

**Welcome to
Fáilte go**

The Morpeth Roll

Ireland Identified

This gigantic testimonial signed by 160,000 people was presented to the popular Chief Secretary for Ireland Lord Morpeth when he left Dublin in 1841. It is surely the world's largest farewell card.

The Morpeth Roll comprises 652 sheets of paper stuck together and wrapped around an enormous wooden bobbin housed in a chest. The entire roll measures a staggering 420 metres in length, and this huge document was assembled in just five weeks as people across Ireland responded to Daniel O'Connell's call for signatures.

Morpeth returned to his splendid family home Castle Howard in Yorkshire taking the testimonial with him, but after his death it lay unrecognised in a basement for more than a century. Now it has returned to Ireland for a touring exhibition in 2013-14, with a chance for people to see it for the first time in 170 years.




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Who was Lord Morpeth?



Thomas Carrick, *George Howard, Lord Morpeth*, c.1835



Built by the architect Sir John Vanbrugh in 1699, Castle Howard in North Yorkshire has been home to the Howard family for more than 300 years. Among the treasures in the archives none was more unique than the Morpeth Roll which re-surfaced after 170 years of lying in obscurity

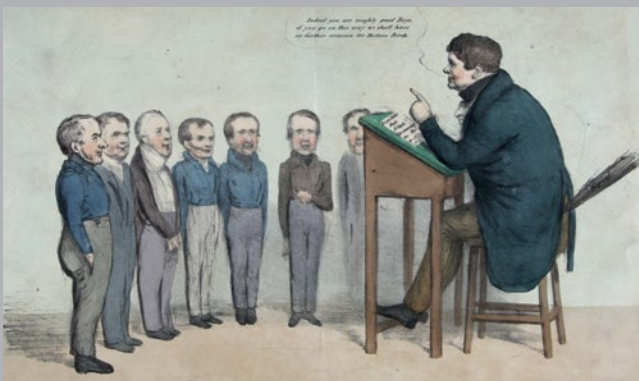
George Howard, Lord Morpeth, was born in 1802 and grew up in his family home Castle Howard. Elected MP for the West Riding of Yorkshire in 1832, he was the third successive generation of his family to be involved in the political affairs of Ireland; his grandfather had been Viceroy in 1780-82, and his father had argued in parliament for Catholic conciliation. In 1835 Morpeth was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland in Lord Melbourne's Whig administration.

Morpeth was a popular figure partly on account of the legislation he helped to introduce but also for his friendly manner in dealing with Catholic MPs in the House of Commons. After losing his parliamentary seat in the 1841 general election Morpeth had to stand down as Chief Secretary, and he returned to Castle Howard taking his enormous testimonial with him.

During his time as Chief Secretary Morpeth was frequently lampooned by the Dublin-born caricaturist John Doyle, better known as 'H.B.'. He often appeared as a slim, naïve youngster, as in the cartoon of 1839 entitled, *Oliver Introduced to the Respectable Old Gentleman*. This parodied the episode in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* when the Artful Dodger (here depicted as the Viceroy, Lord Mulgrave)



introduced the shy Oliver to the leader of this gang of ne'er-do-wells, the infamous Fagin, who is depicted as Daniel O'Connell. H.B. is pointing out how the politically innocent Morpeth is in danger of being led astray by the wily older man.



In *The Irish Tutor* H.B. depicts Morpeth (second from right) and his fellow Whigs as docile schoolboys. O'Connell, their tutor, is sufficiently pleased with their obedient behaviour to declare he has no need to beat them.



The Beggar's Petition shows the indigent O'Connell as Mother Ireland with her large family, holding out her written plea. Morpeth is startled into dropping his Mendicity Bill which was drafted in 1840 to tackle vagrancy.



From Chief Secretary to Viceroy



In 1856 the Irish artist Nicholas Crowley painted Carlisle and his retinue on the steps of the Viceregal Lodge in Phoenix Park. After Carlisle's death his brother Edward Howard ordered eight named figures to be removed from this portrait; the reasons for this remain a mystery, but in the 1990s these persons were reinstated in the picture.



As Viceroy Carlisle led a busy public life frequently officiating at civic ceremonies. These presentation wheelbarrows date from when he opened the Tralee-Killarney railway in 1855, and the Queenstown branch of the Cork-Youghal railway in 1859.

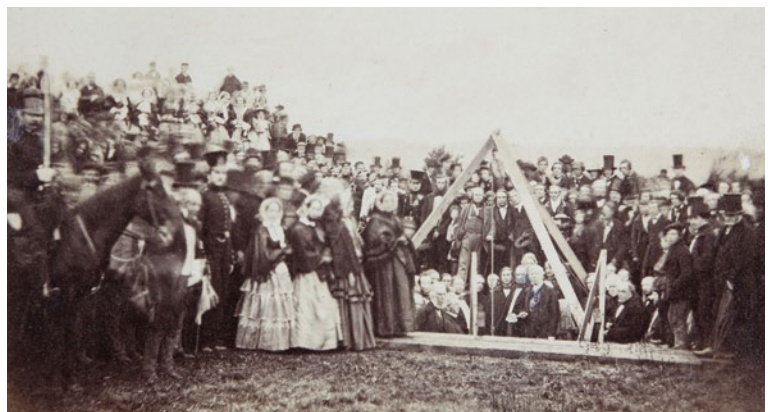


In October 1858, at the end of his first term as Viceroy, Carlisle was presented with a silver and yew wood casket in simulated basket-work from the ladies of the Viceregal court in thanks for his hospitality. Incised on the silver clasp are the names of 129 ladies. The knack of acquiring handsome farewell gifts seems never to have deserted Carlisle.

Morpeth resumed his political career in 1846, and after he had inherited the title 7th Earl of Carlisle he returned to Dublin as Viceroy between 1855 and 1864. While his political achievements were limited during this period of relative prosperity and stability, his popularity nevertheless continued to grow. Ill-health forced him to resign in September 1864, he returned to England, and three months later he died.



On St Patrick's Day 1864 Carlisle recorded in his diary a very curious episode. While standing on the balcony of Dublin Castle and throwing down biscuits to the crowd (as was apparently the custom), a youth threw one back at the party, and was locked in the cells by constables. Carlisle intervened and had the boy released on compassionate grounds. These and other episodes, such as when he refused to sanction the use of strait-jackets on prisoners until he had tried one on for himself, challenge the stereotypical image of the flinty-hearted British official in Ireland, and explain why his popularity continued to grow during his Viceroyalty.



A photograph of Carlisle, knee-deep in a trench and laying the foundation stone of Edwin Thomas Willis' Crimea monument at Ferrycarrig, Co. Wexford, in October 1857.



Above: Dublin Castle courtyard c.1829



Constantine Henry Phipps (1797-1863) was born the 2nd Earl of Mulgrave and later created 1st Marquess of Normanby. In his first parliamentary speech in 1819 he argued for Catholic relief, and his appointment as Viceroy was warmly welcomed by O'Connell. Mulgrave

enjoyed dramatic gestures, and on learning of his posting to Dublin was said to have ordered a special uniform in green from his tailor. When he returned to London in 1839 the nationalist *Freeman's Journal* described him as 'the steady friend of even-handed justice', whose great achievement was to have torn down 'the wall of partition which divided Protestant from Catholic'.

Thomas Drummond, engraving by Henry Cousins, after a portrait by Henry William Pickersgill, 1841



Thomas Drummond (1797-1840), was a Scottish-born engineer who worked on the Ordnance Survey in Ireland before taking up the post of Under Secretary in 1835. His untimely death robbed Dublin Castle of an energetic and efficient administrator. Richard Barry O'Brien was later to claim that Drummond 'ruled for the people and by the people'.



Courtesy Office of Public Works

Dublin Castle Administration

After the Act of Union in 1801 the political affairs of Ireland were controlled from London, and managed in Dublin by the Viceroy, the Chief Secretary, and Under Secretary. The Irish executive was based in Dublin Castle with all the main government departments located nearby.

In 1835 three enlightened officials, sympathetic to the cause of Ireland, took up office, Lord Mulgrave as Viceroy, Lord Morpeth as Chief Secretary, and Thomas Drummond as Under Secretary. These three men were personally popular with Irish politicians and officials, and O'Connell was especially admiring of Morpeth. In 1836 he declared, 'if I was asked who the person in the circle of my public or personal acquaintance is who would be most incapable of doing any act of duplicity or dishonour, I should not hesitate to name Lord Morpeth'.

Working closely with O'Connell and his Repeal party MPs, between 1835 and 1841, the Whig government introduced major legislation dealing with tithe and municipal reform, a poor law for Ireland, and measures to redress the imbalances between Protestant and Catholic appointees in the constabulary and magistracy. Following on from the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, this period has been called a 'brief golden age' in terms of the good relations between Britain and Ireland.



Each official had his own residence in Phoenix Park. The Viceroy lived in the former Ranger's House (above), built in 1752-57 and enlarged in the early 19th century. Today the Viceregal Lodge, better known as Áras an Uachtaráin, is the official residence for the President of Ireland.

The Chief Secretary's Lodge (left) was Morpeth's residence when he was in Ireland; but he was frequently required to be in London either to present draft legislation or to answer questions in parliament. Today the building is the US Ambassador's residence. The Under Secretary's Lodge is now the Phoenix Park Visitor Centre.



Above: Bernard Mulrenin, *Daniel O'Connell*, 1836, National Portrait Gallery, London



O'Connell speaking at a **repeal meeting** in 1843 shortly after he had stepped up his campaign for repeal of the union by holding a series of monster meetings. These would lead to his trial and imprisonment in 1844.



Henry MacManus, *Reading 'The Nation'*, National Gallery of Ireland Collection

This image, dating from later in the 19th century, depicts people reading the *Nation* newspaper which had been founded by Thomas Davis and others in 1842. Men and women across Ireland were able to follow political debate and public events in the press or in reading rooms and constituency clubs.

Daniel O'Connell and Repeal

Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847) was the dominant force in Irish politics for the first half of the 19th century. He believed in working for political reform through constitutional means and from 1810 onwards campaigned for Catholic Emancipation. Irish MPs were unable to sit in the House of Commons unless they had sworn the oath of supremacy, but in 1828 O'Connell forced this issue after he had been elected MP for Co. Clare. The Tory prime minister the Duke of Wellington, and his home secretary Robert Peel, recognised that this enormously popular and influential figure could not be denied his seat in parliament, and the law was changed in 1829.

Catholic Emancipation opened the doors to Irish MPs who could now sit at Westminster and fully participate in parliamentary business. After the 1835 general election O'Connell and his Repeal party formed a political alliance with the Whigs and began to press for reform in close co-operation with Mulgrave, Morpeth, and Drummond.

O'Connell trumpeted repeal of the union as the next great Irish wrong to be righted, looking to secure reform by instalments, while also hinting to his English allies that the threat of mass agitation was never far away.

Like all successful politicians O'Connell recognised the power of political organisation, and in 1823 he had founded the Catholic Association, establishing a network for the exchange of political news and views back and forth between Dublin and the country. This was followed by a succession of other Catholic assemblies, each designed to outwit government legislation banning them.

These social clubs, reading rooms, constituency organisations, and voluntary groups helped circulate political news and stimulate discussion, and this tradition of engagement at grass-roots level, aided by politically active clergy, and sympathetic newspapers such as the *Pilot*, *Morning Register*, and *Freeman's Journal* strengthened O'Connell's position as the voice of Catholic and nationalist opinion.



The Royal Exchange, Dublin

Built between 1769 and 1779 by the architect Thomas Cooley, the Royal Exchange stands in the shadow of Dublin Castle. As the principal assembly room in the city it was the venue for the first public meeting to determine how to mark Morpeth's departure on 12th August 1841. In 1852 the Royal Exchange was re-named City Hall.



Patrick Byrne, *The Interior of the Royal Exchange*, 1834, National Gallery of Ireland Collection.

The inside is a grand rotunda surrounded by giant columns beneath a coffered dome. After the Duke of Leinster had opened the meeting a succession of figures stood up to declare their gratitude and appreciation for Morpeth's work as Chief Secretary.

Organising the Testimonial

By 1841 O'Connell had not managed to advance the cause of repeal. Morpeth's departure and the collapse of Lord Melbourne's government marked the start of Sir Robert Peel's Tory ministry, which was much less sympathetic to O'Connell and his demands.

But O'Connell recognised that the moment offered a special opportunity to voice not just an expression of thanks to Morpeth, but also to make a powerful political statement. At a meeting held at the Royal Exchange in Dublin on 12th August the idea emerged for a farewell address, but it was O'Connell who called for it to be signed by more than just the metropolitan and political elite. He urged that it be inscribed by a 'multitude of signatures' that would 'attest the united sentiments of the people of Ireland'.

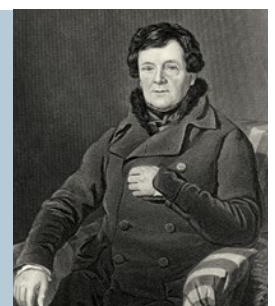
O'Connell praised Morpeth as an 'enthusiastic friend of the civil and religious liberties of Ireland'. But he was also looking ahead believing, as many contemporaries did, that Morpeth would return to politics, and quite probably ascend to the highest office, in which case he would number among Ireland's most powerful advocates and friends. If this were to happen the testimonial would take on the status of a marker, something that could be cashed in at a future date.

The size of the testimonial was due to O'Connell's public endorsement of it, along with the fact that he and his supporters could call upon an established political network of repeal activists and priests to gather signatures throughout the country. The roll was a graphic reminder to the Tories of O'Connell's ability to mobilise opinion and support: signatures that appeared as a vote of thanks at one moment might very well be channelled in the direction of mass opposition on another occasion.

Freeman's Journal, 13 August 1841

'I mean to propose that the address...be universally circulated, and when that multitude of signatures was procured which would attest the united sentiments of the people of Ireland, and their gratitude towards Lord Morpeth, that the document be then handed his lordship, which he would, no doubt, preserve with pride for his remotest posterity...It will be the unbought and spontaneous offering of a generous and oppressed people – the unpurchasable testimonial of that ardent disposition which shows how much we value those who are honest and sincere friends of Ireland.'

Daniel O'Connell



The Farewell Presentation

On 14th September 1841 an estimated 1,000 people crammed into the Royal Exchange to hear the presentation chaired by the 3rd Duke of Leinster. The crush was so intense that a section of the platform collapsed throwing a number of dignitaries to the floor.

The Duke announced that the signatories to the address included '54 peers, 29 right honourables, 25 barons, 97 deputy lieutenants, 12 Roman Catholic bishops, and 472 clergymen of all persuasions, together with the most respectable merchants and traders of Ireland'. But what transformed the address from a vote of thanks by a select few was the thousands of names attached to it; in fact it was not yet finished, for the Duke remarked, 'a great number of signatures are still coming up from the country'.

The address presented by the 'Reformers of Ireland' opened with a warm appreciation of Morpeth.

We hold in our grateful remembrance the devotedness with which, in early life – in those dark days of bondage, when a vast majority of our Fellow Countrymen were oppressed for Conscience sake – Your Lordship ranged yourself with the Friends of Ireland; And we have marked the earnestness with which Your Lordship has ever since essayed to impart life and spirit to the cold form of Civil and Religious Enfranchisement, which you and others had created.

Morpeth was clearly overcome at the scale of this farewell and deemed 'this honoured document as the richest heir-loom I could bequeath to the name I bear'.

In the evening a grand banquet took place at the Theatre Royal, with tickets for the event costing thirty-two shillings (a sum that was equivalent to more than half a year's wages for a labourer). The theatre was specially decorated with coloured silks and filled with candles. Musicians were placed in the upper gallery, while the upper and lower tiers of boxes were reserved for ladies. Six hundred guests were treated to an extravagant feast where the champagne was said to have 'flowed free as mountain streams'.



Above: Thomas Clement Thompson, Augustus Frederick Fitzgerald, 3rd Duke of Leinster, c.1815.



The Theatre Royal on Hawkins Street was the venue for Morpeth's grand farewell banquet in the evening, which was attended by the great and the good of Irish society.



The banquet would have taken at least three to four days to prepare and was typical of 19th-century grand dining. Such a banquet would be almost impossible to recreate today without gathering specialised chefs from all corners of the globe.

*Sixty dishes of turtle soup
Sixty roasts of venison, beef, veal and mutton
Four dozen best Belfast hams
Four dozen ox tongues, garnished (decorated with butter sculptures)
Four dozen Périgord pies (filled with foie gras and truffles)
Six dozen prime chickens
Three dozen roast turkeys
Three dozen crammed capons
One hundred lobster and chicken salads
Sixty dishes of gallantins (dishes of stuffed pork or veal poached in a stock)
Forty dishes of béchamel fowl (chicken in aspic jelly)
One hundred shapes of jellies and creams
Sixty gateaux de Savoy (highly decorative cakes)
Sixty pieces monte (edible table ornaments made from sugar and pastry)
Forty high caramels and pyramids (more table decorations made from spun sugar)*

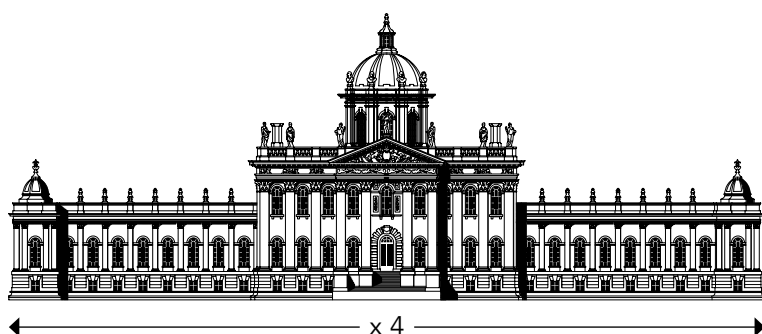
Document and Mechanical Object

When O'Connell called for a multitude of signatures he probably did not know how many people would respond to his appeal, but sheets were made available for signing at the offices of Dublin newspapers and at the Commercial Buildings in the city. Copies of the address were dispatched all over Ireland and sheets were returned filled with signatures. The final assembly would have been a dramatic process: one blank sheet was filled with names, as was another, and then these were joined together; and then more were attached. In this way ten sheets became 100 sheets, and 100 names became 1,000 and so on. A total of 652 sheets have been joined together to form, in effect, one document, a single page that is 420 metres long.

This form may have drawn its inspiration from the petition assembled by the Chartists in London in 1839, which was the size of a cartwheel and weighed a third of a ton; this roll contained three miles of paper and boasted more than a million signatures. But the Morpeth Roll was neatly wrapped around a bobbin, which rested on two brass spindles inside a chest, allowing it to turn smoothly as a mechanical object.

It is hard to imagine Morpeth or his family regularly unwinding the roll at home but the early sections do show signs of frequent handling. Unwinding the paper is an easy exercise, but winding it back is much harder, and because the paper wanders as it is spooled onto the bobbin this causes the edges to become creased and torn.

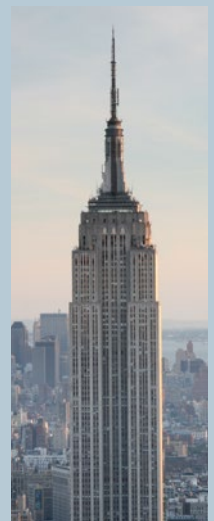
Today the surviving roll measures 420 metres, this means it would extend three times the length of Croke Park in Dublin; alternatively had Morpeth chosen to unroll it on its arrival in Yorkshire he would have found that it was four times the length of his grand home Castle Howard.



Conservation work has also shown that the roll has suffered damage at some point and been repaired. The strange axle at the centre of the bobbin is a later addition, and seems likely to have been installed after some sections of the roll were lost.

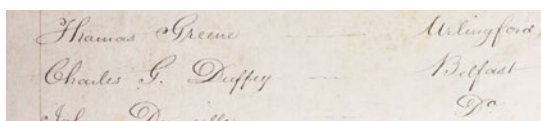
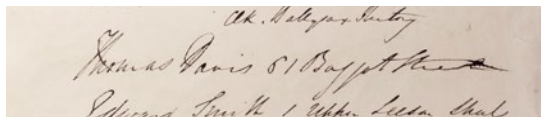


In fact it makes more sense to understand the roll as a long vertical document; after all it is read in a downward action. This means that comparisons with tall structures are more appropriate, perhaps none more arresting than the fact that the roll is just thirty-one metres shorter than the Empire State Building. But given that it has lost a number of sections one cannot discount the possibility that the Morpeth Roll was once taller than this famous New York skyscraper.





Who is on the Roll?



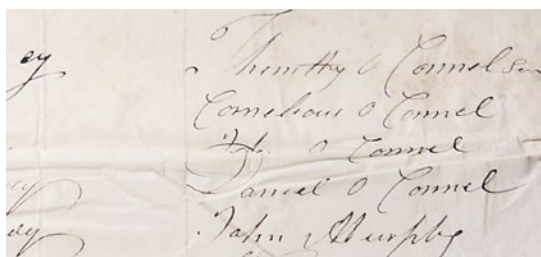
Among the names of famous people on the roll are those of Thomas Davis, who added his address at 61 Baggott Street, Dublin; and Charles Gavan Duffy on a list of names from Ulster. Both men would go on to found the *Nation* newspaper in 1842.



Sir Frederic William Burton,
Thomas Davis, National
Gallery of Ireland Collection



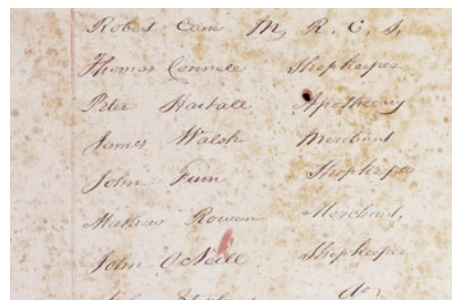
Charles Gavan Duffy
in 1848, Mary Evans
Picture Library



There are many Daniel O'Connells on the roll, the name appearing on several different sheets, in one instance among four listed family members. This does not necessarily mean they are fraudulent signatures: as with all popular leaders the Liberator will have inspired many families to name their sons Daniel.

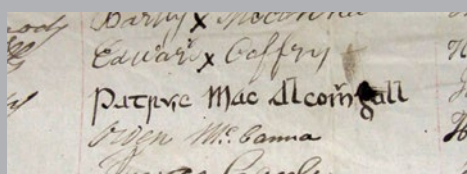
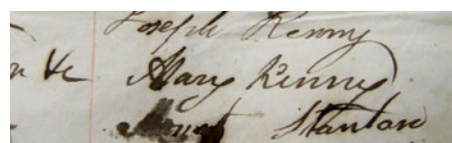
The organising committee was chaired by the Duke of Leinster, who was the first signatory, followed by the three committee members, George Rae, Andrew Carew O'Dwyer, and William Henry Hart.

These names are followed by members of the nobility and then thousands of signatures gathered from all over Ireland. Some sheets are from specific areas and are identified as such: for example Boyle in Roscommon, Inchicronan in Co Clare, or Armagh. But many of the sheets contain names from different locations. One sheet has people from as far afield as Dublin city, Kilkenny, Wexford, Tipperary, Galway, Belfast, and Armagh. Some names have identifying tags to them such as parish priests, magistrates, and some people mark down their trade as shopkeeper, merchant, bookseller and so on.



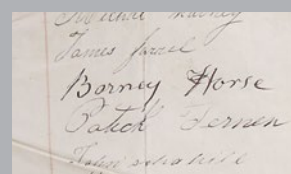
Some sheets contain different signatures in different inks and hands, others are compiled in a single hand where quite probably the parish priest or schoolmaster took it upon himself to put down all who were in favour of adding their name to the testimonial.

The names on the roll appear to be exclusively those of men, including males who were illiterate and who were recorded by the mark 'X'. The name of one woman appears on the roll, that of Mary Kenny. However one cannot discount the possibility that signatures with just an initial for the first name might include those of women.



A handful of people signed themselves in Gaelic script, such as Patrick MacAlcomhgaill.

There appear to be very few pseudonyms or names that poke fun at authority, although 'Barney Horse' might be a false identity.





Above: One of Bianconi's excursion cars getting ready for passengers and packages outside Hearn's Hotel in Clonmel, Tipperary in 1856. During August and September 1841 these carriages would have carried sheets of signatures to Dublin; these might have been consigned to the post, or delivered in person to the Commercial Buildings in Dublin. Mary Evans Picture Library.



The presence of postage stamps and franking marks on the reverse of some sheets shows how many were posted back to Dublin.

Below: Map of Ireland from Samuel Lewis' *Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, first published in 1837, marking in principal roads, railways, rivers, and canals. These were the arteries of communication on which post, trade, and news would have depended. The signatories on the Morpeth Roll came from across the four provinces of Ireland.

The Length and Breadth of Ireland

The organisation of the roll in such a short space of time was an extraordinary accomplishment. Word had to spread from Dublin across Ireland, signatures had to be gathered, and sheets sent back to the capital for assembling.

A clue to the speed of this operation lies with the presence of Charles Bianconi's name on the roll, who signed himself from Clonmel. His pioneering transport network, begun in 1815, had grown to the point that by the early 1840s even the remotest parts of Ireland were not far from some form of public transport.

Michael Dunne, Ballymarnes
C. Bianconi, Clonmel
James H. O'Rourke, J.P. Wexford



Westport



Sligo



Belfast



Galway



Dundalk



Limerick



Dublin



Cork



Kilkenny Castle



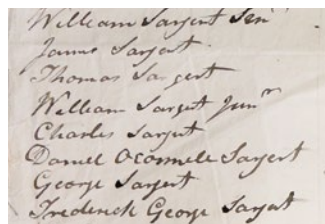
Waterford



Searching the Roll Today

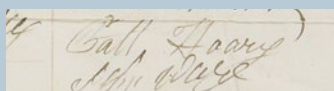
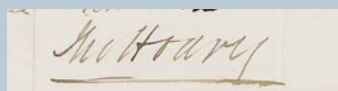
The Morpeth Roll has been digitised by Ancestry.com and for the first time ever it is possible to search for one's own ancestors among the thousands of names. Few signatures are accompanied with a location or an identifying tag such as profession or position. But even in the absence of such information there are plenty of clues within the roll to aid identification, and the expertise and knowledge of local and family history societies will undoubtedly help to excavate many of these names.

Clusters of names might reveal specific localities, and these can in turn be checked against other sources, such as Griffith's Valuation, the tithe applotment books, or trade directories.



Within the sheets there are other hints for identifying people and localities. For example a sequence of eight Sargents each marked in an identical hand, surely denotes family links

at some level, and quite probably geographical proximity. Elsewhere there appear seven Geoghegans and four Murtaghs, each in a uniform hand, these offer promising starts.



Family Tree 2

A different example lies with the name Hoary. The conservator in the Russell Library at NUI Maynooth is called Paul Hoary who has been working intensively on the roll for three years. By chance he spied two familiar names, M[ichael] Hoary and Patt Hoary, on a sheet from the locality of Ballinasloe, Co. Galway. The name Hoary is relatively unusual (there are only two other instances with this spelling on the roll), and he knew that his family came from east Galway.

Paul was able to construct a family line back to 1851 to his great-grandmother, but at that point he could not definitively link his family to the Michael and Patt Hoary on the roll. The likelihood is that they are distant members of his family, but the proof will lie elsewhere, perhaps on gravestones.

Paul Hoary (1955-) = Jane Gray (1963-)
 Paul Ambrose Hoary (1920-1995) = Veronica Grogan (1928-)
 Michael Hoary (1874-1955) = Ellen (Nellie) Horan (1878-1957)
 Patrick Hoary (c.1851-1911) = Honoria (Nora) Lawless (c.1851-1933)
 Patrick Lawless (b.1830?) = Mary Haly



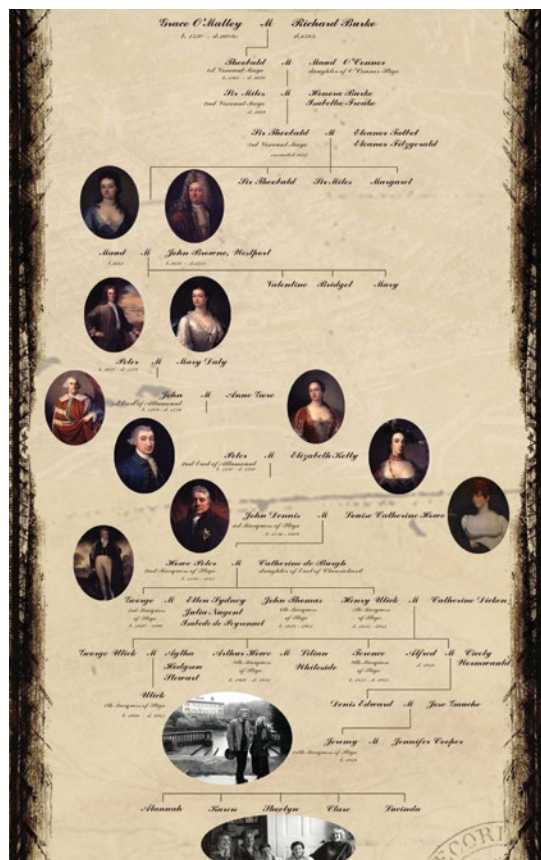
Above: Sir William Beechy, Howe Peter Browne, 2nd Marquess of Sligo, 1809.

Sligo's name was included among the nobility at the top of the roll. His family home was Westport House, Co. Mayo, where his descendants still live.



Family Tree 1

Constructing the family tree of the Brownes of Westport is a simple task, family papers record the descent from the 2nd Marquess (1788-1845) to the 11th Marquess and his children today.



Did They Stay or Did They Go?

The 157,439 signatures on the Morpeth Roll constitute two per cent of the population of 8.2 million people in 1841. Given that many of these names came from the middle classes the total represents a higher proportion of educated, prosperous, and politically articulate Catholics, as well as Protestants. To adapt a popular genealogical phrase one might reflect of that moment, 'who did these people think they were?'

O'Connell foresaw the testimonial as something that Morpeth could hand down to his descendants; Morpeth agreed, calling the roll the 'richest heirloom' his family could have. But the presence of so many signatures means the roll becomes something of a national heirloom too.

Dating from just before the calamities of the 1840s, this record of signatures acquires a very special status, and one might also ask of these names, 'what sort of a famine did they have?' Questioning where these individuals were at the end of that traumatic decade becomes a way of trying to uncover their life stories. What happened to them between 1841 and 1851: were they alive or dead, prospering or failing, in Ireland or overseas?



Above: Edwin Hayes, *An Emigrant Ship, Dublin Bay, Sunset*, 1853, National Gallery of Ireland Collection



The journey overseas would begin in agents' offices, before moving to the quayside and embarking for North America or other parts of the globe.



John & Helen
John & Henry
Nicht. & Cornelia
John & Fidelity
Howard & Lee
Daniel & Henry
John & Adeline
John & Lydia
Wells & Harriet
Jonathan & Helen
Robert & Henry
Susan & Naughton
Peter & Cornelia
Michael & Elizabeth
Patrick & Helen
Margaret & Curran
Martin & Curran
Arthur & Curran
Thomas & Fidelity
John & Helen
William & Naughton
Peter & Henry
Robert & James

Shady Curran
John & Fidelity
Nicht. & Cornelia
Francis Norton
Patrick & Dorsey
Patrick & Catherine
Martin & Cornelia
Daniel & Henry
John & Mary Ann
Nathaniel & Helen
Patrick & Mary Ann
David & Melba
James & Fidelity
William Welch
Patrick & Helen
Nicht. & Thornton
James & Mary Anne
John & Cornelia
Nicht. & Lydia
Martin & Cornelia
Mark & Curran
Margaret & Curran
John & Helen

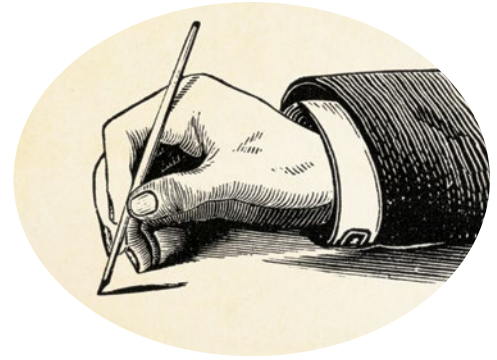
One way of framing this question is to place a sheet from the Morpeth Roll alongside a very different record of names, that of people who were sold Indian meal in Strokestown, Co. Roscommon, in May 1846 during the Famine. These desperate people would almost certainly have gone on to leave Ireland, but perhaps some of their names, or those of their relatives and neighbours, are on the Morpeth Roll.

No 4

List of those Tenants from Litterum
Dooherty & Carnashinn to whom Major
Mahon sells land at 1/2 price
27 July 1846

Name	Town Land	Exp	1/2	Remarks
1. Sgt. Corral	Dooherty	1	0 6	
2. David Hunt	Do	1	0 6	
3. David Donohue	Do	1	0 6	
4. Pat. Fyfe	Do	1	0 6	
5. Miss Salt	Do	1	0 6	
6. Jack. Maxwell	Do	1	0 6	
7. Martin Fyfe	Do	1	0 6	
8. Moll. Donnelly	Do	1	0 6	
9. John Donnelly	Do	1	0 6	
10. Martin Kelly	Carnashinn	1	0 6	
11. John Litterum	Do	1	0 6	
12. Pat. Harlow	Do	1	0 6	
13. John Jennings	Litterum	1	0 6	
14. John Hamilton	Do	1	0 6	
15. Pat. Macdonald	Litterum	1	0 6	
16. David Conlon	Litterum	1	0 6	
17. Pat. Torrey	Litterum	1	0 6	
18. Mary Davis	Carnashinn	1	0 6	

Self and Signature



The signatures on the Morpeth Roll form a bridge to the past, which people can explore through the Ancestry.com website. These names are flickering Irish presences, each one denotes somebody, and establishes that they were there (even though the precise 'there' is not always easy to establish) at a given moment – the summer of 1841. In many cases these names will be traceable and will establish a connection with families today.

We are our name before anything else (child, adult, spouse; nice person, unpleasant person; famous person, unknown person). And our name is still embedded in our signature. One's handwritten name is legal proof of one's identity. It is the key to some of the most important documents and actions in people's lives: owning a passport, opening a bank account, getting married, making a will.

The personal signature is enormously authoritative, yet in many areas of life it is fast disappearing: credit card transactions now require a number and not a signature; soon written cheques will have disappeared. The advent of email has rendered the written letter and signature unnecessary if not almost obsolete. Will there come a time when identity is no longer confirmed by signature, and if so what is the sign that will denote who somebody is? If that moment arrives will it ever be possible to make such a record as the Morpeth Roll again?

The Morpeth Roll can act as a means for contemplating questions about what it means to be Irish. By asking if the names it contains chose to stay or depart in the 1840s, or left in subsequent decades, or indeed returned at some later point, it acquires a significance that stretches long after 1841, and far beyond the shores of a single island on the western edge of Europe. It has the potential to reach out to millions of people worldwide who claim Irish descent.

The roll needs to be viewed in the context of 1841, and it also has to be comprehended across the terrible 1840s and the aftermath of the Famine. But at the onset of the twenty-first century the Morpeth Roll, filled with its multitude of names, can also prompt fresh reflections on a personal and a national past. It presents an opportunity to re-imagine Ireland through the simplest and most fundamental of signifiers – the signature.



The Morpeth Roll, Ireland Identified is a collaborative project between Castle Howard, NUI Maynooth, and Ancestry.com with the aim of researching, conserving and digitising the Morpeth Roll. In addition, special thanks go to the Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates, and the Russell Library at NUI Maynooth; the Office of Public Works; Westport House; the Naughton Gallery, Queen's University, Belfast; Failte Ireland; and Stubbs Design.

More information on the project can be found at: www.castlehoward.co.uk; www.nuim.ie; and www.ancestry.com/Morpeth

A publication *The Morpeth Roll, Ireland Identified in 1841* accompanies the exhibition.