

## **Dunkellin Monument, Eyre Square**

Ulick Canning de Burgh (1827-1867), Lord Dunkellin, was the eldest son of Ulick John de Burgh (1802-1874), the first Marquis of Clanricarde, a politician and wealthy land magnate who lorded over one of the largest estates in Co. Galway. Born in London, the Eton-educated Dunkellin pursued a military career. He served as MP (Liberal) for Galway between 1857 and 1865 and for Co. Galway between 1865 and 1867. He died of Bright's disease (nephritis), a serious and then untreatable kidney disorder, in 1867.

### **Dunkellin Memorial Committee**

Soon after his death, several of his peers formed a memorial committee in order to raise funds for a monument and oversee its completion. A sum of £1,600 was raised within three months, including £10 from the Prince of Wales (later George V). The committee resolutely decided that subscriptions for the monument should be confined to Galway City and County, the two constituencies represented by Lord Dunkellin, and returned several subscriptions received from outside the County. In 1873, the *Galway Vindicator* reported that the 'subscribers included men of every shade of politics in the County and town of Galway. Clergymen Catholic and protestant, noblemen and gentlemen, professional and mercantile, all cordially united in a determination to do honor to the memory of the late lord Dunkellin'. Almost fifty years later, the *Galway Observer* reported conflictingly that it was 'subscribed for by the Clanricarde tenantry, a good deal of which ... was obtained from the people by threats' (27 May 1922).

### **John Henry Foley**

The Committee agreed that the distinguished Anglo-Irish sculptor, John Henry Foley (1818-74), should execute the work. Foley accepted the commission, even though he was preoccupied with the O'Connell Monument for Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street), Dublin.

Foley's monument consisted of a 2.5m bronze statue of Lord Dunkellin on top of a polished Peterhead red granite pedestal, which stood on two steps of Aberdeen granite. The inscription on the pedestal read: 'Lieu. Col. Lord Dunkellin, M.P., for the County of Galway. Born 1827. Died 1867. This statue was erected by the inhabitants of the County and Town of Galway as a tribute of affection and respect to his memory. 1873'. The memorial committee was impressed with Foley's work: 'in none of the great works, which have given him world-wide celebrity, has he shown more genius and skill than in the present instance, where, with only the slender assistance of a photograph, he has been enabled to produce the faithful likeness' (*Galway Vindicator*, 24 Sept. 1873). The monument was placed at the northern end of

the square, facing the Galway County Club and was flanked by the Crimean Cannons. Not everyone was enamoured with the monument, as this piece in the *Nation* (28 June 1873) shows:

What I complain of and what I think the people of Galway have reason to complain of, is this – that the only public square in Galway, and the only one which has been railed and planted by the people's money, should be sacrificed to pander to the ambition and to please the vanity of the friends of the deceased Lord Dunkellin. Is there any reason why the people of Galway should place Lord Dunkellin among the immortal gods, sacrifice their public square to honour him, and bow down their heads as they pass along the public streets in admiration of the late Lord Dunkellin. I answer emphatically – No!

### **Unveiling**

The unveiling ceremony took place in September 1873, during which the Town Commissioners formally accepted the monument from the Memorial Committee. The event 'gathered together most of the nobility and gentry of county, but of the people there seems to have been a scant attendance' ('The Nation', 27 Sept. 1873). John Redington, Chairman of the Galway Town Commissioners, said "I accept, then, with peculiar gratification, on behalf of the Municipality of Galway, the trust you have this day committed to our charge; and I earnestly hope that this statue may remain to future generations as a symbol of the social harmony which has ever happily existed amongst us, and as a testimony of our appreciation of Lord Dunkellin's high and sterling qualities of head and heart" (*Galway Vindicator*, 24 Sept. 1873).

### **Hubert George de Burgh-Canning**

As Lord Dunkellin predeceased his father, his younger brother, Hubert George de Burgh-Canning (1832-1916) inherited the family estate. The second Marquis of Clanricarde had little interest in Ireland or his estate and made a rare visit to Galway for his father's funeral. He also succeeded Lord Dunkellin as M.P. for Galway but, in 1871, resigned his seat in protest against the Land Act 1870, which was, he believed, 'fraught with injustice to the landlord'. In 1886, the Woodford evictions on the Clanricarde estate received worldwide attention and the estate became a symbol of landlord oppression. In September, a crowd assembled in Galway and led by a band marched to the County Gaol where they cheered for the Woodford prisoners and denounced Lord Clanricarde, the Chief Secretary and the Attorney-General for

not allowing bail; they then continued to the Lord Dunkellin Monument, which they threatened to pull down or blow up using dynamite.

In October, at a meeting of the Galway Town Commissioners one member submitted a notice of motion: 'that this Board remove the statue of Lord Dunkellin in the Square to some less prominent position more suitable to his character and the character of his successor the marquis of Clanricarde'. The motion caused uproar, not least because the member in question cast aspirations on Lord Dunkellin's character; some of those who knew Lord Dunkellin personally were quick to come to his defence, whilst the chairman noted that 'a man's fault should die with him'. When the furore was over, the motion was defeated by 7 votes to 12.

### **Town Tenants League**

Despite several threats from those opposing its presence in the square, the Dunkellin Monument survived in situ for almost half a century. In 1922, the bronze statue was pulled from its pedestal by the Galway Branch of the Town Tenant's League, which sought similar entitlements for urban dwellers as had been conferred upon farmers by the land acts. Speaking from the empty pedestal, S.J. Cremin, Secretary of the Transport Workers Union, said that the monument was 'a symbol of landlord tyranny, and they [the Town Tenant's League] intended to pull down every symbol of its kind in Ireland and put a monument of some good Irishman in its place'. The statue was then dragged through the streets of Galway and given a mock funeral, before being dumped into the River Corrib, from whence it disappeared. In the aftermath of the incident, it was reported that 'armed Dáil and Executive forces' patrolled the streets of Galway.

### **Castlegar Memorial**

The pedestal of the Lord Dunkellin Monument remained in Eyre Square until the mid 1930s. It was eventually incorporated into the Castlegar Civil War Memorial on the Tuam Rd., Galway.