

WATERFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY



**Sir Thomas Wyse (1791-1862) Politician and Educational Reformer**

Born in Waterford on the 24 December 1791, Sir Thomas Wyse was educated at a Jesuit college named Stonyhurst in England, and subsequently attended Trinity College, Dublin from 1808 to 1812. His 'Grand Tour of Europe', would see him become acquainted with Letitia Bonaparte (niece of Napoleon Bonaparte) whom he would marry in 1821. They would have two children, though they would separate near the end of the 1820s.

Though Catholic Emancipation was achieved by the time Wyse was elected MP for Tipperary. In parliament, his main interest was of educational reform. He would advocate multi-denominational education with specific religious instruction provided on another day. While the creation of provincial colleges to provide university instruction and education. Wyse's proposals would presage the 'national system' of Irish education and the Queen's Colleges Act of 1845.

In 1832, Wyse competed for the seat of Waterford city, only to be defeated, and then subsequently elected for the same constituency in 1834. He was appointed as a lord of the treasury in the Melbourne government in 1839, becoming one of the first Catholics to be a member of the British government after Catholic Emancipation of ten years previous. In addition, he chaired committees on English legal education and the endorsement of fine arts. However, he would lose his seat in Waterford in 1847.

Wyse was made a British ambassador to Greece in 1849 would see him involved in the Don Pacifico incident (an attack on the Portuguese consul's house) and the development of the Crimean War. In 1857, Wyse was knighted, and returned to Greece to deal with financial reform of the Greek state, while also advocating reform of the Greek legal and penal systems. He died in Athens on 15 April 1862.

**Cian Manning**