

THE SMITHWICK FAMILY

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Notes from a Talk given at Kilcreene Lodge to the
Kilkenny Archaeological Society.

THE traditional account of our branch of the Smithwick family is that they came to Ireland and settled in Wexford about the year 1580 from Hertfordshire. Two years ago I made enquiries in Hertfordshire and found in a parish church there that all references to the Smithwick family ceased there before the end of the 16th century, thus showing the remarkable accuracy of the tradition.

In 1641 the whole family, with the exception of one little boy, who hid away, were killed in the insurrection, and he escaped and made his way to Tipperary, where he grew up and married a Miss le Hunte, the daughter of a Cromwellian Colonel.

Just before 1710 a young John Smithwick came from Tipperary to Kilkenny and started his business in the year 1710. Unfortunately, there are no records to show his precise business at that time.

As a matter of interest the name Smithwick was in Ireland, I think, since the Anglo Norman Invasion, also with its Gaelicised form of Smidig, also Smedig and Smist and Smisteach, and was quite familiar to Kilkenny up to the end of the 15th century. There is a Killa Smiste and also a Tobar Smiste in North Co. Kilkenny.

John married, firstly, Jane Dunphy, who was buried with five of their children at St. Canice's Cathedral, and, secondly, Mary Grace of Lazybush, from which second marriage our family are descended.

At this moment I might mention that Mr. Daniel Sullivan was running a brewery in Kilkenny in the year 1706, and the same Daniel Sullivan also held some other property under a fee farm grant from James, Duke of Ormonde, dated 19th December, 1713.

John Smithwick had three children, the eldest, the Rev.

Edmond Smithwick, was Parish Priest at St. Patrick's, Kilkenny, and was murdered in November, 1776, somewhere between the Market Place and what is now John's Bridge. Secondly, Peter Smithwick married a Margaret Murphy and died about 1773, leaving four children the eldest of whom, John Smithwick, married Catherine, a daughter of Edmond Butler of Dangan, on October 7th, 1789. We have John's portrait here. His younger brother, Paul, married Eleanor Murphy and they had one child, Canon Paul Smithwick, curate of St. Mary's, Donnybrook, and later Parish Priest of Howth and Baldoyle. We have here a Bible presented to my grandfather by Canon Paul Smithwick, and also an address given to him by the parishioners of Donnybrook. John died in 1842, and his widow lived to be 103 years of age.

Their son, Edmond, was born in 1800 and died in 1876. We have his portrait here. He was four times Mayor of Kilkenny and for eight years ran the Kilcreene Harriers, and was also at one time a local Director of the National Bank, Limited. In the famine year of 1847 he collaborated with Richard Sullivan in setting up a soup kitchen at Sullivan's Brewery to relieve distress. He purchased the freehold of the brewery in the Court of Chancery about the year 1827. At this time, it was both a distillery and a brewery. His wife was Ellen, daughter and heiress of Montague Williams of Clonmel. I have never traced this family.

Edmond was a great personal friend of Daniel O'Connell and Daniel O'Connell stayed many times at Kilcreene House. There are many letters from Daniel O'Connell in existence written to Edmond Smithwick and also to Richard Sullivan to whom I have referred above. The Smithwick letters are now in the possession of Mrs. Helen Bennett, a grand-daughter of Edmond Smithwick. The Sullivan letters are owned by Mrs. Anne Smithwick, of Birchfield, Co. Kilkenny. Birchfield was in the ownership of Richard Smithwick, younger brother of Edmond. He was born in 1804 and died on 20th November, 1860, after which the property was acquired by John Francis Smithwick and then Richard Hubert Smithwick, where Mrs. Anne Smithwick

and her two children, Mary Frances and Daniel, now reside.

Mrs. Anne Smithwick is a great grand-daughter of Richard Sullivan and a grand-daughter of James Sullivan. Richard Sullivan lived at Castle Bamford, Co. Kilkenny, and James Sullivan lived at Rose Hill. Richard was at one time an M.P. for Co. Kilkenny.

Daniel O'Connell made one of his speeches from the first floor of the present brewery offices of Smithwick's Brewery. He was godfather to one of Edmond's sons, Daniel O'Connell Smithwick, father of George and Alfred Smithwick, who lived at Orchardton and later at Prospect, Co. Kilkenny. His grandson, Paddy Smithwick, is the leading steeplechase jockey of the United States, and paid a visit to us here recently. He and his brother, Michael, live in Maryland with their mother, Mrs. Emma Smithwick. Michael is a trainer.

Edmond lived at Kilcreene House, and here I might mention Kilcreene, which, I think, is properly translated as "the old burial ground." There was a battle fought near Kilcreene about 648 A.D., and evidence of this pre-Christian burial ground was uncovered in the last century by Edmond Smithwick when a gravel pit was being excavated. Kilcreene was originally in the possession of the Rothe family and finally went to Sir Henry Bayley Meredith and thence to the Smithwicks. Where I am speaking (Kilcreene Lodge) was first built approximately 1690 and 1706. In 1706 a Richard Cole of Kilcreene (this house) obtained a fee farm grant from James, Duke of Ormonde, of portion of St. Francis Abbey Brewery. Our house was a Miller's house as there was a linen bleach here, and the remains of a retting pond can still be seen about 400 yards from here.

Edmond's eldest son, John, came to live here in October, 1861, having married Christina, daughter of Nicholas Devereux of Bishopswater, Wexford. Nicholas had a distillery at that time at Bishopswater.

Shortly after their marriage, John and Christina were asked to dinner at Jenkinstown by George Bryan. They arrived late as their coachman had trouble with one of the wheels of the coach and George Bryan was rather annoyed. Seventy-three years later, in March, 1934, just after we

were married, the late Lord Bellew and Elaine Lady Bellew very kindly asked us to dinner, but we arrived safely on time.

This room where I am speaking was built in 1884, and the chandelier was purchased that year and comes from Baccaret, Eastern France. The lake which you see outside was originally a small stream, and my grandfather, John, built the waterfall and the far bank, thus forming a storage lake. He then put in the waterwheel about 1871, which is fed from the lake and, as you will see, has two pistons. This wheel, which is still working, provides this house with water. The pistons were made by Llewellyn & James of Bristol, and the waterwheel by Messrs. De Loughry's Foundry, Kilkenny.

This was the first house in Co. Kilkenny to have a bathroom with running water, and Mr. Kenealy's house was the first in the city of Kilkenny.

John died on 16th March, 1894, while following the Kilkenny Hunt at Three Castles, Co. Kilkenny. We have his photograph here. He was a Justice of the Peace and Deputy Lieut. of Co. Kilkenny and successively High Sheriff of both city and county. His eldest son, Edmond, of whom we have a portrait, died at the age of seven years. His next son, James (my father), was born in 1869. He was a Justice of the Peace and High Sheriff and was educated at Beaumont College, where he was captain of the school and captain of the first Cricket Eleven. He married in 1900 my mother, Gertrude Boland, and there are three sons, Arthur, Col. Harold Smithwick, M.D., O.B.E., and myself.

We married on 8th February, 1934, and there are six children by our marriage: four boys and two girls, of whom our eldest son, Peter, is here to-day. Peter is the fourth Peter in the family tree. Our youngest son, John, is the sixth John in the family tree. Paul Smithwick is the third Paul.

A younger brother of Edmond Smithwick was Daniel, whose first son, Daniel, married Frances Power of Tramore. One of their children, Joseph, married Elizabeth Anne Bowen, who lives at Birchfield (to which I have referred) with her children, Mary Frances and Daniel. Daniel Smithwick, junr., is the fourth Daniel in the family tree.