

The Leinster Arms – *Through the pages of 19th century newspapers*



The Leinster Arms was built in 1777. The Historic Environmental appraisal of the Leinster Arms describes it as a former hotel built in the Classical style, introducing a formal and sophisticated design to a row of relatively modest structures. The building attests to the coaching tradition in Maynooth in the late 18th century. It has a striking canted projecting bay to the centre and is constructed in squared limestone and the ashlar construction to the canted projecting bay is a fine example of the high quality of stone masonry traditionally practiced in the locality. (National Inventory of Architectural Heritage).

From its beginnings the Leinster Arms has served its community well as a place where the aristocracy, tenants and townspeople met to celebrate events in the town, where meetings were held and where it was a place for visitors to the area and an important stop on the road west.

Richard Vousden opened an inn called the Leinster Arms in Maynooth in 1777, and had stables at the New Inn in what is now Enfield, mid-way between Maynooth and Kinnegad. This was an important new road out of Dublin and may have been a very profitable operation for Richard Vousden.

A description from the *Dublin Journal* 1771 tells us that “Richard Vousden, proprietor, promised the public ‘good four post beds and bedding, constantly well aired’, as well as the best wines and ‘the best meats the markets can afford’. But he also gave prominence to the location of his inn and its wider context on the road west: ‘He has got stables at the New Inn, where he means constantly to keep chaises and horses, which will enable him to drive that long stage between Maynooth and Kinnegad with more expedition, without advancing the expense to the travellers. He hopes the impartial public will consider he was the first that set up chaises on that road. Post chaises, as usual, in Maynooth, and also at the New Inn, which is mid-way between Maynooth and Kinnegad. Post chaise and pair at thirteen pence a mile, four horses at nineteen pence halfpenny. Gentlemen may be accommodated with horses to their own

carriages at the above price.”

The 'New Inn' referred to here was at what was then 'Nineteen-mile-house', now Enfield <https://www.vousden.name/ireland.htm>

In 1882 the then owner Mr. Thomas Carr put the Leinster Arms up for Auction due to his declining health. The description of the property as advertised in the *Leinster Leader* on Mar 11 gives a detailed description of the property and points to its central role in the major events in Maynooth during this time.

“The hotel is commodious, having about 18 apartments, drawing, sitting room, bedrooms, two WCs and a spacious ballroom. The latter is frequently used in the picnic season and for wedding and other parties – the drive from Dublin, 12 miles through the Phoenix Park, Strawberry Beds, Salmon Leap, Carton and the College, with dinner at this far famed hostelry, being one of the most enjoyable excursions in Ireland”...

“There is a general posting establishment in connection with the Livery Department which is much frequented. There are superior stables and outbuildings, eleven box stalls, corn and hay lofts, cattle and cart sheds, rick stands etc. The premises are extensive containing or measuring two acres and two perches, including a walled in garden which supplies Hotel with all vegetables in season, fruits and flowers. Superior water from river which flows through garden”.

Names of its business suppliers are also mentioned - Jameson, Guinness, Bass and wines by Thompson, Bewley and Draper.

The Duke of Leinster had the lease on the premises and gave free permission to sell for 20 years from the 20 September 1881.

It was bought by Michael F. Furlong for £2,000 and who gave notice of ownership in the newspapers of the day. The *Nation Newspaper* (1889) recorded the death of his wife Mary who died aged 38. In 1890 Maria Teresa Redmond, spinster appears to have taken over the running of the hotel on behalf of Michael Furlong as she applies for licences on his behalf. By 1901 Alice Redmond (a relative is applying for licences as Maria Teresa was (recently) deceased (*Leinster Leader* May 11 1901).

An examination of newspapers from the 19th century reveals the life of the Leinster Arms. Although built in 1777 the first report found in the newspapers appears in the *Freemans Journal* of 1819. The McDonnell’s Hotel and Tavern *The Leinster Arms*, had come under new ownership and one of the first occasions was described at length and in detail under the heading “Dinner at Maynooth”

“A few days since, a number of Gentlemen, comprising much of the rank, wealth and respectability of the neighbourhood of Maynooth dined....The object was the support of this newly opened and excellent Establishment. About 100 Gentlemen sat down to Dinner, served in the very best style, embracing every delicacy of the season, and wines of the first quality”.

Several toasts were given by Major Stanhope (brother to the Duchess of Leinster) to - the King, various Dukes, the Lord Lieutenant and the Duke and Duchess of Leinster who were not able to be present. The President of the College also attended and gave a speech in gratitude to the “enlightened legislator and enlightened government” who founded and endowed the College of Maynooth.



Part of “Survey of the town and town parks of Maynooth.... 1821 by Sherrard, Brassington and Greene. (NLI MS 22.004, n. 12 and Irish Historic Towns Atlas – Maynooth)

Annual dinners were held in the Leinster Arm which were presided over by the Duke of Leinster and one of 1822 was reported in the *Belfast Newsletter* (taken from the *Farmers Journal*). The dinner was attended by the heads of Maynooth College, several persons of distinction and the principal tenantry of the “Noble Duke”. Reference was also made to the Duke’s patriotic disposition and to his protection, dispensing confidence, harmony and good will.

The *Freemans Journal* in April 1840 reported on the celebrations in Castledermot and Maynooth on the Marquess of Kildare attaining his majority. Again, the Leinster Arms played its role. There was much celebrating in Carton, where 120 labourers sat down to a meal in a decorated barn followed by music. At 6 o’clock in the evening the tenantry (50 in number) were treated to a dinner in the Leinster Arms. “The town was brilliantly illuminated” as the people wanted to give as much *eclat* as possible” in honour of the occasion.

Later in the month of April the town itself wished to entertain the young Marquis. The town was brilliantly illuminated, with a large bonfire and there was a succession of magnificent fireworks during the night. But this was “eclipsed” by the

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“enthusiasm and splendour in the interior (rooms) of the Leinster Arms Hotels where the dinner to the youthful and distinguished guest took place.” The room was decorated with flags, banners, wreaths of flowers. “The dinner consisted of a profusion of all of the luxuries of the season, and the wines were of the richest vintage and in great abundance.

Upwards of 150 gentlemen sat down to dinner. Several beautiful and fashionably dressed ladies were also present in the room during the evening. The band of the 97th Regiment, with an old blind harper, and a company of professional singers from Dublin attended”. Some of those in attendance were the Duke, Dr. Montague President of the Royal College of Maynooth, Vice President Dr. Renehan, Lord Cloncurry, Rev Blacker (Rector), Dr Haly President of Clongowes College, Hans Hamilton agent to the Duke. The stewards were Dr. M.T O’Kelly, Mr. Gannon, Mr. Malone and Mr. Ellis.

The Leinster Arms also played a role in welcoming the Prince of Wales in 1861. The whole town was decorated and there was a festive atmosphere. Mr. Carr, proprietor of the Leinster Arms had the building “beautifully illuminated”. Over the door were the letters V.R. (Victoria Regina) with the Prince’s feather illuminated in variegated colours. Above were

flags of various colours with a Cead Mile Failte banner below.

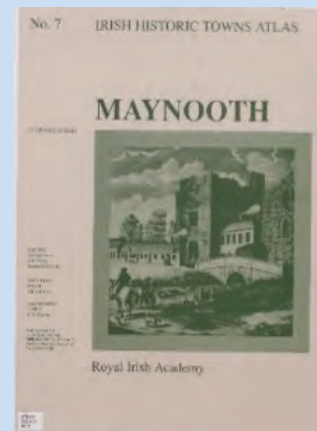
Other occasions at the hotel included meetings of societies such as the Sick and Indigent Bookkeeper Society (1867). It was the venue for auctions such as Farm of Laraghbryan (1885). A notice in the Leinster Leader on April 21 1900 from Captain Rochfort of O’Connells Kilcock calling for the 17 selected players to meet at the Leinster Arms before proceeding to play a friendly match with Crom-a-Boo Maynooth. An advertisement for a female worker was posted in the Leinster Leader in 1905. “Wanted – Strong Country Girl, Good Plain Cook, do Housework and must have 1st class discharges”.

The Leinster Arms was put up for auction in November 1910 by its owner Ms. Alice Redmond, although there are later newspaper

mentions (1912) where Ms. Redmond is noted as the owner.

The Maynooth Historic Towns Atlas gives further sources for the Leinster Arms and its owners.

Susan Durack



Richard Vousden’s inn, location unknown. 1776, 1777 (FDJ 20–23.4.1776, 27.2–1.3.1777). Closed in 1777 on opening of Leinster Arms (see next entry). Leinster Arms, Main St S. Leinster Arms, opened by Richard Vousden in 1777; 1781 (FDJ 15–18.11.1777, 10–13.3.1781). Maxwell’s inn, ballroom (see 21 Entertainment) and stables 1781 (Sherrard, 1781), 1785 (RD 441/231/284240), 1789 (DEP 3.9.1789). Leinster Arms 1791 (DEP 30.8.1791). Grehan’s inn, stabling for 100 horses 1797 (DEP 7.10.1797); 1812 (DEP 13.8.1812). Inn, incorporating ballroom, additional stables 1821 (Sherrard *et al.* 2). Leinster Arms Hotel 1822 (DEP 8.10.1822). Leinster Arms 1824 (Pigot). McDonnell’s hotel 1826 (DEP 8.8.1826), 1829 (Cooke). Head Inn 1840 (Val. 1). Leinster Arms 1846–81 (Slater). Major alterations in progress 1850 (Val. 2). W. part converted to private residence in c. 1850; hotel 1859 (Val. 3), 1873–1909; unnamed 1977 (OS). E. part John Dean’s inn 1850 (Val. 2); private residence 1859 (Val. 3); post office 1873 (see 13 Administration). Leinster Arms Hotel, ballroom, general posting establishment 1882 (KO 25.3.1882). Leinster Arms 1995.