



NUI MAYNOOTH
Oiscoll na hÉireann Mhúid

THE EXPANSION AND DECLINE
OF THE O'DONEL ESTATE
NEWPORT, COUNTY MAYO
1785-1852

By

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List of Abbreviations

JGAHS	<u>Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society</u>
N.A.	National Archives
NLI	National Library of Ireland
NA	National Archives
PC	Unindexed packing case National Library of Ireland
RD	Registry of Deeds

Introduction

This thesis examines the history of the O'Donel estate in West Mayo, from the purchase of the estate by Sir Neal O'Donel in the late eighteenth century to the sale of most of the estate, in the 1850s in the Encumbered Estates Court, by his grandson Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel. The estate was purchased from John Thomas Medlicott and Thomas John Medlicott for £33,589 19s 4d, which was equal to nineteen years and a half purchase of the rental income minus the head rent amounting to £1722 11s 3d per year.¹ The O'Donels owned land in three baronies of Mayo, the Tarmon estate in the barony of Erris, the Cong estate in the barony of Kilmaine and the Newport estate in the barony of Burrishoole. Included in the sale of lands by the Medlicotts was also land in Counties Tipperary, Kilkenny and Waterford but this was probably disposed of almost immediately as the only reference to it in the O'Donel papers is in the deed of sale of 17 July 1774.²

The Burrishoole estate, centred on the town of Newport, was made up of 70,000 acres. The land is generally poor consisting in a large part of mountain grazing. The part of the property that was arable, consisted of acidic peaty soils. Crops that grew there were buffeted by winds coming in from the Atlantic Ocean. The soil and climate were ideal however for the cultivation of potatoes and linen. The success of these two crops led to the rapid increase in the population of the estate and its subsequent drastic decline

¹ NLI, PC264 (2)/22 Document from Court of Kings bench marking agreement between Sir Neal O'Donel and John Thomas Medlicott and Thomas John Medlicott where in exchange for the Newport estate described therein John Thomas Medlicott was given £33,589 19s 4d and Thomas John Medlicott one sparrow hawk.

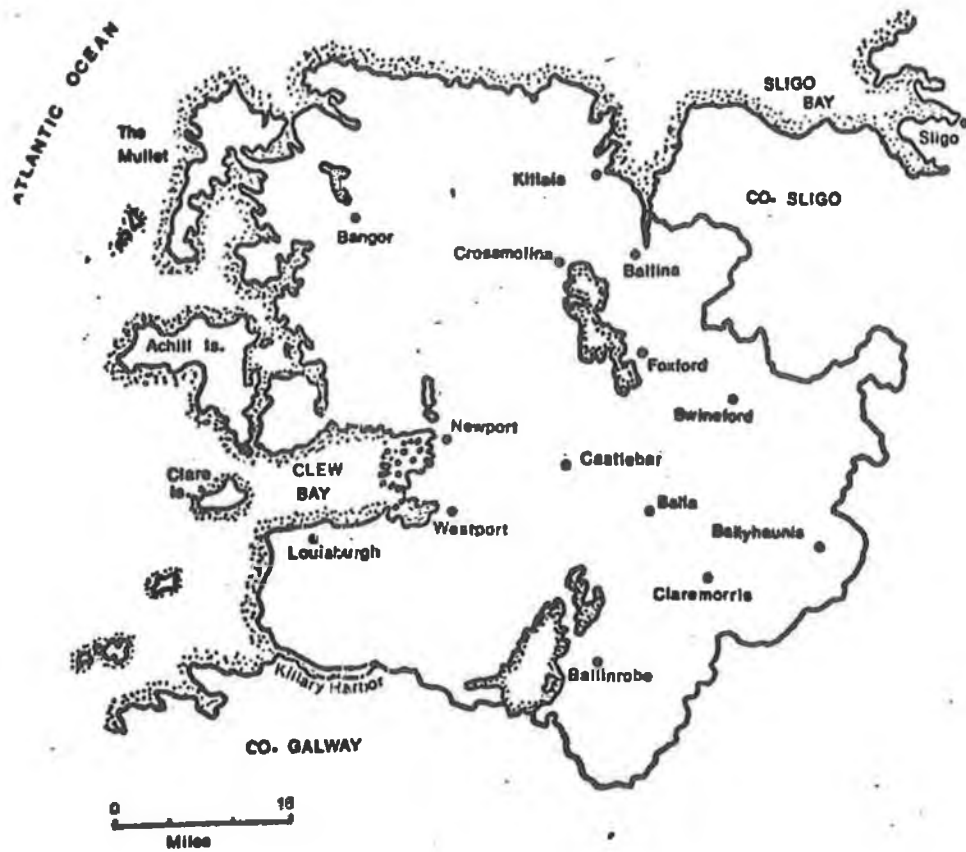
² NLI, PC263(1)/50 Indenture of Estate 1774 'Signed sealed and delivered by the within named Thos John Medlycott, John Thomas Medlycott, Frances Phillipa Elizabeth and Susan Medlycott, John Earl of Altamont and John Thewles, Jane Brown and James Shiel in the presence of ...'

during the Great Famine of the 1840s, when the population on the estate decreased by 46 per cent between 1841 and 1851.

Maps 1 to 3 show the location in Ireland of County Mayo and where in Mayo Newport and the Barony of Burrishoole are located.



Map 1: Ireland. Provinces, Major Cities, and County Mayo (after Almquist)



Map 2: County Mayo.(after Almquist)



Map 3: The Baronies of Mayo (after Almquist)

The O'Donels were originally from Donegal but had come to Mayo in the seventeenth century. They had initially settled in Ballycroy, later in Achill and finally appeared in Newport in 1760. The first of the O'Donels to own the Burrishoole estate was Neal, later Sir Neal. He was the son of Hugh, who owned a farm in Melcomb, Newport where the O'Donels built the first of their big houses. Sir Neal was already a large landholder in the parish of Burrishoole prior to the purchase from the Medlicotts. It has been suggested that he may have made his money smuggling wine and tobacco from Spain. It is interesting to speculate that if this is true his contacts in Spain may have been his distant cousins, descendants of the exiled Red Hugh. Sir Neal had four

sons, Hugh, James Moore, Connel and Sir Neal the younger who eventually succeeded him. Sir Neal in turn was succeeded by his son, Hugh James Moore, who died the following year in a shooting accident to be succeeded by his brother Richard.

The O'Donels moved in the social circles of the landed Anglo-Irish aristocracy both in Mayo and in Dublin. They owned several houses in Dublin at different times. In his will dated 1810 Sir Neal O'Donel left to his wife Lady O'Donel his interest in the house and furniture of No 15 Merrion Square North and in 1811 Sir Neal O'Donel the younger had a residence in Mountjoy Square, Dublin.³ The estate was not as isolated from the social world of Dublin as one would imagine. Leaving Dublin at 7 p.m. by mail coach one would arrive in Westport at 4 the following afternoon.⁴

Little has been written specifically on the O'Donel estate. A previous thesis was written by Joe McDermott on the Burrishoole estate when the Medlicotts owned it and run successfully by their land agent James Moore from 1720 until his death in 1765.⁵ However there is a substantial literature available on pre-famine Mayo.⁶

³ NLI, PC265(1) Will of Sir Neal O'Donel; PC263(1) Letter from W Johns to Sir Neal O'Donel 22 Mar 1811

⁴ The Treble almanack for the year 1830 containing John Wilson Stewart's Almanack, the English Court Registry, Wilson's Dublin Directory with a new Correct Plan of the City. (Dublin, 1830)

⁵ J.P. McDermott, 'An examination of the Accounts of James Moore Esq. Land agent and collector of Port Fees at Newport Pratt, Co. Mayo 1742-65, Including an account of the development of Newport Pratt from the early eighteenth century until 1776' M. A. Thesis, NUI Maynooth, 1994.

⁶ Padraig G Lane, 'Currane Mountain, Mayo and the 1850s: a socio-economic study' in Cathair na Mart xii (1992), 75; Padraig G Lane, 'The Gonne-Bell Estate at Streamstown Co. Mayo: a record of property vicissitudes' in Cathair na Mart xiii (1993), 82; Padraig G Lane, 'Landed encumbrances; a record of the Dillon-Browne estate' in Cathair na Mart xiv (1994), 69; Padraig G Lane, 'The Lambert Brookhill Estate: a record of Mayo property 1694-1946' in Cathair na Mart xvi (1996), 45; Padraig G Lane, 'Rents and leases in eighteenth century Mayo: an observation of the Lambert estate' Cathair na Mart xviii (1998), 57; Padraig G Lane, 'The consideration of Mayo property in the 1830s and 1840s' in Cathair na Mart xix (1999), 101; Padraig G Lane, 'The general impact of the Encumbered Estates Act of 1849 on Counties Galway and Mayo' in JGAHS xxxiii (1972), 44; Padraig G Lane, 'The impact of the Encumbered Estates Court upon the landlords of Galway and Mayo.' in JGAHS xxxviii (1981), 45; Padraig G Lane, 'Purchases of land in Counties Galway and Mayo in Encumbered Estates Court 1849-1858.' in JGAHS xxxiii (1991), 95; Padraig G Lane, 'Some Galway and Mayo Landlords of the mid nineteenth century.' in JGAHS xxxv, (1993), 70; Desmond McCabe, 'Social order and the ghost of moral economy in Pre-Famine Mayo' in R Gillespie and G Moran (eds), 'A various country' essays in Mayo history 1500 - 1900 (Westport, 1987) p. 91; W. H. Crawford, 'Development of the County Mayo economy, 1700 - 1850' in R. Gillespie and G. Moran (eds), 'A various country' essays in Mayo history 1500 - 1900 (Westport, 1987) p. 67.

Padraig Lane published ten articles on the Encumbered Estates Court between 1972 and 1999, which evaluated the impact of the court upon the agrarian scene.

Desmond McCabe examines the interactions between landlord and tenant in Mayo in the years leading up to the famine.⁷ and W H Crawford examines the developing commercial interaction in the county which improved with the development of roads which gave rise to a larger number of fairs and markets and the gradual closer contact with a wider world through improved communications.⁸

All these sources looked at the landlord in eighteenth and nineteenth century Mayo but nobody has looked at one landlord family and their estate and the financial difficulties they got into during the period prior to and during the Famine. This thesis attempts that task.

The evidence that this thesis is based on consists mainly of the unindexed O'Donel papers in the National Library of Ireland. These had been preserved by the local historian and county councillor Pádraig O Domhnaill who rescued the documents when they were being disposed of following the sale of Newport House by the last of the O'Donel family. His widow subsequently passed them on to the National Library. There are some gaps in this material and there is nothing present on some parts of the estate, particularly the Tarmon estate and land in Counties Kilkenny, Tipperary and Waterford that was included in the deed of 1774. Rent rolls are not available for every year and some are more detailed than others. The material consists mainly of leases, rent rolls, details of indentures and court cases and papers relating to the sale in the Encumbered Estates Court. Other primary sources in the National Library consulted

⁷ Desmond McCabe, 'Social order and the ghost of moral economy in Pre-Famine Mayo' in R Gillespie and G Moran (eds), 'A various country' essays in Mayo history 1500 – 1900 (Westport, 1987), p. 91

⁸ W. H. Crawford, 'Development of the County Mayo economy, 1700 – 1850' in R. Gillespie and G. Moran (eds), 'A various country' essays in Mayo history 1500 – 1900 (Westport, 1987), p. 67

include minutes of the Westport and Newport Poor Law Union and correspondence of Jonathan Pim, one of the secretaries of the Central Relief Committee.⁹

Other primary sources include abstracts of wills and correspondence with and from the Central Relief Committee and reports of the extent of the Famine available in the National Archives. Several deeds involved in the estate were examined in the Registry of Deeds and details of clergymen active in the parish and church registers from St. Catherine's Church of Ireland church were consulted at the Representative Church Body Library.

There are three main themes in the thesis, the landlord and their world of debt, the tenants world and problems in that area and landlord-tenant relations. The main factors in the decline of the estate were financial involving extensive borrowing and settlements made on marriages of daughters and to younger sons of the family. This was not matched by a corresponding growth in income over time. The decline in agricultural prices following the ending of the Napoleonic wars and the concomitant decline of the linen industry in the parish made the payment of rent by the tenants more difficult and contributed to financial difficulty resulting in the family having to sell most of the estate. These difficulties were massively accentuated by the occurrence of the Great Famine in 1847. The relationship between the O'Donel family and the tenants during the Famine and how the tenants of the O'Donel estate fared in comparison with those of other landlords is also looked at. Co-operation with various relief agencies, particularly the Central Relief Committee organised by the Society of Friends or Quakers, was very important in alleviating distress at this time. The workings of the two Poor Law Unions

⁹ NLI, MS 14309 Minutes of the Westport Union Board of Guardians 1840 ; NLI, MS 5739 Minutes of Newport Union ; NLI, MS 8669; Pim correspondence. Sir Richard O'Donel Newport April 25 1847 to C.R.C.

active in the area, initially the Westport Union and later the Newport Union, and Sir Richard O'Donel's involvement in them is also examined. The impact of the Famine on landlord tenant relations is examined. The change in land leasing patterns from multiple tenants to single tenants and the role of evictions in population dynamics are also considered.

This thesis will examine the factors that gave rise to the expansion of the O'Donel estate and its subsequent decline. It will also look at how these factors influenced the lives of the tenants and their relationship with the landlord.

Chapter 1

“THE REMAINDER TO IN TAIL MALE”

THE INHERITANCE OF THE O’DONEL ESTATE

This first chapter concentrates on the O’Donel family and their change in fortunes over time. The decline in agricultural prices following the ending of the Napoleonic wars and the concomitant decline of the linen industry in the parish of Burrishoole made the payment of rent by the tenants more difficult. This decrease in income was further complicated by increased debts due to annuities and marriage settlements. Annuities were paid to widows of landlords or potential landlords and over the period of sixty-seven years covered by this study annuities were paid to five widows and to two daughters of deceased heirs. A large number of deeds were executed to secure these annuities and this further added to the burden of debt. Wills were often used to disburse the wealth of the estate rather than consolidate it and place it in a more financially viable position for the inheritor of the estate.

The amount of land the landlord owned was associated with status. Land was a necessary attribute of a gentry family. Their perception was that the more land that they owned the better their status. Even when the family was in dire financial straits they did not think of selling land. Also associated with status was the honour system. It was vital for the aristocracy to uphold personal and family honour in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This resulted in three members of the O’Donel family fighting in duels. The result of these duels was that two of the family, James Moore O’Donel and Hugh O’Donel were seriously wounded, James Moore subsequently dying from his

wounds. His story illustrates some of the perils of political life in Connacht at the end of the eighteenth century. A dispute occurred during an election campaign in Castlebar in 1790 between the rival sides in the election the supporters of the Bingham and those who supported the Brownes. The Bingham were the main landlord family in Castlebar of which Lord Lucan was a member and the Brownes included Lord Altamont of Westport, to whom the O'Donels were related. The sheriff intervened and called in the army and the consequence was a riot, in which a number of people including James Moore O'Donel were severely beaten.¹⁰

I

The O'Donels were the lineal descendants of Niall Garbh O'Donel, cousin of Red Hugh O'Donel, who regarded Tir Chonaill as his inheritance and was bitterly disappointed when the crown bestowed it upon earl Rory. The Cromwellian campaign resulted in wholesale clearances of the native population in Donegal and following the defeat of the Irish outside Letterkenny in June, 1650, it is believed that Manus's son 'Rory of Lifford', and many others, were transplanted to the Ballycroy district of Mayo, around 1654.¹¹ The great grandson of Rory, Neal O'Donel, held title to Kildavnet and Achill Beg in 1776. In 1781 he purchased the fine estate of Cong and four years later he was able to purchase the Burrishoole estate from John Thomas Medlicott for £33,589 in opposition to John, third earl of Altamont, afterwards first marquis of Sligo.

The Medlicotts' estate was run successfully by their land agent James Moore.¹² James Moore died in 1765 and this probably contributed to the decision of the Medlicotts to sell the estate. Following his death the estate was not run as well and in

¹⁰ NLI, MS 5619, p.203

¹¹ R.S.O Cochlain, 'The O'Donnells of Mayo' in North Mayo Historical Journal iii,(1990) p. 67

1774, the Medicotts were in severe financial difficulty and applied for a loan to John late earl of Altamont who accordingly agreed to lend them £16,333 6s 8d at 6 per cent interest. As there were many annuities and other debts affixed to the Medicotts' estate it was agreed that as security for this loan they would convey to the earl of Altamont most of the estate for ever. In exchange the earl agreed to make a lease for lives renewable for ever of the estate to the Medicotts their heirs and assigns at a rent of £980 that was the interest of the sum of £16,333 6s 8d. One condition of this was that the Medicotts would procure surrender of the undertenants leases within seven years. The other smaller part of the estate was also assigned to the earl to protect him from other debts due from the Medicott estate particularly an annuity due to William Osborne. The Medicotts regularly paid the earl of Altamont the head rent of £980 a year until the year 1785 when Sir Neal O'Donel purchased the estate. Following his purchase Sir Neal was not able to persuade the undertenants to surrender their leases. However all the debts affecting the premises were paid off except the annuity to Osborne.¹³

Sir Neal O'Donel had received a baronetcy in 1780.¹⁴ This was associated with his change to the Protestant faith in 1763.¹⁵ He had four sons, the eldest Hugh had married Alice Hutchinson and as he was expected to inherit the estate there were several settlements made on their marriage.¹⁶ Hugh, who predeceased his father, had been

¹² J.P. McDermott, 'An examination of the Accounts of James Moore Esq. Land agent and collector of Port Fees at Newport Pratt, Co. Mayo 1742 -65, Including an Account of the Development of Newport Pratt from the early eighteenth century until 1776' M. A. Thesis, NUI Maynooth, 1994.

¹³ NLI, PC263 (2)/60 Chancery 17 April 1832, John O'Hara and Dame O'Hara (widow of Hugh James Moore O'Donel) otherwise O'Donel Plaintiffs. Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel Baronet and others Defendants

¹⁴ Debrett's baronetage with knightage illustrated (1877) p.347.

¹⁵ P. Ó Móráin, Annála beaga pharáiste Bhuiréis Umhail. A short account of the history of Burrishoole parish (Westport, 1957) p. 95

¹⁶ NLI, PC265 (3)/22 Marriage Settlement Hugh O'Donel and Alice Hutchinson.

educated at Glasgow University and was living at Tralee at the time of his death in 1799.¹⁷ After his death his widow Alice gave birth to a daughter who was christened Alice Hugh Massey O'Donel and several court cases arose from her claim to part of her father's estate not being paid.¹⁸

The second son was James Moore O'Donel who died without issue but a settlement was made on 8 November 1793 prior to his marriage to Deborah Camac. In this settlement lands in Kilmactigue in the County of Sligo and the lands of Tarmon and Knocks in the half barony of Erris and County of Mayo leased by Sir Neal O'Donel under the see of Killala were assigned to James Moore O'Donel. Following his death trustees were appointed to manage these lands and his widow was entitled to an annuity of £400 during her lifetime. In his will Sir Neal left these lands to his son Connel O'Donel on condition that the annuity would continue to be paid. He also bequeathed to his daughter in law Deborah O'Donel, the widow of James Moore O'Donel, £50 to purchase a ring as a mark of his regard for her.¹⁹

The third son the second Sir Neal married Catherine Annesley and there were several settlements on this marriage. The fourth son was Connel.

Neil Beg or Sir Neal the younger succeeded his father Sir Neal. His son Hugh James Moore O'Donel succeeded him in turn. Sir Hugh James Moore O'Donel in a

¹⁷ Edith Mary Johnston- Liik, History of the Irish Parliament 1692 – 1800. (6 vols., Belfast, 2002) v p.387.

¹⁸ NLI, PC264(2)/8 Order in Court of Chancery 20 July 1806 re: Alice O'Donnell daughter of Hugh O'Donnell letters of guardianship due sum of £10000 from the estate of her father Hugh O'Donel ; PC265(3)/22 Marriage Settlement Hugh O'Donel and Alice Hutchins

¹⁹ NLI, PC263 (3)/62 Indenture 1854 between Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel , George Clendenning O'Donel , Mary O'Donel otherwise Clendenning wife of Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel , Michael Murphy of Mountrath Street in City of Dublin Sir Neal O'Donel left an annuity of £2000 a year to his wife Mary Coane if she should survive him . Will of Sir Neal O'Donel of 9 March 1810 left £14000 to his younger children Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel wished to settle a jointure of £1000 on his wife Mary Clendenning if she should survive him

marriage settlement, dated 24 May 1828, specified that the remainder of his estate should pass to the offspring of his second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh sons. This was tempting fate in a family where two out of the four previous inheritors or potential inheritors of the estate had died without male issue, and he died four months later, in a shooting accident at Newport House, his only offspring a posthumous daughter, Arabella.²⁰

Female offspring could not inherit the estate, although this was changed later in the nineteenth century when it appeared that the family was dying out and the estate would go with it. Millicent Agnes O'Donel the only child of Richard Alen O'Donel was allowed to inherit the estate on condition her husband changed his name to O'Donel and any of her children also had the name O'Donel.

Sir Hugh James Moore was succeeded by his brother Richard who became Sir Richard. Sir Richard married Mary, the daughter of George Clendenning. Her father had been the agent for the marquis of Sligo and her brother, Alexander Clendenning, later became agent for Sir Richard and subsequently was appointed Receiver when the estate was declared bankrupt by the Court of Chancery.

In 1752 the Medlicott estate yielded only £1700 but in 1800 Sir Neal's income was £8000 a year. Part of the source of his wealth was derived from the honourable occupation of smuggling, then prevalent on the West Coast of Ireland.²¹ Sir Neal was a shipowner and traded as far south as Cadiz, Spain. Revenue officials seized several hogsheads of wine from his Melcomb premises in 1790. He retaliated by suing the crown for trespass and the breaking open of doors, etc. After protracted court

²⁰ NLI, PC263 (2)/60 Chancery 17 April 1832, John O'Hara and Dame O'Hara (widow of Hugh James Moore O'Donel) otherwise O'Donel Plaintiffs. Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel Baronet and others Defendants

²¹ J. McDermott, 'Newport – The 18th Century' in the Journal of the Newport Historical Society i (1996),p.38

proceedings he was awarded £1,500 damages and costs.²² A letter from Lord Sligo to Sir Neal O'Donel the younger, informing him of the forcible landing of tobacco near Newport and that the authorities in Dublin have been notified, might infer that the involvement of the O'Donel family in smuggling could be common knowledge in the area.²³

An outside income that ceased due to increased surveillance would help to explain why the estate became unviable. The answer more probably lies in the fact that due to an unfortunate set of circumstances: five heads of the O'Donel family or potential heads died in a period of twenty-nine years.²⁴

Two of the O'Donels were killed. An article in the Dublin Chronicle of 11 May 1790 states :

In the duelling line the County of Mayo has taken the lead, during the present General Election no less than three private contests have been fought there in the week before last. That between the Hon Denis Browne, one of the candidates, and Mr Bingham terminated without any disagreeable consequences. But in the duel between Mr Hugh O'Donel son of Sir Neal O'Donel Bart and another of the Mr Bingham's we are sorry to add that the former was most dangerously wounded being shot through the neck.²⁵

Eleven years later in September 1801, James Moore O'Donel was not so lucky and was killed in a duel, by Major Denis Bingham at Killanley Glebe near Enniscrone in County Sligo. A tradition says that he was lame and had the sight of only one eye and is

²² R.S.O Cochlain, 'The O'Donnells of Mayo' in North Mayo Historical Journal v,(1990), p. 67

²³ NLI, PC265(1)/67 Letter from Lord Sligo to Sir Neal O'Donel the younger informing him of the forcible landing of tobacco near Newport and that the authorities in Dublin have been notified

²⁴ P. Mullowney and J. Geraty, 'The O'Donels of Newport' in Back the Road Journal of the Newport Historical Society i, (1996), p.12 ; NLI, MS 112 p.107 Genealogical Office, Pedigree of O Donel of Newport Co. Mayo c 1730 - 1806

²⁵ Dublin Chronicle, 11 May 1790.

supposed to have been placed with his back to the sea, so that he was silhouetted against the horizon. The same source alleges that his opponent had been instructed by his second to fire before word was given, which he did scoring a direct hit to the heart. Bingham himself was unhurt.²⁶

The inscription on the memorial tablet to James Moore O'Donel in Newport Church of Ireland church reads 'In arduous times he proved his loyalty to his King, in corrupt times he supported the independence of his country and as he lived a Man of Honours so he died a Man of Courage in the 36th year of his age.'

Further loss of an O'Donel heir could have taken place in 1828 when a duel took place on an island near the town of Newport between Richard O'Donel and J Stewart Esqs. The duel was reported in the Mayo Constitution :

The former attended by Lieut. Hyland of the Royal Navy and the latter by Lieut. O'Halloran of the 69th Regiment. After an exchange of shots without effect, the parties were again handed their pistols when Mr Stewart fired a second time we are happy to say without effect. Mr O'Donel who reserved his shot then discharged his pistol into the sea, whereupon the matter terminated.

The above meeting took place in consequence of the strenuous exertions of Mr Richard O'Donel to prevent such demonstrations of public feeling as might and probably would lead to the excitement of the Party Spirit following the election of Daniel O'Connell. His endeavour to preserve the peace and tranquillity of the town and neighbourhood undisturbed was not seconded by the Local Authorities, in the way that might have been expected.²⁷

The lifestyle of the O'Donels would not be unlike that of other gentry in the parish an example of which was Reverend George Graydon, the Church of Ireland

²⁶ R. S.O Cochlain, 'The O'Donnells of Mayo' in North Mayo Historical Journal v. (1990), p. 67.; NLI, MS 5619: O'Malleys in the 18th Century by Sir Owen O'Malley, p.203

²⁷ Mayo Constitution 14 July 1828

rector of the Burrishoole parish up until his death in 1805.²⁸ His wife Elizabeth had set up a straw bonnet manufactory in the parish, which gave considerable employment. They lived in a house in Carrickahowley called Wilford Lodge about five miles west of Newport. An account of the expenses arising from the funeral and winding up of the affairs of Reverend Graydon showed he enjoyed a comfortable lifestyle. As well as having the house in Mayo he also had a residence in Merrion Street in Dublin. He had several servants working for him, a maid servant was paid £2 17s for her wages in full while John Grimes was owed £20 for wages and John Gannon £35. Other servants in Wilford Lodge were paid £14 4s, the gardener was paid £2 10s for two months work and labourers were paid £1 4s 2d for work done the previous year. Workmen were paid 6s 6d for cutting mearing fences and 8s for carrying two stacks of turf back from the bog to Reverend Graydon's house. Quarrymen were paid £6 16s 6d for quarrying stones and building four cabins and a messenger was paid 6s 6d for taking two calves to the fair. These may have been the same two calves that were sold at Crossmolina for £3 6s. A cow was sold for £7 19s 3d and two more cows sold in Ballyheane fair for £10 9s. Both Crossmolina and Ballyheane fairs would be over twenty miles from Wilford and it would be a long hard days work for the servant to walk the cattle to the fair sell them and return home the following day. Some black cattle were sold on two occasions at Newport fair which would only be about five miles away for £17 10s and £6 6s. A total of seven horses were sold and these were of differing quality. Two bay horses were sold for £28 8s 6d whereas two lesser horse sold for £4 17s. A bay horse, two cars, two saddles and bridles were sold for £9 12s 9d. During the period of Reverend Graydon's terminal illness and after his death the horses had to be placed in livery and this resulted

²⁸ NLI, MS 16964 Accounts of the administration of the estate of Rev George Graydon Newport Co. Mayo 1805 - 7 ; Patrick N Wyse Jackson and Ezio Vaccari , 'Volcanoes and straw bonnets : the Graydons of Burrishoole' in Cathair na Mart , xiii (1993) , p. 90

in expenditure of £56 15s. During this period one of the horses was sick and £2 3s 7d was spent on medicine for it. Income arising to Reverend Graydon from tithes in the parish of Burrishoole, from Christchurch in Dublin and the Canonry of Kildare amounted to £502. The sale of his belongings realised a sum of £776. His paintings and books were taken to Dublin to be sold where the paintings realised £228 and the books £83. All the furniture from the house was sold to Sir Samuel O'Malley the resident landlord in the neighbouring parish of Kilmeena for £304. Glass, china and other small articles sold for £10 5s, £15 was received for some silver spoons, £5 for a gun and £2 3s for a case of pistols. The household linen was sold for £18 6s, but the most interesting item in the sale was the Reverend Graydon's collection of minerals which he had spent a lifetime collecting and was sold to the Geology Department in Trinity College for £100. As one would expect the funeral of a noted clergyman involved considerable expense and the family spent a total of £96 on these arrangements.²⁹

II

At least part of the reason for the growing debts of the O'Donels were several marriage settlements in the O'Donel family, wills leaving large amounts of money to younger children, (two of which were unborn at the time of their fathers' deaths) and jointures to widows that survived their husbands often by over twenty years. These amounts led to a severe encumbrance on the O'Donel estate, which combined with the decline in agricultural prices in the 1830s and the Great Famine of 1845-7 ended in the inevitable sale of the estate by Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel.

The first of these incumbrances was that due to the Medicotts being in financial difficulty in 1774, they needed to borrow a large amount of money which they obtained in exchange for a head rent to be given to the earl of Altamont. This head rent was

²⁹ NLI, MS 16964 Account of the Administratorship of Elizabeth Graydon April 23 1803

commenced on the 15 July 1774. The Medlicotts conveyed for ever the fee simple and inheritance of most of the Burrishoole estate to John, earl of Altamont for £16,333 6s 8d.³⁰ In exchange for this the earl agreed to execute a lease for three lives renewable for ever subject to the clear yearly rent of £980 sterling. This head rent was secured by selling the major portion of the estate to James Browne and James Shiel and the survivor of them and the heirs of such survivors for ever. Part of this settlement involved John, earl of Altamont assigning a lease for three lives with a covenant for the perpetual renewal of all the lands mentioned in the sale.

Sir Neal O'Donel had purchased the Cong estate in 1781. In order to purchase this estate he borrowed the sum of £13,700 from Sir Rowland Hill of Hawkestown in the County of Salop in Great Britain Bart. To secure this loan deeds of lease and release were made on 29 and 30 August 1781. Sir Neal O'Donel the Elder conveyed to Rowland Hill and his heirs the Cong Estate subject to redemption on payment of the principal sum of £13700 sterling with interest for the same at the rate of £6 per cent per annum. Thomas Browne was included as a guarantor for this loan. When Sir Rowland Hill died Sir Richard Hill and Rowland Wingfield Esq. were appointed his executors and they obtained judgement of £14,000 against Sir Neal O'Donel in his Majesty's Court of King's Bench in Ireland in Hilary Term 1787 for non repayment of this loan. A further sum of £7188 1s 10d was awarded to the Reverend William Browne and Charles de Laet executors of Thomas Browne. William Browne Esq., heir at law of Reverend William Browne and sole executor, revived this cause in 1822 and obtained a final decree of £17,633 4s 0d sterling for principal and interest due upon the mortgage debt.

³⁰ NLI, PC263(1)/50 Indenture of Estate 1774 'Signed sealed and delivered by the within named Thos John Medlycott, John Thomas Medlycott, Frances Phillipa Elizabeth and Susan Medlycott, John Earl of Altamont and John Thewles, Jane Brown and James Shiel in the presence of ...'

A further indenture was made by Sir Neal O'Donel the younger on 7 April 1825 with William Browne and Edmund Foster Coulson of Hull in the County of York and John Robinson Robinson of Lissoglassick in the County of Longford. By this time the principal sum was reduced to £16,700 and all interest paid off. Edward Foster Coulson and John Robinson Robinson paid £16,700 to William Browne and Sir Neal granted to Edward Foster Coulson and John R Robinson and their heirs the Cong Estate. A further deed was made on the same day, between Foster Coulson and John R Robinson of the one part and John Harewood Jessop and Frances Jessop his wife of the other part. This declared the trusts respecting the sum of £16,700 to be for the sole and separate use of Frances Jessop. This deed was subsequently assigned to Robert Flood of Farmley, County Kilkenny and John Robinson junior of Lissoglassick , County Longford.³¹

As well as annuities that were arranged to assist in servicing the debts that arose from the estate there were also several court cases in which judgements were assigned against different members of the O'Donel family. Sir Neal O'Donel the elder on 16 July 1785 in the Court of Kings Bench was found to owe Elizabeth Medlicott of the City of Dublin a total of £4550. This was made up of the principal sum of £2275 with interest at six per cent per annum. When Elizabeth Medlicott died, Cornelius Sullivan Esquire was appointed her executor and on 23 September 1824 he obtained a further £2100.

In the same court of Kings Bench Sir Neal was found to owe Susanna Medlicott of the City of Dublin a total of £4550 made up of the principal sum of £2275 with interest at six per cent per annum. He managed to reduce the amount owed to £400. Cornelius Sullivan was again appointed her executor and was owed a further £2000 on this account. In the same court of Kings Bench Sir Neal was found to owe Francis

³¹ NLI, PC263 (2)/60 Chancery 17 April 1832, John O'Hara and Dame O'Hara (widow of Hugh James Moore O'Donel) otherwise O'Donel Plaintiffs. Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel Baronet and others Defendants

Phillipa Medlicott of the City of Dublin a total of £4550 made up of the principal sum of £2275 with interest at six per cent per annum. By two separate payments he was able to reduce the principal to £2100. Again Cornelius Sullivan was appointed her executor and became entitled to the judgement debt and interest thereon. By a deed of 29 May 1827 Cornelius Sullivan assigned the Judgement Debt to Robert Barry.

Sir Neal O'Donel the elder was also found in the court of King's Bench on 14 January 1785 to owe to General Manus O'Donel of Newcastle in the County of Mayo £1000 made up of the principal sum of £500 with interest at six per cent per annum.

This last mentioned judgement debt was paid off by Sir Neal O'Donel the elder in his lifetime. He then assigned it to Dodwell Browne of Rahins in the County of Mayo Esquire his son in law in trust for his, Sir Neal O'Donel's own use. The judgement was then vested in Peter Digges La Touche and Mary Anne La Touche otherwise Browne his wife, Mary Anne having acted as administrator for her father Dodwell Browne after his death.³²

On 16 August 1785 in the Court of Exchequer Sir Neal O'Donel was found to owe John Thomas Medlicott of Bannfield in the County of Dublin esquire a total of £6174 made up of the principal sum of £3084 with interest at six per cent per annum. John Thomas Medlicott assigned this judgement on 16 August 1786 to William Smyth of Granby Row in the County of Dublin Esq.. This debt was subsequently assigned to Arthur Guinness who was the executor of William Smyth and he took proceedings in court in 1815 to establish his claim to this judgement. However it was stated that the debt had long since been paid off. Arthur Guinness took a further case in 5 October

³² NLI, PC263 (2)/60 Chancery 17 April 1832, John O'Hara and Dame O'Hara (widow of Hugh James Moore O'Donel) otherwise O'Donel Plaintiffs. Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel Baronet and others Defendants

1831 against Sir Richard O'Donel who again insisted that the debt was long since paid off and satisfied.

Sir Neal O'Donel the elder in the Court of Exchequer on 6 June 1789 was found to owe to the Revd Moone Johnston of Kilpipe in the County of Wicklow £3600 made up of the principal sum of £1800 with interest at six per cent per annum. This last mentioned judgement debt was paid off by Sir Neal O'Donel the elder in his lifetime. He then assigned it to Dodwell Browne of Rahins in the County of Mayo Esquire his son in law in trust for his, Sir Neal O'Donel's own use. The judgement was then vested in Peter Digges La Touche and Mary Anne La Touche otherwise Browne his wife, Mary Anne having acted as administrator for her father Dodwell Browne after his death.

Sir Neal O'Donel the elder in the Court of Exchequer on 2 December 1777 was found to owe to James McDonnell of Cantin Valley, Mayo £892 19s 0d made up of £446 9s 6d principal with interest at six per cent per annum. This judgement was afterwards assigned to Mary Anne Browne and following her marriage to Peter Digges La Touche it was further assigned to James Digges La Touche and Arthur Hutchins.³³

As already mentioned the one remaining incumbrance on the Medicott estate was the annuity to William Osborne. In May 1804 Hannah Osborne and the executors of William took a court case to recover the arrears of the annuity which at that time amounted to £7614 13s 5d. Sir Neal hearing that Osborne was willing to dispose of this annuity for £5000 made an offer to her, which she agreed to take. However after Mr Medicott informed Sir Neal that he meant to impeach the annuity Sir Neal decided not

³³ NLI, PC263 (2)/60 Chancery 17 April 1832, John O'Hara and Dame O'Hara (widow of Hugh James Moore O'Donel) otherwise O'Donel Plaintiffs. Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel Baronet and others Defendants

to purchase. In the meantime Denis Browne, brother of the marquis of Sligo, purchased the annuity from Hannah Osborne for £4500.³⁴

Other incumbrances on the estate included the marriage settlement of Sir Neal O'Donel. James Moore, the former agent of John Thomas Medlicott, by his last will made in 1765 bequeathed to his grand daughter Mary O'Donel otherwise Coane then wife of Neal O'Donel Esq. later Sir Neal O'Donel, baronet, the sum of £1000. As Sir Neal had not made any settlement on his wife at the time of his marriage, the following year he drew up a deed with James Moore, William Coane and Roger Shiel Esq. stating that he had received a marriage portion with his wife of £1300. This £1300 in fact included the £1000 bequeathed by James Moore to his granddaughter. To secure this settlement he assigned his real and personal estate to William Coane and Roger Shiel so that they should immediately after the death of Sir Neal pay £1000 to his wife Mary if she was then alive. The other £1600 was to go to his children in whatever proportions he should specify in his will. If Dame Mary should die before Sir Neal then the whole £2600 should be divided among the children.³⁵ In 1798 at the time of the marriage of their son Hugh a further jointure was settled on Dame Mary in case she survived Sir Neal of £3000 per annum. This was meant to be in lieu and bar of dower and thirds and be in lieu and in satisfaction of all and every provision or provisions therefore made for her. The settlement also reserved to Sir Neal a power to charge his estates with £14000 as and for younger children and grandchildren. Counsel John Kirwan giving his opinion of whether Lady O'Donel would be entitled to the £1000 mentioned in this settlement, in addition to the £3000 a year felt she would not. He was of the opinion however that

³⁴ NLI, PC 263 (2) Judgement stating Denis Browne has purchased annuity from Hannah Osborne and can Sir Neal O'Donel force him to sell him the annuity from Counsel John Kirwan for case of Opinion

³⁵ NLI, PC263 (2)/60 Chancery 17 April 1832, John O'Hara and Dame O'Hara (widow of Hugh James Moore O'Donel) otherwise O'Donel Plaintiffs. Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel Baronet and others Defendants

the provision of £14000 for children and grandchildren in the deed of 1798 would not deprive them of the £1600 secured to them by the settlement of 1766.³⁶

A marriage settlement was made prior to the impending marriage of Hugh O'Donel with Alice Hutchinson on 10 October 1798. Hugh as the eldest son was expected to inherit the estate on the death of his father Sir Neal, so the settlement was extremely generous. Dominick Jeffrey Browne of Castle McGarrett in the County of Mayo Esquire and Peter Locke of Gloucester Street, in the City of Dublin guaranteed the settlement, made between Sir Neal and Lady Mary O'Donel and Hugh O'Donel and Alice Hutchinson. Other guarantors were Connolly Coane of the City of Dublin Esquire, the brother of Lady Mary O'Donel, Arthur Herbert of Tralee in the County of Kerry Esquire, Arthur and Emmanuel Hutchinson of Ballylackey in the County of Cork Esquires, Patrick Lynch of Clogher in the County of Mayo Esquire and Lewis O'Donel of Old Castle in the County of Mayo Esquire.

It stated that immediately after the marriage the lands of the Cong estate were to be assigned to the use of Emmanuel Hutchinson and Patrick Lynch their heirs or executors administrators and assigns for the term of ninety nine years in trust. This was to insure that Hugh O'Donel and his assigns should receive yearly during the joint lives of Sir Neal O'Donel and Hugh O'Donel a sum of £2000 a year payable half yearly and that in case Sir Neal O'Donel should survive Hugh then each of Hugh's sons should receive yearly during the life time of Sir Neal an annuity of £2000 a year payable half yearly. After the death of Sir Neal O'Donel, if his wife survived him she should receive £3000 per annum. Dominick Jeffrey Browne and Peter Locke were to ensure the terms of the settlement were carried out during the lifetime of Hugh O'Donel. After the death of

³⁶ NLI, PC263(2)/60 Judgement stating James Moore left £1000 to his granddaughter Mary O'Donel otherwise Coane wife of Sir Neal O'Donel from Counsel John Kirwan for case of Opinion

Hugh O'Donel, Connolly Coane and Arthur Herbert their executors administrators and assigns were to be responsible for the term of five hundred years. This was to be done to ensure payment was made to the first and other sons of Hugh O'Donel by Alice Hutchinson and the male heirs of first and other sons, successively according to their priority of birth. If there were no sons of this marriage the inheritance was to pass to the second son of Sir Neal O'Donel, James Moore O'Donel, who as stated previously, died in the lifetime of his father without any issue. The inheritance then passed to Neal O'Donel, the third son of Sir Neal O'Donel and with an ultimate remainder to the right heirs of the said Sir Neal O'Donel deceased entail male.

Sir Neal O'Donel's will was made on 19 March 1810. In it he stated that under the terms of the settlement of 10 October 1798 and deed of 8 December 1798 he was entitled to charge a sum of £14000 on the lands and premises of the estate. He left to his son Neal O'Donel now Sir Neal O'Donel the sum of £10, to his fourth son Connel O'Donel £3000, to his daughter Margaret Lady Molyneux the wife of Sir Capel Molyneux Baronet the sum of £10. To his grandchildren, who were children of his daughter Maria, who died following a fall from a horse in the grounds of her estate in Rehins, Castlebar Co. Mayo in 1809, and her husband Dodwell Browne he left the following amounts.

To Hugh Henry Browne he left £990, to Neal O'Donel Browne £1990, to Matilda Browne £1000, to Louisa Browne £1000, to Maria Browne £1000 and to Mary Anne Browne £5000. Mary Anne later married Peter Digges la Touche and was afterwards a plaintiff in a suit in Chancery against Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel.³⁷

³⁷ NLI, PC263 (2)/60 Chancery 17 April 1832, John O'Hara and Dame O'Hara (widow of Hugh James Moore O'Donel) otherwise O'Donel Plaintiffs. Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel Baronet and others Defendants

In the marriage settlement of Sir Neal the younger, Francis Charles Annesley agreed to advance to Connel O'Donel the £3000 left him in his father's will.³⁸

The marriage settlement of Hugh James Moore O'Donel consists of two parts. The first dated 24 May 1828 settles the Cong estate and that part of the Burrishoole estate held freehold on Thomas Towers of Bushy Park in County Tipperary and Henry O'Hara of the Middle Temple London Esq.. They were required to sell off enough of this property for the payment of all arrears of interest and costs due not to exceed £500.

The second part of the settlement made on the 30 May 1828 with William Francis Hart, Josias Dunn of Kildare Street in the City of Dublin Esq. and Alexander Richey of Bagot Street in the City of Dublin was for the purpose of barring all quasi estates tail and remainder in those parts of lands of Burrishoole held under covenant from the earl of Altamont. This settlement was to be guaranteed by Sir John Blake and Edward Price of Kilroot in County Antrim esq., Connel O'Donel of Seamount in the County of Mayo Esq. and Peter Digges La Touche of Pembroke Street in the City of Dublin Esq.. The purpose of this settlement was to make provision by way of jointure for Dame Arabella O'Donel. It granted to Josias Dunn and Alexander Richey all lands that were unsold after the first settlement was completed with the remainder to the use of Sir Hugh James Moore O'Donel for life. If Dame Arabella O'Donel should survive Sir Hugh she should receive an annuity of £1000 per annum. A portion or portions of £10000 for a younger child or children should also be secured. A court case in regard to this settlement was finalised with an award of £10000 to daughter Arabella and £1000

³⁸ NLI, PC263 (1)/84 Indenture 22 June 1813 between Connel O'Donel, Sir Neal O'Donel and Francis Charles Annesley stating that Francis Charles Annesley has paid Connel O'Donel £3000 owed to him from the will of his father Sir Neal O'Donel the elder.

per annum to Dame Arabella for a total of eleven years amounting to £21,000 in total settlement.³⁹

Arrears were already starting to build up on the estate before the death of Hugh James Moore O'Donel. When he died on 28 July 1828 there was then due to him in rent £1994 19s 6d from the Newport estate and £1283 3s 1d from the Cong estate. A Receiver was appointed in 1829 and received £1222 5s 11d from the Newport and £780 19s 3d from the Cong estate making together £2003 5s 2d leaving a balance of £1274 17s 5d which the receiver stated to be insolvent. Also when Hugh James Moore O'Donel died there was an arrear of head rent due to the marquis of Sligo amounting to £6000, £1470 of this had accrued from the time when Sir Hugh inherited the estate from his father.⁴⁰

The marriage settlement of Richard Annesley O'Donel was made on 15 April 1831 with George Clendenning of Westport in County Mayo Esq. and Mary Clendenning spinster third daughter of George Clendenning. Sir Richard, who was ignorant of the contents of the marriage settlement of his brother Hugh James Moore O'Donel of May 1828 as he had not been shown them, wished to provide a jointure for his future wife and secure portions for his younger children. He wished to provide Mary Clendenning a jointure of £600 during her life if she should survive him with power to increase this to £1000. He also wished to secure a portion or portions for younger children when it should be ascertained that he had power so to do either under the settlement of 1798 or that of 1828. He agreed with George Clendenning that in consideration of the £5000 he had received as a marriage portion if he had power under

³⁹ NLI, PC263 (2)/60 Chancery 17 April 1832, John O'Hara and Dame O'Hara (widow of Hugh James Moore O'Donel) otherwise O'Donel Plaintiffs. Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel Baronet and others Defendants

these two settlements he would charge his estates with a jointure for his wife Mary of not less than £600 but not exceeding £1000. He would also convey the estate to trustees to be named by George Clendenning for a term not to exceed 99 years to better secure the estate to provide a portion or portions for the younger child or children daughter or daughters of the intended marriage.

Apart from the legal proceedings concerned with deeds and encumbrances several cases were taken against Sir Neal O'Donel.⁴¹ A simple loan of £900, which was to be repaid by annuity of £120, for the life of the first Sir Neal, resulted in a large amount of correspondence. Legal proceedings and fees and further settlements followed the death of some of the principals involved in the annuity or the sale of their share in it. Charles Jacob Bannister in a case taken in 1805 received an award against Sir Neal of £1680, which had been paid off by 1813.⁴²

The drawing up of these wills, indentures and settlements and subsequent court cases resulted in some sizeable bills from solicitors and barristers. In 1807 £436 6s 7d

⁴⁰ NLI, PC263 (2)/60 Chancery 17 April 1832, John O'Hara and Dame O'Hara (widow of Hugh James Moore O'Donel) otherwise O'Donel Plaintiffs. Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel Baronet and others Defendants

⁴¹ NLI, PC263 (1)/77 Details of legal fees in several cases taken against Sir Neal O'Donel. ; PC263 (1)/80 Plaintiff Robert Fitzgerald Ormsby 1815. ; PC263 (1)/81 Plaintiff John Langston 1815. ; PC263 (1)/82 Plaintiff Charles Keane 1815. ; PC263 (1)/83 Plaintiff Richard Acton 1815. ; PC263 (1)/78 Plaintiff Mary McDonnell 1817. ; PC263 (1)/79 Plaintiff Joseph Manus O'Donel 1817.

⁴² NLI, PC264 (1)/37 1805 Court of Annates Sir Neal O'Donel to Chas. Jacob Barrister £1600. ; PC263(2)/76 Indented deed of 30 August 1805 Neal O'Donel eldest son of Sir Neal O'Donel John Claudius Beresford and Charles Jacob Bannister nominated and appointed on behalf of Charles Jacob Bannister agreed annuity of £120 so paid to Neal O'Donel out of lands at Cong. ; PC263(2)/100 1805 Agreement between Sir Neal O'Donel and John Claudius Beresford to pay an annual annuity to Charles Jacob Bannister of £120 ; PC264(2)/19 Memorial of an Indenture of assignment 2 June 1808 between Charles Jacob Bannister and Henry Doughty £840 transfer to Henry Doughty annuity of £120 to Charles Jacob Bannister for Neal O'Donel of 30 Aug 1805. ; PC265 (1)/70 Correspondence to Sir Neal O'Donel 1811 re: non-payment of annuity of £120 to Henry Doughty. ; PC263 (2)/96 Indenture 29 May 1812 Henry Doughty annuity for £120 a year in return for £900 lump sum. ; PC264 (1)/49 30 August 45th year of reign of George third Neal O'Donel eldest son of Sir Neal O'Donel John Claudius Beresford Charles Jacob Bannister Philip Henry Roper sum of £840 in exchange for a yearly annuity of £120 for the life of Neal O'Donel. ; PC263 (2)/58 Debt of £1680 by Neal O'Donel to Chas Jacob Bannister for costs from Court of Exchequer 1813.

was paid ⁴³ and in 1812 £62 0s 8d. ⁴⁴ The effect of all of these court cases and various marriage settlements and widows' jointures placed a severe drain on the estate. This combined with a decline in agricultural prices, and therefore rental income, resulted in the O'Donel estate being placed in receivership under the control of the Court of Chancery in 1829. Alexander and George Clendenning, brothers in law of Sir Richard who had previously been his land agents, had been appointed Receivers. The amounts that Alexander Clendenning found to be still owing from the estate in 1832 are listed below (Appendix 1). ⁴⁵ The Famine and the accumulated incumbrances had put the estate under a further severe financial burden. In 1849 Sir Richard O'Donel owed the Bank of Ireland £20,000. ⁴⁶

There had been a dispute between the Clendennings about the amount of money that they had collected from the estate which caused court proceedings to be initiated and the Clendennings were eventually declared bankrupt. As part of the settlement of the court case between the Clendennings and Sir Richard the flax and Corn Mills situate at the town of Newport were to be made over to a Mr Ritchie an assignee of the

⁴³ NLI, PC265 (1)/80 Legal costs of Sir Neal O'Donel 1807 amounting to £436 6s 7d.; PC265(2)/9 1809 Legal bill for services carried out by solicitor over a number of years .

⁴⁴ NLI, PC265(3)/28 Accounts from Josias Dunn solicitor to Sir Neal O'Donel for legal work 1812 £62 0s 8d

⁴⁵ NLI, PC264 (2)/14 1829 Alexander Clendenning receiver. ; PC263 (2)/101 Attested copy of Accounts of the Receiver Alexander Clendenning from the estate of Sir Richard O'Donel used as evidence in the three court cases taken against Sir Richard O'Donel by Arthur Guinness, Peter Digges La Touche and John O'Hara. Amount of rents received in 1843. Newport Estate £6879 12s 10d Cong Estate £2500 17s 3d Clogher Estate £459 8s 7d. ; PC264 (2)/28 Affidavit of Alexander Clendenning in case of John O Hara and wife vs. Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel 1844. ; PC263 (2)/70 Court of Chancery Alexander Clendenning receiver lands Ballycroy and Achill. ; PC263 (2)/74 Memorandum of agreement made between Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel and Henry Brett , Francis Burke and Michael Murphy assignees of Alexander Clendenning and George Clendenning bankrupts . Whereas said Alexander Clendenning and George Clendenning acted for several years as land agents for Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel receiving rents and claiming large sums spent on improvement of estate which Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel disputes make final settlement of all claims of Clendennings and Alexander Lambert against Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel.

⁴⁶ NLI, PC263 (2)/66 Memorandum between Sir R A O'D and Alexander and George Clendenning land agents.

Clendennings. Sir Richard would also endeavour to get the assignees paid out of the funds produced by the sale of his estates in the Incumbered Estates Court.

Sir Richard would also give a lease for ever of the land where George Clendenning built a premises known as the Dispensary. He would also agree to pay to Alexander and George Clendenning £4000, owed to them. Sir Richard also agreed to limit his wife's jointure to £600 and the settlement for his younger children to £3000. He should then sign over all his estate except his personal property to Michael Murphy of Rathmines in the County of Dublin Esq., the official assignee appointed in the bankruptcy of George and Alexander Clendenning. No proceedings should be taken against Lady Arabella O'Donel in relation to her jointure without the written consent of Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel. The Mansion House and Demesne of Newport and lands adjacent should be left in the possession of Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel and his family until all other portions of his estate had been sold.⁴⁷ As Sir Richard wished to repurchase some of his estate from the Incumbered Estates Court, it was agreed that Michael Murphy should divide the estate into parcels to be sold that would enable Sir Richard to purchase those parts that he desired. The estate was sold in the Incumbered Estates Court on several different days as it was broken into several different portions and lots. These are outlined in Appendix 2.

The Incumbered Estates Act was passed in 1849. Under its terms, a tribunal known as the Incumbered Estates' Commission was established. Any estates to be sold had to be incumbered, and could only be sold without the consent of the owner if the level of debt was greater than half its annual income, or the estate was in receivership. The sale of estates in fee, leaseholds in perpetuity, and viable leases of which at least sixty years were unexpired, all came within the Commission's remit. But the most

⁴⁷ NLI, PC263(2)/66 Memorandum between Sir R A O'D and Alexander and George Clendenning land agents.

attractive feature of this legislation was the fact that it conferred on the purchaser a parliamentary or indefeasible title. Proceedings taken before the Commission were also very much quicker than comparable procedures taken in the Court of Chancery.⁴⁸

Various charges were made on the land of the estate in the 1840s. Church tithes were levied on property with a value of greater than £4 and were paid by the tenant. The county cess was also paid by the tenant except that portion that was chargeable on wasteland that had not been leased by the landlord and in that case the landlord was responsible for its payment. This amounted in 1843 to £9 15s 5d on the Burrishoole estate. Another charge on the estate was quit rent, which in 1843 amounted to £29 2s. Poor rates were a charge that was levied on the landlord but he usually included this as part of the rent. Problems arose however when the rent was in default and the landlord still owed the poor rate. In 1843 the poor rate amounted to £101 8s 8d on the Newport estate and £15 3s 5d on the Cong estate.

III

The O'Donels regarded themselves as a great Mayo family. Some married into other great Mayo families but most of them went outside the county to find brides. Not only did marriages create bonds between the O'Donels and other families but also they often provided an injection of much needed capital into the estate. During the period of this study, it does not appear that any land was acquired as part of a marriage settlement but George Clendenning O'Donel, son of Richard Annesley O'Donel and Mary Clendenning, inherited from his father-in-law, Euseby Stratford Kirwan, his estate in County Longford in 1870.

Sir Neal married Mary, daughter of William Coane of Ballyshannon. The O'Donel family were therefore maintaining their links with Donegal. James Shiel who

⁴⁸ Mary Cecelia Lyons, *Illustrated Incumbered Estates Ireland 1850 - 1905* (Whitegate, 1993) p.46

was also from Ballyshannon was one of the guarantors of the Indenture between the Medlicotts and Sir Neal O'Donel.

Sir Neal's son Hugh married Alice Hutchinson of Ballylickey Co. Cork. Hugh, was lieutenant colonel of the South Mayo Militia who were stationed in Dunmanway in County Cork in January 1795 under his command.⁴⁹ This is probably where he met Alice Hutchinson. She was regarded as a great heiress that brought a marriage settlement with her of £20000, which was most welcome in the financially strapped O'Donel estate.⁵⁰ However it has been stated that she was the illegitimate daughter of Massey Hutchinson of Mount Massey, County Cork.⁵¹

Sir Neal's son James Moore married Deborah Camac. And his third son Neal married Catherine Annesley the third daughter of Lord Richard Annesley one of his majesties Privy Counsel of Annesley Lodge in the County of Dublin.⁵² His fourth son Connel married Mary and died in 1840.⁵³

Sir Neal the younger's son Hugh James Moore married Arabella Blake daughter of John Blake of Menlo Castle, Galway. Menlo Castle was the scene of much high living in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Sir John Blake the twelfth baronet is said to have been made an MP to give him immunity from his creditors. According to the story, when he had been duly elected, his constituents came in a body

⁴⁹John Mayock , 'South Mayo Militia' in Cathair na Mart ,xiv, (1994) ,p. 11

⁵⁰ NLI, MS 5619 O'Malleys in the 18th Century by Sir Owen O'Malley

⁵¹ Edith Mary Johnston- Liik, History of the Irish Parliament 1692 – 1800. (6 vols., Belfast, 2002) v p.387.

⁵² NLI, PC264(1)/38 1809 Settlement of Marriage of Sir Neal O'Donel and Catherine Annesley

⁵³ NLI, MS 14309 Minutes of Westport Poor Law Union Guardians 18/11/1840

to Menlo and called him ashore from the boat in which he was sitting in order to avoid two process servers who were waiting for him on the riverbank.⁵⁴

Sir Neal the younger's son Richard Annesley married Mary Clendenning of Westport, the daughter of George Clendenning, the agent for Lord Sligo. She fixed her dowry as her weight in gold, which she improved by concealing two smoothing irons in her dress when she was weighed.⁵⁵

Settlements may also have gone out of the estate at the time of marriage of daughters and several deeds specify the amount to be provided to a daughter on her marriage. In his will Sir Neal the elder specified that his four granddaughters should receive £1000 each. The interest on this amount should be used for their education and on their marriage or attaining the age of twenty-one they should receive the principal amount.⁵⁶

Sir Neal the elder had four daughters. Maria married Dodwell Browne of Rehins. He belonged to a branch of the Browne family of Mayo, which also included Lord Altamont of Westport, the Brownes of Breaffy, Castlebar, and the Browne family of Castlemagarret among whom was the MP Dominick Browne. Margaret married Sir Capel Molyneux also an MP who lived at Castle Dillon Co Armagh. The other

⁵⁴ Mark Bence-Jones A guide to Irish country houses (London, 1988) p 204.

⁵⁵ P Mullowney, and J Geraty, 'The O'Donels of Newport' in, Back the Road. Journal of the Newport Historical Society i (1996), p. 12

⁵⁶ NLI, PC263 (3)/62 Indenture 1854 between Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel, George Clendenning O'Donel, Mary O'Donel otherwise Clendenning wife of Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel, Michael Murphy of Mountrath Street in City of Dublin Sir Neal O'Donel left an annuity of £2000 a year to his wife Mary Coane if she should survive him. Will of Sir Neal O'Donel of 9 March 1810 left £14000 to his younger children Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel wished to settle a jointure of £1000 on his wife Mary Clendenning if she should survive him

daughters were Catherine and Isabella. He also had a third son Neal O'Donel who was placed in a lunatic asylum in 1843. ⁵⁷

IV

Part of the prestige associated with being a great landowner was building for one self a great house and this too imposed costs on the estate. The O'Donels improved their environment by building not one but two houses for themselves. The first house that they lived in was about a mile outside the town of Newport in Melcomb. The house was originally known as Seamount and was added to considerably over the time that the O'Donels lived in it. The first to live in it was Sir Neal's father Hugh. In one of the O'Donel rent rolls Samuel O'Donel is listed as living at Seamount. ⁵⁸ In 1781 a lease for ever of Seamount House was made to Connolly Coane brother of Sir Neal's wife Mary. ⁵⁹ In 1798 a lease was made to James Moore O'Donel, second son of Sir Neal of Seamount House and eight acres of land. ⁶⁰ When Sir Neal the younger and later Sir Richard inherited Newport House, Sir Neal the younger's brother Connel lived at Seamount. ⁶¹ In his last will of 13 October 1840 Connel O'Donel left all his property after the decease of his wife Mary to Sir Richard. In 1846 Captain John Nugent of the Revenue Police is listed as living in Seamount in Slater's Directory. ⁶² In 1860 George Clendenning O'Donel was living in Seamount House. ⁶³

⁵⁷ NLI, PC263(2)/85 Instructions to enter caveat in the Court of Probate to prevent Rev Mr Young obtaining probate on the will of the late Mr Neal Connel O'Donel who was placed in a lunatic asylum in 1843

⁵⁸ NLI, MS 5744 Memorandum of leases on Sir Richard O'Donel Estates 1773 -1842

⁵⁹ NLI, PC 265 (1)

⁶⁰ NLI, PC265(1)/19

⁶¹ Samuel Lewis, A topographical dictionary of Ireland (3 vols., London, 1837) i, p. 233

⁶² Slater's Directory 1846

⁶³ NLI, PC 264 (2)

After a few years in residence, the O'Donels decided to build a larger house for themselves in the town of Newport. The house was described by Mark Bence-Jones as:

A two story house of different periods of Georgian; with a front of five bays between 2 three sided bows and a higher wing at right angles which has an elevation of four bays and a shallow curved bow. Handsome staircase hall with wide arches and plasterwork of 1820s; stairs of wood, with balustrade of plain slender uprights; curving gallery.⁶⁴

The O'Donels spent large amounts of money in the upkeep of their houses and also repairs to tenants houses. In 1843 £43 was spent on repairs to William Bland's house in Clogher, £265 on repairs to Melcomb House and £80 on the demesne wall and nursery of Newport House. Improvements were also made to the wool store, Newport Hotel, the wall retaining the Shramore river and drainage was carried out on Nurse Joyce's holding and in the townland of Kiltarnet. Improvements and maintenance of the Gate House cost £54. In this year the amount of rents received was £6879 12s 10d from the Newport Estate, £2500 17s 3d from the Cong Estate and £459 8s 7d from the Clogher Estate.⁶⁵

Not only did the O'Donel's improve their own houses they also considerably improved the town. Lewis in 1837 states

The pier was erected at the expense of Sir R. A. O'Donel and some of the merchants of the town; the quays are extensive and commodious, and accessible to vessels of 200 tons' burden, which can be moored in safety alongside and take in or deliver their cargoes at all times of the tide, and within a few hundred yards may lie at anchor in perfect security. The channel is safe, and the harbour very commodious: the entrance into the bay, which is called Clew, Newport, or Westport bay, is spacious and direct;

⁶⁴ Mark Bence-Jones A guide to Irish country houses (London,1988) p 225.

⁶⁵ NLI, PC263 (2)/101 Attested copy of Accounts of the Receiver Alexander Clendenning from the estate of Sir Richard O'Donel used as evidence in the three court cases taken against Sir Richard O'Donel by Arthur Guinness, Peter Digges La Touche and John O'Hara . Amount of rents received in 1843. Newport Estate £6879 12s 10d Cong Estate £2500 17s 3d Clogher Estate £459 8s 7d

and within it are numerous islets and rocks, between which, on each side, are several good roadsteads, capable of accommodating large vessels, with good anchorage in from two to six fathoms.⁶⁶

and Mr and Mrs Hall writing in 1840

a few years back Newport was little better than a collection of hovels , and a modern traveller in 1839 complains bitterly that he was domiciled in an ugly mean-looking pothouse, redolent of sour beer and effete whiskey punch , the bed chamber of which was small frouze and unclean . He adds however that Newport was intended to be a better town and a better town it is now. The hotel is neat and comfortable, the cars are good, several pretty houses have been built along the quay and some large storehouses ' in progress' indicate increasing prosperity. At the quay a vessel of four or five hundred tons may unload. The town and a vast district to the west of it, including nearly the whole of the island of Achill are the property of Sir Richard O'Donnel.⁶⁷

V

The O'Donel family being among the resident gentry were almost all appointed to positions either as Justices of the Peace or High Sheriffs.⁶⁸ Before the purchase of the estate by the O'Donels, James Moore had been appointed local deputy for affairs of the Admiralty.⁶⁹ In 1815 Connel O'Donel was the High Constable of the Barony of Burrishoole.⁷⁰ There was a certain amount of negotiation between the resident gentry

⁶⁶ Lewis, A topographical dictionary of Ireland ii, p. 430

⁶⁷ Mr and Mrs Hall's Tour of Ireland 1840 edited by Michael Scott (London, 1984). p 394

⁶⁸ NLI, PC265 (3)/19 Sir Neal O'Donel made Justice of Peace; PC264 (1)/34 Appointment Justice Peace Sir R O'D nineteenth year reign Victoria. ; PC265 (1)/26 4th year of reign of William 4th (born 1765, ruled 1830-37) Sir R O'D appointed High Sheriff of Mayo.

⁶⁹ NLI, PC265(3)/23 Appointment of James Moore as local deputy for affairs of the Admiralty

⁷⁰ NLI, PC263(1)/59 Connell O'Donel High Constable for barony and Patk Gibbons Deputy High Constable 1815

for nominations to these positions and there is a letter from Lord Sligo to Sir Richard O'Donel requesting his permission to nominate a certain person for sub sheriff for the county of Mayo.⁷¹

Involvement in the military and in politics were ways in which landed families could increase their status and prestige in society. Several of the O'Donels were members of the South Mayo Militia. Sir Neal's eldest son, Hugh, was lieutenant colonel of the South Mayo Militia and Colonel of the 100th Regiment of the Line. The South Mayo Militia were stationed in Dunmanway in County Cork in January 1795 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Hugh O'Donel. His fellow officers were Lieutenant John Browne, Lieutenant Dennis Browne and Second Master John Browne. There were also fifty enlisted men in the contingent. In 1798 the numbers in the militia had increased, there were 110 men under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Hugh O'Donel during the month of April 1798, for which he was paid £23 17s 6d. There was also a larger contingent of 120 under the command of Colonel D G Browne for which he was paid £33 15s 0d for the month of April.⁷² Within twelve months Hugh O'Donel had been dismissed from the militia for his anti - Union views.⁷³ Following the landing of the French in Killala in 1798, a contingent of the French troops was stationed for a while in Newport under Captain Boudet but neither Sir Neal O'Donel nor his sons were in Newport at this time. Sir Neal O'Donel was at Athlone and his four sons were serving with their regiments.

A Court-martial was held at Castlebar on charges made by the Reverend John Benton, protestant chaplain to the South Mayo Militia and others against Captain James

⁷¹ NLI, PC265(1)/60 Letter from Lord Sligo to Sir Richard O'Donel requesting his permission to nominate GM for sub sheriff for the county of Mayo

⁷² John Mayock, 'South Mayo Militia' in *Cathair na Mart* xiv, (1994), 11

Moore O'Donel and his brother Lieutenant Connel O'Donel. Evidence was given that Captain James Moore O'Donel stepped forward at Castlebar as advocate to two known rebels, Crump and Gibbons and also backed another rebel Denis McGuire and that several known rebels were serving as members of the Newport Cavalry and Infantry. Another rebel, James Kelly, had encouraged support for the United Irishmen but still remained a member of the Infantry Corps. Lieutenant Connel O'Donel was asked to ensure that Kelly would appear before the local court on charges of sedition but in the meanwhile Kelly absconded. The court met at Castlebar on Monday 1 December 1800 and members of the court were Major Wetherington of the 9th Dragoons, Major Graham of the Royal Meath Militia and Major Frazer of the Frazer Fencibles.

Reverend Benton stated that in 1798 Newport Pratt was considered to be the sink of rebellion but it appeared that neither Captain O'Donel, who was a magistrate and a yeoman officer nor any of his family came forward as loyal men or prosecuted to conviction one rebel leader. The Tree of Liberty was planted in the town by a yeoman of the name of Gibbons who was convicted on the clearest testimony but escaped from prison. Captain O'Donel found in the house of Gibbons a hat decorated with a profusion of green ribbon, the emblem of disloyalty and found among his papers sufficient evidence to hang him but did not produce this at the trial of Gibbons or give evidence himself.

Captain O'Donel met the lord lieutenant in Athlone and told him that the French were in possession of the town of Tuam knowing this not to be true. This delayed the progress of the king's troops for one whole day. Another charge against Captain O'Donel was that a rebel called James Gordon was heard to say by John Wallis and Richard Davis that Captain O'Donel had spent the six weeks before the French landed at

⁷³ Edith Mary Johnston- Liik, History of the Irish Parliament 1692 – 1800. (6 vols., Belfast, 2002) v p.387.

Killala going from one corps of United Irishmen to the next telling them that they would soon be relieved. Joseph Kenning of Newport, a yeoman and an Orangeman, was sent for by Sir Neal O'Donel and asked was he an Orangeman. Anthony Wilkes swore that Lieutenant Connel O'Donel called the yeoman off parade into the market house and asked them to separately swear they were not Orangemen, which Kenning refused to do. Lieutenant O'Donel had rushed at James Wilks with a drawn sword for playing 'The Protestant Boys' and swore the tune should never be played in Newport.

The court also heard that Lieutenant O'Donel frequently on parade read letters from Captain James Moore O'Donel MP wherein the Captain boasted that in parliament he was pulling down the Orange badges. The court decided after hearing the evidence that Dr Benton had failed to prove the allegations and that Captain James Moore O'Donel and Lieutenant Connel O'Donel had fully exculpated themselves from any imputation of disloyalty or want of zeal in their duty as magistrates and officers.⁷⁴

After the defeat of the '98 insurgents, James Moore O'Donel who had been educated at Lincoln's Inns and was called to the Irish Bar in 1789,⁷⁵ arrested scores of rebels and then when they came up for trial went to extraordinary lengths to defend them from the gallows. In Oct 1799 when Colonel Hugh O'Donel died he had been offered an earldom (earl of Achill) and a large sum of money for his support of the Union but he died as he had lived - an Irish gentleman.⁷⁶

Politics played a significant part in the life of the landed gentry. Colonel Hugh O'Donel and Captain James Moore O'Donel were both MPs in Grattan's Parliament. Hugh was Burgess for Donegal Borough and James Moore for Rathoath Borough,

⁷⁴ Padraic O'Domhnaill, County Councillor Mayo News 17 July 1930

⁷⁵ Edith Mary Johnston- Liik, History of the Irish Parliament 1692 – 1800. (6 vols., Belfast, 2002) v p.387.

County Meath. The O'Donels were the first members of their family to seek parliamentary honours and entered parliament with the set purpose of offering a persistent and determined opposition to the forcing the Act of Union through Parliament.

In the debate on union at the opening session of parliament in 1799 Colonel Hugh O'Donel stated

There is no person in or out of this House who can be more anxious for supporting the closest connection between England and Ireland than I have been or ever shall. I have fought to preserve it from being interrupted by external and internal foes; but should the legislative independence of Ireland be voted away by a Parliament which is not competent therewith I shall hold myself discharged of my allegiance and I will join the people in preserving their rights. I will oppose the rebels in rich clothes as I have ever done the rebels in rags .If my opposition to it in this house shall not be successful I will oppose it in the field. ⁷⁷

Both Hugh O'Donel and James Moore O'Donel voted against the Union in 1799, but Hugh was dead before the vote was taken in 1800 when James Moore again voted against but he himself was also dead the following year. ⁷⁸ He was vehemently opposed to the Union and in one of the wilder anti-Union speeches declared that: 'if the Parliament of Ireland should be mean enough to vote away the legislative independence of Ireland, the people of Ireland would not be mean enough to submit to it, they would assert their rights, die as freemen rather than live as slaves. I have made up my mind what my conduct shall be – I shall either live free or fall by cut six of some Hessian

⁷⁶ Padraic O'Domhnaill, County Councillor in Mayo News July 17 1930

⁷⁷ P. Mallowney and J. Geraty, 'The O'Donels of Newport' in Back the Road Journal of the Newport Historical Society i.(1996), p. 12

⁷⁸ Edith Mary Johnston- Liik, History of the Irish Parliament 1692 – 1800. (6 vols., Belfast, 2002) v p.387.

sabre or other foreign mercenary.’ On 6 June 1800, he moved the Union Bill instead of being engrossed should be burnt.⁷⁹

Dominick Browne MP was particularly friendly with Sir Richard O’Donel and there is a large amount of correspondence in the O’Donel papers between them both politically and socially. Browne wrote to Sir Richard about Repeal of the Act of Union, with details of his speech in the Mayo Constitution.⁸⁰ He also wrote as to how the Mayo landlords should vote, as to extending voting rights to Catholics, with mention of Daniel O Connell.⁸¹ Lord Sligo who was also an MP wrote to Sir Richard O’Donel refusing Sir Richard’s request to nominate Daniel O Connel to a committee of the House of Commons.⁸² Dominick Browne wrote to Sir Richard O’Donel on a more personal note, from the House of Commons in 1830, congratulating him on his impending marriage to Mary Clendenning.⁸³ He also wrote to Sir Richard inviting him to bring his sisters to visit Castlemagarret, Dominick Browne’s home outside Claremorris. It is interesting to speculate if one of them subsequently married Dominick Browne.

VI

Religion played a big part in the life of the O’Donel family. Sir Neal the elder and his father Hugh had converted to the Protestant faith in 1763. During the greater

⁷⁹ Edith Mary Johnston- Liik, History of the Irish Parliament 1692 – 1800. (6 vols., Belfast, 2002) v p.387.

⁸⁰ NLI, PC265(1)/61 Letter from Dominick Browne MP to Sir Richard O’Donel re Repeal of the Act of Union and Daniel O Connel with details of his speech in the Mayo Constitution .

⁸¹ NLI, PC265(1)/71 Letter from Dominick Browne MP Castlemagarret to Sir Richard O’Donel as to how the Mayo landlords should vote as to extending voting rights to Catholics with mention of Daniel O Connell 1829

⁸² NLI, PC265(1)/74 Letter from Lord Sligo to Sir Richard O’Donel refusing Sir Richard’s request to nominate Daniel O Connel to a committee of the House of Commons 1831

⁸³ NLI, PC265(1)/72 Letter from Dominick Browne MP Castlemagarret from House of Commons to Sir Richard O’Donel congratulating him on his impending marriage to Mary Clendenning 1830

part of the eighteenth century the influence of the penal laws were a constant menace to Catholics. Their influence was felt particularly strongly in Connacht because there were more Catholic freeholders there than anywhere else. The result was that a large proportion of the Catholic land-owning families changed their allegiance at some time or other during the century. The names and dates were recorded in the official convert rolls, and show that many families remained Catholic until the second half of the century. There was a steady drain, which gradually undermined the Catholic position and left a much reduced but still appreciable number of Catholic land-owning families that still kept the old faith by the end of the century. There were various reasons for individual changes, but most of them were connected with property rather than religious conviction. Probably the chief reason was the wish to keep the estate together instead of allowing it to be divided among a number of children. If the eldest son turned Protestant he could inherit the entire estate, and many of the converts were eldest sons. A French traveller in Connacht at the end of the century formed the opinion that many of those who had conformed had done so in case a relative should turn Protestant and claim the estate while others had conformed in order to become members of parliament.⁸⁴

In the parish of Burrishoole there were congregations of Church of Ireland, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Presbyterian. Sir Richard O'Donel became a member of a sect similar to the Plymouth Brethren called the Darbyites and a conventicle was set up in Newport.⁸⁵ John Wesley visited Newport every other year between 1756 and

⁸⁴ J.G.Simms, 'Connacht in the eighteenth century' in Irish Historical Studies xi, (1958) , p. 116.

⁸⁵ P. Mallowney and J. Geraty, 'The O'Donels of Newport' in Back the Road Journal of the Newport Historical Society i.(1996), p. 12

1767 in the hope of setting up a congregation but did not return after 1767 when one had not been set up.⁸⁶

VII

Between the middle of the eighteenth and the middle of the nineteenth century the O'Donel family fortune collapsed in the face of accumulating debts. Because credit came so easily to landowners many of the Irish gentry mortgaged their estates to the hilt in order to impress others with their ability to afford not only the necessities but also the luxuries of the social season. By means of loans scattered among various creditors, some of whom were relatives and others professional money lenders, owners could continue to maintain a privileged lifestyle long after their rental income had ceased to pay the bigger bills. When crop failures or depressions occurred, landowners who had mortgaged their properties to the legal limit found it well nigh impossible to pay their interest instalments due twice a year.⁸⁷

This chapter has shown the decline in fortunes over time of the O'Donel family. As L.P. Curtis jr. states

Solvency is the product of a constant interplay between annual rental income and the myriad expenses of running an estate and maintaining the lifestyle appropriate to a landed gentleman. Landlords receiving an annual remittance or profit from their estates of at least 30 per cent of the rents received after the agent had paid all the bills and costs of incumbrances, should be considered solvent. Any amount less than this would have made it difficult for a gentleman dependent on rental income to keep himself and his family in the manner appropriate to his social standing.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ W.H. Crawford , 'Development of the County Mayo economy, 1700 – 1850' in R. Gillespie and G. Moran (eds), 'A Various country' essays in Mayo history 1500 – 1900 (Westport, 1987) p. 67

⁸⁷ L.P. Curtis jr, 'Incumbered wealth : landed indebtedness in post-Famine Ireland' in American Historical Review li (1980), p. 332

⁸⁸ L.P. Curtis jr, 'Incumbered wealth : landed indebtedness in post-Famine Ireland' in American Historical Review li (1980), p. 332

Chapter 2

THE O'DONEL ESTATE

THE LAND AND ECONOMY OF THE ESTATE

The first chapter has examined the origin growth and decline of the O'Donel estate from the purchase of the estate in 1788 to the sale in 1852. The main factors in the decline were financial involving extensive borrowing and settlements made on marriages of daughters and to younger sons of the family. This was not matched by a corresponding growth in income over time. This increased indebtedness led finally to the sale of most of the estate in the Incumbered Estates Court. The economy of the estate as its capacity to yield income was therefore crucial to the history of the O'Donel estate in the nineteenth century. This chapter examines how the decrease in agricultural prices following the ending of the Napoleonic War, the subsequent decline in the local linen industry and the inability of the tenants to pay their rents all contributed to the financial difficulties of the estate.

This chapter will look at the change in the economy of the estate over time concentrating on the Newport estate in Burrishoole. The rural economy was based on livestock and three crops, corn, potatoes and flax. Statistics are available for livestock numbers in the parish in 1851, but whether these were greatly decreased from those before the Famine is not known. Potatoes were grown as in many other parts of the West of Ireland for subsistence and with this readily available form of nutrition and the two cash crops corn and flax producing an adequate income for the tenants, the

population in Mayo rose dramatically from 293,112 in 1821 to 388,887 in 1841 an increase of 32.7 per cent.⁸⁹

The economy of the Newport estate was not based solely on the rural areas and agricultural production. Captain Pratt, the first land agent of the Medlicotts, had founded the town of Newport Pratt which was named after him. Following the purchase of the estate by Sir Neal O'Donel the town was further developed and acted as the centre of administration of the estate. The O'Donels had built themselves a large landlord house in keeping with their status in the community and there were several churches established in the town. The town having been built on a river, a port had been established and subsequent to this fairs and markets. This brought money into the town from the tolls and customs of the fairs and also from the money received for exports of corn through the port. The town was also a centre of government administration in the locality having a courthouse and military and police barracks. Although a large amount of the spinning and weaving of linen took place in the rural parts of the parish, there were also a large number of weavers living in the town and a street was subsequently called Weavers Row. Leases were issued to encourage trades people to settle in the town. As well as the linen based industries, there was a straw-hat manufactory set up.

I

An examination of the rural economy of the estate starts by looking at how the estate was divided and rented out to tenants. There were 125 townlands in the parish of Burrishoole, County Mayo in 1841. Sir Richard O'Donel was by far the biggest landlord in the parish. He owned sixty-nine townlands. The other major landlords in the parish were the marquis of Sligo, who lived in Westport seven miles from Newport and Sir William Palmer who lived for part of the year in Kenure Park, Rush, County Dublin

⁸⁹ 1821 Census of Ireland p.354; 1841 Census p. 400

and the remainder of the year on his estates in England. They each owned fifteen townlands in the parish. Colonel Gore lived in Beleek Manor, Ballina, County Mayo and owned twelve townlands.

The townland because of its size, association with family and with home place remains the most intimate and enduring of the land divisions in Ireland. Through repeated usage in land surveys and property transactions from the seventeenth century onwards, the townland gradually replaced all earlier units and in the nineteenth century was chosen by government as the basic administrative unit for the purpose of land valuation and census of population.⁹⁰ In the parish of Burrishoole all townlands were only owned by one head landlord, although there were some cases of middlemen subletting. The ownership of the townlands in the parish is shown in Fig. 1.

The acreage of land held by individual landowners again showed O'Donel to be the major landholder with 29,787 acres in the parish of Burrishoole in 1841. The marquis of Sligo had 8135 acres, Colonel Gore 5496 and Sir William Palmer 1914 acres. Sir Richard O'Donel also had the majority of tenants with 6,413 with 1,637 paying rent to the marquis of Sligo and 1,585 to Colonel Gore. Sir William Palmer had 695 tenants. The percentage of population in the parish by landlord is shown in Fig. 2 and the percentage of land owned in the parish of Burrishoole by the four major landlords in Fig.3.

⁹⁰ Paul Connel, Denis Cronin, and Brian Ó Dálaigh (eds.), Irish townlands studies in local history (Dublin, 1998) p. 9.

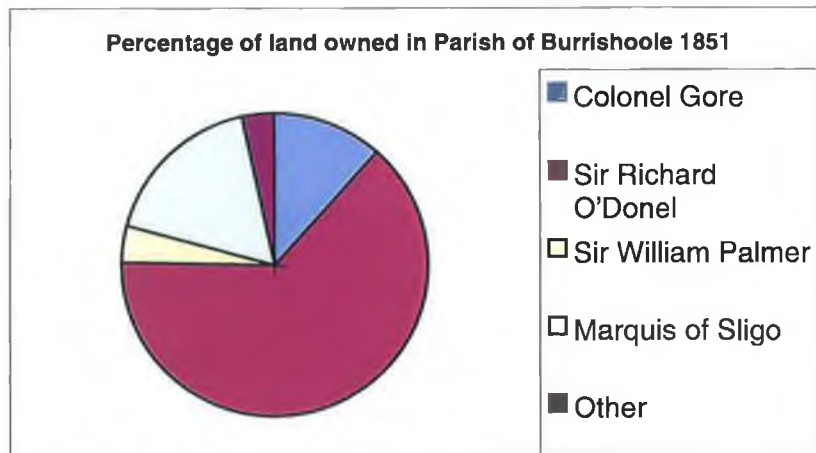


Figure 2 Percentage of land owned in the Parish of Burrishoole by the four major landlords.⁹¹

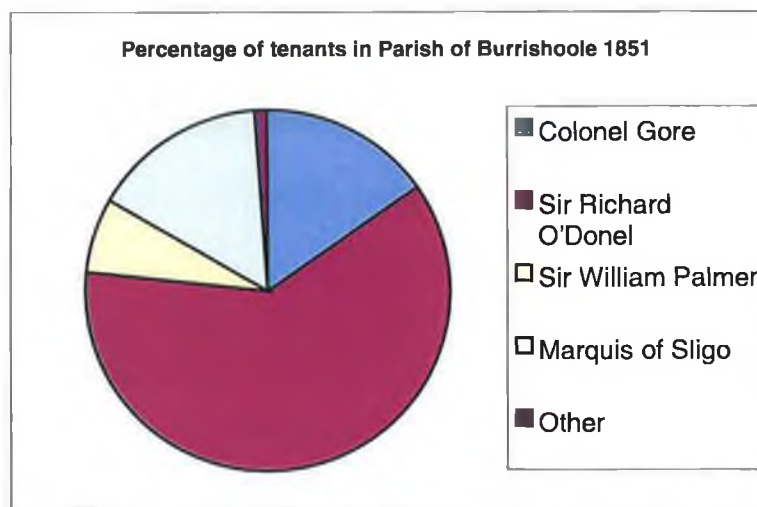


Figure 3 Percentage of tenants renting from the four major landlords in the parish of Burrishoole 1851.⁹²

⁹¹ Griffiths Valuation of Tenements for the Union of Newport, County Mayo 1857

⁹² Griffiths Valuation of Tenements for the Union of Newport, County Mayo 1857, 1851 Census of Ireland.

	Min	Max	Count	Mean	Std Dev	Mode
Griffiths 1857	IR£4.65	IR£202.45	69	IR£55.51	IR£36.57	IR£45.50
Total Population 1841	11	271	69	92.94	61.73	83
Total population 1851	0	217	69	46.78	45.43	35
Per cent decline	-13.04%	100.00%	69			48.05%
Acres	39	4453	69	431.70	769.75	164
Value pence per acre	2.09	542.00	69	90.52	85.76	79.64
1851 population per acre	0.00	0.81	69	0.26	0.20	0.2
1851 value per population in pence	0.00	824.45	69	222.51	176.42	215.25
Number of Leases	0	10	69	1.59	2.27	1
Per cent of Leases with non native names	0.00%	100.00%	69			0.00%
Per cent of Leases with more than one name	0.00%	100.00%	69			0.00%
1841 population per acre	0.00	1.70	69	0.57	0.38	0.57
1841 value per population in pence	49.48	1413.91	69	208.76	241.68	136.06
Arrears 1805	0.00%	100.00%	47			0.00%
Arrears 1816	0.00%	299.20%	49			40.29%
Arrears 1823	0.00%	320.23%	46			85.13%
Arrears 1824	0.00%	420.23%	47			103.19%
1816 Rent for townland as a percentage of 1805	0.00%	998.37%	47			100.41%
1823 Rent for townland as a percentage of 1805	0.00%	827.57%	47			100.41%
1816 Surnames still in townland as a percentage of 1805	0.00%	100.00%	39			87.00%
1823 Surnames still in townland as a percentage of 1805	0.00%	100.00%	39			66.00%
1857 Surnames still in townland as a percentage of 1805	0.00%	100.00%	43			66.00%

Figure 4 Calculations of the Mean, Mode, Min, Max, and Standard Variation for several variables associated with different townlands in the Parish Of Burrishoole owned by Sir Richard O'Donel

Material available in the O'Donel papers in the National Library included rent rolls and arrears from 1774 to 1844 during the period under study.⁹³ There were also a total of 216 leases issued by the O'Donel family for the parish of Burrishoole.⁹⁴ Population for the different townlands for 1841 and 1851 was obtained from the respective censuses⁹⁵ and acreage and valuation from Griffiths Valuation.⁹⁶ The population was higher in the smaller more valuable townlands. Carrowkeel consisted of eighty-seven acres and had a population in 1841 of 173, Corraunboy had a population of 129 on seventy-six acres and Camcloon had a population of 125 on eighty-three acres. This was contrasted with Oghilees having a population of six on 842 acres, Derrybrock with nine on 1309 acres and Glennamong with twenty-two on 4453 acres. The higher concentration of population was associated with much better soil quality in these areas. The size of a townland is usually associated with the richness of the soil. The land in the three largest townlands in the parish is also the poorest. Oghilees had a valuation of 1.2p per acre, Derrybrock 2.6p per acre and Glennamong 0.4p per acre. While the more heavily populated townlands of Carrowkeel, Corraunboy and Camcloon had a valuation of 38p, 40p and 22p per acre. After the famine extensive grazing farms were established for example a whole townland, Glenamadoo, of 2,045 acres was let to one tenant Henry J Smith.⁹⁷

⁹³ Rent rolls for 1805, 1811, 1812, 1813, 1814, 1815, 1816, 1818, 1819, 1823, 1824, 1838, and 1844 NLI, PC263(1), PC263(2), PC263(3), PC264(1), PC264(2), PC265(1), PC265(2), PC265(3); MS 5736 Rentals and Tithes Applotments 1774-1830; MS 5744 Memorandum of leases on Sir Richard O'Donel Estates 1773-1842; MS 5821 Rent Roll 1774-1814; MS 5745 Sept 1826-Sept 1831 Rental; MS 5742 Accounts O'Donel Estate and Relief Funds 1837-40;

⁹⁴ National Library of Ireland, Manuscripts Collection, O'Donel Papers unindexed Collection. PC263(1) - PC265(3)

⁹⁵ 1841 Census. 1851 Census

⁹⁶ Griffiths Valuation of Tenements for the Union of Newport, County Mayo 1857

⁹⁷ Griffiths Valuation of Tenements for the Union of Newport, County Mayo 1857, p66

Examination of the leases and rent rolls in the O'Donel papers gives a picture of the way land was rented in the estate. A large percentage of the leases were made out to a single leasee and entries in the rent rolls were to single name leasees in many of the townlands. However this does not preclude the possibility that the immediate lessor might have sublet the land, although in some of the later leases a penalty clause was inserted to prevent this. In some townlands land was not rented in severalty as a farm held by individuals but to a group of tenants. Unlike other areas of Ireland, Mayo had been relatively untouched by the enclosure of common fields. Land allocation among villagers was accomplished by a complex system of usufruct rights, which tended to produce a fragmented and subdivided pattern of land use. As with partible inheritance systems, Mayo's rundale (runrig) tenure allowed most individuals to have access to some land, no matter how limited in acreage. Such a system was predisposed to absorbing an increasingly pauperised tenantry in the context of demographic growth.⁹⁸ Land rented by rundale was usually entered in the rent roll as '& Co'. Those who rented together were mostly interrelated and lived in tightly huddled groups of houses called clachans. Each clachan appointed a head man. De Tocqueville on his visit to Newport in 1835 remarked 'The parish has 11,000 inhabitants living in 100 hamlets.'⁹⁹ Apart from 1,285 living in the town of Newport the majority of the remainder of the occupants lived in these hamlets or clachans.¹⁰⁰ The land involved was an open field system (infield/outfield). Each family might have as many as thirty fragmented lots depending on the quality and location of arable and grazing land. The plots were unfenced but were marked by stones or by making a small ridge known as a caolog. The unique feature of

⁹⁸ Eric L. Almquist, 'Mayo and beyond: land domestic industry, and rural transformation in the Irish west.' Ph. D. thesis Boston University 1977 p.123

⁹⁹ Emmet Larkin (ed.) Alexis de Tocqueville's journey in Ireland July-August, 1835 (Dublin, 1990) p.129

the system was that ownership was rotated among the families every three years.¹⁰¹ The outfield, which consisted of large expanses of blanket peat bog and mountain 'wasteland', was generally grazed in common by village co-tenants.¹⁰² The head man held the lease from the landlord and was therefore responsible for the collection and payment of all rents. He also acted as a mediator in disputes. The land was not divided equally among all the occupants of the clachan however. Those with the most capital got a larger proportion of land and usually the more desirable portions.¹⁰³ The unit of measurement was based not on area but on grazing capacity, the grazing for a cow was known as a collop. The amount of cattle a tenant was allowed to graze on the mountain pasture was linked to the size of his tillage area. On Clare Island in the nineteenth century eight dry sheep were deemed equivalent of a cow in grazing terms.¹⁰⁴ The tillage collop was not measured by area but by fertility of the soil and was supposed to be capable of supporting one family by its produce.¹⁰⁵

In identifying the townlands where rundale was practised note was made of all entries where '& Co' was entered but joint tenancies with just two names were not included. In some cases entries with '& Co' were made in townlands which also had a large amount of individual leases. This was probably not true rundale but a group of tenants renting collectively. There were forty-four townlands in the O'Donel estate in

¹⁰⁰ Lewis, A topographical dictionary of Ireland ii, p. 430

¹⁰¹ Michael J. O'Malley, 'Local relief during the Great Irish Famine 1845- 1850 the case of county Mayo' Ph. D Thesis. Loyola University Chicago. 2000.

¹⁰² E. Estyn Evans, The personality of Ireland (Dublin, 1992) p. 55.

¹⁰³ Desmond McCabe, 'Social order and the ghost of moral economy in Pre-Famine Mayo' in R Gillespie and G Moran (eds), 'A Various country' essays in Mayo history 1500 – 1900 (Westport, 1987). p.91

¹⁰⁴ C. Mac Cártaigh, 'Clare Island Folklife' in New survey of Clare Island Vol. 1: History and Cultural Landscape. (Dublin, 1999) p. 43

¹⁰⁵ P. Knight, Erris in the Irish highlands and the Atlantic railway (Dublin 1836) p. 46.

the parish where rundale renting took place in 1839.¹⁰⁶ In most cases the head man decided who in the clachan paid the rent on which portion of infield and not all portions allocated were of the same size. Likewise with the outfield, the number of animals that could be put on the common grazing by each of the tenants renting in common would be decided by the portion of the rent they were paying.

In 1824 an assignation of the grazing for the townland of Glendahurk which consisted of 1455 acres of mostly mountainy land showed that the rent for a calf's grazing for the year was 2 shillings. A quarter which was the grazing for a cow was 3 shillings. There were several shares that were not made up of multiples of these amounts, for example Martin Grady had a share of 5s 4d and Pat Cusack 9s 4d. This is probably due to the grazing for a sheep being 8d, in which case Grady would have the grazing for eight sheep and Cusack for fourteen. Some of the tenants who had grazed animals in Glendahurk had come quite a distance, Cusack coming from the townland of Cloggernagh in the neighbouring parish of Addergoole. In 1805 Mr Dodwell Browne had been renting the whole townland at an annual rent of £92 but when he fell into arrears the lease reverted to Sir Richard O'Donel.¹⁰⁷

County Mayo was the only county in Ireland where rundale remained the predominant form of tenure in 1845. In the poor law unions of Ballina, Swinford and Westport alone, 364,603 acres were held in common or joint tenancy. Similarly the greater part of the union of Castlebar union was held in common. Nearly 40 per cent of the rental income of Newport landlord Sir Richard O'Donel's estate in Achill Island and Burrishoole came from such tenants. Such a high concentration of heavily populated settlements meant that Mayo was particularly vulnerable to crop failure in 1845. The

¹⁰⁶ NLI, MS 5742 Accounts O'Donel estate and Relief Funds 1837-40

¹⁰⁷ NLI, PC263(2)/1

lower classes also included landless agricultural labourers who held small plots of potato ground or conacre from a farmer at fixed rent, payable in work. Labourers earned no money and relied exclusively on the potato for food.¹⁰⁸

The 1851 census has details of the agricultural holdings in the Barony of Burrishoole. 63 per cent of holdings were less than fifteen acres. There were a total of 3,445 holdings in the barony and 700 of these were under five acres. Only nine per cent were greater than thirty acres. There were a total of 1197 horses and the majority of these were kept on farms of between five and thirty acres. There were also twenty five mules and 718 donkeys. It was more than likely that a farm over thirty acres had a horse while those over two hundred acres probably had two. On the five to fifteen acre farms where almost sixty percent of the donkeys were owned there was only thirty percent of farmers owned a donkey. There were a total of 10,906 cattle and again the majority of these were on the five to thirty acre holdings which made up 62 percent of total holdings, but 1834 cattle were on farms between 100 and 500 acres that only made up 2.7 per cent of the holdings. Farmers with five acres or less would only have one cow while the farmer with a hundred acres had ten cows and the seventeen landholders having more than five hundred acres had on average forty eight cattle. There were 7165 sheep and 52 per cent of these were on farms between fifteen and one hundred acres. There were 1611 pigs and 45 per cent of these were kept on farms between five and fifteen acres. Other animals kept were 785 goats, 21,232 chickens almost 9000 of these were kept on the five to fifteen acre holdings which made up 43 per cent of total holdings. A farmer on a holding of one acre or less was likely to have just four hens, while those having fifteen acres or more would have eight.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Michael J. O'Malley, 'Local relief during the Great Irish Famine 1845- 1850 the case of county Mayo' Ph. D Thesis. Loyola University Chicago. 2000.

¹⁰⁹ 1851 Census

II

A lease in 19 Oct 1706 by Sir Henry Bingham of Castlebar to Owen O Malley of Burrishoole of the four quarters of Burrishoole, specified that the lessee and his undertenants had to grind their corn and grain at Ballyvaughan mills, and to thicken their cloth at Ballyvaughan tuck mill, under penalty of 2s 6d for each default, and to do suit at the manor of Burrishoole lordship.¹¹⁰ The lessees of the mill are also described in seven leases and there is also a considerable correspondence with McAdam and Carroll the manufacturers of the mill equipment.¹¹¹ The mill was rented by Richard Lendrum from the Medicotts in 1777 at a rent of £25 13s 6d.¹¹² The possibility of a rival mill being set up in the parish is mentioned in a lease of land from John Arbuthnot to Lieutenant Colonel Wilford in 1792. John Arbuthnot had been an Inspector for the Irish Linen Board and he must have felt in his retirement that he would like to establish a linen mill on his property in West Mayo. Included in the lease of the land of Carrowsallagh to Wilford was a clause specifying he had a right to quarry enough stones from a quarry on the leased land to build two houses and a mill. It was also agreed that no weir or other impediment should be fixed on the stream, which would interrupt the free passage of the fish or current of the water. The fishing rights on the stream were granted to Lieutenant Colonel Wilford.¹¹³ There is no evidence however that this mill was eventually built and John Arbuthnot died in 1797.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ J. Ainsworth, 'O Malley Papers', in *Analecta Hibernica* xxv,(1967) p187 .

¹¹¹ NLI, PC265(1)/42 1846 Correspondence 15 letters re: building scutch mill and corn mill for Sir Richard O'Donel with Messrs McAdam, Carrol and Co Belfast

¹¹² J. McDermott, 'An examination of the Accounts of James Moore Esq. Land agent and collector of Port Fees at Newport Pratt , Co. Mayo 1742 –65 , Including an account of the development of Newport Pratt from the early eighteenth century until 1776', MA, NUI Maynooth, 1994

¹¹³ NLI, PC 263 (3) 1792 lease John Arbuthnot to Lieut. Colonel Richard Wilford of eighth of Kings Regiment eighth Dragoons Carrowsallagh part of Carigahowley

¹¹⁴ Knockavelly Glebe, headstone inscriptions, *Back the Road, Journal of Newport Historical Society*. i, (1996), 21.

In 1798 George Lendrum, miller, who was probably Richard's son, claimed for damages to the Commissioners for inquiring into the losses sustained by such of his Majesty's loyal subjects as have suffered in their property by the rebellion.¹¹⁵ James McParland mentioned the mill in 1802 in his Statistical survey of County Mayo when he says that there is one good oat mill in the barony.¹¹⁶ George Lendrum was still renting the Mills in 1805¹¹⁷ but in 1811 William Ivers was renting them.¹¹⁸ In 1838 Sir Richard O'Donel leased the mill together with the right of water to them to Jonas Swain. The lease, which was for 41 years, specified that Jonas Swain should within five years of taking up the lease spend £500 on renovation of the mill. If this were done there would be a twenty pound abatement of the first years rent of £32 12s. If repairs were not carried out the lease would only run for 31 years.¹¹⁹

In April 1845 Mary Wilks aged 22 was married to John McNab of Westport who worked as a slator. Mary was a daughter of Thomas Wilks, a weaver, whose residence was the mill. Linen was also being processed at the mill at this stage and Thomas was weaving the yarn that was produced. Two daughters of Charles Naylor, who also gave his address as the Mill Newport, were married in 1846. Charles gave his occupation as farmer so he probably lived in one of the mills cottages, where he worked part time as well as spending the rest of his time looking after his cattle and maybe cultivating a few fields of flax.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ J.F. Quinn . History of Mayo vol.3 (Ballina, 1993) p.120

¹¹⁶ James McParland .Statistical Survey of County Mayo (Dublin, 1802) p. 112

¹¹⁷ NLI, PC 263(1) O'Donel Estate 1805 Rent Roll

¹¹⁸ NLI, PC 263(2) O'Donel Estate 1811 Rent Roll

¹¹⁹ NLI, PC 263 (3) 1838 Lease of mill to Jonas Swain.

¹²⁰ Representative Church Body Library , Church of Ireland Marriage Register Parish of Burrishoole.

Between 1851 and the late 1870s, the area under grain in Ireland contracted dramatically. Wheat yields fell by over two-thirds, oats by a little under three-fifths, and barley by about a third. This reflects the post-Famine shrinkage in population, and subsequent redeployment of land to animal husbandry. That is why mills, which were profitable in the 1830s and 1840s, had become surplus to requirement by the close of the nineteenth century.¹²¹

III

The form of agriculture practised in the barony was considerably altered by the Famine. Prior to this flax was extensively cultivated in the parish of Burrishoole as can be seen by some of the placenames such as Bleachyard and Weavers Row. James Hack Tuke had remarked in 1847, that the soil and climate of Connaught were particularly suitable for the growing of flax.¹²² A list of persons paid premiums for sowing flax in 1796, in a scheme run by the Linen Board, to increase the supply of flax includes several people in the Newport area.¹²³ Those listed include Sir Neal O'Donel, who was provided with a loom. Four spinning wheels were provided to Connor Deveir, Denis Duffey, Michael Duffey, Michael Geraughty, Thomas Lunskin, Mary Malley, James McDonagh, Manus McManamon, Edmond Mylett, Claud Nixon, James Nixon, Edmond Nolan, Dominick O'Donnell, James M. O'Donnell, Owen O'Donnell, Widow O'Donnell, Owen O'Mally and James Walsh.¹²⁴ An account of the arrears of flaxseed

¹²¹ Mary Cecelia Lyons, Illustrated Incumbered Estates Ireland 1850 - 1905 (Whitegate, 1993) p.73

¹²² J.H. Tuke, A visit to Connaught in the autumn of 1847. (London, 1847)p. 8

¹²³ Linen Board premiums for persons growing flax: 1796 a list of persons paid premiums for sowing flax in a scheme run by the Linen Board to increase the supply of flax. It provides the name and parish of residence of over 2,000 persons in Mayo. It is available in several archives in book or microfiche form. NLI Call Number Ir:633411 i7

¹²⁴ John Mayock, 'County of Mayo, a list of persons to whom premiums for sowing flax-seed in the year 1796 have been adjudged by the trustees of the linen manufacture' .in Cathair na Mart, xi ,(1991),93

also gives names of those involved in the cultivation of flax.¹²⁵ They may have had to return to Sir Richard O'Donel the same amount of seed at the end of the growing season that they were given at the beginning of the year. Unfortunately this is only a partial list and of a total of 727 gallons in arrears 285 are carried forward from a previous missing page. Those growers that were not in arrears would also not be included in this list. The growers of flax that were in arrears are shown in figure 5.

Townland	Growers in Arrears
Barrack Hill	John and Pat Cain
Bleachyard	John Hester, Edward Killey, Anthony McFadin
Burrishoole	Mark Dugan and Austin Gallagher
Callowbrack	John Quinn
Comploon	Pat Loughnan
Curranboy	Mark Dugan
Derrygarrif	Pat Duffy, James Murphy and Thomas Garrean
Derryhill	Bryan Golden and John O'Malley
Derryhillagh	John Brice
Derrylahan	Pat Berry, Manus Brice, John Cunniff, John Cusack, Edward, Pat, Peter and Thomas Lavelle, Mathew, James and Widow McGuane, Cormick and James Nolan, William O'Malley, Edward Quinn, Hugh and Widow Sheridan
Fauleens	Joseph Clark and Pat Gallagher jr. and Pat Gallagher snr.
Kiltarnought	Dominick Heveran and James Limerick jr. and James Limerick snr. and Anthony McGann
Knockalegan	John Bourke and James Cunny
Knockbrega	Michael, Pat and Thady Kerrigan as well as John O'Donel
Knockaneel	Myles Costello
Knocknagee	Hugh Cleary, Samuel Gorry, Alick Sweeney and Mrs Daniel Sweeney.
Knockroe	Francis Cavanagh, Pat and William Garrean and Brian McGuire
Raugh	Frank Gallagher, Pat McManamon and Daniel Sweeney
Rossgiblin	Pat Greavan and John Scuffield
Rossmore	Peter Cunnane, Peter Lavelle and Rodger Sweeney
Shanballyhugh	John and Michael Lavelle
Shrafarna	Michael Mulloony and John Corrigan
Tawnawoggaun	Henry Garrean, Widow Gibbons and Michael Quinn

Figure 5 The growers of flax that were in arrears O'Donel estate in 1822

A large amount of flax was grown in the townland of Derryloughan. In Knocknagee Hugh Cleary was in arrears for 3 gallons and the largest amount of arrears in this list of 63 gallons was Samuel Gorry. This would have been enough seed to sow

¹²⁵ NLI, PC263(1)/68 An account of the arrears of flaxseed contained in the North Division of the Newport Estate

five acres. Also in this townland was Alick Sweeney owing 31 gallons and Mrs Daniel Sweeney.

Orla Dempsey in her thesis in 1987 on 'Quaker Contribution to Relief in Ballina Co. Mayo during the Great Famine 1845-50'¹²⁶ states that

Previous to this the Friends in an attempt to diversify employment (seen as the only way of returning the country to economic prosperity) promoted the growth of flax, cultivating almost 75 acres themselves on their model farms. This was purchased by Bernard and Kock of Newport. The latter obviously sufficiently impressed with the end result, approached the Central Relief Committee with a project that proposed to establish a factory for the steeping and preparing of flax in Ballina to be "conducted " by the Hay Brothers and Co. After the usual consideration was given, the Committee agreed to aid them and advanced a loan of £500. Knox Gore was now himself involved in the cultivation of flax put forward a proposal to build a flax-scutching mill to complement Bernard and Kocks rettery.

Bernard and Kock, two Swiss gentlemen, were involved in the linen industry at the time of the Famine with a substantial rettery in Newport. This not only handled the crop that was grown around Newport but also flax harvested around Ballina a distance of thirty miles from Newport was transported in order to be retted. Mayo was particularly suited to growing flax, as the plant thrives in moderate to cool climates with moist summers. The seeds were sown thickly to minimise effects of weeds in shallow drills in March or later if the winter had been hard. When 70-100mm high the crop was carefully weeded. The flax was pulled, not cut, in late summer or early autumn, when the seeds turned yellow from green indicating ripeness. After harvesting the plants were laid out in neat rows on the grass to dry for up to 2 weeks. The seed was then separated

¹²⁶ Orla Dempsey , 'Quaker Contribution to Relief in Ballina Co. Mayo during the Great Famine 1845-50' , MA, NUI Maynooth, 1997 p. 49

from the stalk in a process called rippling. Next, the outer part of the stalks must be allowed to decay in order that it might be easily separated from the fibre. This retting process which was carried out partly by exposure to damp grass and partially by steeping for about ten days in pools, required delicate judgement; even a small mistake would mean a serious loss in the value of the flax. After retting the flax was spread on the grass to further the separation process and then scutched where sheaves of flax were beaten by a mallet and then by a flat wooden knife until the fibres resemble threads. The next process was hackling where the fibres were drawn through the hands and then through a wire brush. Spinning then took place after which the yarn was then bleached by steeping in dye and boiling.¹²⁷

The linen industry in Mayo got a welcome boost when John Arbuthnott who bought property in Carrigahowley, about four miles west of Newport was offered the post of Inspector-General to the Irish Linen Trade in 1782 and he did much to promote the linen industry in Connaught.¹²⁸ It is curious that so much flax growing should take place in Connaught, far away from the centres of weaving and from the Dublin market. In all probability the peasants in this region turned to flax cultivation because they found it more difficult to supply either cereals or dairy produce which were staple goods in the midland and southern counties.¹²⁹

By the year 1800 the linen trade was flourishing. Flax was extensively grown in the barony of Burrishoole. Spinning wheels and looms were in every cabin – in some cabins there were two looms – where they spun and wove pieces of linen for the regular linen markets at Castlebar and Westport. Towards Westport, in the barony of Murrisk, it

¹²⁷ Conrad Gill, The rise of the Irish Linen Industry (Oxford, 1964) p 36

¹²⁸ Conrad Gill, The rise of the Irish Linen Industry (Oxford, 1964) p 288

¹²⁹ Conrad Gill, The rise of the Irish Linen Industry (Oxford, 1964) p 36

was greatly encouraged by the earl of Altamont, who established two bleach greens in the neighbourhood. Around Castlebar the local landowner, Lord Lucan, established three bleach greens as well as setting up a linen hall there where the linen market was held on Saturday and £500 spent. Rural industry was favoured by landowners seeking to diversify the incomes of their tenants and to improve their own profits. The trade brought cash into rural households, which allowed increases in both land rents (which obtained only before 1810) and rural population density. In the context of population growth after 1750, economic survival for smallholders increasingly depended upon labour intensive production of linen yarn and potatoes.¹³⁰

De Tocqueville in his tour of Ireland was under the opinion that Lord Altamont had introduced the linen industry into West Mayo. He found it to consist principally in spinning flax, which was sent out of the country. There was very little weaving in West Mayo at this time except for local use of the resulting cloth. In order to establish the weaving industry Lord Altamont built good houses in the town of Westport, and let them upon very favourable terms to weavers, gave them looms, and lent them money to buy yarn. In order to secure them from manufacturing goods, which they should not be able readily to sell, he constantly bought all they could not sell, which for some years was all they made. As the manufacture arose, buyers came in, so that he did not need to buy any great quantity. The first year 1772, he bought as much as cost him £200; the next year 1773, £700; the next 1774, as much as £2000; and in 1775, above £4,000 worth; and in 1776, the number of buyers having much increased he did not need to lay out any more than £4,000, the same as the previous year.¹³¹

¹³⁰ James McParland, Statistical survey of County Mayo (Dublin, 1802) p. 113

¹³¹ Emmet Larkin (ed.) Alexis de Tocqueville's journey in Ireland July-August, 1835 (Dublin, 1990) p.129

Asenath Nicholson who visited the Newport area in the time of the famine observed

Sir Richard O'Donel promoted the cultivation of flax in the parish and many of his tenants were on this in the summer and autumn of 1847. Among the thousands which were happily at work were many women, and their cheerful responses testified how they prized the boon to be allowed to labour, when they could earn but a few pence a day. The following year there appeared to be a decline in this work, and with it many of the poor were left hopeless, and probably before another spring opened they were, sent out into the storm by the driver of Sir Richard. ¹³²

IV

To fertilise their arable crops the tenants commonly used seaweed as can be seen from a lease made in 1805 by Sir Neal O'Donel to his son Connel O'Donel of the farm and lands of Burrishoole and Rosgibbleen. These lands with the dwelling house, salt works and out offices known as Owen O'Malley's Burrishoole were bounded on the East by the river of Burrishoole on the west by the sea and on the north by the lands of Knockelayne and Derrada and on the south by the Burrishoole River and the sea. The lease included the kelp shores and manure weed for a rent of one hundred pounds for three lives. ¹³³

The long indented coastline around Clew Bay afforded potato growers unusually good facilities for heavily fertilising their crops with kelp and sea sand. Kelp burning was also an important adjunct to the economic life of many west coast communities in the nineteenth century. ¹³⁴ In 1774 Neal O'Donel had rented the kelp shores of Newport

¹³² Asenath Nicholson, Annals of the Famine in Ireland (Dublin, 1998) p.117

¹³³ NLI, PC263(3)/14 Lease 3 May 1805 Sir Neal O'Donel to Connel O'Donel

¹³⁴ Kenneth McNally, Achill (Newton Abbot, 1973) p. 172

and Achill from John Thomas Medlicott for £100¹³⁵ and in 1814 after he bought the estate from the Medlicotts he had rented the Newport Kelp Shores alone for £237 to twenty-three leasees.¹³⁶ He had lowered the rent to £130 by 1819.¹³⁷ Richard Pococke believed that by harvesting the seaweed for manure and kelp burning that the fishing declined as the fish spawned on the seaweed.¹³⁸

Houses were heated by the use of turf, as the lease from Sir Neal O'Donel to his son Connel states that the lessee had a right to full and free liberty of entering securing and carrying away yearly and every year during the term hereby granted a sufficiency of turf on the best and most convenient part of the boggs of Doontrusk and Derrada which said premises lay.¹³⁹ The lease from John Arbuthnott Esq. specifies that Lieutenant Colonel Wilford has liberty to cut turf for the use of his house, on the most convenient part of the boggs used by the said John Arbuthnott Esq.. This is provided that it is cut in straight lines and not promiscuously in holes as a mangled bog.¹⁴⁰ Reverend Mr Coney, parish priest of the neighbouring parish of Kilmeena stated to the Commissioners on Poor Laws in Ireland in 1836 that the universal fuel of the barony is turf and bogwood which is in most places sufficiently accessible to the tenants but often of very poor quality as the portions of bog assigned to the different villages have been worked out. John Kenny a small ordinary farmer testified to the same Commission that it took him about a fortnight to cut as much turf as his family required for a year, about 14 days

¹³⁵ NLI, MS 5736 Rentals and Tithes Applotments Medlicott and O'Donel estate 1774-1830

¹³⁶ NLI, PC263(3)/37 Arrears for Burrishoole 1814

¹³⁷ NLI, PC263(3)/39 1819 Rent Roll

¹³⁸ Richard Pococke, *Richard Pococke's Irish tours*, (Dublin, 1995) p. 83

¹³⁹ NLI, PC263(3)/14 Lease 3 May 1805 Sir Neal O'Donel to Connel O'Donel

¹⁴⁰ NLI, PC263 (3)/18 1792 lease John Arbuthnot to Lieut. Colonel Richard Wilford of eighth of Kings Regiment eighth Dragoons Carrowsallagh part of Carigahowley

more would be spent in drying and bringing it home. Altogether he reckoned that firing cost him 10s a year counting his own labour. Sir Samuel O'Malley, the chief landlord in the parish of Kilmeena stated that woods were never robbed for fuel but they sometimes were for other purposes such as flail handles. There was no instance known of a landlord depriving a tenant of fuel as a punishment.¹⁴¹

Houses were not only heated with turf; they were also built with it. James McParland in 1802 wrote of habitations in the parish of Burrishoole 'Some very poor, made of turf sods, badly roofed and thatched, and full of smoke and dirt, as they have neither chimneys nor offices, except a very few'.¹⁴²

V

The centre of the Burrishoole estate lay at O'Donel's residence at Newport. The Frenchman, Coquebert on touring Connacht in 1791 remarked ' These two small places, Newport and Westport, share the poor trade of Clew Bay. Newport being the more advantageously situated since its river can take ships of 500 tons.' On the day of Coquebert's arrival there were two ships there, while not a single vessel had been seen in Westport. On that day also a fair or market was being held for which booths had been erected. He further observes 'At a mile and a half from the town are the meagre ruins of Burrishoe Abbey giving its name to the barony i.e. Bur is Uall Locus Territori Pomorum. Newport has fallen into decline because the owner lacks both intelligence and fortune.'¹⁴³ Lewis remarked 'the pier was erected at the expense of Sir R. A. O'Donel and some of the merchants of the town; the quays were extensive and commodious, and accessible to vessels of 200 tons' burden, which could be moored in

¹⁴¹ Report from Commissioners on Poor Laws in Ireland vol XXXII (1836) Appendix (E)

¹⁴² James McParland, Statistical survey of County Mayo (Dublin, 1802) p. 87

¹⁴³ Sile Ni Chinneide, 'A Frenchman's Tour of Connacht in 1791' in JGAHS xxxv (1976), p52.

safety alongside and take in or deliver their cargoes at all times of the tide, and within a few hundred yards may lie at anchor in perfect security. The channel was safe, and the harbour very commodious: the entrance into the bay was spacious and direct; and within it were numerous islets and rocks, between which, on each side, were several good roadsteads, capable of accommodating large vessels, with good anchorage in from two to six fathoms.’¹⁴⁴

The port of Newport was the major port of Mayo in the eighteenth century and not only was the produce of the Linen trade exported through it but also a large amount of barley and oats. No exports of grain were recorded prior to 1749 but after 1785 when prices rose considerably exports were regular.¹⁴⁵ In 1838 Lewis stated that the increasing demand for grain, chiefly oats for Liverpool, aided by the establishment of cornbuyers in the sea-ports had given rise to a considerable export trade, for which Killala, Ballina, Newport and Westport were the chief marts.¹⁴⁶ However the regional port of Newport came under threat in the early nineteenth century. As the trade in Newport declined that in Westport was on the increase. From Newport roads to Castlebar and Westport were inadequate and this accelerated the decline of Newport, as it was safer to bring corn to Westport by road rather than by the dangerous sea.¹⁴⁷ In 1826 the amount of oats sold in the two towns was roughly equal 1283 tons for Newport and 1300 for Westport. In 1835 15,720 tons were sold in Westport but only 1,000 tons in Newport, demonstrating the expansion of Westport as a market town for the area at

¹⁴⁴ Lewis, Topographical dictionary ii, p. 430

¹⁴⁵ Donald E Jordan, Land and popular politics in Ireland. (Cambridge, 1994) p. 48

¹⁴⁶ Lewis, Topographical dictionary i, p. 356

¹⁴⁷ T.W. Freeman, Pre Famine Ireland: a study in historical geography (Manchester, 1957) pp. 110-3, p. 263

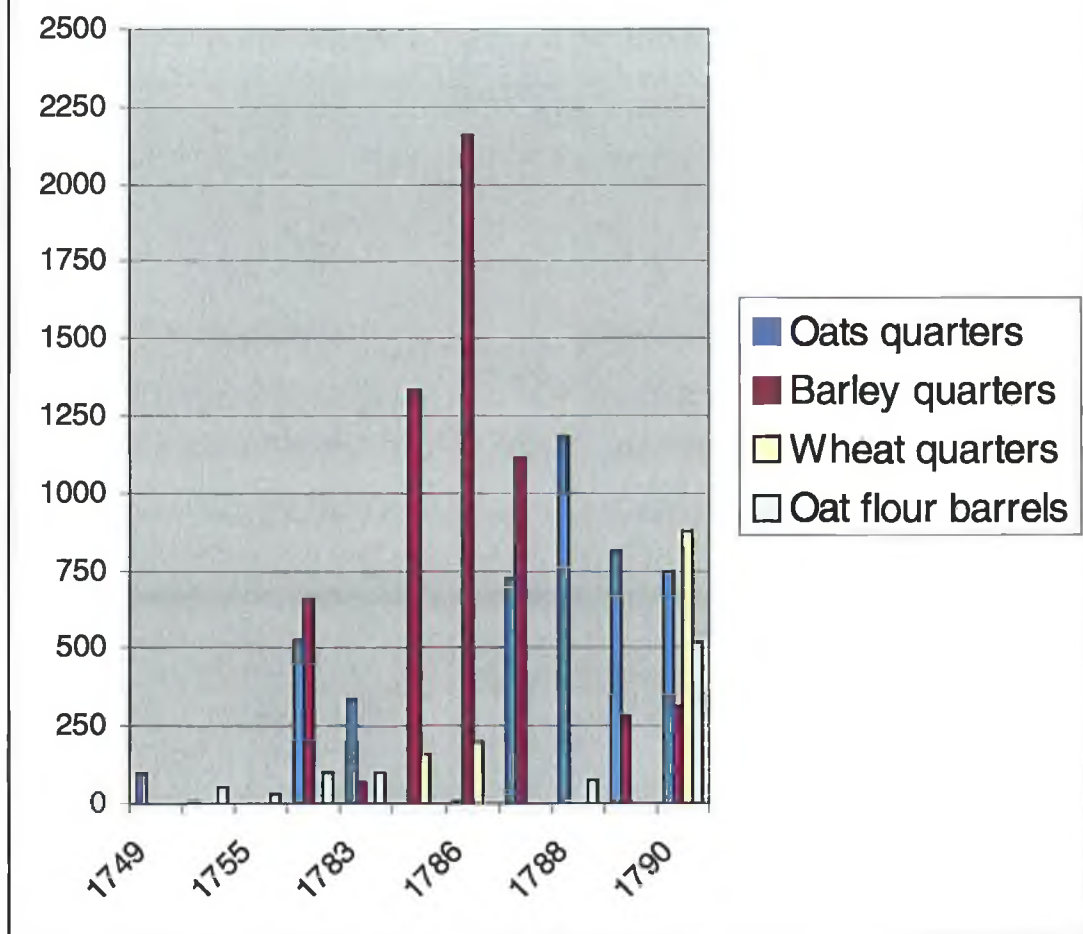
the expense of Newport.¹⁴⁸ That year the value of exports and imports from Westport was £87,805 and £28,517 respectively while exports from Newport were £2269 while there were no imports.¹⁴⁹ By 1843 the decline of the port of Newport was complete, no vessels entered it all year while 77 used the port of Westport and 106 Galway. Postal returns of Mayo towns show that the post office was established in Newport in 1784. In 1831, when the town had a population of 1,235, it had only an eighth of the revenue of the post office in Westport, which had a greater turnover than both Ballina and Castlebar, which were larger towns.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Parliamentary gazetteer of Ireland (3 vols. , London, 1844-6) ii, p.749.

¹⁴⁹ James Fraser, Guide through Ireland hand book for travellers in Ireland : descriptive of its scenery, towns, seats, antiquities, etc. (1854) p.134

¹⁵⁰ W. H. Crawford, 'Development of the County Mayo economy, 1700 – 1850' in R. Gillespie and G. Moran (eds), 'A Various country' essays in Mayo History 1500 – 1900 (Westport ,1987)p.67 ; Nineteenth report of the Commissioners of Inquiry into the collection of the revenue arising in Ireland and Great Britain , HC 1829 (353), xii, appendix 87 ; Report from the Select Committee on the post communications with Ireland: with the minutes of evidence and appendix, HC 1831-2 (716), xvii, appendix 21.

Grain Export from the Port of Newport 1749-1790



Source: House of Commons Journals, Ireland ,XII (1786-8) Appendix cccli; XIV (1790-1) appendix ccxcii

Figure 6 Grain export from port of Newport 1749 -1790

The second important element in the urban economy was linen. The first textile village in Mayo may have been Newport, where Captain Pratt settled a colony of Quakers about 1720.¹⁵¹ In the north of the county the linens were sold unbleached in the market of Ballina because there was no convenient bleach green. Some of the flax was sold as yarn and may have been woven in Ulster. By the 1750s the industry had grown to a sizeable one, with markets spread throughout the county and exports leaving

¹⁵¹ K. Carroll, 'Quaker weavers at Newport 1720 – 1740' in *Friends Historical Journal* (1976) pp 15 – 27.

principally from Newport and Sligo. Much of the flax in the northern half of the county still went northwards for spinning. With the natural gravitation towards Castlebar of much of the rest of the linen yarn, it was a natural business opportunity for the local landlord Lord Lucan to pursue. In 1763 Sir Charles Bingham (later Lord Lucan) obtained permission to establish a 'premium' linen market in Castlebar. The finest and therefore most expensive grades of linen were now available in commercial commodities in Castlebar. The opening of the linen hall on September 5th 1790 helped further to establish Castlebar as the dominant player in the western linen industry. This involved more people in the production of flax and increased the value of Lucan's land and led to more prosperity in the environs of Castlebar. Lucan also of course as the dominant businessman earned a percentage of all business done. Once established, the linen hall and its main business was leased to the Belfast based Northern Linen Company, hardly surprising as the business was now extensive and the Lucan of the time was to all intents and purposes an absentee landlord.¹⁵²

The growth of the industry did however put a strain on the locally available linen weavers. During the latter half of the century a steady stream of migrants from Ulster, elevated this somewhat. The sectarian aftermath of the Battle of the Diamond turned this stream into a flow, and these new migrants many of who were professional weavers were a godsend to the expanding industry. A market gradually developed and linen provided an adequate and constant source of income. In 1776 a traveller to Castlebar noted that '8 or 9 years ago there were no linens here but now 300 pieces are sold in a week, 200 looms are employed in the town and neighbourhood, yet great quantities of yarn are sent off.'¹⁵³ The linen hall gave much greater control to the local

¹⁵² Seamus Devaney, 'The Linen Industry in Castlebar' Essay for Certificate in Local History, GMIT, Castlebar Co. Mayo, May 2000.

¹⁵³ Arthur Young, *A tour in Ireland*. ed. Constantia Maxwell (Cambridge, 1925), 81

market, kept prices stable and was to act as the hub of the local industry. Castlebar began to draw much business from all linen producing areas, to the detriment of markets such as Newport, Westport and Ballina.¹⁵⁴

Asenath Nicholson on her visit to the Newport area in the time of the famine observed

Mr Gildea, the Church of Ireland clergyman, too, had a fine establishment for spinning and weaving which employed about seven hundred, mostly women, spinning and hand-skutching and their earnings were three shillings and three shillings and sixpence per week. The yarn was spun by hand, and woven by a spring shuttle. The table linen and sheeting would compete with any manufactory in any country. Yet this valuable establishment was doing its last work for want of encouragement, want of funds; and machinery is doing the work faster and selling cheaper, though the material is not so durable. What can the poor labourer do willing to work at any price, and begging to do so, yet cannot be allowed the privilege. Mr Gildea kept a number employed, and employed to a good purpose, many of whom may at last starve for food.¹⁵⁵

Manufacture of garments and sheets from the linen cloth also took place. In 1842 Patrick Cosgrave supplied linen sheets at 4/1 1/2 lb., men's shirts at 1/9 each, boys shirts at 1/5 each and women's shifts at 1/5 each to the Westport Union workhouse.¹⁵⁶

Bleaching of linen took place in the townland of Bleachyard. Whether this bleach green was in operation after the famine is not clear, as there were advertisements in the local Press for bleach greens in Belclare and Turlough. The Belclare Bleach green had

¹⁵⁴ Seamus Devaney, Castlebar pers. comm. May 2000.

¹⁵⁵ Asenath Nicholson, Annals of the Famine in Ireland (Dublin, 1998) p. 117

¹⁵⁶ NLI, MS 14309 Minutes of the Westport Union Board of Guardians 1840

been active for a considerable period of time as the French travel writer De Coquebert visited it in 1791.¹⁵⁷

Having descended the mountain the travellers return to Westport by carriage. On the way back, at two and a half miles from the town, they arrive at a bleaching house belonging to Mr McDonnell, brother in law of Mr Dominick Martin to whom they are already indebted. This Mr McDonnell is the chief purchaser of linen cloth in the district, the type called sheetings, which he sells for about £800 a year. From McDonnell they learn that the expansion of the linen industry has greatly reduced the amount of yarn sold since Arthur Young's time.

James McParland observed that 'at Ballyclare is a very extensive manufactory of linens, unions, diapers and sheetings'.¹⁵⁸ The Turlough Bleach Green was advertised in the Mayo Constitution in 1838.

William Malley proprietor begs leave to inform the public that his Bleaching Mills are now in full work and he pledges himself that such persons may please to favour him with their orders shall have their linens well and expeditiously bleached at most reasonable terms and he gratefully acknowledges the preference he has been hitherto received and hopes for a continuation of it. He will receive linens for the above green at the following places Edward Malley, Newport. Also at Ballina, Tuam, Swinford, Castlebar, Westport, Crossmolina and at the green under the direction of Peter Vallely.

¹⁵⁹

The heyday of the linen industry in west Mayo was in the 1820s and after this period decay set in, due to the fact that the industrial revolution produced machine-made

¹⁵⁷ Sile Ni Chinneide, 'A Frenchman's Tour of Connacht in 1791' in JGAHS xxxv (1976), p52.

¹⁵⁸ James McParland, Statistical Survey of County Mayo (Dublin, 1802) p. 108

¹⁵⁹ Mayo Constitution 8 May 1838

goods against which the hand spun materials could not compete. With this industry on the decline pressure on the land increased, as the industry was the source of all extras beyond the bare necessities of life.¹⁶⁰ In the 1830s, as machine production of linen yarn transformed Ulster's textile industry, the market for handspun yarn declined rapidly in Mayo. This left the county all the more susceptible to demographic crisis. Such a crisis occurred in 1846-50 when the harvests of potatoes, the staple food of most smallholders, failed in the wake of an epidemic of potato fungus.¹⁶¹

Another industry that prospered in Newport was a factory producing straw hats. James McParland noted in 1802 that

A manufacture of straw-plat for hats and bonnets was introduced and encouraged here by Mrs Graydon ; there are now in Newport and its neighbourhood a great number of girls employed , whose manufacture is sold at from 4s to 26s the hat or bonnet ; very small girls earn from six pence to fifteen pence per day ; the most fashionable ladies of this and the adjacent counties buy and wear them , not for charity , but for their fineness and excellence . I believe the number of employees to be upwards of a hundred children most of whom maintain themselves and their families by the straw manufacture.¹⁶²

The sale of the agricultural products from the rural hinterland took place in the various fairs and markets. A monthly fair was held in Newport and Mulranny and a weekly fair in Newport.¹⁶³ By 1750 fairs were held on 29 May and 31 October. After

¹⁶⁰ H. D Inglis, A Journey throughout Ireland during Spring, Summer and Autumn of 1834 (2 vols. London ,1834) ii , 94 - 107.

¹⁶¹ Eric L. Almquist, 'Mayo and beyond: land domestic industry, and rural transformation in the Irish west.' Ph. D. thesis Boston University 1977, p 84

¹⁶² James McParland ,Statistical survey of County Mayo (Dublin, 1802)

¹⁶³ NLI, PC265 (1)/52 1797 Grant of fairs to Sir N O'D. ; PC264 (2)/17 Granting of 2 extra fairs in Newport 1781 One on first day of August and the other on 20 Dec rent of £8 6s.

the calendar change dates were 8 June and 11 November. A 1787 patent to Sir Neal O'Donel added 1 August and 20 December. The patent stated that if the fair day should fall on a Sunday then the fair should be on the following Monday. It also specified that no damage hurt or prejudice should be done to any of his majesties subjects who held fairs in the neighbourhood of the said town and lands of Newport Pratt. The rent for the fairs due to the Crown was eight pounds and six shillings forever together with a Court of Pie Powder together with all Tolls Customs Privileges and Immunity to the said fairs and courts. ¹⁶⁴ A market house had been built by 1798 for the administration of the market and collection of tolls as Anthony Wilkes swore at the Court Martial of Connel O'Donel that Lieutenant Connel O'Donel called the yeomen off parade into the market house and asked them to separately swear they were not Orangemen. ¹⁶⁵ By 1852 it had a Tuesday market with no patent. ¹⁶⁶

At these fairs tolls were charged. In 1777 Patrick Gallagher paid £12 10s for the Customs of fairs and Markets and in 1808 Hugh McDonagh received a lease for one life of the Customs of fairs and Markets for £56 17s 6d. ¹⁶⁷ The fair or market was a major social occasion which the men dressed up for, being ashamed to be seen without stockings or shoes, the women were generally without either but the children were always so. ¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ NLI, PC264(2)/17 Granting of 2 extra fairs in Newport 1781 One on first day of August and the other on 20 Dec rent of £8 6s

¹⁶⁵ Peter Mallowney and Jack Geraty, 'O'Donels and their family tree' in Back the Road, Journal of Newport Historical Society (1996) i. p12.

¹⁶⁶ W. H. Crawford, 'Development of the County Mayo Economy, 1700 – 1850' in R. Gillespie and G. Moran 'A Various country' Essays in Mayo History 1500 – 1900 (Westport ,1987) p. 67

¹⁶⁷ NLI, MS 5737 James Moore's Accounts ; NLI PC 263 (1) Indenture Sir N O'D Hugh McDonagh Tolls Customs and usages of fairs 1808. PC263 (2)/55 Schedule of Toll and Customs and Cranage levies within the manor of Newport. ; PC263 (2)/94 List of tolls and customs 1818.

¹⁶⁸ Report from Comm. on Poor Laws in Ireland HC 1836 [38], xxxi, 70 Appendix (E)

Dr Pococke in his tour of Ireland in 1752 visited Newport, which he described as a much older town than Westport. Newport had a market in frieze, yarn, stockings, corn and meat. Wine was imported and there was a trade in mussels.¹⁶⁹ James McParland who gave details of the four fairs held in Newport in 1802 was rather disparaging about Newport saying that the only right that they can claim to the name town was merely being the place where fairs are held. Whereas in an advertisement for the sale of a farm of land in Gortawarla in 1852, Newport and Westport were both described as excellent market and seaport towns.¹⁷⁰

Prices in the market and items for sale were not that different than in the competing market town of Westport where the following prices were obtained in December 1827, oats cwt 5s 4d to 5s 6d, wheat cwt 8s 8d to 9s 2d, barley cwt 5s 6d to 5s 8d, oatmeal cwt 11s to 12s, potatoes per stone 1d to 1 ½ d, first flour per cwt 16s, 2nd 13s, 3rd 10s. Bran was sold for 4s cwt, beef per lb. 2d to 3d, mutton per lb. 2 ½ to 3 ½ d, pork per lb. 3d, hides per stone 4s 8d to 5s, tallow per stone 4s to 5s, salt butter per lb. 5 ½ d to 6d, fresh butter 8d to 9d, Hay made 1s per cwt, straw per cwt 10d to 1s, linen per yard 7d to 9d, yarn per hank 5d to 6d, whiskey per old gallon 5s 6d to 6s, wool per stone 12s to 12s 6d and salmon per pound 7d to 8d. Freight to Liverpool or the Clyde was 18s to 20s per ton.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ Richard Pococke, Richard Pococke's Irish tours (Dublin, 1995) p.83

¹⁷⁰ James McParland .Statistical survey of County Mayo (Dublin, 1802) p 85 ; Mayo Constitution 11 January 1828.

¹⁷¹ Mayo Constitution 8 January 1852.

<u>Markets</u>		<u>Fairs</u>	
Flour per bag	6d	A milch cow and calf	6d
Oatmeal per cwt	3 ½d	Beeves or dry cows each	5d
Potatoes per load	2d	Horses each	5d
Wheat per cwt	2d	Salt per load	2d
Barley per cwt	1 ½d	Sheep and lamb	2d
Bere per cwt	1 ½d	Goat each	1d
Oats per cwt	1d	Calves each	2d
Beef per carcass , hide and tallow the tongue	4d	Cabbins each	12d
Mutton do	2d	Butchers stall	6d
Pork do	3d	Each carload of hay or straw	4d
Veal do	1d	Each horse load of hay or straw	2d
Fish per load	1d	Large covered standings each	12d
Large fish per dozen	2d	Small covered standings each	4d
Kelp per cwt cranage	1d	A car load of any commodity	8d
Oil per barrel	4d	Every pack of wool	12d
Flannels per 20 yds	5d	Every 20lb weight of pound or tow yam	2d
Frize per 20 yds.	5d		
Country hides for cranage and customs	2d		
Calf skins per dozen	6d		
Large covered standings each	3d		
Small covered standings each	2d		
Stockings per dozen	3d		
Butter per crock 40lb weight	3d		
Butter per crock 60lb weight	4 ½d		
Rabbit skins per doz.	3d		
A car load of any commodity	4d		
A small bushel or bag with any commodity	1d		

Figure 7 Schedule of the Tolls and Customs and Cranage levied within the
Manor of Newport 1818

VI

For the economy to operate effectively a transport system was required and also a system of local administration had to regulate economic activity. In 1855 John F Bourke of Westport was barony cess collector for Burrishoole South and Claudius Nixon of Newport for Burrishoole North.¹⁷² The county cess among other things was used to fund road building in the county and in 1854 Sir Richard O'Donel was the foreman of the grand jury, which had responsibility for allocating this money. Twenty eight thousand seven hundred perches of roadworks were to be carried out and for this a rate of 8 ¼ d in the pound was struck. £164 2s 6d was due on the barony of Burrishoole and there was a total arrears for the county of £5,027. As well as roads, at the spring meeting of the grand jury Sir Richard O'Donel stated that a petition was laid before him for presentation to both houses of parliament praying that the Grand Junction Railway Bill would receive approval. The grand jury unanimously agreed to support the petition.¹⁷³

Roadworks and other construction were carried out in the barony under the direction of the grand jury for the barony that also appointed high constables and sub-constables.¹⁷⁴ A very considerable road network had been created in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Mayo linking many settlements and allowing the market economy to penetrate the region.¹⁷⁵ The sub-constable was responsible for ensuring that this work was carried out in his area and sometimes he was not reimbursed. Another

¹⁷² Thoms Directory 1855.

¹⁷³ Mayo Constitution 7 February 1854.

¹⁷⁴ Proceedings of the Grand Jury for County Mayo 1720 –1780. Castlebar Library. ; NLI, PC263 (2)/62 Improvements at Newport 31/3/43 to 31/1/1844. ; PC263 (3)/40 Diary of days worked by labourers on construction of Castlebar to Glenisland road with number of horses used etc.

¹⁷⁵ W. H. Crawford, 'Development of the County Mayo Economy, 1700 – 1850' in R. Gillespie and G. Moran 'A Various country' Essays in Mayo History 1500 – 1900 (Westport ,1987) p. 67

function of the subconstable, who in 1815 was Patrick Gibbons, who collected the Spring County Cess for the barony, which amounted to £1434, part of which, was to be used to pay for these roadworks. The cost of road repairs averaged 6s per perch and Cess was only payable by the more substantial landholders whose valuation was greater than £4. Patrick Gibbons as well as being the subconstable was also a merchant and had supplied Connel O'Donel, the brother of Sir Neal the younger, who was the High constable of the Barony with hay and port wine. When Patrick Gibbons failed to deliver to him all the County Cess that he had collected Connel O'Donel deducted this amount from his provisions bill.¹⁷⁶

Newport as the seat of the major landlord in the barony of Burrishoole was also where the military and police barracks were located. The report from the commissioners on poor laws in Ireland had stated that there was some disturbance in the area of Newport in the early 1830s associated with increases in rent.¹⁷⁷ The marquis of Sligo writing to O'Donel in 1832 informs him that thirty soldiers will be sent to Newport to a half billet station. This arose from an attack on Nowlan's house in Rockfleet and there was also a threatening letter from 'Captain North', a nom de plume for local rebels, about Clendenning. The marquis was suspicious that the Catholic parish priest Father Hughes was encouraging the unrest as he had heard that the priest had told one of the process servers never to serve a process without telling him about it. By January 1833 the situation had disimproved and Sir Richard, who was sheriff of the county at the time, wrote to the lord lieutenant advising him not to order the sheriff to levy directly for church cess in Ballycroy as it would bring the whole district already much disturbed into a state near to rebellion. The marquis of Sligo however felt that the military should

¹⁷⁶ NLI, PC263(1)/72 Money owed to Pat Gibbons by Connel O'Donel for repair to roads 1825

¹⁷⁷ Report from Commissioners on Poor Laws in Ireland HC (1836) xxxii supplement to Appendix p. 19

be used to enforce the collection and the lord lieutenant agreed with the marquis. Later that month an attack occurred on the house of one of Sir Richard's tenants Martin Limerick and four men were arrested. Limerick had been a waterguardsman for seven years and a position in the admiralty was obtained for him so as he could leave Newport with his family.¹⁷⁸ The duties of the military were maintaining law and order. This often involved assisting officers of excise in seizure of illicit stills. This was vigorously pursued between 1813 and 1816 when fifty-five troops were stationed in Newport consisting of one captain, one subaltern, three sergeants and fifty enlisted men. This complement was only exceeded in Mayo by Ballina, where there were fifty two enlisted men. The troops stationed in Newport were generally part of a regiment that had been sent to Mayo and was stationed in Castlebar, Westport, Newport, Foxford, Ballina, Dunmore, Ballaghderreen, Ballycastle, Claremorris, Crossmolina and Killala.¹⁷⁹ In 1828 following the election of Daniel O'Connell in Clare disturbances took place in the town of Newport between the troops and the local population, under the guidance of the parish priest Father Hughes, celebrating the election. The following Saturday the commander of the troops, Lieut. O'Halloran of the 69th Regiment, acted as second to J Stewart Esq. in a duel with Richard O'Donel who was assisted by Lieut. Hyland of the Royal Navy. The duel, which took place on an island in Clew Bay, arose from an argument about the election. Luckily neither combatant was injured. There was large amount of lawlessness in the county at the time and in the Spring Assizes in 1828 the following prisoners were tried, seven for cattle stealing, twelve for murder, six for rape,

¹⁷⁸ NLI, PC 265(1)/58 letter from Sir R O'Donel requesting troops to be sent to Newport 1832; PC 265(1)/59 letter from Lord Sligo to Sir R O'Donel stating that 30 troops to be sent to Newport 1832; PC265(1)/62 Letter from Sir Richard O'Donel 1833 to the Lord Lieutenant advising not to be too severe in trying to collect county cess in Ballycroy as this could lead to disturbance in the area; PC265(1)/63 Letters from Sir Richard O'Donel to E G Stanley and his reply as to an attack on the house of Martin Limerick and possibility of obtaining for him a position in the Admiralty.

¹⁷⁹ Mayo Constitution March 31 1828

twenty one for larceny, six for highway robbery, and seven for sheep stealing. Also charged were four for passing base coin, one for assaulting a post boy with intention of robbing the mail, four for burglary and robbery, one for infanticide, one for shooting at with intent to kill and one for forging the names of two magistrates to a certain document. One of those tried for sheep stealing was Anthony Reilly who was indicted for feloniously stealing three sheep the property of Captain Stuart of Newport and he was found not guilty.¹⁸⁰ In some cases the forces of law and order came off second best and a case was reported where three policemen that had gone to make an arrest under a magistrates warrant were viciously attacked by the neighbours of the man intended to be arrested.¹⁸¹ There are several letters among the correspondence requesting extra troops for the area.¹⁸² A letter from Pat Gibbons requesting that troops that have been withdrawn from the town should be rebilleted in a premises belonging to him¹⁸³ and there is also a reference made to a murder in Ballycroy.¹⁸⁴

Customs and Excise in the Newport area were involved in preventing smuggling and illegal importation of arms. During the Famine they investigated three incidents of plundering of cargoes of corn, two of which were destined for the Achill Missionary settlement of Reverend Edward Nangle. The Revenue Officers in 1845 were under the command of Captain John Nugent who lived in Seamount, Newport and Lieutenant John Newcombe.

¹⁸⁰ Mayo Constitution 6 March 1828

¹⁸¹ Mayo Constitution 28 April 1828

¹⁸² NLI, PC265(1)/58 Request for 30 troops to be stationed in Newport 1833 ; PC265(1)/59 Letter from Lord Sligo to Sir Richard O'Donel stating that 30 troops to be sent to Newport 1832.; PC265(1)/66 Letter from Lord Sligo to Sir Richard O'Donel Jan 28th 1859 arranging meeting to request more troops for the area.

¹⁸³ NLI, PC263(1)/70 Letter from Pat Gibbons to Major General Sir John Buchan requesting that troops return to Newport and be rebilleted in the premises belonging to Pat Gibbons 1783

¹⁸⁴ NLI, PC265(1)/75 Nov 1831 letter from Lord Sligo to Sir Richard O'Donel re: Ballycroy murder

They both reported on the extent of the potato famine in the region.¹⁸⁵

Outbreaks of Cholera in Newport are mentioned in two letters, one in 1832¹⁸⁶ and one in 1837.¹⁸⁷ Patrick McGreal had been providing medical care in Newport in 1831 and was living in Weavers Row, with his family which included two sons Myles and Jeremiah, in a house previously occupied by the Church of Ireland Rector, Rev Josiah Hern. He was paying a rent of £6 a year on a lease made in 1821.¹⁸⁸ But by 1832 he had moved his residence to Castlebar to take up a position as Surgeon and apothecary.¹⁸⁹ Sir Richard O'Donel contributed to the medical dispensaries in his estate. In 1844 he contributed £25 to the Newport dispensary, £10 10s to the Achill dispensary and £3 3s each to the Cong and Fairhill dispensaries. Others contributing to the Newport dispensary were Messrs Boileau Druggists, Marquis of Sligo who contributed five guineas, James T S Stuart and Rev Geo. R Gildea £3 12s 6d each, Connel O'Donel three guineas, Alex Clendenning, Col Knox , John Knox Esq., Neal Davis and William Gillespie two guineas each. Also contributing were Mr Hoyte, Mr Ivers and Sir Richard Palmer £2 each, and John Quinn, Geo. Clendenning Sr., Geo. Clendenning Jr., Dominick McLoughlin, Edward Malley, Mr Farrell, Rev Charles

¹⁸⁵ NA, Customs and Excise 1081 2/2 5 May 1840 Custom House London to Westport commending action of Westport in informing the Lord Lieutenant of the illegal importation of arms into Newport from the "Paragon" ;1081 5/1 5 January 1849 Custom House London to Westport . Report that two vessels from Keel carrying Indian Corn etc. for the Missionary Settlement at Achill Island had been plundered of their cargo ;1081 5/2 10 January 1849 Custom House London to Westport reply to Westport re plundering of Indian Corn etc. and measures to be taken .; 1081 5/3 14 February 1849 Custom House London to Westport Details of prosecution to be carried out against two vessels believed to have plundered a cargo of meal in Rossminna Sound. ; 1081 14/39 30 March 1850 Custom House London to Westport Table of alterations to be made in the Coast Guard force in the Westport district .

¹⁸⁶ NLI, PC263(1)/74 Letter to Dr McGreal from his nephew concerning Cholera in Newport 1832

¹⁸⁷ NLI, PC263(3)/57 Letter from Babs O'Donel Galway to Patt Gibbons re outbreak of Cholera 1837

¹⁸⁸ NLI, PC265(1)/17 Lease to Patrick McGreal for three lives 3rd April 1821

Wilson, William Nixon, James Hillis, Mr. T William, Mr. Swain and Rev Mr. Carman gave one guinea each. ¹⁹⁰

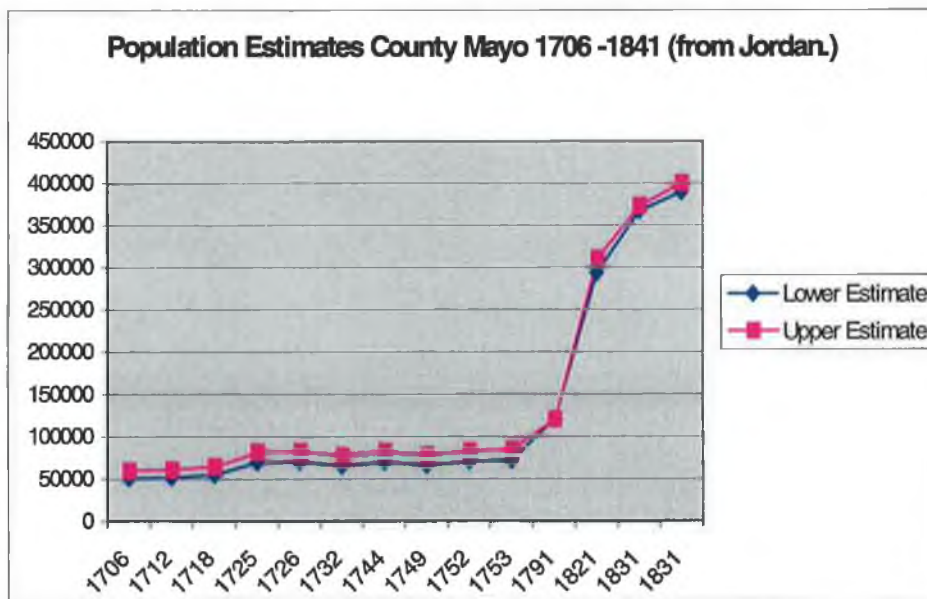


Figure 8 Population Estimates County Mayo 1706 – 1841.

¹⁸⁹ NLI, PC263(2)/23 Lease 22 September 1832 between Patrick McGreal of Castlebar Surgeon and apothecary and Alexander Clendenning of Ballinrobe

¹⁹⁰ NLI, MS 5742

VII

The population in the county had increased markedly in the years leading up to the Famine as shown by Jordan leading to stresses within the economic system.¹⁹¹ During the last half of the eighteenth century the landlords farmers and cottiers of County Mayo endured unpredictable weather, frequent credit crises and the vicissitudes of the Irish, British and Colonial markets to develop gradually a market oriented cash based economy that was remarkably vibrant by the end of the century. This was reflected in growing arrears of rent. For forty-six of the townlands where sufficient data was available the average arrears in rent increased from 0 per cent in 1805 to 40 per cent in 1816, 85 per cent in 1823 and 103 per cent in 1824. The amount of arrears varied between townlands and there were some townlands where the arrears were 299 per cent in 1816, 320 per cent in 1823 and 420 per cent in 1824. During this period when a decreasing amount of rent was making its way to the landlord's pocket the rents did not increase significantly. The combined rent of thirty townlands on the O'Donel estate edged upwards by just over 0.3 percent per annum between 1777 and 1788 but the combined rent of thirty five townlands rose 2.7 percent per annum during the period 1788 to 1805. A further increase of 3.5 percent per annum on sixty-eight townlands together took place between 1805 and 1814.¹⁹² The average rent of the forty-six townlands for 1816 and 1823 was 101 per cent of what it was in 1805 but there were a few townlands where rent increased considerably.

Periods of food shortage had occurred in the years before the Famine and the French traveller Alexis de Toqueville, in the journal of his tour around Ireland in 1835 tells of his visit to a priest in Newport. 'The priest's house was surrounded by starving

¹⁹¹ Donald E Jordan, Land and Popular Politics in Ireland, (Cambridge, 1994) p. 47

¹⁹² Desmond McCabe, 'Social order and the ghost of moral economy in Pre-Famine Mayo' in R Gillespie and G Moran (eds), 'A various country' essays in Mayo history 1500 – 1900 (Westport, 1987), p. 91

peasants awaiting the distribution of corn, which he had secured for their survival'.¹⁹³

The historian James S. Donnelly jr. writes of the west of Ireland 'there the appalling degree of destitution and the extremely small size of holdings combined in a doubly destructive assault on landlord incomes. This combination was at its worst in County Mayo'.¹⁹⁴ The loss of rents was devastating, in some cases tenants were two or three years in arrears and also as 75 per cent of leased land was valued at under £4 this meant that the poor rates on these lands fell to the landlords to pay.¹⁹⁵ The decline of the linen industry in the 1830s and the fall in crop prices, resulted in Mayo having a much higher share than average of insolvent proprietors whose estates were encumbered or bankrupt.¹⁹⁶ The marquis of Sligo depicted the state of insolvency when writing to the Chief Secretary for Ireland E G Stanley in January 1831:

All the gentry of Mayo are beggars, a state in which I fancy with few exceptions, are placed a great majority of my imprudent countrymen in this province. I happen to know that the estates of the gentry in this county are mortgaged or engaged for one million and a half of money.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Emmet Larkin (ed.) Alexis de Tocqueville's journey in Ireland July-August, 1835 (Dublin, 1990) pp130- 131.

¹⁹⁴ James S, Donnelly Jr.: 'Landlords and tenants' in W. E. Vaughan (ed.) A New History of Ireland. Ireland under the Union .1801-1870 (Oxford, 1989) v, p.336

¹⁹⁵ Sean P McManamon, 'Landlords and evictions during the Great Famine.' in Cathair na Mart , xviii (1998) p125

¹⁹⁶ Cormac Ó Gráda. 'Poverty, population and agriculture 1801-1845' in W.E. Vaughan (ed) A New History of Ireland. Ireland under the Union .1801-1870 (Oxford, 1989) v, p. 108 – 36

¹⁹⁷ Lord Sligo to E.G. Stanley Jan. 1831, N.A., S.P.O., Official Papers, 1831, 973/81 cited in Desmond McCabe, 'Social order and the ghost of moral economy in Pre-Famine Mayo' in R Gillespie and G Moran (eds), 'A various country' essays in Mayo history 1500 – 1900 (Westport, 1987), p. 109

If this were true the debt would have exceeded the rental of the county by 300 per cent.¹⁹⁸

Even without the onset of potato blight a disaster was waiting to happen in the area. The population had increased dramatically in the previous fifty years in response to an improvement in the economy, the expansion of the linen industry and a greater demand and therefore higher prices for agricultural produce because of the Napoleonic Wars. A sudden downturn in the economy due to the ending of the war, the decline of the linen industry, due to increased industrialisation in the textile industry in England and the north eastern counties of Ireland, left a large population without the land resources to feed itself. The landlords because of their encumbered financial circumstances were unable to come to the assistance of their tenantry.

¹⁹⁸ Desmond McCabe, 'Social order and the ghost of moral economy in Pre-Famine Mayo' in R Gillespie and G Moran (eds), 'A various country' essays in Mayo history 1500 – 1900 (Westport, 1987), p. 91

Chapter 3

“a little thing will help a poor man”

THE O'DONEL ESTATE

LANDLORD TENANT RELATIONS

The first chapter has examined the origin growth and decline of the O'Donel estate from the purchase of the estate in 1788. The main factors in the decline were financial involving extensive borrowing and settlements made on marriages of daughters and to younger sons of the family. This was not matched by a corresponding growth in income over time. The second chapter concentrated on the various factors at work in the Newport estate, and specifically that part in the parish of Burrishoole, which limited the growth in income resulting in the family having to sell most of the estate. This chapter examines the relationships between the O'Donel family and the tenants. As the Great Famine occurred towards the end of the O'Donel's tenure as a major landlord and undoubtedly contributed to their eventual impossible financial position, this chapter also uses the Famine as a case study of what happens when relations between landlord and tenant were placed under stress. How the tenants of the O'Donel estate fared in comparison with those of other landlords is also looked at. Included in this is an examination of the increase of arrears of rent and the eventual outcome of those tenants in severe arrears. Also the decline in population is compared with that of tenants of other landlords in the locality. Co-operation with various relief agencies, particularly the Central Relief Committee organised by the Society of Friends or Quakers, was very

important in alleviating distress at this time. The workings of the two Poor Law Unions active in the area, initially the Westport Union and later the Newport Union, and Sir Richard O'Donel's involvement in them is also examined. The impact of the Famine on landlord tenant relations is looked at and what tenants had power during this period. The change in land leasing patterns from multiple tenants to single tenants is also examined. The role of evictions in population dynamics is also considered.

I

A total of 171 leases were issued during the period of this study. There were sixty eight leases in the town, 100 for the rural areas of the estate and three covering both town and rural areas. It is possible that there may have been other leases issued that are no longer present in the O'Donel papers. These were examined to see if there was any trend in shortening the length of leases, the townlands they were issued in and the possible religious affiliation of the lessees.

A lot can be learnt from these leases as to where different people lived in the town of Newport and surrounding areas, previous occupants of those premises and relationships to other inhabitants from the lives given in the leases. In comparing the leases with rent rolls it will be noted that a higher proportion of non-native Irish surnames occur in the leases. Leases were often granted to encourage tradesmen and shopkeepers to settle in the town of Newport and this is reflected in the large number of leases in Weavers Row and Market Street.¹⁹⁹ Charges by solicitors acting for the O'Donel family in drawing up these leases were quite costly²⁰⁰ and most of the land on the estate was therefore let without leases on a year to year basis. The concentration of leases is greater in some parts of the town and some townlands. A good picture of the

¹⁹⁹ W. H. Crawford, 'Development of the County Mayo Economy, 1700 – 1850' in R. Gillespie and G. Moran *'A Various country' Essays in Mayo History 1500 – 1900* (Westport, 1987) p. 67

²⁰⁰ NLI, PC263(2)/87 Lawyers costs for several deeds for Sir Neal O'Donel 1812

changing land and property ownership can be seen for the townland of Melcomb/Seamount where five leases are recorded and Weavers Row where there are fourteen leases.

Some tenants names did not appear on the leases as the land was let in common under the rundale system described in the previous chapter. There were none of these joint leases made after 1820 although of the total of 171 leases, fifty eight were made after 1820. There were thirty two leases in common made in different townlands including Carrickaneady, Carrowbeg, Derryclydagh, Derrykell East, Derrylahan, Derrylohan, Doontrusk, Graffy, Kilbride, Knockbreaga, Knockmeel, Letterkeen, Letterlough, Roigh, Rostrunk, Shrafarnagh and Yellow wire. There were two leases in common in Comploon, Derrygarrif, Rossinrubble, Shanballyhue and Shraughmore and five in Knockatinaweel. Of these thirty-two leases in common, 56 per cent were for one life, 7 per cent for two lives and 37 per cent for three lives. After 1800 the lease was more likely to be for one life than for three. This contrasts with the urban leases where 7 per cent were for one life, 4 per cent for two lives, 40 per cent for three lives, 25 per cent for ever and 24 per cent for a specified number of years. There were sixteen leases in the town before 1800, seven of these were for ever, whereas of the fifty two made after 1800, twenty seven were for three lives and only ten for ever. The rural leases to one tenant only were 35 per cent for one life, 8.5 per cent for two lives, 25 per cent for three lives, 11 per cent for ever and 20 per cent for a term of years. There were more leases for three lives after 1800 than before in the rural area of the estate.

As would be expected evictions do not figure highly in the O'Donel papers. There are only two evictions mentioned one in 1788²⁰¹ of McNamara a tenant of Sir

²⁰¹ NLI, PC265(3)/21 1788 ejectment McNamara

Neal O'Donel and the second in 1853 of Bernard McCarroll of Newport Pratt a tenant of Mary Clynes of Belmullet.²⁰² Sir Neal O'Donel in retaining material in his records seems more concerned with the effect evictions had on his income. In 1793 when he brought ejectment proceedings for non-payment of rent on the Cong estate and was ordered by the court to reinstate the tenants who still did not pay rent but for which he was liable for tithes.²⁰³ There were also several decrees for non-payment of rent, which did not necessarily result in eviction.²⁰⁴ There was a decree for non-payment of rent by Jeremiah Canning and others of Comploon in 1830. In 1837 there was no sign of any Canning in Comploon. The tenants in Comploon were Lunn, Roarke, Rooney, O'Donnell and Moran and an entry in the rent roll showed the tenant in Comploon Canning to be James Lunn.²⁰⁵ As we have seen before payments of £20 14s 9d were made to the solicitor Neil Davis in 1843 by Sir Richard O'Donel for decrees, ejectments and dismiss.²⁰⁶ Other payments totalling £44 2s were made to other solicitors and to witnesses' expenses at the Quarter sessions.²⁰⁷ He also paid a further £6 10s 9d for miscellaneous expenses for labourers assisting the sheriff in evictions in Mulranny and Ballycroy, paying for valuation of land after evictions, transport of prisoners to Castlebar, printing notices to quit and serving Chancery notices. He also employed

²⁰² NLI, PC264(1)/45 1853 Notice to quit Bernard McCarroll of Newport Pratt from Mary Clynes of Belmullet

²⁰³ NLI, PC265(3)/24 1793 Sir Neal O'Donel brought ejectment for non-payment of rent on Cong estate and was ordered by court to reinstate tenants but they still don't pay rent and he is liable for tithes . Seeking John Kirwan counsels advice as to his course of action

²⁰⁴ NLI, PC263(2)/56 Decree for non-payment of rent 1830 Comploon Jeremiah Canning and others ; PC263(1)/60 Civil Bill for rent due taken by Sir Richard A O'Donel against Peter Gibbons , Patt Gibbons jr , James Monaghan , Neal McManamon and Ann Morris houses and tenements on east side of Market St and parks on Barrack Hill.

²⁰⁵ NLI, MS 5742 Accounts O'Donel Estate and Relief Funds 1837-40

²⁰⁶ NLI, PC264(2)/28 Accounts of Sir Richard O'Donel for 1843- 1844 Affidavit of Alexander Clendenning in case of John O Hara and wife vs. Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel 1844

keepers to watch tenants stock that owed rent so that they would not sell their stock and crops and emigrate without settling their debts. In 1844 Sir Richard must have given up hope of ever making the estate profitable as he had paid a surveyor a years salary of £52 to survey the estate.²⁰⁸ On 23 June 1838 at Castlebar Quarter Sessions decrees were obtained for £122 5s 11d against thirty-one tenants for default of rent with £10 17s 0d in expenses. On October 25 1838 a further £98 13s 8d with £9 9s expenses was obtained against a further twenty-seven tenants.²⁰⁹ Arrears of rent had been occurring since but became more marked after 1820. In 1824 £8,524.11 was owed as arrears but only £5105 received as rent. Among the tenants owing the largest amount were Dodwell Browne in Glendahurk owing 420 per cent of his rent of £93 5s, Edmond Lavelle owing 332 per cent of his rent of £56 18s 5d in Shandrim and 254 per cent of his rent of £68 14s in Derrylahan, David Bourke owing 406 per cent of his rent of £35 5s in Lecarrow, Charles McEvelly owing 310 per cent of his rent of £42 14s in Kiltyroe, Patrick Cain owing 291 per cent of his rent of £44 17s in Shandrim. There were also two rents in common, Thomas Bourke and Co in Carragaun East owing 406 per cent of their rent of £35 5s 10d and Owen O Donel and Co of Rossclave owing 257 per cent of their rent of £49 12s.²¹⁰

The combined rent of thirty townlands on the O'Donel estate edged upwards by just over 0.3 per cent per annum between 1777 and 1788 but the combined rent of thirty five townlands rose 2.7 per cent per annum during the period 1788 to 1805. A further

²⁰⁷ NLI, PC264(2)/28 Accounts of Sir Richard O'Donel for 1843- 1844 Affidavit of Alexander Clendenning in case of John O Hara and wife vs. Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel 1844

²⁰⁸ NLI, PC264(2)/28 Accounts of Sir Richard O'Donel for 1843- 1844 Affidavit of Alexander Clendenning in case of John O Hara and wife vs. Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel 1844

²⁰⁹ NLI, MS 5742, Schedule of decrees obtained at Castlebar Quarter Sessions 23rd June 1838

²¹⁰ NLI, PC263(3)/38 Rental of Newport Estate for 1823.

increase of 3.5 per cent per annum on sixty-eight townlands together took place between 1805 and 1814.²¹¹

II

The tenant community on the O'Donel estate was a diverse body as regards their relationship with the landlords. We can reconstruct something of the lives of the better off among them by examining the lives of some of the leaseholders. An example of one of the leases from the barony of Burrishoole that are available in the O'Donel archive is

20th January 1796 Mrs Margaret Davis of town of Ballinrobe relict of Samuel Davis late of Newport Pratt and Sir Neal O'Donel one acre of land from the old mill and mill race towards the old Barracks twenty three perches and nine links from the old Mill towards the river the benefit of as much water as out of the old mill race as shall be sufficient for the use of the Tanyard. Five acres on the north side of the hill where the old barracks formerly stood with one acre of bog, one plott in Weavers Row and one house and garden near the salmon box with one acre of bog formerly in the possession of William Webster. Twenty one acres of Camcloone Knockcarrowbeg bounded on the east with Derrykell on the south with the river on the west with Catherine Reilly's hill and in the north side with the Drum belonging to Camcloone with a piece of ground thirty feet at the front and fifty feet deep over the rock by the old ditch at the back of the spott where the old mansion house formerly stood in the south side of the river in Newport for lives of John Davis son of Samuel Davis and said Margaret Davis Henry Davis of town of Newport Pratt and Joseph Lambert of Brookhill in said county or 17 ½ years £37.²¹²

Further information about the Davis family was found on examination of the leases and other documents in the O'Donel papers. The tanyard, where the hides that had been obtained from dead animals and animals slaughtered for meat were tanned to make leather, had been in the possession of the Davis family since at least 1730 when

²¹¹ Desmond McCabe, 'Social order and the ghost of moral economy in Pre-Famine Mayo' in R Gillespie and G Moran (eds), *'A various country' essays in Mayo history 1500 – 1900* (Westport, 1987), p. 91

²¹² NLI, PC265(3)/9

Thomas Medicott made a lease with John Davis of Newport, tanner for 'one acre from the Old Mill Race board of the Barracks twenty three foot and nine links from the Old Mill Race towards the river, the benefit of as much water out of the Mill Race as shall be sufficient for use of the tan yard.'²¹³ Twenty years later Thomas Medicott's son, Thomas John made a lease of the same piece of land to Samuel Davis of Newport, son of John Davis, who was now described as a merchant. At this time Samuel Davis was building a new house on this piece of land and his brother Henry was one of the three lives specified in the lease as also was William Davis son of Stephen Davis of Newport, who may have been another brother.²¹⁴ Stephen had made a lease in 1756 with Thomas John Medicott for two plots in Medicott Street and seventy two acres in Mullaun.²¹⁵ His son John had taken out a further lease on the same land in 1790 at an annual rent of £9 2s 11d for two lives that of his two sons, John and William.²¹⁶ William died between 1790 and 1801 when the lease was remade for the same rent with the substitution with another son of John Davis called Stephen.²¹⁷ The Davis family were increasing in stature in the parish and in 1788 were renting the Newport fishery for fifteen guineas per annum,²¹⁸ but were finding it hard to pay their debts in the early part of the nineteenth century and in 1814, Mr John Davis of Mullaun owed £19 in arrears of Cess or Money due Patk Gibbons for Summer Cess in Burrishoole Parish.²¹⁹

²¹³ Registry of Deeds, Book 71 Page 135 Deed 49535

²¹⁴ Registry of Deeds, Book 146 Page 515 Deed 98610

²¹⁵ NLI, PC263(1)/8

²¹⁶ NLI, PC263(1)/9

²¹⁷ NLI, MS 5738 Rent Roll of O'Donel Estate.

²¹⁸ NLI, MS 5736 Rent Roll of O'Donel Estate

²¹⁹ NLI, PC263(1)/62 Arrears of Cess due Patk Gibbons for Summer Cess 1814 Burrishoole Parish

From the first lease mentioned we know that Samuel's widow was Margaret and she had moved to Ballinrobe and her son also named John had taken over the running of the tanyard. By 1823 the Davis family had got out of the tannery business and a lease was made to Anthony O'Donel of the Tanyard House for £15 for three lives, one of which was George Davis son of Richard Davis revenue officer.²²⁰ This Richard who was living in Kilbride²²¹ and was a son of Stephen's had been a member of the yeomanry in 1798 and had been compensated £20 for his horse having been stolen in Castlebar. His brother Hugh also had his horse stolen but it was not as valuable and he only received £11 7s 6d in compensation.²²² Richard Davis was a witness for the prosecution in the court martial of Captain James Moore O'Donel after 1798. He testified that a rebel called James Gordon said that Captain O'Donel had spent the six weeks before the French landed at Killala going from one corps of United Irishmen to the next telling them that they would soon be relieved.²²³

The family decided that there were easier ways of making a living than taking skins off dead animals and tanning them, a most unpleasant process and decided to advance in the world by educating their children. Neal became a solicitor and James a doctor. Between 1839 and 1841 Neal Davis had subscribed two guineas each year towards the running of the Newport Dispensary. Sir Richard O'Donel had paid him £2 15s 6d on January 28 1839 for notices to quit and a further £2 8s 6d on the same date

²²⁰ NLI, PC263(1)/25

²²¹ NLI, MS 5738 Rent Roll of O'Donel Estate

²²² Rev E Dean MacHale, 'List of persons who have suffered losses in their property in the County of Mayo, and who has given in their claims on or before the 6th April 1799, to the Commissioners for inquiring into the losses sustained by such of his Majesty's loyal subjects as have suffered in their property by the rebellion.' in North Mayo Historical Journal ii,(1988)p. 21

²²³ P Mallowney & J Geraty, 'O'Donels & family tree.' in Back the Road, Journal of Newport Historical Society i. (1996) p12.

for ejectments ²²⁴ and in 1843 he was paid a total of £20 14s 9d by Sir Richard for decrees ejectments and dismiss. ²²⁵ He was also a witness along with Rev George Robert Gildea and J Flanagan to the will of Connel O'Donel, brother of Sir Neal the elder published in 1840 and along with Matilda Ivers to a codicil to the same will. ²²⁶

Neil was not the first member of the Davis family to enter the legal profession. William Davis had drawn up the rent roll for John McLaughlin's estate in the parish of Burrishoole in 1777 ²²⁷ and in 1802 he was acting as solicitor for Sir Neal O'Donel from his office at 41 Bride Street, Dublin. ²²⁸

James Davis became a doctor and was appointed to the Newport Dispensary. He was paid £30 on August 5 1839, £15 12s of this came from receipts of sales from the dispensary. This was probably a twice-yearly payment as the doctor in the workhouse in Westport was paid an annual salary of £50 in 1846. At a meeting of the Poor Law Union Guardians of the Westport Union on 18 November 1840 Dr Davis was appointed Medical officer of the Union for Newport under the Act to extend the practice of vaccination against smallpox. He was paid 1s per head for each successful vaccination up to 200 then 6d per head. ²²⁹ In 1859 he was Dispensary doctor for Ballycroy, Newport and the workhouse ²³⁰ and was renting land in Carrabaun. ²³¹ Other members

²²⁴ NLI, MS 5742 Accounts O'Donel Estate and Relief Funds 1837-40

²²⁵ NLI, PC264(2)/28 Accounts of Sir Richard O'Donel for 1843- 1844 Affidavit of Alexander Clendenning in case of John O Hara and wife vs. Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel 1844

²²⁶ NA, LEC 1622 ff143 T19815 Plain copy Will and Codicil of Connel O'Donel of Seamount County Mayo Esq. last signed 13 Oct 1840.

²²⁷ NLI, MS 5821 Rent Roll of Medlicott Estate.

²²⁸ NLI, PC263(2)/60 Judgement stating James Moore left £1000 to his granddaughter Mary O'Donel otherwise Coane wife of Sir Neal O'Donel

²²⁹ NLI, MS 14309 Minutes of the Westport Union Board of Guardians 1840

²³⁰ J.F. Quinn, 'Members of Newport Poor Law Union 1859' in J.F. Quinn, History Of Mayo. (4 vols., Ballina, 1993), ii, p. 108.; Slaters Directory 1846 cited in J.F. Quinn, History Of Mayo. (4 vols., Ballina, 1993), ii, p. 109.

of the family did not enter the professions, William Davis was working for the O'Donel's and was paid a weekly salary of 5s and an allowance of 2s 6d, a very large sum at the time. He was also paid 15s for repair of his boots.²³² In 1839 John Davis received £2 12s 6d and £4 17s 8d for road making.²³³

A second example of upward mobility was that of John Nixon. His lease of 1797 stipulated that

in consideration of five shillings, the new dwelling house situate in Market Street, Newport, bounded in the east by a garden now in the possession of James Carman, on west by Market Street, on the north by James Carman's holding and on the south by houses now tenanted by James Naylor, Thomas Kelly and John Loughnan. With full and free liberty now and at all times thereafter of passing and repassing to the rear or yard through the present passage thereto between the said Loughnan's and John McGuire's houses. All that the two new houses in Weavers Row now tenanted by the said Kelly and Loughnan bounded on the East by the aforementioned passage, on the west by said Naylor's house on the north by the aforesaid yard and offices and on the south by the Weavers Row together with the garden or plot of land to the said dwelling house belonging bounded on the east by Reverend Josiah Hern's house on the west by the aforementioned James Carman's garden and Hugh McGuire's house on the North by Nathaniel O'Donel's garden and on the south by Weavers Row aforesaid at £8 annual rent for ever .²³⁴

A year later John Nixon had deserted from the Newport cavalry at the time of the rebellion but the following year had returned to duty as was said in evidence at the Court martial of James Moore O'Donel. At about the same time there were three other

²³¹ NLI, MS 5740 Rent Roll of O'Donel Estate.

²³² NLI, MS 5742 Accounts O'Donel Estate and Relief Funds 1837-40

²³³ NLI, MS 5742 Accounts O'Donel Estate and Relief Funds 1837-40

²³⁴ NLI, PC264(1)/25

Nixon families in the parish. In 1777 James Nixon was renting land in Inishower at £4 and William Nixon, his brother was renting a house in Weavers Row for £2 5s 6d.²³⁵ In 1800 William Nixon made over to Connel O'Donel his lease in Weavers Row. The rent of this property, which was adjoining a house already owned by Connel O'Donel, increased from the £2 5s 6d that Nixon was paying to Medicott to £12 10s 3d due to the fact that William Nixon had built a house on it.

In 1788 James Nixon was renting land in Burrishoole for £2 2s and in 1805 his rent in Burrishoole and Kiltarnet was £9 2s. In 1789 Claud Nixon was renting land in Inishower at £6 and was still renting this in 1805.²³⁶ Claud and James both grew flax on their land.²³⁷ John Nixon was paying £15 a year rent for his house in Market Street, now Main Street in 1807²³⁸ and two years previously had started renting land in Carrowbaun for £37 13s 6d. By 1811 John Nixon was also renting land in Comploon at £11 7s 6d and two plots in Market Street at a combined rent of £23. William Nixon was renting land near the new bridge at a rent of £3 8s 3d and a plot and a house on Weavers Row at a combined rent of £5 13s 9d.²³⁹ but was finding it hard to pay his debts as he owed Patrick Gibbons £1 in arrears of Cess or Money due for Summer Cess in Burrishoole parish in 1814.²⁴⁰ By 1816 arrears of rent were beginning to show up in the rent rolls. John owed 29 per cent of his rent, Claud 42 per cent, James 100 per cent and William had not paid any rent for three years on his property in Weavers Row.²⁴¹

²³⁵ NLI, MS 5737 James Moore's Accounts.

²³⁶ NLI, O'Donel Unindexed Papers 1805 rent roll

²³⁷ NLI, PC263(1)/68 An account of the arrears of flaxseed contained in the North Division of the Newport Estate

²³⁸ NLI, MS 5744 Rental of Newport Estate

²³⁹ NLI, O'Donel Unindexed Papers 1811 rent roll

²⁴⁰ NLI, PC263(1)/62 Arrears of Cess due Patk Gibbons for Summer Cess 1814 Burrishoole Parish

²⁴¹ NLI, O'Donel Unindexed Papers 1816 rent roll

All four owed a half years rent in 1818 and this practice known as the 'hanging gale' seemed to have gained acceptability in the estate which would have further added to the O'Donel's financial problems.²⁴² In 1819 another member of the family Thomas, who was a son of William, had entered the rent rolls and was renting more land in Kiltarnet at a rent of £4 the lease of which he had taken over from a family called Dira.²⁴³ By 1824 John Nixon was having problems paying his rent and owed a total of £72 17s 6d.²⁴⁴

There were five Nixons listed in the tithes applotments for the parish of Burrishoole, Huston in Barrackhill and Knocknadornogue, a Mr Nixon in Inishower, Thomas in Rosgibbleen and William in Kiltarnet.²⁴⁵ It is possible that the two entries for Huston Nixon were two different people as in two marriages of daughters of a Huston Nixon in one he is described as a shopkeeper and in the other as of Inishower Island. On 18 November 1847 Catherine Maria Nixon, daughter of Huston Nixon, shopkeeper was married to Francis O'Donnell a clerk from Knockmore in St Catherine's Church of Ireland Church. Among the witnesses were William Nixon and Claudius Nixon. On 22 January 1848 Elizabeth Nixon, daughter of Huston Nixon of Inishower Island married Henry Rose in the same church and Huston Nixon was a witness. Claudius Nixon may have been a clerk in the church as he was a witness to two other marriages the same year.²⁴⁶ Between 1839 and 1841 William Nixon subscribed £1

²⁴² NLI, O'Donel Unindexed Papers 1818 rent roll

²⁴³ NLI, O'Donel Unindexed Papers 1819 rent roll

²⁴⁴ NLI, O'Donel Unindexed Papers 1824 rent roll

²⁴⁵ NA, Tithes Applotment, Parish of Burrishoole.

²⁴⁶ Representative Church Body Library, Marriage Register Newport parish of Burrishoole (I) Aughaval Union, Westport Co. Mayo Diocese of Tuam 1845 -1932.

Is each year to Newport Dispensary²⁴⁷ and he was elected a Guardian for the Newport area of the Westport Poor Law Guardians for the year ending 25 March 1844 and was also re-elected the following year. Huston Nixon was elected as a Guardian for the Achill area.²⁴⁸ The Nixon family was closely associated with the O'Donels and following the death of Sir Neal O'Donel, the younger, his widow Lady Catherine O'Donel retired to Bath when her son Sir Richard succeeded to the estate. She was accompanied there by her maidservant Jane Nixon, who when Lady Catherine died in 1830 wrote to Lord Annesley, Lady Catherine's brother stating that Sir Richard had not paid off his mother's debts as promised.²⁴⁹

James Nixon was a surgeon and apothecary and a contemporary of Dr James Davis.²⁵⁰ In 1839 he was one of the Newport subscribers to Mathew Archdeacon's Legends of Connaught.²⁵¹ In 1849 Thomas Nixon was appointed Relieving Officer of the Newport poor Law Union for the Electoral Divisions of Achill, Doega, Slievemore, and Currane, Achill at a salary of £50 per annum.²⁵² In 1858 when Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel was deputy lieutenant for Mayo and magistrate, Claudius Nixon of Newport was Barony Cess collector for Burrishoole North.²⁵³

²⁴⁷ NLI, MS 5742 Accounts O'Donel Estate and Relief Funds 1837-40

²⁴⁸ NLI, MS 14309 Minute Book of the Westport Union

²⁴⁹ NLI, PC265(1)/76 Letter from Jane Nixon to Lord Annesley and from Lord Annesley to Sir Richard O'Donel that the jointure to Lady Catherine Annesley O'Donel then resident in Bath had not been paid for two years

²⁵⁰ Slaters Directory 1846 cited in J.F. Quinn, History Of Mayo, (4 vols., Ballina, 1993), ii, p. 109.

²⁵¹ J.F. Quinn, 'Subscribers to Mathew Archdeacon's "Legends of Connaught"', in J.F. Quinn, History Of Mayo, (4 vols., Ballina, 1993), i, p. 12.

²⁵² NLI, Newport Poor Law Union Minute Book, 15 October 1859-27 April 1850.

²⁵³ Thom's Directory 1858

In 1855 Huston Nixon was renting two properties in the town of Newport one at a rent of 5s and the other at £1 1s.²⁵⁴ In 1857 in Griffith's Valuation there were five Nixons in the parish, William Nixon in Inishower, there was also a William having a house in Georges Street in Newport but this might be the same man. Claudius held land in Kilbride, Huston in Castlebar Road in the town of Newport and Anne in Kiltarnet. Anne Nixon was renting two small cottages valued at 5s each to Anne Burke and Catherine Murray and two acres of land and a house to Thomas McDonnell.²⁵⁵ By 1858 the Nixons had moved out of Kiltarnet. Sir Richard O'Donel drew up a lease for twenty one years with John Bole of Castlebar for all the land of 'Kiltarnaght' that had been occupied by Francis Nixon widower containing in total 29 acres for £16.²⁵⁶

III

However not all the tenants on the O'Donel estate were as well off as the Davis and Nixon families. They lived a precarious existence and had to put up with crop failure and famine in many years prior to 1847. The Report from the Commissioners on Poor Laws in Ireland tells of the conditions present in West Mayo in 1836. In the parishes of Kilmina and Kilmaclasser, which had a total population of 12,444 the parish priest Myles Sheridan reported that cottages were generally let by persons having small holdings from the head landlord at a rent of ten shillings for a cabin without land. A cabin with half an acre cost from 30s to 40s depending on the quality of land. Rent was always paid in cash as distinct from in exchange for labour. Beds were made of straw and placed on poles supported at head and foot by stones to raise them from the damp of the floor, which was often wet due to the roof leaking because it was badly thatched.

²⁵⁴ NLI, MS 5740 Rental of Newport Estate March and Sept 1855

²⁵⁵ Griffiths Valuation of Tenements for the Union of Newport, County Mayo 1857, p66

²⁵⁶ NLI, PC263(2)/6

The economy of the parish had deteriorated markedly in the previous ten years. The linen trade and the herring fishery had both declined. One portion of these parishes on the sea coast and islands became victims to the failure of the fishery and the interior and eastern parts carrying on the weaving business suffered by the failure of the other. The condition of the people was generally peaceable except that in the winter of 1831 when tenants were calling for a reduction in rent. There were no public houses although there may have been a shebeen as Father Sheridan when stating that there were no public houses elucidated by saying he meant there were no licensed houses in the parish. Illicit distillation did not occur but there was a certain amount of illicit spirits sold.

Theobald Burke who was a J.P. testified as to the situation in the parish of Islandeady with a population of 8564. Here the usual rent of a cabin without land was from 10s to £1 and if there was land attached the charge could be as high as £2 per acre. Rent is paid in many cases in labour and in others in cash. The cabins were built of loose stones sometimes dashed and furniture consisted of two or three chairs and a large form upon which they ate. The bedding was very bad. Usually only one family lived in a cabin but there were three or four instances where more than one family resided in the cabin. During the Napoleonic wars the condition of the poor was prosperous, as the parish was an agricultural one. Since the end of the war their condition has deteriorated considerably, the population was increasing to a vast extent and the habit of subdividing their holdings with their grown families was the principal cause of their poverty. There had been little disturbance in the parish in the previous three years. There were about six public houses in this parish and illicit distilling had increased there for the previous four years due to the cheapness of grain.

Rev Charles Hargrove gave evidence on the parish of Kilmina with a population of 9,000. Poor people in this parish might have had a second cabin on their little farm or

set a small plot to build on for about £1 per cabin without ground and more if a small potato patch was also rented. Most of these cabins were most miserably furnished seldom with bedding and often without chair or table. The rent was chiefly paid in cash and seldom in exchange for labour. In the previous four years the condition of the poor was deteriorating every year and the population increasing rapidly. There were no licensed premises in this parish but there were several shebeens selling illegal spirits but these spirits were not made in the parish.

The standard of clothing in the barony was not good. One of the testators to the commission, Michael Luddane stated that he had borrowed the coat and breeches that he was wearing from a neighbour, as he was ashamed of his own old rags. The annual expenditure for clothes in the tenant families did not exceed £1. An entire suit was purchased for about £2 and with patching the coat was made to last at least four or five years. When at home the man was clothed in rags and was generally without shoes. New clothes were seldom bought for children who were clothed with their parents cast offs. On holydays and when attending fairs or markets the men were rarely without shoes and stockings, the women were generally without either but the children were always so. The men's coats were made of frieze woven by local weavers from yarn spun by women of the neighbourhood. The women wore cloaks of cloth made of the same material. For other articles of dress they made use of cotton goods. Many people did not have sufficient warm clothes to enable them to leave their cabins in winter. Most cabins did not have a bed and the occupants slept on straw on the floor, which was often damp and rapidly became bad and unwholesome. There were a great many cabins where the only furniture was a large chest, two or three stools and an iron pot to boil potatoes. When there was only one bed in the house it was occupied by the married couple and the younger children. If there was only one room in the cabin, the remainder of the

family male and female lay together on straw strewn on the clay floor. If there were two rooms, the females slept together in the inner room where the married couple laid. Sometimes when a man's son had got married and there was not a separate bit of land to give him or else that he could not afford all at once to build another cabin, the young couple and the old couple together with their grown up brothers and sisters had continued to all sleep together in the one room for a year and a half. Along the sea coast where the population was already crowded the cabins were of a very miserable description, frequently consisting of just one room of from twelve to eighteen feet long by about twelve broad, built of loose stones with a thatching of straw or potato stalks. To resist the violence of the westerly winds the inhabitants found it necessary to bind down the thatch with ropes composed of reeds and other materials. If these were not available large flagstones were used to hold down the roof. Inside the rafters were exposed and there was no other ceiling. The thatch was often so imperfect as not to exclude the rain which falling onto the floor always of clay contributed to the dirt and wretchedness of the inmates. Stone chimneys were seldom seen in these cabins and a hole was left in the roof to allow out the smoke from the fire. This hole was covered with a wickerwork basket as a partial guide to the smoke or else a stone was laid flat on the hole in the roof and the smoke exited through the door. When the cabins were built windows were usually installed, but when they were broken the glass was often not replaced and the gap closed with mud or stones. The use of privies was quite unknown even to the more comfortable occupiers of the mountains, the filth of the house was received and treasured in an excavation before the door which served the purpose of a dung pit. There were no sheds for fuel, probably because the way turf was stacked secured it against the atmosphere. The majority of the houses in the country had pigsties

but the pigs were not always confined to them, as it was deemed injudicious to exclude them from the warmth of the cabin.²⁵⁷

The people could all build their own cabins. Many raised the necessary wood out of the bogs. Others had to pay 5s or 6s for the door posts and rafters such was the price at which Lord Sligo's steward sold timber to Lord Sligo's tenants. Straw for the roof came to about 10s and a man thatched it in two days at 1s a day. One of the witnesses to the commission offered to build any number of ordinary cabins at £2 15s a piece. Mr Ellis, an architect, says he could not build one under £3. In some places people were charged from 10s to 15s a year for the liberty to erect a cabin. Where a rood of ground was attached to a cabin the rent was seldom if ever less than £1 to £1 5s. The landlord never built the cabin. The cabins of the occupiers of land were for the most part collected in villages situated towards the centre of the farm held in common without reference to the quality of land. The location of the village was originally determined by a spring or stream of water or with a view to being near a county road. These villages consisted of from three to twenty wretched cabins inhabited by petty tenants and their subtenants. There was no reason to suppose that the inhabitants of them of them were either better or worse conducted than those whose cabins were placed alone.²⁵⁸

The tenants stock was often seized for rent, and most of them compounded with the pound keeper and paid him 1s a year. Persons who paid this sum were not liable for any further demand from the pound keeper (who was generally also the driver) no matter what number of cattle should be driven. The expenses of the bailiffs are certain fixed sums and often quite disproportionate to the value of the property seized. The

²⁵⁷ Report from Commissioners on Poor Laws in Ireland HC 1836 xxxii, Appendix (E), p. 40

²⁵⁸ Report from Commissioners on Poor Laws in Ireland HC 1836 xxxii, Appendix (E), p. 41

tenants used turf and bogwood for fuel. John Kenny a small ordinary farmer testifying before the Poor Law Commission estimated that it took him about a fortnight to cut as much turf as his family required for a year, about fourteen days more was spent in drying and bringing it home. Woods were never robbed for fuel but they sometimes were for other purposes such as flail handles. There was no instance known of a landlord depriving a tenant of fuel as a punishment.²⁵⁹

In the years leading up to the Famine Father James Hughes was the parish priest of Newport. When he died in 1852 the Mayo Constitution which was the local conservative journal described him as ‘an ornament to his church, a living bulwark of liberty and a devoted and self devoting friend of the poor’. On leaving Newport he had been promoted to president of the deanery of Claremorris and parish priest of Kilcolman. The Evening Freeman in announcing his death commented ‘Many men have filled more conspicuous positions and been consequently more in the public eye to whom the title of ‘distinguished ‘ may therefore more fitly apply but if to labour sincerely and orderly and indefatigably in the cause of religion and charity and county in a province which long recognised his virtues and now mourns his loss confer distinction then is our lamented friend eminently well entitled to that character.’²⁶⁰

Alexis de Tocqueville on his tour round Ireland in 1835 had met Father Hughes in Newport. He described him as being a man of about fifty with an open and energetic face, a little stout with a strong accent. A little common and dressed in black with riding boots. He lived in a small white one story house facing the quay with three windows in front and covered with large white slates. A little stone peristyle was attached to the house and there was a small meadow at the side. When de Tocqueville and his

²⁵⁹ Report from Commissioners on Poor Laws in Ireland HC 1836 xxxii, Appendix (E), p. 41

²⁶⁰ Mayo Constitution 30 March 1852; Evening Freeman 25 March 1852.

companion arrived the priest was absent but there were fifty individuals seated around his door appearing to be waiting for him. The room where the travellers met Father Hughes was furnished with old but comfortable furniture and the walls were covered with coloured engravings of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, the Pope and one or two religious scenes. Among all these pictures were tacked political caricatures and on the table were several newspapers. Father Hughes was very active politically and had entered into several public debates with the protestant rector of Castlebar Rev William Baker Stoney. He also contributed widely to the letters columns of both local and national newspapers.²⁶¹ De Tocqueville had read letters Father Hughes had submitted to the newspapers and had come to ascertain for himself that conditions were as bad as the priest had stated. Following the publication of the letters donations of £340 had been sent and the crowd waiting outside the door were hoping to receive some of this.²⁶²

A large supply of oatmeal had been purchased and a committee was set up of three Catholics and three protestants, to distribute this under the supervision of the priest. Most of the people waiting for the priest had not eaten since the previous day when they got their supply of oatmeal. Most of them were small farmers paying a rent. A partial failure of the potato harvest in 1834 resulted in a scarcity since March and those who had cows, sheep, and pigs have sold them in order to live and when they no longer had anything left to sell and were looking for relief. The committee had decided that the oatmeal should be sold at half cost price and then more bought rather than giving it away but they would not let those starve who had no means of purchasing. Because some members of the committee were not present in town the supplies could not be distributed until they returned. The priest when he addressed his congregation

²⁶¹ Freemans Journal (Dublin) 8,14,21,22,25,28 and 31 July 1835.

²⁶² Emmet Larkin (ed.), Alexis de Tocqueville's journey in Ireland July-August, 1835 (Dublin, 1990) p.129

outside his house spoke in a loud and animated voice and had a passionate interest for the people, but at the same time an air of firmness and command. Father Hughes who was accompanied by two priests from neighbouring parishes said that the state of society was intolerable and could not last.²⁶³

The main form of institutional relief in such periods of crisis was the poor Law system which had been established in 1836. When the Poor Law Unions were set up the whole of the Barony of Burrishoole and Ballycroy were included in the Poor Law Union of Westport. At the first meeting of the Board of Guardians on 20 August 1840 Joseph Burke Esq., Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, was present to help set up the Union. Among the Guardians elected were George Clendenning Esq., the marquis of Sligo, Sir Richard O'Donel Bart., Connel O'Donel Esq., Joseph A McDonnell Esq., Mr Patrick Gibbons and Dominick McLoughlin Esq. All of these had connections with Newport. Wardens appointed were Mr Thomas Garvan for Kilmeena, Mr John O'Donnell for Kilmaclasser, Mr Austin Hoban for Newport Mr Anthony Lavell for Achill and Mr Joseph Lenaghan for Ballycroy. At the next meeting on 18 November 1840 Medical Officers of the Union were appointed to extend the practice of vaccination against smallpox. Doctor Davis for Newport, Doctor Adams for Achill and Mr Durkin for Louisburgh. There was nobody appointed for Westport as Doctor Kearins the Medical Attendant at Westport Dispensary refused the terms offered. Sir Richard O'Donel, although elected as a Guardian was a very poor attendee at the meetings in the early years of the Union.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ Emmet Larkin (ed.), Alexis de Tocqueville's journey in Ireland July-August, 1835 (Dublin, 1990) p.129

²⁶⁴ NLI, MS 12705 Westport Union ledgers Oct 1840 – Sept 1847

On 26 November 1840, the poor law commissioners, JGS Lefevre, GC Lewis and George Nichols informed the guardians of the Westport union that a workhouse should be built within the union of Westport for the reception employment and relief of 1300 destitute poor persons men women and children properly classified. Initially the workhouse was to be built to accommodate 1000 inmates but it was never extended for its full complement of 1300. The commissioners estimated the cost of building and fitting out the workhouse would amount to £9800. The poor law commissioners directed the guardians of Westport to raise that amount as a poor rate on the rateable property in the union or to borrow the amount and pay off the principal and interest of the loan from the poor rate. William Thomas was appointed clerk of works to superintend the erection of the union workhouse at a salary of £2 2s 0d per week and Mr James Hearton was appointed to value all the rateable property in the union at a fee of £540 for eighteen months work. The board of guardians decided to raise this by requesting a loan from the exchequer loan commissioners for £10,000 to cover the costs of purchasing the site, building the workhouse, purchasing additional buildings, paying the clerk of works and other contingencies.

On Wednesday August 4 1841, George John, earl of Altamont attended by his brother James Browne, Colonel Charles Knox, and Joseph Burke Esq., Assistant Poor Law Commissioner laid the first stone of the workhouse. The following members of the board of guardians, Geo. Clendenning Esq. Major O O'Malley, J C Garvey, Capt. R M Haugh, Capt. J T S Stuart, Charles F Hynes, William Levingston, William Graham, Francis Woodhouse, Charles McDonnell and Dominick McLoughlin were also present. Sir Richard O'Donel may not have been a guardian at that time as the minutes announce he was elected the following May along with William Gillespie for Achill, Edward Malley and Dominick McLoughlin for Newport and John Currigan for Ballycroy. At the

same meeting that the results of the election were announced James Kean was appointed warden for Newport, Anthony Lavelle for Achill and Joseph Lenaghan for Ballycroy. At the meeting of 29 June 1842, Mr T H Burke was appointed medical attendant to the workhouse at an allowance of £50 year, Mr Henry Roe as master at an annual salary of £50, Mrs Julia O'Malley as matron at £25 a year and James Scott as porter at £10 a year. Mr Thomas resigned as clerk of works and was replaced by Mr James Davidson. By August 26 John Gibbons was supplying furniture for the workhouse for £227.²⁶⁵

After Mr Hearton had completed the valuation of the rateable property in the Union, it was decided at the guardians meeting on 28 September to impose a rate of ten pence in the pound on the electoral division number three comprising the parishes of Kilmaclasser Newport Achill and Ballycroy. However the county cess collectors declined the collection of rates and advertisements were made for competent persons for the collection of rent throughout the Union. Six pence in the pound was to be allowed for collecting the rate. On 10 October a letter was received from the poor law commissioners requesting the Westport board of guardians to appoint a number of justices of the peace as guardians. Among these was Captain James T S Stuart of Ardagh, Newport. Peter McGuire was appointed as rate collector for district number three.²⁶⁶

At this stage the workhouse was almost ready for the reception of paupers and the following items of clothing and bedding were purchased. William Woods supplied blankets at 1s 9d lb., frieze jackets at 4s 6d, frieze trousers 3s 10d, frieze waistcoats lined at back with calico and flannel 3s 10d, worsted caps for men 1s and worsted caps for boys at 10d. Patrick Cosgrove supplied linen sheets at 4s 11½d per pair, bannegan

²⁶⁵ NLI, MS 12705 Westport Union ledgers Oct 1840 – Sept 1847

²⁶⁶ NLI, MS 12705 Westport Union ledgers Oct 1840 – Sept 1847

trousers at 3s 2½d per pair lined all through with twilled swans down cotton, corduroy jackets and trousers 4s 9d, men's shoes at 1s 9d, boy's shoes at 1s 5d, linen shifts at 1s 5d, flannel petticoats, cotton bedgowns , girls frocks and women's caps all at 1s 10d. John Lavelle supplied rugs or coverlets at 2s and linsey woolsey petticoats 2s 2d. James Henry supplied bed ticks at 3s 9d and bolsters at 1s. Thomas McManamon supplied men's shoes at 4s 9d and boys for 3s 5d.²⁶⁷ Finally on November 16 1842 a letter was received from the poor law commissioners stating that the workhouse was fit for reception of paupers. But in such a poverty stricken area, the guardians were unable to collect the poor rate, in spite of enlisting the aid of the constabulary and even troops in their efforts, so the workhouse remained shut until the issue of a writ of mandamus compelled its opening in November 1845.²⁶⁸

On March 1 1843 Sir Richard A O'Donel was appointed chairman of the board of guardians. JTS Stuart of Ardagh, Newport was among the ex officio officers. Guardians elected were Edward Malley, Dominick McLoughlin, William Nixon and Austin Hoban for Newport, Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel and William Gillespie for Achill and William Lundy for Ballycroy. Peter McGuire had been reasonably successful in collecting rates, returning £29 2s 6d in December 1842, £66 10s in January 1843, £67 10s in March, £85 7s 6d. in April and £159 17s 6d in May. Even with this amount there was still £339 remaining uncollected. The following year the marquis of Sligo was again Chairman and Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel vice chairman. James Keane was appointed warden for Newport, Anthony Lavelle for Achill and John Currigan for Ballycroy. In 1844 Sir Richard was now elected for Newport rather than Achill. His fellow guardians in Newport were Edward Malley, Austin Hoban and William Nixon

²⁶⁷ NLI, MS 12705 Westport Union ledgers Oct 1840 – Sept 1847

²⁶⁸ John O'Connor, The workhouses of Ireland. (Dublin , 1995) p. 122.

while William Gillespie and Huston Nixon represented Achill. William Lundy was the guardian for Ballycroy.²⁶⁹

Newport Poor Law union was separated from the Westport Poor Law Union in 1849 when work on the construction of the workhouse costing £5965 and having accommodation for five hundred inmates was commenced.²⁷⁰ It had a valuation of £8159 and was divided into ten electoral divisions but it was not until 1852 however that the workhouse was opened. The electoral divisions were represented by ten elected and eight ex officio guardians who met weekly at 11 a.m. on Mondays in the courthouse. Collection of poor rates was to be divided into three areas and advertisements were made in the local press for people to tender for the positions and stating the rate at which they would collect the new rates in the Union.²⁷¹ The three areas the poor law union was divided into and the rates assigned for this purpose were Achill consisting of the district electoral divisions of Achill and Curraun at 2s 11d in the £ and Doega and Slievemore at 1s 10½d in the £. Ballycroy was made up of Ballycroy north at 10½d in the £ and Ballycroy south and Newport west at 2s 11d in the £. Newport consisted of Newport east at 2s 6d in the £, Derrylohan at 1s 0½d in the £ and Shramore at 5d in the £.

The chairman of the Newport board of guardians in 1851 was the marquis of Sligo. Other guardians included Sir Richard A O'Donel and James Hillis Esq. Persons desirous of becoming clerk of the Union had been asked to attend but as there were no applicants for the situation of clerk in attendance, Dodwell Browne was appointed to act temporarily as Clerk, at a salary of one pound per week. Advertisements were inserted

²⁶⁹ NLI, MS 12705 Westport Union ledgers Oct 1840 – Sept 1847

²⁷⁰ John O'Connor, The workhouses of Ireland. (Dublin, 1995) p. 262.; NLI, MS 5739 Minutes of Newport Union

²⁷¹ Mayo Constitution 14 May 1852

in the local newspapers the Connacht Telegraph and the Mayo Constitution stating that applications for the appointment of Clerk would be considered at the courthouse at Newport on Monday 29 October 1851. Applications were to be accompanied by testaments of character and letters from two solvent persons stating their willingness to become sureties in a joint bond for the sum of £100. Salary was to be £50. Thomas Clarkson was appointed relieving officer for the electoral divisions of Newport East, Shramore, Derryloughan, and Newport West at a salary of £50 per annum. Thomas Nixon was appointed relieving officer of the electoral divisions of Achill, Dooega, Slievemore, and Currane, Achill at a salary of £50 and John Currigan was appointed relieving officer of the electoral divisions of Ballycroy North and Ballycroy South at a salary of £40.

John Bole was appointed distributor of provisions to the recipients of outdoor relief in Achill electoral division, Dooega electoral division, Slievemore electoral division and Curraun Achill electoral division at a remuneration of 5s per £10 of relief given. John Currigan was appointed distributor for Ballycroy north electoral division and Ballycroy south electoral division and William Walsh for Newport east electoral division, Shramore electoral division, Derryloughan electoral division and Newport west electoral division. The master of the Westport workhouse was asked to give a weekly census of each class of paupers from the Newport Poor Law union in the Westport workhouse. William Levingston agreed to supply one ton of rye meal at Westport Quay at the rate of £6 10s 0d per ton and Pat Grehan was to be paid 15s a ton to deliver this to Ballycroy. By June 1852 the board was advertising for suppliers to tender for the supply by the following September of upper shoe leather at per lb., sole

leather at per lb. and shoemakers findings by the cwt. They also wished to appoint a shoemaker to instruct the boys at the workhouse.²⁷²

In October a reporter of the Mayo Constitution was refused admission to a meeting of the Newport guardians. He was there to present tenders for advertisements as well as report but was made to wait outside for hours. He reported that the meeting of the guardians was the only one in the province that the press could not attend and would like to know the real supplier of milk to the workhouse who got 4d a gallon for skim milk and 2¾d for buttermilk. The latter being the price for new milk in Castlebar workhouse.²⁷³ Reading between the lines he seemed to be implying that one of the guardians was producing the milk but using someone else's name on the tender to supply it. It was decided at a meeting in October that it would be necessary to appoint an assistant matron. She was to be paid a salary of £8 per annum with apartment and rations of bread and milk and an allowance of four pounds per annum in lieu of meat tea and sugar.²⁷⁴

Even though Mr James Hearton had valued all the property in the Newport Union in 1842, when it had been part of the Westport Union, the guardians decided to revalue the property and advertised for a valuator at a fee of £20. He would have to sustain his valuation against all cases of appeal made and the revision must be completed within one month from the date of appointment. He would also need a number of solvent persons to give surety for him in a bond of the sum of £100.²⁷⁵

Following the valuation the rates were also increased. Dooega increased from 1s 10 ½d to 8s 6d in the £, Curraun from to 8s 8d in the £, Ballycroy North from 10 ½d to

²⁷² Mayo Constitution 25 June 1852

²⁷³ Mayo Constitution 29 October 1852

²⁷⁴ Mayo Constitution 26 October 1852

8s 4d in the £, Ballycroy South from 2s 11d to 7s 4d in the £ and Newport East from 2s 6d to 9s 8d in the £. Shramore increased from 5d to 9s 9d in the £, Derrylohan from 1s 0 ½d to 9s 4d in the £, Newport West from 2s 11d to 9s 4d in the £, Achill from to 9s 9d in the £ and Slievemore from 1s 10 ½d to 9s 2d in the £.²⁷⁶

The workhouse porter must have vacated his position in February 1854 as the guardians advertised for an applicant to fill the vacant position at a salary of £8 per annum with apartments and rations.²⁷⁷ An annual notice to tender to supply the workhouse was issued in September 1854 and articles required included whole flour at per ton, second flour at per ton, oatmeal at per ton, Indian meal at per ton, white bread at per 4lb loaf. Other supplies required included candles per lb., beef and mutton per lb., soap per cwt., turnips per cwt., cabbages per score and onions per stone. Items of clothing included calico white and grey per yard, check per yard, frieze per yard, shambray per yard and lindsey woolsey per yard. Straw per ton was also requested. This was probably used for bedding and lime per barrel might have been used for disinfection or if it was quicklime for burying the dead paupers that might have died of infectious diseases. Sweet oil per gallon was also required as well as turf per ton to be supplied from the following July. The guardians also slipped into their tender application wine per bottle. This may have been for their own entertainment at the weekly board meetings or for a night-cap for the master and the two matrons of the workhouse. Tenders were to be accompanied by samples where practicable.²⁷⁸

In 1855 the guardians were chairman Sir Richard Annesley O'Donel, vice chair Peter Denis Browne, Treenlaur, Newport. George C O'Donel of Newport House who

²⁷⁵ Mayo Constitution 16 November 1852

²⁷⁶ Mayo Constitution 10 January 1854

²⁷⁷ Mayo Constitution 7 February 1854

was nephew of Sir Richard was deputy vice chair. Dodwell Browne was still the returning officer. Patrick Gibbons had been appointed master of the workhouse and the matron was Jane Sharply. The two chaplains were Rev George Robert Gildea for the established church and Rev Mathew Flannelly for the Catholic church. The medical officer for the workhouse was James Davis who also covered the Newport Dispensary area. Samuel Laird was responsible for the Achill dispensary and the position in Ballycroy was vacant.²⁷⁹

In 1858 Sir Richard was still chairman William Pike had replaced Peter Denis Browne as vice chair and George C O'Donel, who was now known by the appellation of Sir George C O'Donel and lived at Melcomb House Newport was still deputy vice chairman.

IV

However though institutional relief was geared to deal with limited subsistence crises and the effect on relations between landlord and tenants, it was not in a position to deal with the sort of widespread shortage of food which occurred in 1847. The events of that year expose many of the weaknesses of the rural world of the landlord in response to the crisis.

James Hack Tuke a Quaker from York made a six-week tour of Ireland in 1847 and published a summary of his findings.²⁸⁰ This gave a good indication of the state of hardship and deprivation of the peasantry in West Mayo during the Famine. Some disparaging remarks were made about Sir Richard O'Donel which resulted in extensive correspondence between Sir Richard and the Central Relief Committee and probably

²⁷⁸ Mayo Constitution 1 September 1854

²⁷⁹ Thoms Directory (Dublin 1855)

would have resulted in legal proceedings being taken except for the intervention of Jonathan Pim one of the secretaries of the committee.

Tuke commented on the fact that the cultivated land in Connaught was so minutely divided that out of 46,000 farms, 44,000 were under fifteen acres and held by men too poor to employ any hired labourers. This would have been similar in the Barony of Burrishoole where 63 per cent of holdings were under fifteen acres in 1851. It must be remembered that the large amount of mountain grazing in this area resulted in holdings being larger than they were in east Mayo but the production per acre would be lower.²⁸¹ Tuke stated that the division of land in many parts of Ireland had been promoted by the landlords to increase their own political influence, the more tenants they had, the more votes they had to control in poor law and government elections.

The soil and climate of Connaught were ideally suited to growing flax and there had been a marked increase in the area grown in 1847, two thousand four hundred and ninety nine acres were grown in Mayo. Half of this had been grown in the neighbourhood of Newport an increase from fifty acres in 1844.

At the time of Tuke's visit to Newport, nearly 1,000 workers mainly women, were engaged by Sir Richard O'Donel, in harvesting the crops, the women earned 4d a day and the men 8d. He commented that this was a miserable wage but the workers were cheerful and industrious. Nearly half of the flax grown around Newport was in Sir Richard O'Donel's own hands, and he was purchasing the remainder from his tenants at the rate of £5 to £7 and in some cases £9 per acre. The seed cost about 25s and the two diggings and other expenses which are required cost a further 28s, to which must be added the cost of the extra quantity of manure after so exhausting a crop as flax. After

²⁸⁰ James H Tuke, Visit to Connaught in the autumn of 1847 a letter addressed to the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends Dublin. Second edition with notes of a subsequent visit to Erris (London, 1848)

these outlays there could be little left for the tenant to live upon. He felt that O'Donel was making a substantial personal profit from the flax grown by his tenants. This was one of the two accusations that O'Donel felt most aggrieved about, and in the second edition of his letter Tuke seems to make a partial apology stating that since the publication of the first edition Sir Richard O'Donel had informed him through a neutral friend, probably Jonathan Pim, that the flax grown upon his estate was sown too late in the season to produce an average crop. Also in the growth and purchase he was merely acting on behalf of a firm in Manchester with whom he had contracted to grow the crop. He was however unwilling to agree that the rent charged to O'Donel's tenants was as low as he stated. Another improvement by Sir Richard was the building of a flour and scutching mill at Newport. However mechanisation of the process where labour is so superabundant would seem counterproductive and better quality linen was produced in Belgium by hand rather than machine.

Reverend George Robert Gildea had established a small linen manufactory, which employed a considerable number of handloom weavers and nearly seven hundred women were engaged in hand scutching and spinning flax earning from 3s to 3s 6d a week. The Quakers were very strongly against gratuitous relief and instead gave the people a means to provide an income for themselves. This could be by providing vegetable seeds for which they could sell a crop and repay the cost of the seed or provision of clothing to the fishermen in Achill which could be repaid from the sale of their catch. The normal practice for tenants of west Mayo estates was to grow a cash crop, usually corn, to pay the rent and a potato patch to provide subsistence. When the potato crop failed the tenants did not want to part with the corn crop, as it might be their only means of subsistence. The landlords fearing they would not receive their rent and

²⁸¹ 1851 census

arrears unless the tenant sold the cash crop employed the driver or bailiff to 'cant' the small patches of oats or potatoes or placed keepers over the crop. The charge of guarding the crop was added to the tenants rent. Even the produce of seed, distributed by benevolent associations such as the Central Relief Committee had been totally used to pay the rent and these guarding charges and nothing was left to help sustain the landholder. At a time when the charity of the whole world had been turned towards the relief of this starving peasantry, Tuke found it unbelievable that the landlords would then evict these same tenants if they did not obtain their rent. He was particularly concerned when on his visit to Achill, he saw at what he described as 'the wretched fishing village of Kiel, belonging to Sir Richard O'Donel' an example of this where a few days previous a total of forty families had been ejected. On this second point of contention O'Donel was most annoyed with Tuke. In the second edition Tuke makes a retraction stating that he had been informed that O'Donel was only the nominal owner, this part of his property having been under the control of the Court of Chancery for many years. Tuke describes in harrowing detail the result of this eviction;

A crowd of these miserable ejected creatures collected around us, bewailing with bitter lamentations their hard fate. One old grey haired man came tottering up to us bearing in his arms his bedridden wife; and putting her down at our feet, pointed in silent agony to her, and then to his roofless dwelling, the charred timbers of which were scattered in all directions around. This man said he owed little more than one years rent, and had lived in the village, which had been the home of his forefathers all his life. Another man with five motherless children had been expelled and their boiling pot sold for 3s 6d. Another family consisting of a widow and four young children, had their only possession 'a little sheep' seized and sold for 5s 6d.

One hundred and fifty tenants who had been evicted owing from half a years to a year and half's rent were faced with a walk of nearly forty miles to the workhouse of the Union in Westport. Some indeed would never reach their destination, death would release them from their sufferings and the landlord from his burden.²⁸²

Following the publication of James Tuke's account, Sir Richard O'Donel wrote to Pim complaining about the remarks made about him. Pim wrote to Tuke that when Tuke first proposed mentioning what he had seen on Sir R O'Donel's property that he had objected to it, though he did not push his objections as strongly as he felt and wished he had done. He felt that 'it was very undesirable when writing about a class to mention individual names and especially in Ireland when it was so hard ascertain the true facts and we must judge a man in reference to the circumstances in which he is placed and the character of those by whom he is surrounded.' Pim said that he believed Sir R O'Donnell to be a good rather than a bad specimen of the landed class in the West of Ireland, energetic, economical in his private expenditure, strictly moral in his habits. He also believed him to be conscientious in his conduct towards his equals and his dependants though at the same time with a conscience much less enlightened than he would probably possess if he lived in Yorkshire or Wexford. He was also at that time under circumstances of strong temptation due to his financial position and the great depreciation in the value of his estates. Under these circumstances to see him given as an example of a bad landlord must have surprised all those acquainted with the county of Mayo.²⁸³

²⁸² James H Tuke, Visit to Connaught in the autumn of 1847 a letter addressed to the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends Dublin. Second edition with notes of a subsequent visit to Erris (London, 1848) p. 11

²⁸³ NLI, MS 8669 Pim correspondence. Letter from Jonathan Pim to James Tuke 20 Jan 1848

The barony of Burrishoole consisted of the parishes of Achill, Burrishoole, Islandeady, Kilmaclassar and Kilmeena. The relief commission papers give details of the severity of the Famine in these parishes. From the parish of Achill Edward Grainger constable reported that in 1844 there were 455 acres of potatoes planted and the same amount in 1845 and 1846. No land was let in conacre for the planting of potatoes.²⁸⁴ In the Curraun part of the Achill parish Constable Robert Stretton reported from Mulranny that in 1844 there were 156 acres of potatoes planted 161 in 1845 and 143 in 1846. Rape was sown in place of potatoes. Robert Stretton also reported from the Mulranny end of the Burrishoole parish that 362 acres of potatoes were planted in 1844, 376 in 1845 and 308 in 1846. There were ten acres planted in conacre in 1844 fifteen acres in 1845 and seven acres in 1846. Oats or rye was sown in the place of potatoes. From the Newport end of Burrishoole parish Head constable Monkton Creagh reported that in 1844 there were 1,402 acres of potatoes planted with seventy three acres in conacre, in 1845 1,456 with eighty eight acres in conacre and in 1846 1,116 with thirty four acres planted in conacre. In place of potatoes oats barley flax and turnips were sown. Peter Keary constable reported that in the Glenisland part of the parish of Islandeady in 1844 there were 693 acres of potatoes planted with seven acres in conacre, in 1845 672 with eight acres in conacre, in 1846 573 with six acres planted in conacre. Barley and flax were sown in place of potatoes. In the other part of the Islandeady parish Denis Walsh sub Inspector reported that in 1844 there were 410 acres of potatoes planted with seventy nine in conacre, in 1845 418 acres and the amount planted in conacre was not known and in 1846 408 acres with twenty two acres planted in conacre. The people in this parish were not able to sow any crop in place of potatoes and the land was left

²⁸⁴ National Archives, Relief Commission Papers RLFC 4/211

waste for want of seeds or means to set it. In one part of the parish of Kilmaclasser in 1844 there were 423 acres of potatoes planted, in 1845 421 acres and in 1846 312 acres. There was no conacre planted in this parish and oats, barley and flax were sown in place of potatoes. In the other part of the parish in 1844 there were 407 acres of potatoes planted with sixty five acres in conacre, in 1845 413 acres and in 1846 four hundred and twenty acres, the amount planted with potatoes had actually increased although there were only eight acres planted in conacre.

In part of the parish of Kilmeena in 1844 there were 239 acres of potatoes planted with eight acres in conacre, in 1845 249 acres with nine and a half in conacre and in 1846 201 with four acres in conacre and oats barley and flax was sown in the place of potatoes. In the other part of the parish in 1844 there were 1,106 acres of potatoes planted with 106 acres in conacre. In 1845 1,141 acres were planted with potatoes and in 1846 1,075 acres with forty four acres planted in conacre. In this parish when the seed failed in the ground many persons for want of means to replant left the land waste.

Prior to the Famine Sir Richard had been encouraging the improvement of agriculture in his estate and had allowed premiums of £10 5s 2d to his tenants and £35 16s 4d for drainage grants. He had also subscribed £10 to the Ballinrobe Agricultural Society and had encouraged his better tenants to exhibit their produce there. After the famine drainage schemes were carried out in the estate at Cuilmore, Mullaun and Tawnawoggaun.²⁸⁵

The Society of Friends or 'Quakers' as they were commonly known set up the Central Relief Committee on 13 November 1846 and a large amount of their work was

²⁸⁵ NLI, O'Donel Papers PC 263(2)/62 Accounts for payments of workers for 1843/1844; NA, Class Chancery Sub Class Drainage Awards enrolments 7 31, 7 33, 7 41.

carried out in Mayo.²⁸⁶ Relief to Mayo during the period of the Famine consisted of 696 tons of food, twenty nine food boilers, £2309 in money, sixty one clothing grants and 54,172 lbs. of seeds, the majority of which were turnips.²⁸⁷

The Central Relief Committee had in early 1847 sent a grant of provisions for the poor of Newport district. Sir Richard thanking them for their generous donation called to their attention the neglected state of cultivation of the lands around Newport and unless prompt action were taken he feared a repeat of the previous years calamity. It was too late to sow oats but there was still time to put in a flax crop. Flax seed, both Riga and American, was freely available in Westport and if a loan of £250 could be made he would hope to purchase one hundred lbs. of flaxseed and induce his tenants to sow a large crop of flax which was likely to be very remunerative. He was willing to contribute £50 himself and stated he would willingly give the entire amount if it was in his power to do so.²⁸⁸ William Todhunter replied requesting more details and these were supplied a week later. Five thousand acres in the parish of Burrishoole were suitable for the growth of flax. All unfortunately were lying waste and about fourteen men would be employed in the cultivation of each acre. The return would be about sixty cwt of straw per Irish acre out of which there would be sixty stone of flax. An acre of good average flax on the foot was worth £12 and costs included seed per acre £1 15s 0d, labour 12s, harrowing 3s, weeding and pulling 15s. In 1845 Sir Richard developed an interest in promoting the growth of flax but could only purchase about three tons of flax in the markets of Westport and Newport. In the year 1846 it increased to 21 tons 8 cwt. 0 qr. 13 lb. for which he paid £1047 4s 6 ½ d. In the year 1847 he had bought up to the

²⁸⁶ Transactions of the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends during the Famine in Ireland (Dublin, 1996)

²⁸⁷ Rob Goodbody, A suitable channel. Quaker relief in the Great Famine. (Dublin, 1995) p 89

²⁸⁸ NLI, MS 8669, Pim correspondence. Sir Richard O'Donel Newport April 25 1847 to C.R.C.

beginning of May 94 tons 13 cwt. 0 qr. 62 lb. at a cost of £3755 18s 4d which was sold for export through Pinkerton and Thompson in Westport. Sir Richard in his closing statement to Todhunter said 'a little thing will help a poor man and I do believe that a few quarts of flax seed would help many a poor creature from ruin but let us not forget that not one moment should be lost.'²⁸⁹

Jonathan Pim, one of the secretaries of the Central Relief Committee and a successful textile manufacturer, decided, rather than delaying the grant by having it go before various subcommittees, to advance the money from his own personal funds. He however stipulated that seed which is expected to procure a valuable crop should not be given away but the recipients should give an undertaking that they would repay its cost from the sale of the resulting crop. He did not ask Sir Richard to be personally responsible for these debts but did suggest that the repayment of the loan for the flax seed should take precedence over Sir Richard's own rents. The committee was aware of the destitute condition of the district and was very willing to afford further assistance to provide the inhabitants with food.²⁹⁰

Sir Richard replied the following day thanking Jonathan Pim for acceding to his request to provide funds for the purchase of flaxseed. He also agreed that although he was against gratuitous relief and felt that the parties receiving the seed should give the best security they could procure for its repayment in the present circumstances this would be very difficult. He was owed £4000 for seed, oats, guano, and green crop seeds given out on loan to the people in 1846. He said he would only purchase the flax seed conditionally until he heard from Pim if the security was

²⁸⁹ NLI, MS 8669, Pim correspondence. Sir Richard O'Donel Newport May 1 1847 to William Todhunter

²⁹⁰ NLI, MS 8669, Pim correspondence. Jonathan Pim to Sir Richard O'Donel May 1 1847

absolutely conditional on the grant being made.²⁹¹ Pim replied three days later stating 'If anything is repaid it is well if not we cannot help it. I wish it to be fully understood that I do not hold thee in any respect accountable.'²⁹² Pim wrote again on May 13, requesting more information about the condition of the people around Newport, the proportion of the ground cultivated in 1846 that had been tilled in 1847 and what sort of crops have been put in. What hopes were there for the people being able to support themselves by their own labour and how far the relief afforded by the new act would improve the situation. Pim also asked to be informed on the amount of seed and acreage sown with flax as this was the only grant made by the Central Relief Committee in 1847 for seed.²⁹³

William Todhunter in correspondence with Jonathan Pim felt that the £250 advanced by Jonathan Pim would be returned by O'Donel although he felt that he did not use it as wisely as he might have 'doing mischief in blindly following his hobbies', whereas he had put it to better use than money advanced to Reverend Nangle in Achill, who had completely wasted it.²⁹⁴

Sir Richard had little influence and no legal power in Achill, which had been at that time nineteen years under the Court of Chancery. The driver who was responsible for the evictions was in the pay of the Court authorities. In fact it was not a legal eviction at all but a forcible turning out of squatters or conacre tenants by the legal tenants holding leases in which forcible legal evictions they were assisted by the driver of the Receiver of the Court of Chancery. As regards the land used for growing flax in

²⁹¹ NLI, MS 8669, Pim correspondence. Sir Richard O'Donel Newport May 2 1847 to Pim.

²⁹² NLI, MS 8669, Pim correspondence. Pim. To Sir Richard O'Donel Newport May 5 1847.

²⁹³ NLI, MS 8669, Pim correspondence. Pim. To Sir Richard O'Donel Newport May 13 1847.

²⁹⁴ NLI, MS 8669 Pim correspondence. Letter from William Todhunter to Jonathan Pim Galway 22/10/1847

Newport, Sir Richard O'Donel stated that the ground on which the flax was grown had been under corn the previous year. It would not bring another crop without manure and would therefore have remained idle or have been unprofitably tilled had not the flax been grown. The rate of rent for this grant would have averaged 5s per acre instead of 30s. ²⁹⁵

As well as requesting aid from the Central Relief Committee Sir Richard O'Donel in 1847 also organised the shipment of a cargo of Indian corn shipped from Glasgow on the vessel "Margauds" and consisting of about 60 tons Prince White American Indian Corn and 120 tons Prince Zillawado. This cost £18 a ton delivered at the Quay at Newport. ²⁹⁶

One would expect on an estate of seventy thousand acres that there were a large number of employees. A partial list exists for 1843 and this might cover also the portion of the estate in Cong as several of the names do not appear anywhere else in the Burrishoole documents. Sir Richard O'Donel farmed a large part of his estate himself and there are several references in the O'Donel papers to 'my agriculturalist'. This would be the farm overseer. There would also be bailiffs employed, farm managers, labourers, gardeners and house servants. Anthony Lavelle was the bailiff of the Achill estate and was paid an annual salary of £16 16s 4d and John Corrigan was the bailiff of Ballycroy estate being paid a salary of £10. Laurence Boyle was paid £31 10s, Anthony Kim £20, William Ferris £10 10s, John Elwood, J Heathley and Peter Lavelle £10 each, Joseph Huddy £8, Gallagher and Moran £6 each, Anthony Keane £4, F McManamon was paid £2 2s, Stephen McManamon, Francis Sweeney and J Dogherty

²⁹⁵ NLI, MS 8669 Pim correspondence. Letter from Jonathan Pim to James Tuke 20 Jan 1848

²⁹⁶ NLI, O'Donel papers PC 265(1)/43 Correspondence from James Barrett Belfast 13 Mar 1847

£2 each, Conor Patten £1 10s, John Ruddy £1 and Boy Keeher 5s. Apart from Lavelle and Corrigan the account does not state what the duties of each individual were.²⁹⁷

The population of Mayo decreased from 388,887 to 246,030 between 1841 and 1871, a decline of 37 per cent. This was even more marked in the Barony of Burrishoole where it decreased from 39,853 to 20,601, a decrease of 48 per cent.

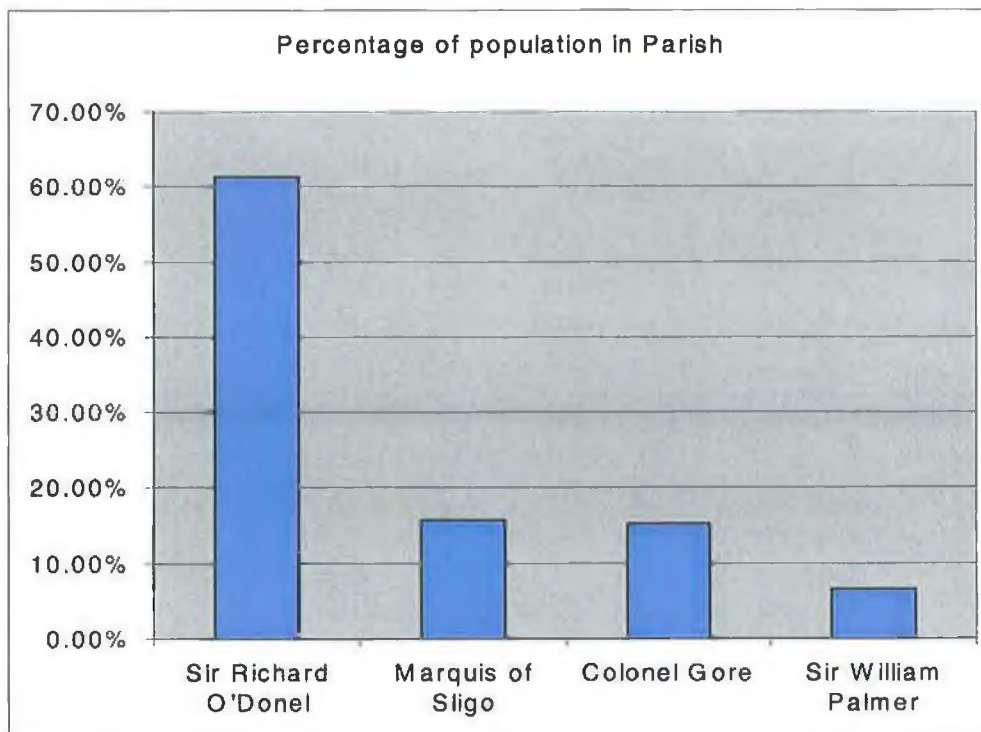


Figure 9 Percentage of Population in Parish by Landlord .

²⁹⁷ NLI, O'Donel Papers PC 263(2)/62 Accounts for payments of workers for 1843/1844.

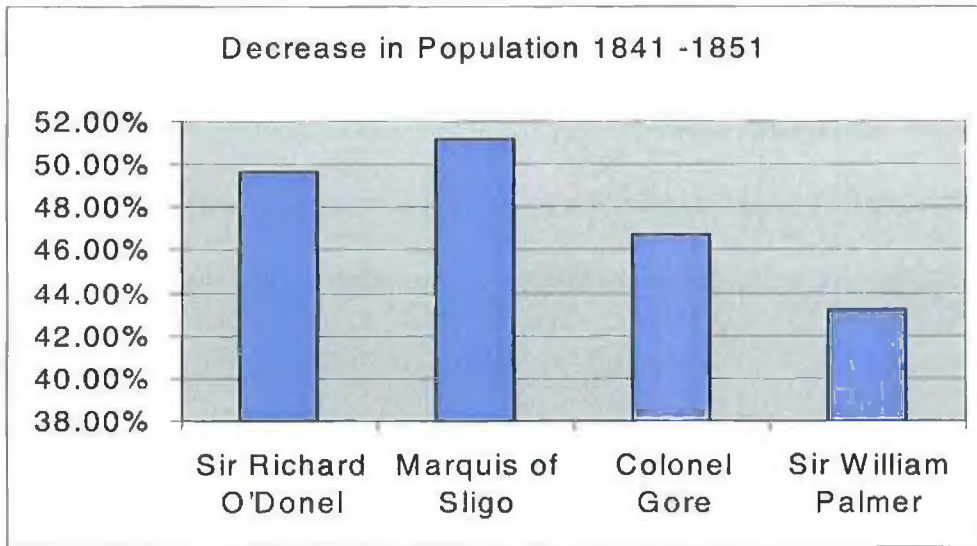


Figure 10 Decrease in population by Landlord.

Comparison of Landlords, Griffiths Value per acre and decrease population 1841 -1851

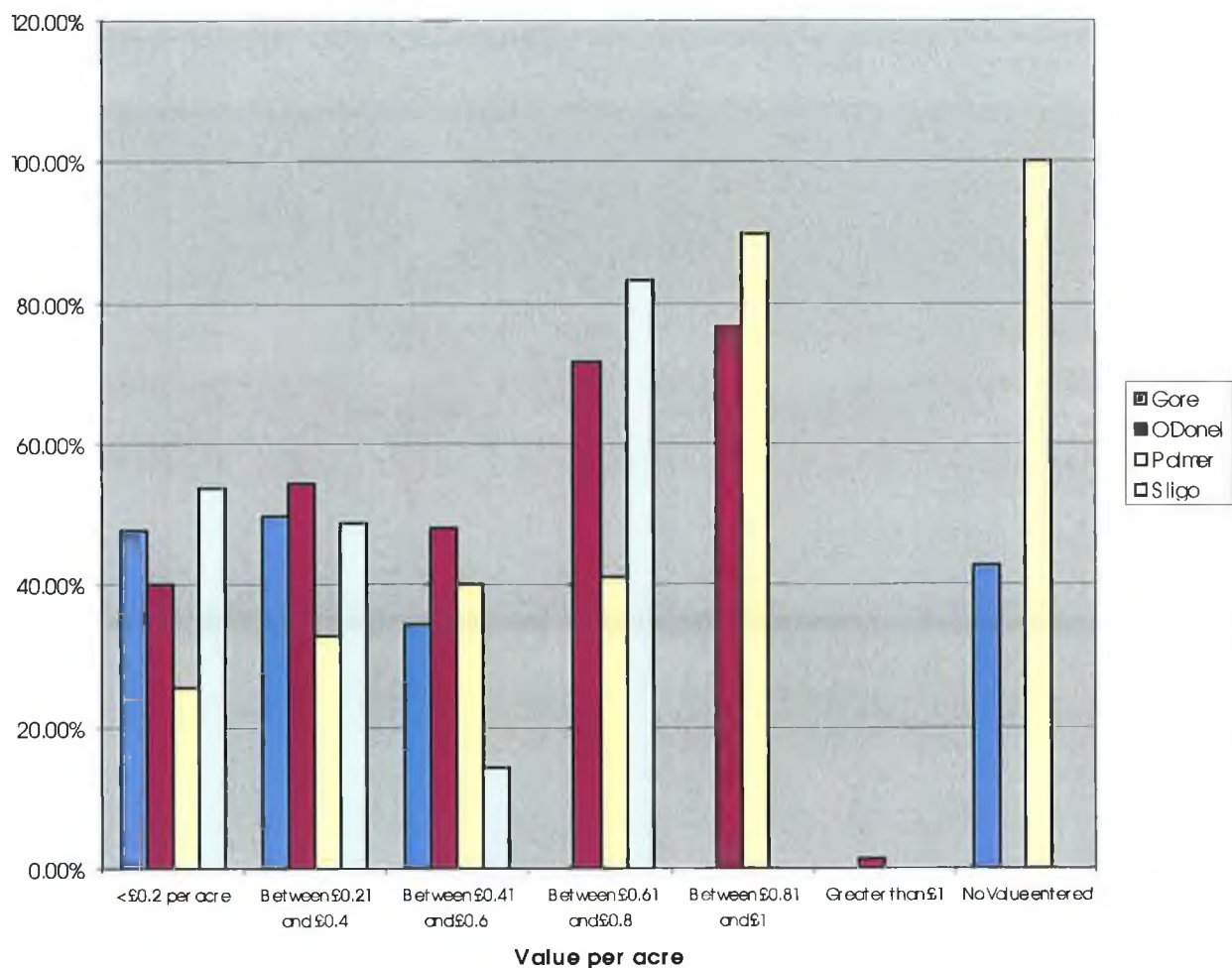


Figure 11 Comparison of Landlords, Griffiths Value per acre and decrease population 1841 -1851

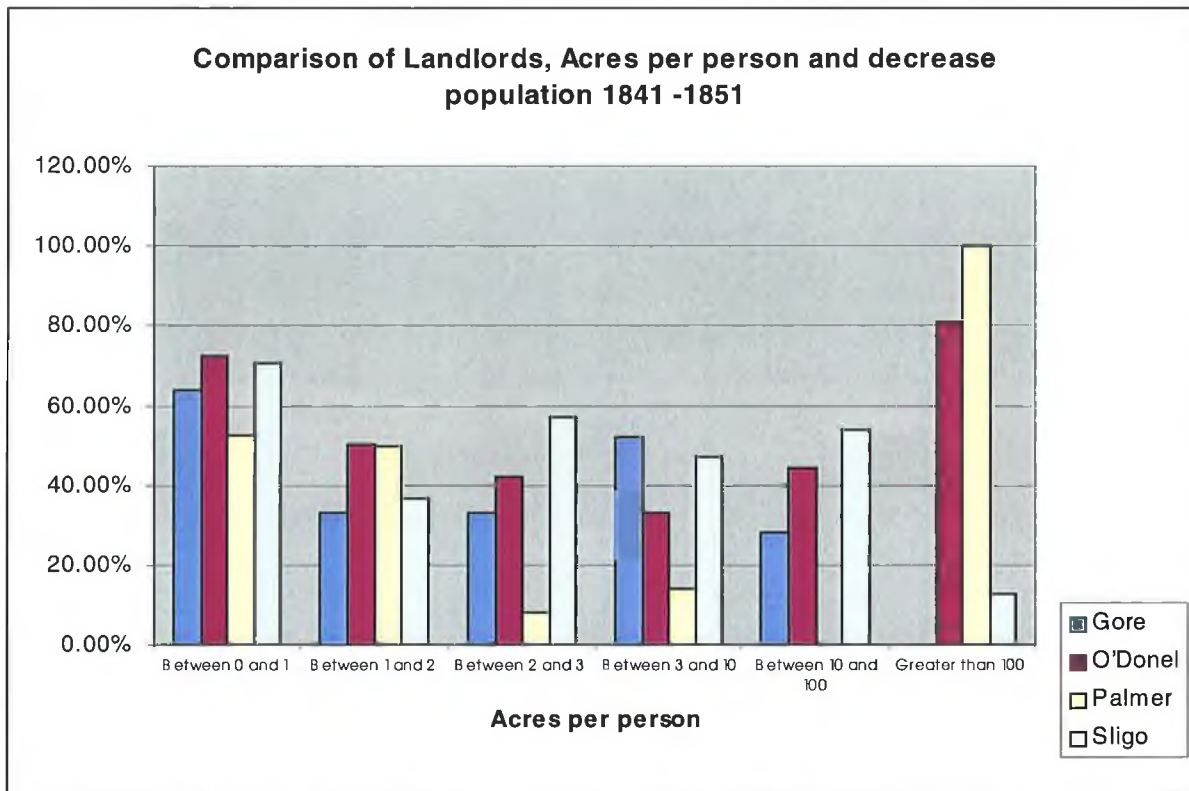


Figure 12 Comparison of Landlords, Acres per person and decrease population 1841 - 1851

Sir Richard O'Donel was by far the biggest landlord in the parish of Burrishoole. He owned sixty nine townlands as compared to fifteen each for Sir William Palmer and the marquis of Sligo. Colonel Gore owned twelve townlands. The amount of land that was owned again showed O'Donel to be the major landholder with 29,787 acres in the parish of Burrishoole. The marquis of Sligo had 8135 acres, Colonel Gore 5496 and Sir William Palmer 1914 acres. Sir Richard O'Donel also had the majority of tenants with 6,413 with 1,637 paying rent to the marquis of Sligo and 1,585 to Colonel Gore. Sir William Palmer had 695 tenants.

The total decrease in the population of the parish between 1841 and 1851 was 45.78 per cent. This varied between the four major landlords from 43.17 per cent for Sir William Palmer to 51.13 per cent for the marquis of Sligo with Colonel Gore at 46.69 per cent and Sir Richard O'Donel at 49.66 per cent in between.

When the decline in population was compared with the number of acres per person it is found that the greatest decline occurred in the most heavily populated townlands. This varied between the four landlords and all had the greatest decline in townlands with less than one acre per person this varied from 63.68 per cent for Colonel Gore to 72.49 per cent for Sir Richard O'Donel. A 100 per cent decline or total loss of population occurred from two townlands owned by Sir William Palmer where there were more than one hundred acres per person and in the same category in the estate of Sir Richard O'Donel the population declined by 80.95 per cent between 1841 and 1851. In areas where there was between two and ten acres per person the contrast between landlords was more marked, an average decrease of just over 10 per cent taking place on the estate of Sir William Palmer and greater than 50 per cent on that of the marquis of Sligo.

When the decrease in population is compared with the value of land it is seen with three out of the four landlords greater decreases occurred in the most valuable land, according to the valuation put on it subsequently by Sir William Griffith in 1857. The exception to this being Colonel Gore where the biggest decrease of 49.75 per cent was in the second least valuable category of land valued at between £0.21 and £0.4 per acre. This would suggest that the other three landlords, O'Donel, Palmer and Sligo were clearing their most valuable land to make more profitable farms for future tenants. The previous tenants, who may have been evicted could have been either forced into the workhouse, emigrated or have died during the Famine.

In 1851 there were 1,035 occupants in Newport workhouse. It is possible that a proportional greater number of tenants of the resident landlord and chairman of the Poor Law Guardians of the Newport Workhouse were admitted than those of the other landlords in the parish. To determine this the admission records for the workhouse would need to be consulted and unfortunately these have not survived.²⁹⁸

Asenath Nicholson visited Newport in 1847 and was told by the local postmistress Mrs Arthur that she had fed a little boy, once a day, whose parents and brothers and sisters were dead, with the exception of one little sister.

The boy was seven years old, the sister five. They were told they must make application to the poorhouse, at Castlebar, which was ten Irish miles away.' One cold rainy day in November, this boy took his little sister by the hand, and faint with hunger set off for Castlebar. And now, reader, if you will, follow these little bare-footed, bare-headed Connaught orphans through a muddy road of ten miles, on a rainy day, without food, and see them at the work-house, late at night. The doors are closed. At last, they succeed in being heard. The girl is received; the boy sent away no room for him. He made his way back to Newport the next morning, and had lived by crawling into any place he could at night, and once a day called at the door of my friend who fed him.

When Mrs Arthur cleaned him up, dressed him in a new suit of clothes and was about to burn his old rags he became upset. He explained this as he felt that no one would believe he was in need if he was wearing fine clothes but Mrs Arthur fed and paid for his education at the local school.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ 1841 Census, 1851 Census, Griffiths Valuation.

²⁹⁹ Asenath Nicholson, Annals of the Famine in Ireland (Dublin, 1998) p. 82

Asenath Nicholson also commented that turnips were not an adequate substitute for the potato. Even though they were easy to grow, and seed was distributed by many relief agencies particularly the Central Relief Committee, they were not as nutritious as potatoes and even when a larger amount was consumed at a meal than was normal with potatoes hunger still remained. The stomachs of the peasants were so swollen, especially children's, that it was a pitiable sight to see them. Black bread was distributed by the relief officers to those on outdoor relief schemes and also to the children in school. The bread was quite indigestible and was thought to contain either turf mould or some continental material for bread that the government had deposited in that region some twenty- nine years before, which had become damaged, and then could not be sold.

She further said 'Whether the poor lived or whether they died on this bread, or by this bread, I do not pretend to say, only that death was doing its work by hunger, fever and dysentery continually.'³⁰⁰ The Famine and its accompanying hardship affected not only the small cottagers around Newport. Nicholson further recounted 'A former rector by the name of Wilson died in the summer of 1847, leaving a widow and four children on a pretty spot, where they had resided for years, and gathered the comforts of life about them. I saw step by step all taken for taxes and rent; everything that had life out of doors that could be sold at auction, was sold; then everything of furniture, till beds and tables left the little cottage, and the mother was put in jail and is now looking through its grates, while her children are struggling for bread.' These were tenants of Sir Richard O'Donel. Charles Wilson was the incumbent of Achill in 1847.³⁰¹ A Rose Wilson died

³⁰⁰ Asenath Nicholson, Annals of the Famine in Ireland (Dublin ,1998) p. 112

³⁰¹ Thom's Directory (1847) p.299

in the rectory at Newport in 1873 at the age of seventy. She is buried in Newport Churchyard.³⁰²

As noted previously James Hack Tuke had received a rebuke for making allegations about O'Donel ordering evictions. Nicholson also remarked on O'Donel's driver that had been evicting tenants and her view was that ignorance was no defence and that landlords were responsible for those that they employed.

But this fearless 'driver' throws, or causes to be thrown down, cabin after cabin, and sometimes whole villages, of which it is said the landlord was entirely ignorant; but the pitiless storm heeded not that, and the poor starved exiles pleading that the cabin might be left a little longer, have no pity, their pot and even the cloak, which is the peasant woman's all by night and by day, has often been torn from her emaciated limbs and sold at auction. Perhaps in no instance does the oppression of the poor and the sighing of the needy come before the mind so vividly as when going over the places made desolate by the Famine; to see the tumbled cabins, with the poor hapless inmates who had for years sat around their turf fire, and ate their potato together, now lingering and oftentimes wailing in despair, their ragged barefooted little ones clinging about them, one on the back of the weeping mother, and the father looking in silent despair, while a part of them are scraping among the rubbish to gather some little relic of mutual attachment (for the poor, reader, have their tender remembrances); then, in a flock, take their solitary, their pathless way to seek some rock or ditch to encamp supperless for the night, without either covering for the head or the feet, with not the remnant of a blanket to spread over them in the ditch, where they must crawl. Are these solitary cases? Happy would it be were it so, but village upon village, and company after company have I seen; and one magistrate who was travelling informed me that at nightfall the preceding day he found a company who had gathered a few sticks and fastened them into the ditch, and spread over what miserable rags they could collect (for the rain was fast pouring); and under these more

³⁰² Asenath Nicholson, Annals of the Famine in Ireland (Dublin, 1998) p. 115

than two hundred men, women and children were to crawl for the night. He alighted from his car, and counted more than two hundred. They had all that day been driven out, and not one pound of any kind of food was in the whole encampment!

She was told of an occurrence when during the funeral of a respectable young woman, a young lad availed of the opportunity while the gate was open to carry in a large sack on his back, which contained two brothers, one seventeen, the other a little boy, who had died by starvation. In one corner he dug, with his own emaciated feeble hands, a grave, and put them in, uncoffined, and covered them, while the clods were falling upon the coffin of the respectable young woman.³⁰³

Y

The extent to which the landlords assisted their tenants in time of need is subject to debate. De Tocqueville interviewing the three parish priests of Newport and the surrounding parishes in 1835 remarked that they were all of the opinion that the two main landlords in the area the marquis of Sligo and Sir Richard O'Donel had done nothing to help relieve the distress. One of the reasons for this was that almost all the great landlords were very financially embarrassed and also there was a profound hatred between them and the population. All the great families of Mayo at the time were Catholics who had become protestants to keep their property, or protestants who had seized the property of Catholics. The population regarded them as apostates or as conquerors and detested them. In return the landlords did not feel any sympathy for the tenants. They let the farmers die before their eyes or evicted them from their miserable dwellings on the slightest pretext. While such a large proportion of the population were starving the marquis of Sligo had a thousand sheep on the surrounding grasslands and

³⁰³ Asenath Nicholson, Annals of the Famine in Ireland (1998, Dublin). p 115

several of his granaries were full yet the population had no idea of seizing these means of subsistence. They would sooner die than touch them partly due to religious virtue but also from fear of hanging or transportation for stealing from the landlord. It was evident that the priests, if they were not encouraging the people to revolt, would not be in the least sorry if they did revolt, and their indignation against the upper classes was lively and deep. The priest and the protestant minister were at open war, and they fought for souls with a very great fervour. They attacked each other in the newspapers and in the pulpit in very bitter style. The protestant minister had called the Catholic 'a blood thirsty priest.' And the epithets the priest used were hardly more complimentary.³⁰⁴

When the tenants on the estate were undergoing severe hardship Sir Richard O'Donel was installing in his house the latest water closets which he ordered from Patrick Ternan, plumber and water closet manufacturers, 13 Winetavern Street, Dublin.³⁰⁵ Five years later the effects of the Famine had largely disappeared from the parish when Mr James Caine was advertising his hotel in the Mayo Constitution. He stated that he proposed conducting in the best possible styles and flatters himself that from the accommodation that he can afford families wishing to frequent a western sea port during the summer months will find it thus advantageous to call at his establishment. Apartments would also be available for invalids who may wish to enjoy pure air and picturesque scenery and every attention paid to their comforts. Well aired beds, good attendance, comfort, cleanliness and moderate charges. Post chaise and cars would be available on the shortest notice.³⁰⁶ However severe damage had been done to

³⁰⁴ Emmet Larkin (ed.), Alexis de Tocqueville's journey in Ireland July-August, 1835 (Dublin, 1990) p.129

³⁰⁵ NLI, PC 263(3)/46 Bill plumber and water closet manufacturer.

³⁰⁶ Mayo Constitution March 30 1852

the finances of the O'Donels during the preceding twenty years and they were forced to sell their estate in the Encumbered Estates Court.

Conclusion

This thesis examined one landed estate in County Mayo in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and how it became fragmented over time.

The first chapter examined the origin growth and decline of the O'Donel estate from the purchase of the estate in 1788. The main factors in the decline were financial involving extensive borrowing and settlements made on marriages of daughters and to younger sons of the family. This was not matched by a corresponding growth in income over time. The amount of land the landlord owned was associated with status. Land was a necessary attribute of a gentry family. Their perception was that the more land that they owned the better their status. Even when the family was in dire financial straits would not consider selling land. By 1832 debts totalling £75,499 had accumulated on the estate. Also associated with status was the honour system. It was vital for the aristocracy to uphold personal and family honour in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This resulted in three members of the O'Donel family fighting in duels. The result of these duels was that two of the family, James Moore O'Donel and Hugh O'Donel were seriously wounded, James Moore subsequently dying from his wounds.

The O'Donels owned land in three baronies of Mayo, the Tarmon estate in the barony of Erris, the Cong estate in the barony of Kilmaine and the Newport estate in the barony of Burrishoole. The second chapter concentrated on the various economic factors at work in the Newport estate, and specifically that part in the parish of Burrishoole, that contributed to financial difficulty, resulting in the family having to sell most of the estate. Mayo had a much higher share than average of insolvent proprietors whose estates were encumbered or bankrupt.³⁰⁷ The marquis of Sligo depicted the state

³⁰⁷ Cormac Ó Gráda. 'Poverty, population and agriculture 1801-1845' in W.E. Vaughan (ed) A New History of Ireland. Ireland under the Union .1801-1870 (Oxford, 1989) v, p. 108 – 36

of insolvency when writing to the Chief Secretary for Ireland E G Stanley in January 1831:

All the gentry of Mayo are beggars, a state in which I fancy with few exceptions, are placed a great majority of my imprudent countrymen in this province. I happen to know that the estates of the gentry in this county are mortgaged or engaged for one million and a half of money.³⁰⁸

If this were true the debt would have exceeded the rental of the county by 300 per cent.³⁰⁹ Periods of food shortage had occurred in the years before the famine and the French traveller Alexis de Tocqueville, in the journal of his tour around Ireland in 1835 tells of his visit to a priest in Newport. 'The priest's house was surrounded by starving peasants awaiting the distribution of corn, which he had secured for their survival'.³¹⁰ The historian James S. Donnelly jr. writes of the west of Ireland 'there the appalling degree of destitution and the extremely small size of holdings combined in a doubly destructive assault on landlord incomes. This combination was at its worst in County Mayo'.³¹¹

The loss of rents was devastating, in some cases tenants were two or three years in arrears and also as 75 per cent of leased land was valued at under £4 this meant that the poor rates on these lands fell to the landlords to pay.³¹² Even without the onset of

³⁰⁸ Lord Sligo to E.G. Stanley Jan. 1831, N.A., Official Papers, 1831, 973/81 cited in Desmond McCabe, 'Social order and the ghost of moral economy in Pre-Famine Mayo' in R Gillespie and G Moran (eds), 'A various country' essays in Mayo history 1500 – 1900 (Westport, 1987), p. 109

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³¹⁰ Emmet Larkin (ed.), Alexis de Tocqueville's Journey in Ireland July-August, 1835 (Dublin, 1990) pp. 130 - 131.

³¹¹ James S. Donnelly Jr., 'Landlords and tenants' in W. E. Vaughan (ed.) A new history of Ireland. Ireland under the Union .1801-1870 (Oxford , 1989) p.336

potato blight a disaster was waiting to happen in the area. The population had increased dramatically in the previous fifty years in response to an improvement in the economy, the expansion of the linen industry and a greater demand and therefore higher prices for agricultural produce because of the Napoleonic Wars. A sudden downturn in the economy due to the ending of the war, the decline of the linen industry due to increased industrialisation in the textile industry in England and the north eastern counties of Ireland, left a large population without the land resources to feed itself. The landlords because of their encumbered financial circumstances were unable to come to the assistance of their tenantry.

The third chapter examined the relationships between the O'Donel family and the tenants using the Famine as a case study of these relationships. Periods of distress had occurred in the years proceeding the famine and de Tocqueville in 1835 had obtained the opinion of two parish priests from the neighbouring parishes to Newport that the two main landlords in the area the marquis of Sligo and Sir Richard O'Donel had done nothing to help relieve the distress. One of the reasons for this was that almost all the great landlords were very financially embarrassed and also there was a profound hatred between them and the population. Many of the great families of Mayo at the time were Catholics who had become protestants to keep their property, or protestants who had seized the property of Catholics. The population regarded them as apostates or as conquerors and detested them. In return the landlords felt little sympathy for the tenants. They let the farmers die before their eyes or evicted them from their miserable dwellings on the slightest pretext. While such a large proportion of the population were starving the marquis of Sligo had a thousand sheep on the surrounding grasslands and several of his granaries were full yet the population had no idea of seizing these means

³¹² Sean P McManamon, 'Landlords and evictions during the Great Famine'. in *Cathair na Mart* , xviii, (1998) p.125

of subsistence. They would sooner die than touch them partly due to religious virtue but also from fear of hanging or transportation for stealing from the landlord. It was evident that the priests, if they were not encouraging the people to revolt, would not be in the least sorry if they did revolt, and their indignation against the upper classes was lively and deep.³¹³

As the Great Famine occurred towards the end of the O'Donels' tenure as the major landlords in the parish and undoubtedly contributed to their eventual impossible financial position, this chapter also examines the effect the policy that Sir Richard O'Donel had towards his tenants during this period. How the tenants of the O'Donel estate fared in comparison with those of other landlords is also examined. Included in this is an examination of the increase of arrears of rent and the eventual outcome of those tenants in severe arrears. Also the decline in population is compared with that of tenants of other landlords in the parish. Co-operation with various relief agencies, particularly the Central Relief Committee organised by the Society of Friends or Quakers, was very important in alleviating distress at this time. The workings of the two Poor Law Unions active in the area, initially the Westport Union and later the Newport Union, and Sir Richard O'Donel's involvement in them is also examined. The impact of the Famine on landlord tenant relations is looked at and what tenants had power during this period. The change in land leasing patterns from multiple tenants to single tenants is also examined.

The effect of maintaining a lifestyle appropriate to that of being a member of the Anglo-Irish gentry took a heavy toll on the finances of the O'Donel estate. This increased indebtedness over time led finally to the sale of most the estate in the

³¹³ Emmet Larkin (ed.), Alexis de Tocqueville's journey in Ireland July-August, 1835 (Dublin, 1990) p.129

Incumbered Estates Court. If the economy of the country and this part of Mayo had continued to prosper the O'Donels would have been able to meet their financial obligations. Alternatively if they had modified their lifestyle they probably would also have succeeded in staving off the sale of the estate. However tightening the belt buckle was not in keeping with being seen as an important member of the landed gentry in West Mayo.

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Appendix 1

Account of debt charges affecting the O'Donel estate 1831 submitted to the Court of Chancery by Alexander Clendenning. 3 January 1832.

The first schedule to which the foregoing charge refers containing an account of the several charges affecting the Estates in the pleadings mentioned.

Name	Principal Late Currency			Principal Present Currency			Interest Due Present Currency 1 November 1831		
	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
Francis Jessop	16,700			15,415	7	8	3609	15	3 ½
Cornelius Sullivan	2,100			1938	9	3	615	8	11
Robert Barrv	2,000			1846	3	1	531	5	3
La Touche and wife	500			461	10	9	461	10	9
La Touche and wife as assignees of General Manus O'Donel	1800			1661	10	9	1661	10	9
La Touche and wife as assignees of Johnson	446	9	6	412	2	9	334	10	9
La Touche and wife as assignees of McDonel	500			461	10	9	334	12	3
Neal O'Donel Browne	500			461	10	9	334	12	3
Hon H Caulfield and Wife	500			461	10	9	144	13	8
B D La Touche and Wife	500			461	10	9	334	12	3
Julia L Brown	500			461	10	9	334	12	3
A Richey and Wife	500			461	10	9	334	12	3
Maria O'Donel Browne	500			461	10	9	334	12	3
BD La Touche and wife assignees of Crawford	100			92	6	2	92	6	2
BD La Touche and wife assignees of Johnson	50			46	3	1	46	3	1
Hon H Caulfield and Wife	2,000			1846	3	1	448	10	8
Newport Free Schools	600			553	16	11	229	4	7

The foregoing charges are all included in the schedule annexed to the deed of settlement of 10 October 1798

Name	Principal Late Currency			Principal Present Currency			Interest Due Present Currency 1 November 1831		
	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
Colonel Clayton and wife created by deed of 10 th Oct 1798	10,000			9,230	15	6	3665	10	0
Colonel Clayton and wife created by deed of 10 th Oct 1798	1000			923	1	6	279	15	7
Hugh J H Browne	1990			1836	18	6	374	11	2
P D La Touche and wife	5000			4615	7	8	1930	7	6
A Richey and wife	1000			923	1	6	283	8	8
J C Browne	1000			923	1	6	546	16	1
M O'D Browne	1000			923	1	6	697	8	7
Hon J C Annesley	3000			2769	4	7 ½	852	1	4

These sums make up the £14000 charge by Sir Neal O'Donel the elder pursuant to power extended in said deed of 10 October 1798

Name	Principal Late Currency			Principal Present Currency			Interest Due Present Currency 1 November 1831		
	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
Hon T C Annesley	216	13	4	200			35		
Neal C O'Donel	1666	13	4	1538	9	2	335	3	3
Mary O'Donel	1666	13	4	1538	9	2	326	18	5 ½
Martin Connolly and wife	1666	13	4	1538	9	2	234	4	6 ½
Margaret M O'Donel	1666	13	4	1538	9	2	302	3	11
C A O'Donel	1666	13	4	1538	9	2	302	3	11
J St L O'Donel	1666	13	4	1538	9	2	302	3	11

These make £10000 charged by Sir Neal O'Donel the younger for his children

The second schedule to which the foregoing refers containing in amount of the several sums paid by said receiver on account of interest on part of the charges in the foregoing schedule mentioned and which sums are all included in the consent bearing date the third of December on thousand eight hundred and thirty one .

Name	Interest Due Present Currency 1 November 1831		
	£	s	d
To Lady Catherine O'Donel since deceased three years indenture to first May one thousand eight hundred and thirty	2769	4	7
To the deft Cornelius Sullivan on account of interest	443	1	6
To the deft Robert Barry on account of interest	465	4	7
To the deft Frances Jessop widow on account of interest	1849	17	0
To the deft Frances Jessop widow on account of interest	1387	7	9
To the deft Major William Thwaites on account of interest	232	12	4
To the deft Major William Thwaites on account of interest	100	0	0
To the deft Peter Digges La Touche on account of interest	300	0	0
To the deft Peter Digges La Touche on account of interest	500	0	0
To the deft Colonel William Robert Clayton and wife on account of interest	1000	0	0
Paid to the defts Peter Digges La Touche and wife as assignees of Colonel Manus O'Donel on account of interest	100	0	0
Paid to the defts Peter Digges La Touche and wife as assignees of William Moor Johnston on account of interest	300	0	0
Paid to the defts Peter Digges La Touche and wife as assignees of Joseph Crawford on account of interest	50	0	0
Paid to the defts Peter Digges La Touche and wife as assignees of William Moor Johnston on account of interest	50	0	0
To the deft Hon Henry Caulfield on account of interest	100	0	0
To the deft Alex Richey on account of interest	200	0	0
To the deft Alex Richey on account of interest	83	1	7
To the deft Louisa Browne on account of interest	150	0	0
To the deft Louisa Browne on account of interest	83	1	7
To the deft Maria O'Donel Browne on account of interest	150	0	0
To the deft Maria O'Donel Browne on account of interest	250	0	0
To the deft Hugh John Henry Browne on account of interest	100	0	0
To the deft Hon Francis Charles Annesley on account of interest	300	0	0
To the deft Martin Connolly and wife on account of interest	140	0	0
To the deft Mary O'Donel on account of interest	50	0	0
To the use of Defendant William Young esq. on account of interest due the defendants Margaret Molyneux O'Donel , Catherine Annesley O'Donel and Isabella St Laurence O'Donel	150	0	0
To the trustees of Newport free school on account of interest	100	0	0
To the deft Neal O'Donel Browne on account of interest	100	0	0

Total amount owed £75499

Appendix 2 Lands of the O'Donel Estate sold in Encumbered Estates Court 1852 –

1856

**Include C:/floppy/encumbered56.xls sheet 2 for sales in encumbered estates
court page1**

Appendix 2
Lands of the O'Donel Estate sold in the Encumbered Estates Court 1852-1856

No	Townland in Denomination	Quantity of Land Statute Measure			Yearly Rent			Deduction Head Rent			Profit Rents D - E			Griffiths Valuation			Valuation of Mr Brett on order of Commsioners			Purchaser	Purchase Price in £
		a	r	p	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d		
29	Kilbride	225	2	15	140	2	0	32	11	9.75	107	10	2.25	131	12	7	154	11	1	Edward Day	2375
20	Camcloonbeg,	156	3	22	57	14	8	1	6	6.5	56	8	1.5	50	4	4	81	19	5	George Malley	1100
7	Shanvallyhugh,	126	0	28	67	19	4	2	12	6	65	6	10	51	9	8	71	14	10	Henry Brett	1210
8	Kiltarnaght,	136	0	13	71	19	10	2	15	4.25	69	4	5.75	57	0	8	83	15	2	Henry Brett	1125
42	Lecarrow,	401	1	19	207	0	0	57	11	1.5	149	8	10.5	186	18	4	224	16	6	Mr Brett	2450
35	Kiltyroe,	199	2	39	92	8	7	23	9	6	68	19	1	80	6	9	97	0	7	Mr Brett	1025
36	Rossow,	181	2	18	113	10	10	20	19	8.5	92	11	1.5	105	10	0	114	3	4	Mr Brett	1825
38	Rossdooan,	230	2	13	133	11	2	31	1	4	102	9	10	135	16	4	176	1	2	Mr Garvie	1900
47	Carrickaneady,	246	1	5	164	0	2	39	17	6	124	2	8	128	16	8	177	7	5	Mr H A Stephens	2475
33	Seamount (part of Teevemore)	14	1	0	30	1	6	16	1	1	14	0	5	39	9	5	38	1	6	Mr H A Stephens	650
17	Derryloughanmore,	231	0	38	68	2	10	2	0	11	66	1	11	64	17	5	75	16	9	Mr H A Stephens	1350
41	Shandrum,	198	3	23	110	2	5	27	2	8.5	82	19	8.5	88	17	3	102	18	10	Mr H A Stephens	1400
18	Part of Derryloughanbeg,	47	1	21	23	4	1	1	0	0	22	4	1	26	12	1	28	7	6	Mr H A Stephens	475
22	Barackhill,	68	2	20	73	4	11	17	12	11	55	12	0	57	19	8	162	12	10	Mr H A Stephens	1150
50	Premises in Newport and Barrack Hill held by Lord Sligo	23	2	32	9	4	7.5	0	0	0	9	4	7.5	-	-	-	43	4	2	Mr H A Stephens	225
49	Inishturlin,	2	2	20	104	6	2	22	0	0	82	6	2	233	4	10	263	13	0	Mr H A Stephens	1880
28	Carrowbaun	54	3	33	71	7	3	1	12	7	69	14	8	63	1	1	106	5	0	Mr H A Stephens	1325
19	Camcloonmore,	83	1	12	25	8	4	1	4	0	24	4	4	30	8	6	39	0	8	Mr H A Stephens	490
27	Mullaun	50	0	16	71	9	0	4	2	3	67	6	9	42	18	6	43	17	4	Mr H A Stephens	760
24	Newport Town with Tolls and Customs,	42	0	14	192	13	8	100	10	0	92	3	8	-	-	-	484	3	2	Mr H A Stephens	2510

Appendix 2
Lands of the O'Donel Estate sold in the Encumbered Estates Court 1852-1856

No	Townland in Denomination	Quantity of Land Statute Measure			Yearly Rent			Deduction Head Rent			Profit Rents D - E			Griffiths Valuation			Valuation of Mr Brett on order of Commsioners			Purchaser	Purchase Price in £	
		a	r	p	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d			
37	Currigaroe	91	0		38	45	17	4	1	11	8	44	5	8	44	13	2	48	2	4	Mr H A Stephens	675
13	Newport Salmon Fishery,				100	0	0					100	0	0				100	0	0	Mr John E Verdon	2325
3	Derrykill West,	203	3		11	80	2	7	3	5	7	76	16	12	71	4	10	90	7	2	Mr John O'Farrell	1450
5	Callowbrack ,	624	0		38	83	2	10	1	15	11	81	6	11	73	16	4	82	13	0	Mr John O'Farrell	1400
4	Tawnawoggaun,	191	1		35	115	5	10	3	13	7	111	12	3	82	9	2	107	1	10	Mr John O'Farrell	1625
6	Derrygarve,	265	3		39	85	5	10	3	14	10.5	81	10	11.5	71	10	5	90	19	11	Mr John O'Farrell	1025
2	Knockmoyle(in parish of Burrishoole) ,	506	3		25	110	6	7	3	7	4	106	19	3	92	18	6	100	14	2	Mr John O'Farrell	2025
1	Skerdagh Lower,	551	1		37	92	0	0	3	18	1.5	88	1	10.5	73	9	1	82	12	3	Mr John Roache	2100
15	Freachillaun West,	28	0		14	35	0	0	1	6	6	33	13	6	28	16	6	38	17	0	Mr John Robinson	520
31	Teevemore(part of)	116	3		7	82	0	0	2	14	5	79	5	7	76	7	7	82	0	0	Mr John Robinson	2000
32	Teevemore House and part of Teevemore	25	2		23	18	0	0	1	5	8	16	14	4	34	0	7	38	15	5	Mr John Robinson	1100
26	Knockatinnyweel	144	1		31	61	2	7	2	16	3.25	58	6	3.75	73	16	10	83	13	4	Mr John Robinson	1410
25	Drimlong,	68	3		27	33	7	0	1	4	0	32	2	12	29	5	5	35	0	0	Mr John Robinson	610
44	Rossclave,	108	0		27	66	2	0	3	2	0	63	-1	12	62	13	2	69	8	0	Mr K Hallows	1200
43	Rossanrubble,	174	0		26	104	5	5	23	14	8.5	80	10	8.5	94	11	4	101	8	5	Mr K Hallows	1450
45	Creevaghau,	39	2		19	76	17	10	3	6	6	73	11	4	91	3	10	100	2	11	Mr K Hallows	1700
14	Rossbarnagh,	52	3		3	28	0	0	1	4	0	26	16	0	25	0	0	26	0	4	Mr Keith Hallows (in trust)	800
12	Cuilmore,	402	3		21	203	6	6	7	3	0	196	3	6	158	15	3	205	11	6	Mr H A Stephens	2775

Appendix 2
Lands of the O'Donel Estate sold in the Encumbered Estates Court 1852-1856

No	Townland in Denomination	Quantity of Land Statute Measure			Yearly Rent			Deduction Head Rent			Profit Rents D - E			Griffiths Valuation			Valuation of Mr Brett on order of Commsioners			Purchaser	Purchase Price in £
		a	r	p	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d		
11	Clooneshal,	221	1	22	93	19	1	2	10	8.5	91	8	4.5	65	9	6	95	13	4	Mr H A Stephens	1120
21	Knocknageeha,	120	2	37	74	11	0	3	12	2	70	18	10	79	12	6	85	6	0	Mr Verdon	1670
23	Part of Bleachyard called Yellow Weir,	69	2	28	25	11	6	0	12	10	24	18	8	26	3	11	27	16	6	Mr Verdon	550
16	Rossmore,	77	2	34	65	12	6	2	11	8	63	0	10	56	8	2	58	11	0	Mr Verdon	1300
30	Sandymount	48	2	29	56	13	2.5	1	10	4.5	55	2	10	48	11	0	81	19	0	Mr Verdon	1780
48	Aughness including part called Rensfort	2709	1	15	23	1	5.5	0	0	0	23	1	5.5	91	7	10	105	0	0	Mr Verdon	700
10	Tawnameeltogue,	104	0	32	107	9	1	3	15	7.5	103	13	5.5	84	9	0	107	9	1	Mr Verdon	1500
34	Knocknaboley,	315	1	21	206	13	4	68	11	11.5	138	1	4.5	165	5	1	140	17	8	Mr William Livingstone	2525
39	Roslaher,	51	0	26	25	19	4	0	9	2	25	10	2	39	6	11	40	1	2	Mr William Livingstone	600
40	Newport House and Demesne, including Raheyweran,	25	3	19	81	5	0	0	8	9	80	16	3	76	14	6	81	5	0	Sir Richard A O'Donel	2100
46	Carrowmore,	193	0	26	124	11	8	37	12	3.5	86	19	4.5	106	17	6	130	16	8	Sir Richard A O'Donel	1600
9	Derryloughan South,	301	3	20	158	13	2	4	1	8	154	11	6	128	0	10	162	0	2	William Lyons	2400
51	Knockmullen or Gortawarla	196	3	23	92	6	2	18	12	3	73	13	11	844	8	6	909	12	6		
Lot No 2966	Shrafarnagh , Shramore , Letterkeen, Roigh, Rostrunkmore	7791																		Nathaniel P Simes	4000

Appendix 2
Lands of the O'Donel Estate sold in the Encumbered Estates Court 1852-1856

No	Townland in Denomination	Quantity of Land Statute Measure			Yearly Rent			Deduction Head Rent			Profit Rents D - E			Griffiths Valuation			Valuation of Mr Brett on order of Commsioners			Purchaser	Purchase Price in £
		a	r	p	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d		
Lot No 2967	Achill	23452																		Reverend Edward Nangle	10,500
Lot No 2968	Doega and Carrowgarve	3977																		Samuel Holme	2333
Lot No 2993	Carrickkildavnet , Dereen , Shraheens	7791																		William Pike	2333
Lot No 2994	Achillbeg Island , Cloughmore , Claggan and Saulia	2592																		Thomas Brassy	2333
Lot No 3004	Carraunalea , Carrowsallagh , Clogher , Druminnavonagh , Mobrandy , Murreavagh , Derrartin , Derrintowey	3552																		Revd John M Ashworth	4000
Lot No 3191	Drumslide , Fahy , Doona , Drimbane , Dooriel , Bleankeeragh , Cregganroe , Shanamongragh	5829																		William J Birch	5280
Lot No 3202	lands in Ballycroy	10635																		George Clive	5280
Lot No 3211	lands in Cong	898																		Joseph Lambert and Manus Prandergast	10,500

