

PULVERTAFT PAPERS

A Newsletter on the Pulvertofts & Pulvertafts

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EDITORIAL

As in 1999, I offer my thanks to Christopher Pulvertaft for writing an interesting article, this time on the life of his mother, Nancy, who died during the year at the remarkable age of 102.

The two other articles stem from a visit to the library of the Irish Genealogical Research Society during the year. When I first visited it in 1974, it was housed in the Irish Club at 82 Eaton Square but, by the time I joined the Society in 1983, it had been moved to The Challoner Club in Pont Street, Belgravia. I have used it infrequently over the years as it is only open on Saturday afternoons and, even when I worked in London, I tended to go to the country at weekends.

In 1991 the library had to move out of the Challoner Club and, after a period in storage, it returned to The Irish Club. History now seems to be repeating itself as The Irish Club has just started an extensive refurbishment and the library has again been boxed up and put into store! Happily, my visit was shortly before the library's closure and I was able to extract the information that I needed.

AN EARLY PULVERTOFT IN IRELAND ?

Amongst the books in the library of the Irish Genealogical Research Society - and consulted there in August this year - is a "Report on Ormonde Manuscripts - Index to Vols 1 & 2" printed by The Historical Manuscripts Commission in 1909. The index includes an entry:

John PULVERTONVol. 1, p 173

the volume and page number referring to the printed edition of the Ormonde Manuscripts.

As the surname Pulverton is not one that has been found in many years of searching indexes for the Pulvertoft family name, it seemed possible that a Pulvertoft entry in the manuscript had been incorrectly transcribed as Pulverton when the two printed volumes were being compiled for publication. Happily, a copy of the printed work is also held in the IGRS Library - "Historical Manuscripts Commission, Fourteenth Report, Appendix, Part VIII. The Manuscripts of the Marquis of Ormonde, preserved at The Castle, Kilkenny - 1895." It was immediately consulted.

There are twelve parts to the manuscripts including ones with headings such as "Address from Kilkenny and Tipperary to Henry VIII", "Royal Letters" and "Peers' Letters"; but the part that contains the "Pulverton" reference has the heading: "Documents in Relation to the Army in Ireland, 1598 - 1650". The preamble to this part includes:

"This valuable and unique set of original papers supplies new information on the army in Ireland and the persons and affairs in connection with it from 1598 to 1651."

"The army documents before us extend from 1641 to the time of Ormonde's withdrawal from Ireland after his treaty with the commissioners of the Parliament of England in 1647."

And so to page 173. It contains several muster rolls of companies, each dated 26 April 1644. The 27th Company is that of Captain Daniell Treswell and the muster roll names his lieutenant, an ensign, two serjeants, two drummers, two corporals and 45 soldiers - including Jo. Pulverton.

Under the muster roll is a statement that:

"Captaine Daniell Treswell his foote companie, mustered at Dublin 26 April, 1644, were found in strength as followeth, videlicet :-

*Present: officers, 9; pikemen, 15; musquettiers, 24 = 48
Absent: captaine, absent, 1; souldiers, sicke and seene, 3. [In all, 52.]"*

John Pulverton (or possibly Pulvertoft) was one of the pikemen or musketeers - the roll does not differentiate between them.

The question that we must now try to answer is "Will this scrap of evidence bring us any closer to finding the elusive link between Linconshire and Ireland?" The first action has been to write to the Kilkenny Archaeological Society to see if the manuscripts themselves are still at the Castle in Kilkenny and whether there is an archivist who could examine them and check the spelling of John's surname.

The second has been to ask for the full muster roll to be published in the magazine of the Lincolnshire Family History Society to see if members of the Society can identify other individuals in the 27th Company as coming from Parts of Holland in Lincolnshire. Hopefully, the muster roll will be published at about the same time as this newsletter goes to print and, if we are really lucky, we will hear that other members of the Company were recruited there, suggesting the link that has eluded us for so long!

NANCY McFARLANE PULVERTAFT

Nancy Pulvertaft was born in Cork, the younger daughter of James Worrall, a bank manager, and Martha, née Buchanan. The Worrall name can be traced in Dublin at least as far back as 1619. The Buchanans had been land-owning and tenant farmers in Co. Fermanagh for more than 200 years.

Nancy's childhood years were spent in the small towns of Fintona and Monasterevan. Much younger than her sister and brother, and never having gone to a proper school, she diverted herself as a child by observing the foibles and eccentricities of the adult world around her, developing the great interest in people that she retained throughout her life. Fortunately, much of what she observed in her early years is recorded in her Memoirs, written in the late 1960s and early 70s.

In 1914 Nancy's father died and shortly afterwards her mother inherited Gortatole near the border in Co. Fermanagh. The farm had been Nancy's maternal grandfather's and she lived there until her marriage in 1925. Her Memoirs describe the life from daily tasks such as spring-cleaning before the days of vacuum cleaners and hand-churn butter-making to social life and dances with the Military stationed in Enniskillen. People from all walks of life are also described, often with candour! Another side of Nancy's life at that time was her piano playing and she often accompanied her sister, a trained singer, at concerts.

This was also the time of the 1916 rebellion and later the "Troubles" and civil war in Ireland. In spite of the fact that houses like Gortatole were being burnt down during the Troubles, Nancy's mother seemed completely immune to danger. She owned one of the very few cars in the district and Nancy, who had driven since she was 17, was often called on when the Police or Military needed messages to be carried, with the result that she was formally enlisted as a "C"-Special. She was also granted a Firearms Certificate, allowing her to carry a Webley & Scott revolver that she said was a far greater danger to herself than to any enemy!



NANCY PULVERTAFT in 1973

Nancy married Bryan Pulvertaft on 10 December 1925 and two days later the couple sailed for India. Details of Brian's career in India and later Japan are described in Vol 4, No 4 of these papers. Nancy coped well with the cultural shock of India, but life in Japan was certainly much easier for her. Both her children were born in Japan but, with very reliable amahs to help, she also found time to browse in antique shops where she acquired many fine examples of Japanese art and handicraft.

In late 1935 Bryan and Nancy decided to return to Ireland where Bryan took over Gortatole and built up a model Grade A, TT-tested dairy farm. Nancy's tasks were managing the house, growing

vegetables both for the house and for sale, acting as stand-in dairyman, delivering milk, running messages in the car and much else. It was hard work and a far call from the genteel years from 1915 to 1925. In 1944, after a serious illness, Bryan had to give up Gortatole and the family moved to a smaller farm in Co. Wicklow, but his health was by then irreparably damaged and he died in July 1945. After a grim winter in an isolated house, Nancy was fortunate in being able to sell the farm well and rented a flat in a large house near Arklow.

The years that followed were a period of restitution. Her flat could not have been more suitable, nor her landlord and neighbours kinder. In 1958, however, not only her mother but also her sister and brother died and, with no immediate prospect of either of her children settling in Ireland, Nancy decided to move to England. In autumn 1959 she bought a house in Cranbrook, Kent, turned it into a gem and lived 24 active and happy years there.

Although very happy in Cranbrook, Nancy was a realist. In 1981 she gave up her car after 64 years of accident-free driving and in 1984 decided to give up her house while still active enough to supervise her move and settle into a new home. This was to be a residential hotel in Flokestone and here she lived until her death on 11 June 2002. Sadly, her later years were marred by a mild stroke that damaged her faculties and by the death of her daughter, Rosemary, in 1990. She hardly ever complained but she was sometimes lonely, particularly after her son-in-law left the district and other good friends died. She was popular with the staff in the hotel who loved to hear her stories from the old days in Ireland, even when repeated!

Nancy never shook off her Irish origins but, after moving to England, her attitude to Irish politics changed as she came to understand why the Irish chose total independence rather than remaining in the Commonwealth – although she would have preferred the latter. It was therefore appropriate that, in accordance with her wishes, Nancy was buried with Bryan in Ireland, in the beautifully situated Castlemacadam churchyard near Avoca in Co. Wicklow.

NOTES & QUERIES

Some Family History Memories

Readers with good memories may recall my mentioning the name of Michael Leader, the Cork family historian, who lived for many years in Warwick Way, Pimlico and was most generous in allowing access to his extensive collection of Cork parish register transcripts. Sadly, Michael died in 1998 but many of his genealogical papers are now preserved in the Library of the Irish Genealogical Research Society in London.

It was amongst these papers that I found a letter from Professor R.J.V. (Robin) Pulvertaft (M30R) (q.v. Vol 2, No 10 of these papers). It was addressed to Michael Leader on 5 September 1973 from the house in which Robin lived in his retirement – “Hedges”, Stour Row, near Shaftesbury, Dorset. Although it is not clear to which member of the Pulvertaft family Michael had originally written, his letter had been passed to Robin for a reply. As Robin’s response is both amusing and has some assertions that need to be confirmed or disproved, I have reproduced the relevant paragraphs below:

“Your letter has been forwarded to me as the current doyen of the Pulvertaft clan. It appears that Pulvertaft hunting is a national, even international sport, as few years go by without some enthusiast discovering, with delight, that like the coelacanth we are not extinct.

I think the reason is that it is one of the very few Norman Conquest surnames still in use. The family lived from time immemorial in East Anglia, Boston has a Pulvertoft Lane and Lincolnshire has a Pulvertoft Place, no longer in the family.

Here follows information handed down verbally. In the “Visitations” countless Pulvertofts appear. There are two grants of arms to members of the family. A number of the periodical “The Antiquarian” some 50 years ago was devoted to the family records. I do not bear arms whether qualified or not.

The recent family history begins with Cromwell who hung a Pulvertoft for burning a church; he was a Leveller. Cromwell established a battalion of Levellers among them at least one Pulvertoft who was sent to Ulster and fought at the Battle of the Boyne.

During a post-Cromwell settlement, a piece of land known now as Castle Hackett in Co Cork was granted to my ancestor, who lost it at cards to a Hackett. I examined at medical finals with the contemporary Hackett (now in Australia). He would not give me back my land!

Pulvertafts are extinct in Ireland. They thrive in the USA where I was received with acclamation by a Cork policeman. I had missed a plane, but he held it back, saying "Never let it be said that a Pulvertaft had to stay in New York a minute longer than he wanted."

A Rev Thomas Pulvertaft appears in Trinity Dublin records (I think 1750) and another, my father, also Rev Thomas Pulvertaft about 1890."

Of the points made in this letter, the Heralds' Visitations have already been well documented in earlier issues of these papers. The references to the Antiquarian and the records of Trinity College, Dublin should not prove too difficult to trace. However, the family's descent from the Norman Conquest, the hanging of a Pulvertoft and the references to Castle Hackett are much tougher nuts to crack! If any reader can provide any evidence to support these claims, it would be most welcome!

Happy Christmas

D.M.P.

Obituary

It is with deep regret that the death is recorded of Nancy Pulvertaft on 11 June 2002 at Folkestone.