
G01/4

Shawe-Taylor Papers,

1890 - 1909

Castle Taylor, Ardrahan, County Galway

A Descriptive List Prepared by Galway County Council Archives



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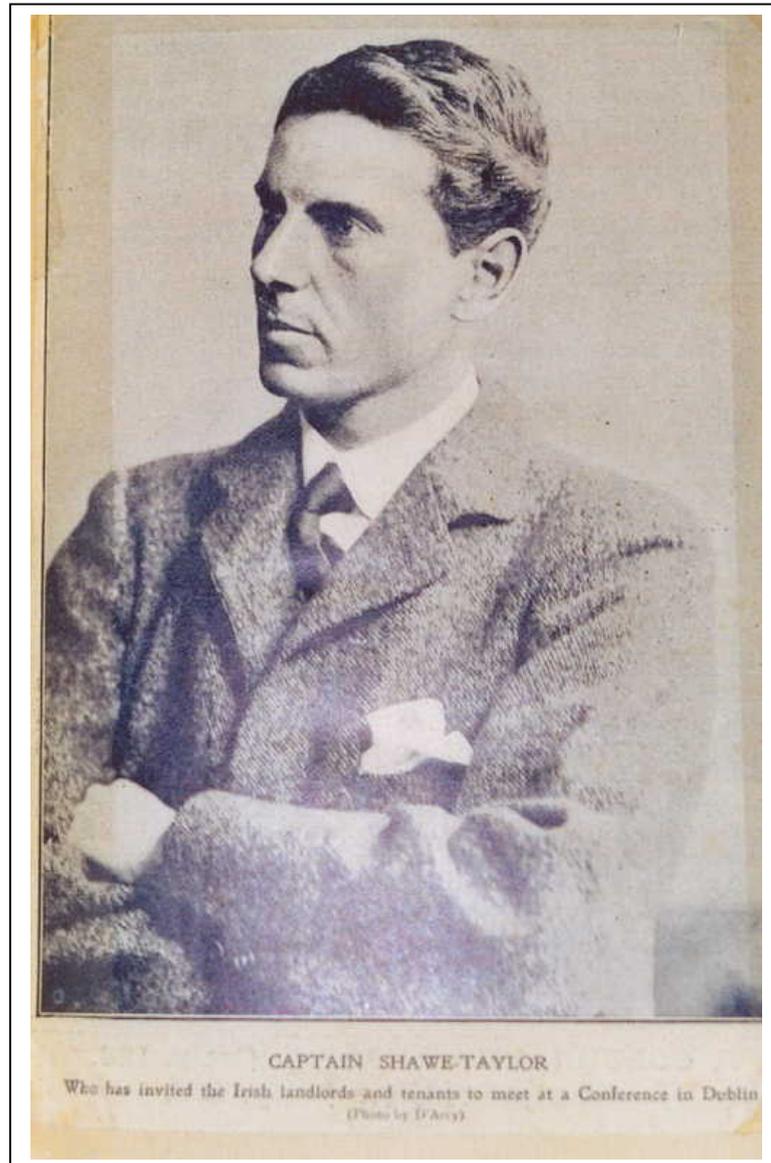
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Captain John, Shawe-Taylor (1866–1911)





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INTRODUCTION

This collection of archives consists of 8 volumes of newspaper clippings and one diary of Captain John Shawe-Taylor (1866-1911).

Biographical Notes:

Shawe-Taylor, Captain John, J.P. (3 January 1866 – 30 June 1911)

Shawe-Taylor of Castle Taylor, Ardrahan, county district of Gort, county Galway, landlord and officer for 17 years in the British army, was an energetic and important – yet often forgotten - figure in the Irish Revival at the beginning of the 20th century. He was described in one contemporary newspaper article as the *'Man who built the Bridge whereby landlords and tenants were able to cross over to each other'* (G01/4/8, p38).

His father, Walter Taylor Newton Shawe-Taylor *1832-1912) was High Sheriff of Galway in 1868 and is reported to have owned over 7,000 acres of land in 1874¹. He was also a Guardian of the Gort Poor Law Union during the 1870s and 1880s.

His mother Elizabeth Persse, was a daughter of Dudley Persse of Roxborough and sister of Lady Gregory.

The family house an 18th century tower house was sold in the 1930s or 1940s by John's son Michael to the Irish Land Commission and subsequently demolished². The last family member to reside at Castletaylor, Michael Taylor, left Ireland in the 1950s and died shortly afterwards in Trinidad³.

Shawe-Taylor served with the 1st Battalion Cheshire Regiment in Egypt, Burma, Karemni Expedition, and South Africa, he served as Aide-de-Champ to General Sir John Davis, K.C.B., Commanding Southern District from 1893-1898⁴.

An article in the *Freeman's Journal* of 8 September 1902 posed the rhetorical question 'Who is Captain Shawe-Taylor?', and subsequently went on to inform its readers that he is *'the son of a Galway gentleman famous as an agriculturist – is a young soldier who has only recently returned from the Boer war, where he served with his regiment, the Cheshires. The regiment was stationed at Limerick for a long time, and there Captain Shawe-Taylor was well known as a*

¹ Spellissy, Sean *'History of Galway'*, Celtic Bookshop [1999]

² Bence-Jones, Mark *A Guide to Irish County Houses*, p75

³ Henry, William *Role of Honour. The Mayors of Galway City, 1485-2001*, p100

⁴ Burke's Irish Family Records, 1976



practical philanthropist. Believing that Tommy Atkins smoked and drank too much, Captain Shawe-Taylor sought to convert him by example, and became a strict non-smoker and total abstainer. He was not, however a "Bigoted tee-totalleer", for if he passed the wine up himself he did not spare it on the many friends he entertained at the Cheshire Mess. In religion he was an ardent Evangelical and frequently preached to the soldiers of his own creed – never, it is fair to add, uttering a word against Catholics or in any way interfering with the religion of Catholic soldiers....(3 September 1903, G01/04/3).

Taylor is considered to be have been like his aunt, Lady Augusta Gregory (Coole Park, Gort), *'atypical of the class from which he came.'*⁵

He was chief instigator of the Irish Land Conference held in Dublin in 1902. He invited four landlord leaders and four leaders on the tenant's side to meet to promote a just and satisfactory scheme of land purchase. Shawe-Taylor acted as Honourary Secretary to the Conference, which meet at 30 Molesworth Street, Dublin on 19 December 1902 and deliberated for 2 weeks. The Conference's Report, issued on 3 January 1903, recommended a massive scheme of land purchase with the assistance of Treasury Loans to be extended to tenants to buy out landlords. In August 1903 the Wyndham Land Act followed the recommendations of the Report.

Immediately after the issue of the Report Shawe-Taylor undertook a five week tour of the United States of America to promote its merits. His objective been *'to ascertain whether Irishmen in America entertained a really undying and irreconcilable hatred to England, or whether, in the event of England displaying a sincere endeavour to restore peace and prosperity to the country by finally settling the land question, there would be any possibility of a change in Irish-American sentiment'* (2 March 1903, G01/4/6). During the tour he met with President Roosevelt in Washington to discuss the work of the Land Conference.

While on tour, due to the vacancy resulting from the death of Colonel Lynch, M.P., there was speculation in Ireland that he would run for election in county Galway. One newspaper article at that time, 24th January 1903, described him as *'a daring and fearless reformer, and his action in the anti-licensing crusade and Land Conference has raised him very high in the estimate of the Galway people'* (G01/4/5). However, he declined to put his name forward.

Following the success of the Land Conference Shawe-Taylor became involved in the Irish Reform Association which held its first meeting at the Royal Hibernian Hotel, Dawson Street, Dublin in April 1903. Earl of Dunraven, Adare, Co. Limerick presided. The objectives of the Association were firstly *'To encourage co-operation amongst all Irishmen, irrespective of creed or class, for the development of the country's resources, and for the promotion of the welfare of*

⁵ Campbell, Fergus, *Land & Revolution, Nationalist Politics in the West of Ireland 1891-1921*, p76



the people', and secondly to *'To secure for Ireland such effective control of purely Irish affairs as may be compatible with the maintenance of the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland, and with the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament'* (G01/4/8, p40).

At its first meeting the Association passed a resolution stating *'That we reaffirm our belief that in the application of the spirit of the Land Conference to Irish problems lies the only hope of satisfactory solution'* (G01/4/8, p40).

In September 1903 Shawe-Taylor suggested holding yet another Conference, this time on the University Question. The objective been to *'end the present feud between Orangeism and Catholicism in the North'* and to remove *'religious intolerance wherever it exists in other parts of Ireland'* (The Freeman's Journal, 11 September 1903, G01/4/7).

He was conferred a Freeman of the City of Dublin in 1903. He married, Amy Eleonora, only child of Gerard Norman, BCS, of Bromley, Kent on 12 July 1905⁶. They had two children, (Michael b. 1906, and Eleonora Elizabeth b. 1909). The last family member to reside at Castletaylor, Michael Taylor, left in 1950s and died shortly afterwards in Trinidad.⁷

Gort Rural District Council passed a resolution of sympathy following Captain Shaw-Taylor's death in June 1911, stating *'That wehaving heard with regret of the demise of Captain Shawe-Taylor do hereby tender to Mr Walter Shawe-Taylor, and the other members of his family, an expression of our sincere sympathy in the great loss they have sustained'* (G01/10/9, p2).⁸

Arrangement

The volumes in this collection are for the most part arranged chronologically by type. They form a comprehensive account of the contemporary view on the historic Irish Land Conference, on Shawe-Taylor and his role in the Conference and on the other issues in which he took an interest or active role. The volume of clippings on the Land Conference, 1902-1903 (G01/04/2), may have been compiled and kept by Shawe-Taylor while on tour in American – it includes postal addresses of various contacts in the States, together with various letters from persons in America. His 1890 diary is an interesting narrative on the life and activities of an army Officer based in the jungles of Burma.

Patria McWalter Archivist

⁶ Burke's Irish Family Records, 1976

⁷ Henry, William *Role on Honour. The Mayors of Galway City, 1485-2001*, p100

⁸ Gort Rural District Council Collection at Galway County Archives, G01/10



Allied Material

Primary Sources

- Castle Taylor, Ardrahan, County Galway papers, James Hardiman Library, NUI, Galway
- Gort Rural District Council Archives, Galway County Council Archives, G01/10
- John Dillon Paper (6773), Trinity College Dublin

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A. Diary of Lieutenant Shawe-Taylor, 1890

1. 1 January 1890 – 27 May 1890, Burma Directory and Diary, marked 'Private'
30 November – 31 December kept by Shawe-Taylor when based in Burma,
wherein he records his daily activities and,
movements, details of his dealings with and handling of the men under his
command and the local inhabitants, and details of patrols, receipt of rations, and
letters from home. Includes entries such as
 - 'Went out on patrol N.W., visiting all the villages interviewing Thuggis and Goungs, last village we came to was Ningyan. Here the Goung told us some villagers had seen fresh elephant tracks that morning. Came back here for 2 days rations and started back with one section at 2. Took 10 villagers from Nigyan and came on tracks about 3 days old just before sunset. Dismounted and with 2 men and Stanley followed tracks...' (16 January).
 - 'Interpreter told me that girl had been raped by 2 soldiers between 16th and 18th. Sounded the "Fall in", and had roll call, but all present. Warned men in order that I would deal very severally with anyone found out of barracks without my permission. Afterwards they all paraded as they wished to see me, said they were all surprised at being accused. Told them that at any rate there were 2 of them who weren't, so it was nonsense to talk of all. Warned them again that I punish to the full extent of my powers anyone found out of barracks without my leave' (27 January).
 - 'Interpreter woke me up at 1 with news that Myoke had sent in word from Myolin that released Npoungyi had cut the Minthoes head off. Started off at once with 2 Sections, shook hands with the Myoke who was in the greatest state of delight. We waited till 4 and then started for place in jungle near Joodatgyee. The Npoungy and his bloody dab accompany us. We found plenty of tracks of blood, but very hard to follow up on dry ground...' (4 February).
 - 'Took off Day Guard as men not even getting 2 nights in bed. Warned them it would be put on again if any cases of breaking out of camp. Getting frightfully hot in the day time now, in fact it doesn't get cool till the early morning when a breeze springs up' (2 April).
 - 'No letter from Home feel uneasy as Mother had bad cold when writing last, am afraid it may be the Influenza' (9 April).

Also includes some notes at the back of the volumes, such as relating to rations,
and various expenses such as payments to guides. c. 50pp



B. Irish Land Conference, 1902-1903

Volumes of various national and local newspaper clippings relating to the establishment of, progress, final report, and analysis of the effectiveness of the Irish Land Conference organised, in large part by Shawe-Taylor, to bring landlords and tenants together to discuss an amicable resolution to the question of land ownership in Ireland.

Average size 270pp

2. [July] 1902 – July 1903
Includes article stating 'Capt. John Shawe-Taylor of Galway, Irel., originator of the conference which made possible the Irish Irish Land bill, which is this week absorbing the attention of the British cabinet, addressed the Victorian Club at a dinner at Hotel Nottingham last night. While the olive branch hung conspicuously, although metaphorically, over the meeting, there was a undeniable waving of the red flag – an air of armed neutrality – such as might be expected when an ardent Irish reformer expressed his views frankly before one of the staunchest British clubs in the city...'

Includes [holograph] notes by Shaw-Taylor throughout the volume, in particular at the back where there is what could perhaps be a rough diary of persons to see while on tour in America together with their addresses, such as that of John Devoy, (Secretary Clanna-Gael).

Includes articles detailing the basis of the Wyndham Act (1903). Also includes several letters to Shawe-Taylor.
3. 3 September 1902 – 9 October 1902
Includes article stating 'that Captain John Shawe-Taylor, whose powers as an organiser of opinion have been amply proved by the success of his efforts on the Licensing Question, renews with candour and boldness the attempt, already made in less courageous form by others, to bring together a Conference between landlords' and tenants' representatives for the settlement of the Land Question. He invites by name the men who, by general consent, are best entitled to speak for the landlords and the tenants to a friendly Conference in Dublin within a month from the issue of the invitation' (3 September 1902).
4. 10 October 1902 – 18 December 1902
Includes copy of photograph of Shawe-Taylor pasted to front of the volume.



5. 18 December 1902 – 15 February 1903

6. 14 February 1903 - 6 April 1903

Includes report on Shawe-Taylor's five week tour to the United States. His objective 'was to ascertain whether

Irishmen in America entertained a really undying and irreconcilable hatred to England, or whether, in the event of England displaying a sincere endeavour to restore peace and prosperity to the country by finally settling the land question, there would be any possibility of a change in Irish-American sentiment' (2 March 1903).

Includes a report of an account of the Irish situation given by Shawe-Taylor in a speech before the Victoria Club of Boston where he is reported to have 'One of the great difficulties is this: The Englishman does not understand the Irishman. The Irishman is possessed of a very quick wit, he is clever, brilliant, brave; he was a memory of the past; he is possess of an exquisite quality of sympathy.

The Englishman is different. He is more methodical, and so, more practical. The material things of life appeal more to the Englishman than to the Irishman. The Irishman has essentially spiritual nature. Memory and sentiment appeal to him ore than anything else in the world.' (21 February 1903).



C. The University Question, 1903-1904

7. 11 September 1903 – 8 January 1904 Volume of newspapers clippings relating to the establishment of a Conference to discuss the University Question.

Includes an article stating 'Captain Shaw Taylor, greatly daring and encouraged by past experience, comes forward again with the suggestion for a Conference upon another of the grave problems of Irish government. This time he proposes a Conference on the University Question...His object in suggesting a Conference is, as he states it, "to end the present feud between Orangeism and Catholicism in the North" and to remove "religious intolerance wherever it exists in other parts of Ireland" (The Freeman's Journal, 11 September 1903); and in a report following a visit to Queen's College in Galway he said "It is a deplorable state of affairs. In Galway the Queen's College with its schools of arts, engineering, medicine, and law, its magnificent buildings, laboratories, and halls of science, its buildings, finer far externally than the American colleges and yet practically moribund. The college would accommodate 400 students, and yet last session the number was only 118. How can Irishmen succeed and compete successfully with other members of the Empire when such education as is offered to them by the Queen's College is closed to them. At present, rightly or wrongly, the Catholics of Ireland consider that the colleges are dangerous to their faith. Here at once is a subject for settlement at the Irish University Conference and the result will be that the Queen's Colleges will then fulfil their true mission of affording the best and highest education to every man in Ireland who is desirous of obtaining it" (The Irish Times, 12 September 1903); at a meeting held in the Galway Urban Council Room on 6 January 1904 Shawe-Taylor is reported to have said that '... as a Galway man he was glad to be before them that day to discuss the all-important University question. The county was waking up. They had the Gaelic League making good Irishmen, the Irish Literary Society, and the Irish National Theatre. Politically they had the Land Act, which was revolutionising the country. One grand thing about the Land Act was that it had brought out to some degree and to some extent the landlords of Ireland. It was stated that the conference on the land question consisted mostly of hunting men. He was glad to see the treasurer of the County Galway Hunt present, and he only hoped that the hunting men of Ireland would be with them in the University question...' (The Irish Times, 7th January 1904).

c. 100pp



D. Irish Reform Association, 1903 – [1906]

8. April 1903 – [1906] Volume of newspaper clippings relating to the Irish Reform Association, includes
- article stating that 'Interviewed in London on Saturday, Captain Shaw-Taylor said: - The passing of the Irish Land Act and the prospects of the early establishment of a peasant proprietorship instead of the present dual ownership has effected a revolutionary change in Ireland.
Irish landowners, already debarred from Parliamentary careers, as well as from the County and Rural Councils, will, when they have parted with their tenants, have still less interest than ever in their country and its concerns. Their homes and demesnes will now be their only sources of interest and occupation. Without doubt, progressive, able, and active men will rebel against such social and political ostracism, and in large numbers leave the country....
The 'Irish Reform Association' affords an opportunity to such men, and it is from Irish landowners that the Association will probably receive a full measure of support.
It is possible that in the near future Nationalist may, without sacrifice of principle, allow members of the new Association the opportunity of entering the public life of their country by serving in Parliament and in the County and Rural Councils. Under such circumstance, without doubt, landowners would have the strongest inducements to remain in their own country, while Ireland would, I believe, be an undoubted gainer in prestige, power, and material prosperity. Extremists, no doubt, on both sides may view with suspicion such a moderate and progressive Association...'. (p15)
 - Articles on Shawe-Taylor's address to the Protestants and Orangemen of Ulster in Belfast to debate the issue of devolution, with one stating that 'Captain Shawe-Taylor has a clear, incisive style, and won his way at once to the hearts of his hearers. His courage, tact and gentlemanly bearing, and above all, his transparent honesty and sincerity, succeeded where his arguments failed. His personality and not his cause was the winning card that never failed him' (p37). Furthermore, the same article reported he said that 'It was primarily the Local Government Act which had given administrative capacity to the Irish people. It had given the people self-reliance, and encouraged their temporal and industrial activity.....Ten years ago they were torn asunder by agrarian warfare; to-day it seemed as if they could hear the bearing of the wings of the angel of peace. They had learned, as a people, that one pound of construction was worth a tone of destruction. And that heaven helped those that helped themselves...'(p37)



- Includes transcript of an open letter from Shawe-Taylor in response to a similar letter by the Bishop of Kildare, wherein he stated 'We have to face facts; the North needs ocular demonstration and practical proof that such a thing as clerical dictation is an absolute impossibility before it will give its adherence to an extension of self-government. Therefore very humbly, very imperfectly, but very earnestly, I Would plead with the bishops and priests of Ireland to consider whether under existing circumstances the cause of Ireland would not now be best advanced if something could be done to more largely leave the arena of controversial politics to Irish politicians and to Irish statesmen' (p45).

72pp



E. Irish Industrial Reform, 1905-1906, [1909]

9. 1905-1905, [1909] Volume of newspaper clippings relating to industrial reform and the growth of industrial associations advocating the need to industrialize.
- 20pp