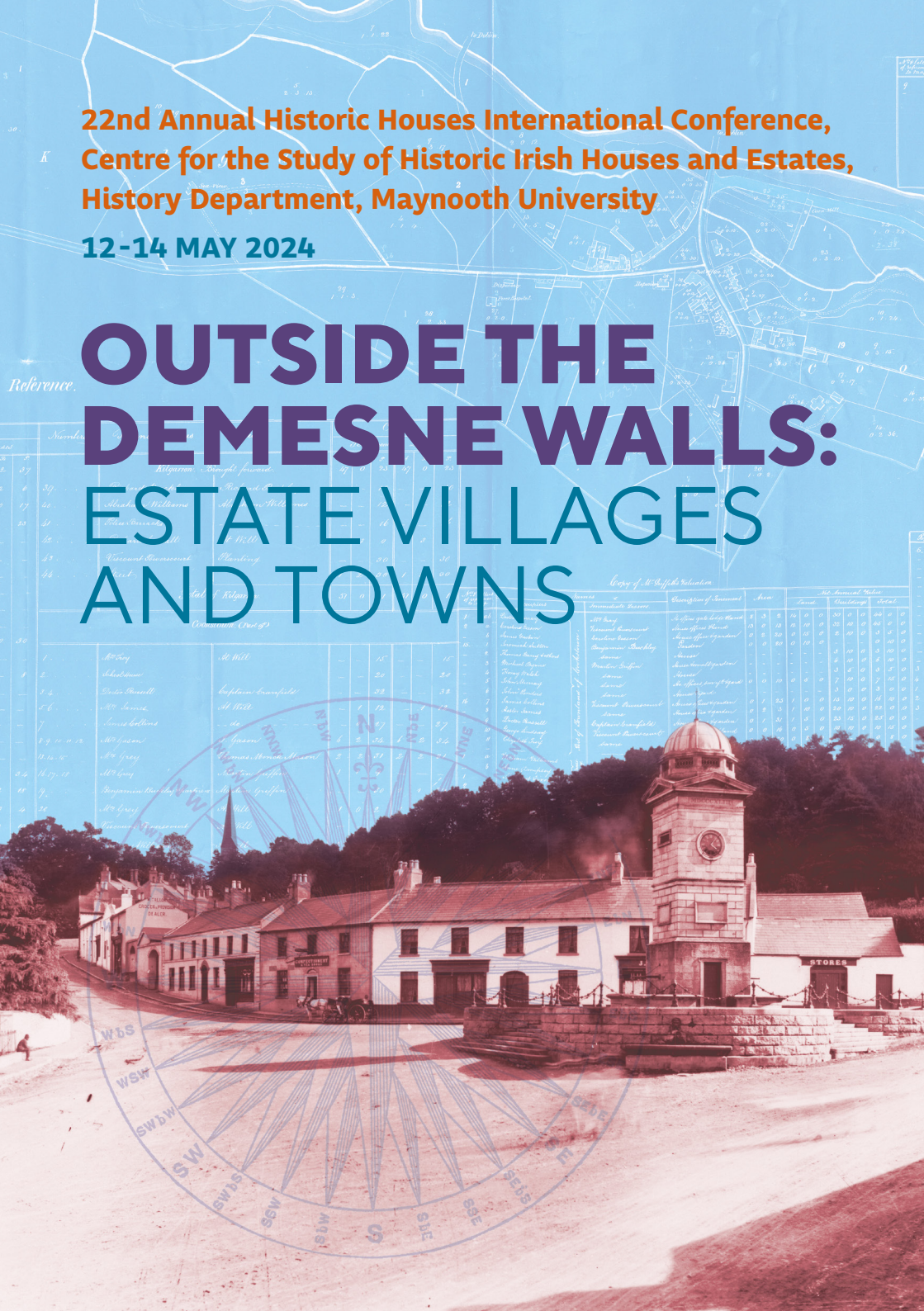


22nd Annual Historic Houses International Conference,
Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates,
History Department, Maynooth University

12-14 MAY 2024

OUTSIDE THE DEMESNE WALLS: ESTATE VILLAGES AND TOWNS



OUTSIDE THE DEMESNE WALLS



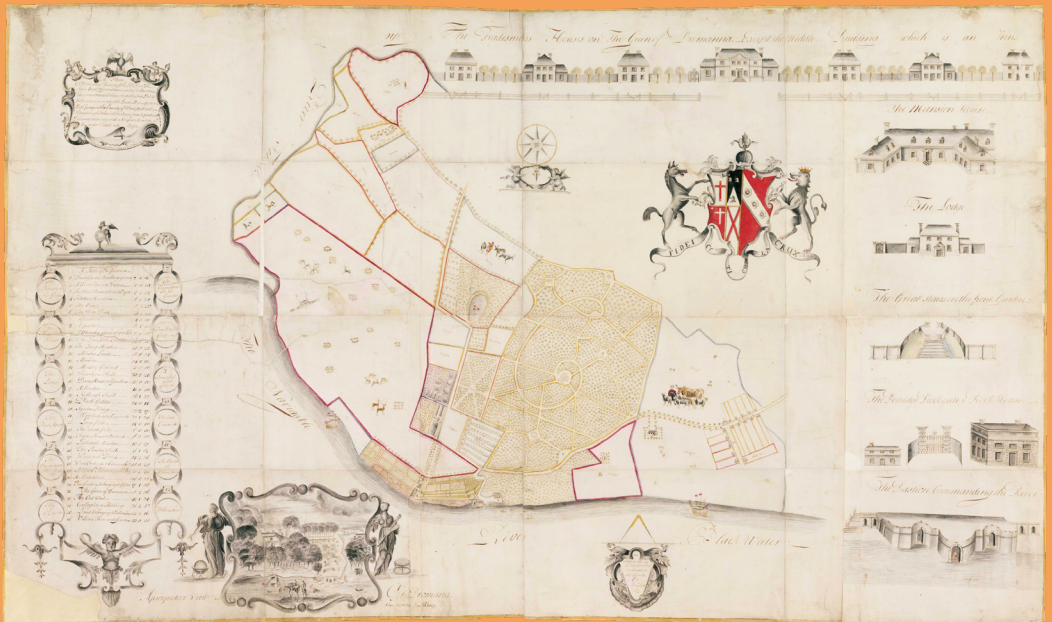
The Country House was one component in a complex landscape that also included estate villages and towns populated by staff, tenants rural and urban, and others, including local traders whose lives and livelihoods were closely interlinked with the big house and its residents.

Many towns and villages were built on the strength of local landlord investment. Sometimes landlords might modify, demolish or, in some cases, entirely relocate a village as part of their grand architectural schemes. Their motives might be aesthetic, philanthropic or a mixture of both; but since their income depended so often upon rent rolls, the relationship with the neighbouring community was also an economic one, shaping patterns of employment, agriculture, trade, and prosperity.

Neighbourhoods – both rural and urban – would be badged with a particular family identity often manifested in its vernacular architecture or name; village and town street names memorialised prominent local families; and squares hosted monuments to those who had died in imperial battles or were benefactors of the less well-to-do.

Landlord investment might result in better housing, sanitation and public health; the social, political and spiritual lives of tenants and neighbours might be shaped by churches, schools, meeting rooms, societies and charities, as well as essentials of infrastructure such as roads and railways, which would increasingly link rural localities with the wider world. Public houses might become the meeting places of the disaffected.

How important was the Big House and its resident family and staff to the economy of the local village or town? Was the estate village merely an appendage to the Big House



OUTSIDE THE DEMESNE WALLS



or was it an essential umbilical cord? Why did landed families engage in such place-making? How were these interventions received by those beyond the demesne walls? Did they reinforce or remove boundaries? Were social relationships governed by goodwill, gratitude, suspicion or other sentiments? For estates that still retain large property portfolios, what is their meaning and purpose today?

Did the relationship between country house and town or village differ in Ireland, the UK and further afield? For example what impact did the dispersal of great estates have on local economies in Ireland after the 1903 Land Act, in Britain after the First World War, or in Europe in the aftermath of revolution?

Outside the Demesne Walls will examine these and many other themes relating to country houses and their local town/village communities whether from historical or from contemporary perspectives.

Papers on these or other topics relating to country houses and their relationship to and with estate towns and villages in Ireland, the UK, Europe or elsewhere will be considered. Abstracts of no more than 400 words should be sent to Professor Terence Dooley and Professor Christopher Ridgway before 1 December 2023 at the following addresses: terence.a.dooley@mu.ie and cridgway@castlehoward.co.uk

The conference will be live and held on 12-14 May 2024 at Maynooth University and Castletown House.