

JOHN GRUBB RICHARDSON

Best known for: Founding the Quaker model village Bessbrook, Education Reform and his involvement in the linen, fertiliser and shipping industries.

Born: In Lisburn - 13/Nov/1813 Died in Moyallon House in 1891

Family life: John was the second of 10 children and he himself went on to have 10 children (2 sons and 8 daughters). He initially married his cousin Helena Grubb who died in 1849 giving birth to their second child, Helena. He later remarried Jane Marion Wakefield of Moyallon House. They had 1 son and 7 daughters.

Education: At age 11, John began as a boarder for 3 years at Balitore School (which at that stage was predominantly a Quaker institution, and later went on to become an official Quaker School). Following this, he completed his education at the Quaker-run Frenchay School in Bristol, England.

A Quaker Life: No matter how successful John became, his christian faith and Quaker principles remained central to his life. Due his strong belief in pacifism, he resigned in the 1850s from the Liverpool Steam Boat Company (a business he founded with the intention of improving conditions for immigrants travelling to America), when he learnt that the ships were being used to transport troops involved in the Crimean War. He advocated strongly for educational reform and believed that integrated education was key to this. All schools during his time in Bessbrook were integrated. The village remains diverse today.

BESSBROOK VILLAGE



The village was a lovely place to live - Laoise
 Founded in 1845, it was the second Quaker Model Village to be founded in Ireland (after Portlaw in 1825). Settlers first came there in 1806. It got its name from Elizabeth (Bessy) Nicholson (an early settler) and also the brook that flowed through the village. In 1845 John Grubb Richardson transformed it to provide safe affordable housing for those who worked in his linen mill.



Bessbrook had integrated Education in the 1800s - Timothy



All residents of Bessbrook had access to medical care - Octavia

The compelling evidence he gave was instrumental to the success and implementation of the Public Schools Act of 1868. In 1882 John was offered a Baronetcy by Queen Victoria, but due to his Quaker belief that all people are equal, he refused this title. He wrote back saying that as a Quaker, the only reward he expected or wanted for having helped his fellow man, was the pleasure it gave him.

Bessbrook: When founding Bessbrook, John strongly believed that without public bars there was no need for either pawnshops or police, so he refused to allow any of the "3 Ps" in his village. To this day there are no pubs or pawnshops in the village, although it does now have a police service. To ensure that all residents were fit and healthy he created an early basic welfare system, whereby residents paid a small contribution from their wages and this funded medical care for all. The village was deliberately designed to be as attractive as possible with every home having a garden area for children to play safely in. Although many of those who lived in the village were Quakers who had come from England to work there, John encouraged residency from members of many denominations, and this was reflected in his insistence on integrated education within the village. The Quaker Cadbury village of Bourneville, built over 30 years later was largely inspired by the success of Bessbrook.