

**THE SO CALLED REAL PERSON WHO LIVED
AT No.7 ECCLES ST.**

**Extracts from "Silent Years"
.. the Autobiography of John Francis Byrne.**

In the spring of 1967 the demolition crews moved into Eccles Street, just off Dorset Street on the north side of Dublin City. It was with horror that the Literati of the city realised that the wrecking balls were about to descend on No.7, the fictional home of one of the great literary creations of the twentieth century, Leopold Bloom, the eponymous hero of what was certainly the most controversial, if not the greatest novel of that century, "Ulysses", by James Joyce. Too late to hold back the march of progress, in the persons of the wrecking crew, the literati emerged from the mayhem, dust covered, probably somewhat battered, but unbowed, bearing away for posterity the front door of the condemned building. It is probable that the raiding party escaping from the cultural desert of the north city did not rest until they crossed the Liffey and reached the leafy shade of the literary oasis at Duke Street, commonly known to the thirsting classes as Davy Byrnes. Here it was decided to set up the door as a permanent monument to past glories. Such an occasion demanded the services of an orator of sufficient stature, that orator, it was unanimously agreed, was already sitting at the bar of that august establishment.

Patrick Kavanagh, Farmer, Poet and Publisher and some time Goalkeeper, late of Mucker, Inniskeen, Co. Monaghan (sometimes referred to by his not always admiring contemporary, Brendan Behan, as the "F...r from Mucker") was not entirely flattered by the task with which he was entrusted. He held little regard for the already growing "Joyce Industry" with its attachment to all things Joycean, no matter how trivial. He averred to this scepticism in his introductory speech in which he referred to the obsession with such matters and the confusion of fiction with reality, in that regard he poured scorn on the importance placed on No.7 Eccles Street and the "So called real person" who lived there.

Dismissed so brusquely by Patrick Kavanagh, one is tempted, in the face of that scorn, to ask just who was this, "So called real person", who did once live at No.7 Eccles Street, and how did his humble and relatively temporary home find its way into the annals of world literature.

The house at No.7 Eccles Street was actually visited on a number of occasions by James Joyce while it was the home of his friend and fellow medical student John Francis Byrne. The two had met in their schooldays at Belvedere College and the friendship had continued in University College, in the end neither would qualify, both would emigrate, Joyce to Paris in 1904, Byrne to New York in 1910. Apart from a brief visit by Byrne to Paris 1927 the two would not meet again.

Elaine Byrne has been researching the life of John Francis Byrne and in particular (in this centenary of the day that never was) his enduring friendship with James Joyce which survived many personal misunderstandings and the wide expanse of the Atlantic Ocean that was to separate them for most of their lives.

J. F. Byrne and James A. Joyce.

J.F. Byrne (1880-1960) was at one time Joyce's closest friend. He is the model for Cranly in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In his book *Silent Years*, Byrne reminisces on his life experiences both in Dublin and in Wicklow. Byrne states in his book that Joyce used many of his experiences in the writing of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and also in *Ulysses*.

In the course of my study, I will give examples of where these experiences occur in Joyce's writing.

The following points will be covered:

Origins of Byrne

Time spent in Wicklow

Friendship with Joyce

Use of material by Joyce in his writing (alleged)

Comments from Stanislaus Joyce (brother of James) refuting many of J.F. Byrne's claims.

John Francis Byrne's father (Mathew) had been a farmer for most of his life; he had owned, or rented three farms in the County Wicklow, one each in Knockfada, Knockadreith, and Cronroe. Mathew Byrne decided to sell out all his property in Wicklow, and come to Dublin where he hoped to follow in the footsteps of his elder brother Simon, who had made himself a rich man in the dairy and general provisions business. Although Mathew Byrne died when J. F. Byrne was three years and ten months old, Byrne states that he remembered him well but not well enough to explain why his father was so widely known, and so generally liked - his principal friends, of course, being mostly farmers. It was due to this that there were so many places where, as his father's youngest child, that J.F. was welcome.

(Byrne, 1953 p.192)

Byrne's family were originally from Co. Wicklow and were related to the Fogarty family from Carrigmore through his grandfather, Ferdinand Byrne's, marriage to Cecilia Meath, from Ballyduff. Cecilia's sister, Bridget, married Michael Fogarty of Carrigmore, who's son, also Michael is referred to by Byrne as, "The Gaffer", thus, J.F. Byrne's father was first cousin to the 'Gaffer'.

An enclosed copy of his family tree shows the Wicklow Ancestry of J.F. Byrne.

In Wicklow, J.F. Byrne stayed at the small Fogarty farm. The Fogartys were visited for the first time by J.F. when he was six years old, and the family at that time consisted of Michael Fogarty; his wife Hannah; his brother Matt; three daughters,

Mary Ann, Bridget, and Hannah; and two sons, Michael and Willie. In the Fogarty farmhouse, J.F. was never really a visitor and was accepted on a similar level by all the neighbours. When on the farm he did everything that a young and active son of a farmer would be expected to do. (Byrne, 1953 pgs. 195/6)

In Byrne's book *Silent Years*, he states that he was born in a house on East Essex Street in Dublin.

However, review of his birth registration show that some of the details given on the original birth certificate were revised on 27th February 1892 on production of a statutory declaration made by Bridget Byrne, Mother, and R. George Cook, Registrar. (copy enclosed) The reason for the changes would appear to be connected with the proposed enrolment of John Francis Byrne in Belvedere College in 1892. As his birth cert. showed that his father was a labourer, it was unlikely that Byrne would have been offered a place in Belvedere College, so it was necessary to reflect the change of status regarding Mr. Byrne's position of 'shopkeeper' rather than 'labourer'.

Byrne entered Belvedere College in September 1892. (Byrne, 1953, pg. 15) Father Tom Wheeler was then the Rector. In April 1893 James Augustine Joyce entered Belvedere College and the friendship between Byrne and Joyce began. Byrne sat in the same class with Joyce in room No. 3 in Belvedere College from 1894 to 1895. (Byrne, 1953, pg.146) Byrne remembers the house in 20 East Essex St. and describes how many properties in the area had passageways and doors connected. One such passage led to 26 Wellington Quay and to a bookshop owned by "a stout, greying, reddish-faced, loud-voiced man, with glaring protruding grey eyes".

(Byrne, 1953 pg. 18) In *Ulysses*, chapter x, Byrne maintains that there is a short description of the man – "The shopman's uncombed grey head came out and his unshaven reddened face, coughing. He racked his throat rudely...and bent, showing a raw-skinned crown, scantily haired." (Joyce, 2000 pg. 303)

In 1895 Byrne passed his matriculation exam, he intended to use this to go to Skerry's school where he hoped to train for a job, preferably as a telegraph operator (largely because the age limit, 16, was lower than most other jobs).

Father Wheeler, late of Belvedere, was now Rector in University College, Stephens Green, and it was at his invitation that Byrne entered the College. (Byrne, 1953 pg. 27) At the College he was introduced to Fr. Darlington, Dean of Studies, who had a large influence on him and the subjects that he studied.

At this time it seemed to be assumed that Byrne intended to become a novice for the priesthood, the only question being whether he intended to become a Carmelite (he had served mass as a child in Clarendon St.) or a Jesuit, he ended this speculation by

announcing that he practised no religion (and so continued).

Byrne wrote at some length on an incident in the College where the Dean of Studies was forced to light the fire himself. (Byrne 1953, pg. 35) Joyce included the story in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and Byrne felt his confidence had been abused and that Joyce had caricatured the occasion.

(Joyce, 2001 pgs.142-146)

In 1952, Stanislaus Joyce (brother of James) wrote to his friend Con Curran and in this letter he refers to Byrne's complaints regarding the fire lighting incident. In his letter he says:.....

I have received and in part read Byrne's Silent Years, sent by an American friend of mine whom you may have met in Dublin, Mr. Richard Ellmann. Although its main commercial value lies in the reminiscences of my brother and in the identification of Byrne with Cranly, the references to my brother are for the most hostile, openly or correctly.He takes it for granted that A Portrait of the Artist as a Young man is an autobiography of my brother and a biography of J.F. However grievous the loss may be in the latter case, it is neither. The characters in that novel were freely created from living models. He flatters about a fire lighting incident which, he says my brother appropriated for his story, but he has nothing to say about the zest and subtlety in conversation with which my brother's affectionate memory invented him..... (Joyce, 1952 special collection library UCD CUR L 172a)

Joyce did not enter University College until the academic year 1898-1899 and at that time Byrne was not attending lectures since he had taken up a position as tutor to the Mooney family of Castleknock, Co. Dublin. (Byrne, 1953 p.39) Byrne writes...

When he entered University College it was natural that Joyce should cleave to me. We had been together in Belvedere, and in the intervening years had maintained acquaintanceship. Joyce was nearly two years younger than I, and at our respective ages, eighteen and sixteen, these two years meant a lot, at least in physical development. I was unusually strong, much stronger than anyone would have thought from my appearance, whereas Joyce was thin, light and weak. Due to this, my attitude toward him became, and to a great degree remained protective. (Byrne, 1953 pg.40)

Despite an evident sense of humour, Joyce was not gregarious, preferring to converse with his friends one at a time, and was particularly inseparable from J.F. Byrne, the cryptic Cistercian and handball enthusiast known as 'The White Bishop.' (Meade,

2002 p.21)

Byrne joined a Chess Club, which met at the D.B.C. on Dame Street; it was here that he introduced Joyce to John Howard Parnell, brother of the late Charles Stewart. While Joyce had no interest in chess, and though he had no understanding of the game, he used the occasion in *Ulysses* (Byrne, 1953 pg.43)

The sun freed itself slowly and lit glints of light among the silver ware in Walter Sexton's window opposite by which John Howard Parnell passed, unseeing. There he is: the brother. Image of him. Haunting face. Now that's a coincidence.....Drop into the D.B.C. probably for his coffee, play chess there. (Joyce 2000 pg. 209)

It was at the Chess Club, where he waited patiently while Byrne played, that Joyce first dubbed his friend 'Cranly'. It was an obscure reference to the White Bishop in Chess and a fourteenth century Archbishop of Dublin who was of the Carmelite Order, a White Friar. (Byrne, 1953, pg.44) It was as 'Cranly' that James Francis Byrne appears in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Referring back to the letter of Stanislaus Joyce to Con Curran, the following point is made by Stanislaus Joyce on the subject of the name 'Cranly'

He writes also that Jim gave him the name 'Cranly' because a man named Cranly was Archbishop of Dublin at the end of the fourteenth century. He is wrong. Jim chose the name because he thought Byrne's family was from Wicklow and that Cranly was a Wicklow name. While we were children in Bray, we had a nurse whose name was Cranly, Polly Cranly. Her people were fisher folk who lived at the poor end of Bray Head...(Joyce, 1952. special collection library UCD CUR L 172a)

It was the untimely death of a cow at Carrigmore in July 1899 that led Byrne to decide to research into animal diseases (Byrne, 1953, pg. 58). The Librarian at the National Library had found a source entitled, "*Diseases of the Ox*". Byrne was reading this tome when he was joined by Joyce who's amused reaction led to him being ordered out of the Reading Room, no blame was attached to the former. Joyce retold this story in "*A Portrait of the Artist as a Young man*", (Joyce, 2001, p175).

As an observer it is obvious that many of his experiences are of events involving or initiated by his friend.

It was at this time that Joyce published an essay on Ibsen in the *Fortnightly Review* (Byrne, 1953 pg. 63), it may have been his first publication. After this he often sat with Byrne in the National Library writing poetry, he was meticulous in his work, interminably rewriting and retouching his efforts. At the end he would, with slow and stylish penmanship, write out the finished poem. "Keep all these, JF, some day they'll

be worth a pound a piece to you,".. he often said jokingly. In spite of his personal opinion, (Byrne felt that Joyce was the least academically talented in the group) (Byrne, 1953, pg .54)

Byrne was quite sure that there was much truth in Joyce's observation. It is possible that Byrne resented the fact that for the first time Joyce was showing a greater talent than his own in a common field of endeavour. Joyce's opinion of Byrne's literary endeavours was reflected by his comment, when told by a mutual friend that the latter had written his autobiography, "I would be surprised to hear that Byrne had read a book, let alone written one!" (Byrne, 2003 page.2)

In 1902 Byrne reported on a personal split which occurred between him and Joyce about something he refused to disclose but which apparently hurt him deeply. A possible explanation of this split could relate to details of an incident recalled by Stanislaus Joyce.

One of the letters my brother wrote me from Paris during the first part of his stay there contained a pound note which he asked me to give Byrne. It was the repayment of a small loan, and as my brother was not habitually prompt in settling his debts, I was surprised. I was puzzled that Jim did not write to Byrne direct, but I went, as I was asked to, one evening to Byrne's house in Essex Street and found him at home. He received me on his doorstep, and seemed to be considerably put out when I told him why I had come. He asked me a few times whether I was sure my brother intended me to repay him the loan, and when I replied that there could be no mistake about it, he stood there on the doorstep, gazing over my head into the gathering dusk and tapping the banknote against his fingernail in tight-lipped meditation. When I met Cosgrave perhaps on the following night and told him about Byrne's strange behaviour, his amusement from the moment I mentioned Byrne's name was so irrepressible that I knew something must have happened between them. At length he said:

I know what's the matter with him.

It appeared that several nights before, when he and Byrne were strolling about together, Byrne had shown him a postcard, which he had just received, from Paris. On one side of it was the photograph, reproduced in Gorman's biography, representing Jim in a long overcoat that made him look much taller than he was and rather like an anarchist who was thinking of emulating Orsini, and on the other half in neat small handwriting the poem which began:

*All day I hear the noise of waters
Making moan.*

Byrne was evidently flattered at having been chosen to be the recipient of what the

English editor had called 'a moment of my brother's spiritual life'. He talked about him enthusiastically, possessively, boastfully.

--- I'll take my dyin' Bible, said he, that there's not a man in Dublin knows more about Joyce than I do.

--- Do you know this? asked Cosgrave, taking an exactly similar postcard out of his pocket.

It was written in the dog Latin they often used, and concerned the 'scorta' of Paris. It was, as Cosgrave suspected, something Byrne did not know. He was too stunned to reply at once. The implication of like unto like did not appease him. He could find no words strong enough to express his anger.

Byrne took it as a personal offence to him that there should be something concerning my brother that others knew and he did not know.

Another possible explanation for the payment of £1 and Byrne's puzzlement may be the fact that Byrne had recently refused in striking terms, a loan of £1 to Joyce (See copy of extract from *James Joyce* by Richard Ellmann)

When my brother returned to Dublin at Christmas and while the breach still lasted, he broke his silence when we were walking together to tell me in his usual halting fashion, 'I think I have been mistaken in Byrne'. The breach was soon mended but they were never quite so friendly again. The warmth had gone from their friendship, and it was not really renewed until years later when my brother returned from Trieste to visit Dublin. And then it was renewed on a very different footing. (Joyce, 1958, pgs. 209-211) *

In *Silent Years*(p.84) Byrne relates his memories of stormy times with Joyce:

During Joyce's absence in Paris something had occurred which hurt me deeply. I cannot go into detail about this, but I felt so badly about it that I wanted to break with him. In long rambles about Dublin during the week after Easter, I talked the matter over with him exhaustively, but it seemed to me that his explanation explained nothing, and I would not agree to a continuation of our friendship. With this understanding, we parted finally on Friday night. On the following Sunday morning, the postman delivered to me this letter from James A. Joyce:

Dear Byrne:

Would you care to meet me tomorrow (Sunday) in Prince's St. at one o'clock? Perhaps you will not get this tomorrow morning as the post is upset.

J A J

7 S Peter's Terrace, Cabra
Saturday night

That Sunday afternoon, evening, and night, we walked through all the southern suburbs of Dublin. And as we walked we talked; and gradually James Joyce won, in substantial part, his battle for a continued friendship.

Towards the end of *A Portrait*, Joyce writes about the long walk and talk. As usual, however, he mixes this event with events of other times and places. In one passage, he writes:

"Their minds, lately estranged, seemed suddenly to have been drawn closer, one to the other."

(Joyce, 2001, p.184)

Joyce's first visit to Dublin after his grand departure in 1904 took place in July and August 1909 and initially seemed very promising. He and Giorgio were warmly welcomed by his father and his siblings. Too similar to get along for a protracted period of time, James and John Stanislaus Joyce understood one another well and managed to achieve a reconciliation. In addition, Joyce's father was delighted to see his first grandson. On the publication front, Joyce also appeared to make progress. On 9th August he met Joseph Hone and George Roberts of Maunsel & Co., and within ten days a draft agreement, which offered Joyce favourable terms and the promise that his book would be printed by March 1910, was signed. However, all of these positive developments were overshadowed by an unexpected event, which upset Joyce enormously. (McCourt, 2000, p138)

Between them Gogarty and Cosgrave had hatched a plot. For different reasons they wanted to be avenged on Joyce. Cosgrave had failed in his wooing of Nora and he was being parodied in Joyce's autobiographical novel as 'lynx-eyed Lynch', a man of 'excrementitious intelligence', who upon listening to Stephen's theories of beauty, deemed them 'true scholastic stink'.

Joyce had been impudent enough to allow chapters of his work to circulate in Dublin. His vow of abstinence did not last long and soon he was drinking with Cosgrave, rakes together as in the old days. Then one night Cosgrave struck. Nora had gone out with him too, that they had walked along the canal and out to Ringsend; in short Joyce had been deceived. A cuckold. Accusations shot across the Irish Sea. His eyes were full of tears, his heart full of bitterness; he was wounded, dishonoured, destroyed for all time. His faith in her was broken. He would leave for Trieste immediately, once Stanislaus had procured the fare money. All was over between them. At the same time, he was begging her to write and tell him if the hand that touched him in the dark and the voice that spoke to him in the dark was gone for ever. Had she walked the same streets, lingered on the banks of the Dodder and dispensed her soft favours to

this other? And what else, what else? Though his faith in her was broken he was nevertheless soliciting pity for his poor mistaken wretched love. For the sake of that wretched love, she was to write to him by return. Was Giorgio his son? Were not the bloodstains in the "Hope" guesthouse in Zurich that first time a little slight? He wallowed in his own wretchedness and thought that probably parading 'his son' in Dublin had made him an object of ridicule. He called on his last-remaining friend, J.F. Byrne, who lived at No 7 Eccles Street, an address to be made famous in *Ulysses*, and poured out the grievances of tortured soul and tortured body. Byrne assured him that it was a damn lie, Cosgrave and Gogarty had hatched the plot to break him. They were jealous because of Nora but more so, because of a sneaking certainty that maybe he had the makings of a poet, that maybe his private aesthetic, 'his thought-enchanted silences', would crown him Ireland's Homer after all. (O'Brien, 2000, p.65)

But the episode left a lasting mark: later he would draw on it to make betrayal one of the central issues of *Ulysses*, where Cosgrave appears as Lynch, a judas character who in "Circe" abandons Stephen to the British soldiers and goes off with the prostitute Kitty Ricketts. Joyce also chose his friend Byrne's address, 7, Eccles Street, as the home of Leopold and Molly Bloom. (McCourt, 2000, p.138)

To Nora Barnacle Joyce

MS. Cornell

19 August 1909

44 Fontenoy Street,

Dublin

My Darling, I am terribly upset that you haven't written. Are you ill? I have spoken of this affair to an old friend of mine, Byrne, and he took your part splendidly and says it is all a 'blasted lie'. What a worthless fellow I am! But after this I will be worthy of your love, dearest.

I sent you three enormous bags of shell cocoa today. Tell me if you get them right.

My sister Poppie goes away tomorrow.

Today I signed a contract for publication of Dubliners.

Excuse to me Stannie for not writing to him.

My sweet noble Nora, I ask you to forgive me for my contemptible conduct but they maddened me, darling between them. We will defeat their cowardly plot, love. Forgive me sweetheart, won't you?

Just say a word to me, dearest, a word of denial and O I shall be so transported with happiness!

Are you well, my darling? You are not fretting, are you? Don't read over those horrible letters I wrote. I was out of my mind with rage at the time.

I must go down now all the way to the G.P.O. to post this as the post has gone here: it is after one at night.

Good night 'my precious'!

No man, I believe, can ever be worthy of a woman's love.

My darling, forgive me. I love you and that is why I was so maddened only to think of you and that common dishonourable wretch.

Nora darling, I apologise to you humbly. Take me again to your arms. Make me worthy of you.

I will conquer yet and then you will be at my side.

Good night 'my dearest' 'my precious'. A whole life is opening for us now.

It has been a bitter experience and our love will now be sweeter.

Give me your lips, my love.

'My kiss will give peace now

And quiet to your heart.

Sleep on in peace now,

O you unquiet heart'

Jim. (Ellmann, 1975, pgs. 159-160)

In Byrne's book (1953,p.85) he mentions a conversation between Byrffe and Joyce regarding the last wishes of Mrs. Joyce as she lay on her death bed, that her son James would return to the faith.

There is quite an extended exchange between Stephen and Cranly in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (pgs 184-192) regarding the former's refusal to comfort his dying mother by at least pretending a return to his religious practice. 'They had quarrelled over her wish that he make his Easter duty'.

Talking it out later with his confidant, Cranly, who tried to persuade him to it, Stephen drew back: "A voice spoke softly to Stephen's lonely heart, bidding him go and telling him that his friendship was coming to an end" (Schwaber, 1999, pgs 61/62)

Cranly, with the sharpest instruments of casuistry, tries to probe his stubborn refusal. It is less a question of faith than of observance. Stephen will not, to please his mother, do false homage to the symbols of authority, yet he is not quite unbeliever enough to take part in a sacrilegious communion. If he cannot accept the eucharist, he must be anathema; he respects the forms by refusing to observe them. 'I will not serve that in which I no longer believe, whether it call itself my home, my fatherland or my church: and I will try to express myself in some mode of life or art as freely as I can and as wholly as I can, using for my defence the only arms I allow myself to use, silence, exile and cunning. (Beja, 1973, pgs. 96/7)

This reflects Joyce's relationship with his own mother and the events leading up to her death in 1903.

Byrne's views in this case were later reflected in his own experience when he reassured his elderly cousin, Mary (who was a surrogate mother to him), then on her death bed, that he would fulfil her lifelong wish and return to the faith of his childhood. He never did.

Byrne's cousin Mary did not like Joyce, partly because, she said of him once, "When he holds out his hand for you to shake, you feel nothing but five little, raw, cold, sausages." And Joyce did not like Mary. And that was why in *Ulysses*, Mrs. Fleming is the lady who cooks and darns socks for Poldy and Molly Bloom in number 7 Eccles Street. (Byrne, 1953, p.88)

Stanislaus Joyce in his letter to Con Curran in 1952 refutes this idea....."He also thinks that my brother gave Bloom's charwoman the name Fleming because he disliked Byrne's cousin, Mary Fleming. Wrong again. The charwoman who used to come to help my mother was called Fleming, as my sisters in Dublin could confirm"..... (Joyce, 1952, special collection library, UCD CUR L 172a)

Byrne left Ireland in April 1910 to become a financial journalist. In 1916, he realised that matters in Ireland were coming to a head and travelled to Dublin before the Easter Rising took place to cover it for the New York Times. (Meade, 2002, pg. 22) He returned to the USA in August of that year, a somewhat disillusioned figure. Byrne was more fortunate in this aspect than his friend Francis Sheehy Skeffington, who also returned to Ireland at this time and who was arrested by British Forces during the rising and shot without trial at Beggars Bush Barracks on April 26th. On his return to the United States, Byrne published an article on the Irish situation under the title, '*The Irish Grievance*' in the *Century Magazine*, though he complained that this could only be done under an emasculated form (it had already been turned down by '*Collier's*' in its unemasculated form).

Among the visitors to James Joyce's salon-in-exile was his college friend, J. F. Byrne. John Stanislaus's first copy of James's gramophone record may never have reached him, for in November 1927 John wrote to Byrne to answer his proposal to visit him. (p398 John Stanislaus Joyce) Byrne remembers that they had an enjoyable reunion; everyday Joyce and he would discuss the *Work in progress* for hours, and Joyce would ask Byrne to read aloud passages that Joyce would indicate from his manuscript.

2, Square Robiac
192, Rue De Grenelle
Paris

Dear Mrs. Byrne: I am very glad to meet my old friend Byrne after so many years and it is most kind of you to allow him to stay a few days. I hope you will not be

annoyed if we press him to stay over the weekend as the weather is very fine and he ought to see a number of things here before he leaves. The change too will do him good. He will go back on Monday or Tuesday unless you should wish him to return earlier.

With kind regards
Sincerely yours
James Joyce

In 1918 Byrne devised a code system that he thought amazingly simple and yet unbreakable. The "machine" used to produce his cipher (which he called his "chaocipher") required nothing more than a cigar box and a few odds and ends. In writing about his invention, Byrne states:

When I first set about to discover a system for concocting an indecipherable cipher, I had it clearly in mind that such a system would and should be universally available, I envisioned, for instance, the utilization of my method and machine by business men for business communications, and by brotherhoods and social religious institutions. I believe that my method and machine would be an invaluable asset to big religious institutions, as for example the Catholic Church with its worldwide ramifications. I had, and still have in mind, the universal use of my machine and method by husband, wife, or lover. My machine would be on hire, as typewriter machines now are, in hotels, steamships, and, maybe even on trains and airlines, available for anyone anywhere and at any time. And I believe, too, the time will come and come soon when my system will be used in the publication of pamphlets and books written in cipher which will be unreadable except by those who are specially initiated.

Unfortunately, no one of importance took his machine seriously. He demonstrated it to the head cryptanalysts of the US Signal Corps, but was rejected. His system was also rejected by the State Department, the Department of the Navy, and AT&T.

However, Byrne did not give up. He wrote and published a small booklet in which he enciphered known texts in his Chaocipher, and defied the world to break it. Later Byrne published his autobiography, in which he included a lengthy message in his Chaocipher. He offered to pay \$5000 to anyone who could correctly break his cipher. He sent copies to the American Cryptogram Association, the New York Cipher Society, and to Norbert Wiener (father of cybernetics), and to other believers in the capabilities of the electronic calculating machines.

Unfortunately, no one ever claimed the prize. (<http://www.purplehunt.com/byrne.htm>)

In 1947, Byrne wrote to Constantine P. Curran, seeking assistance in gathering

material for the book that he intended to write on his memoirs.

1114 New York Ave.,
Brooklyn 3, New York
January 21, 1947

Constantine P. Curran
42 Garville Ave.,
Rathgar, Dublin
Eire

Dear Con:

After a reticence so prolonged, I feel really timid about bursting in on you without fair warning. But I know you will forgive one who was ever a bit erratic for continuing true to form; and I know, too that you will pardon my writing you in type when I tell you that if I were to use a pen you might not be able to read the product.

I do hope, Con, that you and yours are well. As for me and mine, we are all fairly well, but, as so often before, separated. Alice and Phila, with her three babies are in Alameda, Calif. where they are both working in the U.S. Naval Dept. in the personnel division of the Naval Air Station. Phila won't reside in or near New York, so, for Alice, it is a case of Mohammed and the mountain.

There is something Con, which I believe you might be able to do, or have done, for me-and that is to take two snapshots of No. 7 Eccles St. and send them to me, preferably with the films. I would like a view of the whole house and also a close-up of the hall door and front area. I am doing a book, largely reminiscent, and including something about Jim Joyce. But the one real purpose I have in writing the book is to make one last effort to "put over" my cipher system which I invented twenty-eight years ago.

If you have any material (photos or the like, of Joyce), that has not before been published, I'd be glad to have it. Another thought that occurs to me is that readers outside of Ireland would like to learn just how Joyce is regarded by the Irish people, and by the younger generation, with emphasis on that part of it which could be described as collegiate. In anything I say in my book about Joyce, there will be no literary comment. Would you care to do a bit along these lines? Mind you, I am not asking you for this. My only thought here is that maybe you have now, or have had in the past, something you would like to say about Joyce, or his work-something that you really never got around to in print. If you have maybe you would send it to me. I would, of course, credit it to you-either under

your own name, or a pseudonym, or to anonymous.

I don't think it will be news to you when I tell you that all my life I have never been able to achieve anything in writing except by setting a deadline. My deadline for the book is towards the end of the next month, February; and I would, therefore, appreciate it as a very great favor if you would let me hear from you before then.

Meanwhile, Con, I assure you that I am now, as always

Sincerely and affectionately yours,

J. F. Byrne.

By the way, Con, do you know of any reason, apart from "Ulysses," why I should be interested in No. 7 Eccles St.?

(Special Collection Library UCD CUR L 172a)

On the 8th August 1960, Alice Byrne wrote to Con Curran with the sad news of the death of John Francis Byrne.

8 Rio Vista

Oakland 11

California

8-18-60

Dear Con;

You will probably remember me when you see signature at end of letter. I hope you continue well and happy.

This is just a note to tell you that poor Jeff died suddenly April 29th last was listening to the radio and slumped over – dead. He simply stopped: of course he had been ill and in pain from an aneurism – severe heart trouble for a long time but was up and about all the same. I sent a little article about him to the Irish Digest quite a while ago but never heard from them – if they got it – they were not interested – I think he deserved a little public notice.

Probably you have already heard this yourself – but as you were one of his earliest and close friends – in case you didn't hear, I wanted to let you know.

I hope sincerely you keep well yourself and your daughter.

With best wishes, I am also an old friend

Alice Byrne.

(Special Collection Library UCD CUR L 168)

Family Connections..John Francis Byrne's County Wicklow Ancestry..

Matthew Meath.....Son of Bryan Meath, Rossanagh

Married (1778)

Bridget Turner (1757).....Daughter of Loughlin & Judy Turner, Killiskey

Parents of:

Cecilia (1779).....Married Ferdinand Byrne (1804)

Parents of:

(i) *Miss Byrne.....Married Fleming.*

Parents of:

Mary Fleming (1845-1925)

Cecily Fleming (1848-1930)

(ii) *Matthew Byrne (1820-1883).....Married Bridget Byrne (1861)*

Parents of:

Peter (1860-1895)

Mary (1861-1881)

Anne (1865-1880)

Bridget (1868-1888)

Patrick (1876)

Polly, died young

John Francis Byrne (1880-1960).....Married Mary Anne Hayden (1916)

