

John Frizzle (fl. 1733)

Description

John Frizzle remains an otherwise unknown person; we know little more than that he claimed to have been a Miller at â??Corryâ??s Mill, near Enniskillenâ?• and was familiar to Duckâ??s poetic works. The text I have chosen is from *The Gentlemanâ??s Magazine* (Vol. 3, Feb. 1733, p. 95) and only from what it contains can we guess as to who â??John Frizzleâ?• was.

If he really was a worker at â??Corryâ??s Mill,â?• we can at least investigate the possible work conditions he would have encountered and the socio-economic position he would have held. The Irish economy had suffered significantly since the Glorious Revolution of the century previous (Philip Oâ??Regan, â??Accountability and Financial Control as â??Patrioticâ?? Strategies: Accomptants and the Public Accounts Committee in Late 17th and Early 18th â?? Century Ireland,â?• *The Accounting Historians Journal* 30:2 [December 2003]: 105-131); and, even in times of prosperity, the plight of a miller hadnâ??t ever been easy. Roy Porter has English laboring-class men making as low as a shilling a day and as high as thirty pounds a year, only a little more than enough to survive, but economic conditions would have been significantly worse in Ireland (*English Society in the Eighteenth-Century*). On the other hand, physiometric data from the era has the still predominantly agricultural society of Ireland a few centimeters taller than their English laboring-class counterparts (John Komlos and Francesco Cinnirella, â??European Heights in the Early 18th Century,â?• *Vierteljahrschrift f r Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 94. Bd., H. 3 [2007]: 271-284). An Irish laborer may have fared worse economically, but he probably ate better. Land ownership would have remained out of his reach, as would have much opportunity for social mobility. The poem, it would seem, comes from the desire to rise out of such a position.