

# DANIEL McCONAGHY – 1865

Compiled by Marie McKendry Don & Oonagh Fowler

**Daniel McConaghy** was born in 1865, the second son of John McConaghy and Mary Jane Redmond. The family home, Warren View, sits right next to the Causeway Memorial School, both sited souliquely, just a field or two away from the headland which plunges dramatically down to the Giant'sCauseway.



Taken at front door of Warren View for a double wedding at Billy Parish Church, September 1897.

**Daniel McConaghy** and **Margaret Ann Graham** are the couple, centre left.

Daniel's sister, **Marianne McConaghy** and **Robert Wark** are the couple, centre right

*(They went to live in Durban, South Africa, where Robert Wark worked for a sugar refining company. Marianne died there. In retirement, as a widower, Robert Wark returned to Warren View to live out his days.)*

Far right is **John McConaghy**, Daniel's father.

Far left we think is **William Graham**, Margaret Ann's uncle from Kirkpatrick Fleming, Dumfriesshire.

The headlands and shore, and the spectacular rock formations of this ruggedly beautiful part of the North Antrim coast were in his very back yard and he must have explored every nook and cranny as a boy and come to love the bracing air, the glorious sea and the sky of this lovely place. Within this setting and to the community that meant so much to him, he devoted his lifelong service as headmaster of the Causeway School.

It was here too that he met his wife, Margaret. Daniel's descendants still enjoy sharing the story of that romance.

Margaret Ann Graham was raised in Dumfriesshire in Scotland. She was trained in haute-couture dressmaking and hairdressing. In the mid 1890's, she became Lady's Maid for Lord Macnaghten's six daughters, and came from London to serve them there at 'Runkerry House'. When she made her first appearance in the area, following behind the Macnaghten ladies as they filed into church, the local commentary praised her poise and style and lovely thick, auburn hair.



Schoolhouse at Ardihennon – Maud, baby Grace, Ellen Mary, Peggy, two little boys in wagon and William McConaghy



Top: John & Mary CENTRE: Grace  
BOTTOM: William, Peggy, Ellen & Maud

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# DANIEL McCONACHY – 1865

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The Macnaghten's used to host wonderful cultural evenings at Runkerry and Daniel McConaghy, the local school master, would attend with his violin. Margaret Graham first saw him there and was quite taken with him. The story goes that she made a visit to the Wishing Chair at the Giant's Causeway to make a very special wish - that one day she would be his wife. Love blossomed, and they were married at Billy Parish Church in 1897. Daniel and Margaret lived at the Teacher's Residence at Ardihennon, now demolished, which was only a hundred yards from the school

gates. Here they raised eight children, but sadly lost a daughter, Ellen Mary, who was not quite ten. She died in April 1917, during the heaviest snow fall that had visited the area in many years. In

those conditions, a horse drawn hearse was unable to travel out from Coleraine or Ballymoney. It is a moving testimony to the spirit of the community and the love extended to the family that local friends and farmers dug a path through the drifts all the way from the Giant's Causeway to Billy Parish Church, a distance of three miles or more, so that her little coffin could be taken by pony and trap for burial.

Daniel McConaghy trained at the Church of Ireland Teacher Training College in Dublin and studied Horticulture at Glasneven near Dublin. He began teaching in 1887, and taught at the Giant's Causeway for 43 years, moving up from the National School at the Nook, to become principal in 1915 of the new Causeway Memorial School which was built by the Macnaghten family. He served there until he retired in 1930. Even in retirement he continued to be known affectionately as the "Master". Writing of her high regard for him, one former pupil said that she could fill the page telling all the good things about the Master. He was a person of quiet integrity and his life and example demonstrated kindness toward all men and a deeply held faith in the sovereignty and goodness of God. A quote which he appreciated was: ***"The prospect of a future state is a secret comfort and refreshment to my soul. It is that which makes nature look gay around me; it doubles all my pleasures and supports me under all my afflictions."*** (Addison)



John McConaghy (Daniel's father) with Daniel's brother George driving the wagon



Daniel in the middle with friends at the Causeway

At that time, many people were rather taken with Spiritualism. Daniel McConaghy was not, but as this excerpt shows he was gracious to those whose ideas differed to his own. In his own words. ***"Although my old brain is unable to grasp the facts and teachings of Spiritualism, I read with pleasure your remarks about your meetings with good mediums in London and that you had spoken with your mother. It is indeed wonderful. But I feel that it is better for me to be content to wait till I pass over to the other side where I can meet and talk with the loved ones gone before. I enjoy our Communion Service in Church where I feel that the congregation in which I find myself is not the few people assembled in Church at the moment: it is the whole Communion of Saints. I offer myself to God and pray that the Life of Love and service and sacrifice may take possession of me thereby knitting me to all others who share it whether in this world or in that beyond."***

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The McConaghy's of Warren View were people of faith – they loved books and were also musical. Daniel's father trained a Temperance Band in their home, and Daniel could play piano, violin, and flute well. He taught the children at school to sing songs and hymns in four-part harmony, and at the end of the school day he played the flute or fiddle for them for drill and dancing. He was gifted artistically too, and undoubtedly would have shared his love of drawing with his students. The Causeway School was said to have been one of the most progressive in the area.

Daniel McConaghy's enthusiasm for teaching scientific ideas and his personal love of horticulture, and bee-keeping, created a diverse and hands-on learning experience for his students. At home, Daniel kept a thriving and intensively cultivated garden in which he grew all kinds of vegetables – including unusual ones like Jerusalem Artichokes. He built a greenhouse and may have been one of the first in the community to grow his own tomatoes. He also kept a dozen or more beehives, which he constructed himself. At school, he installed a glass fronted hive so that the children could observe the bees and their busy activity inside. In addition to bee-keeping the boys at school were taught gardening and how to create good drainage for the earth.



John McConaghy – Daniels Father



Young Daniel McConaghy

They learned about pruning and together they trained apple trees to grow flat against the school wall, since it was too bleak and stormy there for normal growth. Daniel kept a science cupboard wellstocked with apparatus for conducting experiments and displayed an interesting collection of geological specimens in a glass case to stimulate enquiry and discussion. One or two other teachers were employed at the school to assist, and at one time, Daniel's wife, Margaret, was employed to teach sewing to the girls.

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The Causeway School was the very first in the district to institute a mid-day supply of hot cocoa to the children. Each child brought a penny and their bread. The Macnaghtens sent a free supply of milk fresh from Runkerry dairy each day. The milk was heated at the school and cocoa and sugar were added. This warm nourishment must have been a blessing to some of the poorer children. Margaret McConaghy would make big pots of broth, full of all kinds of vegetables to feed her own children when they came down at lunch time to the schoolhouse. They had plates of broth and “pieces” – thick slices of buttered bread. In those days, many children had to come to school without even a piece. Those who found their way down to the house were never turned away from having share of the master’s humble fare. Some of the children came barefooted and tattered and sometimes Margaret, who was an expert needle woman, adept at cutting down old clothes to make do and mend, would take time to make a garment for an especially needy child.

The McConaghy family has long been connected with the Giant’s Causeway. Their generations have farmed the land, grazed sheep, and cattle, and collected and dried kelp there. Some from amongst them ventured out with the waves of emigrants who sailed to America and to Australia during the nineteenth century. Sad letters from Australia tell of a difficult life, and a great longing for homeland, and speak of precious connections with fellow immigrants from other North Antrim families. One of the McConaghy’s who was fortunate enough to fulfil his hopes of returning from Australia was

Daniel’s older brother, John, who later became land steward at Runkerry for Lord Macnaghten.



Daniel in retirement



Daniel & Margaret with John & Mary

Daniel McConaghy grew up amidst great family industry. Warren View was a popular guest house in the 1880s and comments from well pleased patrons in the old visitor’s book, with entries which span three decades, attest to the family’s warm hospitality, good-food, and comfortable accommodations

– a home from home, amidst the beauty of the natural surroundings, that welcomed visitors back summer after summer, and from as far afield as the United States. The family also had a ‘tent’ - a

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little shop for souvenirs and refreshments along the path that led down to the Causeway. In 1896 Daniel's father opened the Giant's Causeway Post Office in the front parlour of Warren View, and Ulster's tiniest postal district was created complete with its own special postmark. The Giant's

Causeway postmark was much in demand by stamp collectors and popularly sought by tourists who visited from all over the world. With potted geraniums on the windowsill, well-worn floorboards, a warm wooden counter cluttered with nostalgic postal paraphernalia - the gleaming brass scale with its assortment of weights, ledgers, files and a wall of wooden drawers, an old fashioned black telephone, walls papered with posters and notices, and lighting provided still by flickering oil lamps it was, until its close, a charming reminder of a bygone era.

Family members from three generations served as Postmaster at the Giant's Causeway Post Office until it closed with the retirement of Daniel's daughter, Maud McConaghy in 1975.



Daniel's Daughter Maud McConaghy, the last Post Mistress of the Giant's Causeway Post Office.



Daniel & Margaret McConaghy - Retired