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KATE MAGEE FROM IRELAND: MOTHER OF A TASMANIAN POLITICAL DYNASTY¹

Danny Cusack

Over the past two decades I have related in the pages of *Ríocht na Midhe: Journal of the Meath Archaeological and Historical Society* the stories of a number of Meathmen who made their mark in the land down under: John Balfé and brother-in-law Christopher O'Reilly (Tasmania), Paddy Lynch (Western Australia), Patrick McGarry (New South Wales) and Fr James Timmons (Victoria). Here now is the tale of another emigrant, a Meathwoman who as they say nowadays 'broke a few glass ceilings' in her adopted land. Her eldest son—by then Premier of Tasmania—would be photographed with Eamon de Valera at Dalgan Park Navan during a triumphant visit to his mother's homeland in 1935.

Catherine (Kate) Magee was born in 1860 into a farming family at Kilmainhamwood, County Meath and died in Hobart, Tasmania in 1919, in her 60th year. In the intervening years she had emigrated to Australia where she married publican James Ogilvie (son of a Scottish convict) and mothered a political dynasty: both Ogilvie sons (Albert and Eric) serving as ministers in Tasmanian governments during the 1930s and 40s (Albert as Premier) and a great grand-daughter Madeleine as an MP in the 2000s. Kate had two marriages. Upon the premature death of her first husband, she married Frederick Westbrook—and began a second family. All the while she continued to run a public house in her adopted city. An example of what might be called an enterprising emigrant, Kate was a strong woman who assumed a role and responsibility untypical of her time. Along with a few remnants of the Magees in K'wood, Ogilvie and Westbrook, descendants may be found in Tasmania to this day.

Meath emigrant

Kate's mother's family, the Smiths, had farmed about a mile outside the village of Kilmainhamwood in the townland of Shancor for generations. They were known as the 'Pat Andy' Smiths. Kate's mother grew up here along with sister, Bridget, and brother Andrew Patrick (Pat Andy), who married Jane Browne, daughter of Hugh Browne, the well-known poet and scribe from Balloughly, Kingscourt, known locally as 'the poet' Brown. Kate was thus a grand-niece of the poet insofar as her aunt-in-law Jane (Brown) Smith was the poet's daughter. Kate's father was Michael Magee from the adjoining townland of Tavis. Like the Smiths, the Magees were a long-established farming family in the locality. Kate was said to have been a bright and intelligent young girl who blossomed into a beautiful and elegant young woman. She was sufficiently academic to

¹ First published, *Ríocht na Midhe* 22, pp. 128–55. Republished with permission.

be able to attend the Bailieboro Model School (about ten miles from her home place) for several years in her mid-teens.² She would have been a boarder. Such an opportunity would have been rare enough for a young woman at the time and doubtless afforded her an educational advantage which stood to her in later life. The school register for the year ended 30 June 1876 reveals that she obtained passes in reading, spelling, writing, arithmetic, grammar, geography (distinction), physical geography, needlework and music. She failed only 'sewing machine'. She however redeemed herself the following year by obtaining a pass in 'sewing machine' along with passes in all the aforementioned subjects, including another distinction in geography.³

In 1879–80, by which time she was about 18 years of age, Kate emigrated to Australia with her cousin, Mary Matthews of Corryrouke, Mullagh. Mary was a daughter of Andrew Rourke and Bridget Smith (sister of Kate's mother Mary). It is said that Kate left Ireland with only £2 in her pocket, a sum which she later returned to her mother.⁴ The two young women settled in Hobart, the capital of the colony of Tasmania, where Kate obtained employment as a governess. She also worked for a time as a scullery maid and cook at Government House. This would have been prior to the tenure of Jenico Preston of Gormanston Castle, County Meath, the 14th Viscount Gormanston, as governor of Tasmania (1893–1900). Whether the two ever got to meet we can only speculate. Although returning to Ireland for an extended visit some thirty years later, Kate would spend the rest of her life in the Tasmanian capital.

Marriage

In December 1885 Kate married Hobart publican, James Ogilvie, son of a convict blacksmith, in Hobart's St Mary's Catholic Cathedral. James' father George, once described as an 'Aberdonian hell-raiser', had some years previously opened a public house in the town with another ex-convict, Caroline Gadbury from England. Gadbury and daughter Sarah had settled down with Ogilvie after her first husband (and two other children) had died. At 25, Kate was about seven years James' junior. After their marriage the couple continued to run the Victoria Tavern and it was here their first son, Albert, was born in March 1890. A second son, Eric, was born in October 1892. The two boys were baptised and raised Catholics. Their father, a non-Catholic (and Freemason), died suddenly in September 1893 aged only 40, leaving his 33 year-old wife to raise the two sons. Albert was only about 3½ and Eric about one year old.

Barely nine months later however, in June 1894, she re-married, to Hobart banker/clerk, Francis Westbrook. The wedding took place in St Joseph's Catholic Church. Kate and Frank had three children together: Francis Jnr (born c1895), Victor and Melva (born 1903). The family lived in a fine big house at 63 Goulburn Street. Sometime around 1905, and for reasons that are unclear, Frank left the family home leaving Kate to raise five children on her own.⁵ Her youngest child and

² The Bailieboro Girls Model School register records that she was first enrolled on 1 March 1875 and she had turned 14 on her last birthday. Her address is given as Carnacally. She was finally struck off the register on 30 April 1878 at 17 years of age. Register consulted at Cana House, Cavan, 25 January 1999. Regrettably, despite extensive research no further information could be obtained as to how the Magees came to be living at Carnacally, or the exact location.

³ *Ibid.* The register for the Boys Model School reveals that Kate's cousin, Francis Magee of Shancor Kilmainhamwood, attended the Bailieboro School a few years later in 1881–83.

⁴ As related by son Albert Ogilvie during visit to Ireland, *Irish Press*, 16 May 1935.

⁵ According to one unsubstantiated claim, Kate kicked Frank out because of his excessive drinking.

only daughter, Melva, was younger than half-brothers Albert and Eric by thirteen and eleven years respectively. Albert and Eric, both of whom retained the Ogilvie surname, had gone off to secondary school on the mainland while Melva and her two brothers were still quite young. Kate desired a good education for her two sons in order that they might better themselves rather than become drinkers and gamblers like many men of her social circle in the pub trade. She also preferred a Catholic education. These considerations no doubt governed her decision to send Albert and Eric to St Patrick's College, Ballarat in Victoria, for their secondary schooling.

After her re-marriage, Kate continued her involvement in the pub trade and over the following years was connected with the running of several public houses in Hobart: The Victoria Tavern (already mentioned), the Hole-in-the Wall, the Walhalla, the Ship, the Traveller's Rest and the Royal. When she took over the Traveller's Rest in 1903 she was the first female proprietor of that establishment, retaining the proprietorship until 1912.

Return visit to Ireland c1913

In 1913, after an absence from her native land of over thirty years, Kate made a return visit to Ireland with daughter Melva, then aged ten. In bringing Melva, Kate was possibly motivated by a desire to remove her young daughter from the male-dominated Ogilvie/Westbrook household in Hobart and associated pub scene. The pair stayed for about a year with Kate's mother at Kilmainhamwood during which time Melva attended a local national school. Kate then returned to Australia leaving Melva as a boarder at the Mercy Convent in Navan for the next four years, 1916–20.⁶ Four postcards still in existence testify to Kate's maintaining an affectionate correspondence with her Irish relations after her return to Australia.⁷ One bearing a photograph of Kate and her two youngest sons, Frank and Victor Westbrook, sent at Christmas 1914 to her Aunt Jane at Shancor reads as follows:

Dear [Aunt?], I hope you are all well. We are all splendid but are very much concerned about this dreadful war. How is [cousin] Katie.[sic] I hope she hears from her husband and regularly.

Give my love to dear old uncle [Pat Andy]. He is a wonder. Remember me to [cousins] Maggie, Andy and [neighbour] Rosie Smith. Wishing you all a happy and prosperous New Year. I remain yours affectionately, Kate.

Uncle Pat Andy died in 1916 aged 84. Katie Smith had married William O'Reilly of Cortubber Kingscourt in January 1914. A daughter Anna was born at Cortubber the following December. A reservist in the British Army, Sgt O'Reilly was called up at the outbreak of war in August 1914 and sent to fight in France with the Royal Irish Fusiliers.

⁶ Information from Melva's daughter, Jill Terry c2005. Typed up notes supplied by Eilish Lambe of Navan. Regrettably, despite extensive research, no further information could be obtained regarding Melva's time at Kilmainhamwood and Navan.

⁷ Postcards in possession of Eilish Lambe, Brews Hill, Navan. One postcard bearing a picture of the SS Orient had been sent from London to cousin Annie Smith in Preston just prior to Kate's return to Australia. The fourth postcard bearing a photo of the Post Office in Hobart was sent soon after Kate's arrival back in Tasmania and reported on a visit by a Mrs Power (a friend of Annie's) to the island capital.

Another postcard bearing a studio portrait of just Kate herself was sent about the same time to cousin Annie Smith then living at Preston in England. It also expresses concern for the welfare of her cousin Katie. The reference to ‘her trouble’ is almost certainly an allusion to the news that within months of being sent to France Katie’s husband William had been captured and imprisoned in a German POW camp at Limburg:

My dear Cousin, I hope you are well. I have not heard from your brother Pat lately. I do feel so sorry for your sister Katie. I hope she got over her trouble safely. How lonely she must feel. I am sending you a postcard of myself and two youngest sons. Wishing you a Happy and prosperous New Year. I remain your loving and affectionate cousin, Kate

Cousin Pat Smith had emigrated to Perth Western Australia with his next door neighbour, Hugh Cusack (the author’s grandfather) in 1908. Pat was not born until 1890, at least a decade after Kate’s original departure from Ireland, so the two cousins had never met. They had, however, obviously struck up a correspondence in the meantime, with the pair now based on opposite sides of Australia—he in Perth and she in Hobart.⁸

There is a sequel to Kate’s correspondence of Christmas 1914 which makes a poignant story.⁹ Barely a few months later, cousin Katie (Smith) O’Reilly, aged only thirty, died of peritonitis leaving behind her three-month-old daughter, Anna. The baby’s father was still imprisoned in Germany. Soon afterwards Annie Smith gave up her job in Preston to return to Shancor to help care for her niece. Anna’s father William O’Reilly remained imprisoned in Limburg until December 1916 when he was transferred to a sanatorium at Leysen in Switzerland due to health problems. In September 1917 he was moved to a hospital in London but his health continued to deteriorate. He died aged 35 the following month without ever getting to see his daughter, who by this time was nearly three years of age. The cause of William’s death was given as inflammation of the kidneys. Ever since the death of his wife two and a half years earlier O’Reilly had maintained a regular correspondence with his sister-in-law Annie Smith in Shancor. In fact, plans had been set in place for Annie and Anna to travel urgently to London to see him when the news came through of his death. Anna was now a double orphan. Thereafter she was raised by her aunt Annie and uncle Andy at Shancor.¹⁰

The Rosie Smith to whom Kate asked to be remembered in her postcard to her aunt Jane of Christmas 1914 was a neighbour who lived a couple of fields away from Kate’s uncle, aunt and cousins in a now extinct lane running from the Newtown Road down towards the New line road. There was at that time a thriving little sub-community in this lane of about half a dozen households:

⁸ Pat Smith died in Perth in March 1969 aged 79.

⁹ The poignant story of Sgt William O’Reilly, wife and daughter is told at greater length by Myles Dungan in *They Shall Grow Not Old: Irish soldiers and the Great War*, Dublin: Fours Courts Press, 1997. It is based largely on material supplied by Eilish Lambe. The story is also the subject of a display included in the 1914-18 War exhibition in the Cavan County Museum at Ballyjamesduff. The display includes items from the correspondence between Sgt O’Reilly and sister-in-law Annie Smith.

¹⁰ Annie Smith died in April 1954 aged 78 and brother Andy in November 1958 aged 70. Their parents Anna’s grandfather Pat Andy Smith and grandmother Jane died in 1916 and 1925 respectively.

four of Smiths, one of Maguires and one of Muldoons.¹¹ Kate would already have been acquainted with some of the people living there from childhood visits to her mother's people at Shancor. During her 1913–14 sojourn at Kilmainhamwood she would have been able to reconnect with these and other people in the locality she had left over thirty years previously. While doubtless a source of joy and consolation to her, this period back at 'home' was only temporary and her departure to return to Australia surely was accompanied by ambivalence and some sadness.

Death

Kate Westbrook would never see Ireland again. She died in St Helen's Private Hospital, Hobart five years later on 12 December 1919, aged only 59 years. Her death was sudden and unexpected and occurred following 'collapse after an operation'. She lived just long enough to see eldest son, Albert, elected to the Tasmanian House of Assembly seven months earlier in May. She did not live long enough, however, to see Albert get married just six months later in June 1920. Nor did she witness the unfolding of the prominent political careers of Albert and younger brother Eric over the following two decades. Melva was still in Ireland at the time of her mother's death. It is said that she never forgave her mother for leaving her there. She was nonetheless favoured in her mother's will, although all the children did receive an inheritance.¹²

Kate was buried with her half-sister Bertha Connell (died 1895)¹³ in Cornelian Bay cemetery which affords a magnificent view over the harbour of Hobart. Some twenty years later she would be joined by son Albert and forty years later again, in 1979, by Albert's wife Dorothy. Also buried in the grave is a Bridget Hill who died in 1925, aged 92. An emigrant from Tipperary she was no family relation; in all likelihood she was a long-time friend of Kate's. She had been a witness at Kate's marriage to Francis Westbrook in 1894.¹⁴

¹¹ See Danny Cusack, *Kilmainham of the Woody Hollow: A History of Kilmainhamwood for the Centenary of the Church 1898–1998*, Kilmainhamwood: Kilmainhamwood History Committee, 1998, p.63; 'Shancor Lane: A Case Study in Change' for a description of this sub-community of houses, and the accompanying map (p.62). This map shows the exact location of the house of Kate's mother's people the Pat Andy Smiths down a separate shorter laneway leading from a fork just off the Newtown Road where the late Phil Shankey's house is located.

¹² The gross value of Kate's estate was £4980. I am indebted to Mary Anderson of Hobart for the information regarding the circumstances of Kate's death, her will and the inheritances.

¹³ Although recorded on the gravestone as 'sister', Bertha was in fact Kate's half-sister. She was only 22 years of age at the time of death and unmarried. She died from obstruction of the bowel. No further information could be elicited on Bertha. It would seem that Kate's mother Mary Magee (nee Smith) was widowed at some stage and later remarried to a (Mc)Connell. There were McConnells in the townlands of Carnacally and Aughamore, Kilmainhamwood in the late nineteenth century. No further information could be elicited as to other Magee or Connell siblings of Kate. My thanks to Dianne Snowden of the University of Tasmania for the information concerning the death of Bertha Connell.

¹⁴ Bridget had emigrated as an 18 year old in 1854 along with her elder sister Mary and two cousins Mary and Catherine Slattery, all from the Nenagh district in Tipperary. Bridget remained unmarried and worked as housekeeper for over 30 years to Rev. Dean Charles Wood of Hobart until his death in 1896; Rootschat.com and *The Mercury* (Hobart), 29 August 1896.

Ogilvie political dynasty

Albert Ogilvie attended St Patrick's College at Ballarat in Victoria and the University of Tasmania before working in Hobart as a barrister. He became involved in Labor politics and enjoyed a parliamentary career spanning twenty years from 1919 to 1939, terminated prematurely only by his sudden death on the golf course in Melbourne at the age of only 48. He was Labor Member of the House of Assembly for the electorate of Franklin which spanned south-western Tasmania for that entire period. He served as a minister in the Lyons' Labor Government from 1923 until 1927. The following year he was elected leader of the Tasmanian Labor Party in succession to Joe Lyons and served as Leader of the Opposition in the State Parliament until 1934. In that year he led the Labor Party to victory in the State elections and served as Premier of Tasmania until his untimely demise five years later.

The conflict between himself and his erstwhile party leader Joe Lyons is an underlying theme of Ogilvie's career. From the outset Ogilvie was ambitious and determined to oust, or at least succeed, Lyons as Labor leader. The tension which existed during their time together in government in the 1920s was magnified during the following decade by which time they were leaders of opposing parties. Lyons had left the Labor party and was now national leader of the conservative United Australia Party and Prime Minister of Australia. Ogilvie was leader of the Tasmanian Labor Party and (from 1934) Premier. A clash of temperaments existed between the mild-mannered and accommodating Lyons and the more aggressive and ambitious Ogilvie.¹⁵

Once dubbed an Australian F.D. Roosevelt, Ogilvie's tenure in the premiership was distinguished by his leadership in devising and implementing policies to help Tasmania recover from the depression of the early 1930s. Massive unemployment relief and substantial government-led public works projects distinguished his approach. The latter included famously building a road to the top of the Mt Wellington Pinnacle outside Hobart. That road has ever since been known as the Ogilvie Scar.

During his early political career, Ogilvie was something of a left-winger. In 1931 he ran for office on a fairly radical economic programme. The programme on which he ran for re-election six years later was, however, considerably more moderate. A combination of the exigencies of office and the need to unite different elements of his party demanded substantial adjustment and compromise. It is doubtful, however, that this comfortably-off businessman and lawyer was ever really radical. Yet he saw himself as anti-Establishment, a part-Scottish, part-Irish Catholic boy with a taint of convict past raised in the pub trade who had made good. In this he was partly influenced by stories told to him by his mother about the snobbery she had encountered during her time at Government House. Throughout his career, Ogilvie managed to be a thorn in the side of the local Anglo-Protestant establishment.¹⁶

¹⁵ John Briggs, 'Scourge of the Establishment: Albert Ogilvie and Tasmanian Society, 1890–1939', unpublished MA thesis, University of Tasmania, 2016, Chapter One. The Australian Labor Party split in 1931 as a result of severe internal divisions over their economic response to the Great Depression. Amidst intense disagreement between economically conservative and radical elements of the party, two senior ministers in the Scullin Labor government, Joe Lyons and James Fenton, resigned from Cabinet in January 1931. Lyons, Fenton and their supporters subsequently merged with the conservative opposition Nationalist Party of Australia to form the new United Australia Party led by Lyons with the last Nationalist leader John Latham as his deputy.

¹⁶Ibid, Chapter Two discusses the contrast between Ogilvie and Lyons.

Irish-born and Tasmanian-based historian, Richard Davis, has placed Ogilvie firmly in the tradition of Tammany Hall. He has also characterised him as short-tempered, abusive and authoritarian.¹⁷ Fellow Tasmanian historian, Michael Roe, who has written extensively about this period, described Ogilvie as aggressive. Roe also emphasised the close link between the Irish Catholic community and Labor politics, along with the link between the liquor interest and the Labor Party.¹⁸ With his ethno-religious and family publican background Ogilvie neatly fits into this mode of categorisation.

In October 1920, 30 year-old Ogilvie married 22 year-old Dorothy Mabel Hines from Melbourne, a barmaid in one of his family's pubs in Hobart. The couple later had one daughter Patricia born in 1923. Ogilvie's law business was doing well. In that same year Ogilvie, wife and baby moved from the family home at 63 Goulburn St (an area of dim repute on the southern side of Hobart) to a house built 40 years previously at 23 Stoke Street in the much more fashionable suburb of Newtown on the other side of the city. The house known as *Alverstoke* was expanded and converted by Ogilvie into a concrete modernist edifice.¹⁹

Albert's visit to Ireland 1935

In 1935 Premier Ogilvie took an extensive month-long tour of Europe under the auspices of the Tasmanian branch of the Empire Parliamentary Association. The accompanying party included his wife Dorothy, daughter Patricia (then aged 12) and Irish-educated Dr J.F. Gaha, minister for health in Ogilvie's government.²⁰ The tour included a visit to Ireland from 13 to 19 May. On arrival in Dublin, the party was met by the Taoiseach, Eamonn de Valera himself. Ogilvie was also granted an audience with the Papal Nuncio, Dr Pascal Robinson. The highlight of the time in Dublin was probably a grand luncheon at Dublin Castle attended by De Valera, a number of cabinet ministers and other dignitaries. On another occasion Ogilvie attended the gallery of the Dáil Éireann while it was in session and met with the leader of the Labour Party, William Norton. The time in Dublin included a certain amount of general sight-seeing and other social events such as a reception in the Shelbourne Hotel attended by some of Dr Gaha's Irish friends. A visit to the Dublin Child Welfare Centre was also arranged (Mrs Ogilvie was employed as a child welfare worker in Hobart).²¹

On Friday 17 May, the Ogilvies were taken on a day-tour to County Meath. They were accompanied by De Valera, Frank Aiken and his wife and J.P. Walshe, secretary of the department of foreign affairs. Following a stop at Tara, the party proceeded to the Columban headquarters at

¹⁷ Richard Davis, *Irish Traces on Tasmanian History 1803–2004*, Hobart: Sassafras Books, 2005, pp. 129–5.

¹⁸ Michael Roe, 'A. G. Ogilvie and the Blend of Van Diemen's Land with Tasmania', *Bulletin of the Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1986, pp.40–4.

¹⁹ Now known as *Willesden on Stoke*, the site presently consists of three luxury accommodation suites and a private swimming pool.

²⁰ John Francis Gaha (1894–1966) was born in rural New South Wales. He attended St Joseph's College Sydney. In about 1912 he began medical studies at the National University of Ireland before working as a doctor and house surgeon in Dublin. He returned to Australia in 1920, settled in Tasmania and established a private practice in Hobart. In 1934 he was elected to the Tasmania Parliament and served as Minister for Health 1934–43. Michael Roe, *Albert Ogilvie and Stymie Gaha: World-wise Tasmanians*, Hobart: Parliament of Tasmania, 2008.

²¹ *Irish Press*, 16 May 1935.

Dalغان Park where luncheon was held hosted by the Columban Superior-General, Dr O'Dwyer. Fr Maguire, an Australian-based Irish Columban, was also present. Following the luncheon the party visited Newgrange and Slane.²² Ogilvie and Dr Gaha (who had spent eight of his teenage and early adult years living in Dublin) later recorded some of their memories of that day thus:

Our first stop was the Hill of Tara, from which we saw the beauties of the Irish landscape ... It would appear from its situation that people of another age, as well as ours, had a distinct eye for beautiful natural settings. The hill enables one to look far across the Irish plains, and all around is the most fertile land in all Ireland. At its foot flows the Boyne, a name not unfamiliar to people the world over.²³

At Dalغان Park they had been treated to a 'splendid lunch' by the Principal Fr O'Dwyer. They recalled that:

Amongst other things, the good Father is a very good fisherman, and on the previous day he had secured from the Boyne nearby an 11 lb. salmon for us. The meal was not without its amusing side; the father, who had a sense of fun, set out to add to our happiness with a special brew called 'whiskey punch', manufactured by the Jameson Irish whiskey people. The concoction was of extreme potency. At first the thing appeared to be very amusing, but after a time one thought one detected the good Father weaken, and observed that he called an assistant to his aid.²⁴

Later on in the evening they had been taken around the grounds of the monastery 'which proved to be a most delightful setting' after which they motored back to Dublin 'by way of other ruins [Newgrange and Slane] dating back to the earliest records of Irish history'.

The following day (Saturday) the Ogilvies took a private trip to Navan with the purpose of establishing the existence and whereabouts of any relations in the town. They met the Town Clerk and the UDC Chairman. The registry of births was consulted in the local vestry. No immediate relations survived in the town though Magee 'aunts' from Cornmarket had emigrated to San Francisco some years previously. Ogilvie was however introduced to a couple of people in the town (including a John McTaggart of Brews Hill) connected to his supposed Magee 'relations'.²⁵ In reality these Navan Magees had no connection whatsoever with Kate Magee.

On the Sunday, their last day in Ireland, the Ogilvies were taken on a sight-seeing tour in the countryside, to Kildare, during which they visited the Jesuit-run Clongowes College. The previous evening, however, Albert delivered a broadcast from Athlone on 2RN radio (the precursor to RTÉ) in which he gave his impressions of Ireland. He revealed at the outset that his mother had been born in Ireland and that she had lived there until she was eighteen. She had left Navan with only £2 in her pocket which she eventually sent back to her mother. In her adopted land she had 'set out in business on her own and done well'. Moreover 'his earliest recollections were the wonderful tales

²² *Irish Press*, 17 May 1935.

²³ *Report on the official visit of the Premier of Tasmania and Minister for Health to the United Kingdom and European countries under the auspices of the Empire Parliamentary Association (1935)*, p. 22. Printed copy retained in the State Archives of Tasmania, Hobart [T.C. P914 TAS].

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Irish Press*, 20 May 1935.

of the history of Ireland he had from her' and 'that from the very earliest years she [had] instilled a deep love of Ireland into the hearts of her children'. Visiting Ireland was 'just like coming home'.²⁶ He had been overwhelmed ever since his arrival in the country by the kindness and courtesy he had been shown. He was agreeably surprised and pleased to observe the advances Ireland had made in recent years in improving the living standards of its people. He concluded by observing that the Irish had played a very important part in the life of Australia, including public affairs. Seven of the eight members of his government were of direct Irish descent.²⁷

Ogilvie's visit to Ireland had an interesting sequel as regards his attempts to trace his mother's people. For all his talk on 2RN of his mother's stories about life in Ireland, he seems to have picked up little about geography and the specifics of place. Indeed, most of his knowledge appears to have been at the level of generality. Furthermore he appears not to have consulted his half-sister Melva Westbrook (who had spent about a year at Kilmainhamwood and four years at boarding-school in Navan) before leaving Tasmania on his European trip. His relationship with Melva may have become a little distant, if not strained, by this stage. As previously noted, Melva had received a lifetime allowance from her mother while Albert and his three brothers got no inheritance.

In any event, Albert's cousin Annie Smith at Shancor Kilmainhamwood must have subsequently got word of his visit. Some 16 months later she wrote to Ogilvie to inform him that his mother was not from Navan but from Kilmainhamwood. Had he consulted Melva or done his research before leaving Hobart he would surely have been aware of such basic information. Ogilvie replied to cousin Annie on Premier's Department note paper in November 1936—some 18 months after his visit to Ireland—acknowledging his cousin's communication and the crucial piece of information contained therein:

Dear Mrs [sic] Smith,

I was very pleased to receive your letter of 15th September. It is true that I visited Irish Free State in May last year, and now that you write to me I remember that my mother said her birthplace was Shancor, Kilmainham Wood, and Melva also remembers her education in the Convent at Navan. I am very sorry indeed that whilst there I missed seeing you.

There is just a possibility that I may visit England again next year, in which event I may have time to visit the Irish Free State; if so I will certainly write to you and make an appointment to see you.

I will send you a copy of our Christmas card, which has a photograph of me therein. Also, by ordinary mail I am sending you one of the Tasmanian illustrated papers in which you will probably be interested.

With kind regards and best wishes,

I am,

Yours sincerely,

[AG Ogilvie signature]²⁸

²⁶ *Irish Press*, 16 May 1935.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Letter dated 13 November 1936. Original in possession of Eilish Lambe of Brews Hill, Navan.

Ogilvie did not visit England again the following year and would be dead barely three years later. This makes all the more disappointing that he did not get to visit his mother's birthplace or meet up with his first cousins on his one and only visit to Ireland.

As well as Ireland, the touring party also visited England, France, Monte Carlo, Switzerland, Italy, Germany and the Soviet Union. Upon their return to Australia Premier Ogilvie and Dr Gaha compiled an extensive report on their European tour, a report which included revealing impressions of countries visited and which was printed as a public document.

In Italy the Ogilvies met Mussolini who impressed Albert as 'a man of undoubted personality, courage, character and efficiency but [who was] also ruthless and ambitious beyond words'.²⁹ They also visited St Peter's in Rome and had a personal audience with Pope Pius XI. Germany was two years into Nazi rule under Hitler at the time of their visit to that country. The Soviet Union was at the height of the Stalinist purges. In their report Ogilvie and Gaha commented on the underlying layer of fear which they detected. As for the Soviet system itself they were ambivalent. While acknowledging its achievements they were also very aware of its shortcomings and challenges: '[W]e are far from being prepared to recommend or even suggest Soviet methods as an alternative to insecure capitalism'.³⁰ They recognised the failings of capitalism but seemed to favour a social democratic response. Overall they were harsher in their judgements of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

That Ogilvie was influenced by his trip to Germany was reflected in the fact that he subsequently became a keen advocate of rearmament and expressed his support for the acceptance into Australia of Jewish refugees. Indeed his experience in Europe in 1935—reinforced by a shorter visit two years later—appears to have expanded his horizons and given him an international vision rare amongst locally based Australian politicians of his day.

Ogilvie died suddenly of a heart attack on the Warburton golf course whilst on a visit to Melbourne. He was only 49. Younger brother Eric was mentioned as a candidate in subsequent media speculation concerning his successor as Premier. In the eventuality Irish-born minister Edmund Dwyer-Gray filled the post on an interim basis for a few months until being replaced by Robert Cosgrove who retained the Labor Party leadership and premiership until 1947. He was again Premier from 1948 until 1958.

Ogilvie's estate was valued for probate at £8905, a substantial enough amount for the time. A statue was later erected in his honour in the grounds of Government House, Hobart. Opinion as to Ogilvie's legacy is divided. Certainly, he did much to hasten development and lift Tasmania out of the throes of depression, though other aspects of his administration (including his own financial propriety) have been questioned.

Eric Ogilvie

Albert's younger brother Eric followed a not dissimilar political career. Like Albert he had attended St Patrick's College, Ballarat and the University of Tasmania. Unlike Albert, however, he did not proceed directly into the legal profession and purposefully forge out a career for himself. Instead as a young man he travelled and worked at various occupations, including a four-year stint as a

²⁹ *Report ...* (1935), p. 14.

³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 46.

jackeroo in Queensland. Upon his return to Tasmania in his late 20s he had several jobs in industry before eventually joining his brother's firm as managing law clerk.

Eric did not enter the Tasmania Parliament until 1928, some nine years after his brother. He served as MHA for Wilmot (a different electorate to his brother) for twelve years until 1940. At the time of his election Eric, then aged 36, was still living in the family home. It has been said that Albert to some extent gave his younger brother a 'leg up' and that Eric owed some of his subsequent political success to his elder brother's patronage. It has been said that of the two brothers Eric was the joker while Albert was much more serious and ambitious.

After Labor was elected to power in 1934 Eric served as Attorney-General and Minister for Education in his brother's government. As such he was a senior minister with some amount of power and authority. When Albert died suddenly in 1939 Eric was mentioned as a possible successor as Premier. It would appear however that he was not as highly regarded within the party as his brother and that was not to be.

When Eric retired from parliamentary politics in 1940 he was only 48 years of age. He nevertheless maintained an active life in employment until his eventual retirement in 1957. As well as holding various positions in trade unions he served for a time as Industrial Registrar. He was a delegate to the ILO Conference in Geneva in 1954. He also held various honorary positions in the Labor Party during this period, including that of delegate to federal conference and member of the federal executive.

Unlike brother Albert whose career was truncated by his premature death at the age of 49, Eric, who lived to be 70, was able to go on to pursue an active career after retirement from politics and fit much more into his working life overall. When Eric died in April 1962 he too was buried in Cornelian Cemetery, not far from the resting-place of his mother and brother. He was later joined by wife Lucy who died in 1979, the same year as Dorothy Ogilvie.

In 1936, at the age of 44, Eric had married Lucy Coughlan, then aged 30. The couple had met through Albert's law firm. Like Albert's wife Dorothy, Lucy too was from Melbourne. Her father was Michael Patrick Coughlan (1867–1950), a native of Co. Cork. Lucy's sister Kathleen married lawyer Nicholas McKenna, who himself had moved from Melbourne to Hobart and was a partner with Albert in the firm Ogilvie and McKenna.

As Senator Nicholas (Nick) McKenna, the Ogilvies' close relation would go on to become a leading figure in Australian national politics. He served a very long term as a senator for Tasmania in the national parliament and was for some years leader of the Labor Party in the Senate. The Ogilvie/Coughlan/McKenna connection exemplified a close-knit Irish-Australian Catholic Labor legal network in relatively small town Hobart.

A Meath connection asserted itself in the form of the prominent Hobart-based journalist Eric Balfe (1898–?), a descendant of Drumconrath-born John Donnellan Balfe (1816–80), Young Irishman, informer who subsequently enjoyed a prominent career as a journalist and politician in Tasmania.³¹ Eric Balfe was a contemporary of the Ogilvie brothers.³² As chief political writer and editor of the *Hobart Mercury* Balfe remained on friendly terms with Albert Ogilvie at a time when

³¹Stefan Petrow, 'Judas in Tasmania: John Donnellan Balfe 1850–1880', in Richard Davis et al, *Irish Australian Studies, papers delivered at the Eighth Irish-Australian Conference, Hobart July 1995*, Sydney: Crossing Press, 1996, pp. 462–74. Balfe's brother-in-law Meath-born Christopher O'Reilly also enjoyed a prominent career as a politician in his adopted Tasmania. See Danny Cusack, 'From Ballybeg to Van Diemen's Land: Christopher O'Reilly (1835–1910)', *Riocht na Midhe* vol. 25, 2014

³² Briggs, 'Scourge of the Establishment', p. 11.

the paper itself was hostile to both the Labor Party and the Premier personally. He would later have direct access to most of Tasmanian premiers and senior bureaucrats between the 1940s and 1960s. Eric Balfe's father had also been a journalist and Eric's son Barrie Donnellan Balfe (1930–2016), sometime editor of the *Hobart Mercury*, continued the family tradition of journalism, as did one of his nephews.³³ The Balfes had established something of a journalistic dynasty in Tasmania.

Albert Jnr visit to Ireland 1960s

Albert Jnr, Eric Ogilvie's son, visited Ireland as a 23 year old in 1964. Unlike his namesake uncle 29 years earlier he got to meet some actual relations—the Lambes in Navan. Albert was educated by the nuns and Christian Brothers in Hobart before following in the footsteps of his father and uncle by entering the legal profession. Having completed a law degree at the University of Tasmania he won a Ford Foundation scholarship and spent nine months in 1963–4 at Tulane University, New Orleans. Scholarship completed, he travelled in the USA and England before paying a visit to Ireland in the summer of 1964.³⁴

Here he met his Lambe relations at Brews Hill Navan: Anna and her children Eilish, Ena, Mary, Nicholas, Christopher and Brian. Anna (née O'Reilly of Shancor, Kilmainhamwood) was a niece of Ann Smith of Shancor who had written to Albert Snr in 1936 appraising him of his Kilmainhamwood relations. Ann was a first cousin of Kate Magee, Albert Jnr's grandmother.³⁵ Throughout her life Anna Lambe (1914–88) took a keen interest in her Australian relations with whom she was a long term and regular correspondent.³⁶ Young Albert apparently made a good impression in Ireland. The *Meath Chronicle* described his visit thus: 'He is a young man of impeccable manners and his unassuming and friendly disposition endeared him to everybody who had the pleasure of meeting him in Navan.'³⁷

Madeleine Ogilvie

Politics skipped a generation with the Ogilvies insofar as neither Albert Jnr nor brother Eric Jnr followed the parliamentary paths of their respective fathers. However Albert Jnr's daughter Madeleine has made amends. Born in 1969 and the middle of three daughters, she followed her father and grandfather into the legal profession after too having studied law at the University of Tasmania.

Madeleine served as the Labor MHA for Denison in the Tasmanian parliament from 2014 until 2018. She clashed with the party's Left faction over the issues of marriage equality and euthanasia leading to her losing her seat. She was however re-elected to Parliament as an independent in a 2019 by-election. As the only Independent in the Lower House she was in a powerful position (along with a couple of Green MPs) to decide the fate of legislation of the Liberal (conservative) minority government of which she was generally supportive.

³³ *Hobart Mercury*, 28 May 2016, reporting Barrie Balfe's death.

³⁴ *Meath Chronicle*, July 1964.

³⁵ *Ibid.* Also information supplied by Eilish Lambe of Brews Hill Navan.

³⁶ Anna also corresponded with Fr Senan Moynihan, sometime editor of the *Capuchin Annual*, who later emigrated to Perth western Australia where he became chaplain to St Anne's Hospital Mt Lawley where the present author was born and with the noted Australian authors Mary Durack and Patsy Adam-Smith.

³⁷ *Meath Chronicle*, July 1964.

Madeleine eventually threw in her lot with the Liberal Party. Running as the Liberal candidate she was elected MHA for Clark (formerly Denison) in the 2021 elections. Soon afterwards she was appointed a minister in the incoming Liberal Government assuming responsibility for five portfolios, including those of Small Business and Women. Since April 2022 she has continued to serve as Minister for Small Business and holds three other portfolios.

Madeleine's political odyssey reflects to a degree the gradual transition in Irish Australian Catholic political loyalties. A growing involvement of Catholics in the conservative parties (Liberal and National) has become evident in recent decades. This suggests that traditional Irish Catholic loyalty to the Labor Party was both circumstantial and contingent. Socio-economic and other factors have served to erode that support.

Madeleine is married to William Doyle and the couple have four children. After losing her seat in the 2018 election she took up the position of president of the Tasmanian Football Council.³⁸ In 2015 she featured in the BBC *Who Do You Think You Are* documentary about English convict Caroline Gadbury who was the second wife of her great, great grandfather George Ogilvie.³⁹ Madeleine's grandfather James was actually one of two sons born to George and first wife Caroline Justin, an English free settler. There was therefore no blood relationship as such between Caroline Gadbury and Madeleine.⁴⁰

Ogilvie and Westbrook descendants

Kate Magee has a sizeable number of descendants in Australia today, mostly resident in Hobart. These include four living grandchildren (of five born) and eleven great-grandchildren through the Ogilvie line and one living grandchild (of four born) and six great-grandchildren through the Westbrook line. There are also a considerable number of great, great-grandchildren.

Kate's son Albert and wife Dorothy had one child Patricia (born 1923) who is now 97 years of age and living in a nursing home in Hobart. Patricia married Colin Rennie in 1948 and the couple had three children: Peter (born 1949), Helen (born 1951) and Robert (1953–76) who died in a bushwalking accident at the age of 23. Between them Peter and Helen (Boon) had four children, all now in their forties.

Eric Ogilvie and wife Lucy had four children: Ann (born 1937), Albert Jnr (born 1940) and Eric Jnr (born 1946). Ann married Michael Connor and the couple had four children, now in their 50s or 60s. Albert Jnr married Frances Northam and the couple have three daughters—including the aforementioned Madeleine—all now in their 50s. All still live in Hobart.

Kate's three children by Frank Westbrook were Victor (1897–?), Melva (1903–91) and Frank Jnr (1895–1966). Victor married May McAuliffe (?–1953) and the couple had two children Helen (1933–45) who died at twelve years as a result of a bicycle accident and David (1929–82). David married Cecily Lucas in 1964 and the couple had five children, now all in their 50s. Melva married Edward Terry (1904–?). The couple had one child Jill (born 1931) now 89 years of age and living

³⁸ *Mercury*, (Hobart), 8 January 2019.

³⁹ *Mercury*, 29 January 2015. *The Secret History of My Family* was broadcast on BBC 2 in March 2016.

⁴⁰ 'Your Ancestors: Caroline Gadbury and the Ogilvies', a briefing paper prepared by Steve Perring, Assistant producer BBC Media Village White City UK March 2015; 'The rise and fall off a teenage shoplifter', *Radio Times* BBC, 5–11 March 2016.

in the Ogilvy Nursing Home in Hobart.⁴¹ Over the years Jill Terry has taken a keen interest in her Irish connection, largely because of her mother's extended childhood sojourn in Meath described earlier. She has for years been a regular correspondent of Eilish Lambe in Navan who is a close relation through Eilish's late mother Anna whose mother Kate Smith of Kilmainhamwood was a niece of Kate Magee's mother Mary. The present author met Jill on a visit to Hobart in April 2005. Melva Terry (nee Westbrook) herself had an extended life after returning to Tasmania from Navan in 1920. She died in Hobart in 1991, aged 88 years.

Frank Westbrook Jnr (1895–1966) married Lillian Abbott and the couple had one child Pauline (1925–2008). In 1949 Pauline married Max Osborne (1924–50) who was killed in a mining accident while Pauline was pregnant with son Max. Max Jnr (born 1950) is a retired surgeon living in Sydney. The present author met Pauline Osborne in the company of her cousin Jill Terry on his 2005 visit to Hobart. Pauline brought me on a trip by car to the Mt Wellington monument outside Hobart by Ogilvie's Scar, the road built by her uncle Premier during the Great Depression.⁴²

Irish dimension in Tasmanian politics

The historic and symbiotic relationship between the Irish Catholic community and Labor politics in New South Wales in the early 1900s and beyond has long been well recognised and documented.⁴³ Less recognised however is the almost equally strong relationship which prevailed in Tasmania. The decades of the 1920s, '30s and '40s notably witnessed the prominent role of men such as Albert and Eric Ogilvie, Joseph Lyons (Labor Premier of Tasmania 1924–28, later Nationalist Prime Minister of Australia 1931–39), Edmund Dwyer Gray who was the grandson of Sir John Gray whose statue graces O'Connell Street in Dublin and son of *Freemans Journal* editor Edmund Gray, sometime editor of the same newspaper himself, emigrant and briefly Premier of Tasmania following Ogilvie's death in 1939, Sir Robert Cosgrove (Gray's long-term successor as Premier), Frank Gaha (minister in Ogilvie's government and companion on his visit to Ireland in 1935), not to mention most of the aforementioned members of Ogilvie's cabinet (with the addition of Thomas D'Alton). Furthermore, the Governor of Tasmania 1924–30 was Sir James O'Grady, Bristol-born of Irish parents, and former Labour MP in the House of Commons.

As noted previously Nicholas McKenna was a partner in Albert Ogilvie's law firm and married to the sister of Eric's wife Mary Coughlan. McKenna would go on to serve as a Labor senator for Tasmania for 24 years, 1944–68, including fifteen years, 1951–66, as his party's deputy leader in that chamber. He also served as a minister in the national Labor government 1946–49. Another prominent political contemporary was Jack Dwyer who served as Labor MHA from 1931 to 1962, including a brief stint as Deputy Premier in 1958–9.

To the Ogilvie dynasty in Tasmanian Labor politics we might also add the O'Byrne dynasty. Of Irish grand-parentage, Justin O'Byrne (1912–93) served as a Labor senator for Tasmania for thirty-four years 1947–81, a longevity which eventually earned him the title of 'Father of the Senate'. He

⁴¹ Information supplied by Helen Boon of Hobart, daughter of Patricia Rennie and grand-daughter of Premier Albert Ogilvie.

⁴² Pauline Osborne died in 2008 and Jill Terry (aged 97) is currently resident in a nursing home in Hobart.

⁴³ This theme of the prominent role of Irish Australian Catholics in Tasmanian Labor politics is developed in Richard Davis, *Eighty years' Labor : the ALP in Tasmania, 1903–1983*, Hobart: Sassafras Books, 1983), Chapters One and Two.

was president of the Senate at the time of the constitutional crisis which led to the sacking of the Whitlam Labor Government by Governor-General Sir John Kerr in November 1975.⁴⁴

O'Byrne's grand-niece Michelle (1968–) and grandnephew David (1969–) have both been prominent in Tasmanian Labor politics over the past quarter of a century. The brother-sister combination served together as ministers in the Tasmanian Labor Government 2010–14. David was briefly leader of the State Labor opposition in June–July 2021.⁴⁵

Descendants in Ireland

It is difficult to identify close relations of the late Kate Magee in the Kilmainhamwood district today. In the first decade of the 1900s there were Magees in the townlands of Shancor, Tavis and Kilmainhamwood (at the Fox Glen). They would all have ultimately been the one family and relations of Kate's father's people. Some would no doubt have been first cousins of Kate.

In the first half of the twentieth century there lived a family of Magees in a farmhouse neighbouring the Smiths at Shancor. These Magees had a reputation for being tough, tight and miserly. In later years the household consisted entirely of unmarried brothers and sisters, including Micky ('Mucker'), Maggie and Ellen. Ellen was the last to die. Although Magees are now long gone from Shancor and the Fox Glen, there is today still Magees at Tavis, family of the late Paddy Magee (1931–2013). They are probably the nearest surviving relations to Kate on her father's side.

Relations through Kate's mother's people (the Smiths) are a little easier to identify, although none are to be found in the Kilmainhamwood area today. The Wards of Bailieboro and the Lambes are connected to Kate through two of her first cousins (daughters of her uncle Pat Andy of Shancor). Cousin Margaret (Maggie) married Michael Ward of Bailieboro. The couple had twelve children, including Alphonsus. Alphonsus's son Justin is now a prominent businessman based in the main street of Blanchardstown, north county Dublin.

Cousin Kathleen (Kate) Smith of Shancor married William O'Reilly of Cortubber, Kingscourt. The couple's only child Anna (who was raised by Smiths at Shancor after both parents died young) eventually married Nicholas Lambe of Ballinee, Nobber. In December 1948 the couple and their three children moved to Navan into a house at Brews Hill (christened *Parkview*) next to Pairc Tailteann. Another three children were born here. Nicholas Lambe died in 1957. Daughter Eilish and son Christopher (Christo) still live in the family home. With the move of the Lambes to Navan over 70 years ago the direct connection of Kate's mother's people with Kilmainhamwood was severed. The Smith house and land was purchased by the late Phil Shankey when he moved to Shancor from Blackfort Lane at Ardagh in the 1942.

The Matthews families at Corryourke, Mullagh would also have a connection with Kate inasmuch as her aunt Bridget (Smith) married Andrew Matthews of that locality. As previously mentioned one of the couple's daughters, Mary, travelled with cousin Kate to Tasmania. Their other daughter Bridget emigrated to the USA along with three female cousins (daughters of Kate's uncle

⁴⁴ Irish-educated Richard Davis (1935–22), one time Professor of History at the University of Tasmania, wrote O'Byrne's biography *The Vision Splendid of Senator Justin O'Byrne*, Hobart: Sassafras Books, 2019.

⁴⁵ Michelle O'Byrne has served in both the Federal and State Parliaments. MHR for Bass 1998–2004, she has represented the same constituency in the Tasmanian House of Assembly since 2006. David O'Byrne served as MHA for Franklin 2010–14, and again since 2018.

Pat Andy). All contact was subsequently lost with these four women and their families.⁴⁶ It is impossible therefore to identify surviving relations of Kate in the USA.

She does however have identifiable relations in Western Australia resulting from her cousin Pat Smith emigrating to Perth in 1908. Pat married and had six children, one of whom (Kevin) is still living. Kevin and most of his siblings had families of their own. Most of the Smith descendants are currently resident in Perth. In 1987 Kevin Smith and wife June visited the by then deserted Smith family home place at Shancor.

Conclusion

Kate Magee of Kilmainhamwood was not necessarily a typical female emigrant or a typical Meath emigrant of her time. With her middling tenant farmer background and secondary education at Bailieboro Model School she had at least a slight advantage over many of her contemporaries. Nevertheless, hers is one story of the female Irish emigrant experience in Australia and deserves to be told.

Kate Magee became an enterprising businesswoman who finished up running a chain of public houses in Hobart. Like many other such Irish women she had enhanced her opportunities for economic and social advancement through marrying a non-Catholic—or, in her case, two non-Catholics (in succession James Ogilvie and Francis Westbrook). Though, perhaps reflecting the dominance of Kate the individual and her personality as much as the ways of the time, the children of both marriages were all raised Catholics. Subsequent generations of Ogilvies would remain predominantly Catholic. Neither of the two husbands remained on the scene long, however, and it was left to Kate to capitalise upon the opportunities from the base she had established for herself. Kate Magee's most enduring legacy however was one she did not live to see—the creation of an Ogilvie mini-dynasty in Tasmanian Labor politics through sons Albert and Eric and, much later, great granddaughter Madeleine, notwithstanding her later change of political allegiance. To that extent the Ogilvies were representative of one Irish-Australian emigrant story: that of the first generation of Irish-Australian Catholics who built upon the base established by their parents of modest backgrounds by establishing themselves in the business and professional classes while at the same time finding their political expression through the Labor Party.

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⁴⁶ Information supplied by Eilish Lambe of Navan.