

Mary Levins-Moore (1866-1955)

Mary was the daughter of Andrew Moore and Anne Levins. She had eight sisters and one brother. All the girls used their mother's family name as well as their father's. Their family home was at Ashton House on the border of the Phoenix Park in Dublin. Her parents also owned a town house at 49 Merrion Square, from where the invitation to Mary's wedding was issued.

Mary married Thomas P. Martin at Westland Row Church, Dublin, on 16 April 1890. It was regarded as one of the most fashionable weddings of the season. The couple's first home was at Glencar, Marlborough Road, Glenageary, Co. Dublin, but in 1900 they moved to Greenbankin Monkstown, a property on five acres which provided flower, fruit and vegetable gardens a rockery, green lawns, tennis courts, a summer house and a bamboo plantation. There were trees, stables, a paddock, cowsheds and an acre or more of rough ground with two ponds connected by a tunnel, where the children loved to play.

In 1891 Mary gave birth to her first child, named Thomas Shannon after his late paternal grandfather. Her eldest daughter, Marie Helena, was born a year later. Ten more children followed. They were named Ethel, Charlie, Jack, Violet, Beatrice, Frank (known as Leo), Richard, Cecil, Desmond. The youngest, Andrew, was born in November 1907.

Tragically, Mary was widowed during her final pregnancy, when her husband, Thomas, was killed by a self-inflicted gunshot wound on March 17th, 1907. A Coroner's Jury returned a verdict of accidental death.

The young widow displayed remarkable courage and resilience, concerned for the future of her large family. She was greatly supported by her relatives among the Martin and Moore families.

Another great sorrow came at the end of 1915. Her two eldest sons, Tommy and Charlie, had volunteered for service in World War I. Her eldest daughters, Marie and Ethel, volunteered and served in the war as nurses with the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD). Both sons were wounded more than once, but on December 8 1915 Charlie was reported missing. Believing he was taken prisoner, Mary set about keeping a Diary that would bring him up to date on events he had missed when he would

eventually return home. On July 1, 1916, Mary was informed that Charlie had died of his wounds soon after his capture the previous December.

Mary suffered another sorrow in 1925, with the tragic loss of another son, Richard.

In 1937, her eldest daughter, Marie, became the foundress of the Medical Missionaries of Mary, after twenty years of struggling to bring this dream to fruition. These years of searching deeply involved her mother, who was Marie's great support. The well-known Irish missionary in Nigeria, Bishop Joseph Shanahan came to know Mary in 1920. He appointed her President of the Catholic Women's Missionary League which he had established to support the work overseas.

In 1949 the Martins sold their home at Greenbank to the Sacred Heart Sisters who established a school on that property. The family moved to St. Margaret's on Cross Avenue, Booterstown, Co. Dublin, where Mary Martin lived for the remainder of her long life.

Supplied by: Isabelle Smyth