



**NUI MAYNOOTH**

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

**VALENTINE LAWLESS,  
LORD CLONCURRY,  
AND HIS LANDED ESTATES  
1799-1845**

**by**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>NA</b>	<b>NATIONAL ARCHIVES</b>
<b>NLI</b>	<b>NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND</b>

## INTRODUCTION:

Valentine Lawless, son of Nicholas and Mary Lawless, was born on 19 August 1773. He attended boarding school seminary in Portarlington and later progressed to school at Prospect House. He progressed to the King's School in Chester and finally graduated from Trinity College Dublin in 1790, with a B.A.<sup>1</sup> In 1799, on the death of his father, Valentine inherited the title Lord Cloncurry and the Lyons estate which contained the family home. It was situated in the barony of South Salt in north Kildare and amounted to 1,060 acres of prime agricultural land[See Appendix 1].<sup>2</sup> It was located about three miles from Celbridge and ten miles from Naas. The estate bordered the Castletown estate of the Connolly family and the Straffan House estate owned by Arthur Henry. Valentine Lawless inherited additional lands at Cloncurry on the Kildare - Meath border and at Abbington in County Limerick as well as a large house, 'Maretimo' in Blackrock, County Dublin.<sup>3</sup> The Lyons and Cloncurry holdings were later additions to the Lawless family property, as Nicholas Lawless had only purchased the latter in 1787 and the former in 1798 from the Aylmer family.<sup>4</sup>

However, up to his father's death, Valentine's interests lay not in landlordism but in the field of politics. He had endured two spells in the Tower of London due to his involvement with Wolfe Tone and the United Irishmen rebellion of 1798.<sup>5</sup> On his release in 1801, he returned to the Lyons estate for a short period and then left for a grand tour of Europe, which was prolonged by the outbreak of the

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<sup>1</sup> William J. Fitzpatrick, *Life, times and contemporaries of Lord Cloncurry* (Dublin, 1853), (Hereafter cited as Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*).

<sup>2</sup> Manuscript map, 1801 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 21 F 50).

<sup>3</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1833 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5694).

<sup>4</sup> Conveyance under decree, 1798 (Maynooth College Archive, 112/2).

<sup>5</sup> Lady Morgan, *Lady Morgan's Memoirs; Autobiography Diaries and Correspondence*, vol 2 (London 1862), p. 195, (Hereafter cited as Lady Morgan, *Memoirs*).

Napoleonic wars. He left detailed instructions for the development of the estate and additions to the house.<sup>6</sup> Even while away from Ireland he maintained regular contact with those he had left in charge. When he eventually returned in 1805, he settled down to the life of an Irish landlord.

Lord Cloncurry wrote his memoirs in 1847, entitled, 'Lord Cloncurry, Personal Recollections of the Life and Times'.<sup>7</sup> Cloncurry described his early life, his imprisonment and his acquaintance with such personalities as Daniel O'Connell and Lord Anglesey, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. There is little mention of his role in the management of the Lyons, Cloncurry and Abbington estates. The majority of letters printed in his memoirs were written to Cloncurry by characters such as O'Connell and Lord Anglesey between 1815 and 1845 which do not give a revealing insight to the man himself.

In 1855 two years after his death, William J. Fitzpatrick wrote Cloncurry's biography. Fitzpatrick distinguished his book from Cloncurry's autobiography by claiming that its predecessor was a 'series of reminiscences of his lordship's early friends and of fragmentary sketches of the most important epochs of his own life up to 1832'.<sup>8</sup> He sought to illustrate Cloncurry's life by describing the events in which he had played a part. Fitzpatrick published one hundred and seventy two letters in his book, the majority of which were written by Cloncurry. However, although Fitzpatrick focused on Cloncurry's life he did not explore Cloncurry's role as a landlord.

Valentine Lawless came into his inheritance at a time of great change. Ireland had witnessed a dramatic increase in population in the previous twenty-five years

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<sup>6</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, (undated)1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>7</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Personal recollections of the life and times* (Dublin1847), p.198. (Hereafter cited as Lord Cloncurry, *Personal recollections*).

<sup>8</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry* p.4.



which would continue until 1845.<sup>9</sup> The Napoleonic wars in Europe had created a great boom in the Irish economy, however the end of these wars in 1815 resulted in a reversal of fortunes. Between 1815 and 1845 there were several periods of difficulty caused by minor famines which were compounded by the increasing population.<sup>10</sup> Set in such a changing environment, Lord Cloncurry, as a substantial landlord is a character worthy of detailed study.

On his return to Ireland from Europe in 1805, his main aim was to introduce reforms on his three estates. He hoped to extend some of these improvements on a nationwide basis. It is possible that he developed his core values of fairness and justice through his involvement with the United Irishmen or from the French revolutionary goals of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity'. His travels around Europe also had a positive influence on his ideas of agricultural improvements. This study concentrates on various aspects of Lord Cloncurry and his Munster and Leinster estates that are not referred to in either Cloncurry's autobiography and Fitzpatrick's biography. It will not dwell on Lord Cloncurry's involvement with the United Irishmen or his imprisonment. The main focus will be on Cloncurry's direct management of his three estates.

Chapter one will examine the factors which impacted on the formation of the character of Lord Cloncurry. His early life contained some life altering experiences that shaped the man, who would in time, manage the Lyons, Cloncurry and Abbington estates. The main events of his life, the organisations and movements that he pioneered and joined will be referred to.

Chapter two will focus on Cloncurry's attempts to restructure the management of the estates and the tenants. It will analyse Cloncurry's aims and aspirations for

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<sup>9</sup> K. H. Connell, *The population of Ireland 1750-1845*, (Oxford, 1980), pp 1-3.

<sup>10</sup> K. Theodore Hoppen, *Ireland since 1800: conflict and conformity*, (New York, 1989), p. 39, (Hereafter cited as Hoppen, *Conflict and conformity*).

the changes that he introduced. The results of his attempts at improvements for the three individual estates will also be examined and will show that the degree of pace of change varied from estate to estate.

Chapter three will consider several strands under the theme, 'obstacles to progress'. Cloncurry may have been able to control developments and change within his own demesne but had lesser control over the tenants on his three estates and even less control over outside influences. The effects on the estates of the post Napoleonic war depression, the minor famines of 1821 and 1831, and the population explosion will be dealt with, as will Cloncurry's attempts to counteract them. It will also focus on the developing socio economic awareness of the tenants and how that manifested itself in their rejection of the landlord's improvement schemes – a form of behaviour that might be termed 'anti-paternalism'.

The sources for this study are wide and varied. Lord Cloncurry's biography, while taking its obvious biases into account is still a valuable source provided the information it contains can be authenticated by other sources. The value of Fitzpatrick's work lies in the inclusion of a large number of letters written by Cloncurry. A collection of one hundred and twelve letters written by Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, his land agent, is housed in the Manuscript Room of the National Library of Ireland. The majority of these were written by Cloncurry while he was on the continent between 1802 and 1805. There are several rent rolls surviving for the three estates. They contain details relating to tenants and their holdings. Cloncurry has also entered comments regarding several tenants in relation to leases, arrears, and reasons for non-payment of rent. They are not complete for the full period of this study but sufficient to create a clear image of the financial situation of the three estates between 1799 and 1845. The rentals also

include the accounts and expenses of Lord Cloncurry. Details of domestic, farm and workman's accounts are also available for the period 1830 –1845. Lord Cloncurry's cashbook survives for the period 1803-1812, which allows a detailed examination of his expenses during this period. There is also one rent roll surviving from Michael Aylmer, the former landlord, which provides an insight into the Lyons estate before the Lawless family purchased it. This particular rental allows a comparison between the management styles of Michael Aylmer and Lord Cloncurry. Several maps of the Lyons and Cloncurry estates from the early 1880's are also housed in the National Library. Further information has been gleaned for this work from other letters written by Lord Cloncurry to several of his friends such as Captain and Lady Morgan. The records of the school at Lyons are housed in the National Archives. Lord Cloncurry, his agent, Rev. Nolan, the parish priest of Lyons, Rev Costello, parish priest of Abbington, and Arthur Henry and Mr Connolly, two local landlords in the Lyons area all contributed to the Poor Inquiry. Their submissions allow a comparison of life on the estates in the 1830's after the 1831 famine.

*This thesis uses Irish historical studies guidelines for reference purposes.*

## CHAPTER ONE 1: THE LANDLORD.

In 1799, Nicholas Lawless died, leaving his son Valentine Browne Lawless to become the second Lord Cloncurry. Valentine inherited his estate, and was left to take on all his credits and debts. His three sisters each received £10,000, which was to be paid from the personal and real estate of their father. Valentine himself received £5,000. All of Nicholas's servants received one year's wages, while his personal servant, James Mc Mullen, received £50. Ann Dempsey, a widow on the estate, was also to receive £50 per annum. A further £15,000 was set aside for any children Valentine might father in the future.<sup>1</sup> However, £70,000 of the estate was withheld from Valentine by his father in case of confiscation by the British authorities.<sup>2</sup> At the time of his father's death, Valentine was imprisoned in the Tower of London on suspicion of treasonable practices with the United Irishmen. During his term of imprisonment, from April 1799 to March 1801, his grandfather died, as did his fiancée, who apparently died of a broken heart.

On his release from prison, the newly titled Lord Cloncurry returned to the Lyons estate, the family home near Celbridge in north County Kildare [Figure 1]. The topography of the estate is generally low lying and gently undulating which is typical of Kildare. Lyons Hill dominates the landscape at 651 feet. The underlying rock is limestone and the soil varies throughout the estate from brown clays to shallow slate. The Grand Canal split the estate, while the River Liffey meandered along the fringes, both providing the land with excellent drainage. The villages of

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<sup>1</sup> Official copy of will of Nicholas Cloncurry, 1799 (NA, Cloncurry papers).

<sup>2</sup> Lady Morgan, *Lady Morgan's memoirs: autobiography diaries and memoirs*, vol.2 (London, 1862), p. 195, (Hereafter cited as Lady Morgan, *Memoirs*).

Ardclough and Newcastle lay within the confines of the estate, which included the townlands of Lyons, Ardclough, Pluxtown, Kearneystown Upper, Kearneystown Lower, Dangan, Commons Upper and Commons Lower.<sup>3</sup>

The estate was to play an important role in his life and he would always have a romantic view of the estate. In a letter to a friend, Sir Charles Morgan, he wrote, 'we have a capital house here and the place is beautiful and pleasant'.<sup>4</sup> Cloncurry not only inherited the 1,060 acres that made up the Lyons estate, but also 1,796 acres at Abbington in Co Limerick,<sup>5</sup> and 3,904 acres in Cloncurry along the Kildare and Meath border.<sup>6</sup> A small amount of land was held at Kilmainham, County Dublin and a large town house, called 'Maretimo', in Blackrock Co Dublin. Lord Cloncurry also received income in the form of tithes from land in Co Carlow.<sup>7</sup> However the Lyons estate, or as he commonly called it, "Lyons" was where Cloncurry made his home until his death in 1853.

Lewis's Topographical Dictionary describes a detailed portrait of the estate. The Lyons estate comprised 1,904 statute acres, 160 acres under woodland and the remainder divided equally between tillage and pasture. 'Lyons castle, the splendid seat of Lord Cloncurry, ... the demesne [Figure 2] is very extensive and tastefully laid out'.<sup>8</sup> The description also mentions a picturesque lake, a chapel containing a bronze crucifix given by Pope Pius VI to Lord Cloncurry, a white marble font brought from Rome and a national school under the patronage of Cloncurry. According to the description, the house contained several rooms decorated with frescos by Gabrielli, and artist brought from Italy by Lord Cloncurry. Such a

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<sup>3</sup> Cloncurry estate rentals, 1833 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5694).

<sup>4</sup> Lady Morgan, *Memoirs*, p. 197.

<sup>5</sup> General cash account of Lord Cloncurry, 1769-1796 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5659).

<sup>6</sup> Schedule of Lyons, 1814 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8183).

<sup>7</sup> Rentals and accounts, 1828 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5662).

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland, vol ii* (London, 1837), p. 326.

detailed and biased description could have only been written by someone with an intimate knowledge and connection with the estate. The bias is there as Lord Cloncurry contributed to Lewis's work. The description creates an idyllic image of a landlord and his family being long established on the estate. Although this was not the case with Lyons and the Lawless family.

The Abbington lands in Limerick were the only part of the Cloncurry inheritance that had been in the family's hands for a substantial period. Cloncurry's grandfather was Robert Lawless, who, as a young man, sold turf and hares in Dublin. A Dublin woollen merchant took pity on the young boy and took him in, gave him a job and allowed him sleep under the counter.<sup>9</sup> When the merchant died, Robert married his widow. His son, Nicholas, was educated in the Catholic College in Rouen because of the restrictions of the Penal Laws.<sup>10</sup> He bought an estate in Normandy but local disdain forced him to move home. Apparently, the local people resented him purchasing property in the area and regularly made cutting remarks about him, within earshot. He returned to Ireland in 1767, having converted to Protestantism with the sole aim of becoming an Irish landlord. He married Margaret Browne, only child of Val Browne, a Dublin merchant. Nicholas managed the family business and entered into partnership with John Dawson Coates, a Quaker banker. Nicholas made his fortune from the bank of Coates and Lawless before ending their partnership in 1778. His father Robert died the following year. Nicholas bought the Rathcormac estate in Limerick, sold it shortly afterwards and purchased Abbington and Maretimo House. Nicholas was elected to

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<sup>9</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, pp 15-27.

the independent borough of Lifford, County Donegal, in 1776 and was granted the title of a baronet of the kingdom of Ireland.<sup>11</sup>

The Cloncurry and Lyons estates were initially the property of the Aylmer family. Michael Aylmer, the head of the family, was heavily in debt to Nicholas Lawless by 1781. Aylmer was a compulsive gambler and had lost a fortune through his addiction. In December 1781, Michael Aylmer and his wife Mary sold several townlands of the Cloncurry estate to Sir Nicholas Lawless for £25,365. Later, in 1787, the manor and remaining townlands of the estate were also sold to Lawless for the sum of £19,248 3s 4d.<sup>12</sup> Despite selling off the entire lands on the Cloncurry estate, Aylmer was still in debt to Lawless for £15,571 9s 5d.<sup>13</sup> By 1796, Aylmer's debts had spiralled out of control. His total debts were £33,994 19s 9d, of which £11,176 15s 1 ½ d was owed to Nicholas Lawless.<sup>14</sup> Lawless took court action in March 1796 to reclaim his debt. Thomas Westby, a master of the High Court of Chancery granted that Michael Aylmer had to pay his debts within three months or, on failing to do so, Lyons estate would have to be sold to cover the costs. Nicholas Lawless bid £37,450 sterling for all the townlands, towns and premises except the towns and lands of Kill, Hartwellstown, Brogestown, Freedeens and Monshega, which he opted not to purchase. On 23 June 1798, the sale to Lawless was confirmed and the money was paid into the Bank of Ireland.

For this sum Lawless had purchased the towns and lands of Lyons, Tanragee, Kearneystown, Dangan, Ardclough, Skeagh, Tubberkane, all of which lay in Co. Kildare, in addition to Johnstown, Tubberbride and Newcastle which lay in Co. Dublin. The 1796 rent roll of Michael Aylmer put the total rental income of the

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<sup>11</sup> *London Gazette*, 3 July, 1776.

<sup>12</sup> Conveyance under decree, 1798 (Maynooth College Archive, 112/2).

<sup>13</sup> Nicholas Lawless's notes, 1792 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8183).

<sup>14</sup> Conveyance under decree, 1798 (Maynooth College Archive, 112/2).

purchased land at £1,995.<sup>15</sup> Notes in the rental put the value of the demesne with the plantation, house and buildings at £5 per acre. The demesne was surrounded by a stone wall and bordered the Grand Canal. The timber had already been valued by a possible purchaser at £4,442 11s 9 ½ d. The house, which had only been built ten years previously at the cost of £12,000, was highly finished and 'fit for the residence of any nobleman or man of large fortune'.<sup>16</sup> The estate passed to Valentine in 1799.

When Lord Cloncurry was eventually released from prison in 1802, he put his affairs in order in Ireland and set off on a tour of Europe with two of his sisters, Charlotte and Valentina. Valentina was ill and a stay in warmer climes to aid recovery was an accepted practice at the time. Charlotte was married to Sir Francis Burton, while Valentina, would later meet and marry Count Plunkett in Rome. Count Plunkett later became Lord Dunsany. Taking the Grand Tour of Europe was not uncommon among the landed gentry of the time. Cloncurry's travels were to have a very formative influence on his life. His travels and experiences would help mould the man who would in time return to Ireland as the new landlord of the Lyons, Cloncurry and Abbingdon estates.

On his tour around the great European cities, Cloncurry mingled and socialised with the nobility of Europe. While in France, Cloncurry and Lord Holland, who was travelling with the Cloncurry family, were received by Napoleon in the magnificent rooms of the Tuilleries.<sup>17</sup> According to Cloncurry, Napoleon was very interested in the differences between an English and an Irish peerage. Cloncurry thought Napoleon to be slight and thin and 'not possessed of much more information upon general subjects than of confidence in his own oratorical

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<sup>15</sup> Rentals and accounts of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1833 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5694).

<sup>16</sup> Rent roll of the estate of Michael Aylmer, 1796 (NLI, Aylmer papers, MS 9056).

<sup>17</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 183.



powers'.<sup>18</sup> During his stay in Italy, Lord Cloncurry and his party were under the protection of Pope Pius VII.<sup>19</sup> Cloncurry claimed in his memoirs to have been on friendly terms with the pope and often accompanied him on walks around the Quirinal Gardens. Cloncurry's house in Rome shared the gardens with the pope's residence. Pope Pius VII gave Cloncurry a key to the gardens. Cloncurry saw him as a 'kind hearted man, not deficient in shrewdness'.<sup>20</sup> Cloncurry, who was a man not afraid to give his opinion on any subject, claimed that he advised the pope to send the monks out to work in the countryside in order to rid them of the idleness that existed among them. However, Cloncurry had very critical comments to make concerning the catholic clergy in a letter he wrote to Thomas Ryan. He believed that anyone who visited Rome would lose his or her religion.<sup>21</sup> Cloncurry accused the priests of being 'pimps and everything else that is bad'. He also criticised the lavishness of religious ceremonies. When Pope Pius VII left Rome to crown Napoleon, Lord Cloncurry, Count Plunkett and Lord Mountcashel accompanied him on horseback as far as Viterbo. Many young Irish gentlemen travelled around Europe during this period, yet very few travelled or mixed with such illustrious company as Cloncurry did.

Pope Pius VII gave Cloncurry permission to excavate in the ruins of ancient Rome. A law forbade the removal of antiquities from Rome, but Cloncurry and many others soon realised that the poverty of the owners and authorities made it possible for the law to be by-passed. As a result of this Cloncurry sent several crates of excavated and purchased items back to Ireland. He had to use an Italian name to ensure the safe passage of his goods. Cases of wine were sent from France

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<sup>18</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 183.

<sup>19</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Personal recollections*, p. 198.

<sup>20</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Personal recollections*, p. 198.

<sup>21</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 16 June, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

and Italy. Two chimneypieces of white marble and two tables of ornamental alabaster were sent home from Rome.<sup>22</sup> Pope Pius VII presented Cloncurry with a white marble holy water font, which later stood in the chapel in the Lyons estate. Cloncurry also sent home four columns of polished red Egyptian granite.<sup>23</sup> Three of these were from the Golden House of Nero, and had been used by Raphael to decorate the Farnesine Palace. The fourth column was from the Baths of Titus. The pillars were certified by Baron Von Humboldt, who was in Rome collecting artefacts and works of art for the king of Prussia. While Cloncurry was on his tour of Europe, his plans for the extensive development of Lyons House were underway. The four columns of red granite would support the great portico over the front door of Lyons House. They still stand there today.

One shipment went down in Killiney Bay on 'The Aid'. It included items belonging to Lord Cloncurry, valued at £1,000. More notable, were the items of Miss Moore, a travelling companion of the Cloncurry family, which included art valued at £18,000 sterling, but which Cloncurry claimed could not be replaced by any money.<sup>24</sup> Cloncurry also sent home several works of art, which he felt would add to the art collection of the country.<sup>25</sup> While in Rome, Cloncurry commissioned the artist Gabrielli to travel to Ireland to help in the redevelopment of Lyons House. Gabrielli painted several magnificent frescos of local landscapes in various rooms in Lyons house. Most of these remain, but unfortunately, two were painted over as time progressed.

While in Nice, Lord Cloncurry fell in love with Elizabeth Georgina Morgan, the youngest daughter of Major General Morgan, who had previously been

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<sup>22</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 2 September, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>23</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 16 June, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>24</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 16 June, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>25</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 16 June, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

commander in chief of the East Indies. The two families arranged to meet again in Rome, and on their reunion, Lord Cloncurry and Elizabeth Georgina were married on 16 June 1803.<sup>26</sup> At the time the new Lady Cloncurry was only sixteen years old. Before they left Europe, Lady Cloncurry gave birth to two children, Valentine Anne and Mary. The new family arrived home to Lyons estate on 5 November 1805. So proud was Cloncurry of his new wife that he had sent instructions to his agent, Thomas Ryan, to prepare for their arrival.<sup>27</sup> One candle was to be placed in each of the 220 windows in Lyons House. Three pounds was allowed to make a bonfire on Lyons Hill and to provide ale for the cottiers on Lyons demesne. A further three pounds was left in the public house in Newcastle for free ale for the tenants. On the Cloncurry estate, ten pounds was allowed for two bonfires and ale for the tenants. Cloncurry hoped that the bonfires would not be mistaken as signs of a rebellion. The arrangements were 'a compliment to the loveliest woman and best wife in England'. Lord and Lady Cloncurry became the socialites of their time, and regularly attended the great balls in Dublin, particularly in Dublin Castle. According to William J. Fitzpatrick, Cloncurry's biographer, 'people who would normally have stayed at home, hurried to the ballroom, in order to catch a glimpse of the exquisite enchantress'.<sup>28</sup>

Unfortunately, Cloncurry's peace and contentment would not last. On 19 February 1807, Lord Cloncurry sued Sir John Bennet Piers for criminal conversation with Lady Cloncurry. Piers was accused that, 'on Elizabeth Georgina, he did make assault and did then and there ravish, embrace, debauch, lie with and

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<sup>26</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 268.

<sup>27</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 25 October, 1805 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>28</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 288.

carnally know'.<sup>29</sup> He was also accused of depriving Lord Cloncurry of 'the comfort, society, love and affection of his said wife'. Cloncurry sued Piers for the sum of £100,000. Sir John Bennet Piers had been an old school friend of Lord Cloncurry's. Piers had come to visit family friends in the area and called to visit Cloncurry at the Lyons estate. He became infatuated with the young Lady Cloncurry and set out to seduce her. He stayed at Lyons House regularly and sent several letters to Lady Cloncurry stating that he could not live without her. Lady Cloncurry kept this a secret from her husband. In the two-day court case, this was explained away as the 'secret vanity of women'.<sup>30</sup> On one occasion, Piers visited the house when Lord Cloncurry was absent, and he was shown to the drawing room, where Lady Cloncurry was resting. Piers then proceeded to check the billiard room, which was adjacent to the drawing room, to see if they were totally alone. He then locked all doors that led to the drawing room and covered the keyholes. In his haste, Piers did not notice Gabrielli the artist on top of scaffolding in the billiard room where he was painting the ceiling. Gabrielli later testified to Piers' strange behaviour and that Lady Cloncurry had emerged from the drawing room in a confused state, with her dress discomposed and showing signs of a struggle.<sup>31</sup> Her face was 'as red as fire'.

Later that year, the Cloncurry family moved to a house on College Green for a period of one month. Lord Cloncurry shared his time in the two houses in the Lyons estate and College Green. Piers also took up lodgings on the Green and called to Lady Cloncurry whenever her husband was away. On several occasions they were found in compromising situations. On one such occasion, as Lady

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<sup>29</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Full and accurate report of the trial of Sir John Piers for criminal conversation with Lady Cloncurry*, (Dublin, 1807), p. 4, (Hereafter cited as Lord Cloncurry, *Trial of Sir John Piers*).

<sup>30</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Trial of Sir John Piers*.

<sup>31</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Trial of Sir John Piers*.

Cloncurry was ready to leave the house, with her carriage and companions waiting outside the house, Piers arrived to visit. Lady Cloncurry emerged one half hour later 'so flushed and warm that she had to ask for the windows of the carriage to be let down for air'.<sup>32</sup>

Piers gave Lady Cloncurry a portrait of himself and a lock of his hair in a locket. On another occasion, when the family had returned to the Lyons estate, Lady Cloncurry confessed to being too ill to come to dinner but was later seen by her husband walking on Piers' arm. The following morning, Lord Cloncurry woke to find his wife crying and begging him to send Piers away. Cloncurry failed to find Piers in the house, but noticed that a fowling piece was missing and presumed that Piers had risen early to go shooting. When he eventually found Piers on the other side of the estate he was careful to ask him for the gun before ordering him to leave the house. At the time Lord Cloncurry was unaware of the actual situation and mistakenly presumed that Piers was only guilty of 'extreme of gallantries'<sup>33</sup> Lord Cloncurry subsequently invited Piers to his house on several other occasions. Eventually, Lady Cloncurry broke down under the stress and told her husband the truth about the affair. She told him, 'it is too late, the villain has ruined me, and dishonoured you, I am guilty'.<sup>34</sup> Piers later wrote to Lord Cloncurry and challenged him to a duel to the death.

At the court case, the blame of seduction was laid entirely on Piers. Lady Cloncurry was deemed too young to resist. The trial lasted for two days, with a crowded courtroom each day. The jury deliberated for one half hour and decided in favour of the plaintiff for the sum of £20,000. Cloncurry was devastated by the revelations. In a letter to Thomas Ryan, he wrote 'I have been robbed by the

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<sup>32</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Trial of Sir John Piers*.

<sup>33</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 290.

<sup>34</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Trial of Sir John Piers*

cruellest villainy, of all that made life of value to me, oh how great and undeserved is my misfortune, I am striving to hide from the world and myself.'<sup>35</sup> Cloncurry ended the letter with 'let me see you my dear Tom, though, I can hardly wish it, for even friendship can do nothing for me'.

The marriage was dissolved by an act of parliament and Lady Cloncurry returned to England, where she re-married, to the Rev. John Sanford in 1819. Her children remained in Ireland with Lord Cloncurry and Lady Cloncurry would never see them again. During the court case, she wrote to Thomas Ryan, beseeching him to steal a lock of hair from Valentine Anne and Mary so she might 'place it next to her heart'.<sup>36</sup> Lord Cloncurry also re-married, to Emily Douglas, the widow of the Hon Joseph Leeson. She had three children from her first marriage, whom Lord Cloncurry treated with great love and affection.

On his return to Ireland in 1805, Lord Cloncurry found that the act of union had caused many of the wealthy landlords to move to England. Absenteeism was something that Cloncurry despised. He saw himself as a man who tried to improve his own area through drainage or road improvement and other works, but later claimed that absenteeism caused the poor rates and pauperism to rise to the extent that improving landlords like him could not give employment. In response to this he resolved to live and die in his home country.<sup>37</sup> He was determined to set a good example and stem the flow of the aristocracy across the Irish Sea. He wanted to devote the rest of his life to fulfilling his duty as a quiet country gentleman. Cloncurry did not involve himself in mainstream politics after his return to Ireland. In a speech at the Thomas Moore banquet in 1818, he claimed that his 'magisterial

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<sup>35</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 11 June, 1806 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>36</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 302.

<sup>37</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 285.

duties, his princely hospitality, his agricultural pursuits and munificent private charity took up all of his time'.<sup>38</sup>

Cloncurry was an acquaintance of Robert Owen, the English philanthropist who had established a model farm and village at New Lanark in England. Cloncurry had contributed £500 to the Hibernian Philanthropic Society. Owen stayed at the Lyons House on several occasions. Cloncurry and Owen hoped to introduce some of the ideals of Owen to Ireland. Cloncurry wrote to Owen in 1823 and claimed to have found 'extraordinary instances of good sense and zeal amongst the middle and lower orders'.<sup>39</sup> The 1821 famine, which caused severe hardship for the peasants, prevented any such movement being established. Cloncurry travelled to Connaught in 1823 and claimed to have witnessed scenes of the military distributing small amounts of potatoes to the poor but with the bayonet at the ready to prevent a rush. Cloncurry was critical of the government's attitude of not spending money to educate Catholics unless they converted first. Perhaps his involvement with Robert Owen helped develop a determination in Cloncurry to dedicate his life to improving the condition of his tenants and where possible the general situation in Ireland.

Lord Cloncurry certainly could be considered an improving landlord. He took great pride in his contributions to his demesne and his tenants' lives. Throughout his life, Cloncurry was personally involved in improvements on his estates, and within the country. In 1814, Cloncurry and the Duke of Leinster set up the County Kildare Farming Society. The main aim of the society was to encourage agricultural improvements. Agricultural fetes were held in Monasterevin, County

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<sup>38</sup> Lord Cloncurry to the Moore Banquet, quoted in, Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 318.

<sup>39</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Robert Owen, 1823, quoted in, Lady Morgan, *Memoirs*, p. 461.

Kildare to demonstrate such improvements. Ploughing matches were also held at the Monasterevin fetes.

Cloncurry was a man who always had an opinion on most matters and was not afraid to articulate them. In 1816, he wrote to the editor of the *Carrick's Morning Post* to criticise the government for the construction of the Royal Canal, which was parallel to, and only a few miles from, the Grand Canal.<sup>40</sup> He felt that it would be an 'unnecessary rival and a public expense'. The Grand Canal passed through the Lyons estate and certainly enhanced its value. Perhaps this fuelled his protest more than the reasons he gave. In the same letter, he claimed that Queen's County coal brought by Canal was better than English coal and, if well managed and transported by canal would be cheaper. On 13 March 1824, Cloncurry attended a meeting in the Commercial Buildings in Dublin to discuss the possibility of draining and cultivating several bog lands in Ireland.<sup>41</sup> Cloncurry stated that there were three million acres of bog land and two million acres of wasteland that could be reclaimed. Lord Cloncurry and several colleagues formed the Joint Stock Company, with the aim of reclaiming the five million acres of unproductive land. The project needed the co-operation of the British Government, but the Government required the company to invest four fifths of the total cost before the project started. This proved impossible and the company collapsed with the project. In April 1824, Cloncurry offered a £20 premium to the first person that could transport 100 tonnes of potatoes to Limerick by canal or by the River Shannon.<sup>42</sup> He also offered a £10 premium to whoever arrived in second place with their cargo. At the time, according to Cloncurry, Limerick and Clare were in a state of destitution.

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<sup>40</sup> Lord Cloncurry to the *Carricks Morning Post*, 1816 quoted in, Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 320.

<sup>41</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 352.

<sup>42</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 353.



In 1834, Lord Cloncurry published his suggestions for a law promoting the pacification of Ireland and the improvement of the Irish territory and population.<sup>43</sup> In his design, he proposed the abolition of tithes, and of the fiscal powers of the grand juries and corporations. In lieu of the tithes, the grand jury cess and local taxes, he suggested a general tax on landlords and tenants. He proposed that all local public concerns should be placed under the management of commissioners, who would be appointed by the crown. Local bodies elected by the taxpayers would aid these commissioners. One role of the commissioners would be to create permanent employment for the working class. According to Cloncurry, the tithes were too heavy a burden for the already rack-rented occupiers. However, Cloncurry possessed a paternalistic attitude towards granting these concessions to the working class. It was important that concessions were granted from a higher rank or order and were timed properly to ensure that 'the wild excitement that pervades the rural multitude ... be weakened. Cloncurry also wrote 'the poverty, natural improvidence, and recklessness of the peasantry require a cautious and general system of productive employment under which means and habits will generally improve together throughout the country'. Despite having a genuine wish to improve the lot of the peasantry, it had to be on the terms of the landed gentry in power. It was not for the tenant to change his lot. Cloncurry's attitude was typical of improvers of the time. On his Mount Bellew estate in County Galway, Christopher Dillon Bellew insisted that dung pits were to be set back from the houses and turf was not heaped along side the roadways.<sup>44</sup> He also chose the location for their houses. Yet 'these valid aspirations were presented to the lower

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<sup>43</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Design of a law for promoting the pacification of Ireland and the improvement of the Irish territory and population* (Dublin, 1834), (hereafter cited as Lord Cloncurry, *Design of a law*).

<sup>44</sup> Joe Clarke, *Christopher Dillon Bellew and his Galway estates, 1763-1826*. (Dublin, 2003), p. 16, (Hereafter cited as Clarke, C.D. Bellew).

orders as compulsory impositions and could be mistaken as merely another attempt by the landlord to curtail their freedom’.

Cloncurry complained that the shortage of homesteads, farm offices and granaries in Ireland was a disgrace. His proposed general tax could be used to rectify the situation. According to him, Irish farmers lost up to one tenth of their produce to rot, vermin and waste due to the lack of proper buildings. Cloncurry had visited Lucerne in Switzerland when he was younger, and from his experience, was able to say that although Switzerland was not a major corn- producing country, it was safe from famine, due to its public granaries. These were very well organised and resulted in very little waste or loss, and produced vast profits. In his opinion, such improvements could be applied to Ireland, which would prevent unnecessary waste and give a handsome return. In his proposal, he once again suggested the reclamation of the three million acres of unproductive wasteland. For a very small outlay, it could become very productive, and provide employment and settlement for 100,000 families. He stated that if capital was combined with the available labour, Ireland could be transformed into ‘a smiling garden, and her despairing people, happy, useful and contented’.<sup>45</sup> With the idea of improvements came the ideal that everything had to be useful, including the peasantry.

Cloncurry also believed that the reclamation project would stem the flow of emigration to England where vast numbers of Irish were lowering the price of labour. The population would be employed and peaceful, and in addition the state would be saved the expense of military and police that were currently needed to ‘resist a population made reckless by idleness, famine, and discomfort, and stimulated by political agitators, anxious to destroy property which they have not

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<sup>45</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Design of a law*.

the industry to acquire'.<sup>46</sup> His views on the usefulness or uselessness of the 'whiteboys' and other such groups to Ireland and the welfare of the people is predictable. In 1845, Cloncurry allowed an abatement of rent to Michael Ryan and Martin Carey on the Abbington estate for defending themselves against whitefeet.<sup>47</sup>

Lord Cloncurry claimed in 1824, to have voted for the corn laws, as he knew his countrymen had never tasted bread and it gave Ireland much needed money.<sup>48</sup> The corn laws were introduced to regulate the price of corn. The poor laws were introduced as a result of the poor inquiry of 1836. They set up the poor law union and empowered the formation of the workhouses. They caused great division among the landed class as the poor rate was levied on the landed class to pay for the costs. Cloncurry was reluctantly for them and believed that they would lower the price of land and probably cost him £1,200 or £1,500 per annum, "but as no tenant can pay more than he already does, the landlord must be answerable, as in the case of tithes, thus the poor laws will be an indirect tax; the desire to abolish it will join the upper orders to the corps reformateur and ultimately the whole system of iniquity must be put down".<sup>49</sup>

Cloncurry had definite opinions on tenant rights, which he detailed in a letter to Dr. Richard Grattan in 1848. In his opinion, bargains concerning land should be made in court, where the landlord would be ashamed to overcharge. In addition, a law could be formulated preventing the lessee from sub-letting at a higher rent than he or she paid.<sup>50</sup> This would protect the poor cottiers and labourers. He also felt that the landlord and proposed tenant could state in open court what buildings and

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<sup>46</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Design of a law*.

<sup>47</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1845 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5665).

<sup>48</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Sir Charles Morgan, 1824, quoted in, Lady Morgan, *Memoirs*, p. 196.

<sup>49</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Sir Charles Morgan, 1824, quoted in, Lady Morgan, *Memoirs*, p. 197.

<sup>50</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Dr. Richard Grattan, 1848, quoted in, Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 198.

improvements were required, and what each was required to pay. If necessary, a third party could lend the necessary funds, which would be the first charge on the farm. The entire arrangement could be registered by the clerk of the peace, which would protect all parties and develop decent homesteads.

In 1826, Cloncurry wrote to the marquis of Downshire in relation to the conduct of the Kildare Place Education Society and the employment of the poor.<sup>51</sup> In it he claimed that no individual in Ireland had expended more money in the improvement of property than he. His aims for the improvement of Ireland were put forward in this letter. He was very critical of some suggested policies of the government, such as the transportation to the colonies of the most active and industrious of Irish people. This was removing the very people who had most to contribute to the future improvement of the country. At this time, Mr Cropper, an English merchant had proposed to the government to use his merchant fleet to transport cotton from the East Indies to be spun by cheap labour in Ireland, which would then be transported back to the East Indies. Cloncurry was adamant that cotton factories would be detrimental to the health and morals of the Irish people. According to Cloncurry, Ireland could prove to be more productive and industrious than it was at that time. The drainage of bog lands and planting of trees would prove more productive than Peruvian mines. Irish peat could easily be used in the production of iron, which would reduce the imports of finished iron from Sweden. Self-sufficiency for Ireland was a main objective throughout Cloncurry's life. Cloncurry had proposed the building of a ship canal between Dublin and Galway, which would run between the Grand and Royal Canals. This was despite his earlier complaint about the Royal Canal being too close to the Grand Canal. The large

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<sup>51</sup> Lord Cloncurry to the Marquis of Downshire, On the conduct of the Kildare place education society and the employment of the poor, 1826 (Dublin, 1826).

midlands plain would be easy to excavate. Cloncurry paid John Killaly, an engineer, to draw up maps and plans for the project. Cloncurry claimed that with 30,000 workers, he could complete the project for one million pounds.<sup>52</sup> He claimed that his proposed ship canal would repay itself in five years of peace or one year of war, by saving trade from the rough seas of the channel and from the steam profiteers.<sup>53</sup> The canal would also act as a drain for the bog lands and would provide food, employment and profit to millions.

Lord Cloncurry claimed in his memoirs that he was the architect of the petty sessions court system.<sup>54</sup> This was substantiated by his biographer, William J. Fitzpatrick. Cloncurry was critical of the old format whereby any individual who had complaint to make against someone, had to travel to the nearest magistrate's home or office and wait several hours for an audience with the magistrate, who was usually an acquaintance of the individual he or she was lodging the complaint about. The decision usually went with the acquaintance of the magistrate. Cloncurry was critical of the lack of honour in such a system. He aimed to introduce improvements and abolish as many abuses of the system as he saw fit. The petty sessions as devised by Cloncurry were first held in the town of Celbridge, five miles from the Lyons estate. It took some time for the other local magistrates to support the new idea, but gradually they too adopted Cloncurry's system. Cloncurry insisted that two magistrates would attend weekly to hear and adjudicate on complaints of the local people. Augustus, the Duke of Leinster, attended the court sessions regularly. Apparently, the Duke would often address Cloncurry as

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<sup>52</sup> Lord Cloncurry to the editor of the *Morning Herald*, 14 December, 1827.

<sup>53</sup> Lord Cloncurry to the Marquis of Downshire, On the conduct of the Kildare place education society and the employment of the poor, 1826 (Dublin, 1826).

<sup>54</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Personal recollections*, p. 231.

the Lord Chief Justice of Celbridge and Lyons.<sup>55</sup> The Petty Sessions were eventually authorized and ratified by successive Acts of Parliament in 1836.<sup>56</sup>

Lord Cloncurry had experienced and endured a lot in his early life. He was born into luxury, was well educated and had travelled extensively throughout Europe. His travels played a significant role in the formation of the man and his outlook on life. He observed with a keen eye how improvements in other countries had changed people's lives for the better. Despite spending time in prison, and losing both his father and his fiancée during his prison term and losing his wife to an affair, he retained a remarkably positive outlook on life and remained active in his attempts to improve his county and the lives of its people.

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<sup>55</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Personal recollections*, p. 231.

<sup>56</sup> *Bill to amend act for holding petty sessions by justices of peace in Ireland*, H.C. 1836 iv.527.

## CHAPTER 2: NEW MANAGEMENT POLICIES

The Lawless family had come to financial prominence in a very short period of time among a landed class that had been in their lofty position for generations. Their neighbours included long established gentry such as the Henrys of Straffan and Connollys of Castletown in County Kildare. Nicholas Lawless did not have the opportunity to live the life of a wealthy landlord for very long and after his death, in 1799, his son Valentine inherited the estate. This was a period when the traditional relationship that had previously existed between landlord and tenant had already started to change. In the eighteenth century, a common method of estate management saw the landlord dividing his estate into large tracts and letting them to middlemen on long leases.<sup>1</sup> By so doing the landlords avoided the costs of direct management.<sup>2</sup> The middlemen rarely bothered making any improvements to their holdings and the occupiers did not have the means to do so.<sup>3</sup> These middlemen made a comfortable living from subletting to the actual occupiers and by 1800, subdivision had created 'a concealed class of occupiers'.<sup>4</sup>

The Napoleonic wars created a demand for Irish agricultural produce which resulted in rising prices. Landlords who had previously sublet their lands to middlemen realised that they were not receiving the true rental value of their property. They gradually sought to involve themselves directly into the management of their estates and to remove the middlemen and others who sublet. This did not prove to be an easy task because of the long leases held by some

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<sup>1</sup> James S. Donnelly, JR, *Land and people in nineteenth century Cork, The rural economy and the land question* (London, 1975), p. 9, (Hereafter cited as Donnelly, *Nineteenth century Cork*).

<sup>2</sup> Hoppen, *Conflict and conformity*, p. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Donnelly, *Nineteenth century Cork*, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> W.A. Maguire, *The Downshire estates in Ireland, 1801-1845, The management of Irish estates in the early eighteenth century* (Oxford, 1792), p. 121.

middlemen which were often as long as 99 years or three lives<sup>5</sup>. Where possible landlords allowed leases to run their course and did not renew them or if they did it was not on the same terms or length as before. Landlords sought to lease their land on leases of 21 or 31 years, or sometimes on leases that were yearly and at the will of the landlord.

The high prices and large profits that resulted from the Napoleonic wars ended with the peace of 1815. Some landlords were forced to grant reductions to the tenants and their net incomes remained static between 1815 and the 1820's.<sup>6</sup> By 1830, prices had fallen 30 to 40 per cent below wartime levels and resulted in a widespread call for a reduction in rents.<sup>7</sup> Many landlords found themselves in serious financial trouble. By 1844, 1,322 landed estates were being managed by courts and would eventually be sold to pay creditors.<sup>8</sup>

During this period many landlords expanded and improved their estates. The 'Big Houses' were extended, large ornamental lakes were created and great plantations of natural and foreign species were planted to enhance the estate's appearance. Improving landlords encouraged their tenants to farm productively so that improvements were made without any direct investment being made on the part of the landlord. Allowances and abatements were granted to tenants for improvements made such as the planting of trees, draining fields, or slating houses. Progression meant higher profits and many landlords encouraged new techniques in agriculture, a greater use of fertiliser and the introduction of foreign breeds of livestock. Schools, infirmaries and churches were built with financial assistance from the local landlord which was a benefit to the locals, and also added to the

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<sup>5</sup> Donnelly, *Nineteenth century Cork*, p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Hoppen, *Conflict and conformity*, p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Donnelly, *Nineteenth century Cork*, p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> Hoppen, *Conflict and conformity*, p. 36.



enhancement of the landlord's family reputation. Such developments were typical of the paternalistic approach adopted by property owners in the early nineteenth century. Paternalism has been described as a 'belief in the moral and intellectual superiority of the upper orders ... a belief among the better class that they had a duty and the capacity to bring about a change in the circumstances of the lower orders'.<sup>9</sup>

When Lord Cloncurry inherited his estates, these changes had not yet begun on his property. Middlemen still held large tracts of land on his three estates under long leases and on generous terms. According to the 1796 rental of Michael Aylmer, the holdings of the eight cottiers at Pluxtown on the Lyons estate were held at 20 shillings per acre, a rate of rent that had not been raised for 50 years.<sup>10</sup> This land could now be let at £2 10s 0d per acre. The townland of Tanragee would set at £2 5s 6d per acre while the townlands of Skeagh and Kearneystown, held by Bart Gerrard, could be let for double the existing rent when the lease expired. This high land valuation was due to its proximity to the banks of the Grand Canal with an extensive front to the Commons of Lyons

Cloncurry's decision to involve himself directly in the management of his estates was informed by his experiences of the poverty that he witnessed among the peasants in Italy and from his father's influence. In a letter to his agent, Cloncurry wrote that 'my father and I have made it a rule to encourage resident tenants and to put off our estates the clap of middlemen'.<sup>11</sup> He followed his father's lead in this policy but he had his own motives. By restructuring the rentals and introducing direct leasing he would be in a position to increase his rental income. Also, by

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<sup>9</sup> Joe Clarke, *Christopher Dillon Bellew and his Galway estates, 1763-1826* (Dublin, 2003), p. 6, (Hereafter cited as Clarke, *C.D. Bellew*).

<sup>10</sup> Rent roll of the estate of Michael Aylmer, 1796 (NLI, Aylmer papers, MS 9056).

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, undated (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

being in direct contact with his tenantry he could ensure greater loyalty among them. Once he had achieved this he could start to introduce modern methods to improve agricultural output on his estates. Cloncurry's mentality was one of someone open to change. Perhaps his social and political ideals developed from involvement with the United Irishmen and his travels through France where he encountered the revolutionary ideas of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity'. He would also have drawn inspiration from other improving landlords of his time. In his memoirs, Cloncurry claimed that between the time of his father's death and his own release from prison some of his tenants had taken advantage of the situation to sublet their farms, cut down woods and commit various other misdemeanours. A few 'turned rich meadows into brick fields ... and opened quarries'.<sup>12</sup> Cloncurry believed that the magistrate and squireen were the worst type of tenant and, following legal advice, he paid some tenants to leave his lands and allowed others to remain on the land only until their leases expired.<sup>13</sup>

By 1803, the situation on the Lyons estate had not shown any great change as there were only 16 cash paying tenants holding land on the Lyons estate on long-term leases. Lord Cloncurry was still in Europe and did not actively involve himself in the restructuring of his estates until 1807. The size of the holdings and leases varied greatly. Bart Gerard held 107 acres 2 roods in Skeagh. He held a lease of 41 years dating from 1791 and paid a yearly rent of £87.<sup>14</sup> Edward Kennedy held 200 acres at Newcastle on a lease of three lives, for a yearly rent of £42 10s 0d. Widow Maguire held 71 acres 1 rood 38 perches in Newcastle. Her lease was for 61 years dating from 1787, with a yearly rent of £66 11s 10d.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Personal recollections*, p. 155.

<sup>13</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Personal recollections*, p. 156.

<sup>14</sup> Rental of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5693).

<sup>15</sup> Rental of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5693).

Widow Maguire was possibly the woman whom Cloncurry described in his memoirs as having complained that the expiration of her lease deprived her of the rent that her husband had received from subletting, even though this was against his covenant. The landlord claimed that he made her an allowance of £50 a year to compensate her loss.<sup>16</sup> There were no tenants on the estate in arrears during the 1803-1811 period. All tenants paid half yearly. This coincides with Michael Aylmer's notes in his 1796 rental that the lands on the Lyons estate were rented under their true current value.<sup>17</sup>

By 1825, the situation in relation to leases had changed on the Lyons estate. The number of tenants had increased from 16 in 1803, to 50 in 1825.<sup>18</sup> The leases were for shorter terms and the rental values had increased. Only six leases pre-date Cloncurry taking over the estate and these were leases either forever or for three lives.<sup>19</sup> Due to the length of their term Cloncurry was unable to make any changes to these particular leases. Thirteen of the tenants had just taken up or renewed their leases between 1821 and 1825. Their terms varied between 21 years, 31 years and for one life. This is consistent with Cloncurry's claim that he re-let his lands to 'occupiers who held the plough in their own hands'.<sup>20</sup> The majority of holdings were smaller and leases shorter than they had been in 1803. Richard Farrell, of Edwardstown, held 12 acres 0 roods 14 perches on a lease of one life.<sup>21</sup> Dennis Kenny held 34 acres 0 roods 16 perches in Ardclough on a lease of 31 years. Twenty-nine tenants had no lease or term of holding specified, being literally tenants at will. The holdings of these tenants were very small. Both Lawrence

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<sup>16</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Personal recollections*, p. 155.

<sup>17</sup> Rent roll of the estate of Michael Aylmer, 1796 (NLI, Aylmer, MS 9056).

<sup>18</sup> Rental of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, 1825 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5661).

<sup>19</sup> Rental of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, 1825 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5661).

<sup>20</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Personal recollections*, p. 181.

<sup>21</sup> Rental of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, 1825 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5661).

Lynch and Patrick Reilly were two such tenants at will with 2 acres 2 roods 3 perches in Dangan. Twenty-nine of his tenants were in arrears in 1825 indicating a rise in rents and a difficulty for tenants to pay. By 1833, only seven tenants on the Lyons estate had under-tenants, the remainder were lessee occupiers.<sup>22</sup> By this stage Cloncurry was successful in implementing his policy of removing the middlemen.

A similar situation had existed on the Abbington estate in County Limerick. In 1781, Nicholas Lawless had advertised the estate in four lots for tenants to take up rentals. The townlands of Rath and Mongfune contained 230 acres and 347 acres respectively, while the mountain farms of Forkeal and Moher contained 347 acres and 350 acres respectively. All lay within eight miles of Limerick city and within two miles of Abbington. He proposed to let the holdings for a period of 31 years from May 1782. The farms were broken into smaller holdings for rent and in 1803 there were 22 tenants on the Abbington estate.<sup>23</sup> The original leases expired in 1813 and by 1829, the number of tenants in the Abbington estate had increased to 52.<sup>24</sup>

All these leases had commenced since Cloncurry's inheritance of the estate and were of shorter terms in keeping with his overall policy. Twenty agreements were dated from the post Napoleonic wars period and all for a term of one life. Three others were for three lives. Pat Hanley of Farrane held 24 acres 2 roods 10 perches on a lease of one life from 1818. John Connell, also from Farrane, held 9 acres 3 roods 7 perches on a similar lease of one life from 1818. Some of the holdings were still quite large such as that of Richard Philips of 110 acres 2 roods 32 perches or Daniel Costello who held 204 acres. The twenty holdings at Rathwood were at will, including that of John O'Brien who was described as 'not an improving tenant' and James O'Meara, whose holding was rated as 'land

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<sup>22</sup> Rental of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, 1833 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS5664)

<sup>23</sup> Rental of the estate of Lord Cloncurry in county Limerick, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5693).

<sup>24</sup> Rentals of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, 1829 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5662).

improved and well divided but house very bad'<sup>25</sup>. The land at Rathwood was leased for 30s per acre, a possible indication as to the quality of land compared to that on the Lyons estate.

By 1834, all 12 tenants in Rathwood were in arrears with their rent payments, a pattern that was reflected on the Lyons estate.<sup>26</sup> They had not incurred the arrears but had bought out those who had and now were considered by Cloncurry as 'generally improving and industrious'. It is noteworthy that the new tenants had to take on the arrears of the previous occupiers. In relation to Patrick Mc Namara's holding of 230 acres in Rath which was leased for 51 years from 1786, a note in the 1836 rental states, 'expires in 1837, have directed a survey be made of present division of this hold, now held by 30 tenants'.<sup>27</sup> This is another example of how Cloncurry phased out middlemen, introduced direct leasing and re-drew divisions on both the Lyons and Abbington estates.

However, despite Cloncurry being able to make amendments to leases and the size of the holdings on the Lyons and Abbington estates, the situation was very different on the Cloncurry estate. Nicholas Lawless had purchased this estate from Michael Aylmer in two lots, in 1781 and 1787.<sup>28</sup> The 1797 rental showed that the land was held by 19 tenants. In 1803, there were still only 19 tenants with land on the Cloncurry estate and the sizes of the individual holdings were considerable. Eight holdings were over 200 acres, two of which were over 300 acres and one amounted to 850 acres. None of the tenants on this particular estate was in arrears in 1803. This is not unusual considering that, in the economic climate of the time, the quality of the land and the size of the holdings were very conducive to increased

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<sup>25</sup> Rentals of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, 1832 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5663).

<sup>26</sup> Rentals of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, 1834 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5663).

<sup>27</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1836 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS5664).

<sup>28</sup> Conveyance under decree, 1798 (Maynooth College Archive, 112/2).

agricultural production. The majority of the tenants on the former Aylmer estate were still not occupiers but acting as middlemen and subletting. This was a practice that Cloncurry claimed that both he and his father detested and did not permit on their estates. Yet, by 1829, there were still only 19 holdings on the Cloncurry estate.<sup>29</sup> This was at a time when the Lyons estate had been sub-divided into over 50 holdings.

The total income in rent from the estate in 1797, was £2,310 6s 3d.<sup>30</sup> By 1803, this had only risen to £2,691 14s 1d.<sup>31</sup> In 1836, the yearly income from the Cloncurry rental was £2,506 3s 2d, while the income from the Lyons rental was slightly lower at £1,888 3s 0d.<sup>32</sup> This is put into context when the size of the estates is considered. The Cloncurry estate totalled 3,904 acres, while the estate in Lyons amounted to 1,060 acres.<sup>33</sup> The type of land on each estate was fertile, unlike at Abbington where a considerable amount was bogland and mountainous. The reason why the Lyons estate yielded a proportionally greater income is due the term and value of the leases of the Cloncurry tenants granted by Aylmer. The majority of leases dated from 1779, which was just over one year before Michael Aylmer had to sell the estate to Lawless in lieu of the large amount of money he owed him. It is possible that Michael Aylmer knew he was under pressure to sell, and granted his tenants long leases at very reasonable terms. It is not possible to establish whether this was out of a sense of loyalty to his tenants and as a gesture to give them a form of security for their future under their new landlord. It may well have been the case that Aylmer was exacting revenge on Lawless for forcing him to sell. Local tradition in the area suggests that this was his intention. One other

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<sup>29</sup> Rentals of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, 1829 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5662).

<sup>30</sup> Rentals of the manor of Cloncurry, 1797 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5658).

<sup>31</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5693).

<sup>32</sup> Rentals of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, 1836 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5664).

<sup>33</sup> Rentals of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, 1833 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5694).

possible explanation for the long leases granted by Aylmer could be the influence of the middlemen. They were a wealthy and powerful cohort that could have exerted pressure on Aylmer to agree to the leases, particularly if he was also in debt to them. There are no memoirs or diaries of Michael Aylmer surviving to give an indication of his mindset or intentions at that time. Furthermore, he gave long leases on financial terms that were clearly below the economic potential of the estate at the time. The sale of his estate did not clear his debt and he was forced by the courts to put the Lyons estate up for auction in 1796 when it was also purchased by Lawless.

Nicholas Lawless might have had possession of the Cloncurry estate but he was not going to make any greater profits from it than Aylmer did. In 1803 the income from the Cloncurry estate was £2,691 14 s 1d and yet, by 1836, it was only £2,506 38s 2d. In the 1836 rent ledger Cloncurry wrote that 'neither increase or decrease expected for some years'.<sup>34</sup> Clearly he was unable to make significant changes to the Cloncurry rental.

Further evidence of Aylmer's possible vengeance was the attitude of the tenants on the Cloncurry estate to arrears. For the entire term of Cloncurry's reign as their landlord they were very careful not to fall into arrears and never defaulted on two consecutive payments. On rare occurrences when these tenants did fall into arrears they normally paid the rent and arrears in full whenever the rent was next due. In 1803, there were no tenants in arrears on the Cloncurry or Lyons estates.<sup>35</sup> However the half yearly rental for May 1825, showed arrears of only £183 15s 10 ½ d for the Cloncurry estate, from a total half yearly rent of £1,344 17s 1d.<sup>36</sup> Only three tenants, Samuel Colgan, Christopher Donegan and James Egan had missed payment and that was of only one payment. Yet Cloncurry noted instructions to Mr

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<sup>34</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1836 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 3147).

<sup>35</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers MS 5693).

<sup>36</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1825 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5661).

Rooke, who handled his legal affairs, to proceed against the three men. This was unusual considering that the three tenants were behind by only one payment and Egan had actually paid half of what was owed. During these years, the tenants on the Lyons and Abbington estates were falling into considerable arrears, some by several payments [See Table 1].

	Arrears	Rent Due	Payments
Cloncurry	£42 6s 2d	£1,283 14s 3d	£1,283 14s 3d
Lyons	£239 1s 4d	£944 5s 7d	£612 19s 9 ½ d
Abbington	£2,303 4s 3 ½ d	£3,793 13s 8 ½ d	£1,587 16s 1 ½ d

**Table 1: Half Year Rentals, May 1829.**<sup>37</sup>

*Source:* Cloncurry papers, rentals, 1829 NLI, MS 5661

For the half year rental of May 1825 there was a combined arrears and rent total of £5,449 14s 5d for the Abbington estate. Only £2,248 11s 10 ½ d was paid, leaving new arrears of £3,201 2s 6 ½ d. Out of the 53 tenants on the estate, a mere three were not in arrears, yet, Cloncurry only proceeded against two tenants. Richard Philips was £173 in arrears and owed a further half year's rent of £35. Philips had not paid anything for the previous two and a half years so his land was surrendered and re-let. Benjamin Hayes owed a half year's rent of £147 13s 4 ½ d and was put under ejectment, but this was only after he missed four payments.<sup>38</sup>

The landlord's tolerant attitude to arrears on the Lyons estate was similar to that adopted on the Abbington estate. In 1825, there were 50 tenants on the Lyons estate at this time and 29 were in arrears, such as James Moore of Lyons and Dennis Kenny of Ardclough . Yet, proceedings were only taken against five tenants,

<sup>37</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1829 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5661).

<sup>38</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1825 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5661).



including William Grant who owed one year's rent of £69 and Lawrence Lynch who owed one year's rent of £7. The five tenants who all missed three consecutive payments were ejected and their lands re-let. James Murphy of Dangan owed one half year's rent of £249 and his 124 acres were surrendered but not re-let.<sup>39</sup> The townland of Dangan ran alongside the Grand Canal, so Cloncurry possibly wanted to retain the land for his own use. According to Michael Aylmer these holdings had doubled in value since the construction of the Grand Canal.

The 1825 rental showed significant arrears on both the Lyons and Abbington estates but Cloncurry granted abatements of £654 15s 9d to these tenants. The granting of abatements was clearly a management policy of Lord Cloncurry and coincided with the high arrears which were possibly due to the economic downturn that followed the end of the Napoleonic wars in Europe. Due to his involvement in the management of his estates, Cloncurry was obviously aware of the difficulties his tenants were having and was prepared to make adjustments to help them meet their payments. By contrast, no abatements were granted to tenants on the Cloncurry estate. Cloncurry used arrears on this estate as an opportunity to restructure its leasing pattern.

It is clear that Lord Cloncurry was more amenable to his tenants in the Lyons and Abbington estates than on the Cloncurry estate. They had smaller holdings, yet paid higher rent. In pursuing this policy of estate management, Cloncurry strove to break up the large holdings for financial reasons and good estate management. This was achieved on the Abbington and Lyons estates but on the Cloncurry estate the landlord found himself restricted by the long leases given out by Michael Aylmer. The tenants were obviously well aware of his intentions. Consequently, they were

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<sup>39</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1825 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5661).

careful not to fall into arrears, fearing they would not receive the same treatment as tenants on the other two estates.

Some tenants were evicted for unusual reasons. John Carroll on the Abbington estate was declared as 'never likely to be better and holds too much land for his means and industry'.<sup>40</sup> In 1834, Cloncurry ejected Michael and John Kenna of Rathwood for taking forcible possession of land from John Tinsley.<sup>41</sup> In 1836, Mr Dwyer from the Abbington estate was given notice to quit for being in arrears of £29 4s 0d for one year and for 'having forced the widow Catherine Hayes from her house and subsequently to marry him'.<sup>42</sup> John O' Meara, a tenant on the Abbington estate was given notice to quit for 'allowing strangers to draw bog stuff'.<sup>43</sup> All of this was at the instigation of Lord Cloncurry highlighting the level of control he was exerting over the estate population. It also indicates the level of aversion he had to strangers on his property.

In the early 1800's, some property owners opted for the direct management of their estates as opposed to leasing to middlemen, in order to introduce much needed improvements to their estates. For some landlords the reason for this was future financial gain; for others, such as Lord Cloncurry, it was also because of an increased social awareness of the responsibility of the landlord. Middlemen were not inclined to undertake improvements while the occupiers did not possess the finances to carry out such measures. By taking direct control of his estate Cloncurry could encourage his tenants to improve their holdings and homesteads. He did not fund these improvements directly but granted abatements and allowances in the rent of compliant tenants. Michael Hanley of the Abbington

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<sup>40</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1831 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5663).

<sup>41</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1834 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5663).

<sup>42</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1836 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5664).

<sup>43</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1836 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5664).

estate was allowed £16 17s 5d for timber and slates for his house.<sup>44</sup> William Boyle, also of the Abbingdon estate, was allowed £13 15s 0d for 'building and slating a house measuring 45 ft by 17 ft'.<sup>45</sup>

Lord Cloncurry placed great emphasis on the planting of trees on his demesne and estates both for financial gain and aesthetic value. At the time of purchase of the Lyons estate, it had plantations that were valued at £4,442 11s 9 ½ d.<sup>46</sup> Cloncurry even managed to direct proceedings concerning plantations while he was abroad and away from his estate. A major part of this planting scheme was undertaken within the demesne walls. In a letter to his agent Cloncurry gave instructions for the planting of 1,000 birch, 2,000 alder, 2,000 laurels and holly.<sup>47</sup> In 1804, he paid £2 10s 0d for 500 fir trees.<sup>48</sup> He ordered a double line of quicks were to be planted along the two drains leading from the neighbouring holding of Mrs Brunton on the edge of the demesne, to the lake, and if the summer was dry, Kelly was to supply a horse for the purpose of carrying water to the young trees. Cloncurry had already obtained permission from the Grand Canal company for this work. Kelly thought the job would cost £500, although Cloncurry himself felt that the task could be completed for £300. This suggests that the landlord felt that he always knew best, even better than his farm manager who had a life time of experience of farm management. On his return from Europe, Cloncurry hoped to find 'tolerable gravel walks and young plantations at Lyons'.<sup>49</sup> In 1813, Cloncurry published a notice in the *Dublin Gazette* concerning the planting of 105,000 trees on the Lyons estate, which included, 20,000 oak, 15,000 larch, 10,000 beech,

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<sup>44</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1837 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5664).

<sup>45</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1832 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5663).

<sup>46</sup> Rent roll of the estate of Michael Aylmer, 1796 (NLI, Aylmer papers, MS 9056).

<sup>47</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, (undated), (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>48</sup> Cash book of Lord Cloncurry, 1803-1812 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5660).

<sup>49</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 16 December, 1805 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

10,000 Dutch alder and 10,000 elm.<sup>50</sup> His improvements were driven by a genuine interest in the enhancement of the Lyons estate. But he was also being ostentatious by seeking approval for this massive undertaking.

Even when his finances were not as he wished Cloncurry persisted with the plantings on the Lyons estate, as 'a year gained in that is of consequence'. He encouraged his tenants to plant part of their holdings in order to improve their financial circumstances and create a more enhanced image of the estate. However at the time all commercial trees planted on landed estates remained the property of the landlord and only he could give permission for their felling, although an act of 1765 did allow the tenant claim the value of the trees that he had planted on the expiration of his lease.<sup>51</sup> A tenant, Daniel Costello had served notice to Cloncurry to plant 3,000 trees on his 306 acres in Abbington including 2,100 laurels, 100 oak, 100 beach 500 scotch, 100 ash and 100 popular.<sup>52</sup> Another tenant, Thomas Reade of Farm Hill, Lyons, was allowed £15 0s 10d for ground planted.<sup>53</sup> According to the description Cloncurry gave to Samuel Lewis for his famous topographical dictionary, 160 acres were under plantation on the Lyons estate.<sup>54</sup> Not all plantings were to his liking. He complained that the clump of trees planted to hide the old house was useless, as it would hide the family church, which he wished to see from the Lyons House.<sup>55</sup> The old house in question was the original home of Michael Aylmer and the church had been the Aylmer family church.

Cloncurry became acutely aware of the plight of his tenantry, particularly during the economic depression that followed the end of the Napoleonic wars in

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<sup>50</sup> *Dublin Gazette*, January 14, 1813, p.44.

<sup>51</sup> William H. Crawford, *The management of a major Ulster estate in the late eighteenth century*, (Dublin, 2001), p. 60, (Hereafter cited as Crawford, *Management of an Ulster estate*).

<sup>52</sup> Rentals of Lord Cloncurry, 1836 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5664).

<sup>53</sup> Rentals of Lord Cloncurry, 1845 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5665).

<sup>54</sup> Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*. (vol. 2, London, 1837), p. 326.

<sup>55</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 28 April, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

1815 and after the minor famines in 1821 and 1831. He had witnessed the full effects of peasant poverty and disease during his time in Italy. This influenced him in being considerate to his tenants and this manifested itself in the form of abatements, rent reductions provided in time of hardship, pensions and donations, which served as a form of social welfare. The holdings of both John Connell and David Stanley in Abbington had not been revised since 1818 and were held at 46s per acre. In 1832, Cloncurry reduced their rent to 36s per acre. Walter Burke of the Abbington estate, owed £13 14s 2d. It was noted by Lord Cloncurry that any payment was doubtful as the family 'had been afflicted with fever for three months and were much impoverished'.<sup>56</sup> Similarly it was noted that Lawrence Maloney, Abbington, 'had been ill and family with fever'.<sup>57</sup> This fever may have resulted from the minor famine of 1831 and had afflicted some of the families on the Abbington estate. It also highlights the humanity of Cloncurry in recognising their plight and appreciating their difficulty in trying to meet their rent payments.

In a letter written in 1805, Cloncurry expressed his wish to do something for the poor at Pluxtown on the Lyons estate, whose houses were in a very bad condition.<sup>58</sup> His intention was to allow £50 or £60 to build one large double (or two single cottages) instead of the two worst and by degrees to replace the others. Four double houses (or eight single houses) would be enough to solve the accommodation problems. His interest in their welfare must be viewed as typical of the concern shown by Lord Cloncurry towards the community of tenants living on his estates. Apart from the new houses at Pluxtown and allowances for building and house improvements several people received pensions. Mrs Murphy and Mrs Dempsey had been given pensions by his father and Valentine carried on this

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<sup>56</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1836 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5664).

<sup>57</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1833 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5663).

<sup>58</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 16 December, 1805 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

practice.<sup>59</sup> The September 1844 rental showed that £6 was set-aside for this purpose.<sup>60</sup> An entry for May of that year showed that Cloncurry regularly paid a yearly subscription of £10 to the dispensaries in the townlands of Murroe and Lyons.<sup>61</sup> He had distributed wine to the sick on the estate and Mr Mahon, a former employee who was now bedridden, was given three or four shillings per week.<sup>62</sup>

In addition to these improvements, Cloncurry was anxious that his tenants might improve their educational standards and this remained a priority throughout his life. He claimed that from an early age he was aware of the responsibility that was passed on to him and he was determined that those who were immediately dependent on him would not be deprived of an education. He had a sense of moral obligation towards the peasants. Lord Cloncurry was convinced that education would have a positive effect on society as he confided to his agent 'Instruction is the best way of making the poor industrious and useful'.<sup>63</sup> This paternalistic attitude was quite prevalent among many early nineteenth century landlords and Cloncurry was typical of that group. He embodied this paternalistic attitude of knowing best, mixing it with a touch of arrogance, yet combined with a genuine aim to change people's circumstances for the better. He became a member and subscriber to the Kildare Place Society, whose proclaimed aim was to extend education to all classes of Irish people irrespective of their religion and served as president of the Dublin Library Society in D'Olier Street which was set up in 1791 to raise funding for a public library.<sup>64</sup> A sum of £6,000 was raised and the library boasted a large collection of books and newspapers from around the world.

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<sup>59</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 4 March, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>60</sup> Rentals and accounts of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, 1844 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5665).

<sup>61</sup> Rentals and accounts of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, 1828 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5662).

<sup>62</sup> Lord Cloncurry to John Kelly, (undated), quoted in Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 568.

<sup>63</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 4 March, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>64</sup> John Watson Stewart, *Dublin Directory, 1825* (Dublin, 1825), p. 175.

In his memoirs, he claimed to have built five schools over his lifetime believing that the denial of education to the Catholic youth by the penal laws was 'wicked and foolish'.<sup>65</sup> In a letter to Fr Maher, parish priest of Abbington in 1852, Cloncurry stated that his first act as a landlord was to give three acres of land on the Abbington estate for a school.<sup>66</sup> He also gave the local priest 100 sovereigns for a new Roman Catholic chapel adjoining the school. George H. Jones, prior of the monastery and collegiate school of Mount St. Joseph, Clondalkin, County Dublin, wrote to Cloncurry's biographer, William J. Fitzpatrick, detailing Cloncurry's role in the establishment of the school in 1813. Cloncurry donated funds to the school over many years and acted as president of its board. With his financial help 200 boys were educated and 105 destitute boys were clothed.<sup>67</sup> Cloncurry laid the foundation stone of the chapel attached to Mount St. Joseph and subscribed liberally to its construction. He also frequently paid for boys to attend various seminaries or boarding schools.

St. Anne's School was established by Lord Cloncurry in Ardclough on the Lyons estate in 1812.<sup>68</sup> He had bought a small piece of ground upon which was built a chapel and a schoolhouse. The ladies of the Cloncurry family aided in the running of the school for 30 years and Cloncurry himself allowed £10 per annum to the master. His level of involvement shows his commitment to the education of his tenants in the years preceding the Stanley education act of 1831, which set up the national school board. In this respect he was ahead of his time. Cloncurry sought to obtain schoolbooks from the Kildare Place Society to which he subscribed. However, as Fr Nolan, the local parish priest, had views that were not consistent

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<sup>65</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Personal recollections*, pp 372-375.

<sup>66</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Fr Maher, 1852 quoted in Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 577.

<sup>67</sup> George H. Jones to William J. Fitzpatrick, 1854 quoted in, Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p576.

<sup>68</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Chief Secretary of Education, date unknown, (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

with its regulations, Cloncurry was unable to obtain any books. The school started with 107 boys and, when girls were admitted, enrolment peaked at 140 students.<sup>69</sup> There were three different teachers between 1835 and 1840, on a salary of £4 per annum. Cloncurry continued to pay £10 to the school each year and made occasional gifts of books. In time, his family discontinued visits to the school as it was badly managed.<sup>70</sup> Cloncurry subsequently informed Fr. Nolan that he would cease his donations unless a committee was appointed and the school submitted to the regulations of the Kildare Place Society. In a letter to the education board Cloncurry described the situation, and promised that if the commissioners of education could have the school regulated to their plan and satisfaction he would continue or even increase his allowance to the school.

In 1840, the school was struck off the education board's list because it had fallen into disrepair and an application was made for funding for repairs or an extension.<sup>71</sup> The application form for aid towards the building of the new schoolhouse was signed by three Protestants and twelve Catholics. This would suggest that harmonious relations existed between the Catholic and Protestant communities in the parish, although all of the children who attended this school were Roman Catholic. The old school was in a very bad state of disrepair and a letter from Fr. Nolan in which he claimed that the roof on the existing building would not last a year added weight to the application. He also stated that the area had many agricultural labourers who were very poor and unable to fund the necessary repairs.<sup>72</sup> Lord Cloncurry donated £310 per annum to St. Anne's and the children brought 1d a week. The school served a population of 1,000 and in

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<sup>69</sup> Lyons national school, (NA, Ed 1/43), roll.33.

<sup>70</sup> Letter from Lord Cloncurry to Chief Secretary of Education, date unknown, (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>71</sup> Lyons national school, roll 33 (NA, Ed 1/43).

<sup>72</sup> Lyons national school, roll 33 (NA, Ed 1/43).



summer, 70 boys and 50 girls attended the school but in winter only 35 boys and 25 girls attended. Perhaps the lower attendance of children in winter coincided with lack of labouring work and a shortage of money. Lord Cloncurry had promised a lease of the land, rent free, for the school in perpetuity. The proposed new building was estimated to cost £323 4s 9d and Cloncurry had agreed to give £50 towards its construction. The parishioners agreed to donate a further £50 as well as their labour with the government providing the remainder. The trustees of the school were Cloncurry's son, Edward, and Robert Cassidy Lord Cloncurry's accountant. Cloncurry's accounts for 1846 show his regular donation of £10 for Lyons national school in Ardclough.<sup>73</sup>

Cloncurry was always very concerned regarding who was about the estate in his absence. In July 1803, Cloncurry asked Ryan to pay a visit to the Lyons estate in order to keep the locals in place in his lordship's absence, otherwise the people of the demesne would get into bad habits which he would find impossible to rid them of when he returned home.<sup>74</sup> He tolerated visitors to Lyons in his absence as long as Ryan was there to monitor them. He complained of not having any privacy or comfort of life. In particular, Cloncurry felt that those who came from Lucan were quite troublesome as they came 'tag, rag and bobtail and no servant can see what mischief they do'.<sup>75</sup> He also stated that there were certain insignificant people in that part of the country who would wish to do him some mischief if they could, although he couldn't tell why as he had never done harm to any person.<sup>76</sup> In the aftermath of Robert Emmet's rebellion in 1803, Cloncurry was wary of who was about his property which was possibly due to his own involvement with the United

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<sup>73</sup> Rentals and accounts of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1846 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5665).

<sup>74</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 16 July, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>75</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 20 October, 1808 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>76</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 16 June, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

Irishmen. This dislike of visitors and intrusions was not limited to the peasantry but also extended to the local gentry. He instructed Ryan to break the newly acquired habits that the neighbouring gentry had developed in his absence such as shooting on his land without permission. He saw it as a work of charity to provide labouring employment for the locals, yet he stressed the importance of the workers having no need to enter the Lyons demesne. Ryan was given instructions to discharge any member of staff who, in his opinion, kept bad company. He was also advised to monitor the behaviour of the people of Lyons and decide if it was necessary to move any furniture or valuables from the Lyons house for safekeeping. It is unlikely that Lord Cloncurry would know his tenants very well at that and as such did not put any trust in them. In relation to labourers who were employed on the estate in 1803, he instructed that 'Doyne or any other cripple who is honest can watch them'.<sup>77</sup> This may appear as being distrustful, but it was simply good management practice. In 1805, he wrote to Ryan hoping that the soldiers in the area would not remove any of the useful people of Lyons but admitting that there were some fellows about the place he would like to be taken away.<sup>78</sup> Cloncurry later wrote, 'What wretched fools our common people are'.<sup>79</sup> This gives a further insight into his paternalistic attitude. Everything had its place on the estate and only what, or whom, he deemed useful would be retained.

Although Cloncurry had a genuine concern for his tenantry, he was also a very determined man and not above subterfuge when it came to getting what he wanted. Bordering Lyons demesne was a small section of land, which he greatly desired to own but did not belong to him. This land at Clonaghilis was the property of Mr Arthur Henry of Straffan House. In Cloncurry's view, the land was of no use to

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<sup>77</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 9 August, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>78</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 2 December, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>79</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

Arthur Henry because it was cut off from the rest of the Straffan estate by the canal. The land was of no real use to Arthur Henry but was vital to him as echoed by his own words, 'Lyons will never be complete without it'.<sup>80</sup> Arthur Henry had promised to give Cloncurry a provisional lease on the farm which was under current lease to Mrs Brunton. When in Florence, Cloncurry wrote to Ryan requiring him to execute the lease immediately, or if Henry would sell it to offer him 2% more than anyone else. Cloncurry was so desperate for this piece of land that he was prepared to purchase or rent it at the highest terms. He wrote to Ryan on four occasions from the continent regarding the property. In one letter, he advised Ryan 'this can be better done in my absence as Mrs Brunton will not suspect anything'.<sup>81</sup> Eventually in March 1807, Henry sold the 13 acres 1 rood 20 perches at Clonaghilis to him and it became part of Lyons demesne.<sup>82</sup> Cloncurry aimed to have a section of the road to Newcastle widened as it was the 'only handsome approach to Lyons demesne, and he would not be without it for one thousand pounds'.<sup>83</sup> This would obviously affect the holding of several tenants. At this time the grand jury controlled local government, policing, the military and road improvement. Cloncurry instructed Ryan that if permission was not granted for his road presentment to the grand jury then he was to have every possible interest made for it at the following assizes, as the 'duke of Leinster could do anything in Dublin'.<sup>84</sup> In addition, his bankers had great interest in this work being completed.

The introduction of much agricultural improvements in the early part of the nineteenth century was as a consequence of landlords' direct management of their

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<sup>80</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 30 September, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>81</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, (undated) 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>82</sup> Indenture between Henry of Straffan, Co Kildare and Rt Hon Valentine Browne Lord Baron Cloncurry, 1807 (Registry of Deeds, 592-393-403604).

<sup>83</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 20 June 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>84</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 20 June 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

estates.<sup>85</sup> Major improvements were introduced between 1815 and 1845 such as the replacement of the wooden plough with the iron swing plough from Scotland and the reclamation of wasteland and the use of cheap fertiliser. The development of roadways by landlords was also significant as it opened up new areas to agriculture.<sup>86</sup> As a result of these measures the production of potatoes experienced rapid growth between 1800 and 1845. Lord Cloncurry was to the fore in initiatives designed to improve agricultural methods in Ireland. He acted as chairman of the Society for Improvement of Ireland. This was founded in 1825, with the aim of developing agriculture, fisheries, land reclamation, inland navigation and rural communications.<sup>87</sup> He was also a member of the Royal Dublin Society, whose declared purpose was the 'improvement of husbandry and other useful arts'.<sup>88</sup>

Cloncurry was adamant about the importance of agricultural improvements because of their value to the tenants and, obviously, to himself. Considering that his formative years were pre-occupied with political matters such as the 'national question' and the United Irishmen, he took to agriculture with great vigour and purpose. While abroad, the young landlord became aware of agricultural practices on the continent. He wrote to Thomas Ryan from Rome in mid June 1804 informing him that the hay in the region had been harvested two weeks earlier and the farmers had progressed to the corn.<sup>89</sup> He was struck by the methodology of farming practices in Italy. The hay was drawn in on carts all pulled by a pair of almost white oxen. Each pair could draw nearly two tonnes on a two-wheeled cart with a pole that rested between their necks. According to Cloncurry, the best lands around Rome could return five or six tonnes per acre, even though the soil was

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<sup>85</sup> Donnelly, *Nineteenth Century Cork*, p. 37.

<sup>86</sup> Crawford, *The management of a major Ulster estate* p. 60.

<sup>87</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 370.

<sup>88</sup> John Watson Stewart, *Dublin Directory, 1825* (Dublin, 1825), p. 166.

<sup>89</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 25 August, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

badly cultivated. He was perceptive in his observations that the farmers had to travel five or six miles to their fields as they all lived in large towns.

Entries for accounts and expenses over many decades show that Lyons demesne under Lord Cloncurry operated as a mixed farm. Having a well-stocked demesne was of great importance to him. He showed a great deal of initiative in importing well bred stock for his demesne, with the aim of breeding a prize herd. During his tour of Europe, Lord Cloncurry showed foresight to send a cow, a heifer and a calf of the famous Tuscan breed back from Italy to his estate in Ireland.<sup>90</sup> In 1833, £111 was paid to Robert Archibald for cattle bought in Yorkshire and transported to the Lyons estate.<sup>91</sup> This indicated a very progressive farmer adopting high standards of agricultural practices. His vision for the future development of his demesne was typical of that of many of his contemporaries. The Lyons estate was also an arable farm with a range of tilling appliances on the estate. Maps of the demesne surveyed by John Roe in 1796 and 1801 show only one field under arable use. However, it was a different field in each case, possibly indicating crop rotation.<sup>92</sup> On his tour in Italy, Cloncurry also discovered a new way of breaking horses which was later adopted on his estate.<sup>93</sup>

Even a glimpse at the variety of produce from his two gardens would indicate the level of advancement within his demesne. One garden was beside the old church and consisted of 2 acres 3 roods 10 perches, while the other was just inside the west wall alongside the end of the lake and consisted of 3 roods 13 perches.<sup>94</sup> A list of seeds purchased from Dickinsons & Company in Edinburgh for the gardens

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<sup>90</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 16 April, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>91</sup> Rentals and accounts of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1833 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5694).

<sup>92</sup> Maps of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, including demesne of Lyons in county Kildare, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, manuscript maps 21F 50 (1-36)).

<sup>93</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 2 December, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>94</sup> Maps of the estate of Lord Cloncurry, including demesne of Lyons in county Kildare, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, manuscript maps 21F 50 (1-36)).

included four bags of red beetroots, four bags of Altringham carrots, two bags of purple broccoli, six bags of white turnips, two bags of round spinach, one bag of sweet basil, eight bags of garlic, one bag of mustard seed, twenty two bags of white and scarlet runners, two bags of Scots leeks and two bags of cos lettuce.<sup>95</sup> He was certainly wealthy enough to pay the cost of importing such extravagances, however, considering the period in which he lived, having such a variety of vegetables and herbs available to the big house in rural Ireland was impressive.

On his return from Europe in 1805, Lord Cloncurry adopted a direct role in the management of his estates. This involved the removal of middlemen from the land and leasing the holdings to the occupiers. Despite Cloncurry achieving this on the Abbington and Lyons properties, Michael Aylmer's earlier intervention prevented him from fulfilling his aims on the Cloncurry estate. Cloncurry developed the Lyons demesne and house which would stand as a testimony to him. He was a progressive landlord and introduced many improvements to his property in the form of tree plantings, drainage schemes and road construction for both their financial and aesthetic value. Cloncurry ranks high among his contemporaries in the humane way that he treated his tenants. His tour of Europe had awakened him to the plight of the peasant and when similar difficulties appeared on his doorstep he granted abatements and reduced rents to aid his tenants. Further concessions included compensation for improvements made on holdings and the funding of schools and dispensaries. Although these reflected his paternalistic attitude. While their circumstances were not ideal, life for the tenants on Lord Cloncurry's property was more tolerant because of his humane attitude towards them.

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<sup>95</sup> Rentals and accounts of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1827 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5661).

### CHAPTER 3: BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

During his time as landlord of the Lyons, Abbington and Cloncurry estates, Lord Cloncurry pursued his policy of improvements. This included the restructuring of leases, improvements in tenant housing, the funding of education among the tenants, the redevelopment of Lyons House and the modernisation of agricultural practices. That he did not succeed in bringing all his to their completion should not be regarded as a failure on his part. Cloncurry, like many of his fellow landlords at this time, was unable to pursue his policies free from internal and external influences.

From 1775 to 1845, Ireland witnessed a spectacular growth in population. From 1781 to 1831, the growth was at its most dramatic with a mean annual increase of 1.34 per cent.<sup>1</sup> This rapid and dramatic increase in population put great pressure on the land, which as the main source of food and income for the labouring population. Periods of economic depression caused by the fall in agricultural prices after the Napoleonic wars and minor famines between 1821 and 1845 added to the difficulties of the peasant population. Some landlords encouraged the reclamation of bogland and wasteland on the hill and mountainsides. The conacre, which was a lifeline for many labouring tenants became a valuable source of increased rent for the landlords. Lord Cloncurry had stated his policy of ridding his estates of middlemen and subletting. During his lifetime, this would prove impossible on the Cloncurry estate, due to the long leases given by his predecessor Michael Aylmer. This chapter will focus mainly on the Lyons and Abbington estates but will at times include the Cloncurry estate for comparative purposes and to produce an image of the

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<sup>1</sup> Connell, *Population of Ireland*, p. 245.

developments on his entire property during this period. The aim is to examine to what extent outside influences prevented Cloncurry from succeeding in his plans.

The parish of Abbington is spread over three baronies; Clanwilliam, Owenybeg and the county and city of Limerick. The abstract and returns for the 1821 census put the population of the Abbington parish at 6,341 [See Appendix 1].<sup>2</sup> This total population comprised 1,188 families who lived in 1,035 houses, indicating that there was more than one family per household in several cases. The 1821 census returns for the Lyons parish put the total population at 536 [See Appendix 1].<sup>3</sup> There were 102 families in the parish housed in 79 houses. According to the poor inquiry of 1836, there were 100 cabins in the Abbington parish that housed more than one family.<sup>4</sup> According to Lord Cloncurry's submission to the poor inquiry there were only three or four instances of more than one family per house in the Lyons parish.<sup>5</sup> In the neighbouring Straffan estate there were six instances.

On Cloncurry's property in 1821, over half of those employed were in agriculture, 113 workers out of 199 on the Lyons estate and 1207 workers out of 2032 on the Abbington estate. The problem on the Abbington estate was the shortage of land to accommodate so many of those limited to employment in agriculture. A total of 6,286 people eked out a living on these 1,796 acres. As a result, emigration was common from the Abbington parish during that period. The answers given by the respondents to the poor inquiry in 1836 regarding emigration show a great difference between the counties of Kildare and Limerick in relation to rising population creating

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<sup>2</sup> *Abstract of population of Ireland, 1821*, H.C. 1822 (36), xiv, 737, pp. 186-198. [Hereafter cited as *Census of 1821*].

<sup>3</sup> *Census of 1821*, p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> *Poor inquiry (Ireland): Appendix (E) containing baronial examinations relative to food, cottages and cabins, clothing and furniture, pawnbroking and savings banks, drinking; and supplement containing answers to questions 13 to 22 circulated by the commissioners* [37], H.C. 1836, xxxii, 1, p. 218 (hereafter cited as *Poor inquiry, supplement to appendix E*).

<sup>5</sup> *Poor inquiry, supplement to appendix E*, p. 65.



pressure on the land. Arthur Henry of the Straffan estate and Mr Connolly of the Castletown estate in Celbridge stated that there was no emigration in the area.<sup>6</sup> Lord Cloncurry claimed that only three or four people had left the parish of Lyons for America whereas Rev. Costello, parish priest of Abbington, claimed that 500 people had emigrated from there in the summer of 1831.<sup>7</sup> He also claimed that the population had doubled and would increase ten fold if it were not for emigration. By 1841, the population in the Abbington parish had reached 6,960 inhabitants [See Appendix 1].<sup>8</sup>

The population on the Lyons estate had dropped to 379 inhabitants [See Appendix 1].<sup>9</sup> Possibly this was as a result of Cloncurry's success in phasing out subletting. On this estate, 63 per cent of the houses were classified as being of either third or fourth class. However on the Abbington estate, 90 per cent of the homes were of third or fourth class. Also there were 89 thatchers and 57 slaters in the county of Limerick as opposed to 13 thatchers and 87 slaters in county Kildare, a possible indication of the quality of roofs on the houses in the two counties. The effects of the dramatic population increase were felt more strongly in County Limerick than in County Kildare and this was reflected in conditions prevailing on both the Abbington and Lyons properties. Cloncurry's tenants on the Abbington estate had no choice but to try to sub-let land or share houses. Poverty and unemployment led to requests for abatements from the landlord. Any hopes of improving their homes, or holdings were impossible under the circumstances and the only hope for many people lay in

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<sup>6</sup> *Poor inquiry: Appendix (F) containing baronial examinations relative to con-acre, quarter or score ground, small tenantry, consolidation of farms and dislodged tenantry, emigration, landlord and tenant, nature and state of agriculture, taxation, roads, observations on the nature and state of agriculture; and supplement* [38], H.C. 1836, xxxiii, 1, pp. 157-158. (hereafter cited as *Poor inquiry, supplement to appendix F*).

<sup>7</sup> *Poor inquiry, supplement to appendix F*, p. 218.

<sup>8</sup> *Abstract of census of Ireland, 1841*, H.C. 1843 [459], LI. 319, pp 212-216, [Hereafter cited as *Census of 1841*].

<sup>9</sup> *Census of 1841*, p. 40.

emigration to America. With such over population Cloncurry could not pursue his overall policy of improvements to its fullest extent.

While on his tour of European countries between 1802 and 1805, Lord Cloncurry incurred major expenses. The purchase and transportation to the Lyons estate of fine wines, works of art and marble and granite columns were at a considerable cost. The insurance alone of one cargo amounted to £3,000. His living expenses in Italy were remarkably cheaper than the cost of living in Ireland according to Cloncurry. In one letter to Ryan from Florence, he wrote that 'the living of the very best kind is not more than half Dublin prices'.<sup>10</sup> In his memoirs, Cloncurry claimed that he and his family were able to procure excellent lodgings in Rome for a mere £90 a year.<sup>11</sup> On hearing that Arthur Henry, his friend and neighbouring landlord in Ireland, was in financial trouble, Cloncurry encouraged Henry to join him in Rome where he could 'live very cheaply and elegantly'.<sup>12</sup> In 1805, Cloncurry again wrote to Ryan detailing his expenses in Europe up to that date. He had expended £5,500 and expected to spend a further £800 before he reached home.<sup>13</sup> He hoped to spend no more than £200 per month.

During his time abroad, a vast development, designed to improve the house and demesne, was underway on the Lyons estate. This included the extension of the 'Big House', plantations, walkways and the draining of the front and back lawns. Richard Morrison was the architect assigned to complete the work on the house who had also worked on the refurbishment of Mount Bellew house in county Galway, the home of Christopher Dillon Bellew, the local landlord<sup>14</sup>. No expense was spared. Morrison himself was paid £250 for his efforts and expertise, which was £50 more than the

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<sup>10</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 20 May, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>11</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Personal recollections*, p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 20 May, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>13</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 4 May, 1805 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>14</sup> Clarke, *C.D. Bellew*, p. 9.

agreed contract.<sup>15</sup> A new wing was added to the east of the house. Within this wing a bedroom was built for the new Lady Cloncurry. Lord Cloncurry sent instructions that the main window in the room was to face south and it also had to be made fireproof. No combustible materials were to be used, the walls were to be composed of plain plaster, a stone stairs, with tile or flagstone on the floors.<sup>16</sup> Cloncurry even suggested to Morrison that the drawing room was of too long a span and suggested a dividing wall with an arch to support the ceiling, although Morrison assured him that the ceiling would hold. New windowpanes and sashes were installed throughout the house. A large number of craftsmen and labourers were required for such an extensive project. In 1803, Cloncurry instructed Ryan to employ as many stonemasons as there was material for, and that the war in Europe should make no difference to the work at Lyons.<sup>17</sup> However in September of that year, Cloncurry complained to Ryan about a raise of 6d that had been given to the stonecutter. It had not been authorised by him and he was not prepared to pay it.<sup>18</sup> He also stated that no carpenters or workers were to be employed unless Thomas Kelly, the demesne manager, sanctioned it. Cloncurry would not pay any bill unless it was for work or materials authorised by Kelly.

While he was absent from the country, Cloncurry placed the direct running of the estate in the hands of Ryan and Kelly. The latter was in regular contact with Cloncurry by letter regarding the building works on the house and the general estate. Cloncurry told Ryan that he had great confidence in Kelly, a man who would always do his best and was honest. Yet, Cloncurry regularly instructed Ryan to inspect Kelly's accounts. Kelly was considered by Cloncurry to be too easy on the local

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<sup>15</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 16 June, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>16</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 2 December, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>17</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 20 June, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>18</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 2 September, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

pilferers and the people of the demesne, so Ryan was asked to pay regular visits to the Lyons estate and spend several nights in the house to ensure the locals did not step out of place. It was important to Cloncurry that the tenants and labourers knew their role and place on the estate. Cloncurry once wrote of Kelly that he was ‘ an excellent man, but has some prejudices, his ideas of perfection never went beyond Wicklow’.<sup>19</sup>

Lord Cloncurry’s cash book for the period 1803 – 1812 shows the expenditure for wages paid to craftsmen working on the house.<sup>20</sup> Between 10 September 1803 and 13 December 1804, £503 was paid to Dan Anson for carpentry. Presumably Anson was the contractor for all the carpentry work. Also in 1803, Joseph Handley, a stonecutter was paid £29 7s 11d, Thomas Maguire was paid £50 7s 2d for plumbing work. Between 7 July 1803 and 29 Oct 1803, £67 was paid to labourers for road works. Also, £104, 9s 3d was paid to Robert Lovely for slates and £18 17s 6d was paid to Findlay Alder for timber. In addition to the costs of the building works on the house, Lord Cloncurry also had the regular expense of the management of his estate. The annual salary for the gardener on the Lyons estate was £7 2s 2 ¼ d. The weekly money to Kelly for expenses and labourers wages came to £28 8s 9d. The cost of insuring the house against fire damage was £11 15s. It cost £34 12s 3d to freight statuary purchased in Rome to Lyons and an additional £4 0s 2d for a man attending the goods.

Cloncurry had also left instructions for the development of the demesne. This included plantations, the construction of gravel walks and a major draining project for the front and rear lawns of the big house.<sup>21</sup> The large pond had caused problems leaving the lawns waterlogged and Cloncurry was also fearful that the house might flood on occasion. Cloncurry claimed that he would rather pull the house down than

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<sup>19</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 2 December, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>20</sup> Cash book of Lord Cloncurry, 1803-1812 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5660).

<sup>21</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 20 May, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

drain the pond. Instructions were also given to clean and deepen the ditch between the front lawn and canal making a high bank on the lawn side, the entire distance from the little door in the demesne wall near Mrs Brunton's holding across to the other side of the demesne.

Cloncurry was prepared to spend money on projects for improving the estate but saved even a penny where he could and loathed wasting money. He claimed to Ryan that 'money was better employed in the demesne than left idle by'.<sup>22</sup> He instructed Ryan that if there were troops in the vicinity, he should try to get permission to put them to work on the road and drainage projects.<sup>23</sup> Cloncurry loathed paying the cost of stamps which was too high in his opinion. He went so far as to forge numbers on an old stamp and even asked Ryan to send him one to use on a letter.<sup>24</sup> Cloncurry was sometimes prudent in terms of his finances. Fruit and vegetables, which were not needed in the big house, were to be sold by Kelly.<sup>25</sup> Cloncurry instructed Ryan to make only repairs that were absolutely necessary on Maretimo House and to let it for £200 for the year or else he should sow potatoes in the front grounds and let the house for £150.<sup>26</sup>

Cloncurry's plans for the major development of the Lyons estate put severe strain on his financial resources. The cost of all the works was considerable, particularly on labour-intensive work such as drainage and for the skilled craftsmen employed in the house. In December 1804, Cloncurry instructed Ryan to borrow whatever money was necessary to complete the works on the Lyons estate as he would rather pay the interest than have the works stopped or badly completed. Then in a letter from Vienna on 3 August 1805, Cloncurry wrote, 'the expense is greater

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<sup>22</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 10 May, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>23</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 16 July, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>24</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, undated (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>25</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 16 January, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>26</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 4 March, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

than I imagined and Lyons threatens to make a beggar of me if I don't put a stop in time to the business'.<sup>27</sup> He also claimed that even if all the arrears were paid, he would still owe £1,000. The arrears were out of his reach and would remain so for some time after his return to Ireland.

At this stage Cloncurry was beginning to experience financial difficulties. In January 1808, Cloncurry's debt stood at £7,561 10s ½d.<sup>28</sup> His income the half year of 1808, from his three estates was £3, 602 19s 5d, with eight tenants only in arrears. Shaws Bank in Dublin had refused two of his drafts for £200, which greatly disturbed him and put him in an awkward position.<sup>29</sup> At the time, Cloncurry was very indignant about the situation and claimed that somebody else must have put his or her bills under his name in Shaws Bank. But if no mistake was made then he felt that Shaws had acted in a very unfriendly manner and if possible he did not want to deal with them any more. This was his attitude to several banks to which he was indebted. Despite owing a considerable amount of money, he expected the bankers to behave like gentlemen and to honour his drafts. If they refused then he would have no more dealings with them and they would lose his business. In May 1808, despite his financial difficulties Cloncurry instructed Ryan to draw £1,000 from Halpins, £1,100 from Shaws, £1,100 from Carters and £600 from Murphys.<sup>30</sup> He wrote in November 1808, 'as circumstanced as I am, the accounts at the bank being so much against me'.<sup>31</sup> However, Cloncurry was still looking to expand his property. In November 1808, he enquired about purchasing land in Kilmainham and raising the money by a mortgage on the estate. Despite his financial difficulties, he still expected to continue living in his accustomed high style and instructed Ryan to 'make what arrangements

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<sup>27</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 3 August, 1805 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>28</sup> Cash book of Lord Cloncurry, 1803-1812 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5660).

<sup>29</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 2 August 1808 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>30</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 25 October 1808 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>31</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 26 November, 1808 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

you can and let me know the result because on Saturday I will want my weekly money'.<sup>32</sup> At that time Cloncurry declared that 'it was not right for the tenants to have the hanging gale'.<sup>33</sup>

By 1811, Lord Cloncurry owed Murphy's Bank £4,500.<sup>34</sup> He claimed that he would rather go to jail than to ask for any more credits. He also maintained he did not have enough money to meet his household expenses.<sup>35</sup> Cloncurry's law expenses from the divorce case were weighing heavily on him and it was not until 1814 that all the money was paid to him from John B. Piers. That same year 1811 there were 23 tenants in arrears on the Abbington estate and nine in arrears on the Lyons estate. John Humphrey on the Abbington estate owed £63 7s 2d in arrears, while Mrs Gerrard of Skeagh on the Lyons estate owed £ 130 10s 0d in arrears. Cloncurry's half yearly income for 1811 totalled £3, 578 9s 3d.<sup>36</sup>

The end of the Napoleonic war in Europe brought a period of economic depression to Ireland. During the war, Irish produce found a guaranteed market in Britain, with high prices. In turn, landlords and middlemen increased the rent on their lands. But the end of the war brought a fall in demand and lower prices. Irish peasants could not afford to return to stock rearing unlike the landlords who had the capital to build up stock herds. The peasantry were tied to the production of potatoes as a subsistence crop. As the prices fell the arrears of tenants grew.

In 1818, all 44 tenants on the Abbington estate were in arrears.<sup>37</sup> Cloncurry had received no payment from the majority of tenants for the previous one and a half years. Some tenants had missed payments for several years. Jeremiah Ryan owed

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<sup>32</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 9 August, 1808 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>33</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 1809 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>34</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 1811 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>35</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 9 June, 1811 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>36</sup> Cash book of Lord Cloncurry, 1803-1812 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5660).

<sup>37</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1818 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8183).

arrears of £463 2s 6 ½ d and Matthew Duhy owed £965 5s 2 ½ d. For that half year on the Abbington estate, Cloncurry was owed £1, 516 in rent and £3,193 in arrears, totalling £4,709. He only received £2,272.

The 1819 report on disease and state of and condition of labouring poor in Ireland gives a general view of the situation in north Kildare during the outbreak of typhus and fever, which was followed by a minor famine in 1821.<sup>38</sup> Disease was mostly confined to the poor. There were two consecutive very wet seasons which greatly hampered agricultural production. As a result, the potatoes were scarce and expensive, wheat was very malty and oats were also expensive. The poor were forced to live on wild turnip weed called 'prasha bwee' mixed with malty flour. There is no direct mention of Lyons parish in the report but it does convey an image of conditions in the general area. The parish of Kilcock bordered the Cloncurry estate and the report mentions fever in the villages and towns on the roads into Dublin. It had been brought into the area by labourers from Connaught, who had been driven from their homes by a famine in 1817. The report states that there were around 3,000 labourers from Mayo and Roscommon living on the sides of the roads around Kilcock. This surplus of cheap labour would have driven down the wages of regular labourers of neighbouring estates including the Cloncurry estate.

In the County of Limerick, the fever was at its worst in the last months of 1817, and the early months of 1818. The poor were forced to collect 'esculent plants' in the potato gardens and the leaves of wild turnips. There was a severe lack of employment, which was made more acute by the collapse in trade. Several dispensaries were set up around the county to deal with the fever. The Abbington estate was composed primarily of small holdings of land not as conducive to

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<sup>38</sup> *First report from the select committee on the state of disease, and condition of the labouring poor in Ireland.* H.C. 1819 93140, viii, 73.



production as on the Lyons and Cloncurry estates. As a result, the tenants on the Abbington estate were the most vulnerable during this period.

	Arrears	Rent Due	Payments
Abbington	£3,817 14s 4 ½ d	£1,632 0s ½ d	£2,248 11s 10d
Cloncurry	£183 15s ½ d	£1,632 0s ½ d	£1,214 12s 9d
Lyons	£978 15s 11d	£660 6s 1d	£816 6s 1d

**Table 2: Half-Year Rentals, May 1825**<sup>39</sup>

*Source:* Cloncurry Papers, NLI.

In 1825, [See Table 2] Lord Cloncurry's tenants on both the Lyons and Abbington estates were struggling to pay their rents and arrears. The arrears on the Abbington estate were more than double the actual rent due. Overall, Cloncurry received £4,264 10s 8d from all his properties, which was slightly less than half of what he was due. Cloncurry's expenses for the following year came to £4,893 17s 2d. Twenty-nine of the fifty tenants on the Lyons estate were in arrears, while fifty of the fifty nine tenants on the Abbington estate were in a similar position. Tenants who could not pay their rent had no surplus money to pay for improvements, such as slating a roof, planting trees or purchasing livestock. Thomas Brady of Dangan had £100 of £126 17s 8 ½ d abated and Cornelius Reid of Tanragee had £35 3s 0d of £35 3s 9d abated. In total £654 15s 9d was abated out of a total arrears of £4,476 19s 1d. This would have limited the progress of improvements that Cloncurry desired on his estates.

John Rourke was the resident carpenter on the Lyons estate and James Williams also worked there for a period as a carpenter. Each man was paid 3s 1d per day.

<sup>39</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1825 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5661).

Cloncurry showed an improving initiative in employing two full time carpenters on the estate and providing them with a fully equipped workshop. Cloncurry funded the equipping workshop for his carpenters, which included, 1 frame saw, 1 rib saw, 1 grooving plane, 2 cross cut saws, 2 chisels, 1 smoothing plane and 1 round plane.<sup>40</sup> The working conditions and wages were obviously satisfactory as Rourke was on Cloncurry's pay roll for over 30 years.

There were 16 labourers on the Lyons estate who paid their rent by labour. They settled annually at Lyons House. These tenants included John Kelly and John Bell of Newcastle and John Rourke of Emmanville. As already mentioned, John Bell was the gardener on the Lyons estate. In 1832, Bell told Cloncurry that he expected his holding to be rent-free. His rent at the time was £1 11s 4d. He had built up arrears of £17 6s 6d.<sup>41</sup> This certainly was a departure from the norm. Bell was a tenant at will whose home depended on his labour in the garden. For someone on the lower rung of the socio-economic ladder to take a stand and refuse to pay his rent was a gamble indeed. Bell's arrears had amounted to £22 1s 0d before Cloncurry intervened. He stopped 1s per week from Bell's annual salary of £7 2s 2 ¼ d.<sup>42</sup> Cloncurry showed a very humane side and manipulated Bell in his position rather than dismissing him. Bell was not the only labouring tenant to object to paying rent. In 1837, Edward Carroll, a labourer with a house on the Lyons estate, refused to pay his rent and arrears of £7 4s 5d.<sup>43</sup> Cloncurry however, did not evict Carroll. Patrick Mooney, another labourer, surrendered his lands but not his position of employment on the Lyons estate. The pressure of rents and arrears obviously became too difficult to handle.

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<sup>40</sup> Inventory of working tools, Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1822 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8183).

<sup>41</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1832 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5663).

<sup>42</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1834 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5663).

<sup>43</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1837 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5664).

This was not the first time that tenants had not accepted Cloncurry's paternal role as willingly as he would have wished. While he was anxious to make improvements, they did not readily accept them. During the time he was on the continent, Mr Clinch, a local magistrate and tenant of Lord Cloncurry on the Lyons estate, wrongly informed the authorities that members of Robert Emmet's rebellion of 1803, were hiding at the Lyons house. Clinch himself led the soldiers to the house, where he stole a tea urn, 4 hunting guns and papers belonging to Lord Cloncurry. He was in the process of breaking down the door to the wine cellar when stopped by the army officer in charge. Cloncurry suggested Clinch was 'boiling over with Protestant loyalty'.<sup>44</sup> At the time Cloncurry had only actually met Clinch on one occasion. This was probably an occasion that one of Cloncurry's own tenants tried to use his dubious record in the 1790s against him. In 1804, Cloncurry was informed by a neighbour that Clinch was spreading false and unfounded reports about the tenants on the Lyons estate.<sup>45</sup> Cloncurry believed this bad feeling resulted from the fact that Clinch resented being one of his tenants. Cloncurry stated that Clinch was 'beneath his notice as long as he paid his rent'.

When Cloncurry had made a presentment to the grand jury in relation to the new road that he wished to build between Newcastle and the entrance to his estate in 1803, objections were made against the proposal by Mr Clinch and by Mr Graydon. Cloncurry was furious and wrote to Ryan stating that the road had nothing to do with them and that they were opposed to it for 'the most rascally motives'.<sup>46</sup> Clinch had been a landholder on the estate before Lord Cloncurry took over its management. He was a middleman, and as such a landlord in his own right. He was also a local magistrate and a man of authority. It appears that he resented the new Lord Cloncurry

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<sup>44</sup> Lord Cloncurry, *Personal recollections*, p. 187.

<sup>45</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 30 September, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>46</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 20 June, 1803 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

and his proposed improvements. Clinch was not open to change from above and resisted in every way possible. By 1811, Clinch had missed six rent payments and had arrears of £71 4s 6d, and was eventually evicted for non-payment of rent.<sup>47</sup> Clinch was also summoned by Lord Cloncurry to the petty sessions court as a result of a dispute over wages with a man who had mowed meadows for him. The mower claimed he was owed a further 20s by Clinch. When Clinch refused to attend the court, Lord Cloncurry ordered the seizure and sale of a cow belonging to him from which the plaintiff was paid his 20s and the balance was paid to the owner. Clinch appealed the decision to the quarter sessions claiming that Cloncurry was unduly harsh towards him due to their previous disagreements. He later had to admit that he was ejected because he had failed to pay rent for the previous four years.<sup>48</sup>

Stephen and George Coyle held 99 acres in Kearneystown and 80 acres in Dangan, both on leases of 31 years dating from 1798 and 1799 respectively. At the time of Lord Cloncurry's inheritance of the Lyons estate they were the second largest holders on the estate. Like Clinch they were middlemen. With their holdings on 31-year leases, they felt secure in their position and naturally resented any attempts by Cloncurry to change the status quo on the estate. They were content with the existing situation and were not prepared to bow easily to the changes imposed by their new young landlord. In their parish they were perceived as powerful men and did not wish to be regarded as mere tenants. In April 1806, Cloncurry wrote to Ryan stating that he had just noticed that Coyle's lease stipulated that he could not allow houses to be built between the Commons and the Grand Canal, or else he could have to forfeit the land. Coyle had allowed such an occurrence, and Cloncurry had given him notice to

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<sup>47</sup> Cash book of Lord Cloncurry, 1803-1812 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5660).

<sup>48</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry* (Dublin, 1855), p. 235.

quit his holding.<sup>49</sup> In November 1806, Cloncurry wrote that Coyle had done all in his power to cause trouble for him by disputing possession of his holding. Cloncurry feared that on Coyle's instigation, others would dispute possession with him.<sup>50</sup> Their holdings bordered the Commons townland and in 1807, Cloncurry instructed Ryan to write to Coyle warning about any further encroachments on the Commons.<sup>51</sup>

Also in 1804, Cloncurry wrote to Ryan complaining that the children of the Lyons estate would not attend the school.<sup>52</sup> It would appear that the tenants were not prepared to accept everything imposed or handed down from above. Cloncurry wanted the school managed as he saw fit, as opposed to Fr Nolan's style of management. Perhaps this was a case where some tenants sided with the local priest rather than their landlord.

In 1828, [See Table 3] only one tenant on the Cloncurry estate was in arrears whereas, on the Abbington estate, 37 out of the 44 tenants were in arrears.

	Arrears	Total Due	Payments	New Arrears
Abbington	£2,038 3s 4d	£3,409 2s 11 ½ d	£1,554 3s 2 ¾ d	£1,854 19s 7 1/2 d
Cloncurry	£184 12s 3d	£1,426 0s 3d	£1,379 17s 2d	£46 3s 0d
Lyons	£299 17s 2d	£956 12s 4d	£501 10s 9d	£455 1s 7 ¾ d

**Table 3: Half Year Rentals, November 1828**

*Source:* Cloncurry Papers, NLI.

Cloncurry was forced to evict some tenants from the Lyons estate. Thomas Brady of Dangan, Lawrence Mc Bride and James Beattie were all evicted for non-payment of rent and arrears and their holdings re-let. The Abbington estate certainly caused more problems for Cloncurry than the other two estates combined. The incoming arrears on

<sup>49</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 23 April, 1806 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>50</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, November, 1806 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>51</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 10 April, 1807 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

<sup>52</sup> Lord Cloncurry to Thomas Ryan, 1804 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 8492).

it in 1828, were over £2,000, whereas, the combined arrears for the Cloncurry and Lyons estates was only just over £484. A further setback was probably caused by a minor famine in 1831. The May 1832 rental for the Abbington estate showed arrears of £2,334 6s 11 ½ d. In 1832, he granted further abatements to some of the Abbington estate tenants, probably out of necessity. George Duhy was allowed an abatement of £140, which was granted in the form of £20 over 7 years.<sup>53</sup> John Connell was granted an abatement of £3 6s 8d and a further £77 off his arrears of £86 6s 5d. With the famine having a direct impact on his tenants' ability to pay their rent, Cloncurry displayed both realism and humanity by granting abatements instead of forcing evictions. However, the November 1832 totals for the entire estate did show an improvement in payments [See Table 4]. The series of abatements to the Abbington tenants had allowed them to recover enough to pay rents and some of their arrears.

Arrears	Total Due	Payments	New Arrears
£2,709 5s 2d	£6,627 16s 4d	£4,106 17s 1d	£2,510 19s 3d

**Table 4: Half-Year Totals for Combined Estates, November 1832.**<sup>54</sup>

*Source:* Cloncurry Papers, NLI.

The rent from his estates was Cloncurry's only regular income of note [See Table 5]. His stock in the Grand Canal company and his mining shares did not amount to much in value. The townlands of Edwardstown and Farm Hill were valued at £5,200 but they were part of the Lyons demesne and would not be sold by Cloncurry. The year's rent of £8,650 was substantial, but his debts and expenses of managing the estate and living the life of a country gentleman consumed most of his cash income.

<sup>53</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1832 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5663).

<sup>54</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1832 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5663).

Years Rent to November Past	£8,650
Duke of Leinster's Bond	£4,615 7s 8d
Grand Canal stock	£450
Mining Shares	£230
Edwardstown	£2,200
Farm Hill	£3,000
Book, Plate and Furniture	£4,500
Clonoclis bought from Mr Henry	£840
Trees	£500
Total Value	£24,385 7s 8d
Deduct Debts	£7,300
Final Total	£17,085 7s 8d

**Table 5: State of Lord Cloncurry's Finances December 1834.**<sup>55</sup>

*Source:* Cloncurry Papers, NLI.

The 1836 May rental [See Table 6] provides an insight to the financial state of the tenantry at the time of the poor inquiry.

	Arrears	Total Due	Payments	New Arrears
Abbington	£1,643 0s 4d	£3,089 16s 9d	£1,016	£2,073 16s 8 ½ d
Cloncurry	£22 14s 0d	£1,276 13s 1d	£1,231 5s 0d	£45 8s 1d
Lyons	£451 13s 10d	£1,396 12s 10d	£1,102 4s 11d	£294 7s 5d
Totals	£2,117 8s 2d	£5,763 2s 8d	£3,349 9s 11d	£2,413 12s 2 ½ d

**Table 6: Half-Year Rentals, May 1836.**<sup>56</sup>

*Source:* Cloncurry Papers, Rentals, 1836 NLI, MS 5664.

The 1836 rental shows, that despite improvements in payments, the tenants on the Abbington estate were still in a precarious position. Their payments totalled £1,016,

<sup>55</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1834 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5663).

<sup>56</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1836 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5664).

yet in 1825 they had managed to pay £2,248 11s 10 ½ d. The 1831 famine did not appear to affect payments of that many tenants on the Cloncurry and Lyons estates. There were four evictions between 1834 and 1836 on the Lyons estate, but overall the number of tenants in arrears was negligible. But as shown, this was not necessarily down to Cloncurry's management of the estate. The Abbington estate should have provided Lord Cloncurry with the highest income of the three estates. In 1836, it provided the lowest. Tenants paid higher rents in Abbington than on the Lyons and Cloncurry estates. High population growth, a drop in demand for their production and in wages, added to two periods of famine in 1821 and 1831, severely limited their ability to meet the demands of rent and arrears, despite Cloncurry's attempts to help them. The result was a drop in Cloncurry's income, which curtailed his plans for the further development of the three estates.

As many landlords at the time did, Cloncurry increased his income where that was feasible. Tenants were enjoying a rise in their fortunes from the late eighteenth century and Cloncurry naturally wanted to increase his income as well. When leases ran their full term, Cloncurry sought to restructure them on more favourable terms towards himself. In 1796, the value of the Lyons rental came to £456 3s 10d.<sup>57</sup> By 1825, Cloncurry had raised the value to £660 6s 1d and by 1836, it amounted to £944 19s 0d. Rent for the Abbington estate in 1818, amounted to £1,516 3s 10 ½ d. Yet in 1836, it only amounted to just over £1,446. Despite a natural inclination to raise the rents, Cloncurry was conscious of the plight of his tenants on the Abbington estate and structured the rental accordingly. In May 1837, Cloncurry noted in the rent book that Benjamin Burke and James Doyle could pay in February.<sup>58</sup> The tenants on the Lyons estate were in a more favourable position and were able to meet the rising

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<sup>57</sup> Rent roll of the estate of Michael Aylmer, 1796 (NLI, Aylmer papers, MS 9056).

<sup>58</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1837 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5664).



rents. In relation to the three estates, Cloncurry wrote in the November 1836 rental, that the holdings on the Abbington estate were all moderately let and that the full arrears of £1,725 9s 2d would be paid.<sup>59</sup> In relation to the Lyons estate, he wrote that one family would need an abatement of 30s per year and that the holdings of the cottiers were fairly let.<sup>60</sup>

Lord Cloncurry contributed to the poor inquiry, as did his agent, and Rev Nolan, parish priest of Lyons. So also did neighbouring landlord, Arthur Henry of Straffan. Rev. T.O.B. Costello, parish priest of Abbington, also responded to the questionnaire issued by the commissioners. The Inquiry does provide a good insight of the condition of the peasantry at the time, including those on Lord Cloncurry's estates, despite certain biases for some of the answers given by contributors. In his responses to the questionnaire Lord Cloncurry enhanced the image of the Lyons estate, whereas Rev. Nolan's answers conveyed the opposite impression. Possibly, the agent's responses give a more accurate picture. Cloncurry put the average rent of land in the parish at £1 14s per acre, although his own agent put it at £2 per acre.<sup>61</sup> Rev Nolan claimed it to be £3 to £4 per acre and that a certain degree of rack-renting occurred for the larger farms. The neighbouring landlord, Arthur Henry, claimed the rent to be £1 10s per acre on his estate. Cloncurry claimed that labourers' wages averaged between £15 and £20 per annum, although his agent stated that they were never more than £15. Lord Cloncurry put the rent of the conacre as low as £5 on well-manured ground and stated that the peasants used it just to have something of their own to work on in their spare time.<sup>62</sup> Yet his agent put the price at £3 -£8 per acre and in the Abbington parish it

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<sup>59</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1836 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 31470).

<sup>60</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1836 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 3147).

<sup>61</sup> *Poor inquiry, supplement to appendix F*, pp 157-158.

<sup>62</sup> *Poor inquiry, supplement to appendix F*, pp 157-158.

was between £8 and £12 per acre.<sup>63</sup> Rev. Costello also claimed that, although never a remunerating crop the poor man had to take the con acre or starve. On the Lyons estate, Cloncurry claimed that the condition of the poor since 1815 was 'stationary but improving in some circumstances', whereas Arthur Henry of Straffan believed their situation to be deteriorating from low wages and want of employment.<sup>64</sup> The rising population and higher rents were reflected in the living conditions of the Abbingdon tenants. The homes in Abbingdon were mud walled, badly thatched and with straw bedding. Their clothes were so poor that three-quarters of the Abbingdon parishioners could not attend Mass for want of clothing.<sup>65</sup> If in constant employment the labourers could earn £12 per annum. The reality was £5 in wages plus £3 to £4 from other sources. This total income was put in perspective by the yearly food expense of labourers, which Rev. Costello put at £12. As a result, the tenants' ability to meet their rental payments was severely limited.

Conditions on the Lyons estate were better. The homes of the tenants here were of stone and lime and some were slated.<sup>66</sup> Although there were some of mud and thatch, these were rented from farmers and not directly from the landlord. At the time, there were still some middlemen on the Lyons estate. A similar situation existed on the Straffan estate. Tenants on the Lyons and Straffan estates were clothed in freize and coarse cloth, and lived on potatoes, oatmeal and bread.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Poor inquiry, supplement to appendix F*, p. 218.

<sup>64</sup> *Poor inquiry, supplement to appendix E*, p. 65.

<sup>65</sup> *Poor inquiry (Ireland): Appendix (D) containing baronial examinations relative to earnings of labourers, cottier tenants, employment of women and children, expenditure; and supplement containing answers to questions 1 to 12 circulated by the commissioners* [36] H.C 1836, xxx, 1, p. 218 (hereafter cited as *Poor inquiry, supplement to appendix D*).

<sup>66</sup> *Poor inquiry, supplement to appendix E*, p. 65.

<sup>67</sup> *Poor inquiry, supplement to appendix D*, pp 66-68.

	November 1828	November 1832	November 1837
Arrears	£2,911 16s	£2,745 3s	£2,701 3s 2 ½ d
Total Due	£6,627 15s	£6,627 13s	£5,473 13s
Receipts	£3,692 5s 4d	£3,457 13s	£3,865 10s 8 ½ d
New Arrears	£2,663 10s 3 ½ d	£3,169 19s 5d	£2,605 3s 1d

**Table 7: Half Year Totals of Combined Estates for November 1828, 1832, 1837.<sup>68</sup>**

*Source:* Cloncurry Papers, NLI.

The financial summary for the combined estates over a nine-year period [See Table 7] make clear, that as the years progressed, the situation did not improve in the long term for Lord Cloncurry, caused mostly by the problems on the Abbington estate. Furthermore, between 1825 and 1843, the actual rent did not change, apart from the abatements granted by Cloncurry. In 1841, there were 24 tenants in arrears on the Abbington estate out of a total of 67.<sup>69</sup> But in 1843, that number had risen to 65.<sup>70</sup> Although the majority were in arrears by just one payment, the situation would not improve. By November 1845, all tenants on the Abbington estate were in arrears.<sup>71</sup> Cloncurry received less than half what he was due in rent and arrears. The new arrears totalled £3,363 4s 10d. The combined new arrears for the two Kildare estates was £353 12s 11d. There were 15 tenants in arrears from these two estates and 13 of them were from the Lyons property.

During this time Cloncurry persevered with improvements. He allowed tenants the poor rates on all three estates and continued to pay subscriptions to the local dispensaries and funding to schools. Pensions were still paid to the pensioners on the Lyons estate. Those tenants who had the means to make improvements to their homesteads and holdings had allowances made in their rent

<sup>68</sup> Rentals for the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1828, 1832, 1837 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MSS 5662-5664).

<sup>69</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1841 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5665).

<sup>70</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1843 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5665).

<sup>71</sup> Rentals of the estates of Lord Cloncurry, 1845 (NLI, Cloncurry papers, MS 5665).

Despite his best intentions, the events that dominated his estates, in particular the Abbington estate, were outside Cloncurry's control. Internally, the Aylmer leases were granted before his time and there was also a reluctance on the part of some tenants to co-operate with his plans. These were internal problems that admittedly might be resolved eventually through careful long-term management practice. However, Cloncurry's time as landlord coincided with the massive population increase and the economic decline that followed the end of the Napoleonic wars. There proved to be no relief because two minor famines in 1821 and 1831 resulted in separate periods of hunger and compounded the difficulties of his tenants. These were times to tighten the purse strings but Cloncurry continued to spend extravagantly. Overall, his years as landlord were trying times for a man of high ideals.

## CONCLUSION:

Lord Cloncurry was born into a life of privilege and luxury in the latter half of the eighteenth century. He was well educated and travelled extensively throughout Europe during which time he encountered such individuals as Napoleon and Pope Pius VII who were destined to play significant roles in European history. His encounters with these people, coupled with his other experiences abroad played a significant role in the formation of the character of Cloncurry. Despite the opulence and luxury that he enjoyed, Cloncurry's formative years were difficult. During his imprisonment, resulting from his involvement with the United Irishmen, he lost both his father and fiancée. He later found love, happiness and a family with Elizabeth Morgan, but that too was short lived. Yet despite these difficulties, Cloncurry proved to be an enduring character and maintained a remarkably positive outlook on life. It would have been easy for him to succumb to bitterness, but Cloncurry did not allow his personal difficulties control his life.

Cloncurry's grandfather started life among the peasantry and his own early political and social education centred around the United Irishmen. His experience in post revolutionary France opened his mind to the goals of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity'. His travels in Italy gave him a first hand impression of the devastation that disease and poverty could cause to tenant farmers abandoned by absentee landlords. At home Cloncurry despised such landlords regarding them as the ruination of Ireland.

Cloncurry was aware of the responsibilities as a landlord from an early age. On taking over the estate from his father, Cloncurry set out to restructure it by a policy of direct management which involved phasing out middlemen and other sub-

letters. In doing so he hoped by this to increase his income and ensure a loyal tenantry. In this respect Cloncurry fitted the mould of many Irish landlords of his time. Unfortunately for him, the middlemen on the Cloncurry estate had the luxury of the long leases granted by Michael Aylmer and were secure in the knowledge that Cloncurry was powerless to act against them once they paid their rent on time. However he was successful in restructuring tenancies on the Lyons and Abbington estates.

Unlike many of his contemporaries Cloncurry was perceived as being a benevolent landlord as illustrated by the manner in which he dealt with the tenants of his Lyons and Abbington estates. His management policy brought him into direct contact with his tenants and as a result he became very aware of their circumstances and was not surprised by the reality of their plight. As a landlord he was considered a fair man with no religious bigotry and had a genuine interest in the welfare of his tenantry. During the difficult periods that followed the peace after the Napoleonic wars and the famines of 1821 and 1831, Cloncurry granted abatements and reduced rents to accommodate his tenants. He was a fair man with no religious bigotry and had a genuine interest in his tenantry. He was a firm believer in the value of education and made provisions for the education of tenant families on his estates. This was part of his overall policy of improvements. Tenants who were willing to improve their homes and holdings were encouraged and offered incentives.

Cloncurry related to men such as Robert Owen, who shared his aspirations to achieve improvements for the common good. He found a vehicle to express and develop these ideas in organisations such as the Royal Dublin Society, the Kildare Place Society and the Society for the Improvement of Ireland. Here he found like-minded people whose aim was to see Ireland and her people progress. Through these

groups he was able to publicise his grand ideas for projects such as the mass reclamation of wasteland and the construction of the Dublin to Galway ship canal.

Cloncurry did not realise his vision for the estates. He was unable to pursue his aims to their completion free from external influences. His plans floundered on the economic downturns that followed the peace of 1815 and the famines of 1821 and 1832. This was compounded by the dramatic increase in population that exerted great pressure on the land and resources, particularly on the Abbingdon estate. Tenants on the Lyons and Abbingdon estate remained in arrears for the remainder of Cloncurry's life and he was forced to reduce rents or grant abatements to keep them on the land.

In response to his direct involvement in his estates, several tenants, in his view, reacted negatively. They questioned his control over common ground and registered their objections to his plans for road development on the Lyons estate. Civil disobedience became a common thread through Irish rural life as tenants became more socially aware.

Cloncurry's attitude towards improvements partly came from his paternalistic attitude. The peasant tenant should improve his lot but only at his landlord's instruction and behest. Cloncurry was a man of vision and he possessed an unwavering determination to develop his estates as a testimony to his greatness. Roman antiquities were to the fore of the 'Lyons House', dominating and supporting the portico. In his mind it was fitting that these artefacts from the greatest civilisation stood as symbols of his own power and influence in the Lyons estate.

He was a man of several contradictions; generous yet ruthless, extravagant yet spendthrift. Cloncurry was a very social man but was wary about possible intrusions onto his estate. He saw himself as a man of justice and established the Petty Sessions where the peasant could seek an unbiased decision in court. He had an unswerving

belief in himself and his own ability. Yet when Cloncurry lost his sense of control a darker more insecure side emerged. This was evident in the way that he dealt with Lady Cloncurry. The great paternal landlord showed no leniency towards her and she was banished, depriving his children of the natural and vital relationship with their mother. He was similarly vindictive in his treatment of tenants on the Cloncurry estate who fell into arrears – evictions were carried out without remorse. As a man scorned he was a force to be reckoned with.

Valentine Lawless, the second Lord Cloncurry died of pleurisy on 28 October 1853, at the age of 83. In keeping with his character, three days previously he had attended the Great Exhibition at the Royal Dublin Society. He left his entire estate after debts and legacies to his son Edward.<sup>1</sup> Cloncurry instructed in his will that he was to be carried to his grave at the church yard on the Lyons estate by the labourers employed by him and each man was to be paid £2 for 'his troubles'. Three hundred labourers from his estates attended the funeral and all wore scarves or hatbands on their sleeves as a mark of respect.<sup>2</sup>

Cloncurry fits the mould of a Shakespearean tragic hero complete with a requisite hunger for power and ambition, negated by flaws and failings but ultimately he emerges as a sympathetic and likeable character. He was a man who embraced change and his determination was his armour against fear of taking risks. The reviewer of Cloncurry's memoirs asked why such a shrewd man had not borne a more influential or conspicuous part in Irish politics. A possible explanation may lie in his earlier frustrated forays into the political world. However, an examination of his contribution to his estates and to his tenants' lives dismisses this question as limited in the parameters it sets around Cloncurry's achievements on so many levels. His

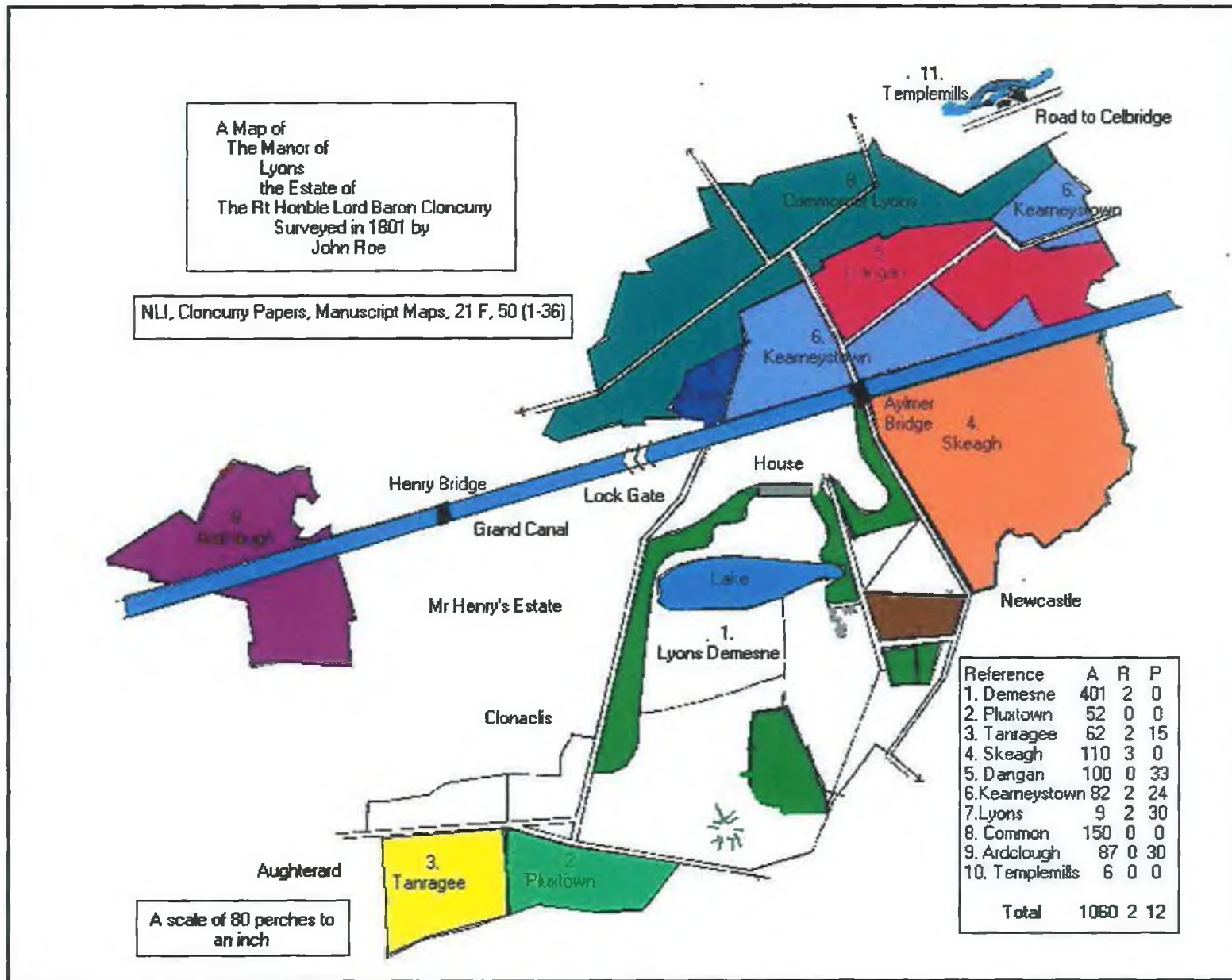
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<sup>1</sup> Official copy of the will of Valentine Brown Lawless, 1853 (N.A. Cloncurry papers, T9540, 396).

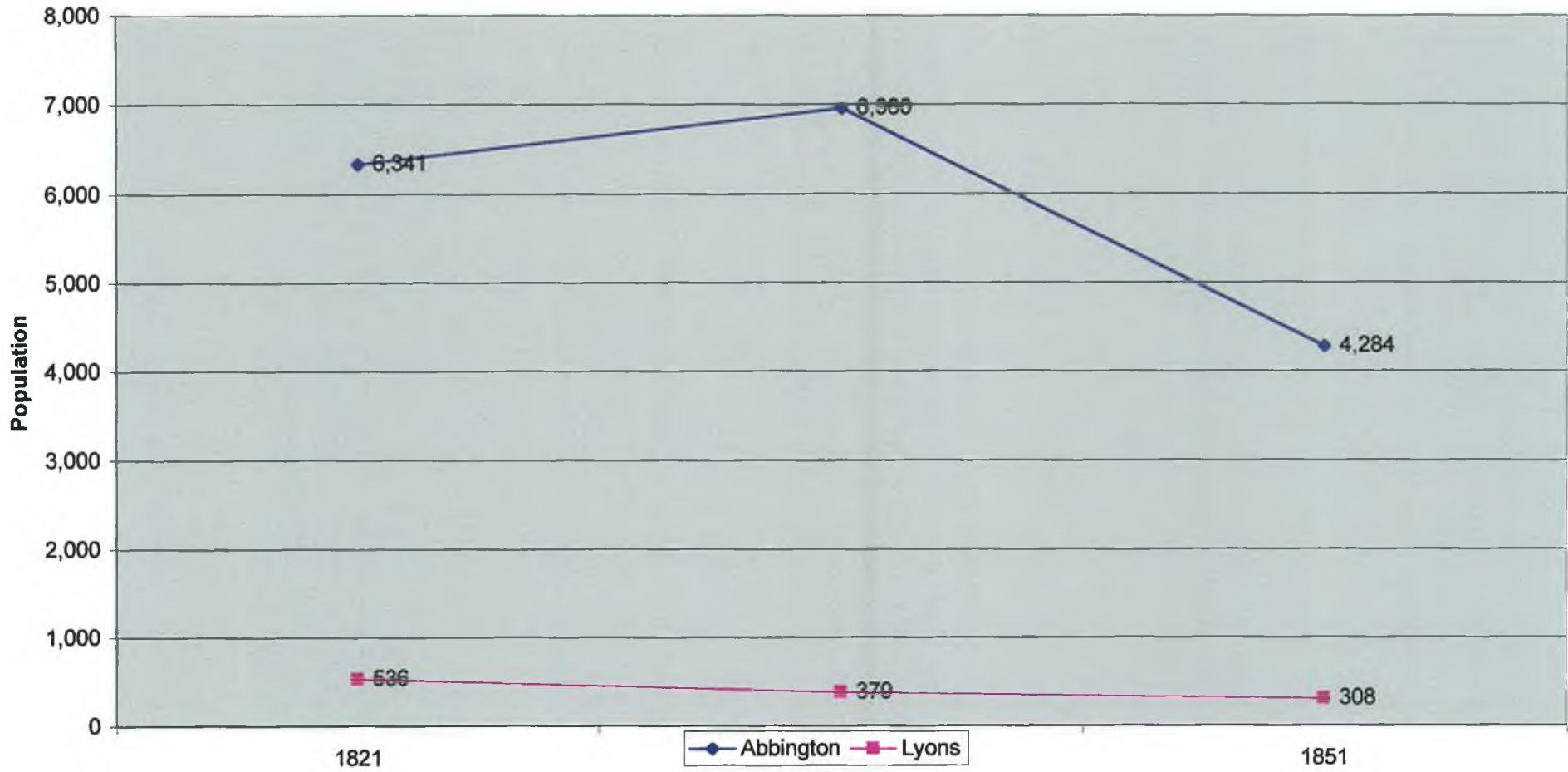
<sup>2</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Lord Cloncurry*, p. 453.



trenchant contribution was as an open-minded, progressive landlord who relentlessly pursued his vision for his estates.



### Populations for Abbington and Lyons



Appendix 2.  
Source: Census 1821, 1831, 1841.

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[36] H.C 1836, xxx, 1.*

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#### EVIDENCE IN THE LANDSCAPE

In the course of this research, field trips were conducted to the following sites of interest to this study; Lyons estate demesne, 'Lyons House', Church and graveyard the Lyons demesne, Lyons schoolhouse.