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Dear Michael

On the occasion of our visit in April I agreed to send you a copy of the transcription of my great-grandfather's diary for the period after he moved into the castle in 1894. I have left out the lengthy details of building materials and concentrated on personal matters that are of greater interest to members of our family. He appears to have been a somewhat intolerant man, but maybe that is how people behaved in those days!

We loved our holiday in Donegal, especially the stay at the castle. The transformation from the ruins that I saw in 1988 to what it is today is truly magical. If Solis decide to go ahead with you suggestion of a little museum in the tower I would be pleased to contribute the records I have of my family's occupation between 1894 and 1944.

With very best wishes,



Nicholas White

Diary of Major General Henry George White from 7th April 1894 to 13th January 1898. Most of the diary contains details of labour and materials used in building works. This summary concentrates on personal information.

Took possession of Lough Eske Castle from Mr A. Brooke, Saturday 7 April 1894, the property having been in the family of the late Thomas Brooke JP, DL for 270 years up to the date of his death in 1884. The family name was properly Young(?) but was changed to Brooke on succeeding to the Manor Brooke property near Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. The housekeeper Margaret Lowry has been 52 years in the house.

Furniture purchased by valuation was handed over by Mr Arthur Brooke one of the trustees to the will of the late proprietor. Value £117.

Three servants – Anne Davies, cook, Harriette Robins housemaid, and Samuel Speed footman accompanied me over from Talgarth Hall, Maclynlleth, N. Wales.

Building was commenced Thursday April 12 by adding two porches to the Church Lodge. Two masons engaged and two labourers aiding in digging the foundations. Two carts employed in bringing sand and stone, the latter from Altilo quarry.

3 May. Ascension Day. Roman Catholics all away except Mundy. Six Protestants employed cleaning up at Church Lodge.

25 May. Douglas the gamekeeper went duck shooting with my gun without leave last evening. When I spoke to him this morning he was insolent, denied that he had committed any fault, and said he was about to give me warning. Then I told him he must go this day a month, Monday June 25th. Send him written notice to leave, to be signed and returned.

26 May. Douglas has not returned written notice, and when asked to do so said it was not legal and he “never been required to do so before.” I asked him to continue cutting down the laurels. He refused and said that he would only do keeper’s duty, and was very offensive in language and demeanour swearing “By God.”

14th June. Major & Mrs. Hamilton and their son came over for the afternoon.

18th June. Mundy laid up with bad rheumatism in leg, and obliged to go home. Brown horse brought over this morning and given in charge of Tom Graham. Lowry the gardener active for Mundy. Tried the new horse after dinner. He pitched going towards the Friary Quarry and stopped dead twice taking the cart into the ditch. By thrashing him he went as far as the stone keep in the Lowry’s field with three men’s assistance. When loaded he refused to move a load of tiles, only half a one. He stopped dead in centre of field, pitched obstinately and when beaten reared straight up, getting off-foreleg over the shaft of cart, rearing again to free himself. He also struck out with his forelegs at men holding his head. Present Hammond, McNulty and Ward. Were obliged to take him out of cart and send him to his late owner, telegraphing to London to stop cheque, also writing to Cox & Co to same effect.

22 June. Mare took the stallion again today. They call her Fanny!!

23 June. Mundy away again. Pony trap arrived from Talgarth.

25 June. Mundy to work again. Dr. Warnock tells him he is suffering from neurosis. Douglas left for Scotland this morning. Paid him his wages £3.9. to date. Micky Thomas’ mother died yesterday, so the family of four were absent. Nicholl the painter also absent presumably through his wife’s confinement.

30 June. George McGee, plumber arrived by 7.20pm train.

1 July. Very fine. Interviewed McGee. Of very satisfactory appearance. Has been 6 years in the Royal Engineers, and the survey in China and Japan. Seems intelligent and active.

3 July. Very fine. McGee and Nicholl putting lead roof on porch of back door. Had to dismiss two of McNulty family – one for being absent without notice on 30th – the other for neglecting his horse. Also gave notice yesterday to Mary McNulty that should not require her services after end of this month, a poor worker.

4 July. Mullins and son finished the window in my room, bricked up recess of larger window, and commenced to do same to one of the windows in tower room, which I hope will be Ronald's (*son*).

12 July. Orangemen all away today at Laghey. Lost a good salmon in afternoon through Mickey's joking frightening the nearly dead fish when trying to get him into the landing net. Pigeons eating all gooseberries and currants.

15 July. St. Swithin. Fine. Sunday – singing much improved.

17 July. Heavy showers. This constant rain is most prejudicial to the country.

18 July. Fine. A great blessing after so many wet days.

22 July. Sunday. Heavy showers. Killed 2 nice salmon last evening and some sea and brown trout.

30 July. Found that the drainage of gentleman's WC and rainwater pipe into back yard is blocked. 3 men at work trying to get outlet into a supposed natural fissure of rock. Natural outlets always bad so liable to be blocked.

4 August. Mr Livesey came over to shoot rabbits. Killed 16 out of 24 shots. Not bad for this wild place.

28 August. Expected to have had a reply to my letter about Mr G. Brooke's misleading advice as to the drainage of L. Eske. (Should I not hear from you by 25th inst., Sat 4 next, I shall conclude that the failure to dispute liability for the expense and inconvenience that I have been put to is through misrepresentation and shall have to incur further expenses that I shall seek to recovery from the trustees.

20 Sept. Away at Talgarth.

18 October. Mrs White (*wife*), Sybil (*daughter*), Aline (*step-daughter*) and maid left for London at 1pm from Lough Eske station, Mr Livesey kindly giving a special engine and carriage to take them 28 miles to Strabane to meet the mail for Dublin. Sybil's 19th birthday. Very fine and calm.

25 Nov. FCW (*wife*) sailed for the continent yesterday morning. There seems to be a very sad and heavy blank. God grant that she may return with renewed health.

From November 1894 to April 1896 the diary deals only with details of building works and appears to contain nothing of personal interest.

1896

20 April. Went to London to give evidence before a select committee of the House of Commons for the promotion of a bill by the Donegal Railway Company for two extensions: the one from Strabane to Londonderry 14 miles, and the other from Donegal to Ballyshannon a similar distance.

30 April. Returned from London, and heard by telegram in the afternoon that the committee had passed the preamble of the bill.

22 May. FCW expected to have reached England from Malta about 19th via Bay of Biscay in steamer Clan Macintosh, but no letter has arrived from her.

23 May. FCW reached London 21st. Bad attack of liver on voyage home, and still confined to her bed.

3 June. Mr Walker Royal Engineers from Lough Swilly came for a day's fishing. Thunderstorm in afternoon and first rain for many weeks; is much needed but only lasted half an hour.

4 June. RC holiday.

7 June. Gilden, head mason not yet returned from RC holiday, probably the whisky to blame. Maxwell, the plasterer, away also half the following day and owned to be suffering from liquor. These holidays are a great misfortune to the country and a waste of its labour.

26 June. Start for London to give evidence before a committee of the House of Lords on behalf of the proposed extensions to the Donegal Railway to Ballyshannon from Donegal and from Strabane to Londonderry, and hope to bring FCW back after over 6 months absence.

3 July. Returned from London with FCW. Very fine passage and FCW not much tired, though train from Strabane was much delayed owing to its being the local holiday. Result of petition in the House of Lords not yet known as the Great Northern case was still proceeding. Recovered expenses 26 June: Return to Euston from Strabane £5.14/-, 2 sleeping car tickets 10/-, 8 days expenses at 15/- per diem = £12.4/-.

8 July. Attended petty sessions for investigation into case of Doruin(?) rioters, which was adjourned until 22nd instant.

16 July. Attended as grand juror for assizes at Lifford, returning Saturday evening the 18th. A very pleasant experience of county life.

29 July. Very wet. First day of Strabane show. Started for station but not in time for 11,17am train, but lucky as day turned out so bad.

1 August. Very fine. Wind NE. Heard the guns of the fleet at Lough Swilly very plainly. Sybil, Ronald and Aline arrived today from London.

23 August. Sybil, Ronald and Colonel Dixon bicycled to Donegal church and lunched with Mrs Bevan who came over afterwards with Mr Eccles to tea.

25 August. Heavy showers. FCW's garden party. Over 40 expected, but afraid there will be but a small muster.

6 Sept. Sunday. All went to Lough Eske Church.

8 Sept. FCW, Sybil, Aline and Col. Dixon started by rail to ?.

14 Sept. Col. Dixon left. Sybil seedy with what Dr. Warnock says is gastric catarrh.

20 Sept. FCW very ill and in greatest pain all night with severe cramps in stomach and vomiting completely doubled up from 11.30pm till Dr. Warnock arrived at 7.30am. (sent for at 6am). He called again at 11am and promised to look in between 5 & 6 pm. FCW sick again just after he left at 11.45 but in less pain.

25 Sept. Instructed Mrs Irvine grocer Donegal not to furnish any articles on order of the cook or any servant of the house unless on a written order signed by myself or by Mrs White.

2 Oct. Sybil left by night mail for Dublin en route to Co. Clare and afterwards to Sophie Butler, Masseys.

12 Dec. Went to Dublin for the trial as to the right of way in case against Mr A. Wallace of Ardnamona for trespass in breaking the padlock on the Dark Grove(?) Gate notwithstanding that two keys had been sent him to pass through with. J. Hammond, J. Inquart, J. Mundy, T. Graham, W. Morrow, & J. S. Cavers(?) attended as my witnesses. Lodged at 26 Molesworth Street, McIntosh's private hotel.

13 Dec. Went to St Patrick's Cathedral at 11.30, and to Phoenix Park afternoon. Very wet.