

The Seymours of Somerset

CHAPTER

7



The present inhabitants of Ireland are descended from a long line of immigrants and invaders dating back to the first settlers who arrived after the last Ice Age. From the early Middle Ages, Norsemen, Normans and English came as armed invaders and many of them subsequently settled in this country. What happened during the course of Clontuskert's history is no different in this

Somerset
House

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regard; waves of immigrants have settled within the boundaries of the parish for centuries. The Seymour family which settled in Somerset was a part of one such group which came to Ireland in the mid 1600s as soldiers in the Cromwellian army.

The Seymours arrived in Ireland with Colonel John Eyre, a native of Wiltshire in England, who came to this country in 1651 at the age of twenty-eight. He was an officer in the army of General Ludlow, the Cromwellian Commander in Ireland. Eyre took an active part in military operations in Connacht, and under the Act of Settlement of 1652, he was granted large estates in East Galway. A portion of these lands was situated in that part of Clontuskert which lies in the Barony of Longford. When the wars ended, he set about settling these lands with army officers and tenants, most of whom hailed from the Eyre estate in Wiltshire. By 1652 he had built a church at Dononaughta in what is now Eyrecourt and in 1658 he married Mary Bigoe, daughter of Philip, the High Sheriff of King's County.

Following John Eyre's death in 1685, his widow married John Seymour of Ballynocken, King's County. In his will, John Seymour expressed his desire to be buried at Dononaughta. He also mentioned his brother Sir Edward Seymour, the 4th Duke of Berry Pomeroy in Devon. The Devon Seymours were of the same family line as the Dukes of Somerset, one of whose members was Lady Jane Seymour, third wife of Henry VIII and, for a brief seventeen months, Queen of England.

Sometime prior to the year 1700, Charles Seymour leased Ballymore Castle from Giles Eyre, the lease to be renewable every seven years and to continue for ever. It would appear from the available records that he was a brother of the John and Edward mentioned in the paragraph above. Other sources dispute this. However, family baptismal names and the naming of the

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Clontuskert estate as 'Somerset', would strongly suggest that Charles, John and Edward were brothers. From this Charles Seymour, the Seymours of Ballymore and the Seymours of Somerset are descended. They were to remain in East Galway for the following three hundred years. There is no record of Charles' marriage or of his being buried in Ireland and it is believed he returned to England prior to his death. The only surviving record of his family is that his eldest son was also named Charles and from him the Somerset line springs.

Charles Seymour, of Ballymore Castle, had four sons; Charles, Thomas, John and Randal. Little is known of Randal. John leased Feaghmore. Thomas, who married Belinda Madden of Claremadden, leased Ballymore in Lawrencetown as well as land in Ganaveen which was commonly known as 'Scrub'. Charles also leased land in Clontuskert.

It is the latter Charles who is of the greatest interest to the story of Clontuskert. He was the first Seymour to settle in the parish and it is from him that the Seymours of Somerset are descended. In 1721 he leased lands at Crowsnest, Lynch and Canaghdone from the Eyres for a fee of £60 a year. (There is no indication as to the location of the lands known as Lynch and Canaghdone.) The house at Crowsnest, situated on the right of the narrow road leading to Coolbeg, was described in November 1722 in the proceedings of the Court of Exchequer as being 'in tenantable condition but in need of repair'. On the 1838 Ordnance Survey map there is evidence of a sizeable dwelling close to the site on which Pollok's fattening yard was built more than a hundred and twenty years later. Some of the older people in the locality believed that the first Clontuskert Seymours were born in this house. However, a few people maintained that the first Seymour residence in the parish was at Lisanora Castle, located inside the

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boundary of Clontuskert parish bordering Graveshill. This site was on the Somerset estate, close to where the Seymours were to build Somerset House some years later. Incidentally, 'Crowsnest', which was previously known as Cullyderry, got its name from the Crowe family of Belmont, County Offaly, who as well as farming in their own right, were also land agents for Giles Eyre.

Charles Seymour married Hannah Donelan at Eyrecourt in 1739. Ten years later, he took on the lease proper of Killogotane, Shraogues and Coolbeg - formerly known as Derry - and commenced the building of Somerset House. He had four sons, the eldest of whom, Simon, was born in 1741. All four were baptised at Eyrecourt. Simon was given the lands at Crowsnest, Killogotane and Coolbeg while his brother Thomas was given lands at White Park, County Roscommon and at Barnaboy, which was rented from a Mrs. Peter Lorcan. In 1773, one of the younger sons, Richard Eyre Seymour, married another Hannah Donelan, and was given lands at Lisnacody and Cloughbrack. Simon married Eleanor Lynch of Rahara - or Rachra - County Roscommon. One of the witnesses at the wedding was Neptune Lynch from Kellysgrove.

Simon and Eleanor had two children, Charles and Eleanor, both baptised in 1776. A will made in 1795 indicates that Simon's estate had grown during his lifetime. He was by now the lessee of lands in Kilnagrehane in Kiltormer, Barnaboy, Crowsnest, Cloonascragh and Killogotane, now known as Somerset. All these lands were left to his son Charles. Eleanor married Thomas Doolan of Boveen, County Offaly, who was murdered in the 1798 uprising.

Charles Seymour, the details of whose life are sketchy, was born in 1776. In 1803 he married Margaret Wade of Fairfield and they became the parents of four sons and three daughters. It is interesting to note the continuing Eyre connection in one of the forenames of his eldest son, Simeon Robert Eyre Seymour and in

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the fact that his second daughter Dorinda married the Rev. Giles Eyre. Charles later went on to serve as a Colonel in the British army.

At this time the Seymour estate totalled 229 Irish acres (371 Statute) in Somerset and a further 178 Irish acres (288 Statute) in Coolbeg, all of it leased from the Eyres. The family no longer occupied lands in Barnaboy. These lands were leased to the Rev. W.



Charles
Seymour
1797

Nason. Neither did they occupy the lands at Crowsnest or Cloonascragh which at this time were leased by the West family of Dublin who owned Lismanny Lodge, where Allan Pollok would later build Lismanny House.

Between 1823 and 1828, in the *Tithe Applotment Books*, we note for the first time a mention of tenants on the Seymour estates. In 1823, the Tithe Composition Act was passed in the House of Parliament. This Act allowed for the payment in cash of a tithe or tax to be collected from every landholder for the support of the Established Church. Every farm in Ireland was valued in order to calculate how much money was due from each landholder. The records of these valuations, the *Tithe Applotment Books*, contain the names of some of the Seymour tenants. The measurements are in Irish acres and all the land is leased from the Eyres.

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LANDS AT SOMERSET			
Charles Seymour	99 acres		
Rev. James Hannigan	15 acres	3 roods	
Mick Hanrahan	23 acres	1 rood	
Hugh Egan at Goode	10 acres		
Burton Persse 3 lots	81 acres		

LANDS AT COOLBEG			
Thos. McLoughlin	29 acres	3 roods	15 perches
Pat Turley	11 acres	2 roods	
Pat McLoughlin	26 acres		
Jo. Martin at Co.	37 acres	3 roods	20 perches
Jos. McLoughlin	8 acres	0 roods	10 perches
J. Hanney	1 acre	3 roods	
Wm. Colohan	16 acres	3 roods	
Ch. Seymour and Turley	47 acres		

In Charles Seymour's papers are the names of people who were tenants in Somerset prior to the *Tithe Applotment Books*. Among those listed are the lands of Pat McLoughlin of Coolbeg, leased to Solomon Blundell of Eyrecourt, and the lands of the Rev. J. Hannigan at the Glebe, leased to the Rev. James Strange Butson.

Simeon Seymour, Charles' eldest son, who had married Mary Anne Lalor (or Lawler) in 1831, took over the running of the estate at a very troubled time for the landlord classes in Ireland. Protestant land occupiers then held over eighty per cent of all the land in the country and were demanding high rents which the average peasant tenant was unable to pay. There were mass

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evictions but there was also a plentiful supply of land-hungry tenants to replace those who were evicted. Tenants had few legal rights and poverty was endemic. During this period, the landlords themselves were frequently in a poor financial situation. From the Seymour papers it is evident that Simeon was having problems in finding the money for his own rents which were due to the Eyres.

From 1830 the pages of the local papers reflect the growing dissatisfaction among the impoverished tenantry. Membership of outlawed secret societies was on the increase. Almost every parish in North Clare and South East Galway, including Clontuskert, had its own branch of the Terry Alts, a secret society similar to the Ribbonmen in its modus operandi. Attacks on landlords and on the larger tenant farmers were not uncommon. Houses were raided for fire-arms. Death threats were issued to those who refused to comply with their demands, animals were mutilated, crops were destroyed and the occasional murder was committed. The landlords reacted by employing spies and ensuring that a heavy police presence was deployed in the area. Penalties were severe for transgressors, with hanging or deportation among the sentences handed down. In Clontuskert alone in the years 1831-32, over twenty attacks were reported. One of the most notorious of these incidents resulted in the deportation for life of Hugh Larkin to Australia for an attack on Somerset House. This happening was the inspiration for Thomas Keneally's 1988 international best-seller, *The Great Shame*. The *Western Argus* of Saturday, December 10, 1831 gives details of one such attack:

On Saturday the 4th at about 12 o'clock in the open day, a party of men well armed entered the house of Simeon Seymour Esq. in the absence of the proprietor. This place is within five miles of Ballinasloe. Having possessed themselves of two beautiful

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fowling pieces and two pair of pistols, they proceeded to search for Mr. Seymour's desk which having found they forcibly broke it open and took from it a large quantity of powder and ball together with some money. They then retired without doing further damage. It is strongly suggested that they had accurate information from some persons connected with the establishment, for on their entrance they displayed accurate knowledge of the interior arrangements - requiring no direction or asking no questions either - as to where arms or ammunition could be found.

The attack which led to Hugh Larkin's arrest was as a result of notices which he had pinned on Simeon Seymour's door, which stated that unless Seymour abided by the 'Terry-Alts' demands to reduce rents and improve wages, he would be murdered. There were further attacks, one of which involved the breaking down of Simeon's door and threats being issued to the Seymour household. Among those involved was Darby Goode, who escaped arrest and subsequently fled to England. Another story records the execution of Will Colohan from Lismanny who, seated in his coffin, was taken by cart from his jail cell, where close to a house known as *The Three Gates* in Ganaveen, he was hanged from a tree.

Simeon Seymour's troubles continued into 1832 with continuing tenant and worker unrest, according to a report in *The Western Argus* of January 1832:

A few days ago, Simeon Seymour Esq. of Somerset, in the Barony of Longford, had forty or fifty men working in a field. On the steward entering, they began to smile and laugh. The steward asking why were they laughing, one man replied that they were served with notice not to work under regulated price. The whole party instantly left the field and no further

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work was done that day. Mr. Seymour had been a very kind and indulgent landlord and gave general employment to his tenantry.

In September of the same year, Simeon Seymour's financial troubles had become so serious that he was forced to advertise the letting of Somerset House and a hundred acres of land. The advertisement in the *Western Argus* mentions 'the garden, the orchards, the furniture and the beautifully planted grounds'. Interested clients were instructed to make application either to Dr. Bird of Banagher or to Mr. Hampton of Ballinasloe, the agents for the sale.

Simeon's difficulties continued over the next few years. In a document of 1835 we find that Mr. Thomas McLoughlin Esq. of Coolbeg House had been appointed receiver to the estate. This situation continued until 1838 when Simeon's brother Charles from Abbeylands, is mentioned as receiver. Charles was left with the task of paying off his brother's debts and settling payments due to other family members. Among the payments mentioned were: £8 to John Hanney, woodranger; £90 to Thomas Eyre to be paid on the May and November Gale Days; £150 to Thomas Scott for repairs to Somerset House; £10 each to his brother William and sister Eleanor. A few months later, probably in 1839, Simeon and his family emigrated to Canada.

In 1838, there were nine tenants at Killogotane, four at Somerset and one each at Shraogues, Lenafan and Park Ros. The yearly rent due to the estate was £584.7s.10d. The amount outstanding after three years was £452.3s.5d. which was a very considerable sum in those days. Twenty tenants, together with the rents they paid in 1835, are recorded below. Some of their descendants are still living in Clontuskert. In the six years up to 1841, the names of the tenants had changed in some instances:

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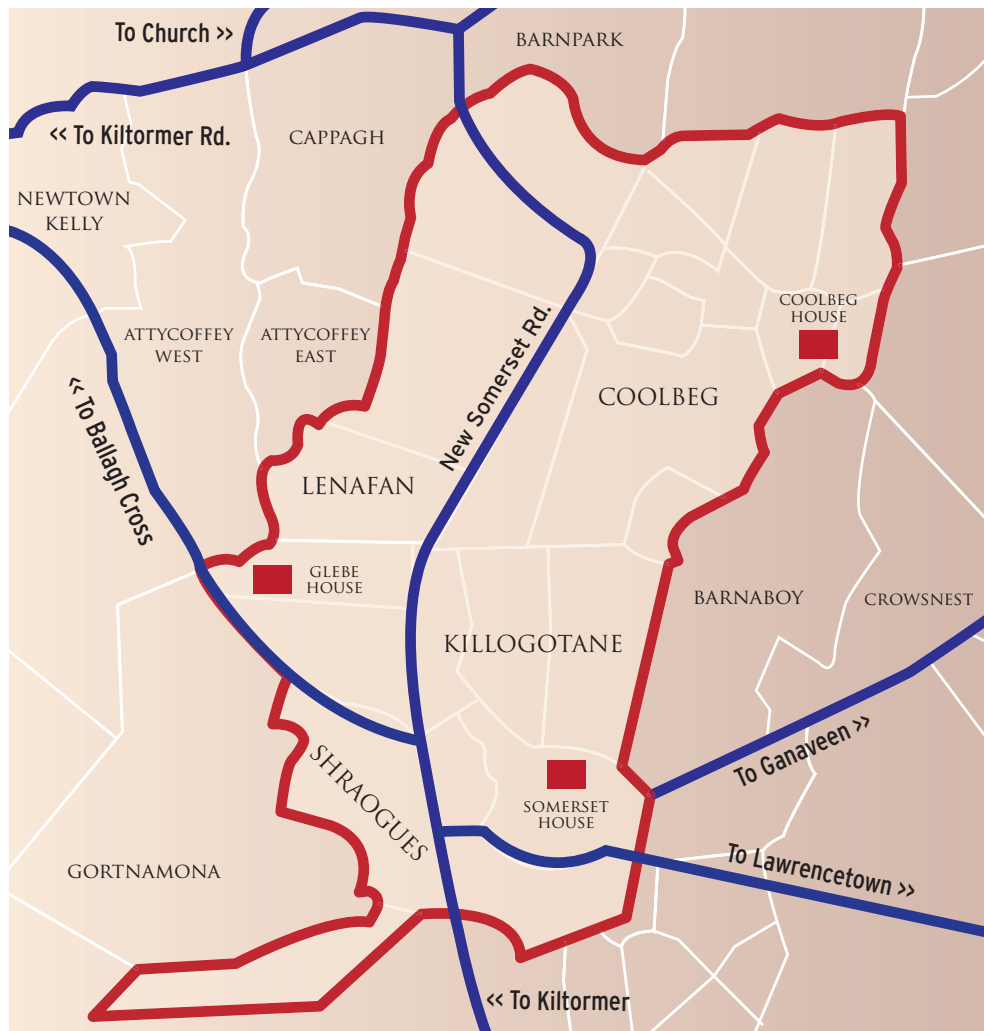
KILLOGATANE 1835	KILLOGATANE 1841	YEARLY RENTS
John Martin	Lacky and Tom Martin	£35.15.7
Patrick Colohan	Lacky and Tom Martin	£23.13.5
Patrick Turley	Patrick Turley	£24. 4.5
John and P. Goode	John and P. Goode	£9.18.0
Rev. J. Hannigan	Rev. J. Hannigan	£13.13.8
Bernard Colohan	Bernard Colohan	£43.12.7
John Hanney	John Hanney	£16.17.6
John Hanney	John Hanney	£4.16.0
Bernard Colohan	Bernard Colohan	£27.0.0
SOMERSET 1835	SOMERSET 1841	YEARLY RENTS
Capt. Warburton d.1840	Charles Seymour	£191.17.6
Patrick Lorcan	Patrick Lorcan	£8.1.7.
Patrick Goode	Patrick Goode	£9.19.8.
Lackey Kelly	Pat Goode	£13.14.2.
COOLBEG 1835	COOLBEG 1841	YEARLY RENTS
James McLoughlin	James McLoughlin	£7.1.11.
Michael McLoughlin	Michael McLoughlin	£14.17.2
Widow Horan	Pat McLoughlin	£8.2.3.
William Colohan d. 1840	Daniel Colohan	£21.12.11.
Patrick McLoughlin	Patrick McLoughlin	£26.0.0.
SHRAOGUES 1835	SHRAOGUES 1841	YEARLY RENTS
Pat Blake Esq.	Pat Blake Esq.	£65.9.6.
LENAFAN 1835	LENAFAN 1841	YEARLY RENTS
Bryan Kelly	Bryan Kelly	£12.0.0.
PARK ROS 1835	PARK ROS 1841	YEARLY RENTS
Patrick McLoughlin	Patrick McLoughlin	£6.0.0.
TOTAL RENTAL		£584.7.10

Charles Seymour of Abbeylands and his brother Samuel, died in 1848, possibly as a result of famine fever. Their youngest brother, William Conway Somerset Seymour, took over the running of the estate. He let the forty-acre field at Somerset for 'oat-soil conacre' at the rate of £5.10.0. per acre - a hefty sum in the second year of the Famine.

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The names of those who rented this conacre were; Patrick McLoughlin, Patrick Boyle, Rev. Mr. Walshe, Thomas Colahan, Patrick Colahan, James McLoughlin, Loughlin Martin, John Finn, Mrs. Hanney, Loughlin Kelly, Laurence Butler (for James), Laurence Butler (for self), Patrick Kelly, Bryan Kelly, Patrick Shiel, Peter McCage, Patrick Goode. Some of these people are from areas of the parish other than Somerset.

Somerset Estate
in the 1890s



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In 1855, Somerset and numerous other estates throughout Ireland became bankrupt due to the depressed conditions which resulted from the Famine. Tenants were unable to pay their rents and landowners and occupiers were forced to pay heavy Poor Law rates for the alleviation of the plight of the poor. The Encumbered Estate Acts of 1848 and 1849 were passed to solve this problem by making it easier for landlords to sell such indebted estates, to discharge their debts and enable buyers of such estates to start with a clean title. It was hoped that such legislation and an accompanying provision of Government capital, would enable the easier sale and purchase of indebted estates.

Special Encumbered Estates Courts were set up, with three judges presiding. If a landlord's estate, whether owned or leased, had debts amounting to half the net annual rent, he could apply to the judges to put his land or lease up for sale and in this manner clear the encumbrances.

Regrettably however, despite the Devon Commission's recommendation, there would be no payments under the scheme to tenants who had improved their holdings. By 1859 over three thousand estates amounting to some five million acres had passed into the hands of new - mostly Irish - landlords, many of whom immediately set about evicting their tenants.

Like so many landholders after the Great Famine, William Conway Somerset Seymour was in severe financial difficulties. He was forced to put the estate up for sale, even though it was still in the name of his brother Simeon, now in Canada. The advertisement shown on the following page appeared in the *Western Star* newspaper in 1855.

Writing about the auction, the *Western Star* journalist described the estate: 'in the middle of good hunting country. . . . several packs of hounds hunt in the neighbourhood . . . surrounded

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Auction
Notice
1855

by gentlemen of importance . . . some of the richest land to be found for meadow and feeding . . .’

At the time of the Famine the total rents on the estate had been reduced to £200 per annum and were not increased since

then. This caused the property to be undervalued, with the result that the purchaser would be in a position to set his own rents and enter his own agreement with his tenants. A Fee Farm Grant was available from the state for the purchaser.

In 1855 William Conway Somerset Seymour purchased the Rental of the lands of Somerset in the Encumbered Estates Court. The *Western Star* comments:

We are happy to announce that the

William
Conway
Somerset
Seymour

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Somerset property has been bought by William Somerset Seymour so that it will remain in the family with which it has been so long connected. This will bring great satisfaction to the County of Galway.

It is important to remember that the Seymour estate was not owned by the family at any stage up to this time, being largely owned by the Eyres and, latterly, by Alan Pollok. In 1870, at the instructions of the Landed Estates Court, Somerset along with other lands in Clontuskert, Kiltormer and Killoran, were put up for sale by Thomas Stratford Eyre Snr. and Thomas Stratford Eyre Jnr., along with Allan Pollok. The lands were to be sold in ten lots before the Honourable Judge Lynch, at the Landed Estates Court, Inns Quay, Dublin on Tuesday the 29th day of November 1870, at the hour of 12 noon. William Seymour bought Somerset outright for the sum of £1715.

The tenants on the estate in 1880 and the yearly rents paid were:

Lower Shraogues	Michael & Kelvin Brennan	£212 13s. 0d.
Glebe	Reps. Of Church Body	£13 13s. 0d.
Upper Shraogues	Michael O'Brien	£139 14s. 0d.
Coolbeg West	Pat Coen	£185 0s. 0d.
Coolbeg East	James Curley	£184 12s. 2d.
Coolbeg House	Bernard McLoughlin	£47 12s. 6d.
Coolbeg	Thomas Colohan	£32 7s. 8d.
Coolbeg	John Colohan	£21 12s. 10d.
Somerset House	John Geoghegan	£150 0s. 0d.
Somerset House Division	W. Larkin	£8 5s. 0d.
TOTAL		£995 10s. 2d.

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Due to a fortuitous set of circumstances, it is possible to get a glimpse of the people who worked on the estate at that time. In the course of renovations to their house some years ago, the McLoughlin family of Coolbeg found two journals from the Seymour estate containing workmen's employment records dating from 1869 to 1874. These records were kept by Bernard McLoughlin who was head steward on the estate. Bernard, originally from Tipperary, had graduated from horticultural college with qualifications in Botany. His first posting was on the Burke estate in Roscommon and from there he went as steward to the Clancarty estate in Garbally, the first Catholic to be employed in that position. It was he who was responsible for the planting of the

McLoughlin
Notebook

WORKMEN'S ACCOUNTS, from *Aug 10* to *Aug 14* 18

No. of Men.	WORKMEN'S NAMES.	Monday.	Tuesday.	Wednesday.	Thursday.	Friday.	Saturday.	Days Worked this Week.	Wages per day.	Total Value of the Week's Work.	Money Paid.	OBSERVATIONS.
	<i>Michael. Madon</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	1 3	7 6		<i>Clipping still and</i>
	<i>Robert Quinn</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	1 2	7 7		<i>wire during next</i>
	<i>John Croyle</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	1 2	7 7		<i>three days.</i>
	<i>Pat Golden</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	1 2	7 8		<i>digging all available</i>
	<i>John Moran</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	1 2	6 5		<i>ground for winter</i>
	<i>John Croyle</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	1 2	7 7		<i>crops-</i>
	<i>John Golden</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	1 2	8 7		
	<i>Mary Bunt</i>	X	X	X	X	X	X	6	1 3	4 7		<i>Cleaning out</i>
1		X	X	X	X	X	X	5		6 3		<i>cess pool at</i>
2		X	X	X	X	X	X	6		7 7		<i>old abbey and</i>
3		X	X	X	X	X	X	5		5 10		<i>Carting Contents</i>
4		X	X	X	X	X	X	3		3 6		<i>into garden</i>
5		X	X	X	X	X	X	4		5 3		<i>for Raspberry pit</i>
6		X	X	X	X	X	X	4		5 3		
7		X	X	X	X	X	X	2		2 8		<i>Wednesday very wet</i>
8		X	X	X	X	X	X	4		2 8		<i>Thursday wet also</i>
											4 6 9	<i>at mid noon staff</i>
												<i>and said nothing</i>
												<i>while raining</i>

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beautiful Broad Walk on the Garbally estate. In 1868, he was employed by the Seymours as Head Steward. Soon after his arrival in Somerset, he met Honora Moclair from Aughrim, governess to the Seymour children. They married two years later, in 1870, and after their wedding they were given Coolbeg House and the accompanying lands, which had previously been leased by another McLoughlin family - not related to Bernard.

The two journals are a meticulous record of aspects of life on the estate. The names of the labourers are recorded, together with their wages, their hours of work and even the comings and goings of the landlord. Weather reports, types of plants sown and the nursery where the plants were purchased, are mentioned. The great walled garden, the walls of which are still intact, was a place of particular pride. Many rare and exotic plants were imported

from overseas as the gentry of the district vied with each other to produce the most outstanding display. The walls were high so as to afford protection to the fruit trees from the rigours of the elements. Hives of bees were maintained in the garden to aid pollination. Fireplaces were placed strategically so that fires could be lit as a protection against frost. Lamps were also used for this purpose.



Head gardener
Bernard
McLoughlin,
with two
Seymour ladies

The garden workers in the 1864 Journal are listed as Mike Madden, Robert Dunne, Mick Dunne, John Boyle, Pat Golden and

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Stephen Moran. They earned 5s. 10d. for a six-and-a-half day working week. Others who worked on a casual basis during that year were Mike Spain, Tom Burke, Martin Walsh, Ned Quinn, Mike Healy, Richard Conroy, Mike Walsh, Martin Walsh, Pat Moran, Pat Fahy, Martin Broderick, Dan Haney, Martin Donohue, John Lyons, Frank Mc Loughlin and Mike Horan.



The list of workers who were employed six years previously in 1858 for cutting turf and harvesting potatoes included: Martin Haverty, Patsy Houlihan, John Geraghty, Patsy Kelvin, John Carrole, John White, Daniel Francis, Pat Treacy and Pat Ryan. They were paid at the rate of 4s. 6d. for a six and a half day week.

Walled Garden
at Somerset
as it looks today

In the 1874 Journal, we notice that the men were paid 12s. 4d. for a fortnight's work. The men listed were Martin Haverty, Marty Haverty, Larry Goode, Mic Coen, John Geraty, Matty Geraty, Kate Geraty, Mary Geraty, Tom Dooly, Martin Dooly, Ned

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Garden at
Somerset
House



Martin
Dooley,
gardener

Dooly, John Dooly, Tom Geraty, Augy Hoary, Billy Hoary, Stephen Burke, John Madden, Mic Madden. Two additional workers were referred to as 'Tom's sister and Matty's wife'! Unlike the earlier journal, this one also lists the other workers on the estate.¹

In 1875, William Conway Somerset Seymour died at the age of fifty-four leaving his wife Eliza and their young family. Eliza, formerly Eliza Cusse of Chisenbury, lived until April 7th 1915. They had four children: Charles (1862-1924) who became a civil engineer; William (1863-1939), who did not marry and lived in Cleaghmore, Ballinasloe; Alfred, who died as an infant; Eliza (1865-1958) who lived at Gentian Hill, Galway.

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Some years after William's death, the Somerset estate was once more put into the hands of a receiver. Mr. Delahunt, a neighbouring farmer from Skycur, helped Eliza and her son



Somerset
House

William to manage the estate on behalf of the family from time to time. Charles, a railway engineer, also helped out during the time that he was stationed in Athlone.

In the 1880s, Somerset was described by a visitor as a substantial three-storey residence with sufficient out offices and servants' quarters to suit a farm of its size. At the entrance, there was a beautiful gate-lodge built in what is known as 'the ink-bottle design'. The beauty of the surrounding parkland was enhanced by its mature trees and tasteful gardens.

According to the 1901 Census, Eliza was recorded as the head of the Seymour household, a widow of seventy-four and an Episcopalian.



'Inkpot'
gate-lodge,
main avenue

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Residing with her was her thirty-four year-old daughter Eliza and her thirty-six year-old son, William, both described as Protestants. Also in the house were two servants, Mary McDonnell, a Catholic aged fifty, a native of County Clare, and Margaret McDonnell, also a Catholic, aged nineteen, from Galway. Both are listed as being able to read and write.

The Seymour family was visited at Somerset House in July 1907 by an Australian cousin, Seymour George Pilkington Davies. By a stroke of good fortune, he had researched the Seymour family history utilising the services of professional genealogists, and in this

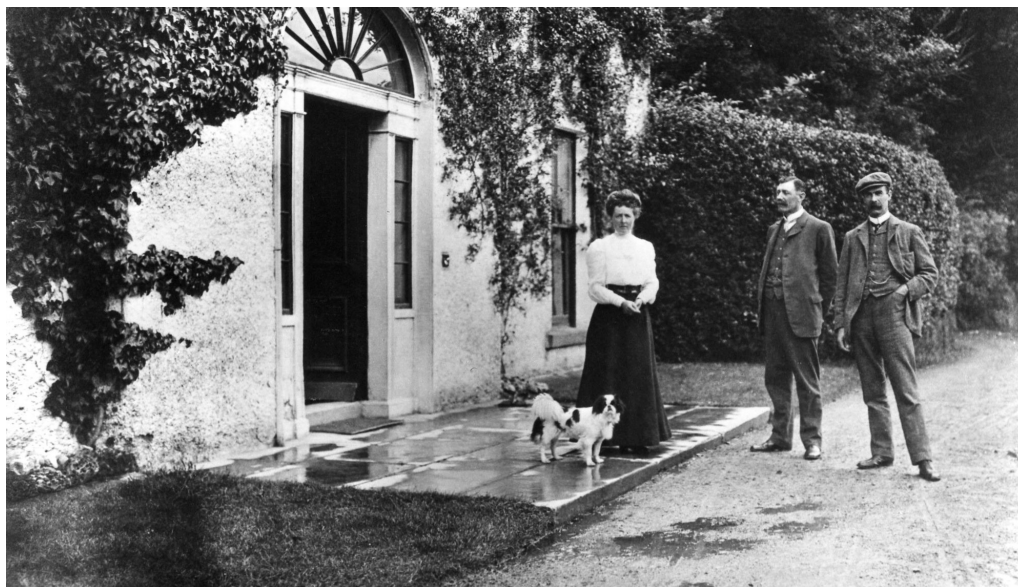
Storm
Damage
Main
Avenue
1903



way, many family records such as will extracts and deeds were copied before the originals were lost in the disastrous Four Courts fire of 1922.

William, Eliza's second son, took over the running of the Estate for a very brief period following his mother's death in 1915. In May of the following year, William placed an advertisement in the *East Galway Democrat* to say that he was giving up his farm due to ill health and the pressure of the financial difficulties he was experiencing. Another reason for his decision may have been the

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Miss Seymour,
Charles Seymour
and Australian
visitor Seymour
G.P. Davies
in front of
Somerset House

pressure exerted by the large number of smallholders in Clontuskert who were clamouring for the division of the larger estates in the parish.

In 1917, the workers on the estate were listed as: Mary Forde, Mrs. T. Dooley, Mrs. Dooley, Molly Forde, P. Coyne, Tom Forde, Jack Forde, D. Callaghan, Paddy Larkin, Pat Forde and the Hanneys, Pat, Mick, Packy and Jack. The men earned 3s. 6d. per day while the women received 2s. 6d.

A glance at the auction notice prepared by E. Rothwell, Auctioneer, Ballinasloe, advertising the sale of stock and implements, gives another insight into life on a large estate at the turn of the century. Among the livestock listed were young cows in milk, three-year-old heifers in calf, a pure-bred Hereford cow and heifer, a three-quarter bred yearling



Denis Stevenson,
worker on
Somerset Estate

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Michael
Dooley,
groom at
Somerset
1910



Hereford bull, Aberdeen Angus store bullocks, two-year-old ewes with promising Oxford lambs at foot, two very useful six-year-old farm mares and one driving cob. Farm implements for sale included a chill plough, wheel rake, hay kicker, water cart in frame, combined mower and reaper, full-sized threshing machine with shakers, earthenware feeding troughs, larch hurdles, oat bin, new larch gates, four dozen new rabbit traps, a lathe, cross-cut saws, yard lamps and a large assortment of carpenter's tools. Items which had been in use for family transport included a phaeton with hood, a sidecar with cushions, a cob and donkey cart, a polo trap, a new Rallie trap with lamps and cushions complete, one Liverpool gig, and an assortment of brass-mounted harness.

The half-year rents payable to the estate in 1915 were:

Sarah Colohan	£11 10s. 0d.	Rev. R. Shannon	£31 0s. 2d.
Hugh Bleahen	£95 5s. 0d.	Maria Colohan	£7 15s. 0d.
Michael Dolan	£74 6s. 0d.	P. Hanney	£1 19s. 0d.
Mr. Madden	£63 0s. 0d.	Mr. McLoughlin	£8 0s. 0d.

In addition, P. Larkin and Mr. Rothwell paid £3 10s. 0d. and £80 0s. 0d. respectively for conacre, while P. Hannigan and sons paid £140 for timber.

A large field was let for meadow to: P. Connor, J. Bohan, S.Dunne, M. Larkin, M. Kirwan, J. Cunningham and two plots to P. Colohan. The total sum for the entire field came to £57 7s. 0d.

Having sold the estate to his older brother Charles, William then moved to a house in Cleaghmore, Ballinasloe where he lived

The Seymours of Somerset

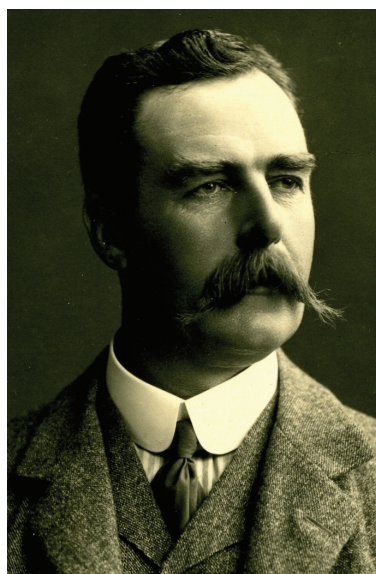
until his death in 1939.

A letter from Patrick Larkin to Charles Seymour in the late Spring of 1916 gives an insight into the day-to-day affairs of the estate at that time. Patrick was looking after that portion of the estate which was not let to tenants during this period. It appears that Charles Seymour was then based in Longford before he returned to Somerset to take over the running of the estate. He then attaches his account.

The bill mentioned was from Curley Bros., Kiltormer, dated May 11th 1916, and was prepared for 'Mr. Seymour, Longford'.

Shortly after the auction, Charles Seymour took over at Somerset. He was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, having qualified as a Civil Engineer. After qualification he went to work with the Midland and Great Western Railways of Ireland. During his time as a railway engineer, he was responsible for a variety of railway designs including the branch line to Loughrea. In 1892 he married Minella, daughter of John Rose of Clowater, County Carlow. They had two sons, William and Charles and two daughters, Minella Beatrice and Lillian Loris. Charles lived in Somerset from 1915 until his death in 1924. His wife died in 1949 and both are buried in Clonfert Cathedral.

Their eldest son William was born in 1896 and served in World War 1, as did several of the tenants and workers on the



Charles Seymour,
railway
engineer

The Parish of Clontuskert - Glimpses into its Past

Somerset
Friday

Hon. Sir

I enclose years rent now due.
I am also sending 12 years re for
herding & fensin. we did not build
the walls yet nor had no time its
only now we have the crop sowed
the spring was so hard & John Gerahty
stayed home to sow his own we had
to loose a lot of time this year
with the ewes some of them were
delicate both ewes & lambs only I
had some of the cake you sent to
give them some of them would
never pull throw we have 59 lambs
& one ewe to lamb yet

we only lost one ² one more May 18th with wool.
As soon as we can we will do the
wrest of the walls
The Springers time will be up on Sunday
Past she has not made much of an udder
as yet if you are scarce in grass you
could leave her another week but better
bring her before she calfs
The Sheep & cattle are going on
all right please keep 10 for
the lamb I took of a month ago
that I was telling you about
I put the cow down as usual

I am Sir
Your Obedt Servant
Pat Larkin

The Parish of Clontuskert - Glimpses into its Past

	£	s	d
1/2 years herding	3..	10..	0
9 days fensin + reparing wirefense		13..	6
2 days going for cattle		3	0
1 day changin hay		1..	6
1/6 for wire staples		1..	6
2/6 for getting lambs cut		2..	6
Lourleys Bill		8..	3
	5	8..	3
10 for lamb		10..	0
	4..	10..	3

Larkin Bill

Somerset estate. After the war, he continued to serve in the British army. He also fought in World War Two and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. Before his retirement in 1950, he became D.D.S. of the Western Command with the rank of Brigadier. He died in 1957. His career bears witness to the continuing career involvement of many members of the Seymour family in the British army from their first arrival in Ireland. The 15th Royal Huzzars were billeted at Somerset House for a time during the troubled year of 1921. There is an underlying irony concerning the Seymour connection with the British army in the frequently related story told by some of the workers on the estate. If the story is to be believed, several I.R.A. members on the run were allowed to shelter in the attics on the very night when a

The Seymours of Somerset

dinner in honour of a group of British army officers, was being held in the dining room downstairs.

Their second son Charles took over the ownership of Somerset after his father's death in 1924. Major changes were taking place in land ownership and the division of lands in the area at the time. The large Pollok estate was in the process of being divided and some of it was given to veterans of World War 1 as a reward for their service. At this time, land agitation was the major preoccupation among many of the parishioners of



(Left)
William Seymour
April 1916

(Below)
15th Royal
Huzzars. Billeted
at Somerset
1921



The Parish of Clontuskert - *Glimpses into its Past*

Clontuskert. Apart from ninety-nine acres around the house, all of the Somerset estate was being let to large-scale livestock farmers for grazing land. This led to friction in the parish with smallholders demanding that all such land should be divided and given to them in order to enlarge their small farms. The movement, spearheaded by the United Irish League was sometimes bitter and divisive. This issue is dealt with in Chapter 15.

Charles Seymour continued to farm at Somerset until the 1940s. In 1945, he was given the option by the Land Commission of surrendering his farm at Somerset in exchange for another at Rock Lodge, Trim, County Meath. He accepted the offer, thus bringing to an end an almost three hundred year association between the Seymours and Clontuskert. He was a very popular man in the locality and his six feet six inch frame was a familiar sight at all the

cattle and sheep fairs in the Ballinasloe area. Gradually, most of the estate had been taken over by the Land Commission. Houses were built along a newly opened road linking the Old Road with the road between Madden's Cross and Graveshill.

In 1948, at the age of forty-three, Charles married Patricia Audrey from Monkstown, Co. Dublin. His association with the Clontuskert area continued in his frequent visits to the Ballinasloe fairs where he bought many pens of sheep on the Fair Green. Four children were born to the marriage;



Charles
S. Seymour

The Seymours of Somerset

William John Somerset Seymour who died tragically at the age of six in 1951; Hazel Audrey, Anne, and Simon. Simon still lives in County Meath with his wife Barbara and their three children. His sister Anne lives close by at Rock Lodge. Charles Seymour died on September 13th 1983, aged seventy-eight years.



Wedding of
Charles and
Patricia Seymour

Somerset House and ninety acres of land was given to the McDermott family in 1948. The McDermotts decided that they were unable to maintain such a large house, and as a result, the main three-storey section was pulled down. A two-storey extension, once the servants' quarters, was retained as the McDermott family's residence. The south wing of the rectangular farmyard buildings was also demolished. Fortunately, the great walled garden still survives, giving a glimpse into the lifestyle of the former owners. Most of the great trees, which once adorned the lawns surrounding the house, have long since disappeared. In 1970, Pat McManus from Moore, County Roscommon, bought the property from the McDermotts and his son Noel now resides in the house.

The Parish of Clontuskert - *Glimpses into its Past*

With the departure of Charles Seymour and the division of the estate by the Land Commission, almost three hundred years of continuous occupation by the Seymour family came to an end. Initially, they were granted their land in Clontuskert parish because of their allegiance to the regime of the hated Cromwell. History will be kind to the Seymours however. By and large, they were benign landlords and good employers who are still spoken of in the parish with a degree of affection not normally accorded to families of their tradition.

Larkin's 1819
Map of Central
Clontuskert



| The Parish of Clontuskert - *Glimpses into its Past*

hundred yards beyond the modern limits of the town, the 1691 road followed the old roadway to the left leading up and over Liscappul hill. Having passed across the Glan road, it rejoined the modern road to Galway at Melehan Bridge, a few hundred yards from Aughrim.

The Commander of the army was Godert de Ginkel, a sixty-one year old Dutchman and friend of William of Orange. Even though he had not previously set foot in the area, he was well briefed about its topography by his military scouts. His staff directed him to the top of Urraghry hill, aptly referred to by the local people as Lios Árd, or the 'high fort'. From this vantage point he was able to survey the positions of the enemy troops to the west and to oversee the deployment of his own forces as they moved to their allotted battle positions.

Urraghry Hill

