

*1 – Reenafaraha, county Kerry
(courtesy National Library of Ireland (NLI))*

Irish sporting lodges

PATRICK BOWE

HUNTING OF ONE SORT OR ANOTHER HAS BEEN A FEATURE OF IRISH LIFE FROM time immemorial. Ancient Irish poems relate the hunting exploits of Finn McCool and his famous hounds, Brann and Sgeolan. The Archbishop of Dublin is recorded as having a hunting park at Shankill, county Dublin, in 1213. Hugh de Lacy, Grace O'Malley's swain, was killed while hunting deer on Achill Island. There is much literary and pictorial evidence for hunting in Ireland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, we know that Daniel O'Connell enjoyed hunting hare with hounds in the mountains above his house at Derrynane, county Kerry. Politicians such as Charles Stewart Parnell and James Redmond enjoyed shooting in the Wicklow Mountains.

Physical evidence of field sport activity is scant. An occasional deer park wall or fence survives. Game coverts, especially those for foxes, are more widespread. However, sporting lodges survive in almost every county, many now in permanent rather than temporary habitation. They comprise a building type that is virtually unstudied.¹

LODGES

A lodge is a house built for occasional use only. As a result, it is usually smaller in scale and more compact in design than a house built for year-round habitation. There were not many great baronial shooting lodges in Ireland of the type frequently associated with nineteenth-century Scotland. Exceptions to this rule were few, and would include Kylemore Castle, county Galway, completed as a fishing lodge in 1860; Ashford Castle, county Mayo, under construction from 1870 (famous for its woodcock shoot); and Glenveagh Castle, county Donegal, erected in 1860 as a base for deerstalking.

Lodges were built for many different reasons. Some were built as bases for



2 – *Garinish Island Lodge, county Kerry*

This panoramic view shows how it sits low and relatively unobtrusively in the rugged landscape. (IAA)

sea bathing, which was recommended for health reasons during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Seaport Lodge, Portballintrae, county Antrim, and Carew Lodge, Woodstown, county Waterford, are good surviving examples. Such marine lodges were also convenient for yachting. An example of such a yachting lodge can be seen on Garinish Island, county Kerry (Plate 2).² Several lodges were built around the Curragh, county Kildare, as bases from which to enjoy the horse racing on the heath.³ Some lodges, known as ‘hunting boxes’, were built as bases for fox hunting or stag hunting. Examples included Lord Gormanston’s lodge at Whitestown on the Delvin river along the Dublin-Meath border, and Fisherwick Lodge, county Antrim, built by the 2nd Marquess of Donegall in 1805. The latter was sited in the middle of a walled deer park in which the deer were hunted with hounds.⁴ Another example of a lodge within a deer park was Lissaniska Lodge at Kilcoleman Abbey, county Kerry.⁵

Some lodges were built by landowners, not so much for sporting purposes but as bases for the supervision by them or their agents of their outlying estates. Lansdowne Lodge, Kenmare, county Kerry, is an example. By the end of the nineteenth century, lodges were being built simply as what we know today as weekend houses. In many instances, a small yet elegant house, built for whatever purpose, was called a lodge. However, the greatest numbers of lodges recorded are those that can be called sporting lodges, designed as bases for the field sports of fishing and shooting.⁶

LOCATIONS

Sporting lodges were built close to areas where wild game was available. Game was plentiful throughout Ireland in early days. As the country was settled gradually for agricultural use, the natural habitat of wild game was reduced. It was obliged to retreat to the more remote wilderness areas of mountain, bog, marsh or moorland. Sportsmen followed them to these regions and built lodgings nearby, especially as good sport often demanded rising early and staying out late.⁷

Many lodges were located in such remote locations that access was difficult. W.H. Maxwell (Plate 3),⁸ who immortalised Ballycroy Lodge in north county Mayo in his famous book, *Wild Sports of the West*, published in 1832,⁹ writes of the difficulty of accessing it. There was no road within ten miles of the lodge, so he was obliged to travel by sea from the port of Mulrany.

Lengthy private-access roads were built to some lodges later. For example, Altanabocky Lodge, built in 1848 in the foothills of the Nephin Mountains in north

3 – W.H. Maxwell

Detail of portrait engraving from the frontispiece to Maxwell's classic book on Irish field sports, Wild Sports of the West (London 1832). (NLI)





*4 – Mr Pike's Lodge, Achill Island, county Mayo
It is well sheltered by the surrounding trees in a wilderness setting. (NLI)*

Mayo, was accessed on foot or on horseback, until a two-mile-long drive was constructed in 1904. A long, specially constructed lane led across a bog to reach Grouse Hall in county Kerry.

As wilderness areas are usually more exposed to inclement weather than others, it was considered essential for lodges to be sited and designed so as to mitigate the harshness of their environment. They were sited either on mountain slopes facing away from the prevailing wind, or in low, sheltered hollows. W.H. Maxwell writes of Ballycroy Lodge as being 'a low, snug dwelling',¹⁰ located at the bottom of a narrow creek near the mouth of the Owenduff river. For reasons of shelter also, plantations of trees often closely surrounded lodges. In some instances, virtually all that is visible of a lodge from a distance is a series of characteristically high chimney stacks – the result of a desire to keep the inhabitants warm after a cold outdoors day (Plate 4).

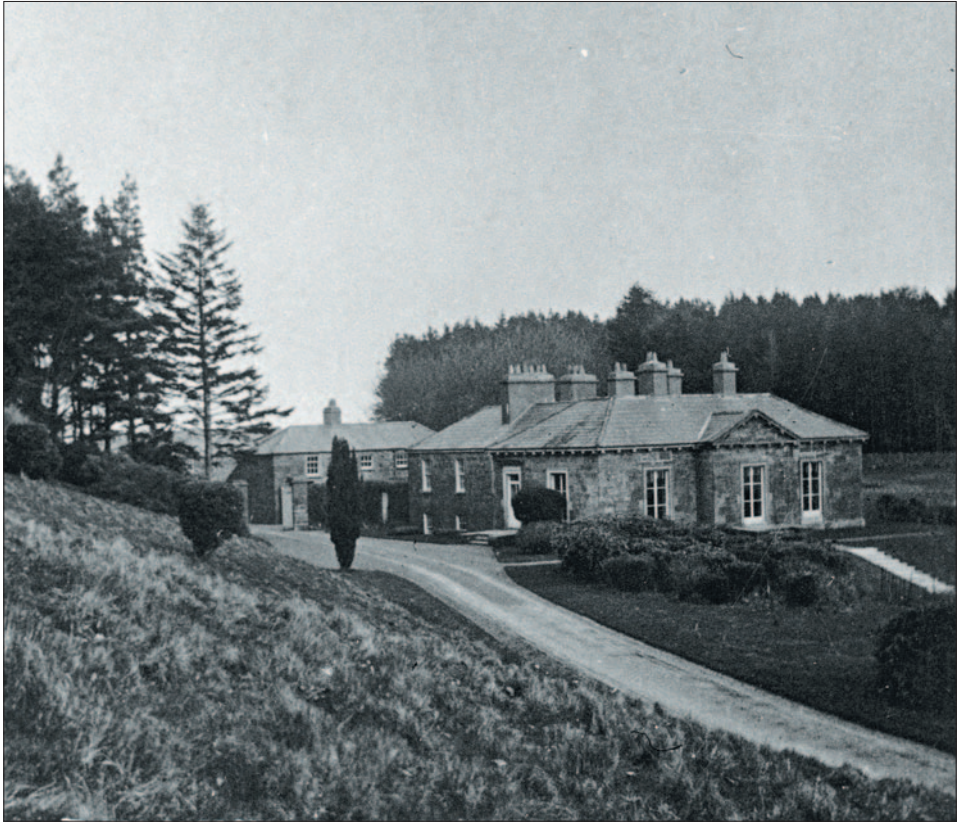


*5 – Ormonde Lodge, on the slopes of Slievenamon, county Tipperary
The shooting lodge was within reach of the Ormonde family's main home, Kilkenny Castle. (NLI)*

BUILDERS

Who built and used sporting lodges? Some lodges were associated with great estates and were built in wilderness areas close to them. For example, Mountain Lodge was erected by the 2nd Earl of Kingston in 1785 in the Galtee Mountains, within sight of his main house at Mitchelstown, county Cork. Mount Leinster Lodge was built in the 1840s for the Bagenal family of nearby Bagenalstown, county Carlow. Glencar Lodge, built by the Gore-Booth family on the shores of Lough Gill [in county Leitrim], could be reached easily from Lissadell. Ormonde Lodge (Plate 5), on the slopes of Slievenamon in south county Tipperary, was easily accessed from the main Ormonde house of Kilkenny Castle.

However, as road and rail connections improved, lodges were built in wilderness areas, located at a considerable distance from their owner's normal place of



6 – Drimbawn, Tourmakeady, county Mayo

Under the same roof are high-ceilinged reception rooms in front and two floors of service and bedrooms behind. (IAA)

residence. The west of Ireland was made easily accessible from the east coast by the construction of the Midland and Western Railway line,¹¹ and by the road construction projects undertaken in counties Kerry and Galway by the engineer Alexander Nimmo during the first decades of the nineteenth century.¹² The rivers and mountains of Kerry, Galway, Mayo and Donegal became the classic background to summer fishing and shooting in Ireland. For example, the Jameson family from Dublin constructed Sheskin Lodge in remote moorland in north county Mayo, and the Bellingham family from county Louth built Shean Lodge on the Owenduff river, also in county Mayo.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the availability of easier travel facilitated an influx of international sportsmen. Richard Berridge, a wealthy London brewer, bought the Connemara estate of Ballynahinch Castle, the real asset of which was its extensive and fertile fishery. The Berridge family, wishing to develop this asset,



7 – Garinish Island Lodge, county Kerry

Single and double-storey sections are accommodated by siting the lodge on sloping ground. (NLI)

was responsible for the erection of many fishing lodges in the area, including Inagh Lodge, Fermoyle Lodge and Screebe Lodge. A Philadelphia banker, Mr Willcox, employed the Dublin architect L.M. McDonnell to build Lisnabrucka, a fishing lodge on Ballynahinch Lake. Lord Digby, normally resident in Dorset, acquired and expanded Glenamoy Lodge in north county Mayo about 1901. In 1924 Ballynahinch Castle and its fishing were sold to the Maharajah of Nawanagar.¹³ By the twentieth century, the world of fishing and shooting in the west of Ireland had become a truly cosmopolitan one.

DESIGN

Lodge design eventually developed its own set of requirements, accommodations

and environments. Though varied in architectural style, it was always appropriate to its wilderness setting. The Irish lodge, being required to accommodate a few friends for rough shooting, game fishing or racing was notably compact in design. It was often of a single storey only. Although usually long and rectangular in plan, some examples are T-shaped or L-shaped, and even one, Flesk Lodge, near Killarney, was E-shaped. Some lodges had surprisingly long rear returns to accommodate the large number of bedrooms often required for a sporting party. Annaly Lodge in county Clare had a two-storey return that was seven bays long.¹⁴

Larger lodges were sometimes of one storey in front, where the reception rooms were located, and of two storeys behind, where the bedrooms and service rooms were accommodated. In this way, high-ceilinged reception rooms at the front and two storeys of lower-ceilinged bedrooms and service rooms behind might all be accommodated under the same roof. Examples of this arrangement survive at Drimbawn on Lough Mask, county Mayo (Plate 6), and at Luggala, county Wicklow (Plate 8).

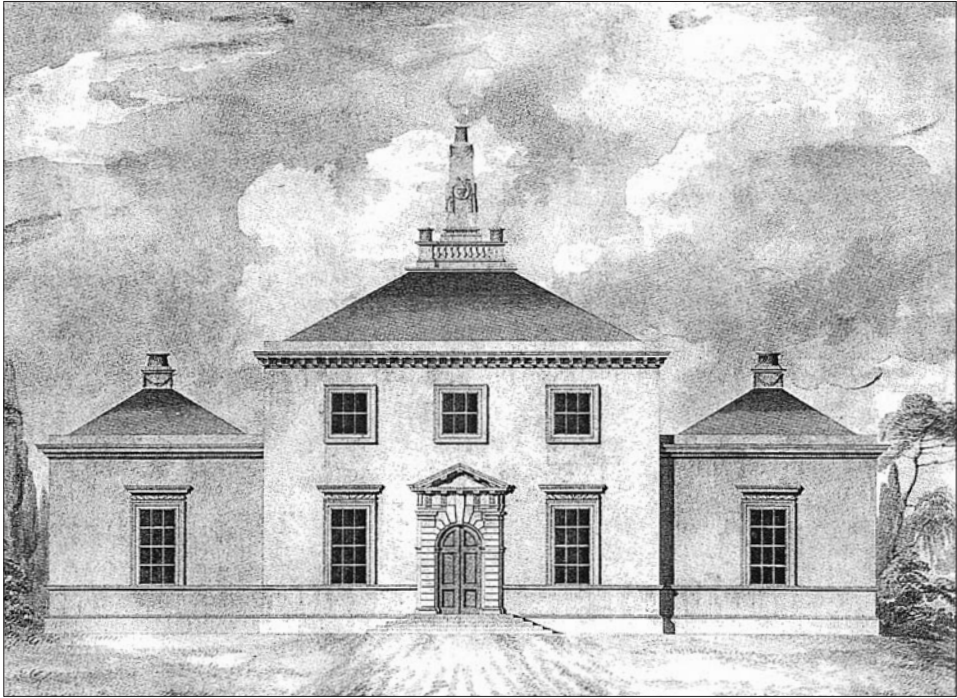
A variation on this arrangement was sometimes devised by siting a lodge on sloping ground, as at Garinish Island, county Kerry (Plate 7). In at least one instance, Clarendon Lodge near Kenmare, county Kerry, the appearance of a lodge was partly single



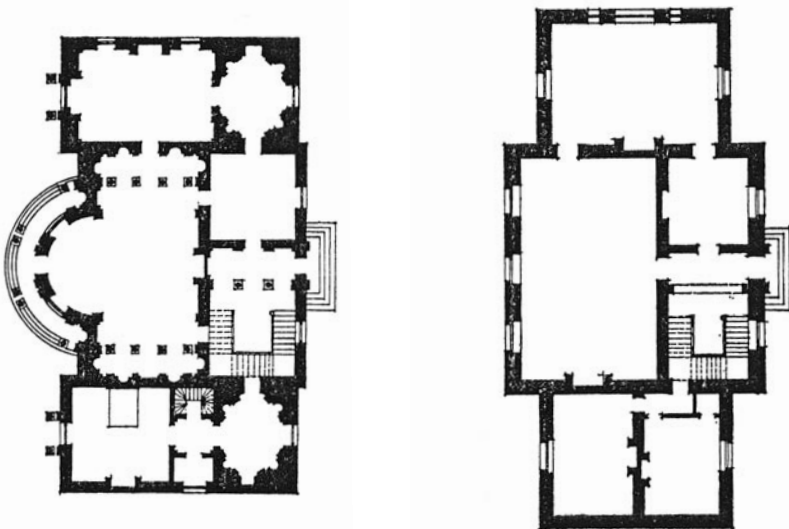


8 – Luggala, county Wicklow

*This shooting lodge is divided into single and double-storey sections.
(The Gothic windows have been recently restored to their full height.) (NLI)*



9 – *Unexecuted design for a hunting lodge by Sir William Chambers for the 1st Earl of Charlemont*
(courtesy Royal Academy of Arts, London)





10 – Hare Island Lodge, Lough Ree, county Westmeath

A fishing lodge in the early 19th-century picturesque taste with ‘neo-gothick’ windows and other details. (IAA)

and partly double-storey, resulting in an unusually picturesque appearance to the entrance front.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

Architectural style varied principally with the period in which a lodge was constructed. For example, the hunting lodge designed for the 1st Earl of Charlemont by Sir William Chambers in 1768¹⁵ was based on a Renaissance *barco*, or hunting lodge, at the Villa Gamberaia near Viterbo, Italy (Plate 9). Late-eighteenth and early nineteenth-century designs partook of a new picturesque taste, and were in a ‘neo-gothick’ style. Surviving examples include the lodge at Luggala, county Wicklow (Plate 8), and that on Hare Island in Lough Ree, county Westmeath (Plate 10). A



11 – Bantry Lodge, county Cork

This fishing lodge displays, with its picturesque thatched roof, a rustic 'neo-gothick' style. (NLI)



more rustic neo-gothic style was used at Bantry Lodge on the Glengarriff river, county Cork (Plate 11),¹⁶ and at Tourmakeady Lodge, county Leitrim (Plate 12).

The nineteenth century saw some lodges erected in a severely neo-classical style. Examples include Drimbawn, county Mayo (Plate 6), and Dromahair Lodge, county Leitrim (Plate 13). Similarly severe, but plainer in style, were two lodges, Delphi Lodge (Plate 14) and Traelaur Lodge, both built by the Marquess of Sligo in county Mayo. The subsequent Early English architectural style gave more scope for invention, as can be seen at Mount Leinster Lodge, county Carlow, which was probably designed by Daniel Robertson, and at Lough Bray Lodge, county Wicklow (Plates 16, 26), erected originally for the well-known Surgeon Crampton .

High Victorian lodges, as at Vartrey Lodge, county Wicklow, were in a range of eclectic styles, and exhibited the complexity of plan and detail characteristic of the period (Plate 15). Low-ceilinged bedrooms tended to be accommodated within the lodge's roof spaces, and were lit by dormer windows. A by-product of this arrangement was a building with a many-gabled exterior, the pointed gables often echoing in form the pointed mountain peaks among which the lodge was set, as found at Reenafaraha, county Kerry (Plates 1, 18). Edwardian lodges were in a more or less Arts and



12 – Tourmakeady Lodge, county Leitrim

A lodge in a simpler, rustic style (note its thatched roof and the garden chairs also of a rustic design). (IAA)

Crafts style, as evidenced by Cloghan Lodge on the Finn river in county Donegal (Plate 17).

Some lodges were constructed in a simple, vernacular architectural style. Many early examples, like Lady Kingston's lodge in the Galtee Mountains,¹⁷ were in the form of extended cottages with thatched roofs (Plate 19). Maxwell writes of Ballycroy Lodge that 'the bent roof is impervious to rain'.¹⁸ A list of later lodges, constructed in a more substantial vernacular style, would include Kilteaney Lodge, built by the Shaen-Carter family on the Owenduff river, county Mayo (Plate 21), Grouse Lodge on Djouce Mountain, county Wicklow (Plate 22), and Grouse Hall at Gleneely, county Donegal (Plate 23). A further example was the lodge¹⁹ attached to the estate of Caher Park, county Tipperary, and named, with patriotic whimsy, Shamrock Lodge (Plate 20). Other lodges began life as simple vernacular cottages or farmhouses that were then extended in a more ornamental style. An example sur-



13 – Dromahair Lodge, county Leitrim

A shooting lodge of severely neo-classical style in a setting of natural scrub and mountain heather. (IAA)

vives in Aasleagh Lodge, built by the Plunket family near Aasleagh Falls, county Mayo (Plate 24).

The storage of long fishing rods was a problem. Maxwell describes how, at Ballycroy, the rods, being too long to fit in the lodge's rooms, were stored outside on wooden pegs beneath the cottage eaves. In more sophisticated arrangements, slate or glass-roofed verandahs were constructed, and the rods stored on their rear walls. Verandahs and porches also added to the draught-proofing of a lodge's interior, and enabled sportsmen to change their wet overclothes and outdoor footwear before going inside. A good example can be seen at Ormonde Lodge, county Tipperary (Plate 25).



14 – Delphi Lodge, county Mayo

Also severe, but plainer in style, this fishing lodge's mountain setting is reminiscent of its namesake in Greece (NLI)

15 – Vartrey Lodge, county Wicklow:

A High Victorian lodge, its mass is broken down with gables to minimize its visual impact in its mountain setting. (NLI)





16 – Lough Bray Lodge, county Wicklow

This Early English Revival style shooting lodge incorporates extensive half-timbering. (NLI)

17 – Cloghan Lodge, county Donegal

(from Alistair Rowan and Christine Casey, THE BUILDINGS OF IRELAND. NORTH WEST ULSTER (London 1979)) (IAA)





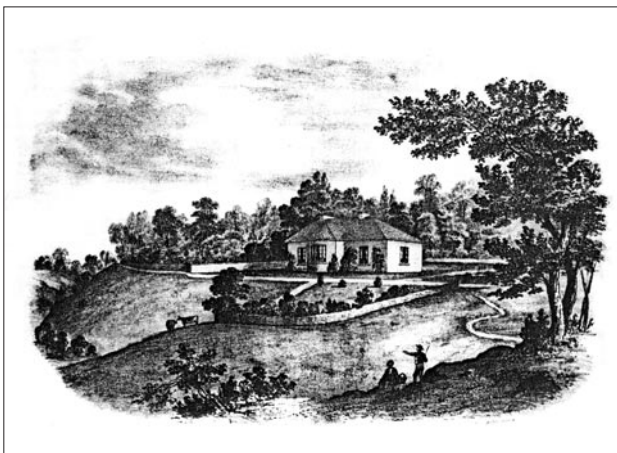
18 – Reenafaraha, county Kerry

Its pointed gables echo in form the pointed mountain peaks behind. (NLI)



19 – Lady Kingston's Lodge, county Tipperary

This shooting lodge (upper-left-hand side of drawing) is in the form of an extended cottage with a thatched roof. (IAA)



20 – Shamrock Lodge, county Tipperary

A cottage-style lodge, part of the estate of Caher Park, county Tipperary, its simple shape is articulated by a central bow. (from Mary Cecelia Lyons' book INCUMBERED ESTATES)

21 – *Kilteaney Lodge, county Mayo*

A single-storey fishing lodge on the banks of the Owenduff river in a simple, though substantial, vernacular style (IAA)



22 – *Grouse Lodge, county Wicklow*

A shooting lodge in vernacular cottage style, the rear portion (visible above near roofline) being of two storeys (IAA)



23 – *Grouse Hall, county Donegal*

*An extended lodge in a simple vernacular style (from Rowan & Casey, *THE BUILDINGS OF IRELAND, NORTH WEST ULSTER*)*





24 – Aasleagh Lodge, county Mayo

This fishing lodge was originally a three-bay farmhouse. Sheltering plantations screen the mountains behind. (NLI)

25 – Ormonde Lodge, county Tipperary

Verandahs and porches were added to nineteenth-century lodges to provide draught-proofing to the interior. (NLI)



SERVICE BUILDINGS

A yard and its service buildings were usually attached directly to a lodge so that they could be accessed conveniently, and were often unified architecturally with it, as at Drimbawn (Plate 6) and at Whaley Lodge, county Wicklow. The yards of the larger lodges usually had a cottage for the gamekeeper or river-keeper, who would live there with his family all year round. The keeper's cottage at Shramore Lodge near Lough Feeagh, county Mayo, contributes greatly to the picturesque outline of the building complex. A yard would usually include a fish room or a fish house with a cool, northern orientation. It was fitted internally with marble or slate shelves on which the catch would be laid to keep it as fresh as possible. Lagduff Lodge in north county Mayo also has a smoke room, in which surplus fish can be smoked to preserve them. (Sometimes, surplus fish was driven to a nearby station and loaded on a train to end up on Dublin dinner tables.) Also facing north would be the game larder of a shooting lodge. It was usually fitted internally with ceiling hooks, from which game would be hung to intensify its flavour.

Stables, together with a tack room, were provided for the ponies and donkeys used to transport the sportsman's sometimes elaborate gear over rough terrain for considerable distances, and to transport the day's 'bag' home.²⁰ Kennels were needed for a shooting party's working dogs – that is, setters, pointers, spaniels and retrievers.²¹ Maxwell describes the kennels at Ballycroy: 'nor are the dogs forgotten; a warm and sheltered kennel is fitted up with benches and well provided with straw'.²² At Mount Eagle Lodge, county Kerry, the service yard included an unusually large number of kennels to accommodate a small pack of hounds, since the lodge was used as a base for informal fox hunting as well as for shooting.

THE INTERIOR

The internal arrangement of a lodge reflected the fact that it was designed to accommodate a party of friends rather than the family for which a permanent residence might be designed. A disproportionately large number of bedrooms was provided. The majority of bedrooms were single, and often of a surprisingly small and narrow size. For example, Shean Lodge, built in 1871 in county Mayo, contained eight bedrooms, sitting room, dining room, bathroom and kitchen.²³ Smaller lodges had just one reception room for general use. Although Shean Lodge had just one bathroom for eight bedrooms, later lodges provided more, hot baths after a cold day outdoors being regarded as a *sine qua non* of lodge life. A lodge kitchen was usually relatively substantial, often with an adjoining drying room in which wet clothes might be

aired. All rooms, including bathrooms, had substantial fireplaces to warm those occupants who had returned from a day in the open air.

Specialist rooms were also required. A gunroom or, at least, a securely locked gun cabinet was essential. Storage for game bags, cartridge belts and other apparatus needed for shooting was also provided. The importance of secure storage is highlighted by a report that ‘moonlighters’ raided Mount Eagle Lodge, county Kerry, in 1879 and took guns and ammunition.²⁴ The tackle room of a fishing lodge was sometimes elaborately fitted out with wall-racking for rods, gaffs and nets, and shelving for fly cases, reels and spare line, as well as accommodation for waders and boots.

INTERIOR DECORATION

The interior decoration of a sporting lodge reflected the fact that field sports tended to be the preserve, though not the exclusive preserve, of men. The internal decoration of a lodge was utilitarian and sufficiently sturdy to withstand the heavy wear expected from occupants kitted for an outdoor life. For example, the internal corridors of Faha Lodge near Glenbeigh, county Kerry, were paved with flagstones.²⁵ Window and door openings often had heavy internal shutters, both for extra insulation and for security when the lodge was not occupied.





26 – Lough Bray Lodge, county Wicklow

This Early English Revival style shooting lodge incorporates extensive half-timbering. (NLI)

Walls were usually dry lined internally. In some lodges, the wood lining covered only the lower half of the walls in the form known as wainscoting. Polished or stained panelling in oak or pine could be found in luxurious lodges. In other instances, panelling was painted, the paint colour mellowing over time as a result of peat and tobacco smoke. Maxwell notes a turf fire sparkling on the hearth in the parlor at Ballycroy, and notes further that if bog deal²⁶ were added to the embers, it emitted ‘a fragrant and delightful glow, superseding the necessity of candles’.²⁷

The internal decoration reflected the lodge’s purpose. Sporting trophies such as wall-mounted antlers as well as stuffed birds and fish in glass cases were common. Natural curiosities found during past sporting forays – geological specimens, unusual bird feathers, dried animal bones, insect specimens and dried plant specimens – gave to some lodges the aspect of a natural history museum when they were gathered in display cases. Natural history engravings, landscape watercolours and antique cartoons gave the rooms something of the character of a gentleman’s club.

FURNISHING

Furnishing was of the hard-wearing kind – stoutly built tables, leather-covered armchairs and sofas. Fender seats and large log boxes stood by the fire. Some larger lodges had a billiard table for use during poor weather. Maxwell regrets that Ballycroy was ‘unprovided [sic] with a billiard table, and it requires ingenuity to contrive some occupation for the long duration of a summer’s day’.²⁸ Many lodges had a selection of sporting books or of volumes on local or natural history to while away bad weather days or long evenings by the fire. Game or fishing records were usually kept in leather-bound volumes, these being of interest to later sportsmen as guides to their own sport.

Some of a lodge’s furnishings were directly relevant to the sport being pursued. For example, a stalking lodge would have a telescope mounted in a suitable window of the sitting room to enable any movement of deer on the mountain to be observed closely from within. A fishing lodge might have a fish glass suspended on a stand in a window overlooking a lake or river. This very large magnifying glass allowed an intending angler to observe the rise of fish to the insect life before going outside. The fish glass also helped in observing the level of the water in a river – a key indicator of fishing conditions – by reference to a graduated staff or pole sunk in the riverbed within sight of the window. The hallway would have been furnished with a barometer to help with weather prediction, a substantial coat and hat stand, a container for walking sticks, crooks and umbrellas, and a basket for midge veils, midges being the curse of many summer evenings outdoors.



27 – Newtownbarry House, county Wexford

A simple, thatched fishing hut on the banks of the Slaney provides respite for fishermen during bad weather. (NLI)

At Clydagh Lodge, county Kerry, there were just four narrow bedrooms, each with a trundle bed – that is, an iron bed on castors. This enabled the beds to be wheeled from room to room because accommodation provision needed to be varied for each sporting party. A washstand and a pitch-pine wardrobe might have completed the furnishing.

OUTLYING FACILITIES

By the nineteenth century, well-established legal systems of fishing and shooting rights underpinned the development of a sporting estate. For example, Shean Lodge, county Mayo, enjoyed shooting rights over 11,000 acres of adjoining moorland and mountain, as well as fishing rights along five and a half miles of the Owenduff river.



FROM LORD CAVAN'S LODGE, ACHILL ISLAND, CO. MAYO

28 – View from Lord Cavan's Lodge, Achill Island, county Mayo

A simple path and mown lawn act as foreground to the spectacular mountain and sea view. (NLI)

Nearby Lagduff Lodge enjoyed rough shooting over approximately 7,000 acres, and fishing along three miles of the Owenduff river.

Within these large areas, the best sporting locations might be at some distance from the lodge, so outlying huts and bad-weather shelters were provided. Sometimes a herd's hut, known as a 'booley' in the west of Ireland, was adapted for this purpose. Maxwell writes of such an arrangement in the Nephin Mountains, above his cousin's lodge at Ballinacroy: 'a herdsman's hovel to which my kinsman has added an apartment for his accommodation in the grousing season'.²⁹ The game-keeper also used the accommodation when scouting for game. Maxwell describes him as 'lying out on the hillside through the long autumnal night to watch the passage of deer down from the mountainside to graze by moonlight on the plains below'.

Fishing huts were simpler and smaller in scale, being necessary only for tem-



29 – *Lough Inagh Lodge, county Galway*

The planting of islands in a lake encourages the insect life on which fish like to feed. (NLI)

porary shelter during cold or very showery weather. Usually somewhat ephemeral in construction, and sited on a riverbank with good sight lines over the river or lake from inside, they were just big enough for a few companions to squeeze in for a rest or a picnic lunch. Paul Sheehan, in his book *Irish Game Fishing*, describes such a hut at Lough Inagh Lodge in Connemara as ‘a tastefully constructed hut where the angler can light a fire and keep warm on a cold March day while resting the beat’.³⁰ The tea hut above one of the weirs on the Boyne river at Blackcastle, county Meath, and the tea hut on the Slaney river at Newtownbarry House, county Wexford (Plate 27), were thatched picturesquely. Corrugated iron sheeting, often painted green to harmonise with the countryside, was often used in a hut’s construction. An example erected by Norah Robertson, author of the book *Thrifty Salmon Fishing*, survives near the Slaney river at Huntington Castle, county Carlow.

In addition to shelters, other minor constructions facilitated the fisherman.



30 – *Delphi Lodge, county Mayo*

Sheltering trees enclose a small stretch of traditional parkland in front of the lodge. (NLI)

Small weirs, footbridges, stiles, jetties and small casting piers called ‘butts’ were constructed. These were usually designed in a minimalist way or using rough timber or field stone construction to minimise their visual impact on the overall landscape.

THE GARDEN

Many lodges possessed little or no garden, relying on an expanse of mown grass and a gravel path as a foreground to a dramatic landscape view, as at Lord Cavan’s lodge on Achill Island (Plate 28). Others boasted miniature parkland sheltered by tree belts, and varied with single or isolated clumps of trees, as at Delphi Lodge (Plate 30). Those lodges that had gardens generally boasted schemes semi-wild in character, usually extending over a series of hillocks and dells and crossed by mean-



31 – Delphi Lodge, county Mayo

Because of their traditional construction, the river pools and weirs have a minimal impact on the landscape. (NLI)

dering gravel paths. Sheltering plantations closely surround and protect gardens on what are often exposed sites, and so advantage is not taken of the potential for sweeping views from the garden itself. However, the garden paths are often extended through the shelterbelts to reach distant lookout points from which wide views of the surrounding countryside can be enjoyed.

Some gardens had lawn areas that were artificially levelled for games like croquet and tennis. Lansdowne Lodge, county Kerry, had an archery range. Ardnamona, county Donegal, Fermoye Lodge, county Galway, and Garinish Island, county Kerry (Plate 32), are but some that have typical lodge gardens.³¹ The acid soil and high rainfall favour the rapid growth of rhododendrons and other ericaceous plants. Summer-flowering hydrangeas, fuchsias and montbretia were grouped to extend the flowering season. Heather gardens, featuring many exotic and horticultural varieties, were considered appropriate for gardens in moorland areas. Rock



32 – *Garinish Island Lodge, county Kerry*

Lodge gardens tend to be naturalistic in character. (photographs: the author)

gardens were favoured for lodges in mountainous areas, as at Lisnabrucka, county Galway. Random paving as well as random rubble or dry stone walling was considered appropriately naturalistic in style for a lodge's wilderness setting.

THE LODGE ENVIRONMENT AND ITS CONSERVATION

A sportsman has always been attentive to the conservation of habitat, for an abundance of game depends on it. Moorland has been conserved as the natural habitat of grouse; copse and brushwood as the habitat of woodcock; marshland is the preferred location of deal, snipe and bittern. Oak woods have been maintained for pheasant shooting; high furze and ferns to shelter deer in winter and summer; a clear stream over gravelly soil as the ideal home for trout. When stocks of native game were

exhausted, particularly after the Great Famine of the 1840s, sportsmen were involved with reintroduction. The Nephin Mountains in county Mayo were restocked with red deer from Scotland; loughs Ennel, Owel and Derryvaragh, county Westmeath, and Lough Anna, county Donegal, were restocked with trout from Lough Leven in Scotland.

Natural habitat was sometimes improved for better game conservation. For example, the islands and shorelines of western lakes were often thickly planted with native trees and shrubs to encourage insect life on which lake trout feed (Plate 29). Series of weirs and artificial pools were constructed along rivers where a good natural sequence did not exist. This was carried out, for example, at Delphi Lodge in the 1860s (Plate 31), and Lord Bantry built a small dam at the outlet of Lough Shangrue above his Glengariff fishing lodge before stocking it with trout. Weirs with hydraulic gates control the water level in the rivers at the Costelloe and Fermoye fisheries in Connemara. Such interventions in the landscape have usually been made with visual sensitivity and with the intention of mimicking natural landscape features. The sportsman has been assisted in doing this by his intimate knowledge of flora and fauna and of local geology and climate. He has also been assisted by his aesthetic appreciation of the natural landscape in which he takes his sport. Maxwell writes of the beauty and wildlife of county Mayo during the months he was at Ballycroy Lodge in the early nineteenth century. He describes appreciatively how ‘the foam of the Atlantic breaks sometimes against the windows’, how he sees from the windows ‘a range of hills where the original red deer of Ireland are still existing’, and continuing how ‘in the calm of the evening I hear the shrill cry of the sand lark; and in the early dawn the crowing of the cock grouse’.³²

The historical role of the sportsman in the conservation of Irish wilderness areas has now been assumed by both public and non-governmental organisations, aided by the new systematic studies of the science of ecology and the practice of environmental conservation. Wilderness conservation is now undertaken for its own sake rather than for that of the sportsman.

The contemporary relevance of sporting lodges as a building type stems from their achievement of both elegance and ruggedness in compact and economical architectural design. Though apparently modest in scale, they often conceal interiors of surprising amplitude. They were built with sensitivity to the landscape that surrounds them – a wilderness landscape that was conserved, to a great extent and over many centuries, by sportsmen. The Irish sporting lodge is a building type that deserves further study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Nicola Gordon Bowe, George Gossip, David Griffin, Brian Leonard and Jeremy Williams.

ILLUSTRATIONS

All illustrations courtesy Irish Architectural Archive (IAA) or the National Library of Ireland (NLI) unless otherwise stated.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ Guy St John Williams, *Racing Lodges of the Curragh* (Kildare 1997), and the as yet unpublished photographs of sporting lodges taken over many years by George Gossip are the exception.
- ² The 4th Earl of Dunraven, *Past times and Pastimes*, 2 vols (London 1922) I, 27.
- ³ Guy St John Williams, *Racing Lodges of the Curragh* (Kildare 1997).
- ⁴ C.E.B. Brett, *Buildings of Co. Antrim* (Belfast 1996) 161.
- ⁵ Valerie Bary, *Houses of Kerry* (Whitegate 1994) 173.
- ⁶ Some sporting lodges have self-evident names. Grouse Lodge, county Wicklow, Grouse Hall, county Kerry, and Grouse Hall, county Donegal, are obviously shooting lodges, as was Snipe Hall, county Clare. Fishers Lodge, county Clare, was used as a base for fishing. Jockey Hall is the appropriate name of a racing lodge on the Curragh, county Kildare. Bathing lodges were given names like Summer Lodge or Sea Lodge, both in county Clare, or Oyster Hall and Barnacle Lodge, both in county Kerry. Other lodges were named for the mountains on which they were located. Examples include Mount Eagle Lodge or Brandon Lodge, both near Tralee, county Kerry, and Mount Leinster Lodge, county Carlow. The names of some lodges were derived from a family name or title. Fisherwick Lodge, county Antrim, was named for one of the Marquess of Donegall's subsidiary titles, and Annaly Lodge, county Clare, for Lord Annaly, the brother of the lodge's builder.
- ⁷ The bibliography of books on Irish field sports is extensive. Amongst the best known are: Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey, *The Fowler in Ireland* (London 1832); William Peard, *A Year of Liberty, or Salmon Angling in Ireland* (London 1867); Charles Henry Crooke (pseud. John Bickerdyke), *Wild Sports in Ireland* (London 1897); Augustus Grimble, *The salmon rivers of Ireland* (London 1903); Gerald FitzGerald, *Pot Luck – rough shooting in the west of Ireland* (London 1938); N.K. Robertson, *Thrifty Salmon Fishing* (London 1945); A.A. Luce, *Fishing and Thinking* (London 1959); T.C.Kingsmill Moore, *A Man May Fish* (Buckinghamshire 1960).
- ⁸ William Hamilton Maxwell (1792-1850) was born in Newry, county Down, and was educated at Trinity College, Dublin. He fought in the Peninsular War and, subsequently, at Waterloo. He became a clergyman and was attached to the diocese of Tuam. However, he was not very assiduous in the performance of his duties and was deprived of the living. He moved to Scotland, and after years of poor health he died in relative poverty at Musselburgh near Edinburgh. His best-known book is *Stories of Waterloo*. He also wrote a biography of the Duke of Wellington, as well as a series of novels and short stories, one of the latter series being

- published under the title *Erin-go-Bragh*.
- ⁹ The first edition of *Wild Sports of the West* was published in London in 1832, a second edition in 1838. Further dated editions came out in 1843, 1870 and 1892. An edition, with an introduction by the 4th Earl of Dunraven, appeared in 1915. There are, in addition, a number of undated editions, including one published in New York, a copy of which is in the National Library of Ireland. The book was translated into Irish by Seán Ó Ruadháin and published as *Sedgairacht an Iarthair* by the Government Publications Office in 1933.
 - ¹⁰ W.H. Maxwell, *Wild Sports of the West*, 2 vols (London 1832) I, 44.
 - ¹¹ The Midland and Great Western Railway reached Galway in 1851. The Great Western and Northern Railway arrived in Claremorris, county Mayo, in 1862.
 - ¹² Nimmo, a Scots engineer, was responsible for the construction of many roads, bridges, piers and harbours in counties Kerry and Galway. He was also responsible for the foundation of the town of Roundstone in Connemara. He built, as his residence, Corrib Lodge at Maam Bridge in Connemara, but died in 1832 at the comparatively early age of 49.
 - ¹³ Anne Chambers, *Ranji, Maharajah of Connemara* (Dublin 2002).
 - ¹⁴ Hugh Weir, *Houses of Clare* (Whitegate 1994).
 - ¹⁵ John Harris, *Sir William Chambers* (New Haven and London 1996).
 - ¹⁶ Edward Malins and The Knight of Glin, *Lost Demesnes* (London 1976) 123.
 - ¹⁷ Frederick O'Dwyer, 'A Noble Pile in the Late Tudor Style', *Irish Arts Review*, 18 (2002) 39.
 - ¹⁸ W.H. Maxwell, *Wild Sports of the West*, 2 vols (London 1832) I, 45. 'Bent' is an old English word often used to describe reeds, rushes or sedges.
 - ¹⁹ Mary Cecilia Lyons, *Incumbered Estates* (Whitegate 1993) 74.
 - ²⁰ Ponies and donkeys were more adaptable than horses over rough countryside. Breeds such as the Connemara Pony or the Kerry Bog Pony were especially sure-footed.
 - ²¹ Pointers and setters, including Irish Setters, were used to locate game on the ground by scent; spaniels and retrievers to locate it after it had been brought down. The Irish Water Spaniel was a breed especially well known in the west of Ireland for retrieving game brought down over water. The Glen of Imaal Terrier, named after the county Wicklow glen, was a breed used in hunting burrowing game.
 - ²² W.H. Maxwell, *Wild Sports of the West*, 2 vols (London 1832) I, 46.
 - ²³ The painter Paul Henry stayed here while working for the Congested Districts Board. The singer Count John McCormack was a frequent guest in the 1930s. The lodge was subsequently acquired by the Craigie family. See Eric Craigie, *Irish Sporting Sketches* (Mullingar 1984), and Eric Craigie, *An Irish Sporting Life* (Dublin 1994).
 - ²⁴ Valerie Bary, *Houses of Kerry* (Whitegate 1004) 184.
 - ²⁵ *ibid.*, 109
 - ²⁶ Bog deal is the wood of fir or pine found buried in peat bogs. It differs from bog oak, which is also found in peat bogs and which, in its blackened state, was used in furniture manufacture.
 - ²⁷ W.H. Maxwell, *Wild Sports of the West*, 2 vols (London 1832) I, 45.
 - ²⁸ *ibid.*, 70.
 - ²⁹ *ibid.*, 45.
 - ³⁰ Paul Sheehan, *Irish Game Fishing* (Shrewsbury 1997) 122.
 - ³¹ Edward Malins and Patrick Bowe, *Irish Gardens and Demesnes from 1830* (London 1980) 115, and Michael George and Patrick Bowe, *The Gardens of Ireland* (New York 1986) 38.
 - ³² W.H. Maxwell, *Wild Sports of the West* (London 1832) 45.