

Morgan the Pirate, and the Vancouver ferry boats.

A young woman arrived on my doorstep not so long ago, she had a tale to tell. A Canadian, from a remote location in British Columbia, her name was Monimia. Yes, an unusual name, but not that unusual, because the woman in the picture here is also Monimia. My Canadian visitor was dressed differently, of course. Though no doubt the way she was dressed, sort of Sarah-Palin-goes-moose-hunting, that will in a hundred years time seem as strange and bizarre as does this nineteenth century garb. That wasp waist was once the height of fashion, if not the height of health for the internal organs.

Canadian Monimia told me her story. I knew it vaguely because she was a distant cousin, and we shared a surname. But it was interesting to hear the details from the Monimia mouth, so to speak.

Her great grandfather was a son of wasp waisted Monimia here, and his name was Tredegar. Another unusual name. With a vaguely Welsh ring to it. There is in fact a town in Wales of that name, but Tredegar was Irish, as was his mother Monimia.

Tredegar was what the Australians call a larrikin, a tearaway. In times of the old empire there was a great outlet for that class of lad...soldiering. Those who stroll into St Andrew's Tourism Centre in central Dublin will pass a strange monument in the onetime graveyard. That is a memorial, if not quite to Tredegar personally, but to the men of the *The Imperial Yeomanry*, a unit formed in Dublin to fight in the Anglo Boer War. Tredegar joined that as a trooper, and fought out there. He then became an officer in the regular British Army. But had to leave his regiment following an affair with the wife of a brother officer. They didn't stand for that sort of thing, then. Now one suspects they run wife swapping parties, but whatever.

Tredegar resurfaced as an officer in the British Indian Army, and there he soldiered for years. He became a leading polo player, and Canadian Monimia showed me photos of him on a horse, solar teppee on head and polo stick at jaunty angle. Those were the days. But all good things end and Tredegar's army career did likewise. He next

showed up in Canada, in Vancouver. He died in that city, and then his wife died. And their two small sons were plonked into an orphanage. There they remained for some considerable time until Tredegar's Irish relatives got round to wondering what had happened to the children. An emissary was sent out to Canada, and she found the boys and brought them back to her home in England where they were brought up. The emissary was Violet Monimia, Tredegar's sister. Later, as young adults, the sons returned to Canada and became sane and responsible citizens, marrying and bringing up children who, in turn, married and brought up children, one of them being my Canadian Monimia.

There is always a Monimia in our family, she told me, all girls are given the name Monimia. It's a tradition. Neither she nor I had the slightest knowledge of how this name ever arose, but be that as it may. Monimia is, of course, the name of the heroine of Thomas Otway's 1680 play, *The Orphan*. (I put in that 'of course' to disguise the fact that I've just looked it up on the internet.) Apparently the play remained very popular up into the 19th century and thus the name of the heroine was not uncommon. Reading the bizarre sexual plot of the play it beggars belief why anyone would want to call their daughter Monimia, but the Victorians were very strange. Anyway, Canadian Monimia and I were on firmer ground with wasp-waisted Monimia's surname. Although she married a Kennedy, one of my kinsmen, her own name was Monimia Morgan Byrne. Her father was James Byrne, a solicitor who owned the lands near Chapelizod that are now the site of King's Hospital School, and her mother was a Miss Morgan. Monimia, known to her friends as Nina, died in 1889 in a house called 'Lismolin' in Glenageary's Silchester Road. She was thirty four.

And where does Morgan the pirate come into all this?

Well, Monimia's mother Miss Morgan was a descendant of the Morgans of Wales, the family of the Lords Tredegar of Newport. This family connection obviously resulting in the strange given name Monimia applied to her son, Tredegar. And also linking Tredegar to another of those Morgans of Wales, the notorious 17th century privateer and Governor of Jamaica, Sir Henry Morgan.

And the ferryboats?

Tredegar worked as a captain on those boats, moving from island to island, much as his piratical forebear had plyed the Caribbean.