

# ① EDMUND IGNATIUS RICE

by his great, great, great, great grandnieces, Liz Manning and Miriam Kelly

## Our connections to Edmund Ignatius Rice

The following paragraph explains the relation between ourselves, Liz Manning and Miriam Kelly, and Brother Edmund Ignatius Rice.

In 1763, Margaret Tierney gave birth to her fourth child, Edmund Ignatius Rice. Edmund's father, Robert Rice was the son of Lord Monteagle. Edmund Ignatius was our great, great, great granduncle. We are second cousins and are related to Edmund through his brother, Richard.

Richard (1769) married Bridget Egan (1882). They had four boys and five girls. Their third daughter, Joanna, born in 1810, married David Dunne, who owned a tannery in Callan. Joanna gave birth to six children, and her youngest, Catherine, married Michael Murphy, a Kilkenny jeweller. Catherine Dunne and Michael Murphy also had six children. Their daughter, Mary, married James Bourke, a merchant tailor, our great grandfather.

Mary gave birth to eight children. Her daughter Eileen is Miriam's grandmother. One of her sons, Brian Bourke is Liz's grandfather. Eileen married Michael Walsh. They had nine children. The eldest daughter, Christine, married Patrick Kelly and they have three children, one of whom is Miriam.

Brian Bourke married Margaret (Peg) Denehy (19.9.1888). Margaret gave birth to ten children. One of them, my mum, Elizabeth Bourke married Thomas Manning. There are five children in the Manning family, of whom I, Liz, am the eldest.

Our grandparents can remember their grandmother talking about being taken out to Westcourt to visit relations as a child. Our great granduncle, John, was so like Edmund Rice in appearance that people said that they could have been brothers.

## A short summary of the life of Edmund Ignatius Rice

Edmund Rice was born at Westcourt, Callan, Co. Kilkenny in the year 1762. He left his father's farm at the age of seventeen to help his uncle, a wealthy merchant, in the City of Waterford. Edmund's quick brains and great business acumen soon led to him becoming both a successful and extremely wealthy young man.

Edmund married at the age of 23 but tragedy struck when his young wife, injured in an accident, died shortly after giving birth to their daughter, Mary, who was to spend her life as an invalid. Mary is a rather mysterious figure and we know little about her. She is believed to be buried by the road between Clonmel and Carrig-on-Suir. Mary lived to be about 70 years old.

In his experience of deep sorrow, Edmund became aware of two realities in his life - one within himself, the other all around him. He became aware of his faith in God, and of God's support of him in his days of difficulty and sorrow.

He was deeply touched by the presence of so many poor people who needed help to give them dignity and rights as human beings.

From this point his life changed. He began to give more and more of his time, energy and money to the poor. He

wanted to bring the light of hope into their darkness. In 1802, he started a school for poor boys. He encouraged others to follow him in his work, and so began the Christian Brothers and their mission of helping and educating young people. Edmund Rice gave up everything that he had to that mission, and today there are nearly 3,000 brothers in 500 schools in 25 countries.

Edmund had known the taste of success and failure. Once, he told a friend: "One thing you may be sure of - that

while you work for God, whether you succeed or not, He will amply reward you."

The key to this success was his total trust in God. He wrote to the Brothers in 1829 and told them to "cast all your cares into the arms of Providence."

Edmund Ignatius Rice died in 1844, and as one man said: "Brother Rice lived and died a saint. He was the poor man's friend and it was the poor, the young and old who alone could write his epitaph."

## THE RICE FAMILY

Edmund Rice belonged to the very distinguished family of Rice. The Rice's came originally to Wales and then to Ireland from Florence and Normandy. Br. Rice's family can be traced back to the Dukes of Tuscany, and to Lord Otho of Florence, a Baron of England in 1053. Br. Rice and his kinsmen were descended also from Rhys (Rice) of Tewdwr Mawr, the last independent

Price of Wales, through his daughter the famous "Helen of Wales."

Many prominent people appear on his family tree

James Doyle, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, a close friend of Daniel O'Connell and Br. Rice himself, Robert Rice, Bishop of Ferns in 1666, James Rice, Mayor of Waterford in 1483, Walter Rice, Mayor of Limerick in 1520, John Rice, Lord Treasurer of Ireland in 1294, Sir Stephen Rice, Knight of Kerry and Baron of Exchequer (died in 1714).

Edmund Rice's grandfather was Lord Monteagle of Limerick. This title was not, however, continued by Lord Monteagle's oldest son, Catholic Robert Rice, father of Edmund.

Because of their noble blood, the Rices were treated with respect by the peasants and though they were Catholics, by the nobility, especially the Earl of Ormonde.

## A brother to all

Br. Edmund Ignatius Rice is the very Reverend Founder of the Christian Brothers. Many, many fine tributes have been paid to him. He was a "great man in the truest sense of the term." He carried out his many difficult sacrifices and strenuous labours "heedless of the applause of the world." - quotes Most Reverend J. Kinane, D.D., Co Adjutor Archbishop of Cashel.



Edmund Ignatius Rice

## Our research

In our project, "A Brother to All", we gathered much information about Br. Rice's childhood home and surroundings during the Penal Times, about priest-hunters, lookout trees and hedgeschools. Westcourt, his home in Callan, is preserved beautifully by the Christian Brothers as a museum in honour of the great Founder. We followed him through his education as an intelligent teenager and his Waterford career as a successful businessman. We retold the story of his struggles and sacrifices and his unbending determination to bring God's word to the poor uneducated children of Ireland. We dug up family documents and photographs and compiled our family tree, showing our relationship with Br. Rice. This is the first time the family tree of Richard, Edmund's brother has ever been drawn up. Br. Cullen, a prominent figure in promoting the cause of Edmund Rice said in a letter (1968) to Mr. E. Costello of High St, our relative, "I may tell you that yours is the only fairly well authenticated family connection with the Founder. There are scores of other persons who establish relationship beyond vague family tradition."

In our research of Br. Rice and of family history we came upon some very interesting facts and stories. For example, the famous Bianconi (or "Brian Cooney" to the Waterford locals!) was taught by Edmund Rice and was so indebted to him all his life that he left his huge fortune of £50,000 when he died to the Christian Brothers. We recorded other little stories like the 'the man in the old meat barrel' and 'The story of Br. Rice and his wheelchair.' We were delighted when the Christian Brothers of Westcourt lent us, as an artifact for our project an old ledger believed to have belonged to Br. Rice. It contains the detailed accounts of one of his schools. He was a very astute businessman as his life.

Br. Edmund Ignatius Rice's life is very interesting. We are proud to be his great, great, great grand nieces. He was a true 'Brother to All'.



The home of Ignatius Rice at Westcourt, Callan

This article was the winning entry in the Youth Heritage Project, exhibited at Rothe House and sponsored by the Irish National Insurance Company.