

Good Evening

Mr. President, Members and Guests

An Irish Statesman and Literarian

This is my third paper on Edmund Burke.

The first was my first Club paper, 33 years ago in 1982. The second was 13 years ago in 2002 and now the third. Why this repetition? you may well ask.

This is partly because available information on Burke, the Irish Statesman and Literarian, has been continually increasing. Recently there has been a surge of new information. For instance three new books on Burke have appeared in the past 18 months. This is a remarkable record for someone who has been dead over 200 years. I believe some of the new evidence that has emerged could be of interest to the Club.

The most recent of these new books is by David Bromwich, Sterling Professor of English at Yale, published in 2014 by Harvard University Press, entitled "The Intellectual Life of Edmund Burke". It deals with Burke, both as a philosopher and a politician. The book has received rave reviews, both by the London Review of Books and the New York Times Book Review.

Bromwich examines Burke's writings and speeches at length and in a very scholarly fashion. He examines his words and what they tell us about the way Burke thought. He also highlights the literary quality of Burke's writings and the debt he owes to Milton and Shakespeare. Bromwich admires what he describes as Burke's sense of "enlightened humanity" and the deftness with which he unravels the complexities of 18th century British politics.

Both book reviewers believe that Bromwich on Burke will become the standard reference for some time to come.

My paper this evening will include a good deal about Ireland in the 18th century and about Burke's early formative years before he became famous.

This includes the time when he was a student at Trinity College Dublin, my old alma mater. I will also include an account of his happy retirement years after he left politics, spent in Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire. These

interesting periods of Burke's life are rather neglected so far by the literature.

Members of my wife's family lived in Beaconsfield and for some years my wife and I had had a vacation home there at number 3 Burke's Road.

Inevitably some material from my previous papers will reappear in what I have to say this evening. For this I beg forgiveness, particularly from those

of you of long standing who also have long memories.

As an introduction to paper three, let me start on board a trans-Atlantic flight from the States to Ireland. The Irish-American writer J.P. Dunleavy gazed down through his cabin-window, as his flight descended on its approach to the Shannon Airport.

He described the scene below in poetic prose in the opening paragraph of his book on Ireland.

“The ocean beats pearl white against the high dark cliffs

and spills green tinted water on its sallow beaches.

To look down from the skies, the tiny fields are soft,

silent and green in their innocence.

From brown bogs and purple brighter moorlands,

streams and lakes shine silver upon a land

that long knows how to tolerate suffering.”

Ireland’s suffering began in 1169 with an invasion,
a brutal attack by her Anglo-Norman neighbor, England.

Ireland invaded so long ago,
England’s armour and deadly cross-bow
Crushed a weak-armed Irish peasantry.
So began a long, sad, history.

England, by Dermot McMurrugh led,
Landed at Wexford and quickly spread.

McMurrugh, a minor Irish king,
What made him do such a treach'rous thing!
Rejected, when seeking High King's role,
Enraged, deprived of his lifetime's goal.
Worst enemy chosen, the last straw.

Humiliation, stuck in his craw.

In Ireland, at the mere mention of the name, McMurrugh,
you are expected to turn aside and spit on the ground.

Ireland struggled in vain to be free

Too proud to go down on bended knee

Poverty, hunger, life very hard,

Few Irish families left unscarred.

An old Irish lament conveys the heartbreak and bitterness
caused by the occupation. It sounded like this.

O Paddy dear and did you hear the news that's going round?
The shamrock is by law forbid to grow on Irish ground

She's the most distressful country that ever yet was seen
They are hanging men and women for the wearing of the green.

Irish uprisings just always went wrong.
England too near, its army too strong.
Ireland absorbed, like Scotland and Wales,
Rebels were killed, or thrown into jails.
I hated Irish history at school.
Ireland always lost, that was the rule.
Made part of the United Kingdom,
Price Ireland paid, loss of its freedom.
Tied to the will of the Kingdom's Crown,
Dublin became a small English town.
Of its old culture, hardly a trace;
Was England's largest overseas base,
Dublin fenced in. "Paled" for protection,
"Beyond the Pale" meant complete rejection.
The MacGowans lived "Beyond the Pale",
Their name meant "Blacksmith's Son" to a Gael.
Irish, the nation's language once again,
Riobard MacGowan is my true Irish name.

My blacksmith forebears worked with metals

When work was slow, they mended kettles.

Entering Pale, natives forbidden.

Those who made it had to be hidden.

Some MacGowans reduced name to Smith,

Were admitted to Dublin, forthwith.

Sixteen ninety one rebellion failed;

Irish fighters killed or for life jailed.

England turned its screw even tighter,

Increased fury of Irish fighter.

The English leader Cromwell, as punishment for rebellion, introduced harsh new Penal Laws.

The practice of Catholicism in Ireland was forbidden.

All Catholic schools were closed.

Protestants could not marry Catholics.

Catholics could not own land.

They were not allowed enter any profession,
particularly law and teaching.

Catholics could not sue a Protestant in a court of law.

They could not own a gun.

Or own a horse worth more than five pounds.
They were even forbidden to place Catholic relics on Irish graves

The most hated law was the closure of Irish schools.

Let's do away with Catholic schools.

Keep Ireland a nation filled with fools.

Easier controlled, let's keep them down

So Government planned in Dublin town.

Periodically, depending on the English political party in power, or the attitude of the reigning monarch and, after Cromwell died, some of these laws were eased. The Irish tried to circumvent them as much as they could, especially in remote rural areas, where maintaining law surveillance was difficult. Even in Dublin clandestine Catholicism was quietly practiced.

In the early 1700's Richard Burke, a Dublin Protestant lawyer, married Mary Nagel a beautiful Catholic country girl. In order to marry Richard, Mary adopted his religion. But she maintained close ties with her parents living on a farm in remote Ballyduff, County Cork, and she quietly continued to practice her Catholic faith.

This caused no family problems because Richard had some years

previously undergone a similar change of religion to enable him to become a lawyer.

The Burkes lived in a modest home on Arran Quay on the banks of Dublin's river Liffey, a tidal river. It frequently flooded the Burke's basement.

A son, Edmund, was born to Richard and Mary in 1729, which brought them great joy.

Edmund was schooled at home by his parents. He was very bright and learnt to read and write at a very early age.

Translations of the classics were commonly found on the bookshelves of 18th century Irish intelligentsia. The works of Cicero had a particular appeal. He was a great orator who fought for the underdog. Most who have heard of Cicero, know of him in a general sort of way. He was an important figure in classical times but was not in the same class as say Plato, Aristotle or Socrates. He was against slavery and fearlessly challenged the absolute power of the great Julius Caesar.

Cicero taught that the best orator should be the best human being and would act upon this by entering politics and introducing good laws. He believed that the most valuable parts of philosophy were those that could be directly transferred into politics.

Crowds came to hear him speak. He made many enemies among the establishment and paid the ultimate price for his principles with his life.

Richard explained all of this to his very bright young son in simple terms.

Edmund grasped the importance of Cicero's struggle against injustice and discussed this with his father, as would a much older person.

Listening to his mother talk of Ireland's problems with England, Edmund felt certain that Cicero would have supported underdog Ireland. Cicero became Edmund's hero and later in life became a mentor.

Dublin, noted for its dirty air,

Foggy, damp, chilly and sunshine rare.

The young Edward was a sickly child

Needed clean air and a climate mild.

Bad for health was Dublin's cold and grime.

Plans made, Edmund moved to Cork's warm clime

Loved grandparents, farm and country side

Leaving own parents, took in his stride.

The school at Ballyduff, was an illegal "hedge school", hidden in fields by hedges and made for a quick get-away at the first sign of approaching military.

“Hedge School” for Edmund, something quite new

Teaching at home was school that he knew.

This was diff'rent, had a new feature,

Part of a group, taught by a teacher.

O'Halloran was the Master of the School at Ballyduff

He was loved, strict and in appearance rough

His cane he never used, except to wave in air,

When driving home a point, considered worthy, rare.

Occasionally he lost his class going beyond the basics

Quoting lines from Shakespeare and the ancient Classics

Sure 'twas like fly-fishing, just a little pleasantry

Casting for an intellect hiding in the peasantry

Though it was his greatest wish

Seldom did he land a fish

Finding work was good enough

For his brood at Ballyduff

On this day he thought he would give it another try, to cast a line.

He began: "However little a flute may be out of tune the expert always notices and in the same way," here he waved his cane in the air, "we all should be careful in life to avoid any chance disharmony, all the more because harmony in life is a higher and a more important thing than a flute out of tune". He paused for the giggles to subside and then asked hopefully, "And who do you think might have said that?"

Like a flash, the six year old Edmund, on his first day at school seated on a rough hewn front row bench, raised his hand and speaking with a clear Dublin accent, politely answered, " If you please sir, it was Marcus Tullius Cicero, known to his friends as Tully".

At once Edmund felt he was on home ground and all his fears for his new school quickly evaporated. He became O'Halloran's star pupil. Edmund was given extra lessons, was introduced to the works of Shakespeare and other great writers and poets. He also began the study of Latin.

O'Halloran was very proud of his pupil and years later when Edmund had become famous, O'Halloran told all and sundry "sure he learnt quite a bit after he left me, but it was I who first put a Latin grammar in his hand."

Edmund grew tall, strong and sturdy and his parents were delighted with

his progress academically. Edmund spent six years at Ballyduff and loved working at the farm alongside the farmhands. But by the age of twelve his parents felt Edmund was ready to move on to face the challenge of living and studying in an 18th century Irish boarding school.

He was entered to Ballytore School in County Kildare not far from Dublin. The school had the reputation for being the best high-school in Ireland. It attracted students from all parts of the United Kingdom. The founder of the school and its headmaster, Abraham Shackleton, was a Quaker from Yorkshire. The Quaker influence he was exposed to at this school left a permanent mark on Edmund. Militarism and violence in politics were abhorred and Edmund was led to believe as a basic tenet that "Know history and man's nature and you may presume to know God's intent". Also he was taught that "When you have diversity bear it. Have as many religions as you find in your country. Providing it is a serious religion, you will find reasonable worship in them".

Edmund was pronounced ready in 1744 at the age of 15 to sit the entrance examination to Ireland's leading University, Trinity College Dublin.

The exam had the reputation of being stiffer in classics than entrance to Oxford or Cambridge. But Edmund was well prepared.

A letter from Edward to Richard Shackleton, Abraham's son and Edmund's closest friend, described the exam. It went, filled with schoolboy pride, " ...the examiner, Reverend John Pellisier was exceedingly well humoured, cleanly and civil. He made me construe parts of Horace, Vergil and Homer and told me I was a good scholar, understood the authors very well and I seemed to take pleasure in them. He ended up by remarking that I was more fit for Trinity than three parts of his class. I was asked who were my teachers. The Reverend knew Shackleton but had never heard of O'Halloran". Edmund was then taken and introduced to the Provost.

I sat the same exam in classics at entrance to Trinity 212 years later. I was three years older than Edmund. I failed to amaze my examiners, was not asked who my teachers were, nor was I introduced to the Provost.

Burke won prizes galore as he progressed through Trinity.

In preparing this paper I remember that I had a volume on "The History of Trinity College Dublin, 1591 to 1893", which marked the ter-centenary of

Trinity, by Professor of History, Constantia Maxwell. The book was published in 1946. I had not looked at the book for years.

I leafed through it to see what Professor had to say about Burke and found her book a treasure trove.

According to Professor Maxwell apparently the usual courses did not fully exercise Burke's mind or satisfy him intellectually. He needed some further challenge and bursting with ideas, in his third year as a student at Trinity aged 18 on 21st of April 1747, he gathered a few student friends together and formed..... a Literary Club!

Professor Maxwell stated that the Burke Club was and here I quote, ".... the most important University student development of the 18th century".

It predates the formation of the Dr. Samuel Johnson Club, 1760 and the famous student club, "The Oxford Union" 1843, at Oxford University.

The purposes of the Burke Club, continued Professor Maxwell are set forth in the "Preamble to the Laws". These are stated to be and here I quote, "for the improvement of its members in the more refin'd, elegant and useful parts of Literature.....the Formation of our minds and manners.

Language is the cement of Society so is the perfection thereof perhaps its greatest ornament and not the least of its blessings.....

For this reason then the business of the Club is speaking, reading, writing and arguing in Morality, History, Criticism, Politics and all the useful branches of Philosophy". The Club met twice a week and sat from 5pm till 9pm. Among the subjects presented and debated were questions of foreign policy, classical subjects and characters, painting, the nature of poetry, atheism, charity, trade and a variety of other topics.

For the very first time on record in the English speaking world on the 21st April 1746, 269 years ago, the formation and purpose of a literary club were enunciated by Burke. Although written in stilted English of the 18th century and aimed at a student audience, does this newly formulated club of old not foreshadow our club?

Burke's Club continued after he graduated. Some years later it acquired the title "College Historical Society" which still exists, is very active and cherishes its Burke literary origins. It claims to be the oldest student literary club in existence.

Many of Ireland's historical figures and parliamentarians and some of its most distinguished orators developed their training and speaking skills there.

I was a member of the Medical Student Biological Society, the medical school's version of a Burke's Club and became its Registrar or Secretary.

I am presenting to our Club Library Professor Maxwell's History of Trinity which contains the details of the formation of the Burke Club. The book contains an illustration of the opening page of the minutes of the first Burke Club meeting in Burke's handwriting.

When Burke graduated B.A. from Trinity his father sent him to continue training in law at the Middle Temple. When he had finished, to his father's dismay, he lost all interest in a law career and spent some time wandering around Europe. He was interested in philosophy and art. This was already apparent at Trinity, At the Club he presented the beginning of a paper on the "Nature of the Sublime and the Beautiful". He was interested in aesthetics. He finished his paper after he left Trinity and had it published. It was hailed as a major contribution to European aesthetics and praised for its originality, lucidity and style.

It caught the attention of poet Lessing who translated it into German and acknowledged that he made great use of it for his landmark study on art criticism "The Laokoon". Burke had arrived on the London literary intellectual scene and importantly was now earning a living. He developed a popular magazine and became its editor.

Not only did Burke write on lofty themes. He portrayed his humanity in a paper he read at his club on the horrors of poverty under English rule of the poorest Irish living near Ballyduff. He wrote," As you leave the Town the scene grows worse and presents you with the Utmost Penury in the midst of rich Soil.....money is a stranger to them.....As for their food they seldom taste Bread or Meat; their diet in Summer, is Potatoes and sour milk; in Winter when something Comfortable is required they are still worse, living on the same root made palatable only by a little Salt accompanied by water: their Cloaths so ragged.....nay it is no uncommon sight to see half a dozen children run quite naked out of a Cabin scarcely distinguishable from a Dunghill.....I appeal.....(to anyone) For the Justness of the Picture".

As the result of his magazine he attracted the interest of the Whig political Leader, the Marquess of Rockingham, who appointed him aide and private

secretary which opened the world of politics for Burke. Burke's public stature grew rapidly. He rose in the ranks of the Whigs and was elected a member of Parliament, where he developed his greatest political achievements. Like Cicero, Burke became the supreme orator of his day as he advanced his ideas.

When Burke spoke every seat was filled in Parliament, as when Churchill spoke many years later at times of national danger. At Westminster, friend and foe alike came to hear the Irishman. The famous woman novelist and protégé of Dr. Samuel Johnson, Fanny Burney, seated in the visitor's gallery listening to Burke, was obviously impressed. She wrote,

"Tall, erect, well-formed with a countenance of much sweetness, which I esteem very handsome. When aroused in debate, his mental strength is manifest in his broad brow and in the light of his large eyes. The spell in which he bound those fortunate enough to hear him speak, made them forget all else, as they listened to the winged words which fell from his lips".

The fine bronze statue, which I passed each day as a student at the entrance to Trinity, captures some of this, as he stands with arm raised pointing to the heavens in mid-oratorical flow

Burke spent most of his political career as a Whig in opposition. Parliament was then a place of little authority in the hands of its members. King George's court wielded enormous power and with the aid of compliant Tories extracted vast amounts of money needed to maintain the King's extravagances. With passion and the power of his logic, Burke changed inevitable foregone conclusions into key debates, which changed the nature of British Parliament. He seldom used notes when he spoke, but admiring listeners recorded them. Eventually he was persuaded to write his speeches which were widely distributed as pamphlets read by the public. In the U.S., I understand that his speeches still today surface as required reading in many English and history courses. As you well know Burke supported the American Revolution and condemned the French Revolution, predicting the horrors of the "Reign of Terror". He wrote "Rage and frenzy can pull down more in half an hour than prudence, deliberation and foresight can build up in a hundred years".

He developed and explained the importance of political parties and the notion of a left and right in politics.

Bromwich believes that Burke does not easily fit into any present day party.

He wrote, "Burke is commonly seen as the father of modern conservatism.

The matter is more subtle and interesting. Burke was a defender of disenfranchised minorities, an opponent of militarism, of slavery in the British West Indies, debtor imprisonment, homosexuals being pilloried and then often murdered by mobs. He held the Penal Laws in Ireland in scorn and for America became its greatest ally against George 3rd war against the American Colonies. He fought and lost a prolonged struggle against the corrupt and unscrupulous rule in India of the British Governor-General Warren Hastings. As a mark of regard and trust the New York Assembly appointed Burke their representative in London. Bromwich recommends that Burke be required reading by our present day politicians.

The Hasting's trial dragged on for seven years with Burke as the lead prosecutor. Hastings, though patently guilty at least to some of the charges, was cleared on all accounts.

Burke retired from politics but not from pique. He had at least a partial victory against Hastings. His exposures shocked the British public that the same standards, as they were then at home, were not being applied overseas, where instead exploitation was commonplace.

After his demanding life in opposition against the entrenched establishment Burke had another life to live. It would bring him a happiness he had not known since his days on the Nagel farm at Ballyduff.

He turned down an Earldom offered by a now admiring, aged and ailing King George, but accepted a civil pension. He bought 600 acres of farmland in Beaconsfield about half-way between London and Oxford, near enough for his old Club friends to visit.

Beaconsfield

Lovely ancient Tudor town

Norman Church of some renown

Leafy lanes, an Inn the Crown

Cornfields ripened golden brown

A cricket match on velvet green

No sight is more serene

The bowler runs and swings his arm

The wicket, the batsman keeps from harm

The ball is struck, it fleeting flies

High up into the summer skies

Villages nearby, in easy reach,
Penn's school, where still they teach.

Chalfont Saint Giles

Less than five miles

Milton wrote his wondrous story

Blind to all this rural glory

Paradise Lost; some's found in Beaconsfield

Burke found his Eden there revealed

No longer a nation's great leader

Became instead a cattle breeder

Expert on turnips and green peas

Planted many hardwood trees

Built irrigating draining trench

Built a school for orphaned French.

Grew healing herbs free for ailing sick

Claimed his physic did the trick

'Till one day a rub his wife drank

Then his reputation sank.

Our Beaconsfield home was about half a mile from “The Gregories”, Burke’s home. Unfortunately some years after he died it burnt down and no trace of it remains. The part of Beaconsfield where we lived is called “The New Town” now covers what was part of Burke’s farmland.

He also had a roomy building built which housed 40 children who had become orphaned during the French Revolution guillotine era. He raised funds for this worthy effort from wealthy friends and successfully badgered the government for support. The children were seen regularly dressed in blue and white uniforms with the French Royal crest, marching down the road as they sang “Vive le Roi”.

Today the local football team uses their colours and crest on their shirts.

On vacation, I entered the small town Library and was provided a membership card. I checked to see what they had on their shelves on Burke. I found nothing much of interest. The Lady Librarian was sympathetic. I was planning a paper and did the library have a Burke archive on his local activities?

With a beaming smile she unlocked a filing cabinet and handed me a thick folder on Burke and Beaconsfield. Under her eagle eye she allowed me spend two days transcribing details.

Burke entered the small town life with gusto. He attended the old Norman Church regularly, though he was not Anglican. Remember, to him all serious religions had something to contribute. He died in 1796 aged 67 and left instructions that he wanted no memorial built, but he wished to be buried beneath the Church. Apparently as the Burke Centenary Celebrations approached the then Beaconsfield 53rd vicar, the Reverend G.A. Cook ignoring Burke's wish launched an appeal in a letter to the London Times which produced 113 pounds, 14 shillings and 6 pence to build a memorial in the church which would be unveiled as the center piece of the centenary celebration. It would be a tribute paid by society who owed him so much. Burke's modesty should not prevent such a tribute being made. Myfanwy and I felt we should pay our respects.

We stood gazing at Burke's image on the wall. It was created in bas-relief in pearly grey Derbyshire alabaster. It cost 81 pounds and fixing to the wall cost 3 shillings and 6 pence. The enterprising Vicar had 2 pounds 16

shillings and 7 pence left over for the Sanctuary fund.

In that silent sun-lit setting I could not resist touching that cool alabaster brow that Fanny Burney so admired.

But where was the tomb? According to the archive it was buried under the middle isle. There was no sign of it there. A lady arranging flowers for a forthcoming wedding with a smile showed where to look. Seating had been rearranged years ago with expansion of the Church. She announced that she sat over him every Sunday. I accepted her invitation to do so myself which I accepted with mixed feelings. Yes there was a brass plate fixed to the floor, "Edmund Burke, 1730-1797" beneath the pew. How would Burke feel about such sacrilege. After some thought, I felt he would be amused. How could he relate more closely to a community, where he had spent his happiest years as Squire Burke, than to be regularly sat upon.

It is hard to summarize the greatly talented Burke and his great civilizing influence on society. What did the great Master of the English language Dr Samuel Johnson say of this co-founder of his Club. His unforgettable tribute is as follows.

“You could not stand with that man beneath a shed while it rained, but you must be convinced you had been standing with the greatest man you had ever seen”.

The greatest Tory of the 18th century takes off his hat and makes the lowest possible bow to the much younger Irish Whig! What a tribute! I feel sure Johnson would have no problem in having of a portrait of Burke being placed alongside his in this hall, not only to mark their friendship but also to remind us that both together share a role as procreators of our Club.

Thank you.

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We revere Dr. Samuel Johnson as the greatest literarian of his day and we think of his Club as our forerunner, but without diminishing his importance to us we should remember Burke's club predates his. Dr. Johnson preferred his Club to remain small, intimate and select. As Burke's reputation grew so did the club attracting a broader elite, including politicians artists and others adding a more cosmopolitan nature to the club. Johnson did not always feel comfortable at meetings and in the final years of his life hardly attended.

out in the mid 1900's. However a Johnson Society was created in the town of Lichfield, Johnson's place of birth and subsequently in London and in many large cities throughout the world including Tokio. The London Society holds a large meeting annually in remembrance of Johnson. The Society sells books on Johnson and other memorabilia.

At his Club at Trinity and then at the Johnson Club are where Burke honed his oratorical and debating skills. As a leading member of the Whig political party he mounted his fearless opposition against King George 3rd.

It was in this body that Burke honed his Ciceronian oratory and his powerful historical Whig fearless challenges against George 3rd. He was America's

strongest ally at Westminster and notably this included as a leading Whig historical years with Burke being the connecting link between the two. Johnson's Club is said to have disappeared in the mid 20th century and is replaced by Johnson Societies established throughout the world.

Burke graduated B.A. in 1748 and went to London to study at the bar.

His Club faded in his absence but was then resuscitated as the Trinity

Historical Society in 1770 and is still remains very active. Many of Ireland's

historical figures and parliamentarians and some of its most distinguished

orators received their training at the Historical Society which still cherishes

its Burke Club origins.

Burke's interests though lofty were also very human. His memories as a

boy of the poverty he witnessed around Ballyduff would endure throughout

his life.

One of his first papers as a student dealt with the subject. "As you leave

the town, the scene grows worse and presents you with the Utmost Penury

in the midst of a rich soil.....money is strange to them..... as for their Food,

it is notorious they seldom taste Bread or Meat; their diet in Summer is

potatoes and sour Milk; in Winter, when something is required Comfortable,

they are still worse, living on the same Root, made palatable by a little salt

accompanied with Water; Their Cloaths, so ragged..... nay it is no uncommon sight to see half a dozen Children run quite naked run out of a Cabin, scarcely distinguishable from a Dunghill.....I Appeal to anyone.....to account for the Justness of the picture”.

Much to his father's dismay Burke turned aside a career in law. He earned his keep by writing. He developed a popular magazine that surveyed world affairs and became its editor. It was widely read as a source for England's overseas activities and impressed the Marquess of Rockingham, the wealthy, influential leader of the Whigs in the British Parliament.

Rockingham appointed Burke his aide and private secretary. The King, supported by the Tories fought the Whigs, who were trying to reduce the his excessive power. Burke spent most of his long political power in opposition. Parliament was then a place of little authority in the hands of its members, The Court wielded enormous power and with the aid of compliant Tories extracted enormous sums of money to maintain George's extravagences. Burke with the strength of his logic and passion changed inevitable conclusion into key debates and changed the nature of Parliament. Copies of his speeches were widely distributed by his supporters and even now they are commonplace in History and English courses. Notably he was America's closest ally, and he corrected predicted the reign of terror following the French Revolution.

The quality of Burke's writing, dazzling conversational skills, his manner

and bearing made their mark on elite London literary circles. Dr. Samuel Johnson doyen of London's literary elite invited him to join his Club which he and the famous painter Sir Joshua Reynolds were forming.

There were 12 founding members who are pictured in a portrait in this hall.

The central figure is Burke listening intently to Johnson expounding.

At the Club Burke honed his considerable oratorical and debating skills.

Burke and Johnson did not see eye to eye politically. Burke a Whig and

Johnson a Tory. Their differences went further. Johnson wanted the Club to

remain small and intimate and for years it remained so. Gradually

numbers increased and included not only the significant writers of the day,

the included parliamentary leaders, the church, the arts and industry, Burke

and his intellectual prowess and his energy was a driving influence in the

growth of the Club. During the last ten years of his life Johnson rarely

attended. Though they differed Johnson enormously admired Burke as a

visionary genius. His friend Hester Thrale relates this unforgettable

Johnsonian anecdote on Burke.

"You could not stand for five minutes with that man beneath a shed while it

rained, but you would be convinced you had been standing with the

greatest man you had ever yet seen". The greatest Tory of the 18th century makes a sweeping bow to a young Irish Whig upstart.

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recognizable overtones that resonate with the feelings we have towards our own Club. Although

we revere the great master of the English language Dr Samuel Johnson and his Club the

his class. After that

In his final year at Trinity, at the age of 18, Edmund gathered together some fellow

students and on 21st April 1747 formed a literary club. The current very active student College

Historical Society is the direct descendant of Burke's literary club, the oldest student literary club

in Ireland and Great Britain.

(The following may be an appropriate ending to the paper).

The Burke minute book still exists, written mainly in Burke's handwriting.

The purposes of the

Club are set forth in the "Preamble to the Laws". The Laws are stated to be and here I quote,

"for the improvement of its members in the more refined, elegant and useful parts of Literature,

these seeming the most likely means for attaining the great end in view – the formation of our minds and manners for the function of Civil Society.....and as Literature is the cement of Society

Club.

It continues as the current College Historical Society and

is the oldest student literary club in Ireland and Britain. It predates the Dr. Samuel Johnson's Club

founded in 1760 and the famous Oxford University Union founded in 1823.

Burke was a founding member of the Johnson Club and was the prime mover in its organization

and development.

Johnson as its life President did not approve of the numerical growth of the Club, wanting it to

be small and intimate. Burke encouraged its growth. The club attracted leading University

intellectuals, writers, artists, politicians and business leaders. Johnson as president attended

few meetings during the final 10 years of his life. He and Burke were opposites politically.

Johnson a strong Tory who benefited from a handsome pension awarded by King George 3rd.

Burke was a Whig and a strong critic of the King for his precipitation of the American

Revolution. When Burke eventually retired to a farm at Beaconsfield and by which time the King had

recognized his national worth, and offered him an Earldom, which Burke refused to accept.

Nevertheless Johnson is reported in commenting,(insert the comments)

The Johnson Club finally faded away sometime in mid 20th century. There are however multiple

Samuel Johnson Societies, even one in Japan. The major one is located in London where a

major annual lecture is held and were Johnson memorabilia are on sale.

In rural areas laws eased,
There Irish did more as they pleased,
Hidden illegal schools abounded.
Nine thousand schools were founded.

A typical hedge school was founded in the small village of Ballyduff in County Cork.

O'Halloran was the Master of the School at Ballyduff
He was loved, strict and in appearance rough.
His cane he never used, except to wave in air
Driving home a point considered worthwhile, rare.

Occasionally he lost his class, going beyond the basics
Quoting lines from Shakespeare, or the Ancient Classics

“Sure ‘twas like fly fishing, just a little pleasantry
Casting for an intellect, hiding in the peasantry.

One day he thought it was time to cast a line, to give it a try and In a loud clear voice he
began;

“Now boys and girls listen to what I have to say to y’all.

However a flute may be out of tune the expert always notices and in the same way (and here he
waved his cane in the air) we all should be careful in life to avoid any chance disharmony, all
because harmony in life is a higher and a more important thing than a flute out of tune. And who
do you think said that?” He asked hopefully.

A small new boy, named Edmund Burke sitting in the front row, brought that day by his
grandmother, Mrs. Nagel, politely answered in a precise Dublin accent;

“If you please sir, it was Marcus Tullius Cicero”.

A startled O’Halloran realized he had an exceptional new student on his hands.

Later, Edmund Burke became famous as the leading statesman, orator and politician of
the day and was likened to the great Roman senator Cicero of classic days. His old teacher