

WILLIAM WILLOUGHBY COLE

January 1807 –
November 1886



Slide 1 above

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen

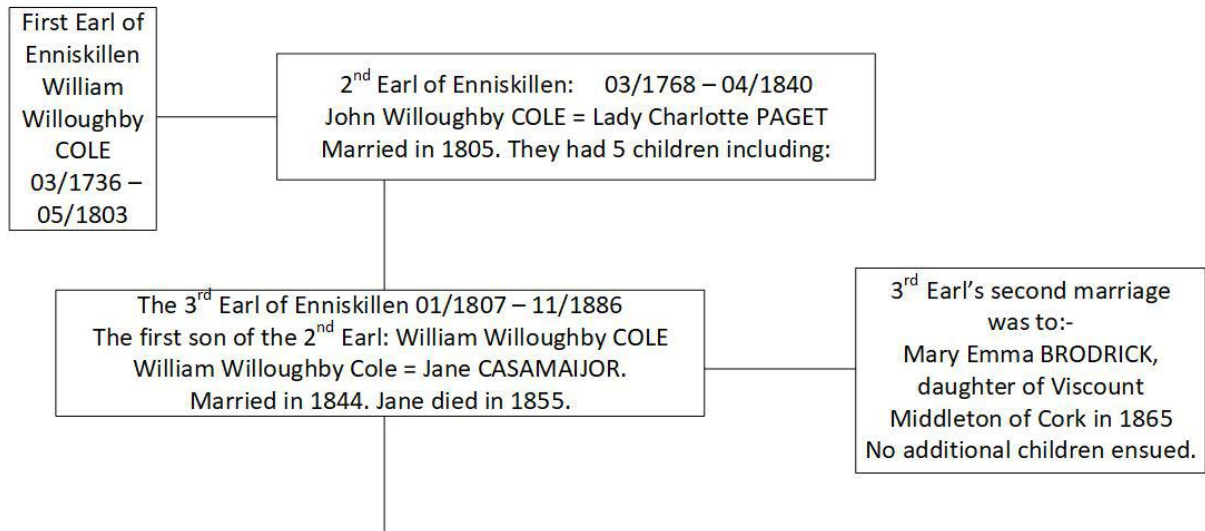
Today I'd like to describe the life and times of William Willoughby Cole, 3rd Earl of Enniskillen. I'll be covering the following aspects of his long life:

1. His family tree and his significant others
2. His interests in geology
3. The Cole dynasty's roots
4. His psychology
5. His early life
6. The attempted assassination
7. Willoughby Cole during the traumatic years of the Irish Famine
8. His management of the Workhouse at Enniskillen
9. His land holdings
10. And lastly: events following his demise.

Mervyn and I work in the Cole industry. His Cole is General Galbraith Lowry and because I live in Willoughby Place I got William Willoughby Cole.

The latter lived for 80 years but as I've got just 20 minutes to cover his life I'd like to start immediately by detailing Willoughby Cole's family history during the 19th Century. I handed out copies of his family tree earlier.

SLIDE 2



CHILDRENS NAMES	BORN	PASSED ON
John Willoughby Michael COLE died aged 5	12/1844	04/1850
Lowry Egerton COLE, subsequently 4th Earl of Enniskillen	12/1845	04/1924
Florence Mary COLE	08/1849	03/1924
Arthur Edward Casamaijor COLE	03/1851	08/1908
Alice Elisabeth COLE	02/1853	08/1931
Jane Evelyn COLE	04/1855	03/1941

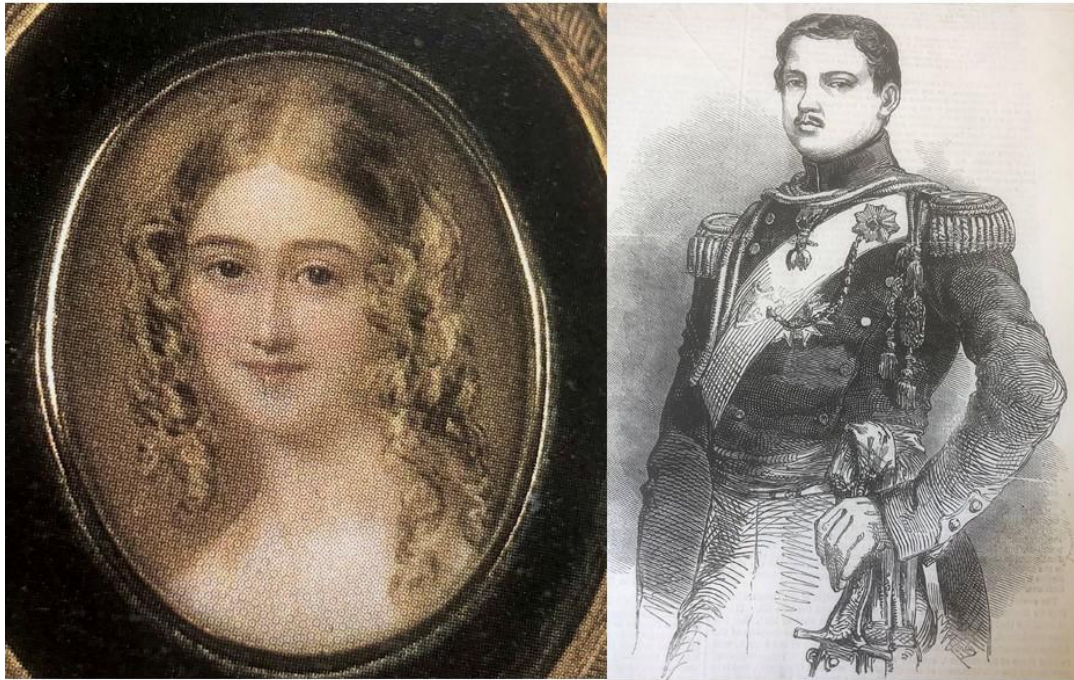
Lady Charlotte (see slide) – Willoughby Cole’s mother - was a daughter of the Earl of Uxbridge.

One of the 3rd Earl’s Uncles would have been General Galbraith Lowry Cole.

Of Willoughby Cole’s own children, his **second** son – another Lowry – subsequently became the fourth Earl in 1887. In full the latter was christened:- Lowry EGERTON Cole after Willoughby Cole’s fellow fossil Collector Sir Philip Egerton whom he first met while they were studying together at Christ Church Oxford.

I think we can also safely assume that Willoughby Cole’s first wife – Jane Casamaijor – was probably not of Irish stock.

SLIDE 3



Casa Maijor is Spanish for: the Noble House (i.e. of Bourbon). The Casamaijors were an offshoot of the Bourbon Dynasty which alternated with the Austrian Hapsburgs to supply Royals to most of the Kingdoms of Europe including Spain.

This is Jane on the left. The gent on the right is Charles de Bourbon: King of Naples and thus a relative of hers.

So my question for you is this. Given that Willoughby Cole was a fervent Orangeman for most of his life. Why did he marry the daughter of a Spanish Roman Catholic dynasty?

ANSWER:

Showing remarkable timing, Jane Casamaijor's family had emigrated to Bristol shortly before the first French Revolution rocked Europe. These Spanish immigrants became rich, using their inherited wealth to buy Sugar Plantations in the Caribbean. Bristol was capital of the British slave trade so it was a logical place for the Casamaijors to base themselves. But the Caribbean sugar market eventually collapsed - collateral damage of the Napoleonic Wars.

Some of the Casamaijors menfolk meanwhile had volunteered to serve the British East India Company – as by coincidence - had several of the Cole family including Galbraith Lowry who performed well out there.

So it is probable that India was where the two families first got to know each other. Jane was **born** in India but immigrated to Bristol – perhaps for educational reasons. And by this time her family had converted to the Church of England.

We believe that Willoughby Cole first met Jane at a soiree in Bristol and he duly proposed. They were married in 1844. Saint MacCartan's Cathedral has stained glass windows in memory of husband and wife.

Their marriage was both happy and fruitful as you could see in the family tree but sadly Jane died just 11 years later, shortly after childbirth.

Willoughby Cole was therefore a widower for the next 10 years. He re-married, to Emma Brodrick, daughter of Viscount Middleton from Cork. They had no further children.

I mentioned that Jane met Willoughby Cole in Bristol. So what was **he** doing there? There were 2 probable reasons why he was in Bristol:

First, the Cole family hailed originally from Devon so Willoughby Cole would still have had relatives in the West Country. One of his titles was Baron Grinstead; Grinstead is in Wiltshire where the Coles owned land. The literal meaning of the Christian name 'Willoughby' is: the willow trees by the farm which are plentiful in Devon.

Second: Willoughby Cole was an expert in fossils. It was his passion, and Bristol is close to Lyme Regis, part of the world-famous Jurassic Coast.

SLIDE 4



Willoughby Cole had originally gone to Oxford University where he majored in this new subject of Geology. He had several extremely enlightened lecturers there who directed his attention towards fossil fish.

SLIDE 5



He did not graduate – he had no need to. Instead he did the customary Tour of Europe. But in HIS case he visited Geology Museums only. He is probably the only man who ever lived that was proud to be called an old fossil. It was about this time he gained his best-known nickname: the great pirate. This was because any owner of fish fossils was fair game. He would visit other Collectors and not leave until he had added theirs to his own. He let nothing stand in his way – least of all: cost.

He knew the slopes of Cuilcagh better than anyone else and over the years he amassed 10,000 specimens of fish, at Florence Court – the best Collection in Europe. Towards the end of his life he sold them to the British Museum.

His father the 2nd Earl of Enniskillen didn't approve of his son's passion. He called it damned nonsense. But Willoughby slyly got around his old man's objections by inviting illustrious Collectors to Florence Court. These well-bred young scientists so charmed Cole Senior that Willoughby was able to continue buying for his collection.

He became an author by the way, but his only book was a catalogue of his fossil fish.

He was nearly 2 metres tall, that's 6 foot five inches in old money.

Willoughby Cole was self-evidently a man of his: Georgian/Early Victorian times. Originally, the Coles were an extended, prominent, land-owning and farming family in the South-West of England. The roots of his **local** ancestry began in the early 1600's when several members of the Cole family became Planters – i.e. active members of King James 1st 's Plantation of Ireland. They chose to live in County Fermanagh.

Willoughby Cole had many Titles during his long life: Baron Grinstead, Earl of Enniskillen, and Lord Enniskillen. He inherited such titles once the 2nd Earl died.

In his professional life he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. This is Britain's National Academy of Science.

During today's presentation: any figure I quote has been adjusted for inflation and as a rule of thumb: £1000 in 1886 would be worth £115,000 today.

The Coles generally made their money by military means –and/or by marrying rich heiresses. Willoughby Cole chose the latter strategy.

At the time of Willoughby Cole's birth in 1807, Great Britain had suffered several severe, recent shocks:

- The defeat, following the American War of Independence in 1783

- The resulting loss of revenue from the (former) American Colonies
- The first French Revolution of 1789 and
- The Irish Rebellion of 1798.

Why is it the French REVOLUTION but the Irish REBELLION?
Anyone know?
Answer: because the Irish revolt of 1798 FAILED.

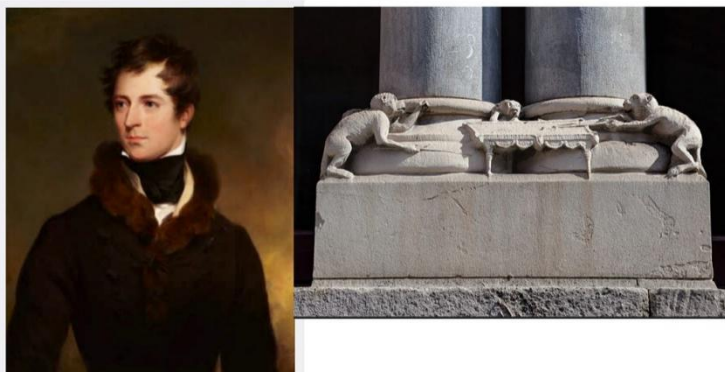
The English Aristocracy's birth-rate fell dramatically in this Period – particularly in regard to male heirs. This was because marriage had become too inbred as well as too insular. The reason was - obviously - to keep each Family's inheritance within the family which was why you married your first cousin.

Something had to give so the Aristocrats responded to this crisis by incorporating ALL of the titled families in Scotland, Wales and Ireland. That dramatically widened the gene pool. The aristo's started having male heirs again.

Although he chose a Spanish/ Indian girl as **his** bride, Willoughby Cole nonetheless benefitted from this Aristocratic open doors policy when it was time for him to take his place in British Society. He became "one of us".

After the Napoleonic Wars, British Society of the 1820's indulged in exhibitionism - if you've got it flaunt it. There was also an orgy of gambling.

SLIDE 6



Florence Court © National Trust

Viscount Willoughby Cole – by now a teenager – duly joined the Kildare Street Club. The stone images in the slide were photographed at the front of the Club. It shows several little monkeys playing billiards.

Of this Kildare Street Club the Dublin Author George Moore wrote:

'This Club is the oyster-bed into which all the eldest sons of the Anglo-Irish landed gentry fall. And there they remain, spending their days, drinking sherry and cursing Prime Minister Gladstone in a sort of dialect – a dead language about which the stupidity of the Club has preserved.'

Willoughby Cole also became a Member of Parliament for Fermanagh from 1832 until 1840 - when the 2nd Earl passed. After that he sat in the House of Lords as Baron Grinstead.

SLIDE 7



It's foolish to try to examine the psychology of anyone who has passed away so I can only note in passing that psychiatrists believe those who hoard or collect obsessively may be exhibiting obsessive-compulsive behaviour or OCD. Willoughby Cole was clearly an obsessive collector – of fossils. He was also such a heavy smoker that he went blind towards the end of his life. Obsessive Compulsive behaviour can be triggered by insecurity. But if true: why might Willoughby Cole have been insecure because - on the face of it - he had it all?

I mentioned earlier the shock to the Aristocracy from events such as the French Revolution. But there were other shocks - much closer to home - that could have contributed to insecurity:

- 1792: admittedly before his time: formation of the United Irishmen
- 1801: the Act of Union was passed, tying Ireland to Great Britain
- 1819 The Peterloo Massacre near Manchester. It was triggered because the authorities feared that large-scale protests could have sparked a revolution similar to the French Revolution.
- In 1823 when he was just 16 his father the 2nd Earl met with 2000 Ribbonmen in a field halfway between Florence Court and Swanlinbar. I don't know whether or not his son accompanied him that day.

Can anyone explain who the Ribbonmen were?
Thank you.

The Earl told the Ribbonmen that he was a good landlord and that all money raised in rent stayed within the County; furthermore that he was plainly NOT an absentee landlord.

He asked the Ribbonmen to kindly disperse and they agreed to do so on one condition that he did not lead any Orange Marches in the County. I should explain that in 1823 the Orange Order in Ireland had been formally closed down due to pressure from the Houses of Parliament. The 2nd Earl readily agreed to their demand – and they duly dispersed. I would just add that Willoughby Cole re-established the Orange Order and supported it financially from 1846 onwards.

- And lastly, in 1848 there was a SECOND French Revolution. The British Aristocracy were obsessed by events in Paris that year.

If I'm right that Willoughby Cole did feel insecure, there is another figure that Willoughby Cole reminds us of: Earl Grosvenor of Ely Lodge. Again, a heavy smoker and, like Willoughby Cole he spent time in the Army: the TA for Earl Grosvenor and the Fermanagh Regiment of Militia for Willoughby Cole who was its Colonel from 1834 – 75. The Militia by the way NEVER served overseas.

In 1875 the Militia were transferred to the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and Willoughby Cole became an Honorary Colonel of its 3rd Battalion, the 27th Inniskilling Fusiliers Regiment of Foot. You can see a 27 on the blue water bottle in slide 8:-

SLIDE 8



I'd now like to mention events on the night of 15th September 1845. These events came under a range of newspaper headlines: Take your pick.

SLIDE 9

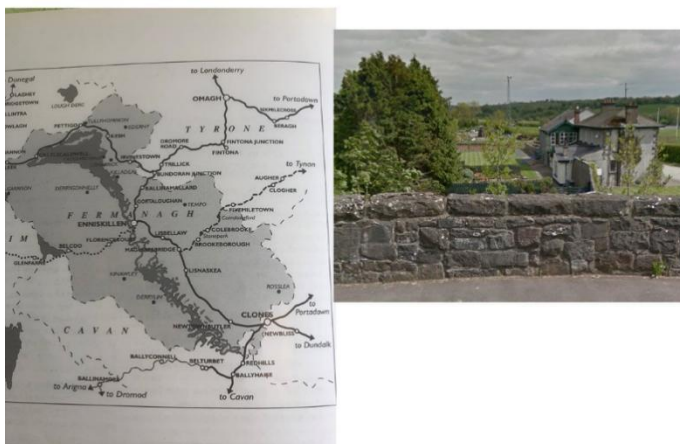
*“The assassination attempt
upon the Earl”
“The Beragh Outrage”
“The Trillick Derailment”
“The Orange Provocation”*

Health and safety inspectors regard fossil collecting as a safe activity and so Willoughby Cole was probably the **only** European fish fossil expert who has ever suffered an attempt on his life.

What actually happened that night?

Early on September 15: 400 Orangemen and their wives plus Willoughby Cole left Enniskillen and travelled to Derry Londonderry where they were wined and dined. At the end of the evening they set off for home by train.

SLIDE 10 and 11



QUESTION: As you can see: Beragh is on the so-called Derry Line, NOT the Derry to Enniskillen Line so why do you think the train was on a different route?

ANSWER:

The excursion diverted to Dungannon for 2 reasons:

- to drop off any Orangemen and their wives who lived in the Dungannon/Portadown areas and,
- Second to highlight the opening of this brand new railway line.

The excursion train proceeded on the diversion until it reached Beragh [see photo] near Fintona. On passing through it, the train was seen to give 3 massive rabbit hops. This was due to the 3 boulders placed on the line each of which was about 250 kilo. Both the engines and front carriages left the line and proceeded down the embankment.

The Orangemen must have forgotten to bring their i-Phones that day and - it being the middle of the night - there are no photographs of the train wreck as far as I know, so here is a photo I stole earlier from the States.

SLIDE 12



And where was the Earl of Enniskillen? He had been travelling on the footplate of the lead engine so he was thrown off. The engines did **not** overturn but Willoughby Cole got caught underneath the engine's boiler. He was literally between a rock and a hard place.

Both of his legs were severely scalded from steam. Despite that and with commendable courage he managed to push away the railings that had trapped him. Although this drained his remaining strength it was now possible for William Nixon his Land Agent to pull him free. Willoughby Cole showed his gratitude to Nixon later on by giving him the money to build Herds House. This didn't end well.

None of the other passengers was injured, but 2 of the traincrew died. Since the Earl was indisposed a Mr. D'Arcy took charge. He hired a pony and trap and galloped on to Enniskillen to raise the alarm. It is said that every vehicle in the town set off to rescue the Orangemen and bring them home. I don't

know which Mr. D'Arcy this was but at about this time the principle landlord in Irvinestown was a Judge D'Arcy. So it might have been him.

Once Willoughby Cole got home to his family at Florence Court he received urgent medical attention and for several months he moved around the house in a bath chair. But he recovered completely.

A reward of £115,000 was offered for information as to the perpetrators. There were no takers. But there **was** a Board of Inquiry to which I am indebted for laying out what happened that night.

Was it a targeted assassination? This is unlikely. Even if someone in Derry Londonderry had noted where the Earl was travelling on board, the telegraph did not reach Fintona until 1846 – a year later. Perhaps the Ribbonmen just got lucky.

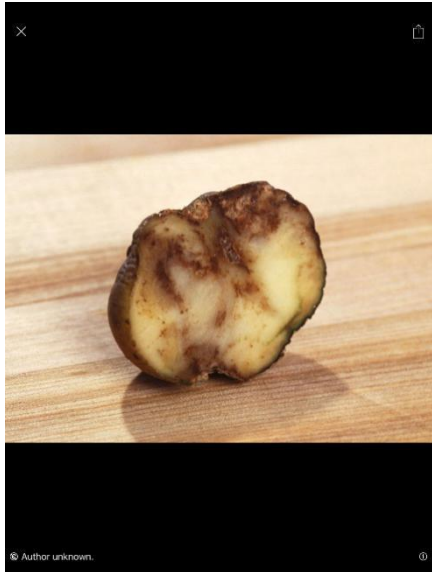
Politicians and Poets believe you should never waste a crisis, so this is how the event at Beragh was written up:

*Racing quickly on (?at 15 mph)
In their giant strength
The monster engines came
Bearing men of might and their ladies bright
AND the Lord of a noble name (Guess who!)
The massive slab of granite stone
Was placed on the iron way
When the dark black clouds of the brooding night
Had succeeded the light of day
With a bounding crash
Down the steep descent
Rushed the iron giants.*

Etc. etc. Why don't they write poems like that anymore?

Willoughby Cole was closely associated with the re-opened Orange Order. He re-created it and became Grand-Master of the Orange Lodge in Ireland from 1846 until his death. He was appointed Imperial Grand Master of the Orange Lodge Order from 1866.

SLIDE 13



September 1845 was not only the date of the derailment at Beragh, it was also the apparent date of potato blight. I believe that the fungus *Phytophthora infestans* reached this country as a contaminant of seed potatoes imported from the States. It infects and damages the potato itself as well as its leaves.

At first it was a curiosity but once the weather turned warm and wet the infestation exploded. This is why I'd like to show you an Icelandic Volcano called HEKLA.

SLIDE 14



IT erupted in 1845 and sent millions of tons of dust into the atmosphere across the entire Northern Hemisphere, Ireland included. This is probably why Ireland had such awful weather that year.

SLIDE 15

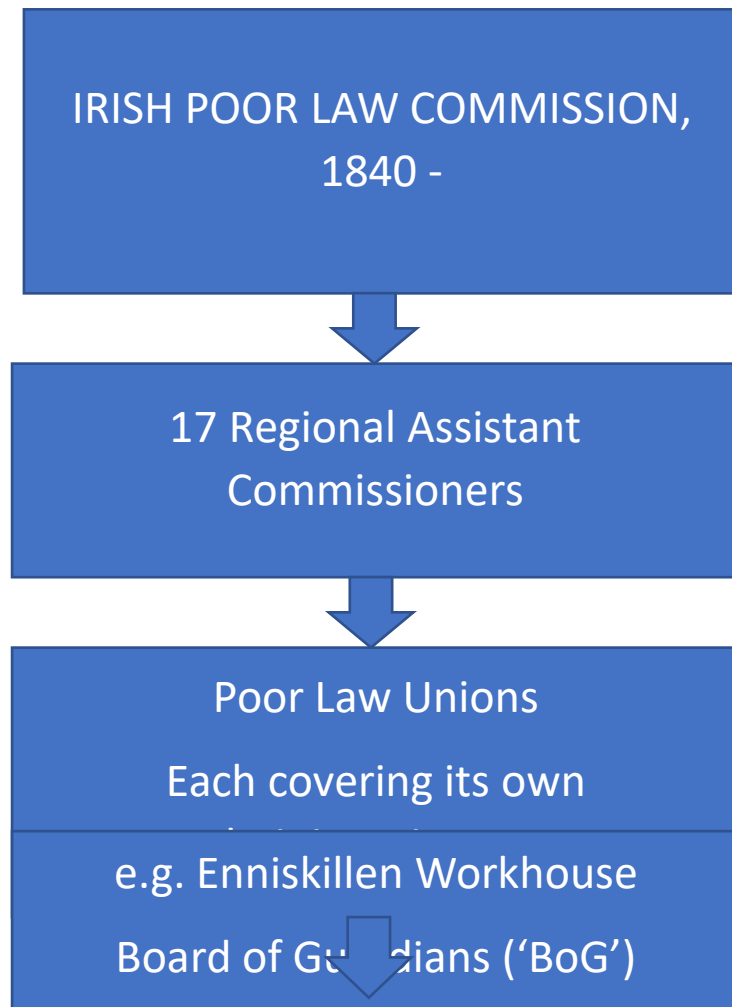


The famine affected Fermanagh directly between 1845 and '49 but the knock-on effects continued until 1851 by which time Fermanagh had lost 25% of its inhabitants through natural causes, hunger, disease, death or migration. The worst affected townland was Drumelly which incredibly lost 45% of its population.

DO YOU KNOW THE TOWNLAND - ANYONE?

To emphasise the distance between Church and State as well as to remedy the awful conditions of the Period, the (London) Parliament had already passed the 1838 Irish Poor Law Act which duly led to the appointment in 1840 of the Irish Poor Law Commission. Incidentally even Canada got its own Poor Law at this time.

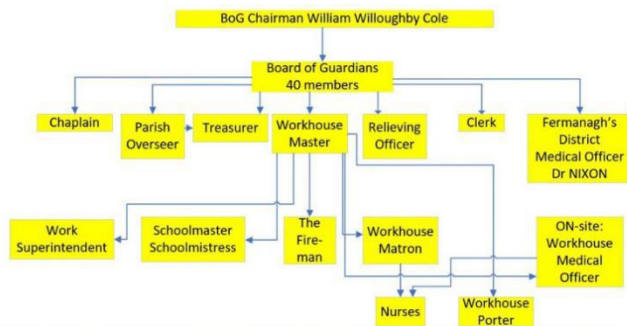
SLIDE 16



Under the Poor Law Act each Level was responsible for the next Level down.

Here is the infrastructure for the Enniskillen Workhouse, there to support the paupers in the Enniskillen Union.

SLIDE 17



The Workhouse Residents

It was a well-meant exercise with a good management structure. It contained built-in checks and balances.

Willoughby Cole was appointed Chair of the Enniskillen Board of Guardians – BOG for short.

Now for the physical layout of the Enniskillen Workhouse.

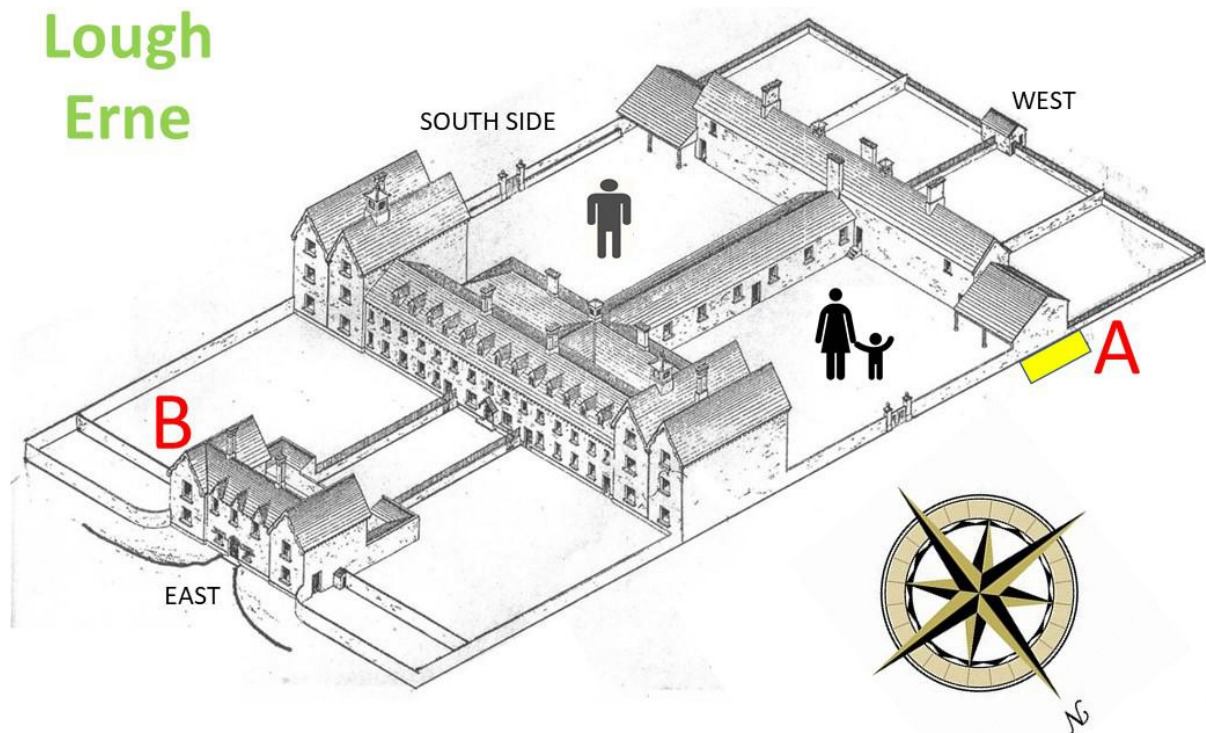
Most of you know its former location but for those who may not: maybe one of you could point it out?

SLIDE 18



Do you all know where the the Enniskillen Workhouse was?

Here is a Birdseye sketch of the Enniskillen Workhouse complex [on screen]. SLIDE 19



The Cornagrade land for it was sold by Willoughby Cole to the Poor Law Commission. But it was swampy unsuitable bog land. Furthermore the land sale was negotiated in IRISH Acres. As soon as the deal went through, Willoughby Cole had the Contract wording changed to Statute Acres which are 33% less in area. This raised the debt burden by the same percentage.

There was a lot of skulduggery and I am grateful to :

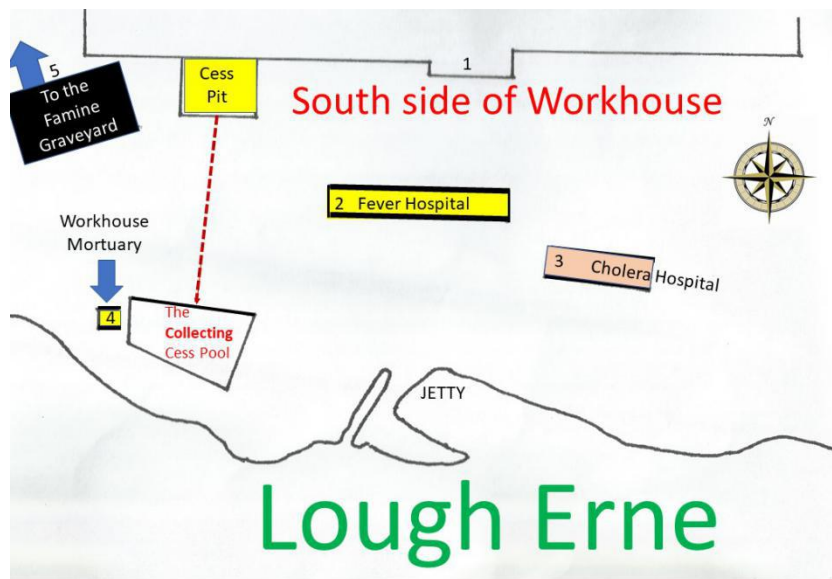
- the IMPARTIAL Reporter which truly earned its title,
- to Jack Johnston for his book WORKHOUSES OF THE NORTH WEST and
- to Workhouse Medical Officer Dr. Nixon who was fearless in speaking truth to power.

Most of the 40 or so Guardians didn't turn up for Board Meetings and if there wasn't a quorum the Meeting had to be cancelled, again and again. The ONLY times there was ever a full attendance was whenever Contracts to Supply were discussed. There were massive conflicts of interest. And if food WAS ever supplied - tea for example - much of it was stolen by the staff and sold in the town.

As the Impartial Reporter commented: most of the Guardians just weren't interested. They preferred to spend their time hunting and fishing. The Workhouse bored them.

It won't surprise you to hear that diseases of hunger were rampant: cholera, typhoid and typhus. Over 2,000 paupers followed this cycle of death [show: NUMBERED Workhouse slide]

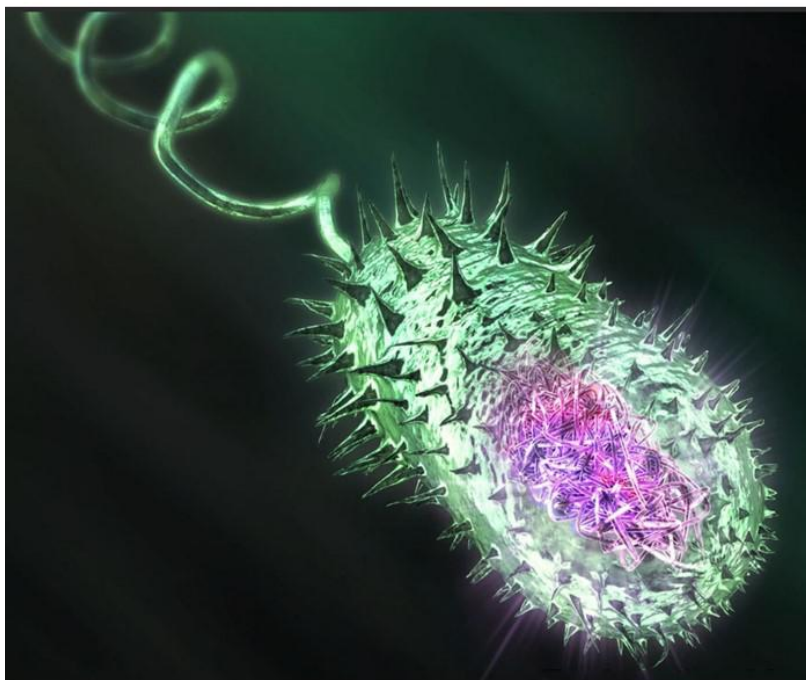
SLIDE 20



- 1: in the workhouse
- 2: moved to the fever hospital building
- 3: next, to the Cholera hospital
- 4: the Mortuary and on to:
- 5: the famine graveyard.

[This is a photograph of the Cholera bug]

SLIDE 21



In 1849 Surgeon Joseph Lister was just starting to use sanitary techniques in surgery at Edinburgh Infirmary so what's now called the Germ Theory of Disease was non-existent during the Irish Famine.

SLIDE 22



[This photo was taken with UV light].

Hand washing has recently become newsworthy and you can **now** SEE germs left on hands after washing - but the Board of Guardians could not. This was important because the Guardians insisted that the staff of the Workhouse report to Board Meetings in person. Naturally the staff were re-contaminated daily with things like Cholera bugs. **THIS MEANT** that the room where the Board held its Meetings [point B] also became infected. That room was over the main entrance lodge and is still standing today.

Once they figured this out for themselves the BOG hurriedly vacated their room and moved to hold Board Meetings at the Townhall instead. Guess what: it happened again so once again they vacated the premises and moved this time to the Courthouse.

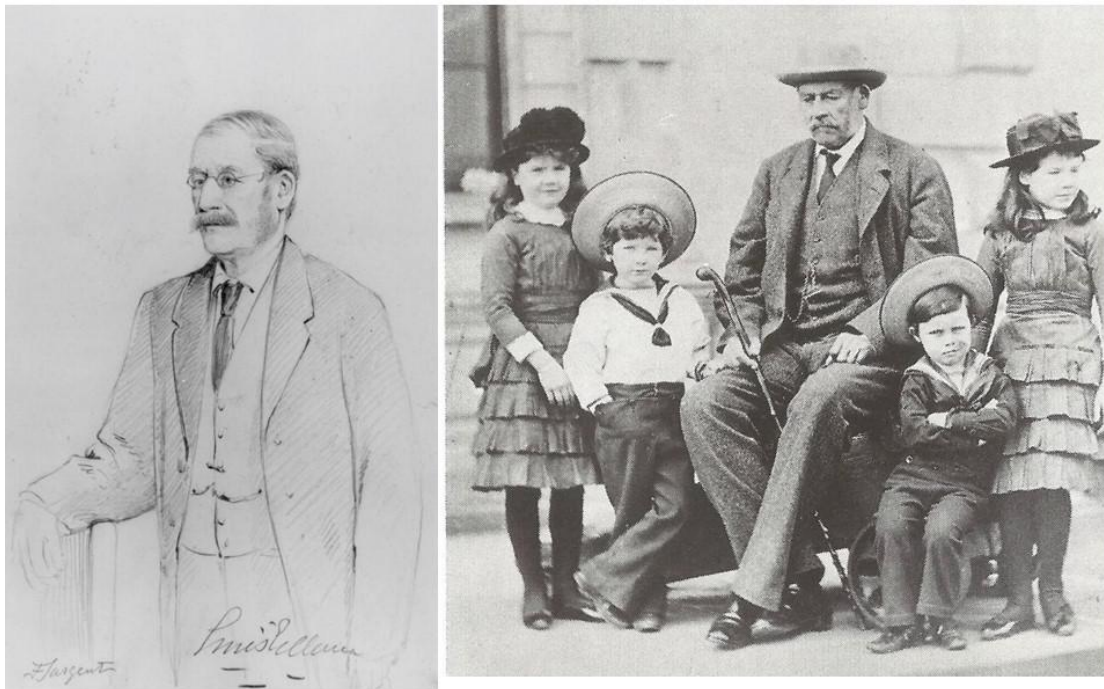
I'd now like to jump to the issue of LAND.

Willoughby Cole owned 30,000 acres across Donegal, Waterford, Wiltshire, Devon and Fermanagh. According to the Public Records Office (or 'PRONI') in the 1880's Irish agricultural land had low value. In 1845 Willoughby Cole opposed the Ballyshannon Dock and Harbour Bill. That Bill planned to LOWER the Lough by up to 19 feet or about 6 metres. That would have drained formerly marshy land and would have opened many thousands of lakebed acres up for agriculture. So, it was only in the 20th Century that this finally occurred. I believe he opposed the Bill because he may not have wanted to pay for a civil engineering project which would have principally benefitted his tenants, not his own Estate.

Willoughby Cole died in November 1886. He was blind by this time.

Here he is surrounded by his grandchildren.

SLIDE 23



His Will is deposited at PRONI. The estate MINUS his land was worth 2 and a half million Pounds. There were the usual bequests to kith and kin plus money set aside for the care of orphans of Orangemen.

And so to the Obituaries. They were generally favourable, mentioning for example that he took a benevolent interest in his tenants and that he was a gracious gentleman, respectful of everybody. He granted his tenants a rent holiday during the Famine Years.

He was inevitably: conservative. I found this choice quote in one of his letters. You can almost hear him gritting his teeth as he wrote: *"I have been obliged most unwillingly to alter the opinion I expressed previously."*

One Editorial I found surprised me. It reads as follows and was published shortly after his passing:

"In our Age (i.e. 1886) when social reformers are so much abroad amongst us, it is impossible for us now to realise the autocratic sway exercised by the Late Earl of Enniskillen. " Wow! I wonder what his family thought of **that**.

What happened to the Coles after his passing is outside my remit but – spoiler alert – the dynasty moved to Kenya to avoid inheritance taxes. The 7th Earl now operates a well-regarded Country Lodge on Lake Elementaita. The Coles incidentally co-wrote the Kenyan Constitution before Independence.

THANK YOU, ANY QUESTIONS?