

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL ARCHIVES  
PRESENTS

# JOHN TATE'S CHARITY



# INTRODUCTION

This exhibition is based on the Wicklow County Archives' collection entitled "John Tate's Charity Collection" and is supported by funding from the Heritage Council. Our thanks to the trustees of John Tate's Charity.

- ▲ This digital presentation will explore one of Wicklow County Archives' more unusual collections – John Tate's Charity.
- ▲ Donated to the County Archives in 2012, with thanks to the charity's trustees.
- ▲ This project is funded by the Heritage Council's Heritage Stewardship Grant – please also see, in this section, the Descriptive Catalogue of the archival collection.
- ▲ Founded in 1787, John Tate's Charity has provided support to the residents of Rathdrum Parish and the wider area for over 200 years.

# John Tate's Charity

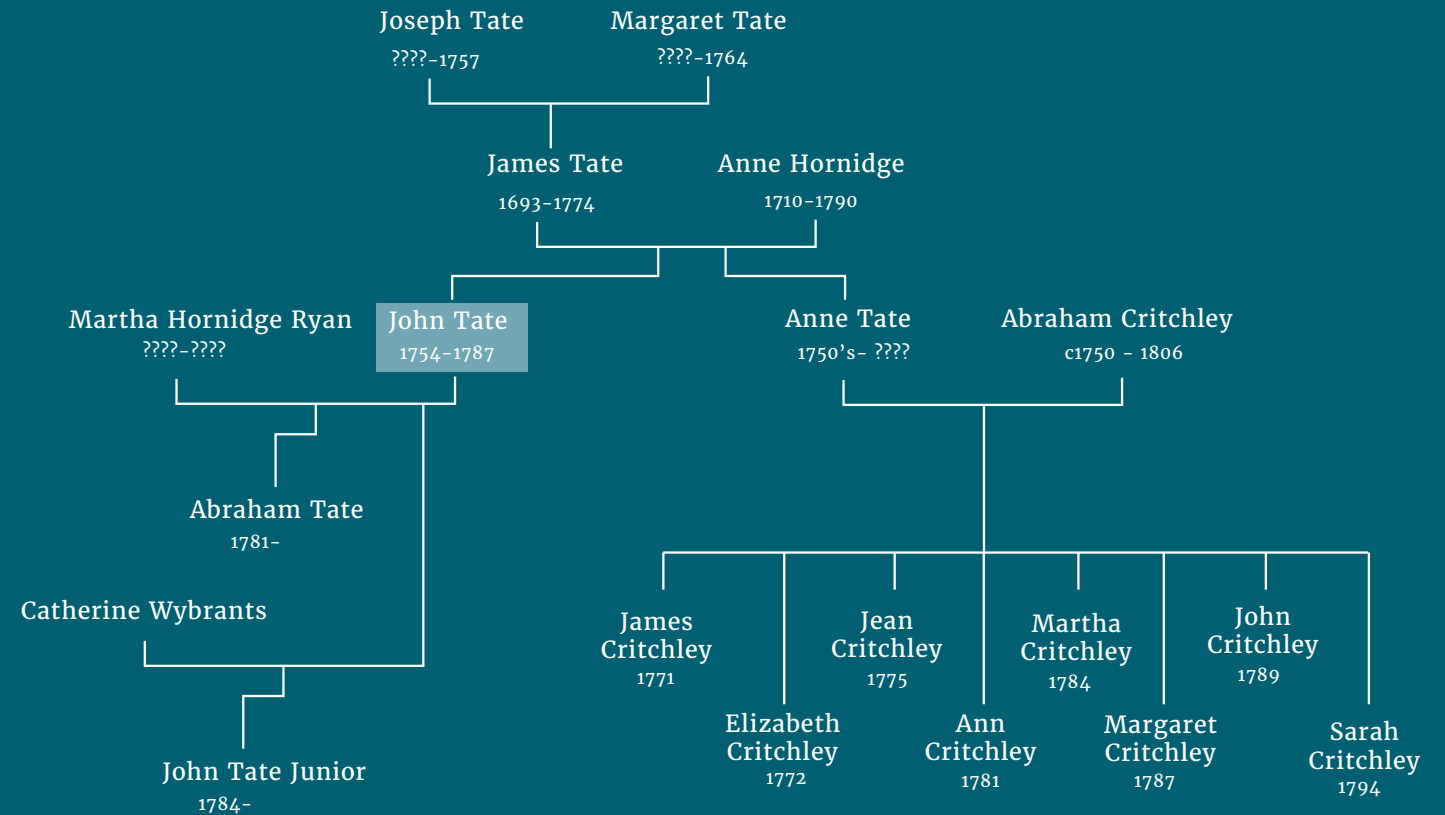
John Tate, from Rathdrum in Wicklow, was a well-to-do landowner in the late 18th century. He had inherited land on long-leases from his father and, over his short lifetime, had extended his holdings to just under 3,000 acres in the surrounding areas.

While not a member of the Protestant Ascendancy, he was well connected to them and a committed member of the local Anglican church. He died young, at the age of 33, and in his will, left his interest in 895 acres at Cullentragh, as the basis of a charity to provide support to the needy in his local area. The Charity is still active today more than 200 years after its establishment.

# THE TATE FAMILY

Born in 1754, John Tate was the son of James Tate, whose parents, Joseph and Margaret had moved from Dublin and lived in Ballinacorbeg, and Anne Hornidge, whose family owned the Tulfarris estate. James inherited from his family and lived in Fananierin, near Glenmalure. He had added to the family's landholdings in 1767, by taking a three lifetime's lease on 1,928 acres for properties in Coolballintaggart, Ballycurraghmore, Ballygobbin, and Ballyteige. The owner John Hayes, a landowner with 4,500 acres at Hayesville, later Avondale, lent James the £350 to acquire the lease. In 1774, James would buy out the lease and fully acquire the land, for £1,200, again using a loan from John Hayes.

James became a churchwarden of Rathdrum Parish Church as well as a parish councillor between 1758 and 1772. In 1778 he was appointed a member and applotter of the Wicklow Grand Jury collecting tithes in the barony of Ballinacor.



Partial family tree of the Tate family

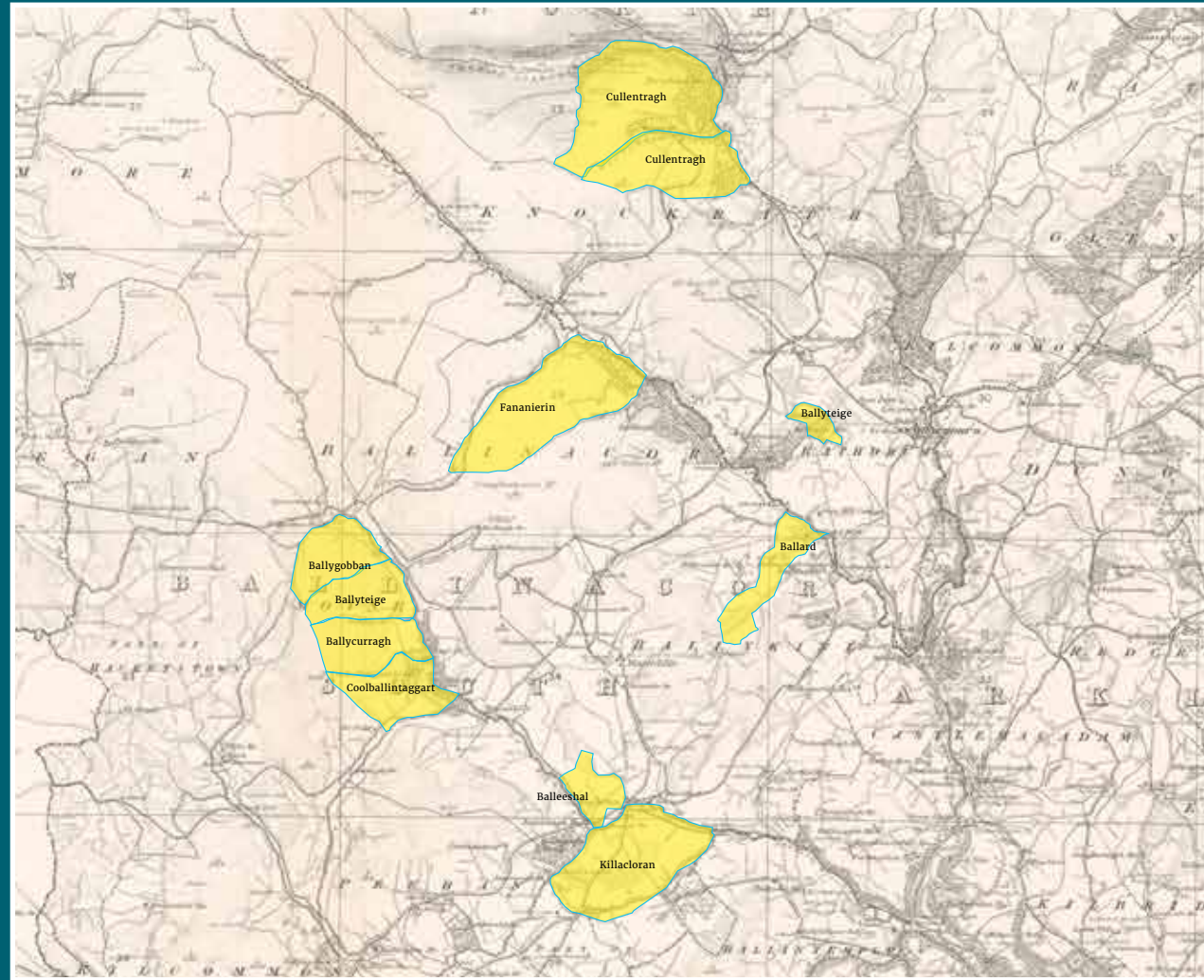
# JOHN TATE

James' son John Tate inherited the family's landholdings. He had one surviving sibling, his sister Anne, who married Abraham Critchley, a prosperous landowner who would later become a Treasurer to the Grand Jury and Deputy Lieutenant of the county.

In June 1771, John took a lease on 200 acres in Ballard from Daniel Lawrence, who was a local landowner and in 1825, a Tithes Commissioner for Rathdrum Parish. He would later lease John 895 acres at Cullentragh. Following John's death, this land would form the basis of the charity.

John continued to consolidate and expand his landholdings, largely with loans from John Hayes who was the landowner in many cases, by acquiring more leases and buying out others to acquire full title.

John was proving very successful in building up his landholdings and was a well respected member of the local landed community who supported his rising status. However, he died, unmarried, at the early age of 33. He had two children out of marriage and, despite the norms of the time, managed in his will, to ensure that they would be looked after in the event of his death.



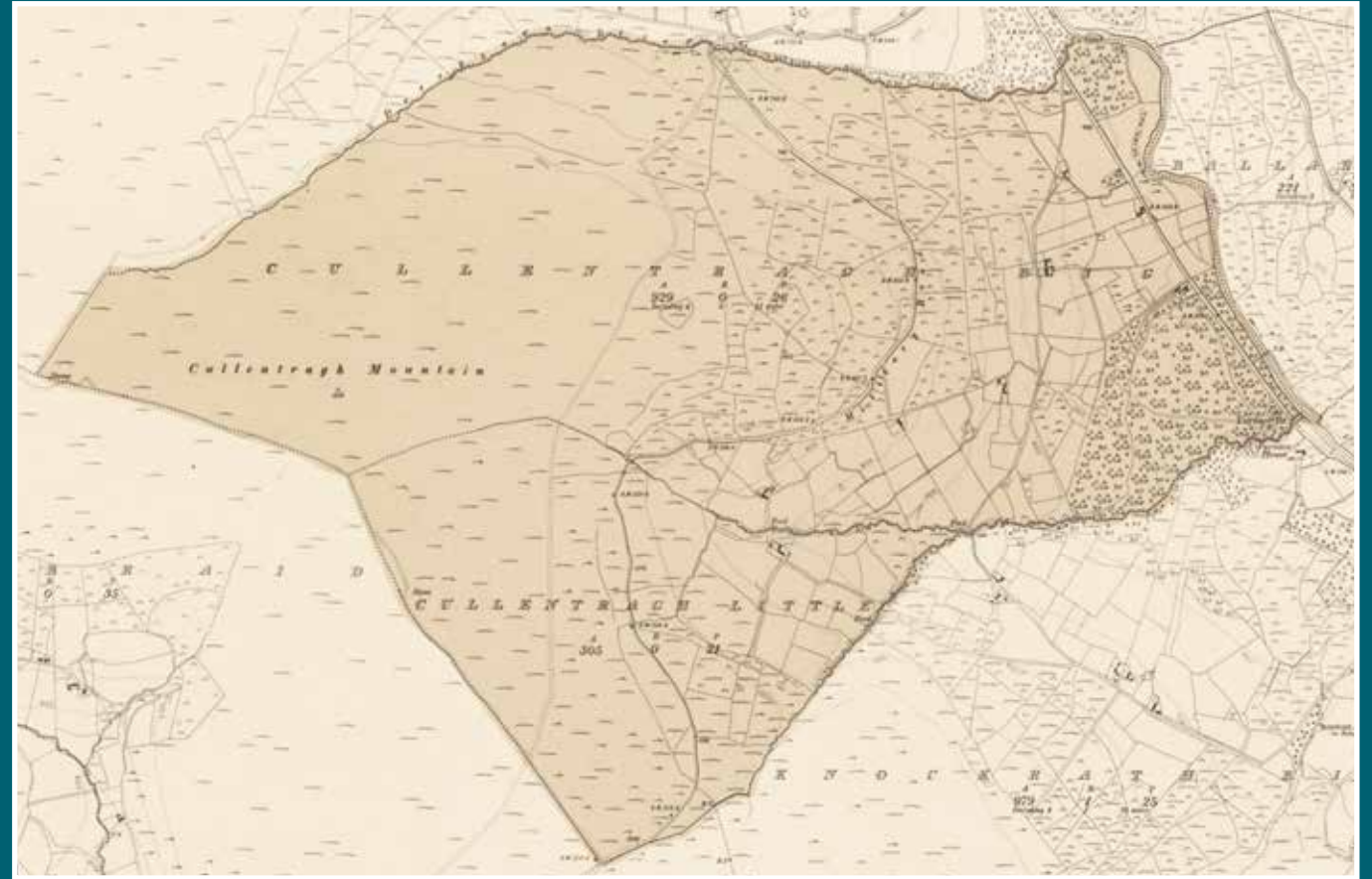
Tate Landholdings, overlay on OSI Map 1839 (courtesy of Ordnance Survey Ireland)



# JOHN TATE'S WILL

John Tate bequeathed his interest in the leased property of 895 acres at Cullentragh to be the basis of his charity. The purpose of the charity was to help fund benevolent deeds within the confines of Rathdrum parish.

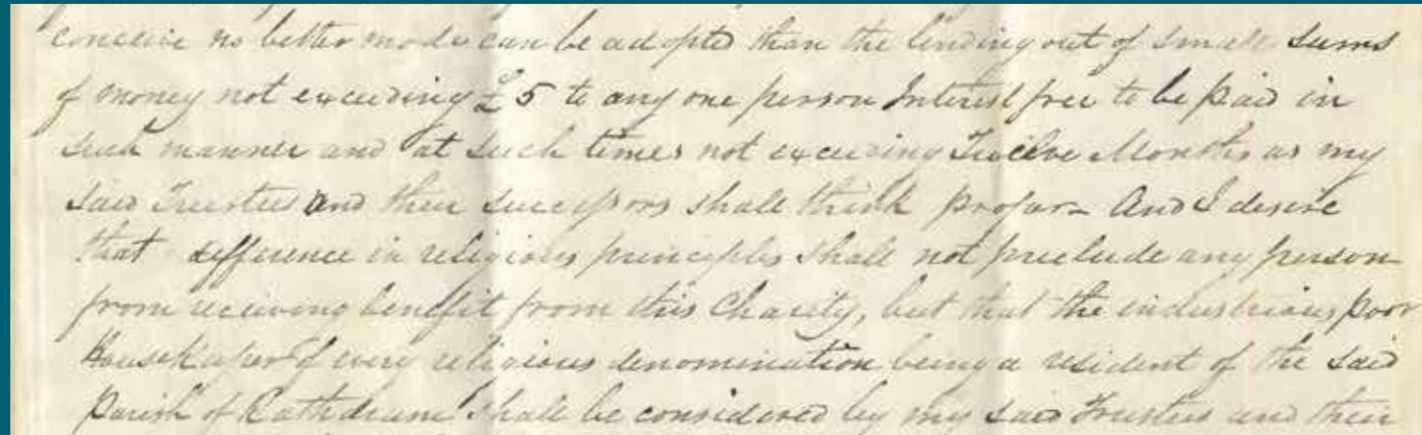
In the will, Tate specified the type of philanthropic endeavours he had in mind. The best use of his resources would involve patronising “*industry [hard-work] among the poor inhabitants*” by “*lending out small sums of money not exceeding £5 to any one person interest free to be paid in such a manner and at such times not exceeding 12 months.*” Donations rather than loans should only be distributed in exceptional circumstances, like in cases of “*sickness or some unforeseen misfortune or sudden emergency happening to any of the poor of the said parish*”, or when dealing with “*aged or infirm persons, or when there is a family of five children and upwards whose parents or themselves are unable by their labour to provide a sufficient support.*”



Cullentragh Big and Cullentragh Little OSI map 1838 (courtesy of Ordnance Survey Ireland)

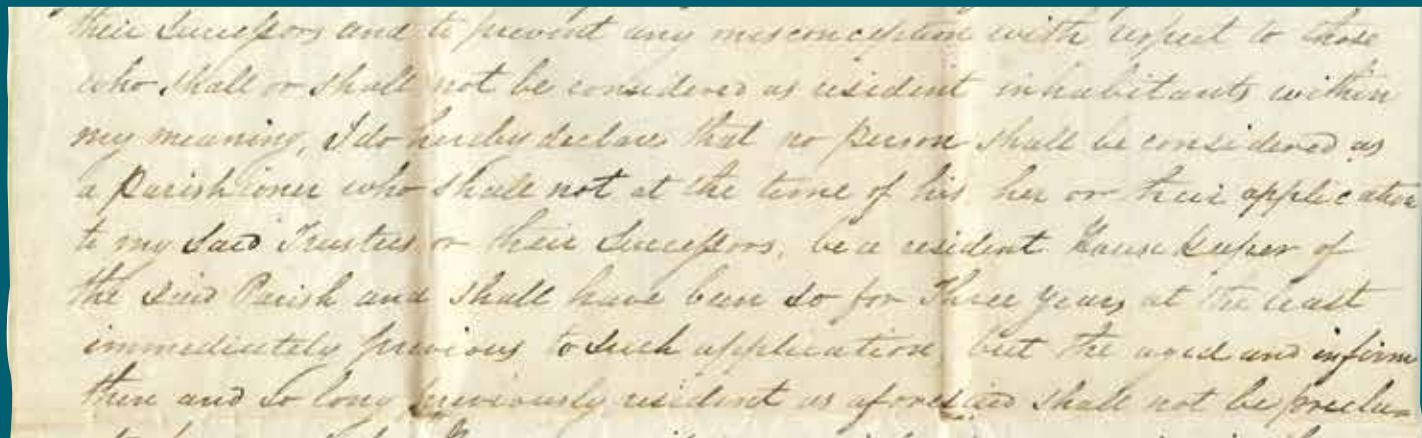
# JOHN TATE'S WILL

- Beneficiaries must be resident in Rathdrum Parish for at least three years.
- The charity would not discriminate based on religion.
- The charity would provide interest free loans of up to £5.00 repayable over twelve months.
- Only in cases of extreme hardship would donations to the poor of the parish be made.



Conceive no better mode can be adopted than the lending out of small sums of money not exceeding £5 to any one person Interest free to be paid in such manner and at such times not exceeding Twelve Months as my said Trustees and their Successors shall think proper And I desire that difference in religious principles shall not preclude any person from receiving benefit from this Charity, but that the industrious poor householder of every religious denomination being a resident of the said Parish of Rathdrum shall be considered by my said Trustees and their

Interest free loans of up to £5.00. ... difference in religious principles shall not preclude any person from receiving benefit from this charity. Will of John Tate, Page 1.



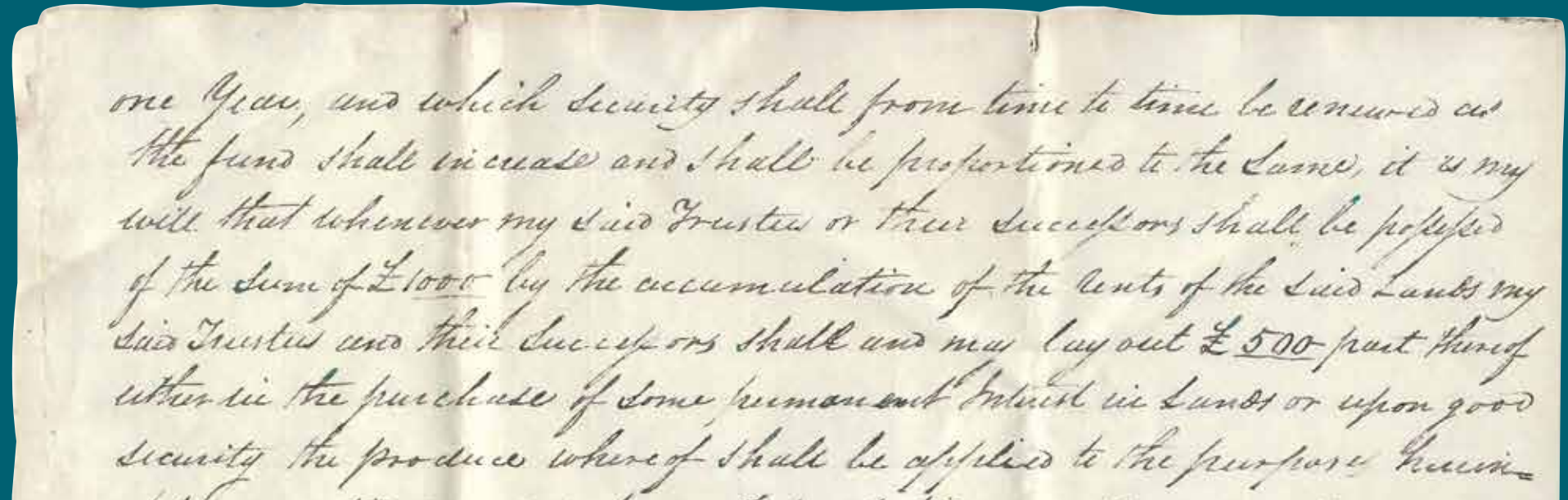
their Successors and to prevent any misconception with respect to those who shall or shall not be considered as resident inhabitants within my meaning, I do hereby declare that no person shall be considered as a Parishioner who shall not at the time of his her or their application to my said Trustees or their Successors, be a resident householder of the said Parish and shall have been so for three years at the least immediately previous to such application but the word and inform there and so long previously resident as aforesaid shall not be precluded

... beneficiaries must be resident in Rathdrum parish for at least three years Will of John Tate, Page 2.

# JOHN TATE'S WILL

The will clearly laid out the rules for qualifying as a trustee and their reporting requirements. It also made provision for the Trustees to change the rules for the management of the Charity and to make decisions as to how they should invest any surplus funds to the benefit of the charity.

- ▲ Samuel Hayes – Avondale Estate
- ▲ The Reverend Richard Strong – Rathdrum Parish
- ▲ Abraham Critchley – Anne Tate's husband
- ▲ Thomas King, Kingston Estate – friend and business associate
- ▲ Daniel Lawrence – Landowner, friend and business associate

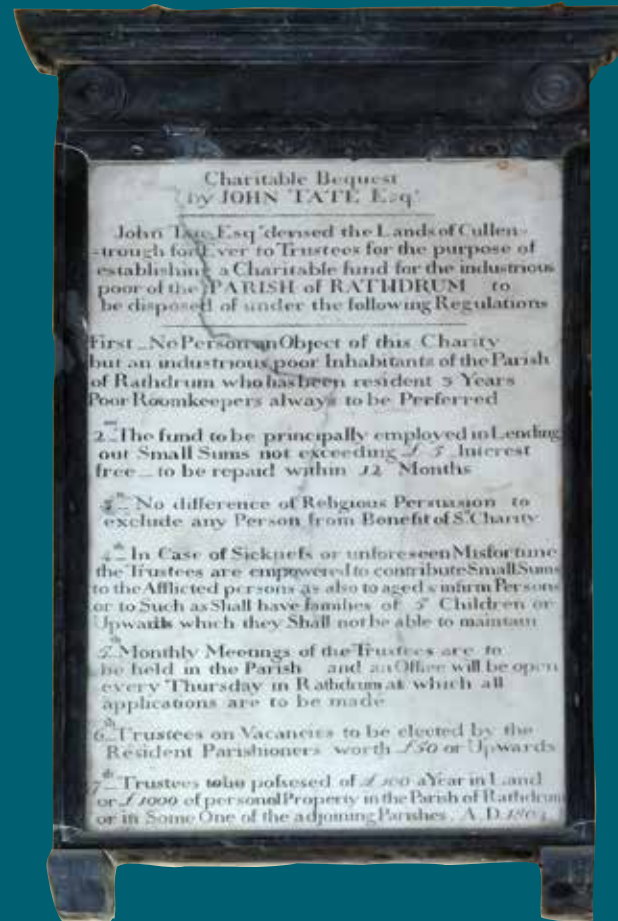


How the land and funds were to be managed. *Will of John Tate, Page 4.*



# JOHN TATE'S WILL

- ▶ A plaque commemorating John Tate's bequest was installed in St. Saviours church in Rathdrum.
- ▶ The original deeds related to the bequest are part of the Tate Charity Collection in Wicklow County Archives.



John Tate bequest plaque, St. Saviours Church, Rathdrum



John Tate's Charity Deed Wicklow County Archives

# HISTORICAL CONTEXT

## 19TH CENTURY RATHDRUM

Tate's Charity began its work in the early 1790's. Rathdrum parish had a population of around 2,688 in the 1830's of whom 1,504 lived in the town.<sup>1</sup>

Rathdrum acted as a principal centre for the area due to its location in the middle of the county and the roads connecting it to the east coast. It is likely that the population was similar in the late 1780's - 90's. The high percentage of town dwellers was unusual in the county due, in some part, to small local industries.

There was a thriving flannel weaving industry in the area around Rathdrum made up of hand weavers and a large weaving mill, Allen's in Greenane, employing up to 300. In 1793 the Flannel Hall was built, paid for by Earl Fitzwilliam, at a cost of £3,500. It served as the sales point for all flannel production in the area. Fitzwilliam received a toll of 2d per 120 yards sold and was earning an average of £300 per annum<sup>1</sup>. The weaving mill in Greenane was burnt down during the 1798 Rebellion. The industry would fail in the early 1820's as a result of the Act of Union, which removed any duties on imports from the UK.

There was also a mining industry in both Avoca and nearby Glendalough and Comerford's flour mill in the town itself.



Flannel Hall, Rathdrum early 1900's. (courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)



Rathdrum, early 1900's (courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)

1. Samuel Lewis' Topographical Dictionary of Ireland 1837.

# HISTORICAL CONTEXT

## 19TH CENTURY RATHDRUM

Rathdrum parish had, in Irish terms, been relatively prosperous but a large proportion of the population lived at subsistence level.

The loss of the weaving industry had a significant impact on the local economy and employment. The end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 also resulted in a collapse of agricultural prices. In the early 1820's Ireland suffered a partial failure of the potato crop, increasing hardship for the local population.



Comerford's Mill Rathdrum  
(courtesy of *The Miller Magazine*)



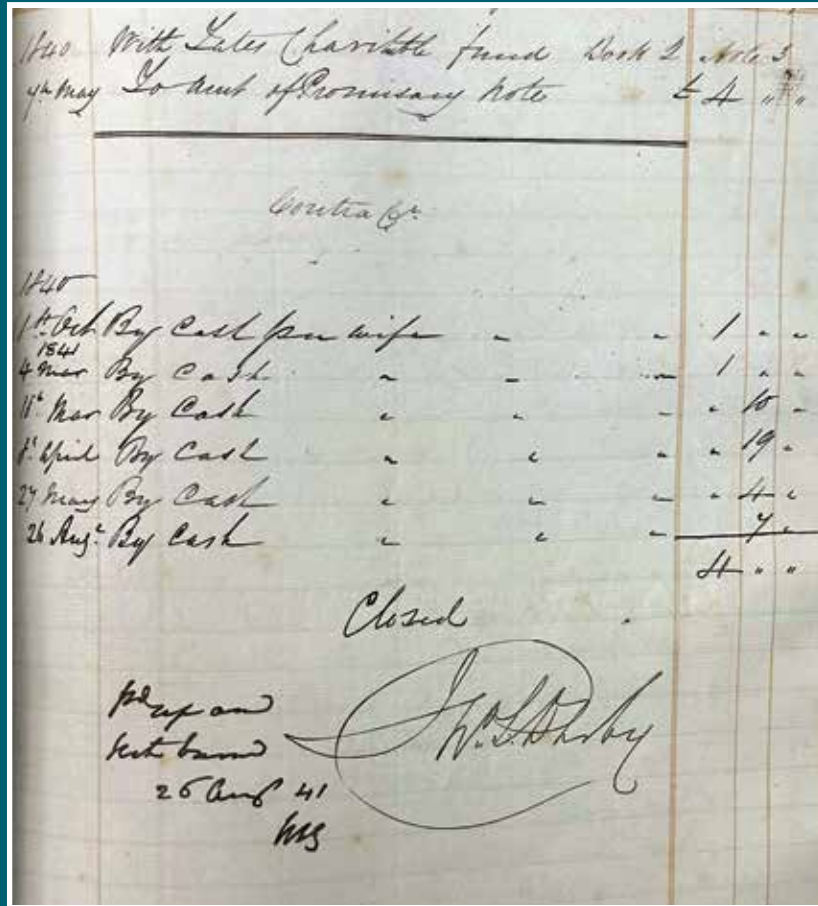
Thatched houses, Rathdrum, early 1900's (courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)



# THE EARLY YEARS

## Social supports

In the 1790's and through to the mid 1800's there was little in the way of formal structures to provide medical and health care, schooling or support for the poor. Where these were available they relied on charitable donations, in some cases with matched funding through the Grand Juries.



Loan Book ledger entry, Tate Charity Collection, 1840-41

## Financial Support

In order to qualify for financial support a person must be resident in the parish for at least three years. The rules of the charity stated that support was to be provided through interest-free loans, up to a limit of £5. In cases of extreme hardship parishioners could receive a donation.

The minute books from 1800-1840 contains hundreds of names of those in the parish that would have received money from the charity detailing the amount and the reason for the loan or donation. In the 1860's the number of donations still exceeded the number of loans.

	Loans	Donations
April 1868	5	38
June 1869	9	94



# THE EARLY YEARS

## Dispensary

At the time of John Tate's death in 1787, there was no doctor in Rathdrum Parish. Dispensary doctors were first established by legislation in 1805 under an Act of Parliament, by which they were defined as "an institution where medicine and advice are given gratis to the poor". In 1810 the charity provided the sum of £50.00 a year to provide and keep open a dispensary in the parish. It is probable that the Grand Jury provided a matching sum per annum.



The dispensary doctor- West of Ireland. (Howard Hemlick c. 1883)

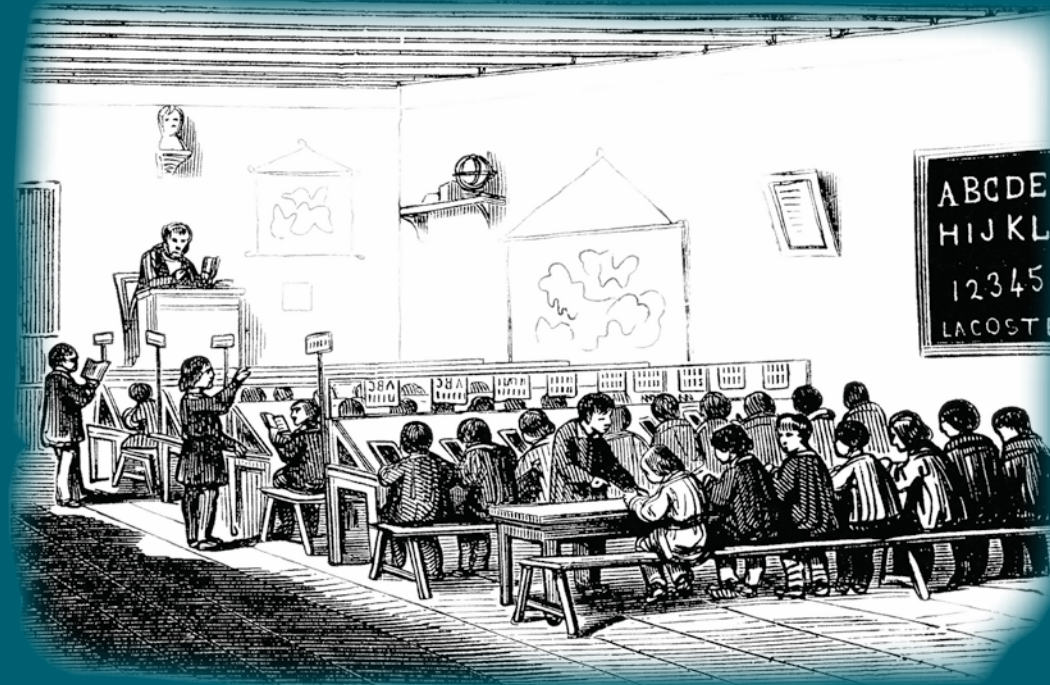
The scene above shows a doctor in an actual dispensary. However, in most cases the services were provided through home visits.

# THE EARLY YEARS

## Education

There was no school in Rathdrum in the early 1800's. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 1812, the Charity instructed William Parnell Hayes to source the best and cheapest mode to establish schools in different towns of the Parish for the education of the poor.

A salary for a teacher for a Protestant Sunday School was also granted.



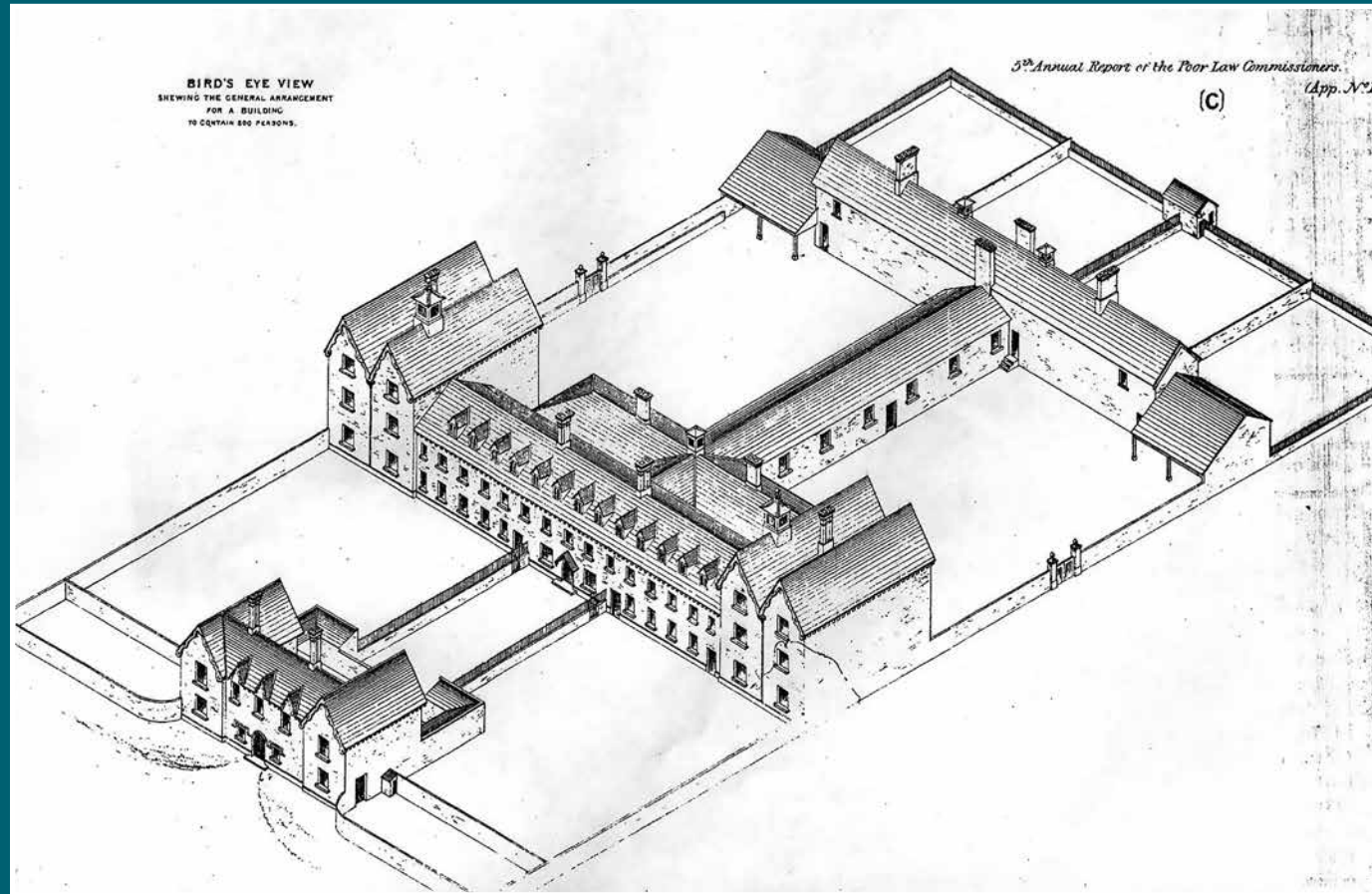
By 1827, a school for 160 pupils of both sexes had been established in Rathdrum. 80 pupils were educated free of charge. The teacher's salary was paid by the Erasmus Smith charity. A small school was also established in the Flannel Hall, supported by Earl Fitzwilliam.<sup>1</sup>

1. Samuel Lewis' Topographical Dictionary of Ireland 1837.

# THE POOR LAW

The first real government policy, to address poverty in Ireland, was the Poor Law which was enacted in 1838. Its functions were broadly similar to those in England. The operating costs for each Poor Law Union was to be provided through a Poor Law Rate on landowners. Support was to be provided through a network of 130 workhouses. The Rathdrum Union was established in 1839 and a Board of Guardians appointed. Their duty was to care for those who were unable to provide for themselves.

In reality, the Workhouse provided food and shelter for the destitute. This did not extend to the provision of medical care. It did not provide for any support or relief outside of the Workhouse until 1847.



Standard Workhouse Elevation designed by Mr. George Wilkinson, Poor Law Architect.  
Fifth Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners, 1839 (Wicklow County Archives)



# THE POOR LAW

## Rathdrum Workhouse

The Rathdrum Union was to meet the needs of a large territory covering a population 51,689 in the electoral areas of: Newcastle, Killeskey, Arklow, Kilbride, Castlemacadem, Dunganstown, Wicklow, Rathdrum, Glendalough, Roundwood, Glenealy and Aughrim.

The inaugural meeting of the Rathdrum Workhouse Board of Guardians took place in the Flannel Hall on the 5th November 1839. The Workhouse, with a capacity of 600, was completed in 1842. Land for the workhouse was leased from Earl Fitzwilliam. Workhouse employees included a Medical Officer, School Master and School Mistress.

A separate Fever Hospital would be set up in the New Brewery leased from the Ellis family.

Page 11

Form 2.—REGISTRY of Persons Admitted into, and Discharged from the Workhouse

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
Number	Name and Residence of Pauper	Sex	Age	W. Adult, whether Male, Female, Widower or Widow; W Child, whether Male, Female, or Infant.	Employment or Calling	Religious denomination	If disabled, the description of disability.
201	Richard King	Male	62	Widow	Servant	R.C.	Senile
2	Thomas King	Male	94	Widow	Shoe Maker	R.C.	Do
3	John King	Male	6	Widow	None	R.C.	Healthy
4	John King	Male	40	Widow	None	R.C.	Do
5	John King	Male	15	Widow	None	R.C.	W. rattle
6	John King	Male	15	Widow	Servant	R.C.	Healthy
7	John King	Male	8	Widow	None	R.C.	Healthy
8	John King	Male	18	Widow	None	R.C.	Do
9	John King	Male	9	Widow	None	R.C.	Do
210	John King	Male	33	Widow	Servant	R.C.	Do
1	John King	Male	11	Widow	None	R.C.	Epilepsy
2	John King	Male	6	Widow	None	R.C.	Healthy
3	John King	Male	14	Widow	None	R.C.	Do

Workhouse Registry page, 1847 (Wicklow County Archives)

## Workhouse Admissions

In its first year of operation the workhouse was admitting around 40 people a month. By June 1851, the total figure rose to 999 admissions, more than 50% above it's design capacity. The Flannel Hall was used for additional accommodation when the Workhouse became over-crowded.



# THE POOR LAW

## How did the Charity operate during the famine?

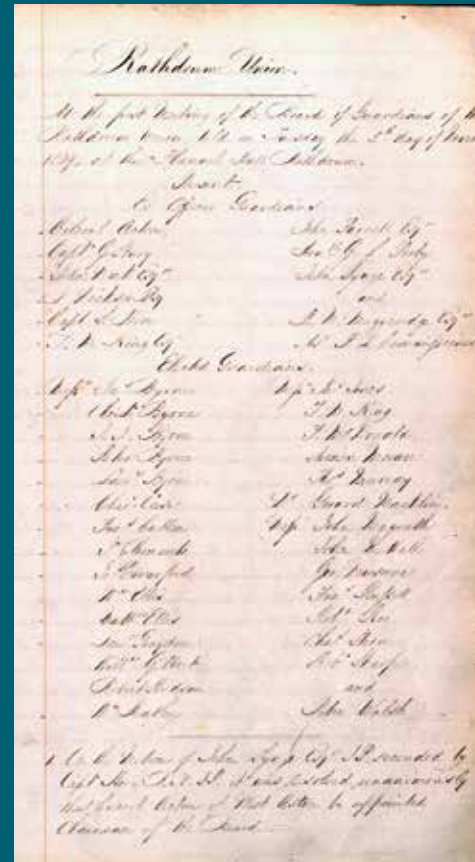
Regrettably, there are no minute books for the Charity's activities from 1840 - 1867. However, it is interesting that many of its trustees also served on the Board of Guardians for the Rathdrum Union. It is thought, although undocumented, that the Charity suspended its activities during the famine period and assigned its funds to the Parish.

### Board of Guardians Rathdrum Union

Members from Rathdrum

1839 **John Parnell**, Vice Chairman and later Chairman. **Colonel Acton**, **Captain J. Bury**, Mr. John Manning, Mr John Shaw, Mr. George Woodbourne, **Mr. James Comerford**, **W. Mills King**.

1850 **John Parnell**, Chairman  
Richard Manning, **James Comerford**



First meeting of Rathdrum Union 1839.  
(Wicklow County Archives)

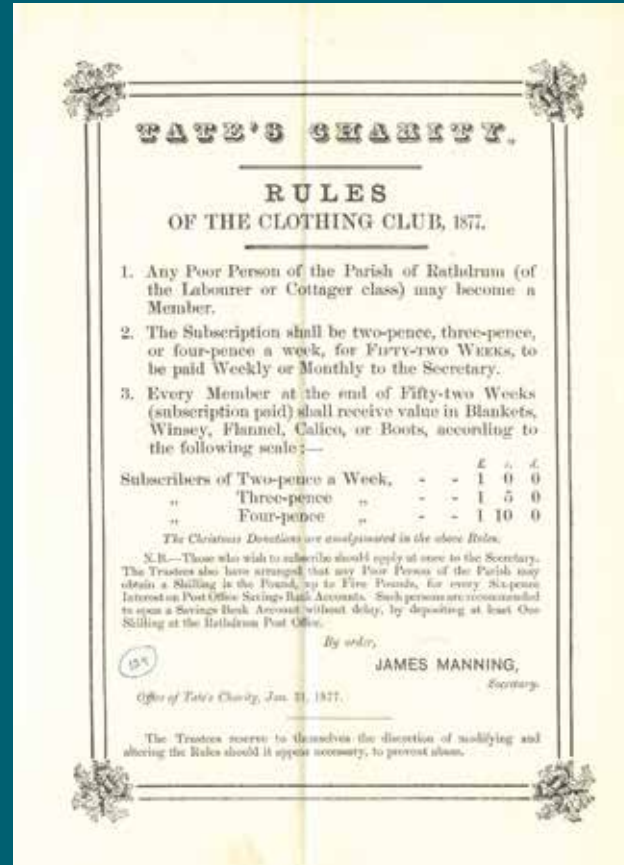
### Trustees Tate Charity

1803	<b>John Parnell</b> , Acton
1804	Abraham Critchley, Thomas King Rev. Richard Powell
1809	Thomas Acton, William Parnell Hayes
1836	Rev. W. M. Guinness, <b>Capt. Acton</b> , <b>W. Mills King</b> , <b>Captain James Bury</b>
1867	<b>James Comerford</b> , C.S. Parnell - Chair Mar 69-78, Rev. Henry Galbraith
1869	John C. Lees, Benjamin Johnston
1879	Rev. Wyndham Guinness
1888	Guinness, Owen Fogarty, <b>James Comerford</b>
1904	Rev. Wyndham Guinness, Laurence Byrne, D. Ryan
1906	<b>James Comerford</b> , Laurence Byrne, Kemmis, Speares, Thomas Wilson, Henry Saul, B. Manning Secretary

# THE CLOTHING CLUB

Tate's Clothing Club started in 1877 and ran until 1979. In effect it was like a savings club. The big difference was that the charity would match the funds saved, provided the subscriber saved consistently over the year.

So, if someone saved £5.00, they could get clothing worth £10.00. They could also nominate the local draper where they would like the funds to be available. In 1884, there were 165 subscribers, 130 in 1915, 42 in 1923 and, at the end of the fund in 1979, 20 people were subscribers.

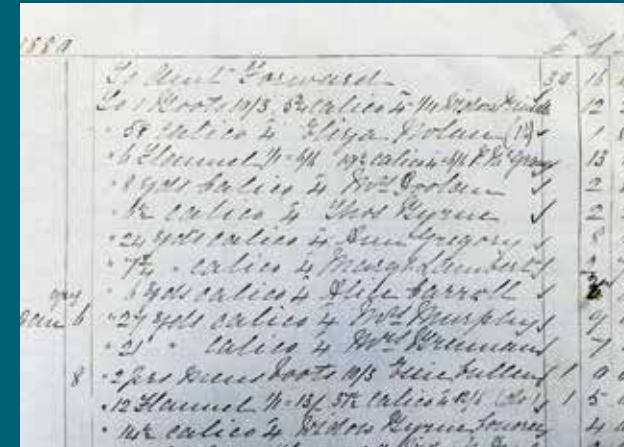


Clothing Club Rules 1877

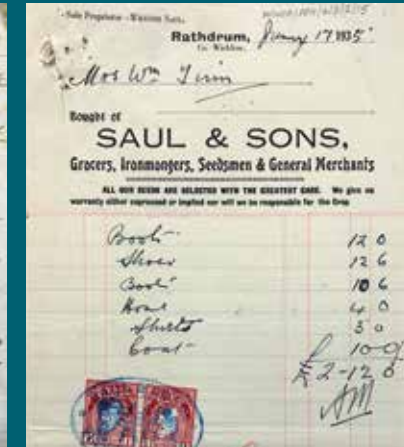
## What did people save for?

In 1880, subscribers were buying boots and clothing fabrics, calico and flannel, for making their family's clothing. By 1935, it was boots, shoes, hose and ready-made clothes, shirts and coats.

The savings were collected at the Tate Charity's office in Rathdrum and, in 1900, there was also a savings point in Aughrim.



Sample of goods supplied 1880



Sample of goods supplied 1935

# THE CLOTHING CLUB

Subscribers could nominate the local draper where they would like the funds to be available.

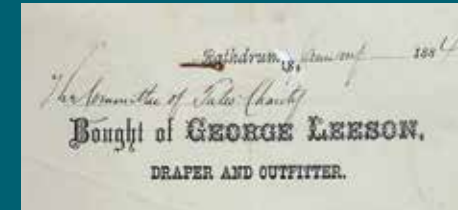
## Some of the suppliers

Account	Year	14 <sup>th</sup>	21 <sup>st</sup>	28 <sup>th</sup>	Total
	5/24/57	12/24/57	19/24/57	26/24/57	
	(49)	(50)	(51)	(52)	
1	1	5/-	5/-		10 0
2			5/-		5 0
3		8/-	10/-		18 0
4	1/-	2/6	3/6		7 0
5	1/6	2/-			3 6
6	5/-				5 0
7					
8	4/-				4 0
9	4/-	6/6			10 6
10					
11		1/6			1 6
12	3/-		2/-		4 0
13					
14					

Savings Club ledger, Tate Charity, 1957

Name of Shop where Cash will be left	
1	P. Leeson.
2	Mrs Comerford.
3	John Sutton
4	John Sutton
5	Suttons
6	Suttons
7	Suttons
8	Mrs Jim Cullen.
9	Comerford's
10	
11	Suttons.
12	Suttons
13	Suttons.
14	

Shop selected by subscribers, 1957



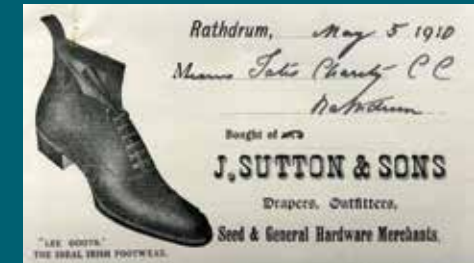
George Leeson, Rathdrum 1884



J. Sutton and Sons, Rathdrum 1902



James Phelan, Aughrim 1900



J. Sutton and Sons, Rathdrum 1910



# THE CHARITY IN THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

## How did the charity's work change?

Poverty in Ireland remained high in the first thirty years of the State. The charity continued to provide interest-free loans and donations to the poor as the minutes to 1909 show. Unfortunately, there are no minute books after 1909.

In 1906 the charity paid for a Ms. Smith to act as midwife for the parish.

The Clothing Club continued until 1979, although the number of subscribers had fallen to 20.

As the needs of the community changed, the Charity changed the focus of its support. It set up a Student College Loan Scheme to provide interest-free loans to those who couldn't afford to meet the fees. There is also a record from 1978, where the *County Wicklow Association for the Handicapped* (Rathdrum Branch), records a donation of £1,000 to the school.



Salvation Army District Nurses visiting a mother and her newborn baby, 1910. (Salvation Army International Heritage Centre)



College student interest free loan scheme



# SOME OF THE CHAIRTY'S TRUSTEES



Portrait of Samuel Hayes,  
(courtesy of Coillte/Avondale House)

## Samuel Hayes

Born in 1743, Samuel Hayes was a barrister and an MP in the Irish Parliament from 1783 to 1790 and he was also involved with the Irish Volunteers. He inherited Hayesville and renamed it Avondale. He was appointed Sheriff of Wicklow in 1773. Hayes was a talented amateur architect, who helped design and build Avondale House and worked with Earl Fitzwilliam on the design of the Flannel Hall. In 1792 the Dublin Society appointed him to a committee to select a suitable site for a botanic garden. In 1794 Hayes wrote the first book on trees in Ireland: *A Practical Treatise on Planting and the Management of Woods and Coppices*. He was one of the first trustees of Tate Charity.

## Abraham Critchley

Abraham Critchley was the husband of Anne Tate, John Tate's sister. The Critchleys were a well established and wealthy family resident in Ballyboy townland and shareholders in the Glendalough mines. Abraham and his family repelled a rebel attack on their house at Ballyboy on 25 March 1798. The properties of James and Abraham Critchley respectively, were 'totally burned and destroyed by a large body of rebels'<sup>1</sup> under General Holt that July.

Abraham and John Critchley claimed just over four thousand pounds compensation from the government for the loss of the house, furniture and cattle at Ballyboy and received just under £4,000 of the amount claimed.

Critchley was Treasurer to the Grand Jury and Deputy Lieutenant of the county. He was one of the first trustees of Tate Charity.

1. Journal of the Mining Heritage Trust of Ireland No. 14  
The Silver-Lead Mines of Glenmalure

# SOME OF THE CHARITY'S TRUSTEES



Portrait of William Parnell Hayes,  
(courtesy of the National Gallery of  
Ireland)

## William Parnell Hayes

Born in 1777, he inherited the Avondale estate in Co. Wicklow and changed his name to Parnell-Hayes. He was Charles Stewart Parnell's grandfather. In his 1804 pamphlet, *An inquiry into the causes of popular discontents in Ireland by an Irish country gentleman*, he attributed Irish unrest to the Elizabethan conquest and confiscation of land, the tithe question, and the sectarian structure of the state. He also comprehensively denounced the Act of Union, and advocated Catholic Emancipation.

In August 1817 Parnell was elected as MP for Co. Wicklow, retaining the seat in the general elections of 1818 and 1820, while also serving as Deputy Lieutenant for the county. In 1820 he published 'A letter on the potato diet of the Irish' to the editor of the Quarterly Review, which expressed unease at the widespread reliance on a single food crop. He was a trustee of the John Tate Charity in 1809.



Undertaking signed by Hayes, Acton and King for building works at Glebe House, Rathdrum in 1793. Courtesy of Representative Church Body Library (RCB)

## Rev. Richard Strong

Rector of Rathdrum Parish, a founding trustee of the charity along with Samuel Hayes, Thomas Acton and Thomas King.

## The Glebe House Rathdrum<sup>1</sup>

Samuel Hayes, Thomas Acton and Thomas King were also commissioners overseeing building works done for the Rev Richard Strong at the Glebe House at Rathdrum in 1793.

# SOME OF THE CHARITY'S TRUSTEES



Kilmurragh House 1930's  
*(courtesy of the National Botanic Gardens)*

## Thomas Acton (1742-1817)

Kilmacurragh Estate was known as West Aston or Westaston when the eldest surviving son Thomas succeeded. In 1780, he married Miss Sidney Davis, daughter of Dublin barrister Joshua Davis. With some support from the Royal Dublin Society, Thomas and Sidney continued to develop the gardens at Kilmacurragh which would become one of the National Botanic Gardens in 1996. Trustee of Tate Charity 1809.



Kilmurragh House 1850  
*(courtesy of the National Botanic Gardens)*

## William Acton (1789-1854)

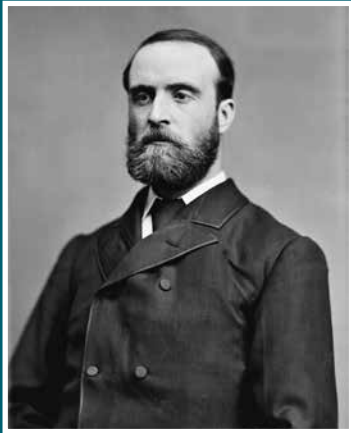
William Acton of Kilmacurragh Estate was a JP for Co. Wicklow and High Sheriff of the county in 1820. He served as Lt-Col. of the Wicklow militia and as MP for the county 1841-48. He was a benevolent landlord, and he organised several famine projects on the estate to stave off starvation, not only of local people, but also of labourers from County Mayo. The restoration of the ha-ha around the Deer Park and by the front lawns, and the building of two projecting and overlapping single-storey wings to the house, were carried out in 1848 as part of this relief effort. William is credited with building the walled garden during the 1820s, with its orangery (the latter still existed till the early twentieth century) and glasshouse ranges. Trustee of Tate Charity 1836.

## Rev. William S. Guinness

B. 1795 - D. 1864. Rector of Rathdrum Parish and son of Arthur H. Guinness, the brewer. Trustee of Tate Charity 1836.



# SOME OF THE CHARITY'S TRUSTEES



Charles Stewart Parnell  
(Wikipedia Commons)

## Charles Stewart Parnell (1846–1891)

Grandson of William Parnell Hayes, he was born in Avondale House. Part of his earliest education was provided by Rev. Wyndham Guinness, rector of Rathdrum and also a trustee of the Tate Charity. Parnell was an Irish nationalist politician who served as a Member of Parliament from 1875 to 1891. He was leader of the Home Rule League from 1880 to 1882, and then of the Irish Parliamentary Party from 1882 to 1891, who held the balance of power in the House of Commons during the Home Rule debates of 1885–1886.

He was a trustee of the charity in 1867 and its chairman from 1869–78.



Ardavon House (courtesy of the Comerford Family)

## James Comerford

Owner of Comerford Mills in Rathdrum and lived in Ardavon House in Rathdrum. Trustee of Tate Charity 1867–1906.

The catalogue for the Tate Charity Collection is available at the following link.  
<https://www.wicklow.ie/Living/Services/Arts-Heritage-Archives/Archives/Collections/Private-Papers/John-Tates-Charity>



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