

Hidden Gems and Forgotten People

KILLULTAGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



GORDON OF STONEYFORD - VIOLIN MAKER

Hugh Gordon was born in Ballymacward, Stoneyford, Co. Antrim in 1794. The young Hugh Gordon became intrigued by the violin and all types of fiddle music. He started making violins in the 1820's, using local pine and sycamore and making many of his own tools, templates and patterns based on the designs of Stradivari and the other great violin makers. Hugh was a highly intelligent and talented man and became a farmer with a reputation as a bit of an inventor, with a natural bent towards all things mechanical. His love of music led him to show a great interest in the strong tradition of Ulster Scots fiddle music in the South Antrim area which was frequently performed in the open air, particularly at fairs, markets and other social gatherings in neighbouring towns and villages such as Antrim, Crumlin, Glenavy, Lisburn, Ballyclare, Moira, Lurgan and of course, Belfast. Hugh Gordon did not make a great number of violins, perhaps fifty at most, but his work, although that of an amateur is highly regarded by those who have played and owned them. His details are recorded in a number of Dictionaries of violin - Makers, including William Henley's, Dennis Plowright's and Greaven's Irish Violin Makers.

Hugh Gordon died in April 1854 aged 60 and is buried in St. Aldan's Church of Ireland, Glenavy.