



Sylvester O'Halloran (1728-1807): Three unpublished Letters

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*In Limerick O'Halloran resides
And o'er the County Hospital presides;
Excels in Surgery and healing Arts,
With flowing Pen displays uncommon Parts;*

John Gilbourne, *The Medical Review* (1775:47).

Very little of the known correspondence, private or public, of the celebrated Limerick surgeon and antiquarian Sylvester O'Halloran survives, notwithstanding the body of correspondence published by J.B. Lyons¹ in the 1960s or the additional letter published in 2007 by the present author.²

Consequently, my focus in this article is to introduce into the public domain three previously unpublished letters. This correspondence is preserved in manuscript form in the Bodleian library. The earliest of which, dated 1779,³ is to a presently unknown correspondent. The second two letters, dated June 1781⁴ and February 1782⁵ respectively are to Lord Macartney (1737-1806), who at this juncture in history was Governor of Madras, a position he held from 1781-86. The connection between these three letters, which may not initially appear obvious is, O'Halloran's *A complete Treatise on Gangrene and Sphacelus, with a new Method of Amputation* published by A. Welsh, Limerick in 1765. O'Halloran dedicated this work to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Francis Seymour

¹ J.B. Lyons, (ed.), 'The Letters of Sylvester O'Halloran, pt. 1', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, viii, (1961), pp. 168-181; 'The Letters of Sylvester O'Halloran, pt. 11', *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, ix, (1963), pp. 25-50.

² Claire E. Lyons, 'A Rediscovered Letter of Silvester O'Halloran to Dr. de Salis, 1 February 1777', *Journal of Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, (2007), Vol. 59, pp. 46-58.

³ Catalogue No. G.A. Ire 4^o19.

⁴ Eng.lett.b.23.

⁵ Eng.lett.b.23

Conway (1718-1794), Earl of Hertford. It was reprinted the same year by Vaillant in London.

A detailed account of O'Halloran's medical career has been previously supplied by fellow surgeon Sir William Wilde⁶ in a seminal commemorative article written in 1848. More recently in the 1960s, J.B. Lyons⁷ of the Royal College of Surgeons has further added to our understanding of the unique position O'Halloran occupied in the medical world of eighteenth-century Ireland and England. O'Halloran's individual and innovative involvement in medical science, as revealed by both Wilde and Lyons, serve to establish O'Halloran as an original thinker, an individual who acted and thought 'outside the box' and consequently, place him as an individual of superior intellectual capacity, towering over most of his eighteenth-century contemporaries in the field of medical science.⁸

Therefore, it is not my intention here to go over ground already covered by these two scholars. Rather the focus of this article is to situate these three unpublished letters into the already published body of correspondence, in the hope that this repositioning will produce a more nuanced understanding of the O'Halloran dynamic, leading to a deeper awareness of his medically activated, albeit political directed, activities located in a British and Anglo-Irish setting.

Nevertheless some explanation of his medical background is of interest in the present context. O'Halloran received his surgical training on the continent, at London, Paris and Leiden.⁹ In 1749 he returned to Limerick with a completed thesis in hand that would ensure the future success of the newly qualified surgeon O'Halloran. His regular publications, on diverse subjects, maintained his profile in the medical world throughout his long life. He published two major works on the cataract. In 1750 he published *A new Treatise on the Glaucoma, or Cataract* and a further publication five years later on *A*

⁶ Sir William Wilde, 'Illustrious Physicians and Surgeons in Ireland. No. VI. Sylvester O'Halloran, M.R.I.A.', *The Dublin Quarterly Journal of Medical Science*, V, (1848), pp. 223-250.

⁷ J.B. Lyons, 'Sylvester O'Halloran (1728-1807)', *Irish Journal of Medical Science*, (May, 1963), pp. 217-232; *Irish Journal of Medical Science*, (June, 1963), pp. 279-288; 'Sylvester O'Halloran, 1728-1807', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, Vol. 1V, (1989), pp. 65-74.

⁸ Sir William Wilde, pp. 227-245.

⁹ J.B. Lyons, (May, 1963), pp. 219-221.

Critical Analysis of the new Operation for a Cataract (1755). In 1765 he published the previously mentioned, *A complete Treatise on Gangrene and Sphacelus, with a new Method of Amputation*,¹⁰ a work which features prominently in the unpublished 1779 letter which will be discussed presently. In 1791 in volume four of the *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy* O'Halloran published, *An Attempt to determine with Precision such Injuries of the head as necessarily require the Operation of the Trephine*. Followed by *A new Treatise on the different Disorders arising from External injuries of the Head; illustrated by eighty-five (selected from above 1500) practical cases* in 1793. This latter work is significant, not only as an interesting composition on head injuries, but also for the insights it provides into the social pastime of faction fighting, which has O'Halloran informs, us allowed him 'to convert the follies of my country-men into wholesome information, for the good of mankind!'¹¹

O'Halloran's antiquarian works¹² are outside the ambit of this present article, however, O'Halloran would not have made this distinction. He was forever mindful of the 'esteem' of Ireland and availed of every opportunity to emphasize her ancient civilized culture. In the preface to his work on amputation he states:

In the most early periods of our history, it appears, that the health of the subject, was a particular object of attention in the state; and where no other monuments of our antiquity left, yet would this alone, in every civilized nation, secure us the character of a polished people¹³

Moreover, in his *Introductory Discourse* to his *A new Treatise on the different Disorders*

¹⁰ Subsequently referred to here as: *New Method of Amputation*.

¹¹ O'Halloran, (1793), *Introductory Discourse* p. 5.

¹² Sylvester O'Halloran, *Insula Sacra or The General Utilities arising from some permanent Foundation, for the Preservation of our Antient Annals Demonstrated and the Means Pointed Out*. (Limerick, 1770); *An Introduction to the Study of the History and Antiquities of Ireland* (London & Dublin, 1772); *Ierne Defended: or, A Candid Refutation of such passages in the Rev. Dr. Leland', and the Rev. Dr. Whittaker's Works, as seem to affect the Authenticity and Validity of Antient Irish History* (Dublin, 1774); *A General History of Ireland*, 2 Vols. (London & Dublin, 1778); "An introductory Discourse to the poem of Conloch.", Brooke, Charlotte, *Reliques of Irish Poetry* (1789), pp. 3-8; "On the Ancient Arms of Ireland", *Anthologia Hibernia*, Vol.1. (1793), pp. 245-254.

¹³ Sylvester O'Halloran, (1765), *Preface* p. xii.

arising from External injuries of the Head, and, cognizant that his own proclaimed expertise in the field, based on a liberal supply of patients, might be used as evidence of Irish barbarity he observes:

But as no opportunity has been lost by the enemies to the reputation of this most ancient country -and too many of these are domestic ones - It will no doubt be remarked that if under the present mild and equitable laws, such violences [*sic*] and outrages are perpetrated and continued, what must have been the state of barbarity of the country when governed by the native rodes; Will the generous foreigner forgive me, if, for a moment, the PHLEGM off the philosopher is absorbed in the fire of the *patriot*; and that I descend to render that justice to my poor country-men, *which they have for a long period seldom experienced!*¹⁴

O'Halloran clearly appreciates the manner in which his work might be construed in the current political climate, to further denigrate the Irish race and digresses to for stall his work being used in a manner contrary to his intent.

Aside from the more intellectual pursuit of his publications, O'Halloran was a humanitarian and committed to improving medical facilities in Limerick. He was founder of the first Limerick County Infirmary¹⁵ and, moreover, supported the erection of a Lying-in-Hospital in 1773, his services given free gratis.

The O'Halloran name has now become interwoven with the physical landscape of Limerick city. His name is remembered in the commemorative foot bridge 'The Sylvester O'Halloran Bridge' erected over the Abby River by Limerick Civic Trust in 1987. In 1989 the construction of 'The Sylvester O'Halloran Post graduate Medical Center' at Dooradoyle, Limerick was completed and a stone from the old Limerick infirmary which O'Halloran had founded was incorporated in the new building.

¹⁴ Sylvester O'Halloran, (1793), *Introductory Discourse*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁵ J.B. Lyons, (May, 1963), pp. 228-230.

Background to the previously unpublished 1779 letter:

It has not escaped attention in the past that Sylvester O'Halloran was garnering support to petition for a Civil list pension. Lyons makes this observation based on a comment in an 1783¹⁶ letter from O'Halloran to Edmund Burke (1729-1797):

tho' my Claim in the cause of my Profession may perhaps not appear to you, so Eligible; yet now as a man of Letters; as one who has warmly & Successfully interested himself in Exploring, Vindicating, & Establishing his Native History, some public Countenances is due.¹⁷

O'Halloran evidently feels that his work has, in the main, been ignored by the establishment. This letter has previously stood in isolation. However, what was not revealed until now was the background to, and the enduring nature of O'Halloran's campaign, or that his initial campaign was centered on his *New Method of Amputation* (1765). This assumption is made possible by the content of the 1779 previously unpublished letter which functions as a nexus revealing the organized strategy which underpinned O'Halloran's campaign. Moreover, this correspondence facilitates the contextualization of O'Halloran's persistent struggle within a series of letters, public and private, spanning a period of eleven years. In addition, this letter provides valuable insights into the influential social and political circle in Britain that was open O'Halloran.

Working backwards then, and in consequence of this new insight afforded us by the 1779 letter it is possible to contextualize O'Halloran's letters to the *Freemans Journal* in 1772 and again in 1778 as the first public appearance of an enduring campaign on his part to achieve recognition for his contribution to medical science. O'Halloran's first mention of the term 'reward' in relation to his *New Method of Amputation* is in a letter published in the *Freeman's Journal* in 1772,¹⁸ six years after the initial publication of the work. This letter also records O'Halloran's first public expression of disappointment at the reception

¹⁶ Reprinted in 'The Letters of Sylvester O'Halloran, pt.11', J.B. Lyons, (ed.), p. 42. This letter Lyons has in error dated to 1793. It was written in 1783, ref. *Sheffield Archives* WWM/BK P/1/1836

¹⁷ Reprinted in 'The Letters of Sylvester O'Halloran, pt.11', J.B. Lyons, (ed.), p. 41-42.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32-34.

of this work in Ireland – A work O’Halloran feels, would have earned him a national reward in any other country in Europe, but in Ireland he submits, the climate is such that his ‘Irishness’ is operating against him.

Indeed, so sensible was I of the Importance of this new practice, and the extensive Inductions to be drawn from it *Principals* I had Reason to think myself intitled [*sic*] to *national Reward*, for my unwearied Diligence in this Affair: sure I am, that in any other country of Europe, the Author of so useful a Discovery would not be unnoticed! Why will you not to adopt it? Sure you will not think the worst of it by being the Discovery of your Countryman?¹⁹

The tone of the letter is strong and argumentative in places which beg the question as to whether O’Halloran felt that a more encouraging reception of his work in Ireland would activate further support for his cause. This may indeed have been the case as a further letter published in the *Freemans Journal* (1778)²⁰ again questions the recalcitrance of Irish surgeons to adopt his new method of amputation, notwithstanding, O’Halloran reminds us, that his procedure has the full backing of Mr. Adair²¹ and has been used in both St. George’s and St Thomas’s Hospital in England.²²

Ironically, the surgical application of this work, which O’Halloran held in such high esteem, is little regarded today, nevertheless it retains profile. This profile is due to the small appendix *The Proposals for the Advancement of Surgery in Ireland* which is sequestered at the conclusion of the work, and from which, it is generally agreed, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland evolved.²³

In 1778, however, Irish surgeons continued to ignore, what O’Halloran considered was, in general, a major advancement to medical science and in particular, the usefulness of

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 33.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 34-35.

²¹ Robert Adair was surgeon-general to George III. When the Royal College of Surgeons received its charter O’Halloran and Adair were simultaneously appointed honorary members. Reprinted in ‘The Letters of Sylvester O’Halloran, pt. 11’, J.B. Lyons, (ed.), p. 44.

²² Ibid., p. 35.

²³ Sir William Wilde, op. cit., p. 228; J.B. Lyons, (1989), op. cit., p. 71.

his method of amputation to the military. Irish parochialism, O'Halloran suggests is responsible for its rejection. Drawing a parallel between the reprehensible behavior of the Irish body of surgeons in comparison to that of his friend Mr. Bromfield (1712-1792),²⁴ surgeon at St. Georges's Hospital, O'Halloran casts an implied censor on his fellow Irish surgeons:

he [Bromfield] condescended to adopt a mode of practice, the invention of a person greatly his inferior in every point of chirurgical merit, merely because he was satisfied of the justness and utility of it; and by so doing has greatly raised its reputation and consequence.

I am persuaded, Gentlemen, ...you would readily adopt any practice that tended to public utility, *even though a native of the kingdom was the author of it.*²⁵

A meanness of spirit then, O'Halloran feels, rather than an overriding concern for the good of humanity, is the driving motivational force responsible for the reluctance of the Irish body of surgeons to support his new method of amputation. Interestingly, this was not the first time, however, that an Irish medical audience had failed to appreciate O'Halloran's work. Wilde²⁶ informs us that when O'Halloran presented his initial treatise on the cataract to Dr. Barry, President of the College of Physicians in Ireland in 1749, that the college, notwithstanding, that this work had been previously recommended for publication by Dr. Meade (1673-1754)²⁷ in London, had neither the 'time nor curiosity' to appreciate its contents.

²⁴ Bromfield was a surgeon at St. George's Hospital. In common with O'Halloran he was a humanitarian and had founded, with Mr. Martin Madan, the Lock Hospital to which he was appointed surgeon. Bromfield was appointed surgeon to George III in 1761 after his marriage to the Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg.

²⁵ Reprinted in 'The Letters of Sylvester O'Halloran, pt.11', J.B. Lyons, (ed.), p. 35.

²⁶ Sir William Wilde, p. 231.

²⁷ O'Halloran and Dr. Richard Mead had common interests. Mead had studied classical literature and antiquities at the University of Utrecht before he entered Leiden as a student of medicine. He was elected into the council of the Royal Society in 1705, physician to St. Thomas's Hospital in 1703, and was censor of the College of Physicians in 1717, 1719, and 1724. In 1727 he was appointed physician to George III.

O'Halloran's letter to an unknown correspondent, 1779.

This letter is a carefully orchestrated, well-planned piece of self-promotional marketing. In the absence of today's mass media communication network this letter is the eighteenth-century equivalent of a modern-day promotional campaign, the purpose of which is to sell the O'Halloran product to the authorities as a suitable candidate for a civil list pension. In the light of which, it is not an improbable conjecture, that this letter may only be an example of one of many such letters, dispatched to influential individuals to gather support for O'Halloran's campaign.

Based on the content of this 1779 correspondence it appears obvious, that for some time prior to the date of this present letter, O'Halloran had garnered the support of an influential group, what in present day terms could possibly be considered a marketing support team, who had been working behind the scenes to promote his claim for a 'public reward' based on the utility of his *New Method of Amputation*. And in light of the military dynamic of England's colonial expansionist policy, it is not surprising that the military utility of O'Halloran's method, which boasted a quicker recovery time than other methods then available, would appeal and find support with the English establishment.

The endeavors of his friends on his behalf, it seems, had now resulted in a favorable response from the secretary of the Treasury, Sir Grey Cooper (1726-1801).²⁸ In light of which, and clearly on the advice of his friends, which he refers to in the anonymous plural as 'they', he once more put pen to paper.

Among those O'Halloran mentions is first and foremost his friend and fellow surgeon, Robert Adair who has advised him to memorial the current Prime Minister Lord North (1732-1792).²⁹ John St. John (1746-1793)³⁰ elected member of Eye at this period has

²⁸ Grey Cooper was called to the bar in 1751. He entered politics in 1765 and was appointed secretary to the Treasury. He remained joint secretary to the Treasury for sixteen years under the successive governments until the downfall of the North administration in 1782.

²⁹ Frederick North, second earl of Guilford. Lord North was a member of the Tory party. He served as prime minister of Britain from 1770 to 1782. In 1780 he enacted legislation that allowed Ireland to export woollen goods, and to trade freely both ways with British colonies. He was in favour of the union of Britain and Ireland and during the debates on Pitt's Irish trade proposals spoke in favour of union.

³⁰ John St. John (1746-1793) was a member of the Whig party and friend of Edmund Burke. He represented Eye during the years 1775-1784. Though in this letter he refers to a Col. St. John, I take it that this may be in error as in, the 1778 letter to Edmund Burke he specifically mentions Mr. St. John.

‘memorialed’ Lord North on O’Halloran’s behalf. This reference to St. John facilitates the contextualization of what hitherto may have appeared to be an insignificant inquiry to a ‘memorial’ recorded elsewhere in a letter to Burke dated 1778:

I shall be much obliged to you, to Enquire of M^r St. John, how the Memorial I gave was disposed of. I cannot help thinking that the laws of Common Humanity, are Interested in that affair, especially at the very dawn of a Bloody War,³¹ and that a good Minister and a good Man, will not overlook it.³²

As the letter, from which the above comment is taken, is dated 1st August 1778 it could be assumed that St. John’s contact with Lord North, on O’Halloran’s behalf, may have taken place some time earlier in the same year.

Another influential political figure mentioned in this correspondence is Lord Beauchamp³³ who at this juncture holds the position of lord of the treasury in Lord North’s government and has advised O’Halloran on procedure. Sir Grey Cooper, previously mentioned, has similarly responded. Although the correspondent of the 1779 letter is, and remains unknown, internal evidence regarding the content and direction of the material, seems to suggest that the unknown correspondent had a high political profile, is, at the least, an acquaintance of, if not a friend, of Edmund Burke and is most probably a member of the Lord North government then in power.

In addition then, to providing invaluable information regarding the influential circle of friends that O’Halloran felt free to draw on for support, this letter also functions to open a

³¹ O’Halloran may here be referring to the war in the American colonies. In Feb. 1778 France and the United States had signed a ‘Treaty of Alliance’ obligating Spain to assist against the English. On 21st. June 1779 Carlos 111 of Spain officially declared war against the English.

³² Reprinted in ‘The Letters of Sylvester O’Halloran, pt.11’, J.B. Lyons, (ed.), p. 40.

³³ Francis Ingram Seymour, (1743-1822) was the eldest son of Francis Seymour Conway, Earl of Hertford who had held the post of Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1765. His son Francis Ingram served as chief secretary to his father, during his time in office. Francis Ingram sat in both the Irish and English parliament. He represented Lisburn during the period 1761-1768; Lostwithiel from 1766-68 and Oxford 1768-1794. He was lord of the treasury in Lord North’s government during the period 1774-1780. Beauchamp was a proponent of religious toleration and spoke in favor of penal relief for Catholics in 1778. He spoke against Pitt’s trade proposals and advocated for an independent parliament for Ireland. He believed, however, that the political ties between England and Ireland were essential.

window on the complex process and protocol involved in securing a civil list pension in eighteenth-century Britain.

A quick perusal of this 1779 letter quickly informs us that O'Halloran's plans to secure some form of official remuneration are well advanced at this stage and what he now requires is for some 'friend' to petition Parliament on his behalf. Which immediately begs the question as to why Burke, who already has in his possession, O'Halloran tells us, 'the heads of the Intended Petition', has not already done so? Evidently, O'Halloran also feels that Burke is being somewhat reluctant in this matter and urges this unknown correspondence to intervene on his behalf:

I write by this post, to my friend Mr. Burke to Engage him to make the Required Application, and presentation from me to Parliament, which I hope he will comply with; Will you, My Dear Sir, be so kind as to see and speak to Mr. Burke on this Matter, and to favor me, with a letter, as soon as Convenient.

Unfortunately, there now exists a four-year gap between this letter and the next extant correspondence between O'Halloran and Edmund Burke dated 1783.³⁴ What may or may not have occurred in the interim is at present unknown

O'Halloran's letters to Lord Macartney, June 1781 & February 1782.

In order to maintain chronological sequence I pause here to address the two previously unpublished letters from Sylvester O'Halloran to the diplomat and colonial governor Lord Macartney, (1737-1806).³⁵ This correspondence is clearly an outgrowth of O'Halloran's civil pension campaign. For in addition to pleading the general and military

³⁴ J.B. Lyons, (1963), op. cit., pp. 41-42.

³⁵ George Macartney diplomat and colonial governor was born in either Antrim or Dublin and educated at Trinity College, Dublin. He enjoyed a long political career. In 1764 he was appointed British envoy to Russia. In 1768 he was elected member for Armagh and retained the position until 1776. In 1769 he was chief secretary to Lord Townsend, the Irish viceroy and part of his duties was the management of the Irish House of Commons, a position he held until 1772. His appointment as governor of Madras in February 1781 was for a period of five years. His mission was to counter the French and the Franco-Dutch alliance support for American Independence in India. Macartney's next posting was in Peking, again for the East India Company. In 1796 he was offered and accepted the position as governor of the Cape.

utility of his *New Method of Amputation* O'Halloran's claim for public remuneration was based on a promised, more complete second edition of this work. An edition, he informs us, in the 1779 letter is already at an advanced stage of preparation.

What the exact nature of O'Halloran's relationship with Lord Macartney was is impossible to say, based solely on the evidence of this meager correspondence. It is most likely, however, in the present context, that O'Halloran has approached Macartney to stand for him with a London bookseller, in much the same manner as he had approached Henry Jerome de Salis³⁶ in 1777 concerning the printing of his *A General History of Ireland* (1778). He may also have enclosed in his letter to Macartney, as he did with his letter to de Salis, some further documents relating to a general overview of the proposed work and a list of printing proposals.³⁷

Be that as it may, O'Halloran's request to Lord Macartney indicates that he was now far enough advanced with his proposed second edition that his thoughts had turned to the practicalities of printing and finding a sponsor and possible subscriber that would not only appreciate the military utility of his work, but with would be sufficiently stimulated to stand sponsor for him with a suitable bookseller. O'Halloran's reply to Lord Macartney dated 2 February 1782 confirms that his request was met with a positive response; '*Gratitude for the unlimited order, on your Book-seller, in London,*' This support from the highly political and military influential Macartney would have greatly enhanced the dynamics of O'Halloran's campaign.

In the final analysis we are left wondering what ever happened to the proposed second edition. There is no evidence, or at least I can find none, that a second edition of O'Halloran's *New Method of Amputation* ever came to press. The last mention extant to this work is in letter to Burke dated 1783, where he assures Burke that although the death

³⁶ Reprinted in 'A Rediscovered Letter of Silvester O'Halloran to Dr. de Salis, 1 February 1777', Claire E. Lyons, (ed.), pp. 55-6.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 50-51.

of his wife had delayed matters somewhat he intends to 'immediately resume' work on the second edition.³⁸

To return to the matter at hand, this letter also confirms that Burke did not support O'Halloran's petition to Parliament in 1779. Moreover, it appears that Burke's recalcitrance in this matter was due to the fact that he felt that O'Halloran's claim, based solely on his contribution to medical science, was insufficient grounds to warrant a civil list pension. However, O'Halloran is nothing if not persistent in this matter and once more appeals to Burke for support and, furthermore, broadens his argumentation to include his antiquarian works.³⁹ In addition, he urges Burke to remedy the neglect of Irish 'genius' by agitation for the extension of royal favor to Ireland:

The fact is, our Irish men of consequence seldom extend a thought, beyond themselves & their immediate dependents; so that Genius may flourish or Expire for any Attention paid by them to it. I cannot help thinking, but a proper representation thro' you, would be a means of Extending Royal Munificence to this side of the Channel⁴⁰

Until further evidence comes to light what other correspondence may have occurred between O'Halloran and Burke, or between other interested parties regarding O'Halloran's petition for a civil list pension remains unknown. What can be said is that despite the persistent and enduring nature of O'Halloran's campaign, it was in the final analysis, unsuccessful.

Perhaps, with the benefit of hindsight, this was not the most auspicious time for O'Halloran, more particularly a politically marginalized Irishman, to attempt an entry onto the civil list. The American War of Independence and the specter of the imminent loss of the colonies had brought to prominence the general abuse of the civil list

³⁸ Reprinted in 'The Letters of Sylvester O'Halloran, pt. 11', J.B. Lyons, (ed.), p. 42.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

patronage system.⁴¹ Edmund Burke was especially committed to reform and when returned to power he was responsible for the passing, in 1782, of legislation that would initiate a more widespread reform of the system in general.⁴² An attempt by Charles Vallancey (1721-1812) to obtain a government pension for O'Halloran's fellow antiquarian Charles O'Connor (1710-1791) in 1788, had likewise failed.⁴³

In conclusion then, the primary focus of this article was to bring into the public domain three previously unpublished letters of the renowned Limerick surgeon and antiquarian Sylvester O'Halloran. These letters I have transcribed below retaining the form, punctuation and spelling of the originals. In addition, I have attempted to situate this new material within the body of previously published correspondence in order to reveal the protracted and enduring nature of O'Halloran's campaign to achieve public recognition for his work. It is my contention also that the 1779 letter provides a useful insight into the complex political process and the 'behind the scenes networking' involved in mounting a campaign to achieve a civil list pension in eighteenth-century Ireland/Britain.

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⁴¹ Warwick Funnell, 'The "Proper Trust of Liberty": economical reform, the English constitution and the protections of accounting during the American War of Independence.' *Accounting History*, Vol. 13 No. 1 (2008), pp. 7-32.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴³ Vallancey had submitted O'Connor's name to George Grenvill, (1753-1813) Marquis of Buckingham appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in November 1787, as a likely candidate for a government pension. O'Connor thanks him for his efforts on his behalf in a letter dated 27th March 1788. Catherine Googan Ward & Robert Ward, (eds.), 2 Vols. (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1980), Vol. 2, 440, 273.

Appendix.

O'Halloran's letter to an unknown correspond 1779:

Dear Sir.

As I know you to be, a Gent of great politeness and good Nature as well, as well⁴⁴ as of taste and Erudition, they Encourage me to Request your friendly support - It is now about fourteen years since I published a Treatis[e] on Gangrene, in which a New Method of Amputation was described. many Attempts, for Centuries had been made to abridge the Cure after amputation, and to Remedy many Inconveniencies Complained of, as Subsequent to it; and it may be with Confidence affirmed, that these Useful discoveries were Reserved for me. I may be permitted to say so, since it has since been Acknowledged, by the Royal Reader[y] of Surgery, at Paris, by the Medical Society of London, as may be seen in the fourth volume of their works. By M^f. Bromfield, in the first Volume of his Surgery etc.⁴⁵ Yet so it has happened, that Interesting as this Object is, to the public, particularly, to the Military, and so long and Eagerly sought for, notwithstanding the Recited testimonies in its favor, it has made very little advances, Except under my own hands. Convinced of its great Utility, M^f. Adair, when I was last in London, Recommended me to Memorial Lord North. Claiming a Public Reward for so Useful a discovery. Which was delivered by Col. St. John. Lord North, wrote to M^f. Adair, to know if I was Intitled [*sic*]to such Reward; and he gave it, as his opinion, and quoted Authorities for that opinion that I was. Lord Beauchamp wrote me word, that his opinion was, that the Application should be made thro' Parliament; and I was yesterday Honored with a letter from Sir Grey Cooper, pointing out, that to Apply properly and to Succeed, some friend should Apply to the Chancellor of the Exchequer for his Majesty's permission, to move the House on that head, which must be done, by a petition referred to that House. that Rewards, for useful discoveries in Medicine, have been allotted, the voice of antiquity, as well as of modern times, sufficiently proclaim - the Regency [of] Louis the 14th is replete with proofs of this kind, as well as that of his Successor; even the Use of Agaric to stop Hemorrhagies [*sic*] or bleedings, was Royally Rewarded, by this last - In England also, such Rewards have been granted - By adopting my

⁴⁴ Repeated word in text

⁴⁵ The work referred to by O'Halloran above is '*Chirurgical Cases and Observations* 2 vols. (1773).

Mode of Practice, the cure of Amputation, is abridged by one half in the thigh, where its defects are most sensibly felt, by it, the Cure is Completed, in one third of the time, it now takes up. But besides, the Expedition in healing, the bones are so firmly Covered, with solid flesh, that the patient is totally Exempt, from all these effects, complained of in all other methods, and are by a wo[o]den leg make nearly the same use with the stump, as if no such loss, had been Sustained - All these facts have been sufficiently proved, not only in private practice, but by 14 different Cases, in the Public Hospital of this City. When I first published that work, I had proved it, but in three Cases; yet so eager was I, that the public should benefit by so Useful Practice, that I immediately laid it before them. I have for about twelve months prepared a second edition, Replete with many new cases and further Improvements, but I have waited the Issue of my Memorial; as it is but too Evident, that without some Eminent mark of Public Approbation, this second Edition, will no more Engage the Attention of the Faculty, then the former - in Consequence of Sir Grey Cooper's letter, I write by this post, to my friend Mr. Burke to Engage him to make the Required Application, and presentation from me to Parliament, which I hope he will Comply with; and I am sure it will not want your Countenance and Support. Will you, My Dear Sir, be so kind as to see and speak to Mr. Burke on this Matter, and to favor me, with a letter, as soon as Convenient. I think it is Evident, that by Engaging in this Matter, you Essentially serve the public. I shall, if Necessary, attend on the spot, and submit the facts, to the severest testimony. I hope Mr. Burke will not decline the task, as I could not presume to Request you to do it. He has the heads of the Intended Petition, which I wish you would see – I shall be Solicitous for a speedy Answer; and I have the Honor to Subscribe my-self, with great Respect and Esteem - Dear Sir

Your most Humble
and obed^{nt} serv^{nt}

Limeric Dec. 2nd – 1779 –

Sil: Ô Halloran

O'Halloran's letter to Lord Macartney 1781:

My Lord.

Limeric June 12th. 1781 -

The very kind Letter, which your Excellency did me the Honor of writing to me, of the 19th of February, I did not Receive till the 24th; two days after the departure of the *Swallow*;⁴⁶ and with pleasure and gratitude, I sit down, to Return your Excellency my unfeigned thanks, for this mark of Esteem, and for your Letter to M^r Walter.⁴⁷

It is true my Lord, that I have hitherto, made no other use of it, but to show to my friends, that proof of your Excellency's generous attention to what Regards the Honor of your Country; and when I do send it to London, I shall be Carefull [*sic*] not to abuse your Lordships Liberality. My friend M^r. Browne, the present prime Sergent, has lately favored me, with some interesting particulars Relative to the depriving Irish Lords of their Judicature, from a very scarce work of the late Lord Egmont's.⁴⁸ Indeed my Lord, this Attempt of mine, seems every day, more and more Important; and when I Consider the vast fund of Information still to be sought for, and the little Countenance and Attention paid to the Subject by the public, I am often intimidated from proceeding into, at least with that Alacrity, I otherwise should.

I am truly sorry my Lord, at the very Unfavorable Accounts from India;⁴⁹ but I hope that to your Excellency will be Reserved, the glorious task of Repelling foreign Invaders, and Restoring internal peace to that Quarter of the Globe. It would afford me particular pleasure could I be so happy, as to preserve a place in your Excellency's Memory, and to be sometimes Honored with a few lines, when affairs of greater import, did not Interfere –

With the most profound Respect and the warmest wishes for your Excellencies Success in India, and for your safe and happy Return to your Country, and to your friends,

I have the Honor to Subscribe my-self

My Lord, Your Excellencie's [*sic*]much obliged,

and most obed^{nt}.

and most Humble Serv^{nt}

Sil: Ô Halloran

⁴⁶ Sylvester's son, Joseph O'Halloran was appointed midshipman on board the East India Company's sloop of war, *Swallow* on 22nd February 1781. In 1782 he was made ensign in the Bengal army in India. Therefore, O'Halloran's interest in Indian affairs has a personal dimension. Moreover, as lord Macartney sailed for India on the 21st February, 1781, there is the possibility that the *Swallow* may have comprised part of the escort.

⁴⁷ Mr. Walter of Charing Cross, London, bookseller.

⁴⁸ John Perceval (1711-1770), 2nd Earl of Egmont.

⁴⁹ Macartney's initiatives to collect revenue to support the war effort against the Franco-Dutch alliance was not immediately supported by the Governor general in Calcutta, Warren Hastings, a month later, in July, made Sir Eyre Coote 'military supremo' in Madras. This may be the part of the troubles that O'Halloran is referring to above. For a more detailed account of Macartney's time in India Ref. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004) p. 27.

O'Halloran's letter to Lord Macartney 1782:

My Lord.

2 February 1782

Gratitude for the unlimited order, on your Book-seller, in London, and am high sense[able] of the Honor of your Excellencies kind letter accompanying it, just before your quitting Tarbot, stimulated me, to return you my thanks; which I did by the Trial Packet last June. The same Vessel being now ready to sail from the Shannon, I again take the liberty, to Request your Excellency, will accept of my grateful Acknowledgment and permit me the wishes, to preserve a place in your Memory.

The letter I Enclosed to [Mr.] Walter, last August; but hitherto have made no further use of it, than that of proclaiming your Excellencies generous Intentions - the truth of it is, My Lord, tho' I am far advanced in that work, I have laid it out, on a broad and generous Scale, yet so Little Curiosity do I see, in my Country-men, that I apprehend it would scarce quite caste, much Sub (?) reward a man, for his labor and trouble. As for the Ancient History; my love for my Country, my Ardor to Rescue it, from the many Calamities, which ignorance and Malice had thrown on it; and administer our great Ancestors, with some degree of dignity, due to their virtues, were superior to Every other Consideration. In the present incidence I do not feel myself quite so much interested; and for what I can see, the Public bestow little thought on the Matter. I am never the less persuaded, that if it was to goe [*sic*] on with Alacrity, it would not be the Case. Now I sure of your Excellencies Countenance and Protection I would certainly persevere in work, which I flatter my-self, would ultimately tend, to the Credit and Honor of Ireland.

With the warmest wishes to your Excellencies Success in India, and for Every thing that can add to your happiness, I have the Honor to Subscribe my-self – My Lord – Your Excellencies much Obliged, and most obed^{mt}. Humble Serv^{mt}

Sil: Ô Halloran

Limeric Feb.^y 2^d. 1782 –

