

M. Gonzaga Joynt –Family Reunion



M. Gonzaga Joynt IBVM

In 1841, a military chaplain based in India, the Rev. Dr. Bakhaus came to Ireland seeking nuns “for the education of the upper classes as well as the poor”.¹ The Ursulines having refused him for a lack of members, he went to meet with Mother Teresa Ball at Rathfarnham. The Loreto Order was then only 20 years old, Abbey Church having just been completed that year. India was to be the inaugural Loreto mission although it seems M. Teresa Ball was not altogether keen at first. Fr. Bakhaus recalled the meeting:

“Having called for the Lady Superioress, a person of great talents, virtue, and majestic behaviour, she received me civilly indeed, yet very coldly. Having explained to her the nature of my visit, she refused my application with an unqualified denial...Arguing and

¹ First the Blade, pg.7

entreating for at least two hours of warm conversation when, thanks to God's Holy Providence, I succeeded"².

The book on the Indian Loreto Mission, *First the Blade*, notes that the situation in India would not have been unknown to those in Ireland, being as it was "the place where so many sons and brothers, serving in the British Army, sweltered and pined and died in battle, or of tropical diseases"³.

The Annals of Loreto Calcutta note that "The name of India as a home for the missionary was at that time connected with all that was most repugnant to nature and the Church Area which our Sisters, were called to serve was especially noted, as one of the most fatal, to European constitutions. However, neither the fear of unavoidable perils nor the rending of every tie to earth, could dampen the courage of the favoured few, who were chosen to be the first to teach the knowledge of Jesus, to the children of the Far East and it was with a joyous and grateful heart that each one responded to her Superioress's call and answered 'I come'."⁴

In 1841, six sisters and six postulants set sail for India on board the Scotia. The four month long journey thankfully passed "without any remarkable incident"⁵. On their arrival in Calcutta, they were greeted by a large crowd and shown to their new home. From these beginnings, the Loreto Mission would spread across India.

² FTB, pg 9.

³ FTB, pg 9.

⁴ Loreto Calcutta Annals. LOR/IND/BOX 1/2

⁵ Loreto Calcutta Annals. LOR/IND/BOX 1/2

One of the early members of the Indian Mission was Mother Joseph Hogan, known as 'Mother Mary Hogan', who had arrived in India in 1844. She was to have a big influence on a young girl named Anna Joynt. Anna had been born in India in 1838 to Irish parents. In 1851, following the death of her father, her widowed mother decided to return to Ireland with her youngest children, hoping to leave them in the care of an elder brother already living in Dublin. Anna, who was then about 13 years old, was left behind to comfort her eldest brother Samuel, a businessman in Calcutta. Eventually, when no news of Anna's mother or siblings was forthcoming, they were presumed to have been lost at sea. Now an orphan, Anna had only her brother Samuel.

A short time later business called Samuel to Melbourne, Australia and he decided to leave Anna in the care of the Loreto sisters in Calcutta. As the Joynt family were Quakers this was a somewhat usual decision but perhaps it was the Irish origin of the sisters which fatefully led to Anna beginning her life with the Institute. One can only imagine how lonely and afraid this young girl must have felt, being as she was, for all intents and purposes, alone in the world. Indeed, having left for Melbourne, Samuel was never heard from again.

The book, *First the Blade*, notes that "now doubly orphaned, she fell into a serious sickness".⁶ The kindness shown to her by the Loreto sisters and, in particular, by M. Joseph Hogan, were to be a profound comfort and influence on young Anna. Aged 15, she converted to Catholicism and the following year, was admitted to the Loreto novitiate as Sister Mary Gonzaga. Professed three years later in 1857, she became one of the first Indian-born Loreto sisters.

⁶ FTB, pg

Thereafter followed appointments as Mistress of Novices and Local Superior in Loreto House Calcutta and in Entally and then, in 1887, she was appointed Mother Provincial. During her time in office, she oversaw the establishment of new missions in Ranchi, Morapai, Shillong and St. Mary's Entally. M. Gonzaga Joynt was described as "a guide, philosopher and friend to generations of nuns, forming them to her own high ideals of piety and fidelity to the Rule".⁷ A warm, caring person, the celebrations of her Golden Jubilee in 1904 lasted for three days. She is probably best remembered for her work advancing women's education in India. In 1912, she established the Teacher Training College in Calcutta, oversaw its affiliation to the University and the recognition of its qualification to a BA and later, a Bachelor of Teaching. She was in office for 33 years, until 1918. She died in Loreto House, Calcutta in 1928, at the age of 91.

M. Gonzaga Joynt had a particularly close relationship with her 'namesake' M. Gonzaga Barry, foundress of the Australian Province. They regularly exchanged warm and friendly letters giving the news from their respective provinces and turning to one another for advice and guidance. The Australian Province was especially supportive of the Indian Mission and sent no less than twenty sisters to Calcutta. It was while these letters were being catalogued in the Loreto Archives here in St. Stephen's Green that the story of the dispersal and reunion of the Joynt family was discovered.

In January 1888, Gonzaga Joynt wrote to Gonzaga Barry with "a piece of news that will rejoice you". I will let her tell the story in her own words...

⁷ Loreto Archives Database Entry – (from FTB?)

“Now, Mother dear, what do you think but that after supposing my brothers & family to be at the bottom of the Atlantic for the last 37 years, my youngest brother Edward found me out, scarcely a week ago!

I do not know if I told you that a little before my dear eldest brother Samuel started for Melbourne ... My mother & the rest of the family returned to Ireland. She did not know I was going to be placed here, much less did the others know, & when she died on sea all trace of me was lost. The children were taken care of by an elder brother at home with whom I had never corresponded and being too young to have any news they could tell little or nothing about their sister Anna & so he could not write to me & when, shortly after, my poor brother Samuel was lost going to Australia, I was left alone & without a friend in India except the dear nuns among whom God had brought me. Here have I been since the age of thirteen, lonely but very happy, especially since God deigned to call me to His own immediate service. I heard that my mother’s vessel the “Elizabeth” had gone down & that all were lost. It probably went to the bottom [on] a subsequent voyage, but thank God, my mother & family were not drowned. Poor Mamma died just as they reached the Mauritius & there they buried her. The children were brought up by the brother at home, Philip & the youngest boy Edward, as soon as he grew up determined to make his way to India, remembering he had a sister & a brother here. For 19 years he has been out & of course in the search more or less & since April last he has been near Calcutta in a suburb, and yet we only met a week ago!

One of the Jesuit Fathers happening to pass through the office noticed his resemblance to me & asked his name. On being told it was Edward Joynt it struck him he might be some relation of mine & asked me to send for him. I did not do so, for I felt if it were my brother

and God wished us to know each other He would bring him to me. And so He did. Others heard of the great resemblance of features & similarity of name & spoke to Edward himself about it & the poor fellow came off direct here & sent me his card. I felt almost faint but went to the Chapel for a while & then to him. After mutual explanations & all he told me, there could be no doubt left on his mind or mine. He became greatly agitated & sobbed & cried convulsively & you can imagine what I felt to find those again whom I had so long mourned as lost. The joy is so great that it has quite upset me. My heart is too full either to eat or sleep as before but it all will calm down again".⁸

Her brother Edward continued to visit her in the convent in Calcutta once a week. Letters came from other members of the family, with her sister Jane sending her a letter which was written by their mother on the ship, only a few days before she died. Gonzaga Joynt described it in a letter to Gonzaga Barry – "My mother died on the way home, but fancy, my sister kept all these years a letter which Mamma wrote two or three days before she died and sent it to me. It was in very truth a voice from the dead to see her dear handwriting and her loving words to me".⁹

This reunion could not have been more unexpected for M. Gonzaga, who wrote of the rediscovery of her family – "What a joy it is to me to have found them all you can guess".¹⁰

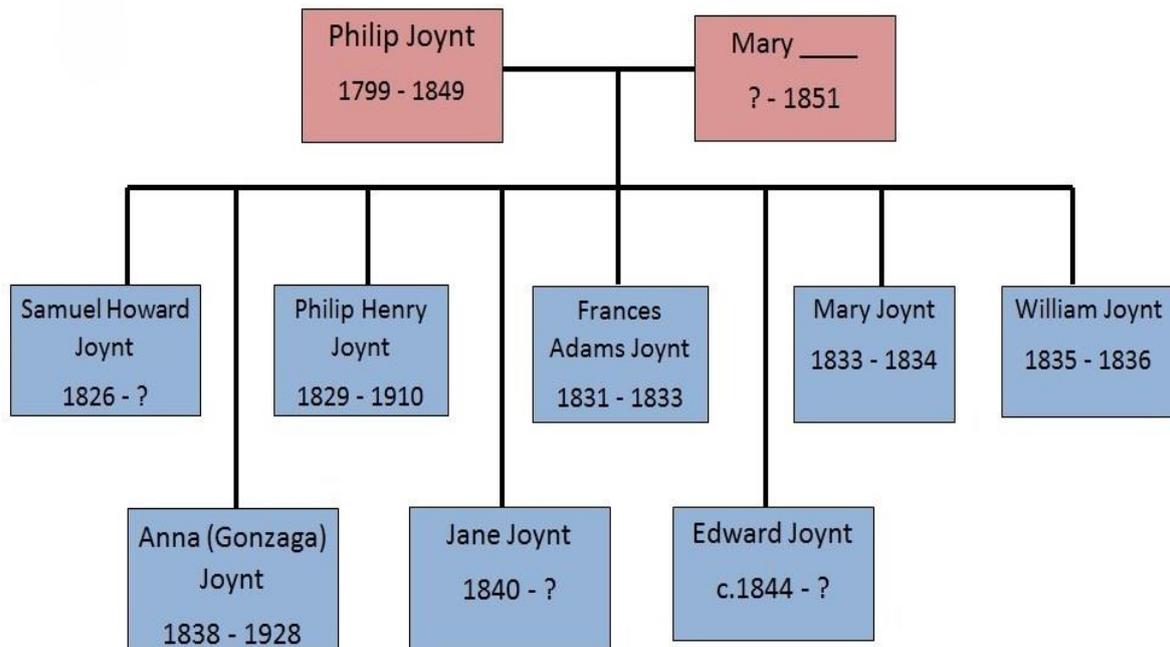
⁸ GB/GJ/6 (7 February 1888)

⁹ GB/GJ/7 (4 April 1888)

¹⁰ GB/GJ/7

Tracing the family

Spurred by these letters, we in the Loreto Archives decided to try to fully trace the story of the Joynt family. This involved searching through birth, marriage and death records for Ireland and India and locating (and deciphering!) British Army service records.



The story begins with Philip Joynt, Gonzaga's father. Born in 1799 in Dunfany, Co. Mayo, he enlisted in the British Army in Naas, Co. Kildare in 1817, at the age of 18. Prior to this he had worked as a labourer. Enlisting was a common alternative to life as a labourer for Irish men. It is estimated, that in the nineteenth century, Irishmen accounted for almost a third of the men in the British Army. Philip's enlistment form notes his period of service as 'life'. He was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in the 31st Regiment of Foot, who would be ordered to India in 1825. Philip Joynt would ultimately spend 18 years in the East Indies with the army. Interestingly, British Army records show a number of men by the name of Joynt from Dunfany, Co. Mayo who enlisted around the same time as Philip. Unfortunately, with so few

Irish records dating from the early eighteenth century, we have no way of knowing if these men were related to Philip. This lack of records also means that while we know that Philip was married to a woman named Mary, we have no idea who she was or when their marriage took place. We do know that Mary travelled to India with her husband, something which strikes us as unusual today but in fact a proportion of men from each garrison were permitted to have their families accompany them. If a married soldier died, his family were generally provided with passage back home.

The British India Office records indicate that Philip Joynt was a School Master in the British Army Garrison Schools in India. His position as School Master says something of his character and level of education. At this time, a significant proportion of soldiers would have been illiterate and as such School Masters taught both the soldiers and their children. Philip moved between the various garrison town schools during his time in India.

In 1844, following 27 years of service, Philip Joynt was discharged from the British Army owing to his “impaired vision” and being “worn out”. On his discharge papers, a Major Baldwin records that “he has maintained a moral and exceptional character for the whole period of his long service” and “has performed the duties of School Master Sergeant continuously for nearly 19 years with real ability”.¹¹ Philip Joynt was discharged in Chatham and as such it seems probable that it was at this time that his namesake and second eldest son, Philip Henry Joynt, returned to Ireland, for it was **he** who was already living in Dublin when his mother and the rest of his siblings set off for home in 1850.

Following his discharge, Philip Joynt returned to India, although it is unknown when or indeed why. Many ex-soldiers opted to stay on in India, often finding work on the various

¹¹ British Army Discharge Papers, Philip Joynt of 31st Foot (UK National Archives)

infrastructure projects which were underway - the creation of railways, roads and bridges. What is certain is that Philip would die there in 1849, leaving his widow and youngest children to return to Ireland. No Indian death certificate or burial record for Philip exists; we only know the date as it was entered into a register of Chelsea Pensioners.

Identifying the siblings of Gonzaga Joynt was made considerably easier due to the meticulous records kept by the British India Office of all the births, deaths and marriages which took place amongst the soldiers and their families.

Philip and Mary's first child, **Samuel Howard Joynt**, was born in November 1826 in Buxar, Bengal. The book *First the Blade* describes him as having launched on a promising business career but it seems that not long after the departure of the majority of the Joynt family, things were going badly for Samuel. In 1850, his name appears on a list of insolvent debtors in the London Gazette where he is described as being a merchant and agent, carrying on business in Calcutta, Benares, Dinapore, Cawnpore and Allahabad. Perhaps this turn of fortune was due to the recent death of his business partner, Thomas O'Callaghan. Interestingly, the following year, Samuel married Thomas' widow, Anne O'Callaghan, in Fort William, Bengal. He was 24 and she was 32. At the time of her first marriage to Thomas O'Callaghan, Anne was only 16. She had been born to Scottish parents in Calcutta where her own father worked as a merchant.

As we have heard, Samuel went to Australia to pursue business interests and was never heard from again. In a letter to Gonzaga Barry, Gonzaga Joynt described how Samuel was

“the means of bringing us to know each other”¹² as she had apparently written to Gonzaga Barry in Australia seeking any information about the whereabouts of her brother. Although she had once received news that there was a storekeeper by that name in Melbourne, she had come to the conclusion by 1888 that he had been lost on his way to Australia and was now “among the dead”.¹³ Despite extensive searching of Australian records and newspapers no information regarding Samuel or his wife Anne could be found so, sadly, perhaps Gonzaga was correct.

The second eldest son, **Philip Henry Joynt** was born in September 1829 in Meerut, Bengal. He had returned to Ireland, presumably with his father when he was discharged from the army, and had settled in Dublin where he worked as a clerk. In October 1850, he married Mary Anne Bentley in St. Paul’s, Church of Ireland, Dublin. The couple had three children together, two of whom died in infancy. It seems apparent that when the other Joynt children returned to Ireland, they went to live with Philip and Mary Anne.

For this reason, it seems odd that in 1856 he enlisted in the British Army at Waterford. He was then 29 years old and working as a salesman. It was noted on his enlistment form that he had previously served as a volunteer in the 109th County of Dublin Regiment of Militia. Philip was sent to serve in Canada for 18 years, from June 1858 until January 1877. He was not discharged until 1880, when he was aged 50. His discharge form notes that “his conduct has been fair” and “he is in the possession of the good conduct badge”. It was also noted that his name was recorded in the Regimental Defaulters’ Book 31 times and he had been thrice convicted by court martial. It should be noted that this is not quite as bad as it sounds

¹² GB/GJ/10 (14 Aug 1888)

¹³ GB/GJ/10

when you consider that in 1865, 9% of all soldiers in the British Army had been court martialled.

The discharge form further notes that he intends to retire to Portsmouth, which is indeed where we find him on the 1881 and 1901 census of England, living in lodging houses with other Chelsea Pensioners.¹⁴ The 1881 census notes that he is a widower, though no death certificate for his wife Mary Anne can be found. He would stay in Portsmouth for 30 years, dying there in 1910 aged 81. After his death, probate of his will was granted to the wife of a fellow army pensioner in Portsmouth.¹⁵ It is interesting to wonder how much contact he had with his children and siblings during this time. Perhaps it was the responsibility of caring for his own wife and daughter, alongside his returned siblings, that led him to seek steady employment with the Army, even though it would mean leaving them behind once again.

Following the births of Samuel and Philip Henry, the Joynts were to suffer the pain known to so many army families in India – the death of children. **Frances Adams Joynt** died aged only 17 months. **Mary Joynt** died aged 1 year. Another son, **William Joynt** was to die aged 13 months. The details of these deaths were recorded but no cause of death was given. Sadly, this was not an uncommon occurrence, conditions were difficult - tropical diseases were rife and very often children died on the long and arduous journeys from one garrison town to another, being buried along the way.

¹⁴ 1881 England Census – living 40 Havant Street, Portsmouth.

1901 England Census – living 81 Kent Street, Portsmouth.

¹⁵ 1911 England Probate Calendar – “JOYNT, Philip Henry of 26 St. James’ Street, Portsea, Hampshire. Army pensioner, died 3 February 1910 at the parish of Portsmouth, Infirmary Kingston Portsmouth. Probate Winchester, 31 August to Emily Kate Jennings (wife of Sidney Jennings). Effects £7 13s.”

No doubt, the birth of **Anna Joynt** in 1838 in Dinapore was a great joy to her parents, who had by then suffered the premature deaths of three consecutive children.

Baptisms within the Chaplaincy Station or District of Dinapore in the Archdeaconry and Diocese of Calcutta

year	Month	Day	Parties Baptized	when and where Born	Parents Profession and Residence	where Baptized	Signature by whom
1838	April	4	Caroline	18 March 1838 Dinapore	Daughter of Charles Jones. Bombardier 7 th Co. Artillery and Mary his wife.	Dinapore	John Vaughan Chaplain
1838	May	15	Anna	21 April 1838 Dinapore	Daughter of Philip Joynt. Sergeant & School Master H. Co. 51 st Regt. & Mary his wife.	Dinapore	John Vaughan Chaplain

Anna (Gonzaga) Joynt Baptism 1838

After Anna, came another sister, **Jane Joynt**, who was born in 1840. Having returned to Ireland aged 10, she would go on to marry James Marshall, a Sergeant in the Scots Greys in Dublin, at the age of 27.¹⁶ It was Jane who had kept the letter written by their mother and sent it to Gonzaga. Jane settled in England and indeed while returning from Ireland in 1894, Gonzaga spent two nights in a convent in Hammersmith where Jane came to visit her. She described the joy of this occasion in a letter to Gonzaga Barry : "I have bid her goodbye for life, I think, not indeed with regret but with a heart full of gratitude to the good God who so wonderfully found her for me and brought us together after a separation of 40 years".¹⁷ No record of Jane and her husband can be found in either the English or Irish census records or birth and death records. If they were moving between Ireland to England, this may explain why they are missing from census records.

No more births were recorded by the British India Office for the Joynt family from this point on as Philip had been discharged in 1844 but we know that Gonzaga had at least two other siblings.

¹⁶ Marriage Record: Jane Joynt & James Marshall (GRO Reference: Dublin North, 1867, Vol. 12, page 447)

¹⁷ GB/GJ/22

Edward Joynt, the brother who found her in Calcutta, was born roughly the same year that his father was discharged from the army. When he met with Gonzaga in 1888 she described him thus – **“My loved brother is now 41 years of age, a widower with two little children. I regret to say that he is a bigoted Methodist & I most earnestly beg your prayers & those of the dear Sisters & children in Mary’s Mount and Portland for his conversion & that of my other Protestant relations.**

.....

Edward is all I could wish – except a Catholic. The poor fellow assured me he would not love me the less for being a Papist and a nun! But I see he is afraid lest I should influence him about religion – so I try to be prudent.”

Edward was in India with his children for 19 years before meeting with his sister, but Gonzaga notes in 1891 that he has returned to Ireland and is now with their sister who is married and settled there. Furthermore, she notes that despite being “a red hot Methodist” he “intended to call at the Abbey and see S. M. Philomena and if possible, our dear RM General. He is not a Catholic yet, but oh so changed to what he was!”¹⁸

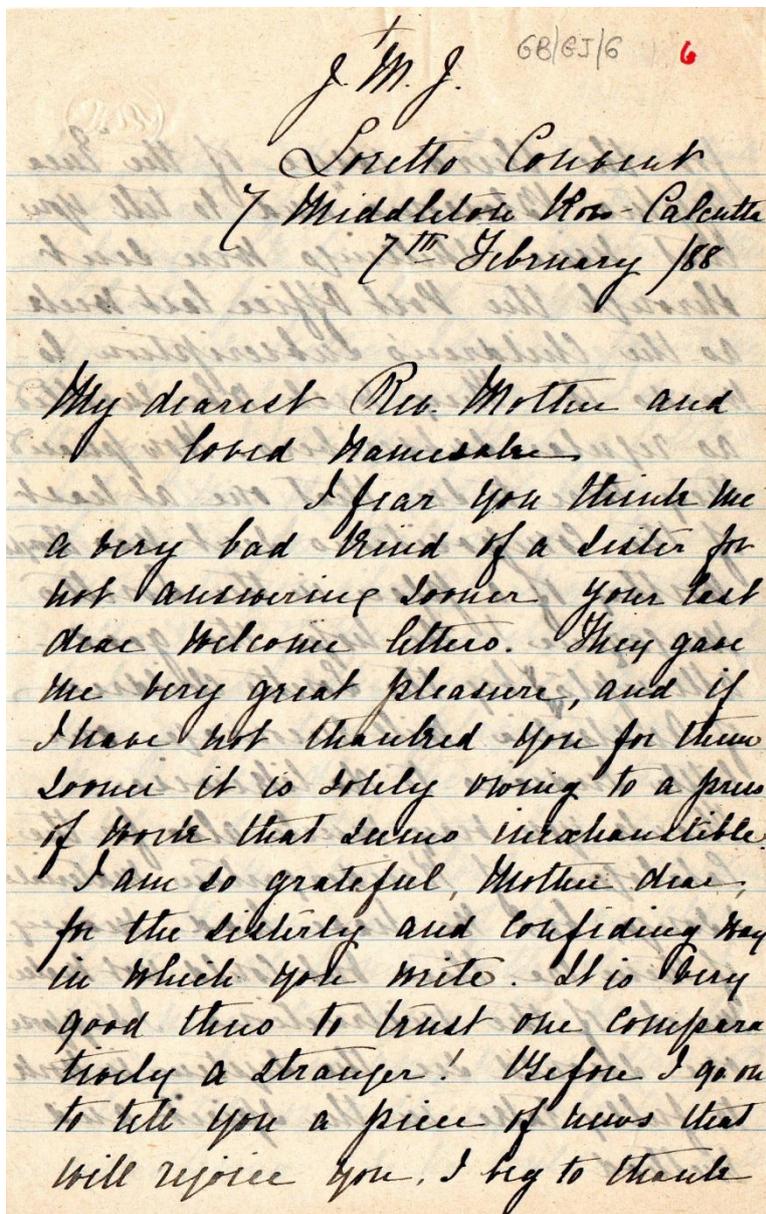
A younger sister, **Emily Joynt**, appears as a witness to Jane’s marriage and is mentioned by Gonzaga as being a Methodist along with Jane. It seems probable that she is the sister who is settled and married in Ireland, though no marriage certificate can be found for her.

A further brother and sister are noted by Gonzaga as being in America “but at present they are lost. They changed residence and did not write since”.

¹⁸ GB/GJ/17

Following the death of their father, the Joynt family spread out across the world and though once estranged, were joyfully and unexpectedly reunited after 40 years apart. In this loss and reunion with her family, Gonzaga saw the hand of God and did not regret the lost years, instead rejoicing in their reunion so many years later.

Karen de Lacey
February 2015



The image shows the opening page of a handwritten letter on aged, lined paper. At the top right, there is a red wax seal. The text is written in cursive and includes the following:

J. M. J. GB/GJ/6 6
Loretta Couscut
7 Middleton Row - Calcutta
7th February 1888

My dearest Rev. Mother and
loved Nieces
I fear you think me
a very bad friend of a sister for
not answering sooner your last
dear welcome letters. They gave
me very great pleasure, and if
I have not thanked you for them
sooner it is solely owing to a piece
of work that seems insupportable.
I am so grateful, Mother dear,
for the sincerity and confidence
in which you write. It is very
good thus to trust one compe-
tently a stranger! Before I go on
to tell you a piece of news that
will rejoice you, I beg to thank

Opening page of letter from M. Gonzaga Joynt IBVM to M. Gonzaga Barry IBVM, Australia relaying the news of the rediscovery of her brother, Edward Joynt, February 1888. GB/GJ/06