

Ponsonby-Barker & Prittie
of Tipperary

By Art Kavanagh

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Ponsonby-Barker & Prittie of Tipperary

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Ponsonby-Barker & Prittie of Tipperary

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Ponsonby/Barker of Kilcooley

The Human Hot Water Bottle

When Captain Chambré Ponsonby brought his wife back to Kilcooley in 1873 the happy couple were greeted with illuminations and a triumphal arch in the neighbouring town and a bonfire at the entrance to the demesne. Cheering tenants pulled their carriage and there was music and dancing all night.

Whiskey and beer were provided for all comers by the bridegroom's uncle, Sir William Ponsonby-Barker, the then owner of Kilcooley. Though a stern Evangelical he did not object to the country people enjoying themselves.

This was the same William Ponsonby-Barker who, on occasion, took a maidservant to bed with him as a human hot water bottle. He justified himself on the spiritual precedent of the Biblical King David. It seems that after family prayers he would line up the maids to make his choice.¹ Bence Jones goes on to say that on one occasion the maid of his choice '*offended his olfactory sensibilities, so he sprinkled her liberally from a bottle which he took in the dark to contain eau de cologne but which in fact contained ink!*'

Kilcooley in the foothills of the Slieveardagh Hills, on the Tipperary-Kilkenny border, was first granted to the Cistercians in 1182 A.D. by Donough Mor O'Brien who gave them what land he could encircle in a day's ride. There they built an Abbey and the monks lived and worked there until the Reformation in the time of Henry VIII. After that it came into the possession of the Earls of Ormonde.

¹ Bence-Jones - *The Twilight of the Ascendancy*

Jerome Alexander

The Abbey and lands of Kilcooley were purchased in 1636 by an Englishman, Sir Jerome Alexander for £4,200 from the then Duke of Ormonde. Known as the Hanging Judge, Jerome was much feared in post Cromwellian Ireland. At the time a phrase was coined "*to be alexandered*". It meant to be executed without mercy. Jerome is best remembered for the fact that he gave a very substantial bequest of £600, and his own large collection of books to Trinity College with a brief that a library be founded there.

He also left a few strange bequests in his will – *'my pocket tweezers which I bought in Brussels'* to Dr. Jones, Bishop of Kildare, gold spectacles to the Bishop's wife, and to his daughter Elizabeth *'my great dyamonde ringe, gold and silver watches and my case of silver instruments which I bought at Brussels and I verily believe cost me three score pounds'*. The provost of Trinity College was left his *'gold headed stick with tweezers on top'*.²

He left the great bulk of his property to Elizabeth, including Kilcooley and his other lands, but she was to forfeit all if she *'at any time after my decease marry and take as husband any Lord of Ireland by what name or title soever he bears or the son of any such Lord, nobleman or Nobleman Baronet, Knight, Esquire, gentleman, Archbishop, Prelate or any Irishman that comes of an Irish extraction and descent or that hath been born or bred in the Kingdom of Ireland'*. She was likewise forbidden to marry any papist.³

² One of the watches is in the National Museum

³ Neely – *Kilcooley: Land and People in Tipperary*

Ponsonby- Barker of Kilcooley

Jerome was born in Norfolk and after his schooling became a barrister in 1617. Within a short period he was imprisoned for 'sharp practices' and debarred. Upon his release he decided to try his fortunes in Ireland. He set up a legal practice in Dublin in 1627 and soon found employment with important noblemen. He was very ambitious and tried unsuccessfully to become Clerk of the Crown. His debarring in England was a serious obstacle and he decided to go there to have the orders of debarment lifted. Instead of that happening he made the King (Charles) furious by his persistence and was again imprisoned. However his powerful friends soon arranged his release and he was pardoned.

Upon his return to Ireland in 1634 he was elected as a member for the Borough of Lifford in Donegal where he was expected to forward the Ulster Plantation. It was at this period that he met the Duke of Ormonde and persuaded him to sell Kilcooley. Jerome never saw Kilcooley until the 1660s and he never lived there.



Jerome Alexander

He was an enemy of Strafford, the Lord Deputy, and a ruthless judge who had received a spell of imprisonment from the Lord Deputy. In 1641 he fled from Ireland with his wife and children - '*escaping in their night clothes*'. After the rebellion of 1641 he made claims against the Government for losses as Kilcooley had been restored to the Cistercians. He did not recover Kilcooley until after the Restoration. It would appear that Jerome Alexander had risked his life for the King (Charles II) by taking part in the secret negotiations that brought about his restoration.⁴

Jerome died in 1670 and was predeceased by his wife who died in 1667. Both are buried in St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin.

The Origins of the Barkers of Kilcooley

Elizabeth Alexander married Sir William Barker of Essex in 1676 and thus began the unbroken succession of Barkers and Ponsonbys who have held onto Kilcooley until the present day.

Neither Sir William nor Elizabeth ever lived in Kilcooley and regarded the estate just as a source of revenue managed by various agents. In the 1670s the estate netted about £250 per annum.

When Elizabeth died in 1702 Sir William married a girl of twenty, Letitia Motham, but they do not appear to have had any children. Sir William died in 1719 and was succeeded by his son William.

⁴ Carte Papers Vol. 34.

The second Sir William did not spend much time in Ireland either but his son the third Sir William was educated and brought up in Ireland. The second Sir William inherited the estates in Ireland in 1719 upon the death of his father.

Sir William III was educated at Kilkenny College and in 1720 was sent to Trinity College in Dublin. While his father lived mainly in England Sir William III was sent to Kilcooley to manage affairs there. He had to live in the old Abbey, which would have been considered a miserable residence by any gentleman of the time.⁵

Not only did his spendthrift father keep William III short of money but he also sent his two brothers to Kilcooley to live with him. They did not get on very well and when William complained to his father he wrote saying to tell his brother *'he would come to Ireland, make him his boot black and teach him with a whip to have manners'*.

The Barker Family in the 18th Century

In 1733 Sir William III married Mary Quin from Adare, Co. Limerick⁶ and in 1737 a son was born, also christened William. He was to be the last Barker baronet. His father, Sir William II died in 1746 and Sir William III became heir to all the Irish estates, which were valued at the time at £5000. He had a town house in Rutland Square in Dublin and spent his winters there. His careful way of life laid the foundation of the considerable prosperity of his son.

In the later 18th century Sir William Barker IV incurred the displeasure of his tenants and of the country people in general when he began enclosing his lands. An article in the

⁵ Neely

⁶ Her portrait was sold in the Dunraven sale of Adare in 1982.

Ponsonby- Barker of Kilcooley

Irish Historical Journal cited Sir William as an example of the type of landlord who helped produce the Whiteboy movement of agrarian crime by enclosing land that had formerly been commonage. Despite this W.G. Neely, in his in-depth study of the owners of Kilcooley, insists that there is no evidence of Whiteboyism in the Kilcooley area in those years. However this may not have been the case as in January 1786, a tithe proctor living on the estate of Sir William was forcibly brought to Urlingford and there cropped and buried. (T. Power in *Land, Politics and Society in 18th century Tipperary*)

The fine Palladian residence, in which the subsequent Barker descendants lived, was built around 1762 by the last Sir William though his father was alive at the time. Sir William IV had a sister, Mary, who married Chambré Brabazon Ponsonby. Chambré's father was the Hon. Henry Ponsonby, the younger son of the Earl of Bessborough.



Kilcooley (courtesy I.A.A.)

The Whiteboys were so called because they chose to wear a white smock (something akin to that of the Ku Klux Klan). They began their activities in Co. Tipperary at Clogheen. It was a protest movement against the imposing of tithes on potatoes and corn. The tithe on potatoes was what hit the poorest hardest. The outrages, such as houghing of cattle, etc., began about 1761 and were aimed at the tithe proctors and those who took over the lands of tenants evicted for non-payment of the tithes. Fethard, Thurles and Cashel were areas of major unrest (as well as Co. Kilkenny), but Kilcooley was somewhat removed being in the hilly country of Slieveardagh.

In 1772 Sir William granted leases to Palatine families that he brought to Kilcooley from Adare, on condition that they never employed anyone professing the popish religion.⁷

Sir William IV married Catherine Lane, an heiress but had no family and so when Chambré Ponsonby died in 1762, Sir William invited Mary Ponsonby, his sister, to stay in Kilcooley with her children Chambré and Mary.

The Old Ladies of Llangollen

During the last decades of the eighteenth century life at Kilcooley seemed to be idyllic if one is to judge from the letters of the family members. While Sir William might have been

⁷ One of the families was named Switzer - Christie Switzer from Kilcooley established the famous Switzers of Grafton St., Dublin and James Switzer, his brother, built the Kilkenny Alms house, which he called St. James. The Alms House was to accommodate twenty widows or unmarried women of good family, eight Roman Catholic and twelve Protestant. He provided an annuity of £20 for each woman and the porter and the chaplain. Another famous Palatine was Richard Sutcliffe who became one of the world's foremost mining engineers.

Ponsonby- Barker of Kilcooley

something of a bigot⁸ the same cannot be said of young Mary Ponsonby Barker's half sister, Sarah Ponsonby. Sarah wrote with advice to her friend Susan Tighe of Woodstock in Co. Kilkenny. Susan was contemplating the gift of a cow and a bible to her married Protestant tenants and Sarah recommended that she 'extend a little comfort to Roman Catholics also, such as a little Pig or Cock or Hen or possibly a few trees to plant around their cottages - as they will feel being totally excluded from it.'

This was the Sarah Ponsonby who ran away with Eleanor Butler, a daughter of the Ormond heir. Sarah was the object of unwanted affection from her godmother's husband, Sir William Fownes. Eleanor Butler, a Protestant, was persecuted by her Catholic stepmother. Sir William, when told of the sad situation of the two young ladies gave Sarah £580 which set them up for many years. The two ladies intended going to France but en route they arrived in Llangollen, in Wales, and fell in love with it. They lived there for the rest of their lives.

When Mr. Butler became the Earl of Ormond Sir William Barker persuaded him to help his daughter, now Lady Eleanor Butler. This he did and in time they became famous as 'The Old Ladies of Llangollen'. Celebrities such as Sir Walter Scott, the Duke of Leinster and the Duke of Wellington 'could not visit Wales without calling on them'.⁹

Despite being avowedly non-political Sir William took the lead in forming two companies of Volunteers - the Kilcooley True Blues and the Slieveardagh Light Dragoons. According to some commentators the Volunteers in Tipperary were formed in direct response to the growing threat of agrarian violence and

⁸ Sir William was elected as High Sheriff in 1764 and was considered to be part of the extreme right wing of Protestantism.- T. Power in *Land, Politics and Society in 18th century Tipperary*

⁹ Bence-Jones *The Twilight of the Ascendancy*

not to support Grattan, as it was perceived. Sir William was a delegate to the National Convention held in Dublin in 1783.

It was during this period of his life that Sir William undertook improvements to the estate such as the construction of a lake in 1789 with a Gothic Boat House.

Unrest Forced Sir William to Flee

In 1798 Chambré Ponsonby, Sir William's nephew became Captain of the local Yeomanry, who were on full time duty patrolling the Urlingford-Mullinahone-Killenaule district. According to Neely there was no incident at all in the area at the time other than the attacks on the game in the district by the restless bored young men themselves.

When the 1798 rebellion broke out Sir William fled with his family to England, where they had a large property at Bath. Neely states that he went to England for his health.

By 1799 the danger had passed but the Slieveardagh Yeomen were reluctant to be stood down. They sent a petition to Chambré stating that for the security of the country, troubled as it was by numerous bandits, they should be kept in arms.

Rumours of rebel bands marauding near the towns of Naas and Kildare deterred Sir William from returning to Ireland. Whenever he did it was only to see that the estate was being maintained in good order.

Sir William died in 1818 and Chambré Ponsonby inherited the estate. In accordance with the wishes of his uncle he changed his name to Ponsonby-Barker.

Chambré Ponsonby the heir apparent and nephew of Sir William married Lady Harriet Taylor, the daughter of Lord Bective. Chambré had been a Lieutenant in the Army but resigned his commission after his marriage. He went to live in Belmont Lodge, near Durrow. He had a small estate of his own

at Galmoy, but seems to have been somewhat impecunious until he inherited Kilcooley in 1818. He and Harriet had three sons and one daughter, Catherine.¹⁰

Chambré Ponsonby-Barker

Chambré seems to have been a spendthrift and in 1791 the Earl of Bective and Sir William discharged a debt of £4000 owed by Chambré. Later in 1814 he owed over £3000 to the Bishop of Waterford and this too had to be discharged.

In 1821 as High Sheriff of the county he presided over a meeting of Magistrates in Cashel who petitioned the Lord Lieutenant to have the Insurrection Act enforced, to put the district under military law and return the Yeomen to full time duty. This they claimed had restored order in the serious troubles of 1815.¹¹

In 1828 at the first meeting of the Slieveardagh Brunswickers, held in the courthouse of Ballynonty, the magistrate, Ponsonby-Barker, and Charles Langley leading a group of Palatines of Kilcooley, were met by a large hostile Catholic crowd. The Brunswickers were founded by the gentry who opposed Daniel O'Connell's move for Catholic Emancipation. Only the intervention of Fr. Michael Meighen of Gortnahoe prevented an attack on the Brunswickers.¹²

Chambré Ponsonby-Barker died in 1834 and was succeeded by his son William, who dropped the Ponsonby and was known simply as Mr. William Barker. He inherited estates of over 8000 acres in a very troubled time with grave unrest in every area due mainly to the 'Tithe War'.

¹⁰ Catherine married Thomas Connolly of Castletown

¹¹ Neely

¹² McGrath in *Tipperary History & Society*

Mr. William Barker

Mr. William Barker was considered to be somewhat rigid in his views and ways, bordering on the eccentric. He was separated from his wife shortly after his marriage and there were no children. He was implacably opposed to Daniel O'Connell and to Emancipation and Repeal. He preserved a letter from his friend Mrs. Hely Hutchinson describing a visit to Derrynane, in which she said of O'Connell - *"He is like the very Devil himself, arrogant, self opinionated and will brook no contradictions."*¹³

One of his first acts upon taking over the estate was to establish an Orange Lodge there. The Orange Lodge was, in essence, a Protestant defence association in the face of constant rumours of rebellion and Protestant massacres, following the bitterness of the Tithe War. It had 112 members drawn mainly from the Palatine tenants of the Kilcooley estate and from the tenants of Balief and Woodsgift owned by the St. George family.

The Lodge came to an abrupt end when William Barker and the St. Georges were warned from Dublin about the illegality of the Order. William subsequently joined the Free Masons, became a Knight Templar and a Knight of St. John of Malta.

William was reputed to be a good landlord and he was also one of the main shareholders in the local Coalmining Company. He tried to expand the coalmines during the 1840s and it is to his credit that during the worst of the famine years none of the coalminers was made redundant, despite the fact that the demand for coal almost dwindled away to nothing.

¹³ *The Irish County House* - Peter Somerville Large

Kilcooley Burnt in Arson Attack

The mansion at Kilcooley was seriously damaged by fire in 1839 in most unusual circumstances. It would appear that a woman carrying a child had presented herself at the front door demanding to see the butler, Mr. Ashby. William Barker, himself had come to the door to inform her that it was no place for her to knock, as the servant's entrance was elsewhere. When he heard her story he was so incensed that he sacked the butler on the spot. Ashby packed his bags determining to go abroad but he also packed the chimney with all the paper he could find and before leaving lit the fire. As a result the chimney went on fire and all but one of the wings of the house was burnt.

The house was rebuilt but was not finished until 1843 and the expense made serious inroads into the family finances, which became depleted thereafter.

Mr. William Barker's Career

When the scourge of the famine hit the area William Barker did much to help the poor by undertaking the building of a demesne wall of about five miles. He was compelled to sell the family jewels to pay for it.

Just prior to the famine, in 1841, William had aspirations to become an M.P. Thomas Maude of Dundrum and William were the Tory candidates. The liberals, Robert Otway Cave and Valentine Maher, who won convincingly, opposed them.

Interference with voters was almost a commonplace occurrence. Such interference occurred in 1841. William's Protestant tenants marched in a body with the intention of going to Clonmel to vote but were confronted at Clonamiclon by a hastily thrown up stonewall which they easily surmounted. At New Birmingham it was different. There the way was

blocked by carts filled with culm – coal dust – and a 300 strong crowd. In the fracas which followed the tenants were forced to find sanctuary inside the walls of the estate.

Again in 1857 William offered himself for election and according to Neely he stood for *“Justice for Ireland, civil and religious liberties and the Maynooth grant. He did not see the need for any radical change but rather fair play and justice for all within the existing order.”* He was again defeated.

Damnation Tom

When he died in 1877 he was succeeded by his huntin’, shootin’, fishin’ brother Thomas, a sprightly septuagenarian who rejoiced in the nickname of “Damnation Tom” as every sentence he uttered was prefaced with the word “Damn”. It fell to the lot of “Damnation Tom” to sell off a considerable portion of the Barker lands in such far-flung places as Ashgrove in Co. Waterford and Callan in Co. Kilkenny, to reduce the burden of debt. However he managed to hold on to the very valuable Clarina estate in Limerick, which at the time brought in more rent than the Kilcooley estate.

Disaster Strikes the Barkers

“Damnation” Tom’s son was Chambré Ponsonby. He was the man mentioned at the start of this article. Such was the state of Ireland at the time that Chambre despaired of the future. His brother-in-law, Horace Plunkett,¹⁴ who was in ill health, had gone to Wyoming where he worked on ranches and later bought himself a ranch on the Powder River. He declared

¹⁴ The 2nd son of the 16th Baron of Dunsany.

Ponsonby- Barker of Kilcooley

that the future was in America. Chambré went out to visit Horace and decided to sell out his estates and move to America.

On his way home, in 1884, he took ill and died suddenly on the voyage. As his eldest son and heir Thomas was only six years old at the time his mother had to take the responsibility for running the estate. She was helped by her brother Horace, who from the distant Rocky Mountains and the occasional visit to Kilcooley fought a kind of rearguard action in the land wars of the last decades of the nineteenth century.

Mary Ponsonby had further troubles when her brother, Lord Dunsany, died and she undertook the task of rearing his two sons, the eldest of whom was the Lord Dunsany of literary fame. As soon as the children were old enough to be sent to boarding school Mrs. Ponsonby retired to England and remained there until her death in 1921.

In the 1920s Tom Ponsonby, a grandson of "Damnation Tom" was the owner of the estate, which he had inherited in 1884. He had been educated at Eton and Oxford and had entered the army with a commission in the 10th. Hussars. He fought in the Boer War in South Africa and then spent three years in America managing his uncle Horace Plunkett's ranch.

The Ponsonby-Barkers in the 20th Century

When living at Kilcooley and expecting guests from England he would arrange for them to be given a hamper by the stationmaster in Dublin to sustain them on their journey south to Kilcooley. The station master used insist on the Kilcooley guests going first class even if they had only bought third class tickets, and he would select a compartment for them with care.

'No, not that one Ma'am, poor Lord Ashtown, too much of the drink, you know.'¹⁵

His wife, Mary Paynter, whom he married in 1909, spent considerable money in renovating and refurbishing the house. They had four children, Chambré, George, Henry, and Noreen.

During the 1916 rebellion, Tom was in Dublin with Sir Horace Plunkett when he was shot and seriously wounded by 'friendly' fire. It would seem that the car they were travelling in was mistaken for a car carrying rebels and was shot at by British soldiers. Tom eventually recovered.¹⁶

Kilcooley was raided during the Civil War, when a gang of men broke into the house. Tom managed to pull the fuse and left the house in darkness. Then he put on rubber-soled shoes and began walking about the house opening doors. The raiders who had only one flash lamp were non-plussed by this strategy and left after some time. The only other person in the house was young George, who was asleep in his nursery. On another occasion the butler, who heard the raiders coming, got out on the roof and began blowing *The Last Post* on a trumpet. Again the raiders left in a hurry.

Tom Ponsonby was an astute manager and farmed what was left of his estate in a most profitable way until the advent of the Economic War with Britain, which ruined Irish farming. Tom was wealthy enough to survive but he was obliged to lease most of his lands to the Forestry Department.

He was a much-travelled man who expanded not only his own horizons with his innovative interest in farming methods and forestry, but by his writings he educated others

¹⁵ Neely – Kilcooley: Land & People of Tipperary

¹⁶ Bence-Jones in *Twilight of the Ascendancy*

Ponsonby- Barker of Kilcooley

also.¹⁷ In 1919 he was appointed as one of the five commissioners with the newly established Forestry Commission with responsibility for the entire British Isles.

He was married to Frances Paynter the daughter of a wealthy member of the English gentry. They had three sons. The two eldest sons found careers in the Services and Chambré was a Military Attaché in Norway while George, a Major, served with the 1st. Army in North Africa and Italy during the Second World War. George was wounded four times but was fortunate in that he was able to recover and return to Kilcooley. The third son, Henry Jeffrey inherited the house and lands of Grove from his Barton cousin, Charles Robert in 1955. Henry Jeffrey married Rosemary Wells of Sussex and they have one son, Julian, and two daughters, Jane and Rosanna.

Lt. Col. Chambré, the eldest son, felt unable to accept the responsibility of Kilcooley and when Thomas Ponsonby died in 1943 the estate was left in the capable hands of George his second son.

Chambre was married twice and had two sons and one daughter, Merelina Karen. His sons are Richard Chambre and Miles Brabazon.

George married Elizabeth Melville of Somerset and they have three sons, Thomas Charles, Henry Brabazon and Peter Douglas. All three were educated in Eton and Thomas went on to study music in London.

Peter Douglas is the last of the Ponsonbys to occupy Kilcooley House.

¹⁷ He wrote an important Pamphlet entitled *Agricultural Labour* for the Co-Operative Reference Society in 1917 and he wrote a scientific treatise for the Scottish Forestry in 1931.

Prittie of Kilboy

Kilboy House, the home of the Prittie family, who later became Lords Dunalley, was designed by William Leeson around 1780. Described in *The Vanishing Houses of Ireland*¹⁸ as the most important house that Leeson designed, the author went on to say 'Kilboy had a superb entrance front with engaged Doric portico. It had a very fine interior with good plasterwork and imperial main staircase. The house was burnt in 1922 and well restored but without the attic storey. In the mid 1950s it was demolished and a single storey house was built on top of the basement storey; reached by the original steps.'

Kilboy has now come into the possession of Mr. Shane Ryan, son of Mr. Tony Ryan of G.P.A. fame who has developed the demesne, capturing much of the former glory of the old Kilboy.

Captain Henry Prittie the Cromwellian Grantee

The Prittie dynasty in Kilboy began with Colonel Henry Prittie, one of Cromwell's more trusted commanders. He was a Captain in Cromwell's New Regiment of Horse. During the war in Ireland he was made Sheriff of Carlow (1650) and later Governor of Carlow. After the successful campaign Prittie was given about 1000 acres in the area in lieu of pay. Like many of his brother officers he immediately began buying up the lands that had been awarded to his fellow soldiers who had no wish to remain in Ireland. This, combined with his descendants' fortuitous marriages to heiresses, meant that the estate grew

¹⁸ Knight of Glin, David Griffin and Nicholas Robinson.

Prittie of Kilboy

over the next two hundred years, so that by the middle of the 19th century the Pritties owned about 16,000 acres of land in county Tipperary most of which was centred around Kilboy¹⁹. Henry was married to Honor Foley of Stourbridge and he had one son, also called Henry. The Captain died in 1671. He was succeeded by his son Henry.

Henry Prittie's Extraordinary Escape

Henry was besieged for twenty-one days in his castle of Dunalley by the Jacobites after the Battle of the Boyne. They eventually gained entrance and seized Henry and threw him from the battlements. Henry, quite extraordinarily, survived the fall unhurt and managed to escape. Henry was married to an Alcock and they had two sons and five daughters. The second son, Richard, married an heiress, Barbara Bouchier from Wexford in 1714. One of the daughters was married to Captain John Bayly of Ballynaclogh, another Cromwellian grantee.

How the Pritties Grew Their Estate

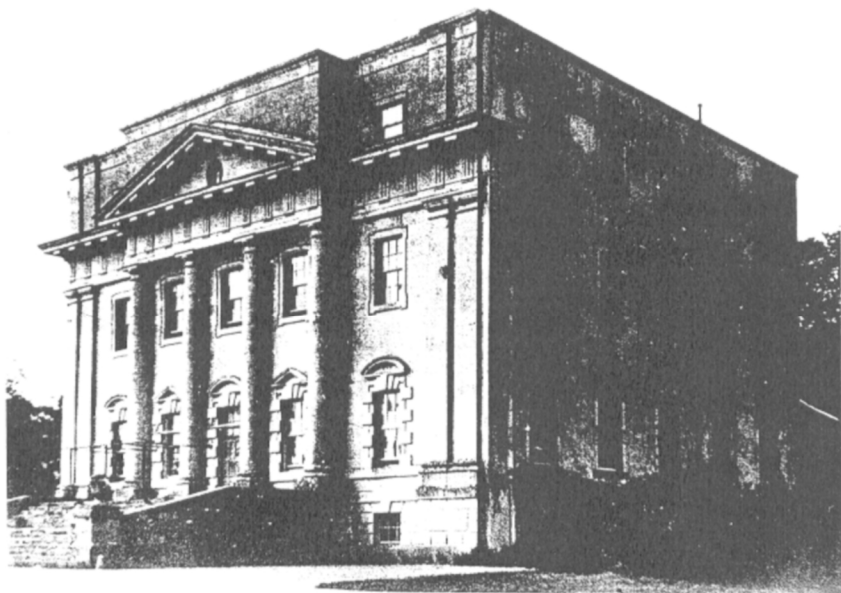
It was through marriages to heiresses that estates were extended. The outstanding example of this at the outset of the century is the marriage in 1702 of Henry Prittie (the Colonel's grandson) to Elizabeth daughter and heiress to James Harrison of CloghJordan. This alliance added to the sizeable Prittie estate of 3,600 acres a further 900 acres centering on CloghJordan which had the advantage of being in the same region as the home estate.

The joining of the estates brought the Prittie family important political benefits, since by the extension of its landed interest it gained in freeholder strength in an area where rural

¹⁹ The Pritties also owned Corville, near Roscrea, during the 18th and 19th centuries.

Prittie of Kilboy

Protestants were more numerous than elsewhere in the county. In this way the displacement of one landed family consolidated the interest of another and enhanced its political prospects, which for the Pritties were largely built on a family interest.



Kilboy (courtesy I.A.A.)

In the next two generations each of the heirs to the Prittie estate married heiresses: Deborah Bayly in 1736 and Catherine Sadleir in 1766, thereby further consolidating the family's interests, landed and political.

While the Prittie men were lucky in their matrimonial choices, by a strange quirk of fate the number of male children in each generation was generally one and seldom exceeded two, while the number of females was very great. This meant, of course that husbands (and dowries) had to be found but equally it meant that extensive and expensive lands did not have to be found on which to house younger sons.

Prittie of Kilboy

Though numerically small in number the Prittie heirs proved to be able men who left their mark on the evolving political, social and economic entity that became modern Tipperary.

The Prittie Family in the 18th Century

Colonel Henry's grandson, Henry, who was born in 1682, became a High Sheriff for the county in 1706. As already alluded to, he was married to an heiress, Elizabeth, the daughter of Colonel James Harrison of Cloughjordan. On the death of Colonel Harrison the estates of Cloughjordan came into the possession of the Pritties of Kilboy. Henry and Elizabeth had one son, Henry, and three daughters who married Croker of Limerick, Meade (later Lords Clanwilliam) and Clutterbuck²⁰ of Derryluskan.

The son, Henry (born 1708) was active politically and was an M.P. for Tipperary from 1761- 8. A magistrate, he was firmly in the forefront of promoting law and order²¹. He was married to an heiress, the daughter of Venerable Benjamin Neale of Leighlin and widow of John Bayly of Debsborough.²² This Henry was the man who successfully launched the family into mainstream politics.

In the 1761 contest there were three candidates, Maude, Mathew, and Henry Prittie of Kilboy. When polling closed on 8 May 1761 the poll stood thus: Prittie 924 votes, Mathew 532, and Maude 486, with Prittie being elected.

²⁰ Richard Clutterbuck, an Adventurer, received over 3000 acres in Middlethird Barony in 1654

²¹ At Clonmel assizes of June 1762 a reward of £20 was offered by 27 leading landowners including Maude and Henry Prittie (Dunalley) for the discovery and prosecution of "each of the first three Papists guilty of carrying arms in said county".

²² She had three children at least by John Bayly. She was somewhat older than Henry and she was about 36 years old when they married.

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He also made attempts to use the natural resources on his lands. In the 1720s and 30s the Pritties revived interest in mining in the Silvermines. Lead was the mineral being mined at this time. After 1730 the mining was left in abeyance until 1802 when the Dunalley Mining Company was formed with the intention of exploiting the ore there and also at a number of other locations.

Henry Prittie who died in 1768 had one son and six daughters who married various local landowners such as Peter Holmes, Matthew Bunbury of Kilfeacle, Thomas Otway and Michael Head. His son, Henry, became the 1st Lord Dunalley.

There was a general election called in 1768 sometime prior to the death of Henry Prittie.²³ In the 1768 contest Henry promised his surplus votes to Thomas Mathew, of Thomastown and Annfield, conditional on a bond of £1,000. However, Henry did not demand payment on the bond after the election. When the next election occurred in 1776, Mathew assumed the understanding with Prittie would be binding on his son the future 1st Lord Dunalley, but when approached the future 1st Lord declared that he wished to stand singly and unconnected.

At this stage Mathew promised to honour the bond. Prittie declined the offer, but conceded that Mathew would get half his surplus, the other half going to Daniel Toler. Prittie then contended that he was now freed from the bond. The result of the election was that both Prittie and Mathew were elected for the county with Prittie heading the poll.

His success came about as a result of the widespread marriage alliances that were forged with the leading landowners of North Tipperary.²⁴ He represented the county from 1776-90 and was High Sheriff in 1770. He was decidedly

²³ From 1768-76 Henry Prittie of Kilboy, 1st Lord Dunalley was M.P. for Gowran.

²⁴ His brothers-in-law were Thomas Otway, Peter Holmes, Michael Head and Matthew Bunbury. His father-in-law, Francis Sadleir of Sopwell Hall and he had the support of the very influential Earl of Clanwilliam, one of the county's leading landowners.

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not in favour of granting any relief to Catholics and like his father he was an ardent supporter of the rule of law.

With the re-emergence of considerable agrarian unrest, the American war of Independence and threatened French invasions Volunteer Corps were founded all over Ireland. In Tipperary, by 1782, there were eighteen functioning Volunteer corps. In the north of the county the leading gentry all had their own corps including Peter Holmes, Henry Prittie and Carden of Templemore.²⁵ Each corps was comprised of about forty rank and file members drawn from the head tenantry or from friends or associates of the colonel.

The Pritties in the 19th Century

Henry became the 1st Lord Dunalley in 1800. He was married to Catherine Sadleir in 1766. Their eldest son Henry Sadleir married in 1802, Maria Trent, a niece of John Fitzgibbon, first Earl of Clare,²⁶ and in 1826 he married Emily Maude, daughter of their nearest neighbour and fellow Cromwellian, Cornwallis Maude (Viscount Hawarden).

Francis was the second son of Henry Prittie (1st Lord Dunalley) and Catherine Sadleir and he married Martha Otway of the Templeberry family.

Henry and Catherine's daughters married as follows - Catherine to Henry Cole Bowen of Bowenscourt, Cork; Deborah to Samuel Perry of Woodrooff; Mary to Michael Cox of Castletown; Martha to Lorenzo Jephson of Wilmar and Elizabeth to Colonel Bernard of Castle Bernard, an M.P. for Co. Offaly.

On the question of Catholic Relief, Prittie and Toler the M.P.s in the later decades of the century, took a hard line and when there was a movement for Catholic Relief in the early 1790s. Prittie, Toler and others from the north of the county

²⁵ Stoney, Jocelyn, Toler and Parsons were also part of this group.

²⁶ Henry got a dowry of £5,000 from the Earl.

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were reported to have been forcing their Catholic tenants to sign the Nenagh Address.²⁷

However, the opposition was in vain as a major Catholic Relief Act was passed in 1793, which gave very many concessions to the Catholics. The passage of the Act was marked by celebrations in Tipperary and by expressions of thanks from local delegates and towns.

In contrast to his public stance Prittie got on well with his Catholic neighbours and a great friendship existed between the Catholic Carrol family of Lissenhall in North Tipperary and the Pritties. A story is told that this arose because Sir William, Carrol's father, deputized for the very young Henry Prittie (the second Lord Dunalley) in a duel with an English officer. In the course of the fight, which was fought with swords the tip of Carrol's sword was heard to hit metal, indicating that the Englishman was wearing armour under his clothes. Carrol's second muttered in Irish "Don't you know, sir, where Daly sticks the sheep in Tulla?" Carrol took the hint and stabbed his opponent in the neck, thus winning the duel.²⁸

The Pritties were good neighbours to the Catholic Daltons of Grenanstown, near Nenagh. The Daltons had distinguished military service in the Austrian and German armies. Peter Dalton received the title of Count from the

²⁷ In the last decade of the 18th century there was a nation-wide movement, in the form of the Catholic Committee, in which Tipperary played a significant role. There were representatives from Carrick, Clonmel, Cashel, Nenagh and Thurles on the county committee. The county delegates were Laurence Smith, a merchant from Carrick, James Scully of Kilfeacle and John Lalor of Long Orchard. In direct response to this and only a day after the delegates were selected the Protestant diaspora of the county held a meeting, in Nenagh, of gentry, freeholders and clergy that was very well attended. The meeting formulated an address to the two county M.P.s, John Bagwell and Daniel Toler instructing them to 'vigorously oppose all attempts at innovation or alteration in Church and State' and to support the constitution. - T. Power in *Land, Politics & Society in 18th century Tipperary*

²⁸ D. Murphy *The Two Tipperarys*

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German Emperor. While they were absent from Ireland their landed interests appear to have been attended to by the Pritties. In 1796 Dalton wrote to Prittie of that 'mutual friendship that has so long existed between our families'.²⁹

Traditionally the Pritties stood for the established order in church and state; a fact reflected in marriage patterns. However the marriage in 1802 of Henry Prittie (2nd Lord Dunalley) and Maria Trant, a family supportive of Catholic relief, was contemporaneous with a shift in the political stance of the family. The marriage of his brother, Francis A. Prittie, to Elizabeth Ponsonby consolidated this for the Ponsonbys were already married into the O'Callaghans, Lords Lismore, who also favoured relief. Given the position of prominence already established by the Pritties as political leaders of the northern gentry, this transition was a highly significant one for the landed class in the county as a whole.³⁰

In the course of the 18th century the Pritties established direct marriage links with nine leading families: Sadlier, Harrison, Bunbury, Holmes, Otway, Head, Bayly, Meade, and Clutterbuck. Through them the Pritties became linked to about thirty other major and minor families in the north. These alliances formed the basis of a unified gentry and cohesive landed class in the northern part of the county. They served to elevate the Prittie family to a leadership position based on family ties and, by extension, command of freeholders, which were most numerous in the north before 1793. The marriage with the Meades, future earls of Clanwilliam, in 1736, was an important factor in extending this power base outside the north as it brought further freeholder support from a large estate in the south, a dimension consolidated by links with the Armstrong, Bradshaw, Chadwick, and Smithwick families via the Sadlier marriage.³¹

²⁹ T. Power *Land, Politics and Society in 18th century Tipperary*.

³⁰ T. Power *Land, Politics & Society in 18th century Tipperary*

³¹ *Ibid.*

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A Volunteer Bill in the House of Commons, in favour of parliamentary reform, was defeated but three Tipperary men voted for the bill. They were Prittie, Toler and Thomas Barton. As the passing of the bill would have meant the end of the boroughs it was opposed by O'Callaghan of Fethard, Moore of Clonmel and Pennefather of Cashel.

There was a general election held in 1806. Due to clerical manipulation the Catholic vote secured the election of Montague Mathew and Francis A. Prittie, the brother of the 1st Lord Dunalley, who had moved into the House of Lords. From this period on the Pritties, allied with the Mathew interest continued to be pro Catholic and more liberal in outlook. The Pritties' liberal views may have been influenced by a tutor who was engaged to teach Francis Aldborough Prittie at Kilboy. He was Rev. Henry Fulton, the Church of Ireland curate to their parish, who was transported as a convicted United Irishman in 1798.³²

When the 1st Lord Dunalley died in 1801 he was succeeded by his son Henry Sadleir Prittie who became the 2nd Lord Dunalley. Although married twice to Maria Trant and Emily Maude, the 2nd Lord had no children. He was very active in politics and worked with O'Connell to achieve Catholic Emancipation. The 2nd Lord Dunalley and Daniel O'Connell, the Liberator, were two of the first men to subscribe to having a monument erected to the Duke of Wellington, following the granting of Catholic Emancipation. The monument was to be erected 'in or near Dublin, commemorative of this the most glorious of his public services'. Henry Sadleir Prittie represented Carlow from 1797-1800. He supported the Union and his father was rewarded by being elevated to the Peerage. Henry Sadleir later represented Okehampton, Devon, as a Whig supporter from 1819-24.

Francis Aldborough Prittie was a very able man, whose son, Henry, by his second marriage, became the 3rd Lord

³² This man's extraordinary story is told in *Renegade* by Marjorie Quarton.

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Dunalley. Francis was an M.P. for Tipperary from 1806-12 and 1819-30. Prior to this he was M.P. for Doneraile in Cork in 1800 and for Carlow in 1801. His first wife was Martha or Maria Otway, the widow of George Hartpool³³ of Shrute Castle, Co. Laois, by whom he had a daughter.³⁴ His second wife was Elizabeth the daughter of the Hon. George Ponsonby, Lord Chancellor of Ireland. They had three sons and three daughters. The daughters were Mary, Hon. Catherine Charlotte and Hon. Frances Eliza. The last named married John Bagwell of Marlfield in 1838 and her children inherited Marlfield. She died in 1901.

Francis Aldborough's second son, the Hon. George Ponsonby Prittie, married and had a family but only one of his daughters married and had a family. She was Florence who married W. Black from Scotland.

His third son, the Hon. Francis Sadleir Prittie of Glenview, Clonmel, became an Army Officer. He married an heiress, Mary Rose, and one of his daughters married Henry Irvine from Castle Irvine in Co. Fermanagh in 1862, and they had children.

Henry (b. 1807), the eldest son of Francis Aldborough, succeeded to the estates of the Pritties upon the death of his uncle, the 2nd Lord Dunalley, in 1854. He was a Deputy Lieutenant and High Sheriff of the county. He was married to Anne Maria the only daughter and heir of Cornelius O'Callaghan, Viscount Lismore.

His son, Henry O'Callaghan Prittie, a career Army Officer, succeeded to the title in 1885 as the 4th Baron. He was

³³ Barrington, the famous lawyer, wrote an account of the extraordinary life of George Harpole and his short marriage to Maria Otway. They were separated after less than eighteen months of marriage. She was Harpole's second wife. He had divorced his first wife, who stabbed him. He was insanely jealous of Maria and without proof of any infidelity on her part separated from her. He died of tuberculosis shortly afterwards. She married Prittie two years later but died in childbirth at the age of 23. For an extended notice of the Harpoles see pg. 211-213 of O'Nolan - *History of a People* by Art Kavanagh.

³⁴ Elizabeth Prittie married the Hon. Rev. Robert Maude

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born in 1851 and was educated at Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge. He was High Sheriff for Tipperary in 1883 and was Lieutenant for the county in 1905. He rose to the rank of Colonel in the 3rd Royal Irish Regiment. It was during his tenure that the successive Land Acts forced the gentry to sell their lands to the tenants. They were allowed to keep demesnes around their houses if they could prove that they could farm the lands productively.



Entrance Gate to Kilboy (courtesy I.A.A.)

The Prittie Family in Modern Times

Henry O'Callaghan Prittie was married to Mary, the daughter and heiress of Major General Farmer, and they had

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two sons and four daughters³⁵. His eldest son, Henry Cornelius O'Callaghan Prittie, the 5th Baron, married Beatrix Graham, an heiress from Lanarkshire and they had two sons the eldest of whom was born in 1912. The 5th Baron was, like his father, an Army Officer and rose to the rank of Major in the Rifle Brigade. The 5th Baron's younger brother, Francis Reginald, a Captain in the Rifle Brigade, was killed in action in 1914.

Henry Cornelius O'Callaghan Prittie was also a distinguished author who wrote *Saddle & Steel* and *Khaki & Rifle Green*. He died in 1948.

His younger son, Terence Cornelius Farmer Prittie, was awarded an M.B.E. in 1946. Like his father he was an author. His book *South to Freedom* tells of his exploits as an escaped prisoner of war. Terence died in 1988 and left two sons, the eldest of whom, Oliver Allen, was twice married and has one son and three daughters.³⁶

The eldest son, Henry Desmond Prittie, the 6th Baron, was born in 1912. He was educated at Stowe and R.M.C. Sandhurst. He served in World War II and afterwards in East Africa and the Far East. He retired in 1953 with the rank of Hon. Lieutenant Colonel. He was married to Mary Phillipa Carey the only daughter of Major Hon. Philip Carey. They had two sons and one daughter, the Hon. Mary Prittie who lives in Galway.³⁷

The younger son, the Hon. Michael Philip Prittie, educated at Stowe, now lives in Seattle in the U.S.A.

Henry Francis Cornelius Prittie, the 7th Baron, who was educated at Gordonstoun and Trinity College, Dublin, now lives in England. He is married to Sally Louise Vere and has one son, Joel Henry, and three daughters, Rebecca Louise, Hannah Beatrice and Rachel Sarah

³⁵ They were Maura, Kathleen, Mary and Irene who all died young.

³⁶ Dominic Terence (b. 1987), Jemma Victoria (b. 1975), Kinvara Louise (b. 1978) and Laura Zoe (b. 1989)

³⁷ The Hon. Mary is married and has one son Thomas Benjamin and three daughters, Flora Tasmine, Pollyanna Felicity and Lily Phillipa Joyce.

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