

Baron's head rules heart in decision to sell



Glenamara, Stradbally, Co Waterford: €785,000 for five-bedroom, early 19th century house on one acre in centre of village. Right: it is being sold by Gerald Spring Rice, 6th Baron Monteagle of Brandon. Photograph: *Country Life*

Michael Parsons meets Lord and Lady Monteagle of Brandon who are selling their Co Waterford home

LADY ANNE was engrossed in quite "the most fantastic tennis match" beaming in from Wimbledon so his lordship had to deal with the "gentleman" from *The Irish Times*. (Alas, dear reader, the noble lord normally takes the *Daily Telegraph* which is rather more useful if you need to "keep an eye on who's popping off" in aristocratic circles.)

The lights may, finally, be going out in the twilight world of the Anglo-Irish but there's a drop of blue blood still coursing through the old wolfhound.

Gerald Spring Rice, the 6th Baron Monteagle of Brandon, is reluctantly leaving Ireland - "our heart says we love it here; our head says we must" move back to England to be "closer to family".

For over eight decades he has been criss-crossing the Irish Sea (often by mailboat) and the family has been gradually downsizing through a succession of Munster properties. His childhood was spent at Limerick's Mount

Trenchard estate followed by an idyllic spell on Valentia Island off the Kerry coast.

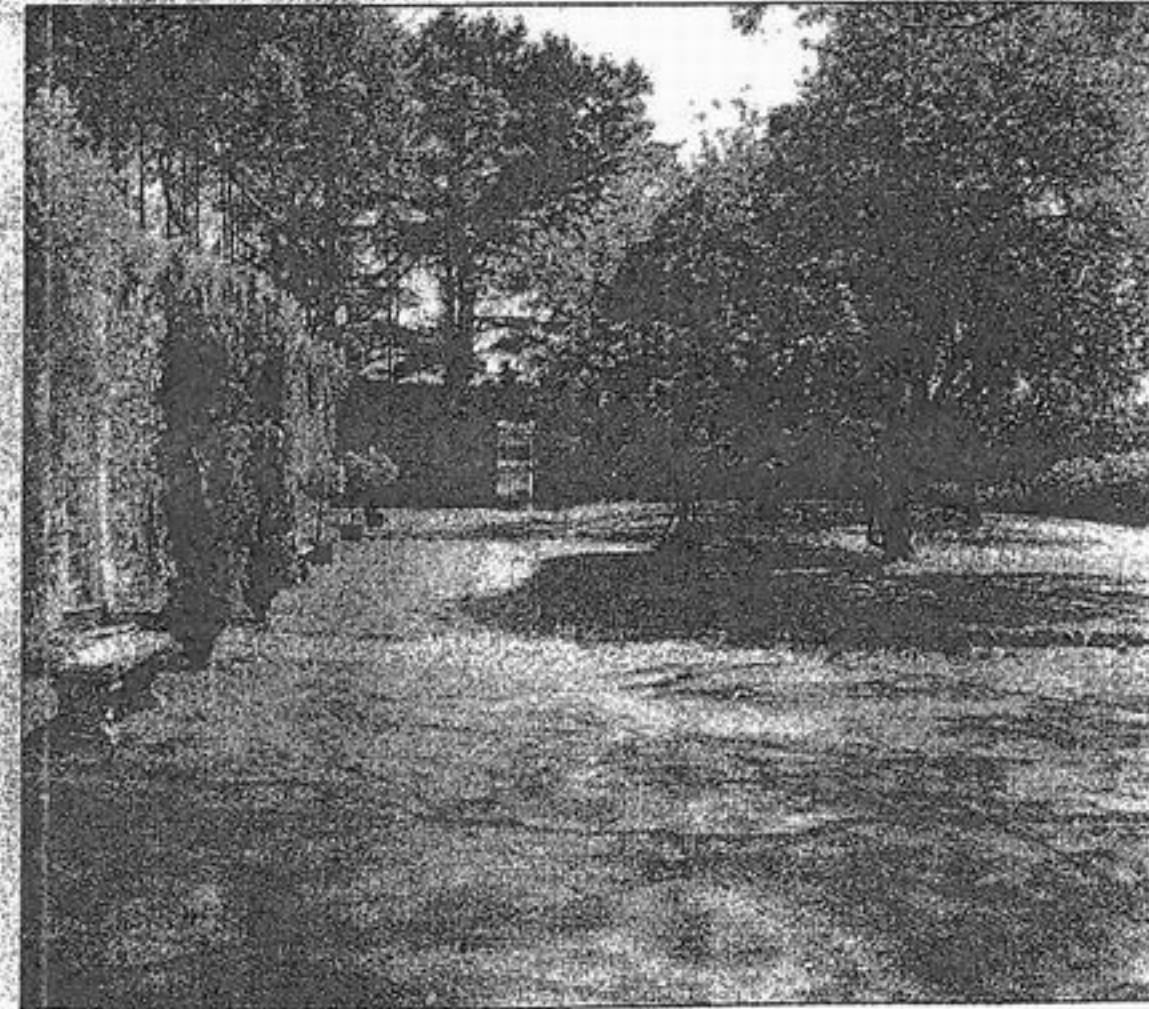
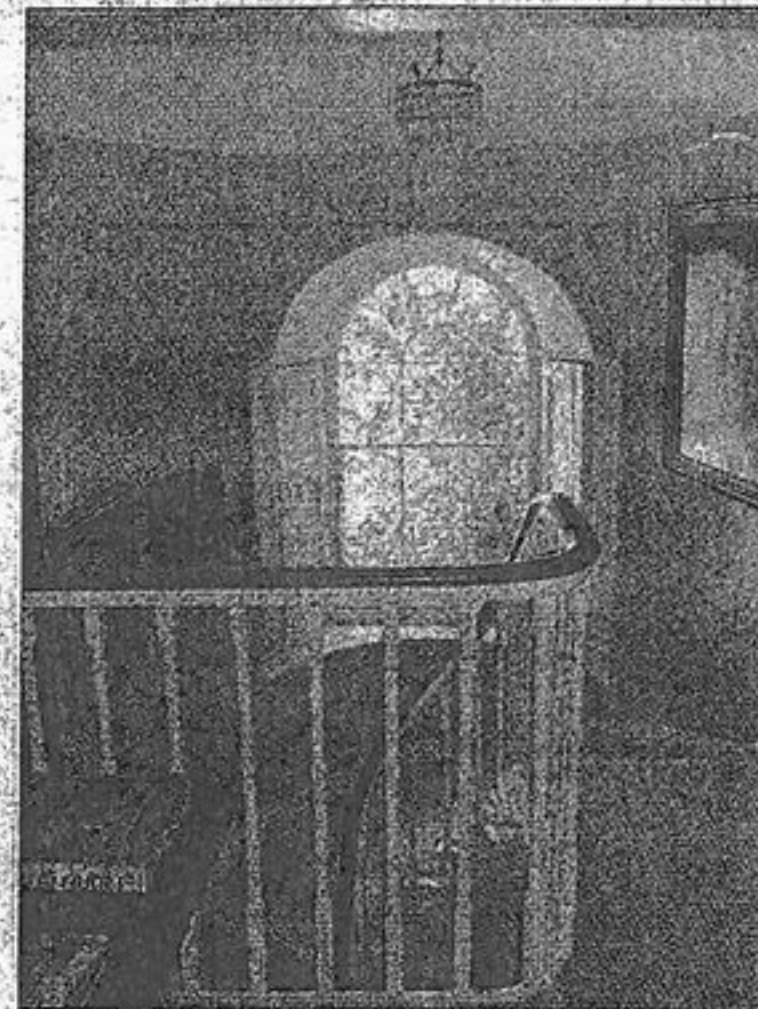
"Great, great, grandfather," an MP for Limerick city and chancellor of the exchequer (who'd "turn in his grave if he saw what the bloody lot were doing today"), was granted the title by Queen Victoria in 1839.

The incumbent lost his seat in the House of Lords when hereditary peers were "kicked out" by Tony Blair and, though he retains the right to sit on the steps of the throne to listen to proceedings, finds that "they're rather uncomfortable". Incidentally, the "Brandon" in his title, he explains, refers to the Kerry mountain and not the "frightfully dreary town in Suffolk".

Lord Monteagle of Brandon's life has followed a time-honoured path: an education at Harrow School (alumni include Byron, Baldwin, Churchill, King Hussein and Nehru) and an 11-year stint in the Irish Guards.

For younger readers that means serving with the British Army's poshest regiment (affectionately known as "the Micks") and not a career as a Garda sergeant in a damp barracks in Templemore.

Then it was into the City of London and a career in the stock market but he also served, for 18 years, as a member of "Her Majesty's Body Guard of the Corps of Gentlemen at Arms" - an



elite, splendidly-uniformed group with 31 members who carry battleaxes, wear helmets with swan feather plumes and provide ceremonial duties at royal occasions, such as the state opening of parliament and Buckingham Palace garden parties.

But the siren of Ireland was always calling and he returned in 1980, first to Co Cork and then, for the past eight

years, to Stradbally in Co Waterford. Now Glenamara House is for sale by private treaty, with an asking price of €785,000, through joint agents Michael H Daniels & Co of Mallow and Shelley & Purcell, Carrick-on-Suir.

The 325sq m (3,500sq ft), five-bedroom, early 19th century house on one acre is believed to have been the dower house for the Wood House estate, seat

of Lord Beresford. Its village centre location provides easy access to both churches, two national schools and a supermarket. A coaching yard, with separate access from the road, has an assemblage of handsome stone out-buildings.

The 82-year-old baron's tour of the house, which is in "very good nick", is like stepping into the pages of a Molly

Keane novel. A visitor's book on the hall table has a signature by Roger Casement from July, 1906; a framed Beaton-esque photograph captures the 1950s glamour of the young lord and his lady resplendent in their best robes on Queen Elizabeth's coronation day (they were guests); an upstairs landing has a portrait of "grandfather's friend, Prince Louis of Battenberg"; and the study has a framed clipping from *Country Life* which described him as a "living national treasure" in 1995.

Outside, the walled garden is sublime with a patio perfect for "lime-juice and gin" after strenuous singles with Miss Joan Hunter Dunn.

Stradbally is a delightfully unspoilt village spared - just - from Bourneville chocolate box prettiness by the looming presence of a hulking cement handball alley from the de Valera school of architecture.

There are thatched cottages, a glimpse of whitewashed walls splashed with blood-red roses and two appealing pubs. Minutes from the house, there's a sheltered beach in a cove awaiting a new series of Enid Blyton *Famous Five* adventures.

Glenamara would make a wonderful south coast holiday home for a family of means and taste (admittedly a rare entity in these troubled times) or a permanent residence for someone seeking a highly civilised, gentler lifestyle.

MAJESTIC IN MEATH



Extended country pile on 27 acres

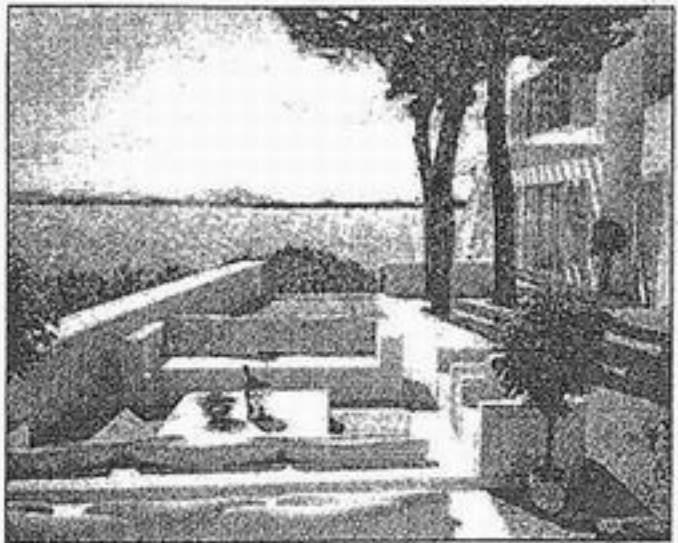
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BARGAIN HUNTER

Fendi beds, fantasy lights, bargain BBQ

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NEOPOLITAN CREAM



Elegant homes on Ischia in Bay of Naples

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“Dublin local authorities have 1,200 affordable homes - but few takers for them

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