



Bray Town Hall / Market House

“The Woman behind the Gate”

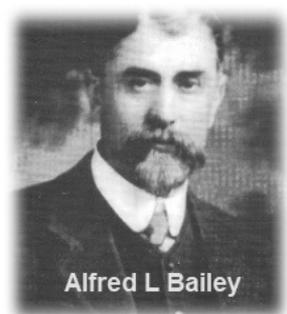
This familiar photograph of Bray Town Hall/Market House is from the Lawrence collection by Robert French, taking a closer look at the image gives the opportunity to tell the story of the people who were residents of this iconic Bray building <http://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000320608>

Behind the familiar 1881 Main Gate of the Town Hall, we see a young woman peering curiously out from the Town Hall. The young woman is believed to be Evelyn Hilda Bailey (1892-1975), youngest daughter of Alfred Lemuel Bailey and Harriet Annie Wardle (Annie). The Bailey family lived in the basement living quarters of Bray Town Hall from 1883 until 1922. The basement window facing out at street level is no longer visible since the restoration of the building some years ago. The family also had a kitchen area located above the basement room but below the council chamber. (Photo of basement window at street level)



Alfred Bailey was born in London in 1855, his family were originally from Hampshire, Southern England. Alfred married Annie Wardle in Christ Church, Bray in 1876, their address was recorded as Giltspur Cottage (Kilruddery) and both their fathers were recorded as coachmen. The couple moved to London where Alfred took up employment as a parcel porter in Euston Station. The couple had three daughters born in London (Alice, Emily and Edith). In 1879 Lord Brabazon (Reginald, son of William, Earl of Meath), proposed the idea of building a new Town Hall/Market House as a gift to the people of Bray. After many discussions with the Town Commissioners, the offer was accepted and the construction of the building started in 1881.

As the work progressed, there were a number of disagreements between Lord Brabazon and the Town Commissioners. Lord Brabazon insisted on a number of conditions to met before he handed over the building to the commissioners. One condition was that he be allowed to nominate a Caretaker for the Town Hall and that his salary be paid by the commissioners. His nomination was Alfred Bailey, Alfred's father-in-law named Job Wardle was the loyal coachman to William Brabazon, 11th Earl of Meath. Job was recorded as a coachman on the 1851 English Census in William's home in London, and had come to Ireland around this time as William had just inherited his title on the death of his father. It was noted on Job Wardle's headstone in 1900 that he had been a devoted servant to the 11th Earl of Meath for 53 years.



Alfred L Bailey

The commissioners eventually agreed to the conditions and Alfred Bailey was accepted for the position of caretaker. He tendered his resignation in London and made his way back to Bray with his family in July 1883, and took up residents in the new Town Hall/Market House. Alfred Bailey's duties during his time in Bray Town hall included Caretaker, Weighmaster, Fire Brigade Dispatcher/Officer, he also prepared and decorated the Town Hall along with

his wife for the many event and meeting that were regularly held in the hall. He also was given extra payments for winding the Town Hall clock, this position was put out to public tender at a later stage.

The first birth registered in the Town Hall/Market House was Mabel Bailey in May 1884, the first death recorded was Alfred's brother-in-law Terence Wardle in April 1898 aged 37. Alfred's wife Annie died in the Town Hall in August 1900 at the age of 44. Alfred was remarried the following year to a catholic nurse named Ellen Dixon nee Boyd, Ellen was the widow of James Dixon from Belmont, Kilruddery.

One of Alfred Bailey's son-in-laws named Edward Byrne was a prominent Nationalist in Bray. Edward (from the Dargle Road) who married Alice Bailey in 1899 was associated with Bray Emmets, and other organisations including the UIL and AOH and later years the Trade Council and Labour Party. Edward was elected as a councillor to Bray Urban District Council in 1920. This council recognised Dáil Éireann as the true government of Ireland and this attracted the attention of the police and crown forces. Alfred Bailey was detained for a number of hours on the stairs of the Town Hall in October 1920, during one of a number of high profile raids on the Town Hall in search of correspondence between council staff and Dáil Éireann. (Photo: Bailey family members at Town Hall).



In 1922 at the age of 67, Alfred Bailey's health had deteriorated and Edward Byrne read a letter of resignation accompanied by a doctor's cert to the council. The resignation was accepted with general regret by all members and it was noted that Alfred had been one of the most courteous members of the council staff for the past 39 years. Alfred retired to St Mary's Cottage on the Boghall Road with his wife Ellen and remained there until his death in 1943. John Keenan and later Jack Harpur replaced Alfred in the role of caretaker and weighmaster in Bray Town Hall. The Bailey family link was not to end in 1922; Edward Byrne served on BUDC and attended meetings in the Town Hall until his death in 1945. (Photo: Edward Byrne centre, front with members of BUDC 1934, by R Byrne)



Edward E Byrne (Alfred's grandson) took his father's seat in the Town Hall from 1945 until his retirement from the council in 1974. He had the privilege of raising the new Municipal Flag of BUDC on the flag mast of the Town Hall in October 1956.

Alfred's great grandson John Byrne held this family seat on Bray Urban Council from 1974 until his retirement in 2014, by coincidence Bray Urban Council was abolished that very year. All three generations of the Byrnes represented the Labour Party and held the positions as Chairperson of the council a number of times during their terms on the council. This sadly represented the end of the Bailey family link to Bray Town Hall that lasted 131 years. (Photo Edward E Byrne raising flag on Town Hall in 1956)

