

Ignatius Nihill of Limerick and Liverpool

by *Mary Casteleyn*

Ignatius Nihell, merchant of Limerick, married Anastasia, daughter of John Roche (1688-1760) and Anne Stacpoole (died 1786), youngest daughter of Philip Stacpoole of Mountcashel, County Clare. He was the brother-in-law of those prominent and successful eighteenth century Catholic merchants of Limerick, Stephen Roche and Philip Roche and of Thomas Roche of Rotterdam, all sons of John Roche. However, records in Preston indicate that he was not as successful in business as his brothers-in-law and in July 1769 he was to be found sitting in the Castle of Lancaster Goal as an insolvent debtor, having been arrested and detained before 29 September 1768, for want of bail, on the suit of one Peter Knibloe, described below as of Limerick. The documents, now held by the Lancashire Record Office, have been drawn up by a scribe, presumably a court or legal scribe, with just a few notes adjoined in Ignatius Nihell's own hand.

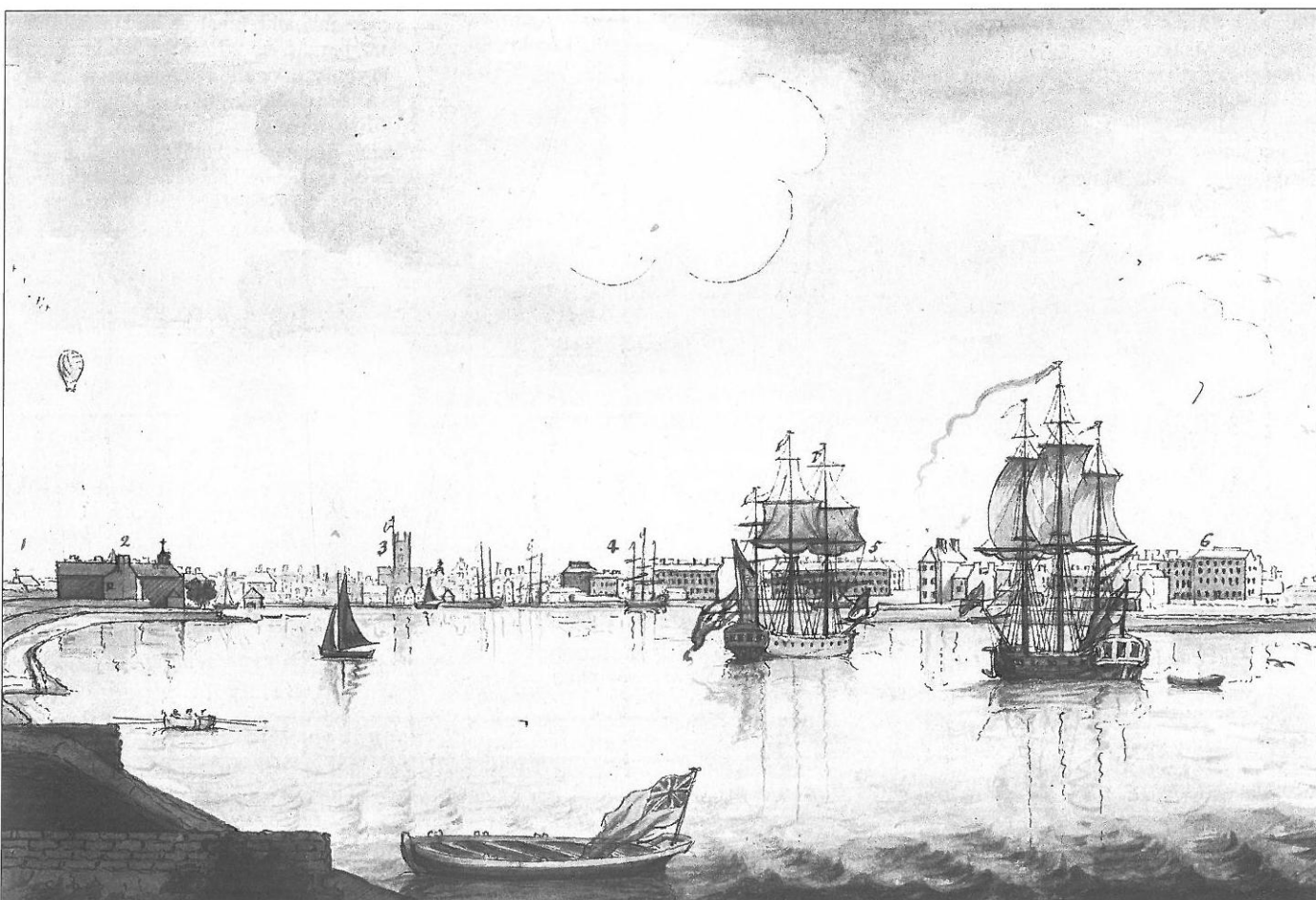
Ignatius Nihell, formerly of the city of Limerick 'but lately of Liverpool in the

County of Lancaster' produced a true schedule of all his real and personal estate, either in possession, reversion, remainder or expectancy, intending to take advantage of an act of Parliament for the relief of insolvent debtors made in the ninth year of the reign of George. George III ascended to the throne 25 October 1760, so this legislation must have been brand new in 1769, when Ignatius Nihell took advantage of it, allowing him to be set free after declaring that he had no goods of a value of £10.

As required, he produced an account of all those who owe him money listing names, abodes and sums due, and in doing so, reveals exactly why he was in financial difficulties. The total amount of money owed to him was £4,160-14-1½d. Most of his debtors appear to be ordinary business people or customers, mainly in Limerick; doing business by promissory note appeared to be an acceptable practice amongst known merchants and shopkeepers. It app-

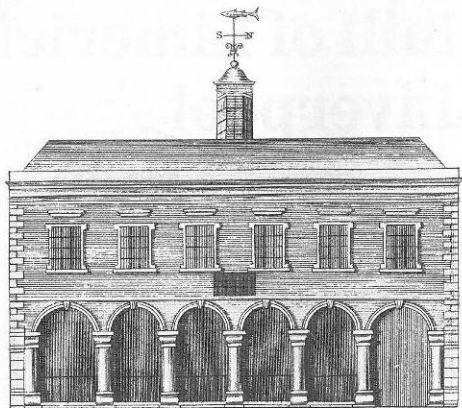
ears doubtful if most of these people were the cause of his financial embarrassment, but there are two specific debtors who between them owed him the enormous sum of £4,115-0-0. The non-payment of these two debts must be the real reason for his problems. Here is the list of his debtors as itemised by Ignatius Nihell: -

Morgan O'Brien, Limerick, £4-8-1½, due on a promissory note
 Mary Carrol, Tulla, near Limerick, £18-0-0, due on a promissory note
 William & David Roche, Limerick, £4-10-0, due on two promissory notes
 James Ryan, Limerick, £1-10-0, due on a promissory note
 Morgan Dwyer, Temple Boden, near Limerick, £4-0-0, due on a promissory note
 Owen Sweeny, Limerick, £0-19-0, due on a promissory note
 Patrick Maloy (sic), Limerick, £1-3-0, due on a promissory note
 John Wheeler, Limerick, £2-0-0, due on a promissory note
 John Ryan, Limerick, £0-10-0, due on a promissory note



Original drawing for engraving in Ferrar's History of Limerick

(Limerick Museum)



The Exchange Limerick, from Ferrar's History (Limerick Museum)

Elizabeth Gibson, Limerick, £2-0-0, due on a promissory note
 Pierce Joice, Galloway, money owed for goods consigned to him
 Patrick Malloy, Limerick, amount not stated but for an unsettled account
 John Weeler (sic), Limerick, amount not stated but for an unsettled account
 John Ryan, Limerick, amount not stated but for an unsettled account
 Elizabeth Gibson, Limerick, £0-14-0, reason due not stated
 Francis Getty, Dublin, £2-0-0, reason due not stated
 Andrew Moore, Dublin, £3-0-0, reason due not stated
 Christopher Meade, Limerick, £1-0-0, reason due not stated
 Peter Knibloe, Limerick, £2,110-0-0, 'for the damage I sustained by him as I compute the same while he sailed in my employ, by his neglect of his duties and for money received by him to my use'.
 John Lehy, Limerick, £2,005-0-0, 'for goods consigned to him and money paid by me to his use.'

Added to the above list, by Ignatius Nihell in his own hand 'besides other debts which I cannot set forth for the want of my books which are at Limerick'. From Ignatius Nihell's statement, it appears that the said Peter Knibloe may have been acting as a ship's captain in charge of a ship laden with goods paid for by Nihell. I have not been able to ascertain what actually happened and whether Knibloe and Lehy were in cahoots together to defraud or cheat Nihell but it is interesting that it is Knibloe's suit that has landed Nihell in a debtor's prison in England and not the other way around with Knibloe in prison on the suit of Ignatius Nihell.

Nihell's schedule of possessions make interesting reading being the instruments and artefacts of his trade and these being

presumably in Limerick, although this is not made actually clear: -

a quantity of rigging and ropes, two iron beams for weighing, 4 pairs of brass scales and beams and brass weights from one pound to a quarter of an ounce, four 56lbs, one 28lb, one 14lb, one 1lb, one 4lb, one 2lb iron weights, 4 sash windows, counters, shelves, partitions, locks, drawers, trunks, one desk for writing on, corks for bottles and glazed pictures.

The inventory continues with joint goods held by himself in partnership with Patrick Meade of Limerick. These are:-

a quantity of Silk Remnants, Ribands, Silk Lace, Sattins (sic), Silk, Cotton and Linnen (sic) Handkerchiefs, Poplins, Camlots, Stuffs, Callimancoes, Everlastings, Cambrick, Lawn, Muslin, Woolen Cloaths, Rattens, Serges, Mohair, Threads, Hatts, Hatbands, Stockings, Pins, Flannels, Buckrams, Paragons and trimmings for Beds, Pillian Lace, Metal Buttons, Mohair Buttons, Sleeve Buttons, Buckles, Sissors, Wires, Snuff, Looking Glasses, Jack Linos, Hemp, Stay trimmings, Fustians, Velverets, Velvets, Daises, Garters, Tapes, Arrace Lace, Paper, Pocket Ticking, Shaggs, Flax, Wadding, Hentings, Henting Handkerchiefs, Cloth and Scarlet Milled Caps... and other goods (this last being added in his own hand).

Finally

I the said Ignatius Nihell, nor any other person or persons in Trust for me, or for my use, have any lands, money, stock or any estate real or personal, in possession, reversion, or remainder or expectancy, other than what are in the said schedule contained except for

wearing apparel, and bed and bedding for myself and family, working tools and necessary implements for my occupation and calling and these not exceeding the value of ten pounds, as witness my hand this 28th day of June 1769.

This statement is signed by Ignatius Nihell.

It is difficult to imagine that Ignatius Nihell really had no more than effects to the value of £10. Ignatius Nihell died in 1776 leaving a prerogative will. His widow, Anastasia Nihell, was the sole executrix to her mother Anne Roche whose will was proved 8 June 1781.¹ There is no mention of any Nihell children in this will although Anne Roche's other granddaughters are named. Anastasia died on 28 March 1786² and also left a prerogative will dated 1786. Sadly copies of these two Nihell wills do not appear to have survived but the fact that they both made prerogative wills would indicate that there was probably personal and real estate in the family at the time the wills were made.

And who was Ignatius Nihell? Although there is considerable material on the Nihell families from Limerick and Clare it is difficult to fit him into any specific Nihell family tree. There was a Nihell merchant family operating out of Philadelphia in the mid to late eighteenth century. Lawrence Nihell snr, whose origins surely must be Limerick or Clare, is said to have died in Limerick, where he had gone to protect his vessels during the revolutionary war (1775-1783), but no date is given for his death.³ This Lawrence had two sons, Lawrence jnr, and Ignatius and a daughter Ann, born 1788. Whilst the son Ignatius is too young to be the same Ignatius married to Anastasia Roche, the use of Ignatius as a Christian name is pertinent as a probable family name passed down in this branch of the Nihell family. I have not found the name Ignatius used in other Nihell branches at this time or in the early nineteenth century. Ignatius Nihell who ended up in the Castle of Lancaster Goal in 1768/69 might be a brother or other relation of Lawrence Nihell snr, of Philadelphia. These Philadelphia Nihells are in the same trans-Atlantic maritime trading business as the Roches of Limerick, so it is tempting to make the connection between these Philadelphia Nihells and the Roches. However, that can only remain as a supposition unless further evidence comes to light.

SOURCE

Lancashire Record Office. Lancashire County Quarter Sessions - Debtor's Insolvency Papers, file on Ignatius Nihell of Limerick and Liverpool. Refs QJB/38/15 1769 and QJB/38/17 1769.

REFERENCES

- 1 *Father Clare's Abstracts of Irish Wills*, IGRS Collection, London.
- 2 *The Limerick Chronicle*, Thursday 30 March 1786.
- 3 *Biographical and Historical Cyclopaedia of Westmoreland County, Penn., Philadelphia PA*. John M Gresham & Co. 1890.