ISSN 1753-2396 (Print)
ISSN 2753-328X (Online)

Journal of
Irish and Scottish Studies

Articles

Purpose and the Irish Landed Gentry: The Case of Arthur Hugh Smith Barry, 1843–1925

Author: Ian d'Alton

Volume 10, Issue 1
Pp: 117-141
2020
Published on: 1st Jan 2020

1495
ABERDEEN
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Purpose and the Irish Landed Gentry: The Case of Arthur Hugh Smith Barry, 1843–1925[1]

Ian d'Alton

What were the Irish landed gentry *for*? Goldwin Smith, writing in the *Contemporary Review* in 1885, suggested that 'Landlordism, it is to be feared, however beneficent and picturesque in theory, is practically a failure. Where there is no obligation to work, pleasure in most of us gets the better of duty'.[2] Much later, Shane Leslie, for one, was in no doubt. 'Country life' he averred 'was entirely organised to give nobility and gentry … a good time'.[3] In this reading, the women had children, parties, visits and gossip – 'comings-and-goings, entertainments, marriages'.[4] The men had horses, foxes, guns, cards – and women.[5] And if many landlords saw their tenants as dim, feckless, devious wastrels, this was almost exactly reciprocated – it is well to remember that the greatest hatreds often derive from, and feed on, Freud's 'narcissism of small differences'.[6] To take one very prosaic example: drinking to excess was something both the gentry and their tenantry could understand. Lady Charlotte Smith Barry, writing of Fota, County Cork in the early nineteenth century, describes 'the great quantity of wine that was consumed there, the big decanter which holds nine bottles … being refilled many times, the door having previously been locked and the key thrown out of the window.'[7]

---

[1] The description is by Archbishop Thomas Croke, in a letter to Very Rev R. Cahill, PP, VG Tipperary, *Freeman's Journal*, 28 June 1889. Quoted in Laurence M. Geary, *The Plan of Campaign 1886–1891* (Cork, 1986), 116. My thanks go to Larry Geary, Felix M. Larkin and David Nolan for their comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

[2] Goldwin Smith, 'The Administration of Ireland', *Contemporary Review*, 48 (1885), 4.

[3] Quoted in Terence Dooley, *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland: A Study of Irish Landed Families 1860–1960* (Dublin, 2001), 44.

[4] Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen's Court & Seven Winters* (London, 1984), 259.

[5] See, as one instance, the description of Owen Fitzgerald's bachelor life in Anthony Trollope's Cork novel, *Castle Richmond* [1860] (3 vols, London, New York, 1979), I, 12–13 and 27–8.

[6] Donald Akenson, *Small Differences: Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants, 1825–1922* (Quebec, 1988), 149, using the term from Sigmund Freud, *The Taboo of Virginity* [1917] (Standard edition, London, 1953).

[7] 'Memoir of the Early Life of Arthur Hugh Smith Barry later Lord Barrymore covering the Years from his Birth to the Period after the Death of his First Wife Lady

L. Perry Curtis has recently explored the nature of the demonising of Irish landlords since the Famine, focusing on the Land War and the depiction of evictions. Drawing on the National Folklore Collection, his conclusion is that the stereotype, shaped by the Famine but constructed in sharp detail in the 1870s and 1880s, long outlasted the reality.[8] In modern times the distortion has been no less, often fostered through the literary achievements of their own kind, with partial and attractive writing in such as Lennox Robinson's 1926 play *The Big House*, Elizabeth Bowen's novels *The Last September* (1929) and *A World of Love* (1955), and a plethora of memoir and semi-sentimental coffee-table books about the 'Descendancy'.[9] These have largely trumped the actuality, despite a string of modern sober studies. The latter sorts of analyses are not new. It was not from a shortage of contemporary examination and prescription – now largely forgotten and unread – that landlordism, as a purposeful system, collapsed. Leaving aside the obvious polemics from implacable enemies convinced that the gentry were beyond redemption, there are dozens of quite thoughtful and forensic dissections of its defects and its strengths from friends and sceptical sympathisers in the periodical journals, pamphlets and newspapers of the later nineteenth century.[10]

Mary Frances Wyndham Quin', typescript of an unpublished MS now in the archives at Fota House, County Cork, 3. I am indebted to Mr Niall Foley for enabling sight of the typescript, and for other kindnesses, and to Mr Robin Petherick for permission to quote from it. Also Jacqueline O'Brien and Desmond Guinness, *Great Irish Houses and Castles* (Dublin, 1992), 195.

[8] L. Perry Curtis jr, *The Depiction of Eviction in Ireland 1845-1910* (Dublin, 2011); idem., 'Demonising the Irish Landlords since the Famine' in Brian Casey (ed.), *Defying the Law of the Land: Agrarian Radicals in Irish History* (Dublin, 2013), 20–43.

[9] Christopher Murray (ed.) *Selected Plays of Lennox Robinson* (Gerrard's Cross, 1982), 195; Elizabeth Bowen, *The Last September* (London, 1998); idem., *A World of Love* (New York, 1978).

[10] For example: J. A. Froude, 'On the Uses of a Landed Gentry', *Fraser's Magazine* (December 1896); J. P. Mahaffy, 'The Irish Landlords', *Contemporary Review*, 41 (January-June 1882), 160–176; M. MacDonagh, 'Are Irish Landlords as Black as they are Painted?, *Fortnightly Review*, 73 (June 1903), 1030–47; Lord Dunraven, 'The Land Purchase Deadlock', *Fortnightly Review*, 78 (November 1905), 795–98; 'The Social Revolution in Ireland', *Edinburgh Review*, 198 (July 1903), 200–30; Dudley Cosby, 'The Hard Case of the Irish Landlords', *Westminster Review*, 154 (August 1900), 194–211; Lord Castletown, 'The Land Banks (Ireland) Bill and the Land Question', *Journal of the Institute of Bankers*, 4 (January 1902), 28–47; Mabel Sharman Crawford, 'Experiences of an Irish Landowner', *Contemporary Review*, 52 (August 1887), 263-74; Sir Horace Plunkett, 'Agricultural Organisation', *New Ireland Review*, 1 (June 1894), 197–205; Charles Stewart Parnell, 'Mr Balfour's Land Bill', *North American Review*, 150 (June 1890), 665–70; Anon., 'The Ex-Landlords of Ireland, their Duties and Prospects', *National Review*, 52 (February 1909), 942–51. See a report of a lecture by

John Banville's subversive Big House novel, *Birchwood* (1984) contains the thought-provoking observation that 'We imagine that we remember things as they were, while in fact all we carry into the future are fragments which reconstruct a wholly illusory past'.[11] It suited agitators to represent the landed nexus as rapacious and ruthless, overwhelmingly Protestant and often significantly absent, in mind as well as body. The acceptance of such was vital to a larger political purpose and, indeed, it was hugely successful. Not only Irish-America, but significant swathes of liberal England, agreed with the assessment. And in it were large elements of truth. But it skated over a couple of things. For one, the landed economy was somewhat more than Cromwellian land-grabbers; there were significant institutional outliers – corporate estates held by such as the London guilds, the Church of Ireland, Trinity College, the railway companies.[12] For another, while the largest estates were substantially Protestant-owned,[13] there was a sub-class of Catholic landowners. These were mainly small estates: the 1861 census of occupations by religion throws up the intriguing statistic that fully 40 per cent of landed proprietors in Ireland were Catholic but holding only about 20 per cent of the acreage.[14]

Furthermore, typically Irish landowners were not particularly prosperous. Unwise family settlements and the Famine, followed in smart order by the Encumbered Estates Court, picked off many gentry families by mid-century. Rapaciousness and ruthlessness were the consequences of inefficiency and incompetence, not the reverse, summed up in the landlords failing to keep rents

---

William O'Brien entitled 'The Lost Opportunities of the Irish Gentry' delivered on 8 September 1887, in Dublin, discussed in Laurence M. Geary, 'Anticipating Memory: Landlordism, Agrarianism and Deference in late-Nineteenth-Century Ireland' in Tom Dunne and Laurence M. Geary (eds), *History and the Public Sphere: Essays in Honour of John A. Murphy* (Cork, 2005), 129–31. For others, see W. M. Griswold, *A General Index to the Contemporary Review, The Fortnightly Review, and the Nineteenth Century* (Bangor, Maine, 1882).

[11] John Banville, *Birchwood* (London, 1984), 12. See also Ian d'Alton, 'Remembering the Future, Imagining the Past: How Southern Irish Protestants Survived' in Felix M. Larkin (ed.), *Librarians, Poets, and Scholars: A Festschrift for Donall Ó Lúanaigh* (Dublin, 2007), 212–30.

[12] Lindsay Proudfoot, 'The Estate System in mid-Nineteenth-Century Waterford' in William Nolan and Thomas P. Power (eds), *Waterford: History and Society, Interdisciplinary Essays* (Dublin, 1992), 521.

[13] Nearly half the country was comprised of estates each of 5,000 acres and upwards, which were owned by only 700 landlords. See W. E. Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1994), 6.

[14] From Akenson, *Small Differences*, 162, appendix F, and Proudfoot, 'Estate System', 519.

in line with rising prosperity in the 1850s and 1860s, and thus experiencing all the more heavy a fall-out in the 1870s when times got bad again. At one end of the spectrum there is the example of Lord Midleton whose incompetent agent Thomas Poole allowed arrears of £70,000 to accumulate between 1806 and 1838.[15] At the other was Arthur Hugh Smith Barry.[16]

One of the few Irish landlords who bucked the perceived trend, Smith Barry held on for a long time; but he was exceptional. In his day, he was significant.[17] Lord Midleton's verdict in the 1930s was that 'Smith-Barry ... had a *cachet* which no one else could aspire to' and that he was 'the one resident Southern landlord of capacity who commanded general confidence'.[18] As late as 1910, *Vanity Fair* was caricaturing him as a typical Irish landowner in one of its 'Men of the Day' series.[19] Born before the Famine, he died three years after the foundation of the Irish Free State a wealthy man, worth about €30 million in today's money. His gross estate was proved at £492,277, his personal estate at £295,487, but that in the Irish Free State was only £46,800.[20]

Smith Barry was one of an influential group of United Kingdom landed proprietors with property in England as well as Ireland. This structure of what we might call 'transnational' landholding was by far the most common.

---

[15] George A. Birmingham, *The Bad Times* (4th edn, London, 1914), 40; also W. E. Vaughan, 'An Assessment of the Economic Performance of Irish Landlords, 1851–81' in F. S. L. Lyons and R. A. J. Hawkins, *Ireland under the Union – Varieties of Tension: Essays in Honour of T. W. Moody* (Oxford, 1980), 173–199; James S. Donnelly Jr, *The Land and the People of Nineteenth-Century Cork: The Rural Economy and the Land Question* (London, 1975), 173–4.

[16] The whereabouts (or, indeed, existence) of Smith Barry's personal papers remain a mystery. In November 1971 his daughter replied to an enquirer that 'My father's papers, diaries and so on would certainly help historians but (especially as things are just now in the country!) [a reference to the Northern Ireland Troubles] I feel they should rest in the Bank for a few more years yet ... I was proud of my father and all he tried to do for the country we both love so much'. Hon. Mrs Dorothy Bell to David Rose, 6 November 1971, NLI MS 39,922/1. Her daughter in 1984 surmised that Mrs Bell 'gave some records to somebody in Dublin, but I cannot be sure'. Mrs Rosemary Villiers to David Rose, 31 May 1984, NLI MS 39, 922/1.

[17] Ian d'Alton, 'Barry, Arthur Hugh Smith, Lord Barrymore' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009), vol. 1, 318–19.

[18] The earl of Midleton, K. P., *Records and Reactions, 1856–1939* (London, 1939), 227–8; *A Page from the Past: Memories of the earl of Desart by himself and his Daughter, Lady Sybil Lubbock* (London, 1936); 'Lord Desart and the Irish Convention, by the earl of Midleton', 241–5.

[19] 'Spy' [Leslie Ward], 'An Irish Landowner **',** *Vanity Fair*, 31 August 1910**.**

[20] Will, 18 June 1925: (probate 16 December 1925); see http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/bills/article-1633409/Historic-inflation-calculator-value-money-changed-1900.html [accessed 13 August 2013]; *Irish Times*, 29 April 1926.

Hiberno-Scottish landlords were much rarer – only six have been identified from Bateman's 1883 *Great Landowners*.[21] This was a narrow crossover, and goes a long way to explaining why, when discussing land proprietorship and cultural affinity in the different countries of the United Kingdom from an Irish perspective, the usual comparator tends to be England rather than Scotland. While landlords and their agents had to deal with different legal systems and landholding customs in England and Ireland, those differences were much less than with the Scottish systems.[22] In Smith Barry's case, he could be classed as more Hiberno-English than Anglo-Irish; his estates consisted of 13,000 acres in Cork, 8,600 in Tipperary, 3,000 in Cheshire and 2,000 in Huntingdonshire, with seventy-nine acres in Cork city, and 6,200 in county Louth. He had a townhouse in London – 20 Hill Street, Berkeley Square, Mayfair – which may have come through the second Lord De Tabley, who married Smith Barry's mother in 1871 (his father died in 1856).[23] He also owned, more exotically, a winter residence on the Mediterranean, in Algeria.[24] In the 1870s the valuation of the Irish lands amounted to some £32,000; the English estates to £9,200. A cadet branch of the family (Ballyedmond, Midleton), owned some 8,400 acres in the 1880s.[25] On Smith Barry's death, the Irish estates, which were entailed, passed to his brother and then to his nephew Robert Raymond Smith Barry.

---

[21] These included the duke of Abercorn (76,500 acres in Ireland, and 2,162 in Scotland (Edinburgh and Renfrewshire); Lord Lansdowne; Lord Oranmore and Browne; Lord Ruthven; and John Broom Pollok. John Bateman, *The Great Landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1883), 1, 259, 345, 362, 391, 423.

[22] See Eric Richards, 'The Highland Estate Factor in the Age of the Clearances' [The Carnegie Lecture, 2014], where he discusses the development of Irish and British estate management in an earlier period – https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9jMzmT6Ato&list=UUSIgDc9Fc9Tg1uO2bacD1qg [accessed 19 November 2016].

[23] 'Hill Street ... comprises none but fine and handsome houses, and has always been inhabited chiefly by titled families, or, at all events, those of high aristocratic connections ... In this street the late Lord De Tabley, better known by his former name of Sir John Leicester, made his fine collection of paintings of the English school'. Edward Walford, 'Berkeley Square and its Neighbourhood', *Old and New London* (London, 1878), vol. 4, 326–38, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=45201 [accessed 2 September 2013].

[24] J. G. Sutton, 'The Political Career of Arthur Hugh Baron Barrymore 1867-1903', M. Phil dissertation (UCC, 2004), 9.

[25] Bateman, *Great Landowners*, 27; U. H. H. De Burgh, *The Great Landowners of Ireland: An Alphabetical List of the Owners of Estates of 500 acres or 500 Pounds Valuation and Upwards* (Dublin, 1878), 83; *Return of the Names of Proprietors, and the Area and Valuation of All Properties in the Several Counties of Ireland, held in Fee or Perpetuity or on Long Leases at Chief Rents*, H. C. 1876 (412.) lxxx.395, 56. See also http://landedestates.nuigalway.ie/LandedEstates/jsp/family-show.jsp?id=2712 [accessed 2 September 2013].

Somewhat mysteriously perhaps, given his antecedents, the house survived the 1919-23 period unscathed. In 1936, the Cork estate of Fota Island that had been substantially improved by Smith Barry and his father[26] was acquired by Arthur Hugh's daughter, Dorothy Bell, who sold Marbury Hall, the Cheshire residence (now demolished).[27] On her death in 1975, Fota ceased to be lived in; it is now the property of the Irish Heritage Trust. For Smith Barry, the English lands provided a parliamentary power-base but his political and economic interests remained almost exclusively Irish-oriented.

Arthur Hugh was born on 17 January 1843 at Leamington, Warwickshire, the elder son of James Hugh Smith Barry and Elizabeth Jacson.[28] In 1915 he wrote that 'My mother was a delicate woman and I apparently a poor and weakly specimen; friends I am told used to say "poor Mrs Smith Barry, she is not likely to live long and as for that wretched baby she will never be able to rear it".'[29] Succeeding to the estates in 1856 while still a minor, he was educated at Eton; and at Christ Church, Oxford between 1863 and 1865 where he did not proceed to a degree. While he seemingly had a full social and sporting life at Oxford – he was President of the Bullingdon Club, for instance[30] – later the impression given is that he was not particularly clubbable, and he is a curious absence from the memoirs of many of his contemporaries. For instance, his brother-in-law, Lord Dunraven, mentions him only in passing.[31] Like his father a keen yachtsman, he was admiral of the Royal Cork Yacht Club between 1890 and 1925, and a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron and of the Marylebone Cricket Club.[32] Cricket was a passion. He was a strongly built man who used his physique to be a hard hitting batsman, usually in the middle order; he was also a capable reserve wicket keeper. He was not in the XI at either Eton or

---

[26] 'Memoir of the Early Life of … Lord Barrymore', 4; see also the Earl of Dunraven, K. P., C. M. G., *Past Times and Pastimes* (London, 1922), vol. 1, 26, a story recounted by an American journalist staying at Fota being presented with a freshly-picked lemon for his hot whisky punch.

[27] See http://fotalearningzone.ie/index.php/resources/resource/43/category/primary_resources [accessed 12 August 2013].

[28] For a description of Fota, see Jennifer McCrea and Laura Murtagh, *Aspects of Fota: Stories from the Big House* (Dublin, n.d.).

[29] 'Memoir of the Early Life of … Lord Barrymore', 4.

[30] Email from Ms Judith Curthoys, Archivist, Christ Church, Oxford to Ian d'Alton, 6 April 2004; Sutton, 'The Political Career of Barrymore', 10-11; 'Memoir of the Early Life of … Lord Barrymore', 12.

[31] See Dunraven, *Past Times and Pastimes*, I, 96.

[32] Alicia St Leger, *A History of the Royal Cork Yacht Club* (Cork, 2005), 138, 172, 190, 418; 'Memoir of the Early Life of … Lord Barrymore', 12, 19.

Oxford, but soon became much in demand for a variety of club sides either side of the Irish Sea.[33]

His first marriage was in 1868 to Lady Mary Frances Wyndham-Quin, third daughter of the third earl of Dunraven and Mountearl; 'they are South of Ireland people', he wrote to his English solicitor; 'so you see I am going to become more closely connected … with the country'.[34] As a child, he travelled a great deal in France and Italy, partly for his mother's health, and partly because money was tight after the Famine and went further on the Continent. The love of travel continued, and he was abroad a great deal between 1874 and 1886.[35] The house in Algiers was bought largely for the benefit of his wife's health. It was 'an old Moorish Villa at Mustapha Superieure which belonged to the family of an old Mufti who had owned it for generations: it had never had a European to spoil its character which had been the case with nearly all the Moorish villas around Algiers. It was a most picturesque old building full of old columns and tiles and some very fine plaster work, although a most fascinating place with vines and outer courts and a quaint old Moorish garden'.[36] They spent each winter there from 1877 until Lady Mary's death in 1884. They had a son, who died in infancy, and a daughter.

Smith Barry's second marriage in 1889 was to Elizabeth Post, widow of Arthur Post, an American of wealthy family,[37] and daughter of General James Wadsworth (died 1864), commander of the military district of Washington during the American Civil War and a rich landowner.[38] It is probable that she

---

[33] Cricketing obituary in *Wisden* (1926) and his biography in Arthur Haygarth, *Scores and Biographies* (London, 1878), X; also a biography by Edward Liddle (October 2007) at http://www.cricketeurope4.net/CSTATZ/IRELANDBIOS/s/smithbarry_ah.shtml [accessed 13 August 2013].

[34] Smith Barry to Mr Blake, 1 July 1868, DCN1402/72/1, Chester, Cheshire County Record Office [hereafter Cheshire CRO].

[35] Charlotte Smith Barry [Lady Charlotte Cole, daughter of the earl of Enniskillen, wife of James Hugh Smith Barry, Smith Barry's brother], *Notes on the Smith Barry Family. Written for her Son, Robert Smith Barry* (1933), 26–7; Smith Barry at an election meeting in Huntingdon, 27 April 1886: *Cambridge Chronicle*, 30 April 1886; 'Memoir of the Early Life of … Lord Barrymore', 6–8, 10–11, 13, 18, 20.

[36] 'Memoir of the Early Life of … Lord Barrymore', 20. See also Smith Barry's appointment papers as High Sheriff of Chester in 1883; the papers were signed and witnessed by the British Consul General in Algiers: QDA12/52, Cheshire CRO.

[37] Marie Caroline de Trobriand Post, *The Post Family* (New York, 1905), 192.

[38] Wayne Mahood, *General Wadsworth: The Life and Times of Brevet Major James S. Wadsworth* (Cambridge, Mass., 2009); Henry Greenleaf Pearson, *James S. Wadsworth of Geneseo Brevet Major-General of United States Volunteers* (Forgotten Books, online, 2012); http://www.mrlincolnswhitehouse.org/inside.asp?ID=691&subjectID=2 [accessed 8 April 2014]. Elizabeth's sister was Cornelia Wadsworth Ritchie Adair (1837–1921), wife of

brought considerable money to the marriage from both her father and her first husband.[39]

Smith Barry was sometime a member of the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union, the Irish offshoot of the Primrose League, the parliamentary consultative committee of the Irish Unionist Alliance and prominent therein until 1913 when, in Lord Midleton's phrase, he 'had run his course'.[40] He was a vice-president of the Irish Landowners' Convention and was at the apex of Cork county life, being a Deputy Lieutenant and a Justice of the Peace, High Sheriff in 1886 and an occasional member of the Grand Jury and the Board of Poor Law Guardians.[41] After he ceased to be an MP for Cork County in 1874, he continued to take an active political role at local level, and is found in attendance at numerous political meetings up to 1912.

In his English incarnation, he was a Justice of the Peace for Huntingdonshire and Cheshire, and High Sheriff for Cheshire in 1883. Appointed a privy counsellor for Ireland in 1896 he was elevated to the peerage in 1902 as Baron Barrymore, of Barrymore in the county of Cork.[42] Between 1918 and 1922, he stood against the die-hards of the Southern Unionist Committee which had broken with the Irish Unionist Alliance.[43] Eventually, he came to support Lord Midleton's accommodative Anti-Partition League. He died on 22 February 1925 at his London residence.[44] His remains were cremated at Golders Green cemetery, London and the altar cross in Christ Church, Church of Ireland, Rushbrooke, County Cork, stands in his memory. The title died with him.

Thus far this is the conventional, measured, planned, life trajectory of many of the Irish landed gentry in the period. But Smith Barry was 'a clear

---

John George Adair of Glenveagh Castle, County Donegal.

[39] See Indenture – Declaration of Trusts 'as to trust funds invested in America pursuant to ante-nuptial settlement', 12 December 1889 [witnessed before the US Consul General in London]: DCN1402/72/1, Cheshire CRO. Also draft codicil to the will of Lord Barrymore, 24 February 1915, which indicates the existence of American money: DCN1402/72/2, Cheshire CRO.

[40] IUA, *Annual Report 1891* – PRONI, D/989/C/4/1; *A Page from the Past*, 242.

[41] He served four times between summer 1872 and spring 1899.

[42] *Hansard*, *HL Deb 29 July 1902 vol. 112, c 1.*

[43] Patrick Buckland, *Irish Unionism I* (Dublin, 1972), 150.

[44] Obit., *Weekly Irish Times*, 28 February 1928. For portraits of Smith Barry see (1) by Walter Stoneman: bromide print, 1917; (2) by Sir (John) Benjamin Stone: platinum print in card window mount, July 1897 [1 & 2 in the National Portrait Gallery, London]; (3) portrait by (Sir) William Orpen, 1915. See William Orpen to Mrs St George, n.d., but 1915. Graves Collection of William Orpen Letters, National Gallery of Ireland, PD/GRA/120. See also an obit. in *Northwich Guardian*, 24 February 1925, for his north Cheshire activities.

cut above the average class of Irish landlord'.[45] He came to embody the family's motto 'Boutez en avant' (loosely translated as 'Push forward') that was boldly emblazoned prominently, almost as an advertising slogan, at the main gates to Fota. This became evident early on, when he was only twenty four. As the head of one of the great families of Cork, it was expected that he would follow a political career. An opportunity presented itself in 1867, at a by-election for the county. Arthur Hugh's family antecedents and university education would have ineluctably pointed him towards the Conservatives,[46] and it was rumoured that he had been invited to stand.[47] If so, he declined: even before the Ballot Act, Cork conservatism offered little prospect of electoral success. It was an astute move, although it might have been more the result of careerism in the absence of paternal influence. Standing thus as an 'Independent Irish gentleman' he was criticised for the anodyne nature of his election address. As one observer said, it 'will justify any course he may adopt.'[48] Smith Barry was excoriated as being 'yesterday the first of the Tories; today he was the last of the Liberals.'[49] Other Liberal candidates withdrew, leaving Smith Barry unopposed[50] as a supporter of Gladstone, and of modest measures of franchise, church and land reform.[51] Crucially, it was a relatively calm period in the conflicts over land. Politics reflected this quiescence. 'It is many years since there has been in the County a contested election that excited less interest or enlisted less enthusiasm' was the *Cork Constitution*'s verdict on the somnambulance.[52]

The 1868 election in Cork was again an internecine Liberal affair. Smith Barry won, in a three-cornered contest.[53] No Pitt, Smith Barry had voted (but

---

[45] J. J. Lee, quoted in McCrea and Murtagh, *Aspects of Fota,* 31.

[46] For instance, James Hugh Smith Barry was appointed as a member of the Conservative committee to contest the Cork county election in 1837. JHSB contributed £100: *Cork Constitution*, 8 July 1837.

[47] *Cork Examiner,* 22 February 1867, editorial.

[48] *Cork Examiner,* 14 February 1867, letter from a person claiming to be a tenant-farmer from the Kanturk area.

[49] *Cork Examiner*, 19 February 1867; *Cork Constitution*, 19 February 1867.

[50] *Cork Constitution*, 22 February 1867; Brian Walker (ed.), *Parliamentary Election Results in Ireland, 1801–1922* (Dublin, 1978), 266. Walker classifies Smith Barry as a Liberal.

[51] *Cork Examiner*, 13 February 1867; *Cork Constitution*, 13 February 1867; Sutton, 'The Political Career of Barrymore', 11, 13.

[52] *Cork Constitution*, 21 February 1867. He was sworn in on 4 March 1867 (*Hansard*, *HC Deb 4 March 1867 vol. 185, c. 1306).*

[53] McCarthy Downing, of Skibbereen, owned about 3,000 acres. See http://landedestates.nuigalway.ie/LandedEstates/jsp/estate-show.jsp?id=1882 [accessed 13 August 2013]; Walker, *Parliamentary Elections*, 266.

not spoken) in the previous parliament for Gladstone's resolutions in relation to the Church of Ireland. He was more positive this time in his declared support for disestablishment and denominational education. Along with McCarthy Downing, another large landowner in the county, he prevailed over a cousin of the earl of Cork. During the 1868 parliament, in the words of J. G. Sutton, he had an 'anonymous and unspectacular performance',[54] dutifully voting for the Irish Church Bill and for Gladstone's 1870 Land Act.[55] By 1886, he was peddling the line that this liberal interlude was due to his extreme youth; twenty years after that admission, he described the period from 1867 to 1874 as one in which he was 'young, guileless, and simple'.[56] In truth, it seemed that despite his long years in parliament, the act of getting into the House of Commons was not much to his liking; the huge constituency of Cork county, 'which had to be visited and canvassed from North to South and East to West, stopping at all sorts of horrible inns and calling upon and drinking with every sort of squire and parish priest', was expensive (costing him nearly £7,000 in 1868) and time-consuming (the canvass took six weeks).[57]

No-one was neutral about Smith Barry. To his opponents he was variously 'a pernicious little noodle of a Cork landlord'; a 'vainglorious little bashaw'; 'the galloping snob of Rotten Row'; an 'aggressive busybody'; a 'man of 'lofty incomprehension'; and 'a virulent partisan': these last three epithets are from Archbishop Thomas Croke.[58] William O'Brien characterised him at this time as 'the most dreaded man in Ireland'.[59] To an admirer like Lord Midleton, he was possessed of 'characteristic courage and foresight', with 'claims on the confidence of the South which I could never hope to achieve'.[60] In 1887, the *Cork Constitution* newspaper lauded 'the great services that he is acknowledged to have rendered to the loyal inhabitants of this City and Province'.[61]

---

[54] Sutton, 'The Political Career of Barrymore', 29.

[55] *Hansard*, *HC Deb 11 March 1870 vol. 199, c. 1857*.

[56] *Cambridge Chronicle*, 30 April 1886; *Hansard, HL Deb 11 December 1906 vol. 167, c. 36*.

[57] 'Memoir of the Early Life of … Lord Barrymore', 16.

[58] *United Ireland*, 26 October 1889; *Tipperary Nationalist*, 14 August 1889; *Freeman's Journal*, 28 June 1889; Denis Marnane, *Land and Violence: A History of West Tipperary since 1660* (Tipperary, 1985), 110; Virginia Crossman and Donnacha Seán Lucy, '"One huge abuse": The Cork Board of Guardians and the Expansion of Outdoor Relief in Post-Famine Ireland', *English Historical Review*, 126 (2011), 1424-5; *Cork Constitution*, 17 January 1890.

[59] William O'Brien, *Evening Memories* (London and Dublin, 1920), 440.

[60] The earl of Midleton, K. P., *Ireland – Dupe or Heroine* (London, 1933), 73; Midleton, *Records and Reactions*, 228.

[61] *Cork Constitution*, 15 November 1887.

Whatever about his character, probably all could agree that he was an extremely assiduous man of business. What seems to have brought this talent into focus was his coming into the management of the substantial Smith Barry inheritances in 1868. From here on it was landed economics which engaged his attention;[62] and it is not as the relatively liberal Dr Jekyll – supporter of church disestablishment and franchise extension – that he is remembered, but rather as the arch-Tory Mr Hyde of the Plan of Campaign and wrecker of 'New Tipperary'.

Once in control of his estates Smith Barry commenced, both in England and Ireland, a process of tightening up on tenancies and ridding the properties of lax legal and financial practices. For instance, on the Tipperary town estates, the traditional absenteeism of the landlord had resulted in a loss of control over tenancies, and thus a loss of income. Together with a new land agent, he cracked down on his tenants, particularly middlemen.[63] He learnt his stuff, evidenced by the rather tedious detail often given in his parliamentary speeches.[64] Money was his main mover, and he had a considerable grasp of the financial world.[65] He was an original nominee of Captain John Shawe-Taylor to the Land Conference in 1902, but declined.[66] A political opponent in Cork, D. D. Sheehan, claimed that Smith Barry was purely obstructive when it came to land reform; although the latter felt that the 1903 Land Act which started the final transfer of the ownership of the land from landlord to tenant 'will, I believe, if given time, work satisfactorily and carry out the policy of the Government to a very large extent'.[67] The question of evicted tenants – both

---

[62] See, for instance, some of his numerous speeches on land matters in 1896. *Hansard*, *HC Deb* 8 June 1896 vol. 41, cc. 686–7; 12 June 1896 vol. 41, cc. 1017–35; 21 July 1896 vol. 43, cc. 329, 359; 22 July 1896 vol. 43 c. 371.

[63] Sutton, 'The Political Career of Barrymore', 35.

[64] See, for instance, his speech on a 1893 bill to deal with evicted tenants (*Hansard*, *HC Deb 29 March 1893 vol. 10*, cc. 1444–8); on the 'disturbed' state of parts of county Cork in 1907 see *Hansard, HL Deb 4 June 1907 vol. 175, cc. 456–9; for the Irish Land Bill, where he had an amendment accepted by the government, see Hansard, HL Deb 25 October 1909 vol. 4, cc. 331–2.*

[65] For instance, he posed a very technical question on tithe rent-charge redemption in 1899. See *Hansard*, *HC Deb 16 June 1899 vol. 72, cc. 1354-5. See also Smith Barry to Mr Blake (solicitor), 23 November 1867, concerning his future wife's financial settlement from Lord Dunraven: DCN1402/72/1; 22 June 1873, concerning the merits of investing in consols or railway stock: DCN1402/72/1, Cheshire CRO.*

[66] F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland since the Famine* (London, 1971), 213; William O'Brien in the House of Commons, 1908 (*Hansard*, *HC Deb 23 November 1908 vol. 196, c. 1866);* Sally Warwick-Haller, *William O'Brien and the Irish Land War* (Dublin, 1990), 224.

[67] D. D. Sheehan, *Ireland since Parnell* (London, 1921), 91; *Hansard*, *HL Deb 13 June 1904*

generally, and on his own estates – was a particular bugbear, right up to 1917.[68] As late as that year, Smith Barry was frustrating the attempts of Tipperary Urban District Council to acquire his land for housing.[69] And while he held to a consistent point of view – that a contract was a contract and that 'It is a dangerous thing to point out to Irish tenants that there is a means of escaping from the payment of their obligations'[70] – he acquiesced in the passage of a private act in 1905 that restored to their leases some of the town tenants that had had them cancelled in the 'New Tipperary' imbroglio.[71]

His parliamentary career[72] subsequent to 1886, when Smith Barry became Conservative and Unionist MP for South Huntingdonshire in 1886, sponsored by the earl of Sandwich, was as undistinguished as his former one as a Liberal. He was only fourth on the list of preferred candidates in 1886, as Lord Sandwich detailed, in front of Smith Barry, at a Borough of Huntingdon Conservative Association Tea and Smoking Concert in April 1886.[73] Holding forty meetings, he won, but not by much: he had a majority of 161 over his Gladstonian opponent, Thomas Coote, a coal merchant. His 1886 election address was tailored to his constituency, concentrating on land reform in the English context, opposition to the disestablishment of the Church of England (a bit of an Aunt Sally), and local government reform. His margin in 1892 was even slimmer, at twenty-two votes, but he was returned with a larger majority in 1895.[74] While consulted by Gerald

vol. 135, c. 126.

[68] *Hansard*, *HL Deb 17 June 1907 vol. 176, c. 102; 6 August 1907 vol. 179, cc. 1751–2; Hansard, HC Deb 11 June 1917 vol. 94, c. 612*.

[69] T. Dawson [Town Clerk], *Tipperary Urban District Council Housing Schemes. Lord Barrymore and the Tipperary UDC: The Relations Explained* (pamphlet, n.d., but probably 1917).

[70] *Hansard*, *HC Deb 7 May 1891 vol. 353, c. 330*.

[71] Barrymore Estate Act 1905 (5 Edw. 7 cap.1P, assented to 11 July 1905), 'To enable the Baron Barrymore to restore certain forfeited leases in the town of Tipperary, and for other purposes'. The Act was repealed by the [Irish] Statute Law Revision Act, 2012 (no. 19 of 2012) - DCN/72–77 1857–1919, Cheshire CRO. The Act makes it clear that the tenants paid for the Act's passage: Act, 14. Papers relating to the Act's passage are in the UK Parliamentary Archives, HL/PO/PB/1/1905/5E7c1 and HL/PO/JO/10/10/221 Item 166 a) and b).

[72] He was MP for Cork County from 23 February 1867 to 31 January 1874 and for South Huntingdon from 1 July 1886 to 1 October 1900.

[73] *Cambridge Chronicle*, 2 April 1886.

[74] *Cambridge Chronicle*, 30 April 1886.; *Hunts Guardian*, 25 June 1886; *Hunts County News*, 30 June 1886; *Hunts Post*, 2 July 1886; *Hunts Post*, 5 July 1902; R. H. Mair (ed.), *Debrett's House of Commons and Judicial Bench* (London, 1886), 33 (for Thomas Coote); *Cambridge Chronicle*, 16 July 1886; *Hunts Post*, 30 June 1895; Sutton, 'The Political Career of

Balfour about the 1898 Irish Local Government Bill,[75] he was apparently never considered for political office, despite the high regard in which he was held by Gerald's brother, Arthur.[76] As early as 1896 he was being talked of for a peerage, but in the event did not receive it until 1902.[77] Tim Healy, in a typically mischievous commendation suggested, in 1888, that he should be appointed as Under-Secretary in Dublin Castle: 'He saw sitting opposite one of the largest landowners in the South of Ireland, the hon. Gentleman the Member for Huntingdonshire (Mr Smith Barry), a Gentleman who had never had any difference with his tenants, and a Gentleman against whom no personal accusations had been made.'[78] But the suspicion must have been that he was a one-trick pony. From Smith Barry's perspective that was exactly the point. Concentrate on what you do, and do it well.

An examination of his activity in parliament between 1886 and 1900 demonstrates that his interests lay almost exclusively with the Irish land issue. His first recorded speech was in 1887, on the matter of the Plan of Campaign; his last as an MP was on the subject of Irish illiterate voters. Of his 150 or so interventions in both the Commons and the Lords, all but seven related to Irish affairs; the overwhelming majority of these were concerned with land purchase, the Plan of Campaign, evicted tenants' rights, and related matters.[79] Only one directly concerned his constituency; an unsuccessful attempt in 1900 to enable the corporation of Huntingdon to enclose certain lands.[80] Otherwise, his parliamentary career was undistinguished, serving on a couple of minor

---

Barrymore', 114.

[75] Alvin Jackson, *The Ulster Party* (Oxford, 1989), 173.

[76] See *Northwich Guardian*, 25 June 1892 'Great Unionist Demonstration at Northwich' in honour of Smith Barry. The attendance included the duke of Westminster (one of the 'Ponsonby syndicate') and A. J. Balfour. The principal subject was Smith Barry's part in defeating the Plan of Campaign.

[77] Marquess of Salisbury to Earl Cadogan, 7 November 1896: Parliamentary Archives, CAD/938 (Cadogan Papers).

[78] *Hansard*, *HC Deb 9 March 1888 vol. 323, c. 753.*

[79] These figures are derived from a search of the online *Hansard* at http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/people/mr-arthur-barry [accessed 14 August 2013]. Note however that this online resource is not complete. Volumes 16 (30 April to 20 July 1914), and 23–5 The period from 3 August 1916 to 24 July 1917 is missing. We know of one intervention by Barrymore covered by volume 16, mentioned in Buckland, *Irish Unionism I*, 24; *Hansard*, HL Deb 1 July 1914 vol. 16, cc. 595–8 (Barrymore on the Government of Ireland Amending Bill).

[80] *Hansard*, HC Deb 13 March 1900 vol. 80, cc. 707–10. It is recorded that he gave £300 towards the promotion of the Cheshire Salt Districts Compensation Bill, 1891: *Northwich Guardian*, 25 June 1892.

select committees (Foynes Harbour and the Fishguard and Rosslare Railways and Harbours Bill) and asking questions on vaccinations in Hong Kong and fertilisers and feeding stuffs and rates and tolls of canal companies.[81] His only English political office was as a vice-chairman of the National Union of Conservative Associations, a titular role.

Smith Barry was one of three Anglo-Irish MPs from Cork who sat for English constituencies in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (the others were Sir Robert Penrose-Fitzgerald – Cambridge city, 1885-1906 – and Sir J. Pretyman-Newman – Enfield, 1910-18 and Finchley, 1918-23.[82] Insofar as it was useful, these provided parliamentary representation for those Anglo-Irish landlords and southern Protestants who had lost it after the extension of the franchise in 1884 and the abolition of the small boroughs. As the loyalist *Cork Constitution* newspaper put it: 'Although Mr Smith Barry has not been elected for an Irish division we have no doubt that the many thousands in the county and city of Cork, who have no direct exponent of their views in parliament, will feel that in him and Mr R. U. Penrose-Fitzgerald they have fast and firm friends, who know of their wants and who will not be unwilling to advocate their interests'.[83] Indeed, it must have seemed to their somewhat bewildered English constituents that these 'Anglo-Irish' MPs were more the latter than the former.[84] There was often palpable impatience with their over-emphasis on Ireland, not to say unfamiliarity with their persons.[85] Thus, at an 1892 Unionist demonstration in Smith Barry's honour in Cheshire, despite Smith Barry being careful to emphasise his 'Cheshire blood' the local newspaper reported that he 'was not generally recognised by the audience'.[86]

Smith Barry's second parliamentary coming coincided with his involvement in two well-known episodes in the Irish land wars of the later nineteenth

---

[81] *Hansard*, *HC Deb 7 March 1887 vol. 311, cc. 1380–1; Hansard, HC Deb 11 May 1898, vol. 57 c. 957*.

[82] *Times* (London), 13 March 1947 (Pretyman-Newman); http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/cgi-bin/search.pl?sur=&suro=c&fir=&firo=c&cit=&cito=c&c=all&tex=%22FTST859RU%22&sye=&eye=&col=all&maxcount=50 (Penrose-Fitzgerald) [accessed 23 April 2014].

[83] *Cork Constitution*, 15 July 1886.

[84] See, for instance, an editorial in *Cambridge Independent Press*, 21 November 1885; also Smith Barry's remarks at Huntingdon, *Cambridge Chronicle*, 7 May 1886.

[85] *Cambridge Independent News*, 21 November 1885, editorial; *Cambridge Chronicle*, 25 June 1886, editorial. Home Rule, from a local East Anglian perspective, was seen primarily in terms of potentially provoking a flood of Irish immigration to Britain, undercutting local labour.

[86] *Northwich Guardian*, 25 June 1892.

century. These demonstrate his singlemindedness and efficiency, qualities virtually unheard of within the landlord classes. The first is in relation to combating boycotting. The Property Defence Association, established in 1880, was already in that arena. The PDA's strongest branch was in Cork, but the organisation was not particularly effective; the result was the foundation of Cork Defence Union in September 1885.[87] Denigrated as 'The Royal Cattle-Lifting and Outrage Manufacturing Association' by the nationalist W. J. Lane,[88] the CDU was a well-oiled machine. It had a paid secretary, established a London office and a robust and reticent financial structure, designed to outwit nationalist lawyers. This efficiency bore all the hall-marks of Smith Barry. A parallel organisation, the Irish Defence Union, headed by Lord Bandon, and highly approved of by the Chief Secretary, was based in London for lobbying and fund-raising purposes.[89] By the end of October 1885, local branches of the CDU were in the process of being set up at Tallow in County Waterford, and in Kilmallock, Charleville, Queenstown and Passage West in County Cork.[90]

Providing flying columns of labourers and machinery for boycotted persons[91], opposing the renewal of licences for boycott-supporting publicans, hiring blacksmiths, labourers and carpenters and organising stores and outlets for produce,[92] the CDU's success lay in avoiding involvement in rent disputes, evictions and forced sales. As Smith Barry wrote rather disingenuously of the CDU to *The Times*: 'It is not in any respect an organisation for the purpose of enforcing the payment of rents, or for the especial defence of land-owning interests. The system of boycotting and intimidation ... affects the liberty of not only landowners, but also merchants, farmers, shopkeepers, artisans and

---

[87] *Cork Examiner,* 28 September 1885; *Cork Constitution*, 28 September 1885. See Property Defence Association, *Annual Report of the Committee* (Dublin, 1881-1887), *passim*. The PDA was formed in 1880. Its Cork branch (of which Smith Barry was the largest subscriber in 1880. See 1881 *Annual Report*, 22) was the most active.

[88] *Cork Constitution*, 25 October 1885.

[89] Balfour to C. M. Davidson, 15 May 1888: BL Add MSS. 49826, 508 (Balfour Papers).

[90] *Cork Constitution*, 19, 20, 26 October 1885; *Cork Examiner*, 31 October 1885. It was alleged that the Church of Ireland bishop of Cork was a member, and had 'encouraged' his clergy to do likewise. See the speech of Sir John Brunner, *Hansard, HC Deb, 12 September 1887, vol. 321, cc. 413-4 (Brunner was MP for the division of Cheshire in which Smith Barry's Marbury Hall was situated).*

[91] The first reported case of the CDU aiding a boycotted person was in *Cork Constitution*, 16 October 1885, when a threshing machine was delivered to a Protestant tenant farmer in west Cork.

[92] George Pellew*, In Castle and Cabin* (New York, 1887), 83; *Cork Constitution*, 3 May 1886.

even labourers ... The aim of the CDU is to afford such persons an organised assistance, so that they may carry on their occupations'.[93]

Or so he claimed. However, at its inaugural meeting a resolution resisting any decrease in judicial rents was passed; and there is evidence of the secretary taking an active part in at least one eviction.[94] The CDU could not help but be political. For instance, in May 1886 its committee passed a resolution against Home Rule.[95] The organisation continued in existence into the new century, but its critical work was done by 1890, with the gradual collapse of the Plan of Campaign. The most high-profile entanglement with the forces of tenantism involved the nationalist-led South of Ireland Cattle-Dealers' Association in the winter of 1885-6. The CDU took on, and forced a draw with, the Association, when the cattle-dealers, assisted by coal porters, refused to send their stock to England on the City of Cork Steam Packet Company along with the cattle of boycotted persons.[96]

Smith Barry is best remembered however for his involvement in one of the most significant disputes in the Plan of Campaign.[97] The Ponsonby estate at Youghal, some 10,000 acres, was the first on which the Plan was adopted,

---

[93] CDU, *Boycotting in the County of Cork* (Cork, 1886), 1, objects of the CDU; Smith Barry, letter in *Times* (London), 15 October 1885, reprinted in *Cork Constitution*, 16 October 1885. The original article on the CDU has stood the test of time and the rigours of revisionism: D. C. Savage, 'The Irish Unionists, 1867–1886', *Éire-Ireland*, 2 (1967), 86-101. See also Gerry Sutton, 'The Emergence of the Cork Defence Union, September 1885–March 1887', *Journal of Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 112 (2007), 40–51.

[94] *Cork Constitution*, 28 September 1885; on the Ponsonby estate see copy letter (n.d., but probably 1890) of Neville Chamberlain, Inspector General, RIC, to the earl of Bandon, President, CDU, relating to an incident wherein a Mr W. Hanna, described as Secretary of the Cork Defence Union, saved a policeman from serious injury at an eviction at Mitchelsfort, 12 October 1890 (?) (copy in the possession of Ian d'Alton). The CDU supplied 'emergency-men' to the Ponsonby estate in 1887. Curtis, The *Depiction of Eviction in Ireland*, 177. See also first annual report of the CDU in *Cork Examiner*, 25 October 1886.

[95] *Cork Constitution*, 3 May 1886.

[96] The best description of this episode is in Donnelly, *Cork*, 329–30. See also Savage, 'Irish Unionists', 95; *Boycotting in the County of Cork*, 13.

[97] *Times* (London) obituary, 23 February 1925, noted that his 'name was associated with the Irish Nationalist agrarian movement known as "The Plan of Campaign", from 1888 to 1891'. C. F. d'Arcy, Archbishop of Armagh, mentioned Barrymore as one of the significant Church people who had died during 1925 (*Irish Times*, 13 May 1925, report of the proceedings of the General Synod). For press coverage of the Plan on the Ponsonby estate, see Felix M. Larkin, 'Keeping an Eye on Youghal: The *Freeman's Journal* and the Plan of Campaign in East Cork, 1886–92', *Irish Communications Review*, 13 (2012), 20–6.

in November 1886, and Talbot-Ponsonby himself was an example of how apparent bloody-mindedness and avarice were the consequences of bad luck, inefficiency and incompetence, not the reverse.[98] Earlier than often noted, by 1887, the Chief Secretary, Arthur Balfour, was bemoaning Ponsonby's weakness, and the rumours that he was about to negotiate a settlement with the tenants through Canon Keller, the parish priest of Youghal.[99] In a letter to Edward King-Harman, Balfour dangled the bait of government assistance if the landlords could assist Ponsonby; his *cri-de-coeur* was that

> It drives me to despair to see the game so ill-played by the landlords; who will not apparently energetically combine together for any other purpose than to abuse the Government [and] contemptible as I think the Irish Landlords are for not having had the spirit to combine [with] each other I should be very glad in those cases where the Plan of Campaign has been started without the Shadow of an excuse, to go out of my way to aid the Landlord in his struggle.[100]

King-Harman agreed: 'The folly and apathy of the class has been simply heart-breaking' - but he drew Balfour's attention to Smith Barry, who confirmed Balfour's concern about the effect of an unwise settlement on the land economy.[101] Smith Barry had form in this area. In 1885, he had called on landlords to combine, just as the nationalists did; and in December 1886, he established the County of Cork Landowners' Association. By then, he was already taking a detailed interest in Ponsonby's woes. Indeed, he was bankrolling the Youghal landlord from an early stage.[102]

---

[98] C. W. Talbot-Ponsonby's principal residence was Langrish House, Petersfield, Hants. He subscribed to Smith Barry's testimonial at Northwich, in 1892. See bound copy of 'Great Unionist Demonstration at Northwich', 23 June 1892, list of subscribers, 6: D2802/25, Cheshire CRO.

[99] For Keller's part in the Ponsonby campaign see Felix M. Larkin, 'Canon Keller of Youghal' in Casey, *Defying the Law of the Land*, 155–63.

[100] Balfour to E. A. King-Harman, 19 November 1887 [copy], BL Add MSS. 49840, 57; Balfour to Sir West Ridgeway, 13 March 1888, BL Add MSS. 49826, 377. See also J. V. O'Brien, *William O'Brien and the Course of Irish Politics, 1881–1918* (Berkeley, 1976), 72.

[101] King-Harman to Balfour, 21, 22 November 1887, BL Add MSS. 49840, 59–62, 69–71.

[102] *Hansard, HC Deb 17 February 1890, vol. 341 c. 535. Smith Barry denied that he had only 'dropped from the clouds' in 1889.* Donnelly, *Cork*, 357, puts Smith Barry's intervention in Ponsonby's finances in 1887; Geary, *Plan of Campaign*, 105–6; L. Perry Curtis Jr, *Coercion and Conciliation in Ireland 1880–1892: A Study in Conservative Unionism*

Balfour had found a Soul as stern as his own. In early 1889 matters came to a head, with the rejection by Ponsonby of a deal brokered between his former agent and Canon Keller which, if it had been accepted, would have precipitated a serious depreciation in land values in southern Ireland. Balfour, like Smith Barry, saw this as a 'social revolution' that had to be countered.[103] In a coup instigated by Balfour[104] and backed behind the scenes by Smith Barry, a dozen or so of the wealthiest landlords in Britain joined in a scheme to purchase the estate. 'It is by combination', Balfour wrote, 'that the tenants have been successful; and, in my opinion, it is only by combination that they can be adequately met.'[105] The syndicate consisted of the dukes of Norfolk (a Roman Catholic), Devonshire, Westminster; Lords Fitzwilliam, Ardilaun, Derby; Walter Morrison; and Smith Barry. Each put up £10,000. Balfour was hopeful that the duke of Bedford and Lords De Vesci and Pembroke would join. Lord Revelstoke (a Baring, of the banking family) pledged £5,000.[106] In all this, Keller and the nationalists seriously underestimated Smith Barry's resolve and competence. Some lengths were gone to in keeping the financing details under wraps; William O'Brien later claimed that a prosecution against him was abandoned, as Smith Barry would have been called to give evidence at which those might have emerged.[107] Smith Barry's trusted agent, Horace Townsend, was brought in to manage the estate. 'Compromise was outside the syndicate's terms of reference', as Laurence Geary puts it.[108] An offer from the syndicate having been rejected, all the tenants were cleared from the estate by October 1890, and the Plan finally collapsed in February 1892.[109]

Smith Barry's victory was further underlined by events on his Tipperary estate, which had been the scene of a rent-strike in sympathy with the Ponsonby tenants (although it appears that Smith Barry had had some runs-in previously with his tenants).[110] With, in William O'Brien's phrase, 'words of pitiless hauteur' he gave ten minutes to a deputation of Tipperary tenants,

(Princeton, 1963), 180–1.

[103] Geary, 'Anticipating Memory', 136.

[104] See a draft of a letter to an unnamed duke, c. April-May 1889, quoted in Blanche Dugdale, *Arthur James Balfour, first earl of Balfour, K.G., O.M., F.R.S., 1848–1905* (London, 1939), 132.

[105] Balfour to Lord Courtown, 2 May 1888, BL Add MSS. 49826, 483.

[106] Viscount De Vesci to Balfour, 27 January 1889, BL Add MSS. 49821, 161–3; Geary, *Plan of Campaign*, 110.

[107] O'Brien, *Evening Memories*, 427.

[108] Geary, *Plan of Campaign*, 114.

[109] Larkin, 'Keller', 162–3; Donnelly, *Cork*, 359.

[110] Warwick-Haller, *William O'Brien and the Irish Land War*, 116.

headed by their parish priest, Canon Cahill, that had travelled to London to remonstrate about the Ponsonby situation.[111] Following the Ponsonby debacle O'Brien had encouraged tenants to set up a town – 'New Tipperary' – to try and outflank the landlord economically.[112] Despite the spin put on it by O'Brien, it failed disastrously, at a cost of £40,000.[113]

Later, an unrepentant Smith Barry recognised his own significance in seeing off the Plan of Campaign:

> Certainly, he had done all he could to avoid evictions on his own estates when it was at all possible to avoid them; but when it was necessary for the sword to be drawn he had of course felt bound to carry the matter through, and he owned he had been responsible for a good many evictions that had taken place in other parts of the country.[114]

Here is demonstrated Smith Barry's strong sense of moral certainty. At the apogee of the Land War, in 1890, he had looked into his own heart and had not found any doubt:

> For my part I have done what I believe to be my duty, not merely as an Irish landlord, but as an Irishman who loves his country ... whatever may be the result to myself, I shall continue in the course I have chosen, because I feel in my conscience that I have done what is right.[115]

This may have emerged from character:

> a very strong personality ... quite fearless; indeed, of remarkable courage both physical and moral, an excellent conversationalist, with a command of language ... for though shrewd, with much cleverness and appreciation of mental qualities ... not profound ... somewhat prejudiced ... did not suffer fools gladly ... rather merciless ... criticisms

---

111 O'Brien, *Evening Memories*, 425.

112 For Smith Barry and New Tipperary, see J. G. Sutton, 'New Tipperary Revisited: The Case of Arthur Hugh Smith-Barry', *Tipperary Historical Journal* (2005), 155–73.

113 IUA, *Mad Tipperary*, leaflet no. 49, October 1891; Donnelly, *Cork*, 375; O'Brien, *Evening Memories*, 432–8.

114 *Hansard, HC Deb 20 July 1894 vol. 27, c. 642. See also an extensive apologia in 1890 given by Smith Barry to the House of Commons, Hansard, HC Deb 17 February 1890 vol. 341, cc. 535–8.*

115 *Hansard, HC Deb 17 February 1890 vol. 341, cc. 537–8.*

> could bite ... heart was warm ... friendship to be trusted ... wit rather than humour ... restless and loved travelling.

So far as one can judge, this about sums up Arthur Hugh; but it is actually a description of his mother.[116]

Certainly, Smith Barry was single-minded, stubborn, unimaginative; in the phrase of the Cork MP, J. C. Flynn, he was one of the 'unteachable landlords'.[117] That was precisely his strength. Land was a moral, as well as an economic, anchor. He saw himself as a good landlord; indeed, generally, so did even his bitter opponents. William O'Brien, while condemning him for his leadership of the Ponsonby 'Eviction Syndicate', wrote with hindsight in 1920, that he was 'unimpeachable in the management of his own private property'.[118] Even Canon Keller acquiesced in that judgement.[119] And family, and its continuity, expressed through landownership, are crucial to understanding the likes of Smith Barry.

This is laced with irony, however, for he was himself a 'tenant for life' under the terms of his father's will.[120] This coincidence of circumstance did not apparently engender any feelings of empathy with his own tenants. It also raises questions about his proclaimed empathy for Ireland. Like many landlords, he did not invest any of his considerable personal wealth in Irish land or securities, for instance.[121] Yet he did not take advantage of getting cash, and a bonus free of the entail, from the 1903 Land Act, and the barony of 1902 was consciously a re-creation of a former peerage of the (Irish) Barry family; his English estates would have furnished an appropriate title, had he so wished. He toyed with the idea of standing for the Irish Senate. And he held on to his lands to the bitter end: they were eventually compulsorily acquired under Saorstát Éireann's 1923 Land Act.[122]

---

[116] Smith Barry, *Notes on the Smith Barry Family*, 29.

[117] *Hansard*, *HC Deb 3 August 1905 vol. 151, c. 208*.

[118] O'Brien, *Evening Memories*, 421; Marnane, *Land and Violence*, 102; Warwick-Haller, *William O'Brien and the Irish Land War*, 17.

[119] Larkin, 'Canon Keller', 160.

[120] 'Instructions for settlement of the fortune of Miss Smith Barry, daughter of Arthur Hugh Smith Barry, Esq., M.P., on her intended marriage with H. Overend, Esq.', n.d., solicitor's note that Smith Barry is a 'tenant for life of estates in the Counties of Tipperary and Cork which are entailed in the usual mode'. DCN1402/74/1, Cheshire CRO. See also Barrymore Estate Act, 5.

[121] Smith Barry, draft will, 5 July 1912, lawyer's annotation: Has Smith Barry 'any of his own land in Ireland? – No' – DCN1402/72/2, Cheshire CRO.

[122] Marnane, *Land and Violence*, 114. See, for instance, Smith Barry's speech on the

Smith Barry's was an instinctive unionism. From 1886, when he spoke at meetings in Liverpool and Chester organised by the IUA's predecessor, the Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union,[123] and as Chairman and Vice-President of the Irish Unionist Alliance in the early 1900s, he held firm against anything but the most modest form of Irish local self-government. Like many of his class, he was incapable of seeing Irish nationalism in transcendental terms, categorising it merely as the vehicle for the people to acquire a greater, but what he felt would be an illusory, prosperity.[124] The organic connection between land and nationalism, and how each fed off and reinforced the other, seemed beyond his comprehension. In 1886, he said that 'he did not see why the land question should be mixed up with the Home Rule question' - and he seemed genuinely to believe that.[125]

His attitude to the Union was conditioned by landed and economic imperatives, not the other way around. If money was an issue, Smith Barry could be found, on the fringes at least, in the camp of the critical. For instance, he attended the first meeting on the question of the over-taxation of Ireland held in Ireland in Cork on 12 December 1896. It was convened by his friend, Lord Bandon, as Lord Lieutenant of the county, in response to a requisition presented to him by Sir John Arnott. This had been signed by many luminaries, including Smith Barry's old sparring partner, Canon Keller. Yet, unlike Lord Castletown, Archbishop Meade, Sir George Colthurst or the unionist Lord Mayor Sir John Scott, Smith Barry did not speak, and later stated in a letter to the press that he was 'present merely as a spectator'. Subsequently, he seems to have absented himself from the landlord convention on 28 January 1897, where many unionists denounced the burden of excessive taxation. This seems uncharacteristic; but at that stage he may not have wished to jeopardise the chances of a peerage by openly supporting reform.

Along with others such as Lords Dunraven and Castletown, he was prepared to offer some support to William O'Brien's All-for-Ireland League.[126] This may have been tactical: when one of the O'Brienites, Moreton Frewen,

---

Purchase of Land and Congested Districts (Ireland) Bill (*Hansard*, *HC Deb 13 April 1891 vol. 352, cc. 389-90; HC Deb 22 July 1896 vol. 43, c. 371. Dooley, The Decline of the Big House, 113–22, deals with the economic consequences for landlords of the 1903 and 1909 Land Acts.*

123 Sutton, 'The Political Career of Barrymore', 96.

124 *Hansard*, *HL Deb 6 August 1907 vol. 179, cc. 1751–2.*

125 *Cork Constitution*, 22 April 1886, meeting of Cork Loyalist Association.

126 Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life 1891–1918* (Dublin, 1999), 109.

wanted to resign as MP in 1911, Barrymore was reported as saying that 'we in Cork no longer interest ourselves in O'Brien and his Party and ... we shall take no trouble to register our people and without our support O'Brien has no future'.[127] In 1909, with the peerage safely under his belt, he even shared a platform with O'Brien – each had serious concerns about the Liberal government's forthcoming Land Act.[128] In 1914, he joined with O'Brien and Lord Dunraven in a recruiting campaign.[129] Two years earlier, with Home Rule much closer, his recognition of the political realities had seen a softening of tone. At a meeting of the unionists of Munster on 20 April 1912 to protest the third Home Rule Bill, it was painfully obvious how these now isolated remnants of the gentry class tiptoed around the religious and ethnic issue. As Barrymore put it, 'They did not speak there in the same loud and plain tones that their friends in Ulster did'. Even the type of language being utilised by northern and southern Protestants was on a markedly divergent course by 1912. The verbal imagery of the north, couched in quasi-religious terminology, was of the unstoppable collective will with phrases such as 'intensely earnest in their advocacy of a righteous cause', 'determined not to be deprived of their Imperial birthright', and so on.[130] The southern discourse was that of 'soft power', if it was speaking of any power at all. At the Munster meeting, perhaps reflecting Barrymore's utilitarian stance, virtually all the local speakers concentrated on the damage to the country's finances and economy that they felt the Bill would inflict. This line was continued in a speech to the Irish Landowners' Convention in Dublin, 1913, when Barrymore, it was reported, excoriated home rule, principally because a home rule parliament's first port of call for tax would be the land.[131]

Barrymore's penultimate speech in parliament in 1913 was on the Home Rule Bill, at last recognising its likelihood. 'We have done all that we can', he said. 'We in the South cannot say we will not have Home Rule, because we are in a considerable minority, and if Home Rule is forced upon us we shall have to bow under it and get on as best we can.' But he ended on a note of

---

[127] Quoted in O'Brien, *William O'Brien*, 203.

[128] O'Brien, *Evening Memories*, 439. O'Brien claimed that this temporary alliance blackened his reputation, and that cries of 'Barrymore' were levelled against him at meetings. Ibid., 440.

[129] Warwick-Haller, *William O'Brien and the Land War*, 261; O'Brien, *William O'Brien*, 212.

[130] See *Church of Ireland Gazette*, 12 April 1912, 'The Week' (writing about the great anti-Home Rule meeting in Belfast).

[131] *Cork Constitution*, 22 April 1912; *Hansard*, *HC Deb 15 January 1913 vol. 46, cc. 2103–224 (Robert Outhwaite, Hanley).*

hope: 'I myself am not so much afraid of Protestants as such being trampled upon in the South as are many of my friends in Ireland.'[132] It should be noted, though, that while in the aftermath of his comprehensive victory in the Plan of Campaign in 1891 he had leased out his principal English residence, he took back the lease on the death of the lessee in 1914, coinciding with the passage of the Home Rule Bill. It was a typical Barrymore insurance policy.[133] He was, ultimately, an unreconstructed unionist.[134]

Moreover, Barrymore saw a place for the landlord, even after the dispossession of the 1903 Land Act. In 1907, he set out, typically in a tone of utilitarian superiority, the purpose of the gentry in the new dispensation:

> And, I venture to submit, it would be a very great misfortune to the country generally, because I do not suppose that anybody wants to drive out of the country landlords who are living in the country, who are spending their money there, who are working at their farms, and so forth, because those farms are probably the best cultivated farms in their neighbourhood; they set a good example to their neighbours, they probably employ a good deal more labour than an ordinary tenant-farmer does, the cottages and buildings are generally in very good order; and I think it would be a very great misfortune to the country if men of that kind — and there are a great many of them — ceased to exist.[135]

An impractical ideal this might be, but it points up the fact that while many landowners were incompetent, nevertheless a number took their stewardship of the property as 'life custodians' seriously and went over the books every year with their agents and accountants, keeping an eye on rent receipts and debt burdens. But managing his land in Ireland was not entirely the same as managing it in England. S. R. Lysaght, in his pseudo-autobiographical novel *My Tower in Desmond* (1927), encapsulated the differences in attitude between the English and Irish landed classes. Writing of an English gentry house, he

---

[132] *Hansard*, *HL Deb 30 January 1913 vol. 13, cc. 770–3.*

[133] http://www.merseyforest.org.uk/foam/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Section-1-Families-Associated-with-Marbury-HallRev5.pdf [accessed 23 August 2013]; also Jackie Hamlett and Christine Hamlett, *A House with Spirit: A Dedication to Marbury Hall* (Northwich, Cheshire, 1997), *passim.*

[134] In 1916, in the aftermath of the Rising, for instance, he is found at a meeting in Dublin to impress upon the administration the unionist opposition to any new form of Irish government after the war. O'Brien, *William O'Brien*, 226.

[135] *Hansard*, *HL Deb 6 August 1907 vol. 179, cc. 1751–2.*

remarked that 'every detail of the place spoke of something that had to be paid for, instead of, as with us, something that had to be made to pay'.[136] This was perhaps a revealing exposition of the two somewhat opaque cultural worlds which Smith Barry had to straddle and manage.

Competent management, though, was not enough. By the early 1900s, it was far too late for this to produce any significant dividend, economic, cultural or political. The point about the Irish landed gentry, as William O'Brien said as early as 1887, was that it had missed its opportunity to become relevant.[137] One commentator in 1890, indeed, looked for purpose: 'The landlords … could remain in the country for the discharge of other and more useful functions, national and municipal, than they have ever performed as the "English Garrison"'. That commentator was an unlikely Michael Davitt. But the moment passed, and it was completely unrealistic to suggest, like Sydney Brookes, writing in the *Fortnightly Review* as late as 1908, that 'As an alien caste, they have conspicuously failed; as a native aristocracy it is still possible for them to succeed.'[138] Sir Horace Plunkett, in the same year, was much more realistic: 'we have failed ... so to identify ourselves with the national life as to establish our influence upon the only sure foundation – popular goodwill'.[139] More telling, perhaps, was his recognition that defining 'national life' was the prerogative of the other side. Nevertheless, some of the gentry themselves seemed to think that they still held societal place. In 1915 Barrymore wrote about arriving at his own 'tower in Desmond':

> It was during the summer of 1847 [he was four years old] that I paid my first visit to Fota: my mother and I ... arrived in the boat from Bristol to Cork; my father met us with a six oared gig at Passage and we landed at the Tower [the point at Fota where guests could arrive by sea] and we were dragged by the labourers up to the house, fifty five years later the grandsons of these men dragged my wife and daughter and myself

---

[136] S. R. Lysaght, *My Tower in Desmond* (London, 1927), 95. I am indebted to David Nolan for this reference.

[137] Geary, 'Anticipating Memory', 130.

[138] Michael Davitt, 'Retiring the Landlord Garrison', *Nineteenth Century*, 27 (May 1890), 794; Sydney Brookes, 'The Last Chance of the Irish Gentry', *Fortnightly Review*, 83 (2 March 1908), 405. See also J. P. Mahaffy, 'The Romanization of Ireland', *Nineteenth Century*, 50 (July 1901), 33–4.

[139] Quoted in Curtis, 'Demonising the Irish Landlord' in Casey, *Defying the Law of the Land*, 31.

> upon the same journey when King Edward had conferred a peerage upon me at his coronation.[140]

Here was expressed the belief in an unchanging sense of deference over half a century. It perhaps points up his lack of sensitivity – he could not see, apparently, that the grandsons of 1902 were almost certainly actors. It suited their Edwardian self-interest to dissemble; it did not mean that they believed in what they did. In that, Barrymore's tale was an illusion, a delusion.

Fitting perfectly into Sidney Webb's 'inevitability of gradualness', landlordism and its associated society crumbled in slow motion from 1880 to 1920. But why? Perhaps, at the end of the day, we are forced back into the cultural to seek the real reason; for it is surely Elizabeth Bowen's *Death of the Heart* (1938). Too many dreams and not enough hope, in Bruce Hornsby's words. Image gradually displaces reality; all we are left with is Molly Keane's 'only an echo here';[141] and image, which is nothing but smoke in the air, can then be just blown away. In almost a parody of itself the gentry burn out, are burnt out, and get out. In effect, landlord*ism* was finished off by its lack of utility and economic redundancy; land*lords* became irrelevant because of their politics, their religion and their cultural distance. At the last, once land had been exchanged for land bonds, perhaps the Irish landed gentry (though not Arthur Hugh Smith Barry, it must be said) were left with no real purpose other than Goldwin Smith's 'pleasure'.

Trinity College Dublin

[140] 'Memoir of the Early Life of … ord Barrymore', 4.

[141] M. J. Farrell [Mary Nesta Skrine/Molly Keane], *Two Days in Aragon* (London, 1941), 17.