

Tales of the Creggaun

by Eric Shaw



Clondegad graveyard near Ballycorick Bridge has the ruins of a Protestant Church that was abandoned in the 1920s and gravestones going back to at least 1700. On a recent visit there, I came across a large, flat stone, with ornate carvings and this inscription:

*Here lies the body of
DANIEL KELLY Who departed this life*

*May 5th 1858 Aged 23 years. Erected by
his father*

*Timothy Kelly of Clare Castle
for him and posterity
may they rest in peace
Amen*

The Master of the Mariner

The last line is curious and there is also a fine etching of a two-masted sailing ship on the stone.



In the Limerick Reporter of 7 May, 1858, the following notice appeared:

At Clare Castle, after a short illness, Daniel Kelly Esq., third son of T. Kelly Esq., merchant, leaving a young wife to mourn his premature demise and deservedly regretted by all who had the pleasure of his acquaintance. The deceased was a Captain in the merchant serviceⁱ.

There was a sailing ship of the 1830s called the Mariner that had a tough reputation in the transport of convicts to Australia and that remained afloat until the late 1850s. But Lloyd's Register does not show a Master with the name of Kelly.

Daniel Kelly was baptised in Clarecastle on 11 January 1835ⁱⁱ, the son of Timothy Kelly and Margaret Whelan. Timothy Kelly who died in 1879 aged 75ⁱⁱⁱ showed his occupation as coal merchant on his death cert. His coal yard was at 9, Quay Road which is now in the Creggaun on the left as one goes up the lane^{iv}. Daniel had a brother, Patrick Kelly, born in Clarecastle on 1 March 1848^v. From a later account, Patrick went to sea and obtained a Master's Certificate. He took over his father's coal yard in 1871 and married Mary Cahir in 1874. The couple had six children.

Their son Patrick was drowned in the Fergus in July 1894^{vi}. Three young men from the village took a boat that belonged to the Ordnance Department that was based at the port. The boat was fitted with a sail. The three were Patrick O'Kelly, John McMaster whose father Michael was a school teacher in Doora and John McGowan, a clerk in the employment of

Patrick O'Brien who was then resident in Carnelly House. At Islandmacgrath, the boat was hit by a gust of wind and it capsized, throwing the three young men in to the water. McGowan who was able to swim made for the shore but the other two men were lost. McGowan went back on foot to the village and raised the alarm. The body of Patrick O'Kelly was found the following morning. He was brought to the Church and after the funeral service, the cortege left for the family burial plot in Clondegad. As the funeral was leaving the village, word came that the body of young McMaster had been recovered.

The other Kelly children, apart from a daughter, Delia, appear to have died young. Delia is remembered for her herd of goats in the village. In an unsigned article in the Clare People of July 1978, entitled *Memories of Old Clarecastle*^{vii}, the writer wrote – 'I remember, too, Delia Kelly, an eccentric lady who dressed in the fashions of a bygone age, and took her goats down through the village for a daily walk. Her father, I think, had been a captain of a boat which came to Clarecastle'. Patrick Kelly was appointed as Harbour Master in Clarecastle Quay about 1887.

In an article in the Clare Champion in 1966 on Clarecastle written by Tony Percy^{viii}, Pat Kelly is remembered as being 'a short, bearded man, in a Sea Captain's uniform, who, prior to being appointed Harbour Master in Clarecastle, had sailed before the mast, to Nova Scotia and other foreign parts. He held a first class Master's Certificate from the days of the old sailing ships'. In official papers, Pat sometimes gave his name as Patrick OKelly (no apostrophe) and gave his occupation as a merchant, a coal merchant, a sea captain and a Harbour Master. Kelly's Hill is a name still remembered. With the removal of the Roche plant in the coming years, the Hill will become visible again.

The address of 9 Quay Road, Clarecastle gives a link to an associated story. In 2011, I was contacted by a Carney family in Australia. Their great-great grandfather, John Kearney had emigrated to Australia in 1862 and from family papers^{ix}, they had the address of 9 Quay Road, Clarecastle as the family home. The Clarecastle Church records show the baptism in 1841 of the first child to William Kearney and Mary Garrahy of the Creggaun, Clarecastle^x. The couple went on to have nine further children. Living next door to the Kearneys was Timothy Kelly at 10, Quay Road. At some stage, Timothy bought No. 9 and did a swop with the Kearneys^{xi}. The Kearneys moved in to 10 Quay Road and Timothy set up a coal yard where No. 9 had been. In 1880, Pat Kelly took over the coal business following the death of his father the previous year. William Kearney was known as a piper and his parents were William Kearney and Kathanne MacNamara.

John Kearney was born in 1843 to William and Mary. At the age of 18^{xii}, he emigrated to Australia on aboard the Northumberland on the 14 Nov 1862. According to family lore, his cousin also came with him. Her name was Mary Fitzgerald. She was 16 and from Ennis. It appears Mary has listed 3 Fitzgerald relatives already in the colony.



Bridget Kearney (Carney) was born in Clarecastle in 1845 and emigrated to Australia on board the Montrose in 1862^{xiii}. She listed her parents as William and Mary, and her brother John Carney of the Rocky River Diggings, New South Wales as her family in the colony. Also with her were her cousins Martin and Catherine Fitzgerald, both born in Ennis.

In November 2011, a member of the Carney family of Australia travelled from Hong Kong to meet me in Clarecastle. He walked up the Creggaun, down the Quay, visited the Church etc. and took a series of photographs of Clarecastle to bring back to his Australian relatives. I have a detailed family tree for the Carney



family of Australia on file. The two photographs over were given to me by the original Carney enquirer and are wonderful to have.

ⁱ Limerick Reporter 7 May 1858

ⁱⁱ Clarecastle Church records

ⁱⁱⁱ GRO

^{iv} Land Valuation Office- Cancellation Books for Clarehill

^v Clarecastle Church records

^{vi} Clare Journal 29 July 1894 and 8 August 1894

^{vii} Clare People, July 1978

^{viii} Clare Champion, 1966

^{ix} Family papers held by the Carney family of Australia

^x Clarecastle Church records

^{xi} Land Valuation Office- Cancellation Books for Clarehill

^{xii} Family papers held by the Carney family of Australia

^{xiii} Family papers held by the Carney family of Australia