

VISIT TO FALTAGH TOWNLAND: CO. MONAGHAN : IRELAND

INTRODUCTION

In March 1992 I made a visit to Monaghan Town in Co. Monaghan in an attempt to substantiate that my paternal Irish ancestry originated from Faltagh Townland in the parish of Aghabog. The year 1992 was the 200th. anniversary of the birth of my great great grandmother Elizabeth McMahon in 1792.

In 1890 my great grandfather - Michael McMahon (one of many children attributed to Elizabeth and her husband Matthew) - returned to Co. Monaghan from Australia and only very briefly, in a travel diary, made passing references to the visit without giving pertinent details other than to write that he visited the Waddell family in Ballyway. This epistle is to make up for his apparent lack of fully recording his trip.

The purpose of this sorry little narrative - should any copy survive for a hundred years - is to inform the reader of why I undertook the trip and what little information I obtained.

The reader should also be aware that at the time I was working in London at the Australian High Commission as an accredited diplomat with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I utilised a week's recreation leave. I left London by bus on the evening of Sunday 1 March and returned the same way reaching London on Saturday 7 March. The trip was bloody uncomfortable and took thirteen hours each way including the ferry crossing of 3 1/2 hours. I hired a car in Dublin and drove to Monaghan. I kept the car for the week which allowed me freedom of movement in and around Monaghan Town and specifically to Faltagh Townland.

The recounting of the trip in detail is basically for Suzanne Hyde - an Australian cousin - with whom I am sharing family information and who is au fait with the background to the events and people about which, and about whom, I am writing. However, the information is for anyone who is interested, be he/she/they family or otherwise.

SUNDAY 01.03.1992

My experience at the Victoria Coach Terminal only confirmed my previous ordeals at such places; they are dirty, dreary, dismal and dank and inhabited by people with similar characteristics. The trip commenced badly as the bus company could not locate my ticket as it was locked in a safe to which nobody had the key. I was forced to purchase another one using plastic with the assurance that my Visa account would be credited; I will believe that only when I see the credit on the next statement.

The bus seats were designed as torture chambers. Only a dwarf or a child could sit in them for any length of time with any degree of comfort.

The bus left on schedule at 7.30 P.M. and the drive to Hollyhead was of several hours duration with stops at places I cannot remember and which are of no consequence. At one comfort stop we remained for an interminable 45 minutes before eventually arriving at Hollyhead at 2.10 A.M. for an 4.00 A.M. ferry departure. We were then forced to leave the coach, collect our baggage and carry it through Customs only to have the sleepy examiners wave everybody onto the waiting bus, which we then boarded and waited for yet another 30 minutes before it was loaded aboard the ferry. The crossing of the Irish sea was smooth - which was fortunate for me as I am a poor sailor - and was completed in 3 1/2 hours.

It was an experience which should only be undertaken infrequently but, at £42 return (\$A97), it was something different. It shakes out the cobwebs and brings one back to earth; there are people who have no other option but to travel under such conditions. I arrived at Dublin bus terminal at 8.30 A.M. on Monday 2 March.

MONDAY 02.03.1992

I collected the hire car (without incident - and that's a record) and promptly got lost on at least six occasions as I endeavoured to navigate my way out of Dublin. Eventually I was successful and worked my way north for about 100 Kms to Castleblayney where I turned west for Ballybay and Swans Cross Roads. However, I accidentally veered north onto the Monaghan road and was annoyed when I realised what I had done. However, as I was close to Monaghan town I decided to continue to my ultimate destination, arriving at about 1.00 P.M. at Mary McArdle's B. and B. known as "The Cedars", Clones Road, Monaghan, phone 47 82783. I received a warm welcome, including tea and crumpets, a hand drawn map of how to locate Swans Cross Roads, Theo McMahon's house, as well as the local BDM office.

And so at 2.00 P.M. I commenced the first assignment of the trip - locating the death certificate of Elizabeth McMahon. I was fortunate for the first of only two occasions on the whole journey; the BDM quickly and efficiently found the entry for 30.06.1869. In a matter of minutes I had a copy which confirmed that she died on that date in FALTAGH townland and that a James McMahon was present when she passed away.

The second fortunate occasion was at the same location on the same day when I was able to confirm the dates of birth of Catherine McMahon's and Francis Keenan's children and obtain Mary Anne's certificate which gave her DOB as 19.04.1869 at CORKEERAN. She appears as entry No.434 registered in the District of DAWSONGROVE in the Superintendent Registrar's District of COOTEHILL in the County of MONAGHAN. With the exception of the entry number, the details for the other children were identical as that for Mary Anne and I decided against getting their copies, which at £5.50 (\$A12.80) each, would have been quite expensive. Their DOBs' are as follows:

Alice	25.09.1870
Michael	06.04.1873
Thomas	28.09.1874
Patrick	28.07.1878

The Monaghan Town BDM office is about the size of an average two car detached pre fab garage (say about 7m. x 9m.) with one full-time registrar. She has a vertical opening window which she reluctantly opens when customers appear. However it only opens to a height which is below the level of the height of an average person, and therefore you stand crouched over, with your head and shoulders bowed, and the remainder of your body at a forty-five degree angle to the counter, while you endeavour to convince her that it is 1869 and not 1969 that you're chasing. She was not impressed with the amount of time I commandeered on her otherwise unruffled afternoon.

Little realising that that foray was to be the most successful of the week, I set out south for Swans Cross Roads on route R188 in the sincere belief and hope that I would have everything wrapped up in about two days. I envisaged a leisurely and triumphant return to London with a report to my family in Australia that I knew exactly who my ancestors were and from whence they originated. It proved to be an erroneous assumption.

On the way to Swans Cross I wondered what I was going to do when I got there and who I was going to see. I recalled Mary McArdle mentioning that I couldn't miss the crossroads because there was a Post Office on one corner. She was almost correct; there is a Post Office but if you blink you'll miss it as you go through a small crossing indistinguishable from any other small intersection. It reminded me of the store cum post office at Ravensworth. I'd decided to stop off and chat up the owners as they would surely know who lived where and did what in their area.

Eric Sloan and his wife knew it all; it was probably the smartest thing I did on the whole trip. When I explained my quest I was taken into the back room while several options were discussed. I was informed that Tommy McMahon on the farm wouldn't even remember the name of his own mother (and she lived with him); his cousin Frank (son of Big John) would be better but Mary Coyle would be preferable. Best of all would be Bridie McGill at Rockcorry. Oliver McMahon would be useless. Tommy and Frank were first cousins being sons of John and Patrick; Bridie was Frank's sister - being widowed in 1971 after being crippled with polio as a child but still bearing six children. All of that information I received in the space of a few minutes and I've done well to remember it all. The Sloans made a phone call to Bridie McGill and I set out for Rockcorry, which was only about fifteen minutes drive south of SCR and still on route R188, with the expectation

that all was about to be revealed to me.

Bridie is a charming lady who opened the door and with a large smile said "Come in cousin" even though we had never before laid eyes on each other, and our de facto introduction was by telephone through the assistance of a distant postmaster. She took me into her lounge room, and gave me a brandy, despite my protestations, large enough to choke a horse (I had by then been on the road for 21 hours, and apart from an hour or two of sleep on the ferry, awake since 7.00 A.M the previous day and was feeling a little jaded).

She knew absolutely nothing about the family. Her father was John McMahon and her grandfather was Patrick McMahon (who had married a Larmer). They were from Faltagh (pronounced Falter as in Halter) and so we thought we were related but we did not know how or through whom. I was bitterly disappointed. She wanted me to see her cousin Paddy Larmer and Peter McKenna. I drove on to see the latter (an author and no relation), but he knew nothing about the Faltagh McMahons. He had written "A History of Rockcorry St. Mary's" in "The Emetresse". He included the McMahon Bishops up until about 1750, who may or may not have come from Faltagh, but he did not research the family beyond the period mentioned in his book.

I returned to Monaghan and wrote up my notes in a restaurant which had just closed at 7.00 P.M. at which point I heard a customer remark "They stay open late , don't they?"

During the day I had also phoned the Waddell family in Lisnaveane but Alec (they really do name their children after their fathers/grandfathers) was out. He is a vet surgeon. I promised to ring again. Bridie had also provided me with the name of Philip Moore of Newtownbutler Road, Clones (pronounced Clon-us) who wrote a history of the McMahon clan - but from an historical aspect rather than as a family chronicle. That appears to be dead end. Bridie also cheered me up by saying that some Faltagh McMahons' had gone to Co. Clare.

By the time I had finished the note it was 7.45 P.M.. The cook had gone and the waitress was vacuuming the carpet; I obtained the impression that the manager wanted me to leave. I had only travelled in the region of 150 miles but I felt as if it had been 500 miles, particularly as they were secondary winding and narrow roads.

It had not been a productive day family wise, and the indications were that the following days would be no better. The people with whom I had spoken have never had a desire, an interest or a reason to maintain records. Most of them didn't care. Bridie told me that a Clare Bain from Australia had visited her brother Frank some 2-3 years ago and knew about/was interested in the Faltagh McMahons'. Bridie promised to get me her address.

I returned to Mary McArdle's to sleep the night away.

TUESDAY 03.03.1992

I awoke at 1.30 A.M. The room was stuffy and I opened a window only to startle a rabbit about 5 metres away squatting on the lawn. I was up pretty early and went for a jog. Mary McArdle did a great breakfast of juice, cereal, egg, bacon, sausages, grilled tomatoes, toast, marmalade and tea/coffee.

I decided to visit Rossmore Park and saw what was left (foundations only) of Rossmore Castle. The visit was out of interest only, and I took some photos, but there is no connection with McMahons' as far as I am aware. I went to a bank and cashed some travellers cheques and then to Theo McMahon's but he was not at home. I decided to visit the local museum, and while it was of some interest, and demonstrated the prominence of the McMahon clan in Co. Monaghan until 1603, when they had a bust up and split into separate and distinct groups, I did not gain any information for my inquiry.

The curator at the museum told me about two paintings or lithographs of Rossmore Castle which hang in the foyer of the local Credit Union. I strolled down there and took photographs of one as well as the inscription beneath it. I had lunch at the Westenra Arms Hotel in the centre of Monaghan. I rang Theo but was informed he would not return until after 4.00 P.M. I then rang Bridie McGill but there was no response. I decided to drive out to St. Mary's at Latnamard to see the church and the cemetery. Mike and Jenny McMahon (my son and daughter-in-law) had photographed all the McMahon headstones during their foray into Monaghan in January this year. On the drive out I decided to call at Tommy McMahon's farm in Faltagh.

He was home and made me welcome as he had learnt that I was in the district. He lived there with his wife Brigid and his mother Molly. He spoke at what sounded like 200 words per minute and I had extreme difficulty in understanding him. His accent, rapid speech and a slurring of words (he had few teeth) all contributed to my lack of comprehension. His wife and mother were much easier to fathom. The farm consisted of 100 acres and has been in his family for three generations; his grandfather (Patrick), his father (also Patrick) and himself. He said he had one son (I didn't ask but I'm sure his name would be Patrick).

Tommy knew less than nothing about his ancestry. He knew his grandfather's christian name but that was all. He showed me a "fort" as they are called in that area, and which, I understand, is also known as a "Bohogue". This is a copse of trees/scrub/shrubs where Mass was celebrated under cover during "the troubles" in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries when the English would not permit Catholicism to flourish.

Tommy said that in the past "few" years he had been visited by

the following people:

1. Brian McMahon.
2. Rupert McMahon, 9 Farran Street, Lane Cove.
3. His sister, Clare Bain, 4/38 Fairfax Road, Bellevue Hill. Phone NO. (02) 327 6931.
4. James Mackey, 10 Merrion Square, Dublin 2, Phone No. 761832.
5. An unknown man "some years ago" who owned merino sheep. James Mackey told me in Dublin that this person's name was Thomas McMahon.
6. Jerry McMahon from Hong Kong who gave Molly (Tommy's mother) the following two certificates which I saw and from which I copied the following details:
 - (a) **MARRIAGE**: N.S.W.: Thomas McMahon to Catherine O'Dwyer in Braidwood on 23.02.1870 (other details were too faint to read)
 - (b) **DEATH**: Thomas McMahon 13.07.1926. Aged 85 and **BORN** in Sydney in 1841.

Who was this Thomas McMahon? And born in Sydney in 1841? Who is/was Jerry McMahon (Tommy had no idea)? Why visit Faltagh and give Molly certificates unless there is a connection. If Thomas was born in Sydney and was a Faltagh McMahon then who were his parents? Could his father have been a brother to Matthew (and Bernard) and migrated to Australia? Was he, perhaps, a convict? Is he the first link in the chain which brought the Faltagh McMahons' (and the Waddells) to Sydney Town? Has a new trail opened up?

During our discussion Brigid fed me a huge afternoon tea of ham sandwiches, iced vo-vo, as well as chocolate, biscuits. Tommy is a dairy farmer and runs about 100 head of beef cattle as well. There was no other information I could glean from the family. Throughout my stay in Monaghan all my contacts kept saying that Tommy, more than anyone else, knew the background to the Faltagh McMahons'. As I've said I found him a very difficult person to understand. Perhaps one of his difficulties may have been his embarrassment at having a foreigner invade his home and discuss his family openly. I am of the opinion that he had/has more information, but for whatever reasons, and known only to him, he was either reluctant, or could not, elaborate.

From there I decided to visit Bridie McGill again, where, despite my protestations, I was fed another huge afternoon tea. She had been unable to arrange the Larmer meeting as the aged gentleman said that his knowledge of McMahon's was negligible. I told Bridie that I was going to dine at a

restaurant called Andy's that evening, on the recommendation of Mary McArdle. She then said that Maureen Redmond, the wife of the owner/manager Ciaran Redmond, was my cousin being a Faltagh McMahon. Amazing!!! From Bridie's I drove down the road to Mary Coyle - also a cousin. She owns a small general store in the village of Rockcorry. She had no background or knowledge of the Faltagh McMahons'.

On my return to Monaghan I called on Theo McMahon and made arrangements to see him at 10.00 A.M. the following day.

I was expected at the restaurant. The word had obviously gone out. Ciaran phoned his wife Maureen who, together with her brother, Pat McLaughlin, came to the restaurant to meet me. Neither had any information about the Faltagh McMahon clan.

However we did spend the night talking and again I was told that my physical appearance strongly resembled that of other McMahon members. Ciaran poured beer and treated me to the biggest steak (Steak Monaghan) and all the trimmings - all on the house.

Pat McLaughlin is a chicken farmer - raises one day old chicks to a maximum of eight weeks and then sells them. He has batches of 50,000 chickens every eight weeks. After dinner I was taken back to his house where I met Mary, his wife - and the children - and treated to a huge supper of tea, cakes, home made bread and jam (I must have added 5 Kgs. in weight on that day alone). Pat lives at Killygoan, Monaghan, Co. Monaghan on phone (047) 81546.

However, one interesting point was some old photographs I was shown. One was of a Canon James McMahon as a young man taken in about 1920 - I was looking at my own father. The resemblance was uncanny. We then went down to the chicken houses - at 11.00 P.M.- and viewed 32,000 chickens in one house. Their environment was computer programmed - from heating to feeding/ watering.

All the people (relatives?) I've met are amazed to learn that they have hundreds of cousins in Australia. That worries me - not that we exist, but that they were unaware of it. Surely they would have had some inkling that earlier ancestors had gone to Australia? They all seem to have difficulty in accepting the fact that I'm going back into history 200 years. They don't seem able to grasp that fact. They have all been very friendly and extremely interested in my quest but have been unable to provide definitive proof of a family connection. As I mentioned earlier they claim that they cannot go back beyond their grandfathers - two generations.

Then again there is no need for them to do so - they know who they and where they belong - they are part of their own history. It is only people like me who - for whatever personal reasons - are endeavouring to discover who and what we were and from whence we came.

It is important that we establish that we are the Faltagh McMahons' or otherwise all research to date has been for nothing. Elizabeth's death certificate seems to now confirm this point - although I should like to have supporting evidence.

So far I have met Bridie McGill, Thomas McMahon, Maureen Redmond, Pat McLaughlin and Mary Coyle. All have accepted that we are cousins - based on my comments, which are without solid foundation. Maureen and Pat told me that the Faltagh McMahons' had always been "hard workers", as distinct from some other Irish who were not so enthusiastic about earning money. Tommy (the farmer) was described as extremely hard working. He had made the farm economically viable and had purchased additional acres over the years.

There appears to be a naivety about the people which is both appealing and almost childlike - which of course they aren't, but they do have soft and engaging characteristics.

WEDNESDAY 04.03.1992

I spent two hours with Theo McMahon this morning. We spoke of the frustrations of research; the lack of Irish records and, in particular, the lack of church records for the parish of Aghabog being St. Mary's at Latnamard. There are no church records earlier than about 1884 although civil records commenced in 1864. Theo could not account for this other than to say that either the priests were lax in their duties or the registers, if they existed, have been destroyed/lost/mislaid.

As a professional genealogist he was frustrated by similar restrictions and could not trace his Irish forebears beyond about 1800. He said, simply, that records do not exist or have as yet not been located/discovered. He said it had taken him over 30 years of painstaking research before he obtained a "breakthrough" when he discovered one ancestor had served at Waterloo and he was able to obtain some military records which opened a new avenue to him. His only advice to me was to keep researching in the hope that a "breakthrough" will occur. It appears to me that we have have gone about as far as we can using extant records.

I was able to confirm with him , however, that the 1833 land records showed a Matthew McMahon of Faltagh holding/leasing 15 acres 2 roods and a Bernard McMahon holding/leasing 5 acres. Matthew's acreage was the largest single lease holder in the Townland. In the 1844 census a total of 144 persons were listed as living in Faltagh Townland.

In the 1858 land census the total acreage for Faltagh Townland is given as 231 acres broken into 18 plots/properties. Matthew McMahon isn't listed but there is a Patrick McMahon leasing/owning 20 acres, Bernard McMahon leasing/owning 21 acres and James McMahon leasing/owning 26 acres. James and Patrick, together with a Michael Smith, share a further 3

acres. (I wonder if James McMahon is the same James who was present at Elizabeth's demise 11 years later? Was he perhaps a son or a brother-in-law? Was Patrick a son or a brother to Matthew? What about Bernard? Was he a son or brother to Matthew?)

There are no wills on record for either Matthew or Elizabeth McMahon.

I will write to the Valuations Office, Ely Place, Dublin and seek advice on the previous owners to plots of land in Faltagh listed as Map References 1 & 2 (Patrick), 4 (Bernard), 5 (James) and 6 (James, Patrick and Michael Smith) for the 1858 survey.

The 1901 census listed only the following McMahon residents as living in Faltagh Townland:

<u>FAMILY</u>	<u>FAMILY</u>	<u>FAMILY</u>
Patrick 50	Francis 60	Edward 61
Maggie 43	Anne 55	(widower)
Edward 17	Bernard 25	Patrick 24
John 11	Kate 23	John Kelly 11
Francis 10	(his wife)	
Susan 8	Francis 1 mth.	
Patrick 6	Owen Kelly 3	
Thomas 4	(nephew)	
James 2		
Maggie 10 mths.		

During lunch today I rang Alec Waddell at (042) 44803. He had no history other than he was aware that 3 ancestors who had gone to Australia had returned to Monaghan. However, he told me that Rory Hope, a lecturer in Genetics at Adelaide University and living at 16 Glen Avenue, Unley Park S.A. (08) 272 3783 was a Waddell descendent and had visited Monaghan some few years ago. Also a Jim Waddell at 56 Grove Street Wagga Wagga (069) 226876 had also visited him re the Waddell family. He also gave me Freda Bingley of 1/19 St. Stephens Gardens, Twickenham, Middlesex, TW1Z LT, (081) 8911026 as a person who had written a history of the Waddells. I will contact her for further information.

I then went back to Faltagh to Tommy's farm but there was noone about. I took some photographs as the weather was at least fine although the ground was very soft/boggy underfoot. I also climbed a fence or two and managed to get into the bogogue. It was a silent damp copse of trees with moss and small bushes at ground level. It was difficult to see into it and was an obvious place for a gathering of people to participate in Mass without being seen. I took some more photographs.

The surrounding area is undulating hills subdivided into very small fields of, I would guess, about 2-3 acres by hedgerows

of thick matted hedge and thorny bushes impossible to penetrate. I could only gain entry into the fields by climbing a gate or squeezing through where the hedgerow was very sparse. There was no soil erosion and as far as the eye could see the land was green and subdivided into those very small fields.

I asked the ghosts and spirits to speak to me but all I heard in reply was some hounds barking in the distance and the wind in the trees and hedgerows.

I then went on to Bridie's house to work up a "family tree" on the 1901 census families but all she could give me was the Patrick/Maggie branch. She did not recognise Francis/Anne or Edward the widower. Another blank. I returned to the B. & B. to await being collected by Maureen and Pat to go and see another cousin - Eammon - as they think he may have some information. Personally I doubt it.

I met Eammon and his family (he is a farmer living on the outskirts of Monaghan). Again - but as expected - neither he nor his family had any records or background into the ancestors. He had no realisation that there were Australian relatives. This lack of knowledge continues to worry me. Surely some of them would have some childhood memory or recollection of being told that some relatives had gone to Australia. Again I was fed a massive supper and returned to the McArdle house well after midnight. They keep very late hours.

THURSDAY 05.03.1992

I returned to the BDM office this morning and researched some births/deaths and hypothesised on a few scenarios but all to no avail. I could not locate any connection. There is no recorded death of a James McMahon from Faltagh between 1870-1910. I assumed he was a son of Matthew/Elizabeth and therefore born about 1820-30. Had he lived until 1910 he would have been 80 to 90 years of age. There was a James McMahon, whose son registered the death, who died in 1891 but he was not from Faltagh and I therefore disregarded that death.

The trip has almost come to an end and I am no further advanced than before. I have some indications that we are in the correct area but the lack of Irish records is extremely frustrating. I think we have gone about as far as we can with the information we presently have. Theo McMahon is of the same opinion. What we need is some solid background information that was obtained (and hopefully retained) by relatives. Somebody somewhere must have or was handed down some records which have not yet come to light. The only other way is to hope that in future research by Theo McMahon or a person like him, that from some old house, church, stable or attic the records for St. Mary's at Latnamard for the period 1810-1864 or thereabouts will materialise and so assist in completing the gaps. I will follow up a couple of leads in

Dublin (Valuations and Mackey) and will leave to Suzanne to chase up the Australian addresses, especially the now elderly Bain contact who visited Aghabog during World War 2.

An interesting but frustrating research trip. The hospitality was tremendous, the interest intense, the hatred of the English barely concealed and controlled, but the knowledge of ancestral history negligible. I readily and quickly adapted to the question "Will you have a wee drink?", to which I gave the standard reply, "That would be grand".

As a futile and final gesture I yet again drove out to Latnamard church/graveyard on the off chance that I would spot something which I had overlooked. Naturally I didn't. I called in to the Sloans' at the Swans Cross Roads Post Office cum store to thank them for their interest and assistance. Surprisingly Mrs. Sloan said she did a little research herself and had recently been of help to a family through local school records. She said she knew the location of the Latnamard school records and would definitely examine them for entries concerning McMahon scholars. She did not know how far back in time they went.

I returned to Monaghan, had dinner, and was writing up some notes in the McArdle house when Pat McLaughlin arrived at about 8.00 P.M. He had driven over to give me two photographs of his uncle Canon James McMahon which he had had reproduced, the one who, as a young man, so closely resembled my father. We discussed my visit, and knowing that it had not been very successful, casually asked if I would like to visit yet another cousin named Margaret Connolly nee McMahon. I accepted and we set out to find her as Pat knew she lived on the other side of Monaghan town but not exactly where.

She had some information on the Big Pat and Wee Pat families and I was able to obtain a clearer picture of the relationship between the two, but was no closer to tying them to Matthew and Elizabeth. Out of the blue she suddenly remembered an Eilish McGlone who, while not a McMahon relation, was related to Maggie McGahey who was Wee Pat's wife. At 10.30 P.M. she was phoned and immediately launched into details which were too involved to handle over the phone. For the first time however, she confirmed that she knew of McMahon brothers who had gone to Australia. Although I was to return to London tomorrow I made arrangements to visit her as early as possible tomorrow en route to Dublin. Another very late night.

FRIDAY 06.03.1992

I said good-bye to Mary McArdle, paid my B. & B. fee of £44 (\$A102) for four nights and mornings of great hospitality and returned to the Faltagh Townland area to talk to Eilish McGlone who lived on a farm (with husband and family) close by to Tommy McMahon's farm.

While our discussion was interesting and somewhat informative

it was, as I had come to expect, discouraging. She claimed that there were only three McMahan families in Faltagh at the turn of the century - this is the same as the 1901 census. She claimed they were all related - possibly brothers - but could not confirm that. She was sure, as was Pat McLaughlin and Margaret Connolly that Big Pat (born circa 1854) and Edward (born circa 1840) were brothers. The third family in 1901 was Francis (born circa 1841) whose son was Bernard (Barney). She recalled playing at his deserted farmhouse (as did Bridie McGill and Margaret Connolly) after his family had left. The house was eventually "tossed" (demolished). Eilish recalled that the Barney McMahons', as they were known, left Faltagh following financial problems and moved to Scotland. She said that they married into the Duffy family and that she knew (through Margaret Connolly) of a relation in Castleblayney who knew where the descendents lived and would send me the address as soon as it was obtained.

Eilish said that it was known/legend that brothers of Big Pat and Edward went to Australia. They probably did but I don't think that they are our direct ancestors - the dates just don't fit! No matter which way I look at them I cannot get children born circa 1840-54 as brothers/sisters to our Michael/ Francis/Edward etc. who migrated to Australia at the time the two in question were children.

When I asked the name of their father she could not recall it at all but she knew their mother was formwery a Greenan and lived "just over the hill" (she pointed it out to me from her front window) and across the road in Lisnaveane. A suspicion was beginning to form in my mind. I asked her if the mother's name was Alice. Alas alack, she could not recall the name at all!!! What I was thinking was that Big Pat, Edward and Francis were children of Bernard McMahan. The dates are approximate. A possible family tree would then look something like this:

BERNARD AND ALICE (NEE GREENAN) MCMAHON

CULLAGH	ANN THOMAS	EDWARD	FRANCIS	CATHERINE PATRICK
1833	1836 1838	1840	1841	1847 1854

That would mean that of the 7 children listed above, 4 went to Australia and 3 remained in Ireland. Only supposition of course. I don't like the dates of their years of birth - they are spread over too many years and there are too many gaps between births. People were not known for spaced family planning in that era!!!

The rain had stopped, but the wind was howling against the windows. The drawing/lounge room was small and Eilish had a four bar radiator blasting out the heat. She was slowing down with her memories and the discussion was obviously coming to a close. I directed the conversation back to Elizabeth and Matthew but she could not recall stories about them at all. I mentioned that Elizabeth was formerly a McMahan prior to

marrying one. She said that either Elizabeth or Matthew could have "come to Faltagh" from a neighbouring townland. She mentioned Mick McMahon from Tonagh. Now that comment made me sit up straight. That was the first occasion that anyone had said that they knew of a Michael McMahon. There are no "Michaels" anywhere in the Patrick, Edward or Francis families of 1901 or their descendents to this very day. Not one. Yet here was a lady who casually drops the name "Mick" into our conversation. I immediately thought of Brian McMahon's contention that we are descended from the Tonagh McMahon family/ies. I showed Eilish the photographs of the two gravestones in Latnamard cemetery of the two Tonagh McMahon families (taken by Mike and Jenny in January 1992). The gravestones have the following christian names:

1. Edward died 1988, Elizabeth died 1986, his parents Frank died 1914 and Anne died 1965.

2. Edward died 1923, wife Margaret died 1937, and their children Patrick, Michael, Francis without dates of death, Margaret died 1947 and her husband died 1981.

Eilish said the families were related (naturally!) but was vague on the specifics.

I am of the opinion that we should perhaps be paying more attention to the Tonagh McMahon clan rather than the Faltagh mob. It would be disappointing after all the time and effort but it is a distinct possibility.

While Elizabeth and Matthew obviously lived in Faltagh (1833 tithe applotment book and Elizabeth's death in the Townland in 1869) I cannot connect them with surviving Faltagh descendents.

Who was James McMahon and what happened to him? Did Elizabeth come from Tonagh to join Matthew or was it the reverse? What happened to their 15 acres? Was Bernard a brother? Is he the same Bernard as is listed in the 1858 land survey?

I now had more questions than when I commenced. I said my farewells to Eilish and drove on to Dublin more confused than ever and wondering what to do next. It looked like another trip to Monaghan was warranted.

While writing up my notes in the dismal Dublin bus terminal (having dropped off the car at Dublin airport and caught a bus into town), and as I had some hours to wait, I decided to ring James (that name again) Mackey, solicitor, of 10 Merion Square, Dublin phone 761832. He offered to discuss the family and as I was within easy walking distance of Merion Square I strolled over. We spent about an hour together.

His connection is that he is a descendent of Thomas, who together with his brother Frank, went to Australia in the

1840s Unfortunately I was no further advanced at the end of our discussion as to where we fit into the puzzle. I think (and that's dangerous) that these two brothers belong to the Bernard and Alice McMahon branch. Suspicion only - no facts. He did say that Francis had no issue. According to him Thomas died in Sydney in 1922 aged about 90 and owned an hotel in George Street. He said that Thomas was twice married and that he (Mackey) was a descendent of a daughter Mary Josephine McMahon who married a James Lynch (solicitor) in Brewarrina in about 1896. His grandfather and grandmother both returned to Ireland. His first cousins are Clare Bain and Rupert McMahon. The latter is now in a home but Clare Bain is alive and living with her stepson -James Bain - Chairman of NatWest Bank Australia Ltd. as well as James Bain Stockbrokers. Mackey also said that Jeanne O'Brien (spouse of Dr. J. O'Brien) of 82 Mons Avenue, Maroubra was a first cousin. Both are supposed to have a good knowledge of their ancestors (where have I heard that before?). Clare Bain visited Faltagh during World War 2 when she was in England as an Australian Nursing Sister.

The mysterious visitor to Faltagh in 1988 was a Thomas McMahon who reportedly had merino sheep. No other information is available about him.

I am of the opinion that we are not related to this branch of the McMahon family but there is obviously a Faltagh connection.

I retraced my steps to the bus terminal and wearily boarded the bus for the return trip. There was a force 6 gale in the Irish sea which didn't do my stomach much good but I survived without too much inconvenience. I arrived in London at 8.30 A.M. on Saturday 7 March 1992.


KEVIN JOHN MCMAHON

PDOB - BURWOOD NSW 31.05.1933

THIS REPORT WAS COMPILED IN LONDON

ATTACHMENTS

1. Death Certificate for Elizabeth McMahon

K No 200

Uimh. No.

19

ÉIRE



IRELAND

Deimhniú báis ar na h-éisiúint de bhun na hAchta um Chlárú Breitheanna agus Básanna 1863 go 1972.

DEATH CERTIFICATE issued in pursuance of Births and Deaths Registration Acts 1863 to 1972.

Uimh. No.	Dáta agus Ionad Báis	Ainm agus Sloinne	Gnéas	Staid	Aois an lá breithe is déanaí	Céim, Gairm nó Sli Bheatha	Cúis Báis Dheimhniú agus fad an tinnis	Síniú, Cálíocht agus Ionad Cónaithe an Fhaisnéisora	An dáta a Cláraíodh	Síniú an Cláraítoora
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
10	June Elizabeth 1869 Fallteagh	Elizabeth McMahon	Female	Widow	77 years	Farmer's Widow	Chronic Bronchitis 2 years Uncertified no Medical attendance	James McMahon Present at death Fallteagh	July Seventh 1869	Robert B Moore

Deimhním leis seo gur fíor chóip í seo de Thaifead Uimh. 10 I hereby Certify that the foregoing is a true Copy of the Entry No. 10

Is é Blían an Bháis sa Chóip dheimhniúithe thuas ná The Year of Death shown in the above Certified Copy is
 Mile One Thousand Eight Hundred and Sixty-nine

i gCeantar an Chláraitheora Mairseachta do Co. Sligo in the County of Sligo i gCeantar Clárathoir (*Mairseachta na mBreitheanna agus na mBásanna (†Superintendent) Registrar of Births and Deaths

MONAGHAN for the District of MONAGHAN
 Dáta 2/3/1992 Date

*Scríos amach an focal idir lúibíní mura n-oirceann sé †Strike out word in brackets if not applicable.

Is cionn trom é an teastas seo a athrú nó é a úsáid taréis a athraithe TO ALTER THIS DOCUMENT OR TO UTTER IT SO ALTERED IS A SERIOUS OFFENCE