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The Shirley Estate 1814-1906: The development and demise of a landed estate in County Monaghan.

Lorraine O' Reilly

2014

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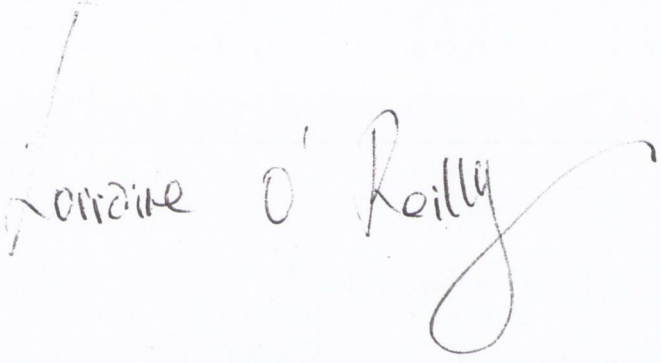

Contents

Abbreviations

Acknowledgements

Introduction **1**

Chapter One Evelyn John Shirley **34**

Chapter Two Land agents and pre-Famine estate management **80**

Chapter Three The Shirley Estate during and in the immediate aftermath of the Great Famine. **126**

Chapter Four Post-famine Developments: The Shirley Estate 1850-1882. **187**

Chapter Five Reluctant Demise: The Shirley Estate 1851-1903 **218**

Conclusion **246**

Bibliography **260**

Appendices **270**

Abbreviations

Bessborough Commission	*Report from Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the working of the Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act 1870 and the Acts for amending the same*
Devon Commission	*Evidence taken before Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland,* HC 1845 (605), XIX
Poor Inquiry (Ireland)	*Third report of the commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland* [43], H.C. 1836, xxx.1.
EJS	Evelyn John Shirley
EPS	Evelyn Philip Shirley
SES	Sewallis Evelyn Shirley
PRONI	Public Record Office Northern Ireland
WCRO	Warwickshire County Record Office

Illustrations

1. Map of the Shirley Estate 1852.

2. Lough Fea; great hall, conservatory, and rear or house

3. Great hall and conservatory

4. The Shirley coat of arms above the entrance porch

5. Home-wood; steps leading to the blue-stone cross

6. Inscription on the blue-stone cross in memory of E.J. Shirley

7. Image of Evelyn John Shirley

8. Image of Evelyn Philip Shirley

9. William Steuart Trench

10. William Steuart Trench's grave.

11. Bath estate rent office erected in 1859

12. Carrickmacross workhouse

13. Carrickmacross fever hospital

14. Market Square, main St., Carrickmacross

15. Ettington Park, Stratford Upon Avon, Warwickshire, United Kingdom

16. Portrait of Ettington Park house and immediate grounds.

17. Tiles in the entrance hall of Ettington park depicting the Shirley family motto; Loyal Je Suis.

18. Shirley estate bog notice 1855.

19. Shirley estate rent notice 1851.

List of Tables

Table 2.1.Details of schools situated in Magheross

Table 3.1 List of auxiliary work houses and maximum number of occupants

Table 3.2 Summary of rentals of the Shirley estate 1843-1852 (£)

Table 4.1 Total rent received on Shirley estate and EPS' portion 1843-1856 (£)

Table 4.2 Annual rental income and estimated expenditure on improvements on the Shirley estate

Table 4.3 Summary of rent arrears and rent received (£) 1879-89

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Lorraine O'Reilly

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I wish to dedicate this thesis to my mother Bridie, whose hard work, love, support and encouragement is endless.

Introduction

The following is a study of the semi-absentee Shirley estate situated in south Ulster in the barony of Farney, County Monaghan 'on the edge of a great belt of drumlins that sweep from County Down to North Connaught'.[1] The Shirley family were the largest landowners in Monaghan, possessing 26,386 statute acres in the 1870s and they were closely followed by the neighbouring Bath estate which then comprised of 22,762 acres.[2] It would be easy to assume that both landlords were similar and in some respects they were, especially regarding the management of their estates in Monaghan, but in England, they were very different. The Shirleys for example were never given a peerage, while the Baths held the title of marquis from 1789. In terms of the possession of land, the Baths possessed a much more extensive property portfolio than the Shirleys. In England, they owned large tracts in Wiltshire, Somerset, Hereford, Shropshire and Sussex which, together with the Irish estate, totalled 55,574 acres; by comparison the Shirleys possessed just 1,769 acres in Ettington, Warwickshire, and 665 acres in Worcester.[3] This echoes a point made by L.P. Curtis that the history of individual estates varied as much as the people who lived on them and that it was not unusual to find 'estates in the same barony undergoing different experiences during good times and bad'.[4] This single estate study will not only reflect on Curtis' theory in comparing the two estates at pivotal stages throughout the nineteenth-century but it will demonstrate the value of focussing on a single great estate that was geographically located in the south Monaghan hinterland of Ulster but had characteristics comparable to great landed estates in the west of Ireland.

The geographical location of the estate is an essential starting point since there were great differences between estates situated in the north and south of Monaghan. Estates further north belonging to the Anketells, Maddens, Westenras, Rossmores, Leslies, and Dartreys, for example, had more in common in terms of religious composition with estates situated in the neighbouring northern counties of Armagh and Tyrone. Examples of

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[1] Patrick Duffy, 'Carrickmacross' in Anngret Simms and J.H. Andrews (eds), *The Thomas Davis lecture series; more Irish country towns* (Dublin, 1995), p. 67.

[2] John Bateman, *Great landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1883), p.406.

[3] Bateman's work documented that Bath's acreage in England and in Ireland was valued at £68,015 while Shirley's property was valued at £23,744.

[4] L.P. Curtis, 'Incumbered Wealth: landed indebtedness in post-Famine Ireland' in *The American Historical Review,* lxxxv, no.2 (1980), p.333.

this can be seen on the Leslie estate where the tenantry was comprised of substantially greater numbers of Protestants than on the more southerly Shirley or Bath estates, where the communities were similar to those in the neighbouring counties of Cavan and Louth. In the parish of Donagh on the Leslie estate for example, 60 per cent of the 6,696 inhabitants in 1831 were Catholic, 18 per cent Church of Ireland and 22 per cent Presbyterian.[5] Corresponding statistics for Carrickmacross in the same year indicate that as much as 93 per cent of the inhabitants of the Shirley estate may have been Catholic, 4 per cent Church of Ireland and 2 per cent Presbyterian.[6] Many Protestant tenants on some north Monaghan estates were Church of Ireland, most of whom broadly sharing their landlord's religious and political aspirations which were in turn important factors in ensuring social stability, and it was significant to the level and longevity of leadership that the landed classes were able to maintain there.[7] During election campaigns for example, landlord-tenant relations were not as strained on estates where the majority of tenants held the same faith as their landlord. This would have also been reflected in the local prevalence of secret societies or illegal land agitation.

The relationship between the Shirleys and the local Catholic clergy was at times strained, especially in the second half of the nineteenth-century, which will be examined in chapter four. Legal proceedings were brought against Evelyn Philip Shirley (1812-82) [hereinafter EPS] by Father James Joseph Hughes in 1866 for publicly tarnishing his reputation in a national newspaper the previous year. That high profile case served as a prelude to future tense relationships between the clergy and EPS in the forthcoming decades and he openly expressed his distrust of them in correspondence to McMinn throughout the late 1850s and 60s. It will be interesting to see how this emerged from deeper roots, for example in the 1830s when Mitchell was accused of proselytizing in the estate's newly founded national schools, or whether it was a spill-over from the committed parliamentary electioneering that involved both the Shirleys and the Catholic clergy on opposing sides in the many contests between the 1850s and the 1880s.

From an economic perspective estates in Ulster, especially those in the north-east, differed from elsewhere in Ireland in several respects, including in size: there was a higher

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[5] Anthony Doyle, *Charles Powell Leslie II's estates at Glaslough, county Monaghan, 1800-41* (Dublin, 2001), p. 11.
[6] *First report of the commission of public instruction, Ireland*, p. 9a, H.C. 1835, xxxiii.
[7] Olwen Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland; land, power and social elites 1878-1960* (Dublin, 2009), p. 02.

number of 'great' landowners in Ulster than in other provinces.[8] As Purdue has noted, the 'higher density of great estates, large mansions and titled landowners conversely resulted in fewer minor gentry families and overall fewer country houses per county'.[9] The Shirley estate was 'great' not minor in terms of its size and its nineteenth-century rent-roll, but was unusual by Ulster standards in other respects: no aristocratic title, no parallel great estate in England, very few Protestant tenants, and not even a 'big house' until the 1820s. This thesis will consider how far this was an Ulster estate at all, or whether its character was more that of a west of Ireland property.

The geographical situation of the estate also influenced the evolution of rural industry. This could be seen in the rise and fall of the linen industry in the Monaghan region, initially making smaller holdings economically viable and paving the way for the huge subdivision of farm holdings. By the eve of the Great Famine however, linen was in terminal decline and some parts of the county corresponded more with the rural overcrowding evident in the west of Ireland than with Belfast's hinterland. Increased sub-division influenced by the linen industry had contributed to dangerously high population densities, with southern parts of the county most affected. Duffy has calculated that there were as many as 400 people per square mile by 1841.[10] It will be important to witness how the demographic crisis of the 1840s on the Shirley estate compared with neighbouring and distant estates to get an overall view of the estate as a social system.

Like religion, geography dictated the course of social unrest and tenant discontent which varied so much in different parts of the country. Chapter three will examine how the Shirley estate and to a lesser extent the absentee Bath estate coped with the Great Famine and the effects it had on their tenantry, and also how these two estates compared with those situated in the greater Ulster region. In the fourth chapter, this geographical contrast will be seen even at the beginning of the twentieth-century, when Emily Jean Shirley became a trustee of her son Charles' estate since he was a minor. In correspondence with her land agent in 1904, in relation to selling off large tracts of the estate lands Emily noted that, 'a sale in north Monaghan should not in any way show what we'd be given in south Monaghan, for we are in a much worse part of the country, Roman Catholic & disloyal'.[11]

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[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Christine Kinealy and Trevor Parkhill (eds), *The Famine in Ulster* (Belfast, 1997), p.04.

[11] Emily Jean Shirley to Mr Gibbings regarding Irish estate affairs, 24 Jun. 1904 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/5/2).

Secondly, the thesis aims to define the Shirley family as being in that special category: semi-absentee landlords. In 1800 as many as one third of the estimated 10,000 landed proprietors in Ireland were considered absentee, predominantly living outside the country for reasons such as their involvement in parliamentary politics, they were in the armed forces, or simply that they were property-owners in Britain as well.[12] By the early 1870s 46 per cent of Irish estates were occupied by resident landlords, 25 per cent by landlords resident elsewhere in Ireland and 23 per cent were either owned by public institutions such as Trinity College Dublin or they were considered absentee.[13] Whether the Shirley family are to be considered absentee or semi-absentee appears to have caused a certain degree of ambiguity amongst historians. Historians such as Duffy have referred to the estate as an absentee one,[14] while others such as McDermott have suggested it was semi-absentee.[15] Many recent single-estate studies have documented estates owned by either completely resident or absentee landlords such as Desmond Norton's study of the absentee Lord Palmerstown and the management of his Irish estates in the 1840s, or Nuala Hunt's article on the resident trustees of the fragmented Powerscourt estates.[16] The Wingfield family lived in Enniskerry, but they were largely absentee in terms of the management of their Wicklow, Wexford, Tyrone and Dublin estates. This thesis is based on the premise that the Shirley estate fell into the distinct semi-absentee category and there is a two-fold argument for this. In simple terms, to compare the physical presence of the Shirley family on their Irish estate (particularly from the early nineteenth-century onwards) to that of its closest counterpart and wholly absentee Bath estate constitutes a justified argument. The Shirleys were after all politically active in the county from the 1820s to the 1880s, and the Baths were not. Secondly, although the Shirley family were resident at Lough Fea for just a few months each year, they exerted almost as much control over their estate as the Powerscourts did, though perhaps not quite as effectively in terms of controlling the landscape and preventing subdivision.

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[12] Duffy, 'Irish landholding structures and population in the mid-nineteenth-century' in *Maynooth Review, iii* (1997), p.18; see also Terence Dooley, 'Estate ownership and management in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Ireland' (http://www.aughty.org/pdf/estate_own_manage.pdf).

[13] Ibid.

[14] Patrick J. Duffy, 'Management problems on a large estate in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland: William Steuart Trench's report on the Shirley Estate in 1843' in *Clogher Record, XVI,* no.1 (1997), pp 101-22.

[15] Micheál McDermott, *Gypsum mining and the Shirley estate in south Monaghan, 1800-1936* (Dublin, 2009).

[16] Nuala Hunt, 'Estate management at Powerscourt 1847-1857' in *Journal of Enniskerry and Powerscourt local history, i* (2011) pp 31-48.

Of course absenteeism was not synonymous with poor estate management since some of the best managed estates in the nineteenth-century were run by absentee landlords, such as the Duke of Devonshire.[17] Semi-absenteeism was however complex. Like absentee landlords, semi-absentee landlords had to place great power and trust in their land agents whom they relied on at every level of estate management. A great deal of the efficiency of the estate depended on the qualities of the land agent who held multiple responsibilities from collecting rents, keeping accounts, drawing up leases, executing surveys and conducting reports, supervising estate expenditure, overseeing improvements, carrying out evictions, valuing property, liaising with landlords and tenants normally about rent abatements, and corresponding with petitioners.[18] The important nature of the land agent is evident throughout this thesis but particularly so in chapter two, where two agents, Mitchell and Trench, are shown to have greatly influenced major issues on the estate in relation to religion, education, marriage, emigration and agricultural practices, including turbary rights. This was by no means peculiar to the Shirley estate since, next door, Kennedy positively influenced education and particularly industrialised education in terms of lace making, creating a cottage industry in the region for which he was critically acclaimed when he was agent for the Bath estate in the mid-nineteenth-century. Although the three generations of Shirleys documented in this study were all physically absent for prolonged periods throughout the nineteenth-century, their virtual presence was evident through the unceasing flow of correspondence and through the energetic actions of their agents. This is an important point since that is what differentiated wholly absentee estates from semi-absentee estates. Land agents like Mitchell, Trench, Morant or Gibbings were not given the levels of autonomy and discretion that agents on wholly absentee estates usually enjoyed. Perhaps this was the reason why Steuart Trench's agency lasted for just over a single year, and yet he was employed for many years subsequently on other substantially larger estates in Ireland, not least on the Bath estate, where he could freely indulge his ideas and exercise his authority over the development of the estate -- which was then held in trust by Lady Bath.

More unusual was the preferred management style adopted by the Shirley landlords themselves which was demonstrated in many and varied forms. The second and fourth chapters deal specifically with the micro-management techniques of father and son EJS and EPS, which included maintaining close even friendly relationships not alone with

[17] Dooley, 'Estate ownership and management in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Ireland', p.01.

[18] J.S. Donnelly jr., *Land and people of nineteenth-century Cork* (London, 1975), pp 173-87.

the highly paid members of staff but with stewards like James McMinn, who was expected to keep an account of every birth, marriage and death on the estate as well as send samples of fruit and vegetable produce to EPS in London as well as to construct minutely detailed reports of minor demesne developments as well as news of the wider estate.

Thirdly, Lough Fea house and demesne will be a recurring point of interest in this thesis. In the case of almost all members of gentry, a proprietor's 'big house' situated on their estates, symbolised wealth first and foremost, but they also stood for authority, power, independence and the family's prestigious stature within county society. And as Purdue has pointed out, 'just as a social and economic dominance of landed class was symbolised by the big houses they built, so did the physical deterioration of these houses epitomise the crumbling edifice of landed ascendancy in Ireland'.[19] The big house symbolised the family's economic strength and social standing in the community. The very fact that Evelyn John Shirley (1788-1856) constructed such a powerful residence in 1826 corresponds with the semi-absentee nature of the family. From then onwards he endeavoured to spend approximately three months each year residing there. It became centre stage for much of what took place on the estate and thus it is of crucial importance for us, not least because Lough Fea was the location where the many public agricultural dinners were hosted. Dinners were held bi-annually in the 'baronial hall', allegedly built to accommodate the estates' tenantry at social gatherings and to hold agricultural meetings and debates. The speeches made at a number of these gatherings provide intriguing evidence of the Shirleys' view of themselves and some indication of how others saw them. In many cases the speeches were overly positive and painted the estate and its management in a far brighter light than realistically was the case. Nevertheless, the speeches which often highlighted the outcome of agricultural competitions will prove important in illustrating the aspirations and ambitions of the estate and hint at the degree to which it was advancing in the 1860s and 1870s.

Fourthly and very importantly, the Shirley estate will be subjected to a financial assessment, particularly in terms of rental income from the 1840s to the beginning of the twentieth-century. The fluctuations of rental income will be analysed against the backdrop of socio-economic and political changes in the region and in other parts of the country. As chapter two will document, EJS endeavoured to diversify his investment into mining and rural industrial ventures. There were major unforeseen difficulties with this entrepreneurial

[19] Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland,* p. 01.

move but he was ahead of his time, since many British landlords were much slower in pursuing alternative avenues to invest capital.[20] The bare statistical information goes some way in illustrating 'the physical deterioration and destruction' of the estate, but it also reveals 'the decline of a political and economic elite'.[21] A statistical analysis however can only go so far in a single estate study such as this, and therefore it will be imperative to consider the broader political, social and legislative pressures and influences which eventually led to the demise of the Shirley legacy in Monaghan.

For the Shirleys, as with large numbers of landowners across Ireland, their once extremely strong presence was wilting from the 1870s. The aim of this study is to explore as far as is practicable the Shirley's world from within, as opposed to how it appeared from without. This work sets out to assess the development of the Shirley estate across a whole century, but as well as to track the eventual demise of the estate at the turn of the twentieth-century when it was sold off under the generous terms of the Wyndham Land Act 1903. It is also however a study of independence and survival. Like many other landed families the Shirleys decided to retain Lough Fea house and demesne and they retained possession of almost all properties in the immediate vicinity of Carrickmacross town. Purdue, who has examined the big houses of the north of Ireland, similarly found that 'these families, the remnant of what was once a powerful elite, have, whether through careful economic management, simple good fortune or, more often, a combination of both, managed to keep their country houses running as family homes'.[22] Lough Fea house accompanied by 800 acres remains in the hands of the Shirley family to the present day, as does almost all of the properties on the west side of the main street in Carrickmacross. That remains a live issue.

Boundaries of Study

This study aims to conduct a social, economical, cultural and political examination of EJS and EPS and the impact that they had on the Shirleys' Farney estate between 1814 and 1906. This time-frame was chosen for a number of reasons. Between 1785 and 1815, the country had witnessed significant growth. The number of big houses being rebuilt soared, and so too did rents. In the case of many tenants on older leases they were good times too. Even south Monaghan was transformed by the economic expansion of the war

[20] F.M.L. Thompson, *English landed society in the nineteenth-century* (London, 1963); see also David Cannadine, *Aspects of the aristocracy; grandeur and decline in modern Britain* (Yale,1994).
[21] Purdue, *The Big House in the North of Ireland,* p. 01.
[22] Ibid.

era. Although EJS inherited his father's estates in 1810, it was 1814 before he commissioned an independent survey of his estate. The 1814 survey coincided with the start of the economic downturn experienced in Ireland as the Napoleonic Wars ended. Although EJS had inherited the Shirley estates four years previous, the 1814 survey his first major attempts to gain a perspective of his Irish estate and it would prove to be quite a significant influence on his decision to build Lough Fea house in 1826. Subsequent to the end of the wars, the economic climate worsened sharply. Living conditions mirrored this decline as they began to deteriorate, relationships and attitudes between Catholics and Protestants in turn became strained. The attitudes of landlords towards their estates and their tenants, in response to the economic and social changes they witnessed, was to become more business minded and entrepreneurial. Kerby Miller has suggested that 'after 1814, changes of ownership and economic necessities accelerated the transformation of a paternalistic or negligent gentry into a class of landed businessman'.[23] This was true of EJS, who invested much time and money in mining large tracts of land in search for coal only to find there was an abundance of alabaster and gypsum. Miller has spoken of how 'efficiency and profits now took precedence over archaic ideals of honor [sic] and noblesse oblige. One result was a sharp reduction or investments in beautification projects, local industries and public works, which had formally provided employment to artisans and labourers'.[24] However that was not the case in Farney. Perhaps it was because EJS was a relatively young landlord and new to the task in 1814, that this period of economic instability on a general scale did not altogether cramp initiatives on the Shirley estate in terms of local industry. On the contrary, his mining pursuits were closely followed by huge expenditure on construction work associated with the erection of Lough Fea in the 1820s.

The embodiment of this study covers almost a century and thus cannot ignore wider national events, which heavily influenced landlord-tenant relations. Put succinctly, the following underlying influences will be considered and to varying degrees information surrounding them will be threaded into the thesis. The 1820s witnessed a marked rise in sectarianism and the proliferation of various secret societies notably the Ribbonmen, similar to the Defenders at the beginning of the century. Ribbonism evolved as a defence mechanism to protect tenant farmers and rural labourers from increased rents and the

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[23] Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus in North America* (Oxford, 1985), p. 210.
[24] Ibid., p. 212.

threat of eviction. Then in 1823 the Catholic Association was established beginning a new phase in the long campaign for emancipation. This was followed in 1826 by a dramatic demonstration of the new power of the Catholic electorate in counties Waterford, Cavan, Westmeath, Louth - and Monaghan. The Catholic electorate in these regions defied their landlords in a bid to support pro-emancipation candidates, as was demonstrated on the Shirley estate. This was a key stage in the achievement of Catholic Relief Act in 1829.

The third decade of the nineteenth-century witnessed the introduction of the National School system in 1831 and the Tithe War 1830-3, and countrywide police reform, and the fourth decade municipal reform and the resurgence of the campaign for repeal of the Union. Shortly before the Great Famine (1845-50), William Steuart Trench became land agent for the Shirley estate in 1843, and he was determined to implement change from the very beginning. His first days as land agent were recorded in his largely autobiographical work *Realities of Irish Life,* where his depiction of the Carrickmacross people and indeed the tenants of the Shirley estate were thoroughly negative to say the least. He had innovative ideas on methods to raise rent and reduce rent arrears, while also improving agricultural production. Though he resigned from the agency in 1845, his proposed assisted emigration schemes with the onset of Famine the following year in Monaghan, played a vital role in the Shirley estate's reputation. The efficient manner with which he ran the estate office in Carrickmacross is also a telling sign not alone of the type of agent he was but also the type of estate he ran.

The post-Famine decade of the 1850s marked a change of circumstances for those tenants who had survived the Famine and who had not emigrated. On most landed estates this decade witnessed the large scale consolidation of farms and some changes of ownership. Many of the names that were once on the rent rolls were now replaced with fewer tenants holding significantly larger holdings. The 1850s also witnessed many landlords expending large sums of money on drainage, and on the encouragement and improvement of agricultural practices. This continued in the more challenging 1860s, at the end of which came the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. Gladstone's Landlord and Tenant Act of 1870 raised the temperature and *inter alia* led to the establishment of the Farney Tenants Defence Association. The 1870s and 80s were of course dominated by the land question culminating in a series of land acts which actually had little effect on the Shirley estate as EPS's successor Sewallis Shirley showed no appetite to dispose the estate under the terms of the acts. The contrary was the case on the Bath estate next door, and

this led to widespread murmuring amongst Shirley's tenantry who by now were becoming impatient at the estate's refusal to begin sale proceedings.

The decline of the landed gentry in Ireland did not happen in a short space of time, but towards the end of the nineteenth-century with land purchase incentives firmly in place, the door was left ajar for many landlords under severe financial strain to exit comfortably. Between 1906 and 1909 the trustees of the estate of Evelyn Charles Shirley (a minor), finally commenced sale proceedings under the legal expertise of Dublin based solicitor George Drevar Fottrel and Sons. This thesis examines the lead-up to the sale of much of the estate lands and how this would in turn effect the local standing of the Shirley family.

Sources

It is not surprising that for an estate of such magnitude over 20,000 volumes and documents relating to the local and political affairs of the Shirley family and their estate still exist. The estate's archives are housed in the Public Record Office, Northern Ireland (PRONI) and Warwickshire County Record Office, England (WCRO). According to Dooley, 'estate papers are as important to the study of big houses as they are to the estates on which those houses are located, and arguably there is a vast amount of material yet to be fully mined that will shed light on just how landed families lived their lives within (and without) their houses and demesnes'.[25] If this is in fact the case, the Shirley estate's collection provides a historical Mecca for any potential researcher. The Shirley papers consist of a vast collection, documenting generations of history and the local political affairs of the Shirley family across almost five hundred years. The collection comprises papers deriving from the historical, antiquarian and genealogical pursuits of EPS. Examples of articles and books which he penned include *Some Account of the Territory and Dominion of Farney in the Province and Earldom of Ulster,* (1845) and *The History of the County of Monaghan, 1877-8.* Unfortunately for the researcher PRONI did not receive five volumes of what were colloquially known as the 'Farney Bubble Books 1842-1929', and which were originally catalogued by PRONI. These are a collection of scrapbooks which contain printed matter concerning the Shirley estate and the surrounding area, mainly in terms of economic and agricultural related material as well as reports on the political affiliations the Shirleys had in the area. These include items such as clippings from newspaper articles and documents relating, for example to the Carrickmacross Poor

[25] Dooley, *The Big Houses and landed estates of Ireland* p.153.

Law Union. What makes the 'Bubble Books' a most exciting source is the fact that there are also many printed handbills in the collection, most of which would have been produced in rather small quantities, associated with local events in the Carrickmacross area, and therefore it is highly possible that these pamphlets are unique. They have been described as 'an extremely fine collection of primary sources almost all of which are probably to be found nowhere else in Ireland. For instance, there are no runs of the *[Northern] Standard* or the *[People's] Advocate* in Ireland with the exception of one or two years of the *Standard* in the *Northern Standard* Office, Monaghan Town'.[26] Fortunately, PRONI recorded quite lengthy excerpts from the Bubble Books in their catalogue which has proved useful throughout this work.

There is a wealth of alternative material to work with. Dooley has pointed out the importance of focusing on the material at hand rather than that which is out of reach. He outlined how 'relatively little has been published about either individual estates or individual big houses . . . because family or estate records no longer survive'. The absence of some estate collections undoubtedly makes research much more difficult though Dooley advised 'it should not be accepted as an excuse for avoiding an attempt; there are sufficient complementary sources to compensate for lacunae in the material which is available'.[27] Fortunately this was not a real problem in terms of the Shirley estate papers because although the 'Bubble Books' posed a difficulty, the available collection is altogether vast.

Private correspondence including letters between family members, estate agents, solicitors, architects and employees help illuminate many aspects of a landlord's life. Rent rolls and rent books are invaluable in establishing a financial profile of the estate and to what extent rents were either paid regularly or in arrears. Book-keeping was a practice they took very seriously, therefore rents rolls indicate the precise fluctuation of income over the years. They prove a very important barometer with which to measure the estate's and in turn the family's financial situation. Wage books and estate day-books also reveal information as to how many employees worked on the estate at a given time, information as to servant wages, and the duties they were expected to carry out. Coupled with census records we can piece together the inner workings of the estate. Irish Land Commission papers relating to the sale of the Shirley estate in the latter half of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century are also of paramount importance. The extent of these collections generated as a result of the land

[26] Peter Collins, *County Monaghan Sources in the public Record Office of Northern Ireland* (PRONI, 1998), p.100

[27] Dooley, *The big houses and landed estates of Ireland*, p.10.

purchase acts differ between one estate and the next, but for the Shirley's Irish estate ten boxes of material exist for the years 1880-1930. The documents are wide-ranging, from legal information regarding mortgages, loans, marriage settlements to complex title deeds dating back centuries. This collection also includes maps and surveys of various periods. They contain the terms of sale of a huge part of the estate. These documents which are unsorted are currently difficult to use, but they are very useful in broadening the overall scope of the thesis in tracing the decline of the Shirley estate.

Parliamentary papers produced in the nineteenth-century are useful in a myriad of ways. These papers, as Purdue put it, 'contain a wealth of statistical information regarding all aspects of life in Ireland.'[28] The Poor Enquiry, the Devon Commission, the Bessborough Commission and the various censuses of Ireland were highly valuable sources especially when utilised in conjunction with other quantitative evidence.

Oral information can often be viewed as subordinate, yet valuable information can be obtained from current estate owners and previous employees of an estate. They have first-hand experience of estate life and may be able to provide some insight on aspects of estate history, that the researcher may otherwise miss. For this study, Philip Evelyn Shirley kindly agreed to be interviewed and he allowed me examine the interior of Lough Fea and the immediate demesne. It was immensely helpful to the researcher to see the scale of EJS' interiors, and although some of it is in need of restoration much of the original furniture and art work remain intact. The library for example is striking, not alone for the rare works it still contains but the physical make-up of the intricately carved wooden shelves. To explore the main house in conjunction with, for example the great hall and conservatory, the court-yard, the stables, the six gate-lodges, the lake, the great blue stone-cross and steps, the pleasure grounds, the gardens and the deer park is very revealing. I also had the opportunity to interview a gardener who later became a care-taker for the estate in recent years. His father and grand-father had worked on the estate and he was born, reared and hopefully will end his years in one of the gate-lodges.

Although this work is almost entirely based upon the Shirley estate in Ireland, it is not possible to conduct a thorough investigation without documenting that the Shirley family at Ettington Park, Stratford-upon Avon, Warwickshire. It is useful to draw comparisons between the architectural demeanour and the interior layout of Lough Fea and Ettington Park, both of which still stand. They provide sufficient visual sources, offering a contrast on the

[28] Purdue, *The big house in the North of Ireland,* p.08.

levels of capital invested at home and abroad. Ettington Park has been noted as one of the best examples there is today of French and Italian Gothic revival architecture, which in this case was orchestrated by John Prichard, who under the authorisation of EPS in 1858, carried out a major rebuilding programme until its completion in 1862. It was also interesting to see the original carving of the Shirley family motto "Loyal je suis" on the window heads in the reception area. This motto incorporates the Irish shamrock design to signify the family connection with Ireland. Many of the Shirley records pertaining to the running and management of Ettington Park are housed in WCRO. Not surprisingly though, there are quite a number of records in the collection relating to the Shirley Estate in Monaghan. These include a number of EJS' personal pocket books, which were invaluable in establishing various things on his 'to-do' lists in connection with his Irish estate. The pocket-books listed various improvements to be carried out and the various people that he would consult about these tasks. They proved to be a significant source documenting the agricultural progress on the estate, especially with regard to money spent on field drainage. They were also a pivotal source in helping to examine the alterations and improvements made to the house and grounds at Lough Fea.

Historiography

To date, the Shirley estate has not been the subject of much research, which is surprising given the wealth of the archive it boasts. It has been subjected to some scrutiny and some authoritative works have been published in the past and in more recent years. Patrick Duffy has written extensively on various issues, especially mapping the impact of famine and emigration and the geographical demographic disparities on the Shirley estate. Ruth Ann M. Harris has carried out extensive research into Ireland's social and economic history and Irish emigration to England and North America. One of her last articles, 'Negotiating Patriarchy', was published in *Reclaiming Gender; Transgressive Identities in Modern Ireland*, and documents refreshingly, albeit in a general way, the lives of the women who lived on the Shirley estate and the role that they played initially prior to the Famine and the role that they found themselves forced to step into, if widowed, orphaned, estranged or abandoned. Works by W.E. Vaughan have been important in exploring the often-times fraught landlord-tenant relations that existed in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland. Dooley's work is central in the field of big-house and landed estate history. His relatively recent work *The Big Houses and Landed Estates of Ireland; A Research Guide* is essential for every historian beginning a study of any estate or big house. Olwen Purdue has contributed greatly to the history of landed estates in Northern Ireland and her study was particularly useful as a comparative

work, as the Shirley estate is situated in greater Ulster. Scott Malloy, a professor of labour relations at the Schmidt research centre, University of Rhode Island, has carried out a recent study on one of the Shirley estate's most famous tenants, a 'Irish Potato Famine refugee' named Joseph Banigan. In 1847, he emigrated and became a very successful entrepreneur. Although the primary focus of Malloy's work *Irish Titan Irish Toilers* is based on the path that Banigan's life took when he reached Rhode Island, there are many references to the Shirley estate, particularly to the area where Banigan was born.

Also relating to the Shirley estate in terms of its gypsum mining industry is Micheál McDermott's *Gypsum Mining and the Shirley Estate in South Monaghan, 1800-1936,* which was helpful in establishing EJS' subsidiary enterprise. Less recent works, such as Trench's *Realities of Irish Life,* is important as a source that most historians agree should not be taken literally, and Rev. Livingstone's *The Monaghan Story,* an old secondary source proved a major asset at the beginning of the project. Memoirs and semi-autobiographical works by landlords elsewhere or by their family members have proved fascinating sources such as *The Life's Work of a Landlord who Tried to do His Duty* by William Bence Jones, *Seventy Years Young,* the memoirs of Elizabeth Countess of Fingall, Elizabeth Bowen*'s Bowen's Court* and *Seven Winters,* Anita Leslie's *The Gilt and the Gingerbread,* Shane Leslie's *A Film of Memory,* and Marjorie Leslie's *Girlhood in the Pacific*. Other works carried out on single estates proved to be of great importance including recently published *Virtues of A Wicked Earl: The Life and Legend of William Sydney Clements, 3rd Earl of Leitrim 1806-78* by A.W.P. Malcolmson, Joe Clarke's *Christopher Dillon Bellew and his Galway estates, 1763-1826* and 'Bellisle and its owners'. In terms of other estates in county Monaghan, Anthony Doyle's work on the Leslie estate is insightful, as are other single estate studies such as Mary Delaney's *William Steuart Trench and his management of the Digby estate, King's County, 1857-71;* Gerard Moran's *Sir Robert Gore Booth and his landed estate in County Sligo, 1814-1876: land, famine, emigration and politics,* Joe Mooney's *The Changing Fortunes of the Headfort estates, 1870-1928* and Gerard J. Lyne's comprehensive work *The Lansdowne Estate in Kerry*. More contemporary single estate studies such as W.B. Maguire's work, *The Downshire Estates in Ireland 1801-1845, Michael* Bolton's *Headfort House*, Mary-Rose Carty's *History of Killeen Castle, County Meath*, Patricia O'Hare's *Muckross House, Killarney* also play a central role.

Dealing with subject specific areas, the Great Famine and landlord responses is widely covered by historians. Some of the most notable works is this area is Mary Daly's *The Famine in Ireland* and Peter Gray's *Famine, land and politics*. For an examination on the role

of landlords in local politics Virginia Crossman's *Local Government in Nineteenth-century Ireland.* In relation to the politicisation of the boards of guardians and the transformation of local government in Ireland William L. Feingold's *The Revolt of the Tenantry* is most useful.

The land question and landlord-tenant relations have received a good deal of academic assessment over the three quarters of this century. J.E. Pomfret's views in the 1930s accepted the fictional evidence of *Castle Rackrent* and the works of George Moore, Shane Leslie, Somerville and Ross and Elizabeth Bowen, who came from aristocratic beginnings themselves and whose works offer a very interesting insight into their private perceptions on a variety of aspects associated with big house life. Pomfret viewed landlords as 'powerful and predatory', describing them as 'alien and absentee' and having 'little interest either in welfare of the peasants or in the improvement of their property'.[29] It was not until the 1970s that a new more informed analysis in the area of landed estate history took place and greatly improved access to primary source material became available. Historians such as B.L. Solow and J.S. Donnelly Jr drew heavily from this newly available primary source material in the 1970s and the outcome was contrary to the picture produced by earlier historians. They found that instead of tenant farmers 'being squeezed for every last farthing by rapacious landlords, Ireland's tenant farmers actually experienced unprecedented prosperity in the two decades following the Great Famine'.[30] More recently W.E. Vaughan has also made extensive use of a wide range of estate papers contributing majorly to the discussion in landlord tenant relations in the north and south of the country from the end of the Great Famine to the beginning of the land wars.

In terms of the demise of landed estates, work had been carried out by historians such as Dooley on the decline of the big house in the twenty-six counties and provides an in-depth analysis of the challenges faced by the landed classes both before and after partition. David Cannadine's *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* extensively chronicles the economic and political challenges faced by the aristocracy both in Britain and Ireland and in particular Ulster.

Building on this range of scholarship, the present work seeks to focus for the first time on the intricate workings of the Shirley estate spanning over a century of political, social and economic upheaval, transformation, crisis, change, development, improvement and demise.

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[29] Ibid., p.10.
[30] Ibid.

Structure of Thesis

This study sets out to chronologically examine the development of a semi-absentee estate under four successive generations of landlords across a century of change that hugely impacted the Irish landed class and their tenantry. It is primarily the examination of an estate geographically located on the fringes between the north and the south of Ireland. It will examine the characteristics and features common to estates situated north and south of the county and the country. It will investigate EJS' estate management practices in the first half of the nineteenth-century and this will be compared with EPS' handling of the estate from the mid 1850s until the early 1880s. The pivotal role played by land agents in attempting to carry out the micro-managing practices of both landlords will take centre stage. To a lesser extent, there will be an assessment of the roles of Sewallis Evelyn Shirley who was landlord in the last decade of the nineteenth-century and of his widow who was a trustee for their heir and minor when the estate was being sold in the early twentieth-century

Chapter one introduces EJS, his personal life and political career and how the complexities of the 1826 general election impacted landlord-tenant relations in Farney. The importance of the 1814 survey of the estate and the subsequent development and exploitation of natural resources and industry in terms of lime, coal, and gypsum in the pre-Famine period will be analysed. The construction of Lough Fea house and the impact this had on developing the semi-absentee nature of the family will be examined. A contextual analysis of the estate in terms of population, agriculture, land tenure and public ambiguity towards EJS will also be documented.

Chapter Two examines the importance of significant land agents on the Shirley estate, particularly Mitchell and Trench. They persisted in influencing highly important issues which came to the fore in the first half of the nineteenth-century such as the provision of turf and lime, educative practices, religious persuasion, marriage, rents, agricultural practices, sub-division, and population management. Through his 1843 report Trench was influential in instigating the estate's emigration-assisting policies which were implemented at a minor degree in the pre-Famine period and to a much greater extent during and in the aftermath of the Great Famine. The second chapter will also address tenant social conditions and will develop the information set out in chapter one to assess areas like housing and trends in general standards of living. This chapter will also deal with the issue of pre-Famine tenant distress at rent prices and the estate's refusal to listen

to or discuss rent abatement demands. The attack on Trench on his first day in office will be outlined, as well as the build-up and eventual climax of tenant disorder with the Battle of Mageracloone. The emergence of local secret societies as a direct consequence of tenant discontent nationally and the impact these movements had on the estate and in the region will be dealt with.

Chapter three centres around the impact that the Great Famine had on both landlord and tenant on the Shirley estate. The primary role of the Poor Law administration and the roles played by EJS, EPS and their representative as ex-officio members of Carrickmacross board of guardians is interrogated, as are the responses by the elected guardians and in turn the media to their actions. The minutes from the board's meetings have proved very enlightening in comparing the responses of the Bath and Shirley estates to the pressing issues that arose. The supports put in place by Carrickmacross workhouse and the fever hospital in conjunction with the estate's famine relief measures will be subjected to scrutiny. In tandem with estates across the country, assisted emigration schemes formed a pivotal part in coping with the profound poverty, overcrowding, sickness and destitution. Undoubtedly, the negative claims outlined by local media attributed to EJS gave rise to the estate's reputation as an exterminating force working against the tenantry. What chapter three seeks to assess is why this atrocious reputation did not apply to the same extent to Bath. Was it the fact that EJS was semi-absentee and a greater level of accountability could be easier pinned on him, given his physical presence. Was it because of the family's political prominence as a pillar of Toryism in the county? Was it much simpler than that? Did Bath not assist as many paupers to leave and were there not as many evictions carried out on the Bath estate in the first place? Did subdivision not exist to the same extent as it did on EJS' estates and if not, was this a result of the fact that the absentee Bath estate was by and large better run?

The final chapter will formally introduce EPS, his personal life and literary career. This will be one of the first comparisons drawn between the father and son. His management style relative to his Irish estate will be scrutinised with differences and similarities between him and his father in their role as landlords, their entrepreneurial skills, and how effective they were in dealing with the challenges they were faced. Factors such as EPS' apparent lack of entrepreneurial skill and knowledge, his work ethic and discipline, will be examined against external factors such as the huge socio-economic changes under way by the fifth decade of the nineteenth-century. To what extent were post-Famine estate improvements carried out, what did these improvements consist of,

and were tenant farmers, now holding considerably more land than tenants possessed in the pre-Famine era, willing to embrace new agricultural methods? And whether these practices reflected improving policies on other estates throughout the country will be discussed.

Chapter five will look at the ambivalent nature of the estate's demise, and its fight for survival at the end of the nineteenth-century and up to and beyond the Wyndham Land Act 1903.

As Duffy has pointed out, the big house and estate system in Ireland was 'extremely complex in its operation . . . its territorial and tenurial framework was extremely varied and . . . the agents of social and economic change were quite diffuse'.[31] The conclusion will draw together the information that the previous chapters have explored and analysed; furthermore it will sum up the main points of the entire study and establish how they relate to landed estates nationally.

Contextualizing the Shirley family and their English and Irish Estates

Ettington Park

Strong grows the ivy, where before
High toned the notes from roof to floor,
In prayer for those who pray no more.
Roles are clustering where beneath
Lie knight and peasant old in death,
Endured their fight and done their breath,
Yet fair the grave of those who lie,
Old trees between them and the sky,
Friendly the steps that pass them by.
Ended the hurry and the strife,
All in the hot restlessness of life.
They lie where summer flowers are rise;
In kindly neighbourhood they rest,
Near to the home they loved the best,
Gardens and brightness o'er their breast.
To live or die in, fees the fun,
Of hills and woods he shines upon,
No fairer spot than Eatington.[32]
F.E.S.G. 1869

Though they were one of the oldest families in England, the Shirley family, like the Connollys of Castletown, were never given a peerage. Their seat at Ettington Park was

[31] P.J. Duffy, 'The evolution of estate properties in South Ulster 1600-1900' in W.J Smyth and K. Whelan (eds), *Common ground: essays on the historical geography of Ireland* (Cork, 1988), p.88.
[32] Evelyn Philip Shirley, *Lower Eatington: its manor house and church* (London, 1869), p.75.

their principal residence long before EJS decided to construct a residence at Lough Fea. As one of Warwickshire's oldest families, the Shirleys boasted an uninterrupted male line of descendants dating prior to the Doomsday Book of 1086, and it was then that the over-lordship of the manor at Lower Ettington was held by Henry de Ferrers.[33] At the time of the Doomsday survey, "Saswalo" held the manor of Henry de Ferrers, he died about the time of the survey and was succeeded by his only son Fulcher who died c.1105. Fulcher's second son another Sewallis, succeeded to the manor of Ettington: he later moved to Shirley, Derbyshire, whence he assumed the surname 'Shirley'.[34]

Over the centuries, the estate passed from father to son and from son to grandson and where that was not possible, the transmission became very complicated. The claim is however, that the manor of Lower Ettington is the only manor in England still held by the same family as existed at the time of the Domesday survey.[35] The poem above referred to Ettington as '. . . the home they loved the best', and perhaps some of the reasoning behind that is the long, strong, unbroken, historical association the family had with the region.

EPS was keen on decorating some of the main rooms at Ettington Park with rhymes, adding uniqueness as well as a personal touch, since he engaged so much with literary activity. In the servants' hall for example, carved across the fireplace were the words, 'Drink, be merry and be wise, Quarrel not, tell no lies'. The family motto 'Loyal Je Suis' when directly translated means 'Loyal I am' was carved in stone over the window heads in the entrance hall and on the tiles. It also appeared on a large diamond shaped mural in the church at Lough Fea. There was also a shamrock design incorporated in the engraving, signifying the family's long association with Ireland.

EPS' obituary in the *Academy* pointed to the fact that he took great pride in the manor house at Lower Ettington, which he enlarged and remodelled with 'consummate taste'. His primary focus was unsurprisingly on his library 'which he built to contain his literary collections . . . [making] it one of the finest mansions in the country'.[36] However, the English manor house was out of all proportion with the size of the surrounding estate, which barely produced £2,000 per year. Nevertheless, the modest rent roll accrued from rents from Ettington were greatly supplemented by his Irish revenues of nearly £30,000.[37] It was not uncommon for the rental income accrued from landed estates in Ireland to be

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[33] Geoffrey Tyack, *Warwickshire country houses* (Chichester, 1994), p. 81.
[34] L.F. Salzman (ed.), *The Victoria history of the counties of England: Warwick* (London, 1949), p. 78.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] EPS' obituary taken from the *Academy,* 7 Oct. 1882. (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/G/12).

used to facilitate great notions of grandeur in England. The obituary also outlined his love of his Irish surroundings at Lough Fea, in particular the scenery that surrounded the great hall, and how he was known to furnish his guests with a warm welcome to both his aristocratic homes, with great hospitality and cheer. When his guests were leaving, as a gift, he frequently presented them with a printed document, probably an excerpt from one of his published works, outlining his seats at Ettington and Lough Fea. There was no doubt however that both EJS and EPS favoured Ettington Park; 'his heart was in Warwickshire woodland which had been home of the Shirleys for a thousand years'.[38]

The Farney Connection

The Shirley connection with Ireland dated back to the sixteenth century. In 1576, Queen Elizabeth I England granted the first Earl of Essex, Walter Deveraux, the region of Farney, having previously given him estates in county Antrim. Farney, which included the present day market town of Carrickmacross and surrounding townlands and parishes, comprised of just less than 50,000 acres. The first Earl was unsuccessful in maintaining control of the land in Monaghan. He had devised plans to build a stronghold in Carrickmacross but before anything concrete was put in place, he died, leaving the estate in the hands of his son, the second Earl of Essex, Robert Deveraux. The second Earl was a minor aged ten on his inheritance, thus his estates were put in the hands of trustees. In 1599 Robert, who had grown up to become Queen Elizabeth's favourite nobleman was made Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. He was also sent to Ireland as Queen Elizabeth I's emissary and met with the leader of the rebels and Earl of Tyrone, Hugh O' Neill. The meeting was supposed to have taken place close to Carrickmacross in the townland of Aclint six miles south of the town, however there is another townland aptly named Essexford, three miles east of Carrickmacross, which is traditionally held as the meeting place. The meeting between the two was a failure, and as a result Essex had no alternative but to head back to England to face the consequences. As a result of a number of defeats as well as this particular incident, the second Earl was deemed inadequate. He lost his position at court, his estates and in 1601, his head. When Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603, her successor James I exhibited an air of sympathy with the deprived Essex heirs and reinstated them to Ireland. The now third Earl of Essex who was also named Robert was in

[38] Ibid.

a much more secure position in Ireland, making it easier for him than his predecessors to assert his claim. He decided to fulfil his grandfather's initial plans in building a stronghold in Carrickmacross. At the time there was no town but the village of Magheross, otherwise known as the 'old town' or 'Irishtown' which was in close proximity. According to Breathnach, 'Essex built a castle at Carrickmacross between 1628 and 1633. A street was laid out running northwards from the castle, along the line of an existing road. This became the main street of the new town. Plots were assigned to settlers, a number of substantial houses were built. These contrasted with the poor cabins of the inhabitants of Magheross'.[39]

A common pattern emerged whereby there was a poorer class of people living in the old part of the town or in this case the village of Magheross, and a new wealthier planter population settling in the new town, while both classes were living side by side. It was not until the third Earl of Essex died in 1646 leaving no male heir to the estate, that enormous changes would occur that would in turn create quite a unique history for the town of Carrickmacross and indeed for the county of Monaghan. The estate was passed to Robert's two sisters Lady Dorothy and Lady Frances. Dorothy was married to Henry Shirley while Frances was the wife of Sir William Seymour. The estate was held in trust for many years and in 1692, after many lengthy legalities were finalised, their interests were separated and a co-heirship took place with both parties receiving almost equal proportions of the estate. The Shirleys received 26,386 acres, while the Thynne Family, Viscounts Weymouth and subsequently Marquises of Bath, received 22,762 acres. There was a dividing line drawn down the centre of the main street of Carrickmacross. The west side became the Shirley estate while the east side became the Bath estate. (see appendix for further details on Shirley's townlands.)

The kernel: Lough Fea House

One of the best kept secrets of the Shirley estate is Lough Fea House as R. McCollum stated in 1856, 'I have often wondered why so little is known about this tasteful edifice. Why, even in the adjoining county of Cavan, you will meet with many persons in the higher walks of life, who never saw or even heard of this beautiful building,

[39] Pádraig Breathnach, *A heritage guide to Carrickmacross* (Carrickmacross, 1996), pp 12-13; see also Duffy, 'Carrickmacross', p. 75.

with its ornate pleasure-grounds'.[40] The reasons behind this, according to McCollum, was the newness of the castle. A 'very large and unusual Tudor-Gothic house by Thomas Rickman, the English architect and architectural writer who invented the terms '"Early English", "decorated" and "perpendicular" to describe the different periods of Gothic architecture'.[41] The actual construction of the Shirley residence took quite some time; in fact the building spanned twenty years before completion in 1846. As has been established, the family were semi-absentee and spent most of their time at Ettington Park, and as a result there had not been any urgency in creating a second base in Ireland, at least not one that was substantial enough to entertain their social peers. What is evident however, is that when EJS did eventually decide to erect his Irish mansion, no expense was spared. The *Anglo Celt* commented 'in the building of Lough Fea House, Mr Shirley spared nor [neither] time, nor toil, nor gold, and during the 20 years in which it was still in the building, the passing visitor might truly say:

Here wealth still pours its golden tide,
as busy toil its labours plies,
here architecture's noble pride,
Bids elegance with grandeur rise. [42]

The second half of the eighteenth-century and the first half of the nineteenth-century witnessed an increase in the number of landlords erecting stately homes or building extensions to already existing castles in Ireland. The building boom saw many landlords steep themselves in debt. Dooley has outlined how the Earl of Kingston for example spent £220,000 on the building of Mitchelstown castle in the 1820s,[43] while Maguire conveyed how Lord Downshire expended sums of up to £185,000 on building works between 1810 and 1840.[44] In greater Ulster, Lord Dufferin and Lord Londonderry began work on Clandeboyne and Mount Stewart in the 1820s. By 1830, the earl of Erne had begun to construct a castle on the shores of Lough Erne and Sir Henry Brooke completed Colebrook.[45] According to Purdue, by 1878, there were at least 2,000 country houses dotted across Ireland, 10 per cent of which were to be found in the six counties that would later form Northern Ireland.[46]

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[40] R. McCollum, *Sketches of the highlands and of Shirley castle in Farney, taken during the Irish Famine by a looker-on* (Belfast, 1856), p.25.
[41] Introduction to the Shirley papers (P.R.O.N.I., 2007), p.10.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Terence A. Dooley, *The big house and landed estates of Ireland: A research guide* (Dublin, 2007), p. 24.
[44] W.A., Maguire, *The Downshire estates in Ireland,1801-1845:the management of Irish landed estates in the early nineteenth-century* (Oxford, 1972), p.57.
[45] Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland; land, power and social elites1878-1960*, p.16.
[46] Ibid.

EJS carried out almost three decades of building works in the early nineteenth-century, much of which was influenced by English born architect Thomas Rickman (1776-1841) and Dublin-based architect George Sudden after Rickman's death. Much of the stone used on the building of Lough Fea, its gate lodges and surrounding boundary walls, was quarried in one of the estate's townlands, Drumcargy. The 1835 Ordnance Survey map confirmed the presence of Lough Fea house geographically located opposite the scenic Lough Fea while the immediate demesne surrounding the house comprised of about 806 acres.[47] The map also conveyed the presence of numerous gravel pits, sand pits, quarries and areas labelled 'rocks' dotted around the estate, owing to ongoing construction work taking place on the estate grounds. In 1835, for example, there were no gate lodges, instead there was an area which was labelled 'Dublin Gate'. On the 1859 map however, the title had been changed to 'Dublin Gate Lodge'.[48] The 1835 map also illustrated a cottage closer to the main house but it wasn't a gate lodge. Beside the cottage there was a threshing machine and a nursery. It is likely that the person in charge of threshing may have resided in the cottage. Between the 1840s and early 1860s, six gate lodges of varying dimensions and designs were constructed at the boundaries of the demesne.[49] At the lake edge, not far from the main house, there was a boat house and what appeared to be a small junction where two lanes met. One was labelled 'Lake Walk' while the other was 'Mitchell Avenue.' The latter paid tribute to the much disliked and deceased land agent Alexander 'Sandy' Mitchell. On the other side of the lake, there was a wooded area named 'Evatt's Wood', a title dedicated to Humphrey Evatt, land agent prior to Mitchell and one who was supposed to have built good relations with Shirley's tenantry. The *Ordnance Survey Memoirs*[50] noted in the 1830s that the demesne was still very much in its infancy, though 'gradual additions of ornamental planting and walks are made to it under the superintendence of the agent, Alexander Mitchell Esquire of Shirley House, Carrickmacross, to whose display of taste and judgement too much praise cannot be given'.[51] The Memoir repeated that Lough Fea house with its neat exterior appearance had no less than 27 bedrooms. It drew attention to the construction of what appeared to be the great hall, 'for the last two or three years Mr Shirley has been erecting an extensive

[47] Angélique Day and Patrick McWilliams (eds) *Ordinance Survey Memoirs of Ireland:* counties of south Ulster 1834-8, xl (Belfast, 1998), p.138.
[48] Ibid.
[49] McDermott, *Gypsum mining and the Shirley estate in south Monaghan,* p. 28.
[50] Ordinance Survey Memoirs became an addition to the Ordinance Survey maps when civil assistants were recruited to help with sketching, drawing and the engraving of maps and eventually in the 1830s, the writing of memoirs.
[51] Day and McWilliams (eds), *Ordinance Survey Memoirs of Ireland,* p.138.

mansion about 200 yards from the cottage. It is of cut freestone and in the Elizabethan style. It overlooks Lough Fea and commands an extensive view of the adjoining country'.[52] The memoirs praised the interior design of the house, referring to the large quantity of 'beautifully carved oak . . . brought over from Holland at a considerable expense for the purpose of panelling the library and dining-room'.[53]

In terms of architectural design, Mark Bence-Jones has indicated that:

> unlike most other houses of its period and style, Lough Fea has no battlements and few gables, but a solid parapet which conceals much of the roof . . . [with] hardly any projecting bows or oriels, but rather small, mullioned windows under hood mouldings; so that the elevations, of pinkish-grey ashlar, have a solid effect. There are several slender, square turrets with sprocketed, pyramidal roofs; also a polygonal lantern and a small tower and polygonal turret at the end of one wing but no major tower.[54]

He added that the house appeared low and wide-spreading and that the entrance facing the lake was 'flanked on one side by the chapel and on the other by a great hall, which together form a three sided court'.[55] Bence Jones also spoke of the 'great complexity' of the interior of Lough Fea house which comprised numerous corridors and what he described as 'ante-rooms'. He outlined how there was also a hall which was divided by a stone arcade and decorated with nineteenth-century wallpaper. He described EPS' 'famous' library as 'large and handsome', while the chapel was said to be on the scale of a sizeable church, with two pulpits and a gallery.[56] The great hall in the 1840s was the most obvious and distinctive addition made to the house by EJS. Correspondence between Mr Walker and EPS when he became heir, point to minor structural changes that were made, such as pieces added to the chimneys in the mid-nineteenth-century and some of the correspondences were accompanied by sketchy drawings, one of which, was an undated drawing of the Shirley family crest and coat of arms. They were of amateur quality but nevertheless replicates that which is above the entrance porch today.[57]

A reporter for the *Anglo Celt* who visited the house in 1850, stated that 'in the entrance hall of the castle, I observe a visitor's book and in it may be seen the names of ladies and gentlemen, far off and near hand who have been attracted here by the fame of

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[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Mark Bence-Jones, *Burke's Guide to Irish country houses,* (London, 1976); see also introduction to the Shirley papers, p.10.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Introduction to the Shirley Papers, p.10.
[57] Bundle endorsed by Evelyn Philip Shirley, letters from W. Walker of Monaghan to George Sudden relating to building at Lough Fea, 1840-42 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/4).

this ornate structure, which wants only time to rank it with some of the finest and most celebrated of Ireland's castles'.[58] The article also alluded to the newness of the house as juxtaposed to the oldness of the family and the fact that no expense was spared in furnishing and adorning its rooms and walls. EJS and his son were men of refined taste and EPS' love of antiquity added to the grandeur of furnishings brought by him from Italy and Rome made a significant imprint on the houses' features. One piece of Italian ancient craftsmanship which the article reported on was a representation of an Eastern Caravan cut in oak which served as a parlour chimney piece. This antique represented the visit to Jerusalem of the 'Eastern MAGI, when they came to see the new born king of the Jews, whose star at its rising they had seen and came to lay at his feet their most precious gift'.[59]

A number of years after Lough Fea was completed EJS made plans to build a great hall as an extension onto the main house; this hall would not only change the physical image of the house but it would symbolise the public role of the Shirleys as great hosts, and the wealth and prosperity they possessed. Correspondence between W. Walker the architect and George Sudden, architect and clerk of works for the estate, who was active in both Fermanagh and Monaghan indicated that plans to construct a coat of arms above the front entrance to Lough Fea house were drawn up in 1830s. Sudden was employed by EPS at Lough Fea throughout the 1840s and later in the century, he was involved in the re-building of Crom Castle for the third Earl of Erne in county Fermanagh, after it was destroyed by a fire. Numerous decisions on the size, shape, interior and exterior characteristics of the great hall were discussed in the correspondence, with final plans eventually put into place in 1841,when it was erected.[60] It was deemed, the one room in Lough Fea that simply could not be ignored as it was 'vast and baronial with a lofty hammer-beam roof, a minstrels' gallery and an arcade at first-floor level'.[61] The great hall was seventy-five feet in length and thirty-three feet tall. It was connected with the drawing room by a conservatory. 'There are two chimney-pieces of free-stone, on one of them is the motto of the good Bishop Hackett, "Serve God and Be Cheerful",' which echoed EJS' devotion to the Church and EPS' desire for sayings and rhymes to adorn their rooms.

The great hall was an impressive structure complemented by an adjoining conservatory leading out to the terrace and gardens. The hall was certainly the most talked about room in Lough Fea house, and was a highly unusual structure in Ireland at this time.

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[58] *Anglo Celt,* 12 Dec. 1850.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Walker to Sudden.
[61] Introduction to the Shirley Papers, p. 10.

The north Monaghan landlord Lord Rossmore and EJS were in direct competition with each other, as Bence Jones claimed, 'Rossmore enlarged his drawing-room at Rossmore Park five times, but in the end Mr Shirley won the contest by building his great hall'.[62] The *Anglo Celt* claimed that 'Shirley . . . has shown in building this costly structure that a gentleman may live in England a part of his time and yet spend on his Irish estate a large portion of the money he derives from it. He, for one would not have it said that his Irish rental was all spent in England'.[63] One week later another report went on to describe how impressive the interior of the hall really was:

> It is fitted up with furniture of an antique appearance richly decorated with carving and the floors, tables, chairs &C., are all of oak, and the eye of the curious is attracted by the new and out-of-the-fashion grates which the owner's ingenuity has invented and the skilful hands of his own blacksmith have forged for the rooms of the establishment. Along the east side of the hall runs a secret gallery where the inmates of the castle can enter without being much noticed, and there it was that the ladies, on a late occasion, sat looking down on Mr Shirley and his tenants at dinner below and during their after-dinner speeches.[64]

Between a discussion on the lavish interior of the great hall and the various aspects of one of EJS' many dinner parties held there, the reporter went on to state that the stranger is immediately struck by the number and variety of hanging portraits, some of which featured;

> the kings of England and of the Stuart line. James, the pedantic monarch, is mounted over your head as you enter the hall, and the opposite the father, his unfortunate son the first Charles whose wan and careworn visage "is sickled o're with the pale cast of thought". On right and left as you advance up the hall are suspended, many fine and costly paintings which the lovers of the fine arts must come here to admire.[65]

The reporter admitted that he was not an art connoisseur, stating that he had 'neither time nor the taste enough',[66] and he could therefore only suggest its beauty and charm. The windows were ornamented with coats of arms which illustrated the colourful history of Farney. Figures included the Lord of Farney, Richard Pipard 1197, Ardgall McMahon, Lord of Oriel 1415, Shane O'Neill Lord of Ulster 1567 and Walter Earl of Essex and Lord of Farney 1576. One of the adjoining windows illustrated what was termed 'the descent of the barony to the families of Thanne [Bath] and Shirley'.[67] Another window facing the south end, bore the arms of Essex and the English nobles who fought

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[62] Ibid.
[63] *Anglo Celt*, 5 Dec. 1850.
[64] Ibid.,12 Dec. 1850.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

against the men of Ulster in 1573. In 1862, a painting was delivered to Lough Fea and put on display in the South Room. McMinn did not specify what the painting portrayed, only to say that it looked remarkable. In 1870 John Ynyr Burges of Parkanaur, Castlecaulfeild, County Tyrone paid a visit to Lough Fea and he recorded how impressed he was at the art that adorned its walls; 'nothing belonging to it [the great hall] is poor or trifling. The portraits that invigorate the walls are full-length of the Van Dyck and Lely order, and most of the warriors on horseback'.[68] Similar to earlier reports, he was very much struck by 'the lofty wainscoating [sic] and the windows, old furniture of the same ancient bearing, with porcelain and antiques.' He also added how he, his wife and presumably EPS 'breakfasted in this grand apartment, but dined in a smaller one'.[69]

The report in the *Anglo Celt* also conveyed how Lough Fea was open to visitors who were interested in viewing its interior, it stated that no:

> respectable person has been denied access to it or gone away disappointed of seeing it, with his characteristic courtest; Mr Shirley has allowed free access on certain days in each week to even the interior of the house; unless some unworthy persons intrude, or some rudeness is shown or outrage committed by strangers coming to see it, it is likely, Shirley castle will continue to be open to the public.[70]

An article which appeared on the front page of the *Anglo Celt* during the Famine, recorded the high social standards which the Shirleys upheld, in terms of hosting lavish functions. Lough Fea was recorded as the scene of the most 'princely hospitality and delightful enjoyment, succession after succession of distinguished visitors having been sojourning there, as the most recent occasion preceding the week of November 24th 1848'.[71] Colonel Shirley had requested the musical entertainment from the 7th regiment, otherwise known as the Queen's Own Hussars. They were stationed in Newbridge so that they could attend the function which was held in the purpose built great hall. It was noted that, 'upwards of two hundred fashionables attended the ball' and a long list of male and female members of aristocracy based in both England and Ireland was provided by the newspaper. Among those who attended were Reverend Doctors Robertson and Hogg, Lord and Lady Farnham of Cavan, Lord John Taylor, Sir William Russell, the Louths, Headforts, Tottenhams, Longfields, Mr and Mrs Morant (land agent and his wife), the Forsters from Coolderry, the Leslies etc. One of the most interesting attributes of the report was its detailed description of the interior decor of Lough Fea house itself and how

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[68] Report by John Ynyr Burges on a visit to the Shirley estate in1870 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, T1282/3 pp 52-4); see also introduction to the Shirley papers, p.11.
[69] Ibid.
[70] *Anglo Celt,* 24 Nov. 1848.
[71] Ibid.

it coincided with the image of royalty that the Shirleys stood for, metaphorically speaking, as they were the epicentre of the estate. On the centre of the supper table, there was 'a splendid Epergne . . . composed of the most massive gold and silver; and at either ends a pair of antique candelabra a chaste design and matchless beauty'.[72] The great hall and the conservatory were a spectacular sight, lighted with over 500 small lamps.

The central role that Lough Fea and the Irish estate played in the lives of the Shirley father and son was conveyed, in what was possibly one of the final correspondences between EJS and EPS, just three months prior to EJS' death at Lough Fea in December 1856. EJS spoke of their prosperous journey to Ireland (his final ever journey to Ireland) and that his wife Eliza had not complained much about their trip. The very fine weather in Ireland, he mentioned, was making their stay all the more pleasant. He had recently organised to have a newly laid carpet fitted in the chapel of Lough Fea which, he believed looked well and in doing so, he had decided to extend these improvements towards the nearby Magheracloone church which he organised to have newly painted, while also replacing the carpet and the cushions. In relation to Lough Fea, it was evident that he was busy with an array of matters in relation to maintenance and improvements and his urgent tone was illustrative of a willingness to utilise the time he would spend in Ireland wisely. He had first-hand experience of many issues, which he felt required his attention on the estate, and he was meticulous in all aspects of estate management, especially where it concerned his house and demesne. It could be argued that the following extract from a letter sent to his son in September 1856 illustrates the important differentiations between a semi-absentee landlord and his absentee counterpart.

> I have the entrance of the well covered so that laurels cannot blow into it . . . The painted glass in the drawing room looks well but I have ordered more the same for the other two windows. The building for gas operations took up so much time that the foundations for . . . the stone steps for the same reason are but little adorned . . . All the stone walls and chimneys have been stopped because of other jobs which is why it was taking a long time to construct . . . there has been much papering in several rooms, house-keeper's bedroom, several rooms over the stables, hot water piped to your mother's passage, which she thought so cold in the winter.[73]

The numerous notebooks EPS kept containing various items he wished to have carried out at Lough Fea are also testament to the vast knowledge he had on every aspect the his Irish estate. These included 'paint doors at Lough Fea before next visit, ask about bell to stable clock; weight of it and what other bell there is, get new lamps that burn common oil, hang

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Correspondence between EPS and EJS 25 Sept. 1856.(P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/2/1).

maps up in school, speak to [Sudden] about glass roof for conservatory; get man from Liverpool, mark out new walk in plantation, hang candle-labra in drawing room, get in Dublin a black hat and a thermometer . . . '.[74]

EJS was commended in the *Ordnance Survey Memoirs* for the role he played in initiating development beyond the boundary walls of his estate, in light of the construction and maintenance of roads in and around the parish of Magheracloone, notably the roads leading from Carrickmacross to Shercock, to Kingscourt, to Drumcondra and to Ardee, all of which stretched between half a mile and four miles; 'they are kept in most excellent order, having been hitherto under the superintendence of residing agent of E.J. Shirley Esquire'.[75] With regard to more minor roadways, by-roads and lanes, a recurring feature of the memoirs illustrated that the landlord was a key figure in promoting improvements. Some of these minor road ways it asserted 'are necessary for the comfort and convenience of the parishioners: indeed too much praise cannot be given to the landlords of the soil who have evinced the greatest regard for the comfort of their tenantry . . . '.[76] This opinion filtered through to the discussion on *General Appearance and Scenery,* where it observed that the land in the parish was 'a highly picturesque and well-cultivated surface'.[77] The cottages belonging to the poor, it outlined, 'seem of a better description and more efforts have been made to plant the country and assist nature in giving it a more civilised appearance'.[78]

This constant stream of correspondence conveyed the enormous level of interest EJS displayed on his Irish estate. Whether he was staying at Ettington, visiting Lough Fea or in London on business, he played a very strong role in the upkeep and management of all his estate's affairs. Correspondence between him and his immediate family especially EPS ensured that he was always made aware of exactly what was going on regardless of their focus of attention. His land agents were employed to send him fortnightly reviews of all matters relative to the estate and these were often written at considerable length and recorded minute details. EJS' personal pocket diary entries highlighting issues which may have been perceived as unimportant are also testament to the micro-management system that was in place on his estate and it will be interesting to investigate the areas where his attention was mainly focused and compare those with EPS' style of management. The records indicate that various aspects of Lough Fea house and demesne constantly and intermittently demanded

[74] EJS' personal notebooks, 1839-44 (W.C.R.O., Shirley papers, CR464/39-44).
[75] Day and McWilliams (eds) *The Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland: counties of south Ulster 1834-8*, p. 139.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

maintenance, essential repairs and improvement. Although EJS had instigated much of the preliminary building work at Lough Fea, it was up to EPS to preserve his father's legacy after his death for future generations to come. In 1861 for example, the house-keeper's bedroom was in need of being re-papered, making it much more cleaner and lighter. There was also a move to re-carpet the servant bedrooms because the current carpet was very old and worn. Money was always a primary consideration though, and McMinn suggested the old dining room carpet be transferred to the schoolroom and in turn the old schoolroom carpet would be used in the servant bedrooms.[79]

McMinn sent a series of letters spanning almost a decade to EPS, whose main residence was located in either London or Ettington and for a number of weeks each year at Lough Fea. From the letters it was evident that the house had fallen into a state of disrepair. One letter dated 28 April and presumably in the mid 1860s, James McMinn stated 'I beg to inform you that Martin has papered the little closet and passage leading to Miss Shirley's bedroom. It looks now very much more clean and comfortable and would you sir please to allow the small staircase and water closet cleaning from the bedroom to the schoolroom to be prepared also, it would look much cleaner than it now does, the closet in particular for the paper in it is very bad . . . '. Mc Minn pleaded with his employer in quite a meek or passive tone, as though the work carried out in EPS' home was in some way for McMinn's benefit, 'will you sir also please to allow the down stairs passage walls to be cleaned for they are very dirty indeed, they have not been cleaned for some years . . . '.[80] He concluded by stating that he had carpet cleaning carried out and he believed that EPS would be very pleased with the results.

EPS' love for literature, history and collecting rare literary works would explain why new oak was sourced for erecting new book shelves in the library at Lough Fea. This was not a simple task, the carpenter George Thompson was obliged to write to EPS explaining, 'I got the oak for the new book cases and had it all cut up seasoning but there is not ¼ part of old cut stuff that is required and the new cut would require some time to season before put into work'. [81] He also mentioned the purchase of a new boiler for the chapel, which he would have installed immediately.

A number of invoices were sent to EPS in the latter half of the 1850s and the early 1860s. These indicated not only that he was putting his own personal stamp on the house

[79] McMinn to EPS, 19 Apr. 1861 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/5/1-3).
[80] Ibid., 28 Apr.
[81] Thompson to EPS, 29 May 1865 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/V/Box 14)

and grounds but that it was quite an arduous task sourcing labour and materials to carry out the necessary work. In addition, there was a carpenter employed in 1864 for 29 days to carry out 'various different jobs in castle and stables, putting up and finishing new wardrobes, taking down, fixing and adjusting where water pipes [had] burst, working at new book cases and repairing cottages in Leons'.[82] His daily payment was 3*d.* and for the 29 days work he was paid £4 7*s*. During the same period, there was a mason employed to carry out repairs on a stone wall at the back of the castle and to the interior of the house but the record did not specify what exactly. For 4 days work he received 11*s*. 6*d.* A labourer attending to the stone mason was paid 3*s* for his work. J. Thornton was the building contractor in charge of erecting a garden men's tool-house costing EPS £12. For sawing home-timber, T. Martin charged £2 1*s*. 4*d.* while John McAnnally's [sic] bill for turning bases and tonrels for new book cases was 4*s*. 8*d.* The total paid out on demesne workers' wages on 30 January 1864 was £19 7*s*. 6*d.* and it was signed by George Thompson. The interior maintenance and improvements of Lough Fea house throughout the 1860s was reflected both inside and outside the demesne walls too. A letter dated 29 May 1865 sent to EPS by George Thompson regarding building work taking place in certain parts of the estate, informed EPS of recent progress:

> I beg to let you know that the contractor for the new farm house and offices in the townland of Dromgooset [sic] has begun to build. He says he took the job cheap on expectation of getting stones from the quarries as formerly I applied for him to Mr Morant, he said he would give no liberty whatever but for me write you to know your pleasure on the subject and he would have no objection I beg to state that in the quarry at Lynches which you saw there is a quantity of common rouble stones for common building that might be taken away and the large ones kept as at any time there can be two or three carts of rouble got for one large stones.[83]

There was also some building work going on in the town of Carrickmacross and Thompson notified EPS that 'the roofing and repairs of the three houses in Carrickmax [sic] are going on, one of them is fully roofed and slated'.[84] Again, in this letter there was evidence to suggest that Lough Fea house was subjected to renovations as one of the tower roofs was opened up and the old platform taken up whilst new joists were inserted for lead, which would in turn waterproof the building. There was also reference to work carried out at Lough Fea farm yard by a stone mason, who was 'pointing and repairing all the houses and walls round the farm yard these some weeks past'.[85]

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[82] Ibid., 12 Jul. 1864.
[83] Ibid., 29 May 1865.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.

Grounds keeper of Lough Fea in the 1860s John Pizer wrote to EPS on 15 May 1865 with news pertaining to wildlife on the estate. In particular he discussed controlling the number of deer and rabbits 'the deer are looking remarkably well, 2 dozen has [have] been killed by the bucks and two for soup but none has died from disease since you left. I think there are 95 deer in the park and 3 in the back rocks plantation. There will be from 6 to 10 bucks fit to kill in July or the beginning of August. Do you wish me to kill the fawns early . . . I killed altogether last season 2,434 couple rabbits, there are not many left'.[86] In addition, Pizer, who was very loyal to his employer, requested permission for the use of EPS' pheasant nest to loan it to Bath's grounds keeper. 'The marquis of Bath has a new keeper and they have asked me to give them a pheasants nest but I told them I could not do so without your permission – I should feel very thankful for a new gun as soon as convenient as the locks of the one I have is out of repair'.[87] This highlighted that even the employees of both estates maintained close relations.

The Ordnance Survey maps illustrate that by 1859, there were two wooden bridges located at the north and south of Lough Fea lake as well as a pier adjacent to the boat-house that was shown on the 1835 map. The 1859 map also showed that in the townland of Lossetts on the edge of the demesne, there was a new nursery and a school house erected since 1835. Further developments of the demesne took place over the course of 49 years between 1859 and 1908 as evident in the Ordnance Survey Maps. The number of gate lodges within the demesne also increased. In contrast to the large number of gravel pits, sand pits and areas labelled 'rock' on the 1835 map, three gate lodges were erected within the immediate demesne. The 1808-9 map determined the exact names of these three lodges and by then there were three more; Carrick Lodge, Home Lodge, Sforza Lodge, Lake Lodge, Dublin Lodge and Bracken Lodge. Where a thrashing machine was located on the 1859 map, it was replaced by a saw mill by 1908/9, reflecting EPS' move towards exploiting the demesne's woodlands and the sale of timber. The later map also indicated advancement in agriculture over the half century, revealing that the Shirleys now had a Home Farm in close proximity to the house. There was also a hydraulic ram pumping water to the house, while gas works were also illustrated. The *Irish Times* remarked in 1859 how the Shirleys had embraced the idea of gas lighting on the estate. The headline read 'Progress of gas lighting, County Monaghan', while the remainder of the article outlined 'the nobility and gentry of this county seem to have adopted with considerable

[86] Ibid., 15 May 1865.
[87] Ibid., 26 Jul. 1865.

spirit, the system of home-made gas lighting which has been so successfully introduced into this country by Messrs. Edmundson and Co.; the seat of E.P. Shirley Esq. was the first place in the county Monaghan lighted by this process'.[88] In a letter to his son in September 1856, EJS could not help but express his delight at the recent phenomenon, which was the final major improvement he witnessed prior to his death.

> Though our gas is not quite [completed] yet & in spite of some leakage at first, I am much delighted with it. The light is pure and bright and without any smell where all leakage is stopped it is most agreeable. We are waiting for the lamps for the . . . drawing room. The dining room & library have lamps . . . the great hall looks much the better of all the gas lamps, I have not seen it lighted yet but it was lit for trial before we arrived . . . The chapel also looks well as does the conservatory. In the offices it is much approved & in the passages; we want however two more lights in the kitchen, shortly I shall get McCabe, the pump man to be contracted, it is all very simple & only requires regular care & may be easily learned.[89]

[88] *Irish Times,* 23 Jun. 1859.
[89] EJS to EPS, 26 Sep. 1856 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/2/1)

Chapter One

Evelyn John Shirley

Introduction

This chapter will firstly outline biographical information relating to EJS (1788-1856), considering his personal life, notably his marriage to Eliza Stanhope in 1810 which took place in the same year that his father died and he became heir to the estates at Ettington and Farney. His political career will be analysed especially in relation to Irish politics. This will be followed by a consideration of the socio-economic and political state of nineteenth-century Co. Monaghan and, in a more general way, the province of Ulster, to determine how the Shirley estate compared and contrasted with other such estates in south Ulster and further west. The emergence of secret societies, the prevalence of a majority Irish speaking population, religion, politics and agrarian violence will figure in such a discussion. The economic position of the estate in the early years of the nineteenth century will be examined through the surveys and reports that EJS commissioned to extract information and recommendations as to the best steps to take in terms of management policies for the future running of the estate. EJS' actual pre-Famine management policies will then be examined, with the focus on the most significant audit of the estate which was carried out in 1814. This survey was significant, as it outlined the potential for development on the estate, and essentially acted as a plan for future estate management practices, including the development of local enterprise through the exploitation of natural resources, specifically coal, lime and gypsum. Turf was also very important, but the land agent for the estate in the 1830s and early 40s, Alexander Mitchell, was inextricably linked to the practices and malpractices concerning bogs, a consideration of turf will feature in chapter Two. The 1814 survey and its message of the great potential of the estate's natural resources proved influential in the landlord's decision to take up part-time residence in Ireland and then, in the subsequent decade, to construct Lough Fea house.

In addition, this chapter will examine EJS' political profile, particularly in relation to the controversial 1826 general election. We will consider how he was depicted by the media, and, in turn, how he was perceived by the tenants on his estate. This can clearly be observed via the outcome of the hard fought and well-documented election campaign, which witnessed

Shirley's victory but the defeat of EJS' conservative running mate, and which was followed by the distribution of numerous notices to quit, served on the estate's tenants, all of whom voted contrary to EJS' wishes.

Evelyn John Shirley: personal life and political career

Born 26 April 1788, EJS was the third of fourteen children, but the eldest son. He was baptised at his father's ancestral seat at Lower Ettington in June 1788, where he spent most of his childhood. He received a public school education at Rugby and he also received private tuition. He entered St John's College, Cambridge in 1807 and, three years later, succeeded to the estate's of his father. Also in 1810, he married Miss Eliza Stanhope on the 16 August. She was the only daughter and heiress of Arthur Stanhope Esq. cousin of the 6th earl of Chesterfield. The couple went on to have five sons and two daughters.[1]From then onwards his public career began to take shape and EJS divided his time between Warwickshire, Monaghan and London. Between 1813-14, he served as sheriff of Warwickshire. EJS, as his father had done before him, employed land agents to look after his Irish interests and it was not until 1824, when he agreed to fill the office of county sheriff in Monaghan that he appeared to take more of a hands-on approach with his Irish estate. It is most likely EJS then resided at his land agent's residence in Carrickmacross, while he visited his estate and while he carried out his duties as county sheriff. In 1824 he began to put plans in place to construct an aristocratic residence that would be known as Lough Fea house in the townland of Doohatty, Magheracloone, where he intended to reside over the summer months of each year. He employed the expertise of an English architect, Thomas Rickman, to design an Elizabethan Tudor-Gothic style castle on which no expense would be spared.[2] In McCollum's words, the castle appeared 'on an eminence of gentle slope, overlooking Lough Fea, which is within the demesne, and lies to the south of the castle'.[3] The house (named Lough Fea for obvious reasons) was built entirely of stone quarried on the estate, and its collegiate shape and character was noted from the beginning.[4] The Shirley family's coat of arms were situated over the entrance porch; the principal living rooms, including the library, were centrally located within the house, while the dining-room and drawing-room were located to the rear. The conservatory, with the later addition of the great hall were situated to

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[1] Evelyn Philip Shirley, *Stemmata Shirleiana; The annals of the Shirley family, Lords of nether Etindon in the county of Warwick and of Shirley in the county of Derby* (Westminster, 1873), p.233.
[2] Ibid.
[3] McCollum, *Sketches of the Highlands of Cavan,* p.25.
[4] Ibid.

the right, looking out over Lough Fea, while on the left, the Shirley's private chapel was erected. From 1829 onwards, EJS and his family spent three months of each year in residence at Lough Fea, though the house was not finally completed until 1837. The income he drew from his Irish estate was very large by any standard and formed the major part of his overall income, in the best years it exceeded £20,000, but arrears and other charges significantly reduced net revenues in many years, as will be documented in the coming chapters. By 1841, EJS had extended the house by commissioning the spectacular great hall, which some contemporaries referred to as the 'baronial hall'. The reason for erecting this unusual structure was, it seems, primarily to accommodate functions attended by tenants on the estate and where 'lectures on frugality and industry were [to be] given to . . . tenants favoured with invitations'.[5] The function of the great hall was the subject of great praise in the *Northern Standard* in September 1842 when EJS hosted an evening of Thanksgiving for 141 tradesmen, labourers and other estate employees, some of whom had worked on erecting the great hall while others were employed in the running of the house, on the home-farm and within the demesne.

A 'Memoranda of [the] Lough Fea Establishment' survives, recording details pertaining to estate employees between January 1845 and October 1847. Mrs Simms the housekeeper received £25 per annum and this was given to her by the farm steward William Davidson. According to the Memoranda, the terms of her employment were such that she was 'allowed lodging, fixing candles, soap, vegetables, 2lb butter and 7ltrs of new milk per week.'[6] Mrs Simms left her position at Lough Fea on the 11 April 1848. The house-maid who was not named in this instance was paid £9 per annum. Her board for the week was set at 6*s.* except when the family were at Lough Fea. This meant that once the family were present, there would be enough provisions to sustain the house-maid without her requiring a subsidy.[7] A letter boy was paid 3*s.* per week though he was only required when the family visited Lough Fea. A man was also employed to pump water to the house, cottage and stables and to attend to the stove and he received 6*s.* per week. Another was employed to cut up wood and bring in turf when the family was residing, and he was also paid 6*s.* per week. Hugh Woods was Lough Fea's game-keeper and his wages amounted to £25 per annum and in addition he received a weekly stipend of 7*s.* 6*d.*, while 1lb of butter and a litre of milk per day were

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[5] Patrick J. Duffy, 'Colonial spaces and sites of resistance: landed estates in 19th century Ireland' in Lindsay J. Proudfoot and Michael M. Roche (eds), *[Dis]placing empire renegotiating British colonial geographies* (Hampshire, 2005), p.19.

[6] Memoranda of Lough Fea establishment, Jan.-Oct. 1847 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/H/1).

[7] Ibid.

offered to him as food provisions. The game-keeper could pay for the privilege to shoot on the estate at £5 per annum but for his 'protective clothing' there was a budget of £8 per annum. It was his duty to supply the house with rabbits when the family were at Lough Fea and he also agreed to keep down rabbit numbers.[8] Mr George Sudden, was the 'Clerk of the works'[9] whose 'yearly salary in lieu of all allowances', was a substantial £229 and he paid rent for his house and land. Patrick Martin was the head gardener and he was paid 8*s*. per week. He was recorded as paying £6 rent per quarter for a gate lodge and a garden where he kept a cow. He was also in receipt of 100 'cashes' of turf, and was allowed to keep a pig in lieu of potatoes at £6 per annum. William Dividson was named as the farm steward succeeding Yarwood. He received an annual salary of £50 which would be raised to £60 if he was satisfactory.[10] He was also given £10 worth of potatoes, vegetables, turf, 2lbs butter per week, and 2 litres of skimmed milk and 2 litres sweet milk per day'.[11]Although his wages were to be raised by £10 per annum, EJS ordered Davidson's wages be increased even further to £70. per annum from the 26 January 1849. Considering the period, one of the worst years of the Great Famine, it is interesting to see such a large wage increase. The note issuing the order was signed by George Sudden. Thomas Wight was the blacksmith in the same period on the estate and James Hand was named as the assistant blacksmith. Wage ledgers for the family seat of the Dukes of Manchester at Kimbolton Castle, Cambridgeshire for the years 1860-89 indicate that female servants there were paid between £7 and £24 depending on their ranking.[12] The Shirley estate wage levels also compared well with wages recorded in three other country houses in Ireland over thirty years later. Figures taken from the Clonbrock estate papers, the Inchiquin papers and the Clements papers indicate that on average £47.50 was paid to head housekeeper/cook or £40 to a housekeeper between 1880-95. Information received from *Irish Times* and *Freeman's Journal* for the same period indicate that £30 was the average paid to a 'superior' cook.[13] However as Hearn notes, money was only one aspect of a servant's wage since board, lodging and an allowance of tea, sugar and beer were common forms of remuneration, which indeed was the case for employees on the Shirley

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[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Jill Franklin, 'Troops of Servants: labour and planning in the country house 1840-1914' in *Victorian Studies*, xix , no.2 (Dec., 1975), p.222.
[13] Mona Hearn, *Below Stairs; domestic service remembered in Dublin and beyond, 1880-1922* (Dublin, 1993), p.48.

estate.[14] There were also various other factors which determined wages such as the employer's income, the total number of servants employed, and their age and experience..[15]

The Thanksgiving evening held in honour of employees included food, wine, and outdoor entertainment on the lawns, 'climbing soaped poles, running races in sacks, blind-man's-buff, wheelbarrow races by persons blind-folded.'[16] Music was provided later in the evening by a local blind harpist, Patrick Byrne.[17] A speech made by Mitchell at the function thanked the servants at Lough Fea, 'whose attentions during the whole affair were unremitting', while he directed the most praise to the house steward Mr Yarwood for the 'culinary arrangements, and his evident anxiety to bear the family out in carrying their humane intentions into operation'.[18] Yarwood had as much correspondence with EJS as McMinn had with EPS in the 1860s. The steward was a crucial figure within the demesne. EJS recorded 'odd jobs' that were to be carried out within his Irish demesne in numerous notebooks between 1839-44 and these were then relayed in correspondence to the steward. These included killing rabbits in the garden, initiating the construction of road-ways through the demesne, checking 'noise in my study of water . . . advertise for a master for Corvalley school . . . gap in the hedge on the Kingscourt road . . .'.[19]

For social functions, EJS would request Yarwood to 'order over £40 worth of alcohol including port, wine and claret sherry'. If he was hosting a 'farm dinner', he usually ordered a cheaper sherry.[20] The great hall, and indeed the Shirley father and son team, were criticised in the early 1850s for these agricultural dinners which they hosted for the larger tenants on the estate. This will be documented in chapter three. But the architectural design of the great hall as well as the way it complemented the overall assemblage of buildings at Lough Fea, physically and metaphorically, led to sparkling media coverage, and to recognition of EJS as the largest and most prominent landlord in Monaghan. There were obvious competitive tendencies among the landed gentry in Ireland, not least in the material structures they

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[14] Ibid., p.46.
[15] Ibid.
[16] *Northern Standard*, 17 Sep. 1842.
[17] Born in 1794 on a small farm of about 6 acres in the townland of Greaghlone, Magheracloone on the Shirley estate, Patrick Byrne was the eldest of ten children. Like the vast majority of the population on the estate, Patrick was a Catholic and grew up speaking Irish fluently. However in the years to follow, what seemed like an ordinary young boy, would eventually emerge as having an extraordinary talent. At the very young age of two Patrick developed an illness known as smallpox which was not unusual at the time but there were no treatments available and as a result he lost his sight. In 1820, under the patronage of E. J. Shirley, 26 year old Patrick Byrne entered the Irish Harp Society School for blind boys in Belfast as one of four resident students. After 18 months he graduated with 60 tunes and in recognition of his achievement, the school presented him with a large wire strung Irish harp, made by John Egan, Dublin. Patrick was now ready to embark on an international musical career which would span four decades but first Patrick had to convert to Protestantism in order to perform for Royalty and entertain in the big houses across England and Ireland. On the 8th April 1863 he died in the Louth County Hospital from pneumonia and is buried in Bully's acre Carrickmacross leaving his Irish wire strung harp to the Shirley family.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Evelyn John Shirley, 'private note-books, 1838-44 (W.C.R.O., Shirley papers CR464/39-44).
[20] Ibid.

created and the wealth they outwardly displayed, but of course in politics as well. The Shirleys political opponent in county elections, Lord Rossmore, was reported to have extended his dining-room at Rossmore Park no less than five times in a bid to outshine EJS, but the great hall at Lough Fea always won the contest.[21]

Politics was still hugely important to nearly all members of the county gentry, and to be elected to one of the county seats and represent that county in parliament was a symbol of great prestige and achievement. EJS was politically active both in Monaghan and in Warwickshire South constituency. He sat for Monaghan at Westminster for five years until 1831, and then successfully contested the constituency of Warwickshire South in the elections of 1836, 1837, 1841 and 1847.[22] He saw his son and heir EPS re-take one of the county Monaghan seats in 1841, and the latter succeeded him in the Warwickshire South seat in 1853. Although elections in Monaghan did not alter the every-day lives of the tenantry in any substantial way, tremendous excitement was aroused during election campaigns. From 1824 Monaghan had an Independent Club, 'supported by liberal Protestants, some members of the Catholic clergy, and some of the professional and business people'.[23] The Club made a united decision to support a pro-Emancipation candidate in the run-up to an election; noted Liberals who were members of the landed class in the Monaghan region then included the Leonards, who were absentee landlords from Clones, the Westenras of the Rossmore estate, the Dawsons (who held the Cremorne title). Against them was the Tory interest, the Conservative landlords, led by the Shirleys (though EJS has been described as an English Liberal by some historians), the Leslies, the Lucases, and the Maddens, who were it seems better organised and more careful to ensure that their tenants and likely supporters were on the electoral register.[24] In fact one of the first notable actions taken by EJS when he first came to Ireland was to register tenants on his estate who were eligible to vote. As high-sheriff of Monaghan in 1825, he had given the vote to many Catholic freeholders. Catholics made up the vast majority of the voters, in 1833 for example the ratio of Protestants to Catholics in the parish of Magheracloone was 50:1.[25]

Though a strong candidate in the 1826 general election, some of the charges brought against EJS by his opposition, suggested that he was considered 'an absentee' and therefore a stranger to the county. Others criticised him for the coalition he had formed with Leslie,

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[21] Introduction to the Shirley papers, p.10.
[22] K. Theodore Hoppen, 'Landlords, society and electoral politics in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland' in *Past and Present,* No.75 (May, 1877), p.70.
[23] Livingstone, *The Monaghan story,* p.193.
[24] Ibid., p.194.
[25] Rev. Martin Cahill, 'The 1826 general election in Co. Monaghan' in *Clogher Record,* V (1964), pp161-183

'which brought about two of the most powerful interests in the county, to suppress the freedom and independence of the freeholders'.[26] Charles Powell Leslie's father had voted against the Act of Union in 1800 and died in 1801, allowing his son to take his seat until 1826. For twenty-six years thereafter, Leslie had represented the Tory interest in parliament but in 1826 his fate was to change. In the final days of canvassing, in the lead up to the 1826 general election, much of the focus was centred around Carrickmacross; 'everyone realised that the outcome of the election depended largely on the way the freeholders of the Farney area cast their second vote. The first vote would almost certainly be given to their landlord, Shirley; but how could they choose between Leslie and Westenra?'[27] Henry Robert Westenra's father was William Warner Westenra, second Lord Rossmore, and he was a strong supporter of Catholic Emancipation, though his son found it difficult to agree with his politics. At a meeting in Monaghan in 1812, Henry Robert had vowed to support the Protestant ascendency and again he vowed to back the Tory interest when elected MP for Monaghan in 1818. By 1826 however, Westenra's father and the Catholic Association held a meeting, the outcome of which, it was agreed that Henry Robert would run for election in support of the Catholic cause, and the Association would support him. A large meeting was henceforth organised in Carrickmacross for representatives of the candidates to debate on various issues and appeal to the electorate for support. John Bric, a lawyer speaking for the Catholic Association and in favour of Westenra stated that he would 'defend the Catholic interests if elected to parliament'.[28] Humphrey Evatt, the magistrate and agent for EJS replied that there was not very much difference between the politics of Westenra and Leslie. As the days closed in on the election, EJS made one final attempt to secure votes for Leslie when he wrote a persuasive letter to his tenants requesting their second vote be directed towards Leslie.

> My worthy tenants, freeholders and friends,
> you need no assurance from me that I wish you well and that I am proud of being your landlord. Prove your attachment to me and to your own interest by rallying round me and exerting yourselves to oppose the attempts of your enemies, who are endeavouring to ruin you and your cause by persuading you to give your votes against the wishes of your landlord, circumstanced as he is.
> I am pledged by everything most sacred (and what can be more sacred to me than my honour) to support Col. Leslie to the utmost of power; I call upon every man, who is my friend to give his second vote to Col. Leslie. How can I expect in honour, Col. Leslie's votes, if my friends do not support him - rather than be treated thus by my own tenants. I would throw myself on

[26] Ibid., p.168.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.

> the honourable feelings of the support of my own tenants. I hope my tenants and friends, I may not make this appeal to you in vain.
> I trust that [I] ... may depend on your exertions in our cause and prove that mutual and sincere attachment between tenantry and landlord never was nor never shall be dissolved in Farney.[29]

Westenra had previously voted against Catholic Emancipation, though his father, the second Lord Rossmore was a supporter of the Catholic cause, he had acted as a mediator between his son and the Catholic Association and the result was positive.[30]Westenra's sudden shift, was unsurprisingly questioned. The competition between Leslie and Westenra was fierce, and it was unclear whether the Catholic Association would be able to influence the Farney tenants sufficiently to give their second votes to Westenra against EJS' wishes. Excitement was widespread across the county, EJS was greeted back from England by a dinner hosted by the his tenants. Meanwhile a parade was organised for Westenra on his journey through Castleblayney to Monaghan town. Daniel O'Connell, who was originally against the Association's involvement in the election, wrote to the parish priests of Monaghan asking them to encourage their flocks to oppose Leslie. His request was adhered to, with parish priests publicly urging support for Westenra. Livingstone has outlined how Monaghan town was the centre of immense excitement on 24 June 1826 as the election began. Westenra approached the courthouse where he was followed by hundreds of supporters cheering and clapping him, while the response from the crowd towards Leslie and EJS was quite the opposite. Police struggled to prevent the crowd from attacking them. Shots were subsequently fired by the police, three men were killed, while a number of others were injured. EJS was recorded to have stated, 'thank God I escaped the attack of the mob upon Col. Leslie and myself entering the town'.[31] The results of the election were; EJS 1,889, Westenra 1,502, Leslie 1,240, Tyler 170.[32] According to the list, of the 627 tenants eligible with two votes from the Shirley estate, some 40 per cent gave their vote to EJS, 39 per cent voted to Westenra but only 18% voted as instructed for Leslie, while the remainder of the votes were void.[33]

The inherent organisational skill of the Conservatives and the intervention of the Catholic Association shone through in the election, with rivals EJS and Westenra elected as MPs for county Monaghan and the withdrawal of Leslie. Catholic tenants were now choosing

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[29] Ibid., p.170.
[30] Ibid., p.185.
[31]http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/shirley-evelyn-1788-1856 (Nov.2012.)
[32] Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story,* p.187.
[33] Material relating to local government elections in Co. Monaghan and miscellaneous political affairs,1826-1901(P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/E/1).

to vote for whom they felt would best fight for their cause, not only in Monaghan, but in Waterford, Louth, Armagh and Westmeath. In retaliation however, it was suggested that EJS, as well as other landlords who had supported Leslie, began to evict tenants in arrears and specifically those who had voted for Westenra; 'the eviction notices subsequently served on them earned him [EJS] the long-lasting disgust of the local population'.[34] In the last week of August 1826, the Catholic Association held a local meeting where Bric described the treatment of recalcitrant tenants on EJS' estate, and the Association agreed to donate £150 for the relief of Shirley estate tenants who were affected. It was claimed that:

> the very next week after the election, he [Mr Shirley] and his agents commenced an attack on those very men, who supported him in the election (but not Leslie). Not satisfied with the payment of the accustomed gale of rent, he called on them for a dear or hanging gale, which they never before had been called to pay. He had their cattle impounded and set up for auction.[35]

EJS took his seat in November 1826, voted for the first time in February 1827 and by March he was granted one month sick leave due to ill health. By 1828 he was 'criticized for being an absentee and 'intimidatory' landlord, irregular in his attendance in Parliament and 'completely the reverse of liberal' in his principles; he was thought to be popular only with extreme Protestants. However, he secured an alliance with another Tory, Lord Blayney's son Cadwallader Blayney, and was returned in second place behind him at the general election that summer, after another unruly contest with the now openly pro-Catholic Westenra'.[36] He often abstained from voting either for or against Catholic Emancipation, though he was openly opposed to the principle.

Absenteeism was often used as a tactical approach in politics. In 1829, Westenra wrote a pamphlet entitled, *The case of the forty shilling freeholders of Ireland.* The pamphlet reflected his support for Catholic Emancipation and the pro-tenant stance that he now unashamedly stood for, though a complete turnaround from his previous beliefs. The terminology used in his pamphlet was targeted towards the voter. The manner with which it was written is arguably more telling than the content:

> the alteration which is contemplated will effectually strengthen the interests of my family in the county of Monaghan and the interests of those friends who have always hitherto favoured and honoured me with their confidence; and it will principally and materially affect the freeholders of those gentlemen who have as yet been opposed to me. If you approve of my exertions I shall be amply repaid for the trouble

[34] http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/shirley-evelyn-1788-1856 (Nov.2012)
[35] Cahill, 'The 1826 general election in Co. Monaghan', p.178.
[36] http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/shirley-evelyn-1788-1856.

> which the following pages may have cost me; for even your enemies must admit that your approval cannot be obtained either by bribery or intimidation.[37]

Rossmore continued to appeal to the reader as his potential voter; 'when you have read the observations and statements contained in this little work, I shall leave it to yourselves to decide whether I am or not Your Disinterested Defender and devoted friend'.[38]This cleverly orchestrated piece of writing appealed not only to a local readership on Westenra's north Monaghan estate, but was also aimed towards the tenants on the Bath estate, the Rossmore estate, the Leslie estate and the Shirley estate. Rossmore, like most Irish landlords, was looking for votes in the run up to election campaigns at the height of the Catholic Emancipation agitation, and this pamphlet was an attempt to win the Monaghan electorate over. The pamphlet also characterized absenteeism negatively, which is important. It was the ammunition he used to gain the support of the Catholic electorate. EJS was one of the many semi-absentee landlords in Monaghan, while Westenra, a more fully resident landlord, maintained that absenteeism was not the way to conduct the business of managing an estate. In other words, he was comparing the management of his estate to that of others, condescendingly examining the performance of a landlord like EJS who, he claimed, had a land agent looking after all his affairs; 'no deputy can supply the place of a landlord. It is impossible to expect that the agent can reflect the character of his employer. The thousand little kindnesses which can pass between tenant and landlord are unknown upon an absentee estate'.[39] This was a rather romantic notion of the often times fraught relationship between landlord and tenant. He continued to describe the typical Irish 'peasant', in many respects comparing his loyalty towards his family, his home and his fellow country-man to that of the resident landlords' loyalty to his estate and his tenantry:

> He is a noble sample of a man and a Christian and the more his disposition is studied and known, the more true will this description be found. In his name he is an attached and dutiful son. The Irish peasant is a tenderly affectionate husband; a kind and indulgent husband; the domestic relations of life subsist in their full force and are cherished in their most ample and most amiable extent in his poor mud cabin! The beggar never turns away unrelieved from his door and if he has vices, they are not so much to be attributed to him but as to those who have oppressed him for so many years.[40]

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[37] Quoted in Rev. E. A. D'Alton, *History of Ireland: from the earliest times to the present day, half vol. v, 1782-1879*, p.207.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid., pp 207-8.
[40] Ibid., p.208.

The pamphlet continued with an idealistic description of the Irish tenant: 'the Irish peasant is not the person he is usually described to be, on the late election, threats could not intimidate, gold could not buy him! He is impelled by a sacred love of country to act in opposition to his worldly interests. He pursued his constitutional object in a constitutional and upright manner'.[41] The reference to intimidation and bribery was inferring that these were the actions of other landlords in the region, not least EJS, in his response to the 1826 election.

The Catholics of Monaghan, as elsewhere, placed much emphasis on the importance of Catholic Emancipation which was granted in 1829. Monaghan is often held up for its extremely strong support for the move, the editor of the *Dundalk Democrat* writing in 1854 that 'in no county in Ireland were there stouter hearts in the strife than in the county of Monaghan . . . it was the men of Monaghan who brought matters to that crisis in which the duke of Wellington saw that he must start a civil war or emancipate the Irish millions'.[42] EJS was surprised when news broke that the emancipation bill was to be introduced in 1829; he had been strongly opposed to the 'principle', and had subsequently presented petitions against it in March 1829.[43]

In 1830, Blayney (who originally showed sympathy with the Liberals), Leslie, Lucas, and Corry of Rockcorry presented themselves as possible candidates while Westenra and EJS were the two sitting members, and were also running for seats in the next election. It was a complicated and hard-fought battle with three of the possible candidates, Blayney, EJS and Westenra making it known that they would run independently of each other; Blayney attempted to lobby one of the others in order to secure that all-important second vote. Initially, Blayney made a pact with Westenra, but Westenra was suspicious that Blayney was secretly plotting for the second vote with EJS. Livingstone has claimed that 'three successive directives'[44] were issued to the tenantry on Blayney's estate. The first directed them to give their number two vote to Westenra, while the second one requested them not to vote for Westenra and the third one which, inadvertently meant the same as the second directive, urged them to vote for EJS. Through secret communications and strategic pacts, Blayney's priorities 'turned full circle'.[45] Most importantly though, his manipulation of the situation worked and EJS won the second seat. It was suggested that they were 'returned unopposed,

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story,* p.193.
[43] http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/shirley-evelyn-1788-1856 (Nov. 2012).
[44] Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story,* p.194.
[45] Ibid.

ostensibly in order to preserve the peace of the county'.[46] Presumably, one other important factor, the open ballot, steered tenants to vote as they were told to, and this meant that landlords were quite sure that their nominee would be elected, though it had not worked for EJS in 1826, the threat of eviction for those in arrears being all too prevalent. The open ballot remained steadfast in Ireland until the 1870s.

Even as early as July 1832, EJS' place in parliament was faltering; Blayney and Westenra had collaborated with each other and estimated that they could beat EJS by at least 50 votes, but coming under mounting pressure, EJS resigned 'complaining of a coalition between the two leading interests'.[47] Blayney and Westenra were therefore returned unopposed, while Rossmore secured the lord lieutenancy of Monaghan. Rossmore boasted to the Irish secretary Smith Stanley, that he had 'beaten Mr. Shirley completely out of Monaghan' and deemed him 'a violent opponent, uncompromising'.[48] Outside of Irish politics, EJS was also struggling to maintain his reputation inside political circles. As a friend to the agricultural interest and a defender of the Church of England he was expected to succeed in Warwickshire South at the general election of 1832, but according to Sir George Philips, who pushed him out of the running, EJS had 'abused all those who differed from him, in the most violent and unmeasured terms, and raised such a spirit of hostility against himself, as could not be repressed'.[49]EJS was not elected again as a Conservative until July 1836 but held the seat there until May 1849 when 'he accepted the Chiltern Hundreds', thus allowing him to resign his seat.[50] He was remembered as 'an ultra Tory, opposed to every species of radical innovation and change, a thorough church and state man'.[51]

When EJS died at Lough Fea, his 'tenantry' were reported to have commemorated him. In the 'beautiful, tranquil gardens' of the estate was a cut-through wood known as 'home-wood', which looked as though some of the trees and foliage were felled and shaped, so that a wide passage was left open for the construction of numerous concrete steps leading to the impressive and very resounding 'monumental cross of blue limestone', erected to his memory. It was twenty-seven feet in height and bore the following inscription

> To the Glory of God, and the memory of Evelyn John Shirley, ESQ who departed this life at Lough Fea House on the 31st of December 1856, this cross, the emblem of our salvation is

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[46] http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/shirley-evelyn-1788-1856 25 (Nov. 2012).
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50]http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-information-office/p11.pdf (Nov. 2012).
[51] http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/shirley-evelyn-1788-1856 (Nov. 2012).

> erected by the voluntary contribution of the tenantry of the Shirley estate in grateful remembrance of a kind-hearted landlord who during a period of nearly 50 years did much to improve the condition of his tenantry and by his residence amongst them has bequeathed to his descendants the practical lesson that property has its duties as well as its rights.[52]

The wording on the cross was a poignant expression and, interestingly, was inscribed with the names of tenants who subscribed to it. Many of the names were those of large Protestant landholders. Further evidence of this was witnessed in an address of sympathy sent to his son EPS, which was signed by 564 of the most 'respectable landowners and gentry of the town of Carrickmacross'. They described EJS as 'kind but just, resolute in acting up in his convictions of duty, but not intolerant of others, beneficent, exemplary in every relation of life and sincerely religious'.[53] At his funeral, which took place at Ettington Park on 11 January 1857, the Rev. Richard Morris spoke of the hardships endured in Ireland during the Famine, and how EJS found it difficult to create employment for large numbers given the catastrophic levels of hunger, poverty and unemployment. He referred to employment created in the coal mines, in the lime-stone and free-stone quarries as well as in the gypsum and alabaster works near Lough Fea, as an attempt to alleviate some of the suffering.[54]

Socio-Economic Background

When EJS was heir to the Farney estate in the early nineteenth-century his property and the surrounding areas were benefiting from the diversification into domestic linen manufacture which became a hugely important part of the economy during the Napoleonic wars. Coote's *Statistical survey of the county of Monaghan* (1801) noted the ideal nature of the 'cold and deep clays' for growing flax.[55]The growth of the linen industry had a direct impact on local agriculture as well as the size of farm holdings, which became increasingly small with 'every farmer possessing ever so little land . . . engaged in the linen industry'.[56] According to Coote, the men in the region were 'very industrious, and manufacture is more pursued towards the boarders [sic] of the barony where the land is poor'.[57] Dooley asserts that a weaver and his family could survive on sufficient enough land to yield his annual potato

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[52] Evelyn Philip Shirley, *Lough Fea* (London, 1859).
[53] Evelyn Philip Shirley, 'Memoir of Evelyn John Shirley' A funeral sermon preached on the death of Evelyn John Shirley 1857 (London,1858).
[54] Ibid., see also McDermott, *Gypsum mining and the Shirley estate in south Monaghan,* p.*28.*
[55] Charles Coote, *Statistical survey of the county of Monaghan* (Dublin, 1801), p.44.
[56] Ibid., p.44.
[57] Ibid., p.133.

crop while weaving supplemented his income.[58] But as industrialization progressed in the more advanced regions of Ulster, especially in the neighbourhood of Belfast after the Napoleonic Wars, the rural domestic linen trade in county Monaghan and beyond greatly suffered. As the wars ended the price of coarse linen fell at a time when cattle and pig prices were also in decline. The rapid decline of employment in the linen industry led to severe hardship. Meanwhile in Monaghan and more specifically on the Shirley estate, population continued to increase, as did the subdivision of land which had become very widespread by this stage. The famine of 1816-7 was quite severe locally, with outbreaks of typhus, and this was repeated with the onset of famine again in 1821 which further contributed to an even greater decline in the local linen industry.[59] By the 1840s, mechanised spinning and weaving was firmly established in east Ulster, but local flax cultivation continued, although it was clearly now far less important. Textile handcrafts were not entirely gone. The 1841 census records reveal that 24,687 women and 3,400 men were engaged in manufacturing in Monaghan, albeit in areas concentrated central and west of the county, but their earnings were presumably far smaller than thirty years previously. These figures had diminished a decade later with approximately 3,500 people employed by the industry in Monaghan.[60] One of EJS' tenants in 1844, Arthur Mc Daniel, was noted as a weaver by occupation, and he and his son earned 7*d.* per day putting the web, the warp and the spooling together. He then paid his rent out of this income.[61]

The use of the Irish language in a region can be used as a indicator of economic advance or the lack thereof. Dooley has emphasised how for example the English language 'had made rapid progress particularly in areas most affected by commercialisation and modernisation such as Dundalk, county Louth where in 1816, the Church of Ireland rector wrote that "it is gratifying to a person attached to British policy, to have it in his power to say, that the English language is gaining ground fast; and that it is very generally spoken and taught'".[62] Garret FitzGerald's estimates of the minimum percentage of Irish speaking by baronies indicate that the barony of Farney had the highest percentage when compared with six others in the neighbouring counties between Louth, Meath and Armagh. Farney possessed the highest percentage for the cohort of the population born in the decade 1771-81 with 79 per cent of them bilingual in 1851, and this only decreased marginally in the following

[58] Terence Dooley, *The murders at Wildgoose lodge* (Dublin, 2007), p.81.
[59] Livingstone, *The Monaghan story,* p.177.
[60] Patrick Duffy, 'The Famine in County Monaghan' in Christine Kinealy and Trevor Parkhill (eds) *The Famine In Ulster* (Belfast, 1997) p.180.
[61] Devon Commission, p.924.
[62] Dooley, *The Murders at Wildgoose lodge,* p.59.

cohorts, with 74 per cent for the 1801-11 cohort, and 73 per cent for the following one. When compared with statistics for Ardee which is situated under 20km from Carrickmacross, the differences are striking (63 per cent there in the decade 1771-81, 28 per cent in the 1811-21 cohort speaking Irish).[63] The existence of an Irish-speaking majority in the barony cannot only be linked to the introverted character of commercial life and cultural activity, but it may also be linked to the emergence of a strong secret society presence in the region as has been documented in Dooley's *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge* in 1816. The lodge was the scene of a gruesome attack and subsequent murder of an entire Catholic family of 8, the head of which was Edward Lynch a farmer and weaver. The lodge was located less than one mile from the Monaghan border in county Louth and was carried out by 100 or more so called Ribbonmen.[64] Another example used by Dooley was the trial which appeared at the Monaghan assizes in July 1820 when Edward Slaven, Thomas Muckeins and Patrick Marron were tried for conspiring to murder Sir Harcourt Lees (1776-1852) who had gained a reputation as a prolific pamphleteer and a notorious anti-emancipationist.[65] He lived part of the year in Drummoney Glebe on the Louth side of the south Monaghan border and his attempts at proselytising in the locality had increasingly irritated the local Catholic majority. The trial heard from John Milton, who was a soldier stationed in Carrickmacross at the time and who happened to be in a public house where the three conspirators were plotting the events. He swore that 'he found the three accused talking there in Irish. When they began to talk in English he overheard Muckeins say "Sir Harcourt Lees is a d___d [sic] bad man . . . "[66]

In the late eighteenth century and in the lead-up to Catholic Emancipation life was unsettled in Monaghan. Various secret societies such as the Peep O' Day Boys, the precursor group to the Orange Order had emerged before 1790 and there was recurring violence in and after the 1790s. The second decade of the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of a Peace Preservation Force which patrolled the south Monaghan-north Louth regions, accompanied by a number of Louth landlords including Fortescue and Shiels.[67] On one occasion they were alerted to a Ribbon meeting which took place in Carrickmacross. The town, as Dooley points out, became a hub in the organisation of a Ribbon network. There

[63] Garret FitzGerald, 'Estimates for baronies of minimum level of Irish-speaking amongst successive decennial cohorts: 1771-1781 to 1861-1871' in *Royal Irish Academy* lxxxiv (1984), pp131- 4; see also Dooley, *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge,* p.60.
[64] Dooley, *The Murders at Wildgoose lodge*, p.17.
[65] Ibid., pp 40-3
[66] Ibid., p.43.
[67] Ibid.

appears to have been links between this and formal political activity, with a 'growing awareness of the Catholic question . . . that traditional agrarian grievances were entangling with political and sectarian jealousies'.[68]Catholic and Protestant relations were strained in the process, not least in Carrickmacross where the local population was divided along religious lines and where there was a large Protestant commercial population. In the mid-1830s 93 per cent of the inhabitants of the Shirley estate were Catholic, 4 per cent were Church of Ireland and 2 per cent were Presbyterian, proportions utterly different from estates in the northern half of the county.[69] One report in 1813 had maintained that now 'the Catholics refuse to deal with Protestant shopkeepers . . . the principal production is hats which are made by Protestants. On the last fair day, very few hats were purchased but they were knocked off the stands and trampled in the mud.'[70] Whether that reflected the political tensions of the moment or the power of the Ribbon societies is not clear. The differences between the Ribbonmen and the agrarian secret societies would come to light later on. Secret agrarian societies operating in the south Monaghan and north Louth regions did not discriminate religiously in their choice of victim. The family murdered at Wildgoose lodge were Catholic landholders.

The Orange Order became increasingly evident in the Farney region in the early nineteenth-century, and many Protestant magistrates became members, here as elsewhere across south Ulster. July celebrations took place annually, organized by the local lodges.[71] The more conservative landed gentry encouraged the growth of the movement, and it is not surprising to find that EJS' land agent Mitchell was one of the county representatives at a Grand Lodge of Ireland meeting in 1817. By the 1830s there were 35 Orange lodges in county Monaghan.[72] Political clubs on the opposing side were of a more informal nature, the Molly Maguires and the Ribbonmen, who for much of the first half of the nineteenth-century continued to carry out violent agrarian crimes against landlords and their officials in particular. They used tactics such as obstructionism, mobilizing locals to turn out in large numbers against their landlord's representatives when notices to quit or eviction notices were attempted to be served.

The *Northern Standard* reported in the 1840s that, 'due to all this disruption by the Molly Maguires, it was becoming increasingly impossible for the bailiffs, process servers, the

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[68] Ibid., p.104.
[69] *First report of the commission of public instruction, Ireland*, p. 9a, H.C. 1835, xxxiii.
[70] Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story*, pp181-2.
[71] Ibid., p.178.
[72] Ibid.

keepers and the drivers to operate'.[73] One month after the incident dubbed 'The Battle of Magheracloone', local members of the Molly Maguires struck out. According to Steuart Trench 'they used suddenly to surprise the unfortunate grippers, keepers, or process-servers, and either duck them in bog-holes or beat them in the most unmerciful manner, so that the "Molly Maguires" became the terror of all our officials'.[74] On the Shirley estate they agitated against charges when defaulting tenants were made to pay when their cattle were impounded (the fee was set at 2*s.* 6*d.* per day), sometimes for 14 days consecutively. This battle over pounding was more common than the seizure of crops and was distressing for tenants and an indication as to why many supported local secret societies.[75] Estate officials were often the particular target of secret societies, as was the case on the Shirley estate in July 1843, when the *Northern Standard* reported that

> on Friday last, five men dressed in female attire attacked the house of one of Mr Shirley's bog bailiffs named Brian M'Enaney [the same bailiff involved in the Magheracloone riot]. It appears that the outrages committed in that neighbourhood lately have been perpetuated by men in the garb of women and are known by the appellation of "the girls". Those fellows were seen approaching the field in which M'Enaney was working, by his son who give the alarm and the father had just time to reach the house and inform his wife when they rushed to the door. The wife sprang out to keep them off, while M'Enaney closed the door and barred it with a log of wood.[76]

The Molly Maguires made an attempt to break down the door with stones, but ceased once a young man (a nephew of McEnaney's) who had remained hidden in the field came on the scene in an attempt to rescue his uncle. The group of men became afraid and tried to make a swift escape but were pursued by McEnaney's nephew for a short time until he was intercepted along the road by a another group of persons, obliging him to give up the pursuit. Although one of the culprits was put into custody, 'the girls' escaped.[77]

According to Thomas Foster, who recorded his personal experiences when he visited Ireland in 1845-46, the Molly Maguires as a movement were concentrated in the counties Cavan, Longford and Leitrim.[78] The geographical proximity of Farney to the borders of Cavan resulted in their strong presence on the Shirley estate. The disturbances of the early 1840s were still prevalent in the early 1850s in the borderlands of south Monaghan, east Cavan, north Louth, south Armagh and north Meath and, according to Dooley, 'the atrocities

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[73] *Northern Standard,* 26 Feb. 1849.
[74] Trench, *Realities of Irish Life,* p.82
[75] The Devon Commission, Charles Mc Mahon.
[76] *Northern Standard,* 29 Jul. 1843.
[77] Ibid.
[78] T.C. Foster, *Letters on the condition of the people of Ireland* (London, 1847), p. 20.

in the years 1849-52 were given special consideration in government enquiries'.[79] The secret societies operating on what Dooley refers to as 'the notorious Ribbon belt'[80] continued to be a threat to the lives of prominent employees such as bailiffs and land agents. In an article published in the Liberal *Dundalk Democrat* on 4 February 1850, the widespread hatred of EJS' team of estate officials and the consequences that occurred as a result were highlighted. The 'crow bar brigade' as the article referred to them, were responsible for the seizure of crops and stock of tenants in arrears, and they were employed to carry out evictions. The report claimed that 'on Monday night last, a number of persons visited the house of Owen McCabe, who lives in Cornassane [Cornassanagh, a townland in the parish of Corduff] on the Shirley estate, and abused him in a dreadful manner. Both the legs of the unfortunate were broken, and he was otherwise severely injured. McCabe, we understand was employed as a bailiff on the estate'.[81] Then in May of the same year R.L. Mauleverer, an agent for a number of estates situated in south Armagh, was murdered in Crossmaglen.[82] In December of the following year, Thomas Bateson, a magistrate and land agent for the Templeton estate in north Monaghan was murdered in Castleblayney. He was the victim of an attack which took place in Rule's hotel, which was described as his 'usual place of residence'.[83] There was particular public shock at his murder. According to one witness, Patrick Howley, a stipendiary magistrate from Carrickmacross, on the day Bateson was attacked he had an altercation with a tenant over the loss of a tenancy. The tenant had come to the hotel to plead with Bateson, and it was alleged that Bateson replied, 'so help me God, you shall never get it'. Howely opined that perhaps it was this expression that 'sealed his doom'.[84] There was also an attempt on Steuart Trench's life when he took over the management of the Bath estate in 1849 (which he documented in *Realities of Irish Life).*

The other side of the story is caught in a document in the Shirley archive which records the men's wages associated with executing ejectment decrees and the pulling down of roofs of houses. For work carried out over the five days between the 3 and the 8 September 1849, eighteen men were employed, most of them for only two days, at a rate of 1*s*. 6*d*. per

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[79] Dooley, *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge,* p.49. also *A return of the number of murders, waylayings, assaults, threatening notices, incendiary fires and other crimes of an agrarian character, reported by the constabulary within the counties of Louth, Armagh and Monaghan, since the 1sr January 1849; distinguishing by name the persons murdered and waylaid; also, stating the numbers arrested for each offence; whether informations have been sworn in the case, and the result of any trial of the same. HC 1852, xlvii.*

[80] Dooley, *The murders at Wildgoose lodge,* p. 49.

[81] *Northern Standard,* 4 Feb. 1850.

[82] Ibid.

[83] Kevin McMahon, 'Agrarian disturbances around Crossmaglen, 1835-1855: Part VII' in *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*, xiii (1989), pp 167-8.

[84] Ibid.

day. The total cost to the estate of the work was £2 12*s*. 6*d*. for the week. There was it seems no difficulty in recruiting men for such work.[85] In consequence local secret societies continued to operate throughout the 1850s. They were known under various names which often depended on their geographical location.

Vaughan has contended that the meaning of Ribbonism was always ambiguous, at different times meaning 'murderous conspiracies among tenants, unregistered benefit societies of dubious antecedents, and the Catholic equivalent of the Orange Order'.[86] He has also challenged the stereotyped images portrayed by the constabulary in their reports as well as questioning the genuineness of William Steuart Trench's depiction of Ribbonism, especially his description of the Ribbon trial in Monaghan, stating that Trench's main source was one Thornton, whose revelations were not made in court but in Monaghan gaol 'just before he was spirited away by the authorities to begin a new life'. As Vaughan added, there is no way of proving whether Thornton's story was truthful.[87] According to Trench, 'the main object of the Ribbon Society was to prevent any landlord, under any circumstances whatever, from depriving a tenant of his land'. It was not that simple.[88]

Shirley Estate Land Survey 1814

A survey of the Irish estate was carried out at the request of EJS in 1814 by the Warwick surveyor Henry Landor. The survey encompassed information pertaining to 'fine red loam soil', 'frequency of flooding' and 'lime-stone districts' on the estate, and it was not dissimilar to Coote's *Statistical Survey of County Monaghan* in 1801. It was not only a survey of the region, it was also a recommendation of the next steps that should be taken in order for EJS and his tenants to reap benefit and profit from the estate's land. This was a very important document, which is highly worthy of analysis. It is interesting to see as the nineteenth-century progressed how much of Landor's advice was actually considered and how many, if any, of his recommendations were implemented.

In terms of fencing on the estate and in the surrounding areas, it was 'remarkably bad, composed of loose stones, serving rather as boundary marks than for protection from Cattle & trespass; but in the neighbourhood of Carrickmacross, where Quicksets have been planted

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[85] Ibid.
[86] Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants*, p.103.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Trench, *Realities of Irish life,* p.48

in many places the Goats have destroyed them or prevented growth'.[89] There was not very much reference to drainage in the survey, however it listed out some of the townlands that had a tendency to flood and therefore should be used for grass and not for tillage. The soil, he ascertained 'is generally cold & in some few parts requires draining, but produces Oats, Wheat and Potatoes, is suitable for Beans and if well managed would grow good clover and Rye grass. Quickset hedges would thrive well and any shelter would be valuable to the district'.[90]

One of the strongest recommendations the survey made was the necessity to re-examine the estate's tenants and in many cases, it reported that there was now no alternative but to evict tenants in a bid to make way for widespread better quality farming and agricultural practices, echoing earlier reports by other surveyors. 'It is not profitable to make the best rental of the Estate without entirely sweeping off the present Population and Replacing it by real farmers but to do an essential Service to the Proprietor and Community, an entire change of System should take place and be gradually extended'.[91] Even though the survey offered possible alternative positions of employment for the proposed evictees in the coal mines on the estate, should coal be discovered, or in the construction of roads across the estate. In realistic terms what it was recommending was, overall, a mammoth task and one which would create for EJS a ferocious reputation after only four years into his reign as landlord. Landor recommended the issuing of 21 year leases, 'originally intended to be granted that no disputes may arise at the expiration of such term in case any of the Tenants should be removed', but for the remainder of his report Landor was criticising the mismanagement of the estate in terms of haphazard land holdings and farm boundaries. He noted that should a dispute arise (the tenant refusing to quit) without a lawful contract, in other words a lease, then the difficulties associated with settling the dispute would have damaging consequences. The survey strongly conveyed a message that leases were there to protect the landlord and his assets and to disable any actions by unwanted tenants which might jeopardise the landlord's position.

> It is desirable not to incumber a Lease with clauses and Restrictions that are not intended to be, or cannot be enforced [sic]: if a tenant can break one Covenant without blame or punishment, not the most essential are secure, it would ruin an Irish Tenant to Restrict him/as by the leases was intended to a regular system of Husbandry.

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[89] Copy of Mr Landor's remarks on the Shirley estate, 1814 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/S/14); see also Patrick J. Duffy, 'Remarks on viewing the estate of John Shirley esquire situate at Carrickmacross, in the Barony of Farney, in the County of Monaghan, Ireland' in *Clogher Record*, xii (1987), p.301.
[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.

Although Landor's report was carefully constructed and was highly critical of the estate's management policies in the early nineteenth-century he was nevertheless ruthless in his findings, protective of the estate and its leadership at every point. He found that if the estate issued 21 year leases which were cleverly worded, no tenant would have enough 'capital to accomplish so desirable an end', in other words to finance court proceedings for example but 'to manage the farm according to the best course of Husbandry for the mutual advantage of the Landlord & Tenant and without deteriorating the land'. [92]

To conclude, the survey issued five important points of advice to EJS, pertaining to the future leasing of land on his estate. What came to the forefront as specific issues of importance were subdivision among tenant families, more vigilance with regard to turf cutting and tighter restrictions to be put in place in terms of selling lime, the encouragement of quickset planting, which in turn would encourage the advance of fencing. Five concluding points cement the key themes and most important pieces of information found in the survey. The first was directed towards the necessity of bringing subdivision to an abrupt end. In relation to letting a farm, the deceased may leave wishes for the tenant-right to his widow or one of his sons (or children) but the land should 'not be divisible amongst several' heirs. Secondly, turf cutting practices needed to be regulated so that tenants would begin cutting turf 'by measure', thus preventing waste while encouraging the consumption of coal'.[93] The third point referred to the need to preserve the estate's lime supply by forbidding tenants of limestone land from selling the lime. If coal was to be found on the estate then lime-kilns should be established by EJS and let out 'compelling the tenant to consume coal and not turf. If the existence of lime was strong enough to justify the erection of lime kilns on EJS's land, then the tenants should be allowed to purchase lime at a cheaper rate than strangers. The fourth point indicated the need of preserving and protecting some of the best land on the estate i.e. meadowland, and Landor advised EJS to place a reserve rent of '£50 an acre for meadow Land/such to be specified in the leases/ that sho'd [be enforced if it] be broken up or tilled'.[94] Finally, the importance of enforcing the planting and protection of quicksets was emphasised as well. In an end note, EJS was advised not to grant leases for land on the edge of Carrickmacross town for town-parks. If leases were to be granted, Landor advised that ten-year leases but no longer were sufficient there. The reason for this he indicated was that 'there

[92] Ibid., p.302.
[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.

is no money required to be expended thereon beyond good Husbandry and the Fences . . . and as the Town encreases [sic] Rents sho'd [sic] be raised, which in ten years they would bear'.[95]

Natural Resources and Enterprise

In the 1820s, there was a move towards the exploitation of natural resources on the Farney estate to help improve and maintain agriculture, which coincided with the advice issued in Landor's 1814 survey. Lime was to be spread on the land as a fertiliser and quicksets[96] were to be planted across the estate to provide fencing. EJS's establishment of enterprise and business in the region, utilising natural resources such as coal and gypsum was also important. His term as landlord for almost sixty years saw innovative and often controversial methods introduced by his various land agents to ensure that the estate was run as efficiently as possible.

Barley for malting, pigs and spun linen yarn were the most common types of produce brought to market in Carrickmacross according to Coote's *Statistical Survey* of 1801. O'Mearáin has listed butter, fowl, eggs, cattle, horses, sheep, apples, frieze cloth, wool and yarn.[97] Only small quantities of flax were sold locally as the linen industry in Farney never fully developed though attempts were made by George Shirley to encourage it. Linen was more likely to be produced in north Monaghan, and it was demand from the northern baronies for provisions that helped boost Farney's economy during the wars. Monaghan town then and thereafter was at the centre of the county's linen and pig industry. Because it was situated closer to Belfast, pigs were sold there to northern pig dealers. The market rights in Carrickmacross were shared equally between Bath and Shirley and they extracted a toll from all stall holders on market days. Tolls were calculated in a complex manner which must have been difficult to supervise. A brogue maker was charged 2*d.* while 4*d.* was charged for every horse and mare sold, 2*d.* for bringing a dozen of sheep skins to market and not surprisingly 6*d.* was the toll for a beer or ale cabin. It was likely that on market days, alcohol consumption soared due to the large number of people coming to the town, thus the toll for a beer cabin was higher than the others. There was a general market on Thursdays, while the corn market was every Wednesday and Saturday. There were large-scale markets held on one particular day during May, July, September, November and December. Those held in May and

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[95] Ibid., pp 302-3

[96] Known in modern terms as a white-thorn quick, grown from the haw which is the fruit of the white-thorn bush. These are still widely used in farming circles today as hedgerows.

[97] The prices for tolls were set c.1790-1800 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/A/4).

December were the largest.[98]Pigs were bought and sold in huge numbers as were cattle, but to a lesser degree, and because the town was laid out as it were, with a long wide main street, it was ideal for open markets.

Coote reported that individual farm holdings on the Shirley estate averaged six acres while those on the Bath estate averaged approximately ten. The region was almost entirely in tillage with no green food cultivation. In terms of rich woodland as a natural resource on the Shirley estate, masses of oak and fir trees grew primarily within the demesne walls, which McDermott suggests may have been 'used in the mine shafts and industrial buildings'.[99] Clay fences acted as boundaries between holdings and as fencing, providing some drainage around farm holdings. The Ordnance Survey Memoirs concur that there were small patches of hazel within the demesne 'but insignificant as to size'[100]

The manufacture of alcohol was very important for the home economy in the Farney region. There were two distilleries, one on Bath's side of the street and one on EJS's. The distillery on Bath's estate belonged to James Gartland but it was originally the property of the Carolans in the 1780s. It was sold to Gartland in 1822, and he was the proprietor of the second distillery in the town which was located on the Shercock road on the outskirts of Carrickmacross (on EJS' estate). With years of prior experience in the distilling industry, Gartland made vast improvements to the newly purchased distillery, (including extending the premises) which was located just off Bath street (now Farney street). In the 1820s, it was claimed that Gartland's distillery, brewery and maltings employed 'upwards of 300 families' (which seems an exaggeration), and according to Lewis' *Topographical dictionary* (1837), the brewery alone employed one hundred men, bringing work to tenants of both estates. However by 1846 the distillery (no brewery now) employed no more than 'upwards of sixty'. However Livingstone argues that the distillery continued to contribute significantly to employment within the town until around 1859 when it ceased operations.[101]

Carrickmacross lace was one of the region's smaller cottage industries but it was unique. In 1816, the wife of a rector based in the townland of Donaghamoyne, on Bath's estate, visited Italy and fell in love with the lace craft there. Livingstone asserted that this particular method of lace making originated in Florence by Botticelli. Mrs Grey Porter bought a piece of appliqué lace and brought it back to Ireland, as a model for her sewing maid, Ann Steadman. A makeshift lace making school was set up in an out-house on a farm

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[98] http://www.libraryireland.com/topog/C/Carrickmacross-Farney-Monaghan.php (Jun. 2012).
[99] McDermott, *Gypsum mining and the Shirley estate in south Monaghan,* p.16.
[100] Day and McWilliams (eds) *Ordinance Survey Memoirs of Ireland,* p.137.
[101] http://www.libraryireland.com/topog/C/Carrickmacross-Farney-Monaghan.php (Aug.2012)

and it was not long before it generated the attention of large numbers of women. A more up-to-date purpose-built school was erected soon after in Cullaville, county Armagh, which is located just over 10 km from Carrickmacross. This new local home-grown cottage industry steadily developed and it was an important source of income for families in the locality. Unfortunately, with the onset of Famine and the over-production of lace products, it fell into decline. However the Bath and Shirley land agents played a major role in rejuvenating lace making in the aftermath of the Famine. Tristram Kennedy representing Bath and George Morant representing EJS recognised the importance of the lace from an economic perspective, and Kennedy was successful in securing a £100 grant from the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Clarendon 'to train young girls in the manufacture of lace, and with the help of George Morant another school was provided. Kennedy was in Belgium and brought home a new kind of guipure lace, the design of which was traced on a cambric foundation'.[102] The Sisters of St Louis later encouraged young girls to learn the craft and they are credited with playing a major part in its continued success.

Coal; In the early 1800s, the existence of a large deposit of gypsum, a natural occurring form of calcium sulphate, was detected in the Knocknacran area of Magheracloone, which formed part of the Shirley estate. EJS employed the services of the Royal Irish Mining Company to investigate the area between 1814 and 1819 in pursuit of coal. He spent some £1,200 of his estimated £13,500 annual rental income accrued in so doing.[103] Afterwards, EJS invited Richard Griffith to carry out a survey of the area to find out exactly what lay below the surface. The survey detected the presence of coal bearing rock in an eleven-by three-mile area. Iron-stone otherwise known as iron ore, 'fire clay "of excellent quality" and an earth "richly impregnated with alum". . .[and]. . . sulphate of lime' were detected.[104]This is, according to McDermott, the earliest known reference to gypsum on the estate and it explains EJS' abiding interest in exploiting the natural resources the estate had to offer. However, EJS with his Warwickshire background was initially much more interested in the presence of coal than in gypsum. One of the earliest 21 year leases was drafted to the mining company in 1825, but it seems that protecting the rental income of the overall estate was not to be jeopardized. EJS never lost sight of the fact that the agricultural income from his Irish estate would always be more lucrative that any colliery pursuit.

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[102] Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story,* p.527.
[103] McDermott, *Gypsum mining and the Shirley estate in south Monaghan,* pp 14-5.
[104] Ibid., p.15.

In legal terms, the Royal Irish Mining Company were EJS' tenants and they acquired certain rights as well as responsibilities to the land, examples of which were that the mining company were allowed 'full and free liberty with horses, carts and carriages . . . as lessors have a right to do'.[105] Occupying tenants had to give their consent to the mining company to proceed with their activities but there were incentives encouraging tenants to do so. Compensation was provided to any tenant who may have incurred loss or damage as a direct consequence of mining activities. There was also the possibility that local employment might arise out of the mining pursuits and the estate tenants did not wish to interfere with such a positive prospect. The Ulster Custom otherwise known as 'Tenant Right' appears to have been uniformly practiced on the Shirley estate. This recognised that the tenant may have acquired an interest in the property he rented through improvements.[106] According to the *Anglo Celt* in 1850, Tenant Right could provide 'beyond £20 to the out-going tenant . . . to this day he [EJS] maintains it and glories in the fact that he always allowed his tenants to sell their interest in their farms, subject only to the wise precaution that a good tenant going out - should, in justice to his landlord, leave a decent and solvent tenant in place. With this understanding, Shirley allowed his tenants to sell'.[107]According to the *Oxford Companion to Irish History*, 'the nature of this interest was itself ambiguous. It was commonly thought to include not only the value of any improvements carried out by the tenant, but also the difference between the competitive market rent and the lower "fair" rent he actually paid'.[108] This interest was something the tenant could dispose of when he vacated his farm, as distinct from being evicted.[109]It is therefore possible that the idea of financial compensation as a result of mining on the estate may have stemmed from the practice employed by the 'Ulster Custom'. However, tenants on the estate did not possess any real incentive to improve their holdings either with financial input or labour, as tenants had diminutive security of tenure. The majority of leases were for 21 years and there were no guarantees that once the lease period had expired, tenants would not be hit with increased rents or that their land would not be transferred to a preferred tenant. In a situation where the land was valued enough to allow the tenant become a 40*s*. freeholder, the tenant would further be expected to support his landlord and his landlord's nominee at the open ballot elections or face the consequences, if he chose not to comply. The Royal Irish Mining Company had further obligations: as the

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[105] Ibid., p.18.
[106] Ibid., p.17.
[107] *Anglo Celt,* 28 Nov. 1850.
[108] S.J. Connolly (ed.), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.569.
[109] McDermott, *Gypsum mining and the Shirley estate*, p.17.

terms of their lease agreement stated they were responsible for restoring the land, ensuring it was 'good and tenantable so that it would be good for agriculture and pasture', meanwhile 'gates, stiles, hedges, ditches etc' were to be kept in 'good tenantable order' as to be ready for re-letting should the mining abruptly cease operations.[110]

Coal was produced after five months of the start of mining operations and it was sold to the locals at 18*s.* per ton as opposed to 23*s.* usually paid for imported coal. Although demand was not initially high in the domestic market, in Carrickmacross the distilleries and the brewery provided substantial custom.[111] The Mining Company however, encountered some difficulties within the first year of production. The first annual report claimed that the company had problems in 'recruiting personnel to man "the minor departments of the works", in addition there was also the "impossibility of providing tools and machinery in this country"'.[112] The first draft mining-lease to the Royal Irish Mining Company was drawn up in January 1825, after EJS had legally investigated all routes that would protect his interests in the transaction and all those thereafter.[113] The company's third report stated that the mine company's agent Captain William Gourley had overestimated the levels and thickness of coal on the estate and that the company had 'needlessly sunk a shaft to a depth of 87 feet at great expense'.[114] This was a considerable loss to the company, and coupled with the difficulty in adequate mining staff and the ease of availability of English and Scotch coal it meant that they had no alternative but to reduce prices further. Their best quality coal was now selling at 14*s.* per ton, but there was yet another obstacle in the way of success, and that was turf. By the end of the second decade of the nineteenth-century however, turf posed the least problem for the Royal Irish Mining Company. By 1827, EJS was not charging the company any rent to encourage them to exhaust every possible avenue in the search for coal. In 1828, Evatt made an agreement with the company allowing them to freely avail of the 'newly found' gypsum minerals if they continued to search for coal.[115]Terms and conditions outlined by EJS stipulated that should he require it, he would be sold the finest quality gypsum at 10*s.* per ton, but the deal was short lived as the company withdrew from mining works entirely owing to a absence of coal in July 1828.[116]

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[110] Ibid., p.18.
[111] Ibid., p.20.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid., p.15.
[114] Ibid., p.20.
[115] Ibid., p.21.
[116] Ibid., p.21.

Gypsum: In terms of mining, EJS exhausted every avenue in the search for coal. It was not surprising, therefore, that he was not immediately interested in the large mineral deposits detected instead, and the fact that he allowed the Royal Irish Mining Company extract the deposits freely for a term is proof of his indifference. That was to change by the 1830s as he gradually became interested in the mineral as a means of extending his fortune.[117]

The first invoice for gypsum according to McDermott was issued in September 1835 with the company privately owned and managed by the Shirley family. According to McDermott the trade description 'Alabaster and Gypsum Works' appeared on an early invoice of the 1840s. This document indicated that Gypsum was an important raw material in the building industry, principally used in the 'manufacture of plaster and plaster boards and as a retarder in Portland cement'. Furthermore, it outlined that 'pre-fabricated plaster products are now the greatest single consumer of the mineral'.[118] The business venture mirrored one similar in the UK and it had all the characteristics of a future success, but by 1843 EJS decided to lease the mining ground once again. The tenant in this case was George Butler of Pembrey, Carmarthenshire. The lease related to a holding of 317 acres, in the townland of Knocknacran, Magheracloone.[119] Butler intended to spend money on increased man-power instead of purchasing an expensive steam engine and he highlighted that this would benefit the tenantry of the estate in terms of employment. The lack of a railway system in Carrickmacross at this time posed problems with the closest station being in Dundalk, therefore it was expensive to import the coal required to operate a steam engine. One of the terms of the lease however was that Butler would supply a '40 horse-power steam engine' but he repeatedly rejected this clause.[120]As an alternative, he pledged to employ '15 men for at least 250 days per year and he offered to also employ "a few boys and women if they work as they do here"' [i.e., in the coalmines in Wales].'[121]

Similar legalities associated with previous leases were threaded into the newly drawn up lease, one of which included compensating tenants affected by the works. There were disagreements with regard to the length of the lease though. Butler wanted a 60 year lease but EJS was advised by his legal adviser, Gibson that a 21 year lease would affect 'more efficient working of the deposits. Therefore his assertion was that "if alabaster pits be worked at all

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[117] Ibid., p.13.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid., p.23.
[120] Ibid.,p.24.
[121] Ibid.

they would not last longer than twenty-one years'"[122] Butler requested an advance of £500 'in return for agreement to royalties of between one eighth and one fifth of produce or yield'. Gibson advised EJS to loan Butler the money instead, at 6 per cent, and thereby he would avoid compromising his own position; 'the royalty issue was settled at one eighth, to be paid in alabaster or cash, with a surface rent of 16*s*. per acre'.[123] Butler eventually agreed to the terms of the lease but with the condition that the contract could be broken 'in case of acts of God; the Queen's enemies; rebellion; [and] riots or combination of workmen'[124]

In a letter to his son EPS, EJS expressed relief and happiness at the business deal; 'I am happy to say, I believe we are soon likely to let the gypsum quarry on a lease of 21 years to a man with capital . . . it is at last acknowledged to be a very good material. The architect of the Board of Works & the government contractor have agreed to use it and recommend it in all ways'. All but one of Butler's new terms were agreed to. The 'riots of workmen' were not accepted as a condition to break the contractual agreement between Butler and EJS.

Lime: Before the onset of Famine, gradual improvements in agriculture were recorded. The Ordnance Survey Memoirs highlighted that in Maghercloone there was a bid to afford the tenantry a mechanism whereby they could improve their land in a cost effective manner. The Shirleys had a facility where tenants could buy lime from the several minor lime kilns on the estate. This corresponded with one of the recommendations set out in Landor's survey where he explicitly outlined; 'no land can be more improvable from lime than this . . . this District is well adapted to [the] cultivation of Turnips, and the lime would keep this in the highest profitable condition, if well managed'.[125]

Some of the kilns were situated on the property of large tenant farmers and thus operated by them, while others were located on EJS' demesne land. In an interview with the Devon Commission William George Smith, under agent for the Shirley estate, inferred that Mitchell first began to burn lime for the use of the tenantry in 1832 at a lime kiln in Tyrogavan. Smith had been sent to Wales to source good quality coal, and for every ton of coal they produced between 40 and 44 barrels of lime. For three years, considerable quantities of lime were issued to tenants gratuitously, which was also confirmed by the estates' improvement books. As a result, Smith claimed that tenants became increasingly unaware of the actual value of lime, not using it as efficiently as possible, so a charge of 6*d.*

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[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.
[124] Ibid.
[125] P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/S/14.

per barrel was placed on it. Lime was subsequently burned on several parts of the estate and when necessary it was sold to tenants as manure at a low rate, though tenants were often given credit, thus not having to pay until after the next crop was disposed of (in the case of a farmer being in charge of the lime). In addition, Smith claimed that on EJS' estate tenants paid 6*d.* per barrel on delivery, but he did not mention any credit facilities.[126]One prominent lime kiln mentioned was Reilly's Rocks located in the parish of Magheross, while another was at Mason Lodge in the parish of Magheracloone. Smith's interview asserted that 30,000 barrels of lime were used on the Shirley estate annually. The Ordnance Survey Memoirs which claimed that 'obstructions to the improvement do not exist [on the Shirley estate]; on the contrary, every exertion is made to encourage'.[127]In substantiating this it stated that the number of barrels of lime given out on both the Shirley and Bath estates had been substantial, as well as an estimated 100,000 quicksets given out by the Bath estate in the previous year to tenants, in a bid to improve fencing and contribute to agricultural enhancement overall. In 1848, for example one John Duffy from Lisseral applied for '3000 thorn "quicks" for fencing his farm'.[128]

On Bath's estate, a similar policy regarding lime ensued. A large land holder on the estate named Dawson had his own lime kiln and he was contracted to produce lime by the Bath agent, James Evatt. Farmers did not have to pay for lime unless they found it was a success on their land. Evatt paid Dawson on Bath's behalf for the lime, and therefore the tenants were not pressed for payment until they could reap benefits from it. Similar to the Shirley estate, tenants were accused of taking this system for granted, and as a result they did not see the full value of what they were offered. The system was subsequently stopped when lime was issued, only when it was paid for.

Farmers were encouraged to use lime to fertilise their crops and it was known to be especially good for potatoes; therefore it was unsurprising that agriculturists encouraged the use of lime as a repellent against blight in the mid nineteenth-century. There were two distinct methods of using lime to aid in the successful preservation of potatoes. The first method was to 'mix a barrel of freshly burned unslacked lime, with two barrels of sand, or earth, as dry as you can possibly get it. The lumps of lime should be broken into pieces as large as marbles, and the mixture should be left 24 hours; at the end of that time, turn the

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[126] *Evidence taken before her majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the state of law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland,* HC 1845 (605), XIX William George Smith p. 908.
[127] Day and McWilliams (eds.) *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland* p.139.
[128] Improvement Book 1848. (PRONI-D3531/M/7/2)

heap well over, mixing together the lime and sand . . . till no lumps of lime can be found'.[129] A Dublin Castle printed and published document found among the Shirley papers entitled 'Advice Concerning the Potato Crop: To the farmers and to the peasantry of Ireland' and dated 3 November, 1845, advised farmers on the measures to take against the onset of potato blight. The importance of lime was highlighted. Methods included for example the sorting and storing of potatoes and the lengthy document featured diagrams and illustrations showing exactly how to carry out proper potato storage, stacking and packing. The document was drawn up by three experts in their fields. Robert Kane the chemist, John Lindley an English botanist, a gardener and an orchidologist, and Lyon Playfair, a professor of chemistry. They outlined that, where farmers reading the literature did not understand what was being advised, they were to consult with either their landlord or a clergyman whom it states, 'we are sure that they will give you every assistance'.[130] For those on the Shirley estate, it was likely that the estate agent or the rent office was their first port of call.

Mid nineteenth-century: Economy, Agriculture and Demographic

County Monaghan's inland situation determined how the Great Famine affected the county when compared with other counties in Ulster. Duffy asserts that although Ulster in general suffered severe destitution, Monaghan was one of the most affected counties in the province where conditions more closely resembled those in the north midlands and north-west regions of Ireland, thus highlighting the county's transitional location.[131] Population densities in the 1840s across Ulster, including stretches of south Armagh, Cavan, Monaghan and parts of north Louth, were among the highest, containing over 400 persons per square mile,[132]comparable only with the west of Ireland.[133] Monaghan however benefited from having considerably better land than that found in the most of the west of Ireland and geographically speaking it was not as remote from large markets as the west. The 1841 census indicates that the population of Monaghan was 200,442 of whom 185,000 people lived in the countryside.[134] Duffy estimates that there were 370 persons per square mile on average but this would have increased in some districts notably in the barony of Farney (which had some of the highest population densities in south Ulster), and in particular the

[129] His Excellency Baron Heytesbury, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Royal Dublin Society from Robert Keane, John Lindley and Lyon Playfair. *Advice concerning the Potato Crop*. 3 Nov. 1845 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/5), p.03.
[130] Duffy, 'The Famine in Monaghan', p.168.
[131] Ibid., p.169.
[132] Ibid., p.170.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.

Shirley estate. Extraordinarily, Duffy's figures suggest that there may have been between 600 and 1,300 persons per square mile in a few places, and potentially the most overcrowded rural regions in Europe.[135]

The management structure of a landed estate can often provide evidence of how the estate was run, and it is possible to achieve an overall picture of day to day life. In 1858 there were 154 properties with gross estate sizes of 100 to 50,000 acres in county Monaghan, 88 of which were owned by persons not resident in the county but residing in neighbouring counties between Dublin and Derry.[136]Although many of the largest landowners lived for the most part in England like EJS, only seven of the 28 largest estates in Monaghan were considered non-resident. Bath lived in Wiltshire, Viscount Templetown lived in county Down, and Rothwell lived in county Meath.[137]

The Devon Commission report in 1845 outlined some of the factors that differentiated larger estates from smaller estates. What emerges is that on average tenants preferred to be leaseholders on larger estates where rent valuations were generally more acceptable as they were believed to be closer to the Poor Law valuation or below it.[138] In theory larger estates should have been much more tightly controlled, with a more layered managerial and administrative hierarchy; however the reality was somewhat different. Management was often haphazard or nonexistent even at this level, leading to huge subdivision and sub-letting to cottier tenants going unregulated and out of control. It was possible for this to be the case regardless of the size of the estate, and Duffy uses the 2,300 acre Rothwell estate in Monaghan as an example. When Rothwell became heir to the estate in 1835 he decided to evict 52 families 'mere cottiers . . . with whom the landlord had no previty [sic], and some of whom were not known even by name to Mr Rothwell or his agent. They were variously characterised as "undertenants of a house and garden", "undertenant of a hovel", "got in as a weekly tenant under a temporary tenant for a year". . ."squatter from Farney", "lived in gripe of ditch under road . . . never paid rent" '.[139] This was only one instance of mismanagement on an estate that was out of control in terms of landholding, sub-division and sub-letting, and this estate was miniscule when compared with its neighbouring Shirley and Bath estates. The management of the Shirley estate was controversial to say the least, arising from the notorious reputation gained by various land agents, the highly contentious bog cutting

[135] Ibid., p. 171.
[136] Ibid, p.174.
[137] Ibid.
[138] Ibid., p.176.
[139] Ibid.

practices, the enforced religious instruction, the estate's involvement in education, and rent levels higher than official valuations. However, despite the professional advice of agricultural experts and surveyors and indeed of Trench himself on the dangers of the multiplication of farm holdings and the growing number of inhabitants, generally speaking in Duffy's judgement 'there was little interference with the tenants' occupation of land'.[140] Altogether the socio-economic malaise on the Shirley estate in the early part of the nineteenth-century was by no means sudden or unimaginable, it was it seems inevitable. Supporting documentation from late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century surveys and reports suggest that possession of land and the level of agricultural output was insufficient to support the growing population on the Shirley estate. One survey drawn up as early as 1789 indicated that 'tenants have increased in a very great and rapid degree in the last fifty years, and if they increase in the same proportion for the next fifty years the Produce of the Lands under their present mode of culture will be scarcely sufficient for their support'.[141] Landor's report in 1814 spoke about the necessity of 'entirely sweeping off the present population and replacing it with real farmers . . . an entire change of system should take place'.[142] This report highlighted the misdemeanours demonstrated by prior generations of estate managers who 'permitted, even encouraged' the 'wretched occupiers who at present cling to the soil'.[143] This was a practice not resisted until the late 1830s while Mitchell was land agent. In correspondence with a tenant in 1839, Mitchell threatened him with eviction should he give a portion of his land to his son.[144]

Unlike other parts of Ireland, Monaghan was not a county with a large landless population nor did it endure the harrowing poverty and destitution of other areas such as west Galway and Mayo. It was a county of smallholders, comparable to some parts of the west in that they were in a very vulnerable situation as they did not have the same labour relationship with the farm population as they did in parts of Leinster.[145] Some of the largest farmers in the parish of Magheross had 40 acres, yet there were only ten of these in the entire parish, each having between 4 and 6 cottiers.[146] Trench made some attempt to alleviate the common practice for small farmers to take cottiers on. One petitioner Owen Fitzpatrick wrote to Trench pleading for permission to keep his labourer since he had built a house for him,

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[140] Ibid., p.177.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid., p.179.
[146] Ibid.

having received permission from the previous land agent Mitchell. The need to reduce cottiers was also referred to in a report Trench drew up in 1843 which will be discussed at length in chapter two, but EJS was slow to accept any such change.

The large cottier class in Monaghan, the remnant of a more economically prosperous period in the first years of the century, indicates that Monaghan for the most part was a labour intensive county where there were 'few patches of ground where the utmost of cultivation had not been effected'.[147] According to Duffy, the vulnerability of the cottier class shone through when in 1844 a great proportion of them spent two thirds of the year unemployed and this was a direct consequence of the all but vanished linen industry.[148] Their very existence depended on locating employment locally or by seasonal migration, and secondly on being physically able to work. Some petitions sent to the Shirley rent office portray just a sample of the harrowing situation that many found themselves faced with. Petitioners frequently 'sought relief in the form of concessions on rent arrears . . . or help in times of sickness'[149] Henry Magill, his wife and four children were a cottier family residing on Henry Reburn's land in the townland of Carrickmaclim, and he documented his plight in a petition sent to EJS in January 1844. The petition outlined that 'it pleased God to afflict him with an ulcerous leg which incapacitates him from labouring.'[150]Petitioners commonly requested money to help bury their deceased loved ones which was the case for Francis McCabe of Peaste who in December 1844 could not afford the expense of burying his aunt on whose farm he and his family resided. In the same petition, he outlined their dire need for 'night woollen covering' since they were all 'nearly famished with the cold'.[151] Blankets were in particular demand in the winter months, In January 1845, Catherine Martin of Corbane was looking for a blanket to give her 'some covering to shade her feeble bones from the acute cold of the present season'.[152]

In the mid nineteenth-century the barony of Farney and indeed the whole county comprised of small tillage holdings. More than a quarter of those situated in Farney and on the immediate outskirts of both Clones and Monaghan towns comprised less than five acres.[153] The pattern of agricultural holdings was not greatly altered by changes brought about by the Famine. Agriculture was not at all regulated. In terms of crop rotation small and

[147] Ibid., p.180 (quoted from the 1835 Ordnance Survey)
[148] Ibid., p.180.
[149] Ibid., p.181.
[150] Petitions to EJS and EPS from tenants seeking rent abatements and assistance to emigrate, 1840s (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/ P/ boxes 1-3); also see Duffy, 'The Famine in Monaghan' pp 181-2.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid.
[153] Duffy, 'The Famine in Monaghan', p.178.

large farmers alike did not appear to follow any strategic agricultural plan and the sheer lack of agricultural advice at local level was touched upon in the Devon Commission interviews. Sheil believed that in each townland there may have been only two tenants who maintained good farming practices, and in terms of deprivation he claimed Bath and Shirley's estate suffered equally. Sheil had been involved in valuing Bath's estate and although he maintained the estate had not followed his advice, he refused to comment on whether he thought Bath's rents were set too high.[154] The main crops grown in the region were potatoes, oats and barley, and near the town, some wheat was grown. Animal manure and lime were common fertilisers and lime was available to buy on both estates. On the Shirley estate, tenants could procure lime at 8*d.* a barrel with six months to pay their bill. This was considered a fair price, since it was otherwise available outside of the estate at 1*s.* per barrel. Peter Hoey was a large farm holder occupying 27 Irish acres on the Shirley estate; he opined that land averaged £1. 5*s.* per English acre in the country, and between £2 15*s.* and £4 could be paid for land closer to the town, which he stated, was 20 per cent above Griffith's Valuation. Average farm holdings he believed were then between 3 and 10 acres.[155]

The principal farm animal was the pig, often a sow, and the litter were kept in the house with the family; this was a universal feature in Irish cottier households at the time. The pig was a good source of finance especially since nearby Carrickmacross was host to a great pig and butter market. The pig was particularly useful for paying rent and they were fed from surplus potatoes. Some of the tenants kept goats, although a cow was far more prestigious. Father Mulligan told the Devon Commission that 'a farmer is considered a very comfortable farmer if he has a cow, and he is a wealthy man if he has two cows'.[156] Hardly any of the small tenant farmers had a cow; those that had would have sold their milk produce in the town of Carrickmacross, again to pay rent or to fund other provisions.

Female tenants, particularly farmers' wives like Mrs Mohun, wife of Peter Mohun a small farmer from Magheracloone, kept fowl. She brought the eggs to market as a means of generating much needed funds, in her case to purchase clothes for the family. Mrs Mohun, her husband and two daughters and a servant boy occupied 3½ acres. In an interview with the Devon Commission, Mohun explained that he was not making enough money from his small patch of land to pay his rent, which amounted to £5 19*s.* 9*d.*, it having recently been raised from £3 19*s.* 11*d.*, which with the bog rent came to £6. Although he had a wide range of

[154] Devon Commission, John Sheil, p.915.
[155] Ibid., Peter Hoey.
[156] Ibid, p.895

crops which included ½ acre of wheat, ½ rood of oats, 3½ roods of potatoes, 1 rood of clover, a coarse bog and a piece of meadow for grazing one cow, Mohan had no alternative but to resort to purchasing oats, making meal from them and in turn selling the produce.[157] This was a common practice which was noted in *Coote's Statistical Survey* in 1800. Then however, the ground oats were used to make bread or stirabout, to accompany potatoes instead of being consumed by itself as was more common in later decades, especially when there were difficulties with potatoes.[158] Mohun's situation in some senses counteracted Mulligan's views on those who possessed a cow and of grazing land being comfortable. In the 1830s, when Alexander Mitchell was asked by the Poor Enquiry about grazing ground on the Shirley estate, he simply answered 'we have little grazing ground', indicating the scarcity of livestock and the reliance upon tillage. There was a real sense that Mitchell did not want to divulge too much information regarding the nature of practices on the estate for which he worked and the abruptness of his answers verify this. When the same question was put to Rev. D. Boylan of Magheracloone, he outlined 'if by herds are meant those employed by extensive graziers, we have but one such, Mr Shirley's who told me his situation was worth £30 sterling yearly'.[159]

Sheil told the Devon Commission that Mitchell was an improving land agent who had put considerable efforts onto drainage, deepening rivers, encouraging tenants to make ditches, and that he instigated the building of roadways through some townlands thus enhancing the condition of the tenantry. Mitchell reported that he used the funds generated from the contentious bog rents to implement these improvements. However, Trench claimed that the cost of many road-ways was incorporated into tenant's rents for up to eight years prior to his appointment as agent. In other words, tenants were charged for the cost of roads adjoining their land and for roads that used to form part of their farm. This error came to light in the early 1840s, when a tenant observed the mistake and complained. Trench promised that the matter would be rectified and the tenants would be recompensed.

Neither estates engaged much in terms of agricultural societies, farm related schools, advice on farming practices and the publication of farm related documents. Trench alluded to the fact that there had been an agricultural school established for a short time on the Shirley estate but that the superintendent had died suddenly and he was never replaced. On the Bath

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[157] Ibid, Peter Mohun, Small Farmer from Magheracloone.
[158] Coote, *Statistical Survey of the County of Monaghan*, p.131.
[159] *Third report of the commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland* [43], H.C. 1836, xxx.1.

estate there were no agriculturists employed; Evatt told the Devon Commission that he did not see any requirement for an expert but he added that if leases were granted for 21 years he believed that tenants would improve by themselves.[160] In contrast to the Bath estate EJS did adopt Trench's advice and employed the expertise of agriculturists and later established model farms. Trench told the Commission that the estate was benefitting from their presence.[161]

Social Realities

John Shiel, a professional land valuer, found the condition of the tenantry in Farney in 1844 to be one of 'great poverty. They have not the same taste for farming, nor do they keep their houses in the same state as do the tenants of other properties'.[162] He also blamed the huge degree of sub-division coming as a result of marriage settlements where it was customary to allot two or three acres to each son. Dependence was solely placed on the land to survive, but this was not enough to prevent incremental hardship. Tenants lived to work and they worked to pay their rent. In practice, tenants in debt were faced with three options. Firstly, they could sell their interest in their farm holding or in most cases, where large amounts of rent were owed, some tenants could leave their holding, assisted with enough money for the whole family or part of the family to emigrate. The issue of assisted emigration is particularly pertinent, not so much for the fact that the Shirley estate championed assisted emigration measures as advised in Trench's 1843 report, as will be demonstrated in chapter two, but because of the psychological scar the full implementation of the policy left on the barony of Farney. Both Trench and EJS came to be characterized as 'exterminators', attempting to wipe out the dregs of their entire tenantry.

Secondly and more straight-forwardly, tenants under pressure had the option of borrowing money at enormous interest rates from local usurers. The practice was frowned upon by local 'respectable' businessmen and clergy in the region. In 1844 Thompson considered usury to be one of the greatest problems in his parish.[163] Peter Hoey for example believed interest rates to run between 2*s.* and 4*s.* and occasionally as high as 5*s.* for every £1 borrowed in the year. Thompson told the Devon Commission that a servant girl receiving 10*s.* quarterly, could loan her wages out and earn considerable interest.[164] The Shirley estate office also served as a social welfare mechanism and was utilised as a financial institution

[160] Devon Commission, James Evatt, p.928.
[161] Ibid., William Steuart Trench, p.931.
[162] Ibid., John Sheil, p.915.
[163] Ibid., Rev. William Thompson, p.919.
[164] Ibid.

whereby funds could be sought and attained by way of loans. It was a much safer method of borrowing money than approaching informal usurers. Undoubtedly, tenants had to meet various criteria. One estate loan book detailing various monies borrowed by tenants indicated that on 24 January 1842 a total sum of £174 19*s.* 11*d.* was out on loan. It was not clear over what period of time the loans were for, and at what percentage interest rate they were given. From the 25 January 1842 to 24 January 1843 a total sum of £494 16*s.* 4*d* was loaned. With every subsequent year, the amounts borrowed increased. Between 1843 and 1844 which was the year Trench was agent, £512 11*s.* 5*d.* was loaned to tenants for various reasons including 'to go to harvest', the purchase of provisions or the purchase of a cow. From 1844-45, £685 6*s.* 11*d.* was issued in loans, while another substantial loan of £696 4*s.* 5*d.* for the purposes of repairing a broken bridge was also issued. Loans which were repaid by between 31 August 1844 and 18 February 1845 totalled just £167 14*s.*1*d.* Amounts outstanding equalled £528 10*s.* 4*d.* by 1 February 1845 and by August of that year, £541 10*s.* remained owed.[165] It seems that estate-issued loans was not common knowledge, as Thompson told the Devon Commission in 1844 that EJS should have created a loan fund whereby tenants could borrow money at a very low rate so that they could get by, without ever having to borrow from usurers at high interest rates.

Thirdly, it was common for male tenants like fathers and sons to migrate to the rich plains of counties Meath, Westmeath and Dublin, or to England or Scotland for a few months work. Rev. Whittaker, who was interviewed by the Poor Enquiry in the mid-1830s, believed that almost all of the 12,600 inhabitants of Carrickmacross town could be considered labourers, owing to the excessive subdivision of farms in the region. He believed the average yearly wages of the labouring class who did not migrate was between £8 and £10.[166] Harris has estimated that between 1.34% and 1.79% of the male population of county Monaghan migrated to England between May and August 1841.[167] One such man whose experiences were recorded by the Devon Commission was John Connolly. He was listed as coming from the parish of Carrickmacross, but it was not clear from which estate. He worked seasonally for a large farmer named Mr Booth in Norfolk; 'sometimes I go over and have £4 paid and sometimes not a shilling'.[168] Though migrant labour was not always dependable and varied considerably, large numbers of migrants travelled from the Farney region to Lincolnshire and

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[165] Shirley estate Loan Book, 1842 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/M/4/1).

[166] *Third report of the commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland* [43], H.C. 1836, xxx.1.

[167] Ruth-Ann M. Harris, *The nearest place that wasn't Ireland; early nineteenth century Irish Labour Migration* (Iowa, 1994), p.62.

[168] Devon Commission, John Connolly, p. 925.

many to Scotland. They received work usually as labourers on large farms possibly gathering potatoes during the harvest seasons. Unfortunately, migration brought its own dangers as quite a number of tenants came back to Ireland with what was colloquially known as the 'ague', a disease apparently contracted by consuming polluted water. John Connolly's son was one of those who contracted the disease and like many others had to be sent back to Ireland.[169]

The phenomenon of migrant labour was also common in other parts of Ireland. Seasonally, labourers migrated from Connaught to the more prosperous parts of Leinster, while people from West Cork and Kerry travelled to Waterford and Limerick, attracted by wages of 8*d.* per day while meals were sometimes also supplied. According to Cullen, between the decades 1820 and 1841, migration figures greatly rose in Ireland from 8,000 to 57,651.[170] Duffy asserts that in the lead up to the Famine, many Irish labourers had become at ease with the notion of migrating. By the 1840s, correspondence illustrated that considerable numbers of Farney emigrants were travelling back and forth across to Liverpool by steamer from Dundalk and Newry with considerable ease.[171]

Land Tenure

By the mid 1840s the middleman system had been all but erased and land was generally held directly under the proprietors in Farney. The near non-existence of a lease system caused great tension among the tenantry. On EJS' estate tenants were generally renting their land at-will, with the average holding size between 3 and 8 acres. It was Trench's hope that the smallest holding would comprise of 8 acres once the future consolidation of holdings had been completed. He was aware that tenants felt they could live comfortably on 4 acres, but he was convinced that it was not a viable system, especially if poor farming practices persisted.

Over-population and sub-division had a negative effect on improvements. Tenants were opposed to spending money repairing their houses and farms for fear of eviction and thus losing their capital interest in their holding. Thompson told the Devon Commission that EJS' rents was lower than on other estates, but that the vast population he allowed on his estate was frightening.[172] Land agent for Bath, James Evatt, who disagreed with Griffith's Valuation, outlined that rent was charged on an average of £1. 15*s.* per acre on his estate,

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[169] Ibid.
[170] L.M.Cullen, *Life in Ireland* (London,1968), p.122.
[171] Patrick J. Duffy,' Assisted Emigration from the Shirley Estate, 1843-54' in *Clogher Record,* xiv, no.2 (1992),
[172] Ibid., Rev. William Thompson, p.919.

some rent he added was higher and others lower than Griffith had advised. On EJS' estate land averaged £1.5*s.* per English acre, which was 10*s.* less the average of the adjoining Bath estate.[173]

It was not always the stereotypical poorer working tenant who had a gripe over EJS' mismanagement policies. Peter Hoey fell into the larger farmer category. He held 27 Irish acres and a garden on which he claimed to have spent £150. He was in possession of one of about 50 leases issued on Shirley's estate, though Trench pointed out that there were in fact 100 leases in existence, irrespective of the town leases. Most leases were for 21 years with stipulations such as that the tenant could not sell or sub-divide land without written permission from the landlord or agent.[174] Hoey told the Devon Commission that when his lease expired, the garden had been taken from him because he 'thought it proper to vote for a certain member of parliament. They had nothing else against me', he complained.[175] He further expressed his belief that the actions taken by EJS illustrated that those who improved their holdings were likely to lose possession. Hoey was reunited with the garden four years later in 1843, but his rent was raised to three guineas instead of two for one rood of ground. He opined that although efforts were made by estate officials to equip tenants with windows and lime to encourage development, rents continued to run too high.[176] In fact £1,000 was allocated for expending on improvements and on emigration in 1844, highlighting that the recommendations in Trench's report had not gone unheeded. Hoey conceded that improvements were taking place across the estate, especially in terms of the growth of clover, of drainage works, and that there were two successive corn crops where the land could take it.

Another middle class man, Patrick McAnally, who was a book-keeper for Gartland's distillery in Carrickmacross, possessed 20 acres on the Shirley estate but had to give it up in 1841. He claimed that Mitchell 'first encouraged me to purchase land at a dear rate, and to expend large sums of my earnings upon it; and then for no other reason . . . but having voted contrary to his wish, in June 1834, in the Monaghan election, I was prevented making sale of this land'.[177] EJS had proposed the conservative Edward Lucas, while McAnnally must have voted for Westenra who claimed to represent the Liberals. There were still obligations upon tenants to vote according to the wishes of their landlord.

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[173] Ibid., James Evatt, p.928.
[174] Ibid., William Steuart Trench, p.931.
[175] Ibid., Peter Hoey, p.923.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid., Mr Patrick McAnally Bookkeeper for Gartlan's Distillery Carrickmacross, p.927.

The Ulster Custom otherwise known as 'Tenant Right' was practiced to some degree on the Shirley estate. The concept of it was difficult to define. One contemporary described it as 'a phantom that melts away under every attempt to define it and that, the chameleon like, appeared to assume a different aspect every time it presents itself'.[178] County Down landlord, Sharman-Crawford described it as a:

> 'continued tradition . . . enjoyed by the tenant in possession subject to the payment of the rent to which the premises are liable . . . with a right to sell his occupation either by public or private sale, to any solvent tenant to whom the landlord shall not make any reasonable objection; and that such tenant shall not be evicted by the landlord without being permitted to sell his interest and also being paid by the landlord the value thereof, as if sold to a solvent tenant.'[179]

The custom was so prevalent in the north-east regions of Ulster that it became known as the 'Ulster Custom',[180]though the custom was not limited to Ulster, it did exist on estates in the rest of Ireland albeit in a much more limited form. Even in Ulster it varied from one county to the next and from one estate to the next. According to the *Oxford Companion to Irish History*, 'the nature of this interest was itself ambiguous. It was commonly thought to include not only the value of any improvements carried out by the tenant, but also the difference between the competitive market rent and the lower "fair" rent he actually paid'.[181] This interest was something the tenant could dispose of when he vacated his farm, as distinct from being evicted.[182] According to Purdue, it was more pronounced in 'counties Antrim and Down then in the south and west of Ulster where the Protestant population was largely Anglican'.[183] On the Shirley estate according to the *Anglo Celt*, Tenant Right could provide 'beyond £20 to the out-going tenant . . . to this day he [EJS] maintains it and glories in the fact that he always allowed his tenants to sell their interest in their farms, subject only to the wise precaution that a good tenant going out - should, in justice to his landlord, leave a decent and solvent tenant in place. With this understanding, Shirley allowed his tenants to sell'.[184] However, tenants on the estate did not possess any real incentive to improve their holdings either with financial input or labour, as tenants had diminutive security of tenure. The majority of leases were for 21 years and there were no guarantees that once the lease period had expired, tenants would not be hit with increased rents or that their land would not be

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[178] Statement made by lawyers, Ferguson and Vance, 1851 - quoted in Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland; land, power and social elites 1878-1960,* p.33.
[179] Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland; land, power and social elites 1878-1960,* p.33.
[180] Ibid., p. 32.
[181] S.J. Connolly (ed.), *Oxford companion to Irish history* (Oxford, 2007), p.569.
[182] McDermott, *Gypsum mining and the Shirley estate* p.17.
[183] Ibid.
[184] *Anglo Celt,* 28 Nov. 1850.

transferred to a more preferred tenant. In a situation where the land was valued enough to allow the tenant become a 40*s*. freeholder, the tenant would further be expected to support his landlord and his landlord's nominee at the open ballot elections or face the consequences, if he chose not to comply. Tenant Right was sold on the Shirley estate for between £5 and £15 an acre but in the year Peter Hoey was interviewed, it was selling at between £8 and £10 per acre. Trench expressed a belief that Tenant Right prevailed universally, he was doubtful if there were any benefits from it other than to keep tenants content, and it was a deterrent to agrarian outrage. The money was paid to the outgoing tenant after the rent was cleared up, the incoming tenant was usually a neighbouring tenant and, if not, he was almost always an existing tenant of the estate. Trench felt the incoming tenant injured himself to a great degree, putting a significant drain on his capital, and the price of Tenant Right was decreasing as a result.[185] This was reiterated by EPS in 1874 in a publication entitled *"Tenant Right" or "Good Will" within the barony of Farney and county of Monaghan in Ireland* when he specified that no more than £10 was paid per Irish acre with first refusal of sale given to a neighbouring tenant and he claimed that all cases had to be sanctioned through the estate office first. The Shirley estate tenants did not fare as well as those in the greater Ulster regions where a greater sense of security and a greater tendency on behalf of tenants to invest effort and resources would undoubtedly have prevailed than where the custom was not practiced. Historically speaking, tenant right went much further back for Ulster Protestant tenants than the mere economic significance of it. Its roots were believed to permeate from the settlement of their forefathers and was symbolic of their 'traditional right'.[186] EPS shared this view of the Ulster Custom stating, 'It is clear that what is called "the Ulster Custom" which has been interpreted, the right of free-sale of the tenancy of the land to the highest bidder which it has been assumed, can be traced from the time of the plantation of Ulster, has never obtained in the barony of Farney'.[187] This would imply the custom was not practiced at all on the estate, yet when it became law in 1870 under Gladstone's Land Act EPS confirmed that it did not majorly alter how tenant right was being practiced on the estate.[188] To what degree it was practiced however is debatable.

Hoey also claimed that subletting was going on with the consent of the agent and that while small farmers were very poor, the labourers were wretched. In his interview with the Commission, Mulligan outlined the severity of subdivision across the estate. He expressed a

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[185] Ibid., William Steuart Trench, p.931.
[186] Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland; land, power and social elites 1878-1960*, p.33.
[187] (W.C.R.O., Shirley Papers, CR464/65).
[188] Ibid.

fear that the importance of land was so embedded into the mindset of the tenantry that they would rather subsist than leave their homes.[189] Mulligan criticised a particular under-agent who was also a merchant in Carrickmacross. He did not name him but it can be assumed he was talking about Smith: 'if the tenants do not go there to buy things, they are not treated well', he claimed.[190] Hoey was also a merchant in Carrickmacross and experienced first-hand that those with leases were by no means better off than those with none. He was constantly asked by his customers for six months credit for the payment of clover seed from tenants in possession of leases; he suggested they were very poor and that leases should be offered for upwards of 20 years. Mulligan was in agreement with Hoey and he claimed that rents had been raised twice in the past 8-10 years. Although rents were not set any higher than on other estates, he believed that the entire system of mismanagement and thus the lack of encouragement shown by the estate authorities was to blame for the appalling conditions.

By contrast, Rev. Thomas Gibson came across as a strong advocate of the landlord interest in Farney. He was one of very few interviewees to express a belief that agriculture was improving in the region. He pointed to the large numbers of cabbage plants growing on the estates, the existence of 21 year leases (though he believed 60 year leases would have encouraged further development). He outlined the nature of collaborative improvements by landlord and tenant. He was in the minority in believing that the landlords were strongly opposed to sub-division, and as a result he argued that large farms were improving, the smaller farms and the labourers he contended were struggling, though he added they were generally receiving 10*d.* per day with work available every day of the year. He concluded by adding that EJS was not a harsh landlord, he was humane and kind, and he supported any form of emigration that would entice the growth of larger farms through consolidation.[191]

The process in place on the Bath estate was similar to the Shirley's in the case of a defaulting tenant. For example rents due in January had to be paid within one month, otherwise proceedings against the tenant would commence. Evatt explained however that action was seldom taken and in most cases where tenants were experiencing financial difficulties, they were allotted another month's grace. In the event that tenants were falling behind with their rents, Evatt employed bailiffs as a scare tactic and within one day he could ensure that between £400 and £500 would be brought into the office. The charge for the bailiff's services never exceeded 1*s.* and it was chargeable to the tenant, though he added that

[189] Devon Commission, Rev. James Mulligan, p.895.
[190] Ibid.
[191] Ibid.

oftentimes the tenant was not charged if his condition was very poor. According to his calculations, the Bath estate made between £18,000 and £19,000 gross income per annum and that all tenants were tenants at-will, tenants seldom asked for leases and they were usually satisfied. This was not always the case however, and a string of poorly organised agents led to years of mismanagement. When James Evatt was appointed agent for the Bath estate he found it was £4,000 in arrears; this he confessed astounded Bath. The land agents prior were McDaniell and then Humphrey Evatt, who stepped in for a brief period whilst also agent for the Shirley estate. According to James Evatt, neither of his predecessors believed in spending money on improvements. Referring to Humphrey, he outlined that 'his motto was sell what you like, pay what you like but give the landlord his money'.[192] In addition, James Evatt delivered a wonderful image of the relationship that existed between him and his tenants, outlining that he could call into any of their homes, knew all their names and their faces. But there must be some doubts as to how genuine he was in his portrayal.

Conclusion

Similar to Westerna's political statement, an article appeared in the *Northern Standard* in 1843, entitled 'The Effects of Absenteeism Briefly considered'. In it, the author and fellow Monaghan landlord W.R. Anketell outlined how the overall management, the success and the prosperity of a landed estate were much more likely to be obtained should the landlord be physically present to oversee the duties carried out by the land agent: 'it is first of all, his duty to reside to that part of the British dominions where his residence and presence is advantageous to the greatest number of his fellow subjects - where his wealth and his influence produce the most beneficial effects - where he can best perform the part of a patriotic and philanthropic member of society; these are his duties as a citizen'.[193] He continued to state what the duties of the landlord should be 'to ensure that his rents are not exorbitant, and that his farms not unduly engrossed, or ruinously subdivided - to tend to the execution of the public works of the district and to the education of the younger portion of the community'.[194]

Anketell then argued that absentee landlords never had any intention to carry out the duties set out above as they were never and would never be required to do so under British law: 'all these are obligations, not the less binding because the law of the land is silent on the

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[192] Devon Commission, James Evatt, p.928.
[193] *Northern Standard,* 16 Sep. 1843.
[194] Ibid.

subject . . . because they are not enforced by a special Act of parliament but because there is no compulsion in the matter'.[195] Instead, he believed that landlords like EJS were more taken with the urge 'of spending their revenues, to assert that they came into the world for no more noble purpose than to eat, drink, and be merry - that their only anxiety and object is to attend to the garniture of their kitchens and cellars . . .'.[196] The article continued in this vein and what it did was perhaps give an indication as to the negative opinions of absenteeism or indeed semi-absenteeism as demonstrated by their resident counterparts.

Semi-absenteeism was not a criticism used as often, and not everyone heaped blame upon EJS for the unsightly situation his estate was in by the 1830s and early 1840s. Rev. W. Thompson (Church of Ireland minister who resided in Derryolum Glebe on the outskirts of Carrickmacross) used EJS' semi-absenteeism to direct blame on the land agents. He pointed out that the appalling conditions faced by the tenantry on the estate was only partially due to neglect by EJS or his land agents. Should rents not have continued to be paid to EJS' agents, he could not have preoccupied himself with any other matters of public life. Thompson's opinion could have had a two-fold meaning. EJS was merely interested in obtaining large amounts of money from the estate without having to meddle in its affairs to any great degree. Alternatively, Thompson may have been inferring that EJS was not aware of the severity of the situation on his estate. The latter is most likely. Describing Shirley as an 'amiable and excellent man . . . he comes over to Ireland after the Parliament is closed, he stays here till Christmas for he is exceedingly fond of the country and he often remains here after the family are gone for two or three weeks. He comes out every day after two o'clock . . . delighted to see any improvement. I am quite sure, if things had been properly before Mr Shirley and it had been shown that the people were poor . . . he would have acceded to it'.[197] He criticised the land agents instead, commenting that they were not enterprising, nor benevolent and he used Mitchell's 'raising of the coppers' as a prime example.

It is quite apparent that Bath's estate never received the same level of criticism as Shirley's. Both estates comprised of similar numbers of acres, comprised similar population figures and later similar numbers of emigrants. Bath was a politically inactive absentee, while the Shirleys were semi-absentee landlords with a long history of local political involvement. This granted the Shirley father and son advantages over Bath, in terms of experiencing and observing the situation of their estate first-hand. Perhaps the strong levels of criticism had

[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Devon Commission. Rev. William Thompson, p.919.

more to do with the agent then the landlord. James Evatt for example received great praise in terms of his managing abilities on the Bath estate. Described by Thompson as

> a most pain-staking man. He got the Bath estate in a worse state than Trench got Mr Shirley's and now he devotes all his attention to it. He settles the disputes among them [tenants] himself and keeps them out of law; and arbitrators are appointed, one by each party to settle any disputes there may be about property. . .no man could take greater pains to manage the estate of a minor, with an eye to the improvement of the people and the interests of his employers at the same time.[198]

Trench decided not to accept any responsibility for the mismanagement demonstrated across the estate in the 1830s and 40s, and in some respects he was justified, since he was agent for only a brief term. He claimed that there were serious levels of sub-division carried out unbeknownst to the agents, and he was very interested in alternative methods of dealing with the increasing populace. Although he did not discuss his ideas on mountain reclamation in any great detail, he had carried out in-depth research specifically in connection with Queen's County land as alluded to in his confidential report in 1843. He did briefly mention his proposals to the Devon Commission in 1844. It was his belief that tenants from vastly over-populated estates like Shirley's could be transferred to reclaimed mountainous tracts of land, which would prove a profitable investment for large capitalists. He was fully aware that some major changes would have to be made. Probably ignorant of his patronising tone, he contended that the tenants on the estate were 'growing in intelligence and in numbers, and in knowledge of their strength as well as of their wretchedness'.[199]

Charles Mc Mahon, an attorney living in Carrickmacross who was also a Poor law Guardian, had absolutely no doubt as to who to blame for the poverty he witnessed in the area. His opinions drew upon the consensus of others expressed in the Devon Commission interviews. McMahon blamed the non-issuing of leases on both estates which, he maintained, gave power to the estates' authorities to provide the tenant with 6 months notice of eviction. Even a tenant who had built a house or spent money on improvements was at their landlord's mercy. It was as he stated 'one of the great grievances in the area'.[200] He outlined how tenants constantly lived with the threat and the fear of eviction, land was their most prized and valuable asset, as they saw it, and it was their only means to make money. Even in death, some of the small farmers put those who inherited their holdings into debt over the preciousness of the possession of land. Trench highlighted that some of the sums given or promised by tenants to their children as fortune or dowry were frequently so absurdly large

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[198] Ibid.
[199] Devon Commission, William Steuart Trench Re-Examined 1844, p.931.
[200] Ibid., Charles Mc Mahon, p.936.

that they left the inherited party in long periods of debt and on the verge of destitution thereafter.

This chapter has examined the estate from socio-economic and political perspectives, questioning EJS' role in Irish society through the medium of politics via the opinions expressed by tenants on the Shirley estate and on the neighbouring Bath estate. Acquiring the estate in 1810, EJS carried out his own personal research by visiting the area and rent office, conducting a contemporary and sophisticated survey to establish where the estate had fallen into disrepair and in what areas it could be improved. It seemed however that the recommendations outlined in the 1814 survey were only partially adhered to. EJS was much more cautious than was Charles Leslie II for example, who carried out various local industrial projects throughout the nineteenth-century in north Monaghan. Nevertheless EJS was certainly willing to take risks when compared with his geographically closest neighbour Bath. He was the first landlord in his family to explore possible avenues of mining on the estate and the records show that he was relentless in his search for coal and even when all expectations had ceased, he turned his attention to gypsum. Although he was often considered an absentee landlord, this chapter has confirmed that his approach was much more 'hands-on'. He was nevertheless nowhere near as thrifty and enterprising as Leslie, but many of his management strategies resembled those of an improving semi-absentee as opposed to an absentee landlord. His physical presence in the area and indeed that of his family's for at least three months each year, his ability to take risks, the fact that he possessed a thorough, full working knowledge of his estate and the fact that he carefully regarded legalities surrounding the gypsum contracts that he and his legal team drew up reveal much of his character; he was meticulous in protecting his interests and he was extremely cautious in disrupting the land, fearing that it would never again be useful for agricultural purposes once it had been subjected to mining. Mindful of Warwickshire developments, he was fearful of mining works disrupting his large, rent-paying tenant farmers and by putting a compensation plan in place, he was ensuring that his most profitable asset, his rent, was secure. He must have also feared that any legal difficulties would impact on the future development for successive generations of the estate's owners, not least, his son's inheritance. These actions highlight the work of an enterprising though cautious landlord, a man who was only partially successful in politics but who was relentless in business, but whether that would be recipe enough to help him and his tenantry through the worst hit years of the famine would indeed be doubtful. As a semi-absentee he relied on his estate employees, and principally his land agents, to act as managers on the estate ensuring the smooth daily running of the estate and the collection of rents.

Chapter Two

Land agents and pre-Famine estate management

Introduction

For much of the eighteenth-century the Shirleys, like the Baths, were absentee landlords and it was not until the second decade of the nineteenth-century, when EJS constructed the house at Lough Fea, that he could be deemed a semi-absentee landlord. The role of the land agent however remained pivotal, but as this chapter will determine landlord-agent relations as well as land agent-tenant relations were complex and often times fraught. This was an important factor considering the backdrop of rural agitation as witnessed sporadically across the century. This chapter will analyse the role that land agent Alexander Mitchell played on the Shirley estate and in particular the imprint made by William Steuart Trench, who, in 1843 occupied the position of land agent of the Shirley estate for just one year, following the untimely death of Mitchell. Trench was however no more popular than his predecessor. In Monaghan, he was agent for the Shirley estate from 1843-5, and between 1851 and 1872, he took up agency for the marquis of Bath, also in Farney. Born 1808 in Ballybrittas, Queen's County (Laois), William Steuart Trench was the youngest of 15 children. Trench was essentially a member of the landed class himself.[1] He was a controversial land agent in many ways, especially regarding his theories on decreasing estate population size through marriage restrictions, land reclamation, tenancy reform strategies and of course emigration. The infamous role Trench played in terms of assisted emigration schemes on the Bath and Lansdowne estates, and how far this was reflected on the Shirley estate will receive greater attention in chapter three.

The role of the land agent occasionally shifted and changed, and this was usually dictated by outward influences. The post-Famine decades witnessed an alteration in the role of the land agent within Irish society, from exclusively letting farms and collecting rents to becoming a multifarious manager. It was becoming increasingly common for agents to have to perform accounting and administrative duties, arbitrate in their roles as magistrates, become submerged in local politics, an important aspect of which was to sit on the local

[1] Duffy, 'Management Problems on a large estate in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland; William Steuart Trench's report on the Shirley estate in 1843', pp102-22.

Board of Guardians which was comprised of persons elected by those who paid poor rates while local landowners and magistrates sat ex officio. Land agents often attended board meetings on behalf of their employer to represent his opinions and interests, to voice his concerns and to defend his employers' position and, as we will see in chapter three, board meetings were very often tense, especially during the Famine period. In addition land agents were responsible for authorising house and road construction, developing local industries such as fisheries and forestation, planning and developing local towns, not to mention collecting rents and dealing with hundreds or even thousands of tenants throughout the year.[2]According to Lyne, land agents had to comprise the combined skills of an 'agriculturist, accountant, architect, engineer, cartographer, surveyor, judge and amateur physician'.[3] When William Steuart Trench was applying for the assistant agent's post on behalf of his son Townsend, he told the third marquis of Lansdowne that his son was 'possessed of very superior abilities, of peculiar aptitude for business, a good accountant and first-rate mapper [sic] and surveyor . . . he is on his 20th year, active and strong, a good rider and up to any amount of labour'.[4]Townsend Trench was subsequently awarded the job. It was not uncommon for sons to follow in their father's footsteps when it came to a career as a land agent; William Murdock succeeded his father as one of the agents on the Leslie estates in 1822. He had experience in the field as he had occasionally assisted his father prior.

Estates owned by absentee or semi-absentee landlords were by no means the least well managed. In fact some of the best run estates were managed almost entirely by land agents. The Duke of Abercorn for example visited his Baronscourt estate in West Tyrone only a handful of times in the mid to late eighteenth-century, yet correspondence between him and his agent was indicative of his in-depth knowledge of estate business.[5] Between 1844 and 1857, the trustees of Lord Powerscourt's estates greatly depended on the knowledge and expertise of land agent Captain George Darley Cranfield because the heir was a minor. As Nuala Hunt has outlined, the Wingfield family resided at the Powerscourt house and demesne near Enniskerry village, county Wicklow, which comprised 700 acres, whilst their large estates in Wexford, Wicklow, Tyrone and Dublin, together comprising over 70,000 acres were managed by the land agent. The trustees 'asked for and acted on his advice in all matters concerning estate administration' and he was said to have 'possessed those qualities to

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[2] Gerard J. Lyne, *The Lansdowne estate in Kerry* (Dublin, 2001), p.li.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] W.H. Crawford, *The management of a major Ulster estate in the late eighteenth-century: the eighth earl of Abercorn and his Irish agents* (Dublin, 2002), p.04.

which a nineteenth-century landlord sought when employing an agent; namely tact, acceptance and integrity'.[6] Hunt contended that, in the decade 1847-57, 'Cranfield was rarely criticised by the tenants, while the guardians [trustees of the estate] never doubted his word'.[7] In addition, Dublin based surveyors and land valuers Brassington and Gale, credited Cranfield's estate management stating, 'we have seldom met with one estate in which good and judicious management is more strikingly displayed; the effects which are evidenced by its state after the trying times through which landed property has passed'.[8] Desmond Norton's study of Lord Palmerston's estates revealed the great dependence a large absentee landed proprietor had on the largest land agency in Ireland, which was managed by James Robert Stewart and Joseph Kincaid. Extensive works, such as building a new pier at Mullaghmore in the late 1830s, was overseen by the firm. They were in charge of supervising the sourcing of materials, carpentry and masonry and they were obliged to furnish Palmerston with monthly detailed progress reports. The project cost the landlord thousands of pounds, thus indicating the trust and confidence he placed in the firm.

On an absentee estate or on an estate where the landlord had not constructed an Irish residence, accommodation was usually provided for the agent by the landlord and oftentimes this accommodation had to meet the standards of the landlord himself, since he would usually reside there when visiting. In fact, according to Anthony Doyle, when Charles Powell Leslie II travelled from England for the assizes in the 1820s, he would often stay with his land agent James Nixon rather than at Castle Leslie.[9] One of the 'instructions' established for all estate agents to adhere to on George Shirley's estate in the late 1770s, for example, specified that the agent was to have use of 'the house of [sic] Carrickmacross, reserving an apartment for the landlord. Repairs to be done at the landlord's expense'.[10] This remained so until 1826, when EJS built his own private residence at Lough Fea. In 1759 on the Bath estate a three storey dwelling with surrounding farm was erected in the townland of Moynalty on the outskirts of Carrickmacross to accommodate the land agent. On the Powerscourt estates though, where the trustees were resident in the mid nineteenth-century, the agent resided within the Enniskerry demesne where the estate offices were situated, though these were later moved to the village. The sixth marquess of Lansdowne claimed that William Steuart Trench and his son Townsend had lived in luxury and basked in idleness while they were agents of

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[6] Nuala Hunt, 'Estate management at Powerscourt 1847-1857' in *Journal of Enniskerry and Powerscourt Local History, i* (2011), p.32.
[7] Ibid., p.46.
[8] Ibid., p.47.
[9] Doyle, *Charles Powell Leslie II's Estates at Glaslough, County Monaghan 1800-1841*, p.27.
[10] Quoted in 'introduction to the Shirley papers', (December, 2007), p.31.

his estate, how they were 'impatient of opposition', residing at Lansdowne Lodge 'in [a] considerable state, with a yacht in the harbour ready to carry them down the bay, or if the wind did not serve, a whale-boat with a picked crew of stalwart oarsmen always at their service'.[11] Lyne claimed that the Trenches were far from idle and were in fact 'willing workhorses, if not drudges, of successive marquesses'.[12]

In terms of salary, by the latter half of the eighteenth-century, George Shirley's agent Goldfrap was receiving £350 per annum according to the 'instructions' for agents to adhere to. This was then a very substantial wage since John Ross Mahon settled for £500 when he became land agent on the extremely overcrowded Strokestown estate in 1846, while Trench was receiving £350 when he was agent for the Lansdowne estate in the early 1850s. His son who was appointed assistant agent was paid £150 per annum. Their combined salaries were later increased to the fixed sum of £580. Many land agents earned up to four or five per cent commission on the total rental income they collected, though Trench's income was fixed. The agent for the Annesley estate was also paid a fixed salary of £400 in the mid nineteenth-century, though Lyne asserted that the amount agents received was geographically dictated. On northern estates such as on the Downshire estate the agent was paid £1,050 per annum in 1810, in county Antrim Lord O'Neill paid his agent £1,000 in 1814. In the border counties of Cavan and Armagh the Gosford estate agent received £780 per annum.[13] By the 1850s Tristram Kennedy was reportedly receiving £1,500 per annum for his role as agent on the Bath estate and this was almost certainly a fixed salary if Trench's narrative in *Realities* is to be believed. When Trench took up agency of the Bath estate in 1851 he alleges to have found a disconcerting £30,000 worth of debt, owing to uncollected rent arrears over a six year period.[14] The annual income for the Trench father and son team on the Lansdowne estate was therefore a less than satisfactory wage when compared with those of earlier and later decades.

In addition to what has been determined a substantial salary, George Shirley wished for his agent to settle and receive all petitions and he was not to accept bonds or notes as payment. Meanwhile controversies with tenants were to be settled outside of court, he wished his agent to maintain peace and harmony with the Catholic clergy in the region as they were beneficial in 'quelling disorder & Riot by private applycation [sic] to them'.[15] The agent was

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[11] Lyne, *The Lansdowne Estate in Kerry,* p.0l.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Maguire, *Downshire Estates,* p.56; see also Lyne, *The Lansdowne estate,* p.lii.
[14] Colum Kenny, 'Paradox or pragmatist? "Honest" Tristram Kennedy (1805-85): lawyer, educationalist, land agent and member of parliament' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: archaeology, Celtic studies, history, linguistics, literature,* xciiC, no.1, (1992), p.14.
[15] Quoted in 'introduction to the Shirley papers' (December, 2007), p.31.

obliged to write up a report on all affairs concerning the estate every four to six weeks and send it to George Shirley, and this remained the same for his successors. The agent was therefore a vital component of any estate but all the more so on an absentee or semi-absentee estate. Essentially land agents possessed the power to make or to break the estate. As Donnelly pointed out 'estate agents in nineteenth-century Ireland enjoyed a much greater measure of autonomy in the management of landed property than did their counterparts in England'.[16] Many agents therefore went unchecked, and on estates where the landlord was not vigilant or authoritative, when it came to policing its management, they often fell into disarray.

Generations of mismanagement had a gradual ripple effect, that spiralled almost out of control by the fourth decade of the nineteenth-century. There had been and continued to be a clear lack of investment and development on many estates, principally due to the phasing out of long-term leases, which would have provided incentives for tenants to improve their land holdings. Tenants were not encouraged to maintain a reasonable standard of housing which in turn would have had an instant knock-on effect on their general living standards. Even on the Bath estate where Tristram Kennedy had earned a reputation as an agent who stood for reconciliation and reform, a landlord (in the 1830s he was trustee of his family's estate on Inishowen, as well as leasing additional land on the peninsula from the marquis of Donegal) a land agent, a politician an educationalist and an agriculturalist; his departure from the estate was somewhat obscure and gave credence to Trench's story.[17] Together it may be argued, if these simple yet underlying factors had been changed, altered or even assessed more radically and much earlier they would have had a major impact and in turn they would have helped tenants to generate greater financial returns from their agricultural labour in the pre-Famine period.

Middleman system

The eighteenth-century witnessed a significant growth in the middleman system in Ireland. Dooley asserted that 'many were drawn from the old Catholic landowning families and usually held large tracts of land from 100 to 1,000 acres'.[18] This system existed on the Shirley and Bath estates, until the early decades of the nineteenth-century which saw a shift in the manner with which estates were run. Initially landlords believed that by leasing tracts

[16] J.S. Donnelly jr., *Land and the people of nineteenth-century Cork* (London, 1975), p.173.
[17] Kenny, 'Paradox or pragmatist? "Honest" Tristram Kennedy (1805-85), p.14.
[18] Terence Dooley, *The big houses and landed estates of Ireland,* p.20.

of land to middlemen, it would decrease the burden of having to deal with masses of tenants most of whom held a few acres but whom would want to negotiate rent prices annually. From the middleman's perspective, he had the security of a 21 year lease or longer to make agricultural developments, improve houses, and increase agricultural production. The under-tenants were content that the middleman would negotiate rent income on their behalf but often times middlemen would not pass on any rent abatements made by the landlord. This system of issuing extended leases to middlemen according to Dooley 'allowed for the emergence of a Catholic squirearchy or 'semi-gentry, despite the existence of the penal laws'.[19] Dooley also noted the ambivalent nature of middlemen within Irish society. After the Napoleonic war years, many landlords became entrepreneurs in their own right. With this change in outlook, many saw the erroneous nature of the middleman system. By eliminating the middleman, as Kerby Miller outlined, landlords assumed 'greater control over their properties in an effort to extract larger, more punctually paid incomes', [20]they developed and encouraged more modern agricultural practices and in general, they made great strides to issue shorter term leases, a trend that had begun in the late eighteenth-century. Though some landlords viewed the system as an altogether easy method of collecting rents, others viewed them as 'obstacles to modernization and their own attempts and to improve their financial position'.[21] Up to the late eighteenth-century large tracts of townlands, both on the Shirley and Bath estates, were leased to head tenants. According to Duffy, 'they in turn divided their leaseholds into smaller units for letting to tenants, at considerably higher rents per acre than they themselves were paying. There was often further subletting to cottiers at the small farm level'.[22] Before the end of the eighteenth-century and the early nineteenth-century, many landlords had seen the error of their ways in relation to this system but by then it was too late, the population across most estates had soared. At a Board of Guardians meeting in Carrickmacross in 1849 EPS blamed 'that great and dense population' found on his father's estate on the middlemen. In comparison however, Trench found both the Shirley and Digby estates were equally as poor. In one report to Lord Digby, Trench outlined that it was 'one of the most wretched and discouraging in Ireland'.[23]

Another example of the how the middlemen system created obstacles can be witnessed on the Digby estate. It was one of the major challenges that faced Trench in his

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[19] Ibid., p.21.
[20] Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and exiles; Ireland and the Irish exodus to north America* (Oxford, 1985), pp 212-13.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Patrick J. Duffy ,'Assisted Emigration on the Shirley Estate 1844-54' *Clogher Record,* xiv (1992), p.12.
[23] Delaney, *William Steuart Trench and his management of the Digby estate,* p.14.

first year as agent of the Digby estate in 1857. Trench viewed subdivision as one of the most difficult social problems to solve in Ireland. Of the 889 holdings on Digby's estate 102 consisted of less than one acre. Only one holding comprised of 300 acres while 11 holdings comprised of between 200 and 300 acres. When Edward St Vincent, the 9th Baron Digby became heir to the estate at Geashill, he was infuriated to find that his predecessor and cousin Edward Digby had 'no right, moral or legal, to lease away his Irish lands for two thirds of their real value'.[24] The new landlord decided to break the leases which inevitably unsettled a large number of tenants leading to 'much anxiety and upheaval at Geashill'.[25] One of the major differences between Trench's agency on the Digby estate and the Shirley estate was the freedom he was given from the beginning. EJS continued to demonstrate caution when it came to implementing any of the proposed changes drawn up by Trench. Trench was employed by the Digby estate at a time when social unrest was rife just as he had on the Shirley estate fourteen years prior. However, it was clear that Digby allowed Trench and his sons express authority by appointing them his lawful attorneys.[26] This gave the Trenches authority to negotiate with middlemen on the estate in the controversial business of breaking the 150 leases. Some of the middlemen which included 'descendants of substantial farmers, including a magistrate',[27] were more willing to compromise than others. In fact Trench anticipated 'violence, bloodshed and murder'.[28] Many of the leaseholders had made significant improvements to their homes and farms thus they were unwilling to lose their leases without a fight. Lord Digby was equipped with the knowledge that a recent threat had been made to his life since he and his son's arrival to the estate and that the area had become inhabited by 'armed assassins'. Having visited the farms and homes of all the leaseholders, he found that only some of them had made great strides to improve their holdings. The majority, he claimed were in a terrible state. He called a meeting in 1858 where he was obliged to place varying degrees of pressure to entice ten of the most respected leaseholders to sign a consensual agreement. According to Delaney, Trench used the 'divide and conquer' strategy. Once the first group agreed to breaking their leases, the rest followed suit, when he called a conference on what was the last day possible prior to a pending lawsuit. Delaney has suggested that Trench may have attempted to dupe tenants into agreeing with his financial settlements. He used scare tactics on those who were slow to comply, stating that should they

[24] Ibid., p.14.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid., p.17.
[28] Ibid.

not accept his offer of compensation, 'English witnesses' would come to deal with the situation, who, he inferred, would not be as liberal to negotiate with. After much deliberation, only a handful of tenants did not sign the agreement.

Pre-Famine population and bids to prevent its growth.

The existence of this middleman system, Duffy suggests, could have been the primary factor in explaining the huge population of tenants living in Farney. The growth of population on the Shirley estate by the end of the eighteenth-century resulted in the doubling of population figures for the parishes of Magheross and Magheracloone.[29] Duffy asserts that between 1815 and 1841 the population statistics of significant townlands were greatly affected. He maintained that 4,184 persons populated the parish of Magheracloone in 1815 while in 1841 that figure had risen by 115 per cent to 9,012. Meanwhile, there were 5,588 people living in Magheross in 1815 and in 1841 that figure increased by 104 per cent to 11,447.[30] The large scale population growth accompanied by the prevailing problem of subdivision and the multiplication of houses and cabins meant that there were tremendous pressures placed on the estates' resources. By the early 1840s, the Shirley estate was experiencing a Malthusian crisis, since the region had 'the highest rural population densities in the county'.[31]The growing population and inept poverty reflected particularly on the estate's pre-Famine housing situation.

In Farney there were 2,483 families residing in fourth grade cabins. Over half of these cabins were situated on the Shirley estate since the barony of Farney was divided in almost equal proportions between Bath and Shirley. One third of the population of Farney occupied such dwellings in 1841. In 1844, Evatt reported the population of the Bath estate to be around 20,000 while Trench reported that there were 20,500 residing on the Shirley estate. The 1841 census divided housing into four categories. The fourth or lowest comprised mainly of cabins mostly erected from mud, having one room only. Often there was more than one family living in them. The chimney was usually a hole in the straw roof, to allow the smoke through, often there were no windows so the top half of the door was left open to allow light and ventilation to enter making it the most inferior class of housing occupied by the poorest classes in the country. The pig and whatever other livestock the family possessed shared the

[29] The large townland of Magheracloone was situated mostly on Shirley's estate though two minor estates; the Porter estate and the Brownlow estate comprised of very small portions of the townland.
[30] Duffy, 'Assisted Emigration on the Shirley Estate,' p.12.
[31] Ibid.

cabin as referred to in chapter one. In Ulster, fourth class housing made up between 20 and 40 per cent in the housing category,[32]and more specifically these statistics relate to county Monaghan which fell into the 'median category' in terms of housing as between 60 and 80 per cent of housing fell into the third-class housing category in many districts.[33] Fourth class housing appeared to have centred around the 'southernmost parishes and in the north around Monaghan town, with more than one third in the fourth class'.[34] Duffy draws a striking comparison between the densely populated parish of Clontibret, where fourth class housing only occupied one fifth of the countryside, with lesser populated regions which possessed far greater numbers of fourth class housing.[35] What emerges from Duffy's research is the paradoxical juxtaposition of 'population pressure and lower proportions of poorer housing' as a result of the success of the linen industry in earlier decades. A description of one fourth class house in the parish of Aughnamullen in the barony of Cremorne situated on the borders of the Shirley estate between Carrickmacross and Ballybay and recorded in 1836 cemented the horrendous reality of fourth class housing standards. The dwelling was described as 'beyond description . . . of a very low, open, ill-built kind, some built of sods, some of stones without mortar, ill-thatched, damp and smoky'.[36] Depictions like these were not typical of those found on the Shirley estate as evidenced in the Devon Commission, where accounts recorded were not as critical as those of utter destitution in areas such as Galway and Mayo in the west of Ireland. As recorded in chapter one, on a general scale, county Monaghan was a county of small holders and cottiers (as in the west of Ireland) but it did not have such a large population of landless labourers.

The third class house, was the type most frequently found in Farney according to the census. There were 4,312 families living in this category of housing, these were also the houses most often occupied by two or three families. By 1850 this number was down to 3,683 - not nearly as great a decrease as seen in the category before.[37] These houses had three to four rooms with windows, they were often built of mud but in the more advanced areas they were built of stone. They made up 37 per cent of Irish housing.[38] The first and second class houses had 1,144 families between them, and in 1851 this number had risen to 1,673

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[32] Patrick. J. Duffy, 'Mapping the Famine in Monaghan' in John Crowley, W.J. Smyth and Mike Murphy (eds), *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine* (Cork, 2012), p.441.
[33] Duffy, 'The Famine in county Monaghan', p.178.
[34] Ibid., pp178-9.
[35] Ibid.
[36] *Report of the commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland,* quoted in Duffy, 'The Famine in Ulster' p.178.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Cullen, *Life in Ireland,* p.123.

heralding the rise of the larger farmer, with the wiping out of the cottier and small farmer during the famine.[39] By 1851 the number of families had dropped to 525.[40] The families living in fourth class housing were obviously those who were worst affected and thus almost entirely wiped out by the Famine. These tenants were a drain on estate resources and like those who survived the Famine, they were to be dealt with using the most economical methods possible. In *Realities of Irish Life*, Trench spoke of 44,000 souls in the barony of Farney (which included some plots of land not part of either estates including 2,000 acres on the Brownlow estate),[41]and in a bid to entice tenants to conform to his new proposals, it appears as though he offered some of the more industrious tenants the opportunity to improve their holdings with estate assistance. In September 1844, David Lundy was promised slates for an out-house, Neil Marron, Drumgowna was also promised slates and half the cost of timber if he raised his out-house and 'lofted' it.[42] Eakins was promised £1 for properly constructing a 'Gullet' across the road, this was presumably a very small-scale drainage solution. He also promised timber gates to tenants once timber became available for felling on the estates' demesne. Because of the brief period that Trench served as agent, he did not have enough time to fulfil all his promises. The Improvement Book recorded in June 1845/6 that Thomas Woods of Corduff-Kelly was granted £8 to slate the roofs of a cow-shed, stables and a barn, but the accompanying note signed by Morant displayed an air of disapproval. Woods was granted the funds 'on condition that it [the work] is to be completed immediately and solely on account of a kind of promise of assistance from the late agent'.[43] It is difficult to ascertain just how many of Trench's promises were fulfilled. The brief period that he acted as agent meant that Morant made the final decision on whether to grant applicants assistance or not. Mark Cassidy who held three acres in Drumgossat, applied for two windows and 'a little lime' in January 1844; Trench reported that his 'house [was] pretty good, but very dirty, he is so careful of his dung heap that he keeps it at the foot of his bed'.[44] On the same date it was recorded that Edward Murray applied to move his house to a different part of his four acre farm in Drumgossat. Trench confirmed that the house was old, badly built of mud and situated on an inconvenient place on the land, his farm was however well fenced. Requests for assistance to repair existing dwelling houses, out-houses, barns or the erection of entirely new structures were typical of applications. How many new houses were built and at what

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[39] *The census of Ireland for the years 1841-1851*, part 1, p.344.
[40] Ibid.
[41] William Steuart Trench, *Realities of Irish life* (London, 1868), p.69.
[42] Promises of improvements to tenants,12 Sept. 1844 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/M/7/1-5).
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.

cost is difficult to ascertain since estate records of improvements especially for the 1840s did not confirm whether all improvements were actually carried out or not.

Early marriages contributed to over-population and thus to further sub-division of land. One of the first observations Trench made when appointed land agent for Lansdowne was that 'boys and girls intermarried unchecked each at the age of seventeen or eighteen, without thinking it necessary to make any provision for their future subsistence, beyond a shed to lie down in, and a small plot of land whereon to grow potatoes'.[45] Trench's enforced marriage regulations on both the Bath and Lansdowne estates received media attention in Ireland and England as he required tenants to obtain a marriage licence from the rent office. It was reported that he could use this permit as bait in order to get a father or son to give up their holding and agree to emigrate in return for allowing their daughter or sister to get married.[46] The tenants of the Bath estate especially resented his role of 'match maker'. To enforce his policy on the inhabitants of the Lansdowne estate, Duffy asserted that he adopted a system of espionage whereby a network of spies known as 'keepers' were employed to observe potential love interests and marriage proposals.

Oh Girls of Farney it is true
That each true hearted wench
Before she weds, must get consent
From Pious Father Trench.[47]

Harris' analysis of a large number of Shirley estate petitions received from women found that women who were caught up in a patriarchal web within society, positively utilised the social welfare nature of the estate administration to its fullest advantage. They wrote to the agent complaining about family disputes, looking for protection against abuse from the men in their families, and for funds to emigrate. Most of them emphasised their subordinate

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[45] Trench, *Realities of Irish Life*, pp 112-3.

[46] Patrick J. Duffy, 'Disencumbering our Crowded Places; theory and practice of estate emigration schemes in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland' in Patrick J. Duffy (ed.) *To and from Ireland; planned migration schemes c.1600-2000,* (Dublin, 2004), p.88.

[47] *Dundalk Democrat,* 12 Jun. 1869, also quoted in Patrick J. Duffy, 'Emigrants and the estate office in the Mid-nineteenth-century: a compassionate relationship? ' in *The hungry stream; essays on emigration and famine* (proceedings of the conference held at the Ulster-American Folk Park. The Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast and the Centre of Emigration Studies at the Ulster-American Folk Park, (1997), p.76. also quoted in L. O' Mearáin 'Estate agents in Farney: Trench & Mitchell' in *Clogher Record*, x (1981), p.414.

role as women firstly and then stipulated whether they were alone, unmarried, single, widowed, deserted or destitute to further strengthen their petition.[48]

In assuming a fatherly role but ultimately in an attempt to curb population growth on the estate, EJS made an annual address to the tenantry on his estate, he lectured on topics such as drunkenness, laziness, timely harvesting of turf and marriage. In 1842, he distributed a handbill advising on reproduction and living standards. Duffy points to the fact that the address highlighted EJS' conservative Malthusian views, concentrating less attention on encouragement and more on coercion.

> The necessity of consideration before engaging in marriage is self-evident . . .[be] aware of the duties and burdens it will bring . . . remember that you injure your neighbours by throwing upon them the burthen of supporting those whom you ought yourself to support . . . you are taking employment and food from those who already have not enough . . . keep animal impulses under the control of reason.[49]

Ultimately, it was the catastrophic consequences of the Great Famine that led to a huge demographic decrease in the mid nineteenth-century. Though 'revisionist' historians such as Crotty and Cullen writing in the 1960s and 70s contended that the population of Ireland would have significantly reduced even if the Famine had not occurred and that it was not in any true meaningful sense a watershed,[50] generally more recent historiography is inclined to find that the Famine represented 'a major discontinuity in Irish economic history.'[51] Historians such as Mokyr and Ó Gráda for example found that there was a marginal improvement in Irish pre-Famine living standards with a rise in the consumption of sugar, tea, and tobacco. They claimed that the pre-Famine population were well nourished and that literacy levels was on the increase.[52] However, in terms of housing and living conditions the view that inhabitants of pre-Famine Ireland lived in squalid conditions has largely remained untouched.[53]The pre-Famine housing situation on the Shirley estate and in the overall barony of Farney was by no means satisfactory, but when compared with general housing conditions across the country, the region faired reasonably well in having third-class housing in the majority in 1841.

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[48] Ruth-Ann, M. Harris, 'Negotiating Patriarchy; Irish Women and the Landlord', in Marilyn Cohen and Nancy J. Curtin (eds), *Reclaiming Gender; Transgressive Identities in Modern Ireland* (New York, 1999), p.212-3.
[49] Duffy, 'Disencumbering our Crowded Places', p.88.
[50] R. Crotty, *Irish agricultural production: its volume and structure* (Cork, 1966), pp 50-; see also L.M. Cullen, *An economic history of Ireland since 1660* (London, 1972), p.132.
[51]Kevin O'Rourke, 'Emigration and living standards in Ireland since the Famine' in *Journal of Population Economics, vii,* no. 4 (Nov, 1995), p.408.
[52] J. Mokyr and C. O'Grada, 'Poor and getting Poorer? living standards in Ireland before the Famine' in *The Economical History Review,* xli (1988), no.2, pp 209-35.
[53] O'Rourke 'Emigration and living standards in Ireland since the Famine', p.409.

Alexander 'Sandy the cook' Mitchell

The relationship which the Shirley family had with the tenant population on the estate was mediated by the relations the land agent had with the tenantry. In February 1800, Humphrey Evatt, who succeeded Steele as agent of the Shirley estate wrote to George Shirley requesting the position of agent, since it was 'universally believed . . . that Mr Steele is to be immediately removed from your agency' and by June 1800, records indicate that Evatt became agent. In 1802 further correspondence between George Shirley and Evatt revealed that Steele was reported to have died under dubious circumstances; 'from the various reports of the circumstances in which Mr Steele died, it is impossible to collect anything conclusive. The most prevalent report is that he was in advance for your estate upwards of £5,000. The very circulation of such a report points out the necessity of circumspection'.[54]

Honesty and trust were attributes most favoured by landlords when employing agents. On the Headfort estates for example, Thomas Taylor employed the Rev. Henry Sargent as his agent in 1829. Similar to the dishonesty demonstrated on the Shirley estate by Norman Steele when he overtly supported the Union against George Shirley's wishes in the late 1790s, John Rawdon ran into difficulties that cost him his job on the Leslie estate. Rawdon had succeeded his uncle, John Dollard, to the agency in the late eighteenth-century and because of the disparate nature of the estates, the Leslies employed a number of agents. Rawdon, who was agent of the Glaslough and Emyvale estates received £124 per annum in 1800. Doyle described him as an important and active member of the Donagh community, holding large tracts of land and two mills at Kilcran and Stramore. The latter subscribed to his annual rent of over £148. However, it appears that his shrewd business acumen got him into difficulty with his employer, when discrepancies with the estate accounts led to court proceedings against him in 1806, as he owed Leslie £2,000. Rawdon, who had worked for generations of the Leslie family for fifty years, subsequently lost the case, his job and the property he was renting from Leslie. In addition, John Aiken, also agent for Leslie in the early 1800s came under the spotlight in 1814, when he returned large arrears for the Pettigo estate and, as Doyle pointed out, 'it later transpired that there was sums of money missing from the . . . accounts' and he was immediately fired. Instances like these on the Shirley and Leslie estates indicate just how closely observed agents were and that on certain estates, especially those

[54]Letter from Humphrey Evatt to Evelyn John Shirley 04 Jun. 1802. Quoted in Introduction to the Shirley papers (December, 2007).

where the landlord was resident or semi-absentee, the agent maintained only limited control and autonomy over the estate and were expected to follow the landlord's instructions. Landlords such as these were relentless and uncompromising when it came to acts of dishonesty by their agents or when they did not perform as they wished.

Alexander Mitchell was land agent for the Shirley estate between 1829/30 and 1843. He succeeded Humphrey Evatt who had reportedly built up good relations with the estate's tenantry, who had detested Norman Steele. In terms of how Mitchell was perceived as a land agent, Fr. Smollen (parish priest of the neighbouring townland of Donaghmoyne on the Bath estate) claimed that 'he was probably the most iniquitous and tyrannical estate agent that the people of Farney had known, just as in the previous century Norman Steele had been the most feared and hated'.[55] In addition he asserted that Mitchell's appointment marked a turning point for the estate and indeed the barony; 'from this period may be dated the wrongs and grievances of Farney. This man seems to have proposed to himself to trample on the rights, liberty, religion and consciences of the Catholics of Farney, and being the agent of an absentee landlord there was no limit to his authority, and many harsh things were done, I am sure without the knowledge of the landlord'.[56] There were two distinct reasons as to why Mitchell gained such a notorious reputation. One related to the restrictions he placed on estate bogs and turbury rights, while the other was associated with the restrictive education of children on the estate.

Under-agent for the Shirley estate and estate office clerk, William George Smith outlined the role played by Mitchell when he was appointed land agent for the estate in June 1830. Mitchell employed the expertise of conservators, and he organised an eight-step approach for them to follow. The first was to ensure punctuality with payment of rent, secondly, to prevent subletting on a wide scale, the third was to prevent tenants using arable land or meadows as bog-land. The fourth step was to prevent, or to assist in settling, disputes. Fifth, to be observant as to the education of children of the tenantry in their districts. The sixth step was to point out the best means of promoting cleanliness and comfort to the tenantry of the estate. Seventh, to report the numbers of cottiers in their districts and the eighth was to assist in superintending public roads. In addition, he proposed the establishment of a savings bank in conjunction with the Bath estate. This did not directly involve the aid of the conservators though. As to how successful this programme was, it is debatable since his successor Trench found the estate was at a crisis point just over a decade later. The *Northern*

[55] Introduction to the Shirley Papers.
[56] Ibid.

Standard praised the Shirley family and Mitchell's efforts in a report concerning a function held in September 1842 for 141 demesne employees. The reporter stated that 'the urbane [sic] and kind demeanour of the Shirley family . . . is the general theme of conversation here [Carrickmacross] . . . let the landlords of Ireland "do likewise", and they will soon find the same great moral and intellectual change take place in the character of their tenantry and the improvements of their estates which has . . . been effected [in] . . . Farney within the last twelve years'.[57] This was the number of years Mitchell had served as agent for EJS.

Mitchell died suddenly in 1843 of apoplexy in Monaghan town while attending the Spring Assizes as a member of the Grand Jury. It was recorded that when news of his death made its way to the inhabitants of the Shirley estate, bonfires were lit as festivities got underway to celebrate his demise.[58] Following his death and burial a memorial plaque was erected to his honour in St. Finbarr's Church Carrickmacross, commemorating his life and work. Although it states that the plaque was commissioned by Mitchell's family, the wording suggests that his connection with the Shirley estate was synonymous with evaluating his life's achievements.

> In the burial place of his family at Ballinode in this county are interred the remains of Alexander Mitchell of Drumreaske esq, the much valued friend and agent of Evelyn John and Evelyn Charles Shirley esquires whose estate he managed with unceasing attention and the strictest fidelity for thirteen years. It pleased God suddenly to call him from this world, while in the exercise of his duty as secretary to the grand jury of Monaghan on the 13th day of March 1843 in the 46th year of his age.[59]

An extract from Mitchell's will dated April 1843 outlined that his estate would write off a substantial sum of money he had spent on improvements: '£1,300 and expenses which I have expended in permanent improvements upon the agency house and grounds and the offices at Carrickmacross and which sum so expended will I hope be accepted by the Shirley family as a small return on my part for their uniform liberality and kindnesses to me'.[60]

Mitchell and Pre-Famine Education on the Estate

Ireland was quite a relatively peaceful place by the end of the 1830s in terms of politics. The decade had brought many reforms such as the National School system,

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[57] *Northern Standard*, 17 Sep. 1842.
[58] Introduction to the Shirley Papers.
[59] Commemoration plaque erected in honour of Alexander Mitchell in St. Finbarr's Church of Ireland, Carrickmacross Co. Monaghan by his family.
[60] Letter to Evelyn John Shirley, 4 Apr. 1843 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/A/4).

introduced in 1831. The National Board of Education comprised of three members of the Church of Ireland, two Catholics, two Presbyterians as well as the two archbishops of Dublin.[61] Prior levels of education in Ireland were poor as the often haphazard, unsupervised and unprotected hedge schools and parish schools did not have the adequate conditions, the adequate teachers or educational provisions to educate students. The system was primarily a response to the Catholic middling and lower classes in Ireland, who were in some areas unhappy with having only one option in educating their children, in schools subscribed to by their landlord. These schools, where children were taught using a largely Protestant ethos and dubbed as 'proselytizing voluntary societies',[62] were not deemed satisfactory by the Catholic clergy, yet they fared better when compared to the unsupervised but nevertheless widespread hedge schools.

It appears that the National School system in Ireland was welcomed by all religious denominations in Monaghan. The Ordnance Survey Memoirs recorded the state of certain parishes across the northern quarter of Ireland in the 1830s suggested that 'schools by their introduction have led to a slight improvement in the moral habits of the people, who seem anxious for improvement'.[63] The board was in control of establishing a standard set of procedures such as the location of new schools. According to Murnane, 'the Commissioners intended that grant aided schools should be distanced a minimum of three statute miles from one another - presumably on the premise that children should not be required to walk more than $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles to school'.[64] Theoretically, the structural soundness of the school building had to be considered as well as adequate lighting and ventilation. Reality, however proved rather different.

There was already a very successful school on the Bath estate. It had been one of the very first endeavours of Thomas Thynne the 1st Viscount Weymouth in 1711 to erect what he called the Viscount Weymouth Grammar school. Children of the barony of Farney were taught gratis, while others outside of the barony had to pay fees. The school was clearly intended to assist the Protestant faith, yet it catered for both Protestant and Catholic, which was a reflection of the borderland character of south Monaghan, 'outside the bastion of Ulster

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[61] S.J., Connolly (ed.), *Oxford companion to Irish history* (Oxford, 2007), p.402.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Day and McWilliams (eds), *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland,* p140.
[64] James H. Murnane, 'The National School System in County Monaghan: 1831-1850' in *Clogher Record*,. XII, 1 (1986), p.210.

settlement'.[65] The school remained successfully in operation until 1956, contributing to the educational growth of the town's inhabitants across two centuries.[66]

At the beginning of the nineteenth-century, there were 281 schools in Monaghan, 9 of which were situated on the Shirley estate, and EJS made an annual £5 contribution to 5 of them.[67] The number of schools however was not the problem; it was the chaotic nature with which they were run. Teachers were in scarce supply and the availability of a school in any one region depended on the existence of a teacher. They could establish schools in barns and out-houses, charging whatever fees they wished and teaching what they wanted. The new National School system was broadly welcomed in Ireland, especially among Catholics but some among the Protestant population rejected it, given the restricted nature of religious education to children. This included parental consent for every child to receive religious education, while teachers were to only read from the Bible during religion classes. As a result of strong opposition from many Protestant groups, the Church Education Society was established in 1838 to maintain schools of the Established Church, independently of the National System, and there was one of these schools in Carrickmacross, on Shirley's side of the main street. [68]

The Ordnance Survey Memoirs recorded the number of schools in each particular parish in the south Ulster region. Carrickmaclim school for example, which was established in 1818 was listed as having 25 Protestant pupils and 45 Catholics in attendance in the 1830s. 52 were male while 18 were female.[69] Details from this school and the remaining four schools associated with EJS are clearly illustrated by table 2.1 below. All attendance figures are those for the 1830s as recounted by the *Ordnance Survey Memoirs.*

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[65] Duffy, 'Carrickmacross', p.76.
[66] Ordnance Survey Map county Monaghan 1835 (Trinity College Library)
[67] Livingstone, *The Monaghan Story*, pp 265-68.
[68] Ibid., p.270.
[69] Day and McWilliams (eds), *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland*, p.150.

Table 2.1.Details of schools situated in Magheross

School	Date School was established	Number of Catholics	Number of Protestants	Total number Males	Total number Females	Total number Students	Supported by
Carrickmaclim	1818	45	25	52	18	70	EJS & scholars
Mullaghcroghery	1825	14	38	32	20	52	EJS & scholars
Carrickmacross New school	1834	250	3	130	121	253	National Board & private subscription
Cornassanagh	1824	50	0	30	20	50	EJS & scholars
Carrcargaghmore	1834	60	10	30	40	70	EJS & scholars

Source:P.R.O.N.I., Shirley Papers, D3531/C/3/3-4 Reports by George Sudden on the state of schools on the Shirley estate

Livingstone asserted that the latter half of the 1830s was problematic in terms of teaching catechism in the various schools on the Shirley estate. Rev. James Scott who was one of the curates in Carrickmacross severely criticised the scripture teachers who taught in the estate's schools. Mitchell, and fellow aristocrat Captain Richard Bowden were responsible for enforcing the teaching of scripture in the schools. A poster-like large document entitled *Proofs from the Holy Scriptures selected and arranged in 1837 for schools and as a reference in cottages* and published for the benefit of the Ladies Irish Island Association, Auxiliary to the Missions for Achill and other islands was found among the estate's records.[70] EJS' land agent or representative would have distributed and circulated religious items such as this around the schools and perhaps to the tenantry. Unexpected visits to the schools to draw up monthly reports would have ensured that the posters were always displayed.

Disputes were not uncommon on the estate in relation to Catholic education and Bible reading. Mitchell insisted that the Protestant version of the Bible be used in every school that EJS was supporting. When the local Bishop Kernan tried to alter the situation to no avail, several Catholic parents withdrew their children from the estate's schools. One 'remonstrance'[71] written by Bowden on behalf of the teachers was subsequently published in the *Northern Standard.* In the report he criticised the actions of the 'popish curate, who, with a zeal that only ignorant bigotry can enkindle in the breasts of men, has continued to

[70] Reports by George Sudden on the state of schools on the Shirley estate including three printed copies of a proselytising school catechism, 1837 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/3-4).
[71] Livingstone, *Monaghan Story,* p.203.

persecute and denounce these unoffending men from the alter of his chapel, which would be devoted only in worship of God'[72] and he continued in a similar manner which exuded anger and frustration: 'it is a pity that such a fellow is not punished for defamation of character, and exciting the minds of men to commit murder. He is the pastor of a wild a savage district; his 'flock' in consequence . . . have no law but his will; nothing but the interposing hand of providence prevents the sanguinary deeds he urged them to commit'.[73] The terrible deed that Bowden was referring to was the attempted murder of one man named Owen Sheridan who was one of a number of Catholic religious teachers denounced from the alter at Carrickmacross by the priest Father Keown. One of the other teachers that was denounced did not escape with the same outcome. Mr McCabe was actually murdered in the townland of Corduff. EJS was aware of proselytising efforts on the estate and in fact, he mentioned 'put up posters in schools' on numerous occasions in his pocket diaries under his 'to do' lists mentioned in the introduction but ultimately Mitchell received a notorious reputation for his actions.

One particular case which stood out involved the erection of a school again in Corduff, on a piece of land rented from EJS at an annual fee of 5*d*. The teacher was persuaded by Mitchell to use the Protestant version of the Bible in the school, only to find that the Catholic bishop, who was vehemently opposed to the move, fought for the teachers' dismissal. The teacher was subsequently transferred to a different school and the people of the area organised instead to have a school built on church lands which was outside of EJS' control. Mitchell allegedly forbid the sale of stone or building supplies to the community, and he threatened banishment upon any community member who attempted to raise funds on behalf of the school. Ó Mearáin stated that tenants from the neighbouring townlands transported stone using large numbers of carts over the course of one night so as not to be caught.[74]

An article which appeared in the *Northern Standard* on 16 October 1841 confirmed the presence of a school in Corduff;

> Mr Shirley having taken into consideration the wishes of his tenantry, and the wretched state of Corduff and Corcreagh chapels, has offered an acre of ground for a chapel and burial-ground, in the centre of the parish of Magheross, on the following conditions;-
> 1st- To grant a lease in perpetuity to trustees at 1s. per annum, to be used for no other purpose than for a chapel and burial ground, which is to be free to the tenants.

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

> 2d- The present chapel ground of Corduff mountain (on which a National School has lately been built) and the chapel ground of Corcreagh to be given up, and regranted to the Board of Education Ireland. The chapels of Lisdoonan and Magheracloone to take out similar leases as Magheross. Mr Shirley' schools still to continue for the use of those tenants who will take advantage of them; but every Roman Catholic tenant is to use his own discretion as to where he will send his children to be educated.[75]

On 13 September 1842, the Shirley ladies hosted an afternoon of entertainment for children attending the estate's school in the newly completed great hall. Each school's master/mistress entered the hall, directly followed by students, who marched two abreast in procession. The *Northern Standard* reported that a meal was provided for 607 Protestant and Catholic students, all of whom attended schools, supported by the estate.[76] The meal was followed by a blessing 'implored' by the Rev. Morris, an English gentleman visiting Lough Fea. After the meal, entertainment was provided on the lawns at Lough Fea, where the children could partake in 'gymnastic exercises . . . such as climbing, soaped poles, racing, leaping, tumbling. . .'.[77] Mrs EJS, Mrs EPS and Mrs Mitchell awarded a prize of 'some article of dress or utility'.[78] This was then followed by music performed by Patrick Byrne, the blind harpist and dancing in the great hall.

Thomson's account to the Devon Commission in 1844 detailed EJS' strong desire for education across the estate referring to the erection of one school in particular, which cost EJS £600 and between £30 and £40 per annum for the master and mistress' wages. He hastened to add however, that 'all religions can attend indiscriminately, we never interfere with the religious principles of anyone but our own people'.[79] There were no references to Trench having any affiliations with the estate's educational policy. Reports on the 'State of the Schools on the Shirley Property' were drawn up by George Sudden for the years 1846-48. Included in the reports were the names of each of the nine schools, Lossets, Corvally, Carrickmaclim, Carrickmacross, Corduffkelly, Lisdoonan, Cargamore, Corduff chapel school and Tullygarvin, the names of the teaching staff, the individual number of boys and girls attending each school and the total number of students attending each school. These reports indicate EJS' hands-on approach regarding the strict management of education on the estate and the willingness of Mitchell to enforce it, prior to his death in 1843.

In September 1846 the total number of children attending school on the Shirley estate amounted to 217. There were 4 teachers in Lossets national school, which was noted as

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[75] *Northern Standard*, 16 Oct. 1841.
[76] Ibid., 17 Sep. 1842.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Devon Commission, Rev. William Thomson, p.919.

having seriously low numbers of attendees with only 49 students in attendance on the day it was visited by the inspector or EJS' representative, who noted that 'the masters and mistresses seem to be attentive to the school'.[80] A note at the end of the report stated that the schools were all very thinly attended by children and the reason was perhaps that the children were needed at home to carry out harvest work in the fields.[81] The report for October 1846 in connection to Lossets outlined that the master was noted as 'unwell but expects to be able to attend the school room'.[82] Carrickmacross school children were reputed as doing remarkably well. In Lisdoonan school, the attendance was deemed generally bad. The report concluded that the total number in schools subscribed to by EJS was 288, out of this number 72 attended the national schools. By December 1846, overall attendance figures had greatly fallen. 153 children attended the estate school while just 66 were attending the national schools.

The figures for the estate schools rose significantly in 1847, the worst affected year of the Famine. On 8 October 1847 for example, the total attending EJS' schools was 243, 59 per cent more than in December the previous year. On the other hand, there were 28 students attending the national schools (the lowest number recorded on any of the reports) a 43 per cent decrease from December the previous year. The total number of children attending school on the estate in October 1847 was 271. Between October and November 1847, there was a sudden and marked increase in the number of students attending school overall. On 7 November 1847, the total attending EJS' schools was 338, while there were 95 students attending other schools. The total number of children attending national school on the Shirley estate was 433, a 60 per cent increase of overall attendants when compared with the previous month. Meanwhile on the Shirley estate, the national report for 8 July 1848 lists 8 schools. One of the national schools, Tullygarvin was missing from the list yet there was no reason as to why. Of a total number of 383, 322 students attended EJS' schools indicating the number of children attending national schools was 61. In August the total figure rose to 409, but by October, numbers of students were once again reduced with just 292 attending school overall. Outside influences were an important factor to school attendance. Children provided much needed free labour on farms especially during the harvest seasons as was indicated by one of the reports. According to another report in August 1848, 10 students were absent from Cargamore school as a result of having measles.[83]

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[80] Reports by George Sudden on the state of the schools on the Shirley Estate 1846-8 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/4).
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

These statistics coincided with the arrival of Tristram Kennedy as land agent for the neighbouring Bath estate in 1846. Kennedy was extremely well connected across various disciplines especially education, law and agricultural reform. He was born and raised in the diocese of Derry but in county Donegal in the early nineteenth-century. His father Rev. John Pitt Kennedy was a popular Church of Ireland clergyman and was based at the glebe house situated on 280 acres on the Inishowen Peninsula.[84] Rev. Pitt Kennedy died when Tristram was just six years old and left his entire estate to his twelve children. As Kenny has pointed out, the Kennedy children were highly extrovert in their adult lives and careers, especially given the fact that they had grown up in quite a secluded and certainly a very rural setting. By the time Tristram was embarking on his legal career for example, two of his brothers had been called to the bar. By 1826, Tristram was sworn an attorney and shortly afterwards he was appointed sheriff of the city and county of Londonderry but perhaps one of the most notable turning points in his early political career was chairing a highly controversial meeting 'on the comparative merits of Protestantism and Popery' in March 1828.[85] Proselytism by evangelical Protestants was widespread throughout Ireland especially during the 1820s and what made this particular meeting different to others was not the fact that the debate lasted over twelve days or that there were 'six clergymen from the Established Church and six Roman Catholic priests nominated to join battle',[86]or that the transient debate moved from courthouse to cathedral; it was the unusual move by the sheriff (Kennedy) to excuse himself of his chairman duties on the fifth day and nominate a Roman Catholic to take the chair. This 'lack of bias would be recalled gratefully long after the event';[87] Kennedy's reconciliation and reforming approach to religious debate was mirrored in his handling of most other matters when he became land agent and this awarded him the favour of his tenantry. Perhaps Kennedy had looked to his father's religious experience for inspiration as he looked to his brothers and sister for inspiration when he begun managing the Bath estate. John Pitt and Charles Kennedy managed estates in Tyrone and Donegal where they conducted major land reclamation work and John in particular gained recognition as a "the most important advocate of waste-land reclamation in the years around the Famine".[88] Akin to this fame John worked in office as inspector-general of national schools for a brief period and his expertise was later reflected on the two estates that he and his brother Charles managed. Women were actively

[84] Kenny, 'Paradox or pragmatist? "Honest" Tristram Kennedy (1805-85)', p.02.
[85] Quoted in Kenny, 'Paradox or pragmatist? "Honest" Tristram Kennedy (1805-85)', pp 02-3.
[86] Ibid. p.03.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Quoted in Kenny, 'Paradox or pragmatist? "Honest" Tristram Kennedy (1805-85)', p.09.

encouraged to partake in earning an income from sources other than agriculture. In Donegal for example 'where illicit distillation was said to have been "the staple trade of the district" a female industrial school was set up, with a boarding class attached to it, in which young women were trained to become teachers'.[89] In the mean time one of Kennedy's sisters Mary was attempting to revive an old customary costume for women to learn to create in Tyrone. The whole idea was to encourage home-made industries from locally sourced produce and thus prevent idleness and as Kenny states, Kennedy was 'neither without experience nor without example' when in the early stages of the Famine he arrived in Carrickmacross. Education was one of the first areas he targeted in the region given that 'scarcely one in four of the population could read and write'.[90] Building on the existence of the national school system already in place and which was largely "literary" based, he took inspiration from both his brothers and sister and within twelve months by 1848, he had established no less than seven national schools, an agricultural school accompanied by a model farm on the estate.[91] Kennedy also focused his attention on the lace-making industry which had originated in the region in the 1820s but had disappeared with the decline of the linen industry decades earlier. He decided to incorporate lace-making instruction in the estate's national school curriculum and he imported special lace from Belgium, 'to demonstrate a finely finished product,'[92]which in essence became the embryonic stages of Carrickmacross lace as has been examined in chapter one. Kennedy's influence on the region's educational system which had otherwise been dubbed 'a turgid amalgam of social ethics and political docility'[93] awarded him critical acclaim from the Commissioners for National Education in 1850 when a report stated

> Through a wide portion of the barony of Farney the casual looker-on cannot fail to observe the neat appearance and gentle manner of the younger females, and in their looks an expression of self-reliance and content. To those who had known then ill-fed and ill-clad, careless of cleanliness and dejected, if not morose, the transition is at once extraordinary and most cheering.[94]

The report was inadvertently referring to the employment of a large number of female cottier tenants, who were employed by Carrickmacross schools to carry out not just lace making but also knitting, sewing and quilting. In total 150 females aged between 18 and 40 were employed in the local industry in 1851 and Kenny asserts that the income derived from

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[89] Ibid., p.10.
[90] Ibid., p.12.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Gearoid O' Tuathaigh, *Ireland before the Famine: 1798-1848* (Dublin, 2007), p.106.
[94] *Reports of the comm. of nat. educ. in Ir.* 15 (1849), p.262-3 quoted in Kenny , 'Paradox or pragmatist? "Honest" Tristram Kennedy (1805-85)', p.12.

this employment helped some of the poorer cottier families in Farney survive during some of the worst affected years of the Famine.[95] Although Kennedy relied heavily on the already existing national school system, on 'extraordinary individual exertion' and 'local expenditure' to fulfil his educational endeavours, he reported that over the course of five years the local industry had generated £3,000 income for the female employees, which awarded him a very favourable reputation among the tenants of the Bath estate and most certainly would have sparked interest if not condemnation on neighbouring estates.[96]

Mitchell and the bog rent

The Ordnance Survey Memoirs stated that bog-land in the Farney region was primarily used as fuel and consumed by the tenants of the estate. Until the late 1820s, EJS exercised turbary rights allowing relative freedom to tenants to cut turf. Mitchell was reputed to have enforced stricter rules regarding the use of turf, which contributed to his notorious reputation. However, the practices that Mitchell enforced pertaining to turf were already recommended in Landor's survey in 1814, and turf proved problematic in terms of the business pursuits of the Royal Irish Mining Company and EJS in the mid 1820s.

A letter and accompanying report outlining previous turf practices on the estate was sent to then land agent Mr Gibbings on 18 August 1886 by large farmer and agriculturist for the estate, George McKittrick. The report helps to gain a better understanding of the turf situation in the 1830s.

> It originated in Mr Mitchell's time (a former agent) he got all the black bogs on the estate. . .and any tenant having green bog in his farm got no black bog. He gave them permission to cut up on them by taking a ticket and paying a nominal rent for the part cut. This rule holds good up to the present with many of the tenants. The principal part of the green bogs lay on the North West and South west of the estate.
> In Mr Morant's time owing to the scarcity of bog he gave permission to tenants on the south and East of the property to cut turf out of boundary drains and drains laid off to separate the Mooney's land . . . Then after the main drainage of the estate about 1852, several patches of the Mooney's land got too . . . dry as to produce no crops he (Mr Morant) then give permission to cut turf on those patches having an understanding with the tenants to level and reclaim the parts where the turf would be taken out of.
> No rent was charged in these cases as the tenantry were paying drainage money . . . It was not thought of in those days the tenants were most anxious and particular in levelling after them.[97]

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[95] Kenny , 'Paradox or pragmatist? "Honest" Tristram Kennedy (1805-85)', pp 12-3
[96] Ibid., p.14.
[97] Survey of estate bog-land carried out by George McKittrick,1886 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/S/102).

Following several examinations of the estate in the 1830s, all rents were increased by one third while bog land was rented at between £4 and £8 an acre. A bog ticket system was also applied, whereby turf was allotted to tenants from 25 to 40 perches each. Tenants had to buy a season ticket at the rent office and the quantity of turf tenants received for their money was at the discretion of Mitchell. The issuing of bog tickets appears to have been an administrative nightmare. Boylan told the Devon Commission that tenants paid between 6*d.* and 10*d.* for a ticket, permitting them to cut turf. Often times, after travelling long distances on foot, tenants were confronted by a busy estate office where the clerk would ask those seeking to purchase bog tickets to come back another day. This in turn caused a myriad of problems and written complaints poured into the office. Even as late as 1851, Thomas Carragher of Lossetts wrote to William George Smith stating that he drew turf for EJS in August 1849 and instead of receiving his wages in cash, they both agreed (presumably Morant and Carragher) that it would be deducted from his rent. When Carragher visited the office to pay the deficit on his rent, Smith did not have sufficient time to find the bog list. According to Carragher, this incident was repeated twice. In addition, he claimed that 'often times since [I] went to the office and seeing you were weak in health, did not like to be troublesome, returned home without making any application'.[98] As a result of these complications, Carragher was now in arrears, owing £3 2*s.* 'and has no means to pay same'. He further outlined that he was in ill health himself and the only means he had of raising the money was to sell his cow, 'the only nourishment per [petitioner] has for his family'.[99] Carragher did not offer any other solution to the problem only to state that he begged Smith's 'kind inference'. The amount he owed was reduced to £1 14*s.* 4*d.*

The exchange rate between turf and cash appears to have altered repeatedly. Often it was calculated, depending on how efficient the tenant had been in paying his rent that year. According to Ó Mearáin, had a tenant disagreed with Mitchell throughout the year, 'he was doomed to sit with his family during the long winter nights at a fireless hearth depending for the cooking of his food on the uncertain gathering of a few brambles or the charitable donation of a creel of turf from a kind neighbour, [this] however had to be brought after night for fear of vengeance from the office'.[100] On the Bath estate, bogs were regulated in an altogether different way. Tenants were free to use the bog-land they were each assigned and to cut turf as they wished but the land agent had express rights to put any man from his bog.

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[98] Thomas Carragher to W.G.Smith, Feb.1851 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/5/1-3).
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ó Mearáin , 'Estate agents in Farney: Trench & Mitchell', p.408.

No man could sell his bog or transfer it. Bog land was issued for domestic fuel purposes only, it was not to be used for boiling food for cattle for example. Normally each family was granted half a rood of bog.[101] The issue of turbary rights, was and continued to be a contentious issue and the actions of EJS and Mitchell would haunt EPS and his representatives with further disputes, in the decades that followed.

William Steuart Trench

William Steuart Trench who has been mentioned earlier was land agent for the Shirley estate from 1843-4. Trench's father, Thomas Trench was a Church of Ireland Dean of Kildare and *Burke's Peerage* recorded that the Trench family derived from a 'French Huguenot ancestor named Frederic de la Tranche' and this French connection made Trench very proud.[102] His mother was the daughter of Walter Weldon of Rahinderry, Queen's County, and a member of parliament.[103] Trench married Elizabeth Sealy Townsend in 1832, her father was the Master of Chancery in Ireland at the time. The couple had one daughter and two sons, both of which followed in their father's career footsteps.

As a gentleman land agent, Trench was employed by absentee landlords for much of his professional life, and found fraternising with his employers and other members of the landed class second nature. Like many other agents such as James Nixon, agent for the Leslie estates who had great administrative skills and a vast knowledge of the legal system in Ireland, Trench's 'manners and habits permitted easy social intercourse between employer and agent'.[104] His attitudes and philosophy may be seen to represent the priorities and interests of the landed class, which was unsurprising, given his background.[105] For agents, social standing was often dictated by family background, education and/or a military background. Trench had entered Trinity College Dublin in 1826 to study courses in classics and the sciences but he left without taking a degree.[106] Through his writings, it is possible to gain an insight into Trench's character and to a certain degree the cultural context that surrounded his work. *Realities of Irish Life* was written for a highly literate, intelligent and politically astute audience. One newspaper commented on Trench's attempt to 'influence the mind of the reader

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[101] The Devon Commission, James Evatt, p.928.
[102] Gerard L. Lyne, *The Lansdowne estate in Kerry under the agency of William Steuart Trench 1849-72* (Dublin, 2001), p.xlv.
[103] Delaney, *William Steuart Trench and his management of the Digby estate,* p.09.
[104] Maguire, *Downshire estates,* p.191.
[105] Duffy, "Emigrants and the Estate Office in the Mid-Nineteenth-century", p.75.
[106] Gerard J., Lyne, *The Lansdowne Estate in Kerry,* p.xlvi.

towards certain phases of thought'.[107] The book was found in the libraries of the landed classes, it was found among Lord Carlingford's very extensive collection of historical and literary works donated to the Louth Archaeological Society.[108] The *Irish Press* once declared that 'his book is an invaluable contribution; from the landowning side to the history of the agrarian struggle in Ireland in the nineteenth-century'.[109] In *Realities* Trench claimed to have 'lost no opportunity of acquiring information which might qualify me to become a land agent as being most suitable in its higher branches to my capacity'.[110] The predominantly nationalist newspaper the *Nation* was much more critical of Trench's work (in 1871), openly and emphatically denouncing his 'powerful and picturesque imagination that had led him apparently to forget so often, when drawing upon his memory for past scenes, the exact point where fact faded into fancy . . .'.[111] Lyne suggested that perhaps Trench was influenced by his cousin and mentor Francis Trench who was agent for the duke of Leinster and another relative George F. Trench who was agent for the Talbot-Crosby estate at Ardfert.

In the mid nineteenth-century, Trench became land agent for the Lansdowne estate in Kenmare from 1850 to 1872, he then added Offaly, where he took up agency of Lord Digby's estate at Geashill Manor from 1857 to 1867. Trench came from what was known as a new school of agents, he was highly professional, and he developed a strong capacity to construct well-written reports, while his attention to detail in relation to all elements of estate management was evident. His vast knowledge and experience of running an estate, as evidenced by the records of correspondence between him and EJS, was not accidental; 'he had spent years preparing to become a land agent, winning a gold medal for the Royal Agricultural Society for his essay "Reclamation" in 1841'.[112] By the time he became agent of Lord Digby's 31,000 acre estate in 1857, he was able to transform it from 'bleakness and poverty to one with good productive land, where many tenants enjoyed improved living standards and where improvements in housing and land quality gained national and indeed international recognition'.[113]

In *Realities of Irish life* it was clear what Trench thought of Irish tenants in general. He referred to them as 'barbarous', 'idiotic' and a 'very peculiar race'.[114] It is important to

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[107] *Irish Times*, 24 Feb. 1871.
[108] F.F. Urouhart, 'Books from the late Lord Carlingford's library' in *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society*, vi, no. 1 (Dec. 1925) pp 50-2.
[109] *Irish Press*, 10 Aug. 1949.
[110] William Steuart Trench, *Realities of Irish Life* (London, 1869), p.38.
[111] *Nation,* 11Mar. 1871.
[112] http://www.oxforddnb.com.elib.tcd.ie/view/article/27704 (Feb. 2011.)
[113] Delaney, *William Steuart Trench and his management of the Digby estate, Kings County, 1857-71,* p.08.
[114] Trench, *The Realities of Irish Life*, p.18.

examine the actual relationship that existed between land agent and tenantry, especially in relation to a landlord, like EJS who was semi-absentee. The relationship which existed with the land agent and tenants reflected on the landlord. Duffy explored this idea of the structure which existed on estates where the landlord was non-resident, and he outlined how country people envisaged the vague entity which the estate stood for; 'it may have lacked local clarity or been represented in local perceptions by a middleman, and it was often characterised by incoherence, like the "throughotherness" of crown estates like Ballykilcline'.[115]

In *Realities,* Trench alleged that he was victimised by EJS' tenants on his first day as agent for the estate in 1843. The opening scenes of his account documented a severe assault that took place at a meeting outside the estate office in Carrickmacross. He found himself obliged to address a large number of tenants who were 'capable of the wildest and most frenzied excitement'.[116] The tenants were petitioning against increased rents 'which were running at 21 per cent above Richard Griffith's valuation of the estate in 1834'.[117] This was coupled with the addition of exorbitant bog rent imposed on tenants by Mitchell. Whilst standing on a chair, Trench announced that EJS would first of all not be addressing the crowd, as promised, and secondly, he would not be reducing their rents. The tenants, now exasperated by the news, lunged forward and made a savage attack on Trench, making him fear for his life. It was Trench's first encounter with the people of Farney, but he was eventually rescued by the then parish priest Father Keelaghan, who was not given any mention by Trench in *Realities*. Instead he maintained that single handed, he escaped from the hands of the most 'wicked and determined foes'.[118]

Trench's book was an instant hit amongst English readers, it was praised by the *Edinburgh Review* for its forcible and impressive description of the Irish peasantry, which likened its 'popular force, humour and pathos to that in the early works of Charles Dickens'.[119] However, the accuracy of his work was questioned in later years by historians. He also wrote much less popular works such as *Ierne*, a fictitious work on the faith of the Irish peasantry and their preoccupation with landownership, as well as historical works on Ireland from the earliest times to the Land Act of 1870. These works failed to receive serious recognition. Moreover, Trench became well known for implementing assisted emigration schemes during and in the aftermath of the Famine as land agent for both the Shirley and

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[115] Duffy, 'Emigrants and the estate office in the mid-nineteenth-century,' p.71.
[116] Trench, *The Realities of Irish Life*, p.20.
[117] Duffy, 'Management problems on a large estate in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland: William Steuart Trench's report on the Shirley estate in 1843'.
[118] Trench, *The Realities of Irish Life*, p.23.
[119] http://www.oxforddnb.com.elib.tcd.ie/view/article/27704 (Mar.2011).

Bath estates, and to a greater extent, the Lansdowne estate. He resigned from his post as land agent of the Shirley estate in 1844, having lasted only one year. Although the real reasons for his abrupt departure are unknown it may have to do with the fact that many of his proposed reforms were not taken up, though it is fair to assume that they became the basis for many of the management strategies pursued by his successor George Morant, brother in-law to EJS and land agent for the estate from 1844 to the late 1850s. In reply to his letter of resignation, EJS conveyed regret at Trench's decision, but he accepted it as a result of their differences of opinion on many matters connected with the estate.[120] It was reported that when Trench died on 4 August 1872, aged 63, the headstone that was erected by his grave side was repeatedly demolished. It remains in a state of disrepair to this day which can be seen at St Patrick's Church cemetery, Donaghmoyne, County Monaghan.

In March 1843, when Trench was appointed land agent of the Shirley estate, he found the financial situation in steep decline. The arrears of rent were escalating and EJS' tenants were becoming more and more restless with current rent levels, together with the rent they now had to pay for bog-land (a process of cutting turf freely had continued for generations). Trench was overcome with a sense that radical changes needed to take place across the estate. Unless fresh attempts were made to recover debts of rent, in other words arrears from defaulting tenants, and unless there were tough strategies put in place to greatly decrease the estate's population through eviction and emigration, and in turn sub-divided farms were consolidated, the Shirley estate would not generate the revenue which an estate of its magnitude required.

Tenant Discontent

There was evidence of civil unrest directed towards employees of the Shirley estate in the Farney area immediately prior to the Famine, not just in Trench's written recollections but in newspaper reports on various court hearings and trials. Perhaps the strong presence of the Repeal movement in the barony of Farney helped to cement a feeling of negativity towards the established order. The *Newry Examiner* documented a court case that took place in July 1843. Michael Monaghan of Magheross, Carrickmacross, was put on trial for planning the murder of William George Smith. Smith was under agent of the Shirley estate, and was appointed in June 1830 at the same time as Mitchell was appointed agent for the estate. Smith had also become clerk for the Poor Law Guardians in addition to running his own grocery

[120] Correspondence from Shirley to Trench 8 Jan.1845(W.P.R.O., Shirley papers, CR464/147/3).

business in Carrickmacross. Monaghan approached a man named Arthur Byrne, a carpenter by trade who was working in Carrickmacross on 21 July and asked him if he was willing to carry out the assassination of Smith for the sum of £60. The excuse he offered for not shooting Smith himself was that his wife was 'confined' (perhaps this meant she was ill, about to give birth or physically disabled). Monaghan was a mason by trade and had only met Byrne once, at the building of a local national school. After some lengthy deliberations and on hearing at least two very positive character references in favour of Monaghan, he was acquitted by the jury. The Devon Commission questioned Smith as to whether allegations of his showing favour towards customers of his grocer business in his role as a guardian were true. Smith denied any wrongdoing, asserting that those who were prior customers were treated exactly the same as those who bought their goods elsewhere.

There was also the case of Philip, Patrick and Thomas Burns, Partick Coffey and James Ward. All were accused of; 'endeavouring to compel one Patrick Magee, a bog bailiff on the estate of Mr. Shirley'.[121] In court Magee stated that he was directed to go to Scholskill bog at 10am, where he was to act as a security man, so that no one could either enter or trespass on the bog-land without having express permission from the estate's authorities. He recollected:

> no people came to me at the bog, but after I left it, there was a great cheer raised, and about forty or sixty people followed me, big and little; I was walking at my leisure, and the people walked after me; I went into the house of a man called Martin; the women and children were the only persons that spoke to me; they said that I shouldn't be going round the bog until the rents were reduced; they said I wouldn't be allowed to go . . . unless I would promise that I wouldn't be bog bailiff until the rents were reduced; I saw Philip, Patrick, and Thomas Burns, and James ward among the crowd.[122]

What is most striking is that he made the promise not just because he probably feared for his life surrounded by the mob, but because he was afraid of the women, 'I was afraid of the women, and of none of the others'.[123] They did not harm him but he was alarmed by them. The judge disallowed any further evidence be given as the version of events specified by Magee opened the possibility that the accused did not commit any serious crime, they were all acquitted of their involvement.

Many individuals interviewed by the Devon Commission pointed to bog rents on the Shirley estate as one of the major factors that contributed to agrarian outrage. By 1844 bog rents had been charged on the estate for over fifteen years; meanwhile turf continued to be cut

[121] *Newry Examiner and Louth Advertiser,* 19 Jul. 1843.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.

freely on the Bath estate. Peter Mohun complained that EJS had taken away his good bog (presumably because he could not afford to keep it) for which he paid 6*s.* 8*d.*; it was replaced with what he termed as 'a bad bog,' turf from which, would smoke the family from their house, unless there was a very good draught on the chimney. 'The bad bog', demanded a cheaper rent of 4*s.* 6*d.*,[124] Peter Hoey told the Devon Commission that a tenant from the Bath estate had come to preach to those on Shirley's estate about bog rent.[125] This, plus the fact that Mitchell had recently died, was enough motivation to drive the tenants to arms which is essentially what they did, when they attacked Trench on 3 April 1843. In contrast, Bath's tenants, who were also requesting a reduction in rent were satisfied when told by their agent James Evatt, that the matter would be considered and a decision made at a later date; 'they remained peaceful in consequence'.[126]

There was also strong support in Carrickmacross and the surrounding areas for the Repeal movement in 1842-3. The campaign, which had begun over a decade earlier, was rejuvenated across the country by the economic downturn and the publicity it sparked in the *Nation* newspaper. Politically active groups began to form across the country and adapted what had been done in the campaign of the 1830s. Their actions were funded by what became known as 'repeal rent', raised by nationwide committees and branches through the effective use of newspaper reporting and the co-operation with the Catholic bishops and clergy.[127] One of the first open air demonstrations or 'monster meetings' in Ulster was held in Carrickmacross at Easter 1843 and it was reportedly attended by 150,000 people.[128]

Repeal meetings were held on a monthly basis on Sunday evenings in what news articles termed 'the reading room' in Carrickmacross. The chairman was John O'Hagan and those next in ranking order were known as wardens. In Carrickmacross, they were Peter Corrigan, Peter McCaul, Bernard Clarke, Thos. Scott, Thos. O' Flaherty and Bernard Dignan. Their role was to promote the organisation locally, to generate numbers to attend meetings and to raise money. The money they each raised every month was made public knowledge at the meeting, so there would inevitably have been pressure on wardens who raised the least amounts, to improve their subscriptions the following month. A newspaper article reported how, on one occasion, the total sum of 2s.15d. was contributed by 55 workmen employed by the town's distillery and £1 was also subscribed by Rev. Mr McGowan on behalf of the

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[124] The Devon Commission, Peter Mohun, p.922.
[125] Ibid., Peter Hoey, p.923.
[126] Ibid.
[127] S.J. Connolly (ed.), *Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 2007), p.507.
[128] *Newry Examiner and Louth Advertiser,* 19 Jul. 1843.

distillery owner James Gartlan. Both subscriptions were met with great cheers from those in attendance, who, according to the article were, 'so numerous and respectable an assembly' and 'a patriotic body of men'.[129] The Loyal National Repeal Association issued the Carrickmacross branch of the movement with reading material to aid them in their research on the issue. The following are some of the books presented for the use of the Reading-room . . . *Grattan's Memoirs, O' Connel's Memoirs; Reports of the committee of the Association; Ireland and her Agitators ... Repeal Dictionary, The law of Landlord and Tenant*'.[130]

'The Battle of Magheracloone'

The tenants of the Shirley estate appear to have seen an opening for change after Mitchell's death. In 1843, EJS on the advice of Trench was successful in obtaining the right to implement a process known as 'substitution of service' in the Dublin courts. What this meant was that a landlord could post a legal notice of arrears in a public place instead of actually serving it to the persons in question. The tenants who were thus challenged despised the new method for obvious reasons. They were outsmarted, but their anger turned to violence when EJS' 'Protestant authorities' attempted to nail a summons onto the door of the Catholic Church in Magheracloone. In Molloy's view, 'to the parishioners from the Shirley estate, such a desecration sounded a call to battle'.[131] The 'Protestant authorities' that Malloy referred to were actually men recruited by EJS, and were named in the *Northern Standard* as John Curry, Edmond Stevens, John McMahon and William Clindening (who drove Mr Shirley's bailiff, John McEnaney, with seven policemen on his long car drawn by two horses), accompanied by the head constable, James Lang, and eighteen men.[132]

The headline of the *Northern Standard* read 'Police open fire on tenants at Magheracloone Chapel', but the article outlined a somewhat different scene of events, which took place on the day in question, when compared with Trench's recollection of events. The article described how the convoy of EJS' men made their way firstly to Corduff and Referagh Churches where they were met by a large but non-violent assembly. The third stop was at St Peter's Church, Lower Magheracloone. Many from Corduff and Referagh had followed the convoy with others joining the procession en route. The enlarged crowd began to obstruct McEnaney from posting the notices, threatening violence if the bailiff persisted. The

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[129] Ibid.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Scott Molloy, *Irish Titan Irish Toilers* (New Hampshire, 2008), p.21.
[132] *Northern Standard*, 11 Jun.1849.

operation was abandoned, with the convoy returning to Carrickmacross to consult with the sub-inspector of police Captain Barry. In the afternoon EJS' team headed towards upper Magheracloone church, colloquially known as 'the Rock Chapel', having been advised to continue their process with the accompaniment of Barry and his police cortege. There they were met with opposition, none of the posting boys could reach the door and the process had to be abandoned. The procession then hastily proceeded back to Lower Magheracloone, at Tubbermannon Bridge a magistrate from nearby Kingscourt Mr Wilcocks joined EJS' team. Trouble was likely as they reached the Rock Chapel, as a large crowd had already formed. The article suggested that the tenants were mounting a peaceful protest demanding only a reduction in their rents. Wilcocks read the Riot Act and the police posted the ejection orders on the church door. In response the crowd leapt forward, most likely in a bid to remove them, but Barry's men who were armed and ready were given the order to fire. The crowd scattered immediately, but many were wounded and one youth, Peter Agnew aged 16, from Lisnaguiveragh, was shot in the back and killed.[133]According to Trench in *Realities,* the tenants in the region gathered together to form a hand-to-hand combat with the local police who accompanied the bailiff placing the announcements. Confronted by a large intimidating, though unarmed force, the constables shot into the crowd, wounding several and killing one. After the police retreated, the tenants turned the subsequent funeral into a protest demonstration. The Shirley estate then gave up any attempt to collect rents from the destitute and seething farmers, at least until the next harvest.[134]

The year after the 'Battle of Magheracloone', the deceased boy's father received the assistance of a third party to write a number of petitions on his behalf to Trench, setting out the family's dire need of help, in what was a very poignant expression. For Agnew it appeared that death seemed his only possible escape route if EJS did not come to his aid. It must have been exceptionally difficult for this particular man to find it in himself to put aside feelings of pride, anger and hatred to have to beg those responsible for the death of his son, for his last chance of survival. On 13 January he wrote of his destitute state, outlining how he had spent his last penny paying for and borrowing more money for the funeral and interment of his son. This letter was followed by another one six months later, which is relayed here.

The following was the Petition of Patrick Agnew, of Lisnagevragh 23 May 1844.

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[133] Ibid.
[134] Molloy, *Irish Titan, Irish Toilers,* p.21.

> That your Petitioner most Respectfully begs leave to advert to a Petition which he handed to your Honour in February last, in which he stated part of the many grievances, which have rendered him a Monument of misery and woe. He stated also, that he was the father of the unfortunate Peter Agnew, who was shot by the Police at Magheracloone on the 5th June last, whose death has filled the measure of his calamities, accompanied by poverty, nakedness, and all species of destitution.
> Besides the above, a malignant distemper carried off his pigs, and a lingering painful illness seized all his family, who had not a pound of woollen day or night covering, a drop of milk, or the smallest comfort in human life, till the whole family are so overwhelmed with distress and poverty, that they should rather prefer death than live. — Together with all his misery he is in Arrears of Rent, without hopes of being able to retrieve, as he could not crop his ground this season. He therefore submits all his distress to your humanity, and throws himself entirely on your clemency, beseeching you for love of God to visit his place, and ascertain the above facts, and afterwards dispose of himself, his family and place, as your own humanity shall dictate.[135]

The clemency and humanity sought by Agnew was not to happen as the records show that he and his family's fate was eventual eviction in November 1849.

On the Shirley estate, the months of April and May 1843 witnessed a rent-strike. According to Trench in *Realities,* this was met with harsh legalities to effect compliance. Notices to quit were served while tenants were given strong warnings by bailiffs. In retaliation, tenants threatened to cut turf from bog land without tickets and this caused chaos in the rent office with the administration having to request extraordinary measures from Dublin Castle. Trench claimed that he advised that the matter be dealt with differently and that a compromise could be reached. He was eventually able to calm the situation, promising tenants that he would attempt to alleviate their situation. In the months that followed, he made an effort to fulfil his promise by drawing up a confidential report.

"Causes of Complaints Stated and Certain Alterations Suggested in Reference to the Management of the Shirley Estate"

Trench drew up a strictly confidential report in August 1843. There were three major topics which the report addressed: firstly, factors regarding estate management caused tenants to complain; secondly, ways of recuperating estate rents and proposed improvements; and thirdly, it estimated the necessary amounts the estate should invest if the second part of the report was adhered to. The report proved so significant that to some degree it can be linked, not alone to the genesis of his land agency on the Shirley estate, but also to the termination of

[135] Petition of Patrick Agnew to EJS, 24 May 1844 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/P/Box 1).

his position one year later. It reflected very little of the William Steuart Trench character depicted by *Realities of Irish Life* published two decades later. The report undertook much more than other surveys and reports previously carried out on the estate. It was ruthless in its condemnation of the dire poverty of the tenantry, most of whom were living at a subsistence level. It went much further in criticising the management policies of the previous land agents, and Trench made a direct attack on the regime adopted by Mitchell in extorting bog rent and implementing a turf-cutting ticket strategy in order to extract a greater income from the already over-burdened tenants. Duffy claimed that Trench was echoing contemporary authors on land proprietorship such as William Blacker, agent for the Gosford estates in Armagh, who opined that property had its rights as well as its responsibilities. This motto was consequentially engraved on the blue limestone cross erected in the 'home-wood' at Lough Fea in memory of EJS in 1856.

An article in the *Northern Standard*highlighted that there were five very definitive steps taken to ensure the smooth and successful collection of rents, regardless of any external intervening circumstances.[136]These measures were stringently implemented during the rent strike and the 'Battle of Magheracloone' in April and May 1843.The first step employed the services of men known as process servers, which was self explanatory. Their task was to serve tenants with legal bills for rent arrears. Secondly, the grippers were directed to arrest all tenants against whom decrees for non-payment of rent had been obtained, followed by jailing in Monaghan Goal, with all expenses charged to the defaulting tenant. Thirdly, there were watchers or keepers employed on behalf of EJS to vigilantly observe crops which were confiscated, in case they were carried away in the night. The cost of the work carried out by the keepers was deducted from the sale of the tenants' crop and this was naturally detested by the tenants. According to Trench the keepers would 'call frequently upon a backward tenant, [they] used to go through his entire premises to watch all his dealings, to know all his stores and to make himself perfect master of all his circumstances'.[137]Trench opined in his report, that if EJS wanted the tenantry on his estate to co-operate with him in paying their rents, they would have to be encouraged, rather than compelled to do so. They were too proud a people to be intimated in this manner. Instead of confronting the fact that they could not meet the demands of their rents and be faced with a keeper on their premises, they would instead sell their last animal or their final crop until they literally had nothing left. Trench expressed the belief that it was for reasons such as this that rents were continually met for prolonged

[136] *Northern Standard,* 24. Feb.1847.
[137] Duffy, 'Management Problems on a Large Estate in Mid-Nineteenth-century Ireland', pp 112-3.

lengths of time, and they would then suddenly stop as the tenant grew poorer and poorer. The whole process resulted in long-term high rents and a blatant ignorance on behalf of the Shirleys. In confronting issues such as these, he explained that the landlord should have an in-depth knowledge of each defaulting tenant's situation; 'now I well know their pride and that nothing could possibly be more offensive to them than this, they will bear their poverty with unexampled patience, but they do not wish, and in fact cannot bear, that any neighbour should know its full extent'.[138]

As part of the fourth step, there were drivers employed to escort all the livestock belonging to the defaulting tenant to the pound until the rent was paid or they were sold at auction, the money accruing to the landlord. Often there might be twelve or fourteen cattle brought to the pound on any one particular day and occasionally this figure increased to 20. Trench highlighted in his account to the Devon Commission that he had not witnessed this type of punishment before and perhaps that was why he claimed no cattle had actually been sold under his orders, because the tenant usually came to the office with the rent money or the promise of payment.[139] Lastly, the 'Crow Bar Brigade', was employed by the landlord to knock down, when necessary, the ejected tenant's home. In his report, Trench exclaimed that he had never before witnessed a process of tenant intimidation like that operating on the Shirley estate.

Duffy claimed that Trench 'was objectively correct in strictly economic terms; by the 1840s, from the point of view of management, adjustments had to be made in the population - land ratios to correct imbalances inherited from earlier mismanagement'.[140]The Downshire estate in Blessington for example had adopted a similar policy to EJS, yet Trench maintained in the report that he had never witnessed, to the same extent such a 'strict system of espionage'[141]as EJS had enforced on his tenants. In his field of work as agent prior to his appointment with Shirley, the rules were simple, 'land or rent'. Rev D. Boylan told the Devon Commission that he knew a seventy year old man who was sent to goal in Monaghan. He would have happily walked the 26 miles to Monaghan town rather than have to pay for transport which amounted to 14*s*. Though this was divided between the number of prisoners escorted, it was nevertheless, viewed as a serious injustice to tenants, who were already living at a subsistence level.[142] Putting a man in goal would not facilitate him making the rent,

[138] Ibid.
[139] Devon Commission, William Steuart Trench, p.931.
[140] Duffy, 'Management problems on a large estate in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland', p.103.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Devon Commission, Rev D. Boylan p.906.

though Trench could not see how detaining defaulting tenants could be avoided, otherwise thousands would have to be evicted and that, he stated, was not the answer either.[143]

Other causes of complaint for tenants was the issue of 'double rents': with the rent on bogs integrated with the price of standard rents and the 'raising of the coppers' when it came to paying. In terms of rents, tenants maintained that they were being charged 21 per cent above the government's valuation for land and this was true. To prove it, Trench calculated the yearly land value of the estate and added it to the bog rent which equalled £24,626 2*s.* 11*d.*, £1,600 of which was income derived from bog rent. In 1844, with reductions made to bog land, the income decreased to £1,200 per annum.[144] Griffith's Valuation for the estate indicated that the annual rent should have been set at £20,372 7*s.* 2*d.* EJS' rent prices were therefore 21 per cent higher than the valuation.[145] According to the calculation of the rentals adopted here, the rent arrears owed to the Shirley estate by November 1843 stood at £3,140, while the rental income for that year exclusive of bog rent should have totalled £22,007. The arrears from the previous year added to the rent due in 1843 totalled £25,932.The rental income however was £21,648, leaving arrears of £4,284, which were carried forward into 1844.[146]

In his report, Trench accused EJS of 'close shaving' on the matter of bogs. He stated that bogs were gradually raised from 3*d.* to 4*d.* and from 4*d.* to 6*d.* and from 6*d.* to 8*d.*, 'they complain that if a man has what is termed "green bog" that he pays a "double rent" for it, one rent for it as land and another as bog'.[147] This, Trench claimed was not entirely true; a tenant, he stated, 'pays full rent for it as land, and it is also true he pays for it as bog, but when he uses it as bog, a surveyor is employed to make out how much he uses of it as bog, and that amount is deducted from his land rent'.[148]EJS had not acceded to Griffith's advice that bog and turbary should not be valued singularly as a result of its fuel usage. Bog rental should be incorporated with the rental price of the land.[149]

The 'raising of the coppers', another contentious issue, was a book-keeping practice whereby the amount owed in rent was rounded off to the nearest pound or shilling. In *Realities,* Trench used the example where £6 10*s.* 9*d.* would have been rounded off to £6 11*s.*

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[143] Devon Commission, William Steuart Trench, p.931.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Duffy, 'Management problems on a large estate in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland', p.115.
[146] It is important to note at this point, all figures relating to rentals are rounded off to the nearest pound. Calculated using the figures from the rentals for the Shirley estate from 1843-1914,(P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D/3531/R/6/11 – D/3531/R/10/1-2).
[147] Duffy, 'Management Problems on a large estate in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland', p.103.
[148] Ibid., p.114.
[149] Ibid.

Every penny was important to the tenant and it was therefore a highly contentious issue. In the report, Trench estimated that the outstanding money amounted to a trifling £50 extra income for the estate per annum; however it was the distasteful principle, rather than the financial value for what Trench himself termed an 'opulent estate' such as EJS'.

The serving of decrees for the non-payment of rent was also a practice commonly used by the estate. Trench believed this practice was most demoralising to the tenantry. Tenants were issued with notices to pay their debts by a certain date (they had one year to pay rent). Should the arrears not be paid by the date in question, the defaulting tenant was arrested and taken to Monaghan Gaol, where he was detained until such time as the arrears were paid. All the expenses that surrounded the measure were paid for by the tenant, including, the travel expenses and maintenance of the bailiffs whilst in Monaghan. The original arrear might have totalled £2 or £3 but altogether the process (excluding a day or two loss of earnings for the tenant as well as the suffering caused to him and his family) may have amounted to over £2 11*s*.6*d*. Trench spoke of the inhumane nature of this practice, which he had never witnessed previously. If individually analysed, these measures by their very nature had an obvious negative impact on the behaviour of tenants towards the estate administration. Together though, they were decidedly major issues for tenants to cope with especially when combined with decreasing agricultural prices in terms of which, pigs and corn had decreased by up to 50 per cent in recent years. Tenants had therefore no capital to fall back on once they had sold all the livestock and crops they possessed to pay their rents. With land and labour alone as their only tools, it was doubtful they could ever recuperate capital enough to sustain high rent prices. These factors were in turn very damaging to the reputation of the Shirley estate in general.

Trench's recommendations included a temporary reduction of overall rents. He was successful in discontinuing what he coined the system of espionage on the estate, as he warned that immediate arrears would gradually increase. He advised that tenants needed the time and the space to recuperate 'both in their temper and in their substance'.[150] He was not willing to make observations on the issue of the decrees or on the amounts in rents charged to tenants. He made it clear that he was setting out his observations on what he had witnessed and the causes of complaints of the tenantry. They were his main concern, and the report was not interested in the intricate workings of the estate's finances. Tenants, he maintained, required 'careful handling to get them again to work kindly in harness',[151] but he evoked a

[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid., p.117.

sense of threat, stating that he was 'thoroughly convinced that harsh measures such as distraining, processing etc. would not and could not succeed, or prove advantageous to either land or tenant'.[152] Should matters not be rectified, he was concerned the tenants would in the short term appear content that the situation had improved to an extent, but in the long term, he feared that they would regulate themselves and revolt against EJS: 'I have not the least doubt but that tho' [sic] things might for a while go on quietly, yet that at no very distant period another and perhaps more formidable movement, because better guided and thus more determined, would take place against the landlord's rights, which could not be quelled but at a tenfold greater loss than can be incurred by the present outbreak'.[153]

The report made two very distinct recommendations which were based on the experience of other extensive proprietors in Ireland. One was to 'meet those tenants who are inclined to improve half way, by making them liberal allowances in aid of substantial improvements',[154] while the second was 'assisting those who are so sunk that they cannot recue themselves, to emigrate'.[155] The majority of the tenant population on the estate desperately needed something to fight for and they required a reason to seek the approval of their landlord. Trench felt that improvements to dwelling houses, to farm yards and out-houses would instil a feeling of pride in their holdings and encourage growth in agricultural output, which in turn would generate long term rent security for EJS. He compared the situation with one in England, where a small minority of tenants wished to revolt against their landlord but the masses refused to partake in the action because they had too much to lose. Their houses were nicely furnished and they possessed gardens and they were content. Trench obviously had a carrot and stick approach to the situation on the estate. The administering of money in the form of a reduction of rent for example would be squandered on tobacco and alcohol, not on improvements; it was therefore imperative that this initial costly exercise be carried out appropriately, and in a manner which would ultimately benefit the landlord.

The process proposed that the tenant interested in making improvements would write to the land agent detailing exactly what he proposed to carry out. To quote the example offered by Trench where, 'the erection of a decent slated house suited to his farm and premises' was proposed, the land agent might have to make alterations to the layout and plans for such a building and even have his own plans drawn up should he disagree with those of

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[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.

the tenant. When all plans were agreed, the landlord would share half the costs of the improvement with the tenant, but ultimately the tenant would be the 'sole executioner' of the work. In many respects there was a tendency throughout the report attempting to dupe the potential improving tenant; 'the tenant would be convinced the landlord felt an interest in his welfare, he will exert himself to improve when he knows his landlord will bear and share with him'.[156]

Trench recommended improvements in the line of planting, drainage and occasionally fencing. However, what was striking about the report was his attitude towards housing. It gave a real sense of the severe deprivation EJS' tenants endured for the want of windows, chimneys and furniture, without any of these simple items, he believed, they will lose all hope: 'I look upon a decent habitation as one of the first steps towards civilisation, and yet on this property there are hundreds of . . . tenants' houses where there are neither windows, bedsteads, tables nor chairs, and hundreds destitute of one or more of these comforts, I might rather call them necessaries'.[157]

To conclude on the issue of tenants who may be categorised as possible candidates in receipt of improvement funds, Trench made a very telling argument:

> What I conceive they want most is kindness, encouragement, some substantial proof that the landlord is anxious for their amelioration, that they will be left to enjoy the fruits of their exertions and that everything will not be raised upon them the moment they increase its value by their industry. I allude not only to the rises which took place upon their land some time ago, but to the several rises which have taken place upon smaller articles which they were obliged by their position to consume such as turf, lime etc . . . this seems to have broken their confidence that their welfare was really studied and they seem to have no heart to do anything or make any improvement lest advantage might be taken of it and they be considered as being able to bear an additional rise in some form or other.[158]

In relation to the second group who fell into the category that Trench termed as the 'indolent and illdisposed [sic]', these were the tenants that had nothing to lose, either through 'misfortune or misconduct', they had nothing but the desire to rebel and cause continued annoyance to the estate's inhabitants. According to Trench, these tenants were primarily responsible for the recent disturbances on the estate, including the 'Battle of Magheracloone'. In handling them, he stated that they would see the gradual improvements taking place around the estate on holdings belonging to their neighbours and friends. They would not have

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[156] Ibid., p.118.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid., p.119.

substantial backing from fellow tenants in disturbing the peace, and they would therefore not remain a huge threat to the future management of the estate.

The third group on the other hand were very numerous, they were the most broken, the most destitute, and according to Trench they were beyond any help financial or otherwise that the estate could offer. These were tenants who were overcome by poverty, either through mismanagement of their own affairs, loss of crops or cattle by bad seasons, or by providing security for others. They would never be able to provide for themselves or their families, let alone meet other demands such as rent. The only way to deal with this category was to provide financial assistance to emigrate.

In terms of how the estate would finance both an improvement and emigration strategy, Trench proposed that the estate could afford between 5 and 10 per cent of the annual rental income. To begin with, 5 per cent would allow an overall expenditure of £1,231 to rise to 10 per cent. Trench suggested that other estates with half of EJS' annual income were spending these amounts. He made reference to the fact that for decades the estate had not allotted funds for such practices, and it was precisely for that reason it found itself in the present situation. The report assured EJS that although the estate was very substantial in size, the expenditure proposed was quite minute, but the consequences would be observable. On the one hand, he estimated the tenants would be safe in the knowledge that EJS had their improvements to the forefront of his mind, while on the other hand a gradual increase in farm produce would take place and, in turn, improved farms would generate a greater return, satisfying both landlord (who was increasing his fixed assets) and the tenant (who was improving his standard of living). Trench recommended two agriculturists be employed solely to advise tenants on how to bring about the proposed improvements, including how to lay drains, 'explain the different localities and qualities of soil which were suited to particular crops and practically instruct them how these crops should be got in so as to secure their ultimate success'.[159] Although Trench did not mention a model farm in this particular report, there were model farms established on the estate to physically demonstrate new farming methods, one of which was situated at Derrylavan, Magheross. He also suggested the establishment of farming societies, where agricultural knowledge and skills could be transferred. Premiums could be given to those with the best crops and farm produce, which would in turn encourage others to follow suit. All classes of tenant would benefit from this innovative way of learning from each other.

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[159] Ibid., p.120.

In an end note written after Trench read the report aloud for EJS (to see his instant reaction), he substantiated his claims against bog rent, highlighting three grounds for which he opposed them.[160] He argued that the bog charges were 'unusual', 'onerous' and 'impolitic'. In a concluding paragraph, he outlined that what he had witnessed in his four months as land agent, left him in no doubt that serious change was immediately necessary. He reported that having unexpectedly visited a great number of homes across the estate he found that 'even in Ireland, it has never fallen to my lot to witness destitution to the same degree and over such a large extent, as I have seen it on this property'.[161] One of the final points he made in the report was very telling of the geographical location of the Shirley estate in Ulster where he compared, albeit in a general capacity, the Shirley estate tenantry with tenants in the north and south of Ireland; 'they may and do differ from the general population of the North of Ireland, but they have exactly the same general characteristics with the peasantry of the South'.[162]

"Statement concerning measures taken for recovery of Rent on the Shirley Estate"

Another report was drawn up by Trench on 23 September 1844 entitled 'Statement concerning measures taken for recovery of Rent on the Shirley Estate'. In a note accompanying the statement, Trench wrote, presumably to EJS, 'as you this day expressed a wish that I should explain precisely the nature of the measures which have lately been adopted for the more effectual recovery of rent and especially of the arrears'.[163] The first step was to serve defaulting tenants with notices to quit. At the time Trench was drawing up this statement, notices had already been served; many tenants had presented themselves at the estate office in Carrickmacross, requesting that no further action be taken as they wished to avoid the expenses incurred by the ejectment process (about one guinea).[164] Tenants who opted for this route were at the mercy of their landlord. They gave up their land peacefully and quietly which, as Trench put 'was the object of the ejectment process, I of course consented in every case to accept these terms and at once sent out the bailiff to take possession ordering him where he had obtained it, to replace the tenants back again in their houses as 'caretakers', that is persons paid a nominal sum to take care of the premises, not for

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[160] 'Statement concerning measures taken for recovery of rent on the Shirley estate', 23 Sep.1844. (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/5).
[161] Duffy, 'Management problems on a large estate in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland, p.122.
[162] Ibid.
[163] 'Statement concerning measures taken for recovery of rent on the Shirley estate', 23 Sep.1844. (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/5).
[164] Duffy, Management problems on a large estate in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland, p.103.

themselves as tenants but for the landlord who now held actual possession of the land'.[165] The case was such that the tenants now known as caretakers would receive an opportunity to discuss their financial situation with the land agent, in which case if there was sufficient evidence to suggest that they did not have the wherewithal to meet their rent sum, the land they previously occupied would be rented to a new tenant, the debts owing to the landlord extracted and the remainder if any would then be issued to the tenant, who would then be dismissed from the estate altogether.

Trench recorded fourteen incidents where this method was applied successfully. In a case where the tenant's financial situation was partially acceptable, they were allowed to remain in their residence under the term of 'caretaker' until their crops were ready to harvest, in which case their produce was sold at auction to pay the rent usually by the month of July. If there was a surplus of crops, the tenant was permitted to take them as there was no 'additional charge need be paid on them, for this process, which must otherwise be the case if strangers were employed to save them'.[166] In a case where the sale of crops alone was insufficient to meet the arrears and rent, all the crops would be taken, even the surplus (those which remained unsold) and some of the land would in turn be rented, preferably to a neighbouring tenant. According to Trench, this method was highly efficient in helping to ascertain outstanding debts, 'this proceeding has produced considerable effect; it has shown the tenant that he cannot hope to keep the land unless the rent be fully met'.[167] This was partially to do with establishing a fear factor among the tenantry and by conveying a far from lenient attitude towards tenants, others they hoped, would lead by example. According to Trench, the public auction of a tenant's crop 'made neighbouring tenants far and near in various parts of the estate look anxiously around for means to make up rent and avoid a similar fate'.[168] He also mentioned a change in legislation pertaining to the confiscation of defaulting tenant's crops. According to Trench 'this has enabled us to seize their crops and sell them by auction in four days after seizure. This has been done in a few cases (about 8 or 9) wherever the decrees were on hands in various parts of the estate and I think it has had a strong effect. The crop is not so easily hidden as the person, and the sale of it by public auction has in fact published it over the estate that the arrear must be paid'.[169] Farms 'in

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[165] 'Statement concerning measures taken for recovery of rent on the Shirley estate' 23 Sep.1844 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/5).
[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid.

hand' meant that they were in the possession of the landlord; they had already been secured by that stage.

Trench went on to state how advantageous these new measures were, and he was adamant that tenants would begin to realise that they would not be permitted to reside on the Shirley estate without paying their dues. He stated that there had never been any obstructions or disturbances caused at any of the aforementioned auctions; in fact, he suggested that neighbours bid freely on crops and as a result they received good value for money. Trench may be indicating here that the purchase of cheaper produce took precedence over moral standards, whereby tenants might be tempted not to purchase crops confiscated from their neighbours as a mark of solidarity or respect. This, he condescendingly suggested, should be considered 'as a marked sign of the submission and obedience of the tenantry'.[170]He concluded by stating that 'since these measures have been adopted, an unusually large amount of arrears has been paid in, and I am certain the tenants are making the most severe exertion to meet the landlord's demands. I expect that when the present autumn and winter has passed over, the arrears on the estate will be small'.[171] In ensuring this, Trench sent 262 processes in order to recover, what he alluded to as 'the old arrears'.[172]

True to form, the rent rolls for 1844 highlight an increase in the land rental income for October which amounted to £3,690 and December £2,209. The figures compared with the Spring/Summer months, with June exhibiting the least amount of rent £571. In terms of arrears from 1843, September and October were by far the best paying months of the year and, added together, they contributed a significant £3,290 towards the overall arrears paid in the year which amounted to £5,596. In terms of bog rent, it was a good year for the estate especially since the 'Battle of Magheracloone' was fresh in the minds of many. Total bog rent received was £1,063 while bog rent arrears paid were £270. Altogether contributing £1,332 to the overall income of the estate for the year. From the sale of lime the estate accrued £490, with sales peaking in October, £177 worth having been sold. £187 in loans were also paid back to the estate. The income for the year totalled £27,142 which must have been a considerable triumph for Trench.[173]

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[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.
[172] Ibid.
[173] Series of Shirley estate rent rolls, 1844 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531 R/6/11).

Conclusion

This chapter set out to establish what exactly distinguished the much criticised semi-absentee Shirley estate from others, especially its closest neighbour and absentee Bath estate in terms of the social, political and economical situation. EJS' role as landlord was to be scrutinised in terms of the management policies. In the 1830s and certainly by the early 1840s, his reputation as a landlord was overshadowed by the notorious reputation of his land agents especially Mitchell and Trench in the pre-Famine decade. Mitchell's strict policy on implementing educational restrictions and instigating new turbury laws on the estate left a lot to be desired for the tenantry. When Mitchell died in 1843, the tenantry saw a long awaited opportunity for change, which was why they attacked Trench on his first day as agent.

Trench made a deep impact in the one year he acted as agent. These factors were echoed in his confidential report, where he could not find a parallel for the conditions on the Shirley estate with any he had witnessed elsewhere. His important confidential report conveyed greater knowledge as to what EJS was not willing to do for his estate as opposed to what he was. The report painted Trench in a different light than his work in *Realities* and folklore would suggest. He came across to some extent as a supporter of the tenant cause, critical of bog rent, 'raising the coppers' and the huge levels of sub-division. Trench constantly referred to the affluent nature of the estate and the income derived from it, though EJS was more than hesitant about spending large sums of money obtained from rents on improvements. Hindsight conveyed that many of Trench's policies would have been ultimately interrupted by external influences such as the Famine if he had continued as agent for the estate. Nevertheless, it appeared the reason he resigned his position was the sheer lack of initiative by EJS to implement or at least initiate some of the changes he advised. Ironically, elements of his improvement strategies as well as his infamous emigration schemes were implemented by his successor George Morant in the years to follow.

Many of the Devon Commission interviews were enlightening in terms of conditions on both estates and the consensus was that the Shirley estate which was occupied with almost 500 more tenants than the Bath estate fared worse in terms of mismanagement. Especially in terms of sub-division which prevailed to a great extent, it could be argued that it would have continued to exist if Famine had not struck. Many landlords were blamed for their absenteeism but EJS was a semi-absentee, spending approximately one quarter of the year in Ireland, overseeing the management of his estate. He was fully aware of the situation in terms of over-crowded, subdivided holdings but the fact that he was unmercifully slow in

instigating any real development and improvement in the pre-Famine period cannot be ignored.

During the Famine years as will be seen in the following chapter, it was possible to get a glimpse of EJS' attitude towards those seeking aid from the Poor Law Guardians in Carrickmacross. It was his son EPS who actively represented the estate at Board meetings, and he could not hide his animosity towards many of the workhouse applicants, referring to their 'laziness' which he opined was exhibited by the peasantry all across Ireland, and EPS blamed their moral shortcomings for the appalling situation that many now found themselves in.

Chapter Three

The Shirley Estate during and in the immediate aftermath of the Great Famine

Introduction

Terence Dooley has outlined the importance of singling out individual estates and subjecting them to a thorough investigation in terms of their handling of the Famine. He has posed pertinent questions to act as navigational pointers, which are followed in this chapter in order to address if not answer these questions in relation to the Shirley estate. Rather than generally dealing with landlords as a homogenous group in terms of the management of their estates, Dooley pointed out the importance of dealing with how individual landlords handled the major issues they and their estates envisaged in the nineteenth-century. The labourer and cottier classes were those most affected by the Famine (1845-51) and the vast majority of tenants from both the Shirley and adjoining Bath estates were living at a subsistence level by the mid-nineteenth century. Unsurprisingly, they were the people most heavily dependent on the potato for food, and they were also living in poor housing with an ignorance of hygiene, cleanliness and sanitation. These factors led to ill health, and many tenants found themselves faced with the reality of diseases such as typhus, dysentery and typhoid fever.

Owing to the Great Famine there was a phenomenon of 'visitors' coming to Ireland to personally experience and observe for themselves what conditions were really like for the destitute. Ó Gráda points out that 'statistical evidence of the poverty of the Irish masses on the eve of the Great Famine is buttressed by a stream of official inquiries and by the accounts of visitors to Ireland who put their impressions to paper. For the bottom one-third or even half the population, life was harsh and comfortless even by mid-nineteenth century British and West European standards'.[1] The portrayal of EJS in a British newspaper by one of these so called tourists to Ireland proved no different. Alexander Somerville was a British reporter with the *Manchester Examiner* and was sent to Ireland in 1847 to experience firsthand the devastation and in turn report on what he had envisaged. In a series of letters which were published in the newspaper and subsequently by Somerville, it was clear that he was struck by the utter destitution in Ireland. In one such letter he reported the following.[2]

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[1] Cormac Ó Gráda, 'The rise of living standards' in Kieran A. Kennedy (ed.) *From feast to Famine; economic and social change in Ireland 1847-1997* (Dublin,1998), p.13.

[2] http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/sadlier/irish/somervil.htm (Jul. 2012).

> Several absentee English landlords controlled sizeable private estates, Evelyn Shirley, the relatively liberal proprietor of more than 25,000 acres- the largest plantation in the county- took up part-time residence a few years after his parliamentary victory in 1826. His agents helped divide the land into ever smaller plats [sic] in order to increase rents and pocket some of the expanded income, which averaged 21 per cent above official land values. Ironically, the tenants themselves worsened the situation by strong-arming authorities to subdivide the land, sometimes against the better judgement of honest agents who understood the larger picture.[3]

It became increasingly clear from the letters written in the *Manchester Examiner* that Somerville was out of his depth and found it difficult to understand the situation in Ireland. One letter which signalled his sheer lack of comprehension recorded him standing at a roadside in the heart of rural south Monaghan observing a number of labourers attempting to carry out their manual farming duties. All seven men together were evidently too weak to carry out the work of even one able bodied man. One man became too weak to continue and on his hands and knees crawled out onto the road using all the power he had left in him to pick himself up and make his way home. Somerville approached the man in a bid to hear his story and the extremely weary man told of his dire starvation and his situation at home, where he had a wife and six children depending on his labouring wage, which consisted of 10*d.* per day. The man, who was in his forties but who looked years older, could not physically do any more and headed home to lie down. Somerville described the man as a skeleton, and on meeting his family described them all as unable to work or do anything other than eat but there was nothing to eat. In calculating how much each person would have to eat, if the farm labourer spent all his wages on Indian corn alone, Somerville estimated with given the price of Indian corn which was set at 3*s.* per 16lb, they could afford to buy 26lb 7oz per week which in turn allotted 7 and a half oz of what was commonly known as Yellow Corn per day over a 7 day period. The trouble with that calculation as Somerville pointed out was that, with all the will in the world a family who were on the edge of starvation could not hold themselves back from eating over their daily budget of food and so there would be two or three days in the week where they may have to go without any food. In concluding his letter, he made reference to the fact that many people, including the family in question could not afford commodities such as salt or necessities like fuel for the fire for example. The only fuel that was used was to make the customary thick porridge style dish made with Indian corn known as stir-about.[4]

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[3] Alexander Somerville, *Letters from Ireland during the Famine of 1847* (Dublin,1994), p16.
[4] Ibid.

By the mid 1840s thousands were confronted with the stark reality that the workhouse was their only means of survival. Carrickmacross workhouse was erected on the Shercock road, on the outskirts of the town, in 1842, while simultaneously the fever hospital was erected directly across the road. As with many towns all across Ireland, they were constructed in a bid to cope with high levels of poverty, sickness and destitution. In 1843, the House of Commons requested a return of valuations of every Poor Law Union in Ireland. The report calculated the total number of persons eligible to pay poor law taxation in each Union (those with holdings valued at £4 or more). In Carrickmacross Poor Law Union 6,235 persons were obliged to pay for the relief of those admitted to the workhouse. Unfortunately most of Carrickmacross workhouse records were destroyed, and as a result researchers have to rely on reports on the discussions which took place at Board of Guardian meetings on a weekly basis. A record was published in the *Dundalk Democrat and People's Advocate* which not only illustrates the Guardians' dealings with the day-to-day mechanics of running the workhouse and admission of applicants, but also processing the tenders for workhouse provisions. What was very illuminating however, was the references to the two principal landlords' handling of the Famine crisis. Many members of the board considered themselves almost on equal social standing with the local gentry and they were not afraid to express their feelings at meetings, either to the landlord himself or to his representative. In addition, the reported proceedings gave an indication of the verbal offerings of the landlord or his agent on various pertinent issues such as emigration and Board of Works schemes.

In terms of emigration, Dooley asked whether landlords such as EJS, who expended large sums on assisted emigration as a means of relieving distress did so 'for paternal reasons or were they motivated by a stronger desire to consolidate their holdings and thereby, realize greater long-term profits?'. Assisted emigration was a pertinent factor, depended upon, for the future development of the estate in terms of lessening its population and increasing the number of consolidated farms. Dooley argued; 'undoubtedly landlords and the lower orders viewed the economic and social rationale of assisted emigration very differently but what evidence is there of this? To what extent did the stronger farmers on the estate collaborate in this process knowing that their own future would be better secured?'[5] Approximately 2,000 emigrants were assisted to leave the Shirley estate in the mid-nineteenth century. The petitions from some of those who wanted to leave Ireland will be a feature of this chapter, as well as a determination of approximately how much was spent on emigration and in doing so,

[5] Dooley, *The big houses and landed estates of Ireland*, pp 178-9.

the estates' rental information for the corresponding years will be outlined. The Famine left its mark on the Shirley rent rolls and it is of interest to see how the rentals fluctuated and how far they can tell the story of the estate throughout the Famine years. In the barony of Farney and certainly Carrickmacross Union, assisted emigration schemes left an indefinable scar on local folklore. This chapter will examine aspects of emigration from the Shirley estate and, because the Bath estate was connected in so many ways not least because Trench was land agent for the estate throughout the Famine years and beyond, it will receive attention for comparative purposes.

Workhouse Administration

The Irish Poor Law Act of 1838 was based on the English model, which had been in existence since 1834. Ireland was divided into 130 unions, with a workhouse in each, and 2,049 electoral divisions (later increased to 163 unions and 3,438 divisions).[6]To a certain extent it represented a breakthrough in tackling the country's major problem of a near destitute under-class and it was a state-initiated social welfare system incorporating a universal tax. In Ireland however, the Poor Law represented much more that that, it was a local government institution that limited the power of landlords for the first time and armed the rural Irish localities with a representative body who would defend their situation within the realm of local social and to an extent political affairs. Up until this point as Feingold argued the aristocracy and landed classes 'supported by appointment procedures, which were hedged round with property qualifications, legal strictures, and numerous safeguards . . . before 1880 monopolized or dictated the composition of virtually all public offices . . . except for the few parliamentary constituencies and the elective seats on municipal corporations'.[7] The way in which the Board of Guardians was structured made it more difficult for the affluent classes to exercise the same control and influence over the membership of other local authorities such as the grand juries, presentment sessions, and commissions of the peace which were all appointive. Appointment to the grand jury for example excluded tenants since one of the stipulated requirements was the possession of land worth at least £50. In addition, grand jury appointments were made by the high sheriff who would consult with the local gentry so that even those eligible landholders in possession of the requisite £50 holding had to pass, what Feingold coined as an 'informal barrier'.[8] Although the Board of Guardians had an elected

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[6] Connolly (ed.), *Oxford companion to Irish history,* p.476.
[7] William L. Feingold, *The revolt of the tenantry: the transformation of local government in Ireland 1872-86,* (Boston, 1984), p.11.
[8] Ibid., p.13.

element, they were subject to modest landholding requirements and not land ownership which immeasurably broadened opportunities for those who were then elected by 'ratepayers under a wide franchise that covered all but the labouring, artisan, and subsistence farmer classes'.[9] An elected Board of Guardian was nevertheless held in high esteem both by the members themselves, their peers and their respective communities. As an Irish countryman, the Poor Law Guardian was in most cases ineligible to run for any other form of government or to receive a public title; he would affix the letters "P.L.G." after his name with pride. It was a symbol of achievement and it meant that he was a distinguished member of society.[10]

The system however was not without its flaws. Landowners did have the added advantage of been granted the franchise as well as been given special representation on the boards in the form of an ex-officio element, composed of justices of the peace.[11] These 'special privileges' as Feingold refers to them, meant that landowners were at an advantage in influencing the proceedings of the boards, but the elect element which was adopted from the English Poor Law system to give the ratepayers a voice, was beyond the control of the landed elite, except as voters themselves.[12]The Irish Poor Law went further in securing a balance of power 'in which the tenants' and landowners' power would balance each other and theoretically, through continual contact between the two groups, teach them tolerance and cooperation'.[13]The founders however placed too much emphasis on the English model when creating the Board of Guardians. They underestimated the levels of social and economic influence and control that the landed classes in Ireland exercised over their tenants, which was over and above that demonstrated in England.[14] The ex-officio element which originally comprised of one third of the elected guardians and then in 1847, 'to a level of equality with the elected guardians, was complex in terms of voting. Poor Law elections 'were conducted by a complicated system of multiple and cumulative votes'[15]which leant in favour of landowners. Ratepayers rated at over £4 were entitled to one vote, however for owners and occupies of larger higher-valued properties, their vote was calculated using a six-stage scale.[16]Put simply, landowners possessing land valued at over £200 were entitled to the maximum number of votes which was 6, (though in many cases through various loopholes they earned 18 votes) and very often those entitled to these votes represented the larger landlord and thus the

[9] Ibid., p.14.
[10] Ibid., p.xxiii.
[11] Ibid., p.14.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Feingold, *The revolt of the tenantry: the transformation of local government in Ireland,* p.19.
[16] Ibid.

minority class in Ireland.[17]Other class prejudices of the Poor Law system in favour of landowners but not occupiers included voting by proxy. One of the reasons for this move was that many landowners were absent from the region from time to time or for prolonged lengths of time, whereas land occupies were resident in the locality. Without voting by proxy, it was contended that the landowner's power would not be protected.[18]

Open voting papers was also an element of the Poor Law election system which safeguarded the landed class. A returning officer was sent out to rural divisions on the 25 March each year to visit the homes of those eligible to vote. The officer left the voting papers containing the names of the candidates contesting to represent their division. Voters made their decision, signed their names and returned the voting paper to the officer who collected them the following day.[19] Once the officer returned to the office to count the votes which were left open, it was permitted for any enfranchised ratepayers to freely observe. This, as Feingold suggested, provided 'ample opportunity for interested parties, either before or after the papers were counted, to discover which candidates each voter preferred. The opening that this method offered to would-be intimidators often proved irresistible; thus electoral intimidation was a common feature of poor law elections'.[20] The by proxy voting system and the open voting paper system came under indirect attack in Carrickmacross in 1845 when the *Newry Examiner and Louth Advertiser,* published a highly critical report accusing the Carrickmacross Board of Guardians of being corrupt with regard to elections. The allegation turned out to have some justification. It documented discrepancies in the election of William George Smith,[21]a merchant in Carrickmacross and under-agent for the Shirley estate; his behaviour came under scrutiny in the Devon Commission for his alleged favouritism to customers of his business, and a conflict of interest in the rent office and on the Board of Guardians. One newspaper indicated his 'principles are anything but popular or national'.[22]He was up against a Mr Hoey at the election of guardians, described as 'a most respectable, independent merchant [in Carrickmacross], and of the most patriotic sentiments'.[23] Hoey asserted that there was foul play at work and requested an investigation; otherwise he would pay for a legal enquiry into the election himself. The independent investigator found that there

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[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid., p.21.
[21] William George Smith was Shirley's rent office clerk or under-agent. He is also referred to as a man whose life was threatened by the secret societies in Farney by Trench in *Realities of Irish life.*
[22] *Newry Examiner and Louth Advertiser,* 13 Dec. 1845.
[23] Ibid.

were voting lists with abbreviated forenames. The newspaper further commented 'as if there could be any question of their identity- in spite of all this, it turned out that Mr. Smith was in a minority, and had no earthly right whatever to the office into which he was thrust by the officious friendship of the returning officer'.[24] A new election was ordered by the Commissioners rather than allowing Hoey take the seat. The newspaper was vehemently opposed to this move and backed Hoey in his protest against what it termed 'this scandalous injustice'. The results of an independent enquiry found that Smith 'did not obtain a majority of good and lawful votes on that occasion and . . .[was] therefore not entitled to act as an elective guardian for that electoral division!!!'.[25] Hoey's humble response indicated a man who was perhaps genuinely aware of the situation surrounding him and the Board of Guardians and he found the whole idea that there might have been another costly and troublesome election ludicrous, especially . . . now that poverty and the fiercest famine stare the ratepayers in the face,[and] would be most injurious, impolite, and inhumane . . .'.[26] It is of course also possible that he feared another election would simply jeopardise his success. The newspaper article strongly condemned the Commissioners using terminologies commonly used to negatively depict landlords. It appealed to its readers to be aware of the malpractices carried out by some of the guardians, warning them of the 'tyrannical and capricious conduct of the Commissioners'. They were seeking justice under the Poor Law Act, which it opined 'never was very popular in any part of the kingdom, and has certainly not been calculated to soften public dislike to its provisions; but its administration will become altogether odious and intolerable'. It deemed the entire corrupt election process 'lame and impotent'.[27]

Just five years after the controversy, the power of landlords in influencing their tenants was raised at the Farney Tenant Right Committee meeting held on 19 April 1851. The 'misconduct' of EPS and his agent Morant in the election of members to sit on Carrickmacross Board of Guardians was again highlighted. It was alleged that 'intimidation [was] used by certain parties to influence the ratepayers to vote contrary to their wishes. The *Dundalk Democrat* claimed that three charges could be distinctly proven against EPS and Morant. Firstly, notices to quit were served on a large number of tenants during November 1850 with the threat that further proceedings would take effect including shortening or elongating the term for which tenants could hold their farms depending on the manner in which they voted at the election of guardians. This was further evidenced by the estates' necessity to publicly

[24] Ibid., Nov. 1845.
[25] Ibid., 13 Dec.1845.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.

advertise for a large number of new staff in September 1850. Morant posted a placard in Carrickmacross stating:

> Shirley Estate - Wanted: from 30 to 40 stout, able and resolute men, fearless of intimidation, to act as keepers. They will receive 7*s.* per week wages, with additional pay for night work. Applications to be made to George Morant at Shirley Estate office.[28]

The newspaper reporter was surprised that the estate would publicly and locally advertise what could be deemed controversial and dangerous positions. The report outlined that no men in the area would apply;

> we can inform Mr. Morant that he will find some difficulty in filling up his ranks as the stout, able and resolute men of Farney are far from the Shirley estate. They have fled in despair from it, and those who remain are so crushed down by disease and want that, instead of being stout and resolute, they are feeble and miserable.[29]

Secondly, a reduction of rent for a two year period was promised to those who conceded to the bribe. Prior to receiving this reduction though, tenants would have to vote for EPS' nominees. Thirdly, that a few days previous to the election, tenants would receive printed notification as to whom to vote for and they were to do as requested.[30] These allegations were reinforced by complaints from tenants or ex-tenants who experienced eviction themselves immediately succeeding the general elections in county Monaghan, as happened in 1826 and in the 1830s. It was clear that EPS used some of the persuasive tactics, his father had, decades earlier. According to Feingold, the original concept in constructing electoral divisions which averaged twenty per union was a philanthropic aim to reduce eviction levels and to keep the cost of poor rates at a minimum.[31]It was believed that landlords would be discouraged from evicting large numbers of tenants who would then seek refuge in the union workhouse and so the landlord would end up contributing to their upkeep by means of the poor rates. In practice however, evicted tenants hoping to avoid 'internment in the workhouse' would seek food, shelter and/or money by begging in nearby towns and those who inevitably ended up in the workhouse were costing the town rather than the rural divisions.[32]

In all, what appeared as a nationwide philanthropic government body that represented the needs of the local, urban, rural, evicted, destitute and starving masses and which was inclusive on many counts where other government movements were class dictated, from the outset the Poor Law appeared different. However, on closer examination the cumulative vote

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[28] *Dundalk Democrat,* 21 Sep. 1850.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Feingold, *The revolt of the tenantry: the transformation of local government in Ireland,* p.15.
[32] Ibid., pp15-6.

was associated with wealth, the proxy vote was achieved through landownership and the open voting papers gave the enfranchised classes the power to coerce.[33]In assessing whether the Poor Law effectively contributed to a weakening of landlord power through the medium of Board of Guardian meetings or whether they managed to maintain a strong metaphoric and representative presence; though they were frequently physically absent from their duties, a number of factors must be considered. Firstly, the ex-officios were numerically weak restricted to one third of the elected guardians though this legislation was later altered by Parliament and set at an equal level to the elected guardians. Feingold places little emphasis on this point since ex-oficios rarely attended meetings, the fraction that they represented numerically was theoretically irrelevant. [34]Instead he focuses on the flaws in the founder's thinking which 'confined them too narrowly to the poor law administration, treating it as though it were isolated from the outside world'.[35]In other words, not enough social, economic and religious differentiations were recognised between the English administration and the Irish administration. The Poor Law in each country should have worked differently if the ex-officios were not to dominate. In England for example ex-officios did not dominate boards to as great of degree as they did in Ireland because they simply had more in common. Traditionally speaking, landlords and tenants maintained good working relationships and land tenure was much more secure in England than in Ireland. In addition, the agricultural situation in England was better than in Ireland, the social class system was more varied in England which comprised a substantial number of 'independent occupier-owners who provided a more continuous flow from the bottom to the top of the social scale'.[36]Whereas in Ireland there was a much greater rich and poor divide or as Feingold opined 'one the tillers of the soil, the other the owners; one largely Gaelic and Catholic, the other largely Anglo-Saxon and Protestant'.[37] Moreover, among the English classes existed a familiarity that did not exist in Ireland as it was common to work together in an administrative context in the parish vestries for example and ultimately in England, differing classes upheld common interests in terms of religion, nationality and race. In Ireland landlord-tenant relations were strained and by the 1840s they had reached a crisis point and this was certainly the case in Carrickmacross. The insular views of the founders reflected on the fact that the system in Ireland did not mirror the social situation outside and as Feingold put it, 'the nature of the class system in Ireland was such that

[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., pp 42-3.
[35] Ibid., p. 43.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

the superiority of the Ascendency pervaded all aspects of Irish life. To expect it to be different on the Boards of Guardians was unrealistic'.[38]The power they upheld was testament to their ability to secure the election of their agents or others to represent their interests while they were unable or unwilling to attend meetings themselves, the three principal voting mechanisms already established (cumulative, proxy and open voting papers) played a vital role but without a doubt there was a psychological element that existed for generations in Ireland. As Feingold argued, the Irish tenantry lived in fear of the dominating landlord class at least up until the 1870s. On a daily basis for example, they controlled their rent, evictions, they could permit of forbid turbary rights, they controlled the distribution and the sale of lime and manure etc. and therefore the true source of the landlord's political power could only continue to exist 'as long as the differential state of mind was maintained'.[39]

Carrickmacross Workhouse

Carrickmacross Poor Law Union was formally 'declared' on the 5 November 1839 and covered an area of 94 square miles. Its operation was overseen by 5 ex-officio and 16 elected guardians, representing 14 electoral divisions.[40] Carrickmacross workhouse was built in 1842 and situated on the Carrickmacross to Shercock road, where it still stands today in a beautifully restored state 'as a testament to those families who had no choice but to move into the workhouse for survival during famine times'.[41] There were obvious difficulties associated with the running of the workhouse, not to mention the social stigma attached to admission as it was viewed as the very last resort of the destitute. Families were required to enter the workhouse together, individual members being ineligible for relief except under extenuating circumstances. Once admitted, family groups were split up, with men, women and children over 2 years of age assigned to separate wards.

Poor Law Relief was provided within the workhouse at the discretion of local Poor Law Guardians, with preference given to the aged, the sick, the disabled, and children. The guardians who met in Carrickmacross workhouse on Tuesday evenings operated under the discretion and control of the Poor Law Commission, though the Commission could not interfere in individual cases. The role of the Commission was to supervise 'the election

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[38] Ibid., p.44.
[39] Ibid., p.49.
[40] Ballymackney, Bocks, Carrickmacross, Corracharra, Crossalare, Donaghmoyne, Drumboorg, Drumcarrow, Drumgurra, Enagh, Kilmurry, Kiltybegs, Loughfea, and Raferagh.
[41] http://www.carrickmacrossworkhouse.com/html/history.asp (Sept. 2011)

proceedings of Poor Law boards, and was empowered to dissolve boards whose members were incompetent or inactive'.[42]Carrickmacross workhouse was managed according to the standard plan. The guardians were often praised for their particular efforts in local newspapers, and in turn they were occasionally criticised for neglecting their public roles when maladministration was revealed. The published proceedings of Carrickmacross Board of Guardians' meetings illustrate much of what was going on across the Shirley estate and on the nearby Bath estate. It is possible to see whether one estate was more inclined to collaborate with board discussions and decisions than the other. The contributions the landlord or his representative made at meetings illustrate opinions they expressed on various contentious issues and the motions they supported tell something of their mindset and equally, their lack of attendance at meetings altogether can indicate their lack of interest or their absenteeism. It was common for ex-officio guardians to rarely attend Board of Guardian meetings where as politically minded tenants who generally made up the elected element had nowhere else to go. Feingold argues that both elected and ex-officio officers were guilty of not attending meetings however ex-officios were by far the worst offenders.[43] Some were among the largest landowners in Ireland, many of whom like Bath, were reputed as having only visited their estates a handful of times. Feingold put their long-term absences from meetings down to their boredom of Irish country life and their preferences for conducting business and pleasure in large cities such as Dublin and London. Many were also required to attend to official duties such as fulfilling their roles as magistrates, attend quarter sessions and observe baronial presentment sessions etc.[44]

In terms of the workhouse diet, the *Newry Examiner and Louth Advertiser* reported on 16 August 1845 that there were problems arising with the potatoes which were supposed to be consumed by the workhouse inmates. This was the first such report concerning Carrickmacross workhouse in relation to diet. One of the guardians, Mr McMahon called for the boards' attention to the new potatoes that were so soft and wet because of the late rains; 'if continued they might be injurious to health and bring on disease in the house; therefore he thought it advisable to substitute bread for dinner for the course of a fortnight, and at the expiration of that time, new potatoes would be much better fit for use. The potatoes for dinner were examined by the guardians and they unanimously agreed that for a fortnight hence,

[42] Connolly (ed.), *Oxford companion to Irish history*, p.477.
[43] Feingold, *The revolt of the tenantry: the transformation of local government in Ireland,* p.35.
[44] Ibid., p.37.

bread should be substituted.[45]Also in August, the Board of Guardians of the Ballycastle Union in Antrim decided to instruct farmers to mix potato starch with oatmeal or flour and make it into bread.[46] By October 1845, this was the case in many other workhouses across Ulster with local relief officials having to consider alternative potato substitutes such as rice, oats, bread or soup. By the end of the summer 1845, there was a total of 153 inmates in Carrickmacross workhouse on what was essentially the eve of the Famine crisis. The average cost per inmate was estimated at $1s.\ 4\frac{1}{2}d.$ In December 1846, as the crisis reached its first peak, dysentery was on the increase in the workhouse and again there were talks about possible alterations to the inmates' diet. It was decided that vegetable soup would be served instead of milk for three days of the week as it was 'less conducive to the distemper',[47] and that white bread would take the place of brown bread for a time, as the butter milk that had previously been served with brown bread was blamed for the ill health of the inmates and the adoption of a more varied diet was unanimously decided.[48]

By spring 1846 local relief committees who, up until this point had managed to support their relief efforts without the assistance of Peel's Tory government were now struggling to cope with the mounting pressure of the destitute masses.[49] The return of blight as early as July in the same year suggested that it would become more widespread than the previous year, marking the real onset of Famine in Ireland. Reports from Ulster indicate that by October the disease had destroyed crops in counties Down, Antrim, Derry, Tyrone, Armagh and Monaghan.[50]Discussions took place as to precisely how many inmates the facilities at Carrickmacross workhouse could cope with, at a time when there was huge growth in the number of applications made to the board by paupers seeking relief. The medical officer, James Kelly, recommended in January 1847 that no more than 550 inmates should occupy the workhouse at any one time and by that stage the workhouse was already accommodating 535. The Poor Law Commissioners gave permission to erect an extension to the dormitories, allowing for the housing of 100 additional inmates.[51] In June, Peel's government fell from power and the newly appointed Whig administration led by Lord John Russell 'modified the relief policies of the previous year and decided to make public works the main mechanism for

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[45] *Newry Examiner and Louth Advertiser*,16 Aug. 1845.
[46] Cahal Dallat, 'The Famine in county Antrim' in Christine Kinealy and Trevor Parkhill (eds) *The Famine in Ulster* (Belfast 1997), p.16.
[47] *Newry Examiner and Louth Advertiser*, 4 Dec. 1846.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Kinealy and Parkhill (eds) *The Famine in Ulster*, p.05.
[50] Ibid.
[51] *Newry Examiner and Louth Advertiser*,16 Jan, 1847.

providing relief'.[52]The workhouse, now under increased strain, made use of auxiliary relief measures supervised by the Board of Works to help free up much needed space. In early 1847 for example, twelve men, three women and three children were discharged to be employed by the Public Works scheme.

The Board of Guardians had to initiate further economy measures early in 1847, given the dismal prospects for the year ahead (though they noted their appreciation to the marquis of Bath for his £300 subscription, the estate's portion of the poor rate). They contemplated seeking a halt to distillation in the town of Carrickmacross so that grain could be used to feed the starving people rather than be utilised for alcohol. Proprietor of the two distilleries in the town and Carrickmacross guardian, Thomas McEvoy-Gartlan agreed to the motion, should such a resolution be passed on the matter in due course. They discussed teaching the inmates how to bake bread and investing in large ovens in order to make the workhouse more self sufficient. Subsequent to the recent passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act, the Guardians also discussed a proposal to erect tents on workhouse grounds in a bid to distribute outdoor relief to the hundreds for whom there was not enough room in the workhouse. Again, this posed problems in terms of the risk of the spread of infectious diseases from workhouse inmates to those receiving outdoor relief and vice versa. The Poor Law Amendment Act 1847 legally recognised the necessity for the most vulnerable classes which it categorised into groups such as the sick, the disabled and widows with two or more legitimate children as eligible to receive outdoor relief or in other words relief administered outside the workhouse and especially if the workhouse was full to capacity.[53]Many charitable bodies and local authorities such as the Board of Guardians had administered outdoor relief in the previous years of the Famine by way of food and money to assist the large numbers who could not be accommodated by the workhouse. Under the amendment however, able-bodied men were ineligible for relief unless it was sanctioned by the Poor Law Commissioners at the request of the Poor Law Guardians. Local relieving officers were appointed to supervise the distribution of outdoor relief, the cost of which was borne out of the poor rates. Generally, Board of Guardians were not in support of the new Act and in some cases they refused to accept their new responsibilities which essentially placed the entire burden of poverty and destitution that occurred in a locality on that locality. In other cases the boards overtly opposed the new Act. In November 1847 for example, Cavan workhouse which was in significant debt and heavily overcrowded, the entire Board of Guardians was dissolved since the opposition against the

[52] Kinealy and Parkhill (eds), *The Famine in Ulster*, p.05.
[53] Connolly (ed.), *Oxford companion to Irish history,* p.441.

Poor Law Amendment Act was so great, two vice-guardians were appointed in December to replace them.[54] In other Unions, the boards were divided in opinion on outdoor relief which was more expensive to distribute and there was the additional costs associated with employing Relieving Officers. In county Down for example the Newtownards board were evenly split on the introduction of outdoor relief with the majority of landowners in favour.[55]McCavery questioned the reasons behind this, outlining that perhaps this was a class who could afford to pay the price for such relief or perhaps there were underlying political reasons, 'to prevent lawlessness or incur gratitude, or spread the cost of supporting the poor'.[56]In Carrickmacross there does not appear to have been any significant opposition to the distribution of outdoor relief at least not from a financial perspective, the minutes do refer to the health implications of establishing food depots on the immediate workhouse grounds and the fear of the spread of infectious diseases but otherwise there were no great debates over its implementation.

The *Newry Examiner* reported on 19 June 1847 that £88 6*s*. $10\frac{1}{2}$*d*. worth of necessities had been consumed by the workhouse during the previous week. The average weekly cost of each pauper had increased and was now set at 2*s*. 2*d*.,[57] at the same meeting, the medical officer of the workhouse stated that fever was on the increase, with fever patient numbers rising from 36 to 50. On the other hand and in contrast to the financial burdens that were already placed on facilities, the board agreed that poor rate collector Mr McElroy should be granted the 3*d*. wage increase that he had requested. His commission was raised from 6*d*. to 9*d*. in the pound, given 'his great efficiency as a collector'.[58] While on a similar topic, the board addressed the idea of endeavouring 'to get the landlords of this union to advance their proportion of the poor rates for their tenants . . . [as a result according to the board, the landlords] would greatly relieve their own tenantry by not requiring them, in these hard and critical times, to pay in advance for the landlords what they must afterwards return to them'.[59]An application was sent to the landed proprietors in the Carrickmacross Union and all but EJS 'cheerfully acceded',[60]although he did make an agreement to pay through his agent George Morant 'as soon as funds came into his hands'.[61]Although Bath was slow to conform to the new system, he lodged the sum of £300 in poor rates in advance for the tenants of his

[54] Fr. Dan Gallogly, 'The Famine in Cavan' in Kinealy and Parkhill (eds) *The Famine in Ulster*, p.69.
[55] Trevor McCavery, 'The Famine in County Down' in Kinealy and Parkhill (eds) *The Famine in Ulster,* p.123.
[56] Ibid., p.122.
[57] *Newry Examiner,* 19 Jun. 1847.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.

estate via his agent Tristram Kennedy. As a result of EPS' tardier response, which was referred to on many occasions, there were greater pressures placed on poor rate collectors: 'the rate collectors having been called before the board, and reprimanded for not using more exertion in collecting the rates, and being told their bonds would be put in force against them. Collectors stated they had applied to EJS' agent several times and could not get the landlord's proportion, or the rate of the holdings under £4'.[62]While the numbers in the actual workhouse soared to over 800, including those accommodated in two makeshift houses, hundreds more were seeking admission on a weekly basis, but only dozens of the most impoverished could be admitted due to exhausting resources and funds. Inmates were still costing the workhouse 2*s*. 2*d.* each per week, although in May 1847, the medical officer was offered a wage increase from £35 to £50 per annum.

In the weeks that followed in early 1847, the Board of Guardians wrote to EJS, who owed the workhouse in excess of £1,400. The Poor Law Commission office wrote to the board in Carrickmacross requesting that the issue be dealt with as a matter of urgency. In what they described as a 'respectful letter . . . requesting him to come forward in the same kind and benevolent manner as the other landlords had done and advance his proportion of the poor rates for his tenantry.[63] The clerk of works wrote a concise letter to EJS stating that 'they [the board] direct me to say that they did hope and expect in this season of unprecedented distress, destitution, and misery, which prevails in this union, that you would have been influenced by the same kind and charitable motives which influence all the other landed proprietors of the union to pay their proportion for their tenants, and not allow them to be in advance for you at a time when they were unable to pay their own part without it pressing heavily upon them . . .'.[64]The reply from EJS' representative was so short and so abrupt however that is seems appropriate to relay it.

> 4, Summer-hill, Kingston, June 5.
> Sir- Mr Shirley has received a communication from the Board of Guardians of the Carrickmacross Union, which from the tone of impertinence which pervades it, he declines to answer. I wish, however, to acquaint the board that Mr Shirley is quite prepared to pay such proportions of the poor rates as can legally be demanded of him, upon the application of the poor rate collector.[65]

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[62] Ibid., Mar. 1847.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., 08 Jun.
[65] Ibid.

This letter, which was deemed by the *Newry Examiner* as 'uncalled for' and which 'manifests bad taste and exhibits no kind or generous feeling',[66] obviously caused sour feelings among the board against EJS. One of the guardians, Thomas Dwyer, responded to the letter by issuing a personal statement on his own situation: whereby he had only recently received a demand from EJS' head bailiff, John McEnaney for a half year's rent due at the end of May, 1847. Dwyer, declaring his previous status as a good tenant, stated that he paid his rent 'regularly and correctly, and I even paid the rent due on 1 November 1846, early in March last notwithstanding my cattle were seized on yesterday for half a year's rent due on the 1st of May'.[67]The remainder of the discussion that followed, criticised EJS' handling of his tenantry but also the need for clarity; the original letter addressed to him by the board intended no insult or injury to EJS.

The Board of Guardians' meetings illustrated many other controversies over land during the Famine. In some cases the major landlords were not those responsible for the evictions but rather it was the larger farmers. In May 1847, one of the larger tenants on the Shirley estate, James Lundy, evicted a large cottier family of seven known as the Keenans. Griffith's Valuation indicated that Lundy had four holdings occupying houses, offices and land in the townland of Mullaghcroghery. Altogether his holdings totalled 25 acres, 2 roods and 3 perches. The board 'expressed their condemnation of the inhumane act'.[68] However the head of the Keenan family was told that he and his family would not be admitted into the workhouse but instead were directed to apply for relief to the local relief committee,[most likely in Raferagh] and gave him a written recommendation to issue to the chairman thereof.[69]In conclusion, a guardian, Mr Bashford, offered Keenan the right to send a free legal summons to Lundy for such an inhumane eviction from his home.

The board was also confronted by many domestic cases such as that of Judith Marron, who had been evicted from her cottage on the Shirley estate by her husband in September 1847. He had refused to allow his wife food or shelter and when he caught their daughter secretly giving her food, he evicted his daughter as well. The board admitted the woman to the workhouse but not the daughter, and they decided to take legal action against Marron as he occupied some acres and was seen to live comfortably. At the same meeting the case of Mr. Hamilton Nelson, the clerk of Raferagh relief district, and one of the cooks, Ms. Sally Bell, was discussed. Both parties were found guilty of selling workhouse provisions such as

[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., 17 May. 1847.
[69] Ibid.

'paupers stirabout and converting the money for their own private use'.[70] They had sold it at as high a price as 17*s*, when it should have been freely distributed as part of the outdoor relief scheme. This was not common practice among relief committees, where in fact the opposite was more probable. The government's insistence that food was not to be sold below the local market price was disliked in many regions and in practice it was often ignored altogether in areas, as was the case when the Clogher relief committee provided cut-price grain as a supplementary form of relief to those working on the Public Works scheme.[71] Raferagh, a large townland 13 km east of Carrickmacross on the Shirley estate, came under attack again in January 1848, when the relief committee documented that each patient was costing the rate-payer an enormous 8 $\frac{1}{2}$*d.* in the temporary fever hospital. This was almost three times higher than the average price in Carrickmacross. The Commissioners required the committee at Raferagh to provide a detailed report to substantiate their expenses. The report showed that they were paying more for provisions such as milk and meal than Carrickmacross workhouse, but the board accused them of disorder in their affairs.

In 1847 and 1848 with the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act and the harshest years of the Famine, there were enormous pressures placed on workhouses which gradually became densely overcrowded. In north Monaghan, Clones workhouse supported 2,600 inmates in 1848 alone, with a further 4,000 obtaining outdoor relief in auxiliary houses and sheds.[72]The figures for Carrickmacross and Castleblayney were just as high. According to Duffy, in 1848, 4,000 inmates were supported in thirteen auxiliary houses, while Castleblayney supported an additional 5,300 inmates in auxiliary housing, while there were 3,600 inmates accommodated in the workhouse itself.[73]Returns of insolvent arrears in the Shirley rent rolls for the year 1847 indicated that 161 tenants were declared insolvent, with the total 'irrecoverable' arrears amounting to £1,025.[74] The townland with the most insolvent tenants was Carrickmacross, where over £80 was owed in insolvent arrears, Mick Fleming was the greatest debtor owing £49 7*s.* 10*d.* It was followed by Enagh north where £60 was owed, Mullinclavan owed £44, and Raferagh owed £39. Bernard Banigan (who will be discussed later in relation to emigration) was the lowest debtor owing just 3*s.* (half years rent), his rent was the lowest of all across the entire estate. In 1848 the numbers dropped substantially. There were 50 insolvent tenants altogether, owing the estate irrecoverable debts

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[70] Ibid., 8 Sept. 1847.
[71] Kinealy and Parkhill (eds) *The Famine in Ulster*, p.06.
[72] Duffy, 'Mapping the Famine in Monaghan', p.445.
[73] Ibid.
[74] List of irrecoverable rent 1847 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/V/10).

of £256 11*s.* *11*d. The highest debtor was Miles Byrne, Carrickmacross, who owed £28 12*s.* and the lowest was Peter Duffy Junior from Lisnagiveragh, who owed just 3s. 6*d.* The townlands encompassing the greatest debts were Ummerafree, Raferagh, Lossetts Magheracloone, and Drumberagh with debts averaging £20 in each.

Meanwhile in November 1848, EJS hosted a lavish ball in the baronial hall at Lough Fea. The *Anglo Celt* reported that the castle was the scene of 'princely hospitality and delightful enjoyment, [with] succession after succession of [two hundred] distinguished visitors' including a long list of English and Irish members of aristocracy. Sir William Russell, Lord and Lady Louth, Lord John Taylor, the Farnhams of Cavan, the Headforts, the Tottenhams, the Longfields, Mr and Mrs George Morant, Miss Forster of Coolderry, the Leslies of Monaghan, Doctors Robinson and Hogg of Carrickmacross etc. The musical entertainment for the evening was provided by the 7th Regiment of Queen's Own Hussars who were stationed at the time in Newbridge.[75]

The centre of the dinner tables were exquisitely dressed with épergnes of gold and silver, and at either ends stood candelabras. The report spoke of how eloquently the room was lit up with over five hundred small lamps glistening in the conservatory 'producing the most brilliant effect, which from its position served to give to the Ball, as well as to the supper-room a fragrance and splendour that alike delighted the eyes and the sense. . .'.[76] In stark contrast with what was going on elsewhere on the estate. Lough Fea was used as a physical and metaphorical stage from where EJS performed as the protagonist for a large aristocratic audience, and this cameo epitomises the social role of big houses across Ireland.

In Carrickmacross workhouse in June 1849, numbers peaked at 1,900 and a similar figure was quoted for the thirteen auxiliary houses and sheds combined. Meanwhile plans were drawn up to extend the workhouse in a bid to accommodate a further 400 orphaned children. Children under fifteen years made up a large percentage (approximately 40 per cent)[77] of workhouse inmates across the country but Parkhill points out that the number of children accommodated by the workhouses in Ulster was particular high. In Ulster, children comprised one half of all workhouse inmates, numbering around 16,349 in 1848.[78] In a bid to tackle this problem as it were, many workhouses resorted to emigration. Between 1848 and 1850, 107 female orphans were assisted to emigrate from Enniskillen workhouse, 44 from

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[75] *Anglo Celt*, 24 Nov. 1848.
[76] Ibid.
[77] John Cunningham, 'The Famine in Fermanagh' in Kinealy and Parkhill (eds) *The Famine in Ulster* p.145
[78] Trevor Parkhill, 'The Famine in County Londonderry' in Kinealy and Parkhill (eds) *The Famine in Ulster* p.158.

Lisnaskea, and 38 from Carrickmacross until over 4,000 female orphans had emigrated to Australia, where there was a gender imbalance in the colony's male dominated society.[79]

The following table lists the thirteen auxiliary houses used to accommodate over 1,000 surplus paupers which the workhouse did not have space for. The numbers they housed fluctuated on a daily basis. Some of the facilities were better regulated to suit their purpose than others. Gartlan's house for example, which was divided into seven apartments, returned mixed reports, with some apartments having perfect ventilation, while in others it was deemed only 'good'. Marron's house was reported 'airy and roomy', while Clarke's house which accommodated 50 persons was reported to have had bad ventilation, the surrounding location had imperfect drainage and 'in the vicinity of this house there is a mill-dam supplied from a very small stream, in the summer season nearly dry, exposing a surface of stagnant mud, from which malarious and pestiferous exhalations must emanate, rendering it . . . a very ineligible site for a residence . . .'.[80]

Table 3.1 List of auxiliary houses and maximum number of occupants

	Adults		children
Brennan's	192	or	250
Mckeown's	60	or	90
Horsehill	80	or	0
Fever Sheds	96	or	0
Swinburn's house	50	or	80
Fever Hospital	110	or	0
Hanlon's House	88	or	0
Finn's House	88	or	0
Gartlan's House	210	or	0
Marron's House	150	or	0
Plunkett's House	52	or	0
Gordon's House	32	or	0
Clarke's House	50	or	0

Source: Details from Dr. Walsh's report as reported to Carrickmacross Board of Guardians in Jan. 1850.

The severity of the situation was echoed in the rentals. There was a dramatic decrease in the amount of rent collected from the Shirley estate in 1849. To take August as an example only £272 9*s.* 11*d,* was received leaving a further £1,957 10*s.* 7*d.* in unpaid rent. Altogether,

[79] John Cunningham, 'The Famine in Fermanagh' in Kinealy and Parkhill (eds) *The Famine in Ulster* p.145; see also http://www.carrickmacrossworkhouse.com/index.php/history-of-workhouse and http://www.irishfaminememorial.org/

[80] *Northern Standard,* Details from Dr. Walsh's report as reported to Carrickmacross Board of Guardians in Dec.1849-Jan. 1850.

the arrears climbed to 27% of the overall rent due. This was the highest percentage of arrears recorded since 1843. By December, returns from the Poor Law collectors showed that over £800 remained uncollected. The collectors complained how, in some parts of the union the landlord had taken away crops from many tenants in lieu of rent, and that on the Shirley estate, some tenants were in limbo. Those liable to face eviction and have their houses thrown down would not pay the poor rate, and neither would EJS, who would soon possess the property. Vexed, Mr Hoey warned the rate collectors, they would not have much of a wage at the end of the month if they did not exert themselves. Bath's agent co-operated, outlining that he would not renew the lease of any middleman 'on whose tenement arrears of poor rate were due'.[81] In contrast, Shirley owed £40 for the Enagh division alone.

By mid December 1849, it was decided each pauper would receive half a pound of beef for Christmas day dinner, and chairman McMahon initiated discussion on the possibility of a workhouse farm. For this the board needed to acquire about 25 acres of reasonably priced land. The land agent for Bath, Tristram Kennedy, generously offered the proposed amount of land to the workhouse for the rent that would usually be paid for it. He proposed dividing the farm between Shirley and Bath's land, each letting $12\frac{1}{2}$ acres at a nominal rent. There was an observation that EJS now had plenty of idle land. Nevertheless in later December, Morant declined to be involved outlining that EJS regarded 'the scheme as quite visionary on the part of the guardians, and of very doubtful benefit to the Union'.[82]On the contrary, Kennedy responded stating [that] he would allow the workhouse 25 acres 'in the event of Mr Shirley not acceding to the proposed arrangements at a fair and just rent'.[83]

Duffy has spoken about the bureaucratic nature of Famine-related support networks such as the Poor Law Commission and the Board of Works. He quoted the *Northern Standard* as stating they were 'enveloped in a mystery dark and impenetrable'.[84]This same hidden air of mystery appeared to have enshrouded the weekly meetings of Poor Law Guardians in Carrickmacross and often times there appeared to have been obscure but endless disputes on various issues. Absenteeism had become an increasing concern and in the depths of winter 1847, large numbers of paupers were being turned away without relief, while many guardians continued to be absent from their roles. For this, the *Newry Examiner and Louth Advertiser* strongly criticised their action; 'our reporter considers that the general attendance of

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[81] *Dundalk Democrat*, 8 Dec. 1849.
[82] Ibid, 18 Dec. 1849.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Duffy, 'Mapping the Famine in Monaghan', p.449.

Guardians at this Board is not at all as regular or as full as it should be. It is really too bad that gentlemen who assume to discharge a public duty should thus wantonly neglect it. There has been no period since the introduction of the poor laws into this country, in which Guardians should be more punctual in their attendance to their respective duties, then at the present time'.[85] They were also lambasted by the Commissioners for the incorrect manner in which they managed their finances. In a letter to the guardians, the Commissioners compared Carrickmacross with Castleblayney workhouse in terms of weekly expenditure. In Carrickmacross, the weekly average cost of the paupers was said to be 'extraordinarily high'.[86] It also criticised their actions on a more general scale: 'there is scarcely any union in Ireland which has suffered more severely from the mal-administration of the Poor Law Act than the union of Carrickmacross. Endless trouble, expense, excitement, and bad feeling, have resulted . . . '.[87]

Allegations of the board's inefficiency and inability to manage its affairs were confirmed by the minutes of a meeting held in November 1846. The agenda specified the meeting would address 'Tenant Right and Security of Tenure'. Instead however, much time was taken up at the meeting discussing whether or not the topic up for discussion should be discussed or not, and if so in what order it should be discussed. After much chaotic deliberation, the guardians eventually discussed the fact that many tenants had essentially neglected their duties on small farm holdings; in terms of improvement for fear that the Ulster Custom would not be practiced on their estate. Some of the guardians specified that there were instances where land was producing 10 barrels of oats but could readily produce 15 barrels. The tenants, they inferred, did not want to incur additional fertiliser or labour costs for fear they would lose their unofficial right to compensation. Disagreements ensued as to whether the board should even discuss the matter at all. Some of the guardians, such as chairman Morant and deputy vice-chairman and aristocrat J. Bashford Esq. of Cabragh Lodge, Donaghmoyne strongly supported the landlord class and stated that they feared that Tenant Right might spark greater tensions among the small holders and the working classes. Bashford threatened to walk out of the meeting, whilst others such as Charles McMahon were adamant that they, the guardians were put there to represent the interests of the ratepayer and he claimed that Carrickmacross was one of the Unions most called upon in Ireland to address the issue 'where there were several thousands of ratepayers, all tenants at-will, and who, for want

[85] *Newry Examiner and Louth Advertiser*, 20 Nov. 1847.
[86] Ibid, 6 Nov, 1847.
[87] Ibid, 25 Apr. 1846.

of security of tenure and value for labour and capital, had naturally left their farms greatly neglected and badly cultivated'.[88]Again, he strongly contended if the law of the land gave such security, it would promote and improve cultivation, thereby increasing the production of different species of corn in the barony. In abrupt response, Morant vehemently outlined 'discussions of this nature shall not be carried out in this room'.[89]Strongly opposing Morant, McMahon stated that he was charitable to those worse off both inside and outside of the workhouse, and he threatened that the guardians would nominate a different candidate to take the chair. The role of chairperson was subsequently offered to the various guardians, all of whom refused. Morant eventually left hastily and Mr Bashford left soon after, asking the clerk to record his objection to discussing the issue. The issue was subsequently dropped until a further meeting.

The drawn-out bureaucratic and mysterious nature of the board again came to light at the end of 1847. McElroy's poor rate collector's wage increase appears to have been accidently publicised via the minutes of a guardian's meeting. 'There had been an understanding between the Guardians to allow him 9*d.* per pound for collecting the rates of his district, but they did not wish that this fact should appear on the minutes, lest the other collectors should look for a higher poundage'.[90]The minutes of a meeting in January of the same year highlighted that Pat McMahon and Pat McCabe both of whom had been appointed rate collectors were to receive 6*d* in the pound, therefore McElroy was hoping to secretly receive 3*d.* more in the pound than his fellow collectors. This information came as the book-keeping practices of the Poor Law Commissioners were tightening. The same article quoted a short letter from the Poor Law Commission office requesting a prompt return of accounts and accompanying documentation. In January 1847, there were 535 inmates in Carrickmacross workhouse, with a weekly average cost of 2s. $0\frac{1}{2}d.$ per pauper. One year later there was a modest increase, with 558 inmates in the workhouse, though the average cost of each pauper remained the same. However the large-scale changes could be witnessed outside the physical walls of the workhouse, which was administering outdoor relief as part of the Poor Law Amendment Act to 1,501 persons. By January 1848 it was reported that 'relief is given in this Union in money. Every recipient of out-door relief, above nine years of age, receives 8*d.* per week, and every one under nine years, 4d. per week'.[91]

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[88] Ibid., 7 Nov. 1846.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid., 4. Dec. 1847.
[91] Ibid., Jan. 1848.

In the summer of 1850 Carrickmacross Union struck a rate of 5*s.* in the pound in two electoral divisions on the Shirley estate, 'a move by the rascally Guardians' which, in Shirley's view, would ruin the landlords and ratepayers alike.[92] The *Anglo Celt* reported at the end of 1850 that the occupants of the area were financially stretched enough with high rents without considering the extra strain of the poor rates; 'besides the high rents the people here have got the new and distressing impost of poor rates which, in this union are raising to from 3*s.* to 5*s.* in the pound'.[93] The *Northern Standard* reported in January 1851, that all rents on the Shirley estate were reduced by 10 per cent because of the growing numbers going to the workhouse from the estate; 'hardly enough to pay the Poor Law rates which had in turn been increased' the newspaper exclaimed; 'but all over the county the landlords were reducing the rents and the tenants were a little less dissatisfied'.[94]

There were further difficulties for the collectors in the latter 1840s and early 50s. Mr McMahon was given the run-around when he appeared in some neighbourhoods 'a horn was sounded, and the people shouted from hill to hill in such a manner, that it was impossible for him to succeed in making seizures'.[95] In four days of collecting, he only received £50. At another meeting in 1849 a rate collector told the board that there were places he could not get any money whatsoever claiming that 'in instances where Mr Shirley was liable, he refused and stated that he had turned two or three farms valued under £4 into one farm. Other lands were untilled for the last two years'.[96]

In Carrickmacross, public works commenced in 1849 to build an improved sewerage system. EPS, who was then attending board meetings frequently asked to see the contract agreement for the sewerage works, which he indicated were taking too much time to complete. It had been decided that four pauper men from the workhouse would aid the contractor, but this he claimed, had not been forthcoming. EPS appeared outraged by the situation, stating 'laziness was at the bottom of everything in Ireland; in retaliation, fellow guardian Mr Callan stated that 'if the Irish were paid like other people, they would be found to work as well' while the chairman dwelt on EPS' absences, stating he was sorry to hear him 'express himself so relative to the Irish; however, when he was naturalised in the country, perhaps he would have a different opinion of the people (laughter)'.[97]

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[92] Duffy, 'Mapping the Famine in Monaghan', p.445.
[93] *Anglo Celt*, 5 Dec. 1850.
[94] *Northern Standard*, 12 Oct. 1850.
[95] Ibid.
[96] *Dundalk Democrat and People's Advocate*, 24 Nov. 1849.
[97] Ibid.

At the same meeting EJS' agent Morant came under fire from a former tenant named Duffy. Duffy claimed that he had not received the sum of £8 which he had been promised by Morant two years previous for giving up his farm. Morant's version of the story was that Duffy had agreed that he and his family would emigrate to America, while Morant would pay the full £27 passage fee. Duffy went as far as Drogheda but claimed that he then turned back, as he did not have enough money for his passage. EPS then made a snide remark about Duffy being too lazy: 'he had lost much by that laziness'.[98] EJS was heavily criticised by fellow guardians for referring to the Irish as 'lazy'. In November 1849, editor of the *Dundalk Democrat* Joseph Carton raised the issue of laziness, Carton accused EPS of turning up late for a boardroom meeting a few days previous, the Board of Guardians had concluded their meeting by the time he arrived. Using this as ammunition, Carton concluded his report by accusing EPS of being 'very lazy'.[99] There was a divide among the guardians as to who was at fault in this rather complex situation. EPS and Morant were of the opinion that this case was a waste of the board's time, and it was not the place to discuss such matters. 'Mr Morant said Duffy came to the wrong place. He came indeed to the guardians to ask them to compel Mr Shirley to get him what he thought was due to him!'.[100]On further questioning, Duffy said; the £8 was in lieu of crops and he had been promised the sum of money in addition to his passage to America. Morant refuted this claim and argued that those tenants who chose to emigrate were always given funds and supplies to assist their passage. 'There was never an instance of any one leaving the Shirley estate since emigration was resorted to where a tenant to leave without having some money . . . it was a most absurd thing, for the board to entertain the question at all, or to interfere between Mr Shirley and his tenants'.[101] Fellow guardian Mr Kenny contradicted Morant, saying that should Duffy, his wife and nine children require refuge in the workhouse at the expense of the ratepayer (which amounted to £36 per annum), then it was in fact a matter for discussion by the board. After Duffy was questioned further by Morant and EPS, he stated that he favoured Smith, the clerk in Shirley's rent office rather than Morant, and was subsequently advised to go back to the rent office where the matter would be cleared up.[102]

Sending tenants to the rent office to solve various individual cases was not uncommon. Duffy asserted that Carrickmacross rent office was a powerful social welfare institution which

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[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.

had existed long before the Poor Law Act. It was more than just a physical structure where the exchange of monies for land, lime and turf took place in simple cold systematic transactions. The rent office represented the estate and the estate 'undoubtedly formed the most important spatial and social reality for good or ill in the daily lives of most of the country population . . . [it] represented the place where rents were paid and help might be sought in various crises'.[103]

In Duffy's case the guardians appeared to have calmed the situation, acting as mediators between EPS and his angry tenant. Issues of a similar nature were not uncommon at board meetings. One woman, whose husband had gone to England or Scotland in search of work, came before the board in April 1850 looking for relief. She claimed she and her five children were promised by Morant that they would receive assistance to emigrate to America in the summer of 1849, should she give up her house. Morant insisted that he had made no such promise. When asked by the chairman if the woman's former land and house were now occupied, Morant replied that 'there was no one willing to take it through delicacy, or perhaps fear or something of that kind'.[104] He was also strongly of the opinion that the board should discontinue admitting women and their families without their husbands. Other members of the board contested his motion, stating that they were there for that very reason, to aid the destitute. The woman and her family were subsequently admitted after much deliberation.

EJS', EPS' and Morant's attendance at board meetings proved pivotal in terms of how their discourse with the other guardians reflected on the overall relationship the Shirleys and the estate administration had with the estate's tenantry in general. Firstly as early as 1845, the corrupt nature of the open voting element in the election of EJS' employee must have undoubtedly created a feeling of distrust among the elected guardians and among the tenantry. Media coverage heightened an awareness of what the estate administration was capable of and would have put the Bath's position morally higher than the Shirley's. Secondly, throughout board proceedings, there was constant reference to the delay in EJS coming forward with his portion of the poor rates, his lack of cooperation which was compounded in the board's necessity to correspond with him on numerous occasions in order to extract the sums owed. Thirdly, Tristram Kennedy who had developed a good reputation as agent even prior to his position on the Bath estate negotiated and debated in a much less aggressive manner at meetings. The minutes refer to EJS', EPS' and Morants' discussions with or about paupers seeking aid from the workhouse as rude, obnoxious and in bad taste. EJS for example

[103] Patrick Duffy, 'Emigrants and the estate office in the mid-nineteenth century: a compassionate relationship?' p.71.
[104] *Dundalk Democrat and People's Advocate*, 20 Apr. 1850.

continually used the word lazy to describe paupers, he refuted claims by tenants surrounding, land, rent, eviction, relief, and emigration. He was portrayed as displaying an aggressive demeanour, he was dismissive of board discussions that he was uncomfortable with conversations on issues such as tenant discontent on his estate, and he frequently voted against the admission of paupers whom he did not deem eligible, though the contrary was the case for most of the other board members. This often enraged the Shirleys or Morant who occasionally walked out in the middle of meetings. Kennedy on the other hand was much more willing to conform on behalf of the Bath estate, with measures that EJS totally dismissed, for example the provision of land for growing crops which to be consumed by the workhouse. Instead of having to provide half of the land which was the motion put forward in the first instance, the Bath estate were forced to provide all 25 acres on account of EJS disagreeing with the measure. The elected members of the board frequently and negatively alluded to their own personal experiences as tenants of the Shirley estate but the same cannot be said of the Bath estate. In addition the Bath estate did not evict such large numbers of tenants nor did it ever come under the same fire as the Shirley estate for filling the workhouse with its dregs. However, the Bath estate did conduct large scale assisted emigration which unsurprisingly escalated once Trench replaced Kennedy as agent in January 1851. In contrast, the Bath estate was not labelled with the same notoriety as the Shirley estate and to a great extent the wholly physical absentee nature of the Bath landlord coupled with the attitude and reputation and popularity of Kennedy must have added to this. The *Dundalk Democrat* summed the situation up quite well, when in 1851 it reported how the Poor Law had led to 'an organised system of extinguishing the small-holders, lest they should become chargeable to rates, and 'extermination' upon a grand scale became the order of the day. The Bath estates, in common with the rest of the district, were greatly overpopulated, but Mr Kennedy sternly refused to adopt any of the cruel remedies applied in other quarters'[105] namely the Shirley estate.

It would be untrue to assume that EJS or his representatives were the only guardians who did not always display compassion towards the paupers who came before the board. In one instance for example in November 1849, the board showed what can only be described as callous tendencies when a young girl came before it looking for a coffin to bury her deceased mother. The board stated that they did not have the wherewithal to supply coffins, and the chairperson made a couple of inappropriate jokes to the great amusement of his fellow board

[105] *Dundalk Democrat*, 1 feb. 1851.

members. He exclaimed how he had heard of a man sentenced to hanging in Monaghan Gaol whose coffin was ordered and made; 'he was afterwards pardoned and then [pursued] for the price of the coffin (great laughter)'.[106] The girl must have left deeply distressed. The general consensus was however positive towards the Guardians. A brief appraisal of the work they carried out was printed in the *Dundalk Democrat* in 1850. The article contended that they had much greater labours to perform than many other Unions, owing to the large numbers requiring relief and the ever increasing difficulty in securing funds to carry out required works. It outlined many developments the board had helped implement. Their attention to hygiene, the manner with which they employed inmates for example, and additionally two huge ovens were installed in the house for the purpose of baking white and brown bread. An experienced master baker was hired to teach his trade to ten male apprentice inmates between the ages of 15 and 20 years. The guardians were praised for erecting a large mill for grinding wheat, which employed forty inmates and produced one ton of meal per day in a further bid to be self sufficient. The inmates' clothing and shoes were all made in the house by a large number of inmates who were taught by a master craftsman. Two-hundred yards of strong linen were produced in the house weekly and used by women to make bedding, curtains, shirts etc. while wool to make socks was also spun in large quantities and embroidery classes were established for over 50 girls to partake in.[107]

Feingold suggests that to a certain extent, the Famine had a beneficial effect on the Board of Guardians. Very soon after they were established, they were confronted with a continuing crisis and in turn this compelled them to learn and develop the administrative and organisational skills to cope and this developed much more rapidly than would otherwise have been the case.[108] As has been outlined, they can be criticised in many respects and in many cases they were negatively depicted by newspapers but by and large Board of Guardians 'emerged from the Famine as an efficient, well-coordinated administrative network, to which Parliament subsequently assigned functions not directly related to poor relief'.[109] In addition to the important role they played during the Famine, they were also tasked with the responsibility of assisting evicted tenants to emigrate in 1848, in 1851 they were administering the local dispensaries under the Medical Charities Act 1851. They were responsible for 'apprenticing workhouse boys to the navy and merchant marine, placing illegitimate and orphaned children with foster parents, inspecting sanitary conditions in the

[106] Ibid., Nov. 1849.
[107] Ibid., 4 May. 1850.
[108] Feingold, *The revolt of the tenantry*, p.12.
[109] Ibid., p.13.

union and arranging for the construction of water lines and sewers, inspecting sanitary conditions in bakehouses and workshops, providing lists of names of persons eligible for jury duty and for the parliamentary franchise . . . '.[110] They were in essence the central controlling tower of local government in the Union.

Carrickmacross Fever Hospital

In 1842 a fever hospital was erected almost opposite the Workhouse in Carrickmacross. It was one of many hospitals built at the time to cope with the recurring danger of a fever epidemic in Ireland. There were a large number of local businessmen, members of gentry, land agents and clergymen who contributed towards building the hospital. Bath and EJS each contributed £100, while Alexander Mitchell contributed £20 James Evatt donated £10 while Revd. Dr. Robinson, Carrickmacross give £15 and Revd. Grey Porter, Donaghmoyne £5. The total voluntary subscriptions amounted to a substantial £442 3*s*.[111]

Medical staff was in scarce supply during the Famine period and mortality figures were high not only among the patients, many of whom were admitted with typhus and relapsing fever, but also the nurses and those who administered medical relief at a time prior to the implementation of vaccinations. (The hospital remained in use until the 1950s). On 31 August 1846, a Central Board of Health was established in Dublin with power to require Boards of Guardians to set up fever hospitals and to provide dispensaries and appoint extra medical officers. The intentions of the Act were creditable; temporary fever sheds were to be erected, there was to be a bed for every patient and clothing was to change frequently. The only question was; where were the Boards of Guardians to find the money? In the meanwhile, until these utopian conditions came into being, the fever-stricken had, in most cases, only the workhouse to rely on.[112] This was the reality of the situation in Carrickmacross because the fever hospital was obliged to close from 1846 to the early 1850s as a result of having insufficient funds to operate. The high number of deaths had also damaged its reputation. The Board of Guardians decided to rent the fever hospital from September 1847 to January 1851 in a bid to cope with excessive numbers of inmates. At Board of Guardian meetings from 1850s onwards Morant introduced a motion to cease renting the hospital. It appeared the hospital's committee wanted to keep possession of the building. Bath's agent Kennedy and

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[110] Ibid.
[111] Carrickmacross Fever hospital subscriptions list, 1842 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/5/2).
[112] *Northern Standard*, 31 Aug.1846.

Bashford opposed the motion, wishing to retain use of the facility for a further six months because 150 paupers remained in the hospital with no alternative facilities available. Chairman of the Board of Guardians Charles McMahon expressed his optimism that the hospital committee would agree to extend their lease as a result of the extenuating circumstances; 'I consider it both cruel and inhumane for any committee to ask us to turn out 150 poor paupers out of the hospital, when we have no place to put them'.[113] Alone in his view, Morant threatened that legal proceedings would ensue should the board object to handing over possession. Peter Hoey was both a guardian and a financial contributor towards the hospital, and opposed giving up the facility. Census records indicated that 367 persons died in the hospital in 1850.

The pressure of sickness and disease on the Shirley estate prior to the Famine was illustrated in an undated report, but most likely drafted by the medical officer of the new workhouse in 1844 and relating to numbers treated in the period between 1842-3. An excerpt from the 1843 medical report which was aptly entitled 'Diseases most frequently met with on the Lough Fea Estate' is worth outlining. It stated that the average number of patients treated at the dispensary per day was 45. They were treated on each of the 4 receiving days of the week. For the remaining two days between 10 and 20 patients were treated. The remaining two days referred to, may have alluded to patients requiring emergency medical treatment at the weekends. Firstly, out of every 100 patients treated, the medical officer calculated that 80 had infections of the stomach and bowels, either alone or combined with other diseases and in most cases they were characterised by squealing and burning pains. Secondly, asthma was very common, 'the greater part of the old patients (especially the women) and also many of the middle aged ones being affected with it'.[114] The itch was listed third, this disease occurred to patients of all ages 'from the child of scarcely a week old up to the oldest person, it is very probable that there are few families on the estate who have not either themselves had it or some of their immediate predecessors and would not be at all uncommon to see the whole of a family affected by it'.[115]

The report continued in a similar manner listing other illnesses and diseases including rheumatism, which was most common in older people, because of cold damp weather conditions. Toothache, he reported 'is exceedingly common both in young and old and the

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[113] Ibid., 24 Feb. 1850.
[114] 'Diseases most frequently met with on the Lough Fea estate 1843' (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/3).
[115] Ibid.

homeopathic have frequently proved very successful in it'.[116] Worms were listed number six affecting young children and middle-aged persons. One of the more serious diseases on the list was scarlet fever, and the author stated that it had 'for the last 8 months been very common, as has also an infection of the throat characterised by great soreness of it with swelling of the glands of the neck and throat in many cases bearing all the marks of undeveloped scarlet fever. Of the two infections together there has probably been at least six or seven hundred cases'.[117]

Small-pox was listed as number eight: 'a great many children die of it, but a medical man is comparatively seldom applied to as the common people think that medicine has very little power over it and that the doctors are more likely to do harm than good'.[118]Measles were briefly mentioned; however the author suggested that it was not common for sufferers to seek medical intervention unless severe illness emerged consequentially. Consumption was the next disease listed; it was one of the most fatal as 'it has always been too far gone before patient applied to [doctor]'.[119] Also listed was Chronic Dysentery, an inflammatory disorder of the intestine causing the sufferer severe abdominal pain as well as diarrhoea while also passing blood and/or mucus. If left untreated, the disorder could be fatal; however the report stated that 'in most of the cases [found on the Shirley estate] relief had been given'.[120] Epilepsy was listed as number 13, it 'has occasionally been met with and always neglected but I suspect not altogether cured on account of the patient ceasing attendance when they find an improvement has taken place and they are generally satisfied with the present good'.[121]

Finally two types of fever were listed. One was Intermittent Fever while the other was Typhus Fever. The causes attributed to the former were interesting; 'a few cases of this have presented themselves . . . the patient has always attributed it to going to the harvest in the county Dublin'.[122] The latter is said to have presented 26 cases, of which it was estimated that three patients had died. The author suggested that two of the three lost their battle against the crippling disease 'through the negligence of the friends in not sending for and giving the medicines at the proper time'.[123]

The report listed out and briefly outlined a total of 15 diseases relative to the Shirley estate. From the causes and remedies of the disorders, it was possible to establish the

[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid.
[119] Ibid.
[120] Ibid.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid.

ignorance of the estate's inhabitants from their beliefs as to the causes of sickness (such as travelling to Dublin), to the remedies whereby a medical man's intervention would be sought prior to that of a doctor. The Ordnance Survey Memoirs recorded that there was not much sickness in the district of Mageracloone in the 1830s. 'The Farney dispensary, situated in Carrickmacross, is supported by the voluntary subscription of the principal proprietors and neighbouring gentlemen, assisted by county presentment'.[124] To substantiate this claim, Shirley records confirm that sums of money were subscribed to three dispensaries located on the estate under the Charity Account for the half year ending 31 August 1850. The Farney dispensary received £12 10*s.* on 11 May, on the 8 June £5 was subscribed to Ballytrain dispensary after Edward Maguire, (the treasurer) was forced to write a letter to George Morant seeking the subscription; he must have been disappointed when the Ballytrain dispensary received only half of the usual subscription in 1850. Meanwhile on 27 July the annual £1 subscription was made to 'the woman in charge of Leons dispensary'.[125] The Farney dispensary was the largest and the most significant in light of its central location and this was reflected by the annual subscription allotted. It was 'attended by one surgeon assisted by a compounder of medicines and is conducted on truly liberal terms'.[126] The sheer lack of education coupled with customary beliefs about health and welfare led to somewhat hybrid medical practices.

Board of Works

The Office of Public Works was established in 1831 in a bid to promote the economic improvement of Ireland and to reduce poverty and disorder. The board was in charge of the expenditure of public funds on national projects such as bridges and harbours at Kingstown and Dunmore. In addition the board were granted the sum of £500,000 to issue to local authorities or individuals for works initiated in their localities and in the decades that followed, a further £50,000 was made available for the construction of roads and bridges in poorer districts while loans were also made available to carry out large scale drainage works, to make sanitary improvements and to construct railways and fisheries.[127]The board's greatest challenge came with the Famine and during the two-year period 1845-7, it was the primary body responsible for relief under Russell's government and it acted in conjunction with the Irish Poor Law. In regions like Carrickmacross however, it took too long for operations to get

[124] Day and McWilliams (eds), *Ordinance Survey Memoirs of Ireland,* p.140.
[125] Records of dispensary subscriptions, 1847-8 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/V/Box 6)
[126] Day and McWilliams (eds) *Ordinance Survey Memoirs of Ireland,* p.140.
[127] Connolly (ed.), *Oxford companion to Irish history*, p.52.

underway and as a result many who were sent to work in 1846 were physically unable. The board had stringent policies in place concerning the type of public works undertaken and wages paid, and it was criticized by landlords for sponsoring useless works, and by tenants for the inadequacy of the relief it provided.[128] In general, public works schemes were too costly and they were slow in dealing with the immediacy of the crisis in Ireland. An example of this can be witnessed in county Fermanagh which was one of the counties in Ireland least affected by the Famine. The public works administration was unable to efficiently deal with the demands placed on it in October 1846, when it took three months for bureaucratic procedures to be completed and before funds were granted for works to take place after a meeting was held in an attempt to progress works in East Omagh.[129] This was again echoed in Tyrone when in December 1846 road works costing £5,000 that had been sanctioned in October had not yet started. The board initially took five weeks to make its report to the Treasury on the first 44 batches of works, one week before the Treasury authorised the first £2,000 and this pace continued into December, with the first batch of works not beginning until January 1847 and the remainder one month later. Eventually when public works schemes (which were supposed to represent an emergency form of relief) did become operational, large numbers of those eligible to work were suffering the physical consequences of starvation and sicknesses such as fever, dysentery and diarrhoea were rampant. Issues like these were obvious from the reports on meetings of Carrickmacross Board of Guardians in the 1840s, and there were ambiguous feelings towards the Board of Works schemes. The guardians feared that many, if not all of those discharged from the workhouse in large numbers and sent to work on drainage or sewerage works would soon be sent back to the workhouse unable to sustain the hard daily labour that was expected of them. In Carrickmacross Mr Callan expressed fear that 40 able-bodied pauper men and their families, whom the board was proposing to send to Lurgangreen and Castlebellingham, to carry out drainage works would quickly come back. Mr Kelly also stated that he had reservations about the matter since he had heard of similar cases, whereby paupers were paid so little they could not pay for lodgings and food so they left the works, deeming them a failure. Yet Carrickmacross Board of Guardians sent large numbers of failed applicants who had sought refuge in the workhouse to apply to the Board of Works.

In May 1844, Samuel Ussher Roberts was appointed district engineer for the Ardee, Glyde and Fane drainage districts in counties Monaghan, Louth and Meath, where he was in charge of extensive arterial drainage works. These became major Famine relief schemes.

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[128] Ibid.

[129] Kinealy and Parkhill (eds) *The Famine in Ulster*, p.05.

Roberts wrote many letters in relation to the state of persons who worked at digging the arterial drains in the south Monaghan area. Thus on 5 February 1847 Roberts reported:

> The class of people employed as stewards or gangers, and recommended by the proprietors, has been found most inefficient, and their inefficiency has of course increased largely the difficulty of controlling so large a work. Works are now open in upwards of 50 different localities in the barony, so that employment may be said to be at the door of every labourer. Men, infirm and able-bodied, women, and children have been employed, and I do not think relief in the shape of employment could be more effectually afforded. Payments are made once a week. I have divided the barony into four divisions, the pay returns of which terminate on different days; by this means all men are paid a day or two after the week's earnings are due. . ..I cannot describe the poverty and destitution among the people in this barony; unfortunately the works in aid of relief were not commenced until the people were almost starving. Hundreds of them came to work without having tasted food for days before; the result was, they were unable to earn wages capable of supporting themselves, and numbers of them left the employment in despair to go to the poorhouse.[130]

Roberts found that because tenants were unable to earn wages exceeding 8*d.* per day even though every effort was made to induce them to exert themselves, it was to no avail; they were simply too weak to carry out even the most menial of tasks. In the end he found himself 'obliged to raise the scale of prices, so as to enable them, weak, infirm and badly fed as they were, to earn wages that would save them and their families from actual starvation'.[131]

With regard to the efforts made by the local proprietors, Bath, EJS and their representatives, Roberts criticised their lack of effort and influence in relation to the works which he stated were 'progressing satisfactorily and well, though we have not experienced that aid or assistance . . . that might have been expected, and which would have helped us through our difficulties'.[132] The report continued stating that on 30 January 1847, 'over 20,000 people (9,608 men, 7,042 women and girls and 3,606 boys), were employed on Public Works on an average wage of 6 pence, less than 2 cent, per day, digging drains at 75 locations throughout the area of South Monaghan'.[133] These statistics were mirrored across Ulster with 25,000 people employed on approximately 4,000 work schemes in the neighbouring county of Cavan in February 1847.[134] Wages on the works scheme in the Rathfriland and the Mournes areas of Down were paid between 8*d.* and 10*d.* per day, slightly more than those paid in Carrickmacross, however the Board of Works inspecting officer Captain Brereton found that the usual wages would have needed to be 'trebled to be of any sufficient service whatever'.[135]

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[130] Parliamentary Papers, 8, Sessions 1846, vol. 8.
[131] *Northern Standard*, 8 Apr. 2004.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Fr. Dan Gallogly, 'The Famine in county Cavan' in Kinealy and Parkhill (eds), *The Famine in Ulster*, p.65.
[135] Trevor McCavery, 'The Famine in County Down' in Kinealy and Parkhill (eds), *The Famine in Ulster*, p.124.

On 20 February, less than one month after Roberts had confirmed the huge numbers employed on works schemes, it was reported that the works scheme would soon be terminated. Employment, he stated was becoming increasingly limited with people physically unfit to work, having to be discharged from their duties, and he confirmed the destitution they envisaged.

> Hundreds spend days without food, and in the absence of proper sustenance have recourse to the most unwholesome diet. Their deserted and wretched cabins, their forlorn and distressing look, with pain and sickness so dreadfully depicted in every countenance, is horribly painful to look at; and with all this human misery, there is no person putting his shoulder to the burthen, no proper efforts are being made to relieve the people. How it will end, God only knows.[136]

Similar was the case in county Cavan when on 20 March 1847 20 per cent of those employed were made redundant.[137] According to Gallogly the selection process targeted women and children first but by mid-June the numbers which had increasingly diminished, fell to 2,000 and then they ceased altogether. In Farney, Roberts made recommendations as to what should be done next in the barony. He noticed that large farmers were tilling properly. He further noted that it was customary for the small farmers to cultivate their land with the help of their children who would carry the manure to the ground in baskets; they would then hire horses to plough. This account coincides quite closely with evidence taken by the Poor Enquiry. EJS' agent Mitchell who did not always answer the questions in any great detail, reiterated that women and children carried out a great deal of farming, working as labourers which was of paramount importance to the family income, potentially earning 4*d.* per day.[138] Roberts stated that the large proprietors in the region like Bath and Shirley had a responsibility in bringing about agricultural stability to the barony's farmers, though he noted how his advice was falling on deaf ears. They 'ought now to supply . . . means to dig or plough their land, and give them seed, which would ensure the land being tilled. I have urged in the strongest manner I could, the necessity of looking to these matters in time; but nothing is done yet, and if public employment is not given to the people in March; Farney is lost'.[139] The Shirleys were advocates of the 1846 Drainage Act as envisaged through the correspondence between EJS and the Office of Public Works (OPW). His application which accompanied a report drawn up by Trench to drain and subsoil 103 acres in the townlands of

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[136] *Northern Standard*, 8 Apr. 2004.
[137] Fr. Dan Gallogly, 'The Famine in county Cavan' in Kinealy and Parkhill (eds), *The Famine in Ulster*, p.65.
[138] *Third report of the commissioners for inquiring into the condition of the poorer classes in Ireland* [43], H.C. 1836, xxx.
[139] *Northern Standard*, 8 Apr. 2004.

Corrybracken, Drumgosset and Knocknecran East at the cost of over £527 was approved. The case could be argued however, that EJS with the advice of Trench was already much more preoccupied by the idea of assisted emigration as an effective method of sorting out the estate. Instead of agricultural relief they supplied emigration relief.[140]

Assisted Emigration Schemes

In 1848, arrears began to build up again though the rent due was in decline as a result of falling number of tenants occupying holdings. The total rent due in 1847 was £18,530 while the total received was £17,836 exhibiting arrears of £3,349.

3.1 Summary of rentals of the Shirley estate 1843-1852 (£)

year	1843	1844	1845	1846	1847	1848	1849	1850	1851	1852
Arrears c/f	3,140	4,284	4,205	2,476	2,655	3,349	4,766	2,376	2,580	2,069
Rent due	22,007	21,997	22,176	19,077	18,530	17,621	17,888	18,462	16,760	17,824
Rent Received	21,648	22,076	23,905	18,899	17,837	16,204	17,995	18,759	14,341	16,610

Source; Calculated using the figures from the rentals for the Shirley estate 1843-1910, P.R.O.N.I., D/3531/R/6/11 – D/3531/R/10/1-2

Emigration was certainly not a new solution in the mid nineteenth-century. In the pre-Famine period, the government had come under increasing pressure to subsidize emigration in a bid to solve destitution in Ireland and provide a much needed labour force in the Colonies. Cost was a deciding factor against the measure and thus by the mid 1840s, with the home economy deteriorating and with the onset of Famine, increasing numbers of Irish landlords turned to financing emigration themselves.

Whether absentee or resident landlords experienced the realities of the situation at ground level. Whilst sitting on Board of Guardians at meetings or responding to the minutely detailed correspondence that estate officials were obliged to draw up and send to the absentee landlord regularly, the deplorable situation on many estates could not be ignored. After 1845, landlords faced the prospect of non-payment of rents, escalating arrears and the associated costs they would incur in proceedings against defaulting tenants. They had to bear the brunt of ever-increasing Poor Law rates which bore heaviest on estates with large pauper populations, as landlords were required to pay the rates for tenants with holdings valued at less than £4. In

[140] McDermott, *Gypsum mining and the Shirley estate,* p.28.

1838 for example, EJS was reported to have had 'over 3,000 [tenants] who did not pay each over £5'.[141] In May of the same year Lord Lismore recorded that EJS' anxiety with the huge number of poor tenants that were resident on his estate was so great that he felt compelled to establish a "sinking fund" 'to buy out and provide for the useless tenantry', this of course never happened.[142] In 1847, the so-called 'Gregory clause' was passed as an amendment to the Poor Law Act of the same year. Named after sir William Gregory who proposed the Act 'the quarter acre clause' prohibited those occupying more than a quarter of an acre of land from availing of relief from poor rates.[143] Until May 1848 this Act also applied to the dependants of those quarter acre landholders. Critics of the Act saw it as a lawful mechanism that would enable landlords greater freedom in clearing their estates of surplus tenants.[144] EJS delayed no time in carrying out large scale evictions and assisting emigration which was already in operation on the estate. Records indicate that pre-Famine emigration was carried out on the estate with many emigrants receiving their passage money while others were also outfitted with provisions.[145] Duffy asserts that it is likely that other emigrants were indirectly assisted by having their rent arrears written off once they surrendered their holdings and cabins could be destroyed. Hundreds were assisted by the estate between 1847 and 1849 but records also reveal that there was a keen interest and willingness on behalf of the tenantry to go. The *Northern Standard* reported on 27 March 1847 that 'emigration is a great safety valve . . . If we have a population that we cannot feed it is in our interests to provide them with means to go to those countries where there is a field for their exertions'.[146] Inevitably there were many who emigrated from this estate and others who were privately supported either by themselves and their families or through remittances from relatives and friends. Those that were assisted by the Shirley estate were those who had no other means of supporting themselves and those who were referred to as 'broken down' in Trench's 1843 report.[147]

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[141] David Fitzpatrick, 'Emigration, 1801-70', in W.E Vaughan (ed.) *New History of Ireland; v Ireland Under the Union 1800-70, i*, (Oxford, 1989), pp 585-8 and Patrick Duffy, 'Disencumbering our crowded places; theory and practice of estate emigration schemes in mid-nineteenth century Ireland' in *To and from Ireland; planned migration schemes c.1600-2000*, pp 79-104.

[142] Duffy, 'The Famine in Monaghan' in Kinealy and Parkhill (eds) *The Famine in Ulster*, p.193.

[143] Ibid., p.194.

[144] Connolly (ed.), *Oxford companion to Irish history*, p.241; also see Dooley, *The big houses and landed estates*, p.29.

[145] Duffy, 'The Famine in Monaghan' in Kinealy and Parkhill (eds) *The Famine in Ulster* p.195.

[146] Quoted in Duffy, 'The Famine in Monaghan',p.194.

[147] Ibid.

Trench was obviously an avid supporter and 'superlative advocate'[148] of Thomas Malthus's population management policies which observed that sooner or later a Malthusian catastrophe in the form of Famine or disease would control population disorder. One of his main theories was based on food supply being intrinsically linked with population figures. This was evident in Trench's 1843 confidential report, where he advised EJS on emigration, which he believed would lead to great long-term improvement, through the consolidation of farms. Although Trench did not make express reference to throwing down houses, it was most likely that he, like many other followers of Malthus, believed that emigrant schemes would have to be accompanied by 'subsidiary preventative measures like destruction of houses of emigrants and imposition of taxes on houses or windows to discourage early marriage',[149] which he successfully carried out on the Digby and Lansdowne estates. This, Trench maintained, 'rarely happened without their [the tenant's] consent and not affecting the purchase money'.[150]Meanwhile in 1845 the *Newry Examiner* reported on various competitions which took place on local estates. The competition set out to find the neatest houses and gardens on estates in Louth and Monaghan; it seems tenants had to nominate themselves to compete.

With emigration schemes, houses, barns and outhouses were thrown down to prevent family or relatives of the emigrants moving in and taking over the holding. If not done, this defeated the purpose of assisting entire families to emigrate. The system of eradicating whole families prevailed on the Shirley estate among others (notably the Fitzwilliam and Palmerston estates), though as the Famine crisis worsened, Morant granted assistance to any individuals (especially women, in what was called 'an experiment' in 1848) who wished to leave in the hope that they would remit enough money to initiate chain migration amongst their families and thus lessen the financial burden on the estate.[151] Women, it would appear, were more likely to stay in touch with home than their male counterparts. In terms of rent on the Shirley estate, the increase in arrears continued in 1848, when the total rent due was £20,971 while the actual amount retrieved was £16,204, i.e. arrears were now amounting to £4,766.

As a result of his style of land agency and his proficiency in managing the logistics of dispatching large numbers of paupers, Trench became spokesman for those insolvent in various assisted emigration schemes on the Shirley and Bath estates in Farney, and

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[148] Duffy, 'Disencumbering our crowded places; theory and practice of estate emigration schemes in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland' in *To and from Ireland; planned migration schemes c.1600*-2000, p.102.
[149] The Devon Commission; William Steuart Trench.
[150] Duffy, 'Disencumbering our Crowded Places', p.80.
[151] Ibid., p.92.

Lansdowne in Kenmare. Most landed estates were physically and metaphorically at the heart of the overpopulation crisis, but only the larger estates had the financial and administrative wherewithal to implement emigration to any degree. This was evidenced by the great number of emigrants who were assisted on various large estates, and it was on these estates that the most significant impact was felt. Between 1850-3 for example 3,360 pauper emigrants were assisted to leave the Lansdowne estate by Trench, 2,000 of whom left in the year 1851; this would have been viewed as a logistical victory in contrast with the uncontrolled flow of emigration from other estates.

In Farney, by the spring of 1844, 140 adults and 40 children had emigrated at a cost of £356 in subsidies from EJS, with petitions and correspondence showing that tenants across the board from cottiers to tradesmen and schoolteachers, young and old, expressing a wish for assistance to emigrate. Thus Peter Ward, a schoolmaster, his wife and nine children were granted £15 5*s.* in March 1844 to emigrate.

A detailed list of emigrants from the Shirley estate compiled between 2 May 1848 and the 19 May 1849 suggested that at least 136 adults and almost 200 children were assisted to emigrate throughout that year to England, New York, Canada, Philadelphia and Quebec (often exact numbers of children were not counted - sometimes the records state the names of the parent or parents, adding 'and family' to suggest assisted passage for their children). The information recorded differed depending on each individual or family circumstance. The surname was always recorded, and in some cases the townland address, the cost of emigration and whether or not the family/individual was granted extra provisions either via estate funds of from the assistance of neighbours or relatives. A typical example of a family who were listed was 'Feb 1st '49, Patrick Carroll late of Corrybracken, wife and six children - eldest 18, 2nd 16, 3rd 13, 4th 9, 5th 3, 6th $\frac{1}{4}$. Whole passage to New York and necessaries for voyage'.[152] On the same date in the same townland, Widow Gulshenan and her three children aged 20,18 and 16 respectively were also granted whole passages to New York and necessaries.[153] It was not a coincidence that the two neighbouring families were aided to emigrate to the same destination, as there was a note made on 3 May by Morant, specifying; 'it will be advisable to insure the departures of a certain number of families together for the future'.[154] Such was also the case with James and Laurence Ward both of whom were labourers on the Lough Fea demesne. They were probably related and they each had wives and children. James had a wife

[152]Ibid.
[153]Emigration list 1 Feb.1849 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/M/6/1).
[154]Ibid.

and seven children ranging in age from 14 years to 1. Laurence had a wife and five children. Both families were granted whole passages to New York and 'all requisite necessaries in food and clothing for voyage'.[155] In terms of whole passage to New York for example, it cost approximately £2 10*s.* per head and this included children.

A significant number of those documented were women, either widowed and emigrating with their children or travelling alone or with a sister. In all, there were 43 women listed who were unaccompanied by a man. George Morant signed the agreement for Widow Elizabeth Loughran and her daughter from the Lurgans. They were granted the £1 passage to England on 19 May 1849 'after proportion of house and land has been surrendered'.[156] Anne Byrne, Enagh was granted whole passage to Quebec as were Catherine Courtney, Greaghlone and Mary Hamilton's daughter from the Glen. She was different because there was a note, most likely written by Morant, outlining that she was an 'experiment to see if she will in time sent[d] for the remainder'[157]of her family with remittances. Not all passages were straightforward: on 11 November 1848, Judy Murphy and her six children were given whole passages to New York, but only under the condition that her husband Francis Murphy would agree to emigrate with his family and pay for his own ticket. Morant wrote, 'I do not give anything towards her husband's passage'.[158]

Women who were vulnerable relied more on the estate office than their male counterparts for aid and assistance as echoed by Harris. She documented some of the problems faced by individual women on the estate and how the Shirley administration dealt with them. Anne McCabe from the townland of Greaghlatacapple had worked for Thomas Mee of Beagh before she became pregnant with his child. He initially promised he would marry her but later reneged, and she was not the first girl that had found herself in such a predicament with Thomas Mee. As a result Anne was compelled to look to the estate for assistance of some description in February 1844. She admitted she could live with the poverty of raising an illegitimate child alone, but not the shame. She was subsequently assisted to emigrate, but Thomas Mee was forced to partially finance her passage. Harris maintained, in cases where a biological father could not or would not take care of his offspring the father figure became the landlord.[159]

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[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Harris, Negotiating patriarchy; Irish women and the landlord, p.212-3.

Charitable donations from neighbours and relations shone through in the emigrant records. On the 15 April 1849 James Fox and his son from Faraghy were granted whole passages to Quebec and necessaries, but a neighbour Owen McConnon donated £5 for the passage of two of Mr Fox's other sons. James Martin of Dromerloughmore and his family were granted £6 assistance from EJS in May 1849 with an additional £6 given to them by the rate payers of Dromcarrow division. Interestingly, there was only one emigrant recorded as assisted to leave the workhouse. Thomas McKenna, late of Carrickahogue, was granted a whole passage to Quebec and necessaries.[160]

In November 1849, editor of the *Dundalk Democrat* Joseph Carton attacked the estate's assisted emigration schemes, stating that they would ultimately offer EPS 'no relief', they would only suffice in driving greater numbers of tenants to the workhouse and he used the electoral division of Enagh as an example where he claimed; the inhabitants were 'half naked, and living on rotten potatoes, strive to hold out a little longer. Can nothing convince Mr. Shirley that he is committing a series of blunders day after day?'.[161] Emigration and specifically assisted emigration became strong permanent features of the Shirley estate throughout the 1840s and early 1850s. In the decade 1841-51 the population of the Shirley estate fell by 8,000 and of that figure, Duffy estimates that 18 per cent of this decline can be attributed to assisted emigration.[162] McDermott contends that by 1852, at least 1,300 people, including 160 families were assisted on the Shirley estate[163] however it is more likely for that number to fall beyond 2,000. Duffy's analysis of the census, points to the fact that the parish of Magheracloone lost more of its population in the Famine period than any other parish in the diocese of Clogher.[164] It was recorded as one of the most densely populated townlands on the estate before the Famine. The census returns for the years 1841 and 1851 indicate that the population of county Monaghan fell from 200,407 to 141,758, a decrease of 29%.

Duffy has calculated that 5,800 tenants were assisted to emigrate from the Wandesforde estate in Kilkenny between 1846-55, while similarly between 1847-56, 6,000 paupers were assisted from the Fitzwilliam estate in Wicklow. From the Palmerston estate in Sligo 4,292 paupers emigrated between 1847-50 and from the Bath estate, Carrickmacross 3,000 emigrants were assisted by Trench between 1851-54 at an average cost of £4 5*s*. 8*d*. per

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[160] Ibid.
[161] *Dundalk Democrat and People's Advocate*, 24 Nov. 1849.
[162] Duffy, 'The Famine in Monaghan', p.194.
[163] McDermott, *Gypsum mining and the Shirley estate*, p.29.
[164] Ibid., p.27.

pauper.[165] In general it was the larger estates which engaged in assisted emigration schemes, and indeed they may have been the estates most affected by over-population according to Duffy. Of the estates mentioned above, the landlords possessed between 23,000 acres to 120,00 acres, Bath owning the former and Lansdowne the latter.[166] On these estates the office officials assumed the role of 'local politician, magistrate, banker, solicitor, arbitrator, family counsellor, and welfare officer'.[167] It was via these estate offices that meticulous records were kept to ensure an in-depth knowledge of the estate and its population with the assistance of the 'agent, clerks, bailiffs, runners/messengers and other personnel'.[168] This close surveillance of the masses was known colloquially as a system of 'watching'. It was prevalent on larger estates like the Downshire estate in Blessington, Lord Leitrim's estate in Donegal, Lord Lansdowne's estate in Kerry and on Bath's estate in Monaghan.[169] The confidential report drawn up by Trench in 1843 illustrated that it was prevalent on the Shirley estate too. Duffy asserted that opulent Irish landlords like Lansdowne, Palmerstown and Fitzwilliam had high-profile public reputations to maintain in England that they wished to protect and as a result they were reluctant for their Irish estates to receive adverse publicity.[170] Their English estates contrasted significantly with those they possessed in Ireland. Shirley's 7,000 acre estate which occupied approximately 3,000 tenants with 600 cottier families in Ettington Park near Stratford Upon Avon in the early 1840s contrasted sharply with ownership of the largest estate in county Monaghan. [171]

Cost of Emigration

Trench told the Devon Commission in 1844 that there had not been much emigration from the Shirley estate until the landlord offered to pay for it, and with the availability of private funding rather than state funding, potential emigrants were happier to leave; 'they have gone to America with nothing rather than leave the country with nothing'.[172] Those who emigrated fell into two main categories according to Trench. There were those who were unable to maintain the rental payments for their holding: they sold their good-will or their

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[165] Ibid., p.84.
[166] Ibid., p.85.
[167] Ibid., p.86.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Ibid., p.87.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid., also see particulars of cottiers on the Shirley estate,1840-7 (W. C. R. O., Shirley papers, CR229 Box 16/1 and P.R.O.N.I., D3531/M/5/1).
[172] Ibid., Devon Commission, Trench.

tenant-right and placed the proceeds into the agent's hands; he was then responsible for paying their often extensive debts. He added that he did not think that agents should be given this task. Secondly, there were the grown-up sons and daughters of small farmers who, through earlier subdivisions, were left with no provision for their future.[173] Before the Famine, tenants granted assistance to emigrate were allowed to sell the tenant-right of their holdings, a small proportion of which was spent on clothing for the departing tenant. Trench claimed that tenants could choose where they wished to emigrate to and that they were given a trifle extra money if they agreed to have their houses thrown down and their farms consolidated with that of a neighbour.

Individual prices of passage varied depending on the number from each family who emigrated and the necessary amount spent on provisions. Some of the Shirley emigrant lists did not name the emigrants or give any further personal details; instead they documented the order number, the number of passengers facilitated by the order, whether they were adults or children and the amount charged to the estate.[174] The estate office records for the Shirley estate show that 140 adults and 41 children emigrated in 1844. The total cost to the estate was £356.7*s*. One document relating to the spring months of the year 1846 also illustrated the emigration numbers, but this time the estate office recorded the names of the individuals, or at least the heads of households 'and family'. In all 63 adults emigrated and 33 children. There were only 6 individuals listed to travel alone that season, the remainder were families. This was a total of 96 emigrants vacating the Shirley estate, arranged in conjunction with Thomas Elliott, the passenger agent for Liverpool. The amount payable by the estate on 1 July 1846 was £200 2*s*. 6*d*. The average cost of passage per person was set at £2 1s. 8*d*. and a note made at the end of the record stated the reason for the slightly increased average price was 'the population of children being large'.[175]

In 1847, the price of passages rose. Letters were sent to the person in charge of organising emigration on each estate, informing them of the price increase. One such letter was sent to William George Smith, clerk of the Shirley rent office, on 6 February 1847 by his brother-in-law, Thomas Elliott the Liverpool agent, who looked after the emigrants' welfare.[176] The letter specified that the cost of passages to America would rise 'in

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[173] Ibid.
[174] Emigrant list, 1844 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/P/Box 1).
[175] Ibid.
[176] Patrick J. Duffy,' Assisted emigration from the Shirley estate, 1843-54' *Clogher Record*, xiv, no.2, (1992), p.14.

consequence of the extreme rates of bread stuffs'.[177] The letter outlined new regulations which ensured that all passenger vessels carried 70lbs of bread for each adult passenger to meet the 1lb daily quota per person (half that quantity was allotted to children). The cost of passage in 1847 to New York, Boston and Philadelphia was set at between £3 15*s*. and £4 for adults and between £2 10*s*. and £2 15*s*. for children. With the new bread provision regulations, the expected cost of travel to Quebec for example increased by approximately £2,[178] making the average cost of a ticket £5 5*s*. per adult, while passage for a child was half that price. A portion (approximately 5*s*. may have had to be paid per adult and half that per child to the Government Emigration Society) 'by which a considerable sum is created each year, to assist those in need in proceeding to their several destinations and enabling them to make settlements in localities where [they are] most likely to find employment'.[179] Thomas Elliot made one final note highlighting the nuisance that large numbers of emigrant children were becoming; 'when ships go full (as now) to the United States ports, they can only carry 2 souls for every 5 tons of the ship's register burden [in other words cargo] therefore, children if numerous are a heavy drawback'.[180] As the document conveyed, it was more expensive for an adult to travel than a child, and as there were only two persons permitted for every five tons of cargo the vessel carried, it did not matter whether they carried adults or children the amount was restricted to two persons. It was therefore obviously more advantageous to carry adults over children.

Many applicants were illiterate, and as a result it was necessary for neighbours, relatives or friends to apply to their landlord for assistance to emigrate on behalf of a certain party. These applications acted as references for the applicant, and often petitions were written or signed by a person or persons perceived to be upstanding members of the community. One such petition was sent to George Morant at the end of January 1846. The letter was reasonably well written and signed by Henry Reburn and Michael Connor. They declared themselves arbitrators in a family dispute between Francis Agnew and his brothers and sisters in Alts over land. Francis wanted his own part of the land, whereas the rest of the family (all of whom appeared unmarried) were happy to live together on the farm. The arbitrators wanted EJS to make a decision on whether Agnew should be given £40 in two £20 instalments, thus selling

[177] Thomas Elliott to W.G. Smith 6 Feb. 1847 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/P/Box 1).
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid.
[180] Ibid.

his share in the farm, or if Agnew chose to emigrate, the £40 would be paid to him in one payment.[181] The matter was left open for EJS to decide.

Another letter dated December 1848 requested that a tenant named Thomas Larkin, his wife and three of his family be assisted to emigrate. The amount they required was £12 10*s*. The family consisted of this group plus two more sons, and the letter outlined the amount they had requested would not be sufficient enough to pay for passage for the two sons, who both had 'situations' which they hoped they 'will continue to have such until such times as their parents will be able to defray theirs also. Otherwise it is thought that they all shall become a burthen to the union forthwith'.[182] The letter was signed by eight neighbours, both from the Catholic and Protestant community namely Pat Keenan, Thomas Mcintee, Richard Lundy, Felix Meale, David Lundy, Richard Roe, Peter Maguire and Samuel Eakins. Although there was no date or address on the letter, the names were common to the Corvally/Corduff/Corcreagh areas (which can be established from the rent books and Griffith's Valuation). Their petition was granted and signed by George Morant, and Thomas Larkin, his wife and children appear on the 1848/9 emigration list.[183]

In an account for the month of August 1849, which listed the expenses for essential provisions to accompany emigrants on their journey, it became apparent just how expensive assisted emigration was for the estate. Emigrants had to travel from Carrickmacross to Dundalk where they may have had to spend a night or two, get food etc. Miscellaneous expenses associated with the trip between Carrickmacross and Dundalk in a long-car were £4 11*s*. 5*d*. When in Dundalk they were scheduled to travel by train to Drogheda. In one month the train travel charges amounted to £7 3s. When in Drogheda the emigrants were destined for Dublin where expenses amounted to £27 2*s*. 4*d*. Once in Dublin, either food was provided or each emigrant was given a small allowance for food while they waited on the ship to set sail. Often delays ensued, heightening the landlord's bill. For August 1849, expenses in Dublin amounted to £10. Necessary provisions for the passage such as towels, caps, cotton sheets, as well as large amounts of individual inner and outer clothing and footwear, bore heavily on emigration funds. The total amount spent on the above was £536 19*s*. 7*d*.[184]

Within Carrickmacross Union, emigration was becoming very common, but with substantial resistance from some members of the Board of Guardians and members of the

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[181] Manorial court book recording arbitration and other decisions in disputes between landlord and between tenant and tenant, 1843-4 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/M/6/1).
[182] Ibid.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Ibid.

clergy. At a Board of Guardians meeting in November 1849, EPS addressed the issue of emigration. In the previous nine months he calculated that 450 persons were as he put it 'sent off' from the Bath estate, while 930 had emigrated from his own estate.[185] He expressed the view that the Poor Law system in Ireland could not operate satisfactorily 'unless it was coupled with emigration'.[186] Armed with statistics to substantiate his argument, EPS noted that for every 100 emigrants to Canada, 60 opted to go on to the United States. He therefore proposed that they send emigrants direct to the US rather than Canada. He proposed to systematically begin with individual electoral divisions such as Enagh, whereby 'a tax for emigration purposes might be levied on that division'.[187] He moved that families should travel together and he concluded his argument by stating that he hoped the board would unanimously support his motion. The primary concerns of the board were justifiably financial ones. They feared that it was already financially stretched but they also feared that the occupants of Enagh, who could ill afford the financial demands already expected of them, would respond very negatively to further taxation. Others expressed the fear that the population of the Union having already decreased by one third due to Famine and death having 'done their work on the people to a fearful extent'[188] in recent years, emigration would undoubtedly worsen the population loss.

EPS compared the cost of assisting emigrants from England to America, which averaged £3l 12*s*. 7*d.* a head, with those from Ireland which he estimated at £4. per head. The discussion then turned to the responsibilities of the landlords. The chairman stated; 'let them give employment to the people and then their burtherns would be lightened. Let the landlords secure the tenant in his improvements; let them give farms at proper rents, and good long leases, and then they would find the country in a different state. He saw in several places what could be done with land when the tenant was secured the value of his improvements'.[189] Morant responded, saying tenants already receive leases of twenty-one years. Kennedy, said the board should be thankful to EPS for his proposal as he was offering to bear two-thirds of the expenses of emigration 'because the law compelled him to pay a part of the rate on holdings valued over 4l, [£] and all the rate on those valued under 4l [£]',[190] but he outlined an alternative plan whereby, 'if arrangements were made to the effect, that when a landlord dispossessed a tenant he should give that tenant or some of his family employment at 1s a

[185] *Dundalk Democrat,* 10 Nov. 1849.
[186] Ibid.
[187] Ibid.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Ibid.
[190] Ibid.

day; he thought that the dispossessed tenant would earn in some time, say 25l [£]. beyond his support, which would enable him to take his family out of the country'.[191] A disagreement ensued with EPS arguing that Irish men would not work unless they were compelled to work. In response to the remark, Kennedy stated that if the Irishman was paid a fair wage, in return he would give honest work. The argument shifted once more to the short length of leases; the chairman claimed that a sixty-one year lease would bring about a lot of positive changes. In response, Morant criticised 500 middlemen in the barony whom he claimed allowed only paupers to fill their land. Mr Gartlan had the last word at the meeting proposing that the best solution was a reduction on all rents, from which immediate positive change would ensue. His motion was met with loud cheers of 'hear hear'. He contended that if reductions were not implemented soon, even solvent farmers who were once very comfortable would have no alternative but to seek admission to the workhouse. The country he believed, 'would be nearly depopulated . . . it would be too late - it would be similar to sending for the doctor when the patient was dead (hear hear)'. EPS replied 'Oh, you are always complaining'.[192] The same report recorded that there were then 1,459 inmates in the workhouse, 1,458 in the auxiliaries, and 249 in the fever hospital.

There was a continuous sense that only those who drained the estate's resources should be helped to leave, and the 'animal analogies [which] frequently characterised Malthus' attitudes'[193] towards the overpopulation of Victorian Ireland informed that. Lord Monteagle declared that his Ballykilcline estate was freed from locusts in 1848, while Trench in 1851 wrote about ridding the Lansdowne estate of 'superabundant rabbits'.[194] On estates such as the Lucan and Wyndham estates, there was a laissez-faire approach to emigration - slight support for voluntary emigration. Trench criticised this 'indiscriminate subsidised emigration' though it was cheaper in the short term; he believed that only the respectable tenants would opt to leave. Of Bath's estate in 1852, Trench boasted that 'we have not lost one single man I should wish to keep'.[195] It was also seen to be more advantageous to assist pauper tenants to emigrate than to pay for their upkeep either inside or outside the workhouse. In *Realities of Irish Life,* Trench calculated the rent from the Lansdowne estate as £10,000 per annum during the Famine while the poor rates were £15,000 per annum in the late 1840s and early 1850s. With a total once-off payment of between £13,000 and £14,000 for assisted emigration, he

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[191] Ibid.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Patrick Duffy, 'Assisted emigration from the Shirley estate; theory and practice of estate emigration schemes in mid-nineteenth century Ireland' in *To and from Ireland; planned migration schemes c.1600-2000*, p.83.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Ibid., pp 89-90.

estimated it would be enough to clear the estate of the worst paupers and directly benefit both pauper and landlord.

Duffy has argued that the policies laid down by Trench in his 1843 confidential report were 'fairly simple, and in face of the facts, rather logical: namely that in the early forties, impoverished tenants on tiny holdings, in rent arrears and with little possibility of paying any rent, should be encouraged to give up their farms and be given their passage to America'.[196] This would have reduced 'future charges on the rates, consolidate farms and improve the life chances of the people themselves, though this latter point was not a primary consideration'.[197] As yet, comparatively little is known about Shirley estate emigrants, particularly those who emigrated to Australia where EJS had at one stage placed great emphasis as a destination of choice. There were two probable reasons for this. Firstly, EJS had family connections there. His son in-law, Neil Malcolm, had purchased land in the colony of South Australia allowing EJS to 'nominate a number of emigrants from his estate at minimal cost'.[198] In 1843, Neil Malcolm married Louise Shirley, EJS' daughter. Malcolm along with his brother had purchased 4,000 acres of land in South Australia in 1839, establishing Poltalloch station, close to Lake Alexandrina.[199] Secondly, EJS would undoubtedly have been attracted by the relatively cheap passage fee of £2 per head to Australia. But, the entire exercise became more troublesome and expensive; with 'inflexible regulations about supplies and outfitting put agents and their staff under a great deal of pressure, so that ultimately American emigration was the more popular and convenient option for all concerned'.[200]

The fact that little correspondence took place between emigrants and the agents of Shirley's estate or indeed with EJS himself is unfortunate, perhaps it is indicative of prior relations between landlord and tenant on the estate. Semi-absenteeism may also have been a factor compared with for example resident landlord Lord Monteagle (Brandon, County Kerry), where emigrants wrote to express their gratitude to him after they arrived at their destination. Correspondence of this nature was not to be found among the Shirley records. However one correspondent was referred to at a Board of Guardians meeting. He was Mr.

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[196] Duffy, 'Emigrants and the estate office in the mid-nineteenth century: a compassionate relationship?' p.73.
[197] Ibid.
[198] Trevor McClaughlin, Stephanie James and Simon O' Reilly "Migration to Australia mid-nineteenth century: Emigration from the Shirley Estate at the time of the Famine" p.294.
[199] Ibid, p.295.
[200] Patrick Duffy ' "Disencumbering our crowded places";theory and practice of estate emigration schemes in mid-nineteenth century Ireland' in *To and from Ireland; planned migration schemes c.1600-2000,* p.97.

McNally from Kiltrane who had emigrated to America in 1846 and he and since then expended £240 in purchasing houses and lands. [201]

The Shirley estate came under severe criticism in 1849 for the poor conditions in which emigrants reached their destination, after enduring the long drawn-out voyage to South Australia. One such incident occurred when the 'Constance', which had sailed from Plymouth in August 1849, arrived in Port Adelaide in the record time of 77 days, as opposed to the regular 90 to 110 days.[202] Although the average number of days had decreased, the number of deaths were high. The ship's passengers were affected by sickness 'within three weeks of leaving Plymouth . . . fever, diarrhoea, cholera and pleurisy has spread among the passengers'.[203] Besby, a surgeon travelling on the ship, was commended for his medical intervention to help alleviate the epidemic. By the time the ship arrived in Adelaide 21 deaths and four births had occurred. Three more died immediately after arriving in Adelaide. There had originally been 244 persons on board, 86 of which were infants and children while 201 were Irish.[204] Eleven others were taken to hospital on arrival and sixteen were visited at their lodgings by a doctor.

'The Destitute Board in Adelaide which bore the cost of looking after the sick emigrants, complained to Lieutenant Governor Sir H.E.F. Young about the appalling conditions that Shirley estate emigrants arrived in;

> A great increase to the numbers receiving relief from the Destitute Board has taken place since the arrival of the "Constance" on 5th November, with Government emigrants.
> The greater part of the emigrants by this vessel were Irish and I am informed were in a very emaciated state when put on board in Plymouth in consequence of which low fever to a great extent, prevailed on board all the voyage . . .
> I am informed that nearly half those people were from one estate in Monaghan, and I beg leave to express an opinion that such a selection is highly objectionable, for considering the wretched state to which the peasantry of the south of Ireland have been reduced by famine and disease, it is not probable that a number of Irish emigrants, especially if taken from one neighbourhood, will be of that healthy and robust character so requisite in persons selected with the view of supplying the colony with an eligible description of labourers.[205]

Aside from the condition of the passengers prior to embarkation, the cold, damp conditions on board the ship as well as icy cold weather were without doubt contributory factors, if not the causes of illness on board. This episode however was a warning to both EJS

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[201] *Northern Standard*, 19 Nov. 1849.
[202] Trevor McClaughlin, Stephanie James and Simon O' Reilly 'Migration to Australia mid-nineteenth century: emigration from the Shirley estate at the time of the Famine' in *Clogher Record, xx,* no.2 (2010), p.298.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Quoted in 'Migration to Australia mid-nineteenth century', p.299.

and those in charge of choosing the ship's movements. The captain of the 'Constance' had risked sailing through ice-berg laden waters so that he could beat previous sailing times and had put the entire crew and passengers lives at risk. A letter written by R.F. Davis, who was Malcolm's shipping agent, was sent to Stephen Walcott at the Colonial Lands and Emigration Commission in London denouncing any claims that the Shirleys were responsible for off-loading persons unfit for such a voyage. The correspondence stated 'Mr Shirley's emigrants' letters teem with praises of south Australia: . . . they gloat in anticipation of their saving money, remitted it to their relatives, and being joined by them . . . the people sent by Mr Shirley were neither emaciated, ill provided, or ill suited for the colony of south Australia, but that on the contrary they were rough sturdy labourers, well provided for an ordinary passage to Australia, and I am delighted to assure you, by their letters, a well employed happy, money making lot'.[206]

Trench claimed that Lansdowne's tenants were happy to be emigrating and leaving behind 'a country festering with filth and pauperism disfigured with miserable hovels, inhabited by a miserable race'.[207] He referred to the hoards of tenants in a frenzy queuing for emigration tickets in the hope that they would not run out and their fear that estate funds would cease before they were assisted.[208] For some, the journey was without a doubt horrific in terms of sanitation, and the levels of sickness and mortality cannot be ignored, but there was evidence to suggest that many were transported in a humane and caring manner and that they were content or even delighted with their passage. Elliott, the passenger agent at Liverpool, (who it must be noted was a businessman and desirous of promoting his services) wrote to EJS in 1844, reporting that

> the last paid of your people got off yesterday all in excellent humour and I must say most grateful they all appeared for the trifling friendship and attention I tried to show them. They one and all desired I should write to let you know how they prayed for your success as they termed it. The ready cash they all got daily does much for them and tended to make them very cheerful.[209]

However as some of the following petitions illustrate, for many there was no other alternative but to leave.

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[206] Ibid.
[207] G. Lyne, 'William Steuart Trench and post Famine emigration from Kenmare to America, 1850-55' in *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and historical society, xxv* (1996), pp 60-75
[208] Patrick Duffy, 'Disencumbering our Crowded Places ;theory and Practice of estate emigration schemes in mid-nineteenth century Ireland' in *To and From Ireland; Planned Migration Schemes c.1600-2000,* p.95.
[209] Elliott to EPS 1844. (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/P/box 1).

> Power, William. Derrynascobe, Oct. 49: Dispossessed of his three acres — house pulled down. "Hopes you will send his growing family to America."
> Power, John. Derrynascobe, Oct. 49: Wife and one child. Had three acres, was dispossessed. Has friends in America who encourage him to go . . . "would like you to enrol him on your spring list for Emigration."
> 'Reilly, Peter. Crumlin, Nov. 49: Having given up possession of his land and house — 7/6 to enable him to go to Scotland.[210]

In January 1852, Trench who was now chairman of the Carrickmacross Board of Guardians and agent for the Bath estate, made an announcement that 'he would on that day fortnight move that a rate be struck on the entire union for the purpose of sending to America the able bodied paupers who were charged to the union at large'.[211] He added in jest that since 66 additional paupers from EJS' estate had recently been added to the expense of the union, Shirley's estate should be charged twice as much as Bath's. One of the paupers referred to by Trench, Owen Corrigan of Donaree, Latin sent a petition to Shirley from Carrickmacross workhouse in August. It is worth quoting a length.

> I beg to remind you that in the month of December 1849 you were pleased to emigrate four of my family to Adelaide in Australia for which act you have earned their most fervent blessing as they state it's second to no other country in the world . . . Shortly after they landed there they sent me. [a sum of money] on receipt of which I moved my family from the Workhouse and did not return until I could hold out no longer. In the month of April last they sent me a remittance of £8 more for the purpose of assisting myself and family to go out there if possible. I immediately lodged the Check in my Guardian's hand, Mr. Marron of Box division, where it still remains at the same time requesting that he would make the case . . . to Mr. Morant as the greater part of the family . . . still remain in the Workhouse. It appears that Mr. Morant's reply to Marron was favourable. But up to the present I could not properly ascertain what conclusion would be come to respecting a little assistance to help my outfit — If we are all found eligible to get out under the heads of free emigration to the colonise[sic], £4 10*s*. 0*d*. would pay our entire passage. We would then have a surplus left to help our outfit and from street [strict] enquiry I am informed that would not exceed £8. Now Mr. Shirley I am not . . . backed out a little by you so as to render some assistance. I must of course take out the family and when that trifle be spent have no other alternative but to become inmates of the Workhouse again as on a former occasion.[212]

A note at the end of the petition in Morant's handwriting granted Corrigan the wherewithal to emigrate 'Settled with Board of Guardians that the office would pay £3 10*s*. to help the estimated expense. The Guardians paying the other moiety'. Not everyone was permitted the funds to leave Ireland though, such as the case of Widow Mohan from Derrylavin. An undated note stated that she had nine children in a 'desolate state' since her

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[210] Ibid.
[211] *Dundalk Democrat,* 10 January 1852.
[212] Ibid.

husband had died. She was dispossessed of her home eight weeks subsequently. A brief note by the office clerk suggested, 'I see no hopes but the Poor House'.[213]

The following was a petition sent to George Morant by Anne and Mary Wynne of Clontrain in 1854.

> That on Saturday last they buried the remains of their poor mother and are now forlorn orphans without parents or friends to assist or protect save that which devine[sic] providence has decreed for them. That with great respect they take the liberty of submitting their heart rendering distress to your honor and humbly hope you'll please take their poor case into humane consideration and do for them as your honor may think meet and they will ever pray.

The petition was left unsigned however there was a note on the back written in red ink by George Morant, confirming they were given the wherewithal to emigrate; 'M.J O'Clarke; this case is one which draws any little further outlay proof and above the promised £1 requisite to place them on the dock of the emigrant ship.' [214]

The Case of Bernard Banigan

Scott Malloy has carried out a case study on one of the 2,000 Shirley estate tenants, who emigrated during the Famine. The case of Bernard Banigan was one extraordinary example of how assisted emigration could positively change the life of one emigrant. Although Malloy's focus was just on one family's situation on the Shirley estate in the mid 1840s, it offered an insight into the lives of many other families, who were in exactly the same position with no other real alternative but to seek aid to emigrate in search of a better life abroad. Bernard Banigan lived with his family in the congested 'civil parish of Magheross in the tiny "townland" of Lisirrill, one of 56 civil divisions on the Shirley property in Monaghan' According to Malloy, Banigan's father, [also named] Bernard, was one of 30 heads of households in Lisirrill which, according to Malloy was the smallest settlement on the estate. The townland comprised of 274 acres, 2 roods and 35 perches.[215] On average each family shared less than 10 acres. At 6*s.* per annum, Bernard Banigan paid the smallest rent of any of his neighbours and he was one of only two tenants paying less than £1 in the townland where only four tenants paid more than £3 in 1843. The Banigan family were also paying the lowest amount for turbary rights, paying 4*s.* twice annually for their bog. Estate maps illustrate that Banigan's few acres were situated on marshy ground beside Lough Namachree, one of the 184 lakes on the estate. 'The paltry rent' suggested Malloy was testament to the likelihood 'that the

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[213] Ibid.
[214] Petitions to George Morant,1854-5 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley Papers, D3531/C/3/8).
[215] Molloy, *Irish Titan Irish Toilers* pp17-18.

ground probably contained swamp land'.[216] The rent rolls showed that Bernard Banigan consistently paid his rent on time. But he was listed as being in arrears (as were half his neighbours) in 1847, the year he brought his family to the United States and surrendered his land to a neighbour.[217] The family consisted of both parents in their mid-to-late 30s and four children, (though Bernard was alleged to have been the seventh son, which indicates that some of his siblings either died or were left behind or went to Scotland); the eldest Catherine was 18 while the youngest was Mary only 1 year old. Joseph Bernard Banigan was 8 years old when the family received £13 for passage and provisions. According to Malloy the Banigan family had already migrated to Scotland in 1845 but had returned home. He could not confirm what their reason for this move was, but perhaps they were investigating emigration on a smaller scale before making the more permanent leap to the US, more likely however was that they went over as seasonal harvesters. There is also the question as to how the entire family financed the return trip to Scotland but they had petitioned EJS for passage to Australia in 1845, prior to their trip to Scotland. In any event, the family were accounted for in Providence, Rhode Island in 1847. Providence was inhabited by diverse communities from all creeds and nationalities, and with some exceptions 'Rhode Island remained a beacon of religious toleration and democratic rights for its inhabitants'.[218]

In 1855, there were some 16,000 Irish Famine refugees in Rhode Island, constituting over one-tenth of the state's 150,000 population. In the decade 1850-60 the population of Providence rose by about 10,000 from 40,000 to 50,000, one third of the increase being attributed to the influx of Irish emigrants.

After attending elementary school for one year, Banigan was introduced to the Rhode Island industrial world of work in 1848 at just nine years, which was normal practice at the time. He was employed by the American Screw Company which became one of the 'five industrial wonders of the world' employing 600 people in 1850, half of whom were women. After years of child labour, Banigan secured an apprenticeship in the town as a jewellery maker for three years, where he was based with his family, and many of his neighbours from Monaghan in what became known as the 'fifth ward', an impoverished immigrant neighbourhood along the western banks of the Providence river. He later became a 'tinker' (a term used to describe Yankee artisans) and a 'journeyman', travelling around Rhode Island learning about special metal production. Banigan's big break came after he turned 21, either

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[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid., p.18.
[218] Ibid., p.31.

while finishing his apprenticeship or having completed it, when he decided to start up his own business. He designed and created a '"corkscrewing" machine that intertwined gold with coral and shells for inlaid jewellery'.[219] Though this invention may have won Banigan a reputation, it was not until he moved from jewellery to rubber production, back where he had started out on the banks of Providence, that he would make his fortune. One of the first patents Banigan had was to produce pencil erasers and then later rubber stoppers for bottles, but manufacturing products from rubber was not a new phenomenon and Banigan met with men who would later become his business partners and colleagues. They had unsuccessfully attempted something similar using rubber in the 1830s.

Banigan eventually would become president of the United States Rubber Company earning him the title, Rhode Island's first Catholic millionaire. Banigan raised Catholic morale amongst his workforce as well as 'righteousness in labour-management relations', and he employed very few children at his footwear factory.[220] Banigan later used his fortune to build orphanages, shelters and homes for vulnerable youths. 'In his will he left $10,000 to the Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and an equal amount to the Lying-in Hospital for Childbirth'.[221]

On Banigan's death many contemporaries attributed his success to his Irish roots and the lucky seventh son superstition. Malloy on the other hand is of the view that it was Banigan's life experiences, and the hardships that he and his family and the other 29 families on the tiny townland of Lisirrill had witnessed. The close-knit family spirit that was evident in Monaghan remained subsequent to emigration. His devout Catholicism was instilled in his workforce at the rubber factory, and found expression in his contributions to the building of churches, carrying out great acts of charity in Rhode Island and spending $100,000 on a family mortuary chapel in 1898. His brief sojourn to Scotland may have broadened his horizons, but it was the assistance the family received to emigrate which had allowed Banigan the opportunity to prosper.

Although not every pauper emigrant's tale was one of rags to riches like Banigan's, there were recurring themes of positivity, prosperity and philanthropy running though much of the correspondence between Trench and Bath in relation to emigration. In an annual report in 1852 for example, Trench outlined that he was 'happy to state that the most favourable accounts have been received of those who have emigrated. They seem to have no difficulty in

[219] Ibid., pp 63-4.
[220] Ibid., p.61.
[221] Ibid., p.61-2.

obtaining employment and the remittances sent to their friends to aid them also in moving or in paying their rent clearly proves the beneficial change which for all parties has taken place'.[222] It could be argued however that Trench felt a need to exaggerate how well his assisted emigration schemes had gone to impress his employers and potential future employers, and to ensure his reputation would remain intact. He applauded the schemes when in the mid 1850s he found that large numbers of established emigrants who had settled in the North East of England were remitting sums of money, enabling their friends and family to emigrate without any assistance from the estate whatsoever. Trench told Lady Bath, 'we are certainly receiving back good interest at least for the money expended on emigration'.[223] The same attitude prevailed on the Shirley estate too. Elliott, the Liverpool agent, advised William George Smith that emigrants should receive an extra 5*s.* each and half that for children as part of their passage money to Quebec in addition to what was provided for by the Government Emigration Society, which was established to aid those in need to reach their destinations.[224]

Generally, emigration was followed by the implementation of estate improvements, land reform and consolidation of farms. In March 1849 George McKitterick, who was employed by Shirley to oversee improvements, wrote to George Morant stipulating the end of drainage works for the present time, and prior to the 'throng of the bog letting' he proposed to commence building a house for himself in Carrickmaclim. He had already spent 'fourteen pounds in levelling old ditches, draining and reclaiming rough ground'. George Morant restrictively wrote across the top of the letter that £20 was 'commonly allowed to any tenant and only under particular circumstances'.[225] McKitterick was granted the full allowance in two instalments of £10.

Thomas Mee of Corkishduff (Corkashyduff in Griffith's Valuation) wrote looking for financial assistance for the rebuilding of a large barn which was partially burnt down when an accidental fire broke out 'through the neglect of my servant boy' in 1848.[226] He outlined that his friends and neighbours worked hard to extinguish the flames and that otherwise he would have been ruined. His letter illustrated the thoughts of a opportunistic man; he thought it would be advantageous to 'raise the walls of the said barn to a proper height and have it lofted and slated',[227] though he stated that he did not have the wherewithal to implement the proposed improvements. Griffith's Valuation recorded Mee as the largest landholder in the

[222] Duffy, 'Disencumbering our crowded places', p.100.
[223] Ibid., p.101.
[224] Elliot to Smith, 1844 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/P/Box1).
[225] McKitterick to Morant, Mar.1849 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/V/Box 7)
[226] Ibid.
[227] Ibid.

townland of Corkishduff, possessing over 48 acres, divided into two plots of equal size. This corresponded with his plea for assistance 'now [that] my farm is considerably enlarged and that I require more houses'.[228] He had obviously benefitted from the consolidation efforts during the Famine. He was only granted £5 to slate his barn and no funding was provided to heighten the walls of his shed.

Between 3 and the 8 September 1849, Mr McKeone, who was employed as a manager in ejecting tenants and pulling down houses, sent a bill to George Morant for the work he and his team of five men Thomas Freeman, John Bell, Robert Sharpe, Michael Freeman and David McKeone had carried out over the course of four days. Each employee was paid 1*s.* per day. They recorded two holdings as 'land give[n] up to your honour',[229] one in Raferagh previously held by Paul McEnaney and one in Beaghcloone by James Brady. Tenants on the remaining eleven holdings, it was noted in the report, were 'ejected; house down'.[230] The total fee charged to the estate was £1 1*s.*1*d.* This coincided with September reports in the *Nation* that EJS had 245 notices of eviction served on his tenants and the workhouse was made aware of the situation so that provisions for the evictees would be arranged.[231] There were 1,700 inmates remaining in Carrickmacross workhouse and auxiliary housing in 1851, this was treble the number found in any other workhouse in county Monaghan without a doubt this astonishingly high figure had a direct correlation with the large numbers evicted from the Shirley estate.[232]

Day Book records reveal the additional expenses incurred with 'pulling down' houses across the estate. Between 1 October and the 6 October 1849 fifteen houses were destroyed; in addition thirteen more were pulled down between early April and the end of May 1850. According to Duffy, 'Shirley was alleged to have thrown down at least 100 houses in Enagh electoral division in 1849, leaving 500 occupants in ditches'.[233] Estate papers indicate that between 1846 and 1856, there were over 650 ejectment processes served on direct tenants from the Shirley estate. This compares with 254 processes served on Bath's estate in the same period.[234] These statistics correspond with the evidence highlighting Enagh and neighbouring townlands as those having had the greatest population losses in the county. At a meeting of

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[228] Ibid.
[229] Bill for carrying out evictions on the Shirley estate, 1849, (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/P/Box 1).
[230] Ibid.
[231] Duffy, 'The Famine in Monaghan', p.194.
[232] Ibid.
[233] (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/P/Box1); see also Duffy, 'Mapping the Famine in Monaghan', p.445; see also *Dundalk Democrat*, 15 Dec. 1849.
[234] Return of ejectment processes in the barony of Farney, entered at quarter sessions in the divisions of Carrickmacross and Castleblayney, in the county of Monaghan, in each year, from 1846 to 1856, &c.

the board in mid December 1849, the harsh realities for tenants on EJS' estate came to light. A Mr Ward claimed the large-scale eviction of 500 paupers in Enagh was EJS' fault and not the hard-working farmers. Insulted, EJS got up, put on his hat and walked out of the meeting. Ward however continued, outlining that the tenants in question were as comfortable prior to the Famine as in any other district but at the present time they were destitute. To argue on behalf of the tenants, Ward specified that from the four divisions of the union on the Shirley estate, Enagh, Raferagh, Drumcarrow and Drumgunow, 651 paupers had presented to the workhouse. In contrast, from four divisions on the Bath estate and others, Ballymackney, Donaghmoyne, Crossalare and Kilmurry, only 181 had presented altogether. These statistics he maintained proved that 'pauperism prevailed there to a fearful extent . . . [however] when tenants were treated with anything like justice they were enabled to keep out of the workhouse, Mr Kennedy later added that 'there were more paupers from two townlands on the Shirley estate than from twenty-five townlands on the Bath estate'.[235] In addition, Ward added his objection towards EJS' emigration schemes, pointing to considerable amounts of land across the estate going to waste. If tilled, he argued that there was enough to employ 1,000 people. A Mr McMinnit however doubted that employment would eradicate pauperism on the estate.

At an agricultural dinner held in the baronial hall at Lough Fea in 1850, George Morant's speech to the party conveyed the positive effect of EJS' emigration schemes on the estate's improvement as well as on those tenants who were assisted. He claimed that EJS' reputation was so great it had reached out as far as Australia. This was a highly contentious issue for the *Dundalk Democrat* whose reporter responded

> yes, Mr. Morant and much further. Mr. Shirley's fame has gone to the ends of the earth. He is known as an exterminator in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America. His name and deeds are heard of in all civilised lands on the world's surface. The tenants [of Farney] are deserting day after day, and carrying the produce of their farms with them. In the townlands of Leggymore, Cornalara, and Corrybracken, four of the wealthiest tenants have, a few days since, carried their crops beyond the reach of the brigade. They still live in their houses, but no stacks of corn appear near them. Two of these townlands are nearly deserted by the tenantry'.[236]

As outlined in chapter two, county Monaghan was part of the most affected region extending in the Famine, westwards through counties Cavan, Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon, Fermanagh, Sligo and Mayo. These counties encountered some of the most severe population losses in the country, losing more than one-quarter of their populations in the Famine years.[237]

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[235] *Dundalk Democrat*, 15 Dec. 1849.
[236] Ibid.
[237] Duffy, 'Mapping the Famine in Monaghan', p.443.

In 1851 there were 59,000 less people in Monaghan than there had been a decade earlier. Census figures show that the county's population fell from more than 200,000 in 1841 to 141,000 in 1851.[238] Fitzpatrick points to the fact that although privately assisted emigration via landlords or other emigration agencies amounted to only a modest proportion of overall emigration figures, it was still a very pertinent factor in instigating change in the trends of outmigration overall. At local level for example, it planted the seed in the minds of those in the remote parts of the country and of those who were more than reluctant to leave initially, those with an inability to pay for passage or to purchase the necessary provisions.[239]Assisted emigration certainly contributed to a significant decrease in population on the Bath and Shirley estates in south Monaghan. In the decade 1841-51 the population of the Shirley estate decreased by 44 per cent from 18,600 to 10,200 while the number of houses decreased by a substantial 42 per cent. Duffy contends that between 15 per cent and 18 per cent of the entire population decrease can be attributed to assisted emigration.[240]

Post-Famine controversy often depicted assisted emigration as highly exploitative of pauper tenants who were 'exiled', 'rejected', 'dispossessed' and 'exterminated' from their land. Trench accused the clergy and the press of waging a malicious campaign and unfairly denouncing emigration schemes in the post-Famine era; one priest for example was recorded as making a poignant explanation as to why Trench's gravestone was destroyed; 'several large farms are so many finger-posts announcing that the 'Destroying Angel' passed that way'.[241] Although Trench confessed in *Realities* that after the Famine he was faced with the reputation of an exterminator in Kenmare and that the previous land agent for Lansdowne, who was agent for thirty years would not have carried out the policies that Trench had, for fear of being labelled with such a title. Even in the 1966 reprint of *Realities,* it was said by the modern editor that 'his name is execrated in popular tradition. It was said that so evil was he that the rats invaded his grave and devoured his body'. Throughout his lifetime however, Trench was vehement in his opinion that those who had emigrated were happy to leave. He asserted that it was those left behind, those who were bitter at the loss of an opportunity, who disagreed with his policies. It was not the thousands who were assisted to emigrate all across Ireland but the 5,000 men, women and children who had been assisted from Farney by Bath and Shirley whose departure certainly made a mark on generations of local folklore, and Trench's grave is testament to that.

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[238] Ibid.
[239] Ibid., p.101.
[240] Ibid., p.102.
[241] L. O'Mearáin, 'Estate agents in Farney- Trench and Mitchell', in *Clogher Record,* x (1981), p.412.

Conclusion

Statistics for the Shirley estate however indicate that the districts which suffered the most significant decrease in population were those consisting of large numbers of holdings between 5 and 15 acres, with many of those areas also containing large numbers of landless cottiers renting land from small holders.[242] To what degree the 'Gregory Clause' affected tenants in county Monaghan is debatable since the numbers of those holding under 5 acres did not experience the dramatic population loss that might have been expected, especially when compared to other estates. Duffy calculated that one quarter of all holdings in the eastern and southern parishes of Farney, Clontibret and Donagh where less than five acres, yet in 1848-51 only 500 of these holdings in the 'Monaghan corridor and the hills immediately to the south of it' disappeared. These figures were actually comparatively low since the Famine crisis was causing major economic, agricultural, social and demographic upheaval.[243] One reason why this was the case according to Duffy, was that this class of people did not have the wherewithal to emigrate and so they had no alternative but to do as tenants like Peter Mohun (who was mentioned in chapter two) did and sit out the Famine. [244]

The decline in the number of tenants on the Shirley estate with holdings of 15 acres or less is stark evidence as to the tenants who were most affected in the Famine years. Duffy asserted that although 5,000 tenants were assisted to emigrate from both Shirley and Bath estates, this further enticed thousands of others to follow suit, or as Duffy has put it, it 'was important in priming a subsequent voluntary outflow of rural migrants'.[245] Those tenants who remained on the land were very interested in availing of grants and assistance which EJS had offered throughout the Famine years. Letters requesting quicksets to plant hedging, lime to aid with drainage works on farms and to disinfect houses where some of the occupants had fever, were sent to the rent office in their hundreds. From 1847-50, there were numerous requests for windows, roof timbers and other materials which would improve their homes. The provision of financial aid slowed down slightly during the Famine period but it never ceased, which is a factor of importance. EJS was eager to implement improvement and change for the better, and the terms of recommendations in Trench's 1843 report were echoed by the improving actions of the estate administration. Funds were available under the Board of Works schemes, many of which were seen to be 'unproductive' on other estates in Monaghan, but Duffy implies that

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[242] Duffy, 'The Famine in Monaghan', p.187.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Duffy, 'Disencumbering our crowded places', p 84.

EJS' works were more along the 'reproductive', in terms of promoting drainage and hedging instead of 'lowering hills and filling hollows'.[246] James Evatt was an advocate for implementing road ways through the Bath Estate; he told the Devon Commission that he would go to a townland, mark out a line of road, and that immediately he would be inundated with offers from tenants to carry out construction work. The scarcity of money and work meant that there was fierce competition amongst them for labouring positions.[247] In terms of improvement on the Bath estate, it appeared as though drainage and road works constituted most of the improvements. They were initially part-funded by the tenants, but the financial strains of the 1840s meant that Bath paid for their implementation.

There was also a substantial decline in the number of fourth-grade housing across both estates, and indeed across county Monaghan in 1851, confirming that it was the poorest class that was most affected by the Famine. The landless cottier for example was left absolutely destitute by the toughest years of the crisis. According to Duffy, 'as many as 3,770 holdings under 15 acres (c.25 per cent of the total) were lost at a time when the rural areas of the county lost more than 50,000 people'.[248] By 1851, fourth class housing in Monaghan had all but vanished; 'most of the coroner reports on sudden death at this time relate to landless families who spent the winter begging. This class, therefore, was truly transient; they seldom speak in the pages of the Devon Commission report; fleeting glimpses of them appear in the descriptions of others'.[249]

Even in the years immediately after the Famine there was still a trickle of petitions sent to the land agent requesting assistance of one kind or another. One such application was made on 22 December 1854, from a woman by the name of Catherine Walsh with an address at Cloughvally Lower, which was situated on the immediate outskirts of the northern part of Carrickmacross town. What was particularly striking about this letter was the strong emphasis placed on the petitioner's deceased father. The letter outlined the particulars of her father's financial and agricultural situation prior to his death. It appeared that the petitioner was doing so to prove she came from a reputable background which was hard working. She also outlined that she possessed a law-abiding family, thinking it might enhance her possibility of gaining assistance. In his lifetime, the petitioner claimed her father 'held 16 acres of land under your Honour for upwards of 50 years, and always paid his rent regularly up to the time of his death, at which time, he divided his farm between his two sons, one of whom died, the other went to

[246] Duffy, 'Mapping the Famine in Monaghan', p.447.
[247] The Devon Commission; James Evatt.
[248] Duffy, 'Mapping the Famine in Monaghan', p.447.
[249] Ibid.

America. In consequence of which my sister and myself were unable to manage the land and it got into arrears. An ejectment was served'.[250] The letter went on to state that she and her sister had offered to pay EJS' bailiff Thomas Finnegan the rent they owed for the portion of land they held, but that the bailiff had refused on the basis that all rent and arrears were to be paid up to date. Pleading with the good nature of the landlord and highlighting the absence of a man in her life or any family member for that matter to look after her, she begged him for an alternative solution to her situation; 'now - my Good and Respected Landlord all I ask from you is to give to me, (a poor destitute female who never married), a house and garden at whatever rent you may think proper - I am now advanced in years without father or mother, sister or brother to do anything for me'.[251] She went on to propose that a dwelling house and garden in the townland of Leons would be perfect, but if that did not satisfy EJS she would be content with any place he pleased. In conclusion, she outlined that because her parents were very old, she was the principal rent payer for thirty years, 'and in duty bound will always pay',[252] and like most letters addressed to EJS she wished divine providence, a long life and good health on him and his family.

With the beginning of a new decade, gradual change began to emerge across the country. By the early 1850's, there was a marked difference in the total amount of rent due, and the question arises as to why these figures altered so much. Was it that the population of the Shirley estate decreased due to the horrid effects of Famine, death, eviction and emigration, or was it as a result of the aforementioned combined with a reduction of rents?. Outside the workhouse, farm holdings across the country at this stage were still relatively small, few comprised of 40 acres or more. In 1851 over half of holdings were less than 15 acres.[253] In terms of estate income, the statistics for 1851 show that the rent due was in excess of £16,760, this was a 24 per cent decrease on rent due in 1845. The amount received on the other hand was £14,341. In 1851 only 74 per cent of the total rent and arrears due were actually collected, in comparison with 1845, when Trench was successful in collecting 91 per cent of the total liabilities due. What was most striking was that the arrears carried over from 1851 to 1852 were just £2,069. These figures confirm that the number of tenants had reduced considerably, and that existing tenants were in a better position to pay their rent. This change, alluded to by McDermott was generated in many forms, one of which 'was provided on the occasion of the annual prize-giving dinner for the tenants hosted by the Shirley family on the

[250] Petition from Catherine Walsh to EJS, 1854 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/P/Box 1).
[251] Ibid.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants in Ireland*, p.05.

10 October 1850'.[254] The event was held in the baronial hall and it became a political platform, where invited guests, most of whom were large landholders and improving farmers heard of the agricultural stability, improvement and other policies EJS and his counterparts had initiated across the estate throughout the year. It also caused excitement among local newspapers with conflicting views. The *Dundalk Democrat* criticised everything from the extravagant décor of Lough Fea house to the long winded convoluted speeches from the top table, to the invited guests who submerged themselves in the aristocratic culture of the evening, forgetting the plight of their neighbours and friends. The *Anglo Celt* on the other hand applauded the Shirleys for the positive agricultural initiative they instigated in the area.

[254] McDermott, *Gypsum mining and the Shirley estate*, p.33. (Note: some sources outline the dinner was held on an annual basis whilst others state they were a biennial event)

B^t of CREMORNE
Pocket Map
of
THE ESTATE
of
J. Shirley Esquire
Charles Shirley Esquire
DONAGHMOYNE
COUNTY
OF
MONAGHAN
CAVAN
Charles Shirley Esq^r

2. Lough Fea house; the great hall and adjoining conservatory are situated to the left. In the centre is a view of the side and rear of the main house with the square turrets with sprocketed, pyramidal roofs; to the right is the polygonal turret at the end of one wing.

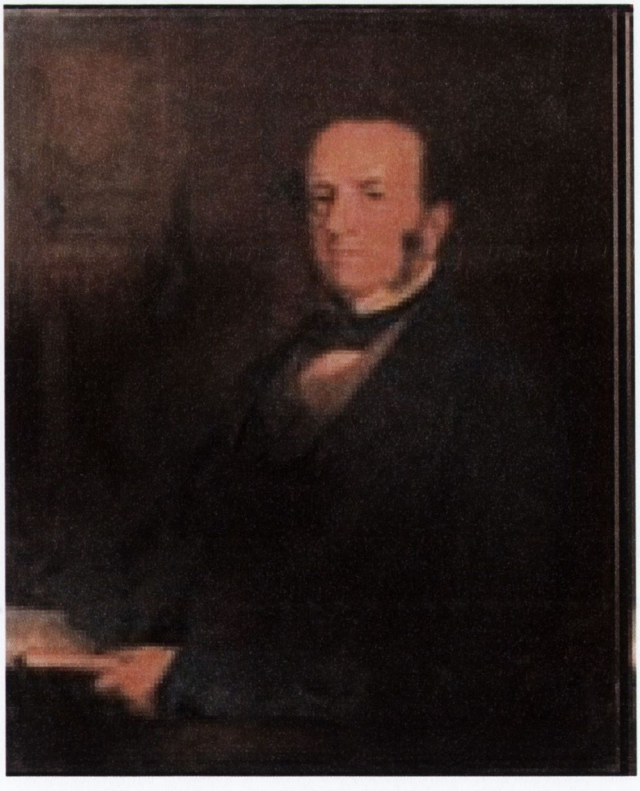
3. A snapshot of the great hall and adjoining conservatory.

4. The coat of arms of the Shirley family over the entrance porch at Lough Fea with 'the quarterings of Basset of Drayton, Braose, Deveraux, Plantagenet, and Ferrers, and the date 1838'.

5. Home-Wood and the steps leading towards the blue-stone cross, erected in memory of Evelyn John Shirley.

6. Inscription on the blue-stone cross erected in memory of Evelyn John Shirley.

7. Evelyn John Shirley(1788-1856).



8.Evelyn Philip Shirley with a book in his hand, symbolising his literary achievements (1812-82).

When William Steuart Trench died 4 August 1872, aged 63, the headstone that was erected by his grave-side was repeatedly demolished. It remains in a state of disrepair to this day as can be seen here at St Patrick's Church cemetery, Donaghmoyne, Co. Monaghan.

11. Modern photograph of the Bath estate rent office which was constructed in 1859. It is located just off Bath St. (now Farney St.) Carrickmacross. The original steel door still remains. The slit windows at the right and left of the porch are illustrative of the high security risk towards land agents and other administrative staff. The steel door was bullet proof.

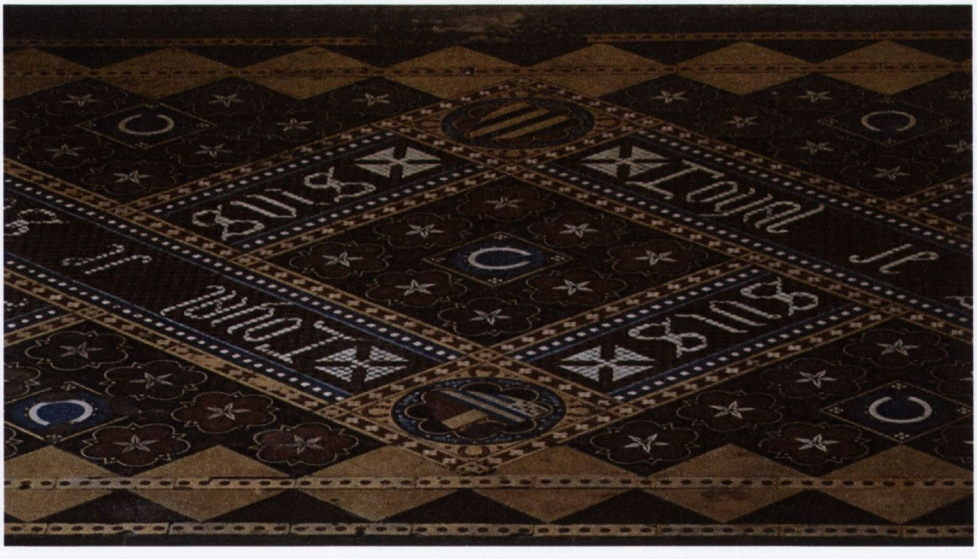
12. Carrickmacross workhouse built in 1842. The highest point at the far left was a later extension, built to accommodate up to 500 extra children, many of whom were orphaned during the Famine.

13. Baronial Fever Hospital, Carrickmacross. It was erected almost directly opposite the workhouse on the Shercock road also in 1842. Fortunately, it too has been restored.

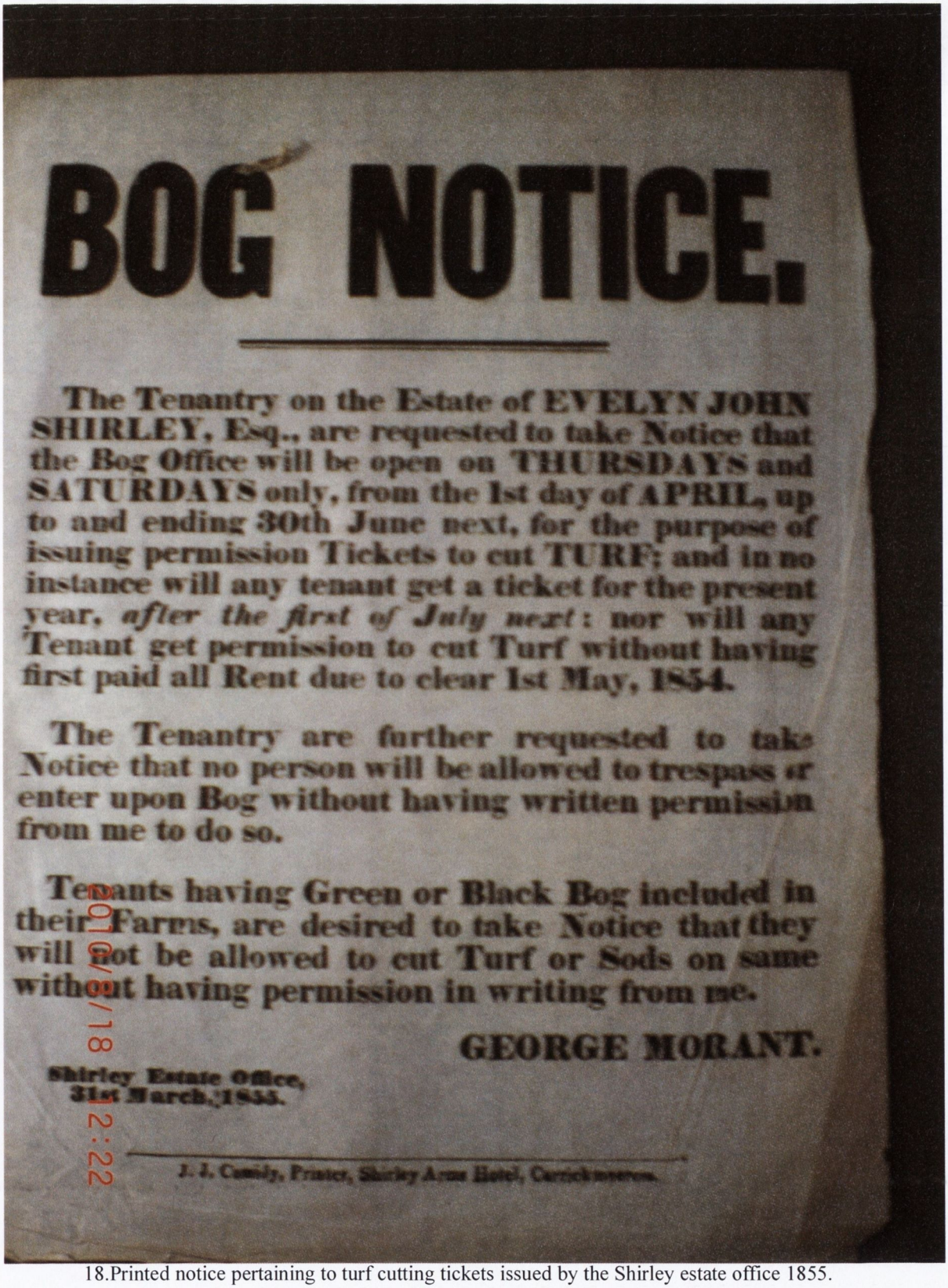
14. The enclosed store of Carrickmacross Market-Square on Bath's side of the main street. The Market-Square was a joint business venture between Shirley and Bath in the 1860s.

15. A modern photograph of Ettington Park, Warwickshire, approaching it from the present-day main entrance.

16. An undated, unsigned portrait depicting Ettington Park in the nineteenth-century. This is currently hanging in the entrance hall of the house.



17. The armorial floor tiles in the entrance hall at Ettington Park. They were supplied by William Holland of Warwick in 1863. The family motto 'Loyal Je Suis', the Shirley crest and the horse-shoe were incorporated into the design.



BOG NOTICE.

The Tenantry on the Estate of EVELYN JOHN SHIRLEY, Esq., are requested to take Notice that the Bog Office will be open on THURSDAYS and SATURDAYS only, from the 1st day of APRIL, up to and ending 30th June next, for the purpose of issuing permission Tickets to cut TURF; and in no instance will any tenant get a ticket for the present year, *after the first of July next*: nor will any Tenant get permission to cut Turf without having first paid all Rent due to clear 1st May, 1854.

The Tenantry are further requested to take Notice that no person will be allowed to trespass or enter upon Bog without having written permission from me to do so.

Tenants having Green or Black Bog included in their Farms, are desired to take Notice that they will not be allowed to cut Turf or Sods on same without having permission in writing from me.

GEORGE MORANT.

Shirley Estate Office,
31st March, 1855.

J. J. Cassidy, Printer, Shirley Arms Hotel, Carrickmacross.

2010/8/18 12:22

18.Printed notice pertaining to turf cutting tickets issued by the Shirley estate office 1855.

SHIRLEY ESTATE

RENT NOTICE.

The Tenantry of the Shirley Estate are hereby requested to take Notice, that the Rent Books will be opened for the Receipt of Rent, Due at the First of May last,

On Saturday, the First of November next.

MEMORANDUM.

It is earnestly hoped, that the Tenantry will, by strict attention to this Notice, relieve the Agent from the disagreeable necessity of enforcing payment by any of those means, which the in-attention and absence of punctuality of many, have frequently obliged him to adopt.

The Books being opened on Saturday, the First of November, the Agent will himself receive the Rent from those Tenants who Pay on that Day; and they will henceforward be honourably distinguished from the other Tenantry, by title, and by any marks of encouragement which it may be in the power of the Agent to confer; and, they will at all times be the first to meet with his consideration.

The Tenantry of the Townland of Mullaghcroghery deserve to be here mentioned as an example of punctuality.

Every man in that Townland has honourably paid his Rent.

No Bailiff will henceforward pass within the precincts of the Townland of Mullaghcroghery; the payment of Rent will be left to the honour of its Tenant-Farmers.

May it soon be the proud boast of the Agent, that it is so with all the Shirley Tenantry.

SIGNED,

GEORGE MORANT,

Agent for the Shirley Estate.

Shirley House, October 22nd, 1851.

Chapter Four

Post-Famine Development: The Shirley estate 1851-1870

Introduction

Correspondence between EJS and EPS is indicative of the strong father/son bond that they developed. In 1829, when EJS was in Ireland overseeing the third year of construction work at Lough Fea, he wrote to his son outlining progress, evident in spite of recent inclement weather. He also counselled EPS, who was then attending Oxford, explaining that the friends he met at university would 'be the most lasting and sincere' he would ever hope to make.[1] Numerous other letters witnessed EJS sending money to EPS to assist with university expenses and advising his son on his financial allowance, while others referred to elections in Monaghan and Warwickshire. The letters left no doubt of their strong friendship. The death of EJS in 1856 resulted in the Monaghan estate passing to his son and heir EPS. This following chapter will outline biographical information relating to EPS and consider his personal life, his political and literary career, his love of antiquities and how his style of estate management compared with that of his father.

EPS was a prominent figure in England and Ireland long before the death of his father, as we have seen in chapter three. The Famine era saw him assert himself in controversial matters as he sat on the Board of Guardians in Carrickmacross and witnessed first-hand how his father dealt with the Famine. This would definitely have equipped him to deal with pressing demands for rent abatements in the early stages of the Land War in the late 1870s and early 1880s. By the time he inherited in 1856 he had a good working knowledge of the estate, he was prominent in the local political spheres on the estate, and his physical presence in the decades prior to his father's death allowed him to assume the role of landlord with considerable ease.

Personal Life

EPS was the eldest son and heir of EJS and Eliza Stanhope and was born on 22 January 1812, in South Audley Street, London. His formal education began at Eton and later at Magdalen College, Oxford where he graduated with a BA in 1834. It was thought that he

[1] Correspondence between EJS and EPS, 1829 (W.C.R.O., Shirley papers CR2747/19/1-7).

was 'too much absorbed in genealogical and heraldic studies to graduate in honours as a leading man of his abilities might have been expected to do'.[2] He later graduated with a MA in 1837. Aged 30, EPS married Mary Clara Elizabeth (1823–94), daughter of Sir Edmund Hungerford Lechmere of Worcestershire, eldest son of a baronet on 4 August 1842. She was described in their marriage settlement as a 'minor, spinster, lady, resident at the Rhyd, Hanley Castle'.[3] EPS and his wife had one son and three daughters. The newly married couple visited Lough Fea on Friday 13 September 1842, and they were welcomed by huge celebrations in Carrickmacross. According to one report 1,000 'Farney yeomen' turned up at the entrance of Lough Fea to provide a 'guard of honor' [sic] and 'give the happy couple a regular "caed milla failtha [sic]"'. Fears that the large crowd may cause an accident or perhaps breach security, Mitchell requested them to move to Carrickmacross, where bonfires were subsequently lit all over the estate and as the festivities continued the following day, it was reported that 'many of the neighbouring gentry brought their families to town to witness the rejoicings'. In addition, the Shirley family and their visitors were reported to have walked through the town and 'were most heartily and loudly cheered'.[4]

In terms of what the future Mrs Shirley financially brought to the marriage, the 1842 marriage settlement specified that the substantial sum of £5,000 was secured on the estates of Edmund Lechmere Esq. on the intended marriage of Miss Mary Clara Elizabeth Lechmere with Evelyn Philip Shirley Esq. She was also to receive a stipend of £200 per annum on the death of her grandfather, Sir Anthony Lechmere. The document outlined that '£5,000 will therefore carry interest at the rate of 4 per cent per annum from the decease of Sir Anthony Lechmere. The trusts of £5,000 to be first for the separate use of Miss Lechmere during the joint lives of her and Mr Evelyn Shirley as pin money, the remainder to Miss Lechmere during her life should she survive, the remainder to Evelyn Shirley during his life in the event of his surviving, the remainder to children . . . except the eldest son . . .',[5] as he was expected to inherit the estates. Miss Lechmere brought a substantial dowry to the marriage, though there were great variations between dowries, depending on the wealth of the family. When Sir Robert Gore Booth married the Hon.

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[2] Dictionary of Irish Biography http://dib.cambridge.org.elib.tcd.ie/ (Jun. 2012)

[3] 1880 Copy of the original 1842 marriage settlement between Evelyn Philip Shirley and Mary Clara Elizabeth Lechmere. The 10 Dec. 1880 copy appears to have been drawn up as there were new trustees. The original was dated 3 Aug. 1842. It is a lengthy document involving Edmund Hungerford Lechmere of Great Malvern, Worcs., eldest son of Sir Anthony Lechmere of the Rhydd, Hanley Castle, Worcs., and Evelyn Philip Shirley with Sir William Heathcote, Hursley Park, Co. Southampton and Rev. Anthony Berwick Lechmere, vicar of Hanley Castle, as trustees (W.C.R.O., Shirley papers, CR229/Box 11)

[4] *Northern Standard*, 17 Sep. 1842.

[5] W.C.R.O., Shirley papers, CR229/Box 11).

Caroline King, daughter of the first Viscount Lorton of Boyle, she brought a dowry of £10,000, while in stark contrast when Caroline died, Robert remarried Caroline Susan Goold, daughter of Thomas Goold, who possessed properties in Dublin and Limerick. She brought a dowry of just £2,000.

On behalf of the Shirley family, the settlement noted that EJS was 'seized of an estate in fee simple of one undivided fourth part of an estate in Co. Monaghan . . . to secure rent charge of £1,000 per annum to Evelyn Philip Shirley during the lives of Mr and Mrs Shirley and the life of the survivor of them to secure a rent charge of £1,000 per annum to Miss Lechmere if she shall survive her intended husband',[6] but a renewed marriage settlement referred to EPS possessing one quarter of the rental income derived from the Irish estate while his father would continue to accrue three quarters of the rental income. Table 4.1 indicates the total rent received from the Shirley estate between 1841 and 1856 i.e. the year EPS got married and his marriage settlement was drawn up to the year of his father's death. The terms of the renewed settlement meant that the county Monaghan estate was worth considerably more to EPS.

Table 4.1 Total rent received on Shirley estate and EPS' portion 1843-1856 (£)

Year	1843	1844	1845	1846	1847	1848	1849	1850	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856
Rent Received	21,648	22,076	23,905	18,899	17,837	16,204	17,995	18,759	14,341	16,610	18,245	20,523	19,874	21,003
EPS' Portion	5,412	5,519	5,976	4,725	4,459	4,051	4,499	4,690	3,585	4,153	4,561	5,131	4,969	5,251

Source: Calculated using the figures from the rentals for the Shirley estate from 1843-1914, P.R.O.N.I., D/3531/R/6/11 – D/3531/R/10/1-2

In 1848, there were further official complex legalities pertaining to the issue when the estate's townlands were divided into seven eighths (EJS' portion) and one eighth (EPS' portion). When the couple were not residing at Ettington Park or Lough Fea, they had an address at 20 Belgrave Square, London.

Genealogy and Politics

Aged 29, EPS won a seat in Co. Monaghan in 1841, taking the seat his father had been squeezed out of ten years previously, and running like him in the Tory interest. He held it until 1847 during which time he also served on the Board of Guardians in Carrickmacross. He assumed several public roles, holding office in both Monaghan and

[6] Ibid.

Warwickshire as a magistrate and as a deputy lieutenant of both counties. He also served as high sheriff of county Monaghan in 1837 and in Warwickshire in 1867.[7] He took the opportunity to familiarise himself with the management of his father's 26,300 acre estate in Carrickmacross, (most likely because he had a one quarter financial interest in the rental income) before being elected to represent South Warwickshire (1853-65).[8] In April 1865 after 12 years of service, he considered himself justified in stepping down by declining age and with 'a deep sense of the responsibilities attached to the possession of a large estate in Ireland, which requires, in my opinion, a more constant residence and supervision than it is in my power to give while I remain in parliament'.[9] His move to Ireland however proved controversial in terms of the 1865 general election which resulted in legal proceedings against EPS for the alleged defamation of character of a local Catholic curate.[10] The mid-1850s also observed a move by EJS to manage the mining business as a personal enterprise, trading under the name Shirley Estate Alabaster & Gypsum Works. EJS had immediately employed an administrative officer J.P. Clarke, who predicted future success for the company. He targeted the domestic and foreign markets liaising with Michael McMahon, the Dundalk shipping agent who, in turn initiated relations with the shipping agent in Liverpool.[11] By 1855, typical gypsum customers were Irish building contractors making extensive renovations on big houses belonging to the gentry or prestigious commercial premises such as courthouses and hotels. Francis Nulty, a Kells based contractor for example, ordered the delivery of five tons of gypsum to Bloomberry House on the Charlesfort estate, county Meath.[12] In some respects the prestigious nature of the customer coincided with that of the proprietor.

In terms of the export market, alabaster or gypsum was sought after by large cement manufacturers such as Roman, Cement & Plaster of Paris Works, Gill Street, Liverpool. McDermott outlined how the purchasing company had stringent delivery policies in place. They required the price set at 12*s*. per ton including delivery to the quay at Liverpool and the quality was to be as good as the sample they were shown. As mining progressed through the years, additional minerals were found though to a much lesser

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[7] Dictionary of Irish Biography.
[8] Ibid.
http://dib.cambridge.org.elib.tcd.ie/quicksearch.do;jsessionid=AB68A64DC91CA8EA393AECE1650B9665 (Jun. 2012.)
[9] EPS' obituary written for the *Academy*, 7 Oct. 1882 (P.R.O.N.I, Shirley papers, D3531/G/12); also see editorial from *Freeman's Journal*, 18 Apr. 1865 and 26 Oct. 1865 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3532/B/4).
[10] EJS to Morant, 10 Aug. 1865 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/9).
[11] McDermott, *Gypsum mining and the Shirley estate*, p.30.
[12] Ibid.

degree, but they were extracted accordingly. These included coal, culm, and sulphate of barytes. These were required to fuel steam engines and to burn lime and by January 1854 EJS' alabaster produce was purchased by companies in London, reaching 'the capital of the empire'.[13] EJS' gypsum company continued to grow from strength to strength. A report drawn up in 1856 by Dublin based civil and consulting mining engineer, Francis Lisabe, found small deposits of gelena, zinc and lead in the townland of Carrickartagh and manganese at the south side of Corduff mountain. Lisabe's report proved important as he conveyed the negativity felt by tenants in general on estates where mining was taking place. He advised EPS to simply offer financial rewards for mineral deposits found by individual tenants. Depending on how much the mineral was worth, rewards could range from 2*s.* 6*d.* to £5 and this further created a '"spirit of emulation" and an expectation of employment for "horse, cart and self"'.[14]

In October 1856, two months before he died, EJS' gypsum business was advertised in numerous Irish and English newspapers. It was believed that he was suffering ailing health, a possible contributory factor to the closing of the business earlier that year. When EJS died on New Year's Eve 1856, EPS inherited a bone of contention in relation to his deceased father's gypsum legacy. EPS declared the mines worthless, blaming the non-existence of a railway service in Carrickmacross as a major factor. He outlined that he would instead lease the mines to a solvent tenant rather than manage them himself, since the contractual agreement with Flood, the mining contractor, was terminated after the death of his father. Flood immediately issued legal proceedings against EPS and a bitter court case ensued, the outcome of which McDermott has conceded is truly unknown. In April 1858, after much deliberation, after many draft contracts were drawn up and much legal advice sought, EPS leased the gypsum mines to a Dublin-based gentlemen, a Mr. Parrot, for a fifteen year period. Thirteen years later, the works were abandoned having completely burned down and that ended the production of alabaster on the Shirley estate for the remainder of the nineteenth-century. EPS did not appear to have possessed the entrepreneurial drive of his father when it came to mining.

EPS was better known for his genealogical and antiquarian pursuits than for his political or entrepreneurial tendencies. The library at Lough Fea was without a doubt one of his most prized possessions and it was reported to be one of the finest private

[13] Ibid., p.31.
[14] Ibid.

collections in Ireland, holding over 3,000 significant English and Irish works.[15] With his love for antiquity, EPS travelled across the Continent once he had finished his studies. He collected pictures and rare books and collections of published works for the libraries both at Ettington Park and Lough Fea, where much of the library was filled with Irish histories and works of literature.[16] There were many parcels and boxes of books delivered to Lough Fea, according to McMinn's correspondence. Prior to one of EPS' visits in the summer of 1860, he ordered the delivery of a large number of books. The demesne steward wrote to EPS outlining that the parcel of books had arrived from Dublin, and as the wrapping paper was quite wet he and his wife decided to open them at once.[17] In December 1865, McMinn was instructed that when a special collection of books arrived, he was to carefully unpack them and place them in the library.

EPS not only archived and preserved precious historical works but also researched and produced many historical chronicles of his own. He first established a reputation as a genealogist by publishing *Stemmatra Shiliana,* (The annals of the Shirley family) in 1841. It was a quarto volume containing the detailed history of the Shirley family and their estates. The Shirleys were traced in an unbroken line from Saswolo or Sewallis, Lord of Ettington in Domesday under Henry de Ferrers. The chief glory of their ancestry was derived from the important marriage of Sir Henry Shirley in the reign of James I. His wife Dorothy Devereux eventually became co-heiress of her brother's estate with her sister Francis who married Lord Bath. The deceased Earl of Essex had also served as the general of the army of parliament. *Some Account of the Territory or Dominion of Farney; in the Province and Earldom of Ulster* was published in 1845/6, it documented the Farney region from ancient times to the mid nineteenth-century and it was deemed 'a labour of love in his later years, to expand this work into a *History of the County Monaghan*, a folio which ranks among standard county histories of the first class' according to one modern judgement.[18]

The library at Lough Fea also encompassed a wide range of manuscripts relating to the Church of Ireland, and perhaps this contributed to EPS' commitment to the established church in his writings, as elsewhere. He published a number of articles on the history of the Church of Ireland (1851), and he also wrote four pamphlets on the threatened Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland (1868), under the pseudonym

[15] Obituary written for the *Academy*, 7 Oct. 1882 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/G/12).
[16] Ibid.
[17] EPS to McMinn, 24 Jun. 1860 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/9).
[18] Dictionary of Irish Biography.

'Spes'.[19] In addition, his library in Ireland contained pamphlets on the 1688 Revolution and documents relating to the Act of Union. According to one source, the most important collection found in the library was 'fourteen volumes containing approximately 300 quarto tracts detailing the 1641 Rebellion'.[20] EPS made considerable additions to these volumes in the ten year period prior to his death. His literary industry was indefatigable and besides the number of volumes he published, his chief work was perhaps the *Noble and Gentlemen of England* (1859). *The Times* referred to it as a work of 'high merit'[21] and several editions were published. It was described as;

> profusely illustrated with armorial shields and gyres a sketch of each family from the earliest ancestors on record. It is the book which most nearly approaches an English Libio d'oro and the line of exclusion is drawn high for no families of gentry are admitted into his list unless they are actually landowners at the present time also their ancestor in the male line was in possession of an estate before the dissolution of monasteries-the change of religion being notoriously a period of social revolution.[22]

It was believed that Benjamin Disraeli portrayed EPS as Mr Ardenne in his fictional work *Lothair*, describing him as a 'man of ancient pedigree himself, who knew everyone else's, which was not always pleasant'.[23] In 1859, EPS privately published a concise book on Lough Fea house; it was a suitable guide for visitors to the house as it described each of the main rooms individually. He also wrote *English deer parks* (1867), which attracted the attention of several London journals.[24] It was an apt subject since his deer park at Ettington was one of the oldest in England. When EPS died, his obituary noted that he 'delighted in complaining to his visitors the radical difference between a deer park . . . and a park with deer in it, a real deer park could only be imparted [sic] by the royal licence and was invested by statute with diverse privileges and immunities . . . so called parks of modern creation, which are only fields fenced in and stocked with deer at the will of the proprietor.'[25] The Shirleys also had a deer park at Lough Fea. One correspondent to EPS in 1859 reported that 'the deer is doing very well and they are now something tame, they are in the habit of collecting into a herd quite convenient to the

[19] Ibid.
[20] These are now housed in the National Library of Ireland. It is believed they formed the basis for much of Shirley's subsequent research.
[21] Dictionary of Irish Biography.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid

kitchen garden, in the twilight they look remarkably well'.[26] The ash trees in the deer park had to be protected as a result of the deer gnawing at the bark, and the game keeper was forced to paint tar on the bark as a preventative measure.

The Farney Bubble Books, which were alluded to in the Introduction, were also compiled by EPS, though his short biographies seldom feature them among his other works. They were a collection of scrapbooks containing printed matter concerning the Shirley estate and the surrounding area, mainly economic and agricultural in subject matter. They also included reports on the Shirleys' political affiliations in the county. They encompassed clippings from newspaper articles, documents relating to the Poor Law Union, Carrickmacross Temperance Association, and Tenant Right meetings held in Carrickmacross. EPS wrote accompanying notes beside many of the documents. He also collected handbills to add to the collection, many of which were printed in small quantities, relating to local events. [27]

EPS died suddenly on 19 September 1882, aged 71, after having an apoplectic fit at his seat at Ettington Park two days earlier. His funeral was kept private and was attended by a few of his closest friends. It was held in the quaint little church at Ettington Park, where he was also buried on 26 September. What were described as 'chief men of note in Warwickshire' including the marquis of Hertford, assembled to pay their last respects.[28] His death came at an ominous moment: agricultural depression, a new and far more formidable national tenant movement in the form of the Land League, and the ignominious parliamentary defeat of Sewallis for Co. Monaghan in 1880, coming after twelve uneventful years in the seat during which time EPS' heir had very rarely spoken at Westminster. EPS' obituary in the *Academy* emphasised his strong devotion to the Church of England. He was a godly man and this, his obituarist inferred, was a vital component of his managerial skills, witnessed on his Irish estate; 'it was his habit, as it was his father's before him, as a mark of duty to make it his residence during a portion of the year. He took pleasure in promoting the welfare of his tenants by judicious improvements and in difficult times was careful to do his duty faithfully as a considerate landlord'.[29] Lough Fea demesne steward, James McMinn echoed similar feelings towards his employer in correspondence

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[26] (PRONI- D3531/C/3/9.) Letter to EPS from James McMinn 24 Feb. 1859 see also 24 Feb 1860

[27] Collins, *County Monaghan sources in the public Record Office of Northern Ireland* (P.R.O.N.I., 1998), p.100.They have been described as 'an extremely fine collection of primary sources almost all of which are probably to be found nowhere else in Ireland. For instance, there are no runs of the *Standard* or the *Advocate* in Ireland with the exception of one or two years of the *Standard* in the *Northern Standard* Office, Monaghan Town'.

[28] Obituary written for the *Academy* 7 Oct. 1882 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/G/12).

[29] Ibid.

in 1865, describing how he 'walked according to scriptural truths and a zealous adherent to the Church of Christ'.[30] On his Irish estate EPS had made significant subscriptions to the Church of Ireland and the Presbyterians. In 1872 for example, he contributed £50 and a site for the erection of a manse at Corvalley Presbyterian Church, four miles to the west of Carrickmacross and as his father had done EPS subscribed £10 annually for the maintenance of the church. His funeral sermon also pointed out that EPS had significantly contributed to the education of children in the parish schools on his English estate for years on end, which had mirrored his father's involvement in education in Ireland.

Post-Famine estate developments; inside outside the boundary walls.

Bi-annual agricultural dinners were indicative of the agricultural situation on the estate. EJS and EPS hosted an agricultural dinner on 19 October 1850. The chair was taken by EJS, and the vice chair by the sub-agent, William George Smith, while Dudley Montague Percival, George Morant, Rev. Mr Morris, Rev. Dr Hutton, Rev. Thomas Gibson, and EPS accompanied at the top table. The blind harpist Patrick Byrne provided entertainment for the evening and was accompanied by a piper. Mr John Goodman and Mr Peter Cassidy, both of whom were tenants on the estate, engaged in singing Irish songs through the medium of the Irish language. The *Dundalk Democrat* delighted at their tricks:

> Goodman and Cassidy are wags. As the names of the songs which they warbled in the hearing of the company are not given, we suspect that they were abusing Shirley and his "brigade" before their faces. Ten to one that the songs were recently composed on the exploits of the "Shirley brigade", For Farney abounds with Irish poets, who can write verses in the old native tongue; and when the muse is in an angry mood, her denunciations of tyranny and tyrants are awfully grand, and the maledictions she pours forth are almost sufficient to make the nerves of the hearer tremble as if operated on by a galvanic battery.[31]

The nationalist *Dundalk Democrat* took a dim view of the proceedings, and to add insult to injury the newspaper complained at how none of its reporters received an invite to the event. Instead they were dependent upon the otherwise Tory *Newry Telegraph* for details. Hence, the delay of almost a month before the report was published on the 2 November 1850: 'we have to complain that we received no notice that such an event would take place. It was most discourteous on the part of the managers of the dinner to neglect sending us, who pay

[30] McMinn to EPS, 5 Sep. 1865 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/9).
[31] *Dundalk Democrat*, 2 Nov. 1850.

such attention to all that concerns the Shirley estate, a letter of invitation'.[32] On this controversial subject the reporter comically and satirically printed the following:

> PRESSURE of immediate local intelligence, which we could not postpone, prevented us last week from going through the entire proceedings at Mr. Shirley's agricultural dinner. But it is not yet too late to pronounce our opinion on what we left untouched. The whole affair was so rich in downright humbug, incident, drollery and claptrap that we must dwell on it a little longer.[33]

The first toast of the evening was raised to EJS referred to by the *Newry Telegraph* as 'the lord of the soil'. Various speeches ensued and many toasts were raised, including one to the prince of Wales and the Royal family with special tribute paid to Princess Alice who had recently died. God's blessing was called on, for the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Carrickmacross lace was also referred to. 'Her grace the Duchess of Marlborough has patronised Irish manufacture in a very marked degree and has not been unmindful of the lace manufacture of Carrickmacross but has given large orders and promised others'.[34]

One of the other speeches alluded to the visual imagery and physical nature of agricultural development which had taken place in the barony since the worst affected years of the Famine. But the *Dundalk Democrat* hit out remarking;

> How these landlords do look at matters! Shirley sees thousands of acres on his estate without a tenant, houses without roofs, and misery on all sides of him; and yet he says that he has seen great changes for the better! There is no use in arguing with a man of this kind, for he will not believe the evidence before him that testifies that instead of there being improvement, the reverse is the case . . .The Telegraph says a great many things of sub-dividing farms, "squatters, who had no right to be there", . . .[he] does his utmost to excuse the exterminations on the estate, by saying that the failure of crops and free trade made it impossible for the small tenants to pay their rents. But why not talk of the remedy for such visitations? It was in Mr. Shirley's power to make reductions in his rents; but, instead of doing so, and helping his tenantry to weather the storm, he hunted them from their homes, and pulled down their dwellings. Although "the course Mr. Shirley adopted", says the Telegraph, "was the only one calculated to meet the crisis and save the country . . . the ultimate result will prove the soundness and humanity of the principles on which they have been acting![35]

The article criticised the grandeur with which the Shirleys were surrounded at Lough Fea, which it claimed, was built from the labours of the hard working-tenants, whose exorbitant rent they squeezed out of them in order to furnish their lavish lifestyles.

> We have a description of Shirley Castle, built by the rack-rents wrung from the tenant farmers. The castle, we are told, is quite a modern structure, and the baronial halls[sic] [is] a very big,

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[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., This referred to the lace making industry which was unique to Carrickmacross and this was alluded to in the introduction of this thesis.
[35] *Dundalk Democrat*, 19 Oct. 1850.

> long, wide, lofty, and great apartment! Better that the castle was much smaller — that they had their land cheap, plenty to eat, good houses, comfortable clothing, and merry lives. Such is what we desire to see on estates rather than lofty castles, on which daws build their nests, and in which rack-renters dwell in luxury and idleness.[36]

The newspaper dwelt on the idea that many of those who attended the dinner had not stood up against EJS nor spoken out against the mistreatment that their fellow tenants were experiencing. The situation was however that most of those invited to the biennial dinner were in fact the better-off farmers, who were found to have excelled in the various agricultural and ploughing competitions held on the estate. They were not typical of the small-holding majority of farmers with red ink beside their names in the rent rolls. The report criticised Mr Mee for example, who was probably the same Thomas Mee who possessed almost 50 acres in Corkishduff, who wrote to EJS in 1848 looking for assistance to heighten the walls and slate his fire-damaged barn;

> Why had not some of the tenants who dined in the baronial hall, (which was built to accommodate them!) the courage to tell Mr. Shirley what they thought of his evictions, and the manner in which he dealt with his unfortunate tenantry? Why did not Mr Mee who is "doing as well as he can," stand up and describe how his late neighbour, Mrs. Mary Gartlan, was treated by her landlord. As he has not done so, we must give her story to the world, which we have received from a trustworthy correspondent, and we beg to call the attention of the public to the manner in which the poor woman was treated.[37]

Mary Gartlan occupied land in the townland of Lisnagaveragh and she was one of very few tenants who possessed a lease, fifteen years of which had expired on the 1 May 1848. The paper which documented her situation in great detail illustrated that on 15 March 1849, John McEnany, the head bailiff of the estate, placed a keeper on her effects until the 5 April, when they were sold by auction for the sum of £10 14*s*. In spite of her situation Mrs Gartlan managed to produce an excellent crop that year. Her cattle were nevertheless seized four times and each time she was obliged to pay 1s. 5*d*. in costs. On the 25 September 1849, McEnany again entered the premises and placed a keeper on her crop and stock, where he remained until closer to harvest time. At the end of October, 'McEnany who was accompanied by an auctioneer, and one of EJS' agriculturists, entered the premises, and sold the entire corn, cattle, hay, and other articles in one lot, and in less than five minutes' for the grand total of £31 10*s*. in other words a year's rent. Even though the entire lot included the farm, crops which consisted of threshed oats, 15 stacks of oats, each containing about 5 barrels and £4 10*s*. worth of hay and the stock comprised of two cows, three heifers, two calves, two horses,

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

one colt, ten pigs, two goats and eighteen geese, all were previously valued at £94 by Mr. Patrick Hamill, Lattene, and Mr. James Ward, of Coolfore. The article outlined that Mrs. Gartlan, never received any more for her goods, in addition she was served with an ejectment process in June and was evicted in July.[38] There was no mention of any Gartlans in the townland (Lisnaguiveragh) in Griffith's Valuation.

Referring to the situation on the Shirley estate in Farney, the newspaper warned:

> Let the people know the fate of their neighbours on the property of Mr. Shirley . . . where you could ascend a hill and count tens and fifties and hundreds of ruined homesteads whose blackened walls and silent desolation tell to God and man that the merciless destroyer has been there, where there are thirteen auxiliary workhouses and more sought for, as all are crammed in suffocation; and in the name of justice, in the name of humanity, in the name of mercy, in the awful name of God, I call upon Lord John Russell, I call upon the Government, I call upon the Imperial Legislature to render the poor man's property as sacred as that of the rich.[39]

As the article implied there were definite signs of organised tenant discontent in Farney which had begun to take shape in the early 1850s and this will be examined presently. However in terms of estate advances in the 1850s and in the subsequent decade, correspondence between land steward James McMinn and EPS after the death of his father points to a sustained attempt to improve the immediate Lough Fea demesne, and this was reflected to some extent outside the demesne walls and across the estate. McMinn wrote to EPS on a fortnightly basis throughout the 1860s, informing him in great detail of local occurrences from the growth of plants and flowers in the kitchen garden to the felling of trees in the wood, from the work carried out by various workmen and employees to news and idle gossip pertaining to tenants' personal lives on the estate. His correspondence covered a wide range of topics which would have kept EPS very much up-to-date with Irish affairs and it provides an invaluable insight into the goings on behind the demesne walls in the mid-to-late nineteenth-century under EPS distant management.

The gong to call employees to work was sounded on a daily basis and the demesne was a highly regimented place, a hive of activity which created and maintained jobs for local tradesmen and labourers. The correspondence between McMinn and EPS documents the move to create more attractive pleasure grounds, and a new orchard was planted in the immediate years after EJS' death. The orchard was situated beside the cottage, not far from the main house.[40] McMinn reported how 'we planted roses against the side walls and ivy

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] McMinn to EPS, 10 Feb. 1859 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/9).

against the newly built gable and likewise trees and shrubs in the ground adjoining . . . I did not plant the fruit trees close to the garden paling but left a . . . piece of ground . . . to make a bee garden'.[41] There was an emphasis on developing the vegetable garden, with McMinn hoping to plant new potatoes in the spring of 1859. In November when they were harvested, McMinn sent both potatoes and apples to Ettington to see if they met with EPS' 'satisfaction'.[42] He also made reference to the good crop of fruit in the vinery, and in August 1865 there was an abundance of grapes and melons which he was at a loss to know what to do with.[43] It was common to give surplus fruit and vegetables to members of the local clergy if they were ill, and to members of staff such as land agent Morant and George Donnely, who had had an operation. There were also pears growing in the orchard which was targeted by thieves in September 1865, when five stones of ripe pears were stolen; the culprits left footprints for a considerable distance heading in the direction of Carrickmacross. McMinn added that no stranger had stolen them. He opted to sell some of the fruit and vegetable crop in a bid to earn money for the demesne.[44] Hamilton Pallett and James Slevin were employed in the plantations to prune and thin the hedges, while simultaneously there was levelling ground in progress and efforts to make the hay secure.[45]

A clean and tidy image was paramount to the demesne's steward, who told EPS that a number of his friends who had been given special permission to enter the demesne to host a picnic had not adhered to the rules. McMinn complained that Mrs Keelan's party drove their carts right through the glen to the summer-house opposite the kitchen garden. They left the summer-house dirty and untidy after their picnic, while also abusing the ground with the imprint of horse's feet and cart wheels. The gate keepers were informed not to allow Mrs Keelan and her 'accomplices' into the demesne in the future.

In the mid 1850s James Reilly the carpenter was employed to erect and repair wooden fences and palings, and when a drought came as a result of a very dry spell in the summer of 1859 he was reduced to mending wooden carts as there was not enough water to drive the saw-mill and thus produce timber for fencing or to construct a new draw-bridge for the river entering into the lake.[46] Hand, the blacksmith, was instrumental in making long lengths of iron railings. McEntee repaired the draw-bridge, while McMahon

[41] Ibid., 10 Feb. 1859.
[42] Ibid., 12 Nov. 1859.
[43] Ibid., 9 Jun. 1859 also see 10 Aug.1865.
[44] Ibid., 11 Sep. 1865.
[45] Ibid., 22 Jul.1859.
[46] Ibid.

was building a wall around the pleasure gardens and Thornton was erecting what was referred to as the 'monument', most likely to be the blue stone cross erected in memory of EJS. McMinn also raised the issue as to whom to give the contract for building a 3ft high wall around the iron cottage/house, asking EPS whether Thornton would be considered for the job.[47] Throughout the mid 1850s, a large-scale clean up and repair operation took place on all roads and avenues within the demesne. In November 1859 a new road was constructed 'past where the old stables stood into the rose garden', and by so doing McMinn noted that 'we will reclaim a great piece of ground that will be of great value in propagating shrubs and trees of different kinds, at the same time it will improve the look of the place, in a short time we will make a finish of it'.[48] There were also men employed to sell a number of cattle, each of which fetched over £10, except for a younger cow which sold for £6 12*s.* 6*d.*

McMinn was openly critical of his employees to EPS, some of whom he described as 'backward in forwarding their work'.[49] On occasion he revealed his denominational preferences, when he employed Mrs Dawson's son as 'ordered' by EPS and stated 'as far as I know Mrs Dawson is a quiet person and of value about the house. I consider her son should be better in performance to some Roman Catholic'.[50] In February 1861, after a bout of illness, McMinn discharged a number of employees, suspecting they were idling in his absence. Though he was not there to oversee them, he singled out Michael Gartlan, the garden man who he claimed was a most useful person in all aspects of work. McMinn added that he could put every faith and confidence in him and would recommend Gartlan to receive 9*s.* per week.[51] In April, he reported to EPS that while he was absent from his duties there was mischief carried out by trespassers, but he had instructed Patrick Gartlan who resided in the Dublin gate lodge 'to keep vigilant'. McMinn was more concerned about the damage to the estate's reputation by a lack of adequate security. He claimed 'it filled the mouths of the vulgar and looked something bad in the eyes of the public'.[52]

Throughout 1859, the trees were thinned in the home wood in preparation for large timber auctions, held within the immediate demesne and at the small forest at Carrickmaclim a couple of times a year in the late 1850s and early 1860s, primarily

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[47] Ibid., 9 Jun. 1859.
[48] Ibid., 12 Nov. 1859.
[49] Ibid., 10 Feb 1859.
[50] Ibid., 24 Jan. 1859.
[51] Ibid., 28 Feb.1861.
[52] Ibid.

because McMinn could not find suitable customers for a private sale of the timber.[53] He referred to four private applications he had had for timber at the end of December 1860; he struck a deal with one of the customers but he could not agree a fair price with the other three applicants, though he confessed his desire to dispose of much of the hard-wood on the demesne, but not at a cut price. He exclaimed, ' heaven if I am spared in health, I'll do what lies in my power to dispose of the timber to Mr Shirley's interest'.[54] On the other hand, at Christmas, he delivered a large load of firewood free of charge to all the widows living in the cottages and lodges in the demesne.[55] Organising for a timber auction took a lot of time, effort and manpower with many employees transferred from other less important tasks to carry out the heavy-duty work of felling and stacking large volumes of timber. McMinn gave EPS a thorough description of the entire process. Once thinning took place, the timber was stacked into piles, then the auctioneer was contacted while notices advertising the auction were distributed. McMinn was confident, telling EPS that several people had contacted him and Morant, requesting to purchase timber from the estate. He further assured EPS that he would 'get it sold to a good advantage'.[56] One document related to an auction held on 8 April 1861 shows that timber was sold to no less than 108 customers, each paying between 1*s.* and 9*s.* Charles McCabe bought the most timber paying 12*s.* The timber auction fetched a total of £15. 1*s.* for the estate. There was ongoing correspondence concerning the money that would be accrued from the sale of beech and Scotch fir at the end of February 1860. McMinn believed that some of the elms in the hedge adjoining Evatt's wood would command a good price.[57] In spring 1861 a railway contractor bought most of the timber privately, spending over £30.

In many respects, estate authorities were taught to be very thrifty. For example, when the dials of the clock on the turret at the rear of the house needed repairing in early 1860, the specialist estimated the total costs would amount to £20. McMinn thought the estimate was too high and instead recommended that a local painter from Carrickmacross, a Mr Martin, would carry out the job at a cheaper rate. He was to be employed in April of the same year to paint and 'regild' a gate. Further correspondence mentioned that Martin was employed to paint the roof of Lough Fea church, and the dials of the turret clock

[53] Ibid., 21 Dec. 1860.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid., 6 Apr. 1859.
[57] Ibid., 28 Feb. 1860.

which also required gilding.[58] In June 1860, straw was required to thatch the cottage roof, but McMinn suggested that since straw was selling at between 4*s*. 6*d*. and 5*s* 6*d*. per cart, he did not think it prudent to purchase it; instead he advocated using reeds instead.

McMinn wanted to build a small shed in April, once all the thinning of the plantation had ceased for the season and all the gardens were 'looking satisfactorily' clean and tidy. He made sure to specify that it would be conveniently located close to the manure yard, it would not be an eye sore to EPS as it would be hidden by laurels, and with all the materials with which to build it in place, it would not cost very much.[59] In Spring 1862, McMinn oversaw the building of a new gate lodge.[60]

EPS also concerned himself with what might be considered trivial demesne matters, such as the amount of coal used and whether the amounts varied from year to year. McMinn assured him 'there is sufficient [coal] to last for two years at the same rate as last year's consumption'.[61] In the summer of 1862 McMinn ordered a huge 60 tons of common coal and 60 tons of gas coal, at £1. 3*s*. per ton to deliver. Sufficient storage suitable for such a large order (which they estimated would last for six or seven years) had to be found. He later questioned EPS as to whether it was right to move two cows from the meadow beside the carriage drive to the deer park, and whether he and his wife could borrow a couple of dozen flowerpots.[62]

McMinn bought a four-year old horse for £15 in the summer 1860 as he thought it would be handy to have one around the place. By 1862 the demesne had only two working horses and, when one dropped dead in April, McMinn stressed the importance of having to purchase another capable horse, pointing out that any older than a four-year old would be too old to carry out the level of work expected. The tone of the letter implied that EPS was likely to purchase an older horse because it would be cheaper in the short term.[63] McMinn argued that a couple more cows were needed to provide the house with cream and milk, the two existing ones were not sufficient enough to meet the demands.[64] Consistent with the self-sufficient nature of the demesne, McMinn advised EPS of the advantages of producing hay to feed the deer, horses, cattle, sheep etc. throughout the winter rather than

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[58] Ibid., 25 Apr. 1862.
[59] Ibid., 28 Apr. 1860.
[60] Ibid., 25 Apr.1862.
[61] Ibid., 12 Apr.1859.
[62] Ibid., 28 Apr. 1860.
[63] Ibid., 25 Apr. 1862.
[64] Ibid., 3 Jun.1862.

purchasing same.[65] They also grew fruit and vegetables, including crops of beans and turnips, which were fed to the deer, and oats which Mr Pizer, the gamekeeper, fed to the pheasants.

Though there was a consistent theme flowing through the correspondence that everything was improving across the estate and with McMinn repeating the mantra that 'the place in general is looking something well' and 'peace and quietness' prevailed within the demesne, there were a number of references made to the damage sustained to the blue-stone monumental cross and the fact that it would need to be protected. This seemed to suggest that it was the target of vandals. McMinn had to employ a workman to repair it after it was damaged.[66] In general however he repeatedly put EPS' mind at ease, outlining that 'the workmen about this place continue to conduct themselves with propriety as far as I know, to me all is in quietness'.[67] In fact relations appeared so jovial that McMinn and his wife were invited on a visit to Ettington park.

It is difficult to ascertain exactly how much money was expended on demesne improvements alone in the 1860s, the records show that between 26 August 1859 and September 1862, EPS spent £156 on Lough Fea house repairs and general maintenance such as fixing water pipes and replacing window frames.

Demesne lands covered 6 per cent of the country in the latter half of the nineteenth-century and they ranged in size from 100 acres to 1,500 acres.[68] The demesne on the Shirley estate conformed to the large-estate pattern across the country. These generally comprised home-farms, kitchen gardens, gardens and lawns for ornamentation and leisure purposes, woodland for rearing game, and parkland for grazing cattle and sometimes, as in the case if the Shirleys, a deer park. Since the Famine, landlords increasingly foresaw the lucrative value of farming, cleared tracts of untenanted land themselves. By the 1870s, it has been estimated that 15 per cent of land in Ireland comprised of demesne farms.[69] The mechanical shift to create new and improved farming tools and implements could be witnessed on the Shirley's demesne in March 1865, when McMinn proposed making a long-bodied cart and a timber carriage which he outlined were both badly needed. In addition he commented on how the estate farm did not have a doubled-handled plough for drilling turnips. The plough, which the estate farm already

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[65] Ibid., 17 Mar. 1865.
[66] Ibid., 28 Apr. 1860.
[67] Ibid., 29 Jun. 1860.
[68] Dooley, *A research guide,* p.127.
[69] D.S. Jones, *Graziers, land reform and political conflict in Ireland* (Washington, 1995), pp 121-3.

possessed was a swing plough, but McMinn added that he could not bear the thought of borrowing a plough for drilling the turnips from one of the large tenant-farmers on the estate. He told EPS that he much preferred lending to a neighbour than having to compromise his and EPS' reputation by having to depend on the 'tenantry for the loan of implements'.[70] Later, he specified the cost of a new swing plough and a grub harrow to be supplied by Ritchie, the implement manufacturer in Ardee.[71] In a bid to convince EPS, he claimed that a new drilling plough would only set him back a few pounds, and he assured him that he was acquainted with first-class plough-men who could begin work with immediate effect. Even with the general rise in agricultural prosperity, landlords in general were not investing significantly in agricultural improvement. McMinn found it difficult to secure funding from EPS for implements for his own farm and this points to the difficulties which tenants must have encountered while seeking financial assistance.[72]

Post-Famine Developments outside the Demesne

Improvement was certainly evident within the demesne walls, but there was some evidence to suggest that tenants were also making great strides to do likewise. In terms of broader estate progression in the mid nineteenth-century, the estate's improvement books indicate that not alone was estate funding available in greater quantities to tenants in the 1850s for purchasing new windows for dwelling houses, timber, slates, labour and lime, but that across the estate, there were considerable levels of construction, expansion and improvements being implemented by tenants in tandem with developments in EJS' local gypsum enterprise, Shirley Estate Alabaster & Gypsum Works, which grew from strength to strength throughout the decade.[73]

In terms of estate expenditure on improving existing dwellings, widow Ward from Lurgans was a typical example of the type of applicant granted assistance. She received £4 17*s.* 2*d.* towards the cost of timber, slates, workmanship and masonry work required for an extension to her house in June 1852.[74] A profile of the applicant appeared as important as the reason why he/she was seeking financial assistance. In July 1852, it was noted that Bryan Mohun of Creevy-Lower had a good house situated on three acres,

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[70] McMinn to EPS, 29 Dec. 1865 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/9).
[71] Ibid., Dec. 29 1865.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.

that his family were 'clean people and industrious', his daughter made money from sewing which paid the rent. The absence of windows in their house made her job more difficult, since she could only sew during day-light hours.[75] The trend of improvements continued throughout the 1850s. Between February and June 1852, 5 acres of estate lands were drained at a cost of £10 2*s.* 6*d.* Between May and September the following year, the figures remained the same, though in addition the estate issued large numbers of iron gates, barrels of lime and quicksets. Cormack Duffy, Drumbroagh for example received 2,000 'quicks' for a new ditch.

Included among the Improvement Books were professional architectural plans drawn up in the late 1840s for four different types of rural dwelling. Having spent the Famine years expending large sums on assisted emigration schemes and 'throwing down' houses, these plans for new houses paved the way for building up the estate physically and metaphorically. The simplest house plan was entitled 'plan of house for Labourer or small Farmer', the front elevation indicated two small windows on the left, with the door situated on the right and the chimney in the centre of the roof. It was noted that if the roof of the house was slated or tiled, the gables would not need to be as high. If the family were large, the high gable enabled extra space for a loft, otherwise the one bedroom on the ground floor could be divided into two. There was also the option of incorporating a 'dairy & store' at the rear left leading from the kitchen. On a basic level though, this was a house of two halves, a kitchen to the right and a bedroom to the left but nevertheless it was very different from the cabins that cottiers, labourers or small farmers resided in during the Famine.

The second drawing was entitled 'Plan of house for a Farmer holding from ten to thirty acres'. This was a two-storey house, the front elevation illustrated that the door was centrally located with a small window either side and on the upper floor were three smaller windows, though the window in the centre was not drawn as definitively as the other two. Perhaps this was optional and not typical of this type of house. Just as the labourer's house had two rooms on the ground floor, the proposed plan for a house between ten and thirty acres was similar, except for the stone stairs leading from the centre of the ground floor to the upper floor, where there were two bedrooms, one to the right and one to the left. The third and most prestigious house was entitled, 'Plan of farm house for a Tenant holding from thirty to sixty acres'. Front elevation drawings indicated that this house resembled

[75] Ibid.

that which was proposed for ten and thirty acre farms. The middle window on the upper floor was definitively drawn though and the side elevation indicated that it was much wider. On the ground floor was a kitchen to the front right with a scullery located on the rear right, to the front left was a parlour, while a dairy completed the ground floor at the rear left. There were four bedrooms situated on the upper floor. The fourth plan illustrated the offices and farm houses, which would accompany this large farm-house. The front elevation showed a large arch in the centre of a two-storey structure with two windows, one to the left and one to the right. In the centre was a cart-house, on the right, a stable and on the left a cow-house. The upper floor housed a large barn and a corn store.[76] Unfortunately, the Improvement Books did not stipulate how many of the proposed new dwellings were erected across the estate or whether these were partially or entirely funded by EJS.

In 1861 the major impact that the Famine had made could be witnessed through the considerable fall in the region's population levels. The census figures for county Monaghan indicate that the population was by then 126,340, a decrease of 74,067 from 1841. The population of Carrickmacross town was just 2,045. The annual amount of property valued under the Tenement Valuation Act was £203,348. County Monaghan's occupants were described as 'almost wholly agricultural' and, despite the efforts made in the 1850s to move towards mechanised farming instruments, 'spade husbandry . . . [is] much practised' [77] and the general situation in terms of agriculture in the county was mirrored on the Shirley estate. Although much was done in terms of educating tenant farmers as to correct agricultural practices that would benefit both landlord and tenant, and although EPS micro-managed every aspect of his estate so that he was kept updated with even the most trivial of matters concerning individual farm issues, there were still tenants who refused to embrace farm development or who were perhaps more concerned with political issues that were taking place surrounding land tenure from 1850 onwards.

Agricultural dinners continued to be held in the great hall at Lough Fea in the 1860s and 1870s by EPS, just as his father had done in the previous decades. Although the layout of the event remained similar, it was presented on a grander scale and the numbers invited continued to grow, though not in terms of the number of tenants. Instead of the fifty guests as in 1850 or 60 which was the number of tenants with 'well cultivated farms'

[76] Various house plans in Shirley estate Improvement Books 1848-78. (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/M/7/1-5).
[77] McMinn to EPS 11 Dec. 1866 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/9-11)

invited in 1860,[78] there were 150 guests entertained at the lavish event in November 1870 while 400 invitations were issued in 1871 for a 'Grand Ball' which was attended by the usual aristocrats and influential residents from the adjoining counties of Louth, Meath and Cavan.[79] In attendance at the 1870 agricultural dinner were members of the clergy and fellow aristocrats. The guest list included Mrs and Miss Lloyd, Mr and Mrs Hamilton, Drs Pinching Reade and M'Kenna, T.J Holland Esq., etc. A large number of ladies occupied seats in the gallery.[80] There were obvious differences in the content of speeches and the issues raised in speeches tended to be synonymous with issues at the forefront of estate politics at a given time. The dinner held in 1860 which was attended by the master of the workhouse Mr Wallace and the estates' agriculturalist Mr Nelson paid much attention to how adverse weather conditions as well as other factors had affected the state of agriculture in the previous year. EPS outlined how he had read Nelson's agricultural journals with great interest and that he had tested their accuracy to find that it had been quite a good year for farmers given the cold winter and wet spring that they had endured. Morant noted that grasslands and pasturage had gradually increased since 1853 and that fencing throughout the estate had greatly improved. Though official government reports published echoed the retarded nature of agriculture throughout the country in the previous year, he was adamant that this was not the case on the Shirley estate. There was much emphasis placed on the importance of the estate's agricultural competitions which were put in place in conjunction with an expert agriculturalist to educate tenant farmers on the best farming practices necessary to reap the greatest rewards from their land. Cattle shows, agricultural competitions and ploughing matches were evident in many parts of the country throughout the nineteenth-century. There were annual agricultural shows held in Carlow since 1845 for example,[81] in county Mayo an agricultural society was established in 1861 and all prizes were contributed to by members of the local gentry.[82] At the annual Tipperary Union Farming Society agricultural show in 1862, several members of local gentry including the Earl of Donoughmore, Lady Glengall, Lord Waterpark and Lord Lismore were praised for their assistance in helping to grow and develop it.[83] In 1860 at the Shirley estate agricultural competition prizes were offered on a first, second and third place basis in the first three categories. The first category was for farmers holding 40 acres

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[78] *Irish Times*, 22 Nov. 1860.
[79] *Irish Times and Daily Advertiser*, 7 Feb.1871
[80] Hand written report on agricultural dinner, 1870 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/5/1-3).
[81] *Irish Times*, 03 Oct. 1859.
[82] Ibid., 08 Jul.1863.
[83] Ibid., 12 Jan.1862.

and there were 10 competitors. The second category was for those holding 30 acres and there were 8 competitors, the third was for those with 20 acres with 8 competing. Two winning tenants in this particular category were William Lundy and John White each of whom held 20 acres in the townland of Mullaghcroghery. Coincidentally Mullaghcroghery had been singled out by Morant in 1851 as an exemplary example of a townland where 'every man in that townland has honourably paid his rent'.[84]The fourth category was entered into by 8 competitors each with less than 20 acres while the fifth category was for those with less than 8 acres and of the 9 who competed 6 were issued with prizes.

Morant commented that as regards the general management of farms 'a good number of prize holdings are in a very nice state of cultivation and very creditable to the tenants and also to the property'. He added that this must be 'a great stimulant to their [the tenantry's] more careless and slothful neighbours to be up and doing, seeing the great benefit their improving neighbours are deriving from their improvements'.[85] One area that gave Morant cause for concern was the number of turnips planted across the estate; he felt aggrieved that tenants were 'beginning again to trust too much to their old but dangerous friend, the potato', and he recommended that more turnips be planted in the future and less potatoes.[86] Nelson's close surveillance in terms of the agricultural development of the estate between 1851 and 1863 was very detailed and in some respects he created a short profile on many of the tenants, and there is evidence that EPS studied the reports as he made very brief notes at the end of many of them, outlining his satisfaction at how the observations were carried out. Nelson actively visited tenant farmers and advised them in terms of crop rotation and on the correct manner in which to cultivate crops and to educate them in helping them gain the greatest return from their agricultural capital and labour. In the earlier stages of Nelson's work, much emphasis was placed on sowing and the correct harvesting of turnips. Tommy Duffy was a stereotypical example of the type of tenant mentioned in the earlier reports. He had sown his turnips but required additional direction in terms of spreading manure, cultivating the crop and managing it properly.[87] The majority of tenants mentioned had made some effort to sow turnips and other seeds such as clover; however many lacked the education and skill to carry this new work out properly. Such was the case of Hugh Brady who incurred problems spacing his plants out.

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[84] Shirley Estate Rent Notice. (See illustration no. 19 in thesis).
[85] *Irish Times,* 22 Nov. 1860.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Agricultural visitation books by A. Nelson, G. Morant and E.P. Shirley, 1851-63 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/S/73/1-19).

Meanwhile, other tenants refused to follow the agriculturalist's advice. This was the case with Constantine Connolly who had his turnips sown properly but he had not planted clover as directed. In Drumbroan, neither Pat Duffy or his son Bryan would agree to sow turnips but they did sow clover and hay-seed in the fields recommended, while on the contrary in Drummerloughbeg Edward Riley had planted his turnips but not his clover or hay-seed in the fields Nelson recommended, 'but in a field full of weeds and not fit to give crops or anything else without manure'.[88] The issue of ragweed was one that Morant wanted tackled instantly. He reported to EPS in 1857 that there were obvious signs of neglect on the part of the tenantry at reducing ragweeds which was a disgrace to the farmers and the disgust of the landlord and agent. He proposed allowing the bailiff into the district to 'drive each person for rent due' should they continue to ignore this problem.[89] In general however, it was clear that substantial efforts were made both by the estate authorities on behalf of the tenantry and by the farmers themselves to improve the state of farm holdings across the estate in the early 1850s and beyond. By 1857, the reports outline the increased planting of turnips, clover and hay-seed and there was a steady stream of potato planting, but this was closely monitored so that farmers did not become as reliant on it as they had in the previous decade. The better farmers were cutting and trimming hedges, digging or ploughing where they could afford to and rotating crops where appropriate. Farm yards were becoming more popular, with Nelson advising farmers to keep these areas clean and free from debris and conducting small scale drainage where their land was subjected to flooding. There was also an increase in drainage carried out in 1858 by EPS, when 12 acres of estate land were drained at a cost of over £26.[90]

Farmers and farming practices continued to vary however. John McCahey for example had his farm in good order and he spread lime instead of manure, but his house was it seems wretched. On the other hand Thomas Wall in Knocknacran had his fields 'laboured into the ditches and little waste ground', while Noel Burnes in the same townland had no house whatsoever, just a farm. Nelson recommended him to plant potatoes in drills and crops in ridges in an attempt to alleviate the problem of weeds. Meanwhile in Clonturkmason Bryan Daily was one of the few tenants listed who had had his house whitewashed. By the close of the 1850s, the total decrease of what were coined 'exhaustive crops' such as grain and flax was 94 acres in the southern division of the estate. While the

[88] Ibid., 1857.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

'manure crops' increased by 138 acres in the previous ten years and simultaneously there was an increase of 64 acres made into meadow and pasture land which pointed to a marked diversification in farming systems on the estate. Concerned about the high price of flax and the low price of grain, Nelson noted that the growth of the flax crop needed to be closely monitored for fear that it would extend to an excessive extent in the forthcoming years. Although the farmer stood to make a sizable profit from it, it left nothing for manure crops when the farmer exhausted his land and in a short time exhausted his pocket. By the close of the decade it was clear that achieving a positive outcome in terms of farming development was only part of the journey, the greater achievements came in maintaining and progressing with new farming methods. 'Now that a good many of the tenants has their land in good condition, they should strive to keep it so as it is the only way to make it pay'.[91]

The continued development of farming on the Shirley estate did not go unnoticed by the national media. In November 1860, the *Irish Times* reported that although there was temporary interruption to the agricultural prosperity, which continued across Ireland from the 1850s to the mid 1860s, the barony of Farney went almost unscathed. Regardless of the inclement weather the country had endured in 1860, the report outlined the striking nature of Farney's agricultural improvement, especially in terms of the rotation of crops, the close attention paid to the fencing and draining of land, and there was a marked change in the cleanliness and comfort of the cottages, with rent paid punctually. A drop in the consumption of alcohol, especially whiskey, was also noted, which as the article opined was one of 'the best tests of the moral condition of the tenantry'.[92] EPS was credited with social and agricultural improvement which he stimulated with the arrival of new innovative competitions, such as prizes for best fruit, vegetables and flowers produced in kitchen gardens; this mirrored similar measures in England, implementing pride of place and of produce.[93]An account of competitors and the prizes won was drawn up from the 1864 annual ploughing match, and it was an indicator of the funding made available by EPS for farming implements. The list of competitors illustrated the various categories they were competing in including ploughing, flax, gardens, farms and animals. Thomas Mee for example, entered three separate items, his farm, a sow and a three year old heifer, but he did not win anything. Andy Lundy on the other hand won the prize of an iron gate with

[91] Ibid., 1859.
[92] *The Irish Times*, 22 Nov. 1860.
[93] Ibid.

his prized sow. Prizes included ploughs, carts, cart wheels, seed sewers, drill grubbers, wooden gates, iron gates and wheel barrows and grapes, and almost £80 of the estate's improvement fund was spent on the implements.[94]

By 1862 a study of the crops planted across the southern division of the estate indicated that grass represented the largest acreage with 1,232 acres, secondly oats took up 954 acres and this was followed by potatoes covering 288 acres while 207 acres comprised of turnips. Other crops harvested but to a much lesser extent was wheat, rye and barley. The similar number of acres growing potatoes and turnips indicate how successful the estate administration was in ensuring that overreliance and dependence on the potato was not going to dominate agricultural produce in the decade after the Famine.[95] By 1863, there were reports of farmers slating houses and generally farmers, especially those competing in the annual agricultural competitions and cattle shows, were keen to impress the judges whom Nelson accompanied on their rounds inspecting farms, livestock, kitchen gardens and sampling their produce.[96] One letter from EPS' demesne manager James McMinn in 1865 commented on the erection of cow sheds across the estate and the building of walls adjoining small potato fields, and there was one tenant in particular who he singled out: Arthur Hughes, who was continuing to improve 'his little place, he has made a very good job of his fence convenient to his house according to Mr Shirley's orders. After this month, it would be well to let him do the remainder of his on his own account. Sometimes the more is done for some people the more indolent they become'.[97]

In terms of ploughing matches, the 1869 annual Shirley estate ploughing match, awards and prize-giving took place on the farm of Thomas Woods, Clonturkmason, on 12 January. There were various classes in the competition and six prizes in each class. One was a ploughing match where a male tenant or his son could participate, the first prize was £2 10*s*. There was also a cattle show held on 4 August in the same year but there were numerous other animals entered in the competitions. Cash prizes were awarded for the best pigs and the best poultry. There were also prizes for farm cultivation based on green crops and kitchen garden produce. Incentivised by such competition, cash prizes, public pride and reputation would undoubtedly have made tenants much more willing to try and change practices and improve standards on their farms, and with their animals and

[94] Account of 1864 annual ploughing match (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/V/Box 15).
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid., 1863.
[97] McMinn to EPS 12 Feb. 1865 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/9-11).

produce. The total given out in prizes for 1869 was £80 15*s*. and a medal.[98] In 1870 two women were listed as entrants to the class B category entitled; 'To the tenant or his son who have ploughed the requisite quantity of ground within the stipulated time in the best manner'. Interestingly, the first prize went to Norah Mc Nally from Cormoy, while Widow Callan from the Lurgans won fifth prize. Widow Donnelly from Mason Lodge came in sixth place for her kitchen garden: she 'showed the best cultivated kitchen garden cropped with vegetables in ordinary use viz cabbages, carrots, parsnips, peas, beans, onions etc.' For the best 4lbs of butter, first prize went to the wife of Clement Nelson, Carrickmaclim, who won £1 5*s*.[99]

At an agricultural dinner held in 1870, there was much talk of the agricultural improvements made on the estate in the past 34 years and the prizes awarded for the best agricultural practices demonstrated on the estate via the many categorical competitions not to mention the now annual ploughing matches. EPS announced that 'it is a well known fact to everyone that is the least conversant with this Barony that practical agriculture is improving year by year and this year I am happy to state that 37 who obtained prizes had not been successful in any of the former years'.[100] To congratulate the winners the band played the tune "Speed the Plough". One-eighth share-holder of the estate Horatio Shirley Esq. made a speech outlining that since he had succeeded to the estate some of the old tenants had made considerable improvements to their farms. He added

> it affords great satisfaction to award prizes to the most deserving of his tenantry and I hope the good work inaugurated under the auspices of our chairman [E.P. Shirley] will be continued and that the tenantry will soon [be] progressing [with] the rapid advancement of science in every department - we in Farney, if we are to succeed cannot remain inactive. I cannot enter into the minute details of farming in all its branches but I am sufficiently conversant with the theory though I am not an agriculturalist yet I know that the candidate to be successful must excel himself on his farm and thereby he will improve his social position and moral aspect.[101]

One of the notable differences between the 1850 agricultural dinner and this particular evening was the fact that EPS' wife was given an opportunity to speak. She was received by her guests with deafening cheers and she came across confident.

> If I may say a few words to my husband's tenantry & before doing so I thank you from my very heart for the kind manner in which you have received my name in connexion with

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[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid
[100] Hand written report on agricultural dinner, 1870 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/5/1-3)
[101] Ibid.

> the wives and daughters of Farney and I can assure you your landlord's wife has your real welfare at heart. I always feel great pleasure in coming to Carrickmacross & visiting the agricultural show which I am delighted to say does great credit to the wives and daughters of Farney: once more thanking you for the very kind manner in which you have received my health wishing you very many happy meetings in this hall (Band: "Spring of Shillelagh").

EPS proposed the health of Mr Holland who he claimed 'had managed the property for many years to his entire satisfaction and to a great extent the success of the agricultural shows was due to his practical skill and exertion displayed on all occasions'.[102] In reply, Holland thanked EPS for his kind words and the tenantry for the 'very cordial manner in which they have received the toast of my health and hope that my humble services may always meet with the same reception'. He added that although he had not acted as a judge at the competition and he was not qualified to speak at length on improved agricultural practices, he had never before witnessed better work than that which was carried out on the estate in the previous two years. He concluded by congratulating Mrs Nelson of Carrickmaclim who was awarded first prize for her butter in Carrickmacross and for the same class of butter she won second prize in the Royal Agricultural Society Show in Dublin.

The chairman then introduced and raised a toast to the health of the judging panel 'who were gentlemen well qualified to express an opinion on the agricultural state of the country'. One of the judges, stated that he was 'somewhat embarrassed in addressing so intelligent & respectable an audience in this noble hall tonight'. He referred to the fact that he had 34 years experience as an agricultural judge in Farney and that the region was overwhelmed by talk about great depression, regarding trade in many parts of Ireland, however he assured those attending the function that he had never witnessed 'a more prosperous condition with regard to the cultivation of the soil' than in Farney and this he told his listeners was

> owing to you[r] kind hearted & generous landlord who takes a lively interest in the welfare of his tenantry and at the present time has conferred another benefit to his tenants by the establishing of a coffee house in the thriving town of Carrickmacross if the people would follow up the bright examples shown them by our noble chairman we would have very few public houses &"John Barleywine" might soon close his door & the people who are now complaining of want would have a plentiful supply to meet their wants in times of depression such as we hear of which I am happy to say is not felt on the Shirley and Bath properties. The chairman having proposed the remaining toasts of the evening viz "The press and prosperity to Farney" which was duly received with honours the Band closed the proceedings with "Rule Britannia" and the company separated. [103]

[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid.

A move by tenant farmers to breed new types of animals was highlighted in the speeches. In the 1870s at one of the annual cattle shows, (which were essentially agricultural shows) a large number of sheep dogs were entered into the competition. At the baronial hall dinner EPS congratulated those who partook in the competition, and he also proposed a toast to the health of the unsuccessful candidates who he contended, afforded him much pleasure 'in seeing so many competing for the prizes offered on the estate and [he] hoped still more would come forward next year'.[104] He indicated that although there were strong contenders among the 1,000 sheep entered in the category, he would have preferred to see greater increases in the number of sheep grazing across the estate at large. He estimated the number of sheep had increased by 11,000 from 90,000 accounted for the previous year. Furthermore, the Shirleys donated a cup as a prize for 'the best shorthorn' at an upcoming competition in Clones at the latter half of the 1870s. EPS hoped the Farney tenants would not be shy in entering the competition, and in coming out to show their support for the entrants.[105] He later toasted the health of his highly efficient agriculturist and surveyor Mr George McKitterick, who responded by stating that 'he was sure that every tenant on the estate would testify to the great improvement effected by the great liberality shown by our landlord and . . . Mr Sewallis Shirley'.[106] EPS' son Sewallis was on the judging panel at the estate's cattle show. He was renowned for his association with dog-breeding, so it was apt that he should have been thanked because he supplied the prizes for best sheep-dogs. McKitterick outlined how Sewallis was fair in his judgement, making no denominational preference towards English or Irish, Catholic or Protestant. He made the comparison between the competition and the manner with which the Shirleys managed both of their estates, outlining it was like 'an osculating pendulum between Lough Fea and Eatington park and from what I see before me his Irish tenantry is not reflected – if they are fair specimens from the human family weighing from 13 to 16 stone'.[107]

The 1871 ploughing match was a more prestigious affair and was reported in the *Irish Times*. It was held in Lower Cloughvalley, with those in attendance including many members of local aristocracy and local gentlemen and merchants from Carrickmacross. Mr and Mrs EPS and their son Sewallis attended. The number of ploughs entered in the competition had risen from a handful in the 1850s to ten ploughs taking part in each of the

[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.

three categories. Afterwards Morant, who presented the awards, publicly congratulated the participants and EPS and the crowd positively responded with loud cheers and applause. The Shirleys then invited the upper classes in attendance to a tour of their Lough Fea residence and gardens, after which the party returned to Carrickmacross for dinner in the Shirley Arms Hotel, where further praise for EPS' improvement strategies was bestowed.[108]

In north Monaghan, the Leslies had gained a reputation as improving landlords much earlier in the century than the Shirleys who were comparatively slow in improving and developing tenant holdings. In terms of agriculture, ditching, reclamation of bogs and drainage were carried out on the Leslie estate and correspondence from 1801 to the 1830s, between Leslie and his agents indicates that large tracts of bog-land were reclaimed, while these major improvements helped drive general land improvements across the estate. The Leslies also attracted and maintained skills in the region with local industries; for example four mills were built by Leslie between 1800 and 1836, which indicated consistent development. Furthermore, the Leslies encouraged improved farming methods and techniques in the community, through the establishment of a model home-farm at Glaslough and a farming society which held meetings at Glaslough in the 1830s.[109] Comparatively, the Leslies had begun to put concrete strategies in place much earlier than the Shirleys. However, if EJS had invoked the incentives outlined in Trench's 1843 report in terms of offering cash and prize incentives for best agricultural practices, estate development would have no doubt flourished earlier. A good example of this was Coote's remark in 1801 that Glaslough was a place 'where farming is pursued with true spirit, and is rewarded with that success, which a happy love for improvement, and grateful soil will always return'.[110] Later in the century, Wakefield, a contemporary commentator on agricultural matters, substantiated Coote's remarks by describing the Shirley and Bath estates, as exhibiting 'the most wretched cultivation . . . [and where] people complain loudly of middlemen and bad leases', in contrast, he singled out the Leslie estate as one of the better ones.[111] The differences with regard to improvements between EJS and Leslie leads to a two-fold argument. The Leslies were considered resident landlords though for much of the year, like EJS, Charles Powell II's participation in parliament required him to

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[108] *Irish Times,* 03 Feb. 1871.

[109] Anthony Doyle, *Charles Powell Leslie II's estates at Glaslough, countyMonaghan 1800-1841* (Dublin, 2001), pp 54-5.

[110] Coote, *Statistical survey of the countyof Monaghan,* p.154.

[111] Edward Wakefield, *An account of Ireland statistical and political, i* (London, 1812), p.269.

reside in London, and just as EJS relied on a land agent to manage his estate in Ireland so too did Leslie. The longevity of the Leslie family who had first established a base at Glaslough in 1665 was an obvious reason as to why the estate was much more developed and perhaps received more praise. The costs associated with building Lough Fea would have made a considerable indent on EJS' financial resources. On the other hand Leslie's estates were very fragmented and he had made intermittent purchases of land in the 1840s, thus his estates were arguably more difficult to manage. Leslie was therefore obliged to employ numerous land agents simultaneously, but was described by Doyle as a 'practical, hard-nosed businessman who used his talents and political influence to successfully manage his landed estate business through difficult economic times'.[112] Meanwhile on the Digby estate, widespread improvements were not carried out until Trench became agent in 1857, when he and his son embarked on a 'regeneration project'. In comparison with the Shirley estate, windows, chimneys, slates and timber were provided for minor works and repairs on 106 houses by 1862, while a great number of new houses were built on the estate until 1872.[113] Delaney calculated that the cost of repairing each existing dwellings was approximately £9. Altogether, she estimated that Digby spent over £1,500 on improvements in 1871 alone,[114] which was almost £450 more than was spent on improvements on the Shirley estate in 1856 when such spending peaked.

Meanwhile, on other estates in the rest of the country, Ó Gráda suggested that between 1850 and 1875, landlords spent no more than 3 to 5 per cent on improvements.[115] Vaughan, who carried out an in-depth study of the amounts spent on improvements on nine landed estates found that, on average, large estates spent approximately 11 per cent of their rental income on improvements but it was on these estates that increased expenditure was more likely. His evidence concluded that the average spent on improvements on all estates was no more than 4 or 5 per cent.[116] In light of this information, it is possible to estimate how much EJS and later EPS spent on improvements. The following table indicates the rental income for the Shirley estate for each year between 1851 and 1861. In addition 5 per cent of the annual rental income has been calculated for each year to show

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[112] Doyle, *Charles Powell Leslie II's estates at Glaslough*, p.57.

[113] Mary Delaney, *William Steuart Trench and his management of the Digby estate, Kings County, 1857-71* (Dublin, 2012), p.31.

[114] Ibid., figure calculated from statistics, p.34.

[115] Cormac Ó Gráda, 'The investment behaviour of Irish landlords: some preliminary findings', Agricultural History Review, xxii (1975), pp 139-155.

[116] Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants in mid-Victorian Ireland*, pp 122-3, 277-8.

an estimation of estate expenditure on improvements throughout the decade. The rental income for the estate fluctuated with the lowest recorded rental income £14,341 in 1851.

Table 4.2 Annual rental income and estimated expenditure on improvements on the Shirley estate.

year	1851	1852	1853	1854	1855	1856	1857	1858	1859	1860	1861	Total
Rent	14,341	16,610	18,245	20,523	19,874	21,003	19,970	20,240	19,995	20,240	20,851	211,892
5% of rent	717	831	912	1,026	994	1,050	999	1,012	1,000	1,012	1,043	10,595

Source; Calculated using the figures from the rentals for the Shirley estate from 1843-1914, P.R.O.N.I., D/3531/R/6/11 – D/3531/R/10/1-2

Conclusion

EPS' term as landlord of the Shirley estate had witnessed 26 years of massive political, economic and social change. EPS was a semi-absentee landlord as was his father but the jovial manner with which he and his wife were welcomed, subsequent to their marriage in 1842, was a far distant memory when he became involved on the Board of Guardians in Carrickmacross in the years immediately afterwards. Unlike his father, EPS was a historian first and a politician second. His love of literature and his family's genealogy allowed him to write a comprehensive study of his family's history and then of the County of Monaghan. He was outspoken and opinionated; he referred to the Irish as lazy, he openly criticised priests and he kept a cautious and observant watch over the estate, through minutely detailed correspondence with his land steward McMinn and land agent Morant. This chapter has shown that considerable efforts were made in the 1850s and 1860s to implement change, to instigate improvements and to heighten an awareness of the potential to develop agricultural output among his tenantry and across his estate. Just as his father had paid close attention to trivial matters associated with the running of Lough Fea house and demesne, EPS was made fully aware of everything even though he was not always physically present in Monaghan.

Chapter Five

Reluctant Demise: The Shirley Estate 1851-1903

Introduction

This chapter will deal with the demise of the Shirley estate from the formation of the Tenant Right movement in 1850 to the Land War and the impact that the Land Purchase Acts had on the Shirley and Bath estates compared to others. EPS refused to sell the estate under the terms of Gladstone's Land Act 1881 which granted the 3Fs fair rents, fixity of tenure and free sale. It also instituted the Land Commission, with authority to adjudicate on fair rents and to issue loans of up to 75 per cent of the purchase price to tenants who wished to purchase their holdings. Less than 1,000 tenants became owners under the Act and those who entered the Land Court were generally granted reductions of between 15 per cent and 20 per cent.[1] In 1885, the estate was now in the hands of Sewallis Evelyn Shirley of EPS' heir, and he chose not to succumb to the advantages of selling out as his neighbour Bath had done under the terms of the Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act otherwise known as the Ashbourne Land Act. Under the terms of this act, tenants could borrow the full amount required to purchase their holdings at a 4 per cent interest rate over 49 years. It was estimated that over 25,000 tenants, particularly those in Ulster purchased their holdings under the terms of the act which sold land at $17\frac{1}{2}$ years rental.[2] 'Bath sold 21,000 acres for £290,054, the Duke of Abercorn 22,000 acres in Tyrone and Donegal for £267,604, Sir Victor Brooke 7,300 acres in county Fermanagh for £83,992, the Marquis of Waterford 9,500 acres in his titular county for £124,556 and the Duke of Leinster 19,000 acres in county Kildare for £240,000.'[3] All of the above except for Bath were merely selling parts of their estates whereas he was vacating Ireland altogether. The most significant land act in relation to the Shirley estate was however the Wyndham Land Act 1903. Based on the idea of voluntary land purchase which had been a feature of Irish legislation since the late 1860s, this Act was neither new nor radical in principle; however there were extra features that would entice a great number of the remaining landlords in

[1] D.J. Hickey and J.E. Doherty, *A new dictionary of Irish history from 1800* (Dublin, 2003), p.287; also see Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998* (Oxford, 1999), pp 121-2.
[2] Ibid.
[3] David Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy* (London, 1996) p.104.

Ireland to sell.[4] The fact that £12 million was made available under the act, which was over double what was available under the Ashbourne Act, certainly provided an inducement. The additional 'bonus' 'was offset by a legislative guarantee that the purchase annuities would be uniformly less than rental payments: the new Act fixed price zones within which landlords and tenants had to strike their deals, and which were adjusted so as to allow a modest discount to the tenants without breaking the hearts of the proprietors'.[5] In other words, the complicated system of arriving at a purchase price was derived by setting out what Dooley has referred to as 'maxima and minima zones'.[6] This guaranteed tenants that they would receive a 10-30 per cent reduction on second-term judicial rents and a 20-40 per cent reduction on first-term rents.[7] Moreover, a 12 per cent bonus was paid to the landlord regardless of the level of debts or charges on the estate, therefore creditors could not sue him for any portion.[8] Additionally, the act allowed landlords to sell their demesne and untenanted lands to the Land Commission for a maximum of £20,000, which they could then repurchase under the same generous lending terms and low interest rates their tenants were receiving. These terms were therefore economically attractive to both parties and appealed to a wider spectrum of landlords and tenants than previous Acts had managed to do and it marked a new era of reform in Irish land history. It was the catalyst that dissolved the Farney estate.

Tenant Right

The Irish Tenant Right League was established in August 1850 primarily to adapt and enforce the 3Fs: fair rent, fixity of tenure and free sale for tenants. Within a few months, branches were formed across the country. In October a branch known as the Farney Tenants Defence Association was formed, while other branches of the Tenant Right League sprouted up all across Monaghan with the Rev. Dr David Bell at its helm. This was not uncommon since Presbyterian ministers and Roman Catholic priests were prominent in the respective movements. The League had singled out the Shirley estate and negatively criticised EJS. In his address at the 1850 agricultural dinner amid all the discussion surrounding estate improvements, EPS made a direct attack on the Tenant League, which he noted had singled out the Shirley estate and unjustly discriminated against his father. He also criticised the

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[4] Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998*, p.151.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Dooley, *The big house and landed estates of Ireland*, p.51
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.

clergy whom he claimed backed the actions of Tenant Right activists. A newspaper article which defended the League stated that it was merely attempting to compel landlords such as EPS to charge appropriate rents proportionate to the value of the land.[9] Next to make a speech at EJS' agricultural dinner was George Morant who, the paper wrote, addressed approximately fifty guests brought there to eat, drink and listen to nonsense.[10] He praised the fact that EJS had invited his tenantry into the noble baronial hall, a late addition to Lough Fea house.[11] He went on to hit out against Tenant Right supporters in a cleverly orchestrated oration calling them 'brainless, landless and penniless agitators'. These supporters, he claimed were endeavouring to spread, 'Communist and Red Republican doctrines among those who were always too ready to hear some new thing (loud cheers). It was not by shouting at Tenant-Right League meetings, that they would put money into their pockets' he warned, 'nor by uttering idle threats against the landlords, that they would grow heavier crops . . . a man was better at home, attending to the cultivation of his farm, than attending these meetings'.[12] This was a sharp expression indicating the attitudes felt by the Shirleys towards the Tenant Right movement, which was fast gathering momentum in the region and mirrored a strong desire for change. With the establishment of the Farney Tenants Defence Organisation in 1850, there were serious attempts made to challenge local landlords. Bell, a prominent Presbyterian minister originating from county Antrim, came to Derryvally, county Monaghan to serve there in the local secessionist meeting house near Ballybay. He was particularly interested in the Tenant Right movement in general, which was pioneered by Monaghan-born Charles Gavin Duffy (founder member of *The Nation*, the newspaper of the Young Ireland Movement), Sir John Gray of the *Freeman's Journal* and Frederick Lucas, a distinguished English convert to Catholicism and editor of the *Tablet*.[13] In the Belfast Music Hall in June 1850, Bell give his celebrated address at a meeting of 'tenant fighters'.[14] A monster meeting was organised for 1 October in Ballybay, once the various branches (Castleblayney, Carrickmacross, Inniskeen) of the Tenant League came together to form a county organisation. It not only grew out of the various tenant protection societies, but it encouraged the formation of further local societies.[15] According to the *Northern Standard,* although great attempts were made by the agents of most Monaghan landlords to deter the population from

[9] *Dundalk Democrat*, 2 Nov. 1850.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid., 19 Apr. 1851.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Vaughan, *Landlords and tenants in mid-Victorian Ireland*, p.178.

all across the region, some 30,000 turned up at the monster meeting. 'Both Catholics and Presbyterians were said to have gathered around the platform which was erected on the top of a hill off the Monaghan road. They endeavoured to use 'collective passive resistance to bargain with landlords about rents'[16] and thus the flagstaff had a banner of blue, white, green, and orange representing all creeds'. Of the 30,000 persons in attendance, it was reported that 5,000 represented the Farney area. [17]

The League however struggled in Monaghan, increasing Poor Law rates, mounting pressure from landlords, and a vulnerability to eviction putting a huge strain on its resources. The Magheracloone branch of the League could only afford to subscribe £1 14*s*. 2*d.* in January 1851. On the other hand, rents were reduced by 10 per cent on the estate which critics claimed was insufficient to make any significant impact. In 1851 as can be seen in table 4.1 the rental income began its steady increase through the first half of the decade, peaking in 1856 at £21,003 (and the increased amounts expended on estate improvements corresponds with these years). In terms of arrears, the decade did not witness any growth in arrears of rent except in 1854 when they reached just over £3,800. But the extension of the Irish county franchise in 1850 to occupiers of land valued at £12 had initially boosted the League and encouraged its early members to place their trust in parliamentary politics: 40 of the Irish MPs returned in 1852 had pledged support for the movement.[18] But tensions, some of them clerically inspired, weakened the movement and that, coupled with the relative prosperity evident through much of the decade, led to its end and the Tenant League held its last meeting in 1858.[19]

The 1860s: Politics, priests, and social unrest

In 1865 the relative peaceful state of Lough Fea was about to change. James McMinn wrote confidentially to EPS, accusing some of the young men he employed of kidnapping voters for the interest of what he termed 'the priest's party'. He could not prove this, but while conducting his own research he found that a 'few Roman Catholic tenants who voted for Mr Shirley's interest is much persecuted by their clergyman. This I have [heard] from some of their own minds'.[20] He further criticised the actions of the Catholic

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[16] Connolly, *Oxford companion to Irish history*, p.568.
[17] *Northern Standard*, 19 Apr. 1851.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] McMinn to EPS, 10 Aug. 1865 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/3/9)

Church 'and her so called liberal electioneering in the barony of Farney in July 1865'.[21] He spoke to a Catholic clergyman in Carrickmacross on the matter, and claimed he 'heard nothing false from his lips respecting indoctrinate of a liberal and scriptural education', though in general McMinn was dubious of priests, outlining that he had heard some of their vulgar sayings and observed 'their obscene gestures'.[22] He continued to observe closely the actions of his workmen, noting that the air of 'secretness [sic] and darkness in the so called Christians of Rome',[23] made it very difficult to know what was going on with them. He believed that priests in the locality were employing young labourers from the demesne to carry out what he termed the 'night work', inferring that they were intimating and kidnapping innocent tenants who refused to vote against EPS in the election. As a result he dismissed two members of the outdoor labouring staff for carrying out 'the dirty night work for the priests'.[24]

It appeared as though EPS was very concerned as to whether the sons of his long-term employees were involved in recent events. In further correspondence, McMinn spoke of vulgar sermons preached on Sundays by priests as 'most improper and unbecoming to be intended by clergymen of any Christian denomination whatever'.[25] Within a number of weeks there was further unrest when EPS' orchard was broken into in the middle of the night and a significant quantity of pears stolen; in addition, there was an attack on the Shirley rent office in Carrickmacross, while McMinn was there. Someone had broken the windows and run away and although he had a good idea as to who the culprit was, he could not prove it.[26] By December, the situation had escalated when one morning McMinn was sent for, as a matter of urgency by R. Graham, a resident in the Lossets gate lodge. When McMinn reached the house he was astonished to find that a gun-shot had been fired through the window of the lodge the previous night: 'it went right through the door of their dairy and left a good sized hole in the door . . . no one was injured, the poor man and his family was much frightened'.[27] McMinn believed that the Byrne family who lived close by, had 'a notorious bad feeling to[wards] Graham and his family, I know they are ill disposed people, whether they can be blamed with this I cannot tell'.[28] The police were alerted as were Morant and Hill. McMinn told EPS that he suspected a great deal of the

[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., 5 Sep. 1865.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 11 Sept. 1865.
[26] Ibid., 11 Sept. 1865.
[27] Ibid., 13 Dec. 1865.
[28] Ibid.

blame could be apportioned to Mr Graham himself, 'owing to his abusive tongue'.[29] McMinn was however certain that the Catholic hierarchy was at the forefront of civil unrest in the region outlined, 'still there is something very dark in the minds of the Roman Catholics. The priests on Sunday continue to irritate the minds of their hearers . . . there is more than mischief in their minds towards Protestant landlords'.[30]

McMinn's letters served as a precursor to the events of March 1866. EPS was brought before the county Louth Spring Assizes by Rev. James Joseph Hughes, a Catholic curate in Carrickmacross, in what later became a high profile case. Hughes claimed his reputation was tarnished by an accusation made in an article written by EPS and first published in the *London Standard* in July 1865 and later in the *Newry Herald.* The article asserted that priests in Carrickmacross had forced their parishioners to vote for Vesey Dawson [later Viscount Cremorne], the Liberal candidate in the 1865 general election.[31] Dawson subsequently won the second seat for the county with 2,397 votes over EPS' preferred candidate, the conservative Sir George Forster, bt, who came third out of four candidates with 2,218 votes.[32] Support for Dawson had been particularly great in Farney, where he received 709 votes out of a possible 900. EPS maintained that clergymen had instilled in their listeners a hatred of landlords and all that they stood for, 'using the most blasphemous language to insult the landlords and all who were opposed to Mr. V. Dawson'.[33] Those eligible to vote were, according to EPS, 'harangued day after day and particularly on market days by priestly and other agitators'.[34] In addition, EPS accused the Catholic clergy of sending bands of half drunken men across the country two days before the election to kidnap members of the electorate whom they believed would oppose Dawson, and they openly insulted local Protestants. He also referred to the erection of a wooden fence in the market square at the northern end of Carrickmacross, because of fears for the safety of the large crowds expected into town in the run up to the election to hear Father Hughes speak on behalf of Dawson. When three priests arrived to intervene they outlined their objection to Catholic men erecting the fence on behalf of EPS. They used the fence as an analogy for building a scaffold to hang their own countrymen from. All the Catholic men working were forced to abandon their

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[29] Ibid., 29 Dec. 1865.
[30] Ibid.,19 Jan. 1866.
[31] *Weekly Irish Times*, 2 Mar. 1866.
[32] Brian Walker (ed.), *Parliamentary election results in Ireland* (Dublin, 1978).
[33] *Weekly Irish Times*, 2 Mar. 1866.
[34] Ibid.

work, after Hughes threatened them that it was 'at the peril of their own salvation'[35] should they continue to work. EPS' Protestant employees finished the fence.

Further allegations of intimidation were directed towards Morant, when a letter was written to the *Ulster Observer* on 21 December 1865. The title of the letter which sparked great speculation was 'Persecution in Monaghan' and it was signed 'Vigilans'. This echoed accusations of bribery during election campaigns on the part of the Shirley father and son over sixty years. The letter outlined that thirty notices 'to quit' were served to Catholic tenants on the Shirley estate directly after the recent election, including two of the most respected tenants on the estate, Rev. Dean McMahon and Peter Hoey. EPS' response to the allegations was published in a Dublin government journal: in it he accepted that thirty notices were served; however he claimed that all parties had not complied with 'certain arrangements made on the estate'.[36] This sparked the editor of the *Freeman's Journal* to state in December 1865 that EPS was gentle and generous in many matters, though he was stubborn when it came to politics. In correspondence with the *Daily Telegraph* in January 1866 Morant confirmed that Rev. McMahon and Hoey were served with notices to quit, though he claimed, the reason was that both parties had incurred their landlord's displeasure. He stated that the late Monaghan election had been 'a trial of strength between the priests and the landlords, and the former were determined to carry the day . . . this attack on an Irish landlord who has for years done his utmost to improve the conditions of his tenantry will go far to show'.[37] On 16 August 1865, a small Catholic landlord but a major opponent of EPS, Charles Kenny of Rocksavage, Inniskeen, on the Monaghan/Louth border wrote to a number of newspapers. He alleged that EPS and his agent had intimated Catholic tenants on the Shirley estate to vote Conservative.[38] However, EPS was not the only landlord to use these tactics in election campaigns. Richard Mayne agent for Mrs Hope of Hope Castle, Castleblayney wrote a letter in July 1865 outlining that his employer would be voting for Sir George Forster and Colonel Leslie in the upcoming election and she wished her tenantry to follow suit. The sternly worded circular stated; 'I am quite confident, no tenant under my charge will go against her wishes. They should recollect, it is the only opportunity they have of returning the many

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[35] Ibid.

[36] *Freeman's Journal*, 26 Dec. 1865. Also quoted in the introduction to the Shirley papers (December, 2007), p.37.

[37] Letter to the D*aily Telegraph* from George Morant 3 Jan. 1866. Quoted in introduction to the Shirley Papers p.37.

[38] Introduction to the Shirley Papers (December 2007), p.36.

kindnesses shown to them on all occasions . . . I warn you against believing the many stories so industriously circulated contrary to this letter'.[39]

The court proceedings compared the loyalty and toleration of EPS as a landlord to his tenantry with Hughes as a priest to his parishioners. Acting for the defence, Mr Whiteside asserted that the comments made by EPS in the letter were not accusations, they were true and fair comments. EPS, he continued, was a man of God just as the plaintiff was a charitable man. He expressed religious tolerance on a daily basis, having retired from politics in England to spend his summers in Ireland, improving the situation for the 1,600 tenants resident on his estate, 1,400 of whom he added were Catholic, and between 500 and 600 of whom were eligible to vote.[40] The court heard from EPS that much of his information was second-hand and was sourced from James McMinn, his land steward. He had written to EPS telling how he had heard the tenantry talk about Hughes' excitement at election rallies, and how he predicted that EPS would be 'skinned alive' and 'eternally dead in hell'.[41] EPS was then questioned regarding allegations that he threatened to evict tenants who opposed his candidate. Defence for Hughes accused EPS of dispensing thirty notices to quit after the election, twenty-five of which were sent to tenants with a vote. EPS denied all knowledge of this, but Morant who was agent for twenty years confirmed that twenty five notices were issued, all to voters who elected Dawson. Morant added that only one man had actually been evicted since the election and that this was due to the non-payment of rent for two years; he added that rents were set at 21 per cent below Griffith's Valuation. In November 1866, a written address was given to EPS and signed by 1,006 of his Catholic tenants. The address conveyed an unanimous feeling among the signatories at their

> disapprobation of the conduct that has been used towards you at and previous to the late election, in this county. We are sorry your name and person have been abused in a gross and false manner, and put before the public undeservedly. We acknowledge that some of us have been in the crowd where those insults were given to you, but we never sanctioned them . . . we detested them . . . and accuse ourselves of ungratitude [sic], for remaining and listening to so good a landlord thus abused. For, previous to these abuses, we always knew you to be an impartial landlord to your tenantry dealing alike with all creeds.[42]

The tenants noted that EPS had occasionally assisted his tenantry with 'money slates and timber to build their houses, and drain their farms; and your ever solicitous

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[39] Letter written by land agent of the Hope estate Richard Mayne on behalf of Mrs Hope 11 July 1865. Quoted in the introduction to the Shirley papers (December 2007), p.36.
[40] *Weekly Irish Times*, 02 Mar. 1866.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Address to Evelyn Philip Shirley by his tenantry Nov. 1866 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/B/4)

agent . . . has carried on main drainage on a large scale for a general improvement of the soil. By your desire thousands of pounds have been expended for that purpose . . . giving employment year by year . . . to a great number of the small landowners'.[43]

In what can only be described as an address thanking EPS, the tenantry revealed their appreciation for the many 'benefits' they had received not alone from him but also from his late father. The address concluded with an apology on behalf of the tenants outlining how sorry they were that the 'unity and good feeling which has long existed between you and your Catholic tenantry have been interfered with, but we trust that the calumny and gross doings of others will not interfere with the hardworking and industrious people'.[44] In stark contrast with the kind sentiment conveyed in the address, an undated handbill was distributed, warning 'Farney, Keep your eyes open. An insidious attempt is being made this day by the lackeys of a certain rent office to put the halter round your necks again!!! Men of historic Farney, you owe no man on earth an apology. Farney forever!'.[45] A report in the *Dundalk Democrat* questioned the credibility of the address by the Catholic tenantry: 'it may have been signed by them; but let us ask who wrote it? Who went round with it from house to house? Was it the bailiffs? And if not, may we ask where it was signed? Was it that awful place, the rent office, where the farmers must tread lightly on the floor, and speak in whispering accents, lest any discord in sound may grate upon the ears of his honour?'.[46] A Charles Daly came forward to refute the claim set out by the *Dundalk Democrat*. He protested stating that the signatories were men who had voted for Dawson in the late election, had no desire to 'falsely represent' of 'abuse' their landlord and that they were genuinely sorry about the whole affair.[47]

In December 1866, three months before the Fenian rising 4/5th March 1867, McMinn reported to EPS that there was great talk about the Fenians in the area, though he maintained, he was not alarmed about the situation.[48] Nevertheless there was a marked shift in landlord-tenant relations on the estate. In January 1867, McMinn visited the newly completed Barton's saw-mill located close to the outer walls of the demesne. Everything was going well in the line of production, but staff posed a problem. James Reilly for example did not understand how to sharpen and adjust the saws, and McMinn considered whether to dispose of his services or not. In the mean time, because of hazardous winter

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid
[45] Ibid.
[46] *Dundalk Democrat,* Nov. 1866.
[47] Ibid., 11 Dec. 1866.
[48] Ibid., 11 Dec. 1866.

weather, McMinn was forced to 'disemploy' a young boy Grimes, whose father and younger brother worked elsewhere in the demesne. Initially Grimes seemed calm about the matter, but he later sought redress from Mr Morant and when unsuccessful he threatened to write to EPS regarding the issue. McMinn's argument was that it was more reasonable to discharge a young man who otherwise should be sent to school than a man with a wife and family to support, though he added that Grimes should have considered the positions his father and brother held on the estate before making idle threats.[49]

By the end of 1866, many of EPS' employees resigned their posts suddenly. John Kellet, who resided in one of EPS' new cottages in Leons, arrived one evening to speak to McMinn: he was looking for his outstanding wages as he was leaving to begin a new post in England the following morning. McMinn complained to EPS that Kellet left behind his wife and family in the cottage, and he believed that other employees such as Dowd and McMahon would follow suit 'so as to annoy us'.[50] To combat what he believed was a conspiracy, he offered to visit Morant, to see if he could shed some light on whether their rents were paid up to date on their cottages and whether EPS could take back possession on demand; 'I cannot think Mr Shirley will submit to his cottagers leaving in the way Kellet has done',[51] especially leaving his family behind. In the future, he was hoping to secure more permanent workmen, and already he had 'one or two good Protestants'[52] in mind. This coincided with a marked move by McMinn to employ greater numbers of Protestants than Romanists and to gradually replace Catholic families living in the gate lodges and cottages within the demesne with Protestant families and he freely expressed his feelings to EPS in his correspondence on the issue.

Catholic employees set about challenging McMinn for weekly wage increases, alternatively they threatened to leave for England immediately. Some of these labourers and tradesmen were very useful to have around the demesne, many were second and third generation employees whose fathers and grandfathers had been in long term employment. There was the inconvenience of having to look for alternative suitable employees and in some cases, respectable employees resided in the gate lodges. It was therefore common for EPS to concede to the demands of the more respected tenants allowing them small weekly payment increase of between 1*s.* and 2*s.* per week from the average wage of 5*s.* to 7*s.* per

[49] Ibid., 12 Jan. 1867.
[50] Ibid.,16 Mar. 1866.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.

week and to also freely provide the employee with abundant estate resources such as fruit, vegetables and fire-wood as an incentive to stay put.

The Farney Tenants Defence Association.

The Farney Tenant's Defence Association came into existence after Gladstone's first Land Act 1870. The Act legalised the 'Ulster Custom' which was already prevalent in Farney, but it was not legal for tenants to demand compensation for improvements carried out on their holdings or evictions resulting from factors other than the non-payment of rent as well as fair rent though a determination of what was fair rent had not yet been determined. Landlords such as Bath requested their tenants to contract outside the Act. EPS did not regard it as radical in any way, especially in Ulster where matters regarding the Ulster Custom would remain largely as they were but with the difference that

> any dispute the customs of the estate have to be ascertained in a court of law. Hence the expectations of the tenants were at first unreasonably raised: add to which, the intervention of the law has, I think, tended to prevent those beneficial exchanges between the tenants and the so called "squaring of farms" which the more settled condition of agricultural holdings since the famine has rendered desirable. Formally the landlord, or his agent, could by his own authority arrange these exchanges as he considered best for the interest of his tenants and of his own property (which I maintain are ever identical).[53]

This ignited the establishment of the Farney Tenant's Defence Association which gradually spread all across Monaghan. Records show that EPS kept a close eye on the Association and he kept many newspaper reports alluding to their meetings in Carrickmacross. One handbill entitled 'Protection for the Farmer' indicated a preliminary meeting of the Association in the Shirley Arms on 20 May, and it was appended with 54 names, 27 of whom were EPS' tenants and they were marked with an x. This was followed by regular official meetings throughout the 1870s. The establishment of the Association led to court proceedings against EPS such as the case of Mc Bride who claimed £1,000 for tenant right and £1,200 as compensation for permanent and exhaustive improvements to two farms. Mr Butt who appeared for McBride claimed that there was a rule on the Shirley estate which allowed a Protestant tenant to take the place of a Catholic, but the reverse was not the case. McBride claimed he was told by EPS' agent Mr Holland that he was willing to pay too much for tenant right, which was selling for £34 in the Farney area.[54] A

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[53] Draft copy of "*Tenant Right" or "Good Will" within the Barony of Farney and county of Monaghan in Ireland* (Privately printed Chiswick press by Whittingham and Wilking, 1874) 26 Jun. 1974 (W.C.R.O., Shirley Papers, CR464/65), p.18.

[54] Undated report quoted in the introduction to the Shirley papers and originally referenced as (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/B/4).

compromise was reached in relation to the sum paid for tenant right and the matter was settled. The mid 1870s also witnessed the destruction of William Steuart Trench's grave-stone at St. Patrick's church, Donaghmoyne. Trench had died in 1872 and in May the following year a handbill was distributed calling a meeting in the Bath estate market house to decide the necessary steps to take in order to bring the culprit to justice. At the meeting, chaired by Farney Tenants' Defence Association president Thomas McEvoy-Gartlan, a resolution was passed to collect funds and repair the broken headstone. [55]

The agricultural depression of the late 1870s was witnessed across the country, particularly between 1876 and 1879 when cold, damp weather destroyed crops and led to fear of another Famine. The Land League was established in the west of Ireland in consequence but it was slow in coming to Monaghan since the Catholic clergy kept the Farney Tenants Defence Association afloat. On 19 April 1879, a public meeting was held in O'Neill's Commercial hotel in Carrickmacross and it was attended by 400 people. As with most meetings, Thomas McEvoy-Gartlan took the chair. It was suggested that landlords in the region should offer a 4*s.* in the pound reduction on rents as a result of the recent economic and agricultural crisis. Parish priest Father Mooney was recorded as stating that there was never more want for an abatement of rent than at the present time. Comparing it with the Famine years, he stated that they had been worse only because there were more people. It was decided to send a petition to EPS and his cousin Horatio Henry Shirley, who had a one-eighth interest in the estate. Horatio replied to the petition pointing out that there had not been an increase in rent in 46 years, that the agricultural position in Ireland was mirrored in England, and that free trade was to a large part to blame.[56] Eventually, in September 1879 the Association were successful in negotiating a 20 per cent rent abatement on the Shirley estate 'on the year's rent for 1879 on any holding or a portion of a holding, that has been raised in rent above the valuation of 1834.'[57] In addition, there was to be a 10 per cent allowance on the year's rent for 1879 on all holdings that had not been raised in rent since the valuation of 1834. These abatements did not apply to the town residences or the town parks, and to obtain such abatements all tenants had to pay the half years rent due on 1 May 1879, on or before the 1 February 1880. In cases where the floods had completely destroyed crops, an accurate survey had to be carried out and a whole year's rent would be allowed to tenants for those portion of

[55] Introduction to the Shirley papers and referenced in 'Movement to reduce rent in Farney' 19 Apr. 1879 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley paper, D3531/B/5)
[56] Ibid., 23 May.1879.
[57] Ibid., 25 Sep. 1879.

their farms. Table 4.3 below indicates the pattern of rents received in the tempestuous decade 1879-89.

Table 4.3 summary of rent arrears and rent received (£) 1879-89

Year	1879	1880	1881	1882	1883	1884	1885	1886	1887	1888	1889
Arrears	6,169	8,517	9,223	12,599	8,337	6,934	9,429	9,642	10,939	13,482	10,296
Received	18,546	20,190	18,078	25,476	22,152	18,229	20,533	19,528	18,795	19,853	23,622

Source; Calculated using the figures from the rentals for the Shirley estate from 1843-1914, P.R.O.N.I., D/3531/R/6/11 – D/3531/R/10/1-2

One of the first Land League meetings in Monaghan took place in January 1881 in Castleblayney, and was attended by large numbers of those members who had been involved in the Farney Tenant's Defence Association, which by the summer of that year had been subsumed into the Land League. Members pledged, in accordance with the Land League's constitution, that no member would bid for land where a tenant had unjustly been evicted. In terms of the numbers of tenants from Farney who were now members of the Land League, 584 were from Magheracloone (the Shirley estate) 765 from Carrickmacross (the Shirley and Bath estates) and 924 from Donaghamoyne (the Bath estate). A large landholder and member of the locality closely involved in local political affairs, McEvoy-Gartlan was interviewed by the Bessborough commission in 1881. He rented 300 acres under the marquis of Bath, where he stated that free sale was limited to £10 per acre. He claimed that leases which were once very common were now a rare exception and that no outlay on improvements had been carried out by either Shirley or Bath in the previous fifty years, though he expressed the view that the value of their estates were increased due to improvements financed and implemented by the tenants themselves. Rents were increased on the Shirley estate with every change of tenancy but he claimed the 'greatest want of tenants is security'.[58] These claims were supported by Thomas Phelan, secretary of the Farney Tenants Defence Association, a merchant with a drapery shop in the town and a magistrate. He told the Bessborough Commission that where the price of tenant right was limited, additional money was often paid under hand. He recognised that rents locally were between 15 per cent and 20 per cent higher than Griffith's Valuation. Townsmen or merchants like Phelan were encouraged to support the League as they had first-hand

[58] *Report of her majesty's commission of enquiry into the working of the Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act 1870 and the Acts amending the same [C2779], HC 1881, xix, I; Index to minutes of evidence and appendices [C2779], HC 1881, xix, 825.*

experience of the direct financial impact of falling farm incomes. This was compounded in their view by the lack of financial support from landlords who were characterized as spending their incomes in London shops or perhaps in Dublin; however they brought 'little benefit to the local shopocracy'.[59] Phelan reported that the establishment of the Farney Tenant's Defence Association made land agents place even greater pressures on tenants to promptly and punctually pay their rents. This had in turn led to tense relations between tenants and land agents in the region. He observed that Gladstone's first Land Act did have some effect but that it was insufficient to halt rent increases in the future. The Act had not been extended to town holdings and it did not provide absolute security for any tenant. He recommended that 'increased facilities should be given for tenants becoming proprietors . . . the entire money being advanced'.[60] In terms of improvements, he claimed that gradual land reclamation had continued to be carried out in the district.

It was reported that sixty Shirley estate rural tenants had gone to the Land Court after the passing of the 1881 Land Act and that almost all of them were successful in obtaining small rent reductions.[61] There were suggestions however that tenants who took a judicial route to secure rent abatements were treated as though they had committed a crime. One of EPS' methods of retaliation lay in the fact that he had traditionally permitted a 'running gale' in terms of granting tenants who persistently fell into arrears and concurrently carried these or a residue of these arrears with them from one year to the next. Suddenly, as one newspaper reported, 'this indulgence was at once withdrawn from those who had the temerity to go to court, and if they did not pay up to the day, they were at once processed'.[62] Secondly, as with many estates where lime was burnt, it was sold at the discretion of the landlord and his administration. There were claims that judicial tenants were obliged to pay full market price for lime that other tenants could buy at a reduced rate.[63] Additionally, rent reductions of 20 per cent made to non-judicial tenants were not passed on to those who used the court system. But it is not clear how far this was actually estate policy.[64]

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[59] Dooley, *A research guide,* p.43.
[60] *Report of her majesty's commission of enquiry into the working of the Landlord and Tenant (Ireland) Act 1870 and the Acts amending the same [C2779], HC 1881, xix, I; Index to minutes of evidence and appendices [C2779], HC 1881, xix, 825*
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

Plan of Campaign

As table 4.3 indicates, arrears built up during the decade 1879-89 on the Shirley estate. When Sewallis Evelyn inherited the estate in 1882, relations between the estate office and most tenant farmers were hostile. The 1880s depression had led to a number of contested evictions and the estate subsequently became a target of Nationalists in the Plan of Campaign. Despite the passing of the Land Act of 1881 the Plan of Campaign later in the decade was utilised by nationalists on various estates across the country and it was primarily a political response to the agricultural depression, harnessing general tenant discontent on many landed estates. It was initiated by William O'Brien and other leading Parnellites, not Parnell himself. *United Ireland* published the plan in 1886 announcing that where a landlord refused to offer rent reductions, tenants would offer what they conceived to be fair rents, and should these sums not be accepted by the landlord, the money in question would instead be transferred to an 'estate fund'.[65] This collective fund would then be used to financially support tenants who could henceforth expect eviction and more funds would also be made available from the National League if necessary. The Plan of Campaign was geographically concentrated in the south and west of Ireland and between 1886 and 1890, and it was met with 'well-organised landlord and government opposition', but as its operations greatly depended on Nationalist funds which became depleted, its success was limited.[66] There was however some media comment on its impact on Monaghan estates. William O'Brien was reported to have approvingly alluded to the men of Farney and the fact that, prior to the Famine, it was 'head-quarters' of the Ribbon organisation.[67]Although O'Brien did not elaborate on the topic of Ribbonism in the region, a report in 1887 suggested the strong possibility of future social unrest in the area if Sewallis who was now at the helm of the Shirley estate failed to submit and begin sale proceedings on his estate as Bath had in the recent years already begun to do.[68] Prior generations of Shirley estate landlords had a reputation of determination and of following through with their plans; therefore threats made by the estate's administration were not to be taken lightly. The article referred to the merchants and tenants holding commercial properties on Sewallis' side of the main street in Carrickmacross and warned that those

[65] Connolly (ed.), *Oxford companion to Irish history*, p.468.
[66] Ibid.
[67] *Irish Times*, 28 Mar. 1887.
[68] Ibid.

involved in the local work of the National League should proceed with caution.[69] It was reported that notices to quit were already issued on a number of the town's tenants and the Shirleys were described as being 'possessed of determination enough to carry out the contemplated evictions',[70] but not alone this, they had the wealth enough to follow through on any counter claims made against them by protesting tenants. The tenants holding property on the main street were unable to plea that their property was being confiscated as was the case on other estates, where town tenants had erected buildings on ground which they held as mere tenants at-will. This was not the case on the Shirley estate.[71]

By 1886, Sewallis obtained a number of eviction decrees. By December, 'a season elsewhere of peace and goodwill towards men - there was similar consternation in Carrickmacross when the rumour arose that nine families had been turned out into the snow'.[72] It was reported that a magistrate and a relieving officer had gone out into the countryside to find that there were men, women and children who had been evicted and left to perish in the cold. March 1887 saw a repeat of this episode when a further 21 families were evicted when a body of police marched through Carrickmacross. The necessity for the estate authorities to have adequate and ample security meant that the number of families evicted per day averaged four or five which depended largely on the proximity from one tenant holding to the next and the level of disruption from angry tenants encountered en route. On the fourth day of evictions in 1887, 'a whole body of police had to march the entire way' around a 20 mile detour since it was impossible to procure the adequate number of cars necessary either in Carrickmacross or in a neighbouring town.[73] Only 6 cars were located which carried 6 constables and accommodated 14 others had only served to transport one third of the convoy.[74] The occupant of the first house, a Mr McCabe, was said to be in the workhouse. His son who was a shoemaker paid £1 per annum for the house and the garden attached. It was reported that a crowd numbering between 200 and 300 people came to watch and they were much more numerous compared to the police and the evicting convoy. They yelled while the bailiffs removed the 'few worthless articles of furniture from the wretched hovel'.[75]The crowd which was increasing did not put the eviction party off from progressing. The next

[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Ibid.
[72] *Manchester Guardian,* 02 Nov. 1888.
[73] *Irish Times*, 26 Mar. 1887.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

tenant on the list had a somewhat different profile than McCabe. Mrs McCahey paid £23 per annum for 16 acres. She had offered to pay a half years rent without costs, and promised to pay another half years' rent in November out of the proceeds of letting her land for grazing - on the understanding that she would not be disturbed until then. An agreement was reached once Mrs McCahey paid £11. Her husband had died 18 years previous and she was allowed 5 or 6 weeks during which time she had to pay the remainder and she was reinstated as a caretaker, thus waiving any rights she had as a tenant. By the time the police procession set out on the third eviction of the day, they were overpowered by the vast number of angry tenants who had gathered. The eviction party momentarily abandoned the eviction of Catherine Connor of Lavigilduff about a mile further on. One hour later the first contingent of the reinforcements arrived, followed by the remainder approximately ten minutes later.[76] Catherine Connors and her four children one of whom was bedridden due to ill health lived in a wretched hovel which was described as having;

> two apartments - all that were left standing of what had originally been a dwelling of three or four rooms. The gable wall of the kitchen consisted of a thin coating of plaster - a mixture of lime and mud, put up doubtless when the apartment which had formally adjoined it on that side had had become roofless. Daylight was visible through many parts of this lath and plaster gable and the observation applies even greater force to the temporary roof of a thin coating of straw laid loosely upon a few rafters. The inner room was more comfortable but although there was a fireplace, it looked as if no fire had ever been lit in it.[77]

Her husband had died two years previous and she was paying £5 12*s* for $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres and five years rent was now due. A decree which was running at the time of her husband's death was not enforced and she had not paid any rent since. She immediately offered to pay £2, stating that she had let her land in con-acre since the death of her husband but more recently she was finding it difficult to let it. Gibbings refused to accept her payment and she and her family were evicted without delay. The report outlined how the crowd passed around an old pot to raise funds to support the family and £5 was gathered mostly from donations made by the police according to the newspaper.[78]

If these moves by the estate were an attempt to ensure that tenants would stay clear from seeking legal redress in a bid to strengthen their position, they were mistaken. In March 1887, after a spate of evictions similar to those outlined above, a meeting was held behind St. Joseph's church in Carrickmacross. O'Brien who had arrived from Dublin by

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[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

the midday train addressed a small crowd and the chair was taken by Dean Birmingham. In his speech O'Brien stated 'that the rule on the Shirley estate was that the poorer the tenant, the less chance he had of an abatement. He condemned the length of time that tenants would have to wait before the House of Commons or the House of Lords would pass any meaningful legislation to benefit the people. He spoke of their hatred of the bailiffs, seeing them as destroyers of their homes, 'when they came with a small force they could not evict. Now, when they came with an overwhelming force the people lie down without a struggle . . . '.[79] O'Brien roused great excitement among the tenantry giving them a sense of deliverance. He offered them the hope that they would be victorious in their battle against Sewallis. He used prophetic, charged language - stating that 'here on that hill in Ulster' never again would they need to 'expose their naked breasts to the weapons of the forces of the crown'.[80] Instead, he propositioned tenants to keep their money rather than 'shovelling in money to Shirley to evict the tenants and to keep emergency men'. As long as the tenant kept his money, according to O'Brien 'he might bring down an evicting army, he might writ them and he might shoot them . . .'.[81] He advised them not to subscribe so much rent to Sewallis as would buy him salt for his porridge. He reassured them that they had the 'greatest minds of the age on their sides - the greatest of living Irishmen Charles Stewart Parnell and the greatest of living Englishmen William Ewart Gladstone'.[82] Finally a motion was passed agreeing to adopt the Plan of Campaign on the Shirley estate.

The following year approximately 1,000 additional tenants entered the land court seeking a 30 per cent rent reduction. Sewallis agreed to 20 per cent but the tenants refused to accept the terms and the Plan of Campaign became operational.[83] To what extent the plan was successful in Farney is debatable however. The *Manchester Guardian* reported in 1888 that it had failed miserably.[84] From the start, it had been a hasty decision on behalf of the tenantry, principally because it was badly timed. The adoption of the plan in May 1887 when the rents were due also meant that tenants were not at the peak of the year in terms of finances, and ideally they should have waited until autumn when they would have been in a more powerful position after the harvest. One article calculated that the tenantry would have collected up to £20,000 in their 'war-chest' if they had waited until later in the year. Instead only a minority could afford to join the Plan and already their 'power of

[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.
[83] *Manchester Guardian*, 02 Nov. 1888.
[84] Ibid.

resistance was diminished in proportion'.[85] The number of town tenants who joined were also limited since their fear of bankruptcy and the loss of their livelihood proved too important. The tenants who joined the Plan found themselves faced with too many obstacles and therefore the Plan failed before it even got off the ground. One newspaper noted that Sewallis was boycotted in Carrickmacross and that any provisions he desired from the towns' merchants had to be acquired from Dundalk instead.[86] In September 1887 198 tenants on the Shirley estate had their cases heard before the Land Court, and by January 1888 rent reductions of 35 per cent were awarded even though they had only requested 30 per cent. This must have come as a shock to Sewallis and his administration and to the local landlord class in general.[87] The celebration for some tenants was short lived however, since 200 tenants still in arrears were at Sewallis' mercy. There were already 50 evicted farms on the estate and these were cultivated by 'emergency men' which obviously not earning rent and most likely little or no profit.[88]

The *Manchester Guardian* conducted a case study on one Shirley estate tenant's predicament. The tenant who was named A.B. to protect his identity was awarded a substantial 38 per cent rent reduction by the Land Court; however he had fallen into two years arrears and was in danger of eviction. A.B. claimed that Sewallis had given him the option of settling the situation by agreeing to pay his rent at 20 per cent higher than that set by the court. In other words he would be still be paying 18 per cent less rent then prior to the judicial decision.[89] Another tenant in a similar situation who was awarded a 42 per cent rent abatement was also faced with the same fate owing 3 years arrears. He was asked to write to Sewallis outlining how much he was willing to pay over the judicial reduction. The 1885 Land Act gave power to judges to allow tenants an adequate period of time with which to pay their arrears, but out of 125 Shirley estate tenants who applied to the court for time to pay their arrears only 115 could afford to pay the solicitor fee which was 18*d*. When the judge asked each tenant when was the last time he paid his rent, the case was dismissed if the answer were not satisfactory.[90] Feingold's theory that tenants were responsible for their own fate to a large degree is shown to be important here. He suggested that 'the landlords' political power was neither legal nor economic, but

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[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid

psychological'.[91] Scare tactics were used by landlords and tenants were afraid of being subjected to the landlords' most powerful weapons - eviction notices and being confronted about their arrears. These weapons according to Feingold defied even the judicial system and could be used to extract greater rents and receive arrears more efficiently.[92] 'It could continue to exist in its all-embracing form only as long as the deferential state of mind was maintained . . . But in the 1870s it was already in decay, because there were many among the tenant class who no longer regarded themselves as object slaves . . . '.[93]

Prior to the 1890s the Shirley estate tenants no doubt felt aggrieved at the progress in the disposal of the Bath estate sale, while their positions had by and large remained static. They found themselves in a much less advantageous state than their Bath neighbours, who were benefitting from the sale of the estate under the terms of the Ashbourne Land Act 1885. All or almost all of Bath's 1,300 tenants had signed an agreement to purchase their properties and two land valuers namely J.D. Bell and Mr. Lynch had been appointed on behalf of the Land Commissioners. The purchasing tenants would acquire ownership of their holdings on the basis of '15 years' purchase of the old rental of the estate, equivalent to about $18\frac{1}{2}$ years purchase on the judicial rents'.[94] Approximately 250 tenants had had their rents fixed via judicial means through the Land Commission court, approximately 300 by mutual agreement. The average annuity price of holdings was £16 per annum, but many of Bath's tenants paid considerably more, ranging from £100 to £400. Under the judicial sale terms of the Land Commissioners, some of the larger holdings on Bath's estate had to be subdivided in order for them to meet the conditions under which the commissioners had the power to advance the purchase money. One of the conditions under which the purchase money could be issued was that the land purchased could not be subdivided until the final instalment was made by the new land owner.[95]One very important suggestion was the possibility that many tenants may have possessed the entire purchase money, however they thought it wise to avail of the state loan at the low rate of interest at which it was offered. One newspaper suggested that this was a wise step, given a situation where it would financially cripple the purchaser once he had become free from rent for the first time.[96] The repayments that Bath's tenants would

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[91] Feingold, *The revolt of the tenantry*, p. 49.
[92] *Manchester Guardian*, 02 Nov. 1888.
[93] Feingold, *The revolt of the tenantry*, p. 49.
[94] *Irish Times,* 28 Mar. 1887.
[95] Ibid
[96] Ibid.

have to make were 12*s.* in every pound that they were previously paying in rent, and at the end of 49 years they or a family member would become absolute owners of the land and free from rent forever.[97] The close proximity of the estates to each other would have meant that word quickly spread around the region and tenants on the Shirley estate were no doubt frustrated that their estate was not following the same route as the Bath estate. In north Monaghan tenants were continuing to pay their rent punctually up until a few weeks prior to the publication of the newspaper report in March 1887. Tenants were however becoming restless. On the Dartry estate, tenants became disheartened as did those resident in Tydavnet, who stopped paying their rent outright. In Rockcorry tenants were paying their rent, but reports of intimidation of landlords and agents in order to receive rent abatements were evident.[98] The Leslie estate which had an income approximately £10,000 more than the Bath and Shirley estates was receiving rent punctually and there were no obvious signs of the Plan of Campaign on the estate, though Leslie had a reputation as an indulgent landlord 'who has on average . . . not more than four ejectments [sic] in the year and as a rule has never been in the habit of evicting unless where four or five years rent was due'.[99] The Rossmore estate which was heavily encumbered was also in receipt of punctual rent. The rent of the estate was reduced by the land court from £20,000 to between £13,000 and £14,000, and there were very few evictions on the estate - not more than 15 in half a dozen years. It appeared as though EPS and then Sewallis had one of the worst relationships with their tenantry in the county, second only to Hamilton of Scotstown, who it was reported, had not received rent for the previous November and his estate was said to be in a dreadful state where almost all tenants had adopted the Plan of Campaign.

It appears that neither EPS nor his son and heir Sewallis had any intention of selling their Irish estate. One of the reasons why the Bath estate was disposed of so rapidly and the Shirley estate was not, was the difference in size of their respective estates in England. The Bath estate in Ireland supplied a supplementary income compared to their very large English landed revenues. On the other hand, the rent the Shirleys accrued from their Irish estate was very substantial when compared with their modest English estate.

Sewallis died suddenly in 1904 and with the 1903 Wyndham Land Act now in place, a change of policy was inevitable. At the first reading of the supplementary bill in

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[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.

March 1906, T.W. Russell's response was somewhat cautious. Although he agreed that the implementation of the Act would create a new era for Ireland in relation to the land question, he was concerned as to whether it did enough to induce landlords who up until now were not interested in selling their estates. He singled out the province of Ulster as well as certain parts of the south and west where there were landlords where 'no inducement would tempt them to sell'.[100] He told the house that 'you will find them unwilling to sell upon any terms, and what we shall be face-to-face within a few years is the most difficult problem . . . you will find a large number of landlords declining to sell, and you will find a large number of the best Irish tenants unable to buy, and thus be penalised for their very virtue; whilst men who have given trouble will get the advantages which ought to have gone to all'.[101] Although he was correct in the case of some Ulster estates, the trustees of the Shirley estate did decide to proceed now with the sale of the estate under the terms of the Act.

By this stage 600 Shirley estate tenants had gone through the Land Court in a bid to secure fixed rents, and 40 of them had their second term rents fixed.[102] The following year it was reported that 20 tenants wrote to the estate's trustees requesting them to sell their holdings to them. The land agent Gibbings replied to the letter outlining that 'if the present income of the estate could be secured by investment of the purchase money, he was sure the trustees would sell'.[103] Major McDonald and Emily Shirley had became trustees of the estates on the death of Sewallis in 1904 because her son Charles was a minor. McDonald was elderly so it was therefore important for Emily to work closely with Gibbings in managing the estate. The physical upkeep of Lough Fea house was a struggle and correspondence shows that there was always maintenance work to be carried out and Emily was always concerned about the cost. The land agent informed her of all aspects of running the house and demesne farm. In September 1905 for example, he stated that it was now the 'we have about 50 acres of hay to make & 10 acres of corn to cut & turnips to thin with very few hands to do it and of course if we started to draw coal during Harvest the crops would be lost'.[104] An accompanying note outlined that there was rat infestation at Lough Fea and the agent was exerting every means possible 'to banish them but there was a big drain running round the house where it would be possible for them to get in . . . big

[100] *Irish Times,* 26 Mar. 1906.
[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Ibid., 13 Jun. 1907.
[104] Emily Jean Shirley to Gibbings 24 Sep. 1905 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/5/2).

enough for a man to travel through'.[105] He further noted that 'Mrs Shirley is bringing over her cats' to deal with the rats. A report was also drawn up in 1905 regarding house maintenance, and it appears that builders from Sackville street, Dublin were employed to test the sewers at Lough Fea in 1905 and they were subsequently hired to carry out work installing toilets and sinks. The report alluded to rooms belonging to female servants and men's closets, kitchen, scullery and bake house fittings.[106] By October, the house had run out of gas and coal, which was in stark contrast with earlier decades when EJS and EPS orchestrated the delivery of copious amounts of coal to last for years.[107]

Emily was not only highly astute in keeping up-to-date in terms of what was happening within Lough Fea demesne but also in relation to other estates in the Cavan and Monaghan region. The turn of the twentieth-century was a very important time in terms of land purchase, and although the Shirleys did not begin to sell large tracts of land until 1908, it was a period of rapid change and uncertainty. In terms of rental income and arrears as table 5.1 indicates the arrears carried forward and the rent received remained steady throughout the decade. Overall rental income was considerably lower than in the previous decade as large tracts of townlands remained untenanted, which was evident in the 1906 *Return of Untenanted lands* where thousands of acres of Shirley's land was returned as untenanted.[108] In effect, the rental income of the estate had turned full circle, EJS had earned £13,500 almost a century earlier in 1814.

Table 5.1 summary of rent arrears C/F and rent received (£) 1896-1906

Year	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906
Arrears	5,627	4,591	4,469	4,584	4,166	3,436	3,183	3,064	3,484	3,542	3,634
Rent received	17,550	16,415	15,979	16,667	16,933	17,186	16,187	15,551	15,539	15,426	13,011

Emily commented that all of Pratt's tenants were going into court for example. Pratt was a neighbouring landlord on the Cavan-Monaghan border. She was concerned about the potential sale price the Shirley estate lands could fetch, hoping that between 17

[105] Ibid.
[106] Report drawn up most likely drawn up by Gibbings, 1905 (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/5/2).
[107] Ibid., 11 Oct. 1905.
[108] *Return of Untenanted lands in rural districts, distinguishing demesnes on which there is a mansion, showing: rural districts and electoral divisions; townlands; area in statute acres; poor law valuation; names of occupiers as in valuation lists, HC 1906, c.117.*

and 18 years purchase would be achievable. She cleverly observed that sale prices of land in the south could not be compared with those in the north; 'we are in a much worse part of the country, Roman Catholic & disloyal'.[109] Further correspondence indicates that she sought legal advice from a Mr Smale in London who advised that she 'ought to fight it' if the she was 'not satisfied with 20 years purchase being right'.[110] She stated how she could not see why the Shirley estate would pay more than Lord Dartrey, 'he is in a better part of the country. There has been no property that I know of sold in south Monaghan, & north Monaghan is no guide whatever'.[111] However the marquis of Bath had 'completed negotiations for the sale of his estate in county Monaghan to the tenants at $17\frac{1}{2}$ years purchase' in January 1887.[112] Evicted tenants were to be reinstated and given the option to purchase, while all costs incurred by the transfer were to be charged to Bath and no arrears beyond one year would be charged.

In terms of ordinary rent affairs of the estate, Emily was very cautious in relation to all incoming tenants. In relation to a house in the glen, which comprised a small forested area which had to be protected against the illegal felling of trees, she questioned Gibbings as to 'what is being done about the house at the Glen and what rent will it fetch? such a nice little house & charming situation. Anyone put there must look after the glen and not allow wood to be taken . . .'.[113] She added that she was taking a holiday to the south of France in December for some months, 'the change will be beneficial and I look forward to the freedom from worry and business matters'.[114] Gibbings was also suffering from stress as was evident from one letter where Emily said how much 'we felt anxious about you, not sleeping is so trying & wearing'.[115] It appears as though he threatened to leave his position in July 1904, but Emily was quick to reply stating, 'I can hardly believe that after your long tenure of office on the Shirley estate, you will forsake Mr Shirley's widow and young son at the present jointure . . . I am sure you know how very grateful my dear husband and myself were to you for all the good work you ever did on our behalf both in stormy times and fair. I feel quite sure if you had brought the subject before him, he would have given further assistance in the office . . .'.[116] It was evident from their

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[109] Emily Jean Shirley to Gibbings, 24 Jun. 1904
[110] Ibid., undated.
[111] Ibid.
[112] *Weekly Irish Times*, 8 Jan 1887.
[113] Ibid., 7 Nov. 1904.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., 27 Oct. 1904.
[116] Ibid., 18 Jul.1904.

correspondence that there was some tension on the estate in Farney and that Emily was careful not to ignite the spark. Gibbings advised on the eviction of a town tenant on Evelyn St. in order to accommodate Mr Stubbs, the estate bailiff, but Emily and the other trustees decided that this would not be a good idea, 'if things are in a bad state, this might be sufficient to put them ablaze and one cannot be too careful'.[117] Instead she suggested he evict a tenant who could pay nothing.

A tenant representative committee was formed in Carrickmacross in 1906/7 and the issue of land purchase discussed. It was decided that any negotiations entered into would include sixty-five evicted tenants which the paper referred to as 'the wounded soldiers of the Land War' and they would be restored to their former holdings.[118] Mr Fottrell, the Dublin-based solicitor who had dealt with Bath's sale, came to meet the committee in Carrickmacross, but the outcome of his dealings with one of the committee members led to a libel case. Francis O'Connor was a farmer and land valuer residing in the townland of Greaghnaroog on the Shirley estate and he was a prominent member of the tenant committee. In 1907, he accused Peter Garvey who was a merchant and farmer residing in Carrickmacross of having published and circulated 500 leaflets in a bid to try and hamper the sale of holdings on the Shirley estate. The pamphlets were alleged to have stated that 'Carrickmacross rural seems to have become the hunting ground for intriguers in the negotiations for the sale of the Shirley estate. Have you signed any document regarding the purchase of your holdings; why were you asked to sign; by whom were you asked to sign; who is trying to rush the sale? What motive have your admirers in being so anxious to purchase? . . .'.[119] The wording on the leaflet referred to alleged acts of dishonesty by Francis O'Connor in taking part in underhand negotiations for the purchase of farms on the Shirley estate and in conspiring with Fottrell, the solicitors in Dublin, to accept a bribe or a backhander from Shirley to induce the 1,200 tenants on the estate to agree to accept the 'exorbitant' price. Francis O'Connor had already purchased both of his holdings, one at $20\frac{1}{2}$ years purchase and the other at 22 years purchase, and this contributed to the suspicion that he was colluding with the solicitor and the trustees of the estate.

Three vice-presidents of the Tenant's Committee were members of the clergy: Father McCleary, one of the Roman Catholic curates of Carrickmacross but who was

[117] Ibid., 25 Oct. 1904.
[118] *Irish Times*, 13 Jun. 1907.
[119] Ibid.

resident in Corduff, Dean Bermingham and Canon Keenan, while Father Laurence O'Kerin was secretary. McCleary claimed that there were 400 tenants residing there and four-fifths of them were agreeable to the terms of the sale. But the terms of the sale of the estate divided the opinions of the clergy and divided the tenants, some agreeing to them, others refusing. On the 12 January 1906, sale proceedings of the Shirley estate began. There were approximately 1,350 tenants now on the estate, exclusive of those who were evicted, which represented a rental of approximately £16,000[120] per annum, and additionally there were 70 'evicted farms' which were dealt with under the provisions of the Act. (The Irish Land Commission took possession of these for £14.000.)[121] Most tenants agreed to a purchase price of between 19 and 22 years rent, although some tenants did not agree to sign their contracts in situations where neighbouring tenants appeared to be receiving a better deal. Mary Reilly held 24 acres 3 roods and 30 perches in Corkeeran in the electoral division of Drumboory at an annual rent of £22 . Initially in 1900, she had negotiated to purchase her holding at 20.5 years purchase, which amounted to £451, but by 1906 she had renounced the agreement on the grounds that 'the rent is far in excess of adjoining tenants'. A note added that there was 'no chance of getting a higher price from tenant'.[122] Then there was the case of James Marron in Creevy Oliver in the electoral division of Donaghmoyne. Originally he held 20 acres 2 roods and 25 perches for £15 but the Land Court had reduced his rent to £11 10*s*, and the solicitor had not taken this into account when drawing up the agreement for 19.53 years rent at a cost of £293.[123] One revealing case listed was that of Ellen Malone, Lattylanigan, whose rent for an undisclosed number of acres was £8 10*s*. and who settled at 21.05 years purchase; she was due to pay £179 and it was noted that 'Father Maguire pressed us for these terms'. From the lists, it seems that there was a legal trend whereby those who were purchasing the largest tracts of land did so at a reduced number of years purchase. William R. Nelson set out to purchase two separate holdings or one large holding subdivided to meet the terms under which the purchase money was provided by the Land Commission. His rent for the first holding was £34 10*s*. and purchasing at 18.7 years would cost him £646; however it appears that the Shirley trustees were hoping to negotiate further in a bid to achieve 23 years purchase. Similar were the cases of Patrick Murray, Drumgossat and Thomas Reburn, Derrynascobe

[120] Shirley estate rent rolls (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers D/3531/R/6/11-D/3531/R/10/1-2)
[121] McDermott, *Gypsum mining and the Shirley estate,* p.40.
[122] 'List of cases which where purchase money is not in accordance with the terms of sale (P.R.O.N.I., Shirley papers, D3531/C/24).
[123] Ibid.

both of who held reasonably small farms, the former agreeing £10 at 20.5 years purchase totalling £205 and the latter £11 10*s.* at 20.6 years purchase totalling £238. On the other hand, potentially large land purchasers such as Alex White, Drumgoosat, who was paying £75 16*s.* annual rent expected to settle at 15.4 years purchase costing £1,166. However the trustees disagreed with these terms and the transaction was only completed when White agreed to pay at 20 years. In instances where tenants willing to purchase were in arrears, the estate administration calculated the arrears and added this to the years of purchase. This was the case for Margaret Callan, Drumbroagh, who was paying £13 for her holding, and though the document did not specify exactly how much she owed in arrears, they added a considerable 13 years to the number of years purchase price which was originally set at 21.7. This was known as 'an eviction case' where it was probable that the tenant would be unable to secure the required purchase money otherwise.[124] By 1909, with a rental income now fallen to just £1,732, it was evident that tenant proprietorship had become a reality on the Shirley estate. Elsewhere across the country, there had also been a push by some of Irelands largest landlords to avail of the attractive terms of the Wyndham Act. In late 1903 for example, the Duke of Leinster sold the remainder of his Kildare estates for £676,038, closely followed by the likes of Devonshire, Lansdowne, Fitzwilliam and Leaconfield, and also landlords whose lands were exclusively Irish such as Kilmaine, Ranfurly, Wicklow, Fingall, and Meath.[125]

Conclusion

The Landowners of Ireland in 1878 reported that Evelyn Philip Shirley was the biggest landowner in the county of Monaghan, possessing 26,386 acres with a valuation of £20,744. By that moment he was placed under mounting pressure as his estate suffered, as others did, from a huge agricultural depression. The establishment of the Farney Tenant's Defence Association was the key local development in lobbying actively for rent abatements and in the years immediately prior to his death in 1882 it is possible to see that his grip on the estate was loosening considerably. Between 1878 and 1908 arrears remained high, peaking in 1888 with the amount totalling £13,482 which were carried forward from 1887. Gladstone's second Land Act had become law in October 1881, and under it, in those cases where landlords and tenants could not agree on a fair rent, the Land Court decided on a judicial rent under the newly established Irish Land Commission. The

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[124] Ibid.

[125] Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy,* p.105.

tenant's interest in the farm was now legally recognised, tenants were entitled to obtain 15 year leases and the Land Commission would provide three-quarters of the purchase price of the land to facilitate tenant proprietorship. In addition, fair rents were fixed by the courts for the first three years with tenants receiving a reduction of 20 per cent. In the 1880s further attempts were made by EPS' heir Sewallis to restrain tenants from seeking judicial rent reductions and this policy was a factor leading to the adoption of the Plan of Campaign by local political activists. However the success of the campaign on the Shirley estate proved dismal. Landlord-tenant relations were nevertheless greatly weakened and the threatened changes in ownership of the estate towards the end of the century did not help to restore them. It was the attractive terms of the Wyndham Land Act 1903, Birrell's Act six years later, and the fact that after Sewallis' death in 1904 the estate was held by trustees which dictated the fate of the estate and conditions under which its tenants negotiated 'tenant proprietorship'. The Act was seen by many as sending Irish landlordism into 'conspicuous and conclusive liquidation'.[126] The Shirleys, like many more aristocratic patrimonies in the country, had clung to their estates almost quarter of a century after the Ashbourne act, and it is not clear when total disposal was seen as inevitable . . .Within ten years of the passing of the Wyndham Act the landlord system in Ireland had been almost halved.[127] Between 1870-96, 2.5 million acres had been transferred but with the wake of the 1903 Act, some 9 million acres were sold by 1909 alone. The Shirleys of course held onto their residence and demesne and were not unusual in the county in doing so. In 1912, when Burke carried out inquiries for an updated version of *Burke's Landed Gentry,* he found that most ex-landed families were still actually resident in Ireland, that they had retained their houses and perhaps several hundred acres, but no longer did they possess a great estate.[128] But they were now in a precarious position, 'isolated and cut off from their former tenantry in Ireland and from the British government across the sea'.[129] Sewallis had been the last politically active member of the family, losing his seat for Co. Monaghan in the 1880 election, losing influence locally with the reform of the poor law and with the great democratization of local government in 1898. The Shirleys however managed to retain several hundred acres within the immediate demesne (between 700 and 800 acres approximately) and they also managed to retain possession of one half of the main street in Carrickmacross (which a century later is still a highly contentious issue).

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[126] Ibid., p.104.
[127] Cannadine estimates that 46 per cent of land in Ireland was owned by former tenants in 1908, p.105
[128] Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy,* p.105.
[129] Ibid.

Conclusion

This micro-study of the semi-absentee Shirley estate set out to establish an overall socio-politico and economic picture of the largest estate in county Monaghan. In assessing how the Shirley estate compared and contrasted with estates elsewhere it Ireland, it is important to examine individual themes which either set the estate apart from others and indeed highlight its position in contrast to other estates both in Ulster and/or the rest of Ireland.

The introduction outlined the differentiations between absentee, semi-absentee and resident landlords so as to categorise the Shirleys. They undoubtedly fell into the semi-absentee category, which was evident throughout this work. It was also important to geographically position the estate in terms of comparing it with other estates and landed families, especially in Monaghan. The socio-economic and religious differentiations between estates in the north and south of the county were striking and it was therefore feasible to compare the Shirley estate with its closest neighbour, the Bath estate with estates north of the county and with estates situated in the greater Ulster region. These comparisons can often prove complex and problematic. On the surface, the Bath estate appeared similar to Shirley's and in Ireland both estates were similar in size, in fact until the 1600s together they represented the 50,000 acre Essex estate. William Steuart Trench was employed as agent on both estates, while newspaper and parliamentary reports teemed them together on many aspects, drawing comparisons on for example, the number of leases issued on both estates to the number of tenants assisted to emigrate. These estates were a binary, opposed to each other in the sense that they appeared similar in Ireland but in England, their proprietors were worlds apart in terms of rank and with regard to the amount of land they each possessed. These factors had a lasting influence on the manner with which both estates were managed throughout the nineteenth-century.

The amount of land owned by different landlords in Ulster varied greatly. There were the vast estates owned by territorial magnates like the Duke of Abercorn who owned 60,000 acres in county Tyrone as well as 16,500 acres in county Donegal or the marquis of Downshire who possessed 78,000 acres in county Down and 5,787 acres in county Antrim. On the opposite side of the scale there were landowners like Thomas Waring with 3,500 acres in county Down or Lord Dartrey who held 17,345 acres in Monaghan, 7,985

acres in Waterford, 1,578 acres in Louth and 1,565 acres in Armagh.[1] The Shirley estate fell into the category of some 89 landed proprietors, most of whom (like the Shirleys) were untitled gentry with lands concentrated in one estate rather than spread across several counties.[2] Akin to estates geographically located in Ulster, the Shirley estate fitted in with Hughes's calculation that two thirds of the estates valued at over £20,000 and usually over 20,000 acres were located in either Leinster or Ulster.[3]

The Shirley's seat at Ettington Park as well as how and when they acquired lands in Ireland was a vital component of the history and heritage that would shape Monaghan. It was therefore paramount to outline the family's origins, the land they possessed by the beginning of this study and architectural structures they erected, modified and extended as symbols of wealth, class, authority and prosperity. EJS was the first landlord in the Shirley bloodline who decided to erect a large mansion worthy of an aristocrat. The introduction outlined most of the main rooms with intricate detail to illustrate the size, magnitude and the meticulous attention paid to every aspect of its construction and furnishing both interiorly and externally, not to mention the lengths that EPS could financially stretch to, in order to lay these solid foundations for a part-time base in Ireland. Lough Fea house symbolised more than just a house though, it became the essential cog in the machinery that ran the estate and it was the metaphoric centre stage from where a succession of Shirley heirs could act out the role of largest landlord in Monaghan. The importance of the unusual great hall as a structure, built to entertain aristocrats, members of the clergy, tenants, estate employees, school children and farmers, epitomises this idea of the centre stage located at the heart of the community. EPS was by no means unique in his decision to erect a country mansion in Ireland as the 1820s witnessed a big house building boom. Together with eighteenth-century political developments, the growing ascendency of the Protestant landed classes and the move towards an independent Irish parliament, Irish landlords possessed a growing awareness and conscious desirability to become part of an newly emerging ruling elite.[4] Though the Act of Union in 1800 had brought the Irish parliament to an abrupt end, it would be justifiable to think that big house building would also follow suit. The contrary was in fact the case and landed proprietors many of whom were raised to the peerage for supporting the union now had more spare time with which

[1] Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland; land, power and social elites 1878-1960*, p.17; see also Collins, *County Monaghan sources in the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland,* p.37.
[2] Ibid., p.17.
[3] T. Jones Hughes, *The estate system of landholding in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2010), p.140.
[4] Ibid., p.16.

to pursue other projects and so the 1820s and 30s witnessed an increasing trend of landlords investing vast amounts of time and money on building projects. In-depth research did not indicate exactly how much money was required to finance the building itself or whether EJS was required to extract a loan nor was it possible to clarify exactly how much EJS' marriage to Eliza Stanhope brought to the new heir in a marriage settlement, which is unfortunate. These statistics would have been more enlightening than having to rely on the approximate cost of building houses on other estates during the Irish big house building boom of the latter half of the eighteenth- century and early nineteenth-century. Nevertheless, the large scale building and construction work of the house and demesne went on for almost three years in the 1820s and again with the construction of the great hall in the early 1840s. This would have created large scale employment, and as sources indicate, almost 150 employees were seated at a thanksgiving dinner in the great hall in September 1842.

In terms of politics, landlords dominated local administration in a number of powerful positions. Deputy lieutenants were chosen by lieutenants and they were responsible for their respective localities. EJS' was not a deputy lieutenant but he did serve as county high sheriff for Monaghan in 1824, this was a post almost always filled by a landlord, and it carried responsibilities including the overseeing of parliamentary elections and as serving justices of the peace, they had the power to select members to the grand juries who were in-turn selected from the landed classes. The landed classes also dominated poor law boards and although their membership partly depended on being elected, members tended to be weighted in favour of large property owners. Landed proprietors were also able to direct the outcome of local elections either legally or illegally.[5] This was the case in chapter three when EJS's under agent was controversially and publicly humiliated for his part in duping the electorate. EJS was more politically oriented than EPS and the controversial 1826 general election witnessed the tenants on the estate voting against his wishes and this led to subsequent allegations pertaining to the issuing of eviction notices.

Chapter one and two indicated the social and agricultural realities on the estate in the pre-Famine period. Particular emphasis was placed on the danger of the estate's bursting population, the growth of active and occasionally violent secret societies, the wretched and deplorable housing, and the living conditions and poor farming practices resulting in the terrible state of agriculture across the estate. A broader analysis indicates that estates

[5] Virginia Crossman, *Politics, pauperism and power in late nineteenth-century Ireland* (Manchester, 2006) p.38.

across Ireland were suffering the consequences of malpractices and mismanagement conducted by estate authorities over generations. Some landlords (absentee and semi-absentee) testified their ignorance of the situation, proportioning blame on the land agents and more commonly on the middlemen. Akin to estates across Ireland, public opinion founded upon EJS' thirty years as landlord was ambiguous by the early 1840s, when generations of mismanagement were confronted in 1843 with the introduction of William Steuart Trench as agent. In that year, Trench carried out a damning report condemning the previous mismanagement of the estate and outlining the utter necessity for transformation. Trench's predecessor Mitchell was inextricably linked to turf and education in his term as land agent for the estate, and as a result he developed a notorious reputation and was heavily criticised, not least by his successor Trench -- who earned an even worse reputation, which was relayed through folklore. From the outset Trench was a different class of land agent. He viewed Irish estates in general as easy-going by English standards and he commented in *Realities* that 'if he [land agent] be willing to adopt the *laissez aller* system, and let everything take its course, he may have an easy life of it in Ireland'.[6] Though he was EJS' agent only briefly, his term was anything but peaceful and quiet. Tenant discontent was rife and his first day at work was testament to that. His confidential survey of the estate and his innovative plans to generate greater long term profits was undeniably economically achievable. Why then did EJS, who already portrayed himself as being cautious whilst contractually agreeing to leasing the local gypsum mines, not seize the opportunity to appoint someone as proficient as Trench to completely over-turn his estate, clear mercilessly subdivided holdings, rid the estate of its dregs, implement emigration schemes at an efficient rate and begin to instigate large scale improvements? The findings of this study indicate that both EJS and EPS were tireless in micro-managing the estate, even though the estate was undoubtedly as deplorable as detailed in Trench's report, but perhaps EJS felt that these new proposals which were ultimately critical of his decisions and were too radical and too costly and would undermine his authority. Ironically, Trench who had negatively depicted the easy-going management strategies carried out in Ireland on a general scale was proposing to transform the estate in many respects, but it was rejected by a landlord who would not have accepted or expected a complacent land agent. Perhaps this is why Trench was much more suited to employment on an absentee estate, where he had greater autonomy with which to carry out such

[6] Trench, *Realities of Irish Life,* p.vii.

policies. In reality, Trench's measures were carried out on the estate but over a much longer time-frame. It could also be argued that although it appeared the measures advocated in Trench's report were in time implemented, EJS with the advice of his son mirrored the reactions of other estates in responding to pre-Famine tensions and later when many other estates were financing emigration schemes during the Famine, the Shirley estate's reaction was no way unique in initiating large-scale emigration schemes.

Estate records point to the importance of assisted emigration on the estate from the mid 1840s that echoed the advice offered by Trench's confidential report. The trickling stream of emigration taking place in the country in the pre-Famine decades became a flood during and in the immediate aftermath of the Famine crisis. MacDonagh has asserted that around 50,000 people emigrated from the island altogether in the early to mid nineteenth-century.[7] Up to 2,000 emigrants were assisted from the Shirley estate and a similar number was reported for the Bath estate. They were typical outcomes for estates of their size. Individually, these figures were not at all astronomical when compared with other estates in the country like the Lansdowne estate in Kerry, where 4,600 emigrated in the 1850s. However, collectively they represented the loss of over 4,000 local people from the barony of Farney due to assisted emigration alone, which does not account for those who financed their own passage, either via personal funds, the assistance of neighbours and relatives, or through remittances sent home from previous emigrants. Regardless of these factors, assisted emigration made a considerable indent on the estate's reputation and in folklore as an 'exterminating' force. Although Trench was not employed on the Shirley estate after 1845, he was closely associated with its controversial emigration policies and this was most likely due to both the reputation he was gaining in his position as agent on other estates as well as his advice in reporting to EJS. Perhaps, Trench's successor George Morant requires more attention in this regard, though he did not come to the fore in correspondence concerning emigration. It appeared as though EJS and the estates under-agent William George Smith were in charge of administration regarding assisted emigration. The chapter also dealt with one very successful entrepreneur, Bernard Banigan who became one of Rhode Island's most successful businessmen and who created large-scale employment for fellow emigrants from all across Ireland. Banigan cannot be unique, and further research in tracking other emigrants from the estate who excelled abroad

[7] Oliver McDonagh, 'Irish emigration to the United States of America and the British colonies during the famine', in Edwards and Williams (ed.), *The Great Famine: studies in Irish history* 1845-52, pp 319-88.

would be most beneficial in attempting to counteract the negativity that surrounded estate funded emigration.

Chapter Four introduces EPS though he was prevalent on the Irish estate for decades prior to becoming heir. It discussed EJS and EPS' close personal father and son relationship and how this influenced EPS' management styles. It outlined how they differed in terms of initiating local enterprise, but how they were similar in maintaining a watchful eye over the tenantry, with minutely detailed correspondence provided by the land steward James McMinn. Sources such as these cement the belief that the Shirleys were only semi-absentee landlords. Comparisons can be drawn from the fact that EJS was interested in providing a social outlet to accommodate both business and pleasure, and this was proven with the construction of the unusual great hall in the early 1840s. The hall sparked great media attention and the Shirleys were often criticised for the agricultural dinners they hosted for their 'select' larger and improving tenants. These dinners were a platform from where the Shirley heirs could attempt to influence their tenants (and voters) in making significant strides towards improving and developing agriculture. Newspapers such as the *Dundalk Democrat* heavily criticised these dinners as farcical, commenting that they did not represent the wider population of the estate. Chapter four indicates that these social events continued and expanded into annual agricultural competitions and prize-giving ceremonies under the authorisation of EPS in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Elsewhere, dinners such as these were not that common, especially on absentee estates, though Lyne recorded a number of social functions which took place on the Lansdowne estate in the 1860s. There in February 1861, the tenants, shopkeepers, local tradesmen and labourers held a bonfire for land agents William and John Trench 'as a mark of gratitude . . . for their various kindness . . . for the employment . . . [of] . . . mechanics and labourers . . . in repairing and improving their cottages . . .'.[8] The two day affair was a great success with some 5,000 people travelling for games and festivities. In December 1867, the 'banquet committee' representing some of the oldest native and planter families on the estate held a public dinner for 85 guests held in the Lansdowne Arms hotel, Kenmare, in appreciation of the policies implemented by their 'liberal and excellent landlord'. Even though the Trenches were criticised for the harsh treatment of tenants with widespread evictions on the Lansdowne estate, long speeches were made positively conveying the developments in estate agriculture, improvements and local economy over the previous twelve months. Lyne reported that widespread speculation existed as to

[8] Lyne, *The Lansdowne estate,* p.375.

whether the dinner was actually hosted by the tenants or whether it had been a ploy to cultivate popular public opinion. Just as local media had divided opinion on EJS' and EPS' dinners, the same was true of the Lansdowne dinner. The *Tralee Chronicle* initially believed the event demonstrated the high esteem with which the agents were held, but later revised their remarks after new evidence came to light that tenants who could barely afford the price of the dinner and some who had subscribed were turned away as beggars. A local priest also claimed he had incriminating evidence to suggest the dinner was a farce and was in fact organised by the Trenches themselves.

The 1850s and 1860s witnessed the gradual implementation of improvements across the Farney estate. This was echoed across the country as Donnelly has argued: between 1854 and 1876, Irish farmers enjoyed a level of prosperity unparalleled since the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars.[9] The end of the previous decade experienced a significant decrease in the population and thus hundreds of mud houses and cabins were thrown down. This made way for existing tenants to begin expanding and improving, and the estate's records indicate that from the latter 1840s there was constant activity repairing existing dwellings and farms and erecting new houses and farm out-houses. Unfortunately, the records do not record exactly how many proposed improvements were implemented and how many were funded or partially funded by the estate. What is certain however it that hundreds of petitions and applications were made to the estate office and in almost all cases financial assistance was granted. This claim is substantiated by Duffy who asserts that 'hundreds of windows were installed, kitchens lofted, houses and outhouses roofed and slated, fields drained, and tens of thousands of thorn quicks were planted. All were given 100 per cent subsidies by the estate it seems'.[10] Research has also indicated the presence of a model farm and the employment of an agriculturalist, the establishment of agricultural shows and competitions showcasing cattle and tillage. Though the estate was under the agency of George Morant when most large scale improvements were carried out, it was actually Trench who had first outlined the expedient necessity for rapid transformation across the estate. Had EJS taken on board at least some of Trench's improvement policies a decade earlier, the estate would have no doubt been ahead of its time.

The fourth chapter also focused on the rise in tenant discontent by the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the Land War. Many historians like F.M.L. Thompson concurred that the ownership of land in England equalled the possession of power

[9] Donnelly, *Land and people of Cork,* p.173.
[10] Duffy, 'Management problems on a large estate in mid-nineteenth century Ireland', p.111.

and this was the case from the era of reform in the 1830s to at least the 1870s,[11] but despite the power and influence they exercised, the position of Irish landlords was becoming increasingly vulnerable before that, as has been outlined by K.T. Hoppen.[12] In terms of religion especially in counties or regions like south Monaghan where Catholics made up the majority, landlord and Catholic clergy relationships became strained, as can be witnessed on the Shirley estate, especially through EPS' correspondence with McMinn and through his controversial court case. The Catholic clergy were linked with tenant committees and they were seen to assist tenants in opposing landlordism in rural communities and mobilizing 'liberal' support in parliamentary elections. There was also a tendency in parts of the country for Presbyterian ministers to actively engage in tenant right campaigns in the 1850s and this posed even greater challenges to the landed classes. Purdue argues that, with the growing politicisation of tenants, landlords were now being pushed towards the cultural, social and economic fringes. In England, Irish landlords were viewed as a source of weakness, a discredited class, who had accepted the Act of Union because they accepted that they were incapable of ruling their own affairs, and they were viewed as being financially liable for the cost of the Great Famine which had left a marked dent in the country's finances.[13] The Shirley estate had more in common therefore with landed estates in the rest of Ireland than with those in Ulster in this regard, since the majority of their tenants shared common history, tradition, culture, political aspirations, and religious beliefs. This was important as it set estates in south Monaghan apart from those in the north of the county.

Many estates were in financial difficulties by the end of the nineteenth-century. Their long held reputation as reckless spendthrifts who foolishly gambled and lived luxuriously beyond their means was not altogether unfounded or the stuff of fictitious narratives. Purdue's study of northern estates has shown that landlords had borrowed extensively and by 1870 the financial situation for many posed a real concern. However, there were some landed proprietors like the Shirleys who managed to remain financially stable. In 1876, Lord Charlemount hoped to make a modest but nevertheless important profit of £1 per acre, once all his debts were cleared.[14] Lord Dufferin highlighted in 1880 how his Cladeboyde estate was just about keeping itself together. Research did not indicate that the Shirleys were experiencing any financial difficulties at this stage; their thrifty cautiousness which was

[11] F.M.L. Thompson, 'Britain', in David Spring (ed.), *European landed elites in the nineteenth century* (Baltimore, 1977), p.23.
[12] K. Theodore Hoppen, 'Landownership and Power in Ireland: the decline of an elite' in Gibson and Blinkhorn, *Landownership and power,* p.172.
[13] Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland; land, power and social elites 1878-1960,* p.25.
[14] Ibid., p.27.

demonstrated by both EJS and EPS and their good marriages can be accredited to this. With this in mind, it is possible to see the importance of the 1814 land survey which EJS carried out four years after he became heir. This survey proved very influential in terms of encouraging EJS to exploit the natural resources on the estate and which may ultimately have led to him deciding to construct Lough Fea house. The diversions into enterprises like the exploitation of natural resources in the first half of the century indicates that EJS was a entrepreneur. He could be criticised for not recognising the potential value of the gypsum mineral earlier instead of focusing his attention on coal. He could also be criticised for the long drawn-out legal contractual agreements he was cautious in drawing up when leasing the mines to external companies, but he was relentless in ensuring that the family legacy and reputation would not be tarnished as a result of any legal technicality. The burning, selling and distribution of lime on the estate to enhance agricultural improvement was also important. EPS undertook the large scale sale of wood in the second half of the century like the marquis of Headfort who employed woodrangers throughout the nineteenth century as timber sales and auctions provided a substantial level of income for his estates as well as many others.[15] The possession of commercial properties in the town of Carrickmacross and their investments in commercial enterprises outlined in chapter one in the market square may have also paved the way for financial stability for the Shirley estate later in the century.

By the late 1870s, there was a sudden halt to economic prosperity across the country and across Europe. A sudden drop in agricultural prices which in turn led to a consequential loss of earnings was compounded by some of the worst spells of weather witnessed in Ireland for many years. Purdue has pointed out that

> incessant rain throughout much of 1877 prevented farmers from preparing the ground adequately for planting of from harvesting any crops that managed to grow during the cold wet summer. After a partial recovery in 1878, the following year, 1879, turned out to one of the wettest and coldest on record. The combination of low prices and appalling weather conditions brought many of Ireland's farmers from a position of prosperity to one of near despair within a matter of three years.[16]

Tenants and merchants, shop keepers and tradesmen who had grown accustomed to providing credit more freely on account of the agricultural prosperity of previous years, saw tenant farmers now building up debts to banks, commercial bills and of course arrears in rent. The Irish populace was growing unsettled by the agricultural depression and the falling prices of the late 1870s. They established the highly successful Farney Tenants Defence Association

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[15] Dooley, *Big houses and landed estates,* p.73.
[16] Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland; land, power and social elites 1878-1960,* p.39.

and this later merged with the Land League. These organisations had notable successes in combating their landlord's intentions. In this regard, the Shirley estate had more in common with southern estates such as the Leinster estate in Kildare[17] and those in the west of Ireland since the movement was much slower to progress in the six northern counties.[18] Writing in 1874 EPS lamented the problems and issues that arose as a direct result of the negative impacts by the 1870 Land Act. 'When the experience of a few more years shall have proved how the Act works, but in the meantime it must be admitted that the aspirations of the Tenant League are by no means satisfied with what has been done; nothing short of what they call "fixity of tenure" will do that; which means, as they express it, being "rooted to the soil" so that the landlord shall not be able to evict, except perhaps by the non-payment of rent to be fixed by the tenants!!!'.[19] He showed signs of fear as regards the slow but steady upward movement of tenant power and statutory protection. 'If we suppose for a moment that so preposterous a demand should ever be conceded by the British, or even the Irish parliament, society would be on the eve of resolving itself into the elements from which it sprung before those mythical times . . . long before the date of that curious code of laws . . . once administered by the Brehons.[20]

In an end note EPS quipped, 'Show what would be the state of Ireland should Tenant Right be carried out unchecked with legitimate conclusion when a small field of about half an acre, was held by twenty six people!'.[21] In general landlords were not enthusiastic about the Act and equally so with Gladstone's' 1881 Land Act. However, there were some landlords like Sir H.H. Bruce who had traditionally held staunchly conservative views but who acknowledged the need for reform and believed that the act of 1870 had not gone far enough in making the tenant any more content in Ireland than before.[22]

Like estates across the country, arrears of rent increased from the late 1870s and this trend remained evident on the Shirley estate with arrears particularly escalating in the years between 1879 and 1889. By the close of the decade every class was affected by the economic downturn, and though most tenant farmers were not facing utter financial ruin, they had come to expect a greater level of prosperity which was now being denied. They owed the banks, the shopkeepers and the landlords but it was the latter who they turned to for leniency - confident

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[17] Dooley, *Big houses and landed estates,* p.41.
[18] Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland; land, power and social elites 1878-1960,* p.40.
[19] Draft copy of "*Tenant Right" or "Good Will" within the Barony of Farney and county of Monaghan in Ireland* (Privately printed Chiswick press by Whittingham and Wilking, 1874) 26 Jun. 1974 (W.C.R.O., Shirley Papers, CR464/65), pp 18-20.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., p.20.
[22] Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland; land, power and social elites 1878-1960,* p.49.

that they would receive rent abatements, but they had a fight on their hands. Landlord-tenant relations were incredibly strained up and down the country. Some landlords were willing to offer between 10 and 20 per cent abatements, such as the marquis of Ely and Lord Gosford without entering legal recourse. It is likely there were some motivated by the desire to alleviate the plight of their tenants but to all intents and purposes, the power of the landed class depended on their economic power and their political strength. As Purdue's work has shown, 'Where previously evictions for non-payment might have been the inevitable course, now landlords and agents feared the impact of such actions on their tenants.[23] She makes reference to Ulster landlord Crossle on whose estate the Land League was remarkably weak but even he feared the reaction from his tenantry, if he placed too much pressure on them, 'most positively it will drive them into rebellion against their landlord and if they once establish a land league on the estate we shall not get any rents at all'.[24] There was also a rise in agrarian tension and in some cases violence; rents were withheld as a direct threat by the Plan of Campaign as witnessed on the Shirley estate, and some landlords including Sewallis carried out periodic evictions in the late 1880s, as outlined in chapter four. The authorities were faced with logistical challenges and the threat of violence, though many of the tenants evicted had run into financial difficulties up to five years previously. There was also a threat made to the lives of landlords and agents on some estates, though there is no evidence of this on the Shirley estate; Trench documented a fear for his life in this period when he was agent of the Bath estate in *Realities of Irish Life*. By the close of the seventh decade of the nineteenth-century, the traditional relationship that had existed between landlord and tenant was shattered. The hierarchical class structure that had existed for generations was now balancing out, at least in terms of political structures. The Representation of the People (Ireland) Act of 1868 had lowered the occupying franchise in towns to £4 valuation from where it had previously stood at £8. This contributed to an increase in the number of Presbyterian and Catholic electors in Ireland and coincided with the emergence of political tenant-right movements who depended on this new group of electorate.[25]

Gladstone's second Land Act become law in October 1881, and it went a long way in granting tenants the 3Fs and under it, in those cases where landlords and tenants could not agree on a fair rent, the Land Court became involved and decided on a judicial rent under the newly established Irish Land Commission. The tenant's interest in the farm was now legally

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[23] Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland; land, power and social elites 1878-1960,* p.44.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

recognised, tenants were entitled to obtain 15 year leases and the Land Commission would provide three-quarters of the purchase price of the land to facilitate tenant proprietorship. In addition, fair rents were fixed by the courts for the first three years with tenants receiving a reduction of 20 per cent. However tenants on the Shirley estate like those in the three southern provinces, felt it had made little progress in eradicating landlordism which was one of the main aims of the Land League. The geographical location of the Shirley estate and its social, political and denominational differences stood in contrast to the greater Ulster region, where there was widespread praise for Gladstone's Act both in the local media and at tenant-right meetings where tenants conveyed how the Act had exceeded their expectations.[26] Regardless of the positive impact the Act had on tenants, the landed classes were immediately and directly affected by the act throughout the country. Rent reductions whether 17 per cent or 22 per cent put considerable dents on their disposable incomes as has been outlined. In 1882, attempts were made by Sewallis Evelyn Shirley to bypass the process, but these attempts were unsuccessful as over 100 tenants were successfully awarded between 15 per cent and 20 per cent reductions when they pursued legal challenges.[27] Further attempts by Sewallis to repeal decisions made by the courts were unsuccessful. Strikingly, Ulster was the province which returned the greatest number of tenants judicially fixing rents. In the rest of Ireland, tenants were paying attention to Parnell's advice to hold off from entering court until the Land League's test cases were tried first. In the entire province of Ulster however, there was a rush to have rents reduced. Of the three counties outside the north - Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan, Monaghan returned the least.[28] Nevertheless, 'between 1882 and 1885, 48 per cent of all occupiers of holdings of five acres or above applied to have their rents judicially fixed. This was substantially greater than the figure of 36 per cent for Ireland as a whole over the same period.'[29] Average reductions were also higher in Ulster with 22 per cent averaging in 1882 and 21 per cent in 1883. Figures for the corresponding years in the other three provinces indicate a static average of 17 per cent.[30]

The succession of land purchase acts in the era 1885-1909 are generally perceived to represent the fall of Ireland's elite and certainly it could be assumed that this was the case with the Shirley estate sold under the terms of the Wyndham Act 1903. Purdue's study on the other hand suggests that instead of representing their demise, this period created a

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[26] Ibid., p.49.
[27] McDermott, *Gypsum mining and the Shirley estate,* p.38.
[28] Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland; land, power and social elites 1878-1960,* pp 52-3.
[29] Ibid., p.53.
[30] Ibid.

economically wealthier ex-landed class. Ultimately, however this period witnessed the dramatic change in landownership throughout Ireland. EPS and later Sewallis were not unique in refusing to sell their Irish estate under the terms of the previous land acts, firstly their estate in Ireland was far larger than the Ettington estates they processed in Warwickshire, secondly, they were not in financial ruin, they had not recklessly spent their fortunes and they had invested interests in the local area. Thirdly, they had been semi-absentee landlords from at least the early nineteenth-century, they had built a stately home which was accompanied by a vast demesne and which ensured self sufficiency and a clause as part of the Settled Land Act 1882 forbade the sale of settled mansions.[31] They were micro-managers and they proved meticulous in keeping a close watchful eye over their tenants for over a century. Fourthly, it was the priority of most landed families to pass their estates onto the next generation and there was undoubtedly a powerful personal disinclination to be the family member out of a long succession of generations of landlords who had to sell the family patrimony, whether or not for reasons of financial necessity. It is interesting therefore that the estate was sold while in the hands of trustees and not a direct heir, when sale proceedings were declared. Emily Jean Shirley with the advice of her trusted land agent Gibbings, and the close correspondence she upheld with her legal team in Dublin helped to make the informed decision to sell. The marquis of Bath like most absentee landlords was more desensitised by the whole process, which was by and large a financial transaction and a business decision. Of course, his focus had always been placed on his Wiltshire estates in England and contrary to the Shirley estate, the ignorance Bath demonstrated towards his Farney estate was highlighted not least by Kennedy's withdrawal/dismissal from the agency in the 1850s and the culmination of long standing rent arrears.

From the outset this work referred to the importance of semi-absenteeism and the fact that this was a study of survival. Today, the Shirley family still possess Lough Fea house which was erected in 1826, and almost 1,000 acres of woodland and agricultural land within the demesne. They maintain a strong but controversial presence in the town of Carrickmacross, possessing almost all of the premises on the west side of the main street for which they continue to derive ground rent. In contrast the Bath legacy did not survive in Ireland; by the late 1880s the marquis of Bath had sold his entire Irish property.

When the land agent and trusted friend of Emily Jean Shirley died in the early twentieth-century, there was what was termed a 'highly important and attractive sale of

[31] Purdue, *The big house in the north of Ireland; land, power and social elites 1878-1960,* p.77.

modern and antique household furniture, motor car, plate, paintings, outdoor ornaments, cattle etc'.[32] The sale of J.T. Gibbings' personal possessions was not just symbolic of the end of an era in one man's life but the end of a period that was dominated by a landed elite. The sale took place at the agent's residence known as Shirley house, which was located adjacent to the rent office in Carrickmacross. It was described as 'standing in charmingly laid-out grounds' and it was accompanied by numerous hot houses, a peach house and vinery. There was a tennis court and large kitchen garden. There was ample servant accommodation, stables and coach houses with all necessary offices.[33] The agent's residence was highly exclusive containing 2 study rooms, dining room, hall and landing, office, six bedrooms, multiple dressing and bath rooms, store, pantry, kitchen and dairy. He had possessed items which were highly valuable including a 1903 H.P. Gladiator motor car, a gentleman's bicycle, a Polo cart, a large quantity of oats, a rick of hay, an oil tank, a large quantity of timber and a large quantity of paraphernalia associated with horses including saddles, bridals, harnesses, carts, farm implements and animals as well as two donkeys and three milch cows. He also possessed unusual antique artefacts such as very valuable old armour, pistols and swords and more unique was a valuable eight-day wall clock. Household furniture included mahogany and carved oak cabinets, richly upholstered furniture, scientific instruments, hand vacuum cleaner, books, bookcases, a large number of rare paintings in huge ornamental frames, rich tapestry, mirrors, china, dinner and tea services, cut glass with chaste designs, coffee machine and tea urn.[34] What was much more symbolic than the list of material goods is that the house and offices were advertised for letting a number of weeks later. For the first time in over three hundred years, there was no longer a need to employ a land agent on the Shirley estate.

[32] *Irish Times,* 27 Jun. 1908.
[33] Ibid., 07 Sep. 1908.
[34] Ibid.

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APPENDIX ONE

The Shirley Heirs (1843-present)

1. Evelyn John Shirley (Apr. 1788-Dec. 1856)
   Returned to Parliament for Co. Monaghan 1826-1831.
   Represented Warwickshire South 1836-1849.
   Married Eliza Stanhope 1810.
   Died New Year's eve 1856, aged 69 at Lough Fea but was buried at his seat at Ettington.

2. Evelyn Philip Shirley (Jan. 1812-Sept. 1882)
   Member of Parliament for Co. Monaghan 1841-1847.
   Represented Warwickshire South 1853-65.
   Married Mary Clara Elizabeth Lechmere 1842.
   Died 1882, aged 70.

3. Sewallis Evelyn Shirley (Jul. 1844-1904)
   Member of Parliament for Monaghan 1868-1880.
   Founder of the Kennel Club 1873.
   Married Emily Jean McDonald 1884.
   Died 1904, aged 59.

4. Evelyn Charles Shirley (Feb. 1889-1956)
   Major High Sheriff for Co. Monaghan 1914.
   Married Kathleen Mary Phyllis Cardew.
   Died 1956, aged 67.

5. Major John Shirley (1923-2009)

6. Philip Evelyn Shirley (1956-present
   current house owner).

APPENDIX TWO

Shirley estate agents and years employed.

1. Norman Steele (1790-1800)

2. Humphrey Evatt (1800-1829/30)

3. Alexander Mitchell (1830-1843)

4. William Steuart Trench (1843-1845)

5. George Morant (1845- late1850s)

6. John T. Gibbings (late 1850s - early1900s)

APPENDIX THREE

The Following is a list of Townlands on the Shirley Estate Acording to Evelyn Philip Shirley's 1878 Records.

	Townland	Acres		Townland	Acres
1	Aghalile	146	45	Cornaslieve	120
2	Aghatamy	94	46	Corrinenty	345
3	Aghinillard	179	47	Corrybracken	278
4	Aghlattacru	128	48	Cortubber	61
5	Aghnacloughan	233	49	Corvalley	336
6	Alts	129	50	Creevedornan	96
7	Annaghmarran	279	51	Creeves (Oliver)	102
8	Annahean	389	52	Creeves (Swinburn)	68
9	Ardragh	469	53	Corkashybane	258
10	Ballaghnagearn	142	54	Corkashyduff	146
11	Ballinloughan	173	55	Corkieran	147
12	Ballycartlan	159	56	Crossalare	135
13	Barndonagh	115	57	Crumlin	266
14	Beagh-magheracloone	175	58	Derrylavin	218
15	Beagh-Magheross	152	59	Derryleeg	149
16	Bocks Lower	316	60	Derrynaglagh	278
17	Bocks Middle	256	61	Derrynascobe	162
18	Bocks Upper	336	62	Descart	226
19	Carrickadooey	266	63	Doagh	322
20	Carrickartagh	354	64	Donoge	165
21	Carrickahogue	568	65	Doohatty	458
22	Carrickamore	264	66	Dooraa	172
23	Carrickmaclim	218	67	Drumbo	191
24	Cashlan West	158	68	Drumbrackin Duffy	220
25	Clonmeenan	66	69	Drumbroagh	187
26	Clonseady	297	70	Drumcargy	160
27	Clontrain	191	71	Drumcarrow	232
28	Clonturkmason	149	72	Drumgarra	417
29	Cloughvalley Lower	215	73	Drumgeeny	255
30	Cloughvalley Upper	249	74	Drumgossat	197
31	Comertagh	163	75	Drumgowna	346
32	Coolfore	183	76	Drumturk	158
33	Coraghy	216	77	Drumloughbeg	142
34	Corbane	280	78	Drumloughmore	134
35	Corcreagh	402	79	Drummond Etra	70
36	Corduff Kelly	245	80	Drunberagh	240
37	Corduff Mountain	268	81	Drungoan	120
38	Corensegagh	151	82	Dunaree	300
39	Corlea Magheracloone	253	83	Dunaree Lattin	340
40	Corlea Magheross	190	84	Enagh North	253
41	Cormoy	112	85	Faraghy	199
42	Cornacarrow	51	86	Farthagorman	124
43	Cornalaragh	272	87	Farthes	309
44	Cornasassonagh	282	88	Greaghawillin-Jackson	118

89	Greaghawillin-Richey	135
90	Greaghdrummit	175
91	Greaghdrumneesk	143
92	Greaghlane	266
93	Greaghnaroog	232
94	Finnegan	330
95	Greaghlone	449
96	Killark	172
97	Killarue	155
98	Killygally	184
99	Knocknacran East	154
100	Knocknacran West	180
101	Lattinalbany	184
102	Lattlanagan	122
103	Lavigilduff	252
104	Leeg McMahon	303
105	Leitrim	153
106	Leggimore	178
107	Leons-agarve	270
108	Lisacullion & Mill	259
109	Lisatillister	163
110	Liscorran	28
111	Lisdoonan	160
112	Lisdrumturk	337
113	Lisnacleagh	171
114	Lisnafeddaly	201
115	Lisnagiveragh	180
116	Lisnakeeny & mill	190
117	Lisserill	282
118	Lossetts Magheracloone	99
119	Lossetts Magheross	136
120	Lurgans & Mill	274
121	Mason Lodge	43
122	Mullaghcroghery	322
123	Mullaghgarve	120
124	Mullaghmacateer	155
125	Mullantlavan	160
126	Mullantornan	158
127	Nafarty	263
128	Nurebeg	85
129	Nuremore	119
130	Ouvery	191
131	Peaste	211
132	Raferagh	551
133	Rahans	165
134	Rakeeragh	163
135	Shanco	430
136	Skalkill	365
137	Sreenty	460
138	Tonaneave	309
139	Tullylogherney	162
140	Tullynaskeagh East	265
141	Tullynaskeagh West	198
142	Tyrnedrola	92
143	Tyrogarvan	222
144	Ummerafree	368

Shirley townlands in common with Bath

Beagh-Magheross

Corlea-Magheracloone

Cormoy

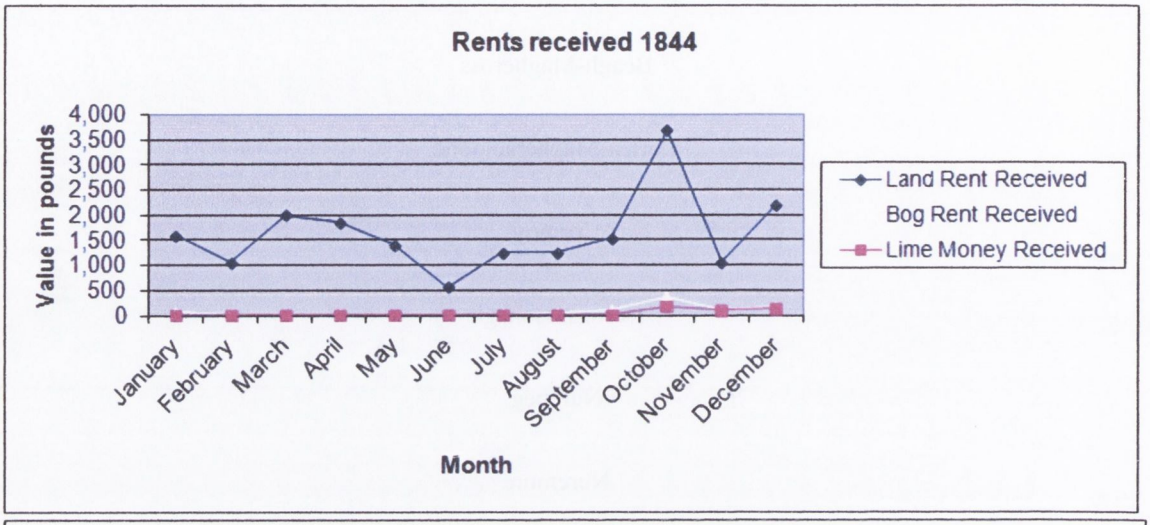
Cornasassonagh

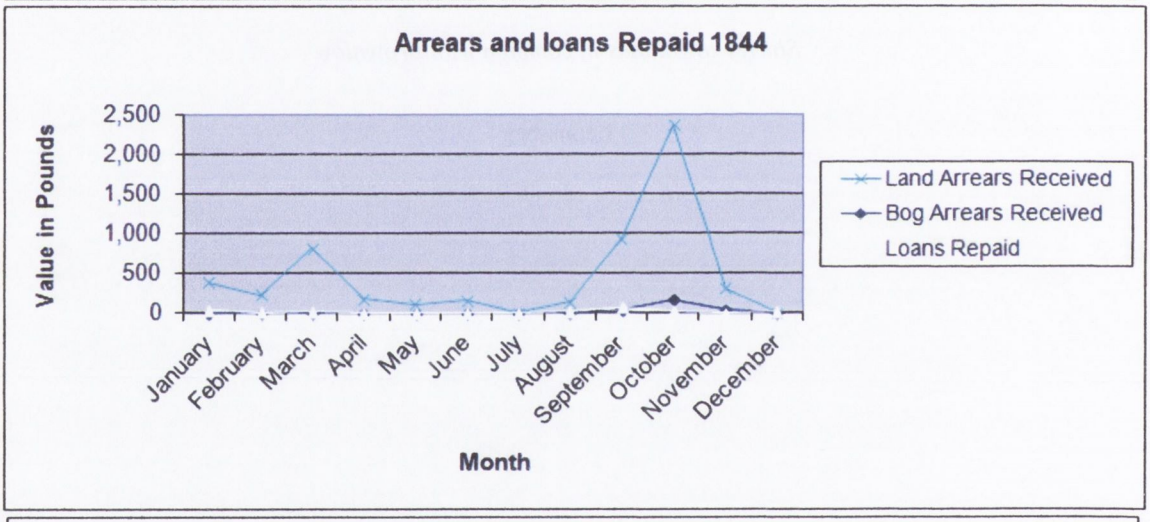
Nurebeg

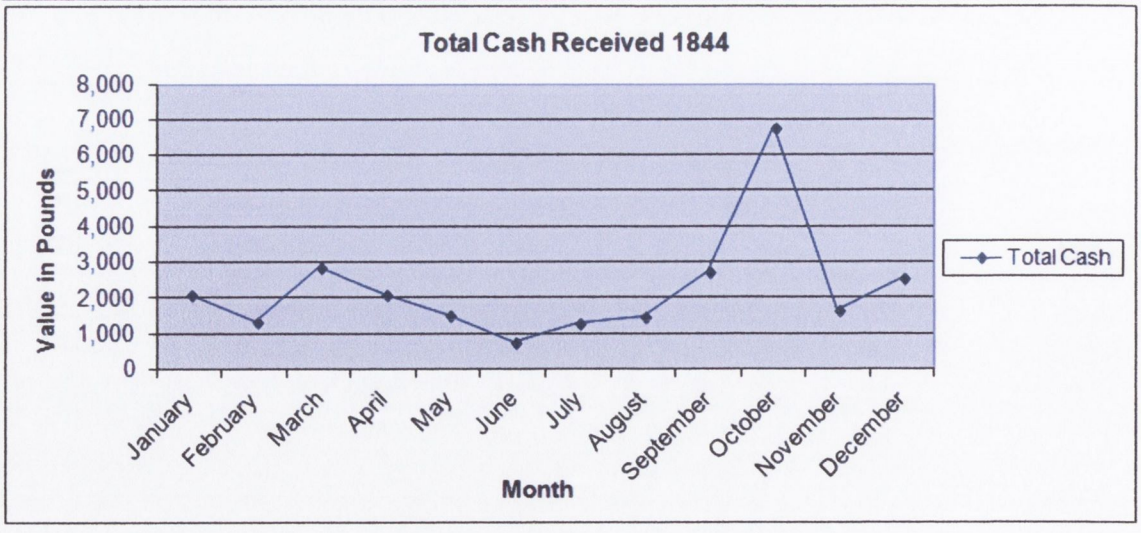
Nuremore

Shirley townlands in common with Brownlow

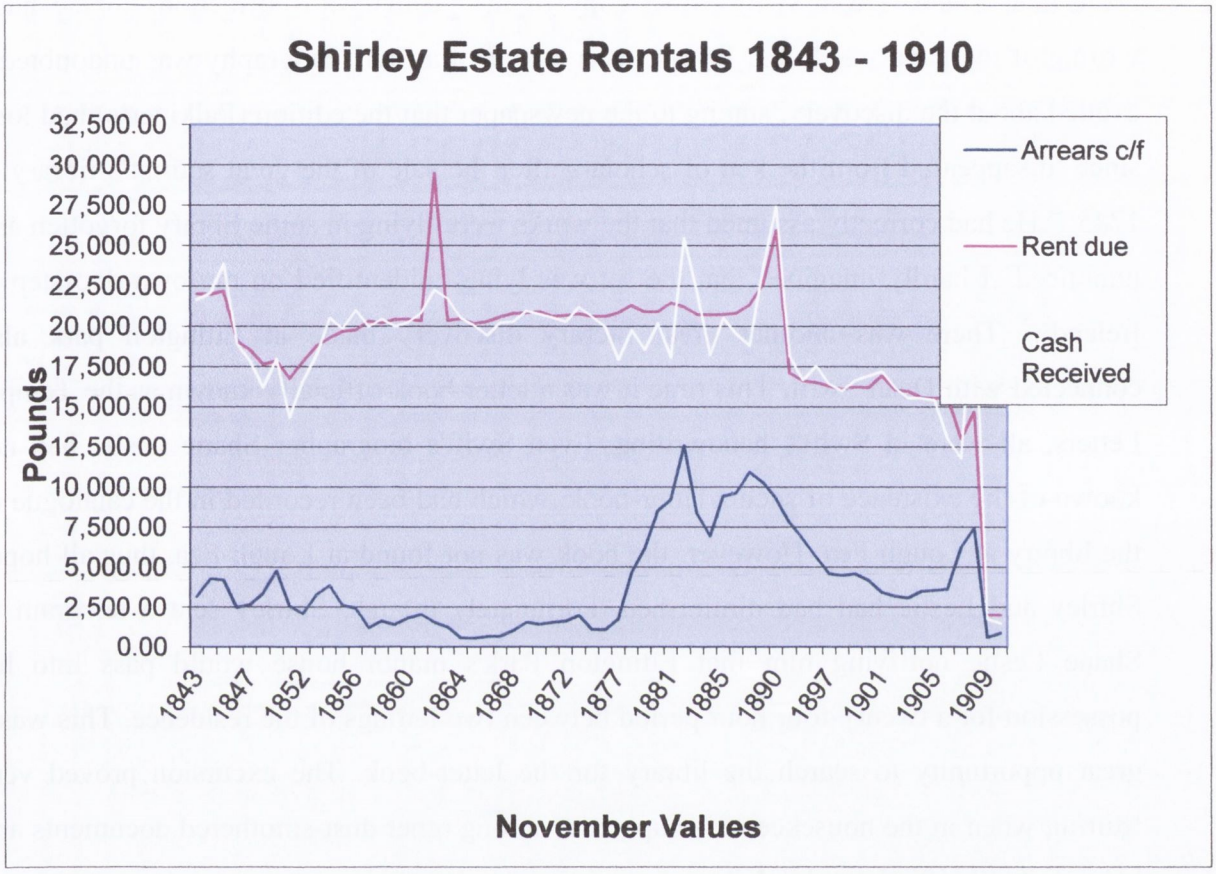
Leons-beg


Rents received 1844
Value in pounds
4,000
3,500
3,000
2,500
2,000
1,500
1,000
500
0
January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December
Month
Land Rent Received
Bog Rent Received
Lime Money Received


Arrears and loans Repaid 1844
Value in Pounds
2,500
2,000
1,500
1,000
500
0
January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December
Month
Land Arrears Received
Bog Arrears Received
Loans Repaid


Total Cash Received 1844
Value in Pounds
8,000
7,000
6,000
5,000
4,000
3,000
2,000
1,000
0
January
February
March
April
May
June
July
August
September
October
November
December
Month
Total Cash

The information illustrated on the following graph was derived and calculated from the Shirley rent rolls from 1843-1914.[1] The information pertains to land rent only and does not include for example bog rent. The blue line illustrates the land arrears carried forward, the pink line signifies the rent due whereas the yellow indicates the land rent that was received.



[1] D3531/R/6/11----D3531/R/10-1-2

APPENDIX FIVE

The Library at Lough Fea was made famous in 1933 when a 'literary relic of great value'[2] was discovered. On the 13 October, the *Daily Telegraph* reported that Mr Shane Leslie whose aristocratic family for generations had resided at Castle Leslie in North Monaghan found 'Dean Swift's own copy of his poems with corrections in the hand writing of the great man'.[3] Leslie who was author of a Swift biography was undoubtedly excited about the discovery, stating to the newspaper that the edition (Falkiner's) had long since 'disappeared from the ken of scholars after the sale of the great satirist's library in 1745'.[4] He had correctly assumed that the works were 'lying in some library forgotten and unnoticed...I hardly imagined that the set was lying unidentified on my own doorstep in Ireland'.[5] There was another great literary discovery made at Ettington park also connected with Dean Swift. This time it was a letter book officially known as the Temple Letters, all were in Swift's handwriting. Even Swift's biographer Shane Leslie had not known of the existence of such a letter-book, which had been recorded in the catalogue of the library at Lough Fea. However, the book was not found at Lough Fea, thus all hopes Shirley and Leslie had had diminished. Fortunately though, Shirley sent a telegram to Shane Leslie notifying him that Ettington Park's manor house would pass into his possession for a twenty-four hour period between two lettings of the residence. This was a great opportunity to search the library for the letter-book. The excursion proved very fruitful, when in the housekeeper's cupboard, among other dust-smothered documents and ledgers, lay Swift's letter book.[6]

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[2] Breathnach, *A heritage Guide to Carrickmacross*, p.29.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid., p.30.
[5] Ibid.,
[6] Ibid., p.31.

APPENDIX SIX

The following poem was written by Jack Spratt, Kingscourt, Co. Cavan and appeared in the *Dundalk Democrat* 12 June 1869

(I)

'Tis fallen days with Farney's sons,
MacMahon' lands so fair
When petty tyrants may intrude
And read heart's feeling there.
Oh Girls of Farney it is true
That each true hearted wench
Before she weds, must get consent
From Pious Father Trench.

(II)

Oh search green Erin through and through
And tell me would you find
Match-maker and land-agent too
In one small farm combined.
Next order that he'll issue forth
May be as harsh to you
To change your ribbons of the green
And sport the red and blue.

(III)

All vain the day-dreams that you nursed
In youthful love enjoy
Great Trench's fiat has gone forth
'You must not wed that boy'.
That boy in manhood's burning noon
Must seek some distant shore
To work a weary life-time,
His fondest hopes no more.

(IV)

But a brighter day is drawing
When freedom's sunny ray
Shall chase the sighs of blighted hopes
Like morning mists away.
Each boy shall wed the maiden
He wooed so long in vain,
And the roses shall return
To Kitty's cheeks again.
And petty tyrants will not dare
Love's ardent fire to quench,
Nor maids a dispensation want
From pious Father Trench.