Introduction
The cliché "the victors get to write the history" could probably be aptly attributed to Cyrus Field. There is hardly a history on the subject of the trans-Atlantic cables that does not put him at centre stage and not without justification. He was an excellent self-publicist and the "History of the Atlantic Telegraph" first published by his brother in 1866 certainly strengthened his claim. However, just like the recent Hollywood movie, "U571" the popular history ignores the fact that the scientific and technological efforts were due to the contributions of many others who should have a share in an achievement which completely changed the pace of world communications. This paper attempts to re-examine some of the facts using a range of alternative sources. The Cooke drawings in the IET Archives are one such source. Another is Capt. Brine's histori-graphical map of the place and time which is in the BM Library. It is sufficiently accurate that a correlation between its placement of ships and Cooke's drawings of the same can be achieved. Finally, there is a little known document which is held at the Friends Historical Library in Dublin. It was first drawn to my attention by Brendan Scaife, whom some may remember organised the very successful PG-S7 weekend meeting in Dublin in 1987. I am extremely grateful to him for sending me extracts from the "Diary of John Lecky" who died ca 1928. Lecky was the only son of the manager of the quarry at Valentia island and although his memory appears to be somewhat inaccurate in places, he nevertheless gives a unique child's eye-witness account of the events. It is proposed to use a major portion of these extracts as the back-drop to this alternative view of the 1857/58 cable expeditions. The paper will conclude with a brief assessment of subsequent histories of some of the dramatis personae.

"Trace from the Ordnance Survey map of the Island of Valencia (sic) in the Barony of Ivera & County of Kerry for Bewicke Blackburn Esq by J. McGowan CE 17 February 1843" (now in National Museum of Ireland)
"Map of Valentia. shewing the positions of the ships and various lines of cable connected with the Atlantic telegraph compiled from the latest Government surveys and other authentic surveys compiled by Captain Frederic Brine RE FRGS 1859"

The people and the place
McGowan's tracing from the Ordnance Survey of Valentia shows the arrangements of the tenancies three years before the Great Potato Famine a disaster where the different landlords distinguished themselves in different ways. The unfortunate tenants of the Trinity College Dublin estates suffered terribly on account of the inability of the TCD Board to decide what should be done. The tenants of Sir Peter Fitzgerald (1808-1880), 19th Knight of Kerry* fared much better. He was a member of a family who are still in banking and he spent much time on his estate trying to create and foster local industry and ease hardship. He established a slate quarry which was managed by John Lecky's father

" Our house was at Knightstown, the village locally known as the Foot at the east end of the Island and with its garden was separated from the slate quarry works only by a wall which had two or three doors.

The garden was about 4 acres; there was another house in it of only 4 rooms this was used as a lumber house for the first few years. The upper and west side of the garden was over 110 yards long and there we had a rifle range, for we were lent a rifle found in the Redan or Malakoff. It was an English make and had two groves, the bullets being like the planet Saturn.

* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knight_of_Kerry reports that "Knight of Kerry, also called the Green Knight, is one of three Anglo-Irish hereditary knighthoods, all of which existed in Ireland since feudal times. The others are the White Knight (Fitzgibbon Family) and the Knight of Glin (Black Knight)"
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. . . The slate was quarried in great blocks, where the rough ends and sides were sawn off and the blocks brought down to the works to be sawn into slabs, they were sawn by long slips of iron saws without teeth, worked backwards and forwards by machinery and attended to by sawyers constantly feeding the saws with fine flint gravel from Bridport and a constant drip of water. One of the sawyers, Silvanus Sullivan was also our gardener was a considerable friend of ours, a most decent hardworking fellow who found speaking English a difficulty.

The Schooners which brought the gravel used to take away the slabs to London and wherever wanted. I remember the "Reaper", the "Gleaner" and finally the "Sir Charles Napier".

The Quarry foreman was Dan Jones, he was a great ally of mine. His father "old Jones" weighed the slabs en route for the schooners and had a small office and a platform weighing machine just inside the lower gate of the yard close to the pier where the schooners would lie to be loaded.

Mr Blackburn left two boats, one the six oared "Helen" and the other the 10 foot "Star" both rigged with sprit main-sail, jib and mizzen. I used to be allowed to sail the "Star" under the care of Paddy Shea Martin, his real name was only Paddy Shea, but as his father was Martin the Martin was stuck onto the Shea. He was gate keeper and lived just inside the upper gate to the yard. He was an old smacksman and as he had nothing to do during the day I could have him and the star whenever I liked or could get away from lessons. My sister Hannah did her best to teach me the 3 Rs until 1858 when I went to Cork and in 1859 to Queenswood and 1861 to business.

My father having been a ship builder in Cork took great interest in boats and craft of all sorts and he having taken the lines of the Helen and the coastguards' "White Galley" designed a boat for himself. She was made by a man who came round from Cork to repair John Driscoll's smack, "The Olive" I forget his name but he was a good workman and built the boat we called the "Colleen" on my father's lines which roughly were roughly 21 feet overall. The dead flat 1 foot aft of the midship section making the bow 1 foot longer than the stern which had a very flat floor. She was built of fine yellow knotless pine soaked in 3 coats of varnish and in 1883 I had her out for a last sail, then she was sold away and I do not know what became of her."
The events of 1857

"We were roused up in 1856 by the prospect of a submarine cable across the Atlantic being started from Valencia *(sic)*. Some of my own recollections I have put into letters to the Times (vide Appendix). The route for the cable across to Newfoundland had been sounded by HMS Cyclops (a small paddle wheeler). I think that it was the first or at any rate an early attempt to take very deep sea soundings. She came into the Harbour and my Father went on board to call on the Captain and took me with him. Each cast of the lead brought up a little tube of mud or ooze which contained bits of shells etc most interesting to scientific men."

It should be noted here that the Cooke drawings in the IET Archives include illustrations of sounding equipment which was used at that time

"The British and Irish Magnetic Telegraph Company got the contract for the land wire and it was brought down from Killarney to the White Strand. The engineer B.D. Watlock* proved to be a great friend of ours, such a jovial fellow, all loved him. He erected huts for offices at the White Strand but I think the line was run across to the Island in 1858 when the White Strand was given up.

This hut also appears in the Cooke drawings. The annotations in Brine's map mention that it is now up for sale

In 1857 when the ships arrived we had so many visitors to the Island it has always been a wonder where they all got accommodation. Our cousin Margaret Lecky came to pay us a visit and it so happened a fellow passenger on the car was a little old foreign gentleman with whom she got into conversation. He did not know where he was going and he had not made any arrangements but our cousin said Mr Lecky was sending a pinnace for her and he could come too. He was the, at one time, well known Dr Hamel who was employed by the Russian government to find out all the scientific information he could. Hence his visit to Valencia for the Atlantic cable. There was no room in the Hotel for him so my father had a bed made up for him in the little 4 roomed garden house and he had his meals with us. The garden house had no locks to the doors, only the old fashioned thumb latch so the Dr could not lock his door, but to protect himself he opened a blade of his penknife and put it through the latch on to the thumb piece, edge up, so that if anyone tried to get in he would cut his thumb badly. He was an amusing visitor but he would not give us any information. One day Father asked him how the scent of Russian leather was made. Whether or not he knew we do not know but he said "you take one skin of your leather and you put it between two skins of Russian and press them and then your skin will smell like ours"! One day at dinner he took up the pepper caster, but it was empty. Father sent it out to be filled and gave it to the Dr who would not take it "Providence does not wish me to have pepper today". Some of the cable operators had served in the Crimea and one of them had a Crimean medal which whenever he met the Dr he took great care to have displayed prominently on his coat. Our dear Miss Maria Fitzgerald *(daughter of the Knight of Kerry)* lived at Reenglas and she entertained the many visitors as often as she could and amongst them the old Dr who being old, lonely and rather a despised foreigner elicited her profoundest pity and was the occasion of the Valentine in rhyme which she got the next February. It was a long time before the author was found to be Mr Blackburn.

* Benjamin Watlock was still employed by the Magnetic Telegraph Co in 1865/6. His recent passing was noted in an exchange of Christmas Greetings in 1882 between James Graves at Valentia and F. Perry at Heart's Content *(see Cable Talk: Relations between the Heart's Content and Valentia cable stations 1866 - 1886* D. de Cogan Newfoundland Quarterly, **28** (1993) 37 - 43
Paddle steamer, "Willing Mind" taking on the shore end of the 1857 cable for transfer inshore. Note the way in which Cooke has annotated the different parts as if he had a plan to colour the picture at some later date.

Shore end being taken from Willing Mind and transported inshore on rowed boats. The small sail-boat looks particularly like one of those described by John Lecky.
Shore end being shipped towards White-strand, Ballycarberry

landed cable and cable jointing in progress
Shore end wound round an anchoring point, so that when the cable ship draws away it is not pulled out to sea

"The Directors meetings were first in the Hotel, but when they found old Hamel pretending to be asleep they asked help from my Father and the Board meetings were in our dining room and the table they sat at was a circular slab of slate.

To celebrate the laying of the cable the Knight of Kerry gave a banquet and dance and these were held in John Driscoll's store in the slate yard. Most fortunately there were sufficient slabs ready to lay down for the floor and others for the dinner table and of course Father again had trestles knocked up and the small slabs laid on them. What was done for seats I do not remember, nor what the girls thought of the slabs for dancing on, however all went off splendidly. The tables cleared away and the floor was ready for the ball. At the upper end of the store the Knight wanted a big sheet with "Caith Mile Failthe" (céad mile fáilte) (100,000 welcomes) in Irish and evergreens all round. The evergreens were easy but the printing! Father again. He wanted a black paint that would dry quickly so he had a happy thought, a huge bowl of starch was made into which he stirred gunpowder and so got his paint. Whilst the banquet was proceeding I was sailing round in the Helen, but on landing had a message from Father to come in to him. I sat between him and I think Sir Wm O'Shaughnessey a great Indian Telegraph engineer. He gave me my first glass of champagne which I thought nice and Father gave me my first glass of claret which I thought nasty.

In the evening was the first Ball and coming away at midnight there was a light on one of the peaks of the Drung hills up the valley. We thought it was a bonfire but Capt Lyons said "Star of Hope" and star it was. The next night was the Servant ball. Dan Jones said he could and he would dance a sailors hornpipe, but he didn't. I asked him the following day "why!" "Masther John" says he "I had a hole in my stocking fut" (sic)."

The events of 1858

"After the ships went away we had profound calm for a hear. We heard of the new attempt being arranged and of the terrible storm that the Agamemnon got into in the Atlantic when she and the cable were so nearly lost. No visitors on the island, the Fitzgeralds away, Father in London. My sisters and I were all alone when one morning someone came into my room and woke me up with the news "Agamemnon in Lough Kay" such excitement! During the morning Capt Lyons came down from Caherciveen and he took us 4 to go on board the Agamemnon. When we got out to her she was lying like a cork on the water, having laid her part of the cable from mid Atlantic and having burn all her coal as well as some of the decks, she was wonderfully light and it was a wonder how she got in without disaster. All ladders were too short and I think my sisters were slung up in chairs, how I did I forget. In the afternoon the cable instead of landing at the White
Strand was brought round the East end of Begnis and landed on the Valencia beach just under the Coast guard station. We all helped put it up and well tarred our hands."

Once again lots of people turned up and Cooke recorded a royal visit where the young Prince Alfred, then 14 years old appears more interested in the social rather than the technological matters.

Record of fun and games at Glanleam House, (the home of the Knight of Kerry) together with a key which shows the participants, including Cooke and his son as well as one of the sisters of John Lecky.

"In the slate yard was a long narrow saw house never used. My father had the machinery cleared away and lent the house to the company. The house was cut up and divided into rooms by bulk heads and it was at the E. end of the window overlooking the yard and pier that the instruments were assembled. The end of the cables brought in and what messages got through were sent and received until failure and silence."
One of the few that got through: A humanitarian message reporting the collision between the Europa and Arabia on the Grand Banks near Newfoundland

"Directors and Scientists flooded to the island and everything possible was thought of and tried but to no purpose. They tried a very powerful current and my Father had a huge slate battery made for them. I remember one day going into the operating room and one of the Electricians took up a barrel steel pen by an insulated tongs and sent the current through when the steel melted like wax in a candle!"

Aftermath

"All was no good and they all went away. What was left of gear and instruments an Electrician Richard Collett was put in charge of. He was a great friend of ours. He had nothing to do and was ready for anything. The Thomson reflecting galvanometer by which the messages were sent across (sic) and received was still there and Collett had some idea of recording earth currents'. He got me to sit opposite the scale and call out the variations shewn by the mirror,

Collett was involved in the early days of the operation of the 1865/6 cables and there was great friction between him and Graves, the Valentia superintendent. It must have been particularly galling for him when Graves subsequently published several papers on earth-plates using data derived from cables when out of service.
but I do not think anything came of this. When Collett and all had gone this instrument was abandoned and came to my father. After his death I gave it* and pieces of the shore end cable and deep sea cable to the Science Museum South Kensington where it sits alongside the similar one used at Hearts Content (sic) NFLD.*

Peoples' reputations were made and broken on the outcome of the 1858 trans-Atlantic cable. The contribution of E.O.W. Whitehouse* has been recorded elsewhere. It has been argued (History of Technology, 10 (1985) 1-15) that if a cable had been in perfect order and free from all defects, then it might have survived its mistreatment. It is not clear whether there would have been the stomach to have another attempt at that time and in any event the principals and technology of communicating over long cables had some way to progress. In this respect the intervention of the American Civil war was possibly a blessing. Nevertheless, it (the Civil War) did have its casualties. Matthew Maury whose knowledge of the sea and associated surveys of the Atlantic represented a major US contribution to the project sided with the Confederate states. He never achieved major office with the Government following the victory by the Union states. It is perhaps belated recognition that the School of Engineering at the US Naval Academy at Annapolis is housed in Maury Hall.

1858 was a bad year for Cyrus Field. No sooner was he back in New YOrk then his office and warehouse on Beckman Street were destroyed by fire with heavy loss of goods and records. His prospects the following year were even worse. With a nationwide depression he was forced to admit bankruptcy and his creditors were paid off at 25%. According to Bern Dibner this represented his third financial collapse in twenty years and effectively removed him from further investment in the Atlantic venture. Nevertheless throughout all of this he remained optimistic and he was fortunate that he had allied himself to the winning side. According to David Homer Bates ("Lincoln in the Telegraph Office" D. Appleton-Century Co 1939) after many meetings with Lincoln and Secretary of State, Stanton, Field managed in 1862 to sell about 50 miles of the abandoned 1858 cable to the War Department. Bates also paints an interesting portrait of Field for whom he had to transcribe a memorandum

". . . . . the latter was intensely interested in the subject and being of an excitable nature, his words flowed from his lips in a rapid, intermittent stream, while his thoughts outran his spoken words ten to one, so that it was not long before I, not being a shorthand writer was engulphed and the result was, judging from my notes that Field's memorial, like an ocean cable, was discernible only at its two ends, with here and there indications of a struggle and a splash. Several weary hours were spent in this way, and when at last some sort of order had been evolved out of seeming chaos and the memorial finally completed and signed, Field shot out of the door and rushed over to Stanton's room, waving the document as if it were a danger signal, leaving me alone and in a semi-collapse. Drawing long breaths of relief at the removal of the tension, I returned to my regular cipher work, resolved never again to act as an amanuensis for Cyrus W. Field."

Acknowledgement
The kindness of Brendan Scaife who, having found the "Diary of John Lecky" in the Quaker Library, copied relevant extracts and passed them to this author is gratefully acknowledged.

** Neill Brown responding to enquiries on this matter noted that far from 'giving' the Science Museum actually purchased these items from Lecky.
* His descendents, now named Orange-Broomhead still have an interest in this history