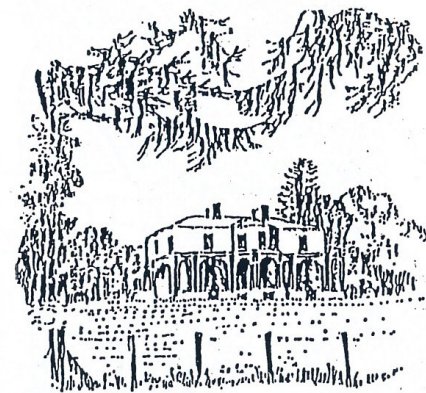
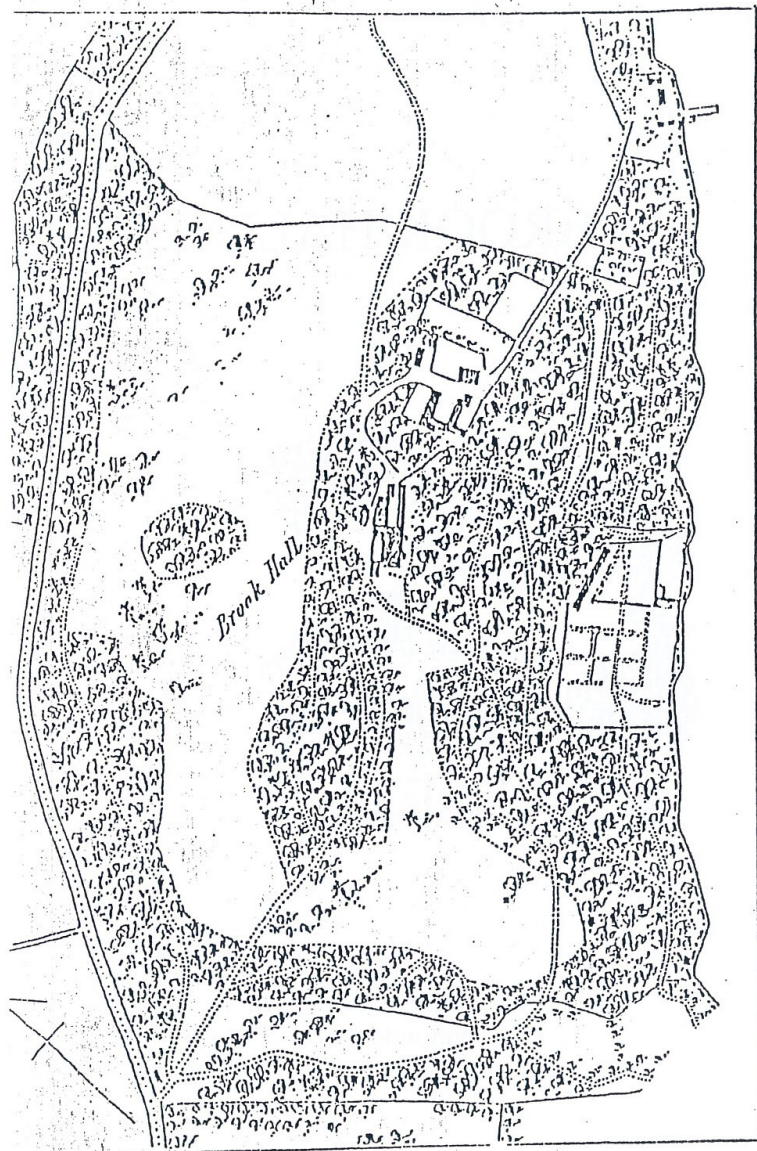


Plan of the garden at Brook Hall in 1964

BROOK HALL



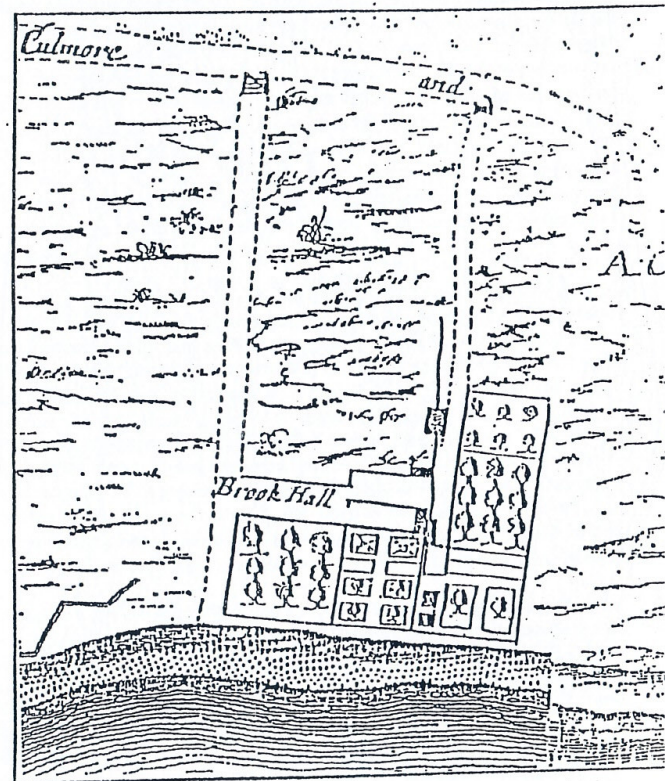
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Londonderry
BT48 8JE



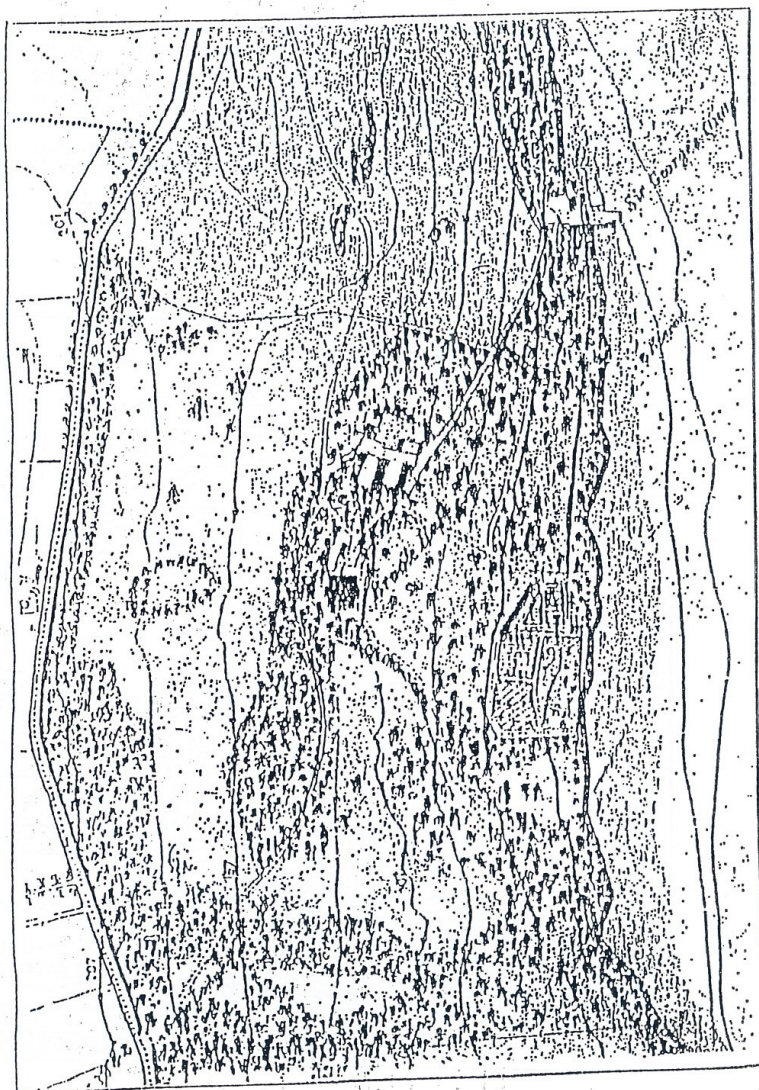
Brook Hall in 1834
Ordnance Survey Map 13

BROOK HALL

During the late eighteenth century, successful Londonderry merchants erected a string of handsome villas along the banks of the Foyle. Arguably the finest of these, Brook Hall stands within a landscape park of about one hundred acres with commanding views across the river. Full of horticultural interest, the park contains a large arboretum begun in the 1930s by the late Commander Gilliland, which is maintained to exemplary standards by his cousin, David Gilliland, who succeeded to the property in 1957.



From a map depicting the siege of
Londonderry (1689) by Francis Nevill



Brook Hall in 1858
Ordnance Survey Map 13

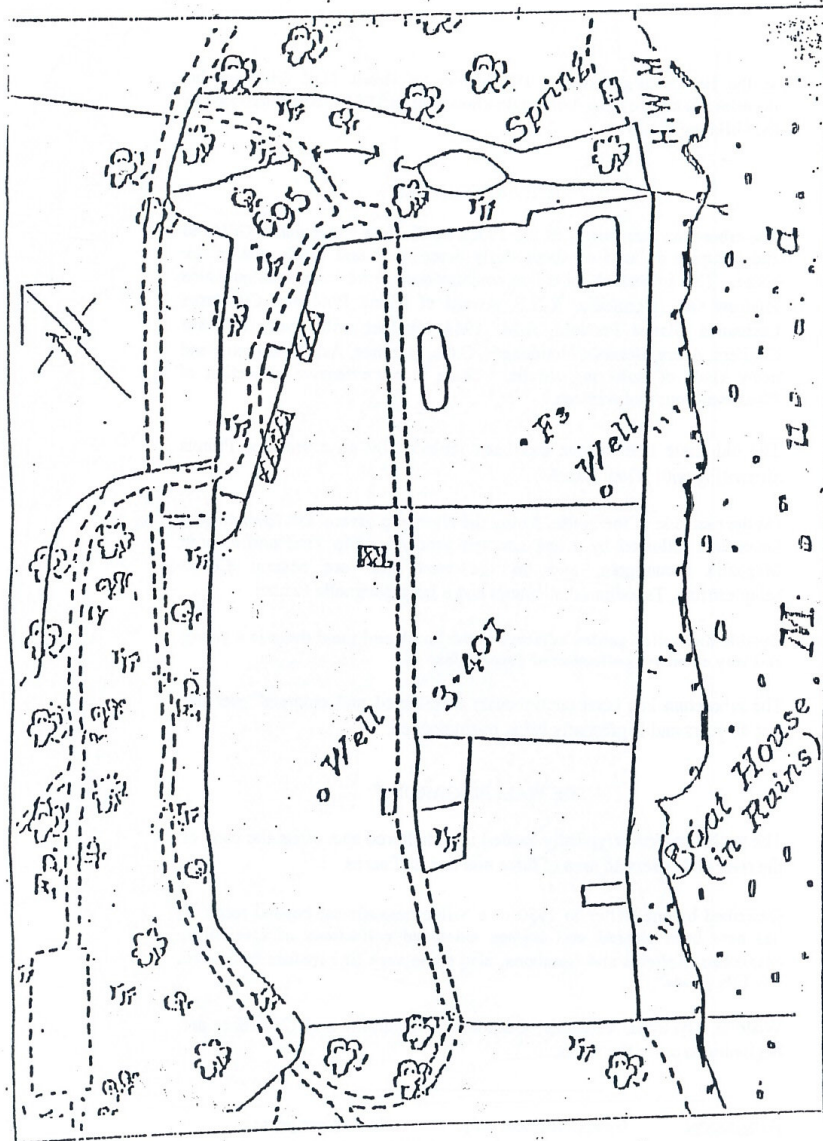
A POTTED HISTORY

An early mansion at Brook Hall was located quite close to the River Foyle just above the walled garden. This house, as depicted on late seventeenth century maps showing the famous siege in 1689, was flanked in front by the walled garden, which still remains, and to one side by orchards. Around 1770 the property was sold by the Wray family to Sir George Fitzgerald Hill, Member of Parliament for the City of Derry and Clerk of the Irish House of Commons in Dublin. He created the parkland setting and began building the present villa on an elevated site north of the old house.

Sir George Hill's landscape at Brook Hall received considerable praise from contemporary visitors. In 1802 the Rev. G. W. Sampson described Hill as a 'very spirited planter' and noted the 'rapidity, with which the demesne of Brook Hall has taken the lead of most other improvements', which reflected 'credit on the zeal of the proprietor. There are gardens and everything else corresponding. Old trees intermingle with the new and the prospect from the house, and other parts of the farm, is extremely fine'. Some years later in *Notes of a Journey in the North of Ireland in the Summer of 1827*, Mitchell wrote of Sir George Hill's landscaping that 'evidently neither expense nor skill has been spared in furnishing and maturing one of the most luxuriant collections of shrubs and plants that I ever beheld'.

The Rev. Sampson in 1802 referred to Hill's house as 'a modern edifice, lately finished on a very elegant plan'. It was indeed elegant 'with a central oval entrance hall - laid with the longer side across the axis - opening to a deep saloon with a segmental bow that is answered inside by a curved wall with paired niches, either side of a central door. To the south is a big square drawing room again with segmental bow, and on the north a delightful, finely detailed cantilevered oval staircase' (Rowan 1979, 402). This first house was just one room deep, but from the evidence of an early sketch dated 1819 (presently hanging in the hall) and the 1834 Ordnance Survey map; it is apparent that the early nineteenth century house and possibly the original building, had a large wing on the north side with a segmental bow projecting from its south front matching the existing one.

At some stage between 1815 and 1819 Sir George Hill is known to have carried out building work on the house. This probably involved adding the Regency-style veranda around the garden sides of the building, while the fine drawing room wallpaper could have been hung at this time. Sir George may also have been responsible for adding the single storey front across the entrance with its Nash-style loggia of coupled columns by way of a porch, and its new entrance - on the axis - top lit with rounded corners. It's likely that the next baronet, Sir George Hill, was responsible for demolishing the north wing in the 1830s before he was sent to Trinidad



The walled garden at Brook Hall in 1964

A POTTED HISTORY

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