The Geography and Implications of Post-Famine Population Decline in Baltyboys, County Wicklow

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The Famine was the key turning point in the social history of modern Ireland. The death of over one million people and emigration of an equal number were only the beginning of a process of depopulation which followed the loss of the staple diet of three million Irish men and women.¹ This decline in population facilitated the consolidation of land holdings and led to an increase in prosperity and security amongst the tenants who survived this cataclysm. Three key sources are available with which to examine the dramatic landscape and population changes in Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century. The population decline is enumerated in the decennial censuses from 1841. Specific information on land holdings is provided for pre-Famine Ireland by the Tithe Applotment Books, and from 1851 by Griffiths' Valuation and subsequent records held in the valuation office.² An analysis of these records provides the results of a process of depopulation and consolidation but does not deal with the process itself. To understand these processes we must refer to contemporary accounts and, where possible, marry the qualitative and quantitative sources.

Such a combination of sources is available for the Smith estate in Baltyboys, county Wicklow. Here we are fortunate in having the published diaries of Elizabel Smith, the wife of the landlord of a small estate.³ In this paper I will examine the statistical sources for population and land tenure using the Smith diaries as a means of interpreting the changes recorded in those sources. It will be seen that the consolidation of land holdings on the Baltyboys estate was the long-term policy of the residential landlord, facilitated by, but not initiated by or solely the result of, the Famine. As a micro study, examining only one of the c.62,000 townlands in Ireland (0.006% of the total land area in Ireland), it is possible to focus on the human tragedy subsumed in the statistical sources. The

² For an introduction to these sources see W. Nolan, Tracing the Past: Sources for Local Studies in the Republic of Ireland (Dublin, 1982).
study also focuses on an eastern region while most Famine studies have looked to the west of Ireland.

Elizabeth Smith, who left us her diaries, was born in Edinburgh in 1797. She came to Ireland in 1830 after her husband, in her own words 'a poor sad Orangeman', inherited a small county Wicklow estate. She was an accomplished writer who earned substantial sums for articles published in Scottish magazines and is most famous for her book Memoirs of a Highland Lady, first published in 1898. Her diaries, begun in 1840, provide a detailed description of the greater part of the population on her Wicklow estate, so detailed that it is possible to combine her writings with statistical sources to present an accurate picture of the distribution of population and changing land-holding patterns in pre- and post-Famine Baltyboys. By comparing this material with statistical sources three decades later, it is possible to demonstrate how, in the post-Famine period, steady population decline stands in stark contrast to the continuity of land tenure.

The Smith estate of Baltyboys corresponded to the townland of Baltyboys Lower in the parish of Boystown, in the barony of Lower Talbotstown, within two miles (3km) of Blessington, in west county Wicklow (figure 1). The large townland of 1142 acres (462ha) is a roughly triangular-shaped ridge with the Kings River and Liffey River forming its north-east and north-west sides, respectively. The 'base' of the triangle is demarcated by a straight townland boundary unassociated with any natural features. The ridge bounded by the rivers rises sharply from below the 600 foot (183m) contour (the level of the Poulaphouca Reservoir) to 993  feet (303m) in as little as one-half mile (800m). Due to the steep gradient, most of the individual holdings displayed a typical environmental egalitarianism by running down the hill to include both rough upland pasture and waterlogged lowlands. Baltyboys House stands near the apex of the triangle; nonetheless, it stood no more than two miles (3.2km) from all the Smith’s tenants, which is to say it was a very tight estate unit, unusual in that it was possible for the landlord to know all the tenants.

Pre-Famine Population and Land Tenure

The Tithe Applotment Books, compiled between 1823 and 1838, survive in manuscript form in the National Archives in Dublin. On the Baltyboys estate, the area for each holding is given in statute acres and the accuracy of the report is certified in a document signed and sealed by Col. Henry Smith, husband of

4 Grant (Smith), The Highland Lady, p. vii.
5 Smith (née Grant), The Irish Journals, pp. xiii-xv.
6 E. Grant (Smith), Memoirs of a Highland Lady, ed. A. Tod (Edinburgh, 1988).
Figure 1 The location of the Smith estate, Baltyboys Lower townland, north-west county Wicklow.
Elizabeth. In itself, this indicates the interest the Smiths had in their newly inherited estate, a marked change from the absentee administration of Henry Smith's brother. Because of the accuracy of information in this source it is possible to relate most holdings to those recorded in the Primary Valuation and draw a plan of the tenancies for pre-Famine Baltyboys (figure 2). The Tithe Applotment Books record thirty separate holdings held by twenty-eight individuals. This made the average holding forty acres (16ha) per tenant. That figure obscures the diversity in holding size, however. Four men, John and Thomas Darker, and Thomas and Hugh Kelly held almost half of the estate. In contrast eleven holdings were under 15 acres (6ha).

The land assessment preserved in the Applotment Books offers us a glimpse of an estate in transition. John and Thomas Darker still held the 'demesne' land surrounding Baltyboys house before the completion of the Smiths' homecoming (figure 2, plot 4). The Smiths' influence is to be seen in the case of the southern holding of Thomas Kelly (figure 2, plot 9). This was land taken from George Kearns in an effort to consolidate and increase the Kelly's farm. Henry Smith had one holding in his own name at this stage, having been lately taken over from a tenant named Quinn (figure 2, plot 27). The concentration of dwellings in this and adjacent holdings suggests that Quinn had rented landless dwellings to sub tenants, a practice Smith would have stopped in order to maximise his rents.

In examining the population on the Baltyboys estate we are fortunate in that the first reliable census for Ireland was taken four years before the Famine in 1841. We can rely on the accuracy of these figures for Baltyboys Lower because the census data was collected by the Smiths with the same care taken in the compilation of the Tithe Applotment Books. In June 1841 Elizabeth Smith wrote:

> Busy filling up the Census papers which are very complete as to information, the use of which I don't exactly know, the poor people here are all terrified that they were to have been kidnapped or pressed or murdered on the night of the 6th. Half of them were not to go to bed and had barricaded their doors.  

The 1841 census gives a population of 260 persons on the Baltyboys estate. From the detailed descriptions provided in the diaries it is possible to locate the individual families and ascribe a probable number for each household. Used in combination with the map sources, it is possible to construct a fairly accurate distribution map marking the high watermark in the townland's population just prior to the Famine (figure 2). Approximately one-fifth of the population was

7 N.A.I., TAB 32/4, Boystown.
8 Grant (Smith), The Highland Lady, p. 64.
Figure 2 Pre-famine Baltyboys (based on the 1841 census, the tithe applotment books and the Smith diaries).
located on or near Baltyboys house (plate 1) and gained a livelihood from working on the Smith estate. This includes the Smiths, their household servants, live-in outdoor farm labourers, and the Darkers, who administered the Smith estate, and who also held lands of their own.

Past the Darker's excellent house where I did not call knowing well that all there was as one could wish. Northern, protestants, well-educated, industrious, they are a credit to the country. Of the two bachelor brothers John manages the good farm of ninety-six acres; Tom is the Colonel's steward and bailiff at a salary of fifty pounds. Two maiden sisters take charge of the house, etc. Amongst them they have brought up five orphan nephews and nieces.9

On the demesne lands, there were five dwellings which housed the remainder of the Smith retinue and their families: a retired nurse maid, the gardener, herd, stableman and a general labourer.

The major population group was made up of the large tenants, their families and labourers. On the east side of the hill these tenants' houses were located at

9 Ibid., pp. 294-5.
the western, or uphill, side of their holdings. Many of these farm houses still survive and are substantial buildings, often of two storeys, with an extensive cluster of out buildings, often forming an enclosed yard. As large as these buildings are, the size of the population they supported is impressive. The diaries tell us that the ten largest land holdings accounted for as many as eighty-seven persons, over one-third of the townland's population. Tom Kelly, for instance, had a wife and seven children. In addition, he employed as many as seven people, most of whom resided either in the house or the farm buildings which overlooked his 120 acre (49ha) holding. His house, which still survives, was thatched within living memory. The outbuildings, in contrast, were always slated (plate 2). Mrs Smith's description of the Kelly household is typical in its detail as it is in its begrudging attitude towards her larger, more independent tenants. She wrote in January 1847:

Tom Kelly, an old man now, with old untidy ways, married at fifty, a girl with a hundred pounds who has made him an excellent wife. They have a large yard, new good offices, a garden, house of three large rooms, and seven children, four boys and three girls; the four elder ones at school; plenty here but in an uncomfortable manner and the worst farming though

Plate 2  The modest farmhouse of Tom Kelly, originally thatched, overlooked his 121 acre farm. Seventeen persons were accommodated within the house and its well-built slated farm buildings.
the rent is never behind; no draining, no turnips, not sufficient stock. Hal means to resume about twenty acres of the low ground to reclaim himself as this stupid old creature can't be moved to exertion and we shall have a world of plague to get back the possession, both husband and wife acting tragedy when informed of it although they got this addition to their old holding on the express understanding of improving it.

... Tom Kelly will manage fewer acres better as he will not diminish his labourers and they are too few for the size of the present farm — two old half-useless men and a little boy, all of whom he gets at half wages, with a niece as maid-servant. His little daughter, one of my pets, manages her younger brothers and sisters.\textsuperscript{10}

A third grouping in the Baltyboys population is made up of a few craftsmen on small holdings; a mason and two carpenters. Their families and apprentices made up about ten per cent of the townland's total population. Mrs Smith described the mason in January 1847:

James Carney...he is doing well on his farm of twenty-three acres; has it well stocked, lives in a good three roomed slated house with a pretty wife and four children, two of them at school; his trade has hitherto kept him easy, but no one is building this year, so he has had to part with his men, his wife with her maid, to leave enough food behind.\textsuperscript{11}

We must assume that they were able to survive the Famine years due to their trades, rather than their small holdings.

The remainder of the populations was made up of the smaller tenant farmers, former tenants who still held houses from which the land had been dispossessed, and sub-tenants, those who had a house through one of the Smith's larger tenants. For the most part, these were the very poor who survived on their plot of potatoes and acted as casual agricultural labourers. Few of their homes survive (plates 3-4):

five acres of this leased ground are let to Bartle Murphy up at the top of the hill close by the moat which once defended one of Cromwell's watch towers. The Colonel has planted all these furry fields and Murphy has the charge of them at a small salary without which he must have been begging, the five acres having ruined him: his potatoes gone, his two cows dead of the murrain, nothing left of all his labour but a cwt. and a half of oatmeal. There are six children, four at school, one at the breast.\textsuperscript{12}

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p. 287.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 296.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 295.
Plate 3  The remains of the home of Bartholomew Murphy lies on the 274m contour above the Poulaphouca Reservoir. Murphy, who farmed only 8.5 acres, was an employee of the Smiths in charge of the nearby plantation.

Plate 4  The small house belonging to the Hylands was associated with only two acres of land.
Nearly two-fifths of the population in Baltyboys lived in conditions which could not have been much better that those described in the following diary entry of January 1847:

I went up the hill again first calling on the Widow Quinn, who being left some years ago on her husband’s death insolvent with a large and very young family and she an ailing woman, the Colonel relieved her of her land, forgave her seven years’ rent, gave her the stock and crop to dispose of and left her the house and garden for her life. All her children were employed as they were fit for work and she has certainly done better than if she had retained her ill-managed farm. All her sons are in good places, one of them with us; her daughters married except one who lives with her and takes in washing. I put mother and daughter on the soup list, times being so hard. Two of the daughters are very well married; the third made a wretched one; she took a sickly labouring lad who is often laid up, but to whom she has brought seven children. They live in the mother’s cowhouse where she had no right to put them and thus settle a whole family of beggars upon us, but we did not look after things then as we have learned to do now. It is the most wretched abode imaginable, without window or fire-place, mud for the floor, neither water or weather-tight, nor scarce a door, all black with smoke, no furniture scarcely. Yet times are brightening for the nearly naked inmates. A brother in America sent them at Christmas ten pounds which paid their debts, and bought them some meal and fuel, and their eldest son is to go out to this kind uncle in March.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 292-3.}

This extreme case illustrates the unimaginable poverty of those who lived on the margins of the estate system and highlights the exceptional vulnerability of older women within this system.

**Baltyboys During the Famine**

In a postscript to the journal, written near the end of her life, Mrs Smith refers to their policy of consolidation and the strategy they employed, which was the orthodox political economy of the day. She wrote:

We determined to get rid of the little tenants and to increase the large farms – and we did it – but not at once – just watched for opportunities
and managed this delicate business without annoying anyone — or even causing a murmur.\textsuperscript{14}

That a 'murmur' was caused is discussed below, but what is of key importance in the above statement, confirmed by the \textit{Tithe Applotment Books}, is that consolidation and its corollary, depopulation, were the pre-Famine goals of at least one resident landlord.

Famine provided the greatest opportunity towards their aim of getting rid of the 'little tenants'. Even before the blight, bad harvests threatened the population of Baltyboys. In October 1841 Smith recorded:

Bitter cold and dismal is the prospect before us, so early, so severe a winter, no fuel, no harvest, corn still out and malting, potato crop a failure, what will become of the improvident poor of this country, in the Poor House some must be driven to take refuge but it won’t contain a fourth part of the starving population and many will die rather than enter it.\textsuperscript{15}

She wrote of the need for a new agricultural system to replace the total reliance on the potato in November 1842 and at the same time recognised the harm caused by the programme of land consolidation:

Our population is increasing, our means of providing for it not increasing in proportion, too much property seems to have got into too few hands, too many mouths have too little to fill them, there is a want of energy, a want of principle, a want of knowledge ... A better system of agriculture by which a greater supply of nourishment may be extracted from the ground seems indispensable.\textsuperscript{16}

The first mention of the potato failure which caused the Great Irish Famine comes in October 1845.\textsuperscript{17} In September 1846 she states simply: 'Here comes the famine ... so here we are, the peasantry starving.'\textsuperscript{18} The famine diseases, dysentery, inflammatory attacks, influenza and fever,\textsuperscript{19} are recorded in entries from September 1846, and from January and March 1847.\textsuperscript{20} However, these diaries

\footnotesize{14} Smith (née Grant), \textit{The Irish Journals}, p. xviii.
\footnotesize{15} Grant (Smith), \textit{The Highland Lady}, p. 80.
\footnotesize{16} Ibid., p. 150.
\footnotesize{17} Ibid., p. 197.
\footnotesize{18} Ibid., p. 261.
\footnotesize{20} Grant (Smith), \textit{The Highland Lady}, pp. 258, 292, 307.
are a poor source for statistical information concerning the actual death toll in the townland. For example, in May 1847 she records the first death from the Famine in a family that had lost seven out of ten children:

he desired me to have poor little Andy Ryan buried at once, the house fumigated etc. ... After dinner I walked to John Darker's and he wrote up to forbid any wake, to order the funeral this morning and then a general cleansing – all which was attended to by these unfortunate parents; they have now but three children left of ten, and their only girl will hardly long survive for she is a wretched looking little creature. Between constitutional delicacy, the great dung heap at their door, the mother's carelessness, and the father's aversion to go in time for the Doctor they have lost a fine clever family.

The cumulative effects of death and emigration were so extensive that it led to the closure of her boys' school. In April 1850 she wrote:

There are very few boys left on our side of the country; there will be few men soon for they are pouring out in shoals to America. Crowds upon crowds swarm along the roads, the bye roads, following carts with their trunks and other property. We have forty children as yet in the girls' school; but really I don't think there will be half that number by autumn.

The progress made towards her stated goals of depopulation and farm consolidation is evident in the *Primary valuation* and their accompanying maps, compiled circa 1851. The recently published Ordnance Survey maps for County Wicklow added to their accuracy and permitted the preparation of annotated maps corresponding to the reference number in the first column of the valuation tables. This source indicates that the land of Baltyboys Lower was held by ten fewer (18) persons, in eight fewer holdings, in 1851 (figure 3). Only six of the 1851 holdings were under fifteen acres (6ha) opposed to eleven in 1836, and the average holding per tenant had risen from forty (16ha) to sixty acres (24ha). The most profound difference between 1836 and 1851 was in the demesne lands (figure 3, plot 2). These were consolidated, probably early in the 1840s, into one 182 acre block then in the name of James King (Mrs Smith's son-in-law). This was accomplished at the expense of the Commons', who were probably bachelors without direct heirs, and, to a lesser extent, the Darker Brothers.

21 Ibid., pp. 331-2.
22 Ibid., p. 507.
Figure 3  Baltyboys immediately after the famine (based on the 1851 census, Griffiths’ valuation, Valuations Office records and the Smith diaries).
Under Lord John Russell, the administration of famine relief shifted its emphasis from the straightforward provision of food to public work. The Poor Relief Bill of 1847 facilitated the efforts to reduce both the population and the number of small holdings on the Smith estate. In April Elizabeth Smith wrote in praise of the notorious Gregory Clause:

there have been two clauses inserted by the Member for Dublin, Mr. Gregory, one of which precludes the holder of more than a rood of land from being in any way assisted ... The beggars are the small holders, entitled to no relief, and so we shall gradually get rid of them; they must give up their patches and take to labour.

In November 1848 she describes the results of this policy:

Driving about, the many unroofed cabins give additional desolation to the wet and dirty lanes. The moment the Poor House receives the inmates the wretched dwelling is destroyed so that a return is impossible; quantities are still even at this season going off to America, many of them with plenty of money in their pockets! And we miss them not. This winter will surely make some room.

The diaries of Mrs Smith describe in detail the consolidation process which led to the transfer of lands to the Darker brothers just before the compilation of Griffiths’ Valuation. John Darker was given exclusive control over lands previously shared with his brother (figure 3, plot 7). To offset this, and in advance of his marriage, Thomas Darker was given three holdings which had been the property of George Kearns, Richard Grey and Patrick Quinn (figure 3, plots óabc). It is useful to take a closer look at the history of the holding taken from Pat Quinn, in the extreme south-east of the townland, as it illustrates the complex relationship between landlord and tenant, and provides an insight into the meandering course of the Smith’s consolidation policy. Pat Quinn held his farm of forty acres (16ha) in 1840 when we hear of his defaulting on his rent in September. Smith wrote:

Tom Darker [their steward] has distrained the three bad Tenants, Kearns, Doyle and Quinn. John [Robinson, their solicitor and land agent] had no difficulty with the poor creatures whose crops he seized. He left them

24 Grant (Smith), The Highland Lady, p. 313.
25 Ibid., p. 425.
all that they would require for the support of their families, merely took what they would have improperly disposed of, and before May comes, when they will be dispossessed, we must see to get something done for them. Farm they never will – Quinn from vice and Kearns from folly, and Doyle from something between the two.\(^{26}\)

Quinn was a year behind in rent in June 1843,\(^{27}\) but, despite the threats of dispossession, an entry from 1844 shows that he remained a tenant on the Smith estate, emphasising the point that notice of eviction cannot be taken as an index of actual dispossession:

"Pat Quinn obdurate: he will neither pay his rent nor give up his land on the kind conditions proposed; so he must be put out; and with his vindictive disposition this will be a disagreeable business.\(^{28}\)"

In March 1846 this holding was in the hands of the Smiths.

"Hal had an offer from Mr Hanks for Pat Quinn’s ground, but has refused it, finding the management of land on his own account so profitable.\(^{29}\)"

In September, profits from the cattle raised on his land were such that Elizabeth Smith longed for the depopulation of Baltyboys. Further, she was fully aware of how famine facilitated this ambition:

"Mr Darker sold ten of the young cattle off of Pat Quinn’s farm, the fourth part of the stock on it, and on these ten he has made a profit equal to the half year’s rent, rather more indeed. I wish there was not a tenant in Baltyboys, there will not be many by and by, no small holders at any rate. When potatoes are gone a few acres won’t be worth a man’s time to manage. What a revolution for good will this failure of cheap food cause.\(^{30}\)"

Nonetheless, Paddy Quinn may still have been in possession of this holding at the beginning of 1847, and in favour after paying his November rent.\(^{31}\) Finally, in March 1850, we learn of the decision which is preserved in Griffiths’ Valuation; Mrs Smith wrote: Tom Darker is to have fifty-one acres on the other side

\(^{26}\) Ibid., p. 39-40.
\(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 175.
\(^{28}\) Smith (née Grant), The Irish Journals, p. 69.
\(^{29}\) Grant (Smith), The Highland Lady, p. 214.
\(^{30}\) Ibid., p. 260.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., p. 307. The editors believe this to be a reference to (Red) Pat Quinn. Nonetheless, Pat Quinn still occupied a house on his land (or former land) in December 1847, p. 361.
of the hill – all the scattered bits we have purchased from different little ten-
ants.\footnote{Ibid., p. 506.}

Clearly Patrick Quinn’s grip on this plot of land was tenuous. But what is also
made clear in the diaries is that his right to that holding went beyond legal
entitlements. Over a period of ten years he was clearly a bad tenant in his land-
lord’s view, yet it took over six years to finally prise him from his holding. Six
months or more after his dispossession (prior to March 1846) it was still
described as ‘Pat Quinn’s ground’. The use of patronyms in Ireland to describe
holdings is in stark contrast to the use of toponyms in English holdings, like
Grange Farm or Willow Farm that we hear about in the Archers radio serial on
BBC Radio 4. It demonstrates the insecure position of landlord towards tenant
and shows how, linguistically at least, the tenants had won the land war before
it was ever begun.

The imposition of the Protestant Tom Darker onto lands held by the long
established tenants Quinn, Grey and Kearns caused not just a murmur of dis-
content but, in Mrs Smith’s words, ‘a most unpleasant feeling among the peo-
ple’. Threatening letters were sent to Thomas Darker and Col. Henry Smith, in
return, threatened to close the school. The following passages illustrate the ten-
sions caused by the new allocation of lands as well as the power and confidence
of Mrs Smith in handling estate affairs in opposition to her husband:

he will tell these gentry that one and all must quit should harm of any
kind happen to any of the Darkers. They are a most odious people. They
seem incapable of rising out of low vindictive evil feelings. Not a man in
Baltiboys is the worse for Tom Darker cultivating these patches on his
own account instead of on the Colonel’s. What business is it then of
theirs? ... I wish they were all in America, I know.

The Colonel had terrified me to death about my school declaring he
would close it and fill the house with police and he actually wrote and
offered it to the magistrates so I should have been obliged to write also
and say that I could not agree.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 512-13.}

What later occurred is not clear from the diaries which concentrate on the
marriage of her first daughter at this point. No subsequent intimidation is re-
ported but Mrs Smith was very disillusioned by the threatening letters and a
spate of sheep stealing. We can only speculate on whether this ill feeling influ-
enced the decision of the Smiths to quit Baltyboys in the same year. In July 1850
Elizabeth Smith refines a familiar theme:
Envy, jealousy, malice, evil speaking, hatred, lying, and all uncharitableness, fill the minds of our wretched peasantry. Fancy that fine boy of Jack Byrne's having been used by his father as his instrument in this letter business – made to write the two threatening notices – it has almost been proved against them and the police expect to bring it quite home to that house. How I do wish we had not one tenant in Baltiboys. It will come to that probably. And if we do not live to carry it out, do you keep it in mind, dear Jack [her son], to get all your land into your own hands; graze it; till only what the cattle require; house and pay your few servants well; and grow flax to employ their women.\(^{34}\)

The ten years between 1841 and 1851 saw a decline in population of fifty-three, from 260 to 207 persons. Naturally the population would have increased in the first half of the decade; nonetheless, the drop of twenty per cent compares favourably with the information extracted from the diaries and Griffiths' Valuation and is comparable to the decline in population for the barony and county as a whole.\(^{35}\) Seven families seem to have disappeared in those years. Mrs Smith provides us with an account of one large scale emigration and there are numerous references to the assisted emigration of individuals:

Cairns [Kearns] is off today, begging to the last. Cousin Charles goes with them – unable to part from the children particularly from one boy by some strange accident the perfect image of himself ...Such a set – 'tis worth all they have cost to rid of them.

We must be careful in our expenditure as probably the few small tenants we have may be induced to emigrate if assisted. Lachlin and Mary Ryan are gone – to New Orleans – with a large party of friends, Mary under the charge of Kiogh [Keogh] the tailor's son and wife. We paid all her expenses and most of her brother's ... Even in a business point of view this is a £10 profitably laid out. These orphans who have much plagued us will cost us no more, and they may act as pioneers for their numerous relations.\(^{36}\)

If my interpretation of Mrs Smith's diary is correct, the assisted emigration of family units accounts for forty per cent of the population decline. Presumably

\(^{34}\) Ibid., pp. 514-15.
\(^{35}\) K. Hannigan, 'Wicklow before and after the famine' in K. Hannigan and W. Nolan (eds), Wicklow, History and Society; Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County (Dublin, 1994), pp. 789-822. The population of Lower Talbotstown fell 22% between 1841 and 1851. County Wicklow's population fell 21.5% during the same period. See p. 813, table 20.8.
\(^{36}\) Grant (Smith), The Highland Lady, pp. 313-14, 499.
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To account for the drop in population is a large gap in the normally detailed memoirs. The omission is probably best explained by the fact that many of those missing were from the ranks of the farm labourers. This group rarely received mention by name in the Smith diaries – a fact mirrored by their exclusion from the debate surrounding the land question. Unexpectedly, many of the very poor landless householders seem to have survived the Famine years if not the subsequent decades.

Post-Famine Population Decline and Consolidation

To understand the long term effects of the Famine it is necessary to examine the Baltyboys estate nearly four decades after the potato crop first failed. We learn from the valuation records that the same large tenants, or their heirs, were still in situ (figure 4). Eleven of the fifteen major tenants – those with over thirty-five acres of land – or their descendants, survived the period 1836-83. Of the four who failed to survive, two seem to have been bachelors with no direct descendants. Indeed, most of the changes which occurred during the 1840s became a permanent part of post-Famine Baltyboys. Only minor alterations were made in the farm holdings between 1851 and 1883, probably at the instigation of Elizabeth Smith who, incredibly, re-occupied Baltyboys House in 1882 at the age of eighty-five. Twenty-three acres (9ha) were taken from the Darker holdings. Twelve of these (5ha) were added to the Tyrrell lands (figure 3, plot 6b – figure 4, plot 9), and eleven (4ha) were added to the demesne lands, once more in the name of Smith.

More profound was the drop in population. The 1881 census records only 136 persons living in the townland, down by 48% from 260 four decades earlier, one third fewer persons than in 1851. In 1841 4.4 acres (1.8ha) had supported one person, forty years later the figure was 8.4 acres (3.4ha). The valuation records indicate where on the estate most of the decline in population came from (figure 4). Although the 'big house' had been re-occupied, the other dwellings on the demesne were empty or gone. The lodge occupied by the Dodsons up until 1871 (figure 3, house 2f) is now in the name of Mrs Smith, as is the dwelling occupied by Robert Ashe between 1851 and 1863 (figure 3, house 2c). There is no mention of the house occupied by John Grace from 1851 to 1879 (figure 3, house 2a). The 'joint tenement' of T. Rowley and J. Fitzpatrick is 'down' from 1875 (figure 3, house 2de). These five dwellings housed in the region of twenty-nine persons in 1851. It is evident, therefore, that the withdrawal of patronage on the part of the resident landlord had accounted for as much as forty-one per cent of the decline in population at Baltyboys. Five other dwellings were abandoned prior to 1883. The most notable departure was that...
## Post-Famine Population Decline in Baltyboys

### Table: Post-Famine Baltyboys in 1883

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### Figure 4

Post-famine Baltyboys in 1883 (based on the 1881 census and Valuations Office records).
of the extended family housed at the Widow Quinn's. This house passed into the vacant possession of Long Pat Quinn in 1882. Four other landless dwellings also disappeared.

Conclusion

The aspects of population and land tenure discussed in this paper highlight the major dichotomy in post-Famine Ireland; the contrast between profound population change on the one hand and continuity in land tenure on the other. The consolidation of some holdings did lead to a decline in their overall number, but the basic layout of farms was unchanged, a feature also noted in Smith's analysis of Clogheen-Burncourt parish in south county Tipperary. Throughout our period, Baltyboys remains an area dominated by the established tenant farmer and it was this element of society which shaped the ethos of post-Famine Ireland. In contrast, the sources testify to decay at either extreme of the Baltyboys social pyramid. The pyramidal structure of society had a very narrow top and a very wide base. These are the elements which were carved out of the Irish landscape as a result of the changes brought about by the Great Irish Famine. The landless cottier and the smaller tenants could not survive the loss of their staple food and the decreased demand for their labour. On the Smith estate, largely due to the efforts of the resident landlord and his remarkable wife, this population emigrated rather than died. Nonetheless, the population was greatly reduced. We have also seen how the drop in the numbers employed on the Baltyboys estate accounted for a large proportion of that decline. This probably mirrored a similar drop in output and profitability of the demesne farm. Mrs Smith did not foresee how the policy of consolidation and depopulation would lead, ultimately, to the decline in prominence of her own position. More broadly, it may suggest that the Famine and post-Famine policies removed the large labour force which supported and were supported by the landed gentry, an unlikely coalition which could have provided a bulwark against the rising power of the tenant farmer.