



***A Forgotten Patriot:
Charles Lucas 1713-1771***

By Sean J Murphy

Centre for Irish Genealogical and Historical Studies

C. LUCAS

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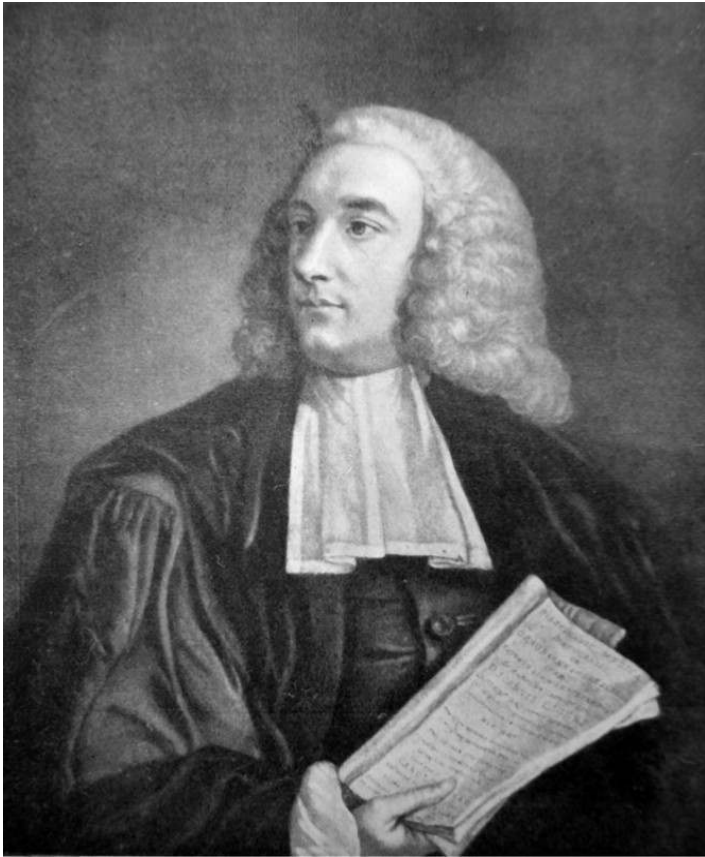
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**Charles Lucas MD, print by James McArdell from a
portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds circa 1756**

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Charles Lucas 1713-1771

Early Years in Clare

If remembered at all in the period since his death, the eighteenth-century patriot, author and medical doctor Charles Lucas has tended to be portrayed as a minor politician and anti-Catholic bigot. Hence Lecky characterised Lucas as ‘wholly destitute of oratorical power and bitterly intolerant to his Catholic fellow-countrymen’, while R B McDowell has described him as a ‘bustling, public-spirited tradesman’ who ‘condoned the penal code’.¹ More recently, Leighton has referred to Lucas’s ‘retrograde patriotism’ and identified anti-Catholicism as central to his thinking.²

It has been Lucas’s misfortune not yet to have found a biographer, which fact can be advanced as further evidence of historical insignificance (as though all significant history has been written). The present writer has been working independently for some years on a life of Lucas and pending the completion of a fuller volume, the present short account is offered in the hope that it will help preserve the memory of a man by no means perfect but of sufficient worth and importance to merit our attention.

Charles Lucas was born in County Clare on 16 September 1713, the son of Benjamin Lucas of Ballingaddy near Ennistimon. There is a tradition that Charles was born in an old house located on Willie Daly’s riding centre in Ballingaddy, and a Lucas family still resides in the area at Sandfield Lodge. The Lucases were of Cromwellian stock and hailed from Bury-St-Edmunds in Suffolk. Charles’s

1 W E H Lecky, *A History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, London 1913 Edition, 1, page 461; R B McDowell, *Irish Public Opinion 1750-1800*, London 1944, pages 11, 17.

2 C D A Leighton, *Catholicism in a Protestant Kingdom: A Study of the Irish Ancien Régime*, Dublin 1994, page 77 and following.

granduncle, Lieutenant-Colonel Benjamin Lucas, was a Cromwellian officer who had been granted lands in Clare after service in the wars of the 1640s (the writer formerly believed that Lieutenant-Colonel Benjamin rather than his brother Henry was Charles Lucas's direct ancestor).³ While little is known about Lucas's early years, it would not be implausible to speculate that given his background, radical Commonwealth ideals would have played a part in shaping his political awareness and prejudices. Furthermore, although the Lucases may originally have been adherents of a dissenting sect, Charles was certainly a member of the Established Protestant Church of Ireland in adult life.

Benjamin Lucas died about 1727, bequeathing the relatively generous total of £937 to his wife Mary and large family, which included two natural children by his servant maid, Ellen Hynes. Charles, the second youngest son, was allocated £80 and his father requested that his brother John should arrange a proper occupation for him.⁴ Stories that Benjamin left his family destitute appear to be based on exaggeration and were possibly a result of Charles's later political notoriety and periodic financial difficulties.⁵

Ballingaddy of course is not far from Clare's natural wonderland the Burren, and there is evidence that Charles explored the area in his youth. His earliest published work was an article in the form of a letter describing Kilcorney Cave, with a short account of the Burren.⁶ Lucas, who ventured

3 Lucas Family, Barry Manuscripts, National Library of Ireland, Genealogical Office MS 412, pages 66-7.

4 Will of Benjamin Lucas of Ballingaddy, probated 1728, Prerogative Will Book 1726-28, National Archives of Ireland, 10/2/3, folios 309a-b.

5 O'G, 'Charles Lucas', *Dublin Penny Journal*, 1, 1832-33, page 389.

6 E C Nelson, 'Charles Lucas's Letter (1736) to Sir Hans Sloane About the Natural History of the Burren', *Journal of the Irish Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons*, 21, 1992, pages 126-31.

through the narrow opening for about forty yards, recounted local lore to the effect that a ‘stud of fine horses’ was sometimes seen emerging from Kilcorney Cave. He observed also that while the cave was normally dry, at uncertain and irregular periods it poured forth ‘such a deluge as covers the adjacent plain, sometimes with above twenty foot depth of water’ (this unpredictable periodic flooding still occurs and led to the death of a local man as recently as 1997).

Lucas’s letter also listed some of the flora of the Burren, including Juniper, Yew, Goldenrod, Vervain and Cinquefoil. Lucas cited the Latin names of most of the plants he listed, and it has been observed that few authors have acknowledged the priority of his account of Burren flora.⁷

Turning to the local residents of the Burren Lucas described them in the following terms:

The inhabitants are but few, and they mostly poor cottagers whose chief stock is goats. They are courteous and good-natured to strangers, though wild and unspoiled, [and] weak, blind, superstitious zealots of Rome.⁸

These comments tend to confirm that Lucas had grown up with a significant measure of prejudice towards his Catholic fellow-countrymen, which was undoubtedly a product of the atmosphere of fear and mistrust existing between the descendants of settlers and dispossessed natives. Yet Lucas’s reference to the courtesy and good nature of the Burren Catholics does set him apart from the more extreme and militant wing of Protestantism, which as we shall see tended to be unwilling to make any such concessions.

Dublin Corporation Politician

After his father’s death, Lucas was apprenticed as an apothecary in Dublin city and set up shop for himself there in the 1730s. Lucas married his first wife Anne Blundell in

7 Nelson, ‘Charles Lucas’s Letter’, page 127.

8 Same, page 128.

1734.⁹ Dublin at this time was a rapidly expanding capital with a population of about 120,000, of which a majority was Protestant but Catholics were increasing in number. Undeterred by the fact that he was a newcomer to the apothecary's trade, Lucas wrote against frauds and abuses in the preparation and sale of drugs. Lucas's campaign was instrumental in securing legislation in 1736 which authorised the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland to inspect apothecaries' shops.¹⁰ His stance also provoked the enduring enmity of many of his colleagues, and may have contributed to an initial failure in business which necessitated a temporary retreat to London about 1737.¹¹ Far from keeping his head down or confining himself to business affairs on his return to Dublin, Lucas decided to become involved in local politics.

The Common Council or governing body of Dublin Corporation was composed of two houses, the Lord Mayor and 24 Aldermen forming the upper house, while the lower house was called the Sheriffs and Commons and was composed mostly of representatives of the city's 24 trade guilds. The guilds were controlled by about 3,000 Protestant Freemen, who also possessed the right to vote in parliamentary elections, and Catholics of course were excluded from all political power. The constitution of Dublin Corporation was based partly on royal charters granted since 1172, partly on usage, ancient customs and by-laws, and principally on 'New Rules' imposed by the government of Charles II in 1672, whose main effect was to strengthen the oligarchy of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen.¹²

⁹ *Index to Dublin Grant Books and Wills*, 1, page 1,030.

¹⁰ Lucas, *Pharmacomastix, or the Office, Use and Abuse of Apothecaries Examined*, Dublin 1741; *Statutes of Ireland*, 6, pages 203-6.

¹¹ *An Apology for the Conduct and Writings of Mr C-s L-s, Apothecary*, Dublin 1749, pages 7-8.

¹² Sean Murphy, 'The Corporation of Dublin, 1660-1760', *Dublin Historical Record*, 38, 1984, pages 22-5.

Lucas began his political career as a representative of the Barber Surgeons' Guild on the Common Council, to which he was appointed in December 1741. In alliance with James Digges La Touche, a Merchants' Guild representative and a member of the wealthy Huguenot merchant and banking family, Lucas commenced a campaign for municipal reform in April 1742. Lucas and La Touche sought to limit the oligarchic powers of the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, and correspondingly to increase the powers of the Sheriffs and Commons. Supported by a radical majority in the lower house, Lucas and La Touche scoured old Corporation records in an effort to show that the Aldermen had usurped many of the powers they exercised, and in particular they sought to demonstrate the unconstitutionality of the New Rules.¹³

The dispute between the two houses of the Corporation raged over a period of years, in the course of which Lucas produced two pamphlets arguing the case for municipal reform. In a remonstrance published in 1743, Lucas argued that the government of Dublin was 'truly popular' and he condemned the powers of the Aldermen as unconstitutional encroachments on the rights and privileges of the Commons and citizens.¹⁴ Lucas's second pamphlet, published in 1744, was more extremely worded, and as well as representing the Aldermen as power-hungry usurpers, he also took the opportunity to castigate the New Rules as a scheme to prepare a 'highway for Popery and slavery'.¹⁵

The reformers represented the Protestant freemen or enfranchised citizens of Dublin only, whose entitlement to participate in municipal and parliamentary elections depended on their membership of the city's exclusive trade guilds.

13 Murphy, 'Corporation of Dublin', pages 25-8.

14 Lucas, *A Remonstrance Against Certain Infringements on the Rights and Liberties of the Commons and Citizens of Dublin*, Dublin 1743.

15 Same, *Divelina Libera: An Apology for the Civil Rights and Liberties of the Commons and Citizens of Dublin*, Dublin 1744.

Under the penal laws, Catholics were denied participation in politics even at the municipal level, and there is no evidence that they were greatly interested in Lucas's agitation at this stage. The campaign eventually began seriously to impede Corporation business and the matter came to a head when the reformers took a case in the Court of King's Bench in June 1744, arguing that a recent appointment of an Alderman had been invalid. The court found against the reformers, and in December 1744 the triennial selection of guild representatives provided the victorious Aldermen with an opportunity to remove Lucas and La Touche from the city council. These setbacks, together with the crisis caused by the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, led to a temporary lull in the municipal dispute and it would be a number of years before it was finally resolved.¹⁶

The Barber's Letters

The next occasion on which Lucas ventured to comment on Catholics and Catholicism is one which reflects least credit on him and sees him exhibiting prejudices perhaps most closely fitting the stereotype of the Protestant bigot. In the wake of rioting in Smock Alley Theatre in January 1747 consequent on attempts by the manager, Thomas Sheridan, to curb rowdy excesses by 'gentlemen' members of the audience, Dublin was split into camps pro- and anti-Sheridan.¹⁷ Lucas entered the fray as a champion of Sheridan, producing several pamphlets in February and March 1747 in which untypically he concealed his identity behind a pseudonym, 'A Freeman, Barber and Citizen'.¹⁸

Lucas ascribed the theatrical disturbances to a premature slackening of legal discipline in the kingdom and warned of a

16 Murphy, 'Corporation of Dublin', pages 28-9.

17 E K Sheldon, *Thomas Sheridan of Smock Alley*, Princeton 1967, pages 81-95.

18 A Freeman, Barber and Citizen [Lucas], *A [First]-Third Letter to the Free Citizens of Dublin*, Dublin 1747.

relapse into the slavery and barbarism which characterised the ancient Irish before they were reformed and brought under ‘the best government in the world’. Noting that the most prominent rioter, one Kelly, was a Catholic from the province of Connacht, Lucas claimed that there was more to the riots than a mere theatrical dispute, and that they were the work of a group of ‘professed papists’ and ‘mercenary converts’ who were preparing for ‘a foreign invasion, a western insurrection or an universal massacre’.¹⁹

The gratuitously insulting references to ‘papists’ evidently produced a critical reaction which Lucas could not ignore, for in the third and final pamphlet of the Barber series he felt obliged to declare that he had ‘never reflected on any man for mere religious principles’, and claimed to have daily contact and friendship with Catholics. He attempted to distinguish between those who accepted the spiritual authority of the pope, whom he merely pitied, and those who accepted temporal papal power, whom he strenuously opposed.²⁰ The obsessiveness of the anti-Catholic propaganda in Lucas’s Barber’s Letters of 1747 was in fact uncharacteristic, and it is likely that like many of his co-religionists he had been affected by the scare attendant on the Jacobite Rising of 1745, while the mask of pseudonymity undoubtedly also encouraged lack of restraint. Although, as we shall see, Lucas was to become less preoccupied with the dangers of ‘popery’ and more favourably disposed towards Catholics and ancient Ireland, the memory of the Barber’s Letters was to live on and would become the principal basis for Lucas’s reputation as an ultra-Protestant bigot.

The Dublin Election of 1748-9

Lucas’s next opportunity for political involvement came during the Dublin by-election of 1748-9, when the city’s two

19 A Freeman, Barber [Lucas], *A [First] Letter*, pages 2-6, *A Second Letter*, page 10.

20 Same, *A Third Letter*, pages 18-19.

parliamentary seats fell vacant due to the deaths of the incumbent MPs. In uneasy alliance with James Digges La Touche, Lucas attempted to break the virtual monopoly of Dublin's parliamentary representation by aldermen of Dublin Corporation.²¹ As well as making fiery speeches in the guild halls, Lucas deluged the voters with pamphlet addresses and letters designed as much to educate them in correct political principles as to advance his own candidacy. These tracts were republished by Lucas in a collected edition in 1751, under the title *The Political Constitutions of Great Britain and Ireland*, and in the writer's view this is one of the most important but neglected Irish political works of the eighteenth century. It is true that Lucas's writings lack the weight of Molyneux or the stylistic brilliance of Swift, and not infrequently tend to be overwritten. Yet in an age when an emotive and overblown style was prevalent, Lucas was by no means the worst offender, and those who take the trouble to persevere will find that the *Political Constitutions* is actually quite readable, as well as being systematically laid out and containing much matter of interest. The work is composed of lengthy prefatory material, twenty election addresses and six letters to the citizens of Dublin, all written by Lucas, together with selected reprints from Lucas's election newspaper, the *Censor*, many of the latter articles being written by other authors.²²

It must be stressed that Lucas's election campaign was not confined merely to municipal matters, as has sometimes been implied,²³ but encompassed much larger political issues.

21 Sean Murphy, 'Charles Lucas and the Dublin election of 1748-9', *Parliamentary History*, 2, 1983, pages 94-5.

22 Lucas, *The Political Constitutions of Great Britain and Ireland Asserted and Vindicated*, London 1751, two volumes continuously paginated and bound as one; copies of this and others publications of Lucas can now be accessed online at <http://books.google.com>.

23 Patrick Kelly, 'William Molyneux and the Spirit of Liberty in Eighteenth-Century Ireland', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 3, 1988, page 138.

Thus his election addresses contain an exhaustive analysis of the British constitution with its balance between the three estates of king, lords and commons, and stress the ever present danger of degeneration due to corruption. This analysis largely follows traditional Whig and 'Commonwealthman' patterns of thought, and among the authorities listed by Lucas were Locke, Coke and Acherley.²⁴

However, it was in his attempt to demonstrate that the British constitution was also the birthright of the Irish that Lucas was to be most controversial, and indeed original, making a distinct but still not adequately recognised contribution to the development of Irish nationalist thought. In his tenth address of 13 January 1749 Lucas rejected the claim that Ireland was a conquered colony dependent on the government and parliament of Great Britain, and praised William Molyneux as 'that strenuous assertor of truth and liberty'. In the course of his summary of Molyneux's *Case of Ireland*, Lucas made a radical statement which eventually would land him in serious trouble with the authorities:

. . . it must now be confessed that there was no general rebellion in Ireland, since the first British invasion, that was not raised or fomented by the oppression, instigation, evil influence or connivance of the English.²⁵

In his eleventh address of 31 January 1749 Lucas went even further in his critique of the misconduct of 'our mother-nation, England', a task he undertook 'with the utmost reluctance' and without prejudice, as he possessed 'neither consanguinity or affinity, nor even fosterhood, with any Irish family in the kingdom'. He claimed that though the native Irish in medieval times had shown their willingness to submit to English law, they had been treated as badly 'as the Spaniards used the Mexicans, or as inhumanly as the English now treat their slaves in America'. He concluded with an attack on the declaratory act of 1720, which he saw as

24 Lucas, *Political Constitutions*, pages 1-109.

25 Same, pages 112-14, 123.

evidence of the increase of the ‘destructive excrescence of English power’, signalling clearly that his words had a contemporary as well as a historical import.²⁶

‘National Rights’

A *Censor* article published in June 1749, almost certainly written by Lucas himself, provides additional evidence of a more mellow and sympathetic attitude towards Gaelic culture. Illustrating abuses of power, the article cited the example of a man said to have been imprisoned by a lord mayor of Dublin merely for speaking Irish, following it with the case of ‘one McCurtin, an inoffensive, honest, poor man,’ allegedly committed to Newgate for ‘writing an harmless, silly book’ by Sir Richard Cox, the Tory lord chancellor and lord chief justice during Queen Anne’s reign.²⁷ Now the latter reference was in fact to Hugh MacCurtin, the Gaelic poet, antiquary and former active Jacobite, who as he came from a part of Clare close to Ballingaddy almost certainly would have been known personally by Lucas. In fact it has been intriguingly suggested that MacCurtin may have been a tutor to Lucas in his youth, and could have helped form his anti-English view of Irish history.²⁸ Although Lucas did not press his ideas concerning the treatment of the native Irish further - indeed it is remarkable that he advanced them at all given his Protestant prejudices - he was more than hinting at the existence of an inclusive Irish nation transcending the Anglican and Dissenter sections of the population, and having a common interest in resisting English domination, even if he was not prepared to concede that all sections should possess a complete equality of civil rights.

One contemporary observer ascribed the increased politicisation of Dublin citizens to the events of 1749,

²⁶ Lucas, *Political Constitutions*, pages 132-4, 143.

²⁷ *Censor*, 24 June 1749, in Lucas, *Political Constitutions*, page 466.

²⁸ Vincent Morley, Hugh MacCurtin: Eighteenth-Century Poet and Antiquary, unpublished M Phil thesis, UCD 1992, pages 75-7, 117.

specifically mentioning that ‘national rights’ had been added to the agenda for discussion.²⁹ It seems difficult to deny therefore that Lucas’s political ideology was nationalist, and it is hardly ‘anachronistic’ to claim so.³⁰ Indeed as much as the money bill dispute of 1753-6, the Lucas affair of 1748-9 marked a watershed, for both episodes showed that a growing number of Irish Protestants were prepared to accept the existence of distinct Irish interests whose defence required that British domination be resisted. Furthermore, the strength of Lucas’s denunciation of English misgovernment in Ireland, and his not unsympathetic portrayal of the native Irish, justify the conclusion that he represented an important pivotal stage in the transition from Anglo-Irish or Protestant constitutional nationalism to the more radical and inclusive republican separatism of the United Irishmen.³¹

In this connection it is significant that Lucas exerted a considerable influence on the radical and republican James Napper Tandy,³² while Theobald Wolfe Tone hoped in 1796 that if a republic was achieved, a pantheon might be constructed peopled by figures such as Molyneux, Swift and Lucas, ‘all good Irishmen’.³³ Despite his frequently and often fulsomely expressed attachment to the Hanoverians and the British system of constitutional monarchy, Lucas revealed an

29 A Freeman [James Digges La Touche?], *A Short but True History of the Rise, Progress and Happy Suppression of Several Late Insurrections . . . in Ireland*, London and Dublin 1760, pages 16-17.

30 Sean Connolly, book review in *History Ireland*, 3(3), 1995, page 58.

31 Sean Murphy, ‘Irish Republicanism Before the United Irishmen’, unpublished article, 1998, page 10.

32 James Kelly, ‘Napper Tandy: Radical and Republican’, in James Kelly and Uáit ear Mac Gearailt, Editors, *Dublin and Dubliners*, Dublin 1990, page 2.

33 W T W Tone, Editor, *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone, Founder of the United Irish Society . . . Written by Himself*, 2, Washington 1826, page 41.

underlying respect for a rival form of government when he wrote that the British system ‘has more of the true republic in its composition than any of those that now bear the name of republic’.³⁴ Lucas’s pivotal role in the transition to republican separatism becomes clearer still if we look at his evolving views on the question of how far Catholicism was to be tolerated, which subject was also addressed directly in his election publications.

Lucas and Catholicism I

In a tract dated 18 August 1749, which took the form of a letter to the citizens of Dublin, Lucas moved from municipal matters to divest himself in a more personal than usual way of some thoughts on Catholicism and religious and political differences in general.³⁵ He observed that he had been variously represented by his enemies as a Tory, Jacobite or High Church man, and also as a Whig, Low Church man or Presbyterian who ‘could roast or broil papists’. Noting that ecclesiastical government was the only difference between his (Anglican) creed and that of the Presbyterians, he then specifically discussed the position of Catholics, but in terms more tolerant than those he had employed in the Barber’s Letters of 1747. He again claimed that he pitied rather than condemned the religious errors of the ‘papists or Romanists’, and had the popes not claimed temporal power, he would ‘know no difference between the civil rights of a papist and a Protestant’. Hence he believed that Catholics should be free to worship according to their consciences, and should be compelled only to pay ‘due allegiance to the civil constitution’. Lucas concluded his religious reflections by stating that all subjects, ‘whether papist or Protestant, Jew or gentile’, should have ‘the full protection of the law’ and the

34 Lucas, *Political Constitutions*, page xvi.

35 Same, pages 424-48.

liberty to dispose of their persons and property as they chose, subject to the just laws of God and man.³⁶

Expressions of support for religious toleration were commonly made by the most virulently bigoted Protestants of the period, but Lucas's comments in this letter show that he had undoubtedly modified his position since 1747. While not committing himself to a call for their repeal, he clearly implied that penal laws obliging Catholics and other non-Anglicans to deny their religion or limiting their property rights were unjust, and that all that should be required of them was acceptance of the civil constitution. These were very close to the expressed beliefs of the leading Catholic spokesman, Charles O'Connor of Belanagare, whose pamphlet in defence of Lucas we will examine shortly. While not in any way proclaiming Lucas as a champion of oppressed Catholics, which he certainly was not, it is necessary to point out that the standard view of him as an ultra-Protestant bigot should be revised. Certainly there is no evidence that he was an uncritical supporter of the penal code, or that he held so crude a belief as that all Catholics were potential murderers of Protestants sanctioned by papal benediction.

Charles O'Connor of Belanagare

The Dublin by-election of 1748-9 generated an extraordinary paper war, with Lucas himself contributing in the region of a quarter of a million words and up to two hundred pamphlets being published by supporters and opponents. Among Lucas's opponents in the pamphlet warfare were Reverend William Henry, rector of Urney and later dean of Killaloe, and Sir Richard Cox, a grandson and namesake of the above mentioned Tory lord chancellor and lord chief justice. Henry and Cox were two robustly Protestant individuals who were uninhibited in their attacks on Catholicism and who viewed Lucas as a threat to the

³⁶ Lucas, *Political Constitutions*, pages 442-4.

Protestant interest. Henry declared that the violence of the Jacobite rebels was not so dangerous as Lucas's attempts to create disunity between Great Britain and Ireland, and he equated Lucas's doctrines with those of the 'popish' rebels of 1641. Henry also stated that the dependence of Ireland upon Great Britain was 'the greatest happiness and blessing', and that anyone who doubted this need only look back to the barbarity of ancient Ireland, when 'the whole island seemed rather to be an hell of devils, than an habitation of men'.³⁷ Clearly enraged by the Censor attack on his grandfather, Cox likewise equated Lucas's doctrines with those of the 1641 rebels and warned of the dangers of 'meddling with the dependency of Ireland upon Britain'. Cox went on to accuse Lucas of being a 'pupil of McCurtin, Sullivan and Carte', and alleged more scurrilously that he must be 'the offspring of an Irish popish priest' and an agent of the Pretender.³⁸ Henry and Cox, it is submitted, were true representatives of the kind of extreme Protestant bigotry usually attributed to Lucas, and it is significant that in 1749 they were to be found in opposition to him.

Charles O'Connor of Belanagare was sufficiently interested in the Dublin election controversy to pen a response to Henry and Cox and in defence of Lucas, which was issued anonymously and dated 30 September 1749.³⁹ Commencing with some complimentary remarks concerning Lucas, whom he described as 'an ornament to his country and to human nature', O'Connor moved on to attack 'the drivelling author' Henry, and also Cox, 'the most abandoned scribbler from Cork'. Posing as a Protestant, O'Connor devoted the greater

37 W Britanno-Hibernus [Rev William Henry], *An Appeal to the People of Ireland*, 2nd Edition, Dublin 1749, pages 6-8, 11.

38 Anthony Litten [Sir Richard Cox], *The Cork Surgeon's Antidote Against the Dublin Apothecary's Poison*, Dublin 1749, no 2, page 5, no 6, pages 4-5, 8, 18.

39 [Charles O'Connor of Belanagare], *A Counter-Appeal to the People of Ireland*, Dublin 1749.

part of his pamphlet to a brief outline of the history of ancient and medieval Ireland, in which he rejected Henry's hostile depiction and was at pains to show that the country had then possessed a system of government which enshrined 'true essential liberty'. The pamphlet closed with an exhortation to the voters of Dublin to elect the 'champions of liberty' to 'the grand council of the nation'.⁴⁰

Yet this apparently strong support for Lucas appears to be undermined if not entirely negated by comments in a letter attributed to O'Connor, which was dated 28 October 1749 and addressed to 'Civicus', the pseudonym of his Dublin relative Michael Reilly:

Your hints are friendly and demand many thanks, but I am by no means interested, nor is any of our unfortunate people, in this affair of Lucas, into which we are dragged by violent and wanton malevolence. I have even some disgust to Lucas on account of his Barber's Letters; a true patriot would not have betrayed such malice to such unfortunate slaves as we.⁴¹

As a matter of fact, this letter is a fabrication. None of O'Connor's genuine correspondence of the 1740s, such as has yet been discovered, contains any reference to Lucas. What happened was that O'Connor's grandson and biographer, Reverend Dr Charles O'Connor, librarian at Stowe, took a genuine letter from Reilly to O'Connor and recast and embellished it as a letter written by his subject, in order to minimise his support for Lucas. A section of Reilly's letter, dated October 1749, did contain the following critical but not completely dismissive comments concerning Lucas, which formed the basis of the fabrication:

Indeed the greatest aversion I have to him [Lucas] proceeds from his Barber's Letters, for a true patriot

40 [O'Connor], *Counter-Appeal*, pages 5, 7, 9, 11, 14.

41 Quoted in Rev Charles O'Connor DD, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Late Charles O'Connor of Belanagare*, Dublin [1796], page 212.

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would not betray such malice as he has shown in those papers. His behaviour at that time makes a blot in his character that we can never overlook, otherwise I could wish him success.⁴²

In a further letter of 21 April 1750 Reilly mentioned to O'Connor that it would be worth his while to read Lucas's eleventh address, which was written 'in a bold intrepid spirit'.⁴³

It will be recalled that in his eleventh address Lucas had accused the English of treating the native Irish in an inhuman fashion and of refusing to give them the benefit of English laws in medieval times. Catholics would naturally view the author of such writings sympathetically, although they might be inclined to go further and point out that this mistreatment still continued in the eighteenth century, with the full participation of Irish Protestants. With the notable exceptions of the Barber's anti-Catholic propaganda in 1747 and an urgent sense of grievance over the penal laws, Lucas and O'Connor therefore had a significant amount in common. It would not be unreasonable to conclude that this common ground and an emergent sense of national solidarity caused O'Connor to support Lucas, and that his attitude was shared by other Irish Catholics.

Matthew O'Connor, who was aware of his brother Reverend Dr O'Connor's fabrications, was later to suggest that though the Barber's Letters were 'a wanton attack upon a fallen people', Lucas 'was no real abettor of intolerance, but might have found it necessary to shield himself by pretended hostility to the Catholics against the imputation of popery'.⁴⁴ Now while this explanation of the Barber's attacks may seem to err on the side of charity, Matthew O'Connor's is a near-

42 Civicus [Michael Reilly] to O'Connor, 15 August-12 October 1749, Royal Irish Academy, Stowe MS B I 1.

43 Same to same, 21 April 1750.

44 Matthew O'Connor, *History of the Irish Catholics from the Settlement in 1691*, Dublin 1813, pages 236-7.

contemporary opinion which deserves much greater respect than that of his dishonest brother.

Despite the suppression of Reverend Dr O'Connor's memoirs of his grandfather, undoubtedly because of his own and others' realisation that he had gone too far in tampering with documents,⁴⁵ copies of the work remained available and undoubtedly influenced the tendency of later historians to portray Lucas as a crudely anti-Catholic bigot. Thus when describing Lucas as 'virulently and aggressively anti-Catholic', Lecky referred to the very page of Plowden which quoted in full the letter concerning Lucas fabricated by Reverend Dr O'Connor.⁴⁶ The inclusion of the fabricated letter in the 1980 edition of Charles O'Connor's correspondence⁴⁷ has meant that it continues to influence the unwary, and indeed it is cited in a recent authoritative history of the Catholic question.⁴⁸ Although informed that it is not authentic, the editors unaccountably have decided to retain an abridged version of the letter in question in the latest edition of Charles O'Connor's correspondence.⁴⁹ Other letters attributed to O'Connor may also be distorted or fabricated and caution is advised when using the publications in question.

45 Charles O'Connor SJ, *The Early Life of Charles O'Connor . . . of Belanagare, and the Beginning of the Catholic Revival in Ireland in the Eighteenth Century*, 1930, typescript, National Library of Ireland, pages iii-v.

46 Lecky, *History of Ireland*, 2, pages 205-6; Francis Plowden, *An Historical Review of the State of Ireland*, London 1803, 1, page 302.

47 C C Ward and R E Ward, Editors, *The Letters of Charles O'Connor of Belanagare*, 1, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1980, pages 4-5.

48 Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: the Catholic Question 1690-1830*, Dublin 1992, pages 51-2.

49 R E Ward, J F Wrynn SJ and C C Ward, Editors, *Letters of Charles O'Connor of Belanagare: a Catholic Voice in Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, Washington DC 1988, page 3.

Burke and Lucas

There exists a further indication that those with pro-Catholic sympathies may have been inclined to support Lucas in 1749, in the form of five articles in the *Censor*, which could be the work of the young Edmund Burke.⁵⁰ The articles, some of which were signed with the letter 'B', a signature believed to have been used by Burke in his own journal, the *Reformer*, exhibit a lofty tone and support Lucas in a relatively cautious and moderate way. In what can only be a reference to anti-Catholic legislation, 'B' counselled that if 'penal laws' had been made for 'turbulent and seditious times', the wise judge would suffer them 'to be forgot in happier days and under a prudent administration'.⁵¹ These *Censor* articles were first identified as Burke's in 1923 by the Samuelses, but a 1953 article by Vincitorio blasting Lucas as a bigoted demagogue whom Burke could never have supported swung the balance against the great conservative being the author.⁵²

The present writer believes that there is substantial evidence to show that Burke may have composed the 'B' *Censor* articles, and if he was not in fact the author, then this would bring into question the hitherto accepted attribution to him of the *Reformer* articles similarly signed.⁵³ It should be noted that Burke's biographer Lock has now made a plausible case that Robert Hellen (1725-1793) is the most likely author of the *Censor* articles, principally on the grounds that he is

50 *Censor*, 22 July, 5 August, 26 August 1749, 28 April, 5 May 1750, in Lucas, *Political Constitutions*, pages 487-91, 501-5, 517-21, 563-72.

51 *Censor*, 5 May 1750, in Lucas, *Political Constitutions*, page 571.

52 A P I and A W Samuels, *The Early Life, Correspondence and Writings of . . . Edmund Burke*, Cambridge 1923, pages 389-95; G L Vincitorio, 'Edmund Burke and Charles Lucas', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 68, 1953, pages 1,047-55.

53 Sean Murphy, 'Burke and Lucas: an Authorship Problem Re-examined', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 1, 1986, pages 143-56.

identified as such in a manuscript table of contents referring to a rare reprint of the articles located in Cambridge University Library.⁵⁴ Although missing the Cambridge attribution, the present writer had also considered Hellen as a possible author of the *Censor* pieces, noting the uncertainty concerning his responsibility for other publications with which his name has been associated.⁵⁵

Lock also suggests that the 'B' *Reformer* articles may have been written by Beaumont Brennan and not by Burke,⁵⁶ so that his name must be added to the list of candidates for authorship of the *Censor* articles. This particular authorship problem remains unsolved, but the point stands that 'B' of the *Censor*, whoever he was, was a moderate who voiced apparent criticism of the penal laws and was prepared to support Lucas.

Parliamentary Condemnation

Even as Charles O'Connor's contribution to the election paper war was being published, the controversy surrounding Lucas's candidacy was coming to a head. The Lord Lieutenant, the Earl of Harrington, pointed in his opening speech to parliament on 10 October 1749 to Lucas's 'audacious attempt to create a jealousy between the two kingdoms'. Following a complaint by Sir Richard Cox, the House of Commons mounted an investigation of Lucas's election writings, and he was called before the house for questioning on 12 October and ordered to re-appear on the 16th.⁵⁷ With courage that can only be admired, or perhaps exceptional foolhardiness, Lucas returned to the issues of legislative independence and the causes of Irish rebellions even as parliament deliberated on his case. In the *Censor* of 14 October he sought support for his position by quoting from a

54 F P Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 1, Oxford 1998, pages 61-2.

55 Murphy, 'Burke and Lucas', page 149.

56 Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 1, pages 56-7.

57 *Journals of the House of Commons of Ireland*, Dublin 1796-1800 Edition, 5, pages 9, 12-13.

work by James Anderson DD, which claimed that Ireland was a distinct kingdom, that Catholics had believed they were taking arms in their own defence in 1641, and that both sides had been guilty of atrocities in the ensuing war.⁵⁸

The belief that Catholics had undertaken a completely unprovoked and indefensible massacre of Protestants in 1641 was deeply ingrained in the minds of most Irish Protestants and was a recurrent theme in sermons and tracts of the eighteenth century.⁵⁹ By associating himself with Anderson's comparatively liberal views on 1641, Lucas showed that he was unrepentant in what his opponents considered to be his justification of Irish rebellions, and this cannot have done his cause any good. Furthermore, Lucas's stance on 1641 and Irish rebellions are further evidence that he was not at the extreme end of the anti-Catholic spectrum.

On 16 October Lucas returned to the parliament house in College Green accompanied by a large crowd, where he maintained an attitude of defiance before the House of Commons. After Lucas had been ordered out, the house voted that certain of his election publications were seditious and promoted insurrection, that he had justified past rebellions and reflected scandalously on the lord lieutenant and parliament, and that he was an enemy to his country and should be imprisoned in Newgate. Fearing that his angry followers would attempt a violent uprising and that his health would not withstand imprisonment, Lucas yielded to the pleas of friends and fled by boat to the Isle of Man.⁶⁰

Government sensitivity to the nationalist sentiments stirred up by Lucas's agitation is demonstrated by Harrington's

58 *Censor*, 14 October 1749, in Lucas, *Political Constitutions*, pages 555-6; the work by Anderson from which Lucas quoted is entitled *Royal Genealogies*, London 1732.

59 T C Barnard, 'The Uses of 23 October 1641 and Irish Protestant Celebrations', *English Historical Review*, 106, 1991, pages 889-920.

60 *Journals House of Commons Ireland*, 5, pages 12-14; Murphy, 'Dublin election 1748-9', pages 103-4.

decision to return for correction to England the king's answer to a House of Commons address, on the grounds that the words 'and Ireland' had been omitted inadvertently after 'Great Britain'. Harrington stated that he would have preferred to spare his majesty this trouble, but 'at a time when questions relating to the dependency of this kingdom have been so maliciously and mischievously discussed in a multitude of public writings', sending the answer to the House of Commons as it stood would cause 'invidious comments' to be made, 'as well within doors as without'.⁶¹

The removal of Lucas from the scene was probably a satisfactory outcome so far as the government and his enemies were concerned, and polling commenced in his absence on 24 October. Although Lucas's running mate La Touche won one of the two parliamentary seats, he was later to be unseated by the House of Commons on the grounds of electoral 'irregularities' and the representation of Dublin city therefore remained safely in the hands of the aldermanic party for the time being.⁶² Just before polling commenced, the Catholic clergy had issued directions from the pulpits in Dublin forbidding their flock 'to join in any mob, tumult or meeting . . . or even to appear about the place of election, as they have no manner of concern therein'.⁶³ This injunction would appear to indicate that though deprived by law of the franchise, some Dublin Catholics at least were taking as keen an interest in the election as was Charles O'Conor of Belanagare, and it is likely that election gatherings contained significant numbers of Catholic tradesmen, journeymen and apprentices.

61 Harrington to Bedford, 31 October 1749, National Archives, Kew, State Papers Ireland, 63/411, folios 191-2, NLI microfilm.

62 *Journals House of Commons Ireland*, 5, pages 31-56; Murphy, 'Dublin election 1748-9', pages 106-7.

63 Faulkner's *Dublin Journal*, 24 October 1749.

THE
POLITICAL CONSTITUTIONS
OF
Great-Britain and Ireland,
Asserted and vindicated;

THE
CONNECTION and COMMON INTEREST
of both Kingdoms, demonftrated;
AND THE

GRIEVANCES, which *each*, more especially the *later*,
with it's *Capital*, has fuffered, under *oppressive* and
tyrannical Governors, *usurping* and *lawless Magiftrates*,
dependent and *iniquitous Judges*, and *spurious* and *cor-*
rupt Parlements,

Set forth in feveral

ADDRESSES and LETTERS

TO THE
FREE-CITIZENS of *DUBLIN*;

First delivered and publifhed with the fole Intent to *de-*
teft public Abufes, to revive the ORIGINAL PRINCIPLES
of the POLICY, and to *refore* the CONSTITUTIONAL
FREEDOM of ELECTIONS, in general, *thofe*
of MEMBERS of PARLEMENT, in particular;

Now republifhed as a *cautionary Information* to the City of
LONDON, and for the *juftification* of the AUTHOR,

C H A R L E S L U C A S,

A FREE-CITIZEN of *Dublin*, *while Dublin was*, now an *Exile* for
the Caufe of TRUTH and the LIBERTY of his Country.

To which are added,

The CENSOR: OF, the CITIZENS JOURNAL.
AND

AN APPENDIX, containing the ADDRESS of the MERCHANTS
and TRADERS, Citizens of *DUBLIN*, to his
MAJESTY, and the DECLARATIONS and RESOLUTIONS
of feveral of the free and loyal Corporations of that City.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

V O L. I.

L O N D O N :

Printed in the YEAR, M,DCC,LII.

Title page of collected edition of Lucas's writings
relating to the Dublin election of 1748-9

Exile

Following his flight to the Isle of Man, Lucas made his way to the English mainland, and in December 1749 the Earl of Orrery reported to a correspondent that he was at Liverpool.⁶⁴ Shortly thereafter, Lucas proceeded to London and spent the early months of 1750 monitoring affairs in Dublin, this time writing under a pseudonym.⁶⁵ He laid his case before one of the Secretaries of State (probably Bedford), but did not receive any positive response. Lucas then turned to the Corporation of London for support, and on 17 March 1751 presented a manuscript copy of the dedication to the forthcoming collected edition of his election publications of 1748-9 to the Lord Mayor of London, Alderman Cockayne.⁶⁶

Now aged 37 and ‘rendered a citizen of the world at large’ by his misfortunes, Lucas ‘threw aside the political pen’ and decided to travel to the Continent for the purpose of securing medical qualifications.⁶⁷ He studied first at Paris under Petit and then went on to the University of Rheims, where he graduated MD on 20 October 1751. He next visited ‘the principal baths and mineral waters in Germany’ in order to analyse their medicinal and chemical properties. The University of Leyden, renowned for its atmosphere of religious toleration, was at this period the fashionable resort of British and Irish students, and Lucas rounded off his studies of physic by graduating MD at this institution on 20 December 1752.⁶⁸ The title of his Leyden thesis, written in Latin, was *De*

64 Orrery to William Cowper, 10 December 1749, Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Fifth Report*, Appendix, page 359.

65 A Gentleman of the Middle Temple [Lucas?], *A Critical Review of the Liberties of British Subjects*, London 1750.

66 Lucas, *An Appeal to the Commons and Citizens of London*, London 1756, pages 2, 18, 73.

67 Same, page 1.

68 R W I Smith, *English-Speaking Students of Medicine at the University of Leyden*, London 1932, page 145.

Gangrena et Sphachelo and it was dedicated to his patron Thomas Adderley.⁶⁹

On his return to London in 1753, Lucas found that the lord mayor had taken no action on his earlier appeal, and indeed insisted on returning to him the manuscript dedication and printed collection of election publications. Further approaches to other members of the Corporation proved fruitless, so in 1756 Lucas issued a public appeal to the commons and citizens of London in which he bitterly denounced the inaction of the officers of their Corporation.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, a new outbreak of political turbulence was occurring in Ireland, in the shape of conflict between the Irish administration and parliament during the years 1753-6 over the question of whether parliament had the right to allocate surpluses in the treasury without prior royal consent.⁷¹ Lucas followed these events closely in London and was once more moved to take up 'the political pen'. Commenting on the fact that many of the MPs who had stigmatised him as an enemy to his country in 1749 were now using his arguments against the government, he observed drily, 'Since the days of the Irish apostle Patrick, no conversion like this was known in the island of saints'. However, he did not believe that these were true patriots, and the dispute 'was no more than a struggle between a few families for power and places'. Lucas also pointed out that by embracing his political doctrines and accepting that the parliament of Ireland was 'a free and competent legislature for that kingdom', the 'mock-patriots'

69 Lucas, *Dissertatio Medica Inauguralis de Gangraena et Sphacelo*, Leyden 1752 (copy obtained from Library, University of Leyden).

70 Same, *Appeal to the Commons and Citizens of London*, pages 19-23.

71 Declan O'Donovan, 'The Money Bill Dispute of 1753', in Thomas Bartlett and D W Hayton, Editors, *Penal Era and Golden Age: Essays in Irish History, 1690-1800*, Belfast 1979, pages 55-87.

had effectively acquitted him of the charges they had formerly laid against him.⁷²

Medical Career

Throughout his medical career Lucas was to lay great stress on the curative powers of water. His investigation of spas on the Continent has already been mentioned, and on his return to England he visited Bath and other such centres. The results of his researches formed the basis of a three-volume *Essay on Waters* published by the leading London printer Andrew Millar in 1756.⁷³ The first volume dealt with simple waters, the second with cold, medicated waters and the third with natural baths. There is disappointingly little on Irish spas and waters in Lucas's essay. However, Lucas is credited with having been the first to analyse the sulphur well at Lisdoonvarna in his native Clare in July 1740,⁷⁴ and while a commercial spa was only established in the town in the nineteenth century, it remains the oldest centre of its kind in Ireland.

Samuel Johnson reviewed Lucas's *Essay on Waters* in terms which were perhaps surprisingly favourable:

The Irish ministers drove him from his native country by a proclamation in which they charged him with crimes of which they never intended to be called to the proof, and oppressed him by methods equally irresistible by guilt and innocence. Let the man thus driven into exile for having been the friend of his country be received in every other place as a confessor of liberty, and let the tools of power be taught in time that they may rob but cannot impoverish.

⁷² Lucas, *Appeal to the Commons and Citizens of London*, pages 8-9, 17; *Charles Lucas's Prophecy Concerning the Mock-Patriots of Ireland*, London 1756, page 4.

⁷³ Same, *An Essay on Waters*, 3 Parts, London 1756.

⁷⁴ Dr John Ruttly, *An Essay Towards a History of the Mineral Waters of Ireland*, Dublin 1757, page 58; Ruttly came to dislike Lucas intensely.

Coming from the man whose best-remembered comment on patriotism is that it was ‘the last refuge of a scoundrel’, this was praise indeed, and Boswell quoted this review as proof of Johnson’s ‘patriotic spirit’. Elsewhere in the review, however, Johnson expressed scepticism concerning the curative effects of cold bathing.⁷⁵

Lucas’s genius for controversy manifested itself also in his study of spas, and he became involved in a public quarrel with the medical faculty at Bath concerning its professional methods.⁷⁶ Lucas was admitted a licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians of London on 25 June 1759, and he appears to have established a fairly successful medical practice in London, though it is highly unlikely that he ever earned anything like £3,000 per annum, as an anonymous supporter later claimed.⁷⁷

One satisfied patient of Lucas was the Earl of Charlemont, who recalled that he had been afflicted by ‘a violent rheumatism’, which for two and a half years disabled him ‘from every sort of business’, during which time he was ‘an absolute cripple’. Having gone through ‘an excruciating course of pains and physicians’, Charlemont stated that at length he was ‘restored to health by the tender care and effectual abilities of the excellent Dr Lucas’.⁷⁸

While only a small portion of Lucas’s original correspondence has survived, we have one fascinating letter written from London in 1756 and giving medical advice to a patient, Richard, Lord Boyle, son of Henry Boyle, First Earl of

⁷⁵ *Boswell’s Life of Johnson*, G B Hill Editor, 1, Oxford 1934, pages 91, 311.

⁷⁶ *Letters of Dr Lucas and Dr Oliver, Occasioned by a Physical Confederacy Discovered at Bath*, London 1757.

⁷⁷ William Munk, *The Roll of the Royal College of Physicians of London*, 2, Second Edition, London 1878, page 224; *A Vindication of the Corporations of the City of Dublin respecting . . . Dr Charles Lucas*, Dublin [1766?], page 13.

⁷⁸ HMC, *Charlemont Manuscripts*, 1, pages 8-9.

Shannon, and himself future Second Earl. Lucas's recommendations seem eminently sensible in the main, including good diet, exercise, rest, a comparatively light regime of medication and, inevitably, guidance on making best use of the resources of major European spas. Delicate matters were obviously his lordship's alcohol intake and amorous activities, which Lucas suggested should be moderated, with 'Ceres and Bacchus . . . to be sparingly used and Venus laid aside'.⁷⁹

Return and Election to Parliament

In Lucas's absence the campaign for the reform of Dublin Corporation had continued, with matters being brought to a head by a riot in the city in December 1759, inspired by a rumour of an impending union between Britain and Ireland.⁸⁰ The aldermanic party now realised that some measure of reform was unavoidable, and in February 1760 a bill was presented to the House of Commons. The bill speedily passed all stages and passed into law having received the royal assent in May. The main impact of the municipal reform act was to dilute the power of the aldermen and correspondingly increase that of the sheriffs and commons.⁸¹ Perhaps predictably, Lucas was unimpressed and dismissed the act as 'a pitiful palliative for some abominable oppressions in the city, agreed upon to silence the clamour of the abused citizens'.⁸²

The more relaxed political conditions immediately following the accession of George III in 1760 encouraged

79 Lucas to Lord Boyle, 26 July 1756, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland D2707/A/2/11/1 (my thanks to Anthony Malcomson for drawing this letter to my attention).

80 Sean Murphy, 'The Dublin Anti-Union Riot of 3 December 1759', in Gerard O'Brien, Editor, *Parliament, Politics and People*, Dublin 1989, pages 49-68.

81 Same, 'The Corporation of Dublin 1660-1760', pages 32-3.

82 Lucas, *Seasonable Advice to the Electors of Members of Parliament*, London 1760 Edition, page 32.

Lucas to think of returning to Ireland and standing again for parliament in the general election necessitated by the death of George II. In November 1760 he issued a pamphlet from London which significantly was directed firstly to the electors of Ireland and secondly to those of Dublin. Lucas enthused over the accession of a king 'born and bred a Briton' and announced that he was roused from the 'political lethargy' which formerly had seized him 'at seeing no prospect of redress of our national grievances'. The chief of these grievances he identified as the want of regular general elections at set intervals as in Britain, the practice in Ireland being for parliament to be terminated only on the death of the king or at his pleasure. While stressing that Dublin would have the first claim to his services, Lucas underlined his view of himself as a national figure by reminding the Dublin electorate that 'the representative of any part . . . is a councillor, a trustee and a guardian to the whole community'.⁸³ Having established that there would be no more legal proceedings against him, Lucas arrived back in Dublin in March 1761 to contest the general election. The contest for Dublin's two seats was again closely fought and when polling closed in May, Lucas was in second place behind the principal aldermanic candidate, the City Recorder James Grattan (father of the patriot Henry Grattan).⁸⁴

Lucas threw himself with enthusiasm into his new role as a parliamentarian, co-operating with Henry Flood and others of the minority patriot party to maintain an active opposition. True to his election pledge, Lucas's principal aim was to secure a limitation of the duration of Irish parliaments by securing mandatory general elections every seven years as in Britain. While publicly supporting a limitation bill many MPs privately opposed such a measure, no doubt because they did not relish the inconvenience and expense of more frequent elections. Working with other patriots including Edward

83 Lucas, *Seasonable Advice*, pages 11, 23, 26, 35, 63.

84 Faulkner's *Dublin Journal*, 25 April-9 May 1761.

Sexten Pery and Flood, Lucas attempted to have a limitation bill passed in the parliamentary sessions of 1761-2 and 1763-4, but although legislation got as far as the drafting stage it failed to secure passage.⁸⁵

Among Lucas's other legislative concerns was of course supply of medicines, and the 1736 act having lapsed he introduced a bill in January 1762 providing for new controls on the preparation and sale of drugs. Although a number of apothecaries were still opposed, the bill was approved by parliament and the resulting legislation passed in April became known as the 'Lucas Act'.⁸⁶

Health and family matters were now to intervene to divert Lucas's attention from his political duties. Lucas's first wife Anne having passed away before his exile in 1749, he married his second wife Penelope Catherwood at St James, Westminster, in March 1760.⁸⁷ In the Autumn of 1764 Lucas and Penelope travelled to Bath as both his and his wife's health required taking a course of waters there.⁸⁸ The stay in England proved to be an extended one, and Penelope died at Bristol Hot Wells on 2 August 1765.⁸⁹ Returning to Ireland, Lucas recorded his grief at the loss of his wife in affecting but typically florid eighteenth-century style:

She that was the sum of worldly happiness to me, she who could blunt the keenest edge of adversity, and sweeten the bitter cup of life, is not much more than a month fled from

85 *Journals House of Commons Ireland*, 7, pages 14, 82, 186, 288; Halifax to Egremont, 4, 8, 11 December 1761, and Northumberland to Halifax, 11 and 28 February 1764, *Calendar of Home Office Papers*, 1760-65, pages 84, 85-86, 388, 391.

86 *Journals House of Commons Ireland*, 7, pages 110, 117, 172; 1 George III, chapter 14, *Statutes of Ireland*, 7, pages 848-58; T P Kirkpatrick, *Henry Quin MD*, Dublin 1919, pages 27-8.

87 IGI Individual Record, <http://www.familysearch.org>, accessed 6 August 2009.

88 Lucas, *A Third Address to the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, Sheriffs, Commons and Citizens of Dublin*, Dublin 1766, pages 55-62.

89 *Freeman's Journal*, 13 August 1765.

me, from calamity to which I wedded her, to a place fitter for her angelic spirit. You know that in her, Heaven fulfilled all the wishes and desires of my heart.⁹⁰

Lucas and Catholicism II

After a long period of enforced quiet, by the mid-eighteenth century Irish Catholics had begun to bestir themselves to try and secure an amelioration of the penal laws. A Catholic Committee had been founded in 1760 by Charles O'Connor of Belanagare, Dr John Curry and others, with the aim of bringing about some improvement in the legal position of Catholics.⁹¹ However, bills to confirm the right of Catholics to take mortgages on landed property failed in 1762 and 1764, largely due to renewed sectarian tensions resulting from the outbreak of the Whiteboy agrarian disturbances.⁹²

We do not have any significant commentary from Lucas on the subject of the mortgage bills, and while it would be unwise to attempt to draw any firm conclusions from silence, it can be suggested at a minimum that he was not prominent in the often frankly sectarian opposition to the measure. Accounts of the contributions to debate of other MPs have survived, including that of Sir Lucius O'Brien, member for Ennis, who proposed a compromise measure which would enable Catholics to recover money lent, while precluding 'their dominion over the lands of their debtors'.⁹³ As a fellow-Clareman and parliamentary ally, it would not be unreasonable to speculate that O'Brien's views on the Catholic question would have been close to those of Lucas, that is, showing some willingness to support relief, but apprehensive lest

90 Lucas to Mrs Heatly, 6 September 1765, HMC, *Charlemont Papers*, 1, London 1891, pages 277-78.

91 Gerard O'Brien, Editor, *Catholic Ireland in the Eighteenth Century: Collected Essays of Maureen Wall*, Dublin 1989, page 118.

92 Same, page 119.

93 Matthew O'Connor, *History of Irish Catholics*, pages 306-7.

Protestant liberties should be undermined by granting Catholics too much political power.

One reported observation by Lucas on the Munster and Ulster agrarian disturbances of the 1760s, if interpreted correctly, may indicate that he was still prone on occasion to lapse into the sectarian insecurity which he had displayed in 1747. In a contribution to a House of Commons debate in October 1763, Lucas wondered why indictments in the north were for high treason, while those in the south were only for riot and breach of the peace, the apparent implication being that Catholics were being treated more leniently than Protestants. Yet he also stated that the crimes committed in both parts of the country were precisely the same, underlining his belief in equal application of the law and continuing attachment only to lawful and 'constitutional' forms of protest.⁹⁴ Lucas was a member of the parliamentary committee appointed to enquire into the causes of agrarian disturbances in December 1765, but was not among those MPs charged with preparing legislation in the wake of the committee's report.⁹⁵ In fact, Lucas displayed much more interest in a recent military riot in Dublin in August 1765, during which Newgate Jail had been broken open by a group of soldiers, and he sought to use this outbreak to embarrass the government.⁹⁶

A useful barometer of radical Protestant attitudes towards Catholics is to be found in the newspaper the *Freeman's Journal*, which was founded in September 1763 with the dramatist Henry Brooke as its first editor and Lucas as a leading contributor. Madden asserted that despite its patriot principles, the *Freeman's Journal* was 'a fierce assailant of the religion of Roman Catholics and an incessant reviler of popish

94 [James Caldwell, Editor], *Debates Relative to the Affairs of Ireland . . . 1763 and 1764*, 1, London 1766, page 47.

95 *Journals House of Commons Ireland*, 8, pages 61, 70-1.

96 Lucas, *To the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, the Worshipful the Board of Aldermen, the Sheriffs, Commons, Citizens and Freeholders of Dublin*, Dublin 1768, pages 21-9.

priests', and while correctly pointing out that Lucas was not the founder of the paper as sometimes claimed, he nonetheless associated him with its supposed editorial policy.⁹⁷ There is no doubt that hostility towards Catholics was to be found in the columns of the paper, but many of the worst attacks were contained in letters reflecting the prejudices of the paper's mostly Protestant readership, while correspondents sympathetic towards Catholicism were sometimes given space to put their point of view.⁹⁸

There are few references to Lucas in the correspondence of Charles O'Connor of Belanagare in the 1760s. In one reference O'Connor stated in September 1763 that he 'would gladly know the *Freeman's* political plan', adding that Lucas was 'associated in the execution of it'.⁹⁹ The paucity of references to Lucas in O'Connor's correspondence in the 1760s does seem to indicate that he simply did not figure prominently in the Catholic party's concerns during this period, and certainly not as a major foe. When it is considered that the strategy of Catholics in the 1760s was to lobby and court favour from government, and that of Lucas and the patriots to protest and oppose at nearly every turn, it can be seen that conditions did not exist for a repeat of the marked convergence of interests which had occurred in 1749. It is also true that Lucas never again expressed himself with such frankness in his writings as he did in the latter year on the subjects of mistreatment of the native Irish and the causes of Irish rebellions, perhaps because his experience of exile and the constraints of his new role as an MP had rendered him more cautious on those issues at least.

There is a more positive indication that despite his perceived limitations Lucas was not held in low regard by all contemporary Catholics, in the form of some comments in a

97 Madden, *Irish Periodical Literature*, 2, pages 373-4, 388.

98 Letter of 'Homo', *Freeman's Journal*, 28 December 1765.

99 O'Connor to Curry, 15 September 1763, RIA, Stowe MS B I 1; *Letters of Charles O'Connor*, 1988 Edition, page 157.

letter of the Catholic surgeon and antiquary, Sylvester O'Halloran. Although they differed in religion, O'Halloran and Lucas shared a similar medical background, having both attended the universities of Paris and Leyden.¹⁰⁰ In a letter to Charles O'Connor of Belanagare dated February 1766, which dealt among other matters with 'oppressions' laid by Protestants on Catholics, O'Halloran concluded with an unexpectedly warm tribute to Lucas, while conceding that he must be considered an opponent of Catholicism:

I received last post a very long and a very polite letter from my old acquaintance Dr Lucas, in which he is pleased to bestow many encomiums on my work. I find the popular honours lately conferred on him have not made him forget his friends. He has even gone so far as to relate to me private anecdotes which bespeak a warm friendship. He is a stiff promoter of our coup de grace, but is in the mean an honest man as he acts from principle.¹⁰¹

The Octennial Act

Although the recently bereaved Lucas was in attendance following the opening of parliament in the Autumn of 1765, it was Flood who took the lead in this session in endeavouring to secure a limitation bill. Flood introduced a bill in January 1766 and there followed efforts to amend it, particularly by extending the length of parliaments from seven to fourteen years. The proponents of a seven-year session on the British model prevailed and Lucas was delegated by the Commons to present a septennial bill to the Lord Lieutenant. Having passed the Irish houses of parliament the bill was sent to England but was not approved by the King.¹⁰²

100 J B Lyons, *Brief Lives of Irish Doctors*, Dublin 1978, page 47.

101 O'Halloran to O'Connor, 11 February 1766, RIA., Stowe MS B 11.; J B Lyons, Editor, 'The Letters of Sylvester O'Halloran', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, 8, 1961, pages 177-8.

102 *Journals House of Commons Ireland*, 8, pages 23, 76-77.

Displaying characteristic tenacity, Lucas again took the lead in the struggle for limitation of the duration of parliaments in the session which commenced in Autumn 1767. Working now with Flood and William Ponsonby, Lucas prepared heads of another limitation bill which he presented to the Commons on 16 November, and as on previous occasions these were referred to the consideration of a committee of the whole house. Outside parliament Dublin Corporation and many of the city guilds petitioned parliament in favour of the measure. In November the Speaker and the Commons attended Lord Lieutenant Townshend with a further septennial bill, and having been approved by the Irish Privy Council it was transmitted to England in December.¹⁰³ Townshend traded off his support for the bill with promises from MPs, including a number of the patriots (excluding apparently Lucas), to support in return his proposals to augment the strength of the army in Ireland.¹⁰⁴

In February 1768 there came the good news that the King in Council had approved the limitation bill, with some alterations. The most important change was that the length of parliaments was set at eight as opposed to the seven years which applied in Britain, this being considered to be better adapted to the biennial sessions of the Irish parliament.¹⁰⁵ The House of Commons accepted the amended limitation bill, sent it to the House of Lords whose members also agreed it and on 16 February Townshend announced the royal assent to MPs and peers assembled together in the House of Lords.¹⁰⁶

The 1768 Octennial Act greatly increased the influence of public opinion on parliamentary representatives, involving as

103 *Journals House of Commons Ireland*, 8, pages 161, 186, 191, 198, 203-229.

104 Townshend to Shelburne, 12 December 1767, *Calendar of Home Office Papers*, 1766-69, pages 228-29.

105 Shelburne to Townshend, 2 February 1768, same, pages 301-02.

106 *Journals House of Commons Ireland*, 8, pages 226, 228, 229.

it did regular general elections.¹⁰⁷ Indeed the act was itself the product of public opinion, ably orchestrated outside parliament by Lucas and the patriots, and it helped pave the way for the final assault on Poyning's Law in 1782-3.¹⁰⁸ While Lucas was clearly the prime mover in the campaign which led to the Octennial Act, a recent commentator has recorded merely that the measure 'was due in part to his efforts', which tends to show that there may still be some difficulty paying the man his proper dues.¹⁰⁹

Other elements of the patriots' reform programme did not fare so well in the parliamentary session of 1767-8, for example, bills relating to the tenure of judges and better securing the liberty of the subject were not approved.¹¹⁰ An issue impacting negatively on Catholics was also the subject of intended legislation, namely, 'intrusion' and 'quarterage', sums which were levied by the guilds on Catholic merchants and traders despite their being denied full membership of the bodies. In the face of increasing Catholic willingness to test the legality of intrusion and quarterage in the courts, the guilds decided to press for legislation which would confirm the charges and put the matter beyond dispute.¹¹¹

In contrast to other issues involving Catholics in the 1760s, there is absolutely no doubt concerning Lucas's position on intrusion and quarterage, for he fully supported the right of the guilds to levy the charges. In November 1767 he introduced in the House of Commons a bill to confirm the legal right of the guilds to collect quarterage, but the bill was

107 7 George III, chapter 3, *Statutes of Ireland*, 9, page 504.

108 HMC, *Charlemont Manuscripts*, 1, pages 24-7.

109 James Kelly, 'Charles Lucas', *Multitext Project in Irish History*, http://multitext.ucc.ie/d/Charles_Lucas, accessed 9 September 2009.

110 Shelburne to Townshend, 2 February 1768, *Calendar of Home Office Papers*, 1766-69, pages 301-02.

111 O'Brien, Editor, *Essays of Maureen Wall*, pages 65-7.

rejected by the English privy council, largely due to successful lobbying by Catholics.¹¹²

Lucas published a pamphlet devoted entirely to the question of guild levies on Catholics in January 1768, which by his standards was studiously moderate. He was prepared to concede that there were 'sensible non-freemen who through mistake, but with proper attention to their own rights,' refused to pay quarterage. Lucas concluded his pamphlet by urging legislative support for the guilds on the intrusion and quarterage issue, claiming that this would assist manufactures and 'extend and secure the established religion'.¹¹³ Of course Lucas was defending the indefensible in attempting to justify intrusion and quarterage, but his position was based primarily on a desire to support the guilds, his most important political power base, and of course on a pragmatic need to satisfy his constituents, who were in the main guild members.

Final Years

Having won the Octennial Act Lucas did not rest on his laurels, and his final years were marked by even more intense conflict with the administration, continued assertion of Irish autonomy and criticism of English misgovernment. In 1768 Lucas opposed the proposed augmentation of the army in Ireland, and he also took up the case of David Blakeney, a matross in the Regiment of Artillery whom he claimed to have been victimised and sentenced to 500 lashes for daring to complain about short-pay.¹¹⁴

Lucas's relations with Townshend were probably the worst he had with any Lord Lieutenant, and his attacks on government sharpened after the controversial prorogation of

112 O'Brien, Editor, *Essays of Maureen Wall*, pages 67-8.

113 Lucas, *The Liberties and Customs of Dublin Asserted and Vindicated*, Second Edition, Dublin 1768, pages iii, iv, 48, 52-3, 64.

114 Same, *A Mirror for Courts-Martial, in Which the Complaints, Trial, Sentence and Punishment of David Blakeney are Represented and Examined with Candour*, Dublin 1768.

parliament in December 1769, as a result of its refusal to pass a money bill.¹¹⁵ Townshend was undoubtedly referring to Lucas's involvement in the Blakeney case and his hostility to military augmentation when he wrote as follows:

Here is a Dr Lucas, the Wilkes of Ireland, who has been playing the devil here and poisoning all the soldiery with his harangues and writings, but I have treated this nonsensical demagogue as he deserves, with the mob at his heels.¹¹⁶

Such lofty denunciation of Lucas still has its effect and has liberated some historians from the need to pay too much attention to the career of a figure they regard as little better than a rabble-rouser.

The parallels between the case of Ireland and the increasingly restive American colonies were clear to the patriots, and following the Boston 'massacre' in 1770 Lucas was sent an account of the incident by the townsmen.¹¹⁷ So disabled by gout that he frequently had to be carried to and from the House of Commons during his final years, Lucas died on 4 November 1771 and was buried in St Michan's Churchyard, Dublin. Lucas's son Henry and other relatives were in attendance at his funeral, as were his friends Lord Charlemont, Flood and Adderley. The mourners also included officers and many hundred brethren of the guilds and, indicating the deceased radical's now more respectable status, the Lord Mayor with representatives of the Corporation and the Vice-Provost and scholars of Trinity College.¹¹⁸

Lucas had married his third wife Elizabeth Hely in 1768 and his widow survived him by many years, being still alive as

115 Lucas, *The Rights and Privileges of Parliaments Asserted upon Constitutional Principles*, Dublin 1770, page 4 and generally.

116 Townshend to Granby, 5 April 1768, HMC, *Rutland Manuscripts*, 2, page 303.

117 *A Letter from the Town of Boston to C Lucas Esq, One of the Representatives of the City of Dublin in Parliament*, Dublin [1770].

118 *Freeman's Journal*, 5 and 9 November 1771.

late as the 1820s.¹¹⁹ Periodically prone to financial problems as we have seen, Lucas left his family in some debt, even though he possessed such substantial assets as a house in Henry Street, Dublin, and a residence in Ballybough, which of course were disposed of after his death.¹²⁰ Lucas apparently left an autobiography in manuscript, whose fate is unknown, and his son-in-law Dr Edward Foster's plan to publish a collection of his works appears to have foundered due to differences with Lucas's widow.¹²¹ The absence of a published memoir or collected or republished works is one obvious reason for the relative neglect of Lucas by historians, in contrast to those other members of the Anglo-Irish nationalist pantheon, Molyneux, Swift, Flood and Grattan. Lucas's grave still survives in St Michan's and a fine statue of him by Edward Smyth (see image on cover) can be viewed in City Hall, Dame Street. The portrait by Reynolds at the front of the present work shows Lucas holding his Leyden medical thesis.

Any evaluation of Lucas should of course refer to his medical as well as political work, and his emphasis on proper control of drugs certainly remains valid,¹²² while the health value of hydrotherapy and spas is still appreciated. Townshend's the 'Wilkes of Ireland' is perhaps the best-remembered contemporary description of Lucas, although it obscures the fact that the Irish radical's career predated that of his English counterpart. Lucas was undoubtedly a pugnacious and difficult character whose political activities must ever seem somewhat futile to devotees of power, while those drawn to oppositional politics may be more likely to regard him a little more favourably. Lucas undeniably possessed a strong measure of prejudice against Catholics, but was not quite the

119 Lucas Family, Barry Manuscripts, NLI GO MS 412, pages 66-7.

120 *Freeman's Journal*, 31 December 1771.

121 Same, 28 October 1773.

122 The Dublin headquarters of the National Drugs Advisory Board, replaced in the 1990s by the Irish Medicines Board, were called 'Charles Lucas House'.

ultra-Protestant bigot portrayed by some commentators. While in no way denying their unpleasantness, it has been shown that the Barber's Letters were not typical of Lucas, and he avoided such a nakedly sectarian tone in subsequent publications.

The degree of Lucas's emphasis on an Ireland oppressed by an external power and the strength of his denial of the country's colonial status were such that his ideology can legitimately be termed nationalist. Lucas's brand of nationalism, like that of his predecessors Molyneux and Swift, stopped short of being separatist, seeking maximum autonomy for a distinct kingdom of Ireland, which happened to share a monarch with the kingdom of Great Britain. Of course this variety of nationalism conceded full rights only to the Protestant and indeed Church of Ireland section of the population, which is why it is properly distinguished as 'Protestant' or 'Anglo-Irish' nationalism. In conclusion, just as Lucas's reputation as an intolerant bigot needs to be revised, his crucial contribution to the evolution of Irish nationalism and his pivotal role in the transition to republican separatism should also be acknowledged.¹²³

123 The present work is derived from my thesis, *The Lucas Affair: A Study of Municipal and Electoral Politics in Dublin 1742-9* (unpublished MA thesis, University College Dublin 1981), and in particular is a revision and expansion of a published article, 'Charles Lucas, Catholicism and Nationalism', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 8, 1993, pages 83-102. As my professional work as a genealogist has taken me away from specialised eighteenth-century studies I have not yet been able to complete the book-length study of Lucas advertised by my publisher Academica Press, so the present online booklet is offered by way of compensation and with apologies for the delay.

A Forgotten Patriot: Charles Lucas 1713-1771

The eighteenth-century patriot Charles Lucas is little remembered today and has not infrequently been dismissed as a minor politician and anti-Catholic bigot. Hopefully a prelude to a more detailed study, the present booklet is intended to help preserve the memory of a man by no means perfect but of sufficient worth and importance to merit our attention. Lucas's career is described from his birth in County Clare in 1713, through his first surviving written work on Kilcorney Cave and the Burren, his move to Dublin and efforts to reform the Corporation, his candidacy during the Dublin by-election of 1748-9, his condemnation by parliament and exile in Britain and Europe, his work as an apothecary and medical doctor, and following his return from exile in 1761 his parliamentary career until his death in 1771. A case is made that despite Lucas's undoubted Protestant prejudices, he was more than a mere bigot, and furthermore that his ideology was nationalist and marked a pivotal transition to republican separatism.

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