





*John Ormsby Vandeleur M.P., 1800*

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Author: Rene Franklin. Co-author: Roisín Berry.

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LE CUIDU AN CHOMHARLE OIDHREACHTA



*Charlotte Vandeleur (nee Foster), 1867*



*Hector S. Vandeleur, 1867*



*L to R: Col. Vandeleur, Tom Keane, Miss Jackson, M. Keane, Miss Wilton, 1861*



*Mrs. C. T. Vandeleur.*

*Vignette and in fancy dress, Allahabad, 1865*



*Kilrush House amongst trees*



*Crofton Toler Vandeleur*



*Robert Seymour Vandeleur, 1870*



*Capt. and Mrs. C. T. Vandeleur.  
Dublin, 1864*



*Cliffs at Kilkee*



*Mrs. Sterndale. Fancy costume.  
Benares, 1866*

# *The Vandeleur Photographic Collection*

The Vandeleur photographic collection contains over 300 images of different members of the Vandeleur family, their relatives and friends. The photographs date from 1857 to 1871, the post-famine years when West Clare was struggling to recover from the devastation of crop failure, evictions and starvation. No traces of the hardship endured by local people can be found in these images as the subjects pose formally for their portraits. The men are often captured in military attire and the women sport the most up-to-date fashions, some are even in fancy dress. The settings are luxurious and very much removed from the poverty that was gripping the county at the time.

The photographs themselves are all black and white although a small number have been tinted with colour. Further colour is added to the album through the use of beautifully sketched borders and the use of stamps (both private and official)

on some of the pages. Each page of the photographic album contains specific annotations. The volume is indexed and provides the name and date of many images.

The Vandeleur Photographic Collection is of great historical importance in both local and national contexts. It reveals much about both the public and private lives of one of County Clare's most influential aristocratic families in the years after the famine. It provides us with a broader glimpse into Irish life in the mid to late 19th century. In effect, these photographs, which capture daily activities of the wider Vandeleur family, allows one to gain a unique insight into a period of history which is rarely seen and which is critical in coming to an understanding of the development of modern Ireland today.



# The Vandeleurs



*Above: Col. Crofton Moore Vandeleur M.P., 1860*

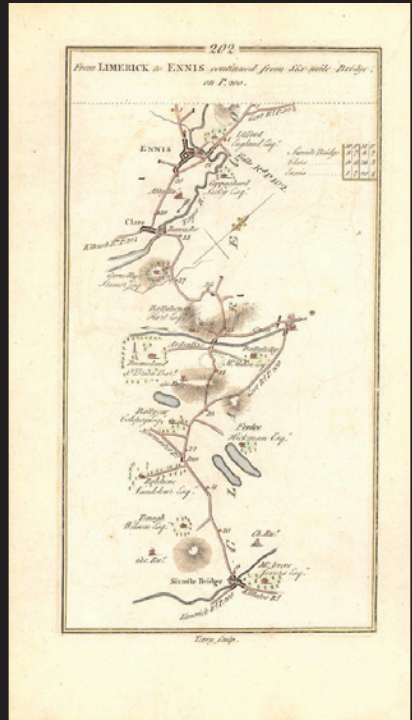
*Opposite: John O. Vandeleur,  
late Col. 10th Royal Hussars  
National Portrait Gallery, London*

Maxmilian Van Der Leur, a Dutch merchant, was the first of the family to settle in Ireland and obtained a fiat of naturalisation in 1603. His son, James (d.1642), established a mill in Sixmilebridge in 1635. According to the depositions of 1652 he suffered huge losses, having been 'deprived' of various properties by the Irish who rose in the rebellion of 1641, but was later reimbursed by the Cromwellians. James's son, Giles (d.1701), obtained a lease of 'six plowlands of Moihill, near Sixmile Bridge' in 1656. He went on to become High Sheriff for the county in 1665. When his son, John (1670-1727), became the first protestant rector of Kilrush and purchased the associated estates, the Vandeleur family began to play a heightened role in the history of West Clare. The senior branch of the family settled in Ralahine, a few miles east of Newmarket on Fergus. It was recorded in the contemporary journal of Thomas Dineley that by 1681, Ralahine Castle was 'in the hands of Giles Vandeleur Esq., who hath built unto it the fairest stables in the countye'.



In 1712, the Earl of Thomond leased Boyle Vandeleur 'the towns and lands of Kilrush, Monemore, Leadmore, Carrowcalla and Cappa containing by estimation 3,381 acres'. The lease was held in trust for Rev. John Vandeleur (1670-1727) who, in turn, became the first Vandeleur landlord of Kilrush. In 1749 his son, also John (d. 1754), finally purchased the estate for the sum of £9,826.0.6. In 1754 Crofton Vandeleur (1722-1790) inherited the large estate. Crofton was appointed High Sheriff of Clare in 1764 and was returned an M.P for the county in 1768. Crofton's eldest son John Ormsby [1780-1828], a member of the Irish Privy Council and a Commissioner of Customs, succeeded his father on his death in 1795. The Vandeleurs were active in mobilising the Clare Militia during the 1798 Rebellion and fought against the rebels in the decisive battle of New Ross.

John Ormsby Vandeleur played a major role in the development of Kilrush in the early 19th Century and was responsible for building the country mansion, 'Kilrush House' in 1808. His son, Col. Crofton Moore Vandeleur (1808 -1881) grew up in the environs of Kilrush House and inherited the Vandeleur estates in 1828. In 1839 Col. Vandeleur donated a site for a new Catholic Church and by 1855 the associated convent was completed. The local fever hospital, which was also established under the auspices of Col. Vandeleur, contained up to fifty beds alongside a surgical department.





When the Poor Relief Act of 1838 was passed, Col. Vandeleur went further and constructed a workhouse in Kilrush that housed at least 800 people. During this period Col. Vandeleur's name became synonymous with the large-scale tenant evictions occurring in west Clare. The potato blight, which precipitated the Great Irish Famine of 1845-48, caused the deaths of one million people in the country and forced the migration of nearly one million more. As a result of the disaster, the tenant farmers of county Clare were unable to meet their rent payments and some 6,000 were evicted from the Kilrush Union between 1848 and 1849. It is estimated that up to 1,000 people were evicted from the Vandeleur estate alone during the late 1840s. Col. Vandeleur's son, Hector Stewart (1836-1909), inherited the estate in 1881. Similar to previous family members, he was appointed High Sheriff of Clare in 1872. However, he did not make Kilrush his main residence and visited the property only once in 1882. In Hector Stewart's absence, the conditions of his tenants grew steadily worse. Several farmers appealed to Vandeleur's agent to reduce the crippling rents, but the negotiations failed and evictions quickly followed. In 1883 Hector Stewart Vandeleur eventually returned to Kilrush and re-instated many of the tenants that had been evicted.

*Above left: Hector Stewart Vandeleur, 1867*

*Left: 'Sixmile Bridge to Ennis' map, Courtesy Limerick City Museum*

*Right: Col. John Vandeleur, 1863*

The widespread influence of the Vandeleurs in county Clare diminished toward the end of the 19th century. Many members of the family moved to England while many others joined the British army and were stationed all over the world. Most never returned to Ireland. Alexander Moore Vandeleur (1883-1914) inherited the Kilrush estate in 1909 but was soon after killed on the Western Front at Ypres. His brother Major Cecil Forster Seymour Vandeleur (b. 1869) had already been killed in 1901 during the Boer War. Sadly, Kilrush House was burned down in 1897. Two decades later the estate was taken over by the Land Commission under the Land Purchase Scheme.





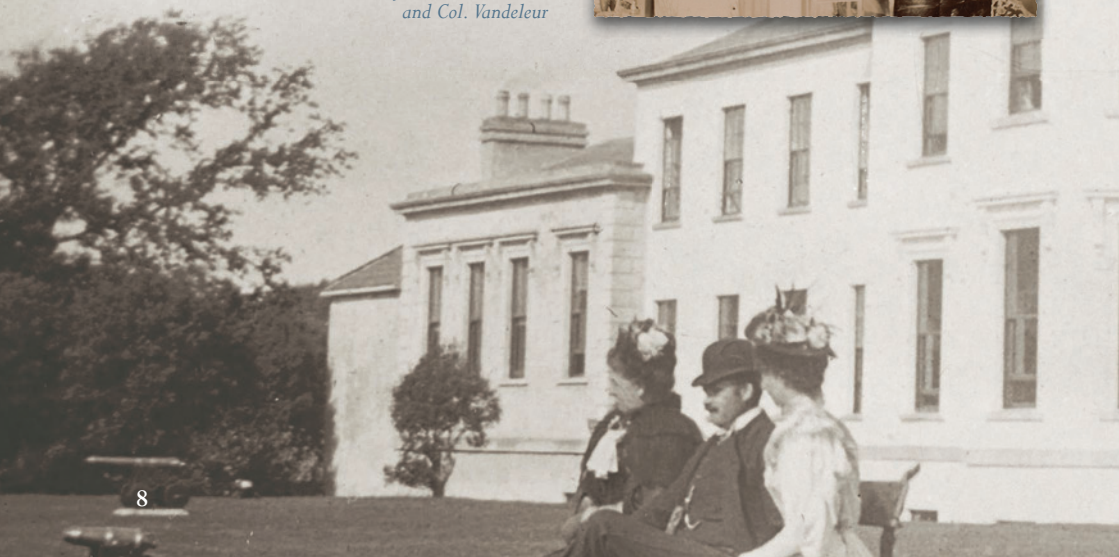
Kilrush House, the Vandeleur seat of residence, was built in 1808 by John Ormsby Vandeleur. This country mansion was located half a kilometre from Kilrush town and consisted of three storeys over a cellar with panoramic views of the Shannon, the Twelve Pins and the Kerry Mountains from its eighty-six windows. Kilrush House was situated in the Vandeleur demesne, which covered over 400 acres. High walls surrounded the grounds, with approaches from two main entrances.

# Kilrush HOUSE

*Above: Approach to Kilrush House*

*Right: Interior of Kilrush House, 1895*

*Far Right: Kilrush House gardens, Miss Vandeleur, Mrs. Reeves, Lady Frances Vandeleur and Col. Vandeleur*



A description of the fine stately home was given in the Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland in 1845,

*The principal features of interest in the environs [of Kilrush] are the estuary and... the mansion of Kilrush immediately to the east of the town...The Demesne around the mansion is of a mile in length, extends from the town to the eastern boundary of the parish, and is the property of C.M. Vandeleur, Esq., the town's proprietor. The mansion is a handsome, commodious, and modern edifice, standing on an interesting spot, which commands a view of Mangerton and Millicuddy's Reeks at Killarney, Brandon Mountain, Kerry Head, and the mouth of the river Shannon.*

Sadly, Kilrush House was destroyed in 1897 due to an accidental fire caused by a night lamp. The estate was taken over two decades later by the Land Commission under the Land Purchase Scheme. The grounds of the estate were brought back to life with the regeneration of its garden in 2000. The garden has been redesigned for the 21<sup>st</sup> century around the old original path system. It is now known as 'The Vandeleur Walled Garden'. The original garden was likely to have been quite simple and functional, essentially for the production of fruit, flowers and vegetables. This sheltered walled garden is enclosed by beautifully constructed walls and located within 420 acres of native woodland.



# Development of KILRUSH

Like many 'improving' landlords of the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century, John Ormsby Vandeleur devised a plan to stimulate local industry. He soon realised that in order to succeed, he needed to establish Kilrush as an economically viable town. If a strong local economy could be generated, then the wages of the tenants would improve and higher rents could be levied as a result. In turn, this increased rental income would supply Vandeleur with the means to aesthetically improve his estates and townlands.

*Sisters of Mercy Convent*



He foresaw the considerable potential that Kilrush port possessed due its depth and geographical location. It would easily allow the entrance of large, heavy vessels and also act as a sheltered mooring point for vessels in distress. Scottish businessman, James Patterson, a gunboat lieutenant who had retired from the Royal Navy, joined Vandeleur in the development of Kilrush port. Patterson began a lucrative trade from the port and in doing so generated a new circulation of income and produce in the locality. This brought great prosperity to many people in Kilrush, as they no longer had to rely solely on neighbouring markets to sell their produce. In 1802, 12,000 barrels of oats were sold in Kilrush market but by 1812 the number had increased enormously to 32,000. The harbour and pier were soon extended to accommodate this massive increase in trade.



Similarly, Vandeleur was largely responsible for the planning of Kilrush town itself. He oversaw the construction of Merchant's quay, Customs Quay and Custom House and purposely planned the town's wide streets and Market square. The associated Market House was added around 1812. Like other examples in Westport and Birr, Kilrush was a town that was designed with trade and marketing in mind.

*Ordnance Survey Map of Kilrush, 1842.  
Clare County Library*



The town was neatly built with wide streets running parallel with each other. The principal streets were carefully paved and flagged. In 1825 a new road was built from Ennis which was named Vandeleur Road and as the town expanded this eventually became Vandeleur Street. The courthouse was built in 1831 on a site donated by Crofton Vandeleur and in 1839 the family provided sites for a Catholic Church and the nearby Sisters of Mercy Convent complete in 1855. The local fever hospital, also established under the auspices of Col. Vandeleur, contained up to fifty beds alongside a surgical department.

*The Square and Francis Street, Kilrush  
Courtesy National Library of Ireland*



**READ AND LEARN.**—Hints on Sub-soiling.

“The Out-sowing season having commenced, I recommend to the attention of such small farmers, as have to deal either with a cold, wet soil, not yet drained—or a dry soil which may become exhausted by constant cropping and shallow ploughing; the following mode of tillage, which I have adopted for two years, with the most complete success:—

“I lined out the ground, to be tilled in ridges, four feet wide, and furrows two feet wide. I then dug out of the parts lined off for the furrows, and put on the ridges all the active soil which could be taken up by the spade. The seed was then sown, and covered by the earth which had remained in the furrows, and which were for this purpose, closely shrouded.”

“By this mode I obtained a dry seed bed in most ground—as fresh active soil, in exhausted ground—and a depth of surface, in light land. The increase returns in the crops, far more than repay the very little additional labour, or loss of extent of surface, (and I found it so) for the crops (such as Turnips, &c.) pronounced by a number of competent judges, to be extraordinary, considering the shortness of land which produced them and the circumstances, under which they were grown.”

“In one instance, on a cold retentive soil, not drained, where there had been a very poor crop of potatoes the previous year, and the soil not stirred from the time the potatoes had been dug out until the oats were sown.

“In the other case, a second crop of Oats was taken of the same field, the stubbles having been ploughed in October; this crop was much superior to the former; it produced fine grain, and was so luxuriant that the greater part of it was lodged when I milled on the gentleman to view it, a few days previous to receiving, which was on the 10th of August.

“Should the surface be very shallow, the breadth of the ridges may be narrowed, or the breadth of the furrow increased. The wide furrows allow of receiving the subsoil either with a double, triple, or quadruple, and I do highly revere all systems, which appear to be well adapted to the soil, &c.; and where it is, I now drain whenever I find the drains at hand—sometimes before sowing. I make the drains at fifty, or sixty feet apart, and put in intermediate drains the same distance, and I do this in hoeing the potatoes.

“The drains are run according to Mr. Smith’s plan—down the incline, and I now run the furrows and furrows also down the incline, the two first years, and in cropping, instead of diagonally, with the furrows following the ridge the second year. The furrows of the first year forming the centre of the ridge the second year; and consequently, the centre of the ridge of the first year forming the furrow of the second year.

“The third year I run the ridges and furrows diagonally, or with a slight incline across the field, striking the diagonal furrows two or three inches deeper than those running down the incline, that the diagonal furrows, which will be the deeper, may receive the water from the other furrows, and conduct it towards the drain at an angle.”

**TO MAKE BREAD GOOD, CHEAP AND WHOLESOME.**

Take 3 lbs of Swedish Turnips, all others except the yellow Bullock, or Aberdeen and Irish Libral, are comparatively speaking, valueless, the Swede is the best; the others are the Lancaster, Yorks, or Ribblesdale, you may put them down to ball, and when well boiled, strain and squeeze them well in a cloth; then pound them well in a mortar, put when pounded squeeze them again in the cloth (mind how often I repeat the word well) for the more of the watery juice to take from them the less the bread will be of the turnip. Take 3 lbs of wholemeal, and work up the same as any other good flour. If your meal is purchased from a house, you will require about 4 lbs of small, 3 lbs of house made meal is equal to 4 lbs of household meal—be prudent upon all the wholemeal you purchase, but not wholemeal with the husks and chaff, and wild rye of wheat, intended for bakery use, and first flour, answers well when it comes to the work, outside of some wheat. It will sell in three times, as if you possible can manage it, purchase above stores of wheat and grind it in a mortar—you will find a great advantage in it. I confine myself to Swedish Turnips in this description, Oatmeal or Indian will answer as well; I purchased some Indian meal but I did not like it, it is not ground so fine as that I got last year, and being coarse it gets gritty and does not go so far as when ground fine. The coarse Indian meal will make good bread, but you must steep it all night; 4 lbs of wholemeal and 3 lbs of Swedish turnips will make 3 lbs of bread—mind I say Swedish turnips—it is better and more pure than house made of wholemeal, and does not require so much salt or kitchen. The wholemeal at 2s. 4d. per stone, this bread will cost one penny per pound.

The halfpenny worth of salt and a rag of the sweet milk, or sweet butter milk added will make a lighter and much better bread, baked either on a griddle or in an oven. I was once forgetting to say that this bread will I think be kept for a month, it improves by keeping it for some time. You do not stir on the turnips, let those who purchase them value them.

For information as to price, I purchased one penny worth of white New-Bell quality, I got two turnips which weighed exactly 2 lbs., which is 7d. per stone, 4d. per cwt., or 23 1/2 lb. 4d. per ton. 20 tons to the acre, which is a light crop for white New-Bell, it amounts to 240 per acre, according to the present retail price; I have made persons bread in the same proportions, and the turnips turned in very much superior to any potatoes, more pure and more abundant for a hard working man—after boiling and peeling you can squeeze very little water out of the turnips, not so with the turnips, 200 of

turnip and 4 lbs of wholemeal will make 16 pound of bread; so will some of the turnips. Perhaps are not to be had this year, but I hope to see them generally next March. Right oppositely that people require a great quantity of manure, but that is a mistake, they do not require more than potatoes, but they require the manure shorter and looser and more freely applied; do not make fine by proper cultivation. On a heavy soil that has grown potatoes, they will give over 20 tons to an acre, with tolerable fair cultivation, and less tons of potatoes to the acre is a fair crop in our light soils.

Mr T. Hales, of Ashby, writes in the “Farmers’ Journal” of the 11th June, 1845, page 445, states that he grew at the rate of 57 tons to the Irish acre; 1200 and will not give any foundation, and 8 pound of seed will sow an acre in drills at 15. 6d. per pound—that is what I paid Mr. Drummond, of Downhampton, [Iris county] for the seed, but I fear it will not be had next March for double that price. Grass is capital manure for turnips. Thus the favourite vegetable of our ancestors before the Water Rats, brought us the potato and tobacco—would that we were independent of the sea were this! An acre of turnips well sown and sown late more pigs in an acre of potatoes, (and a Calves) and in the easiest way for the small farmer, the children will feed and live from out, and the stings will rear the pigs well, and the roots when at perfection will fatten them. Some say to sow one in March.

While Belgium carrots will keep pigs neatly as well, but horse manure best, with the same cultivation—some kind of hard mud manure, and some cost of seed, they will give 20 tons to the acre. James Midway, Esq. of Kiltannon, in the County of Clare, said this winter to Mr. Abraham, of Limerick, Scotland, the produce of an acre of carrots for £130.

Twenty bushels of manure sown into the corner of a garden will grow me an acre, and a large bush. Mr. Ashby, Mr. O’Brien, give this year 50 tons of white New-Bell manure on a quantity of ground with my person on and you. If you put manure on a well-manured ground the produce will be increased. Just so, as in a garden in general. The best manure you can possibly give, is animal, and the best you will get cheap, and most useful, is manure of the family of old Potatoes (which is a good substitute) and you will find a particularly well fatted calf, and will succeed. But the plants are not so much as you may think, if you give them manure at all, but you will find the plants will grow better, if you have the manure. I think it will be well, a few pounds of white New-Bell manure, to be put on the ground, two or three times, and find the best manure you in the long run, and give it under the

FRANCIS ORMSHINGTON.

**A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE POTATO.**

**TURNIPS, CARROTS, PARSNIPS, AND CABBAGES,**

You can eat them yourselves, give them to your Cattle and Pigs, or sell them to others. Plough up and prepare your stable land as soon as possible. Sow your Turnips in dry ground between the middle of April and June, in Drills, well manured with Manure, at least 2 Feet apart. 4 lb of Seed to an acre. A Bottle with a Quill inserted in the Cork, will make a good substitute for a Machine.

Carrots and Parsnips, you can cultivate with advantage in good dry boggy land. The best time for sowing is from the middle of March to the 1st of June, in Drills one Foot 6 inches apart.—2 lb of Seed will sow a Rood.

Observe all your labour and Manure will be thrown away unless you till well, and keep the plants gradually thinned to about five inches apart—and the ground FREE FROM WEEDS.

My Tenants will obtain the above Seeds under Cost Price, at the Lime-Kiln Office, Kilrush, or at the School-house, Tullyrinne.

I will give the following Premiums for the best Acre of the above green crops in each Parish on my Estate:

On holdings under 30 Acres - £3 0 0 | For the best Rood in holdings under 10 Acres £1 0 0

For the Best Half Acre - 2 0 0 | For the nearest and best kept House & Garden 0 10 0

These claiming the above Premiums, to send in Notice to Mr. Michael Dore, before the 1st October, 1847, When the Premiums will be awarded.

YOUR FRIEND AND WELL-WISHER,  
C. M. VANDELUR.

**WATERBURY'S PATENT**



The potato blight, which precipitated the Great Irish Famine of 1845-48, caused the deaths of one million people in the country and forced the migration of nearly one million more. As a result of the disaster, the tenant farmers of county Clare were unable to meet their rent payments and some 6,000 were evicted from the Kilrush Union between 1848 and 1849. It is estimated that up to 1,000 people were evicted from the Vandeleur estate alone during the late 1840s.

By 1878, rural Ireland had become increasingly troubled due to poor harvests, decreasing international demand for produce and plummeting prices. Tenants were paying increasingly high and ultimately unaffordable rents, which in turn led to a large increase in evictions by unsympathetic landlords. To resist the aggressive removals, many tenants began to organise local meetings in order to publicise their demands for land reform. The first of these tenants' rights meetings was held at Irishtown, Co. Mayo in 1879. Present at the meeting was Michael Davitt (1846-1906). Soon after the Irishtown meeting Davitt formed the Land League of Mayo on 16 August 1879.

Charles Stewart Parnell (1846-1891) became the first President of the broader 'National Land League' in October 1879. The National organisation pledged to protect the welfare of poor tenants by every means available to them within the lawful constitution. The overall strategy of the Land League was to effectively mobilise the peasantry of Ireland in the pursuit of a moral and just land settlement. This, they believed, could be won by demanding what popularly became known as, the 'Three F's' – fair rent, fixity of tenure and freedom of sale.' The Land League gained huge popularity all over the country and its success in mobilising rural dissent meant that it could no longer be ignored by an increasingly concerned government.

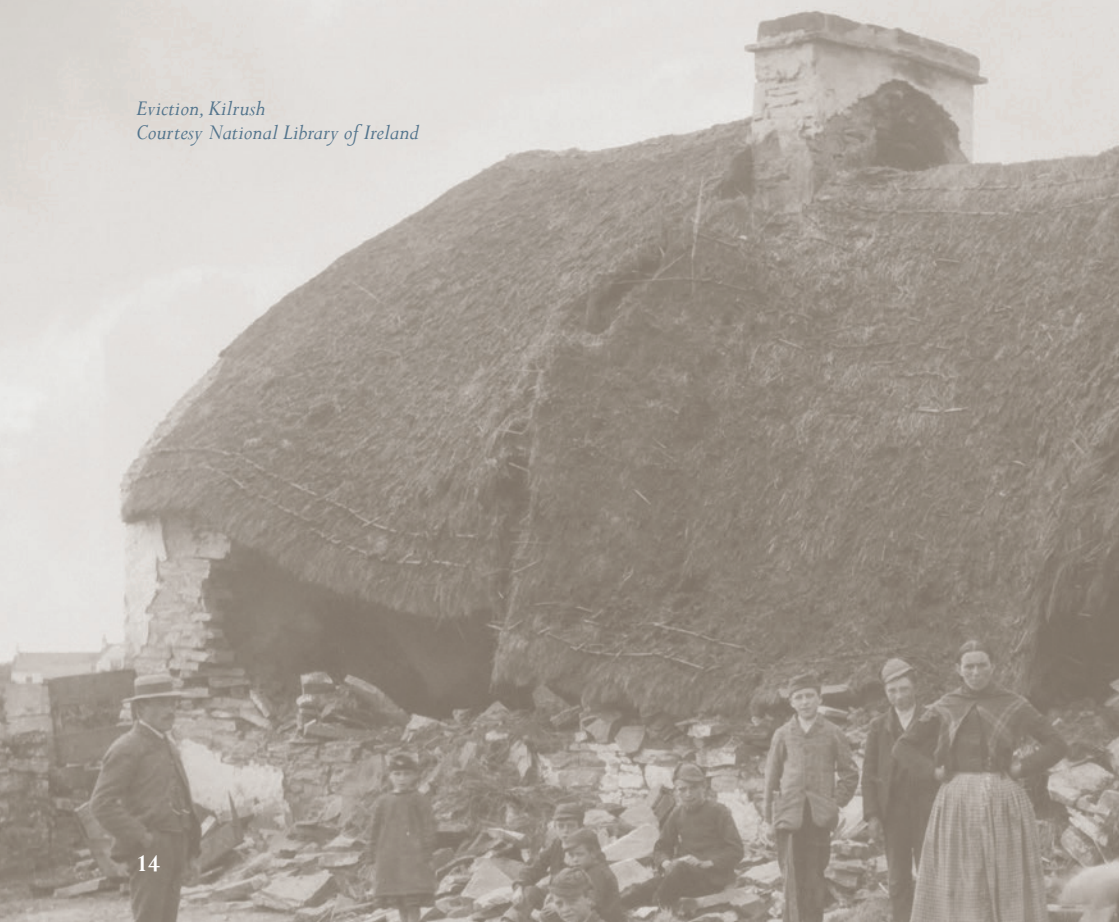
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*Top Left: "Substitute for the Potato" proclamation.  
Courtesy National Library of Ireland*

*Left: Miss Kennedy distributing clothing at Kilrush  
London Illustrated News, 1849, Courtesy National  
Library of Ireland*

# EVICTIONS and the Land League

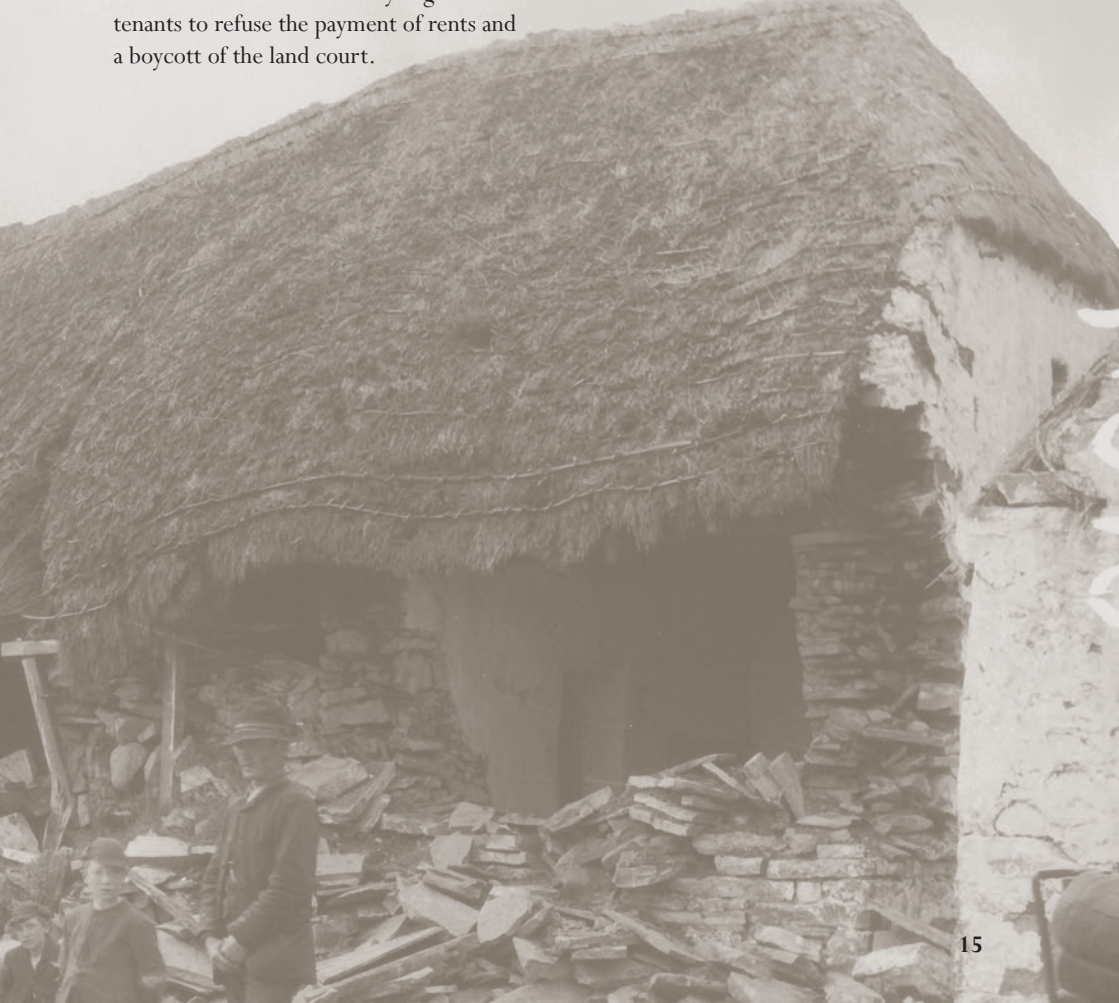
*Eviction, Kilrush  
Courtesy National Library of Ireland*





In 1881, a Land Act was introduced by the British government which purported to provide for the 'Three Fs' and the establishment of an 'independent' Land Commission. However the Land League had reservations about the long-term advantages of the Act, particularly the provision that rental prices would be fixed by the discredited system of local Land Courts. Agitation continued and in response the government had the leaders of the League arrested. The Land League responded by declaring a 'No Rent Manifesto' which successfully urged all tenants to refuse the payment of rents and a boycott of the land court.

Agrarian unrest escalated during this period and the Land League was suppressed. Davitt urged that the movement be re-named the 'National League' in order to circumvent this ban. Prime Minister Gladstone and Parnell reached a compromise in the form of the 'Kilmainham Treaty' in May 1882, an agreement to end coercion and release political prisoners in return for the ending of agrarian outrages and the 'No Rent Manifesto'. The agreement also amended the 1881 Land Act to include those tenants in arrears and vulnerable leaseholders.



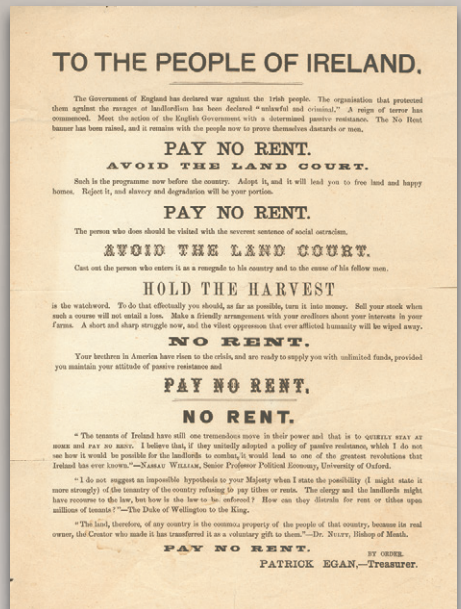


The tenants on the Vandeleur estate carried on a long resistance under the subsequent 'Plan of Campaign', which took place from 1886-1891. Prominent nationalists such as John Dillon (1851-1928) and William O'Brien (1852-1928) were the driving forces behind the new campaign. The principle tenet of the 'Plan of Campaign' was to impose specific rent levels on selected estates. At this time, however, the rental arrears of some tenants on the Vandeleur estate went back as far as five years. Vandeleur was only willing to settle for one year of arrears but a coalition of tenants rejected the offer. Wholesale evictions began in earnest and the infamous 'battering ram' became the preferred weapon of choice in demolishing the property of any resisters.

*The Land League 'No Rent Manifesto', 1881  
Courtesy National Library of Ireland*

*Illustrations of the Vandeleur eviction campaign from United Ireland, 1888  
Courtesy National Library of Ireland*

Several of these Vandeleur evictions were captured by a photographer named Robert French who worked for the Lawrence Photographic Studios in Dublin. From the 1860's onwards he travelled throughout Ireland capturing images that now provide a fascinating glimpse of Ireland during that turbulent and tragic period and were the first examples of what we now consider photojournalism in Ireland.



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