



**NUI MAYNOOTH**

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

**POWER, RESISTANCE, AND RITUAL:  
PATERNALISM  
ON  
THE CLONBROCK ESTATES  
1826-1908**

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## Abbreviations

C S.H I.H E	Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates
D I	District Inspector
I R.C.H.S.S	Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences
J P	Justice of the Peace
K P S	Kildare Place Society
L.H S	London Hibernian Society
M P	Member of Parliament
N A I	National Archives of Ireland
n d.	no date/not dated
N U.I	National University of Ireland
N L I	National Library of Ireland
R A I S I	Royal Agricultural Improvement Society of Ireland
R.I.C.	Royal Irish Constabulary
U I.L.	United Irish League

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## INTRODUCTION

Until now works on big houses and landed estates have been published in two separate and specific genres. On the one hand there are the familiar coffee table books with glossy photographs depicting architectural splendour, lavish interiors, or ghostly ruins,<sup>1</sup> and on the other there are the academic histories of the wider land question and to a lesser extent estate management.<sup>2</sup> There has, in fact, been a considerable evolution in the historiography of landlord-tenant relations since John E. Pomfret's *The struggle for the land in Ireland, 1800-1923* (1930)<sup>3</sup>. It portrayed Irish landlords as capricious rackrenters that squeezed tenant farmers for as much as they could and evicted indiscriminately. The struggle, in his opinion, was one in which a homogenous group of oppressed Catholic tenants farmers challenged the might of the pro-British landowning elite and won. Pomfret's thesis was very much the accepted orthodoxy until the 1970s when a new generation of scholars began to make extensive use of estate records and discovered that his conclusions were considerably flawed. The first person to present this evidence was Barbara Lewis Solow in *The land question and the Irish economy, 1870-1903* (1971)<sup>4</sup>. Solow presented evidence that rents in the post-Famine period were low and evictions rare illustrating that the capricious evicting landlord was the exception rather than the rule.

James Donnelly's *The land and the people of nineteenth-century Cork* (1975) supported Solow's assertions about rents and evictions in the post-Famine period.<sup>5</sup> He argued that the economic downturn of the late 1870s had diminished the

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Bence-Jones, *A guide to Irish country houses* (revd ed London, 1988), Tarquin Blake, *Abandoned mansions of Ireland* (London, 2010), Desmond FitzGerald, knight of Glin, and James Peill, *The Irish country house* (London, 2010), Desmond FitzGerald, David Griffin and Nicholas Robinson, *Vanishing country houses of Ireland* (Dublin, 1988), Desmond Guinness and William Ryan, *Irish houses and castles* (London, 1971), Simon Marsden, *In ruins the once great houses of Ireland* (Boston and London, 1997), Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd and C S Sykes, *Great houses of Ireland* (London, 1999), Sean O'Reilly, *Irish houses and gardens from the archives of Country Life* (London, 1998), Valerie Pakenham, *The big house in Ireland* (n d)

<sup>2</sup> See historiography section below

<sup>3</sup> John Pomfret, *The struggle for the land in Ireland, 1800-1923* (Princeton N J, 1930)

<sup>4</sup> Barbara Lewis Solow, *The land question and the Irish economy, 1870-1903* (Harvard, 1971)

<sup>5</sup> J S Donnelly, Jr, *The land and the people of nineteenth-century Cork the rural economy and the land question* (Boston, 1975)



increased standard of living to which tenant farmers had become accustomed. So rather than rackrented tenants rising up against an oppressive landlord class, for which the pre-1970s orthodoxy argued, he considered the outbreak of the Land War as 'a revolution in rising expectations'.<sup>6</sup> Paul Bew in *Land and the national question in Ireland, 1858-1882* (1978) debunked the myth of a homogenous Irish peasantry in conflict with the landed elite and exposed the deep fissures that divided a rural society comprising large farmers, smallholders, and labourers.<sup>7</sup> Samuel Clarke in *The social origins of the Irish Land War* (1979) argued that similar cleavages existed in rural society but chose to use the less contentious term collectivities as opposed to class which Bew used.<sup>8</sup> W. E. Vaughan's *Landlords and tenants in mid-Victorian Ireland* (1994) made extensive use of estate papers and rental ledgers which confirmed the existence of low rent levels argued by Solow and Donnelly. He argues that Irish landlords, by not investing in their estates, lost an opportunity in the post-Famine period to build up a relationship with tenants.<sup>9</sup>

There have been relatively few comprehensive studies of estates, with the exception of *The Downshire estates in Ireland, 1801-1845* (1972) by W. A. Maguire, *The Trinity College estates, 1800-1923* (1992) by Robert MacCarthy, and *The Lansdowne estate in Kerry under the agency of William Steuart Trench, 1849-1872* (2001).<sup>10</sup> Maguire's work explores the complexities of estate management especially the extent to which the landlord's hands were tied by settlements and other financial encumbrances which very much constrained his ability to act as a free agent. The difference between Downshire's northern and southern estates is teased out as well as an informative discussion of the role played by land agents in the affairs of the estates. MacCarthy's work to a large extent focuses on the survival of the middleman system on the estates throughout the nineteenth century and in separate chapters he provides case studies of individual estates. Gerard Lyne's extensive

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<sup>6</sup> Donnelly, Jr., *The land and the people of nineteenth-century Cork* (London, 1975)

<sup>7</sup> Paul Bew, *Land and the national question in Ireland* (Dublin, 1978)

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Clarke, *The Social origins of the Irish Land War* (Princeton, 1979)

<sup>9</sup> W. E. Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants in mid Victorian Ireland* (New York, 1994)

<sup>10</sup> W. A. Maguire, *The Downshire estates in Ireland, 1801-1845 the management of Irish landed estates in the early nineteenth century* (Oxford, 1972), R. B. MacCarthy, *The Trinity College estates, 1800-1923 corporate management in an age of reform* (Dublin, 1992), Gerard Lyne, *The Lansdowne estates in Kerry under the management of Willuam Steuart Trench, 1849-1872* (Dublin, 2001)

study focuses on the career of a single land agent and how his management policies impacted on the people of south Kerry. In recent years the Maynooth Studies in Local History Series has published a number of histories which have dealt with the topic of landed estates including works by J. J. Conwell, Gerard Moran, Micheál McDermott, and Ciarán Reilly<sup>11</sup>

There have been few studies of the landed class as social group, although Patrick Melvin's study, 'The landed gentry of Galway, 1820-1880', deserves particular mention<sup>12</sup>. Terence Dooley's *Decline of the big house in Ireland* (2001) looks at the decline of the landed class through the prism of the break up of their estates and the other social and political factors which contributed to its demise, as mirrored in the decline of the country house, from the late 1870s through to the 1960s<sup>13</sup>

The central aim of this thesis is to address a lacuna in the historiography of the landed estate by using the concept of paternalism to reach another layer of understanding of how a landed estate worked and to bring fresh insights to the nature of the evolution of relationships between landlord and tenant in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Ireland. It is, broadly speaking, an interdisciplinary approach to an issue in Irish social history which has attracted relatively little attention from historians.

The term paternal or paternalism has been most frequently employed by scholars of Irish history to describe the benevolent or 'improving' actions of a landlord at a particular time or the existence of amicable relations between a landed family and the tenantry. However, paternalism was much more complex than the benevolent or improving actions of a landlord, the other important aspect of this relationship was deference. By addressing these two interrelated concepts this thesis aims to break new ground in the field of Irish historical research. Drawing on these concepts this

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<sup>11</sup> Gerard Moran, *Sir Robert Gore Booth and his landed estate in County Sligo, 1814-1876* (Dublin, 2006), Ciarán Reilly, *Edenderry County Offaly, and the Downshire estate, 1790-1800* (Dublin, 2007), Micheál McDermott, *Gypsum mining and the Shirley estate in south Monaghan, 1800-1936* (Dublin, 2009), J. J. Conwell, *A Galway landlord during the Great Famine: Ulick John de Burgh, first marquis of Clanricarde* (Dublin, 2003)

<sup>12</sup> Patrick Melvin 'The landed gentry of Galway, 1820-1880' (Ph D thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 1990)

<sup>13</sup> Terence Dooley, *The decline of the big house in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001)

thesis will explore how landed power was exercised, legitimised, resisted, and overturned over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

The concept of paternalism has received scant attention in Irish historiography so this work has engaged with scholars who have addressed the subject in nineteenth-century England and Wales. It will draw extensively on two works; David Roberts' *Paternalism in early Victorian England* (1979), and Howard Newby's 'The deferential dialectic' (1975), while references will be made occasionally to Matthew Cragoe's *An Anglican aristocracy the moral economy and the landed estate in Carmarthenshire, 1832-1895* (2001)<sup>14</sup>. While Roberts' work on paternalism in the early Victorian period focuses principally on England it makes some reference to Ireland as well as Scotland and Wales. The reason the thesis draws on Roberts' work is because it provides insights into how paternalism as social outlook became popular at just the time when Robert Dillon, third baron Clonbrock, came into possession of his estates in 1826. Moreover, it provides a profile of early Victorian paternalists and an insight into the *mentalité* that informed how they acted. While Roberts' work establishes the foundation Howard Newby's concept of the deferential dialectic takes it a stage further. It is the principal analytical tool by which the relationships of paternalism and deference have been understood leading to new insights into class relations on an Irish landed estate during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Roberts argues that the term paternalism did not exist among early Victorians, they spoke of 'paternal government' or 'patriarchal principles' but never of paternalism which is a twentieth-century construct. However, despite the fact that the term paternalism was not used, Roberts argues that during the period a paternalist social outlook did exist. He explains that paternalism had its roots in the late medieval period and was given expression in the Tudor era with Thomas Smith's *Republica*

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<sup>14</sup> David Roberts, *Paternalism in early Victorian England* (New Jersey, 1979), Howard Newby, 'The deferential dialectic' in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, xvii (1975), pp 161-2, idem, *Property, paternalism, and power class and control in rural England* (London, 1978), Matthew Cragoe, *An Anglican aristocracy the moral economy and the landed estate in Carmarthenshire, 1832-1895* (Oxford, 2001)

*Anglorum* which had drawn extensively from the classics. In Aristotle's *Politics* Smith found: 'the theory of the patriarchal origin of the state, a theory that saw the origin of the state arising from the extension of the family to larger units'. However, this view fell out of favour during the enlightenment and the age of scientific revolution when: 'The triumphant cosmology of Kepler, Gallileo, and Newton had little room for a hierarchic, organic, and miraculous chain that ran from God in his empyrean heights to the lowly insect.' Furthermore, the social contract espoused by Thomas Hobbes and John Locke 'was a bargain between the rulers and the ruled and it was agreed to because of the power held by rational and calculating individuals. Such a theory was a considerable departure from Aristotle's theory of patriarchal origins'.<sup>15</sup>

However, a resurgence of paternalist ideas began to take place in the early nineteenth century as a response to industrialisation, urban sprawl, and poverty. After the chaotic years of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when the monarchy and aristocracy of France had been swept aside, men of property felt less secure and looked back to the medieval period which they idealised as time when duty, chivalry, and honour permeated society.<sup>16</sup> Roberts argues that it was Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the revolution in France* with its passion for a hierarchal and organic society 'that started that wave of paternalist writings that crested between 1827 and 1847'. He identifies twenty authors of paternalist literature that published works during this period including Samuel Coleridge, William Wordsworth, William Gladstone, Benjamin Disraeli, and Augustus Pugin. The two works that framed these twenty years were the *Broad stone of honour* (1827), a medieval romance, by Kenelem Digby, and *Friends in council* (1847) by Arthur Helps.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly both of these authors had Irish connections: Digby's family background was Anglo-Irish gentry and Arthur Helps had spent time in Ireland as the private secretary to Lord Morpeth, chief secretary of Ireland between 1835 and 1841.

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<sup>15</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, pp 13-6

<sup>16</sup> See also, Mark Girouard, *The return to Camelot chivalry and the English gentleman* (Yale, 1981)

<sup>17</sup> Kenelem Digby, *The broad stone of honour* (London, 1827), Arthur Helps, *Friends in council* (London, 1848)

Books by these twenty authors were the intellectual cutting edge of the paternalist revival but Roberts argues that it was newspapers, periodicals, and novels that made it popular. Of the five London newspapers that espoused paternalist ideas, three of them, the *Morning Herald*, *Standard*, and the *St James Chronicle* were superintended by another Irishman, Stanley Lees Giffard.<sup>18</sup> Among periodicals with a paternalist outlook were, most notably, *Blackwood's Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review* but Roberts also includes the *Dublin Magazine*. He also argues that the 'silver fork novel', a prolific literary genre that frequently depicted model paternalists as their heroes, was instrumental in disseminating paternal ideas. In Charles Kingsley's *Alton Locke* (1848) 'The lord is a model paternalist who lowers his rents, gives up his hounds, improves cottages, grants allotments, and opens his picture gallery to the people'.<sup>19</sup> An Irish contributor of note to this genre was the future Young Irelander, John Fisher Murray (1811-65), with *The viceroy* (1841); however, its most famous Irish exponent was Lady Morgan who adapted this genre in the 1820s and 1830s.<sup>20</sup>

Roberts argues that in early Victorian England 'no social outlook had deeper roots and wider appeal than what twentieth-century historians call paternalism'. Unlike Bentham's theory of utility or the laws of political economy, paternalism 'did not exist as a set of definite, logical, and clearly defined axioms [but] formed instead a set of varying attitudes and beliefs'.<sup>21</sup> There were, however, four basic assumptions about society that almost all Victorian paternalists shared: 'it should be authoritarian, hierarchic, organic, and pluralistic'.<sup>22</sup> Everybody in society had their place and a part to play and 'At the heart of the paternalists hierarchal outlook is the strong sense of the value of dependency, a sense that they could not exist without those who are dependent having an unquestioned respect for their betters'.<sup>23</sup> It is unsurprising then as Roberts points out that 'the typical paternalist believed in

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<sup>18</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p 192

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p 91

<sup>20</sup> John Fisher Murray, *The viceroy* (Dublin, 1841)

<sup>21</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p 1

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p 2

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p 3

capital punishment, whippings, severe game laws .... He never doubted the sacred nature of paternal authority, whether exercised by a magistrate at quarter sessions, by landlords on their estates, or by archdeacons'. Along with these four basic assumptions about society Roberts argues that there were 'three principal sets of duties (among many) that the conscientious paternalist of superior rank felt he must perform: ruling, guiding, and helping'<sup>24</sup>

While Roberts' work focuses on paternalism in England he argues that the Anglican and landowning establishment that existed across the United Kingdom was paternalist at its heart 'The elite of that establishment studied Aristotle, read Burke above all, and probably dipped into Paley or Coleridge. The outlook of that elite, whether in Ireland, England, or Scotland, was instinctively paternalist'<sup>25</sup> Roberts presents a convincing argument for the existence of a paternal social outlook during this period and there is no doubt that it was influential in Ireland. 'Property has its duties as well as its rights' the famous dictum of Thomas Drummond, under-secretary between 1835 and 1840, would become a mantra for Irish paternalists for decades after it was first uttered in 1839<sup>26</sup> People understood society, its ills, and the remedies for them in paternal terms so it should come as no surprise that the *Devon commission*, as Peter Gray has pointed out, 'offered little to cottiers and labourers beyond greater landlord paternalism'.<sup>27</sup> Roberts' work has provided the foundations that permit an understanding of the paternal mind and the historical process which formed it, while the work of Howard Newby has facilitated a development of this understanding Although his work is sociological and his research was conducted among agricultural workers in rural England during the twentieth century the development of his concept of the 'deferential dialectic' has been informed through an analysis of rural society in nineteenth-century England so some aspects of his concept are applicable to landlord-tenant relations in nineteenth-century Ireland

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid , p 4

<sup>25</sup> Ibid , p 238

<sup>26</sup> John F McLennan, *Memoir of Thomas Drummond* (Edinburgh, 1867), p 325

<sup>27</sup> Peter Gray, *Famine, land, and politics British government and Irish society, 1843-50* (Dublin, 1999), p 71

Newby's aim in 'The deferential dialectic' was to explain 'the relational and normative means by which elites maintain their traditional authority [and] the strategies they employ that attempt to ensure the stability of their power'.<sup>28</sup> Deference, he argues, is neither 'a type of behaviour' or 'a set of attitudes' but rather a combination of both and 'a form of social interaction which occurs in situations involving the exercise of traditional authority'.<sup>29</sup> He uses the term 'deferential dialectic' to explain this relationship as an ongoing process which requires attentive management in order that the 'tensions' inherent in the dialectic can be addressed. The root of these tensions is the fundamentally inegalitarian nature of the paternal relationship between the superordinate and subordinate partners. However, the successful management of these tensions necessitates the superordinate group entering into an inherently contradictory relationship with the subordinate one in order to strike a balance between the conflicting elements of *differentiation* and *identification* which constitute deferential interaction. Because of the hierarchical nature of the relationship, *differentiation* from subordinates is a prerequisite in order to effectively wield power over them but, so too, is it necessary to cultivate a level of *identification*,<sup>30</sup> in order that the subjection of the subordinate is less obvious, thus facilitating the presentation of the relationship as an organic one in which the two parties co-operate: 'Paternalism contains this contradiction at every level. At one and the same time paternalism may be exemplified by autocracy and obligation, cruelty and kindness, oppression and benevolence, exploitation and protection.'<sup>31</sup>

Newby identifies 'ideological hegemony' as one of the principal strategies by which elites maintain their positions of power, arguing that: 'A crucial element in the management of the tensions inherent in the deferential dialectic is the provision of a consistent and coherent set of ideas which interpret the power of the ruling elite in a manner that reinforces their legitimacy.'<sup>32</sup> If it is considered, as Roberts argues, that an 'unprecedented efflorescence of paternalist ideas ... characterised social thought

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<sup>28</sup> Newby, 'The deferential dialectic', p. 149.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>30</sup> The terms *differentiation* and *identification* will be mentioned throughout this thesis and will appear in italics to indicate that they are the elements that constitute the deferential dialectic.

<sup>31</sup> Newby, *Property, paternalism, and power*, p. 29.

<sup>32</sup> Newby, 'The deferential dialectic' p. 142.

in the 1830s and 1840s' then it is evident that an ideological hegemony had been established during this period.<sup>33</sup>

Another strategy by which elites maintained their positions of power was by their use of 'the gift'. Newby acknowledges the work done by anthropologists and sociologists in this field including Marcel Mauss, Bronislaw Malinowski, and Georg Simmel<sup>34</sup> He argues that deference needs to be reinforced in a positive fashion using substantive and/or symbolic forms so that tension management in action may be observed. 'The most appropriate method, a form of action that combines exactly those identificatory and differentiatory elements that characterise deference is the gift.. It was charity often given, significantly, on a personal localised basis, that celebrated, symbolized and reaffirmed the deferential dialectic.'<sup>35</sup> The concept of the gift is a persistent thread which has been woven into this thesis and it will show how much of Lord Clonbrock's power was embedded in it and his capacity to deliver it.

In Irish historiography there has been little attention paid to the interrelated concepts of paternalism and deference but it has not, however, gone unnoticed, as K T Hoppen dedicated five pages to the topic in *Elections, politics and society* (1984) In this brief exposition, Hoppen provides examples of how some landlords acted in a paternal manner, they intervened to resolve disputes among families, distributed blankets and clothes among the poor and provided indigent widows with pensions Other aspects of this paternalism, which Hoppen describes as the provision of bread as well as circus, was the 'staging of sumptuous banquets and periodic spectacles such as fireworks displays'. In return they required 'deference' which, he argues, is the name given to the tribute paid by dependents to paternalists. 'In rural Ireland the concept - notable always for its obscurity - is less helpful than in England Yet

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<sup>33</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p 28

<sup>34</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The gift* (London, 1954), Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (London, 1922), Georg Simmel in K. H. Wolff (trans), *The sociology of Georg Simmel* (New York, 1964) The work of Clifford Geertz, particularly his development of the 'thick description' as a tool of analysis, has proved useful in gaining deeper insights into the relationships of domination and subordination which are explored in the thesis See Clifford Geertz, *The interpretation of cultures* (New York, 2000), pp 3-30, Idem, 'Deep play notes on the Balinese cockfight' in *Dedalus*, vol 1 (1972), pp 1-37

<sup>35</sup> Newby, 'The deferential dialectic' pp 161-2



versions of the art did flourish in suitably Hibernian metamorphosis.’ With his focus on elections Hoppen observed the paternalism-deference dynamic in operation and how ‘codes’, ‘nudges’, and ‘winks’ were used to communicate how the landlord wished his tenantry to exercise their votes.<sup>36</sup>

While paternalism and deference do not feature prominently in Irish historiography, a short thread of historical debate regarding deference has emerged. The debate opened with Joseph Lee’s assertion that the Land League provided the stimulus ‘to the struggle to emancipate tenants from the shackles of mental serfdom. It taught the tenants the simple but symbolic technique of not doffing their caps to landlords’. This, he argued, heralded an end to the age of deference in rural Ireland,<sup>37</sup> but W. E. Vaughan, unconvinced of this assertion, maintains that it ‘is a large claim; for one thing, habits of respect may be interrupted but not permanently destroyed by conflict, for deference, like hope, springs eternal’. Despite challenging Lee’s cap doffing assertion Vaughan provides an example of how the change in deferential attitudes from one generation to the next may be studied. He uses an example from 1861 when a father and son sent separate letters to Lord Inchquin requesting his permission to allow the farm to remain in their family: the father began his letter with ‘My Lord’, while the son began with ‘Dear Sir’.<sup>38</sup>

While cap doffing and forelock tugging may not be quantifiable, Laurence Geary has illustrated how people like Michael Davitt, in *The Fall of feudalism in Ireland* (1904), considered it a ‘hateful and heartbreaking sight’. A further example provided by Geary is a resolution passed by the members of Rossmore branch of the Land League who did ‘solemnly bind [themselves] not to take off [their] hats to any man in future except the priest’.<sup>39</sup> Geary has also paid some attention to the rituals of paternalism that took place on ‘significant family occasions, such as a marriage, the

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<sup>36</sup> K. T. Hoppen, *Elections, politics, and society* (Oxford, 1984), pp 133-5.

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Lee, *The modernisation of Irish society* (Dublin, 1973), p. 89.

<sup>38</sup> W. E. Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants in mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1994), p. 226.

<sup>39</sup> Resolution passed by Rossmore branch of the Land League, in Laurence M. Geary ‘Anticipating memory: landlordism, agrarianism, and deference, in late nineteenth-century Ireland’ in Tom Dunne and Laurence M. Geary (eds), *History and the public sphere: essays in honour of John A. Murphy* (Cork, 2005), p. 127; Michael Davitt, *The fall of feudalism in Ireland: Or the story of the Land League revolution* (London and New York, 1904).

birth of an heir, a coming of age, [and a] recovery from illness'. He has argued that there were instances of 'pre-Land War social lubrication' but that 'the speed with which tenant obsequioseness was discarded after the commencement of the Land War suggests that it was little more than a ritualistic veneer'.<sup>40</sup> This thesis will permit an expansion of this debate as considerable attention will be paid to the rituals of paternalism in an attempt to gain a greater understanding of what they were and the roles they played in landed estate life. Reflecting the interdisciplinary dimension of the work, chapters four and five will devote considerable attention to them drawing on theory from the social sciences to flesh out their significance and discover whether they were just a ritualistic veneer as Geary argues or something more substantial.

### **Primary sources**

A wide range of primary sources have been consulted in the research of this thesis. estate papers, parliamentary papers, *Hansard's parliamentary debates*, traveller's accounts, pamphlets, newspapers, material in private possession, records of the Famine relief commissioners, police reports, minutes of poor law guardians. The most important source has by necessity been the Clonbrock papers housed in the National Library of Ireland. It is one of the most comprehensive collections of family and estate papers containing material from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. Much of the evidence on which this thesis is based has been extracted from this collection. Rental ledgers from the 1840s to the early 1900s provide insights into the economic circumstances of tenantry, its changing profile, the rents that were paid, and its changing profile. The estate correspondence of the third and fourth barons Clonbrock has proved illuminating in matters pertaining to education and agrarian agitation. The personal correspondence of family members permits illuminating insights into the mind of the landed class. The diaries of Augusta Caroline Dillon from 1866 to 1895 provide details of events occurring on the estate that otherwise would have gone unreported. Account books from the pre-Famine

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<sup>40</sup> Geary 'Anticipating memory', pp 131-2

period have revealed minute details of expenditure on charity, emigration, improvements, and eviction.

However, estate papers alone do not reveal the complexities of paternalism on an estate. In this respect provincial newspapers such as the *Western Star* (Ballinasloe) and the *Tuam Herald*, reflecting conservative-unionist and liberal-nationalist viewpoints, were particularly valuable. As newspaper became more radical during the nineteenth century they illuminated the attitudes of small tenant farmers as they were afforded little opportunity to participate in the public sphere earlier in the century.

The Hansard parliamentary debates also provide illuminating insights into the stance which the barons Clonbrock took regarding the legislative change during the period. Parliamentary papers have been another invaluable resource as the land agents, as well as local clergymen, gave evidence to the various commissions of inquiry detailing many aspects of estate life from landholding and education, to agricultural improvement. Pamphlets, especially those by Thomas Bermingham, housed at the National Library of Ireland and the Royal Irish Academy's Halliday Collection, were the fulcrum around which paternalism in Ireland was initially understood and provided the impetus for the wider study.

### **The Dillon family and Clonbrock: an introduction**

This study begins in 1826, the year Robert Dillon, third baron Clonbrock, inherited the family estates at the age of eighteen. It ends in 1808, the year that his son, Luke Gerald Dillon, was forced through intense agitation to come to terms with his tenants and agree to the sale of his estates of around 28,000 acres.

The Dillon family of Clonbrock were descended from Sir Henry de Leon who came to Ireland in the eleventh century. Thomas Dillon, who had been appointed chief justice of Connaught in 1577, secured the family's first foothold in east Galway in 1584 and began to expand from there. He purchased the suppressed Carmelite friary at Caltra around 1590 and about the same time lands from the O'Kellys of

Clonbrock and Clougher. At the time of his death in 1606, he was the owner of ‘the substantial O’Kelly castle and bawn at Clonbrock’.<sup>41</sup> By 1728 the family was sufficiently established that Robert Dillon (1703-46) was able to secure a seat in parliament as MP for Dungannon. To secure a political future for the family he secured a controlling interest for the borough of Lanesborough Co. Roscommon and it was to this borough that his grandson, also named Robert (1754-95) was elected in 1776. In the late eighteenth century a medieval tower house was an inappropriate residence for a man such as Robert who had political ambitions to join the peerage so between 1780 and 1788 he engaged the services of the architect William Leeson and built Clonbrock House, a three storey mansion with seven bays the central three of which were breakfronted and pedimented.<sup>42</sup>

Although a modest house in comparison to some of the great mansions designed by the likes of Edward Lovett Pearce and Richard Castle, aspects of its design drew from neo classicism and reflected the political ambitions of Robert Dillon. As Mark Girouard has argued: ‘people did not live in country houses unless they either possessed power, or, by setting up in a country house, were making a bid to possess it’. A country house was the ‘headquarters from which land was administered and power organised. It was a showcase in which to entertain supporters and make good connections’.<sup>43</sup> No doubt Robert Dillon used the house for these purposes as he succeeded in furthering his career and the standing of his family with an elevation to the peerage as the first baron Clonbrock in 1795.

Terence Dooley has argued that big houses ‘were built to inspire awe in social equals and .. deference in the lower social classes’. For the tenants on the Clonbrock estates, many of whom lived in one room cabins and small cottages, Clonbrock House would certainly have been an impressive sight. An indication as to how it was perceived is provided in Caesar Otway’s *Tour of Connaught* (1839) He remembered

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<sup>41</sup> Joe P. Mannion, ‘Landownership and anglicisation in Tudor Connaught: the lordships of Clanrickard and Hy Many, 1500-1590’ (Ph D thesis, NUI Galway, Galway, 2010), p. 286

<sup>42</sup> Bence-Jones, *A guide to Irish country houses*, p. 86

<sup>43</sup> Mark Girouard, *Life in the English country house* (Yale, 1978), p. 2

being told a circumstance which occurred half a century ago, and was witnessed by a relation of mine then on a visit to Clonbrock. The then lord was getting home his year's fuel, and as was the custom, the tenantry, according to their villages, took it in turn, day after day, to draw home, with men and horses, the lord's turf, and during the process each set of villagers got their dinners in the servants hall; but when it came to one set [who] were called to come into the house to dinner, nothing could persuade them to do so - in Irish, their only language, they declared that they dare not do so, lest the big building should fall upon their heads while under it <sup>44</sup>

Clearly there was a marked difference between the smallholders and the landed family, the two classes inhabited very different worlds.

When Robert Dillon inherited the estates in 1826 they were situated principally in county Galway with two small estates in Limerick and Roscommon (which he sold in the 1840s). On succeeding to estates, landlords frequently engaged the services of surveyors to assess the extent and condition of the land they possessed. In the 1830s Clonbrock contracted Edward Vaughan, a Dublin surveyor, who produced a detailed survey with accompanying townland maps, of which sixty-one survive <sup>45</sup>. Different boundaries evolved over time giving expression to townlands, parishes, dioceses, baronies, and poor law unions; the Clonbrock demesne straddles the two parishes of Fohenagh, and Ahascragh. By 1856 all of Clonbrock's estates were located exclusively in county Galway and Richard Griffith's general valuation calculated that he possessed 916 holdings in seventeen parishes spread across seven baronies, or three poor law unions (see map below) <sup>46</sup>. The chart below illustrates the number of holdings that Clonbrock owned in the respective parishes according to Griffith.

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<sup>44</sup> Caesar Otway, *A tour in Connaught* (Dublin, 1839), p. 163

<sup>45</sup> A survey of the estate of the Rt Hon Lord Clonbrock situate in the County of Galway', by James Vaughan and Sons, Dublin (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MSS 22,008-09)

<sup>46</sup> Richard Griffith, *General valuation of rateable property in Ireland* (Dublin, 1855)

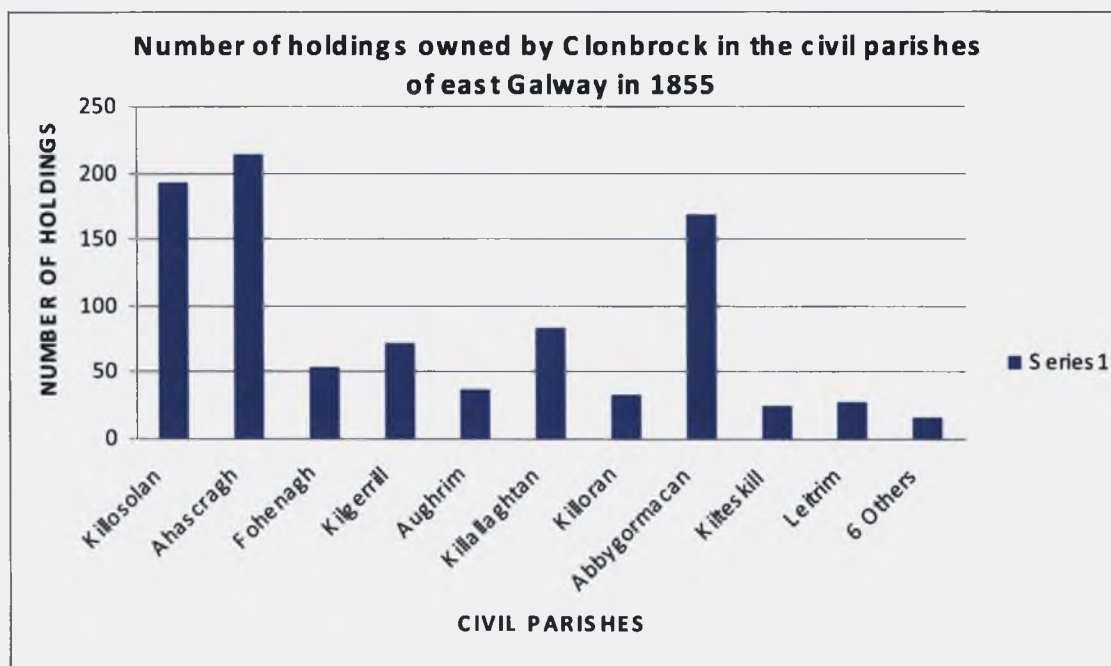


Fig.1. Source: Richard Griffith, *General valuation of rateable property in Ireland (Dublin, 1855)*

Of the 916 holdings on the estates 517 were concentrated in the four civil parishes adjacent to the demesne: Killosolan, Ahascragh, Fohenagh, and Kilgerrill. The parishes of Aughrim and Killallaghan straddling the Ballydonlan estate had 120 holdings, while the small mountain estate at Dalystown had twenty-six holdings in the parish of Leitrim.

It is to the management of the estates during the golden age of paternalism between 1829 and 1842 that we now turn.



## Chapter one

### The golden age of paternalism on the Clonbrock estates 1829-1842

I am aware, what an enlightened friend has often told me, that in most minds vast is called visionary, and enlarged views are often looked upon as castles in the air I am further told 'that the poor are never to cease off the land'. A person who talks *only* of vast and extensive plans and yet never by actual experiment proves, on a small scale, that which he advocates as useful on a great scale, is, I admit, a visionary I trust that I have in practice proved, or ascertained the utility of those measures I recommend for general adoption, in various localities I have not given my own views and experiences alone, but have collected from sources within my reach, the opinions of the best informed men of the present time on the subject <sup>1</sup>

Between 1826 and 1843 Thomas Bermingham was the land agent on the Clonbrock estate <sup>2</sup> He was a member of the Reform Club, a Whig supporter, and a pamphleteer who was not afraid to voice his views, even if they were in conflict with those held by his employer, Robert Dillon, third baron Clonbrock (a Tory representative peer from 1838) Between 1831 and 1848 Bermingham published numerous pamphlets expressing a paternalist social outlook covering such topics as the condition of the labouring poor and the duties of resident landlords <sup>3</sup> The quotation above is from the introduction to his 1835 pamphlet, *The social state of Great Britain and Ireland considered...*, in which he made several suggestions to bring about an improvement in the condition of the Irish poor Bermingham believed from experience gained as Lord Clonbrock's agent since 1826, together with knowledge gained from living in England and Belgium, where he resided for three and seven years respectively, he had a significant contribution to make toward this end

David Roberts has argued that the core of paternalism was a belief that society should be authoritarian, hierarchical, organic, and pluralist Clustered around these core ideas were a set of attitudes 'no one of which was a necessary element to the

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Bermingham, *The social state of Great Britain and Ireland considered, with regard to the labouring population* (London, 1835), p 11

<sup>2</sup> Bermingham was the principal land agent on Clonbrock's estates at this time, Thomas Blackstock managed the Bermingham and Quansbury estates but his accounts are fragmented and not suitable for comparison with Bermingham's Bermingham also acted as the land agent on the neighbouring Mahon estate between 1823 and 1833

<sup>3</sup> See bibliography, pp 265-6



paternalist outlook, but all of which contributed to make paternalism a rich complex and varied set of attitudes'. One of these attitudes. was 'a belief in the inevitability of poverty. Paternalists believed the bible when it said the poor shall never cease off the land'.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, Thomas Bermingham, as the introductory quotation indicates, did not believe this passage from the bible but this does not mean he was not a paternalist but rather that his paternalism was of a more enlightened variety

This chapter will show how this paternalism was put into practice on the estates managed by him and while it will illustrate its enlightened aspects it will also illustrate the harsher side of paternalism thus exposing the contradictions that, as Howard Newby has argued, defined paternalism at every level. The chapter contains two sections, the first will argue that in the 1820s and 1830s estate management was driven by a paternal ethos which showed a degree of consideration for the welfare of 'superabundant' tenants on overcrowded estates. The second section will argue that the paternalism which existed on the estates constituted a form of social welfare which made provision for widows, orphans, and the sick which assisted in strengthening the bonds between landlord and tenant and facilitated the legitimisation of landed power. It will further argue that Clonbrock and Bermingham understood the important role that landlord charity played in strengthening the bonds between landlord and tenant and resisted, in vain, the introduction of the poor law which was one of the first centralising measures to curtail locally based landlord power

'Agricultural colonies' and 'pauper colonies' were first founded in the Kingdom of the Netherlands as a response to growing unemployment in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. These projects provided basic accommodation and a small amount of land on which poor people could make a living and they, no doubt, provided the inspiration for Thomas Bermingham's home colonization project on Lord Clonbrock's Roscommon estate in the late 1820s and early 1830s. Bermingham initiated the project as a response to overcrowding on this portion of the estate and, pleased with the results, published the details as an example to

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<sup>4</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p. 6

landlords and to the government of how the problem of overpopulation might be solved. Exhibiting a paternal concern for the plight of the poor it very much conforms to the kind of literature which, according to David Roberts, constituted a paternalist *zeitgeist* in the 1830s and 1840s

The land consisting of 300 acres at Iskerbane, Co Roscommon, had been let to a middleman on a lease of three lives and by the time it expired in 1824 and was returned to Clonbrock's father, the second baron, it had become overcrowded through subdivision. When the lease was drawn up, the previous century, the land had been let in just four divisions and by the time it was returned it supported sixty-two families and a total population of 370. According to Bermingham, the estate was farmed according to the '*Village system*' [his italics] whereby the land was held communally and managed by the heads of the village. Otherwise known as 'rundale' Bermingham described how the system led to subdivision.

At first, perhaps, one family rented a large tract of land, but in process of time, as a son or daughter married, an out-house or cow-cabin became the residence of the new married couple, and a portion of ground was assigned to them. Thus the holdings (or small tenements) became subdivided, not with permanent fences, so as to ensure to each person his own plot, but according to the variable regulations made by the heads of the village. The tillage-land of one person this year, being allotted to another next year, whilst the grazing-land was regulated by so many head of cattle to each portion called collips. Such subdivisions have been carried on, till the claims of some of the family have been a fortieth or fiftieth part of the whole.<sup>5</sup>

Landlords and agents regarded rundale as backward, and an impediment to progress, as the periodic redistribution of land meant that there was no incentive to make permanent improvements. Furthermore: 'The process of allocating arable strips was said to be a particular source of conflict, because of disputes over who got what.'<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Facts and illustrations for the Labourer's Friend Society in a short narrative of the home colonies of Iskerbane and Castle Sampson* first published in 1833, this edition published as an addendum to *The social state of Great Britain and Ireland considered* (London, 1835), p. 142 (henceforth cited as *Home colonies*)

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Bell and Mervyn Watson, *A history of Irish farming, 1750-1950* (Dublin, 2009), p. 29, for a defence of the rundale system see Kevin Whelan, 'Pre and Post-Famine landscape change', in Cathal Pórtéir (ed.), *The Great Irish Famine* (Cork, 1995), pp. 19-33

This, according to Bermingham, was the case at Iskerbane where there were incessant legal squabbles 'succeeded by deadly feuds and bloody strife' In 1829, shortly after the third baron succeeded to the estates, a decision was made to reduce the number of occupiers at Iskerbane the land was drained and new holdings were carved out for twenty-seven families considered to be 'the most responsible and best conducted in the village'.<sup>7</sup> Thirty-five families, considered to be 'superabundant', were offered a programme of assisted emigration or a sum of money and the previous year's crop free of charge to remove from the property. However, only five families accepted so an alternative plan was adopted for thirty remaining families Early Victorian paternalists were expected to show a concern for the poor and Bermingham, in tune with the paternalist *zeitgeist*, related that with 'every anxiety being felt to treat these poor people with kindness' they were resettled in 1830 on 'home colonies' at nearby Castlesampson They were still permitted to keep their produce of the previous year free of charge and houses of lime and stone were erected on their holdings for which they paid no rent for the first year.<sup>8</sup>

According to Bermingham the experiment was a success and by 1833 he was able to claim that there was 'little or no arrear' on these estates and that a part of the country that had been 'fearfully disturbed' was now quiet. Furthermore, he argued that the combined rents of Iskerbane and Castlesampson had been increased from £283 to £357 representing a six per cent profit on the £1,212 which had been expended improving these properties Bermingham used the example of home colonies at Iskerbane and Castlesampson to show how, with a small outlay, 'redundant labour' could be employed and turned to profit. He argued that this system could be adapted across the country on the vast tracts of bog and mountain land to provide employment for the surplus population. Exhibiting the paternal duty to guide and superintend, he claimed that all the peasantry needed was the kind of 'direction and assistance' that was provided on Lord Clonbrock's estate to become 'useful members of society, instead of being (as too often is the case) under a

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<sup>7</sup> Bermingham, *Home colonies*, p 142

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid* pp141-2, for a study of Irish emigration in the nineteenth century see Gerard Moran, *Sending out Ireland's poor assisted emigration to North America in the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2004), Kerby Miller and Paul Wagner, *Out of Ireland the story of Irish emigration to America* (London, 1994)

mistaken system of mismanagement, forced to become a burthen on their landlords, and disturbers of the public peace’<sup>9</sup>

Bermingham’s and, by extension, Lord Clonbrock’s advocacy of home colonies was a progressive and experimental approach to dealing with the problem of overcrowded estates. As well as his advocacy of home colonization he persistently campaigned for large scale public works to develop the country’s infrastructure and provide employment to the poor. In this he had common cause with the Irish radicals William Torrens McCullagh and John Pitt Kennedy who were advocates of providing public works for the able-bodied poor. Pitt Kennedy had initiated land reclamation projects on the Cloghan estate in Derry and shared Bermingham’s enthusiasm for home colonization. He articulated the view that such projects were an effective way of dealing with overpopulated areas and his 1835 pamphlet *Instruct, employ, don’t hang them* he included an excerpt from Bermingham’s *Home colonies* pamphlet. He expressed the highest regard for both Bermingham and Clonbrock, ‘who have proved to the world that there exist in Ireland intelligent, energetic, beneficent proprietors and managers of land, and that where such characters were found, their tenantry are happy, docile, industrious, and loyal’.<sup>10</sup> The Rev William Hickey 1787/8-1875, alias Martin Doyle, was well known in his lifetime for promoting agricultural improvement and his *Address to the landlords of Ireland* (1836), appealing to proprietors to perform their paternal duty, also included excerpts from *Home colonies*. He praised Clonbrock who: ‘Instead of “driving out” these human beings [the ‘superabundant’ tenants], in order to “drive in” sheep, his lordship allowed Mr Bermingham, his intelligent and humane agent’ to provide them with alternative accommodation’<sup>11</sup>

The ideas of Bermingham and Clonbrock were somewhat removed from those of Archbishop Whately who chaired the *Poor inquiry*. Peter Gray has argued that he

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid pp 145-6

<sup>10</sup> John Pitt-Kennedy, *Instruct, employ, don’t hang them or Ireland tranquilised without soldiers, and enriched without English capital* (London, 1835), p 141

<sup>11</sup> Martin Doyle, alias, Rev William Hickey, *Address to the landlords of Ireland*, in *The works of Martin Doyle*, vol 1 (Dublin, 1836), p 81, see also, Tim Cadogan, ‘Rev William Hickey/ “Martin Doyle” (1788-1975) agricultural educator and essayist’ in *Bandon Historical Journal*, v (1989), pp 36-42

was possessed of a: ‘Malthusian-based minimalism and preference for emigration [which] was a world away from the interventionist public works schemes of the Irish radicals McCullagh and Kennedy . . . The Belgian model of Irish rural society favoured by the latter was an anathema both to the orthodox economists and defenders of the “improving” landed interest’<sup>12</sup> Bermingham, as we have seen was not averse to emigration as he had offered a programme of assisted emigration to the Castlesampson tenants in 1829 as well as providing £47 in 1833 and a further £115 in 1836 to assist people who wanted to leave. A standard sum was not paid to emigrants and the fifteen people that left for America in 1836 received sums ranging from £2 to £10 yielding an average of £7 7 s per person<sup>13</sup> Advocating emigration of any description seems to be somewhat at odds with the paternalist notion that those higher up in the hierarchy were to care for those less fortunate. However, in *The social state* Bermingham described those who emigrated as independent minded people who possessed ‘a natural spirit of enterprise to seek the remedy [of their poor situation] on the world’s wide waste’.<sup>14</sup> This seems to be an attempt to morally justify assisted emigration by implying that these independent minded people were less in need of the paternal guiding hand and able to make their own way in the world. However, while Bermingham did offer sums of money to assist emigrants, it was not a policy that he actively pursued. He, unlike Whately, did not see it as a panacea for Ireland’s ills, arguing that ‘it would be impolitic, to rest on a hope that emigration will materially obviate the difficulties which . . . obstruct the progress of national improvement’.<sup>15</sup>

While experimentation with home colonies was somewhat radical and marks Bermingham and Clonbrock as unusual among the ‘improving’ landed interest, Bermingham’s claims, as late as 1846, that the ‘experiment was eminently successful’ were, perhaps, somewhat exaggerated as the Clonbrock account books

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Gray, *The making of the Irish poor law, 1815-43* (Manchester, 2009), p. 252

<sup>13</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,594)

<sup>14</sup> Bermingham, *The social state*, p. 127

<sup>15</sup> Bermingham, *The social state*, p. 127

reveal that he omitted certain details regarding the project <sup>16</sup> Trumpeting its success he failed to mention that a sums of £3 13s and £6 15s were spent ejecting tenants from Castlesampson in 1834-5 and 1838 respectively or that they had resulted in £97 in losses <sup>17</sup>

Further evidence that Clonbrock was not pursuing a policy of consolidation has been garnered from the *Poor Inquiry* which heard that some changes had recently taken place on his estate but 'not with a view of making one large farm, but of throwing a number of minute holdings into a certain number of farms of 10 acres each Mr Bermingham stated, and all present [at the inquiry that day] confirmed his assertion, that the change in question had been affected without recourse to any harshness'.<sup>18</sup>

The inquiry did not state on what section of the estate this took place but these details were revealed in *The miseries and beauties of Ireland*, a travel book published in 1837 by one of the assistant poor law commissioners, Jonathan Binns This revealed that the townland in question was Doon which Clonbrock had purchased from a former lessee of the crown in 1832 at which time fifty tenants were in occupation According to Binns, these tenants were offered sums of money for being ejected as well as an offer to relocate them to other parts of the estate and assistance to build houses Some tenants accepted this offer while others used the money they had received to emigrate and the remainder 'four or five of the old occupants still remain' <sup>19</sup>

The Clonbrock account books confirm that tenants were compensated for ejection as £169 was given to paupers for 'going away from Doon' in 1833-4 and a further

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<sup>16</sup> Thomas Bermingham, *Letter addressed to the Right Honourable Lord John Russell containing facts illustrations of the good effects from the just and considerate discharge of the duties of a resident landlord* (London, 1846), p 18 (henceforth cited as Bermingham, *Duties*)

<sup>17</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MSS 19,596, 19,598)

<sup>18</sup> *Poor Inquiry (Ireland) Appendix F Containing baronial examinations relative to con acre, quarter, or score ground, small tenantry, consolidation of farms, and dislodged tenantry, emigration, landlord and tenant, nature and state of agriculture, taxation, roads, observations on the nature and state of agriculture, and supplement, containing answers to questions 23 to 35 circulated by the commissioners*, p 80 [38], H L 1836, xxxiii, 82 (henceforth cited as *Poor Inquiry Appendix F*), see Niall Ó Ciosain, 'The Poor Inquiry and Irish Society - a consensus theory of truth' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, xx (2010), pp 127-139

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Binns, *The miseries and beauties of Ireland*, vol 11 (London, 1837), pp 16-7

£107 in 1834-5<sup>20</sup> Paupers on the Ballydonelan, Clonbrock, Bermingham, and Roscommon estates received £111, £35, £26, and £22 respectively. The eighteen paupers ejected on the Ballydonelan estate received various sums ranging from £5 to £20 each. Fourteen of these of these were undertenants, twelve of whom received a sum of £5. Widow Derham, who 'had ten in family' got £20, while John Colohan who 'had been a useful man on trying occasions' received £10 The remainder received sums of between £5 and £6.<sup>21</sup> Bermingham's evidence to the *Poor Inquiry* regarding labourers wages provides some insight into the value of these payments to the paupers He paid labourers 8d per day in the summer and 6d per day in the winter, which corresponds to an annual income of £9 2s for a six day week However, labourers were rarely able to secure work throughout the year so an annual wage of £5 to £6 would be a more reasonable estimate so even those who were paid £5 had the equivalent of one year's wage.<sup>22</sup>

Whether Clonbrock provided accommodation for tenants ejected from overcrowded portions of the estate is difficult to ascertain but given that he had made some effort to accommodate the 'superabundant' tenants at Castlesampson it is entirely possible. Evidence submitted to the *Poor inquiry* by the Rev Robert Cadge, of Castleblakeney appears to suggest that he did In reply to questions relating to the practice of consolidating small holdings to create one large farm, he stated that he had knowledge of just one instance in his parish where 'the dispossessed [were] left to shift for themselves. Lord Clonbrock, the chief landholder, when he is obliged to resort to this leaves the house and one acre of land free, with turbary'.<sup>23</sup> Tenants on other estates were not so fortunate as the Rev Patrick Pouden of Kilklooney (Ballinasloe) reported that the practice of dispossessing smallholders to create large farms was common in his parish and 'the poor outcasts [who had been evicted] nestle where they can, they suffer great misery and anguish of heart, their feelings

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<sup>20</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1833-4 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MSS 19,596)

<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> *Poor Inquiry (Ireland) Appendix D Containing baronial examinations relative to earning of labourers, cottier tenants, employment of women and children, expenditure, and supplement, containing answers to questions 1 to 12 circulated by the commissioners*, p 80 [36], H L 1836, XXI, 82

<sup>23</sup> *Poor Inquiry, supplement to appendix F*, p 14 [38], H L 1836, XXXIII, 440

are excited; and this system produces all the ferocity of despair, and many of the dreadful inroads on the peace and order of society'.<sup>24</sup>

Overall, the picture that emerges of the Clonbrock estates from the *Poor inquiry* is a positive one. Its investigation into the condition of the cottages and cabins of the labouring class found that their general dimensions were between eighteen and twenty-one feet long, thirteen feet wide, and mostly built of stone. Clonbrock's cottages, however, were found to be 'far superior' to these as they were thirty foot long 'His lordship provides timber, cave stones, and iron window-frames, which move on central pivots, and afford tolerable facilities for ventilation. The panes of glass cost but 1d each, and the tenants are bound to replace them when broken'.<sup>25</sup> Further evidence of paternalism was Clonbrock's support of the Ahascragh Charitable Loan Fund to which he donated £50 on its foundation in 1833.<sup>26</sup> In *The social state* Bermingham advocated the establishment of these funds arguing that they could be useful in raising people from poverty and preventing them from falling into it.<sup>27</sup> The *Poor inquiry* reported that the Ahascragh society had distributed £720 among 400 borrowers for the purposes of buying pigs, meal, and potatoes and that 'no loss has occurred'.<sup>28</sup> Although set up for the benefit of small tenants some landlords began exploiting them for their own ends. In evidence to the *Devon commission*, Charles Filgate, who replaced Bermingham as Clonbrock's agent in 1843, related how the Ahascragh loan fund had been wound up 'for we found great abuses .. the proprietors would drive the tenants to go to the loan funds, and when they got the money it went into the landlords pocket'.<sup>29</sup>

While most of the evidence concerning Clonbrock that was presented at the *Poor inquiry* was positive one incident which took place in the townland of Doon reveals

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid* p 6 [38], H L 1836, xxxiii, 432

<sup>25</sup> *Poor Inquiry (Ireland) Appendix E Containing baronial examinations relative to food, cottages and cabins, clothing and furniture, pawnbroking and savings banks, drinking, and supplement, containing answers to questions 13 to 22 circulated by the commissioners*, p 38 [37], H L 1836, xxxii, 40 (henceforth cited as *Poor Inquiry Appendix E*)

<sup>26</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1834-5 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,597)

<sup>27</sup> Bermingham, *The social state*, p xv

<sup>28</sup> *Poor Inquiry Appendix E*, p 93 [37], H L 1836, xxxii, 95

<sup>29</sup> *Evidence taken before her majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the state of law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland*, pt ii, p 506 [616], H L, xx, 512



that not everything ran smoothly on his estates. Before Clonbrock bought these lands from the crown a man had been squatting and had not been removed by the time he assumed control of the property. It was stated at the *Poor inquiry* that this man was of 'bad character' and that although Bermingham gave him £5 to vacate he did not leave. A further £15 was given to his father who took responsibility for getting him off the estate but he still refused to move and secretly erected a cabin on the land of Mr Connolly, one of the legitimate tenants. Connolly took legal proceedings against the man who then waylaid him and shot him in the thigh. He was later arrested, prosecuted, convicted, and hanged.<sup>30</sup> Therefore Bermingham's assertion that the townland of Doon was cleared without any recourse to harsh measures might be somewhat of an overstatement, but perhaps this only extended to the legitimate tenants and not squatters.

The surviving rent rolls for the 1830s and 1840s are fragmentary so it is not possible to determine the number of evictions but some insights can be gained from the account books to assess whether evictions on the estates were extensive. Various terms appear in the account books that are associated with eviction such as 'notice to quit', 'ejectment decree obtained', 'expenses ejecting tenants' or 'paid sheriff for forcible possession'. These three terms denote various stages in the process of eviction and as W. E. Vaughan has argued, 'Notices to quit and ejectment processes exceeded the number of ejectment decrees, which in turn exceeded the number of executions made by the sub-sheriff and the number of evictions returned by the constabulary'.<sup>31</sup> Serving notices to quit and ejectment decrees were often used by landlords as a form of social control in order to keep troublesome tenants in line, more often than not the rents were paid before an eviction ever took place so their existence in the account books does not constitute evidence of eviction. Even in cases where the tenants were 'ejected' from holdings there is a possibility that they were readmitted on another part of the estate as Bermingham stated to be the case in relation to those 'ejected' from the townland of Doon in his evidence to the *Poor inquiry*. The difficulty of determining actual eviction is illustrated by the case of

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<sup>30</sup> *Poor Inquiry Appendix F*, p. 35 [38], H.L. 1836, xxxiii, 37

<sup>31</sup> Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants*, p. 19

John H. Gilmore of Lurgan who was served with an ejection order in 1841 His name appears again in the 'expenses ejecting tenants' account the following year where it was recorded that it cost £1.10s to dismiss him In the end he was not ejected and, ironically, became one of Clonbrock's model tenants in the ensuing years winning several prizes for his produce in the Ballinasloe Agricultural Society's competitions<sup>32</sup> However there are a number of instances in the 1830s where the services of the sheriff were marshalled to take possession of holdings providing concrete evidence of physical eviction. in 1834, 1835, and 1839 the sheriff was paid £5, £21, and £4 10s respectively for gaining possession of holdings<sup>33</sup>

It is unlikely that Bermingham would have gone to any lengths to accommodate these tenants on other portions of the estate or to compensate them for disturbance as a pamphlet published by him in 1843 reveals. While arguing the case for tenant right he proposed that 'in the case of the removal of unfortunate tenants, who have not acted in a litigious manner toward their landlords by withholding possession, &c , but whom it is thought advisable to remove, I think, for humanity sake, a certain sum should be charged to landlord'.<sup>34</sup> Therefore it is obvious that Bermingham felt that if a tenant did not remove from a holding when requested and asserted a right to it by withholding possession then he or she had forfeited their right to compensation and it must have been against such tenants that the services of the sheriff were employed to gain 'forcible possession'. It would be reasonable to argue that such tenants did not receive an offer to be resettled on another portion of the estate as they would have been regarded as troublesome for their refusal to defer to those in positions of power on the estate The paternalist world view demanded that those lower down the social scale accepted that those in higher positions knew what was best for them and if they dared challenge their 'betters' they suffered the consequences for what was regarded as 'impertinence'.

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<sup>32</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1841, 1842 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MSS 19,610-12)

<sup>33</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts 1834-5, 1835-6, 1838-9 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MSS 19,596, 19,598, 19,606)

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Bermingham, *Correspondence between Sir Robert Peel and Thomas Bermingham, esq , on the subject of public works in Ireland, with his plan of a railway and improved canal communication between Dublin and the river Shannon* (London, 1843), p 9

While Clonbrock and Bermingham were praised by radicals such as William Torrens McCullagh and John Pitt Kennedy and clergymen such as the Rev William Hickey, the Irish aristocracy and landlord class had failed to make a positive impression on the French travellers Gustave de Beaumont and Alexis de Tocqueville who laid the blame for Irish poverty firmly at their door.<sup>35</sup> De Beaumont was convinced that a peasant proprietorship needed to be established and identified the laws of entail and primogeniture as obstacles to achieving this. He described them as ‘weapons placed in the hands of proprietors for the protection of their estates’<sup>36</sup> He argued that in England it was easy to understand ‘the assistance which a wise and enlightened aristocracy might derive from a system of absolute and inflexible entails’ by protecting it from the occasional extravagance. However, he argued that in Ireland, where the aristocracy was ‘destitute of prudence, talent, and conduct, degraded in public opinion, impoverished as much by its vices as its errors ... then the law framed to perpetuate its wealth will only accelerate its ruin’.<sup>37</sup> He criticised Irish landlords for the miserable state of the peasantry and again used the example of England to contrast the Irish case. ‘In England the farm is so rich it may be confounded with the demesne of the landlord. In Ireland there is a sudden break where the demesne ends, it appears almost incredible that the hideous form which displays such indigence and misery, should belong to the same palace as that containing such enormous opulence’.<sup>38</sup>

Alexis de Tocqueville, de Beaumont’s travelling companion and intellectual collaborator, expressed similar views of the Irish aristocratic/landlord class. In his *Tour of Ireland* he asked the rhetorical question: ‘Who supports the poor in Ireland today? It is the poor. The rich man looks at the poor over the top of the walls of his beautiful park, or if he meets him on the road, he responds to his entreaties: I make it a duty not to give anything to those who do not work. And he does not provide

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<sup>35</sup> Tom Garvin and Andreas Hess, ‘Gustave de Beaumont: Ireland’s Alexis de Tocqueville’ in Séamas Ó Síochain (ed.), *Social thought on Ireland in the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2009), pp 9-26

<sup>36</sup> Gustave de Beaumont [W. C. Taylor (ed. and trans.)] *Ireland: social, political, and religious* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), p. 316, first published as *L’Irlande sociale, politique et religieuse* (Paris, 1839)

<sup>37</sup> De Beaumont, *Ireland*, p. 317

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*

them with work. He has big fat dogs and his fellow creatures die at his door. Who feeds the poor? The poor.<sup>39</sup> That the poor cared for the poor in Ireland is undisputed and the Rev Henry Hunt, rector of Ahascragh, testified to this in evidence given to the *Poor Inquiry*. When asked whether beggars were given money or provisions, Hunt replied that 'the poor at their doors give potatoes to the travelling beggar'. Further questioned about the number of people that provided accommodation to beggars and at what cost, he replied that beggars were 'scarcely ever refused lodging, and if he has a blanket or other covering, I do not believe he is charged any thing'<sup>40</sup>

David Roberts has argued that the three principal duties which the conscientious paternalist of superior rank felt he must perform were ruling, guiding, and helping. The evidence presented thus far in this chapter provides a degree of proof that Bermingham and Clonbrock were motivated by paternal principles in their treatment of the poor and that there was some consideration for 'superabundant' populations on the various estates. Their methods in dealing with these problems won approval from radicals which marked them out as somewhat different from the improving landed interest. Lord Clonbrock does not appear to conform with the bleak portrayals of de Beaumont and de Tocqueville as some concern for those residing beyond his demesne walls indicates that he was performing his duty of helping those less fortunate than himself.

The second part of this chapter intends to further examine how the management of the Clonbrock estates was influenced by the paternalist *zeitgeist* and how 'charity often given, significantly, on a personal localised basis . . . celebrated, symbolised and reaffirmed the deferential dialectic.'<sup>41</sup> It will provide insights into the operation of landed power at estate level by examining the distribution of charity on the estates in the year March 1834-5 to illustrate that a form of estate based social welfare

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<sup>39</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville [Emmet J Larkin (ed and trans)], *Alexis de Tocqueville's journey in Ireland, July-August 1835* (Dublin, 1990), pp 78-9

<sup>40</sup> *First report of his majesty's commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland, with appendix (A) and supplement*, pt 1, p 6, H C 1835 (369) xxxii, 316 (henceforth cited as *First report of the poor law commissioners Appendix A*)

<sup>41</sup> Newby, 'The deferential dialectic', pp 161-2

existed before the introduction of the poor law. This will lead on to the debates that emerged in relation to the introduction of the poor law and Thomas Bermingham's engagement with them. Finally it will show that the introduction of the poor law in 1838 had no immediate impact on the estate based distribution of charity but that as time progressed it went into decline which had implications for locally based landlord control.

The chart below provides a breakdown of the £350 paid out in charities for the year ending 31 March 1835.

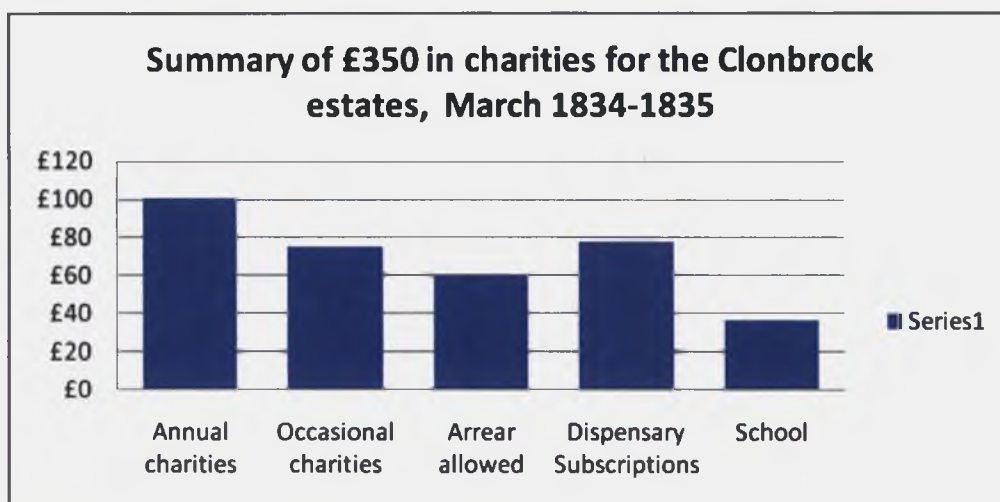


Fig. 1.1. Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers MSS 19,595-6<sup>42</sup>

The charity accounts recorded the name of each individual and in some cases their address as well as the sum they received. The names entered in the 'Annual charity' account changed little from year to year and many of them were probably older people to whom pensions were being paid. At the *Poor Inquiry* Thomas Bermingham stated that widows were in receipt of pensions of £2 and the accounts, see Fig.1.2, reveal that widows were beneficearies of a certain degree of charity.<sup>43</sup> However the average sum of money expended on widows that year was £2.7 as

<sup>42</sup> The 'Annual charities' account for this year also included the sum of £25 paid to the schoolmaster at Kilglass (Clonbrock) school but as the school is given a specific account in later years it was decided to separate this figure in order that the data should be consistent. The extra £11 bringing the total expended on the school to £36 was for improvements to the school extracted from the 'Improvements to Clonbrock estate' account MS 19,696. Chapter two will address the topic of education in greater detail. The arrear allowed for that year was £97 but only sums allowed to paupers or to tenants for losses have been included.

<sup>43</sup> *Poor Inquiry: Appendix F*, p. 81 [38], H.L. 1836, xxxiii, 83.

some widows were allocated up to £4 which may be due to them having to raise a young family but this is not specifically stated in accounts. While these sums of money may have provided some assistance it certainly would have been difficult to live on if it is compared with the wages that labourer could expect to earn. However, it must be considered that a labourer may have had to support a wife and family on such wages of £5 to £6 which makes the £2 pension looks significantly more substantial. Men, as can be seen, were also in receipt of charity and a nurse was paid to visit sick tenants. Vulnerable children such as those that were orphaned or those with visual impairments were also the recipients of perennial charity as the chart further reveals.

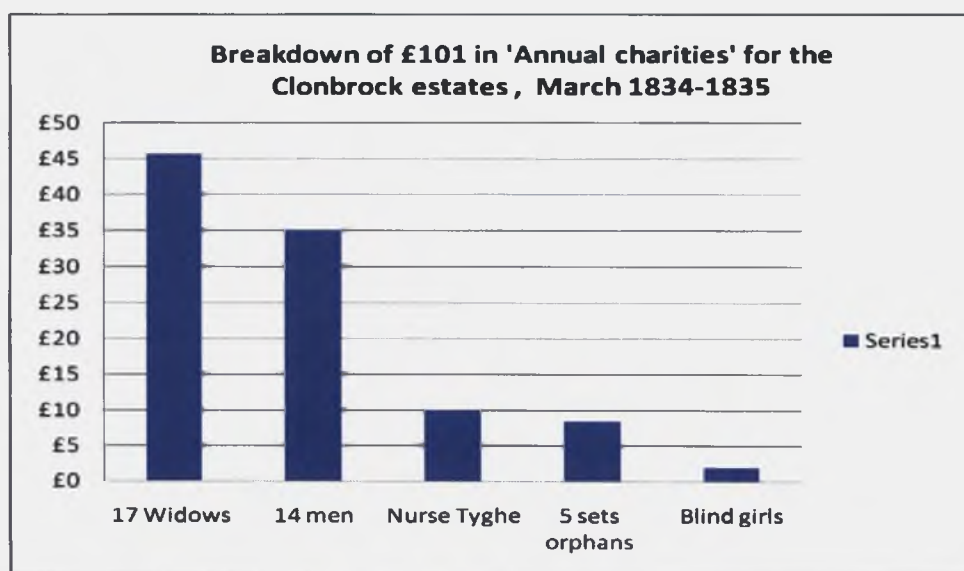


Fig 1.2. Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,595-6

The 'Occasional charity' account, on the other hand, paid out sums of money to individuals who encountered difficulty over the course of a year and most of the names that cropped in this account changed from year to year. That year £75 was given to various people the breakdown of which appears below in Fig.1.3.

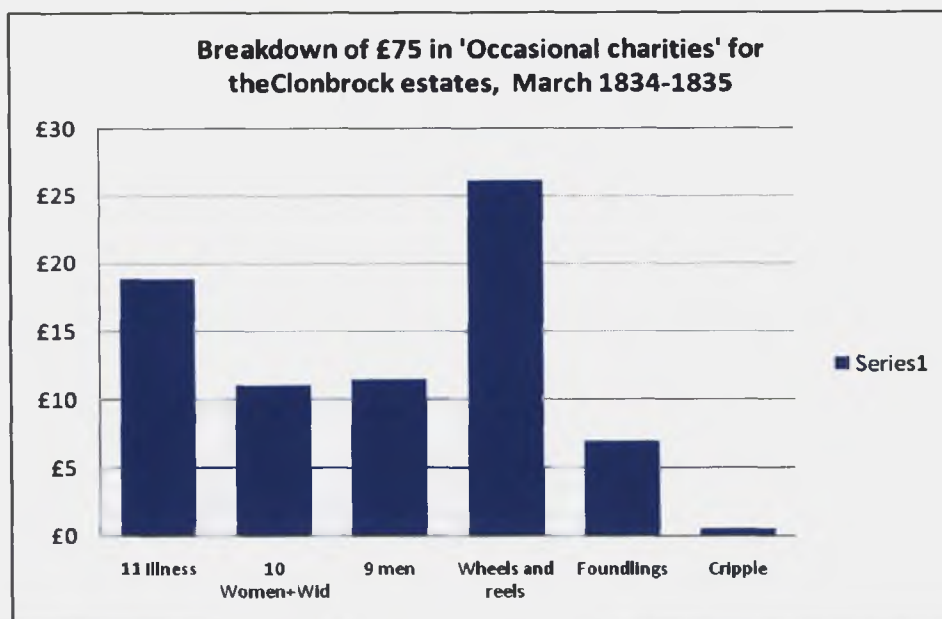


Fig. 1.3 Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers MS 19,595-6

Out of the eleven people that received a total of £19 for illness seven were named and the other four, two men and two women, were simply described as 'poor men' or 'poor women' which may indicate that they were not tenants and probably mendicant beggars. Of the eleven suffering from illness ten were described as sick or sickly while one had fever and it is somewhat notable that there was a significant gender imbalance of nine men to two women in this section. £26 was paid for wheels and reels which indicates that Clonbrock assisted tenants in the development of domestic industries such as spinning. £7 was allocated to foundlings some of whom were discovered at Lanelough which proves interesting as this townland borders the Clonbrock demesne and this location may have been specifically chosen because there was an awareness that Clonbrock would make some provision for them.

That year £50 10s. was subscribed to dispensaries at various locations across the estates and Ahascragh dispensary, the one closest to the demesne, received a considerably higher donation at £30 compared to the others for which £5 was the usual donation. As Laurence Geary has pointed out 'the fact that voluntary subscriptions had to be raised before a presentment could be obtained from the grand jury meant that philanthropy rather than necessity dictated the number and

location of dispensaries in pre-Famine Ireland'.<sup>44</sup> Before Clonbrock purchased a number of townlands at Dalystown in 1832 Bermingham informed him that 'The people about here are rejoiced at the idea of having you as a landlord'.<sup>45</sup> Clonbrock, it seems, did not dissappoint his new tenants as he erected a new dispensary there in 1834 at a cost of £27 10s. and subscribed a sum of £5 to it in subsequent years<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, it appears that Clonbrock's reputation as a benevolent paternalist worked in his favour. When negotiating the purchase of this estate Bermingham informed him that the vendor was prepared to sell 'at £18,000, he [the vendor] values them to £19,000 to any one else but as you take such care of the poor tenants he wishes to give you a preference'.<sup>47</sup>

Other charitable donations that year came in the form of arrears allowed to eight tenants totaling £56 for losses, flooding of land, or because they were widows or paupers. Two contrasting payments stick out in the 'sundry small' payments account, £3 5s. was allowed to L. Finaghty for the trespass of pheasants and 7s was paid to the doctor for attending Widow Fox's child who had broken her leg<sup>48</sup> While the considerable sum of £350 was spent on charity it represented a just 4.3 per cent of the projected rental of £8,000 on the estates in question<sup>49</sup>

Even landlords that were regarded as possessing a sense of *noblesse oghige* did not believe in 'promiscuous' charity and were critical of many charitable organisations. They advocated assistance for the sick, widowed, orphaned, blind, and insane but were lothe to dole money out to the able bodied that were capable of work. A conscientious paternalist advocated work for the able bodied poor rather than handouts and considerable amounts of money were spent employing labour on various improvement schemes on the Clonbrock estates

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<sup>44</sup> Laurence M. Geary, *Medicine and charity in Ireland, 1718-1751* (Cork, 2004), p. 63

<sup>45</sup> Bermingham to Clonbrock, n.d. (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,727 (9))

<sup>46</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts (NLI, Clonbrock papers, 19,595-612)

<sup>47</sup> Bermingham to Clonbrock, 12 Apr. 1833 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,727)

<sup>48</sup> Sundry small payments account, Clonbrock rental and accounts (Ibid. MSS 19,595-6)

<sup>49</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts (Ibid. MSS 19,595-6)



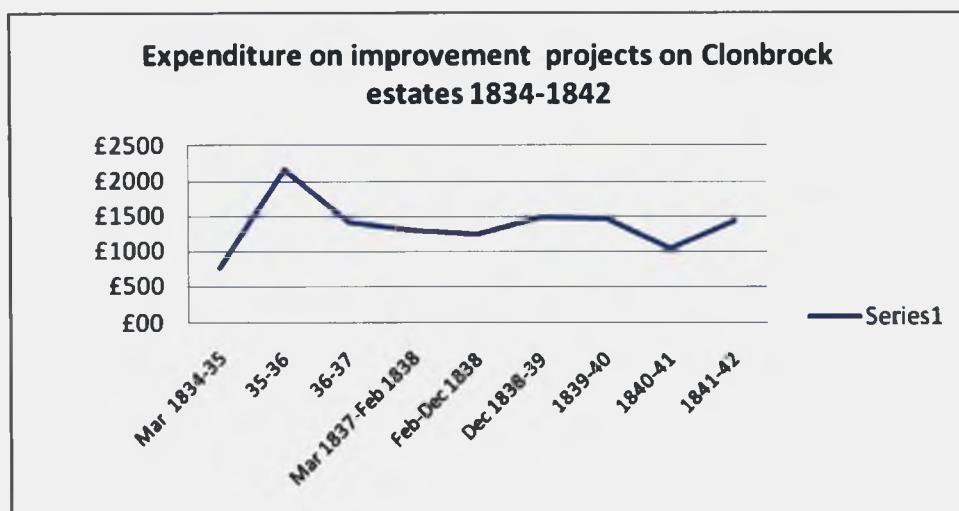


Fig. 1.4 Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers MSS 19,596-12

Thomas Bermingham was an avid campaigner for state-sponsored public works which he believed would improve the country's infrastructure as well as provide much needed employment for the poor during the 'hungry months' of late summer and early autumn. Much of his campaigning zeal was focused on the promotion of drainage schemes and railway projects as is evidenced in his pamphleteering. He experimented with horse drawn rail carriages, and barrow rails when carrying out improvements on Clonbrock's estate,<sup>50</sup> and was a founder member, along with Lord Clonbrock, of the Western Railroad and Navigation Company in 1831.<sup>51</sup> In 1838 the Irish Railway Commission recommended the establishment of an extensive state-constructed and controlled railway network and Peter Gray has argued how this was rarely viewed as connected with the poor law question: 'However, a closer examination of its chronology and the political considerations surrounding its establishment and operations suggests that it can legitimately be regarded as forming part of a common strategy with the poor law bill for the economic development of Ireland and the redressing of the structural problems of poverty in that country.'<sup>52</sup>

The *Poor Inquiry* has provided a considerable amount of source material for this chapter and the issue of an Irish poor law was one of the principal questions to

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Bermingham, *Remarks on the proposed poor law bill for Ireland, addressed to George Poulett Scrope, Esq., member for Stroud...* (London, 1838), p. 6 (henceforth cited as *Remarks*)

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Bermingham, *First report of the committee on the Western Rail-Road and Navigation Company* (Dublin, 1831).

<sup>52</sup> Gray, *Irish poor law*, p. 173.

emerge in the 1830s. Despite the fact that the United Kingdom was a single political entity each of its constituent countries had different methods of poor relief. In England, since the introduction of the 'old Elizabethan poor law', the poor had an automatic right to relief and this right was upheld when the workhouse system was introduced there in 1834. In Scotland the basis of the poor law was the voluntarism of private individuals that cared for the poor through their own initiatives. Although a higher percentage of the Irish population lived in poverty Ireland had no poor law so the government set up the *Poor Inquiry* in order to determine what kind of poor law would suit the country. Chaired by archbishop Whately it heard evidence throughout the country from various classes of people between 1833 and 1835.<sup>53</sup>

Thomas Bermingham was optimistic that the information gathered during the inquiry would be put to good use in easing the plight of the poorer classes in Ireland and stated as much in *The social state*<sup>54</sup>. This pamphlet was published in March 1835 just a few months before the findings of the inquiry were authorised for publication. He was, no doubt, attempting to influence the outcome of the inquiry as he included feasibility studies for river drainage, railway construction as well as his home colonization pamphlet. The kind of poor law that he advocated was a mixture of the Scottish voluntarist model combined with extensive government investment in infrastructural projects to provide work for the unemployed. Home colonization was considered by the commissioners and they agreed that government loans could be provided to finance them as long as they were individual initiatives that incurred no expense to the government.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the report 'adapted a distinctly sceptical tone towards the role of active state intervention in mitigating Irish distress through works of agricultural improvement better undertaken by the proprietors themselves'.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> For discussion see, Niall Ó Cíosaín, 'The Poor Inquiry and Irish Society - a consensus theory of truth' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, xx (2010), pp 127-139, Gerard O'Brien, 'The establishment of the poor law unions in Ireland' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxiii (1982), pp 97-120, idem, 'The new poor law in pre-Famine Ireland - a case history' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, xii (1985), pp 33-49

<sup>54</sup> Bermingham, *The social state*, p xx

<sup>55</sup> Gray, *Irish poor law*, p 126

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p 116

Despite the report's lack of enthusiasm for his favoured means of alleviating the distress of the poorer classes and the problem of overpopulation Birmingham continued campaigning for extensive infrastructural investment in railways and drainage. He did not voice any significant opposition to the findings of the *Poor Inquiry* but when it became apparent that the workhouse-based English poor law system was being considered he opposed it. Considerable expense had been incurred conducting the *Poor inquiry* but the government decided to disregard its findings and engaged the services of George Nicholls, one of the English poor law commissioners, to conduct a new survey. Compared to the effort and expense on the *Poor inquiry* Nicholls' short survey could be described as a whistle stop tour of the country. He denied that Irish needs differed from those in England and recommended the creation of large poor law unions and the establishment of workhouses on the English model. Many landlords feared that if the able bodied poor were given a right to relief in workhouses, as they were in England, then they, as the principal payers of the poor rate, would be bankrupted. They feared that workhouses would immediately become crowded and that the virtuous payers of the poor rate would be forced to support idleness within workhouse walls.

David Roberts has argued that tory reviewers writing in periodicals were somewhat suspicious of philanthropy. 'A philanthropy that meant a personal benevolence in a small community they did not dislike, but a philanthropy that was extended, diffuse, and general won from them only the most pejorative adjectives. They wrote of "platform philanthropy," "claptrap philanthropy," "the pernicious cant of universal philanthropy," "pseudo humanity and philanthropy"<sup>57</sup> While the expense of funding a workhouse centred poor law was the prime consideration, this model also threatened to undermine the paternalist position of the landlord and agent and their centrality in exercising control at local level. They decided who were the deserving and the undeserving poor and dispensed charity according to their own dictates and they feared a loss of control to commissioners answerable to a central authority. It could reasonably be argued that Clonbrock performed his paternal duty to his tenantry through estate charities and the provision of employment. However, the

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<sup>57</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p. 74

general feeling among those in favour of the workhouse centred model: ‘from liberal whigs to humanist tories, was the belief that Irish landlords were failing in their responsibilities to their tenants and to society in general’<sup>58</sup>

While the poor law bill was being debated in parliament in early 1838 Thomas Bermingham made his position on the matter clear in his *Remarks on the proposed poor law bill for Ireland, addressed to George Poulett-Scrope, Esq, Member for Stroud*. Poulett Scrope was an English radical and long time campaigner for an Irish poor law and Bermingham began his pamphlet by complimenting him on his persistent avocation of this cause. However, he wished to inform Poulett Scrope of alternative methods of poor relief that he thought might be of use at this very important time. From experience gained travelling around Prussia, Belgium, Switzerland, Savoy, and parts of France in the latter part of 1837, Bermingham felt ‘satisfied that the English are far behind foreigners in the science of managing the poor, and that we should seek abroad for further information, in order to make the Irish poor law as perfect as all the friends of humanity wish it to become’.<sup>59</sup>

At Ghent, in Belgium, he had been impressed with the inmates of the poor house as their labour paid for half the running costs and that an orphanage at Cologne was ‘a real school for industry’. These were institutions with a self-help ethos that he believed could be models for an Irish poor law rather than the proposed workhouses. He was further impressed by the levels of private charity that supported these institutions and the work of Sisters of Charity that attended the sick in hospitals. In these places he ‘found real relief afforded to the necessitous without parade, and not in expensive establishments [i.e. workhouses] .... The spirit of independence seemed sufficiently active to prevent any but the destitute from seeking relief, and that relief was not churlishy given or accompanied by humiliating acts’.<sup>60</sup>

He was of the view that the workhouse system in Ireland was unsustainable and estimated that the cost of constructing a workhouse and maintaining widows,

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<sup>58</sup> Virginia Crossman, *Local government in nineteenth century Ireland* (Belfast, 1994), p 45

<sup>59</sup> Bermingham, *Remarks*, pp 3-4

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid* pp 4-5

orphans, the aged, and infirm within them would break landed proprietors. He argued there were many excellent institutions including the deaconries in Ballinasloe and Cloughjordan, where the poor were visited and relieved by private charities, and that the introduction of 'one uniform and expensive plan' would lead to their demise. Other institutions that he held in high regard were dispensaries and used Ahascragh dispensary as a model of efficiency where 2,373 had been treated for a sum of £180 or 1s 6d per individual<sup>61</sup>. Finding common ground with Poulett-Scrope he criticised the poor law bill for the absence of any mention of public works and suggested some measures that he believed would be advantageous. His vision of railways was never far from his mind and to economise and save on expensive steam engines he suggested a horse drawn tram line from Ballinasloe to Galway. He estimated that this could be achieved for £200,000 which 'allowing 4s per week or £5 per annum...eight thousand heads of families would be found in employment for three years during the idle periods'.<sup>62</sup> He further suggested the draining of bogs as public works projects. In three years, he stated, and this is verified from evidence in the Clonbrock account book, a project to drain Crith bog for Lord Clonbrock had provided £2,000 worth of labour to the local community. He admitted that profits were slow to come in but that it was not for the nation 'to estimate the profit of a measure upon the same scale as a merchant or trader, but should estimate the assistance afforded to the distressed, the improvement of the kingdom, and the comfort of the inhabitants'.<sup>63</sup>

While Bermingham admitted the necessity of poor laws and of institutions such as hospitals and fever hospitals, asylums for the 'deaf and dumb', and blind lunatic asylums, he expressed no confidence in the workhouse system because of the cost, and the humiliation that he believed the poor would suffer if forced to enter them. Echoing Whately's recommendations he argued for private initiative in the dispensation of charity. Essentially he was arguing that as much relief as possible should be outdoor relief which treated the sick in dispensaries and provided the able bodied poor with public works from which they could derive an income.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid pp 9-10

<sup>62</sup> Ibid p 6

<sup>63</sup> Ibid p 7

The poor law bill continued its progress through parliament and one month after Bermingham had penned his pamphlet, Frederick Shaw, Tory M.P. for Dublin University, proposed to limit workhouse relief to the impotent and elderly poor and completely exclude the able-bodied. It was defeated by 134 votes to 75 and represented a significant defeat to those who were trying to frustrate the bill's passage<sup>64</sup> In the end it proved an insurmountable task and the bill passed on 30 April but only twenty-five of the sixty-three Irish M.P.s voted in its favour and at least eight other Irish M.P.s abstained

Such was the significance of the defeat of Shaw's proposal that a petition to the House of Lords was drafted in Galway while the bill was still in the Commons. Many of the grand juries that were meeting around the country for the spring assizes drew up similar petitions demanding:

the restriction of state relief to the 'impotent poor,' along with some form of remunerative employment for the labouring poor. In March, the grand juries of Meath, Cavan, Wexford, Fermanagh, Kings county, Down, and Mayo all submitted similar resolutions ... During the 1837-38 session, 116 petitions from various bodies, with 39,922 signatures, were presented against the bill, this swamped the paltry four (with 593 names) in its favour<sup>65</sup>

The meeting to draw up the Galway petition, attended by Bermingham, was held at Tuam courthouse on 29 March and chaired by Sir John Burke, who had been a Whig M.P. for Galway between 1830 and 1832. The petition argued that the bill that was before parliament would not attain its proposed objective of relieving the poor and that the 'work-house principle will be utterly repugnant to the feelings and habits of the Irish poor,- the most degraded and wretched will probably reject the shelter afforded on such terms'.<sup>66</sup> It asserted that the more hardworking and meritorious section of the community would be unjustly taxed in order to support the 'idle and unemployed'. It strongly objected to the 'arbitrary and unlimited powers awarded to the commissioners - Being non-resident, they cannot from experience either

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<sup>64</sup> Gray, *Irish poor law*, pp 201-03

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, p 362

<sup>66</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 31 Mar 1838

sympathise with the necessities, comprehend the resources, or direct judicious relief, of the Irish people’<sup>67</sup>

It further described the bill as oppressive and inquisitorial ‘being calculated to wither the purest sentiments of benevolence - To snap asunder the ties of gratitude and affection’. The petition concluded with a call for the introduction of the Scottish poor law model as well as arguments for the draining and cultivation of wasteland and an appeal to ‘assist the efforts of agriculturalists, by affording permanent employment to [a] willing and intelligent peasantry’. It was resolved that Lord Clancathy supported by Lords Clonbrock, Gort, and Fitzgerald present the bill to parliament. It further resolved that Thomas Bermingham and others form a committee to sit in London while the bill was progressing through the House of Lords<sup>68</sup>

It is evident that Bermingham assisted in drafting this petition because of the similarities between it and the pamphlet he published the previous month. Both the pamphlet and the petition expressed the views of landed paternalists regarding the duties and responsibilities of property. Like many landlords in England, who were dedicated to locality, they feared the centralised Benthamite commissioners which they criticised using. ‘the classic argument of paternalism that only in small, circumscribed spheres, where all were intimately and personally known, could benevolence and property be rightly administered’.<sup>69</sup>

Fear that the ‘the ties of gratitude and affection’ would be broken suggests concern that the paternalist relationship would be undermined, it is hardly surprising that those who conscientiously managed their estates sought to retain control of local charity. They firmly believed that it could be better administered by the rule of property but they also knew that the dispensation of charity was an essential component of the social glue that was at the heart of paternalism and that the surrender of its control to centralised authorities would undermine their ability to

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p 257

successfully manage the deferential dialectic and weaken what was one of the rare instances where the tenantry might be persuaded to view the big house in a benevolent light. As Howard Newby has argued: The most appropriate .. form of action that combines exactly those identificatory and differentiatory elements that characterise deference is the gift. .. It was charity often given, significantly, on a personal localised basis, that celebrated, symbolised and reaffirmed the deferential dialectic.<sup>70</sup> There can hardly be any doubt that the charity which the poor received from Clonbrock fostered some level of *identification* but it also underscored the *differentiation* that existed between giver and receiver. To further quote Newby.

Clearly one does not wish to deny the conscious validity of the philanthropic and Christian motivations to charity, but charity has long been, in effect, an integral part of the legitimation of social subordination, not only through its status-enhancing properties but because it has been used discriminatingly in favour of the 'deserving' (i.e. deferential) poor.<sup>71</sup>

The power of the gift was intimately understood by those who opposed the introduction of this measure and the Galway petition, along with several others, was presented to the House of Lords by the marquis of Clanricarde on 18 May. He 'came closest to articulating a class interest in expressing the fear that the centralising powers of the bill, in common with many other innovations under the present administration, would continue the process of "gradually and by degrees superseding the resident gentry"'.<sup>72</sup>

The poor law bill went through several readings in the House of Lords and while some amendments were made, its fundamental tenets of large unions based on the workhouse system remained the same but it stopped short of the Elizabethan poor law by denying the legal right to relief of the able bodied in the workhouse. Their admission was to be decided on an ad hoc basis at the discretion of the guardians with priority for relief given to the aged, infirm, orphans, and the impotent poor. Each electoral district was made responsible for its paupers to assuage the fear that the creation of large unions would penalise the conscientious landlord whose rates would be used to pay for the support of paupers from districts where no effort was

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<sup>70</sup> Newby, 'The deferential dialectic' p 161

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, pp 161-2

<sup>72</sup> Gray, *Irish poor law*, p 211



being made. No provision was made for outdoor relief nor was there any mention of public works to employ the poor.

Despite the protestations of Irish landlords and the barrage of petitions the 'Act for the Effectual *Relief of the Destitute Poor* in Ireland' was passed by the Lords on 9 July 1838 by 93 votes to 31. Lord Clonbrock was one of the dissenters that did not vote for the bill and signed a protest against its passing.<sup>73</sup> One of the principal arguments against the introduction of the poor law, and its accompanying poor rate, was that it would bring a halt to the benevolence of landlords and others who had acted in a charitable manner. For the first few years following its introduction this does not appear to have been the case on the Clonbrock estates and the distribution of charity continued under Bermingham's direction as the graph below illustrates.

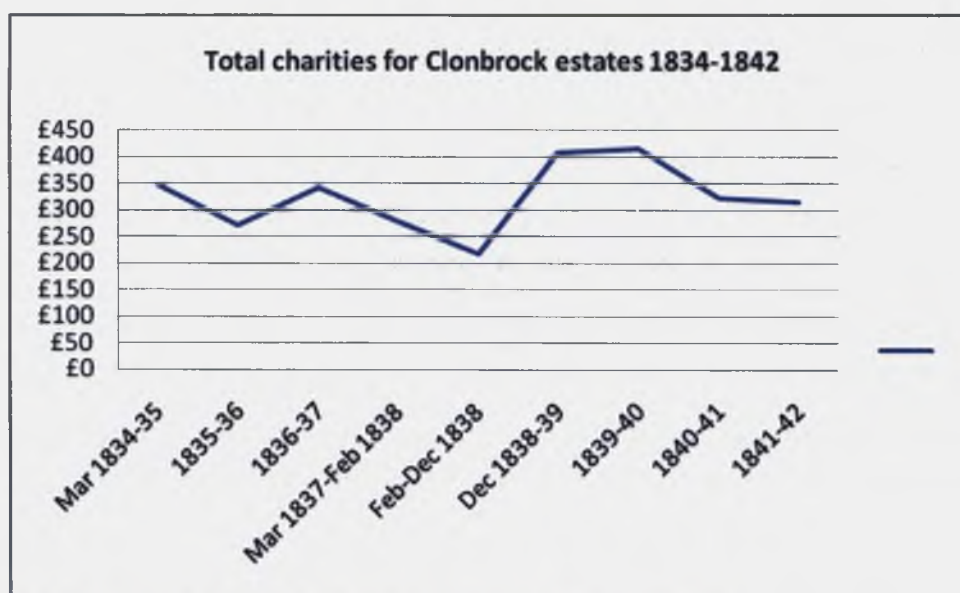


Fig. 1.5 Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers MS 19,595-19,612

In fact expenditure on charities peaked in the years immediately after the introduction of the poor law. This is attributable to the advent of poor harvests and an economic downturn which made life increasingly difficult for those that lived on the fringes of poverty. It is particularly evident in the £140 expended on 'Occasional charities' in 1839 as this figure had not risen above £80 since 1834.

<sup>73</sup> *Hansard* 3, xlv, 30 (9 July 1838).

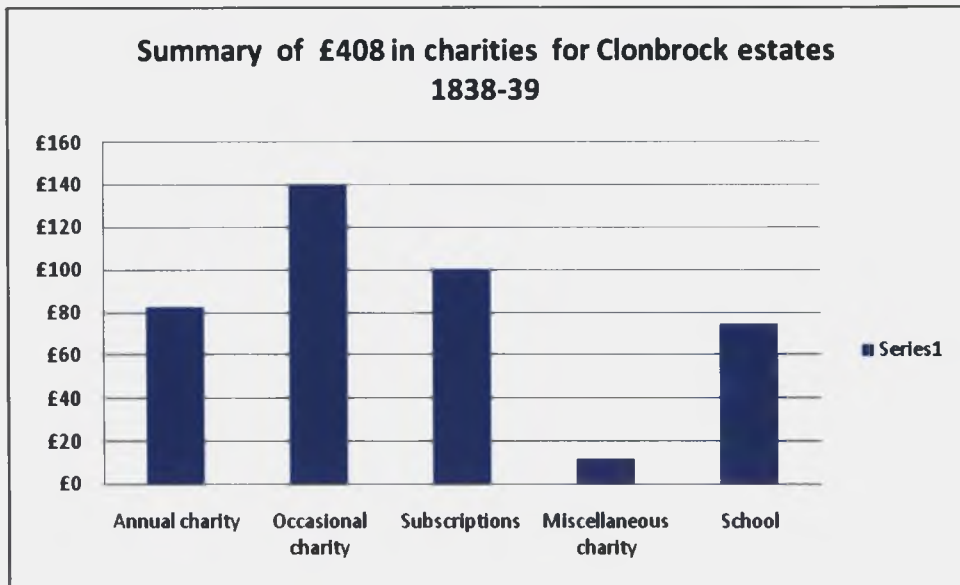


Fig. 1.6 Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers MS 19,595-19,612

The bulk of the figure consists of charity dispensed on the Clonbrock and Ballydonelan estates which amounted to £54 and £58 respectively and the pie chart below indicates how the £54 allocated to the Clonbrock portion of the estate was distributed.

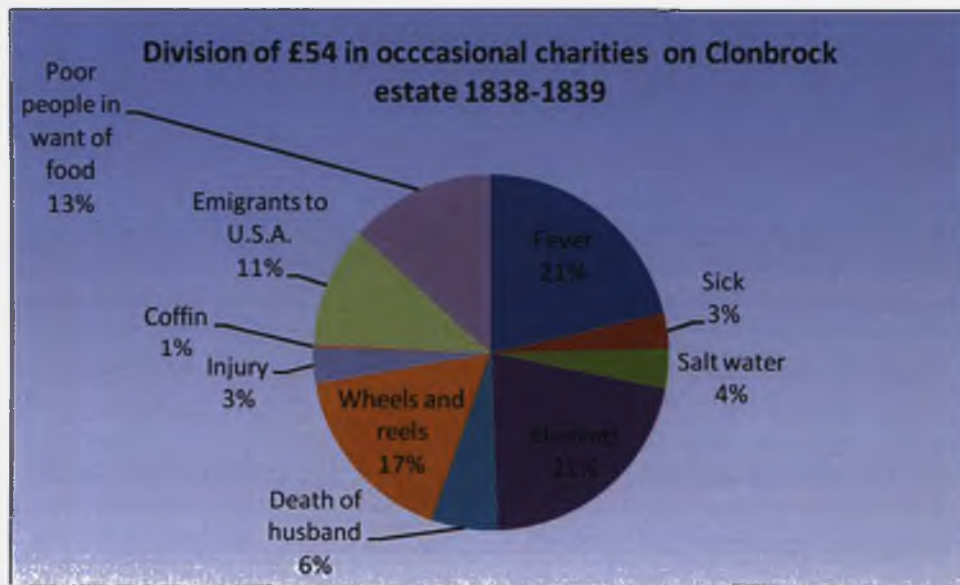


Fig. 1.7 Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers MS 19,605

This section will give some examples from these estates to illustrate the challenges that were facing the tenantry in these trying times and the response of Clonbrock and Bermingham to them. This particular year the charity accounts were itemised

according to the particular estates and the chart above illustrates how the £54 allocated to the Clonbrock portion was distributed. Included in the figure of £54 paid out in occasional charity on the Clonbrock estate in 1838-9 is a sum of £7 10s recorded as 'weekly charities' paid out to twenty four 'people in want of food on the estate' during late July and August corresponding with the 'hungry months' when the people awaited the ripening of the potato crop. 'Weekly charities', distributing small sums of money during the hungry months, were not paid out in previous years and this reflects the 'localised, yet severe, distress [which occurred] in some parts of Ireland'<sup>74</sup> during 1839, and its impact on the poorest of Clonbrock's tenantry. Fever also hit the poorer sections of the tenantry that year and £2 was spent whitewashing fever sheds at Killosohan where the sick were being quarantined. Several people suffering from fever received various sums from Clonbrock that year: eight named individuals received sums ranging from 10s to £2 and a sum of £1 8s was allocated to give 'oatmeal to poor people in fever on the estate'. Patt Rogan, Kilglass received £1 in March and 4s in July/August when he was still in fever. However, it appears that he was unable to shake the fever and on 23 October the occasional charity account records a sum of 5s paid to provide a coffin for him. Less than a month later Widow Rogan, probably Patt's wife, also from Kilglass, received £1 because she too was suffering from fever.<sup>75</sup>

The account also records two others suffering from unspecified illnesses for which they received sums of money. Three tenants and one tenant's son were given 10s each to go to 'salt water' indicating that they were being sent to the sea for health reasons, others received compensation for injury while working on the estate or for the death of a spouse. James Clarke whose 'house was blown down by the hurricane' (the night of the big wind) received £1 in assistance for repairs as well as five shillings on 24 June due to illness. He had not shaken this illness, it appears, by 23 August as he was a recipient of 10s to go to salt water. The picture was similar on the Ballydonelan estate where tenants received financial assistance or were sent to 'salt water'; furthermore £4 was spent employing nurses to tend to those that had

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<sup>74</sup> Christine Kinealy, 'The role of the poor law during the Famine' in Cathal Poirier (ed.) *The Great Irish Famine* (Cork, 1995), p. 107

<sup>75</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1834-5 (NLI, Clonbrock papers MS 19,605)

been stricken with fever. At Ballydonelan, however, there were more people in need during the 'hungry months' as forty-four people were recorded as receiving 'weekly charity'.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, the introduction of the poor law does not seem to have interfered with the distribution of charity on the Clonbrock estates, neither does it appear to have diminished Clonbrock's ardour for improvements. There was continuous expenditure on the latter which provided work for the labouring population on the drainage of Crith bog and individual tenants were also encouraged to drain their land for which they received compensation (see Fig.1.4). However, from 1835-6 to early 1843 £274 was allocated to paupers for 'going away'.<sup>77</sup> It is unclear whether these tenants were accommodated elsewhere on the estates or given work as labourers but, as we have seen, there was significant expenditure on improvements where they may have been employed. At the *Devon Commission* Charles Filgate stated that Clonbrock employed 300 labourers who held houses at will, sometimes with a little garden, for which they were charged a 'trifling rent'.<sup>78</sup>

The provision of cottages and small plots of land for labourers is consistent with measures that Bermingham recommended in *Duties*. This pamphlet provided details of how a humane landlord should act when he came into possession of an overcrowded estate. He categorised various classes of people resident on such estates and suggested specific actions for each class. Classes one and two were farmers who were to be assisted with capital to improve their holdings. For the third class, 'mere labourers', the landlord was to provide cottages and a small portion of land, 'upon which [they] occupy their spare time when not employed by the next farmer, or on public roads or drains'.<sup>79</sup> Bermingham's recommendation regarding the fourth class provides some insight into the kind of person who availed of assisted emigration.<sup>80</sup> This fourth class was identified as lodgers, 'probably sons-in-law of

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1836-42 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MSS 19, 597-19,611)

<sup>78</sup> *Evidence taken before her majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the state of law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland*, pt 11, p 507 [616], H L, xx, 513

<sup>79</sup> Bermingham, *Duties*, p 7

<sup>80</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1836 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,600)

the tenant' with no legal claim on the land. This class was to be assisted in finding employment and accommodation elsewhere and the humane landlord would 'expend sums from one pound to five pounds sterling on their removal from the premises – perhaps paying their passage to America'.<sup>81</sup> Not only did the persons travelling receive money for emigrating but the heads of families that remained received rental allowances for sending sons or other family members abroad. For instance, in 1837 Widow Miles, Widow Matthews, Thomas Durham, and Michael Dolan all received between £4 and £5 'on sons going to America'<sup>82</sup>

From 1838 to the end of 1841, the first years following the introduction of the poor law the amount expended on 'Occasional charities' rose significantly but this figure fell to £33 in 1842 indicating that the poor law was beginning to have an impact on estate based charities. This was Bermingham's last full year as agent and despite the decline in the amounts spent on charity he granted rental allowances totalling £728 to eighty-three tenants. However, not all this can be considered as charitable as a considerable percentage of this sum was for tenants who had made improvements to their land. Further sums were granted to tenants for non-specific reasons so neither can they be included as estate charity. A number of tenants did receive allowances for reasons that could be considered charitable and this sum of £54 may have compensated somewhat for the decline in expenditure on 'Occasional charities'. Lawrence Shanaghan received £3 for 'great loss of cattle on mountain', John Kennedy received £3 for failure of his wheat crop, and £6 for John Kissane 'a long time sick by which he got insane'<sup>83</sup>

However, it is clear that estate based charities were entering terminal decline and this is particularly evident from the plummeting 'Occasional charity' account illustrated in Fig 1 8

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<sup>81</sup> Bermingham, *Duties*, p 7

<sup>82</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1837 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,602)

<sup>83</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1842 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,611)



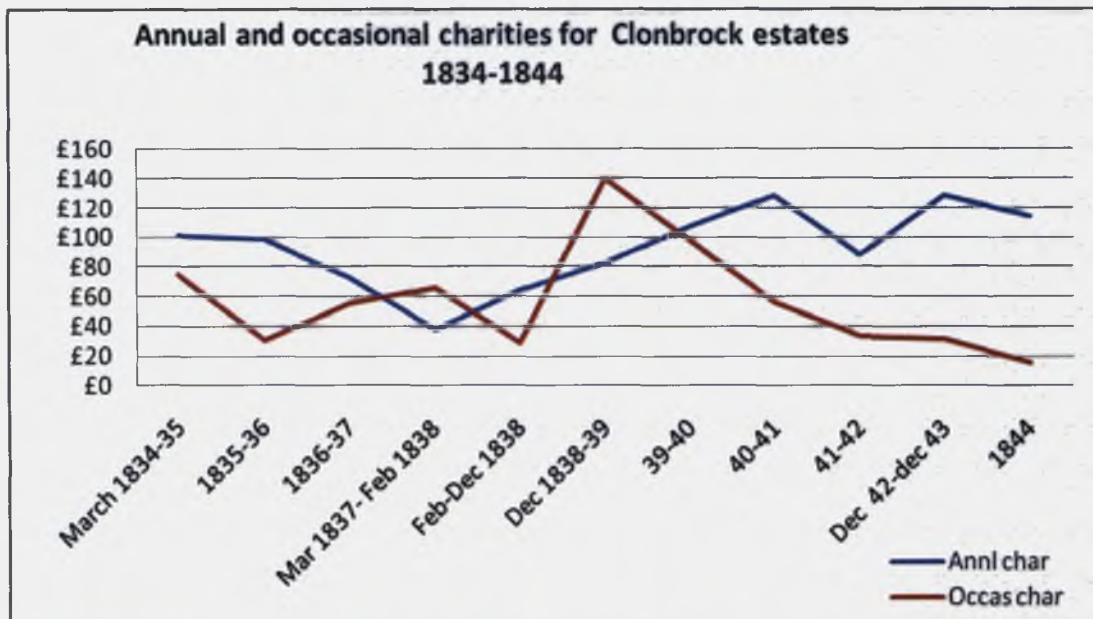


Fig.1.8. Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers MS 19,595-19,617

This can only be attributable to the poor law especially if it is considered that the Ballinasloe Union Workhouse opened on 1 January 1842. Initially Bermingham was sceptical about its capacity to deal with the number of poor that sought refuge within its walls. In a letter to Clonbrock on 13 January he stated how he had:

attended the accommodation of paupers last Saturday. It is awful, the destitution, and the house is not ready to accommodate all those who apply, it is damp and was, in my opinion, opened too soon - they are very properly sending back to the electoral division the paupers-it will be a great tax unless all landlords shall provide for their own paupers out of the house - one young woman was admitted on Saturday - with five children. She was dead on Monday so here is five children at once chargeable to the electoral division of Killane at least £20 a year and yet you know a house and acre of land would have given them enough to eat with the mother's labour- it is an ill advised measure.<sup>84</sup>

Despite these initial teething problems and Bermingham's apparent rejection of the system he was by March that year making use of the workhouse and the case of Bidy Maguire from Kilglass, adjacent to the demesne, illustrates the transition from locally centred, landlord controlled estate charities to the centralised workhouse system based on the poor law. During December 1839-40 she received £4 8s. 6d. in charity spread over sixteen instalments throughout the year. The following year she received £2 5s. over eleven instalments, 10s. of which was paid to 'nursenders' to care for her while she was in fever. However, in 1842, just over two months after

<sup>84</sup> Bermingham to Clonbrock, 13 Jan. 1842 (N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 35,727).

the workhouse opened, there is only one payment to her, on 10 March, when 2s 6d was paid 'to take Biddy Maguire to the poor house'. For her, at least, echoing the words of the poor law petition three years earlier, the 'purest sentiments of benevolence' appeared to have withered somewhat <sup>85</sup>

Another factor in the decline of charity on the Clonbrock estates was the retirement of Thomas Bermingham as land agent in February 1843 signalling an end to what can be described as the golden era of paternalism on the Clonbrock estates. He was replaced by Charles Filgate, the former colleague of Bermingham's on the neighbouring Mahon estate, who appeared to be more profit motivated. On assuming his position he disallowed Catholic holidays to the labourers which had been permitted by Bermingham and this motivation to increase profit may have carried over into his management of the estate charity. Unfortunately, the surviving accounts which Filgate kept do not provide personal information about the people who were in receipt of charity so it is not possible to study estate charity in detail after February 1843 when Bermingham retired. Bermingham's departure marked a distinct fall in the amount expended on estate charity but it would be somewhat unfair to lay the blame for this at Filgate's door as the necessity of having to pay the poor rate must have curtailed the agents ability to dispense charity. In 1843, the Poor Law Amendment Act released occupiers on holdings valued at less than £4 from paying the poor rate and the responsibility for their payment fell to the landlord. That year £175 was paid in poor rates and this accruing expense would have done little to promote estate charities and may explain why 'Occasional charities' fell as low as £15 in 1844 (see Fig. 1 8) <sup>86</sup>

The poor law had a considerable effect in weakening the paternal relationship between landlord and tenant on the Clonbrock estates by undermining the landlord's power at local level and this power was further eroded with the introduction of the Medical Charities Act in 1851. This act brought all dispensaries under the remit of the poor law and an end to Clonbrock's donations to those located on his estate.

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<sup>85</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts (N L I, Clonbrock papers MSS 19,607-15)

<sup>86</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1843-4 (N L I, Clonbrock papers MSS 19,615-6)

However, landlords like Clonbrock who had opposed the poor law soon came to accept it as the Ballinasloe board of guardians, on which he served in the ensuing decades, was largely controlled by the landed interest. In 1842 the boards of guardians of the Ballinasloe and Galway unions were recorded as having the highest number of elected magistrates in the country<sup>87</sup>. Landed control was further tightened when tenants with holdings valued at less than £4 were disenfranchised the following year by the Poor Law Amendment Act.

While it was not immediately apparent that there was a threat to their power there had been an indication that they were not fully in control. Peter Gray has argued that the political excitement in the run up to poor law elections in the pre-Famine period has been underplayed. This, he argues, was particularly evident before the introduction of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1843 when tenants on holdings of £4 or less were entitled to vote in the elections and that the 'political revolt against landed control [in the 1880s] had been prefigured in the contested poor law union politics of the pre-Famine period'<sup>88</sup>. Essentially a Trojan horse had been permitted to enter the citadel of landed power and while the initial danger was neutralised the inherent threat that a wide franchise posed was to manifest itself later in the century and their positions of dominance on the poor law boards was challenged once again.

David Roberts has argued that in early Victorian England 'no social outlook had deeper roots and wider appeal than what twentieth-century historians call paternalism'. The literature which influenced this outlook came from a wide array of authors that published philosophical treatises, novels, and magazine columns. Names such as Edmund Burke, Walter Scott, and Benjamin Disraeli, and publications such as the *Quarterly Review* and the *Edinburgh Review* all contributed to the creation of this paternalist *zeitgeist*. Interestingly the catalogues for Clonbrock library for the early Victorian period have survived and works by these authors and numerous issues of the magazines were all to be found at Clonbrock.<sup>89</sup> Thomas

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<sup>87</sup> O'Brien, 'The establishment of the poor law unions', p. 114, Clonbrock became chairman of the Mountbellew union in 1851 following its creation in 1848 by the poor law commissioners.

<sup>88</sup> Gray, *Irish poor law*, p. 340, O'Brien, 'The establishment of the poor law unions', p. 114.

<sup>89</sup> Library catalogues of Clonbrock, 1807-c.1850 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MSS 19,947-9).



Birmingham's *The social state* was also present on the shelves and it, along with his other works, can, without difficulty be said to have contributed to this *zeitgeist*

The object of this chapter has been to argue that paternalism as a social outlook informed how the Clonbrock estates were managed between 1827 and 1842. It has shown from evidence in Birmingham's pamphlets, the Clonbrock accounts, and from evidence presented to the *Poor inquiry* that contemporary notions of duty influenced how the Clonbrock tenantry was treated. Considerable effort was made to relocate tenants on overcrowded estates and to provide them with some measure of compensation for disturbance. However, benevolent paternalism was only extended to those tenants that behaved in a deferential manner and submitted to the wishes of the landlord. Others who chose to resist by withholding possession felt the full force of the law and eviction thus illustrating the what Roberts identifies as the 'cruelly authoritarian' aspects of paternalism.

This chapter has further shown, through a study of estate charity, how 'the gift' symbolised and reaffirmed the deferential dialectic with its contrasting elements of *identification* and *differentiation*. It played an important role in legitimising landed power and for these reasons both Birmingham and Clonbrock resisted the introduction of the poor law. They understood its role in copper fastening the paternal relationship but despite their efforts to resist it, the centralised model of the workhouse won the day. Howard Newby has argued that one of the consequences of the rise of charitable organisations in the nineteenth century

has been increasingly to deform the gift by rendering it more bureaucratically organised and impersonally dispensed on a less localised and less discriminating basis. The gift has thus become less effective as a means of social control, and its use has become less appropriate to the exigencies of a hierarchy characterised more and more by rational-legal authority.<sup>90</sup>

There is no doubt that Clonbrock had lost something very valuable once the poor law was introduced. Workhouses were not designed to foster *identification* toward the landlord but toward the state and given the harsh conditions that existed in these institutions it is doubtful if they fostered *identification* on any level. Clonbrock

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<sup>90</sup> Newby, 'The deferential dialectic', p. 162

lived until 1893 so he would, in time, come to realise the loss of power which this act entailed when his family lost control of the Mountbellew board of guardians in the latter part of the century. It could, without exaggeration, be described as the first in a series of measures that would topple Clonbrock and his class from what, in 1843, appeared to be an unassailable position of power.

## Chapter two

### **Paternalism, education, and agricultural instruction: the endeavours to promote orderliness on the estates of Lord Clonbrock 1834-1844**

Many writers on paternalism have defined the term too narrowly, limiting it largely to the performance of benevolent duties ... making it seem that being benevolent is the core of paternalism. But benevolence was not really the core, it was rather only a part of a wider set of duties. For the paternalist the obligation to rule firmly and to guide and superintend were far more essential <sup>1</sup>

The previous chapter has explored how Clonbrock performed his paternalist duty of helping his tenantry through the distribution of charity and its importance in defining the deferential dialectic during the golden age of paternalism on the Clonbrock estates. Much of the chapter focused on charity and the benevolent aspects of paternalism but, as David Roberts has argued, in the quote above, there were more essential duties to paternalism. This chapter aims to explore the guiding and superintending dimension of paternalism during this period, from the 1830s to the eve of the Great Famine in 1844. The maintenance of order was essential to the smooth running of a landed estate and the schoolroom was the perfect place to lay the foundations for an orderly tenantry through education. In this arena the children, as well as being provided with a basic education in reading, writing, and arithmetic, could be taught skills beneficial to the estate in later life, either as servants or tenant farmers. Furthermore, the teacher could begin instilling the habits of deference that facilitated the tenantry's acceptance of the social order and the creation of social harmony on the estate <sup>2</sup>

The chapter will begin by examining education in the parish of Ahascragh and assessing the extent to which Lord Clonbrock wielded influence in the education of the tenantry. The second part of the chapter will examine Clonbrock's attempts to provide agricultural instruction for his adult tenantry and the extent to which this contributed to the creation of an orderly and industrious tenantry. Finally, the discussion will conclude by assessing Lord Clonbrock in the performance of his

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<sup>1</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, pp 6-7

paternal duty of guiding and superintending and the extent to which it contributed to the running of the estate.

### **The estate school and education in the parish of Ahascragh**

Paternalism, according to David Roberts, had various aspects and its strongest pillar, as viewed by contemporaries such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Thomas Chalmers, and the duke of Richmond, 'was the paternalism of property. Its second strongest pillar was the paternalism of the church.'<sup>3</sup> In England landed and ecclesiastical paternalists worked together as the Church was, along with the army, a favoured career path for younger sons of the landed class. The same, excluding Ulster, was not true in Ireland as the overwhelming majority of the population was Catholic while the ruling landed elite, with some exceptions, was Protestant. This made the practice of paternalism somewhat more difficult especially in the sphere of education. In England educational matters were simply delegated to the Church but in Ireland it was an arena where the Catholic and Protestant hierarchies locked horns and proved to be a proxy battle in the wider struggle for power in nineteenth century Ireland.

In the early nineteenth century, societies were founded to provide a basic education to the poor but some of them, such as the London Hibernian Society (L H S), founded in 1806, showed an equal interest in proselytizing for which they were condemned by the Catholic Church. Initially, the Catholic Church's relationship with the Kildare Place Society (K P.S), founded in 1811, was cordial. Members of the Catholic gentry were patrons of individual schools and at national level Daniel O'Connell sat on the management board. However, in 1820 when the K.P.S began allocating funds to proselytising agencies, including the L H S, O'Connell resigned from the board and he and the Irish Catholic hierarchy became vehement opponents of the society.<sup>4</sup> A school had been established at Kiltglass, bordering the demesne, by the second baron Clonbrock as early as 1819 and that year it received £23 from

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<sup>3</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p 170

<sup>4</sup> D. K. Akenson, *The Irish education experiment* (London, 1970), p 89, Susan M. Parkes, *A guide to sources for the history of Irish education* (Dublin, 2010), pp 30-4

the K.P.S.<sup>5</sup> With the withdrawal of Catholic support from the society as well as the millenarian fever generated by the Pastorini prophecies in the 1820s this was a challenging time in which to establish a school. According to Thomas Bermingham, in evidence given to a parliamentary inquiry in 1832, dissensions emerged and the school was closed. However, when the third baron succeeded and employed Bermingham as agent the school was re-established. Bermingham employed a Protestant and a Catholic master but the Protestant master resigned soon after because Bermingham 'did not insist on the bible being read throughout'. He consulted with the Rev Dr Oliver Kelly, the Catholic archbishop of Tuam (1815-1834) who voiced no opposition to the school as he was confident that the religion of Catholic children was not being interfered with. From this point on, according to Bermingham, the school began to prosper. Children continued to be taught from the Kildare Place books but the bible was kept in a separate room for the Protestant children to consult if they wished. Another Protestant master was employed who had no objections to Bermingham's arrangements and as a result everything was 'most orderly; there is no tampering with their [Catholic's] faith, they are taught things in common to all Christians; and I do hope it will long continue a blessing to its liberal patron, Lord Clonbrock, and of use to the poor of his tenantry'.<sup>6</sup>

Clonbrock, it appears, had solved the divisive issues that had emerged in relation to education at his school which reflects a progressive approach to the problem. At a national level the K.P.S. had alienated Catholics and attendance at their schools was forbidden by the Catholic hierarchy. Lord Stanley, appointed chief secretary in 1831, wanted this resolved and although he possessed a degree of anti-Irishness and was 'temperamentally inclined to support the Kildare Place Society, in the face of Catholic opposition to it [he] came to the conclusion that a national system was required and set out to design one'.<sup>7</sup> The aim of the National Board of Education was to establish a non-denominational system of education in which Catholics and

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<sup>5</sup> *Returns to orders of the Honourable House of Commons, dated 9th February 1824; for accounts and papers relative to schools and education in Ireland*, p. 27, H.C. 1824 (179) xxi, 409.

<sup>6</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on the State of Ireland; with the minutes of evidence, appendix and index*, p. 460, H.C. 1831-2 (677) xvi.

<sup>7</sup> Colin Barr, *Paul Cullen, John Henry Newman, and the Catholic University* (Notre Dame, 2003), p. 19; see also Mary E. Daly, 'The development of the national schools system, 1831-1840' in A. Cosgrove and D. McCartney (eds), *Studies in Irish history presented to R. Dudley Edwards* (Dublin, 1979), pp 150-63.

Protestants could be educated together. Essentially it sought to address the kind of problems which, according to Thomas Bermingham, had been successfully resolved at Clonbrock school. The previous chapter has argued how paternal landlords resented interference from central authorities as they feared a curtailment of their local power base. Like the poor law the education board was administered by commissioners who dictated what books were to be used in schools and reserved the right to dismiss any teachers if they found them to be unsuitable. Furthermore, if the board's inspectors found that the conditions laid down by the commissioners were not adhered to then funding could be withdrawn.<sup>8</sup> Lord Clonbrock did not apply to the national board for funding and this permitted him complete control over the school without having to conform to the dictates of inspectors or commissioners school.

While this autonomy may have suited Clonbrock the fact that his school did not come under the remit of the national board means that there are no inspector's reports to consult. However, this gap has been bridged using parliamentary reports and evidence from expenditure on the school in the Clonbrock accounts. The figures produced by the *First report of the commissioners of public instruction* provide useful information about schools at parish level which permits insights into the influence that Clonbrock wielded over education in the district. When this survey was conducted in 1834 none of the eight schools, with a total attendance of 538 pupils, were been overseen by the national board. Five of the schools were classified as 'hedge schools' which were the legacy of the penal laws that forbade Catholic education and many families continued to send their children to them rather than those founded by landlords or educational societies.<sup>9</sup>

D.K. Akenson has argued the existence of hedge schools provides evidence 'that a lively underground intellectual life did exist in portions of peasant Ireland'.<sup>10</sup> Thomas Bermingham, however, was no supporter of them expressing how he

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<sup>8</sup> *Education (Ireland) First report of the commissioners of national education in Ireland*, p. 4, H.C. 1834 (70), xl, 58

<sup>9</sup> *First report of the Commissioners of Public Instruction (Ireland)*, pt 11, p 18 [47] H L 1835, xxxiv, 778

<sup>10</sup> Akenson, *Education experiment*, p 49

'dislike[d] them very much' because they were not superintended.<sup>11</sup> While Bermingham expressed great dislike for them their most vehement opponents were Protestant evangelicals such as Noel Baptist Wriothlesley. In his *Notes of a short tour through the midland counties of Ireland in the summer of 1836* he related how, in 1825, children in hedge schools were provided with books such as '*Irish rogues and rapparees ... Pastormi's prophecies . . . The history of the philanderer flashaway*, and many other of similar merit. With books like these, and under the lowest masters, they were left to learn at pleasure, superstition, immorality, and sedition'<sup>12</sup> Baptist Wriothlesley's assertion about sedition is somewhat exaggerated but hedge schools, due to the expense of books, tended to use whatever reading material they could. The curriculum at the Ahascragh hedge schools consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic, and Roman Catholic catechism, the only deviation from this format was the teaching of English in the school of Thomas Carnew and this may explain why his hedge school was the most popular with seventy pupils. Despite the fact that pupils had to contribute a sum of money for the support of the master there were 285 children or 53 per cent of the school going population enrolled at hedge schools. The sums that the children were required to contribute every quarter varied considerably, those making the highest contributions attended the school of Thomas Carnew where they gave between 1s 6d and 7s 6d while those attending the school of Thomas Geoghan made contributions between 1s and 2s 6d.

There were three further schools providing elementary education in the parish, one of which was funded by the rector of the Established Church and the L H S with a sum of £40 which enabled them to waive fees and attract fifty pupils. However, the absence of fees was no guarantee of high attendance as the school funded by Sir Ross Mahon only managed to attract eighteen pupils despite the fact that there were no fees. Mahon was an extensive landowner in the parish of Ahascragh and the low attendance at this school amounts to a rejection by the tenantry of his attempt to

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<sup>11</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on the State of Ireland, with the minutes of evidence, appendix and index*, p. 461, H C 1831-32 (677) xvi

<sup>12</sup> Noel Baptist Wriothlesley, *Notes of a short tour through the midland counties of Ireland in the summer of 1836* (London, 1837), p. 324, for background to the hedge schools in Galway see, Maeve Mulryan-Moloney, 'The hedge schools of north-east county Galway' in *Galway Roots*, 1v (1996), pp. 82-4

provide education, especially if it is considered that there was an added incentive for pupils to attend with a one shilling bonus awarded every quarter to pupils deemed to have achieved a suitable level of proficiency in their education <sup>13</sup>

Finally, the school supported by Lord Clonbrock, with 185 pupils, was the largest in the parish. It was also the best funded in the parish as, according to the report, he paid £40 per annum and the grazing of one cow for the upkeep of the school and the inspectors were particularly impressed with it. They found that the children were ‘supplied, gratis, with books and stationery, and many of them clad; altogether the establishment reflects great credit upon its patron’. As the 185 pupils in attendance represented 34.4 per cent of the school-going children in the parish it could be said that Clonbrock had considerable influence over matters of education in the locality. The success of Clonbrock school in attracting pupils can probably be attributed to two factors: firstly there was no religious instruction given, and secondly, the pupils were not requested to make a contribution for the instruction they received. While the hedge schools taught Roman Catholic catechism which was compatible with the religion of the vast majority of the population of the parish (estimated, in 1834, to be 5,472 Roman Catholics and 182 Protestants)<sup>14</sup>, the fact that they were supported through contributions might have been a deterrent to attendance especially for those living on the margins. Clonbrock school was a possible option for the less well off of any denomination as there were no fees to pay and the fear of parents that the faith of the children would be compromised would have been assuaged by the absence of religious instruction on the curriculum. The L.H.S. was well known as a proselytising body so the school which it funded in conjunction with the rector was unlikely to have provided religious instruction complimentary to Catholics. The school funded by Sir Ross Mahon also provided religious instruction, and as he was a Protestant, the instruction provided was most likely to have been complimentary to

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<sup>13</sup> *First report of the Commissioners of Public Instruction (Ireland)*, pt 11, p 18 [47] H.L. 1835, xxxiv, 778

<sup>14</sup> *First report of the Commissioners of Public Instruction (Ireland)*, pt 11, p 16 [47] H.L. 1835, xxxiv, 772



this religion and probably accounted for the low attendance as it must have been prohibitive to Catholics<sup>15</sup>

Some landlords had resorted to extreme measures to ensure that the children of their tenantry received an education which they deemed appropriate. The second earl of Clancarthy, who owned land in the parish of Ahascragh, became infamous in the 1820s for insisting that the children of his tenants attend a bible school. The *Connaught Journal*, criticizing his actions, described how ‘the lord of the soil has ordained it that no person is allowed to live on the estate ... unless he send his children to the academy of mischief’.<sup>16</sup> In fact Thomas Coen, the bishop of Clonfert, who clashed with Lord Clancarthy in 1826 over the issue of proselytising through bible schools, was the son of the woodranger at Clonbrock and had been born and raised on Clonbrock demesne.<sup>17</sup>

Lord Clonbrock, having seen how divisive the issue of religion had been, and its role in forcing the closure of the school in the 1820s, adopted a pragmatic approach and excluded religious instruction from the school. His ultimate goal was to create order on the estate and the thorny issue of religion was best avoided if cordial relations were to be promoted. His conciliatory approach might be attributed to the fact that his family had been Catholics and had only converted in the previous century in order to avoid dispossession under the penal laws. Although Clonbrock and his family were committed Protestants by this time, he was prepared to see confessional issues sidelined in order that he could maintain a degree of control over the education of his tenantry’s children instead of holding out a vain hope that they would attend a school where the religious instruction was not compatible with their beliefs.

Books for the school were sourced from the K P S. and Andrew Todd, a Dublin bookseller, £10 was spent in 1828 and £11 in 1831 with an average spend of £4 6s

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<sup>15</sup> *First report of the Commissioners of Public Instruction (Ireland)*, pt 11, p 18 [47] H.L. 1835, xxxiv, 778

<sup>16</sup> *Connaught Journal*, 16 Oct 1826

<sup>17</sup> John Healey, *Maynooth college its centenary history* (Dublin, 1895), p 189

between 1828 and 1833.<sup>18</sup> The school was well maintained at Clonbrock's expense and was regularly whitewashed and fitted with glazed windows and this added to the expense of running the school. The commissioners for public instruction stated that the school was funded with a £40 donation from Lord Clonbrock and grass for one cow but wages, maintenance, and repairs meant that expenditure on the school was actually much higher. As the graph below illustrates, expenditure on the school from 1834 to the end of 1844 ranged from £45 to £105 and as the master's salary remained constant at £40 the variation is attributable to the repairs and improvements as well as supplying books and other educational aids.

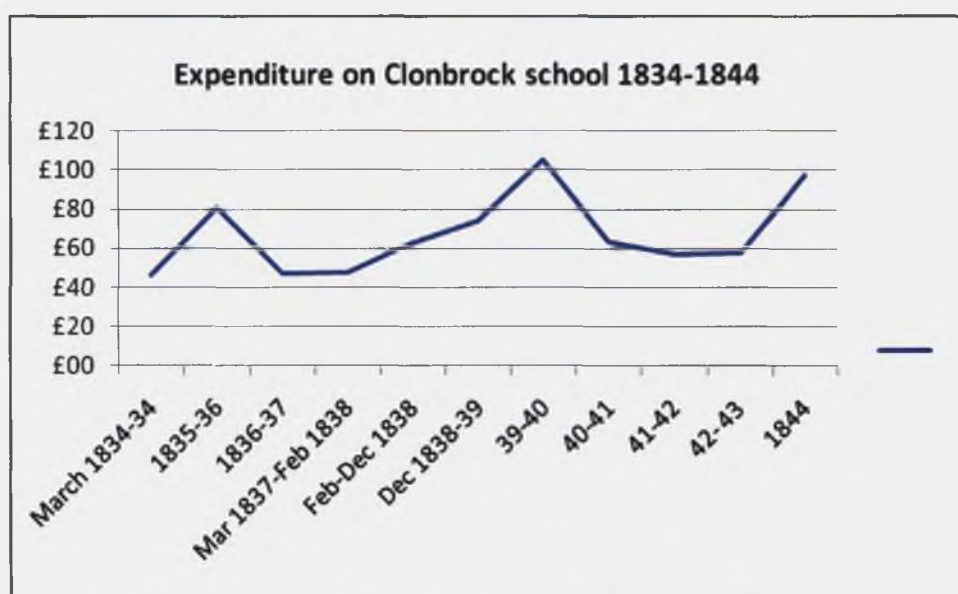


Fig. 2.1 Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,595-19,616

For instance, the increase recorded for the year 1838-9 is attributable to necessary repairs occasioned by the 'night of the big wind' in January 1839 when £12 10s. 6d. was spent on slates 'to repair the roof of school after storm'.<sup>19</sup> Expenditure peaked the following year at £105 when it was given a complete revamp, 'sundry repairs and expenses attending school' came to £37 which entailed the addition of a new classroom, glazed windows, fireplaces and chimneys, and the plastering and whitewashing of the walls. A further expense of £7 was accounted for with new

<sup>18</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1828-43 (N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MSS 19,585-93).

<sup>19</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1839 (N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,606).

books and the provision of ‘firing’ which involved the cutting of timber and turf and drawing it to the school came to £11 19s 1d<sup>20</sup>

The subjects taught at the school were reading, writing, arithmetic, and needlework for the girls<sup>21</sup> The previous chapter has shown how ‘wheels and reels’ were provided to the tenants for spinning, and instruction in this task was given to the pupils as a number of wheels and reels were also supplied to the school.<sup>22</sup> Visiting schools was common practice among aristocratic ladies and the single surviving diary kept by Lady Clonbrock (wife of the third baron) records that she visited the school twice in January and once in February 1837. Visits by the ‘lady bountiful’ to schools usually involved an inspection of the work being carried by the pupils and sometimes to present prizes but no details of the visits were noted in the diary The education provided the girls with skills suitable to their station in life, as Jessica Gerrard has argued, in the English case: ‘Upper class women who saw country girls as potential domestic servants (initially in middle-class homes) and eventual labourer’s wives naturally insisted that schoolgirls learn domestic skills such as needlework, and habits of neatness, cleanliness, industry, obedience, and deference.’<sup>23</sup> In rural Ireland there would have been little opportunity for employment in middle-class homes and the girls attending Clonbrock school were most likely to have found jobs in the homes of strong farmers before marrying

The National Board of Education ‘considered it advisable that the curriculum to be followed in its schools should include . the cultivation of land’.<sup>24</sup> Bermingham also recognised the importance of agricultural instruction and advised those interested in the education of boys to consult a letter by John Hull written to the *Educational Magazine* Hull saw no reason ‘why a schoolmaster, assisted by his boys, cannot make a livelihood off four or five acres of good land attached to his

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<sup>20</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1840 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,608)

<sup>21</sup> *First report of the Commissioners of Public Instruction (Ireland)*, pt II, p 18 [47] H L 1835, xxxiv, 778

<sup>22</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MSS 19, 602-04)

<sup>23</sup> Jessica Gerrard, ‘Lady bountiful women of the landed class and rural philanthropy’ in *Victorian Studies*, xxx (1987), p 189

<sup>24</sup> James Mitchell, ‘Thomas Skilling (1793-1865) professor of agriculture, Queen’s college, Galway, part 1, his career to 1849’ in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, lvii (2005), p 67, see also Parkes, *Sources for Irish education*, p 59

school room'. This, he argued, would provide a good livelihood for the master independent of private subscriptions 'and instructing his scholars in letters, they would also be learning the useful art of gardening, instead of spending their time in birds' nesting, poaching, pulling down hedges, dog fighting, &c, as is too commonly their occupation in our country villages and hamlets'.<sup>25</sup> Birmingham's recommendation of Hull's letter reveals that the motive for educating the children was as much about social control in diverting boys from potentially deviant activities as a concerned benevolence for their welfare. There was clearly a vision for the education of the boys at Clonbrock school and the English assistant commissioner at the poor inquiry remarked that

at the [Clonbrock] school at K1lglass it is intended that the boys should receive agricultural instruction, and this tends to improve the agriculture of the labourer. It would have done so the more speedily had not the school been fixed upon a spot of land of very ordinary description, and it will take a considerable time before the boys will be able to reclaim it, and exhibit an example of good cultivation to the neighbourhood.<sup>26</sup>

There are clues indicating that some form of agricultural instruction was being carried out as £9 18s was spent constructing a pig sty and sewers next to the school in 1834-35, £2 buying manure in 1838, and £3 2s making box barrows in 1838-39 and more wheelbarrows in 1839-40.<sup>27</sup> On the Cloghan estate in Derry, which was managed by John Pitt Kennedy, there were similar initiatives to provide gender specific education. Instruction was provided to the girls in order to 'render them good servants' while agricultural instruction was provided for the boys. The English travellers Mr and Mrs S. C. Hall found that Pitt Kennedy and his sister showed considerable interest in the school. They noted 'that while Miss Kennedy [playing the role of lady bountiful] receives every day, from the mistress, a report of each pupil's progress, and inspects the school herself, several times during the week, her brother ... watches the boys with the deepest solicitude'.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> John Hull, *On garden village schools*, addendum to Thomas Birmingham, *The social state* (London, 1835), p. 213

<sup>26</sup> *Poor inquiry Appendix F* p. 359 [37], H.C. 1836, xxxiii, 361

<sup>27</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1834-40 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MSS 19, 596, 19,604, 19,606, 19608)

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Jonathan Bell and Mervyn Watson, *A history of Irish farming, 1750-1950* (Dublin, 2009), p. 59

It is clear that that the tasks for which the children were educated conformed to contemporary notions of the appropriate work for both male and female and the motives of the landed class in providing estate schools, whether in Britain or Ireland, cannot have been very different. Anne Hattersley conducted a study of estate schools in rural Northumberland during the mid-Victorian period and given the evidence from Clonbrock and Cloughan estates it is easy to draw comparisons as she has argued that

a paternalist view saw elementary schooling as a preparation for the pre-ordained, gendered roles in the micro-society of the country estates. The children were to be civilized and their behaviour improved. The girls were taught to aspire to become a good wife, mother and homemaker. Boys were prepared for the world of agricultural work.<sup>29</sup>

There was never a suggestion that the higher intellect of the children would be developed, the education provided was sufficient to improve their lot as obedient servants, labourers, and farmers, not to inspire aspirations of rising above their station. Landed paternalists believed that development of high intellect ought to be the preserve of hereditary rulers and were threatened when they observed sharp minds among the lower orders<sup>30</sup>. Even the liberal reformer John Stuart Mill was of the opinion that the poor

should not be required or encouraged to think for themselves, or to give their own reflection or forecast an influential voice in the determination of their destiny. It is the duty of the higher classes to think for them, and to take responsibility for their lot. The rich should be *in loco parentis* to the poor, guiding and restraining them like children. Of spontaneous action on their part there should be no need. They should be called on for nothing but to do their days work and to be moral and religious.<sup>31</sup>

Upper and middle class Victorians regarded the poor as somewhat deficient in moral character and that deficiency was considered to be even more acute among the Irish poor. L. P. Curtis has argued that Victorian caricature represented Irishmen as 'Paddy' and that, by the 1860s, he had become 'an "anthropoid ape"'. Among the

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<sup>29</sup> Anne Hattersley, 'Paternalism and education on landed estates in rural Northumberland, 1850 – 1900' in *Northern History*, xlv, no 1 (2007), p 125

<sup>30</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p 172

<sup>31</sup> John Stuart Mill, *The principles of Political economy with some of their applications to social philosophy*, vol 11 (1848, revd ed Indianapolis, 2004), p 193

forces that accelerated Paddy's degeneration was the assumption that there were qualities in Irish Celts which marked them off as a race or breed quite distinct in looks and behaviour from those who claimed Anglo-Saxon, Danish, or Norman ancestry in the British isles.<sup>32</sup> Even Thomas Bermingham, when advocating the benefits of drainage in 1839, showed that he was possessed of a degree of prejudice toward the Irish as he advised landlords. 'to get an experienced drainer from Lancashire to show Paddy how to use [drainage tools] and make drains properly'.<sup>33</sup>

The pseudo-science of phrenology in no small way played its role in perpetuating the stereotype of the Irish as morally deficient: 'defined as the science of mental faculties as revealed by examining the external form of the skull, [it] became a fashionable cult in Europe and America after 1815, largely on the strength of its three forceful apostles, F J Gall, J. K. Spurzheim, and G. Combe'.<sup>34</sup> Combe spent a considerable amount of time in Ireland 'studying' the 'Celtic race' and observed that 'they have great combatitiveness and an acute intellect, but the moral sentiments are not so large, indeed they will need training for centuries before they can equal the Saxon race.'<sup>35</sup>

The development of a higher intellect was the preserve of elites and the Irish landed class flocked to English public schools where their 'superior' moral character could be enhanced through the study of the classics which was considered the only suitable education for an aristocrat or gentleman<sup>36</sup> Lord Clonbrock had attended Eton and his son Luke Gerald was destined to follow in his footsteps. In 1845, one year before he enrolled at Eton, the eleven-year-old Luke Gerald was examined by the phrenologist James Quilter Rumball whose conclusions, unsurprisingly, conformed to contemporary prejudices regarding gender and ethnicity. Proficiency in music was considered a positive female attribute and proficiency in mathematics a more suitable talent for males, so the report concluded that Luke Gerald had the

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<sup>32</sup> L P Curtis, Jr *Apes and angels the Irishman in Victorian caricature* (Newton Abbot, 1971), p 1, see also Peter J Bowler, 'Race theory and the Irish' in Séamas Ó Síocháin (ed ), *Social thought on Ireland in the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2009), pp 135-46

<sup>33</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 29 Mar 1839

<sup>34</sup> Curtis, Jr *Apes and angels*, p 11

<sup>35</sup> George Combe, *Lectures on phrenology* (New York, 1839), p 303

<sup>36</sup> Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy, *The public school phenomenon ,597-1977* (London, 1977)

potential to be ‘an excellent mathematician’ but was possessed of little musical ability. Neither is it surprising that Luke Gerald was found to have a moderate level of instinct, as it is associated with animals and nature. However, as a ‘Saxon’ he was found, unlike his ‘Celtic’ cousins, to have a large degree of sympathy and morals, as they were associated with humanity and culture<sup>37</sup>

### **Agricultural instruction and the Ballinasloe Agricultural Society**

The previous section has discussed how religious differences made the practice of paternalism somewhat more challenging in Ireland than in England and how, by excluding religion from the estate school Lord Clonbrock managed to retain a degree of influence over education in the parish of Ahascragh. The surviving sources have illustrated the role that the estate school played in educating and instructing the children of the tenantry for roles that would contribute to the landed estate. This instruction, however, did not end at the school gate when the children finished their basic education as Clonbrock’s endeavours to instruct extended to the tenant farmers who were provided with the expertise of a professional agriculturalist, on hand to advise them with improved methods of agriculture. By the 1830s Scotland was considered to be the cutting edge of research into modern farming methods. Jonathan Bell has argued that ‘the impact of improved Scottish farming methods and implements on Irish techniques was primarily a reflection of the central importance of Scottish developments to the international discourse on agricultural improvement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries’.<sup>38</sup> In the 1830s and 1840s it had become fashionable for Irish landowners to employ Scottish agriculturalists on their estates. William Blacker, the agent on the Gosford estate in County Armagh, introduced sixty agriculturalists to Ireland in the 1830s where they worked for various landlords. Clonbrock had employed agriculturalists from as early as 1835 and by 1838 there were two, Charles Thompson and William McLeish<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Phrenological examination of Luke Gerald Dillon by James Quilter Rumball, 1 Mar 1845 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,670 (1))

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Bell, ‘Scottish influences on Irish farming techniques’ in R. J. Morris and Liam Kennedy (eds.), *Ireland and Scotland: order and disorder, 1600-2000* (Edinburgh, 2005) p. 57

<sup>39</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1836, 1838 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MSS 19,600,19,604)

In 1842 Lord Clonbrock declared that ‘he had long been a disciple of Mr Blacker’<sup>40</sup> who, in 1838, had advised him on setting his demesne lands as well as providing instruction to his agriculturalist, Charles Thompson.<sup>41</sup> Blacker was renowned as a progressive land agent and was described by John Stuart Mill as ‘one of the most experienced agriculturalists and successful improvers’ in the north of Ireland.<sup>42</sup> He published pamphlets on the management of landed estates, the claims of landlords to legislative protection, and the best methods of improving small farms. His *Prize essay on the management of landed property in Ireland* argued that farms from five to eight acres could be prosperous if the tenants were assisted by the landlord over a number of years.<sup>43</sup>

He advocated a system of crop rotation and advised landlords to distribute seeds for green crops and turnips to persuade tenants to change from their tradition of growing grain which exhausted the land and necessitated that it be left fallow in one of every four years. He advised the use of cow manure to fertilise the turnips for winter feed and for landlords to provide lime as potato fertilisation. However, he argued, the agriculturalist needed to be vigilant to prevent the tenants from putting both lime and cow manure on the potatoes. If his method was followed, and the tenants received suitable support and instruction, he argued that smallholders could be raised to a level of profit.

A loan of twenty or twenty-five shillings worth of lime, will in most parts of Ireland, insure, without other manure, an English crop of cup potatoes, and will produce after this a crop of grain, a crop of vetches or clover, and a second crop of grain. Those four crops, all ought to produce ... not less than £20 to £25, being a pound for every shilling lent ... and how a small loan of this kind, continued for two or three years, must bring an allotment of five to eight acres into a completely productive state, under the direction of an experienced agriculturalist, and supposing his rent be twenty shillings per acre, which is an average rate, the whole amount may be paid by fattening one or two pigs and a cow, and this may be accomplished on half an acre of turnips and potatoes, leaving him seven and a half acres free for himself.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 1 Oct 1842

<sup>41</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1838 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,604)

<sup>42</sup> John Stuart Mill, *Principles of political economy with some of their applications to social philosophy*, vol 1 (1848, revd, ed New York, 2006), p 181

<sup>43</sup> William Blacker, *Prize essay on the management of landed property in Ireland* (Dublin, 1834)

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, pp 25-6



Blacker's methods appear to have greatly influenced Thomas Bermingham who was also a keen supporter of agriculturalists and distributing seeds to the tenantry. In a letter to the *Tuam Herald* in 1839 he recommended that those interested in promoting improved systems of agriculture 'do as my Lord Clonbrock is doing here, and other landlords elsewhere, engage Scotchmen to show their tenants how to manure, to plough, to sow, and to reap'.<sup>45</sup> He stated that on the Clonbrock estate a variety of seeds had been bought from the best shops and distributed to the tenantry who paid when the next gale of rent was due. He argued that if landlords sought only fair rents, employed new methods, and paid proper attention to their estates then the tenant would feel 'that his interest and the landlord's is one and the same'.<sup>46</sup> While this advice indicates that the paternal duties of guiding and superintending were being adhered to it also reveals that he understood the importance of creating a suitable level of *identification* which, as we have seen, is a key component in the management of the deferential dialectic.

Bermingham went to considerable lengths to implement new methods of farming as one of the Clonbrock accounts entitled 'Seeds lime and ploughs lent and to be lent to tenants as follows' reveals. This account, from 1840, states that 'freight and carriage of seeds, ploughs and agricultural implements' to Clonbrock amounted to £43 while the 'seedsman's bill' came to £465. A further £33 was paid out for 'draining tools and agricultural implements for tenants use' and £73 was expended 'cutting turf and burning lime for tenant's use'.<sup>47</sup> Clearly the tenants had access to the latest drainage tools and ploughs which were, most likely, imported from Scotland or copies of Scottish designs. The metal Scottish 'swing ploughs' after some resistance replaced the wooden Irish variety so that by the mid-nineteenth century 'the Irish Industrial exhibition catalogue of 1853 described the Scottish swing plough 'as almost universally employed'.<sup>48</sup> Blacker noted that scepticism had been expressed by some landowners about the difficulty in recovering the amounts advanced to the tenants for lime and he was himself unsure whether this could be

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<sup>45</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 30 Mar 1839

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>47</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1840 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,608)

<sup>48</sup> Bell, 'Scottish influences on Irish farming techniques', p 53

depended upon. However, he felt 'confident that when the circumstances of the people have been improved, and that they are *really* able to pay, they will be found willing'.<sup>49</sup> There is no evidence that Clonbrock's tenants failed to repay sums advanced for lime but some fell into arrears in repaying what they were advanced for seeds

Payment and arrears for seed distributed 1838-1840			
	1838	1839	1840
Received for seeds	£7 2s 6d	£201 11s 4d	£535 8s 9d
Arrears due for seeds	£25 6s	£9 9s 8d	£150 19s 7d

**Fig. 2.2. Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers MS 19,608-19,610**

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the clearing of overcrowded sections of estates was carried out to create a number of small, economically viable farms, rather than to create large grazing ranches. Assisting small farmers was the stated objective of the Ballinasloe Union Agricultural Society which was founded in 1840 and of which Lord Clonbrock was one of the vice-presidents. First among the rules and principles of the society was the introduction of 'improved systems of husbandry upon the small farms .. developing the resources of the soil, giving employment to the productive industry of the union, and improving the general condition of the peasantry'.<sup>50</sup> However, a paternalistic concern for the welfare of smallholders was not their only motive as it aimed to attract 'Landed proprietors and other persons desirous of promoting the welfare of the district, or interested in keeping down the poor rate.'<sup>51</sup> The society offered premiums for ploughing matches and prizes for farmers in three classes, 0-5 acres, 5-15 acres, and 15-30 acres. In 1841 it employed an agriculturalist, James Clapperton, and by the time it published its first annual report in October he had visited 432 farms in the union.<sup>52</sup> Clonbrock, as we have seen, employed his own 'Scotch' agriculturalist to instruct his tenants

<sup>49</sup> Blacker, *Prize essay*, p 11

<sup>50</sup> *Principles, rules and regulations of the Ballinasloe union agricultural society, established 1840* (Ballinasloe, 1840), p 3

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>52</sup> *Proceedings and amended rules of the Ballinasloe union agricultural society* (Ballinasloe, 1841), p 18

which was seen as a progressive step. However, the society's judges felt that they had somewhat of an unfair advantage when it came to competing for the society's prizes. In their first annual report they related how

in every ploughing match the names Michael Kelly and Michael Larkin are distinguished generally as successful, and always as highly creditable competitors. These men are tenants to Lord Clonbrock, who, with a highly praise-worthy zeal to promote the improvement of those deriving under him, employed an agriculturalist to instruct them - May we not justly attribute the want of equal skill in the unsuccessful competitors, to their not being favoured with similar means of acquiring knowledge?<sup>53</sup>

Dennis Gaughwin and John Naughton, from Doon, competed in the third class category for turnip cultivation. Gaughwin's turnips were judged 'pretty well cultivated, crop a fair one, and in a healthy state, but will not attain the same weight as any of the other crops in the class to which he belongs'<sup>54</sup>. His neighbour, John Naughton, fared somewhat better and won a prize for turnips that were considered to be 'cultivated in a very perfect manner - crop weighty, and in a rapidly progressive state'.<sup>55</sup> Agricultural improvers like Blacker wished to eradicate the Irish practice of sowing potatoes in 'lazy beds' which were considered unproductive. Instead, he argued that a simple method of growing potatoes in drills would double the output of the crop and to encourage this method of cultivation the society offered premiums for potatoes sown in drills.<sup>56</sup> One of the third-class competitors, John Gilmore, with a holding at Lurgan, adjacent to Clonbrock demesne, had his crop inspected and it was estimated that his crop would produce two tonnes and two hundredweight to the acre.<sup>57</sup> However, showing room for improvement, it was estimated that although Gilmore would have a fair crop it did not 'reach an average with other competitors either in weight or appearance'.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p 7

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p 18

<sup>55</sup> Ibid

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p 38, many claimed that the lazy bed technique was actually more efficient on marginal land, for discussion see, Jonathan Bell and Mervyn Watson, *A history of Irish farming, 1750-1950* (Dublin, 2009), pp 59-61, Kevin Whelan, 'Pre and Post-Famine landscape change' in Cathal Póirtéir (ed), *The Great Irish Famine* (Cork, 1995), p 28

<sup>57</sup> There were three John Gilmores renting in Lurgan in 1842 as tenants of Clonbrock and all three of them John H, John P, and John W, would all claim some of the society's prizes in the 1840s and 1850s, Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1842 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,615), see previous chapter for a discussion on John H Gilmore

<sup>58</sup> *Proceedings and amended rules of the Ballinasloe union agricultural society* (Ballinasloe, 1841), p 17

The society found that the role of the agriculturalist, James Clapperton, had been invaluable in fostering enthusiasm for improvement. He had been 'generally' well received and in most cases 'he found a willingness to attend to his instructions and advice, and in very many an eager desire and endeavour to turn them to immediate account'. However, it regretted that not all were willing to accept advice due to 'habits and prejudices' that withheld the 'most ignorant and uneducated from making any exertion'. As well as exposing the society's own prejudices about the tenant farmers this indicates that the peasantry did not trust the motives of landlords in their 'improving' endeavours. The society especially regretted that no one had come forward to enter the 'neatest and best kept tenement' competition which reveals that even those who had come forward to have their crops inspected were none too enamoured with the prospect of their dwellings being inspected<sup>59</sup> William Blacker, who was the guest speaker at the society's annual dinner that year, extolled the virtues of agriculturalists and admitted to his very limited success in estate management until he had employed them. Making an argument that agriculturalists needed to visit as many farms as possible and endorsing Clonbrock's employment of them he stated 'that if people were to be *taught*, the most natural way was to get people to *teach* them, and that if you can't send the inhabitants of a *whole district to the teacher*, that it is equally plain that you should *bring the teacher to them*' [author's italics]<sup>60</sup>

There was much optimism after the society's first year and high hopes were expressed that it would gather strength as time passed. While the work of the agriculturalist received much praise the society found that there was another factor which had contributed to the 'moral and intellectual improvement of the people', namely abstinence from alcohol. Considering Lord Clancarthy was active in proselytising on his estates and that he was president of the society, it is understandable that there was no mention in the society's report that the Roman Catholic, Father Mathew was a positive agent in affecting this change. Thomas

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<sup>59</sup> *Proceedings and amended rules of the Ballinasloe union agricultural society* (Ballinasloe, 1841), p. 17

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid* p. 38

Bermingham, however, in a letter to the *Tuam Herald* the previous year attributed the complete absence of drunkenness during the Ballinasloe fair to 'that good man Father Matthew who was administering the pledge during some days of the fair'.<sup>61</sup> It appears that Father Matthew had an impact in the district of Ahascragh as he had visited the district a few weeks prior to the fair and it was estimated that out of the 15,000 people that had gathered there 10,000 had taken the pledge.<sup>62</sup>

K. L. Hull has argued that 'agricultural improvement was merely a subset of a larger 'cultural improvement' envisioned by those in power'.<sup>63</sup> The society's committee was positive that the 'habits of sobriety' and the work of the agriculturalist would open up new possibilities for the small farmers. The committee argued that the way had 'been prepared for a great moral reformation for the successful prosecution of any undertaking in Ireland, and, however gradual the progress of agricultural improvement, the society's task is to awaken and direct the hitherto slumbering energies of an intelligent people'.<sup>64</sup> In 1842 the agricultural society was particularly pleased with the increase in cultivation of green crops as the number of cultivators had grown from only thirteen the previous year to over 200. By 1844 that figure had increased even further as the table below illustrates

Number of tenants planting recommended crops in 1844	
No. of tenants	Crops
13	Rape
131	Turnips
132	Vetches
138	Clover and grass

**Fig. 2.3.** Source: *Fourth report of the Ballinasloe union agricultural society, 1844* (Ballinasloe, 1844), p. 7.

<sup>61</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 17 Oct 1840

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, 10 Oct 1840

<sup>63</sup> K. L. Hull, 'To drain and to cultivate' in C. E. Orser, Jr (ed.), *Unearthing hidden Ireland: historical archaeology at Ballykallcline, county Roscommon* (Bray, 2006), p. 162

<sup>64</sup> *Proceedings and amended rules of the Ballinasloe union agricultural society* (Ballinasloe, 1841), p. 17

If it is considered that only thirteen farmers in the Ballinasloe union planted green crops in 1841 and three years later, on the Clonbrock estates alone, 138 had planted clover and grass then it could be reasonably argued that Clonbrock was having some success in persuading tenants to adopt new agricultural methods. His success was second only to Lord Clancarthy, for whom 240 tenants planted turnips and 157 planted vetches<sup>65</sup>. In his 1843 pamphlet Bermingham addressed a number of issues including the duty of landlords to assist their tenants. He argued that many landlords had encountered great difficulty in attempting to improve their estates and that some tenants 'were too much wedded to old habits, and unwilling to adopt the well meant and oftentimes judicious improvement recommended by the landlord'. However, he did not blame tenants alone for their unwillingness to change, arguing further that the resistance to improvement was often the result of the landlord not giving due consideration to the position that tenants often found themselves in. It was his contention that if tenants undertook to adopt new methods and the experiment failed the landlord

might possibly lose his rent, but the tenant may lose his all, the tenant often feels that he is not rich enough to speculate, and therefore will not venture, besides, the tenant may not have hitherto reason to place much confidence in his landlord, and as the greater part of the experiment is to be made by his own exertions, he naturally feels afraid to risk so much labour on an uncertain return, either at present or hereafter<sup>66</sup>.

Measures were taken on the Clonbrock estates to compensate tenants for seeds that did not grow which would have made them less reluctant to experiment with new methods. In 1842 ten tenants received allowances for seeds that failed ranging from 3s. for Patt Clarke to 13s 2d for Patt Neal. Among the others that received allowances was the Kilglass schoolmaster providing further evidence that agricultural instruction was taking place there<sup>67</sup>. The existence of this 'safety net' must, in no small way, account for the success that Clonbrock achieved in persuading so many farmers to plant green crops by 1844. Furthermore, it illustrates that Bermingham's pamphleteering was more than mere rhetoric and that he practiced the paternalism that he preached.

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<sup>65</sup> *Fourth report of the Ballinasloe union agricultural society, 1844* (Ballinasloe, 1844), p. 6-7

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Bermingham, *Correspondence between Sir Robert Peel* (London, 1843), p. 8

<sup>67</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts (N L I, Clonbrock papers 1842, MSS 19,611, MS 19,612)

The improvement of land through drainage was another measure advocated by the agricultural society. Significant sums were invested in improvements as chapter one has shown and the table below provides some detail of this expenditure for the year 1841-2

<b>Building of walls drains and fences on Clonbrock estates, Dec. 1841-1842</b>	
Clonbrock	£69
Doone	£14
Ballydonlan	£84
Dalystown	£9

**Fig. 2.4. Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers MS 19,610**

Tenants who co-operated with the landlord and constructed drains on their land were given half the cost in the form of allowances. The table below provides an example of this on the Clonbrock portion of the estate.

<b>Allowances to tenants for constructing drains on the Clonbrock estate, 1841-1842</b>		
<b>Townland</b>	<b>Drains constructed in perches</b>	<b>Amount allowed</b>
Sundry cottiers Cloncannon	116	£3 13s
Sundry tenants Loughanbee	18	£0 13s
"" "" Curryfarry	128	£4 5s
"" "" Cloncannon	47	£1 6s
P Doyle's demesne farm	N/A	£11 17s
Mick Keogh Derrymore	79	£1 9s

**Fig 2.5. Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,610**

There is similar detail for the other estates and what proves interesting is that even those with the smallest holdings, i.e. cottiers, were participating. The tenants were granted allowances for the drains they constructed and those main drains into which the tenants drains fed were maintained by Clonbrock. For instance, main drains at Kilglass that year cost £3 3s and 'main drains from Lurgan bridge to Shrufane

meaning cost £1 5s<sup>68</sup> At the Tuam Agricultural Society's dinner in October 1843 Bermingham argued 'that the best and only way to get a tenant to improve with advantages to himself and his landlord is to give him his land cheap and for the value'. Poor men, he continued, did not have the means to drain land unless there were public watercourses to direct the drainage water Drainage, he continued, required a collaborative effort in which 'the government must go first, the landlord next, then the poor man will drain his land and the improvement of the country will follow.'<sup>69</sup>

Since the founding of the society Clonbrock's tenantry, as we have seen, were actively involved in adopting new methods and this was reflected in the number of prizes they continued to claim in the society's annual competitions. In March 1842 three of his tenants, Larkin, O'Kelly, and Naughton, claimed four of the six prizes that were offered in the ploughing competitions<sup>70</sup> Since Clonbrock had been elected as a representative peer since 1838 he was often absent from the country and at the agricultural society's dinner that year he expressed regret that this had 'prevented him from paying as much attention to the advancement of agriculture as he wished'.<sup>71</sup> Despite his involvement in the world of high politics he still managed to attend meetings of poor law guardians, act as a local magistrate, and attend the ploughing matches in 1843 and 1844 to witness his tenants claim further prizes<sup>72</sup> David Roberts has identified several kinds of paternalists from voting blocs in the House of Commons including Peelites, Whig grandees, 'country squires wedded to locality and hierarchy' and the Anglo-Irish However, this definition of all Irish paternalists in one bloc is much too narrow and while Clonbrock was involved at the highest levels of power he also managed to dedicate time to local affairs so he could, in many ways, be described as a country squire paternalist Their social milieu according to Robert's was the 'squire's park, the local hunt, the

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<sup>68</sup> Clonbrock rental and account 1841 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,610)

<sup>69</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 21 Oct 1843

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, 5 Mar 1842

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, 1 Oct 1842

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 11 Mar 1843, 9 Mar 1844



local agricultural association dinner, the ploughing match, and the petty and quarter sessions'.<sup>73</sup>

In his examination of paternalism in Sussex Roberts observed that agricultural society dinners were microcosms of the 'hierarchical and patriarchal society that dominated' the county.<sup>74</sup> The same was true of the Ballinasloe society's dinners and the extensive reporting of them in the press permits an insight into this microcosm. Dozens of the most notable people to attend were named individually, beginning with the most prominent at the head table and continuing from there. At the Ballinasloe society's dinner in 1842. 'The Right Hon. the Earl of Clancarthy presided .. supported on his right by . Lord Castlemaine, Wandesford, Esq, Lord Clonbrock' and a host of other gentry, notables, with the manager of the National Bank, toward the end of the list.<sup>75</sup> 'The social attitude expressed in the speeches and toasts that enlivened these assemblies reflected the needs, interests, and functions of the county's ruling elite. They spoke and they spoke enthusiastically, of the friendly intercourse and neighbourliness these convivial gatherings represented and of the social harmony and unity of all classes.'<sup>76</sup> At the dinner in 1844 Clonbrock spoke of the great benefits that the Royal Agricultural Society, of which he was vice-chairman, had brought to the advancement of the country and how he, more than any man, wished for the improvement of the small farmer and the labourer.<sup>77</sup> Clonbrock had provided tickets for thirty of his tenants, at a cost of £4 10s to attend the dinner, and it allowed him with an opportunity to affirm bonds of solidarity with them as an organic community, with him as its paternal head, working together for the betterment of the estate. So although these rituals reinforced the hierarchy of the ruling elite it was coated with a communal gloss which masked the superordinate/subordinate relationship, once again, illustrating the contradictions within the paternalist relationship with its dual elements of *differentiation* and *identification*.

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<sup>73</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p 257

<sup>74</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p 107

<sup>75</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 5 Oct 1844

<sup>76</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p 107

<sup>77</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 5 Oct 1844

Agricultural societies had their detractors and given that Lord Clancarthy, with his record for proselytism, was the president of the Ballinasloe society this criticism is unsurprising. It was mostly at Repeal meetings that this criticism was voiced: at one held in Loughrea on 6 July 1843 the M P for Mayo, R. D. Browne, argued that 'landlords were endeavouring to dupe the people, by exaggerating the immensity of benefits that must result from agricultural societies ... in order to divert their attention .. from the Repeal of the Union'. He further claimed that hidden behind the improving landed interest was a desire to increase profits from land. They were, he added 'endeavouring to keep up the rents by getting more labour from the peasant, through an improved system of agriculture ... If I were the peasant I would not be taught by the rich, merely for the benefit of the rich'.<sup>78</sup>

Two months later at another Repeal meeting Daniel O'Connell criticised Lord Clonbrock for not permitting the Catholic labourers their religious holidays but he attacked Lord Clancarthy with particular vehemence for the coercive measures that he employed to force his Catholic tenantry to send their children to Protestant schools. The tenantry were, he argued, being forced to 'sacrifice their children to the moloch [an Old Testament demon] of Lord Clancarthy's will or go out and starve'. Also present at the meeting was John MacHale, the archbishop of Tuam, who was a vehement opponent of the national schools system, which he believed, was a proselytising agency.<sup>79</sup> Speaking directly after O'Connell, he expressed the view that the experiments of agricultural societies were forwarded as a poor alternative to repeal: many of the members of these societies, he argued, 'conceal their revolting bigotry under the hypocritical guise of benevolence, as you have seen instanced in the man whose intolerance, worse than that of the Turks, has been appropriately denounced by the Liberator'.<sup>80</sup> Animosity toward agricultural societies, however, was not universal among the Catholic hierarchy as the bishop of Clonfert, Thomas Coen, did not join MacHale in his condemnation of them. In fact, Coen could be described as one of the founders of the Loughrea Agricultural Society

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid, 15 July 1843

<sup>79</sup> For a discussion of MacHale's educational policy, Maeve Mulryan-Moloney, *Nineteenth-century elementary education in the archdiocese of Tuam* (Dublin, 2001), Hilary Andrews, *The lion of the west a biography of John MacHale* (Dublin, 2001)

<sup>80</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 15 Sept 1843

as, in 1840, he had chaired the meeting at which it was founded. Neither did Coen follow MacHale's lead in prohibiting Catholic children from attending national schools as the system that had been introduced was considered the best deal to be had. Both MacHale and Clancathy represented the entrenched and hardline views of their respective religions while Coen and Clonbrock might be said to represent the conciliatory ones.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter set out to explore the duties of guiding and superintending, two of the most essential elements of paternalism according to David Roberts. It has examined education in Clonbrock's estate school, where the children were prepared for the 'preordained gendered roles of the landed estate'. Along with an elementary education in the 'three Rs' the boys were provided with a measure of agricultural instruction while the girls were instructed in sewing and spinning. It has shown how Clonbrock was aware of the potential threat that religious divisions posed to the creation of social harmony on the estate and wisely chose to omit religious instruction from the curriculum at Clonbrock school. This allowed him influence over the education of thirty-three per cent of the children in the parish of Ahascragh and this ability to guide and superintend the children would have facilitated the inculcation in habits of deference that helped to maintain order on the estate. It has further argued that there was not the slightest intention of developing the intellect of the children but the intention was rather to prepare them for their station in life. The second section of the chapter has examined how this was carried out through the provision of agricultural instruction. The tenantry were provided with the assistance of a professional agriculturalist, given access to the newest implements and tools, and crucially, were provided with a safety net in the form of compensation if their seeds failed. Clonbrock and the tenants shared the cost of land drainage and this collaborative endeavour facilitated the promotion of the relationship as an organic partnership of mutual interests in which a degree of *identification* with the tenantry could be cultivated.

## Chapter three

### The Great Famine: testing the mettle of paternalism

This chapter aims to examine the performance of paternal duties on the Clonbrock estates during the Great Irish Famine, 1845 to 1851.<sup>1</sup> It will assess whether the extensive reports of Clonbrock's benevolence in both the Tory and Liberal press were grounded in fact or mere rhetorical flourishes reflecting the ideological hegemony of the paternalist *zeitgeist*. It might be argued that an assessment of paternal duty during the Famine is somewhat of an unfair test as the scale of crisis was unprecedented in Irish history since none of the country's existing systems or institutions were designed to cope with such a crisis. However, the landed class, especially the nobility, prided themselves on having a superior 'character', and as character is less tested under normal circumstances than in times of great crisis it could be argued that the Great Famine provided the true test of landed paternalism. Using a patchwork of sources, due to the absence of estate rentals and accounts, this chapter will provide some sense of how Clonbrock responded to the crisis and performed his paternal duties.

The surviving estate papers for the period are not extensive but some fragmentary accounts kept by Charles Filgate survive as well as an account book relating to the house and its environs have been useful in discerning the impact of the Famine on the estate and the Clonbrock's attempts to deal with it. The rental and accounts for the period between 1844 and 1848 are unavailable but those from 1849 to 1851 are and they permit insights into how the estate was coping with the final years of the crisis. One enlightening source, the Famine Relief Papers, in the N.A.I., does not

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<sup>1</sup> The literature on the Famine is extensive, some of the better known works include, Mary E. Daly, *The Famine in Ireland* (Dundalk, 1986); James Donnelly, Jr., *The great Irish potato Famine* (Gloucestershire, 2002); Peter Gray, *Famine, land and politics: British government and Irish society, 1843-1850* (Dublin, 1999), Cormac Ó Gráda, *Black 47 and beyond: the Great Irish Famine in history, economy, and memory* (Princeton, 1999); Christine Kinealy, *This great calamity: the Irish Famine, 1845-1852* (Dublin, 1994). For a Galway perspective see, J. J. Conwell, *A Galway landlord during the great Famine: Ulick John de Burgh, first marquis of Clanricarde* (Dublin, 2003); Christine Kinealy, 'The response of the poor law to the Great Famine in County Galway' in Gerard Moran (ed.), *Galway: history and society: interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 1996); John O'Sullivan, 'Landlord-tenant relations on the Clonbrock estate, 1849-1893' (M.A. thesis, N.U.I. Maynooth 1997).

deal specifically with the Clonbrock estate but with relief efforts at Ahascragh, the local village, so insights into the performance of Clonbrock's paternal duty have been garnered from them. These papers elucidate how the local nobility, gentry, and notables responded to the crisis through the efforts of the Ahascragh relief committee of which Clonbrock was chairman in 1847. Other supplementary sources include national and regional newspapers, parliamentary papers, and an unpublished family history written by Lady Mahon, the granddaughter of Lord Clonbrock, in the 1950s, which drew from family papers that seem not to have survived.<sup>2</sup> Together, this collection of sources has permitted some level of understanding of how Clonbrock responded to the various phases of the Great Famine between 1845 and 1851 and how his benevolent reputation was truly tested.

According to J. S. Donnelly, Jr., the potato blight destroyed the potato crop in the eastern United States during 1843 and 1844 from where it spread to central and northern Europe the following year, finally reaching Ireland in September.<sup>3</sup> The Famine that transpired as a result of the blight led to a contraction of the Irish population by 25 per cent, or two million persons, one million of which are estimated to have died from hunger or its associated diseases. Ballinasloe was selected to host the Royal Agricultural Improvement Society of Ireland's (RAISI) show in 1845. This prestigious event, held in early October, was attended by many distinguished guests including the duke of Leinster, the marquis of Downshire, and the earl of Devon, who had chaired the commission of inquiry into Irish land in 1843. Clonbrock's tenants won prizes in the society's show, a notable achievement considering that competitors were drawn from all over Ireland, not just the Ballinasloe union. At the society's dinner, the earl of Devon proposed a toast to 'Lord Clonbrock and the resident landlords of Ireland' and then spoke about the duty of a resident landlord to encourage tenants to forsake old habits and adopt improved methods of agriculture. Clonbrock responded to the speech stating that 'the getting rid of bad habits was not to be done without great trouble and difficulty.'

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<sup>2</sup> Lady Mahon (nee Dillon, Edith), 'The Dillons of Clonbrock' unpublished family history compiled by one of the third baron Clonbrock's granddaughters in the 1950s (in private hands)

<sup>3</sup> Donnelly, Jr., *Potato Famine*, p. 41

He hoped he got rid of his, and he [called] on his brother landlords . . . to persevere'.<sup>4</sup> The tone of the speeches at the dinner was upbeat, expressing great hope for the future, and there was no mention of the fears that were beginning to mount about the precarious state of the potato crop and the spread of blight.

However, the Royal Agricultural Society had been conducting experiments on diseased potatoes since the outbreak of the blight and on 20 September the *Tuam Herald* reported 'the rapid progress of this alarming disease'.<sup>5</sup> These experiments were conducted by Professor Robert Kane who, on 7 October, was appointed by the government to a scientific commission, along with Dr Lyon Playfair and Dr John Lindley, to investigate the causes of the disease and suggest remedies for its arrest and prevention. This commission was forwarded information from various sources regarding the disease, including agricultural societies, and concluded that the blight was caused by the retention of an abundance of water as a consequence of the wet season that had passed.<sup>6</sup> As the vice-president of the Royal Agricultural Society and the Ballinasloe Agricultural Society Clonbrock would have had a certain degree of influence over what advice these societies were going to disseminate with regard to saving potatoes. On 22 October the Ballinasloe society issued a circular offering its members advice on saving the crop, advising farmers to dig the crop without delay as soon as it ripened and to separate it into slightly damaged, badly damaged, and undamaged portions. For those that were slightly damaged, 'merely infected at the eyes', it advised people to cut away the infected parts and, after drying, to consume the potatoes as soon as possible. For the badly damaged portion it advised that it be ground into water to make a starch that could be preserved and used in the making of oaten bread.<sup>7</sup> However, as Donnelly, Jr., has pointed out. 'What everyone wanted to know . . . was not so much what to do with potatoes going or gone bad, but how to keep good potatoes sound.'<sup>8</sup> In response to this the society advised against the traditional method of storing potatoes in deep pits but rather to store them in heaps

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<sup>4</sup> *Western Star*, 11 Oct 1845

<sup>5</sup> *Tuam Herald*, Sept 20, 1845

<sup>6</sup> Donnelly, Jr., *Potato Famine*, pp 44-5

<sup>7</sup> *Western Star*, 25 Oct 1845

<sup>8</sup> Donnelly, Jr., *Potato Famine*, p 45

and cover them<sup>9</sup> Essentially, the advice given by the agricultural society was similar to that offered by the scientific commissioners whose recommendations were based on shallow pit ventilation methods that had been popular in the years preceding the Famine. The pit ventilation method was given wide publicity and 70,000 copies detailing their construction were circulated by the government of which thirty copies were sent to each parish priest in the country and a further 10,000 copies were circulated by the R A S I. to local societies.<sup>10</sup>

While the main concern of the farmers was to preserve whatever was left of their crop the agricultural societies and the landlords were concerned that dearth of the potato crop would lead to a temptation to consume the seed potatoes that were required for the next season's crop. The first heading that the circular issued by the Ballinasloe agricultural society advised farmers to 'let nothing tempt you to sell what is necessary for the support of your family, and particularly seed for your ground in the ensuing year'.<sup>11</sup> It is estimated that 25 per cent of the 1845 potato crop was destroyed by blight and the poor, who traditionally planted late, were hardest hit<sup>12</sup> Early planting of potatoes was forwarded as a possible solution to combating blight and at a meeting of the agricultural society on 12 November Lord Clonbrock successfully tabled a motion that premiums should be offered 'in every electoral division in the union for the best and second best half rood of potatoes sown before Christmas His lordship stated that he had offered similar premiums in every village on his estates, as he considered it of the last importance to introduce autumnal sowing'.<sup>13</sup> This method of potato cultivation had been advocated by an English agriculturalist, Mr Grey of Dilston, who forwarded his instructions to the society which they published on 13 December.<sup>14</sup> How successful Clonbrock was in convincing the tenantry to carry out these measures is difficult to assess but it is more likely that those who had previously co-operated with him continued to do so

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<sup>9</sup> *Western Star*, 25 Oct 1845

<sup>10</sup> Donnelly, Jr, *Potato Famine*, p 47

<sup>11</sup> *Western Star*, 25 Oct 1845

<sup>12</sup> Cormac O Gráda, *The Great Irish Famine* (Dublin, 1989), p 32

<sup>13</sup> *Western Star*, 15 Nov 1845

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 13 Dec 1845

As it turned out it was of no consequence what time the potatoes were planted as the crop of 1846 was almost a total failure. Donnelly, Jr, has argued that little attention was paid to the advice offered by the commissioners 'and rightly so' and that they undermined what shaky credibility they had when they proposed, in early November, less than a week after insisting on keeping potatoes absolutely dry, that steeping them in bog water would prevent decay<sup>15</sup>

While Clonbrock's advice about autumnal sowing was of no avail this did not become apparent for a number of months so he was in the meantime, at least, providing some leadership as it was important to have answers if one was to command respect. Clonbrock's benevolence as a landlord was frequently referred to in the press and in early December both he and Lord Clancarthy were referred to as 'princes of the people in the alleviation of human misery' and it was further predicted that the charitable acts which they were engaged in would be 'speedily followed by other acts worthy of their active benevolence'<sup>16</sup> While no direct evidence exists for charitable actions on the part of Clonbrock, at this point, the testimony of Thomas Bermingham regarding Clonbrock's instructions on the oat crop provides some insight. The oat crop had traditionally been the cash crop from which small tenant farmers paid their rent and the abundance of this crop in that season was seen as a ray of light on the horizon. The agricultural society in its address to the farmers of the union remarked that the corn crops appeared to be excellent that year and that it the duty of all 'to take the *greatest care of all the produce of our land, fit for the food of man, and to use it with the strictest economy, not allowing a particle to go to*'. (Author's italics)<sup>17</sup> Tenants on landed estates usually paid one half of their annual rent on 1 November and at meeting in Dublin, attended by Daniel O'Connell, to discuss the failure of the potato crop, Thomas Bermingham stated that Lord Clonbrock 'had signified his intention of not pressing upon the people at this critical period'. Bermingham implored:

the landlords of the country to follow such a noble example, and stay the fearful results which would be sure to follow from the exercise of any

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<sup>15</sup> Donnelly, Jr, *Potato Famine*, p 46, see also, Kinealy, *This great calamity*, pp 33-5

<sup>16</sup> *Western Star*, 6 Dec 1845, Thomas French had just recently established the *Western Star* and while it was generally favourable to the landed class it was not slow to criticise landlords who acted harshly

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 25 Oct 1845



oppression .... The expression of Lord Clonbrock should be the standard expression of every landlord in Ireland to his tenants - "Touch not your oats; don't take it out of your haggards until you are safe from the imminent peril that threatens you".<sup>18</sup>

Robert Peel's government set up a central relief commission in November 1845 and, in order not to draw criticism from the free trade Whig opposition, he secretly ordered the importation of Indian meal worth £100,000. This aspect of his relief policy has attracted the most praise and his foresight in ordering this measure was confirmed in early spring when starvation was reported in several districts.<sup>19</sup> In February instructions were issued to the lords lieutenant of counties to form county committees for the distribution of food. These county committees were authorised to form parochial sub-committees drawn from the clergymen and magistrates of the parishes to oversee the distribution of meal to the aged and infirm while employment was provided for the able bodied who could earn sufficient wages to buy food at a reasonable price.<sup>20</sup> On 22 March 1846 the Catholic parish priest at Ahascragh, Richard McLaughlin, informed the relief commission that many people that had saved sufficient potatoes to get them through until the next harvest had found that they had 'decayed or nearly so'. He expressed anxiety about the delay in providing assistance because 'famine and fever are already making their ravages in this parish [and] their victims will be many before the relief is offered'. According to him there was no employment for the able-bodied men who were in extreme want and he pleaded with the commissioners 'to do something for the poor of this locality' until work was provided.<sup>21</sup>

Instructions were sent to McLaughlin providing details of how to set up a local famine relief committee but he did not receive any co-operation from the local gentry in establishing one. McLaughlin speculated that under the influence of the writers of *The Mail* they 'do not wish to think that any such committees [are] necessary' or, perhaps, as we have seen in chapter one, they were suspicious of external authorities dictating how charity should be organised at local level.

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<sup>18</sup> *Nation*, 8 Nov 1845

<sup>19</sup> Daly, *The Famine*, p. 70

<sup>20</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 28 Feb 1846

<sup>21</sup> Fr Richard McLaughlin to the Famine relief commission, 22 Mar 1846 (N A I, RLFC 3/1/868)

McLaughlin further reported that there was little in the way of public employment 'except the cutting away of one hill and as the disposal of that work is in the hands of a land agent and he is employing only the tenants on the property of which he is the manager'<sup>22</sup> Despite his failure to set up a local relief committee he had succeeded in obtaining £30 from the Calcutta fund but was afraid of letting the people know that he had it for fear that the paltry sum would be insufficient to meet the needs of the number of applicants. He was not able to keep this a secret for long, it appears, as four days after he had written this letter to the commissioners the *Tuam Herald* reported that the money had been distributed and how the people of the parish had much reason to be grateful to him for the exertions he had made to ensure their relief<sup>23</sup>

The relief commissioners requested to know who McLaughlin had approached in attempting to set up a relief committee and he stated that he had approached the Rev Peter Browne, the local Protestant rector, hoping that he might use his influence in assisting to found a committee. This attempt was not successful and McLaughlin, expressing a concern that food prices were too high, requested some Indian meal to reduce the price of food in the markets adding that if it had not been 'for the kindness of the Calcutta fund many would have died of starvation'<sup>24</sup> In reply, the relief commissioners related that they could not recommend aid except as an auxiliary to local means of relief and that the 'constituting of such a committee rests with the lieutenant of the county'. Furthermore, the commissioners seemed to suspect that McLaughlin may have been exaggerating the levels of distress in the district as they stated they had 'not received any reports of the existence of such distress at or near Ahascragh as would require the establishment of a depot there for the sale of Indian meal'<sup>25</sup>

The relief commissioners did investigate McLaughlin's claim that the public works were being monopolised by the local land agent as the county surveyor, William

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<sup>22</sup> McLaughlin to the Famine relief commission, 23 June 1846 (N A I, RLFC 3/1/3563)

<sup>23</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 27 June 1846

<sup>24</sup> McLaughlin to the Famine relief commission, n/d (N A I, RLFC 3/1/4193)

<sup>25</sup> Famine relief commission to McLaughlin, 18 July 1846 (N A I, RLFC 3/1/4385)

Kempton, visited the district and reported that the twenty-two people employed was 'as many as there was room for, that the tickets were signed by Mr Filgate agent to Lord Clonbrock, by Fr McLaughlin the parish priest (the complainant in this matter), and by the Rev Peter Browne rector of Ahascragh'.<sup>26</sup>

Clearly, McLaughlin had been somewhat economical with the truth in not telling the relief commissioners about his role in signing the public works tickets. Perhaps he had very little influence in deciding who was allocated tickets as Browne and Filgate, representing the Protestant and landed interest, were likely to have had similar ideas as to who were the deserving poor and may have vetoed any suggestions McLaughlin made. It is possible that Filgate was monopolising the public works for the benefit of the Clonbrock and Mahon tenantry, the estates under his management. This was not uncommon as Mary E Daly has argued there were claims that certain 'landlords tenants were given work places in proportion to the amount of taxation which he had paid'.<sup>27</sup>

Large scale evictions in Galway began to take place in spring of 1846 and those that took place on the Gerrard estate, a property neighbouring Clonbrock's, became infamous, especially as it had been reported that the tenants had tried to pay the rent but were refused.<sup>28</sup> These evictions, possibly, provided some of the motivating factors that inspired Thomas Bermingham to write his *Duties* pamphlet, published in July 1846. The pamphlet, a paternalist treatise on the management of landed estates, argued that it was 'absolutely necessary to regulate the law of ejectment' because the law as it currently stood could be used

as a reason for the extensive depopulation of estates, there should therefore be enacted a law, by which the powers of the landlord to eject shall be defined, and the sums which he must pay for permission to exercise that right, also defined, which sum should have reference to the age and state of health of those he means to eject, in thus compelling the landlord to contribute to their future settlement he is only forced to do that which the humane landlord does of his own accord.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid, n/d

<sup>27</sup> Daly, *The Famine*, p 78

<sup>28</sup> *Western Star*, 28 Mar 1846

<sup>29</sup> Bermingham, *Duties*, p 10

The main thrust of the pamphlet was to advise an incoming landowner how to organise the various classes of tenantry in order to bring about an orderly estate. Tenants that held too much land and were devoid of capital were to forfeit some of this land to tenants who had too little land and spare capital. It advocated that some small tenants ought to be employed as labourers and that the old and infirm should receive small pensions. Bermingham also argued that the system of tenant right could operate to the benefit of both landlord and tenant. He spoke of a 'humane landlord' who had expended £500 compensating tenants which he wanted removed from a townland he had bought from the crown. The landlord he was referring to was, of course, Clonbrock and the townland was Doon, the one Bermingham himself had divided into ten acre farms in the 1830s. Furthermore, Bermingham argued, that this

same proprietor has to my knowledge, in numerous instances allowed tenants to sell their interests, whenever he or his agent was satisfied, that the tenant substituted was a good one. No humane landlord would for a moment hesitate to admit of this substitution. I have known many instances where the tenants have given for the good will of other tenants' interests, even where no leases were in existence, sums nearly equal per acre to what the proprietor had given for the fee of the same lands.

He further argued for increased public works and, perhaps to show that there were alternatives to eviction, stated how he had settled sixty-three families on the home-colomes at Castle Sampson in the 1830s.<sup>30</sup>

As early as July 1846, it was apparent that the potato crop in the vicinity of Clonbrock was once again in a perilous state as a contributor to the *Western Star* stated he had witnessed a man in the townland of Lurgan, adjacent to Clonbrock demense, 'picking out the diseased plants'.<sup>31</sup> The return of the potato blight in 1846 devastated the crop so the outlook for the winter of 1846-47 looked ominous. With an imminent escalation of crisis Fr McLaughlin finally succeeded in establishing a relief committee at Ahascragh on 26 September where he was appointed secretary and the Rev Peter Browne as chair with Charles Filgate among the other members of the committee. McLaughlin immediately set to work and on 28 September he

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 18 (see chapter one for a discussion on this)

<sup>31</sup> *Western Star*, 4 July 1846

requested that the commissioners send a ton of biscuit to relieve the poor as prices had risen so high that famine had already made an appearance in the locality<sup>32</sup> However, the change in government from Tory to Whig with the collapse of Peel's government over the corn law question brought about a radically altered outlook with regard to providing relief for the destitute. The government of Lord John Russell was critical of the gratuitous nature of the relief measures that the Peel administration had adopted and it decided that Irish landlords must bear the responsibility for the relief expenditure. Foreign corn had been purchased but it was only to be sold as a last resort, and in the place of food-centred relief the Russell administration decided to concentrate on establishing public works<sup>33</sup> This change in policy, away from food distribution, was reflected in the reply sent by the commissioners to McLaughlin which stressed that the supply of biscuit at Galway was low and would be required for relief of the districts in the immediate vicinity of the town. Instead, it advised that the relief committee provide relief from the home harvest of corn and wheat arguing that they were at this time cheaper than Indian meal of which there was only a small quantity in the markets 'and still less in the commissariat depot'. It further argued that the population must subsist on home produce until foreign supplies arrive in the month of December at 'which time prices will .. be lower'.<sup>34</sup>

Also reflected in the reply was the Whig economic policy that the market, if permitted to operate unfettered, would result in a fair price for food. Thus, the commissioner's letter to McLaughlin concluded with the argument that 'every motive now exists on persons of local influence uniting their exertion to have the home produce brought speedily into the market'<sup>35</sup> This however was not to be as speculators began to hoard grain in the expectation that prices would rise and that is exactly what happened<sup>36</sup> Hoarding was exacerbated by the export of crops, and

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<sup>32</sup> McLaughlin to Famine relief commission, 28 Sept 1846 (N A I, RLFC 3/2/11/61)

<sup>33</sup> Kinealy, 'The response of the poor law to the Great Famine in County Galway', p 379

<sup>34</sup> Copy of Famine relief commission reply to McLaughlin, 29 Sept 1846 (N A I, RLFC 3/2/11/61)

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>36</sup> Ó Gráda, *Black 47 and beyond*, p 135

Indian meal which had cost the government less than £13 per ton in August was being sold, in some cases, for as high as £24 in January.<sup>37</sup>

At the agricultural society's dinner on 3 October Clonbrock spoke of the usefulness of public works in relieving the destitute but this, he argued, could only be a temporary measure. It would seem, in hindsight, that November 1846 was too late to preach about the errors of over-reliance on the potato considering that he had encouraged tenants to plant them the previous year. Nevertheless, Clonbrock argued that for a permanent improvement in their condition the farmers 'must look to a better system of agriculture . . . and endeavour to form new habits, instead of those which a total dependence on the potato had heretofore created'.<sup>38</sup> At this time Clonbrock decided to sell his hounds and stable of hunters, an action that was to contribute significantly to his reputation as a benevolent paternalist. In March 1847, during a parliamentary debate Mr Lefroy stated that there had been many attacks on Irish landlords in the house that day 'but no one had mentioned the name of Lord Clonbrock, who had actually kept hounds, and had given them up and sold his horses since the famine came on'.<sup>39</sup> According to an unpublished family history citing Lady Clonbrock's diary from 1846 this took place on 5 November when Lord Clonbrock 'went with Lord Crofton to Dublin for the sale of his horses and hounds' and on Nov. 7 "Horses and Hounds all sold".<sup>40</sup>

Lady Mahon, author of the work, claimed further that 'Robert [Lord Clonbrock] did all he could to help the starving people. He had the deer in the deerpark at Clonbrock killed and distributed for food'.<sup>41</sup> No contemporary evidence for this has been uncovered but in 1890, a letter signed by a number of tenants referred to the assistance he gave to the tenantry at this time. It stated that Clonbrock opened several stores during the Famine and supplied food to any tenant that applied for it. 'You even shot all your deer and distributed the venison among your tenantry.'

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<sup>37</sup> Donnelly, Jr, *Potato Famine*, p. 70

<sup>38</sup> *Western Star*, 3 Oct. 1846

<sup>39</sup> *Hansard* 3, xc1, 6778-9 (31 Mar 1847)

<sup>40</sup> Lady Mahon, 'The Dillons of Clonbrock', p. 51, this diary from 1846 does not form part of the NLI's Clonbrock papers and has not been located by the researcher

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*

Yours was no grudging hand; and we well know that your lordship's orders were to those that you appointed to distribute food; that if one single tenant was found hungry their position was lost'.<sup>42</sup> Impoverished tenants feasting on venison during the Famine seems somewhat unlikely and surely it would have made more sense to sell the venison and use the cash raised to fund the relief of the distressed. Clonbrock would certainly have raised a significant sum from the sale of his horses and hounds but another factor in the motivation behind their sale must have been the strain which they placed on resources at this time especially as food prices were beginning to rise. The 'oats account' reveals that prior to November 1846 the horses, hounds, and deer were all being fed with oats so the removal of these animals from the demesne may have been to preserve the contents of the stores (referred to in the tenant's letter) for human consumption.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the government's declaration that public works would completely replace food distribution may have sparked a fear that his stores were going to come under increased pressure and he actively sought to preserve them.

Paternalism, however, as we have seen in Chapter two was more complex than the performance of benevolent actions. David Roberts has argued that it had a dichotomic nature which could be both benevolent and autocratic and: 'in certain areas it could be, severely, even cruelly authoritarian'.<sup>44</sup> While Clonbrock's sale of the hounds and stable of hunters illustrates a degree of benevolence, the fate of two men stealing wood from the demesne less than two weeks later illustrates the 'cruelly authoritarian' dimension of his paternalism; for landed paternalists property was sacred, and any infringement of this property was not tolerated. Hence, when Patrick Fahey and Patrick Downey were caught trying to remove an ash tree from the demesne they received no quarter from Clonbrock, and were prosecuted to the full extent of the law. At the quarter sessions the following spring they were found guilty and: 'Fahy was sentenced to six months imprisonment with hard labour; [and] Downey ... to four months [also] with hard labour'.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Tenants' letter to Lord Clonbrock referring to the coming of age of his grandson in 1890, n.d. (N.L.I. Clonbrock papers, MS 35,766 (3)).

<sup>43</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts (N.L.I. Clonbrock papers, MS 19,508).

<sup>44</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p. 2; see also Newby, *Property, paternalism, and power*, p. 29 for discussion.

<sup>45</sup> *Western Star*, 10 Apr. 1847.

Public works were to begin at Ahascragh in late September 1846 but the Ahascragh accounts do not form part of the relief commission papers in the N.A.I. However, some insights into the provision of public works for the district can be gleaned from newspaper reports. Responsibility for the administration of public works was taken away from the landlord controlled grand juries and transferred to the Board of Works which was somewhat contentious and caused heated debate as the crisis worsened in the winter of 1846-47. At an extraordinary presentment sessions held in Ballinasloe on 3 December 1846, '£3,000 were presented for the drainage of the estates of landlords in the neighbourhood'. Lords Clonbrock and Clancarty had offered to pay half of the money which was advanced by the government but the presentment was disallowed<sup>46</sup>

Under the new regime controlled by the Board of Works 'only the viceroy himself could authorise extraordinary presentment sessions, and the relief schemes proposed at the sessions had first to be scrutinised by the board's officials, who then might request the treasury to sanction them. Adherence to these procedures caused agonising delays in starting public works'<sup>47</sup> At the 'ordinary' presentment sessions the following February, much criticism was levelled at Major Ainslie, the inspecting officer for the Board of Works. Lord Clancarty stated that from the presentments that had been made at the extraordinary sessions in December 'ample employment would have been provided for the poor, but unfortunately government refused to fiat them on account of an informality ... which might have been overlooked in a case of such pressing necessity'. As a result, Clancarty argued, there was not enough work for the poor and this was reflected in the number of applicants to the relief committees<sup>48</sup> By this time Clonbrock was now chairman of the Ahascragh relief committee and James Dillon, a landowner with a seat near Aughrim, stated that, at local level 'The gentlemen who formed the Ahascragh [relief] committee were, without question doing their own part' but he criticised the inefficiency of the Whig policies and government officials such as Ainslie who were charged with

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<sup>46</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 5 Dec 1846

<sup>47</sup> Donnelly, Jr, *Potato Famine*, pp 71-2

<sup>48</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 6 Feb 1847



administering them. Clonbrock agreed with Dillon and spoke of how it was unjust that only 'one or at the most two persons of the one family are allowed employment' which, due to the high price of food, was insufficient to support a family of five or six. Clonbrock argued that there 'was ample room for labourers on the Dalystown road' (one of his estates) and laying blame for the deterioration of matters firmly at the government's door 'stated that on Major Ainslie and the higher authorities, should rest the responsibility of the starving poor'.<sup>49</sup>

On 30 December 1846, as it became evident that the free market was not the panacea to regulate the high price of food, Sir Randolph Routh, the chairman of the relief commission, reluctantly agreed to the setting up of soup kitchens. This reversal of policy was influenced by reports of increased starvation and of the success of the Society of Friends in alleviating it through their privately funded soup kitchens. The benefits of this reversion of policy were considered to be two-fold in that the soup kitchens would provide food for the destitute while simultaneously lowering the price of food.<sup>50</sup> There was a soup kitchen operating at Ahascragh from at least 20 January 1847 when the Rev Peter Brown requested extra funds from the commissioners to continue its operation. He stated that the soup shop had been dispensing '200 quarts of gruel soup gratuitously and by sale daily we have also purchased large quantities of rice and Indian meal which we sell at cost price with great advantage'.<sup>51</sup> A few weeks later, on 13 February, in addition to the 200 quarts of gruel, the committee distributed 100 pounds of rice daily to provide for the needs of '150 heads of families who are the most destitute in the district – unable to work from sickness or other infirmity, or in danger of starvation from want of employment'. Brown expressed further concern about the spread of dysentery, and as the situation began to worsen through the month of March, Browne requested further aid from the commissioners as the number of people they were attempting to supply with food increased from 150 heads of families to 500. He claimed that their labours were being carried out 'most effectively and satisfactorily' and that the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> T P O'Neill, 'The organisation and administration of relief, 1845-52' in R D Edwards and T D Williams, *The Great Famine studies in Irish history* (Dublin, 1994), pp 236-7

<sup>51</sup> Rev Peter Browne to the Famine relief commission, 20 Jan 1847 (N A I, RLFC 3/2/11/61)

supplies of wheaten meal from the government stores at Banagher were most beneficial. However, he expressed dismay that the previous government grant of £120 had not matched the £146 in subscriptions raised locally by the end of February. He argued that that they had been promised ‘pound for pound’ and requested that the amount now subscribed (see table below) be equalled as there was an added burden on the committee due to a pauperised estate in the locality under the management of the Commissioners of Woods and Forests <sup>52</sup> In total for the year up to 17 March 1847, the committee raised a total of £529, the breakdown of which appears below

<b>Statement of Ahascragh relief committee, 17 March 1847</b>	
Subscriptions	£247
Donations	£162
Govt grants	£120
<b>Total</b>	<b>£529</b>

**Fig. 3.1, Source: N.A.I., RLFC3/2/11/61**

The subscriptions consisted of money raised locally from the nobility, gentry, and clergy of the parish as well as donations from external charities such as the Quakers who donated £20, the A1gburth Committee Liverpool £20, and the General Central Relief Committee (GCRC) which donated £50. Clonbrock was a member of the GCRC which may explain the donation to relief in the Ahascragh district. It was founded on the 29 December 1846 and was religiously and politically diverse. Chaired by the marquis of Kildare it included the Catholic archbishop of Dublin, the dean of Saint Patrick’s, as well as Lord Clonbrock and Daniel O’Connell M.P., and by the end of 1847 it had distributed £72,000 to distressed districts throughout the country <sup>53</sup>

While landlords like Clancarty and Clonbrock were eulogised in local newspapers such as the *Western Star* for their efforts in alleviating distress, other landlords were heavily criticised for neglecting their tenantry. As stated earlier, the evictions on the

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 20 Mar 1847

<sup>53</sup> *Report of the General central relief committee for all Ireland* (Dublin, 1849), p 5

Gerrard estate at Ballinlass had gained particular notoriety for the clearances executed there but one landowner came to the attention of the Galway media for the neglect of the starving tenants and subtenants on his estate near Ballinasloe. The *Western Star* described how, even during the ordinary seasons the tenantry on the Persse Park estate were ‘the most wretched on any property we know, but at the present moment, in no other part of Ireland can there be found more wretchedness, more destitution, than exists among the neglected tenantry of Mr Persse. Several have already died of absolute starvation’. The same issue of the newspaper published a letter by Bishop Thomas Coen on the matter. He felt it was his duty not to allow 300 human beings ‘to die without declaring to the public that they are on the brink of starvation’. He accused Persse of rackrenting poor quality land and of miserliness for not contributing ‘a single shilling to the Ballinasloe dispensary, from which a large portion of these wretched creatures receive medical aid’.<sup>54</sup> This contrasts starkly with Clonbrock who, as we have seen in the first chapter, contributed to several dispensaries on his estates. The fragmentary surviving abstracts of accounts for 1847 reveal that Clonbrock paid £68 in annual charities, £42 in subscriptions (under Bermingham, the account which mostly donated to dispensaries and poor funds) and granted £70 in allowances to tenants for the failure of the potato crop.<sup>55</sup> These figures pale in comparison to the amounts Clonbrock distributed in charities in the late 1830s and early 1840s but without a full set of accounts for the period 1844-8 it is impossible to draw any definite conclusions. While Filgate’s accounts for the period are fragmentary the existence of other accounts, as O’Sullivan has shown, provide some insight into how the big house and its environs was a centre for employment during the year 1846-7 (see Fig 3 2)

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<sup>54</sup> *Western Star*, 27 Mar 1847

<sup>55</sup> Abstracts of accounts kept by Charles Filgate, 1845-52 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,724 (8))

<b>Salaries and labour costs on Clonbrock estate 1846-1847</b>			
	<b>Salaries</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Total £</b>
<b>Farm</b>	53 50	296 80	350 30
<b>Stable Yard</b>	75 31	78 81	154 12
<b>Garden</b>	73.50	135 20	208 70
<b>Woods</b>	45 71	0	45 71
<b>Place</b>	112 00	214 76	326 78
<b>House</b>	317 90	50 61	368 51
<b>Keepers</b>	40 00	14 50	54 50
<b>Total £</b>	717 92	790 68	1508 60

**Fig 3.2. Source**

John O'Sullivan, 'Landlord-tenant relations on the Clonbrock estate in Galway, 1849-1893', Table 4, p 18

That year £790 and £717 was expended on labour and salaries respectively so those who were lucky enough to secure work would have been more able to cope with the crisis. The most needy would not have earned a salary of any description but the £790 expended on labour was sufficient to provide an annual wage of £7 19s for 100 people. Unfortunately these accounts are not available for the subsequent years but this particular set provides an indication of the employment available around Clonbrock during one of the most distress years of the Famine.

There is very little specific evidence of deaths by starvation in the locality but the most vulnerable were the landless labourers and those on pauperised estates such as the tenants of Dudley Perse and those resident on the estates managed by the Commissioners for Woods and Forests which the Rev Peter Browne had referred to in his letter to the relief commissioners. However, starvation was only one of the dangers brought on by the Famine and the pestilence that followed in its wake was equally as destructive, and unlike starvation was not class specific. The weak and starving were the most likely to contract one of the Famine's attendant diseases such as typhus, cholera, dysentery, or relapsing fever which were exacerbated by infected people crowding together on public works. Those working closely with the poor also ran a greater risk of contracting them and on 22 May the *Nation* reported that Fr

Richard McLaughlin had fallen victim to typhus<sup>56</sup> Mary E Daly has pointed out that typhus and relapsing fever were caused by lice and were not directly connected to starvation. This is confirmed by the fact that typhus in particular was responsible for the deaths of many doctors, clergymen and others in presumably comfortable circumstances during the famine years'.<sup>57</sup> The landed class, while less exposed to the ravages of fever, did not escape either and in August Lord Dunsandle also fell victim to typhus fever<sup>58</sup> Other members of the Galway gentry who fell victim to fever were 'Thomas Martin of Ballinahinch, Robert Gregory of Coole, John Nolan of Ballinderry, and Paul Dolphin of Turooe.'<sup>59</sup> In 1851 the *Western Star* reported that Clonbrock had fallen seriously ill with typhus fever and how 'it had seldom heard so much general regret expressed for any individual as the public at large feel for the affliction which has befallen his lordship and his family' While some of famine's attendant diseases were not as class specific as starvation itself the treatment of the diseases was. Unlike the poor of the locality, who had to resort to the vastly overstretched dispensary system, Clonbrock was attended to by the surgeon general and within a week of this report he was over the worst of the fever<sup>60</sup>

In May 1847 the board of health advised that all food distributed was to be cooked as some people in receipt of relief did not have the means of cooking it, but this was opposed by many and had to be enforced by the board<sup>61</sup> Donnelly, Jr, has given several examples of how many people would accept dry food rations but not cooked food. In one case he cites an inspecting officer who argued that the acceptance or refusal of cooked food was a true test of destitution as he found that there was a fall of 33 per cent in the number of people who applied for relief when the food distributed was cooked rather than in dry ration form<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, as Mary E Daly has argued: 'Cooked food had the ideological benefit of being virtually

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<sup>56</sup> *Nation*, 22 May 1847

<sup>57</sup> Daly, *The Famine*, p 103

<sup>58</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 14 Aug 1847

<sup>59</sup> Patrick Melvin 'The landed gentry of Galway', p 450

<sup>60</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 22, 29 Mar 1851

<sup>61</sup> O'Neill, 'The organisation and administration of relief', pp 240-1

<sup>62</sup> Donnelly, Jr, *Potato Famine*, p 87

immune from pilferage, or financial speculation.’<sup>63</sup> This, perhaps, explains an incident that occurred at an outdoor relief depot at Ahascragh in early July when ‘several turbulent fellows endeavoured to prevent the poor people from taking the steeped meal and literally flung it about the street’. Two of the ringleaders that orchestrated this attack were arrested and brought to the local bridewell where one of them was found to have £7 in his pocket which, in 1847, was the equivalent of almost a year’s wages for a labourer<sup>64</sup> This man could hardly have been in need of relief but he and his co-conspirators may have previously accepted dry rations and expressed their dissatisfaction with the steeped rations by attacking the depot

Another fruitful source that has provided insights into the practice of paternalism during the Famine are parliamentary papers that reveal how Clonbrock secured significant funding to help initiate improvement schemes on his estates. This source provides details of the estate improvement loans which Clonbrock applied for in early 1847, and the subsequent grants he received from the Board of Works which permitted him to employ labour in the latter years of the Famine from late 1847 to 1851. Clonbrock made his initial application for a land improvement loan in February 1847 and by October the Treasury had sanctioned £6,000 in loans of which £500 had been issued by the end of the year<sup>65</sup> On 20 September the first of a series of meetings to disseminate ‘practical information on agricultural subjects’ was held in Ballinasloe and attended by several tenants of Clancarty, Dennis Kelly, and Clonbrock, some of whom, the *Western Star* reported, ‘exhibited considerable intelligence on the subject of agriculture’<sup>66</sup> This provides evidence that there was a pro-active spirit among the Clonbrock tenantry in facing the crisis. As in former years Clonbrock’s engagement of an agriculturalist was paying dividends for some of the tenantry who claimed prizes in the Ballinasloe Agricultural Society’s competitions

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<sup>63</sup> Daly, *The Famine*, p. 87

<sup>64</sup> *Western Star*, 3 July 1847

<sup>65</sup> *Public works (Ireland) Sixteenth report from the board of public works, Ireland, with appendices*, p. 198 [983] H.C. 1847-8, xxxvii, 414

<sup>66</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 25 Sept 1847

John H Gilmore, of Lurgan, who had been served with an ejectment decree in 1841 had by this time become a model tenant scooping several prizes. He won first prize of £1 5s for 'the neatest and best kept farm, most comfortable and best furnished dwelling house', £2 for the best cultivated dwelling farm under twenty acres, finally he was awarded £2 for the best thorough drainage which was supplemented by a further £2. In total he won prizes worth £8 amounting to about a year's wages for a labourer. Two other tenants of Clonbrock's, Denis Gawkwim and Michael Kelly also won prizes of 15s and £1 respectively for cultivating crops.<sup>67</sup> It is evident that these tenants were reaping the benefits of the agriculturalist that had been employed by Clonbrock but it does not appear that he was met with universal acceptance as Clonbrock was served with two threatening notices before the end of the year calling on him to dismiss both his steward and his agriculturalist. This 'outrage', according to the *Western Star*, was completely unwarranted as it considered Clonbrock

an excellent nobleman - excellent in all relations of life - is resident on his property giving extensive employment to the people, affording to his tenantry all the facilities for self improvement, assisting the neighbourhood by every useful means which can better the condition of the country, and showing an example of what a kind, liberal landlord should be.

Furthermore, in defence of the steward and the agriculturalist it stated that they had been employed by Clonbrock 'for the alone purpose of instructing his tenantry in the improved systems of agriculture, the cultivation of flax, and the manufacture of drainage tiles'.<sup>68</sup>

That Clonbrock was providing employment is evident from the grants he received from the Board of Works, which were issued in seventeen instalments between the end of 1847 and 1852, totalling £6,900. The inspector of drainage with the Board of Works also confirmed that Clonbrock was providing extensive employment through the drainage schemes for which he was awarded the medal of the Royal Agricultural Society. The society found that 'in no part of this district have works of man and thorough drainage been more extensively or effectively carried out, and through the medium of the improvements large tracts, consisting previously of flooded and

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 27 Oct 1847

<sup>68</sup> *Western Star*, 11 Dec 1847

barren wastes, are now producing valuable green and cereal crops’<sup>69</sup> The background of those employed on Clonbrock’s drainage projects is unknown but the likelihood is that most if not all of it was carried out by his own tenantry. Employment on these projects would have been crucial in assisting the tenantry on small holdings to survive as the Famine extended into 1848.

The Poor Law Amendment Act passed in the summer of 1847 was a measure introduced by the Whig government to shift the responsibility of relief from the British Treasury to the Irish landlords and their tenants. It was a measure that permitted outdoor relief, which was prohibited under the poor law of 1838, and promoted land clearances due to a clause within the act denying relief to occupiers of holdings in excess of one quarter acre. Cormac Ó Gráda has argued that this decision to amend the Irish poor law and place the burden of relief entirely on the shoulders of the Irish taxpayer was the most cynical move that the government had made in its attempt to deal with the crisis: a decision which ‘amounted to a declaration that, as far as Whitehall was concerned, the Famine was over. This callous act born of ideology and frustration, prolonged the crisis. In the west roadside deaths were still commonplace in the winter of 1848-9’<sup>70</sup>

With the added burden of having to provide outdoor relief many poor law unions became broke and four of the six Galway unions, Galway, Clifden, Loughrea, and Gort were dissolved by the poor law commissioners. The guardians were replaced with paid officials who were supposed to bring the finances of the unions into an orderly state. However, after only a few months, the new appointees in the Gort union found that they were no better able to manage the finances than their predecessors. In 1847, the Ballinasloe union fared better than its western neighbours as it did not have to bear the same burden of relief. Kinealy has shown that 83 per cent of the population was relieved in the unions of Galway, Clifden,

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<sup>69</sup> *Public works (Ireland) Twentieth report from the board of public works, Ireland, with appendices*, pp125-6 [1569] H C 1852-53, xl1, 531-2

<sup>70</sup> Ó Gráda, *The Great Irish Famine*, p 39



Loughrea, and Gort, while, in the the Ballinasloe union only 33 per cent were relieved <sup>71</sup>

Although the Ballinasloe union may have been relatively unaffected it had, by no means, escaped the calamity. The winter of 1847-8 brought more distress and even in April disturbing scenes were observed at the Ballinasloe workhouse. The poor law had not been designed to cope with extensive famine so it is hardly surprising that the system began to groan under the pressure. A reporter from the *Western Star*.

witnessed the most appalling scenes of misery, thousands of wretched creatures from all parts of the union being congregated about the gates of the workhouse endeavouring either to gain admission or to obtain outdoor relief. It is fearful to contemplate the wretchedness that meets our eye at every turn. The guardians have been meeting for the past three days, investigating the claims of the miserable beings thus seeking such tardy and inadequate relief as the worst law ever inflicted on a country can afford <sup>72</sup>

With so much depravation and competition for relief it appears that those within the workhouse were the lucky ones. However, the workhouses were built to be austere at the best of times and under the great pressure caused by the Famine it would not be an exaggeration to describe the conditions as horrific. The poor were caught between a rock and a hard place in the attempt to survive and the workhouse was the last and desperate option. Up to this point in 1848, there had been no specific reports of deaths occurring around Clonbrock, but on 13 May, the *Nation* reported that 'Lord Clonbrock has caused a great quantity of timber to be cut on his estate in Galway, and manufactured into coffins for the poor, gratis. Why not into meal to keep them alive'.<sup>73</sup> From this evidence one might conclude that a considerable number of poor people had been dying.

Against the backdrop of the crowded workhouse and trees being chopped down at Clonbrock for use as coffins a man by the surname of Finn signed himself out of the Ballinasloe workhouse in late May. Three weeks later, on Thursday 9 June, he was

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<sup>71</sup> Christine Kinealy, 'The response of the poor law to the Great Famine in County Galway', pp 283-5

<sup>72</sup> *Western Star*, 1 Apr 1848

<sup>73</sup> *Nation*, 13 May 1847

found dead near a place called Lowville on the road to Ahascragh. The *Western Star* speculated that he had left the workhouse in the hope of obtaining employment and having not met with success he had to resort to applying for relief once again. He attended a meeting of the Board of Guardians in Ballinasloe on Wednesday 8 June and through the 'kind exertions of Mr Filgate succeeded in getting his name on the outdoor relief list'. He was not deemed eligible to receive relief until Friday but the next day he was found dead on the road and an inquest into his death found that he had died from starvation. The *Western Star* concluded its report with the lines 'A young man dying of starvation in one of the finest countries in the world' This requires no comment.'<sup>74</sup>

Lowville is adjacent to Clonbrock demesne so the circumstances of Finn's death require some comment for this reason. No family by the name of Finn appears in the Clonbrock rent roll of 1843 or 1849 so, unless he happened to be the under-tenant of a middleman, he was not resident on the Clonbrock estate. Griffith's valuation for the district, conducted in 1854, lists only one Finn family in the vicinity of Ahascragh, at Ballydoogan on the outskirts of Clonbrock demesne and if Finn had travelled from this place to apply for relief in Ballinasloe he would have had to pass the front gates of Clonbrock. Another matter that requires attention is Finn's relationship to Charles Filgate as it was stated that it was through the 'kindness' of Filgate that he was admitted to the list of outdoor relief. To tell a man who is in the advanced stages of starvation on Wednesday that he will receive relief two days later can hardly be described as 'kindness'.

Despite this, it does appear that Filgate did intercede on his behalf, suggesting that he was known to him. If it is considered that the reason Finn had left the workhouse was to seek employment then it is not unlikely that he had sought work on the Clonbrock drainage where he became known to Filgate and this, perhaps, explains why Filgate may have interceded on his behalf to obtain relief. While there is a degree of speculation as to the exact circumstances of Finn's death this case illustrates the stark choices that faced the poor at this time and underscores the

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<sup>74</sup> *Western Star*, 10 June 1848

relative boon that the drainage works would have provided for the poorest of the Clonbrock tenantry. Furthermore, it illustrates that Clonbrock practiced a nuclear paternalism in the sense that it extended only to his own tenantry. It might be argued that Finn was not Clonbrock's responsibility, as he was not his tenant, but as Matthew Cragoe has argued in a study of landed estates in nineteenth-century Wales: 'The aristocracy's paternalistic duties did not end at the park gates or even the boundaries of the parish. In its fullest sense, paternalism required that they be responsible for the whole community of which they formed the pinnacle'.<sup>75</sup> The concluding line of the *Western Star's* piece on the starvation of Finn might alternatively have read 'a young man dying of starvation *next to the demesne of a benevolent landlord!*' This requires no comment.'

Early in 1849, many of the poor law unions were essentially bankrupt and the government sought to introduce a cross subsidisation measure, the 'rate in aid', to spread the burden for relieving the destitute in financially embattled poor law unions, mostly in the west and south-west, across the more prosperous unions.<sup>76</sup> The rate payers of the Ballinasloe union resisted this measure and called a meeting where a resolution was passed arguing that 'relief ought to be furnished from imperial resources, and applied, not to the maintenance of a vicious system of outdoor relief, perpetuating famine in the land, but to the employment of the population in cultivating and sowing'. Many landlords, such as Clonbrock, whose estates were well managed, argued for the 'individualizing of responsibility', and the creation of smaller poor law unions and units of taxation.<sup>77</sup> At the meeting he expressed

his thorough conviction that the individualizing of responsibility was the only principle calculated effectually to save the country . . . Show each individual that by self-exertion he might save himself, and the first step toward the regeneration of all would be accomplished . . . Everyone must acknowledge that the converse of this proposition had proved unsuccessful, and he looked to this as the principle cause of the evictions which had taken place in Ireland, for when a landlord found that no efforts of his could relieve him from the unjust burthen of supporting the poor on the estates of others, he was often obliged, in

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<sup>75</sup> Cragoe, *The moral economy of the landed estate*, pp 94-5

<sup>76</sup> James Grant, 'The Great Famine and the poor law in Ulster: The Rate-in-Aid Issue of 1849' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xvii (May 1990), pp 30-47

<sup>77</sup> Peter Gray, *Famine, land and politics*, pp 317-8

self defence, to rid himself of a portion of his own tenantry, whom he was no longer able to maintain, in order to turn his land to a more profitable account.<sup>78</sup>

His argument was that it was preferable that each individual landowner should be compelled to perform his duty to his dependents rather than what was transpiring under the poor law, which was, in his opinion, forcing landlords to abdicate their paternal duties to their tenantry. Essentially, he believed that paternal landlords should not be expected to support the poor on the estates of others as well as supporting the poor on their own estates and if responsibility was individualized then every landlord would be required to care for his own poor. Furthermore, he argued that, because of the poor rate, he had to pay for the poverty created by other estates and that the only way that he could reduce his costs was to evict his own poor and shift the responsibility for their upkeep onto the rest of the rate payers.

Clonbrock's opinion would not have been out of step with British public opinion at this time as the sympathy that had existed for evicted tenants, at the beginning of the Famine, had dissipated by 1849. In October 1849 the *Illustrated London News* expressed the view that evictions

are not merely a legal but a natural process, and however much we deplore the misery from which they spring, and which they so dreadfully aggravate, we cannot compel the Irish proprietors to continue in their miserable holdings the wretched swarms of people who pay no rent, and who prevent the improvement of property as long as they remain upon it.<sup>79</sup>

What became known as 'compassion fatigue' syndrome in the twentieth century has been put forward as a contributory factor to this change in attitude but there also existed a widespread adherence to providentialism, 'the doctrine that human affairs are regulated by a divine agency for human good'.<sup>80</sup> Some extreme evangelicals saw it as a direct judgement by God for the perceived idolatry of Catholicism while moderate and liberal Protestants saw it as a short term evil from which 'a greater good would flow, so long as this was not impeded by human resistance to divine

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<sup>78</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 21 Mar 1849

<sup>79</sup> *Illustrated London News*, 13 Oct 1849

<sup>80</sup> Peter Gray, 'Ideology and the Famine' in Cathal Poirteir (ed.) *The Great Irish Famine* (Cork, 1995), p 91

intentions’<sup>81</sup> The only information that is extant regarding Clonbrock’s opinion on the subject is from a speech made during the 1850s in which he referred to Famine as ‘a visitation of providence’ that had brought sad and evil times.<sup>82</sup>

Belief in providence existed at the highest levels of the monarchy and the administration permeating right through society in Britain and Ireland. In 1847 Queen Victoria issued a royal proclamation calling for a fast to take place in England and Ireland on 24 March. The rhetoric employed in this proclamation drew extensively on providential explanations for the Famine, referring to the ‘heavy judgements with which almighty God is pleased to visit the iniquities of this land by a grievous scarcity and dearth of divers articles of sustenance and necessities of life’.<sup>83</sup> This proclamation and fast day ‘gave official sanction to a providentialist interpretation of the potato failure, which became remarkably widespread amongst the English political classes. A very high proportion of parliamentary speeches in 1847 attributed the crisis to divine intervention’.<sup>84</sup> This adherence to providence continued throughout the Famine and beyond to explain the catastrophe that had befallen the country. In 1849, at the Ballinasloe Agricultural Society dinner, Lord Clancarty spoke of how there existed ‘a disposition to struggle manfully against adversity’ but argued that the Irish farmer had ‘in a great measure, himself to blame, in consequence of his continued and exclusive attachment to that uncertain crop’. He further argued that as the disease which had destroyed the potato was ‘doubtless, sent by providence – it may therefore, perhaps, be well for us to consider the design of providence in sending [it]’. Therefore, he advised that they would ‘be disregarding a great warning were [they] again generally to plant the potato, and to depend on it exclusively’.<sup>85</sup> The ‘practical instructor’ employed by the society also explained the apathy of the farmers in providential terms. He had witnessed ‘the existence of great suffering and privation among the small farmers, the want of

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<sup>81</sup> Peter Gray, ‘National humiliation and the Great Hunger: fast and Famine in 1847’ in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxii (2000), p. 216, see also Desmond Bowen, *The Protestant crusade in Ireland: a study of Protestant-Catholic relations between the Act of Union and Disestablishment* (Toronto, 1978), Paul M. Connell, ‘Evangelicalism, the Church of Ireland, and anti-Catholicism in the life and thought of Rev. Tresham Dames Gregg (1800-81)’ (Ph.D. thesis, NUI Maynooth, 2007).

<sup>82</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 16 June 1855

<sup>83</sup> Royal proclamation calling for a general fast, *The Times*, 13 Mar. 1847

<sup>84</sup> Peter Gray, *Famine, land and politics*, p. 259

<sup>85</sup> *Western Star*, 4 Oct. 1849

means in many instances for sowing the land, in others a reckless improvidence in delaying or neglecting the most necessary farm works, the prevalence of despondency even among the most enterprising and industrious'.<sup>86</sup>

The speech delivered by the Rev Peter Browne, rector of Ahascragh, indicates that he had, to some degree, been influenced by the paternalist *zeitgeist* as he argued that there was a need for landlords to take a 'parental interest' in the affairs of their 'good and industrious' tenantry and to grant them reductions. However, he could, by no means, be described as a benevolent paternalist since he did not appear:

on behalf of the idle, the dissolute, or worthless tenant. By no means spare the guilty, let execution be done upon him, let the worthless cumberer of the ground be exterminated; he is an enemy to his country, an enemy to his landlord; and if such characters are permitted to multiply, the country will become a mass of pauperism.<sup>87</sup>

This hardening of attitudes to evictions by the British press and the landed interest in Ireland provides a backdrop to the evictions that took place on the Clonbrock estate between 1849 and 1851.

As the rent rolls are available for a number of years from 1849, it is possible to examine Clonbrock's performance of his paternal duties in more detail so this section will examine Clonbrock's performance of his paternal duties during the latter stages of the Famine to 1851. Earlier in the chapter it has been shown how, according to Thomas Bermingham, Clonbrock did not press his tenantry during the earlier stages of the Famine and urged them to keep their oats until the danger was past. At the rate in aid meeting in 1849 things appear to have changed as he condoned the eviction of tenants as a form of 'self defence' to which landlords had been 'obliged' to resort. It is difficult to know how many evictions took place between 1843 and 1848 because of absence of the rent rolls for these years but here was certainly a considerable contraction in the number of families resident on the estates as they declined from 582 in 1843 to 496 in 1849 representing a drop of 17.3 per cent, and this pattern continued until 1851.<sup>88</sup> The factors that contributed to this continued decline were 'ejection', 'surrender', 'gone away', 'emigrated' or 'thrown

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 27 Oct. 1849.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 10 Oct. 1849.

<sup>88</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts (N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,616-17).

houses’ Using police returns Donnelly, Jr , has estimated that almost a quarter of a million people, or 49,000 families were evicted between 1849 and 1854 These evictions peaked in 1850 when 73,871 persons or 14,546 families were ejected from their homes <sup>89</sup> The *Western Star*, a publication usually favourable to the landed interest, condemned the number of evictions being carried out

Every day furnishes fresh proof and exhibits the clearest illustration of the cold apathy, and listless indifference of the landed class, to the comforts and social condition of their tenantry The march of extermination instead of slackening its pace is advancing with frightening and alarming rapidity, all over the land, spreading terror and desolation in its progress and making its countless victims feel the deadly force of its oppressive hand Thousands of stalwart peasantry “their country’s pride” have been cruelly banished from the humble cottages that gave them birth, and driven to look for shelter within the gloomy walls of a workhouse, or seek a home beyond the wide expanse of the broad Atlantic, where they will meet with that encouragement to industry, and remuneration for their toil and labour, which had been denied them in the land of their nativity <sup>90</sup>

Clonbrock had argued at the rate in aid meeting that landlords had been forced to evict their poorer tenants as a form of self-defence against the government’s decision to try and spread the cost of the destitution caused by the Famine across the country Clonbrock himself appears, to some degree, to have implemented this form of ‘self defence’ on his estates between 1849 and 1851 The table below provides details of the twenty evicted according to socio-economic category, as determined by the value of land which they held

<b>Breakdown of evictions on the Clonbrock estates 1849-1851 according to value of holding</b>					
<b>Famine evictions</b>	<b>5s-£4</b>	<b>£4-15</b>	<b>£100-£200</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>Total</b>
1849	3	5	1	1	10
1850	1	5	0	1	7
1851	1	1	0	1	3
<b>Total</b>	5	11	1	3	20

**Fig. 3.3 Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,617-20**

The table illustrates that evictions were highest in 1849 and had tapered off completely by 1851 after which time they became extremely rare These figures confirm accepted knowledge that those on smaller holdings were most vulnerable to

<sup>89</sup> Donnelly, Jr , *Potato Famine*, p 140

<sup>90</sup> *Western Star*, 2 Nov 1850

eviction. It might have been expected that Clonbrock's paternalism was most likely to have found expression in the vicinity of the demesne but there does not appear to have been any favouritism toward tenantry in the locality around Clonbrock. Fig.3.4 illustrates that tenants were just as likely to be evicted on this estate as those on the more removed Ballydonlan estate.

<b>Breakdown of evictions by district on Clonbrock estates 1849-1851</b>				
<b>Estate evictions</b>	<b>1849</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1851</b>	<b>Total</b>
Clonbrock	1	4	0	5
Doon	0	3	0	3
Castlegar	1	0	0	1
Ballydonelan	4	1	0	5
Dalystown	0	0	0	0
Quansbury	4	1	1	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>20</b>

**Fig. 3.4. Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,617-20**

Dalystown, the estate which was the most remote from Clonbrock, at twenty-two miles distant, was populated by tenants on the very smallest of holdings. These tenants should have been the most vulnerable to eviction but not a single tenant was evicted there between 1849 and 1851 which goes against the general trend. This estate appears to have fared, at least in terms of survival of holdings, as well if not better than other, seemingly, more prosperous sections of the estate. Surprisingly, the smallest holdings valued at only five shillings were still extant in 1853 as Fig. 3.5 illustrates.

<b>Comparison of holdings on the Dalystown estate 1843-1853</b>		
<b>Dalystown Holdings</b>	<b>1843</b>	<b>1853</b>
<b>5s.</b>	7	7
<b>5s -£4</b>	47	39
<b>£4-15</b>	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>47</b>

**Fig. 3.5. Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,617-21**

In terms of valuation five shillings equated to about a quarter acre of good land and it would have been difficult if not impossible to make a living from a holding of this size especially if the potatoes grown on them had failed. According to Arthur



Young, one acre of potatoes was sufficient to provide sustenance for four people so if a five shilling holding equated to a quarter acre of good land then this kind of holding, at the best of times, would have been barely enough to feed one person<sup>91</sup> The five shilling holdings of these tenants were more likely to have been more than a quarter acre but it would have been inferior mountain land and difficult to cultivate Furthermore, the occupiers would not have been eligible to obtain outdoor relief unless they surrendered their holdings so the fact that they survived is remarkable The tenants occupying holdings under £4 were also considered to be vulnerable because the landlord was eligible to pay their portion of the poor rate and the high survival rate of these tenancies is also remarkable However, rather than try and rid this estate of these small holders Clonbrock encouraged them to stay by forgiving arrears to the tune of £57 in 1851 This would have been a considerable abatement to these tenants if it is considered that the total annual rental of the estate was £62<sup>92</sup>

Part of the reason that this estate was treated differently may be that the motivation for buying, it in the first place, was not entirely economic The three townlands which comprised the estate were adjacent to Dalystown mountain and when Clonbrock was considering purchasing it in the 1830s Thomas Bermingham informed him that it would be a good acquisition for any sportsman<sup>93</sup> According to his granddaughter, Lady Mahon, he did use it for sporting purposes and took a party to Dalystown woods every year to shoot woodcock<sup>94</sup> There is also a further possibility that these tenants were employed as labourers in the woods or in the rearing and preservation of game but with the absence of accounts this is difficult to verify

While evictions did take place between 1849 and 1851 there were also tenants that left the estate as Fig 3 6 illustrates

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<sup>91</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, *The Great Irish Famine* (Dublin, 1989), p 54

<sup>92</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts (N L I Clonbrock papers, MSS 19,619, 19,621)

<sup>93</sup> Thomas Bermingham to Lord Clonbrock, n/d (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,727 (9))

<sup>94</sup> Lady Mahon, 'The Dillons of Clonbrock', p 73

Breakdown of holdings 'given up', 'surrendered', 'thrown houses' 'gone away'							
	5s	5s-£4	£4-15	£15-30	£30-100	£100-200	Total
<b>1849</b>	0	8	15	5	1	0	29
<b>1850</b>	0	1	3	1	0	0	5
<b>1851</b>	0	3	1	0	1	1	6
<b>Total</b>	0	12	19	6	2	1	40

Fig. 3.6. Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,617-20

Once again this confirms accepted knowledge that those occupying smaller holdings were more likely to have been affected by the Famine Clonbrock had expressed support for schemes of assisted emigration in 1847 but without the rent rolls or accounts to draw from it is difficult to know how many people on his estates were assisted with emigration during the years from 1844 to 1848 <sup>95</sup> He did not initiate a systematic policy of mass emigration for tenants like Sir Robert Gore Booth in Sligo, or Major Mahon in Roscommon <sup>96</sup> However, between 1850 and 1854 he paid various sums of money to sundry emigrants and to people who had 'gone away' (see Fig 3 7)

Monies paid to people 'gone away' or to emigrants 1850-1855 (value in £'s)						
	1850	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855
<b>Emigrants</b>	75	110	99	99	30	0
<b>Gone away</b>	66	44	0	0	0	0

Fig. 3.7. Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,617-22

No detail as to how many people emigrated is given but in the 1830s the sum of £10 was the most common figure so this, perhaps, provides some indication (see chapter

<sup>95</sup> *Report of the select committee of the House of Lords on colonization from Ireland, together with minutes of evidence*, p 202, H C 1847 (737-ii), xl, 833

<sup>96</sup> See, Gerard Moran, *Sir Robert Gore Booth and his landed estate in county Sligo, 1814-1876* (Dublin, 2006), idem, *Sending out Ireland's poor assisted emigration to North America in the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2004), pp 58-69, Robert Scally, *The end of hidden Ireland, rebellion, Famine and emigration* (Oxford, 1995), Pdraig Vesey, *The murder of Major Mahon, Strokestown, County Roscommon, 1847* (Dublin, 2008)

one) However, Clonbrock did not bear all the burden for his emigrating tenants as he, like other landlords, petitioned boards of guardians to assist former tenants who were inmates of workhouses ‘In the early 1850s [he] sent a number of such petitions to the Mountbellew guardians in 1852, for example, when the guardians agreed to provide £7 towards the emigration of Mary Mannion, a widow from Kileen and her five children, Clonbrock paid the rest’<sup>97</sup>

By 1853 as the estate began to recover from the effects of the Famine the number of families on the estates had fallen considerably as Fig 3.7 below shows

Comparative overall decline in holdings on Clonbrock estates, 1843-1854												
Holdings	5s	5s- £4	£4- 15	£15- 30	£30- 100	£100- 200	£200- 300	£300- 500	£500- 700	£700- 800	£800+	Total
1843	11	216	291	35	16	6	5	1	0	0	1	582
1853	7	178	249	24	21	3	5	3	0	1	0	491

Fig. 3.8. Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,617-21

However, the figure of 491 holdings for 1853 is inflated by the increase in tenancies on two townlands. In 1843, on the Clonbrock estate, Bernard Fallon is recorded as the sole tenant paying £64 on the townland of Lissolane while in 1853 his sole tenancy is replaced by eight new tenancies. Similarly on the townland of Killuremore, on the Castlegar estate, the 1843 rent roll records James Dillon paying £137 as the sole tenant while in 1853 this tenancy is replaced by thirty-one new tenancies. Bernard Fallon was replaced by the eight tenants before 1849, where there is a gap in the rent rolls, and it is unknown whether he was evicted or ‘went away’ so it is difficult to come to any conclusions about the breakup of this holding among the eight new tenants. However, there is more information regarding the tenancy of James Dillon, and this permits further insights into Clonbrock’s paternalism and his estate management policy at this time.

<sup>97</sup> Moran, *Sending out Ireland’s poor*, p 137

Dillon was ejected from his £137 holding in 1849 and the following year the townland was occupied by thirty nine tenants. There are two likely explanations for this, the first is that Dillon was a middleman and had let this land to subtenants and after his ejection Clonbrock accepted Dillon's subtenants as his own. The second possibility is that Dillon was farming the £137 holding as a sole tenant and when he was ejected Clonbrock decided to break his holding into smaller farms and get new tenants. However, out of the thirty-one holdings on this townland in 1853, thirteen were valued at less than £4, and it is highly unlikely that Clonbrock, at this point, would have created such tenancies, so it would more possible that Clonbrock had assumed the responsibility of Dillon's subtenants. While it cannot be stated conclusively that this was the case, all the evidence points to it so it might be inferred that Clonbrock exhibited a paternalist duty of care, not only to his tenants, but to subtenants as well. It seems more certain that Clonbrock was not pursuing a policy of consolidation on the townlands that had been recovered from Fallon and Dillon.<sup>98</sup>

As stated above, the inclusion of these tenancies inflates the number of holdings in 1853 so to get a true comparison with the number of holdings recorded in 1843 they need to be discounted from the 1853 total which is shown below

Decline in number of holdings 1843-1853 discounting the townlands of Kulluremore and Lislane												
Holdings	5s	5s - £4	£4- 15	£15- 30	£30- 100	£100- 200	£200- 300	£300- 500	£500- 700	£700- 800	£800+	Total
1843	11	216	291	35	16	6	5	1	0	0	1	582
1853	7	163	230	21	22	3	5	3	0	1	0	452
+/- %	-36%	-24%	-13%	-40%	+37%	-50%	0	+200%	0	N/A	N/A	-22%

Fig. 3.9. Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,617-21

The data in this table illustrates the change that had taken place in the decade between 1843 and 1853 and while not all of the changes can be attributed to the Famine it was by far the most significant factor in affecting this change. It is unsurprising that the overall decline of 22 per cent is exactly reflected in the under

<sup>98</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1849-53 (N L I Clonbrock papers, MS 19,617-21)

£15 valuation category given that the vast majority of tenancies were drawn from this demographic. It represents a significant decline in the number of small holders on the estate as a new era emerged in the wake of the Famine.

## Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to test the veracity of newspaper accounts of Lord Clonbrock's paternal benevolence before and during the Great Irish Famine 1845-1851. Despite having to resort to a patchwork of sources it has been possible to gain some insights into the performance of his paternalist duties at this time. Much of the evidence that has emerged appears contradictory with acts of apparent benevolence on the one hand negated by acts or words of harshness on the other. At the beginning of the crisis in 1845 we have seen how he was reluctant to support Father McLaughlin's efforts to set up a Famine relief committee but that he threw his weight behind it in 1846 when the crisis mounted. He provided incentives to the peasantry for the planting of potatoes during the winter of 1845 and the following year criticized their farming practices for overreliance on the potato. A landlord giving up his hounds was considered to be the act of a model paternalist at this time and this archetype found expression in the novels of the period. David Roberts points out how, in *Alton Locke* (1849) by Charles Kingsley 'The lord is a model paternalist who lowers his rents, gives up his hounds, improves cottages, grants allotments, and opens his picture gallery.'<sup>99</sup> While Clonbrock may have successfully cast himself in the role of model paternalist through the sale of his horses and hounds it has also been shown that he was not slow to see the rights of property exacted as Patrick Downey and Patrick Fahy found out when they tried to remove an ash tree from Clonbrock in 1846.

Further evidence of benevolent paternalism was the securing of loans in order to provide work for his tenantry and there can hardly be any doubt that the £6,900 which he secured would, in no small way, have assisted him in fulfilling his duty to

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<sup>99</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p. 91, Charles Kingsley, however, was prejudiced toward the Irish, referring to them as 'white chimpanzees' during a visit to Ireland in the 1860s, see Curtis, Jr. *Apes and angels*, p. 100.

his 'dependents' during the crisis. However, his speech at the 'rate in aid' meeting condoning evictions as a form of self-defence which landlords were forced to perform undermines his image as a benevolent paternalist. He was effectively stating that the hierarchic and organic society of paternalist rhetoric, where each 'individual had his function, his place, his protectors, his duties, his reciprocal obligations, and his strong ties of dependency', was a dead letter. While it can be argued that the twenty evictions carried out between 1849 and 1851 illustrate that compassion fatigue, a hardening of attitudes to destitution, and a rejection of paternal duties was occurring, it can equally be argued that other actions by Clonbrock demonstrated an adherence to those duties. His attitude to the poorest of the tenantry on his mountain estate, where no evictions were carried out and arrears of rent were forgiven, is one such example. His willingness to accept the subtenants of James Dillon, many of whom occupied uneconomic holdings further illustrates that Clonbrock had not completely abandoned his paternalism.

It has been shown that Clonbrock exhibited some concern for both his tenants and subtenants and earlier it was argued that he practiced a nuclear paternalism in that he provided only for his tenants and not for the destitute of others. He made this particularly clear in his 'rate in aid' speech but it has also been illustrated by the experience of Finn, the starving man who passed his gates on the way to obtain poor relief in Ballinasloe and died near this place the following day. While there is evidence for benevolent and harsh actions on the part of Lord Clonbrock there is one small strand of evidence that suggests that Lady Clonbrock played the role of lady bountiful at this time. A letter to the *Morning Chronicle* argued that resident landlords that had shared in the horrors and afflictions of the Famine were being unfairly criticised and that 'few classes of men had ever been so severely tried'. It further added that ladies too had played a role that should not be forgotten. 'Those ladies who with gentle hands and as true hearts, have lent all their energies to the sacred cause of charity. Curraghmore, and Westport, Clonbrock and Moate Park, and many other lonely districts will long remember the "Sassenach lady," who came among them and gave comfort to the wretched and hope to the despairing'<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *Morning Chronicle*, 16 Oct 1850

However, as noted by Lady Mahon in ‘The Dillons of Clonbrock’ ‘though Caroline’s [Lady Clonbrock’s] diary does not allude to it 1846 was the famine year’<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, Lady Clonbrock gave birth to two daughters during the Famine, Katherine, in April 1847, and Elizabeth in 1848, so it is unlikely, even if she had the time, that she was spending it among the poor which would have increased the risk of infection to her infant children<sup>102</sup>

In conclusion, the evidence suggests that Clonbrock performed his paternal duty to his tenantry in some respects and failed in others. In giving up his hounds he appeared to conform to the standards of the model paternalists portrayed in contemporary English fiction. However, during the Famine a lot more was required than gestures such as this and although, as the rent rolls have revealed, he was not pursuing a policy of clearing the smaller tenants from the estate, the fact remains that between 1843 and 1853, Clonbrock’s estates had become an inhospitable place for 118 tenants, on holdings valued at less than £15. While it may be argued that the twenty evictions that took place between 1849 and 1851 was low considering the number of tenancies on the estates, Clonbrock’s financial situation was far from strained, so it is not possible to see how they could have been justified. Not only had he realised his full rents during these years, he had actually begun to claw back arrears as Fig 3.10 demonstrates

<b>Rental and arrears on Clonbrock estates 1849-1851</b>			
	Projected rent	Rent and arrears received	Arrears
<b>1849</b>	£8,823	£9,269	£1,893
<b>1850</b>	£8,648	£9,067	£1,473
<b>1851</b>	£8,857	£9,250	£1,081

**Fig. 3.10. Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,617-9**

There was a dereliction of duty at all levels of the administration from the parliament in Westminster down to individual landlords. From 1847 onward when the Whig government decided that ‘Irish property must support Irish poverty they

<sup>101</sup> Lady Mahon, ‘The Dillons of Clonbrock’ p 50

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, p 69-70

had effectively disowned Ireland's problems and the union in the process'<sup>103</sup> At local level, when the 'rate in aid' was proposed in 1849, those like Clonbrock who argued against it complained about having to support the poor of other landlords and this illustrates, not only the gross neglect of some landlords such as Dudley Persse, but of the inability of the landed class to act as a unit and provide leadership for the country in a time of great crisis. Furthermore, while it was one thing for the rate payers of the unions in the east and north of the country to protest at the 'rate in aid', Clonbrock's speech illustrates that he was unwilling to assist his neighbours in the financially embattled unions of county Galway.

It was an opportunity for the landed class to step up to the mark, act as a unit, and show that the ideological hegemony, that was the paternalist *zeitgeist*, which had cast them as the protectors of the poor, had some substance. However, the collective character exhibited by them at this time was more akin to squabbling scullery maids than to the high minded ideals of aristocrats. The paternalist rhetoric that portrayed Lord Clonbrock as one of the most benevolent landlords in the country continued after the Famine and even right up to the Land War and Plan of Campaign when, for example, at a meeting of the National League in 1886, the radical nationalist M P , Matt Harris, argued that 'in the past Lord Clonbrock was not a bad landlord. He was not an exterminator'<sup>104</sup> He was certainly not an exterminator, however, during the Famine his paternalism was tested and, in many respects, found wanting.

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<sup>103</sup> Gray, *Famine, land and politics*, p 229

<sup>104</sup> *Irish Times*, 8 Dec 1886



## Chapter four

### Conflicting discourses and the legitimation of power

If, as David Roberts has argued, in England the 'promises and claims [of paternalism] often exceeded its actual benevolence and efficiency' then in Ireland, as we have seen in the previous chapter, its unfulfilled promises and claims were even more accentuated<sup>1</sup> One of the reasons, in his opinion, for the resurgence of paternalism during the early Victorian period was to provide an intellectual theory that helped make sense of the bewildering changes that were taking place in England at that time 'Bombarded on every side by endless publications trumpeting natural rights, utilitarian ethics, political economy, anti-corn law trades and French socialism, many needed some theory, if only one that dressed up old dictums and homespun truths in the more elegant dress of medieval ideals'<sup>2</sup>

As an intellectual theory, he argues, it was ill equipped and somewhat archaic to meet the challenges that urbanisation brought Increased drunkenness, prostitution, and the proliferation of slums 'fell outside the ministrations of older paternal authorities' who were unable to tackle these problems The well-defined personal relations that were the cement of paternalism began to crumble in the face of change The central bureaucracy was more impersonal and the 'individualism, egalitarianism, and democracy so rudely asserted by the lower-middle and working classes' also contributed to the passing of the paternalist *zeitgeist* that had existed between 1827 and 1847<sup>3</sup>

While the proliferation of paternalist rhetoric went into decline in the years after 1847 in relation to the numbers of books and articles published it was, despite its shortcomings during the Famine, still the dominant paradigm by which the landlord-tenant relationship was understood and discussed in Ireland Drummond's much quoted 'property has its duties as well as its rights' would continue to ring out as a mantra for several decades at agricultural society dinners and even commentators

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<sup>1</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p 273

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p 275

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p 271

that criticised landlords in the newly emerging, and increasingly independent, provincial press did so using a paternalistic framework which accused them of failing to do their duty. Except to a small degree in the north-east of the country Ireland did not undergo the same social changes associated with industrialisation and urbanisation that occurred in England so the ideological hegemony of paternalism persisted. Since the west of Ireland was at the very periphery of these changes and the Clonbrock estates were entirely rural<sup>4</sup> the well defined personal relations that were the cement of paternalism had an even better chance of surviving there.

As explained in Chapter one the centralising bureaucracy had diminished the landlord's role as benefactor through the introduction of the poor law and this was further compounded in 1851 by the incorporation of local dispensaries into the poor law framework. However, this did not mean that Clonbrock had lost all control over local charities and he continued to provide a number of widows with pensions and assist tenants that had fallen on hard times by cancelling arrears. While much local charity was no longer his gift, land, the most important commodity, was still monopolised by the gentry and aristocracy and it was their gift of what Samuel Clarke has called 'non contractual privileges' in relation to the holding of land that ensured the persistence of the paternalist relationship on the Clonbrock estates. These privileges included moderate rents, permission to sell, and most importantly, according to Clarke, undisturbed occupancy<sup>5</sup>. When the Tenant League began campaigning for these rights in 1850 they became known as the 3F's, fair rent, free sale, and fixity of tenure, and evidence suggests that all three existed on the Clonbrock estates in the 1850s<sup>6</sup>.

The table below illustrates a comparison between the rents charged for a number of townlands on the Clonbrock estates with Richard Griffith's general valuation of 1854.

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<sup>4</sup> Unlike Lord Clanricarde and Lord Clancarty whose seats were in the towns of Portumna and Ballinasloe, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Clarke, *Social origins*, pp 166-8

<sup>6</sup> R. V. Comerford, in S. J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford companion to Irish history* (Oxford, 2004), p. 568

<b>Comparison between rents paid and Griffith's valuation 1854 (value in pounds)</b>		
<b>Townlands</b>	<b>Clonbrock rental 1854</b>	<b>Griffiths valuation 1854</b>
Kilglass	269 5	312 4
Lurgan	175	187
Shruhaunfusta	31	41 5
Kylebrack	29 5	59 5
Doon	471	493

**Fig. 4.1.** Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers MS 19,622; Richard Griffith, *General valuation of rateable property in Ireland* (Dublin, 1855)

The most striking comparison is that of the townland of Kylebrack, located at Clonbrock's mountain estate at Dalystown, as the rental is almost half of Richard Griffith's valuation. In the previous chapter it was noted as quite remarkable that a large number of apparently uneconomic holdings managed to survive the Famine so it must be considered that Clonbrock was, perhaps, allowing them more land than the rental value suggests. However, not everyone's rent was lower than Griffith's valuation, three John Gilmores - John H, John W, and John P - had holdings in the townland of Lurgan and John P may have been somewhat aggrieved that he was being overcharged for his holding as the table below reveals

<b>Comparison between rents paid by the Gilmores of Lurgan and Griffith's valuation</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Clonbrock rental 1854</b>	<b>Griffith's valuation 1854</b>
John H	£6 10s 8d	£8
John W	£6 10s 0d	£7 15s 0d
John P	£9 12s 0d	£9 10s 0d

**Fig. 4.2.** Source: (N.L.I., Clonbrock papers MS 19,622); Richard Griffith, *General valuation of rateable property in Ireland* (Dublin, 1855)

Charles Filgate, the land agent, was another tenant that paid a rent higher than Griffith's valuation which valued the holding at £270, £14 less than his annual rent<sup>7</sup>. However, this land was rented as a non-residential grazing farm and was, as such, not treated in the same fashion as those of the small farmers. Overall, though, the evidence suggests that Clonbrock charged a fair rent for his land.

<sup>7</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1854 (N.L.I., Clonbrock papers MS 19,622), Richard Griffith, *General valuation of rateable property in Ireland* (Dublin, 1855), p. 11

Evidence for free sale is harder to substantiate as this transaction took place between the incoming and the outgoing tenant and would not have been recorded in estate accounts. However, in 1860 the *Western Star* reported that on the Clonbrock estates, and some others

in the west of Ireland a custom similar to the tenant right of Ulster has long been observed. The tenant from year to year may at any time sell his interest or good will, in a farm to the highest bidder, provided the landlord approves of the party who makes the purchase. As a general rule, no tenant is ever dispossessed so long as he pays his rent and refrains from deteriorating the soil.<sup>8</sup>

While evidence for free sale is more difficult to come by, that is not the case for fixity of tenure as the rent rolls show that holdings remained in the same family name for successive generations indicating that there was continuity of holding, not just for the sitting tenant, but for successive generations of his family. There was, at least, some form of fixity of tenure in existence. As Matthew Cragoe has observed in a study of Welsh landed estates 'It is important to see landed estates as passing down not only through dynasties of landowners, but also dynasties of tenants.'<sup>9</sup> However, it must be remembered that while a form of the three Fs existed on these estates, Clonbrock was under no obligation to grant them and so, they remained privileges that were the landlord's gift to bestow.

This chapter aims to build on previous chapters which have examined various aspects of paternalism on the Clonbrock estates exploring how power was legitimised through ritual, copper-fastened through naked power, yet undermined by a curse. It will argue that the ritual to celebrate the coming of age of the heir was the most important ritual of the landed estate and smoothed the way for the transmission of the estate from one generation to the next. It will further argue that it successfully balanced the elements of *identification* and *differentiation* which defined the deferential dialectic and facilitated the stabilisation of relations on the estate. Howard Newby has argued that once relations were stabilised 'the occasional miscreant could be, and was, dealt with by the naked and savage use of power'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Western Star*, 14 Mar 1860

<sup>9</sup> Cragoe, *An Anglican aristocracy*, p. 4

<sup>10</sup> Newby, 'The deferential dialectic', p. 155

This will be the focus of the second section of the chapter which will demonstrate how a tenant paid the ultimate price and was evicted for failing to adhere to Clonbrock's code of deference. The final section will examine how popular belief in a curse associated with the Clonbrock heirs was used as a weapon of resistance by the Clonbrock tenantry which questioned the legitimacy of landed power.

### **The ritual legitimization of paternalism**

W. E. Vaughan has argued that in mid-Victorian Ireland various events associated with landed families provided occasions for spectacle.<sup>11</sup> The birth of an heir was often marked with bonfires on estates, his coming of age with extensive celebrations, his marriage with the presentation of addresses and gifts, and finally the funeral of the landlord was often marked with an exhibition of deference such as the drawing of the hearse and remains by the tenantry. These life cycle rituals were a feature of estate life at Clonbrock in the second half of the nineteenth-century and this section will explore how the 'coming of age' of Lord Clonbrock's heir, Luke Gerald, in 1855 was a ritual legitimization of the paternal power which governed affairs on the estate. Coming of age festivities were rituals of spectacular proportion held to mark the attainment of the heir's majority, at the age of twenty one, which were attended by thousands of people. They were held by landed families throughout the nineteenth century and in the post-Famine period they received extensive coverage in newspapers so it is possible to examine them in some detail.

The scale of coming of age festivities, often attended by thousands of people, illustrate that these events were the most important of the life cycle rituals associated with the landed class. It could be argued that the birth of an heir was more important but many children died in infancy so extravagant celebrations would have been somewhat premature, in fact Luke Gerald's elder brother died before he reached his first birthday. Weddings, also important, were celebrated at the house and locality of the bride so extensive celebrations involving the future tenantry of the male heir were not usually possible. Mark Girouard has argued that 'in most [English] country houses of the time, the high point of entertaining was the coming-

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<sup>11</sup> Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants*, p. 4

of-age' of the heir<sup>12</sup> This also holds true for the Irish country house but they were, however, of far greater importance than the high point of country house entertainment as they marked the forging of another link in the chain of descent and increased the likelihood that a family's title and estates would persist in the future. A further reason for the importance of the heir's majority was the implications associated with the complex legal intricacies of 'strict settlement' which were designed, in so far as it was possible, to make the land inalienable from the family.

The principal legal device was 'entail' which meant that the landlord was never the outright owner of the estates but merely the 'tenant for life' and those that were entitled to inherit after him were named in the settlement documents and they in turn would become 'tenants for life'. The son that came of age was known as the 'tenant in tail' and, in many cases, if he and the 'tenant for life', usually his father, came to an agreement then a new settlement could be drawn up to reflect the financial needs of the estate and the family. For this to occur it was necessary for the heir to have reached his majority and to act in agreement with his father or whoever the tenant for life happened to be. Therefore when an heir came of age he was vested with certain powers to change the settlement and this added to the importance of a 'coming of age' which recognised him as a significant actor in the affairs of the estate and its future.<sup>13</sup> This system permitted the landed class to maintain a stranglehold on land for centuries as the entails within the settlements could not be broken except by an act of parliament. Even if an estate was bankrupt it was protected from sale by these entails and such was the case during the Famine which necessitated the passing of the Encumbered Estates Act in order to free them from these constraints and permit sale.

David Cannadine has outlined some of the sociological questions that have arisen through different approaches to the study of political history that

centre round the functional and ceremonial. Is spectacle the handmaid of power, is it the other way round, or is it something altogether more complex and subtle? Are ceremonial occasions consensual examples of 'collective

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<sup>12</sup> Girouard, *Life in the English country house*, p. 290

<sup>13</sup> Barbra English and John Saville, *Strict settlement: a guide for historians* (Hull, 1983), pp. 20-22

effervescence', or conflictual instances of 'the mobilisation of bias'? Do such pageants reinforce community, or hierarchy, or both?<sup>14</sup>

This section will attempt to answer these questions posed by Cannadine through an examination of the coming of age festivities to celebrate the majority of Luke Gerald Dillon in 1855. Following an explanation of the terms 'collective effervescence' and the 'mobilisation of bias' the coming of age will be analysed in detail to flesh out elements that will provide answers to the questions.

'Collective effervescence' is a term coined by the sociologist, Emile Durkheim in his 1912 work *The elementary forms of the religious life*. Durkheim observed a sacred/profane dichotomy in the lives of Australian Aborigines. During the profane phase small family groups were dispersed, and hunted and fished by themselves. This dispersal, he observed, led to a rather dull existence and the tasks of hunting and fishing were 'not occupations to awaken very lively passions'. However, a sacred phase occurred periodically when there was a concentration of large numbers of people.

This concentration takes place when a clan or part of the tribe is summoned to the gathering, and on this occasion they celebrate a religious ceremony. The very fact of the concentration acts as an exceptionally powerful stimulant. When they are once come together, a sort of electricity is formed by their collecting which quickly transports them to an extraordinary degree of exaltation.

At these gatherings many of the norms and conventions of the tribes were suspended and there was an increase in sexual license. Durkheim observed that 'the effervescence often becomes so intense that it leads to outlandish behaviour'.<sup>15</sup>

The 'mobilisation of bias' on the other hand is a term that was coined by E. E. Schattschneider who argued that 'All forms of political organisation have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others, because organisation is the mobilisation of bias. Some issues are organised into

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<sup>14</sup> David Cannadine, *Rituals of royalty: power and ceremonial in traditional societies* (Cambridge, 1987), p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Emile Durkheim, *The elementary forms of the religious life* (London, 1971), p. 215.

politics while others are organised out'<sup>16</sup> Essentially, the difference between the two concepts is that collective effervescence is a spontaneous celebration occasioned through a gathering of crowds of people who share a common bond while the mobilisation of bias is a calculated move to promote certain ideas at the expense of others

When Luke Gerald Dillon, Lord Clonbrock's heir, came of age in March 1855, bonfires were observed 'blazing in all directions' to mark the occasion and a few months after, once he had completed his studies at Oxford, a 'coming-of-age' was staged at Clonbrock<sup>17</sup> These celebrations were extensively reported in several newspapers including the *Galway Mercury*, the *Western Star*, and the *Tuam Herald* with representatives of each newspaper present as invited guests for the dinner The main events of the day were the presentation of an address to Luke Gerald by representatives of the tenantry, a sports event, a tenant's dinner, and an exhibition of fireworks By midday, when proceedings had been scheduled to commence, several thousand people, including tenant's families and others from outside the estate, had assembled near the big house A 'coming of age' was one of the rare occasions when demesnes were open to the public so the tenants of other landlords, while not regaled with a meal which, came to participate in the sports day A 'vast concourse' of people assembled on the lawn in front of the house and when Luke Gerald appeared at 1 p.m. he was greeted by repeated rounds of 'deafening applause' This applause was repeated when Lord Clonbrock emerged to join his son while Lady Clonbrock and other family members were 'enthusiastically greeted upon their appearance at the windows' The crowd then formed dancing parties and 'danced

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<sup>16</sup> E. E. Schattschneider, *The semi-sovereign people* (New York, 1960), p. 71. Other works that have informed the theoretical approach for this chapter include Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz, 'The two faces of power', in *The American Political Science Review*, vol. lvi, no. 4 (Dec. 1962), pp. 632-42, Idem, 'Decisions and nondecisions: an analytical framework', in *The American Political Science Review*, vol. lvii, no. 3 (Sept. 1963), pp. 632-42, Idem, 'Power and its two faces revisited: a reply to Geoffrey Debnam', in *The American Political Science Review*, vol. lxxviii, no. 3 (Sept. 1975), pp. 900-04, Tim Olaveson, 'Collective effervescence and communitas: processual models of ritual and society in Emile Durkheim and Victor Turner', in *Dialectical Anthropology*, vol. xxvi (2001), 89-124, Victor Turner, *The ritual process: structure and anti-structure* (New York, 1995), Arnold Van Gennep [Monika B. Vizi-dom (Trans.)], *The rites of passage* (London, 1960)

<sup>17</sup> *Galway Mercury*, 17 Mar. 1855



vigorously upon the lawn for nearly an hour, to the music of a number of fiddles and other familiar instruments’<sup>18</sup>

At about 3 30 p m a deputation of tenants, drawn from Clonbrock’s ‘respectable’ tenants, approached the house with an address to Luke Gerald and were ‘received in the Grand Hall by Lord and Lady Clonbrock’<sup>19</sup> What appears to have made this deputation respectable was the large amounts of land which they rented from Clonbrock as the table below illustrates

<b>Tenants forming the deputation to L. G. Dillon in 1855</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Value of holdings</b>
Michael John Carr	£786
John Carr	£130
W H Masters	£380
Charles Filgate	£284
Dr Colohan	£340
John Ryan	£180
Michael Finnerty	£60
John Connolly	£50

**Fig. 4.3: Source: (N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,622)**

The previous chapter has shown how a microcosm of the elites that dominated east Galway was observable at the agricultural society dinner and the same is true of coming of age celebrations as the neighbouring nobility and gentry showed up in force to attend While these occasions provide opportunities to observe the hierarchy of the county elite they permit rarer insights into the tenant hierarchies that existed on landed estates The deputation was the elite of the tenantry, especially those that held land in excess of £100 acres Although the holdings of Michael Finnerty and John Connolly seem small by comparison to the others it must be considered that hundreds of Clonbrock’s tenants had holdings valued at less than £15 so a holding of £50 or more was certainly ‘respectable’ by the standards of the day

<sup>18</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 16 June 1855

<sup>19</sup> *Western Star*, 16 June 1855

The content of address was a mix of hyperbole, which eulogised the Dillon family, and what might be described as a paternalistic social contract in which Luke Gerald was reminded that, while he had privileges, there were also duties to be fulfilled. It described the attainment of his majority ‘as a matter of deep concern’ not only to the tenantry but to his country and expressed expectations that he would become involved in promoting the interests of Ireland as well as those of the tenantry. It praised the manner in which he had been raised and how his parents had taught him to sympathise with sorrow and suffering. They (the tenantry) expressed confidence that when he came to manage the estate he would ‘follow in the footsteps of his noble father, who has at all times with much zeal and justice, discharged his duties as a Landlord, and who, intimately acquainted with the requirements of the tenant farmer, has ever been ready with his purse and advice to advance the true interests of those who are placed under him’. Echoing Drummond’s ‘property has its duties’ and indicating elements of a social contract within the address they felt ‘assured, that while in the enjoyment of the privileges of your position, you will never overlook its duties’<sup>20</sup>. Although very subtle this phrase reminded him that he had obligations and allowed the representatives of the tenantry to express a degree, albeit a very limited degree, of agency.

From the centre of the hall, Luke Gerald replied to the address and thanked the tenantry for the kind words expressed in the address. He referred to how he was ‘most closely connected’ with them and that their ‘happiness and welfare must ever be the object of my life to promote’. Acknowledging that they were in a contractual relationship he expressed hopes that throughout his life that his ‘conduct [would] meet with [their] approval’ and if he ever strayed then he would follow the shining example that had been set by his father<sup>21</sup>. With the conclusion of the address and reply Lord Clonbrock then introduced Luke Gerald to several members of the deputation who ‘expressed their sincere and hearty congratulations’<sup>22</sup>. Lord Clonbrock introduced his son to them as his heir, a man in full enjoyment of his

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<sup>20</sup> Tenants address to Luke Gerald Dillon published in *Galway Mercury*, 16 June 1855

<sup>21</sup> Luke Gerald Dillon’s reply to the tenantry, *Galway Mercury*, 16 June 1855

<sup>22</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 16 June 1855

rights prepared and entitled to take control of the running of the estate when the time came, and the members of the deputation were recognising him as such. Lord Clonbrock was paving the path of succession for his son by introducing him to representatives of the tenantry in effect he was stating 'here is my son, someday he will inherit these estates and he will replace me as your lord'

After the formalities of the address and reply were dispensed with a celebratory banquet attended by the tenantry and local gentry was given in a large pavilion erected in the demesne. It was bedecked with flags, some of which were inscribed with 'Irish Harps and other appropriate emblems' while others were emblazoned with slogans such as 'Welcome' and 'Erin go bragh'. 'Over the central front of the pavilion floated the arms of the noble house of Dillon'<sup>23</sup> The newspapers listed the invited guests of Clonbrock beginning with the aristocracy then moving on to the gentry, clergy, and others among whom Michael and John Carr were mentioned, indicating that they were the elite of the tenantry. Thomas Bermingham was unable to attend because of old age but he wrote a letter to the press describing John Carr as a gentleman who had 'by industry and uprightness of conduct and character advanced himself to be the leading tenant on the Clonbrock estate'<sup>24</sup>

The rest of 'general company which numbered upwards of 600' included the tenantry from all sections of the estates who dined on 'everything substantial and delicate with wines of the purest vintage'. After the meal the traditional ritual of after dinner speeches commenced and Clonbrock, as chairman, began by toasting the queen, the lord lieutenant, and the army and the navy, while the airs of 'God save the queen' and 'rule Britannia' were played by the band. He proposed a toast to his son and pointed out the many qualities that he believed Luke Gerald possessed. He felt grateful that he had been permitted to witness his son's coming of age as his own father had died three years before he himself came of age in 1829. He expressed hope for the transmission of the family name and title to Luke Gerald.

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<sup>23</sup> *Western Star*, 16 June 1855, *Galway Mercury*, 16 June 1855

<sup>24</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 14 July 1855

who, he expected would 'perform the duties of the station in which God has placed him' <sup>25</sup>

He then asked the company to drink the health of his son and everyone rose and cheered over and over again until Luke Gerald rose to respond to the toast and expressed his hopes that he might prove deserving of the tenantry's good wishes. He then proposed a toast to the health of the Clonbrock tenantry to which loud cheers rang out once again to the air of 'Hibernia's sons'. John Connolly, a tenant farmer was called upon to respond and he iterated his pleasure of being a happy tenant adding that 'there was not one of his lordship's tenants that was not comfortable and happy (great applause), owing to his paternal care and solicitude'. He added that the name of Clonbrock had travelled far and wide and even where he was not personally known he had the reputation of being a good landlord. 'And when his son comes in the course of nature to enjoy his inheritance the wish of the tenantry would be that he should go on in his father's footsteps. Through the whole of that long and honoured line of Clonbrock there never yet was a bad landlord' <sup>26</sup>

He continued to eulogise the Dillons as good landlords and invited everyone to gaze upon the happy faces of the tenantry present as evidence of this. He gave thanks to Luke Gerald for his toast and proposed a toast to Lord Clonbrock 'one of the best of men, in fact, their guardian angel' <sup>27</sup>

Lord Clonbrock returned thanks for his tenant's speech but decided to refrain from addressing the question of landlord-tenant relations as he believed after dinner speeches did little to provide a solution to this question. Instead, he asked that he be examined 'on the tenor of his actions as their landlord for twenty-five years'. He believed that if landlords and tenants approached each other in a spirit of mutual

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 16 June 1855

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

forbearance using the maxim 'to do unto others as you wish to be done unto you' then the relationship between the two classes would greatly improve <sup>28</sup>

He expressed hope that the kindly relations that existed between him and his tenantry would continue and proposed a toast to 'the guests' and thanked all who had come to celebrate the great occasion with him. Another of the toasts proposed was to Clonbrock's 'worthy' agent Charles Filgate because he helped relieve distress during the Famine by reducing rents 'and the distribution of other timely favours, owing to which they were now all prosperous and happy, and required no reduction'. Filgate returned thanks for the thirteen years he had spent with them as the agent where he was permitted to 'distribute the favours at all times so liberally bestowed by their noble landlord'. He was keen to point out the difference between the 'improving and the slothful tenant' and that a landlord was as entitled to his rent as a merchant was entitled to payment for goods <sup>29</sup>

The final speaker was Dennis Henry Kelly, a cousin of Lord Clonbrock's and a descendant of the ancient Gaelic chiefs of Uí Maine that had once ruled the territory in which much of the Clonbrock estates were located. He composed a song for the occasion, which he sang to the air of 'Rory O'More', the chorus of which went as follows

Here's to young Gerald Dillon, the heir of Clonbrock,  
May he prove a true chip off the old sterling block,  
A scion well worthy a proud ancient stock,  
And who'll stick to his colours as firm as a rock <sup>30</sup>

Kelly owned a small estate in county Roscommon and despite his descent from the ancient Gaelic chiefs he was a committed Orangeman and had voted against Catholic Emancipation <sup>31</sup>. However, also present at the celebrations was Cornelius O'Kelly of Gallagher who was a representative of another branch of the ancient O'Kelly clan. Clonbrock was also related to this branch of the family who had

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid

<sup>29</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 16 June 1855

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Melvin 'The landed gentry of Galway', p. 435

remained Roman Catholic and had held over 800 acres of land from Clonbrock prior to the Famine. They relocated after inheriting land at Gallagher and the Carr family became the main tenants on their former holdings.

Concluding the dinner speeches Clonbrock proposing a toast to the press remarked that the celebrations at Clonbrock that day were a private affair that was hardly worth reporting in the press but there were 'many absent friends that would like to know their doings on the occasion' and he hoped the press would oblige them. Jasper Kelly, of the *Tuam Herald*, returned thanks and spoke of Lord Clonbrock's reputation as a benevolent landlord and expressed hopes that his son would follow in the same footsteps 'and sustain his ancestral name as nobly and as well as his respected and honoured father had done before him'. With the speeches concluded the national anthem was played and the banquet was brought to a close. People continued to engage in dancing, leaping, and running which was 'observed from the windows of the mansion and the lawn by the family and their distinguished guests'. The grand finale of the festivities was a fireworks display at Castlegar demesne that evening.<sup>32</sup> It was reported that 'a large number of the respectable inhabitants of Ballinasloe had arrived to witness the fireworks. In that part of the country the scene was a novel one, and excited some deep interest in some thousands who had never before witnessed such a display'.<sup>33</sup> The road to Castlegar was bedecked with flags and banners and a triumphal arch was erected across it. The fireworks consisted of eighty-one pieces under the direction of Mr Johnstone of Dublin. Each piece had an exotic name like 'Discharge of serpents' or 'Bouquet of sunflowers' and the display was reported in detail by the press.

A Superb Set Piece in Three Mutations, first commencing with a Wheel of Brilliant Fires, displaying all the beautiful tints of the rainbow, and afterwards changing to an immense Bouquet of Revolving Roses and Sunflowers, the whole piece encircled and Finished with a rich Trellis Work and Border of Jasmine fire. Balloons and rockets were discharged without intermission, and mimic batteries, salutes, &c, pealed away during the evening. The following mottoes were beautifully represented in pyrotechnic designs - 'Happy Union

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<sup>32</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 16 June 1855

<sup>33</sup> *Western Star*, 16 June 1855

between landlord and tenant', 'Ten thousand welcomes to the Hon L G Dillon', 'Clonbrock, the tenants friend'<sup>34</sup>

Such was the extent of the pyrotechnic illuminations that 'in Ballinasloe [eight miles away] they were quite observable' The celebrations continued until 1 a m and the press was of the opinion that the event was enjoyed so much that it would 'long be remembered by all who were present on the occasion'<sup>35</sup> That the illuminations and fireworks would 'long be remembered' was, of course, the reason for such a display, and the impact of the spectacle on a nineteenth-century Irish smallholder must have been great Stories of the display could then be told to children years after the event had taken place and the next coming of age would have been looked forward to in expectation of such spectacle

The coming of age of an heir was the central ritual of the landed class that celebrated the forging of another link in the chain of descent and while the main focus of the celebrations was on the heir, there was also a symbolic celebration of the virility of the landlord who had produced an heir and reared him to maturity Lord Clonbrock mentioned that the celebration of his son's majority was a private affair but with several thousand people crowded into the demesne and reporters from three newspapers present nothing could be further from the truth A statement was being made through the spectacle of the celebrations to the tenantry and those gathered but also to the public at large when the event was extensively reported in the newspapers Throughout the speeches the messages that were being conveyed outlined the duties and responsibilities that each class had to each other There were many references to the noble line of Dillon and a mention of how the family's coat of arms fluttered prominently over the pavilion It was acknowledged by all that Lord Clonbrock was as good a landlord as any tenant could hope to have and the continuity of the family was repeatedly asserted through the hope that Luke Gerald would follow in his father's footsteps Lord Clonbrock emphasised that there was an organic relationship between the family and the tenantry, each with their respective duties Filgate made it clear that the tenant's duty was to be industrious

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<sup>34</sup> *Western Star and Tuam Herald*, 16 June 1855

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid* 16 June 1855

as opposed to slothful and that while Lord Clonbrock was considerate in times of distress, such as during the Famine when he reduced rents, the point was being made that the difficult times were now past and he expected to be paid in full

Examining the coming of age festivities of landed heirs in the nineteenth century provides an opportunity for the historian to feel the pulse of landlord tenant relations at those particular moments. If carefully examined they reveal much about the landed family and the tensions that may or may not have existed between them and their tenants. The coming of age celebrations at Clonbrock were very much a success but the same cannot be said for the festivities to celebrate the majority of Lord Dunlo, the earl of Clancarty's son, two months earlier. Resentment against Lord Clancarty existed because of his proselytising efforts among his tenantry and his refusal to allow the Sisters of Mercy to administer to the poor of the Ballinasloe Workhouse in the 1850s. As part of the festivities to celebrate the majority of Lord Dunlo, his heir, it was planned that the householders of the town would place lighted candles in their windows at darkness to honour his majority. However, one section of the town did not 'illuminate' and although Lord Clancarty stated that he respected their wishes to refuse and would not deny them access to his park it must have rankled with him.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, the *Galway Mercury*, a newspaper with nationalist sympathies, described him as a thane who conducted himself in a shabby and small minded fashion for not sending tickets for Lord Dunlo's festive dinner to their office.<sup>37</sup>

At the Clonbrock festivities the music and iconography had a mix of Gaelic and imperial flavours suggesting that the two traditions could co-exist. 'Rule Britannia' was played alongside 'Rory O'Moore' and banners displaying 'God save the queen' were draped alongside others displaying Irish motifs like 'Erin go brach'. This, however, was not the case at the festivities to celebrate the majority of Lord Bernard, the earl of Bandon's son in 1871. The festivities at Bandon featured marches of freemasons and Orangemen, there was no mention of the playing of Irish

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<sup>36</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 14 Apr 1855

<sup>37</sup> *Galway Mercury*, 21 Apr 1855



airs but ‘the strains of martial music (were not) wanting, for two bands were in attendance, the fine band of the 14<sup>th</sup> Hussars and that of the South Cork Light Infantry’<sup>38</sup> At Clonbrock a festive atmosphere prevailed and along with dancing and leaping the choicest wines were supplied for the dinner At Bandon there was no mention of any dancing or alcohol being provided at the tenants’ dinner During the after dinner speeches a clergyman referred to the ‘sober men, like those he saw before him, met together in cordial friendship to pay compliment to their future landlord’<sup>39</sup> Altogether there was an austere and militaristic tone to the celebrations at Bandon and this was continued some weeks later when a banquet was given to the tenants on one of his outlying estates at Durras Court The day concluded with a display of fireworks ‘accompanied by salvoes of artillery which provoked many an echo in the surrounding mountains on the top of which bonfires were lit’<sup>40</sup>

Coming of age rituals were celebrated in different ways by different families and provide insights into how landed families communicated with their tenantry The success of the celebrations at Clonbrock indicate that the event was a well managed affair that could permit a degree of high spirits while maintaining control The *Galway Vindicator* reported that

hilarity, order, and regularity everywhere prevailed attended by nearly 3,000 spectators of all ranks and ages-no accident occurred After a minute and painstaking inquiry, the only casualties we can record are the breaking of a couple of wine glasses, and the partial conflagration of a lady’s dress either by the tail of an eccentric comet or a spark from some bewildered rocket, but we are happy to say without inflicting any personal injury on the part of the fair owner<sup>41</sup>

The *Irish Times*, as a liberal unionist publication, favourable to the landed class, reported these events regularly from 1859 in the late nineteenth century communicating the message that property, hierarchy, and tradition brought order In Britain, as the new industrial and merchant class became more wealthy and increasingly influential, they held similar celebrations when their eldest sons came of age but these were seldom reported by the *Irish Times* One exception in 1868

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<sup>38</sup> *Cork Constitution*, 13 Sept 1871

<sup>39</sup> *West Cork Eagle*, 16 Sept 1871

<sup>40</sup> *West Cork Eagle*, 30 Sept 1871

<sup>41</sup> *Galway Vindicator*, 16 June 1855

was the majority of the heir of a Staffordshire coal and iron magnate. This event surpassed any Irish coming of age in terms of magnitude. Entertainment was extended to between 4,000 and 5,000 people

at which 900 bottles of wine and 2,340 gallons of ale were consumed. The drunken orgies which marked the affair were most disgraceful. One reverend gentleman, wandering he knew not whither, hatless, and fighting with his friend and neighbour, was tumbled out of the pavilion. A gentleman of the press was discovered among the helpless at five in the morning in a field. Fights took place without number, and many, men, women, boys and girls were helpless through drink, others reeling home, and numbers lying in the fields and lanes, dead drunk. Sixteen men, felled by drink, helpless and prostrate, were counted within a radius of twenty yards, and scores scattered about, many bleeding, hatless, shoeless and coatless, incapable of movement or speech.<sup>42</sup>

The message here is clear: a man may accumulate wealth but that does not convey upon him the qualities of a ruler or one who could command order. The landed class considered this their birthright through generations of good breeding and superior education. Furthermore, this is given as an example of how society would disintegrate should merchant and industry types ever replace the landed class as the 'natural' rulers.

This brings us back to the questions posed earlier in the chapter: 'Are ceremonial occasions consensual examples of "collective effervescence", or conflictual instances of "the mobilisation of bias"?'<sup>43</sup> At coming of age celebrations there was mobilisation of bias in favour of paternalism which promoted the landlord-tenant relationship in terms of organically connected classes with duties and responsibilities to each other at the expense of 'tenant right'. Evidence has been presented for the existence of a *de-facto* form of the 3Fs on the Clonbrock estates. However, it was a different matter altogether if they were to be enshrined in law as this would render them rights rather than a privileges and further diminish the levers that facilitated deference to authority. According to Schattschneider all forms of political organisation have some bias and some issues are organised into politics.

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<sup>42</sup> *The Irish Times*, 21 Sep 1868

<sup>43</sup> David Cannadine, *Rituals of royalty: power and ceremonial in traditional societies* (Cambridge, 1987), p 5

while others are organised out<sup>44</sup> Paternalist discourse was in and discussion of tenant right was out

Although tenant right was not mentioned in the speeches it was implied that if landlords performed their duty both landlords and tenants could live harmoniously This was also implicit in a letter by Thomas Bermingham, the former agent, to the *Tuam Herald* some weeks later Addressing the tenantry, young and old, he referred to political meetings, which he never much encouraged ‘Sometimes such are necessary [he argued], but not in your case, for those whom providence has placed over you are desirous to promote your interests’<sup>45</sup> The coming of age celebrations were not the only arena where there was a mobilisation of bias in favour of paternalism at the expense of tenant right as it was forbidden to speak of tenant right at agricultural society meetings so there was considerable effort among the landed elite to exclude it from public discourse Rule 23 of the Ballinasloe Agricultural Society forbade any discussion of religious or political issues and because the issue of tenant right was associated with the politics of the Tenant League its discussion was forbidden<sup>46</sup>

Despite the mobilisation of bias in favour of paternalism it would be incorrect to say that the festivities at Clonbrock were completely lacking in effervescence While not in the same league as the effervescent scenes witnessed in Staffordshire the *Galway Mercury* reported that ‘hilarity, order, and regularity everywhere prevailed’ The extent of the effervescence at these festivities depended very much on the landed family hosting them and how comfortable they were with their tenants As we have seen there was a militaristic and austere atmosphere at Castle Bernard and the celebrations concluded there after a reception at 10 p m At Clonbrock they continued until 1 a m while at the coming of age of Lord Dunraven’s heir at Adare in 1862 ‘copious supplies of hot punch’ were served at a supper for over 1,000 persons after which dancing resumed ‘At half past five o’ clock [in the morning] his

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<sup>44</sup> Schattschneider, *The semi-sovereign people*, p 71

<sup>45</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 14 July 1855

<sup>46</sup> *Annual report of the Ballinasloe Union Agricultural Society, 1844* (Ballinasloe, 1844), p 21

lordship was in the midst of his people throwing open his cellars to give his parting drink to his tenants and their families'<sup>47</sup>

The answer to the next question posed by Cannadine 'Do such pageants reinforce community, or hierarchy, or both?' is that both were reinforced but to further flesh out the answer one must return to Howard Newby's concept of the deferential dialectic. Newby defines deference as 'a form of social interaction, the origins of which, lie in the process of legitimation by tradition of the hierarchical nature of the social structure by those in superordinate positions'. He argues that traditionally legitimised hierarchical organisations are capable of extreme stability because deference is granted to both the tradition itself and to the person holding the authority position. However, those deferring to the superordinate partner cannot be taken for granted and to understand the social basis for deference it is necessary to understand the strategies by which elites legitimate their position. Deferential interaction consists of two opposing elements *differentiation* and *identification*. It is by *differentiation* that the positions of domination and subordination are delineated but acceptance of social hierarchies cannot be achieved unless the subordinate group identifies sufficiently with the superordinate partner in the relationship. 'It is the tension between these opposing elements of *differentiation* and *identification* from which contradictions arise that threaten the destruction of the relationship'. If the superordinate partner carries the process of *identification* with the subordinated group too far then *differentiation* is not possible and 'deference to elite authority breaks down, thus whilst elites attempt to retain the *identification* of those below them in the hierarchy, they must also operate certain mechanisms of social distancing which endorse their *differentiation*'<sup>48</sup>. At Clonbrock the coming of age ritual provided an opportunity for this *identification* to be strengthened and if it is considered that the *Galway Mercury* reported that 'hilarity, order, and regularity everywhere prevailed' then it appears that the balance between *differentiation* and *identification* had been struck perfectly as the 'hilarity' of the occasion would have

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<sup>47</sup> *Munster News*, 1 Feb 1862

<sup>48</sup> Newby, 'The deferential dialectic', p 152

fostered *identification* while at the same time there was sufficient *differentiation* to preserve 'order and regularity'

To answer the other sociological question raised by Cannadine 'Is spectacle the handmaid of power, is it the other way round, or is it something altogether more complex and subtle?' the relationship between power and spectacle at the coming of age ritual is complex and they can be best understood as components forming a mutually reinforcing circuit that legitimised the superordinate group. The success of the ritual lay in the control of discourse and the ability of the landed class to convince the tenantry that they were tied together in an organic relationship. As Newby argues the strength of paternalism 'lies with the fact that as the subordinates come to accept these relationships as legitimate so the prevailing ethos increases in strength'<sup>49</sup> Coming of age celebrations are the most spectacular example of rituals where the paternalistic bias was mobilised. Other examples where this mobilisation of bias was evident included agricultural society dinners and harvest home dances. The landed classes' use of these rituals and their influence in securing extensive coverage for them in the press facilitated the continued circulation of paternalist discourse and the maintenance of an ideological hegemony which presented landlords such as Clonbrock as benefactors to their communities<sup>50</sup> As Newby has argued in the case of the English landed class, but which is also applicable to an Irish landed paternalist such as Clonbrock 'By their ideological alchemy they were able to convert the exercise of their power into "service" to those over whom they ruled and a rigid and arbitrarily controlled hierarchy into an "organic" society of "mutual dependency".'<sup>51</sup>

### **The great benefactor and the great oppressor: Lord Clonbrock and the case of Pat Barrett**

Newby has argued that 'a crucial element in management of the tensions inherent in the deferential dialectic is the provision of a consistent and coherent set of ideas

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<sup>49</sup> Idem, *Property Paternalism and power*, p. 29

<sup>50</sup> Chapter two has shown how the hierarchy of the county elite was evident at agricultural society dinners, for examples of a harvest home dances at Clonbrock see *Western Star*, 12 Jan. 1854, 10 Jan. 1857, 23 Jan. 1858

<sup>51</sup> Newby, 'The deferential dialectic', p. 157

which interpret the power of the ruling elite in a manner that reinforces their legitimacy’<sup>52</sup> As we have seen above this was executed with efficiency at the coming of age ritual held at Clonbrock in 1855 Newby states that the use of naked coercive power by elites in dealing with the inherent tensions in the deferential dialectic was unwise as it threatened to destabilise the whole system However ‘When the hierarchical structure has been stabilised by the widespread adherence to a deferential form of interaction, the occasional miscreant could be, and was, dealt with by the naked and savage use of power The great benefactor could also be the great persecutor’.<sup>53</sup>

The following section will focus on how Clonbrock played the part of both the great benefactor and the great oppressor and how, with the stabilisation of the hierarchical structure, one particular ‘miscreant’ was ‘dealt with by the naked and savage use of power’ In 1860 Patrick Trumple who held two farms at an annual rent of £310 died without issue aged seventy-eight leaving a considerable estate In his will he left a sum of money for charity and religious purposes, £1,000 to his widow and relatives, and £500 to Lord Clonbrock Indicating the existence of the paternalist ideological hegemony in the provincial press the *Western Star* reported that it was a ‘remarkable instance of gratitude and good feeling on the part of a tenant toward a landlord’ and that it spoke ‘volumes for the system of landlordism on the Clonbrock estates, where such amicable relations exist, a Tenant Right bill would add but little to the security and comfort of an industrious tenant’<sup>54</sup> Following Patrick Trumple’s death the farm he had held in Clonmane valued at £110 was re-let to his widow for the term of her life, while the second farm in Corballymore valued at £200 was let to Dr Kearns, one of Clonbrock’s grazier tenants<sup>55</sup>

While the Widow Trumple was granted continuous occupation through a lease for life, the following year another tenant, Pat Barrett, had his ‘non-contractual privilege’ to continue undisturbed in possession of his holding revoked and was

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p 155

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

<sup>54</sup> *Western Star*, 14 July 1860

<sup>55</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1860 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,624)

evicted for an indiscretion that had displeased Clonbrock. The Galway press showed little interest in Barrett's case and were it not that the *Nation* initially brought the case to light, it is probable that it would have been ignored altogether. Pat Barrett may well have argued that his circumstance 'did speak volumes for the system of landlordism on the Clonbrock estates' but for very different reasons than those offered by the *Western Star* in Trumple's case. Rather than highlighting amicable relations on the estate this case provides an example of how relations between Clonbrock and Barrett became hostile. Considerable attention has been paid to this single eviction because it is the only eviction during the period of study where there is an opportunity to hear the voice of an evicted tenant and this permits insights into aspects of paternalism and deference which, for the most part, remain hidden.

The *Nation*, a nationalist newspaper that championed the rights of tenants, ran a weekly column under the heading 'landlord doings' that railed against reported injustices of landlords. On 12 January 1861 it reported the case of Pat Barrett's eviction and other instances of 'landlord tyranny' that had taken place throughout the country. The article claimed that landlord power was the greatest cause of social disorder in the country and that while it prevailed 'acts of cruelty and injustice will be matters of everyday occurrence'. It accepted that the landlord had a right to turn a tenant adrift if he had not paid his rent but declared that he had no right to evict a man because of how he voted or for religious affiliation. Barrett was described as a peaceable man who paid his rent but had 'showed himself possessed of certain religious feelings, prejudices, or superstitions, of which the landlord did not approve'. Barrett's transgression, the *Nation* claimed, was that at the grave yard where he was the key holder, he had refused to allow a Protestant clergyman to officiate at a funeral of a convert and insisted that the minister 'read the burial service on the road instead of over the body of the deceased'. It described Barrett's actions as very foolish, 'the act of an ignorant, but possibly an honest man' and denied that Clonbrock had any just cause to evict him. Furthermore, it argued that any tenant could be evicted if they

do not subscribe to the views of [their] landlords on every single point of their belief and swear by every one of their passing fancies. A tenant may be

evicted if he does not wear his hat according to his landlord's directions, or if his coat is not cut in the shape most agreeable to his lordship, or if he dares to have a coat at all. Those men must be taught that the times of lord and vassal have passed away, they must be taught that they have no right to exact from their tenantry anything but the rent agreed upon in lease or contract, and that in all other matters of conscience and conduct, the tenants shall be as free as landlords themselves.<sup>56</sup>

After Barrett was evicted he approached a member of the local Catholic gentry, Gonville French, and asked him to intercede on his behalf regarding his eviction. French wrote to Charles Filgate regarding the matter and on receiving a reply wrote a letter to the editor of the *Nation*. He stated that it 'was with deep mortification' that he read the 'unmerited strictures on Lord Clonbrock in regard to his ejection of Barrett'. As a Catholic he felt that 'much is due by our body to that excellent nobleman whose life has been spent in promoting the happiness and well being of his numerous tenantry (almost entirely Catholic), by whom he is both loved and respected. In not one instance has he ever interfered with his religion'. He claimed that the reasons forwarded by Filgate for evicting Barrett

perfectly satisfied me. With his lordship it was the carrying out of a principle. So far from being actuated by a malignant or sectarian feeling, he preferred to pay every claim that had been put forward, including what Barrett himself gave a former tenant for the holding, for all improvements he may have since made, or for anything else that could reasonably be put forward, and his lordship is not niggard in his dealings.<sup>57</sup>

Another column in the *Nation* that day reiterated the injustice of the eviction simply because Barrett's belief 'in some popular superstition', associated with the graveyard, had motivated him to deny entry to the Protestant ministers who wished to perform the funeral service. It expressed dissatisfaction that the only reason given for the eviction was that 'it was the carrying out of a principle'. Our correspondent [French] is satisfied with the reasons given by Lord Clonbrock and Mr Filgate, the public, however, are fond of judging for themselves in those cases'.<sup>58</sup> It was argued that 'the carrying out of a principle' could just as easily have been used by Lord Plunkett, Bishop of Tuam, who was involved in a series of controversial evictions at

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<sup>56</sup> *Nation*, 12 Jan 1861

<sup>57</sup> *Nation*, 19 Jan 1861

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*



Partry at the same time as the Barrett case<sup>59</sup> The concluding statement of the article asserted that

whatever may be said for Lord Clonbrock or Mr Filgate, or other such benevolent landlords and agents as may from time to time come in rather 'questionable shape' before the public, we shall not fail to say that the power enjoyed by their class, even in matters pertaining to the tenure of land, is too great to be compatible with the well being of the public, and that the 'principle' of using that power for any other purpose than to enforce the compliance with the terms of lease or contract is highly dangerous to liberty and life in Ireland<sup>60</sup>

Hardly any of the provincial newspapers reported Barrett's case but the conservative *Western Star* entered the fray close a month after the eviction had taken place It stated that the sub-sheriff of the county accompanied by Charles Filgate and twenty-two constabulary commanded by P Sweeny assembled to see the eviction through 'but their services were not required as no opposition was offered' It supported French's defence of Clonbrock and his right to evict Barrett stating that he 'had prevented in the most shamefully bigoted manner the decent interment of a Protestant in a public burying ground on his lordship's estate, and his lordship, who has in a great degree caressed his Roman Catholic tenantry could not prevent a flagrant insult to his own religion and to the institutions of the state to pass unnoticed'<sup>61</sup> The article claimed that Clonbrock's actions were supported by every enlightened Catholic and that the public owed him a 'debt of gratitude for carrying out with *firmness* the principle of complete toleration'<sup>62</sup> This is a puzzling and somewhat of an oxymoromic statement, it could be argued that if Clonbrock was being completely tolerant he would not have evicted Barrett

The final instalment in the *Nation's* reporting of the case came from Barrett himself and was submitted as a reply to Gonville French's letter of 19 January Barrett stated that he was surprised 'not a little to find you [French] defending a course which, on my soliciting your interference on my behalf a few weeks before, you

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<sup>59</sup> See Gerard Moran, *The Mayo evictions of 1860 Patrick Lavelle and the "War" in Partry* (Mayo, 1986), idem, *A radical priest in Mayo Fr Patrick Lavelle the rise and fall of an Irish nationalist, 1825-1886* (Dublin, 1994)

<sup>60</sup> *Nation*, 19 Jan 1861

<sup>61</sup> *Western Star*, 2 Feb 1861

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*

condemned as unreasonable and tyrannical' He explained that he had informed French of the reasons alleged by Clonbrock for evicting him from his holding and wanted to know what had changed since then Once again the issue of the 'matter of principle' arose and Barrett declared the reason he had been evicted was that he had prevented the two proselytising ministers who had come from Ballinasloe from officiating at the funeral at Chapel Finerty graveyard

I did not hinder the remains to be interred, but holding the key to the ground in my possession, and feeling convinced that I would not act rightly by allowing ministers of another religion to enter the precincts of a place venerated and held sacred by the Catholics of the surrounding parishes, I did refuse them my consent to enter the place and in doing so I acted according to the dictates of my conscience

He claimed that this was the only offence he had committed and the reason Clonbrock had thrown him and his family 'on the world' He said that he had violated no law and while it was alleged he insulted ministers of 'their religion' he inquired as to why the ministers of his religion were insulted daily in England and Ireland in a similar manner? Furthermore, he argued that there may have been an additional reason for his banishment

I refused on a late occasion to vote for the member of Lord Clonbrock's choice at the county election, and in consequence of my insubordination on the occasion I was compelled to pay a half year's rent, which up to that period was allowed to run, as what is called a hanging gale These are the causes which brought the sheriff of the county to my house on last Friday, assisted by the Crowbar Brigade After handing my wife and her six little ones, for I was absent, out one by one, they forced the walls from the roof, and let all fall in with a crash Alas! I am now houseless and homeless

Having signed the letter, Barrett then added a list of twenty-one families evicted by Clonbrock, which, including women and children, amounted to 168 persons<sup>63</sup>

The cases of Trumple and Barrett provide insights into how, as Newby has asserted, 'the great benefactor could become the great oppressor' by punishing the occasional miscreant with the 'naked and savage use of power' and they illustrate how aspects of paternalism played out on the estate The gift of the non-contractual privilege of undisturbed occupancy was secured by Patrick Trumple for his widow through

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<sup>63</sup>*Nation*, 16 Feb 1861

deferential bequests to Clonbrock while Pat Barrett's tenancy was terminated for what can be described as an unwillingness to show appropriate deference. The exact reason for Barrett's eviction was not forwarded by Clonbrock, nor is there any indication from Gonville French except to state that 'it was a matter of principle'. It appears that he had broken an unwritten code which defined the performance of deference and had paid the price for it. It may well have been that the affair in the graveyard had caused it and he had expressed insufficient deference to Clonbrock's religion through his actions. It may also have been for his 'insubordination' by not voting for Clonbrock's candidate in the election.

In the mid-nineteenth century voters cast two votes for their chosen candidates and 'many landlords considered it "legitimate" to demand a share in their tenants' voting power'<sup>64</sup> This was certainly the case with Clonbrock who stated in a letter to Lord Naas in 1859 'I never ask my people for more than one vote'<sup>65</sup> If Clonbrock felt that he was entitled to one of his tenant's votes then Barrett's 'insubordination' would have been perceived as an unwillingness to defer in an appropriate manner and marked him out as a potential troublemaker. It can safely be argued that Barrett was evicted for his lack of deference and not for accruing arrears of rent as the rental ledger substantiates his claim that he had paid his rent and that the 'hanging gale' had been demanded from him. Rents on landed estates were paid in two instalments or 'gales', usually on 1 November and 1 May, and when a tenant entered into an occupancy no rent was due until the end of the first six months. This became known as the 'hanging gale' of rent that was owed to the landlord and was one of the 'non-contractual privileges' which permitted a tenant to raise crops and pay rent. However, as Samuel Clarke argues, it created great controversy as it augmented the landlord's power<sup>66</sup> As early as 1812 Edward Wakefield in *An account of Ireland statistical and political* describes the hanging gale as 'one of the great levers of oppression by which the lower classes are kept in a kind of perpetual bondage, for as every family holds some portion of land and owes half a year's rent, which a

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<sup>64</sup> K. T. Hoppen 'Landlords, society and electoral politics in mid-nineteenth century Ireland' in *Past and Present*, lxxv (1977), p. 84

<sup>65</sup> Lord Clonbrock to Lord Naas, 22 Apr. 1859 (NLI, Mayo papers, MS 11,036)

<sup>66</sup> Clarke, *Social origins*, p. 167

landlord can exact in a moment, this debt hangs over them like a load, and keeps them in a continual state of anxiety and terror’<sup>67</sup>

As stated in the previous chapter evictions were a rarity after 1851 and the eviction of Barrett would have sent out a powerful message to the tenantry and, perhaps, prompted a recalibration of notions of deference to conform with the code of behaviour that Clonbrock expected. The cases of Trumple and Barrett have provided insights into how the relationships of paternalism and deference were being played out on the Clonbrock estate but it also provides insights into Clonbrock’s influence with the provincial press. The *Nation* provided a platform for Barrett to air his grievances with Clonbrock but he received no support from any provincial newspapers and this poses the question why? Especially if it is considered that the *Tuam Herald* rallied to the cause of Catholic tenants in Partry County Mayo who were being evicted by Church of Ireland bishop of Tuam. The answer lies in the fact that its editor was Jasper Kelly under whose direction the newspaper became ‘an important organ of Roman Catholic opinion’<sup>68</sup>. Despite the fact that Barrett claimed persecution for acting according to his conscience and may have expected support from the *Herald* it must be considered that Jasper Kelly had eulogised Clonbrock at the coming of age celebrations five years earlier. Kelly described Clonbrock as a well respected and honoured man who had nobly sustained his ancestral name and expressed his hope that Luke Gerald would be able to do the same<sup>69</sup>. So, in addition to Clonbrock’s power as a landlord at local level he had a considerable amount of clout with the provincial press, and not just the conservative *Western Star* but with ‘an important organ of Roman Catholic opinion’ too. This illustrates Clonbrock’s ability to make advantageous alliances with the press and exert influence on the public sphere and this brings us on to the final part of the chapter which will examine the existence of a counter discourse or what Nancy Frazer has described as a ‘subaltern counterpublic’. This one was much harder to control as it took the form of a curse against the family perpetuated through oral

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<sup>67</sup> Edward Wakefield, *An account of Ireland statistical and political* (London, 1812), p. 244

<sup>68</sup> Obituary of Jasper Kelly, *Western Star*, 26 Oct. 1867

<sup>69</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 16 June 1855

culture and this will add a further layer of understanding into how the deferential dialectic played out on the estates of Lord Clonbrock

**The curse as a subaltern counterpublic that contested the legitimacy of Clonbrock's power.**

In the first section of the chapter it has been argued that the celebration of Luke Gerald's coming of age was a ritual which legitimised the paternalist relationship. This process of legitimation can only have been assisted by the presence of two of his cousins, who were representatives of branches of the ancient O'Kelly family. However, the popular tradition held that the O'Kelly had participated in a rebellion against the English crown and their lands were confiscated and granted to an ancestor of Lord Clonbrock. However, O'Kelly remained in the district and paid clandestine visits to the site of his former power at Clonbrock where a tannery had been established by the Dillon family.

On one of these occasions having gone into the new tannery he strongly excited the compassion of the workmen, who, through his rags, recognised their quondam chief, and one of them perceiving the dilapidated condition of his shoes gave him some of the leather to repair them. As he was going out with it he chanced to encounter the new proprietor, who roughly handled him, overbearingly reproached him, and charged him with baseness and theft!!! At length, stung beyond endurance, the grey haired chieftain knelt down and poured forth, in his native tongue, one of those aoirey maledictions [and] bound him under a spell that no father of his race should for many generations, live to see his son come of age.<sup>70</sup>

It is difficult to say how long this curse or versions of it had been circulating but it was described by the *Galway Vindicator* as 'an old tradition' and the family's genealogy verifies that no father of the Dillon family had lived to witness a son's majority for over 150 years.<sup>71</sup> In 1855 the curse was extensively reported in the national and provincial newspapers because it was broken when Lord Clonbrock lived to see Luke Gerald's coming of age. According to the *Western Star* a great

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<sup>70</sup> *Galway Mercury*, 17 Mar 1855

<sup>71</sup> Lady Mahon, 'The Dillons of Clonbrock', genealogy and family tree appended to this volume, Bernard Burke, *A genealogical and heraldic dictionary of the peerage and baronetage of the British empire*, vol. 1 (London, 1853), pp 214-5, this volume provides dates of birth and death of the heads of the family from 1754 which confirms that neither the first or second barons had lived to witness the heir come of age

anxiety existed, in the minds of the peasantry, that Lord Clonbrock would be struck dead before his son's birthday and when he arrived by train to Ballinasloe after Luke Gerald reached his majority

the public mind was soon relieved [as] his lordship never having shown symptoms of being in better health or spirits. The intelligence spread with the utmost rapidity, and the heartfelt joy which pervaded all classes was perfectly indescribable. As his lordship proceeded in his carriage homewards he was greeted by the hearty cheers of the peasantry assembled in the various localities.<sup>72</sup>

Bonfires were lighted not only across Clonbrock's estates but across Lord Clancarty's as well. Clancarty's son, Lord Dunlo, came of age on 13 January, but he postponed celebrations until Lord Clonbrock could celebrate with him.<sup>73</sup> This suggests, perhaps, that Clancarty was aware of this curse and might have thought it inappropriate to have bonfires celebrating the coming of age of his son while his neighbour, Lord Clonbrock, waited nervously to see if he would live to see his son attain his majority. The uneducated peasantry were not the only ones that believed in the curse as Edith Dillon-Mahon states that as soon as Luke Gerald had reached his twenty-first birthday on 10 March Lord Clonbrock 'was in a fuss to see his son as soon after that as possible, being superstitious about the family curse'.<sup>74</sup>

Interestingly, a newspaper clipping describing O'Kelly's curse pasted into a family album has the words 'not true' written in large bold letters across it.<sup>75</sup> Several years before the coming of age, Daniel O'Connell made reference to the curse at a Repeal meeting at the Corn Exchange in September 1843. Charles Filgate had just begun his tenure as Clonbrock's agent and had, allegedly, denied Catholic labourers on the estate free time to celebrate religious feast days. O'Connell criticised this behaviour, adding that

Lord Clonbrock was, he believed, in other respects, a good employer, but why would he dishonour his name with conduct such as this? Some hereditary calamity was said to track the course of the Clonbrock family. There was a traditionary report handed down from immemorial time that no father of that noble house ever saw the eldest born son attain the full age of manhood. He

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<sup>72</sup> *Western Star*, 17 Mar 1855

<sup>73</sup> *Galway Mercury*, 17 Mar 1855

<sup>74</sup> Lady Mahon, 'The Dillons of Clonbrock' p 76

<sup>75</sup> Album of newspaper cuttings (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,665)

did not wish to speak superstitiously or with arrogance, but merely, if it was true, that the hand of providence made itself thus be felt upon the family Conduct such as he (Mr O'C) had been describing, so far from procuring a relief from so dreadful a calamity, was calculated rather to draw down another and heavier dispensation <sup>76</sup>

There was further mention of the Clonbrock succession in 1851 when Lord Clonbrock became ill with typhus fever. On this occasion the *Cork Examiner* reported that 'it is a curious incident that for two centuries Lord Clonbrock has never lived to see the majority of his heir. His lordship's eldest son will be of age in a few months, and the circumstances have so played upon Lord Clonbrock as to throw him into a dangerous state of illness' <sup>77</sup> Clonbrock's son was not due to come of age for another four years at this point and this illustrates how the circulation of the curse led certain sections of the press to make connections with it rather than the fact that he had simply contracted typhus. Not only had an awareness of this curious aspect of the family history spread as far as Cork but also to the furthest of the colonies as the *Hobart Town Courier* in Tasmania reproduced, in August, verbatim what had appeared in the *Examiner* <sup>78</sup>

Other versions of the curse also existed, one told of how a young boy, the imbecile son of a widow descended from the ancient O'Kelly clan 'became involved in some form of theft in a tannery that operated adjacent to Clonbrock'. The boy was facing a serious punishment for the alleged crime, so the O'Kelly widow was forced to strike a deal with Dillon giving up her claim to the tower house and land at Clonbrock if he ceased the prosecution of her son. However 'tradition has it that in her temper she cursed the Clonbrocks and asked that they may never see a son as heir to the estate attain the age twenty-one years' <sup>79</sup> No documentary evidence for the 'widow version' of the curse has been uncovered but the cursing widow was a well recognised archetypal figure in nineteenth century Ireland. In the early 1840s the cursing widow was illustrated in *Tom Burke of ours* in which she curses the

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<sup>76</sup> *Nation*, 16 Sept, 1843

<sup>77</sup> *Nation*, 19 Apr, 1851 abridged from the *Cork Examiner*

<sup>78</sup> *Hobart Town Courier*, 13 Aug, 1851

<sup>79</sup> Tadhg Mc Lochlainn, *The story of Kilture, Fohenagh, and Kilgerril parish over a period of almost two-hundred years* (Ballinasloe, 1975), p 10

landlord's son because her lease was not renewed by his father<sup>80</sup> Lord Waterford's family, like the Dillons of Clonbrock were, in popular tradition, believed to have been cursed by a widow for an injustice perpetrated against her son. Using the records of the Folklore Commission, Patricia Lysaght has described folk memories of the widow's curse: 'The sentiment *Is maing a thuilleann mallacht baintrí*, "woe to him who deserves the widows curse"-expressed by a county Waterford tradition bearer-aptly sums up popular perceptions of the power of the widow's curse'<sup>81</sup>

The Dillon family themselves had their own version of the curse, also associated with a widow. According to Lady Mahon when Lucas Dillon died in 1716 he left, in his will, half of Clonbrock demesne to his second wife, Ellice, nee Aylmer, and half to his heir, by his first marriage, Robert Dillon. 'This division led to violent quarrels between Robert and his stepmother. There is a tradition that, about this time, an old woman, some say the enraged Lady Aylmer, went to Clonbrock and cursed the family, saying that for many generations, no owner of Clonbrock should see his eldest son come of age'<sup>82</sup>

Of the three versions of the curse two refer to injustices perpetrated against dispossessed members of the old Gaelic family who owned the lands around Clonbrock while the other traces it to an internal family dispute. However, all of the newspaper reports regarding the breaking of the curse in 1855 were based on the O'Kelly chieftain's version which raises the possibility that the Dillon family may have come up with their own version of the curse to somehow defuse the symbolic power of the de-legitimizing O'Kelly versions.

Using a curse to challenge the prevailing ideological hegemony reveals the creativity of small farmers in formulating a passive resistance strategy that did not bring them into open conflict with power. There are many tales and legends attached to landed families and their houses throughout Ireland, the devil appearing at Castletown

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<sup>80</sup> Charles James Lever, *Tom Burke of ours* (Dublin, 1844), p. 32

<sup>81</sup> Patricia Lysaght, 'Women and the Great Famine' in Arthur Gribben (ed.), *The Great Famine and the Irish diaspora in America* (Massachusetts, 1999), p. 42

<sup>82</sup> Lady Mahon, 'The Dillons of Clonbrock', p. 4



House, a member of the Shirley family of Lough Fea who was born with a dog's paw instead of a hand, a supposed murder of a lady pushed down the stairs at Garbally by Lord Clancarty. One of the more grotesque is a curse laid on the pregnant mother of Arthur MacMurrough-Kavanagh by an old woman. While laying the curse she was reputed to have broken off the arms and legs of the Christ figure on a crucifix she was holding with the effect that when Arthur was born he was bereft of arms and legs. Even in Shane Leslie's novel *Doomsland* there was a legend that a ghost carriage paid visits to Deluce Castle (a thinly disguised Castle Leslie) and 'there was enough rumour to encourage the legend and leave the children of the family as terrified as the villagers passing the avenue at Halloween'<sup>83</sup> J. C. Scott has argued that rumour and gossip can be mobilised as a form of resistance and as a popular belief the curse would have circulated in the same way. In fact, the curse can be viewed as a form of gossip which Scott argues is a story

told about an absent third party, once launched, it becomes an anonymous tale with no author and many retailers. Although it is by no means a respecter of persons, malicious gossip *is* a respecter of the larger normative order within which it operates. Behind every piece of gossip that is not merely news is an implicit statement of a rule or norm that has been broken. As a form of resistance, then, gossip is a kind of democratic "voice" in conditions where power and possible repression make open acts of disrespect dangerous.<sup>84</sup>

The rule or norm that had been broken according to the O'Kelly versions of the curse was that a noble Gaelic family had been dispossessed of their lands by the Dillons and retribution was being exacted through the supernatural agency of the curse. It appears that the curse was effective, as a form of resistance, because Lord Clonbrock, according to his granddaughter, was labouring under the superstition that he may not see his son who had come of age. Whether the family actually believed in any of the curses is immaterial. What is important, however, is that the narrative circulated sufficiently to be reported in the press which would not have pleased Clonbrock and even for this reason alone it was an effective 'weapon of the weak'

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<sup>83</sup> Shane Leslie, *Doomsland* (London, 1923) p. 10, Deluce Castle is a loosely disguised Glaslough House, the Leslie ancestral home, which provided the backdrop for this semi-autobiographical novel.

<sup>84</sup> J. C. Scott, *Weapons of the weak* (Yale, 1985), p. 282.

Erving Goffmann has explored the 'on stage' and 'off stage' acts in the performance of deference and Howard Newby has drawn from these concepts in formulating his deferential dialectic argument. He argues that the deferential label ascribed to servants and agricultural workers in the nineteenth century was a result of the superficial observance of their 'on stage' behaviour such as tugging the forelock. However, he argues that off stage behaviour needs to be examined because 'the widespread existence of rural underworld activities - poaching, rick burning, cattle-maiming, etc. belie the application of the term "deferential" to many of these people' or as K. T. Hoppen has argued 'Daylight sycophants often became moonlight marauders'.<sup>85</sup> The coming of age and the curse can also be viewed using these concepts. There were deferential aspects to the presentation and the content of the address presented to Luke Gerald, everyone accepted their place in the hierarchy of the estate through seating arrangements, and the speeches legitimating Clonbrock's power were accepted and applauded. This 'on stage' performance contrasts with the 'off stage' reality of the curse which challenged the legitimacy of Clonbrock's power.

A further aspect of the curse which deserves some attention is an examination of the curse as a 'counterpublic' which was at variance with the dominant paternalist discourse that, for the main part, constituted the ideological hegemony and legitimised the power of landlords such as Clonbrock. The foundation text for discussion of the public sphere is Jurgen Habermas' *Structural transformation of the public sphere* which argued that, during the eighteenth-century, the advent of salons in France and coffee shops in England together with an increase in pamphlets and printed material created a space which facilitated the reflexive circulation of discourse leading to the emergence of a bourgeois public sphere which challenged the power of church and state.<sup>86</sup> Habermas argued that this public sphere was open and inclusive but Nancy Frazer, in her critique of his thesis, counter argued that certain groups including women and the lower strata of society were excluded from this universal public sphere and formed their own 'subaltern counterpublics' which

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<sup>85</sup> Newby, 'The deferential dialectic', p. 142, Hoppen, *Elections politics and society*, p. 136

<sup>86</sup> Jurgen Habermas, Thomas Burger (trans.), *The structural transformation of the public sphere an inquiry into the category of bourgeois society* (Cambridge, 1989)

are ‘parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs’<sup>87</sup> As previously stated the rhetoric which framed landlord tenant discourse in the 1850s remained overwhelmingly paternalistic and even when landlords received criticism, it was using this framework which accused them of not fulfilling their duty Therefore, the curse with its narratives of dispossession and retribution acted as a counterdiscourse to the paternalistic *zeitgeist* which pervaded the provincial press through the 1850s

The week of the coming of age was very significant regarding the development of the public sphere in Britain and Ireland as Gladstone’s bill to repeal the final stamp tax on newspapers was being debated in parliament<sup>88</sup> The conservative *Western Star* made its position clear on the issue and provides insights into how small farmers were being excluded from the discourse of print culture It argued that the bill

would tend to produce a set of publications addressed only to the lower classes, and appealing in many cases to their worst passions and prejudices the character of the newspaper press would be so lowered as essentially to bring it into collision with the public, the authorities, and to necessitate a recourse to those arbitrary powers for its restraint which have been recently adapted in foreign countries, and in times past in our own<sup>89</sup>

Lord Clonbrock, however, did not express any discontent with the bill and although he did not vote on the issue in the House of Lords he toasted the press during the coming of age dinner The press, he argued, ‘exercised so potent an influence upon all communities He believed it to be the one which, more than any other guaranteed the freedom of a free people’<sup>90</sup> The bill passed parliament that month and it is generally agreed that ‘it was crucial for the growth of the newspaper industry on both sides of the Irish sea But in Ireland the growth of a cheaper press

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<sup>87</sup> Nancy Frazer, ‘Rethinking the public sphere a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy’ in *Social Text*, xxv (1990), p 67

<sup>88</sup> Marie-Louise Legg, *Newspapers and nationalism the Irish provincial press, 1850-1892* (Dublin, 1999), p 13

<sup>89</sup> *Western Star*, 24 Mar 1855

<sup>90</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 16 June 1855

coincided with the growth of nationalism’<sup>91</sup> In the post-Famine period increasing literacy and the growth of the provincial press facilitated the emergence of what might be called an ‘agrarian public sphere’ and the counterpublic which articulated the narrative of dispossession and retribution embedded in the curse became part of this public which, by the time of the Land War, had no problems articulating those narratives As Anne Kane has argued

the Land War provided the ‘political field’ on which a unified national identity emerged from public discourse over landlordism and British domination, and collective action based on new symbolic understandings At the core of both Land War ideology and the emergent national identity was a discourse of retribution, configured through the collective sharing of narratives, embodying central themes of the injustice of British and landlord domination, and the rights of the Irish to the land and the country<sup>92</sup>

As we have seen, this discourse, because of the curse, was pre-existent on the Clonbrock estates and it would be a fruitful resource that the United Irish League would tap into when agitation broke out on the Clonbrock estates during the Ranch War in the early twentieth century When Luke Gerald Dillon, fourth baron Clonbrock, called for coercive legislation in 1907 due to lawlessness, the *Connaught Leader* issued a tirade against him Contextualising Clonbrock’s call for coercion within a framework of dispossession that referred to the injustices of the Williamite and Cromwellian confiscations, it denied that the country was in a state of lawlessness describing Clonbrock as a ‘carrion crow’ who had ‘poured fourth a stream of calumny and misrepresentation It is evident that falsehood did not perish with the unscrupulous despoiler of the unhappy O’Kelly in the days of the tanyard of treacherous memory’ Further use of the curse the following month referred to the ‘dark time when the FARMER OF KILLIOSOLAN<sup>93</sup> was hatching a plot against the unfortunate O’Kelly The days of the historic “hide of leather” are gone by - its charm played out’<sup>94</sup> From this evidence it appears that even though the curse had been broken over fifty years earlier it continued to be mobilised to challenge the legitimacy of Clonbrock’s power

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<sup>91</sup> Legg, *Newspapers and nationalism*, p 13

<sup>92</sup> Anne Kane, ‘Narratives of nationalism constructing Irish national identity during the Land War, 1879-82’ in *National Identities*, 11 (2000), p 245

<sup>93</sup> This is a reference to the Dillons as farmers in the townland of Killiosolan, where they resided before acquiring Clonbrock, see introduction, p 1

<sup>94</sup> *Connaught Leader*, 8 June 1907, 13 July 1907

## Conclusion

The thrust of this chapter has been to address the questions of power and legitimacy on the Clonbrock estates in the 1850s. The first section examined how the Clonbrock family legitimised their power and promoted a paternalist ideology through ritual at the coming of age of Luke Gerald Dillon in 1855. It has established that this ritual was a mobilisation of bias that succeeded in promoting the landlord-tenant relationship as an organic partnership of mutual dependency while simultaneously maintaining the hierarchical and well defined personal relations that were the foundations of paternalism. It has shown how the balance between *identification* and *differentiation* was successfully struck in a careful management of the tensions inherent in the deferential dialectic and how, with the establishment of a stable and hierarchical structure, Pat Barrett, 'the occasional miscreant' was punished with the 'naked and savage use of power'.

The first two sections illustrated how power was legitimated and how boundaries were maintained while the final section explored how, beneath the surface, the legitimacy of Clonbrock's power was challenged by a subaltern counterpublic in the form of a curse. While there were similarities between the practice of paternalism on English and Irish landed estates, English landlords, unlike most of their Irish counterparts, were considered the legitimate leaders of the people. They did not have to contend, as did Clonbrock, with a curse expressing a narrative of dispossession and retribution which challenged his position. David Roberts has argued that paternalism's strongest pillar was the paternalism of property and its second strongest pillar was the paternalism of the church<sup>95</sup>. As we have seen in chapter two, the lack of cohesion between the Irish landed class and the Catholic Church meant that the church as a central pillar of paternalism was weak in Ireland<sup>96</sup>. This chapter has shown that there were also problems concerning the paternalism of property on the Clonbrock estates as the curse has illustrated that there were issues of legitimacy simmering beneath the surface. If paternalism was

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<sup>95</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p. 170

<sup>96</sup> See chapter two

based on the 'rule of property', its duties and its rights, and Clonbrock's property (the estates) was perceived as somewhat illegitimate then the two central pillars of paternalism were weak. Ireland did not face the same social problems that were brought on by industrialisation and urbanisation in England and with its rural economy it should have been a more hospitable place for paternalism to flourish. However, with fundamental flaws in its two central pillars landed paternalism in Ireland faced an equally uncertain future as its counterpart in Britain.

## Chapter five

### **The cracks appear: the manifestation of inherent tensions between Clonbrock and the Catholic clergy and the consequences for deference**

At the heart of a paternalist's hierarchical outlook is a strong sense of the value of dependency, a sense that one could not exist without those who are dependant having an unquestioned respect for their betters. Those who held a paternalist outlook believed in the body politic, one in which every part had an appointed and harmonious place. Whether a ploughman or a bishop, each individual had his function, his place his protectors, his duties, his reciprocal obligations, and his strong ties of dependency.<sup>1</sup>

Landed paternalists such as Lord Clonbrock were at the apex of the social pyramid and it is hardly surprising that they should hold such a hierarchical outlook as it was the basis on which their power and position depended. In England, David Roberts has argued, landed paternalists and churchmen worked in unison and it was 'only with the rule of landlord and parson, that a hierarchical, authoritarian, and organic society could be preserved'.<sup>2</sup> Excepting the north-east of the country this alliance did not exist in Ireland as the difference in religion between the landed class, mostly Anglican, and their tenantry, who were overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, complicated the matter. As the second half of the nineteenth century progressed and the power of the Catholic Church grew, the absence of this alliance had serious implications for the maintenance of the hierarchal social structure of the landed estate. D. K. Akenson has argued that for a considerable period of time after Catholic Emancipation was granted in 1829 'The Roman Catholic bishops were still grateful for mere toleration and were far from demanding. During the century, however, a religious revolution occurred. Power gradually slipped from the Anglican hands and, after disestablishment in 1871, was gone almost entirely'.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter will show how this power struggle was played out on the Clonbrock estates in the late 1860s and early 1870s and how it hindered Clonbrock's capacity to manage the inherent tensions in the deferential dialectic. Beginning with the marriage of Luke Gerald Dillon in 1866 it will examine, using newspaper reports,

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<sup>1</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p. 3

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p. 72

<sup>3</sup> Akenson, *Education experiment*, p. 4

how the rituals of deference associated with the 'life cycle' of the heir continued to run smoothly and play their part in buttressing the ideological hegemony of paternalism. With particular focus on a presentation of silver plate by the tenantry to Luke Gerald it will explore how this played a role in promoting the idea of landlord and tenant as mutual partners in a contractual, organic, relationship. The second part of the chapter will show how Clonbrock, after building a school at Killosolan, which should have assisted in the process of *identification*, became a point of contention between him and the local parish priest and undermined his ability to successfully manage the deferential dialectic. The final section of the chapter will illustrate how deference to Clonbrock, having suffered during the school affair, was further compromised in 1872 during the Trench-Nolan by-election when his tenantry refused *en masse* to defer to his wishes and voted for Nolan.

### **The marriage of Luke Gerald Dillon and the tenant's gift**

In August 1866 Luke Gerald Dillon married Augusta Crofton, the daughter of Lord Crofton, of Mote Park, County Roscommon. Newspapers reported how Roscommon town 'looked like a shrubbery' or some suburban villa 'such as might be found in some sunnier or southern land'<sup>4</sup>. For two miles a series of arches dotted the road from Mote Park to the town and banners and flags were everywhere.

Reaching Goff Street "Roscommon rejoices in the happy union of the noble houses of Crofton and Clonbrock" arrests your gaze. Thence to the church was one of complete bower-banners, wreaths, flowers vying for the mastery, whilst from above, a coronet in scarlet and gold, with the insignia of the noble houses on either side, blushed in the blaze of the summer sun that poured his glory on the scene<sup>5</sup>.

The wedding ceremony took place at 1 p.m. and by 5 p.m., after the meal, Luke Gerald and his bride had left for their honeymoon, but this did not signal an end to festivities. A festive atmosphere existed in the town where even the inmates of the workhouse were 'regaled in the evening at Lord Crofton's expense'. The employees on the estate were all granted time off and a grand illumination to celebrate the marriage commenced at 9 p.m. where 'almost all the front windows of the town

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<sup>4</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 21 July 1866, *Roscommon Journal*, 21 July 1866

<sup>5</sup> *Roscommon Journal*, 21 July 1866



were tastefully decorated [and] were shown off to the greatest advantage by the large array of wax lights which rendered the streets almost as bright as if it were noon day'<sup>6</sup> At 10 p m , Lord Crofton and his sons walked the length of the town, followed by 'an immense crowd who cheered him heartily ' The hills around Mote Park were topped with large bonfires to celebrate the event and the estate employees amused themselves until the daylight hours<sup>7</sup> As stated in the previous chapter, extensive festivities involving the tenantry did not occur on the estate of the heir when he married There were few mentions of Clonbrock in the press coverage except that the labourers 'on the estate of Lord Clonbrock, were supplied with the means of regaling themselves during the evening of the marriage'<sup>8</sup>

Lord Crofton presented a diamond-studded bracelet to the bride on behalf of the Crofton tenantry and he assured them that she received the 'valued token of their friendship and attachment with feelings of gratitude, gratification and pride which will be lasting as the brilliants they selected to perpetuate their kindness'<sup>9</sup> This was very much a wedding gift to the bride and not to the couple and was a parting gift to her as she left her own family to start a new life at Clonbrock While a marriage was of less importance than a coming of age it was, none the less, an important event in the life cycle of the heir and concerned the future of the estate so it was essential that the Clonbrock tenantry mark it appropriately

Soon after the wedding at a meeting in Ballinasloe it was 'resolved that the tenantry should present the Hon Luke Gerald Dillon with a suitable address and mark of esteem on the occasion of his marriage' A subscription list was immediately drawn up and some of Clonbrock's wealthier tenants, such as John Carr, and others who had formed the deputation at the coming of age, subscribed £10 each<sup>10</sup> There were also more modest subscriptions of £5 and £3 but the ball had begun rolling and by the middle of September 201 tenants had subscribed sums ranging from £10 to five

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<sup>6</sup> *Roscommon Journal*, 21 July 1866

<sup>7</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 21 July 1886

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>9</sup> *Roscommon Journal*, 21 July 1866

<sup>10</sup> *Western Star*, 11 Aug 1866

shillings and a total of £337 was raised<sup>11</sup> The subscription list published in the newspaper effectively outlined the hierarchy on the estate with the extensive graziers such as John Carr and twelve others at the top of the list having subscribed £10 each, one person subscribed £6 and fifteen others £5 each So these twenty-nine tenants subscribed £211 of the total £337 and the remaining sum of £126 was made up from the other 172 subscriptions With the money subscribed, some silver plate was commissioned from a London silversmith as well as an illuminated address from an artist in Dublin

The *Tuam Herald*, on learning of the tenants' decision to make a presentation to Luke Gerald, reported on the cordial relations that existed between landlord and tenant on the Clonbrock estate which provided a contrast with 'the wide-spread beggary, ruin and desolation which landlord greed and despotism have wrought without ruth or rest' There was no mention of what had happened to Pat Barrett but Clonbrock's response to the economic downturn in the early 1860s appears to have been sufficient to sustain his reputation as a benevolent paternalist<sup>12</sup> Dooley has shown how, in 1861, Clonbrock granted his

smaller tenants a temporary but full abatement of either a year's or a half-year's rent His gross income for 1861 was unaffected His large tenant farmers and the payment of previous arrears saw to that Then in the following year most of those who had been granted abatements doubled up on their rents with the result that Clonbrock received something of a windfall of over £14,000 Nor did Clonbrock use the economic boom as a pretext to exploit the rent levels of his estate, rents were increased by only 13 per cent from 1854 to 1869 (with a further increase of 11 per cent from 1869 to 1880)<sup>13</sup>

The *Herald* further argued that Lord Clonbrock's 'dealings with his tenants [were] well known to be characterised by justice, equity and benevolence The serpent of sectarianism lurks not beneath his outward kindness, nor in promoting their material interests does he directly or indirectly hold out to them the bribe of proselytism'<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 15 Sept 1866

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 25 Aug 1866

<sup>13</sup> Dooley, *The decline of the big house*, p 33

<sup>14</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 25 Aug 1866

The plate and address were completed the following spring and a 'respectable and influential' deputation of seventeen tenants went to Clonbrock to present the gifts. They were met in the drawing room by Lord Clonbrock, Lord and Lady Crofton, the parents in law, four of Luke Gerald's sisters, Charles Filgate, a local Protestant clergyman, as well as Luke Gerald and his wife Augusta. The address was read out by James Ryan, the secretary of the committee. In typical style it eulogised both families as resident landowners whose tenantry were happy and prosperous. It referred to Luke Gerald's attachment to his father and how he had only 'to tread in his footsteps to ensure to [himself] the blessings of the poor, the esteem of the wealthy, and the regard and confidence of all'. They expressed hope that he would be 'pleased to accept the [silver plate] testimonial of your affection, which we now tender to yourself and your lovely and accomplished bride'. It wished him happiness in his marriage and hoped that he might hand down to future generations the 'traits of honour, truth, and integrity which have hitherto distinguished the noble house of Dillon'. In response Luke Gerald thanked the tenantry for the gift and spoke of how it would be his

constant endeavour to prove myself worthy of the confidence which you thus repose in me, and a great portion of the happiness of my life will depend on the measure of it which you for the future accord to me [ ] I trust that [my wife and I] may hand down the inheritance of your kind feeling unimpaired to our successors, and that your magnificent gift may be rivalled in permanence by the good relations and affection between landlord and tenant of which it is the imperishable record<sup>15</sup>

The presentation of the address and plate represented the next stage of the life cycle rituals connected with the heir of the estate. It marked a further step on his road to becoming the next Baron Clonbrock and master of the estates. Like the coming of age it was a ritual of legitimation which smoothed the next generation's accession to the estates. The address restated the paternal social contract whereby the tenants recognised Lord Clonbrock as a benevolent landlord and his son, Luke Gerald, as their future landlord. It implicitly stated that he had a contractual responsibility to continue in the benevolent tradition of his father and in his response to the address he expressed hopes that he would. While the address stated that the gift of plate was

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid , 6 Apr 1867

given to Luke Gerald and his 'lovely and accomplished bride', in reality the gift was exclusively intended for Luke Gerald as the heir to the estates and this was reflected in the inscription engraved on the plate

*Presented by the  
Tenantry of the Clonbrock Estates  
To the  
Hon Luke Gerald Dillon  
On his Marriage with  
The Hon Augusta Caroline Crofton  
July 18 1866*

It was through this gift of plate that the tenants of the Clonbrock estate sealed the paternal social contract with Luke Gerald, the heir and future landlord, and he appears to have understood the symbolic importance of the object by referring to it as the 'imperishable record [of] the good relations and affection between landlord and tenant'

While the ideological hegemony of paternalist discourse presented the landlord as the benefactor to his tenantry this ritual facilitated a role reversal in which the tenantry, through the presentation, became the givers allowing them to express some measure of symbolic power. The gift inferred that the landed family were indebted to the tenantry and that their very existence depended on the tenantry's acceptance of their position of authority. This is evident in Luke Gerald's response to the tenants' address as he spoke of how it would be his 'constant endeavour to prove [himself] worthy of the confidence which you [the tenantry] thus repose in me, and a great portion of the happiness of my life will depend on the measure of it which you for the future accord to me'<sup>16</sup>. While this ritual served its purpose of promoting the landlord-tenant relationship as one of co-operation in which both parties had duties and responsibilities to each other, it was a mechanism through which landlords, such as Lord Clonbrock, legitimised the subordination of the tenantry. Howard Newby has argued that

paternalism does not exist in a social vacuum – it is derived from and embedded in a particular system of social stratification, the source of which is

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid

basically economic and objectified through property. Paternalism is therefore a method by which class relationships become defined, and grows out of the necessity to stabilize and hence morally justify a fundamentally inegalitarian system. Indeed it is tempting to regard such a system of traditional authority as involving no more than an exchange relationship, between paternalism on the one hand and deference on the other, yet this is to overlook the inherently hegemonic nature of traditional authority which defines the prevailing 'rate of exchange' as legitimate. It is precisely by defining the relationship as a free and fair exchange that it is stabilised.<sup>17</sup>

Luke Gerald Dillon could not have anticipated the amount of change that was to take place in the ensuing decades and the extent to which his happiness would actually be determined by the tenantry who, in a few short years, would begin severing the 'old social bonds'

The winds of change had begun to blow adversely against the Irish landed class and within two years of the tenantry presenting the testimonial to Luke Gerald, William Gladstone began to undermine the very foundations of landed dominance. He led the Liberals to victory in 1868 and the following year he began hacking at what he had called the three branches of the poisonous 'upas tree' of Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. His Church Act of 1869 lopped off the religion branch of the tree with one fell swoop and brought about disestablishment of the Irish Church. The land branch of this tree, he would find, was not to come off so easily but his land act of 1870 began the process of granting rights to the tenants that would, in time, culminate in the transfer of property from landlord to tenant.<sup>18</sup> The act did not sweep away entail and primogeniture, as the *Freeman's Journal* claimed in 1877, but it 'did mark the interference of parliament with previously sacrosanct rights of property'.<sup>19</sup> W. E. Vaughan has argued that the act was Gladstone's attempt to make tenants secure in their holdings and was 'a remarkable change' from the pre-existing laws governing landlord and tenant. From its introduction in August 1870 it became an impediment to estate management.

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<sup>17</sup> Newby, *Property, paternalism, and power*, pp 28-9

<sup>18</sup> See Terence Dooley, *'The land for the people' the land question in independent Ireland* (Dublin, 2004)

<sup>19</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 10 Nov 1877, R. V. Comerford, 'Gladstone's first Irish enterprise' in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A new history of Ireland, v Ireland under the union* (Oxford, 1989), p 450

as it became more difficult for landlords to change the terms of existing yearly tenancies Existing rents could not be changed except by the agreement of both parties, or by the landlord evicting the tenant, but if the tenant were evicted he might receive as much as seven times the existing rent in compensation for disturbance<sup>20</sup>

Clonbrock opposed the measure and expressed a dissentient voice for a number of reasons, some of which elucidate how paternal power operated on the Clonbrock estates Clonbrock's first reason, an inversion of Drummond's dictum, stated that 'property has its rights as well as its duties, and the present bill is the greatest violation of them in modern times' The second was that the bill would 'promote litigation between the owners and occupiers of the soil, and interfere with those reciprocal feelings of cordiality and good will on which the welfare of an agricultural community so much depends'<sup>21</sup>

The previous chapter has shown how the 3 Fs, as 'gifts' of the landlord, existed in some form on the Clonbrock estates so Lord Clonbrock was not opposed to the principles of the bill However, there was a difference between these *de facto* privileges that his tenants 'enjoyed' and the granting of *de jure* rights to them, which is what the bill sought to achieve Clonbrock, it appears, understood the power of these gifts, or non-contractual privileges, and the role they played in the process of *identification* as they engendered 'reciprocal feelings of cordiality and good will' which were essential in the successful management of the deferential dialectic and for this reason he was unwilling to relinquish them Gladstone's legislative assault on Protestant ascendancy had certainly altered the Irish political landscape and it is, perhaps, no coincidence that it was during his first term as prime minister, between 1868 and 1874, that deference to landed authority on the Clonbrock estates began to crumble The following section will now examine how Clonbrock's 'gift' of a school to his tenantry in the parish of Killosolan, instead of assisting in the process of *identification* and contributing to the successful management of the deferential dialectic, became a focal point for conflict between him and a local priest and would

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<sup>20</sup> W E Vaughan, 'Ireland c 1870' in W E Vaughan (ed), *A new history of Ireland, v Ireland under the union* (Oxford, 1989), p 755

<sup>21</sup> *Hansard* 3, ccm, 30 (10 Aug 1838)

eventually embroil the highest levels of the Catholic hierarchy and undermine the paternal relationship which had been carefully managed

### **Paternalism complicated: the case of Killosoan school**

Since its inception in 1831 the national schools system continued to expand so that by 1868 there were 6,520 schools rolls registered with the national board. By this time the hedge-schools had disappeared from the parish of Ahascragh and two national schools had emerged (see Fig 5.1). The disparity in the figures for 1834 and 1869 can be explained by the different methodologies employed to determine the number of pupils attending schools, in 1834 they were calculated according to the number of schoolchildren on the roll while in 1869 they were determined by the number of children actually present in the school on the day of inspection. This disparity in the figures can be further explained by the population decline that occurred in the post-Famine years<sup>22</sup>. However, the salient point is the apparent decline in influence that Clonbrock wielded over matters of education in the parish. In 1834 there were 34.4 per cent<sup>23</sup> of the schoolchildren in the parish attending Clonbrock school while in 1869 there was only 15.1 per cent.

<b>Attendance at schools in the parish of Ahascragh, 25 June 1868</b>							
	Ahascragh N S	Dalysgrove N S	Clonbrock	Weston	Hedge schools	L H S	Total
1834	0	0	185	18	284	50	538
1869	112	27	26	7	0	0	172

**Fig. 5.1 Source:** *Royal commission of inquiry primary education (Ireland) Vol vi Educational census Returns showing the number of children actually present in each primary school on 25th June, 1868 With introductory observations and analytical tables*, p 142 [C 6-V], H.L. 1870, xxviii, 196

D. K. Akenson has argued that the national school board founded in the 1830s increasingly fell under the control of the Catholic Church which 'was of course a mirror of the rapidly shifting balance of power within Ireland in the nineteenth

<sup>22</sup>Cormac O Grada, *Ireland a new economic history, 1780-1939* (Oxford, 1994), p 215

<sup>23</sup> See chapter two

century’<sup>24</sup> Spearheading this ‘religious revolution’ was Paul Cardinal Cullen whose path was to cross with Lord Clonbrock’s at the *Powis Commission* in 1868 Clonbrock was one of the commissioners appointed to this inquiry which investigated primary education in Ireland in an attempt to find out what measures could be implemented to improve the system Cullen, on the other hand gave evidence to the commission which ‘has been lauded by experts to be the most complete statement of Roman Catholic claims in the matter of primary education’<sup>25</sup> While the inquiry was taking place at national level Clonbrock locked horns at local level with the parish priest of Killosolan over the management of a school he was building for his tenants’ children The building of a school should have been an opportunity for Clonbrock to reap the rewards of a deferential tenantry that were thankful for his benevolence but a dispute over who had the right to appoint the master resulted in Clonbrock himself having to defer to the wishes of Catholic Church Thus, the Killosolan school dispute perfectly illustrates, at a micro level, the power shift which Akenson argues was taking place at this time, and the pervasive nature of Cullen’s power

As the school was being built in 1868 Clonbrock sought the assistance of the local parish priest, Father Healy, to choose a master but Healy claimed that it was he, ‘as the people’s pastor’, rather than Clonbrock who had the right to choose to make this selection<sup>26</sup> Healy had the full support of his bishop, the ‘out-and-out Cullenite’, Dr Laurence Gillooly,<sup>27</sup> so Clonbrock, in an attempt to resolve the issue began to communicate with the bishop He explained that he did not want to interfere with the education of the children and had offered to provide a Catholic master but claimed his right as the ‘patron of the school, built by myself, on my own property to have the exclusive right of appointing and dismissing the master’<sup>28</sup> He added that he was anxious to have the assistance and co-operation of the priest and that the

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<sup>24</sup> Akenson, *Education experiment*, p 4

<sup>25</sup> Colin Barr, “Imperium in Imperio” Irish episcopal imperialism in the nineteenth century’ in *English Historical Review*, cxxiii (2008), p 623, for further reading on Cullen see Colin Barr, *Paul Cullen, John Henry Newman and the Catholic University, 1845-1865* (Notre Dame, 2003), Desmond Bowen, *Paul Cardinal Cullen and the shaping of modern Irish Catholicism* (Ontario, 1983)

<sup>26</sup> Copy of letter to Dr Laurence Gillooly, 2 June 1868 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,729 (1))

<sup>27</sup> Desmond Bowen, *Paul Cardinal Cullen and the shaping of modern Irish Catholicism* (Ontario, 1983), p 228

<sup>28</sup> Copy of letter to Gillooly, 2 June 1868 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,729 (1))



appointment of the master would be guided by his opinion as he had no desire to have a master that the priest disapproved of 'with respect to faith and morals' Clonbrock believed that the Catholic Church's claims relative to the school were 'excluding me from that which I deem to be my right' regarding the employment of the master Clonbrock wished to inquire whether the bishop still refused his consent for the establishment of the school and was eager to hear his views on the matter<sup>29</sup>

Gillooly responded to Clonbrock a few days later outlining six reasons why the selection of the master had to be in the hands of the Catholic clergy Reasons four and five are amalgamated below

That the selection of teachers should exclusively belong to those whom the natural and divine law have charged with the education of youth-viz-to their parents and to their recognised spiritual pastors That consequently, the selection of school teachers for Catholic children cannot belong to non-Catholics, and that if made and enforced by them is a violation of the rights of Catholic parents and of the Catholic clergy-and in reality a most dangerous form of religious persecution, and that if such a selection is made as of right and enforced by landlords, even Catholic, it is an abuse of power, oppressive alike, to the tenants and to the clergy

This clearly set out the reasons why Gillooly was opposed to Clonbrock having anything to do with the selection of the master but one very important reason connected with Clonbrock's power to bestow a 'gift' was also outlined by Gillooly He could not 'concede to a particular landlord, because of his exceptional kindness and liberality, a power which the majority of landlords and even his own successors might abuse to our grievous detriment, nor accept as a favour, which may of course, be at any time withdrawn' The bishop stated that it was his desire to see the continuation of the good relations that existed on the estate and asked that Clonbrock 'reconsider the question of Killosolan school and recall a decision, which your tenants and their clergy should regard as an illiberal abuse of power' Finally, he added that if Clonbrock were to give up 'the entire management of the school to the parish priest, the establishment of the school would be more highly valued and more gratefully remembered by clergy and people, and your lordship's just

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid

influence over its direction, as regards its secular objects would be more cordially admitted' <sup>30</sup>

Essentially, Clonbrock was being asked to hand over complete control of the school and accept an ornamental role as its patron. Gillooly conceded that Clonbrock would have some secular influence over the school but in reality that was never a possibility. The control that the Catholic Church was seeking to impose in the case of Killosolan school reflects Cardinal Cullen's wider educational vision, which C Hayes has argued

proposed that state involvement in education should amount merely to the provision and supervised distribution of public monies to be used mainly for church controlled educational ventures. The Church, he insisted, must be the school mistress of her flock. Her divine commission to 'teach all nations' appertained to all facets of morality. It embraced, therefore, all fields of knowledge, secular and divine <sup>31</sup>

In the case of Killosolan school it was sufficient that Clonbrock was building it and an ornamental role as patron was about as much influence as the Catholic Church was willing to permit him.

The introduction to the chapter has referred to David Roberts' argument that, in England, landed paternalists and churchmen worked in unison and that it was 'only with the rule of landlord and parson, that a hierarchical, authoritarian, and organic society could be preserved' <sup>32</sup>. On an English estate the Killosolan school episode would not have occurred as landlord participation in the management of an estate school would have been regarded as a positive thing for which the tenantry would have been grateful. However, in Ireland, Clonbrock was being asked 'to give up doubtful disputed claims that excite alarm and mistrust and instead of strengthening, much weaken the attachment of [his] dependents' thus complicating his efforts to manage the deferential dialectic <sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Gillooly to Clonbrock, 6 June 1868 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,729 (1))

<sup>31</sup> C Hayes, 'The educational ideas of Paul Cardinal Cullen' in *Proceedings of the Educational Studies Association of Ireland* (1980), p. 6

<sup>32</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p. 72

<sup>33</sup> Gillooly to Clonbrock, 6 June 1868 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,729 (1))

The following year, 1869, the school and master's house were completed at a total cost of £232<sup>34</sup> However, the dispute concerning the appointment of the master remained unresolved and Healy communicated with Clonbrock claiming that he and his parishioners wished that the parish priest should 'always [be] recognised, both by the landlord and the national board as the official manager of the school of Killosolan, and that the landlord as a patron, will not interfere with the rights of the parish priest as manager'<sup>35</sup> It is unlikely that Clonbrock was accustomed to such assertions of authority from lower ranking clergy and refused to yield from his belief that he had the right to be the 'recognised manager of the school' suggesting that Healy recommend a candidate who had a certificate from the national board He stated that he had 'no intention or wish to interfere in the religious education of the school or indeed in any way unless asked upon to do so by the board of education At the same time I wish to retain the power of dismissing any teacher in the very improbable event of his conduct appearing to me to be objectionable'<sup>36</sup>

In response Healy explained that the rules of his church forbade him from accepting the offer He argued that it was his responsibility to cater for the religious instruction of his flock 'not only for the old, but also and more so of the young, as it is written "train up a child in the way he shall go and when he is old he will not depart from it" The secular and religious education is so interwoven in the Catholic, that none but the pastor can, with any security to the children, be manager' Healy went on to argue that the teacher might be an infidel and that as long as he behaved himself he would be considered a moral man Again Clonbrock was asked to reconsider his position 'and not withhold the management of the school, or sully the fair name of good landlord, so well earned, by interfering between the priest and his people'<sup>37</sup>

As a paternalist Clonbrock would have also considered the tenantry to be 'his people' but Healy was clearly laying a claim to them as his own on behalf of the Catholic Church By August the school was getting ready to open its doors and the

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<sup>34</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1869 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,362)

<sup>35</sup> Healy to Clonbrock, 24 May 1869 (Ibid, MS 35,729 (1))

<sup>36</sup> Clonbrock to Healy, 26 May 1869, Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Healy to Clonbrock, 28 May 1869, Ibid

matter remained unresolved Healy wrote once again to Clonbrock stating that he was ordered by the bishop 'to caution the people of Killosoolan against sending their children to that school unless the parish priest is the official manager of it' Healy stated his position in relation to a similar case that had happened previously at Castle Ffrench In that instance the late Mr Thornton built a school and insisted that he be the manager but the parish priest imposed a ban on the school until the management was handed over to him Therefore, Healy argued 'I think, my lord, I have a right to expect the same obedience from the people that he had'<sup>38</sup> Here again is evidence of the local priest expressing his power by asserting that he had the 'right to obedience from the people' Clonbrock replied that he was aware of the clergy's opposition to the new school but that he could only do the best he could under the circumstances as he had been deprived of Healy's assistance in the selection of a master He stated his intentions to contact his friend Mr Deade, a Roman Catholic, who would be able to recommend 'a fit and proper person to take charge of the school It must then remain to be seen whether the people will be willing to forego the opportunity which will be offered them of a good education for their children without any possible danger to their religious faith and principles'<sup>39</sup>

The standoff was set to continue with neither party willing to budge on the issue and Healy replied to Clonbrock immediately arguing that, even though a Catholic was involved in the selection process, this teacher would be as objectionable as one selected by Clonbrock himself<sup>40</sup> Cardinal Cullen 'claimed prerogative related to the appointment, dismissal and behaviour of schoolteachers [and that] they should be kept under constant clerical surveillance in all their teaching work' He expressed this view in pastoral letters as well as to the Powis commission so the Killosoolan school dispute could be said to have been spearheaded by Cullen as Bishop Gillooly, and Father Healy were following his lead<sup>41</sup> Healy continued to register his protest at Clonbrock's attempts to control the school arguing that it was 'an anomaly to see the management of a school denominationally and truly Catholic in the hands of a Protestant It is just the same as to see a Protestant nobleman building a chapel for

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<sup>38</sup> Healy to Clonbrock, 4 Aug 1869, *Ibid*

<sup>39</sup> Clonbrock to Healy, 6 Aug 1869, *Ibid*

<sup>40</sup> Healy to Clonbrock, 6 Aug 1869, *Ibid*

<sup>41</sup> Hayes, 'The educational ideas of Paul Cardinal Cullen', pp 5-6

his Catholic tenantry and holding the management of the congregation, with the power of appointing and dismissing the priest contrary to the authority of his bishop' <sup>42</sup>

It was not until the following year, 1870, that there appears to have been a resolution to the affair and that Clonbrock had been dealing directly with Cardinal Cullen whom he had most likely met while serving on the Powis commission. In negotiations with Cullen, Clonbrock expressed his 'readiness to give the management of Killosohan school to the parish priest for the time being' and to have the school opened as soon as possible <sup>43</sup>. Cullen wrote to Bishop Gillooly who gave his assent to Clonbrock's proposal and it was expected that Cullen would communicate with Clonbrock informing him of this. Cullen, however, neglected to communicate with Clonbrock which explains the delay in getting the school open. Gillooly explained that this oversight of Cullen's was 'because of the duties with which he was overwhelmed at the time of his departure for Rome [so] he entirely lost sight of the subject' <sup>44</sup>. Gillooly apologised that Clonbrock's letter had gone unanswered and that, given the conciliatory spirit in which Clonbrock had acted in regard to the school, he regretted 'that there should be even the appearance of neglect or discourtesy toward you on my part or that of the cardinal' <sup>45</sup>

To avoid any further delay Gillooly wrote directly to Clonbrock setting out conditions in order 'that [the] school question may be settled at once and that your tenants' children may no longer be deprived of the educational opportunities that they stand so badly in need of'. Gillooly suggested, firstly, that Clonbrock and his future representatives were to be the patrons of the school as long as they rescinded all claims to its management. Secondly, that the clergymen appointed by him (Gillooly) or his successors to the parish of Caltra-Killosohan were 'to be the managers of the school and have the free appointment and dismissal of the teachers employed therein, subject to the control of the bishop and of the education board'. If Clonbrock was prepared to meet these conditions Gillooly promised that the

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<sup>42</sup> Healy to Clonbrock, 6 Aug 1869 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,729 (1))

<sup>43</sup> Gillooly to Clonbrock, 24 Aug 1870 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,729 (1))

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*

Catholic clergy would pay 'prompt and cardinal attention' to any representations that he (Clonbrock) or his successors made in relation to the school and expressed the hope that 'further misunderstandings which [he was] most anxious to avoid, [would] be prevented' <sup>46</sup>

Clonbrock replied to Gillooly and, more or less, accepted his terms which represented a significant climb-down since the beginning of the affair when he claimed the exclusive right to appoint and dismiss the manager. Clonbrock nominally reserved the right to appoint the master but acknowledged that in reality the parish priest

will have the appointment of the master inasmuch as I undertake to appoint whomsoever he may select. Practically, also the parish priest would have the power of dismissal of the master for any offences or shortcomings when religion should be concerned and I should not think for a moment of retaining a man, with whom, in this respect, he should be dissatisfied. But I also reserve to myself the power of dismissing any master should I see the necessity of doing so [but that] this power will not be arbitrarily exercised.

Clonbrock concluded the letter by stating that these were the views that he

had the honour to submit to his eminence Cardinal Cullen and which I believed to have been deemed by him worthy of his recommendation to your lordship [Gillooly] for approval. I need only add that for his approval I have waited patiently for nine months, as I was anxious to show the possibility of bishop priest and landlord working harmoniously together for the benefit of the people <sup>47</sup>

By now Clonbrock and Gillooly were close to agreement and sole management of the school was handed over to the parish priest of Caltra-Killosolan with Lord Clonbrock as patron. Gillooly accepted Clonbrock's proposal so long as his interference was limited to the terms specified in his letter and provided the authority he claimed in the future direction of the school was 'no more than I should freely invite you, as the donor of the school to exercise, even if it did not belong of right to you, as patron of the school' <sup>48</sup>. Overall the outcome of this affair was a significant victory for the Catholic clergy but Gillooly was prepared to seek further

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Clonbrock to Gillooly, 26 Aug 1870 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,729 (1))

<sup>48</sup> Gillooly to Clonbrock, 1 Sept 1870, Ibid

concessions from Clonbrock with regard to Clonbrock school, at Kilglass, on the outskirts of his demesne Gillooly made a request that

the school at your gate, which is chiefly frequented by Catholic children would employ in it at least one Catholic teacher and thus give your tenantry a further evidence of your fairness and generosity and of your respect for their religious convictions This I beg your lordship to do- or else place that school, in the same way as that of Killosolan, in connection with the education board I should very much regret, after settling one cause of disagreement to see another one subsist, against which it must ever be my duty to raise my voice and exercise my authority<sup>49</sup>

In reply Clonbrock thanked Gillooly for his letter informing him that the school at Killosolan would be 'opened under favourable auspices and confer much benefit on the district' However, he expressed his regret that he could not accede to Gillooly's wish that he

should alter the constitution of the school at Kilglass This is a school supported entirely by myself without any national assistance It has always been under the charge of a Protestant master and mistress for the benefit of the Protestant children but it has for upwards of 40 years been attended by a large number of Roman Catholic children I have always most strictly insisted that no attempt should be made to shake the faith of any Roman Catholic and I state that my wishes in this respect have been carried out, as I have never had a single complaint on the subject I can only hope that your lordship will not think it necessary to interfere with a school of such long standing and which has been the means of imparting a large amount of useful instruction to those residing in its immediate neighbourhood<sup>50</sup>

Here Clonbrock appears to express fear that Clonbrock school was next on the Catholic clergy's list of schools to control, and seems to use deferent language in an appeal to leave it be As it turned out they did not seek any further concessions with regard to Clonbrock school and it remained in his control but the whole affair of the Killosolan school would certainly have taken would certainly have left him pondering the ascendant power of the Catholic Church

This section has illustrated how, in Ireland, the paternalism of property and the paternalism of the church did not work in unison to form the central pillars of paternalism as they did in England Clonbrock certainly wished that it was the case

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> Clonbrock to Gillooly, 5 Sept 1870 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,729 (1))

as he 'was anxious to show the possibility of bishop priest and landlord working harmoniously together for the benefit of the people' However, as we have seen relations between the landed class and the Catholic Church were, due to the difference in religion, always going to be tense Although the Killosolan school affair went unreported in the newspapers there can hardly be any doubt, with a school and master's house remaining unused for a year, that the affair was a topic of conversation at firesides, fairs, and markets, and would have spread to other sections of the estate The Catholic clergy had taken a successful stand against landed authority and this, perhaps, provided an inspiration for the tenantry to refuse, *en masse*, Clonbrock's 'request' to vote for his candidate in the Trench-Nolan by-election of 1872

### **The Trench-Nolan by election of 1872: a further crack in deference to Clonbrock**

When W H Gregory, M P for County Galway, was appointed governor general of India in 1871 his parliamentary seat in the House of Commons became vacant and a by-election was called It was contested by a Home Rule, and Catholic, candidate, Captain John Philip Nolan, a Galway landowner based at Ballinderry outside Kilconnell, and a Tory candidate, Captain William le Poer Trench, the second son of the earl of Clancarty On 8 February 1872 Nolan was declared the winner by an overwhelming majority but as the Trench camp accused Nolan and his supporters, which included the Catholic Church, of intimidating electors with temporal and spiritual punishment an inquiry was held to establish the veracity of these claims Passions ran high as there was much resentment against Trench, especially within Catholic circles, because of the proselytising efforts of his father and extended family The vast majority of Galway electors were the tenants of Protestant landlords, including Clonbrock, who urged them to vote for Trench, so the mass defiance of their wishes is evidence of the further crumbling of the deference to which they had been accustomed The secret ballot had not yet been introduced so the public nature of this defiance further embittered landlords, who simply could not believe that their tenants were capable of such insubordination They were of the view that it had been orchestrated by the Catholic Church and claimed that a



campaign of intimidation had been waged from the altars and pulpits of the county. The subsequent inquiry into the affair heard evidence from priests, bishops, landlords, agents, and tenants which permits a rare window through which to obtain insights, at estate level, into the growing power of the Catholic Church, the 'gift' as an inducement to good behaviour, and the increasing difficulty with which Clonbrock was faced in his management of the deferential dialectic.

Among those that gave evidence were Lord Clonbrock, priests from three parishes on the estate, Caltra-Killosolan, Kılconnel, and Cappataggle, as well as from Pat Barrett, the tenant who had been evicted by Clonbrock twelve years earlier. Father White, the curate in the parish of Caltra-Killosolan, and deputy of Father Healy, was accused of promoting the Nolan cause from the altar of his Caltra church. He stated that he only spoke about the election in his chapel because pressure was being applied to the tenants by the local landlords to vote for Trench. While he believed Lord Clonbrock to be a good landlord for whom he had the 'height of respect' he claimed that 'every voter in the parish [had] suffered pressure from the landlords and agents' to vote for Trench. He related how the agent on the Blakeney estate visited the tenantry and informed them that it was the 'wish of Captain Blakeney [that his tenantry] vote for Captain Trench, and they felt it very difficult to go against the wishes of their landlord. In the same way the tenants of Lord Clonbrock spoke to me and said, that they had been called upon by the agent twice' <sup>51</sup>

White argued that the Clonbrock tenantry 'felt pressurised' especially as the landlord had taken the trouble of asking them in the way he did, that he would take it as an especial favour'. White appears to be referring to what K. T. Hoppen has described as the widespread use of 'codes and hints that voters and dependants needed always to construe words carefully. Nudges and winks were endlessly transmitted in "requests", "wishes", "hopes", in "asking" rather than "pressing"' <sup>52</sup>. Implicit in these 'requests' or 'especial favours' were the non-contractual privileges relating to

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<sup>51</sup> *Galway election. Copy of the minutes of evidence taken at the trial of the Galway county election petition, with an appendix*, p. 700. H.C. 1872 (242-I), xlviii, 785 (henceforth *Galway county election petition minutes of evidence*).

<sup>52</sup> Hoppen, *Elections politics and society*, p. 146.

the holding of land or other bequests that were in the landlord's power to bestow. As it transpired thirty-nine of the forty tenants from which the 'especial favour' was asked did not comply, but as Hoppen further argues 'when almost everyone disobeyed, there was little landlords and agents could do' <sup>53</sup>

White reveals a salient point about the practice of paternalism on the estate and the significance of the 'gift' in the management of the deferential dialectic. According to his evidence a tenant by the name of Ryan told him that 'he was afraid that he would not get slates for [the] house that he was building, as the agent had promised, if he voted for Captain Nolan' <sup>54</sup>. Confirming Hoppen's argument about codes, nudges, and winks, White stated that no explicit threat had been made regarding the slates. That is how paternal power was supposed to work, the subordinated group were expected to read the codes and conform to a certain mode of behaviour. While the mass defiance of Clonbrock's 'wishes' in relation to the election provides evidence that these codes were being discarded, Ryan's case illustrates how they may have been more generally adhered to in former years and the role that the gift played as an inducement to good behaviour. Newby has argued the exercise of traditional authority was somewhat more complex than an exchange relationship between paternalism and deference arguing that it was the ability of the superordinate power to define the 'rate of exchange' as legitimate which was the lynch pin of hegemonic power. With the disestablishment of the Church and the land act it was not as easy for the landed class to legitimise their hegemony and sometimes as Ryan's case has shown, the exercise of traditional authority was 'no more than an exchange relationship, between paternalism on the one hand and deference on the other' <sup>55</sup>

The evidence presented by Clonbrock shows that while it was one thing for tenants to behave in a non-deferential manner, the expression of this kind of behaviour from children must have been very worrying indeed, although Clonbrock himself made light of it. In the run up to the election, when riding home from a board of guardians

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p 151

<sup>54</sup> *Galway county election petition minutes of evidence*, p 700, H C 1872 (242-I), xlviii, 786

<sup>55</sup> Newby, *Property, paternalism, and power*, pp 28-29

meeting at Mountbellew, he ‘came through a mob [that] saluted me with “Hey for Nolan, Lord Clonbrock go to the devil” I have no doubt that it was playful I went on a little further, and even out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, I heard the same thing, for all the national school children shouted “Hey for Nolan”’<sup>56</sup> On the Ballydonlan portion of his estate the children attending Cappataggle national school showed the same enthusiasm for Nolan after reputedly hearing a rousing sermon by Fr Byrne, the curate He spoke of how the ‘Protestant landlords of [the] county combined with a few Catholics, if they be worthy of the name, want to pawn on a Catholic constituency, a member of a family who have been at all times the direct enemies of our religion and our faith’ A local respectable resident, Mr Fahy, a Catholic, who declared he was going to vote for Trench, was visited by the schoolchildren who requested that he vote for Captain Nolan Father Byrne was questioned as to whether he had any hand in promoting this but he denied it stating that he was absent the day that the incident occurred<sup>57</sup> However, there can hardly be any doubt that the decline of influence in the sphere of education must have been a contributory factor to the show of non-deferential behaviour by the schoolchildren

Further insights into how Clonbrock viewed the different classes of tenantry on his estates were revealed in his evidence He only ‘requested’ the votes from certain tenants whom he considered incapable of making an informed decision He spoke of how the lower classes of tenantry had less ‘knowledge or inclination for politics, and therefore vote not so much according to their political opinions as to oblige somebody, it maybe the priest or the landlord In 99 cases out of 100 I do not think they have sufficient political knowledge to judge’ Clonbrock explained that when he spoke of ‘his tenants’ it was ‘about those whom I naturally supposed would go with me, but I had several gentlemen who held grass farms, and do not know how they voted for I never asked’<sup>58</sup> While analysis of the rent rolls reveals the glaring class differences between the grazier or ‘gentleman’ farmers and the smaller class of tenantry, rarely are these differences so clearly spelt out by Clonbrock Essentially, it reveals that two economic systems existed side by side, the political economy of

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<sup>56</sup> *Galway county election petition minutes of evidence*, p 404, H C 1872 (242-I), xlviii, 490

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p 584, H C 1872 (242-I), xlviii, 670

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p 406, H C 1872 (242-I), xlviii, 491

which the grazing system was part where the tenants were not expected to vote with the landlord, and the moral economy or paternal system, where the tenants had traditionally been expected to conform with to their landlord's 'wishes'.

The revolt against deference that the by-election had precipitated gave Clonbrock serious cause for concern as not only tenants but even 'babes and sucklings' were behaving in an insolent fashion. This chapter will conclude with a final example of how deference to Clonbrock was crumbling by examining Pat Barrett's role in the election. Since he had been evicted by Clonbrock, in 1860, Barrett had been 'jobbing in cattle going from fair to fair and market to market'. At a Nolan election rally in Ballinasloe he led the Tuam marching band up to the police station where he 'took off his hat and cheered for Nolan, "and to hell with Trench"'. Furthermore, he was heard saying that Captain Nolan was going 'to give [him] a better farm than [he] was dispossessed of by Lord Clonbrock and lots of money'<sup>59</sup>. He was frequently witnessed at Athenry railway station using violent and abusive language to landlords and their supporters and on the day of the election nomination he was arrested for assault.

Since his eviction he and Clonbrock had met several times and according to Clonbrock's evidence he had been 'rather courteous in his conduct' but this was not to be the case when their paths crossed on the day that the election results were announced. On that day Clonbrock and Luke Gerald Dillon were travelling home and they needed to change trains at Athenry when they had the misfortune to run into him. To get to the second train he and Luke Gerald had to walk the whole length of the crowded platform during which time Barrett gave Clonbrock 'very considerable abuse, indeed he called me "blind old thief"'. He also spoke to Luke Gerald about his futile attempt to canvass for Trench among the tenants as he 'Pat Barrett had been there as a canvasser before him and secured their votes on the other side'<sup>60</sup>. Barrett's behaviour is another indication that the deference to which landlords were accustomed was shattered during this election. Previously Barrett

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p 235, H C 1872 (242-I), xlviii, 321

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p 404, H C 1872 (242-I), xlviii, 490

had been courteous in his conduct to Clonbrock despite his eviction but he appeared to unleash his frustration at this time when tensions had been aroused during the campaign. In his evidence Captain Nolan denied that he had ever promised a farm or money to Barrett or recruited him as a canvasser. When questioned as to whether he believed Clonbrock to be a tyrant landlord he replied: 'Certainly not Lord Clonbrock'. However, he did state that Luke Gerald and Charles Filgate had aroused a certain degree of indignation because they 'were both canvassing very actively and strongly, and there was pressure being put upon the tenantry at a certain time'.<sup>61</sup>

In his own evidence Lord Clonbrock related how he had given specific instructions to Luke Gerald that when canvassing on his behalf 'You will distinctly tell every tenant who I ask to vote that I make no threat and hold out no inducement'.<sup>62</sup> It was his view that Luke Gerald had complied with his wishes but as we have seen earlier the 'nudges and winks' and 'especial favours' made the 'wishes' of the landlord clear. The Catholic clergy, on the other hand were very explicit about how they wanted their congregations to vote. This was very clear in the cases of Fr White of Caltra and Fr Byrne of Cappataggle. No less explicit were the instructions of Fr Manning of Kilconnell who stated from the altar 'that any Catholic voting for Captain Trench would have the finger of scorn pointed at him by his fellow Catholics'. A good number of Clonbrock's tenants held farms in his parish and Clonbrock had instructed his bailiff to canvass for Trench. Manning condemned the forceful manner in which the bailiff demanded that the tenants tell him who they were going to vote for. However: 'they would not answer one way or the other. He said such conduct on the part of the bailiff was most reprehensible ..... He also said that he hoped that it might not happen again; but that if the man did go to the houses he asked them no more than to give him a cold water bath'.<sup>63</sup>

The difference between the implicit and explicit forms of persuasion was to bring judgement against the priests while Clonbrock and the landlords were exonerated.

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 739, H.C. 1872 (242-I), xlviii, 825.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 406, H.C. 1872 (242-I), xlviii, 491.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 27, H.C. 1872 (242-I), xlviii, 113.

Hoppen has argued that landlords and agents ‘were deeply engaged in the business of ‘influence’ An amorphous term at the time ‘influence’ could range from ‘legitimate’ to ‘undue’ or even ‘illegal’<sup>64</sup> When Justice Keogh passed judgement on the case he found that the three priests were guilty of ‘undue influence within the meaning of the Corrupt Practices Act and also guilty of intimidation, by means of threats and denunciations of temporal injury, and spiritual punishment’<sup>65</sup> However, he found that Clonbrock did ‘not canvass his tenants at the last election, but that his son did so, without, however, any attempt to coerce them’<sup>66</sup> The luckless Pat Barrett, on the other hand, was committed to prison for one month for contempt of court having accosted a witness who gave evidence at the trial in favour of the Trench camp<sup>67</sup> Justice Keogh’s final judgement found that undue influence had been applied by the clergy and Nolan supporters with the result that Nolan’s victory was overturned and he was unseated from parliament and replaced by Captain Trench However, the furore caused by the election and the accusations of interference were significant factors in the passing of the secret ballot that year When the next general election took place in 1874 Trench lost his seat and Nolan was successful which calls Justice Keogh’s judgement into question

## Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to illustrate how religious differences between Clonbrock and the representatives of the Catholic Church proved to be a significant impediment to the management of the deferential dialectic on an Irish landed estate It began with an exploration of the marriage of the heir as a further example of how life cycle rituals were used to stabilise social relations and define the prevailing rate of exchange as legitimate It has further argued that the building of Killosolan school, which should have been an opportunity for Clonbrock to cultivate a degree of *identification*, exposed the inherent tensions between the landed class and the Catholic Church that were manifested in a dispute over the school’s management and impeded rather than facilitated the management of the deferential dialectic The

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<sup>64</sup> Hoppen, *Elections politics and society*, p 146

<sup>65</sup> *Galway county election petition appendix*, p 895, 955, 989, H C 1872 (242-I), xlviII, 981, 1041, 1075

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p 902, H C 1872 (242-I), xlviII, 988

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p 886, H C 1872 (242-I), xlviII, 972

growing power of the Catholic Church at the expense of the landed and Protestant interest was further illustrated in the Trench/Nolan by-election revealing salient points about the workings of paternalism and the social hierarchy on the Clonbrock estates. Together, these various sections have shown that despite Clonbrock's best efforts to preserve the 'hierarchical, authoritarian, and organic society', essential to the continuation of landed power the cracks had begun to appear and the future, even at this early stage, looked ominous for him.

## Chapter six

### Swimming against the tide: the troubled years of the 1880s

Despite the weakening effects that the Killosolan school episode and the Trench-Nolan by election had on the deferential dialectic, the signature rituals of paternalism continued to be performed on the estate. In 1877 Luke Gerald Dillon returned to Ireland after spending two winters abroad in order to recover his health. He and his wife, Augusta, arrived at Clonbrock on 28 June where they ‘were welcomed by bonfires, flags, evergreens and the men took the horses from the carriage at Keogh’s gate [the front gate] and dragged us to the house, all the place and around turned out’<sup>1</sup>. Sixteen years later, in 1893, following the death of Lord Clonbrock, tenants unhitched the horses from the carriage bearing his remains and pulled it from Clonbrock House to the church in Ahascragh<sup>2</sup>. Across the country during the intervening years, especially during the 1880s, the relationships of paternalism and deference that were a feature of landed estate life were undermined through rent strikes, boycotts, and agrarian violence precipitated by the agricultural downturn and economic crisis of the late 1870s. While relations completely broke down on some estates between 1879 and 1882 this was not the case with Clonbrock. For this reason it has attracted the attention of scholars seeking to gain an understanding of landlord-tenant relations from the post-Famine period to the end of the turbulent period of the 1880s culminating with the Plan of Campaign<sup>3</sup>.

This chapter will show how the paternal style of estate management persisted in the post-Famine period and that a continued adherence to it during the Land War helped Clonbrock to defuse potential agitation on the estate, which, paying dividends, allowed him, and Luke Gerald, to exercise continued influence on the local board of guardians. While Clonbrock was successful in defusing agitation during the first phase of the Land War, 1879-82, his capacity to manage the deferential dialectic began to diminish as agitation broke out during the Plan of Campaign in 1887 after

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<sup>1</sup> Diary of Augusta Caroline Dillon, 1877 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,788 (4))

<sup>2</sup> *Irish Times*, 4 Dec 1893

<sup>3</sup> See for example Dooley, *The decline of the big house*, Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants*, O’Sullivan, ‘Landlord-tenant relations on the Clonbrock estate, 1849-1893’



which time, in a firm rejection of paternalism, tenants began to make use of the land courts to adjudicate a fair rent. The final section of the chapter will explore how the rituals that had defined paternalism and deference were becoming somewhat anachronistic by examining how the 'coming of age' had become a pale shadow of what it had been in former years and that the funeral of Lord Clonbrock in 1893 was, in many ways, the death march of paternalism on the Clonbrock estates.

### **The early phase of the Land War: 1879-1882**

J. S. Donnelly has argued that in County Cork at the beginning of 1877 relations between landlords and tenants 'appeared so calm that the violent land war which erupted within less than three years could only have been seen by a great leap of the imagination'.<sup>4</sup> The situation began to change that year as two very important forces were in train that together would bring the land question to the fore in east Galway. Firstly the harvest of 1877 was abysmal due to inclement weather that was set to continue for a number of years. Secondly, W. E. Gladstone, who had resigned as the leader of the Liberal Party in 1874, visited Dublin and made a play for the Irish nationalist vote arousing suspicion that he was once again seeking to return as leader of the Liberals. He was awarded the freedom of Dublin city and was feted at City Hall and the Mansion House where he revealed his thoughts on the Irish question. Expressing similar ideas to those put forward by Gustave de Beaumont in the 1830s<sup>5</sup> he described his own creed on the issue of land and how he 'attached no value to the ... system of land laws with respect to entails and settlements'. In England he regarded the 'relation of landlord and tenant as inseparable from [the] social state' but he believed that the situation was 'different in Ireland' and while he 'attached small importance to the acquisition of small properties in England [he attached] great importance to it in Ireland'.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Donnelly, Jr., *The land and the people*, p. 251.

<sup>5</sup> See chapter one. By this time Gladstone's position on the land question had been influenced by the thinking of John Stuart Mill who was an advocate of peasant proprietorship; See, Graham Finlay, 'John Stuart Mill and Ireland' in Ó Síocháin (ed.), *Social thought on Ireland* pp 27-46.

<sup>6</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 8 Nov. 1877; for a discussion of Gladstone's visit to Ireland see Kevin McKenna, 'From private visit to public opportunity: Gladstone's 1877 trip to Ireland' in Mary E. Daly and K. T. Hoppen (eds), *Gladstone: Ireland and beyond* (Dublin, 2011), pp 77-89.

The convergence of bad harvests and the subsequent economic crisis, together with Gladstone's return to power, brought the land question, which had been silently simmering since his first land act in 1870, back to the boil once again. Tenants began agitating for more clearly defined rights in relation to the holding of land and the formation of the Land League, with its clarion call for the 3Fs, created a new force in Irish politics that would irretrievably alter the relationship between landlord and tenant, even on estates like Clonbrock's, where there was relatively little agitation<sup>7</sup>

The paternal style of estate management is the most likely reason that agitation was avoided on Clonbrock's estates. Chapter one has shown how a considerable amount of money was expended on improvements in the pre-Famine period and W. E. Vaughan has calculated that in the 1850s and 1860s Clonbrock re-invested 11 per cent of his gross income improving his estates<sup>8</sup>. The rental and account books for the period between 1869 and 1879 are not extant but Clonbrock's land agent, John Ross Mahon, when questioned about expenditure on improvements at the Bessborough commission, estimated that 'the amount expended by the landlord in the ten years including 1878 was £5,700'<sup>9</sup>. The projected rental for 1868 multiplied by ten is £103,329 and a reasonable estimate for the rental over the ten year period of which the £5,700 expended on improvements represents 5.5 per cent.

The reason that expenditure on improvements declined during this decade is unclear but this was the general trend on six of the seven estates in Vaughan's sample<sup>10</sup>. Vaughan has estimated that re-investment by Irish landlords in their estates was as low as 4 or 5 per cent and by not reinvesting sufficient funds they had missed an opportunity to strengthen the relationship with their tenants. 'If a quarter of the rents had gone back to the tenants in the form of loans, gifts, new houses, and

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<sup>7</sup> For studies of the Land League see also, Paul Bew, *Land and the national question in Ireland, 1858-1882* (Dublin, 1978), Clarke, *The social origins*, Donnelly, *The land and the people*

<sup>8</sup> Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants*, p. 277

<sup>9</sup> *Report of her majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the working of the Landlord and tenant (Ireland) act, 1870, and the acts amending same Minutes of evidence*, p. 655-6 [C-2779-I], H. L. 1881, xviii, 873-4 (henceforth cited as the *Bessborough commission minutes of evidence*)

<sup>10</sup> Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants*, p. 277

drained fields, the tenants would have been inextricably tied to their landlords’<sup>11</sup> The figure expended on improvements on the Clonbrock estates for the 1850s and 1860s, at 11 per cent, combined with the 5.5 estimate for the 1870s gives an average expenditure of 8.6 per cent for the period between 1850 and 1880. This figure is considerably higher than the 4 to 5 per cent of Vaughan’s estimate for landlord re-investment<sup>12</sup> However, not all the Clonbrock land, especially the grazing land, needed draining and if it is considered that extensive grazing tenants paid almost half the rental in 1880 there would have been considerably more to spend on the draining of smaller farms<sup>13</sup> This is a salient point because at the Bessborough commission John Ross Mahon stated that expenditure on improvements was ‘almost entirely [on] drains’<sup>14</sup>

As well as Clonbrock’s support of the local schools and contributions to the local churches the most important reason that agitation did not break out is that the principal demands of the Land League, the 3Fs, had, in some shape or form, already been in existence since the 1850s<sup>15</sup> Although these were granted as privileges and not as rights their existence seems to have been a significant factor in the relative tranquillity of the Clonbrock estates. Vaughan has argued that at the outbreak of the Land War if the method used by a Kerry land agent for revaluing land were applied to the Clonbrock estates then rents charged would have been fifty per cent higher<sup>16</sup> Chapter four has shown how some evidence existed for ‘free sale’ on the Clonbrock estates in 1860 but this was emphatically denied by John Ross Mahon in 1880. When asked if the tenants had been ‘allowed the right of disposing of their holdings?’ he answered that ‘there has never been on any of them any tenant right’ However, regarding the passing on of holdings from one generation to the next he

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, p. 129

<sup>12</sup> Cormac O Grada has calculated that landlords invested no more than between 3 and 5 per cent between 1850 and 1875, Cormac O Gráda, ‘The investment behaviour of Irish landlords, 1850-75: some preliminary findings’ in *Agricultural History Review*, xxii (1975), pp. 151-3

<sup>13</sup> See below

<sup>14</sup> *Bessborough commission minutes of evidence*, p. 656 [C-27791-I], H.L. 1881, xviii, 874

<sup>15</sup> See chapter four

<sup>16</sup> Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants*, p. 50

stated that 'If a tenant leaves his holding to another, he is recognised as the tenant, unless there is some special reason to prevent it'<sup>17</sup>

Clonbrock's reputation as a good landlord continued into the 1880s and the management of the Clonbrock estates was frequently cited, by both the liberal and conservative press as a model for others to follow. Land League meetings were not usually events at which the praises of landlords were sung, yet at Cappataggle in December 1880, at the height of the agitation for the 3Fs, Clonbrock's management style was referred to as exemplary. James Kilmartin, a poor law guardian and leading figure in the Ballinasloe Tenant Defence Association, spoke of how 'he longed to see his countrymen like people of all free 'countries – owners' of the land, or at least, to have the land at a fair rent without any fear of being disturbed, like the tenants on Lord Clonbrock's estate'<sup>18</sup>. Kilmartin's statement provides interesting insights into the assertiveness that had developed amongst the tenant farmers and their representatives. In the 1850s and 1860s the non-contractual privileges that were 'enjoyed' by the Clonbrock tenants were the best that could be hoped for but by this time *de facto* 'privileges' were no longer enough and *de jure* rights were the minimum they were prepared to accept.

Another reason for the continuation of peaceful relations on the Clonbrock estates was the way in which Clonbrock dealt with the agricultural crisis and economic downturn. In the years 1880-82 he granted abatements of rent to tenants of £270, £570, and £497 representing 2.5, 5.3, and 4.3 per cent of gross rental, respectively for the years concerned<sup>19</sup>. Furthermore, he repeated the successful strategy he had employed during the Famine by applying for government loans to fund improvement schemes. In February 1880 he was approved for a loan of £7,545 of which £3,520 had been issued before the end of the year. This, no doubt, contributed to the alleviation of distress by providing paid employment for those who had suffered crop failures or were experiencing distress<sup>20</sup>. For those who were

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<sup>17</sup> *Bessborough commission minutes of evidence*, p. 655-6 [C2779-I], H L 1881, xviii, 873-4

<sup>18</sup> *Irish Times*, 28 Dec 1880

<sup>19</sup> O'Sullivan, 'Landlord-tenant relations on the Clonbrock estate, 1849-1893', p. 53

<sup>20</sup> *Return of the names of landowners and sanitary authorities who have obtained loans under the provisions of the Relief of distress (Ireland) acts, 1880*, p. 18, 22, H C 1881 (99) lvii, 670, 674

hit particularly badly he provided £188 in 'meal supplied to distressed tenants in the spring and summer of 1880'<sup>21</sup>

Clonbrock believed he was making adequate provision for his tenants and when he heard that some of them had also been receiving aid from the Ahascragh relief committee he asked John Ross Mahon to contact the Ahascragh parish priest, Fr Healy, and the chairman of the parish committee requesting that that they find more deserving objects for parish charity Mahon informed Healy that

The rumour in the country is that people are getting relief who do not want it As I have not seen the lists I cannot say, I know you have a hard card to play and your own kind disposition adds to the difficulty of refusing However when such very large employment [is] given on the Clonbrock and Castlegar estates I hope you will agree with me in thinking that the relief fund should be devoted to real objects of charity<sup>22</sup>

Thus, despite the disagreement over Killosoan school, Clonbrock and the Catholic clergy were co-operating with each other as Clonbrock received a list providing details of forty-three of his tenants that were in receipt of aid from the parish committee The tone of Mahon's letter to the parish committee was similar to the one sent to Healy

Lord Clonbrock desires me to say that he does not wish any tenants of his to get relief meal from the charitable funds at your disposal I have directions from his lordship to give labour to those who require it- one or two men from a family according to the number in a family Should there be cases where the family is large, and only one man fit for labour I am authorised to give meal gratuitously in aid There are many old helpless people around Ahascragh, who very much want food and I think it a hardship should they be cut short, to give it to people who can buy for themselves<sup>23</sup>

The evidence suggests that Clonbrock had responded well to the crisis and this was reflected at a Land League meeting in early December 1880 At this meeting, held at Cappataggle, the denunciation of landlords featured prominently but someone called out 'There are some good', to which the chairman of the meeting replied 'None in this locality but Lord Clonbrock, for whom I ask three loud and hearty

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<sup>21</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1880 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,633-5)

<sup>22</sup> Copies of letters sent by John Ross Mahon to Fr Healy and the Ahascragh relief committee, 22 Feb 1880 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,727)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

cheers’<sup>24</sup> While there was little or no trouble on the Clonbrock estates during the early phase of the Land War, John Ross Mahon was pessimistic about the future of landlords. In a letter to his brother in 1882 he expressed the view that although landlords were loyal and true they were, nonetheless, being swept away by the British government. ‘Fortunately, I have not invested money in land. I am thoroughly sick of the country and its inhabitants. They seem to be getting worse daily and the country itself cannot get right in my lifetime’<sup>25</sup> By the following year he was somewhat more optimistic as he was able to report ‘a considerable mend in Irish affairs’ as combinations against payment of rent had abated. Now that the danger was past he was less antagonistic to the people relating how ‘The tenants stood out bravely but have been fairly beaten. Curious to say they are making no profession of attachment but are quite civil’<sup>26</sup>

While Clonbrock succeeded in keeping agitation at bay during the early phase of the Land War between 1879 and 1882 a new force, combining agrarian radicalism and parliamentary politics, had emerged. Spearheaded by C. S. Parnell, it was instrumental in forcing the issue of land reform onto the agenda and securing concessions for Irish tenant farmers which were enshrined in Gladstone’s 1881 land act. This gave legal recognition to the 3Fs and brought about the foundation of the Irish Land Commission which had the power to adjudicate on fair rents. While the Settled Land Act of 1882 was introduced to enable indebted landlords to raise capital through the sale of land it swept away entail and primogeniture and broke the spell by which the landed class had maintained a stranglehold on property for centuries. Land had, heretofore, been sacrosanct, and its sale was an anathema to a class that had jealously guarded their property for centuries by means of entail. Prior to the Land War there was no problem securing mortgages on land to raise capital but when intense agitation broke out, banks and other institutions came to regard Irish land as a risky venture so it became necessary to introduce this measure to prevent some landlords from bankruptcy. Core estates and demesnes were protected by the act but the principal legal device that had defined them as a class

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<sup>24</sup> *Western News*, 4 Dec 1880

<sup>25</sup> John Ross Mahon to George Mahon, 17 May 1882 (N L I, Pakenham-Mahon papers, MS 22,231)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*

and protected the family's property had been weakened<sup>27</sup> This was the first significant step in freeing up the land market to facilitate purchase by tenants as it removed the legal impediments forbidding the sale of estates It would take many years for this to take place but a process had begun that would, in time, change, not just the physical landscapes of landed estates, but the social and political landscape of the country itself

The granting of *de jure* rights to tenants removed one of the central levers by which landlords induced tenants to behave in a fashion which they deemed appropriate and rendered the deferential dialectic increasingly more difficult to manage Enshrined in law, the 3Fs were no longer the gift of the landlord and fear of eviction for some misdemeanour or other became less of a fear Under the terms of the act tenants could only be evicted for non-payment of rents and if tenants believed their rents were too high they had the option of entering the land courts to adjudicate a fair rent However, for the first half of the 1880s the Clonbrock tenantry did not make use of these courts and if control of poor law boards may be taken as an indicator, there was still a considerable degree of deference to landed authority in the Mountbellew union

William Feingold has argued that as a result of the Land War a revolution in local government took place between 1877 and 1886 in which tenant farmers came to control the boards of guardians Half of the members of the boards were appointees or 'ex-officios', while the other half were elected by the ratepayers of the union that were in possession of holdings valued at £4 or over The ex-officios were drawn 'from the highest-rated justices of the peace presiding in the counties [and were] all landlords of varying stature' The elected members were mostly drawn from the tenant farmer class but also shopkeepers and publicans, and a substantial number of "'landlords' men"- land agents and bailiffs'<sup>28</sup> Every April, after new guardians

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<sup>27</sup> Dooley, *The decline of the big house*, p 105

<sup>28</sup> William L Feingold, 'The tenants movement to capture the Irish poor law boards, 1877-1886' in *Albion a quarterly journal concerned with British studies*, vii (1975), p 217, idem, *The revolt of the tenantry the transformation of local government in Ireland, 1872-1886* (Boston, 1984), Virginia Crossman, *Local government in late nineteenth-century Ireland* (Belfast, 1994), idem, *Politics, pauperism, and power in late nineteenth-century Ireland* (Manchester, 2006)

were elected and appointed to the board, they met to decide who would be the chairman, deputy chairman, and deputy vice chairman. Control of the chair permitted scope to dictate the direction of meetings and the kind of persons who were elected to these positions by the board give a fair indication as to whether they were controlled by members of the landed interest or by the tenant-nationalist interest. Those elected to the three chair positions for the Mountbellew union up to 1885 goes against the general trend that Feingold observed in the west and south of the country from the beginning of the Land War. The table below illustrates how Clonbrock, and the landed interest, maintained control over these offices during this period.

Office holders on Mountbellew Board of Guardians 1878-1887							
	1877-1879	1880-1882	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887
Chairman	Ld Clonbrock	Clonbrock	Clonbrock	Clonbrock	L G Dillon	L G Dillon	L G Dillon
Vice chair	M J Cheevers	W Joyce	*****	L G Dillon	M J Cheevers	P Geraghty	T K Mahon
Dept vice chair	W Joyce	L G Dillon	L G Dillon	John Carr	John Carr	J F O'Dowd	T Kenny

Fig. 6.1. Source: *Thom's Directory of Ireland, 1878-1887*

From 1877 to 1880, Lord Clonbrock and two other landowners - Michael Joseph Cheevers, based at Killyan House, and Walter Joyce, based at Corgary House - occupied these positions. Feingold has argued that the greatest 'period of absolute change [in favour of the tenantry] came in 1879-1882, when 7 per cent of the offices changed hands each year'. However, as the table shows landlord influence in the Mountbellew union was still strong and the Dillon family even tightened their grip on the board with the election of Luke Gerald in 1880. No one was recorded as the vice chair for 1883 and in 1884 a substantial tenant of Clonbrock's, John Carr, was elected to the board. However, it would be wrong to think of Carr as an anti-landlord guardian as he was one of Clonbrock's most extensive grazing tenants and the relationship between the Carr and Dillon families had been mutually beneficial for several decades. It should be recalled that the 1855 letter by Thomas



Bermingham praising his virtues, quoted in chapter five referred to him as ‘a gentleman I highly respect, as a tenant for whose father Lord Clonbrock’s father had the highest respect and esteem, and one who, by industry and uprightness of conduct and character, has advanced himself to be the leading tenant on the Clonbrock estate’<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, he was a prominent member of the tenant deputations at Luke Gerald’s coming of age in 1855 as well as the one in which he was presented with a testimonial of silver plate following his marriage in 1866, so he could be more accurately described as a ‘landlord’s man’ rather than a representative of the tenant’s interests

In the second half of the nineteenth century the extensive graziers began to emerge as elites in their own localities renting large tracts of land In 1880, on the Clonbrock estates, seventeen tenants paid rents in excess of £100 and their combined rental of £5,070 constituted almost 50 per cent of the projected rental of £10,756<sup>30</sup> However, there was elite within an elite and of these seventeen tenants paying the combined rental of £5,070 the three principal tenants paid £2,028 To gain an understanding of the extent of the land that these three men held *The return of owners of land* found that Clonbrock owned 28,246 acres valued at £11,442 so the £2,028 paid by them represents 17.7 per cent of the total value or the equivalent of 5,000 acres of average land on the Clonbrock estates<sup>31</sup> Of these three top renters Thomas O’ Connor of Pallas paid £921, John Carr of Moylough, who was married to a sister of O’Connor’s, paid £707, and Francis Darcy £400<sup>32</sup> John Carr not only rented land from Clonbrock but also from the Bellews of Mountbellew so the amount of land that he held was equivalent to the size of a small landed estate

Feingold has calculated that by 1885 over 40 per cent of the offices of chair were held by the tenant interest but this was not the case on the Mountbellew board especially if John Carr is factored in as landed interest rather than tenant interest<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 14 Jul 1855

<sup>30</sup> O’Sullivan, ‘Landlord-tenant relations on the Clonbrock estate’, Table 18, p. 62

<sup>31</sup> *Return of owners of land of one acre and upwards in counties, cities, and towns in Ireland*, p. 294 [C-1492], H.L. 1878, lxxx, 361

<sup>32</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1880 (N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,633)

<sup>33</sup> Feingold, ‘Irish poor law boards’, p. 225

If this is accepted then landed control of this board appears to have successfully resisted this revolt of the tenantry for which Feingold argues. There can hardly be any doubt that the paternalist style of estate management which responded well to the crisis of the late 1870s and early 1880s was a contributory factor in the Dillon family maintaining their influence in local government as they dominated the offices of chair, especially between 1880 and 1884 when both Lord Clonbrock and Luke Gerald were appointed to them.

However, Home Rule fever began sweeping the country in 1886 in expectation of Gladstone's Home Rule Bill and as a result landed control of the offices of chair was curtailed for the first time with the election of two nationalist candidates, Patrick Geraghty and James F. O'Dowd, as the deputy chair and deputy vice chair respectively. This conforms with Feingold's assertion that '1886 was by far the best year for the tenants in the boards of guardians elections. Although the absolute increase of tenant officerships was only 6 per cent the relative increase was much larger than the 7 per cent of the early years, because there were fewer offices remaining to be captured'.<sup>34</sup> While it had taken a considerable period of time in comparison to other unions the breach of this citadel of landed control was far from absolute as Luke Gerald Dillon managed to retain the principal office of chairman of the board. Furthermore, the landed interest exploited divisions within the nationalist camp the following year and succeeded not only in retaining the chairmanship, but re-capturing the vice-chair position with the election of Thomas Kelly Mahon, a landlord, with a small estate based at Thornfield. This was a considerable achievement as the agrarian agitation which became known as the Plan of Campaign had broken out on his estates around Cappataggle and Ahascragh and tensions were beginning to rise. However, the outbreak of the Plan also points to the fragility of landlord-tenant relations on the estates. The following section will focus on the Plan of Campaign on the Clonbrock estates and show how the use of naked and savage power to address it initially brought order and stopped the spread of agitation. Ultimately, however, it undermined support for the Dillon family and their capacity to attract enough voters to remain in control of the Mountbellew board of guardians.

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<sup>34</sup> Feingold, 'Irish poor law boards', p. 226

It will further show that while some tenants chose a less dangerous strategy in their attempts to obtain lower rents by making use of the land courts, nonetheless, it represented a rejection of the paternalist relationship by involving third parties in the affairs of the estate

### **Agitation and litigation: the different strategies employed to gain rent reductions**

Lord Clonbrock and the Dillon family would have been accustomed to varying expressions of respect from estate workers and tenants and perhaps to more elaborate forms of display from indoor servants who were

required as ‘deference givers’ Living symbols of the landowner’s status and wealth, they confirmed his power and prestige with their exaggerated deference and obedience in front of impressed visitors Only well trained ‘front stage’ servants could perform the complex ceremonies of etiquette and hospitality correctly, and formalise and regulate their employer’s encounters with callers, the lower servants, and even the children <sup>35</sup>

An insight into the orderly lives and strict rules of behaviour to which indoor servants had to adhere at Clonbrock has been provided by Lady Mahon [Edith Dillon], who remembered their attendance at morning prayers in the 1880s

A long wooden form was put for all the servants in front of the sideboard, stretching almost the whole width of the room I can see them all now, filing in, in strict order, first the housekeeper, then the cook, Miss Dillon’s maid, Mrs Dillon’s maid, any visiting maid, Miss Louisa, Georgy, and Katie’s maid, the head housemaid, the kitchen maid, the scullery maid, the hall boy, the second footmen, the first footman, any visiting valet, Mr Dillon’s valet The butler, then, who had held the door open for the procession to enter, shut it, and sat down <sup>36</sup>

While inside the big house the orderly world in which everyone knew and accepted their place in the hierarchy appeared to persist, Joe Lee has argued that deference to landed authority had begun to break down since the beginning of the Land War Clonbrock had emerged from the early phase of the Land War relatively unscathed but with a further economic downturn in the mid 1880s the situation began to look ominous once again Consequently, Clonbrock pursued the same policies that he

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<sup>35</sup> Gerrard, *Country house life*, p 144

<sup>36</sup> Lady Mahon, ‘The Dillon’s of Clonbrock’, p 84

had in the earlier in the decade by granting abatements, in 1885 and 1886 he granted abatements of 12.5 per cent and 15.6 respectively.<sup>37</sup> However, these abatements were not considered sufficient by some sections of the tenantry who demanded 25 per cent abatement in December 1886. Agrarian agitation began to sweep across the country at this time following Timothy Harrington's call, in October 1886, for tenant farmers to adopt a Plan of Campaign and withhold rents until they were granted sufficient abatements of rent.<sup>38</sup> The 'Plan' represented the second phase of the Land War and by the time it finally petered out in 1891, 203 estates, mostly in the south and west, had become disturbed.<sup>39</sup> However, it was relatively short lived on the Clonbrock estates beginning in December 1886 and ending in 1887 during which time the Janus face of paternalism with its benevolent and oppressive dimensions was once again revealed.

On 7 December a committee representing ten townlands on the Ballydonlan estate met John Ross Mahon, and offered him 75 per cent of the rents, which he declined. He offered them a reduction of 10.5 per cent but the tenants refused to accept this. Matt Harris M.P. was present at the meeting where he expressed the view that 'In the past Lord Clonbrock was not a bad landlord. He was not an exterminator' and that if he were 'ten years younger he would gladly accept their offer'. Mahon left empty handed that day and the tenants deposited the reduced rents they were willing to pay at the National League rent office in Loughrea 'with a cheerful celerity, quite unusual in the annals of rent collecting'.<sup>40</sup> On Sunday 2 January a National League 'monster meeting' was held in the small village of Newbridge, a few miles from Clonbrock; it was attended by several members of the Moutbellew guardians and it was reported that 800 men and horses came from Moylough. However, John Carr, who lived in Moylough, was not present and Patrick Ferguson, an extensive farmer who would eventually unseat Luke Gerald Dillon from the chairmanship of the board of guardians in 1888, told the meeting that he was going to divide a 101 acre

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<sup>37</sup> O'Sullivan, 'Landlord-tenant relations on the Clonbrock estate, 1849-1893', p. 53.

<sup>38</sup> Nationalist M.P. 1883-1910. The original call for the Plan of Campaign was published in the Irish National League's newspaper, the *United Irishman* on 23 October 1886 from whence it spread to the nationalist press in the provinces.

<sup>39</sup> Laurence M. Geary, *The Plan of Campaign* (Cork, 1986), p. 13.

<sup>40</sup> *Irish Times*, 11 Dec. 1886; *Freeman's Journal*, 9 Dec. 1886; *Western News*, 12 Dec. 1886.

farm that he owned between ten poor men J J Clancy the M P for north Dublin attended the meeting and praised Ferguson's decision to divide this farm This, he argued, was

a sign of what was passing around and a sign of what was coming some years ago landlordism was a sort of overfed, full blooded, prancing animal Now what is it today? It has dwindled down to an old, lame, bony, hoofless, infirm garron, whose two legs are spancelled by the land act of 81, and today if it attempts to kick with the hind legs which were still left, it will find that the Plan of Campaign has spancelled these two legs also <sup>41</sup>

Mention of the distribution of large farms among the poorer tenantry must have sent a chill down the spines of graziers such as John Carr and perhaps with forewarning of the meeting's content he had absented himself for fear he would be called upon to give up some of the grass farms he rented from Clonbrock

At this time the tenants on the neighbouring Mahon estate also began agitating for a reduction in rent and on Tuesday 11 January 'in obedience to a call from Mr J Ross Mahon, agent to Lord Clonbrock, Sir Wm Mahon, and others [he was the agent for several small estates also], the tenants from the various properties assembled at Ahascragh' In negotiations with landlords the local Catholic clergy frequently represented the tenants and it was the Rev J Carroll, parish priest of Fohenagh, who met Mahon at the rent office and requested a 30 per cent reduction of rent <sup>42</sup> This was refused 'whereupon the Lisnascreena tenants [bordering Clonbrock demesne] handed in their subscriptions to the estate fund, and entered with the spirit of the Plan of Campaign Subsequently Castlegar tenants followed their example' The Castlegar tenants were called upon again to pay their rents the following Monday, 18 January, but they continued to refuse <sup>43</sup> The official line of Parnell's parliamentary party was unfavourable to the Plan but it was tacitly supported by several M P s including David Sheehy the M P for south Galway, who had visited

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<sup>41</sup> *Western News*, 8 Jan 1887

<sup>42</sup> For a discussion of the Catholic hierarchy and the Plan of Campaign see, Emmet Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church and the Plan of Campaign, 1886-1888* (Cork, 1978), Ambrose Macaulay, *The Holy See, British policy and the Plan of Campaign, 1885-1893* (Dublin, 2002)

<sup>43</sup> *Western News*, 22 Jan 1877

Ahascragh in mid-January to offer his support to the tenants. The local police, however, were not so enamoured with his visit and followed him everywhere<sup>44</sup>

The dispute between Clonbrock and the Plan tenants continued and in February the Cappataggle branch of the National League held a meeting where ‘some tenants on the Clonbrock estate who [had] not joined the Plan of Campaign, came before the meeting and endeavoured to explain their reasons for not doing so. The explanation, however, was not deemed satisfactory’ and it appears that some people were determined to use extreme measures against those that had refused to join the Plan<sup>45</sup>. Not long after this meeting, an explosion blew away the outhouse of a farmer named Richard Martin at Mullagh. According to the *Irish Times* ‘One reason assigned for the outrage is that Martin had refused to join the Plan of Campaign with other tenants on the Clonbrock estates’<sup>46</sup>. Clearly there were tensions on the estate and not everyone was willing to join the agitation. These tensions intensified when one of Clonbrock’s agents, S. Ellis, summoned several people for trespass and carrying away timber. On Sunday night 5 February his house was attacked by a group of men and the windows and doors were broken with stones<sup>47</sup>.

Some people, however, rose to the defence of Lord Clonbrock and a letter from ‘a tenant farmer’ to the *Irish Times*, portraying Clonbrock as a benevolent paternalist, argued that

if fate ordained, that the head or parent of a house should be called away he would always soothe the widows tear, and keenly and deeply feel for the friendless orphan. He even loved his tenants as his children, for if death rendered a holding vacant he would select in preference, to any other, the next male of kin, thereby proving his filial affection

It further argued that he had given employment to hundreds, spent thousands on houses, roads and drains, built a school, and even distributed linen wheels

These are some of the many gifts his lordship has favoured his tenants with. Now I would ask the public is Lord Clonbrock to be put on a level with the tyrant, the rack-renter, the exterminator, etc. The tenants of this distinguished

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 29 Jan 1877

<sup>45</sup> *Western News*, 5 Feb 1887

<sup>46</sup> *Irish Times*, 5 Feb 1887

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, 12 Feb 1887

nobleman should laudate him in the most eminent degree they should never forget the immortal fame and magnanimous spirit he always possessed and displayed toward their welfare<sup>48</sup>

The letter was anonymous but the likelihood is, that considering it was sent to the *Irish Times*, it was written by one of Clonbrock's 'respectable' grazier tenants. Earlier chapters have shown that the claims made in this letter, while somewhat overstated and hyperbolic, were not fictional. However, it did neglect to mention the harsher aspect of Clonbrock's paternalism which applied 'the naked and savage use of power' to deal with Pat Barrett in 1860. The paternal style of management with its cultivation of *identification* aimed to instil in the tenantry the very sentiments expressed in the letter which argued that Clonbrock was deserving of deference. Those who did not behave in a sufficiently deferential manner, such as those agitating for a rent reduction, had become divorced from Clonbrock's 'filial affection' as he began taking steps in the court of common pleas to have them removed from their holdings. Writs were issued against tenants that had joined the Plan in early February and at a meeting of the Cappataggle branch of the National League some weeks later 'a number of the Clonbrock tenantry [arrived] with death sentences [eviction notices] which they received during the week, and stated they would fight it out to the bitter end. The action of Lord Clonbrock was severely condemned as was that of a few of the number who had not joined "The Plan of Campaign".'<sup>49</sup>

On 25 March John Ross Mahon, in the court of common pleas, related how he had been attempting to recover £40 7s 6d in unpaid arrears from Michael Coen, who had joined the Plan. According to Mahon 'The defendant and other tenants on the estate had adopted the Plan of Campaign, and they had disposed of all their effects under the Plan, the only means left to the landlord to recover the rent due was to sell his [the tenant's] interest in the farm under the land act'<sup>50</sup> However, in order to do this Coen had to be served personally with the judgement against him but no one could be found to do it for fear of personal injury so Clonbrock's lawyer requested

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 16 Mar 1887

<sup>49</sup> *Irish Times*, 12 Feb 1887, *Western News*, 5 Mar 1887

<sup>50</sup> *Western News*, 2 Apr 1887

‘that the service [of the judgement] should be substituted by registered letter’ This motion was granted by the court and in four other similar cases on the Clonbrock estates<sup>51</sup>

It is difficult to discern, from an examination the rentals for 1886 and 1887, just how many tenants joined the Plan because of the short period of time over which the dispute took place. It commenced in December 1886 and as the estate accounts reveal that rents were, for the most part, paid at the May gale, it appears that tensions had subsided by this time. However, some of these rents must have been paid retrospectively as J.R. Mahon remarked to his brother on 22 May that Clonbrock’s tenants had ‘not yet given up the Plan of Campaign’<sup>52</sup>. In the end a 12.94 per cent abatement was granted, almost 2.5 per cent higher than what Mahon had initially offered at the beginning of the dispute. While the tenantry in general would have benefited from this reduction some, most likely the principal agitators, suffered eviction and did not reap any reward from the Plan. Clonbrock chased certain tenants for their arrears through the courts and entries after the names of five tenants in the comments section of the rental ledger read ‘ejectment decree obtained 31 March 1887’. In the case of Mary Silk, who owed arrears of £22 19s the comments read ‘ejected by emergency men, house has since been levelled’<sup>53</sup>. The finality of a house being levelled would have struck fear into the agitating tenants and must have acted as a disincentive for new tenants to join the Plan. Two further evictions took place that April and, illustrating the low levels of eviction that had taken place in previous decades, the *Tuam News* reported that these were the first ones to have been seen in that parish in over thirty years<sup>54</sup>. The methods adapted to deal with the agitation on the Clonbrock estates resembled the measures taken by Arthur McMurrough Kavanagh on his estates in Carlow and Wexford. He and Luke Gerald were regular correspondents and key members of the Property Defence Association, an organisation founded to preserve the rights of landowners, therefore, it is unlikely that their adoption of similar methods was a coincidence. His tenants

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> John Ross Mahon to George Mahon, 22 May 1887 (N L I, Pakenham-Mahon papers, MS 22,231)

<sup>53</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1887 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,639)

<sup>54</sup> *Tuam News*, 15 Apr 1887



demanded a 25 per cent abatement of rent 'They banked the rents and started a defence fund But when the landlord had writs served on twenty-one of the ringleaders [in February at the same time as Clonbrock], the combination quickly collapsed'<sup>55</sup>

Concurrent with the threatened evictions was the election to decide who would sit on Mountbellew board of guardians and toward the end of March the successful candidates and the ex-officios met to decide who would hold the chair offices Ex-officios had reputations for poor attendance at meetings but whenever the guardians first met after elections to decide the offices of the chair they turned out in force The vote to decide the chairman for Mountbellew that year was closely run with an equal amount of votes for Luke Gerald Dillon and the nationalist candidate Patrick Ferguson However, this deadlock was broken when

Mr J N L Baggot opened the door to cheer the faces of the ex officio officers who were trembling lest a National Leaguer might enter in and decide the question contrary to their wishes Mr Baggot the champion evictor got a hearty welcome from the conservative party, the side he was to take was of course a foregone conclusion - the dead lock was opened, he voted for Luke Gerald Dillon, son to Lord Clonbrock, who is about to tumble down half a dozen houses in the next few days and in the ensuing year he becomes chairman to see to the interests of the many poor his father will send on the highway<sup>56</sup>

The *Western News* bemoaned the absence of two nationalist guardians and accused them of divided loyalties It stated that 'if the two national guardians that were absent had been willing to make small sacrifices and not be running with the hare and hunting with the hounds, not to be so much afraid of his honour, Gerald Dillon, and vote straightforward, the day was won as far as the first chair was concerned'<sup>57</sup>

Obviously there were a couple of 'nationalists' whose interests were sufficiently entwined with those of the landed interest that they were not prepared to vote against Luke Gerald and had stayed away John Carr's colours, however, were firmly nailed

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<sup>55</sup> Geary, *Plan of Campaign*, p 13

<sup>56</sup> *Tuam News*, 8 Apr 1887

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*

to the mast as he was the person who had seconded the nomination of the landlord candidate, Thomas Kelly Mahon, as deputy chairman

Office holders on Mountbellew board of Guardians 1887-1893							
	1887	1888	1889	1890	1891	1892	1893
Chair	L G Dillon	P Ferguson	T Kenny	T Kenny	T Kenny	T Kenny	T Kenny
Dept chair	T K Mahon J P	T Kenny	J Bracken	J Bracken	P Geraghty	P Geraghty	P Geraghty
Dept v chair	T Kenny	T Higgins	P Geraghty	P Geraghty	P J Cruise	P J Cruise	P J Cruise

Fig. 6.2. Source: *Thom's*, 1888-94

A further factor in this victory for the landed interest was that there was a great degree of rivalry between nationalists from Moylough and Mountbellew and the *Tuam News* argued further that if it had not been for 'party feeling, private spleens, and factious inclinations the second chair would [also] have been won'<sup>58</sup> Although Luke Gerald Dillon and his supporters had managed to exploit divisions among nationalists, on this occasion, and reinstate the landed interest as the dominant force on the Mountbellew board of guardians, there can hardly be any doubt that the Plan of Campaign had caused a sizeable degree of damage to his capacity to command the votes of guardians especially if it is considered how closely the election had been run. The following year, the nationalists ran a better campaign and the landed interest was completely ousted from the offices of chair a situation that prevailed for the next three years until they regained a minor foothold with the election of P J Cruise as deputy vice chairman, in the wake of the Parnell split, in 1891. The 'revolt of the tenantry' in the Mountbellew union was a more protracted affair than what Fiengold generally observed. However, the democratic age was beginning to flourish and landed power had been significantly weakened. As Crossman has argued 'In the early part of the century, the dominant position of the landed elite seemed impregnable. Tenants vastly outnumbered landlords however, and once

<sup>58</sup> *Tuam News*, 8 Apr 1887

they began to operate collectively, the illusory nature of landlord pre-eminence was exposed' <sup>59</sup>

While some of Clonbrock's tenants opted for direct action by adopting the Plan of Campaign and some paid a very high price, such as Mary Silk who had her house levelled, others chose the less risky legal strategy of seeking a judicial review of rent in the land courts and between 1888 and 1893 thirty-three tenants made use of these courts. Even though the courts had adjudicated on fair rents since October 1882 Clonbrock's tenantry did not make use of them until 1888. Notwithstanding the agitation of the Plan of Campaign, this possibly suggests that the tenants were, by and large, satisfied with the rents that they paid. However, as the economic downturn worsened in 1886 the tenants' position may have worsened. A meeting of the Irish Parliamentary Party on 4 August 1886 'warned the government that the payment of judicial rents [set earlier in the decade] had become impossible and demanded the immediate revision of all such rents'. As Laurence Geary has argued 'for many tenants even the judicial rents had become rack rents, a point conceded by the rent commissioners who, from the end of 1885, began to fix the judicial rents at a level 10 to 14 per cent below that which had prevailed for the previous four years' <sup>60</sup> The engagement of this process by certain tenants constituted a firm rejection of paternalism and any confidence that Clonbrock was acting in a fair manner in setting their rents. Landlords who perceived themselves as the paternal heads of their estates resented the fact that their tenants chose to involve third parties such as estate committees or sub commissioners who adjudicated rents <sup>61</sup>

Not every tenant succeeded in obtaining a reduction, of the thirty five holdings that were adjudicated the rents of ten remained unchanged. However, they were unlikely to have had the same cause for regret as Hanoria Darmondy whose rent in Clonkeen was increased from £7 16s to £9, or Laurence Colgan of Eskerboy whose rent was increased from £33 7s to £36 <sup>62</sup> The steepest increase was imposed on Mary Kelly

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<sup>59</sup> Crossman, *Politics, pauperism, and power*, pp 38-9

<sup>60</sup> Geary, *The Plan of Campaign*, p 7, 16

<sup>61</sup> Dooley, *The decline of the big house*, p 92

<sup>62</sup> *Irish land commission Return according to provinces and counties of judicial rents fixed by sub-commissions and civil bill courts, as notified to the Irish land commission during the month of February*,

from Cloughayallow-eighther whose rent of £18 10s was raised to £26<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, the majority of tenants that undertook this course of action, twenty-three in total, were successful in getting the rents reduced The table below shows how rent reductions were sought by a variety of demographic groups on the estates illustrating that the £5-£15 category was twice as likely as the rest of the categories combined to seek reductions

Judicial rents fixed on Clonbrock's estates 1888-93				
Holdings	No of tenants	Rent before	Rent after	% change
Less than £5	3	11 46	10 7	-6 63
£5- £15	23	228	206	-9 64
£15-£30	5	107	96	-10 30
£30-£100	2	86	87	+01 16
£100-£200	2	352	269	- 25 60

Fig.6.3. Source: *Return of judicial rents fixed, 1888-1893*<sup>64</sup>

If, as Laurence Geary has argued, judicial rents were being reduced by between 10 and 14 per cent after 1885 then Clonbrock must have been charging a fair rent to tenants with smaller holdings in the first half of the 1880s because, as the table reveals those with holdings valued at less than £30 had, on average, their rents reduced from between 6 63 per cent and 10 3 per cent The tenants with farms valued at over £100 paid relatively more for their land than those on smaller holdings so it seems that a system of cross subsidisation was in place whereby the charging of higher prices to the more extensive tenants allowed Clonbrock to charge the smaller tenants less That a two tier system of pricing was implemented is found in evidence given by John Ross Mahon to the Bessborough commission in 1880 where he stated that 'The small tenants pay 12 5 per cent less than the ordnance

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1890, specifying dates and amounts respectively of the last increases of rent where ascertained, also rents fixed upon the reports of valuers appointed by the Irish land commission on the joint applications of landlords and tenants, pp 44,-45 [C 6507], H L 1890, lxi, 136-137 (subsequent reports cited as *Return of judicial rents fixed* )

<sup>63</sup> *Return of judicial rents fixed, 1892*, pp 16-17 [C 6786], H L 1892, lxvi, 408-09

<sup>64</sup> See bibliography, pp 264-5

value The grass [or extensive] tenants pay twenty per cent over the ordnance value '65

Comparatively speaking the Clonbrock estate made it through the turbulent period of the 1880s having suffered very little damage On some estates such as the Granard estates during the first phase of the Land War or the Clanricarde estates during the Plan of Campaign, relations between landlord and tenant had completely broken down<sup>66</sup> While the difficulties faced by Clonbrock might be considered minimal in comparison to others, deference to landed authority had, nonetheless, been considerably eroded and both landlords and tenants inhabited a different world to the one which existed just one generation previously In 1855 when Luke Gerald Dillon came of age the Dillon family were at the peak of their power and the coming of age was an important ritual that projected their power and legitimised the social hierarchy of the landed estate with Clonbrock as the paternal father figure at the head By 1890, when Robert Edward (Robin) Dillon came of age, landed power had significantly weakened and although his coming of age followed the same ritual formula as the one held for his father in 1855, the change which had occurred was very pronounced as the resistance to landed power which had been passively expressed by the curse in 1855 was by now in full voice through newspapers sympathetic to the rights of tenants and opposed to landlordism

### **The demise of life cycle rituals on the Clonbrock estates**

The festivities to mark Robin Dillon's coming of age were held on the 13 September 1890 by which time these events as rituals of power had lost their potency Despite this it was celebrated in much the same fashion as it had been twenty-five years previously, when Luke Gerald came of age A group of tenants formed a committee and commissioned an illuminated address and a portrait of Luke Gerald as gifts for Robin A deputation of tenants arrived at Clonbrock at 1 30 p m where the address was read out by James Ryan, the chairman of the committee and the address and portrait were then presented to Robin by Fr Fahy, the Fohenagh parish priest This

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<sup>65</sup> *Bessborough commission minutes of evidence*, p 657 [C2779-I], HL 1881, xviii, 877

<sup>66</sup> Dooley, *The decline of the big house*, p 84, Geary, *Plan of Campaign*, p 18

was something of a contrasting role to that of Fr Carroll, the parish priest in the neighbouring parish of Ahascragh who, only two years earlier, had led the tenants of various local estates to the rent office in Ahascragh and demanded at 30 per cent rental abatement during the Plan of Campaign

In deferential language the address opened with ‘We the tenants on the Clonbrock estate beg to approach you with our sincere congratulations’ before alluding to the land legislation and the disruptive decade that had just passed by referring to ‘elements that have been at work which weakened many of the ties which bound landlord and tenant together’ However, they [the tenants] did not want to miss the opportunity to honour him and ‘the noble house which we pray you may worthily represent’ As in former addresses received by Luke Gerald the one to Robin eulogised Lord Clonbrock as a paternal landlord

Memories of kindness received are ever gently nursed in grateful hearts, and in coming to you today we come not only to pay you a personal compliment but also to show to the venerable head of this noble house the gratitude of a tenantry to whom he has been a father and a friend for over sixty years

Toward the end it raised the subject of agitation reflecting how

Times may change and warring elements may do much to effect the relations of tenant and landlord but despite all changes, honour, truth, and dignity, the characteristics of your house handed down from father to son, will ever bind to you the feeling of honest hearts<sup>67</sup>

The content of this address differs in many ways from the one presented to Luke Gerald in 1855 While Clonbrock’s praises as a paternalist were sung there was not a single mention of Robin ever becoming their landlord or ‘following in his father’s’ or grandfather’s footsteps as the 1855 address had done The coming of age was closely associated with the system of strict settlement and very often when heirs came of age they had the power to change the settlements Once the Settled Land Act, 1882, had been passed it became possible to break the entails and settlements so it was no longer a *fait accompli* that the heir would inherit the land as portions of estates could be sold off This greatly diminished the importance of an heir’s

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<sup>67</sup> Tenants’ address to R. E. Dillon, *Western Star*, 12 Sept 1890

coming of age as it opened up the first real possibility that the ownership of land could be transferred from landlords to tenants

Tenant proprietorship was no longer the pipe dream that it had been the previous generation and while sales of estates were still rare 'Under the terms of the 1885 [Land] Act, almost £10 million was advanced between 1885 and 1891 allowing 25,317 tenants to become purchasers'<sup>68</sup> A further difference between the address presented in 1890 and that of 1855 was the absence of references to the paternalist values of duties and responsibilities. There was little need for the tenants to make reference to them as Gladstone's land legislation had seen to it that landlords could not behave in an arbitrary fashion as some had in former years and tenants had legal avenues by which they could assert their rights

By now the eighty-three-year-old Lord Clonbrock was blind and confined to a wheelchair, yet he was still possessed of enough energy to participate in the proceedings. He was brought out to the front steps and the *Western Star* reported that 'he literally electrified the whole audience and the tenantry by delivering a speech which was throughout enthusiastically applauded'. While the tenants' address neglected to mention the transmission of the estates from one generation to the next, Lord Clonbrock did not, as he spoke of how his place would 'be filled by one far more capable of holding it than ever I have been myself' and he urged the tenantry to 'stand to [his grandson], and when time and opportunity occur, my hand to you, he will stand to you'. A dinner was then served to 270 of the tenants at which Luke Gerald, with a continued adherence to paternal values, eulogised his son as possessing a kind and affectionate heart and 'sufficient ability for the discharging of the duties of his life'<sup>69</sup> As in former years the landlord was eulogised by various speakers and Fr Fahy, who had earlier presented the address and testimonial, was one of these. He spoke of how the illustrious head of the house of Clonbrock had

carried with it down the stream of time many cogent proofs of how his good and kind and noble acts are embedded not only in the hearts of a devoted and grateful tenantry, but in the recollections of his countrymen throughout the

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<sup>68</sup> Dooley, *The decline of the big house*, p. 105

<sup>69</sup> *Western Star*, 12 Sept. 1890

length and breadth of the land I have heard from a reliable authority that when the great crisis was upon the country in black 47 he divested himself and deprived himself of the only legitimate means he had of getting a little recreation He removed his pack of hounds - he sold his stud of horses and flew the rescue of the famine stricken and hungry with all the tenderness and good nature that his great and charitable heart was capable of

As in the tenants' address he made several references to the benevolent paternalism of Lord Clonbrock and similarly omitted any reference to Robin being the future landlord The only mention of this was from the schoolchildren, of whom '525 were entertained to a sumptuous luncheon, and all sorts of sports and plays by the Hon Mrs Dillon [Luke Gerald's wife Augusta] An address presented by the children of the local schools offered their 'warmest congratulations' to Robin <sup>70</sup> This address, obviously drafted by the schoolmaster, thanked the women of the Dillon family for their interest in the school and related that

Although, we are now only children, in the natural order of things we expect to be yet men, and look forward with the feelings of the most pleasurable anticipations to the time when we will all be tenants to the grandson of him whom we have heard our father's and mother's so often feelingly describe as the best, kindest and most indulgent of landlords <sup>71</sup>

As in former years the highlight of the event was the fireworks display after which a dance commenced in the servant's hall and continued until the early hours of the following morning

The decline in importance of coming of age celebrations as rituals of power was reflected in the relative disinterest that the provincial media displayed in reporting the event In 1855 Luke Gerald's was extensively covered by three Galway newspapers and with minor reports in several others The *Western Star* was the only Galway newspaper to devote any significant coverage to this one and allocated only half a page compared to almost a full page for Luke Gerald's in 1855 As a clear indication of the ritual's decline, the address and reply to and from the heir were placed in the advertising sections of both the *Western Star* and the *Athlone Times* revealing that these once newsworthy events now had to be paid for

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid

<sup>71</sup> *Athlone Times*, 20 Sept 1890



A letter to Luke Gerald from a friend in the diplomatic service expressed the degree which times had changed and how, even at this stage, coming of age ceremonies were becoming somewhat anachronistic. This friend on reading a newspaper account of the day's festivities related how he had felt both pleasure and pain

Pleasure at the grand sight suggested by the old man [Lord Clonbrock] on the steps of the house speaking those beautiful simple words, transcendently eloquent and thrilling one even at this distance. The pain was the thought that this was an almost miraculous survival from a beautiful past never destined to return. Of a past that had not died a natural death but has been inhumanly murdered by the basest combinations of the very violent and vulgar political egotisms on both sides of the channel. Accursed army of murderers with the GOM [Gladstone] and Parnell at their head<sup>72</sup>

Had the author of this letter been aware how the event was criticised in the nationalist press or of a resolution passed by the local branch of the National League he would have been even more upset. Chapter four has illustrated how the folk curse with its narrative of dispossession and retribution operated as a subaltern counterdiscourse and an effective form of resistance to landed power. However, in 1890, due to the growth of the nationalist press, these counter discourses were being firmly expressed in print culture by those opposed to the landed interest

The *Tuam News* reported how the coming of age 'was taken as an occasion by some of the wealthiest of Clonbrock's tenants to show their flunkeyism. A committee was formed and a ticket sent to each of the tenants admitting one to lunch at Clonbrock for which the modest sum of 3s had to be paid. A couple of fat heifers and a fat sheep were killed for the feast but the tenants paid smartly for it'<sup>73</sup>

A special meeting of the Ahascragh branch of the Irish National League was convened to discuss the event. The chairman, Andrew Manning, a poor law guardian for the Balinasloe union, was a tenant on the neighbouring Mahon estate and a veteran of the Land War. He had no objection to the celebrations at Clonbrock and stated that it was only natural that Robin's parents 'should avail themselves of this

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<sup>72</sup> Letter to L G Dillon, n d (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,761 (5))

<sup>73</sup> *Tuam News*, 12 Sep 1890

opportunity to pay him this tribute of their affection’<sup>74</sup> What he did find objectionable was that

a Catholic priest should so far forget himself as to enter the camp of the political enemies of the people, and signalise his advent by an address that I feel bound to describe as nothing short of a tissue of the meanest and most crawling literary rubbish that ever came from the lips of the most servile hanger on or underscraper of an extensive landlord

He went on to examine the ‘so called sacrifices that the rev speaker says Lord Clonbrock made in the interests of his tenantry’ Referring to Fr Fahey’s praise of Clonbrock’s actions during the Famine he asked rhetorically ‘Did anyone ever hear such balderdash?’ Manning did not deny that Clonbrock had acted as Fahy had stated but he did not see anything particularly noble in a Clonbrock giving up hunting during the Famine ‘Could any tyrant that ever existed find a recreation in hunting with the great spectre of Famine stalking over the land and staring one in the face at every turn?’ Death was everywhere argued Manning and just because Clonbrock gave up hunting during this period ‘we are to be told by a Christian minister that he deserved to be immortalised for his heroic self-denial and magnificent self-sacrifice’ He claimed that while Clonbrock had ‘given Reynard a rest in Black 47’ he evicted 300 families ‘drove them from their homes, turned them into exile’ Furthermore, he made reference to Pat Barrett, who had been evicted in 1860 for ‘daring to exercise his right to vote for the popular candidate in the Bellew-Gregory election’ The branch unanimously adapted a resolution denouncing ‘the language used by Father Fahy, of Fohenagh, at the Clonbrock festivities on the 9<sup>th</sup> inst, as being unworthy of an Irishman and a priest, and strongly calculated to resuscitate the dying institution of landlordism, and a most pernicious example to the members of his flock’<sup>75</sup>

At some level Manning and the other members of the National League understood that the coming of age was a ritual that sought to legitimise landed power so a special meeting of the league was convened to admonish Fr Fahy for the role he had played in it The calling of the meeting and the subsequent publishing of its

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 8 Oct 1890

<sup>75</sup> Ibid

proceedings achieved its goal of undermining the ritual and illustrates how resistance had emerged from the passivity of a curse to confident expression in the public sphere within a single generation. Furthermore, it illustrates that although the Catholic Church had become increasingly powerful, nationalist bodies such as the National League were quick to condemn priests if their behaviour was deemed inappropriate. As J. G. White has argued 'it seems to be on the whole true that the Irish clergy could lead their people only in the direction in which they wanted to go.'<sup>76</sup>

Clearly, the rituals of paternalism and deference were in terminal decline but one final ritual was to take place a few years later. At the coming of age, when speaking to the tenantry from the steps of the house, Lord Clonbrock's parting words were 'It is not probable that we shall meet again, and I therefore leave you an old man's blessing "May God Almighty bless you all".'<sup>77</sup> There were no further occasions for Clonbrock to greet the tenants but they had one final appointment three years later. On 4 December 1893 Lord Clonbrock died aged eighty-six years, his funeral took place five days later and the *Tuam News*, one of the staunchest opponents of landlordism, and at times not uncritical of Clonbrock, reported how

Peer and peasant, cottier and labourer, together with a large admixture of the trading classes from Ballinasloe and the neighbouring towns, braved the severe weather to pay respect to one who was regarded by all as a model landlord and a benefactor to the poor and struggling man. The horses were removed from the hearse, and relays of stalwart and willing tenants conveyed the hearse to the burial place, nearly two miles, amidst a shower of pitiless sleet and snow.<sup>78</sup>

This was the last of the life cycle rituals of the barons Clonbrock in which landlord and tenant performed the distinctive roles that defined the paternal relationship. Robin Dillon remained unmarried so there was no occasion for the tenantry to present an address as had been the case with his father in 1866 and by the time Luke Gerald died in 1917 much of the estates had already been sold and there were no relays of tenants to pull his hearse. In any case relations between him and the tenantry had deteriorated during the first decade of the twentieth century which

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<sup>76</sup> J. G. Whyte, 'The influence of the Catholic clergy on elections in the nineteenth-century' in *English Historical Review*, lxxv (1960), p. 248.

<sup>77</sup> *Western Star*, 13 Sept. 1890.

<sup>78</sup> *Tuam News*, 15 Dec. 1893.

meant that it was unlikely that he would have been accorded the same respect as his father. Furthermore it was a different age to the one of the nineteenth century and the rituals of paternalism, where they did persist, were an even more 'miraculous survival of a past never destined to return'<sup>79</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter, framed by two rituals of deference, has explored the further decline of power on the Clonbrock estates between 1877 and 1893. Much happened in the intervening years that changed the relationship between landlord and tenant: the 3Fs were enshrined in law by the 1881 Land Act and the Settled Land Act of 1882 weakened the centuries long stranglehold that the aristocracy and gentry had held over land. Agitation, boycotting, and violence were a feature on many landed estates during the 1880s. However, the elements of benevolent paternalism which characterised the management of the Clonbrock estate contributed to the absence of agitation during the first phase of the Land War. The cordial relations that existed on the estate were instrumental in the Dillon family maintaining influence on the local board of guardians while all around, as Feingold has shown, the landed interest was being ousted from positions of influence on the boards all over the country. However, as the decade progressed this control began to wane as the second phase of the Land War broke out and tenants began to agitate during the Plan of Campaign. This agitation led to strained relations on the estates and once again the Janus face of paternalism that was both benevolent and oppressive revealed itself. However, it appears that Clonbrock correctly judged the 'mood of the tenantry', as a whole, and through a combination of benevolent and oppressive measures, or 'coercion and conciliation', he prevented the Plan from spreading and restored order to his estates. While the oppressive power to evict was used sparingly by Clonbrock, the advent of the Plan and use of the land courts by his tenants which coincided with the ousting of the landed interest from the offices of the board of guardians represents a rejection of paternalism and another blow to landed power at local level. The problems that Clonbrock faced in the management of his estates during the 1880s were minimal compared to others and the *zeitgeist* that emerged in 1880s was

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<sup>79</sup> See footnote 74

emphatically unsympathetic to the paternal social outlook which, only a generation earlier formed the ideological hegemony that dominated the discourse of landlord-tenant-relations

The decline in the fortunes of the Irish landed class was very much reflected in the emasculation of the coming of age as a ritual of power. This was evident at Clonbrock in 1890 as its attempt to legitimate the hierarchies of the landed estate was undermined by local nationalists aided by a press that was sympathetic to their ideas. It was, at one time, the signature ritual of paternal power but by the 1890s successive land acts had stripped it of its meaning and reduced it to mere pomp. The era when these rituals defined the relationship between landlord and tenant were rapidly coming to a close and the respectful exhibition of the tenantry performed at Lord Clonbrock's funeral was the last great flourish of paternalism and deference. From this point on the paternal world of traditional hierarchies in which everyone had an appointed place and accepted it only existed in pockets. Some elements of the paternal relationship would survive, and in order to completely break the power of the landlord these too would have to be extinguished as we will find out in the final chapter.

## Chapter seven

### Severing the bonds: the United Irish League and the demise of paternalism on the Clonbrock estates 1898-1908

At the one end of the scale we may suppose a landowner who is wearied out by the uncertainty and trouble to which he is exposed, who has no particular sentiment to his property, perhaps having purchased it not so long ago, while freedom of contract still existed in Ireland, or perhaps from never having resided on it. At the other end we may take a man who has had little trouble from the land courts, who has constantly resided on his property, and whose life is therefore identified with it, who is attached to his tenants by strong personal and hereditary ties, and who has always entertained the most friendly relations with them. It is obvious that such a man would require a far higher inducement to sell than the former<sup>1</sup>

The above quotation is an excerpt from a letter by Luke Gerald Dillon, fourth baron Clonbrock, published in the *Morning Post* in February 1903. Not only had he inherited his father's title and estates in 1893 but, apparently, a paternal mindset as the quotation reveals. The letter was penned as the chief secretary, George Wyndham, was attempting to introduce sweeping measures to stimulate land purchase and the thrust of Clonbrock's letter was that paternal landlords who had resided on well run estates were entitled to a higher price for them<sup>2</sup>. The quotation further reveals that it was not only for the loss of his land that Clonbrock believed he was entitled to compensation but also because of the severing of the 'hereditary ties' which the sale of the estate would entail. However, the vast majority of his tenants were not so sentimental about the hereditary ties and were eager, not only to become proprietors of their own farms, but to have the size of the farms increased by breaking up the grazing ranches. Therefore, the scene was set for conflict across his estates and this final chapter will focus on the period between 1898, when the United Irish League (U I L) first emerged, and 1908, when Clonbrock agreed terms of sale with the tenants.

Over the course of this decade, due in no small way to the activities of the U I L, there was a complete breakdown in the once clearly defined personal relations where

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<sup>1</sup> *Morning Post*, 17 Feb 1903

<sup>2</sup> For detailed exposition of the Wyndham Land Act see, Patrick J Cosgrove, 'The Wyndham Land Act, 1903: The final solution to the Irish land question?' (Ph D thesis, NUI Maynooth, 2010)

everyone knew and accepted his place and on which the paternalist management of the Clonbrock estates depended. A continuous strand throughout this thesis has been the use of the gift in fostering a degree of *identification* which was essential to the successful management of the deferential dialectic and this chapter will illustrate how the U.I.L., having gained insights into the relationship between deference and the gift, prohibited and poured scorn on the acceptance of any benevolences coming from the big house. Broken into three sections this chapter will, firstly, demonstrate the effect that grass roots agitation orchestrated by the U.I.L. between 1898 and 1903 had on Clonbrock and other landlords and its role in bringing about the extensive land purchase legislation introduced in 1903.<sup>3</sup> The second section will concentrate on the period between the summer of 1903 and 1907 and the deadlock that developed between landlord and tenant over the sale of the estates and the outbreak of agrarian agitation, known as the Ranch War, directed against graziers. The final section will examine how instances of cattle driving, the signature weapon of the Ranch War, escalated during the winter of 1907-8, forcing Clonbrock to agree to the sale of the estates.

Between 1879 and 1889 accumulated arrears on the estates rose from £990 to £3,649 and although this was by no means excessive compared to the difficulties experienced on other estates, it was a substantial amount of income to lose.<sup>4</sup> However, in the wake of the O'Shea affair 'the sustained countrywide agrarian agitation on behalf of Irish tenant farmers [initiated in 1879] was disrupted by the division in the parliamentary movement'.<sup>5</sup> This led to a period of relative calm on the estates as agitation receded and the accumulated arrears stabilised as illustrated in Fig. 7.1.

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<sup>3</sup> For the U.I.L.'s role see Paul Bew, *Conflict and conciliation in Ireland, 1898-1910: parnellites and radical agrarians* (Oxford, 2002); Fergus Campbell, *Land and revolution: nationalist politics in the west of Ireland, 1891-1921* (Oxford, 2005); Cosgrove, 'The Wyndham Land Act, 1903'; Andrew Gailey, *Ireland and the death of kindness: the experience of constructive unionism, 1890-1905* (Cork, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1880-90 (N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,633-42).

<sup>5</sup> Campbell, *Land and revolution*, p. 29.

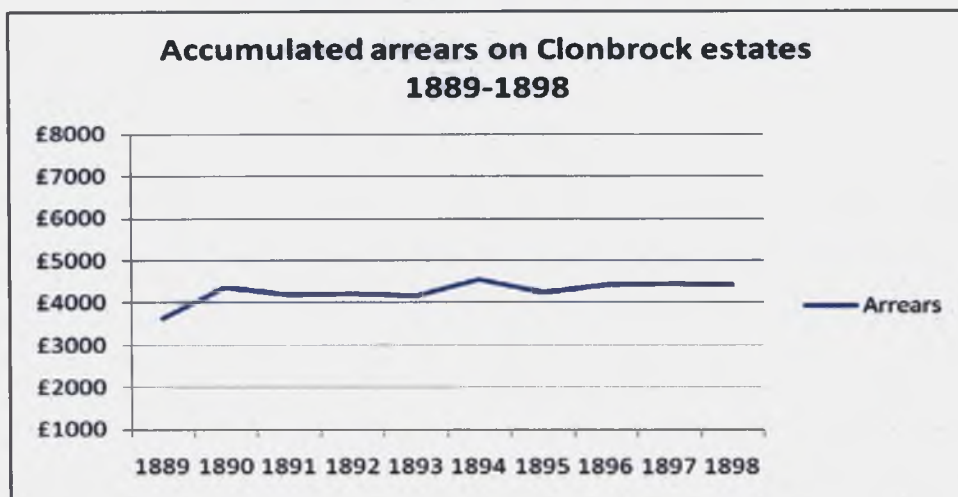


Fig 7.1. Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 19,642-51

The disarray into which the national movement had fallen was reflected in a resurgence of landed control of the Mountbellew board of guardians as Lord Clonbrock and Henry Grattan-Bellew, a neighbouring landlord, took the chair and vice-chair respectively in 1894.<sup>6</sup> Both Clonbrock and Grattan-Bellew retained these positions until 1898 but this resurgence was short lived as two forces converged that would permanently oust them from positions of influence in local government. Firstly, the government introduced considerable reform in the area of local government which was to see the transfer of power from the unelected grand juries to representative county councils and at a more local level the functions of boards of guardians were absorbed into urban and rural district councils. Crucially, the new legislation increased the franchise which did not bode well for the landed interest as the local elections loomed in 1899.<sup>7</sup> Secondly, coupled with the reform of local government was the emergence of the United Irish League (U.I.L.) a grass roots agrarian organisation founded by William O'Brien in February 1898 which aimed to break up the large grazing ranches and have them redistributed among uneconomic tenants.<sup>8</sup>

Initially support for the U.I.L. was limited but their 'mobilisation of popular

<sup>6</sup> *Thom's*, 1895-1900.

<sup>7</sup> Crossman, *Local Government*, p. 93.

<sup>8</sup> For further reading on O'Brien see Philip Bull, 'William O'Brien: problems reappraising his political career' in MacDonagh, Oliver and Mandle, W. F. (eds), *Ireland and Irish-Australia: studies in cultural and political history* (London, 1986), pp 49-63; Joseph V. O'Brien, *William O'Brien and the course of Irish politics, 1881-1918* (Berkeley, 1976).



nationalist support in the local government elections [of 1899] transformed it from an isolated agrarian movement into a national political organisation’<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps aware of the challenge that he faced, Clonbrock, who had decided to run for the Ahascragh district in the county council elections, began canvassing in December 1898, months before the election was due to take place. He wrote to several people including John Joyce who had been deputy vice chairman of Mountbellew guardians between 1895 and 1898. Joyce expressed sympathy with Clonbrock’s views and informed him that the UIL were soon to hold a meeting to select candidates for the election<sup>10</sup>. Another voter, Henry Lynch, pledged his support but feared ‘the voting power of the district will be much against men of your [standing]- as I am sure you will never be a party to the national programme’<sup>11</sup>. Lynch judged the mood well as neither Clonbrock nor Henry Grattan-Bellew, who stood as Unionist candidates, succeeded in getting elected as county councillors. However, while they did manage to get elected to the Mountbellew Rural District Council (R D C) for a number of years the landed interest was never again to occupy positions of influence on either the Mountbellew board of guardians or on the R D C. The tone of the first resolution passed by Mountbellew R D C reflected the power shift that had taken place. It attacked the local government act as ‘insufficient and inadequate to the requirements of the country, and as the representatives of the people, we reiterate our demand for national self-government, as nothing less than a full measure of Home Rule will satisfy the aims and aspirations of the Irish people’. Over twenty-five were present at the meeting and only three expressed dissent at the resolution, Lord Clonbrock, Sir Henry Grattan-Bellew, and Mr Cornwall, J P, who had been co-opted onto the council<sup>12</sup>.

The emergence of the UIL was a particularly worrisome development for Clonbrock because they had selected graziers as the targets of their campaign and, as the previous chapter has demonstrated, a small number of graziers were responsible

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<sup>9</sup> Campbell, *Land and revolution*, p. 39

<sup>10</sup> John Joyce to Clonbrock, 11 Feb. 1899 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35784 (5))

<sup>11</sup> Henry Lynch to Clonbrock, 29 Jan. 1899, *Ibid*

<sup>12</sup> *Roscommon Messenger*, 29 Apr. 1899

for paying almost half the Clonbrock rent. The importance of these tenants to Lord Clonbrock is further underscored by the fact that during the turbulent period of the 1880s when arrears reached £3,649 the grazing tenants 'were only [responsible for] £23 on aggregated rents of almost £50,500'<sup>13</sup> In 1903 the graziers continued to occupy a central role in the affairs of the Clonbrock estates as twenty-one extensive tenants paid £4,879 or 45.8 per cent of the total projected rental of £10,646. Of even more importance is the fact that 445 tenants across his estates eked out a living on holdings valued at £10 or less so the UIL's call for the break up of the grazing ranches would have resonated very strongly with this class of tenant.<sup>14</sup>

As David Seth Jones has argued, graziers occupied an ambiguous position within Irish society as they were often Catholic and culturally connected with the smaller class of tenantry while acting the part of gentleman farmers. They were frequently seen as upstarts for their pretensions to gentility and were often resented for monopolising the grasslands.<sup>15</sup> Grazing land was taken on the con-acre or eleven month system and every year these tracts of land were auctioned to the highest bidder. Theoretically, they were open auctions where everyone had an equal opportunity to bid for the land. In reality, however, it was only extensive graziers, such as the Carrs of Lakeview, Moylough, who had any chance of success as small farmers simply could not compete with these 'ranchers' who reared young bullocks for finishing on the more fertile plains of north Leinster.<sup>16</sup> The Carr family had been extensive tenants of Clonbrock's for generations and by the 1880s they paid rents of £707 per annum. However, by 1903 their holdings on the Clonbrock estates had declined to £192 but they continued to hold extensive tracts of land on the Grattan-Bellew estates where they had their residence.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Dooley, *The decline of the big house*, p. 91

<sup>14</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1903 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,653)

<sup>15</sup> David Seth Jones, *Graziers, land reform, and political conflict in Ireland* (Washington, 1995), p. 152, *idem*, 'The cleavage between graziers and peasants in the land struggle, 1890-1910', in Samuel Clarke and J. S. Donnelly, Jr (eds), *Irish peasants: violence and political unrest, 1780-1914* (Manchester, 1983), for a case study of a grazier in the nineteenth century see W. E. Vaughan, 'Farmer, grazier, and gentleman: Edward Delany of Woodtown, 1851-1899' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, xi (1982), pp. 53-72

<sup>16</sup> Paul Bew, *Conflict and conciliation*, p. 11, Campbell, *Land and revolution*, pp. 16-7

<sup>17</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts, 1903 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,653)

John Carr was born in Lakeview in 1836 so he was a contemporary of Luke Gerald who was born in 1834 and by 1900 he was one of the largest sheep farmers in the country. The family very much aped the gentry lifestyle, like the Dillon family they played croquet on the lawn and were well known on the hunting field. While graziers 'were were socially and economically the betters of the peasant class, they were unable by and large to emulate the standing of the gentry and associated circles'<sup>18</sup> The fact that the Carr family did not own land prevented them from breaking into the inner circle of the county elite and their monopolisation of so much grazing land would have created resentment among smaller farmers. However, there were certain avenues by which they could increase their standing within the community and like many aspiring families who craved respectability in the second half of the nineteenth century they chose the Catholic Church. Five of John Carr's six sisters became nuns, one of whom became mother superior of the Ursuline convent in Sligo. His five brothers showed less inclination for holy orders but, Thomas Joseph, the one who did follow this path, had an illustrious career which included a professorship of theology at Maynooth, a period as bishop of Galway from 1883, and then as archbishop of Melbourne from 1887 to his death in 1917.<sup>19</sup> While the advent of the UIL may have been worrisome for Clonbrock it must have been equally, if not more, worrisome for the Carr family and the other graziers because it was their monopoly of the grasslands that was the basis of their wealth.

The importance that grazing land played in supplementing the incomes of landlords was realised during the earlier phases of the Land War and Land League activists knew that 'to paralyse these lettings was to strike a blow at the heart of an already fractured and tottering landlord system'<sup>20</sup> This campaign against the grazing system was intensified by the UIL whose modus operandi at local level was to appoint 'A group of sturdy young members [to] form a "deputation" which would visit prominent local graziers with the suggestion that they might give up their land in order that it might be divided up for the people'<sup>21</sup> This tactic was employed in

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<sup>18</sup> Jones, *Graziers*, p 152

<sup>19</sup> T P Boland, *Thomas Carr archbishop of Melbourne* (Queensland, 1997), p 6, Carol O'Regan, *Moylough a people's heritage* (Moylough, 1993), pp 74-8

<sup>20</sup> Jones, *Graziers*, p 181

<sup>21</sup> Bew, *Conflict and conciliation*, p 43

the vicinity of Clonbrock demesne as early as November 1899 James Johnstone informed Clonbrock that he had been visited by a group of men claiming to represent the U I L and was ‘advised’ to surrender his grazing lands at the next letting He was promised that he would receive compensation for the surrender of this land but refused to give it up Furthermore, he told Clonbrock, that all the men of the locality were being forced to join the U I L <sup>22</sup>

During 1899 and 1900 Clonbrock communicated with several landlords regarding the activities of the U I L and in October 1900 he wrote to the chief secretary, Gerald Balfour, about his concerns ‘that a new method of intimidation, somewhat on the old Plan of Campaign, has been started in the County of Limerick’ This referred to a the case of the Ellis family who were being intimidated into selling grazing land and Clonbrock wished to know whether the government could do something to prevent sales in cases where intimidation had been applied <sup>23</sup> Balfour replied that ‘the new Plan of Campaign reported from Co Limerick is just the kind of scheme to commend itself to [the] mischief working brain’ of William O’Brien <sup>24</sup> However, in response to Clonbrock’s question of preventing the sale of land in cases where intimidation had been used he replied that

I do not think we have any legal power to do so The advance of money for the purchase of holdings under the land acts is entirely in the hands of the Land Commission The Irish government has no veto on any transactions which the commissioners sanction Should this prove the starting point in a new Plan of Campaign, I have no doubt that we shall be able to meet and defeat it like the old one But I need hardly remind you that the most effective weapon with which to fight a combination of tenants is a combination of landlords <sup>25</sup>

Agitation continued in 1901 and one of the targets, William Daly of Dunsandle who owned 37,000 acres, informed Clonbrock that ‘the United League is the “Ruling Party” in this neighbourhood and cases of intimidation are happening weekly and are well known to the authorities here and in Dublin ’<sup>26</sup> Col Edward Cooper complained to Clonbrock that it had been impossible to secure convictions at the previous winter assizes because nationalist magistrates were in the majority and

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<sup>22</sup> James Johnstone to Clonbrock, 9 Nov 1899 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,784 (6))

<sup>23</sup> Clonbrock to Gerald Balfour, 26 Oct 1900, *Ibid*

<sup>24</sup> Balfour to Clonbrock, 24 Oct 1900, *Ibid*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>26</sup> Col William Daly to Clonbrock, 29 June 1901 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,784 (7))

even a simple drunk and disorderly case fell through because the alleged incident had occurred at a League meeting<sup>27</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed by Judge Charles Kelly who criticised the inaction of the government in dealing with boycotting. He described the UIL as ‘the most dangerous association that has sprung up within the last twenty years’ and explained his difficulty in hiring a herd, having given notice to one that he would be dismissed for idleness<sup>28</sup> The prospective herd

asked me whether my herd was leaving me of his own accord. I replied that I was dismissing him for neglect of duty, the man explained that he would not take his place on any terms although I offered him double the ordinary wages. Wyndham [the chief secretary for Ireland] is under a complete illusion if he imagines that by leaving the league alone the farmers will disregard it. It will grow more powerful day to day. The poor people will submit to whichever authority they are most afraid of. At present that authority is the United Irish League and not the English government. I know for certain that the life of William Daly of Dunsandle is in the greatest danger. Lord Ashtown who I believe has always been a most popular landlord has turned off all his Roman Catholic labourers and servants. He must have been threatened or he would not have taken so stringent a measure<sup>29</sup>

Judge Kelly had definite grievances with the UIL but was not prepared to allow Clonbrock read out his letter in the House of Lords and appeared to retract what he had said a few days later. ‘I regret I cannot consent to you reading my letter. In fact the National League have not interfered with me in any way. If William O’Brien and co discovered that I was taking any steps against them they would certainly resent it and I should probably be boycotted’<sup>30</sup> While Kelly was unwilling that his name be mentioned there is no doubt that his experiences influenced the speeches which Clonbrock delivered to the House of Lords on 9 July 1901.

Clonbrock placed the blame for the boycotting, mutilation of animals, and intimidation squarely at the door of the UIL. He declared that ‘society is turned upside down and illegality has taken the place of law’<sup>31</sup> He urged the government

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<sup>27</sup> Col Edward Cooper to Clonbrock, 1 July 1901, *Ibid*

<sup>28</sup> Judge Charles Kelly to Clonbrock, 30 June 1901, *Ibid*

<sup>29</sup> Kelly to Clonbrock, 30 June 1901, *Ibid*, for further reading on Ashtown see L P Curtis, Jr, ‘The last gasp of southern unionism: Lord Ashtown of Woodlawn’ in *Eire-Ireland*, xl (2005), pp 140-88

<sup>30</sup> Kelly to Clonbrock, 1 July 1901 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,784 (7))

<sup>31</sup> Clonbrock’s speech to the House of Lords, 9 July 1901 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,776 (6))

to proclaim openly that the United Irish League, holding or disseminating the principles of which, approving where it does not actually instigate criminal offences, interfering tyrannically in almost every relation in life, and exercising gross intimidation over the whole population is an illegal and immoral organisation<sup>32</sup>

There can hardly be any doubt of the success of the U I L 's campaign especially if it is considered that even a judge was unwilling to speak out against them. Despite this Clonbrock had no success in his attempt to get the organisation proclaimed and it continued to be a thorn in the side of both landlords and graziers in its objective of breaking up the ranches and securing tenant proprietorship. By the beginning of the twentieth century the falling price of land stock in which landlords were paid for their estates, since the 1891 land act, became a disincentive for them to sell and this impeded land purchase<sup>33</sup>. However, there were expectations that the government would introduce a new land act that would be favourable to both buyers and sellers and in September 1901 William O'Brien and John Redmond launched the U I L 's campaign for compulsory land purchase with the aim of securing the best possible terms for tenant farmers in the forthcoming land act<sup>34</sup>. The grazier, the grabber, and the landlords were the selected targets of this agitation and once again James Johnstone, fearing that he was to be such a target, contacted Clonbrock with

private information from the sergeant at Woodlawn that there is a meeting of the United Irish League to be held at Ballymacward on Sunday next the 29 [September] for the purpose of naming certain grassfarms which the league may deem suitable for dividing in the parish, amongst these is one which I hold on the Blake estate at Glantane which is in my possession for about fifteen years. I fear if the meetings are allowed to go on at Ballymacward as they have been, it will very much interfere with the peace of the locality, which I believe would be a peaceful one as there are only a few who are in favour of them<sup>35</sup>

In Clonbrock's opinion this was evidence of illegality and he informed the under-secretary Sir David Harrell that 'naming certain farms in a district with a view of

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid

<sup>33</sup> Dooley, *The decline of the big house*, p 113

<sup>34</sup> Campbell, *Land and revolution*, p 58

<sup>35</sup> Johnstone to Clonbrock, 22 Sept 1901 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,784 (7))

bringing about a surrender of them by the present holders and subsequently dividing them appears to me to be a direct incitement to boycotting and possible outrage'<sup>36</sup>

Throughout the winter and spring of 1901-02 agrarian agitation increased dramatically in east Galway, especially in the districts of Athenry and Loughrea, and the 'most significant problem, from the county inspector's point of view, was that the so-called "law of the League" appeared to be superseding the "law of the land" in the region'. The police faced a wall of silence from local communities and it was impossible to find out who was personally responsible for instigating the boycotting and intimidation<sup>37</sup>. George Wyndham, the chief secretary, was eager to get a new land bill through parliament in March 1902 before the government was pressured into introducing coercive measures. Although Wyndham entertained good relations with the Irish Party his land bill was rejected by them as too favourable towards landlords. The rejection of this bill gave the upper hand to coercionists who succeeded in getting the crimes act reintroduced in nine counties, and for his efforts in supporting the measure the nationalist press referred to Clonbrock as a member of the 'landlord gang of yelping curs have got what they have so long clamoured for'<sup>38</sup>

It was under the provisions of this act that a number of people including John Roche M P , William Duffy M P , and John Lohan, who had defeated Clonbrock in the county council elections two years previously, faced charges relating to what they had said at a demonstration held at Caltra on 17 August. The charge was that the defendants 'did, with other persons whose names are unknown, take part and incite other persons to take part in an unlawful conspiracy to compel certain persons, who were then in the occupation of grazing lands, not to use or occupy same'. The strategy of 'cattle driving' whereby the stock belonging to graziers was driven from the ranches to the grazier's home where he was advised to cease his use of grassland did not become widespread until 1906 but according to Roche's speech at the demonstration one had take place as early as 1902

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<sup>36</sup> Clonbrock to Sir David Harrell, 25 Sept 1901 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,784 (7))

<sup>37</sup> Campbell, *Land and revolution*, p 65

<sup>38</sup> *Connaught Leader*, 7 Apr 1902

It was alleged by the court that he had advised the crowd to get a ‘list of every grazier in the parish. Wait upon him – and I would advise you to go further than that. Do what Father Colgan did in Menlough, when he went out at the head of his people and walloped the stock of the farm and sent them to the home of the grazier, and the people of Menlough. They have [the] farm now in their grip and they own it.’ However, Father Colgan, who was in the court, in an effort to neutralise this incriminating evidence, addressed the bench stating that ‘an agreement for purchase had been signed when the cattle were turned off’<sup>39</sup> Roche was asked whether he knew the names of the graziers in the parish and two of the five he listed, Lyons and Hession, held grazing farms from Clonbrock<sup>40</sup> The prosecution’s case was lengthy but when the opportunity arose for the accused to present a defence ‘Roche said neither he nor his friends intended to call any witnesses. He believed he was entitled to make the speech he had made at Caltra, and furthermore that it was his duty to do so as during his lifetime the population of the country had dwindled down to one half’ The judge, however, did not agree and sentenced the men to three months in prison with hard labour<sup>41</sup>

Not long after the Caltra meeting Captain John Shawe-Taylor, the younger son of a Galway landlord, wrote a letter to several newspapers relating how the Land War had raged for over 200 years and ‘Today the United Irish League is confronted by the Irish Land Trust,<sup>42</sup> and we see both combinations eager and ready to renew the unending conflict’ Shaw-Taylor suggested a conference and invited moderates representing the landed interest and representatives of tenant farmers to come together and bring about ‘a true settlement of the present chaotic, disastrous, and ruinous struggle’<sup>43</sup> During the nineteenth century the third baron Clonbrock would have been considered as a moderate but the situation with the fourth baron was somewhat different. Since agrarian disturbances began in the late 1870s he had been

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<sup>39</sup> *Roscommon Messenger*, 4 Oct 1902

<sup>40</sup> John Lyons held land at Isker valued at £300 per annum while different members of the Hession family held two farms, Andrew Hession’s farm at Tycooley was valued at £206 while the other farm held jointly by William and Patrick Hession was valued at £258. However, by 1907 both these farms were in held by Patrick Hession (N L I, Clonbrock papers MS 19,653 and 19,657)

<sup>41</sup> *Roscommon Messenger*, 4 Oct 1902

<sup>42</sup> A landlord organisation formed to meet the threat posed to the landed interest by the U I L

<sup>43</sup> *Irish Times*, 3 Sept 1902



at the vanguard of organisations founded to defend the ‘rights of property’, including the Property Defence Association founded in 1880, and the Irish Landowners Convention founded in 1887. Furthermore, he was a founder member, in April 1902, of the Irish Land Trust which Shawe-Taylor had identified as one half of the problem so, unsurprisingly, he was not suggested as one of the moderate landlords to participate in his proposed land conference. At a meeting of the Irish Landowner’s Convention on 10 October Clonbrock stated that Shawe-Taylor was neither a landlord nor a tenant and knew nothing whatever of the Irish land question.<sup>44</sup> The members of Mountbellew R D C, unimpressed by Clonbrock’s opposition to the land conference, unanimously passed a resolution condemning ‘his hostile attitude toward the much desired conference of bona fide representatives of the tenants and landlords to discuss the settlement of the Irish land question. We also desire to express our feelings of resentment at his rude and ungentlemanly conduct and remarks toward Captain Shawe-Taylor, a man who has shown an earnest desire to bring about a satisfactory settlement of this vexed question’<sup>45</sup>

While Clonbrock may have been somewhat hostile to Shawe-Taylor’s suggestion, Wyndham was not and, lending his support to the idea, soon saw it realised. The tenant delegation, led by William O’Brien, and its landlord counterpart, led by Lord Dunraven met for the Land Conference at the Mansion House in December and by early January they had reached an agreement. This guaranteed a 12 per cent bonus to the landlords on the selling price of estates and this lucrative incentive was expected to get land purchase moving once again. As Dooley has shown ‘Under the 1891 Act, land was purchasable for 18.1 times the yearly existing rents in 1901. The bonus inflated this average price to 25.4 years’ purchase and to what landlords perceived as being a more reasonable and acceptable figure’<sup>46</sup>. This was the most extensive measure of land legislation ever introduced in Britain or Ireland and many indebted landlords rushed to take advantage of the generous terms of the act. However, as we have seen from the ‘hereditary ties’ quote from February 1903, at the opening of this chapter, Clonbrock believed he would need ‘a far higher

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<sup>44</sup> *Southern Star*, 18 Oct 1902

<sup>45</sup> *Roscommon Messenger*, 18 Oct 1902

<sup>46</sup> Dooley, *The decline of the big house*, p. 113

inducement to sell' and his continued lack of enthusiasm to sell remained after the Wyndham act was passed into law. His lack of enthusiasm toward a sale was reflected in a reply to a resolution passed by Mountbellew R D C calling on him to sell his estates

I do not find in the Local Government Act of 1898 or in the Land Purchase Act of last session any provision empowering a district council to deal either directly or indirectly with the question of land purchase. I therefore, desire to submit to the district council that the matter to which their letter refers lies entirely outside their sphere of action, as laid down by parliament <sup>47</sup>

With the generous terms of sale offered under the Wyndham act it was expected that the U I L would gradually fade away, and for a while it looked as if this is what would happen. However, Clonbrock and a number of other landlords that were determined to get even higher prices for their estates soon 'provided the U I L with a new *raison d'etre*' and the scene was set for the Ranch War <sup>48</sup>

### **The Ranch War**

The agitation directed by the U I L in the aftermath of the Wyndham act was once again directed at graziers in an attempt to put pressure on the landlords to sell. The first rumblings of this Ranch War were in 1903 on the Wills-Sandford estate in Roscommon where a rent combination forced the owners to sell on terms favourable to the tenants. The success of the tenants there inspired those on the Dunsandle estate of William Daly to agitate once again. Between October 1903 and August 1904 the estate was subjected to intense agitation in the form of rent strikes and boycotting. James Archer Daly, owner of the Radford estate in east Galway, was similarly feeling the effects of agitation as his herds were prevented from saving hay making it impossible for him to keep winter stock. In a letter to Clonbrock he expressed his dismay at the government's inaction arguing that 'If the Government intended that we should be ruined, driven from our occupations and homes, would it

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<sup>47</sup> *Irish Times*, 6 Nov 1906

<sup>48</sup> Campbell, *Land and revolution*, pp 87-8

not be less cruel to give us our marching orders instead of allowing us to bleed to death by the enemies of order and the British government' <sup>49</sup>

James Archer Daly was in no way sympathetic with his namesake William Daly who was being agitated against. He wrote to Clonbrock informing him of a newspaper article that gave a detailed account of William Daly's 'career, his persecutions, cruelties, terrorisms culminating in the tenant combination to resist to the last of his obvious tyranny. Perhaps it is not right of me to remind you how often I warned you and others what his brutal conduct was sure to bring about' <sup>50</sup> In May 1904 during a parliamentary debate, in the House of Lords, on the state of 'lawlessness' in Galway, Clonbrock

was extremely glad to hear that the matter had not escaped his majesty's government. In this part of Ireland the feelings of the people have been raised to such a pitch by the articles in the nationalist press and by speeches made in the country that the voluntary character of the act of last year appears to be quite lost sight of, and the belief seems fairly fixed in their minds that a land owner is bound to sell his property to his tenants at whatever terms it may be convenient for the tenants to offer <sup>51</sup>

Calling attention to inflammatory speeches made by members of the UIL at demonstrations he remarked that landlords were being forced to sell their entire estates

Not only the land in the occupation of the tenants, but the grazing land besides, which they had in their own hands or let to grazing tenants, and further, that the tenants were not to deal directly with the landlords but the landlords were to be forced to sell to the estates commissioners. In fact, the landlords were to be given no option in the matter whatever <sup>52</sup>

To prove his point he quoted from a speech given by Martin Finnerty at a UIL demonstration at Kiltulla during May 1904. Finnerty told the crowd 'that they might as well expect a flock of blackbirds to give the people the land as expect the landlords to sell, unless compelled to by the determination of the people and by their

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<sup>49</sup> James Archer Daly to Sir James Doherty (copy sent to Clonbrock), 6 July 1904 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35784 (8))

<sup>50</sup> James Archer Daly to Clonbrock, 11 July 1904 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35784 (8))

<sup>51</sup> *Hansard* 4, cxxxiv 838 (10 May 1904)

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, 1420 (13 June 1904), for a discussion on the estates commissioners see, Cosgrove, 'The Wyndham Land Act, 1903', p 87

organisation’ Furthermore, Finnerty argued that it was ‘by agitation they should compel them to divide the grass lands [and that] wherever an estate was offered not to buy unless the grazing land was divided among the whole body of tenants’<sup>53</sup> Clonbrock argued that it was inflammatory speeches such as Finnerty’s and pressure from the UIL that were responsible for rent strikes and intimidation on his estate and those neighbouring it He gave an example of how there were rent strikes on two properties in his locality where the UIL held sway, and on a third property ‘which it appears had not attracted the attention of the UIL the tenants came by themselves, and all paid their rent’<sup>54</sup>

Attacks on the remnants of paternalism are evident in a further example given by Clonbrock he explained to the house that on one estate, during a period when there was a dearth of fuel, the agent told the tenants that they could collect the loose timber lying around the demesne ‘but they were afraid to do so, and preferred to go some distance away and buy fuel rather than get timber from this demesne for nothing’ This provides insights into the UIL’s understanding of the role that the gift played in cultivating *identification* with the landed family and its role in managing the deferential dialectic They had obviously made the connection between paternalism and deference and if they were to be successful in their objective of sweeping away landlordism they needed to remove any opportunities where this social dynamic existed

Clonbrock argued that boycotting did not come from the tenants themselves and that it must have been orchestrated by a superior order (i.e. the UIL) He accused the government of sitting with folded hands and serenely contemplating the war from Olympian heights and that they were so bent on the success of the Wyndham act they were ‘not disposed to look too curiously into the means by which the transfer of property from landlord to tenant is brought about’ He asked if the government were ‘not prepared to take stronger steps, and whether they will not refuse to sanction any agreement for purchase where intimidation prevails’<sup>55</sup> He

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<sup>53</sup> *Hansard* 4, cxxxiv, 1420 (13 June 1904)

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*

referred to the Wyndham act as ‘a dead letter, for it is quite clear that the majority of the landlords would be prepared to face obloquy, annoyance, and even personal danger, rather than submit to terms which would be ruinous to the interest of both themselves and their families’ Again Clonbrock reiterated what he had said in February 1903 about landlords being ‘under no moral obligation to sell They [the landlords] are not responsible for the state of confusion, of uncertainty, and anxiety brought about by faulty legislation in the past All they can be accused of is the unpardonable crime of still being possessed of some property, which is coveted by others’<sup>56</sup> Clearly Clonbrock’s attitude to a sale had not changed but the same could not be said of William Daly who capitulated due to the boycotting and intimidation, and informed Clonbrock that he was prepared to sell 2,000 acres to the estates commissioners provided he got twenty-three years purchase ‘If this is agreed to, the sale to be made by me to the estates commissioners of both tenanted and untenanted land, this will save me a lot of bother’<sup>57</sup> Eventually Daly sold all his land and ‘the success of this test case created the precedent for a countrywide no-rent agitation on behalf of land purchase’<sup>58</sup>

Some months later in January 1905 Lord Clonbrock’s daughter Edith married Sir William Mahon, the head of the neighbouring landed family Among the wedding presents she received were a silver dressing case from the servants and employees at Clonbrock, silver framed menu slates and a butter dish from Killosoolan school, and a turquoise and moonstone bracelet from Clonbrock school Among the gifts that William Mahon received were a silver bowl from the servants and employees at Castlegar<sup>59</sup> However, although it was reported that there was much rejoicing and the lighting of bonfires in Ahascragh that evening there was no mention of the tenantry from either estate Neither does there appear to have been any gifts from the tenants of the estates to the newlyweds providing a contrast to Luke Gerald and Augusta’s wedding in 1866 when there were gifts to the bride from the tenantry of

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>57</sup> William Daly to Lord Clonbrock, 19 Aug 1904 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35784 (8))

<sup>58</sup> Campbell, *Land and revolution*, p 95

<sup>59</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 5 Feb 1905

the Crofton estate and an address and testimonial worth several hundred pounds presented by the Clonbrock tenantry

However, when they returned from their honeymoon a few months later they were met at the gates by servants, employees, and tenants where the familiar ritual of unyoking the horses from the carriage took place and Sir William and Edith were pulled up the avenue. Later that evening there was bonfire in the market square 'the village of Ahascragh was brilliantly illuminated, every window of every pane of every house had at least one candle in it. In the market square a splendid bonfire was made [as well as] a torchlight procession which met Sir William and Lady Mahon, and accompanied them through the village cheering all the time'<sup>60</sup> While these rituals were not directly connected with the Clonbrock estate they do give an indication that the rituals of paternalism and deference had, to some extent, survived. However, as the sale of the Mahon estate was also being negotiated at this time these rituals were no longer as significant as they had once been. Just as the nationalist press lambasted the 'flunkeyism' of those that attended Robin Dillon's coming of age in 1890 those that participated in the events associated with the return of the honeymoon couple received similar treatment in the 'Ahascragh Notes' column of the *Connaught Leader*. It reported that although there were some true nationalists in the district it was the 'scum of Ahascragh' who threw 'themselves under the landlord juggernaut a team of donkeys - human asses I mean - and the nobler and more intelligent animals, were taken from the carriage to make room for those low carrion'

There was similar contempt for the torchlight procession but certain sympathy for the torch bearers as they were only young boys 'Poor little wretches, no one could blame them. A day will come when many of them will remember with feelings of disgust the part they took in that evening's proceedings. It is perfectly safe to predict that this was the last flicker of dying landlordism in this or any other part of Ireland'. It further referred to those who had turned up to take advantage of the free drink that was on offer as 'porter swipers [that] had a high time of it, and gorged

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<sup>60</sup> *Tuam Herald*, 1 April 1905

themselves like the beasts they are' However, it added that when a suitable amount of drink had been consumed one of them shouted 'To hell with him! This is the last of his liquor [William Mahon's] we'll ever taste'<sup>61</sup>

A column adjacent to 'Ahascragh Notes' reported how an estate committee had been formed to request that Lord Clonbrock sell his estates and the secretary of the committee communicated with him to this end In his reply he stated that he had 'No wish to sell [his] property and thus break off old relations with tenants, with whom I have always been on the best of terms, and whose interest I have always been anxious to promote, but as they are unanimous in the desire to purchase, I would endeavour to accede to their wishes'<sup>62</sup> Continued pressure was exerted on graziers to surrender their holdings and Richard Howard, a tenant of Clonbrock's on the Ballydonelan estate, was sent a letter in January 1905 and asked to surrender two grazing farms, valued at £190 and £170, by the secretary of the Killoran branch of the UIL<sup>63</sup> Howard ignored the letter and on 16 April he was approached by a deputation of four men including the UIL secretary, Owen Kearns, and requested once again to surrender the farms The four men in question were then arrested and charged with intimidation but the jury at the summer assizes failed to secure a conviction<sup>64</sup> A few weeks later Clonbrock received a petition which in deferential fashion began with the words 'My Lord, we the [198] undersigned tenants on the Clonbrock estate respectfully approach your lordship, and request to be informed if you will be pleased to sell your estate under the conditions of the present land act'<sup>65</sup>

Perhaps enamoured by this approach Clonbrock contacted Fr Shanagher, the parish priest of Ahascragh, informing him that he wanted to meet representatives from all sections of the estate and requested that he write to the priests in the various districts, Fohenagh, Killure, Aughrim, Cappataggle, and Mullagh, so that deputations could be organised As he wished to 'see the deputation in the dining room here there must be some limit to the number I should think that from 25 to 30

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<sup>61</sup> *Connaught Leader*, 1 Apr 1905

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>63</sup> Clonbrock rental and accounts (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 19,653)

<sup>64</sup> *Irish Independent*, 22 July 1905

<sup>65</sup> Tenant petition to Lord Clonbrock, 6 Aug 1905 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,721 (3))

including the priests would be sufficient'.<sup>66</sup> Shanagher encountered some difficulty in settling who would comprise the deputations and was unable to get less than forty persons including the priests for which he apologised but felt that it was necessary to include so many to avoid jealousies. He suggested 22 September as a suitable date for the meeting and advised Lord Clonbrock that it was not necessary to provide a luncheon for them. 'In fact my Lord it is too good of you to offer a luncheon and may I say it is quite unexpected hence there will be no disappointment in your dispensing with it altogether.' Clonbrock agreed to this date but did not wish to 'refuse the pleasure of offering luncheon as some have come from long distances'.<sup>67</sup>

Clonbrock met the deputation at Clonbrock House as arranged which represented an important moment in the history of the estates. Clonbrock certainly had a home advantage as the tenants were unlikely to have ever been invited into the dining room of the big house before. However, if he had thought that he might get the negotiations off to an amicable start by inviting the tenants to Clonbrock for luncheon he was mistaken as it was going to take more than the fine cuisine of the big house to persuade them to accept his terms. The tenants had already been warned by the *Connaught Leader* about concluding a private sale with Clonbrock. It advised them to

be on their guard, or as sure as the sun will shine tomorrow morning, so surely will they be mulcted with a ruinous price for the land which his lordship has consented to sell. Let them not consent to purchase directly from the landlord, but through the Estates Commissioners or Congested Districts Board. If they are wheedled now into an extravagant price they are surely ruined.<sup>68</sup>

In the end a total of fifty-nine people from the respective parishes on the estate attended to represent Clonbrock's tenants and the presence of seven priests among them illustrates how the Catholic clergy had assumed the role of leaders. At the coming of age in 1890 Fr Fahy had been reprimanded by the National League for eulogising Lord Clonbrock's benevolence during the Famine but Fr Shanagher, having introduced the deputation, spoke in similarly eulogic tones of the cordial

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<sup>66</sup> Clonbrock to Fr Shanagher (copy), 12 Aug 1905, *Ibid*

<sup>67</sup> Shanagher to Clonbrock, 13 Sept 1905, *Ibid*

<sup>68</sup> *Connaught Leader*, 10 Sept 1905



relations that had always existed between the barons Clonbrock and their tenants, and the kindness with which the third baron had treated the tenantry during the Famine. He praised Gladstone and the land acts and asked Clonbrock what he could do to reduce the annual payments and enlarge the holdings of tenants. Clonbrock stated that the matter was a most serious one for him and reiterated his mantra that 'as the property in the immediate neighbourhood had been in the possession of [his] family for upwards of 300 years and had passed down from father to son for eleven generations, it was a painful thing for [him] to be the person to sell it'.<sup>69</sup>

His terms of sale were twenty-three years' purchase of rents which meant that the purchase repayments payable by the tenants would be twenty-five per cent less than their annual rents. However, due to the favourable terms offered by the Wyndham act with its twelve per cent bonus there was a considerable backlog of landlords waiting for the purchase money to be advanced.<sup>70</sup> 'Most [landlords] received around 3.5 per cent on the purchase money from their tenants in the interval'.<sup>71</sup> Clonbrock, however, insisted that he was to receive 4 per cent of the purchase price per annum until he received payment from the estates commissioners. Concerning the grassland he did not want to disturb anyone on old agreements or those holding from year to year but agreed to sell land that was in his own hands and some other grass farms. However, he stated that he could not proceed with the sale because of the ongoing court case relating to the case of intimidation against Richard Howard. Fr Meagher, the parish priest of Abbeygormicon, said that intimidation had not been intended and that the only intention of the young men of the district had been to 'protect against any "collective action" between tenants of grass farms and their landlords by which more permanent tenancies should be created and that the language [they had used] had been most respectful'.<sup>72</sup> A tenant, identified only as Thomas C. of Park added that 'as regards grazing farms there was not the slightest

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<sup>69</sup> Lord Clonbrock's memo of the meeting at Clonbrock House, 22 Sept. 1905 (N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 35,784 (9)).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Cosgrove, 'The Wyndham Land Act, 1903', p. 208.

<sup>72</sup> Lord Clonbrock's memo of the meeting at Clonbrock House, 22 Sept. 1905 (N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 35, 784 (9)).

their intention to interfere with old tenancies and residential holdings on valid tenant right lettings’

Another point of contention centred on who would compensate the graziers if they were to be disturbed to facilitate the enlargement of smallholdings

Clonbrock expressed the view that the estates commissioners would not entertain the question of compensation but would only advance the value of the land, therefore any compensation would have to come out of the purchase money and would be paid by him (Clonbrock) and not the purchasing tenant Fr Meagher suggested that it might be done by the purchasing tenant agreeing to give a larger number of years purchase with the balance going to the outgoing grazier Clonbrock expressed his doubts whether this would be sanctioned by the estates commissioners Fr Fahy, the parish priest of Killallaghan, thought it fair that Clonbrock should not be at a loss for the sale of his property ‘but pressed for a sale of the grasslands, saying the tenants did not wish to purchase without it Michael Fallon of Currafary, (who Lady Clonbrock would later describe as ‘our most inveterate enemy’<sup>73</sup>) said that this was also the view of the tenants in his neighbourhood’<sup>74</sup>

The following year agreement had yet to be reached but by the middle of May 1906 the tenants on the Ballydonlan estate appeared to be getting close to a settlement Fr Fahey, the priest that had been negotiating on their behalf, contacted Clonbrock’s agents, G E Armstrong and Mahon and Co, stating how it was ‘so good and generous of Lord Clonbrock to convey the pleasant news to his Ballydonelan tenants and the tenants in general’ regarding sale of the estate<sup>75</sup> The various Clonbrock tenants were not united under a single estates committee and the negotiating process for land purchase was conducted on an individual basis by the various sections of the estates with their respective priests as their representatives A number of the

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<sup>73</sup> *Roscommon Messenger*, 8 Feb 1908

<sup>74</sup> Lord Clonbrock’s memo of the meeting at Clonbrock house, 22 Sept 1905 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35, 784 (9))

<sup>75</sup> Fr Fahy to G E Armstrong and Mahon, 17 May 1906 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35, 727 (17))

Ballydonlan tenants from Killoran, Aughrim, Killallaghtan, and Cappataggle met at the parochial house in Killallaghtan on 16 June and set out the terms under which they were willing to purchase. Fr Fahy informed Clonbrock that they were prepared to offer twenty-two years purchase for their own holdings and that the estates commissioners should fix the price of the grasslands. He further informed Clonbrock that the tenants were 'most anxious to treat you as generously as they possibly can',<sup>76</sup>

Elsewhere on the estates things were not going as smoothly and on 5 August a meeting of the east Galway executive of the U I L heard how some of the principal members of the Mullagh branch of the U I L were attempting to scupper the sale of grasslands to the estates commissioners and secure them for themselves. The chairman of the meeting argued that this was 'of great importance, not alone to the people of Mullagh, but to the people of every other district' and that if the Mullagh branch 'of the U I L was to have any real credibility then 'it would be absolutely necessary for the people of east Galway to support' the members that had reported this 'insidious attempt to nullify the benefits of the Land Purchase Act',<sup>77</sup> The districts in which Clonbrock held land were well represented at this meeting with delegates from Ahascragh, Quansbury, Fohenagh, Caltra, Killure, and Cappataggle. One of the speakers, Mr O'Reilly, a tenant on the Quansbury estate [near the village of Mullagh], stated that over 100 of his fellow tenants had requested that Clonbrock sell his land through the estates commissioners and redistribute five grazing farms but that this request had been turned down due to the intimidation of graziers.

John Roche M P appealed to the Quansbury tenants 'not to be in a hurry, and not to be satisfied with the barren patches and allow the landlord to have the fat of the land, for as sure as he was speaking to them, if they had patience, they would have every perch of the grass land',<sup>78</sup> The meeting then confirmed a resolution by the Quansbury tenants that they wished to purchase their holdings and have the grazing land divided by the estates commissioners according to the spirit of the 1903 land

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<sup>76</sup> Fahy to Clonbrock, 18 June 1906, *Ibid*

<sup>77</sup> *Connaught Leader*, 11 Aug 1906

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*

act. They pledged themselves 'to have no purchase without the fulfilment of these conditions, and we condemn any move for private bargaining on this estate by any tenant or number of tenants on the estate as it would ruin the prospects and destroy the peace of the tenants for all time'<sup>79</sup>

To protest at the actions of Clonbrock and the grabbers, and support the smallholders on the Quansbury estate a demonstration was held in Mullagh the following week on Sunday 12 August. It was estimated that over 3,000 people turned out to support the Quansbury tenants and protest against the terms of sale that Clonbrock had offered. Speeches condemned Clonbrock's unwillingness to sell the grass farms to congested tenants and even on the one grazing farm he had consented to sell he reserved the right to give it to persons of his choice and everyone knew who they were going to be 'the bailiffs, dog-boys, and supporters of the rent office in the past'. William Duffy M P mentioned other landowners, including William Daly of Dunsandle, had sold both their occupied and untenanted land with 'the happiest and best results for everybody concerned'. However, he added, there would always be 'some mad idiots' like Clanricarde who were the bane of their class. 'I do not say you have such types down here, but certainly Lord Clonbrock and others, who in the past enjoyed the reputation of being fair, and I will go so far as to say Irish, in his dealings with his tenantry, are setting an example for crass obstinacy and ignorant stupidity'<sup>80</sup>

The rhetoric employed by the nationalist press and the UIL blamed graziers, not only for monopolising grass lands but for emigration. They were depicted as

a selfish, good for nothing crew and a curse to our country these men absorb all the land good and bad, to themselves and leave several people in Ahascragh without as much grass as would support a goat these men have consciences so hardened by contact with landlords, whose main prop they are and always have been, that they rejoice in seeing the cream of our population fleeing our country as if it were plague stricken<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 18 Aug 1906

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 29 Sept 1906

No further progress was made in getting Clonbrock to part with the untenanted land and an attempt was made to get the tenants from Mullagh, Killure, Ahascragh, and Fohenagh to act collectively and join forces against Clonbrock. This failed, however, and the *Connaught Leader* observed that 'The body of tenants who are at the present day without an estate committee or some such body to watch their interests and push their claims to a purchase and to the grazing lands forward, do not deserve a better fate than that which by their indolence they earn for themselves'<sup>82</sup> In fact, not only were the different sections of the estate unable to co-operate but internal strife existed in smaller communities and within branches of the UIL as we have seen with the Mullagh branch which finally split on the 4 November when 'a heated discussion arose in which a sarcastic crossfire of idle words was freely exchanged [and] Michael Donnelan finally handed in his resignation on the grounds that the committee was not prepared to transact any practical business'<sup>83</sup> This split within the Mullagh UIL was copper fastened the following Sunday, 11 November, when Michael Donnelan was elected as the secretary of the newly established Mullagh branch of Sinn Féin

As 1907 progressed the UIL's campaign of intimidation against graziers yielded the desired results as the amount of unlet grazing farms in east Galway rose from 36 in 1906 to 79 in 1907<sup>84</sup> On 15 May the *Daily Express* reported that the considered opinion of a landlord residing in the east riding of County Galway was that 'not since the worst days of the eighties have lawlessness and intimidation been so rampant or so menacing as they are at present'<sup>85</sup> It is not unlikely that the landlord in question was Clonbrock as these were sentiments he expressed in the House of Lords in early June. Calling for the reintroduction of coercion he spoke of 'the state of agitation and terrorism' which existed in the west of Ireland. In sixty years 'excepting some terrible period when crime and outrage were rife in the country, and many trembled daily for the life of their friends, I cannot recall a period when property has been so insecure and the action of the government so supine as at

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 13 Oct 1906

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 17 Nov 1906

<sup>84</sup> Campbell, *Land and revolution*, p 101

<sup>85</sup> *Daily Express*, 15 May 1907

present’<sup>86</sup> The following day Lord Donoughmore argued that law and order had broken down as those that were adjudicating in U I L courts were also magistrates who were expected to dispense justice in the courts of the land<sup>87</sup>

Clonbrock’s call for coercion brought down upon him the wrath of the nationalist press which resurrected the O’Kelly curse which, as we have seen in Chapter four, challenged Clonbrock’s legitimacy to his estates On 8 June an article in the *Connaught Leader* entitled ‘Our Hereditary Defamers’ related how the ‘ascendency gang’ had been defaming the name of Ireland in the House of Lords It has been argued in Chapter four that the curse embedded narratives of dispossession and retribution and that its circulation constituted a subaltern counterpublic that challenged the prevailing structures of dominance However, during the Ranch War those that were mounting a challenge to that dominance had the print media at their disposal and the narratives of dispossession and retribution, which Ann Kane has argued were prevalent at Land League meetings in the 1880s, were now being employed as rhetorical missiles to attack Clonbrock<sup>88</sup> Those, including Clonbrock, who had spoken in favour of coercion were described ‘as the worthy descendants of the Cromwellian and Williamite land robbers [who] have been engaged in the task of belying the nation they have so long crushed and plundered’ Alluding to the curse it referred to the

versatile and illustrious ‘tanner’ of Clonbrock He has always been treated with the greatest forbearance by his tenants and neighbours In respect for his father’s memory they have overlooked his faults and his ingratitude with forbearance that borders on treachery and cowardice The advocate of coercion has been returned over and over again as a representative of a division on the Mountbellew District Council A single bullock has never been disturbed on the ranches he keeps from the poor without cause

Continuing with his speeches in the House of Lords it related how ‘the “carrion crow” of Clonbrock poured fourth a stream of calumny and misrepresentation It is evident that falsehood did not perish with the unscrupulous despoiler of the unhappy O’Kelly in the days of the tanyard of treacherous memory’<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> *Hansard* 4, clxxv 447 (4 June 1907)

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 633 (5 June 1907)

<sup>88</sup> Kane, ‘Narratives of nationalism’, p 245

<sup>89</sup> *Connaught Leader*, 8 June 1907

A further reference to the curse appeared the following month when Clonbrock was criticised for trying to inflate the price of the estate by getting a grazier to purchase a parcel of land. In cases where a bargain had been struck with a tenant in a district the estates commissioners refused to have anything to do with setting a price so if a grazier paid an inflated price for land his neighbours would also have to pay the same price. The narrative of the curse held that in the sixteenth century Clonbrock had acquired land in an underhand fashion and the *Connaught Leader* declared that the way he was trying to inflate the price of the estate 'might have done in the dark days when the Farmer of Killosohan was hatching his plot against the unfortunate O'Kellys. The days of the historic 'hide of leather' are gone by - its charm played out, and neither coercion, special jurors, nor castle judges can bar the people from their rights'<sup>90</sup> The next month, for his opposition to the evicted tenant's bill,<sup>91</sup> the *Connaught Leader* once again resurrected the curse and O'Kelly's dispossession but this time they juxtaposed it with the case of Patrick Silk who had been evicted during the Plan of Campaign and was seeking reinstatement through the estates commissioners.

We can understand the descendants of the Cromwellian and Williamite robbers persisting to the end in their hatred of the Irish people, but it passes our comprehension to fathom the ferocity of the descendant of the Tanner of Killosohan against this latest effort of the government to bring some measure of mercy and succour to these poor people. IT WILL BE EASY FOR HIM TO PROVIDE FOR POOR SILK out of his ranches, surely HE NEED NOT GRUDGE HIM A HUT in place of the HOME THAT WAS BURNED ON HIM. A time limit excludes all chance of the claims of the descendants of poor O'Kelly being considered even if they could be found. These people have disappeared as completely as the HIDE OF LEATHER by aid which they were undone. No doubt their spirits haunt the fair lands they were dispossessed of. Still ghosts cannot be laid by denying justice to the living no more than accumulation of years can wipe out the memory of a wrong.<sup>92</sup>

This kind of rhetoric was not unusual for certain nationalist publications but what is notable is that more than fifty years after the curse against the Dillon family had, seemingly, been laid to rest with the third baron living to witness his son come of

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<sup>90</sup> *Connaught Leader*, 13 July 1907

<sup>91</sup> For discussion see Cosgrove, 'The Wyndham Land Act, 1903', p. 319

<sup>92</sup> *Connaught Leader*, 24 Aug. 1907

age, the narrative of dispossession still remained which indicates a deep seated origin in the minds of the peasantry Furthermore the articles refer to ‘the farmer of Killosolan’ and the ‘tanner of Killosolan’ which was the place adjacent to Clonbrock that the Dillon family were resident in the sixteenth century before they moved into O’Kelly’s castle at Clonbrock so it is significant the family were remembered as farmers and tanners, a view that would have been very much at variance with the family’s own self perception as the aristocratic proprietors of great estates The likelihood of a descendent of the reputedly dispossessed O’Kelly coming forward and claiming reinstatement were unlikely and as the *Connaught Leader* had argued too much time had elapsed for the claim to be made legitimate This, however, was not the case for Patrick Silk who was provided with a holding by the estates commissioners in replacement for the one from which he had been evicted in 1887 Furthermore, the twenty-two acre holding which he secured was twice the size of his previous one Its buildings and improvements were valued at £190 and it came with £60 of stock and implements which were considered ‘fee grants not repayable’<sup>93</sup>

Despite Clonbrock’s advocacy of the rights of landlords, his calls for coercion, and his insistence on a higher price for his estates, no major agitation had broken out on his estates Interestingly, during the summer of 1907, his calls for coercion were running parallel with the reopening of communication with various parish priests to try and negotiate a sale of the estate Even though the *Connaught Leader* advised on the ‘absolute necessity of loyalty and unity’ it was not heeded as much negotiating was carried out by individual parishes, districts, and even townlands as one suspected the other of coveting grasslands which they wanted distributed among people from their own localities<sup>94</sup> This disunity was no great disappointment to G G Mahon, Clonbrock’s agent who was ‘glad to inform Clonbrock that the Quansbury tenants are divided on the question of buying through the estates

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<sup>93</sup> *Evicted tenants (Ireland) Return prepared pursuant to section 3 of the Evicted tenants (Ireland) act, 1907, giving particulars of all cases in which an evicted tenant (or a person nominated by the Estates Commissioners to be the personal representative of a deceased evicted tenant) has been, with the assistance of the Estates Commissioners, reinstated, either by the landlord or by the Estates Commissioners, as a purchaser of his or his predecessor’s former holding or part thereof or provided with a new parcel of land under the Land purchase Acts, during the quarter ended 31st March, 1908, pp 6-7 [Cd 4171], H C 1908, xc 1350-1*

<sup>94</sup> *Connaught Leader*, 13 July 1907



commissioners<sup>95</sup> He further observed that ‘the delay on Fr Shanagher’s part [in the negotiations] is due I think to the fact that he cannot get the Clonbrock, Doon, and Killure tenants who have joined forces to come to a decision I surmise they will come to no decision until they know if you are prepared to divide’ the grazing farms in the locality<sup>96</sup>

Fr Fahy, negotiating on behalf of the Ballydonlan tenants, offered twenty-two years purchase, one less than the twenty-three years’ purchase Clonbrock sought the previous year and now considerably lower than the twenty-five years purchase price reached on the Leinster estate<sup>97</sup> However, staunchly anti-landlord publications such as the *Connaught Leader* urged the tenants to drive a harder bargain arguing that Sir Henry Burke of Marble Hill who had originally sought 24 5 years purchase had just settled for 20 5 years<sup>98</sup> By 15 July, Mahon was told by Fr Shanagher that the Clonbrock tenants were also prepared to offer twenty-two years purchase if certain grazing farms were divided According to Mahon ‘the general feeling is I think “wait and we will have compulsory purchase at much lower rates” I had a long interview with Armstrong [a partner in the estate agency] yesterday and his advice is “Sell and let the graziers go by the board” Mahon advised Clonbrock to sell at twenty-two years to the Ballydonelan tenants and terms were drawn up but it was not long before a problem arose<sup>99</sup> On 22 July, James Colohan, a grazier, wrote to Clonbrock saying that he had heard a rumour that his farm at Toomore and his grazing land was to be sold to the estates commissioners He believed he had a tenant right to the place and could have a fair rent fixed but ‘was depending on your lordship to stand by an old tenant’<sup>100</sup> A note in the corner of this letter by Clonbrock stated that what had happened had been a mistake and that he would not sell the farm<sup>101</sup> Fr Fahey feared that the sale would not go through because there were several congested tenants on the Ballydonelan estate who sought the division

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<sup>95</sup>J Mahon (of G E Armstrong & Mahon) to Clonbrock, 9 July 1907 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,727 (17))

<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> Fahy to Lord Clonbrock, 18 June 1906 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,727 (17)), Cosgrove, ‘The Wyndham Land Act, 1903, p 201

<sup>98</sup> *Connaught Leader*, 13 July 1907

<sup>99</sup> J Mahon to Clonbrock, 9 July 1907 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35, 727 (17))

<sup>100</sup> James Colohan to Lord Clonbrock, 22 July 1907, Ibid

<sup>101</sup> Clonbrock’s note on Colohan’s letter, 22 July 1907, Ibid

of Colohan's land to enlarge their holdings. His fears turned out to be well founded as the sale did not proceed.

On 4 August, the various branches of the U I L with the closest proximity to Clonbrock demesne came together for a convention at Ahascragh and delegates from the Ahascragh, Caltra, Fohenagh, and Killure branches attended. 'After a lengthy discussion re the grass lands it was decided to write to Lord Clonbrock and Sir William Mahon offering to buy agricultural holdings and all grass lands through the estates commissioners only'<sup>102</sup> However, there were no representatives from the townland of Doon who, according to Mahon, did not show up because they feared 'that if they co-operated with the Clonbrock and Killure tenants the latter might make a claim for a portion of the Doon grass lands'<sup>103</sup> There was much disagreement about what price should be offered by the various sections and sub sections of the tenants. The Clonbrock tenants in the parish of Caltra offered twenty years' purchase while the Clonbrock tenants from the parishes of Ahascragh and Killure now offered only eighteen. In the end, according to Mahon, they all agreed on the twenty year offer of the Caltra people and it was his view that 'the Caltra people seem the most reasonable, there will be nothing in the shape of an offer worth considering as long as the Ahascragh league is constituted as present'<sup>104</sup>

The royal commission on congestion chaired by the earl of Dudley began its inquiries in September 1906 and heard evidence in Galway between 18 September and 4 October 1907. One of those called to give evidence was Thaddeus Glynn, who was nominated to give evidence by Ballinasloe District Council and by the Fohenagh branch of the U I L, of which he was a member. In the district of Annagh where he was a resident he gave evidence that there were ninety-eight families in the division with holdings worth £5 and under, and some as low as five shillings, while there was 2,462 acres of untenanted land. He argued that if the people had the untenanted land 'they would have a way to live comfort compared to now when they

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<sup>102</sup> *Connaught Leader*, 10 Aug 1907

<sup>103</sup> J Mahon to Clonbrock, 5 Aug 1907 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35, 727 (17))

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

are living in starvation’<sup>105</sup> The people of his district, he said, had made several applications to purchase land from Lord Clonbrock under the Act of 1903 but were refused. It expressed the view that the commission should ‘say that there is no remedy against unwilling landlords except compulsory purchase’<sup>106</sup> Another advocate of compulsory purchase was Thomas Reilly from Kiltomer who pointed out the injustices in landholding on the Quansbury estate of Lord Clonbrock. He stated that alongside seventy-seven uneconomic holdings with rent from 6s to £15 there were five grazing farms, of which Clonbrock occupied two, with a total acreage of 700<sup>107</sup> The Rev J P Callanan, parish priest of Killimore and Tierenasragh, argued that

unless compulsory powers were obtained, the present commission would fail of its object, because most landlords would refuse to sell or would hold out for the last shilling. The Clanricarde sore would be healed if the estates commissioners purchased the Clanricarde and Pollock estates, in these cases and in those of Ashtown, Clonbrock, Col Nolan, and others, compulsion might be necessary, and if so should be applied<sup>108</sup>

To put the argument of the landed class forward Lord Ashtown was nominated by the Irish Landowners Convention. He accused the estates commissioners of purchasing land where there has been gross intimidation and the letting value of the land had been reduced<sup>109</sup> He considered the land of east Galway unsuitable for tillage and warned of a collapse of the Irish stock rearing business if the grasslands were broken up. Betraying a very low opinion of western tenant farmers, he railed against a society that punished the thrifty and rewarded the thrifless. In his opinion the ‘outcry about uneconomic holdings in the west [was] largely due to the fact that the land [was] held by tenants who will work no more than they can help, and appear to have no ambition to improve their circumstances by any efforts of their own’<sup>110</sup> The final report of the commission was published in 1908 having interviewed 570 witnesses at 116 public meetings and concluded that all untenanted

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<sup>105</sup> *Royal commission on congestion in Ireland Appendix to the tenth report Minutes of evidence (taken in counties Galway and Roscommon, 18th September, to 4th October, 1907), and documents relating thereto*, p 197 [Cd 4007], H C 1908, xlii, 295

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, p 198 [Cd 4007], H C 1908, xlii, 296

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, p 210, [Cd 4007], H C 1908, xlii, 308

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, p 150 [Cd 4007], H C 1908, xlii, 248

<sup>109</sup> *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland appendix to the tenth report*, p 178 [Cd 4007], H C 1908, xlii, 278

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*

land should be made available, by compulsion if necessary, for the purposes of relieving congestion and improving agricultural practices <sup>111</sup>

For the first quarter of 1907, no cattle drives were reported by the police but from April to September a total of 143 were reported throughout the country, sixty-nine of which had taken place in the district of east Galway <sup>112</sup> Since the commencement of agitation, after the introduction of the Wyndham act, the county inspectors had persistently referred to the U I L as the ruling party The districts of Loughrea and Athenry were seldom reported as undisturbed as tenants waging a perpetual battle on the Clanricarde estates agitated for sale The Ballinasloe and Mountbellew districts, where almost all of Clonbrock's property was situated, were relatively undisturbed except for low level agitation on the Cheevers and Joyce estates By September, agitation had escalated and the county inspector reported that rent combinations existed on twelve estates in east Galway Furthermore, he reported that five cattle drives had taken place 'for which no one has been made amenable' <sup>113</sup> The following month he reported that agitation was 'spreading into the Mountbellew and Ballinasloe districts, which have hitherto been quiet' <sup>114</sup>

On 26 October, Clonbrock summoned a deputation of his tenants, led by Fr Shanagher of Ahascragh, and other priests to meet him He offered to sell but refused to disturb Michael Carr or Thomas Johnstone who held grazing farms in Killosolan and Doon respectively This was unacceptable to the tenants who called a meeting in the league room in Caltra where it was decided to drive the stock off Carr's land at midnight on the night of the 30-31 October This was a significant date as it was just before the autumn gale of rent was due on 1 November as well as the time when many of the eleven month tenancies expired and a new letting season began A crowd numbering somewhere between 1,000 and 1,200 led by Caltra fife

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<sup>111</sup> *Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland final report*, p 111 [Cd 4097], HL 1908, xlii, 851

<sup>112</sup> *Cattle drives (Ireland) Return to an order of the Honourable the House of Commons dated 19th October, 1908,--for a return, by counties and quarterly periods, of the number of cattle-drives reported by the Royal Irish Constabulary to have taken place in Ireland from the 1st day of January, 1907 to 30th day of September, 1908*, p 2, HC 1908 (310), xc, 4

<sup>113</sup> County inspector's monthly report, County Galway, Sept 1907 (N A I, IGCI/12)

<sup>114</sup> *Report of the County inspector, Royal Irish Constabulary, Galway east riding, as to the state of the riding in October 1907*, p 2 [Cd 3949], HL 1908, xc, 6

and drum band turned up with blackthorn sticks and ‘good ash plants’ but advance warning had been received by the R I C who arrested twenty-five people, four of whom had been working in Clonbrock yard the previous day. These employees had been warned by Clonbrock not to participate in the drive and their defiance of his orders indicates that deference had not only broken down among tenant farmers but also among demesne workers. Traditionally they would have been considered more deferential to landed authority and were referred to in the nationalist press by the derogatory terms ‘flunky’ and ‘dog boy’ but clearly deference was breaking down to such an extent that even on the doorstep of the big house it was not guaranteed <sup>115</sup>

Despite all the arrests the drive went ahead with women and children participating and the stock was driven up the avenue to Mr Carr’s house led by the band. Drives took place on other properties in the neighbourhood of Mountbellew and on the night of 31 October bonfires and great celebrations were reported there with over 3,000 people gathered. Further drives continued on the Clonbrock estate over the next few days with the farms of John Lyons, Moylough, and Pat Carr of Killosohan, cleared on 1 November and those of Pat Coffey, Graigue, and Michael Sweeney, Killosohan, cleared on 2 November <sup>116</sup>. By the middle of the month most of the grass farms on the Clonbrock estate had been cleared and the graziers had replied to communications from the Ahascragh branch of the U I L and agreed to surrender their farms the following spring. However, Michael Carr and Martin Connolly who held farms at Tycooley did not reply to the letters and the *Roscommon Messenger* insinuated that they were possessed of airs and graces because they did not have the courtesy ‘to reply to such insignificant people as land leaguers’. An attempt was made to clear the stock from Connolly’s £260 per annum farm at Tycooley but Fr Shanagher intervened to prevent this, perhaps, because it was a residential farm. However, the agitating tenants ‘in order to be even with Connolly’ began to boycott him and all his workers consequently deserted him <sup>117</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> *Western News*, 1 Nov 1907

<sup>116</sup> *Roscommon Messenger*, 1 Feb 1908

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, 16 Nov 1907

On the Ballydonlan estate Clonbrock offered to sell having reduced his 1905 price of 23 years' purchase to 22 years and agreed to sell the grasslands to the estates commissioners as long as he received a satisfactory price and that James Colohan, the grazing tenant, would be accommodated elsewhere.<sup>118</sup> Clonbrock continued to choose carefully where he met representatives of the tenants to negotiate a sale. There were no more invitations to luncheon at Clonbrock to discuss these matters, indicating the deterioration in relations, and G. G. Mahon suggested that he meet the Ballydonelan tenants at the parochial house at Cappataggle because 'it would keep the mob out, which to my mind is a great thing [because] the deputation would be small and on its best behaviour'.<sup>119</sup> They wrote to Fr Fahy in Cappataggle to ask if it would be possible to use the parochial house and he replied that they could 'with the heartiest pleasure and welcome' but due to complications the meeting did not take place until 9 January 1908.<sup>120</sup> The Ballydonelan tenants were mostly prepared to accept Clonbrock's terms but one stumbling block 'that all tenants pay half a year's rent at the beginning of the agreement' proved an impediment to sale. The tenants offered a solution to this problem by requesting that the 'half year's rent be added to the purchase money instead of being paid in cash' and E. G. Armstrong advised Clonbrock that 'under the circumstances this should be agreed to, you are getting a fine price for the land and four per cent is better than most sales'. Lord Clonbrock accepted the advice and conceded the point on the half years purchase so the sale went ahead.<sup>121</sup>

Negotiations were not going so smoothly in the Caltra, Ahascragh, and Fohenagh districts in the vicinity of Clonbrock demesne and the district inspector for east Galway reported that 240 tenants on the Clonbrock estate:

approached Lord Clonbrock with a view to sale and the division of the grazing farms. Lord Clonbrock could not agree to a division of the grazing farms as he had promised to leave some of his grazing tenants in possession of their holdings. The tenants then demanded a reduction of six shillings in the pound which was refused. They have now practically adopted the 'Plan of Campaign'

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<sup>118</sup> Terms and conditions of sale for the Ballydonlan estate, Patrick Goulding to Lord Clonbrock, 23 Nov. 1907 (N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, MS 35,727 (17)).

<sup>119</sup> E. G. Armstrong and Mahon to Clonbrock, *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> Fr Fahy to Clonbrock, 30 Nov. 1907; E. G. Armstrong and Mahon to Clonbrock, 6 Jan. 1908, *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Terms and conditions of sale for the Ballydonelan estate, E. G. Armstrong and Mahon to Clonbrock, 20 Jan. 1908, E. G. Armstrong and Mahon to Clonbrock, 31 Jan. 1908, *Ibid.*

and lodged the rent minus the six shillings per £1 in the hands of Mr Hayden solicitor Ballinasloe. A good deal of trouble may be expected on this estate should Lord Clonbrock try to enforce payment as the tenants are thoroughly organised and will have the support and assistance of the countryside.<sup>122</sup>

Since the passing of the Wyndham act in 1903 arrears of rent began to rise steadily and peaked in 1907 at the height of the agitation on his estates.

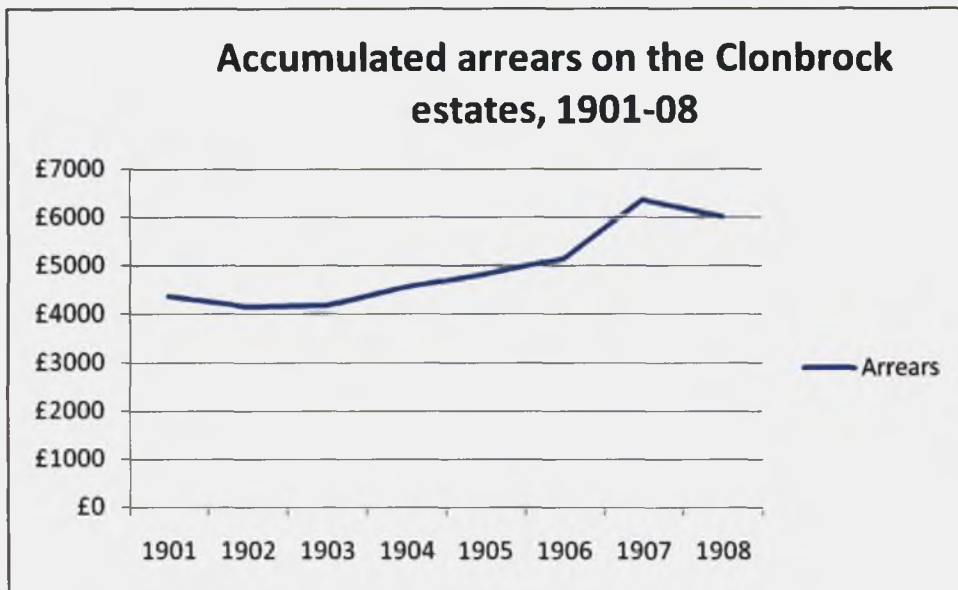


Fig. 7.2 Source: N.L.I., Clonbrock papers, 19,652-59

Earlier chapters have illustrated how the deferential dialectic was becoming increasingly difficult for Clonbrock to manage and how the rituals of paternalism and deference became the targets of nationalist organisations such as the National League. One of those leading the charge against deferential forms of display was Michael Davitt who had expressed the view that: 'It was a hateful and heart-breaking sight to see manly looking men, young and old, doffing their hats and caps and cringing in abject manner to any person connected with an estate, and before magistrates and others associated with the administration of pro-landlord laws'.<sup>123</sup>

Earlier in the chapter it has been argued that the U.I.L. had made the connection between the gift and landed paternalism and the role it played in the management of the deferential dialectic. There was an understanding of the role which the gift

<sup>122</sup> District inspector's monthly report, east Galway, Nov. 1907 (N.A.I., IGCI/12).

<sup>123</sup> Michael Davitt, *The Fall of feudalism in Ireland: or the story of the Land League revolution* (New York, 1904), pp 164-5.

played in fostering *identification* and the U I L sought to smash any opportunity whereby the tenantry might identify with the landed family by making the acceptance of benevolences from the big house taboo. An article by the *Connaught Leader* lambasted a man that had stood up in the league room in Ahascragh on 2 December and advocated payment of rent as a 'dog boy' for whom Clonbrock had erected a pump. The general feeling was that the district of Ahascragh had been the beneficiary of benevolences and the article expressed its disappointment

with Ahascragh men, but sure it is there that all Lord Clonbrock's favourites are situated. It is mainly in the Ahascragh portion of the parish that the Dillon family used to distribute their donations, now put an end to. There the men are who cowered when Lady Clonbrock threatened before any 'drive' took place that if they took part against his lordship that never again would she give them blankets or beef, for her ladyship had been generous enough to go around and bestow beef on some of the 'cringing' cowardly beggars who were low enough to accept it.<sup>124</sup>

These donations, usually given out around Christmas time, have been described by David Roberts as 'beef and plum pudding' rituals which early-Victorian paternalists expressed their benevolence and facilitated the strengthening of the 'social bonds' between the landed family and the tenantry.<sup>125</sup> On their own, these beef and plum pudding rituals were not sufficient to induce good behaviour but simply provided a gloss of social solidarity to a system which in former years was underpinned by codes of behaviour which were implicitly adhered to because the consequences of not toeing the deferential line was possible eviction. However, the land acts had seen to it that 'undisturbed occupancy', formerly the gift of the landlord, had been enshrined in law as a right. Thus, resorting to the removal of 'seasonal benevolences' as a threat indicates the complete diminishment of the ability of the landed family to use the gift as an inducement to good behaviour. While almost all that remained of the paternal system of estate management was this gloss of social solidarity it was, nevertheless, an aspect of landed estate culture, and symbolic of a connection between the big house and the tenantry, which could not be tolerated by the U I L in achieving its stated objective of eradicating landlordism.

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<sup>124</sup> *Roscommon Messenger*, 7 Dec 1907

<sup>125</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p 116



On 11 December 1907, two more drives took place on Clonbrock demesne itself when the cattle of William Hay, Clonbrock's steward, and Sam Mason, his bailiff, were driven. Once again there was a festive element to the drive in which 500 people participated as it was headed by the Caltra fife and drum band. However, '30 peelers lay in ambush at the gate of Ireland's greatest enemy, Clonbrock' who charged the crowd and in the melee that ensued police officers 'used their batons freely' and arrested twenty-three people while women that participated in the drive pelted the police with mud. They were then taken by wagon to a special session of Ballinasloe court where they were bound to keep the peace.<sup>126</sup> Two days after these cattle drives took place the Irish Landowners Convention sent a deputation, which included Clonbrock, to Dublin Castle to plead with the chief secretary, Augustine Birrell, to do something about cattle driving and lawlessness in the country. Clonbrock addressed Birrell

arguing that although he had plenty of reports at his disposal he did not think that anyone who had not lived in the country where the agitation prevailed could form a real idea of the terrorism which existed, a terrorism which not only applied to the landlords and the large farmer but extends to the small humble people, who were forced, often against their will, to join in these illegal combinations, and who were therefore entitled to protection as well as the upper and middle classes.<sup>127</sup>

Other members of the deputation made similar arguments and Birrell responded arguing that the government was doing everything its power to ensure that the rule of law prevailed. Birrell was critical of the graziers who did not help the police protect their farms arguing that even though they had been given advance warning of the drives they would not even turn up to assist the police in identifying the culprits at the drives.<sup>128</sup> Clonbrock wrote to him soon after pointing out that 'cattle were recently driven off two farms held by tenants of mine. Both men are in my employment but the cattle are their own property'.<sup>129</sup> Birrell's reply to Clonbrock was that 'graziers must have suffered great inconvenience and in some cases actual loss but it is a little remarkable that I have had so few, if any complaints from

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<sup>126</sup> *Irish Independent*, 12 Dec 1907, *Roscommon Messenger*, 21 Dec 1907

<sup>127</sup> *Daily Express*, 14 December 1908

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>129</sup> Clonbrock to Augustine Birrell, 16 Dec 1907 (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,784 (9))

them’<sup>130</sup> Birrell’s point was a good one, the graziers did not form an organisation for the protection of their interests or to lobby politicians about agitation. They were not a socially cohesive group like the landed class and perhaps they, in no small way, understood that their monopolising of so much land on the eleven month system was morally unjustifiable. They simply had no room to manoeuvre, they were neither gentry nor bona fide tenant farmers and lacked the wealth and strength of numbers that formed the backbones of the other respective groups. There was a perception, as Birrell’s response to Clonbrock indicates, that the Irish Landowner’s Convention was exaggerating the extent of the agitation and this was due to the U I L ’s ‘defining and original feaure’ of stopping short of murder in its agitation.<sup>131</sup> To a member of the British public reading reports of agitation in Ireland, cattle driving might not have seemed very serious but in reality it was a very effective weapon which decimated the rents of landlords such as Clonbrock. However, since no murders had been committed it was much harder for Clonbrock to make a convincing argument for the lawlessness that he claimed existed. While landlords and graziers had the unflinching support of the unionist press it was very much confined to this base as many simply perceived them as obstructionists to the solution of the Irish land question who deserved whatever they got.

The following week Clonbrock met a deputation of tenants and expressed his concern that a farm should be found for the grazier Michael Carr ‘because he is one of the oldest tenants on my property and I would not like to see him put out. But all the same I have the same wish for the poor man as I have for the rich man’<sup>132</sup> Michael Fallon, the tenants’ representative, was not inclined to agree with Clonbrock and pointed out that among the deputation there were men with between one and three acres of land and that if Clonbrock had as much concern for the poor man as he had for the rich man he would divide the grazing lands.<sup>133</sup> Fallon then revealed some of the personal motives that he had in agitating against Clonbrock and the graziers.

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<sup>130</sup> Birrell to Clonbrock, 18 Dec 1907, *Ibid*

<sup>131</sup> Bew, *Conflict and conciliation*, p 43

<sup>132</sup> *Roscommon Messenger*, 21 Dec 1907

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*

When you wanted to give some land to the Currafary people, you had no one to take twelve acres from but my father, although his holding was situated between two farms held by Bowman and one of the great Carrs, respectively, and these having about 300 acres each [at Tycooley] Now there is no Carr and no Bowman, for Martin Connolly, another great JP, and Hession of Annagh hold Carr's land The Carrs hold no farm but this one [the one on which the drive took place], and I hope he wont have that long, and then they will be extinct while I, a Fallon, am in Currafary still <sup>134</sup>

Once again the tenants came away from a meeting with Clonbrock empty handed having achieved neither a rent reduction nor an agreement to divide the grasslands By February, except for the Ballydonelan agreement, there had been no progress in negotiating a settlement The boycott of Martin Connolly continued and at a school in the Caltra neighbourhood '60 scholars refused to take their seats as a protest against the presence of three sons of a blacksmith who had worked for Connolly' <sup>135</sup> In November Fr Shanagher, the Ahascragh parish priest, had intervened to prevent a cattle drive on his land and he received further support from the Caltra parish priest who also happened to be the president of the local branch of the UIL that had refused to sanction the boycott against him <sup>136</sup> Police reports praised the efforts of the Catholic clergy to preserve the peace of the locality and Fr Shanagher was singled out for particular praise having 'done his utmost to maintain order, prevent crime, and bring about a settlement' He was instrumental in lifting a ban on Clonbrock school which was being boycotted because the children of William Hay, Clonbrock's steward, attended it, and on 18 February he prevented a number of men from clearing a farm in the townland of Killupane adjacent to Clonbrock demesne <sup>137</sup>

However, despite the efforts of the priests, relations between Clonbrock and his tenants had deteriorated to a point where the district inspector feared for the worst unless agreement was reached, in early March when another meeting between Clonbrock and the tenants was scheduled He pointed out 'Should a settlement not be arrived at serious disturbances and outrage are anticipated It will be necessary in that event to establish a protection post in Clonbrock and look closely after Lord

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>135</sup> *Roscommon Messenger*, 1 Feb 1908

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid*, 22 Feb 1908

<sup>137</sup> D I monthly report, east Galway, Jan 1908 (N A I, IGCI/13)

Clonbrock, his house, and the property defence men he will be forced to employ as all his work men will leave him'<sup>138</sup> The desire to reach a resolution of the Clonbrock agitation must have existed at the highest levels because as well as representatives of the estates commissioners, the under-secretary, Sir Anthony Mac Donnell, participated in the negotiations with the tenants and priests at the rent office in Ahascragh on the 5 March. An enormous crowd of tenants gathered outside anxiously awaiting the results and when Mr Hayden, a solicitor representing the tenants, came out to inform them that Lord Clonbrock wanted the game rights they were not pleased so Hayden went inside for further negotiations. 'While these proceedings were taking place the Mountbellew and Caltra bands arrived and made things lively'<sup>139</sup> Eventually, when Sir Anthony Mac Donnell came out and said that the grass lands were to be divided and the tenants were to get the game rights, great cheering was heard. 'In the midst of the cheering was heard "three cheers for his lordship" but there was no response'<sup>140</sup>

Clearly agitation by the U I L had brought things to such a pitch that Clonbrock was forced to sell. However, it must also be considered that Clonbrock was 'as anxious as [the tenants were] that the sale should be concluded' considering that 'toward the end of 1907, landlords had realised that the terms on offer under the 1903 act were the best they could hope for'<sup>141</sup> It was a well know that Birrell was on the brink of introducing a new land act so there was a fear that the twelve per cent bonus that had been offered under the terms of the Wyndham act would be discontinued. As early as September 1906 the Ahascragh notes column had advised the Clonbrock tenants that

They need not be in a hurry, time is fighting their battle, the time is near at hand when the bonus will not be available and we may rest assured that neither Clonbrock or Mahon will permit themselves to be deprived of so considerable sum as the bonus means for them, and will sell without doubt at a moderate price when they find their tenants will buy on no other terms<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid, Feb 1908 (N A I, IGCI/13)

<sup>139</sup> *Roscommon Messenger*, 14 Mar 1908

<sup>140</sup> Ibid

<sup>141</sup> Clonbrock's note on Patrick Goulding's letter to him, 23 Nov 1907 (N L I, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,727 (17)), Dooley, *The decline of the big house*, p 114

<sup>142</sup> *Connaught Leader*, 22 Sept 1906

Therefore, Clonbrock was anxious to have the terms of the sale fixed under the Wyndham act rather than risk losing out on the bonus in the new legislation. The terms agreed were twenty-one years purchase and until the estates were invested in the hands of the estates commissioners the tenants were to pay four per cent on the purchase money, 'on payment of one year's rent within a fortnight, all proceedings to be stayed and arrears forgiven'. Furthermore, 1,400 acres of grassland were to be divided and whatever was 'on hands' on the 1 May was to be let to tenants<sup>143</sup>

## Conclusion

This final chapter has explored how at local level the final vestiges of landed power with its paternal ethos was sidelined by the national movement spearheaded by the UIL. Since its foundation in 1898 it had been a persistent thorn in the side of Clonbrock and other landlords in its single-minded determination to rid the country of landlordism. In the mid 1890s there had been a rallying of landed power at local level when Clonbrock and two other members of the landed interest regained control of the Mountbellew board of guardians. However, following local government reform in 1898, the UIL had been instrumental in finally ousting Clonbrock and the landed interest from power in the 1899 local elections. At a UIL meeting in 1911 a canvasser for John Lohan, who had defeated Clonbrock in the first county council elections, recounted how Lohan had overthrown 'Clonbrock, the effect of which shook the citadel of landlordism in the [electoral] division of [Ahascragh] to its very foundation, and from which it has not since rallied nor ever will'<sup>144</sup>. The UIL inflicted further wounds on Clonbrock in its agitation for compulsory purchase in the run up to the Wyndham act in 1903 through the intimidation of graziers, the passing of uncomplimentary resolutions at the Mountbellew RDC, and, to Clonbrock's dismay, the emergence of the 'law of the league' which superseded the 'law of the land'. However, even though generous terms were offered by the 1903 legislation Clonbrock was convinced that he was entitled to be paid more for his estates because of his residence and the 'strong personal and

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<sup>143</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 9 Mar 1908, *Connacht Tribune*, 6 Nov 1909

<sup>144</sup> *Connacht Tribune*, 27 May 1911

hereditary ties' which existed between him and his tenantry. However, the tenantry showed little sympathy for the continuation of these paternal ties as sales of estates across the country were concluded and they remained tenant farmers. As the rituals of paternalism came to be understood by the U I L as both expressions of power and occasions in which *identification* was fostered, they were denigrated as 'flunkeyism' and the gifts that had once symbolised the deferential dialectic were stripped of their power. Pushed to the limit by the U I L to the extent that the police feared for his life his life and with little time to secure the twelve per cent bonus he had to admit that the days of the landed paternalist were well and truly over and concluded a sale with his tenants which would, in a short few years begin the transfer of land from the landed family to tenant farmers.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has focused on a study of the Clonbrock estates between 1826 and 1908 in order to gain an understanding of how landed power was exercised, legitimised, challenged, and overturned as a result of the sweeping changes which occurred during this period. When Robert Dillon became the third baron Clonbrock in 1826 the level of power that the landed class possessed on their estates was virtually absolute. This power was drawn from the land they possessed and they guarded it jealously by means of entails and settlements which made it practically inalienable from their families. The estates were administered with minimal interference from central government so the condition of the tenantry resident on them varied according to the conscientiousness of the landlord. While paternalist ideology required that they perform their duty to their 'dependents' there was no legal obligation to do so.

The central theme of the thesis has been the decline of paternal power during the lives of the third and fourth barons Clonbrock and the relationship they had with their tenants. It has argued that the paternalist *zeitgeist* that existed between 1827 and 1847 influenced the management of the Clonbrock estates in the early Victorian period. As evidence of this it has shown how, in the 1830s, a degree of concern was exhibited for tenants on overcrowded portions of the estates as efforts were made to accommodate them when these portions were restructured to create economic holdings. It has further shown through a detailed analysis of the distribution of charity, and expenditure on improvements, between 1834 and 1842, how Clonbrock's performance of his paternal duties contrasted with the vice ridden, talentless, and imprudent aristocracy which Gustave de Beaumont had encountered on his Irish travels.<sup>1</sup>

Roberts has argued that paternalism had been defined too narrowly and that many writers placed too much emphasis on the performance of benevolent duties as the

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<sup>1</sup> De Beaumont, *Ireland*, p 317

core of paternalism. In his view this was to miss the point as 'the obligation to rule firmly and to guide and superintend were far more essential,<sup>2</sup> thus the second chapter has examined how local children were prepared for the preordained gendered roles of the landed estate in Clonbrock school. This obligation to guide and superintend was not reserved for the schoolchildren as considerable effort and expense were incurred providing tools and seeds as well as instruction to the tenantry in modern techniques of agriculture.

While considerable evidence has buttressed an argument that Clonbrock performed his paternal duty in the early Victorian period, it was put to the ultimate test during the Great Famine. Evidence suggests that Clonbrock responded well to the crisis during its early stages as he did not press tenants for rent and, as the situation worsened in 1846, he sold his hounds and stable of hunters to assist in Famine relief. In addition to this he secured a considerable amount of money in loans which enabled him to provide relief works on his estates. These actions were very much remembered and for decades he was referred to as an exemplary landlord and even the ardent nationalist and Land Leaguer M.P., Matt Harris, admitted that he 'was not a bad landlord'. However, as the Famine continued and the 'rate in aid' was introduced in 1849 to spread the cost of distress across the country, he argued that he had no choice but to evict tenants to reduce costs which revealed that in practice his paternalism did not quite match the rhetoric of the paternalist *zeitgeist*.<sup>3</sup>

Roberts has argued that paternalism as a social doctrine was ill-equipped to deal with the challenges that the modernising society, which was nineteenth century Britain, demanded and that the paternalist *zeitgeist* which defined the early Victorian period went into decline. However, despite the failure of the landed class to respond effectively to the Famine, paternalist rhetoric persisted as the ideological hegemony in Ireland. The well-defined personal relations that were the cement of paternalism were easier to manage in Ireland as it was not subject, for the greater part, to the sweeping changes which modernisation had instigated in Britain. This ideological

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<sup>2</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, pp 6-7

<sup>3</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 21 Mar 1849



hegemony was observable in coming of age celebrations which promoted the paternalist social outlook through speeches that were widely reported in the press. The coming of age was the signature ritual of the landed estate and at Clonbrock, as on other landed estates, it legitimised the power of the landed family and smoothed the transmission of the estates from one generation to the next. However, it has been shown how an undercurrent of resistance in the form of a curse expressed a narrative of dispossession and retribution which held that the Clonbrock estates had been acquired through sinister designs that dispossessed the rightful Gaelic owners of their birthright and for which retribution was exacted in the premature death of the head of the family for many generations.

While well-defined personal relations were easier to maintain in rural Irish society the curse illustrates how the problem of legitimacy complicated the paternal relationship in the Irish context. This was further exacerbated by religion as in Ireland 'the rule of landlord and parson [working together to preserve a] hierarchical, authoritarian, and organic society' was not a reality.<sup>4</sup> Although Clonbrock had endeavoured to keep the vexed question of religion from complicating matters on his estates, Cardinal Cullen was by the 1860s spearheading a revolution in Irish Catholicism and 'showing clearly that what he wanted was Catholic ascendancy in the educational sphere-and wherever it might be obtained'.<sup>5</sup> This, as we have seen, led to a power struggle between Clonbrock and a local priest for control of Killosoolan school which undermined Clonbrock's position as the dominant power on the estates. This religious sore, which threatened the stability of the estates, was further aggravated by the divisions that the Trench-Nolan by-election engendered, revealing a fundamental weakness in Irish paternalism.

Despite the problems of legitimacy and religion which complicated matters in the management of the estates, Clonbrock continued to invest in estate improvements which contributed to a spirit of co-operation between landlord and tenant. He responded well to the crisis of the late 1870s and early 1880s employing similar

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<sup>4</sup> Roberts, *Paternalism*, p. 72

<sup>5</sup> Bowen, *Paul, Cardinal Cullen and Irish Catholicism*, p. 137

tactics to those that had been used during the Famine by securing loans to provide relief works as well as food to the most distressed. While the paternal response to this crisis, as well as the existence of fair rent and fixity of tenure, meant that cordial relations existed between landlord and tenant during the Land War, this was not the case during the Plan of Campaign as agitation broke out between December 1886 and May 1887. Clonbrock dealt swiftly with this threat and the agitation was quelled in a matter of months so it could be said that he emerged from the troubled years of the 1880s relatively unscathed.

When the twentieth-century dawned power relations on Irish landed estates bore little resemblance to those which had existed during the 1830s when Luke Gerald, fourth baron Clonbrock, was born. The virtually absolute power which landlords had wielded was, over the course of the nineteenth-century, curtailed at every level. The national schools system, as it came to be dominated by the Catholic Church, limited their capacity to control education. The poor law wrested control of local charity from them which brought it within the ambit of the centralising administration. While they reluctantly accepted it, as they controlled the boards of guardians, the extension of the franchise in the 1880s ultimately sealed their downfall from positions of authority on the boards. Moreover, the granting of *de jure* rights, enshrined in the land acts, as opposed to the *de facto* privileges of paternalism represented the most significant curtailment of their power. As stated earlier, it was from the land that Clonbrock and his class drew their power and they regarded the land acts as a form of trespass into the heretofore sacrosanct 'rights of property'.

Once effective leadership had been provided, by Parnell and the Land League, tenant farmers became increasingly emboldened to assert their rights. On the Clonbrock estates this assertiveness led to a rejection of paternalism through the tenant's use of the land courts to adjudicate fair rent. However, it was the Wyndham act in 1903, which initiated land transfer, that was the most revolutionary measure of land legislation introduced by the government. The fourth baron Clonbrock did not embrace the act and was reluctant to sell his estates, forwarding a paternalist

argument that he was entitled to a higher price for his estates because of the 'strong personal and hereditary ties' with which he was bound to his tenantry<sup>6</sup> However, as tenants began to agitate it was evident that these ties were easily broken and when agitation escalated the old issue of legitimation came to the fore once again The O'Kelly curse was resurrected by the nationalist press and comparisons were drawn between the (alleged) dispossession of the O'Kellys, and tenants that had been evicted by Clonbrock Furthermore, although the Dillon family were Catholics during the seventeenth century, Lord Clonbrock was referred to, in the nationalist press, in the same breath as Cromwellian planters in order to further challenge this legitimacy by linking him to the most despised historical figure to haunt the Irish Catholic nationalist imagination By 1908 when agitation reached its most intense level and the police feared for Clonbrock's life he was forced to admit that the era of the paternal landlord was well and truly over Consequently, he negotiated a sale which would, in a matter of a few short years, begin dismantling the estates which his family had built up over centuries

The principal contribution that this thesis makes has been to explain the practice of paternalism on an Irish landed estate as a cultural system It has shown how a paternalist social outlook was established as the ideological hegemony in the early Victorian period and how it was maintained until the 1870s Drawing on Howard Newby's work it has explained how the deferential dialectic operated on Irish estates and how, as time passed and one generation gave way to the next, it became increasingly difficult to manage It has illustrated how the fundamentally megahartarian relationship between the superordinate and subordinate partners, was legitimised through the ideological hegemony of paternalist discourse and how the inherent tensions in the relationship were managed by balancing the elements of *identification* and *differentiation* that constitute deferential interaction

One of the main areas in which this thesis has come to a greater understanding of the interplay between paternalism and deference has been through a close examination of the rituals that defined the relationship Laurence Geary has argued that prior to

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<sup>6</sup> *Morning Post*, 17 Feb 1903

the Land War, the relationship between landlord and tenant was based on patrimony and social deference which was clearly observable ‘on significant family occasions such as a marriage, the birth of an heir, a coming of age, recovery from illness’ He expresses the view that occasions such as these were examples of pre-Land War social lubrication which were an anathema to people such as Michael Davitt who perceived them as ‘“a moral malady born from feudalism and fear”’ It is difficult to say whether the servility that Davitt complained of was genuine or formulaic, but the speed with which tenant obsequiousness was discarded after the commencement of the Land War suggests that it was little more than a ritualistic veneer’<sup>7</sup>

This thesis has examined these rituals in detail across two generations on the Clonbrock estates and shown how they were a good deal more complex than a ritualistic veneer. Significant insights into ritualistic aspects of landed estate life have been gleaned through the application of Howard Newby’s concept of the deferential dialectic. It has argued that these rituals, especially those associated with the life cycle of the heir were instrumental in maintaining and promoting the paternalist ideological hegemony and smoothed the way for his succession to the estates. His birth was heralded with a bonfire, his coming of age with an address, banquet, and fireworks, and his marriage with the presentation of a gift. In depth analysis of these rituals and the context in which they took place has elucidated many layers of meaning in which they are embedded. It has argued that the coming of age was the most important of these rituals and was intimately connected with the system of strict settlement which permitted the landed class to maintain their stranglehold on land for centuries. The coming of age of an heir was a celebration of this system of landholding as it heralded the arrival of a family member who, by attaining the age of twenty-one, was legally recognised as someone who could legitimately inherit the estates. The ritual, however, not only marked the legal legitimacy of the heir but, moreover, buttressed the Dillon family’s hegemony over the tenantry through speeches eulogising the landlord and the expression of hopes that the heir would follow in his footsteps.

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<sup>7</sup> Geary, ‘Anticipating memory’, pp 131-2

The social hierarchy of the estate was emphasised with the wealthiest of Clonbrock's tenants forming a deputation to present the heir with an address. Analysis of the language employed in the address presented to Luke Gerald has shown that the tenantry were permitted to express a small degree of agency by reminding the heir that he was expected to play the role of benevolent paternalist and that he was not to neglect his duty to the tenantry. Effectively, they presented the heir with the paternal social contract and, by his acceptance, he committed to it. This paternal social contract was reaffirmed eleven years later when a further address was presented to him following his marriage, and the contract was copper-fastened with the presentation of a silver testimonial. The ideological hegemony of paternalist rhetoric promoted the landlord as principal giver who cared for his 'dependents' and this ritual facilitated a reversal of these roles, once again permitting the tenantry to express a degree of agency and present the relationship as one of mutual co-operation. Paternalism, however, was inegalitarian and these rituals are examples of how the 'hegemonic nature of traditional authority [defined] the prevailing "rate of exchange" as legitimate. It is precisely by defining the relationship as a free and fair exchange that it is stabilised' <sup>8</sup>

These events certainly were, as Geary has argued, examples of pre Land War social lubrication but their role as rituals of power that legitimised the social hierarchy and balanced the two elements of *differentiation* and *identification* essential to the successful management of the deferential dialectic was even more significant. At the coming of age in 1855 *differentiation* was established through the affirmation of the social hierarchy of the landed estate while *identification* was fostered through music, dancing, feasting, and drinking. People celebrated, yet no boundaries were crossed and as 'Hilarity, order, and regularity everywhere prevailed' it can confidently be forwarded as good example of tension management in action. <sup>9</sup> Newby has argued that 'When the hierarchical structure has been stabilised by the widespread adherence to a deferential form of interaction [as indicated by the order

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<sup>8</sup> Newby, *Property, paternalism, and power*, pp 28-9

<sup>9</sup> *Galway Vindicator*, 16 Jun 1855

and regularity witnessed at the coming of age], the occasional miscreant could be, and was, dealt with by the naked and savage use of power' and the treatment of Pat Barrett has illustrated just how this took place on the Clonbrock estate<sup>10</sup> The case of Pat Barrett has permitted insights, at a microscopic level, into how the paternalism deference dynamic played out on an Irish landed estate It has revealed that there were unwritten codes of behaviour to which the tenantry were expected to conform and the consequences for nonconformity to these codes was, as Pat Barrett found out, banishment from the estate through eviction

Despite the success of the coming of age in legitimising landed power and the social hierarchy of the landed estate it was undermined by the passive resistance of the O'Kelly curse It has been argued that, until at least the early 1870s, paternalist ideas persisted as the ideological hegemony and even within the nascent provincial press landlord tenant relations were, for the most part, discussed using the paternal framework of duties and rights Nancy Frazer has argued that while certain people, including the lower strata of society, were excluded from the public sphere their voice was articulated through subaltern counterpublics that were 'parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs'<sup>11</sup> It is, therefore, not difficult to understand how the curse, expressing its narrative of dispossession and retribution, circulated within such a 'parallel discursive arena' challenged the ideological hegemony of paternalism and its legitimation of landed power

However, it was in the very month that the curse was broken as Clonbrock witnessed his heir attain his majority, that the public sphere was extended in Ireland with the abolition of the stamp tax on newspapers By the advent of the Land War it had developed into an agrarian public sphere where oppositional discourses that had formerly been excluded found expression, sounding the death knell for the ideological hegemony of paternalism Laurence Geary has argued that the rituals of

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<sup>10</sup> Newby, 'The deferential dialectic', p 155

<sup>11</sup> Nancy Frazer, 'Rethinking the public sphere', p 67

paternalism were discarded with great speed after the commencement of the Land War but these rituals continued to be staged at Clonbrock. A coming of age was held for Clonbrock's grandson in 1890 following the same ritual formula as in 1855 but it was, due to a loss of influence in the provincial press, no longer effective as a mobilisation of paternalist bias. Furthermore the importance of the ritual had waned because tenant proprietorship, unimaginable a generation earlier, was a real possibility. Once the rights of tenants had been enshrined in law the paternalist social contracts of addresses and florid speeches about duty seemed somewhat anachronistic. The oppositional discourses that had been excluded by the restricted public sphere of the early 1850s now found confident expression in the nationalist press which was not slow to criticise the 'flunkeyism' of those participating in the ritual, nor to admonish a local priest for eulogising the family in his speech.<sup>12</sup> Even the so-called 'flunkies' that participated in the ritual made no reference to the estates passing from one generation to the next as the addresses from the 1850s and 1860s had done.

The days of paternalism and deference were certainly in terminal decline and this was reflected in the letter from Luke Gerald's friend in the diplomatic service who described the ritual as an 'almost miraculous survival from a beautiful past never destined to return'.<sup>13</sup> However, there was one final flourish of this by-gone era when relays of tenants pulled the carriage bearing Lord Clonbrock's remains to the cemetery in driving sleet and snow and even the *Tuam News*, which had criticised the coming of age some years previously, referred to him as a 'benefactor to the poor and struggling man'.<sup>14</sup> When Edith Dillon, the fourth baron Clonbrock's daughter married the neighbouring landowner, Sir William Mahon, twelve years later, the ritual of pulling the carriage in place of the horses drew sharp criticism from sections of the nationalist press. Those who replaced the horses were described as 'low carrion' for their efforts and a torchlight procession in their honour that evening was described as 'the last flicker of dying landlordism'.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Tuam News*, 12 Sept 1890, *Tuam News*, 8 Oct 1890

<sup>13</sup> Letter to L. G. Dillon n.d. (NLI, Clonbrock papers, MS 35,761 (5))

<sup>14</sup> *Tuam News*, 15 Dec 1893

<sup>15</sup> *Connaught Leader*, 1 Apr 1905

In the 1850s and 1860s these rituals were more than a ritualistic veneer as they played an important role in the legitimation of power. However, by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they had become emasculated by the land acts which instilled a sense of confidence in tenant farmers who were not afraid to assert their rights through organisations such as the National League and the UIL. This thesis with its focus on the decline of these significant family occasions as rituals of power has added a new layer of meaning to the changing nature of the relationship between landlord and tenant from the pre-Famine period to the beginning of the twentieth century.

Returning to Cannadine's question concerning the relationship between power and spectacle 'Is spectacle the handmaid of power, is it the other way round, or is it something altogether more complex and subtle?', In chapter five it has been argued that the relationship was complex and subtle and that both were components in a mutually reinforcing circuit acting as compliments to each other. This assertion is better understood within the context of the entire period of the work as it has been shown that as landed power waned so did the potency of the rituals. The smooth functioning of the mutually reinforcing circuit of power and spectacle required the acquiescence of tenants and the acceptance of the rituals as legitimate among the wider public. However, their function of defining the 'rate of exchange as legitimate' was undermined by the National League and the UIL who disrupted the charge that passed through this circuit making it increasingly difficult to stage these rituals.

Another significant contribution which this thesis has made to the understanding of the paternalism-deference relationship has been an analysis of the role which the gift played in underpinning landed power. Newby has argued that 'a form of action that combines exactly those identificatory and differentiatory elements that characterise deference is the gift. It was charity often given, significantly, on a personal localised basis, that celebrated, symbolised and reaffirmed the deferential



dialectic’<sup>16</sup> Chapter one has further shown that in the 1830s and 1840s, the distribution of charity to widows, orphans, paupers, and others, was estate centred and illustrated how landed paternalists feared that the ‘social bonds’ of paternalism would be weakened by the poor law. This it certainly did but landlords accepted it as their power was initially unhampered due to their control of the poor law unions. However, it came at a price as paternalists such as Clonbrock lost a vital tool by which he cultivated *identification* and assisted in the successful management of the deferential dialectic.

This has shown how Clonbrock’s capacity to use the gift in fostering *identification* was complicated by his profession of a different religion from the majority of the population and how this led to conflict with the Catholic Church when he built a school in 1868. This should have been a gift ‘that celebrated, symbolised and reaffirmed the deferential dialectic’ but instead it was the source of disharmony. The case of Ryan, his tenant who had been promised slates, illustrates how in his case the gift performed its role as an inducement to good behaviour but the mass defiance of his tenantry, in discarding his wishes in the Trench-Nolan by election elucidates the diminishing capacity of the gift to effectively manage the deferential dialectic. Despite this diminished capacity the gift was not completely stripped of its power as the UIL’s determination to extinguish it indicates that it continued to play a role in fostering *identification*. The UIL forbade tenants from collecting free firewood from a demesne and lambasted those that accepted beef and blankets from Clonbrock as ‘“cringing” cowardly beggars’<sup>17</sup> Paternalism and deference were on their last legs but they had not been completely extinguished and the gloss that remained was a mere echo of a former generation which only existed in isolated pockets.

Instances of rituals such as a coming of age became increasingly rare especially after the first decade of the twentieth century. However, even as a new era dawned with the foundation of the Irish Free State in 1922 the occasional coming of age was

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<sup>16</sup> Newby, ‘The deferential dialectic’, pp 161-2

<sup>17</sup> *Roscommon Messenger*, 7 Dec 1907

reported in the press, at least up until 1936. Without the tenantry who had purchased under the land acts their former function of balancing the elements of *identification* and *differentiation* in order to successfully manage the deferential dialectic was obsolete. Instead, they were used as occasions by landed families to try and maintain a bond with those communities that were inhabited by their former tenants as demesnes and their big houses increasingly became islands of isolation with the emergence of a new social and political order.

### Epilogue

The sale negotiated by Lord Clonbrock and the tenants in 1908 did not solve the land question on the Clonbrock estates overnight. Disputes continued over the distribution of the grazing land as tenants sought to enlarge their holdings. Furthermore, due to the backlog of payments which the estates commissioners had to process before dealing with Clonbrock, the tenants had to pay 4 per cent interest on the purchase money. By early November 1909 there was still no funds forthcoming from the treasury and the tenants claimed that at the negotiations it had been agreed that they were to be in possession of their holdings after twelve months. Consequently, they sought a reduction on the interest but Clonbrock refused so in March 1910 they lodged their rent in the bank at Mountbellew until the matter was resolved.<sup>18</sup> However, their appeal to the estates commissioners was unsuccessful and it was not until 1915 that the first monies were supplied by the treasury to begin the transfer of land when £6,587 was advanced for the purchase of eight holdings in Pallas and Ballydoogan.<sup>19</sup> By this time the estates commissioners had taken control over the majority of the Clonbrock estates and just forty-four tenants remained, paying an annual rent of just £240 to the landlord.<sup>20</sup>

Luke Gerald, fourth baron Clonbrock, died on the 12 May 1917 and the *Irish Times* reported that his funeral was attended by some of the former tenantry.<sup>21</sup> There were, however, no reports of ostentatious displays of deference which marked his

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<sup>18</sup> *Connacht Tribune*, 6 Nov 1909, 19 Mar 1910

<sup>19</sup> *Irish land commission Return of advances made under the Irish land purchase acts, during the month of July, 1915*, p 369 [Cd 8562], HL 1917-18, xxv, 585

<sup>20</sup> Dooley, *The decline of the big house*, p 117

<sup>21</sup> *Irish Times*, 16 May 1916, *Connacht Tribune*, 19 May 1917

father's funeral. He was succeeded by his son, Robert Edward, who did not share the same enthusiasm for public life. His interests were scholarly, he was the first president of the Galway Archaeological and Antiquarian Society and was elected a member of the Royal Irish Academy in 1916. However, he suffered from frequent bouts of illness from an early age and when he died a bachelor in 1926, at the relatively young age of fifty-seven, the baronetcy of Clonbrock became extinct<sup>22</sup>. At this point the management of the house and what was left of the estate fell to his sisters Georgina and Ethel Dillon. Their mother, Lady Clonbrock, died in 1928 and they were faced with further difficulty the following year with the onset of a global financial crisis.

The money realised from the sale of the estates, amounting to £250,000, was invested in stocks and shares in 1919 earning between 3 and 4 per cent per annum. This returned an income that was in line with what the net earnings of rent had been so the sale of the estates did not alter the family's economic circumstances. This all changed when the Wall Street Crash of 1929 obliterated the share portfolio and Dooley has argued that from this point forward 'the estate and house went into irreversible decline'<sup>23</sup>.

Ethel Dillon survived her older sister Georgina and continued to live at Clonbrock until her death in 1976 at the age of ninety-six. The new owner, Ethel's nephew, found the financial burden of running the house unsustainable and decided to sell. The family's collection of furniture and art had been amassed over centuries and efforts were made to keep it together. However, despite being approached, the government had no desire to purchase the collection and in November that year Christies of London held a three day auction in which the contents of the house were sold 'and a small but significant page of our history' was lost<sup>24</sup>. However, as the family's extensive collection of manuscripts and photographs was acquired by the National Library of Ireland that history continues to live on. Without the estate and family papers to work with this thesis would not have been possible and such is the

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<sup>22</sup> *Irish Times*, 6 Nov 1926

<sup>23</sup> Dooley, *The decline of the big house*, pp 120-1

<sup>24</sup> *Irish Independent*, 26 Oct 1976

extent of the collection that it harbours many unwritten theses and books awaiting eager scholars to bring them to fruition

In 1984 most of the house was, sadly, destroyed by fire but one wing remains inhabited up to the present day. Like the ruins of many country houses that haunt the Irish landscape, the ivy clad, burnt out shell of the central block of Clonbrock House is testament to the fact that everything has but its time.

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