

Thomas Phillips Vokes

His ancestors and descendents

by Noel Murphy

Little has been discovered about the ancestors and descendents of Thomas Phillips Vokes,¹ Chief Police Magistrate of Limerick City and County, from his appointment circa 1822 to his retirement circa 1845. To date researchers have relied too much on a book written by Henry Robert Addison entitled *Recollections of an Irish Police Magistrate*² recounting the exploits of his father-in-law. Addison wrote that T. P. claimed to be the grandson of a Sir Richard Vokes who had changed the spelling of the family name from Vaux to Vokes. This claim was fanciful on T. P.'s part. However it becomes understandable when one bears in mind that his youngest daughter Anna Charlotta was about to marry a Belgian Count and become Countess D'Bylandt.

It may not be a rags to riches story, but it was still quite a substantial social jump for the Vokes family. There may have been a Sir Richard Vokes in the family ancestry, but he was not T. P.'s grandfather or indeed his great-grandfather. Henry Addison was married to Mary,³ T. P.'s second daughter. The marriage was quite a short one as unfortunately Mary died in childbirth having her third son.

Following the Parliamentary election in Limerick in 1817, a report was published by William Henry Tyrrell⁴ listing the voters by name, the candidates they voted for and the order in which the votes were cast. This was copied and printed by the local press but without the speeches made during the voting. All votes were cast in public, as the secret ballot was not introduced until 1872. Having cast his vote, T. P. took the opportunity to attack the corrupt Corporation of Limerick, which he claimed 'was deliberately denying him his right to be admitted a Freeman of the City of Limerick.'⁵ He explained to the audience that in 1714 his ancestor Edward Vokes, as Sheriff, proclaimed George I King of England. In 1741 another member of his family was appointed Sheriff and in 1760 his grandfather was honoured to proclaim George III King of England.⁶ He also claimed that his father was a Freeman and he being the immediate representative of the family, the Freedom of his native city was withheld from him, while it was bestowed upon persons who had no interest whatever in the city of Limerick.

In the 1738 will of Rev William Campbell⁷ we find that Campbell's sister Catherine was married to Edward Vokes of Limerick, whose eldest son Thomas Vokes was born in 1710 and was therefore Campbell's nephew. Rev William also refers to another nephew also named Thomas who

was an Attorney in London. This second Thomas was born in London in 1707 to William Vokes and his wife Martha. The fact that Campbell refers to both Thomas Vokes as his nephews proves Edward and William Vokes were brothers. The term 'in-law' was seldom used in those days. When the will was written in 1738, the Limerick born Thomas had not yet been called to the bar and therefore would not be referred to as an Attorney. Edward and William both named their first born sons Thomas and therefore it is probable that their father's name was also Thomas.

Thomas Vokes of London married Elizabeth Barker.⁸ She was the sister of Sir William Barker who entered Trinity College, Dublin on 26 February in the 1720/21 term.⁹ Sir William married a daughter of Valentine Quin of Adare. So it would seem that Thomas Vokes and Elizabeth Barker were married in Ireland rather than England. Elizabeth Vokes, the widow of Thomas Vokes, Burgess of Limerick, (ex-Sheriff) received a pension from 1765 until her death in 1780. Corporation pensions were payable from the date of the husband's death and Thomas Vokes, Counsellor-at-law, is reported in *Faulkner's Dublin Journal* of Tuesday 26 March 1765 as having died on the previous Saturday at Milltown, near Limerick.

The Barker family were Cromwellian Adventurers that were granted some 2,000 acres in Pubblebrien Barony, County Limerick and a further 1,000 acres at Kilcooley Abbey, County Tipperary. The Vokes family were tenants on the Barker lands in Pubblebrien for many years after they established themselves in Limerick city and county.

The first record of a Vokes in Limerick is of Edward Vokes, Clothier, living in 'Thomond Gate' in 1703.¹⁰

T P Vokes and his family

T P's parents, Thomas Vokes and Susanna Phillips were married on 24 January 1767.¹¹ They lived on Kilcolman townland in Pubblebrien, which T. P. referred to as his 'paternal Estate' He therefore seems to have been the eldest son. He had an older sister Rebecca who married three times before she died in 1830. He also had a sister Mary who married Edward Mackey in 1812 and his uncle Andrew married Elizabeth Wilson of Ballinacurra in 1785 and died in 1837.¹² T. P. married firstly, Susanna Brew on 12 August 1806 and she

died within six months of tuberculosis and he married secondly Amelia Anne Walsh on 3 May 1809.

Children of T P Vokes and Amelia Anne Walsh

Susan Vokes was born in 1810 and married Capt George Burslem in 1836. She died at East Woodhay, Hants, England, on 27 March 1850 as announced in *The Gentleman's Magazine*.

Mary was born in 1811 and married Lt. Henry Robert Addison in 1828. She died in Scotland in 1832 after giving birth to their third son George. Her descendants still live in Australia today.

Elizabeth Vokes was born in 1812.

Anne was born in 1813 and died at Kilcolman in 1817, aged 4 years.

Thomas Walsh Vokes was born in 1814. He married Amelia Rich on 15 April 1841. They both moved to England where he died of consumption in 1875.

Their daughter Agnes Maryanne, born on 12 June 1846 was their heir and she married Dr John Ryan, son of Timothy Ryan of Castleconnell, in 1877, when she was 31 years old.¹³ They had at least 5 children.

Anna Charlotta was born in 1828 and married Count Alfred Edouard De Bylandt in London in June 1852.¹⁴ Their first son was born in 1853. Anna died on 8 July 1861.

There are no records of the other three children. Nothing further is known of Elizabeth.

T. P. was elected to the Limerick City Council for Richmond Ward and was recorded attending a Council meeting on the 16 November 1841. However, he tendered his resignation from the Council on 7 December 1841 giving his workload as a Police Magistrate as the reason for not being able to continue as a Councilman.¹⁵

He seems to have retired in 1847, as an advertisement in the *Limerick Reporter* in June 1847 offered his home in Rathbane for letting.

To Let, Rathbane House with garden and lawn attached thereto, situated outside the borough and on the Roxboro Road, within half a mile of Limerick. The Cottage is in perfect order. The gardens well cropped and Fruit trees in full bearing. There is about an English Acre of potatoes, very forward, which the tenant can have at a valuation.

See Jonas Blackall.¹⁶

Both T P and Amelia Anne retired to Belgium where she died in 1848 and he died at Spa in 1852.

Addison's book quoted the following from *The Illustrated London News* in October 1852.¹⁷

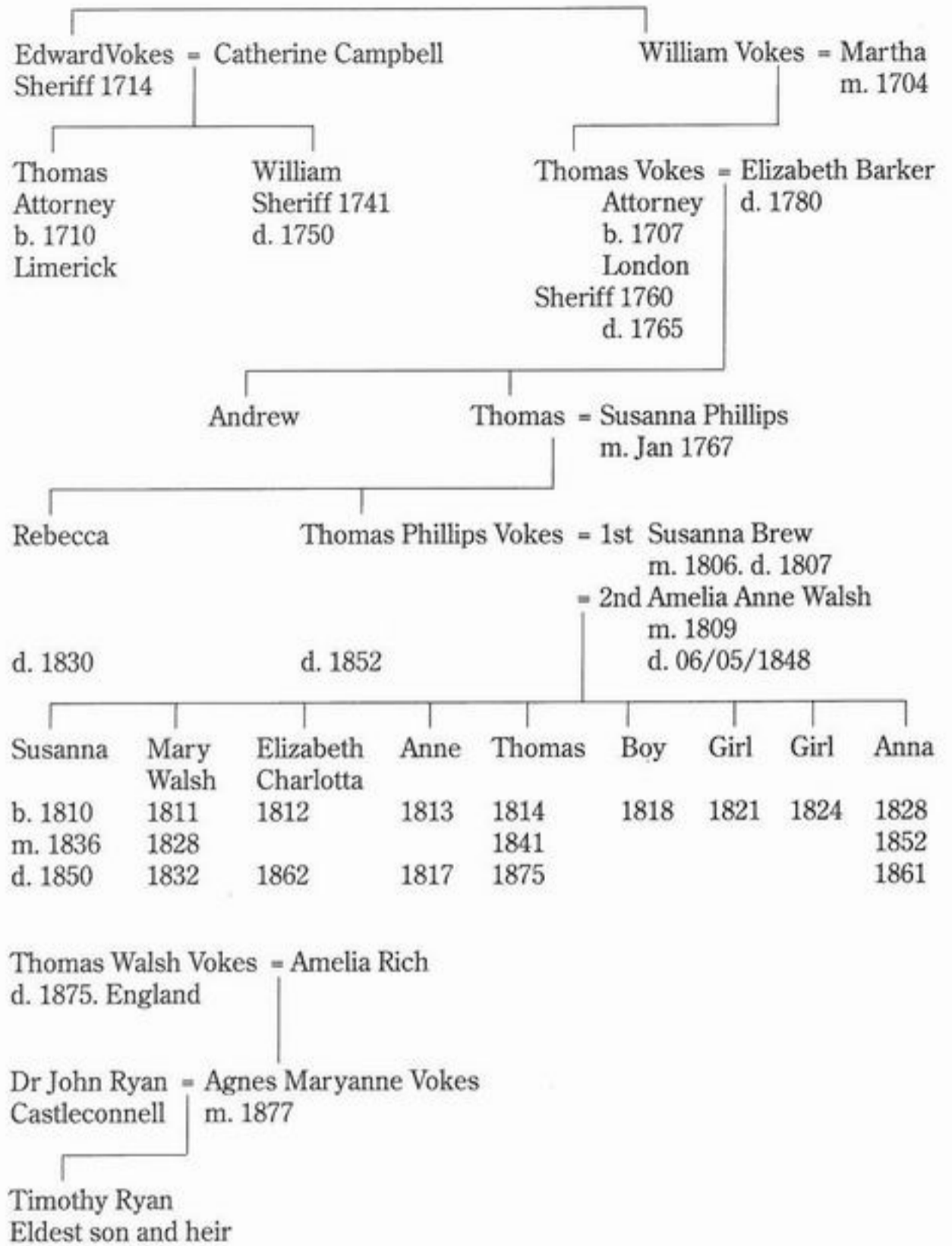
In our obituary of last month we recorded the death of Thomas Phillips Vokes, for upwards of Thirty years the chief magistrate of police in Limerick, a post conferred on him for his daring courage and extraordinary exertions in putting down the rebellious attempts, which threatened the South of Ireland in 1820 to 1822. Mr. Vokes, at that period a country magistrate residing on his paternal estate, single-handed and unarmed, seized the notorious Captain Rock, the terror of the whole district. During three days and nights he pursued him through the mountain fastnesses of Limerick, and at length having captured him, brought him in and lodged him in the county jail. He was soon after tried convicted and executed. When Munster was paralysed by the murder of Major Going and others – when magistrates shrunk in natural terror, well knowing the fatal consequences of activity – when harassed authorities, worn-out troops, and ill-organised police held back from a task of no ordinary danger and toil, Thomas Phillips Vokes boldly stepped forward to put down crime, and bring the violators of the law to instant and summary punishment. He claimed descent from the Vauxes, Lords of Gilsland, and in his belief he was borne out by the fact of his grandfather, Sir Richard Vokes, having originally spelt his name Vaux. Three times were the thanks of Government tendered to this officer, accompanied (on two occasions) by substantial pecuniary marks of approval.

He was the last surviving magistrate under Peel's Irish Police Act. By his death a pension of £950 (Sterling) a year reverts to the Government.

It is possible to see the hand of Henry Addison behind the above extract. He was a man who never missed a chance to put pen to paper using an abundance of poetic licence.

T. P.'s grandson, Glentworth Walsh Frazer Addison (the second son of his daughter Mary) left some autobiographical notes in which he said that he was born on 22 April 1831 at Hulme Cavalry Barracks in Manchester, where his father was stationed. He was sent to Limerick to live with T. P. when he was very young, most likely after the death of his mother in 1832. He lived with T. P. in Limerick for ten to twelve years. He was then taken to Plymouth to join the navy but he was over the age limit and had to return to Limerick. Later he joined his father at Bruges in Belgium. He spent a few years at school there with his surviving brother George. They were then joined in Brussels by T. P. and his aunt Annie who soon after married Count Alfred Bylandt. Glentworth then sailed for Australia to join the gold rush, arriving in Melbourne just before Christmas 1852. He died in 1903.

Vokes Family Tree



Note: - For further extensive information on the Vokes Family see notes in the Limerick City Library Local Studies section under Noel Murphy, or visit their website at: www.limerickcity.ie/Library/LocalStudies

REFERENCES

- 1 For the purpose of this article, Thomas Phillips Vokes shall be referred to as T.P. Vokes.
- 2 Henry Robert Addison. *Recollections of an Irish police magistrate and other reminiscences of the south of Ireland*. (Ward and Locke 1862). Copy in Limerick City Library
- 3 For portraits of Mary Vokes and family see: - <http://www.members.optusnet.com.au/addison/ppg22.htm>.
- 4 A History of the proceedings at the particularly interesting Election for a Member to represent the City of Limerick in Parliament – etc. etc. published by William Henry Tyrell of No 17, College Green, Dublin. The full title takes up a full page. Copy in Limerick City Library.
- 5 Another account says that his admission was denied because his father was dead and therefore his claim was no longer valid because of his father's death.
- 6 In 1741 the Sheriff of the City of Limerick was William Vokes, son of Edward Vokes, who was Sheriff in 1714. In 1760 the Sheriff was Thomas Vokes, a London born Attorney, nephew of Edward Vokes and T. P.'s grandfather.
- 7 *The Irish Genealogist*, Vol. 2. No. 2. Oct. 1944.
- 8 Edward Kimber and R. Johnson, *The Baronetage of England: Containing A Genealogical and Historical Account of all the English Baronets*. London 1771
- 9 *Alumni Dublinenses*. George Dames Burtchaell and Thomas Ulick Sadlier. 1st Ed. 1924.
- 10 The North Munster Antiquarian Journal Vol. 39 1998-9., Brian Hodkinson, *The Limerick Corporation Index of 1843* p. 91.
- 11 Faulkner's Dublin Journal Saturday 24 January 1767.
- 12 Albert Eugene Casey. *O'Kief Coshe Mang, Slieve Lougher and Upper Blackwater in Ireland*, Vol. 6. pp 1221 and 2109.
- 13 This was a Catholic marriage. Dr and Mrs Ryan are listed in the 1901 and 1911 Census living in the DED of Castleconnell.
- 14 *Limerick Reporter* Friday 16 June 1852.
- 15 Council Minute Book. L/Min/1. 11 November 1841 to 15 December 1849.
- 16 *Limerick Reporter* Tuesday 15 June 1847.
- 17 *Recollections of an Irish Police Magistrate*. Op. cit.