



Double Murder, 1891

1891 Double Murder – the prisoner ‘brought up on remand at Virginia [Court-house], charged with the murder of the old man Reilly and his wife, at Lisacoppel.’

Anglo-Celt, 14 March 1891, also 4 and 11 April 1891

William Buchanan (‘lives with his father in Lisanyomore; his mother [Mary Anne] is alive and sister [Maggie] also’) charged with the double murder of Patrick Reilly and his wife Catherine Reilly (‘old Kitty and Paddy’) at Lisacoppel on 2 February 1891.

Witnesses included Bridget Callaghan, wife of Thomas Callaghan, ‘a labouring man with Mr James Byers’.

James Byers was also a witness:

“I live in Lateaster. I am a farmer and farm about 40 acres of land; I knew Paddy and Kitty Reilly; they were caretakers for old Phil Brady. I live within a very short distance of the house they used to live in. I know Thomas Donohoe, a son-in-law of old Paddy Reilly’s; I remember him coming to my house on 3rd Feb between one and two o’clock; in consequence of what he said I went down to old Paddy Reilly’s house with him; I found the front door shut; I went round to the back of the house and found the back top window lying on some straw or rubbish [sic] on the ground and the window open; we (Donohoe and I) returned to the front of the house; I then loosened a nail in the kitchen window which let down the top part of it; the shutters were closed; I pushed them open and there came a gust of smoke out; I then got a bar and broke open the door. Donohoe entered the kitchen first; when I entered the first thing I remarked was the old woman lying on the floor, her feet towards the centre of the kitchen; she was lying on her left side and fully dressed in her usual way; she had her boots on; I also saw the body of her husband on the floor; he was lying on his right side facing the front window; his feet were towards the hearth; his head about 9 or 10 inches from his wife’s; they lay at right angles; there was a table under the kitchen front window; he was lying facing that on his side; from the top of his stockings to his eye brows all his left side was burnt; there was a partition of turf between the table and some potatoes; both the table and turf were on fire; his boots were on; I saw a bag of chaff partly burned and lying immediately in front of his belly, it was smouldering; Donohoe put out the fire by throwing water on it; Donohoe is not a workman in my employment; Thos Callaghan is; he is a labourer; I remember meeting the prisoner in his house some time before Christmas: both Callaghan and his wife were there ...”

[The prisoner cross-examines James Byers and each question and answer is carefully reported]

Thomas Donohoe ... I live in Lisanyomore; I am married to Paddy Reilly’s daughter; he was known by the name of the crockman; he was caretaker to the late Mr Philip Brady; after his death he was caretaker to his son Dr Brady; Paddy Reilly was close on 70; I couldn’t say what age his wife was, I suppose about 65 ...

Dr Brady was then sworn. ... My christian name is Patrick. I live at Clonmellon; I am a physician and surgeon. ... My father lived at Lisacoppel and had a farm there in his lifetime ...

Other witnesses were:

John Lynch, servant to Dr Patrick Brady.

Thomas Wilson: "I keep a blacksmith's forge at the Billis."

John Williamson: "I live at the Billis; I'm a farmer, and hold seven or eight acres of land ..."

Lizzie Wilson: "I'm the daughter of Thomas Wilson and manage a little shop for him."

William Hamilton, District Inspector, Royal Irish Constabulary, Virginia.

Head Constable Kelly, Sergeant O'Donnell, Sergeant Sullivan, Sergeant Mullervy, Sergeant McGarvey, Constable John Brennan, Constable Magrath, Constable Curtain.

James McIlwaine, living at Lisanymore.

Alexander (Alick) Brown: "I live at Coraneden."

Susan Donohoe of Lisanymore

(wife of Thomas Donohoe – 'married eight years ago' – and daughter of Paddy Reilly)

Michael Snell of Aughacashel.

George McElwaine of Coraneden ('I remember meeting the prisoner in the Ballyjamesduff fair of the 4th February. There was a man of the name of James Byers there. Buchanan and I met him at the horse green. He (prisoner) asked both of us to have a drink with him ...')

James McElwaine of Lisanymore, 'carting home meal from McCauley's mill ...'

Mrs John McElwaine (Fanny McElwaine) of Lisanymore. I remember meeting the prisoner at Ballyjamesduff fair on 4th February; he pressed me to have a drink, a glass of wine, from him that day; I had the drink, and he took a glass of porter, and paid for both. He never asked me before to have a drink; he came home in my cart; my son Joseph was with me.'

Her son, Joseph McElwaine, of Lisanymore, 'he treated me to a drink; he had a drink himself and paid for the two; he was home with me and my mother; I was in the cart; he never treated me before that I remember.'

Maria Cahill: "I live in Lisanymore ... I remember Monday, the 2nd of February; I was at Mr Wilson's shop at Billis that day. I was returning home after five o'clock; I remember meeting Mr Devlin, the [National school] teacher [of Billis] on my way home, near the Dispensary; I met John Williamson, the "creel" maker, near the bog lane; I also met Pat Gillick, the post-boy, at the Dispensary; I know where the turf bank is, between Phil Brady's and Callaghan's, I met three boys there going towards Billis; I then passed Paddy Reilly's house; after that I met the prisoner, William Buchanan; I met him between Paddy Reilly's house and Byers' lane ...

The prisoner was committed 'to the next Assizes for the County of Cavan.'

Anglo-Celt, 11 July 1891

Trial at the 'Crown Court of the County Courthouse at Omagh before his Lordship (Judge Johnson), William Buchanan was indicted for that he did, on the 2nd of February, 1891, feloniously, wilfully, with malice aforethought, kill and slay one Patrick Reilly, of Lissacopple, in the County of Cavan. The public galleries were crowded as soon as the court was opened ...'

James Byers 'said he was about the nearest neighbour to the deceased; but, although he was on good terms with him, he was only in Reilly's once.'

'... the jury, after a prolonged sitting, announced a disagreement, and the prisoner was put back to the next assizes.'

Anglo-Celt, Saturday, 19 December 1891, p.3

THE TRIAL OF BUCHANAN.

Buchanan, who was charged with the double murder – that of Reilly and his wife at Lisacoppel, Billis, Virginia – at the Derry Assizes was on Wednesday acquitted of the murder of the old man. He will, however, be put on trial for the murder of the woman.

Anglo-Celt, Saturday, 12 March 1892, p.3

THE CAVAN MURDER.

Buchanan went through this town on Wednesday, making his way for his home at Lissacoppel, Ballyjamesduff.

In this case the Crown withdrew the prosecution, and he was discharged, it being understood that he will quit the country. The venue had been changed from Cavan to County Tyrone where at last Summer Assizes the prisoner was tried for the murder of Patrick and Catherine Reilly. The jury disagreed and he was afterwards tried at the Derry Winter Assizes, when he was acquitted of the murder of Patrick, and put back to be tried at these assizes for the murder of Catherine. He came to Omagh for trial, but the Crown did not wish to have another trial, and he was discharged.

Anglo-Celt, Saturday, 07 May 1892, p.3

Wm Buchanan who was living at his father's residence for the past two months on a ticket of leave, and who was twice on trial for the murder of the Reillys at Lisanymore in February '91, was taken away last week by Mr Hamilton DI, and a force of police. It is understood that he has been sent out of the country.