

THE RISE AND DEMISE OF THE IRWINS IN CLONAKILTY

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Wednesday, the 21st May, 1879, will for many a decade hence, be memorable in the history of Clonakilty, for on this day, while the sunlight was fading from the sky, and while the evening shadows were slowly and calmly heralding the coming night, a great, good man was laid in his final resting place ... the coffin was borne on the shoulders of stalwart men and slender boys, for with the old man and the youth, he who lay within it had been a favourite. With the sorrows of the old and the joys of the other he was a ready sympathiser. Rich and poor equally bore him to the grave. Under the coffin were men who were rich in the world's wealth and under it also were men whose only wealth was a strong arm and a sturdy heart.¹

These lines taken from his obituary, capture the essence, character and greatness of the man that was Maxwell Irwin of Clonakilty. Yet, despite the writer's confident prediction of a well-merited remembrance there is not a monument, plaque or stone to commemorate or perpetuate this 'great' man's memory. Maxwell is most commonly remembered as the father of Mary

Jane Irwin, wife of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, with little appreciation that 'long and earnestly had he laboured for his country' and shown generosity and benevolence towards the 'distressed and the sorrowing'.² This study will endeavour to redress this imbalance by focussing on the huge contribution made by Maxwell and his family, from humble beginnings in the early 1800s to a rather sad and disturbing end seventy years later. Mary Jane's life as a poet, public speaker and human rights activist is well documented, so it is not intended to overly dwell on her life,³ but rather give recognition to the extended family whose talent and contribution were no less deserving of acknowledgement and salutation.

It is ironic that Rossa's first introduction to the Irwin family was when he visited Clonakilty in 1858 and knocked on the 'bright brass knocker' of the Irwin home to canvass Maxwell's support for the Irish Republican Brotherhood, 'as he had been a '48 man and the most patriotic, trustworthy man in the town that we could leave the seed of treason with'.⁴ It is remarkable too that Maxwell was a first cousin to both Timothy Warren-Anglin and Colonel John Warren, both of Clonakilty, who were imbued with the same spirit of service, justice and love of freedom.⁵ Timothy Warren-Anglin was a leading member of the Young Ireland Movement before emigrating to Canada to pursue a legal and political career that saw him ascend to speaker of the House of Parliament.⁶ Like Rossa, John Warren immersed himself in Fenian activity; they were imprisoned together in Chatham Gaol, Kent, where Rossa 'suffered the most excruciating tortures and few men could survive the punishments to which he was subjected'.⁷ On Warren's release he had a triumphant homecoming that was led by Maxwell, along with his four sons, en route from Bandon to Clonakilty. 'Tar barrels blazed at intervals along the route and arriving at Clonakilty at a late hour the town was found to be brilliantly illuminated, and the people all turned out to honour the gallant patriot'.⁸

The son of James Irwin and Jane Warren, Maxwell, who had Protestant ancestry,⁹ was baptised a Catholic in the parish of Enniskeane and Desertserges on 7 April 1817.¹⁰ Subsequent children were baptised in Clonakilty as follows: Elizabeth 1823,¹¹ James 1827,¹² Johanna 1830¹³ and Jane in 1839.¹⁴ Initially the family lived on Barrack Hill (now MacCurtain Hill) in Clonakilty, but by 1839 they had taken up residence on Main Street (now Rossa Street).¹⁵ This

relocation may have something to do with the relaxation of the Penal Laws and the emergence of a well-to-do Catholic merchant class. Records of Maxwell's education were not uncovered but it is likely that he was formally educated because when he entered the public arena in his early twenties, he was an articulate, confident and impressive young man. He was quick to support Fr Theobald Mathew's temperance movement and in 1842 he 'regretted as a teetotaler to see the finger of scorn pointed at his native town, on account of teetotalers not being united as a body, and was sorry his townsmen should be so backward in forwarding a cause which was so eagerly embraced in other countries'.¹⁶ Within a year Maxwell joined other dignitaries at the helm of a Clonakilty contingent at a mass rally held by Daniel O'Connell in Skibbereen which demanded repeal of the Union.¹⁷

On 26 January 1844 Maxwell married Margaret Keohane of Rosscarbery.¹⁸ Ten children were born of this marriage as follows:¹⁹

<i>Name</i>	<i>Baptised</i>
Mary Jane	26 January 1845
James Charles	12 August 1846
William Henry	14 April 1850
Timothy Warren	Not found, born c. 1848
Alfred	1 February 1852
Isabella	28 January 1854
Catherine	15 May 1856
Elizabeth	13 March 1858
Amelia	17 July 1859
Albert	27 January 1861

Table 1: Dates of baptisms for the children of Maxwell Irwin and Margaret Keohane. All were baptised in Clonakilty RC church.

Strand House on Sand Quay has often been mistakenly recorded as the birthplace of Mary Jane Irwin and while it was the family residence later, all

the children up to 1859 were born in Main Street; it is therefore likely that Mary Jane spent very little, if any, of her childhood in Strand House.²⁰ Tenure Books from the period reveal that Maxwell lived at no. 2 Main Street (now Coughlan's Bookshop) as a tenant of the Earl of Shannon.²¹ The Tenure Books also show that Maxwell owned a number of houses on Main Street and a farm holding in the townland of Scartagh.

Apart from expanding his own business interests, Maxwell immersed himself in the political and social advancement of the people of Clonakilty. He supported Rickard Deasy's parliamentary campaign to be elected to the House of Commons in 1855,²² and in later years rallied behind Skibbereen-based solicitor and nationalist politician Timothy McCarthy Downing.²³ Maxwell was elected to the Town Commissioners at a time when only those rated at £5 a year were entitled to vote.²⁴ Recognising the value and huge potential of the railway for business, markets and farmers, Maxwell strongly supported the extension of the line from Bandon to Clonakilty in the 1850s and while Lord Carbery and Lord Bandon supported the proposal, the combined opposition of William Bence-Jones and Lord Shannon proved too strong, which dealt Clonakilty a serious blow and a generation passed before the railway was again seriously considered.²⁵ Expressing his disappointment at the setback, Maxwell wrote:

Railways are about to renovate the resources of the country. Still Clonakilty is consigned to the solitude of the ocean, which surrounds it. If it be true that Clonakilty is doomed thus, who will take the blame for its fate? They should be marked out, whoever they be, and transmitted to the malediction of those who shall hereafter visit this solitude.²⁶

By moving the family to Strand House, Maxwell reaffirmed his status as one of the leading merchants of the town. Over time he took possession of several other buildings on the quays where business thrived, including corn, coal, general merchandise and liquor.²⁷ The future looked bright when Mary Jane was enrolled in the Sacred Heart Convent, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, in October 1860 for an entry fee of £35. Here she excelled academically especially in elocution, public speaking and poetry.²⁸ But the reappearance of Rossa on the doorstep of their home, this time at Strand House, in 1864, cast a perilous shadow over the entire family which defined the rest of their lives

MAXWELL IRWIN & SONS,
SAND-QUAY, CLONAKILTY,
May be Purchased at Manufacturers' Retail Prices—
WINNOWING MACHINES,
(Of the most approved construction.)
THRESHING MACHINES

PURZE BRUIZERS,	MOWING MACHINES,
HORSE RAKES,	REAPING Do.,
WHEELED HAND RAKES,	OILS & PAINTS,
GRINDSTONES,	GLASS,
PLOUGHS,	IRON BEDSTEADS,
GRUBBERS,	CHILDREN'S COATS,
SCUFFLERS,	ARM CHAIRS,
HORSE RAKES,	ROPES & TWINE,
PORTABLE BOILERS,	IRON TUBES,
KITCHENERS,	LEAD Do.,
RANGES,	PLOUGH CASTINGS,
AMERICAN STOVES,	GARDEN SPRINGES,
FILTERS,	LADIES Do.,
WASHING MACHINES,	GARDEN SEATS,
WRINGING Do.,	IRON GATES,
MANGLING Do.,	VELOCIPEDS,
COMBINED Do.,	TURNIP SOWERS,
FORCE PUMPS,	SALAMANDERS,
JACK Do.,	LAWN MOWERS.
ABYSSINIAN Do.,	

FARM SEEDS, PHOSPHATES, GUANO, &C.

NO SECOND PRICES
AT
M. IRWIN & SONS,
SAND-QUAY, CLONAKILTY,
Where every attention will be shown visitors without their being importuned to Purchase.

Fig. 1: Advertisement for Maxwell Irwin & Sons, Sand Quay, Clonakilty (Source: Ó Lúing, *Ó Donnabháin Rosa*, vol. 1, p. 197).

and which prompted Rossa to concede that his visit was 'not for their welfare' as 'the boys found their way to prison and to exile through acquaintance with me'.²⁹ Mary Jane had just left school when she fell madly in love with Rossa; 'I am your own, mostly fondly your own' she lovingly wrote to him.³⁰ Despite her family's objections and the indignant remonstrations of the parish priest, Fr Leader, Mary Jane married Rossa in October 1864.³¹ Within a year he was convicted of treason felony and sentenced to penal servitude for life, leaving Mary Jane alone and on 6 May 1866 she gave birth to their first and beloved son, James Maxwell.³² Soon the financial burden became unsustainable and she made the hardest and most heart-wrenching decision of her life, to leave her young son behind in Clonakilty, along with the four boys from Rossa's first marriage, and with borrowed money set sail for New York on 30 May 1867.³³ The huge burden she had placed on her father weighed heavy on her mind when she wrote to Rossa, 'the last sight of my father is stamped as with mordant on my memory. My poor, poor father'.³⁴

Meanwhile in Clonakilty Mary Jane's brother, James, was to the forefront of all Fenian agitation and activity (Fig. 2). He first came to prominence when he led a 'riot' in the town in 1865 and for his trouble served one month in prison with hard labour.³⁵ He spent the greater part of 1866 in jail having been detained in March and again within days of being released in November.³⁶ Although Mary Jane was in Dublin at this time,³⁷ she kept herself well informed of these events and, on hearing of her brother's conviction in November 1866, wrote of the 'malice of a magistrate named Francis Evans Bennett, who may have bitter memory of my father's assistance to him in less wealthy times'.³⁸ Being connected to Rossa was certainly not to James' advantage as a letter writer to *The Irishman* pointed out:

... from bad food and confinement an ulcer had formed in his neck. He was at home perhaps a week, when he was seized from his sick bed and taken to Cork gaol and from there to Mountjoy. What could be gained by keeping a young lad not over twenty-one years of age in prison? Was it because he was a brother in law of O'Donovan Rossa?³⁹

James was eventually discharged from prison in February 1867 on condition that he left Ireland immediately and go to America.⁴⁰ This, however, was not

the end of James as he would return to achieve further notoriety in the not too distant future.

The pressures of family, business and public life were now intense on Maxwell. According to Mary Jane her father was in 'very dangerous and embarrassed circumstances owing to a fraudulent claim of a new landlord for large rents which had been once paid'.⁴¹ To add to his travails his wife, Margaret, was terminally ill.⁴² But despite all, his greatness of character shone brightly through these stresses and strains of life. He was instrumental in

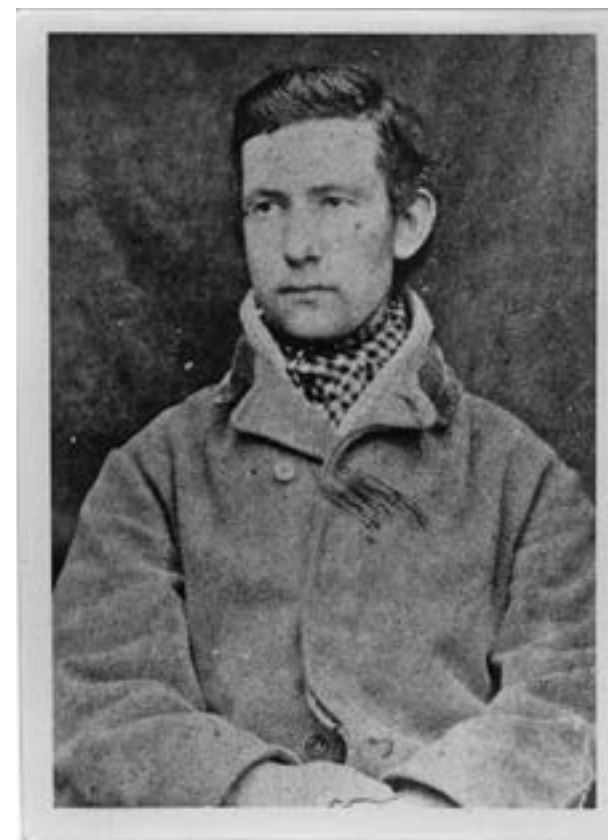


Fig. 2: James Irwin, c. 1865–67 (Photo: taken from 'Fenian Photographs', State Paper Office, *Local Studies Digital Library*, Cork County Library, accessed 7 Dec. 2017 at <http://www.corklocalstudies.ie/items/show/5179>).

establishing a prisoners' rights movement, with his son Timothy Warren (T. W.) – perhaps the most able and skilful of all his children – acting as secretary. A mass meeting, demanding release of the prisoners, was held in the Fair Field, Clonakilty, on 26 September 1869 (see Fig. 3).⁴³ Having paraded through the main streets of the town, the procession arrived at the Fair Field and with the numbers swelling to over 5,000, the chair was taken by McCarthy Downing MP. He accepted the position with very great pleasure for he was 'anxious for the liberation of his fellow countrymen pining in the dungeons of England as any Irishman in whose breast an Irish heart beats'.⁴⁴ But it was T. W. who won the sustained applause of the crowd with a powerfully eloquent and evocative address during the course of which he said:

We love with a great love the Fenian in his cold cell, for has he not shown himself ready to sacrifice life itself for our liberty... To serve his country a Horatius may throw himself into the Tiber, a Mutius may plunge his naked hand into the fire; but the sacrifice of either was not equal to that of the Fenian prisoner, who stood in the dock at Green Street and accepted without a sign of regret, the sentence that was to confine him for life within the walls of a living tomb.⁴⁵

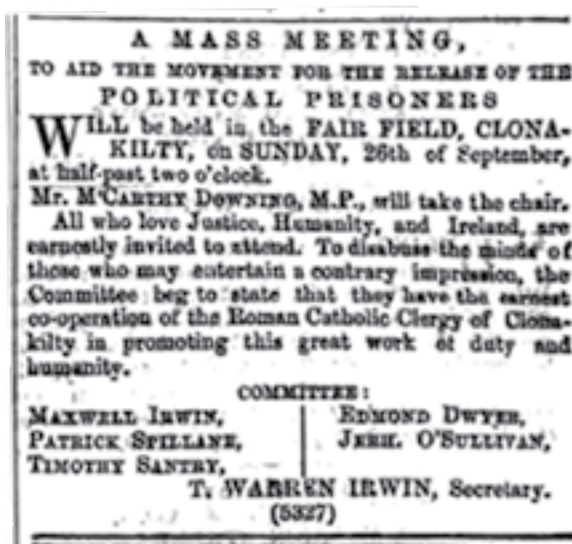


Fig. 3: Advertisement for a mass meeting to be held in Clonakilty demanding the release of political prisoners (*Cork Examiner*, 24. Sep. 1869).

Three months later, in December 1869, and while still a prisoner, Rossa was elected Member of Parliament for Tipperary. A huge celebration was held in Clonakilty; the town band, preceded by blazing tar barrels and followed by an immense crowd 'traversed the principal thoroughfares of the town' before halting at Strand House. T. W. addressed the crowd from the window and in his discourse used Henry Grattan's description of Ireland, 'she is not dead, but sleeping', to demonstrate how succeeding generations had embraced these words.⁴⁶

After Rossa's release, T. W. remained active in student politics and used various platforms to communicate his message. In 1877 he delivered a series of lectures in England on Irish poetry illustrated through recitations and music.⁴⁷ During the Land War (1879–82) he was a medical student at Queen's College, Cork and chairman of a college group supporting Charles Stewart Parnell. When he advertised a meeting of the organisation on the college grounds in 1880, it brought him into disfavour with the College Council. T. W. remained defiant and unrepentant in his own defence when arguing that, 'I am of the opinion that he is but a ginger man, who isn't ready to risk a little for a good result'.⁴⁸ A month later, in April 1880, T. W. stood with Parnell when the 'uncrowned king of Ireland' made his historic visit to Clonakilty and, along with Parnell, addressed the mass assemblage from the window of his own home.⁴⁹ As the heir to the family business and with prospects of a bright political career, the future seemed secure for the young medical doctor, but dark clouds on the horizon signalled a tempest that would have serious repercussions for the family and leave mass destruction in its wake.

Unfortunately Margaret Irwin did not live to see the release of Rossa, because on 12 May 1870 'in the forty-sixth year of her life, after a long and trying illness' Margaret died at her residence in Strand House.⁵⁰ On Rossa's release, Mary Jane was again reunited with her husband and little boy, James Maxwell, when they boarded the *Cuba* bound for New York in January 1871.⁵¹ Resuming a normal family life in such circumstances was never going to be easy, but the constant visitation of tragedy and bereavement made this far more difficult. Of the twelve children subsequently born in America only six made it to their second birthday.⁵² Undoubtedly, the most traumatic was the death, following an accident in 1893, of her first born James Maxwell as he was

'her most dearly beloved'⁵³ and as Mary Jane so beautifully put it, 'his voice is a voice of love to me'.⁵⁴

After Margaret's death, Maxwell maintained an extremely busy business and public life, while members of his family also became more actively involved. Sons William and Alfred formed ventures, which seemed to be of some concern to Maxwell as he took out newspaper advertisements in 1876 to clarify that this was not part of his enterprise.⁵⁵ After returning from America in c. 1873,⁵⁶ the once-exiled son James joined Maxwell on the Town Commissioners when co-opted in December 1878.⁵⁷ Maxwell was also beginning to enjoy some celebrity status; when the world walking champion, Dan O'Leary, returned to town he was seated in the carriage next to Maxwell as they 'retired amidst a very hurricane of cheers' to Strand House where 'the greatest festivity prevailed; toasts and health being duly honoured in genuine Irish style'.⁵⁸ Another huge event in the history of Clonakilty was the founding of a branch of the Land League in August 1880. Among the 4,000 present were James and T. W.⁵⁹ Sadly their father, who had been 'a fearless and distinguished advocate in the cause of justice and humanity', did not live to see this day.⁶⁰

Maxwell passed away at the residence of his son T. W. in Dublin on Monday 19 May 1879.⁶¹ He was just sixty years of age and seldom, if ever, has there been a more momentous funeral in Clonakilty. On Tuesday evening his remains arrived in Bandon by train, where they were met by 'a multitude' and the numbers increased considerably as the procession reached Clonakilty. Here 'the sobs and tears that were to be heard and seen were no hollow tokens of regret, but came from the depths of the hearts of a troubled people'. The remains were laid in the parish church, followed by an overnight vigil of prayer. Mass was celebrated at dawn by Fr Madden, but it was half-past six in the evening before the funeral procession started from the church. The remains were shouldered through the streets of the town as far as Fax Bridge, before winding its way back to Patrick Street and 'into the churchyard on the hill'. The sunlight was fading before the priest recited the Service for the Dead and the earth 'softly laid over the oaken coffin and it wreaths of odorous flowers'.⁶²

Scarcely had the green sods settled on Maxwell's grave when trouble began. William Bateman was 'an old friend' and business acquaintance going back to corn trade in 1863 and 'prized his memory' (see Fig. 4).⁶³ However,



Fig. 4: Portrait of William Samuel Bateman (Courtesy of Michael O'Connell, West Cork Regional Museum, Clonakilty).

Bateman was also a money lender and was owed £300 by Maxwell at the time of his death. He initiated discussions between H. T. Wright, solicitor, and T. W. for the recovery of this money and a plan was drafted for this purpose. Almost immediately Bateman became nervous as he feared that T. W. might abscond to America and other creditors would have equal claim on other mortgaged properties. Wright refused to issue the writ, conceding that he 'was a great friend of Maxwell Irwin' and this triggered a lawsuit and countersuit between these leading Clonakilty luminaries. The manager of the Bank of Ireland, Mr

Franklin, was prepared to underwrite the agreement, but Bateman considered Franklin 'a crook' and declined the offer. Relationships deteriorated so much that Wright went to assault Bateman and 'kick him down the stairs'. Moving with haste, Bateman got the sheriff to seize 250 tons of coal but due to his own negligence allowed T. W. to repossess the goods and have them protected by an armed guard. Bateman pleaded with the sheriff to re-take the property, while offering to 'lose his own life' in the attempt, but the sheriff refused. On the day of the auction prospective buyers were unable to inspect the coal due to the proximity of armed men and so it was struck down for £70 to a purchaser allegedly acting for T. W. Not surprisingly Bateman refused to accept the money. During this time T. W. had the support of Clonakilty people and even the presiding magistrate got caught up in the euphoria in describing Mr Wright as 'an old friend' who should not 'incur such an imputation at the end of a long and honourable career'. He reminded Bateman that he 'wanted to keep Irwin in a state of expectation, deluding him with the idea that a settlement would be come to'.⁶⁴

T. W. had won a significant battle but not the war and it is ironic that it was the Bank of Ireland who offered for sale all of his business interests in January 1885. They comprised six lots and the following is a complete transcript of the newspaper advertisement.⁶⁵

<i>Lot No.</i>	<i>Description</i>
1.	The Sand Quay, known as Peter McCarthy's Quay, with a licenced retail Public House thereon, held under lease dated 29 th May 1868, for 35 years, from 1 st May 1869, at the yearly rent of £15.
2.	Premises forming portion of the lot formerly held by the Reverend Joseph Owgan, with 11 slated cottages and yard attached with frontage to Mill Lane, held with other premises under lease dated 15 th July 1869, for 61 years, from said 15 th July 1869, at the yearly rent of £17. This lot will be sold bound to pay the entire of said rent of £17.
3.	Other premises held under said lease of 15 th July 1869, and on which stands an extensive corn store 101 x 22, and having 3 well supported spacious lofts over ground floor. This lot will be sold indemnified against said rent of £17.

<i>Lot No.</i>	<i>Description</i>
4.	Other premises held under said lease of 15 th July 1869, and on which stands a commodious residence, known as "Strand House", with suitable out-offices, walled-in garden etc. This lot will also be sold indemnified against the said rent of £17.
5.	Other premises held under said lease of 15 th July 1869, comprising commodious and walled-in Coal Yard and Stores. This lot will also be sold indemnified against said rent of £17, and with this lot 5 there will be incorporated and sold herewith, as an accommodation thereto, the Sand Quay, known as Elmore's Quay, which immediately adjoins, held under lease dated 29 th May 1868 for 35 years from 1 st May 1868, as a yearly rent of 5s.
6.	Premises known as the Quay at Desert near Clonakilty, known as the Bathing House Quay, held under lease dated 24 th August 1870 for 40 years, from 29 th September 1869, at the yearly rent of £3. This lot is a large field, forming part of the lands at Desert and extending to the water's edge, with quayage and containing 3 acres statute measure of rich pasture, situated close to the town of Clonakilty and at present let for grazing until 15 th January 1885.

Table 2: Property interests owned by T. W. Irwin and offered for sale by the Bank of Ireland in January 1885.

Most of the Irwin family were in America by 1880;⁶⁶ Isabella, who went when she was nineteen, trained as a nurse in Philadelphia and looked after Rossa's children at various times.⁶⁷ Amelia lived with the family as well.⁶⁸ As the bank closed in, T. W. also sought the sanctuary of America. In August 1883 he resigned as Registrar for Rosscarbery⁶⁹ and arrived in New York on 3 September of that year.⁷⁰ He made his way to California but subsequently lost contact with the family. This was of such concern to Mary Jane that she appealed to John Devoy for his help in locating him in 1913,⁷¹ though T. W. had actually died over a decade before this.⁷² Perhaps she was feeling guilty and painfully thinking that Rossa's influence had prompted the collapse of the family business and the disappearance of her beloved brother!



Fig. 5: Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa with his wife Mary Jane (née Irwin) and their two daughters, Daisy (Margaret) and Jenny (Jane) in 1905 while living in Cork (Copyright and kind permission to reproduce: National Library of Ireland).

Following the emigration of T. W., his brother Albert took up residence at Strand House.⁷³ As the empire crumbled, however, his tenure was short and he subsequently moved to Australia.⁷⁴ Albert's older brother, Alfred, did not escape the harsh winds either. Life seemed good when he married Theresa O'Mahony of Cork in 1877;⁷⁵ along with owning a pub on Jermyn Street (now Clarke Street), he was a grocer and proprietor of hardware in Strand Road (now Wolfe Tone Street).⁷⁶ The birth of his eldest son, Maxwell, was registered in Cork City in 1882,⁷⁷ but within a year the family had joined the others in New York.⁷⁸ But tragedy and death were never too distant from this family. In December 1884, Amelia Irwin, after returning from America, died in Clonakilty at the tender age of twenty-five.⁷⁹ Just over ten years later, in

January 1895, Alfred was killed instantly in an accident in New York. He was a mere forty-two years of age and left a wife and six young children.⁸⁰

James, who endured so much for his Fenian activity, was the last member of the family to have business involvement in Clonakilty. He married Ellen Foley, a publican on Strand Road, in September 1875.⁸¹ When James sought to have the licence transferred to his name, objections were lodged because he was a brother-in-law of O'Donovan Rossa.⁸² However, it may have been to the advantage of all concerned if the application had been refused. While Ellen was described as a 'loan office keeper', she took out a loan herself in 1873 from the brewers, Lane and Co., Drinan Street, Cork, for £300 and when repayment was not forthcoming they put the property for sale. On the second attempt it was purchased by T. J. Cauty for £530, but on seeing reports of the sale, Bank of Ireland and Munster and Leinster Bank intervened as both had mortgages on the premises and they fought a legal battle for priority.⁸³ It caused great hilarity in court when it was revealed that Ellen had deposited the original lease with the Munster and Leinster Bank but used her 'ingenuity' to get a duplicate signed by Baron Deasy, on pretence that the original was lost, which she handed to the Bank of Ireland. By the time of the court case, both Ellen and James had gone 'to the larger and wider fields of America'.⁸⁴ But there was one last action before the final surrender of all Irwin existence in Clonakilty. James had a holding of thirty-two acres in the townland of Gallanes which was auctioned on behalf of his mortgagees in August 1889.⁸⁵ The writer of Maxwell Irwin's obituary visualised him being remembered for many a decade in Clonakilty but, alas, as T. McCabe brought down the hammer on the Gallanes farm, memories began to fade.

It is earnestly hoped that this narrative will rekindle a curiosity in, and appreciation of, a truly remarkable Clonakilty family. The move to Strand House around 1860 confirmed on the Irwins a privileged status for the family, among the business community and the social elite. The future looked secure as their natural talents flourished through the benefit of education and the guiding hand of a wise and experienced father which was ever present to support and nurture every opportunity. However, everything changed utterly when Rossa returned to knock on their door in 1864 and even he was conscious that his visit was not for their welfare. From then on, the intense loyalty and bond that existed within the family ensured that the shackles that bound

Rossa were the same chains that restricted them from embarking on separate journeys and reaching different destinations. That the path taken by the Irwins in supporting Rossa, led to their demise in Clonakilty, there is no doubt. It is equally true that this noble and generous stance, which has enriched our heritage and history, merits our appreciation and remembrance. So, before closing this chapter, the reader should ponder seriously the question: what would the likely Irwin legacy be, if Rossa had passed them by and knocked on another door?

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(Endnotes)

- 1 *Cork Examiner*, 26 May 1879.
- 2 *The Irishman*, 24 May 1879.
- 3 Mary Jane's life was discussed in brief in the last volume of this journal, see Roche, A. 2015. 'A brief introduction to Mary Jane Irwin and her poetry'. *Clonakilty Historical and Archaeological Journal* 1, pp. 167-74.
- 4 *The Irishman*, 28 June 1879.
- 5 A report in *The Nation*, 20 Mar. 1869, notes that the Irwins were cousins of John Warren; he was the son of Timothy Warren, an uncle of both Maxwell Irwin and Timothy Warren-Anglin.
- 6 *Southern Star*, 21 July 1894. Timothy Warren-Anglin was the son of Francis Anglin and Johanna Warren who married on 17 November 1818, Clonakilty parish, Diocese of Cork and Ross, Co. Cork, microfilm 04772 / 03, p. 28, Catholic Parish Registers (hereafter CPR), National Library of Ireland (hereafter NLI), originals of all Catholic Parish records available to view at <http://registers.nli.ie> and for digitised details see <https://churchrecords.irishgenealogy.ie/churchrecords/>. Timothy was born on 31 August 1822 (baptismal record, Clonakilty parish, microfilm 04772 / 01, p. 98, CPR, NLI) and, following a very successful career in Canada, he died there in 1896 (Curran, J. J. 'Timothy Warren Anglin'. Catholic Encyclopedia, <https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/timothy-warren-anglin> [accessed 11 July 2017]). Margaret O'Donovan-Rossa stated that Timothy Warren-Anglin's mother, Johanna, was a sister to Maxwell Irwin (O'Donovan-Rossa, M. 1939. *My Father and Mother were Irish*. New York, pp. 60-61). However, the baptismal records do not support this view and we know that Johanna was actually Maxwell's aunt, given that Margaret was born in America and never knew her grandparents, it is understandable that she might confuse the generations. The *Southern Star*, 21 July 1894, recounted how Timothy's son, Francis, returned to Clonakilty in 1894 and while there visited Kilgarraff cemetery where his ancestors had been buried for generations. The Anglin family were originally Hanglin and the first recorded burial in the family tomb in Kilgarraff is Jeremiah Hanglin. In his marriage record Timothy's father, Francis, is recorded as Hanglin but on the tomb as Anglin.
- 7 *Evening Freeman*, 11 Mar. 1869.
- 8 *The Nation*, 20 Mar. 1869. John Warren was the son of Timothy Warren and Mary Canty; they were married on 25 October 1829 (Clonakilty parish, microfilm 04772 / 03, p. 61, CPR, NLI) and John was baptised on 18 May 1834 (Clonakilty parish, microfilm 04772 / 02, p. 47, CPR, NLI). John was godfather to Maxwell's daughter, Isabella, who was baptised on 28 January 1854 (Clonakilty parish, microfilm 04772 / 02, p. 152, CPR, NLI). He fought in the American Civil War where he reached the rank of colonel. As a Fenian, he was aboard the *Erin's Hope* that brought guns ashore at Helvic Head, Co. Waterford. He was subsequently arrested and sentenced to fifteen years penal servitude (for more on John Warren see Salyer, this volume).e
- 9 Ó Lúing, S. 1979. *Ó Donnabháin Rosa*, vol. 2. Baile Átha Cliath, p. 196. The author quotes Rossa's daughter, Eileen, as saying that Maxwell Irwin was originally a Protestant who converted to Catholicism. However, she must have been mistaken as he was baptised a Catholic and so it may well be that it was Maxwell's father who converted.
- 10 Enniskeane and Desertserges parish, microfilm 04798 / 02, p. 25, CPR, NLI. He was baptised John Maxwell Irwin.
- 11 1 Aug. 1823, Clonakilty parish, microfilm 04772 / 01, p. 103, CPR, NLI.

- 12 9 Jan. 1827, Clonakilty parish, microfilm 04772 / 01, p. 123, CPR, NLI.
- 13 28 Nov. 1830, Clonakilty parish, microfilm 04772 / 02, p. 27, CPR, NLI.
- 14 21 July 1839, Clonakilty parish, microfilm 04772 / 02, p. 78, CPR, NLI.
- 15 For change of residence see baptismal records for Johanna and Jane Irwin referenced in the previous two endnotes.
- 16 *Cork Examiner*, 2 Sep. 1842. Subsequently Maxwell and his family were very involved in the sale of liquor, but Maxwell was always eager to comply with regulations. After his parish mission of 1868, a number of spirit dealers in the town signed a pledge 'to preserve the fruits of the mission' and resolved not to sell liquor before two o'clock and after six o'clock on Sundays, nor after ten o'clock on Fridays. They also pledged not to sell liquor to those under the influence of drink. Maxwell was the first to sign this declaration which was posted on their shops and at the 'Chapel'. This mission declaration is still displayed at Fernhill House Hotel, Clonakilty. The full transcript can be found in Clonakilty CYMS. *Clonakilty and District Past and Present*. 1959. Clonakilty, p. 108, and the addresses of the vintners are listed in *Francis Guy's County and City of Cork Directory*, 1875–6, p. 191, for all trade directories see, www.corkpastandpresent.ie/places/streetandtradedirectories.
- 17 *Cork Examiner*, 23 June 1843.
- 18 Rosscarbery parish, microfilm 04773 / 05, p. 68, CPR, NLI.
- 19 Clonakilty parish, microfilm 04772/02, pp. 116, 127, 141, 147, 152, 157, 163, 167 and 171, CPR, NLI. While Timothy Warren Irwin's baptismal records were not uncovered, he is identified as Maxwell's son in various sources (see below), including in Maxwell's will, see *Calendars of Wills and Administrations 1858 - 1920*, National Archives, p. 346, <http://www.willcalendars.nationalarchives.ie/search/cwa/home.jsp> [accessed 11 July 2017]. An entry in the 1865 Irish Prisons Registers relates to Timothy Irwin, Cork, aged seventeen and identified as a medical student who in December of that year served one month with hard labour for obstructing the police; given his age, it is estimated that he was born in c. 1848. See Irish Prison Registers, 1790–1924, [Findmypast.ie](http://findmypast.ie).
- 20 For change of residence see baptismal records referenced in previous endnote.
- 21 Valuation Office Tenure Books, 1846–58, National Archives, http://census.nationalarchives.ie/search/vob/tenure_books.jsp [accessed 11 Nov. 2016]. The entries pertaining to Maxwell Irwin relate to the years 1847–50. No. 2 Main Street was described as 'a good substantial house – in good repair, large shop, keeps a bakery & spirit shop; pretty well finished, central situation; valuation £16'. Maxwell was recorded as the owner of nos 3 and 4 Main Street.
- 22 *Cork Examiner*, 9 Apr. 1855. A vacancy arose in parliament when Mr Roche resigned as member for Cork County. Rickard Deasy wrote a letter to the *Cork Examiner* on 1 April 1855 to confirm that he was a candidate to fill the vacancy.
- 23 *Cork Examiner*, 2 Nov. 1868. Timothy McCarthy Downing (1814–79) was a barrister and politician born in Kilgarvan, Co. Kerry. He moved to Skibbereen in 1836 where he established an extensive legal practice. He was an ardent supporter of Daniel O'Connell and was most critical of the authorities during the Great Famine. He was elected to parliament in 1868 and retained his seat until his death in 1879. See Daly, E. 2007. *Skibbereen and District Fact and Folklore*. Leap, pp. 89–91.
- 24 *Cork Constitution*, 10 Nov. 1858. The Catholic Church wielded considerable influence as it was Fr Madden who proposed the list of names to serve as commissioners.
- 25 *Cork Examiner*, 31 Jan. 1853. The cost of the railway extension was £5,000 per mile and the money was to be raised on the markets at a rate of 4%. This interest had to be guaranteed by the landowners along the route and was known as the Baronial Tax. Bence-Jones and Shannon considered the interest rate excessive and the project too risky for them to support it but when Bence-Jones saw the benefits that were accruing to areas that had a railway connection he later became an advocate for the extension to Clonakilty, see *Cork Examiner*, 12 Jan. 1880. It was 1886 before the railway eventually reached Clonakilty, see Tuipéar, T. 1988. *Historical Walk of Clonakilty and its Sea-Front*. Clonakilty, pp. 15–16.
- 26 *Cork Daily Reporter*, 19 Nov. 1856.
- 27 *Cork Examiner*, 7 Jan. 1885.
- 28 Lehne, S. 1995. *Fenianism – A Male Business? A Case Study of Mary Jane O'Donovan Rossa (1845–1916)*. MA Dissertation, St Patrick's College, Maynooth, p. 19.
- 29 CYMS, *Clonakilty Past and Present*, p. 29.
- 30 Ó Lúing, Ó *Donnabbáin Rosa*, vol. 2, p. 303.
- 31 22 Oct. 1864, Clonakilty parish, microfilm 04772 / 03, p. 154, CPR, NLI.
- 32 Baptismal record, 6 May 1866, Clonakilty parish, microfilm 04772 / 02, p. 187, CPR, NLI.
- 33 Lehne, *Fenianism*, pp. 21–7.
- 34 O'Donovan Rossa, J. 1874. *Rossa's Prison Life Six Years in English Prisons*. New York, p. 331. Rossa was in Portland prison at the time of James Maxwell's birth and while the prison is given as his place of residence on James Maxwell's birth certificate, his occupation is listed as 'gentleman'.
- 35 *Cork Examiner*, 10 Nov. 1865.
- 36 *Donegal Democrat*, 8 Dec. 1866.
- 37 Kenna, S. 2015. *Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa: Unrepentant Fenian*. Sallins, p. 88. Early in 1866 Mary Jane moved the children into the family home in Clonakilty but returned to Dublin in July to resume her duties with the Ladies Committee, earning £2 a week.
- 38 Lehne, *Fenianism*, p. 24.
- 39 *The Irishman*, 12 Jan. 1867.
- 40 *Southern Star*, 11 Mar. 1995.
- 41 Ó Lúing, S. 1969. Ó *Donnabbáin Rosa*, vol. 1. Baile Átha Cliath, pp. 285–92. This quote is from a letter written by Mary Jane to a John Edward Pigott in which she outlines her concerns for the children of Rossa's first marriage and for her father's

- financial situation. Pigott was a Dublin journalist from whom Mary Jane borrowed £20 to purchase her fare to America.
- 42 *Cork Examiner*, 14 May 1870.
- 43 *Flag of Ireland*, 2 Oct. 1869.
- 44 *Flag of Ireland*, 2 Oct. 1869.
- 45 *Flag of Ireland*, 2 Oct. 1869.
- 46 *The Irishman*, 4 Dec. 1869.
- 47 *The Nation*, 21 Apr. 1877.
- 48 *Cork Examiner*, 27 Mar. 1880.
- 49 *Cork Examiner*, 10 Apr. 1880.
- 50 *Cork Examiner*, 14 May 1870.
- 51 Kenna, *Unrepentant Fenian*, p. 106. Having examined the ship's manifest, it is noted that Rossa gave his occupation as 'lawyer', see *Cuba* manifest, www.ancestry.co.uk/maryjaneodonovanrossa/immigrationtravel [accessed 20 Nov. 2016, available to Ancestry members only].
- 52 Kenna, *Unrepentant Fenian*, p. 116.
- 53 O'Donovan-Rossa, *Father and Mother*, p. 19.
- 54 O'Donovan-Rossa, *Father and Mother*, p. 56.
- 55 *Cork Examiner*, 9 Nov. 1876. The full text of the notice read: 'To avoid misunderstanding, I to beg to notify that I have ceased to be responsible for the accounts of Mr. William H. Irwin and Mr. Alfred T. Irwin, each has been for some time engaged in his own account'.
- 56 *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 Apr. 1898.
- 57 *Cork Examiner*, 6 Dec. 1878. James, like his brother T. W., was formally educated and studied medicine, see *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 Apr. 1898.
- 58 *The Irishman*, 27 Jan. 1877.
- 59 *Cork Examiner*, 30 Aug. 1880.
- 60 *The Nation*, 24 May 1879.
- 61 *Cork Examiner*, 20 May 1879. T. W. was still a student at this time, so it is likely that he was living in a rented house in Dublin while studying there. In a letter to John Devoy, Mary Jane writes that T. W. was educated at the School of Medicine, Peter Street, Dublin, see Letter from Mary Jane O'Donovan-Rossa to John Devoy regarding her brother T. Warren Irwin and a call from a 'Dublin Independent' reporter regarding Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's condition, 2 Nov. 1913, John Devoy Papers, MS 18,009/16/1, NLI, see <http://catalogue.nli.ie/Collection/vtls000545345>. This letter was written on 2 November 1913 but an incorrect date of 2 October 1913 is provided on the NLI website.
- 62 *Cork Examiner*, 26 May 1879. From the obituary it is clear that the funeral cortege entered Kilgarriff (new) graveyard from Patrick's Hill. His death notice in the *Cork Examiner*, 20 May 1879, states that his funeral will go 'for the churchyard on the hill, where rests the remains of his forefathers'.
- 63 *Cork Examiner*, 27 July 1880.
- 64 All information concerning T. W. Irwin's encounters with William Bateman are taken from *Cork Examiner*, 27 July 1880, 28 July 1880 and 29 July 1880.
- 65 *Cork Examiner*, 7 Jan. 1885.
- 66 *Cork Examiner*, 28 July 1880.
- 67 O'Donovan-Rossa, *Father and Mother*, pp. 20-33.
- 68 *United States Census*, 1880, district ED 570, sheet 44C, GS film no. 1255186, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C., see <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1417683>. Census records show that the O'Donovan Rossa family was living in Philadelphia in 1880. Also in the household was Lizzie Chiddwick. In her book, Margaret O'Donovan-Rossa says that Lizzie Chiddwick, from Clonakilty, saw Rossa as a 'sort of God'. Margaret loved her dearly 'as indeed I should, for no human being could really be worthy of the love that Lizzie lavished on me' (O'Donovan-Rossa, *Father and Mother*, pp. 43-4). Lizzie later returned to Clonakilty to care for her aging mother.
- 69 *Cork Examiner*, 9 Aug. 1883.
- 70 *Furnessia* Passenger Lists, arrival date at New York 3 Sep. 1883, www.ancestry.co.uk/twirwin/immigrationandtravel [accessed 20 Nov. 2016, available to Ancestry members only]. T. W. travelled on board the *Furnessia* from Queenstown (Cobh) and in the transcription of the ship's manifest he was recorded as being twenty-five years of age but was in fact thirty-five at the time and so this was probably just a misprint.
- 71 Letter from Mary Jane O'Donovan-Rossa to John Devoy regarding her brother T. Warren Irwin, 2 Nov. 1913, John Devoy Papers, MS 18,009/16/1, NLI.
- 72 James Irwin's obituary in 1898 informs us that two of Mary Jane's brothers, James and T. W., had been living in San Francisco but T. W. had died 'some time' before this, see *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 Apr. 1898.
- 73 *Skibbereen Eagle*, 5 Sep. 1885.
- 74 *Skibbereen Eagle*, 10 July 1915.
- 75 Marriage record, 8 Feb. 1877, Ss Peter's and Paul's parish, Cork City, microfilm 04787 / 03, p. 80, CPR, NLI; civil marriage record procured by this author from the Civil Registration Office of Ireland.
- 76 *Cork Examiner*, 16 Sep. 1880; *Slater's Directory*, 1881, pp. 36-7.
- 77 Civil birth record, 2 May 1882, registered 19 May 1882, in Cork City, in the Union of Cork, <https://civilrecords.irishgenealogy.ie>; birth record procured by this author from the Civil Registration Office of Ireland.
- 78 *New York State Census*, 1892, ward 18, district ED 54, GS film no. 1930238, County Offices, New York, <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1529100>. The census returns confirmed the date of immigration. Maxwell Irwin, born in 1882, lived until 1957 while his son, Vincent, died in 1986. Vincent had a daughter, Ja-

net, who passed away in 2007. From communications through Ancestry.co.uk, this author is satisfied that the Irwin family lives on in America.

- 79 Death record procured by this author from the Civil Registration Office of Ireland. This confirms that she died of phthisis at the home of her relative Mary Donovan, on Barrack Hill. Amelia was the last of the Irwin family to die in Clonakilty.
- 80 *Southern Star*, 9 Feb. 1895.
- 81 Marriage record, 23 Sep. 1875, Clonakilty parish, microfilm 04772 / 03, p. 170, CPR, NLI; civil marriage record procured by this author from the Civil Registration Office of Ireland. Ellen was the daughter of Patrick Foley, a farmer. On the marriage record she is described as a publican which suggests that she owned the pub herself.
- 82 *Cork Examiner*, 21 Apr. 1876.
- 83 *Cork Examiner*, 16 Jan. 1888.
- 84 *Cork Examiner*, 16 Jan. 1888. By 1879, £1,039 was owed to the Munster and Leinster Bank in Bandon and £1,270 to the Bank of Ireland in Clonakilty. According to the newspaper report, Ellen operated a loan office in the pub at Strand Road. James returned to America in 1882 and lived in San Francisco where he died in 1898, see *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 Apr. 1898.
- 85 *Cork Constitution*, 17 Aug. 1889. The property was sold in two lots. Lot one was purchased by Jeremiah McCarthy for £310 and lot two by Mr O'Donovan for £50.

THE ESTABLISHMENT AND WORKINGS OF CLONAKILTY TOWN COMMISSIONERS 1840–99

Dr Matthew Potter



This article is based on research undertaken for a forthcoming history of Clonakilty Corporation/Town Commissioners/Urban District Council/Town Council from 1613 to 2014 by Matthew Potter, which is due to appear in 2018.

Introduction

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Irish towns were governed by borough corporations that were sectarian (under Church of Ireland control), unrepresentative, inefficient, corrupt and provided few services. Clonakilty Corporation was a typical example of these municipal local authorities. Established in 1613, it was owned and controlled by the Earls of Cork until 1738 and thereafter by their descendants the Earls of Shannon. By the early nineteenth century it was in an advanced state of decay. The Act of Union had ended its role as a parliamentary constituency, and it neglected its other functions. It was a closed corporation, which meant that its members were chosen by co-option rather than election, and were thus completely unaccountable to the townspeople. It was also a sectarian body, entirely Church of Ireland in its composition, from which all Catholics were excluded.