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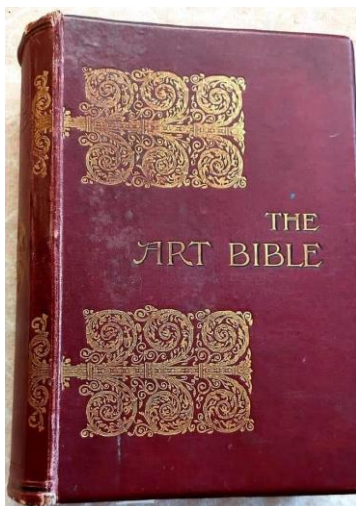
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THE CHARITY SHOP BIBLE AND LYN'S JOURNEY

John McCabe and Lyn Forde (Guest authors)

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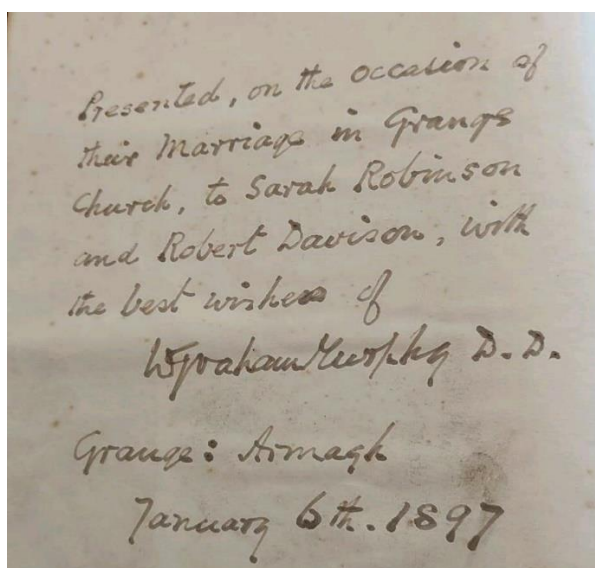
The Charity Shop Bible and Lyn's Journey by John McCabe & Lyn Forde



The 'Art Bible' story originated as a Facebook post in early October 2020 by Lyn Forde on a popular group. Within hours, the post was acknowledged by 809 members with 206 comments being made. Lyn made contact with BBC Radio Ulster presenter Kerry McLean and the story was presented the following week in a 15-minute segment on her radio show. The segment ended with Kerry reading out an offer from History Hub Ulster to "Lyn and John to write an article".

When Lyn Forde from Portadown one day spied a novel in a charity shop window which she cared to purchase little did she know this notion set the wheels in motion leading to a voyage of discovery being aired on Radio Ulster and terminating at a cemetery in Warrenpoint on a beautiful Sunday afternoon.

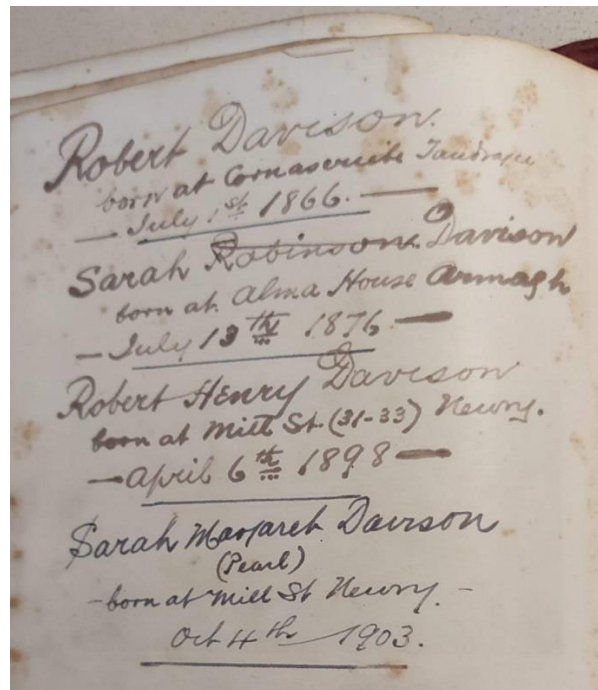
Lyn went on to tell her story to Kerry McLean with my input also on Radio Ulster last month with Kerry asking for me to assist Lyn in an investigation not into the novel she bought but a bible in a 'two books for £1' deal at the charity shop. In the shop Lyn seen an old bound bible which she rescued and took home with the novel and upon opening it on the second page she was surprised to see and read that the bible was a present on the occasion of the marriage in the Grange Church County Armagh of a Miss Sarah Robinson to a Mr Robert Davison back on 6th January 1897.



The presentation bible inscription

The year didn't go unnoticed by Lyn with the bible being 123 years old and when Lyn's husband Colin looking deeper into the book, he discovered an old newspaper clipping reporting on the couples wedding. It listed and named the wedding party and what they were wearing and a list of the wedding presents including the very bible Lyn had in her possession which was presented to the couple by a Rev Dr Graham Murphy. Lyn fired up with fascination realising that the Grange Church was in her own county travelled to the place of worship with the bible in hand to the very location where young Sarah and Robert were wed.

It was also written in the bible the names, places and dates of birth of Robert, Sarah and their two children Robert Henry and Sarah Margaret (Pearl) with both children being born at Mill Street, Newry.



The list of the four names the newlyweds Robert and Sarah and later additions son Robert Henry and Sarah Margaret (Pearl)

It was with this Newry connection that Kerry McLean who has been a friend for several years tagged me into Lyn, her friends' story about the bible on Facebook.

Having been drafted in to investigate I unearthed that Robert Davison was born at Tandragee on 1st July 1866, the son of a farmer Robert Henry Davison of Prospect House, Mullahead, Tandragee who died on 1st October 1925 and is buried at Mullavilly Cemetery in County Armagh. The farmer left over £1,021 in his will which was shared between three of his sons; John a J.P. who was the owner of the Alexandra bakery, Portadown, with his daughter Emma Wright going on to be the proprietor of the Alexandra Hotel, Warrenpoint.

There was another benefactor of the will Isaac Davison who was a chemist in Portadown and then Robert Davison who is the first name listed on his wedding present bible. He married Sarah Robinson from Alma House, Armagh at St Aidan's Church of Ireland, Grange, County Armagh on January 6th 1897 who were given the bible as a gift from Reverend William Graham Murphy. The couple set up home and business at 31-33 Mill Street, Newry with Robert becoming a successful Merchant trading in manure for potatoes and turnips whilst also selling seed oats and flax.

In addition to Robert and Sarah's names on the wedding gift bible, two more names were to be added their children Robert Henry Davison born 6th April 1898 and Sarah Margaret Davison to be known as Pearl born 4th October 1903. Over the decades Robert built up his Newry company having opened another large grocery and provisions business just around the corner from their Mill Street home on Hill Street.

With success also comes setbacks when on 31st August 1929 the Hill Street shop was gutted in a fire, with Robert recovering from this, however two years later nothing could have prepared him now aged 65 years old of being accused of murder. He was to face two counts (1) *'On the 1st September 1931 at Hill Street, Newry Robert assaulted and beaten Mrs Bridget Kane so as to cause her grievous bodily harm and endanger her life'*, and (2) *'with having on the same day feloniously, wilfully, and of malice aforethought, killed and murdered her'*. The charges and court case were national news of the day with Mrs Kane and her husband Patrick, confectioner and tobacconists having a shop adjoining Davison's shop. Mrs Kane was found dying in the scullery of the shop with head injuries by her husband who immediately blamed Robert Davison of killing her and when the trial was heard in Armagh Courthouse December 1931 a Grand Jury found "No Bill" with the case against Robert being discharged. One theory in relation to Mrs Kane meeting her death was that she may have fell with her head coming in contact with the washing sink.

Robert and Sarah got their lives back on track now living at 'Rosemount' Well Road, Warrenpoint with Robert dying on 28th October 1942. Sarah joined her husband Robert in the family plot at Clonallon cemetery, Warrenpoint on 1st April 1957. Their daughter Sarah Margaret (Pearl) who married John Malone in 1923 was to join her parents in the same plot on 10th December 1981 with her predeceased husband already there.

With three of the listed names on the matrimonial bible accounted for at the Davison family plot at Warrenpoint it left me searching for Robert Henry. I found my answer in the Newsletter that Robert Henry had died suddenly at his residence at Great George's Street, Warrenpoint, 21st August 1954 which revealed he was interred in the same cemetery with his wife Doreen.

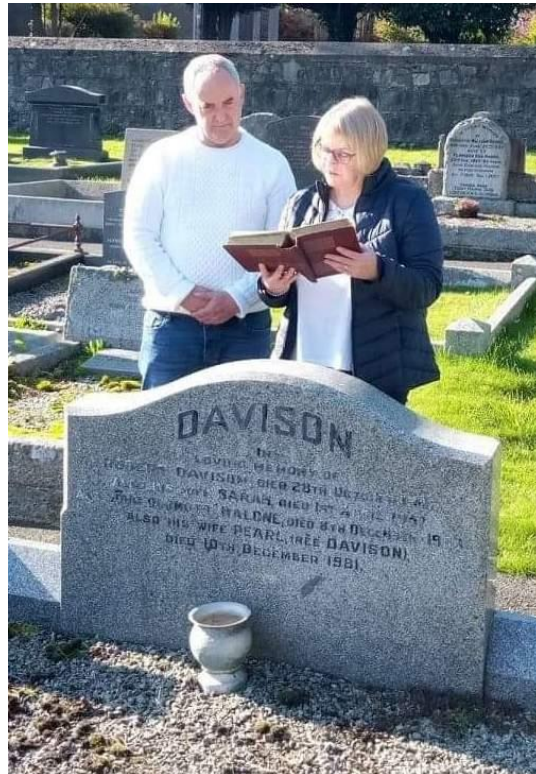
Last month Lyn, Kerry and myself discussed the story on Radio Ulster with Lyn relating her amazing journey of discovery connected with this bible.



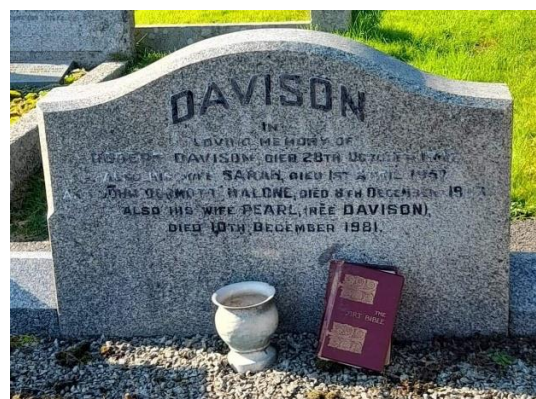
John McCabe, Lyn Forde and Kerry McLean the trio who took up the bible story and investigation

The name Davison continued to resonate through Lyn's head and she discovered that she had in her possession an *'Isaac Davison the chemist'* perfume bottle that she had saved in a house clearance following the death of her parents. She also after a further rummage around her own home, realised that a framed 1915 Alexandra bakery calendar, she bought 15 years ago was the business owned by Robert's brother John. It seemed that this bible was meant to be rescued by Lyn and with the Davison connections linking up with her possessions.

Weeks after the radio interview my partner and I arranged to meet Lyn and her husband Colin on a sunny Sunday at Warrenpoint with the bible for its final journey a reunification over the graves of its former owners Robert and Sarah. Having shown them the former family homes at Well Road and Great Georges Street at Warrenpoint we drove out a little to Clonallon cemetery to view the graves.



Lyn Forde and Newry historian John McCabe at Robert, Sarah and Pearl's graves at Warrenpoint



The wedding bible reunited with its former owners Robert and Sarah

In beautiful October weather Lyn sat the bible on the graves for a while and in a very emotive charged atmosphere she then read Psalm 23 'The Lord is my shepherd'. On our way back home to Newry and Portadown we stopped off at Hill Street and Mill Street Newry to show Lyn and Colin the former home and business locations of the Davison's.



Mill Street, Newry the home and business of the Davison's

History Hub Ulster wish to express our thanks to John and Lyn for allowing us to present this story on our website and Facebook pages.