

Cobean/Cobain Family of Australia

The earliest reference to a Cobain, or similar, so far mentioned, was in the 1~ religious returns, John and William Cobane. The following extract is from a lease made in 1748, and registered in 1753, relating to farmers with the surname Cobean, of Skey townland.

Lease dated 14 January 1748, whereby Acheson Moore of Ravello, Co. Tyrone, Esq. to farm let to Thomas Cobean, Joseph Cobean, and Samuel Cobean, all of Skey, in Manor of Ridgway, Co. Tyrone, farmers, that part of the lands of Skey, in Manor Ridgway, aforesaid, then in the possession of said Thomas, Joseph & Samuel Cobean, and other Cobean their relations, containing 60 acres. I.P.M.* To hold from 1 May 1748 for lives of said Thomas Cobean, Joseph Cobean and Samuel Cobean and survivor of them, at £12.6.0 yearly rent.

This lease was sworn at Armagh, 7 September 1753, and 8 November 1753. It was of advantage to a lessee of land to take out his lease for a term of lives, rather than years. On the same day in 1748, another lease was taken out, with very similar wording, the same witnesses, and sworn and registered on the same days as the one above. The acreage and rent are also the same, to farm, let to John Cobean, & James Cobean, both of Skey... farmers that part of the lands of Skey... now in the possession of said John & James Cobean, & other Cobean, their relations... To hold from 1 May 1748 for lives of said. John Cobean, of said. James Cobean & of John Cobean son of said. James, aged about 2 years, & of survivor of them..."

And so, farming in the townland of Skey, in 1748, were Thomas. Samuel Cobean, as well as John and James Cobean, the last named with a son, John Cobean. It was a Thomas Cobain whose name puzzled me, when as being a passenger on the James T. Foord, in 1851, but here at least is Thomas. Joseph is an unfamiliar name in more recent Cobain families, with Samuel and James well documented in the Sale area especially.

The John Cobane of Skey, who married Maria Stephenson of Cavankilgreen at Aughnacloy, in 1821, must surely have had a direct ancestor among these Cobean! And the James Cobain, just mentioned, was 4 years John Cobain senior's brother, married to Rebecca Smith. Prior to leaving Ireland for Australia in 1862, Samuel Cobain sold his farm in Cavankilgreen townland to a Mr. A. Hadden. The size of these holdings indicates that our immigrant ancestors from Ireland were not among the desperate many who fled their homeland, destitute, as a result of the dreadful famine.

In 1986, wanting to make contact with Cobains, Irwins and others with ancestral names still living in the same area, I wrote a letter which was published in the Tyrone Courier, 15 January 1986. Several people replied, by far the most response being from Uriah Brush of Aughnacloy. He was clearly a knowledgeable local historian, and his opening paragraph was a lesson to me (and family historians), on the need to persist in one's

enquiries. The Aughnacloy Presbyterian Church minister had asked Uriah Brush, in to provide help for a Mr. Robins of Australia. Uriah had researched the records, and assumed that the minister had forwarded his findings to me! The minister had not done so, and I had made the mistake of not again, gently repeating my initial questions. I mentioned above Samuel Cobain's farm of 65 acres in Cavankilgreen. It is Ascribed as Lot 20a in Griffith's Valuation, 1860, House/office/land, Valuation 1.10.0. The occupier is Samuel Cobain, and the Immediate Lessor is Alexander G M. Moore, probably a descendant of the Acheson Moore cited in the Cobains leases, a century earlier. The Townland Revision Books show Archibald Hadden's replacing that of Samuel Cobane in 1864. Then, in 1885, in place of Hadden we find the name Richard Hadden, which continues 1897-1915, , 1915-1929.

According to Uriah Brush's letter, Archibald Hadden's grandson was also an A. Hadden, presumably Richard's son, and this grandson "opened up a limestone quarry on the farm, known as Cavankilgreen Quarries Ltd. Mr. Hadden, of the firm of Quarry Masters, who also own quarries at Carrickmore and Mountfield, told me [Uriah] that a Mr. Cobane from the Sixmilecross-Carrickmore, said that his people came from the Ballygawley-Aughnacloy part of the Clogher Valley."

As Carrickmore and Sixmilecross, are places a mere ten miles north of Ballygawley, Cobanes in that region may well be descended from kinfolk of the Cobains who emigrated 150 years ago.

I have seen that limestone quarry at Cavankilgreen. It is an enormous, ugly hole in the ground, just along from the farmhouse that Samuel Cobain and his family would have been living in until they left Ireland in 1862. My wife and I visited the area in 1986, and were made welcome by Uriah Brush in his home. He has records from the Aughnacloy Presbyterian registers available to me, and, for me to see those of Ballygawley Presbyterian church, also. Uriah acted as our guide, as we drove him around the townlands of Skey and Cavankilgreen, as gracious and helpful a guide as one could wish for.

Mention of the Irish countryside conjures up images of whitewashed farmhouses set in the greenest of fields, with perhaps a barefoot lad leading a donkey laden with panniers of peat, or a shy colleen posed beside her doorway. Picture-postcards and ballads present an idealised 19th century Ireland, one of simple rural values, untarnished by "progress".

Ireland has a wonderful variety of landscapes, especially considering the relatively small size of the nation. Lakes, moorland, hill country and rugged sea-scapes vie with one another for the visitor's attention, and there are also large areas of farming country to explore, where every mile or so there is a village or market town to service the many small farms around it.

The townlands of Cavankilgreen and Skey lie in this last category, part of a small-scale farming region. The little towns of Ballygawley and Aughnacloy are about four miles apart, with Cavankilgreen midway between them. Skey adjoins Cavankilgreen to its

north-east, and is about half the size of its neighbour, and more off the beaten track. I do not recall even a hamlet in Skey townland, simply a few little cottages from time to time on very minor roads.

Uriah Brush escorted us to Aghaloo churchyard, where the ruins of the parish church stand stark and forlorn, overlooking the gravestones. The main stones of family interest there were of the Falls family. The year after John Cobain senior married Maria Stephenson, his sister, Ann, married James Falls, 17 December 1822, also in Aughnacloy Presbyterian church. The witnesses at that marriage were John Cobane of Skye and Johnston Stephenson of Cavankilgreen.

Tithe Book records for 1826-27, show that several members of the Falls family were landowners in Cavankilgreen, among them James Falls, with 24 acres. The family of James and Ann Falls included John, Sarah, Tom and William, and I understand that the Cobains of Bundalaguah sponsored some members of the family in their emigration to Australia. Thomas Falls owned land at Bundalaguah, where Falls Road commemorates the family, not far from Cobains Road, which runs beside Spring Park homestead.

According to Uriah Brush, the Falls first came to Cavankilgreen in 1726. The Registry of Deeds has several leases to various Falls in that townland, the earliest "to farm let to John Falls of Aughnacloy, taylor (sic.), that part of the townland of Cavankilgreen that lies between the road leading to Liscenny & that part of sd. townland possessed by the Glassgows, together with half of the big meadow so called containing 17 Scotch acres English measure, to hold from 1 May 1725 for lives of John Falls, James Falls and Mary Falls, children to sd. John Falls..." This lease was dated 18 May 1725, and registered 1 June 1741, by John Falls.

As well as being farmers, the Falls — Uriah informed me — distilled whisky _until about the mid- 19th century. In 1986, there were still Falls in Cavankilgreen and in Liscenny, another small adjoining townland, but of a different line from the line of Falls-Ann Cobane marriage of 1822.

In the old Gallo graveyard, also, is a headstone to the memory of a Hugh and Mary Millar. In 1854, Hugh Millar, a carpenter of Cavankilgreen, married Man Stevenson, aged seventeen, their family later emigrating to the U.S.A. The stone was erected by a descendant of the family, who came to Ireland and visited the area.

As we were driving, not far from Uriah's home, he pointed out the house in which the widow of the last of the Cavankilgreen Millars was still living. Her husband had died in about 1984, and no other family remained. He was descended, presumably, from the line started by the marriage of Robert Millar of Derryreevy to Elizabeth Stephenson of Cavankilgreen. It was one of their daughters, remember, Mary Millar, that married Samuel Cobain — the couple that emigrated with their young family in 1862, and settled in Sale.

Each of the places we visited with Uriah was within a very local, manageable area. The Millar cottage was around the corner from the Cobain home, with a quarry next door to that. Haddens were still living in the Cobain house, a reasonably substantial two-storey stone building. Within minutes, we were traversing winding byroads, among the gentle hillsides, of the townland of Skey. This was the picture-postcard green of old Ireland! Neat hedgerows boxed 31 small verdant fields, with the occasional white cottage set unobtrusively at the edge of a home pasture.

I am of the car with Uriah Brush at one spot, and stood looking across a pretty little valley at chequered slopes beyond. He was as sure as he could be, where the Cobains had leased their farmland, two and a half centuries earlier. It was near here that John Cobane must have been born, to the John Cobane that married Maria Stephenson of nearby, in 1821. The John Cobain who made the momentous decision to cross the seas in 1850, in search of a better life, settling first in Boroondara, and Bundalaguah. Uriah pointed to some ruined farm buildings, which he thought was left of the Cobane property in Skey

Uriah's letter to me earlier in the year contained several further items of family interest. Firstly, he had found only one reference to a Johnston Cavankilgreen. (The parents of Maria Cobain, nee Stephenson, were Samuel Stephenson and Mary Johnstone.) Uriah told me of an old lime kiln in Cavankilgreen, known as Johnston's Lime Kiln. Secondly, the Cobanes who were members of Lisbeg Loyal Orange Lodge, early 1803: Thomas Cobane, member 1824: Samuel and John Cobane, members 1824: William Cobane proposed by Brother Thomas Cobane. seconded by BM Archie Hadden.

The Ballygawley Presbyterian church registers also provide interesting material. Born 25 July 1860; a Johnston Cobean was baptised there 28 Sept 1860; his parents being Samuel Cobean and Mary Millar, of CavanKilgreen. Johnston clearly died as a baby, as no Johnston emigrated with Sam and Mary in 1862, and their last child, born at Sale in 1865, was named Johnston.

Between 1843 and 1855, there were five baptisms registered for babies to Archibald Hadden and Mary Jane Irwin, who were of Golan, just north of Skey. It was Archibald Hadden who bought Samuel Cobain's Cavankilgreen» farm, on which the quarry was later excavated. This Mary Jane Irwin was, I believe, a sister of the William James Irwin whose daughter, Margaret married John Cobain.

Archibald HADDEN

Mary Jane IRWIN

Margaret	Wm James	Wm James	Richard	John David
born 11/3/1843	3/1/1846	12/7/1848	13 3 ••'*	
bap. 10/4/1843 '	5/1/1846	20/12/1846	16/11/1848	143 - •' •'

The family of Archibald and Mary Jane Hadden.

A baptism very soon after birth often means that the baby survive, and in this family the second William James has arrived hot OB of the first, making one spare a thought for Mary Jane, the mother.

In the townland of Keavy, or Cavey, a little to the west of Ballygawley; JAMES Irwin and Jane Irwin — possibly cousins — were baptising their children in the Presbyterian Church. These were Sarah and Archibald, twins (born and baptised: 12 July 1844), Richard (born 29 January, baptised 8 February 1846), and John, (born 13 July, baptised 16 July 1855).

Haddens related by marriage to the Irwins, but there was a marital link. Anne Cobain was born 8 August and baptised at Ballygawley Presbyterian church, the daughter of James Cobain and Mary Jane Hadden. of Cravenney Scotch, a townland between Ballygawley and Golan. Thirty years later, 24 October 1873, a James Cobain, of Mullaghbane. and son of James Cobain, married Margaret Busby of the adjoining townland of Cravenney. It is likely that the husband of Mary Jane Hadden, was the oldest son of John and Maria and so a brother of Samuel and John Cobain of Sale. Not all material in the last page or so relates to the immediate ancestry of the Cobains or Irwins now living in Australia. The events referred to have been to show likely to that the surnames occur frequently around Ballygawley and in the appropriate timeframe, and because the folk concerned were likely part of the wider, extended family.

The registers of Aughnacloy Presbyterian Church also contain various Cobains. Falls, Irwins and Stephe

The youngest six children also emigrated to Australia in 1851 with their parents, on the James T. Foord. Whereas we have firm dates of baptism for the older ones, this is not yet the case for the others. Ages that appear on tombstones, or on death and marriage certificates, cannot be taken for granted, nor can the ages on shipping records, as we have already seen. The order of birth of the younger Cobains is known, however, and we can gauge their years of birth reasonably closely. How the family fared after its arrival in Melbourne, in 1851, we can leave to a later chapter.

Before leaving the Aughnacloy Presbyterian church registers, it is worth noting some other Cobanes from the townland of Skey (or Skye, as it was often spelt), who were marrying at about the same time as John Cobane and Maria Stephenson (1821). They were of the same generation, and it is tempting to assume that there was some relationship between them and John Cobane, but we can only guess at this.¹²⁹ He was a witness at the marriage of Alexander Cobane and Elenor Bell.

Skey	Spouse	Of	Married
Jane	John McKie	Skey	1813
Thomas	Elizabeth Cobane	Skey	1818
Sarah	Wm. McKinney	Derrycreevy	1818

Alexander	Elenor Bell	Drumfad	1819
Anne	William Booth	Cavankilgreen	1824

One final church register in the area to look at is that of Carnteel Parish church. A son of William McKinney and Sarah Cobane (see above), was baptised there: Samuel McKinney, born 17 March, baptised 19 March 1826. Likewise, Elizabeth Booth, daughter of William Booth and Anne Cobane, was born 28 December 1825, and baptised 15 January 1826.

I referred earlier to the marriage of John Cobain's sister, Ann, to James Falls in 1822, at Aughtnacloy Presbyterian church. John may have had other sisters -possibly even among the Cobane marriages shown above — but he had, I think, only one brother. This was James Cobain, who married Rebecca Smith.

The following information is from notes written for me, in the 1970s, by Beryl Shaw, of Footscray (Thelma's sister), who listed families of Cobains, Irwins, Falls, Stephensons and McCalls. Her lists have proved reliable, when checked against documents subsequently obtained. "The children of James Cobain and Rebecca Smith were Nancy, Accie, Eliza Jane and Matilda. They all went to America — Great Uncle [James?] died before they left Ireland."

The girls had one brother, at least, but he may not have survived. The register of baptisms at Carnteel Parish Church has this entry: born 5 March 1843, baptised 1 August 1843, James, son of James Cobane of Sky, farmer, and his wife Rebecca Smith.

The surname McCall is on the "Stephenson Girls" chart at the start of this chapter, with George McCall being the husband of Jane Stephenson. It was not a common name in Cavankilgreen at the time, which makes the following entries from the Carnteel Parish Church baptism register the more important. They are the Baptisms of the first two children of George and Jane McCall.

1. Born 10 February, baptised 17 February 1828, Mary, daughter of George McCall and Jane Stevenson, his wife, of Ballygawley, Errigal Keerogue Parish.
2. Baptised 17 May 1829, Samuel, son of George McCall and Jane Siephenson, his wife, Ballygawley, wheelwright.¹³

A final item of interest in the Carnteel Parish Church register is the inclusion of George McCall, aged 24, among those confirmed in 1828. The McCalls were recorded as Episcopalians, or Church of England, when their ship berthed at Port Phillip, in 1850.