

# **FROM DROMAGH TO SYDNEY**

**Gravestone inscriptions-  
a valuable resource  
in family history research**

**Mary L. Walsh**  
©

**Aubane Historical Society**

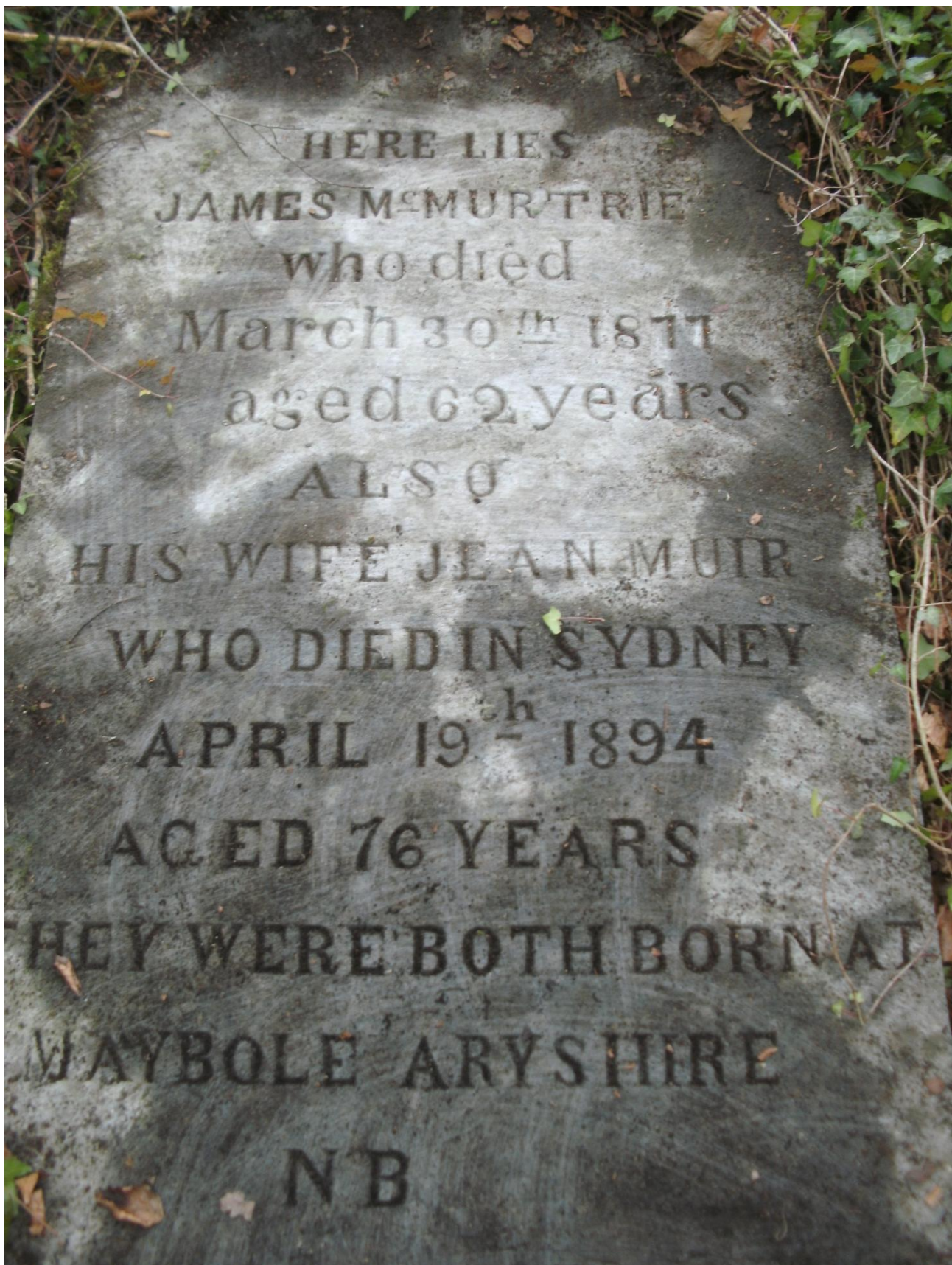


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**The McMurtrie gravestone in the churchyard at Dromagh. It was rediscovered through a series of remarkable chances and coincidences.**

## **FROM DROMAGH TO SYDNEY**

### **Tombstones – a valuable source in family history research**

This is the story of how a simple headstone photograph, of James McMurtrie's burial place at Dromagh cemetery, which I took in April, 2010 led to an amazing search for information on behalf of his descendants currently residing in Sydney, Australia. At the time I did not know the name of the church or the exact location, only that it was located on the main Mallow to Killarney Road at Dromtariffe.

At the outset I would like to say a sincere “Thank you” to all of the people of Dromtariffe who helped provide information for this search. It is so important for me to stress how fortunate everyone looking for information on their Irish ancestors is that all over Ireland there are so many thousands of people, like the wonderful Dromtariffe natives, (whom I met, spoke with on the phone or emailed) who are so willing to put themselves out in many ways to help complete strangers like myself with their enquiries. This, according to David McMurtrie (great great grandson of James McMurtrie) and myself, is one of the most remarkable features of this story. How different it would be if people were not willing to help.

In April, 2010 I happened across a lovely old Church and cemetery on the main Mallow to Killarney road. I just had to stop and take a look. The church seemed a little derelict but the cemetery was so peaceful and lovely to walk around. I had my camera with me and took photographs of the Church, the graveyard and the headstones.

One gravestone to the right of the church and under a tree was partially covered with ivy and had a nice railing around it. I noticed the words Maybole, Ayrshire, NB and Sydney on this stone and the surname McMurtrie, a very rare surname in Ireland. I thought somebody somewhere in the world must be looking for this headstone especially with the reference to far away Sydney and Ayrshire in Scotland. My husband and myself gently removed some of the ivy and leaves to reveal the full transcription and it is as follows :

*Here Lies*  
**JAMES MCMURTRIE**  
*Who died*  
**March 30<sup>th</sup> 1877**  
*Aged 62 Years*  
*Also*  
**His Wife JEAN MUIR**  
*Who died in Sydney*  
**April 19<sup>th</sup> 1894**  
*Aged 76 Years*  
**They were both born at**  
**Maybole, Ayrshire,**  
**NB**

As I now had this lovely headstone photo I decided to search the internet to see if there was any website with an interest in the McMurtrie surname that I could donate the photo to, in the hope that it would help a descendant of James McMurtrie and Jean Muir McMurtrie. I did come across one site with a mention of McMurtrie and Maybole and sent them an email asking if they would like the headstone photo and some other photos of the church and cemetery.

I got a reply from a gentleman named Graham Coward saying the McMurtries were very distant relatives, however seeing as I had gone to the trouble of taking the photos to send them on anyway, which I did. I did receive an acknowledgment. That was in April 2010. I thought that was the end of it. How wrong I was!

Two years later in April 2012 I got this wonderful email from a man named David McMurtrie, a Sydney resident, saying and I quote:

*“I am writing to you to say how thrilled I am to have these photos. For many decades I had been trying to locate the grave. It is terribly difficult to locate a grave when you have no idea where it is. Over the years I did make some progress and indeed on four separate occasions, when members of my family or friends were visiting Ireland, attempts were made to locate it, but never successfully, although in the end we got very close. What you have done is really valuable to me. Locating the grave fulfills one of my deepest wishes”*

I was really thrilled to receive this email. It proves how valuable a headstone photo can be to someone outside of Ireland looking for the burial place of one of their ancestors. David's daughter had come to Ireland in 2000 and stayed with a lovely lady, Mrs. Roche, in a B & B. Mrs. Roche was very helpful and brought his daughter to the Dromagh cemetery (Church of Ireland) but because it was so overgrown they couldn't go in. On another occasion a friend of David's actually walked around the cemetery but didn't come across his great great grandparents' grave. The headstone was a flat one that had been placed on the grave initially and as it was probably fully covered with ivy he missed it. They were all so close and yet so far!

David told me how he had come across the Graham Coward site by chance while he was investigating another side of his family. And also by chance, as he was looking at the site, he saw a small reference to “acknowledgment Mary L. Walsh - McMurtrie headstone photograph”. Realizing at once that this could be the vital clue to the location of the grave that he had been searching for for many decades, David asked Graham about it and was overjoyed when Graham forwarded my Dromagh photos to him. David asked if I would be willing to try and find some more information regarding his great great grandparents, James & Jean McMurtrie. I said I would certainly be willing to try and see how I got on. So this is where my search begins.

**NEXT PAGE: PORTRAIT OF JAMES MCMURTRIE, THE  
LAND STEWARD AT ROSNALEE FROM 1843 TO 1877.  
THE SEARCH FOR HIS GRAVE LASTED OVER 40 YEARS.**







The information David already had was that James McMurtrie had been working in Ireland as a land surveyor when he came across Willam Leader of Rosnalee who offered him the position of land steward which he accepted. He returned to Scotland to marry Jean Muir and then returned to live at Rosnalee where he lived in the Steward's House. They went on to have 12 children and their names were found in the McMurtrie family Bible which is in David's possession. Their children were as follows: -

Jean	born	29.04.1844	
Janet	"	20.09.1845	
John	"	25.06.1847	Died 31.08.1847
James	"	20.05.1848	Died 29.06.1848
Margaret	"	16.06.1850	Died 18.06.1850
John	"	12.08.1851	
James	"	06.06.1853	(David's great grandfather)
David	"	07.02.1855	
Elizabeth	"	25.09.1856	
Agnes	"	10.12.1858	
Margaret	"	07.08.1860	
William	"	03.02.1864	

As can be seen from the children's names it was very common at that time if a child died to give subsequent children the dead child's name. The nine surviving children emigrated to Australia. Two went first before their father's death in 1877 and the rest followed with their mother later. It was impossible to obtain birth certificates for any of the children except William as he was born in the first year of Irish Civil Registration. I was able to attend our local Register's office in Cork City, and purchase a copy birth certificate as I had his date of birth and the registration district which I found on the family search site (it turned out to be "Boherboy", which I would never have thought of) and BOTH parents' names. The spelling for Muir is entered as Moore. This is the entry on the family search site which is free to view: <https://familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.1.1/FRWR-JHC>

Full civil registration of Births, Marriages & Deaths started in 1864 for all Religions. In addition, non Catholic marriages were registered between 1845-1863. For anybody who would like to order a certificate for a Birth, Marriage or Death, it can be ordered from the General Register Office (GRO) in Roscommon:

[http://www.groireland.ie/apply\\_for\\_a\\_cert.htm](http://www.groireland.ie/apply_for_a_cert.htm) An online index for the Irish Civil Registration is available on: <http://familysearch.org/search/list> (a site run by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints). You will get the necessary reference numbers i.e. Volume number and page number and District here. This site has records for all of Ireland up to 1922 and for the Republic up to 1958. A very good site which shows the civil registration districts in Ireland on a map is [www.connorsgenealogy.com](http://www.connorsgenealogy.com) It is possible to search this site for more information.

A very good free site for searching for ancestors' births, marriages or deaths is the [www.irishgenealogy.ie](http://www.irishgenealogy.ie) site which has church records (not civil records).





**The broken memorial stone of Jean McClymont and her son John Muir. The discovery of this second gravestone was a great surprise.**

However not all County Cork parishes are available. Still it is worth checking this site from time to time as new parishes are being added regularly. If you want to look up any ancestors who lived in the Dromagh /Dromtariffe area just enter either placename in location and you get a lot of records for people from the area. To narrow your search enter surname and area. It was important to see what townlands were in Dromtariffe parish. I found all of these in the Irish Times website. <http://www.irishtimes.com/ancestor/fuses/townlands/index>

As Mallow Church of Ireland records are not currently on the [www.irishgenealogy.ie](http://www.irishgenealogy.ie) site, I contacted Rev. Canon Eithne Lynch of Mallow Union to see if she had any baptismal records for the McMurtrie children. She was extremely helpful and went through a huge number of records and unfortunately nothing relevant was discovered. I subsequently visited the Canon in St. James Church, Mallow and she had a large number of registers ready for me. The registers were for the parishes of Ballyclough, Clonmeen, Clonfert, Dromtariffe and Newmarket. I did go through the Burial register for Dromtariffe, unfortunately it only contained the last five burials. There are charges for these searches which are outlined on the Mallow Union site <http://www.mallow.cloyne.anglican.org/>. The site also has a full list of registers held at Mallow and also information on older parishes whose churches are no longer in use. These churches have been decommissioned and sold to private individuals/companies (as is the case with the Dromagh Church). The main reason for selling the churches was the decline in the Church of Ireland population and the cost to the church authorities to maintain them. It is worth noting that some records prior to the full civil registration in 1864 are available on some commercial/fee paying sites.

In the meantime David, from Sydney, told me that Jean Muir's parents were John Muir and Jean McClymont. I checked my headstone photos for Dromagh and found one with just the name Jean McClymont but the rest of the stone was fully covered with ivy and leaves. I made another journey to Dromtariffe to locate this headstone. It seemed unusual to have Jean Muir's mother buried at Dromagh. I went back to the cemetery and started at the McMurtrie grave and couldn't believe it when I discovered a second flat gravestone placed right beside the McMurtrie one, both surrounded on four sides by ornate railing. So myself and my husband got to work removing the ivy piece by piece and trying to remove a lot of earth surrounding the stone. The full transcript revealed itself and was as follows:

*Here Lies  
Jean McClymont  
Who Died May 13<sup>th</sup> 1865  
Aged 85 Years  
Widow of  
John Muir  
Chapleton, Kirkoswald  
N.B.  
Also  
John Muir Who Died July 26<sup>th</sup> 1880  
Aged 67 Years*

This was amazing as all of these people were relatives of David McMurtrie. In fact Jean McClymont was his great great great grandmother. Another generation back. This was a very exciting discovery. I went to the library and checked the death notices in the Cork Examiner newspaper for May 1865 (which are available on microfiche at both the Cork City Library and the Cork County Library): “At the residence of her son, Mr. John Muir, Dromagh, in this county on the 13<sup>th</sup> inst, Mrs. Muir aged 85 years”

The website [www.irelandoldnews.com](http://www.irelandoldnews.com) has excerpts from the Cork Examiner newspaper and has a section ([www.irelandoldnews.com/obits](http://www.irelandoldnews.com/obits)) which contains a list of death notices and in some instances obituaries from Irish newspapers from all over USA, Canada and other countries. It also has over 25,000 entries indexed from the Cork Examiner.

I tried to find more information on the Muirs/McClymonts. I checked the location of Kirkoswald and discovered it was only 4 miles from Maybole. I didn't know what N.B. stood for so I posted a query on a genealogy site ([www.rootschat.com](http://www.rootschat.com)) in the Scottish section and received a reply with the answer I was looking for - North Britain. This site is free and an excellent one for people searching for ancestors. There is an Ireland forum with a separate section for each county.

I also Googled both of their names and found a lot of Scottish records online at <http://www.ayrshireroots.com/genealogy>. I did find birth dates for Jean (born 1780) and her marriage to John Muir on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1806, also records for births of their children Agnes Jan 1807, Margaret 26.04.1808, Agnes 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1810, William 26<sup>th</sup> Oct 1815, Jean 1<sup>st</sup> May 1818 (married James McMurtrie 12<sup>th</sup> Dec 1842) Elizabeth 26 June 1821. Unfortunately their son John's birth date remains elusive.

From previous experience I knew of a brilliant resource, The O'Casey Volumes, 16 in all, for genealogical and historical searches in County Cork and North East Kerry. These volumes are widely known as O'Kief Coshe Mang, Slieve Lougher and the Upper Blackwater. They are not available online, however some extracts from them have been posted on various genealogy sites. They are available at some libraries throughout the world and a set is held at the Cork County library ([www.corkcoco.ie/library](http://www.corkcoco.ie/library)) in the local studies department.

Albert Eugene Casey created and compiled these volumes when he started doing his own family research. They are an invaluable resource for anyone searching for ancestors in this area. An index to these volumes is available online at the Cork City library site [www.corkpastandpresent.ie](http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie). Just go into search and key in O'Kief Coshe Mang for the full index. It has Birth, Marriage and Death records for Church of Ireland and Roman Catholic parishes and also has Quaker records. It has gravestone transcriptions for many graveyards in the area.



The O'Casey volumes had records for the parishes I was interested in. I went through records for 12 parishes including Ballyclough, Boherboy, Castlemagner Duhallow, Drishane Millstreet, Dromtariffe, Kilbrin Duhallow, Kilmeen Duhallow, Newmarket, Novaldaly and many others. I was delighted to find some gravestone transcriptions for Dromagh, although I had photographed almost all of the headstones there.

I also found the death records for both James McMurtrie and John Muir who died 26<sup>th</sup> July 1880 in the O'Casey volumes. His death was under the name John Mine, with the same date of death, aged 67, Reason for death, Albumenoria, 4 months, and the person present at death was a Mary Shine. It also gave his occupation as a land steward which was new information. Could it possibly have meant that John Muir replaced James, his brother-in-law, as the Land Steward at Rosnalee? Had he brought his mother with him when he came to Dromtariffe to work, especially as she is listed as a widow on the gravestone and she died in 1865.

I subsequently discovered some information on John Muir's will in a new online site connected to the Irish National archives site. This was a great discovery because it said his will was proved by William Nicholas Leader, an Executor and the will was sworn at Rosnalee. This would seem to indicate that he WAS the land Steward at Rosnalee at some time. This is the web address for searching the wills:  
<http://www.willcalendars.nationalarchives.ie/search/cwa/>

The details found for James McMurtrie's death entry were name (spelling incorrect) "James Mc Murtru, M.62, Land Steward, place of death Rosnalee (Dromtariff), date Mar 30 '77, bronchial fever 8 days coma 2 days. David McMurtru present at death."

While at the library I enquired about any publications that might help my search for information on Dromagh /Dromtariffe. The very helpful and knowledgeable librarians, Kieran Wyse and Richard Forrest, suggested several publications, one "Seanchas Duthalla" another "Mallow Field Club Journals" and another publication, "Aubane, Where in the World is it?" by the Aubane Historical Society. I had never heard of a place/area named Aubane.

I returned to the library another day and went through all of the Seanchas Duthalla magazines (20 volumes from the Duhallow Historical Society). ALL of the publications recommended by the librarians were superb and full of historical items on Dromtariffe and in particular the following which were very relevant to my search for information.

From the *Seanchas Duthalla*

1. Leaders of Rosnalee by Tadhg O'Muineachain (which had a photo of the house)
2. The First Leaders of North Cork by L. Leader, Senior
3. The Rectory, Dromtariffe by Hugh V. Kelleher

4. Out of Darkness , 3, The Land for the People by Patrick O'Sullivan
5. The Hangman's Noose (Crime & Execution in North Cork 1790-1883) by Jo Good

From the *Mallow Field Club Journals*

1. Mallow Church of Ireland Parish Records by Deirdre Sheehan, Mallow Heritage Centre
2. Mallow Schools, 1824 by Rev. Robert Forde  
From '*Aubane Where in the World is it*' By Jack Lane  
Chapter 11 -An article on the Land War -by Jack Lane

Following my introduction to the Aubane Historical society in the library. I had a look at their website when I came home and found it full of really useful information. I found an item on the site titled "Devon Land Commission". This commission, named after its chairman, Lord Devon, conducted hearings in the mid 1840's in Ireland to collect information on the land issue. The commission set up in towns around Ireland, one being Kanturk. I learned that the majority of people giving evidence were land agents or landlords, however in Kanturk the parish priest for Millstreet Fr. Patrick Fitzpatrick gave evidence for the "other side" (the tenant farmers).

I couldn't believe it when I saw that James McMurtrie was one of the people called on to give evidence. He was sworn in to give evidence and initially was asked about his background and where he came from, and what experience he had in farming and drainage. He was also asked about rental rates and the ability of farmers to progress. The full transcript can be seen in the Aubane Historical Society website: [http://aubanehistoricalsociety.org/aubane\\_collection/devon.pdf](http://aubanehistoricalsociety.org/aubane_collection/devon.pdf)

Thanks must go to Alan Brick of Millstreet ancestry, and now living in South Africa, who scanned books and made them into Pdf files so that anyone interested could download them freely.

An online index to the contents of the Mallow Field Club journals is available at <http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~irlmahs/mfcj27.html>

The journals are available to use at the Cork County Library. They contain many graveyard transcriptions. The graveyards covered can be seen in the index.

All of these superbly written articles shed a huge ray of light on the area at the time when James McMurtrie was a land steward at Rosnalee. Thanks to all the authors and historians, they have helped enormously and will continue to help people into the future. It is great to have all of these great resources available to those of us living in County Cork. We have to think of how difficult it is for people living outside of Ireland trying to get really great information such as that contained in all of the above resources on their family history, so any help that they can get from these publications is great for them.

The next step in my search was to try and make contact with some of the local historical societies. It is from this point on that I experienced the warm welcome and helpfulness of the local people. If one person I spoke to couldn't help me they contacted someone else who could. It was a brilliant network.

My first contact was with the IRD Duhallo Ltd. (Integrated Rural Development). Details of this company I got from the Aubane Historical Society book. They gave me contact details for Noreen Kelleher of the Society. She in turn contacted Jack Lane who gave me contact details for Tom Meaney, a man living in Rathroe, Derrinagree, who is very interested in local history. I spoke with Tom and his wife Joan. They were so helpful and went to a lot of trouble contacting other locals on my behalf. I was very interested to know if there had been a school in Dromagh in the 1840's/50's/60's when the McMurtrie children were living at Rosnalee. I was also interested in the history of the Dromagh Church and Tom told me to contact Richard Pomeroy, another local resident, in relation to the church.

David McMurtrie had said his Great Grandfather James, who was born on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1853 at Rosnalee and emigrated to Australia, had spoken about attending school at Dromagh and "doing his homework on the flags" (we take this to mean the flagstone floor) and so felt sure that he did in fact attend school there. David said that James, even as an old man, used to recite lots of poems from his schooldays. Tom Meaney was also sure there was a school there in the McMurtries' time.

I discovered at the Cork County library that Boherbue (Boherboy) National School celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1996, and so would have been opened in 1846, so a possibility, I thought. I had also been told, by a relative of mine Margaret Doherty, who hails originally from Millstreet, that Derrinagree national school might also be a possibility. I telephoned both schools and neither had records going back to 1840's /50's.

I then telephoned Dromagh National School and spoke with Ms. Edel Sheehan a teacher there. Edel was extremely helpful and said there had been a school at Dromagh as early as the 1840's. A temporary school was built in 1841-1843 and was situated where Barrett's Post office is now located. On 28<sup>th</sup> May 1843 a permanent school opened and was located 300 yards east of the present school. The girls were downstairs and the boys upstairs. There were stone stairs outside at the back of the school. This information was documented by Timmy Moynihan. R.I.P.

Edel searched the old school registers and amazingly did find Margaret McMurtrie listed. Margaret was born 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1860 and started school on July 9<sup>th</sup> 1864. The school roll books from the 1860's provided a huge amount of information on Margaret which included the day she first started school and the day she left. They also contained information on the pupil's religion – Presbyterian in Margaret's case, the subjects taken, their results, whether fees were paid or not, their home address and the father's occupation. Margaret took the following subjects – Reading, Spelling,



Writing, Arithmetic, Grammar, Geography and Needlework. Margaret left the school on 4<sup>th</sup> September 1876. Pupils attended Monday to Saturday and the hours were from 9a.m. to 5p.m. so they had a very full week. This was fantastic information which anybody searching family history would be thrilled to receive, as David was. Edel's search and help is greatly appreciated.

During my conversation with Edel we spoke about James McMurtrie being the land steward at Rosnalee. She told me that the steward's house was still there and that Timmy (Tadhg) Moynihan R.I.P., the renowned historian, and his wife were living there. I was very saddened to learn of the passing of such an eminent historian on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2013.

I followed up on Tom Meaney's recommendation to contact Richard Pomeroy and he was very helpful. I was interested to know if the church had a name other than Dromagh church; also if there were deeds to view for the graves, and who was responsible for the upkeep of the cemetery and church.

Mr. Pomeroy was able to answer all of my questions. He told me that the church was always known as Dromagh church and never seemed to have been named after a Saint. There weren't any deeds available for the graves. I wondered who was responsible for the upkeep of the church and he said he was the person trying to maintain the graveyard totally on his own. I was upset to think this gentleman was trying to keep this cemetery in good order on his own.

The church building was no longer in the ownership of the Church of Ireland and the cemetery was no longer being cared for by the Church authorities. It would be great if a group could come together to help in maintaining the cemetery. I know the whole community of Dromtariffe has organised major clean-ups of the cemetery on previous occasions and it would be great to have this happen again. Mr. Pomeroy suggested contacting Con Tarrant another renowned historian, to help with general history of the area and in particular the Leader estate of Rosnalee. My sincere thanks to Mr. Pomeroy for his help.

After a few more phone calls I telephoned Mr. Tarrant's residence and spoke with his daughter Mary O'Callaghan who was very knowledgeable and interested in helping me. I told her I would love to make a trip to Dromagh to see the Steward's house and she told me her cousins lived in the adjoining house. She said they would be delighted to help me out with information. Her cousins were Eamonn and Breda Tarrant. I contacted the Tarrants and the Moynihans and asked if I could call on them and maybe take some photographs, during my visit. They both said I would be very welcome.

I visited the following day armed with the very clear and concise directions given to me by Mary O'Callaghan. I visited Timmy Moynihan's house first. It was a great privilege to meet his wife Margaret and himself. It was lovely to actually see

the house where the McMurtries lived in the 1800's. With their permission, I took some photos and a video of their house and garden and thanked them. I took a lovely photo of Timmy and his wife which I posted on to them the following week.

I then went next door to the Tarrants. I got a marvellous reception from Eamonn and Breda. They were both working when I called and stopped immediately and invited me in for tea and lovely fresh scones. We ended up chatting for over two hours. They had a picture of the great house Rosnalee. They told me their house would have been used as a farm building in the 1800's. They gave me a guided tour of the outside which had stables to the rear. There was another lovely stone building with a bell. This building was used as a creamery in the Leader's time. The bell was used to summon workers in the morning, at break times and also at the end of the day.

The Tarrants allowed me to take a video which I sent on to David and it gave him a great idea of the layout of the house and farm where his ancestors lived and were responsible for the running of the farm. David really appreciated all of the help both Eamonn and Breda gave me and it really gave him a full picture of the steward's house, David didn't have to imagine it any longer.



**The land steward's house at Rosnalee where James and his family lived –  
David McMurtrie didn't have to imagine it any longer.  
(Timmy Moynihan, R.I.P., pictured in doorway)**

The Tarrants explained how the Leaders owned vast acres of land. The turn off the main Mallow-Killarney road would have been the original entrance to Rosnalee estate. The house at the junction would have been the original lodge to the estate. I asked them about the Glebe House, (the former Rector's home in the McMurtries' time) and they said Hugh Kelleher would be the expert on that. I told them that I had seen an article in the Seanchas Duthalla magazine at the library written by Hugh V. Kelleher. Breda Tarrant very kindly telephoned Mrs. Kelleher then and arranged for me to call on them. Breda also telephoned Edel Sheehan, the teacher, but she was not there.

I visited Hugh V. Kelleher and his wife and again they were so welcoming and hospitable, offering me tea and cake, which I declined. Hugh was very willing to impart his knowledge to me which I really appreciated. I was totally astounded by the welcome and the help I received from Mary O'Callaghan, the Tarrants, the Moynihans and the Kellehers. As I said earlier you could not find more hospitable people. It was the same all over the area.

On leaving Hugh V. Kelleher's house I decided to take some photos of the junction where the lodge was located. As I was taking the photos, one of the locals stopped in his car at the junction. I'm sure he thought to himself, 'Who is this crazy lady taking photos of a house and signposts?' We got chatting and he was wondering what I was doing and when I told him he gave me some new information about the Leaders having a mill across the road and drying blankets on bushes. He also said that at the entrance to the Rosnalee estate there had been a beautiful set of iron gates and in latter years these had been moved to another location further up the road. This man was Jerome O' Flynn and again I would like to thank him for his help.

David was anxious to see what the Glebe House (former Rector's house in 1800's) was like, so I drove up the Avenue to it and asked the owners if I could I take a photo, which they allowed. The house was very imposing and was surrounded by lovely countryside.

My search was nearing an end. I met up with an Aunt of mine, living in Mitchelstown. I mentioned to her that I was helping a man from Australia with his family history in the Dromagh/Dromtariffe area and couldn't believe it when she said she was from Dromtariffe. I then remembered attending her wedding to my uncle, a good few years ago, when I was in National School. I remember that day well as I had to leave school early. Her name is Eileen "Clem" Kelleher. She contacted her brother Denis who in turn contacted Dermot O'Flynn, another local man from Dromtariffe.

I contacted Dermot and he said he had some notes with information on Rosnalee. He was more than willing to give me this information, which again was very much appreciated. It was fantastic. In fact it had some great new information on the role of the land steward at the Leader's Great House at Gurteen. It had a photo





**The church at Dromagh (Church of Ireland)**



**Jean McMurtrie the land steward's eldest daughter and her husband Arthur Kenny. Together as Matron and Superintendent they ran the great orphanage at Ballarat, Australia.**

of the steward's house and in the article said it was here the men were given their duties for the day and here they were paid on Saturday night for ploughing, herding, milking, thinning turnips, hay saving, picking fruit and all other work that was done in running a great estate.

My aunt and myself made a trip to the Dromagh church and cemetery. When we were walking around we noticed the door, at the side of the church, near the McMurtries' grave, wide open. This had always been closed on previous visits. I felt it was a sign to enter the church.

We had a look inside the main front door and were amazed to find there was still an inscription on the wall behind where the altar would have been located. There were still some original tiles on the aisle. Some of the windows were in good condition, however some of the roof tiles had fallen into the church building. The porch area, which was inside the main front door was full of earth and leaves with ivy growing up the walls. The sky was plainly visible from the porch. It was very interesting to see what the church would have been like back in the 1800's. There was a lovely arch of trees leading up to the main entrance door. On our visit to Dromagh we had been invited to tea by a school friend of my aunt, Mary Flynn, now Vaughan. She provided more local knowledge which was very helpful and we enjoyed the social visit too.

I have transcribed almost all of the headstones/memorials at the Dromagh cemetery, but unfortunately there are a few that are illegible. One large one in the middle, surrounded by high spiked railings is a Leader one, however I was unable to access it. I came across a black and white photo of a church and cemetery on a website which was named "Abandoned Ireland": [http://www.abandonedireland.com/Dromagh\\_Church.html](http://www.abandonedireland.com/Dromagh_Church.html). It was here I discovered the name of the church. I would hate to think of the Dromagh cemetery being associated with being abandoned. It is such a lovely peaceful place and it is such a shame to see the church descending into ruins.

A website worth mentioning for genealogy searches is [www.igp-web.com/archives](http://www.igp-web.com/archives). It has a great section on County Cork. The Irish census for the years 1901 and 1911 is available to view online [www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search](http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/search). Rosnalee House where James was the land steward can be seen in the 1911 census. The enumerator's extract shows it was located as follows:

Parliamentary Division: North Cork

Poor Law Union: Kanturk

District Electoral Division (D.E.D): Rosnalee

Townland: Gurteen

Barony : Duhallow

Parish: Dromtariffe

<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/reels/nai001938705/>

I mentioned the Cork City Library site above [www.corkpastandpresent.ie](http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie), within this site is another great resource; it is from the notes of Col. Grove White. There is a specific section on Dromagh. It has a photo of one of the Leader's Stewards taken 1910 after the McMurtries' time; this photo can be seen after page 52. A photo of Rosnalee in the same article can be seen at the end of page 58: [http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie/places/northcork/grovewhitenotes/danesforttoelmyale/GW3\\_52\\_59.pdf](http://www.corkpastandpresent.ie/places/northcork/grovewhitenotes/danesforttoelmyale/GW3_52_59.pdf)

I enjoyed the search to try and find information to help David McMurtrie in Sydney. I am glad he asked me to help. It is thanks to all of the kind people of Dromtariffe/Dromagh and surrounding areas that David has gained a great insight into his ancestors' time there. I have learned a lot about the Dromtariffe area. I would like to thank David too for proof reading this pamphlet and his very helpful suggestions.

The amazing willingness of everybody from the locality and surrounding areas to help total strangers is greatly appreciated by David McMurtrie and myself. To all those who allowed me into their homes, had tea and scones and chatted for hours, thank you. To all of those I met on the journey, or spoke to on the phone, or contacted by email, Thank you. A thank you to my husband who helped me with this search and also my son who helped with all my computer issues. I would also like to thank Richard Henchion for his help. I hope I have not forgotten anybody, however, if I have I am sorry.

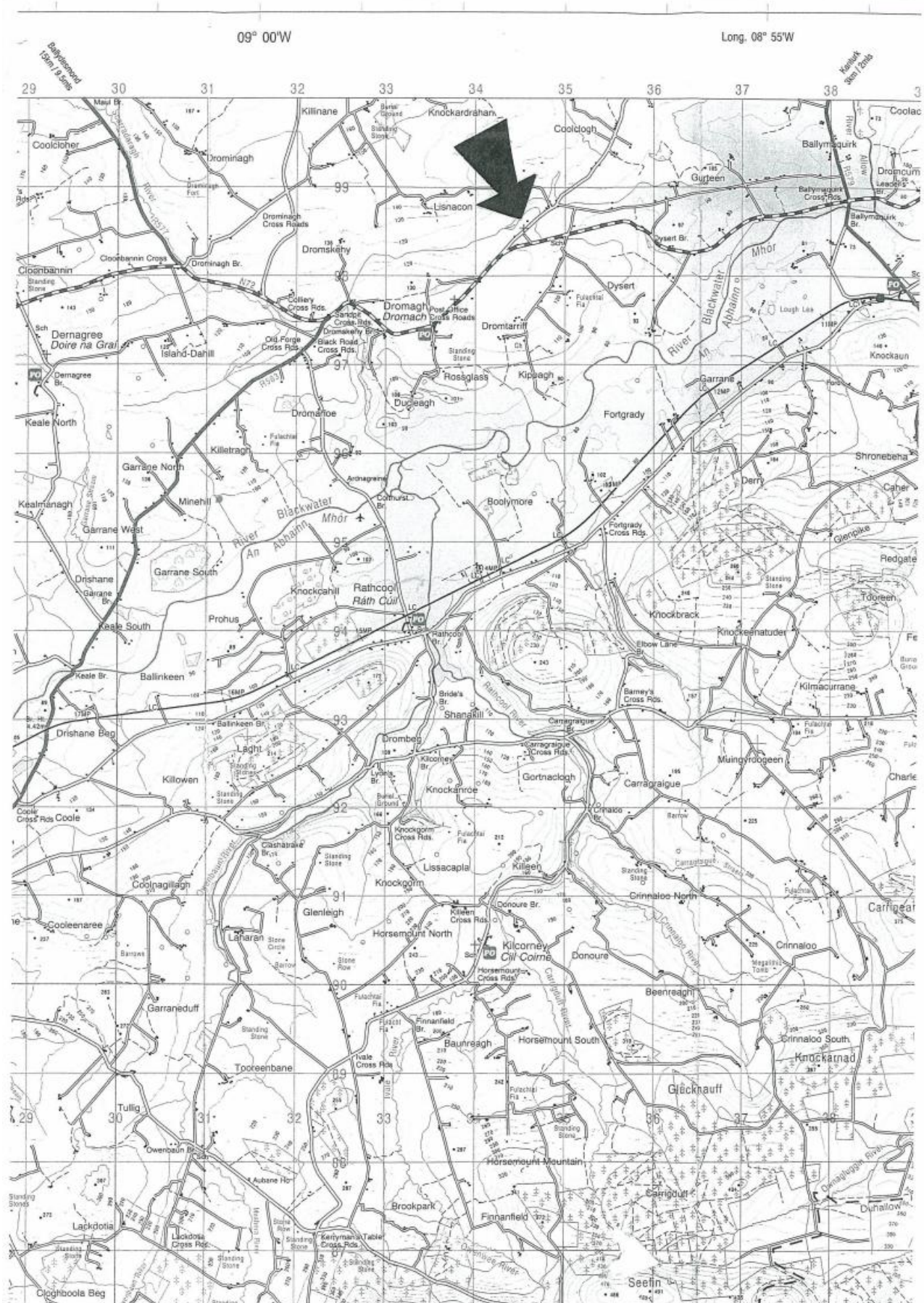
I have been asked to write up the story of my search by Jack Lane, of the Aubane Historical Society, hoping it might help others looking for their ancestors.

On that first day back in April, 2010, I could so easily have driven straight past the old Dromagh church, or not bothered to remove the ivy covering the McMurtrie grave. What a long story developed from those first steps! It goes to show how in genealogical matters every little step and every detail can be so very important.

Mary Walsh  
(MaryLWalsh@live.ie)  
February 2014

**Dromagh Church is highlighted in the map on the next page**





## **Some publications by the Aubane Historical Society**

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**Orders to: [jacklaneaubane@hotmail.com](mailto:jacklaneaubane@hotmail.com)**

**[www.aubanehistoricalsociety.org](http://www.aubanehistoricalsociety.org)**



This pamphlet "FROM DROMAGH TO SYDNEY had its beginnings in a search by a man from Sydney, to find the burying place of his great great grandfather, James McMurtrie, who was born in Scotland. He lived in Co. Cork in the 1800's. He died in 1877 and following his death, his wife and children emigrated to Australia.

David McMurtrie, of Sydney spent 40 years searching for the grave of his ancestor James McMurtrie who was the land steward at Rosnalee, Gurteen, Dromtariffe, Co. Cork, a great estate owned by the Leader family, from 1843 to 1877.

One day back in April, 2010 a lady from Cork was driving past a graveyard at Dromagh and decided to photograph all the headstones. By a series of chances and coincidences this led to the discovery of the long lost grave and in turn to many further discoveries. This pamphlet tells the story of the rediscovery and the subsequent investigations.

The pamphlet also gives a great deal of helpful advice to people researching their family tree. It emphasises the great importance of contacting local people and how helpful and friendly they always are. And it reveals the great wealth of printed and online material available to the researcher.

**Mary Walsh lives in Cork City. Through researching her own family tree seven years ago she developed a keen interest in genealogy. She loves photography and this hobby led to her taking headstone photographs.**

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