

# From Dunany to Dunany—a little Bellingham history

by Eleanor Hammond

Sydney Bellingham was a man of some fame in Argenteuil and is remembered in the Lachute area with Bellingham Street and in the naming of Dunany, seven miles north of Lachute.

The name Dunany was chosen by Bellingham himself in memory of a point of land on the Irish Sea near his old home, Castle Bellingham in Eire. He was born there on August 2, 1808, the fourth son of Sir Allan Bellingham, a family of the Protestant ascendancy, but of modest means.

William Smith, the first Dunany settler, still has many descendants in the Lachute area. The population in that area had increased to such an extent during the 1840s that postal service was merited, and in 1853 the Dunany Post Office was opened. William Smith became the first postmaster. The office of postmaster continued in the Smith family until 1922.

Bellingham was also a large land owner in Arundel and according to the *History of Argenteuil County* by Cyrus Thomas, he induced William Thompson, said to be the township's first "actual" settler, to leave Belle Rivière in the Seigneurie of the Lake of Two Mountains for Arundel.

The young Sydney Bellingham first came to Canada at the age of 15 to seek his fortune and at the age of 20 married a wealthy widow, whose fortune aided him in his business and political ambitions.

Bellingham had, it seems, something of a stormy political career. He served as a member of the legislative assembly for Argenteuil on and off between 1854 and 1875. Throughout most of that period he went head to head with J.J.C. Abbott for the seat. The battle was documented at length in several editions of *The Argenteuil Advertiser*, short-lived newspaper which published from 1872 to about 1877.

Bellingham was well known in Argenteuil and elsewhere in the province as well. He was called to the bar of Lower Canada in 1841 and was also long-time political writer for the *Montreal Times* and *Daily News*, according to Thomas.

Bellingham is said to have distinguished himself during the Rebellion of 1837 and after his return to Ireland he penned *Some Personal Recollections of the Rebellion of 1837 in Canada*. It was first published in 1901 (just a year before he died) and was republished in 1970.

In 1874 Sydney Bellingham inherited Castle Bellingham and shortly after his election in 1875, he returned there to live permanently. Thus ended his stay in

Canada. The Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Volume XII, makes no mention of any children, and when Sydney died in 1902, the castle passed to a relative.

## To Ireland

A recent trip to Ireland, and a large map, provided us with an opportunity to visit Castle Bellingham and to photograph Dunany Point, about three miles distant. The castle has been converted, in quite unattractive fashion, into a hotel and lounge.

On the Dublin-Belfast Road which runs through the town and is the main thoroughfare, the little Church of Ireland still administers to the few C of I adherents. They have a new and dynamic minister and at the time of our visit, the church was having an internal restoration.

There is much evidence of the Bellingham family's involvement through the years. Under the stained-glass windows behind the altar is the Bellingham vault, where generations of Bellinghams are buried.

Attached to the Church is a series of small apartments—the Widows Houses—endowed by Sir William Bellingham. These are still in use, and there was lively banter being exchanged by the ladies as we passed.

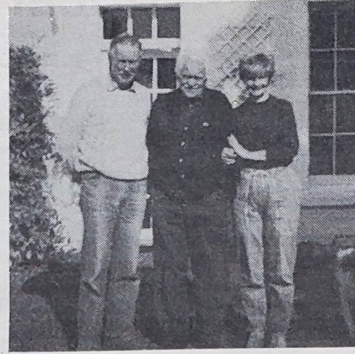
I asked a local shopkeeper if there were any Bellinghams still in the area and was told that yes indeed, Heber Russell's mother was a Bellingham. "He lives in the pink house up the road, where he has a mushroom farm," said our shopkeeper.

Having been reassured that Heber was a very pleasant and personable man and thinking that the Bellingham descendants might be interested in learning about their ancestor's Lachute connection, I called at their door and met Heber's lovely wife, Cora. Heber was away on business, but she invited us for coffee the next morning by which time he would be back.

Their home is truly beautiful, with a wide hallway and a circular staircase, covered with ancestral portraits. Upon entering, the first painting on the right wall was of an 18th century Earl, indicating powerful family connections.

Heber brought us up to date on the Bellingham history. Sydney had died in relative obscurity in 1902 at the age of 92 near Dunany Point where there is another small Church of Ireland, a very modest building.

There are other Bellingham descendants in that area, but as Heber said, we asked at a Roman Catholic store. Had we asked at a store run by Church of Ireland



Heber Russell (left), a Bellingham descendant, and his wife Cora along with Dayton Hammond of Dunany.



The signpost for Dunany.

adherents we would have been directed to the branch of the family which lives near Dunany Point. They had a much closer relationship with Sydney than Heber's branch. Unfortunately, we did not have time to visit them.

In the middle of the road in front of the Church of Ireland in Castle Bellingham there is a circular island with a very large crucifix. It seems that Heber's grandfather attended Oxford and through involvement in the Oxford Group became a Roman Catholic convert. This crucifix was erected by him in memory of his wife.

Since that time Heber's branch of the family has been Roman Catholic and it has caused a small breach between the various branches. Heber's first cousin, son of his mother's elder brother, has inherited the title. He lives in England and has very little association with Ireland.

Heber's mother was the last Bellingham to live in the castle and when it became too much to manage, she moved into a lovely old home on the castle grounds.

Heber himself, educated in a Jesuit College in County Wicklow, became an officer in the Irish Guards and served with the British Army in Africa for many years until his retirement. His mushroom business is very successful with regular shipments to Britain and to the Continent.

Residents of Dunany love the way the name rolls off the tongue. Much to our surprise, the original sounding is Dun-ehny. In Britain, many ancient Norman names have acquired pronunciations vastly different from the spelling.

This is also the case with Bellingham. Lachute has a street which is pronounced Belling-jam!

Note: Eleanor Hammond is the author of *A History of Dunany* published in 1990.

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The gates to Bellingham Castle.