HENRY FOXALL AND THE ARIGNA IRON WORKS

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Henry Foxall (1758-1823), an English iron founder and Methodist lay preacher, spent seven years in Ireland, from about 1788 to 1795. Although he was not Irish, and although he lived in Ireland only a short time, his experiences there provide a window into two key elements of late 18th-century Irish history: the struggle to develop Irish-owned industry, and the violent sectarian conflict that immediately preceded the Rising of 1798.

Portions of Foxall’s life, after he emigrated to the United States, are well documented. He introduced certain technological improvements in iron production into North America in the late 1790s, and earned a fortune providing ordnance to the United States Navy during the War of 1812. He was closely associated with two seminal figures in American history: President Thomas Jefferson and Bishop Francis Asbury, who represent the opposite poles of his career—his vocational life as defense contractor and his avocational life as Methodist lay preacher and philanthropist. Earlier writers who considered Foxall in the context of American military history or American religious history have paid little attention to his time in Ireland, but it is clear that his experiences at Arigna deeply influenced—even defined—much of what occurred later in his life.

Henry Foxall was born at Monmouth Forge in South Wales to English iron worker Thomas Foxall and his wife Mary Hays, the youngest of their five children. Soon after Henry’s birth, the family returned to their home in the British West Midlands, by then a smoky cauldron of iron production fueled by the astonishing technological advancements of the Industrial Revolution. Thomas and Mary Foxall were devout Methodists, perhaps converted under the preaching of John Wesley himself. Thomas became foreman at the Old Forge in West Bromwich, and the couple joined the Methodist Society at Great Barr. Thus, young Henry was raised with two expectations: that he would follow his father and brothers into the iron foundry, and that he would follow his parents into Wesleyan Methodism. The necessary religious conversion was not immediately forthcoming, however, and Henry reached adulthood without it. His iron career proceeded more smoothly, leading to seven years’ employment with Henry Cort, one of the key figures of England’s Industrial Revolution. During this time, Henry became proficient in the use of coke (instead of charcoal) to fire the iron furnace as well as with Cort’s innovative puddling and rolling tech-

Foxall seems to have left Cort about 1788, around the time that Cort’s business partner, Adam Jellicoe, was charged with fraud and embezzlement related to his term as Paymaster for the Royal Navy. Cort’s patents for several key improvements in iron manufacture reverted to the British government in partial payment of Jellicoe’s penalties and Cort was eventually bankrupt. Foxall departed for Ireland, to the Arigna Iron Works, an Irish-owned attempt to transfer the new technology, to exploit Ireland’s mineral resources and to create wealth and employment in a remote, poverty-stricken area of Connaught. The existence of a rich iron deposit in Counties Leitrim and Roscommon, in the area around Lough Allen, had been known since at least the 15th century, but various attempts to work it had met with limited success. A substantial effort occurred in the 1690s, when Captain William Slacke of Derbyshire received land in County Leitrim for his services to the English crown. With his partners John Skerret and Joseph Hall, he erected ironworks at Ballinamore and Dromod in 1695. This operation and other smaller works nearby eventually closed due to a timber shortage. By the 1760s the heavy forests of northwest Ireland had disappeared, the trees cut to produce charcoal to heat the iron furnaces were gone, and iron production ceased. A generation passed before another serious attempt was made to exploit the area’s mineral wealth.

By the 1780s, leading English founders had abandoned charcoal for coke, a hot-burning, nearly smokeless fuel created by the removal of gases from coal. Coal had been discovered two miles west of Lough Allen in 1765, a development sufficiently important to the Irish economy that Parliament appropriated funds to build roads to the site, but none were constructed and the initial colliery was abandoned. Coal was not the only resource essential for iron manufacture that was available near Lough Allen. The same layers of rock also held a 600-foot layer of clay ironstone, a substantial bed of limestone for flux, and a three-foot seam of clay usable for the manufacture of fire bricks, essential to forge and furnace construction. It required only imagination, money, and expertise to construct a modern, high technology ironworks.

In 1781, Thomas O’Reilly, an iron merchant of Dublin, convinced the Irish Parliament to grant him a bounty of £500 to manufacture iron wire and

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5 Flanagan, 21.
steel at New Holland, four miles west of Dublin on the "low road" to Lucan. At the time, O'Reilly's operation was the only commercial iron works in Ireland. Two years later, he unsuccessfully petitioned the government for more funds, as his business expanded. He built mills to produce wire and scythes, products essential to two of Ireland's leading concerns, wire for textile production equipment and scythes for the farmers. He had also made several journeys to England, where, "by large premiums and great Bounties [he] induced the most experienced Men... to engage with him and become Residents in this Kingdom and settle in Habitations he erected for their Accommodation." O'Reilly lured seven experienced, skilled English workers to his factory. Within two years, they trained more than twenty young Irishmen in the wire and steel business. Things progressed well and O'Reilly grew more ambitious. He had spent nearly £10,000 of his own money by this time, along with the Parliamentary grant, but saw greater possibilities for bringing "many other branches of iron work to Ireland," and wanted the government to fund his schemes. On November 3, 1783 Thomas O'Reilly and his two new partners, his brothers Patrick and Andrew, asked the Irish Parliament for an unidentified sum to support his operations.

Thomas, Patrick, and Andrew were the sons of one Mary O'Reilly, by 1783 a widow and, apparently, a wealthy one. The family's circumstances were described as "opulent," and Mrs. O'Reilly frequently hosted large dinners and card parties.

Despite repeated requests, Thomas O'Reilly was unable to obtain additional funding from Parliament. He proceeded anyway, spending his and his family's money, borrowing from Irish bankers, and continuing to import English workers. By February 1784, he had recruited twenty-one experienced workmen and paid premiums and travel expenses for them and their families. At the time, most of Ireland's wire was imported from England, Holland, and Germany and prices were low, so O'Reilly's wire sold at a loss despite its allegedly superior quality. Instead of another grant, he successfully asked that duties be imposed on iron wire imports.

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8 Ireland's lack of iron production is confirmed by other sources, as well. For example, Richard Reynolds of England's celebrated Coalbrookdale Company wrote to a friend in 1785 that there was "very little, if any, iron made in Ireland." Hannah Mary Rathbone, Letters of Richard Reynolds with a Memoir of His Life (London: C. Gilpin, 1852), 259, 1976 microfilm copy, Library of Congress Photoduplication Section, Shelf 48309, Library of Congress Microform Reading Room.


10 Journals of the House of Commons of Ireland, ¶11, 3 November 1783, 57.


12 Duties of a little more than £2 per hundredweight were imposed on all iron wire imported into Ireland beginning in early 1785, except that from Great Britain, which was treated as though it were domestically produced. Journals of the House of Commons of Ireland 11:374.
O’Reilly continued to expand his business. At that same February 1784 Parliamentary hearing, he reported that he had “taken 500 acres of land from Thomas Tenison, Esq; near Lough Allen at the source of the Shannon, with sites for 2 mills, and [was] now about to erect furnaces there, where Coals and Iron are in great abundance, of the very best Quality, and at very low rates, which Undertaking must produce very great advantage to this country.”13 The O’Reilly family had begun development of the Arigna Ironworks, the first attempt to introduce industry into the Lough Allen region since the 1690s,14 and the first Irish foundry to produce iron using coke instead of charcoal.15

The O’Reillys also introduced a second innovation, the puddling process.16 Several sources suggest that one of the O’Reilly brothers attempted to get an English founder to teach him puddling, but was refused, so the Irishman went to France where he learned the technique.17 But the numerous Parliamentary petitions submitted by Thomas O’Reilly never made such a claim and he described his activities in some detail hoping to convince Parliament to grant him additional funding. O’Reilly did not need an English or French founder to teach him puddling. One of the experienced Englishmen he had recruited was Henry Foxall, who had learned both the puddling process and the use of coke from Henry Cort.

It is unclear precisely when Henry Foxall arrived in Ireland, but it was sometime between September 1786 when his son John was christened at Titchfield, England, near Henry Cort’s Fontley Works, and September 1789 when his daughter Mary Ann was born in Carrick-on-Shannon, Ireland.18

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13 "Petition of Thomas, Patrick, and Andrew Reilly presented to the House of Commons, 4 February 1784, Journals of the House of Commons of Ireland 11:316-317, 374.
14 Cyril Mattimoe, North Roscommon: Its People and Past (Boyle: by the author, 1992), 139.
16 Puddling was a significant technological improvement in the iron refining process which increased production while reducing costs. The pig iron was placed in a coal-fired furnace, taking care not to let the coal come into contact with the iron. Heat generated by the coal fire reflected off the ceiling of the furnace onto the metal. The molten iron was then stirred in order to bring impurities to the surface where they could be burned off. The molten pig iron formed a sort of pool or puddle in the furnace, hence the technique’s name. Charles K. Hyde, Technological Change and the British Iron Industry, 1700-1870 (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), 88.
18 For John Foxall’s date of birth and baptism records, Titchfield Parish, 24 September 1786, Hampshire Record Office, Winchester, England. For Mary Ann’s date of birth, Foxall-McKenney Family Bible, courtesy of Ann Coulthurst. Foxall wrote in the family Bible that Mary Ann was born in Ireland, but did not say where in Ireland. Mary Ann told her children she was born in Carrick-on-Shannon, which was the largest town near Arigna and center of a Protestant community. Henrietta McKenney Cragin, untitled essay, among family papers preserved in the daybook of Edith Cragin, courtesy of Nicola Nelson.
This dating fits with O’Reilly’s 1788 startup at Arigna and the beginning of Henry Cort’s financial troubles that same year. Some sources suggest that Foxall worked near Dublin before heading north to Arigna, but Foxall himself left no indication of working at O’Reilly’s New Holland works, and indeed wrote that he, “first [k]new [the O’Reillys] when they undertook to build the Iron works at Arigna in the County of Roscommon near Carrick on Shannon.”

The Arigna Iron Works was an ambitious undertaking. Mary O’Reilly leased its site from Colonel Thomas Tenison, scion of another Williamite family, in 1784. Their agreement allowed the O’Reillys to take as much iron and clay from the property as necessary, but they had to pay Tenison a royalty of two shillings per ton of coal and were forbidden to use Tenison coal for any purpose other than smelting at Arigna. Tenison retained the right to mine coal concurrently with the Arigna operation. The O’Reillys also purchased coal from Tenison’s Aughabley colliery, three miles from Arigna, as well as the Rover colliery, about half a mile away, owned by the Anglican Bishop of Tuam. Limestone was brought from a quarry near Keadue, about a mile and a half from the works.

The works erected at Arigna were extensive, covering about six acres of land near the mouth of the Arigna Valley, south of the River Arigna. The “upper works” were dedicated to smelting and casting, and included a large furnace pool, a forty-four-foot high blast furnace, a twenty-six-foot diameter overshot wheel that worked two cast iron cylinder bellows and a large boring mill. Along with store houses, offices, a cupola-furnaced foundry, and a horse mill for grinding fire clay, the upper works featured a Boulton and Watt double steam engine, used to blow the furnace when the uncertain summer water levels fell too low. At the “lower works,” the O’Reillys produced malleable cast iron and bar iron using a forge with refining hearth, a three-ton mumbling hammer (worked by a thirteen-foot diameter overshot water wheel with air furnaces for puddling), a slitting mill, rollers, and cutters. Adjacent to the lower works there were two houses for the managers and a number of dwellings for the workmen. Local inhabitants collected ironstone from the Arigna stream bed, earning three shillings and four pence per ton. They carried coal to the site on horseback at three hundredweight.

19 Madison Davis asserted in 1908 that “in 1794 [sic] . . . [Foxall] left Birmingham [England] for Ireland, where he had the superintendency of some important iron-works, near Dublin, and afterwards at Carrick-on-Shannon.” Davis provided no source for this statement, which seems to be the source of the tradition. Madison Davis, “The Old Cannon Foundry Above Georgetown, D.C., and its first owner, Henry Foxall,” Records of the Columbia Historical Society (1908), 39.


22 Isaac Weld, Statistical Survey of the County of Roscommon (Dublin: R. Grisberr for the Royal Dublin Society, 1832), 40.
per load, for one shilling and three pence per day. It cost the O’Reil­lys about £3 per ton to produce pig iron, and they averaged about 1,000 tons per year.²³

By 1790 more than 300 persons were employed at the Arigna works, with Henry Foxall as their superintendent. The roads were much improved and real estate prices were rising. Budding entrepreneurs began eyeing the area for pottery and stoneware manufacture, now that the O’Reil­lys had called attention to the high-quality local clay. Thomas O’Reilly, in support of his endless petitions to Parliament for more funding, brought in experienced iron founders to test his iron and testify to its high quality. Their state­ments before Parliament indicate that Arigna produced pig and bar iron as well as nails, flat ware, and hollow ware castings of a quality equal to, if not surpassing, that made in England.

Yet still the O’Reil­lys struggled. Every year they were in business at Arigna, they begged Parliament for money. Every year, the Parliamentary commit­tee assigned to evaluate their petitions recommended “every Degree of public encouragement” to reduce or even halt Ireland’s annual import of 8,000 tons of iron, mostly from Britain, Russia, and Sweden, at a cost of more than £145,000. Parliamentary records list page after page of endorse­ment for the O’Reil­lys and paean­s of praise for the quality of their iron, yet neither grant nor loan was ever forthcoming and in 1793, they defaulted on a £10,000 note from Member of Parliament and Dublin banker Peter LaTouche as well as a second mortgage on the works. All four O’Reil­lys—Mary, Thomas, Patrick and Andrew—were bankrupt.²⁴

So why did such a promising enterprise fail? There seem to have been a variety of reasons. Arigna was undercapitalized. Thomas O’Reilly was too ambitious and should have stuck to pig iron or pig and castings instead of trying to produce pig, bar, and castings.²⁵ Transportation was a problem. Public works schemes to make the River Shannon and some of its tributar­ies navigable were not completed until 1818, and there was no railroad until the 1830s. Some observers felt the O’Reil­lys paid too much for coal and ran Arigna in a lavish manner.²⁶ As Isaac Weld, sent in by the British government to assess the situation in 1818 after two more failures at Arigna, expressed it:

No question seems to be entertained of the good quality of the iron which has been heretofore made at Arigna, and doubtless as good, if not better, may be made here­after, considering what improvements in science and art have taken place. But it may be questionable whether the. . . manufacture. . . can be successfully brought into competition, into the great markets which are at present supplied from England, Scotland, and Wales.²⁷

²⁴Journals of the House of Commons of Ireland, 13:21, 142, ccxvii-­ccxviii (1789-90); 14:ccvi (1791); 15:19 (1792); 15:101 (1793-94); 16:101 (1795).
²⁵McDowell, 668.
²⁶Weld, 37-38, 58.
²⁷Weld, 74.
The Carron Company could ship iron from Scotland to Sligo, fourteen miles from Arigna, more cheaply than Arigna could. 28

Henry Foxall seems to have remained in the employ of the Arigna works for about two years after the O’Reillys lost the business to Peter LaTouche, the Member of Parliament for Leitrim who bought the works for £25,000 at public auction in 1793. Descendant of yet another Williamite family, like so many of Ireland’s wealthy, LaTouche was a banker and businessman. He attempted some expensive improvements to the works. Unfortunately, he knew less of iron manufacture than Thomas O’Reilly, and by 1808 he closed Arigna, joking that all he had to show for his £80,000 investment was a lovely iron gate for his country mansion, Bellevue. 29

Although the O’Reilly-Arigna financial melodrama certainly had profound repercussions for Henry Foxall’s professional life, his personal life was profoundly and permanently changed by other events. By November 1791, within two or three years of his arrival in Ireland, he experienced a religious conversion and united with the Methodists. 30 Late in his life, Foxall recounted the experience to a friend who recorded it:

One Lord’s-day, while in Ireland, riding out on horseback, he saw a number of people gathered together under some trees in a field. Curiosity induced him to approach the assembly; when he found a Preacher of Mr. Wesley’s Connexion calling sinners to repentance. He listened with deep attention. The word reached his heart. He was convinced of sin: for about a month his mind was much agitated; but then he fully resolved to give himself to God. He ‘sorrowed after a godly sort,’ and was ‘weary and heavilyladen,’ for some months. But he sought and found peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby he was enabled to cry, Abba, Father. 31

Foxall joined the small Methodist Society led by Angel Anna Slacke of Annadale, County Leitrim. Mrs. Slacke and her husband William were both descendants of Captain William Slacke, the Derbyshire Williamite who established ironworks in that area during the 1690s. Annadale was a regular preaching place on the Sligo Circuit, and Mrs. Slacke hosted circuit-riding Methodist preachers. Although John Wesley visited Annadale twice, in 1787 and 1789, Foxall’s conversion almost certainly occurred too late for their paths to have crossed. 32 The Methodist Society met at the Foxalls’ home for
the first time in November 1791, suggesting that Henry was by then a member of the society, although his wife Ann was still “striving to enter into the pool of regeneration,” indicating that she had not yet experienced justification and new birth associated with the Wesleyan conversion. Within a short period Foxall became a class leader, exhorter, and local preacher, playing an important leadership role in the modest but earnest group, which was comprised mostly of English ironworkers and tenants on the Slacke estate.

Even as his new-found faith sustained and focused Foxall, his position at the Arigna Works and his public activities on behalf of Methodism rendered him vulnerable to sectarian violence. Methodists frequently experienced violent attacks in Ireland from both Catholics and Protestants. In 1747, when John Wesley first visited the island, nearly seventy-five percent of the population was Roman Catholic. Although many among the Catholic nobility and gentry had joined the Church of England for purposes of political and economic advancement, the lower classes remained loyal to Catholicism and resentful of the comparative prosperity of Protestants, be they Anglican, Presbyterian, or Methodist, and especially be they immigrants from England or Scotland.

Methodism was particularly disliked because of its association with the

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33Angel Anna Slacke to Mrs. Fleming, 19 November 1791, Slacke Family Papers, privately held.
34All converts to Methodism during this time period expected to experience religious conversion in the manner described by John Wesley, and, indeed, were required to have had a Wesleyan-style conversion before being permitted to unite with a local Methodist society. All steps in the conversion experience occur through the grace of God and not through the works or activities of the sinner. First, the sinner is brought to repentance for his or her sins. Second, the sinner experiences justification (forgiveness), which creates a new relationship with God. After justification, the sinner has a “new birth,” in which he or she responds to God’s forgiveness and desires to live a more loving and godly life. From the time of the new birth until physical death, the Methodist convert enters the process of sanctification, which leads to Christian perfection. Perfection does not mean that a human can be without sin or error; rather, perfection means that the Christian no longer intends to sin, but undertakes every action with the sole motive of love of God and neighbor. Wesley acknowledged that it was possible to have an instantaneous conversion, but that the process took some time for most persons.
35In Methodism, a class leader was a lay person who held day-to-day responsibility for supervision and care of local Methodists, serving as a virtual sub-pastor in between visits from the circuit riders, which usually occurred about every three weeks. Each member of society was required to participate in a class that met weekly under the direction of a class leader. Class leaders were the most respected members of the society, appointed by the preacher, and were expected to show deep personal piety, mature experience, and Christian behavior, to enforce the Methodist Discipline, and engage in constant self-improvement through Bible study, reading other books recommended by John Wesley, and observing Methodist behavioral expectations. Exhorters addressed congregants after the preacher’s sermon, encouraging them to repentance and conversion. Local preachers were lay persons licensed by the local congregation to preach and conduct worship in the absence of the circuit rider. For more information, see Richard P. Heitzenrater, Wesley and the People Called Methodists (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1995).
36Kelly, “Angel Anna Slacke,” 23; Papers of Angel Anna Slacke.
37Crookshank, 1:2-9.
British soldiers who enforced the occupier’s order. “The British regiments which formed the garrison in Ireland,” wrote Irish Methodist historian Dudley L. Cooney, “recruited their junior officers from the working classes—the classes which responded most enthusiastically to the Methodist preachers,” and who founded the earliest Methodist society in Dublin. Anglicans and Presbyterians resented Methodist successes among their parishioners and felt threatened by the new sect. Wesley wrote to his brother Charles in 1773 that, “I have been in two mobs since I came into Ireland, one in the South and one in the North. The Protestant mob was far the worst.” Frequent persecution and harassment—everything from pelting with sticks and stones to meeting house arson and street riots—accompanied the circuit riders. Anti-Methodist activities reached all the way to rural Leitrim and Sligo. In 1760, John Wesley barely escaped harm from an Anglican mob in Carrick-on-Shannon, the closest town to Arigna. A diocesan edict forbade Catholics from attending the preaching of Thomas Coke, one of Wesley’s leading assistants, during his tour of the Sligo Circuit in 1786.

In addition to anti-Methodist violence, Foxall was also vulnerable to what Liam Kelly called “the first stirrings of rebellion”—the skirmishes and battles between Protestant and Catholic in the northern counties that began in about 1785 and continued sporadically until the Rising of 1798. John Wesley wrote from Dungannon in 1789 that, “The Papists and Protestants here are almost at open war with each other, and it is feared much mischief will ensue. Some blood has been shed already.” In the early years of this conflict, a Catholic group calling itself the Defenders was not yet associated with the United Irishmen, but focused on local grievances relating to economic and political conditions. Property prices were out of reach for the working class. Although they did not patronize it, the Catholic Irish were required to tithe to the Church of England, as well as pay the dues necessary to secure the services and sacraments of the Roman church. To make matters worse, the crops failed in 1793 and the people grew hungry. There was a brokenness in the social fabric that sparked anger, violence, and rebellion.

By 1793 northeastern Connaught was in chaos and insurrection. The Catholic Defenders were well organized but ill-armed, and began raiding the houses of wealthy Protestants to steal any weapons they possessed. Thomas Tenison’s house at Coalville was burned to the ground and the Kilronan
Anglican Church demolished. Attempts were made to liberate political prisoners in the Carrick-on-Shannon jail, and the Defenders fought a pitched battle with government troops just outside Carrick that resulted in nine or ten deaths. More than a hundred Irish were taken prisoner. Prosperous landholders grew anxious. Angel Anna Slacke wrote of her nightly fears that her home would be the next one attacked.\textsuperscript{43}

Perhaps due to his position as superintendent of the ironworks and Methodist preacher—or perhaps just because he owned something they required—Henry Foxall drew the Defenders' wrath. On the night of May 20, 1793, his home was attacked as the family slept. A somewhat heroic version of the story was handed down through Foxall's descendants for more than a century: "Firearms were discharged at the windows. Drunken shouts and curses pierced the midnight air. . . . Then as a man from the mob started to climb through a window, Foxall felled him to the ground with one swing of a chair. A second and third met the same fate."\textsuperscript{44} Angel Anna Slacke wrote that the Defenders,

had great evil intended against Brother Foxall, but he eluded their vigilance, for he set off from his own house in the night and was with us at our bedside at 2 o'clock this morning, his wife had been with us before, but he left his children and furniture under a very strong guard and has no doubt but God will preserve them from the hands of bloodthirsty and cruel men. . . . We know not if they will visit us this night.\textsuperscript{45}

As noted earlier, the O'Reillys were bankrupted in 1793 and the Arigna Works were sold at auction to Peter LaTouche. Foxall apparently continued in LaTouche's employ and some of the O'Reillys may have continued to work at Arigna. The O'Reillys' bitterness at the refusal of the Irish Parliament—which was controlled by the English—to provide the financial assistance necessary to keep them in business apparently led to rebellion; at least some members of the family joined the Defenders.

After a brief period of calm, tensions began rising again in the spring 1795. Catholic hopes for political reform were dashed by the failure of English Viceroy Lord Fitzwilliam's government and his subsequent recall to London. The Defenders once again began stealing weapons in daring raids. Reports suggested that every Protestant homestead within forty miles of Carrick-on-Shannon was relieved of its arms, including Mrs. Slacke's Annadale. In June they grew bolder, entering the English estates late at night

\textsuperscript{43}Kelly, \textit{A Flame Now Quenched}, 25-28.

\textsuperscript{44}As quoted in Homer L. Calkin, “Henry Foxall: Foundryman and Friend of Asbury,” \textit{Methodist History} 6:1 (October 1967), 36-37. Calkin stated that the attack was provoked by Foxall's success as superintendent of the Arigna works and carried out by jealous foremen from other nearby foundries. But there were no other foundries in the area, Arigna was on the verge of bankruptcy when the attack occurred—hardly a success story that would draw the violence of the envious—and given the context of other Catholic attacks on prosperous English Protestants in the area, it seems much more likely that the midnight raid on Foxall's home was an episode in the Defender violence.

\textsuperscript{45}Diary of Angel Anna Slacke, 21 May 1793, privately owned.
to chop timber and occupying the Arigna ironworks to make their own weapons: pitchforks, pikes, and spears.

The ironworks at Arigna was turned into an arms factory for a day. The Defenders forced seven blacksmiths and several carpenters to make pikes from six in the morning until ten at night, in which time they made 600 pikes. The pikes were said to be eighteen inches long and the handles seven feet long. The Defenders also took a great quantity of powder and lead from the ironworks. However, the Defenders may not have had much difficulty in procuring the ironworks at Arigna because two years later it was reported to Dublin Castle that Mr. Reilly, the owner of the ironworks, "is most active in this [United Irish] business and gives the lower order of the people every encouragement."46

Henry Foxall's role and position during the Defenders' takeover of the Arigna works is unknown. He was indeed an Englishman, but he had also seen the Royal Navy ruthlessly destroy Henry Cort, seizing his patents for improvements in iron technology and leaving him bankrupt and destitute.47 Within a few years Foxall became one of the Americans' leading armament suppliers in their conflict with Britain. It seems unlikely, however, that he would have intentionally helped arm the Catholic Defenders, especially after their attack on his home in 1793 and their ongoing rampages against his English and Methodist friends in that area. How the Defenders gained control of Arigna and how they dealt with Foxall as its superintendent is unknown but fraught with unhappy possibilities.

Whatever his personal circumstances in this situation, the temporary seizure of Arigna provoked a profound change of course for Foxall. Within a few weeks after the episode, he bundled up his wife and children and left Ireland. By mid-June 1795, the month in which the siege of Arigna occurred, Ann Foxall and her children were in Leitrim town, away from Arigna, and preparing to sail for America. Henry was already searching for business possibilities in a new location. Through Mrs. Slacke's connections, he tried to secure a letter of introduction to Thomas Donnellan, an Irish Methodist who was a custom house officer in the port of Baltimore.48 The O'Reillys could not help since they were in desperate straits. "Andrew O'Reilly has been vilely traduced, his fortune is ruined," wrote Mrs. Slacke, "his character injured, his support lost, and he must seek for support on some foreign shore."49 After a fortnight's visit at Annadale, the Foxalls made their way to Newry, and boarded the ship Joseph, bound for New York.50

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46Kelly, A Flame Now Quenched, 37. I am deeply indebted to Liam Kelly's work with primary sources in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, where he discovered documents relating to the seizure of the Arigna Works.
47Foxall testified on Cort's behalf at a 1785 hearing held to determine whether Cort was truly the author of his innovative technologies. Peterson, 230-233.
49Angel Anna Slacke to Mrs. Fleming, 12 June 1795.
50Angel Anna Slacke to Mrs. Fleming, 30 June and 15 July 1795.
The Irish troubles were soon far behind them and Henry was on his way to success beyond his wildest dreams in the United States. With the exception of a brief period immediately following his arrival in America, Foxall was never again financially dependent on others. After the failures of Henry Cort and the O'Reillys, Henry Foxall became his own boss, making his own business decisions. He owed no man a dollar. He never asked the U.S. government to invest in his business, as Thomas O'Reilly had done, but he pursued government contracts and carefully constructed his personal and professional relations with high federal officials to insure a steady flow of business. Foxall is generally credited with introducing the art of boring cannon into the United States, as well as Henry Cort's puddling and rolling processes. He was one of the first, if not the first, American founder to make iron from coke rather than charcoal.

The religious conversion that Foxall experienced in Ireland brought him to a faith that centered and drove the rest of his life. He continued his preaching career, was ordained as a local elder, and became one of early American Methodism's most important benefactors, donating funds to build four churches in Washington, D.C. and providing financial support for numerous causes and programs of the denomination. Foxall, however, is perhaps best known to American Methodists for his friendship with Bishop Francis Asbury, the father of the American church. Foxall repeatedly hosted Asbury during his incessant travels and one of the bishop's traveling companions wrote that the men were as close as brothers. The relationship certainly dated to their childhood days in England's West Midlands. Foxall's parents and Asbury's parents had been close friends and fellow Methodists. Some sources suggest that Asbury was for a time apprenticed to Foxall's father.

Though the Foxall family sailed for New York, by October, they lived in Philadelphia, where Henry was in the employ of Robert Morris, financier of the American Revolution, and then considered the richest man in America. Within a short time, Foxall became the business partner of Robert Morris, Jr. in the Eagle Iron Works. America's military establishment quickly discovered that an unexpected bearer of prized technology had landed quietly on their shores, and began funneled contracts for cannon and shot to Eagle. Ann Foxall died in the 1798 yellow fever epidemic, leaving Henry with the care of two young children. When the United States government relocated from Philadelphia to the new capital city of Washington in 1800, Foxall bought out the younger Morris and sold the Eagle Works to Samuel Richards of New Jersey. He then decamped for Georgetown, at that time a suburb of Washington, where he established a new foundry and made a fortune supplying cannon and shot to the United States Navy during the War of 1812. He retired in 1816, following the death of his second wife, Margaret.

Donovan, 44, 51.
Donovan.
English Smith, and returned to England for the first time in more than twenty years.\textsuperscript{52}

While in England, Foxall married a third time in November 1816, to Catharine Holland, and took his bride on a honeymoon to Dublin where he visited Andrew O'Reilly. “Little but misfortune had followed the whole family” since their failure at Arigna, lamented Foxall. “The circumstance that had generally attended him and his family since I left them... were neither Pleasant [sic] to relate, or Comfortable to hear.” He found Andrew O'Reilly working as a clerk in an Abbey Street iron warehouse, but gave no hint about the fates of Mary, Thomas, and Patrick.\textsuperscript{53} It was a bittersweet ending to Foxall's Irish story, a happy reunion but a sad resolution to the tale that had once seemed so promising, for Henry, for Andrew, and for Ireland.

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\textsuperscript{53}Liam Kelly’s research suggests that Patrick O’Reilly, Andrew and Thomas’s brother and partner in Arigna, and possibly other family members may have been transported to Botany Bay, Australia in 1795, convicted of various crimes relating to activities of the Catholic Defenders—the year that Arigna became a Defender arms factory for a day. Foxall, \textit{Journal}, 22 November 1816; Liam Kelly, “Convicts from Leitrim and Cavan Transported to Botany Bay: 1791-1800,” forthcoming, 12.