

The Glen, Abbeyfeale,  
County Limerick.

*From Denis Craigmiles  
1993*

August, 1956.

Dear Cousin Helen,  
(or Sister M. Caelan - a dual personality?).

Well, I promised most surely, with your eyes fixed earnestly on me, that I would write this letter outlining the history of our common family. You know what I mean by the over-worked adjective "common". I am referring to those several parties called generically the Woulfes or, as you would say, the Wolfes. If you notice any mistakes in spelling or punctuation kindly put it down to my eye-sight - it sounds nicer. Moreover, they spell some words differently in America having developed a most inexplicable dislike to the letter "u", so allow for that. What follows may sound somewhat vainglorious, and in the end generally futile, but it is as near as I can get to the facts.

Making a long cast I start as far back as a Hugh Lupus of Avranches in Normandy in the time of that Duke William who invaded England, won at Hastings in October, 1066, and became William the First of England. This Hugh Lupus was made Constable of Chester and lived at a place now called Church Laughton in that county. It is odd that the present English Dukes of Westminster whose family name is "Grosvenor" and have their country house near the same place on the Cheshire border have a custom of inserting the words "Hugh Lupus" amongst their numerous christian names. What their connection with the man from Avranches may be I do not know but presumably they claim some. A daughter of the last Duke of Westminster runs a racing stable in this county. A descendant of this Hugh Lupus came to Ireland, landing at Bannow, County <sup>Wexford</sup> Waterford, with the first band of Norman invaders in 1169. They moved west and north grabbing such land as the owners were too weak to defend, after the custom of all such pioneers or bandits, whichever you like to call them, and finally infiltrated into the County Limerick. Now gradually we get on to firm ground in the matter of the family history. In course of time the Norman-French of the invaders under the pressure of trade interests gave way to the ruder English tongue in the seaport towns and to the Irish language everywhere else. The "Lupus" presumably was translated into "Woulfe" or "Wolfe" and, in Irish, to De Bulb, (for the Irish have no "W" in their alphabet and express the sound by a "B" aspirate). So our family name appears in English guise phonetically as Woulfe or De Wuluff or even De Baluff - this last being the form

- given in Canon Begley's "History of the Diocese of Limerick" and taken by him from an official "Inquisition" made by the English towards the end of the 16th. century setting out, inter alia, the list of landholders,----- adherents of Garrett, the last Earl of Desmond, whose properties had been confiscated as "rebels".

However, we first appear in the ----- records of Limerick City in the person of a Nicholas Woulfe who is named as a Bailiff of the City in 1383. The next appearance is a Garrett ---- Woulfe who is listed as holder of the same office in 1470. Six years --- after this last date we have a Thomas Woulfe who was Sheriff of the City, a person of importance in those days. After that there is silence for -- many years. The next high light is the Reverend David Woulfe of Limer- see Dictionary  
Nail Biography  
-ick City, a secular priest in the reign of the English king, Edward VI. (1552-56). While on a visit to Rome David Woulfe met Ignatius Loyala -- and joined the latter's newly formed Society of Jesus. Elizabeth had --- then succeeded to the English throne and in the confused conditions of -- the time was moving or rather drifting into the Protestant camp. Father Woulfe was sent back to Ireland and landed in Cork in the beginning of -- 1561. More lucky than many of his contemporaries , especially his ----- personal friends, Richard Creagh and Edmond O'Donnell, both priests and --- both martyred by the English invaders, Father David, after many years of strenuous support of the Earl of Desmond and the Earl's fighting cousin, James Fitzmaurice, died a natural death in the northern part of the ----- County Clare about 1580.

Leaving the Limerick City branch of the family, alone for the moment we will turn to the Limerick County branch with whom, I believe, - we are more immediately connected. A certain Gerald, (spelt "Gerot" in - the above-mentioned "Inquisition"), Baluff, otherwise "Woulfe" held land on a tenure called "knight's fee" from Gerald, the Earl referred to above, -- when Desmond's resistance began. It became clear after, wards that there - was an agreed division of the plunder amongst the invaders. In pursuance of the scheme Queen Elizabeth had authorised the despatch of numerous and well equipped bands of thieves into Ireland. The programme was simple. ---- Owners of land were attacked, murdered, if possible, and the land seized by the Crown was granted back <sup>to</sup> by the immediate assassins subject to a rent -- payable to Elizabeth and her successors. If the proposed victims took - arms in their own defence they were called "rebels" . One of the main

- attacks on the Earl of Desmond was led by two adventurers, Malby and --  
 Raleigh - the latter being the Sir Walter Raleigh whose character, since -  
 white-washed by certain historians and other fiction writers, finally brought  
 him to the scaffold in the following reign. Gerald Woulfe or "Gerot De ----  
 Baluff", if you like, lived at a place called in Irish Inis Cuais, (Inish Coosh  
 is the English pronunciation), near the present town of Rathkeale in the ----  
 County Limerick. He with many other landholders, Gaelic and Norman, lost his  
 life and his land in the ensuing war and of his family, two sons, as I believ  
 -e, fled to the hills in the western and largely uninhabited part of the ----  
 county, settled there and became the progenitors of all the Cratloe and other  
 Woulfes. I should have mentioned that according to the English "Inquisition"  
 the name of this Gerald's father was Philip, a name that did not come back --  
 into the Family until modern times. My opinion that the flight to the West  
 Limerick hills took place during the Geraldine war and before the death of --  
 James Fitzmaurice is based on a curious story told by my grandfather which I  
 shall relate to you some other time. Whatever the details, the main fact ---  
 remains that the County Limerick Woulfes from being people of established ---  
 position in the rich plain of central Limerick became fugitives in the -----  
 western hills and woods. In the turmoil that prevailed all over Ireland the  
 result of continuous attacks from overseas for more than a hundred years ----  
 after the murder of the Earl of Desmond in 1586 the personalities of our ----  
 family, or rather of the County branch of them, are lost to sight until -----  
 towards the end of the 17th. century. They were too busy trying to keep ----  
 alive to keep records. The curtain rises again on two brothers bearing --  
 the now recognised family names of Maurice and James who were living at a ---  
 place called Inchareagh on the bank of the river Gale west of the village of  
 Athea. One of them, James, died in 1704 leaving six daughters and two sons.  
 His eldest son, Maurice, had been born in 1690. Although he was only 14 ----  
 years of age when his father died he was strong and energetic, physically and  
 mentally, and he soon took charge of the family affairs. His younger brother,  
 Richard, died a young man. The story is that he got chilled while on a ----  
 visit eastward down the plain of Limerick and was buried in Monagay church-  
 -yard. It was winter and the snow lay so deep that the body could not be ---  
 brought home. Maurice meantime at Inchareagh made headway as far as the -  
 political and economic conditions of his time would permit. He gave dowries  
 to his six sisters and that task postponed his marriage until he was 40 years

Co Limerick  
 1<sup>st</sup> to have  
 records in 1700's

Maurice.

James D1704

1 Maurice B1690  
 102415 D1792  
 m: Kathleen Rearden

Chl Edmond  
 m: bef  
 1760  
 2 (Short Dick)  
 Richard D1824  
 1 Edmond  
 D1876

Richard  
 D1910  
 1 m  
 12 m  
 2. Richard Cled 90

old, a very unusual circumstance for those days. His wife<sup>w</sup>as a Kathleen Rearden. He then left Inchareagh and took better land at Beenmore nearer Athea. After many years, (thirty apparently), his wife, Kathleen, died. The churchyard, Templeathea, where she was buried was in plain sight of his house. The tradition is that he could not bear to look at it. He left ---- Beenmore and took the entire Townland of Cratloe, some 2,000 acres, in March 1760. That also had once been Desmond land. He lived at the house you -- photographed, below ours, here at the Glen and died there on Christmas night, 1792, being then, you will notice, 102 years of age. He had eaten his ----- supper, possibly too good a one for his years, and was sitting in a corner of the kitchen beside the fire watching a dance of the young people that was in full swing, when he appeared to fall asleep. It was noticed that he had -- 31 of his own teeth in his mouth and the 32nd. was in his waistcoat pocket -- when he died that night so that he was practically intact. That man was -- your great-great-great-great grandfather - as appears below. He had five -- sons. One, Edmond, was married before 1760. One of the other four, called - "Short Dick" succeeded his father in the old house. Short Dick died in 1824 his son, Edmond, died in 1876, and Edmond's son, Richard, died in 1910, ----- leaving amongst his children, your grandmother, Mary Woulfe, and my father, Maurice Richard. The house we occupy at the Glen was built in 1815 by your grandmother's grandfather, the above Edmond Woulfe. The latter was rather a prominent man in the district in his day. Amongst other things he was what was called a "warden" in Daniel O'Connell's Repeal organisation in the ----- thirties and forties of the last century. The house you photographed, the older one, was occupied before 1760 by a certain James Lacy. He was of a -- family that had lost still more than we had in the Tudor wars as can be seen from the size of the ruins of their castle at Glenogra not far from Limerick. Some of these De Lacys had escaped to the Continent and one, Count Peter Lacy, acquired the somewhat risky job of being a field-marshal in the service of the Czar, Peter the Great. Another of them was Bishop of Limerick in the first half of the 18th. century. He had, of course, to keep under cover as -- the Anti-Irish penal laws were then in full swing. Now, if you are not -- too bored we will return to the Limerick City branch of the tribe. I had -- mentioned Thomas Woulfe, the Sheriff of Limerick in 1476. He is described -- as of "Bally Philip", evidently the name of his house. Now recollect that -- there is no doubt about him; the contemporary record is there to be read yet

Limerick City

-- There is a big jump to the next mention of the family in the --  
 civic life of Limerick in 1585 when they had the Sheriff's job again.  
 He was James Woulfe of Corbally, (just outside Limerick on the Clare bank of  
 the Shannon). We know something of this James. He had six sons:- (1).--  
 Patrick, whose son, Richard, took part in the defence of Limerick when the cit;  
 was besieged by Cromwell's army under Ireton in 1650. He escaped after the  
 surrender and got away to France. His descendants settled in Paris and as fa<sup>r</sup>  
 as I know all connect<sub>1</sub>ion with them was lost. (2). Richard, who had descend-  
 -ants in Limerick a hundred years afterwards. (3). Stephen, whose descendants  
 still live in County Clare. (4). James, a Dominican friar. (5). Francis, ----  
 Superior of the Franciscan Order in Ireland, who was appointed Papal Legate -  
 to this country. (6). George, a soldier, about whom there is some confusion.  
 Apparently he had a son of the same name who took part in the defence of the  
 City in Cromwell's war. These last two had very different fates. Francis --  
 Woulfe, the Legate, was captured by Ireton's forces and promptly hanged on the  
 doubly fatal charge of being a "rebel" and a "papist priest". George evaded  
 capture and, of all places, took refuge in the north of England then mainly -  
 royalist and anti-Cromwellian in sympathy. He, George, had a son, Edmond, -  
 and this Edmond who settled in Kent was the grandfather of the General James  
 Woulfe, (or "Wolfe" as he spelt it), who took Quebec for the English in 1759. -  
 There is no doubt about the General's decent from the Limerick Woulfes - so  
 much is known from purely English sources - but in fact most of the family --  
 are not inclined to boast about it. They consider that he was on the wrong -  
 side. The general's father was a lieutenant-colonel in the English army and  
 a Protestant, but that, in the circumstances of the time, was almost inevit-  
 -able. On that point it should be mentioned that there are Protestant<sub>1</sub> ----  
 Wolfes living at Forenaughts in the County Kildare and it has been said that  
 they are descended from the General's grandfather, Edmond. Of that I know ---  
 nothing but they, the Kildare family, have a good record politically, always  
 steadily Irish in sentiment, and the "Wolfe" in Wolfe Tone's name derives from  
 them. The patriot's father was a neighbour and a friend at Forenaughts.

- James 1585
- 1 Patrick
- Richard 1650  
France
- 2 Richard
- 3 Stephen
- 4 James (frar)<sup>Hanged</sup>
- 5 Francis (Priest)
- 6 George - English
- George
- Edmond
- James  
(caught)  
1759

- see Notes & Queries  
 vol 1 1852

I hope sometime to find out the particulars of the personaliti-  
 -ies who link the present County Clare Woulfes with the old Limerick city ---  
 worthies - only a few miles away in a straight line - but so far I have not  
 got round to it. Now I am approaching the end of this instalment of the -  
 story but I should like to add the little I know about the first of our ----

Letter John  
Wolfe  
1836

Limerick Leader  
4 Dec 1854

- emigrants from Cratloe to America. The first to turn his face westward, apart from the Man of Quebec was a James Woulfe, a grandson of the old Maurice above. This James Woulfe had intended to go into the Church and had acquired a good knowledge of the classics. He changed his mind, however, and left for the United States in 1824. Virginia was, apparently, the most promising territory for his purpose and he established there a school - which his abilities and qualifications turned into a distinct success. He appears to have been a restless character. Like many who came after him --- "the noise of the road was in his ears" and after some years he left Virginia and pushed far to the north west to a place now called Monticello in --- Iowa. He took land there and worked it as efficiently as he had in his --- classic studies. He had, throughout, kept in communication with his kinsfolk in Cratloe and one, at least, of his letters is extant. Then the letters --- suddenly stopped. After a considerable interval two of his brothers, John and Richard Woulfe, set out in 1836 to find him. They went first to his --- former Virginian address and by chance met a travelling dentist who had not only known James Woulfe but who also told them that he had died at Natchez - on the Mississippi the year before, (1835). He had been drowned in the --- river and there had been a suspicion of foul play. In any event the exact --- circumstances of James Woulfe's death were never ascertained. The brothers, John and Richard, continued on to Iowa; claimed and established title to --- James' land and became the ancestors, as far as my information goes, of the Wolfe colony in Iowa and the rural parts of Illinois. It was nearly thirty years afterwards that the real exodus began and has continued until there --- are almost as many of the family in the United States as there are in the --- County Limerick. Now I must really put the brake on. With the exception - of the reference to the ancient Hugh Lupus, admittedly guess-work but quite probably not far off the mark, the rest of this letter is very close to the actual facts and in the matter of long, honourable and at times, even distinguished, descent you can hold up your head in any company you may be in in Europe and America.

To finish in a lighter vein and if you had been able to make a longer stay I could have told you stories of local legends, -- of odd events, ghosts, witches and the like that would have made you draw --- closer to the light. We had some of the last-named hereabouts in the old - days. There was Joan Grogan of Athea who, one night at the Glen, called on - the dead of previous generations naming each individually as they came in --

Father  
of Short  
Dick

- one after another, out of the dark in response to her call until my grandfather, then a young man, was driven into a fire-place corner by -- the press of the weird, if friendly, visitors. There was Biddy Airly, the Limerick witch and Moll Anthony, the Clare witch. Biddy Airly was seen on --- both sides of a fence at the same moment which, you will admit, demands a --- considerable degree of technical skill in her trade even for a boss-witch. --- Then there is a stretch of ground in Cratloe called the "Second Hill" whereon no man or woman in their senses will be found after nightfall. However, that can wait and moreover it does not do to become involved too deeply in certain matters. When you get the chance, tar aris! i.e., come again.

Yours ever,

JANE

Jane Woulfe,

^

(alias "Dollie").

Sister M. Cogan,  
 (alias Helen Woulfe),  
 Villa Schifanoia,  
 Via Roccaccio, 123,  
 Firenze, Italia.

3.9.93

Dollie (Jane) Woulfe was a sister of Maurice J. Woulfe, Solicitor, of Abbeyfeale - Maurice being the father of Jean Woulfe, Richard, the lawyer and Maurice the SVM of Georgia U.S.A. I met Maurice Sr. in 1964 + corresponded both with him and with Dr. Tim until their deaths in the late 60's. They were both in their 90's and great letter writers.

Don Woulfe  
 draught