

A TALE OF TWO (or more) MANSES (INCH)

The stories of the manses belonging to two small congregations in Inishowen far outweigh the import of the congregations themselves. To start at the end, as it were, the shenanigans around these two properties known as the manses of Inch and Fahan Presbyterian Churches led in no small way to the EDUCATIONAL ENDOWMENTS (IRELAND) ACT 1885, an Act of Parliament passed by an order in Privy Council in Dublin, taking effect from 6th November 1893.

The effect of this Act was to ensure that, in the Presbytery of Derry, never again would Church property of any kind be registered in the ownership of any individual or group of individuals other than the Education Board of the Presbytery of Derry.

Other properties belonging to other Churches in the Derry Presbytery were included in the Act but these two were notable for how much Presbytery and indeed Assembly discussion time, newspaper column inches and some court time had been expended.

The first minister of Inch, Mr Samuel Armour, probably lived in a fine residence adjacent to the Church at Carnaghan Inch Island, he had retired but possibly remained in the residence until his death in 1853. Mr Armour's house, for whatever reason, was not available to his successor. This may have been a private rental arrangement.

The Rev. James Anderson of Bohillion Burt became the second minister of Inch Presbyterian Church in 1852. By 1856 he already had drawn up plans for a manse and advertised in the Londonderry Sentinel for interested building companies to apply. At about this time the Griffith Valuation shows him having gained the tenancy of a 2.75 acre plot of land in Carrickanee.



It would be very surprising if the small Presbyterian congregation of Inch could have afforded such a fine Manse. The inference is that monies from outside Inch subsidised the building which probably got completed about 1865.

Part of the Presbytery discussions at the time related that, "begging " to get funds for a manse had taken place, and now, not long afterwards, that manse was being turned into revenue for the beggar

On at least two occasions, firstly in 1876 and then again in 1892 Rev Anderson tried to let the manse. It was advertised in the Londonderry press on both occasions and on both occasions the Derry Presbytery interjected to bar any subletting without the express written approval of the landowner, namely Lords Templemore's Estate. The presbytery also wanted legal assurances that Inch Congregation's tenure of the property, as a manse, would not be jeopardised.

The background to the Rev. Anderson was that he was a very big farmer in Bohillion Burt and lived most of the time on his farm. The house on that farm, later owned by his son Robert, was rated as a 15 room 1st class dwelling in the 1901 census. He travelled across the Farland Bank to his Church in Inch, a distance he claimed to be 3.5 miles and he could visit his entire congregation in a single day. Some of his opponents in the General Assembly were working with out of date maps and were not familiar with the fact that the Farland Bank was navigable by pony and trap and believed he had to travel 8.5 miles around by Burnfoot. There is ample evidence that the Manse was lived in during those 1865 – 1895 years, there were at least two recorded deaths, firstly that of Rev Anderson's mother in Law Mrs Elizabeth McElhinney in May 1869 and also that of Mrs Rebecca Porter. Mrs Porter had been the widow of a Mr William Porter, another large farmer formerly of Greenforth Burt who died in May 1879.

Rev. Anderson, claimed, at one particular Presbytery Meeting to investigate the circumstances around his abode that living in such close proximity to the sea as was the case at the Inch Manse was bad for his bronchitis and found the drier air at Burt much more agreeable!

It is possible that Mrs Anderson spent more time at the manse than her husband, she had a clearance auction of "all her household furniture etc" at the manse in November 1887.

When Derry Presbytery's Education Board took control of the manse in 1893, the Rev. James Anderson was described as the last surviving Trustee and the property was rented from Lord Templemore for an annual rent of two guineas.

Following the death of Rev. Anderson in 1895 Inch Church was united with Fahan under Rev Mc Bride. Rev. Mc Bride did not move to the Inch Manse and did in fact leave Fahan later that year.

The following 53 years at Inch Manse were much quieter, housing as it did the families of three successive ministers of the Fahan and Inch Union.

These were; Rev Robert Lynn 1896 -1929, Rev. John Brewster 1930 – 1947, Rev. Thomas J Holmes 1949 – 1958.

It was said to be in need of repairs in 1958 and funds were raised by the two congregations to affect these repairs. There being no conceivable requirement for a manse in the near future the manse was subsequently sold probably within a year or two of its centenary.

If the Inch Manse story seems tumultuous, at least it was only one property. Fahan's story on the other hand involved at least three properties and over a longer time frame.

Apart from the fact that Fahan's first minister, Rev Ninian Cochran (1719 – 1748) probably lived in his own home at Chrislaghmore no definitive record exists of where ministers lived for the next 100 years or so.

There is well established folklore that the fourth minister, Rev David Hamilton (1799 – 1840) rode his horse from the manse at Crislaghkeel to Buncrana which had become part of a united charge with Fahan. His route was over a gap in Mouldy Hill which subsequently became known as "Davy's Gap" after himself. This Crislaghkeel residence was almost certainly not an official Manse in the sense that the Church owned or had a long term lease on it, more likely it was rented. His death in 1840 was recorded as being at his residence in Fahan but no more detail than that.

The first reference to a manse in the true sense of the word is as recorded in this unattributed report:-

"About the year 1858, the late JAMES Sheil Dougherty, Esq., having a life interest in his estate, agreed to give to the Presbyterian Congregation of Fahan a Lease in Perpetuity of Two Acres on which to secure a Manse, reserving what was considered a legal rent under the statute of 1855. An unexpired Lease of the whole farm, with which these two acres were connected, had to be purchased by the Minister or Congregation, in order to get the New Lease perfected. This purchase cost £310. On the two acres an old house stood, which, by a large outlay, was converted into a suitable Manse. The whole expenditure Manse and Farm was £540. The landlord died. The next owner, Richard Doherty, Esq., present High Sheriff of Donegal, discovered that the old house (which had been built by a previous tenant) had not been valued along with the two acres of land, and that consequently a legal rent had not been reserved by his predecessor. Of the remainder of the land the lease had fallen. An ejectment was served upon the Trustees, consent for judgment was given, and the Congregation have been deprived of both manse and farm, the landlord giving (after deducting legal expenses and manse rates) the sum of £56 or thereabouts, as compensation for the actual outlay of £540! The Minister now occupies the house, and pays to the landlord an annual rent of £21, exclusive of taxes, for it and the two acres of land attached."

To try and paraphrase that: - Around 1858 a sympathetic landlord offered Fahan Church the lease of a house and small farm with a view to it being upgraded to be a manse. There were loopholes in the property conveyance process and some years later a new less friendly landlord took advantage of these loopholes and Fahan were evicted from the improved house and land. This was of course after significant monies had been expended on the purchase and upgrades to the property.

Looking at the Griffith Valuation of circa 1857 the said James Sheil Dougherty was the Immediate Leaser of Rose Hill and an adjacent smaller house and farm in the townland of Magherabeg. They were plots 8, 9A & B in the schedule below and occupied by a Mr Andrew McClea. It must have been very shortly after this valuation that Andrew McClea left Rose Hill and Rev. Hanson moved in.

No. and Letters of Reference to Maps.	Townlands and Occupiers.	Immediate Lessors.	Description of Tenement.	Area.		
	MAGHERABEG— <i>continued.</i>			A.	R.	P.
	William Doherty, James Doherty, Robert Doherty, David Doherty,	James S. Doherty, Same,	House, offices, and land, Same and office, Same	1	2	0
	Robert Cunningham	Same,	House	1	2	0
	Arthur M'Clain, Thomas M'Clain	Robert Cunningham, Same,	House, House	1	2	0
8	Andrew M'Clain,	James S. Doherty,	House, offices, and land,	1	2	10
9 A a } - B }	Andrew M'Clain,	Same,	House, offices, & land, {	72	0	0
				9	3	10

Rose Hill, in history, was one of the five “big” houses in the Parish of Upper Fahan. They were: - Glengollan, Birdstown, Fahan House, Fahan Glebe House and Rose Hill. Rose Hill and Glengollan have disappeared completely, Birdstown Demesne still remains but the house was burned down in the 1970’s while the two Fahan ones still exist. Rose Hill itself was situated behind the current Dispensary at the junction of the main Derry to Bunrana Road (R238) with the Inch Road. It also had a cottage within it’s grounds.

The minister in Fahan at the start of this debacle was Rev David Hanson. It is recorded, mostly in birth and death notices in the local press, that the Rev. David Hanson was living in Rose Hill “Manse” Fahan when he registered the deaths of two of his children. These unhappy events were in April 1858 and April 1859. Rev Hanson resigned in 1860 with probably more than a hint of melancholy reflecting his sad tenure at a personal and pastoral level. He died a relatively young man in 1865.

It is also known that in February 1868 and July 1869 the Rev. McBride recorded the happy events of the births of two daughters also at Rose Hill “Manse” Fahan. It is reasonable to assume that this Rose Hill is the Manse on which the rent had been increased from £2 to £26 or 1200% over a period of ten years.

The £484 loss detailed above equates to about £40,000 in today’s terms and then of course there was the ongoing expense of annual rent.

At a Presbytery visitation to Monreagh in May 1866 there was only one item of business, apart from that of confirming their satisfaction with the effectiveness of the spiritual and temporal running of the various duties of the minister and officers there. That item was to confirm that they were aware of the circumstances where Fahan’s rent on their manse had been raised from £2 to £26 per annum and that the whole subject had been referred to the General Assembly for consideration.

In July 1868 Dr Richard Doherty, MD JP future High Sheriff of Donegal offered for sale at Rose Hill, seven acres of standing oats. Almost certainly the result of the labours and sweat of someone associated with the Church who lost it, like the rest of the enterprise, to the bigotry and greed of the said doctor.

Most of Rose Hill today is farmland belonging to the Lamberton family with four dwellings on the original house and cottage site.

It was after exhaustive unsuccessful attempts to raise the money to secure a suitable alternative manse that Rev Mc Bride set out to go to America in late 1869. It appears there were folk there who were supportive of Fahan’s cause and prepared to give financial aid. He took with him letters of introduction and accreditation from the congregation itself and

representatives from just about every other body in the Church, all the way to the Moderator of the General Assembly. Transcripts of these letters are attached.

To date no definitive information exists about Rev. McBride's success in America but his return was followed in 1871 by a generous gift from Mr Joseph Cochran to the congregation. This gift was a two acre plot along the main road overlooking the slob lands of Inch Level. This site for the new manse was secured for a nominal rent and the building was completed 1872 / 1873. Mr Cochran left the ground freehold in his 1875 Will.

It is more than likely that Rev. McBride moved into the new manse for the last 20 years or so of his tenure. If he did, this would have been the only occupation of the building by a minister of Fahan Presbyterian Church because his three successors; Rev Lynn, Rev. Brewster and Rev Holmes all had Inch Church as a joint charge and all lived in the Inch Manse as described earlier.

What irony after all the struggles to get a manse in the first place.



The former Fahan Manse

When the EDUCATIONAL ENDOWMENTS (IRELAND) ACT 1885 was affected in 1893 the Rev. J.B. McBride and a James Lamberton were the joint trustees of the Manse and it's adjoining land. It then, like it's sister manse in Inch became registered in the name of the Derry Presbytery's Education Board.

The property was rented out for many years from 1896 until 1951 but after a tenant moved out at the end of that year it was decided to sell the property. It achieved a price of £2000

Letters of introduction and accreditation taken by Rev. J.

B. McBride to America.

ON BEHALF OF THE

FAHAN CONGREGATION,

COUNTY DONEGAL, PRESENTED BY THEIR MINISTER, THE **REV. J. B. M'BRIDE, A.B., Q.U.I.**

The congregation of Fahan lies in the Barony of Innishowen. It was formed at the commencement of the 18th Century and from its geographical position, was always small. There are at present 75 families claiming connection with it. By a united and spirited effort, and with the aid of friends, we raised a large sum of money to purchase the tenant-right of a small farm, so that we might secure two acres of the same in perpetuity on which to build a Manse for our Minister. After building and enjoying the house for a few years, the next landlord discovered a flaw in the lease, took advantage of it, and ejected us from both Manse and farm, with 'a very small compensation'! Our existence as a congregation depends very much on the success of the present undertaking---viz, the building, of another Manse, as without a house we cannot support a minister. We are unable to meet the present emergency, and our friends here, in the present crisis of our Church, have very heavy calls upon themselves, and cannot help us. Under these circumstances, our beloved minister, the Rev. J. B. McBride, with great self-denial, has consented to leave his family and risk the perils of the deep to solicit aid from our generous, liberal, and warmhearted friends in a far country. And we pray that God may preserve, watch over, and bless him in his labour of love, and bring him back in safety, and that our appeal through him may not be in vain.

Signed on behalf of the Congregation,

THOMAS WALLACE, Clerk, of Session.

JOSEPH CUNNINGHAM, Secretary of Committee.

It is hereby certified that, the Rev. John B. McBride is an esteemed and respected member of the Presbytery of Derry, that the accompanying statement of the case of his Congregation is correct, that we grant him leave to go to America for the purpose of raising funds toward the Erection of a Manse in the room of the one of which the Congregation has been deprived, and that we most cordially recommend his application for aid in this good and necessary undertaking to the sympathy and generous support of the Christian community in that country.

Signed, by order of Presbytery, at Londonderry, this
19th day of October, 1869,

THOMAS CROSKERY, Moderator.
ROBERT ROSS, Clerk of Presbytery.

From Rev. Richard Smyth M.A., Professor of Oriental Literature and Hermeneutics, and Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland:

I understand the Rev. John B. McBride, Minister of the Presbyterian congregation of Fahan, county Donegal, is engaged in collecting funds for the erection of a Manse. The Manse, formally belonging to the congregation, was, a few years ago, wrested from the trustees through a flaw in the lease, which was taken advantage of by the landlord – a Roman Catholic. The case is one of great hardship, and has excited the sympathy of the General Assembly. On account, however, of the number of demands upon the Assembly's Manse funds, it has been found impracticable to afford adequate relief to the congregation. Having been convener of a committee of the General Assembly in charge of the case, which terminated so disastrously for the congregation, I am deeply interested in the success of Mr. M'Bride's efforts, and I shall have great satisfaction in hearing that, through his exertions, the congregation – which is not large – has been delivered from a position of anxiety and embarrassment.

RICHARD SMYTH.

Londonderry, Oct. 25, 1869.

From .Rev. H. S. McKee, D.D., LL.D., Hon. M.R.S.L., Professor of Latin and Greek:

The Rev. John B. M'Bride, B.A., is personally well-known to me, and with the facts recorded in his printed statementor very limited means, is one of great hardship and deserves the sympathy of all who can render him assistance.

As he intends to seek aid from the friends of the Gospel in America, I cordially recommend him to their attention, and generous liberality.

(Signed)

H. S. McKee, D.D., L.L.D., Hon. M.R.S.L.

Magee College, Londonderry,

October 26, 1869.

From Rev. John Rodgers, Professor of Sacred Rhetoric and Catechetics, Theological College; Belfast, and Moderator of the General Assembly for the Years 1866-67: *I know the "Fahan Case" well. It is known and deplored by the entire Presbyterian Church in Ireland.*

It is a sad and telling illustration of the present iniquitous condition of the law as regulating the occupancy of land in this country.

The minister and people of Fahan, like others, have been robbed, but then the robbery is commenced, carried on, and consummated, under the strong hand of law – I regret to add British law.

But the Congregation require to erect a house for their Minister in place of that which, by no fault of theirs, they have lost. Owing to recent legislation in Church matters in Ireland, the demands on the Presbyterian community will be, and indeed are already heavy and numerous. In these circumstances offers of assistance have been made by many Christian friends in America, and encouraged by these, the Rev. J. B. M'Bride proposes to visit the States.

I have the pleasure of an intimate acquaintance with Mr. M'Bride, and feel it to be but a simple duty to say that my admiration of him is equal to my knowledge of that Brother.

He was a distinguished Student of the Queen's University in Ireland and he is an able Minister, and he appeals, in this case, to all who oppose freedom, justice, and Christianity, to tyranny and oppression.

JOHN RODGERS.

Belfast 13th October, 1869.

From Rev. H. P. Charlton, Burt, Editor of 'Irish Christian Treasury':

Being minister of the, Presbyterian Congregation adjacent to that of the Rev. J. B. M'Bride, A.B., and being intimately acquainted with all the circumstances that compel him to undertake the arduous work of raising funds for the Erection of a Manse, I feel it both a privilege and a duty to bear my humble testimony to the strong claims his case has on the sympathy of the Christian public.

His Congregation though poor and few in number, are spirited, and willing to contribute liberally for the Erection of another residence for their minister. The demands, however, upon them, and all our Congregations, in the altered circumstances of our Church, must press heavily for some time, and therefore the Rev. J. B. M'Bride, who was a distinguished Scholar in the Queen's University, and who is regarded by his brethren in the ministry as an able minister, and a man of high principle and honour, has resolved to meet the drudgery of going out to solicit aid from liberal and sympathising members of the Church of Christ in America. I wish him the success his case merits, and bid him God-speed.

H. P. CHARLTON.

The Manse, Burt, October, 1869.

From Rev. J. L. Porter, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Biblical Criticism, Theological College, Belfast:

I beg to recommend the ease of the Fahan Manse, at present advocated by my friend the Rev. John B. M'Bride, as one deserving of the sympathy and aid of a generous Christian public.

J. L. PORTER, D.D.
College Park, Belfast,
12th October, 1869.

From Rev. David Wilson, D.D., Limerick, Moderator of the General Assembly for the Years 1864-65:

Limerick, October 15th, 1869.

My Dear Sir – I regret the necessity that is upon you to make an effort to obtain a new Manse for the Fahan Congregation. When Moderator of Assembly, I recollect the case was brought before the Church. Your case has only to be stated to elicit the practical sympathy of true Christians.

I trust your present effort will be crowned with success, and have much pleasure in recommending the claims of the Fahan Congregation, represented by you, to the Christian public wherever you may have the opportunity of stating them. – I am, very faithfully yours,

DAVID WILSON.

From Rev. Henry Wallace, Professor of Christian Ethics, Theological College, Belfast:

I am well acquainted with the facts respecting the Manse of the Congregation of Fahan, County Donegal. The statement of the case being authenticated by the Presbytery of Derry, will, I trust, engage the sympathies of Christians on behalf of Mr. M'Bride and his Congregation.

H. WALLACE

Professor of Christian Ethics, Belfast.

Windsor, Belfast,

October 7th, 1869.

From Rev. J. T. M'Gaw B.A., Professor of Logic, Belles-Lettres, and, Rhetoric:

I hereby certify that I am acquainted with the circumstances in which the Presbyterian Congregation of Fahan (Co. Donegal, Ireland), have been unjustly deprived of their valuable Manse and Farm, and that I believe the Rev. J. B. M'Bride and his flock have peculiar and very urgent claims upon the practical sympathy and generous aid of all sections of the Church of Christ.

J. T. M'Gaw, B.A., Professor of Logic, Belles-Lettres,
and Rhetoric.

Magee College, Londonderry, 27th Oct., 1869.