

KILLEGAR

A History

Sue, Lady Kilbracken



Mary Morgan (1710-1749)

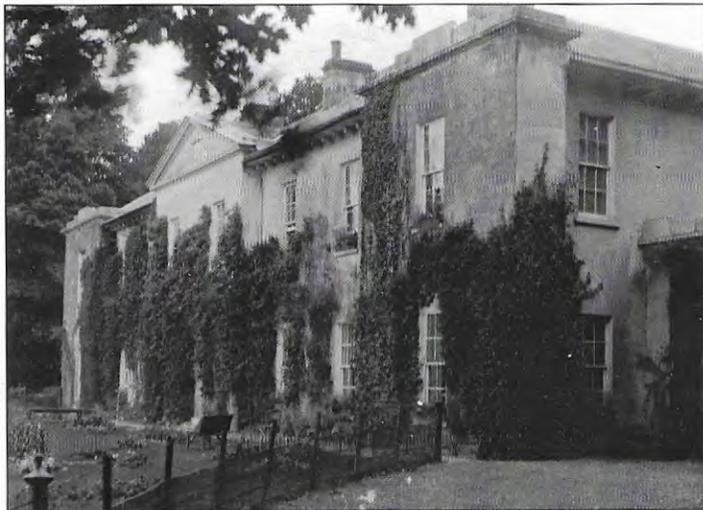


Denis Daly (1747-1792)

KILLEGAR

A History

Sue, Lady Kilbracken



KILLEGAR PRESS

with best wishes,
Sue Kilbracken
October, 2011

First published in September 2011

Copyright Lord Kilbracken ©1990 and Sue, Lady Kilbracken ©2011

Published in Ireland at Killegar House, Carrigallen, County Leitrim, Ireland

Photography: Sven Arnstein, Brian Farrell, Anna Godley, Seamus Kiernan, John Kilbracken & Sue Kilbracken

Front Cover: John Kilbracken. Back Cover: Spring—Seamus Kiernan, Summer, Autumn & Winter—Sue Kilbracken

Inside Back Cover: Sue Kilbracken

Text adapted from Lord Kilbracken's booklet of 1990:

'The Story of Killegar'

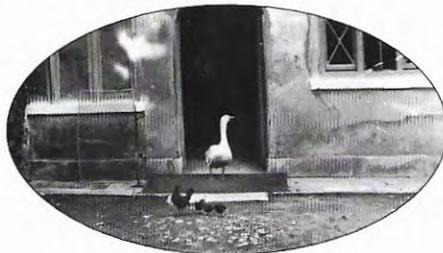
With special thanks to Seán Godley for editing and Bruno Davies for technical consultation

Design & Production by Tony Fahy

*Proceeds from the sale of this booklet will go to the 'Save Killegar Campaign'
dedicated to the conservation and restoration of Killegar*

Typeset in Poppl Pontifex

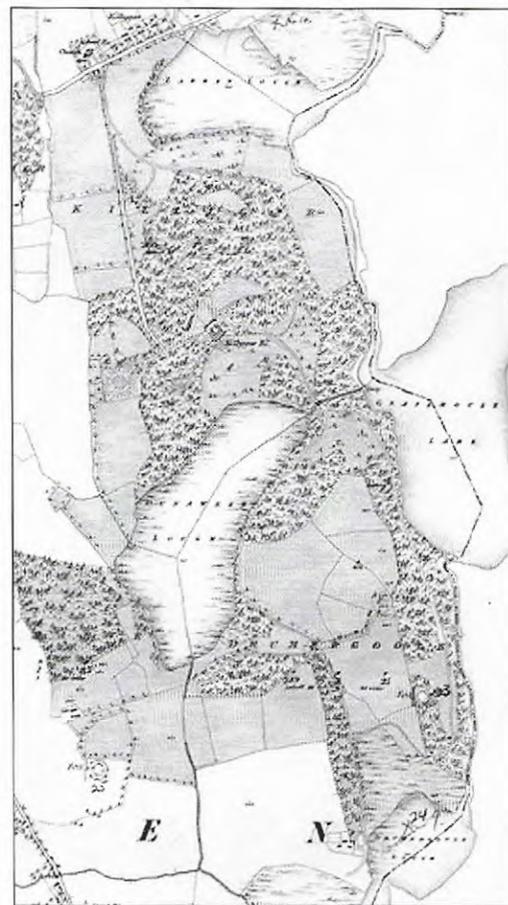
Printed at Abbeyset



KILLEGAR HOUSE and its demense have a long, tangled history. The lands the family own today (the townlands of Killegar and Drumergoul) are part of a much larger estate known in the 17th century as Craigstown. This had previously been O'Rourke country but was granted by Charles I in 1640 to a Scottish family, the Craigs. It extended all the way from the Leitrim-Cavan border to Corrawallen – 2,784 Irish acres.

The Craigs seem to have been a bad lot. They never built a house here—in fact they very seldom visited Ireland—and by 1734 they were bankrupt. Craigstown was put up for sale to pay their debts and was bought by one Richard Morgan, a prosperous Dublin merchant of Welsh extraction, for £5,626 8s.4d. His only daughter, Mary (a handsome woman whose portrait hangs at Killegar), married into the Godley family, her husband being the Rev Dr William Godley, whose father, also a merchant, became a Dublin sheriff. William was a landless clergyman, the rector of Mullabrack in County Armagh.

It was unlikely that Killegar would pass to the Godley family because Morgan left it to his elder son, Richard junior, whose portrait also hangs at Killegar, and he expected that it would stay in Morgan hands. However, Richard junior, though twice married, had only one child, Helen, who died in her early teens. Meantime his only brother William,



Map of Killegar



'Old John' Godley (1775-1863)



Catherine Daly (1786-1866)

a pupil and disciple of John Wesley and one of the very first Methodists, had died tragically in Dublin when he was 20. So the Morgan family died out completely on Richard's death in 1784.

It appeared that Craigstown would then pass at once to John Godley, eldest son of Mary Morgan and her father's 'right heir' but there were many legal complications. Twenty six years of litigation followed between the Godleys and the trustees of Morgan's estate before the Godleys finally established their claim.

John Godley had died in the meantime and his younger son, another John, who was a Dubliner training to be a lawyer, inherited the property. He promptly decided to make the move to faraway, backward Leitrim, build a Big House at Killegar and spend the rest of his life there.

The building and remodelling of Killegar House, from a structure that had been built in 1750s, took about four years. It was completed in 1813 but it is not certain if this makes it Georgian or Regency as the Regency began in 1812. However, the plans must have been drawn up when George III was still reasonably sane, which perhaps made it Georgian. In any case, architectural styles would have been a few years late arriving in Leitrim and it has more the appearance of a late Georgian building—what was known in those days as a villa.

There is no record of the architect or his name, which probably indicates that he wasn't well known, but it's a handsome building and its facade has remained virtually unchanged in the 200 years since completion.

In 1813, Mary Morgan's grandson John—now known by the family as 'Old John'—married Catherine Daly. Catherine was the daughter of Denis Daly and Lady Henrietta Maxwell, only daughter of Robert, Earl of Farnham. Daly was a leading statesman in the Irish Parliament and MP for Galway for many years. His contemporary, Henry Grattan, described him as 'one of the best and brightest characters that Ireland ever produced.' After John and Catherine married they settled at Killegar and went on to raise a large family.

Romantic legend has it that Old John built the house for the woman he loved and, while the house was being built, he started planting trees on his property. Till then there had been no trees in the region beyond the sallies and alders that grew naturally along the lough shores and river banks. He started off with oaks, many of which are still standing, and went on to plant all the main hardwoods as well as a few Scots pines and silver firs over the next half-century—a total of 80 acres. Old John was also responsible for the building of the church,



Church of Ireland, Killegar. 3rd Lord Kilbracken's headstone is in the foreground



Terrace overlooking the House Lake c.1904



Archibald Godley (1828-1907)

school and school-teacher's house at Killegar, together with the two gate-lodges and about a dozen other cottages in the demense.

The location of Killegar is what makes it special. It is built on a drumlin, facing south-east across the rolling Leitrim countryside, now well-wooded, with its two loughs Donaweale (also known as the 'Glasshouse Lake') and Kilnemar (known as the 'House Lake'). Donaweale is the mearn between two counties—indeed between two provinces: its far shore is in County Cavan and formed the western extremity of the Farnham estate till sold to the Forest Service in the 1920s. Beyond Donaweale there is a mountain—the purple peak of Slieve Glagh which is the crowning feature of the view from the house.



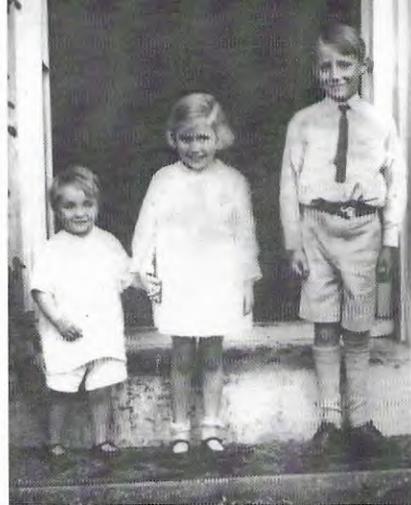
Anna Godley (1865-1955)

Old John lived to the age of 88, dying in 1863 and was buried in his own churchyard at the gates to the entrance of Killegar. By then his eldest son, John Robert—the founder of Christchurch, New Zealand in 1850, was already dead and his son, Arthur—was still a schoolboy. Old John therefore provided that his own youngest son, Archibald, would have a 20-year lease of the house and the home farm, paying the rent to his young nephew. This lease was to be extended to cover the rest of Uncle Archie's life and then passed to his only child, Anna, known by the family as Cousin Anna.

Over this period, the successive Irish Land Acts came into force, which would make it progressively easier for tenants to buy the land they farmed. They were strenuously resisted by almost all landlords and Arthur was perhaps the only one to take a precisely opposite position and encouraged his tenants to purchase. He was a Gladstonian Liberal and had indeed been private secretary to Gladstone, the premier mainly responsible for the Land Acts.

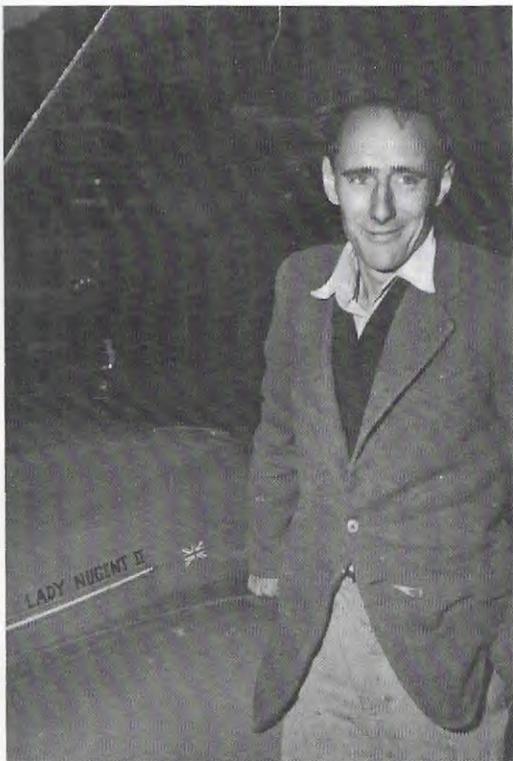
The whole estate had always been tenanted apart from the home farm—the two townlands still owned by the Godley family today. So it happened, before the end of the 19th century, that they were the only lands remaining in Godley hands. As a result of Archie's tenancy, Arthur's son, Hugh, spent the first half of his life entirely in England, where he married Helen Monteith Hamilton. Their three children, John, Katharine and Wynne were all born in England and went to school there. It was in 1927 that Hugh took his family to see for the first time the wild and beautiful Irish property that his father had already made over to him. They all immediately fell in love with it. Killegar was, and has always remained, a paradise for children and the late Lord Kilbracken vividly and fondly remembered this first experience of Ireland.

Tenant at cottage doorway



Wynne, Katharine & John by the saloon doorway on the terrace





John Godley with 'Lady Nugent II' the Morris Oxford he named after the ship his great-grandfather sailed in to Lyttelton in 1850

Over the next sixteen years (1927-1943) the family spent holidays at Killegar more and more frequently. During this time, the venerable Cousin Anna (still remembered locally as 'Miss Godley') was always in command, as a now non-paying tenant. In 1943 the 2nd Lord Kilbracken reached retirement age and came to an agreement with Cousin Anna under which he moved into the Big House and she moved to a smaller one on the estate.

His fortunes did not flourish and he was forced by circumstances to put Killegar on the market. His intention was to transfer to a flat in London and live out his life there. At the time of his death, 16 October 1950, two identical offers had been made for the house and its 420 acres: just £8000. The new Lord Kilbracken, who was in Western Australia when his father died, inherited the Irish property but not a penny in hard cash. The estate was losing thousands and, having only his earnings as a young journalist, keeping it did not seem possible. He gave instructions from Perth that the sale should go ahead.

When his father died, the 30 year-old, 3rd Lord Kilbracken was making the journey to New Zealand on his way to celebrations for the centenary of the founding of Christchurch by his great grandfather, John Robert Godley. He travelled overland as far as possible and had already covered some 12,000 miles between Calais and Calcutta. As he drove

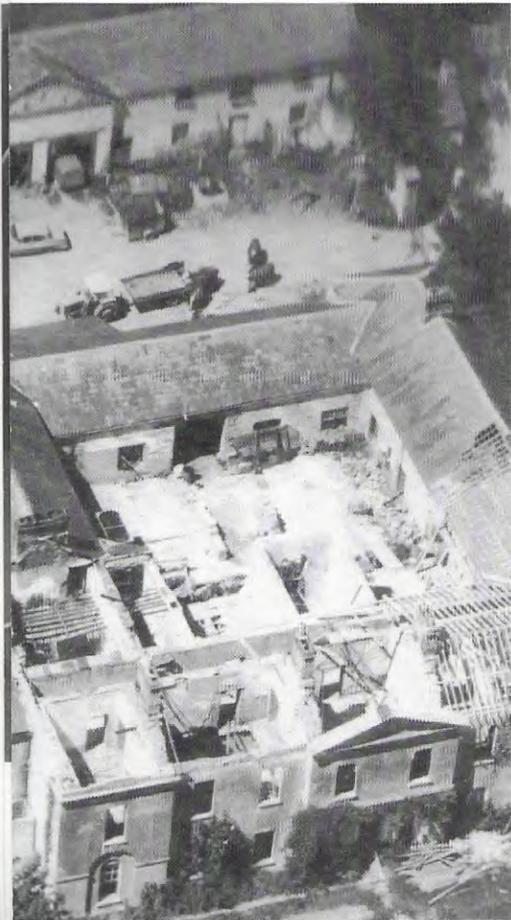
across the deserts of Australia from Perth to Sydney in his 1950 Morris Oxford, he arrived at an ever stronger conviction that somehow or other he might be able to retain possession and, when he reached Sydney, countermanded his instructions and removed the property from the market—a decision that would utterly change his life. So, when he returned in April 1951, it was as sole owner of Killegar.

The vicissitudes have been many since then. It is hard to realise that in those days such a property was a considerable liability and to maintain it from earnings as an author and journalist presented horrendous problems. Again and again he thought Killegar's days as his family home were numbered.

The greatest crisis in the tangled history of Killegar House was still to come with the disastrous fire that was to burn its heart out in May 1970. No-one knows how it started. Lord Kilbracken was woken at two in the morning by the noise of beams falling and flames already in his bedroom. There was never any suggestion that it was malicious. There was no electricity then and it can only be supposed it was caused by a faulty gas-heater or tilly-lamp left burning in his study—where the fire started—when he went to bed in the room next door. Fortunately, the house itself (but not its contents) was fully insured and he now faced



Woman standing in front of Reuben's Rose outside the dining room with Cousin Anna's dogs, Dinah and Puck. c. 1900



another big decision: whether to rehabilitate the existing building, build a new house nearby, or clear out of Leitrim altogether. He never regretted the choice he made and spent the next three years overseeing the reconstruction.

This was all done by local workmen under the leadership of Jack Mahon, with guidance from Austin Dunphy, the distinguished Dublin architect, whenever it was needed. He made quite a few internal changes, which had the effect of reducing the size of the house but the facade remains unchanged. Despite the insurance, the money ran out before the work was completed. Over the intervening years, more and more of the renovation has been carried out and continues but the servants quarters, which Lord Kilbracken decided were no longer needed, were never renovated.

Among family pictures are the 18th century portraits of the heiress, Mary Morgan, and her brother Richard. There is also a *maquette* of the statue of John Robert Godley that stands in Cathedral Square, Christchurch. The statue was knocked down and broken during the disastrous earthquake in March 2011. When workmen came to clear it away they discovered a time capsule hidden in the plinth with a message from the founding fathers to the people of Christchurch.

Mayor, Bob Parker, said the discovery was 'remarkable' and described it as 'like winning the lottery'. Parker said he hoped to 'discover and understand the words and visions of our forebears' from the documents in the capsules. There are plans for the statue to be rebuilt.

Of particular interest in the house is the pre-Celtic saddle-quern, which was raised by a garda frogman from the site of the crannog in the House Lake. These pre-Celtic people made flour by grinding their grain with a two handled tool, much like a rolling pin, along the roughened surface of the quern. Its presence proves that Killegar was inhabited before the arrival of the Celts and that people were growing grain then.

Thus we return in the end to the beginning, from the people who were living here and enjoying Killegar over 3,000 years ago to the people who visit here today.

Adapted from 'The Story of Killegar' by Lord Kilbracken, first published 1990



*Above: Maquette of statue of
John Robert Godley
Inset: Saddle-quern*

OBITUARY LORD KILBRACKEN

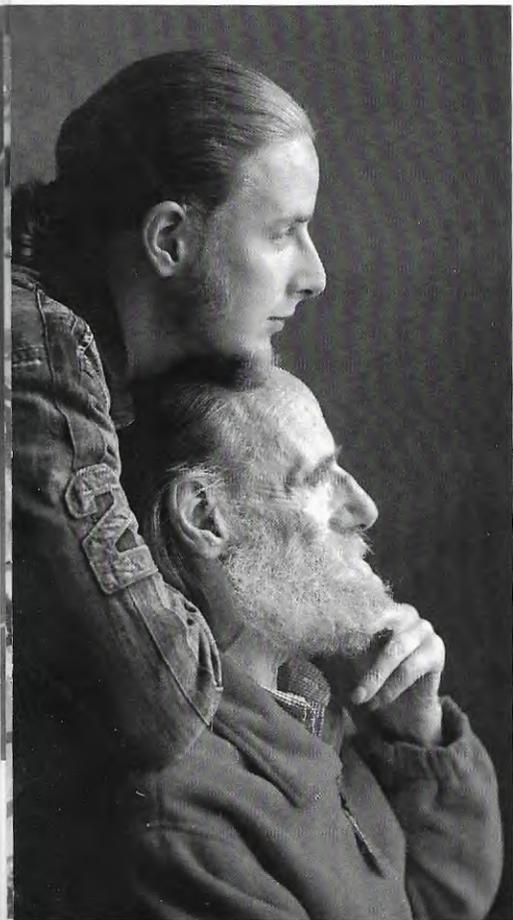
London Times 15 August 2006

THE 3RD LORD KILBRACKEN, who died yesterday aged 85, hit the headlines in 1957 when he succeeded in gatecrashing the Great Red Square parade in Moscow on the 40th anniversary of the October uprising, wearing a pink Leander tie and with his trousers turned inside out.

During the war Kilbracken had served in the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm as a Swordfish pilot, and had gone on to win a DSC in 1945 while commanding a Wildcat squadron. In 1972, however, he returned his medal and announced that he was renouncing British citizenship in protest at the shooting of 13 demonstrators during the so-called Bloody Sunday massacres in Londonderry.

John Raymond Godley was born in Chester Street, Belgravia, on 17 October 1920; he was the son of Hugh Godley, later the 2nd Lord Kilbracken, who would become counsel to the Lord Chairman of Committees of the House of Lords. The peerage had been created in 1909 for his grandfather, Arthur Godley, Gladstone's private secretary and later an Under-Secretary of State for India.

The Godleys originally hailed from Yorkshire, but had moved to Ireland in the 18th century after inheriting an estate in County Leitrim, where an ancestor of John Godley's built Killegar, a fine Georgian house in the classical tradition. John, however, spent his early childhood in England and did not visit Ireland until he was six. At Eton he distinguished himself by rowing in the first VIII, taking flying lessons and setting himself up as the school bookie, thus inaugurating a life-long love of gambling of all kinds. The position earned him a certain amount of kudos with his peers but was not appreciated by the beaks—or by his parents, who cut off funds for his flying lessons as a punishment.



Lord Kilbracken with younger son Seán

He decided that the only way out of ignominy and poverty was to win the school's *Hervey Verse* prize, which came with a handsome cheque for £16. He duly did so with a poem about a storm which he described as 'a masterpiece of 116 lines and a high moral tone'. The prize was presented to him by the same master who had given him a thrashing for his bookmaking activities, though John Godley knew from 'a certain look in his eye' that the crime had not been forgotten.

He had already made up his mind that he wanted to be a writer, possibly a poet, though his father disapproved, suggesting that if he really wanted to be a Milton, he would be better off as a 'mute, inglorious' one. Nonetheless, after going up to Balliol College, Oxford, he published a small volume of verse, *Even for an Hour*, and wrote for *Isis* and the *Oxford Magazine*.

War interrupted his studies but when the conflict ended he returned to Balliol courtesy of the ex-servicemen's grant scheme and rowed bow in the University's second boat, *Isis*.

He had continued to take flying lessons at school, saving the money for them and defying his parents' ban. When war broke out, he joined the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm and for the first two years flew at every opportunity, 'perfectly convinced of my own immortality, despite a number of exciting prangs, a ditching in the Firth of Forth and quite a bit of tracer'.

In 1943-44 he served on convoy escort duty on merchant aircraft carriers in the North Atlantic, flying single-engined Fairey Swordfish biplanes, machines which 'seemed to have been left in the war by mistake' and were affectionately known as 'Stringbags'. On one sortie his engine failed completely and he had to ditch into the freezing waters of the Atlantic. All bar one of the aircraft's dinghies failed to inflate and, after several hours in the freezing water, he and his crew were rescued in the nick of time by a Canadian fishing vessel.



Sub Lieutenant John Godley, RNVR, c. 1940



John Robert Godley (1814-1861)



*Hugh Godley, 2nd Lord Kilbracken
(1877-1950)*

Later Godley was posted Lieutenant Commander in charge of 835 Squadron (then equipped with Wildcat fighters) on an escort carrier, *Nairana*; the squadron protected some of the last convoys to Russia and also conducted night strikes on enemy shipping off the Norwegian coast. He was awarded his DSC for one of these attacks, on the night of 29 January 1945.

By this time he had begun to have serious doubts about his immortality. Just before VJ day a fault developed in the hydraulic system of his Fairey Barracuda and he found himself being liberally sprayed with highly anaesthetic hydraulic fluid. Fortunately, he was almost directly over an airfield, and he managed to land the aircraft before passing out. That was the last time he flew as a pilot. Later he would write a vivid memoir of his time with the Fleet Air Arm, *Bring Back my Stringbag: Swordfish Pilot at War 1940-45* (1979).

On coming down from Oxford, Godley joined the *Daily Mirror* and wrote human interest stories. On one assignment he met the daughter of Han van Meegeren, the Dutch painter who made a fortune by forging Vermeers. Later he wrote van Meegeren's biography. After joining the *Sunday Express* in 1949, Godley embarked on an overland trip to New Zealand to join the celebrations marking the centenary of the founding of Christchurch by an ancestor, John Robert Godley. While he was there his father died but, as had been agreed before departure, he stayed on to represent the family. After the celebrations, the new Lord Kilbracken made his way back to England by sea.

His father had not lived on the family estate in Ireland for many years and at the time of his death it was under offer to a man who intended to demolish the house and exploit the land for forestry. Although he knew he could not afford to maintain the house (he had inherited rather less than £1,000 from his father), Kilbracken could not bear to sell and withdrew it from the market in the hope that he could somehow keep it in the family.

The house was damp and dilapidated and the estate neglected, its sole stock consisting

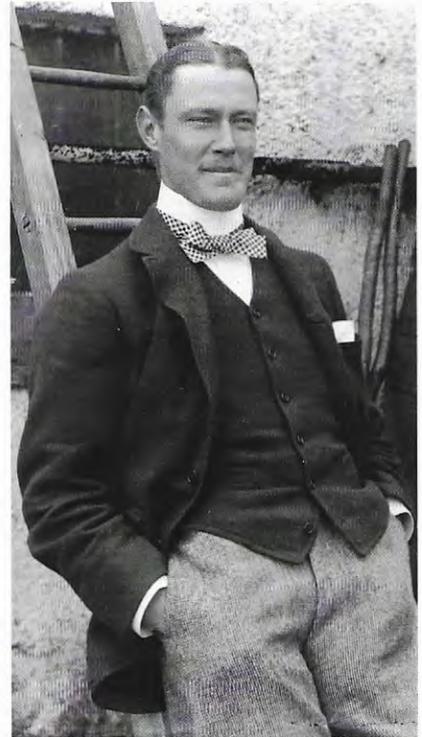
of one aged cow. His best course, he decided, was to divide his time equally between Killegar and the rest of the world, trying to make a go of developing the estate while supporting the endeavour from his earnings as a writer.

He launched himself into a range of unsuccessful enterprises: growing Christmas trees, making cream cheese and selling square yards of Irish bog to Americans for a nickel apiece. He failed to make any money out of this last venture, since the cost of sending a receipt for each nickel was two nickels.

Meanwhile the *Sunday Express* had given Kilbracken the Ephraim Hardcastle column, of which the perquisites included cocktail parties, first nights, free dinners and a large expense account. But a few weeks into the job, while travelling to Fleet Street on his customary bus from Chelsea, he decided on a whim to get off at Victoria Station and board the boat train.

After a few weeks wandering around the Mediterranean, he fetched up in a dirty waterfront hotel at Ajaccio, Corsica, where he became fascinated by the mystery of Rommel's treasure which had supposedly been dumped somewhere in the sea off Bastia. He returned to Corsica after a short spell in America, where he tried to restore his ailing finances by joining the books of a lecture agency. He never did find Rommel's treasure.

Back in Ireland in 1953 Kilbracken met the film director John Huston, who invited him to do a screen test for the part of Ishmael for his forthcoming production of *Moby Dick*. Initially, Huston seemed highly impressed by his performance, so Kilbracken was surprised—and disappointed—to receive a letter a few days later informing him that 'various other factors have finally persuaded me that you were not quite right for this particular part'. Huston was of the opinion that the narrator in the film of the great American novel should have an American accent. His hopes of getting a smaller part in the film, as Pequod sailor number 29 (whose only solo contribution involved walking up the gang



*Alexander 'Alick' Godley (1867–1957)
c.1900, who went on to become Gen
Sir Alexander Godley GCB KCMG,
Commander of the ANZAC forces at
Gallipoli during World War I*



Man (possibly Alick Godley), rowing with Cousin Anna's dog Dinah in the stern, on the Glasshouse Lake, c. 1900



The little girl standing is possibly Margaret Tuite (aged 7 in the 1901 Census). Patrick Tuite was gamekeeper and the family lived in the cottage next to the bridge. c.1900

plank carrying a live pig), also came to nothing. Huston eventually gave him a job as a supplementary script writer, for which he got no screen credit.

One day in 1957 the telephone rang and a suave American voice asked whether Kilbracken would like to spend the next four days in London with the Hollywood film actress Jayne Mansfield, who was there to attend the premiere of her new film *Oh for a Man!* The fee would be 100 guineas—enough to buy him 'a couple of cows'. He knew little about Jayne Mansfield, other than that 'her dimensions were apparently very unusual' and found to his relief that his duties were mainly formal.

During her visit, he received a call from the *Daily Express* inviting him to write on *My Four Days with Jayne Mansfield*, for a fee of 'two more cows'. A few weeks later, hoping to add to his herd, Kilbracken suggested to the editor of the *Express*, Charles Wintour, that he might go to Moscow to cover the 40th anniversary celebrations of the October 1917 revolution.

Travelling on a tourist visa, since it was not possible to gain a visa as a journalist, Kilbracken set himself two goals: to see the Great Red Square Parade and to interview Khrushchev. Unfortunately, though, there were no seats left for the parade and as a 'tourist' it would be impossible to arrange an interview with Khrushchev through official channels. Subterfuge was the only solution.

On the day of the parade Kilbracken rose early and dressed with particular care, hoping to slip out of the hotel and avoid his official minder and then to pass himself off as a member of the Russian proletariat. With his trousers on inside out under his overcoat, wearing a pink Leander tie and a fur hat pulled down over his ears, he launched himself on to the Moscow streets.

By degrees he managed to work his way to the steps of the Moscow Hotel on Red Square,

where he had a front row view of the military parade; later he insinuated himself into the civilian parade, quickening his pace whenever the group he was in started to get suspicious. He sauntered confidently on until he suddenly found himself surrounded by schoolchildren. Seeing a strange pink-tied giant in the ranks of children, one of the teachers accosted him saying, 'You are English' to which he replied indignantly 'No I'm not, I'm from Ireland!' He described this later as a hopelessly bad rejoinder as, at the time, Ireland was far more anti-Communist than England. To his relief, the teacher put his arm around his shoulder saying, 'Ah Ireland! You too in Ireland had your Revolution. We are comrades' and introduced him to his colleague. They were in sight of the Mausoleum when one of the pupils thrust laughingly into his hand the red banner she was carrying. He marched on through the Square, a Peer of the Realm and a capitalistic landowner at the heart of Communism's most esoteric party, with his own red flag fluttering over him.

That evening he received a telegram from Wintour which read: 'Hail Hail Hail Ace Newsman stop Congratulations on wonderful story leading *Daily Express* tonight!' In the Irish edition the story was headlined 'Only Irish Peer in Moscow watches Biggest Military Show'. As Kilbracken wryly observed, he had been the only Peer of any sort in Moscow, or anywhere else behind the Iron Curtain.

Kilbracken achieved his second goal by posing as a photographer and gatecrashing a reception at the Egyptian embassy which Khrushchev was attending. He managed to engage Khrushchev in conversation for nearly half an hour and the crowd around them became so great at one point that they ended up crushed together, belly to belly. With the money from Jayne Mansfield and Moscow, Kilbracken was able to buy several more cows. The best milker he christened Jayne.

Kilbracken had taken his seat in the House of Lords in 1952, but at first rarely attended debates. He joined the Liberal Party in 1960, but in 1966 switched his allegiance to Labour, arguing that he wanted to take 'more positive responsibility' than the Liberals



Mrs Williams in the Killegar Greenhouse, c. 1900.



John Kilbracken with Seán, Lisa & Christopher at Killegar for the celebration of his 80th birthday in October 2000.

Christopher succeeded to the title in 2006 and is now 4th Lord Kilbracken

could provide. As the Troubles erupted in Northern Ireland, he found his loyalties coming under strain. He had long been opposed to partition and, though not himself a Catholic, felt strongly about the discrimination endured by the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland.

In the wave of hysteria that followed the Bloody Sunday shootings in January 1972, Kilbracken announced that he was returning his six war medals in protest, that he was renouncing British citizenship and became a citizen of the Irish Republic. His announcement did not compromise his right to sit in the Upper House, of which he became an increasingly active member. Wildly bearded and vigorous, Kilbracken continued to appear, campaigning for, among other things, the rights of Kurds in Iraq and an end to partition in Ireland.

In 1988, as a member of a parliamentary group investigating Aids, he condemned government claims that people could catch Aids through normal heterosexual relations as 'nonsense' and called its publicity campaign 'alarmist, wasteful and insane'. Kilbracken continued to work as a freelance journalist, and, during the 1980s, wrote a series of guides to identifying plant and animal species. Using a series of questions and answers, a process of elimination leads to the identification of the species. Kilbracken got the idea for the book on a visit to a rebel Kurdish area of northern Iraq, where he had been frustrated by his inability to identify local birds from the index as he did not know their names. His first such guide, *The Easy Way to Bird Recognition* (1982) won the *Times Educational Supplement* book award and sold out at its first printing. Other books in the series included guides to trees and wild flowers.

Lord Kilbracken is survived by his three children, Christopher, Lisa and Seán.

MY RUIN WITH A VIEW

Adapted from Marese McDonagh's article in The Sunday Independent, May 2011

HE WON MEDALS for his bravery as a Second World War pilot, and as a young journalist he once gatecrashed a Red Square party to interview Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev but possibly the greatest challenge for Lord Kilbracken, aka John Godley, 3rd Baron Kilbracken, was Killegar, the family home near Carrigallen, County Leitrim. Even he would have balked last winter when the bathwater in the central-heating-free pile froze over and ice covered the walls, such was the harshness of the season. Britain's Queen Elizabeth II did not include Killegar on the list of stops in May but her state visit has once again triggered debate about the future of Ireland's Big Houses, once former jewels of Anglo Irish aristocracy.

For some they are ruinously expensive monuments to history, destined to crumble and decay. For others they are tourist attractions or precious family legacies which must be saved. Five years after Lord Kilbracken's death aged 85, his second wife Sue and his youngest child Seán are struggling to maintain the house. It is a daunting task and like custodians of heritage houses all over the country they have been racking their brains for ideas about how to generate income to keep their home going.

Ireland's first Mushroom Festival will take place at Killegar in September but it's hard to



Lady Sue, Lord Kilbracken and Seán in the saloon, c.1984

see how a celebration of wild mushrooms will solve their problems. On a sunny May morning, Lady Sue, as some of the locals call her, sat on the terrace overlooking the House Lake (one of three on the estate) and contemplated the title of her planned memoir. 'I think I will call it *A Ruin with a View*,' she joked. Killegar, the magical but crumbling ancestral home of the Godley family, was built in the early 1800s and has been occupied by the family ever since. The hardship of the past two winters caused havoc in a house where portraits and other mementos underline the family connections with such political heavyweights as former British prime ministers William Gladstone and HH Asquith.

The damage done by the prolonged spells of sub-zero temperatures to this and other protected houses unfortunately coincided with savage cutbacks. While windows have continued to rot and roofs to fall in, local authorities got zero funding this year for conservation projects on protected houses.

Just as household bills are causing sleepless nights for people in all walks of life, the Irish Historic Homes Association says some elderly owners of protected gems had to turn off the central heating. Lady Sue has no worries about the oil bill. There is no central heating in Killegar, just a handful of storage heaters and open fires throughout the house. When the temperatures plummeted, causing pipes to burst, she had no water to wash with or flush toilets but she did discover water cascading through the once magnificent drawing room ceiling. 'The winter before last caught us on the hop,' said Lady Sue. 'We had no water for six weeks and we were terribly stranded as it's five miles to the nearest shop.'



Killegar Moonscape

In 2010, after her experience in 2009, Lady Sue took the precaution of filling a bath in 'the pink bathroom' for flushing and washing when the snow started falling—but was horrified when the water froze. 'There was ice on the walls,' explained Australian-born Sue, 'and the outlets in bathroom sinks all froze over too, which meant we couldn't use them.'

As Killegar's two dogs, Mr Darcy and Miss Elizabeth 'Bessie' Bennett, bound over the lawns, the view from the shimmering lake is of a majestic Georgian edifice—it's easy to see why Sue, the young bride, fell in love with the place over 30 years ago.

'John struggled for 56 years to keep Killegar going and every penny he made went into it,' said Lady Sue. 'His life's purpose was to keep it. I asked him "why" once and he said, "because people come here and they just love it". To walk away now would feel like a betrayal.'



Lady Sue, with her dogs, Darcy and Bessie, on the terrace at Killegar

SAVE KILLEGAR CAMPAIGN

THE SAVE KILLEGAR CAMPAIGN was set up by Sue, Lady Kilbracken, in October 2006, shortly after the death of the Lord Kilbracken, in response to concerns in the community that the property might be sold and be lost to them as an amenity and place for recreation. The group was formed because there was recognition for the need to continue Lord Kilbracken's work in preserving Killegar's built and natural heritage and a genuine desire to help.

The *Save Killegar Campaign* exists with the express purpose of conservation, restoration and preservation of Killegar, which is listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage and described there as:

Constructed to a Classical design, Killegar House is a fine country house. The building expresses noteworthy architectural motifs, including a pedimented breakfront, symmetrical fenestration and a Tuscan doorcase. Its split-levelled plan gives the house an unusual character, with its principal elevation now being accessed from the terraced garden. Though damaged by fire and altered during recent decades, the house remains exemplary of early nineteenth-century demesne architecture. Located at the end of a long avenue, which winds through lakeland, Killegar House and its finely-executed, though ruinous, outbuildings are a significant part of County Leitrim's architectural heritage.

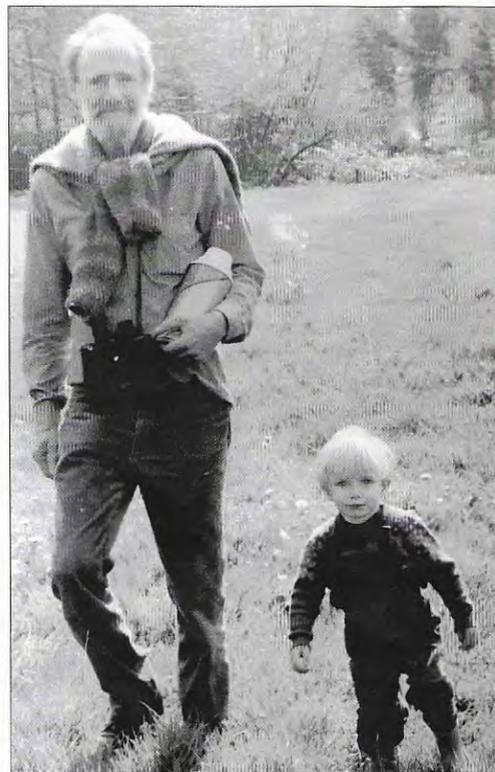
Smaller events organised by the Save Killegar Campaign include the annual attendance



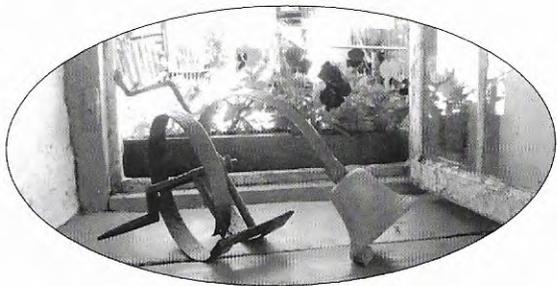
William (standing, aged 10) and Edmund Morrow (seated on the donkey, aged 2) on the terrace c. 1904. Their father, Graham (known as 'Grimes') was the gardener and steward during the 1880s. Edmund eventually became 2nd Lord Kilbracken's chauffeur in the late 1920s. The Morrrows moved to Manchester in 1935 and both brothers died on the same day, 24 June 1960.

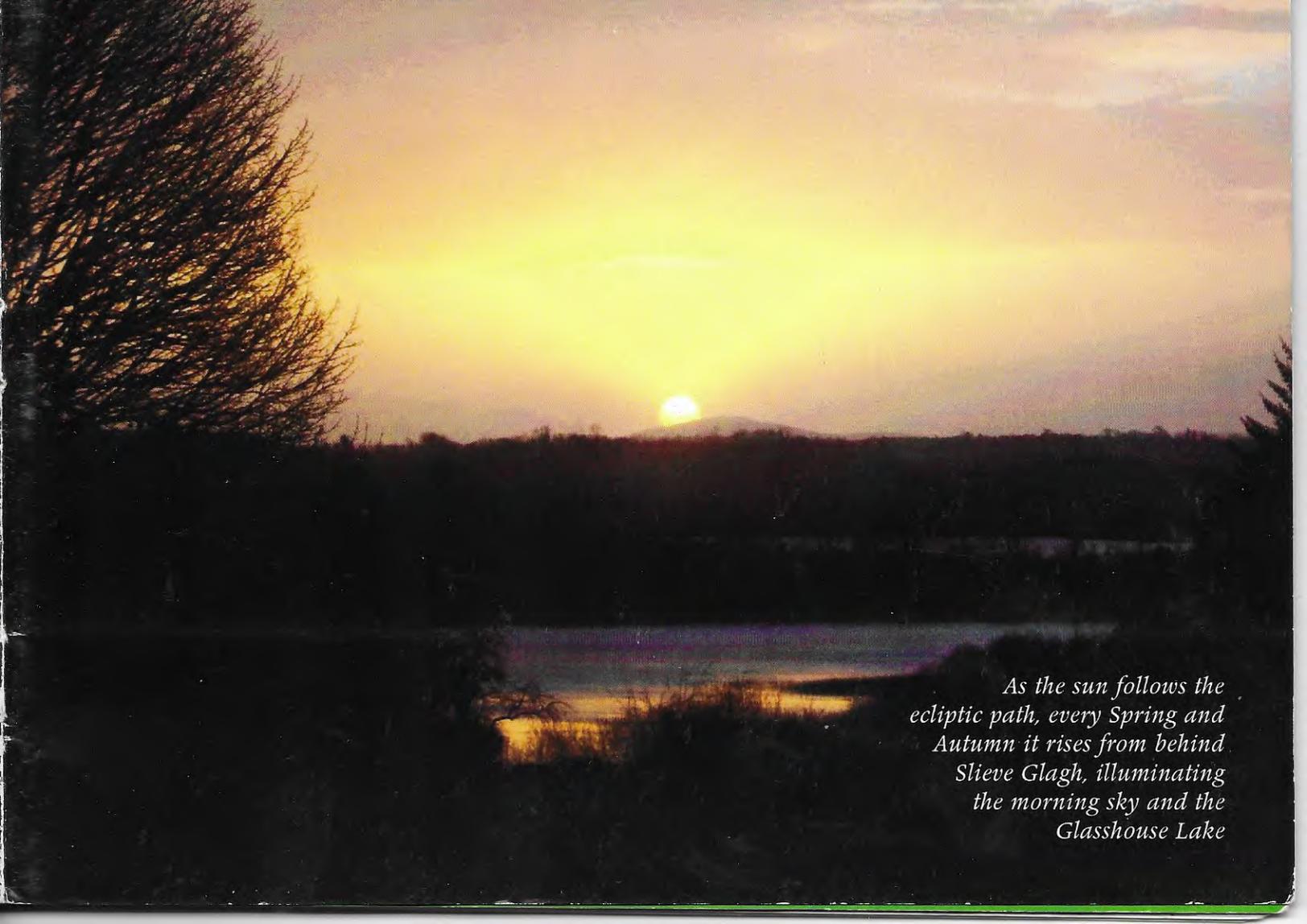
of a local artists' group, visiting womens' groups from both sides of the border, nature walks, talks on history, architecture and archaeology, tours of the house, parties for local children, day outings for the elderly, fishing, birdwatching, dog walking and camping.

If you would like to participate in any of the above, join the *Save Killegar Campaign* or make a donation please contact Sue, Lady Kilbracken at Killegar or visit www.Killegar.net for details.



John and youngest son Seán on the way to the Pottle Woods for a picnic. c. 1984





*As the sun follows the
ecliptic path, every Spring and
Autumn it rises from behind
Slieve Glagh, illuminating
the morning sky and the
Glasshouse Lake*

