

2010 Ireland Trip Report

by Kevin Howley

As the Blackburn family departed Ireland after the 2004 trip, I started feeling unsettled with the thought that the history of our early Quaker ancestors might be lost without greater attention being paid to the places they lived, worshipped and toiled. The 2004 journey had gone a long way to bridge that understanding of history, but how would future generations in both North America and Ireland be assured that history would be preserved?

This query led to discussions with local Quakers in Ireland, the local historical society and the trustees of the Blackburn ancestral burial ground to consider the manufacture and installation of a permanent historical marker at the original site of the Ballyhagan Meetinghouse and at Money Burial Ground. To encourage consideration of such a proposal, the Blackburn Family Association had given approval for the payment of the costs associated with these projects. Our recommendations were well received and planning for the markers moved forward.

At the same time, family members were encouraging that another trip to Ireland be planned. Many who had traveled the first time wanted to return and others were disappointed at having missed that first trip. What better solution than to coordinate another Blackburn trip with the scheduled dedication of both of these historical markers – so the coordination began and an amazing trip was planned.

The itinerary for our July 2010 visit was similar to the 2004 trip. The objective of both trips was several fold: (1) get a first-hand look and feel for the ancestral home, both spiritual and physical, of our Blackburn ancestors; (2) learn about the history of the area in and around County Armagh, Ireland, especially during the period that the Blackburns flourished there; (3) have a little time to simply be tourists; and, mostly importantly, (4) get a chance to get to know our Blackburn cousins.

The total number of travelers on this trip was 69 – just a few more than had traveled in 2004. Of that total of 69, only nine had made the trip six years earlier. The size of the group was perfect in many respects – large enough to have two large motor coaches at our service each day, but small enough so that there was extra leg room on the bus.

Although most of our time was spent in the northern counties of Ireland, the family initially gathered in Dublin on Wednesday, July 21, for the first evening of the trip. The Dublin airport provides more flight options for travelers – and many had come to Europe early or were staying later. We stayed at the Radisson Blu and the lobby was busy that afternoon as Blackburn travelers began checking in. The only planned evening activity was a family dinner.

Travelers began gathering for a family dinner at the hotel at 6:30 and Linda Myers was kind enough to prepare Blackburn Family name tags for each person to fill out and wear during their trip. (You have to keep in mind that most travelers knew very few other travelers, if any, on the trip.) Travelers were also provided with a summary of their line of descent from the immigrant ancestor, John Blackburn, allowing people to compare notes as to just how they were related. Association president, Paula Lee, and her daughter, Sadie, made some welcoming remarks and the group did some “exercises” to meet the people near them. Dinner was wonderful and people sat around their dinner tables for several hours, mixing and mingling. The hotel itself was quite nice and the food at breakfast the next day was equally amazing. Good food (and plenty of it) seemed to be a theme for the week ahead.

On the morning of Thursday, July 22, the family boarded our motor coaches and we were treated to a bus tour of Dublin. Our tour package included guides for the “tourist” components of our trips and we were blessed with two very knowledgeable Irish ladies with big personalities and lots of stories to tell. In fact, there is still some debate about the veracity of some of those stories, but they were certainly entertaining. Among our stops in Dublin was a visit to Trinity College and a look at the Book of Kells.

The only item on the agenda for Thursday afternoon was the two-hour or so trip to Belfast, where we would be headquartered for the remainder of our visit. Our guides provided commentary along the way, but many travelers used the opportunity to get caught up on their sleep. [Last time the family went immediately to Belfast via coach and adding a night of rest and a social dinner in Dublin added greatly to the trip.] We again settled into a Radisson Blu in Belfast and folks were on their own for the evening.

On Friday morning, July 23, the family headed directly to Armagh, the ecclesiastical center of Ireland and the administrative center of the county of Armagh. [Loughgall, the Irish hometown of the Blackburns, is in that county.] There are two cathedrals in the city, both dedicated to St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland. The cathedrals serve the Church of Ireland (Anglican) and the Roman Catholic church. The Church of Ireland site is the one on which St. Patrick is believed to have founded a church in the fifth century. When Henry VIII split from the Roman Catholic church in Rome, that original cathedral site came under the control of the Church of Ireland, forcing Roman Catholics to worship elsewhere. A visit to these cathedrals helped family members understand a little bit about the religious struggles that citizens were facing during that time, but also about the tremendous power held by the Church of Ireland during those days. The first Quaker meeting was established in Ireland in 1654, in the midst of turbulent times.

It is thanks to this control by the Church of Ireland, and the punishments meted out in the Church's name, that we have some sense of context and timing for the life and times of the parents of the immigrant John Blackburn. [We know his parents' names were John and Elizabeth, but at this point we have no information about their ancestry or place of birth.] During those early days, tenants and farmers paid tithes to the church rather than taxes. If they lived within the verge of the parish, they were expected to make their contribution whether they were a member of that church or not. If they did not make their payments (tithes), they were taken to court. The following summarizes actions taken against John Blackburn (father of John Blackburn the immigrant) during that period:

1667 – John Blackburn was sued for tythes in the Manor Court of Loughgall by Humphry Pettard, Priest. He lost a horse worth two pounds.

1668 – John Blackburn was sued for tythes and clerk's wages and was taken from him as much as yarn as was worth two pounds.

1673 – John Blackburn had taken from him for tithe, by the servants of George Walker, four car-loads of hay, worth two shillings.

1677 – John Blackburn had taken from him for tithe four stooks of maslin, eight stooks of oats and one pig, all worth eleven shillings. [A stook is an arrangement of cut grain.]

1680 – John Blackburn had taken from him for tithe, by Patrick Powel, one stook of maslin, two stooks of Barley and six stooks of oats, all worth five shillings.

1681 – John Blackburn had taken from him for tithe, by the servants of Garret Barry (the priest of the parish of Kilmore), four stooks of barley, five stooks of oats and two loans of hay, all worth seven shillings.

These actions, starting at least as early as 1667, indicate that the Blackburn family were certainly members of the Society of Friends as early as that date, rejecting tithes imposed by the Church of Ireland. The Society of Friends was established in Ireland in 1654, so the Blackburns may well have been among the founding members of the Society. The monetary penalties assessed to the Blackburns also reveal that they were not of great means, their penalties being among the lowest assessed.

From Armagh the bus moved on to the small town of Loughgall, the ancestral home of the Blackburn family. We know this to be the townland of their origin because the Quaker records consistently refer to this family as being from Loughgall. The site of their homestead is not known, but given their financial standing and the fact that the land within this townland was almost entirely under the control of the Cope family, they were probably tenants of the Cope family who lived at Loughgall Manor.

The buses parked in Loughgall Country Park, now a public park within the verge of Loughgall Manor. (The Manor itself is now also government-owned and houses the headquarters of a government lab related to the development of orchards.) The family enjoyed a boxed lunch and had some time to walk around this beautiful village, getting a feel for the life our ancestors might have lived. An unfortunate memory of this stop was a playground accident which resulted in what was thought to be a broken arm to one of the two children on our trip, 11-year old Gabe Miller. The health care system took good care of Gabe until he could get back to the United States at the end of the trip. [Once the swelling was down, doctors in the United States were happy to report that there was no fracture.]

County Armagh itself is often referred to as “Orchard Country”, the reason for which becomes evident when driving the roads into and out of Loughgall. The rolling hills along both sides of the roads were covered with apple trees. When seeing row after row of apple trees, one immediately recalls that the same view can be seen driving along the rural roads of Pennsylvania’s Menallen and Butler townships where the Blackburns first settled, including the original land owned by the immigrant John Blackburn which is now owned and operated by Adams County Nursery. It appears clear that John Blackburn, and other Irish Quakers, brought these skills as orchardists to Pennsylvania from County Armagh.

As with any tour there’s never enough time and our visit to Loughgall had to end. From there the family moved on for a bus tour of Belfast, with a specially guided tour of Belfast City Hall, a visit to the parliament building at Stormont and a visit to the Harland & Wolff shipyards where the Titanic was built.

On Saturday, July 24th, the family was joined in the morning by historian Arthur Chapman, who provided commentary and historical insight during the bus trip that day. Arthur and his brother Ross are well respected Quaker historians in the area. Arthur is the author of histories for both Lisburn and Lurgan meetings and his father, George, was the author of *The History of Ballyhagan and Richhill Meetings*, Ballyhagan Meeting being the spiritual ancestral home for the Blackburn family.

Our first stop that Saturday was the Irish Linen Centre and Museum located in the town of Lisburn. Lisburn was and continues to be a very active Quaker town and is home to the only Quaker school still left in the northern counties of Ireland. The town was also at the center of the Quaker linen trade, an industry that made a lot of Quaker families very wealthy in its day. Family members got a guided tour of the museum and had some time to walk around the town.

From there the family moved on to Moyallon Meeting, where members of that meeting hosted the family to a light lunch. The road to Moyallon was lined with beautiful old mansions, thanks in large measure to the linen trade. Local Quakers provided a history of the meeting and family members had a chance to walk the burial grounds. Moyallon Meeting was the spiritual home for most of the Morton family. A large percentage of Blackburn family has Morton roots as John Blackburn’s second wife was Rachel Morton. Other Morton family members married into the family through children by John Blackburn’s first wife, Mary Courtney.

The visit to Moyallon Meeting was one of the highlights of the trip because there were actually several Morton cousins among those greeting us that day. Four of them took charge of the preparation of the lunch, they being Rosemary (Sinton) Castagner and her sister, Helen (Sinton) Boyd and Rosemary (Greeves) Dickson and her daughter, Elizabeth (Dickson) O’Halloran. After lunch, another Morton cousin, Hugh Richardson, walked over to join us for conversation in the adjacent cemetery. Our visit created so much excitement that there is talk that some of these folks at Moyallon, cousins and not, might come visit us during our June 2012 Blackburn reunion. As a show of appreciation for their hospitality, the Blackburn Family Association presented Moyallon Meeting with a contribution of \$1000.

From Moyallon we moved on to Lynastown Burial Ground, one of the oldest, if not the oldest Quaker burial ground in Ireland. The burial ground at Moyallon did not begin until 1736, so before that time members of Moyallon, as well as Lurgan and some other meetings, were buried in this cemetery. We do know that many Mortons are buried at Lynastown, including John Morton (1656-1729) who had several descendants that married into the Blackburn family. John Morton was also the uncle to Rachel (Morton) Blackburn.

Unlike Moyallon Burial Ground where there were quite a number of tombstones, Lynastown is almost barren, with only a few headstones showing and a few dirt mounds, surrounded by a stone wall with a gate. Before the early 19th century, Quakers never used tombstones. From time to time burials might be marked with a small square footer stone with the deceased's initials. Since Lynastown was basically out of use after 1788, the cemetery appears desolate. The local historical society has tried to maintain the cemetery and has posted an historical marker inside the cemetery listing those buried there as recorded in Quaker minutes. Given not all burials were noted in the minutes, the list of individuals buried there would certainly more extensive.

As a point of reference, Friends have historically not believed in bodily resurrection and thus always regarded the physical remains of a person as spiritually insignificant. They also have a testimony of simplicity, discouraging anything that would tend to "puff up" individual pride. Burial or other disposal of the dead is, therefore, mostly a public health issue. By extension, Friends do not tend to visit cemeteries as a method of remembrance or honor. At death, family and friends gather for a Memorial Meeting for Worship and this event is totally disconnected from burial or cremation. Our visit to Quaker cemeteries was, in that sense, out of the ordinary, but local Friends certainly appreciated the spirit behind our desire to visit these historic locations.

Our final visit that day was to Lurgan Meeting, another town with a rich Quaker heritage. Lurgan was the first meeting established in Ireland (1654), followed shortly thereafter by Friends at Ballyhagan in the same year. Unlike Loughgall and Ballyhagan where the Lord of the Manor was connected to the Church of Ireland, the Lord of the Manor in Lurgan (Arthur Brownlow) was a Quaker himself, perhaps allowing for greater growth and freedom within the Quaker community.

Lurgan is also the ancestral home for many Blackburn families through some of their other connections, which added significance to the stop. Among the family names with roots in Lurgan are: Cain, Calvert, Harland, Hodgson, Hollingsworth, Hoop, Kirk and Webb, among many others. Unlike Quakers from Ballyhagan Meeting, the origins of many of these families are more easily identified because they arrived in Ireland in the 1670s and their homelands were often recorded in Quaker minutes. These families tended to come from the English counties of Durham, York, Cumberland and Lancashire.

To this point, the largest limb on the Blackburn tree comes down from John Blackburn (c1720-1767), son of the immigrant, and his wife, Rebecca Harlan. Rebecca's grandparents, George Harlan and Elizabeth Duck were married right there in Lurgan on the 17th day of the 9th month (November) in 1678. (Elizabeth Duck was the daughter of a Hoop and granddaughter of a Calvert, other founding families in Lurgan.)

Members of the Lurgan meeting greeted us that day and historian Arthur Chapman provided us with additional history about the town and the meeting. Before heading back to Belfast for a greatly needed night's rest, the Blackburn Family Association presented Lurgan Meeting with a contribution of \$250.

The clan headed out again on Sunday, July 25th. The first stop that day was to share Meeting for Worship with members of Richhill Meeting. [Richhill is a contraction for Richardson's Hill, the Richardsons having been a wealthy Quaker family.] Richhill Meeting was established in 1793 when Friends at Ballyhagan decided to move, the Ballyhagan meeting house having not aged gracefully and being unsustainable. More importantly, many of the members of Ballyhagan Meeting had left Ireland with the wave of Quaker migration during the period 1720-1750. The Ballyhagan Meeting location had become too isolated relative to where Quaker families continued to live.

For many among our group of 69 travelers, representing many faith traditions, this Meeting for Worship among the Religious Society of Friends would be the first they had attended. Unlike most Sundays at Richhill, the meetinghouse was packed. People came from other meetings to share the morning with us, and many others from the community joined in to celebrate the day. At the close of meeting, local Friends hosted us to a wonderful lunch that included traditional Irish stew, Irish breads and apple pies made with local apples. Again as a show of appreciation and support, the Blackburn Family Association presented the meeting with a contribution of \$1000.

After lunch, family members and locals alike boarded the bus to head to Money Burial Ground, the burial site for members of Ballyhagan Meeting. The burial ground is located along a small road in Money townland. The road is so small and the hill so steep that the buses stopped about half a mile away and we walked to the entrance of the cemetery – and that was the easy part. The cemetery itself was located up a steep staircase and, once at the cemetery entrance, the burial ground continued up the hill from there. Some locals provided car shuttle to those Blackburn travelers who needed some extra help to get to the start of the staircase.

As folks arrived at the top of the stairs to the entrance to the burial ground, they were met with the magnificent marker that had been manufactured and installed thanks to the efforts of our Blackburn Family Association. The marker was beautifully designed and executed. The words on the marker were crafted in collaboration with the Blackburn Family Association, the local burial ground committee, the historical society and local Quakers and they read:

**MONEY BURIAL GROUND
FORMERLY BURIAL SITE FOR
RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS**

**Quaker families from nearby
Ballyhagan Meeting, which was
established in 1654, used this
burial ground from an early
date, until 1793 when they
moved to Richhill.**

**Among those buried here are:
JOHN BLACKBURN died 1723,
his wife ELIZABETH died 1713,
WILLIAM MORTON died 1708
and his wife ELINOR died 1703.**

**Erected by the
Blackburn Family Association
2010**

As a refresher, the immigrants to North America were John Blackburn (c1675-1752) and his second wife, Rachel Morton (1694-aft 1768). They left Ireland for Pennsylvania in 1736. John and Elizabeth Blackburn noted in the marker are his parents; William and Elinor Morton are her parents. It is likely that the first wife of the immigrant John Blackburn, Mary (Courtney) Winter, is also buried in this cemetery.

In addition to local Quakers joining us on this adventure, committee people from the burial ground and the historical society were also in attendance to help us dedicate this day and appreciated this marker. Local historian Ross Chapman was kind enough to have taken the time to review the early minutes of Ballyhagan Meeting and read several entries from those minutes as they pertained to burials at that cemetery. Several family members were in tears as they appreciated the opportunity to both recognize their history and, with this historical marker, secure that history.

Again reflecting Quaker practice, visitors to Money Burial Ground would not see a tombstone for their Quaker ancestors. Although Quaker burials ended here about 1790, this cemetery remains in use today by families in the community – some with surnames representing the early Quaker settlers in that area. The trees that surround this cemetery provide a beautiful canopy and locals have ironically nicknamed this the “cathedral cemetery”.

From the burial ground the buses then headed to the original site of the Ballyhagan Meetinghouse. Again we had to park a half mile away and walk to the site. The meetinghouse itself is long gone, but the original

steps up to the meetinghouse property remain in reasonably good shape. Also on the property are the remains of a small building that is believed to have been the Ballyhagan Friends School. The current owners of the property and other locals came by to greet us.

Again the family took the opportunity to dedicate an historical marker that was placed on the property, right at the head of the stairs. (This marker was also funded by our Blackburn Family Association.) As part of that dedication, Ross Chapman read aloud the marriage certificate of John Blackburn and Rachel Morton dated 16th day, 3rd month (May) 1717. The marker, which reads as follows, was also manufactured and installed with the financial support of the Blackburn Family Association:

**Former site of
Religious Society of Friends
Ballyhagan Meeting House**

**Ballyhagan Friends first gathered
in the home of Margery Atkinson,
near Kilmore, in 1654, establishing
the second Quaker Meeting in Ireland.
Friends build a meeting house at
this site shortly thereafter
and worshipped here until 1793,
when they moved to Richhill.**

Erected July 2010

This busy Sunday still had one more stop before the family would head back to Belfast – an historical site referred to as the Dan Winter Home. To most travelers, this site is of historical significance as the birthplace of the Orange Order. The Orange Order came into existence in 1795, long after the departure of our Blackburns, after the Battle of the Diamond, near Loughgall, a conflict between the Catholic and Protestant communities. Dan Winter was an early organizer and supporter of the order.

For the Blackburns, this home is historically important because it was a home where the family socialized and worshipped in the late 17th and early 18th century. The earliest known ancestor of this Winter family was John Winter (c1647-1690) whose son, Francis, was the first husband of Mary Courtney. Francis died about 1700 and Mary Courtney then married John Blackburn in 1701. The Blackburn family ate at the table in this home and sat around the hearth. The Dan Winter Home is still in the Winter family and Hilda Winter and her granddaughters welcomed us that day.

On the way back to Belfast that day, the bus passed briefly through the townland of Creenagh – the home of William and Elinor Morton and the birthplace of their children. The townland itself is quite small and rural and there really wasn't anything to see – other than lots of apple orchards and a sign indicating a road named "Creenagh Road". Our arrival back at the Radisson Blu brought to an end the family-history focused part of the tour.

The final full day of our travels, Monday, July 26th, was focused on a "touristy" exploration of the northeastern part of Ireland. We again were joined by local guides who provided commentary throughout our day. On our way out of Belfast we passed through the areas most affected by Catholic-Protestant strife, locally known as "The Troubles," including a brief stop at the Peace Wall where many family members left their signatures or a note. The remainder of the morning was spent traveling slowly up the Antrim coast with its beautiful views of the Irish Sea. The skies in the distance were a little overcast, but the shores of Scotland were spotted here and there. Just before noon the coaches stopped at Dunluce Castle, a medieval castle with a very interesting history. After a fantastic lunch in the little village of Bushmills, the family moved on to the Giants Causeway, a World Heritage Site and a natural wonder. Depending upon your imagination, the Causeway was either the result of a volcanic eruption or the work of the giant Finn McCool who was trying to build a bridge to Scotland.

After a very full day on the road, the family headed back to Belfast with many eyes closed and snoring coming from some corners. But the long day was not yet over – the family gathered that evening for a farewell dinner at a local restaurant. A few toasts were made, tears were shed and hugs were given. Travelers lingered late into the evening, everyone realizing that our journey had come to an end.

Early Tuesday, July 27th, family members began boarding our coaches, with some family members heading home and others continuing their adventure. Breakfast that morning brought more hugs and more laughter – and promises to see each other again at the reunion in Gettysburg in June 2012 as a group of strangers had left as friends. Everyone left feeling as if they had truly experienced something special and unique.

The following travelers were part of the Ireland tour, with Blackburn descendants marked with an asterisk:

Ruth*/Jacob Abraham, Austin, TX
Claude Blackburn*/Annie Ray, Mount Vernon, WA
Dwight */Ruth Blackburn, Centerville, UT
Jay*/Charlotte Blackburn, Gig Harbor, WA
John Blackburn*, San Francisco, CA
Nola Blackburn*, Lusk, WY
Paul Blackburn*, McLean, VA
Sarah Blackburn*, Lake Village, AR
Susan Blackburn*, Carlisle, PA
Becki Burgess*, West Valley City, UT
Jim Burgess*, West Valley City, UT
Virginia*/Ken Burgess, West Valley City, UT
Morgan Busch*, Sandy, UT
Janet Corey*, Tucson, AZ
Sorina*/Mikel Cornia
Carol Fox*, Manistee, MI
Bill Fricke*, North Branch, MI
Carol Lee*/Mario Gho, Fairbanks, AK
Anabel*/Wayne Harris, North Branch, MI
Laura Harris
DeAnn*/Tom Hokanson, Port Orchard, WA
Kevin Howley*/Jason Tylenda, Huntington Woods, MI
Lyla Husband*, Happy Valley, OR
Pam Husband*, Milwaukie, OR
Paula Lee*, Dalton Gardens, ID
Sadie Lee*, Centennial, CO
Jerry Miller*/Marilyn Meacham, Bedford, PA
Joe Miller*, California, MD
Susan Montgomery*, Somerville, NJ
Linda Myers*, Canal Winchester, OH
Nancy Myers*, North Branch, MI
Marty O'Donnell*, Indianapolis, IN
Shirley*/Jesse Park, Stahlstown, PA
Lillian*/David Quiring, Liberal, KS
Rebecca Roberts*, Erie, PA
Kaitlyn Roth, Dallas, OR
Lou Ronnebaum*, Earlville, IA
Karin*/John Sedewar, Cairnbrook, PA
Michael*/Christen/Grace Sedewar, Cairnbrook, PA
Melissa Shakman*, Chicago, IL
Nancy Stacy*, Dallas, OR
Betsy Starman*, Naples, FL
Alice*/Jim Sutterfield, Corning, NY

Deb*/Paul Tangren, Falls Church, VA
LeNoir Tennell*, Kirkland, WA
Mary Thomas*, Lexington, OH
Velda*/Paul Thorpe, Sidney, OH
Kerri Twitchell*/Gabe Miller*, Aurora, CO