

## *Sons and daughters*

Some of the children of Moira have become famous for a variety of reasons, probably none more so than the one who nearly became a British Prime Minister.

Francis Rawdon (1754-1826).

Francis Rawdon was born in Moira Castle. His mother was the Earl's third wife, Lady Elizabeth Hastings. In later life Francis took on his mother's maiden name and became famous as Francis Rawdon Hastings.

He was educated at Lisburn, Harrow and Oxford. He was clearly always interested in military affairs. On one occasion when he was ten years old, playing war games in the demesne, a gun exploded injuring him in the leg. But the incident did not put him off a military career. He joined the army when he was 16 or 17 and spent the remainder of his life in the service of his country. He may never have returned to Moira but his story is fascinating.



In 1774 he went to America and fought in the American War of Independence, and was present at the battle of Bunker's Hill. He later became Adjutant General of the British Armed Forces in America and commanded the armies that brought victory to the colonists. He is said to have been one of the most courageous Generals in the whole war. Some of his soldiers founded towns called Moira, in memory of his exploits. One can be found

in New York State, and another in Canada where there is also a river of the same name.

On his return, Francis became a member of Parliament for Randalstown, as well as sitting in the House of Lords in London. Francis had become a Baron in 1783 and became the second Earl when his father died in 1793. He was to eventually inherit his mother's titles as well as his father's, and also much of the estates belonging to the Huntingdon dynasty. In 1790 he built Donnington Hall.

The Earl was extremely critical of repression in Ireland and did more than most to expose the miss-government of Ireland. (See *An Historical Review of the State of Ireland Vol.4* by Francis Plowden Published 1906) In a debate in the Lords in 1797, Lord Moira described the horrors he had witnessed in Ireland against the Catholic people. He declared that ninety-one householders had been banished from one of his own estates (it is unclear which estate this was) He asserted that he wished to uphold the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland as much as his accusers. He only asked that the poor Catholics be allowed to live in peace." (The Land War in Ireland by James Godkin)

Wolf Tone was often a visitor at Moira House, Dublin and Rawdon was godfather to Tone's brother, Francis Rawdon Tone. He sent his own chaplain, Rev Mr Berwick to christen him in the year 1793". (The Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone – Autobiography 1828) Tone actually tried to persuade Moira "to lead the rebellion in Ireland and so become one of the greatest men in Europe". Moira refused but did encourage the rebels without totally committing himself to their cause. His estate was found to be one of the principal arsenals. (There is no record that this was Moira estate; more likely his estate at Ballynahinch. But in Moira, the inn-keeper and a guest were arrested.) (McGill Faculty of Education, Montreal <http://www.mcgill.ca/education>)

To return to Edward Berwick for a moment, he was born in County Down, probably Berwick Hall, in 1750. Edward's father was said to be the Duke of Berwick, the illegitimate son of James II who had fought with James at the Battle of the Boyne, but the dates make that appear impossible. Edward went on to be Rector of Tullylish (1787-1795) before going to parishes in the south of Ireland.

It seemed the village of Moira was to be just a distant memory. He sold his properties in Ireland around 1800. Interestingly, in 1916, some of the heaviest fighting of the Easter Rising took place in what was once Moira House, Dublin.

In 1799, an illegitimate son had been born to him and Jemima French, the daughter of an Irish Baronet. One report claims the boy was born in Moira though I believe it is more likely to have been in another part of Ireland for Jemima was probably from Galway. The Earl did not acknowledge his son and eventually the boy was fostered and given the name George Hunn Nobbs. In 1828 Nobbs became an Irish missionary on Pitcairn Island in the Pacific Ocean where he was schoolmaster and parson to a community descended from HMS Bounty mutineers.

The Earl eventually married in 1804. He had various postings including Commander and Chief in Scotland and Constable of the Tower of London. He was a very close friend of the Prince Regent, who in 1812, gave him an opportunity to be Prime Minister in London. Unfortunately he was unable to form a ministry and so as a consolation prize, he was sent to India in 1813 to act as Governor General of India and Commander of one section of the growing British Empire. (BBC Your place and mine) Rawdon held this post until 1823 and was largely responsible for the establishing of India as part of the British Empire. During this time he was raised to the rank of Marquess of Hastings. While in India he was also involved in the purchase of Singapore in 1819 for the British.

Although Hastings had been mostly engaged in war during his time in India, he also attended to civil affairs. Among the public welfare works that he undertook were building of roads and bridges and digging of canals. He encouraged education among the Indians, founded the Hindu College at Calcutta in 1817 and encouraged missionaries to set up a printing press and a college at Serampore. And who was in Serampore at that time? None other than William Carey, the great Baptist Missionary, known as the "father of modern missions." Carey obviously had very close associations with the Earl and Lady Hastings. He dined with the Governor and talked of conversations and correspondence he had with him. The Earl even "gave an unequivocal mark of his approbation" for the College at Serampore and became a "patron of the infant institution." Hastings wrote to comfort Carey on the death of his wife. In Carey's will, when he bequeathed his books to the library at Serampore, the one book he named was "Hortus Wobournensis – a descriptive catalogue of upwards of 600 ornamental plants" which was given to him by Lord Hastings.

The Second Earl of Moira apparently was a very generous man and much respected. "His ample fortune absolutely sank under the benevolence of his nature"; and, far from becoming wealthy as governor-general, he returned to England in desperate need of employment. He always had severe financial problems and large debts.

He was later appointed the first Commander-in-Chief of Malta. He died in 1826 but had left clear instructions that he was to be buried where he fell, if his "adored wife had no objections." But in a bizarre demonstration of his love, he instructed "that his right hand be cut off and preserved, so that it may be put with her body into the coffin when it please the Almighty to decree the reunion of our spirits." This "last earthly token" of his and Lady Loudoun's "attachment", he declared, "shall not be an idle lesson for our precious children, to whom I now give my fondest blessing." He was buried in Valetta and his hand was eventually buried with his wife 14 years later! (Francis Rawdon-Hastings by Paul David Nelson)

Dennis O'Lavery (no dates available)

Dennis was a native of Moira. His family had been the local land-owners in days gone by. The land was granted to them by James but was later confiscated because of the Lavery family's support for the rebellion. Dennis grew up in poor surroundings and little hope. He joined the Army and was shipped to America with thousands of others to fight in the War of Independence. He never returned to Moira but his name is legendary and deserves its place on these pages.

Denis O'Lavery served as a corporal under Francis Rawdon. In 1781 O'Lavery was wounded while carrying an important despatch. To avoid its falling into enemy hands he hid it in his wound.

*"Within his wound the fatal paper placed  
Which proved his death, nor by that death disgraced.  
A smile, benignant, on his countenance shone,  
Pleased that his secret had remained unknown:  
So was he found."* (Tales of the Wars - Saturday March 17, 1838)

The message was saved but the result was fatal.

Sir John Fortescue, in a history of the 17th Lancers, related the details of the incident and stated that a monument to O'Lavery was erected in Co. Down. Another military historian believed the monument was erected by Rawdon. A letter written sometime in the last century says of O'Lavery, "... in rank a corporal, he was in mind a hero ... his country Ireland and his parish Moira in which a chaste monument records at once his fame and the gratitude of his illustrious commander and countryman Lord Rawdon. (Craigavon Historical Soc) The location of the monument has never been established. Ironically, it was Rawdon's Great grandfather who had confiscated the O'Lavery family's lands nearly 150 years before.

Anne Lutton (1791–1881)

A less well known child of Moira was Anne Lutton but even today her influence is felt in this village. She was born and grew up in a house on the Main Street of Moira, just below the four trees. She has an interesting ancestry. Two soldiers called Ralph and William Lutton had come to Ireland in 1690 with William III and served in his army as officers – the same army in which Arthur Rawdon served. When the war was over, the brothers elected to remain in Ireland. William, was an ancestor of the Anne Lutton.

Anne's father, Ralph Lutton, was an only son of a prosperous father also called Ralph. He inherited much land and property in and around Moira. At the age of eighteen he married his cousin Anne, and became the father of nine sons and four daughters who outlived infancy. Anne was the youngest of these and was born on the 16th of December 1791.

Later in life, Anne described her home village as consisting of one long street, each side of which was ornamented by a regular row of full-grown lime-trees. "Conspicuous in this pleasant leafy street stood the spacious, lofty family mansion of the Luttons, lifting its three-storied, many-windowed front close to the sidewalk ; its ample garden lay all in the rear." (Eminent Methodist Women (1889) by Annie E Keeling)

Mr. and Mrs. Lutton were both unusually intelligent, though Mr Lutton was partially blind. Anne can hardly be said to have been educated. "Reading, writing, plain and fancy work, household management, and the single accomplishment of dancing,"

were all that was required of girls at that time. But Anne was a little home-bird. The first attempt to make her attend school failed, so the youngest child was spoilt and indulged. She was passionately fond of reading, even at five years old. She wanted to be an author, so she devoured every book she could get her hands on from her father's bookshelves. Her eldest brother gave her a lesson or two in writing; the schoolmaster paid daily visits to the house to instruct her in the rudiments of arithmetic. When she was 17 years old she attended a Moravian school, where she learned "a little grammar and geography, as well as satin-stitch and embroidery." But all her education, from Hebrew and mathematics to her exquisitely neat handwriting, were due to her own unaided efforts.

In 1811, Mr. Lutton left Moira and settled with his family on a small estate he owned seven miles away in Donaghcloney. The house was so different from the one in Moira, surrounded by lawns and gardens, and half-encircled by the swift-running river Lagan. These quiet surroundings were the perfect place for study.

Anne had always coveted the power of reading languages other than her own, began boldly to study Latin without a teacher. She had discovered a tattered "Lily's Latin Grammar" on her father's upper bookshelves. The book was rather battered; "schoolboys and worms had combined to outrage and deface it;" but Anne tidied it up and, with only what help her blind father could offer, she studied until she could read the great Latin classics.

Then she did the same with Greek, beginning with the New Testament, then Homer, Plutarch, Longinus and Demosthenes. To the classic languages she then added Hebrew, Samaritan, Syriac, Chaldee, Arabic, and Persian ; " a little " of Ethiopic, Hindustanee, Paissian, and Irish ; and not a little of French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and German. Oriental languages followed and in all, it is said she could understand more than 50 languages and speak 15 accurately. In addition, she became an able metaphysician, a mathematician, a musician, and a very good poet.

What was the point of all this study? Here was a young woman living in the "backwaters" of society acquiring the most wonderful education largely by herself, but it was of little apparent use in Moira or Donaghcloney. But she later saw the purpose. "It was a training process for higher and more hallowed duties," she said. Anne became a highly respected poet throughout Ireland and Britain. Publications by her or about her include:

*Poems on Moral and religious subjects.* 1829

*Memorials of a consecrated Life.* 1882

But it was for another reason she became famous in Moira and far beyond, as we shall see in a later chapter.

## Sir John Lavery (1856-1941)

Lavery is not quite a child of Moira for he was not born here but somehow Moira likes to think it adopted him.



John Lavery was born in North Queen Street, Belfast. He was the son of a wine and spirit merchant. His family were desperately poor, and his father decided to emigrate to America. But the ship broke up in a gale off the Wexford coast and he perished with 386 other passengers. John was only three years old. Worse was to follow, for within three months of this tragedy, John's mother also died leaving John an orphan. He was adopted by his Uncle, a farmer from near Moira. His address was 'Trainview', Back-of-the-Wood, Moira.

John attended school in Magheralin. It is said he detested arithmetic, and he later fled to Scotland. Eventually he got a job as a checker of railway wagons. He was only able to keep the job for a short time, until he was asked to make a monthly return! His lack of arithmetic caught up with him. But he had other skills.

He replied to an advertisement for a lad “good at drawing” and got a job as a re-toucher in a studio. From these humble beginnings, he rose to be regarded as one of the greatest painters of the late 19th and 20th centuries.

His name is immediately associated with a time of Edwardian elegance, the roaring twenties, scandal and the struggle for Irish independence. All of this set against the back drop of the Great War. In 1918, Lavery witnessed and painted the surrender of the German Fleet, disguised as a naval officer!

His portraits included George V, Winston Churchill and Michael Collins. We are left with the impression that he knew everyone in high society and every one in high society knew him. He was honoured by nearly every city in Europe, and received the Freedom of Belfast in 1930.

Today his paintings are very valuable. One sold in 2008 for almost half a million pounds but there are seven more expensive paintings by Lavery!



Churchill in 1915  
by Sir John Lavery