

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNALS OF LADY MURIEL CLOSE

BY GILLIAN CLOSE

Stuart Hall



Lady Muriel's mother Augusta set her daughter the example of journal-keeping, leaving a personal social history and a record of her great love and affection for her daughters Muriel and Mary. Lady Muriel's diaries cover eighteen years between May 1890 and February 1908. The following extracts are from those of 1903-1905.

On Sunday 25th January 1903, Maxwell Charles Close died. His son, Maxwell Archibald Close, and daughter-in-law Muriel had been travelling in Europe and were in France with their daughter Lilius who was to be left at a school in Paris.

Muriel was born Lady Muriel Albany Stuart on 12 March 1869, the elder daughter of 5th Earl Castlestewart and the Countess Augusta, and lived at Stuart Hall, Stewartstown and Drum Manor, Cookstown.

She married
my great-

grandfather, Maxwell Archibald Close (Max), in 1891 and by 1903 had 3 children, Maxwell (Mac) b. 1892, Lilius (Lil) b. 1893 and Agatha (Ag) b 1897. Mac was at boarding-school, Lil was at school in Paris and Ag, with her nurse, stayed at Drumbanagher. They had recently returned from Africa and the Boer War to a fast changing world of bicycles, motor cars, a new monarch and in Ireland the Land Act. In their 12 years of marriage, they had never had a permanent home, so Drumbanagher with its 80 rooms must have been a daunting undertaking; the estate had shrunk from around 9,000 acres to 400 and was no longer self-sustaining.

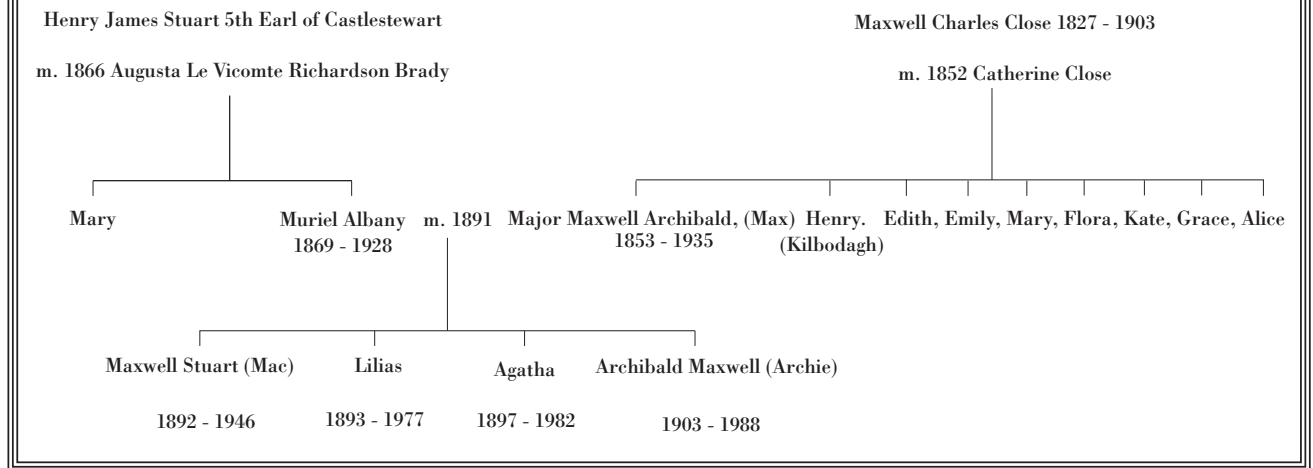
The house and gardens are now long gone which makes this account all the more poignant but Muriel and Maxwell took their period of guardianship seriously. Sometimes the journal raises more questions than it answers and sometimes it is necessary to read between the lines.

**Gillian Close
2017.**



Lady Muriel

Part Of The Close Family Tree



Drumbanagher

Moving into Drumbanagher, 1903

We take up Lady Muriel's story a week after the death of her father-in-law, her husband Max having returned to Drumbanagher for the funeral.

FEBRUARY 1st: Rouen. Heard from Max, who says his mother and sisters are leaving very soon, which comes as a surprise to me as I had thought they would stay there (at Drumbanagher) at least until the summer. Max thinks we should do wisely to go and live there after they go - of course in a very small way. He has much to attend to there and he thinks living there will be cheaper than elsewhere. I feel very much for Gran and the sisters and they have done so much good about Drumbanagher that they will be difficult people to succeed. I do not look forward to such a big undertaking and am afraid it means that we shall have to give up any travelling and lead a very quiet life for some time. I am going straight to S(tuart) Hall for the present. Dear Mac's 11th birthday.

3rd Mr Close's funeral was very large and there were some lovely flowers. The servants have been given a month's notice.

4th We left Rouen by 12.20 train and I was never more glad to leave any place; I have felt so ill there and had such a depressing time that it is like a nightmare to me. I had letters from Max and Gran; she says he is such a comfort to her, so full of affectionate consideration for her and so capable in making all the arrangements. Poor thing, she says life without her dear husband is a ghastly prospect but she makes up her mind to bear it with the patience with which he bore all his illnesses and delicate health.

11th Drumbanagher. Was met a Goragh (local train station) by Max, who looks very ill and worried. Mrs Close is much changed and her face looks so sunken; she broke down a good deal in talking to me. She was so totally unprepared, which seems to trouble her, as of course she had no time for any goodbye to him.



Major M.A. Close (Max)

13th We went to Stuart Hall where I expect to be for some time as the date of Mrs Close's departure is not fixed.

(Muriel remains at Stuart Hall whilst Max spends time both at Drumbanagher and Stuart Hall.)

MARCH 11th I am deeply engaged in getting servants as we expect to go to Drumbanagher in April.

15th Max writes a depressed letter, fearing we may find it hard to exist at Drumbanagher after all. The Duties are £3,500 (equiv £380,000), payable in 8 years at £420 a year. His mother's furniture at £1,200, £200 of which is derived from her own money put into the estate.

20th Poor Mrs Close left today for Dublin with Flora, (one of Max's sisters) the other girls leave on Tuesday. Gran has been at Kilbodagh for the last 3 days. She has been longing to get away from all the painful associations.

(Kilbodagh is a neighbouring house where Max's brother Henry lived with his wife Dorothy and son Barry. Henry was the Land Agent.)

24th The girls (remaining sisters) leave Drumbanagher today and the house is in charge of Mrs Close's maid and a housemaid.

APRIL 3rd. We left (Stuart Hall) for Drumbanagher. I am very sorry to leave poor Mamma so lonely. We arrived for tea and found all our new servants; the cook seems very nice.

4th Poole left, having handed up keys to me. I think parlour and housemaid both seem good servants. I am worn out with seeing to everything, the house is so enormous. We are sitting in the study; it all seems rather blank without the kind welcome of the past.

6th We moved into the library, Max will still have the study for himself.

8th We heard from Mrs Close that Mac arrived safely after a rough passage (from school in Rugby) and was not ill. She has taken 41 St Stephens Green for 2 months and he stays with her till tomorrow. I at last feel I can sit down for a little and rest. I have been worked off my legs since I came here.

15th My new maid Wilson arrived and seems a nice person but older than I expected. I am so thankful all our new servants seem so satisfactory.

22nd We went for a long afternoon to Newry. We looked at some papers for the billiard-room, as we think it would be best to paper it before hanging the pictures which have just been done up.

MAY 10th. Henry came up later and had a long talk over the paper and frieze for the billiard-room. We are getting it from Knowles in London but have chosen nothing yet. The old paper has all been scraped off.

14th We (Dorothy, Henry, Max) all looked at the papers Knowles has again sent for the billiard-room. We have at last chosen one, a blue stripe with a deep frieze of garlands of pink and white roses on a blue ground. I am undertaking all the expense of papering the room as Max cannot undertake anything extra just now.

18th I called on Miss Whiteside and afterwards went to Kilbodagh. Dear Max bicycled to Newry and a hen rushing across the road upset him and he gave his leg a nasty cut and returned very lame and stiff.

9th Max can hardly walk. He drove with me to Poyntzpass and round by Four Towns.



Muriel and Mac - (Born 1892)



Mac at Cricket - 1901

21st Max seems less stiff today but he has been looking ill and I think the fall shook him a little.

JUNE 1st The old carpet from the drawing room was beaten, not having been up for more than 20 years; dense clouds of dust and carpet hair came from it; it looked like beating the sand of the seashore.

2nd Our 12th wedding anniversary. We are obliged to paint most of the woodwork of the windows as they are going to the bad, the side-door is also being painted, the garden seats have all been done and in fact there is no end to the repairs which seem absolutely necessary.

10th The drawing-room paper has at last arrived from Knowles.

20th The drawing-room paper is up but very disappointing, either bad paper or badly hung, or both; the colour has run in places and it looks very smudgy when you go near it.

25th We went to Newry and ordered a cupboard as a wedding present for Minnie McComb who is to be married on Tuesday.

JULY 8th Poor Leahy, the cook, went off yesterday in great tribulation having lost her mother; fortunately the room maid is a good cook. We have got some of the pictures up in the drawing-room where they look very well.

18th Dear Liliias arrived (from Paris), looking thin but not seeming very tired. Lil and Ag are in great excitement at being together and Lil seems very much improved.

22nd We have decided not to send Lil back to Paris but to get a governess for both children as the distance is really too great for her.

25th The children went down to see the King's train pass on its way to Mount Stewart; very heavy rain came on and they did not see much; it poured all the afternoon. I am very busy writing to governesses.

AUGUST 2nd Darling Mac arrived yesterday. He is thin and rather pale but decidedly grown and seems very well.

12th Max went to the Newry Show, taking Lil and Mac. The latter rode Chestnut in the show but got no notice taken of him; we exhibited a calf, butter and honey but were not even commended.

25th Dear Mary (sister) arrived and Max and Mac met her at Poyntzpass.

27th Max went to Dublin to try and pick up a pony at Sewells and also attend a meeting of the Grantees of Trinity College. Miss Bole (Governess) arrived about 9 and seems a nice quiet person.

31st We went to the Vicarage and Mary photographed the East window as a help in choosing the new one which has been decided upon as a memorial (for Mr Close).

SEPTEMBER 1st Dear Mary went to Drum; it has been very kind of her to stay a week as she is anxious to return to Leonard (son). We are going to Dublin on Thursday as I have been feeling so much less well lately.

3rd Dublin. We left by 3.37 train taking Mac. Flora met us. The other people had only just left our rooms and so we are rather uncomfortable here.

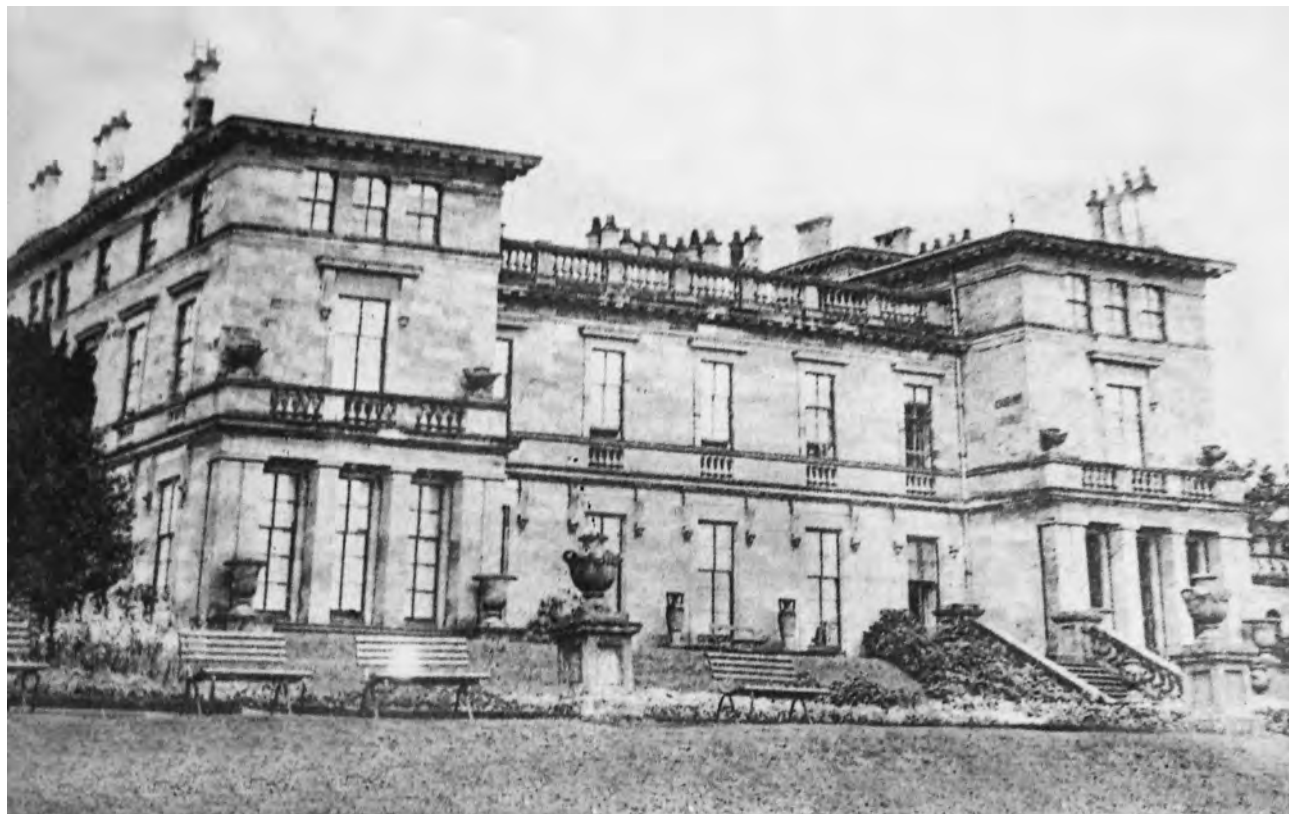
11th Mac had his second riding lesson. Max and I drove to Grafton St. I felt very seedy. I interviewed a nurse who seems very promising and I hope to engage her.

12th Max heard that Uncle M had a fall in getting out of bed and is not expected to live the night.

13th Flora wrote that Uncle M died last night at 10.15 so his sufferings are over. Gran and Flora were with him. After lunch we walked and Max went down later to help his mother about the funeral.

14th I drove in park. Nurse Young arrived, have been feeling much less well.

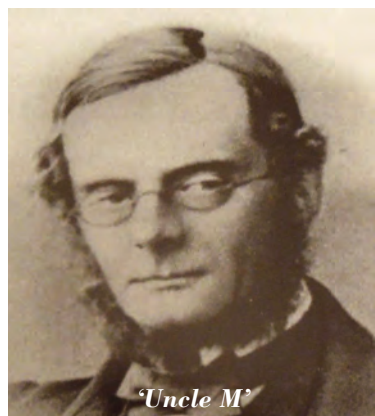
16th Max went to Uncle Maxwell's funeral



Drumbanagher - South Face

17th Mrs Close seems keeping quite well. Max went off to see Mac's riding lesson...wet and dreary, the time does drag.

22nd Max saw dear Mac off at Kingstown and we had a wire later telling of his safe arrival. The endless waiting here is very trying and I feel so sorry we came so soon, 3 weeks on Thurs since we left home.... I feel hopeless with all this delay.



The Reverend Henry Maxwell Close (1823-1903)

Born: Dublin. Son and first child of Henry Samuel Close (a lawyer) of Elm Park and Newtownpark House. Educated at Weymouth and Trinity College, Dublin. Holy Orders 1848. Interests: Glaciation, geology, astronomy, Irish language; member of the Royal Irish Academy; member of Coradh na Gaelige. He worked on the first Irish Dictionary, was Vice-President of The Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language; left £1,000 for the production of the Irish Language Dictionary, Volume One of which was published in 1913; the final volume was published in 1973.

His sister Catherine Deborah Agnes, ninth child of fourteen, married Maxwell Charles Close in 1852.

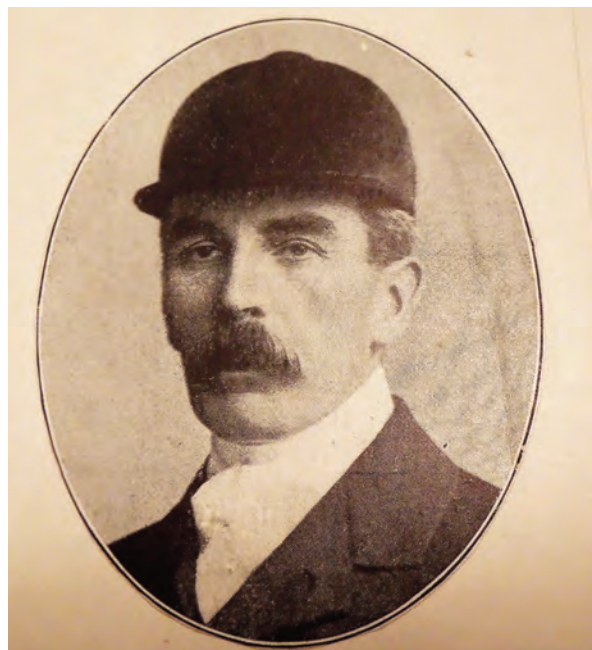
OCTOBER 1st Still dragging on. I drove in the Park with Nurse Young and took a longer walk than usual. At 5.30 I began to feel ill and at 10.20 our dear little boy was born, a very fine, particularly big child, supposed to weigh 10lb. Very fair hair, almost white and blue eyes. A fortnight after Nurse Young had to leave for another case and a very nice Nurse Saunders took her place. I had the baby's own Nurse for him but she proved very unsatisfactory and allowed him to get rather ill and then gave notice. I could hear of no-one suitable so have engaged old Crofts to come back as I know he will be safe with her.

NOVEMBER 3rd One Month later. I am now able to drive every day and have also walked a little. I am thankful to have got on so well and that the baby is such a beautiful child and so strong and wonderfully easy to manage and good tempered. He is particularly intelligent and was so, almost from the first day. I have several people including Mrs Sargent and Miss Perrin. I drove with Max to the Botanic Gardens where we walked a little. He has had to be away a good deal, as the negotiations for the sale of the estate have been going on; it is all practically settled now as far as the Armagh property goes; the tenants accept 17% reduction. The children have been much interested in their brother and Mac has written

particularly nicely about him. He is to be called Archibald Maxwell and the godparents are Mr Shirley, Capt Hall and Maynard Mylea. The Christening is fixed for Thursday at All Saints Church.

5th The darling baby was christened and I was churched. He was so good and looked so nice. Mrs Close, the girls and Addy came.

7th We left Dublin with great joy by 2.45. Archie did not wake until we got into the bus.



Max dressed for the Hunt.

8th Henry came up to tea. The house has had a thorough cleaning and looks very fresh and nice. I have given Archie No 1 so as to be near my room and quieter than the schoolroom passage. Roger Hall (Narrow Water) sent Archie a beautiful cup, napkin ring and spoon in case. Lil and Ag both ride, alternate days and seem to enjoy it immensely.

17th We moved all the furniture we could collect into the drawing-room yesterday but it still looks very empty; we are going to use it next week.... It is very hard to furnish so big a room. We have collected the best of the French tables for it. Dear Archie has grown tremendously since we came here, everyone thinks he looks 3 months old; he coos and smiles most affably and takes a great deal of notice.

24th First day of the shooting. Roger Hall and his brother Frank arrived to stay and the other guns were Mr Harden, Mr Sinton and Henry. Henry and Dorothy dined and Mr Johnston. We were 10 for lunch today and 24 men downstairs including beaters, keepers and Mr Sinton's chauffeur. It gave me a great deal to think of to provide for so many. We used the drawing-room in the evening and it looked bright and lights up well.

25th Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves or were polite enough to say so. Dorothy came to lunch, the Halls left by 6.45 train. Roger was particularly kind and interested about Archie and went to the nursery to see him. We had a christening cake on Tuesday and drank the darling's health. We fed 27 men downstairs today.

DECEMBER 8th Dr MacD. came today and vaccinated my poor Archie;

16th I have utterly failed to get a cook but Bridget is doing her best and some of the others are kindly helping. Major Townes and Capt Frank Hall came over from Narrow Water and with Mr Moorhead, Henry and Mr Harden, made up the guns... Lunch went off better than I could have hoped for.

19th Dear Mac arrived (from school) and looks well and decidedly grown.

25th Great joy of stockings and crackers in the family; they have got many nice presents. I was very glad to be able to get to church and to remain for Holy Communion. We placed a pretty cross on the grave. Mrs Close going on well.

26th Max and Mac went off to the (Hunt) Meet and were back at 3.30, Mac having enjoyed it, though it is difficult to make Chestnut jump.

28th Mrs Innes (Dromantine) called.

29th I went to Acton with Ag and Archie. Old Mrs Alexander seemed wonderfully well and nursed the baby, who was awake and showed his blue eyes.

1904

JANUARY 18th Dear Mac went off, to get to school tomorrow.

20th We went to Scarva for the sale of poor Mr Reilly's furniture; the place has been sold to Sir John Nutting and now the furniture has to go to meet the Bill of Sale, which Col Alexander holds upon it. Some of the things were very good and had attracted Dublin and even London dealers. The set of 10 drawing chairs, Gothic Chippendale, fetched £320, a carved table £120, also Chippendale I think; the 8 dining room chairs £120 (Chippendale but not considered perfect as the woodwork in front had been repaired). There was a good sideboard and some Wedgwood and Spode and old lustre china. Poor young Mr Reilly seemed a pathetic figure watching it all. The Halls were there and Mr Garnett, Mr Harden etc. Mac has arrived

safely at school.

21st Miss Fanny Alexander and Mrs Moore called; the latter's husband Col Moore descends from the former owner of this place and having inter-married in the past with a Reilly, was looking yesterday for family relics at the Sale.

(A governess called Miss Copland was employed for the children on 13th to replace Miss Bole. On a trip to Dublin to visit Mrs Close, some chairs and tables from Scarva were on sale at Butlers. 28th Jan was Ag's birthday and 29th Lil's. Monday Feb 1, Mac's birthday and their return from the trip.)

FEBRUARY 9th Went to Dromantine and we walked round the pleasure ground with Mrs Innes, the shrubs were looking very nice.

APRIL 6th Mac arrived looking thin and taller. The Memorial window to Mr Close's memory, which is to be placed in the chancel, as an East window, is nearly ready and may be up by the end of the month.

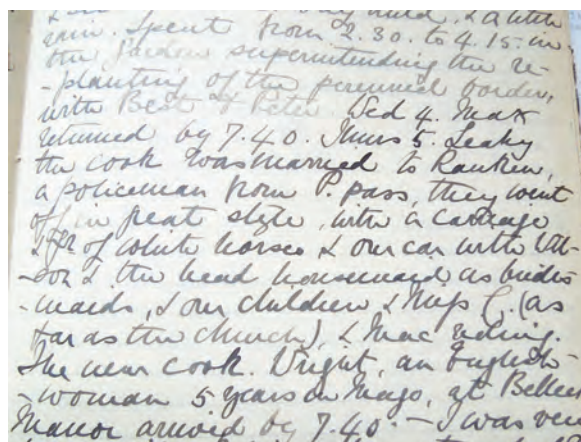
19th My dear mother arrived. I met her at P'pass with Ag and Lil riding. Mac rode Cricket for the first time and got on very well.

21st Mamma and I went to see the new window (at church), which is very nice and the design most dignified, the subject the Ascension. We went on to Kilbodagh and saw Henry.

22nd Violent storms of rain. Went to station and saw my dear mother off. She seems wonderfully well and wants us to join her at 11 Chesham about May 28. Poor McComb had his leg caught in the chaff cutter some days ago and has been suffering a good deal, as his leg was much torn; it is hoped, however, by Dr Mack, that he has not permanently injured himself.

MAY 12th Ascension Day. The service was about 5 o'clock, just after Canon McClintock's arrival from the station. It was all very nice and the music was good, people from a distance having come to help in the singing. There were 8 neighbouring clergymen present. Canon McClintock dedicated the window (to Max Charles Close) and preached, speaking very nicely of dear Mr Close; it was all very touching and pathetic. I wish he could see the window, it is really beautiful and would have pleased him. Canon McClintock stayed the night here and gave us some music after dinner.

(Shortly after this Muriel and Max join her mother in London and then travel to Firby Hall in Yorkshire to visit Mary, Muriel's sister. They return on Thurs 14 July.)



Lady Muriel's handwriting.

JULY 14th The children all well, dear Archie seemed pleased with us though he can hardly remember.

15th The house looks clean and fresh and No 6 done up and looks well.

18th Very fine and hot. We had tea in the hay on the lawn with the children. Two Miss Alexanders came later.

28th We went to Armagh by 4.52 train and got to the Palace about 6 o'clock. Went for a walk with Miss Alexander to Lady Anne's Walk and the garden; the former is picturesque among trees by a stream.

29th We drove to meeting in aid of the Church Auxiliary Fund and over which the Primate presided and made a good speech. The Provost also spoke well and gave an interesting account of the financial position of the Irish church at present, several clergymen spoke including Mr Armstrong and Max, who said a few words well and with some jokes well placed. After tea we visited the new R C Cathedral, which was opened with great pomp by the Pope's legate, Cardinal Vannutelli. The white marble of the High Altar, pulpit and Lady Chapel is most beautifully carved and came entirely from Italy; there are coloured marbles besides, in pulpit etc and the walls are entirely of a conventional pattern of mosaic. We went on to our own cathedral which looked very quiet after the other. Many old features of the interior have been ruthlessly cleared away as an improvement but some fine tombs are left and a good carved ceiling, recently brought to life again. The new East window is by Heaton & Co, who did ours and is also an Ascension and much like ours, only smaller. Armagh is full of police and there has been some stone throwing aimed at the houses of the opposite camp. The streets are hung with festoons of paper roses and many flags, notably green ones with a harp

30th We left after breakfast, having much enjoyed our pleasant visit, they are all so charming from the dear old Primate down. (The Most Reverend William Alexander) He is wonderfully well though very infirm in walking and entering a

carriage. Found all the family well on our return.

31st I forgot to describe our departure yesterday from Armagh station which took place in a terrible crowd, gathered to see Cardinal Vannutelli's departure; there was a band of small boys and some girls in white, probably from the convent school, 'Come Back to Erin' was played, preceded by a chant of some kind, (one I used to hear at Newcastle Convent), at the end of which they all knelt, bare-headed and I suppose the Cardinal blessed them; there was a shouting screaming crowd of quite poor people and some priests and better dressed people. It was only as a favour that we were permitted to enter the station and the porter seemed to think us unreasonable for wishing to depart until after his (the Cardinal's) train had gone.

AUGUST 5th We had all the school up here for tea and games, 65 children came and seemed to enjoy it and ate an enormous tea. The Johnstons came to help; Henry, Dorothy and Barry also here.

1905

JANUARY 5th. Leahy the cook was married to Ranken, a policeman from P'pass, they went off in great style, with a carriage and four of white horses and our car with Wilson and the head housemaid as bridesmaid and our children and Miss C (as far as the church), Mac riding. The new cook, Wright, an English-woman, 5 years in Mayo, at Belleek Manor arrived by 7.40. I was very busy with Peter over the other half of garden border.

In April 1905 Max was seriously ill having contracted diphtheria from the "poor state of the drains". Major work, including the digging of a large trench around the house, was carried out to replace the cracked pipes. The family moved to the Great Northern Hotel in Warrenpoint while the work went on and in May took a house there for the children, Miss Coopland and Nurse. Muriel joined her parents in London for 'the season', made other visits and trips in England, and returned to Drumbanagher at the end of July to be reunited with the children and the house which she said "looks wonderfully well, considering that the garden-men have been helping with the drains..."

Muriel turned her attention in more earnest to the garden (described by Myles Reid in Vol.10 of 'Before I forget'.) and lived at Drumbanagher until her death in 1928, aged 59. Max then lived between Drumbanagher and Drum Manor, Cookstown where he died in 1935. Drum Manor was Archie's home until it was sold to the Forestry Commission in the 1960s when he moved to a modern house. He died in 1988.

HAZLEY'S WELL

While most people would have regarded the coming of the railway as 'progress' bringing with it many benefits, for those local farmers whose farms lay in its path it was extremely disruptive, for just as the Newry Canal a hundred years earlier had cut through their lands in the late 1840s the railway did likewise . There were many farmers whose small holdings were now cut into three – one section between the County boundary and the Canal, a field between the canal and the new railway and a further field or two to the west of the railway. This made life much more complicated when it came to moving livestock or harvesting crops. For those whose homes happened to lie in the path of the new invention it had a much more immediate impact for their dwelling had to be demolished.

It is believed that this is what happened in the case of Samuel Hazley of Kilbodagh. The Hazley family were well-established in the townlands of Drumbanagher and Kilbodagh and at the time of the coming of the railway one of the family, Samuel Hazley was sexton of St Mary's Church Drumbanagher. During the clearing of undergrowth at the Canal Wood, between Poyntzpass and Jerrettspass a few year ago, a lovely

old well was uncovered, which is known as 'Hazley's Well '. It is thought that the well is all that marks the one-time home of Samuel Hazley and that, while he and his family were resettled, their former home was demolished during the construction of the line . Almost miraculously, the well, which had supplied their home with water for a hundred years, somehow survived as a relic of a former age.



Hazley's Well in Canal Wood