

The History of
Kells Bay House & Gardens



The Garden at Kells Bay House, County Kerry, Ireland

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Billy Alexander for inviting me to investigate the history of the garden at Kells Bay; Family solicitor for providing access to copies of the title deeds; Interviews with Michael Bowler, Victoria Vogel and The Honorable Jamie Bigham; The staff at the libraries at the Universities of Cambridge and London, especially the Rare Books Room and the Map Room; Librarians at the local records department at Tralee and Cahirciveen (Kerry).

Table of Contents

Introduction

Land Ownership in Ireland

Chronology of Ownership and Influences on the Garden at Kells Bay

Principal Features at Kells Bay Gardens

Conclusion

List of Illustrations

Figure 1: Aerial view of Kells Bay House and Garden (2005)

Figure 2: The Down Survey Map of County Kerry (1657)

Figure 3: Early map of Kerry showing Kells Bay (1788)

Figure 4: Map of Hollymount Estate with Boundary (1847)

Figure 5: The Blennerhassett Famine Bowl

Figure 6: Map of Hollymount Estate (1857)

Figure 7: Tenants register at Cappamore (1857)

Figure 8: Hollymount Cottage and Estate (1897)

Figure 9: Hollymount, Garden and Beach (est. 1900)

Figure 10: Hollymount, Garden and Tree Fern (est. 1900)

Figure 11: Gardeners and Tree Ferns at Hollymount (est.1900)

Figure 12: Entrance to Hollymount (est. 1900)

Figure 13: Map of Kells Bay Estate (2005)

Figure 14: The Ladies Walled Garden (2015)

Figure 15: Primeval Forest (2015)

Figure 16: Victorian Pathways through the Garden (2015)

Figure 17: Garden sculpture (2015)

Introduction

The aim of the report is to present a history of the garden at Kells Bay, County Kerry, on the south west coast of Ireland. The garden is situated on the north coast of the Iveragh peninsula in Kerry and dates from the early 19th century. The garden extends over 44 acres (18 hectares) and contains an important collection of rare and tender trees and shrubs, many of which originate from the southern hemisphere and have now become naturalised. **(Figure 1).**

Figure 1: Aerial view of Kells Bay House and Gardens (2005)



Source: Private collection of Billy Alexander

The west coast of Ireland is warmed by the Gulf stream, and is mild and temperate. Rainfall is abundant with approximately 80 inches a year. (O'Brien, 2014). There is little dramatic change in temperature between summer and winter. Frost is rare and if snow falls, it

does not lie. Historic accounts have documented the mildness of the climate.

“It is very seldomly violently cold here, and freezeth but little. There are commonly three or four frosts in one winter, but they are very short, seldom lasting more than three or four days together and with all their very worst, nothing so near so violent as in most other countries. But, how mild they ordinarily be, and how little subject to excessive cold. And as the cold in winter is moderate and tolerable, so is also the heat in summer; which is seldom so great, even in the hottest times of the year as to be greatly troublesome.” **(Boate, 1726, p.90).**

The report draws on multiple sources of information. Secondary data was gathered from a wide range of published sources available in university, public and specialist libraries as well as from online sources. Primary data was gathered during two field visits to Kells Bay in September (13-18) and December (13-18) 2015. The data include oral history interviews with four informants and a large volume of private letters, papers and reports as well as maps and photographs of the site.

The report is presented in five sections. Section one has introduced the report. Section two presents the historiography of land ownership in Ireland and notes the principal Protestant land-owning families in Kerry. This is followed by a chronology of the ownership of the garden at Kells Bay in section three which also integrates the principal influences on the garden during each period. Section four describes the principal features of the garden and section five concludes the report.

Land Ownership in Ireland

Land ownership in Ireland is a political issue in which ownership and estate occupancy are the key tensions (Davis, 1999). As there is little recorded history of land ownership in Ireland prior to the 16th century (Lansdowne, 1937; Smith, 1756), this review commences with analysis of information sourced from rare books retained in university and local history libraries.

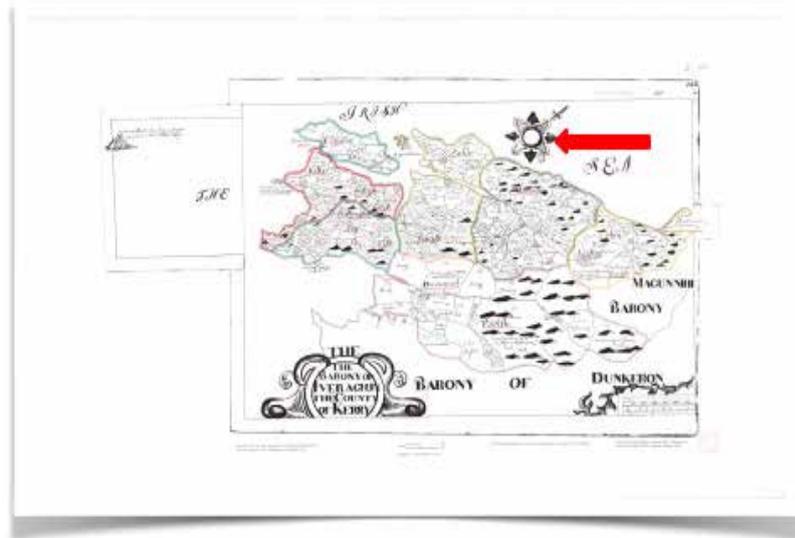
The modern county of Kerry comprises eight 'baronies', administrative divisions which were based on former baronial ownership but that are now administratively obsolete. The four baronies of Magunihy, Iveragh, Dunkerron and Glanerought were formerly part of the region owned by the Earls of Desmond which stretched over much of modern Cork and Limerick. Following the Desmond Rebellions (1569 – 1573) and (1579 – 1583) during the reign of Elizabeth 1 (1558 - 1603), the defeat of the Desmond Earls by the British in 1586 saw their land holdings and possessions forfeited to the English Crown. This led to the promotion of a principal chieftain and regional leader to replace the Desmonds, referred to as the McCarthy Mor. Further rebellions in 1596 and 1641 witnessed more land confiscations and after the death of the last McCarthy Mor, the four baronies were incorporated into the Palatine of Kerry.

Dating from the Cromwellian invasion of Ireland by the English between 1649 and 1653, land was systematically confiscated from the indigenous Irish and disbursed over time to prominent English families. This created a stratified society in which the Protestant landlords owned large estates and Catholics became tenant farmers and farm labourers. In the Cromwellian settlements, 59% of land in

Kerry was confiscated from Catholic ownership (Bottigheimer, 1971).

During this turbulent period, Sir William Petty (1623–1687), an English economist and physician who had served Cromwell, was promoted to physician general in Ireland and commissioned to compile the first English map of Ireland. The mapping process took place between 1656 and 1658 and involved a team of cartographers. Mapping Kerry was no easy task due to the barren physical configuration and the absence of roads and communications (Lansdowne, 1937, p.4). The Down survey maps of Kerry were the last to be completed and could not have been drawn before 1667 since they show an iron works at Kenmare which was only started at that time. The Down survey map of Kerry shows an unnamed coastal inlet in the area now known as Kells. **See Figure 2.**

Figure 2: The Down Survey Map of County Kerry (est. 1657)

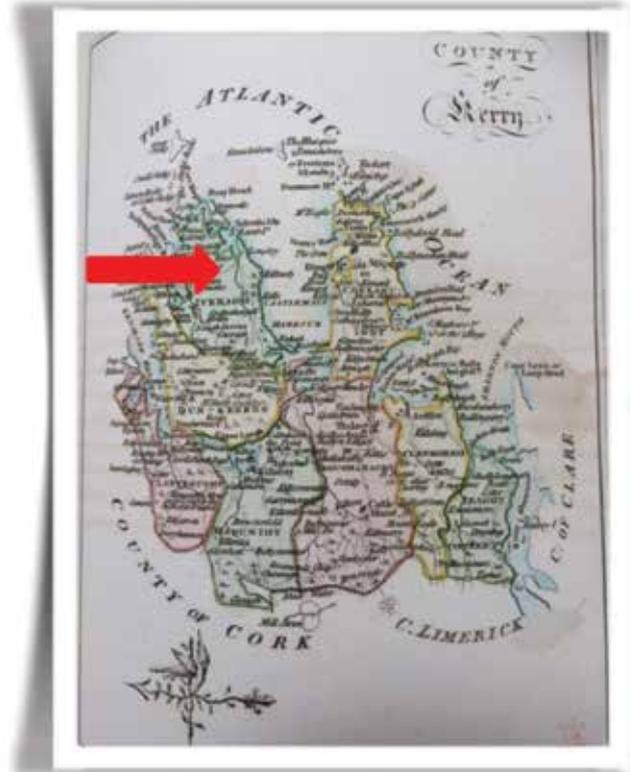


Source: The Down Survey of Ireland (1656-58)

The accession to the English throne of Charles 11 (1630 – 1685) saw the greater part of Kerry come into the possession of Sir William Petty. For example, during the mapping of Ireland Petty acquired 3,500 acres in Kerry (later given the names of the Kenmare and Tuosist estates). He then purchased 2,000 acres from the land commissioners for allowing the land to be used by the English armed forces. He was knighted by Charles 11 and his land holdings then increased to 35,000 acres to include the whole of Glanerought and holdings in Dunkerron and Iveragh. By 1688 had Petty acquired all the confiscated but undisposed lands and this amounted to a further 60,000 acres – in total he owned 270,000 acres in Kerry. Although a large acreage, the market value of the land was very low as it was mostly classified as ‘unprofitable’ i.e., not cultivated. On his death much of the land remained in his ownership but was disposed of by a series of ‘grand leases’ of 99 years, in effect the leases were in perpetuity (Everett, 2001, p.10).

In 1688, after Sir William Petty’s death, his wife Lady Petty, and her son Charles became Baroness and Baron of Shelburne. In 1696, Charles died and his brother Henry controlled the Petty estates for the next 50 years. Charles Petty died in 1751 and the estate passed to John Fitzmaurice, his nephew (Everett, 2001, p.58). Although he inherited a large estate in Kerry, and served as Member of Parliament for Kenmare, Fitzmaurice purchased Bowood in Wiltshire and spent most of his time there. He died suddenly in 1761 and William, later Marquis of Lansdowne, then administered the estates until 1811. The map dates from 1788 and Kells is labelled on the north coast of the Iveragh peninsula. **See Figure 3.**

Figure 3: Early map of Kerry showing Kells Bay (1788)



Source: Scale (1788)

During his tenure Lord Lansdowne invested in large forestation and road building schemes (**Lansdowne, 1937, p.99**). Typical plants and trees found in the region include arbutus, box, yew, holly, service trees and juniper (Twiss, 1776) and between 1805 and 1816 Lord Lansdowne planted more than one and half million trees. The trees were predominantly ash, elm, larch, beech and chestnut (Everett, 2001). By 1815 Lord Lansdowne had become anxious at the expense involved of planting so many imported trees and this triggered a series of land sales. The parcel of land at

Iveragh, Kerry was sold to the Blennerhassett family and is recorded as being in their ownership in 1819. (Griffiths Valuation of Ireland, 1850-1858).

Principal land owning families in Kerry

The county of Kerry accommodates several estates with notable gardens which provide a backdrop to the establishment of the garden now known as Kells Bay and the prominence of naturalised trees from the southern hemisphere. The estates outlined below were in the ownership of English Protestant families.

Glanleam lies 10 miles to the west of Kells Bay and is large coastal estate established by Sir Peter Fitzgerald (1808-1880), also known as the 19th Knight of Kerry. Glanleam is reported to be Ireland's first subtropical garden and private letters kept at the estate document plant exchanges between Glanleam and other garden owners. For example, the Chilean myrtle at Kells Bay garden, the Glanleam Gold, is a descendent of a mother plant at Glanleam (**O'Brien, 2014, p.2**). The estate also hosts a large area of naturalised tree ferns.

On the southern peninsula of Iveragh is the Rossdohan estate which was established by Samuel Heard (1835-1921). In 1862 Heard married the daughter of William Bradley from New South Wales and when he established the garden at Rossdohan became famous for importing Australasian trees and shrubs (**Malins and Bowe, 1980, p.112**). The garden was visited by the gardener William Robinson and although the house was burnt out several times in the resurgent land ownership struggles between 1918 and 1923, there are important examples of tree ferns and other subtropical trees.

Also in Kerry is the Garinish estate, established by Windham Thomas Wyndham-Quin, (1841-1926), Lord Dunraven. The subtropical garden was also visited by William Robinson and hosts a long avenue of *Dicksonia antarctica* that were acquired from Rossdohan in 1923 (Malins and Bowe, 1980).

The largest estate in Kerry is Kenmare which is still owned by the descendants of Sir William Petty. The land was acquired during the Cromwellian land confiscations and leased to the Earl of Bellamont (Richard Coote) for 1000 years at a peppercorn rent (Simms, undated). The land included the Kenmare estate which, although large in area, was 'not so valuable as might be supposed.' (**Simms, p.91**). The Kenmare estate includes Derreen at Tuosist, originally established towards the end of the 18th century. The main investment in the development of the garden was by Henry Charles Keith Petty Fitzmaurice (1845-1927), 5th Marquis of Lansdowne and Lord Kenmare (O'Neill, 2013). The garden includes a large area of naturalised tree ferns (Everett, 2005).

Chronology of Ownership and Influences on the Garden at Kells Bay

The land at Kells Bay has been owned by five families and this section describes each period commencing with four generations of the Blennerhassetts (1819-1953), followed by Preece (1953-1973), McCowan (1973-1979), Vogel (1979-2006) and Alexander (2006). The Blennerhassett family originated from Cumbria and Norfolk and are recorded as first owning land in Ireland in the 16th century (O Cuirc, 2014). In 1584 Ballyseede Castle and 3000 acres of confiscated land at Tralee were granted on perpetual lease to Robert Blennerhassett. The token rent for the estate was set at one red rose to be presented each year

on Midsummer's day. The family and descendants occupied Ballyseede Castle until 1966 when it was converted into a hotel with 30 acres of grounds. The Blennerhassett family invested in developing the land and established the port of Blennerville, Tralee and by 1657 had also erected a windmill for the production of flour and an iron works. In 1878 the Blennerhassett family were listed as owning 12,621 acres of land in Tralee (Bateman, 1878).

The Blennerhassetts were a wealthy, Protestant aristocratic family who benefited from the Cromwellian land confiscations by acquiring land and buildings at token rents. As a member of the network of English landowners living, at least for part of the year, in the west of Ireland the Blennerhassetts would have socialised with other aristocratic families and enjoyed typical popular pursuits. Hunting was one of the main pastimes of the landed gentry in Ireland between 18th and 20th centuries, and it is not surprising therefore that the Blennerhassett family would seek to acquire land on which to establish a hunting lodge.

A Compassionate Landlord (1819-1849)

In 1819 Rowland Blennerhassett (1780-1854) is recorded as owning land at Cappamore on the Ivergah peninsula, purchased from the Marquis of Lansdowne, on which he built a 'small hunting lodge.' (Tithe Applotment Books, 1828). **(Figure 4)**. The plot at Cappamore is identified as Hollymount Cottage, the description is indicative of the presence of indigenous holly trees near the house.

"Of rectangular form having a kitchen built up against or on the rear. It is one storey high and slated. It was erected in 1837 by Rowland Blennerhassett Esq.

Tralee to whom it belongs. There are some trees planted about it."

The principle influence on the Hollymount estate during this period is most likely to have been the Great Famine (1845-1852) during which the population of Ireland fell by 25% when one million people died and another million emigrated (Donnelly, 2001). The legacy of the Cromwellian land confiscations described above was that the majority of indigenous Irish Catholics were dependent on English landlords for employment. Housing was also provided by the landlords in tied cottages, the rent being paid in either cash or kind. The typical diet of the Irish consisted primarily of potatoes and the successive failures of the potato crop pushed many into starvation and unable to pay the rents due. Although there were widespread tenant evictions and in some cases landlords paid emigration costs, oral history interviews related how the Blennerhassetts provided soup to tenants throughout the famine. The large famine bowl on the terrace in front of the house corroborates this story. **See Figure 5.**

Figure 4. Map of Hollymount Cottage and boundary



Source: Ordnance Survey (1847)

Figure 5: The Blennerhassett Famine Bowl



Source: Author (2015)

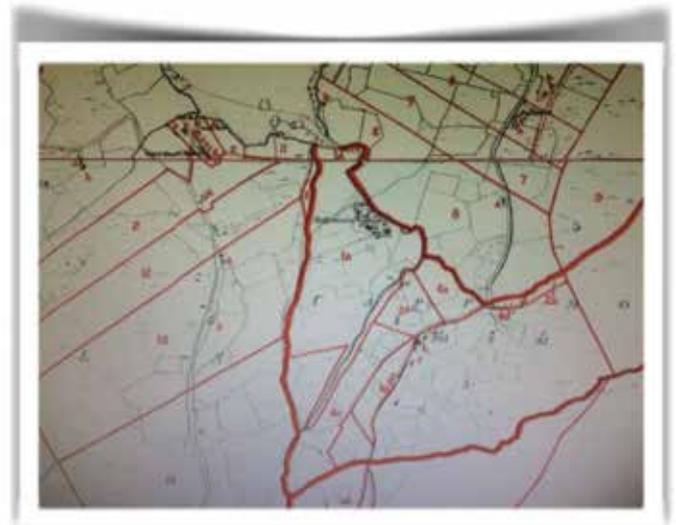
A New Garden at Hollymount (1849 – 1876)

Richard Francis Blennerhassett of Kells (1819 – 1883), was the youngest son of Rowland Blennerhassett and married Honoria Ponsonby in 1849. The family occupied Hollymount Cottage and they have one son, Rowland Ponsonby Blennerhassett, reputedly born at Kells in 1850.

Two influences on the garden during this period are first, the planting of the shelter belt and second, the management of the tied cottages. The oral history interviews referred to how the exposed coastal location necessitated the planting of the shelter belt prior to creating the garden. The shelter belt trees, *Abies grandis*, date from about 1870. The map from 1895 indicates Hollymount Cottage, woodland planting, and pathways through the garden. See Figure 6. In addition to owning Hollymount Cottage

estate, Richard Blennerhassett is recorded as the landlord for a large number of plots, houses and farms in the area. An extract from the tenants register which lists the landlord as Blennerhassett is presented in **Figure 7**.

Figure 6: Map of Hollymount Estate



Source: Ordnance Survey Map (1857)

Figure 7: Tenants register for Cappamore (1857)

Number of Acres	Number of Cows	Number of Pigs	Number of Sheep	Number of Horses	Number of Cattle	Number of Poultry	Number of Bees	Number of Fish	Number of Other
10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20	20
30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70	70
80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	80
90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90	90
100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Griffiths Valuation of Ireland 1850 - 1858

A Wild Garden at Kells (1876 – 1928)

Rowland Ponsonby Blennerhassett (1850-1928), grandson of Rowland Blennerhassett, married Mary Beatrice Armstrong from London in 1876 and is recorded as living at Kells. He extended the original Hollymount Cottage and renamed it Kells. They also kept a house at Hans Place, Chelsea, near to the Chelsea Physic Garden. Rowland Ponsonby is widely held responsible for making additions to the garden which still stand today. He established the Ladies Walled Garden adjacent to the front of the house which still stand today. He established the Ladies Walled Garden adjacent to the front of the house for his wife Lady Mary, planted the Primeval Forest (O Cuirc, 2014) and laid out the pathways through the gardens (O'Brien, 2014). The map from 1897 captures the cottage and layout of the estate (**Figure 8**) and photographs from the turn of the century capture the garden and tree ferns. (**Figures 9 and 10**).

Figure 8: Hollymount Cottage and Estate



Figure 9: Hollymount, Garden from Kells Beach (est. 1900)



Figure 10: Hollymount, Garden and Tree Fern (est. 1900)



The principle influence on the estate at Kells during this time is likely to have been the rising popularity of naturalistic gardens. The Wild Garden (Robinson, 1870) challenged the prevailing Victorian preference for formal landscaping and expansive carpet bedding by advocating for natural gardens in which hardy perennials and self-seeding annual plants would provide a sustainable and self-perpetuating display of plants and flowers. Robinson (1838 – 1937) was born and trained as a gardener in Ireland and hence the book has special significance for Irish gardens and gardeners. Robinson was also interested in tropical and greenhouse plants and his aim was to create a wild garden in which “plants of other countries as hardy as our hardiest wild flowers would grow as if they were indeed wild flowers without further care or cost.” (Fleming and Gore, 1979, p.204). Robinson’s interest in advocating for the naturalization of exotic plants from around the world led to exotic plants being a major characteristic of a Robinsonian garden (Malins and Bowe, 1980, p.107).

The second influence on the garden at Kells Bay might also have been the Victorian craze for ferns which dated from 1830 and reached its peak between 1850 and 1890 (Whittingham, 2012). Collecting ferns at home and abroad was a hugely popular pursuit and it is likely that the tree fern *Dicksonia antarctica* was introduced to Kells Garden at the turn of the century. The tree fern colony is now well established, naturalised and self-seeding. *Dicksonia antarctica* is part of the family of terrestrial ferns; they have an erect rhizome which forms the trunk, large spreading fronds and are very hairy at the base of the stipe. There is only one genera and three species in Australia of which *Dicksonia antarctica* is the largest. Tree ferns were originally attributed to the French plant hunter de Labillardière (1755 – 1834) and then

renamed in honour of James Dickson (1738-1822) a prominent Scottish nurseryman. **See Figure 10.**

Figure 11: Gardeners and tree ferns at Hollymount (est. 1900)



Three narratives account for the presence of *Dicksonia antarctica* in gardens in the northern hemisphere and the truth is likely to lie in a combination of the stories. First, the tree ferns were introduced from Australia in 1786 when they were collected by plant hunters and sent back to Kew (Campbell-Culver, 2001). The narrative commences when Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820) was commissioned by the Crown to seek out Terra Australis Incognita, the unknown Southern Land. Geographers at the time were convinced that there must be a great continent in the southern hemisphere to compensate for the huge land mass in the northern hemisphere because without it the world could not possibly be balanced (Lyte, 1983, p.17). In 1768 Banks sailed on the Endeavour, commanded

by Captain James Cook, for Tahiti accompanied by Daniel Solander, a naturalist trained by Linnaeus. They sighted New Zealand (6 October), New South Wales (19 April) and then Botany Bay in 1770. On return to England, Banks was appointed director of Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew (**Lyte, 1983, p.21**).

After taking up the position of director at Kew, Sir Joseph commissioned plant hunters to return to Australia. In 1814 the plant hunter Alan Cunningham (1791-1839) departed on HMS Duncan and arrived in Sydney in 1816. He shipped seeds back to England and in 1818 he sailed to Tasmania. He returned to England in 1831 (Lyte, 1983). Evidence of the supply of tree ferns to gardeners can be found in the account of John Gibson (1815 – 1875), the Duke of Devonshire's head gardener. When Gibson was appointed to superintendent at Battersea Park he created a sub-tropical garden using tree ferns grown by Sir William Hooker at Kew (**White, 1970, p.132**).

The second narrative is that tree ferns were accidentally introduced to cultivation through the use of their trunks as ballast or weight, to prevent cargoes moving about during long sea journeys during the 19th century. When the returning ships were unloaded at English or Irish docks it was noticed that some of the ballast trunks had re-sprouted. They were then replanted in the gardens of Devon and Cornwall and thrived (**O'Brien, 2014, p.4**). This explanation has some traction as trade between Ireland and Australia increased in the 19th century and maritime records attest to emigrant ships carrying the evicted tenants, convicts, political activists and missionaries from Cork to Australia (Kiernan, 1954, 1984; O'Farrell, 1984, 2000; Reece, 1989).

Third, the tree ferns were exchanged between the

local landowners in Kerry as they each strived to create their estate gardens. A plant book at Garinish records all the plants acquired by Lord Dunraven (Malins and Bowe, 1980, p.117) and notes bamboos from Lord Lansdowne at Derreen and *Acacia falcata* from Samuel Heard at Rosdohan. The plant book at Derreen records plants purchased from Kells and letters between Lord Lansdown and the Knight of Kerry at Glanleam discuss the exchange of plants between them.

A Productive Garden at Kells (est. 1910 – 1953)

Following Irish independence in 1922 the Kells estate remained in the hands of the Blennerhassett family. Lady Mary died in 1928 and Richard Francis Ponsonby Blennerhassett (born 1879) was their only child. He was referred to by estate employees as 'Master Dick', and married Silvia Myers (est. 1910). Their only child, a daughter Diana Mary Ponsonby (1916-2000), was the last family member to have residential connections to Hollymount Cottage. In 1939 Diana married Richard John Moreton Gould Adams, they have no children. During this time the Bowler family lived at Kells House as gardener, caretaker and labourers.

During this period of ownership the oral history interviews provide clear descriptions of the Kells estate as a working garden in which fruit and vegetables were grown at the front of the property between the house and the shoreline. The land supported geese, chickens and a herd of dairy cows which were milked in the sheds at the rear of the house. The estate traded as Kerry Estates and sold fruit, vegetables, and dairy produce to local hotels and retailers. The estate also had a saw mill for processing wood from Kells and neighbouring

estates. It is likely that the access route to the estate was changed at this time to enable produce to leave the estate without passing by the house. **(Figure 12).**

1953-1973. Roland and Nora Preece. The death of Richard Blennerhassett appears to have been a precursor to change of ownership. The Preece's originated from Blybox (Cork) and were connected to other land owners in Kerry and remembered for benevolence and dispensing largesse at festive times of the year (O Cuirc, 2014). There was little development of the house and the garden by the Preece's. They appear to have maintained the gardens adequately and preserved the major parts of the plant collection. Local history reports that Roland Preece took a tree fern to the Chelsea Flower Show in the 1960s but this cannot be substantiated.

Figure 12: The Gated Entrance to the Kells Estate (est. 1900)



A Politicians Retreat

1973-1979. Iain McCowan. After the death of Mrs Preece the Kells estate was sold to Iain McCowan. McCowan was a pilot and travelled between England and Ireland on his own plane. A bachelor, he is noted as considering developing the house as a profit making venture but sold in 1979 prior to his marriage to Lady Phillipa Baillie.

As explained in the historiography the ownership of land in Ireland is a political issue. The region of Kerry has long been a stronghold of Irish home rule and between 1872 and 1885 Rowland Pensonby Blennerhassett represented the home rule party for Kerry at Westminster. Kerry is a popular county for Dubliners to keep a second home and during the tenure of Iain McCowan many visited and stayed at Kells. Oral history recounts that Erskine Childers, the first president of Ireland, was a frequent visitor to Kells and wrote his inauguration speech whilst staying at Kells in 1973. The former Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, and Justice Minister, Gerry Collins, have owned homes in the area.

A Subtropical Garden at Kells (1979 – 2006)

Friedrich and Marianne Vogel originate from Bochum in Germany, they were among several German families who moved to Ireland in the mid to late 20th century. The Vogels already owned a house nearby and knew the area. The family purchased Kells and established a nursery trading as Kells Garden Centre Ltd which was managed by Mary O'Sullivan. The estate was maintained privately until family circumstances and the early death of their son Friedhelm led to the disposal of the estate. The head gardener was John Bowler and his son, Michael Bowler, succeeded him.

The principal influence on the garden during the tenure of the Vogel family is the advice provided from 1980 by Roy Lancaster, plant hunter, television presenter and member of the Royal Horticultural Society. Lancaster was first invited to visit Kells in 1982 to review the garden and advise on how to develop the collection of subtropical plants. Between 1982 and 1985 letters (n=41) between Lancaster, Fritz Vogel and the gardeners at Kells Bay document advice on the purchase of new plants and shrubs, plant care and soil improvements. Their daughter Eva subsequently trained in horticulture and worked with Roy Lancaster when he advised the family on plants and planting in the 1980s.

A Sustainable Garden (2006 onwards)

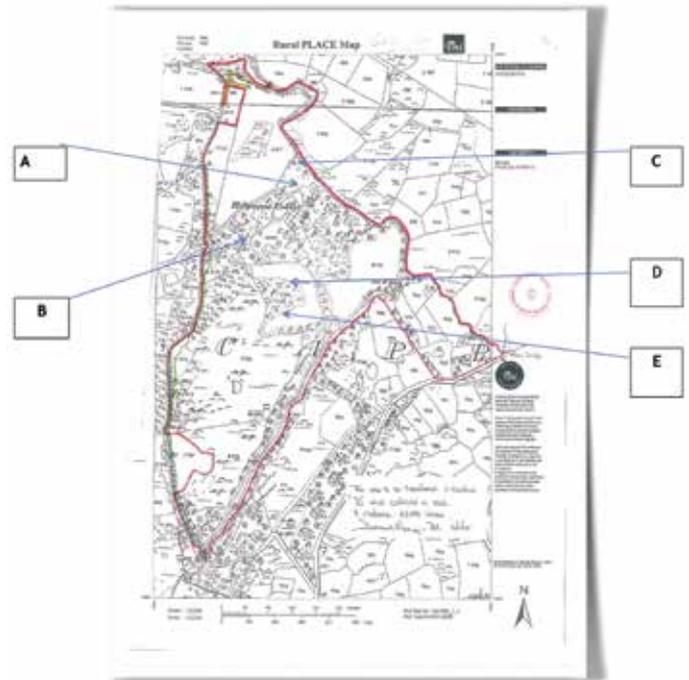
In 2006, William Alexander, a banker and fern enthusiast purchased the estate for €1.6 million. His ambition is to preserve and protect the garden's heritage whilst also developing the estate to be financially sustainable. The plan is to make the Kells estate economically, ecologically and environmentally sustainable. Economic sustainability is pursued by the creation of several profitable income streams: guest house accommodation, a restaurant, plant sales and garden visitors. Ecological sustainability is pursued by expanding the collecting and encouraging the naturalisation of rare and endangered subtropical plants from around the world. Environmental sustainability is being pursued by using local resources, recycling and investing in off-grid energy production.

The Principal Features of the Garden at Kells Bay

This section presents a short description of the principle named areas in Kells Bay Garden. See

Figure 12. The explanations for the areas marked is presented below.

Figure 13: Map of Kells Bay House and Garden



Source: OS 2005 (Dated 1897)

Ladies Walled Garden. A formal garden with stone paths, a lodge built in 1960, and mixed planting. The garden is the site of the *Dicksonia antarctica* (Australia) mother plant for the tree fern colony. Also planted are *Luma apiculata*, *Crinodendron hookerianum* and *Amomyrtus luma* and *Ugni molinae* (Chile), *Strobilanthes atropurpureus* (Himalaya), *Pseudopanax crassifolius* and *Pseudowintera colorata* (New Zealand), *Musschia wollastonii* and *Clethra arborea* (Madeira). Further rare plants in the Ladies Walled Garden are the *Juania australis* (Juan Fernandez Islands), *Bowkeria*

verticillata (Natal) *Acradenia frankliniae* (Tasmania) and *Trachycarpus fortunei* (China). **(Figure 13).**

Figure 14: The Ladies Walled Garden



Source: Private collection of Billy Alexander (2015)

Primeval Forest. Adjoining the Ladies Walled Garden is an area of 7.5 acres (3 hectares) of warm and damp forest comprising naturalised *Dicksonia antarctica* (Tasmania and Australia). **(Figure 14).** Specimens range from those with parasol of fronds extending to 4 metres to seedlings growing in between crevices in the garden walls. Additional plantings include *Dicksonia fibrosa*, *Dicksonia squarrosa* and *Cyathea dealbata* (New Zealand), *Lophosoria quadripinnata* (South America), *Todea barbara* (South Africa) and *Blechnum nudnum* (Australia).

Succulent Garden. At the front of the house is a new succulent garden the most significant plant *Jubaea chilensis* was imported directly from Chile in 2006 and

is well established.

Bamboo Glade. Laid out in 2009 with a shaded pool to expand the variety of plants in the garden. Plantings include *Dendrocalamus hookeri* and *Phyllostachys bambusoides* (Himalaya) and *Magnolia doltsopa*, and *Rubus linearis* (China). The Gunnera Pool. A large expanse of *Gunnera manicata* (South America) accompanied by *Richea pandanifolia* and *Athrotaxis cupressoides* (Tasmania).

Dinosaurs in the Garden. Carved from fallen trees are a series of dinosaur sculptures by Pieter Koning which provide an adventure trail for young visitors. **(Figure 16).**

Figure 15: Primeval Forest (2015)



Source: Private collection of Billy Alexander (2015)

Figure 16: Victorian Pathways through the Garden



Source: Private collection of Billy Alexander (2015)



Source: Author (2015)

Figure 17: Sculpture at Kells Bay Gardens



Conclusion

This report has presented an account of the ownership, management and influences on the garden at Kells Bay. Using secondary and primary sources of information the chronology of ownership documents how five families established the garden and sought ways of creating a sustainable garden in which rare and endangered subtropical trees, shrubs and plants would thrive. As the estate approaches its bicentenary, future considerations will inevitably concern how to balance income generation with maintaining and expanding the plant collection, and managing the increasing number of garden visitors with the preservation of an important Robinsonian wild garden.

Abbreviations

UC University of Cambridge

PRT: Public Records Office Tralee

Primary Sources: Manuscripts

E. O Cuirc, Summary of ownership of Kells House and Garden. Personal Correspondence to Billy Alexander (2014)

H. Dillon, Kells Bay Garden. Personal correspondence to Billy Alexander (2014)

R. Lancaster, A primeval wood. My early memories of Kells House Garden. Personal correspondence to Billy Alexander (2015)

S. O'Brien, The Garden at Kells Bay. A description of the garden, its history and plant collection. Personal Correspondence to Billy Alexander (2014)

Letters between Roy Lancaster, Fritz Vogel, Eva Vogel, Mary O'Sullivan, Bridie Bowler, Tom Wright (Wye College) and Jules Mutton.

Plant Book held at Derreen Garden (1871-1990).

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Maps

The Down Survey Map of County Kerry (1657) **(Figure 2)**

Early map of Kerry showing Kells Bay (Scales, 1788) **(Figure 3)**

UC Map Room. Atlas of the Counties of Ireland. The Extent of Boglands (For the Irish Amelioration Society, 1847) **(Figure 4)**.

UC. Map of Hollymount Estate (1857) **(Figure 6)**.

Hollymount Cottage and Estate (1897) **(Figure 8)**.

UC Map Room OS map (2005) **(Figure 13)**.

Oral History

September 2015. Interview and site visit with Billy Alexander. Owner of Kells Bay Gardens.

December 2015. Interview with Michael Bowler, son and grandson of farmers and estate managers for Kells Bay House and Gardens.

December 2015. Two interviews with Victoria Vogel, daughter in law of Fritz and Marianne Vogel.

December 2015. Interview with Honourable Jamie Bigham and site visit to Derreen house and garden.

Photographs

Aerial View of Kells Bay House and Garden (2005) **(Figure 1)**

The Blennerhassett Famine Bowl **(Figure 5)**

Hollymount, Garden and Beach (est. 1900) **(Figure 9)**

Hollymount, Garden and Tree Fern (est. 1900) **(Figure 10)**

Gardeners and Tree Ferns at Hollymount (est. 1900) **(Figure 11)**

Entrance to Hollymount (1900) **(est. Figure 12)**

The Ladies Walled Garden (2015) **(Figure 14)**

Primeval Forest (2015) **(Figure 15)**

Victorian Pathways through the Garden (2015) **(Figure 16)**

Garden Sculpture (2015) **(Figure 17)**

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