

Another of his works was to completely reorganise and re-lay-out the military barracks and manoeuvring plains at Aldershot and the Old Parade Ground there has been renamed in his honour "Laffan's Plain."

After a time as Chief Engineer at Gibraltar he was appointed Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Bermudas with the rank of Brigadier-General. He was knighted in the same year. Here, during a very critical period of office, he was both popular and successful, and he died in office at Mount Langton on 22nd of March, 1882. He was buried with full military honours in Pembroke Churchyard, Bermuda, after lying-in-state for two days.

Laffan left four sons and one daughter by his wife, Emma Norsworthy.

ANDREW MacCURTIN

Andrew MacCurtin, the Irish poet and scholar, was born at Moyglass, Kilmurry Ibricken. He came of a long line of poets and scribes, and, being brought up in the strictest traditions of the Bardic Schools, had no use for the new-fangled verse of the traditional period in which he lived. In a long poem to his patron, Sorley MacDonnell, of Kilkee, he complains bitterly "of changed system and metre and of having to compose in metres void of all rule and concord, and to fit himself for an evil fashion never practised in Erin before, and to frame a left-handed awkward thing of a ditty because the gentlemen of the country will give more for it than for a well-turned lay or poem." "More respect," he says, "is accorded to a dry, half-educated boor who has no clear view of either alliteration or poetry than to the highly trained bard or man of song. He himself is now thought a fool if he composes a lay in good taste, but he is not of this opinion," and he protests that he "will continue to write after the strictest manner of his craft."

Andrew succeeded to the hereditary title of Ollamh to the O'Briens of Thomond, and, as such, was an authority on the pedigrees of all the great Munster families. He wrote an excellent hand, as may be seen from his manuscripts, many of which are now in Trinity College, the Royal Irish Academy and the British Museum, and, according to Eugene O'Curry, was one of the best Gaelic scholars of his day.

Like his cousin, Aodh Buidhe MacCurtin, he depended chiefly on the patronage of the O'Briens and of Sorley MacDonnell, and, in one of his longer poems, he tells us how he deserted his patrons and went to live in his native and lonely Ibricken because of a slight received from the latter and because he hated mere wealth, loathed the English language and despised those who thought it fashionable to speak the "Saxon jargon."

Poems of his which were remembered and spoken by the people of the Clare Gaeltacht up to recent years were his two laments on the death of Sir Donough Mac Conor O'Brien, of Dromoland, "the great Sir Donat," and an address to a fairy chieftain, "Donn na Daibhche," or "Donn of the Sandhills," whose patronage he humorously craves since the new gentry of Clare have deserted him.

MacCurtin inherited some property at Moyglass but had to sell this in order to continue his studies and travels in search of learning. When the proceeds were gone he opened a school of Irish poetry in his native parish, which became famous and of which Aodh Buidhe, his cousin, was the most famous pupil. He died in the year 1749, and was buried in the churchyard of Kilfarboy, where no stone marks his grave.

JAMES MacNAMARA

James MacNamara, Rear-Admiral in the Royal Navy, the son of Michael McNamara, of Cahir Tuagh, and Bridget Waters, of Redgate, was born in the year 1768. He entered the Navy in 1782, and was rapidly promoted to the ranks of Lieutenant, Commander and Captain. In his younger days he saw service in the East Indies and later served under Admiral Nelson, whose personal friend he was, in the campaigns of 1795 and 1796. For his bravery in a battle off Genoa, in which he captured a French frigate, he was mentioned in despatches and promoted.

When off duty in London in the year 1803, he quarrelled with a certain Colonel Montgomery whose dog had interfered with his own. A duel resulted in which Montgomery was killed, although he fired first and Captain MacNamara was severely wounded. He was tried at the Old Bailey for manslaughter and the trial excited the greatest interest among the busybodies of the day. He maintained that Montgomery had been the aggressor and that unless he had defended his honour he might as well have thrown up his career in the Navy. Hood, Nelson and other prominent Navy men testified that MacNamara was "an honourable, good-humoured, pleasant, lively companion, exactly the reverse of a quarrelsome man," and he was acquitted. We cannot help remembering, however, that he was a near relative of Fireball MacNamara, who fought fifty-five duels and acted as second in as many more.

On the resumption of the war against France in 1808, MacNamara returned to active service and fought bravely for six more years, mostly off the coast of France and in the North Sea. Again he was responsible for a clever action resulting in the capture of a French frigate. On 4th June, 1814, he was promoted to be Rear-Admiral, but his promotion also terminated his naval career for he saw no more active seervice.