

Famous Ulster-Scots O' Mourne

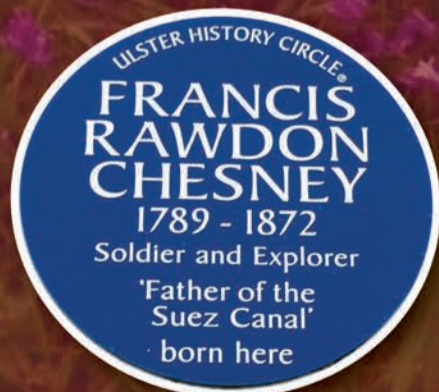
*General Francis Rawdon Chesney
1789-1872*

The Father of the Suez Canal

Francis Chesney was the son of famous Ulster-Scot, Captain Alexander Chesney and was born at Barracks House in the townland of Ballyvea. He began his military career aged just nine when his father enlisted him as a Lieutenant in the local Mourne Yeomanry. Francis went on to serve with distinction in the British Army rising to the rank of General and was given several commissions at home and abroad. It was his commission in Egypt surveying the Suez where he became interested in connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea and where he earned his claim to fame. It was his report which inspired the French to eventually undertake the Suez Canal scheme. Once the Canal opened in 1869, Francis Chesney became known as the 'Father of the Suez Canal'.



Chesney's various works became standard reference books for surveyors and explorers. He was awarded medals by the Royal Society and the Royal Geographic Society, and an Honorary Doctorate was conferred upon him by Oxford University. In 1864, Francis eventually retired from the army, aged seventy five and returned home to Mourne settling at Pacolet House with his wife Louisa and their three sons and two daughters. After passing away in 1872, Francis was buried at Christ Church, Kilkeel. General Chesney is still today remembered on Barracks House in Ballyvea with a blue plaque, which marks his birth place, his achievements and distinguished service.





Pacolet House, Kilkeel

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