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The diary of Frederick Armitage of Noan for 1906

By Denis G. Marnane

This article looks at the background to the Noan estate, a property of about 2,000 acres situated a few miles south of Horse and Jockey. The estate lay in the civil parishes of Graystown and St. Johnbaptist in the barony of Slievardagh. The record of ownership of this property was typical of many such estates: upheaval in the seventeenth century, an orderly pattern of development in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, post-Famine sale and the introduction of new proprietors and finally adaptation to the land legislation at the turn of this century. Allowing a close-up of the workings of the estate in the twilight of the older order is the diary of its landlord for 1906.

Historical background

The core of the Noan estate was in the parish of Graystown and before the Cromwellian confiscation was in the hands of the Laffan family, one of a number of Anglo-Irish families who prospered in the shadow of the Butlers.¹ A smaller denomination, Ballygrehenny, was held by the Fennell family.

Both of these proprietors were dispossessed in the 1650s and, following the Cromwellian plan to use the land of Slievardagh to satisfy the demands of his soldiers, these denominations were granted to one of his officers, Nathaniel Taylor. This officer also obtained lands in the parish of Killenaule, but these were not part of the estate purchased from the Taylors in the mid-nineteenth century.²

Unlike, for example, the barony of Kilnamanagh, which was also reserved for Cromwellian officers but which came to be dominated by just one family, the Maudes, Slievardagh had quite a concentration of settler families – Taylor of Noan, Sankey of Coolmore, Langley of Lisnamrock, Pennefather in Kilvemnon and Shepherd of Clashnasmut. All were descended from officer grantees.

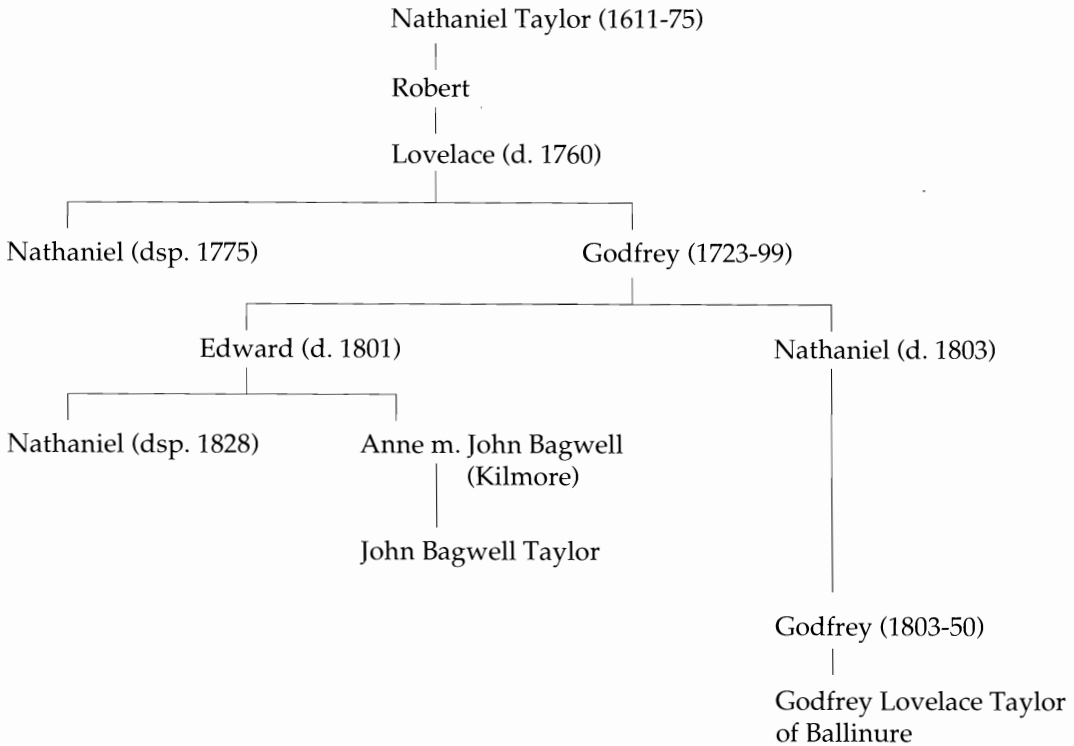
The Taylor property in time was divided between the descendants of the brothers Edward and Nathaniel, who were the fifth generation from the founder of the family in Ireland. The marriage alliances made by various members of the family very much reflected considerations of fishing in a familiar pond. Apart from the founder of the family, who married Susanna Lovelace of Galway, succeeding generations of the family stayed very much within the region with which they were familiar.

Marriage alliances were made with the Bacons of Rathkenny, the Pennefathers of Newpark, the Langleys, the Jacobs, the Whites of Golden and (on two occasions) with the Hare family of Deerpark, Cashel. In what must have been very much a marriage of convenience Robert Taylor, the second generation of the family, married a daughter of the Cromwellian grantee of Graystown.

In terms of its consequences one of the more significant marriages was that in 1819 between Anne Taylor and John Bagwell of Kilmore in the parish of Lisronagh, north of Clonmel. The Kilmore branch of the Bagwells was destined to be much less successful than their better-known cousins at Marlfield. However, in the shorter term, with the death in 1828 of Bagwell's



The Taylors of Noan³



brother-in-law without a direct heir, the marriage of 1819 must have appeared fortunate indeed.

As was customary in such circumstances, John Bagwell assumed the additional surname of Taylor. Thus it was that the property, when it was sold in the Incumbered Estates Court in 1853, was sold by the 33-year-old John Bagwell Taylor. During the seven generations between Nathaniel Taylor, the original grantee, and Bagwell Taylor, there had been changes in the denominations held by the family. The most important, perhaps, was the acquisition by the family of Ballinure, a townland of 853 acres, immediately adjacent to Noan.

Dr. Thomas P. Power, in his *Land, Politics and Society in Eighteenth Century Tipperary*, discusses the economic circumstances that led to the granting of perpetual leases during the first part of that century.⁴ In 1747 Benjamin Burton of Burton Hall in Carlow made such an agreement with Nathaniel Taylor. However, Godfrey Taylor (d. 1799) made a settlement whereby Noan passed to his son Edward and all but about 80 acres of Ballinure became the property of his younger son Nathaniel.

This part of the estate remained in the Taylor family down to the early years of this century.⁵ Edward Taylor, who died in 1801, was very interested in literature and had some of his poetry published in the 1780s.⁶ It was likely that it was he who built up the library of some 2,000 books that were auctioned in 1828 following the death of his son Nathaniel.⁷



The Incumbered Estates Court was set up in the shadow of the Famine, in 1849 to be exact, to allow debt-ridden estates to be sold without the entanglement in red tape that was a usual part of the disposal of property on which was laid a mass (and, indeed, mess) of paperwork concerning mortgages and family settlements.⁸ Apart from the effect of the Famine on the payment of rents on the Bagwell Taylor estate, the fact that John Bagwell Taylor was a minor when he inherited the property and that it therefore was administered by trustees, was not likely to have meant sound administration.⁹ Without rental records, it is not possible to examine how the Famine impacted on the estate; but from other sources some observations can be made.

THE BAGWELL TAYLOR ESTATE (AS SOLD ON 21 JANUARY 1953)¹⁰

Townland	Acreage	Valuations (£)	Average Value per acre of land (£)
Ballaghboy	773.25	499.15	60 pence
Noan	931.25	792.60	77 pence
Ballinure (part)	79	—	80 pence

Total acreage – 1,783.5

Gross Rent – £857

Net Rent – £754

Number of tenancies – 32

The actual denominations of land given in the Incumbered Estates Court rental reflected an older system of place-names than the modern townlands given above. The older denominations were: Noan, Horsepark, Ballyregane, Pierstown, Ballinglara and Ballygreheny. Apart from Ballinure and Noan, none of these names survived, though Frederick Armitage used them to identify parts of his estate in his 1906 diary.¹¹

According to the 1853 rental, 22 of the tenancies were yearly, and this included the largest holding, 175.25 acres. Five of the tenancies were 7 years and dated from 1850 in one case and the following year for the others; one tenancy was for one life or 21 years and dated from 1842; the remaining four tenancies were each for three lives and dated variously from 1797 to 1819.

The fact that all but 400 acres of the estate was free of existing agreements was, of course, attractive to potential buyers. Very important was the fact that James Chadwick, who held the mansion house and 127 acres of the demesne, did so on a seven-year agreement from 1850.

POPULATION CHANGE ON THE NOAN ESTATE, 1841-51¹²

Townland	1841		1851	
	Houses	Population	Houses	Population
Ballaghboy	29	187	27	174
Noan	63	411	40	241
Ballinure (all)	70	487	56	301

These figures do not indicate that there was a planned clearance of tenants from the estate. The reduction in the number of houses in the townland of Ballaghboy is very modest between 1841 and 1851. Noan townland does show a more substantial loss of 23 houses, something reflected in Griffith's Valuation for the townland. This shows a concentration of 19 houses, all



noted simply as 'vacant'. This very likely reflected some of the very poorest families in the townland, whose refuge at best was the workhouse.

In line with general population loss during the decades after the Famine, the reduction in population between 1851 and 1901 was inexorable. During this period, the population of Ballaghboy fell by 65 per cent, that of Noan by 58 per cent and that of Ballinure (all) by 63 per cent. During this same period the population of the county fell by 52 per cent.

The press advertisement for the sale of the Noan estate naturally stressed its attraction to potential buyers. "The demesne lands are beautifully wooded and laid out in plantation, with useful and ornamental timber of over thirty years growth". The property, it was declared, "is held in large well-fenced farms by respectable and solvent tenants, with the exception of a few cottier plots". The estate was sold in one lot on 21 January 1853 for £20,000, which was 27 years' purchase of the profit rent.¹³

The estate was bought by Stanley Black, the background of whom is obscure. Probably he was one of that breed of business gentleman with money to invest whom the Incumbered Estates Court was designed to accommodate. It would be of great interest to know what his tenants made of their new landlord when they caught sight of him as he arrived at Noan. Whatever about the profligacy of established county families like the Taylors, for tenants it was probably a case of the devil you know.

One straw in the wind was the threatening letter received by his land steward in 1862. That year the agricultural economy was in temporary recession, and agrarian outrages, including some spectacular murders, reminded Tipperary landowners of the county's famed propensity for violence. Black's steward was threatened with dire consequences if certain parties against whom decrees for repossession had been obtained were in fact turned out.¹⁴

Immediately to the east of Ballaghboy is the much smaller townland of Knockforlagh, about 236 acres. At mid-century, this was in the possession of John Watson (1771-1854), who in the brutal phraseology of the period, was a "lunatic".¹⁵ Watson's affairs appear to have been looked after by his nephew George N. Watson of Clonbrogan.

This land had been in the Watson family since at least 1745, but Black's interest in it is not difficult to understand. The details whereby ownership was transferred to Black, possibly in 1857, are not clear, but when the well-known parliamentary return of 1876 regarding land ownership gave the Noan estate as 2,019.75 acres, this was made up of the purchase from Bagwell Taylor, rounded off with the Watson land.¹⁶

Black's sole heir was his daughter Harriet, who in 1860 married a most remarkable man, Thomas Rhodes Armitage, who was born in 1824 in England and became a medical doctor. Plagued with bad eyesight all his life, he gave up the practice of medicine in 1860, the year of his marriage. Armitage's practice was in London, and the circumstances under which Harriet Black accepted him, a man who was all but blind, are not known.

Some individuals faced with blindness and the enforced ending of careers would give way to self-pity, but Armitage fought back and out of his affliction did enormous good. In England he gathered together other educated blind men, who investigated the available methods of written communication then current. Their unanimous decision was in favour of Braille, then little



Noan House

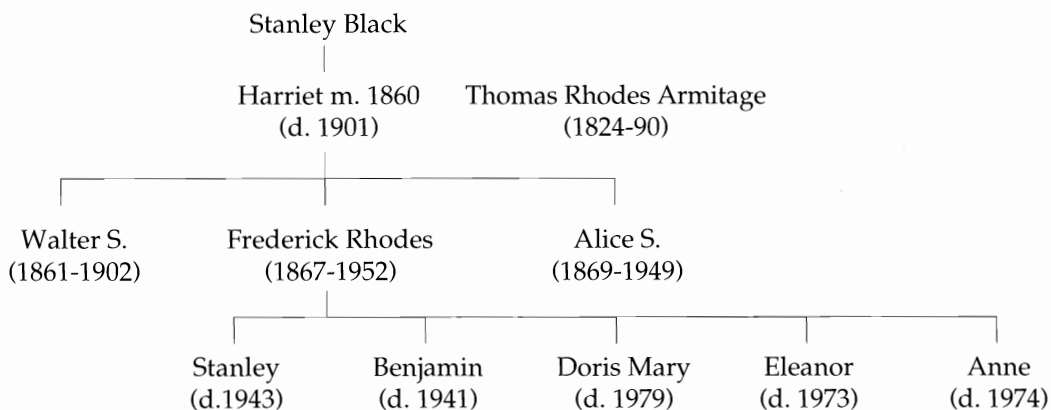


known. Armitage then set about popularising the system and helped to found what became the National Institute for the Blind in 1868.

With regard to the blind, his emphasis was on education and employment, two things that did not come readily to the Victorian mind when confronted with major disability. He was a tireless campaigner and lobbyist, not only in the U.K. but also in Europe, and his work made an enormous contribution to the widespread acceptance and use of Braille.

In the words of one later study: "Without Armitage's great personal influence and tireless pertinacity in what he knew to be a cause of fundamental importance to the blind, it is certain that many years more would have elapsed before Braille was generally adopted".¹⁷ Of necessity, he was away from Noan a good deal. He died in 1890.

The Black-Armitage family of Noan¹⁸



Thomas Rhodes Armitage had two sons and a daughter. The eldest son followed his father's career and became a doctor. When he died in 1902 Noan passed to his brother, even though Walter had a family of his own. Frederick was educated at Rugby and Cambridge; according to local tradition, he worked as an engineer during his early career.¹⁹ His diary of 1906 certainly makes clear that he had a great interest in the practical working of equipment and machinery.

In 1896 he married Ellen Moorhouse, who was from New Zealand. They had a family of three sons and three daughters. Their eldest son did not survive infancy, and the remaining two sons died in action during World War II. Dr. Thomas R. Armitage's daughter Alice carried on her father's work for the blind and helped to found the National Council for the Blind of Ireland. In time her niece Doris became its president.

The 1906 Diary²⁰

The author of this diary, Frederick Rhodes Armitage, was 39 years of age in 1906, though his diary entry for 11 August does not refer to his birthday. He was the father of a four-year-old son and of two daughters aged six and two. Armitage was a life-long diarist, and the 1906 diary indicates a disciplined approach to this practice, whereas in the case of many people intention outstrips performance.

Each day had an entry, usually around 50 to 100 words, and each entry always began with an account of the weather. "Very fine till even., when showery" (11 August). The diary was not



used for any kind of introspective musing; rather the journal is very much that of a practical man of business. The following account of the Armitage diary, discusses it under five headings:

Family, neighbours and social life.

Country pursuits.

The role of landlord.

Farm management.

Politics and public life.

Family, neighbours, social life

The opening entry, that of 1 January, set the tone for the kind of social intercourse enjoyed by the family. After working at his accounts all morning, Armitage and his wife drove to Killenaule, about four miles, in order to visit A.J.D. Simey, who was the District Inspector of the RIC.

One of the difficulties faces by a family like the Armitages was the fairly narrow circle of families "suitable" for friendship, and of course the working of the Land Purchase Acts meant that circle contracted in later years. A special difficulty faced by "new" families of limited pedigree (apart from possible social reservation on the part of older county families, exactly because of this limited pedigree) was the fact that the usual network of the extended family was lacking.

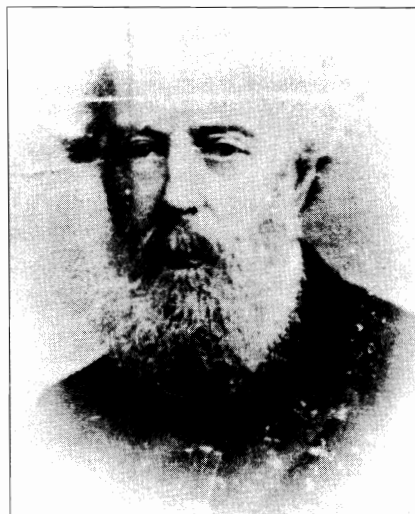
This familial isolation on the part of the Armitage family appears particularly acute. Available information suggests that in 1906 Frederick Armitage had no relatives elsewhere in the county. Armitage was also friendly with the dispensary doctor in Killenaule, W. K. Heffernan and on hearing that the latter was ill, Armitage called (on 1 January) to see him.

There are many references to Heffernan in the diary, both professional and social. The professional connection is hardly surprising, given that there were three small children at Noan and also the fact that Mrs. Armitage was pregnant for most of 1906. (Nothing so indelicate is mentioned in the diary, but their son Benjamim was born in early January 1907!).

On the way home from Killenaule the windows of the carriage, a landau, were broken. Nearly three weeks later (on 24 January), Armitage wrote: "Nearly all day mending landau, picking out broken glass where window was broken".

Some female relatives of his wife stayed with the family for much of 1906 and were, of course, very much part of family activities. With regard to the children, there was the obligatory nanny, a lady called Miss Eacott. As one would expect, the purely domestic side of life does not feature very much in the diary. The contents of the nursery are mentioned when they have to be hauled about during the trips paid by the family to Dublin or London. The children are, however, noticed when ill and their doctor's reports summarised.

Similarly, there are no revealing insights about his wife. The only observation of any interest is that for



Fred Armitage



17 August: "Nell had slight heart attack". But three days later she was well enough to go to Dublin and return on the following day. She was not accompanied by her husband but had one of her female relatives for company.

On 20 March the children were packed off to Greystones, and almost a month later their parents joined them. The reason for this was that on 19 March it was confirmed that the farm manager, a man called Townsend (no christian name is given) had typhoid. The course of and reaction to this illness, as extracted from the diary, is as follows:

(17 March) "Nell found Townsend pretty bad and I biked to Killenaule with note for Dr. Paddy. He is in Dublin. Dr. Fitzgerald taking duty. Moved Townsend into house."

The wider background to this was that Armitage's wife had left for London the previous Monday (17 of March was a Saturday). On Tuesday the diarist noted that he was "doctoring" Townsend, who appeared to have a cold. There was no further reference until that of Saturday, but what had obviously happened was that Armitage's wife, on returning home on Friday, took a more serious view of their employee's illness.

(18 March) "Dr. Fitzgerald of Ballingarry came to see Townsend. Could not tell whether influenza or typhoid."

(19 March) "Dr. Paddy came and said Townsend had certainly got typhoid."

The following day the children were sent to Greystones. As typhoid was a disease usually contracted from contaminated water, Armitage spent that morning "disinfecting and mending [the] yard pump". The following day he took samples of water from the "yard pump", the "house pump" and "Grant's well" and sent the samples to Dublin for analysis. Townsend continued to receive almost daily medical attention and within a few weeks recovered.

A month or so after the children had been sent to Greystones, Armitage and his wife joined them.

(17 April) "Fine, colder and hail near Dublin. Morning biked to Thurles for letters while Nell took train at [Laffan's] Bridge. Went on together to Dublin, then shopping to get tennis racquet repaired and then out to Greystones in evening."

(18 April) "At Greystones. Cold, hail. Went in to Dublin in morning with Nell [and two female relatives]. All went to Spring Show, where I stayed all day but the others did not stay so long."

(19 April) "At Greystones. Fine and warmer but still cold. Went in to Dublin and did some shopping and then to Zoo where met the whole family."

(20 April) "At Greystones. Cold and inclined to be showery. Went in with Nell to Dublin by 11.20 train. Went to Show and bought Hereford bull."

(21 April) "Cold and showery in Dublin. Did some shopping and saw dentist [named] in Dublin. Left Kingsbridge with the family at 3 o'clock and after reaching Noan went round to see bull. Interviewed Wm. Kerr [a gamekeeper] at Harcourt St. Station."

The following month Armitage and his wife spent a week in London, dividing their time between meeting friends and relatives, seeing the more cultural sights (the Natural History Museum and the Royal Academy), going to the theatre and, of course, shopping. In late September his wife and her relatives went to London. At no stage does Armitage express criticism of the seemingly permanent tenure of these ladies in his house.

Three days later, on 29 September, Armitage "Crossed by Rosslare and Fishguard day boat; leaving Laffan's Bridge about 9.30 a.m. and arriving Paddington about 10 p.m." He remained in London for a week, his programme much as before. On one of the days he and his wife went to

Albert Docks to see one of her relatives off to New Zealand. He does not say if this was the highlight of the trip.

On 3 December his wife, children, female relative, nanny and maid left to Dublin. Five days later Armitage joined them. On several days he went for long walks towards Blackrock; they were staying in Lower Mount St. On 12 December: "Went to fat cattle show which was rather poor". On Sunday 16 December: "Went to church at St. Stephen's, good sermon by a curate".

One of the families with whom Armitage was acquainted was Going of Ballyphilip, about seven miles from Noan. The proprietors were the two unmarried sisters of William Ambrose Going, who died in 1897. One of these sisters was in Dublin for an unspecified operation and on a number of occasions during Armitage's stay he met Dr. Heffernan who was also in Dublin, and concern was expressed. (17 December) "Dr. Heff [sic] called and told us that Miss Going's operation this morning had been successful so far."

Armitage briefly returned to Noan between 19 and 22 December, but spent the remainder of the year in the capital. His account of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day is as follows:

(24 December) "In Dublin. Wet on and off all day. Morning shopping. Afternoon with [female relative] to buy muff for Nell; then walking round in streets while all the rest went to hear the carol singing at St. Patrick's."

(25 December) "In Dublin. Fine till afternoon when some rain. Morning, to church at St. Stephen's, Doris and Stanley [his son and daughter] went with us. Afternoon, reading and went for a walk round by Sandymount and Ballsbridge Road."

No mention is made of Christmas dinner; but then there is no evidence in the diary that Armitage had sybaritic inclinations. The last entry for the year noted that the weather was "fine and fairly warm". Armitage spent his day visiting the Natural History Museum and the National Gallery, together with "a little shopping".

Unfortunately, there are no sage reflections on the year passed or to come. The fact that his son Benjamin was born seven days later may explain why the family were in Dublin. Benjamin was to be killed in action on 10 December 1941 when the Japanese attacked and sank *HMS Prince of Wales* off Malaya.

As the novels of Somerville and Ross make clear, much of the social life of county families revolved around visits to each other's houses. On 12 January he and his wife attended a "musical at home at the Deanery", the home of the Rev. William Townsend Butler, Dean of Fethard. A few weeks later he went to Mobarnan, a few miles to the south of Noan, the home of the Tennant family who owned an estate of similar size as that of Armitage.

On offer there was an "afternoon party". For the Tennants this was something in the nature of afternoon tea on the *Titanic*. By this time the family was in financial difficulty. Some of the estate had been sold in 1900, and in 1909 there was local agitation over the disposal of land.²¹

On 6 February there is an entry that nicely captures the class basis of rural society as then constituted. "R. Phillips came for lunch and dinner and Mr. and Mrs. Simey for dinner and to watch Workmen's Dance in Coach-house". The last verb in this quotation says it all! The first-named guest was presumably Richard Phillips of Gaile, a short distance north-west of Noan and a landowner in the same league as his host.

On 3 March the Armitage family and guests went to Graiguenoe near Holycross, the home of Charles Neville Clarke, great-grandson of the well known head-master of the Abbey (Erasmus Smith) Grammar School, Tipperary, the Rev. Marshal Clarke. Armitage's party travelled in two carriages, a dog cart and a more formal brougham. The entertainment on offer was that of tableaux, in which individuals or groups dressed up to create living pictures. Put another way, it was an excuse to rummage in the attic.



Armitage also visited Graiguenoe in late August to attend a garden party. This house was burned in 1923, and Clarke and his wife were killed in an air-raid on Bath in 1942. A reading of Armitage's diary reinforces the impression of a class living life as they had always known it, unmindful of the enemy knocking at the gate. In fact, by 1906 the gate had fallen and, with reform in local government, Land Purchase legislation and the threat of Home Rule, the enemy was battering on the door.

July and August were the months for garden parties. Unfortunately, the Armitages were very unlucky when they held one in late July. It was fine until about two in the afternoon, when it turned very wet. Nevertheless, 70 or 80 people turned up "in spite of the rain". Other such gatherings were held at Greenpark near Cashel and at Glenstal Castle, home of the Barringtons.

The house with which the Armitages seemed to have the friendliest relations was Grallagh Castle, a short distance to the north of Noan. It was, in fact, in the same civil parish, Graystown, though in a different barony, that of Middlethird. Grallagh was the residence of Colonel Daniel Mansergh and his wife Margaret. She was a daughter of Austin Cooper, who in a famous incident was murdered along with Francis Wayland in 1838. The estate attached to Grallagh Castle, about 1,100 acres, was sold in 1875 by the then owner, a cousin of Daniel Mansergh. A particular point of contact between Armitage and Mansergh was their shared interest in fishing.

A perhaps surprising aspect of Armitage's life-style was his reliance on a bicycle for much of his transport. In fact, he appears to have been quite proud of the distances he covered on it. For example, on 2 March, having gone to Nenagh by train two days earlier, he wrote: "Finally started on bike at about 2.40 and going by Borrisoleigh and Thurles got home about 6.20. Distance by cyclometer 32½ miles". In late June he had some difficulty:

- (26 June)** "Biked in to Synod in Cashel. Lunch at Palace. Noticed head socket of B.S.A. spring frame [*sic*] bike broken at Dualla and walked home from there."
- (27 June)** "Morning weeding Douglas nursery and then in to Thurles by train with two bikes. Left B.S.A. bike with Dunlop for repairs and rode green one home, putting in at J. Max's to mend a puncture, then to Grallagh for tennis. Left blade of front fork of green bike broke on way home."
- (29 June)** "Morning round about, adjusting bike etc. Afternoon, rode ladies Humber to Springhill where some good tennis."

A week or so later he was again in Nenagh for a few days on business, and on 4 July he set off for Noan on his ladies Humber. On the way he called at Dunlop's in Thurles and ordered a "Humber R.I.C. bike". On 9 July, having been in Clonmel for a few days, he decided to cycle home on the ladies Humber. Left "Hearn's Hotel at 7.45 p.m. Reached Noan at 9.25, having put in about ten minutes leaving a note at Silverfort".

Armitage continued to have an intense relationship with his "bike". The place referred to by Armitage was the Max family's Ballytarsna, a short distance north-west of Noan. This was a compact property of almost 1,200 acres, occupying just one townland. Springhill, the home of the Hemphill family, was near Killenaule, while Silverfort was the residence of one of the poorer Scullys, Darby, an occasional visitor to Noan.

Country Pursuits

Unlike many of his class, Frederick Armitage, at least according to his diary, did not have an obsession with horses. As indicated above, he much preferred his "bike". Apart from this, his sporting interests fell into the pattern of shooting small creatures that either hopped or flew.



On 2 January his shooting record begins, when he disposed of two snipe in Upper Noan. His entry for 10 January runs: "Out ferreting with Ireland [game-keeper] at Upper Noan, having a look at planting in wood both going and returning. Shot very badly, only getting 3 rabbits with 16 shots." Later that month the rabbit body-count was altogether more satisfactory; twenty two were killed, "of which I got 8 with 21 shots – 20 bore".

Armitage also took part in more formal shooting parties. For example:

(13 August) "Heavy shower about 8.30 a.m. Then beautifully fine. Out shooting at Hanly-Mansergh shoot – guns: Hanly, Col. Mansergh, R. Hemphill, J. Power, Capt. Gibson, Simey, J. Langley and self. Bag, about 9 brace."

This expedition presumably took place around Grallagh, and apart from locals included visitors like Gibson who had a large estate near Roscrea. In early September, in what will bring a shudder to conservationists, he shot a corncrake and a hawk.

(17 October) "Very fine. All day shooting wild pheasants at lower side of place. Guns: Col. Mansergh, Bob Hemphill and self. Ireland also carried a gun. Bag 7½ brace. of which I only shot 1½ birds. I got through 6 cartridges. I think only one bird really got away. Evening – 25 hen pheasants arrived from S. J. Bell of the Norfolk Game Farm."

Between 7 and 9 November much of his time was devoted to shooting. However, the first of these days he categorised as a "dismal failure". He managed to shoot one each of pheasant, woodcock and pigeon and five rabbits. The following morning was spent looking for wounded birds, helped by his game-keeper. His last big shoot of the year was in late November:

(28 November) "Biked to Grallagh and thence drove to Killough for Sam Phillip's woodcock shoot and walked back to Grallagh. Guns: Major S. Phillips, Col. Mansergh, Major Austin Cooper, C. N. Clarke, Arthur Cooke, H. Braddell and self. A very poor day, the total bag being about 3 woodcock and 9 rabbits. I got 2 woodcock and 3 rabbits, getting the only 2 woodcock I saw to shoot with one shot each, though Cooper also fired at the second after it was falling."

This shooting party took place on the estate of S. Phillips of Gaile. Armitage's diary entry for that day, as quoted above, was virtually entirely devoted to his day's sport. However, there is also a brief note to the effect that his wife was "bad" at midday and that Dr. Heffernan came to see her.

Armitage's second favourite sport was fishing, and his mentor for this was Colonel Mansergh of Grallagh (who died in April 1907).

(19 March) "Went over to Grallagh. Col. Mansergh took me fishing to Nodstown ford. Neither of us got anything. Willie Lloyd who was also down there got a trout of probably 2 or 2½ lbs."

(7 May) "Biked to Grallagh to see if Col. going fishing. He had already started with J. Higgins so I biked on after them to the Two Fords and found them there getting ready to begin. J. Higgins and I fishing with wet fly, got nothing. Col. Mansergh with minnow got one small trout and lost a big one."²²

It is pleasing not to be disappointed regarding the above account; no fishing story seems satisfying without reference to the one that got away.

Whatever about fish getting away, Armitage was very keen that trespassers on his property furnish very good reasons for their presence. This aspect of his personality made a strong impression on his neighbours and became part of the folklore about him.²³ For example, his diary entry for **8 May**:

"After noon: to Moor, and Joe Halloran told me that there were men believed to be Gleasons from the bog, hunting hares with dogs round Little Bog last Sunday.



Afterwards out with rifle and fired 7 shots but bagged nothing. On way back met Jack Dwyer crossing Pound Grove field. He said he had come to ask me for loan of a slasher. I told him I would not lend it and that I did not believe his story, but as that was why he was there he had better go home. He went back muttering something about trespass. Afterwards someone looking like him went back again across Power's [land]" .

One point of confirmation about Armitage's strong feelings about trespass is the fact that some of the longest and most detailed accounts in his journal deal with this topic. For example, in early January:

(23 January) "Afternoon: in wood. found Kirwan gathering sticks above Beech Wood. Watched him pull up a young tree which was standing. He afterwards said someone else had pulled it up. I turned him off – he had a dog with him too – and told him I would summons him I found him again. Told him I thought better of him than that he would come again without asking leave after I had spoken to him before – this was about Nov. or Dec. last."

Just before Christmas Armitage was again faced with an invasion of his property. It may well be that the repeated assaults on landlord property on the part of the Government to the advantage of tenants made some landlords even more assertive regarding to their remaining rights. Armitage was not filled with Christmas good-will.

(20 December) "O'Connell, the man who used to drive the creamery cart, turned up in morning with another man and said about ten of them, with six greyhounds, had come for a day's coursing. I sent him away as he had not arranged a day in advance. I also told him I thought it most impudent for him to turn up as he did."

The popular memory of Armitage may have been that he did not have much interest in horse racing.²⁴ But on 27 March, while in Thurles on business, he heard that the Templemore point-to-point races were on at Dovea, on the Trant estate between Thurles and Templemore, "so biked out and saw them". A fortnight or so later, he "biked" to Rosegreen for Tipperary point-to-point races.

Apart from these very traditional country pursuits Armitage was very fond of tennis and his diary has many references to the amount of work he put into cutting and mowing his own tennis lawn. Whatever about the popular image of country house recreation, there is only one reference to croquet being played at Noan!

Role of the landlord

The first and most important point is that by 1906 the role of the landlord both economically and politically was very much diminished. The political aspect of the role is discussed below, but in the context in which landlord-tenant relations are conventionally discussed, namely paying the rent, Armitage's diary has little to say, because there was little to be said.

The first gale day, in May, is not mentioned; Armitage was in London. The second gale day, 22 November, is just mentioned: "rent taking". Armitage's role as a farmer was in many ways more important and substantial than his role as landlord. In 1906 just over half of the Armitage estate was untenanted: 229.75 acres in Ballaghboy, 30.25 acres in Ballinure, 49.5 acres in Knockforlagh and 730.5 acres in Noan.²⁵ Tenants purchasing their holdings did not occur on the estate until 1922.

There were certain other duties someone in Armitage's position was expected to perform. For example, in early January he went to the local school to meet the Senior Inspector of



Schools to discuss enlarging the building. His estate was, of course, a source of employment and so its owner was the recipient of requests for jobs. When there was a strike at Laffan Bridge quarry in early January two men, one from Lurgoe, the other from Buffana, applied to him for jobs. It is not clear if they were successful, probably not.

As expected, Armitage played a role in the administration of his church, at both parish and diocesan levels. He was very regular in his attendance at church each Sunday. The diary does not provide glimpses into his soul, and the only confessional note struck was his reference of 22 March: "A Christian Brother from Cashel called for extra sub [*sic*] which I did not give". It may well have been that it was the "extra" that aroused his note of irritation.

As the owner of a substantial estate and as someone who farmed a good deal of land himself, Armitage had a constant interaction with his employees, both domestic and agricultural. Regarding domestic staff, the fact that there was a quick turnover may say something about him (and his wife) as employers. For example, a new cook who arrived on 11 May left on 10 July, and a girl engaged as a maid on 4 May left on 18 December.

There were also problems with his agricultural employees. In early August two of them "had some silly row last night". The following day, 8 August, they each gave a month's notice, but a few days later one of them, Townsend, whose illness was mentioned earlier, withdrew his notice. The other man left when his notice expired. In November Townsend was again seriously ill and was well looked after, with a doctor in daily attendance and the engagement of a nurse to see him over the worst of his illness.

Careful reading of Armitage's diary reveals far more about the pre-occupations of an extensive farmer than about the role of a landlord. With the setting of judicial rents by the Land Commission, a major source of possible landlord-tenant conflict had been removed. There is only one reference to the previously vexed question of paying rent. On the day before the November gale day Armitage noted in his diary: "John Maher came down with story that he had lost four bullocks from Fethard fair, so could not pay his rent until after Thurles fair". This somewhat unusual excuse appears to have been accepted.

Farm management

The subject to which Armitage pays most attention in his diary is the management of his own land. His career as a ship's engineer before he took over the estate indicates a person of practical application. His approach to running his farm was very much hands-on. Even though he had workmen and right-hand men like Townsend and (Harry) Moonan, Armitage spent much of his time tackling a range of jobs about the farm. (It is entirely typical that, for all the references to these two men, nowhere is there an indication as to their christian names.)

In April, for example, his work about his farm ranged from weighing bullocks to supervising the twisting of tails off lambs, and in between included preparing land for sowing cabbage, kale and carrots, dishorning cattle, planting potatoes and 'washing' sheep. To say the least, his agricultural enterprise was mixed.

Like any farmer of the period, he regularly attended the local fairs, perhaps as many as twenty that year. His diary rarely mentioned prices paid or obtained, as such matters were obviously entered in his farm accounts.

(16 January) "Morning: biked to Fethard fair, where saw Mr. D. Tennant and others. Did no buying or selling."

(20 February) "Biked in to Fethard fair where bought 11 heifers. Very cold going in and very slippery for horses."



- (3 April)** "Biked in to Thurles fair, reached there before 6 a.m. Sold 5 bullocks and old ram."
- (4 April)** "Biked to Laffan's Bridge and thence to Clonmel fair by train. Neither bought nor sold."
- (1 May)** "Biked in to Thurles fair but did no business."
- (6 June)** "Biked in to Clonmel fair where bought 15 yearling bullocks."
- (17 July)** "Biked in to Fethard fair, where bought 12 bullocks and 2 Kerry heifers."

Apart from fairs within the county, Armitage also sold animals to local farmers and butchers. On 13 September he "biked early into Thurles where took train to Dublin", where he attended a livestock sale but bought nothing. Exactly a week later he repeated the journey and this time bought 38 Cheviot hogget ewes at 29 shillings. He returned home on the 3 p.m. train.

His full diary entry for a random sample of days allows some insight to the tenor of Armitage's life in 1906.

- (9 February)** "Frost and a little snow last night. Day fine until about 4 p.m., then wet. Out with Ireland in 'Scorth' and Taylor's wood. Got six woodcock. Evening: branded bullocks bought in Clonmel."
- (19 February)** "Good lot of rain last night. Day fine with very cold westerly wind. Morning: cleaning flues of range etc. Afternoon: began weighing and branding bullocks for fair tomorrow when J. Casey came and bought 15, to be taken next Monday. Decided not to take the others in to fair. Then with Moonan to pond and sluggery in F.R. quarry field."
- (30 March)** "Fine, dull, warm. Morning: weighing bullocks, then to F.R. pond and Paddock, where sowing Garton's 'Rival' oats and black Tartary. Then target practice with little rifle. Afternoon: To F.R. pond – sluice closed about noon – where fencing etc. and then adjusting bike; broke 3 speed gear fixings."
- (26 April)** "Cool, high wind, some showers. Morning: writing etc. Afternoon: drive with Nell [his wife] over to Miss Going's and bought two in calf heifers, 'Blush Rose' and 'Star'."
- (4 May)** "Warm and very fine. Morning: to Upper Noan with Moonan looking at site for shed and at fence and arranging for shifting some of the bullocks. Afternoon: Two where sowing clover, then to Moor where sowing mangels, then with Moonan to look at a Highwayman foal of Mrs. Beatties. Letitia [blank space] came as serving maid."
- (14 July)** "Very fine. Morning: round about and to police barracks to ask about compulsory dipping; quarry etc. Afternoon: Pat Maher – Cashel – came and bought 60 lambs; then Miss Going, Miss Molesworth, Mrs. Simey and baby called. Biked into Fethard and left card on Major Smith and officers."
- (21 September)** "Very fine and warm. Morning: round about and to look at hogget ewes which arrived from Dublin. Afternoon: with Stanley [his four-year-old son] to Canal field to look at Border Leicester ram – then to Gurt na Derris. Moonan and Clarke had a bit of a row about binder twine."
- (30 November)** "Fine, much colder. Morning: to fencing at bog and saw coursing – Dwyer, M. Shea, M. Sullivan, C. Lane, J. Max, Hayde had dogs – by permission. Afternoon: to Upper Noan to look at J. Maher's cattle but did not deal. Got one teal in Little Bog and missed 2 others which were rather far – 3 shots, 20 bore Imp. Sch. No. 7 – Dr. Heff. came to see Townsend. The Dean, Jim White, the Misses Russell and Mrs. de Burgh called."

One of the pleasures in reading and unpublished diary is the somewhat illicit nature of the exercise. Even the least revelatory, in a personal sense, conveys the routine which is the visible structure of a life. Small details in the extracts quoted above establish points of human contact with the reader, even across a gulf of 88 years.

For example, Armitage fixing his “bike” and managing to make bad worse by damaging the gears; Miss Going giving names to her in-calf heifers; the diarist forgetting the surname of the new maid (from a later entry, it was Johnson); Armitage fleeing from Noan on 14 July when the ladies with baby in tow arrived, and cycling to Fethard in search of male company and finally, father and infant son, on a warm September afternoon, going into the fields to view the livestock.

The reference of 19 February above to the “sluggery” involved something with which Armitage was very concerned and to which he devoted a good deal of his time. The word itself is perhaps derived from the Irish word *sloghaire*, meaning quagmire or sunken surface.²⁶ On 22 March he was much concerned with water in the pond leaking faster than it was coming in. The following day he tried to stop the leak with leaves “but did not altogether succeed”.

On subsequent days much of his time was devoted to this same problem. On 29 March he helped to “put down sluice” at the pond but two days later it was still “leaking to some sluggishness under dam”. Problems persisted, and on 11 April he spent the afternoon at “sluggery pond getting sluggishness stopped and putting in manhole arrangement”. Over a month later Armitage and one of his employees spent an afternoon “digging out sluggishness under dam”. This is the only example of the diarist’s use of an unusual or local expression.

Public Life

Indicative of the great change that had taken place in the local balance of power by 1906 compared with a generation earlier was the fact that Frederick Armitage was high-sheriff of county Tipperary that year. But it was not a matter of very great consequence – unlike during the previous century when it was a position of influence and prestige. Local government reform in 1898 and the dominance of the Irish Parliamentary Party at both local and national levels changed all this.

The office of sheriff was an ancient one and had, of course, changed over the centuries. In the nineteenth century the high-sheriff was centrally involved in choosing members of the grand jury, who were then responsible for a range of functions, from financing roads to dispensing criminal justice. The office was held for one year, Armitage being sworn in on 3 January in Clonmel. The sub-sheriff was a solicitor named Arnold J. Power and, as his office was permanent, he provided continuity from sheriff to sheriff. Not surprisingly, Armitage saw a good deal of Power in the course of 1906.

January 1906 saw a general election in both Ireland and Britain. Usually the sheriff would be involved in the election process, the nomination of candidates and so on. But when the nominations were held for the four Tipperary constituencies on four different days Armitage did not bother to attend any of the venues, namely Cahir (S. Tipperary), Clonmel (E. Tipperary), Nenagh (N. Tipperary) and Thurles (Mid Tipperary).

The sub-sheriff sat as returning officer, but as there was only one candidate nominated in each constituency, the process rather lacked excitement. Each of the four candidates was, of course, a catholic nationalist, not something calculated to arouse Armitage’s enthusiasm.²⁷

In his diary entry for 10 February Armitage has a very brief note “Settling Grand Jury lists”. Three days earlier he had met his sub-sheriff in Clonmel and presumably the membership of



the grand juries for the forthcoming assizes in Nenagh and Clonmel was discussed. In the previous century, when it mattered a great deal more, the sheriff's influence over grand jury membership was a source of catholic complaint.²⁸

In 1906 Armitage's role during the assize, first in Nenagh and then in Clonmel, was largely ceremonial. On 28 February he travelled to Nenagh and that evening met and dined with the two judges. The following day, he "fetched" the judges to court, hosted the grand jury lunch and that evening dined with the judges and their staff.

On the third and final day: "Fetched judges – Gibson and Madden – to court; only short day. On taking them back Judge Gibson excused me from further attendance". After attending to some business, Armitage got on his "bike" and returned to Noan.

The following week Armitage was on duty again, this time in Clonmel. His role was as before, the judges, however, being less busy than in Nenagh. One of the cases, an action for slander, did arouse Armitage's curiosity and so he spent part of the morning of the third day in court listening to the arguments. Alderman Edward Pope of Clonmel brought a charge of slander against Patrick Nugent over the latter's charge that Pope did not pay his debts. The charge was made at a meeting of Clonmel Board of Guardians. Pope was in turn the subject of a counter-claim from Nugent for libel, printed in the *Cork Sentinel*, a newspaper in which Pope had an interest. Nugent won £500 damages.²⁹

Armitage had no further official duties until the summer:

(12 June) "Hot, heavy, local thunder showers. Morning: round about and biked into Clonmel to see Arnold Power. He was at Nenagh, so wrote him letter asking if he could arrange for carriage etc. for judges at Clonmel if I worked Nenagh. Also, whether it would be inconvenient to him if I stayed at Club in Clonmel. Biked home and then tillage in Moor. Sheltered from heavy shower in J. Walsh's."

On 2 July Armitage travelled to Nenagh for the second assize of the year. One of the two judges was the Lord Chief Justice, Sir Peter O'Brien, known in nationalist history as 'Peter the Packer' from his earlier reputation of packing juries. Armitage was at the station to meet the judges when they arrived that evening.

(3 July) "Fine and warm. Morning: took Judges to court and in very short time, Sir Peter had Mrs. Dease, wife of Major Dease, R.M., sitting beside him on the 'Bench'. Sir Peter finished about 2.30 and went for a drive with Mrs. Dease, while Arnold Power and I, after a few 'half ones' and a smoke and a chat at Club, went into [Judge] Andrews' court. He sat till 7.20. Evening: to dinner with Judges and then Club, finishing up at O'Meara's Hotel with Arnold Power."

The club was probably the North Tipperary Club in Castle St., founded in the 1880s. It is not clear why Armitage referred to O'Brien as Sir Peter, as he had been given a peerage in 1900. Incidentally, O'Brien's wife was a daughter of Robert H. Clarke of Bansha, who was a son of the Rev. Marshal Clarke, headmaster of the Abbey Grammar School in Tipperary mentioned earlier.

(4 July) "Fine and hot. After finding that Judges would not want us till 2 o'clock, Arnold Power and I drove on side car to Dromineer on Lough Derg; very pretty. Then lunch at Club and saw Judges off by 2.15 train. Then we looked at O'Meara's – hotel keeper's – hermaphrodite pony and his chicken cramming establishment, where he has about 2,000 fowls. Then about 4.15 I started on ladies Humber to bike home.'



On 6 July Armitage went to Clonmel to meet the judges when they arrived for the South Riding assize. As mentioned on 12 June, he stayed at the Tipperary County Club on the Mall, founded in 1836, which had four bedrooms. He then went with Arnold Power to the militia barracks to arrange about a band. On the following morning he brought the judges to court, "the Militia band playing *God Save the King* as we drove up". "After seeing judges home, Arnold Power took me to see Asylum cricket ground and new bungalows and then to dinner at his own place."³⁰

The following day was Sunday, and as the judges did not go to church, the sheriff was free for the day. Armitage had lunch, tea and supper at three different houses and spent the day pleasantly. Monday was the final day of the assize and Armitage, after attending his usual duties, was back home at Noan by late evening, having cycled from Clonmel in about an hour-and-a-half.

This effectively was the end of Armitage's role as high-sheriff. However, there remained the question of his successor for 1907.

(9 August) "Went to Clonmel to see Arnold Power about sending in names for High Sheriff. In view of Butler Stoney probably being excused, sent in four names: Butler Stoney, Parker-Hutchinson, Col. Solomon Watson, Charles Webb."

These four were much the same kind of people as Armitage himself, and the procedure demonstrates the self-perpetuating nature of the landed elite that had formerly controlled local government. Butler Stoney was from Borrisokane, Parker-Hutchinson from Roscrea, Watson from Clonmel and Webb from Nenagh. It hardly mattered which of these gentlemen had the job of judge's flunkey in 1907.

Conclusion

Unlike many other such families, the Armitages did not leave Ireland because of Land Purchase legislation or, indeed, armed conflict. Frederick Armitage lived on in the new Ireland and did not die until he was 85 in September 1952.³¹ Unlike other, perhaps more astute, landlords, who sold out to their tenants sooner rather than later, the Armitage tenants did not purchase their holdings until 1922. The following is a list of these tenants, the size of their holdings, their existing rent and the purchase price of each holding.

Purchase by tenants of holdings on Armitage estate, 1922.³²

Tenant	Townland	Acres	Rent (£)	Purchase Price (£)
M. Burke	Ballaghboy	141.50	48.50	1157
K. Sullivan	"	34.75	17.45	376
W. O'Brien	"	62.00	29.25	637
J. Brien	"	49.00	22.90	494
W. Davern	"	35.50	15.95	351
M. Tobin	"	37.75	14.90	311
M. Kirwan	"	1.75	*	22
C. Ryan	"	63.00	31.95	696
J. Maher	"	63.25	23.45	565
E. O'Brien	Ballinure	4.50	7.50	184
M. Bulfin	"	49.75	48.00	1169
M. Bulfin	Ballaghboy	23.75	*	*



Tenant	Townland	Acres	Rent (£)	Purchase Price (£)
P. Brown	Ballinure	7.25	3.00	65
E. Hall	Knockforlagh	16.75	6.30	136
C. Hennessy	"	19.75	6.20	140
M. Stapleton	"	9.25	3.45	65
W. Connors	"	2.50	1.50	32
W. Connors	"	20.75	7.45	165
M. Dwyer	Noan	4.50	3.45	76
E. Bulfin	"	68.75	44.90	979
E. Hayde	"	3.75	3.00	65
W. Hayes	"	4.00	3.00	65
J. Maher	"	4.75	3.00	65
R. Nolan	"	5.25	3.30	71
J. Moonan	"	35.00	11.25	242
P. Carew	"	63.75	49.90	1203
T. Breen	"	35.50	18.85	411
P. Murphy	Ballaghboy	16.50	4.95	110

This sale of their holdings to the tenants was a better deal for them than for their landlord. Apart from now owning their holdings, former tenants made annual repayments on their loans lower than existing rents; in the case, for example, of the first tenant on the list above, £37.60 instead of £48.50. All of these tenants were advanced the full purchase price of their holdings.

The purchase price averaged just under 23 years' purchase of the rent. With regard to Armitage, however, he would have to get a return of about 4½ per cent on the aggregate purchase money in order to have the same income as before.

The Armitage link with Noan continued until the death of Frederick Armitage's daughter in 1979, when the property was sold. Two of the unusual aspects of the estate were the large proportion of the property farmed by the family and, related to this, the very large decrease in the number of tenants comparing figures for 1922 with 1850.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Civil Survey, Tipperary, I*, pp. 105-6.
2. *Book of Survey and Distribution, Tipperary*.
3. *Burke's Landed Gentry of Ireland* (1904 ed.), p. 585.
4. Power, pp 119-33. See review of this book elsewhere in this issue of *THJ*.
5. Land Commission card index, N.L.I., E C 6727; J. J. Hassett (ed.), *The History and Folklore of Killenaule-Moyglass* (Killenaule ?, 1991 ?), p. 99.
6. *Clonmel Chronicle*, 18 March 1903.
7. *Tipperary Free Press*, 16 July 1828.
8. See *THJ* (1988), pp. 60-1.
9. *T.F.P.*, 29 April 1829.
10. Incumbered Estates Court rental, 21 Jan. 1853.
11. For example (1 June), Ballynagleragh and Ballyregan.
12. *Pobal Ailbe*, pp 92-4.
13. *Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator*, 18, 25 Jan. 1853.
14. *Dublin Evening Mail*, 22 May 1862.
15. *Burke's Irish Family Records*, p. 1189.
16. Land Commission card index, N.L.I., E C 7747; Reg. of Deeds, 1857/21/103.



17. J. M. Richie; *Concerning the Blind* (Edinburgh and London, 1939), p. 66.
18. *Burke's Irish Family Records*, p. 35.
19. *Killenaule-Moyglass*, p. 101.
20. The diary was kept in a *Collins' Scribbling Diary 1906*, and is in excellent condition. It measures 12 x 8 inches and has an entry in legible handwriting for every day of the year. This diary, together with one other for a year in the 1930s, were found some years ago by workmen carrying out repairs at Noan. They are now in the possession of Mr. Joe Brennan, Crohane, Killenaule.
21. *Clonmel Chronicle*, 20 Nov. 1909.
22. Still a well-known fishing site.
23. *Killenaule-Moyglass*, p. 101.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 101.
25. *Return of untenanted lands etc.*, HC 1906 (250) c.
26. *Dinneen, Ir. Dict.*, p. 1061.
27. *Clonmel Chronicle*, 17 Jan. 1906.
28. For example, *T.F.P.*, 29 July 1858, 25 Feb. 1859.
29. *Clonmel Chronicle*, 7. 10 March 1906.
30. See P. Heffernan; *An Irish Doctor's Memories* (Dublin, 1958), pp. 44-50.
31. *Killenaule-Moyglass*, pp. 102-6.
32. *ILC returns of advances* (L 54/9), Dublin, 1926.*

(* Figures included with those immediately preceding.).

