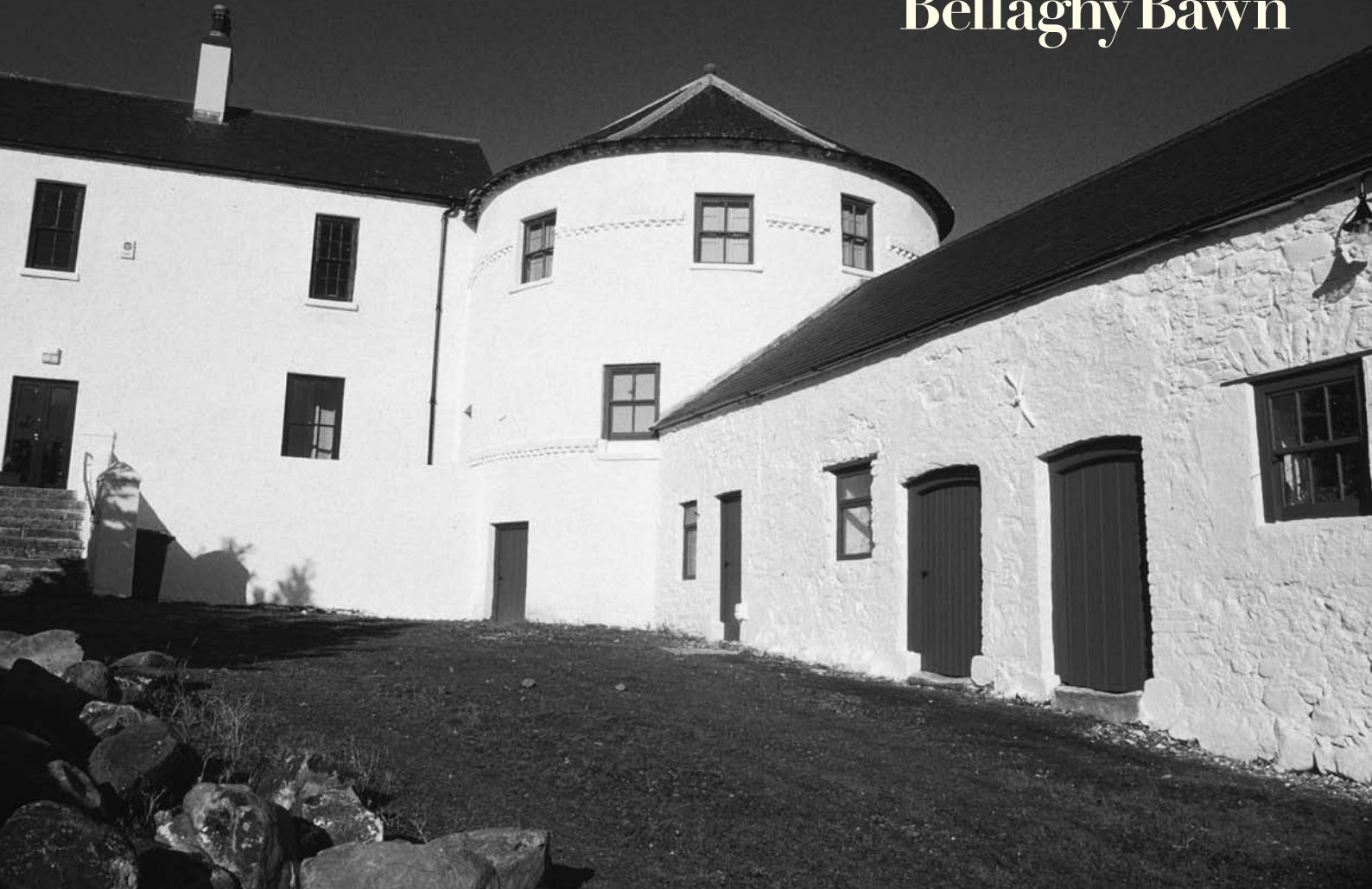


# Nobel's Legacy

# Bellaghy Bawn



*Many of us are aware that Seamus Heaney won his Nobel Prize for literature in 1995. But how many of us actually know where the Nobel Prize originates from?*

# Alfred Nobel

*Alfred Nobel was born in Stockholm on October 21, 1833. His father, Immanuel Nobel was an engineer who constructed bridges and buildings in Stockholm. Alfred's mother Andriette Nobel came from a wealthy family.*

*However due to misfortunes in his work, Immanuel Nobel was forced into bankruptcy the same year Alfred was born. Because of this, Immanuel Nobel left his family behind in Stockholm to start a new career in Finland and Russia.*

# Nobel's Work

*In order to support her family, Andriette Nobel started a grocery store in Stockholm. Meanwhile Immanuel was beginning to thrive in his new enterprise in St. Petersburg.*

*He started a mechanical workshop which provided equipment for the Russian Army. He also convinced the Tsar and his generals that naval mines could be used to block enemy naval ships from threatening the city.*

*Anchored below the surface of the Gulf of Finland, Immanuel's mines effectively deterred the British Royal Navy from moving into the firing range of St. Petersburg during the Crimean War.*

*Now successful in his industrial ventures, Immanuel Nobel was able to bring his family to St. Petersburg where his sons received a first class education through private tuition which included sciences, language and literature.*

*By the age of 17, Alfred Nobel was fluent in five languages. His primary interests were English literature and poetry, as well as chemistry and physics. Alfred's father, who wanted his son to follow in his footsteps, disliked his interest in poetry:*

*In order to broaden his horizons, Alfred's father sent him abroad for further training in chemical engineering. During a two year period Alfred Nobel visited several countries.*

# Influences & Safety

*It was in Paris, the city he liked best that he worked in the private laboratory of Professor T. J. Pelouze, a famous chemist. There he met the young Italian Ascanio Sobrero who three years earlier, invented nitroglycerine, a highly explosive liquid. Alfred Nobel became very interested in nitroglycerine and how it could be put to use in a practical way in the construction industry.*

*He also realised that safety problems had to be overcome and a method had to be developed for the controlled detonation of nitroglycerine.*

# Dynamite!

*After his return to Sweden in 1863, Alfred Nobel concentrated on developing nitroglycerine as an explosive. Several experiments later, one of which tragically killed his brother Emil, he discovered that mixing different additives to nitroglycerine, made it much safer.*

*In 1867, mixing nitroglycerine with kieselguhr, Alfred Nobel was to create an explosive we all know today as **dynamite!** Over the years he founded factories and laboratories in 20 different countries.*

# Secretary & Supervisor

*Intensive work and travel did not leave much time for a social life and at the age of 43 he felt like an old man.*

**At this time he advertised in a newspaper:**

*“Wealthy, highly educated, elderly gentleman seeks lady of mature age, versed in languages, as secretary and supervisor of household.”*

*The most qualified applicant turned out to be an Austrian woman Countess Bertha Kinsky. After working a very short time she returned to Austria to get married, however they both kept in touch and wrote to each other often.*

# Bertha Kinsky

*Sometime later, Bertha wrote a book 'Lay down your arms' and became a prominent figure in the peace movement.*

*No doubt Bertha's convictions influenced Nobel for when he wrote his final will which was to include a prize for persons or organisations who promoted peace.*

*Alfred Nobel's greatness lay in his ability to combine the penetrating mind of the scientist and inventor with the forward looking dynamism of the industrialist. Nobel was very interested in social and peace related issues.*

# Alfred Nobel's Death

*He had a great interest in literature and wrote his own poetry and dramatic works. By this time the Nobel prizes became an extension and a fulfilment of his lifetime interests.*

*Many of the companies founded by Nobel have developed into industrial enterprises that still play a prominent role in the world's economy. Alfred Nobel died in Italy on December 10, 1896.*

# Will & Legacy

*When his will was opened it came as a great shock that his fortune was to be used for prizes in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature and peace.*

*The executors of his will were two young engineers. They set about forming the Nobel foundation as an organisation to take care of the financial assets left by Nobel for this purpose and to coordinate the work of the Prize-Awarding institutions.*

*This was not without its difficulty as the will was contested by relatives and questioned by authorities in various countries.*

*The Nobel Prize in Literature has been awarded to 105 people since 1901, with the first being a French man, Sully Prudhomme. To date, there have been 10 Nobel Prize winners from the United Kingdom and Ireland.*

*The first, Rudyard Kipling in 1907, and more recently; Doris Lessing in 2007.*





# Nobel's Legacy

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