

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,



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

Zara Pollok,
Lady Gowrie

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

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 Lismanny, 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

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.

Lismanny House and gardens



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 Lismanny 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 Lismanny.

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 Lismanny 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 Lismanny 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

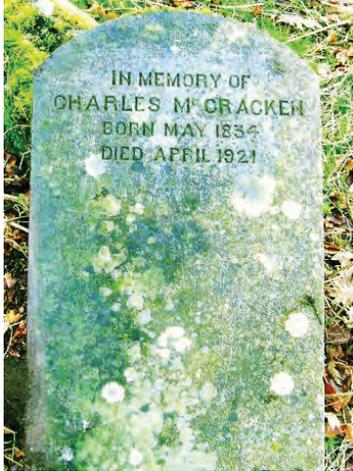


Mr.
McCracken,
farmyard
steward
in Ganaveen

mile from Lismanny 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.

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, Lismanny

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

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 nigh 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
Lismanny
House
out-buildings



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.

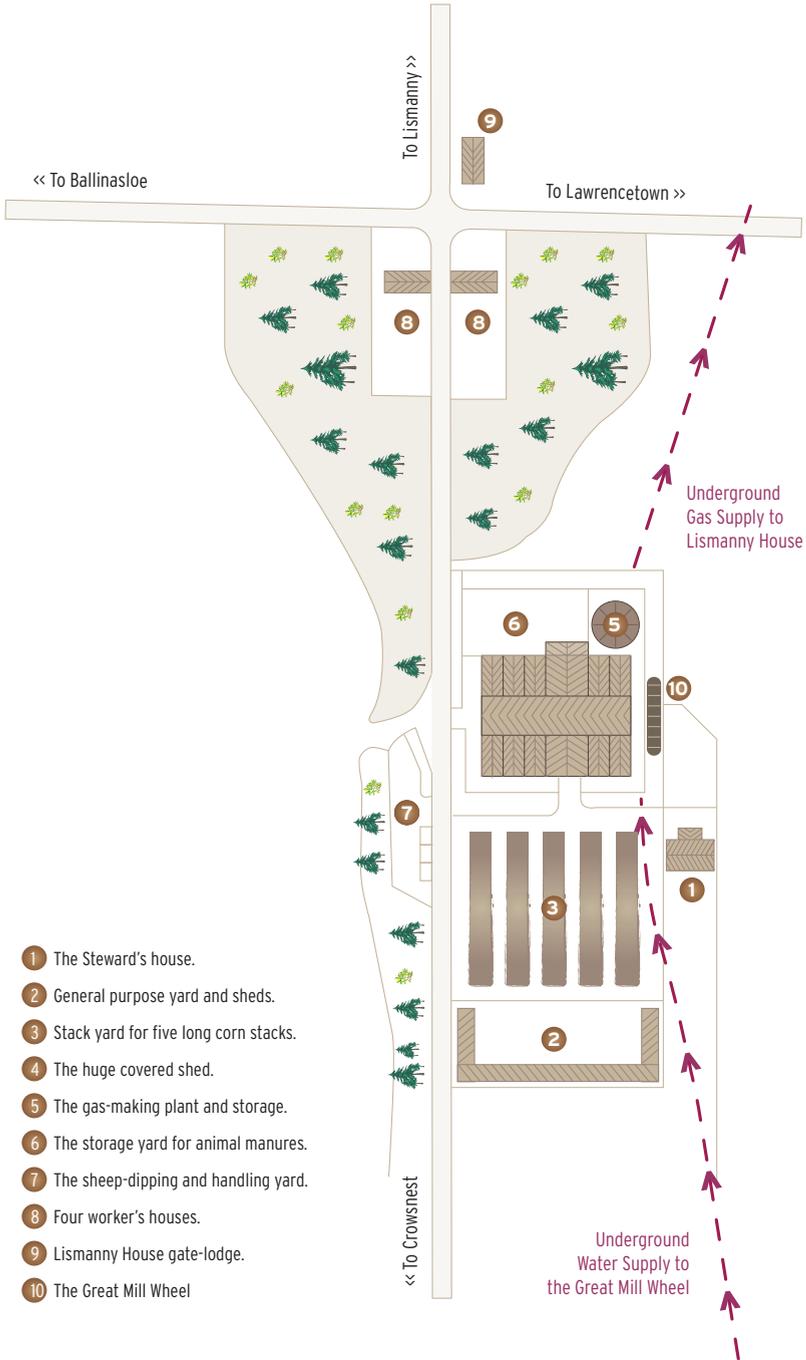
This event brought to a conclusion seventy years which had been dominated by the Pollok family in Lismanny. The first Allan Pollok who arrived in Co. Galway in 1853 brought employment, improved living standards and skills and an exposure to a wider life experience to a deprived people. Many of those 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

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.”





- 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 Lismanny House gate-lodge.
- 10 The Great Mill Wheel

Drawing of Pollok farmyard at Gannaveen