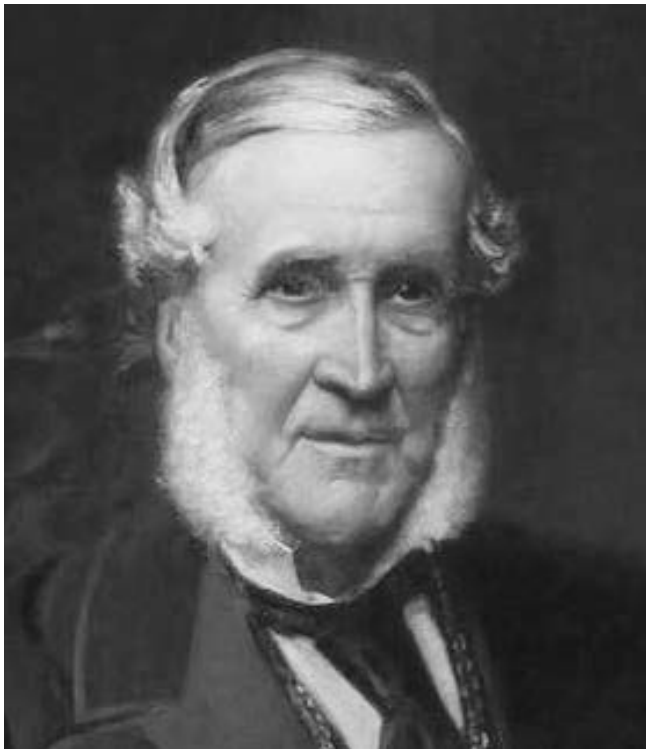# Mill Owners' Biographies – Card 1

William Ewart (1817–1889)

This painting is reproduced by the kind permission of Belfast City Council. The original painting currently resides in Belfast City Hall (2017)

William Ewart was an Ulster-Scot who was born in Sydenham, east Belfast. He attended Belfast Royal Academy before inheriting the mill business from his father. He went on to develop mills in Belfast, England and New York until he had one of the largest linen mill businesses in the world. His home was Glenmachan House, Belfast, a sprawling mansion when compared with the houses of his workers.

During the trade depression of the mid-1880s, to protect the family wealth, Ewart turned the business into a company. The six business partners were Ewart himself and his five sons. Two of them lived in New York and looked after the American sales.

By 1889 Ewart's firm had between 5,000 and 6,000 employees and an annual wage bill of £150,000, which was a lot of money back then. It operated 33,500 spindles and 2,000 power looms.

Conditions for the workers were harsh when compared with working conditions today. The hours were long – from six in the morning until six in the evening with an hour for lunch. A large factory like Ewart's was very noisy and many workers learned to lip read to help them communicate with one another. The mills were also hot and smelly due to the steam and oil fumes from the machinery.
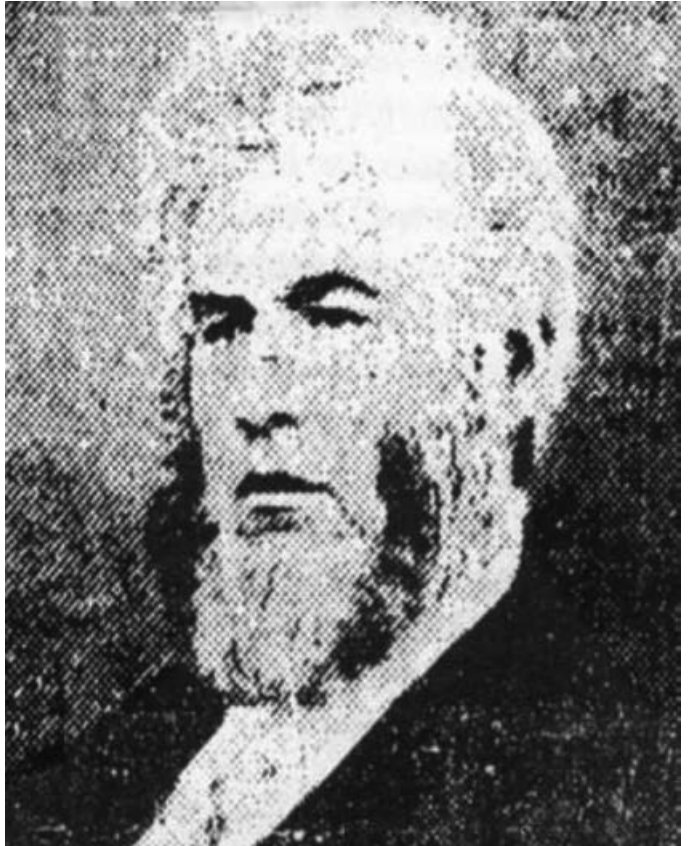
William was a leading figure in Belfast. He was a member of the Belfast Corporation for 25 years, Mayor of Belfast from 1859 to 1860 and served as MP for Belfast City from 1878 to 1885, and Belfast North from 1885 until his death in 1889. He was President of the Irish Linen Trade and Flax Supply Associations and in 1878 was made a baronet.

C. S. Lewis, the famous writer, was a second cousin of the Ewarts and often visited Glenmachan House.

Mill Owners' Biographies – Card 2

Michael Andrews (1788–1870)

Ulster-Scot Michael Andrews was the second son of an established linen mill owner in County Down, who set up his own factory, initially in Little York Street, Belfast. He then moved to an area now known as 'Ardoyne' where he built a large house for himself (called 'Ardoyne House '). It is not known what inspired Michael to call his house Ardoyne, but it is interesting that there is a place in Aberdeenshire, Scotland called Ardoyne. As well as his factory, he built 30 'tied' cottages for the workers. These were houses built by the factory owner but rented to the employee. If the employee left the factory they might have to leave the house and try and find other accommodation. That is why they were 'tied' to their employer.

The village of Ardoyne quickly became established and Michael Andrews built a pub, school and church there as well. He also helped to set up the Belfast Savings Bank and the famous newspaper, *The Northern Whig.* His estate manager, Edward McCormick, also mentioned that he helped to establish a house for the Cross and Passion priests when they came to live in the area.

Michael was married four times as his previous wives died. His fourth wife looked after the children from his previous three marriages. Michael enjoyed gardening, although it is most likely that he had help from labourers to carry out this horticultural interest. He became famous across Britain and Ireland for his gardens and greenhouses. In 1839 the Gardener's Magazine noted that he was the 'grand promoter of horticulture' in Belfast.

Michael Andrews was a popular employer who showed many acts of kindness to his workers. He died in 1870, aged 82, and the News Letter reported that although he was a wealthy man he was concerned about the welfare of his workers. He liked to see them clean and in good houses which were well lit and reasonably furnished. He was buried in Clifton Street Graveyard along with many leading Ulster-Scots who shaped the development of Belfast.

Mill Owners' Biographies – Card 3

Henry James Campbell (1813-1889)

Henry James Campbell who was of Ulster-Scots heritage was probably born in Newtownards, into a family of four children. His father, Henry Campbell senior, died when he was only one year old. Henry worked as an apprentice at a Belfast flax-spinning company called J. Boomer & Co and then moved to Liverpool, England to work there. On his return to Belfast he became a director in Gunning & Campbell, Belfast, a flax- and tow-spinning company.

In 1859 he bought Mossley Mill, County Antrim, and founded the joint company Henry Campbell & Co. with his first cousin once removed, John Campbell. Under John's management and with money provided by Henry, the mill flourished. They invested heavily in the mill, adding many new buildings in the 1870s, but they also invested in the needs of their workforce and of the local community. They provided houses for their workers and established Mossley School in 1868, which provided a basic education for workers' children during the day and then provided evening classes for mill workers and local farmers.

It is worth remembering that not only were the mill-owners Ulster-Scots, so were the people who worked for them. Around 1760, it is noted in historical records that: 'all the people of this part of the world speaks the broad lowland Scotch and have all the Scotch phrases'. The Campbells were strongly aware of their Scottish heritage and in 1875, after retiring from business, Henry Campbell built a house at Craigavad, County Down, in the Scottish baronial style and called it Lorne, after the seat of the Campbells in Scotland. The clan symbol of a boar's head was placed at the entrance of the house.

When Henry Campbell died as a bachelor in 1889, he left a huge (by the standards of the time) estate of £240,000. His money was to be used for the establishment of a hospital or a school: the trustees decided to establish a school, which was named in his honour, Campbell College. The Campbells' boar's head emblem was also incorporated into the school badge. Henry James Campbell is buried in Movilla Cemetery, Newtownards, County Down.