

Transcription

Letter from Rev Jake King of Bellasis to William Byers in Australia.

Bellasis
Virginia
Co. Cavan

3rd Dec 1900

Dear Mr Byers,

I am sorry to have to tell you that your poor father died last March after a short illness. His wife died in February. In fact there were just three weeks between them.

Your father was well attended and had every[thing] he wanted during his illness. Any little money he had just defrayed expenses and he directed me to put up a nice headstone which was done. (I paid for the inscription). It cost five pounds, he was very anxious I take the money for it. There was none left to send Maggie, tho' she wants [= needs] it.

Since your letter came I have looked about [for] the medals of which you spoke but they were not with your father. I think that your [late] brother Jack [died 1891] was with Maggie when he died, so of course she would have anything he left in that way. I tried to find her address, but failed as all your father's papers were burned. I was ill at the time or I might have thought of looking for it, but if I hear any thing of her I will let you know.

Robert's son [i.e. Robert jun.], Jack, is married over a year to a Miss Williamson. They have a young son. Your nephew is just working by the day. He would have been better had he gone out to his father.

Mr Sam Wilson is a bailiff and auctioneer. He is quite well. They have got two little girls. I hope your son will get back safe to you from the war. It is a wearisome business and such loss of lives.

Please lend me that photo of yourself and wife which your daughter mentioned. It is a long time since you went to school down here.

John Williamson has not come home yet; he will surely come now when the winter has set in. We are having a very wet season. I hope you are getting on well with your farm. I am glad your daughters are so nice.

I should tell you that Mr Jed Hans who attended your father was to write to you of his death but must have neglected to do so as he was preparing to go to America. Our church here has lost a lot of members in that way and that reminds me, you never sent me that subscription you promised me. We are always hard up. Ireland is not much the better for the changes in the land laws.

I wish you all success in your farm and don't work too hard on it. Give my kind regards to your daughters and with the same to yourself, believe me

Very sincerely yours,

Jake King

[He then adds the headstone inscription and a comment.]

In memory of Robert Byers who died 4th March 1900, aged 94 years, and of Ellen his wife who died 21st Feb, 1900, aged 89 years.

He was a faithful member of this church during his life.

Notes from Cathryn Warren:

The Irish Land Commission (or simply Land Commission) was created in 1881 as a rent fixing commission by the Land Law (Ireland) Act 1881, also known as the second Irish Land Act. For a century it was the body responsible for re-distributing farmland in Ireland.

The subscription [referred to in the letter] would have been for the upkeep of the church.

John James Byers married Jane Williamson in Oct-Dec 1899*. John James Byers, b.1880, was also known as Jack Byers [see additional note below].

Additional notes:

King, John, M.A.

Presbyterian Minister at (i) Ballyjamesduff, (2) Bellasis, Virginia, Co Cavan.

He graduated from the University of Glasgow in 1820.

In the 1901 census, there's listing for a Presbyterian family living at house no.11 in Billis, Termon, Cavan:

John James Byers, aged 22, his wife Jennie [Jane], aged 26, and a recently born son, John Robert Byers.

They lived with two 'relatives': John Williamson, aged 50 and Samuel Williamson, aged 16.

This was the John James Byers, son of Robert Byers of Termon.

John James married Jane Williamson, "full age" of Drumallaght on 8 November 1899 in Bellasis.

John Williamson was most likely Jane's father.