

Dear Father,

(David)

I'm just writing to you about a few random thoughts that occurred to me after reading your letter. First, the cut stones from the front of the tunnel are lying across the road from the entrance, covered in grass. Many a time I had thought of taking them away because there's nothing surer than ~~they're being stolen~~ ^{their stealing, or being} smashed by a lorry going off the road. However, it would take a digger to lift them and they would need to be handled carefully. It would be a charity if someone was to put them away for safe keeping, particularly now that something may be done about the tunnel.

As for the history of the tunnel, I'm afraid there would be no written history as to its origin. However, my great grandfather worked on the new line and, according to my father, he often spoke about why the road and tunnel were being built. I shall endeavour to investigate further and if I come up with something more concrete, I will send it on and you can pass it on to Leslie Lucas.

In regard to Ards and Ards House, I have just found an old notebook of my father's. He used jot down bits and pieces on anything to hand and in this notebook he has an entry dated, Friday December 30, 1910. He writes: "Was at a dance in Ards House last night given by Sir Pieter Bam. Charlie Coll and I played for them. Bam came in about 9 o'clock."

I did not like it at all but would rather be in the poorest thatch house in Doe, with the Gaelic sounding round me, than in the midst of it all. Bam does his best to unbend, but it is plainly an effort and he seems to know himself that it wont be successful. His wife is outrageously proud. She sat there all the time like an incarnate goddess and noticed no one. Such pride is a sin against Heaven. You would think the ordinary people were less than dogs to her. Her sister is not one whit better. Saw one of the Townshends of Dublin there too. He is a tall lanky fellow, a lieutenant or something in the Navy".

My father often played the violin at the balls in Ards House and Marble Hill House when the latter was occupied by Hugh Law, M.P., and ~~where~~ he met and became lifelong friends of G.K. Chesterton, George Russell (A.E.), Percy Franch, Frank Cousins, and all the artists and literati of the time. While he does not say it in the above excerpt, the dance must have been for workers and tenants which would explain why Sir Pieter needed to "unbend" and his wife noticing no one. His haughty hosts did not meet much with his approval! However, it ~~it~~ does create a picture of the dance and the attitude of the Bams.

My father also wrote a poem about The Coming of the Railway and in the same notebook he jotted down verses. The poem has been lost and only little snippets were extant ~~but~~ and ^{it} was a great surprise to me to find a lot of it here. The verses are not in order and obviously he was making changes in the text as he went along.

It is not, however, what most people say it was in that it is a satirical piece written after the Lough Swilly Railway was built. It is satirical in that it refers, in fact is built around, the decision of the Co. Council to give a grant-in-aid to the investors. From memory (and as you know, it can be very fickle), the investors wanted an indemnity against losing their money. Of course the investors ran the Council in that they held the votes and were either voted on to the Council themselves, or were represented by their servants. They were guaranteed an interest of 7 p.c. and now had a grant-in-aid from the Council for the money they invested!

Anyway, my father wrote this (it must have been 1910 as it is in the notebook with all the entries of 1909 and 1910) at the time of ~~the~~ Louis Bleriot's cross-channel flight and only seven years after Orville Wright's first flight by man at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. He imagines a fleet of planes flying out of Downings and the fall of the railway because of the competition.

"Alas for John MacFarlane and for his rusty rails

For now his idle porters stand and watch the whirring tails

Of Downings' fleet of aeroplanes as freighted off they go

And leave the top of Gania in the distance far below.

"Then loudly rose a clamour from the gents who held the shares

(For money's always noisy when full seven per cent it bears)

COUNCIL

And then our County ~~Council~~ struck a rate-in-aid for these

But what about the baronies that gave the guarantees?

Here's a universal maxim, and in Ireland best 'tis known
 And best of all in Donegal 'tis acted on, and shown
 No less sin a gerrymandering our County Council came -
 'Tis 'always milk the poor man when the rich man's short o' Crame'.

Outside a pious Scotchman preached salvation true to all
 Inside they talked of harbour dues, of tides, their rise and fall
 Soon in a hall capacious the harbour council met
 So pleased that 'tis a miracle that they're not sitting yet.

The reason why in mankind now, true greatness there's a dearth
 Is - we can't be free as we should be until we quit this earth,
 Here tied by rules conventional we toe the silly line
 But soaring in the boundless skies man feels himself divine.

A wise man in an argument keeps still the best behind
 And by feints assaults the citadel of his opponent's mind
 Till, tired in their repulsion, there's a hope that he may yield
 Or surrender to the conqueror, the last to take the field.

Whoever of a sober shade his dreams or visions wove?
 For always in a rosy hue we limn the thing we love
 When keen anticipation bids us paint her what we wish
 We seldom in a sombre dye incline to dip the brush.

*I think these
 two verses are
 part of another
 poem he wrote*

There are several more verses, but as I said, it is not complete and the verses, as written, ~~xxxxxx~~ do not follow each other as in the finished poem. But it continues:
 "Since first we started flying now there's not a house or home
 Around by Cruicknamurlog, by Carrick, Drim or Thome
 There's no cull' wife or gossip down from Rowcross to Melmore
 But's full and flowing over with affairs unknown before.

We would like to point out humbly if this needed boon we had
 We would need no jolting railway, we would need no flying squad
 of Surfacemen intractable to keep the sleepers up
 No traffic boss or ganger cross to drive with tongue or whip.

We would need no ground for stations, no danger signals red
 We would need no level crossings, bridges under, or o'erhead
 We would fear no smash from trespass of erratic sheep or cow
 Other things we could dispense with, far too long to mention now.

Now that same Lough Swilly Company (they spoke the truth in this)
 In its charges is exorbitant and always getting worse
 For they've taxed even Nature's functions, as if mankind they bought
 For their very water closets work by ^{penny} ~~penny~~-in-the-slot!

He also refers to the forthcoming Feis at Doe Castle
 The item is dated March 20 MCMX. "Was at Mass today as usual
 Surprised to hear my name on committee of forthcoming Feis at
 Doe Castle." After I came out of the chapel was talking to

Neil MacBride and John MacNulty of Feymore. Neil did not seem to be in good humour; he's got very sour lately, I don't know why. I wish they had put him on the Committee instead of me. I did not and do not intend to have anything to do with it on account of the Bishop's boycott of us ~~last~~ last year and his shamelessly attempting to prevent our giving expression to our free opinions. I wonder will posterity believe it of him? Am going up to Willie Barr's this evening. It is a very nice sunny day and the air very balmy. This is Palm Sunday. A Palm Sunday - how many years ago? - was the last day I was a server on the altar at Doe".

As you can see from above the great Feis of 1909 at Doe Castle must have been a bit controversial, something I didn't know before. What could the Bishop have said or done? And why? What did the Feis organisers say or write that caused his ire? Intriguing questions. As a matter of interest, Doe Castle was then occupied by a caretaker.

Again, in answer to one of your queries, the ~~dreadful~~ drownings you refer to happened, I read somewhere, in 1818 when a fleet of Scottish ^{fishing} boats were wrecked ~~and~~ ^{and} witnesses said "the bodies were like leathach (seaweed) on the beach next day", which is probably an exaggeration because the number, as far as I know, was never recorded.

I wrote last time that the book on architecture which mentioned Ballymore Church was in Ballymore, but I have since found it here (in Dublin). ~~The book~~ The book "The Buildings of Ireland" will eventually be a nine-volume series, the first of which is "North West Ulster" covering all the buildings of note in the counties of Derry, Donegal, Fermanagh and Tyrone. The publication of the volume was made possible through the generosity of the ESME Mitchell Trust and of Lord Dunleath's Charitable Trust which together made grants to cover the necessary research work for the Ulster volumes. The author is Alistair Rowan. The entry for Ballymore Church reads:

St. John, Clondehorky Parich (C of I). 1752. Built to replace the old parish church at Dunfanaghy and sited in open country for the mutual convenience of the Protestant proprietors in the neighbouring estates. The finest early Georgian church in north west Ulster, though still a simple structure, sticking to the barn-like form of most provincial churches. It is the detail that elevates St. John's. Four finely worked segment-headed windows with big Gibbs surrounds in the S wall, and an enormous Venetian window, with heavy rusticated blocks in the place of pilasters, at the E end. The building is harled, with quoins. On the W front a pretty classical ashlar bellcote and a low hipped vestibule with a small Venetian window. N vestry added by Joseph Welland in 1853. The interior is charming: a long hall, 62ft by 26 ft. culminating in the big E window framed in Doric pilasters and frieze. Wainscoting and 18 panelled pews. Gallery at the back. High, coved plaster

ceiling. The N wall has segment-headed niches to match the windows opposite. The ~~the~~^{taste} for Gibbs surrounds and the scale and confident handling of this church suggest the ~~hand~~^{hand} of Michael Priestley".

In another part of the book, it describes Lifford courthouse where the architect is Michael Priestley

The book also refers to St. Michael's Church, Creeslough, the old Church at Cashelmore, Wray Castle, and Marble Hill, and Dunfanaghy.

You will note the reference to St. John's Church in Ballymore, namely "built to replace the old parish church at Dunfanaghy and sited in open country for the mutual convenience of the Protestant proprietors in the neighbouring estates". That could only refer to the ~~Stewarts~~^{landlords} of Ards and would substantiate the claim ~~of~~ that the Tunnel and "New Line" were also built as part of the plan "for the mutual convenience of the Protestant proprietors in the neighbouring estates". As there was already an entrance to the estate at Derryart, the new tunnel entrance must have been built for the sole purpose of avoiding the tenants on the main road and for stabling the horses. As against that, the Church was built by the Wrays, the first of whom lived at Wray's Castle, and who built Ards House for his son. The private demesne was enclosed by the big wall in the time of Alexander John Robert who married Isabella Toler, a relation of Lord Norbury's (daughter?) It was she who wanted the New Line constructed, completing the original plan ^{William Wray or his son} of Humphrey Wray, a great roadbuilder.

The wall, would have taken some years to build, while the "new line", bridge, tunnel, stables and diverting the Derryart river, would have taken some years as well.

Humphrey ~~had~~ sold the estate to Alexander Stewart in 1782, as you know. * It was his grandson, Alexander John Robert, who had ~~the wall~~ all these things built and who died in 1904. So at a rough guess, the tunnel ~~xx~~ must have been built about

50 years earlier. Again memory is fickle, but as a child I think I remember my uncle Johnny talking about his grandfather working on the new line in 1851 (if only I had listened more attentively, but then I always think that wisdom is wasted on the old); or probably more appropriately, energy is wasted on the ~~young~~ young.

But I ramble. When I started off my main purpose was to let you know (a) that the Tunnel stones are located opposite the Tunnel (b) That there was a poem about the railway; ~~and~~ (c) the approximate date for the building of the wall and tunnel; and (d) the references to Ballymore Church in "The Buildings of Ireland". I hope you can pick through these meanderings and find them.

Thanks again,

Samuel MacIntyre.