

## Did you ever think to link James Joyce to Sir Ernest Shackleton?

One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will  
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.  
(From 'Ulysses' by Lord Tennyson)

I was in and about the city of Dublin on Saturday, 16 June. It was upon that date in 1904 that James Joyce set his novel, *Ulysses*. For many years, that date has been celebrated as Bloomsday, named after Mr Leopold Bloom, a principal character in the novel.

It got me thinking about possible links between the Dublin/ Ireland/ world of James Joyce and that of Sir Ernest Shackleton. Could it be possible to find something that links Joyce to Shackleton, even if obscure and pretty weak? Well, read on...

What was Shackleton doing on 16 June, 1904?

Some places that are common to Joyce's books and Shackleton

Literary links

Shackleton in *Ulysses*

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What was Ernest Henry Shackleton doing on 16 June, 1904? From the immediate sources around me, I can't say for sure exactly what he was up to on that date. However, some things can be said for certain—his rather new lifestyle.

Following Shackleton's return to England in June, 1903, he had inadvertently become the 'quasi-spokesman for the Discovery expedition', as Michael Smith has written, delivering lectures and writing various articles about his time in the ice. A short adventure as subeditor of the Royal Magazine came at the tail end of 1903 but it was obvious that it was not a suitable calling for a personality such as Shackleton.

In November, 1903, Shackleton delivered a lecture to the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (hereafter RSGS) and learned of a significant vacancy—Secretary to the society. He formally applied on 4 November, 1903, and with a bit of assistance from Robert Hugh Mill, Shackleton was officially appointed as Secretary on 11 January, 1904.

Shackleton arrived at the RSGS offices in Queen Street, Edinburgh, like a whirlwind. He wore a light tweed suit and smoked, which contrasted greatly with the traditional black coats of society members. He used typewriters, addressographs and, perhaps worst of all, telephones. Members looked on disapprovingly. 'You should have seen the faces of some of the old chaps when it started to ring today', he wrote to Mill.

To accompany his new job in Edinburgh, Shackleton found a home at 14 South Learmonth Gardens in western Edinburgh. Ernest Shackleton and Emily Dorman were married in Christ Church, Westminster, on 9 April, 1904. As Shackleton settled into his employment, the couple found themselves in influential and elite circles in Edinburgh. It was possible to meet the powerful and wealthy, which would, of course, come in rather useful in years to come.



During this time, Shackleton was preparing for the return of two expeditions from the ice—William Speirs Bruce’s Scottish National Antarctic Expedition aboard the *Scotia* and Robert Falcon Scott’s British National Antarctic Expedition aboard the *Discovery*. The *Scotia* arrived at the Clyde in July, 1904, and *Discovery* returned to the Thames in September, 1904.

Ernest and Emily spent the summer of 1904 in Dornoch in the Scottish Highlands. Mill wrote that Shackleton was ‘trying to learn golf’. However, as Michael Smith’s research has found, it was ‘quickly discovered that golf is a game for patient souls and Emily soon emerged as the better player.’

In fact, back in February, Ernest and Emily had come upon an assistant at the RSGS practicing with ball and club, driving the ball into heavy dividing curtains. Mill tells of Shackleton’s response:

Instead of rebuking his subordinate, Shackleton borrowed the club, and tried his prentice hand at the game. He drove a ball through a pane of the window, right across the street, and far into the Gardens on the other side.

Upon the return of Scott and the *Discovery*, Shackleton went to London to greet his commander and comrades of the Antarctic. Festivities and events were held on 16 September, 1904, as the city welcomed the crew. Soon afterwards, Shackleton left a short note for Scott. He addressed it to ‘My dear Captain Scott’, showing reverence and probable genuine friendship. The note brought Scott up to date with Shackleton’s news since his return from the south.

Just a line to welcome you safely back again after your long anxious time...I am so glad that the whole show has been such a complete success, and that you will now for a time be able to enjoy a rest from your work. As you no doubt know, I am married and settled down as Secretary to the Royal Scottish Geographical Society (RSGS). The pay

is only £200 a year, but it is better than going to sea...I thought if trying to go on another expedition sometime but have given up on the idea now as there seems to be no money about, and besides I am settled so I now have to make money.

So often Shackleton believed himself settled. However, his restless spirit and boundless energy never had him idle or stationary for very long. He always had the concern of money in mind as well as making a name for himself and doing some great feat. Funding and support for his endeavours was to be a constant element of Shackleton's story and is seen throughout the preparations for the *Nimrod*, *Endurance* and *Quest* expeditions.

So, on 16 June, 1904, Shackleton may have been lounging at home with Emily, working frantically at the business of the RSGS or planning his summer at Dornoch.

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In Joyce's story 'Two Gallants', which features in *Dubliners*, Corley tells Lenehan of a woman he met 'going along Dame Street' one night. They arranged to meet the following Sunday. 'We went out to Donnybrook and I brought her into a field there.'

The Shackleton family lived in 35 Marlborough Road, Donnybrook, whilst their father studied at Trinity College, Dublin. One tenuous link made!

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Joyce attended Clongowes Wood College, near Clane in County Kildare. Stephen Dedalus, the main character of Joyce's novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, attended the college for a time.

Ernest's family previously lived at Kilkea House, between the towns of Athy and Castledermot in County Kildare. One (even more) tenuous link made!

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One of Shackleton's favourite poets was Alfred Tennyson, 1st Baron Tennyson. One particular Tennyson poem is relevant to us here. On 11 January, 1903, during the polar trek with Captain Robert F. Scott and Edward Adrian Wilson, Shackleton wrote in his diary: 'Tennyson's Ulysses keeps running through my mind.' As Jim Mayer has written, '[i]t is hard to find a more apt poem to encapsulate Shackleton's restlessness to make a name for himself and to "complete some work of noble note".'

The poem centres on the character of Ulysses (Odysseus in the Greek) following the fall of Troy and his legendary journey home to Ithaca, as told in Homer's *Odyssey*.



Joyce is probably best-known for his novel *Ulysses*. The activities, ramblings and episodes of the characters around Dublin on 16 June, 1904, are compared and often roughly correspond with the structure and narrative of Homer's *Odyssey*.

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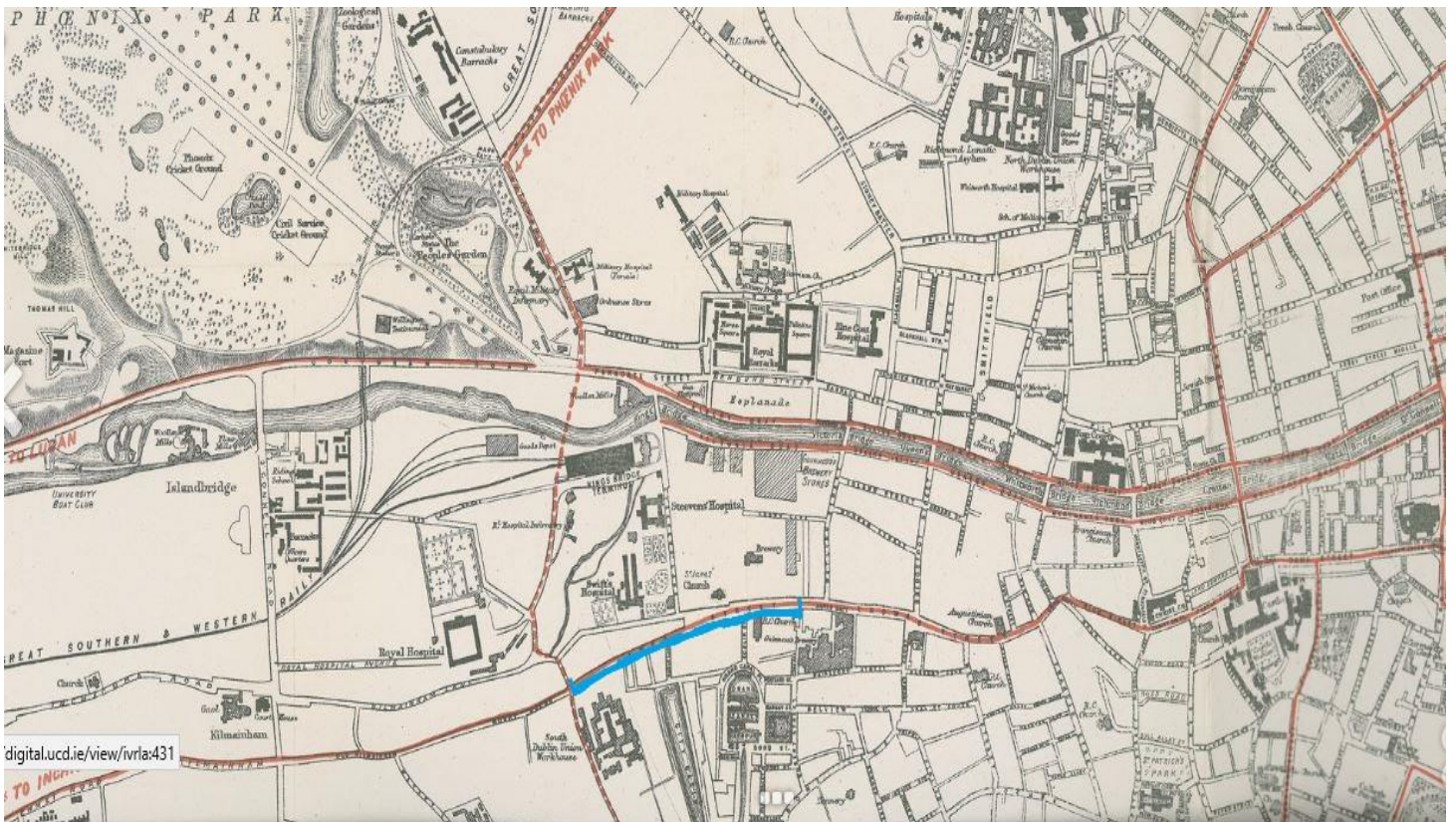
Joyce attended Belvedere College S.J. in Dublin. He also placed Stephen Dedalus into Belvedere in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. John O'Reilly attended Belvedere as a young man. Joyce entered University College Dublin in 1898 and studied English, French and Italian. Both myself and John O'Reilly attended UCD. John was awarded B.Comm. and I received B.A. & M.A.

This does not link Joyce to Shackleton at all, but brings us, the tellers of the Shackleton story, into the intellectual institutions of Joyce. That link is a bit dodgy too, but I promise the next one is spot on!

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Joyce's *Ulysses* is considered a modernist masterpiece. If there was somewhere worth knowing in Dublin in 1904 it's likely it's in *Ulysses*. On page 307 of my Penguin Classics edition (with an introduction by Declan Kiberd), there are the following lines:

From the sundial towards James's gate walked Mr Kernan, pleased with the order he had booked for Pulbrook Robertson, boldly along James's street, past Shackleton's offices.

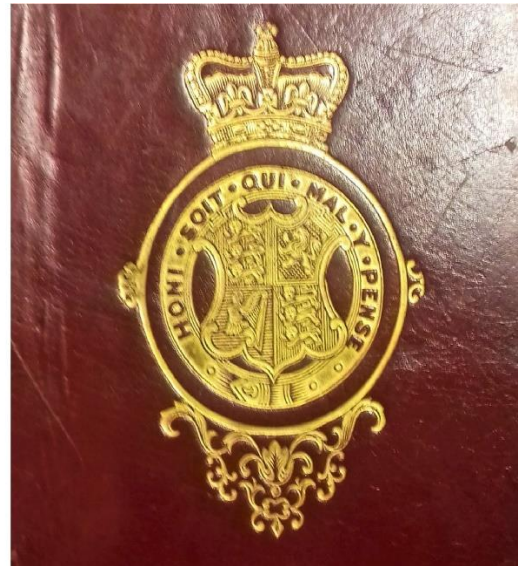
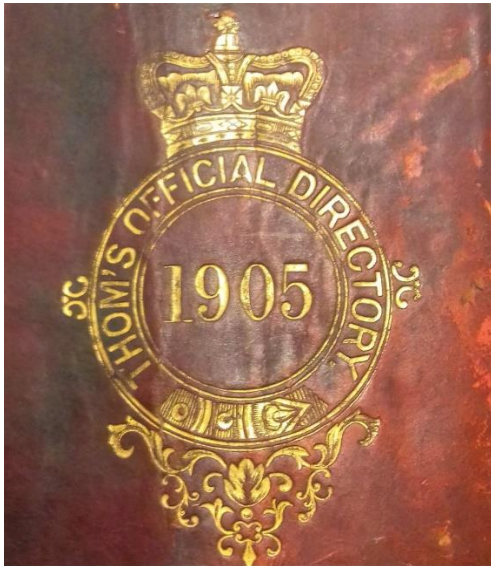


In the novel, Thomas Kernan is a tea merchant and ‘agent for Pulbrook, Robertson and Co, 5 Dame Street, Dublin, and 2 Mincing Lane, London E. C.’ He attends the funeral of Paddy Dignam and even got his name in the newspaper as a mourner. He appears to participate in the drinking of the novel and Molly Bloom recalls him as ‘that drunken little barrelly man that bit his tongue off falling down the mens W C drunk in some place or other’.

In the ‘Nobility, Gentry, Merchants and Traders’ section of *Thom’s Official Directory* of 1905 the following is listed for Shackleton:

Shackleton, George and Sons (Ltd.) millers, corn & flour merchants and confectioners, 35 James Street, 6 and 7 Castle Market—stores, Grand Canal Place, south, and 3 to 7 Bond Street, and Anna Liffey Mills, and Grange Mills, Lucan.

The offices at 35 James Street were near the heartland of the Guinness James Gate brewery of Dublin. The stores at Grand Canal Place and Bond Street made use of the nearby Grand Canal—a significant resource for the mills of Kildare and Lucan.



The Shackleton family had been in the milling business for many years it is an important part of the history of their localities and of the wider history of milling in Ireland. George (1785-1871) and Ebenezer (1786-1856) Shackleton were partners in the milling business at Ballitore, Co. Kildare, established by their father, Abraham. This Abraham was grandson of the first Shackleton to come to Ireland, also named Abraham (1697-1771). The elder Abraham established, with his wife Margaret née Wilkinson, the Ballitore Quaker School for boys in 1726. The above Ebenezer Shackleton and his wife, Ellen Shackleton, were parents of Henry Shackleton, who, with his wife, Henrietta Shackleton, produced Ernest Henry Shackleton, the polar explorer of interest.

In 1826, Ebenezer bought out George’s share of the partnership and set his own operations at Moone while George remained at the mills of Ballitore. In the next decades, George acquired Lyons Mill, at Lyons at the thirteenth lock of the Grand Canal in Co. Kildare, and Grange Mill, Lucan, at the twelfth lock of the Grand Canal. In 1860, George acquired the Anna Liffey Mills, Lucan. George sent his son, Joseph Fisher Shackleton, to manage the Dublin mills. The Ballitore mill was closed in 1875 though the family continued to live in the area. The Lyons

mill was destroyed by fire in 1903 and was not repaired at the time; it now forms part of the Cliff at Lyons complex, a privately-owned luxury hotel.

Richard S. Harrison has written that the various Shackletons in the milling ‘played a particularly innovative role in Irish flour milling in this period [late-nineteenth century into early-twentieth century]’. Joseph Fisher Shackleton at Lucan and Richard Shackleton at Moone were to the forefront of introducing new techniques and new technologies at their mills. This generation of Shackletons was also active in leadership in the industry. Richard Shackleton was active in the National Association of British and Irish Millers and served as its president in 1886. Abraham Shackleton (the third of that name) was an active member of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce and was a well-known figure sometimes called the ‘father of the Irish flour-milling industry’.

## George Shackleton & Sons

Anna Liffey Mills, | Lyons Mills,  
LUCAN, | STRAFFAN.



We use only the best selected Wheats

We possess the most up-to-date machinery

We employ the highest technical skill.

We have 100 years' experience of the trade.

EVERY GRADE OF FLOUR WE MAKE

UNEXCELLED<sup>13</sup> FOR QUALITY AND VALUE.

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In 1904, the different strands of the Shackleton milling family came together. The Memorandum of Association of George Shackleton and Sons Limited tells of ‘the partnership of Abraham Shackleton, Joseph Fisher Shackleton and Richard Shackleton, trading as George Shackleton and Sons’. The Articles of Association tell of the first directors of George Shackleton and Sons:

The first Directors shall be the said Abraham Shackleton, Joseph Fisher Shackleton, Richard Shackleton, William Edmundson Shackleton, George Shackleton. The said Joseph Fisher Shackleton, William Edmundson Shackleton, George Shackleton, and John Wigham Shackleton shall each be a Director for his life, subject to Article 104 [circumstances that would lead a director to have to vacate the office].

The Memorandum and Articles of Association were signed on 2 February, 1904. It was the offices of this company in this arrangement that is

mentioned in Joyce’s *Ulysses* as part of Mr Kernan’s wanderings.

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In the 1903 *Thom’s Official Directory*, the residences of some of the Shackleton’s can be found. Abraham was living at 23 Garville Road, Rathgar, Richard was at Canonbrook, Lucan, and Joseph Fisher was at Anna Liffey House, Lucan.

Looking forward to the 1911 Census, the Shackletons are easy to find, thanks to the National Archives of Ireland’s digitisation and transcription of the return forms. Listed below are the ages of the directors of George Shackleton and Sons, names and ages of spouses if applicable, and occupation as seen on the return forms.

Abraham Shackleton (81). Anne Harvey Shackleton (70). 'Director of Flour Milling Company'.

Richard Shackleton (69). Mary Elizabeth (51). 'JP Flour Mill Owner'.

William Edmundson (43). Edith A. Shackleton (41). 'Flour Miller'.

George Shackleton (38). 'Flour Miller'.

John Wigham Shackleton (35). 'Flour Miller'.

Number.	NAME AND SURNAME.		RELATION to Head of Family.	RELIGIOUS PROFESSION.	EDUCATION.	AGE (last Birthday) and SEX.		RANK, PROFESSION, OR OCCUPATION.	PARTICULARS AS TO MARRIAGE.			WHERE BORN.	
	Christian Name.	Surname.	State whether "Head of Family," or "Wife," "Son," "Daughter," or other Relative; "Visitor," "Boarder," "Servant," &c.	State here the particular Religion, or Religious Denomination, to which each person belongs. [Members of Protestant Denominations are requested not to describe themselves by the vague term "Protestant," but to enter the name of the Particular Church, Denomination, or Body to which they belong.]	State here whether he or she can "Read and Write," can "Read" only, or "Cannot Read."	Insert Age opposite each name:—the Ages of Males in column 6, and the Ages of Females in column 7.  For Infants under one year state the age in months, as "under 1 month," "1 month," "2 months," &c.	Ages of Males.	Ages of Females.	State the particular Rank, Profession, Trade, or other Employment of each person. Children or young persons attending a School, or receiving regular instruction at home, should be returned as <i>Scholars</i> . [No entry should be made in the case of wives, daughters, or other female relatives solely engaged in domestic duties at home.]  Before filling this column you are requested to read the instructions on the other side.	Whether "Married," "Widower," "Widow," or "Single."	State for each Married Woman entered on this Schedule the number of:—  Completed years the present Marriage has lasted. If less than one year, write "under one."	Children born alive to present Marriage. If no children born alive, write "None" in column 11.	Children still living.
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	
1	George	Shackleton	Head of family	Society of Friends	Read and write	38		Flour Miller	Single	-	-	-	County Dublin
2	John Wigham	Shackleton	brother	do	do	35		Flour Miller	Single				do
3	Rebecca Harvey	Shackleton	sister	do	do	38	37		Single				do
4	Jane Christine	Shackleton	sister	do	do	32	32		Single				do
5	Ellen	Coghlan	servant	Roman Catholic	do	32	32	Housewife Domestic Servant	Single				do
6	Elizabeth	Doyle	servant	do	do		26	Coop. Domestic Servant	Single				do

John Fisher Shackleton died in 1908, but he can be found in the 1901 Census. In 1901 he was sixty-years old and gave his occupation as 'Flour Miller'. His wife, Jane Wigham Shackleton, is not on either the 1901 or 1911 census. She was, however, a subscriber and signature on the Memorandum and Articles of Association of George Shackleton and Sons of 2 February, 1904. Jane died in 1909 aged sixty-six.

Although Ebenezer Shackleton (1786-1856) was 'formally removed from the Society of Friends [Quakers] for his failure to conform strictly to its rules in some particulars', all of the aforementioned Shackletons identified as Quakers in their census return forms of 1901 and 1911.

Abraham Shackleton died Wednesday, 29 May, 1912, at his home on York Street, Rathmines, Dublin. That Friday, *The Freeman's Journal* published a laudatory obituary. Abraham was a well-known Irish nationalist and *The Freeman's Journal* praised his dedication to the ideal of self-determination for Ireland.

The passing away of this veteran, who played such a brave and manly part in the fight for Irish self government in the dark days, will arouse much emotion at the present time when the cause for which he stood so nobly and unwaveringly seems, after many years of struggle, to be approaching victory.

The obituary drew upon the presence and industry of the Shackleton family in education and in milling. In these circumstances, if the achievements of another close family member were not mentioned, they would have certainly missing a trick.

It may be mentioned that a nephew of Mr Abraham Shackleton attracted the attention of two hemispheres by his achievements as an explorer a few years ago. This is Lieutenant, afterwards Sir, Ernest Shackleton, who in 1909 reached a point nearer to the South Pole than any explorer had previously accomplished. On the occasion of the announcement of the explorer's triumph, Mr Shackleton, in an interview with the Freeman's Journal representatively expressed indignation at his nephew being claimed as an 'English man'. He declared that he was 'a member of the Ballitore family of Shackletons', adding that 'it isn't because a man is born in a stable that he is a horse'.

SPECIAL EDITION.

**The Freeman's Journal**  
AND  
NATIONAL PRESS.

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DUBLIN: THURSDAY, JUNE 16, 1904.

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In a similar way, *The Freeman's Journal* was sure to recall Shackleton's Irish family in the time after his return from the *Nimrod* expedition. On 6 November, 1909, they felt it necessary to publish the following:

Lieutenant Shackleton's feat is a tangible asset of Ireland. Elsewhere he has been styled a British explorer. We here in the old country know that he is a worthy son of a notable Irish family, who have loved and served Ireland at [sic.] many notable ways. The Shackletons are honoured in Ireland, and we rejoice in the additional renown the young lieutenant has shed upon their name.

Shackleton had been received and celebrated in the imperial capital, London, upon his return. He was promoted to Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (C.V.O.) in July from his previously awarded Member of the Royal Victorian Order (M.V.O.), he was knighted in November and he and Emily even had a personal invitation to Buckingham Palace to meet King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra.

With such acclamation in London, Sir Ernest's Irish birth may have been forgotten (intentionally or otherwise). Shackleton was to receive a very welcome reception when he arrived in Dublin in December, 1909. He was the guest of honour at a luncheon hosted by the Corinthian Club in the Aberdeen Room of the Gresham Hotel on Sackville Street (renamed O'Connell Street in 1924). Later in the evening he gave a lecture at what is now the National Concert Hall, with all proceeds going to aid the Lady Dudley scheme for the establishment of district nurses in the poorest parts of Ireland.



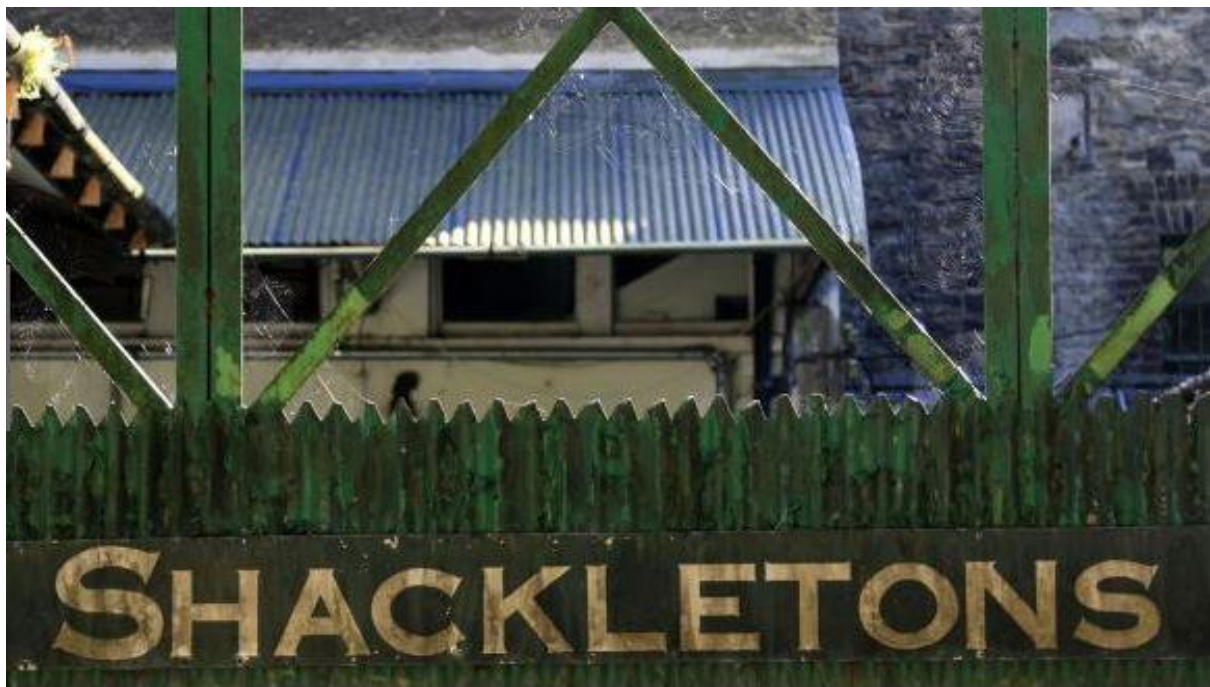
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The Shackleton Anna Liffey Mill still stands in Lucan, Dublin. Operations ceased in 1998 and the premises was acquired by Fingal County Council in 2002. The intention was to create an industrial heritage and visitor centre for the Liffey valley. However, this has not been possible in the economic environment and the site is currently used for archival storage and other uses. See the links below for more on the site and its current state.

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<http://www.timdurham.ie/portfolio/Shackleton-Mill>

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## Images

- Page 2: Royal Scottish Geographical Society, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Queen Street, Edinburgh, in 1905. (Royal Scottish Geographical Society)
- Page 3: Alfred Tennyson, 1st Baron Tennyson, after James Mudd, woodburytype, 1870s (1861). (National Portrait Gallery)
- Page 4: James Street, Dublin, marked with a blue line, shown in the south west section of *Gill & Son's Large Scale Map of the City of Dublin and its Environs*, 1907. (UCD Library Special Collections, Historic Maps Collection)
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- Page 6: George Shackleton & Sons advertisement, *Leinster Leader*, Saturday, 25 June, 1904, p. 2. (Irish Newspaper Archive)
- Page 7: Census of Ireland, 1911, return form A, featuring George Shackleton and others. (National Archives of Ireland)
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- Page 9: Shackleton's Anna Liffey Mills, Lucan, Dublin. Photo by Nick Bradshaw (*The Irish Times*)