

Michael Fitzgerald Snr.

The next solid record we have for Michael (Snr.) is his date of joining the Royal Irish Constabulary. There is a record in 1848 for one Michael Fitzgerald in Queens Co. It records his age as 20 which fits very well with the birth date of Jan 1828. I have yet to see the details of the record but I feel this is our Michael. I know from other records that it will give no clues as to addresses and family links but it should give the dates and places of his postings, his date of marriage and the county of origin of his wife. Not a lot but I shall endeavour to get to see this record at the National Archive in Kew at some time.

Royal Irish Constabulary

The minimum age on entry was 19 and the minimum height was 5' 9", but these were lowered to 18 and 5' 8" for sons of policemen. There was also a minimum chest measurement of 36", which was increased to 37" if the applicant was 5' 11" or taller.

Members could not serve in their native counties and had to have at least 7 years service before getting married. The intended wife had to be vetted by the superior officers before getting married. If permission to marry was obtained, the couple were transferred to a county where neither had relatives.

The highest ranks down to and including District Inspector constituted the officers. Head Constables and Sergeants were non-commissioned officers (NCOs). Those of Constable rank were below this and were known as "the men". The ranks for the men and NCOs changed slightly in 1883. Prior to 1883, the starting rank was Sub Constable Second Class. The first promotion was to Sub Constable First Class, then Acting Constable, then Constable, then Head Constable, and then Sub Inspector Third Class. After 1883, the starting rank was changed to Constable, progressing to Acting Sergeant, Sergeant, Head Constable, and then Sub Inspector Third Class.

The Lost FitzGerald Inheritance

One story that Michael Fitzgerald (Snr.) told seems to have been of a stolen inheritance. This is what his Granddaughter Marian Wurr (1901-1995) recalled. "*Michael's parents, so the story went, were descended from the Earls of Leinster and had had a large estate, but died during the 1840s Potato Famine, leaving him and his sister in the care of an uncle who took their inheritance*". Its not a verifiable story as far as I can tell but there are some interesting things to consider.

Firstly: Michael Snr. was the first born male of this family and so should have inherited from his father at his death under primogenitor.

Secondly: that if the parents were rich landowners then their death due to the potato famine is not likely unless they succumbed to some disease that occurred at the same time. I can not find any record of a pandemic at this time.

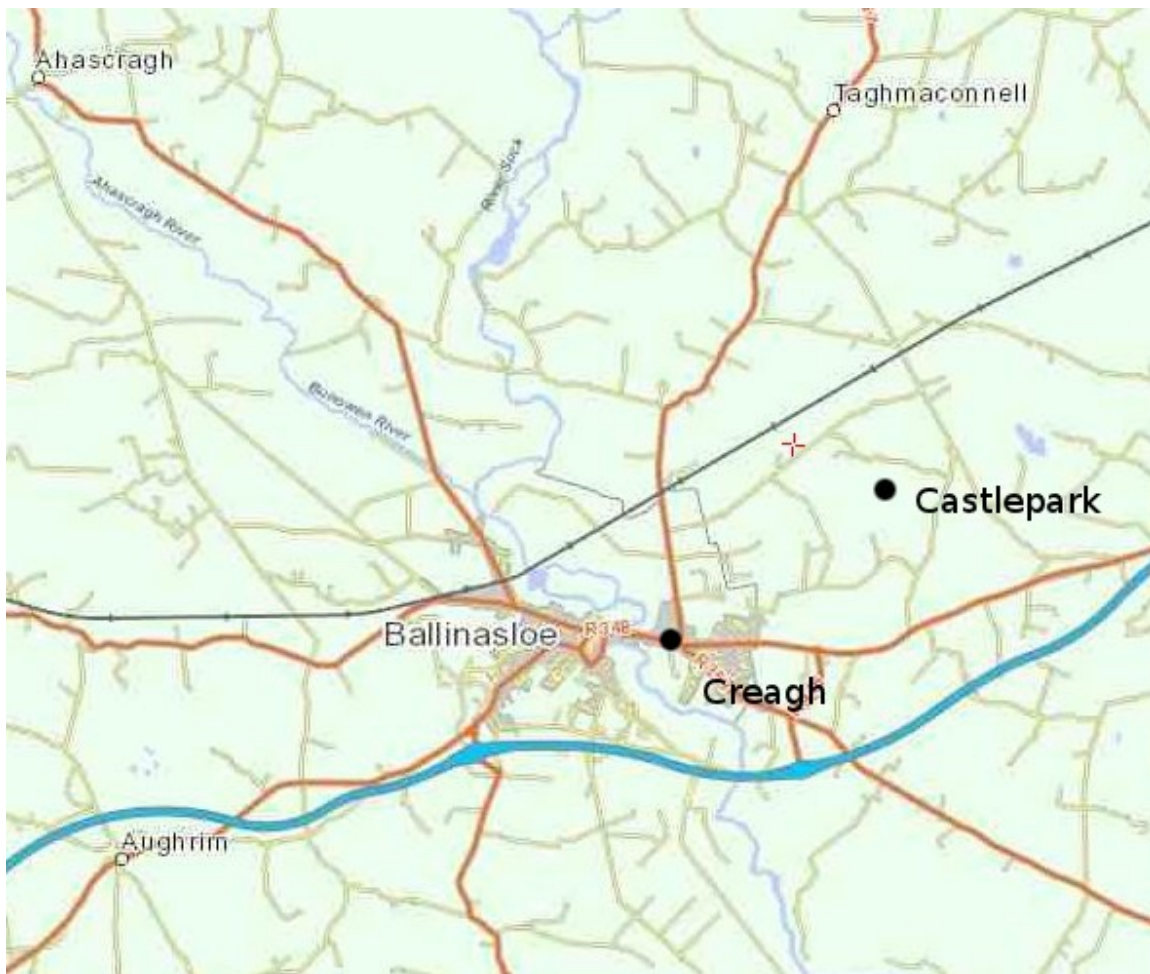
I think it is an interesting story but as it is currently unverifiable we must treat it with a good degree of scepticism. Indeed Marian Wurr said her own father, Michael Jnr., gave the story no credence and no-one ever knew what happened to the 'sister'.

Marriage of Michael Snr. and Catherine Carty



St. Michael's Church - Ballinasloe

When he married Catherine Carty in Ballinasloe (27/11/1865) Michael Snr. was living in Creagh which is just East of the town and she was living in Castlepark 5km to the north east, both in Roscommon. NB Ballinasloe is just on the border of Roscommon and Galway but in on the Galway side.



Her occupation is recorded as Servant and his as Constable. The civil record of their marriage was made in Creagh, Co. Roscommon but they were married in the Catholic church in Ballinasloe, Co. Galway.

The family tradition is that Catherine's had been a Lady's Maid and travelled on the Continent. It is interesting to note that her address is Castlepark and that the townland of Castlepark has no actual settlement except the house, Castlepark house.

Castlepark house was part of the Kelly estate. Six generations of this family lived in the parish of Creagh from the early 18th century. There are records that they had held lands in the area prior to 1641 and continued to hold a portion after the Restoration. The main record I found was of a : *'Major John Talbot D'Arcy of Castlepark, Ballinasloe, county Roscommon, owned 1,961 acres in county Roscommon in the 1870s. Castlepark was formerly a Kelly house. Castlepark and 1,114 acres in the barony of Moycarn with the lands of Turrock in the barony of Athlone were advertised for sale by John D'Arcy in 1878. John Talbot D'Arcy was a son of John D'Arcy of Clifden and Kiltullagh and a younger brother of the Reverend Hyacinth D'Arcy. In 1846 John Talbot D'Arcy married Jane daughter and co heiress of Daniel Kelly of Cargins, county Roscommon.'*

The witnesses at the wedding of Michael and Catherine were Andrew Gallagher and Mary Garvey. Andrew was obviously a good friend as he was also sponsor, six years later, at the birth of Michael (Jnr.) in 1871.

I wondered who this Andrew Gallagher might be. If he is old enough to be a sponsor at the wedding then he must have been at least 21 so born no later than 1844. This would make him 57 in 1901. I looked on the 1901 census for an Andrew Gallagher in a suitable place and found one in Ballybrittas near Mountmellick. But none either in Athlone or Roscommon, Westmeath or Galway who fit the age limit. He was baptised in Mountmellick in 1836. There are records of other Andrew Gallaghers born in Roscommon and Westmeath but which one could be more likely? Who knows but could it be that this proves the link to Mountmellick?

The couple were blessed with a family. In the 1911 census Catherine recorded that she gave birth to 4 children, three of whom are alive in 1911. We have records and family knowledge of three of them but not of the fourth. Perhaps the baby was still born and so never baptised. Of the children we have records for; the first born was Mary Anne (later Begley) baptised 14/6/1867 in Athlone (NB no address is given for her in the Baptismal record). Then Bridget Honoria (Delia?) 27/2/1869 (this is the civil registration in Creagh not the baptism) her address is given as Creagh and Michael is given as "Sub Constable". Finally Michael 3/3/1871. Michael (jnr.)'s baptismal record gives his address as Irishtown, Athlone. Irishtown is on the east end of the town and near St. Mary's Church. So they appear to have lived in Creagh when first married and come to Irishtown, Athlone between 1869 and 1871. Perhaps his RIC record in KEW would shed more light on this.



Delia Fitzgerald with?



St. Mary's Church, Athlone

Some time between 1871 and 1889 Michael (Snr.) and Catherine moved to the post office in a place called Bealnamulla outside Athlone to the west, on the road to Ballinasloe. The two surviving census returns from 1901 and 1911 show them living here. By 1901 Michael (Snr.) has retired from the RIC as he states this in the 1901 return. I have, however, no date for his retirement, perhaps his service record will contain that information.

Christian Name	Surname	Rank	Religion	Profession	Age	Sex	Occupation	Marital Status	County
1	Michael Fitzgerald	Head of Family	Roman Catholic	Read & write	72	M	R.I.C. Pensioner & Sub. Post Master	Married	Queens County
2	Catherine Fitzgerald	Wife	"	"	68	F	"	"	Westmeath
3	Delia Fitzgerald	Daughter	"	"	30	F	Dressmaker	Not Married	Roscommon
4	Kathleen Begley	Grand daughter	"	"	9	F	Scholar	"	Galway
5									

1901 Census return at Bealnamulla

He records that he is an R.I.C. Pensioner but also a sub post master. Delia is living with them as is their granddaughter Kathleen Begley. She is the little girl shown with them in the photograph seen previously. Kathleen was one of the four children born to the eldest, Mary Anne.