

Heritage

Presbyterian Church in Ireland
Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland



Spring 2020

Hello and welcome!

“We are not makers of history. We are made by history.” (Martin Luther King Jr)

That is something to think about, especially in these days where the recent past is being revised. Each one of us can relate what has happened over the past 50 years, but how many of those stories would be completely accurate. I will put my slant on it as you will put yours. Churchill said, “History will be kind to me for I intend to write it”, and that is the temptation which those who record history must avoid.

The story of the church from New Testament times might seem straightforward but there are always different interpretations which are delivered, depending on the aim of the speaker. But does it matter how we interpret the past?

It does! If I accept a certain view of the history of Ireland it will impact on what I believe and how I act today. Take the example of Germany during the 1920s and 30s. What the Nazis taught about their history led them to construct Auschwitz, the horrors of which we have been reminded in recent days during the 75th anniversary of its liberation.

The question which has occupied many minds is how a civilised and educated people such as the Germans could resort to such atrocious behaviour. And yet some deny it ever happened. It is important that we do learn from history for we are who we are today because of the past.

That applies to us as Presbyterians. We have a long and interesting story into which have flowed many tributaries to make the river in which we sail today. It is our aim to help people learn about our story of the past so that they will better understand the present. We would love you to take an interest in how Presbyterianism took root and flourished in Ireland. This is a small effort to whet your appetite.

Blackmouth

Are you a Blackmouth? It is not something we hear much these days but in the past for a Presbyterian being called a Blackmouth was not uncommon. In the April 1945 edition of the *Presbyterian Herald* the Rev W F Marshall offered an explanation which was reproduced in abbreviated form in February 1989. Here it is further abbreviated:

We are told this Irish meaning arose out of the hardships endured by hunted Covenanters in Scotland. The fugitives, in the stress of hunger, had resource to the mountain blae-berries, and the resultant lip stain gave rise to the contemptuous nickname. But the fact is we have no evidence of a Scots use, at any time or in any part of Scotland.

The epithet was used in England without any denominational application. It means there now what it meant when it was used by the Tudor-Stuart authors – a railer, a slanderer, a foul-mouthed or malicious person. I am firmly of the opinion that it is in English Blackmouth that we have the ancestry of the Irish term.

In Scotland the name Blackneb was widely current in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Its meaning was entirely political. It meant a person who was politically disaffected, especially one whose sympathies were with the revolutionists in France. In its later use it meant a seditious person, and in the north of England it was used occasionally in the sense of Blackleg.

I suggest that Blackneb is the north of England and Scots equivalent of the English Blackmouth, and it is in Lowland Scots, which is Old English, Blackneb gained the enlarged meaning of a disaffected person with revolutionary sympathies.

I suggest that Blackmouth acquired the very same meaning at the very same time in Ireland. But over here, since many Presbyterians were accused of republican and revolutionary activities, the religion was tarred with the same stick as the politics, and the epithet applied to the whole Presbyterian community.

I suggest that an ancient term of forthright abuse was seized by a section of the ascendancy party and flung at a body of people whom it had often reviled, many of whom were implicated in rebellious projects and several of whom were leaders in the rebellion itself.

Further evidence will be welcome. But it will have nothing to tell us about blae-berries.

Ancient Baptismal Font

This photograph of a 17th century font is in the congregation of Killeshandra. The plaque tells its story.



The Story of Revivals in Ireland

The following is taken from a series of articles published in the *Christian Irishman* in 1989 and written by Prof Adam Loughridge, then a minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. It begins with the Sixmilewater Revival of 1625.

Two important factors must be considered. On the one hand, there was the spiritual condition of the country into which the settlers came, and on the other hand the moral and spiritual condition of the settlers themselves.

The reformation that affected Scotland to such a large degree had little or no effect upon Ireland. In 1536, a government order abolished the system of appeals to Rome and dissolved the monasteries. It was a political decision that left the vast majority of the Irish people in the same state of ignorance and darkness. In 1605, Sir Arthur Chichester reported to the Privy Council in London on the state of things in Ulster. Churches were in bad repair; bishops were careless and often from their dioceses; the people were ignorant and devoid of teaching; and tribal strife had destroyed the Province.

The moral and spiritual standards of the settlers were for the most part little better. Many of the newcomers were fugitives from debt and from justice and some were addicted to violent crime. The episcopal clergymen who accompanied them were careless and had little idea of the reformed position. Atheism prevailed, ignorance abounded and vice was rampant. Into this scheme of depravity and desolation, it pleased God to bring the Word of his grace and work a glorious transformation in the hearts of the people.

In the providence of God, as conditions worsened for the Presbyterian in Scotland, a door of hope was opened in Ireland. In 1613, Edward Brice, a Scots Presbyterian minister, was settled in Ballycarry, Co Antrim. In 1619, John Ridge, an English Puritan, was appointed vicar of Antrim. A new type of settler had begun to come to Ulster – godly men escaping from the persecution that followed James I’s attempt at counter reformation by the adoption and enforcement of the Five Articles of Perth in 1618. . .

A good foundation was laid for the second reformation in Scotland that began with the signing of the Covenants and was consolidated by the doctrinal standards of the Westminster Assembly of Divines. The strength of the Presbyterian cause in the New World owes much to this revival in Ulster, and wherever the subject is studied today its nature and features are taken as vital guidelines. It pleased God to bless the faithful preaching of the Word, the administration of the sacraments and the exercise of scriptural discipline as the practical instruments in reviving his church. This should give encouragement to diligence and faithfulness on the part of every minister of the Word as they seek “times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.”

Something For Nothing!

Everyone likes to get a bargain. After all that's what the sales are all about. Better still of course is when we get something for nothing. It's for free! The Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland recently revived an old idea we used to use some years ago. We ran two issues for a little magazine called *Heritage*.

Its aim is to show that history can be fun. Many folk like history, especially if it's the story of people and places they know. They don't want something long and difficult to read. A few short snippets could be just what they fancy and *Heritage* tries to do just that. Maybe you've heard it said:

“If it costs nothing, it's probably worth nothing.”

Maybe the old saying is true, or maybe not, and that's where you come in. We want to ask the question –

What do you think?

Do you think *Heritage* is a great idea? Or is it a load of rubbish? Are we wasting our time? Or, as the school reports used to say, “More effort needed!” or “Could do better!” The fact is, we want you, we NEED you to give us your answer.

How can you do it?

You will need to get a copy for yourself. You should be able to pick it up in church, or they should be able to download it, or photocopy it for you. You can download it from the Society's website, or if all else fails, ring the number below, and they'll send you one.

So what do I need to do?

Just tell us what you think. It only takes a few words! So why not do it today? You can contact us at –

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Tel: +44 (0)28 9041 7299

Email: phslibrarian@pcinet.org

Web: www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com

Presbyterians in the Episcopal Church

When Presbyterians came to Ireland at the beginning of the 16th century the church they found was organised along Episcopalian lines. That they were able to fit into this system has raised some eyebrows. But the ground had been prepared by James Ussher who was Professor of Theology at Trinity College.

In 1615 he was largely responsible for the publication of the Irish Articles which would later influence the Westminster Confession of Faith as well as the Savoy Declaration (Congregational) and the Baptist Confession of 1689.

Ussher had Puritan leanings and this emphasis was carried through the Irish Articles into the other Confessions. This allowed the Scottish Presbyterians to slip unhindered and with a clear conscience into the parish churches they found already established upon their arrival. Ussher became Archbishop of Armagh in 1625.

The days of the Mayflower

The story of the Pilgrim Fathers sailing to the New World on board the Mayflower is well known. In fact this year is the 400th anniversary of the voyage and events have been organised to mark that historic event.



Mayflower in Plymouth Harbour by William Halsall (1882)

In September 1620 the Mayflower sailed from Plymouth in the south of England for the New World. These were difficult days for the Reformed Church as it struggled to find

its true identity. There was unease in some quarters regarding the practices of the Church of England which had been established by King Henry VIII, and different groups were promoting different facets of church life. The Puritans were one of these groups along with Independents, Baptists and Separatists. At times these groups found life difficult from the established church and, like the Pilgrim Fathers, they decided to seek peace in another place.

The Presbyterian historian James Seaton Reid gives an account of one such congregation in London:

“In the adjoining parish of Carrickfergus, MR HUBBARD, a Puritan minister from England, was settled. He was episcopally ordained, but he had forsaken the communion of the English Church, and taken charge of a nonconforming congregation at Southwark, London. In this situation, being much oppressed by the intolerant measures of that period, both he and his people resolved to remove to Ireland. Having been under the celebrated Cartwright, a fellow pupil of Sir Arthur Chichester, at Cambridge, and having appraised him of his determination, he was invited by Sir Arthur to Carrickfergus, where he and the members of his congregation who accompanied him were peaceably settled about the year 1621. Blair speaks of him ‘as an able, gracious man,’ but he was not long spared to the Church. He died in the beginning of the year 1623, scarcely two years after his removal; and his people, having lost their pastor, returned to their native country, and settled again in the vicinity of London.”

So when some sailed across the Atlantic Ocean others took refuge nearer to home, and while their stay was short-lived, it demonstrates the links which our Church has had with other Christians. As you will read elsewhere, Archbishop Ussher even played his part in preparing the way for our forefathers to settle here. And what about the visits of John and Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield? Or the evangelists sent by the Countess of Huntingdon? Although they were not permanent, they undoubtedly played their part in the developing religious landscape of Ireland.

While we usually think of the Scottish link in Irish Presbyterianism, we should not forget that other influences added to the richness of our life and witness.

Lost and Not Found!

One of the tasks of the Society is to preserve old documents and artefacts relating to Presbyterianism in Ireland.

We are concerned that some important materials could be lost and never recovered. For example, someone might have an old church minute book at home for ‘safe keeping’. But as the years pass by and people pass on, these ‘old books’ could well be lost.

Perhaps you are clearing the loft or downsizing the house and come across such material. If you are not sure what to do with it please ask us for advice.

When a loved one dies it is a difficult task to clear their possessions. Likewise when a minister or church office bearer dies it can be difficult to know what to do with these old records, books or artefacts.

Can we encourage you to make use of the Society? We would be only too willing to help you dispose of such material. Please make contact with the office or a local member and we will do what we can to make the task easier.

St Patrick a Presbyterian?

The story is told of the parish priest, the Presbyterian minister, and the Church of Ireland rector meeting on the street one 16 March.

Naturally the conversation came round to St Patrick’s Day.

“If he came back today which of our churches do you think St Patrick would attend?” asked the rector. “Personally I think he would come to the parish church.”

“Oh not at all,” said the priest. “He would undoubtedly come to the chapel.”

Both looked at the Presbyterian minister.

“To tell you the truth, I don’t think he would change.”

What little we know about Patrick’s understanding of the gospel and his practice of prayer and Scripture reading, suggests he would fit in well to a Presbyterian congregation.

New Publication

Sketches of the History of Presbyterians in Ireland 1803

by **William Campbell DD**

The Society has just published the third in a series of hardback historical books. It follows on from *Irish Presbyterian Church 1623-1670* by Patrick Adair and *Roberts Blair of Bangor*, containing his autobiography from 1593-1636.

Campbell was minister in Antrim, Armagh and Clonmel and this book contains not only his ‘sketches’ but also a detailed biography from the pen of Dr Donald Patton. In that essay we read, “Campbell does give us an insight into his times and into the Presbyterian mind of the period, as well as information which is unique to him.

We cannot but admire the strength of his intellect and the breadth of his reading. Clearly he was a force to be reckoned with in any debate.”

The book costs £20 from the Society or as a special deal, buy all three in this series for just £30.



Dates for the diary:

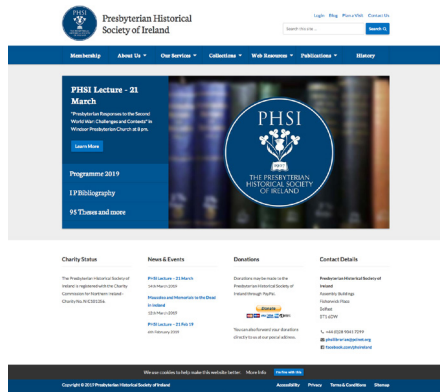
Thursday 7 May 2020 – Robert Allen Lecture in Union Theological College: ‘William Sharman Crawford and his interaction with Irish Presbyterians’ by Professor Peter Gray, Queen’s University, Belfast. William Sharman Crawford was the leading Ulster-based radical reformer of the mid 19th century and a supporter of land reform and the extension of the franchise. Though Anglican by birth, he obtained strong support from the Presbyterian clergy and tenant farmers of Co Down.

Saturday 15 June 2020 – Field Trip. A bus will leave Belfast at 9am to the Route Presbytery, visiting various sites and enjoying morning coffee, lunch and tea. For more details and to book your seat on the bus, please phone Miss Valerie Adams on +44 (0)28 9041 7299.

PHSI website

The Society’s extensive and growing website has a great deal of information concerning Presbyterianism in Ireland:

- The *History of Congregations* which includes details of records and congregational histories which have been written;
- A list of the Society’s publications which can be ordered through the online bookstore;
- Secondhand books;
- Digitised copies of some of the early Presbyterian magazines.



While some of the material is restricted to members only, there is much that can be accessed by all visitors.

Why not give it a try and see what is there – www.presbyterianhistoryireland.com

The Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland

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Hours of opening:

Tuesday and Wednesday 9.30am-1.00pm; 1.30pm-4.30pm;
Thursday 9.30am-1.00pm

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