

The Revd. John Moore and the Making of Rowallane

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When the well-known writer and botanist George Taylor wrote about Rowallane in 1936, the gardens were at the height of their fame and acknowledged as perhaps the best in Ireland. Like so many other visitors at the time, Taylor complemented the owner of the 58-acre gardens, Hugh Armytage-Moore, on his remarkable plant collections and his artistic and practical skill in planting 'where everything is right and beautiful and in complete accord with the site and the landscape of which it forms a part'. However, while Armytage-Moore was one of the great plantsmen of his era and had an undoubted artistic flair for locating his new plantings, the success of Rowallane as a great garden actually owes a great deal to his uncle, the Revd. John Moore, from whom he inherited the property in 1898.

The Rowallane gardens as created by the Revd. Moore from around 1860 until his death in 1888 reflected picturesque principles that were ahead of his time and were a precursor of the 'wild garden' ideas championed in the work of William Robinson. While they proved to be the ideal framework for the well-documented twentieth century plantings of Hugh Armytage-Moore, we know comparatively little about the Revd. John Moore's gardening activities at Rowallane. Moore does not appear to have kept good records, or if he did, they have not survived. It is the purpose of this paper to examine what evidence exists for Moore's gardening activities and for the background of the man himself.



Fig 1. Rowallane in May 1968 with the stable yard, clock tower and walled garden in the foreground



Fig 2. Garden notice from Rowallane dated July 1882.

The Moore Family

When the Revd. Moore acquired the lands that became Rowallane in 1858, he was already a retired clergyman, aged fifty-seven. His career in the church had been fairly conventional, but he had by that time inherited considerable properties from his father, who like him, and his father before him, had served as the agent for the Annesley family. The Revd. John Moore himself had been agent for thirteen years following the death of his brother-in-law, the third Earl Annesley in 1828. This link between the two families is of considerable importance in the history of the Moore family and indeed in any appreciation of the development of Rowallane.

The first member of the Rev. John Moore's family to settle in Ireland was Colonel John Mure (sometimes spelt Muir), son William Mure of Rowallan in Ayrshire. He served in William III's army and obtained a grant of land in Ulster, evidently in the Donaghadee area.¹ His son, Hugh Moore (1696-1777) served as a captain in the Scottish cavalry regiment, the 9th Dragoons or 'Wynne's Dragoons', as it was initially known. In 1720 he married Elizabeth Clarke of Clough House in Co. Down, and it was presumably through this connection that he became first member of his family to serve as the agent for the Annesley family, for they were the landowners around the village and owners of Clough house.²

Hugh's eldest son John Moore (1724-1800) also lived at Clough house and married Deborah Isaac (1728-1806), daughter of Robert Isaac, of Holywood House, County Down and his wife, Anne Baillie of Inishargie (1695-1781). It may be significant that a portion of the lands outside Saintfield that later became Rowallane, belonged to the Isaac family of Holywood. Like his father, Hugh became the agent for the Annesley family, which would explain why he was sometimes referred to as being of 'Mount Panther', for this was the home near Newcastle of Frances Charles, 1st Earl Annesley, from 1772 until his death in 1802.

After the death of the 1st Earl Annesley in 1802, his very grandly enlarged and remodelled house at Mount Panther, notable for its magnificent Adamesque interiors, was leased to John Moore's eldest son, the Revd. Charles Moore, the Rector of Moira. It is not clear if the Revd. Charles Moore was also an agent for the Annesley family, but he died in 1807 without heirs. Mount Panther was then occupied by his younger

brother, Hugh Moore (1762-1848), the father of the Revd. John Moore of Rowallane, who was brought up here. By this stage, Hugh Moore had followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, and become the agent of the 2nd Earl Annesley. Prior to this he had had a colourful career as a captain of the 5th Dragoon Guards and during the 1798 rebellion had raised the Eglantine Yeomanry (of which he was colonel) and served as ADC to General Francis Needham (late Lord Kilmorey) in Wexford and elsewhere.



Fig 3. Mount Panther outside Newcastle, enlarged by the 1st Earl Annesley from 1772. After 1802 it became the home of the Revd. Charles Moore and following his death in 1807 was home for a time of his younger brother Hugh Moore (1762-1848), the father of the Revd. John Moore of Rowallane.

Around the time of the death of 2nd Earl Annesley in 1824, Mount Panther was sold and Hugh Moore moved to Eglantine house, near Hillsborough, where he lived until his death in 1848.³ It is likely he ceased to serve as the Annesley agent at this time, and in Hillsborough lived as a country gentleman, serving as a J.P. and subscribing to the local school, dispensary and charitable society. He was the author of at least one book 'A Dictionary of Quotations from Various Authors in Ancient and Modern Languages' published in 1831 and dedicated to the Marquis of Downshire.⁴ He had married in 1798 Priscilla Cecilia Shaw (née Armytage), from Kensington, London; she was the mother of the Revd. John Moore of Rowallane (1801-1888); William Moore (1806-1883), who lived at Arnmore, County Cavan and father of Hugh Armytage-Moore of Rowallane (1873-1954) and a sister Priscilla Moore (1808-1891), who married the 3rd Earl Annesley.

The Revd. John Moore

Like so many other members of his family, The Revd. John Moore was to play a significant role in the management of the powerful and immensely wealthy Annesley estates. But this had never been his ambition. On the contrary, it's clear he had set his eyes on a quiet pastoral life in the church, perusing an interest in antiquities. Having entered Trinity College, Dublin, in 1820, he graduated with an BA four years later and was ordained into the church, becoming a curate at Drumgath in the Diocese of Dromore, Co Down. Subsequently, he was the Vicar of Kilmood for three years between 1830-33, during which time he was awarded an M.A. from Trinity College, Dublin. The final twenty years of his life in the church were spent as Vicar of Kilcoo, near Newcastle, before retiring in 1853.

The Revd. Moore's otherwise conventional clerical career was however interrupted by circumstances outside the church. In 1828 his younger sister Priscilla had married William Richard, the 3rd Earl Annesley, but the earl died ten years later leaving Priscilla with young children. The Rev. Moore who in addition to his other church duties, had at this time been serving as a domestic chaplain to his sister's family at their newly built house at Donard Lodge, overlooking Newcastle. Now on the death of the earl he found himself acting as co-trustee, executor and chief agent of the entire Annesley estate.



Fig 4. Priscilla Cecilia, Countess Annesley, believed to be painted by the Londonderry artist William Foy (1751-1859) in London to commemorate Priscilla's marriage to Richard, third Earl Annesley in 1828. Priscilla was the daughter of Hugh Moore of Eglantine and was sister of the Revd. John Moore.



Fig 5. View of Donard Lodge around 1880. The house had been built during the 1830s for the third Earl Annesley and his wife Priscilla.

For thirteen years from 1838 until 1851, during the minority of his nephew, William Richard, 4th Earl Annesley (1830-1874), the Revd. Moore oversaw the management of the Annesley estates. Anxious that his stewardship should be conducted with the utmost probity, he ensured that all his correspondence was carefully copied as a record. Consequently, we know a great deal about the Annesley estate management during these years.⁵

One of the activities that the Revd. Moore oversaw during this period, which was to have a direct bearing on his later work at Rowallane, was the creation of the gardens at Donard Lodge, above Newcastle. This distinguished classical-style 'marine residence' of granite ashlar had been built by the 3rd Earl Annesley during the 1830s and was only just completed when he died in 1838.⁶ As a back drop for the house, about five hundred acres of the land above the mansion were planted with trees and it was within this area close to the house, that the Revd. Moore, together with his sister Priscilla, who was a keen gardener, created a remarkable garden. Traversed by a network of winding paths, it covered around eighty-acres with ornamental trees and shrubs, waterfalls, cascades, a hermitage, aviary, shell house, ornamental dining house and a series of little bridges and rustic stone seats. It was clearly inspired by the adjacent property of Tollymore, with its 18th century picturesque wooded landscape and gothic follies. Moore had a particular delight in antediluvian structures, such as standing stones, cairns and stone circles, some of which were to make a re-appearance later in the gardens at Rowallane.⁷

By the time he retired as the agent for the Annesley estates in 1851, the Revd. Moore was thus familiar with the process of garden making. Having inherited his father's considerable wealth in 1848, he also had the financial ability to purchase his own property and create a garden. He had married in 1850, Jane Davidson (née Morris), but unfortunately she died in London six years later. Where Moore was

living in the 1850s is not yet clear; during the 1840s he had occupied the Annesley family's lake-side lodge at Castlewellan, known as The Cottage, but after 1851 it is unlikely he continued to live here. The Cottage itself was demolished in 1858 after the completion of the present Castlewellan Castle.

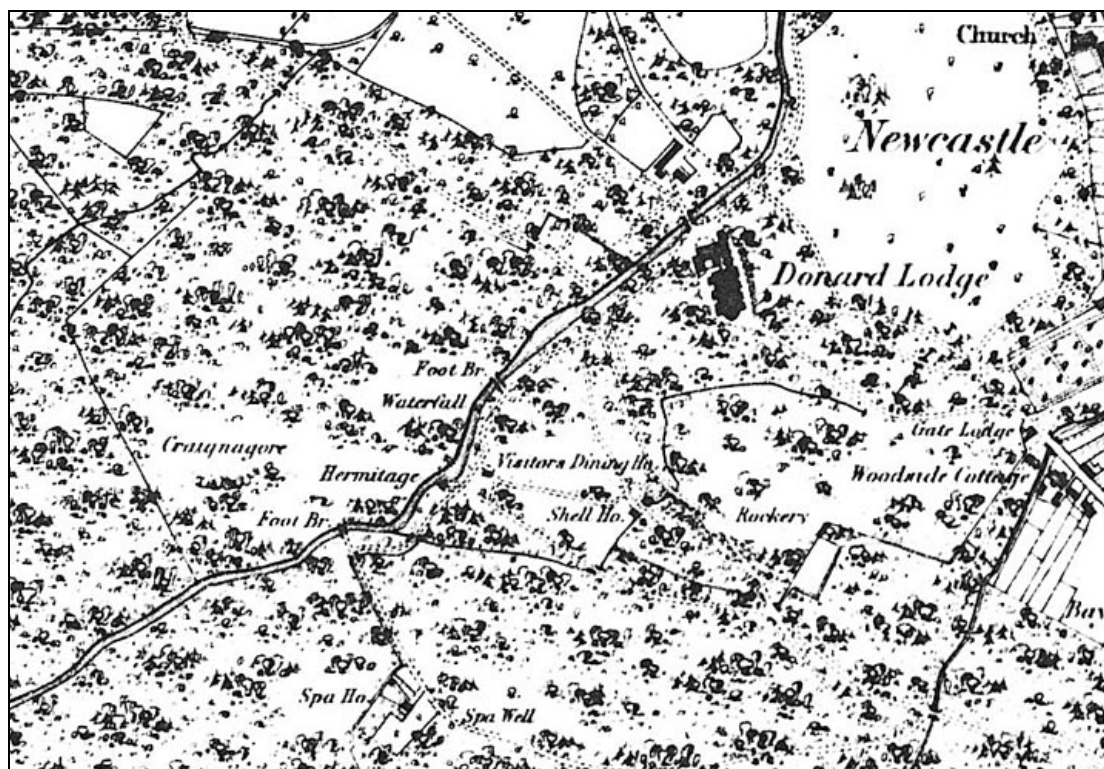


Fig 6. Ordnance Survey map of the gardens around Donard Lodge in the 1850s as laid out by the Revd. John Moore with his sister Priscilla in the 1840s. The wooded picturesque landscape with its river and garden buildings resembled the adjacent, but much earlier demesne landscape at Tollymore.

The Acquisition of Rowallane

The Revd. John Moore's acquisition of the lands of what became 'Rowallane' began in 1858 with the purchase of 507 acres in the townland of Creevyloughgare just south of Saintfield. We can only speculate why Moore chose to buy this property, but it is likely he got a good price through the vendor, the Landed Estate Courts, while some of the lands in the adjacent townland of Leggygowan, had belonged his cousins, the Isaacs of Holywood House. The major factor however was undoubtedly the construction of the new Belfast and County Down Railway, which crossed part of Leggygowan; it opened in September 1858, connecting Belfast with Newcastle.

At the time of purchase, Creevyloughgare contained a farmhouse and outbuildings on the site of the present house, while its undulating largely treeless landscape contained relatively small fields of mostly rather poor grazing land with stones everywhere close to the surface.⁸ The approach was down a lane from the north, connected to the Listooder Road to the west.

Having acquired the property, the Revd. Moore re-named it 'Rowallane' after the Ayrshire homeplace of his great great grandfather; he was obviously proud of his family background, for his had used this name before (spelt 'Rowallen') when building a house in Newcastle for his sister, Mrs Humphrys, during the 1850s; it still survives close to the police station.⁹



Fig. 7. Rowallane Demesne as it appears on the Ordnance Survey map of 1910. Note the railway line on the east side of the property. The Rev John Moore bought the land here in 1858 and started building in the early 1860s

In 1868 and again in 1873 the Revd. Moore acquired an additional 400 acres in the adjacent townland of Leggygowan to the east, bought from Robert Ward of Bangor Castle, Co Down.¹⁰ Acquisition of these lands were to allow Moore to create an entrance from the main Saintfield road on the east (see below). His continuing purchases however did prompt his sister Priscilla to remark that 'unless you mean to have a sale some fine day of all your collections of teapots, etc, you will die in debt - you pay two prices for the bad land around you and deny yourself every comfort'.¹¹ By 1876 his total holding at Rowallane was 982 acres.¹²



Fig 8. The Yew Walk leading to the Stable Yard with the walled garden on the right. The yard was built by the Revd. John Moore in 1865-7 with castellated gothic archway and slender belvedere.

Building Construction at Rowallane

As one might expect, The Revd. Moore began his activities at Rowallane by building a house, which he started in 1860-61. This replaced the existing farmhouse, though it's possible parts of the earlier buildings were retained in the new house. This comprised a plain long undistinguished two-storey block with an entrance via a single storey lean-to on the east side. An inscription on the west elevation notes that it was the work of the builder William Lowry, with masons James Patterson, John Dick, James Irvine and Samuel Dick and that it was built in 1861, though we know in fact it was not completed until 1864.¹³ It was enlarged and remodelled by Blackwood & Jury in 1931 and present double-gabled seven-bay eastern front belongs to this period.¹⁴

Having completed the house, the Revd. Moore's attention was turned to building a stable yard to the south in 1865. It comprises four ranges around a square court, cobbled on two sides, entered though a castellated gothic archway, dated 1867, flanked by with a tall slender belvedere or bell-tower. This tower, which dominates the gardens and the area around the house, has three storeys with lancet windows, an oculus and is surmounted by a Chinese-style wooden balustrade and four corner piers. A plaque on the north elevation is carved with the Moore crest: a blackamoor.¹⁵ The approach to the yard was lined with eight pairs of yew trees and a further planting beyond the building to the left.¹⁶ In the time of Hugh Armytage Moore these yew were clipped.

The rustic castellated flavour of the yard was extended to the walled garden, which spatially links the yard to the house. This garden occupies a D-shaped area of



Fig. 9. The rere or west side of the house c.1890 built by the Rev- John Moore in 1860-61.



Fig. 10. Aerial view of the house and walled garden in the 1950s

1.6 acres with an L-shaped slip garden to the south, originally a frame yard (or working yard) covering about half an acre. A brick-arched gateway linking the two garden sections has a plaque dated 1864, with a surmounting brick stack and Coade-stone globe finial. The most distinctive feature of the garden are the horizontal bands of glazed wall tiles, which have been shaped and pieced to train fruit trees to be tied up without using nails or wires. These were patented by Richard Foxley of Towcester in the 1850s and while seen occasionally in both England and Scotland, appear to be unknown elsewhere in Ireland. Many have been replaced by the National Trust in recent years, as have the similarly unusual path edgings, which are made of glazed terra cotta tiles with ornamental tops.¹⁷

Some structural alterations were made to the walled garden in the 20th century, notably the addition of a summer house in 1927 and the replacement of the main garden gates in 1928. On the main path, ironwork over the junction of the cross paths, for training apple trees, were removed by Armytage Moore. Otherwise it remains much as in the Revd. Moore's day, except that originally it would have been largely devoted to kitchen produce, including the fruit trees we know were purchased in 1869 from Ogle's Grove Nursery, Hillsborough.¹⁸ Vegetables in the central area were grassed over and four Kansan cherries planted.¹⁹ From the 1920s onwards the whole garden was gradually occupied by the ornamental shrubs, climbers and herbaceous perennials for which it is now famous.

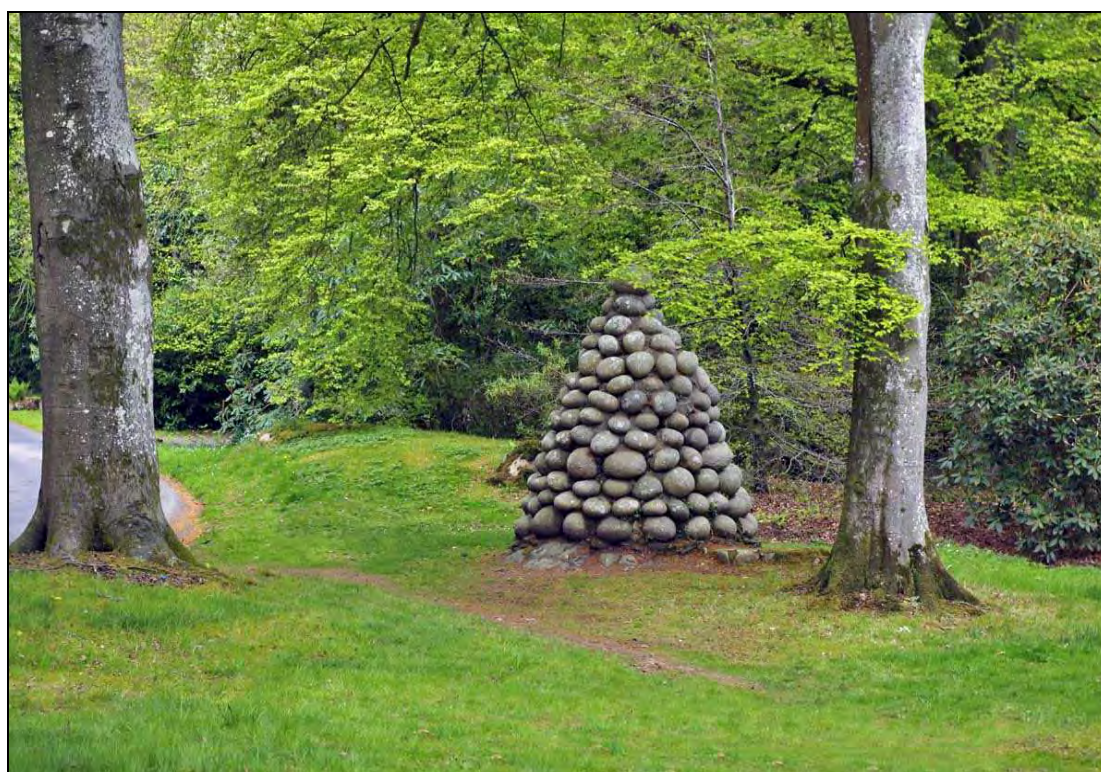


Fig. 11. Photograph of a pyramid of boulder alongside the West Avenue at Rowallane

The Creation of Rowallane's Park and Pleasure Grounds

The landscaping of Rowallane began at the same time of the work on the house and yards, with the initial work focussed upon the clearance of field stones and the removal of boundaries. Some of the stones were gathered together to make cairns (still a feature of the garden) and revetments to hold the considerable quantities of earth being brought into the area for planting.

Mixed shelterbelts were made, notably to the west, where the main pleasure ground was laid out flanking the west avenue. There is a surviving plant order dating from 1861, which reveals that Charles Howden of Laurel Bank Nursery, supplied the Revd. Moore with 2,250 of both Scotch pine and Larch, 1,000 oaks including 500 large specimens and other hardwoods including beech, elm and Sweet Chestnut.²⁰ In addition to these he was planting the fashionable conifers of the time, such as Wellingtonia, deodar, Lawson cypress, monkey puzzle, Thuja plicata and Monterey pine. Some fine specimens still survive, notably a large *Araucaria araucana* (Monkey puzzle) and *Pseudotsuga menziesii* (Douglas fir), the latter being near the large ornamental pond that the Revd. Moore made close to the west avenue.

When planting his trees and shrubs the Revd. Moore preferred to use a more naturalised style of garden, quite different from the then popular 'Gardenesque' style promoted by Loudon, with its stiff planting and neat little beds. In many ways his planting heralded the kind of gardening that became popular in the last decades of the 19th century, and in Moore's case was probably inspired by the Romanic-picturesque 18th century landscape at Tollymore.²¹ This is particularly evident along the east avenue, which he created in the 1870s once he had acquired the additional land in the townland of Leggygowan in 1868-73.



Fig. 12. View of the lawn in front of the house looking east.

The construction of the east avenue, which was to become the main approach to the house, was major undertaking, involving the blasting and removal of large quantities of rock to facilitate an acceptable gradient for easy coach access from the Saintfield road. Work began in 1874 when the Rev. Moore engaged an engineer



Fig. 13. Part of the East Avenue to Rowallane created by the Rev. John Moore in the 1870s

named James Coulter to plot the levels and oversee the work, while Thomas Scott was employed to undertake the rock blasting and its removal. Records show that by June 1875 some 239 cubic yards had been cut, with perhaps a total of 1,000 cubic yards removed by June 1877 when work was completed.²²

His sister Priscilla, forever practical, wrote from Donard Lodge in 1873, just when he was about to start work on his new avenue: “But what can induce you to make a circuitous road to the [railway] station, one usually wishes to get there by the shortest route, & you are incurring great expense to make a round about way thro’ masses of rock”.²³

The new serpentine line of the east avenue, in consequence of all the rock blasting and stone removal, was flanked dramatically by large exposed rocky outcrops, which combined with the extensive tree planting along its route, gives the avenue a very picturesque appearance. The Revd. Moore sought to enhance this effect with a sequence of rustic ornamental structures, notably a stone bridge over a stream, primitive stone seats, standing stones, and ornamental cairns, the latter made from Mourne granite pebbles ('bap stones') brought from the Annesley lands at Newcastle - all calling to mind Thomas Wright's work at Tollymore and illustrations in his famous

book of antiquities, *Louthiana*, published in 1758. The last two hundred yards of the avenue up to the house was lined with cedars, again evoking Tollymore and its splendid avenue of *Cedrus deodara*.

As we have seen, at Rowallane the two avenue approaches to the house, from the east and west, were the focus of the pleasure grounds. This was unusual, for both Victorian and Georgian country houses normally had their drives approach through open parkland, designed specifically to see the house to its best advantage. At Rowallane the parkland, notably a twenty-one acre meadow to the south of the walled garden, was out of sight of the house and primarily used for grazing. For the Revd. Moore it was the pleasure grounds that were important, while the house, on which he had spent comparatively little, was little more an incidental part of the layout.

Rowallane after the Revd. John Moore

The Revd. Moore continued to improve his gardens at Rowallane until his death in 1888. In his will he left Rowallane for ten years to his nephew James Hugh Moore Garrett, son of his sister Caroline, who in the 1880s lived with him together with his widowed sister Maria Humphreys. However, he also stipulated that Rowallane should pass to another nephew, Hugh Armytage-Moore on his 25th birthday in 1898. Garrett did not live at Rowallane, and instead we find another nephew, the Rev George Raphael Moore living there until his death in 1899, by which time the property had passed to Hugh Armytage-Moore. According to a recent survey of Rowallane, it is believed that Rev George Raphael Moore planted a considerable number of trees on the property during his tenure there.²⁴

From 1903 Hugh Armytage-Moore (1873-1954) began to transform the gardens at Rowallane, although he did not actually move there until 1917. Within a decade of his ownership, Rowallane was well on the way to becoming one of Ireland's great gardens, boasting an enormous woody plant collection.²⁵ What Hugh Armytage-Moore achieved is another story, but it is important to appreciate that the enormously successful 20th century planting of Rowallane could not have been achieved without the existing framework created by the Revd. John Moore during his thirty years of ownership.

Strangely, while we know much about the Revd. John Moore's activities at Rowallane and as agent for the Annesley estate, we know little about him personally; indeed, not even a photographic image is known. His obituary tells us that he was 'a gentleman of great artistic taste' with a valuable 'collection of antiquities of various sorts' who 'displayed great enterprise and energy in the beautifying of the property'. The legacy of that 'great enterprise' still survives in the gardens of Rowallane and is a lasting monument to his artistic imagination.

Acknowledgements. My thanks to Mike Snowden for making some comments on this paper and to Mal Conway, National Trust, for help in sourcing images. An earlier version of this paper was published in the Saintfield Heritage Society Journal, 2014.

Notes

1. Knox, A (1875). *History of the County of Down from the most remote to the present day*, Dublin, Hodges, Foster & Co, p518.
2. Cloughmaghericatt, later termed Clough, was acquired by Francis Annesley in the 1630s. The Clarkes were presumably either tenants or agents of the family.
3. The Moore's owned the lands of Carnbane (Eglantine house) from at least 1800. After Hugh's death it was acquired St. Clair Kebburn Mulholland, who commissioned Charles Lanyon to re-model the house.
4. Original edition published by Whittaker, London. Reprinted by Kessinger Publishing, 2010.

5. Annesley Papers, out-letters books (1838-50), PRONI, D1854/6. Having acted as agent since 1838, he was officially appointed to the position, 16 September 1842 (PRONI, D1854/6/5).
6. Architect of Donard Lodge was Thomas Duff and his partner Thomas Jackson with John Lynn acting as contractor. Demolished in 1966.
7. At least one of Moore's garden features at Newcastle ended up being classified as a genuine antiquity, see Chart, D.A (ed.) (1940) *Preliminary Survey of the Ancient Monuments of Northern Ireland*, p135 (Stone circle with Maisie Gaffikin's initials). See also Davies, O (1939) 'Stones circles in Northern Ireland'. *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 2, pt 1 (January), p5.
8. Some pollarded lime trees west of the walled garden have been claimed (rather questionably) as field boundary survivors of this pre-1860 phase, Hazel, F., Rutherford, S and Wallis, B (2008) *Rowallane, County Down. Conservation Management Plan*. Parkland Consortium for the National Trust, p83. However, in this area there was also a large elm, one of three in the garden and a large evergreen oak. There is also a fine pollard oak on the slope up to Trio Hill. On the other side was an elm. As Mike Snowden has observed to me, the scattered planting of these trees questions the boundary theory.
9. Russell, N (2007) *Where Donard Guards*. Ballagbeg Books, , p172.
10. PRONI D2309/1/14b.
11. PRONI D2309/3/2/9.
12. *Land Owners in Ireland. Return of Owners of Land of One Acre and Upwards* (1876). Dublin. Some of the lands he acquired in the 1860s had its tenants unhappily evicted (PRONI, Val/2A/3/23a).
13. Valuation books refer to it as 'unfinished' in 1863, see PRONI Val/2A/3/23a.
14. Original drawings, dated July 1930, are held by the National Trust in Rowallane. Most of the present house entrance (east) front was built in 1931.
15. It may be noted that the head of a blackamoor also surmounts the Annesley coat of arms.
16. I am informed by Mike Snowden that the Rev Moore also gifted Irish yews to the Church of Ireland Church in Saintfield.
17. The spacing between the tiles is the distance required for espalier apples and pears (one pear tree remains). The design also allowed the fan shape training required for stone fruit (Snowden pers com.). During the 1990s the wall's unglazed tiles had become so eroded than the majority were replaced for the trust by the long established firm of Dennis Rhabban tile works near Wrexham on the advise of the then head gardener Mike Snowden. The funding was provided by the Ulster Garden Scheme. Replica copies of the glazed terracotta path edge tiles were made for the trust at this time.
18. PRONI, D2309/1/3/2/90 & 91. Correspondence with Revd. Moore and L.L. Doon presumably the manager of the Ogle Grove Nursery, outside Hillsborough. The nursery, established in the early 19th century, belonged to the Davis family and was one of the largest in Ulster. It closed in the 1930s.
19. These eventually died and were removed by the National Trust along with the central path that divided them creating a large central lawn and also the surrounding planting scheme of roses, fuchsias and herbaceous borders.
20. PRONI, D2309/3/2/52. Other purchases included 450 elms, 25 horse chestnuts, 100 Spanish chestnuts, 25 Balson poplars, 50 Canadian poplars, 150 Lombardy poplars, 100 Wych elms, 25 maples, 100 holly, 500 ash, 500 beech, plus numerous other types in smaller numbers, such as 12 Portugal Laurel, 2 dwarf filbert, 1 Cedrus deodara or 8 purple beech.
21. Roden, Earl of (2005) *Tollymore. The Story of an Irish Demesne*. Belfast, Ulster Architectural Heritage Society.
22. PRONI, D2309/3/2/104).
23. PRONI, D2309/3/2/98, 13th August 1873.
24. Hazel, F., Rutherford, S and Wallis, B (2008) *Rowallane, County Down. Conservation Management Plan*. Parkland Consortium for the National Trust, p21. The Revd. George Raphael Moore was Minister at the Second Presbyterian Church in Saintfield.
25. Reeves-Smyth, T (2014) 'The Flowering of Rowallane'. *Irish Arts Review*, vol.31, no. 1 (Spring), pp120-123.

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