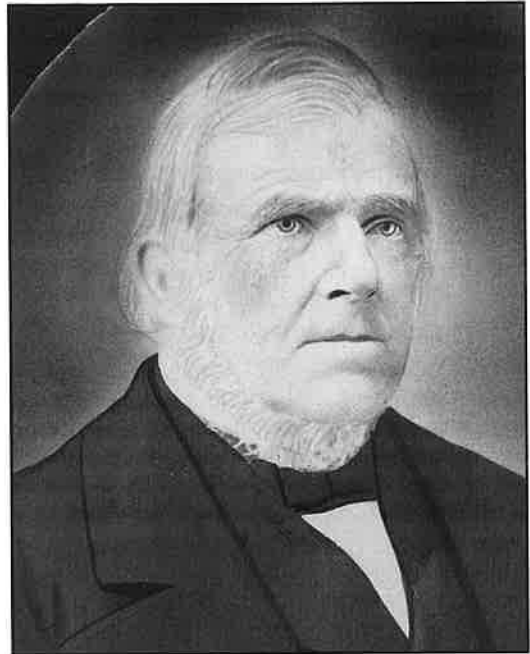


# Scoláirí Simon Cox

By Donnchadh Ó Duibhir

After being with him nearly a year, I left and went to Bansha, four miles east of the town of Tipperary. Here, Mr. Simon Cox, an unassuming little man, had the largest mathematical class in Ireland, and probably in the world, having 157 students, gathered from every County in Ireland, and some from England.<sup>1</sup>

Faisnéis í sin ó Michael McDermott, Gaillimheach a tháinig aniar chun na Báinsí taca na bliana 1830, cuntas a mhusclóidh suim sa sármhúinteoir seo agus ins na táinte macléinn a fuair scolaíocht uaidh. Mar le McDermott, ba dhuine des na scoláirí fáin é a théadh ar a gcamchuart i bhfad ó bhaile ar thóir an léinn. Rugadh sa Choill Mhór, láimh le hAchadh Raithin é. An chéad mhúinteoir aige ná James Rogers i bhFleascach is d'fhoghlaim uaidh uimhríocht agus cuntasaíocht. Ar aghaidh leis ansin go scoil Bhráithre Phádraig i nDroichead an Chláirín, é ar lóistin sa Chora. Chuir sé eolas ann ar ailgéabar, ar ghramadach agus ar chuntasaíocht. Chun bóthair leis ina dhiaidh sin go Luimneach go scoil matamaitice Matthew Collins, mar a bhfuair sé ana-oiliúint sa chéimseatain. D'ardaigh sé a sheolta arís agus ghaibh go Caisleán Oircín i gcomhgar Chathair Chinn Lis. Ba é Thomas McNamara an máistir mór ansin, nó "Father of X", mar a b'fhearr aithne air, i ngeall ar a chumas san ailgéabar go háirithe; agus ainm anairde air sa tsuirbhéireacht lena chois. Is i dtigh William Keyes "a gentleman farmer" i nDrom Caoin a chuir McDermott faoi; agus i ndeireadh báire ráinig sé an Bháinseach agus Simon Cox, mar a thuiriscigh sé thuas.



*Michael McDermott*

Dála Cox, "Like Mr. McNamara, he had special branches in which he excelled; these were the use of the globes, spherical astronomy, analytical geometry, and fluxions".<sup>2</sup> Chaith an Gaillimheach dhá bhliain ag bailiú eolais uaidh agus é ar lóistín ag "Dairyman

Peters, near the bridge of Aughahall, about three miles east of Bansha”<sup>3</sup>. D’imigh sé leis ansin ar ais go Connachta: “I bade farewell to hospitable and learned Munster, where, with a few exceptions, all the great mathematical and classical schools were kept, until the famine plague of 1848 broke them up”<sup>4</sup>. Bhí ana-oiliúint air faoin am sin, agus chuir sé an bhail chríoch uirthi i scoil Matthew Cunniff in Áth Liag i gCo. Ros Comáin.

Níorbh aon stró air, mar sin, a dhintúir a bhaint amach sa tsuirbhéireacht, rud a dhein sé sa bhliain 1836. Fuair sé post i suirbhéireacht ordanáis na hÉireann, cuid dá chúram “examining and translating Irish names into English”<sup>5</sup>. Anonn leis go Sasana ansin agus chaith roinnt blianta ar a cheird ann. Ach ní raibh deireadh taistil déanta aige fós: sa bhliain 1842 d’imigh sé go Quebec Cheanada. Bhí ceataí sa scéal, ámh: ní ghlacfaí lena dhintúir ann - níor mhór dó dintúir Cheanada a bhaint amach; ní amháin sin, ach bhí a cháilíocht féin á éileamh ag Upper Canada agus ag Lower Canada faoi seach. D’éirigh leis ar ball, ach idir an dá linn, fuair sé post mar mhúinteoir in aice le Ottawa.

I sailed up the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers to Bytown – then a growing town in the woods – but now called Ottawa, the seat of the Government of British America. I engaged as a teacher in a school in Aylmer, nine miles from Bytown (now Ottawa).<sup>6</sup>

Tharla na cáilíochtaí cuí aige, b’fhuirist dó post suirbhéireachta a fháil. Níorbh fhada dá mháistrí a aithint go raibh mianach thar barr ann, agus fuair sé ardú céime dá réir. Thug Sir William Logan ardmholadh dhó. Ba é sin an scoláire iomráiteach a bhí ina cheann ar Shuirbhéireacht Geolaíochta na tíre sin: is as a ainmníodh Mount Logan sa Yukon, an sliabh is airde i gCeanada. Bhí McDermott ina chúntóir aige agus é ag déanamh suirbhéireachta ar abhantrach uachtarach an Ottawa sa bhliain 1845:

Spending a few days there (Bytown) it was my good fortune to enlist in my favour the aid of Mr. McDermott, Provincial Surveyor.<sup>7</sup>

Ní gan dua a shaothraigh McDermott a ghradam. Bhain dó seaca dhó agus é i mbun a chúram sa tír ó thuaidh. An compánach a bhí aige, fuair sé bás, agus is ar éigin a thainig sé féin slán. B’éigean méara a choisle clé a theascadh dhe, agus ina theannta sin, méara a lámh, ach amháin an dá ordóg agus lúidín na ciotóige. Ní raibh aon chloroform ná a leithéid i gceist, ach thainig sé as:

After the amputation, I soon healed, which I attribute to my strictly temperate habits, for I never drank spirituous liquor nor used that narcotic weed, tobacco.

Phós sé Mary Connolly taca na bliana 1833, ach cailleadh in Aylmer í sa bhliain 1842:

Adieu, my dear and loving wife,  
 May your pure soul in Heaven rest,  
 When I depart this dreary life  
 May you and I in Heaven be blessed.  
 Nine years we lived in health and joy  
 Blessed with two daughters and a boy,  
 They now are dead, except all but Ellen,  
 May I meet them with you in Heaven.<sup>8</sup>

Ní ardbhéarsaíocht í sin aige. Níorbh fhada dó in uaigneas pé scéal é: phós sé Catherine Fitzgerald ó Cho. an Chláir an bhliain dar gcionn. Saol corrach a bhí in Ottawa sa bhliain 1849, Reformers agus Tories ag rúscadh a chéile sna Stoney Monday Riots, mar a tugadh orthu. Bhí ina throid an lá roimhe sin, leis, agus McDermott i láthair. Áirse a tógadh ar dhroichead ann ach gur cuireadh suaitheantais na nOráisteach ann. Dhiúltaigh McDermott siúl faoin áirse chun dul trasna. Ina ionad sin "I went to the stream and nearly knee deep in water reached the other side"<sup>9</sup>. Luaigh sé fear groí ó Thiobraid Árann:

Next came Bill Harrington, about 5' 10", a well-built Tipperaryman ... When Bill came up the guard pulled him fiercely to come and that he would see him across the bridge. When on the bridge, Harrington demanded for peace sake to move the offensive colors. Hot words followed. Harrington, armed with a heavy club, knocked him (the guard) down and broke his sword. Sooner than one can describe the deed, the arch colors and emblems were mingled with bleeding heads under and over the bridge.<sup>10</sup>



Catherine Fitzgerald McDermott

Níor éalraig McDermott gan leonadh, cé nár mhór é: "I went home. I had but one black eye"<sup>11</sup>. Chuaigh an chíríp chomh mór sin i gcionn air gur bhailigh sé féin is a bhean is a chlann leo as Bytown agus d'imigh go Milwaukee. Bhunaigh sé scoil ann agus d'éirigh go maith leis, ach b'fhearr leis a shaincheird féin, agus ní hionadh gur ghaibh sé léi arís. Ba mhór an sásamh dó gur ceapadh ina innealtóir cathrach é. Níor fhan sé i Milwaukee, ámh; d'imigh sé go Chicago, mar a raibh se i bpáirtíocht le William Clogher ar feadh bliana. Dhein City Surveyor agus City Supervisor de ina dhiaidh sin, ábhar maoite ag fear na Gaillimhe. Scríobh sé leabhar mór cuimsitheach ar an tsuirbhéireacht: *The Civil-Engineer and Surveyor's Manual: comprising Engineering, Practical Astronomy, Geodetic Jurisprudence, Analysis of Minerals, Soils, Grains, Vegetables, Valuation of Lands, Buildings, Permanent Structures, Etc.* (Chicago 1879). Scanradh ceart a bhfuil de léann ann, mar is léir ón dteideal, agus níorbh é a dhearmad gan earraíocht a bhaint as luacháil Griffith ann:

To the late Sir Richard Griffith, I am indebted for his "Manual of Instructions" which he had the kindness to send me, May 23, 1861.<sup>12</sup>

Díol suime an chaoi ar chuir sé an Valuation in oiriúint dos na Stáit. Mar shampla, bhí tábla ag Griffith: General Average Prices of 100 lbs. wheat, oats, barley, butter, beef, pork, mutton, flax. Ach chuir McDermott agusín leis: maize, rice, hemp, tobacco, cotton,

sugar. Déanann sé tagairt, leis, d'innealtóirí Éireannacha, fear Thiobraid Árann, Edmund Leahy, orthu:

The work on hydraulics by Mr. Neville, surveyor for Louth, and that on roads by my school-fellow, Edmond Leahy, county surveyor for Cork, are generally in the hands of every engineer.<sup>13</sup>

Mír eile aige, ní bheifí ag súil leis: "Remarkable Proof of a Supreme Being". Seo mar a mhínigh sé an scéal:

It was on the night of the 13<sup>th</sup> January, 1867, as we revelled in a pleasant starry dream, that we heard the words "God has given the Cross to man, the emblem of and guide to salvation. He has also made the Southern Cross a guide in Surveying and Navigation". Not a moment was lost in seeing if this was so.<sup>14</sup>

Dhein sé dreas beag ríomhaireacht réalteolaíochta ansin i gcruthúnas dó féin go raibh an ceart aige, agus bhí sé sásta:

We rejoice at the valuable discovery, but struck with awe at the forethought of the Great Creator in ordaining such an infallible guide.<sup>15</sup>

Bhí an t-ádh leis nár loisceadh téacs an *Manual* i dtine mhór Chicago:

I lost thirty two pages of the present edition of 1000 copies in the great Chicago fire, Oct. 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>, 1871, with my type and engravings; this caused some expense and delay.<sup>16</sup>

Fuair Michael McDermott bás sa bhliain 1888. Fillimís ar a oide múinte, ar Simon Cox na Báinsí. Ní gach scoláire leis a fáiltíodh roimhe. Bhí de mhí-ádh ag Ciarraíoch díobh olc a chur ar fhíle mór na háite, ar Dhiarmaid Ó Riain agus tháinig de sin aoir nimhneach ar an gcoimhthíoch:

From Kerry Shire this rogue came here, on some important accusation, and took a flight, by day or night, to shun condign incarceration.<sup>17</sup>

Tagraítear don scoil:

To go to school this wicked tool makes it his daily occupation to Bansha Cross, to Mr. Cox, to pick some scraps of education.<sup>18</sup>

Luaitear Ashgrove, baile dúchais Dhiarmada:

Where'er he's found, on Erin's ground, in any strolling avocation, to bring him whole, body and soul, to Ashgrove, without hesitation, till I enforce the law, of course, in its severest application, against this cur without demur, compassion, love or mitigation.<sup>19</sup>

Beifear dian air:

If to this glen he comes again, I pledge my candid affirmation, that his backside and lousy hide will get a wholesome flagellation.<sup>20</sup>

Ceithre líne agus ochtó atá sa dán, críoch “ – ation”le gach líne, agus gach tarchaisne agus achasán is táire ná a chéile á chaitheamh leis an stráinséir ann - bíodh geall gur ghread sé leis gan mhoill.

Scoláire iomráiteach eile a bhí ag Cox ná Thomas Guerin (1818-1887) a bhfuil tuairisc air ag Denis Marnane.<sup>21</sup> D’aistrigh Cox ó áit go háit i rith a shaoil, agus lean Guerin é ón mBáinseach go dtí Laitean, agus as sin go Sulchóid. Ach is ar a scoil sa Ghallbhaile is fearr eolas, mar bhí scoláire mór eile ina mhacléinn aige ann. Ba é sin Patrick Weston Joyce ó Ghleann Oisín i gCo. Luimnigh. Chuir seisean tuilleadh is triocha leabhar dá bhois, chaith tamall ina ardmháistir ar Mhodscoil Chluain Meala, agus a ceapadh ar ball ina cheann ar Choláiste Oiliúna Shráid Mhaoilbhríde; ainm anairde air, leis, mar gheall ar a chuid leabhar ar cheol na hÉireann. D’fhág sé cuntas ar scoil Cox:

The year before going to Mitchelstown I attended a science school of a very different character kept by Mr. Simon Cox in Galbally, a little village in Limerick under the shadow of the Galty Mountains. This was a very rough sort of school, but mathematics and the use of the globes were well taught. There were about forty students. Half a dozen were grown boys, of whom I was one; the rest were men, mostly young, but a few in middle life – schoolmasters bent on improving their knowledge of science in preparation for opening schools in their own parts of the country.<sup>22</sup>

Ábhar iontais ag an Seoigheach ná na scoláirí go léir, geall leis, bheith ag caitheamh an pháipá istigh, agus an máistir ina bhfarradh:

And each scholar took his smoke without ceremony in the schoolroom whenever he pleased, so that the room was never quite clear of the fragrant blue haze. I remember well on one occasion, a class of ten, of whom I was one, sitting round the master, whose chair stood on a slightly elevated platform, and all, both master and scholars, were smoking, except myself. The lesson was on some of the hard problems in Luby’s Euclid, which we had been unable to solve, and of which Mr. Cox was now showing us the solutions. He made his diagram for each problem on a large slate turned towards us.....And when at last someone had to ask a brief question, Mr. Cox removed his pipe with his left hand and uttered a few monosyllabic words, which enabled us to pick up the lost thread; then, replacing the pipe, he went on in silence as before<sup>23</sup>.

Luby úd thuas, ba é an tUrramach Thomas Luby ó Chluain Meala é (1799-1870), uncail do Thomas Clarke Luby. Bhí ainm anairde ar an Urramach Luby le matamaitic, go háirithe sa triantánacht agus sa réalteolaíocht, agus roinnt leabhar scríofa aige orthu. Cúram eile ina theannta sin air i gColáiste na Tríonóide, é ina Regius Professor of Greek.

Maidir leis an Seoigheach, ba é peata beag na scoile é, mar go mbíodh an fheadóg sa phóca i gcónaí aige:

Some dozen or more of the scholars were always in attendance in the mornings half an hour before the arrival of the master, of whom I was sure to be one – what could they do without me? – and then out came the fife, and they cleared the floor for a dance. It was simply magnificent to see and hear these athletic fellows

dancing on the bare boards with their thick-soled well-nailed heavy shoes - so as to shake the whole house. And not one in the lot was more joyous than I was; for they were mostly good dancers and did full justice to my spirited strains. At last in came the master: there was no cessation; and he took his seat, looking on complacently till that bout was finished, when I put up my fife, and the serious business of the day was commenced.<sup>24</sup>

Bíodh geall go mbeadh Cox mórálach as an tríú mórscoláire dá chuid, as Thomas Guerin, dá mb'eol dó a ghaisce i gCeanada agus i Sasana Nua, gur glaoth chun an bharr é, gur ceapadh ina léachtóir le matamaitic in Ollscoil McGill i Montreal é sa bhliain 1845,<sup>25</sup> go mbeadh mac leis ina mhéara ar Montreal. A chur san áireamh, leis, Thomas a bheith ina shuirbhéir agus ina innealtóir nótaí, agus gur thóg sé droichid agus bóithre iarainn i gCeanada, i gCúba, san Astráil agus sna Stáit. Bhí baint aige leis an American Association for the Advancement of Science; léigh sé páipéar dóibh in 1857.<sup>26</sup> Mar le fear nár leag cos thar táirseach ollscoile le linn a óige, ba mhór an éacht é. Ach bhailigh sé chuige a raibh le foghlaim i scoileanna scairte a dhúthaí, ó Fahy, Lorigan agus Morrissey in Imleach, ó Clarke san Ráth Ard, ó Casey i Srónaill, ó Dennehy i Laitean agus i gCill Tíle, ó O'Brien i gCill Mocheallóg, ó McGrath na Ceapaí Móire, gan trácht ar na hoidí tí a bhí aige – Danaher, Cormack, Ryan agus Bergin. Tugtar an chraobh, ámh, do Simon Cox, sa Bháinseach, i Laitean agus i Sulchóid. Féach na hábhair teagaisc a bhí aige i Laitean: Mensuration, gauging, plane and spherical trigonometry, the use of globes, conic sections and some algebra.<sup>27</sup> Chaith Guerin seal ina mhúinteoir i Scoil na Mainisteach i mbaile Thiobraid Árann, ach chaith sé in aer é in 1843. D'imigh sé go Ceanada agus d'éirigh thar barr leis, mar a míníodh thuas.

Focal scoir: Tá sé scríofa i gcáipéisí Scoil Churrach Púir, tuairim is sé mhíle ó thuaidh den mBáinseach, go raibh Simon Cox ina mhúinteoir ann taca na bliana 1870:

An entry for 1872 records that Simon Cox was incapacitated from further efficient discharge of duty and he was recommended for a retirement gratuity of 45-12-0.<sup>28</sup>

Arbh é Simon seo 'gainne é? Gheobhadh, gan dabht, ach níl a dhearbhu agam; nó mac leis, b'fhéidir, nó mac dearthár? Bhí tríúr de mhuintir Cox ar fhoireann na scoile in 1870: Simon, Jeremiah agus Alexandra. Pé réiteach atá ar an gceist sin, is cinnte gur chóir agus gur chúí scéal Simon Cox a ríomhadh agus a dhíol ómóis a thabhairt dó.

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