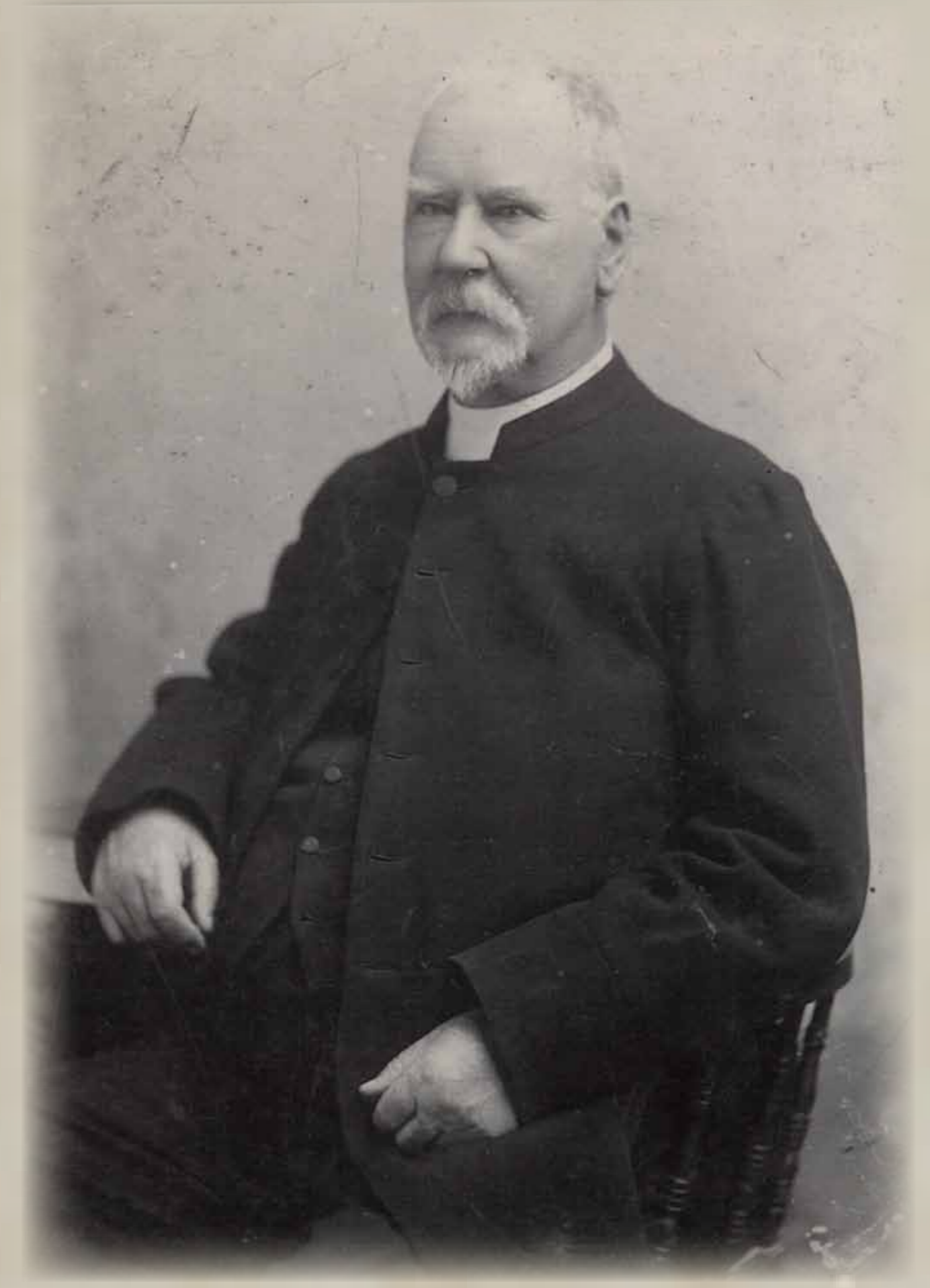


The Canon Philip Dwyer Exhibition

Canon Philip Dwyer (1822-1905)

Philip Dwyer was born in 1822, to parents Elizabeth (nee Doyne) and John Dwyer, barrister-at-law and Commissioner for Lunacy. Philip, the youngest of eight children grew up on Merrion Square in Dublin.

Philip Dwyer (1822-1905)



Philip entered Trinity College in 1839 aged 17, graduating with a degree in Theology in 1844 and was ordained deacon in 1845 and priest in 1846.

As a young clergyman Philip Dwyer arrived in Clare to witness the years of the Great Famine. He is situated in the diocese of Killaloe in the parish of Dunkerrin from 1845 to 1851 and promoted to Prebend in the parish of Tullock in 1851, remaining there until 1864.

In 1857, Philip Dwyer married Anne Stather Crowe (1829-1927), who was from a prominent local family. They had three sons and six daughters between the years 1858-1870; John (Jack), Fenella, Anne, Mary Edith, Harry, Charlotte, William, Florence and Phillipa Mabel.



Canon Dwyer and his family.

From left-right; Mary Dwyer Bethune (standing), Mabel Dwyer (seated), Anne Stather Crowe Dwyer (seated), Canon Philip Dwyer (standing), William Dwyer (standing), Charlotte Dwyer Jones and Annie Dwyer Rawson.

Anne Stather Crowe, was the grand-daughter of Thomas Crowe of the Abbey, Ennis. Captain Crowe had been agent for Lord Leconfield, who upon Captain Crowe's death provided his widow with a pension.

Philip Dwyer was the Rector of St. Columba's, Church of Ireland in Ennis from 1864 until 1883.



St. Columba's, c. 1890, Lawrence Collection. Courtesy Clare County Library.

The Clare Freeman reported in 1865 *'the Rev. Mr. Dwyer informed his congregation that he had written to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to ascertain their views on the proposed extension of their church at the Abbey which was too small for the congregation since their other churches at the parish had been closed.'* In 1867 it was decided to build a new protestant church in the town. Philip Dwyer, had collected by 1870, £8,000 toward the building fund.

The new church opened in 1871 with a capacity for a congregation of 450.

By the 1870s Philip Dwyer had been promoted to Canon and had produced two historically significant publications. The first (published under the pseudonym P.D.), *A handbook to Lisdoonvarna and its vicinity, with map and woodcuts, 1876*, coincided with the period of great growth at the celebrated spas of Lisdoonvarna. The second, published in 1878, being *The Diocese of Killaloe from the Reformation to the close of the 18th Century*, is considered one of the first modern diocesan histories and gained the Canon the reputation as the "historian of Clare"

The Canon produced several other books, including *'The Siege of Londonderry'*, *'Work and its Reward in the Irish Church'* and *'General Booth's submerged Tenth'*.

Map of Killaloe diocese from Canon Dwyer's publication 'The Diocese of Killaloe from the Reformation to the close of the 18th Century', 1878.



The Canon and his family

In 1883, Philip Dwyer resigned his position and left Ennis, with his entire family, for British Columbia.

'After a long sea voyage, the family landed in Panama in the middle of a cholera epidemic. They travelled by mule cart to the Pacific and wrote home giving vivid descriptions of the journey, such as the digging of the canal and the final hours of a hurricane on the last leg.'

From August 1883 to September 1884 the Canon was attached to Christchurch Cathedral in Victoria and in 1885 he was living in Chemainus, Vancouver Island, in charge of the Chemainus and Saltspring Mission.

By 1887, Canon Dwyer had returned with his family to England.

Philip Dwyer's son William remained in British Columbia and was associated with copper mining, was a member of early survey parties in the country, operated a menswear store in Duncan, became electoral returning officer for the district and married, in 1903, Mary Lomas, a local girl in the area. They had two sons and five daughters.

*William Dwyer's Family in the late 1920s:
back row- Eileen, Norah, Philip, Kathleen;
front row- Sheila, Patricia and Michael.*



The Canon's daughters Mary and Charlotte had met their future husbands in Vancouver, both British naval officers. In 1888, Mary Edith Dwyer married Lieutenant Henry Leonard Drinkwater Bethune in York while Charlotte Dwyer married Captain Jones and within one year of the family's arrival to Yorkshire, Annie Dwyer had married Selwyn Rawson, a wealthy local industrialist.



*Picnic near the sea, Penarth, 1913
Second from left Mabel Dwyer, Mrs. Annie 'Mingie' Dwyer,
Dorothy Bethune stands behind Harry Bethune, who is seated.
Rupert Bethune (with towel), Charlie and Mary Bethune
seated on foreground.*

Fenella Dwyer married a Reverend William Malachi who subsequently suffered an accident and remained an invalid for the remainder of his life.

Mabel Dwyer never married and remained a spinster living with her parents. Harry remained in North America, however he was later found to be living in very poor circumstances at the time of his father's death in 1905 and never returned. Jack married an Englishwoman, and was subject to moving frequently from place to place, he died in Vancouver in 1944.

Canon Dwyer, on his return to Yorkshire, was a supply priest and continued this until the 1890s in Leicestershire, Somerset and Norfolk. He died in Weston-super-Mare in 1905 aged 83.

His obituary in the Clare Journal read:

'With all classes he was the same, kindly, genial, and full of a rich vein of humour, which made him favourite everywhere he went. He wielded a ready pen and his valuable History of the Diocese of Killaloe was a monument of his scholarly attainments, his great research and industry.'



*Four generations, 1913, Left-right, Mrs. Nugent, Mrs. Perry,
Walter Nugent, Mr. Nugent, Mrs. Dwyer, Annie Rawson,
Selwyn Rawson (sitting) and Dorothy Rawson (sitting)*

Philip died in 1903, in his will he instructed that 'my body be buried without any expense or any display near to where I may die.'

References and acknowledgements: Prof. Deirdre Hunt, Ms. Lois Macmillan, Ms. Vivian Llyod and Mr. Christopher Rawson.