

## HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

### CLANE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP



#### **RYE VALE DISTILLERY, LEIXLIP**

Intel's operations at Leixlip are a concrete symbol of modern creativity and innovation. Innovation is not new to this location since considerably less obvious and lying in a secluded and picturesque setting behind that Centre of technology is a quiet river-side location which has been an earlier and extremely important Centre for the development of Ireland's linen and distilling industries. Here the latent energy of the river Rye, the second of Leixlip's two rivers, has been harnessed for over two hundred years to provide a naturally endowed incubation centre for these industries which required large amounts of clean water. Hand-printed cottons from India became popular in the eighteenth century and in the early 1750s Dixon and Taylor established an innovative plant at Rye Vale for the printing of cottons. The works were subsequently leased by George Moore, before being leased by partners Cunningham and Harpur who invented a machine to aid the bleaching of linens and cottons.

The Rye Vale concerns were next leased by James Smith and cotton printing at Rye Vale ended when its subsequent owner William Donnellan agreed to lease the buildings to Charles O'Donnell. He converted the building to whiskey distilling to avail of legislative changes in the mid 1820s which had successfully re-invigorated that industry. A number of partnerships operated the Rye Vale distillery until the combined efforts of the Irish Famine and the evolving temperance campaign forced its closure in the late 1840s. In 1874, the Johnston Distilleries Company purchased the old distillery and installed their newly patented and unique distilling process, which produced whiskey fit for consumption without the cost of warehousing. Although chaired by Sir Charles A. Cameron Ireland's pre-eminent food scientist the company was unsuccessful and after a number of other initiatives the distillery finally closed in the 1890s.