

THE CASTLE TALBOTS AND MALAHIDE CC

“Is this a bad time?”

“No, it’s a good time and a good place” I replied to Charles Lysaght. I was just setting out for a cycle about the boreens of Louisburgh, Co Mayo. I was on holiday and had just got as far as the Main Street when I took the call. It was July 2020. We chatted for a while. At my request Charles had agreed to provide some background information on Lord Talbot of Malahide and in particular Lord Talbot’s sister the Honourable Rose Talbot, who was better known to him, and the Talbot connections to Malahide Cricket Club.

We agreed to meet up and continue our conversation when the worst of Covid-19 had passed, maybe in a month or two’s time!

Three years later in July 2023 we resumed our chat in Charles’s back garden in Merrion over a pot of tea on a fresh, sunny morning.

CL “I met Rosie, as she was known, through an English family friend of hers when I was working in London in the 1960’s. Subsequently, especially after I returned to work in Ireland in 1970, I was invited to lunch and dinner parties in Malahide Castle. They were splendid occasions with a mixture of ambassadors, their own circle of gentry and others; they liked to invite young people to mix the generations.

Rosie was very hospitable. Among the people I met at her home were Taoiseach Jack Lynch, whom she liked very much, and North of Ireland Prime Minister Terence O’Neill and their respective wives. I don’t remember her brother Milo attending these parties; he had his own circle. They were both shy and rather reserved.”

In 1948 Milo Talbot had succeeded a cousin as Lord Talbot of Malahide. He and his younger sister Rose, who had been born and brought up in England, took up residence in Malahide Castle circa 1950 but Milo was abroad much of the time serving as ambassador in Laos and in the Foreign Office in London until he resigned in 1958.

The Talbot association with Malahide goes back as far as the 12th century when King Henry II rewarded Sir Richard de Talbot, a young knight of French descent from Normandy with a grant of lands around Malahide in 1185.

Malahide Cricket Club was established in 1861 by the Honourable Richard Talbot, later Lord Talbot of Malahide, grandfather of Milo and Rose and played its home games on the grounds of the Malahide Castle demesne. The Club colours, black and gold, and the crest and motto Forte et Fidele are taken from the Talbot Coat of Arms.



CL *"Rosie was more interested in cricket than Milo. She would go to London every year to attend the Lords Test. I think she sometimes went down from the Castle to the Malahide games. I recall that she was very friendly with one of the Hughes family. She believed her father had been involved in the early days of the cricket club in Malahide. That is possible as he was born in 1854 and brought up at Malahide before departing for a career overseas in the Army; he married late and was in his late 50's, early 60's when Milo [1912] and Rosie [1915] were born.*

Milo and Rosie did not get on that well living together, although she idolised him. She moved out of the Castle in the 1960's to Dun Laoghaire. She had a house opposite the golf course where she entertained regularly.

In the early 1970's Milo entered negotiations with Jack Lynch's government to hand over the Castle to become a residence for the Taoiseach. He didn't see the Malahide property on 270 acres as having a future for his successors and envisaged their living on the family estate in Tasmania where there was a holding of approximately 23,000 acres. The estate in Tasmania is called Malahide [in a region called Fingal]."

Milo had been an undergraduate at Cambridge in the 1930's and knew Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, Kim Philby and Anthony Blunt who became part of a deadly Soviet spy ring within the British Foreign Office. Guy Burgess was Milo's history tutor. Anthony Blunt, who was not unmasked until 1979, remained a friend and visited Milo on many occasions in Malahide Castle.

Milo died suddenly and unexpectedly from a heart attack on 14th April 1973 aged 60 while on a cruise ship off the Greek Islands.

CL *"When Milo died in 1973 Rosie moved back into the Castle. Even though they had their differences Rosie was devastated by his death. She wanted to fulfil her brother's wish, which was to*

hand over Malahide Castle to the State and keep the Tasmanian holding, so she offered the Castle to the State in lieu of the very substantial death duties. There had been a change in government and the new government led by Liam Cosgrave with Richie Ryan as minister for finance did not accept the offer. As a result the contents of the Castle were put up for sale in an auction and scattered. Matt McNulty, the head of Bord Failte, persuaded Dublin County Council to buy the Castle and demesne. Otherwise, it could have been sold off piecemeal. It was opened as a public amenity in 1978. Rosie moved to live in Tasmania to oversee the estate there. She took an extended holiday in these islands every summer.

Before the sale of the Castle, Rosie had the idea of raising a cricket team to play a match against the village i.e. Malahide cricket club. She asked me to organise and captain her team. As it was a Saturday it was not possible to get Dublin club cricketers. I put together a side recruited mainly from Meath County Cricket Club for whom I played at the time. One of our best players was Andrew Bonar Law, a Trinity graduate who was the grandson of the British Prime Minister in the early 1920s. Morgan Dockrell and Richard Whaley also turned out. Our star on the day was Richard Arundell who was heir apparent to the Barony of Talbot of Malahide and who is now the current Lord Talbot of Malahide. He was in his final year in Stonyhurst at the time. He scored more than fifty and was very popular with everybody. Rosie held a reception afterwards in the Castle for all who played in the game.

When the Castle was being sold I suggested to Rosie that she should first donate some extra ground to the Cricket Club as the existing ground was too narrow. I thought she was receptive. I was disappointed it did not happen but perhaps she had to sell the whole estate as a unit. Fortunately the local Council subsequently put things right so ultimately creating the present spacious ground which is an ideal venue for internationals."

The Malahide cricket ground was renovated in 1981 when a new square was laid and a stone wall was built around the extended pitch on the Castle side. In 2011 the ground was redeveloped and enlarged creating the current international standard facility.

CL *"Sadly, but perhaps understandably, Rosie was somewhat bitter at how things had worked out. I tried to persuade her to do a recording of her voice, the last Talbot to live in the Castle, to complement the portrait of Milo and herself as children that is exhibited there. Others, including Desmond Guinness and Desmond Fitzgerald, the Knight of Glin joined me in trying to persuade her to do so. She refused "they have it now; let them tell their fairy tales and do what they like" was all she said. It sounded resentful. She used to return every year from Tasmania and spend at least a month in Ireland looking up old friends. Part of the tour was a trip out to Malahide to see people who worked for her at the Castle and give them lunch. It was appreciated. Milo also left behind a pleasant memory among employees. He had assembled plants from all over the world for the garden. I recall being told by a man who worked in the garden that Milo always clattered the gate or made some noise when he was approaching so as not to take those working there by surprise."*

BG *"According to the Press Reports Rose wanted to retain a right of residence while transferring the Castle and Demesne to the State. But that never happened. Whereas the Cobbe Family in Newbridge House in nearby Donabate transferred the Big House and Estate to the local Council while retaining a right of residence to this day."*

CL *"Yes, I think the Cobbe family did some kind of deal by which they lent their furniture indefinitely in return for a right of residence. It was a pity that the contents of Malahide Castle were sold off. There were priceless items such as the bog oak furniture. A sale of the contents took away a*

lot of the history of the Castle. But it all flowed from this refusal by the Government to take the deal Rosie offered. I never heard that she sought a right of residence as part of the deal."

The Honourable Rose Talbot died in Tasmania on 14th February 2009 aged 93. Both Lord Milo and Honourable Rose were unmarried and died without issue.

CL *"I first played in Malahide for Pembroke in the 1950's, in schoolboy cricket matches. We got the 42 bus out from Eden Quay. Local people then had country voices, different from a Dublin city voice. It was very much a country place, not suburban. The club had just gone senior at the time [in 1953]. I played against Gerry O'Brien-- Buster was his nickname--, Les O'Shea, Norman Adams, Lefty Wright (John Wright), the Hugheses. When the Irish Cricket Union sent me to Lords for coaching [in 1960], I went with Buster and three others. Unfortunately, it rained 3 of the 5 days, so we didn't get much coaching."*

In the 1960's the Irish Cricket Union annually sent a small group of the most promising young players in Ireland to Lords for a week of coaching. The five players nominated to travel to Lords in 1960 were G Irwin and WS Matier (Ulster), C Lysaght and G O'Brien (Leinster) and P Dineen (Munster).

CL *"I got on the Pembroke [first] team when I was 16 in 1958. My teammates included Stanley Bergin, Ken Hope and Harry Hill. I was quite a good offside batsman. I won the Bookman Cup, the second XI Leinster batting trophy in my last year of club cricket in 1962. I went to Cambridge in 1962 and played for my college and the Crusaders but did not do as well as I hoped on their lovely batting wickets [at Fenner's]. Then, when I came back from London in 1970, I played for Meath County. They were short and they asked me to play. It was agreeable and I could play reasonably well without practising."*

Jack Whaley founded the Meath club in the late fifties and had great ambitions for it. At one stage we would play teams from Dublin clubs with most of their firsts. Our games were on a Sunday, and although not league-based, were quite competitive. Jack Sweetman used to prepare good wickets;. He was a master in Headfort School in Kells, which was our home ground. Every year we played Malahide; I got one of my few centuries in one of those games. Ray Daly [former Irish International and captain of Malahide CC]. was a regular on the Meath team and captained it for one season as did I. Meath had an outstanding player in wicket-keeper Lingard Goulding but he didn't play regularly. Coaching the school cricket team Lingard noticed potential of Eoin Morgan who was playing against them for CUS. He compared him at the time to a young Nawab of Pataudi with whom he had played at prep school in England."



LEPRECHAUNS NORTH v SOUTH MALAHIDE JULY 1988

Back Row: N. H. Lush, L. Goulding, C. Lush, R. Molins, H. Linehan, C. Hart.

Middle Row: B. Burke, V. Savino, N.C. Mahony, S. Beckett, A. Linehan, F. Brady, K. Kirkpatrick, G. Graham, D. R. Pigot, G. Bell, C. Hiles, C. Lysaght,

Front Row: G. Crothers, N. Scott, J.S. Pollock, C. O'Donnell, E.W. Haughton, M. Rea, M. Nulty.

Charles also played regularly for the Leprechauns and is still involved with the famous club to this day. His first game for the Leps was in 1960 when Jimmy Boucher recruited him to play in the annual match at Clongowes. They marked their 25th anniversary by a game at Malahide between Northern and southern Leprechauns. Charles was President of the Leprechauns on the 50th Anniversary of the Club in 1998. I showed Charles a press cutting of the Leprechauns Tour of the South East of Ireland in 1971 in which he scored a century against Halverstown. Other fixtures on the tour were against Bagenalstown, Na Shuler and Mount Juliet. Their party that year included former Irish Internationals John Hill and Noel Mahony.

CL Yes, I remember that hundred in the old ground at Halverstown. They played in a nice field near Markey's Pub where we ended up after the match. Paddy Boland of Leinster, a great enthusiast, was their founder and moving spirit.

Brian Gilmore 2023

