The Crowe gentry of Ennis – Early origins and Robert Crowe, merchant[a] [1]

Philip Crowe[b]

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Crowe gentry [2] played a prominent role in the economic and political life of County Clare. One family member was Robert Crowe, a prosperous Ennis merchant, who was active in the civic affairs of the town from 1733 to 1770.[3] His memorial stone is now located in the interior of the recently refurbished section of the Ennis Friary,[c] having been removed from the outer face of the south wall. The memorial is about 2 metres tall and has Romanesque columns either side of an inscription, greatly weathered after more than two centuries exposed to the elements. The inscription reads: 'This tomb was erected by Mr. Robt. Crowe of Ennis for him & family Dec the 4th 177[?]'. The final numeral of the year is missing as a result of damage to the stone but a record of the inscription shows it to have been 1772.[4]



Memorials to his grandson and great grandson are in St Columba's Church of Ireland on Bindon Street -- Thomas Crowe (1777-1855) of Abbeyfield House[5] in Ennis and Thomas Crowe (1803-1877) of Dromore.[6] The genealogies of these two Thomas Crowes appear in Burke's *History of the Landed Gentry.*[7]

[a] This is a revised version of an article titled 'The Crowe gentry of County Clare: origins and history' published in *The Other Clare*, Vol.40, 2016, pages 53-60.

[b] The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Luke McInerney of London in writing and providing source material on the medieval and the early modern history of the McEnchroes.

[c] This was a Franciscan friary established under the patronage of the ruling O'Brien clan in the mid-thirteenth century. After the suppression of the monasteries in the sixteenth century it became a place of worship for the Church of Ireland and continued as such until the late nineteenth century when it fell into ruins. The building is classified as a National Monument of Ireland. See http://www.franciscans.ie/ennis-friary/.

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There is a branch of the Crowe gentry which has not previously been identified and documented. This 'forgotten' branch descends from James Crowe (*c.*1712-1774), the brother of the above-mentioned Robert Crowe.[8] This lineage will be the subject of a later paper.

MacLysaght writes that 'all Crowes in their homeland, Thomond[d], are of native Irish stock'.[9] An early version of the name was Mac Conchradha, from a rare personal name Conchraidh, later anglicised as Mac Enchroe and other variants before ultimately being truncated to its modern form, Crowe. There is a reference to 'the warlike Mac Concroes' (*Mic Concróich cathéchtacha*) in the mid-fourteenth century text *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh* ('Triumphs of Turlough') about the wars in Thomond. The reference would appear to be to the McEnchroe sept of west Clare.[10] By the middle of the nineteenth century, all variants other than Crowe had become extinct in Ireland. They do not appear in Griffith's Valuation[e] in any of the 32 counties, nor subsequently in the censuses of 1901 and 1911. In contrast, there were 2,218 people named Crowe in Co. Clare in the census of Ireland in 1911.[11] The variant spelling McEncroe (as distinct from McEnchroe) has survived elsewhere. In Australia, for example, a search of the 2015 landline telephone directories for all states and territories located 29 subscribers named McEncroe, and none with other variants except Crowe of whom there are many.[12] [13]

People with the name Crowe in Ulster, especially with the 'e' omitted, are likely to have English roots. In England the name is found most commonly in the county of Norfolk.[14]

A name very similar to McEncroe about which there is a lot of confusion is *McEnroe*, a name made prominent in the recent past by the tennis player, John McEnroe. Some published

[d] Thomond was the Gaelic kingdom of the O'Brien dynastic clan which at one time encompassed much of present-day Co. Clare, Co. Limerick and parts of Co. Tipperary.

[e] The formal title of this work is the *Primary Valuation of Ireland*. It was a property valuation survey carried out in the mid-nineteenth century under the supervision of Sir Richard Griffith. The survey involved the detailed valuation of every taxable piece of agricultural land and built property on the island of Ireland and was published county by county between the years 1847 and 1864. Although only the names of heads of household were recorded, it remains useful today as a partial 'census substitute'. The nineteenth-century Irish censuses were lost as a result of the Irish Civil War and other misadventures.

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sources,[15] and many sites on the internet, give *McEnroe* as a variant of McEnchroe with both having Mac Conchradha as the common progenitor. Armorial bearings displayed for *McEnroe* on these internet sites are similar to those 'confirmed' for the Crowe gentry of Co. Clare in 1860 (q.v.). However Rev. Patrick Woulfe[f] was of the view that *McEnroe* originated from Scottish Gaelic– from *Mac Conrubha* rather than Mac Conchradha.[16]

Land and lineage



The origins of *Clann Meic Conchradha* of Thomond are in the parish of Inagh in the barony of Inchiquin. James Frost records that the 'Mac Encroes of Inagh' fought on the side of Murchadh Ó Brien in the Battle of Loghraska in 1317.[17] This is believed to refer to the Mac Enchroe sept and is the earliest known recording of that clan. The parish is located west of Ennis in County Clare. One of the townlands in the parish is Skaghvickincrow, meaning 'MacEnchroe's hawthorn bush or thorn bush'.[g]

In 1618 the manuscripts of the *Great Office Inquisitions* held in the Petworth House Archive in Sussex, England, show that the McEnchroe lands in the townland of Skagh and the adjacent townland of Shelshane (otherwise Soillsane and Sileshaun), both in the parish of Inagh.[18] These manuscripts have been transcribed by Luke McInerney from the original documents. He has provided details of the names of the McEnchroe landholders, the land areas of each, and the sub-townland subdivisions. They are listed in full in the published version of this article.[19]

[f] Luke McInerney considers the earlier work of Rev. Woulfe to be the definitive authority on the origins of Irish names.

[g] For details of the modern parish, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inagh. Skaghvickincrow is the last townland mentioned. For a detailed map of the townland's location, see https://www.townlands.ie/clare/inchiquin/inagh/cloonanaha/skaghvickincrow/

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The pattern of the McEnchroe landholdings in the *Great Office Inquisitions* shows it to have been a product of the traditional Gaelic system of collective proprietorship of hereditary lands and, to this end, exhibit the operation of partible inheritance.[h 20] Landholding kinsmen comprised the *derbhfine*[i] of the sept – a select grouping of kinsmen descended from a great-grandfather. The use of patronyms by some of the McEnchroes is evidence of wider kinship among these landholders and indicates the lands descended to them through inheritance from a more remote ancestor.[21]

In general, the quality of land held collectively among the McEnchroes was of mixed type. Located as it was in west Clare, areas of pasturage were dispersed among lesser quality land parcels and bog, much of which would have suited cattle grazing. The chief agricultural practices would have been 'boolying' or seasonal transhumance[j], but some tillage and crop cultivation may have been practiced on the smaller fertile parcels of land, as it was elsewhere in Gaelic Thomond.

The *Books of Survey and Distribution* show that the McEnchroe clan still occupied these traditional lands in 1641. We might see this in a positive light reflecting the cultural cohesion of the clan, even in those times of great change. However, as later events would show, this was a critical weakness. 'Adapting' families were able to take advantage of the opportunities in the newly-established market economy to buy and sell land without the constraints of traditional clan obligations. As a 'traditional' clan, the MacEnchroes 'became increasingly marginalised, both socio-economically and politically'.[22]

Most of the traditional lands -- including those of all twelve MacEnchroe families in the townland of Skaghvickincrow ('MacEnchroe's thorn bush') -- were confiscated in 1641 in

[h] Under Gaelic law the deceased person's estate was divided equally among the heirs. This contrasts with the English system of primogenitor in those times in which the first-born son inherited most or all of the estate.
[i] See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Derbfine
[j] Booleying is mentioned in Ireland's ancient Brehon Laws, and dates back to the Early Medieval period or even earlier. The practice was widespread in the west of Ireland up to the time of the Second World War. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transhumance.

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favour of the Earl of Inchiquin and others.[23] However, there were some exceptions. Mahone McEncroe and Teige McEncroe retained their lands in Ballymacrogan in the parish of Rath. In addition, Petty's 1659 'census' shows Hugh McEncroe had retained his land in the townland of Carrowkelly (Carrowkeel in Inagh in the 1641 survey), and James McEncroe his land in Boghersallagh. The townland of Carrowkeel West today is adjacent to the modern boundary of Inagh. All the above townlands in and around the modern parish of Inagh are in the barony of Inchiquin, suggesting that up to the mid-seventeenth century the chief landholding branches of the lineage were settled on hereditary lands in a relatively compact geographical area.

McEncroes in the seventeenth century

Members of this clan appear in the Inchiquin Manuscripts[k] in connection with various legal matters associated with the O'Briens of Thomond. Nevertheless, Luke McInerney advises that they were not a hereditary learned family in the Brehon system:[l]

> McEncroes do not appear in Papal documents concerning church benefices; their land holdings, based primarily around Inagh, did not consist of termon (i.e. ecclesiastical) lands; they were not known to have been custodians of reliquaries or other high-status religious items which would suggest an earlier *airchinneach* role or *comharba*; there does not seem to be any references to members of the McEncroe lineage writing or notarising brehon charters and similar documents in Hardiman's *Ancient Irish Deeds*; and they do not feature in the marginalia in Egerton 88 and 89.[24]

McInerney continues: 'What we can say with a degree of confidence is that they were a landholding family, of a long lineage, but middle-tier in terms of status in medieval Thomond'.[25]

[k] http://www.nli.ie/en/list/latest-news.aspx?article=89688e73-15dc-4eca-a02a-2c8f907e7e7d

[l] For hereditary learned families, see Luke McInerney, *Clerical and learned lineages of Medieval Co. Clare: A survey of the fifteenth-century papal registers* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014; and for the Brehon system of law, see http://eprints.maynoothuniversity.ie/5663/1/NH-Brehon-Law.pdf

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The branch of the McEncroes whose descendants became the Crowe gentry of Clare in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries conformed early to the Established Church, probably before *c*.1700 since they do not appear in the Covert Rolls.[26] They adapted quickly to the new political reality, and prospered as a result.

The names of various McEncroes appear in 40 of the Inchiquin manuscripts over the period from 1606 to 1700, most often as witnesses, jurors and conveyancers.[27] These manuscripts, collectively known as the Inchiquin Papers, relate to the ownership and management of the estates belonging to the ruling O'Brien families including the Earls of Inchiquin and Earls of Thomond.[28] The name of Inchiquin is thought to derive from *inis*, island or river meadow, and *Uí Chuinn*, the family O'Quinn.[29]

Four McEncroe names stand out in this collection. One of those is Hugh McEncroe, the name appearing over a span of 93 years, so obviously referring to two or more individuals of the same name. These people, and the periods in which they appear in the manuscripts, can be summarised as follows: Hugh, the elder (1606); James (1641-1677); Hugh, the younger (1638-1699); John (1646-1678); and Laurence (1689-1700). Just a few of those entries will be touched on here: those relating to Conor O'Brien (1617-1651) and his wife Máire ni Mahon (otherwise Máire Rua, *c.*1615-*c.*1686); and entries for Laurence Chroe, steward of the estate of Conor and Máire Rua's son, Sir Donough O'Brien (1642-1717).

Following the death of her first husband, Daniel Neylon of Dysart O'Dea, Máire Rua married Conor O'Brien of Leamaneh in October 1638.[30] Hugh Chroe was one of the witnesses to their pre-nuptial settlement and 'livery of seisin'.[31] Later during the civil war of 1641 to 1653 (Confederate Wars) Gregory Hickman of Barntick, Co. Clare, alleged that Conor O'Brien, accompanied by his wife Máire Rua, raided his farm and stole 400 sheep, 'together with three & thirty horses & mares', and an unstated number of cattle. Also mentioned is the loss of income from mortgages and tenancies. Further, Hickman claimed that Máire Rua killed one of his servants.[32] Although charged with murder, she was never convicted by a court

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and in 1664 was 'pardoned' for her alleged role in the rebellion. Hugh McIncroe[33] and three others posted sureties for her while she was awaiting trial. Hickman also accused James Mac Encroe of 'Inagh Mc Tucroe' (Skaghvickincrow) of stealing property on or about the same date as the raid by Conor O'Brien but on a much smaller scale – that he 'with force of armes tooke away of this dependent's household stuffe, one brass killen, one side sadle and the lockes of this deponent's house.. . three cows. . . and other household goods'.[34]

On 9 October 1649 Hugh Chroe was a witness to a 'feoffment'[35] by Conor O'Brien of Leameneh which appears to be his will in all but name. It provides for the distribution of his assets to Máire Rua, their children and other family members.[36] It is probably no coincidence that Oliver Cromwell had arrived in Ireland only two months earlier. Conor was killed in a skirmish with Cromwellian forces near to Inchicronan in 1651.

The last mentioned of the McEncroes in the *Inchiquin Manuscripts*, Laurence Chroe (elsewhere M'Encroe and Crowe), was the steward of Sir Donough O'Brien's estate from at least 1690.[37] This role anticipates that later undertaken by members of the Crowe gentry as agents for the Wyndham estate in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Estate stewards, later called estate agents, acted for substantial (often absentee) landowners. They were responsible for managing the estate, making agreements with tenant farmers, and collecting rents. They were unpopular with the native Irish, especially so at the time of the Great Famine in the mid-nineteenth century when many landlords 'cleared' their estates of tenant farmers to make way for the more profitable grazing of sheep and cattle.

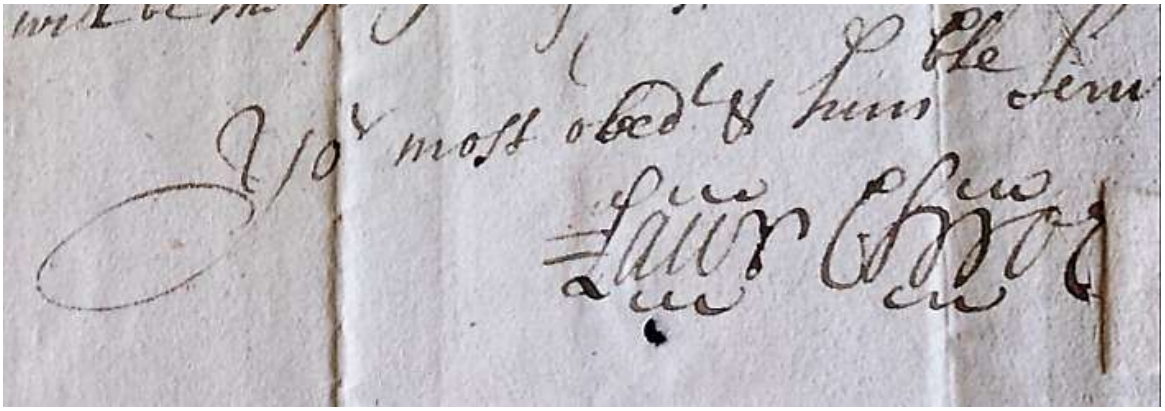
Not all landlord representatives were unsympathetic to the welfare of tenant farmers and agricultural labourers. In a letter dated 10 March 1691 to Sir Donough, then living in England, Laurence Chroe reports on famine conditions in Clare at that time and seeks relief for estate workers:

> Your honour cannot believe the condition the poor people of this county for they are famish and such as lives cannot live. As for the Kilkeran labourers they are most miserable for they have neither bread nor milk. . . .There is no corn for them but I

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should think if your honour was pleased to let them have a cow to each of them, otherwise they will perish.[38]

As was the custom at the time, Laurence Chroe concludes his letters to Sir Donough in florid style – 'Your most obedient and humble servant' – and his distinctive signature.



Elsewhere, Laurence is recorded assisting two Catholic priests in Co. Clare during the severe suppression of the Catholic Church in 1704 in the reign Queen Anne. He posted sureties of £50 (equivalent to about £10,000 today[39]) each for Fr. William Halloran of Kilnasoolagh and Tomfinlough, and Fr. Simon Shinnor of Kilfintinan and Killeely. On the first occurrence his name is shown as M'Encroe and in the latter as Crowe.[40]

A record in the Register of Deeds dated 16 November 1721 shows that Laurence Crowe had a son, James Crowe, inn holder of Ennis.[41] Given the chronology of events, this James Crowe might have been the father of Robert the Ennis merchant and James the attorney (see below).

A person described in the Minchin family genealogy as 'the notorious duellist Crowe' could have been a third son of James the inn holder. This Crowe killed Charles Minchin of Annagh, Co. Tipperary in a duel in 1736.[42] In another source he is identified more specifically as Thomas Crowe of Ennis.[43] Nothing more has been found about this Thomas Crowe other

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than a brief news item extracted by Philip Crosslé from *Faulkner's Dublin Journal* published in 1737: 'Thos Crow stands indicted for calling Chas Minchin, late of Anna Co. Tipp by surrender for mort'.[m] [44] To 'call' or 'call out' meant to challenge to a duel. The meaning of 'surrender for mort' is uncertain but may refer to Thomas surrendering himself to the authorities to be tried for unlawful killing.

The practice of duelling with its associated code of honour, rules and rituals had its origin in the Italian Renaissance.[45] It spread quickly to other European countries arriving in Ireland with the New English.[46] Up to the 1760s the rapier was the weapon of choice after which the use of pistols became increasingly common.[47] A duellist causing a fatality could be charged with murder, though this did not inevitably occur. Being seen as a 'private encounter', authorities often turned a 'blind eye' to the matter.[48] Duelling was most often associated with the aristocracy and the military, but it also came to be a feature of other classes with a claim to being 'people of honour'. The Lucas diarist[n] recorded in 1741 that he, his brother and cousins received instruction in the art of swordsmanship from fencing master Theobald Anderson.[49] Lucas was the nephew of 'Aunt Chroe'[50] who was Rebecca Davenport, wife of Robert Crowe the Ennis merchant.[51]

The descendants of Robert Crowe, the Ennis merchant

There were two branches of Crowe gentry in County Clare in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – one descended from Robert Crowe (*c.*1710-*c.*1772), the other from his younger brother James Crowe (*c.*1712-1774). This section deals with the former of those two branches.

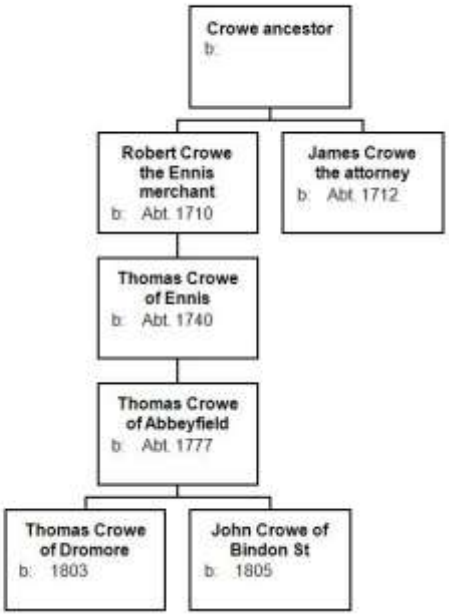
[m] I thank Peter Beirne for his help with the transliteration. This original issue of the newspaper containing this item could not be found.

[n] Lucas appears to have been the eldest son of John Lucas, a farmer of Drumcavan, Co. Clare. The diarist's given name is unknown. The diaries are incomplete and deal with the years 1740 and 1741.

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Robert Crowe the Ennis Merchant was born before 1712. His wife Rebecca was the daughter of Thomas Davenport, an apothecary in Ennis, and Anne Lardner.[52] Robert was greatly involved in the civic affairs of the town, his name appearing in the Corporation Book of Ennis 34 times over a period of 37 years, though never in the higher positions of Provost, Deputy-Provost, or Burgess.[53] Brief references in the Lucas diary suggest he may have manufactured beer, and traded in livestock and agricultural produce.[54] His precise date of death is not known – only that he died before 18 December 1775, the date on which he was referred to as the *late* Robert Crowe in a newspaper notice of the marriage of his daughter Anne to Patrick Keane.[55]

Figure 1: The Crowe gentry of County Clare



All of Robert's inheriting sons in an unbroken line over seven generations from 1740 to 1922 were named Thomas. The first was *Thomas Crowe of Ennis* (*c*.1740-1801) who married Elizabeth Wainwright (1740-1815), daughter of Peter Wainwright and Sarah Hartstongue of Dublin.[56] According to a family history source, their marriage licence was issued on 22 December 1764.[57] Like his father he was active in the affairs of the Ennis Corporation.

Thomas of Ennis became the first of that lineage to take on the role of estate agent for George Wyndham, 3rd Earl of Egremont.[o 58] He remained Egremont's agent until his death in 1801.

[o] His immediate predecessor was his uncle James Crowe (1712-1774) who was Wyndham's agent for just a year or two.

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Even though he was not the first born, *Thomas Crowe of Abbeyfield House* (1777-1855) was almost certainly the inheriting son of Thomas of Ennis.[59] The first child was James Parker Crowe, born about 1774, but for reasons unknown he and a second son were overlooked in favour of Thomas.[60] He married Ellen Tymons[61] of Ballykett in the parish of Kilrush[62] on 13 April 1799[63] and they had fifteen children.

Initially Thomas Crowe and family were living at Ballyvaskin in the far west of the county. In January 1799 ten of his bullocks were 'houghed' (disabled by cutting the hamstrings) by rebels during the Rising of 1798.[64] Others targeted in the same manner during the Rebellion included Edmond Armstrong of Lemenagh, son-in-law of Robert Crowe and Rebecca Davenport.[65] Three men were convicted of the attack on Thomas Crowe's cattle and hanged at Ennistymon on 16 March 1799.[66] Soon after his father Robert's death in 1801,[67] he took out a lease on Abbeyfield House, now the Garda Station, in the town of Ennis.

Opposite Abbeyfield House today on the bank of the Fergus River is an engraved stone known as Steele's Rock, emblazoned with a red 'lion rampant'. It has become something of a minor tourist attraction. As the story goes, Thomas Steele – friend and supporter of the Irish political leader Daniel O'Connell – would stand there in the hope of catching a glimpse of Thomas Crowe's daughter, Matilda. Others give the name of Steele's romantic interest as Eileen.[68] [69] However, the name Eileen Crowe does not appear in the Church of Ireland, Drumcliff parish register. Matilda's baptism does not appear there either although her marriage to Scotsman, James Johnston, in 1837 does. Her death certificate shows she was born about 1816 having died on 11 August 1880 in Tunbridge Wells, England, aged 64 years.[70]

On the death of his father in 1801, Thomas of Abbeyfield House took over as Egremont's agent. Apparently he was assisted by his son John Crowe (1805-1851) and later by John's younger brother Wainwright Crowe (q.v.).[71] On the death of Egremont in 1837, his eldest illegitimate son (he had many) George Wyndham inherited the estate. Colonel Wyndham embarked on a scheme of consolidating his landholdings by removing smaller tenants.[72]

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They were given the option of receiving compensation up to £10, or assisted emigration to Canada. In a letter to Colonel Wyndham on 4 June 1843, Thomas Crowe comments: 'I cannot say whether there will be an outbreak [of protests] or not, but I am quite satisfied that such is expected, by the lower orders particularly'.[73] *The Nation* reported in 1849 that Thomas Crowe had been responsible for demolishing 46 houses thus displacing 232 people.[74]

At this point there is a divergence in the lineage into two branches: one descending from the first son, Thomas Crowe of Dromore (1803-1877); the other from the second son, John Crowe of Bindon Street (1805-1851).

Thomas Crowe of Dromore entered Trinity College Dublin in 1820, undertook his legal training at Gray's Inn in London, and was admitted to the Irish Bar in 1830. He married Charlotte Isabella Forster Hume (*c*.1809-1907), daughter of William Hoare Hume, MP for Humewood, Co. Wicklow.[75] He became a powerful figure in Clare occupying the positions of High Sheriff and Deputy Lieutenant.

In 1851 Thomas of Dromore took over his father's position as agent for Colonel Wyndham. His uncle John Crowe, who had been performing the role of agent, died in that year and his father, Thomas of Abbeyfield House, was no doubt in failing health as he approached the end of his life. At some point Thomas of Dromore's younger brother Wainwright Crowe (1816-1873) assumed day-to-day responsibility, even though Thomas of Dromore remained nominally the agent.

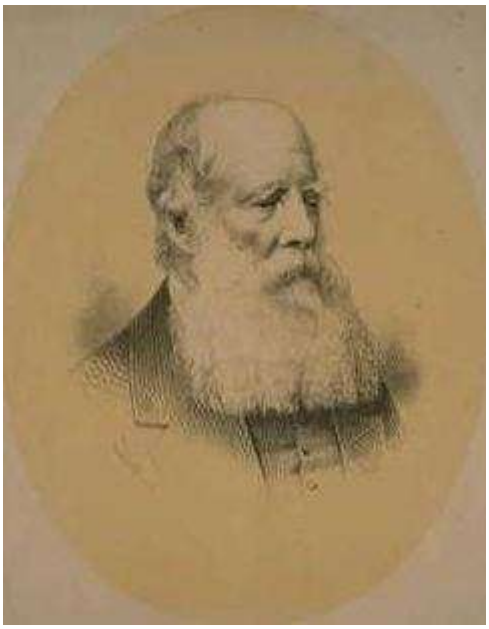
The other branch -- *John Crowe of Bindon Street* (1805-1851) -- descends from the second son of Thomas Crowe of Abbeyfield House. He entered Trinity College Dublin in 1822,[76] and subsequently purchased for £450 a commission in the 93rd Sutherland Highlander Regiment.[77] He served in the British West Indies from 1823 to 1829, rising to the rank of Captain.[78] On 18 August 1829 John Crowe married Frances Elizabeth Stather (1805-1899) at Nevis, British West Indies, the daughter of Ebenezer Stather and Anne Daniell. They

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returned to Ennis, and bought a residence at 8 Bindon Street.[79] John Crowe died here of 'malignant typhoid scarlatina' on 24 March 1851.[80] The accompanying image shows the entrance to the house as it appeared in 2016.

John Crowe and Frances Stather's eldest son, Thomas Carlisle Crowe (1830-1917), was baptised at St. George's parish, Island of Dominica.[81] In 1846 Colonel George Wyndham recommended him for admission to the East India Company Military Seminary at Addiscombe near London.[82]

Frances Stather's younger sister, Maria Moreton Stather (1810-1860) married the Anglican minister Rev.William Branwhite Clarke at Aldersgate, England in 1832.[83] He was the archetypical clergyman/scholar of the time with interests in literature and science. Together with their two children, they immigrated to New South Wales in 1839 where he was assigned to the parish of St Peter's, Campbelltown. He was soon re-assigned to other positions but returned to Campbelltown in 1846.



It was in his capacity as a geologist that Clarke gained prominence in the Australian colonies. He discovered particles of gold in the Blue Mountains in 1841 and at other locations in the following decade. Apparently he was discouraged from publicising these finds by Governor Sir George Gibbs who feared the social and political upheaval that a gold rush would inevitable create. After the death of Gipps, Clarke was appointed scientific adviser to the NSW government and served as its geological adviser. Clarke wrote to Charles Darwin after reading the first edition of *Origin of Species* published in 1859: 'What a wonderful book, but you have left out some observations I have made which really would make it better'. Darwin included those



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observations in later editions.[84] In 1861 his pioneering work was recognised with a £3,000 grant from the NSW government and he was subsequently awarded many academic and scientific honours, including a medal from the Royal Society of New South Wales.

On 23 November 1859, the above mentioned Thomas Carlisle Crowe married Ellen Maynard Clarke, eldest daughter of Rev. William Clarke. They were married by the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney at Rev William Clarke's own parish of St Thomas, North Sydney. Thomas Carlisle Crowe was then a Captain in the Bombay Horse Artillery. He retired with the rank of Major-General. This could well be the person whose portrait hung on the wall at the main Crowe residence at Gobarralong since he seems to be the only Crowe family member who achieved high military rank.[85]

William Crowe formerly of the 73rd Regiment of Foot was granted land at Appin 16 km south of Campbelltown in 1816, but did not take up residence there until at least 1832 when their son Michael was born at Appin. William Crowe died in 1835 and is buried in St John's Old Catholic Cemetery at Campbelltown. Eleanor lived at Appin up to the year of her own death in 1878.[86] She too, along with their first child also named William, is buried with William Snr. at St John's Cemetery, Campbelltown. The presence of the Clarke family in New South Wales – especially with them living at Campbelltown for a while -- would account for William and Eleanor Crowe remaining in contact with the Crowes of County Clare, and for John Crowe providing a legacy for his distant relation (3rd cousin) James Crowe of Gobarralong in the 1850s.[87]

Concluding remarks

The Crowe protestant gentry were part of a small but influential upper middle class in County Clare in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. They were relatively big fish in a small pond. They did not reach great heights in the wider political and social worlds of Ireland and England. None received a knighthood or was elevated to the nobility, and only one family member achieved high military rank.

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However, their superior social rank is marked by the granting of a coat of arms in 1860. In that year Thomas Crowe of Dromore applied to Sir John Bernard Burke, Ulster King of Arms and Principal Herald of all Ireland, for recognition of the family's claim to *armiger*. The wording of the Principal Herald's document is tentative, referring to 'the Armorial Bearings heretofore born by himself and his family (which claims an Irish origin) do not appear to have been registered'.[88] The wording of the statement is hardly an unequivocal endorsement. It now seems clear the Crowes did not have a coat of arms in earlier times. The family line had increased in affluence and power only slowly over the three centuries since Murrough O'Brien acquiesced to the authority of the English Crown. It was only in the mid-nineteenth century that this lineage had achieved a level of status which warranted a coat of arms.



The father and grandfather of Thomas Crowe of Dromore are explicitly mentioned in the Chief Herald's proclamation; however there is no mention of his great grandfather, Robert Crowe the Ennis merchant. This is consistent with the genealogical symbol on the latter's memorial stone in Ennis Friary bring simply a rooster crowing.[89] Nonetheless, the application for a coat of arms was granted. As to whether it is legitimate for the descendants of James Crowe the attorney to use this coat of arms is debateable.

Folktales in County Clare attest to the general perception of the affluence and high standing of the Crowe gentry. One such story tells of a poor man digging under a 'white-thorn bush' in the townland of Skaghvickencrow and 'finding so much money as to make rich men of himself and descendants'. [90] [91]

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During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, most of the descendants of this lineage re-located elsewhere, mainly to the UK. The last of them was Thomas Crowe (1922-2010) who grew up on the family estate in Clare but lived much of his life in England. In later life he presented classical music programs on BBC Radio 3. His informal style greatly endeared him to listeners.[92] In 2007 he published a collection of short stories, a number of which are based on a lonely childhood in Ireland.[93] Tom Crowe was said to be 'conflicted in his identity': 'In England he was seen as Irish, and when in Ireland he was seen as English'.[94]

The descendants of James Crowe, the progenitor of the 'forgotten branch', did not prosper to the same degree as did those of his brother Robert. Failed business ventures and an inheritance dispute resulted in the wealth accumulated by James Crowe ending up in the hands of others. These matters are addressed in an article published in *The Other Clare* in 2017.[95]

Notes and References

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