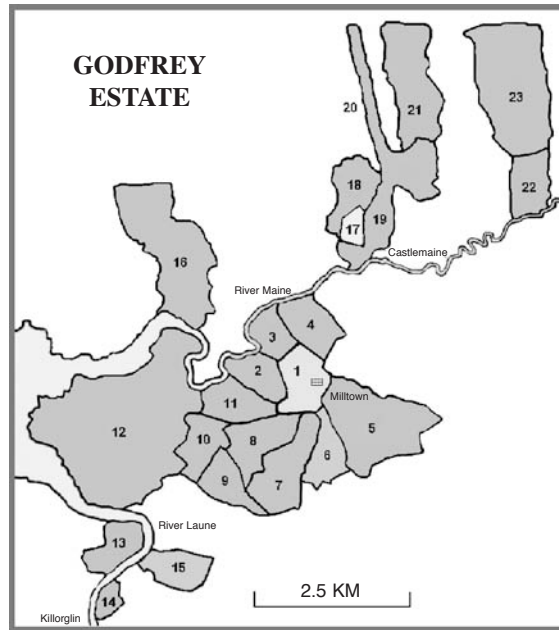


The Godfrey Estate During the Great Famine

John Knightly

The Godfrey estate, which covered over 7,000 acres in County Kerry, was granted to Major John Godfrey of Kent, under the Cromwellian settlement of Ireland in payment for military service. Under the Restoration, the estate was confirmed on Major John by letters patent dated 13 June 1667. It consisted of the following townlands: Abbeylands, Annagh, Ballyoughtra, Ballinamona, Ballygamboon, Ballymacprior, Callinafercy, Castledrum, Clouncarrig, Kilcoleman, Kilderry, Knockagurrane, Knockavota, Rathpoque and Steelroe, all situated in the Barony of Truckanancy. The estate town of Milltown was laid out adjacent to the Godfrey demesne in the 1750s by Captain John Godfrey, whose eldest son was made a baronet in 1785.¹ The development of Milltown was a deliberate attempt at urban planning by the landlord who hoped such development would increase the income and prosperity of his estate through rents, market tolls and the promotion of industries.² By in large it succeeded and Milltown flourished until the economic depression after 1815.

Sir William Duncan Godfrey (1797-1873) inherited the Godfrey estate in 1841 on the death of his father, Sir John Godfrey, 2nd Bart. Educated at Westminster school in London, Sir William later attended the Geneva Academy before embarking on a grand tour of Europe visiting Bologna, Milan, Rome and later Paris.³ Despite this cosmopolitan upbringing and frequent visits abroad, Sir William was largely a resident landlord. He was appointed a justice of the peace in 1822, captain of the Milltown Infantry in 1824 and sworn in as high sheriff of Kerry in 1829. At the instigation of Lord Kenmare, he was appointed a deputy lieutenant in 1832. Throughout the 1830s, Sir William managed the estates of both his brother-in-law, John Coltsmann of Flesk Castle near Killarney and that of his cousin, Arthur Blennerhassett of Ballyseedy. An avid farmer, Sir William kept an extensive herd of cattle, both dairy and beef as well as sheep and hogs. In 1839, he was awarded a medal from the Kerry Farming Society for the best Dutch cow. In 1843, he won a medal for the best Aberdeen turnips exhibited at Muckross and won further medals in 1844 for the



No	TOWNLAND	Acres	No	TOWNLAND	Acres
1	Kilcoleman Demesne	225	13	Ballymacprior (226 acres-sold in 1796)	
2	Abbeylands	171	14	Clooncarrig	76
3	Rathpoge West	191	15	Steelroe	140
4	Rathpoge East	212	16	Castledrum	707
5	Ballyoughtra North & South	526	17	Annagh Demesne	74
6	Lyre (leased only in 18th century)	187	18	Annagh & Cunnavoola	333
7	Knockavota	356	19	Ballynamona Lower	159
8	Knockagarrane	241	20	Laharan	250
9	Kilderry South	171	21	Ballynamona Upper	297
10	Kilderry North	268	22	Ballygamboon Lower & Killeagh	436
11	Kilburn	133	23	Ballygamboon Upper & Lisanoul*	1221
12	Callinafercy	1628		Milltown	53

The acreage of the Godfrey estate varied according to survey. Griffith's Valuation estimated that the estate covered about 8,000 acres. However, Godfrey estimates, excluding mountainous lands, put the acreage closer to 7,000 acres



Sir William Duncan Godfrey

best Ayrshire bull and the best breed of bull exhibited at an agricultural show at Blennerville.⁴ He was also recognised by the Royal Agricultural Improvement Society of Ireland for his use of advanced farming techniques. Politically, he was a liberal conservative and, in general, conservatives displayed more of a sense of noblesse oblige towards their tenants than perhaps many Whig landowners did.⁵ Sir William resided at Kilcoleman Abbey near Milltown, a large neo-Tudor style mansion, originally built 1772 but remodelled between 1819 and 1822 under the direction of the architect Richard Morrison and his son, William Vitruvius.⁶ Further building work was carried out in the early 1840s but

the house was never completed as planned. Sir William was a stalwart and committed supporter of the established church although his wife, Mary Teresa, was a devout Roman Catholic. The couple had ten children and in a family compromise, the boys were raised as Anglicans and the girls as Roman Catholics. Therefore, it was not surprising that the family were sympathetic towards Catholic emancipation. This liberal opinion was perhaps the only realistic option in a county where Roman Catholics predominated. Sir William and his brother, James, were among the Protestants of Kerry who signed a petition to Westminster in support of the grant to Maynooth College in 1845.⁷ The Godfreys supported all denominations whether Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian or Roman Catholic with either land for building chapels or with subsidies. The religious divide later prevalent in the 19th century does not feature prominently in the Godfrey papers although references are made to religious differences. That is not to say that proselytising was absent from the parish. In 1829, the Hibernian Bible Society, a revivalist evangelical group was established in Milltown, one of the many groups that set about converting Ireland with the same zeal that they employed in colonial Africa.⁸

Unlike the estate of Lord Kenmare, held predominantly by middlemen, the 19th century Godfrey estate was for the most part leased directly to between ninety and one hundred tenants, the figure fluctuating according to the times. Throughout the 18th century, the most common method of managing an estate in Ireland was to divide it among middlemen.⁹ Under Sir William's father, middlemen were gradually removed as their leases expired and replaced by direct tenants. In 1793, Sir John had approximately thirty-eight direct tenants, yet by the time of his death in 1841, the number of direct tenants had increased to over one hundred. The terms in leases also changed during the early 19th century, and farms were now usually let for one life and twenty-one years (instead of three lives), with explicit clauses against subletting and subleasing. In 1844, fifty-two Godfrey tenants held under a lease of one sort or another, thirty-one held at will and nineteen held under promise of a lease.

The Milltown area was noted for its rich pasturelands, dairy herds and butter production, what the Godfrey agent called, "prime dairy and fattening land". The profit derived from "score" on the Godfrey estate reveals the importance of dairying and cattle fattening. Score ground was traditionally used for grazing livestock and let, not by the acre, but by the "collop" or "cows grass".¹⁰ Most of the major Godfrey tenants

were relatively prosperous dairy farmers with holdings averaging between thirty and fifty acres. Many of them were prominent Protestant families with surnames such as Cunningham, Eagar, Giles, Hickson, Huggard, Jeffcott, Langdon, Miles, Neil, Palmer, Shewell, Stephens, Thompson, Turner, Twiss, West, Wharton and Williams. Prominent Roman Catholic tenants included the Bryans, Connors, Cormacks, Hanafins, Kellihers, McKennas, Mahonys, Moriartys, Murphys and Spillanes. Many of these families could be considered minor gentry or yeomen farmers, quite willing to support their landlord in times of crisis. It was later recounted, “the yeomen were in Milltown – the Godfreys, in their prime, kept a hundred yeomen there”.¹¹ Nearly all tenants were middlemen of sorts, letting tiny plots to cottiers in exchange for labour. It was reported to the Devon Commission that cottiers held plots “under the farmers and they pay enormous rents to the farmers for a very small holding of land and a miserable cabin”.¹² As Trench discovered in relation to the Lansdowne estates, rentals conveyed “no correct idea whatever” of the real number of occupiers on an estate.¹³ For instance, of one hundred and eighty-nine occupiers in eight townlands on the Godfrey estate in 1847, only fifty-one were direct tenants of the landlord, the rest holding less than an acre, often a miserable cabin along the roadside or a potato plot.¹⁴ Most cottiers, who were sometimes related to the principal tenant, lived in abject poverty. Cottiers had little or no contact with the head landlord, unlike tenant farmers who had regular dealings with the landlord or his agent concerning various issues but more particularly the payment of rent. The twice-yearly gale day was a fixed event when tenants would flock to Milltown, cash in hand, to settle their accounts. Often gale day fell after market day when money was plentiful.

However, the Godfrey’s relationship with their tenants was not simply a record of cash transactions but included various other elements essential in the management of a landed estate. Allowances were given for fertilising with lime, for fencing, for drainage works, for building barns and cottages and for planting trees and orchards. Rent abatements were given when the harvest was bad, where flooding occurred, where animals died from disease or when a tenant successfully petitioned the landlord for a reduction in the rent. Occasionally rents were written off as unrecoverable particularly where tenants were ejected from their holdings or where they surrendered or abandoned their farms. Sir William’s agent, William Spring, closely observed the activities of tenants, and knew those with capital to improve, those who were

industrious, solvent, honest, indolent, litigious, and so forth. Tenants often sought landlord intervention to resolve disputes over land and rents and, given the landlord's role as magistrate, frequently sought legal advice. Contrary to popular myth, tenants did not require the landlord's permission to marry, but permission was sought and required where fathers wished to pass holdings to their sons, usually when the latter got married, or where tenants wished to divide farms.

The years before the Famine were economically turbulent and the overall condition of many poorer tenants hardly improved. What was gained in one year was lost in another. Both tenants and landlord were obsessed with the success or failure of the potato crop. Eleanor Godfrey remarked in 1839, how Sir John was "quite afraid of a failure in the crops and makes himself uneasy about the prospect".¹⁵ Overpopulation, subdivision and reliance on the potato were problems too ingrained and too widespread for any landlord to tackle in any meaningful way. As Ó Gráda has remarked, "Irish landlords lacked the incentive, the power, or the imagination to fulfil their providential duty".¹⁶ Inglis wrote in 1833, "Milltown is a very poor town, the property of Sir John Godfrey who from all that I could learn has more the will than the power of benefiting it".¹⁷ Nevertheless, the Godfrey family adopted a distinct paternalistic attitude to the management of their estate, an attitude in part derived from a strong Christian faith. They maintained a school and dispensary in Milltown, sought to introduce better agricultural methods and encouraged cottage industries such as linen making. Charity was regularly dispensed, the poor given clothing and fuel, and during bad times, rice and Indian meal. Sir William may have been "the best-dressed man, as well as the greatest swell in [Kerry]" but he was not detached from local concerns or events.¹⁸ He bought and sold livestock at local fairs, attended tenant funerals, and not only signed leases but often formally and in person handed possession of farms to tenants.¹⁹ It was not therefore, as it is sometimes portrayed, a faceless mass of humanity outside the demesne gates or an alien heartless landlord within. Consequently, when disaster struck in 1845, it was inevitable that many tenants would look to the landlord for relief.

On 18 October 1845, an "extraordinary" meeting of the Tralee Board of Guardians, including Sir William Godfrey, was summoned to "take into consideration the accounts relative to the state of the potato crop".²⁰ The *Kerry Examiner* reported that the potato crop was "for miles to the west of Killorglin in a deplorable state".²¹ James Prendergast, who lived in Milltown, vividly described the onslaught of the blight in letters to his

children in America:

...a disease has seized the potato crop, which was the standing food of the country. The potatoes, which were good and healthy a few days since, are now rotten in the ground.²²

A Relief Commission was established by the government in November 1845 to advise as to the extent of the potato blight nationwide and to instruct, assist and coordinate the activities of local relief committees. These local committees, made up of landlords, magistrates, clergymen, merchants and poor law guardians, were established in February 1846 in each county. The role of these committees was to raise funds locally, submit proposals for public works, advise on the deserving poor and distribute food.²³ Within the Tralee relief committee region were six local sub-committees including that of Milltown, which embraced the parishes of Kilcoleman, Kiltallagh and Keelgarylander. The Milltown relief committee, chaired by Sir William, was operational by April 1846.²⁴ Another committee was established for Milltown village in February of that year in response to the setting up of depots for the storage and distribution of food.²⁵ By this stage, many landlords were actively involved in relief efforts. In May 1846, Sir William purchased a large quantity of Indian meal to bridge the period before the first potato crops became available.²⁶ According to the *Kerry Evening Post*, the sale of meal proceeded slowly at first because surviving potato stocks were still sufficient. Prendergast, writing to his children remarked:

the state of the country is not as distressing as was dreaded in the beginning of this year, but that was owing to the supplies of foreign provisions brought into the country and to the public works carried on to give the poor employment...real distress was scarcely known here, thank God.²⁷

Purchasing foodstuffs was not a famine innovation. Sir John Godfrey purchased Indian meal for the poor during the famine of 1821 and, in 1837, bought large supplies of potatoes and oatmeal to alleviate distress. His wife, Eleanor Godfrey, established a relief fund for the distressed poor during the 1830s that regularly purchased meal.²⁸ Eleanor also established a linen committee that helped and advised local weavers, and a clothing committee whereby the poor and destitute were clothed.

Despite widespread alarm, the potato crop saved in 1845 together

with government aid was generally sufficient to prevent widespread distress during the spring and summer of 1846. However, the crisis deepened dramatically from November that year when the potato crop failed yet again, this time almost in its entirety. Prendergast wrote:

The state of this country is almost beyond description, nothing to be seen in all quarters but distress and destitution, famine and starvation threatening everywhere...the best farmer here is as short...as the poorer classes...the supply of the Country, it is dreaded, will soon be exhausted unless supplies are brought in from abroad.²⁹

One newspaper reported, "You may say without any exaggeration that in Milltown, the potato crop is virtually gone. There will not be a potato in the country by the 1st of December".³⁰ A naïve faith in the potato had proved fatal. The 1846 police returns for the parish of Kilcoleman noted that 530 acres of potato were sown that year, only ten less than that sown in 1845.³¹ Yet, the returns also noted that farmers were beginning to replace potatoes with oats, a vital cash crop for many during the famine.

In the face of growing destitution, the government decided to provide employment through public works schemes, the cost of which was to be split between ratepayers and the government. Indeed, many resident landlords actively petitioned the government to provide employment. In a memorial to the Relief Commission, Sir William remarked upon the "pressing necessity of providing immediate employment & relief for the poor of this district who are suffering great want & privations from the failure of the potato crop and the consequent high price of provisions".³² He also warned, "the people have endured their wants & privations with resignation and patience but if employment and relief are delayed much longer, the peace & tranquillity of this district must be seriously endangered".³³

Despite later criticism as being wasteful and inefficient, public works were seen as doing some good in keeping people alive and various landlords including Sir William Godfrey appealed for further funds to prolong relief.³⁴

I appeal to you on behalf on the suffering population of the district...to ask...for more funds to employ the people & particularly to finish such works as have been commenced & remain unfinished in consequence of the excessive waste & mismanagement caused by the inefficient manner in which the works have been hitherto carried on.³⁵



Mary Teresa Godfrey

However, despite such heartfelt appeals, increasing costs and fears that public works would keep labourers off the land meant that they were disbanded by the government in the spring of 1847 and substituted by soup kitchens.³⁶ Some landlords had already established such facilities for their tenants. Sir William's wife, Mary Teresa Godfrey, established a detached soup kitchen adjacent to Kilcoleman Abbey in May 1846 where soup, made under her direction, was distributed to the poor in large quantities three times a week.³⁷ Two of Sir William's cattle were killed to help feed the poor in May 1847 and another two in December 1849.³⁸ Sir William also kept a running account with Ellen Moriarty, a

Milltown merchant and surviving receipts indicate that tenants were given provisions for which the landlord paid, "Mrs. Moriarty will please give Widow Sullivan of Castledrum one half barrel of seed oats and charge same to account of Sir William D. Godfrey".³⁹ A government-sponsored soup kitchen was finally set up in Milltown in March 1847 after the secretary to the relief committee wrote to the Relief Commission requesting two soup boilers of a hundred gallons each, "as the destitute derive much benefit from the use of soup".⁴⁰ The soup kitchens demonstrated the ability of the government to feed over three million people daily, although the effectiveness of a diet based on thin meal-based gruel was probably limited.⁴¹

One of the problems facing relief officials in Milltown was its isolated location halfway between Tralee and Killarney, which along with poor infrastructure hindered the transport of provisions. When the Milltown relief committee applied for food supplies from the Killarney committee, they were turned down under the misconception that Milltown was a port-town and should be able to look after its own inhabitants.⁴² This isolation ensured that there were not enough local merchants in competition against each other or enough to prevent the hoarding of food leading to high prices. Sir William stressed to the Relief Commission that, "it was totally out of the power of the poor to purchase provisions from the high price that is at present demanded in this district".⁴³ The Milltown relief committee, in an effort to combat the hoarding of provisions, independently purchased Indian meal, biscuits and bread. The necessary funds were raised locally, encouraged by a government grant determined by the amount collected. By July 1846, the committee had raised nearly £260 in donations.⁴⁴ Sir William and Trinity College were the biggest donors, contributing £30 and £50 respectively. As a result, some 1,224 people were fed from the meal store in Milltown in June 1846.⁴⁵ The committee also expended £173 on breadstuffs, which were sold at between thirty and forty percent under market value in order to stabilize local prices and "to afford partial relief to the distressed".⁴⁶ The Milltown committee raised a further £204 in March 1847 to which Sir William subscribed £50 and the Dowager Lady Godfrey £30.⁴⁷ Meanwhile a Ladies' relief committee raised £82 in May 1847 hoping that the Relief Commission would match their funds. Helen Godfrey wrote to the Commission enclosing a "list of subscriptions received by the [Ladies'] committee towards the relief of the distressed population of this locality & for maintaining a soup kitchen".⁴⁸ To the chagrin of the Ladies' committee, the Commission refused to contribute,

informing them that “by Act of Parliament, grants are now restricted to relief committees formed by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland or the Finance Committees of Unions”.⁴⁹ Likewise, when the Rev. William de Moleyns of Killorglin warned the government about the great number of unemployed and the great scarcity of provisions, the Relief Commission officiously informed the rector that “the intervention of Government in the district is merely auxiliary to local exertions”.⁵⁰ The fact that traditional establishment figures met such indifference to their relief efforts highlights how the reality on the ground was gradually becoming divorced from the directives issuing from Westminster. Despite local charity, public works and soup kitchens, a newspaper report from Milltown indicated that fever and dysentery had taken a heavy toll with the result that “the graveyards are crowded”.⁵¹ It is impossible to quantify the exact numbers who died on the Godfrey estate but it is probable that disease killed many more than starvation. It was later recalled about the famine in Milltown, “’Twas bad – and the cholera after it was worse, when they got any food it killed um”.⁵²

From mid 1847, with falling food prices and the prospect of a good potato harvest, there was a change in official government policy. Soup kitchens were wound up and almost the full burden of relief was shifted away from the British treasury and onto the Poor Law Unions, which had been established under the Irish Poor Law Act of 1838. Each union imposed a local poor-rate to finance relief with the burden of rates shared equally between landlords and tenants on properties rated at over £4 valuation. The landlord, however, paid the full rate on holdings valued at £4 or under.⁵³ This move embodied a popular belief in Britain that Irish property must support Irish poverty conveniently ignoring the fact that many Irish landlords were already saddled with enormous debts. Most Irish landlords were frequently and, to their annoyance, erroneously portrayed in the British press as indolent, pampered, predatory despots ignoring the fate of their peasantry.⁵⁴ The so-called moralist position espoused by Trevelyan, which blamed Irish destitution on moral defects in the Irish character, might well have been embraced by radicals, economists and evangelicals but it is unlikely to have resonated with those resident Irish landlords with paupers clamouring for relief outside their gates.

Estate fortunes

The net rental of the Godfrey estate averaged £3,200 per annum before the famine.⁵⁵ A combination of family settlements, reckless

spending, poor management and unproductive investment led to debts absorbing two thirds of this amount. Landlords had assumed that rents achieved during the Napoleonic Wars as permanent rather than transitory and therefore charged their estates with either large settlements for children and dowagers or with further debts, or indeed both. In 1818, the Godfrey estate was charged with £10,000 for younger children. Between 1818 and 1822, further debts were charged on the estate to pay for rebuilding Kilcoleman Abbey and to allow for estate improvements such as the new flourmill built in 1819. In 1844, the interest paid on loans and inherited debts of £29,000 came to £1,450 per annum. Tithe-rents, head-rents, a jointure for the Dowager Lady Godfrey and an annuity for her unmarried daughter brought annual charges up to £2,143, leaving the landlord's disposable income at between £1,000 and £1,100 per annum. This disposable income was just about adequate to maintain the landlord in a suitable style, but the precariousness of this situation was obvious. Landlords were as dependent on credit as their tenants, and if tenants suffered hardship, than it was only a matter of time before landlords did likewise. During the famine, net rents experienced a steep decline, interest levels remained the same, which multiplied by five years of crisis, meant that landlords had to forego interest payments, borrow or considerably cut costs to survive. The last was rarely an option exercised by the Irish gentry.

Godfrey tenants typically paid their rents from proceeds arising from the sale of livestock, but during the famine, to ensure basic survival, tenants purchased food with money normally set aside for rents. For landlords, rents were therefore the first casualties of the famine. The net rent collected on the Godfrey estate dropped from £3,265 in 1844 to only £2,132 in 1848 reaching a nadir in 1849 when the landlord only collected £1,976 exceeding his annual interest bill. This represented a reduction of about 40 per cent in Sir William's rental income. Simultaneously, the value of allowances, rent abatements and poor-rates given by Sir William to his tenants increased dramatically. Sir William Godfrey allowed his tenants to offset their share of the poor rate bill against their rents. Furthermore, the value of the poor rate was allowed according to the rent they paid Sir William, not the rate set by the rate collector. Thus, Patrick McKenna, whose farm of 27 acres at Ballyoughtra was valued at £22 by the rate collector, was allowed to offset the poor rate according to his rent of £28.⁵⁶ Overall, the poor rate allowances given by Sir William to his tenants increased from £42 in 1845 to £477 in 1849. Labour rates, while small, were likewise offset against rents from 1848.

Godfrey Estate Rentals 1844-1850 ⁵⁷							
Year	1844	1845	1846	1847	1848	1849	1850
Total Gross Rent due	£3,329	£3,357	£3,327	£3,272	£3,343	£3,324	£3,198
Net Rent received	£3,265	£3,059	£2,730	£2,403	£2,132	£1,976	£2,464

Various remedies for dealing with arrears and non-payment of rent were routinely used by landlords, namely rent abatements, write-off of arrears, distraint of goods and that most emotive of topics, evictions. During the famine period, the use of such remedies intensified as landlords sought to remain solvent. Otherwise, they too would succumb, albeit to bankruptcy as opposed to starvation. The decline in agricultural prices from 1848 to 1850 and concurrent rise in arrears forced Sir William Godfrey to grant permanent rent abatements to twenty-two of his tenants. These were substantial farmers, both Protestant and Roman Catholic. Patrick Kelliher of Annagh, whose annual rent was £67, was allowed an abatement worth £19. James Neil, also of Annagh, whose annual rent was £38, was allowed an abatement of £6. William Burke of Ballygamboon was given an abatement of 25 per cent, which reduced his rent from £107 to £80. Giving abatements was both a realisation by the landlord that it was useless to expect tenants to pay rents they could not afford and a desire to keep tenants *in situ* that were somewhat solvent. Landlords did not wish to lose their most prosperous tenants, and the only way to keep such tenants was to offer reasonable inducements such as low rents, long leases, allowances and abatements. The situation was different on estates where middlemen predominated. Lord Kenmare saw no reason to grant his middlemen the large abatements that Sir William Godfrey found essential; indeed, it would have suited Kenmare if his middlemen succumbed.⁵⁸

Others Godfrey tenants were forgiven arrears such as Michael Moriarty of Kilderry, who was forgiven £67 in 1849, and brothers, Edward and John Leslie, who were forgiven £71. In total, over £1,100 was written off by the landlord between 1845 and 1850. The single biggest lost was that incurred by Timothy Lyne of Ballygamboon who held 54 Irish acres at £134 per annum. Lyne failed to pay the May and November gale of 1847 and, in desperation, finally gave up possession in April 1848 owing £200, which was reluctantly written off. If tenants surrendered farms owing large amounts of arrears, there was very little the landlord could do to recover these amounts except try and recoup them from new incoming tenants. Lyne's farm was subsequently let to one William Burke at a reduced rent of £107 per annum. Such new

tenants, offered vacant farms at much reduced rents, were often either existing tenants or large farmers from neighbouring estates or parishes taking advantage of the availability of cheap land. Another such farmer was Oliver Mason, who took a 114-acre farm in Ballygamboon for £120 in 1850 that was previously let for £147.

Despite offering rent abatements, writing off arrears (and excluding the hanging gale), over half of Sir William's tenants were in debt to their landlord by 1849. Accumulative rent arrears rose from £174 in 1846 to £1,153 by 1849. Arrears lurched dramatically in 1847 when they increased by £531 and again in 1849 when they jumped by £391. Only in 1850 did arrears begin to decrease indicating that the worst of the crisis was over. Somewhat surprisingly, many tenants managed to pay their rents in full during this period although invariably in an irregular fashion. The concentration on dairying and livestock production, relatively large farms and generous allowances given by the landlord contributed to this state of affairs. Farmers involved in dairying were little affected by the rise in labour wages but able to take full advantage of the fall in rents and a gradual recovery in cattle exports.⁵⁹ What is noticeable, as the famine progressed, is that unlike previous years, when rents were usually received via two or three cash transactions, rent was increasingly received in small amounts over many months. Michael Spillane of Knockavota usually paid his gale rent twice a year until 1847. In 1848, the ledger records five cash transactions, seven in 1849 and seven in 1850. He also paid with livestock, such as a cow valued at £4-15s-0d.

The landlord had the legal right to seize and hold property as security for payment of a debt or satisfaction of a claim. This power of distraint was an effective remedy against a tenant whose rents went unpaid. The Rev. Eugene O'Sullivan of Killorglin told the Devon Commission that distraint was the usual mode adopted in recovering rent from defaulting tenants in the mid Kerry area.⁶⁰ It was nevertheless an unusual occurrence as impounded cattle or grain was often eschewed at public auction given the public odium attached to distraint. The Godfrey rent ledger, in which all transactions were recorded, offers no indication of distraint with one exception. In 1847, when John, Joseph and Charles Thompson failed to pay their rent, their livestock was distrained and later sold (six cows and twenty calves), the only recorded case in which Sir William or his agent appear to have resorted to distraint.

A more effective method of dealing with defaulting tenants was the threat and reality of eviction. However, like distraint, evictions were not

entered into lightly as the landlord had to balance the costs of an eviction against the loss of arrears and potential agrarian violence, however unlikely it might seem, as those who benefited from evictions were nearly always other tenants. Although beholden to their landlord or to a middleman, tenants were ultimately at the mercy of prevailing economic and social conditions. Technically, the process of eviction removed insolvent tenants and replaced them with either solvent tenants or allowed for the consolidation of farms but this is to ignore the human suffering involved. Common perception linked famine related evictions with widespread mortality and destitution.⁶¹ Nationwide, the number of evictions rose sharply in 1847, peaked in 1848 before levelling off in 1849 and 1850.⁶² The huge increase in arrears on the Godfrey estate in 1847 and the enormous jump in poor rates give some indication why this was so. Out of one hundred and two tenants, six were evicted by Sir William Godfrey between 1846 and 1850, three of these alone in 1848. Nearly all evicted tenants owed over a half-year's rent. Those tenants who made some effort to pay, no matter how small the amount, were left in possession. The first famine-related eviction occurred in 1847 when Daniel Bryan of Annagh was ejected for non-payment of rent at the March Assizes. The farm (108 acres) was then let to Bryan's neighbour, Patrick Kelliher, who subsequently paid all Bryan's arrears. This eviction, however, was not all that it seemed. In 1844, Kelliher had purchased half Bryan's interest in the ejected farm and, in 1850, purchased the remaining interest for £120 with the landlord's knowledge and tacit agreement. In any case, Bryan was not thrown on the roadside as he had another larger farm held on the same terms at a rent of £67 per annum and remained in possession throughout and after the famine. Another tenant, John McCarthy of Castledrum was evicted in June 1848 at the Quarter Sessions at Tralee, owing a year's rent of £48. The vacant farm (50 acres) was subsequently let to a neighbour for six months for £11. However, similar to Bryan, McCarthy had another farm on the estate that he retained. Denis Mahony Leyne was also evicted in 1848 for non-payment of rent for the "miller's acres" in Milltown. No rent had been paid for over two years.

The remaining three tenants evicted by Sir William were among the few middlemen remaining on the estate. The middleman system had led to reckless subletting and subdivision of farms that landlords tried in vain to prevent.⁶³ In 1847, the townland of Kilburn (133 statute acres), held by a middleman, contained twenty-eight undertenants. By contrast, the Abbeylands (171 statute acres) was let directly to six tenants under

whom were only three undertenants. Most of these middlemen were absentees letting their holdings at vastly inflated prices. When the famine struck, their undertenants either fell into arrears or deserted their holdings leaving middlemen heavily indebted to their head landlord as happened on the Godfrey estate. In June 1848, the sub-sheriff took possession of the 113-acre Thompson farm at Ballygamboon under a "habere for non-title" granted in the Court of Exchequer. When a landlord wished to evict or eject a large number of tenants, the cheapest and easiest legal course was to sue for an ejectment on title in one of the superior courts, thus avoiding the lower courts where each tenant had to be sued separately.⁶⁴ Ejectment on title presented fewer difficulties than ejectments on non-payment of rent.⁶⁵ The yearly rent of £175 due by the Thompsons had last been paid in May 1847 and, furthermore, their 1794 lease had expired. Another middleman ejected was Sir William's cousin, Major John Godfrey, who held the demesne of Annagh under a 1791 lease for three lives. Major John, however, was non-resident and his farm let to undertenants who defaulted on payment. By 1849, arrears stood at £123, over one and a half year's rent. The total cost to the head landlord of removing this middleman, his undertenants, along with arrears came to £166. New tenants were put into possession and proceeded to pay £131 thus reducing the arrears bill to £35. Finally, in 1850, Sir William took an ejectment in the Queens Bench against John Orpin, a County Cork based middleman, for non-payment of rent on 120 acres in Knockagarrane. No defence was entered and judgement in Sir William's favour was granted with costs. The land was then let to seven tenants paying a combined annual rent of £125 instead of Orpin's £74. The removal of these middlemen saw the number of direct tenants on the Godfrey estate increase from 107 in 1841 to 117 by 1851.

Sir William Godfrey had no direct tenants whose holdings were valued under £4 so although cottiers were dispossessed on the Godfrey estate, it is not indicated in the Godfrey rent rolls. Comparing a poor law return undertaken in February 1847 and Griffith's Valuation of 1852, the number of tenants valued at under £4 on eight Godfrey townlands decreased from 186 to only 170. Yet, few of the cottiers mentioned in 1847 appear in the 1852 valuation, highlighting the widespread dislocation endured by many. Numerous tenants simply disappeared either through the workhouse, through emigration, or through death and disease.⁶⁶ What is of particular note is that where middlemen were removed, such as in Knockagarrane, one sees the greatest drop in population. In 1841, the number of inhabited houses in Knockagarrane

was twenty-five. By 1847, the number was nineteen. By 1852, according to Griffith's Valuation, the number of houses was nine. Only one of the thirteen cottiers mentioned in 1847 survived the famine. Merely two substantial tenants survived, one of whom increased his acreage from 22 acres to 36 acres. Other townlands such as Kilderry and Rathpoque experienced this drop before the famine when holdings were consolidated for the benefit of big farmers, prompted by the gradual shift to dairying and grazing. However, there is no hard evidence to suggest that small tenants or cottiers were deliberately forced to surrender their holdings by the landlord or his agent to aid farm consolidation during the famine; in any case, force was probably unnecessary by 1848. Tenant farmers and middlemen allowed labourers and cottiers onto their property against specific covenants in their leases and paid them with land, conacre or with wages. When tenant farmers were forced to purchase food in the absence of the potato, they could no longer afford to pay both rents *and* wages. Consequently, farmers either cleared their land of cottiers and labourers or refused them any assistance. The "Gregory clause" ensured that anyone occupying more than a quarter of an acre of land was ineligible for relief unless they gave up their holding. As a result, cottiers either fled to the workhouse or, reluctant to give up their only source of livelihood, perished. Tenant farmers, especially those involved in dairying, benefited from such clearances and indeed were probably instrumental in achieving them with landlord acquiescence if not involvement. This remains a largely hidden tragedy. Indicative of the fortunes of the cottier is Maurice Prendergast of Milltown who rented a "house and garden, the grass of a cow, three sheep and his ass and six pounds yearly" from John Lynch, a large farmer in Dromin.⁶⁷ Maurice and his family successively lay in fever, each getting repeated relapses. Only remittances from America that paid for medical care saved their lives.⁶⁸ Although Maurice survived the famine, John Lynch ejected him in May 1850, having charged Maurice for grazing his cow the same price in winter as in summer and cheating him out of his wages.

Official eviction statistics do not take into account those tenants who surrendered or voluntarily gave up their farms. For many tenants, surrendering a holding was the lesser of two evils as they were often entitled to some compensation by the landlord by virtue of their interest in the land. Similarly, for the landlord, a surrendered farm was preferable to a long-drawn-out ejection process. Twelve Godfrey tenant farmers gave up possession or surrendered their holdings between 1845 and

1850, while another two surrendered their cabins. In April 1847, Thomas Neil of Kilderry, who held at will, gave up possession of his farm being forgiven £28, one-year's arrears of rent. Sir William gave him £30 in consideration of improvements, which was recouped from the incoming tenant who paid a deposit of £44. The Widow Callaghan, who gave up her farm in May 1849, had her arrears of £51 forgiven and was given £12 besides. John Sullivan of the Abbeylands deserted his 54-acre farm in April 1849, the landlord losing a gale rent of £16. Subsequently, on appeal, Sullivan was forgiven his arrears and was given £12 in compensation that paid his fare to the New World. The smallest farm surrendered on the estate was 24 acres, the largest 113 acres.

Those, like Sullivan, desperate to escape destitution, emigrated if they could afford it to Britain or America. The sons of Daniel and James Mahony, both substantial Godfrey tenants, sailed for Boston in 1847. Unfortunately, those at greatest risk, namely labourers and cottiers, lacking the means to emigrate, often perished. The Prendergast letters mention over fifty families from the Milltown area in America and show that beneath the turmoil, emigrants were supported on both sides of the Atlantic by a wide network of contacts. Whether all ejected, dispossessed or destitute Godfrey tenants emigrated cannot be determined but it is certain that a large number of them did so. "Farmers are...deserting their farms and flying to America as fast as they can, destitution is seen almost everywhere".⁶⁹ One James Shea writing to the estate clerk remarked that tenants "are moving away with themselves...it has come to the point that any person cannot say who is the sure tenant".⁷⁰ Many died in transit thus generating the coffin ship tradition. Prendergast mentions the son of Daniel Heffernan of Rathpoque who died "within a few hours sail of Quebec" and Mary Connor of Milltown who "died after landing". He observed, "the accounts of deaths daily received here are really terrifying".⁷¹ Those that survived the voyage often remitted money home to assist those family members remaining in Ireland. Over the course of five years, the Prendergast children sent £200 to their parents in Milltown. This is reflected in Godfrey records, which show that certain emigrant families entrusted Sir William or local clergy with money for their families. Accordingly, we see John McKenna sending £27 from America to Sir William in trust for his mother, and Darby Donovan's son sending £9 to care for his father.⁷² Such transactions underline the multifaceted relationship between landlord and tenant.

Resident landlords faced a difficult choice. On the one hand, distraint

of goods and evictions signified attempts to remain solvent but on the other hand, such actions entailed human suffering. Ironically, landlords were often the only source of charity or relief in their localities but if their rental income collapsed then their ability to provide relief did likewise. In many respects, it was a vicious circle. Absentee landlords, not faced with such misery, could, and many did, turn a blind eye. The McGillycuddy of the Reeks observed, "resident landowners, witnesses of the misery which prevails, are willing to do all within their power to relieve it but the absent proprietors are altogether holding back".⁷³ As the famine progressed, resident landlords were increasingly forced to relieve distress by providing employment on a greatly extended scale.⁷⁴ Many landlords showed little enthusiasm for this responsibility and outside of demesnes and general charitable works, landlords would not have employed huge numbers of labourers except in times of severe distress. Sir William purchased large quantities of Indian and oaten meal and hired additional labourers to alleviate distress in 1842.⁷⁵ The reality of famine, however, forced landlords to alleviate or attempt to alleviate distress in their respective localities on a much larger scale than previously. Relief works on the Godfrey estate were integrated into the management of the 200-acre demesne, which was directly under Sir William's control. Although surplus produce was sold from the demesne, its main function was to supply Kilcoleman Abbey with meat, milk, butter and vegetables, supplies that would otherwise have to be bought at market. Before the famine, labourers worked in the demesne either under contract or under the watchful eye of the steward. The demand for agricultural labour depended in large part on the rhythm of the seasons being lowest between November and February and high in spring and autumn. The average wage bill for labourers working in the Godfrey demesne between 1839 and 1844 was £260 per annum. Other expenses included paying the salaries of the steward and dairymaid, hiring mowers, harness-makers, thatchers and contract workers, purchasing livestock and seeds, and paying the poor-rates and county-cess on the demesne. During the onslaught of distress in 1846, the number of labourers employed in the demesne increased dramatically. The *Kerry Evening Post* noted that Sir William,

...who in addition to subscribing largely to the relief fund of his own district, has not only considerably increased the number of his workmen but also raised their wages to one shilling per day. This work is almost entirely ornamental and will provide employment during the coming summer.⁷⁶

VALUE OF DEMESNE OUTPUT			DEMESNE EXPENDITURE			
YEAR	Value of output consumed by landlord	Value of surplus sold	Value of total output	Labourers' Wages	Other Costs	Total Expenditure
1846	£275	£369	£644	£488	£320	£808
1847	£385	£387	£772	£439	£333	£772
1848	£216	£633	£849	£333	£170	£503
1849	£170	£483	£653	£283	£237	£520
1850	£67	£700	£767	£281	£82	£363
1851	£45	£597	£642	£96	£76	£172

From January to June 1846, fifty-eight people on average per week were employed in the demesne.⁷⁷ Some weeks the total numbered over one hundred people. The average wage for males was twelve pence per day and for females, five pence per day. Labourers worked in the estate nursery and walled garden, planted shrubs and trees, sunk the river that meandered through the demesne, made paths, broke stones, hoed flowerbeds, built walls and even tended the hounds.⁷⁸ In total, Sir William expended nearly £2,000 on labourer's wages between 1846 and 1851. Given the value of demesne produce consumed by the landlord's own household, the sale of surplus produce hardly compensated for this level of expenditure. Sir William was eventually forced to sell most of his beef and dairy herd between 1848 and 1851 to balance the books and produce a profit. Conversely, the value of meat and dairy products consumed by his household dropped dramatically. The employment of so many labourers became increasingly difficult after 1847 in the face of a rapidly shrinking rental. This drop in income inevitably forced Sir William to cut back on relief efforts. By this stage, the government had made loans available to landlords at a low rate of interest to provide employment through estate improvements namely drainage works.⁷⁹ Some drainage schemes were implemented, but they amounted to only five percent of the total cost of relief works.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the *Kerry Evening Post* reported in October 1847, "the landlords of Kerry have applied for loans for the improvements of their estates to a much larger extent than the proprietors of any other county in Ireland".⁸¹ An engineer was commissioned by local notables to report on drainage and improvement works in the Castlemaine/Milltown area. In June 1847, a meeting was held in Milltown to commend this report to the Commissioners for Public Works so as to "give immediate employment

to the labourers and working classes” in “the present distressed state of the country”.⁸² It had to be shown that funds invested would yield a proportionate return, and the report estimated an increase of over 14% per cent in the value of the improved property. While the full amount applied for was rarely sanctioned, Sir William duly got a loan of £1,150 in January 1848. Under the scheme, 100 acres of the Godfrey estate were drained, 100 perches of farm road completed, 116 perches of farm road repaired, 800 perches of embankments reinforced and 5,500 perches of ditches and fences overhauled.⁸³ The reduction in labourers employed in the demesne was partly compensated by these works, which were undertaken in 1848 and 1849. Sir William also sought to reopen the lead and silver mines at Castlemaine to provide employment and commissioned a report from the Crookhaven Mining Company to ascertain the viability of such an idea given that there was a mining boom in the price of minerals such as copper and lead and an assumption that Ireland was potentially rich in metals.⁸⁴ A mining expert came from Cornwall to examine the lodes, but in the event, the cost proved detrimental and nothing was done until after the famine.

Landlords were not the only source of relief. The local clergy were active on relief committees and in fund raising, while the Presentation nuns in Milltown fed and cared for the numerous children under their care. Other well-to-do parishioners also contributed to the relief effort. The Godfrey estate clerk, Thomas Turner, was allowed to offset almost the full value of his rent against relief work in 1848, namely, repairing the Killarney road out of Milltown. Cornelius Murphy, a local merchant, was given building plots in Milltown (Church Street) at nominal rents by Sir William on condition that houses were built to provide local employment. It was also decided to pave the streets of Milltown, thus 3,443 feet of flagging, 657 feet of cut stone, 26 feet of footpath and 123 feet of sewer were laid down. The total cost came to £74, of which £33 was advanced by the local relief committee and the remainder advanced by Sir William.

Although, Prendergast noted, “our part of the country is as quiet as ever,” local disturbances and crime rates increased as the famine progressed notably when relief measures became dependent on charity dispensed by missionary groups.⁸⁵ The local Presbyterian minister, Rev. Edward Dill, an evangelical zealot, was a missionary agent and his idea of a cure for Ireland’s ills included proclaiming the gospel among the people through numerous evangelical groups and supporters.⁸⁶ One such supporter, Elizabeth Banks from Edinburgh set up an agricultural school

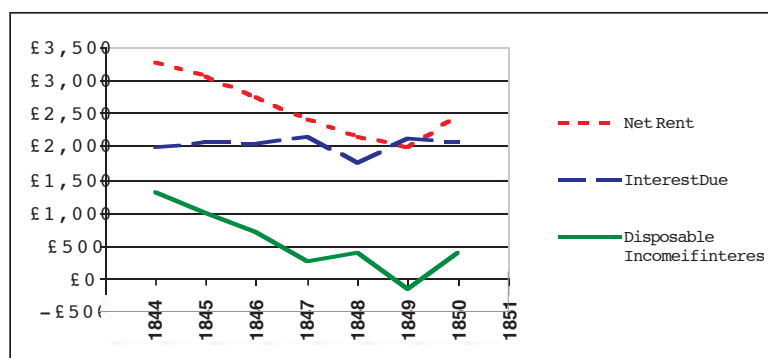
and soup kitchen in Callinafercy, near Milltown. Inevitably, charges and counter-charges of proselytism, bribery and religious bigotry arose when it emerged that Bank's soup was conditional on people accepting religious instruction. Her activities gave rise to numerous conflicts with the local Roman Catholic clergy who threatened to turn both the converted and those converting into hares! When biscuits and Indian meal supplied by the Quakers were fed to hungry children at the Methodist school in Milltown, the anger of the local Catholic clergy was palpable and parents were forced to remove their children. These evangelical efforts left a legacy. A resident in Milltown during the early 1870s remarked:

...there were very few poor Protestants. There was one small class known as soupers... applied derisively to those who in the famine years relinquished their Roman Catholicity and joined the Protestants for the sake of the soup.⁸⁷

Aftermath

For landed families such as the Godfreys, the famine resulted in reduced incomes, heavy poor rates and an accumulation of unpaid interest. Costly family settlements, expensive lifestyles, together with defective laws that permitted accumulation of debts far beyond the value of estates meant that many landlords were in a financial predicament well before the famine.⁸⁸ On the Godfrey estate, the narrow margin between income and expenditure, precariously maintained before the famine, was thrown into turmoil when rents worth over £5,000 were lost. Sir William's yearly interest bill on all inherited debts and charges in 1844 came to £2,143. Had £2,143 been paid yearly during the famine, it would theoretically have reduced Sir William's disposable yearly income from £1,076 in 1845 to nil by 1849 (see graph).

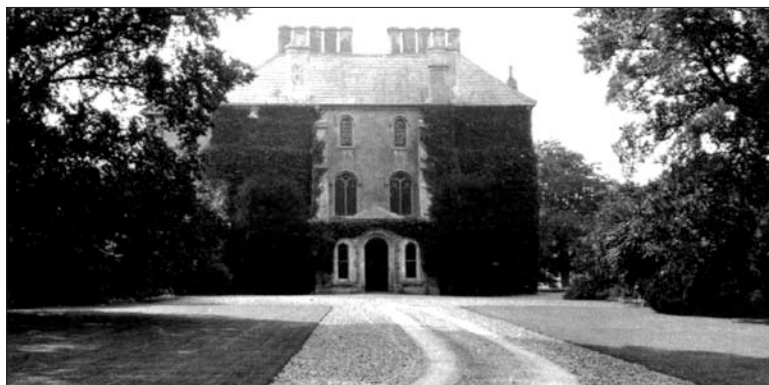
From 1847 onwards, Sir William had no choice but to default on almost all interest and annuity payments. When it came to a choice of paying interest or using money for personal needs, the latter course nearly always prevailed. Prudence was not a virtue practised with great enthusiasm among landed families. Everyday expenses had to be met, such as the maintenance of Kilcoleman Abbey, education of ten children, subsidising the demesne and the payment of county cess. If anything, everyday expenditure increased during the famine given the added cost of relief, the higher cost of procuring goods and the escalating cost of poor-rates. This level of expenditure could not have been met if interest on debts and charges had been paid in full. Curbing such expenditure



would only have caused further destitution among those who depended on landlord largesse. The first to feel the brunt of non-payment of interest and annuities were members of Sir William's own family. The Dowager Lady Godfrey, living in Bath, had to forgo a large part of her annual jointure of £461 and had to rely on other relations for financial support. Her daughter, Agnes Godfrey, had to forgo her annuity between 1846 and 1852. Sir William's brother, the Rev. John Godfrey, who did not receive his interest for four years declared: "Any promises which Sir William may make... of speedy payment cannot be relied on – we know this by experience. He is tempted to make them, intending to fulfil them, but in the end finds himself unable to do so."⁸⁹

Another cousin, the Rev. John G. Day had a charge of £3,899 on the estate earning interest of £195 per annum. By 1852, over £800 was due to Rev Day, who caustically wrote to Sir William, "Your 'few days' have as usual been extended to weeks and weeks to months and yet no arrangement has been come to with me...I am necessitated, though it grieves my heart, to resort to legal proceedings."⁹⁰

In 1844, the debt burden on the Godfrey estate was £29,033, for the most part predating 1818. As the Godfrey estate was entailed, no further loans could be charged on the estate until the heir John Fermor came of age in 1849. Subsequently the entail was broken and borrowing recommenced with a view to resolving Sir William's financial predicament. Before the famine, it was virtually impossible for proprietors to sell their estates to satisfy creditors because of legal obstacles. In July 1849, the government passed the Encumbered Estates Act, which had wide-ranging powers to order sales on the application of a single creditor as long as the annual charges and interest payments exceeded half the net yearly income of the estate.⁸⁸ In light of this act,



Kilcoleman House

the position of many landed families including the Godfreys, became increasingly tenuous. From 1848 onwards, warrants, notices and claims for outstanding loans and interest were served on Sir William with increasing regularity and urgency. Indicative of the financial crisis facing the family was a pathetic thank-you note to Edward Denny from Sir William thanking him for £30 borrowed to pay staff: "I have been much tormented the whole of last week for the want of some money to pay off the steward, &c here."⁸⁹ To forestall creditors and the sale of the estate, various loans were taken out from 1850 to 1853. By 1853, the total debt burden on the estate had risen to £38,122, an increase of over £9,000. Of this amount, over £6,000 went towards paying arrears of interest accumulated during and immediately after the famine. A bill from Sir William's solicitor was settled in 1850 for £700, and over £1,000 was spent on procuring an army commission for John Fermor Godfrey. By 1853, the yearly interest on all inherited debts came to £2,264. Fortuitously, the death of Eleanor Godfrey in 1852 meant her jointure of £461 was no longer a burden; hence, the estate was just about able to bear the additional loans.

By 1850, the famine as such was over, although repercussions were felt for many years afterwards. The 1841 census recorded an Irish population of 8.2 million. By 1851, this figure had been reduced to 6.5 million. These statistics give some indication of the scale of the disaster. It has been estimated that at least one million people died from starvation and attendant diseases, with the remainder emigrating to Britain and North America. The response of landlords to the famine was varied and changed as the crisis progressed. The burden of poor relief and the dramatic increase in rates persuaded even liberal landlords, such as the

Marquess of Sligo, to clear pauper tenants from their estates. The widespread use of evictions after 1847 further strained relationships between landlords and tenants. The assassination of Major Mahon in Roscommon in November 1847, who had evicted over 3,000 of his tenants, was indicative of the times. However, it would be wrong to censure all landlords. Sir William Godfrey responded to the crisis by giving allowances, abatements, offering outdoor relief and providing employment. There was little more he could have done given the dire financial circumstances in which he found himself.

Rising rentals throughout the 1860s and 1870s enabled the full payment of interest on debts, while the marriage between Sir William's son and heir, John Fermor Godfrey, and an English heiress, Mary Cordelia Scutt, in 1856, saved the family from immediate financial ruin. Mary Cordelia had a trust fund worth £24,000 and was heir to a substantial estate in Sussex, England. The income derived from her English investments and estates would continue to maintain the family until well into the 1940s. Nevertheless, the increased debt burden on it meant that the estate was ever vulnerable to changing economic circumstances. In 1879, Sir John Fermor Godfrey borrowed £45,000 from the Representative Church Body to pay off all creditors. Unfortunately for Sir John, this loan was taken out on the eve of a prolonged economic depression. The fear of another famine during the winter of 1879-80 rekindled painful memories and fed into a wider agitation that culminated in the Land War. The imposition of judicial rents from 1881 saw the Godfrey rental decline from a high of £4,100 in 1875 to a net sum of £2,228 in 1898, equal to the rental of 1815. Meanwhile, the arrears of interest on the 1879 loan of £45,000 reached £15,000 by 1908. When the Godfrey estate was finally sold for £47,000 under the Wyndham Land Act of 1903, the 5th baronet only retained the bounty of £1,500. The actions of his ancestors before, during and after the famine had cast a long shadow over the family patrimony.

Sir William relinquished active management of the Godfrey estate in 1866. He and his wife, Mary Teresa Godfrey, then spent some years in Paris before returning to Ireland. Sir William died at Woodlawn, Killarney, in September 1873. One newspaper obituary noted, "Sir William was a most charitable gentleman. Remember the fearful famine years, we saw hundreds thronging to Kilcoleman Abbey and when poverty was stealing life away, we saw Sir William coming to help, and everyday, the poor were clothed and fed."⁹⁰ The charity of Mary Teresa Godfrey was recalled on her death in 1883:

There are few still alive that can speak from personal observations of the untiring exertions of Lady Godfrey during the famine when the failure of the potato crop made its appearance. She was one of the first in Kerry to recognize this fact and the establishment of a soup kitchen was one of her first acts, this at a very early stage of the famine was in full working order. In saving many lives, the deaths in the locality were few in comparison with other districts in Kerry. Many days saw Lady Godfrey...standing from early morning until late in the evening engaged in distribution of relief. Her appeals to friends and to charitable associations for supplemental aid were incessant and successful.⁹¹

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mrs Valerie Bary for access to the Godfrey family papers and Mr Kieran Foley for permission to quote from his Ph.D. thesis, "Kerry during the Great Famine 1845-52". In addition, I wish to acknowledge the assistance of staff at the National Archives of Ireland and at the Irish Folklore Commission and for permission to quote from records in their collection.

Note about author

John G. Knightly is currently undertaking a Ph.D. based on the Godfrey estate and family. He has been involved in local history projects in the Milltown region and is a member of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society and Irish Georgian Society.

Notes and References

<i>JKAHS</i>	<i>Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society</i>
GFP	Godfrey Family Papers
<i>KEP</i>	<i>Kerry Evening Post</i>
PL	Prendergast Letters
NAI	National Archives Ireland

- 1 The Godfrey estate was sold to tenants from 1909 to 1918. The Godfrey demesne was sold by Sir William Maurice Godfrey in 1960 and subsequently broken up by the Land Commission. Kilcoleman Abbey was demolished in 1977. The estate town of Milltown remains relatively intact although under increasing pressure from unsuitable development.
- 2 For the purpose of this article, Sir William Duncan Godfrey will simply be referred to as Sir William Godfrey or Sir William.
- 3 B. Jacob to J. Knightly, 26 April 2003 (details of medals awarded Sir Wm

- Duncan Godfrey and Sir John F. Godfrey).
- 4 C. Ó Gráda, *The Great Irish Famine* (Dublin: 1989), p. 44.
 - 5 See V. Bary, "An Unrecorded Tower House in Kilcoleman Parish with Some Notes on the Godfrey family" in *JKAHS* (1985), no. 18.
 - 6 *The Times*, 20 May 1845.
 - 7 J. S. Donnelly, *The Land and the People of Nineteenth Century Cork: The Rural Economy and the Land Question* (London: 1975), p. 9.
 - 8 Townlands of Abbeylands, Ballyoughtra, Kilburn, Kilderry North and South, Knockagurrane, Knockavota and Rathpogue.
 - 9 *Devon Commission*, Evidence Part II, p. 881.
 - 10 Alternatively, the Godfrey agent took possession of ejected, abandoned or surrendered farms.
 - 11 *KEP*, 17 July 1842.
 - 12 Minute Books – Tralee Board of Guardians, vol. I, 18 October 1845, Kerry County Library.
 - 13 *Kerry Examiner*, 28 October 1846.
 - 14 James Prendergast to his children, 25 October 1845. The James Prendergast Family Correspondence, 1840-50, is located in the Burns College Manuscript Collection, Boston College Library. The Prendergast letters (PL) are a collection of 55 documents that only became known in 1995 in the archives of Boston College. Throughout the 1840s, James Prendergast of Milltown wrote to his children, who had emigrated to Boston. They are a five-year chronicle of the famine in Milltown and convey the everyday struggle stay alive. These letters give an everyday impression of the famine as seen through the eyes of an Irish tenant, in contrast to official documents, newspapers or estate papers. James Prendergast was originally an undertenant of Thomas Eagar of Milltown and held part of West Rathpogue at a rent of £46 per annum.
 - 15 *KEP*, 22 April 1846.
 - 16 C. Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and Beyond – The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and Memory* (Princeton 1999) p. 49.
 - 17 *KEP*, 10 February 1846.
 - 18 *KEP*, 23 May 1846.
 - 19 Maurice Prendergast to his children, 11 August 1846 (PL).
 - 20 *KEP*, 3 July 1837.
 - 21 James Prendergast to his children, 20 November 1846 (PL).
 - 22 *KEP*, 12 August 1846.
 - 23 Police Returns to Board of Works, 20 May 1846, (NAI) RLFC4/12/91.
 - 24 K. Foley, *Kerry during the Great famine 1845-52* (Unpublished thesis UCD 1997), p. 69.
 - 25 Sir William Godfrey to Earl of Bessborough, 12 October 1846, NAI, CSO RP-D/6648/1846.
 - 26 List of subscriptions to Milltown Relief Fund, NAI, RLFC3/1/4134 and RLFC3/1/5218.

- 27 Thomas Turner to Relief Commission, 16 June 1846, NAI, RLFC3/1/3377.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 List of Subscriptions to the Milltown Relief Fund, 27 March 1847, NAI, RLFC3/2/1246.
- 30 Helen Godfrey, Subscription List, 2 May 1847, NAI, RLFC3/2/12/46.
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 Sir William Godfrey to Earl of Bessborough, 12 October 1846, NAI, CSO RP-D/6648/1846.
- 33 *Ibid.*
- 34 Rev. Wm. de Moleyns to Relief Committee, July 1846, NAI, RLFC3/1/4404.
- 35 Draft reply to Rev. Wm. de Moleyns July 1846, NAI, RLFC3/1/4404.
- 36 Sir William Godfrey to Lord-Lieutenant, 29 October 1846, NAI, CSO RP-D/6648/1846.
- 37 Ó Gráda, *The Great Irish Famine*, p. 37.
- 38 Sir William Godfrey to Lord-Lieutenant, 30 January 1847, NAI, CSORP – D/1074/1847.
- 39 Ó Gráda, *The Great Irish Famine* p. 38 and *Black 47*, p. 72.
- 40 *KEP*, 10 May 1846.
- 41 Thomas Turner to Relief Commission, 5 February 1847, NAI, RLFC3/2/12/46.
- 42 C. Kinealy, *A Death-Dealing Famine – The Great Hunger in Ireland*, (London: 1997), p. 92.
- 43 *KEP*, 10 February 1847.
- 44 James Prendergast to his children, 21 August 1847 (PL).
- 45 Irish Folklore Commission, IFC1167/134.
- 46 J. S. Donnelly, “Irish Property must pay for Irish poverty: British Public Opinion and the Great Irish Famine” in *Fearful Realities: New Perspectives on the Famine* (C. Morash and R. Hayes eds.), (Dublin: 1996), p. 61.
- 47 See Peter Gray, *Famine, Land and Politics: British Government and Irish Society 1843-1850* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1999).
- 48 T. P. O’Neil, “The Organisation and Administration of Relief, 1845-52” in *The Great Famine - Studies in Irish History, 1845-52*, (Dublin: 1956), p. 247.
- 49 Godfrey Tenants Ledger 1841-52 (GFP).
- 50 James Prendergast to his children, 9 August 1845 (PL).
- 51 James Prendergast to his children, 21 August 1847 (PL).
- 52 Maurice Prendergast to James Prendergast, 14 July 1850 (PL).
- 53 The Godfrey estate records deal only with direct tenants or middlemen. Under-tenants, cottiers and labourers do not feature to any great extent. Furthermore, few letters survive in the Godfrey papers in relation to the famine period. However, sufficient legal documents, ledgers and accounts remain to give an insight into how this particular landed family coped with

- the calamity. The Godfrey family papers (GFP) remain in private possession.
- 54 Godfrey Tenants Ledger 1841-1852 (GFP).
 - 55 J. S. Donnelly, "The Kenmare Estates during the Nineteenth Century" in *JKAHS* (1991), p. 26.
 - 56 Ó Gráda, *The Great Irish Famine*, p. 56.
 - 57 Devon Commission, Evidence Part II, p. 880.
 - 58 J. S. Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, (London: 2001) p. 27.
 - 59 Timothy P. O'Neill, "Famine Ejections" in Carla King (ed.), *Famine, Land and Culture* (Dublin: 2000), pp. 42-44. Comprehensive data on ejections is only available from 1849.
 - 60 J. S. Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, p. 152.
 - 61 T. P. O'Neill, "Famine Ejections", p. 37.
 - 62 James Prendergast to his children, 29 October 1848 (PL).
 - 63 John Shea to Thomas Turner, 4 November 1847 (GFP).
 - 64 James Prendergast to his children, 21 August 1847 (PL).
 - 65 Jeremiah Connor to Maurice Prendergast, 21 May 1845 (PL).
 - 66 Contracts Book, 1847 (GFP).
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