

# 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 service<sup>i</sup>.*

The Clarecastle Church records shows that the baptism of Michael Kelly on 29 October 1856 to Daniel Kelly and Bridget Gill. So far, no record of the marriage of Daniel and Bridget has come to light.

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.

## Family Background:

Daniel Kelly was baptised in Clarecastle on 11 January 1835<sup>ii</sup>, the son of Timothy Kelly and Margaret Whelan. Timothy Kelly who died in 1879 aged 75<sup>iii</sup> showed his occupation as coal merchant on his death cert. His coalyard was at 9, Quay Road which is now in the Creggaun on the left as one goes up the lane<sup>iv</sup>. Daniel had a brother, Patrick Kelly,

born in Clarecastle on 1 March 1848<sup>v</sup>. 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<sup>vi</sup>. 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.

A daughter of Patrick Kelly, 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*<sup>vii</sup>, 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<sup>viii</sup>, 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.

### The Story of Michael Kelly:

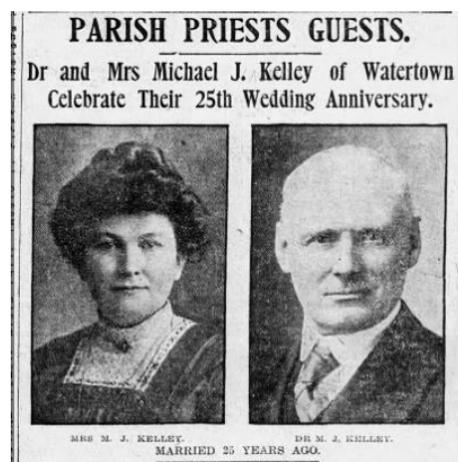
Following the death of Daniel Kelly in 1858, his widow Bridget Gill Kelly and their son Michael, came to live in No. 58 Ennis Road, Clarecastle, a house owned by her father-in-law, Timothy Kelly<sup>ix</sup>. (known locally as Michael Hickey's house)



About 1862, Bridget Kelly emigrated to Lowell, Boston with Michael (some records state that the event took place in 1872 but perhaps Bridget travelled out first and Michael follows about ten years later). As a boy, Michael, now known as Michael Kelley, worked in a grocery store and saved enough money to finance his way through New York University, possibly with help from other family members. His mother Bridget married Bernard Flaherty and moved to San Francisco, leaving Michael in Lowell. She died on 27 December 1907. Her obituary states that she was from Co. Galway.

Michael graduated as a medical doctor and practiced medicine in Connecticut before coming to Watertown, Massachusetts. He married Ella Stack. Following her death, he married Sara Fallon and the couple had two sons, Dr Joseph Kelly of Watertown and Commander Robert Kelley of the US Navy<sup>x</sup>. They also had three daughters, Frances, Helen and Gertrude.

Michael died on 21 March 1937<sup>xi</sup>.



(Date.) ✓ born at ✓ on \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Name.) ✓ born at \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Date.)

I solemnly swear that I was born at Clare Castle, Ireland  
 on Nov 17 1857<sup>1</sup> that my father, Daniel Kelly  
 was born in Clare and is now residing at Clare  
 that I emigrated to the United States, sailing from Queenstown about Apr 15 1871  
 1871; that I resided 53 years, uninterruptedly, in the United States, from 1871 to 1924  
 at Wells, State of Mass; that I was naturalized as a citizen of the United States before  
 the Mass Court of Mass at Boston  
Mass on Oct 11 1878 as shown by the Certificate of Naturalization  
 presented herewith; that I am the IDENTICAL PERSON described in said Certificate; that I have resided  
 outside the United States since my naturalization at the following places for the following periods:  
 \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
 and that I am domiciled in the United States at \_\_\_\_\_ my permanent residence being at \_\_\_\_\_  
 in the State of Massachusetts I follow the occupation of Physician  
 My last passport was obtained from \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Date.) (Disposition of passport.) I am about \_\_\_\_\_  
 to go abroad temporarily, and intend to return to the United States within \_\_\_\_\_  
 months with the purpose of rest and performing the duties of citizenship therein and I desire  
 a passport for use in visiting the countries hereinafter named for the following purpose:  
France \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Name of country.) (Object of visit.)  
Italy \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Name of country.) (Object of visit.)  
British Islands \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Name of country.) (Object of visit.)  
 I intend to leave the United States from the port of \_\_\_\_\_  
 sailing on board the Ocean on June 31 1924  
 (Name of vessel.) (Date of departure.)

On 13 May 1924, Michael Kelley applied for a passport to travel to Europe with his wife. They planned to spend three months visiting France, Italy and the British Islands. In his application, he states that he was born Clare Castle to Daniel Kelly (see extract from application above).<sup>xii</sup> It is not known if the couple visited Ireland.



Passport photo

<sup>i</sup> Limerick Reporter 7 May 1858

<sup>ii</sup> Clarecastle Church records

<sup>iii</sup> GRO

<sup>iv</sup> Land Valuation Office- Cancellation Books for Clarehill

<sup>v</sup> Clarecastle Church records

<sup>vi</sup> Clare Journal 29 July 1894 and 8 August 1894

<sup>vii</sup> Clare People, July 1978

<sup>viii</sup> Clare Champion, 1966

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<sup>ix</sup> Land Valuation Office Cancelled Books for Clare Commons.

<sup>x</sup> Kelley Family Tree supplied by Stephanie Kelley

<sup>xi</sup> Watertown Tribune, 25 March 1937.

<sup>xii</sup> Passport Application dated 13 May 1924.

Additional information supplied by Stephanie Kelley, Bill Arnold and Jackie Elger. There is an inconsistency in the date of arrival in the USA by Michael Kelly which has not been resolved so far. Family papers have been lost and an appeal has been made to the extended Kelley family in the US for any photographs, papers etc. that might help to explain the discrepancies. The marriage record of Daniel Kelly and Bridget Gill is also missing.

