

The Massy's Of Doonass.

Doonass House is probably an example of the most magnificent houses along each bank of the Shannon around Castleconnell and Clonlara.. They claim descent from Hamo de Massy, a companion in arms of William the Conqueror. General Hugh Massy came to Ireland to assist in quelling the rebellion of 1641, later settled in Duntryleague, a few miles from Galbally, Co. Limerick. He was succeeded by his son Hugh Massy, who married Amy Benson, daughter of a fellow Cromwellian. They had four sons, the youngest being Charles, who was born in 1695. He entered Trinity College in 1712, got his B.A. in 1717 and M.A. in 1720/21 and became vicar of Abington and Murroe. In 1740 he was appointed Dean of St. Mary's Limerick and held both offices until death in 1766.

Charles married Grace, daughter of Sir John Dillon of Lismullen, Co. Meath about 1725/30 and came to live at Doonass. Turlough O'Carolan, the great harper was employed to entertain with his music at Lismullen House for the wedding. He later visited Doonass and there had his portrait painted by Francis Bindon of Clare. It hangs in the National Gallery. In 1739 he bought the lands (4325 acres) and Manor House of Doonass from Henry, 8th. Earl of Thomond, subject to a rent of £212 p.a. Ten years later he bought a large part of the parish of Broadford (3950) acres from the Brigemans of Woodfield House. After his death, both estates passed to his son, Hugh, who was created a Baronet of Ireland in 1781 and elected M.P. For Clare 1777/1802. He did not seek re-election after the Union. He had married Elizabeth Stackpoole of Craighbrien, near Ennis in 1765, with sons Hugh 1767, Charles 1770 and Mary Francis 1771. She was drowned crossing the Shannon in 1794 and the following story is told. "She and Lord Clare had a lovers' quarrel. In anger, he crossed the falls of Doonass to the Limerick shore. Heartbroken and desperate she persuaded a local boatman to row her across in thick fog. They were swept on the rocks and both drowned.

Rev Charles Massy in 1788) March 1796 he married, against his father's wishes Mary-Ann Ross-Lewin of Fort Fergus near Ennis, eighteen years of age and a remarkable beauty. A son, Hugh was born in January 1797. They lived at Summerhill House. In 1803, while stationed in Limerick with his regiment of Meath Militia, the Marquis of Headfort got to know them. He was residing in the Earl of Limerick's house, Henry Street, and often visited Doonass as Rev Charles and his wife were fond of society and display. On the

Sunday morning after Christmas 1803, while Rev Charles was officiating in Church, his wife eloped with Headfort. . The Rev brought a court action, claiming £40,000. It was tried at Ennis Assizes before Baron Smith and a special jury. Many eminent council were employed by each side a total 10 for The Rev., including William Mc Mahon, but lead by John Phipott Curran and 6 by Headfort. The Court heard that Headfort, Sir Thomas Taylour of Headfort, Co. Meath, born 1857, had married Mary Quin,, only daughter and heir of George Quin, of Quinborough, Parteen in 1373. The elopment was encouraged and assisted by a sinister character, George Evan Bruce of Castleconnell. Thr trial lasted twelve hours and at midnight the jury decided in favour of Massy and awarded him £10,000. It was during the trial that John Philpot Curran came up with his famous description of Headfort -" THAT HOARYHEADED OLD VETERAN, ON WHOM, LIKE ETNA, THE SNOWS ABOVE FAILED TO QUENCH THE FIRES BENEATH " !

IN 1808 Massy had his marriage to Mary-Anne Ross-Lewin dissolved and in 1813 he married Susan, 2nd daughter of John Westropp of Mellon. Co Limerick. They had one daughter, Susannah, who in 1843 married Samuel Bindon, of Waterpark.

Hugh Massy, Third Baronet, was Born 6th January 97, to Rev, Charles and Mary-Ann Ross-Lewin in 1818 married, Mary, Daughter of John Westropp c Attyflin, near Patrickswell, and also inherited the estate in 1842 at a most difficult time due to the Famine "To which he contributed handsomly" They were totally dependent on the rent from their tenants, who were unable to pay, resulting in the estate becoming bankrupt. The broaford part was sold under The Encumbered Estates Courts and paid off all incumbrances. Sir Hugh died in 1870 and Lady Massy in 1890 aged 90 at Doonass House., Her nephew, John Westropp became the new owner. They had extensive properties at Attyflin and Bunratty. He died in 1903. The estate passed to his son, John Massy Westropp, who sold it back to the tenants under the Land Act of 1910, He died in Bunratty in 1943