

£4.50 ISSN 1743-565X

(NO.20) Vol.5 No.4 January 2025

History Armagh



When jilted women took to the courts for compensation

The imagined planetarium

Warlocks in the Tontine & 800 tons of Guano

An Armagh History Group Publication

The Charlemont Arms Hotel, Armagh

by Kevin Quinn

Located in Upper English Street, the Charlemont Arms Hotel is one of Armagh's foremost business landmarks. The hotel has been providing accommodation and hospitality for the past 178 years to guests from far and wide as well as to many generations of Armachians. Although the Charlemont was established as a hotel by local businessman, John Hughes, in February 1846, one source places the Charlemont's origins in the middle of the 17th Century.

The Goat Inn est. 1641?

In Armachiana, unpublished writings by the first curator of Armagh County Museum: T.G.F. Paterson, an inn was first established on the site of the Charlemont in 1641. Paterson cites Robert Pillow, a local historian and archaeologist active in the late 19th Century:

'According to an undated newspaper cutting in the Pillow collection of Newspaper Abstracts the oldest known Inn in the city of Armagh was one known as the 'Goat Inn' whose designation was changed in 1688 to the 'Real Old Goat'. If the original sign was a goat, it was probably a place of call for shoemakers. Later it is said to have borne the title of the 'Caulfield Arms' afterwards becoming the 'Charlemont Arms', presumably in honour of the volunteer Earl.'

However, Paterson notes that there is limited written evidence for the existence of the Goat Inn:

I have not found Pillow's authority for the Goat Inn, it may be that there was local tradition regarding it, if so, no remembrance now remains'

Local sources

Local sources, such as Ashe's account of the lands of the Archbishopric of Armagh (1703), lists four inns or taverns in Armagh: 'The Three Nags Head' and 'The Kings Arms' both in English Street, and 'The Sign of the Swan' and 'The Sign of the Spread Eagle', both in Market Street. However, the

Freeman Lists from the Corporation of Armagh (1738-1798) names 27 individual Inn-holders, Ale-sellers and Distillers. Unfortunately, the names of their premises are not recorded.

Tradition suggests Charlemont est. 1760-70s.

Due to the lack of information in the written sources, we must rely on oral tradition for an approximate date for either the change of name of an earlier inn to the Charlemont or the establishment of the Charlemont on the current site. T.G.F. Paterson cites a newspaper article concerning the likely reason for the name change from Caulfield to Charlemont and the likely site of the previous premises:

The Charlemont is a place of some antiquity and derives its title from the famous Earl of Charlemont. In the heyday of the Irish Volunteers, there was a Charlemont Arms in every town of note, now there is probably not another surviving in the whole of Ireland. Originally, the licensed portion of the present premises was known as the 'Caulfield Arms', Caulfield being the family name of the Viscounts Charlemont. When James Caulfield the 4th Viscount, was created an Earl in 1763 and later became so notable a figure in public affairs, the designation was changed so that travelers passing through the city might be suitably



Figure 1. As the above quote states 'there was a Charlemont Arms in every town of note'. Another Charlemont Arms Hotel. Location unknown. Courtesy of the Forster family.

impressed with its importance. The hotel proper was, however, in those days the residence of Dr. Atkinson, a member of the family long settled at Crow Hill.

However, Paterson takes issue with the article's view on the location of the hotel premises: It is more than likely that the 'Charlemont Arms' was adjacent to rather than a part of Dr. Atkinson's house at that time:

'The hotel was a later formation than the volunteer period and in the closing days of the 18th century was the residence of Dr. Atkinson a member of the Crow Hill family who died therein.'

However, it is important to note that Dr. Atkinson's house would later become the main body of the hotel. (See fig.2)

From 1770s to 1840s

There are no sources from the late 18th or early 19th Century that corroborate the name change to the Charlemont mentioned by the newspaper article cited by Paterson. There is no mention of the Charlemont Arms on the list of Armagh Inns between 1819-1822. However, it is possible that it was not listed due to it being a less significant inn and/or tavern which did not have a sign and only public houses with signs were recorded, or, it had potentially changed to a distiller or wine and spirit merchant (as was the case by 1840).

Two taverns, a wine and spirit merchant, and a tanner

The 1839 Armagh Plan and Valuation Records show that there were 3 distinct businesses on the current hotel premises (numbers 33, 34, and 35 Upper English Street). The 1840 Lennox Business Directory provides the names of the occupants and their trade surprisingly showing that all occupants were licensed to sell alcohol: Numbers 33 and 34 were taverns occupied by Bernard Hagan and Arthur Brannigan respectively. Number 35 contained two businesses: The principal occupant was William Davidson and Davidson, a wine and spirit merchant, and in the rear of the building was a tanner, Thomas Craig. The valuation records show that number 35 had an annual valuation of £34 which was significantly higher than the £12 for

numbers 33 and 34. The annual valuation would indicate that number 35 was a more substantial building or business. Unfortunately, the names of the taverns are not given.

Arrival of the railway in Armagh

By the 1840s, Armagh was ranked fourth among the Ulster towns after Belfast, Derry and Newry in terms of economic activity. Opportunities arose for small family businesses with the development of postal and telegraphic services, banks, and most significantly, the arrival of the railway, which reached Armagh in March 1848. Many hotels were established around this time to meet the increased demand for overnight accommodation from new rail visitors to Armagh. These included: The Ulster Inn (est. 1848/9) and the Railway Arms Hotel (est. 1852) both located next to the new railway station, the Temperance Hotel, the White Cross Inn, the Plough Hotel and the Harp Inn all established on Lower English Street in the early 1850s, and the Traveller's Home (1856) which was established on Ogle Street.

The sale of number 35

On August 5th, 1845, an advertisement was placed in the Armagh Guardian for the sale of number 35 Upper English Street which would indicate that number 35 had not in fact been a hotel before 1845:

'To be sold. The dwelling- house, tenement and premises in Upper English-Street in the City of Armagh, lately in the possession of Mr. Thomas Craig. Comprised a most commodious Dwelling-house, Tanyard, complete in every aspect with extensive offices and an excellent garden and from their immediate proximity to the intended termini of the Belfast, Coleraine and Omagh railways, they afford a most excellent opportunity for the opening of a hotel or any other business.'

The Charlemont Arms Hotel est. 1846

By February 1846, number 35, had been refurbished and was declared open and ready for business under the name of 'The Charlemont Arms Hotel'. (see.fig.2) The proprietor was John Hughes who was already in the hospitality trade, as proprietor of a public house in Thomas Street. In the early 1840s, there was also a Patrick Hughes

who was proprietor of the Victoria Hotel in Castle Street, but it is uncertain if they were related. In fact, in the early decades of the 19th Century, the 'Hughes' name was prominent in the business life of Armagh so much so that an 1819 Armagh business directory lists seven people named 'Hughes'.

CHARLEMONT ARMS HOTEL,
Upper English-street, Armagh.
OPPOSITE THE TONTINE-ROOMS.
JOHN HUGHES, Proprietor,
(LATE OF THOMAS-STREET.)

IN announcing to the Nobility, Gentry, and Inhabitants of Armagh and surrounding neighbourhood, his removal to the above commodious concern, begs to acquaint them that he has spared no expense in the fitting up of this establishment, with the view of combining every comfort, and embracing every want that such places are usually supplied with; and he feels confident, that on trial, his efforts will be found deserving of some share of public support.

The House is admirably situated in front and rear for ventilation, and particular attention has been given to the sleeping apartments, all of which have been newly furnished.

In the Culinary line he shall at all times be supplied with the best materials of each kind, and the constant personal attention of one long experienced and acquainted with these matters, he trusts, will be a guarantee that, comfort, cleanliness, and despatch will not be lost sight of.

His WINES, SPIRITS, ALES, &c., shall be selected with care, and comprise every kind and description in ordinary demand.

To such of his friends as have heretofore favored him in the POSTING LINE, he feels particularly grateful, and begs to assure them, that the same attention which has merited so large a portion of their patronage shall be persevered in—and that he hopes, with an enlarged Establishment, to be able at all times, on the shortest notice, to attend to their commands.

The last item he would wish to draw public attention to is the moderation of his charges, which shall be calculated on the lowest scale of profits.

The central position of the House will be a matter of convenience to parties doing business in the various markets, as it is in the midst of all, and the Coaches and Vans for Belfast, Monaghan, Aughnacloy, and Newry, will start therefrom each day at their appointed hours.

Travellers and Commercial gentlemen will find a decided advantage in calling at the Charlemont Arms.

J. H. avails himself of this opportunity to return his sincere thanks to the public generally for their very generous support during his residence in Thomas-street.

February 9th, 1846.

Figure 2. Armagh Guardian February 1846 announcing the opening of the Charlemont Arms Hotel

John Hughes (b.1812- d.1900).

John Hughes was an enterprising and innovative entrepreneur in the business life of Armagh between the 1840s and 1880s. The Charlemont remained in his ownership until 1884 during which time the hotel was expanded to incorporate numbers 33 and 34 Upper English Street. From the early 1850s, he was also the proprietor of the Plough Hotel on Lower English Street. Throughout his proprietorship of the Charlemont, Hughes embraced the latest technological innovations of the day to enhance his business. (See fig.3)

Omnibus

In 1856, the ever-inspired John Hughes took delivery of a new omnibus which he had commissioned from local coach makers, Henry and Edward Taylor who were of Armagh Coach Factory situated on the Mall West. An omnibus was a large, enclosed, horse-drawn vehicle used for passenger transport before the introduction of motor vehicles. With the increase in the volume of passengers arriving at new railway station, Hughes no doubt saw the omnibus as a worthwhile investment for transporting his guests to and from the hotel. This investment was well-received by the Armagh Guardian on 30th May 1856:

'The proprietor of the Charlemont Arms Hotel has just given a remarkable token of his desire to maintain the highest character of his establishment while providing for the comfort and accommodation of the public. A new and beautiful omnibus, which has been admired by all who have either sat in or seen it, is a creditable to his enterprise as it the skill of our mechanics. It was built by Mr. Taylor of this city and said to be superior in design and finish to any vehicle of the kind either in Dublin or in Belfast'. (See front cover for photo of the omnibus outside the hotel)

Turkish Baths

In 1862, Turkish baths were attached to the rear of the hotel probably in the old tannery. Again, this was a very timely and shrewd investment by Hughes as the first Turkish bath to open in Ireland was in Cork City in 1859. Hughes most likely made the investment with the view to attract more middle-class visitors who were touring on the ever-expanding rail network by tapping into the emerging Victorian focus on health and well-being. (See fig. 3)

The hot-air baths given at the Charlemont Arms in this city are of the very best description. The spirited owner, Mr. John Hughes, has exhibited remarkable enterprise. In order that he may be amply rewarded it is only necessary for the citizens of Armagh to be convinced of the properties of the bath.

Figure 3. Armagh Guardian April 1870

Innovative farmer

John Hughes was also a substantial and innovative farmer owning lands in the townlands of Tigarraf

and Ballybrolly just north of the city. His focus appears to have been crop farming, especially potatoes. During the famine years, he experimented with new methods of planting potatoes and introduced new potato varieties that yielded better harvests and were more resistant to disease. Below are some extracts from the Armagh Guardian which reference his innovative planting methods and the introduction of a new species of potato:

'Mr. Thompson of Loughgall plans to put a few grains of turnip seeds between the sets, others intend to put beans instead of turnip between the sets...Mr. John Hughes of the Charlemont Arms Hotel has already planted 1 and ½ acres of potatoes.' Armagh Guardian, 13th April 1847.

'Mr. John Hughes of the Charlemont Arms Hotel states that no more than one fourth of his crop of Ballygawley pinks is diseased and the remaining potatoes is so abundant as to lead him to conclude he had more than an average crop.' Armagh Guardian, 6th April 1848.

'The White Rock species which has so successfully resisted the disease in this neighbourhood last year, and we believe was principally introduced here by Mr. John Hughes of the Charlemont Arms Hotel.' Armagh Guardian, 5th June 1852.

'On Monday a splendid Devon Cow lately purchased by John Hughes, proprietor of the Charlemont Arms Hotel brought forth twin calves which is believed to be a very rare occurrence. Mr. Hughes is fortunate in all his rural affairs, and we hope the present increase in stock is ominous of greater prosperity, which he fully deserves.' Armagh Guardian, 6th January 1854.

New ownership

In January 1883, due to a serious illness, John Hughes put the hotel up for sale. A Mr. J. H Mann purchased it in March 1884. It underwent a complete refurbishment which included the Turkish baths and all the previous owners' furnishings being auctioned off. It is unclear if the hotel continued to operate during the refurbishment before it reopened as Mann's Hotel in 1886. However, what is clear is that the name change did not last long as Bassett's Tour Guide lists the premises as 'The Charlemont

Arms Hotel' in 1888. By 1890 the hotel was once again up for sale, this time listed by Mr. Mann's widow. The hotel appears to have remained on the market until 1894 when it was purchased by a James McMahon. The 1890 'For Sale' advertisement provides an insight into the interior layout of the hotel (See fig. 4).

HOTEL TO BE SOLD OR LET.
TO BE SOLD or LET, for term of Years, that
 Old-established and well-known **HOTEL** in
 the CITY of ARMAGH, called "The **Charlemont
 Arms**." The House is centrally situated, large and
 commodious, and in thorough repair; has on the
 premises Turkish and other Baths, and possesses
 all the requirements of a first-class Family and
 Commercial Hotel.
 In connection with it there is an extensive Posting
 and undertaking Establishment, which may or may
 not be taken by a Purchaser or Lessee.
 The business done in all the branches is of a large
 and respectable class.
 If Sold, a considerable portion of the Purchase-
 money will be allowed to remain out on Mortgage
 should such accommodation be required.
 For further Particulars apply to the Proprietor,
 Mr. **JOHN HUGHES**, on the Premises; or to
WILLIAM GALLAGHER,
 Solicitor, College-street, Armagh.
(12 B)

Figure 4. Armagh Guardian 1883

Ownership from 1902 to 1934

In 1902, James McMahon put the hotel up for auction. Between 1902 to 1910, it changed ownership several times. In 1904, there were two proprietors, Samuel McCausland followed by Amelia Marsden. In 1907, it was unoccupied for a period. From 1908 to 1910, it was in the proprietorship of Thomas Weiss followed by Rose Ann O Hagan from 1910 to 1924. In 1924, the hotel changed ownership to the Charlemont Company Ltd. In October 1933, due to depressed trading conditions, the hotel went into receivership and was handed over to the liquidator. (See fig. 5)

Liquidation

In October 1933, Shaw, Leslie, and Shaw Chartered Accountants of Wellington Place, Belfast oversaw the liquidation. The property consisted of the hotel premises: Two yards and a garden at the rear, two dwelling houses with shops, and a three-storey dwelling house. The property was put on the market for £1150. This price included furniture, catering

Martin, Shaw Leslie & Shaw.
 Chartered Accountants,
 of Ogle Street, Armagh,
 Incorporated Accountants,
 Robert Bell, F.R.C.S.
 Telegrams: Armagh, Belfast
 Telephone: Belfast 3320/13 Lines

2 Wellington Place,
 Belfast.

30th June, 1934.

Frank McKee, Esq.,
 Ogle Street,
 ARMAGH.

Dear Mr. McKee,

CHARLEMONT HOTEL CO. LTD. (IN LIQUIDATION)

As you are probably aware the Premises and Equipment have been sold to Mr. Robert Forster of Clones.

I sent him your Inventory of Equipment but he is anxious to have the details of this and I would be glad if you could send this to him as early as possible.

The full address is -
 Robert Forster,
 Lennard Arms Hotel,
 Clones.

Yours faithfully,
James Shaw
 LIQUIDATOR.

EJA.

Figure 5. Letter of confirmation of sale to Robert Forster

equipment and utensils. Mr. Frank McKee, Auctioneer and Valuer of Ogle Street, assisted in bringing the sale to potential interested parties. It was offered to Mrs. Maud Mackle owner of the Lough Neagh Hotel in Maghery who declined. It was also brought to the attention of a Mr. Cauldwell who also declined. It was suggested to Mr. James Finnelly of Banbridge the possibility of converting the hotel into a cinema. Mr. Finney replied that Armagh already had two cinemas and that the cost of repurposing would be prohibitive. Finally, in May 1934, it was decided to put the hotel up for auction at the value of £750.00 or the nearest

POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS

For Tariff and Conditions of acceptance, see over

CHARGE

COUNTER NUMBER

FOR POSTAGE STAMPS

CHARGEABLE WORDS

TO

ADDRESS: -

Shaw,
 Charlemont Arms Hotel
 Armagh.

Client's not interested

11/ =

and tances


Please write the Name and Address of the sender, **IF NOT TO BE TELEGRAPHED**, on the back of this form.

Figure 6. Telegram (difficulty selling the hotel) © Armagh County Museum T048.3

ffered. However, before it went to auction, a Mr. Robert Forster, who co-owned the Lennard Hotel in Clones with his brother Christy bought it.

Forster family ownership: 1934 to present.

Robert Forster came from Co. Fermanagh and was previously a commercial traveller in the shoe trade before entering the hotel business. The hotel has remained in the ownership of the Forster family since this time with significant investment having been made in the hotel over the past 90 years, making it into the successful business it is today. There have been two main structural changes under the Forster's ownership: Between 1976 and 79, the hotel was practically rebuilt after being badly damaged by a bomb explosion in 1975 and in 1999 two derelict buildings adjacent to the hotel were incorporated significantly increasing the overall size of the hotel. (see figs. 8 & 9) Having passed the ownership on to son Robin and his wife, Greta, and now their children, the hotel has now been in the ownership of the Forster family for three



CHARLEMONT ARMS HOTEL
ARMAGH

In conjunction with the
Lennard Arms Hotel, Clones

Proprietors — R. & C. FORSTER

Family and Commercial *A.A. and R.I.A.C.*

HOT AND COLD RUNNING WATER IN BEDROOMS
 ALL CATERING UNDER PERSONAL SUPERVISION

Telephone—ARMAGH 28 **Opposite the City Hall**

Figure 7. Hotel, Forster family and staff in 1939

From Armagh City Guide (1939) courtesy of Armagh County Museum

and I hope that it will remain in the family's ownership for many years to come.

Guests

Over the years, many commercial travellers used the hotel as well as barristers and judges who stayed over for the winter assizes. The latter would often sit down to a seven-course bar dinner upon arrival. The hotel has also hosted many weddings over the years with a wedding breakfast costing half a crown a head in the 1930s and ten shillings and sixpence for bed and breakfast in the 1950s. During the Second World War, army officers, such as Colonel Shirley who was distinctive for having had a wooden arm, often used the hotel. Since the early 1950s, the bullet throwers from Cork have stayed over in the hotel when in Armagh to play against the Armagh bowlers. It is said that the Cork bullet thrower, Mick Barry, was as well-known in the Charlemont as he was in his native Cork .

Famous guests

Over the years, the Charlemont has hosted many famous guests from sports stars such as Gene Tunney, the world heavyweight-boxing champion (1926-28), to stars of stage and screen such as Liam Neeson, who was beginning his career in a local theatre company, and Anne Charleston, who acted as Madge in Neighbours. Many famous musicians have also stayed such as the Joe Loss, Roger Whittaker, Dubliners, Horselips, and Elkie Brooks. However, the most famous of all the famous guests to have stayed in the Charlemont was the legendary cast and director of the iconic movie, 'The Quiet Man.' after shooting the movie in Co. Mayo, John Wayne, Maureen O Hara, Victor McLaglan and John Ford stayed over on their way to Belfast.

References

Paterson TGF. 'Armagh Miscellanea Hotels & Inns' Armachiana Vol 3 Armagh County Museum ARMCM. 282014.55. PP 38-88.

Miscellaneous Collection of Documents the Liqueur & Sale of the Charlemont Arms Hotel. ARMCM. 32.2020.1

McCullough, Catherine. Irish Historic Towns Atlas. No.18. Royal Irish Academy. Dublin 2. 2007.

Armagh Guardian,	5 th August	1845
Armagh Guardian,	9 th February	1846
Ibid,	13 th April	1847
Ibid,	6 th November	1848
Ibid,	5 th June	1852
Ibid,	6 th January	1854
Ibid,	30 th May	1856
Derry Journal	5 th January	1883
Belfast News Letter	22 nd April	1884
Dublin Weekly Nation	4 th April	1885
Northern Standard	4 th December	1886
Irish Times	15 th December	1890
Rafferty. Gerald	Weekender 'And who walked in but John Wayne'.	Ulster Gazette 7 th January 1993
Griffith's Valuation Revision Books,	VAL/12/3/10/4B	1864-1873
Ibid,	VAL/12/B/10/4C	1873-1882
Ibid,	VAL/12/B/10/4E	1883-1895
Ibid,	VAL/12/B/10/4G	1893-1899
Griffith's Valuation Revision Books,	VAL/12/B/10/6B	1899-1910
Ibid,	VAL/12/B/10/7B	1910-1921
Ibid,	VAL/12/B/10/7C	1921-1931



Figure 8. above shows the hotel in the early 1970s.



Figure 9. to the left shows the hotel in the 1980s. Both photographs courtesy of the Forster family.