

Rossmore Monument

The Diamond, County Monaghan



August 2026

Ref: 25045

CARRIG
CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL LTD

Atlantis Building, South Cumberland Street, Dublin 2, Ireland
T: +353 15529080 E: info@carrig.ie W: www.carrig.ie

Carrig UK, 70Cowcross Street, London, EC1M6EL, England

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	3
2	METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS.....	3
3	DECORATIVE FEATURES	3
4	ORIGINAL DESIGN AND CHANGES.....	6
5	MATERIALS	7
6	ARCHITECT AND BUILDER	8
7	HISTORIC SUMMARY	10
	7.1 Construction process.....	10
	7.2 Unveiling.....	11
	7.3 Local Significance in the 19 th Century	12
	7.4 Deterioration and Preservation Efforts.....	13
8	TIMELINE OF EVENTS	15
9	HISTORIOGRAPHY	16
10	PHOTOS AND DRAWINGS	16

1 INTRODUCTION

Rossmore Monument in the Diamond is located in Monaghan, County Monaghan. It was constructed in memory of Henry Robert Westenra, the fourth Baron Rossmore, after he died during a hunting accident at Windsor Castle, England in 1874 at the age of 23.

It is a tiered, Gothic-style monument constructed from 1875-1876 by the Belfast-based firm Robinson & Son for approximately £1,000.¹ It was paid for by donation from the people of Monaghan Town and the project was managed by a special committee appointed by the Monaghan Town Committee.

The Rossmore Monument is alternatively referred to as the 'Rossmore Memorial' and the 'monument in the Diamond.'

2 METHODOLOGY AND PROCESS

The research for this report was primarily conducted using primary sources, particularly newspaper accounts of the construction and the years following. To do so, Carrig relied on newspaper archive compendiums, primarily the British Newspaper Archives and the Irish Newspaper Archives.

Searches were conducted using key terms, both with and without wild card functions. Date restricted searches were used when looking for information from a specific period or when too many results were scraped. Relevant search terms for the monument itself included combinations of the terms "Rossmore," "monument," "memorial," "Monaghan," "Diamond," "Monaghan Town Council," "Monaghan Town Committee," "Monaghan Urban Committee," "Monaghan Urban Council."

Relevant search terms for Robinson & Son and the materials they used included "Robinson & Son," "Robinson," "John Robinson," "J. C. G. Robinson," "John Clarke Graham Robinson," "Ulster Marble and Stones Works," "Ulster granite," "Gorraghwood," "Gorrah Wood," "Gorragh Wood," "Gorrahwood," "Belfast," "York Street," "Queen's Quay," "Steam polished granite," "Castlewellan Granite Quarries," and "Frederick Street."

Two Carrig team members traveled to the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland in Belfast in order to examine Robinson & Son's letter books and documents in person.

One Carrig team member also traveled to Monaghan town and took photos of the monument in person, which allowed the Carrig team to cross-reference the primary sources against the visual evidence from the monument.

3 DECORATIVE FEATURES

The original monument included many richly carved decorative details. According to contemporary accounts, the capitals were carved with the following: "centre capital with strawberry and cowslip; the others with narcissus, rose, lily, fern, geranium, columbine, currant, and passionflower."²

¹ Building News, 12 October 1877, pp. 16.

² 'Monaghan: Friday, May 14, 1875.' The Northern Standard, 14 May 1875.



Figure 1: Left: Central capital with strawberry and cowslip; Middle: Outer capital with currant motifs; Right: Outer capital with fern motifs.



Figure 2: Left: Outer capital with narcissus/daffodil motifs; Middle: Outer capital with passionflower motifs; Right: Outer capital with lily of the valley motifs.

When the fountain worked, water came out of the lions' heads that were affixed to the red centre column and flowed into the centre basin.³

One description of the monument on the day it was unveiled said that "a polished marble jewel is inserted in the centre of each key stone."⁴ Above the apex of each arch is a small shield that protrudes from the surrounding stone, each carved with a letter to spell out 'Rossmore.' Each of these eight shields is connected by a carved, decorative band. In the next tier up is a section of smaller arches. The space between each of these pilasters was decorated with the Rossmore arms, crest, and motto.⁵ These are in very poor condition and mostly are illegible.

Three of the sides compose the Rossmore family coat of arms: On the left is the soldier or knight, in the middle is the coat of arms itself, and on the right is the horse rearing up.



Figure 3: Lion head waterspout, affixed to the central column. Source: NBHS.

³ 'The Monument.' The Northern Standard 6 October 1877.

⁴ 'The Monument.' The Northern Standard 6 October 1877. This presumably refers to polished marble and not a true jewel.

⁵ 'The Monument.' The Northern Standard 6 October 1877.



Figure 4: On the left, three of the sides of the second tier, which together form the Rossmore family coat of arms. On the right, an image of the Rossmore family coat of arms for reference. Source: Carrig's photos; Irishheraldry.blogspot.com.

One of the sides contains additional motifs from the Rossmore family coat of arms, including the horse on a raised medallion, the crown from the crest, and a banner, which likely contained the family motto.

Two of the additional faces had another coat of arms in a shield shape, but are unfortunately completely degraded. One newspaper reporting on the monument's unveiling stated that six of the faces bore the Rossmore family shield, so it is possible that these two remaining faces also had elements of the shield.⁶

The remaining two spaces had an inscription, which, depending on the source, said one of the following:

*"In memory of the Right Hon. Henry Cairnes Westernra, 4th Baron of Rossmore, who died at Windsor, on 28th day of March, 1874, in his twenty-third year. Erected by mourners of every class as a testimony of their esteem and affection for one who, during his short life, attached to him the love of all men."*⁷

Or

*"Erected by mourners of every class in memory of the Right Hon. Henry Cairnes Westernra, 4th Baron Rossmore, who died at Windsor, the 27 day of March, 1874, in his 23rd year, as a testimony of the esteem and affection for one who, during his short life, attached to him the love of all men."*⁸



Figure 5: One side of the second tier containing elements from the family coat of arms.

⁶ 'The Visit of the Duke of Connaught to Monaghan.' The Northern Whig, 13 October 1877.

⁷ 'The Rossmore Memorial.' The Northern Standard, 19 February 1875.

⁸ 'The Monument.' The Northern Standard 6 October 1877.

The inscriptions are now almost entirely illegible (see figure six for an example).



Figure 6: The left side shows one of the degraded shields that are unidentified. The right side shows one of the sides that have the inscription dedicating the monument.

Each of the higher tier of arches ends in a carved finale, connecting to a small dome with carved crockets.⁹ From this, there are eight small columns supporting a second, pointed, covering, which originally had a “spire springing from this canopy” with a ornamental weathervane shaped like a sea horse on top.¹⁰ The sea horse has been missing since at least the 1950s.

An iron railing fenced off the monument from the square, with four ornamental gas lamps attached to the fencing.¹¹

4 ORIGINAL DESIGN AND CHANGES

The monument underwent several changes from its original design to its unveiled form, and several more changes in the following decades. Originally, the inscription was slated to occupy two of the faces near the base of the memorial, while the remaining faces would have the arms of the Rossmore

family “and those of the families with which they are connected.”¹² By the time the statue was unveiled, the inscription was on the second tier of the monument.

By 1905, the monument was already starting to deteriorate, and the carved shields on the second tier of the monument were removed to prevent injury to passerby.¹³

While the weathervane was not in the original design, it was added after additional fundraising from the public in 1876 and 1877. In 1938 it was noted in the Northern Standard that the weathervane was in danger of falling off; by 1954, it was reported that the weathervane was “long down.”¹⁴ Similarly, the original design only had two lampposts; fundraising paid for an additional two to surround the monument. After 1917 but prior to the 1950 removal of the fencing, the gas lanterns were swapped out for a fish-hook style electric lantern (see photo section).

The addition of a guard chain did not occur simultaneously to the original construction, but as a separate project from Lord Rossmore prior to its official unveiling in 1877. The original guard chain was an ornamental railing with two entrances, which were proposed to be locked by the town sergeant at dusk and re-opened at 10:00am every day.¹⁵ Eventually, this system was replaced by a wrought iron fence, as

⁹ ‘The Monument.’ The Northern Standard 6 October 1877.

¹⁰ ‘The Monument.’ The Northern Standard 6 October 1877.

¹¹ ‘The Monument.’ The Northern Standard 6 October 1877.

¹² ‘The Rossmore Memorial.’ The Northern Standard, 19 February 1875.

¹³ ‘The Rossmore Monument Renovation Scheme.’ The Northern Standard, 4 February 1905.

¹⁴ ‘Danger from Monaghan.’ The Northern Standard, 7 October 1938; ‘Lively Meeting of Urban Council.’ The Northern Stanard, 10 December 1954.

¹⁵ ‘The Rossmore Memorial.’ The Northern Standard, 28 July 1877.

evidenced by the photographs shown below. The fence was eventually removed in 1950 for £80 in order to make room for new traffic patterns.¹⁶

After the removal of the fencing in 1950, a telephone post was added directly beside the monument (see photo). Benches were also added at some point in the 20th century. While the benches remained after the removal of the fencing, they are absent in a 1993 photo, so they were removed at some point between 1950-1993.

At the time of unveiling, the monument had three steps, although in the present day there are only two.¹⁷

5 MATERIALS

The monument is constructed from a variety of granite and freestone sourced from across the island and from Scotland. The steps, the polished pillars, and the fountain are all granodiorite, a hard, coarse-grain rock that is similar to granite but that contains more plagioclase feldspar than orthoclase feldspar.¹⁸ While contemporary sources referred to this stone as granite, it is a separate classification of rock. All the granodiorite was sourced from Robinson & Son's quarry in Goraghowood, near Newry.¹⁹ Robinson & Son also operated a quarry in Castlewellan, County Down under the name "Castlewellan Granite Quarries," where they quarried Castlewellan granite that falls under the rock unit name of "Newry Complex, Newry Complex Northeast, Granodiorite Pluton."²⁰ Newry granodiorite is "an extremely hard and resistant building material rarely showing any signs of decay or deterioration."²¹ Contemporary sources confirm that parts of the monument were constructed using Goraghowood stones; although Robinson & Son were operating the Castlewellan quarry during the same period, contemporary sources do not reference the Co. Down quarry when discussing the Rossmore Monument.

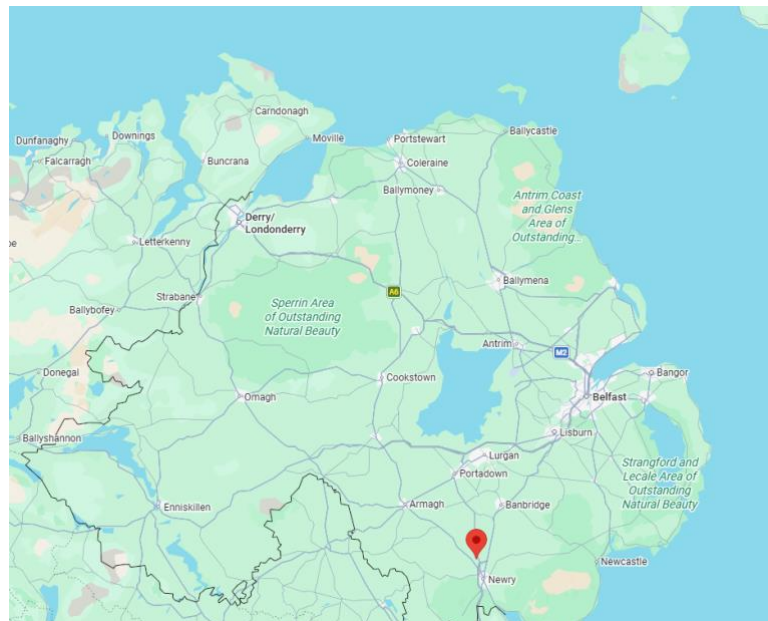


Figure 7: Goraghowood Quarry. Source: Google Maps, 2026.

¹⁶ 'Monaghan City Council.' *The Northern Standard*, 28 July 1950.

¹⁷ 'The Visit of the Duke of Connaught to Monaghan.' *The Northern Whig*, 13 October 1877.

¹⁸ Britannica Editors. "Granodiorite." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 20 July 1998.

¹⁹ 'The Rossmore Memorial.' *The Northern Standard*, 19 February 1875. Goraghowood is alternatively spelled Gorah Wood and Goragh Wood.

²⁰ Stonebuilt Ireland. <https://stonebuiltireland.com/material-detail/?id=108>

²¹ Stone Database. <https://stonedatabase.com/natural-stone/newry-granodiorite/>

The column above the basin is Peterhead red granite, a weakly porphyritic rock likely sourced from quarries near Aberdeenshire, Scotland.²² The remaining stone is a “white Glasgow stone, suitably relieved with blue Cumberland stone, which [was] used for shields, sculptured panels, and small columns at top.”²³ Notably, all the sections made from the “blue Cumberland stone” have deteriorated the most.

The ‘granite’ Robinson sourced was described as being “equal to any found in the United Kingdom,” although most of it was not granite at all.²⁴ After the stones were quarried, they were brought to Robinson & Son’s facilities on York Street in Belfast for polishing and carving.²⁵ At the facilities, the basin and the red granite columns were polished in lathes.²⁶



Figure 8: Peterhead Red Granite Quarries in Scotland, highlighted in blue. Source: Building Stone Database for Scotland.

6 ARCHITECT AND BUILDER

John Robinson was a marble and stone cutter based in Belfast. He was active from at least the 1840s, initially as Robinson, Kelly, & Brown, then later as Robinson & Kelly, and finally as Robinson & Son.²⁷ Robinson & Son was known for their monumental designs, sculptures, and stone cuttings.²⁸ While local

²² ‘The Monument.’ The Northern Standard 6 October 1877.

²³ ‘The Monument.’ The Northern Standard 6 October 1877.

²⁴ ‘Economic Products.’ Northern Whig, 23 May 1876.

²⁵ ‘The Rossmore Memorial.’ The Northern Standard, 19 February 1875.

²⁶ ‘Monaghan: Friday, May 14, 1875.’ The Northern Standard, 14 May 1875.

²⁷ [Dictionary of Irish Architects 1720-1940](#).

²⁸ ‘John Robinson & Son Ltd.’, *Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851-1951*, University of Glasgow History of Art and HATII, online database 2011 [https://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/mapping/public/view/organization.php?id=msib3_1258221426, accessed 29 Jul 2026]

news sources frequently referred to Robinson & Son as architects, no record of them actually being architects has been found.

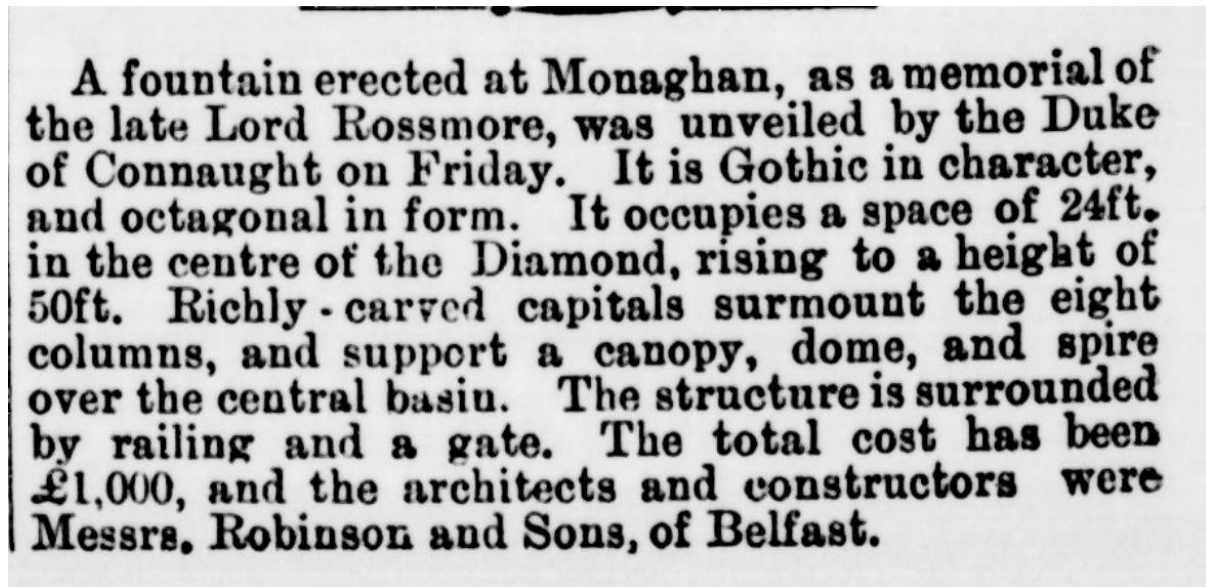


Figure 9: A paragraph referring to Robinson & Son as architects. Source: Building News, 12 October 1877.

While the Rossmore monument was under construction, Robinson operated out of 48-50 York Street, Belfast, where they polished and carved stone. Robinson also operated 'Ulster Granite, Marble, and Stone Works Ltd.' and 'Ulster Steam Polished Granite, Marble and Stone Works,' also based out of 48-50 York Street.²⁹ Robinson advertised that they were the only quarriers and manufacturers by steam power in Belfast.³⁰ They later moved to 44 Queen's Quay, Belfast, before filing for bankruptcy with the city of Belfast on 28 April 1906.³¹

Robinson operated the Goragh Wood quarry, three miles outside of Newry and immediately adjoining the Northern Railway Company's Station at Goragh Wood.³² An 1885 article in the Belfast Telegraph also mentions Robinson operating quarries at Ballymegrehan in County Down, where they had a 'drum' that moved the granite down the mountain and placed on traction-engines or rails to Belfast.³³

Based on the work they did for the Rossmore Monument, Messrs. J. C. G. Robinson & Sons were also selected to build a monument for James Hamilton, Esq. Of Cornacassa.³⁴

²⁹ 'John Robinson & Son Ltd.', *Mapping the Practice and Profession of Sculpture in Britain and Ireland 1851-1951*, University of Glasgow History of Art and HATII, online database 2011 [https://sculpture.gla.ac.uk/mapping/public/view/organization.php?id=msib3_1258221426, accessed 29 Jul 2026]; Belfast Telegraph, 18 May 1875, pp. 2

³⁰ Belfast Weekly Telegraph, 5 April 1879, pg. 1.

³¹ Public Record Office for Northern Ireland, 1/1/703.

³² Belfast Newsletter, 14 August 1889.

³³ 'Granite Development in County Down.' Belfast Telegraph, 16 September 1885.

³⁴ 'The Late James Hamilton, Esq., J.P., of Cornacassa.' The Northern Standard, 13 October 1877.

7 HISTORIC SUMMARY

The fourth Baron Rossmore, Henry Robert Westenra, tragically died in a hunting accident at Windsor Castle, England in 1874 at the age of 23. Shortly thereafter the townspeople of Monaghan began discussing erecting a monument in memory of the Baron and the Town Commission assembled a committee to oversee the process. The Committee was composed of: Ven Archdeacon Stack, D.D., Messrs. M. B. Burke, Mathew G. Rush, James Whitla, Joseph Wright, and A.K. Young.³⁵ Fundraising for the memorial soon commenced. Donor lists were published regularly in the newspapers.³⁶ By 21 November 1874, the memorial fund had raised £857.³⁷

In October 1874, Rossmore family instructed the Committee that the memorial should “take a useful form” by building a fountain in the Diamond with a “height from 30 to 40 feet, and basement from 20 to 24 feet square.” The Rossmores inquired if the commissioners would “take charge of the fountain when built, and supply it with water, even in a temporary manner.”³⁸

On 13 November 1874, the Committee met to decide on an architect and design for the project. 36 architects had submitted designs; the Committee selected three to submit quotes by their next meeting on 26 November.³⁹ Lady Rossmore then approved the memorial design submitted by Belfast-based Robinson & Son. The final design was displayed in the window of Mr. Thomas Mitchell for public viewing during Christmas week, 1874.⁴⁰

In May 1875, the Committee entered into a deed of agreement with the contractors (Robinson & Son).⁴¹

7.1 CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

In April 1875, the Rossmore Committee appointed a sub-committee to decide where the Old Cross should be moved to.⁴² By June 1875, the Committee still had not decided where to move the Cross to.⁴³

A ‘scarcity’ of stone in Glasgow led to building delays; by July 1875, a letter from J. Robinson & Sons was published in the Northern Standard in response to the “frequent enquiries” as to when work on the memorial would commence. In the letter, Robinson states he hopes to begin work on the fountain in a month (August 1875) and complete it by October 1875.⁴⁴

³⁵ ‘Rossmore Memorial Fund Committee.’ The Northern Standard, 14 May 1875.

³⁶ ‘The Rossmore Memorial Fund.’ The Northern Standard, 26 September 1874.

³⁷ ‘Rossmore Memorial Fund.’ The Northern Standard, 21 November 1874.

³⁸ ‘To the Clerk of the Town Commissioners, Monaghan.’ The Northern Standard, 10 October 1874.

³⁹ ‘Rossmore Memorial Fund.’ The Northern Standard, 21 November 1874.

⁴⁰ ‘The Rossmore Memorial.’ The Northern Standard, 19 December 1874.

⁴¹ ‘Rossmore Memorial Fund Committee.’ The Northern Standard, 14 May 1875.

⁴² ‘Monaghan Town Commissioners.’ The Northern Standard, 1 April 1876.

⁴³ ‘Finance.’ The Northern Standard, 11 June 1875.

⁴⁴ ‘Rossmore Memorial Fountain.’ The Northern Standard, 16 July 1875.

In September 1875, the Committee decided to double the amount of lamps at the memorial from two to four, and additional funds were donated to cover the cost.⁴⁵ At this point, the memorial was still not designed to have a fence surrounding it, only 'guard chains.' The four lamps would be placed by each out the four posts the guard chains were to be attached to.⁴⁶ By February 1876, 19 people had donated additional funds to cover the cost of both the two additional lamps and a 'gilding vane' atop the memorial.⁴⁷ The four lamps were installed 'close to the steps' with a chain on the north and south sides of the fountain, leaving two sides open for access to the public.⁴⁸

In April 1876, constructed was completed on the memorial. An auction was held to sell off the planks, boards, poles, and remaining materials left from constructing the monument.⁴⁹

In May 1876, committee member James Whitla proposed that water for the fountain could be supplied from Jail Hill, where the fountain there could supply enough water and the pump at Mill Street could support in moving water to a cistern of 2,000-3,000 gallons that could be built under the road "opposite Mr. Cinnamond's." An inch pipe could then supply water to the fountain year-round at very little cost.⁵⁰

The Committee met on 4 May 1876 and agreed to the handover from the contractor to the committee, with the condition that the contractor was responsible for its maintenance for the first 12 months.⁵¹ During the same meeting, a local painter named Patrick Duffy wrote in to recommend that the four new lamp pillars be painted dark green and 'heavy bronze.' He wrote that if there is no money to pay for the work, he would "ask your honourable board to let me do the job as a compliment to the board." The Committee agreed that the painting should occur.⁵²

By November 1876, two of the lamp covers were already broken and the lamps themselves would extinguish at the smallest amount of moisture. The Town Seargent reported that the contractor was still in his period of required maintenance of the monument, and although Robinson had promised to provide a perforated cover on top of the globe-style light fixture, he had not yet done so.⁵³ In a follow-up meeting in December 1876, James Whitla speculated that the burners were too close to the glass globes, which then cracked from heat. Whitla proposed that since Robinson was soon to visit the memorial for an inspection, the committee should wait to see what Robinson proposed.⁵⁴

7.2 UNVEILING

Several newspapers reported on the monument's unveiling in great detail, including the Northern Standard, the Northern Whig, and Building News. The official unveiling of the Monument occurred on 5

⁴⁵ 'To the Editor of the Northern Standard.' The Northern Standard, 24 September 1875.

⁴⁶ 'The Rossmore Memorial.' The Northern Standard, 24 September 1875.

⁴⁷ 'Rossmore Memorial Fountain Fund.' The Northern Standard, 11 February 1876.

⁴⁸ 'The Rossmore Monument.' The Northern Standard, 6 May 1876.

⁴⁹ 'Timber for Sale by Auction.' The Northern Standard, 29 April 1876.

⁵⁰ 'Rossmore Memorial Fountain.' The Northern Standard, 6 May 1876.

⁵¹ 'The Rossmore Memorial.' The Northern Standard, 13 May 1876.

⁵² 'The Rossmore Memorial.' The Northern Standard, 13 May 1876.

⁵³ 'Town Seargant's Report.' The Northern Standard, 11 November 1876.

⁵⁴ 'The Town Seargant's Report.' The Northern Standard, 9 December 1876.

October 1877 and was presided over by Prince Arthur, the Duke of Connaught. The town was decorated with foliage, bunting, flags, and signage welcoming the royal visit.⁵⁵

The Prince was met at the train station by Lord Rossmore and Captain Candy and large crowds of townspeople. At 1:00pm, Prince Arthur, members of the Rossmore family, the members of the Memorial Committee, and the Town Commissioners presided over the opening ceremony.⁵⁶ Mr. J. K. Young, J.P., of the Building Committee gave an opening speech, which was reprinted as follows:

*Colonel Lloyd, gentlemen of the Commissioners for the Town of Monaghan, a very high honour has been conferred upon me by the Building Committee, that it shall this day, in the presence of his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, the son of our most gracious Sovereign, hand over to your possession for future care this structure, which has been raised by his numerous friends and the inhabitants of this town and county to the memory of the lamented Henry Cairnes, the late Lord Rossmore. . . . I now discharge the duty that has been entrusted to me by transferring to you, sir, as chairman of the Monaghan Town Commissioners, the monument of the affection of the inhabitants of this county, in the memory of Henry Cairnes, Lord Rossmore, the respected and the beloved.*⁵⁷

This speech is interesting in that it refers to the official transfer of ownership of the monument from the Committee in charge of building the memorial to the Town itself. This transfer of ownership became a point of contention in later years, as described in later sections of this report.

After an additional speech by Colonel Lloyd, Lady Rossmore presented Prince Arthur with a silver goblet inscribed with the words “Presented by the Lady Rossmore to his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught on the occasion of his declaring open the fountain erected in Monaghan to the memory of her dear son, the late Henry Cairnes, fourth Baron Rossmore, 1877.”⁵⁸ The Prince then drank water from the fountain using the goblet.

Additional events accompanied the unveiling, including a ball, fireworks, and a luncheon.

7.3 LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

The construction of the memorial clearly played an important role in town culture during this period. Local apothecary and chemist James Whitla regularly advertised for his new perfume, The Rossmore Memorial Floral Essence.⁵⁹ The bottle itself was engraved with a drawing of the Rossmore Memorial Fountain.⁶⁰ Similarly, a local store sold a “choice selection of plain and fancy ornaments, bog oak brooches, and earrings with the Rossmore Memorial carved on them.”⁶¹

In the years immediately after its completion, the monument became a public fixture. Local musicians would play from behind the fenced platform.⁶² One supporter wrote into the Northern Standard on 20 May 1876, saying “On my visiting Monaghan, I was glad to find the Rossmore Memorial completed. In its

⁵⁵ ‘The Visit of the Duke of Connaught to Monaghan.’ The Northern Whig, 13 October 1877.

⁵⁶ ‘The Visit of the Duke of Connaught to Monaghan.’ The Northern Whig, 13 October 1877.

⁵⁷ ‘The Visit of the Duke of Connaught to Monaghan.’ The Northern Whig, 13 October 1877.

⁵⁸ ‘The Visit of the Duke of Connaught to Monaghan.’ The Northern Whig, 13 October 1877.

⁵⁹ ‘The Medical Hall.’ The Northern Standard, 5 April 1879.

⁶⁰ ‘Monaghan Medical Hall.’ The Northern Standard, 21 December 1878.

⁶¹ ‘Ladies’ Dress Department.’ The Northern Standard, 8 July 1876

⁶² ‘The Militia Band.’ The Northern Standard, 26 June 1880.

design it is unique, and reflects the greatest credit on the committee, architect, and contractor. I do not think in the United Kingdom so popular an undertaking was ever brought to such a successful issue, nor could anything have been better designed in taste and architecture.”⁶³

However, the construction was not without local controversy. In 1882, someone wrote in requesting that the newspaper “reprint in pamphlet form the history of Bishop Donnelly’s conduct in relation to the Rossmore memorial . . . [where] the contents would be interesting as well as historical.”⁶⁴ While the full context of Bishop Donnelly’s actions is missing, he did write in to the Northern Standard on 13 March 1876, with his letter reproduced here in full:

To Captain M. Burke, Dear Sir, - There have been sundry groundless rumours afloat, and mistaken interpretations have been put on my holding aloof, as I have hitherto done from the monument a now in course of erection to the late Lord Rossmore. I will no longer lie under the imputation of motives foreign to my mind and heart, especially as my absention was owing to causes which, though I still hold them to have been grave and sufficient, I would fain hope to be now at an end, and to which, therefore, I shall not here more pointedly refer.

*We have had no quarrel with the late lord, nor any desire to cast insult on his memory – very far from it indeed. No section of the community did more than the Catholic clergy and laity to honour him at the attainment of his majority, and during his short career, nor do any class more sincerely mourn the premature demise of a most amiable and kind-hearted nobleman. I take the liberty of sending through you the enclosed ten pounds towards the very graceful monument now almost completed to his memory, and have the honour to be, very faithfully yours, James Donnelly, Bishop’s Residence.*⁶⁵

Similarly, an article printed in the People’s Advocate on 18 March 1876 refers to a *rapprochement* between “the Rossmore family and their Catholic neighbours after Bishop Donnelly’s letter to Captain Burke” after “rabid insult” from the press on behalf of the Rossmore family.⁶⁶

7.4 DETERIORATION AND PRESERVATION EFFORTS

By 1877, the memorial was already showing signs of wear. An article in the Northern Standard requests that the town commissioners consider installing a railing to protect it from abuse: “... we would remind [the commissioners] of preserving from accident or abuse the most valuable and beautiful piece of ornament architecture in the town – the Rossmore Monument. It is among the most discrediting acts of omission of the Town Commissioners that there has not yet been a substantial railing placed round this monument; and it should not any longer be neglected.”⁶⁷

Later that month the Town Commissioners met to discuss the state of the monument, which was now “disgracefully notorious . . . the lamps were broken, the chains round it broken, one of the stones injured, and the brass plate through which the overflow water escaped was wantonly destroyed.”⁶⁸ As the Rossmore Memorial Committee had not yet handed over control of the memorial to the Town Committee,

⁶³ ‘The Rossmore Monument.’ The Northern Standard, 20 May 1876.

⁶⁴ ‘To The Editor of the Northern Standard.’ The Northern Standard, 8 July 1882.

⁶⁵ ‘The Rossmore Memorial Fund.’ The Northern Standard, 18 March 1876.

⁶⁶ ‘The Rossmore Memorial.’ The People’s Advocate, 18 March 1876.

⁶⁷ The Northern Standard, 7 July 1877.

⁶⁸ ‘The Rossmore Memorial.’ The Northern Standard, 28 July 1877.

no one was appointed to the maintenance of the monument. In addition, while Lord Rossmore had previously committed to creating the supply of water that would feed the fountain, he had not yet done so; in 1877 the fountain had still never functioned.⁶⁹

In January 1880 a pipe that supplied the fountain with water burst because of the frost.⁷⁰ In 1885, unknown petty vandals broke off “several of the small ornaments” on the memorial.⁷¹

In 1904 the town of Monaghan completed a two-year waterworks project, which was implemented first under the contractor William McLarnon and then John Graham (of Dromore).⁷² The project created a reservoir with a capacity of 10,000 gallons and included a six-inch pipe that travelled 4.5 (English) miles from the ‘clear water basin’ at the reservoir to the Rossmore monument. The pipe also included three valves and five hatch boxes to facilitate scraping of the pipe. The work was overseen by E Devenish Mears and H. M. Wilson, engineers employed by the Urban District Council.⁷³

Also in 1904, the Urban Council solicited tenders for a contractor to repair the monument and connect its fountain to a water pipe. They selected Henry McGough at a rate of £24 4s 9d.⁷⁴

In 1904-5, Mr. W F Barry was commissioned for a report on conserving the monument. He recommended using a “stone preserved solution” to prevent further decay, as the stone used was “unfit” for outside work.⁷⁵ Barry reported that the eight small columns at the top of the monument would need to be replaced entirely. He also mentioned that the lettering in the inscription had become ‘obliterated’⁷⁶ and that some of the stone was so ‘rotten’ that it could be taken out with fingers. He recommended that all of the carvings on the second tier (the coats of arms and inscriptions) be removed as they posed a danger to passers-by.⁷⁷

In 1905, the Urban Council again solicited tenders for a contractor to wash the monument—potentially with the stone preservation solution—and again selected Henry McGough at a rate of £12 7s 9d.⁷⁸

After 1917 but prior to the 1950 removal of the fencing, the gas lanterns were swapped out for a fish-hook style electric lantern (see photo section).

By 1943, the Monument had further deteriorated. At a meeting of the Monaghan Urban Council, Councillor J. T. Duffy pointed out that “big stones had become displaced, the weathercock was hanging over,” although it was noted that it was unclear who was responsible for the monument’s maintenance.⁷⁹ By 1949, the presence of motor vehicles mean that the Rossmore Monument came under threat. The Monaghan Urban Council consented to remove the monument from the Diamond in order to accommodate new traffic laws. All but two councilmembers spoke out against the removal of the

⁶⁹ ‘The Rossmore Memorial.’ *The Northern Standard*, 28 July 1877.

⁷⁰ ‘Town Sergeant’s Report.’ *The Northern Standard*, 10 January 1880.

⁷¹ *The Northern Standard*, 9 May 1885.

⁷² ‘Monaghan Waterworks.’ *The People’s Advocate*, 22 October 1904.

⁷³ ‘Monaghan Waterworks.’ *The People’s Advocate*, 22 October 1904. More details on the waterworks system can be found in this article.

⁷⁴ ‘Monaghan Urban Council.’ *Dundalk Democrat*, 3 December 1904.

⁷⁵ ‘The Rossmore Monument Renovation Scheme.’ *The Northern Standard*, 4 February 1905.

⁷⁶ ‘The Rossmore Monument.’ *The Anglo-Celt*, Cavan, 9 July 1904.

⁷⁷ ‘The Rossmore Monument Renovation Scheme.’ *The Northern Standard*, 4 February 1905.

⁷⁸ ‘Monaghan urban Council.’ *Dundalk Democrat*, 20 May 1905.

⁷⁹ ‘Our Monuments.’ *The Northern Standard*, 19 February 1943.

Monument, ultimately leaving the decision up to a public vote. However, the council did suggest removing the fencing around the monument, which was eventually removed in 1950.⁸⁰

After the removal of the fencing in 1950, a telephone post was added directly beside the monument (see photo). Benches were also added at some point in the 20th century. While the benches remained after the removal of the fencing, they are absent in a 1993 photo, so they were removed at some point between 1950-1993.

In 2006, Monaghan received £12,000 for the restoration of Dawson Monument and Rossmore Monument as part of the 2006 Conservation Grants under the Urban Renewal for the Border, Midland, and West region.⁸¹ In 2008, Monaghan Town Council allocated an additional £80,000 for the refurbishment of the Diamond, including for enlarging the open space around the Rossmore Monument.⁸²

8 TIMELINE OF EVENTS

- 1874: The 4th Baron Rossmore passes away; fundraising begins for a monument, funded by public donation, to commemorate the 4th Baron. The Town Commission assembles a committee to manage the process. Robinson & Son are selected from 36 submissions to implement the contract.
- 1875: In May, Robinson & Son officially sign the contract with the Committee. Work begins in August after some supply delays.
- 1876: In May, Robinson & Son complete the monument and officially hand it over to the Committee. By November, two of the lamps are broken.
- 1877: The first complaints about the state of disrepair of the monument, including the lack of railing, broken lanterns, and “injured stones” and damage to the plate where overflow water drained from. Later that year, Lord Rossmore sponsored the addition of guard chain and ornamental railing around the monument and connected the fountain to a water source. Official unveiling during Prince Andrew’s visit, where he drinks from the fountain from a silver chalice.
- 1878: A water pipe connected to the fountain froze, stopping the fountain from functioning.
- 1885: Vandals broke off some of the ornamentation from the monument.
- 1904: a waterworks project reconnected the fountain with a water supply.
- 1905: Stone work had deteriorated to the point where some could be removed with fingers. Potential repairs: replacing eight small columns at top of monument, washing with stone preservation solution, removal of crests and inscriptions, repointing.
- 1938: Weathervane begins to fall off
- 1950: Removal of the iron fence surrounding the monument
- 1954: Weathervane is noted as “long down”
- 1985: £10,000 grant for repair of monument
- 2006: £12,000 grant for the restoration of the Dawson Monument and the Rossmore Monument
- 2008: £80,000 allocated by the Monaghan Town Council for the refurbishment of the Diamond, including for enlarging the open space around the Rossmore Monument

⁸⁰ ‘The Diamond Monument May Not Go.’ The Northern Standard, 29 July 1949.

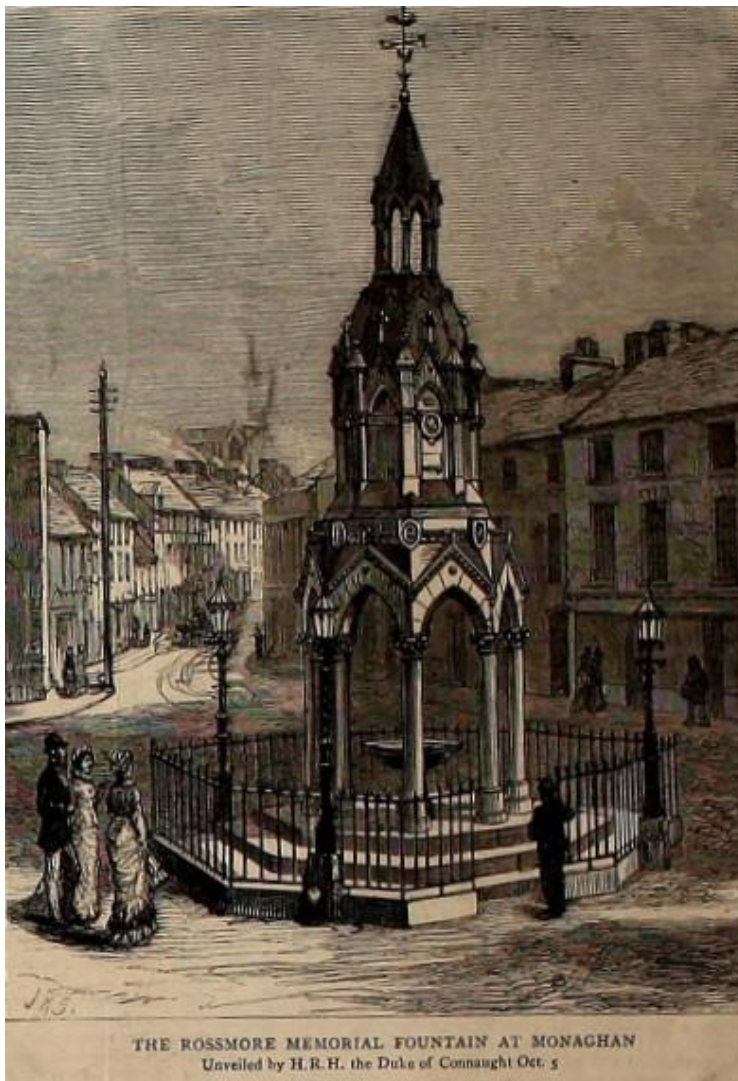
⁸¹ ‘Boost for Architectural Conservation in Monaghan.’ The Northern Standard, 25 May 2006.

⁸² ‘Monaghan Town Works.’ The Northern Standard, March 20, 2008.

9 HISTORIOGRAPHY

In his 2013 book *The Buildings of Ireland: South Ulster*, Kevin V. Mulligan speculates that the English architect E.J. Tarver designed the Rossmore Monument. Mulligan likely came to this conclusion since Tarver is confirmed to have designed the Rossmore Mausoleum where Henry Westenra is interred.⁸³ However, Tarver did not contribute to the Rossmore Monument itself. Many of the modern secondary sources consulted reference Mulligan's theory and state erroneously that Tarver was the architect.

10 PHOTOS AND DRAWINGS



Source: The Graphic, volume XVI, no 414, November 3, 1877.

⁸³ 'Contemporary British Architects'. Building News vol. 59, 11 July 1890 p. 40.



Source: Ireland Photographic Memories by Helen Livingston, reproduced on Archiseek. Photo taken circa 1917. Note that the weathervane is already missing.



Source: Historical Picture Archive, unknown date. Note that the lantern style has changed: previously lanterns were gas, while these appear electric. Also note that there are now only two steps instead of three.



Source: postcard from the collection of Seamus Kearns (1929-2014). Post-1950, as fencing was already removed, but unknown exact date. Note the addition of benches to the sides of the monument and a telephone pole very close to the edge.



Source: Carrig photograph. What used to be the lion head water spout, now removed.

THE ROSSMORE MEMORIAL FOUNTAIN.

On visiting last week the works of Messrs. Robinson & Son, contractors for the Rossmore Memorial Fountain, we were much pleased to observe the rapid progress made towards the completion of what will undoubtedly be a very handsome and artistic work of art. At their granite quarries, Gorah Wood, may be seen the steps, bases of columns, pedestals for basin and lamps, and the pall stones forming an enclosure, all of which are quite finished. The eight polished granite columns which support the buildings are finished at the works in Belfast, and the large granite basin and red granite column for centre of fountain are being polished in lathes. The most tedious portions of the structure are almost completed. The freestone portion of the building is also well forward. The nine large capitals for columns and arch stones, up to the eight shields, bearing the word "Rossmore"—one letter on each—are finished and fitted together. The capitals and other carving are very artistically executed, each capital being beautifully carved with examples of natural foliage, as follows:—Centre capital with strawberry and cowslip; the others with narcissus, rose, lily, fern, geranium, colombine, currant, and passion flower.—*Monaghan Standard*.

Source: Newry Telegraph, May 18, 1875