

PROMINENT SLIGONIANS

Sir Roger Jones

Sir Roger Jones was the leading Anglo-Norman in Sligo in the early 17th century. He first found mention in local records in 1602 as the Constable of the gaol and Governor of the castle.

He filled the office of High Sheriff in 1611, 1615 and 1625. In 1613, when Sligo became a Parliamentary Borough, he had the distinction of being elected its first Provost, or Mayor. He was also a wealthy merchant and ship-owner and an extensive landowner. His social standing was such that he resided in a large stone-built edifice in Abbeyquarter, commonly referred to as Jones's Castle.



Sir Roger Jones' monument

According to an entry in the 'Funeral Register' in the Genealogical Office Sir Roger died at Sligo on August 12th, 1635, and was buried in the mortuary chapel he had built in or at St. John's Church in accordance with the terms of his Will: "My body I commit to the earth in my tomb in the chapel I lately erected in the parish of St. John's in Sligo". He was survived by his widow, Mary, known locally as 'Lady Jones', and Thomas and Mary, "his natural children".

Count Nicholas Taaffe (1677-1769)

Nicholas Taaffe, 6th Viscount Taaffe and Baron of Ballymote, the celebrated Count Taaffe of the Holy Roman Empire, was born in O'Crean's Castle in Sligo in the year 1677. He was the son of Francis Taaffe, a descendant of the eight son of the first Baron of Ballymote, and Anne, daughter of John O'Crean of Sligo.

Young Nicholas was educated in Germany, enlisted in the Austrian service and served with distinction holding the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in Count Hautois' Regiment. In 1732 he was promoted Colonel and in recognition of his bravery against the Turks he was promoted a Major-General, and later, in 1752, was raised to the rank of Lieutenant-General. His long and chequered career in the service of his adopted country brought him many honours – a Count of the Empire and Chamberlain to the Emperor of Austria.

In the country of his adoption, Nicholas Taaffe served his native land to the best of his ability. He took a prominent part in the agitation for Catholic Emancipation in Ireland, and in 1766 published *Observations on Affairs in Ireland from the Settlement in 1691 to the Present Time*.

Count Nicholas Taaffe, one of Sligo's most distinguished exiled sons and the loyal and faithful friend of Ireland, died in Bohemia in 1769, aged ninety-two years.

Charles Phillips (1786-1859)

Charles Phillips, the celebrated 19th century writer and lawyer, was born in Stephen St., in 1786, the son of William Phillips, a member of the Town Council, and his wife, Elizabeth Johnson. He was educated at the Classical School conducted by Revd. James Armstrong and subsequently attended Trinity College, Dublin.



Charles Phillips

After graduating with his B.A. degree, he entered the Middle Temple, London, and commenced the study of law. In 1811 he was called to the Irish Bar, and for the next decade he was one of the legal luminaries on the Connaught Circuit, figuring in many notable cases. In 1821, he was called to the English Bar and subsequently he became the acknowledged leader of the Old Bailey.

Charles Phillips was a prolific writer of considerable merit. His *Recollection of Curran and his Contemporaries*, published in 1818, is his best known work. Quite a few critics regard his famous poem, *The Emerald Isle*, published in 1812, as one of his best works. He was, also, the author of a number of lesser works and these include: *The Consolations of Erin*, *A Garland for the Grave of R.B. Sheridan*, *Specimens of Irish Eloquence*, and *Vacation Thoughts on Capital Punishment*.

Charles Phillips died suddenly at his residence in Golden Square, London, in February, 1859, and is buried in Highgate Cemetery.



Picture: Kilgannon
Pictured in Sligo in 1917 were, left to right, H. Depew, T.C., John Shea, Town Clerk, Laurence Ginnell, C. Connolly, Count Plunkett, Darrell Figgis, Eamon de Valera, D.M. Hanly (Mayor), Countess Markievicz and Mrs. Hanly.

Countess Markievicz awarded the Freedom of the Borough

Francis MacDonagh (1805-1882)

Francis MacDonagh, Q.C., one time M.P. for the Borough of Sligo, was in his day a figure of national repute. Born in 1805, the son of Morgan MacDonagh, a successful Sligo merchant, he studied law at Trinity College, was called to the Bar in 1829 and quickly made a name for himself through his thorough knowledge of the law. He carried his prestige with him into the higher courts and thirteen years later was appointed a Queen's Counsel.

In the great State Trials of 1843, featuring Daniel O'Connell and his fellow Repealers who were arraigned on a charge of conspiracy and the eyes of the world were focused on the trial. Francis MacDonagh was retained for the defence and his singular gifts had the fullest play. The Sligoman's fame was then firmly established and he soon became the acknowledged leader of the Irish Bar.

In 1860, following the resignation of John Wynne as M.P. for the Borough, Mac Donagh offered himself as a candidate and was returned to Parliament unopposed. After suffering a narrow defeat in the 1865 election he resumed his practice at the Bar and was subsequently engaged as leader in some of the most celebrated Irish trials of the late 19th century. He died in Dublin in 1882, aged 77.

Col. William G. Wood-Martin (1847-1917)

William Gregory Wood-Martin, well known scholar and Sligo historian, was born in 1847 and educated at the Royal Military College at Sandhurst. He had a distinguished military career initially commanding the Sligo Rifles and holding the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel with the Sligo Artillery from 1883 to 1902.



William Gregory Wood-Martin

Wood-Martin's fame rests primarily on his valuable contributions to Irish historical research. His writings include *Lake Dwellings of Ireland*, *Pagan Ireland*, *Traces of the Elder Faiths of Ireland*, *The Rude Stone Monuments of Ireland*, *County Sligo and Achill Island*, and are well known to students of Irish antiquity and folklore to this day. It was, however, in the field of local history that the Colonel excelled. His *Sligo and the Enniskilleners, 1688-1691*, published in 1880, was followed by his scholarly 3-volume *History of Sligo, County and Town*, published between 1882 and 1892 and is widely regarded as a work of national as well as local importance.

Colonel W.G. Wood-Martin died at Cleveragh House, on November 16th, 1917.

