

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

BA Local Studies

Essay title:

The rise and fall of a great estate: a case study of Kenure Estate, Rush, County Dublin.

Module code: LS26

Module title: Case studies of landed estates and landscapes: estates, farms and settlement landscapes.

Student name: Peter Francis Whearity.

Student Number: 63154986.

Lecturer name: Dr Jonathan Cherry.

Department name: Modern History.

Submission date: 9 January 2008.

I declare that this assignment is entirely my own work and that all sources are credited.

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## Acknowledgements

Thanks to the following people; Dr Jonathan Cherry for his great support during the Module LS26. The staff of the John Paul Library ii, Maynooth University. Dr Maighr ad N  Mhurchadha, Skerries. Elizabeth Balcombe, Skerries. Joe Curtis, Naul. Concepta Butler and Margaret McCann-Moore, Loughshinny & Rush Historical Society. Fellow students and others who helped me along the way.

## The Rise and fall of a great Estate, Kenure House, Rush, County Dublin.

### Introduction

The aim of this short study is to demonstrate the dramatic change which occurred in an area known as Kenure House and Demesnes. The study will commence before the period of decline began in order to give an indication of what was there prior to 1963 when the entire property came into the hands of the Irish Land Commission having been disposed of by the owner Col. George Fenwick-Palmer. The study will be broken down into three separate parts, each dealing with a different aspect of the study.

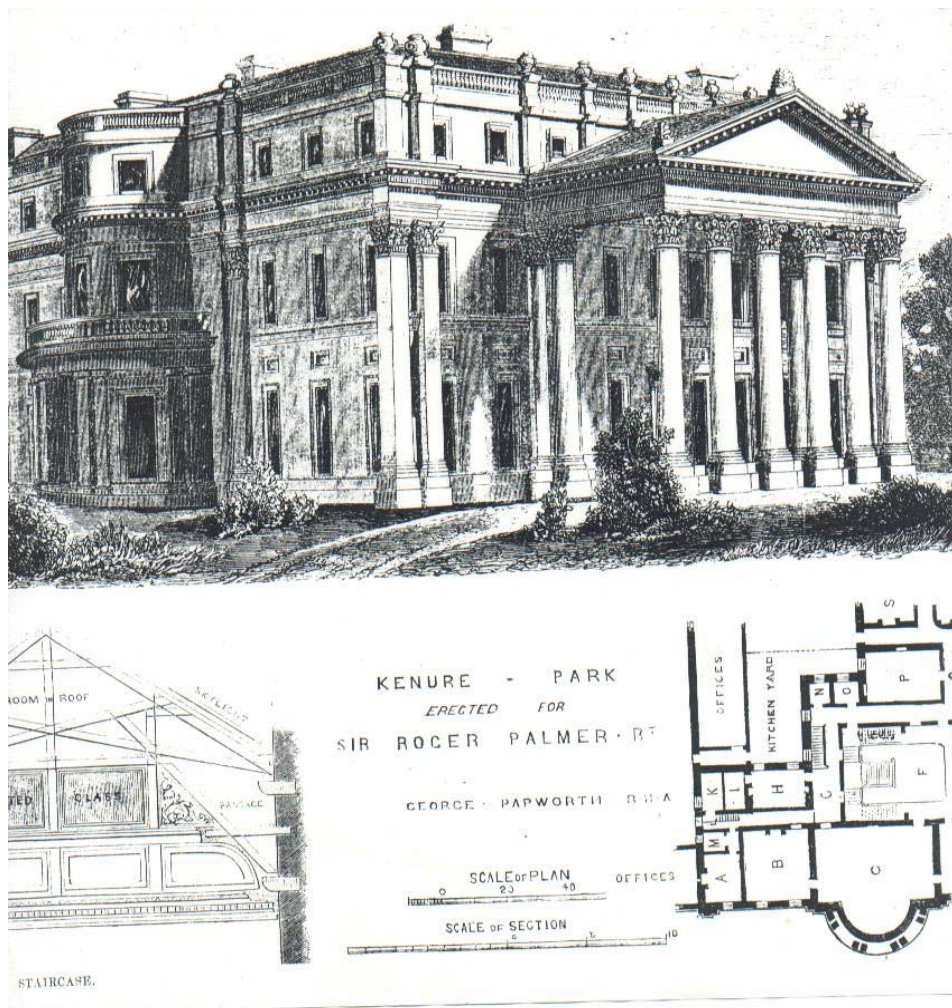
Part one will give a brief historical background of big houses and demesnes in Ireland. A brief history of Kenure House and those who owned it will also be given. Use will be made of maps to demonstrate change for the period 1778-1913 which was a period of relative prosperity at Kenure. The second part will give an account of the people who owned Kenure Estate at various times and an indication of their social status. Part three will begin by alluding to Mark Bence-Jones's account of what the house and estate was like in the years before the rapid decline. Use will be made of photographs to illustrate the change to the landscape up to September 1978 when the house was demolished and the land had already been parcelled off to various parties. These included local horticulturalists, sports clubs, and the house and a small parcel of land to the local authority Dublin County Council. The demise of the house and estate will be examined as well as the situation which resulted in the magnificent Portico (designed by G. Papworth 1842<sup>1</sup>), being retained, after pressure from local protestors was brought to bear. The final part will endeavour to show what the landscape looks like now (2007). Use will be made of a satellite image as supplied by 'Google-earth' which

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<sup>1</sup> *The Builder*, vol. xiii (Dublin, 1855), pp 150- 151.

coupled with the results of a field survey of the names and geographical position of the numerous housing developments now encompassed within the bounds of the former estate. A simple map produced by this student will allow the various named places to be shown on the map. It is hoped that combining all the aforementioned parts of the study that an idea of the very dramatic changes which have occurred over the course of the study can be seen and understood more clearly than before.

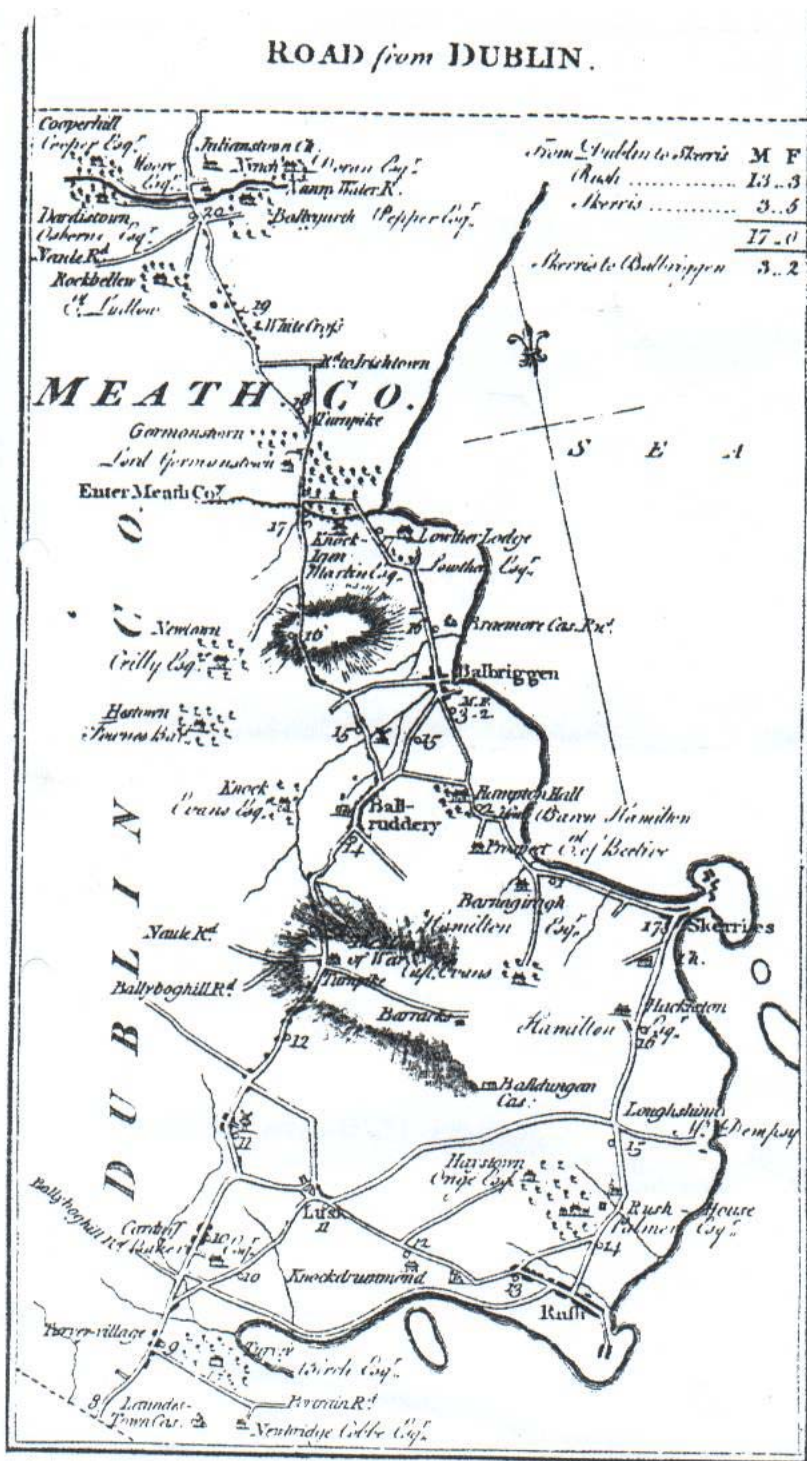
Figure. 1<sup>2</sup> George Papworth R.H.A., plan of Kenure Park, c.1842.



Above is the plan for Kenure House which was subsequently built for the landlord Sir Roger Palmer, Bart.

<sup>2</sup> *The Builder*, vol. xiii (Dublin, 1855), pp 150-151. The author would like to thank Elizabeth Balcombe, Skerries, for providing a copy of Papworth's drawings.

Map. 1 Taylor and Skinner's Map, North County Dublin, 1778.



Map.1 (1778), shows the coastline of north County Dublin with Kenure Estate shown just to the north of Rush village. It also shows Prospect House (now Ardgillan Castle), between Skerries and Balbriggan, the Hamilton Estate, to the south of Balbriggan, and further along the coast north of Balbriggan, is Lowther Lodge in County Dublin.

## Part.1

## Historical background of Irish 'Big Houses and demesnes'

The golden age of big houses occurred in the second half of the eighteenth century when the scale and grandeur of these houses and gardens was unprecedented. The mid eighteenth century onwards saw an upsurge in spending on remodelling homes and gardens and the homes were filled with valuables brought back from Europe. By the late 1870s, a decline began which affected not only houses but estates as well. The 1880s saw a decline of the landlord class at the same time as the land league agitation and the lowering of rents by government left them strapped for cash. The Settled Land Act 1882, opened the door for landlords to sell moveable valuables much of which went to America. The 1880s saw the level of indebtedness increase due partly to the landed classes lavish spending on an unsustainable level. The Wyndham Act 1903 brought relief and allowed landlords to sell land to tenants at favourable rates and receive a bonus on top. Many estates became unencumbered and had money to invest abroad. The First World War affected the landed classes physiologically as did the revolutionary period with the burning of over 300 houses by the IRA in the twenty-six counties while leaving the northern counties unaffected. The Free State government did nothing to alleviate these difficulties and state agencies like the land commission regularly left houses to fall into ruin. The Wall Street crash in 1929-30, hit the Irish landlords hard and many investments were wiped out over night. By the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, costs like rates, increased taxation, and succession duties made it difficult to continue and many landlords left the country. The period 1920s -1980s, saw many houses cease to exist except for those bought by Government, Institutions or private investors. Many were structurally impaired by unsympathetic building making them



fit for their new use but destroying their innate qualities in the process. Few remained in possession of original owners and fewer still remained with house contents intact. The 1980s saw a discernable change in attitude and new-enlightened fiscal policies helped to turn the tide of neglect of such houses as remained. Organisations like the Irish Georgian Society, An Taisce, the Heritage Council, and Government Heritage Service along with various county councils all tried to do something positive in preserving big houses.<sup>3</sup> It must be said however, that the aforementioned efforts met with limited success overall, and in the case of Kenure with none at all except for the reprieve of the Portico.

Regarding the demesnes surrounding big houses, Terence Reeves-Smyth relates that demesne played a central role in the evolution of the Irish landscape both in the past and also in the present time. The scale of the land area under demesnes was such that at one time nearly six percent of Irelands land was held within its bounds. Many of the constituent features such as woods, farmland, buildings and gardens still make a dramatic statement in the landscape today. The demesne owes its origins to the early medieval tenurial system, which saw part of the manorial land held in demesne so as to provide both financial and other support for the estates needs.<sup>4</sup> Peter Somerville-Large wrote, in his work, *The Irish Country House* that although they varied in size nevertheless there was uniformity in style throughout Ireland and also the area was invariably protected by stonewalls. Among other common features were imposing entrance gates accompanied by one or more gate-lodges. Many estates had within their walls the ruins of a castle or church. Walled fruit and vegetable gardens were common as was a glasshouse for exotic produce such as figs. Water features and lakes were

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<sup>3</sup> Terence Dooley, 'Report on country houses 2003'; St. Kieran's College library, Kilkenny, pp 4, 5, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth, 'Demesnes', in F.H.A. Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout (eds.), in *The Atlas of the Irish Rural landscape* (Cork, 2000), p. 197.

included as well. Open parkland and perhaps a deer park were often found too. Fashions changed over time but most landlords followed suit not wishing to be out of step with the current trends.<sup>5</sup>

In the medieval period demesne gardens were relatively small with the emphasis on the production of food for the manors table. As time went on demesne gardens became more ornamental especially in the sixteenth century when exotic plants became available for the first time. Gardens increased in size and became more complex, European and Italian ideas and designs caused a renewed interest in playing greens, ornamental ponds, fountains and statuary became commonplace. In the eighteenth century demesnes became more formal and this is seen at Carton Estate *c.* 1738, with its bosquets, orchards, bowling green and even a canal. This was the era when gardens could be designed on a grander scale to include the whole demesne. The house became the focal point from which the views could be extenuated into long perspectives reaching to the farthest corners of the demesne by the clever use of garden design. In the 1730s, tree lined avenues were lengthened and made to take circuitous routes through the demesne before the house was reached. All this work was done to highlight the status and wealth of the landlord and impress his visitors. Trees played an important part in this period and by careful pruning these could be shown off to great effect. However, Irish landlords were slow to see the commercial value of trees and therefore plantations were relatively small. By the middle of the eighteenth century the formerly symmetrical garden designs had undergone a transformation to a more natural look. This new style, modelled on Italian principals, sought to extol the virtues of the natural world. However, this usually meant much expenditure of effort in moving earth,

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country house; a social history* (London, 1995), pp 136-137, 139-140.

diverting streams, and even moving mature trees from one place to another. The new layout was for open grassland with hidden fences or ha ha's to allow uninterrupted views from the centrally placed mansion. Walkways and rides were cut through the woods in a meandering fashion extending to the extremities of the demesne. All potentially unsightly buildings or activities were removed beyond the perimeter walls and the walled fruit and vegetable gardens moved away from the house, all in the interest of clean lines and orderliness. Gate-lodges and other buildings within the demesne were done up in an ornamental fashion. After the famine, low rental incomes and increased labour costs saw many landlords turn to less labour intensive gardens. The 1880s saw an upsurge in bog gardens, pleasure grounds, and other types of semi wild gardens. The chief advocate of this genre in Ireland was horticulturist William Robinson. The Encumbered Estates Act, 1849, and others which followed saw sales of demesne plummet. Of those which did sell, it was often the case that only the land was wanted and the houses were allowed to languish into ruin while the mature trees were decimated indiscriminately. When landlords had to survive without rental income from their estate lands, many failed to make their demesne profitable. The 1923 land Act, which gave the Irish Land Commission powers to force landlords to sell untenanted land, many demesnes were broken up and distributed among local farmers or set to forestry. The process of destruction continued until the 1970s when increased awareness saw some demesnes and their houses finding a new role in the changing landscape of Ireland.<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the period 1919-1923, was one of political unrest in Ireland and several hundred big houses were burned for a variety of reasons

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<sup>6</sup> Terence Reeves-Smyth, 'Demesnes', in F.H.A. Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout (eds.), in *The Atlas of the Irish Rural landscape*, pp 199-205.

such as antagonism towards the landlord class but also as a means of driving landlords off their land which could then be seized by unscrupulous land-grabbers.<sup>7</sup>

## Part.2

A brief history of the families who owned Kenure House and Estate

Samuel Lewis's Topographical Dictionary states that in c.1837, Kenure Park, formerly known as Rush House was situated nearly a kilometre from the town of Rush, County Dublin. It was the residence of the Duke of Ormond, then Sir Henry Echlin, Bart., before it passed to his ancestor of Sir W.H. Palmer, Bart., who owned it in the aforementioned year.<sup>8</sup> A local publication, *Rush by the sea*, relates that in Anglo-Norman times, a manor and house was established at Rush and was under the control of the Ormond Estate run by the Butler family. In the early 1300s, Sir Theobald Butler and his brother Edmund were the proprietors. However, the area was adversely affected by the Bubonic Plaque in c.1349, and when strips of formerly tenanted land fell vacant due to depopulation from the plaque, these strips became enclosed. During the Williamite land confiscations in the 1640s, the Butlers were dispossessed for a time but later regained their property. In c. 1703, James Butler, Duke of Ormond, built a house at Kenure, which the English antiquarian Austin Cooper described in 1783, as Rush House, a stone built structure in the English style. He wrote that the surrounding land was well ordered with fine stands of trees. In the 1700s the estate was owned by Henry Echlin who in turn passed it to his sons Robert and Henry before it came to Elizabeth Echlin. She married Francis Palmer of Castlelacken, County Mayo, whose family had

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<sup>7</sup> Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the big house in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), pp 171-207.

<sup>8</sup> Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, Vols. I-II (London, 1837), p. 541.

amassed an 80,000-acre estate in that county by the end of the nineteenth century. In the 1820s, after her husband's death, Elizabeth continued to live at Kenure. However, the house was destroyed by fire in 1827, but was afterwards rebuilt on a grander scale with designs by architect George Papworth. The later part of the nineteenth century and the early part of the twentieth, Kenure was occupied by Lt. General, Rodger Palmer who was M.P. for County Mayo. He and his wife lived at Kenure until his death in 1912; whereupon she remained there until the outbreak of the Second World War when she went to live elsewhere. Their marriage having left no heirs, the property fell to a cousin, Col. Roderick Fenwick whose family had English connections. He took the name Palmer as an adjunct to his own and it was he who was to be the final occupant of Kenure House. He is described as a plain and unaustacious man with simple tastes who tried in vain to make the estate pay its way. However, having already sold a portion of the lands earlier he found the increasing costs along with structural problems to be an ever-harder burden to bear. In 1963 he sold the house and estate to the Irish Land Commission for the sum of 70,000 pounds. The estate was broken up with some going to local horticulturists, other parts for local authority housing and the house with three and a half acres to Dublin County Council with the intention of it being sold off.<sup>9</sup>

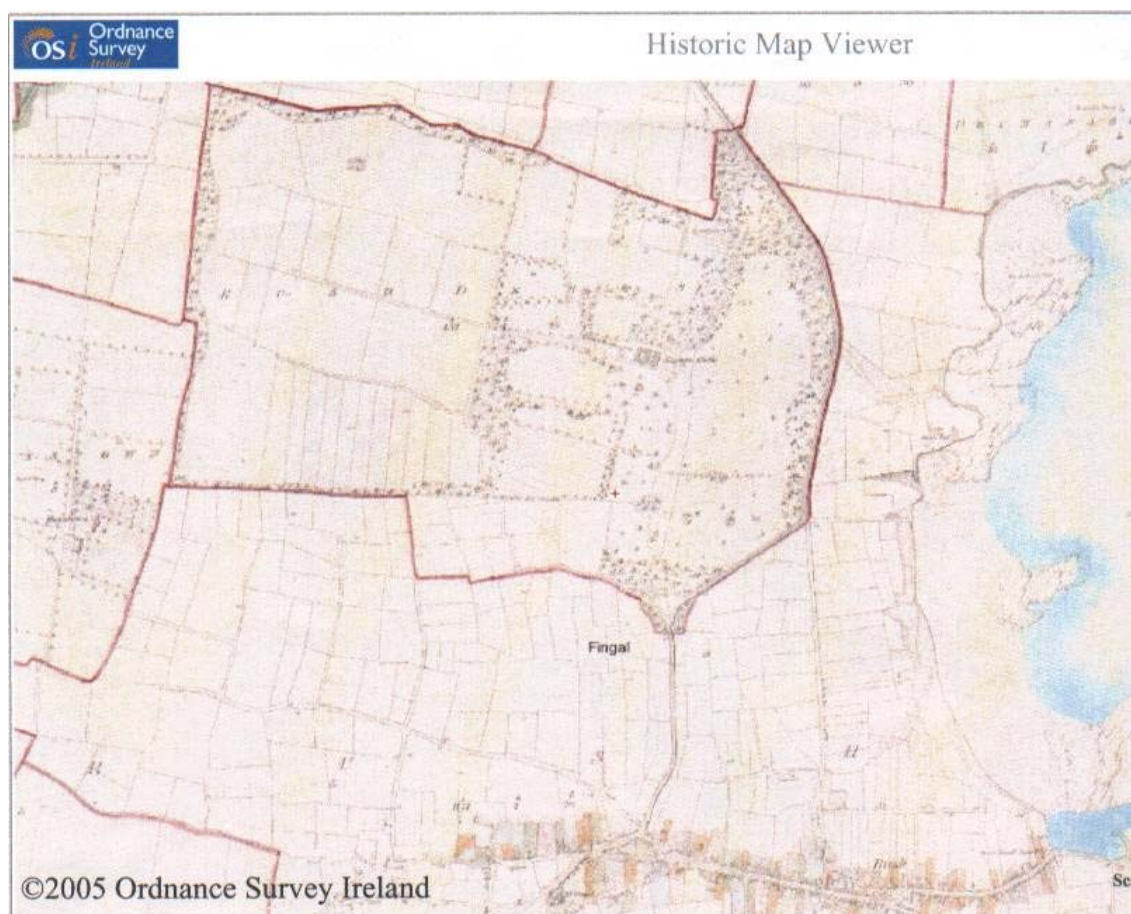
Regarding the history and status of the most recent owners, curiously, *Burke's landed gentry of Ireland*, had no record of either the Palmer family or that of Fenwick-Palmer of Kenure within its pages.<sup>10</sup> However, the author accepts that he may have missed something while carrying out his search of that source.

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<sup>9</sup> Irish Country-Women's Association History Group, Rush, County Dublin, *Rush by the Sea* (Rush, 1996), pp 15, 19, 22, 24, 26-27, 30, 32-33, 35-36, 38.

<sup>10</sup> Bernard Burke, *Burke's landed gentry of Ireland* (4<sup>th</sup>. ed. London, 1958).

Map.2<sup>11</sup> Ordnance Survey Map, 6 inch colour Map Series (1834-1842), Kenure Estate.



Richard Griffiths in his *General Valuation of rateable property in Ireland*, 1852, gives the following information; the demesne consisted of 247 acres with a net annual value

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<sup>11</sup> Ordnance Survey of Ireland, Historic Map Viewer, 6 inch Map (1834-1842); [http://ecomextra.osimaps.ie/OSI\\_LIVE/LibraryDefault.asp](http://ecomextra.osimaps.ie/OSI_LIVE/LibraryDefault.asp) retrieved on 3 Oct 2007.

of 355 pounds and 5 shillings, for land and buildings, along with that for the holdings of Thomas Carey (herd), which brought the total to 574 pounds and 5 shillings.<sup>12</sup>

On examining Map.2, it is relatively easy to pick out a few things of note. These are shown below:

- The long entrance road to the south is for a large part of it running parallel with agricultural fields and only occasionally protected by tree cover on either side.
- The house is set back a great distance not only from the Skerries Road, which runs parallel with the eastern boundary, but is situated even further away from the coastline with its beaches and sea views.
- The views of the Irish Sea and the island of Lambay are gravely compromised by a linear stand of trees running parallel to the aforementioned road.
- The front lawn is of open design, presumed to be grassland, with plentiful small clusters of trees here and there within it.
- The land to the rear of the house looks to have been in agricultural production but it shows a remarkable variety of field shapes and sizes. Along the southern boundary runs a multitude of field strips reminiscent of Anglo-Norman field patterns. Some of the fields are numbered but there is no terrier on my map to give any information regarding these fields.

The layout of manicured grassland all around the mansion was an eighteenth century necessity and the area along with clusters of noble trees was known as ‘pleasure grounds’.<sup>13</sup> Regarding the loss of sea views from the house, which must have been a deliberate act in planting the tree cover, an explanation is forthcoming from W.A. Vaughan. He wrote that it was uncommon for the Irish Gentry to build their houses on elevated and conspicuous sites but rather the pattern was to hide the residence from prying eyes. However, this is not to say that one would not be aware of being near to a country estate, on the contrary, external features would make this abundantly clear to anyone in the vicinity. Estate gate-lodges, boundary walls, and other features would herald what lay within without the house itself having to be on display.<sup>14</sup> William J. Smyth suggests that the big country house with its high hedges, walls and gate lodges enclosing

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<sup>12</sup> Richard Griffiths, *General Valuation of rateable property in County Dublin* (Dublin, 1852), p. 81.

<sup>13</sup> Patrick, J. Duffy, *Exploring the History and Heritage of Irish Landscapes* (Dublin, 2007), p. 20.

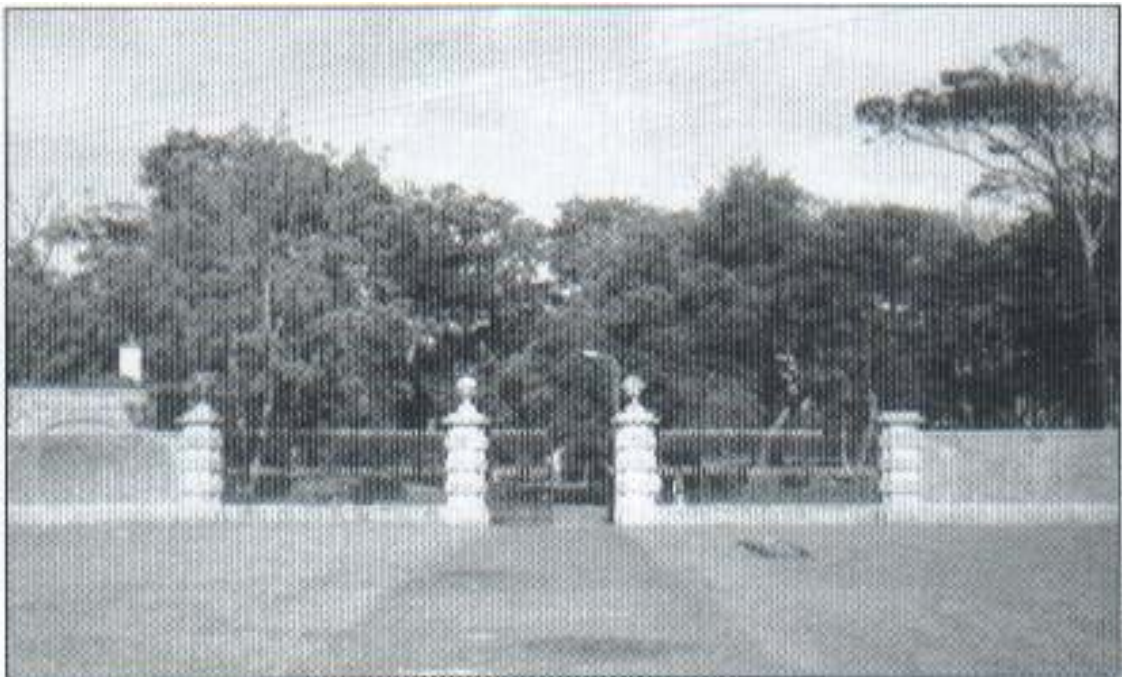
<sup>14</sup> W. E. Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1994), p.1.

the landlords privileged world, was one of the ‘great island-wide symbols of such power and authority’.<sup>15</sup>

Map.3 was examined in the same way as its earlier counterpart. There was seventy years between the maps so that significant change might be expected. The following notes were made;

- The entrance road leading into the estate from the south had received considerable change. Instead of being flanked by open fields for much of its length, it was now shrouded among trees.
- The beginning of the entrance had been remodelled which seems to have required the amalgamation of the parts of two streets as well as the knocking down of several dwellings.
- The fields to the rear of the house were now relatively large with no strips remaining. The fields are no longer numbered either.
- A new Protestant Church and a Parsonage was built near the Skerries Road and a new road within the estate led to these facilities.

Plate.1<sup>16</sup> Entrance gates to the main avenue of the former Kenure Estate.



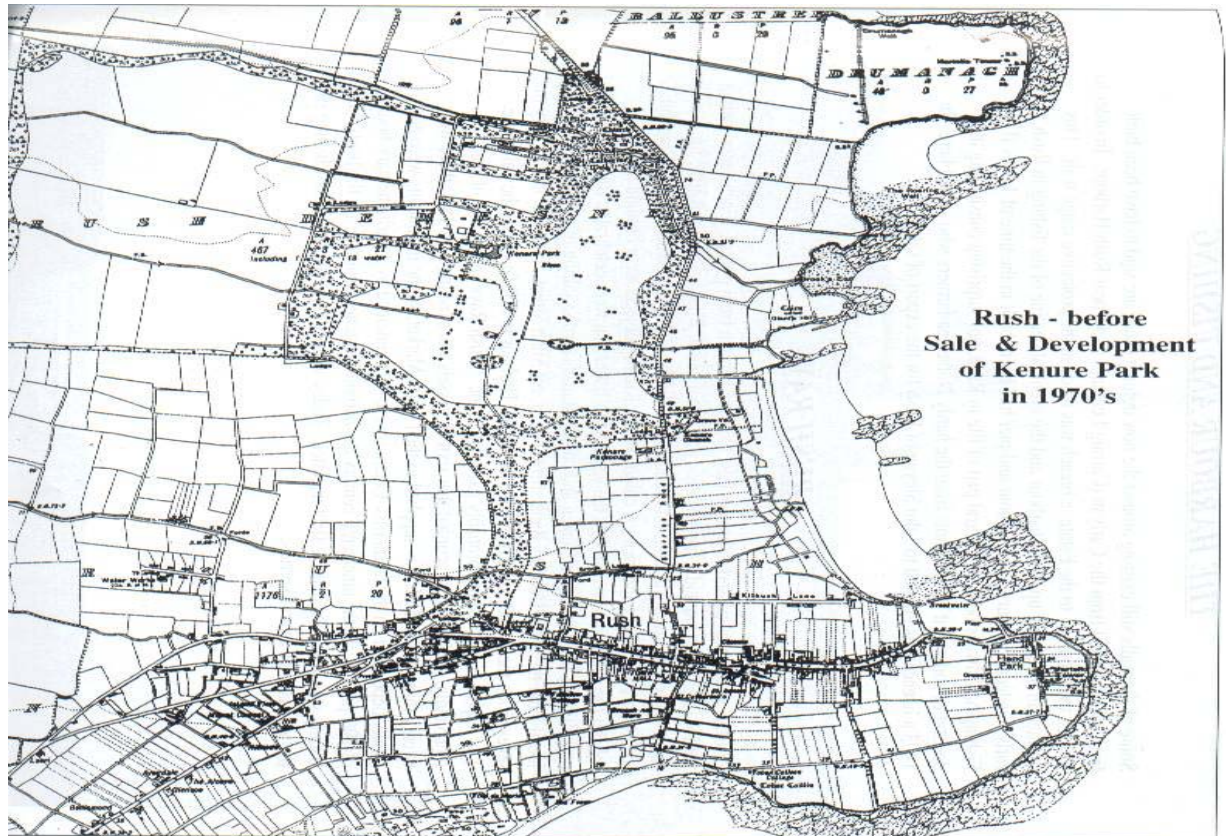
<sup>15</sup> William J. Smyth, *Map-making, Landscapes and memory; a Geography of colonial and early modern Ireland c. 1530-1750* (Cork, 2006), p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> Irish Country-Women’s Association History Group, Rush, County Dublin, *Rush by the Sea*, p. 41.



Note the tops of the pillars of which one is missing, their shape is not that of a pineapple but more of a globe shape. Also the contrast with the earlier map when no trees were present as neither was the gate lodge now seen inside the gate on the left-hand side.

Map.3<sup>17</sup> Ordnance Survey of Ireland Map showing Kenure Estate (25 inch black and white map, 1887-1913).



Regarding the extent of land held by the demesne, recourse was made to the 1906, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers for returns of untenanted lands in Ireland on which stood a mansion. The returns give details of land held by Sir Roger Palmer, Bart., in Balrothery Rural District, electoral division of Rush, County Dublin. In the townland of Rush, he held untenanted land in five lots, a total 86 acres, 6 roods and 102

<sup>17</sup> Irish Country-Women's Association History Group, Rush, County Dublin, *Rush by the Sea*, p. 43: also, [http://ecomextra.osiemaps.ie/OSI\\_Live/LibraryViewerDefault.asp](http://ecomextra.osiemaps.ie/OSI_Live/LibraryViewerDefault.asp) (Retrieved 3 Oct. 2007). (I used the first mentioned source because it was a clearer image than from the historic map viewer).

perches with a combined rateable value of fourteen pounds and fifteen shillings. Rush Demesne was listed as a separate townland, with the same occupier holding untenanted land in two lots of 283 acres, 2 roods and 23 perches, with a rateable value of two-hundred and ninety-one pounds for land and one-hundred and five pounds fifteen shillings for the mansion, and another of 184 acres, 1 rood and 34 perches, valued at one-hundred and ninety-three pounds for land and five pounds for buildings (a total of 467 acres, 3 roods and 57 perches). The nearby townland of Drumanagh held other untenanted land of 45 acres and 29 perches, valued at fifty-eight pounds. All land was in statute acres.<sup>18</sup>

Regarding the extensive alterations carried out on the main entrance gate and avenue, please refer to Plate.1 and Maps 4 and 5. These will show that the entrance gate was moved a considerable distance to the south and bringing it nearer to the town of Rush. A new gate lodge may have had to be built to protect the entrance and leaving the other lodge defunct. It can be seen that what was the entrance road was relieved by a second road on the left boundary of the estate presumably to carry all traffic into and out of the estate except the family and visitors. It is clear by reference to the maps that much disruption was caused to the residents of cottages in the vicinity as well as the users of a road running from right to left which appears to have found itself dissected by the new avenue. The confluence of several streets were altered and many trees planted both inside the gates along the avenue and also outside on the approach to the entrance.

A local publication tells us that several families were displaced by the works and although all were placed elsewhere, nevertheless, some anguish was suffered by some people. The publication refers to some of the estates tenants being removed from

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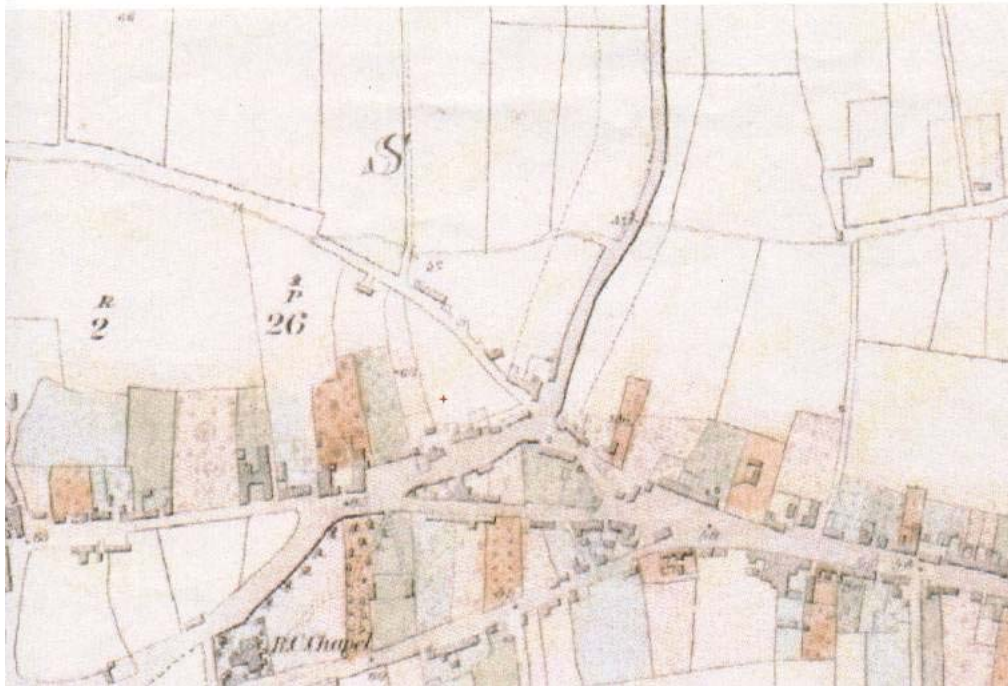
<sup>18</sup> *House of Commons Parliamentary papers, return of untenanted land (1906) in Ireland, on which stood a mansion* (London, 1906), p. 118.

their long-standing holdings and homes to make way for the refurbished and lengthened avenue and entrance gates.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Irish Country-Women's Association History Group, Rush, County Dublin, *Rush by the Sea*, p. 41.

Map.4<sup>20</sup> Main entrance to Kenure Estate (6 inch map, 1834-1842).



Map.5<sup>21</sup> Re-modelled entrance gate and avenue (25 inch map, 1887-1913).



<sup>20</sup>Ordnance Survey of Ireland, Historic Map Viewer, 6 inch Map (1834-1842); [http://ecomextra.osimaps.ie/OSI\\_LIVE/LibraryDefault.asp](http://ecomextra.osimaps.ie/OSI_LIVE/LibraryDefault.asp) (Retrieved on 3 October 2007).

<sup>21</sup>[http://ecomextra.osimaps.ie/OSI\\_Live/LibraryViewerDefault.asp](http://ecomextra.osimaps.ie/OSI_Live/LibraryViewerDefault.asp) (Retrieved 3 Oct. 2007).

## Part.3

## The Decline of Kenure House and Estate

Before beginning to show the decline of Kenure House and Estate, which began in 1964, it might be beneficial to see what the situation was like prior to that time. For details of the families who owned the estate refer to the previous part of this study.

Mark Bence-Jones gives an account of Kenure Estate in his work, *A Guide to Irish country houses*, as follows;

Kenure Park, Rush, Co. Dublin (Palmer, bt, of Castle Lactin, / pb 1911; Fenwick-Palmer, sub Fenwick, / lg 1965). A large mid 18-century, three-story house, grandly refaced 1842, to the design of George Papworth; mostly stucco, with Corinthian corner pilasters reminiscent of those of Nask's London facades; but with a giant pedimented hexa-style Corinthian portico of stone, deep enough to serve as a porte-cochere. Some of the reception rooms were on the ground floor, others on the floor above; which extended into the bow of the garden front, had ceilings of magnificent mid 18-century rococo plasterwork in the manner of Robert West. The rooms on the first floor included a long gallery. The dining room, next to the drawing room, had a cornice of Victorian plasterwork. The small library had mahogany bookcases. Sold 1964, by Col. R.G. Fenwick-Palmer; demolished but for the portico in 1978.<sup>22</sup>

A photograph shown at Plate.2, gives an indication of the excellent state of the house before the problems began to surface. In the years up to 1964 the owner Col. George Fenwick-Palmer was complaining of increased costs in maintaining the estate. He was also grappling with structural problems such as rising damp and dry rot. The outcome of his problems led to the house and the estate being acquired by the Irish Land Commission. That body promptly parcelled out the land to local horticulturalists and also gave some to the Local Authority, Dublin County Council, for house building. The house and three and a half acres was also put into the charge of the council with a view to selling it to any one who would undertake to maintain it. The advertisement as shown

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<sup>22</sup> Mark Bence-Jones, *A guide to Irish Country Houses* (London, 1988), pp 163, 164.



at Press report.1, gives details that the house and a piece of land could be had for a rent of one pound per annum provided the building was repaired and kept in good order.<sup>23</sup>

Press Report.1<sup>24</sup> Stately home for sale.

**A stately home  
— for £1 a year**



*Palmer Estate House*  
... **But there's a snag!**

A stately home for as little as £1 a year, and 3½ acres to go with it. That is the fantastic offer being made today by Dublin County Council.

But there is a slight snag—and it has nothing to do with "big house" boasts.

For Kenure Park House, near Rush, is badly affected by dry rot, and some of its plaster ceilings are sagging to a depth of as much as 18 inches.

The council expects that would-be tenants should be prepared to put the old house in good repair—a job that will cost several thousand pounds.

Said a Council spokesman:

"We are hoping to find some people interested in restoration and preservation and a clause in the lease will commit them to this."

"We have put advertisements in the newspapers in the hope of flushing out people interested in taking over and restoring the house."

If no one is to take the house, the house will almost certainly be demolished.

The house was taken over by the Land Commission from the family of Colonel Fenwick Palmer and later sold to the Council. Much of the land around the house has been developed.

*Castle near D.C.C.*

<sup>23</sup> Irish Architectural Archive; press clipping, untitled and undated; ref, RW.D.149.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

However, as time rolled on and the building deteriorated it was decided by the owners, Dublin County Council, that it was a danger to the public and so in the third week in September 1978 it was torn down. However, among the piles of rubble stood the Portico, reprieved by a combination of local protest and the intervention of An Taisce.

Plate.2<sup>25</sup> Kenure House, c.1954.



Kenure Park, Co. Dublin, entrance front.

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Another fine view of the house can be found in, *Vanishing country houses of Ireland*.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Hugh Doran, *Hugh Doran, Photographer* (Irish Architectural Archive, Dublin, 2007), p. 34. The author is thankful to Theo Mortimer, former editor of the *Dublin Historical Record*, for pointing to this photograph for use here.

<sup>26</sup> David J. Griffin and Nicholas K. Robinson, *Vanishing country houses of Ireland* (2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed. Dublin, 1989), p. 61.



Press report.<sup>27</sup> *The Irish Times*, 22 September, 1978.



The piles of rubble after the destruction of Kenure House in September, 1978.

<sup>27</sup> Irish Architectural Archive; press clipping, *Irish Times*, 22 Sept. 1978; ref, RW.D.149.



Press report.<sup>328</sup> The Portico and local protesters.



Despite the success of the protestors in saving the portico, which still stands today (see Plate.4). Nevertheless the destruction went on with the tearing up of the estate woodlands as shown by Plate.3.

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<sup>28</sup> Irish Architectural Archive, press clipping, *Irish Independent*, 13 Sept. 1992; ref, RW.D. 149.

Plate.3<sup>29</sup> The fall of the Estates trees.



The above photograph shows the destruction of many of the estates trees. However, Map.3 and Google-Earth shows that some parts of the woods have survived to this day. The wooded area between the Skerries road and St. Catherine's estate has an area of grassland flanked by a wood and now known as Kenure wood. The area recently made the headlines in the Press for the wrong reasons when anti-social behaviour was reported as taking place there recently by gangs of youths.<sup>30</sup> In 1966, a few years after most of the trees were felled and the land given over to local horticulturalists, heavy rain caused severe flooding in the newly acquired fields. Compensation was applied for from the Land Commission, however, after the matter was debated in the Dáil, it

<sup>29</sup> T. J. Molloy, in, Irish Country-Women's Association History Group, Rush, County Dublin, *Rush by the Sea*, p. 42

<sup>30</sup> *Fingal Independent*, 14 Nov. 2007, p. 2.

was decided that there was no onus of responsibility on the commission as the land was then in private ownership. In any event it was said that the flooding was brought about by the new owners indiscriminately interfering with trees, shrubs and ditches and therefore damaging the drainage channels from the fields.<sup>31</sup>

Plate. 4<sup>32</sup> The free-standing Portico.



Plans by Dublin County Council to provide an intimate park with sheltered seating around the portico were never carried through.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Dáil Debate; <http://www.oireachtas.debat.es.gov.ie/d/0228/d.0228.196704250017.htmix> retrieved on 12 July, 2007.

<sup>32</sup> Photograph taken by author on 16 Jan. 2007.

<sup>33</sup> *Irish Times*, 30 Sept. 1978. For further information on this aspect see, Peter F. Whearity 'Contrasting fortunes of two Fingal 'Big Houses' Kenure House and Ardgillan Castle: in modern times' in, *Dublin Historical Record*, Vol. LXI, No.1 (spring, 2008), pp 26-49.

## Part.4

What is on the site of the former Estate now?

The answer to the above question can be answered by means of visiting the area and noting what change has taken place such as housing development and so on. It is my intention to draw up a simple map denoting the names of housing estates, streets, which were subsequently built on the grounds of the former estate. Another means for seeing change is 'Google earth', and an image of the area was downloaded from that website for the purpose. Remarkably, the outline of the former estate can still be made out as well as some remnants of the grounds, which appear to have survived the upheaval of recent years. It is anticipated that with the use of the medium of my map coupled with the Google image will be sufficient to illustrate at least the major changes that have occurred in the landscape over the relatively short number of years since 1978 when the house was demolished and the estate split up.

The Google-Earth image, augmented by my simple Map.3 shows clearly the amount of development which has occurred, and its geographical position within the bounds of what was the Kenure Estate. It can be seen that much development of housing took place and a big portion of it took place at the northern end of the site in a local authority housing scheme known as St. Catherine's Park. Other ribbon-like housing development took place to the south of the site adjacent to part of the southern entrance road. Although most of the trees are now gone, there are however, a few disparate clumps still to be seen along the Skerries road and at the southern entrance. The Portico can be seen standing alone in the centre of the image surrounded by a grass park. That area of grass, about three and a half acres, is all that remains of the once magnificent

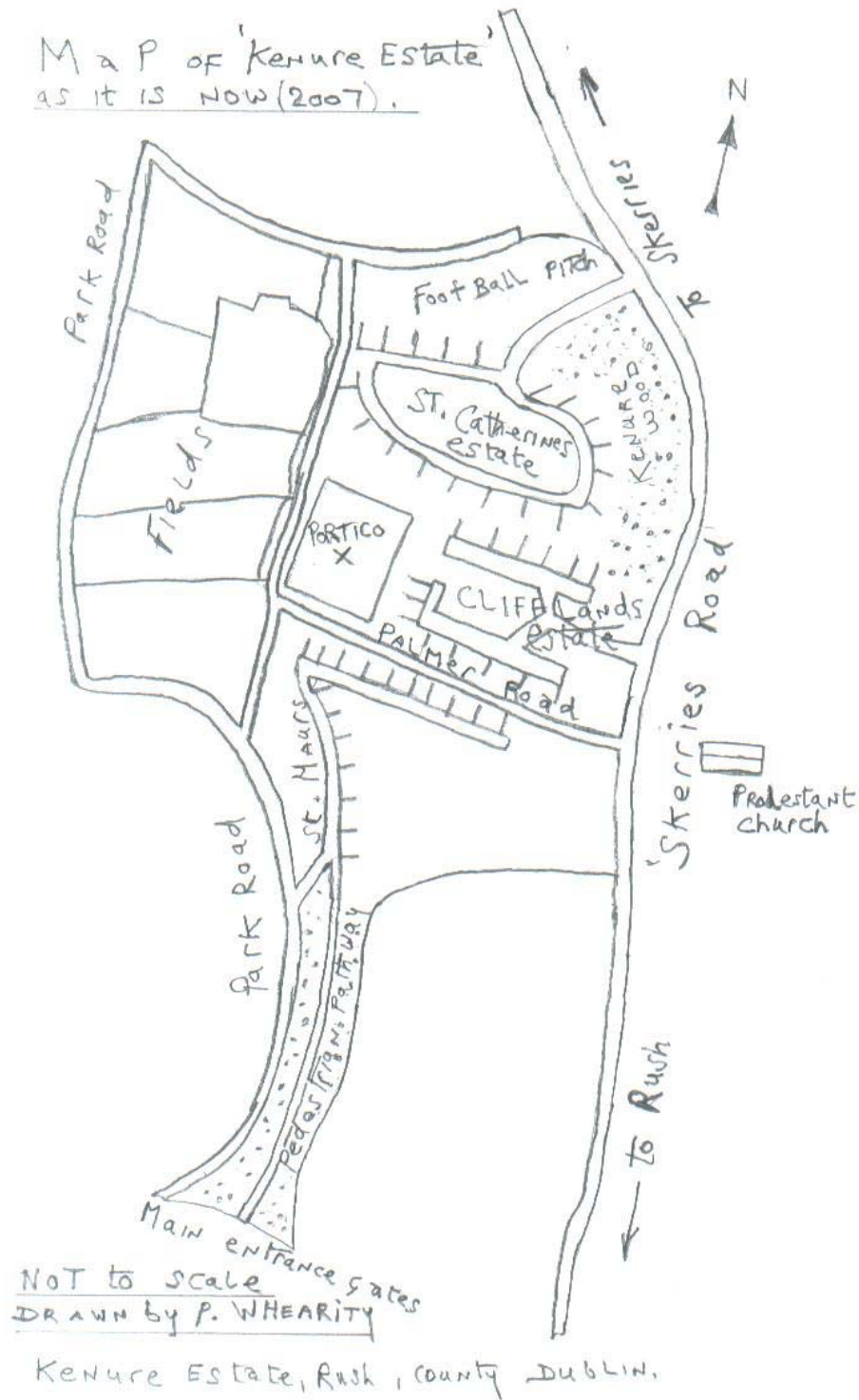


pleasure grounds. Seen with difficulty are two gate-lodges, which have survived, and although the one on the Skerries road was allowed to fall into ruin, nevertheless it has since been fully repaired and now serves as a facility for a local football club. The local cricket and football clubs benefited by receiving a play area too.

Google-Earth image of Rush, County Dublin.<sup>34</sup>



<sup>34</sup> Google-earth image, <http://earth.google.com/download-earth.html> (Retrieved on 13 Oct. 2007).

Map.6 Simple outline map of Kenure Estate as of October 2007.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Drawn by the author after a field trip on Sunday 14 October 2007, to establish names of housing estates and their geographical positions within the former estate boundaries.

## Conclusion

This study began by showing the plans for Kenure House as drawn in 1842, by G. Papworth. It is perhaps the best indicator of the wealth the then owner; Sir Roger Palmer must have possessed in order to be able to build such a mansion, particularly when other Irish landlords were in decline or in financial debt. On the Kenure Estate the opposite appeared to have been the case, at least, that is the impression that one gets. However, it is possible that Palmer was spending beyond his means too, but it would take a more extensive study than this one to answer those questions. The holdings at Kenure date back to the seventeenth century when it was in the possession of the Ormond Estate. Other work besides the building of the mansion took place and the maps show extensive redevelopment of the southern approach to the avenue of the estate which was remodelled in order to create a good impression to visiting guests. Within the demesne itself which ran to several hundred acres, there were features such as open grassland, walled gardens, ornamental gardens, ponds, etc, etc, and the entire demesne surrounded by walls and fringed with trees to protect and give privacy to its owners. When George Fenwick-palmer inherited the property it appeared to be in its prime and other members of the family held extensive lands in County Mayo. The estate appeared to have weathered the political storms of the Irish revolutionary period and the land acts which followed. Nevertheless, by the end of the 1950s and 60s, Fenwick-Palmer seemed to have been struggling with debts and structural problems with the big house, which culminated with the entire holding passing to the Irish Land Commission in 1964. Auctions saw the interior effects dispersed to the four winds and the land divided amongst local horticulturalists, while the house fell to Dublin County Council. Their efforts to sell it on proved to be fruitless, and after languishing into decay, the house, despite the efforts of various preservation groups such as An Taisca

and the Georgian Society, was demolished in autumn 1978. The portico was reprieved by local protestors. It stands today along with a few street names such as Palmer Road and Kenure Woods, as a reminder of what was there in the past. The area once encompassed by the demesne walls has since been extensively developed for housing but elements of the demesne can still be seen at the former entrance gate with its lodge, some small pockets of trees still stand here and there. The land that was once the exclusive preserve of the landed and titled nobility now provided homes for hundreds of people many of whom would probably have no idea of the history of the place or its once magnificent setting or the grandeur of the now disappeared Kenure House, which for many years was the principal mansion in this part of north County Dublin.



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