

## **The Talbot Family**

The Talbots came from France to England and then to Ireland to make Malahide their home for 800 years. Their French ancestors were Barons of Cleuville in Normandy. Their name was Tailbois or Talebot. In 1066 Hugh and Richard Talebot were with William the Conqueror on his invasion of England. They received land in Herefordshire and afterwards spread to other parts of England and Wales. They retained their connections with France, however, and Richard's son was Governor of Plessy in 1118. When his wife died, he became a monk at Beaubec there, thus foreshadowing in a small way the greater connections of his descendants with the Church afterwards, when several of this family were Bishops in Ireland.

Malahide had been a Viking settlement before the arrival of the Normans and the last Norse King of Dublin was forced to retreat to the Grange when the Normans arrived. Aerial photographs show clearly the crop marks west of Bloomfield, where the King, Hamund MacTurkill spent his last days at his ring forts.

In 1184, Richard Talbot was granted the Lordship of Malahide from Henry II (1154~1189), while the rest of Leinster was granted to Strongbow.

Chevalier Talbot received his lands by rendering to the King "one archer with a horse and coat-of-mail forever". Richard died in 1193 and was succeeded by his son Reginald who was a minor at the time of his father's death. At this very early stage of the family dynasty, the Talbots came close to losing their estates. Being a minor, the wardship of the property became vested in the Crown. However, Henry de Fondres, Archbishop of Dublin, acting as Justiciary, appointed a clerk to the benefice in right of the King, as set forth in an ancient Inquisition. The Crown now took proceedings to protect the family estates against the encroachments of the Archbishop of Dublin, and when Reginald died without heir, he was succeeded by his younger brother and heir, Adam. This, indeed, was only the beginning of many a dispute between Church and Crown which haunted the Talbot family over the centuries.

Next in line, in Malahide, was Richard Fitz Adam Talbot and his land was settled on him by Edward I in 1286 and when he died, his son, Sir Milo Talbot took over. He was succeeded by another Sir Richard, who was the associate in arms of Sir John Bermingham. He married Margared de Ashbourne. He was sixth of the thirty Talbots to control the Malahide estates during their 800 year tenure, and, already, the family name, Richard, is beginning to predominate.

The Talbots are always reputed to have been a highly diplomatic family and steered a very safe course between the obstacles of Church and Crown domination. In 1259, they founded a monastery of the Holy Trinity at Templeogue and Richard was Archbishop of Dublin in 1262.

Sir Thomas Talbot born in 1328 later married Agnes Kenewrich and he was succeeded by his son Sir Richard Talbot who became Sheriff of County Dublin. By now, the family had established themselves in about half the counties of Leinster, were members of Parliament, County Sheriffs and were entrusted with the defence of many English Garrison Towns, such as Kilkenny, Arklow, Newcastle etc. They weren't always successful, as Richard, along with 200 other nobles were slain by the people of Louth in 1329.

The Talbots had by now acquired their coat of arms. This custom had its origins in the Crusades. Knights, whether in battle or jousting, were clad from head to foot in armour, and, so some means of identification of fighting men became necessary. So it was, that brightly coloured patterns and emblems began to make their appearance on shields and great coats -hence, the term "coat-of-arms" and horsetrappings. The two outstanding features of the Talbot crest are the lion and the hound. The lion motif, shows the family's Welsh connections and the Earl of Shrewsbury was referred to as "Talbot our Goode Dogge". The poet Chaucer called his dog Talbot. The family motto is Forte-et-Fidele - Brave and Faithful - which would appear to refer to the lion and hound respectively.

During the 14th century, the family kept up their associations with their ancient holdings in England and France and took part in the English and French wars up to the time of the expulsion of the English from France. One great member of the family was Sir John Talbot, known as Lord Furnival who defended the English pale for six years, with little resources against the O'Byrnes, the O'Tooles and the O'Nolans. It was said that he struck terror into the Irish Chiefs largely by his personal presence. His mode of government was praised to the King. When recalled, he went with the English army to France about 1420 and fought with distinction there under two kings and rose to command the whole English army. An interesting fact is that he was defeated at the Battle of Patay by Joan of Arc, the Maid of Orleans. He was captured and imprisoned by the French 'till 1433. Released after the martyrdom of the French girl, he again took up his military duties and was made a Marshal of France in 1441. He became Earl of Shrewsbury, Wexford and Waterford and was literally loaded with titles. He became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. But enough wasn't enough for Lord Fumival. In 1452, he again returned to France, but his star had set. He was defeated and slain at Chastilion. His body was brought home and buried at Whitechurch. His son was killed with him. He was referred to, by historians, as the 'Terror of the French'. His brother Richard Talbot was Archbishop of Dublin in 1443. Books have been written about Talbots exploits and his name became a household word, in England, France and Ireland. It is said that French women, to frighten their children, would tell them that "the Talbot cometh". Talbot's death ended English hopes of dominion in France. One hundred and fifty years after his death, Shakespeare, introduced Talbot into his play, Henry VI, which must ensure him immortality, to some extent.

To return to more mundane topics, the next Malahide Talbot was a Thomas Talbot, who, again was a minor, on his fathers death. He was succeeded by Christopher Talbot who died in minority, and the Lordship developed on his great-uncle, Lord Thomas Talbot, who was next succeeded by Richard, forever associated with Maud Plunkett, the "Maid, wife and widow" on the same day.

By now, the family was becoming closely associated with the Irish, through marriage, and, on occasions, "becoming more Irish than the Irish themselves".

Maud Plunkett, whose tomb stands in the ruins of Malahide Abbey is well remembered because of Gerald Griffins Ballad, "The Bridal of Malahide".

'The Joy bells are ringing  
In sweet Malahide  
The fresh wind is singing  
Along the seaside". etc.

There are twenty verses which tell Maud's story. She was the daughter of the Baron of Killeen and she married Thomas Hussey, Baron of Galtrim, in Co. Meath, on Whit Monday 1429. He was killed in a local skirmish, at Ballbriggan some hours after the marriage ceremony and, so, she became "maid, wife and widow" on her wedding day. Sir Richard Talbot was her second husband and that's why she lies buried in Malahide Abbey. She outlived Talbot, too and married a third time, this time her choice was John Cornwallsh, Chief Baron of the Kingdom of Ireland. "In those warlike days, pretty girls had to steel their hearts against disappointments and sudden deaths", so said the Daily Sketch of 1930, when relating her story. She outlived her third husband also, and ended her days happily receiving dowers from all three dead husbands. After many years of widowhood she died, leaving the son of her second marriage to Richard Talbot, Lord of the Manor of Malahide. Her effigy is on her monument where she sleeps peacefully beside many a member of the Talbot family.

Maud Plunkett's son, Lord Thomas Talbot had a patent of privileges conferred on him by the Crown on the 15th November, 1459 as "Thomas Talbot. Armiger, Dominus de Malahide. He was married twice to Miss Sommerton and Elizabeth Buckley. Here, the family tree becomes somewhat complicated as there are two families, one from each marriage to follow. However, it is best to pay more attention to those who held control in Malahide Castle. Sir Peter Talbot took over at Malahide and he married a Catherine Fitzgerald. They had four children, Thomas, Walter, William and Margaret.

Foreign fields were still claiming the attention of the Malahide Talbots and they took part in the War of the Roses in England. Another son of Lord Furnival was killed fighting for the House of Lancaster at the Battle of Lancaster 1460 and a third son, Sir Christopher died on the same field. There

are many written references to the family's bravery and honour in the field of war.

Sir Peter Talbot was succeeded by Sir Thomas and he, in turn by Lord William, who became Lord Chief Justice of Ireland. His son, Patrick was succeeded by Lord Richard Talbot who was born in November 1583 and who took over Malahide at the age of 11 years and 3 months. After succeeding to his estates he incurred the tyrannous jealousy of Lord Stafford, Lord lieutenant of Ireland, who tried to take the Admiralty of the Port of Malahide and other valuable rights from him. Talbot, on pleading the ancient charters of hereditary line, persuaded the court to give judgment against the Crown. Lord Richard executed a settlement of his Lordships of Malahide, Garristown and the Louth Estates on his eldest son, John. It must be remembered that, at this time, Malahide was one of the chief ports of Ireland and Dublin was extremely jealous of its status. His son, John, however, inherited even greater problems as Cromwell was about to enter the scene.

Lord Thomas' second marriage to Elizabeth Buckley, produced four sons, John, Richard, Thomas and William. William had five sons, two of whom certainly left their mark on Irish history. Most Rev. Peter Talbot SJ. and Richard Talbot, Earl and Duke of Tyrconnell. Both of their stories should suffice to complete this part of the Talbot Story.

Inside Saint Sylvester's Church in Malahide is a plaque to the memory of Most Rev. Peter Talbot R.C. Archbishop of Dublin 1671-80. Dr. Peter Talbot was a Jesuit who studied in Portugal and then travelled through Belgium, settling in Antwerp. It was he who received King Charles II into the Catholic Church in 1656. Charles married Princess Catherine of Portugal and Dr. Talbot, with his fluent knowledge of Portuguese, was appointed domestic chaplain to the King. When Talbot became Archbishop of Dublin, Blessed Oliver Plunkett, a kinsman of his, was Primate of Armagh. A dispute arose between them as to whether Armagh or Dublin should be the Ecclesiastical Centre for Ireland. Eventually, the Pope had to intervene as arbitrator and he ruled in favour of Armagh. Refusing to be reconciled with his brother bishop, Dr. Talbot left Ireland in 1674 and settled in France. Old and sick, he returned to Ireland but in 1678, he was arrested in Malahide and charged with complicity in the Titus Oates Plot.

He was imprisoned in Dublin Castle as also was Dr. Oliver Plunkett some time later. In 1680, on hearing of Talbot's condition Plunkett escaped his guards to give the last rites to Talbot and, so, as history records, Dublin died in the arms of Armagh.

Today, in the Great Hall of Malahide Castle, hangs Jan Wyck's Canvas of the Battle of the Boyne, 1690. 14 members of the Talbot family breakfasted in this hall on the morning of the battle, but not a single one returned when it was over. This brings us to handsome Dick Talbot, the first Duke of Tyrconnell, who ruled Ireland for King James previous to the coming of

William of Orange. His job was to organise Ireland to help James win back the throne. Richard was born in 1630. By patent, dated the 20th of June 1685, he was created Baron of Talbotstown, Co. Wicklow, Viscount of Baltinglass and Earl of Tyrconnell. On the 20th of March 1689, he was advanced to the dignity of Marquis and Duke of Tyrconnell by James II and, eventually became Chief Governor of Ireland. He was captured at the siege of Derry and another Talbot Brigadier Mark Talbot was captured at the Battle of Aughrim. It was Richard's wife who was supposed to have met James on his flight from the Battle of the Boyne (1690). James is reported to have said "the rascally Irish have run away from me" and, she replied "your majesty has won the race" It is highly doubtful if the story is true. James certainly left the Boyne early, but he was never a coward.

Some say he supped with Fagan of Feltrim. Others say he stopped in Malahide Castle, at the invitation of Lady Talbot, reputed to have been a great beauty, and a sister of the Duchess of Marlboro. She survived her husband, lived to be 92, and established a nunnery for the Poor Clares Order in Dublin.

Lord Richard Talbot, born in 1668 lived to be 100 years old. He was the perfect specimen of the Pale gentleman. It has been said of him that he was "exclusive in his attitude, preserved his own language and customs and, even his own costumes".

John D'Alton in 1838, summed up the achievements of the Talbot family, with the following:- "The illustrious achievements of this family are traced in the history of every civilised nation, and every where attach to them the reverence justly conceded to a long line of ancestry, unsullied by the crimes that too frequently stain the annals of contemporaneous houses. Even in the political vicissitudes of these countries, the Talbots have survived, both in England and Ireland, in Baronial rank, for upwards of seven centuries and neither treason nor attainders have even clouded their splendour.