

Setting the Scene

In ancient Irish times, if you wished to survive interclan strife and usurping raiders, it was sensible to live inland – away from navigational rivers... To live up in the hills on barren land, was also opportune. If you preferred to be quiet, frugal - conserve what you had, it was best to keep away from neighbours – their: borders, boundaries and frontiers, especially those of the king. In addition, even if you did all that, it was still not quite enough, for you needed to be wily and shrewd as well.

The O’Ciardha [Kearey] land bordered Lough Derg and the River Shannon’s southern shore – its feeder river. The land included loch-side and lowland grassland and upland mineral bearing hills - all in today’s northern Tipperary County. The neighbours to the west were the O’Carrolls and to the east, the O’Kennedys... all boxed in by the O’Meara, to the south. Follow a line... up the river Shannon round King’s County then across to Dublin, you separate Ireland roughly in half – lands of the southern and northern O’Neill’s.

The Gaelic-Irish suzerainty employed a form of guarantee based on pledges made during times of strife and war – if you help me out, I will do the same for you. It was not possible in that society to run a clan - group of families with a common ancestor, without seeking help to drive off a Viking raider or cattle rustling neighbour - given that you lived within striking distance of a good beaching area of sea or river, and you held a herd of cattle. Therefore, as a clan lord you always had a close association with your neighbours and local king – you probably owed more tribute than they did. If your allegiance called on to fight - somebody you also owed surety to, you had to make the right choice – after all, not anyone living would forget and feuds common.

For ten years ‘Ireland was a trembling sod’ – endless warring campaigns 1156 – 1166, when the stricken Dermot offer his fealty - for the return of his kingdom, to Henry II. In eighty years three-quarters of Ireland, included in this area was O’Ciardha lands, was overrun by the Normans. This was the end to many Gaelic-Irish clans, what was left of them, made allegiances outside their ancient supporters. However, some did continue with their old traditions, gathering what they could salvage.

This situation continued until Henry VII tired of the continual threat of invasion by Yorkist pretenders, backed by the earls Desmond and Kildare. Further Tudor battles saw Ireland completely conquered by 1603. The southern king O’Neill surrendered along with many lords and followers after the battle of Kinsale, including what was left of the larger part of the clan O’Ciardha. The final break up of the family came when Limerick fell in 1691, and when clan lands were not returned in William’s reign. The landlords and monied classes saw no reason to help, educated or succour the needy - they thought it was in their interests to keep the disaffected down. In this new society, if you were Gaelic and wished to survive and perhaps become a landowner it was important to assume Englishness, particularly in name... Kearey [with an ‘ey’] adopted. Immigration to England and its Empire saw more Irish men in London than in Dublin they were all running away from oppression, hunger and lack of opportunity to work.

Thomas Kearey was one such... In his early twenties, he struck out, travelled across the Irish Sea. This was the year of 1812, which was a momentous time for Napoleon Bonaparte, who was escaping... his future looked bleak. Thomas on the other hand, was looking ahead – to make ‘a new start’...

London was Thomas’s goal – Westminster, where there was an Irish quarter. It did not take him long to put his past training as a metal refiner to good use. Eventually, Thomas married and settled down in Brompton. The Keareys’ became Londoners for more than a hundred years living north of the river in and around Bayswater close to Kensington Gardens.

The first part of this book describes where the family had its roots and why most of the family moved away. As the Normans pushed across England they forced the incumbent Celts back... it was never going to be easy to maintain power... time proved it so...!

The second part deals mainly with London in the nineteenth century – very much the world of Dickens, and the coming of the railways – the industrial revolution and the start of the new aristocracy – the factory barons.

*This is a story about 'hope – putting trust in the Lord, all will be well...
In addition, about 'honour– a person's word - given as a pledge'.*

*'Hope is found in all breasts and is free.
Honour - transient, may need payment.'*