

Amanda McKittrick Ros - The World's Worst Writer?

Larne's own took on every 'auctioneering agent of satan' and won, in her own inimitable way.



'I expect I will be talked about at the end of a thousand years.'

Anna Margaret McKittrick was born on December 8, 1860 in **Drumaness**,

(On Magheratimpany Rd. Wonder if any of the current inhabitants remember her?)

Co Down, the fourth child of Edward Amlave McKittrick and Eliza Black. Few would have known then that Anna Margaret would become, by her own invention, Amanda Malvina Fitzalan Anna Margaret McClelland McKittrick Ros, a writer celebrated and slated in equal measure.

During her first teaching post at Millbrook National School, Larne, in 1887, Anna McKittrick met and married stationmaster Andrew Ross, an admired man in the community, fifteen years her senior. Her first novel was penned and printed eight years into their marriage. Amanda asked her husband to publish *Irene Iddesleigh* as an anniversary present, the story of a marriage doomed from the first moment by unrequited love.

'Mocking Angel! The trials of a tortured throng are naught when weighed in the balance of future anticipations. The living sometimes learn the touchy tricks of the traitor, the tardy, and the tempted; the dead have evaded the flighty earthly future, and form to swell the retinue of retired rights, the righteous school of the invisible, and the rebellious roar of the raging nothing.'

Irene Iddesleigh, (1897)

Formidable as she was, perhaps even Mrs Ros had her moments of wide-eyed expectation when self-publishing her first novel. However, Barry Pain, a well-known critic of the time, harshly set upon the unknown authoress and her first literary attempt.

This was to strike a hostile relationship between Ros and every critic - or 'auctioneering agent of Satan' - from then on. She didn't grasp that all publicity is good publicity and in her case it brought her books to the attention of people who appreciated her 'otherness'. She was admired by Mark Twain and Alduous Huxley, who wrote an essay on her style and works, and Sir EV Lucas, who mentioned by name her second novel *Delina Delaney* in his *Mr Ingleside*.

Delina Delaney introduces a darkness and bitterness not known in the romantic *Irene Iddesleigh*. McKittrick Ros's melodramatic humour has free reign, and is irresistible.

"Home again Mother?" he boldly uttered, as he gazed reverently in her face.

"Home to Hades!" returned the raging, high-bred daughter of distinguished effeminacy.

"Ah me! What is the matter?" meekly enquired his lordship.

"Everything is the matter with a broken-hearted mother of a low-minded offspring," she answered hotly.'

Delina Delaney (1898)

When Andy Ross died in 1917, McKittrick Ros wouldn't let anyone she felt unworthy to be at the funeral walk behind the cart, preferring to move off at a canter! She also notoriously returned wreaths to mourners, an act that would be an outrageous and desperate act of a grieving widow if it weren't for the fact that this was Amanda Ros, the public persona she had created ensuring she was never subject to pity.

Some years later, she went on to marry Thomas Rodgers, who provided a more stable financial environment for her literary talents to flourish. She started her third novel *Helen Huddleson*, in which the characters have the most hilariously-alliterated names yet, including 'Sir Peter Plum' and the 'Earl of Grape'.

Though technically flawed, making them quite laborious to read in parts, Ros's novels are worth a closer look. Her raw embellishment of simple plots is truly charming. You may find the stuff of Hollywood rom-coms in Amanda's books but you won't find the dumbed down transparent characters we are so used to seeing on the big screen.

It is little wonder, when you get a taste for Amanda McKittrick Ros, that sections of the literati in London established special societies to get together and read her astonishing prose and even more absurd verse. It is a captivating thought that while Amanda was at home in Larne, Alduous Huxley may have staggered around a drawing-room perhaps reciting from the unashamedly bitter, irresistibly titled *Poems of Puncture*:

'Beneath me here in stinking clumps
Lies Lawyer Largebones, all in lumps;
A rotten mass of clockholed clay,
Which grown more honeycombed each day.
See how the rats have scratched his face?
Now so unlike the human race;
I very much regret I can't
Assist them in their eager 'bent'.
Epitaph on Largebones – The Lawyer
Poems of Puncture (1912)

Of course there was irony in the admiring glances of such intellectual and literary giants, and it remains unclear if Amanda ever really 'got it'. But there was also a genuine affection for her work that lives on in small bands of fans today.

Larne has recognised her by erecting a plaque in her honour in the local library, something she would probably have publicly acknowledged as appropriate. Good job then, that Nick Page, author of *The World's Worst Writers*, is well out of her grasp as he cites her as 'the greatest bad writer who ever lived.' Of course Ros would agree with six sevenths of that sentence.

Amanda Mc Kittrick Ros died on February 3 1939 and almost 70 of those one thousand years later we are still talking about her.

There are very few editions of any of Amanda Ros' work to be found languishing on bookstore shelves but the Belfast Public Library on Royal Avenue has an excellent collection of first editions, typescripts and also quite a lot of correspondence. Many Amanda Ros fans have made the pilgrimage from all over the world to Belfast for this collection.



Life

McKittrick was born in Drumaness, [County Down](#), on 8 December 1860, the fourth child of Eliza Black and Edward Amlave McKittrick, Principal of Drumaness High School.^[2] She was christened Anna Margaret at Third Ballynahinch [Presbyterian Church](#) on 27 January 1861. In the 1880s she attended Marlborough Teacher Training College in [Dublin](#), was appointed Monitor at Millbrook National School, [Larne, County Antrim](#), finished her training at Marlborough and then became a qualified teacher at the same school.^[1]

During her first visit to Larne she met Andrew Ross, a widower of 35, who was [station master](#) there. She married him at Joymount Presbyterian Church, [Carrickfergus, County Antrim](#), on 30 August 1887.

Her husband financed the publication of *Irene Iddesleigh* as a gift to Ros on their tenth wedding anniversary, thus launching her literary career.^[3] She went on to write three novels and dozens of poems. In 1917 Andrew Ross died, and in 1922 Ros married Thomas Rodgers (1857/58–1933), a [County Down](#) farmer.^[1]

Ros died at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast on 2 February 1939,^[1] under the name "Hannah Margaret Rodgers".^[2]

**IT IS BELIEVED THIS WAS THE HOME OF THE
McKITTRICK FAMILY ON THE
MAGHERATIMPANY RD.**

**(This was later the home of the late Ben Boyd and is now
demolished. This is a Google photograph from 2011.)**



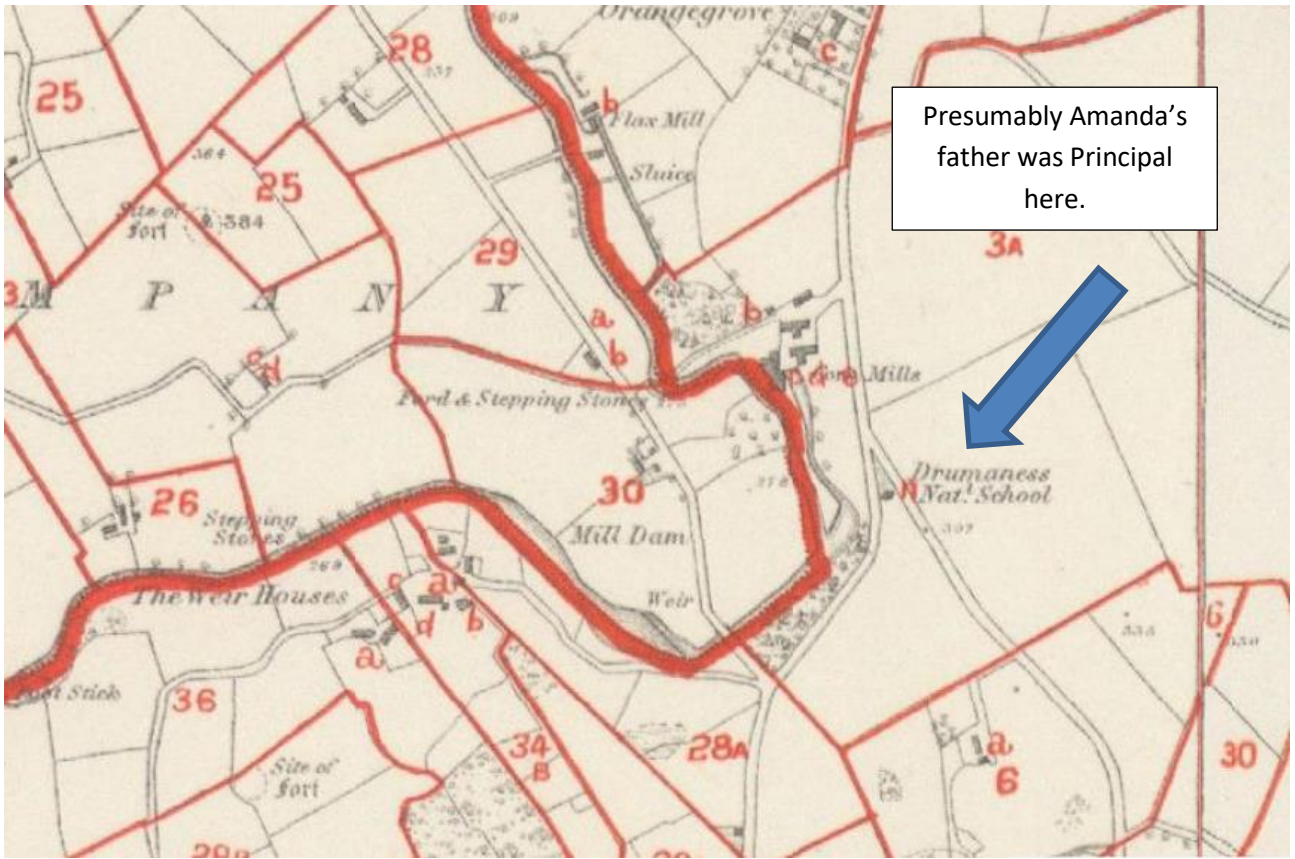
Amanda McKittrick Ros

Born	Anna Margaret McKittrick 8 December 1860 Drumaness, County Down, Ireland
Died	2 February 1939 (aged 78) Larne, County Antrim, Northern Ireland
Occupation	Teacher, novelist, poet
Language	English
Alma mater	Marlborough Teacher Training College
Notable works	<i>Irene Iddesleigh</i> , <i>Delina Delaney</i>
Spouse	Andrew Ross (m. 1887)

No. and Letters of Reference to Map.	Names.		Description of Tenement.	Area.	Rateable Annual Valuation.		Total Annual Valuation of Rateable Property.
	Townlands and Occupiers.	Immediate Lessors.			Land.	Buildings.	

PARISH OF MAGHERADROOL.

MAGHERATIMPANY. (Ord. S. 29.)								
1		Thomas Smyth.	William B. Forde.	House, offices, and land.	20 2 50	14 10 0	3 10 0	18 0 0
2		Hugh M'Mullen.	Same.	House, offices, and land.	7 1 10	5 10 0	1 5 0	6 15 0
3	a	James Gordon.	Same.	House, offices, and land.	39 3 10	30 10 0	7 0 0	37 10 0
	b	Edward M'Creenagh.	James Gordon.	House.	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
	c	Ellen Pedlar.	Same.	House.	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
	d	James M'Gowan.	Same.	House.	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
4		James M'Connell.	William B. Forde.	House, offices, and land.	23 1 25	10 0 0	2 0 0	21 0 0
5	a	William M'Mullen.	Same.	House, offices, and land.	30 2 0	24 15 0	2 0 0	26 15 0
	b	John Gilmour.	William M'Mullen.	House.	—	—	0 5 0	0 5 0
	c	Eliza Gordon.	Same.	House.	—	—	0 5 0	0 5 0
6		John Davey, senr.	William B. Forde.	House, office, and land.	10 0 50	8 0 0	0 15 0	8 15 0
7		John Davey, junr.	Same.	House, offices, and land.	12 1 15	9 15 0	1 5 0	11 0 0
8	A	Peter M'Kenny.	Same.	Houses, offices, & land.	35 2 30	28 0 0	2 10 0	36 15 0
9	B				7 2 35	6 5 0	—	
10		Hugh Davey.	Same.	House, offices, and land.	8 3 0	7 0 0	1 0 0	8 0 0
		Catherine Gilmour.	Same.	House, office, and land.	9 0 20	5 0 0	1 0 0	6 0 0
11	A	Patrick Davey.	Same.	House, offices, & land.	14 2 30	11 0 0	1 10 0	15 10 0
	B				4 0 10	3 0 0	—	
12		Richard Davey.	Same.	House, offices, and land.	16 2 35	13 5 0	1 5 0	14 10 0
13		James Mullen.	Same.	House, offices, and land.	20 2 15	17 10 0	2 0 0	19 10 0
14		Patrick Jennings.	Same.	Herd's house and land.	16 1 10	13 0 0	1 0 0	14 0 0
15		William Mooney.	Same.	House, offices, and land.	16 3 5	13 0 0	1 10 0	14 10 0
16		James Johnston.	Same.	House, offices, and land.	10 3 15	9 5 0	1 0 0	10 0 0
17		Hugh Robb.	Same.	Land.	3 3 30	3 5 0	—	3 5 0
18		James Forsythe.	Same.	House, offices, and land.	6 3 30	4 0 0	1 0 0	5 0 0
19		John Robb.	Same.	House, offices, and land.	18 2 0	15 0 0	1 10 0	16 10 0
20		William Hanna.	Same.	House, offices, and land.	43 0 0	34 0 0	6 0 0	40 0 0
21		James Dornon.	Same.	House and land.	4 1 0	3 10 0	0 10 0	4 0 0
22		Margaret M'Car.	Same.	House, office, and land.	17 0 20	13 10 0	0 15 0	14 5 0
23	a	David Gordon.	Same.	House, offices, and land.	43 0 0	34 0 0	4 10 0	38 10 0
	b	John Davey.	David Gordon.	House.	—	—	0 10 0	0 10 0
	c	Hugh Perry.	Same.	House.	—	—	0 10 0	0 10 0
	d	Anelia Gordon.	Same.	House.	—	—	0 10 0	0 10 0
24		Bernard Smyth.	William B. Forde.	House, offices, and land.	15 2 0	12 0 0	2 10 0	14 10 0
25	a	James Taylor.	Same.	House, office, & land.	10 3 5	6 0 0	0 10 0	6 10 0
	b	William Taylor.						
26		James Thompson.	Same.	House, offices, and land.	4 1 20	3 0 0	1 10 0	4 10 0
27	a	Robert Thompson.	Same.	Herd's ho., offs., & land.	27 1 10	23 0 0	1 10 0	24 10 0
	b	James Dunwoody.	Robert Thompson.	House.	—	—	0 10 0	0 10 0
28		David Johnston.	William B. Forde.	Land.	7 0 5	6 0 0	—	6 0 0
	a	Sarah Finlay.	David Johnston.	House.	—	—	0 10 0	0 10 0
	b	James M'Kittrick.	Same.	House.	—	—	0 10 0	0 10 0
29		Robert Macoubrie.	William B. Forde.	Land.	8 1 16	7 0 0	—	7 0 0
	a	James M'Nicken.	Robert Macoubrie.	House.	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
	b	Thomas Muthewson.	Same.	House.	—	—	0 15 0	0 15 0
30		James Andrew.	William B. Forde.	House, offices, and land.	12 3 10	8 10 0	2 0 0	10 10 0
		Total.			524 2 1	413 15 0	60 10 0	474 5 0
		DRUMSNADE. (Ord. S. 29 & 30.)						
1		David Burns.	William B. Forde.	House and land.	8 0 25	4 10 0	0 15 0	5 5 0



THE OLD DRUMANESS NATIONAL SCHOOL(Top Drumsnade Rd.) – CLOSED 1939

(The school pictured below was a replacement for the village's first school to cater for the children of mill workers which was located opposite the mill at the junction of Oldpark Road and Crawfordstown Road. Although the original building no longer exists, a row of shops now stands in its place.)



NATIONAL SCHOOL-HOUSE AND SMALL GARDEN

DOWN

MAGHERADROOL

37	a	Hugh Coskerry, Patrick M'Veigh,	Same, Hugh Coskerry,	Land, House,	8 3 0	0 0 0	—	6 0 0
					—	—	0 10 0	0 10 0
				Total of Rateable Property, .	761 2 1	414 15 0	407 5 0	823 0 0
	3		William B. Forde,	EXEMPTIONS: National School-house and small garden, .	—	—	2 0 0	2 0 0
				Total, including Exemptions,	761 2 1	414 15 0	409 5 0	821 0 0

RATLYMAGARN

Griffith's Valuation Record Information	
Tenant	
Family Name 1	NATIONAL SCHOOL-HOUSE AND SMALL GARDEN
Forename 1	
Landlord	
Family Name 2	See Exemption
Forename 2	
Location	
County	DOWN
Barony	KINELARTY
Union	DOWNPATRICK
Parish	MAGHERADROOL
Townland	DRUMANESS
Place Name	DRUMANESS
Place Type	TOWNLAND
Publication Details	
Position on Page	19
Printing Date	1863
Act	15&16
Sheet Number	29,30
Map Reference	3

Down Recorder

Drumaness school ready to celebrate 75th anniversary

Drumaness school ready to celebrate 75th anniversary

10 December 2014

A SCHOOL built for the children of Drumaness millworkers will this week mark 75 years of education.

There will be celebrations at Christ The King Primary School throughout the week to mark the birthday with an anniversary mass this evening (Wednesday) at 7.30pm in Christ the King Church for anyone associated with the school.

Visitors have been invited into the school on Friday afternoon to enjoy a photographic display depicting decades of local education.

The village's first school to cater for the children of mill workers was located opposite the mill at the junction of Oldpark Road and Crawfordstown Road.

Although the original building no longer exists, a row of shops now stands in its place.

The next primary school was built at the top of the Drumsnade Road and was known as Drumaness National School. It closed in 1939 leading to the development of a brand new school, adjacent to the church of Christ the King.

The new school opened as Drumaness Primary School and was renamed and blessed as **Christ the King Primary School**, by Canon Gerard McCrory on June 7, 2007.

As part of the anniversary celebrations, parents were given the opportunity to change the school uniform.

They voted for children to wear a shirt and tie, replacing the polo-shirt and sweatshirt which was previously worn by children.

The school colours represent the two local sports clubs in the village, Drumaness Mills Soccer Club and St Colman's Gaelic Athletic Club both clubs wear royal blue.

School principal Grainne Fay said the school crest was maintained as it highlights the Church of Christ the King and the weir which runs along the side of the school from the Dromara Hills.

"Our school is situated in an area of outstanding beauty, our school is beautifully maintained both inside and out and we are extremely proud of it," she said.

"Although our school is a Catholic maintained primary school, we have always welcomed families and staff from other religious and non-religious backgrounds. We continue to do this harmoniously and without issue."

DRUMANESS MILL ORIGINS + FIRST SCHOOL

People

months of the year. In 1845 William Brownlow Forde of Seaforde leased three acres of land to John Davison who planned to build a new flax spinning mill in Drumaness. The mill was completed in 1851 but was up for sale five years later. In 1858 the property was sold for £3000 to James Lamont Brown and his partner Charles Hurst. This was to be the start of a long association between the Hurst family and Drumaness.

The tradition of linen manufacture in the Ballynahinch district provided the labour force for the mill and there was a plentiful supply of locally grown flax for raw materials. In Drumaness the Davidsons and then the Hurst family also provided housing for their workers, creating a mill village. The earliest housing erected in Drumaness was at Red Row consisted of nineteen two storey terrace houses, constructed with blue slate roofs and brick walls leading to the rather literal street name. This was followed by the building of some houses officially called The Green but referred to locally as 'the

back entry' as it led to the mill. In 1872 more of the land was bought from the Davidsons for stores and a shop. Around this time a terrace of slightly larger houses for mill workers was built overlooking the river beside Cumber Bridge and called Riverside. The development of Drumaness was limited by the restrictions of a small and awkwardly shaped site. But in 1906, Hurst's Limited acquired another thirty-three acres from John Forde. This included the ground rising to the west of the mill pond where a number of old thatched cottages stood. These were demolished and fifteen more mill houses were built called Hillside. An Overseer's house was built around 1870 at the end of Red Row overlooking the pond. The Hurst family lived nearby in a late Georgian house known as Harmony Hill.

The housing stock had greatly improved for the mill workers, tenancy depended on employment in the mill, but those who had retired could live on in their homes. The firm repaired the houses and regularly re-painted the

exteriors. Paint was supplied to each tenant every year to redecorate one room in their house. Drumaness National School had opened prior to 1834 but was found to be too small. A mill school was therefore built by the Hurst family for the instruction of the children of their workers. The firm tried to discourage their employees from drinking and smoking. There was no public house in the village. Instead the Hursts encouraged sporting activities and provided a cricket pitch. The firm of Hurst's Limited always displayed a particular interest in the welfare and comfort of their workers and was held in great respect by their employees. Much of the mill housing is still in use today. The linen mill finally closed down in 1968 and its old premises were for a time used by a variety of companies including the establishment of a trout mill in 1973, the only one of its kind in the country at the time.

It would be difficult to leave this reverie on the middle of Down without considering the contribution



Drumaness village and mill

4km SE of Ballynahinch on Newcastle road

This painting of Drumaness was done in 1930 by James J. McKinney (1921-2013) and was kindly given to me by Gerry Rice of Drumaness. The Rice family lived in the end terrace of Red Row c. 1950. The mill buildings are still there today and the old terraced housing but they are surrounded by a modern housing estate (see DR24/11/2004)

In 1659 there were 0 English/Scots & 13 Catholic families here. The proprietor in 1836 was Colonel Forde of Seaforde whose agent was Capt. Gordon. There were 42 landholders in the townland and they were mostly Catholics as the land was poor quality. Their farms were from 3- 24 acres and the rents from 7/6 - 32/6 an acre. The crops were potatoes, corn & barley. Thirty weavers were employed in the mill and a school was established in 1832. There was also William Davidson's corn mill, a wash mill, Johnston's flax mill, McCoobery's flax mill and a bleach mill here. In 1850 James Hurst of Manchester opened a new spinning mill in the village. The Catholic Parochial House and new Catholic chapel were built in 1930 on the western side of Newcastle Road. Drumaness Mills Football Club was formed in 1929.

Newspaper articles from Down Recorder;

new master for the school 24 Feb 1838; J. Nocher murdered 22 Jun 1850; valuable flax mill, machinery & land for sale 24 Jan 1857; stabbing at public house 17 Jul 1858; science class results 13 Jul 1872 ;accident at Hurst's mill 8 Feb 1873; strike at spinning mill 3 Jul 1924*; Drumaness District Summer Football League meeting 4 Jun 1939*

I have indexed the full listings of all the inhabitants in Griffiths Valuations for 1863 into the Surnames Index.

References: TCC p 33; V 17 p 99, 104 OSM: **BH**; DR; DR*; HMP p 28; DMFC ; DR 4/1/2012 p24 (photo of Mill c. 1910) ; OBL5 p33,34,35,36 (b/w photos)

The above picture and information is from Ros Davies great website – <http://rosdavies.com/> – which has much information on Magheradroll(including baptisms and marriages 1825 to 1900) and County Down.