

# Report of Visit to the Quaker Burial Ground at Temple Hill, Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

by Michael Foley



It was a bright, if crisp, sunny Saturday afternoon when members of the Irish Family History Society visited the Quaker, or Friends, burial ground in Temple Hill in Blackrock, Co. Dublin. The autumn sun shone through the ancient trees and lit the identical tombstones as our host Christopher Nuzum welcomed us to the burial ground which he has supervised with great care for many years. Led with a gentle arm by his friend and our ex-chairperson Noel Jenkins, the now blind Christopher gave a history of the ground which opened with the burial of Hannah Chapman in 1860. Since then, Dublin Quakers have been laid to rest in the beautiful cemetery that lies between Blackrock and Monkstown. Under the shade of trees, the burial places are marked by uniform simple headstones, giving brief details of the life of the deceased. Some are simply marked with a number, at the request of the deceased. Burials of Dublin Quakers had taken place in Cork Street since 1698 but that was rather a long way from the



new Meeting House in Monkstown and a proposal was made in 1834 to open a new burial ground in the area and eventually the search ended some years later with the



acquisition of the plot between Blackrock and Monkstown.

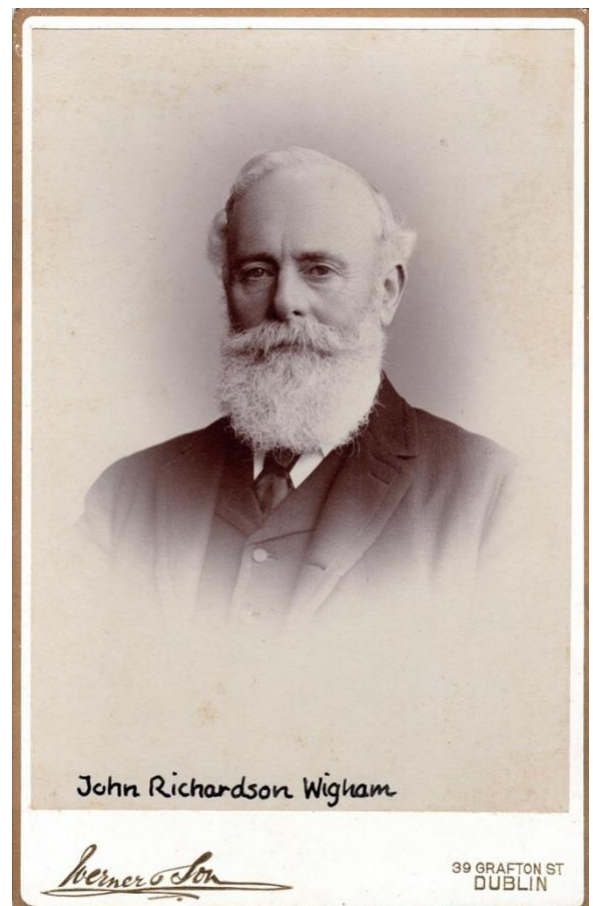


Christopher paused beside the grave of John R. Wigham next to that of his wife Mary Wigham, daughter of Jonathan Pim (one of the brothers who owned the famous Pim's Department Store in Dublin. But John R. Wigham had his own claim to fame.

John Richardson Wigham (15 January 1829 – 16 November 1906) was a prominent lighthouse engineer of the 19th century. He was born to a Quaker family in Edinburgh, Scotland. When he was 15 years old he was apprenticed to his brother-in-law Joshua Edmundson in Capel St. in Dublin. Edmundson & Co. dealt in ironmongery and ran a brass foundry. After John joined, they also provided gas generation plants. On 26 January 1848, Joshua died of typhus, which he contracted whilst providing relief within soup kitchens during the Great famine, as did many Quaker families including Jonathan Pim. Though John was only 19 years old, he took over operation of the company.

Wigham's relatives, in Scotland, were involved in shipbuilding, and he developed an interest in lighting used as a navigational aid at sea. Initially, buoys only had bells to warn mariners at night: the difficulty lay in designing an oil-lamp which could burn while unattended and not be extinguished by waves and storms. The first successful lighted buoy was patented by Wigham in 1861.

In 1863 Wigham was given a grant by the Dublin Ballast Board to develop a system for gas illumination of lighthouses. In 1865 the Baily Lighthouse at Howth Head was fitted with Wigham's new gas 'crocus' burner. This design was 4 times more powerful than equivalent oil lights. An improved 'composite' design, installed in the Baily light in 1868, was 13 times more powerful than



the most brilliant light then known, according to the scientist John Tyndall, an advisor to the United Kingdom's lighthouse authority, Trinity House.

In 1870, the light at Wicklow Head was fitted with Wigham's patent intermittent flashing mechanism, which timed the gas supply by means of clockwork. When this mechanism was combined with a revolving lens in Rockabill Lighthouse, the world's first lighthouse with a 'group flashing mechanism' was produced.



Barrett & Co, of Dublin.

Wigham had a long-standing rivalry with the Engineer-in-Chief of Trinity House, James Nicholas Douglass, which erupted over trials of rival gas, oil and electric illumination systems conducted at South Foreland Lighthouse, Dover in 1884-5. Tyndall, still acting as a scientific consultant, accused Douglass of using his position to influence the trials' outcome and ensure the adoption of his own patents over those of Wigham. Wigham also stated that Douglass had used elements of one of his rejected designs. As a result of the dispute, Tyndall resigned, while Wigham was eventually paid £2500 by the Board of Trade for patent infringement. Lights supplied by Edmundson & Co were used in lighthouses all over the globe; the firm still exists today as F.

Wigham was also director and vice-chairman of the Dublin United Tramways Company and latterly president of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce. He twice turned down a knighthood as was the practice for Quakers who turned down all civic awards of state.

One exception to that was Sir John Barrington, also buried here, who was twice Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1865 and 1875.



At the end of the tour Christopher took us into the Friends Meeting House and regaled us with stories from the many years he has managed the burial grounds.

We would like to thank  
wonderful tour.



Christopher and Noel for a

*Photos by Michael Foley*