

= Boyle Roche =

Sir Boyle Roche , 1st Baronet ( October 1736 ? 5 June 1807 ) was an Irish politician . After a distinguished career in North America with the British Army , Roche became a member of the Irish House of Commons in 1775 , generally acting in support of the viceregal government . He is better remembered for the language of his speeches than his politics ? they were riddled with mixed metaphors ( " Mr Speaker , I smell a rat ; I see him forming in the air and darkening the sky ; but I 'll nip him in the bud " ) , malapropisms and other unfortunate turns of phrase ( " Why we should put ourselves out of our way to do anything for posterity , for what has posterity ever done for us ? " ) . Roche may have been Richard Brinsley Sheridan 's model for Mrs Malaprop . While arguing for a bill , Roche once said , " It would surely be better , Mr. Speaker , to give up not only a part , but , if necessary , even the whole , of our constitution , to preserve the remainder ! "

While these Irish bulls have led many writers to portray Roche as a buffoon , other biographers have interpreted them not as blunders , but as calculated attempts to disarm opposition to ministerial policies through humour . Roche ended his political career with the passage of the Act of Union 1800 , which he supported . He chose not to attempt to enter the British House of Commons and retired on a government pension until his death , married but childless , in 1807 .

= = Life = =

= = = Early life , family background and military service = = =

Boyle Roche was born , the youngest of three sons , to Jordan Roche and Ellen White in County Galway in 1736 . His was an old and respectable Protestant family , said to be a junior branch of the ancient baronial house of Roche , Viscount Fermoy from which Diana , Princess of Wales , descended . The family were also no strangers to politics : Roche 's great @-@ grandfather had been elected mayor of Limerick four times . Roche 's older brother was Tiger Roche , a celebrated duellist and adventurer .

Boyle Roche entered the army at an early age , and served in the so @-@ called American war ( that is , the American portion of the Seven Years ' War ) . There are reports of a Lieutenant Boyle Roche in Rogers ' Rangers who was captured by the French during The Battle on Snowshoes ( near what is now Lake George , New York in March 1758 ) and later returned to his regiment . It is possible that Roche served with Wolfe at the Siege of Quebec in 1759 ; it is a certainty that he distinguished himself in 1762 during the capture of El Morro in Havana . By 1770 he had become a major in the 28th Foot . He was knighted for his bravery at El Morro in 1776 .

Retiring from the army , he obtained an office in the Irish revenue department in 1775 . In the same year , Boyle Roche entered the Irish House of Commons as Member of Parliament ( MP ) for Tralee , a seat he held until 1776 .

Although he was one of the first volunteers to fight the rebellious colonials in 1776 , his contribution to that conflict was mainly in the area of recruitment ? he successfully enlisted 500 volunteers in one weekend in Limerick alone , a feat which so gratified Lord Kenmare that he paid Roche an additional bounty of half a guinea per man . Roche 's flamboyant recruiting methods were described by the Edinburgh Advertiser as follows :

Yesterday Major BOYLE Roche , representative in parliament for Tralee ( who is raising a body of men for his Majesty 's service ) began recruiting here , and met with great success , which is not surprising , if we consider his connexions , and the uncommon support he has received from the noblemen and gentlemen of this province . His method of enlisting was as uncommon as it was pleasing to those who viewed the procession , which was as follows : Major Roche , bearing a large purse of gold . Captain Cowley . A great number of likely recruits . An elegant band of music , consisting of French horns , hautboys [ oboes ] , clarionets , and bassoons , playing God Save the King . A large brewer 's dray , with five @-@ barrels of beer , the horse richly caparisoned and ornamented with ribbands . Two draymen with cockades to serve the beer , The recruiting serjeant .

Drums [ and ] fifes . Another division of recruits . The returning soldiers . Prodigious concourse of [ spectators ? ] . The following speech was made by Major Roche to the populace : Being appointed , through the favour of [ our ] most excellent governor , to raise a body of men for the service of his Majesty , I think it [ a ] most happy circumstance of my life to be the instrument of leading you to honour and renown . The laurels fought for and obtained in all parts [ of ] the globe [ through ] war , have procured us a fame so glorious as not to be equalled by people in any fame not to be sullied by the assaults of prejudice , nor the effects of time : not an action in which we were not victorious , not a siege in which we were not honoured . Will you , my dear countrymen , permit those laurels to fade , or those actions to be forgotten ? No , forbid it , heaven ! Let us now that we have it in our power convey to later posterity a renewal of our fidelity , and a confirmation of our loyalty . A more critical period never presented itself , nor had we ever a fairer opportunity of shewing our attachment to the illustrious house of Hanover , than the present , as his Majesty 's deluded subjects in America are in open rebellion , and like unnatural children , wound their ever indulgent parent , forgetting the torrents of blood spilt , and heap of treasure expended for their preservation . His Sacred Majesty now calls and our fidelity obliges us , and I hope your instinct prompts you , to obey the dictates of so [ grand ] a master . Let us then , my brave and loyal countrymen , join hearts and hands and cheerfully step forth in the glorious cause of our Creator , our King and our Country .

In Dublin , Roche was a member of the Kildare Street Club .

= = = Member of Parliament = = =

Roche continued on in the Grattan Parliament , representing Gowran from 1777 to 1783 , Portarlinton from 1784 to 1790 , Tralee ( again ) from 1790 to 1798 and Old Leighlin from 1798 until the union with Great Britain in 1801 . From the beginning of his parliamentary career Roche ranged himself on the side of the government , and for his services he was granted a pension , appointed chamberlain to the viceregal court , and on 30 November 1782 was created a baronet . For the office of chamberlain he was thought to be " eminently qualified by his handsome figure , graceful address and ready wit , qualities which were set off by a frank , open and manly disposition . "

It was during this period ( in 1782 ) that Roche coined the term " Protestant Ascendancy " .

Apparently , members of the cabinet wrote speeches for Sir Boyle which he somewhat imperfectly committed to memory , in general mastering the substance but frequently producing , through his love of language and ornament , travesties on the original words . Through this he gained his lasting reputation as an inveterate perpetrator of Irish bulls .

Boyle 's memory was indeed excellent . On one occasion he illustrated both the accuracy of his memory and the audacity of his character at the expense of a brother member . Edmond Stanley , anxious to produce an effect in an important debate , had been at pains to reduce his speech to writing . Unluckily , Stanley happened to drop his manuscript in the coffee @-@ room , and walked back into the House unconscious of his loss . Sir Boyle , finding the document , speedily mastered its contents , and , rising at the first opportunity , delivered the speech almost verbatim in the hearing of its dismayed and astonished author . His apology afterward only added insult to injury :

Here , my dear Stanley , is your speech again , and I thank you kindly for the loan of it . I never was so much at a loss for a speech in the whole course of my life , and sure it is not a pin the worse for the wear .

On another occasion , he amused and relieved the House , irritated by the prospect of being obliged to listen to the reading of a mass of documents as a preliminary to a resolution , by suggesting that a dozen or so clerks be called in who might read the documents simultaneously and thus dispose of the business in a few minutes .

Beyond these efforts , he was also the author of a bill to enact , among other things , that " Every quart bottle should contain a quart . "

= = = The Volunteer Convention = = =

The chief service Boyle Roche rendered his government was in connection with the Volunteer Convention of November 1783 , in which he " acted a part only less remarkable than his immunity from the opprobrium which might have been expected to attach to it . " The question of admitting the Roman Catholics to the franchise was at the time being agitated , and found many warm supporters in the convention . The proposal was extremely obnoxious to the Irish government , and on the second day of the meeting the secretary of state , George Ogle , announced that the Roman Catholics , in the person of Lord Kenmare , had relinquished the idea of making any claim further than the religious liberty they then enjoyed , and gave as his authority for this extraordinary statement Sir Boyle Roche , by whom it was confirmed !

Ten days later Lord Kenmare ( who had not been in Dublin at the time ) denied that he had given the least authority to any person to make any such statement in his name . However , his disavowal came too late : the anti @-@ Catholic party in the convention had found time to organize themselves , and when the intended Reform Bill took shape it was known that the admission of Roman Catholics to the franchise was not to form part of the scheme .

Several months later ( on Valentine 's Day ) , Sir Boyle explained himself in a public letter , starting with a description of his alarm upon hearing that the bishop of Derry ( then Frederick Hervey ) and his associates were bent on extending the legislative privilege :

I thought a crisis was arrived in which Lord Kenmare and the heads of that body should step forth to disavow those wilde projects , and to profess their attachment to the lawful powers . Unfortunately , his lordship was at a great distance , and most of my other friends were out of the way . I therefore resolved on a bold stroke , and authorized only by the sentiments of the persons in question , [ took action ] .

He added that while he regretted that his message had been disowned by Lord Kenmare , that was of less consequence , since his manoeuvre had succeeded to admiration . Some believe that Sir Boyle , who was related to Lord Kenmare and often represented his views in Commons , was also stating Lord Kenmare 's true views on this occasion and doing so with his full knowledge , but in a way that provided Kenmare plausible deniability .

Sir Boyle fought hard for the Union :

Gentlemen may tither , and tither , and tither , and may think it a bad measure ; but their heads at present are hot , and will so remain till they grow cool again , and so they can 't decide right now , but when the day of judgement comes then honourable gentlemen will be satisfied with this most excellent union .

For himself , he declared that his love for England and Ireland was so great that he " would have the two sisters embrace like one brother . "

= = = His life in politics = = =

Those who placidly accept the judgement that Boyle Roche was " the Fool of the Grattan Parliament " should reflect on the fact that for almost 25 years he served as Gentleman Usher and Master of Ceremonies to the Irish Court , " an office for which a dignified and decorous demeanor is among the chief essentials . "

Roche was also capable of humour which was both subtle and unquestionably intentional . Once , upon hearing his opponent John Philpot Curran expostulate that he could be " the guardian of his own honour " , Sir Boyle offered his " congratulations to the honourable member on his possession of a sinecure . " On another occasion , when the Opposition tried to cough him down in a debate , Sir Boyle met the interruption by producing some bullets , with the observation " I have here some excellent pills to cure a cough . " His personal courage being beyond dispute , this jest was quite sufficient in those duelling days to procure attention for the remainder of his speech .

= = = Marriage , retirement and death = = =

On 20 October 1778 , Boyle Roche married Mary Frankland of Great Thirkleby Hall , near Thirsk , Yorkshire , daughter of Admiral Sir Thomas Frankland , Bt , whose family name goes back to the

time of William the Conqueror . Although childless , Boyle and Lady Mary appeared to have lived a life of uninterrupted happiness .

After the Union and the dissolution of the Irish Parliament , Boyle received a £ 400 pension , and in addition £ 300 annually in his capacity as " Surveyor of Kenmare River , " a post which had been invented as a reward and required no work . Thus provided for , he was able to spend the rest of his days in comfort .

Boyle Roche died at his house in 63 Eccles Street , Dublin , on 5 June 1807 , and was buried in St. Mary 's Church , Dublin , on 9 June . Mary lived on until 1831 .

= = Boyle Roche 's bird = =

Roche is perhaps best known for once excusing an absence in Parliament thus : " Mr. Speaker , it is impossible I could have been in two places at once , unless I were a bird . " This quotation was referenced by Ambrose Bierce in *The Devil 's Dictionary* in his definition of ubiquity :

In recent times ubiquity has not always been understood ? not even by Sir Boyle Roche , for example , who held that a man cannot be in two places at once unless he is a bird .

But Roche was not uttering a malapropism here , he was quoting , and quoting correctly . The line appears in Jevon ? s play , *The Devil of a Wife* , as follows :

Wife : I cannot be in two places at once .

Husband ( Rowland ) : Surely no , unless thou wert a bird .