

# An Eighteenth Century Map of Ash Hill, Kilmallock

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In the Public Record Office of Ireland, included in a large collection of material from the office of the estate agents of Franks and Carter in Mountrath, is a body of material which relates to the estates of the Coote family of Ballyfin, Co. Laois. Apart from deeds and rentals are a number of associated maps. The accession number of the map under discussion here is 1025/3/10/1/20.

The map is entitled "A SURVEY PLAN & DIVISION of *Ash-hill* for *Chidly Coote* of *Ashill* afores<sup>d</sup> Esq<sup>r</sup>. Containing One hundred & Fortyfour Acres & thirty pch<sup>s</sup> (*Plantation Measure*) *Exclusive of the Lough* Which Contains fifteen Acres & one rood (*Like Measure*) for the Particular whereof see Map & Reference hereunto Annext. As Survey<sup>d</sup> in the years 68, 72 & 74 By Mich: Laffan". "The above Demesne is Situate in the County of Limerick Barony of Coshtlea and Parish of Kilmallock. Mich: Laffan".

On the map the land is divided into twenty-three lots, numbered accordingly and also alphabetically (Fig. 1). Neighbouring estates are marked—'Captain Webb's Land' to the West and 'Mr. Grant's Estate' to the North-West. The roads are signified—'Old Road from the West' in the South-West, 'Turn Pike Road' in the South-East, 'Road' in the North-East, and the eastern edge of the estate which is delimited by the 'Town Wall'.

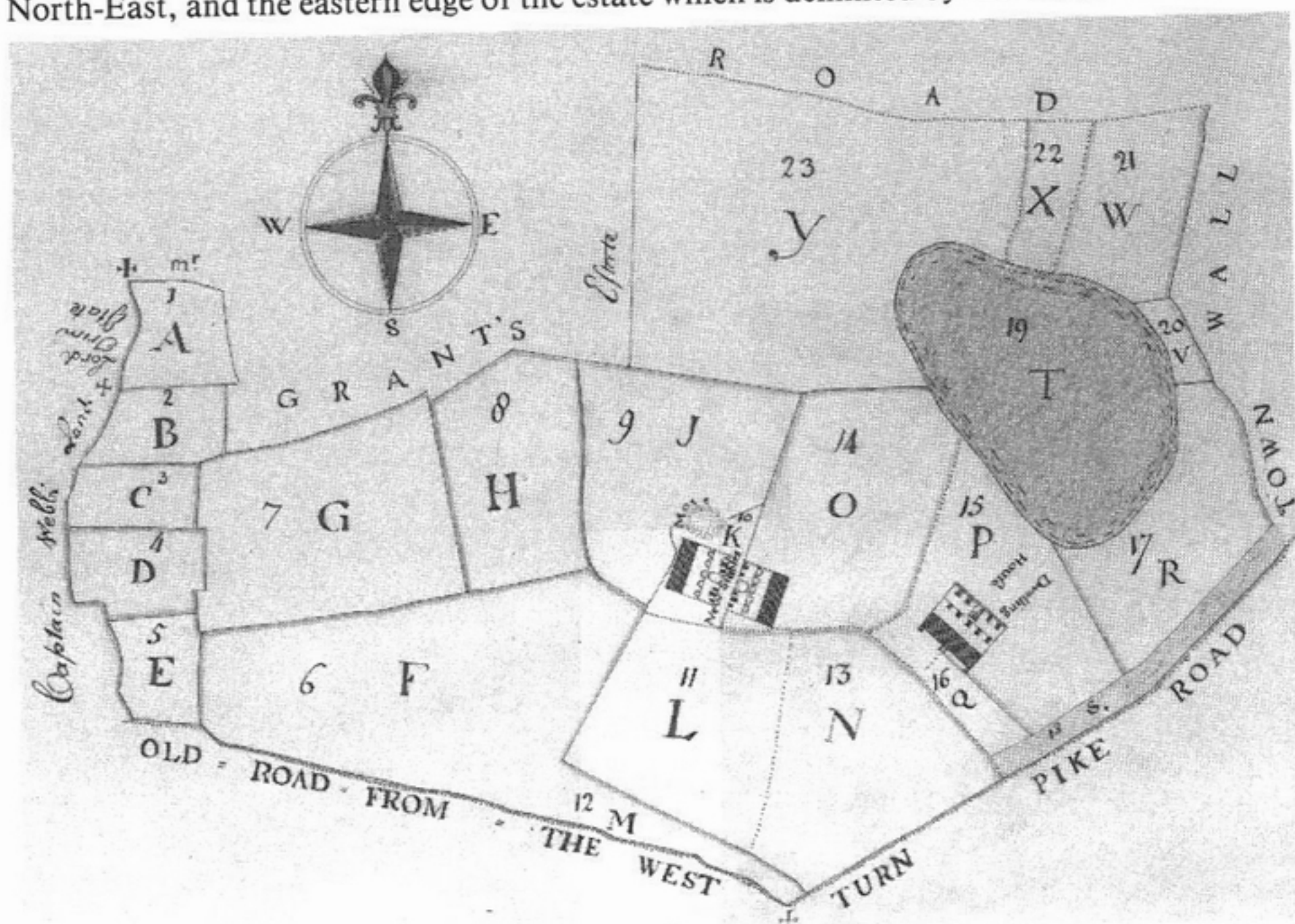


Fig. 1. Tracing of late 18th century estate map of Ash Hill, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick.



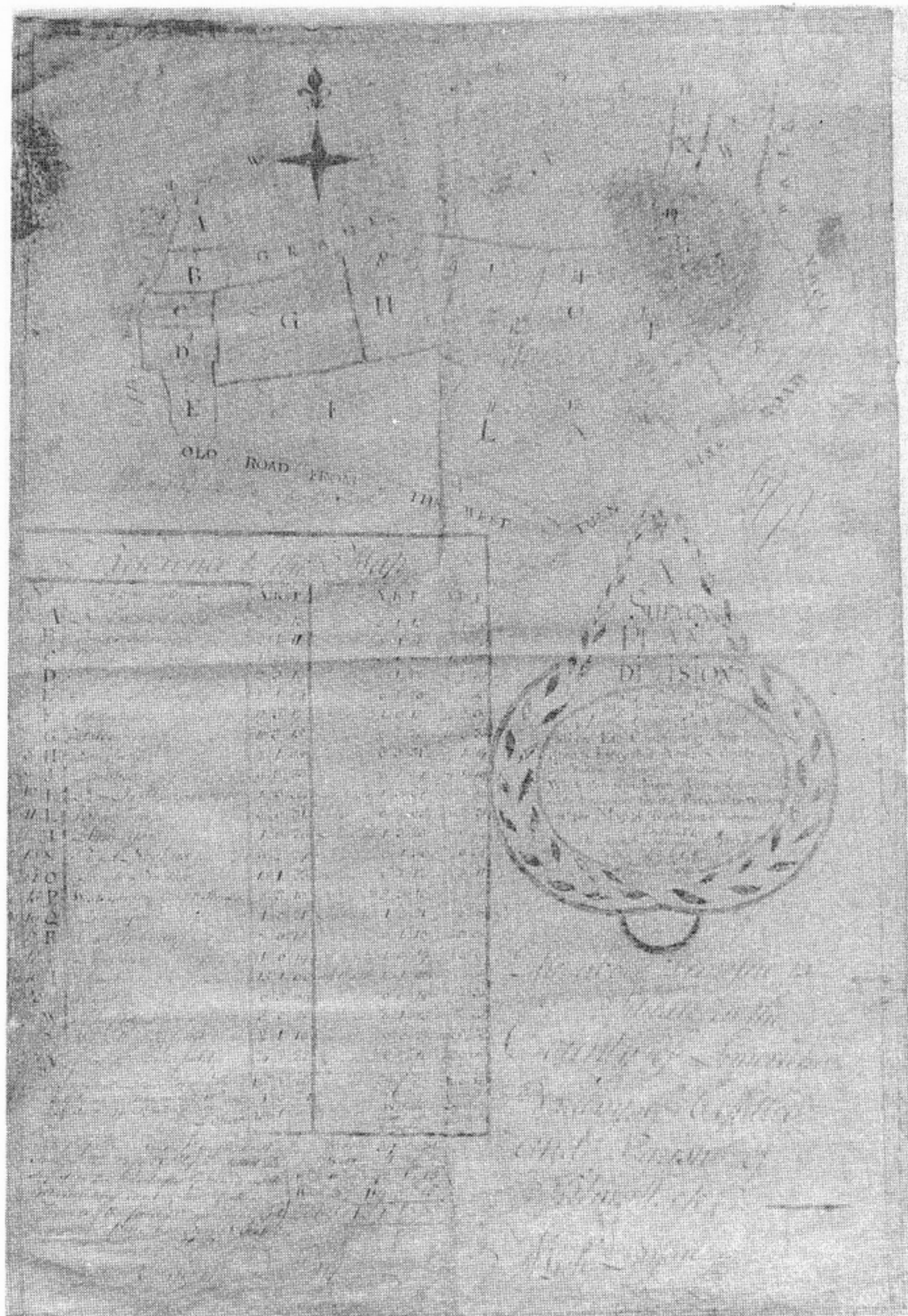


Fig. 2. Late 18th century estate map of Ash Hill Demesne, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick.  
(Photo: P.R.O. Ireland) [References to places on map on facing page.]



On the estate is marked a 'Mote' (depicted as a circular structure) with beside it 'New Stables' laid out on two sides of a yard. The 'Dwelling House' is shown as a two storied, three-chimneyed structure (Fig. 3,a). Lough Nockus takes up a large portion of the eastern part of the Demesne.

The uses of many divisions are given: Potatoe field, Furz field, Stubbles, Bryar field, Twig-Yard (both adjacent to the stables), Firr-Grove (adjoining the house), and the Shrubbery which shelters the house from Turn Pike Road. A kiln field runs down to the lough. The house and garden are shown in the field called West Garriduff, the adjacent field being East Garriduff. Both fields run down to the lough. The total area of land is 159.1.30 A.R.P. (Acres, Roods, Perches) of which 40.1.15 A.R.P. is termed waste land. This includes the stables, mote, twig-yard, West Garriduff garden and house, fir grove, shrubbery and the lough (Fig. 2 and References).

The map is coloured red, yellow and green, and is 'Plotted by a 20 pche Plant<sup>n</sup>. Scale'. The four cardinal points are marked. The map is of parchment and measures 58½ cm. long by 40 cm. wide.

A map of Kilmallock, published by Andrews in this *Journal*,<sup>1</sup> and dating to about 1598 shows the outline of the sixteenth century town of Kilmallock preserved in the Coote map of nearly two hundred years later. The 1598 map shows the position of the southern town wall, the lough and two highways; by Laffan's time this southern wall has become a boundary for the Coote estate. So also the highways to 'Malo' on the South-East and to 'Limericke' on the South-West had become the eastern and western boundaries of the Coote estate enclosing the lough. The 1598 map does not give a name to the lough; neither does Laffan, but the presence of two divisions close to the lough called Lough Nockus and Road Nockus may be an indication of its name. The depth of the lough is attested by the presence of boats on it. Though no town gates are shown on Laffan's map, his Turn Pike Road is the road which runs to Blossoms Gate.

The Civil Survey of 1654 shows the name of the Lough to be Monaghmore; the Down Survey shows Chidley Coote's share of the lands of the liberties of Kilmallock to have been over 675 acres of which, according to Laffan, 159 acres formed Ash-Hill Demesne.

Maurice Craig and the Knight of Glin state that Ash Hill Towers, as we now know it, was built in 1781.<sup>2</sup> In fact, Mark Bence-Jones<sup>3</sup> indicates that the original owner was Evans and that in the late nineteenth century it was owned by John Henry Weldon, and is now

<sup>1</sup>J. H. Andrews, "An Elizabethan Map of Kilmallock" in *Nth. Munster Antiq. J.*, 11 (1968), 27-35.

<sup>2</sup>Maurice Craig and the Knight of Glin, *Ireland Observed, a Guide to the Antiquities of Ireland*, Cork 1970, pp. 11-12.

<sup>3</sup>Mark Bence-Jones, *Burke's Guide to Country Houses, Vol. 1: Ireland*, London 1978, p. 13.

### References to the Map

No.	Denominations	No.	Denominations	No.	Denominations
1 A	North West Bleansigh	9 J	Stables	17 R	East Garriduff
2 B	Pond Bleansigh	10 K	New Stables, yard, mote etc.	18 S	Shrubbery
3 C	Middle Bleansigh	11 L	Bryarfield	19 T	Lough
4 D	Brick Bleansigh	12 M	Twig-yard	20 V	Croghta
5 E	Southwest Bleansigh	13 N	Road Nockus	21 W	Kiln-field
6 F	Gortdroma	14 O	Lough Nockus	22 X	Wm Heany's field
7 G	Potatoefield	15 P	West Garriduff Gardn & House	23 Y	John Cushin's field
8 H	Furzfield	16 Q	Firr-Grove		

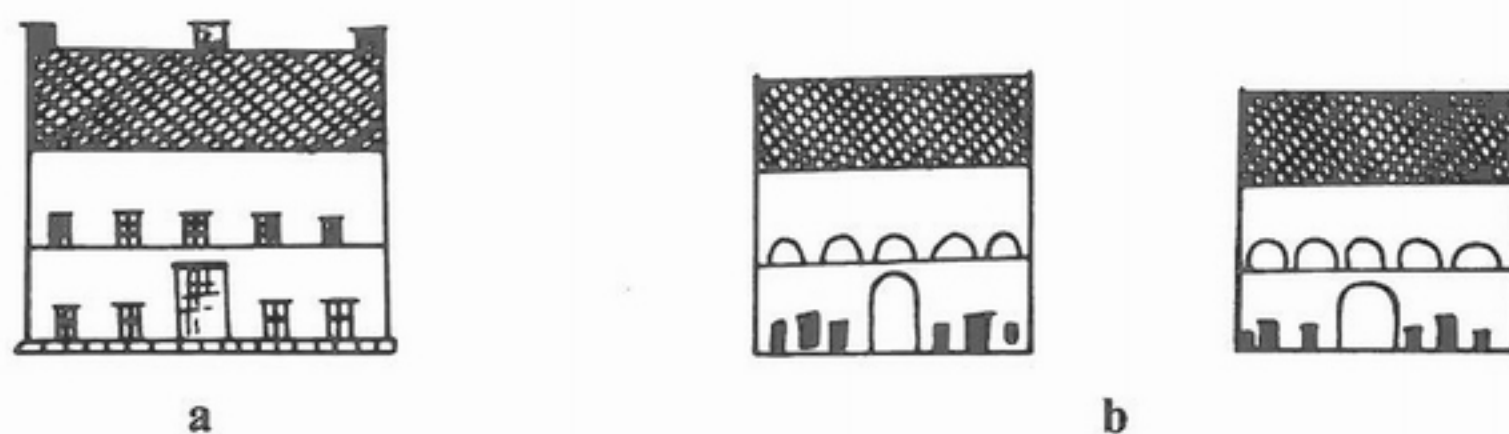


Fig. 3. a. 'Dwelling House'; b. 'New Stables'—as drawn on estate map, Ash Hill, Co. Limerick.

owned by Major Stephen Johnson; there is no mention whatsoever of Chidley Coote. This map, therefore, appears to be the only record of the original estate, related buildings and owner, in the decade before the Evans' ownership and the present house of 1781 (some of which was altered in 1833). This new house of 1781 is sited on Coote's 'New Stables' (Fig. 3, b), all trace of which has disappeared. The original Coote house must have been destroyed or left to fall into disrepair.

The first edition of the Ordnance Survey 6-inch scale map, sheet 47 for County Limerick (1840), shows no trace of the motte which must have, by then, disappeared among the trees surrounding the new house. The town wall, however, is still marked and, most surprisingly of all, the fields and their boundaries do not appear to have changed since Laffan's map. The lough has been named Ash Hill Lough. An entrance to the estate has been opened up from the Turn Pike Road (the original Highway to Malo) which leads past Coote's original house to the new house; to the right of the new driveway is a square foundations marked *Site of Castle Coote*, which is clearly the remnants of Chidley Coote's 18th century house.

The letter book for County Limerick, Volume 1, compiled by John O'Donovan, contains detailed descriptions of Kilmallock but no mention is made of Castle Coote or of a motte. The letters are dated 12 August 1840.

The Ordnance Survey 6-inch scale map for County Limerick, sheet 47 (1923), again shows no trace of the motte; near the site of Castle Coote the remains of a circular bank are depicted. The lake has been drained and the estate appears to be subject to flooding as is seen by the use of the term *water* around the site of Castle Coote.<sup>4</sup> Ash Hill Towers has been expanded and though other buildings have encroached on the estate the layout of the fields is still largely that of Laffan's map.

The 1923 Ordnance Survey Map also shows a Cromlech marked in the Ash Hill demesne; it lies in Laffan's division W and is not shown on the 1840 Ordnance Survey Map. P. J. Lynch writing in the *Journal of the Limerick Field Club*, Vol. II, no. 8 (1904), on "Cromlechs in County Limerick" speaks of a Cromlech behind the Roman Catholic Church (p. 284, ill. facing p. 282) which contains only three stones, all of limestone and which is not marked on the 1840 Ordnance Survey Map. Though the Ash Hill Cromlech is not too close to the Catholic Church it may well be the one Lynch was referring to. It is debatable whether these three stones, in fact, constitute a megalithic tomb as no megalithic tomb is listed in the Kilmallock area in the *Survey of Megalithic*

<sup>4</sup>J. H. Andrews, *op. cit.*, p. 31.



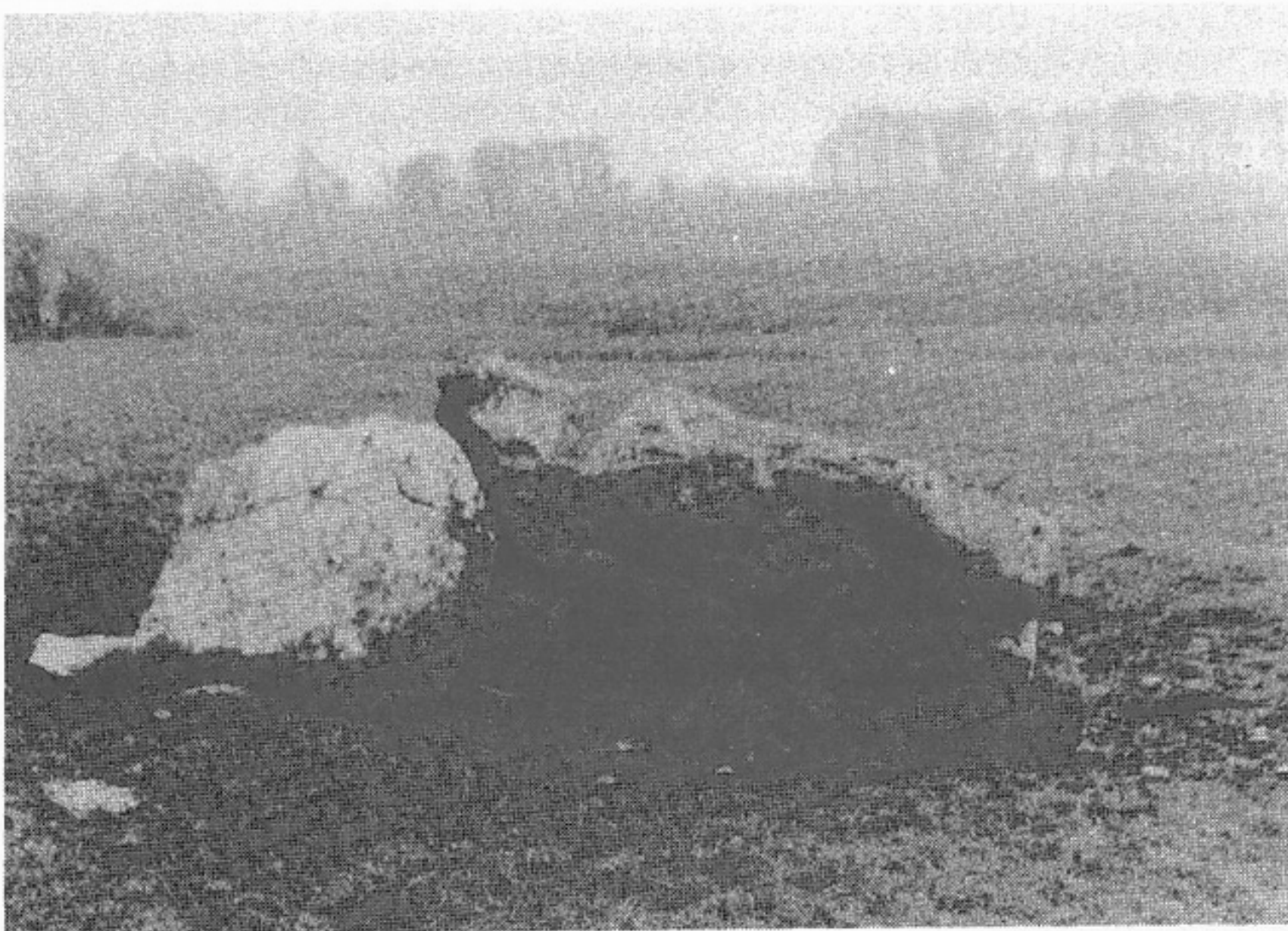


Fig. 4. 'Cromlech', Ash Hill Demesne, viewed from North; Chidley Coote's house would have been in the central group of trees. (*Photo: J. D. Leonard*)



Fig. 5. 'Cromlech', Ash Hill Demesne, viewed from South. (*Photo: J. D. Leonard*)

*Tombs of Ireland*, Volume IV, Dublin 1982, by de Valera and Ó Nuallain. Laffan calls Division W a Kiln-Field. The three stones recorded by Lynch are still *in situ* (Figs. 4 & 5) but appear to be naturally so sited and could not reasonably be interpreted as even the last vestiges of a lime kiln.

Included among this Coote material in the Public Records Office are three leases which attest to the presence of Chidley Coote at Ash Hill. The first is dated 1779 and is of land in Limerick to the Rev. Edward Ledwich, D.R., Dean of Kildare, and the Incorporated Society in Dublin for Promoting English Protestant Schools in Ireland. The second is also dated 1779 and is of premises at Kilmallock (a survey of which is attached to the lease) to Edward Croker, Riverstown, Co. Limerick. The third is dated 1787 and is of land in Co. Cork. A fourth lease is dated 1794 by which time Chidley Coote is recorded as residing in Bath and leasing land near Kilmallock to Philip Bourke of Gibbinstown, Co. Limerick. The land in question is of Cloonstephen which has not been identified.<sup>5</sup>

### Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of John Bradley and Ragnall Ó Floinn, and of Edward Bourke, who prepared the tracing of the original map; thanks are also due to the Hon. Editor, Professor Etienne Rynne, for useful information and references, and to the Hon. Secretary, Revd. John D. Leonard, for checking out the supposed 'Cromlech' and for the photographs used in Figs. 4 and 5.

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<sup>5</sup>P.R.O.I. references 1025/3/10/1/21;22;30;31.