





*The House of Corkagh*

## *The House of Corkagh*

by Joe Devine



*Aerial view of the Corkagh complex*

*So sleeps the pride of former days now glory's thrill is o'er  
And hearts that once beat high for praise, now feel their pulse  
no more*

*The Harp that Once Thro' Tara's Halls- Thomas Moore*

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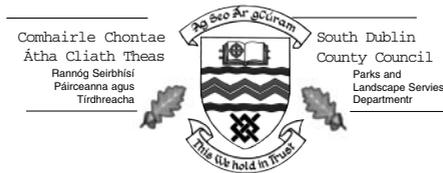
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*Cover based on a map kindly supplied by Mr. Finlay Colley.*

## *Introduction*

**I**T IS with no little trepidation that one tries to compile the history of a dynasty that has been with us for over 200 years and that has endeared itself to a village and its people.

Despite the passing of time and the inevitable demise of the first members, the Finlays, who played a prominent part in the history of Ireland itself; their association with Corkagh House and estate will be forever green.

Roger Kendrick's map of 1759 shows parcels of land surveyed for John Finlay of Corkagh. These were fused later into Corkagh Estate that was to add to the beauty and prosperity of Clondalkin.

The Finlays were prominent in banking, church and affairs of state. John Finlay was a member of The Great Parliament of Ireland, 1791. He was also a friend of Lord Kilwarden, afterwards Chief Justice of Ireland. Both were members of the Vestry of St. John's Church of Ireland in 1791.

If one gives credence to superstitions, the ghostly carriage of the fateful Lord has more than once been heard frantically driven through Corkagh avenue.

Edith, the last of the Finlays married G.P.A. Colley in 1909 and subsequently came to live in Corkagh. She stood out as a gracious host to many a prominent visitor and generous in her

concern for workers in Clondalkin, in the bad times of the 1920s, when the paper mill closed. To quote Goldsmith's lines: "*her bounty gave, 'ere her charity began*".

Having learned the past history of Corkagh and its dynastic nature, we are at once proud and fortunate to have bequeathed to us a lasting part of our heritage that can only be the envy of all who partake of its recreational facilities and its scenic delights.

It is strange to find that twelve hundred years ago the very place that affords pleasure and recreation today, was once the hub of life and living, for humans, who even brought to their graves some fashionable objects of their time, that were to date and mark their passing.

Today when faith in our immortality has changed into an intellectual attitude; uncovering the dead must still give us pause.

We might take cognisance of William Byrne's poem:-

*... For joy can still be found,  
In lingering o'er the magic ground.  
Where he who loves must ever see  
Sights wistful with antiquity.  
That robbed the heart of some old Gael,  
Who died before Troy had a tale.*

The great hope is, that one who puts such information in words and pictures will eventually end up enticing the reader to actually go and witness what we humans can do, to embellish nature itself.

*Joe Devine*

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## *Acknowledgements*

**A** BOOK such as this is the fruit of many years of research both formal and informal and sincere thanks is due to a great many people.

Firstly, I must thank my wife, Helen, who also shares my love of Corkagh Park, for her great patience over the period of gestation of this book.

The greatest thanks is due to the gracious and generous descendants of the Finlay and the Colley families who provided much of the information on the House of Corkagh and permitted the use of their family photographs in the book especially Mrs Valery Hone, Laetitia Lefroy, Mr Finlay Colley and Veronica Lefroy. Others associated with Corkagh who were equally forthcoming with information and photographs were Mrs McDermott (R.I.P.), the Clarke family, Muriel Browne, Jim Kelly, The Karstel family and Mr. Jim Nolan.

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The current occupiers of Corkagh, South Dublin County Council's Parks Department is owed thanks for the trojan work done in providing, maintaining and developing a wonderful park for the people of South Dublin of which they can be justly proud. While supporting the book financially, thanks is also due for the support and assistance received from Parks Department Staff especially, Dr. Christy Boylan, Michael Hannon, Bill Kearney, Ray Greally, Matt Rudden and all the hardworking staff of Corkagh Park.

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A special word of thanks is due to Kieran Swords and Síle Coleman of the County Library in Tallaght for their help and support.

If I have omitted anyone, please accept my sincere thanks for all help given with this book.

*Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir.*

## *Chapter 1*

### Corkagh House

**C**ORKAGH House was built in the Queen Anne style between 1702 and 1714. It was preceded by an older farmhouse built around 1650 or so. The house faced south and joined end to end with the original farmhouse. As both houses faced south, they thus enjoyed long periods of sunshine to the front of the houses.

Strangely enough, no one knows who built either house, though the names of Ralph Mills, William Trundell and H. Arabin are always associated with living there before Thomas Finlay rented it in 1716 and bought the house and estate in 1750.

Both houses were joined at their kitchens. The older house contained the more functional parts such as areas for cooking, washing up and facilities for house staff. In addition, workers were entertained in this section on special occasions such as Colley family weddings. Christmas parties for staff, their spouses and their children were also hosted here.

The older house also provided a through route from the front of the house to the rear. In Corkagh's heyday, a bell was located on its end chimney that rang at 8am, 12 noon, 1pm and 6pm. As the bell could be clearly heard over long distances in this rural setting, those not fortunate enough to own clocks and watches had little excuse for poor timekeeping.

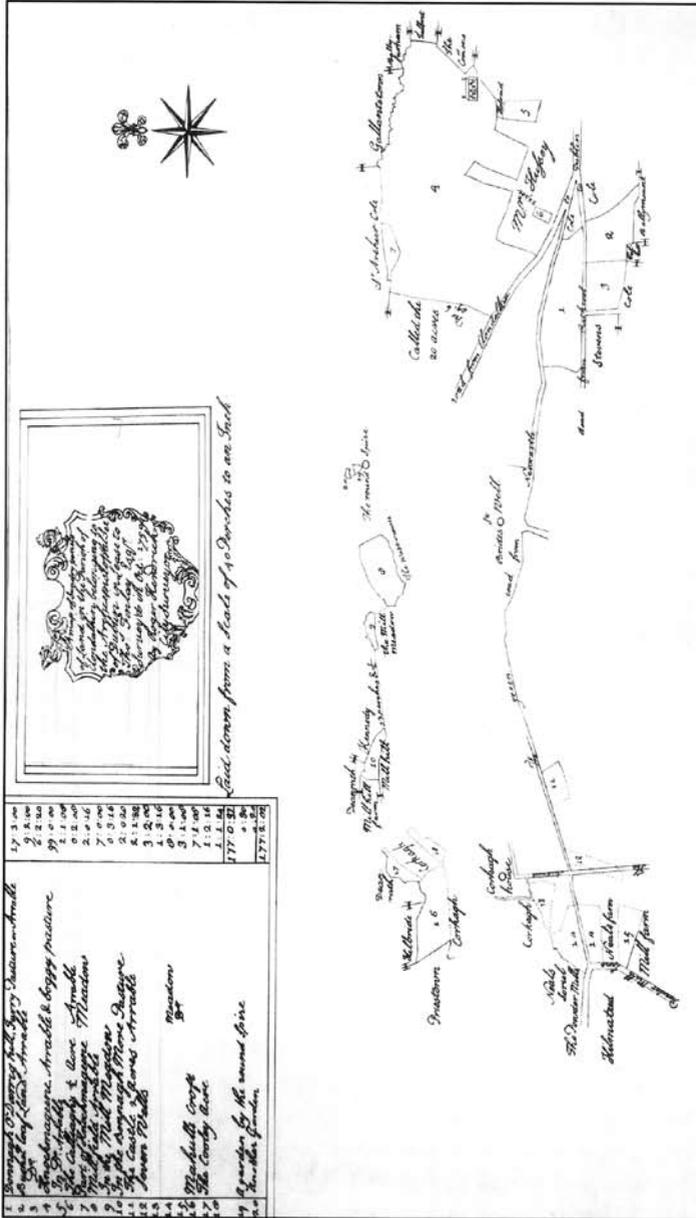


*Corkagh House in the 1930s. Note the original 1650 house to the right.*

In 1818 numerous parcels of land were finally enclosed and the Demesne developed into a large estate which along with Kilmatead, became the property of the Finlay family. For the next 225 years the land was held by members of the Finlay family and their descendants.

The name Corkagh is probably based on the Irish *corcach*, meaning marsh. The name is most appropriate as the Demesne is situated in the floodplain of the Camac or Swift River. Other placenames in the area further support this interpretation of the topography. To the south of where Corkagh House stood is a plot named Corraghan, in Irish *corrachán*, meaning boggy while to the north is Scarlow which is derived from *sciurlach* or *screallach*, meaning barren land. Surface water in the area was increased by the Sruleen stream which arose from the site of Sruleen Well whose name can be interpreted as the well of the little stream. This spring well was used to supply drinking water to the big house, towards which it flowed. From Kilmatead in the south west flows an underground stream which circumscribed the house complex.

The House of Corkagh



The Camac rises on the Dublin mountains and ends its short life in the Liffey near Heuston Station. It flows by the famous walled-garden in Corkagh and has adjoining fields: Mohellscross, Rainbow or Brickfield.

At Kilmatead we find the remains of a powder-mill which was one of seven mills on the river Camac itself. It is no wonder that maximum use was made of water-power for mills. Among the mills powered by the Camac were:

1. Swiftbrook Mill, Saggart
2. Powder Mills at Kilmatead
3. Oil Mill, Clondalkin
4. Corn Mill, Clondalkin
5. Valley Park and Killeen Paper Mills
6. Saw Mill, Inchicore

The Clondalkin area provided copious supplies of gunpowder to the government through the production of at least two powder-mills. The mill at Kilmatead was constructed in 1733 while the mill at Moyle Park was constructed in 1783. Both mills were the site of large and serious explosions but because of their strategic importance were rebuilt and went back into production, despite the unstable nature of the substance. They gave great employment in the Clondalkin area itself.

Wm. Caldbeck of Moyle Park and H. Arabin of Corkagh were the builders of the 1783 mill. Because of the importance of gunpowder, Col. Finlay of Corkagh House was strongly supportive of the enterprise. After the laying of the stones by Lord Devlin, Caldbeck provided lavish entertainment with food and drink for those present.

### *The House of Corkagh*

Col. John Finlay was M.P. for Dublin from 1790 – 1797 and leader of The Uppercross Fusiliers. He married an heiress, Elizabeth Stear of Bedford and was quite influential. As well as operating an existing Bank set up by his father Thomas. While Lt. Col. of Dublin Militia, he was charged at the time of the 1798 rebellion with rounding up the rebels around the Clondalkin area.

Even in church affairs he played a conspicuous role. In 1791 he was nominated by the then archbishop of Dublin, Archbishop Rob Fowler, together with Rt. Hon. Arthur Wolfe (afterwards Lord Kilwarden) of Newlands House, as Warden of St. John's Church Clondalkin. Lord Kilwarden afterwards became Lord Chief Justice of Ireland.

John Finlay himself a Justice of the Peace and an M.P. was afterwards to be the very one who failed to dissuade his longstanding friend from travelling into Dublin so as to avoid the gruesome fate that awaited himself and nephew on July 23rd 1803 in Thomas Street.



*July 23rd 1803. Lord Kilwarden, the Lord Chief Justice and his nephew are dragged from from their coach in Thomas Street and murdered.*



*Lord Kilwarden who resided at the neighbouring property, Newlands. The Finlays have often heard his coach and horses drive up the main avenue of Corkagh en route to his residence at Newlands. So! When you hear them please give way!*

Col. John Finlay died in 1823, aged 73. John's son Thomas, who was Lieutenant Colonel in the Dublin Light Infantry carried on the father's banking business. He died in 1837, leaving his son Rev. Wm. John M.A. who had been born in Derry in 1805. Wm. John married Henrietta Cole in 1837. She died in 1847. In 1849, he married Caroline Elizabeth Hamilton who died in 1909. Around 1850, he planted the overgrown trees, we see in Corkagh's walled-garden, replacing low hedges by beeches and yews. He left his world in 1879.

Henry Thomas Finlay is the best remembered member of his illustrious family. He married Helen Lucy Hedges Dunne of Brittas, Co. Laois. They had three sons and two daughters.

### *The House of Corkagh*

The three sons were all killed in war.

1. Francis Henry John (Lieutenant Royal Dublin Fusiliers) b. 1879, d. 1900, Boer War age 21;
2. George Guy, b. 1889 (Lieutenant Royal Irish Regiment) b. 1889; d. 1916 in France, age 29;
3. Robert Alexander, b. 1893; d. 1915 in World War 1 in Belgium, aged 22.

Their deaths left Corkagh House and estate without a male successor. Losing his three sons must have left a great void in the Colonel's heart. His first wife Helen died in 1902 and his second wife, Emily Octavia died in 1915. In spite of his tragic losses he lived until 1936 and died at the ripe old age of 90.

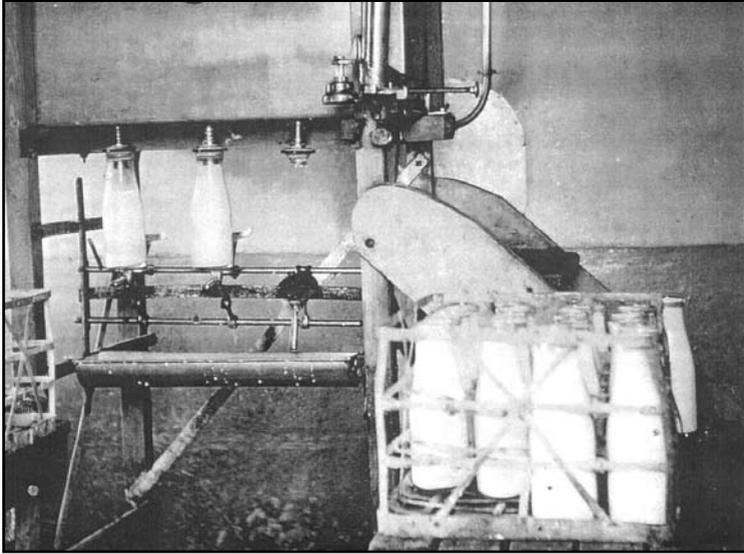
Edith Maud Olivia, the last of the Finlays married George Pomeroy Arthur Colley in 1909 and to her fell the estate and its future. George and Edith had four girls and two boys. George's first love was engineering and he was said to have first come to Corkagh in his Argyll. He was influential in England and on the continent because of his activities in the ambulance service in the early 1900s. He died in 1933 and his son, Dudley, though still in Trinity studying engineering was forced to take over the running of the estate and its farming activities.

In addition to Lord Kilwarden's ghostly horses and carriage, another ghost story is related about Corkagh. Major Gerald Colley, brother-in-law of Edith Colley of Corkagh was stationed in Dublin Castle during the 1916 rising. He told his wife, who was in Corkagh at the time, that the Rising on Easter Monday was expected. His wife, Edith and a friend were walking in Corkagh when they heard a band enter Corkagh. They hurried to the house, thinking that the house was about to be taken over. When they reached the house they found the whole staff gathered outside the house frightened by the sound of the same band, only that no band was to be seen!

*Young men died by Liffey's side, so brave and yet so few, while band unseen on Corkagh Green played drums in the foggy dew.*

*Joe Devine*

Dudley's knowledge of engineering and his experience of machinery stood him in good stead. Under him, Corkagh became highly mechanised, with widespread use of milking and cooling devices. Cows were milked into vans out in the fields and milk was supplied to clients in Clondalkin and further afield.



*An example of modernisation. Bottling plant introduced to Corkagh by Dudley.*

Older men, who were children then, still speak about journeys in Dudley's car to the doctor and how Mrs. Colley delivered a baby in Corkagh. She was a trained nurse. In 1920 when the paper mill closed, Mrs. Colley initiated soup kitchens and home crafts to help the needy without distinction.

Mrs. Hone describes the harvesting and the threshing in particular. The men who came with the threshing-machine and those who came with two-pronged forks were recipients of the Colley generosity. They were given a full meal and tea at breaks. I dare say the event ended with some beverages a little stronger!

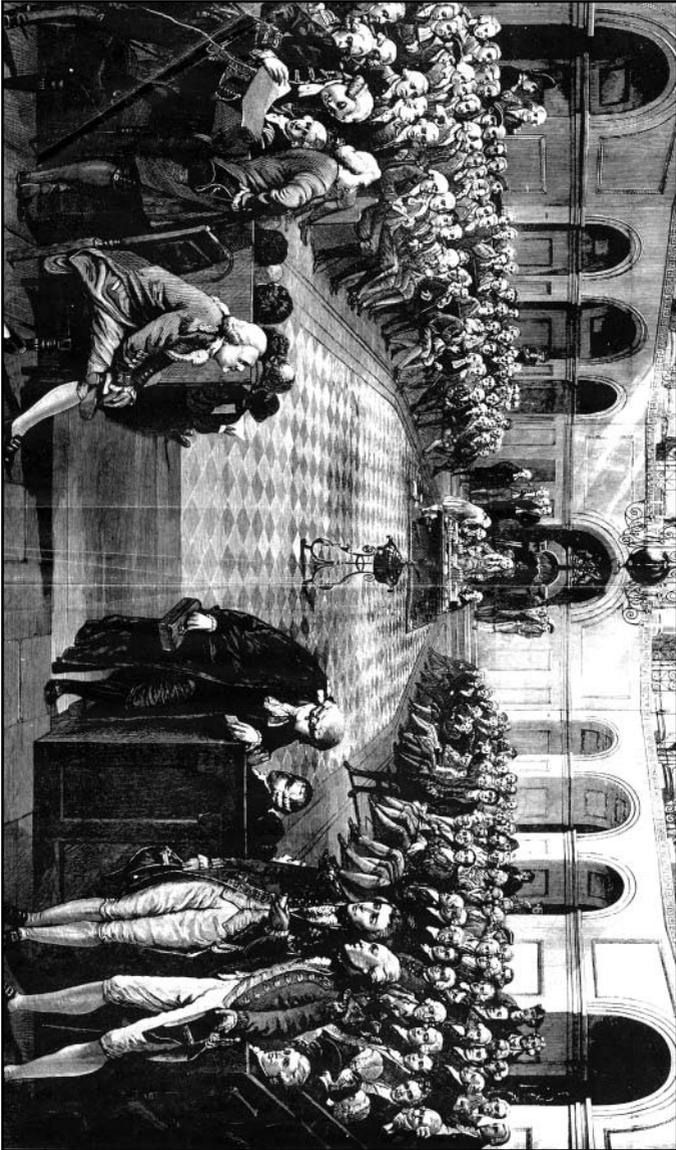
### *The House of Corkagh*

With 25 people working inside and 25 people working outside, it is extraordinary how they balanced work and entertainment; as indicated by the meticulous care by which 65 people and rooms were allocated for a party at Corkagh in 1914. (*See Chapter 4*). The names are a record of those in service at that time. We can only be impressed by the style and confident look of family and staff in photographs of this and later periods.

Both the Finlays and the Colleys had access to, and availed of the best educational establishments here and overseas. Their status in the legal and financial world goes back to the first owner of Corkagh, Thomas Finlay. Their contribution to the military establishment was almost total. By some strange irony; the three Finlays: Francis, George and Robert, brothers of Edith who later became Mrs. Colley, were to find graves in foreign fields, with sons of the old enemy, fighting for the same cause – the rights of small nations.

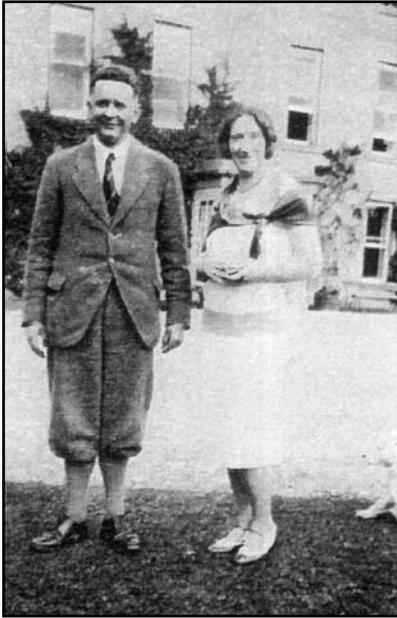
The Colleys had originally been granted lands in Edenderry after the shiring of Laois and Offaly around 1556 and hence we have Colleystown and the barony of Coolstown.

A noted member of the Colley family was Elizabeth Bowen, whose mother was Florence, a sister of G.P.A. Colley. Elizabeth was a prolific writer and a frequent visitor to Corkagh. She married Alan Cameron of the B.B.C. The Colley family also numbered the Duke of Wellington as a famous member: the one who put an end to the peregrinations of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815.



*The Great parliament of Ireland 1790. Included among the distinguished members are John Finlay of Corkagh and Rt. Hon. Arthur Wolfe, (Lord Kilwarden) Lord Chief Justice of Ireland.*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Elizabeth Bowen, pictured at Corkagh  
with her husband, Alan Cameron.*

Elizabeth was born in Dublin in 1889 and moved to Cork. She found herself living in England at the home of her aunt Laura at the age of 13. She died in London in 1973 aged 74. She is buried with her husband Alan near Bowen's Court, Co. Cork. She wrote upwards of twenty novels including *Bowen's Court*; *Eva Trout*; *The Death of the Heart*; *The Shelbourne*; etc. These with many short stories and essays, gleaned by her pen from her teeming brain, filled the books and periodicals of her day.

The Colleys had all the privileges of landed gentry. The boys went to boarding school in England and afterwards to Trinity College, Dublin. The girls went to Alexander College and were socially acquainted with the elite in all aspects of daily life. Social graces were an integral part of their education; equally as important as their academic pursuits. Girls were moulded in manners as well as in speech and etiquette. The arts such as painting, music, poetry, along with games like tennis, croquet and hockey had a special place in the curriculum. These would be the social demands on those who married into the moneyed classes.

Corkagh had three pianos and talent both vocal and instrumental was always welcome. Mrs. Hone recalls how the wife of her uncle Gerald set up a riding school for the girls. She confessed she never broke any equestrian records! What she lacked here however, she made up for in the sphere of erudition!

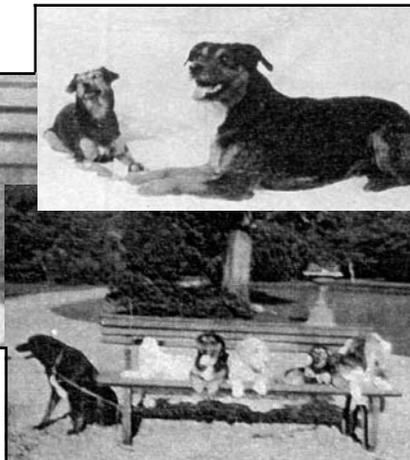
One notable feature of the Colley family in Corkagh was their love of animals, especially dogs. Rabbits and cats were also kept. It reached the stage where the Colonel himself had to curtail the ever-increasing number of dogs! One time the order was disobeyed. The plight of one poor stray dog was so pitiable that Mrs. Hone hid him, only to find, after a few days, the poor unfortunate sitting on the Colonel's knee. He was uttering: "Glory be". The dog was named *Glory Be* by the man himself, without his realising it! They became inseparable from that on.

*Right: Phil & Wellington*



*Above: Sandy*

*Right: Henry, Stanley, Joss &*



The Finlays and Colleys had all the qualities and attributes of the landed gentry without the overt display of grandeur; neither did they substitute the latter for those sound and lasting qualities that always characterises a true lady or gentleman.

Soon the hustle and bustle of a large house, with its noisy throng of inmates visitors and staff was to come to an abrupt end. Maintenance of machinery, lack of skilled van drivers and extra taxes, crowned by foot and mouth disease in the 40s quickly cleared the fields of all stock and contributed in no small way to the untimely death of its owner, Dudley Colley at the early age of 48 years.

*The House of Corkagh*

The ravaging hand of fate had, within months, muted forever the revelry of children at Christmas parties in Corkagh. Gone also was the toy Mrs. Colley gave to each individual child, out of her generous nature. An era had ended with the last of the dynasty moving to Kilmatead, also known as little Corkagh. The paths could only be measured by the chilling silence they left behind; without the lowing of a beast or the pealing dirge of Corkagh's famous bell.



*Mrs Valerie Hone with her flowers*

Few will dispute Valerie Hone's supremacy in depth of knowledge of the lives and times of those who occupied Corkagh House. One is amazed at her powers of retention and the accuracy of that knowledge. We are therefore fortunate to have such a rich source of detail.

In these times, when there is only left enough time for the pen and camera to stem the tide of demolition and heedless destruction of endless reminders of our monumental historical past, it is refreshing to have irrefutably, what would otherwise perhaps have ended up in the vagaries of folklore.

## *Chapter 2*

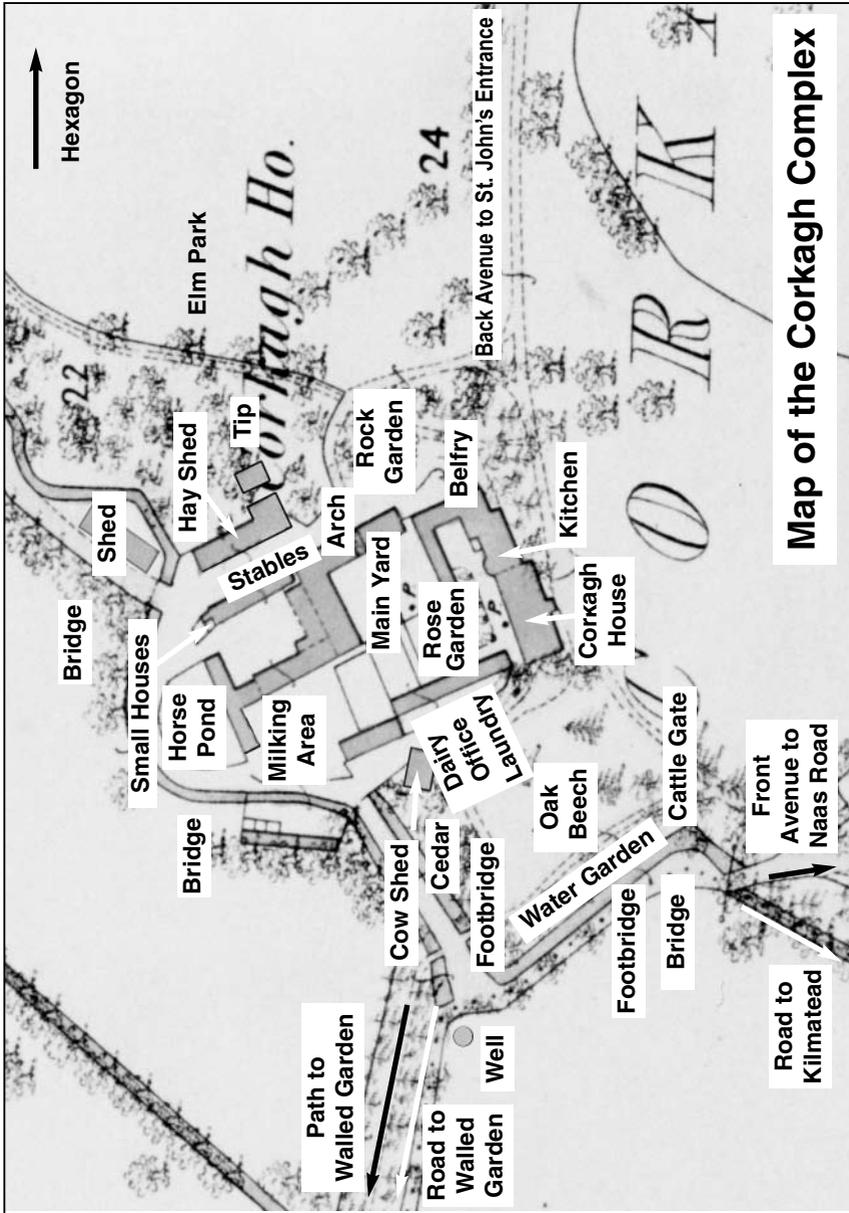
### The Layout of the Corkagh complex

**S**INCE the Big House and many of the features of Corkagh seem to have disappeared, this chapter should help the reader understand the locations and relative positions of some features of the Corkagh complex. The walled garden is dealt with in Chapter 7, page 66.



*The Naas Road gate lodge of Corkagh House.*

The lodge above was the principle one of three leading to the Corkagh estate. The avenue led from the Naas Road and was known as Oak Avenue. Some of the splendid oaks still survive and would have looked on many a famous visitor to parties and historic meetings in Corkagh. This was the path taken by Lord Kilwarden's horses on on 23rd July 1803 after his assassination in Thomas Street.





This view is of the back of Corkagh House. The near building with the arch, lies directly at the back of the house and leads across a path, with steps (1) into the big house (2). Both the row of small houses with the arch and another older house (3), ran parallel to the gable of the big house (2). Sadly both the houses (2 & 3) were demolished in 1960 by Sir. John Galvin, the new owner. The inner row of smaller houses (1) is still intact and the arch altered to a square top. The walk that divided this inner row and the outer houses which are now gone, is just a part of the front lawn. This walk had entrances to both of the demolished houses and each house had a corridor running through and joining both. (4) was a water pump. (5) is the dividing wall between the rose garden on the right and the working area.

### *The House of Corkagh*

The smaller house (3) had a high chimney with a bell that was rung at 8 a.m., 12 noon, 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. This bell overlooked a small garden and an aviary with an entrance through an iron gate which still stands. This gave access to the old house (3). Workers also went through to the hexagon, a six-sided small house for amusement and recreation which was located near where the children's playground stands today.

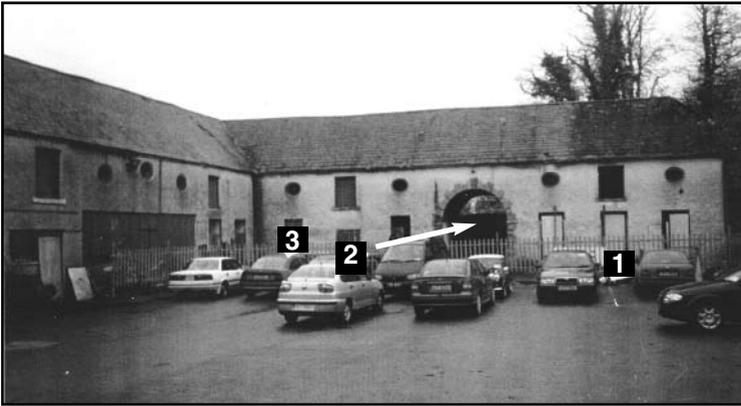


*The rose garden which was located behind the house*

A rectangular area ran from the back of the big house to the higher outhouses and was known as the rose garden. It roughly divided the back area in two. It left a laneway to the left, dividing it from the present County Council Office. The other side was used for horses and cows and to transport hay and foodstuffs. The large outhouses housed cows, horses and pigs at the lower level and hay was forked through the existing doors at the top storeys. Seeds and corn were also stored up there. The farm requirements were brought through the existing big arch from the back. Between those two busy areas, the rose garden gave open access to the back of the big house.

*The House of Corkagh*

In the centre of this garden was the traditional sundial and seats for the pleasure of the household and visitors alike, with paths and a variety of roses. With so many friends it afforded a quiet place to talk and walk and enjoy a cup of tea, far from the madding crowds. It took a fair amount of tending to keep roses pruned and fed. Despite the pleasure, nature is as demanding as it's generous!



*Buildings at back of house:* 1 carpenter's shop, entrance through arch 2; 3 stables for four horses, grain for four horses. Top Doors are for hay.

*Below:* 4 Garage; 5 and 6 hay and corn stores; 7 Outlet door for cows when milked. Entrance was through the rear.



*The House of Corkagh*



*Finlay and Anthony Colley in the water garden.*



*Head Ranger Bob stands by the houses reserved for the men who milked the cows at the early hour of 5 a.m. in time for the dairy.*



*Corkagh back avenue in the snow.*



*Laying out the new Rose Garden. This garden is located in front of where Corkagh House stood.*

### *The House of Corkagh*

Looking to the left facing where Corkagh House stood we see running parallel to its gable end, five small houses. These five were attached and under the one roof. According to Finlay Colley, a most reliable and knowledgeable man in details of Corkagh estate, they were built c. 1820.

It is not their size but rather the associated industry and production that ensures them a place in the history of Corkagh. They complete the rectangular form of the building complex. There is a great poignancy about a place that was once at the heart and soul of Corkagh itself. Up to 1986 the observer got the message that time alone would consign their importance to the realms of history. Fate however seems to have performed for them the miracle of survival, purely because of the near certainty of their final oblivion. Their desolate state made them more suited to history than to the industrial purpose for which they were designed. The few covered-in houses unsuited as they were to the needs of any modern office seems to have functioned adequately for the running of Council business.



*The above picture shows the state of the complete row of five houses before Dublin County Council took over. Curious eyes often looked through these windows to see nothing less than desolation and memories were evoked of what might have been.*



This picture shows a circular water trough that held gallons of water. It was built into a wall which underneath had a furnace to boil the much needed water to soften with soap and detergent, aided by plenty elbow grease, the grime of everyday exertion. This water was kept constantly boiling and was drawn from a tap on the side of the boiler. It was then poured on clothes soaped on a stone bench with a channel and exit pipes. After constant agitation and replenishment of the boiling water, the clothes were transferred to a mangle that squeezed the remaining water from the clothes.

The following picture shows the connecting entrance to the next house where this was done. From here, the almost dry clothes were taken out to a bleach yard where they were exposed to air and sun. Three days each week were set aside for this rather arduous work.

*The House of Corkagh*



The third house in the row was once an office and then a place where leather repairs were carried out. Such a place was needed to carry out necessary repairs to the tackle of the number of horses in Corkagh. This reverted to its old office use when Dudley took to a mechanised system. Houses 4 and 5 were used for a sizeable dairy that supplied milk to Clondalkin and to outside dairies by delivery vans. As hygiene was of paramount importance, both rooms were used, one for cooling and one for bottling the cooled milk. Milking pens ran parallel to the large hip-roofed shed across from these houses and cows were milked there. Milking was subsequently done outside in the fields into vans. Electric machines were eventually the order of the day.

*The House of Corkagh*

Just at the gable end of the laundry, an ornate culvert was accidentally discovered. It had very well bricked-up walls with overhead flags forming a roof. It caused no little interest with people speculating that it might be an underground passage or another Newgrange. Archaeological examination revealed it to be no more than a culvert. The strange thing about it was that it appeared to have no immediately obvious function.



*This photograph shows half the row of houses in the course of restoration to their original beauty. The third house had some very interesting and attractive corning on the walls.*

A tribute here to the staff of Corkagh, to their courtesy, their hard work and their unfailing sense of duty which can never go unobserved by those who make their daily stroll an integral part of their lives. Adequate praise, however may only verge on the obsequious so we'll say: "well done". The good that men do lives after them.

## *Chapter 3*

### The Finlay Family

**T**HOMAS Finlay of Roscommon, of Scottish origin, rented Corkagh House and estate in 1716. He bought it in 1730. The estate contained 336 acres. It had been part of the estate of an Archbishop in the 14th century. The Finlay dynasty lived there for over 200 years.

#### **Lineage -**

JOHN FINLAY, m. Mary Savage, of Portaferry, Co. Antrim.

His eldest son,

ABRAHAM FINLAY, d. 1722, leaving a son,

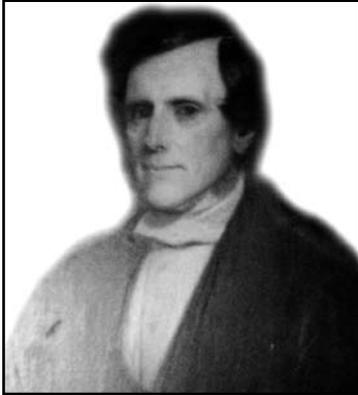
THOMAS FINLAY, of Corkagh, m. Feb. 1735, Deborah, dau. of LAWRENCE STEELE, of Rathbride, Co. Kildare, and d. 7 Dec. 1771, leaving two sons, William Henry, m. the sister of his brother's wife.



*Thomas Finlay*



*Deborah Steele, Rathbride  
Co. Kildare*



*Rev. John William Finlay*



*Olivia Anna (Mrs. Foley)*

FINLAY, John William (1805 - 1879)

b. 1805 Derry; ed. By Dr. Burney; TCD BA 1829, MA 1832.

PC Derryheen (Kilmore) 1834 - 8; C. Castlemacadam 1838 - 41;

PC Rathfarnham 1842 -

buried at Clondalkin.

m. 1st 1837, Henrietta Isabella, dau. of Major Henry Cole, of Wickenham, by whom (who d. 1847) he had issue,

1. Henry Thomas, now of Corkagh

1. Elizabeth Owen, m. 1866, Richard John Ussher, of Cappagh, Co. Waterford and has issue.

2. Henrietta Ellen. 3. Selina Frances, d. 1860.

4. Olivia Anna, m. 1879, Capt. Ernest Foley, Middlesex Regt., and has issue.

Mr. Finlay m. 2ndly, 1849, Caroline Elizabeth, 3rd dau. of Charles Hamilton, of Hamwood and Caroline, his wife, dau. of William Tighe, of Woodstock. He d. 1879. She d. 31 May 1909.

Seat - Corkagh House, Clondalkin. Club - Kildare Street

*The House of Corkagh*

**FINLAY OF CORKAGH**

HENRY THOMAS FINLAY, of Corkagh House, Clondalkin, Co. Dublin.

J.P. and D.L., formerly Royal Warwickshire Regt., Col. Late commanding 5th Batt. Royal Dublin Fusiliers, b. 15 February 1847;

m. 1st, 4 December 1877, Helen Lucy, dau. of the Rev. Robert Hedges Dunne and by her (who d. 9 March, 1902) has issue.



*Helen Lucy*



*Henry Thomas Finlay*

1. Edith Maud Olivia, m. 20 Jan. 1909, George Pomeroy Arthur Colley, of Faunagh, Rathgar, eldest son of late Henry FitzGeorge, of Mount Temple.

*The House of Corkagh*



*Edith Maud Olivia*



*George Pomeroy Arthur Colley, of  
Faunagh, Rathgar*

Rev. Thomas Kelly, a friend of the Finlays was a prolific writer of hymns. He was eventually banned from the Church of Ireland and founded his own religion known as the Kellyites. One of his hymns, *We have no abiding city here* reflected the passing of the Finlay name from Corkagh and the demolition in 1960, amid angry scenes, of his last church in Carysfort Avenue.

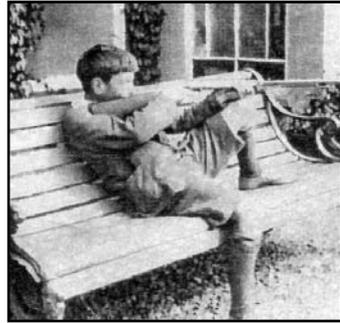
*Detailed Finlay Family trees can be found in Appendices 1 and 2*

## Chapter 4

### The Colley period [*Edith Finlay's family*]



*Dudley Colley, Last owner of  
Corkagh d. 1959 aged 48. He  
was a brilliant motor engineer  
and author of the book Wheel  
Patter.*



*Jock Colley*



*Noreen Colley*



*Valerie and Rosemary  
Colley*



*Veronica Colley*



**Horse Show at Corkagh August 1929**

*Left to Right (front row) Jock Colley, Rosemary Colley, Valerie Colley,*

*Second Row: Aileen Williams, Bitha Cameron, Edith M Colley, Geo. P. A. Colley,*

*Third Row: Audrey Fiennes, Norreen P. Colley, Veronica M. P. Colley,*

*Back Row: Alan Cameron, Maurice Fiennes, G. Dudley, James Pirrbs, Jack Williams, Mary Bird Wood*

*Col. Henry Thomas Finlay.*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Wreaths and smiles. Dudley Colley with Mick Burke, Jim Gates and E. Bourke of Shell Ltd.*



*Henry John (Jock) Colley who died in action and his grave in Johannesburg, South Africa.*



*Mrs Edith Colley in the rose garden*



*Dudley Colley at the wheel of his racing car.*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Finlay Colley and his mother Patricia in their house, The Mill House in Kilmatead which was built c. 1850. On Dudley's death in 1959, Finlay became heir to Corkagh but owing to circumstances it had to be sold. Finlay is a specialist in rare plants. He owns Carbery Nurseries.*



*Maureen Lynch in the water garden with Jeffrey and Laetitia*

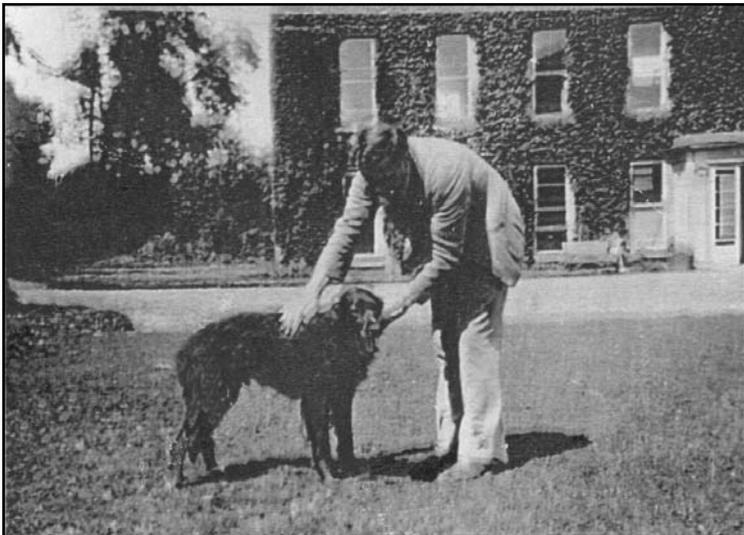


*Celebration in Corkagh 1948. Maggie Cronin (Clarke) holding baby Finlay Colley. Also in the picture are 1 Mick Kelly, chief herdsman, 2 Tom Callaghan, 3 Fanny Cabina, 4 Bridget Errity and 5 Jack Kinsella.*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Veronica Colley (Mrs. Lefroy) at the cedars in Corkagh.*



*Dudley Colley in front of Corkagh House*

Dining room 20

- |    |                 |                        |
|----|-----------------|------------------------|
| 1  | Mr. Colley      | might have             |
| 2  | George do       | more small cakes       |
| 3  | Mrs. Ayleshope  |                        |
| 4  | Miss Litch      |                        |
| 5  | Mr. Caffin      | 9 doz small cakes      |
| 6  | Mr. Cave        | 3 large. out for       |
| 7  | Rev. Cave       | each table             |
| 8  | Miss Hayward    | 3 double ham brack,    |
| 9  | Jeth            | (1 not used) 11 - each |
| 10 | Patricia        | 3 double loaves        |
| 11 | Nonceu.         | 4 lbs each -           |
| 12 | Dudley.         | crackers 4 boxes       |
| 13 | Veronica        | 2 large 2 small        |
| 14 | Johnny Caffin   | Oranges. 5 doz -       |
| 15 | Monica          | Raisins & almonds      |
| 16 | Hugh.           | 3 lbs.                 |
| 17 | { Smyth         | 1 tin mixed biscuits   |
| 18 | { Smyth-Hayward | 10 qts - Milk 2/6      |
| 19 | Cave -          | 2 lbs Butter 26        |
|    |                 | 1 Pt - Cream -         |
|    |                 | bread & jam            |
|    |                 | & bread & butter       |

Planning for a party in Corkagh House in 1914.

The House of Corkagh

Party of the 12 <sup>th</sup> Jan. 1914		
Mothers & children		
Louis & M <sup>rs</sup> Cabena & 2 babies	4	Those who help have tea afterwards
M <sup>rs</sup> Doyle & baby	2	
Jimmy	7	
Peter	8	
Lissie	9	
Maganne	10	
another girl	11	
M <sup>rs</sup> Bovanis	12	
Jobby	13	
Jackey	14	
Carry	15	
May Parrot	16	
M <sup>rs</sup> Common	18	
& baby	19	
May	20	
Lily	20	
M <sup>rs</sup> Dowling	22	
& baby	23	
Willie	24	
James	25	
Dowling boy	26	
Miss Callaghan	26	
Kathleen Ersk	27	
Miss Common	28	
Lily Heasly	29	
Cissy Heasly	30	
Madge Fenlon	31	
James M <sup>rs</sup> Gault	32	
	13	
Hall & H. Keegan	45	
2 boys	20	
Dinner		
Man with Magic Cattem		
dinner & tea		
M <sup>rs</sup> M <sup>rs</sup> Contrie	1	
Budget Erily	2	
Nurse Kilmsted	3	
Nurse Farnagh	4	
Cook Kilmsted	5	
Parlourmaid	6	
Chauffer	7	
boy	8	
Fanny	9	
Jane	10	
Bridget M <sup>rs</sup> Gini	11	
Biddy	12	
M. A	13	
65 in all		
with		
Magis <del>man</del> 66.		
same plans as of 1912		

1914 party for staff families.

## *Chapter 5*

### Staff of Corkagh House and Estate



*Lil Fox in the rose garden*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Louis Cabina, Chief Carpenter in Corkagh. He lived in Kilmatead and had his shop in Corkagh, behind the big house. He is seen here in the Rose Garden behind the big house.*



*Bridget on the occasion of her Confirmation in 1931, pictured at the Gate Lodge on the Naas Road. There were three lodges in all.*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Maureen Lynch, nurse, 1937.*



*Bridget Errity, circa 1935.*

### **Pat Clarke Steward**

The steward originally took charge of cattle. This was an important job as they were the chief source of wealth of a household. As the post evolved he was the man employed on a large estate to manage the domestic concerns, superintend the other servants, keep accounts, etc. The list of duties is so broad that one appreciates the responsibility of the holder of the position of Steward.

### *The House of Corkagh*

Pat Clarke was the steward in Corkagh; and when we remember that 25 worked inside and 25 worked outside; it takes no stretch of the imagination to realise how important his judgement and dedication were in the smooth running of Corkagh House and estate.

An indication of the enterprise that was Corkagh House and estate can be gauged from the estimated tax bill of £360 per annum in the early 1900s. This is apart from maintenance, wages and other charges. That amount of money in the early 1900s was staggering, when one got 13 boxes of matches for an old penny! Every aspect of management was his responsibility. The hiring of house staff and farmhands and ensuring their suitability revolved around the steward. The smooth running of stock, tillage, walled-garden, and planning and arranging to supply and buy from markets was vital. The walled-garden often had ten men working: sowing and reaping. In the early days cows were milked by hand and the dairy kept four men milking from early morning. Two ladies were constantly employed dairying, with helpers as necessary.

There was a time when Corkagh house had a butler, cook, nurse, housemaid and many more washing up, laying tables, sweeping and window cleaning. Fires had to be lit and maintained. Coal and timber had to be drawn up stairs and water, in the early days, had to be brought to rooms upstairs. Visitors, on occasion added to the work. A well organised household took all this in its stride and Corkagh was noted for its efficiency and smooth running.

Among the visitors at a party in 1914 we see many names of the staff as well as the workers outside and their children. (*See Chapter 4*) A photograph shows 14 staff celebrating the birth of



*Wedding of Dan Ryan and Peggy Clarke at Marino Church, c. 1945.  
Pat Clarke is on the extreme right.*



*Betty Cronin, daughter of Maggie Cronin, is escorted to Kill Church on  
her wedding day by her uncle, Pat Clarke in 1950.*

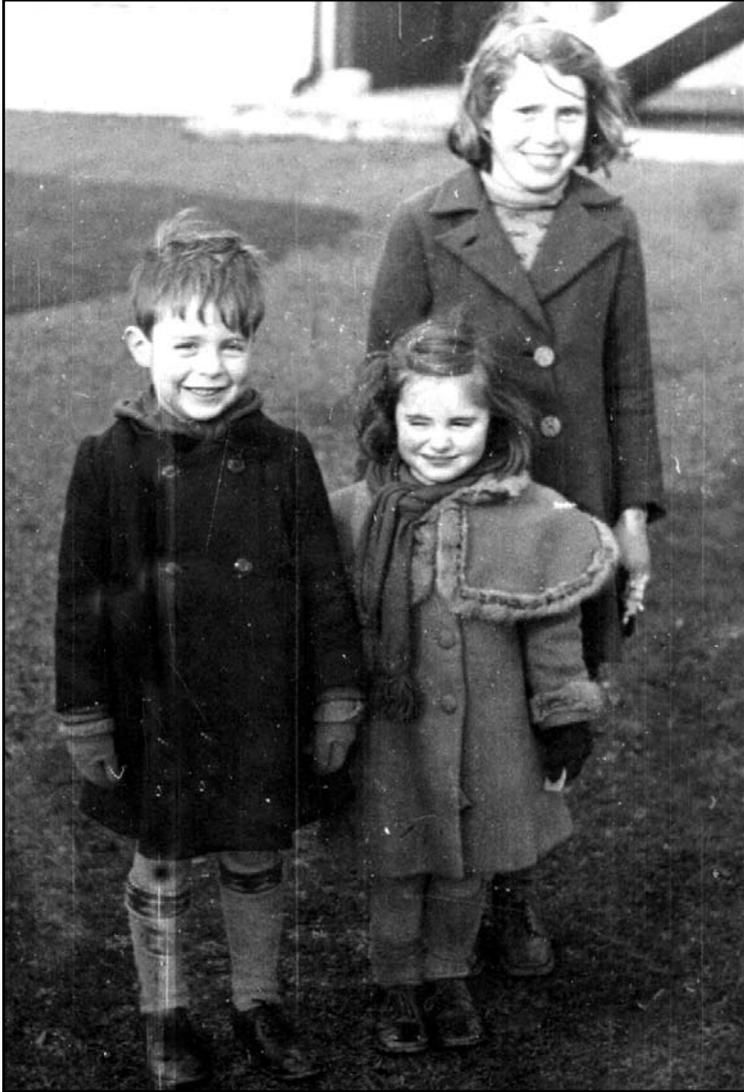
*The House of Corkagh*

Finlay Colley in 1948. The same picture is a useful record of those who worked there. It is true that trust and kindness are always reciprocated and that seemed to be so with the Finlays, the Colleys and their stewards.

Despite a steward's preoccupation, his house was one where visitors were always welcome and I am assured by Pat Clarke's daughter Kay that they always had a full house. The steward's house was like any country house. It was located overlooking the walled-garden. The Clarkes were happy children and joined in the seasonal activities associated with hay-making, saving the corn, threshing and the odd bit of devilment such as jumping up on drays with cocks of hay and heeling them up. The broad fields afforded them endless scope for playing and picnics. They had the finest fresh food, vegetables and fruit. The famous garden must have been the delight of any child and to crown everything, an upstairs window looked out on a beautiful scene of flowers and fruit. The walled garden was described by a man who worked there as a beautiful sight. The 1929 financial crash in the United States dented the financial world and Corkagh was no exception.

Pat Clarke afterwards ended a fruitful life on his way to Croke Park, leaving a proud and intelligent family to emulate his much respected contribution to life and living.

Later the steward's house and the walled garden were rented by the Karstels from Dudley Colley. For further details of the walled garden see Chapter 7.



*Kay Clarke with Jeffrey and Laetitia Lefroy in Dublin Zoo in 1942.*

*The House of Corkagh*

**Thomas Brown Chief Herdsman**

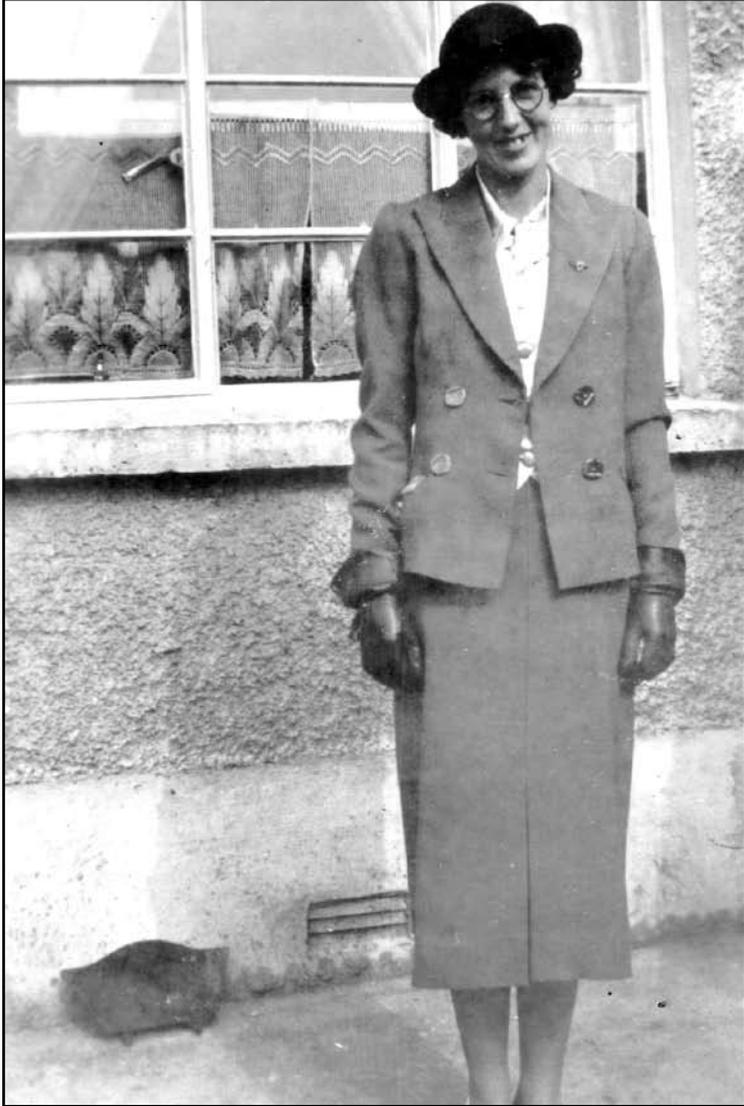
Thomas Brown, the chief herdsman was born in Co. Meath and went as chief herdsman on the Kenmare Estate. He married Nora Mangan of Kenmare. They had three in their family. Thomas' expertise with animals was well known. Hence his value when he came to work as chief herdsman in Corkagh where there was a considerable investment in pedigree cattle and sheep. He retired in the 1930s and lived until 1955 when he died at the ripe age of 83.

His son George was ten when he arrived in Corkagh. He became a teacher and was appointed head of the Model School in Inchicore. His interest in Gaelic Games was such that he mortgaged his house to pay for a playing field. Both George and his wife Muriel were very popular. George's talents were passed onto his children and grandchildren. Muriel travelled to many parts of the world, passing on her dancing skills.



*Thomas Brown pictured with his son George*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Jane Brown, daughter of Thomas Brown*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Wedding of Patrick O'Neill and Jane Brown*

**Herdsmen Mick Kelly and his family**

The family came to Corkagh from Wicklow in 1932. Two children were born before Mick Kelly started work in Corkagh and five were born in the gate lodge at John's Road. Mick was chief herdsman and had the major responsibility of looking after cattle and sheep. Lambing took precedence over sleep when many ewes were expected to produce together, often in inclement weather.

Coupled with the care of cows, cattle and sheep, fairs that had to be attended and the replacement of stock organised. Despite diligently attending to all his duties he reared an exceptional family of eight.



*Mick Kelly*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Jim Kelly stands in the walled garden where he stood over 60 years ago when he worked there as a boy*



*Nellie, Nuala, Mary and Kathleen Kelly.*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Nellie Kelly pictured at the Lodge at the John's Road entrance.*

*The House of Corkagh*



*1, James Kelly, 2, Mrs. Clarke, 3, Michael Kelly.*

### **Jim Nolan**

Jim Nolan was attached to the orchard garden of Corkagh. It covered 5 acres with fruit trees, flowers, glass-houses and vegetables of all descriptions. Its shape, gates and inner pattern have been changed a number of times in its long history. It was a place of great industry and occupied 5 full-time workmen to produce fruit, flowers and vegetables for the markets.



*Jim Nolan, who was attached to the Orchard Garden. He often rang the call-up bell which was rung four times each day.*

### **Those Evening Bells**

Those evening bells! Those evening bells!  
How many a tale their music tells  
Of youth and home, and that sweet time  
When last I heard their soothing chime!

Those joyous hours are passed away  
And many a heart, that then was gay,  
Within the tomb now darkly dwells  
And hears no more those evening bells!

And so 'twill be when I am gone!  
That tuneful peal will still ring on,  
While other bards shall walk these dells,  
And sing your praise, sweet evening bells!

*Thomas Moore*

*The House of Corkagh*

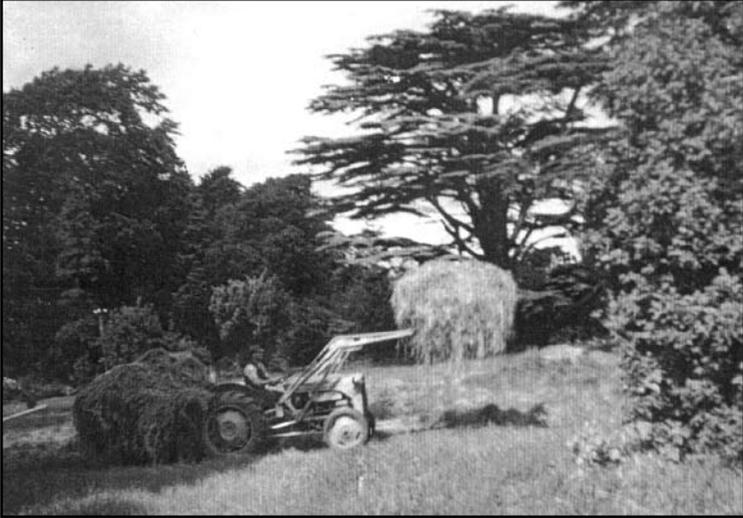


*Picture taken in Clondalkin Library in 1998 by Caitlín Mac Mathúna  
Back Row: Peg Nolan, Evy Archibald, Bridie Gill, Carrie Robertson  
(nee Errity), Peggie Johnston (nee Hanlon), Joe O'Connor.  
Front Row: Paddy Doran, May Hughes, Brigid Gregory (nee Errity)*

Some of those above have since passed away and brought with them a valuable store of the history of Clondalkin and Corkagh in particular. Chief among them is Brigid Gregory (nee Errity).

*Ar dheis Dé go raibh a nanamacha.*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Saving hay in Corkagh*  
*Cutting corn in Corkagh*



## *Chapter 6*

### *The Dairy Industry – Dudley’s Genius*

The milking machine superseded the long and arduous system of hand-milking that had been a feature of dairy work in Corkagh. Dairying then became big business in Corkagh. With mechanisation, cow numbers went to the hundred. 4 men worked in the dairy and more were engaged in milk distribution, with up to 5 delivery vans.



*Christopher Kelly, Corkagh Dairy*



*Milking machine in the fields*



*Fresh milk en route to the dairy from the fields*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Corkach Dairy milk delivery vans leave Corkagh*

## *Chapter 7*

### The Karstels take over the walled garden

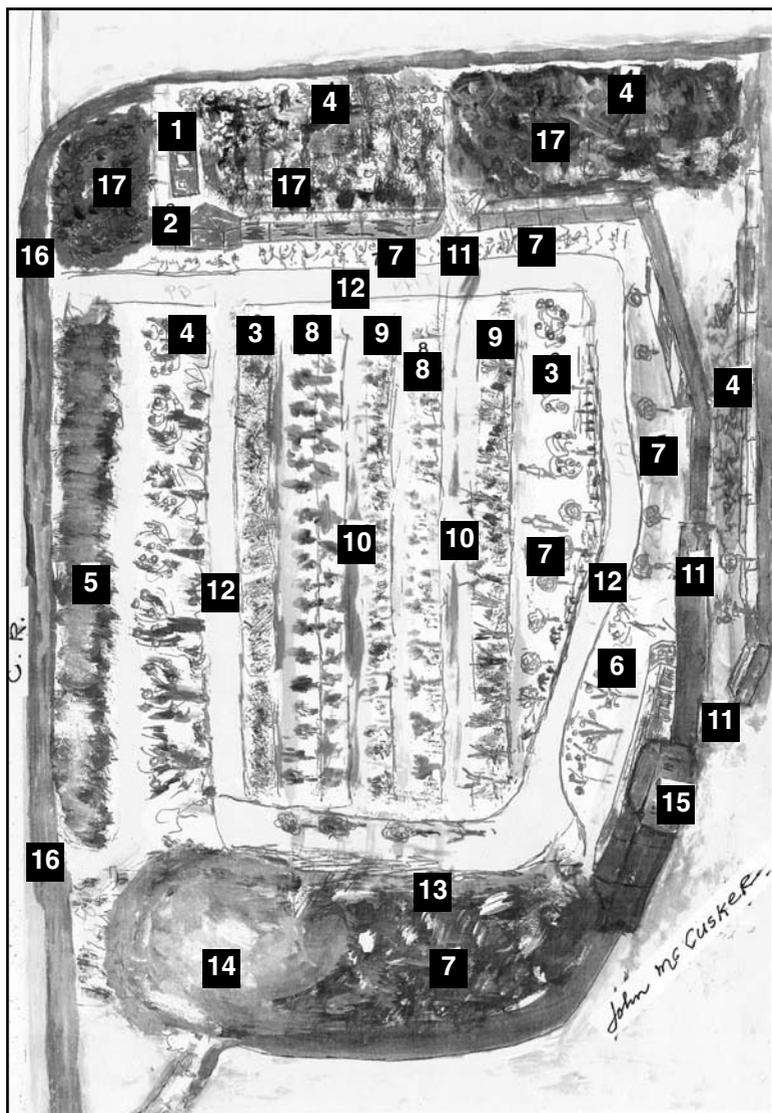
**M**R. KARSTEL, his wife Johanna and two year old daughter arrived in Dublin from Holland in 1950. His ambition was to put his ideas and expertise into the creation of a flower industry in Ireland. With a small financial base and hard work he went about this task, aided by a great woman, his wife. After four years working on rented plots he eventually rented Corkagh walled garden, from Mr. Dudley Colley.

This garden was large, covering 5 acres. At its zenith in the 1930s, it had been beautiful and productive but the passage of time and changing circumstances necessitated its renting out by the Colley family of the big house. Mr. Colley turned out to be Mr. Karstel's true and lasting friend until his untimely death at 48.

#### **Key to Plan of Walled Garden** (*page 67*)

<b>1 &amp; 2</b>	peaches and vines	<b>3</b>	flowers
<b>4</b>	apples	<b>5</b>	nutgrove
<b>6</b>	pears	<b>7</b>	soft fruits
<b>8</b>	yew trees	<b>9</b>	beech trees
<b>10</b>	grass	<b>11</b>	gate
<b>12</b>	walk	<b>13</b>	box hedge
<b>14</b>	pond	<b>15</b>	steward's house
<b>16</b>	Camac river	<b>17</b>	vegetables

*The House of Corkagh*



*Plan of walled garden painted by John McCusker*

*The House of Corkagh*

By 1958, Mr. Karstel had 1,500 sq. yards covered with glass and had been lauded at the famous Dublin Flower Show for the quality of his carnations.

The Karstels planned to move from the house at the walled garden. The house was 200 years old and lacked any comforts. Their desire to vacate it was increased by pressure exerted by its new owner. In 1975, when their new house on the Naas Road was completed, the old house was completely gutted by fire, while they were on holidays.

They lost their life's modest collection of irreplaceable memorabilia. Having held on to their tenancy until 1980, they

retired and Mrs. Karstel lives hale and hearty in her 80s with her son Benny, having withstood the power of money and the vicissitudes of time.



The gable end of the steward's house looked out into the walled garden. The house was 200 years old. It had 3 bedrooms upstairs and downstairs was a sitting room, kitchen, office and hallway. A window overlooks the back entrance. The gable is part of the garden wall.

*The House of Corkagh*



*The Karstel family relaxing in front of the new kitchen.*

What wondrous life is this I lead!  
Ripe apples drop about my head;  
The luscious clusters of the vine  
Upon my mouth do crush their wine;  
The nectarine and curious peach  
Into my hands themselves do reach;  
Stumbling on melons, as I pass,  
Ensnared with flowers, I fall on grass.

*From Thoughts in a Garden by Andrew Marvel*

*The House of Corkagh*



*A new kitchen seen to the front of this photograph was added*



*The burnt out ruins of the old house in August 1975.*

*The House of Corkagh*



*31st August 1953. Mr. Karstel with his wife, mother and a display of fruit and vegetables for the Dublin market. - 2 boxes (60 peaches), 3 chips of kidney beans, 5 dozen. cauliflower, 1 chip of tomatoes, 1 chip of cucumber, 7 chips of apples.*



*Mr. Karstel gets the van ready for the Dublin market*

*The House of Corkagh*

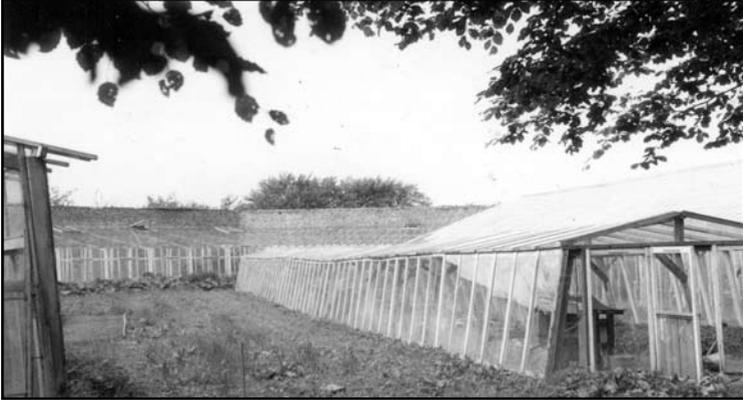


*New glasshouse complete with a special fumigation process shown here with a crop of carnations*



*The gable window of the steward's house looks over Corkagh garden. Note the greenhouses built against the garden wall during the Karstel era.*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Lean-to glasshouses and freestanding 'Dutch light' glasshouses.*

**WALLS OF GLASS**

. . . But ah! What language e'er can tell  
The blooming charms that always dwell  
On this enchanting spot!

. . . Eternal spring blooms all the year,  
Seasons may change — no change is here,  
Continual bloom we find;

. . . The melon, and the luscious pine,  
The downy peach, the loaded vine,  
Pomona's power declare;  
Th' auricula, and blushing rose,  
Jonquil, narcissus, all that blows,  
Prove Flora's fav'rite care.

. . . In walls of glass, 'midst sweetest flow'rs,  
Here you may pass the peaceful hours,

. . . And, if on earth there can be found  
An Eden, or enchanted ground,  
You'll own it is BELLEVUE.

*From an anonymous poem 'To a lady on her desiring a description of Bellevue Gardens' in Walker's Hibernian Magazine, June 1794.*

The Irish Times — Thursday, August 7th, 1958



*Ambition realised. The Karstels enjoy their flowers in the dappled shade.*

A newcomer among the commercial stands at the flower show was an exhibition of carnations by the Corkagh Nurseries, of Clondalkin, Co. Dublin. The carnations were greatly admired, but few of those who praised them realised the circumstances which led to this new stand.

Eight years ago a young Dutch nurseryman, Bernard Karstel, arrived in Ireland with his wife. They were penniless. Karstel had specialised in carnations in the principal flower-growing district of Holland for some years, and became filled with the ambition of owning his own carnation nursery. He decided to come to Ireland to try and achieve

his ambition, and took a job as a gardener in a Dublin suburb to save the money he needed. In the first year he grew vegetables in the open in a plot of land which he rented. The following year he bought cold frames with the money he made.

Three years ago, the Karstels rented a plot in Clondalkin, and decided the time had come to open their own nursery, specialising in carnations. With cuttings from Karstel's former boss in Holland, they went into business. To-day they have 1,500 square yards under glass, but probably their greatest triumph was yesterday afternoon when they stood by their stand and listened to the favourable comments of Ireland's leading flower growers.

Despite the Camac river running outside Corkagh's walled garden the Karstels always had problems getting water in. When the water was high, this was done through a hole in the wall. A channel brought the water down the length of the garden until it reached a pond at the lower end. The water from the valley was brought by buckets to water the various dry spots. Great use was also made of rainwater from roofs gathered into barrels.

*The House of Corkagh*



*Mrs. Karstel's father fits the first water pump in Corkagh. This magic pump did away with the drudgery of carrying water by hand.*

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,  
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,  
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,  
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,  
Or busy housewife ply her evening care;  
No children run to lisp their sire's return,  
Or climb his knees his envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,  
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;  
How jocund did they drive their team afield!  
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

*from Thomas Gray's Elegy Written in a Country Church-Yard*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Why stand I here like a ghost and a shadow? Mrs Karstel stands among  
the ruins of her former home,*



## *Chapter 8*

### The Last Days — The sale of Corkagh in 1959

*'Fond memories bring the light of other days around me'*



*For Sale sign on the Naas Road entrance gate of Corkagh*

**Jackson-Stops & McCabe**

EXECUTORS' SALE  
G. D. P. COLLEY, DECEASED.  
FOR AUCTION ON TUESDAY, 7th JULY, 1959  
AT THE ESTATE HOUSE SALEROOMS  
62 DAWSON STREET, DUBLIN, at 3 p.m.  
**CORKAGH HOUSE AND DEMESNE**  
**CLONDALKIN, CO. DUBLIN**  
ON 256  
STATUTE 248 ACRES



CORKAGH HOUSE FROM THE DRIVE

This magnificent property is only seven miles from the city centre and has highly important and valuable frontage to the main Dublin-Naas road for about 1 1/2 mile.

The period residence is non-basement, and contains entrance hall, drawingroom, diningroom, study, ante-room and library eight main bedrooms and staff rooms, two bathrooms, three w.c.s, modern kitchen, housekeepers room, etc. Unfailing water supply.

The farm buildings are exceptionally fine and are fully up-to-date with hay barn, double cow byres, machinery sheds, milking parlour and dairy, etc., and are compactly laid out for easy working.

The lands are of the highest quality, in fine divisions, all level, well-fenced and watered by the Camac River which flows through the property they have been very well farmed and are in prime condition. Some lovely and valuable timber adds to the attractions. The lands are divided by farm roadways with wide gates giving full access to all divisions. Gate lodge.

Such a property, beside the city, rarely comes on the market, offering as it does in excellent agricultural holding with **HIGH DEVELOPMENT VALUE.**

Full particulars of Tenure in later advertisement.  
**SEEN STRICTLY BY APPOINTMENT THROUGH THE AUCTIONEERS.**

*Auction advertisement*

In the Court of the Commissioners for Sale of Incumbered Estates in Ireland.

COUNTY OF DUBLIN.

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF  
CHRISTOPHER HUME LAUNDER, ASSIGNEE OF JOHN LADAVEZE ARABIN, OWNER;  
EX PARTE  
CHARLES LEWIS, PETITIONER

Sale on TUESDAY, the 13th day of DECEMBER 1853.

RENTAL

OF THE

TOWNS and LANDS of BIG BALDONSSELL, OLD BALDONSSELL, and FLOCK HEADW—held in Fee-simple; LITTLE BALDONSSELL—held under Lease of Lives renewable for ever; RAINBOW PARK, and other PARKS—held under Lease for Lives renewable for ever; NEW ORCHARD, KILMATED, and Part of the Lands of KILMATED or CORBAGHAN—held under Fee-farm Grants. All the said Lands, except the BALDONSSELLS and FLOCK HEADW, being subdivisions of the Townland of CORKAGH—all situate in the

BARONIES OF NEWCASTLE AND UPPER-CROSS,  
AND COUNTY OF DUBLIN.

TO BE SOLD  
On TUESDAY, the 13th day of DECEMBER, 1853,

BY THE COMMISSIONERS, AT THEIR COURT, No. 14, HERRING STREET, IN THE CITY OF DUBLIN.

IN 5072 2025.

Proposals for the Purchase by Private Contract of these Estates, will be received, and submitted by the Auctioneers having Charge of the Sale, to the Commissioners.

For Particulars and Further Particulars apply at the COURT OF THE COMMISSIONERS; or to CHARLES LEWIS, Esq., Solicitor, West of England Insurance Office, Kent; ROBERT DYMOND & SONS, Barristers, No. 10, Bedford Circus, Kent; Messrs. SCOTT and SYMS, 7, Poultry, London; SAMUEL P. GALT, Esq., Barrister, Dublin; JOHN LEWINE WHITTY, LL.D., Civil Engineer, 1 and 16, Henrietta-street, Dublin; WILLIAM HICKIE, Esq., Auctioneer, Chancery, Cork; Messrs. FITZGERALD, Auctioneers; THOMAS JOHN BEASLEY, Solicitor, 11, Stephen's Green North; or to FRANCIS GREEN TINKLER, Solicitor having the Charge of the Sale, No. 9, Upper Gloucester-street, Dublin.

Printed at the General Engineering, Engraving, Printing, and Stationery Office, and Printing and Lithographing Establishment, 11, Henrietta-street, Dublin.—DUNN, JOHN, PRINTER, WARRIST, No. 10, G.R.

Advertisement of Corkagh rental for sale over 100 years earlier in 1853.

## Chapter 9

### Archaeology of Corkagh

**F**EW walking through Corkagh would be aware that it has been inhabited from early times. Liam Ua Broin, a historian, describes how Corkagh House once stood within the moat of a castle. The said castle ruins consisted of an arched entrance, part of a battlemented parapet and eight windows. These remains seem to have been immured within the big house which was built between 1702 – 1714 and was unfortunately demolished. The undue haste with which this demolition took place left little scope, for even an eleventh hour examination of the walls of Corkagh House during the demolition.

A limited excavation carried out between September and November 2001 on behalf of South Dublin County Council, revealed a number of skeletons dated back to the 9th century. Further work in Corkagh may indeed connect these with the Clondalkin settlement that had the monastery with the tower as its centre and St. Mochua or Cronán as its bishop.

## *The House of Corkagh*



*Team member at work. Right: Adult skeleton in good condition.  
Other remains uncovered include those of a juvenile and of a  
premature baby*

It is extraordinary to be able to view the remains of those who departed this life twelve hundred years ago. Based on the burial positions and direction, the burials are Christian. People lived, died and left, no doubt, the great proof of their existence, their bones.

Objects found on site include bronze pins, iron knives, glass beads and lignite bracelets. Layers of charcoal in the kilns supplied the necessary heat for the drying of corn and flues are visible at the kilns' extremities. No coffins were used and the bodies were put in supine positions with their heads to the west. The hands were crossed on the breast, just like today. The graves were shallow and corpses were known to have been placed on top of one another. Stones were placed so as to line the graves and some were placed each side of the head.

Some damage has been caused to the corpses as soil has been removed from the site at some time in the past. Two bronze pins

*The House of Corkagh*

have been found, one on each side of a head. The inference is that these were used to secure a customary shroud. It is certain that we are talking about the early medieval period but how many were buried there, can only be answered by a more extensive excavation at some time in the future. Carbon 14 dating, pollen analysis and bone condition will perhaps reveal further information regarding age and diet.



*Remains of a juvenile.*



*A kiln for drying corn where flint was also found.*



*Disturbed skeleton of an adult, vertebrae and skull in place.*

## *Chapter 10*

### Trees and Swans - Nature in Corkagh

*"The ash, the oak, the elm and the yew, the four best trees that ever grew"*

**I**n addition to these trees, Corkagh possesses horse chestnut, beech and some more exotic trees, the walnut, the cedar and Sequoia or Wellingtonia.

The latter, one of the great Californian redwoods is 30ft in circumference at the base and 90ft in height. One redwood in California, is 361ft tall and 44ft in circumference and estimated to be 3,500 years old! Another in the Western U.S.A. was used to build 20 houses, a church, a mansion and a bank. Some are so large that a tunnel is cut through them for large trucks to pass through. Corkagh's Wellingtonia displays its inbuilt protection against fire through having a thick, soft bark.



*Autumnal scene. Great copper beech beside County Council offices.*

### *The House of Corkagh*

To the west of where Corkagh House stood are cedars which form a canopy under which workers to the walled garden walked to their work each day. On celebration days, this was a place for photographs and the place where those who wished to watch tennis on the front courts gathered. These cedars are very striking and contain small needles with cones which contain paper-like scales with seeds. In Spain cigarette boxes are made from the wood of the cedar.

The main avenue still has interesting specimens of walnut. In its heyday, the walled-garden had a grove of walnut trees.

Conspicuous around the big house were beeches vying in stature and grandeur with the oak and horse-chestnut on the main avenue. The mast, the fruit of the beech also competes with the acorn of the oak and the ever popular conkers of the chestnut.



*Canopied entrance leading to the back of Corkagh House.*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Corkagh's cedars.*



*Front avenue entering the front lawn.*

### *The House of Corkagh*

If you pass by the County Council offices with them on your right, and swing left, you find yourself on Oak Avenue. The name is appropriate because of the many oaks that lined each side of the avenue to the to the Naas Road. The name goes back two hundred years to when this was the main entrance.

Though many fine trees have been cut down, many fine sturdy trunks still survive as witness to a time when these knotty oaks guarded many a celebrity en route to the big house. Oaks are no strangers to the Irish scene, but their adaptation to the décor around the big estates can be traced back to the mid 1700s. They looked extremely well on each side of the big avenue leading to the fashionable Queen Anne and Georgian houses. They were also useful for shelter in bleak areas where they were sown in groves.

Beeches were also very much favoured and indeed they almost always co-existed. The area around where Corkagh House stood still has towering skywards, cedars, beeches, horse-chestnut, cypress and two famous Wellingtonias.

As one begins to walk up Oak Avenue there are fourteen very mature large trees, which stretch across in line, while all the way up the avenue we have continuous lines of oak, broken only by large ones and decked by daffodils in spring.



*Spring has arrived and Helen, Loren and Olga enjoy the new Corkagh park as do their dogs. This tree under which they stand is a walnut tree and still produces fruit.*

### *The House of Corkagh*

The daffodils follow the curved line of the avenue which winds its way to the Naas Road as it has done since Corkagh House came into being.



*Remaining oaks on the oak avenue. The grove of twenty-year-old trees on the right of the picture covers the buried remains of stock destroyed in the 40s after contracting foot and mouth disease.*

### The Famine Commemorative Arboretum



*Famine commemorative arboretum with its radiating lines of trees.*

### *The House of Corkagh*

Many cults have grown around the elder, holly, mistletoe and briar surviving even after the advent of Christianity. The rowan or mountain ash was always decorated with empty eggshells to celebrate the coming of the Summer Solstice. on November 1st, no one dared go under the blackthorn tree, or briar. The Yew tree was always associated with the graveyard. The willow had the power to communicate secrets. Trees have become so enmeshed in the Irish psyche that we find ourselves naked in their absence.

Many place names are derived from trees. Coill, as Kyle at the beginning of townland names gives us for example Kyleduf, meaning blackwood. Dair meaning oak gives us Derry or Kildare.

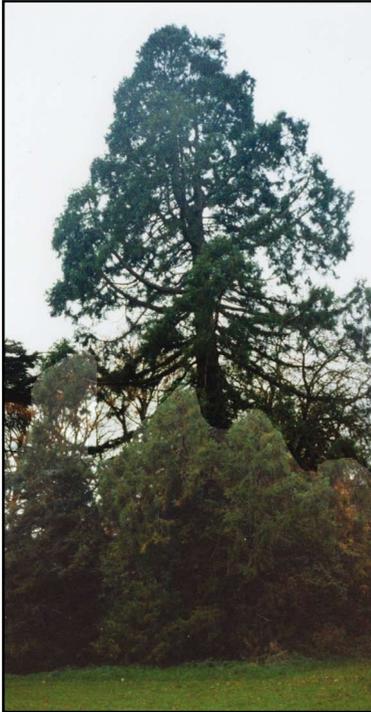
Invaders have invariably cut down woods and trees to deny shelter to the natives and to steal resources. It is no wonder that the emigrant often identified his youthful surroundings with woods and groves.

It is most appropriate that Irish people commemorate important events and tragedies through the medium of trees. In the Famine Commemorative Arboretum groups of trees are planted representing the five continents to which Irish people emigrated. The trees are native to their respective continents. The island of Ireland is represented by a group of sessile oaks. The sessile oak is Ireland's national tree.



*Textured bark of the walnut (left) and the oak (right).*

*The House of Corkagh*



*Corkagh's Wellingtonia or Sequoia dwarfs the towering cedars beside it.*

Trees

I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is  
prest  
Against the earth's sweet  
flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,  
An lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has  
lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems were made by fools like  
me,  
But only God can make a tree.

*Joyce Kilmer*



*Swan Lake, Corkagh.*

## *Chapter 11*

### Kilmatead or Little Corkagh

**K**ilmatead never competed with Corkagh as the big house. Yet the name Kilmatead seems to have an earlier ecclesiastical association and translates as the Church of Tadhg.

Kilmatead was later added to Corkagh estate and became known as Little Corkagh, marking it as a distinctive unit added to an estate which had already been formed. Nevertheless, it always seemed to have kept its identity. It seems to have co-existed with the big house, for as we see on a party list from Corkagh in 1914, both the cook and the nurse from Kilmatead were invited. (see p 43) They were from what we understand as the dower house. A dower house was a widow's share for life, of her husband's estate.

Mrs. Hone, herself an occupant of this principal house in Kilmatead, never understood it to be that kind of house. She married Patrick Hone in 1947 and lived there until 1991, when she moved to the cottage opposite, where she still lives. Patrick Hone died in 1973.



*Remains of a gunpowder mill, Kilmatead.*

*The House of Corkagh*



*The loft, Kilmatead.*

Kilmatead seems to have been a pocket edition of Corkagh, with its own lodge where the Doyle family lived and a sizeable avenue leading into it. It must once have been a very busy place as the numerous ruins point to the existence of at least five powder-mills. The mill pond is a haven for swans and other water fowl and over the centuries the Camac has been used to create features as diverse as flower gardens and millponds and to power powder mills and an electrical generator.

Jim Kelly remembers having his own plot in the sizeable garden at the back of the Mill House where the Kellys grew their own supply of vegetables for their household at St. John's Lodge. He also speaks of Dudley turning a blind eye to the boys making their own raft and floating it on the millpond. He describes a rather big walled garden there.

*The House of Corkagh*



*Kilmatead House.*

During the early part of the 20th century, a cousin of the family Major Edward Hamilton who died c. 1935 rented it from Henry Thomas Finlay of Corkagh. He lived here with his daughters Blanche and Kathleen who was known as Nora. Nora was an artist of note. Blanche died in 1942 and Nora in 1944

Henry Thomas Finlay also lived there himself for a short time around the turn of the century. The Finlays appeared to have used it as a spare house.

I do not know the original date of construction of the house. It appears to have been built in stages starting with a modest two up two down house. It was victorianised in the early 20th century by the architect Page Dickinson. The slated roof was replaced by tiles and the sash windows were replaced by casement windows

*The House of Corkagh*



*Finlay Colley in his exotic garden at Kilmatead.*



*Gunpowder mill and millpond at Kilmatead.*

*The House of Corkagh*



*A former mill which has served as a coach house and a garage.*



*The Mill House, Kilmatead.*

## Chapter 12

### Fairview mills



*Invoice from Clondalkin Oil Mills or Fairview Mills. The extent of the buildings implies a potentially large production.*

On the right as we enter Corkagh Demesne through the St. John's entrance we see an inscription *Oil Mill* on the gate. Looking to the right we see a rather inconspicuous house. Arriving at that house however, you are confronted by a large roofless building. This was part of Clondalkin Oil Mills or Fairview Mills. Its size indicates that it was part of a more complex group of mills. Though adjacent to Corkagh, it was never part of it. However they both shared the fantastic facility afforded them by the Camac or Swift river.

### *The House of Corkagh*

Looking from the air we can see a huge ruin, a large sarcophagus-like structure. This enclosed a broad space with its sturdy walls. We can see stone wheels for grinding and a millrace for channeling the power of water stored in the large pond filled by the Camac River. The water drove wheels that ground flax seeds. Oil was extracted from the seeds.

Michael and Dermot Kavanagh deserve great praise for their efforts to rediscover parts of the mill which have been buried for many years. Mrs. Kavanagh lives there and she and her son are most obliging in showing people around.

An invoice dated 1861 showing that Thos. Roberts esq. purchased 2 cuts of linseed cake from the mill. They cost £1-2-0 and included a 1/3d charged for sacks, returnable within 10 days at 2d each. The chief products of the mill were rape and linseed oil and linseed cake and meal.



*Aerial view of oil mills.*

### *The House of Corkagh*

The Earl of Strafford, Thomas Wentworth saw that the long-standing and highly successful woolen trade in Ireland was in serious competition with that of England and made every effort to counteract it. He introduced flax growing and linen production. He brought skilled people from Wales and Belgium to train the Irish. This country was very suitable for the making of linen from ordinary flax. The Irish were well able to handle flax but found it difficult to pronounce the strange names of some of the foreigners. His solution was to name these as Flemings! Wentworth was recalled and executed May 1641.

The flax industry did take on, and the large stone wheels squeezed oil from flax seed. The residue in the form of cake was used for feeding cattle. It is most likely that by 1861, the date of the invoice that linen production in the area and oil production had been in existence for many years. Field names such as drying-hill and bleach-green are common through the country. The pushing of the local gentry has come to an end and other materials have superseded flax.

Mr. John O'Brien owned the land around the mill right out to the Nangor Road. He owned fields which are now within Corkagh Park. In total he held 189 acres. He was a wealthy man and had a steward living in a cottage beside where the Green Isle Hotel is located today. He lived in Sandymount and in 1954 had 62 cattle, which had risen to 120 by 1970. The rateable valuation of the property was large at £269.

## Stang na gCiaróg

A short distance from Fairview is a plot of land known as Stang na gCiaróg. This area lies on the north bank of the Camac River and is in some way associated with the insect known as the beetle.

The story goes, as told in folklore: when the Jews were pursuing the Saviour they passed men reaping corn. It seems that the same corn had grown from seed sown the previous day. On being asked if they had seen a stranger pass, they replied that no one had passed since they sowed the seed! With that a beetle cocked his tail and shouted: "yesterday, yesterday"; telling that indeed the Saviour had passed.

Ever since then the insect is known as the Devil's Coach Horse and anyone who can cut off his tail will be absolved from seven sins but if they fail they incur seven new ones on top of their existing ones!

The name Stang lingers on, despite the fact that the exact spot is unidentifiable.

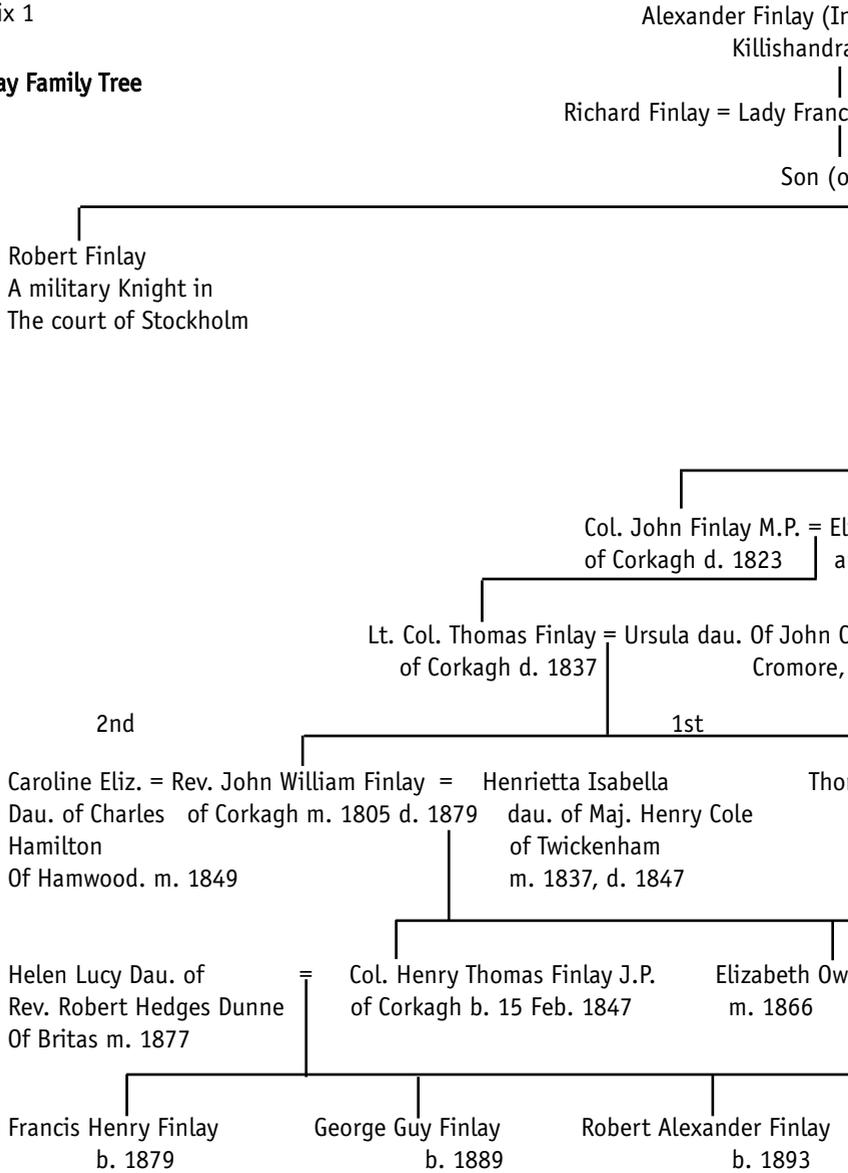
*The House of Corkagh*

## Appendices

*The House of Corkagh*

Appendix 1

**1st Finlay Family Tree**



This chart is based only on information in Burke's Landed Gentry of Ireland 1899 \* See Pedigree d

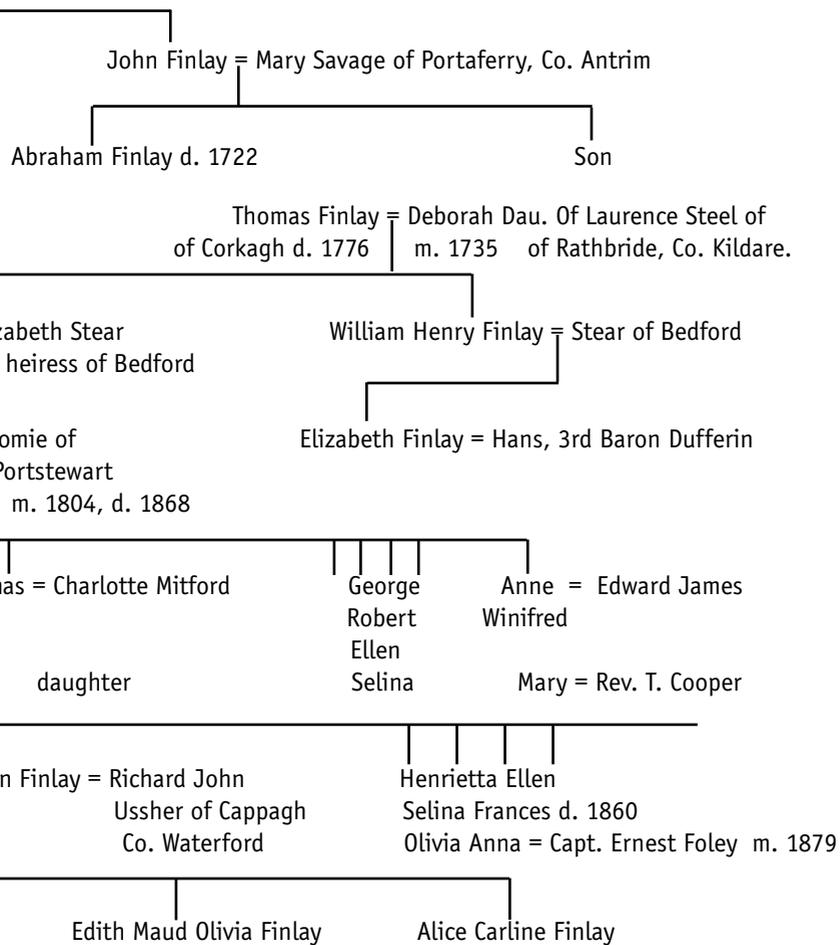
*The House of Corkagh*

Ireland after 1568)

Co. Cavan

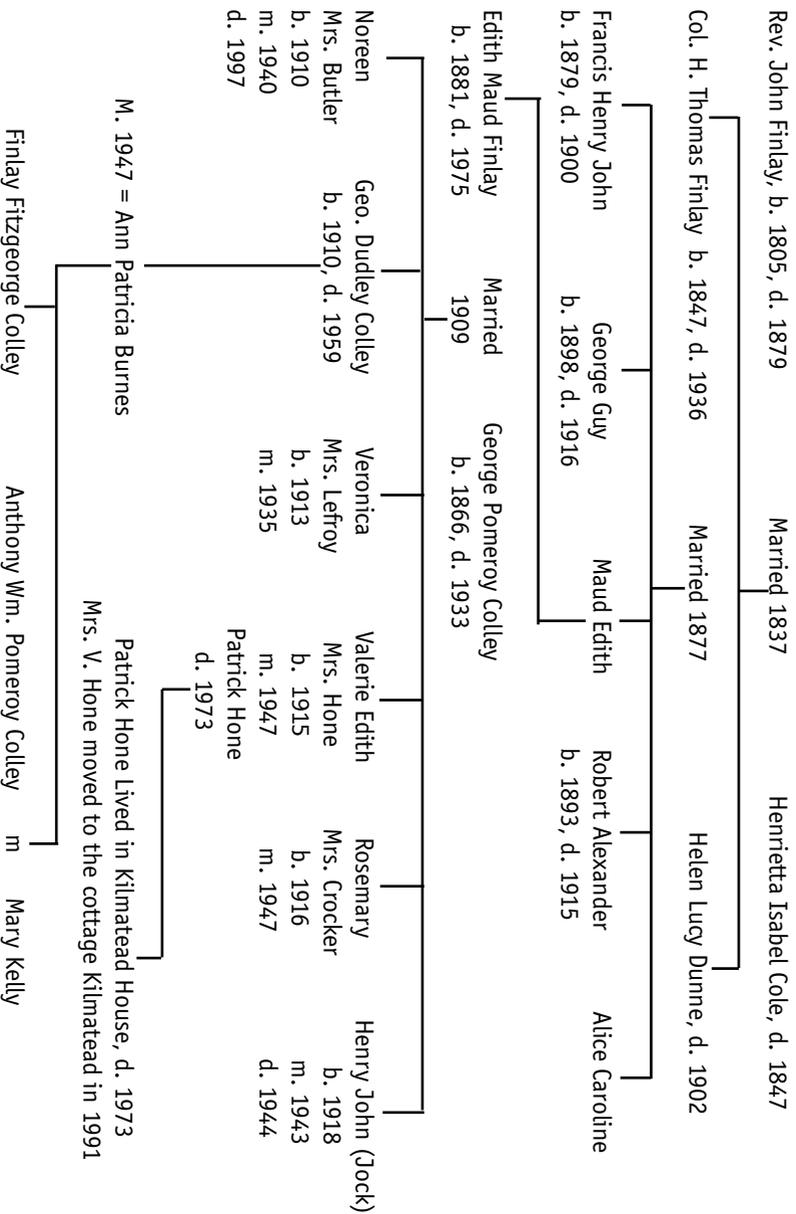
s Macdonnell of Stockholm

sons)



ed 1755 in Lord Lyon's Office, Scotland

Appendix 2 - 2nd Finlay Family Tree

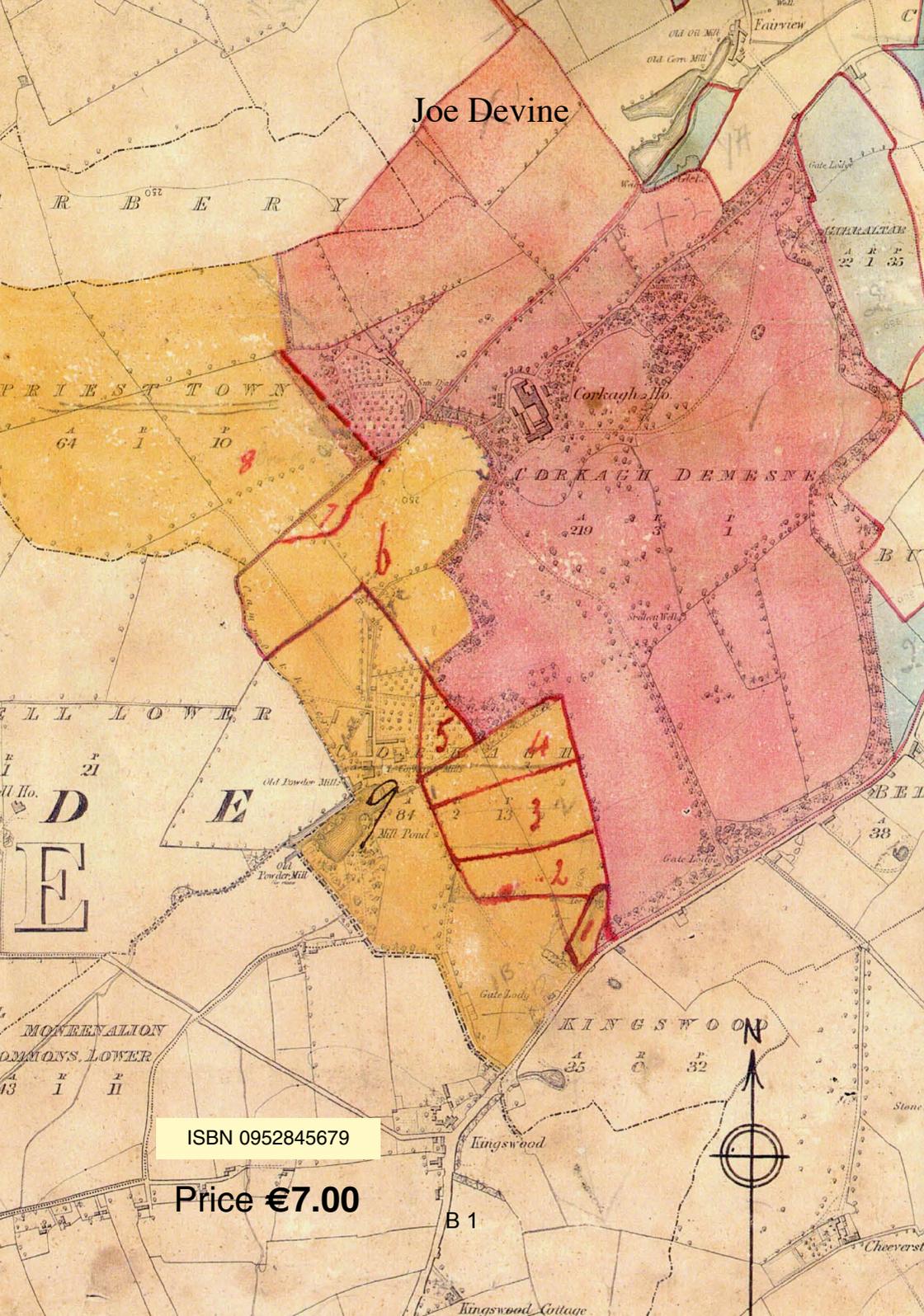


Appendix 3 – Occupants Moyle Park House, Kilmatead House and Corkagh House, 1847 – 1950.

<b>Occupants from 1847 – 1950</b>			
	<b>Moyle Park House</b>	<b>Kilmatead House</b>	<b>Corkagh House</b>
<b>1847</b>	W.M. Caldbeck	John Arabin	W. Stokley
<b>1850</b>	W.M. Caldbeck	John Arabin	Rev. John Finlay
<b>1860</b>	W.M. Caldbeck	John Arabin	Rev. John Finlay
<b>1870</b>	W.M. Caldbeck	W.B. Fottrell	Rev. John Finlay
<b>1880</b>	W.M. Caldbeck	J. O'Callaghan	Rev. John Finlay
<b>1890</b>	W.M. Caldbeck		Rev. John Finlay
<b>1900</b>	Capt. Roper Caldbeck	Col. H.T. Finlay	H.T. Finlay
<b>1910</b>	Maj. Ryves	Mrs. Finlay	Col. H.T. Finlay
<b>1920</b>	Vacant		Col. H.T. Finlay
<b>1930</b>	Patrick Nugent	Maj. Hamilton	G.P. Colley
<b>1940</b>	Patrick Nugent	Miss Nora Hamilton Artist and her sister Blanche	Mrs. E.M. Colley



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