

abounds of the marketing of staples, with implications of the growing commercialisation of farming and horticulture. An accompanying but less welcome development was theft. Orchards were notoriously vulnerable to opportunist thieves. If some robbed garden produce from hunger, other did so from bravado or, more ominously, for gain. Hot-houses, abundant in the wealthier suburbs of Dublin and other large towns, were raided: desirable and expensive fruits such as grapes, melons and pineapples were stolen, as were immature plants being raised in nurseries; presumably there was a ready sale for such desiderata at bargain prices. So gardening even on a modest scale, let alone on vast acres, added to the resentments of those excluded from such activities and the chances of worsening the privileged.

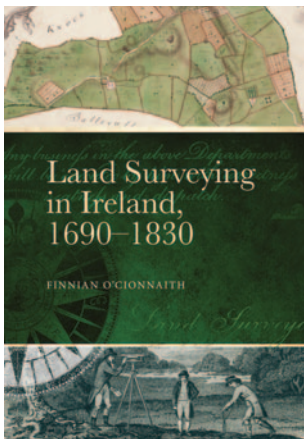
Not only are gardens evanescent, reaching maturity and then prone to decline, they are exposed to fickle tastes, commercial redevelopment and simple ignorance, as O'Byrne's and O'Kane's introduction warns. However, there is a more cheering recognition: renewal is constantly possible. New techniques and technologies, fresh sports and variants are added to the gardeners' arsenal. Catherine FitzGerald, herself involved in the revival at Hillsborough, lists other sites which have been renewed recently: Annesgrove (Cork); Derreen (Kerry); Doneraile (Cork) and Glenarm (Antrim). Furthermore, just as species from elsewhere continue to enrich Ireland, so too the history of garden design and gardening benefits from new studies focused on other places. In relation to Ireland, there is much to ponder in recent publications such as Roderick Floud on the economic history of English gardens (2019), Clare Hickman with *The doctor's garden* (2021), Zachary Dorner's *Merchants of medicines* (2020), on the relationship between drugs, botany and exploration, and Tom Williamson's several penetrating forays into the making of rural landscapes.

Finnian Ó Cionnaith

LAND SURVEYING IN IRELAND, 1690-1830

(Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2022) isbn 978-1-80151-014-1, 272pp, 24x16 cm, 50 b/w illus, €35 hb

review by Finola O'Kane



FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, land surveying may seem a little specific initially as a book topic. This book, however, convinces that it was fundamental to the spatial design of Ireland, bringing to life the individuals, networks, education and society of the men who measured, apportioned and sometimes valued the country's land. The consequences of their surveys may yet be appreciated in the lines of Irish ditches, boundaries and townlands, particularly because of their legal weight as property delineations, but also by having created the web of walls, roads and fields that characterises the Irish landscape more generally. Placing considerable emphasis on the life, works and practices of three surveyors,

*A land surveyor at work,
attended by chainmen*
from John Hampton, architect and
land surveyor's business card (c.1810)
(National Library of Ireland)



Gabriel Stokes (1682-1768), Robert Gibson (d.1761) and John Longfield (c.1775-1833), allows Ó Cionnaith to unite a history of the Irish landscape's formation with that of a profession, tracing precisely its rise and decline over the course of some two hundred years. This detailed overview of three professionals and their sources also enables Ó Cionnaith to demonstrate how land surveying became a springboard for the other professional spatial disciplines of cartography, civil engineering and architecture, particularly, perhaps, in Ireland where the seventeenth-century property transfers had so necessitated its use. Such overlaps created those great treasures of the Irish archives – beautifully drawn maps, mostly at a relatively large scale and sometimes ornamented with cartouches, compasses and title boxes by such distinguished artists as Hugh Douglas Hamilton. As the profession evolved, its intersection with these complementary disciplines led to the smaller scale and more topographical maps of such men as William Bald (1789-1857), Alexander Nimmo (1783-1832) and Richard Griffith (1784-1878). Claiming in his *Practical domestic politics* of 1819 (a title revealing of the subject's essential interdisciplinarity) that the land surveyors' work could 'make Ireland the garden and granary of the empire', Richard Griffith showed how land surveying's essential entwinement with empire ensured that the ideology of improvement continued long into nineteenth-century Ireland.

Some questions, such as why Irish surveying books differed from English ones, are raised in early chapters and answered in later ones, suggesting at times that the book's biographical emphasis does not well serve its very topical and more general interests. Why were the great innovations of French cadastral survey so slow to cross the channel to Great Britain and the British empire? One suspects that a more thematic and comparative history could have positioned land surveying, and its subtext of property rights, more broadly and beyond the English-speaking world. In many European countries the

work of land surveyors was not ‘intrinsically linked to the needs of landowners’ but more allied to those of state formation and carried out for more abstract, strategic and general purposes, particularly those of taxation and empire-building. Why was Ireland not surveyed accurately earlier, only being properly triangulated in 1824, if not because the benefits of surveying at a state level were but slowly realised in London. The British reluctance to tax individual landed property saw the advantages of careful triangulated survey severely lagging behind France, whose first entire and trigonometrically correct *Carte de France corrigée* was completed by Jean Picard in 1684 and followed by Louis XIV’s commission of in 1747 of *Carte générale et particulière de la France* from César-François Cassini de Thury (1714-1784). Other European countries and the United States put such surveys in train in the mid-eighteenth century, and most particularly on their island colonies.

Ó Cionnaith is also at pains to write the history of a professional discipline, its evolution and education, and although this is worthwhile it does not always convince, particularly in the eighteenth century when practical, professional, academic and scientific motives could and did overlap, particularly in towns such as Armagh, and when many others, notably military men, but also many gentlemen, were trained in its rudiments. The contributions made by soldiers – trained in many fields beyond land surveying – to that discipline are somewhat under-acknowledged in the earlier centuries, although very present in the latter chapters, when the achievements of men such as Charles Vallencey and the Ordnance Survey are well drawn. Using the work of his predecessors J.H. Andrews and Arnold Horner to full advantage in this territory, Ó Cionnaith enlightens on the lesser-known Trustees’ Survey of 1709 that followed the Downs’ Survey of 1656-58, Robert Gibson’s revealing overview of the state of Irish surveying practice in his 1755 *A treatise of practical surveying* and Gabriel Stokes’ novel, if unsuccessful attempt in 1750 to certify a profession whose many rogue practitioners could leave landowners with grave legal and personal consequences. The impact of John Rocque’s French school of cartography as a forceful wave of foreign innovation is very well drawn. Matched in impact by the wave of predominantly imperial and English engineers selected by the nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey, Ó Cionnaith is sensitive to the wealth of information on Ireland’s poverty and wider social history that such innovative schemes provided, explaining their very different commissioning circumstances. Ó Cionnaith’s great map diagram, delineating where the various land surveyors employed for the Bog Commissioners worked, demonstrates clearly why drawing remains a key skill for conveying much information in a visually clear and concise form.

A book on land surveying does provide a welcome correction to the many more histories of architecture and historical geography. But it also exposes why we need more histories of civil engineering, and science and technology to explain the key discoveries and concepts more generally, from the problems emanating from an oscillating magnetic north to the advantages of baseline triangulated survey and the slow design of satisfactory instrumentation. This book sometimes shies away from giving a clear technical and mathematical outline of such innovations, and this is a pity because in Ireland mathematics is a compulsory Leaving Certificate subject, although providing for different levels of ability. We do not need to omit accurate scientific and mathematic explanations from such

books, particularly for those who may wish to recall their knowledge, even though it may be a challenge to write them.

The author and publisher are to be commended for producing a book on such a seemingly niche topic that is copiously well-illustrated and thoughtfully and vividly written. The academic community, more broadly, could break further ground by explaining the key geometrical, mathematical and scientific concepts, which indeed might require further well-considered diagrams, equations and formulas, to fully integrate the sciences and the humanities. This book's great delight is showing how the discipline of land surveying so evidently accomplished this with some impressive scientific and artistic intent.

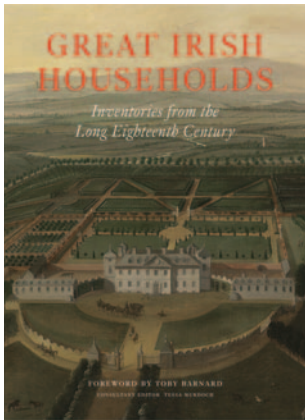
Tessa Murdoch (ed.)

GREAT IRISH HOUSEHOLDS:

INVENTORIES FROM THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

(John Adamson, Cambridge, 2022) isbn 978-1-898565-17-8, 435pp, 27x21cm, 58 illus, £75 chb

review by David Fleming



THE CONTENTS OF THE BIG HOUSE OFTEN REFLECTED the economic circumstances, tastes and fashions of its owners or occupiers, and their predecessors. Occasionally inventories were compiled for valuation, disposal after death, or simply to know what belonged and where. They are important for understanding how households were furnished and how possessions were arranged or stored. They can also reveal how fashion and utility might have altered interiors over time, especially where more than one exists for the same house. *Great Irish households* reproduces eighteen inventories dating between 1703 and 1821. Most are from houses located in Leinster, three from Ulster, and one each in Munster

(Lismore Castle) and Connacht (Elphin palace). All except five (Borris, county Carlow; Carton, county Kildare; Killadoon, county Kildare; Kilrush, county Kilkenny and Newbridge, county Dublin) are taken from public archives. Succinct and useful introductions to each inventory are provided by Jessica Cunningham, Rebecca Campion, Edmund Joyce, Alec Cobbe and John Adamson. All eighteen have been very carefully transcribed, noting erasures, additions and superscript.

The extent of a house's contents largely depended on how regularly it was occupied. Those that were regularly lived in contained all that might be needed, whereas a dwelling only occasionally inhabited might be minimally furnished and decorated. The contents of Lismore in 1703, which had been largely abandoned by the earls of Cork and Burlington after the 1640s, betrays the austere and utilitarian use of the house, then occupied by the