

Chapter 1 : Big Houses of Ireland

The 'Big House' Era in Ireland Big houses is what we call the posh large scale residences built by the super rich upper classes after the era of medieval castles concluded. They started to be built in the latter half of the 17th century, and took various forms, depending on architectural fashions.

Late on January 29, 1916, Lady Mayo was eating dinner with her husband, Lord Mayo, at their palatial home, Palmerstown house, in the Kildare countryside. That day, six IRA men had been shot by firing squad at the military base at the Curragh. Out of the darkness of the country night, a party of armed men approached Palmerstown House and knocked on the door. Bursting into the dining room, they told Lord and Lady Mayo they were going to burn the house in reprisal for the executions of their men that day at the Curragh. They asked the Earl if he was a Free State Senator and he confirmed he was. Still, they gave the pair only 20 minutes to remove valuables before they poured petrol in each room and set the house alight. A total of were burned out, blown up or otherwise destroyed between and IRA guerrillas from Cork no. Brigade headquarters, however, decided to burn Moydrum Castle instead – Moydrum Castle was the residence of Lord and Lady Castlemaine – a member of the British House of Lords and was always an opponent of Irish National aspirations. However, in 1916, the country mansions were generally attacked as specific reprisals, and not made the subject of a concerted campaign as they were in 1919. There was also a difference in geography from the earlier period. In the civil war, burnings were more common in Leinster than in Munster. In the civil war, the only county in Leinster with no burnings was Laois then Queens County. Considerable damage was done to the castle in the fighting; paintings were damaged, antiques were destroyed and windows smashed. By then the anti-Treaty campaign had been reduced to a localised and small-scale guerrilla affair, fought by ever-dwindling bands, coordinated very loosely by a clandestine leadership under Liam Lynch, which Free State forces hunted from safe house to safe house. Ballycarty House, Kerry, destroyed in late 1919. One reason was simply that it was easy to do at a time when their military capability was seeping away. Another, the stated reason, that it was reprisal against the political elite of the Free State for the execution of Republicans. Thirty seven of the houses destroyed were those of Senators, of whom about 20 were old landed families. Attacking them was less likely to attract public outrage than killing directly elected nationalist TDs [members of the Dail or Parliament]. When Sean Hales TD was gunned down in Dublin in December 1919, the Government immediately had four imprisoned republican leaders shot by firing squad in retaliation. Destroying the Big Houses was easy for the Anti-Treaty IRA to do at a time when their military capability was weakening. But the campaign against the senators is only a partial explanation of the burnings. The Experience of the burnings Another possible explanation for the arson campaign was to drum up popular support in the countryside by attacking and humbling the class who had once been masters of the country. Crowds often came to loot the burnt-out mansions. The campaign against Senators and the Big Houses was undoubtedly traumatic for those affected. George Moore, for instance, had to watch in February 1919 as a group of armed men demanded the keys to his mansion at Moore Hall and proceeded to set fire and lay bombs that destroyed the house and his beloved library. There is also, in the accounts of the burnings, a curious air of deference about the guerrillas. She rounded on two of the men. They shuffled their feet, deeply embarrassed. Several other men were throwing petrol around the hall. By the time the first whoosh of petrol flame poured out of the windows, she had five of the men working for her, running out with armfuls of books, pictures, ornaments and our Christmas toys. There was indeed a great deal of rural class conflict during the Irish revolution. The Republicans never took an active part in the various class struggles that broke out between ranchers and small farmers, or between farmers and labourers – all of whom were predominantly Catholic and nationalist. Instead they concentrated their ire on the mostly defunct Anglo-Irish landed class. Why this was so tells us something important about the Irish revolution, its origins and perceived purpose. Self-government for Ireland, in the form of Home Rule, was already on offer from the British government since 1801 – albeit limited to control of domestic affairs under the Empire. The recourse to arms on behalf of Irish nationalists was essentially about speeding up these processes but also changing their meaning. Ireland would not be a grateful self-governing dominion under

the crown, it would be an independent republic. Land redistribution was not an enlightened reform but a partial correction of a historic injustice. The assault on the Big Houses was an attempt to symbolically destroy the colonial past and to show that the revolution was not over. The assault on the Big Houses in early only makes sense in this context as the Anti-Treatyites attempt to show that the revolution was not over. That they were determined not to accept a settlement where the likes of Lord Glenavy presided over the Senate and determined to blot out the reminders of what they thought of as the British colonial past. Conclusion As a military tactic, the burning campaign of early was inconsequential to the outcome of the Civil War. In the intra-nationalist phase of the conflict, the Free State forces, who had excellent intelligence on their former comrades, did not have to resort to reprisals against property revenge killings of republicans were another matter. The Pro-Treaty side, inheritors of the moderate revolutionary tradition conciliatory to Britain, legalistic and socially conservative not only put down those who wanted to continue the nationalist revolution, they also made peace with the former Ascendancy class. Lord Glenavy, for instance served in the Senate until And when the Cumann na nGaedheal had to decide in on what qualified as a National Monument, to be afforded state protection, the Big Houses were specifically excluded. The Senate, with its grandee representatives was abolished. Land annuities, repayments to the British government for the land reforms of the early 20th century, were stopped. Today, in a very different Ireland, the power of the Big House, even as a symbol, is largely gone. In Mayo there is a campaign to restore Moore Hall , burned out in February , as a cultural site and tourist attraction. We have, perhaps, come full circle. See also the follow up article [The Burning of the Big Houses revisited](#)

Chapter 2 : The Big House - Wikipedia

The term big house (Irish: teach mÃ³r) refers to the country houses, mansions, or estate houses of the historical landed class in Ireland, which is itself known as the Anglo-Irish class.

Never Miss Any Updates! I promise to use it only to send you Enjoy Irish Culture ezine. They started to be built in the latter half of the 17th century, and took various forms, depending on architectural fashions. But none of those features are functional at this stage, they are only decor. A good example for this is Ashford Castle in County Mayo, a Victorian castle in a neo-gothic style, and a 19th century build, seen below. Once cannons came on the scene, it became clear very quickly that, ultimately, no medieval castle fortification was able to withstand an assault with cannons. So, you might as well not bother build fortifications, but rather, display your wealth. In Ireland, nearly all the wealth was now held by a new ruling class, the new ascendancy, who had come to power after the Cromwellian invasion of Ireland. It was this class who built so called big houses. The Context Also called Stately Homes, country mansions, great houses, country houses or country lodges, these residences mostly date from the first half of the eighteenth century. The Palladian style was the most common. Examples for these houses include Castletown House and Emo Court see lower down for photos of these and Strokestown Park House which you can see on the next photo. These were architect designed mini palaces, luxurious residences built by those who had it all. Ireland used to have 6, such mansions, now only a tenth of those are left. Some are government buildings, others are owned privately and lived in and are never open to the public, some are open to the public only at certain times, while some are run as museums. Johnstown Castle to the left, a 19th century big house. Photo courtesy of skellig These posh residences were built by the landowning Anglo-Irish ruling classes who had come to power after the Cromwellian invasion of Ireland. Cromwell had paid his soldiers with parcels of land which he confiscated from Irish Catholic landowners. Many soldiers sold their land onto officers and moved back to England. In the end of this process around 7, soldiers and officers accumulated very large estates. This new Protestant ascendancy made up a tiny percentage of the overall population of Ireland. Yet they held all the wealth. The house is now open to tourists. Their large villas were lavishly decorated with art work and fashionable furniture, and the lifestyle involved expensive luxury dinners and parties. The house and gardens can be visited nowadays. Size is an issue! There are big houses of different sizes, the bigger the more important the owners were or wanted to be seen as. There was a lot of competition here. The more windows on the front and the bigger the stairs leading up to the main door, the grander the impression the residence left on the visitor. Like the Norman Tower House , these properties were undervalued by Irish people because of their history. Castletown House above was built between and and belonged to William Connolly, speaker of the Irish House of Commons. This was a house throwing lavish parties everyone wanted to be invited to. Photo courtesy of Jellyshots. For many people, even to this day, there is something objectionable about the notion of these residences because they are associated with colonial times and with the famine when the glamour landlords lived in contrasted with the abject poverty their tenants and servants had to put up with. It has to be said that while the Irish situation was extreme because of colonialism, the basics of landownership were the same all over Europe at the time. Wherever you went, there was a feudal upper class that owned most of the land, and poor peasants were dependent on them for employment as labourers or servants. It provided much needed employment for agricultural labourers as well as servants. Beleek Castle in Ballina, County Mayo, was built in Photo courtesy of BlackburnPhoto. Usually these residences are surrounded by a park land called domain or demesne. Part of the demesne might be a woodland park. Usually there will be a walled garden and orchard nearby where vegetables, fruit and herbs were grown. There will be stables and other outbuildings, maybe a dairy. At the house itself, there were strictly separate quarters for servants and the owner family. Servants were kept out of view of the family by varying means. Often, servants were housed in the basement where the architects might have also located the kitchen, wine and beer cellars, i. Sometimes the servant quarters were in a separate wing like at Strokestown Park House. It might have a Cathedral ceiling or a large sweeping stair case. There will be impressive dining and drawing rooms where madam and sir showcased themselves in

splendour. See the drawing room at Strokestown Park House on the picture above. Madam and sir had their own separate quarters, usually upstairs, and their own personal attendants. A contemporary once said that Castletown was the only big house in Ireland that deserved to be called a palace. Irish mansions were looked down upon somewhat by the English. They had a reputation of putting food before decoration, not exactly a good thing by Victorian standards! You have to realise that Ireland was an English colony back then. And what is the role of a colony? First and foremost the role of a colony is to be exploited for natural resources. And that is exactly what happened. Very little of the wealth produced in Ireland was reinvested here. Most of it financed the lifestyle of absentee landlords. Yet, the contrast within Ireland between the riches of the resident upper classes, and the poverty of the masses was simply staggering. Throughout the late 19th century the Anglo-Irish landowning ruling class gradually lost power. In , 90 percent of all land was owned by Protestant landlords. However, the introduction of successive land acts now finally enabled Irish Catholics to purchase land. Between and around 75 percent of all lands passed from landlords to tenants. The sale was financed by the government in London. Estates had huge bills for the upkeep of mansions and the expected standard of living. Many estates were in debt at this stage, and the income from the sale of land was welcome. In the end many estates sold all the land they had owned keeping only the house and its immediate surroundings, the demesne. The high time of the new ascendancy was gone. Many of these residences now fell to ruin and were abandoned. During the War of Independence, of them were destroyed. Thankfully that attitude has shifted in the last ten years or so and people are slowly but surely beginning to appreciate the place of estates and stately homes in Irish history. Hi there, Your help in growing our readership is much appreciated. It will only take a few seconds of your precious time as we have provided convenient social functions, just pick your preferred option. Thanks a million for the shout out!

Chapter 3 : Luxury Country Houses| Self-Catering Country House Ireland

What the "Big House in Ireland" really points out is that this alien culture develops apart from mother England while not adapting to Ireland. Soon this culture of the Big House is a country within a country, prisoners of their estranged estates, unable to connect with the culture that spawned them, nor with the culture that surrounds them.

Visit Strokestown Park House The female housekeeper was in charge of the female servants organising the entire household. The chamber pots were then collected outside their quarters by a chamber pot boy. The head gardener was a higher servant also. He managed the gardens and orchard. The school room at Strokestown Park House. Generally at Irish country houses, servants were working six and a half days to seven days a week. They might have two days off at Christmas. The lower servants, especially the female servants, were working extremely hard. Twelve hour days were not the exception. Senior servant staff were often brought in from England because sir and madam wanted Protestants in those roles. Some servants never met their employers. But they were afraid of their superiors, the butler and housekeeper who were tough managers. A lot of the servants lives centred around the kitchen which was the hub of these residences. The gentry family however would never set foot in the kitchen. Butter churn at Strokestown Park House. Being a servant was a live-in position. That meant as long as you were in service you would typically not get married. Female servants left employment after marriage. The odd higher male servant, such as a butler, might stay on. Romantic relationships among the staff were forbidden. The servant quarters where they stayed were typically bare and cold. Servants might be housed in the basement, or in a separate wing. In the presence of madam and sir, servants were not to touch any furniture but had to stand separately. Servants were fed simple foods, such as a meal of a staple, perhaps with some cheap fish, or bread and meat for a generous meal. Servants kept to the servant quarters and the kitchen, unless their tasks explicitly dictated they had to enter the main part of the house. When working in the house, servants were supposed to be busy, yet quiet, avoiding making any noise while walking. Servants were never to speak to the family unless they were addressed. Servants had very clear roles and all interaction with the madam and sir were to be kept within the bounds of their role. Servants were hidden from view by varying means. Among the servants, there was a strict hierarchy with the butler and house keeper at the top. They were in charge of all the other servants. The higher servants ate at a separate table or even in a different room, and socialised separately as well. Often, senior servants in the Irish big houses were English Protestants, a fact that could cause tensions among the staff. Servants were mostly kept out of sight of the gentry. They used the back doors only. Strokestown , Rockingham even had servant tunnels that connected the servant quarters to the family quarters, see one on the photo above. Hi there, hope you enjoyed our article on servants at the Irish big house. If you did and if you like what we do, why not tell your friends about our website, so that they may enjoy it, too? All you have to do is use one of the social options provided here at the top left and at the very bottom of all pages. Your support is much appreciated! Warmest regards, Susanna and Colm!

Chapter 4 : The Big House in Ireland by Valerie Pakenham

Any one of the average size big houses in Ireland had a servant staff of around twenty servants. Servants were needed for all household tasks from work on the farm to cleaning to cooking to laundry to assisting Madam and Sir.

Elizabeth Bowen wrote of the big house: The Anglo-Irish became the ruling class in Ireland due to the phenomenon of the Protestant Ascendancy, which saw one class controlling almost all political power in Ireland for several hundred years. Members of the Anglo-Irish class were granted huge areas of land by the British Crown and quickly became leaders in the economic, as well as political, life of Ireland. The Big Houses that this class built served to demonstrate their power and "were meant to inspire awe among equals and deference in the lower classes. The Big House was the nucleus of the larger estate, commonly referred to as the demesne, and served key functions within many Irish communities. The lord of the demesne not only controlled the lands of the community but also often exerted much political influence over it. From the 17th century, it was common for the sons of the Anglo-Irish landowners to enter politics through election to the Irish House of Commons, thus increasing the level of political control over Ireland by these elite families, many of whom had seats in the Irish House of Lords. Despite being so influential over the community in which they existed, Big Houses often had little invested in them apart from the collection of rents. The demesne was designed to provide enough food to sustain the Big House and its inhabitants, as well as provide a profit. This granted it a level of autonomy that made it increasingly independent and cut off from the community. From the mid-19th century, the Irish nationalist movement encouraged the native Roman Catholic Irish to view the Big House and its inhabitants as being isolated from the surrounding Irish landscape. This was often the case, as the divide between the Anglo-Irish and their community was felt not only geographically but also socially. The gap between the landed families and the tenanted widened in the wake of little serious interaction between the two. The Anglo-Irish occupied a social space where they were in Ireland yet not fully Irish, and English in manner and origin yet far removed from life in England. The social and economical disparity between the Anglo-Irish and local population they were governing was, for many, epitomised by the Big House. Design[edit] Russborough House, Ireland. One of the many country houses designed in Ireland by Richard Cassels. The Anglo-Irish elite went to great lengths in the process of designing their homes, as well as furnishing them. They almost exclusively looked to Great Britain and the continent for style and design, claiming to "bring culture back to the Irish homes" [3] and emphasising their separation from the culture and tastes of the native Irish. Many of the Big Houses are known today for their immense architectural value, with some acting as the only surviving work of famous Irish and European architects. Regency style became the fashionable mode of architecture for an elite home in the mid to late nineteenth century Ireland. Features of regency design include the renowned Scagliola columns of Italian influence, made of imported stone, as well as French style plaster and painted ceilings. The objects within the house were also decidedly foreign and could range from collections of valuable Flemish paintings from the Northern Renaissance all the way to the installation of Lusterweiblen, Austrian light fixtures made of antlers and carved wood. The procuring of these items was often a considerable task and served to emphasise the purchasing power of the elite and their ability to live in decadence. The Big House had extensive parts of it devoted to leisure and entertainment, included ballrooms, drawing rooms and parlours, as well as the outside grounds of the demesne that allowed for hunting or playing fashionable sports, like cricket. Much time was devoted to these spaces as the elite had the means to pursue leisure extensively. Photography became a major leisure activity among the Anglo-Irish in the late 19th century, and photographs today serve as one of the principle references for historians of the Anglo-Irish big house. The Big House in writing[edit] Similarly to photography, the ability to read and write so extensively was also a sign of privilege. Maria Edgeworth is one of the earlier Anglo-Irish Big House writers who wrote somewhat comically about the demise of estates thought the mishandling of the often absent family members. Much of her fiction is said to mirror that of her own life and family. The fact that she was a nineteenth century female writer emphasises her status as a woman of privilege. Another later and quite influential Big House writer is Elizabeth Bowen who wrote extensively on the precarious position of the elite

as the power they had held for generations was retracted from them piece by piece over the period of great social and political change where Catholics were no longer denied power and land agitation and nationalism were growing. Her writings chronicle the decline of the Big House as experienced from within. Successive social and political changes that took place in the nineteenth century in Ireland, such as the abolishing of the Penal Laws and the Act of Union, and also the various land acts and reforms, served to level the privileges of the landed class with those of the previously disenfranchised and largely Roman Catholic Irish population. The Great Famine in Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century also served to impact many, though not all, Big houses and landed families. The inability of tenants to pay rents and the high eviction rates experienced during the famine led to extreme rent arrears that gravely affected the landlords' income. Nonetheless, the houses remained an important symbol of a divided society and they were regarded with great hostility by the native Irish. After Ambrose Congreve died in aged, Mount Congreve was described as the "last Big House", meaning the last in which a member of the ascendancy family was resident. The fate of the Big House still remains undecided today as new challenges are faced in order to preserve them. The work speaks of the desire to preserve and the feasibility of such practices. Dooley argues that "the future of Irish historic houses is by no means secure.

Chapter 5 : The Big House (@bighouseireland) – Instagram photos and videos

Ireland's "Big Houses" were the large country homes of local landlords. Most of them were built in the 18th and 19th centuries, and were usually surrounded by large estates. Tenants on the estate rented the land from their landlords.

Most of them were built in the 18th and 19th centuries, and were usually surrounded by large estates. Tenants on the estate rented the land from their landlords. These photographs, collected by the National Library of Ireland, capture scenes from life in the Big Houses before this way of life disappeared. The period they capture looks peaceful and prosperous, but by the s the landlord system in Ireland had been dismantled. Parkanaur House and gardens, Castlecaulfield, Co. Kerry L ROY The house was built between and by Theobald Butler. Cavan, ALB Gate lodges, a central component of the architectural landscape of country estates, were often designed by the leading architects of the period. The snowy garden at Clonbrock, Ahascragh, Co. The Dillon family relaxing at home, Clonbrock, Ahascragh, Co. The christening of the Smyth babies, at Sion Lodge, Waterford. A "coming of age" 21st birthday celebration at Curraghmore, Portlaw, Co. Pursuits such as sports and hunting were common, with many of the landed families particularly interested by the new art of photography. Playing croquet on the lawn, Clonbrock, Ahascragh, Co. Amateur photographers, Clonbrock, Ahascragh, Co. This telescope, at Birr Castle, Co. Offaly, was installed in by William Parsons, 3rd Earl of Rosse. He and his wife Mary were internationally acclaimed amateur astronomers and photographers. Fox-hunting was one of the few country sports in which genteel women could play an active role, some rising to the prestigious title of Master of Foxhounds. For most Irish gentry in , fox-hunting was seen as a harmless and ancient tradition. Women participating in otter hunt, Curraghmore, Portlaw, Co. They could afford to keep large stables and the staff required to tend horses, and later invested in motor cars and chauffeurs. An early motor car, Ross House, Ross, Co. Women with bicycles at Galgorm Castle, Ballymena, Co. Bicycling was hugely popular with the upper classes in the late 19th century. Women took it up enthusiastically as it gave them significant freedom, despite the restrictions of long and heavy dresses. Ladies bicycle race, possibly Moydrum Castle, Athlone, Co. Invalid carriage drawn by donkey, Curraghmore, Portlaw, ca. Driving off, Castletown, Celbridge, Co. Staff Servants were central to the functioning of Big Houses, allowing landed families to enjoy a life of leisure and comfort. While landed estates provided employment for local people and offered servants board, lodging and a degree of job security, wages were relatively low, hours very long, and the work was often drudgery. Uniformed servants, Bessborough House, Piltown, Co. Lady of the house directing the gardeners at Monivea Castle, Athenry, Co. Shearing sheep, Clonbrock, Ahascragh, Co. Roscommon, Tunnels were built so that the staff would move between the boat harbour and the house unseen. Group of stewards at Curraghmore, Portlaw, Co. Stewards were in charge of the maintenance of the gardens and the home farm. Uniformed servants, Curraghmore, Portlaw, Co. All media The story featured may in some cases have been created by an independent third party and may not always represent the views of the institutions, listed below, who have supplied the content.

Chapter 6 : The Big House | helping young people experience God's love, especially when life is difficult.

The 10 Best Big House in Ireland are 1 Aras an Uachtarain official residence of the President of Ireland, open to the public on Saturdays on a first come first served basis ticket allocation from the Phoenix Park Centre next door.

This weekend, the May bank holiday, many of these houses will open their doors to the public for the summer season. We take a look inside. Larry Cummins Sophie Shelswell White, 36, is general manager of Bantry House and the ninth generation of the family to occupy the spectacular, 30,000-square-foot mansion. The house sits on acres overlooking Bantry Bay. At one point, in the mids, we were the largest landowners in Cork, overseeing tens of thousands of acres. These days, things are even tougher: In the long-term, however, her eldest son, Jacob, six brother Max is just 20 months old , will not automatically inherit at the age of Although the auction never happened, the fact that it was considered highlights the financial pressures faced by the family. His is the ninth generation of the family to occupy the house. How do you deal with that? Drishane House is open to visitors under Section This regulation allows owners who open to the public for 60 days of the year to set off expenses against other income. Income comes from hosting weddings and from rent from cottages owned by Drishane House, but the income from paying visitors is negligible. Her initials, scratched by her with a diamond on the dining room window, are still to be seen. Drishane is a history capsule, of or years. Some owners are, and some are not. The State needs to get more involved. Larry Cummins Kristin Jameson and her sister, Andrea, occupy rambling Tourin House, on acres, near Cappoquin, Co Waterford, where their family has lived since A third sister, Tara, is married and lives in Kerry, but visits regularly. Kristin and Andrea are single and Tara has no children. All three, now in their sixties, are descendants of whiskey baron, John Jameson. They opened the house to the public. Tourin has a tillage farm, a acre Cider Apple orchard, which supplies Bulmers, and 65 acres of hardwood, currently being thinned-out and sold for firewood. The house also hosts photographic workshops and art exhibitions. Last year, 1, people visited the house to view an exhibition of paintings of the grounds of Tourin. Tourin, which boasts about 25 acres of garden and woodland, including a walled garden and year-old oak trees, attracts about 2, visitors a year. Among the improvements are investment works at Villierstown Pier, close to Dromana House, as well as signage, parking improvements, and clearance work at Tourin slipway, close to Tourin House. It is hoped that this investment, and other work on the Blackwater, will improve access from the river to the great houses of the Blackwater and encourage more river users to visit the Waterford Garden Trail, the nearby Waterford Greenway, and other attractions. To date, four generations of his family have lived in the mansion, which was built in However, meeting insurance costs, complying with fire and health-and-safety regulations which are the same for a new-build hotel as they are for an historic house , and an ongoing difficulty in accessing grants are a huge headache. Last year, I applied for a heritage grant to repair windows in the main house. That was turned down. Everything we make goes back into the house and there is very little extra.

Chapter 7 : The Big House and the Irish Revolution | The Irish Story

The Big House and the Irish revolution The 'Big House' or country mansion of the Anglo-Irish landed class, was a target of republicans throughout the Irish revolution of A total of were burned out, blown up or otherwise destroyed between and

Chapter 8 : Large Luxury Holiday Homes, Party Houses to Rent | Hidden Ireland

*The Big House in Ireland [Valerie Pakenham, Thomas Pakenham] on www.nxgvision.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. For nearly years, the big country house has dominated the Irish landscape and imagination.*

Chapter 9 : The 'Big House' Era in Ireland

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