

Station Master's House: Maghera

Joe Mallon LLB



I am a Maghera man - I grew up in Crewe Drive just down the railway line about one hundred yards from where the Station Master's House is situated. As children myself and my three brothers, as well as all my neighbours, played on the railway line and went on adventures up to the 'big road' on the old path of the line. My parents always encouraged us to go out and explore and have fun.

The Station Master's House was actually a building I walked past every day on my way to school at the

local seat of learning - Saint Patrick's College. When I left Maghera to go to university in Trinity in Dublin, I never dreamed I would be back one day and be working in this fantastic building.

Not a lot is known about the history of the house. Maghera Station was opened on 18th December 1880 by the Derry Central Railway which ran from Magherafelt to MacFin Junction and was 29.25 miles long. The preceding stop to Maghera was Upperlands Station and next stop Knockloughrim. It was taken over by

the Northern Counties Committee in September 1901. The station closed to passengers on 28th August 1950 and the final closure took place on 1st October 1959. For seventy-nine years the railway station served the people of Maghera and surrounding areas - seventy-nine years of stories, memories and history that I hope to start gathering in order to compile a record of this part of our heritage. One great old story of the station is contained on the Maghera Historical Society website:



Belfast Newsletter 10th March 1890
A MAN LEAPS FROM A TRAIN.

MAGHERA, SUNDAY:- After the departure of the 5.40 train last evening Acting-Sergeant Dolan and Constable McDonagh, who were on duty at the station, heard sounds as of some person moaning along the line a short distance from the station. Constable McDonagh proceeded in the direction, and had only got about 100 yards down the line when he found a young man named James Mellon close to the rails apparently suffering great pain. The station-master, the acting-sergeant, and one of the

porters carried the injured man on a door to the waiting-room, where he was examined by Dr. McGowan, who was in attendance. The doctor found that Mellon's right leg was broken a little above the knee. Questioned as to how the accident occurred, Mellon said he joined the train at Kilrea, intending to get out at Maghera, but he mistook the station, and on finding his mistake he jumped out of the railway carriage, with the result already mentioned. A cart having been procured, he was removed to his father's residence in the townland of Ternoney.

Somewhat ironic given the now current use of the building some have said!

There were five station masters who lived and worked in this fine building over that time - The first was Thomas Butler, he was followed by Harry Moore, Jack Bradley, Herbie Wilson (who is remembered in the article on page 25 My Grandparents: A Personal Tribute. By Kenneth Murray) and finally Herbert Monteith. At the opening of the Station Master's House on Thursday the 3rd December 2015

we were delighted to be joined by Mrs Monteith, her daughter Sandra Grainger and Sandra's husband Richard. Mrs Monteith, in her nineties, was overjoyed to be back in what was her home for many years. Since then her two sons, Keith and Stuart, have been to visit the building and recounted many fantastic stories about growing up there.

This has been a recurring theme since we opened for business on the 1st November 2015 - people calling

*Anailla
 Cheryl Bond
 Graystone
 G. Wickham -
 31st October, 2015.*

*Dear Joe,
 Thank you so much for welcoming
 my mother and me so warmly to the
 opening of your new office at the Station
 Master's House. How and I enjoyed our
 visit. How and I enjoyed our visit so
 much and we were delighted to see
 our former home so beautifully and
 so lovingly restored. How we talked about
 our big night out suddenly - it was a
 much to like of us and it was a glowing
 report to my brother, Stuart and Art.
 Please pass on our appreciation to Eileen,
 your family and all the staff who made
 the evening so special. Blessing you all.*

*With love
 to all*

*Love
 Joe & Sandra Grainger (Monteith)*

in and telling us stories of someone they knew who lived here or sharing their own vivid memories of the station. It has been, at times, magical to see the local people of Maghera engage with the building in this way and makes all of us who work here feel very privileged that the Station Master's House has been brought back to life in the manner that it has. The fact that fellow Maghera people are happy that this restoration has been carried out and new life breathed into this historic building is an unexpected bonus. Clients have left in old pictures, brought in books

on railway stations and locals drop in with their yarns. We have all been amazed at the reaction.

This firm was started by Tony McCormick in 1971. I myself joined in 2004 as a solicitor and Mallon McCormick started business in September 2008. (Tony retired having created his own legacy in Maghera for 45 years at the end of 2015). We had been seeking to expand our premises and with this in mind the Station Master's House was purchased in January 2015 and we set about applying for planning permission via McGurk Chartered Architects, Magherafelt. This application was not without its challenges as this is a Grade B1 listed building. Both Colm McGurk, the principal of that practice, and Edelle Henry were instrumental in the finished design we have today and I am very grateful to them for this. Planning was granted, and local Maghera construction firm P&K McKaigue Limited carried out the complete refurbishment (the building was in very poor repair) in an incredibly short turn around. Works commenced on my wife's birthday on the 9th May and we moved in to start business on the 1st November. Very instrumental, too, in the transformation process were my good friend and graphic designer, Gabriel Muldoon, local joinery firm Specialist Joinery Group who were responsible for the fit-out to the office and Top Glass who developed the structural glazing together with the architects. All the work was done by local tradesmen and craftsmen from Maghera and the surrounding areas. I am very proud that all this was achieved by people from my home area.

We were very honoured for Anthony Tohill, Chairman of Mid Ulster Council to join us for the official opening of the building late last

year along with my own family - my wife Cairtriona and my four children Cara, Kate, Erin and Luke - our staff, friends and guests.

I hope this building will retain its present grandeur and, through me and our team here, will continue to provide a service to the town of Maghera - and beyond - for many years to come.

One year after moving in I have to say it has been a joy to work in the Station Master's House. All our clients who call have given very positive feedback. Everybody here at Mallon McCormick is delighted to be working in such a beautiful building which is such an important part of our local history and which has now been restored and reclaimed for future generations.

