

Samuel Hayes of Avondale

Eileen McCracken, M.Sc., Ph.D.

For the house of the planter
Is known by the trees.
(Austin Clarke).

At the request of several members of the Dublin Society Samuel Hayes wrote the first book on planting in Ireland. It was published in 1794; a second edition followed and then a third and final edition in 1822. The book, *A practical treatise on planting and the management of woods and coppices*, runs to about 24,000 words and the first edition, at least, was printed on handmade paper. All editions are embellished with charming woodcuts of woodland miniatures and are dedicated to the Dublin Society.

Hayes married on 30th October, 1756 Alice Le Hunte, a daughter of Thomas Le Hunte and his first wife Alice, the only daughter of Rev. Jerome Ryves, dean of St. Patrick's Dublin. Thomas Le Hunte, who died in 1775, was a councillor-at-law and M.P. for Wexford town. Another daughter by his first wife, Anne, married the Rev. Abraham Symes in 1769. The Symes family, who had one estate at Ballyarthur downstream from Avondale, and another at Ballybeg, Kilcommon parish, near Shillelagh, were very eminent and extensive planters. The Ballyarthur estate had 140 Irish acres of oak said to be the finest in Ireland.

Samuel Hayes, himself, was a barrister and represented Wicklow town in the Irish House of Commons from 1783 to 1790. He was also a commissioner for stamp duties, a justice of the peace, a colonel in the Volunteers, a member of the sub-committee of the Dublin Society which was responsible for assembling a collection of agricultural implements in use in England, Flanders and 'any other country' which made the 'least pretensions to good husbandry', and a member of the Royal Irish Academy.

He appears to have been a reasonably active member of the House of Commons. During the 1785 session he spoke several times on the subject of the Volunteers. 'I have had the honour of commanding for six years a numerous corps of Volunteers', he said on one occasion. 'Towards the close of the war', he continued, 'as chairman at the quarter sessions, I addressed the grand jury, in a courthouse nearly filled with respectable volunteers' and he concluded by saying that he hoped the sword could soon be laid aside and the country be free to devote itself to trade and the arts.

In 1788 he introduced a bill for the better preservation of sheep and he moved that the plans for the new Courts of Justice (the Four Courts) be laid before the house. During the same session he also presented a bill to explain and amend an act of

5 and 6 George III entitled *An act for encouraging the cultivation and better preservation of trees*.

The following session, 1789, he moved a clause to be inserted in the bill for the encouragement of the linen industry which would enable the trustees to increase the salary of the chamberlain of the linen hall and introduced a bill to amend the laws then in force relating to the repair and upkeep of public roads.

He was one of the committee appointed in 1792 by the Dublin Society to select ground suitable for the establishment of a Botanic Garden. This committee of seven also included the Honourable John Foster, the speaker of the Irish House of Commons, who like Hayes, was ardently interested in planting. The original proposal was to establish a Botanic Garden in co-operation with Trinity College, Dublin and the College of Physicians, Dublin. However, the three bodies were unable to reach agreement although a bill relative to the establishment of a single Botanic Garden was in preparation for presentation to parliament. Foster, Hayes and five others were detailed by the Dublin Society to prepare a draft petitioning the Government not to permit the bill to pass into law in so far as it related to the Dublin Society. Hayes, and other members of the Dublin Society, who were also members of parliament, successfully laid their petition before the house in 1793.

Hayes' town residence was in Nassau Street, Dublin and his country house was at Avondale. He also owned one side of Glenmalur. The first indication that we have of his interest in planting was the awarding to him by the Dublin Society of a gold medal in 1768 for the planting of 2,550 beech under five years old at a distance apart of fifteen feet. The announcement of the award gives his address as 'Hayesville, county Wicklow'. It may well be that this was the former name of the Avondale estate because the present house was built by Hayes about 1770 beside the original house. Hayes' new house was described by a contemporary as 'large and remarkably well finished'.

Another of Hayes's interests was the study of antiquities. To him goes the credit for the discovery of the Church of Saint Saviour at Glendalough. Saint Saviour's is the most easterly of the churches and lies on the south side of the river which flows from the lower lake. At the beginning of the nineteenth century most of the Glendalough churches were little more than ruins surrounded by piles of rubble and they were reconstructed with the original materials during the middle years of the century. Saint Saviour's was 'a heap of rubbish covered with brambles and other vegetation when Hayes uncovered it. Leask remarks that 'the re-edification of Saint Saviour's is reasonably accurate, if not exactly correct in all particulars. Some stones of the restored east window are wrongly placed'. These faults of re-construction can be laid at Hayes's door. Hayes designed the bridge with three elliptical arches over the river in front of Derrybawn

House, which at that time belonged to James Chritchly or Critchly, an eminent planter, and he used carved stones which he took from Saint Saviour's to form the keystones of the arches.

The following description of Avondale is taken from a pamphlet written in 1794, a year before Hayes's death, and it gives a picture of the estate at the end of his life when he had completed his work. 'The banks of the Avonmore are either covered with close coppice wood or with scattered oak and ash of lofty growth . . . On the front and side (of the house) spreads a smooth lawn spotted with clumps and single trees, gently rising to a hill crowned with large beech and uncommonly thriving fir, particularly spruce whose feathered branches hang to the ground. On the back of the house the ground in some parts slopes down with a gentle declivity, in others falls in steep and abrupt precipices, covered with ancient oaks, the roots of many of which are a hundred feet perpendicular over the topmost summit of others.

A walk winds down through this wood and some pleasant plantations of noble Weymouth pine and larch to a vale of considerable breadth. On the other side the river's banks rise to a great height, covered thickly with oak woods, here and there indented by the meadows of two adjacent farms.

The vale extends above four miles . . . where the natural growth of wood has been too thin Mr. Hayes has not spared any expense to supply the defect with every foreign and domestic tree suited to the soil and climate and perhaps no part of Europe admits a greater variety than this district of Wicklow.

A carriage road is constructed a considerable way, with attention to the surrounding views and about a mile from the house, adjoining to a woodranger's lodge, in a most sequestered spot is a room in the form of an old English cottage, for dining in on rural parties. It is built close to the river over a remarkably deep and solemn part, backed by a rock above three hundred feet high, whose rugged cliffs (are) fringed with oak, quicken and holly'.

Hayes died in 1795 leaving no heir and he bequeathed Avondale and his farm in Glenmalur to Sir John Parnell, a relative on his mother's side. Sir John Parnell died in 1801 and Avondale passed to his son William. When William died in 1821 his son, John Henry Parnell, the father of Charles Stewart Parnell, became the owner. For a time, at least, John Henry Parnell called himself John Parnell Hayes.

A fitting epitaph to Samuel Hayes is provided by Frazer writing in 1801: 'The late Colonel Hayes, a name truly endearing to all who feel the enthusiasm of extending zeal for the rural arts'.

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