaugherty	8	4
Ballyknockan	2	4
Carricknacesna	0	11
Carsonstown	0	18
Creevyloughgare	0	10
Drumalig	13	0
Leggygowan	1	12
Lessans	10	3
Lisdoonan	3	12
Lisdalغان	4	1
Lisowen	4	7
Oughley	8	4
Tonaghmore	1	11
Tullywest	9	4

We know the names of a few of the Irish inhabitants, as some of them were later accused of taking part in the 1641 rebellion — Phelim McToole O'Neill, Henry O'Neill, and Phelim Oge O'Neill of Lisdalغان; Neill Roe O'Kelly, Patrick Oge O'Kelly, Brian Reagh O'Kelly, Donald O'Kelly, Patrick O'Kelly, Thomas O'Flynn, Edmund O'Kelly, Patrick O'Flynn, Owen McAllister and Brian O'Kelly of Leggygowan; Patrick O'Kelly, Donald O'Kelly and Brian Roe O'Kelly of Lisowen; and Phelim O'Neill of Tonaghmore.

It may be wondered where these names have disappeared. The explanation is simple. The O'Kellys and O'Flynns became Kellys and Flynnns, and many adopted English or Scottish surnames. The most common names around here to be taken by the Irish were Brown, Donnan, Hanvey, McComb, McCormick, McDowell, McKee, McMurray, Magowan, Martin, Neill and Smith. The name Smith is a straight translation from the gaelic gabha — a smith, and the name is perpetuated in Ballygowan and Leggygowan. Many of the Irish not only adopted English or Scottish names, but also adopted the religion of the planters. The gaelic language died out early in north and east Down, and

for several centuries the names of townlands are the only remnants of the former gaelic culture.

In 1660 the English Commonwealth came to an end, and the monarchy was restored. In an effort to raise money the king ordered a tax on land which was paid in 1663. Fortunately, the list of taxpayers has been preserved, and it shows the poverty of the district, as there are only a handful of names — John Wallace of Ravara, Edward Creighton of Ballyknockan, John Cowdon of Carrickmaddyroe, John Todd of Carricknaveagh, John Rea of Lessans, John O'Dornan of Cahard, David Read of Ballydian, Gawn Hamilton of Lisowen and Neil Roe O'Kelly of Leggygowan.

Several of these names are worth a mention. The Wallace family purchased the half townland of Ravara in 1620 for a yearly rent of £20, and they later bought land in Barnamaghery. They became solicitors in Downpatrick, and the family now lives at Myra Castle, Downpatrick. The family vault is in the 1st Saintfield Presbyterian graveyard.

The Todd family of Carricknaveagh are still living in the townland after more than three centuries. They were the chief tenants, and the other tenants held leases under them. During the rebellion of 1798 they were strong supporters of the United Irishmen and as a result lost most of their land and money. The name is perpetuated in Todd's Hill in Saintfield.

The Hamiltons were the landlords of Saintfield until the estate was sold in 1709. The purchaser was General Nicholas Price, whose mother was a Hamilton. His father, Captain Richard Price, was a Welshman who had served in Ireland during the 1640s and had been paid by a grant of land at Farranfad, near Seaforde. General Price lived at Hollymount, near Downpatrick, and he bought the Saintfield estate for his third son, who was also called Nicholas.

General Price, who died in 1735, can truly be said to be the founder of Saintfield. Walter Harris, writing in 1744, says "It was not many years ago made a town by the care and industry of the late General Price, who began to improve here, opened and made the road passable from Belfast to Down through it, encouraged linen manufacturers and other tradesmen to settle there, had a barrack fixed for a troop of horse, and promoted the repairs of a ruinous, now decent, parish church, to which he gave plate and other ornaments."

Harris also wrote "The country about Saintfield is coarse and hilly, however, by drains and good husbandry, it produces plenty of rye, oats and flax, and affords pasture to sheep and black cattle. The ploughmen carry their furrows to the tops of

the hills, and the morassy grounds at the bottom yield a plentiful increase of rye."

I have already referred many times to 'Saintfield'. The use of this name is not strictly correct, as the earliest reference to the word is in 1712 in a letter written by a member of the Price family. Previously to this the name was Tonaghneave, Saintfield being a literal translation.

The town of Saintfield was of slow growth. The first houses were built between the Fair Green and the Down Street, and the only house on the opposite side of the street was the Price house which stood where McRobert's public house now is. General Price's grandson, Francis, who was M.P. for Lisburn for many years, built the present Saintfield House and planted the demesne. His architect, Cassells, also built Rademon and Hollymount.

Other buildings erected about this period are the 1st Presbyterian Church 1777, the Parish Church 1776, and the Catholic Church, which was opened 21 January 1787. For many years after the Battle of the Boyne Irish Roman Catholics were not legally recognised, and one of their legal disabilities was that they were unable to build churches. Saintfield Catholic Church was one of the first to be built, and it is interesting to note that in Saintfield, Dromore, Ballynahinch and Belfast the money was largely subscribed by Presbyterians. The Rev. Daniel McDonnell, who was the local parish priest at this time, was a noted horseman who hunted with Squire Price's hounds — a fact which may have helped to obtain a lease. The church was rebuilt in 1806 by the Rev. Hugh Green, who also built the church in Carrickmannon in 1807. Green was unpopular with his parishioners, who regarded him as too strict in exacting his dues. The result was that some of the poorest members deserted him and joined the parish church.

During the second half of the 18th century south Antrim and north Down were the scene of disputes between landlords and tenants. There were various reasons — leases expired and landlords took the opportunity to increase rents; a succession of bad harvests and a slump in the linen trade meant that tenants were unable to pay. The Saintfield district did not escape these troubles, although it was not so badly affected as many others. For example, in the *Belfast News-Letter*, 16 August 1771, we read "James Hamilton Clewlow, of Saintfield, advertises the firing of a turf stack at glebe house of Saintfield, on 25th July, 1771, and offers a reward of 20 guineas for the discovery of the perpetrator."

The following year the *Belfast News-Letter* carries this advertisement — "Whereas on the night of the 19th July, 1772, an incendiary letter, signed 'Hearts of Steel' was dropped near Saintfield, in the county of Down, directed to Francis Price threatening said Francis Price, and the Rev. James Hamilton

Clewlów, their families and properties with immediate destruction.

Now we, the inhabitants of the parish of Saintfield, having a just abhorrence of such practices, offer a reward."

Many Saintfield people were forced to emigrate, and their lands were taken by newcomers who moved in from the Killyleagh direction. One of them, Alexander Sinclair of the Lessans, became a senator in Virginia, after fighting bravely against the British army in the American War of Independence.

The trouble around Saintfield between landlord and tenant subsided, or at least went underground, after the hanging of Samuel Jamison of Saintfield at Downpatrick in 1772. Jamison's friends had had a collar made to wear in an effort to save his life. The trick was discovered when Jamison moved after hanging for an hour, and he was immediately rehanged without the collar. The authorities in Dublin issued an order which was in force until capital punishment was abolished "that when a prisoner is about to suffer death by hanging his neck must be bared by the hangman in the presence of the sheriff and his officers, and the rope fixed thereon." Incidentally, the story of Jamison's capture and trial was the subject of a well-known ballad.*

The closing twenty years of the 18th century were exciting times in Ireland. The American colonies revolted, and France and Spain joined in the struggle. There was a danger of invasion, and no troops in the country. To meet the threat volunteer corps were raised all over the country. Saintfield was no exception, and the Price family formed the Saintfield Infantry. These volunteer corps — there were more than 1,100 of them all over Ireland — were never called on to fight, and soon became political debating societies. They formed public opinion in the north, and generally were noted for their radical opinions. Many of them welcomed the new republic across the Atlantic, and when the French revolution broke out in 1789 they hailed it with delight.

Nowhere in Ulster were the new ideas of democracy and republicanism more welcome than in Saintfield. The reason is not far to seek. The Rev. Thomas Leslie Birch, minister of the Presbyterian church, was an apostle of these new ideas and he converted many of his flock.† When Wolfe Tone founded the

*This ballad, with notes, is published in full in *Ulster Folklife*, Vol. 18 (1972), pp. 58-61, by Hugh Shields in an article entitled "Some Songs and Ballads in use in the Province of Ulster . . . 1845". See also *Ulster Folklife*, Vol. 17 (1971), pp. 3-24.

†For a detailed account of Birch see 'Thomas Ledlie Birch, United Irishman' by the present author in *Proceedings of the Belfast Natural History and Philosophical Society*, 2nd series, Vol. 7, pp. 24-35.

United Irishmen in Belfast Birch quickly followed suit and formed the first society in Co. Down at his manse, which had been named Liberty Hall.

The United Irishmen were at first perfectly legal, and few people today would quarrel with their aims which were two in number, a complete and radical reform of the representation of the people in parliament, and no religious discrimination. Among the reforms suggested were votes for all males over the age of 21, and payment for M.Ps.

The United Irishmen were suppressed in 1793, and became a secret underground movement. Nicholas Price was very much a supporter of the government and he did his best to stamp out the movement. Intimidation was common on both sides. For example, in March 1797, David Shaw, James Shaw, David Thompson, William Lindsay, James Sweeney, William Dodds, John Brown and Hugh Kirk were arrested on the charge of attacking William McKee's house after dark. These were men of substance; David Shaw, for example, employed 100 cotton spinners. Later that month the Rev. Birch was arrested on a charge of treason. The chief witness against Birch was a Richard Harper of Oughley who was murdered before he could give evidence.

During the two years preceding the outbreak of the rebellion the countryside around Saintfield was in a state of anarchy. Squire Price and the vicar, the Rev. Clewlow, were active magistrates, and raids for arms were frequent. Blacksmiths were suspected of pike-making, and among those involved were James Spratt and John Orr of Saintfield, Samuel Wightman of Ballygowan and James McKeown of Carryduff. Two carpenters, John Carse of Darragh Cross and Hugh Frame of Ravara, were also implicated in pike making. Wightman of Ballygowan was shot dead by the York Fencibles on their way to the Battle of Saintfield and Carse of Darragh Cross was later imprisoned in Fort George, in Scotland.

The loyalist magistrates were helped in their task of discovering arms and detecting treason by paid informers, of whom Nicholas Mageean of the Lessans is the best known. John Corrough of Ballycloughan also did his bit, while the McKee family of Craigy made no secret of their opposition to the United Irishmen. Mageean sent the authorities a list of prominent United Irishmen in Co. Down, and the following local names may be of interest — Samuel Adams, Killynure; James Bradley, Killynure; George Cumming, Carryduff; William Fleming, Ballycloughan; William Gibson, Drumalig; Arthur Heyland, Saintfield; John Kirkpatrick, near the Board Mill Meeting house; William Minnis, Lisdoonan; James Magee, Toddstown (or Carricknaveagh); Arthur Mellon, Tonaghmore; Thomas Marshall, Lisdoonan; John Marshall, Killynure, James McKee, Toddstown; James McKee, Poguesburn; Francis McGibbon, Drumalig; Joseph Patterson, Tonaghmore; Thomas Rainey,

Toddstown; William Rea, Lisdoonan; Robert Rollo Reid, Ballygowan; James Shaw Senior and Junior, Saintfield; David Shaw, Saintfield; David Thompson, Lisdalgan; and Andrew Todd Senior and Junior, Toddstown.

The rebellion finally broke out in Co. Down on Saturday, 9th June, 1798. The night before the military left the town, and when the rebels assembled there was no one to stop them. They made the Oughley Hill their rallying place, and then a large party marched to Carricknacesna, where they attacked and burned the home of Hugh McKee, killing 12 persons. The attackers, who were chiefly from the Killinchy district, first came in two groups. The first party was led by John McKibben, a Saintfield surgeon, and the second by James Shaw, a Saintfield cotton manufacturer, who was dressed in a green jacket with yellow facings. The following March twelve men were found guilty and hanged. One only, William McCaw of Carricknacesna, was a local.

That afternoon a military party left Comber for Saintfield. It consisted of 270 York Fencibles under the command of Col. Stapylton, the Newtownards Yeoman Cavalry and Infantry, and a number of civilian volunteers. The army marched along the road to Saintfield and when they were almost opposite the present intermediate school the rebels charged down. The skirmish lasted from about 4.30—5.30 p.m. and Col Stapylton, two other officers, two drummers, five sergeants, forty-two other ranks and four civilian volunteers were killed. This fight has been described as the only occasion when pikemen defeated a mounted enemy, and a monument in Comber parish church commemorates the soldiers who fell that day. After the battle the defeated army retreated to Comber and then to Belfast. The whole of north Down was in rebel hands. The next day, Pike Sunday, the rebels encamped at Creevy Rocks, where the Rev. Birch preached. It was also a day when recruiting sergeants were scouring the countryside for volunteers for the rebel army. Some of these volunteers were most unwilling. For example, James Cochran, a Lisdalgan farmer, later told how, on that Sunday, he was brought to Saintfield and then to Creevy Rocks. There he was given a gun and put by General Munro, the rebel leader, into a musket company about 50 strong. Munro divided the company into two sections, one commanded by Thomas Watson of Newtownbreda, and the other by a linen bleacher named Samuel McCance. Cochran was in Watson's section, and exercised until sunset, when Munro marched them in Saintfield, where Cochran escaped.

The rebellion collapsed on Wednesday morning when the insurgents were defeated at Ballynahinch. After the rebellion punishment was meted out. Only two locals were hanged, John Skelly of Ballymacarmery and Henry Byers. The government offered a reward of £50 a head for the capture of leading

rebels, such as David Thompson, Lisdalgaun; William Minnis, Lisdoonan; Thomas Rainey, Carricknaveagh; Richard Frazer, Ravara; Thomas Matthews, Lisdoonan; and Jas. Shaw, Junior, Saintfield.

Matthews and Minnis were captains in the rebel army, as were Richard Walker, Andrew Todd, James Magee, William Dodds and James McKee of Carricknaveagh, Arthur Mellon of Tonaghmore, John Crockard of Leggygowan and James Bradley of Killynure. Richard Frazer of Ravara held the rank of Lt.-Colonel, while David Shaw and John McBurney of Saintfield and John Barnett of Ballyaugherty were colonels. As officers, they were exempt from pardon, but nothing seems to have happened to them, and in a remarkably short time Saintfield became a loyal and peaceable part of the country, and in many cases the sons and grandsons of rebels became strong supporters of the Orange Order.

Other local rebels included Thomas George, Robert Sinclair, and William McKeown, Ravara; Samuel Orr and Andrew McCullough, Lisdoonan; Samuel Orr and James Cochran, Lisdalgaun; Bernard McNamara, William Fleming and Francis Porter, Ballycloughan; William Scott, Ballygowan; James Bradley, Killynure; James Scott, Oughley; Robert Bennett, Glassdrumman; John Garrett, Ballyknockan; William Clark, Tullygirvan; William Dodds and John McNamara, Carricknacessna; Robert Moorhead, David Patterson, Robert Morrison, Hugh Marshall, Charles Hanna, and John Orr, Saintfield.

Of course, not everyone in Saintfield supported the rebels. Many presbyterians were opposed to the Rev. Birch's political views, and many of them left his congregation and formed what is now the 2nd Saintfield Presbyterian Congregation. So far as I am aware, no members of this congregation were involved in the rebellion. Nor were any members of the Catholic Church in Saintfield involved in the rebellion. The parish priest, Father William Taggart, was a staunch loyalist who denounced the United Irishmen from the altar, much to the disgust of the Rev. Birch.

Amongst those who claimed compensation as suffering loyalists after the rebellion were David Beatty, Cahard; Joseph and Samuel Skelly, Caradorn; Margaret Skelly, Tonaghmore; Margaret Tumelty, Ballymacaramery; Robert Irwin, Lisban; Thomas McCoughtry, Killynure; William Parker, Oughley; and the Rev. Clewlow, Adam Cross, Hugh McCartan, William Spratt, James Thompson, and Hester Wallace of Saintfield.

After the collapse of the rebellion Saintfield — in common with the rest of the country — entered into a period of tranquillity. This peace probably encouraged Nicholas Price to im-

prove his estate. In 1800 he established a weekly market in Saintfield, and encouraged trade by offering premiums for good quality produce. In 1803 he built the Market House, and about the same time he erected the Head Inn, for the accommodation of merchants and travellers, and in 1813 he built the Alms House at the Pound Bridge.

Nicholas Price was considered a good landlord, and the following extract from the *Belfast News-Letter*, 19 December, 1817, shows how he, and indeed all his family, tried to cope with the distress caused by the slump after the Napoleonic War. — 'We are happy in being able to state that a subscription has been entered into, and a considerable fund raised for the relief of the poor householders of Saintfield. Nicholas Price Esq., who has also been so distinguished for charity, has generously subscribed £50. Miss Price, Lady Elizabeth Pratt and James Blackwood have also subscribed liberally. The ministers, and most people of ability in the parish, have followed the example. A committee has been appointed to manage the business, who are to give out weekly money and flax gratuitously to the poor, according to the number of their families. The object in giving flax to the poor to spin, is to promote industry, which is the best kind of charity — and to discourage idleness, which is the bane of society. Mr. McBurney is appointed secretary, who has been instructed to write to the several gentlemen who possess landed property in the parish, and it is confidently hoped they will send donations in aid of this charitable fund, which is intended to extend relief to the poor who reside on their estate.

Lady Sarah Pratt has given her annual present of petticoats to poor women; and Mr. Price has also lately distributed a great number of blankets. He has likewise ordered each poor woman belonging to the parish to be supplied, on two days in the week, at Saintfield House, with a gallon of rich nourishing broth or soup, which, it is unnecessary to say, is very acceptable, and highly serviceable at this season of uncommon distress. Such distinguished acts of charity justly deserve to be made public, and it is hoped other gentlemen will follow Mr. Price's example. It may be truly said, there never was a time when there was a louder call on persons of all ranks to contribute according to their ability, to the relief of their starving fellow creatures; as, in consequence of the advanced price of provisions, scarcity of money, badness of trade, and want of employment, multitudes are unable to procure for themselves and families even the necessaries of life.'

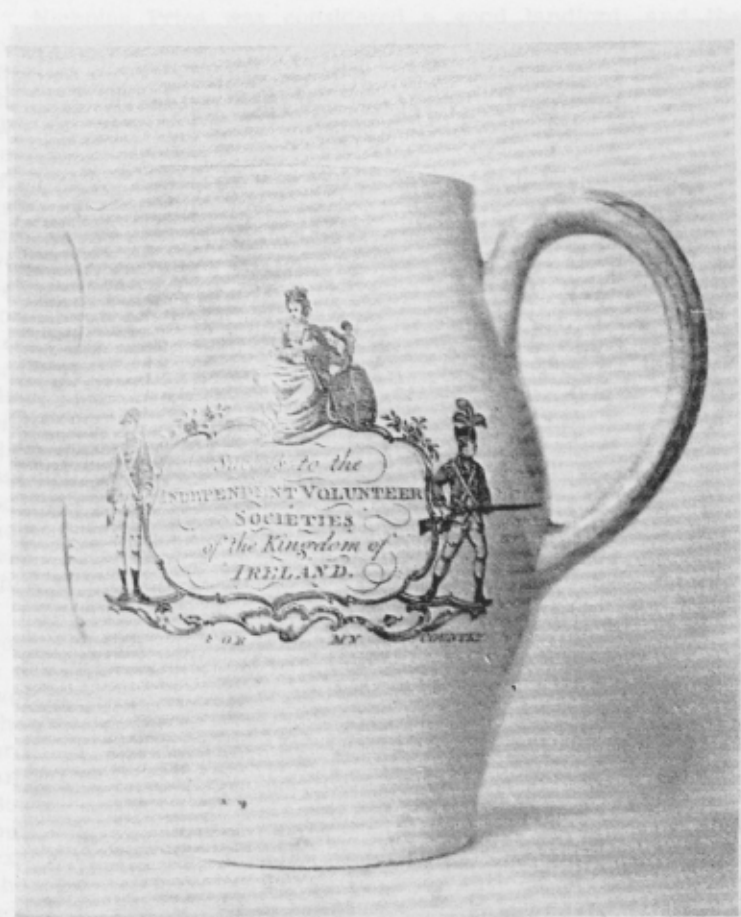
We have a fairly good idea what Saintfield was like at the beginning of the last century, as the vicar, the Rev. Wolseley wrote an account of the parish in 1816. The following are some abstracts:—

"The only town or village in the parish is Saintfield, which



*A Volunteer Badge which is in the possession of
Colonel M. C. Perceval-Price. (See page 6.)*

From his estate in 1800 he established a weekly market in
 Sainthill, and encouraged trade by offering premiums for good
 quality produce. In 1801 he built the Market House, and about
 the same time he erected the Head Inn, for the accommodation
 of merchants and travellers, and in 1813 he built the Alm
 House at the Pound Bridge.



*A Volunteer Jug, also in the possession of
 Colonel Perceval-Price.*

We have a fairly good idea what Sainthill was like at the
 beginning of the last century, as the year the Rev. Wesley
 wrote an account of the parish in 1818. The following are some
 extracts:-

"The only town or village in the parish is Sainthill, which

and a market every Monday and twice twice in the year. The only public building, with the exception of places of worship is a hotel named *Home* with a good wine clock. The landlord, Thomas Price destroyed the rest, and also the rest of the New



Front view of the Volunteer Jug.

These favorable circumstances are, in part, attributable to the public assistance, and the public improvements in farming and domestic industry.

These favorable circumstances are, in part, attributable to the extravagant use of tobacco and ardent spirits, by the



*A reproduction of the postage stamp depicting William Ward,
Bishop of Sodor and Man (see page 23).*

has a market every Monday and twelve fairs in the year. The only public building, with the exception of places of worship is a neat market house with a good town clock. The landlord, Nicholas Price, defrayed the cost, and also the cost of the New Inn, recently erected on the English model at an expense of £2,000. The whole town has a neat appearance, consisting more than half of new houses, well slated and kept in good repair. The number of public houses, as in most country towns, is greater than the size of the town would lead us to expect, and the quantity of spirits consumed is prodigious. Beer is more drunk than formerly, but it bears no proportion to the consumption of whiskey and rum. The shops are well furnished and do much business. On the whole the town may be said to be in a thriving condition. The number of inhabitants has increased rapidly of late years, especially since the yarn and butter markets have been established.

Excepting the Glebe House, the only gentleman's seat worthy of notice is Saintfield House, a spacious and comfortable mansion on the right hand side of the road leading to Belfast. The house of Mr. McBurney, the agent of the estate, is a neat residence. This gentleman has served the neighbourhood materially and improved the view of the town by the erection of four mills of considerable magnitude, two of which are flour mills of the most improved construction, one grinds oats, and the other (a windmill) both wheat and oats.

The population of the town is 950, and is made up as follows — 1st Saintfield, 600; 2nd Saintfield, 125; Catholics, 150; Church of Ireland 75. The occupation of both sexes of the community varies with the seasons. In spring all hands are employed in the bogs and in the potato fields. In summer, weeding corn, potatoes and flax, and making hay employs them at intervals. In autumn, every man, woman and child wields a sickle. And, when the potatoes are safe lodged and the harvest home, they return to their accustomed employments, the men to their trades and the women to their wheels.

The situation of the working classes respecting domestic comfort and conveniences depends principally on their industry, and this is regulated by the encouragement they have to exercise it. The state of the peasantry in this parish confirms this statement. The residence of the principal landed proprietor of the parish, the watchful eye of impartial magistrates, and moderate rents, encourage exertion, and the effect is visible in the good order and peaceable demeanour which prevail in all public meetings, in the thriving condition of the town and neighbourhood, and the yearly improvements in farming and domestic comfort.

These favourable circumstances are, in part, counteracted by the extravagant use of tobacco and ardent spirits, by the

marrying of young persons before they have the means of supporting a family, and their taking land without capital or agricultural knowledge. Add to this the multitude of small farms, at all times pernicious, but now that the products of the farm bear so low a price, in many cases ruinous. The bad effects of sub-division of land was lately proved in this parish. The townland of Lisowen is divided into two parts, nearly equal in quantity and quality. One part is occupied by 36 tenants, and the other by 15 farmers. Both parts were viewed twice within the past six years, and the value of grain produced by the 15 farmers is nearly twice that produced in the other half of the townland.

The principal means of making money during the war was the fattening of pigs and making butter. Butter still keeps its price, but sucking pigs, that four years ago sold for 30/- now sell for 3/-. The food of the labouring poor is rarely better than potatoes and salt or a small herring, and sometimes butter. Oaten bread and oatmeal porridge is unfortunately a treat to some of the lower classes.

The dress of all the middle classes is far beyond their rank in life, especially before marriage. To see the girls going to public worship or to a fair you would conclude they were gentry. At other times you will find them without shoes or stockings.

The houses of both rich and poor are in general neat and clean. It may be observed, however, that from the deficient construction of the chimneys, they suffer much annoyance from smoke, to relieve themselves from which they have the doors open the great part of the day, and are in consequence much troubled with rheumatism.

There has been little variety for many years past in the system of agriculture. The only system of agriculture followed here consisted in breaking up old lea with the addition of from 40 to 60 barrels of lime per acre, by those who can afford it, following this up with repeated crops of oats, barley or wheat, according to the nature of the soil until the land becomes, as they call it, pewtered out, in which state it lay until it was deemed fit for ploughing again. This with the addition of a small quantity of potatoes planted in the lazy bed method constituted the whole routine of farming in this parish, till of late that a few individuals have profited by the experience of the sister country and adopted a more rational system of agriculture. The prevailing crop is potatoes and oats. In a few townlands wheat is raised by no means equal to that of the neighbouring parishes on the seashore. Barley also is found in small quantity and rye in moory land. Every farmer sows more or less flax. Last year the crop nearly doubled that of any former year. The average quantity may be estimated at one bushel of seed to each farmer. No peas or beans are sown except in gardens and in very small quantities. No rape or turnip except

by Mr. Price. Rye grass has been latterly much cultivated for early feeding in Spring and clover is grown but on a limited scale. The quantities and values of the different crops are very difficult to be ascertained. The value of the land varying between £3 to 3/- per acre. The principal improvement in tillage consists in potatoes being raised in greater quantity and planted with the plough, in the increased quantity of clover and rye grass and the land being laid down more evenly and in better condition. In implements of husbandry also there has been a considerable improvement in late years. The Scotch plough is rapidly taking lead of the old Irish plough. A threshing mill of four horse power has also been erected by Mr. Price. The fences are, for the most part, earth faced with stones and planted with thorn quicks.

The acreable rent charged for land set within the last ten years has depended more on the valuation set upon the land by the different landholders of the parish than upon the quality of the land itself; some charging more for that of middling quality than others for the best of theirs. On Mr. Price's estate which includes two-thirds of the parish, the best land is set from £2 to £1/10/-. In Carrydorn, the property of Mr. Shaw of Ballytweedy, none is set lower than £2, in Mrs. Isaac's townland of Legagowan most of the new leases are forever, and the rent fined down to £1 or £1/10/- per acre. Wheat this year may be estimated at £10 per acre, oats and barley at £6, and flax from £12 to £16 per acre, Cunningham measure.

The labouring class is here very numerous, but the industrious can always find abundance of employment. The only kind of service exacted is that of turf drawing for the landlord in the proportion of one gauge to an acre, 3 gauges constitute one horse-load or wagon as it is called.

The black cattle are of an inferior kind, being reared without selection of breed, and stunted in their growth by bad winter keeping, and allowing heifers to breed before they are fully grown. There is a cow at present on the glebe that had a calf at the end of 22 months, but gives very little milk though of a capital breed. Horses, with a few exceptions, are here of indifferent quality. Sheep are always scarce and dear, but few being reared in the parish or neighbourhood. Swine, generally of the old Irish breed with a mixture of Dutch.

The only manures in general use are the product of the farmyard and lime, clay, ashes have not been tried except what may have been produced in the burning of runout moss ground, a practice which seems but rarely adopted.

The prices of grain and provisions have been of late years regulated pretty much by the Belfast market prices. This year oats have sold from 6 to 7 shillings per cwt. (112 lbs), Barley from 6 to 7 shillings per cwt. (112 lbs), Potatoes 1/- per Winchester bushel, Wheat from 12/- to 12/6 per 112 lbs, Oatmeal

from 11/- to 12/- per cwt., Beef from 2½d to 4½d per lb., Mutton from 5d to 6d. per lb., Pork from 3d. to 4d. per lb.

The market is held weekly, the fair once a month. The principal articles sold in the market are linen yarn and provisions. Large quantities of the former are constantly brought to market and the quality in general of a fine staple.

The fair is not held on a fixed day of each month, the quarterly fairs taking precedence of the monthly fairs, and disturbing their regular order. It is an excellent horse fair, being reckoned next to Banbridge. Considerable quantities of black cattle and swine are sold, also, on these occasions, with a small number of sheep."

The population of Saintfield declined after 1816, and in 1841 the population was 909 and there were 166 houses. There were 113 families engaged in trade and manufacturing, 39 families employed chiefly in agriculture, 58 manual labourers, 10 depending on property or professions, and 103 on directing labour.

The earliest reference I can find to schools in Saintfield is in the Rev. Wolseley's Memoir. Schools, he tells us, abound everywhere. There are 14 in the parish, of which 6 are in the town. In two of these the classics are taught and the rates of tuition are one guinea and 14/- a quarter; half a guinea and 6/- are charged for writing and arithmetic in the English schools, and for English only, from 5/- to 2/- a quarter.

"The only licensed school in the parish is kept by the vicar at the Glebe house during the summer season. The only charitable establishment is a female school, principally as a nursery for servants, in which 12 girls are instructed in English and needlework, and clothed at the expense of Lady Sarah Price. When a vacancy occurs a considerable competition takes place, the children of the poorest and most industrious parents have the preference. When fit for service they are recommended to good places if their conduct has been approved of, and supplied with suitable dress. There is also a parish school-house, built and repaired at Mr. Price's expense, with a large garden and comfortable residence free of rent, and convenient town-parks. This is attached to the office of parish-clerk and renders it much more respectable.

The school-houses are, in general, in good order, the expense of building and repairing being raised by subscription from the neighbouring families. There is no public library in the parish but a book club has lately been established."

The Ordnance Survey Memoirs of 1837 give some more

information about local schools. Tonaghmore National School which was built in 1821 by William Hanna, the local landlord, received a yearly grant of £10 from the National Board, while the 63 boys and 37 girls paid the teacher £13 a year. This was an integrated school attended by 12 Roman Catholics and 88 presbyterians. The bible was read every afternoon from 2 to 4 p.m., and the presbyterians came on Saturdays to learn the Shorter Catechism.

Doran's Rock National School also received £10 yearly from the National Board, but the fees, we are told, were trifling. 55 boys attended.

Saintfield Old School, on the Ballynahinch Road, was a small cabin, with a clay floor, no ceiling, and very much out of repair. The teacher's income was £1 yearly paid by the vicar, and fees, which are described as trifling. 18 boys and 12 girls were pupils.

The Price family supported the Infant School, which was held in a loft at the rear of some cabins. 20 boys and 30 girls attended, and the teacher's salary was £20 p.a. This school, which was undenominational, was started in 1835, and 10 years earlier Mr. Price built the Female School at a cost of £80. It stood behind the present Academy and was attended by 46 girls who paid yearly fees of £6 while another £10 was subscribed locally.

Saintfield Academy, originally known as Saintfield Public School, was built by public subscription in 1824. Nicholas Price, the landlord, gave £50, the other inhabitants £160 and the government £100. Squire Price also granted an acre of land, and the work was about to begin when Price had more grandiose plans. He offered to enlarge and remodel the building at his own expense and the local committee naturally agreed. The result was "a handsome building capable of accommodating some hundreds of scholars. It is built on an eminence combining a healthy situation with a delightful prospect. A most valuable grant of land has been given for its site by Mr. Price, who besides granted a considerable sum to complete the buildings. The Rev. James Phillips, of Glasgow, well-known in the literary world as a most erudite scholar, has been elected principal. Classes will be opened for instruction in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, in most of the continental languages, in all the branches connected with mathematics, and in English and writing. In an improving and wealthy portion of the county this seminary will afford manifold advantages, and must further the grand work of civilization. Mr. Phillip's talents must command attention, and we doubt not of every individual taking advantage of so liberal a course of instruction as is thus brought home to his very door."

The academy opened in June 1824 when Mr. Phillips announced that he was prepared to take in a few young gentle-

men as boarders, who may be taught English, writing, arithmetic book-keeping, mathematics, ancient languages, etc. on the most approved plan, while at the same time the strictest attention shall be paid to their improvement, accommodation and morals. Board 20 guineas, or with education included, 24 guineas per annum.

The Academy never realized Squire Price's hope of becoming the Eton of Ulster. The Price family were opposed to the national system of education which began in 1833, and the academy dwindled, partly through lack of government grants. By 1837 there were only 42 boys and 8 girls attending, and the school eventually closed through lack of numbers. By 1844 the National Board had schools in Lessans, Carrickmannon, Leggygowan, Saintfield, Tullywest and Tonaghmore.

In 1850 the committee of the recently formed National School took over the deserted building. The squire was furious, but was unable to do anything about it. However, trouble broke out in 1855 when a George Aston was appointed principal. Aston was a unitarian, and was strongly supported by Father Rowland Magill and Dr. William Gordon, himself a unitarian. The two presbyterian ministers persuaded the squire to open the market house as a rival school which stayed open until Aston resigned 10 years later.

The Gordons were a prominent Saintfield family in their day. Alexander Gordon was agent for the Price estate in the late 18th century. His elder son fought at Saintfield and Ballynahinch on the rebel side and had to flee to America. The younger son had a large family, many of whom had distinguished careers. One became a professor of surgery, another a unitarian clergyman, a third was a linen manufacturer, and Dr. William Gordon was a medical doctor in Saintfield for many years. He was a well-known liberal, and championed the local people in their quarrels with the establishment.

But to revert to education. The last venture of the Price family into this field was in November 1846, when the Saintfield Agricultural School on the Belfast Road, was opened. According to the prospectus, the school was intended to "provide for the sons of farmers a full and comprehensive instruction in the most approved modes of practical agriculture. Along with practice, agricultural science, including chemistry and geology as far as they are connected with the soil, land surveying, engineering, and the common branches of an English education will be imparted to the pupils. The model farm attached to the school contains 60 acres. The office houses have been built on the most approved plans. There is accommodation for about 12 boarders, who will not be admitted under 14 years of age.

Terms of board, lodging, tuition and washing will be £14 a year, payable in advance. Day pupils will pay £2 a year, and

all pupils will be bound, under indenture, for 2 or 3 years, according to their age and requirements."

During the second half of the 19th century the Ulster tenant farmers carried out a campaign to amend the land laws. Saintfield played little part in this campaign. There were, I believe, two reasons for this. One was that the Price family were resident, and like most resident landlords took an interest in their tenants' welfare. They were not the only landowners in the district. The Ranfurly family owned Ballyknockan and Creevloughgare, the Downshire family owned Boardmills, Leggygowan was owned by the Bunberrys, the Delacherois family of Donaghadee (descendants of the Rev. Alexander Hutchison, who bought Drumalig in 1671), owned Drumalig, while the Barnetts owned part of Ballyaugherty, and the Hannas, a Newry family, owned Tonaghmore. The only landlords with a bad reputation were the Shaws, who owned Ballymacaramery and Cahard.

The other reason why Saintfield district took no active part in the struggle for land reform was that the tenants had no leaders. In other districts Presbyterian clergymen, such as Rogers of Comber, Dobbin of Annaclone and Brown of Limavady, were in the forefront, but the Saintfield clergy remained silent.

The only time Saintfield figured in the land struggle was on the 23rd December 1880, when the local Tenant-right Association announced it was holding a meeting at the Fair Green, and the principal speakers would be three Nationalist M.P.'s, John Dillon, Joseph Biggar and Michael Davitt.

A special train, carrying counter demonstrators, arrived at the station, carrying hundreds of Orangemen who paraded up the main street led by Col. Waring, D.L., M.P., and John Rea, an eccentric Belfast solicitor, whose grandfather had had to leave Saintfield in 1798 because he was an informer. The police lined across the street at the courthouse, and the resident magistrate stepped forward and requested Col. Waring as a Deputy Lieutenant to assist him in keeping the peace. The Orangemen then retired to the demesne where they held a counter demonstration.

The tenant farmers' meeting was a small affair, attended by less than 100. James Anderson of Lisowen, described by the unionist press as "a shrewd but misguided old gentleman", organised the meeting. Apart from the three MPs, the other speakers were James Ireland of Lessans, Matthew Anderson of Lisowen, William Morrison of Glasswater, Andrew Shaw Oswald of Saintfield, Rev. Harold Rylett of Moneyrea Non-Subscribing

Church, and the Rev. O'Boyle, the parish priest of Saintfield. O'Boyle's presence was a surprise, as the local catholic farmers were strongly opposed to the Land League.

As if warned by the exile of the Rev. Birch, the presbyterian ministers in Saintfield avoided politics for over a century, and it was not until early this century that one ventured into politics. The cause was the unionist nomination to oppose James Woods, the sitting liberal member, in 1906. The unionists selected Capt. James Craig, who later became Viscount Craigavon, first prime minister of Northern Ireland. Many presbyterian ministers, such as the Rev. Isaac Vance of Granshaw, and the Rev. Boyd of First Ballynahinch, opposed Craig because of his politics, but the Rev. J. Glendinning had a different approach. He seconded a resolution at the Down Presbytery "that in view of the fearful misery, vice, assaults, accidents, and murders arising from the liquor traffic, and in view of Capt. Craig's open avowal that he is a shareholder in Dunville's distillery, we, the Presbytery of Down, desiring the overthrow of the liquor traffic, call upon all our people to withhold from him their support, and thus save themselves from the possible responsibility and disgrace of being represented in parliament by a distillery candidate" — Captain Craig was returned.

During the course of a brief lecture it is impossible to do more than touch upon a few aspects of Saintfield's history, and I have deliberately omitted many of them — the growth of communications, for instance. Many will remember the last train on the old Co. Down Railway which ran on 16th January, 1950. Trains ran out of Saintfield for almost a century, as the station was first opened on 10th September 1858. The introduction of this cheap and speedy method of transport must have had an impact on the town. Before this there were two opposition stage coaches making one run daily between Belfast and Downpatrick. One changed horses at Barry's inn, and the other at Alexander Bradley's inn.

The old road from Belfast to Saintfield went over the Oughley Hill. This was too steep for coaches, so the present road from Saintfield to Carryduff was made in the 1840s. During the 18th century every parish was responsible for the roads in its own area. For example, in 1733, the inhabitants of Ballyknockan, Lessans, Oughley, Killynure and Lisdoonan were ordered by the vestry to repair the road to Belfast.

The vestry acted as a type of council. Saintfield vestry minutes, for example, record in 1783 how the parish was attempting to deal with beggars. It was decided to give only to the poor of the parish, and that each beggar be given a badge. The interesting thing is that of the six who signed the vestry book on this occasion, only the vicar was a member of the Church of Ireland. In 1820 the vestry organised a charity dance in the market-house and raised £30/8/7.

The famous horse fair, which ranked with Moy and Ballin-osloe, made Saintfield known all over Ireland. Local industries which have died out also deserve a passing mention. For example, Saintfield once had a distillery, which stood where the parish hall now is. It was owned by a Co. Tyrone man named James Ledlie, whose sister married the Rev. Birch. Another lost industry is clock and watch making. William Spratt, the son of Samuel Spratt, an Ardmillan clockmaker, settled in Saintfield in 1788 and carried on business here for 60 years. He was a first class craftsman, and made the clock on the court-house.

Saintfield has been the birthplace of many who have distinguished themselves in different walks of life, and I will finish this talk by telling the story of a Saintfield man who figures on a postage stamp. I refer to William Ward, bishop of Sodor and Man, 1823-38, whose portrait adorns a postage stamp issued on the Calf of Man.

His granddaughter published his biography in 1941, and in it she told how the future bishop was the son of a wealthy Saintfield linen merchant who was educated in Ballynahinch where his playmates were the children of the Earl of Moira. The truth, however, is somewhat different. Ward was a poor Roman Catholic labourer who worked for the Rev. John McClelland, minister of First Ballynahinch Presbyterian Church. McClelland recognised the lad's capabilities and persuaded Lord Moira to pay for his education. The result was that Ward entered the anglican church and eventually became a bishop. He never forgot his family, most of whom remained Roman Catholics, and bought his brother Bernard an army commission. Captain Bernard Ward lived at The Cottage, and died unmarried.