

indefatigable collectors of Cavan's folklore was P. J. Gaynor who probably holds a record for collecting more than 17,000 pages relating to folklore and traditions of south Ulster and Meath before he died in 1961.

This series, published by William Nolan for more than twenty years, represents an enormous archive of research papers on Irish counties – probably in excess of seven hundred essays. At this stage in the project it might be useful to consider producing an index to the complete collection, perhaps a searchable electronic index, by author and theme, which would enhance the accessibility of the series.

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Patrick Cosgrove, Terence Dooley, and Karol Mullaney-Dignam (eds), *Aspects of Irish Aristocratic Life: Essays on the FitzGerald and Carton House* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2014, 235 pp., £50 hardback)

This is a valuable collection of essays arising from a conference held at Carton in 2010. The title is consciously generalised, eschewing any pretension to provide an 'exhaustive' account of the FitzGerald or of their principal dynastic residence, Carton in County Kildare. Repeatedly, authors among the nineteen essayists point up the need for a more comprehensive study of the family and of their magnificent seat, and in many senses this book is a tantalising appetiser for the definitive work to come. And come it must, for this is a dynasty and an estate of the first importance for the history of Ireland from the later middle ages to the twentieth century. A number of dominant themes emerge from the wide range of essays: the eminence of the FitzGerald in the governance and representation of Ireland; the fluctuating political fortunes which successively sustained and undermined the family's status; wealth, magnificence and conspicuous artistic display; astute matrimonial strategy and the role of women in cementing and sustaining the dynasty; the life of the estate, its tenants and employees, and in particular the relationship between Carton and Maynooth.

Much has already been published on the history of the FitzGerald in the late medieval and early modern periods by Raymond Gillespie, Mary Ann Lyons, Colm Lennon and Carol O'Connor. These scholars provide essays in this book on the family's history in the Tudor period and beyond when its wealth exceeded that of many English peers and its influence in Ireland ensured the Crown's reliance upon it for secure governance. Gillespie uses an estate survey of 1540, made following the confiscation of lands after the rebellion of Silken Thomas, as a means of visualising 'Carton before Carton' and permitting 'us to peer inside' the manor. Mary Ann Lyons focuses on the Kildare Ascendancy and in particular on Gearóid Mór, 8th earl of Kildare, the only magnate capable of providing the 'cheapest and most effective government of Ireland'. Deputy Governor and Governor of Ireland during the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII, he suffered the consequences of backing the Yorkists in the War of

the Roses but nevertheless retained power and married the king's first cousin, Elizabeth St John. Gerald, 9th earl, was raised at the English court: witty, scholarly and a patron of Gaelic learning, he married Lady Elizabeth Grey and was sophisticated in his domestic arrangements, having sumptuous apparel, a portrait attributed to Holbein, and a library and a chapel with gold plate in his castle at Maynooth. When his power was threatened by Thomas Cromwell, his 21-year-old son 'Silken' Thomas launched a rebellion and was executed for treason in 1537. Though the family never regained the political power of Gearóid Mór, and were eclipsed in the seventeenth century by the dukes of Ormonde, they remained prominent in Ireland. Marriages helped, and among the most colourful of the FitzGerald women was Mabel Brown, wife of Gerald, 11th earl, a devout Catholic who harboured clergymen and was in later life particularly close to a Yorkshire chaplain. Clearly a force to be reckoned with, in her early life at court she and her husband were permitted a rare privilege by Elizabeth I; 'to lye together'.

The acquisition of the Carton estate is charted by Arnold Horner who demonstrates the process of successive purchases which led to the creation of the grand estate within its five mile boundary wall. Though the ruinous state of Maynooth Castle was clearly a major factor in the 19th earl's decision to acquire Carton, the importance of William Conolly's adjoining estate of Castletown was surely also a considerable spur to the creation of FitzGerald's great house. Like Castletown, Carton was as much a grand political statement as an opulent residence for Kildare and his progeny. A gap in the volume is the architectural history of Kildare's new mansion and its place within the wider history of Palladian architecture. Christopher Ridgway's claim for Carton as 'the grandest Palladian house in Ireland' requires further elucidation, as does Richard Castle's evident manipulation of existing fabric to achieve a house with two ranges of rooms divided by a deep spinal wall. While a fascinating account of musical activity at Carton by Karol Mullaney-Dignam makes sense of the Victorian organ in the Saloon or Eating Parlour, we need to know more of its design, and of the work of Cowtan and sons of London who remodelled the room in the mid-nineteenth century. The 19th earl and his Countess, sophisticated patrons of architecture, painting and the decorative arts, are equally elusive and in his introduction to the volume Terence Dooley makes the important point that the reasons for the FitzGeralds' re-emergence at the beginning of the eighteenth century remain to be elucidated. The patronage of the 20th earl and 1st duke and of the 2nd duke of Leinster is considered by Alison FitzGerald, and by William Laffan and Brendan Rooney, whose essays demonstrate the richness of Carton's contents with canvases by Claude and Gaspar Dughet in the Eating Parlour, a legendary silver dinner service and a superlative set of estate views, four of which, by Thomas Roberts, were seen to spectacular effect in the exhibition *Ireland: Crossroads of Art and Design, 1690-1840* at the Art Institute of Chicago, March-June 2015, which featured many objects and art works from Carton.

The relationship with Maynooth, both seminary and town, is addressed in

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a number of essays by Cormac Begadon, Arnold Horner and Ciarán Reilly, which point up the place of Saint Patrick's College in wider government strategies during the revolutionary period and which show the dependence of the local economy upon Carton and the College. The complex personalities of Edward FitzGerald, revolutionary and twelfth child of the 1st duke, and of the controversial 3rd duke (1791–1874), a strong unionist and promoter of emigration from the estate, are unpicked by Liam Chambers and Elizabeth Heggs. The nineteenth-century history and decline of the estate is charted by Patrick Cosgrove, Thomas Nelson, Terence Dooley and Christopher Ridgway. Among the most affecting quotations in the volume is Ciarán Reilly's citation from a journal of 1847 which described the night sounds on the estate: 'It is equal to the time of the cholera, when the deep wailings of the living for the dead woke us from our midnight slumbers.' When George V visited Ireland in 1911 Maynooth was the country's only ducal village though by then the electorate was predominantly nationalist, in 1899 returning to local government three unionists and eighteen nationalists. In the penultimate essay 'Decline and Fall', Christopher Ridgway notes the importance of Edward FitzGerald's memory in saving Carton from the fate of so many Irish houses in the period. In conclusion, Terence Dooley discusses the recent reversal of Carton's fortunes and the role of the Mallaghin family in preserving the house and estate for posterity. Though opinions differ on the remodelling of the estate and additions to the house, there can be no doubt that Carton continues to play a vital role in the economy and society of County Kildare.

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Vandra Costello, *Irish Demesne Landscapes, 1660–1740* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2015, 272 pp., £45 hardback)

This is a very original, in-depth and pioneering study with no parallel in scholarly works on Irish demesnes in a European context. The study is based on original research on a large variety of manuscript sources and makes use of a vast array of contemporary printed sources, such as gardening manuals. The author's direct observations of surviving demesnes greatly adds to the book's sophistication and range of insights. This research has been done in an appropriate critical manner and is highly informative. In addition, the work is firmly anchored in the limited secondary literature on Irish demesnes.

Chapters cover the political, intellectual and economic backgrounds of landed estates, their changing appearance in the eighty years between 1660 and 1740, the culture of improvement (including the new scientific empiricism of that age), and the creation of components of gardens, including pleasure gardens. Topics include horticultural advances, trees and woodlands, botanical developments, the use and control of water works, and field sports and hunting. Thus, the study presents a very large array of highly interesting topics