

# Pollok of Lismanny

## CHAPTER



The Pollok estate which had its headquarters in Lismanny, was an agricultural enterprise on a massive industrial scale. Eleven thousand acres supported three thousand cattle, four thousand sheep and five hundred horses, on eight farms which were laid out in magnificent pasture and tillage land, often in fields of a hundred acres. This level of agriculture was serviced by extensive steam and water-powered machinery, forges, pumps, miles of gas and water piping. Such an agricultural colossus was not achieved without the pain of evictions, hard work, bitterness, poverty, as well as the satisfaction of endurance, vision, determination and wealth.

Allan Pollok came to Ireland as a consequence of the Great Famine. Despite the British government's declaration in 1847 that the Famine was over, huge numbers were still dying from the effects of starvation and thousands were leaving Ireland on every available ship. Many landlords were in serious financial trouble. Tenants were unable to pay their rents and as a consequence, many landlords were brought to their knees, unable to meet the rates they owed. A large number of estates were mortgaged to the hilt due to poor management and extravagant living habits. Landlords were unwilling or unable to sell their land because prices were so depressed.

One of the solutions introduced by the government was the

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Encumbered Estates Act of 1849. This Act created the Encumbered Estates Court in order to clarify title to properties and to facilitate sales of land to interested clients from Ireland and elsewhere. The expectation was that there would be a transfer of land from debt-ridden, bankrupt landlords to enlightened and progressive farmers.

One of those new owners was Allan Pollok who between July 1853 and June 1858 had paid £212,460 for 25,234 acres of land in East Galway and the Creggs area in County Roscommon. Among the estates purchased was an estate of almost 11,000 acres in Lismany offered for sale in the Encumbered Estates Court by Elizabeth Felicia West, widow of John Beatty West M.P. This estate had a troubled history of evictions and crippling debt and Allan Pollok made up his mind on arrival that he would adopt an entirely different approach.

A member of a very wealthy family, Allan Pollok hailed from Broom Mearns in Renfrewshire, which was near Glasgow. From an early period in the history of Scotland a considerable tract of land south of Glasgow was owned by the great landowning Pollok family.



Arthur Pollok  
1781 - 1870

The brothers Allan, John and Arthur Pollok were the sons of the laird of that time, Thomas Pollok. The Polloks moved to Glasgow where, after a spell in the grocery business, they established a very successful shipping company, Pollok Gilmour & Co. They expanded into the timber business and at one stage had eleven shipyards in America, a hundred ships and 5,000

workers. They employed an additional 15,000 men in the forestry business.

Pollok brothers, Arthur and John, retired from the business having amassed great wealth from timber and shipping. It was this wealth that purchased the vast estates in Ireland. Allan Pollok, a son-in-law of Arthur and then in his late thirties, sought an opportunity to invest in farming. Being familiar with land ownership and farming in his native Scotland, he purchased almost thirty thousand acres, mainly in East Galway, through the Encumbered Estate Court in the period 1853 to 1858.

When Allan Pollok arrived in Ireland he was thirty-eight years old. He was married to Margaret Pollok, of Lochliboside, Scotland. She was the daughter of Arthur, who was Allan Pollok's uncle. They had five children, the oldest Allan died before he was a year old. The youngest was just two years old in 1853 when Allan Pollok made the first of his Irish land purchases. It would seem that he had an erroneous impression of what to expect on his arrival in East Galway. His plan was to divide his newly acquired property into extensive farms. Suitable farm-yards would be built on these farms to accommodate tenants with sufficient capital who would, hopefully, farm these properties successfully, improving them in the process. These were the principles of estate management practiced by the Scottish Improvers, a system based on a scientific and commercial approach to farming which he intended to adopt as his model in relation to the management of his Irish estates.

Allan Pollok's first objective was to clear his newly purchased lands of all tenants and to lease the lands out in large holdings. The situation which he found on his arrival in Lismanny was unforeseen by him and appeared to stand in the way of his plans for his newly acquired estate. Many of the existing tenants had earned certain rights which emanated from the Devon

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Commission of 1843 by carrying out improvements on their holdings. Then, there were many more tenants on the estates than he had anticipated, the majority of whom were extremely impoverished. The prospect of early possession had been the inducement that had attracted him to invest in Ireland in the first instance. In addition, his land purchases had been made on the strength of the estate's potential rental earnings rather than on the rents which were current before his arrival. Pollok considered the tenants that he found on his arrival to be in his own words, "neither possessed of capital nor skill to suit me as tenants". He also remarked on "the appearance of great poverty and want of comfort, arising, I think, from numerous families living in comparative idleness on a few acres of land". Such a system of management had, in his opinion, proved ruinous to the previous owners. "If obliged to quit their holdings," he observed, "it would force them to turn to more industry, and benefit both the country and themselves." And so Pollok set about implementing his plans. He attempted to buy up the tenants' holdings but many of them refused to sell. The tenants claimed that they had been led to believe that no "solvent, industrious tenant" would be disturbed. They claimed that they were willing to pay rent to Pollok but that he was only interested in taking over their holdings. Pollok's description of the tenants as being poverty stricken was not entirely true. A considerable number of them were fairly substantial farmers and their reluctance to see themselves reduced to the standing of labourers was understandable. Pollok's rationalization programme was aimed at the substantial farmer or grazier as well as the economically unviable tenant.

*The Freeman's Journal* believed that Pollok's expectation that tenants would give up their holdings and accept re-employment as labourers, was unrealistic. 'How can Mr. Pollok expect to improve

what in Ireland is called a snug farmer by converting him into a spade labourer?' the paper asked. It went on to observe that 'men who were wont to ride a good horse to market – give £3 to the priest on a marriage festival, and hand £100 bank notes to the young farmer who won the daughter's heart, could not be expected to slink down to *day-men* called by the ring of Mr. Pollok's bell.'

However, evictions did occur on a large scale on the Pollok property. A quarterly report on evictions in Galway East for the quarter ending 30th September 1853 indicates that Pollok evicted five hundred and ninety-seven persons on the Pollok property with three hundred and ten of the dispossessed being re-admitted. No houses were levelled on that occasion. The number re-admitted would appear to form the basis of his potential labour force. By means of these evictions, Pollok was forcing the tenants to re-orientate themselves to labourer status.

One of the first recorded indications of grave unrest in Lismanny was the burning of Sycamore Hill House in June 1854. This was described in the *Western Star* as a malicious act. Sycamore Hill House was being made ready for the family of Mr. John Algie, the agent for Allan Pollok. The house, which was almost completed, was totally destroyed by fire. Several sods of turf had been found around the house, which suggested that the fire was the result of deliberate arson. Two of Pollok's unoccupied houses at Lisanacody near Eyrecourt were also burned. A dwelling house and barn at Annaghcorrib, also near Eyrecourt was burned to the ground after the occupying tenants had accepted Pollok's settlement terms. By May 1854, Pollok and his agents had been given occasional constabulary protection. Things were even worse on Pollok's property at Creggs and Glinsk where there was strong reaction to Pollok's consolidation programme of buying out small tenants, often by paying excessive prices for their holdings and

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evicting those who would not sell.

Pollok in a letter written to *The Evening Packet*, a Glasgow newspaper, set out his plans for his recently purchased estate. He strongly defended his approach to the management of his properties and adopted the tone of an injured, misunderstood, benevolent landlord. It would appear that he saw himself as the saviour of a godforsaken people, whose present circumstances and farming methods were in his words, “a nursery for pauperism”. From the evidence in the article he would seem to have a poor understanding of the local situation, failing to recognize the pride of the Irish tenantry and their desire for ownership of their land. Neither did he understand the smouldering unrest beneath the surface, born out of years of oppression.

Anyone reading the local newspaper *The Western Star* in those days, would get a very one-sided view of the situation on the Pollok estates. Allan Pollok was elevated to almost godlike status in this newspaper, which week after week sang his praises and looked on the tenants as ungrateful wretches who for the most part were unable to appreciate this benevolent landlord. There is little doubt that from the time of his arrival in the west of Ireland, Allan Pollok made notable changes for the better in terms of land improvement and farming methods, which were held up as examples of best practice for farmers throughout these islands.

On June 9th 1855 it was reported in the *Western Star* that Mr. Allan Pollok, accompanied by an engineer and an architect, visited his extensive estates in County Galway and outlined the many improvements to be carried out by his agent Mr. John Algie. The paper reported that Mr. Pollok directed the building of a large number of cottages of an ‘mproved style’ for the workers on his estates, and that a vessel with timber for the purpose, from his own Canadian plantations, was due to dock at Limerick.

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Allan Pollok chose Lismany as the site for the house which he and his family would reside when they were in Ireland. John Algie, his agent and the manager of his properties, also resided there for a number of years. In the *Western Star* of March 29th 1856 there is an account of the laying of the foundation stone of Lismany House. The article states that a large number of people were present at the ceremony. At one o'clock, the carriages conveying the proprietor and the principal visitors arrived from the Railway Station. Mrs. Pollok laid the foundation-stone 'amidst the acclamations of the people present'. Barbara and Mary Pollok, daughters of Allan Pollok, were also in attendance. The contractor chosen was a Mr. Francis Madden and the house that was planned for Lismany was to have many beautiful architectural features. Mr. Pollok gave the foreman two sovereigns for the men to regale themselves for the rest of the day. The article states that there was

Lismany  
House  
c.1860



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‘much cheering and acclaim’. It is entirely possible that the acclamation was confined to the gentry in attendance, the assembled peasantry having little reason for displays of enthusiasm.

There is very little mention in the *Western Star* of the trouble and unrest in various parts of the estate. Articles in both the *Daily Express* and *The Freeman’s Journal* of spring 1856 held the view that Mr. Pollok’s tenants were being wronged. It is stated that, ‘Mr. Pollok had laid sacrilegious hands on their time honoured dwellings and degraded the tenants from the respectable position of farmers, to the ignominious restraints and toil of common labourers.’ The *Western Star* however had a very different viewpoint which was set out in a derogatory fashion stating that the tenants ‘should not be encouraged by the public press to remain in their soot begrimed cabins, in which they herd together with pigs and donkeys when they could occupy clean and comfortable cottages.’

All of this time there was ongoing unrest on Mr. Pollok’s estates, particularly on the property at Creggs and Glinsk. Reaction was setting in against his consolidation programme. News of the tenants’ dissatisfaction reached the House of Commons. On April 29th 1856, Mr. Mc Mahon, M.P. for Wexford, wanted a select committee set up to investigate allegations, contained in a petition from the tenants, against Pollok’s evictions. He raised the matter in the House of Commons. In the ensuing debate, men such as Lord Palmerston and Mr. Disraeli rose to denounce Pollok’s policy. The speakers agreed that his policy was despicable and warranted investigation. Mr. Pollok was furious on hearing of the proceedings in the House of Commons. He wrote a letter to *The Times* in defence of his actions, promising to bring the matter before Parliament with a view to vindicating his character. A month later, according to the *Western Star*, the matter was settled and ‘Mr.



Pollok's conduct was warmly approved of by honourable members on both sides of the House.'

Land drainage was one of Pollok's major improvements. The drains were four and a half feet wide at the top tapering to one and a half feet at the bottom. Two feet of broken stones were put at the bottom covered by clay pipes. Tiles, bricks and top quality pipes were made in a special plant for pipe and brick making at Kylemore, Lawrencetown.

The sheer scale of the farm and its output was amazing. The farmyard at Ganaveen was reputed to be the largest in Ireland or Great Britain. An extract from an article in *The Scotsman* in November 1857, gives a good account of the Lismanny farm and its operations.

The steading for the home farm has stalls for 500 head of cattle and twenty-five horses. It is calculated for 1100 acres of tillage land; and 500 acres of permanent pasture in all, 1,600 acres, inclusive of bog . . . The whole number of cattle on the estate at present, 2,860, of which 1,020 are tied up for feeding, 3,900 sheep, 120 pairs of working horses, 60 horses carting stones etc. for building and other improvements and 170 horses under 3 years old. There are this year 1,700 acres of turnips, and 150 acres of mangold wurzel and 400 acres of potatoes. On this land before there had not been ten acres of turnips in all, consequently they could not winter any cattle. Mr. Pollok has not possessed any of the land for more than four years and a large part of it for less than two years. It already feeds more than four times the cattle it ever did before. Mr. Pollok is said to like the sight of the bullocks and sheep but he has not discarded the human race, for there are now upwards of 400 more persons on the estate than when he bought them.

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Such was its fame, that many distinguished visitors from all over Ireland and abroad, came to see this unique operation for themselves. In early October 1858, at around the time of the Great October Fair, His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland accompanied by the Earl of Clancarty, rode from Garbally to



Napoleon the  
Third of France

Lismany to view the extensive farming operations for themselves. The distinguished visitors were given a conducted tour of a large portion of the Lismany farm and expressed their admiration at all that they saw.

Another noteworthy visitor was Prince Louis Napoleon. In September 1860, His Imperial Highness, accompanied by Lord Clancarty visited the Pollok farms and farmyards. The Prince, as reported in the *Western Star*, was much struck with the monster famyard in Ganaveen. Mr. Pollok himself was his guide, and His Imperial Highness was evidently much pleased with what he saw.

The agricultural correspondent of *The Times* of London wrote an article recording his visit to Lismany some time later:

... passing for many miles through a country of large, hundred-acre fields of turnips, corn and grass, bounded by well-built stone walls, with substantial first-class modern buildings on each farm, and groups of cottages by the roadside ... Lismany estate is in eight farms, five of them in Mr. Pollok's own hands, the home farm

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consisting of 4,000 acres and the rest marking about 10,000 acres under his management .... most of the labourers lived in new cut-stone cottages erected on the various farms, for example the Newtown houses in Clontuskert. These were allowed rent-free but without gardens, wages were six shillings to ten shillings a week, all the year round. Shepherds were allowed in addition a cow, potatoes as well as turf and timber for their fires.

When questioned by a reporter in the *Western Star* about his plans, Mr. Pollok stated that except for one farm, Lismany, his intention was to let the whole of his land to tenants as soon as he had completed his improvements and the land was in a fit state for profitable production. In April 1862, as a result of the continuing unrest in the area, Mr. Pollok decided to lease his Creggs estate. He held a public Auction to dispose of his surplus stock, farm implements and horses.

Allan Pollok's success as an agriculturalist was reflected in the many prizes he was awarded in shows all over Britain and Ireland. At the Royal Dublin Society's Show in December 1858, he won eleven out of twenty-two medals awarded in the cattle section. Every year, he won medals for his livestock at all the major shows in England.

The only detailed source of information on Pollok's massive farmyard at Gannaveen, which took three years to build, is to be found in



Some of the medals won by John Pollok at Ballinasloe Agricultural Show.  
[Donated to the Clontuskert Heritage Group by John Walshe of Tullamore.]

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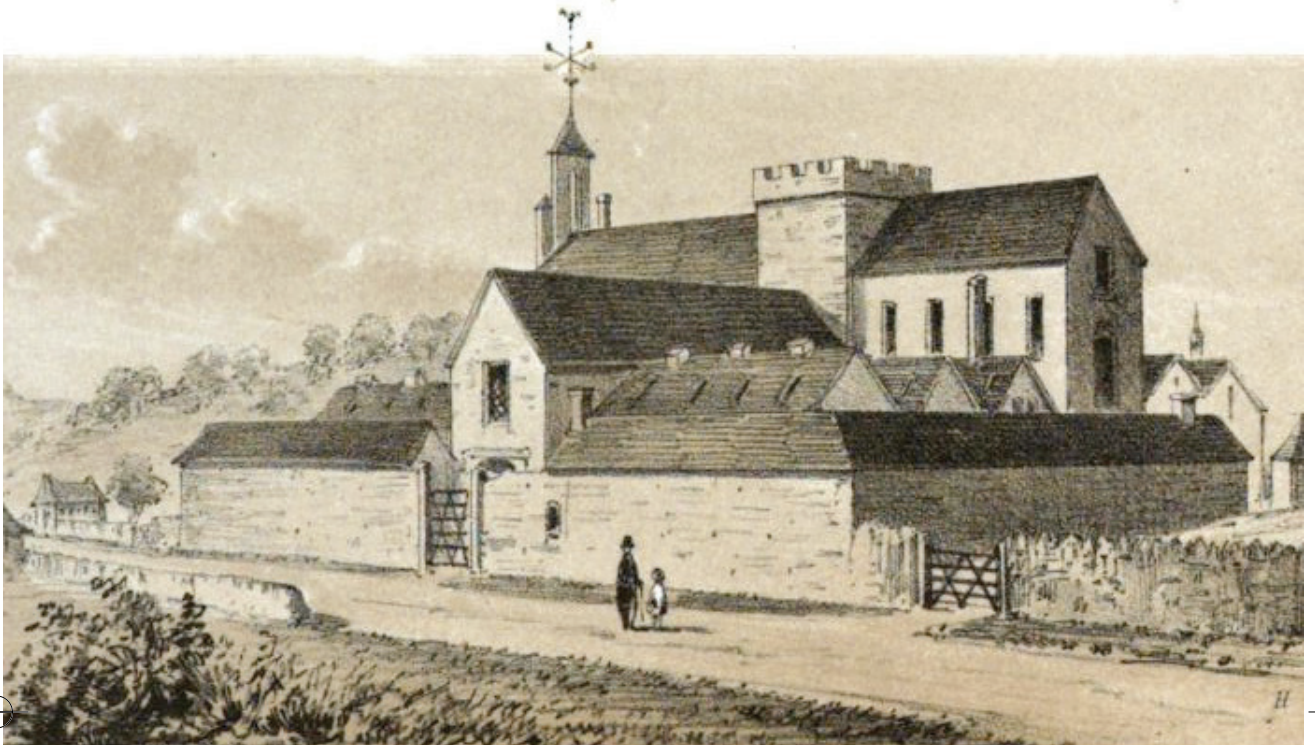
an article in *The Dublin Builder* which appeared in November 1859. There is an amount of detail in the article, much of which is difficult to visualise with any degree of clarity.

The Gannaveen farmyard complex was situated between the road to Crowsnest and what is now the house of Paddy and Mai Burke. It comprised four main sections. The portion nearest to Crowsnest was a large general-purpose yard with sheds on three sides. A shed in the corner was known as the 'animal hospital', where sick animals were isolated from those in the main building.

Down the slope from the open yard was the stack yard where long ricks of un-threshed corn were built on metal stands which prevented rats and mice from gaining access to the plentiful supply of wheat, oats and barley. The stacks were parallel to the road, at right angles to the main covered building. Tramways were laid down between the ricks, on which iron-wheeled wagons, loaded with sheaves, were moved to the wide loft doorway where they were unloaded prior to threshing. Due to the slope, this first-floor doorway was on a level with the surface of the stack yard.

The main farm building was almost an acre in area, all of which was roofed. Thirty-six iron pillars supported the roof and performed the additional function of conveying the rainwater in their hollow interiors to the underground holding tanks. The ground floor of this building was divided in two halves by a 200-foot section, which was 24 feet wide and 22 feet high. Most of this area was used for storing turnips and other roots which were fed to the fattening cattle throughout the winter. On either side of this section, there were a number of divisions: storage barns for hay and straw; rows of cubicles where 232 stall-fed cattle were tied; nineteen stalls and sixteen loose-boxes for horses and six loose-boxes which held two bullocks each. In another part of this building were two millstones for grinding corn, a straw chopping machine,

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a bruising machine for making oil-cake, granaries cooled by two fans each and a huge water pump which pumped water from the underground tanks and the supply stream, into the 2,400 gallon tank which was on a platform thirty-six feet above the ground. A constant supply of water was conveyed through a covered, timber-lined stream from a pond higher up in a wood in Crowsnest. Also situated on the ground floor, was a carpenters workshop, a forge and a bone mill.

Farmyard  
at Ganaveen

On the floor above were situated two grain stores, a sheaf store, a straw store and a threshing machine. The thresher and the bone-crusher below were powered by a huge water-wheel which was driven by the same supply-stream as it flowed downhill and under the main Ballinasloe/Lawrencetown road near the gate

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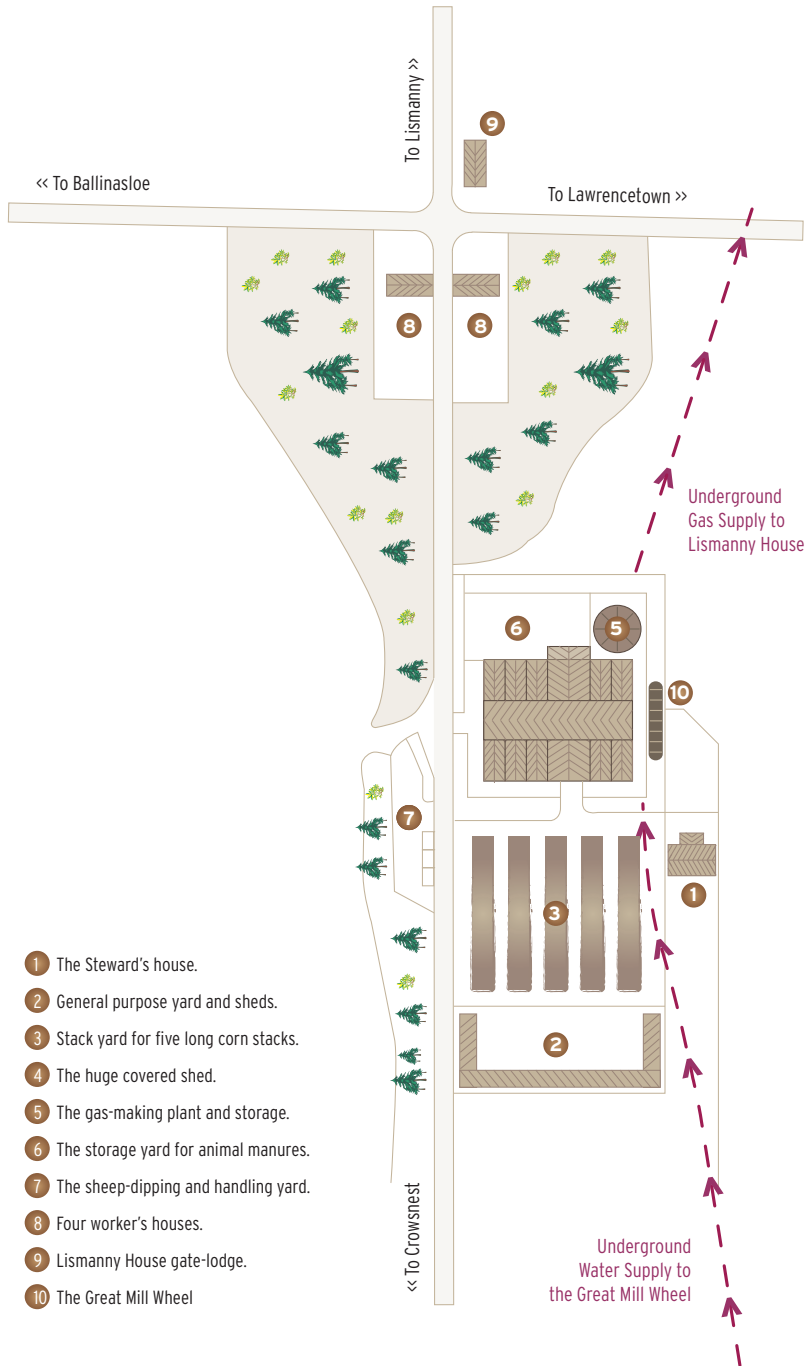
lodge to Lismany House. Deep down below the field in front of Paddy Burke's house, the gurgle of water can still be heard beneath the cut stone supports of the water wheel. Tragically, Paddy's grandfather was killed as he was greasing the mechanism of the wheel, when it was accidentally released by a fellow worker.

A constant supply of fresh air was circulated throughout the building by the fifty-two louver-board ventilators, ensuring that the feeding cattle were housed at a uniform temperature. Daytime light was provided by the sixty-five roof lights overhead. When darkness fell, artificial light was supplied by the sixty gas lamps which were fed from the tank of hydro-carbon gas which was created from the fermenting animal manures in the two large dung-steads outside. The equipment was supplied by a Dublin firm, Edmunds of Capel Street. Safety was not forgotten. Five fire hydrants were placed throughout the unit and two hoses were provided in the event of an accident. The writer in *The Dublin Builder* describes 'an imposing scene when all is lighted up and upwards of 300 cattle contentedly but busily eating-up their last meal for the night, with all the light and shade of roof and pillars and the various colours of the cattle.'

The whole complex was surrounded by a high wall, against which a line of fourteen feet wide sheds had been erected, in front of which was a twenty-four feet wide passage. In these sheds were pens for 140 store cattle, three loose-boxes for bulls and ten additional loose-boxes for cattle. The remaining shed contained carts, harness rooms, tool rooms, a pay office, a weigh office, a poultry house, an implement store, a lavatory and the gas plant.

There was only one entrance to the whole farmstead. The entire operation was managed by the farm steward who lived in a house provided for him and from the landing window of which, he could oversee the goings on of his workmen. Each morning,

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- 1 The Steward's house.
- 2 General purpose yard and sheds.
- 3 Stack yard for five long corn stacks.
- 4 The huge covered shed.
- 5 The gas-making plant and storage.
- 6 The storage yard for animal manures.
- 7 The sheep-dipping and handling yard.
- 8 Four worker's houses.
- 9 Lismany House gate-lodge.
- 10 The Great Mill Wheel

Drawing of Pollok farmyard at Gannaveen

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the tolling of the farmyard bell called the workers to their day's work. This bell is now used at Lawrencetown church to summon worshippers to divine services.

The designer of the buildings was Mr. William Maxwell, an engineer and architect who came to Ballinasloe in 1854 in the employment of Allan Pollok. He was also employed in the erection of farm buildings and dwelling houses in other parts of Ireland. In Ballinasloe, the Presbyterian Manse, the adjoining villa and the Academy were erected from his plans and were a testimony to his professional talent and taste. He erected some admirably designed cottages and superintended a considerable amount of highly successful drainage-work for Lord Clancarty. As an architect he was painstaking in his attention to detail and he was always conscientious in regard to the interests of his employer. As a person he was amiable and kind, and a genius in his field. Mr. Maxwell's death is recorded in 1864. It was a crossroads in time and place that afforded the meeting of the well resourced Allan Pollok with William Maxwell, a designer of genius, with a capacity for a prolific output of development plans. A monument to William Maxwell stands in the Lisheen in Lismanny, close to the site of the former landlord's house.

Allan Pollok continued to develop and build on his estate. A tribute to his achievement as an agriculturalist is recorded in *The Southern Chronicle* of July 1864.

Mr. Allan Pollok is now acknowledged to be the first agriculturalist and is the largest stock owner in Ireland. He has this year on his farms 1,000 acres of turnips, 500 acres of wheat and 500 acres of oats and barley of the most promising descriptions. The fields on his several farms are on average fifty acres each. At the homestead, near Lismanny, there are three acres of slate houses.



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The stables exceed anything in Ireland of the kind, in point of extent, comfort and design, and can be compared, if they do not exceed, the Royal stables. The architect Mr. Kempster, under whose supervision the work was done, by Mr. Patrick Cody, builder, gave the utmost satisfaction to Mr. Pollok. The garden at his residence, the wall of which is built of fire brick, is something very considerable. The greenhouses and graperies are acknowledged by some of the cleverest gardeners of the day to be faultless. In fact the whole arrangements are such as cannot be surpassed in any part of Ireland. The dairy is built after the most beautiful fashion and is floored with polished marble, the shelving being of the same material. The entire utensils are of the most modern description, and are kept scrupulously clean. The harness room is fitted up in a most magnificent style, and the many sets of harness which cover its walls could scarcely be considered necessary for one establishment.

There were other infrastructural projects. A large mill and bakery was built by Mr. Pollok at Ochilmore, Lawrencetown. Both were substantial stone structures and are still standing although the lofty mill chimney was demolished in the early 1970s. They were advertised for rent in November 1859. There was a brick and clay pipe factory in Kylemore and there was a school nearby.

Mr. Pollok did his best to engage his tenants and workers in celebrating the successful development of the Lismanny estate. Each year, from 1855 onwards, the *Western Star* carried an account of the festivities associated with the gathering in of the harvest. This took the form of a get together of all the workers at the different farmyards for food and entertainment hosted by Mr. Pollok. He, himself, attended the Lismanny gathering addressing the workers and thanking them for their contribution to the

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Typical Pollok  
field-gate  
and piers

running of the estate. As the newspaper reports of the harvest festivities varied very little from year to year, it will be sufficient to quote from just one of them to give the reader a flavour of these occasions. We have selected the 1857 article on the Annual Harvest Home as one of the *Western Star's* more interesting accounts.

It was a Thursday in late October. Mr. Pollok entertained the labourers and other persons employed on his Lismany estate to the annual harvest home supper. For this purpose a fine fat bullock was slaughtered and apportioned to the different farms. On this occasion the numbers to be entertained were so great that no one building would have been sufficient to accommodate all together, and it was therefore wisely determined to assemble the labourers etc. of each farm at its own steading under the superintendence and management of its steward. As evening set in, crowds of able and well clad men accompanied by gaily-dressed and happy looking girls, began to gather around the

respective scenes of festive mirth. In all these crowded barns and granary lofts not a rag was to be seen, nor a poverty blanched cheek, nor a sign of want.

Like the harvest home the ploughing match was another annual event which celebrated the advanced farming methods employed on the Pollok estate at Lismanny. It would appear that Mr. Pollok's objective was to encourage the ploughmen to develop their skills by encouraging competition. An account in the *Western Star* of the ploughing match on February 1857 at Lismanny was a particularly interesting one. The scene of the competition was the rich tract of pasture land immediately in front of, 'the noble mansion of Lismanny, lately erected by Mr. Pollok' An interesting observation made in the article was that the last time the land in this field had been broken up was during the Rebellion of 1798. Furthermore in the eyes of the local farmers, the tearing of the old skin from a pasture of long standing amounted almost to sacrilege. In the opinion of Mr. Pollok and his stewards the ploughing up of the old pastures, and subjecting it to a course of tillage, before laying it down in grass again would at least double the amount of grass produced. Time would prove their theories to be correct.

The soil on this particular day was well suited to try the ability of the horses and the toughness of the sod to put the strength of the plough to the test. The various ploughmen from the different farms assembled at Lismanny, for inspection, at eight o'clock in the morning. There were prizes on offer for the best-groomed horses and the best-kept harness. When the inspection was over they all proceeded to the field for the real business of the day. There were fifty-five ploughs taking part, some drawn by four horses, some by three but the greater number by two. The number of plough horses used was one hundred and nineteen. There was a

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large crowd present of local farmers, peasantry as well as many of the local gentry. The day was remarkably fine for the time of year. According to the *Western Star* never were there so many horses and ploughs belonging to one gentleman seen together in Ireland before. And it must be remembered that these were only from one of Mr. Pollok's estates.

Three judges appointed by Mr. Pollok worked very hard to arrive at correct decisions, particularly because there were so many competitors. After quite a length of time they completed their deliberations and wrote their report. The names of the prize winners were then read out and at Mr. Pollok's suggestion they were arranged in the following order:

**BEST PLOUGHING TWO-HORSE PLOUGHS**

1st	Michael Cowan,	Sycamore Hill
2nd	Pat Mannion,	Mahamear
3rd	Pat Noonan,	Sycamore Hill
4th	Michael Hardy,	Kylemore
5th	Pat Donohue,	Cankelly
6th	James Malone,	Quansboro
7th	Pat Nevin,	Lismany
8th	Pat Good,	Sycamore Hill
9th	Miley Staunton,	Tynagh
10th	Michael Buckley,	Redmount

**THREE AND FOUR HORSE PLOUGHS**

1st	John Lanavy,	Abbeyland
2nd	Michael Calanan,	Ballyhoose
3rd	Barney Madden,	Ballyhoose

**BEST CARED HORSE AND HARNESS, TWO-HORSE PLOUGHS**

1st	Pat Holohan Joyce,	Lismanny
2nd	Michael Mc Evoy,	Coolcarty
3rd	Pat Noonan,	Sycamore Hill
4th	Pat Colohan,	Crowsnest
5th	John Walsh,	Redmount

**BEST CARED HORSE AND HARNESS, FOUR-HORSE PLOUGHS**

1st	John Lanavy,	Abbeyland
2nd	Thomas Calanan,	Ballyhoose

Mr. Pollok paid the prizes on the spot himself. There were eleven prizes for ploughing, the highest being thirty-five shillings. The ploughman who had displayed the greatest skill and had done the neatest work, had failed to comply with the regulations regarding the quantity of work. His horses were weak and were unable to finish the set which meant that he was disqualified. However, Mr. Pollok called him forward and, under the circumstances, awarded him with a special prize of a sovereign. He also gave a prize of ten shillings to another ploughman under similar circumstances. Ploughmen, who had been trained in Mr. Pollok's employment, were known for the high quality of their neat and precise work.

There is a very interesting account of a Grand Ball held at Lismanny in October 1859. Although this was published in the very pro-Pollok *Western Star*, it is however, worth recounting.

On Wednesday evening last, Mr. and Mrs. Pollok entertained about one hundred and fifty of the leading gentry of this

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neighbourhood at a grand Ball and supper. There was a first rate band in attendance and the musical programme of the evening comprised every fashionable novelty of the season. Dancing was kept up in great spirit, and the supper was of the most recherché description – there was a profusion of the richest delicacies, and the wines were of the choicest vintage. Lismanny House was most tastefully decorated for the occasion with festoons of evergreens, flowers etc. The company did not separate until an advanced hour next morning.

Hunting was a very popular pastime on the estate. There were many reports of ‘glorious days with the hounds at Lismanny.’ The unfortunate fox would appear to have covered miles from Ganaveen to Gortnamona to Ballymore Castle to Ochil with the huntsmen in hot pursuit. In an account in the *Western News* of February 1881 entitled, ‘Stag Hunt with Mr. Pollok’s hounds,’ the meet was at Barnaboy at 12 o’clock and a splendid stag was released. Like the fox mentioned above, the stag covered a lot of ground.

Kennel Master's  
residence  
and kennels at  
Lismanny.



## Pollok of Lismany

It went in the direction of Kiltormer, wheeled towards the crossroads leading to Aughrim and going behind Clontuskert, passed the old castle through Mr. Craughwell's large farm, passing Mr. Sellar's mill, on to Glenlahaun crossed the bog into Mackney, wheeled back by Mr. Sellar's mill, when he was caught and saved for another day's sport.

As we have seen Allan Pollok liked to impose his will on his tenants. There was however the occasional individual who stood up to him. One such was Anne Colohan, a widow whose husband had died in January 1862. She is an intriguing character who comes across as a feisty, brave woman who not afraid to take on an all-powerful landlord.

Anne was a native of Tirooaun where her father was a tenant of his landlord, Mr. Grome. After the death of her father she went to America and spent nine months there. On her return she married Jack Colohan, a widower many years her senior. They had three children, only one of whom survived, a daughter also named Anne. Their house was on a three-acre plot of land and had been built by her husband who had lived there for over forty years without having to pay any rent because he was a cottier tenant.

Jack Colohan died in early January, 1862. Three weeks after his death, Mr. Pollok, through his steward, directed his ploughmen and labourers to enter upon and plough the land. When Pollok's men arrived, Anne Colohan sought to prevent them and claimed she was assaulted in the process.

According to Anne's testimony in court, when she got up early on the morning of the 24th of January 1862 she found a man named Mick Colohan levelling the ditch. Charley Bowie, Mr. Pollok's head steward held her by the wrists while the ditch was being knocked. When she asked what right they had to come in on

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her land, he knocked her to the ground. Bowie, himself, took the plough and horses and came in through the gap, they spent that day ploughing it. They did not come back for a fortnight. In the meantime Anne sowed some oats in the plot, Bowie came back and ploughed it up on Mr. Pollok's orders and took the fence away with carts and horses.

Allan Pollok had married his cousin Margaret, daughter of Arthur Pollok in August 1839. Allan was twenty-four years old; she was eighteen. They had five children, Barbara, Allan, Mary, Arthur and John. John was only about two years old when his father made the first of his land purchases in the west of Ireland in 1853. Allan Pollok's first son, also called Allan, was born in 1842 but did not survive his first year. In January 1863 another son, Arthur, died in London from rheumatic fever at the age of sixteen.

Barbara Thomson Pollok was born in 1840. At the age of nineteen she married John Gairdner from Kilmarnock in Scotland. He was a land steward for Allan Pollok and they lived at Lisbeg House. They had 10 children. Barbara died at Lisbeg on the 13th April 1900. John Pollok was the youngest of Allan and Margaret Pollok's children. He was born in 1851 and married an Irish girl, Florence Madeline Bingham in Ardrahan in 1873. She was the daughter of John Bingham and Sarah Persse. The Persse family was a noted Galway family and John Pollok's marriage to Florence brought an Irish dimension to the Pollok family. Because of the death in infancy of Allan Pollok's brother of John, and the premature death of Arthur, John became heir to his father, Allan Pollok.

Margaret Pollok, wife of Allan Pollok, died at the age of forty-six years in Lismany on 2nd May 1866. The *Western Star* paid tribute to her kindness, her amiable disposition and her singularly clear and well cultivated mind. Her remains were removed for



internment in the family burial ground in Scotland.

There is no doubt that Allan Pollok was the most significant figure in the Pollok story in Ireland. From his arrival in 1853 until his death in 1881 he changed the landscape and the lives of the people. His son John succeeded him as his heir in 1881. At this stage the whole estate was established, the problems encountered by his father had been resolved and it was easier for John Pollok to be the more indulgent, generous landlord and good employer. He would appear to have a kinder nature than his father.

As we have said previously, John married the seventeen year old Florence Madeleine Bingham, daughter of John Bingham and Sarah Persse, of County Galway, in 1873. He was twenty-two years old at the time of his marriage.

They had seven children, the most notable of whom was Zara Eileen Pollok who was born in Lismanny House on January 20th 1879. At the age of twenty-nine, she married Alexander Hore-Ruthven, later Lord Gowrie, a native of Scotland. Her parents opposed the marriage, regarding him as 'the impecunious son of an impoverished family, with indifferent prospects'. He became governor general of Australia where Zara Eileen, now Lady Gowrie,



Zara Pollok,  
Lady Gowrie

became known for her charitable work. Lord Gowrie died in 1955 and his wife died ten years later on the 19th of July, 1965.

John Pollok enjoyed his hunting, accounts of which appeared on a regular basis in the *Western News*. However it would appear that he did not always want his tenants to enjoy the same

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pursuits. In the *Western News* of the 29th March 1884 John Cody, son of Patrick Cody, Lawrencetown and uncle of the late John Maurice Tully of Lismany, was summoned to appear in court on charges of trespass and possession of an unlicensed gun. John Cody in late January 1884 had been walking in his father's field, carrying a shotgun. He shot a plover which fell into John Pollok's field. He crossed the boundary to retrieve the bird and was just about to do so when Mr. Pollok's gamekeeper appeared, which led to the summons and a court appearance. Mr. Patrick Cody, father of John Cody asked Mr. John Pollok to request his gamekeeper to withdraw the prosecution. Mr. Pollok refused to interfere with his gamekeeper's decision and John Cody was fined. The *Western News* concludes its article:

The prosecution of Mr. Cody may not be very much in the eyes of some people, but it will serve to open the eyes of the people to look around them, and come to the conclusion that the day of persecution may at any time come to their own door, and in order to avert the evil hour it becomes their duty to make a bold stand against the tyranny which is lying in wait for them, and take part in the battle in which the Irish people are at present engaged. If they do not, they deserve to be scourged by Mr. Pollok far worse than when his father drove 550 families out of the country, levelled their homes, and converted their holdings into one vast sheep walk.

One can detect a change in attitude towards Mr. Pollok. This must be seen in the context of the bigger picture, nationally. We had reached an era of great animosity to landlordism, the age of the Land League, which later became the United Irish League, which was very active in Clontuskert from 1881 onwards. Tenants

Pollok of Lismany

became more organized and assertive. Moves were afoot to abolish landlordism and enable tenant farmers to own the land on which they worked. This was known as the Land War, a mould-breaking national movement. Charles Stewart Parnell was a key figure who gave great encouragement to the tenants and was a dedicated supporter of the Land League.

John Pollok died on the 16th of August 1891 at the early age of forty. He travelled to London for medical treatment but died of liver failure. His wife and seven children survived him. The eldest was seventeen years of age at the time and was about to enter the British Navy. The youngest was just six years of age. John Pollok's will was published in the *Western News*. All the estates in Ireland and Scotland were settled on his eldest son, Major Allan Bingham Pollok, with provision being made for his widow and younger children. The value of his personal estate in the United Kingdom amounted to over £33,000.

Lismany House and gardens

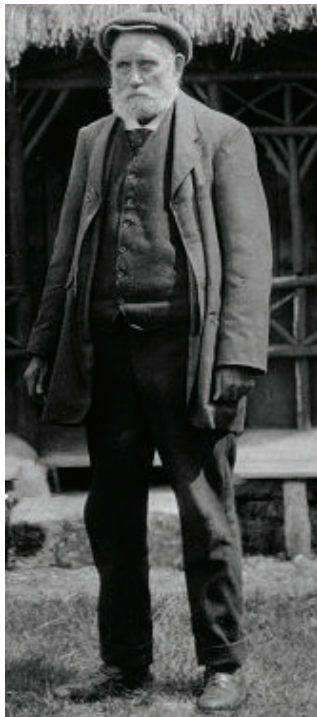


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Allan Bingham Pollok, the eldest son of John Pollok and Florence Bingham, was as stated, just seventeen years old when his father died. He was born in 1874 in Lismany and became a Major in the British army. A member of the 7th Huzzars, he fought in the Boer War and World War 1. He married Gladys Mackinnon in January 1922 in London. The marriage took place at Saint James's Church, Sussex Gardens, London in the presence of a large congregation. Allan Bingham Pollok and Gladys Mackinnon had four children. Allan was to be the last Pollok in Lismany.

From 1870 onwards various Land Acts were passed to reform the situation in relation to tenants, the land and their rights. All of this impacted on the fate of the Pollok estates. A combination of the changing political situation in Ireland, an increasing level of wages for workers on the estates and the depletion of Scottish

resources on which the Polloks had traditionally relied, all led to a decline in the sustainability of the Lismany estate. Some interesting notes written by Major Allan Bingham Pollok are worth recording and provide us with a valuable insight into his state of mind at this time. He stated that he had been living at Lismany since August 1919 having been demobilized from the army some months previously. On his return, he found the area in what he regarded as 'a dangerous, land-grabbing, Bolshevik mood which appeared to be spreading rapidly.' He mentions one example of cattle driving which took place less than a



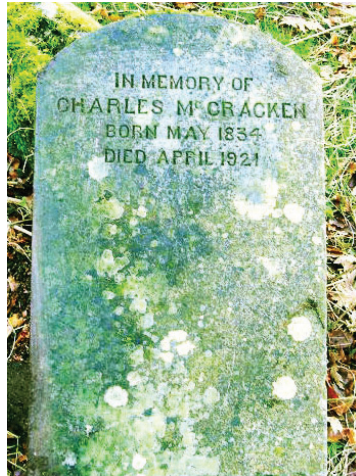
Mr.  
McCracken,  
farmyard  
steward  
in Ganaveen

mile from Lismany on lands at Cloonascragh and Ballymanagh. On a Sunday evening in April, a large number of men surrounded the house of Richard Howard, a farmer living at Eyrecourt demanding that he should immediately give up his farm at Cloonascragh and Ballymanagh. Mr. Howard asked for some time to make arrangements for the removal of his livestock. He persuaded them to give him a week. In spite of getting a promise of a week's grace to do so, all his stock were driven off his land that night, and a number of them were injured or missing. Most of the stock was collected again and put back on the land on Tuesday. On Thursday night all the stock was again driven and the gates of the farm were either removed or broken. The R.I.C. was too weak in numbers to get the stock back on the land. The police inspector reminded Mr. Pollok that cattle drives were going on everywhere in the Ballinasloe area and that he did not have sufficient reinforcements at his disposal. During the week April 3rd to April 10th, Mr. Pollok had no less than five deputations demanding that he move off his land immediately. While he admitted that the majority of these men were well-behaved, they nonetheless complained that the Land Commission was too slow in taking action. As a result, they were determined to get immediate possession of the land and were certain that the banks would give them money to buy it. Allan Pollok, from what he has written, appeared frightened and worried by the turn things were taking. His apprehensions were not relieved when one of his farm labourers told him that they had 'the police rightly bet down and they are afraid to leave the Barracks at night.' In the wake of the 1916 Rising, when many of the Anglo Irish were living in fear, the Pollok family padlocked the main entrance gate and seldom left the house. When they did leave, it was under police protection and by the back entrance.

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Scarcely a trace of the great farmyard at Ganaveen is now to be seen. It was destroyed by a terrible fire in 1920. The site where

the buildings were located is adjacent to the dwelling of Pat and Mai Burke which was the steward's residence in Pollok's time. Apart from a few boundary walls, some traces on the ground and the sound of running water where the great mill-wheel once stood, the Burke farmhouse is the only portion of the complex which is left intact. Mr. McCracken, a Scottish steward, lived in the house and was very popular with the workmen, unlike



Charles  
McCracken's  
Headstone  
in the Lisheen,  
Lismany

the previous incumbent, Mr. Spence. His dying request was that his body would be borne from his house to his burial place in the Lisheen near Sean Tully's house.

On May 26th 1920 at 12.30 a.m. a fire was discovered at the farm yard at Ganaveen. It was a huge fire which caused an estimated £40,000 worth of damage, an enormous sum at the time. It was probably the most symbolic happening in the decline of the enterprise. There has never been a publicly identified perpetrator of the deed despite much speculation. The *East Galway Democrat* painted a graphic picture of the aftermath of the fire.

Gaunt walls, smouldering heaps of timber, oats, bone manure, twisted girders, countless broken slates, damaged machinery, half charred bodies of horses with entrails protruding, tell the tale of havoc caused by a fire, the origin of which is a mystery. Over the place hangs an air of gloom, the workmen employed in the yard

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are dumbfounded at the catastrophe. They shake their heads gloomily and say that it was a terrible fire. Without warning of any kind flames shot into the sky at 11 o'clock on Tuesday night and at 2 o'clock on Wednesday morning the remnants of a magnificent structure was all that was to be seen. An old employee who saw the foundation stone laid, sorrowfully told our representative that night on seventy years ago, he watched the work of erection, and now witnessed its demolition by a cruel and raging fire, which owing to its ferocity made efforts at its extinguishment almost impossible.

In Allan Bingham Pollok's own report of the fire he stated that he farmed 1,400 acres at this time with almost half of it under tillage. The details of his losses were set out in an affidavit made the day after the fire to Lawrence Conroy, Justice of the Peace. It makes for sad reading. Farm buildings of varying kinds, the entire farm yard and all it contained, nine horses including a valuable

Ruins of  
Lismany  
House  
out-buildings



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Entrance at  
south end of  
Lismanny  
House some  
years  
after the  
departure  
of the Polloks.

thoroughbred, corn, hay, seed, numerous items of agricultural machinery and farm implements, were completely destroyed. People who were living in the locality at the time were forever telling of the great orange glow in the night sky and the terrified screaming of the horses wedged in the windows in their desperate attempt to escape. The happenings of that night lived for years as a dark memory in the minds of the compassionate people of the locality. For Allan Bingham Pollok and his family, it marked the beginning of the end of a long association with Lismanny and Clontuskert. Four years later, in May 1924 the appearance of an advertisement in the local papers announcing the forthcoming





auction of the contents of the house and outdoor effects, marks the close of the Pollok era.

The auction was held over two days, the 20th and 21st of May 1924. The items for sale are listed room by room and conjure up pictures of gracious living in an age which has passed. The items included; the grand piano with pianola attachment, an organ, the dining room with its eight foot Sheraton sideboard sarcophagus and a telescope dining table, the library with its bookcases in mahogany, the drawing-room with its tables, chairs and curio cabinets in rosewood, the chesterfield suites and easy chairs, the eight bedrooms all furnished to a high standard, in mahogany. The contents of the servants' bedrooms, their dining-hall, as well as the fittings in the kitchen, pantries and dairy, were also up for sale. The outdoor effects included a Reilligh trap to fit a sixteen-hands cob, as well as three greenhouses. The auction was conducted by John Dooley and Sons, Birr.

This event brought to a conclusion seventy years which had been dominated by the Pollok family in Lismanny. The first Allan Pollok who arrived in Co. Galway in 1853 brought employment, improved living standards and skills and an exposure to a wider life experience to a deprived people. Many of those people however, while benefiting as tenants, felt they were given very little choice, but were obliged to fall in with Mr. Pollok's plans.

Apart from two of its cornerstones and the cellarge beneath which has been filled in, nothing remains of Lismanny House which was demolished some years later. The stonework, slates, windows, fireplaces and brickwork were sold as architectural salvage. One of the main gates at the head of the principal avenue now stands in front of the Carmelite Abbey in Loughrea, and the gates of the second avenue were erected at the rear of the parochial house in Fahy. Ownership of the land passed from landlord to

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Lismanny  
Entrance  
Gates as they  
might have  
looked c.1900

tenants, as it did on many other estates around the country. The land in Clontuskert still bears the marks of an improving landlord, who had access to almost unlimited financial resources, who had the vision and ingenuity to develop the lands at Lismanny and who had the energy and determination to overcome all opposition. The older reader, native to the area, will remember parents and grandparents placing events in a time-frame with the words, “That was in Pollok’s time”, or “That was after Pollok’s time.”

