

## Arrival in Baldock August 1922



*Baldock 1925*

When they left Ballinasloe in the August, Kathleen was in charge as Michael (Jnr.) was already in England. They went first by train to Dublin. They stayed in a 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> class hotel and looked up a few friends the next day before catching the boat to England. Marian did not record whether they went into Liverpool or Holyhead. They went on by train and changed at Crewe. Someone had suggested it better to change and go cross country to Peterboro' then a local train to Baldock. Marian though in 1985 thought it might have been better to have carried on the Euston and then go back out to Baldock.

Changing at Crewe they had a long wait in the middle of the night. Michael had been very sick on the boat over and was now feeling a lot better. In Peterborough they had to cross the town by taxi to the other station to pick up the Baldock train. They arrived into Baldock at 1pm and Michael (Jnr.) was there to meet them. But he had no cart with him and proceeded to walk the long route to their new house 38 Nightingale Way.



*Fitzgeralds outside Nightingale Way*

He had kitted out the house as he expected they would like but Marian Wurr, his daughter, said a lot of what he got has not kept long and that while the beds were of course great they, Kathleen and Marian, would have rather had him wait until they could choose. However he had a meal ready for his weary children.

The houses were built on new ground, full of chalk, and the whole estate was overrun with earwigs. This made for a very uncomfortable first night, they later learned to dissuade the creepy crawlies with paraffin wax on window sills, doors and so on. The following day they set off into town to post letters to Ireland to friends, just to let them know how the move had gone. But on reaching the high road they posted the letters into the first letter box they found that looked to fit the part. It turned out to be the bank. Clearly the bank staff made sure the letters were correctly forwarded as they received replies in due course. It was like the post office in Ballinasloe and they made a genuine mistake. Having 'posted' the letters they left the town and set off across the fields and up into the Weston hills. It was at the top of the hill that the weather suddenly changed and they were pelted by an August rain shower. The whole family were shocked how 'fierce' English rain was. Irish rain was a much gentler affair but this rain 'beat their faces'.

In the first days in Baldock Kathleen made curtains and so on to make the house as they wanted. Her sister Marian Wurr recalled her big sister was difficult to help as had to be in charge. Kathleen insisted on doing the cleaning, cooking etc. Someone in the Loyalist Association suggested to Michael Jnr. that Marian should apply to Spirella, the corset makers in the nearby new town of Letchworth Garden City. This she did and was duly taken on at 10 shillings a week. She continued on this salary until she felt brave enough to ask for a raise when she went up by half a crown. (NB half a crown was 2 shillings and sixpence so she got a 25% raise. 10 Shillings is equivalent to 50p in 2012. So half a crown was 12.5p.). Marian Wurr worked at Spirella until she married in 1928.

Michael (Jnr.) never took a full-time job in England, he was 51 when they arrived, but was happy to provide cover for holiday periods and the like. So sometimes he was watchman at 'the Kryn'. 'The Kryn' was short for 'Kryn and Lahy Steel Works' in Letchworth Garden City. Following the invasion of Belgium in August 1914, thousands of Belgians fled to England with local residents offering to board them and help out financially. Three who arrived in Letchworth GC that year were Jacques Kryn, a diamond merchant, his brother, George, and a colleague, Raoul Lahy. They subsequently formed the Kryn and Lahy Metal Works in Dunhams Lane.



An aerial view of the vast Kryn & Lahy steelfoundry site, c. 1940s.  
After it closed in 1979, this site became Letchworth's business park and out-of-town shopping area.

His bright son John Fitzgerald too worked at the Kryn as an accountant. But around 1930 when the trading conditions were very bad he was let go, the only unmarried member of the office. John felt this was flannel and that they had just wanted to get rid of him. This left him out of work and John took it very badly. In 1931 after trying endlessly to find work he moved down to North Finchley and stayed with his sister Marian Wurr and her husband so that he might try the north London area. He was very depressed by the fruitless working and so when his sister suggested he apply to Darcy Allen in Hendon who were advertising, John was not inclined. He felt it pointless but to placate his sister he did apply and after interview with the Boss who was Irish, landed the job that he held until he retired. He lived this Marian and her family in North Finchley as it was close to Hendon. He studied accountancy hard but was never formally qualified though it seems he was extremely good at his job.

Early in 1925 a new family arrived in Baldock and the two fine sons of the family, Horace and Arthur Wurr caused quite a stir when they were first seen at mass in Baldock. And now we must tell the story of the Wurrs.