

NOTE: SKAHANAGH lands:

John Hurley of Fenit who leased 36 acres of land at Skahanagh to John Blennerhassett, also leased other land at Skahanagh to John Cronin (20 acres), Daniel Enright & Michael Long (20 acres), Owen Lowney (18 acres) & Edward Mahony (10 acres)

John Hurley himself leased 8 acres of land and 107 acres of mountain at Skahanagh from Charles John Allanson Winn Blennerhassett of Ballyseedy (b.c.1830; p.B 7); it appears that other Skahanagh lands were also leased by John Hurly from Charles J.A.W. Blennerhassett then sub-let to tenant farmers

John Blennerhassett's son Joseph BH (b.c.1837), as tenant in 1889-98, purchased his land at Clahane & at Skahanagh from the landlord, as tenants were encouraged to do by government under Lord Ashbourne's "Irish Land Acts" of 1885-88, which set up an "Irish Land Commission" to administer such land transfers;

Joseph Blennerhassett purchased his Skahanagh lands from Arthur Blennerhassett of Ballyseedy Castle estate (son of Charles John Allanson W. Blennerhassett; p.B 7)

NOTE: CLAHANE lands:

It is uncertain from which landlord the Clahane land was purchased, may also have been Arthur Blennerhassett of Ballyseedy Castle, but in 1838 another landlord, Arthur Blennerhassett, of Blennerville House, Blennerville (b.27.10.1776 d.31.5.1839, p.F ?) purchased property at Clahane from Rowland Eagar;

"Burkes Peerage" has this Arthur Blennerhassett with daughters & no sons; but [FOSTER 1881] shows Arthur Blennerhassett with a son Rowland Blennerhassett who died without issue;

Close to Clahane is Cloghane House at Annagh, with its entrance off a side road leading east from Ballyard Hill ["Houses of Kerry" by Valerie Bary 1994, pp 77-78]; This should not be confused with the other Cloghane townland in Co.Kerry, on the Dingle peninsular

The Skahanagh land has been sold as building plots, many are already built on; the old house, with beautiful camelia trees forming a short avenue to the entrance, was offered for sale in 2008 as a building plot, the house to be demolished having been empty and in ruins for 20 years or more

he paid instalments of £4.6s.5d per half year from 1889 to 1898

By 1931 the family paid rates on 3 tracts of agricultural land, but now two in Skahanagh (rateable value £10 & £9:15s) one in Clahane (rateable value £6:5s)

Joseph Blennerhassett d.28.4.1903 Skahanagh "...Pneumonia, 10 days, no medical attention..."; dau. Julia was present; bur. Ballyseedy old graveyard (RC); (headstone inscription has d.July 1904, in error)

m.7.2.1861 Ardfert (RC), Co.Kerry; Ellen Scanlon (witness to m. Patrick Scanlon)

b.16.9.1838 Aramore, Abbeydorney parish, Co.Kerry; of Lurig, Co.Kerry 1861; *sometimes spelt Scanlan in error in her children's baptism records*

d.5.7.1899 bur.Ballyseedy old graveyard (RC)

Sheila Bryant (S 12) remembered that Ellen came from North Kerry, in the area bounded by Listowel, Abbeydorney, Ardfert & Ballyheigue; perhaps from Ardrahan, near Kilmoley (in the centre of this area) or from Lisselton, a little to the north of this area

kept a rooming house, letting rooms to workers in the sealing industry, which was booming at that time; d.28.5.1924

m.1st 1891 New Zealand; Ernest Edward "Ted" Aulsebrook of Melbourne, Australia; Professor of English at Stellenbosch University, South Africa; d.<??> South Africa (not d.25.10.1885)

m.2nd 19.7.1902 St.James' Church (Anglican), Bairnsdale, Victoria, Australia; Alfred "Alf" Marshall of Bairnsdale (no issue)

Marianne & Alf moved from Sealer's Cove; first to Lakes Entrance, then to Lilydale, then to Auburn, all in Victoria



away from the conflict

After the war, work was difficult to obtain in South Africa, so W.H. returned to Kerry in 1902; Arriving home on a wet, dreary January evening he found the wide empty main street of Castleisland depressing and after a few months he became restless; before the end of the year had returned to Kimberley

At Kimberley he had three jobs and for a time worked all three together, 20 hours a day; Firstly, for lack of other employment, he worked for a builder, learning bricklaying & building skills; then employed by "de Beers Consolidated Mines Ltd" as a "truck labourer" from 8.6.1903 until he resigned 13.3.1907 (re-employed 4.4.1909, resigned again 26.7.1909); With limited experience of mechanical engineering his first task at de Beers was installing a pumping engine & equipment at one of the diamond mines, located in what had been separate but adjoining townships Kimberley, Belgravia & Beaconsfield; This may have been the "de Beers Mine" at Belgravia, where W.H. lived, but more probably was the "Kimberley Mine", a man-made pit 215m deep in the centre of the town, for good reason known as the "Big Hole" (this closed in 1914 but is still to be seen, a feature of the town);

W.H. made enough money from these activities to go into business on his own as a builder, houses being in great demand for mine workers; In the words of his brother Michael, he acted as "...his own architect, clerk of works, overseer & manager...", purchasing land in Belgravia & building a number of bungalows for sale or rent to miners; starting with a single house, then building two more, then four more, each house sold financed the building of others;

W.H. lived at four addresses in Belgravia; first at Milner Street, then Elsmere Road, Belgrave Road and 5 Foley St., one of these last two being a larger house he built for himself, with veranda surrounding; The homes he built were close to the junction of Belgrave Road and Foley Street; he named them "Emerald Villas", but this name is no longer in use

In 1907 Julia returned to Kerry, initially on holiday to introduce baby Nellie to the family but staying, living with W.H.'s family at Coolnageragh; W.H. resigned from de Beers 13.3.1907 and also returned to Kerry, to be with his family; When W.H.'s father Hugh William O'Connor died on 3.12.1905 he left half the farm at Coolnageragh to his son Michael O'Connor, but in June 1905 Michael had joined the Presentation Brothers as Brother Francis, so by family agreement his half of the farm was sold to W.H.; On the half of the farm he had purchased, W.H. built a new house in which he installed his wife & dau. then in 1909 returned to SA a third time (on Union Castle Line SS "German", departing 8.1.1909 London to Capetown) to sell his house & property at Kimberley and settle his affairs; while doing this he once again worked as a "truck labourer" for de Beers, from 4.4.1909 to 26.7.1909; in 1911 W.H. and Julia were living with their children Eileen, Hugh, Maureen & Kathleen on their farm at Coolnageragh, Scartaglin; The other half of the family farm at Coolnageragh was inherited by his brother Con;

W.H.'s half of the Coolnageragh farm was later sold to Mr. Breen, whose family still farm there

W.H. purchased "The Fountain Warehouse" on Lower Main Street in Castleisland, a house & business inc. drapery shop & "The Fountain Bar", opposite the old market house & drinking water fountain; As a fluent Irish speaker, his business "The Fountain Warehouse" displayed his name outside in Irish; While Julia managed that business, W.H. started milling grain, of any variety he could find, using very primitive equipment in the shed (still standing) at the rear of the yard behind the house; the animal feed produced found a ready market among a farming community experiencing feed shortage

On 17.9.1918 W.H. purchased the Castleisland flour mill, a derelict watermill built in 1846 by Lord Ventry on the River Maine at Tonbwee, with the land attached to it; the mill's original function having been to grind maize into "Indian Meal"; In 1919 he founded "W.H. O'Connor" as "millers, merchants, drapers, outfitters & importers" in Castleisland; W.H., with James Tangney the carpenter, worked hard to repair buildings & machinery, restarting the old water wheel; In 1926 the old mill at Tonbwee, renamed as "Rhyno Mills", started producing animal feed in quantity, "Rhyno Balanced Rations" quickly gaining repute among Munster farmers as products of the highest quality; The name "Rhyno" may have come from W.H.'s African experience, although it has been also suggested it was taken from the old english word meaning "money"; The mill converted to electricity in 1939, the water wheel being removed, millstream & weir filled in (such a shame...); The business became a limited company, W.H. O'Connor Ltd, c1940;

The railway into Castleisland town was for many years kept open for passengers solely by the need to bring in large quantities of raw material for Rhyno Mills; W.H. purchased the Cragreens, rich grazing land close to the mill fields already his; also a farm at Ballygree, off Powell's Road in Castleisland, which provided a part of the grain used at the mill; In 1935 he purchased another farm at Commeen House in Carrigaline, Co. Cork; Another branch of the business was fattening pigs for market, using Rhyno dry rations, which took place on a large scale

A republican by inclination, in 1914 W.H. O'Connor became Chairman of the "Castleisland Volunteers" and was prominently identified with the Sinn Fein movement of that time; When Sinn Fein set up courts to dispense their own justice in opposition to that of the British administration, W.H. became one of the first local judges of the Republican "Castleisland Arbitration Court"; He took no part in the Civil War that occurred after the treaty of 1922; W.H. is mentioned in "Kerry's Fighting Story 1916-1921" (published 1947 by "The Kerryman" newspaper of Tralee) and in "Tans, Terror an Troubles: Kerry's Real Fighting Story 1913-23" by T. Ryle Dwyer (published 2001 by Mercier Press, Cork & Dublin)

On 8.5.1921 two RIC officers were shot outside Castleisland RC church in Church St., as they left after Sunday Mass, by two IRA men on motorcycles wearing trenchcoats; the shooting witnessed by Julia O'Connor and her daughter Peggy, then aged eight years, who were in the crowd leaving the church; One RIC man was killed, the other being saved by his wife who covered him with her body; This killing brought "Black & Tans" from Tralee out in force and, as reprisal for the murder, four republican owned buildings in the town were burned; One of these was "The Fountain Warehouse", W.H.'s connection with Sinn Fein being known to the authorities & he at the time being "on the run" as a fugitive in hiding from the British authorities, wanted for taking an active part in the conflict; at one time WH hid in a water-filled dyke while the Black & Tans were looked for him above; Dan Russell hid in the Fountain Warehouse, in an alcove behind hanging coats, Black & Tans searching the house but not finding him; W.H.'s brother Michael (Rev. Bro. Francis) saw the smoking ruins of the house; two photographs of the ruins survive (photographer unknown, but perhaps Bro. Francis); The irony of this sad episode is that the RIC officer who died was a friend of Julia O'Connor, yet her house was one of those burnt as reprisal for his murder; He left a widow & two young boys, the widow leaving Castleisland and initially placing her sons at the boys' school run by Brother Francis at the Presentation Brothers in Cork, although when their identity became widely known within that school they were moved elsewhere

Following the burning of their home in Castleisland the family lived 7 years at Artane House, a large old country house with conservatory & orchard, within its own estate off Puckstown Rd (now Collins Avenue) at Donnycarney, Dublin; Julia ran a retail drapery shop, selling fashion ware & millinery, at 101 & 101A Talbot St. Dublin (single width property down, double width up), with four employees, inc. Miss Finn & Miss Maher; the accountant was T.C. O'Mahony of Castleisland, who lived with them at Artane while studying accountancy; W.H. returned to Castleisland, living in spartan conditions at the old mill house, in a single room over the office, until 1927; During this period his daughters Nellie, Maureen & Peggy each in turn lived there with him as housekeeper, while also attending school

Julia O'Connor sought, through courts, compensation for the burning of their house, "The Fountain Warehouse"; Compensation was paid by British authorities and a new house built on the same site, a 3 storey 12 bedroom building with drapery and grocery businesses beneath, also a small lounge bar preserving the old name "The Fountain Bar"; Re-building was completed in 1927, W.H. naming his new home the "The 'Kingdom' House", named for the "Kingdom of Kerry"; Julia managed the retail business at their new home & was a director of W.H.O'Connor Ltd

Artane House was sold, house later demolished & land developed as the Dublin suburb of "Artane"; The 'dogleg' drive to the house remains as a series of footpaths, the lodge (gatehouse) still standing in 2004, in a 1/3 acre plot at the end of the drive (on Collins Ave. at Belton Park Rd), but was for sale & perhaps demolished(?); The site of Artane House itself is off Elm Mount Road, at the playing field

The "Kingdom House" was a large home of great character; among its features was the "Crow's Nest", a roofed platform above the house, open at the sides, providing wonderful views of Castleisland town and surrounding countryside; also a flat roof area for leisure and a billiard room, with full size snooker table that rotated on its axis to provide a dining table for special occasions; At the rear were barns, a greenhouse with grapevine & tomatoes lovingly tended by Julia, and a large yard always crowded with chickens, geese & turkeys; Sold out of the family c1984 "The 'Kingdom' House" is now a bed & breakfast hotel, sadly much changed, with shops & yet another "The Fountain Bar" installed beneath; Julia's grapevine flourishes in the garden of her g.son Michael O'Donovan at Castle Connell, Limerick, the snooker table gracing the home of her g.son Liam O'Connor at Killarney

It is recognised in the town that W.H. O'Connor did much for Castleisland, including obtaining a library for the town from the "Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching" (founded in the USA 1905)

Much of this material on the life of W.H. O'Connor is freely borrowed from a 1957 typescript biography, written by his younger brother Michael O'Connor (Brother Francis)

Information on the Pickering family is from notes supplied by Vida Allen, historian of the McGregor Museum at Kimberley, Cape Province, South Africa.

A business & personal history of W.H. O'Connor may also be found at the Rhyno Mills website, created c1999 by his grandson Shaun O'Connor [Rhyno Mills Castleisland website](#)









The brother & sister sailed from Plymouth, England on S.S. "Gulf of Mexico" departing 27.1.1885, arriving at Sydney, NSW 24.3.1885

His niece Nora Blennerhassett returned to Co.Kerry sometime before 1890 and married there; his nephew John Blennerhassett later moved on to New Zealand

Two other sisters, Ellie & Marianne Blennerhassett, emigrated to N.Zealand at about the same time, Marianne living at Taradale, Meanee Co., Hawkes' Bay, N.Zealand in 1885; Ellie moved from NZ to NSW, Australia bef. 1888 Marianne & her children moved from NZ to Clear Hills, Sydney, NSW, Australia between 1896 & 1902

>>: Jane Elizabeth Blennerhassett >>>>> >>>
 (alias Blenner Hassett);
 b.2.7.1889 Barmedman, NSW;
 moved to Victoria with parents c1896;
 d.1947 Fitzroy, Melbourne, Victoria
 /
 m.1914 Victoria;
 Alfred "Alf" John Froud;
 b.22.2.1889 Swan Reach, Victoria;
 d.1941 Pascoe Vale, Victoria

>>: John Joseph Blennerhassett >>>>>> >>>>
 (alias John B. Hassett);
 b.6.1.1891 Barmedman, NSW;
 of 35 Cooper's Road, Birrong,
 NSW 1955; moved to Victoria
 parents c1896, later moved
 back to NSW; d.1942 at
 Coledale Hospital, Uralla, NSW
 /
 m.2.4.1913 Concord, NSW;
 Bertha Taylor;
 b.1891 South Yarra, Victoria;
 d.16.6.1964 Regent Park, NSW

>>: Daniel "Dan" Blennerhassett >>>>> >>>>
 b.30.9.1893 Barmedman, NSW;
 moved to Victoria with parents
 c1896;
 d.23.5.1903 aged 9 years,
 drowned at Lake Bunga,
 (near Lakes Entrance), Victoria

>>: Ellen "Nell" Blennerhassett >>>>>> >>>>>
 b.3.11.1895 W.Wyalong, NSW
 moved to Victoria with parents
 c1896, later back to Sydney NSW;
 d.29.8.1955
 /
 m. <??> Hall

>>: Thomas "Tom" Blennerhassett
 (alias Blenner-Hassett, alias Hassett)
 b.c1897/9 Cunningham
 (near Lakes Entrance), Victoria;
 moved to Sydney, NSW;
 d.25.5.1963 "aged 64 yrs"

Arthur is said to have returned to Ireland on two occasions, once to claim his inheritance (only to find that he had been left out of his father's will) this trip presumably between c1867-70;
 He went to Queensland from NSW alone c1909 (S 16), his wife Mary staying at Trafalgar with her daughter Liz;
 Arthur had a third family (S 16) at Groviley, QLD; he d.31.12.1917 at Groviley & was bur.2.1.1918 Toowong Cem. (RC), Brisbane, QLD;
 This cemetery has since been removed, the site built on

Arthur's daughter Lu (O'Neill) Joiner (S 17) told her daughter Marion Russell (S 18) that Arthur died at sea off the coast of Queensland while returning from his second trip to Ireland, but that is refuted by his death record showing he died 1917 at Groviley; also unlikely to have travelled by sea during WWI

**Arthur James O'Neill's
1st marriage**

This was Arthur James O'Neill's 2nd marriage; he m.1st 8.10.1864 in NZ to (Catherine) Mary Smythe (not Smith) of Ireland who d.bef.1877 in New Zealand; Arthur & Mary had four ch. born in NZ, three of whom went with Arthur & his 2nd wife Mary (nee BH) O'Neill to Melbourne, Victoria via Tasmania c1889/90

The children by Arthur James' first marriage are:

- 1 **Mary Jane O'Neill b.14.8.1866 NZ; d. Melbourne, Vict.**
Blinded in an accident; she did not move from Melbourne to Lakes Entrance, Victoria with her father & William but lived at the Blind Institute in Melbourne, where they made baskets, brooms etc;
She m.24.3.1911 Alexander "Alex" Munro (no issue) and following her m. lived in small house close to the institute;
- 2 **James Edward O'Neill; b.27.5.1868 New Zealand**
stayed in NZ, where he was a Horse trainer;
d.21.4.1917 NZ, of a kick in the head from a horse;
m. Ciss <??>; issue 2 children,
adopted (by their solicitor) after both their parents' died;
- 3 **Arthur O'Neill b.28.8.1870 New Zealand**
of Sydney, NSW, Australia;
m.20.8.1902 Hobart, Tasmania; Rose Love (m. record not found); *they had a dau.:*
Nancy O'Neill who m.1st <??> Jantzen; d.
and m.2nd <??> Bray and had a son <??> Bray;
- 4 **William "Bill" Francis O'Neill; b.31.12.1872 N.Zealand**
of Lakes Entrance 1903-12; later of Melbourne, Victoria, where he worked on the wharves;
d.27.12.1947 Lakes Entrance, bur. Lakes Entrance

NOTE: The O'Neill sons originally obtained land selections in the Lakes Entrance area; these selections were cheap and they were given three years to clear the land and make it productive before they were obliged to pay rates (local taxes)

**Arthur James O'Neill's
3rd marriage**

Arthur James O'Neill c1909 went alone to Queensland; there he started a 3rd family with "Mary Ann Hassett", (Arthur's g.dau. Pearl Eva Berry believed she was a Blennerhassett and related, but no evidence found...); Mary Ann Hassett's three children (below) are registered as Hassett, the two girls with no father's name given, the son with his father shown as Arthur James O'Neill; at Arthur James O'Neill's death in 1917 the informant Mary Hassett is recorded as "no relation"; At his death 1918 they lived at Samford Rd, Groviley, QLD. It is not known if she had any Blennerhassett connection

The children by Arthur James' third marriage are:

- 1 **Annie Hassett;** b.23.10.1909 Queensland;
d.20.12.1909 Queensland (no father registered);
- 2 **Mary Hassett;** b.23.10.1911 QLD (no father registered);
- 3 **Alexander Hassett** (or O'Neill ?) b.26.11.1914 Queensland;
his father registered as Arthur James O'Neill

>> John Joseph "Jack-Joh" O'Neill
 b.21.9.1879 Winchmore, NZ
 (birth record not found);
 moved to Victoria c1890
 /
 d.15/19.12.1896 unm.; aged 17yrs
 (drowned in Mitchell River
 at Coongulmerang,
 near Bairnsdale, Victoria)
 bur. Lakes Entrance Cemetery





