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National College of Art & Design
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A History of Cavanacor House.

By

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**VOLUME 1
MAIN TEXT.**

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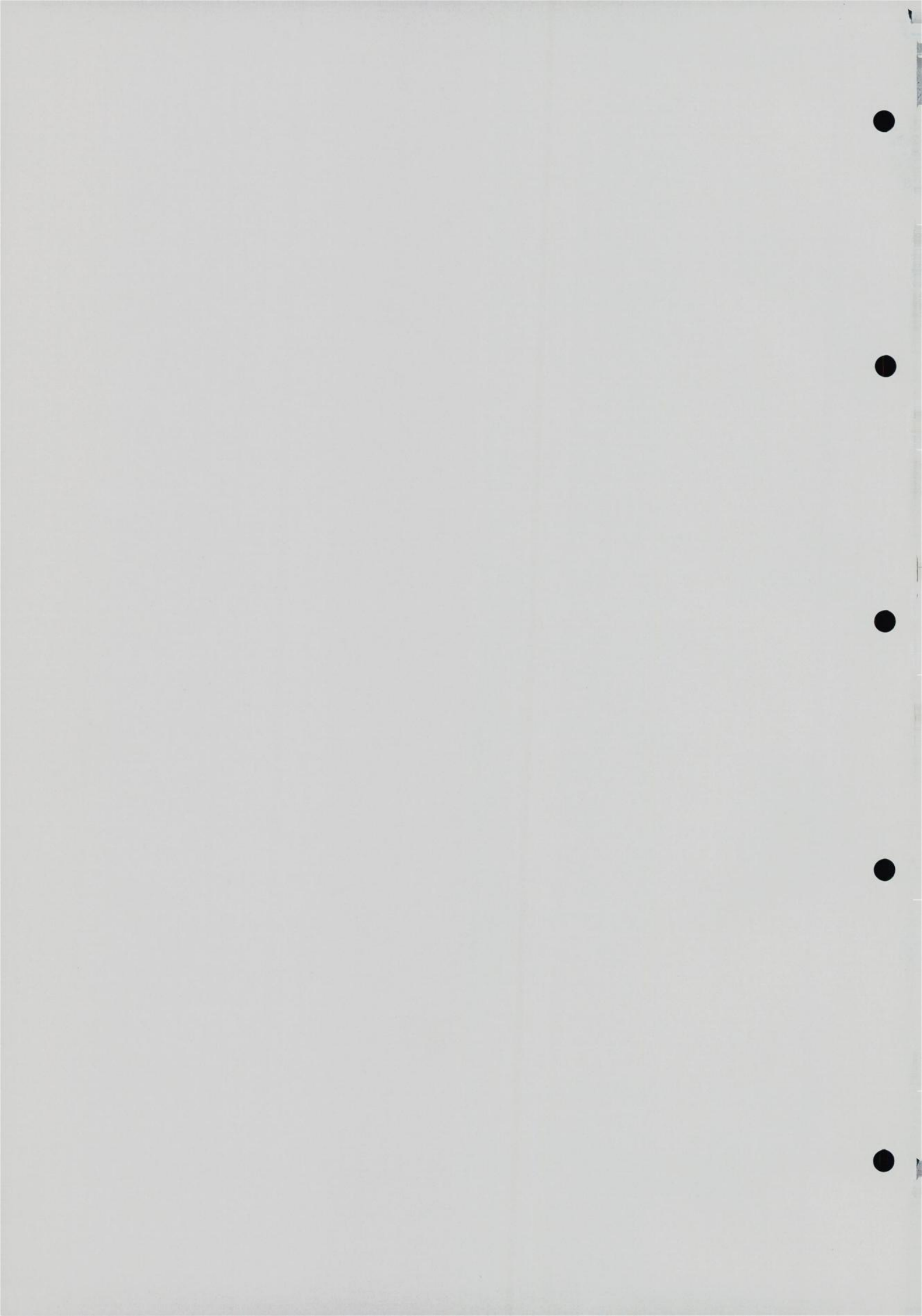


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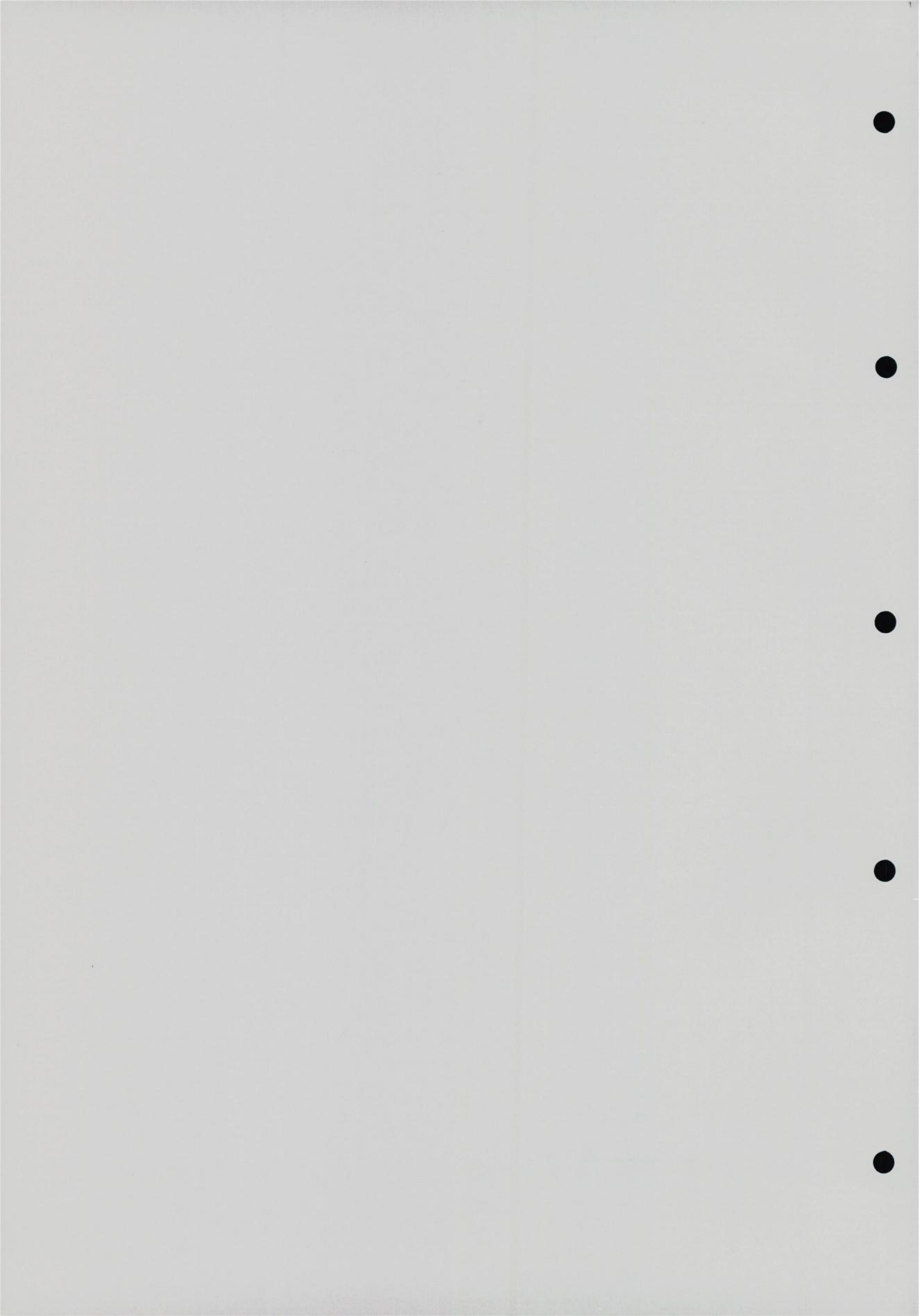
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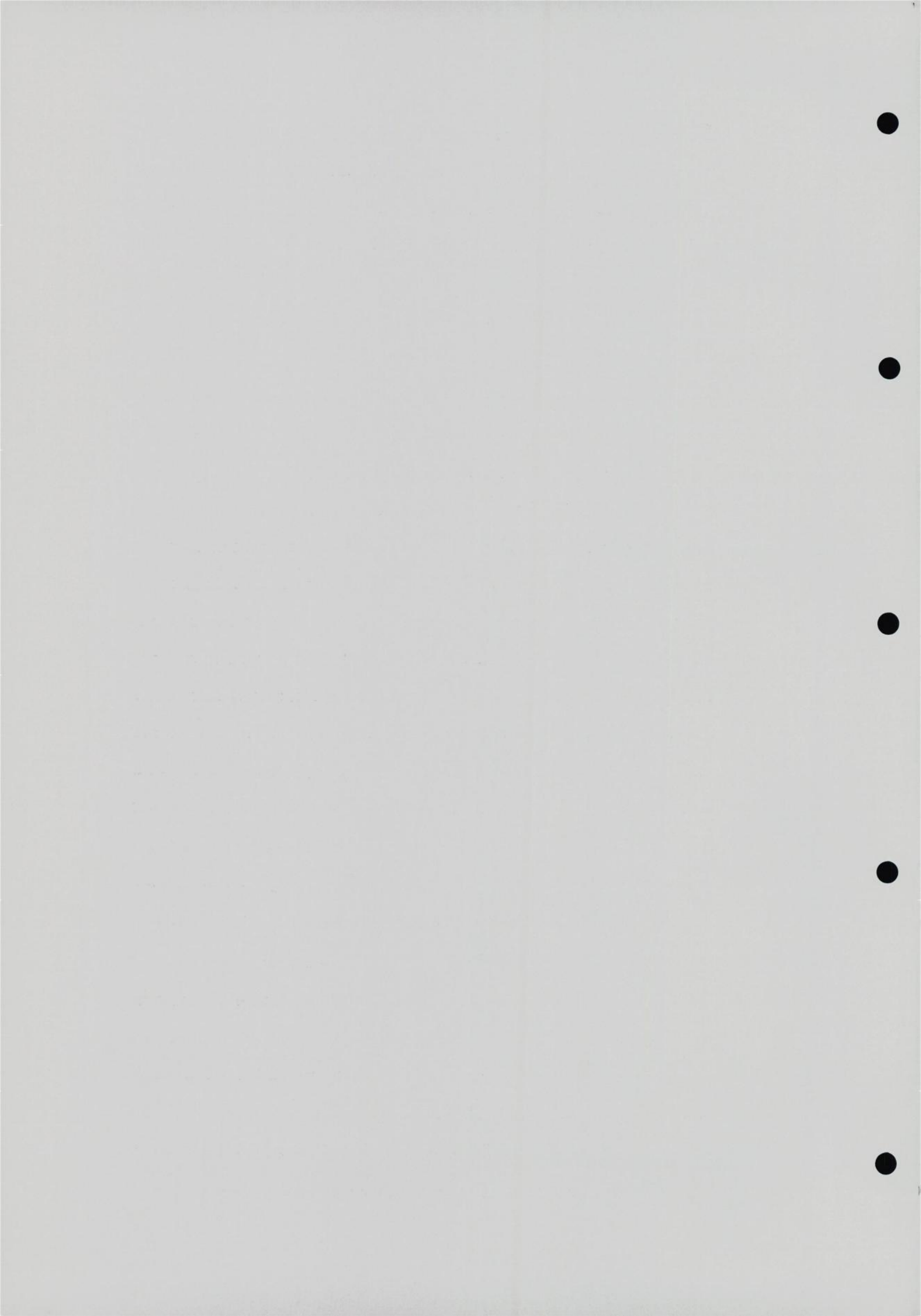
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Prologue: "The Unusualness of everyday being".

The impetus for this study is, in a way, autobiographical. I have lived at Cavanacor House all my life, and because I have lived here for such a long time it has become an essential part of me. I know every little feature of each room, every crack in the wall and every tree in the ten and a half acres of forest and garden surrounding the house. Experiencing a place such as Cavanacor on a day to day basis over twenty one years doesn't necessarily mean that one questions it being there or what the people who shaped and established the house were like. In fact being in such a place for such a long period of time would tend to have quite the opposite effect. The familiar is taken for granted and fits neatly into the volumes of memory. But there is an unusualness of everyday being that seems to escape us within familiar surroundings. I have only recently become aware of this familiarity and subsequently have become interested in finding out more about the one place on earth that is central to my character. This awareness has come about because I have been gradually uprooted from my home. First to college in Dublin and then in the last year travelling throughout Europe. But what I found as time progressed was that people who lived in the various cities I visited would walk about the city intent on their business without paying any regard to their beautiful surroundings.

It is this awareness that has sparked off a new interest in my own home each time I have returned. Through looking in detail at anything and everything related to the house, observing and recording unusual wall thickness and types of wood used, things have begun to fit together. I have had to become a detective of the past as it were. Cross referencing social and

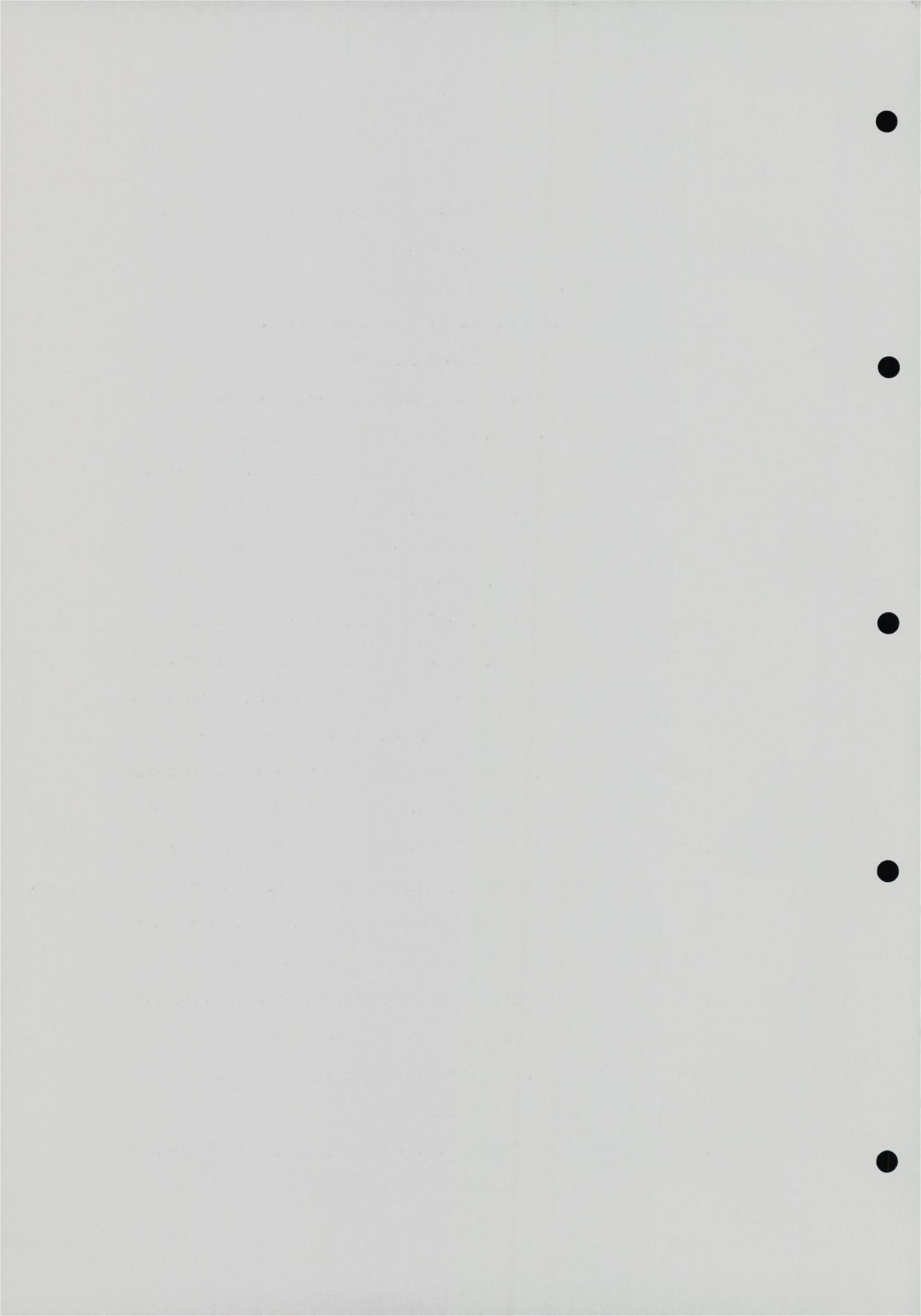


domestic history with architectural trends, and finding reasons for why this house has become what it is, I have come across large gaps in the house's history which will probably never be filled. I have been forced to speculate using very few facts in order to move onto the next period. But it is this that makes the study of the house all the more challenging and exciting.



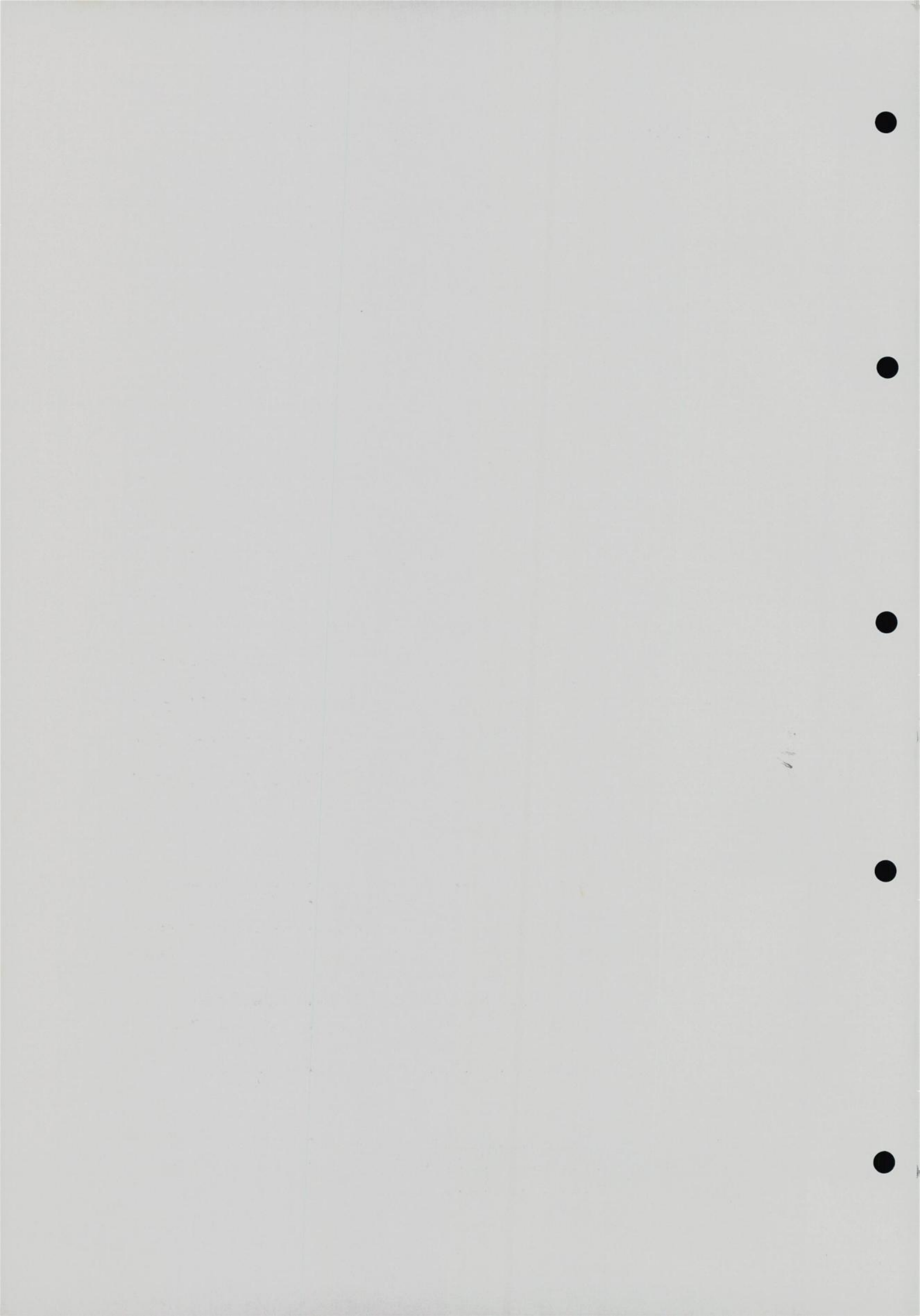
Introduction: A History of Cavanacor House.

I have chosen to approach the study of the house in a very calculated and methodical fashion. This is necessary in order to establish a clear picture of its evolution. Firstly the context and background of the house is established, giving a brief outline of the social and archaeological history of the locality. This ends with a more detailed account of the history of the time in which the house was first built, that is the Plantation times of the early 1600's. The history of the house itself is dealt with up until the present day and the contribution of the various inhabitants to the development of the house. The second chapter looks in detail at the long and complicated evolution of the exterior of the house. In referring to the materials used in the construction and the overall structure of the house it is possible to decipher the changes in styles of architecture and its metamorphosis into the present day building. In the third chapter the interior is looked at in relation to both the interior features and the plan form. Finally in the fourth chapter the gardens are considered and the house is compared to another Plantation house, Springhill. This chapter ends with the analysis of available maps and the subsequent conclusions reached because of this analysis. With the aid of cross-referencing architectural plans and history, this will bring me to some sort of conclusion which will outline in detail the reasons and events over the years which lead to the appearance the house now holds today. By doing this I hope to have created a discourse which brings to light a whole series of forgotten or lost facts about a very historic and significant house which has to date been neglected by lack of detailed study into its history.



Chronology.

- 1611 Sir Richard Hansard gave a grant of land to Roger Tasker, one of his Lieutenants, to build a house overlooking the river Deelee.
- 1611-1619 Roger Tasker builds a house on this land.
- 1619 Sir Richard Hansard dies.
- 1666 Around this time Tasker's daughter Barbara marries John Keyes and is given Cavanacor. The house becomes the main seat of the Keyes family in Ireland.
- 1680 Roger Tasker's other daughter Magdalen Tasker marries Robert Bruce Pollock and emigrates to America about 1680.
- 1689 20th of April King James II dines at Cavanacor under the large sycamore tree on the lawn in front of the house. He gives protection to the house when all the other protestant houses around are burned.
- 1823 Mary Keyes marries Major Humfrey and Cavanacor becomes principle family seat of the Humfrey family.
- 1953 Betty Muriel Humfrey dies on the 11th of November.
1956. On the 30th of April Cavanacor is sold by Joan Muriel Loyd and Daphne Geraldine Lewis who were left Cavanacor by their mother Betty Humfrey.
- 1956 Miss Wilhelmina Annie Clarke moves into Cavanacor
- 1970 Miss Clarke dies on the 13th of November.
- 1970 Miss Ethel Snodgrass and Kathleen Rebecca Snodgrass buy Cavanacor.
- 1974 Miss Ethel Snodgrass sells Cavanacor to Eddie and Joanna O'Kane on the 16th of November.



CHAPTER 1: HISTORY OF THE HOUSE.

1.1 Background history of the locality up until when the house was built in early plantation times around 1611.

Cavanacor house is situated about a mile and a half outside Lifford Co. Donegal just off the main Lifford to Letterkenny road (Pl. 1,2). The whole area around Cavanacor is of notable historic significance, partly due to topographical factors such as the meeting of the river Foyle and the river Deelee nearby. The hill fort at Croghan, opposite the house is considered to be more important than Grianan of Aileach, a large hill fort near Inch in Co. Donegal. Also not too far away is Beltany stone circle, a very significant prehistoric stone circle of its type. Local tradition has it that Saint Patrick visited the locality and that he had difficulty crossing the river Deelee at the ford of Tyleford which is at the front of Cavanacor. The original holding of Cavanacor comprised Cavanacor and Tyleford and the crossing point can be seen from the front door of the house. An account of St. Patrick's visit goes as follows:

Patrick comes round the shoulder of Cruachan Lighean, preaches to the people and baptises them at his well were Ith lies buried at the Foyd. Then he decends to the lowlands at Murlog where in attempting to cross the stream the axles of the chariot are broken again and again.

'Be ye not amazed at this thing for yonder land from stream thither does not need that I should bless it, for a boy shall be born..... and his name will be Colmcille.'

and The Ford of The Chariot is the same ever since-Tyleford

Taken from a letter to Mr Mc Intyre, Donegal Co. Librarian from Fr. Walter Hegarty, 1938, Donegal County Archives.



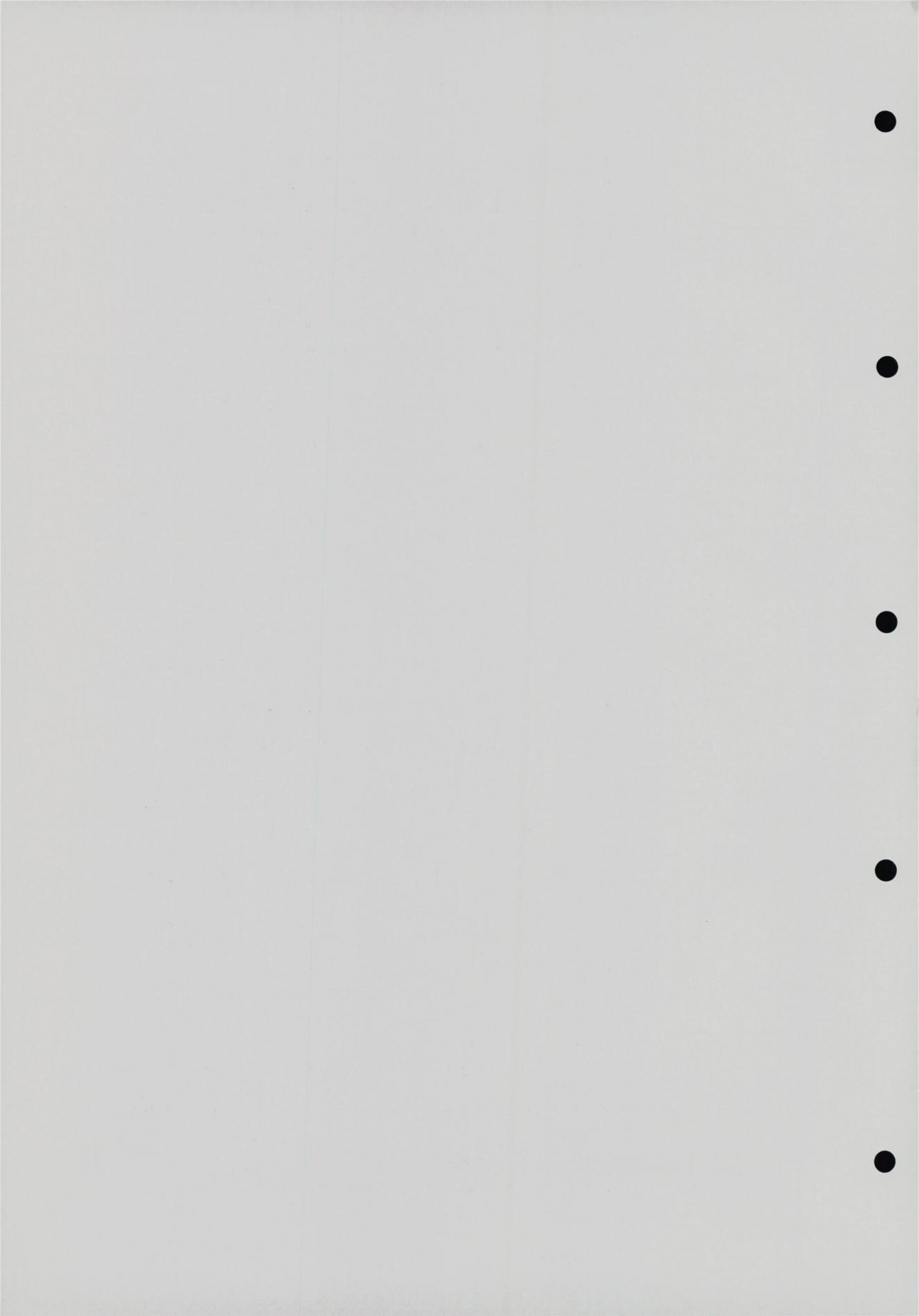
Also near Cavanacor about a mile up the road is Cavan where St. Columcille's grandmother was born. A mile down the road is Ballindrait where the Earls met on the bridge before they went on to Rathmullan for the Flight. The Flight of the Earls took place in the times leading up to the Plantation of Ulster. Towards the end of August 1607 a ship cast anchor in Lough Swilly just off Rathmullan. This ship was to carry Cuchonnacht Maguire away from Ireland to Spain. He had believed for some time that the Gaelic lords would be beggared to the crown, which they became when they left Ireland.

The Flight of the Earls immediately precedes the period in which the house was built, during the Plantation of Ulster. This was a colonising enterprise matching in scale the contemporary English migrations to America.

The principle of the Plantation scheme in Ulster was to clear given areas of Irish inhabitants and resettle them with English or Scottish tenants brought over by entrepreneurs, called 'undertakers'. The Irish were restricted to reside on lands granted to former English army officers, known as 'servitors'. The allotments of land came in three sizes and with various obligations to the grantees, such as to bring over a stipulated quota of tenants from England or Scotland, and to build houses and defences. The Irish who were unfortunate enough not to get an allocation had to pay double rent and use only English methods of tillage and husbandry.

(de Breffny, 1980, p.82)

Sir Richard Hansard was responsible for the Plantation in Lifford in the early 1600's. The Civil Survey states that around 1611 Sir Richard Hansard gave a grant of land to Roger Tasker, one of his Lieutenants, to build a house overlooking the river Dee.

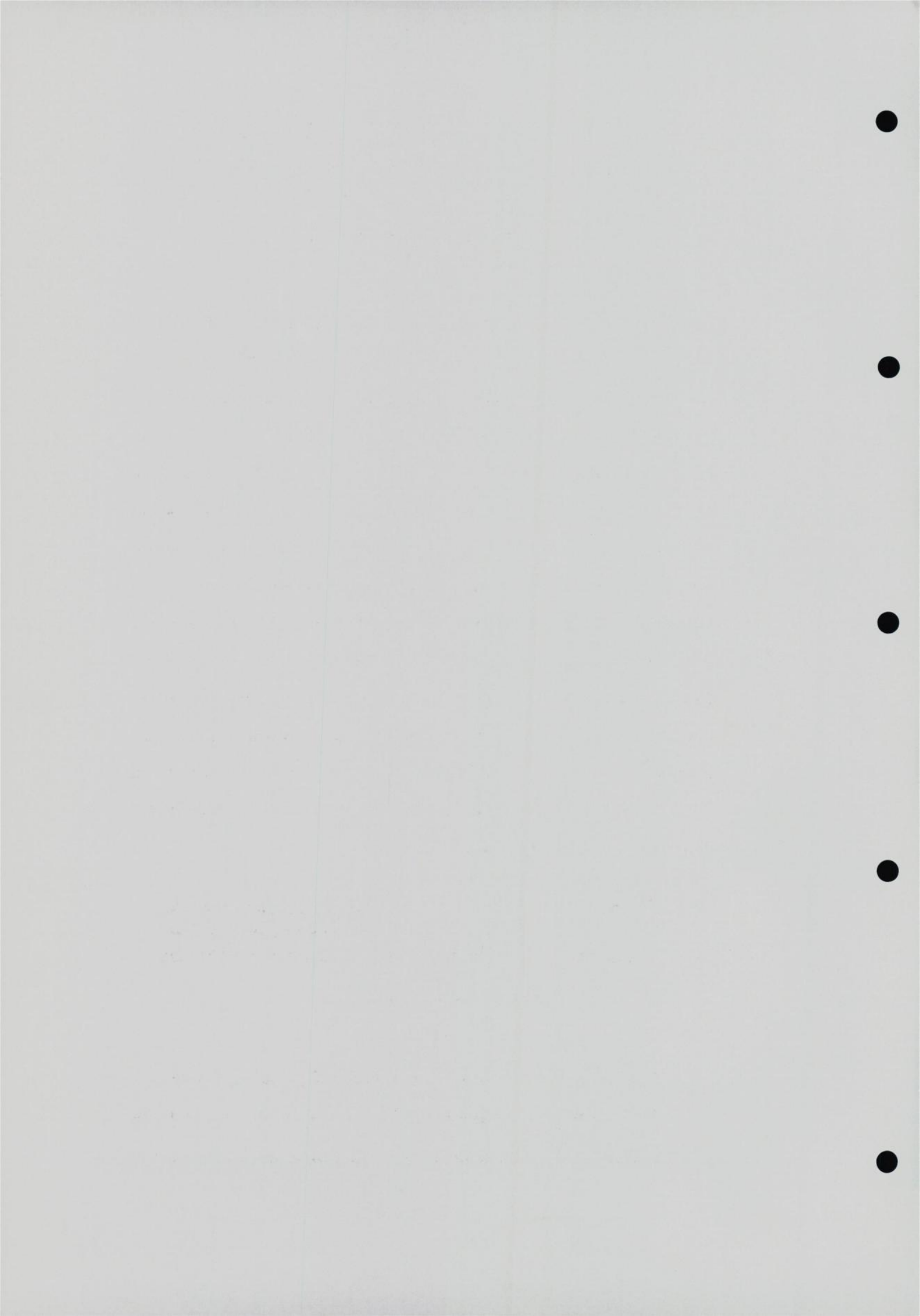


Thomas Keyes, who was Hansard's captain, was granted a plot of land (one sesaigh) in the vicinity of which to build a house. His son John and Roger Tasker, who were Hansard's Lieutenants were given similar plots to build fortified houses to guard another Ford at Ballindrait. Thomas Keyes and Roger Tasker took up and developed land included in Clonleigh originally granted to the Bishop of Derry. Thomas Keyes property was at Clonfade (afterwards Glenfade) and Roger Tasker's was Cavanacor.

(Burke, 1862, p. 162)

Roger Tasker built a house on this land around 1611 and the house was overlooking the river Deele. The house would have had, as it still does today, a very commanding view from the hill and overlooked the crossing point on the river. The field directly opposite the house is known as Tyleford and there was a crossing point of flat stones there. The main road to Lifford and Strabane can be seen from the house as well as a perfect view of the old stone bridge over the river. The Annals of the Four Masters describes a battle which took place at the crossing point between the local Irish and the English Garrison at Lifford.

On one occasion O'Donnell, before he left his camp, went towards the English, to see if he could induce them to come outside the fortifications on the level plain. When O'Donnell's people arrived opposite the town, the English began to reconnoitre them; but they did not sally out against them, for they perceived it was to offer defiance and challenge for battle they had come. O'Donnell's people then returned back when they did not obtain what they wanted, and they halted for some time on the brink of a river called Dael*, a short distance to the north of the town. Large parties of them went to their tents, and about their business, for they did not think that the English would follow them on that day. When Niall Garbh O'Donnell perceived O'Donnell's people scattered and unprepared for action, he told the English that they ought now to attack them. The English at his bidding armed themselves quietly and silently in the centre of their fortifications, in order



that their enemies could not see them until they were armed and accoutred. When they were ready they sallied out from their fortifications in battle array, and then, with Niall and his brothers and people in the van, advanced against O'Donnell's people.

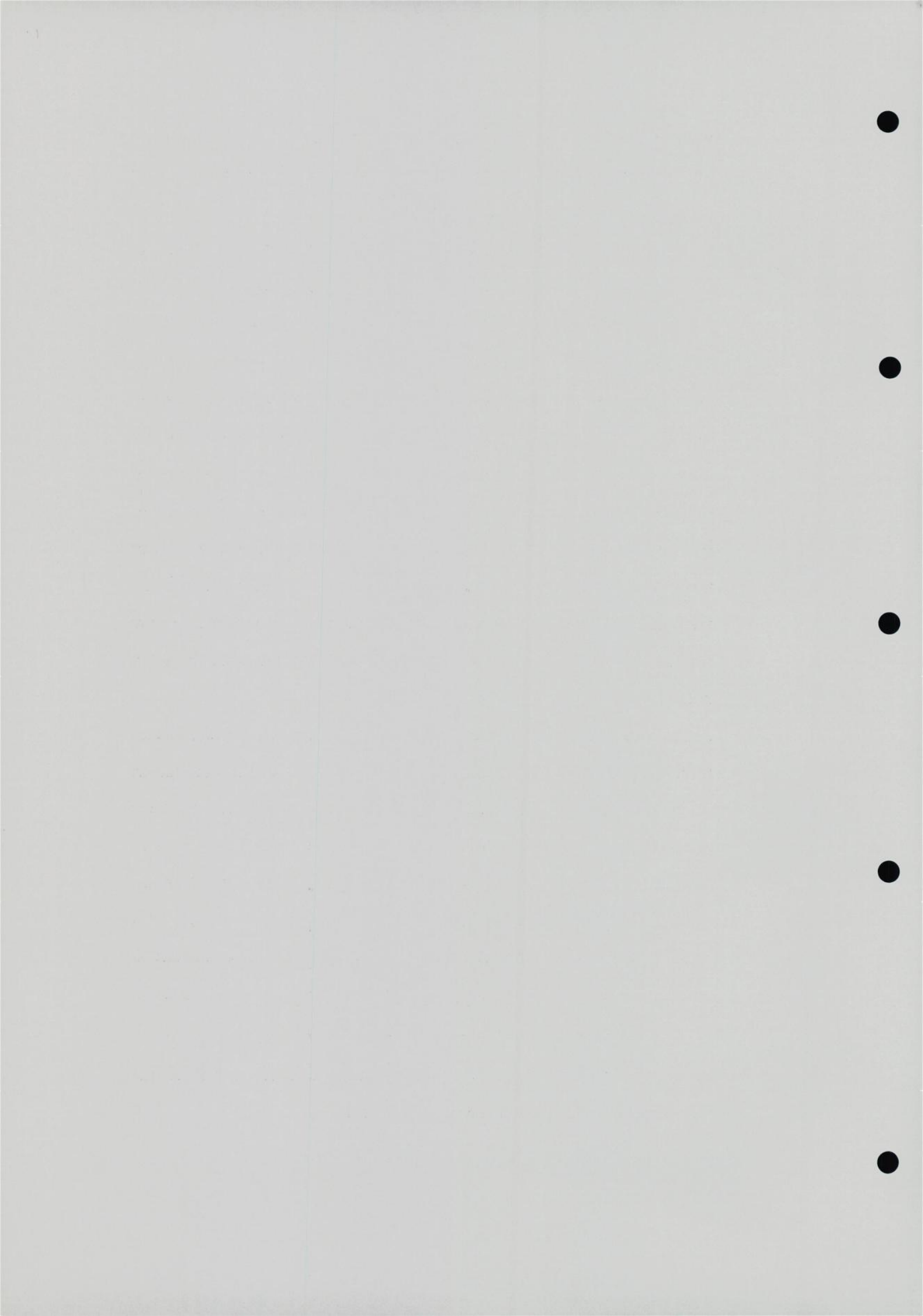
(J O'Donovan Ed., The Annals of The Four Masters. P. 2215 (1600) (see appendix 1.)

The Plantation of Ulster was not dissimilar to the contemporary English colonisation of the New World. However the native American Indians were all but wiped out by their oppressors in a relatively short space of time. The conflict between the native Irish and the English was a much more drawn out process probably because of the close proximity of Ireland to such a strong nation as England. Some of the Ulster Irish would have survived even though a great number would have been slaughtered by the Planters. The native Irish saw their chance for revenge when the settlement weakened and they fought back against the Planters in 1641. Ireland then became part of English civil war and was on the verge of destitution. This was followed by a more peaceful period which was in turn followed by a more prosperous time of restoration which helped Ulster achieve the prosperity it was entitled to.

The main function and justification of a defensive work, be it of earth, wood or stone, is to enable relatively few defenders to withstand with success the attacks of greater numbers.

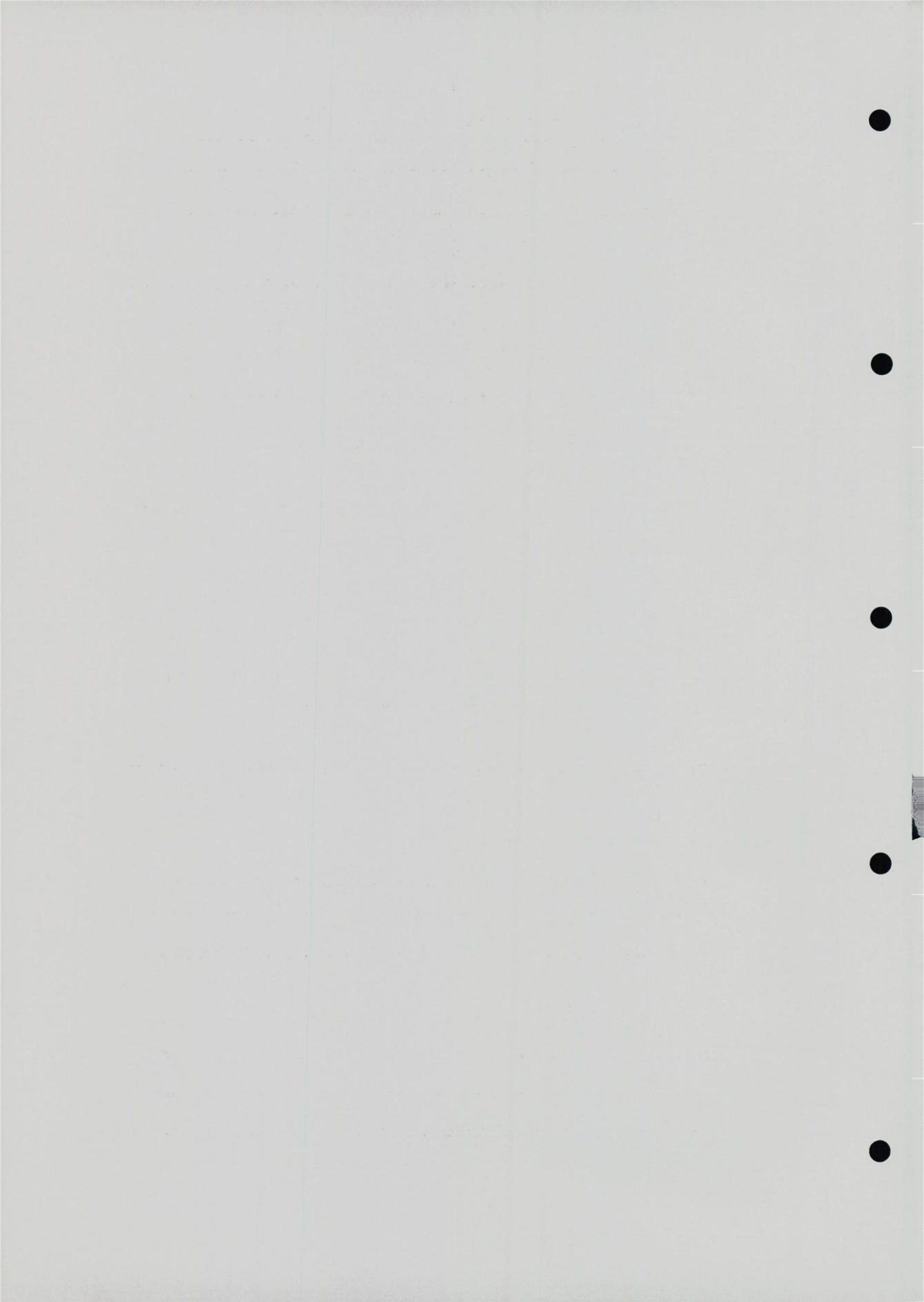
(Leask, 1941, p.241)

Given the unstable time around which Cavanacor house was being built, it is easy to understand the need for the house to be placed strategically and also to be semi-fortified. There would



have been a very strong siege mentality present in the lives of the native Irish and the Planter intruders. The big lone house up on the hill would be a symbol of authority and oppression, owned by foreign people who had taken over the land in the area by force, killing anyone who resisted. This would have bred a lot of hatred in the minds of the remaining native Irish who would have become subservient to these intruders. How close would the atmosphere surrounding the Planters of Ulster have been to the one experienced by the first settlers building their stockade in the New World? Would there have been frequent attacks on the planters from the native Irish similar to the attacks experienced by their brother settlers in America? Roger Tasker was a soldier and would have been an ideal subject to be a planter in Ulster. He was probably positioned at Cavanacor so as to be in close proximity to the garrison at Lifford so he would have some chance to call upon their help if need be.

Especially at night the house has a great feeling of security even though it stands in such an isolated situation. It is still possible to imagine what it would have been like for the first planters, holding out in their lone house up on a hill, and the difficulties in communicating with other planters or the garrison at Lifford in times of need. There are a lot of parallels between the predicament faced by the Planters of Ulster and the situation faced by their contemporaries in the New World although there was probably more of a feeling of terrified isolation felt by the besieged, in their lonely outpost stockades surrounded, so far away from home, by savage native Americans.



“Exploratory Plantations in Laois and Offaly, in reality no more than the foundation of a few fortified outposts, heralded more substantial settlements in Cork and after 1607, in the North, where sheer weight of numbers ensured its lasting success. Although they were founded on political and economical considerations- the aim was to render Ireland at once profitable and loyal- the principles of Plantation were not entirely venal. For those who took part they represented a realization of the renaissance ideal, an adventure initiated in the hope of forging a perfect society on ‘virgin’ territory. It was an excitement at new opportunities not dissimilar to that which lay behind the colonization of America. It is no coincidence that the first Plantations of Ulster were exactly contemporary with the stockades of colonial Virginia. Jamestown was founded in 1607, Derry in 1613.”

(Niall Mc Cullough and Valerie Mulvin.1987 pg. 43)

The house has been in continuous habitation since it was built in Roger Tasker’s time around 1611. Tasker’s elder daughter Barbara, married John Keyes, and Roger Tasker gave his daughter Cavanacor House as a marriage settlement.

“John Keyes married Barbara, daughter and heiress of Roger Tasker, to whom her father assigned Cavanacor, which estate henceforth became their principle residence.”

(Burke, 1862 p.174)

“John Keyes claimeth one sesoch of the said Qr land with house and garden plot in Ballendrait as Assigne to ROGER TASKER who held ye same in freehold from ye sd Sr Richard.”
(Barony of Raphoe, Parish of Lifford, Civil Survey 1654-56.)

The Keyes family were an important family at this time as they are also listed in Burke’s Landed Gentry. The Keyes family made Cavanacor their main seat in Ireland and the house continued under the Keyes name until 1823 when Mary Keyes



married Major Humfrey. From then it became the principle family seat of the Humfrey family in Ireland. (see appendix 2.) The house continued to be under the Humfrey family until 30th of April 1956 when it was sold by Joan Muriel Loyd and Daphne Geraldine Lewis who were left Cavanacor by their mother Betty Muriel Humphrey, who died on the 11th of November 1953. Mrs Humfreys' daughters sold it to a Miss Wilhelmina Annie Clarke who lived at Cavanacor until her death on the 13th of November 1970. The house was then sold by James Wray and Henry Simms (executors of Miss Clarke) to Miss Ethel Snodgrass and Kathleen Rebecca Snodgrass. The latter died during her time at Cavanacor and Miss Ethel Snodgrass sold the house to Eddie and Joanna O'Kane on the 16th of November 1974. These present owners have owned and lived at Cavanacor for the past 21 years.

Jon. Portr claimes one seshoch of ye sd Qr with a house and garden plot in Ballendrait being given by his father in law ROGER TASKER as a porcon with his wife, it being purchased by him from Thomas fflood (sic) who who held the same freehold from sd Sr Richard.

Barony of Raphoe, Parish of Lifford,
Civil Survey 1654-56.

Roger Tasker, the original builder of Cavanacor, had two daughters - Barbara, who later married John Keyes and who inherited Cavanacor on her father's death, and Magdalen (b.1632), who married first Captain Porter and secondly Robert Bruce Pollock, who was an officer in Captain Porter's regiment. In approximately 1682 Magdalen Pollock (nee Tasker) and Robert Bruce Pollock emigrated to America with their children John, Robert, David, William, James, Ephraim, Ann, Margret, and Jane. On arrival in America Robert Bruce Pollock changed



his name to Polk. He was granted land by Lord Baltimore which became known as "Polk's Folly" and "Polk's Lot".

Magdalen Polk lived to be 92 and died in 1726.

Their son William (b.1664 in Donegal) continued living in Maryland and was the father of another William who moved to Pennsylvania and then to North Carolina; he died about 1753.

Colonel Ezekiel Polk who served in the Revolutionary War, was one of his sons and he died in 1824 leaving a son Samuel who married Jane Knox. Samuel and Jane had a son James Knox Polk who became the 11th President of The United States of America.(see Appendix 4.)(Pl.3)

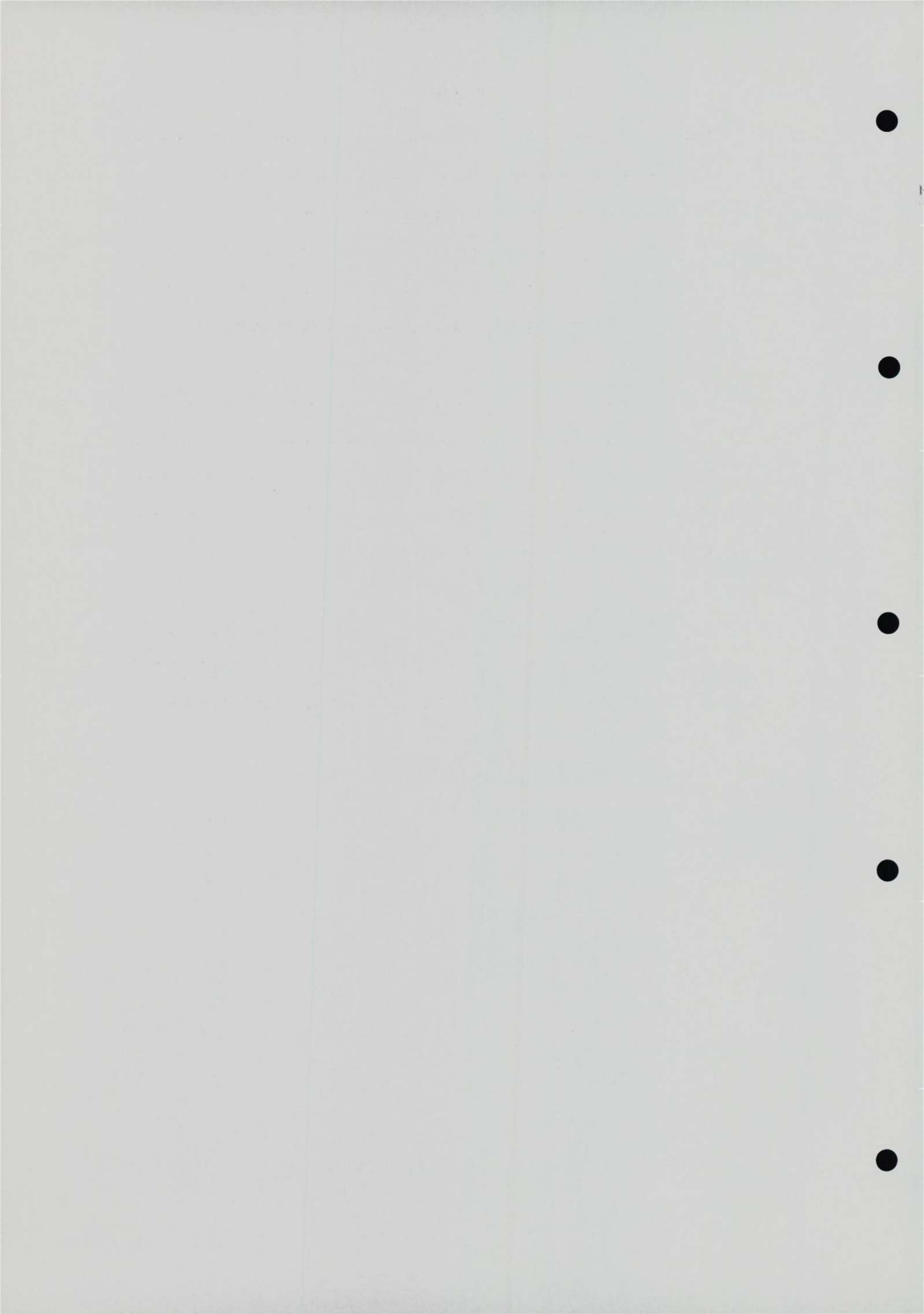
Another individual of note who had connections with the house is King James II who dined at Cavanacor House during the Siege of Derry. On the retreat of his army from Derry all the Protestant houses in the area were burned. Cavanacor was given protection by King James, which saved it from destruction. This makes it one of the earliest plantation houses in continuous occupation up to the present day. An account of the visit of King James to Cavanacor is given in Graham's "Derriana":

On 20th of April 1689 King James passed thro' on his way from Mongevlin Castle to Strabane, after dining under a big sycamore tree in front of the house of John Keyes esq. at Cavanacor, to whom he gave protection, which afterwards saved this gentleman's house, when those of all the Protestant houses round him were burned.

The old oak table on which the unfortunate monarch sat to dinner, and the antiquated china upon which the dinner was served are preserved as curiosities.

(Grahams Derriana. 1822, Pg.54)

Dalton's "Army List" (1689-1714) states that Captain Keyes was in London after the relief and received three months pay



from the War Office to enable him to join the Duke of Schomberg's army in Ireland. Both these officers signed the Derry address to King William after the relief.

While King James was being entertained at Cavanacor by John Keyes, two of John's brothers, Thomas and Frederick Keyes, both of Cavanacor, were inside Derry, defending it against King James' army.

Captain Thomas Keyes and Frederick Keyes are recorded as defenders throughout the Siege. They held commissions in Colonel Baker's regiment - later Colonel Croften's regiment. Previous to this, protestant armies had massed on the flat plains at Cavanacor prior to the siege of Derry.

On the low level grounds between this town and the house of Cavanacor, a great body of Protestant Noblemen and gentlemen assembled with their regiments of horse and foot, a short time before Londonderry was invested by James's army. This circumstance is thus recorded in the Armagh manuscript, Lib. 1. Sec,xv" (See Appendix 3)

(Grahams Derriana, 1822, Pg. 53)



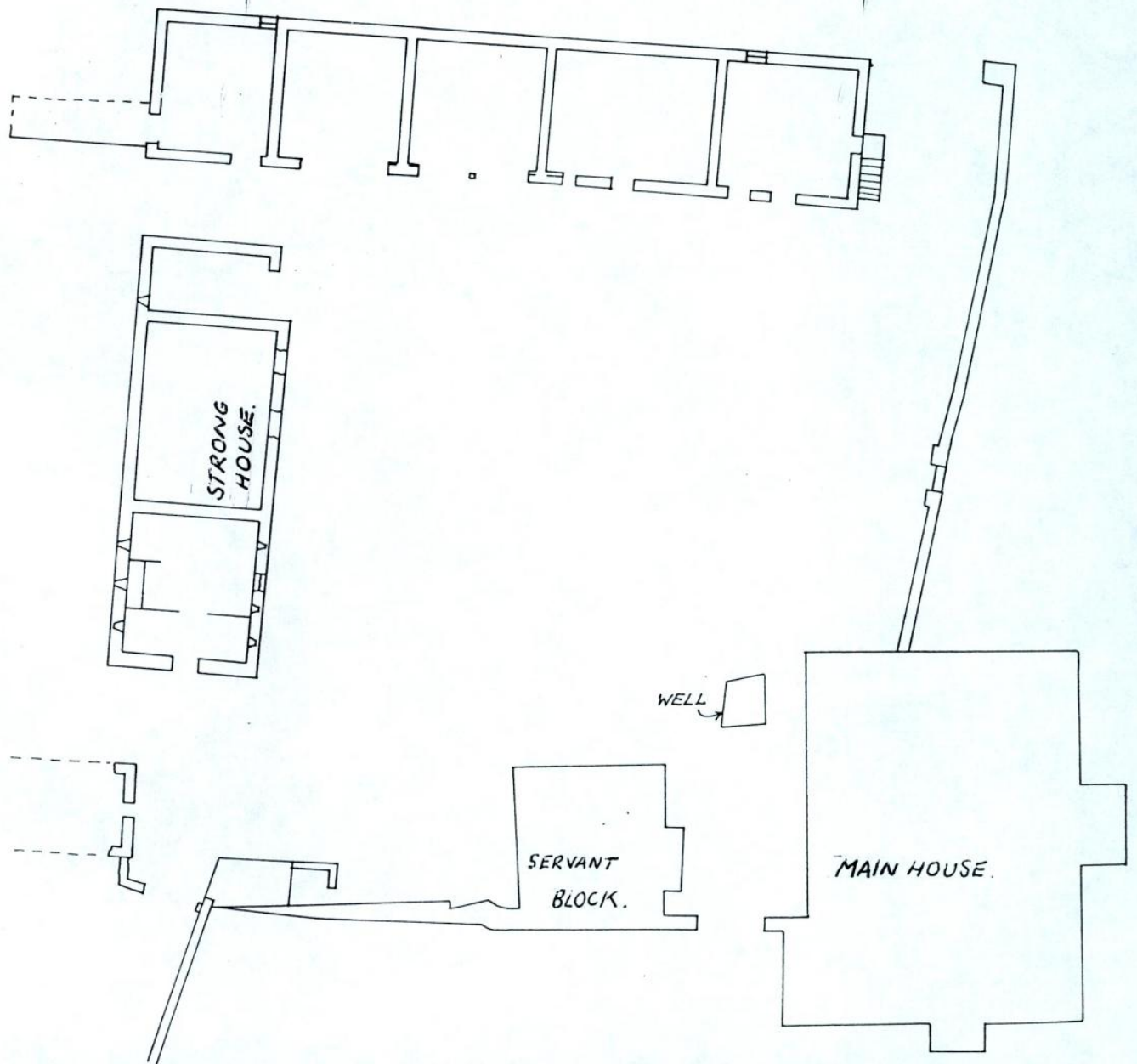
CHAPTER 2: SURVEY OF THE HOUSE.

2.1 Introduction to the construction of the house.

Houses can provide clear evidence of social conditions and changes in history. It can also be said that social conditions and changes in history can provide a mountain of information in relation to the history of a house. It is important in determining the different stages the house went through, to examine the social background of the house, its inhabitants, the history of the local area, and even national and international events such as the Spanish Armada, the Flight of the Earls, the colonisation of America and the Famine.

Architectural styles in the 17th century vary considerably according to their geographical location. In the case of the plantation of Ulster however, styles would have been brought directly into the rural areas by the planters and utilised in a regimented and standard fashion. Roger Tasker would have come directly from England with workers and builders, so that means that he would probably have taken the recent period styles of the time in London with him. The builders of the larger houses in rural areas would have been more likely to be in touch with the latest architectural style than their less wealthy native workers. The smaller and medium sized houses would have been influenced by the styles of the larger houses seen in the local towns.





1. Plan of house in relation to yard.

Fig. 1.

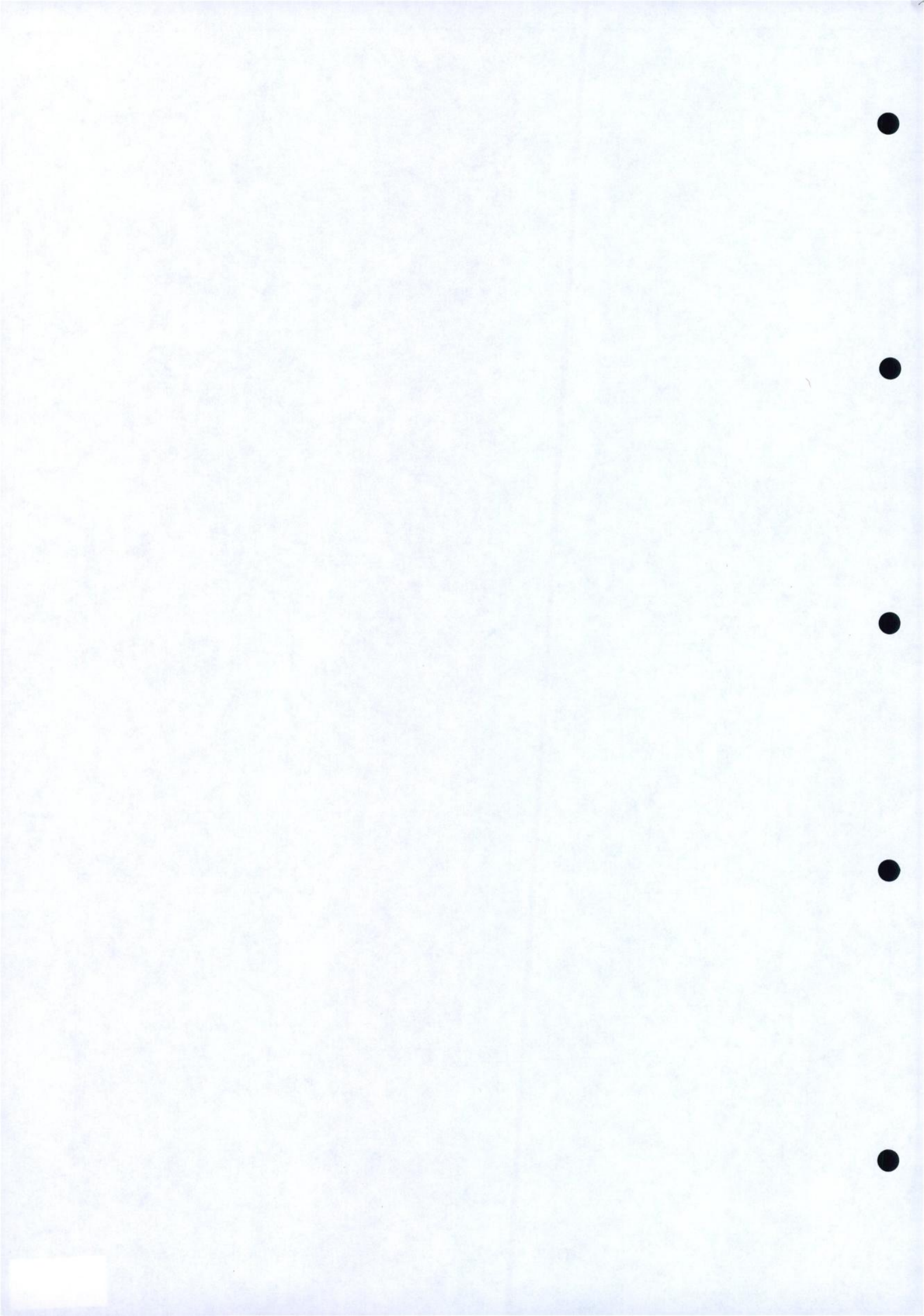




Fig. 9.

9. Side elevation of Cavanacor from garden, showing separated buildings.



Fig. 10

10. Side elevation of Cavanacor showing house before the kitchen was demolished. Top window far left was window to a dressing room and the window directly below it was a larder. To the left of this behind the trees there is the roof of the nursery and the kitchen.



Fig. 11.

11. Side elevation of house detail, upper and lower windows to the far left are the dressing room and the larder.(app.1946)



Fig. 12.

12. Nursery window.(app.1948)

'It is clear from the researches of Mr D.M. Waterman that even in the counties most thoroughly penetrated by the early 17th- Century plantation, the planters, who were in a settlers-and-injuns situation, and would no doubt ideally have wished to build themselves pure Scotch or English houses (with due provision, to be sure, for defence), were sometimes obliged to use Irish masons, and that it was not long before building 'went native'. Ireland is a flat country, with a much greater measure of homogeneity.'

(Craig, 1982, p.17)

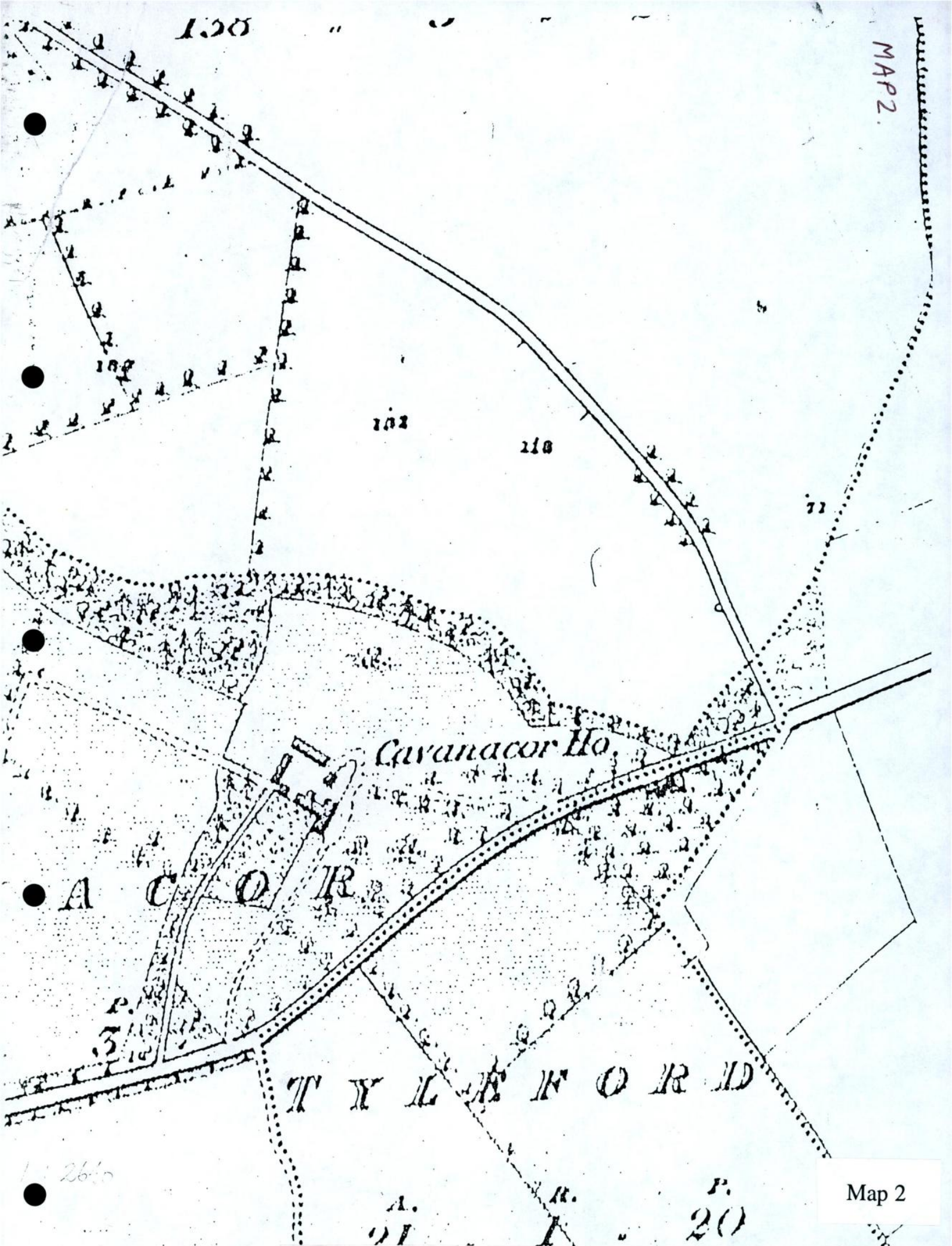
Although adjustments have been made to the house to suit the changing needs of its occupants, these alterations has been considerably limited over the years of the house's existence. This becomes obvious after consulting the plan structure detailed in the various maps dating from the 1800's until today (maps 1, 2, 3, & 4) (Fig.1).. For example the most obvious alteration to the main house that is the demolition of the old kitchen was done in the 1950's, before that the plan of the main house had remained unaltered for over a century (figs. 9,10,11,12). The function of Cavanacor house was, and still is today, a home built to protect its inhabitants from the elements. It has also been used in the past in a defensive nature not just defending its owners from the weather but also from aggressive natives during Plantation times.¹ In researching the date of the original construction of the house which is around 1611 onwards, it is important to compare the initial architectural style of the 1600's with the period of architecture of the major surviving work. This gives an insight into the history of successive alterations to the house, and this in

¹ It was common practice in Plantation times to have a strong-house with a store of arms seperate from the main house so that the inhabitants could retreat to its security in times of attack. The presence of such a building at Cavanacor, with gunholes or slit windows points to the need for a defensive element in the architecture of the complex. Stronghouse:see Pls. 4,5.





1. 1820 map of Cavanacor and lands attached.



MAP 2.

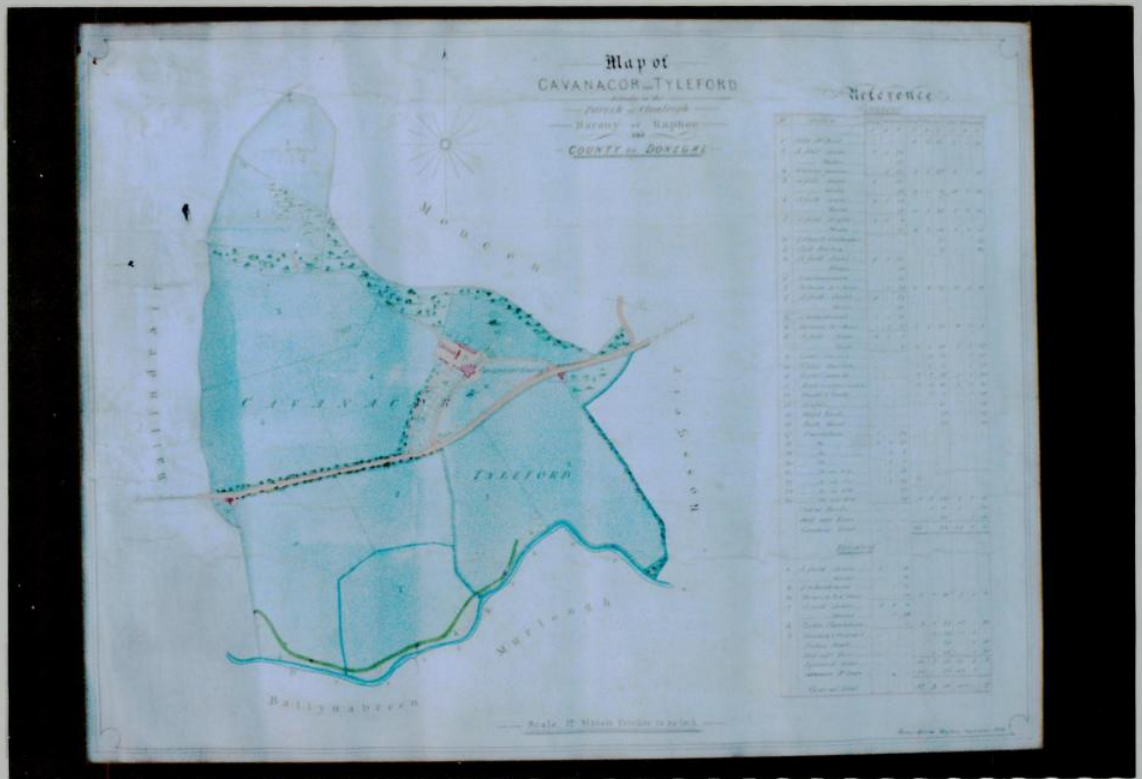
Cavanacor Ho.

ACOR

TYLER ROAD

Map 2

2. 1833 ordinance survey map of Cavanacor and surrounding townlands.

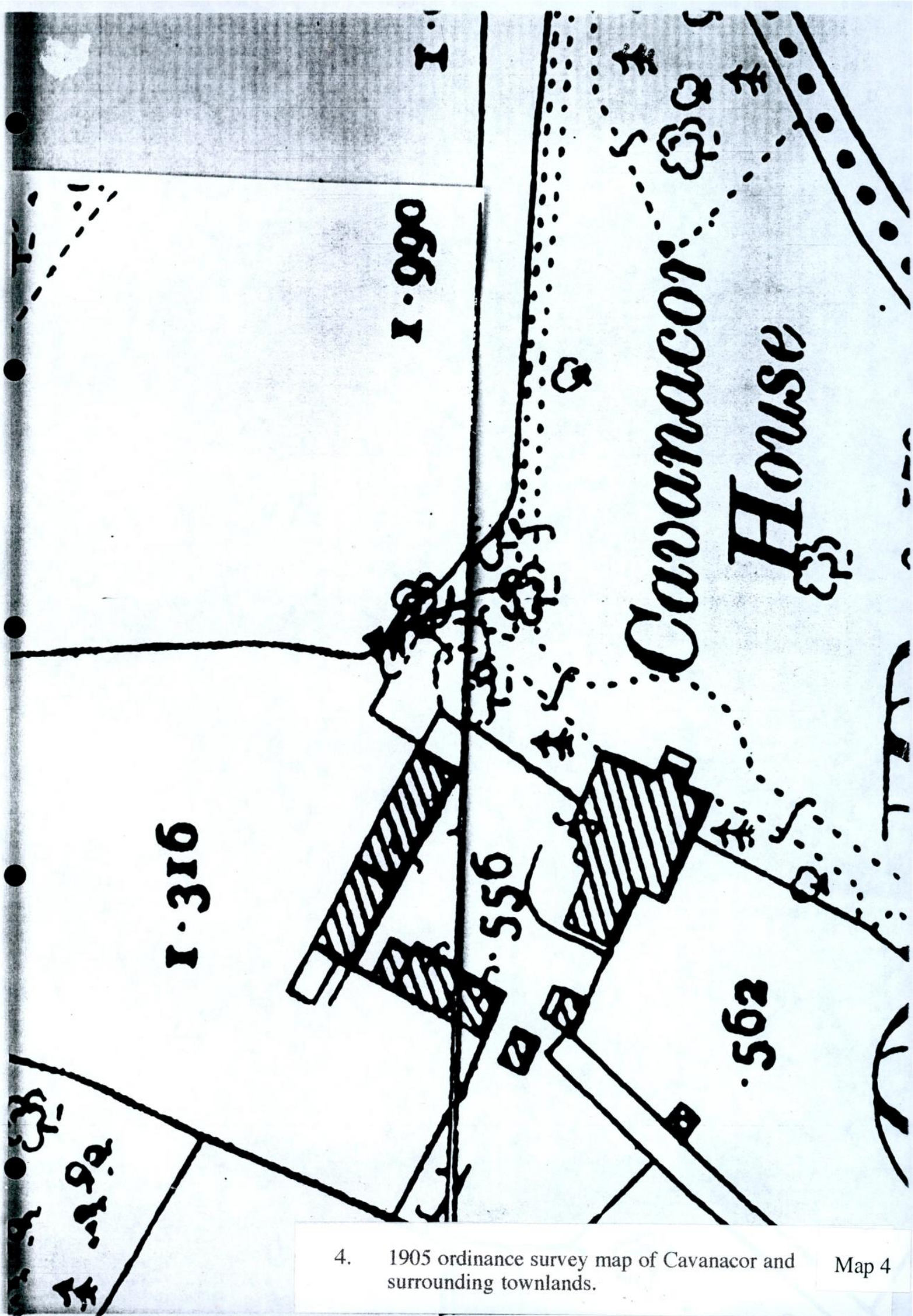


3. 1875 map of Cavanacor and Tyleford.

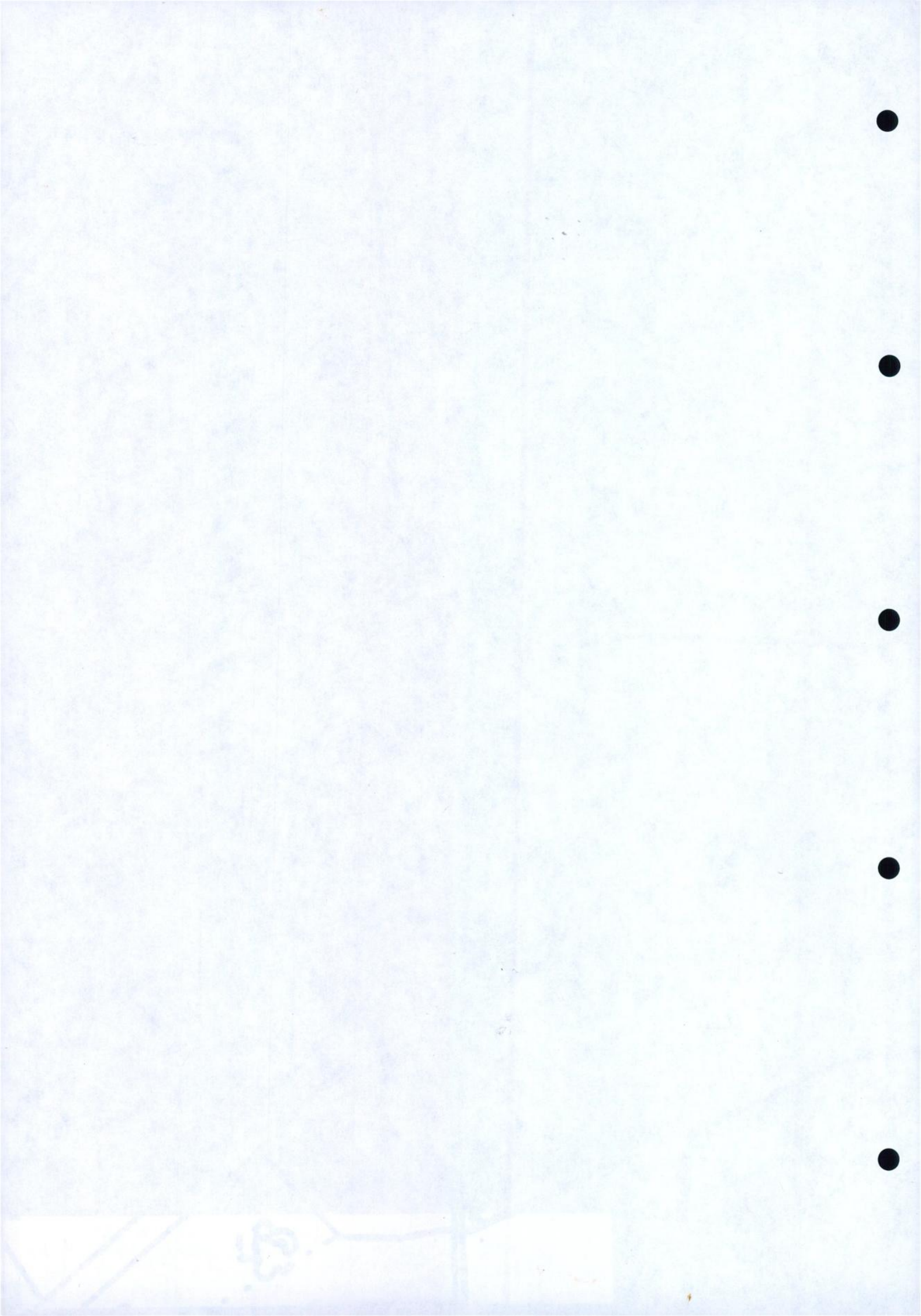


Map 3

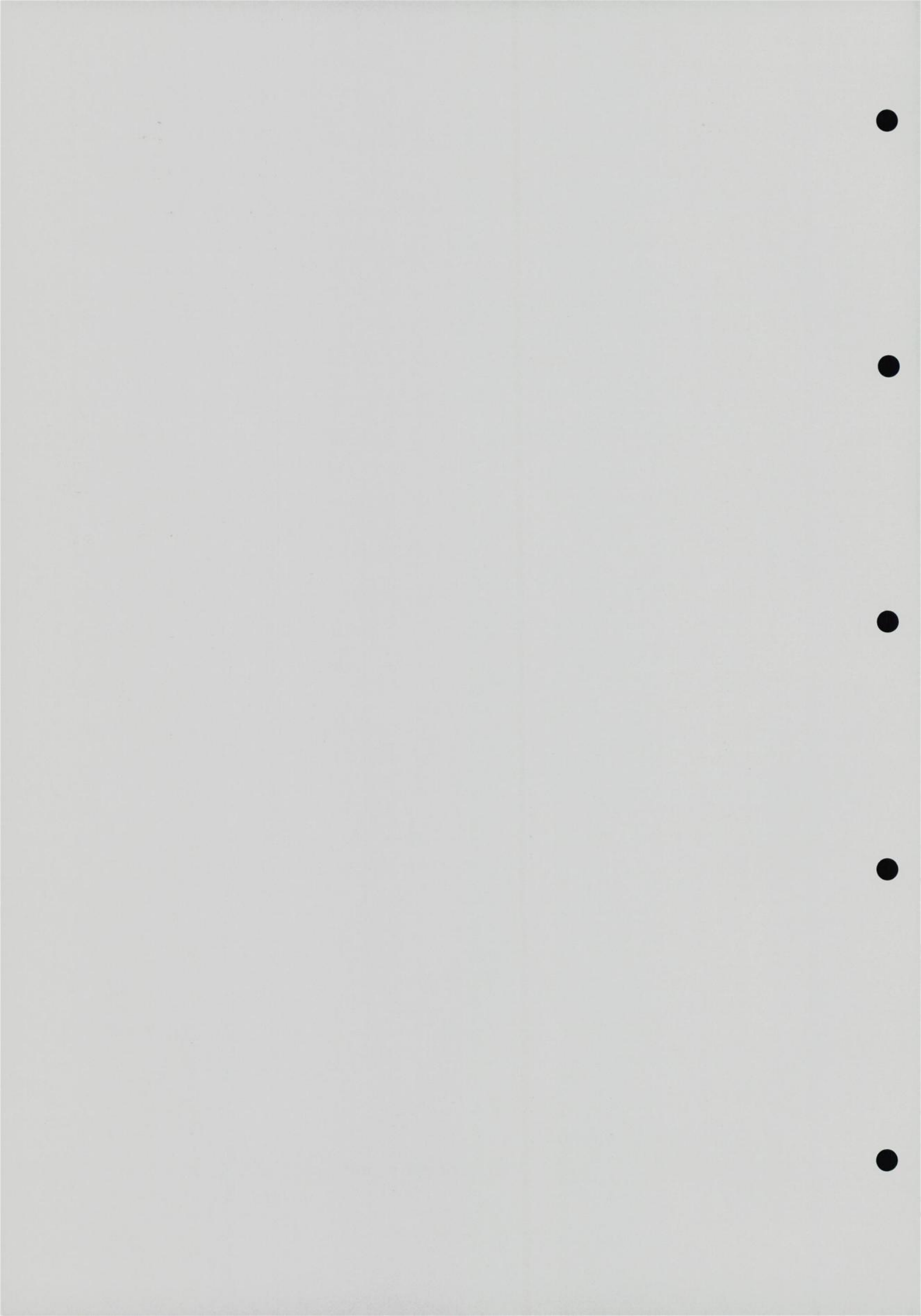
a) Detail of 1875 map.

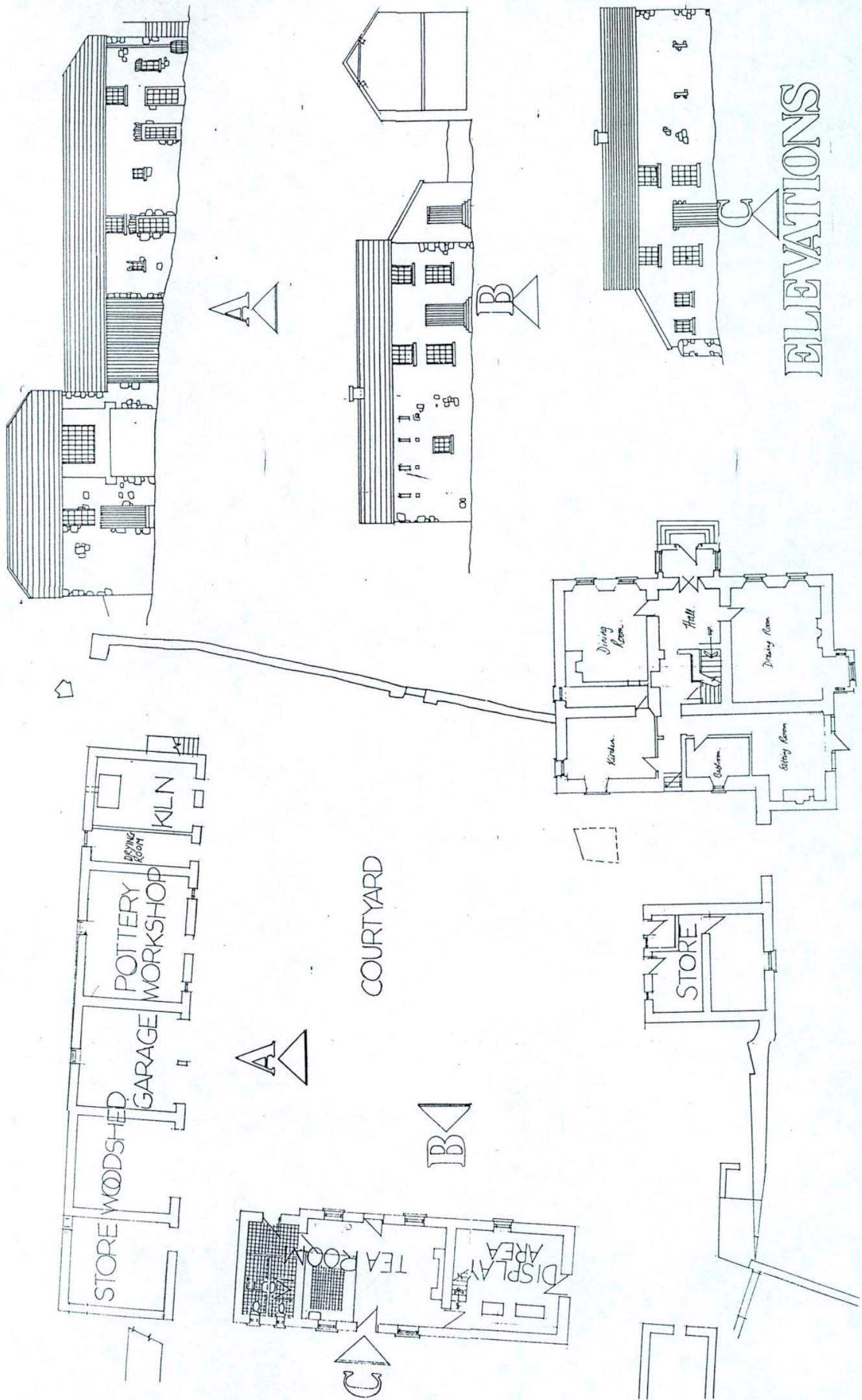


4. 1905 ordinance survey map of Cavanacor and surrounding townlands.



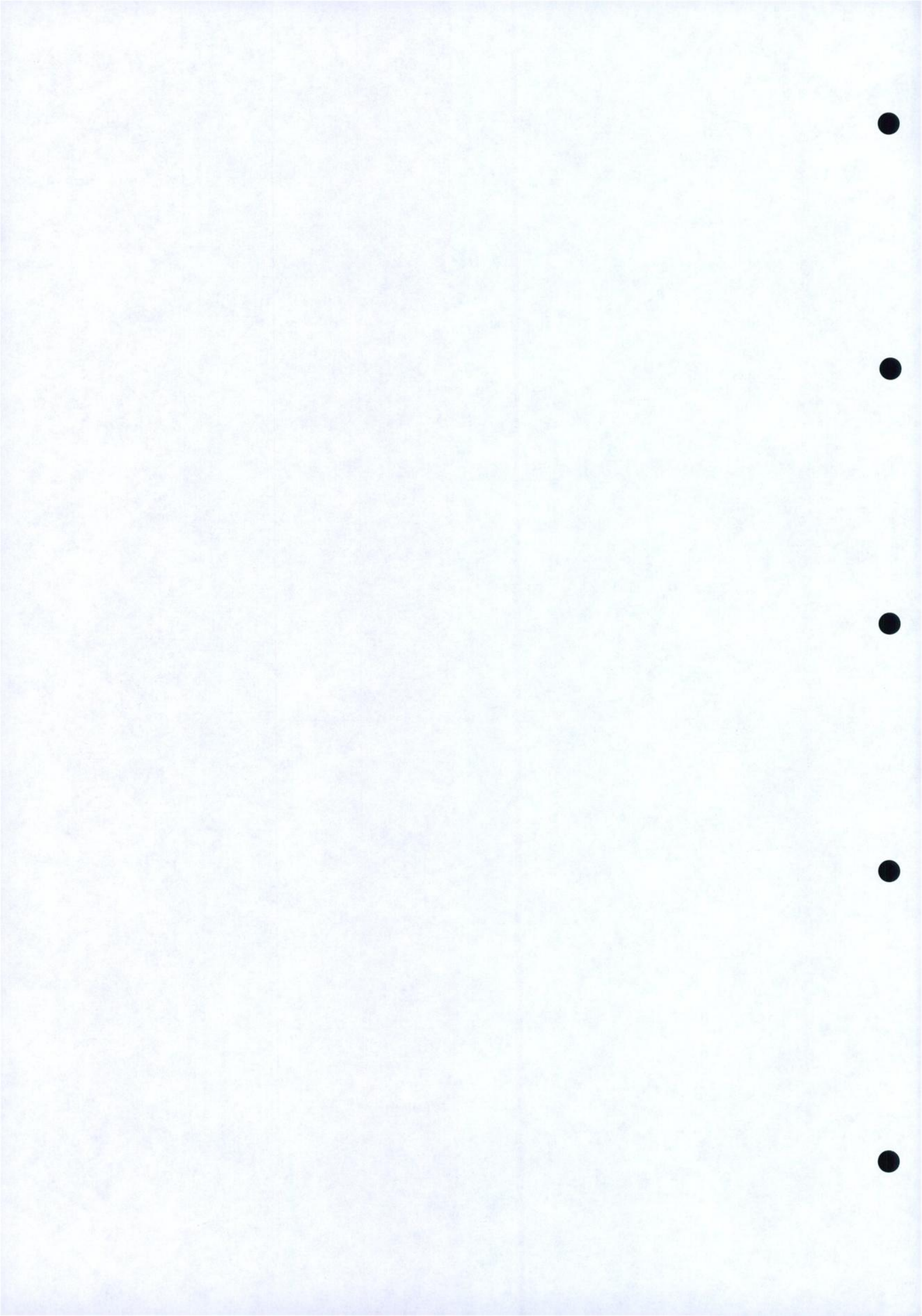
turn informs about the previous owners and their increasing and decreasing prosperity. The inhabitants of a house may have moved up and down on the social scale and this can be reflected in its architectural form. Architecture is always re-evaluated and adjusted and it is in the nature of buildings to go through this constant state of metamorphosis throughout the span of their existence. Buildings change both in their form and in their use. Many old houses that exist today were not built as dwellings but for other purposes.

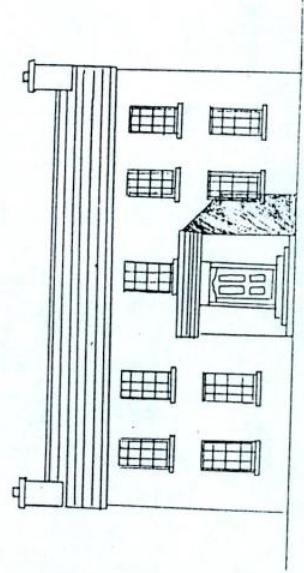
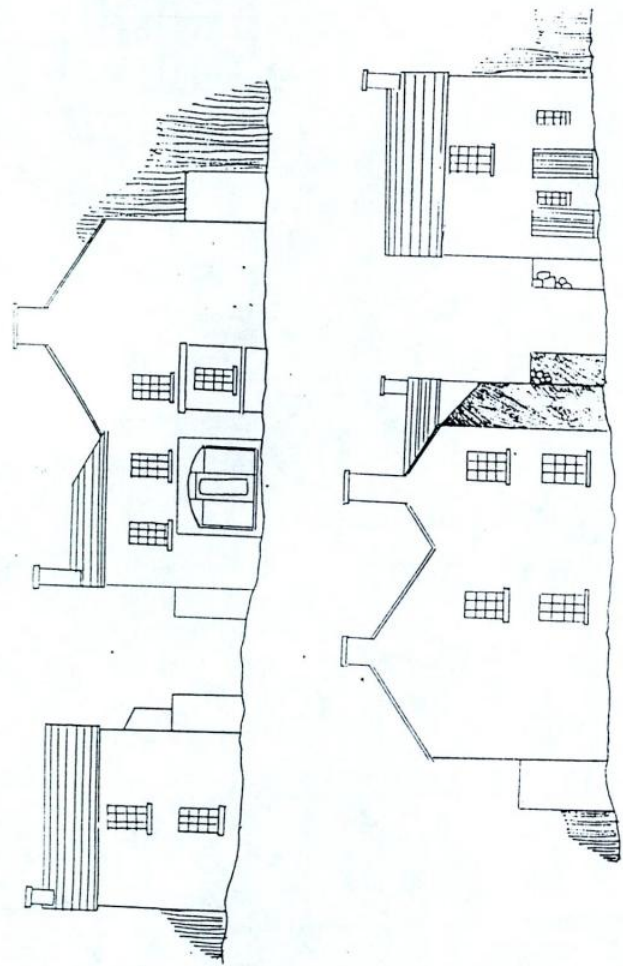




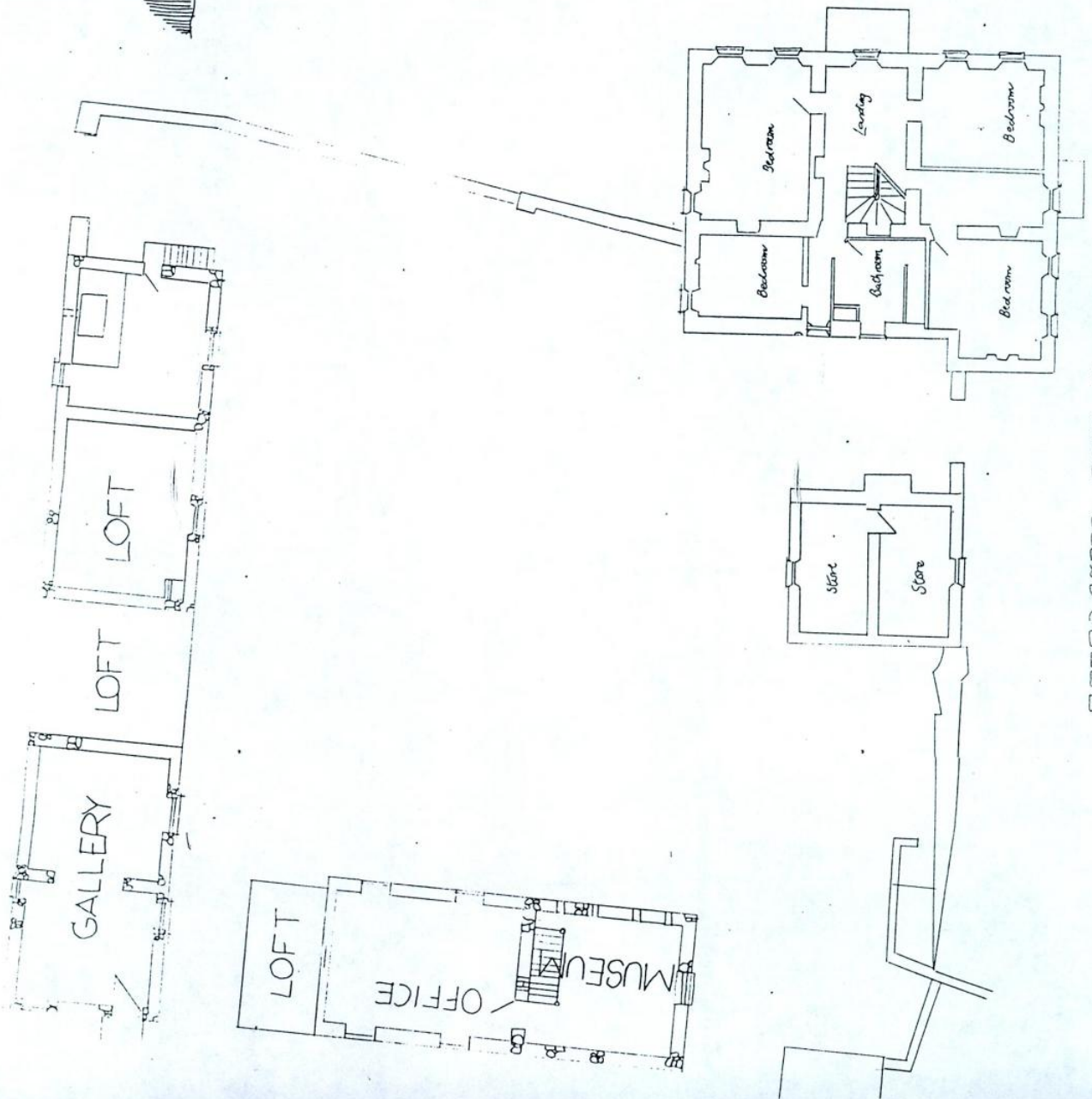
ELEVATIONS

2. Ground floor plan of main house and outbuildings;
Elevation drawings of outbuildings.



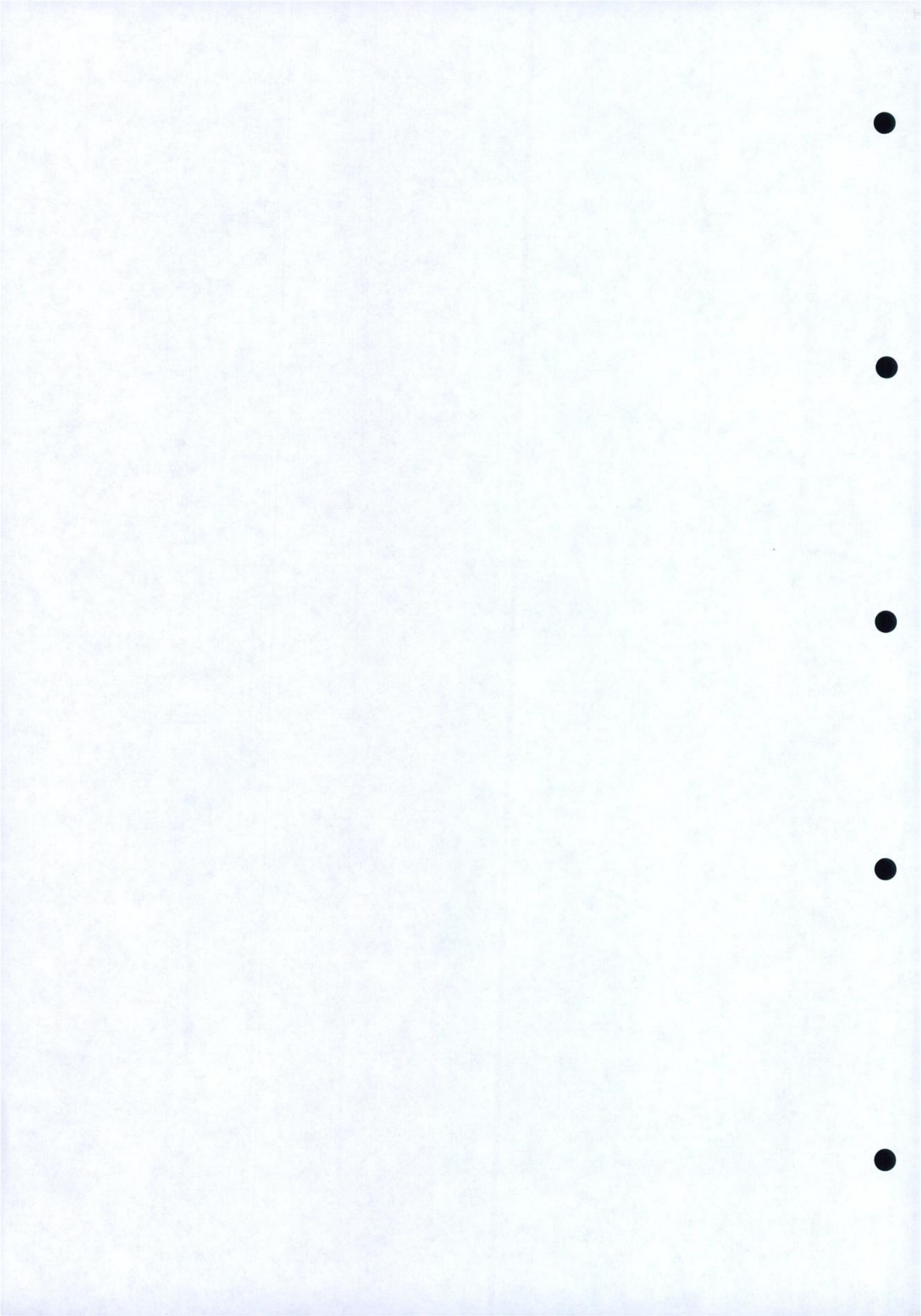


ELEVATIONS



FIRST FLOOR

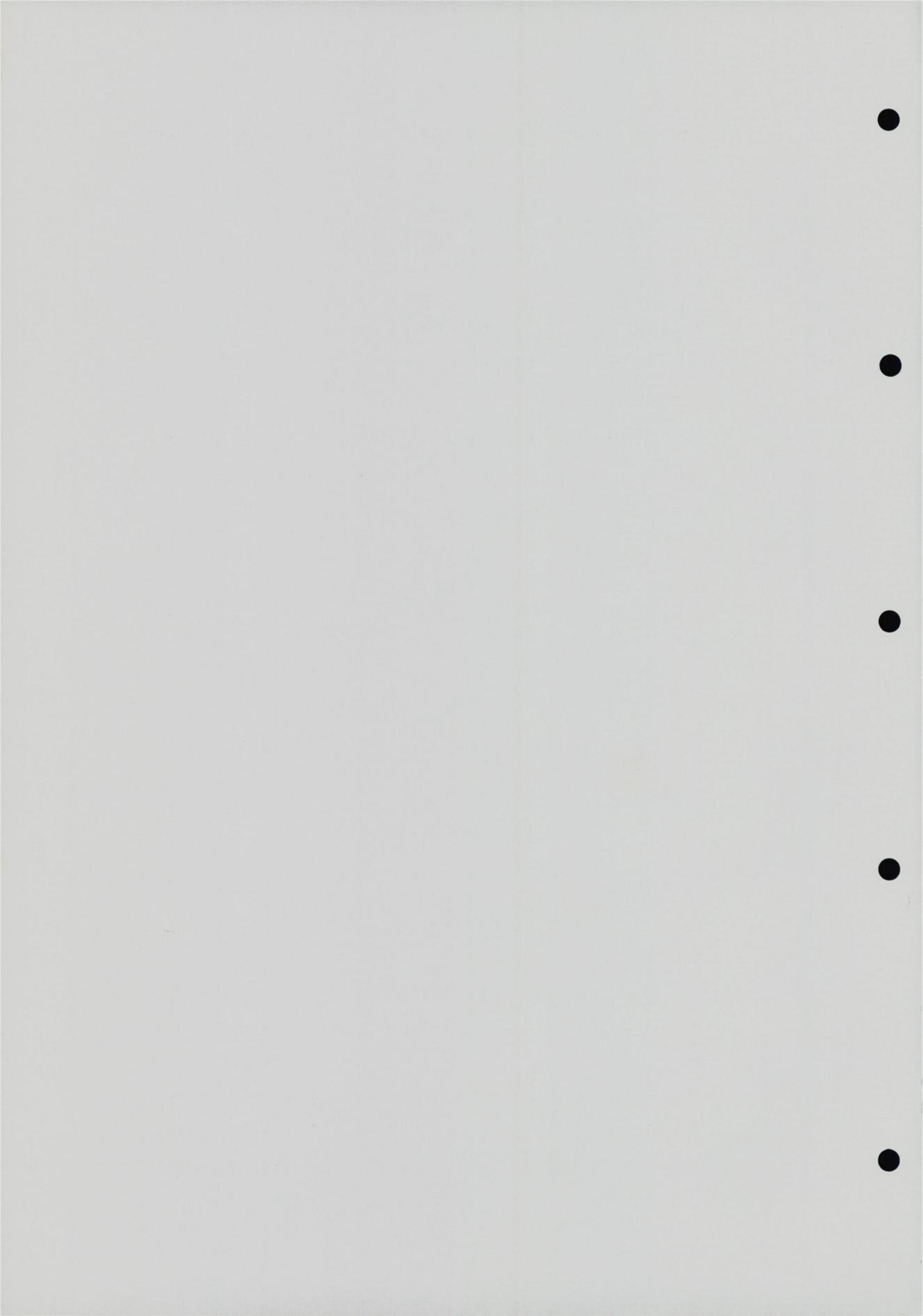
3. First floor plan of main house and out buildings;
Elevation drawings of main house.



2.2 Survey of the exterior of the house and external features of the landscape and surrounding outhouses.

Before drawing decisive conclusions about the development of the house it is important to carry out a detailed survey of the house itself. Firstly it is necessary to establish how important the house is. The house is situated in a rural area and would have been extremely isolated at the time it was built. This isolation is still apparent today, even though there has been gradual growth in the population density of the area over the centuries. Cavanacor has an air of importance about it even today, this is because of its isolated positioning, high up on the hill with a commanding view of the countryside. The approach is also dramatic, as the house can be seen from quite a distance away. Then on reaching the front gate there is a steep driveway with trees on either side which obscure the view of the house. The house can be seen once again near the top of the driveway looking at it through the trees. Here viewed up close it becomes apparent that it is a very important house. Would so much trouble be taken in positioning and building a house such as this if it was not to have any stature within the locality ?

Cavanacor is a fairly large building which is sub-divided and the divisions within the house also contribute to the fact that the house was one of some importance at different stages in its development. There is a front entrance area which leads to the hall, dining room and formal drawing room. This area of the house is cut off from the back by two archways, one leading to the kitchen area and one leading upstairs. There is a substantial servant area at the back of the house and this also points to the



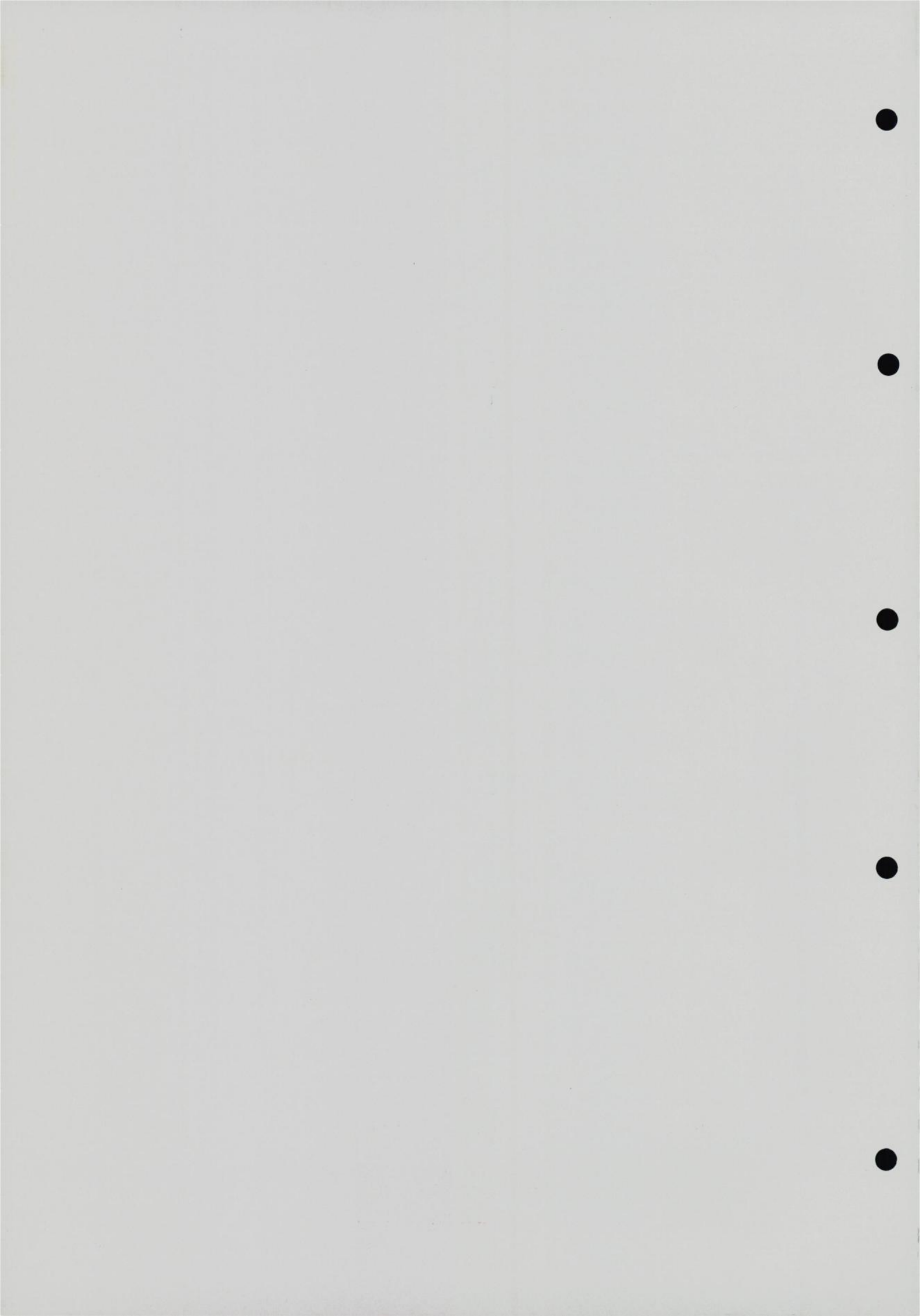
status of the occupants of the house. There is a very large kitchen as well as large living quarters for the servants including bedrooms, sitting rooms and wash room. A census of around 1875 states that 60 people worked and lived at Cavanacor.

Many of the large buildings in the area are much later than Cavanacor and date to around the late 19th century, they are smaller in scale and consist of a number of prosperous farmhouses.

The field pattern surrounding the house is comprised of smaller rather than larger fields so this suggests an earlier field pattern. There was a large amount of property attached to Cavanacor and this can be seen from the various maps still in existence. There was also a substantial yard area which at one stage comprised two yards, a second above the first. In the estate map of 1875 we can see that the Cavanacor estate had 100 acres of land attached and also the second yard is visible which appeared around 1823 and was gone by the early 1900's. (see map 3,3a,3b) The social position of house's inhabitants also points to its importance. The Keyes and Humfreys families are listed in Burkes Peerage and Burkes Landed Gentry. This proves that they are definitely of important standing in social circles of the time and so would obviously live in a house of equal importance. The description of the town of Lifford in Lewis's Topographical Directory of 1837 mentions only two houses in the parish of Clonleigh.

“ The principle seats are Clonleigh, the residence of the Rev. W. Knox; and Cavanacor, of B. Geale Humfrey, Esq.”

(Lewis, 1837,p.44)



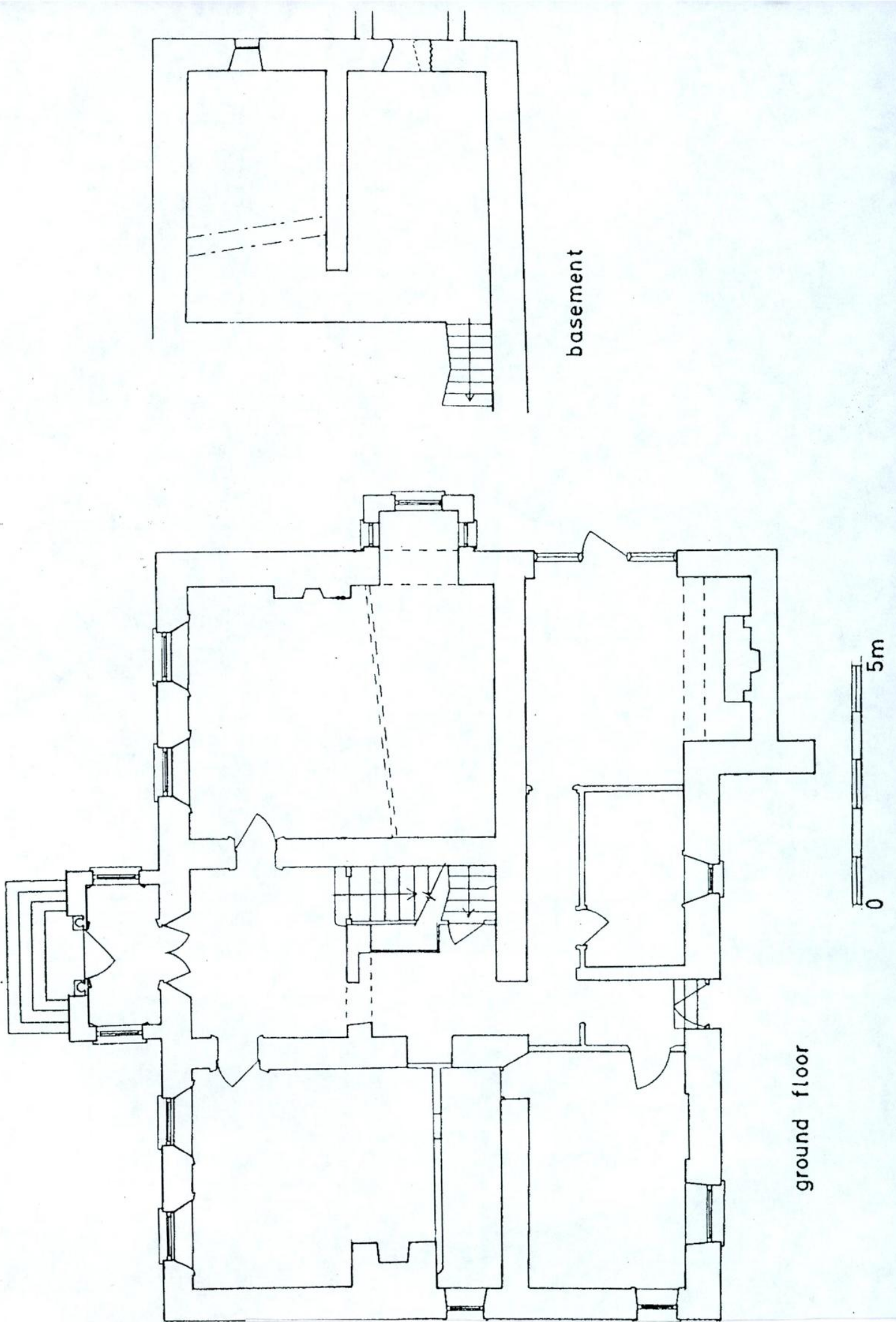


Fig. 4.

4. Ground floor plan of the main house showing proposed single pile form.

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5m

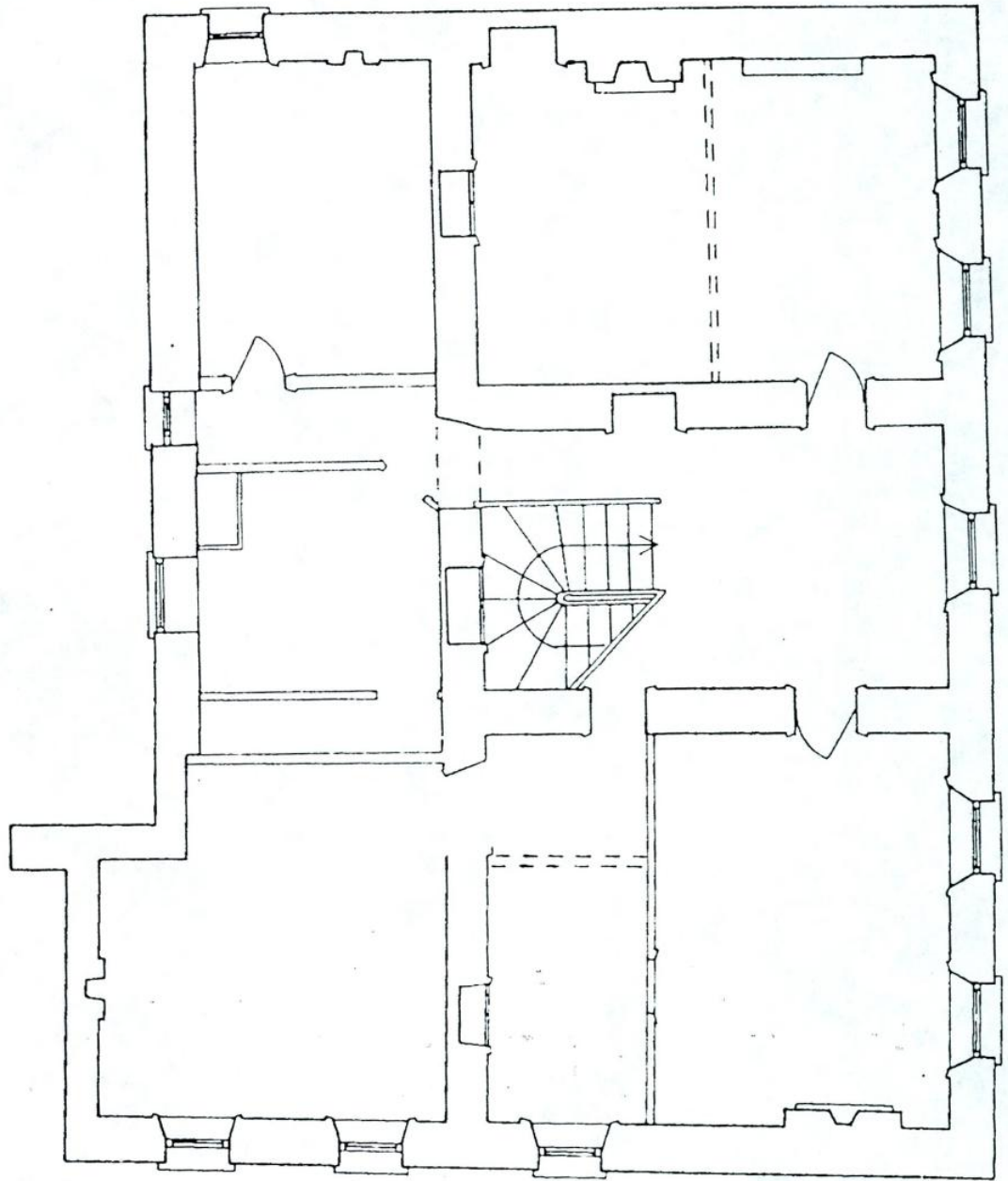


Fig. 5.

5. First floor plan of main house showing proposed single pile form.

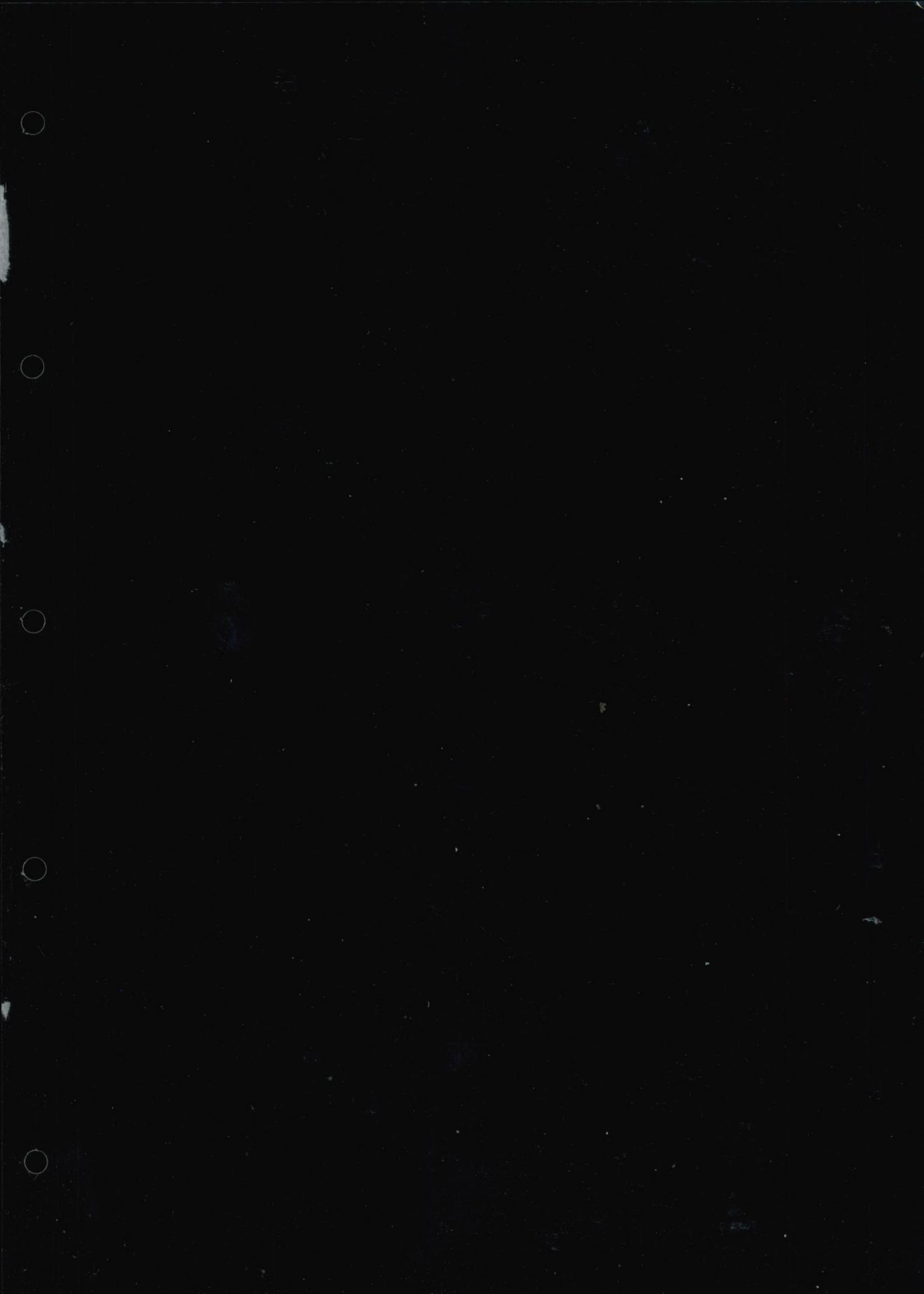






Fig. 6.

6. Side elevation of present day house, showing back of house and servant block. Drawing shows where kitchen would have been between the two buildings.

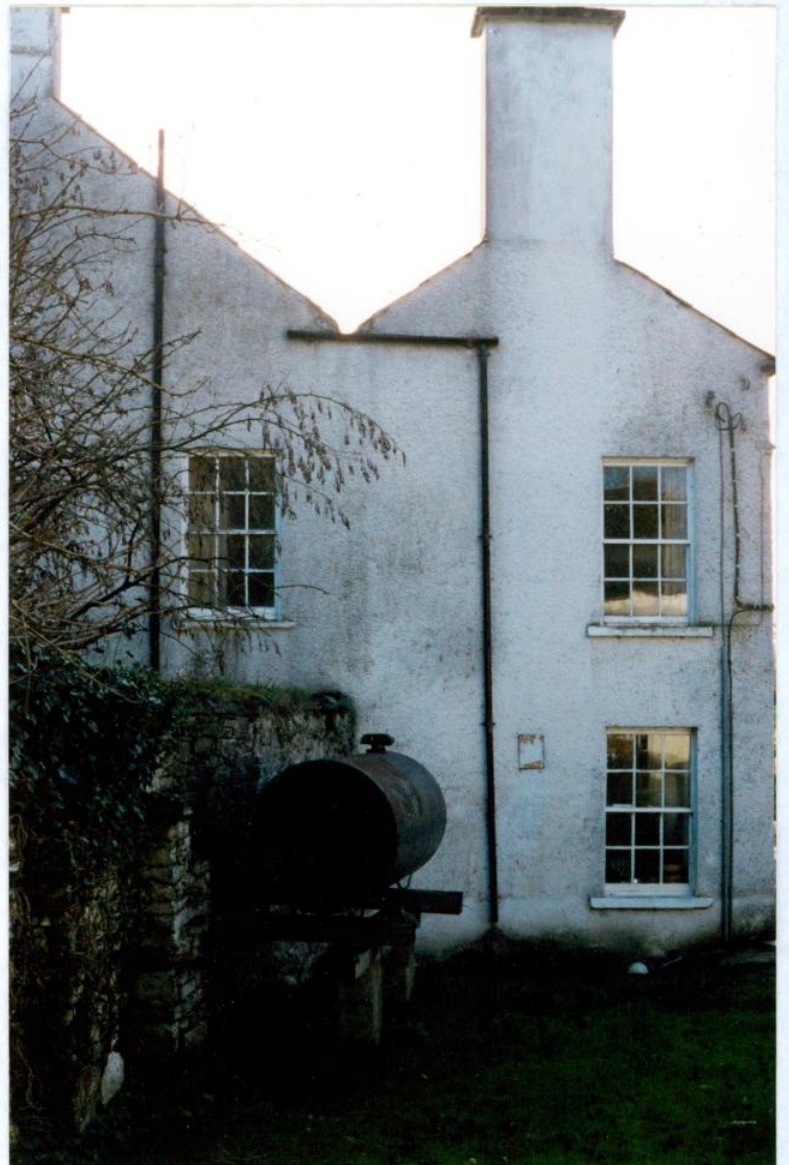


Fig. 7.

7. Side elevation of present day house showing addition at the back which makes the house double pile.



It is clear that the appearance of details to features of the exterior facade at Cavanacor is later than the original main structure. The later features such as sash windows would have most likely been installed into the main facade with minimal adjustment of the original wall structure involved. The general shape of the house is very important as most small houses were built one room deep until the eighteenth century. After this period the double pile plan, that is two rooms deep became popular.

The building at the top of the yard is similiar in construction to the early long houses or Wealden houses. This could indicate that this building is part of the original complex: a strong house as it were. It is also interesting to note that this building resembles in appearance the original single pile house that is now part of the main house. The house is now two rooms deep with additions on one side which make it three rooms deep (Figs. 4,5). But the wall structure of the house seems to make it clear that these were later additions. The central wall is very thick for an interior wall, so it is possible that the front is essentially the original structure and that this central wall is the exterior back wall. The house then would have been of a similar structure to the building at the top of the yard.(Pl.4,5) It will be seen that changes in material used also indicates a difference in the phases of construction (cf.p.36). Therefore it becomes obvious that the house is definitely not all of one build and the original building has obviously been extended.

In many cases houses would not have been completely rebuilt to suit changes of fashion but only given a face lift. This happened



frequently in the 18th century and a Georgian facade often hides a much earlier building. These facelifts often involved the insertion of sash windows in place of old casements, and the roof might be adjusted and raised to provide additional headroom in the upper story. This is very evident in Cavanacor House as although the exterior appearance of the house is predominantly Georgian in style, a great number of the interior features will suggest an earlier period of architecture.

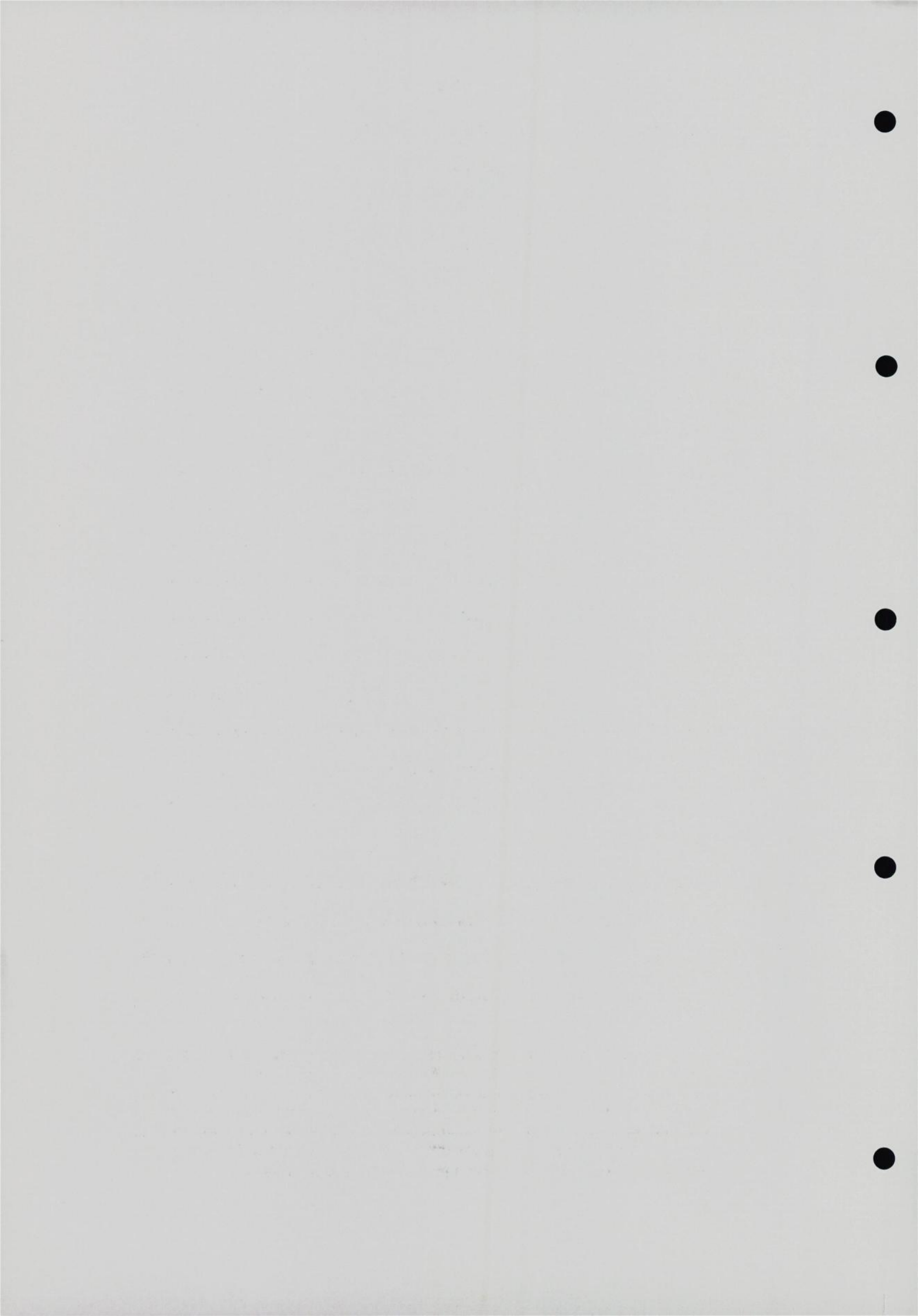


2.3 Materials used in the construction of Cavanacor.

The fabric of the walls at Cavanacor indicates the different building phases. When stone and flint has been predominantly used in the construction of a house this usually proves that the house is earlier than if it was constructed from brick. This has to be assessed in relation to when brick was first used in the area which was during the Plantation of Ulster. Cavanacor is predominantly made out of stone and flint and this points to the fact that it is of an earlier date than if it was made out of brick.

Stone was not usually used in the construction of smaller houses as smaller houses were usually constructed out of cob or an equivalent apart from areas where stone was readily available for instance shallow quarries or demolished buildings were near at hand. Stone would have been used in the construction of larger houses so it will be important to find out where this stone was found and if the site was chosen partially because of its close proximity to a quarry. In the case of Cavanacor there is a shallow quarry at the back of the house, this could be one of the reasons for choosing the site. Shale is the type of stone used in the construction of the house (Pls.6,9). This is a local stone and it is applied with minimal decoration. Rubble has been used mainly in the construction with stones of irregular size and shape laid with thick joints.

It is difficult to say if there are brick window surrounds used in the construction, as the house has been completely pebble-dashed probably in the recent past. Nevertheless the house is very understated in its decorative features, which also suggests earlier origins. Stone was limited in its use for decoration and instead

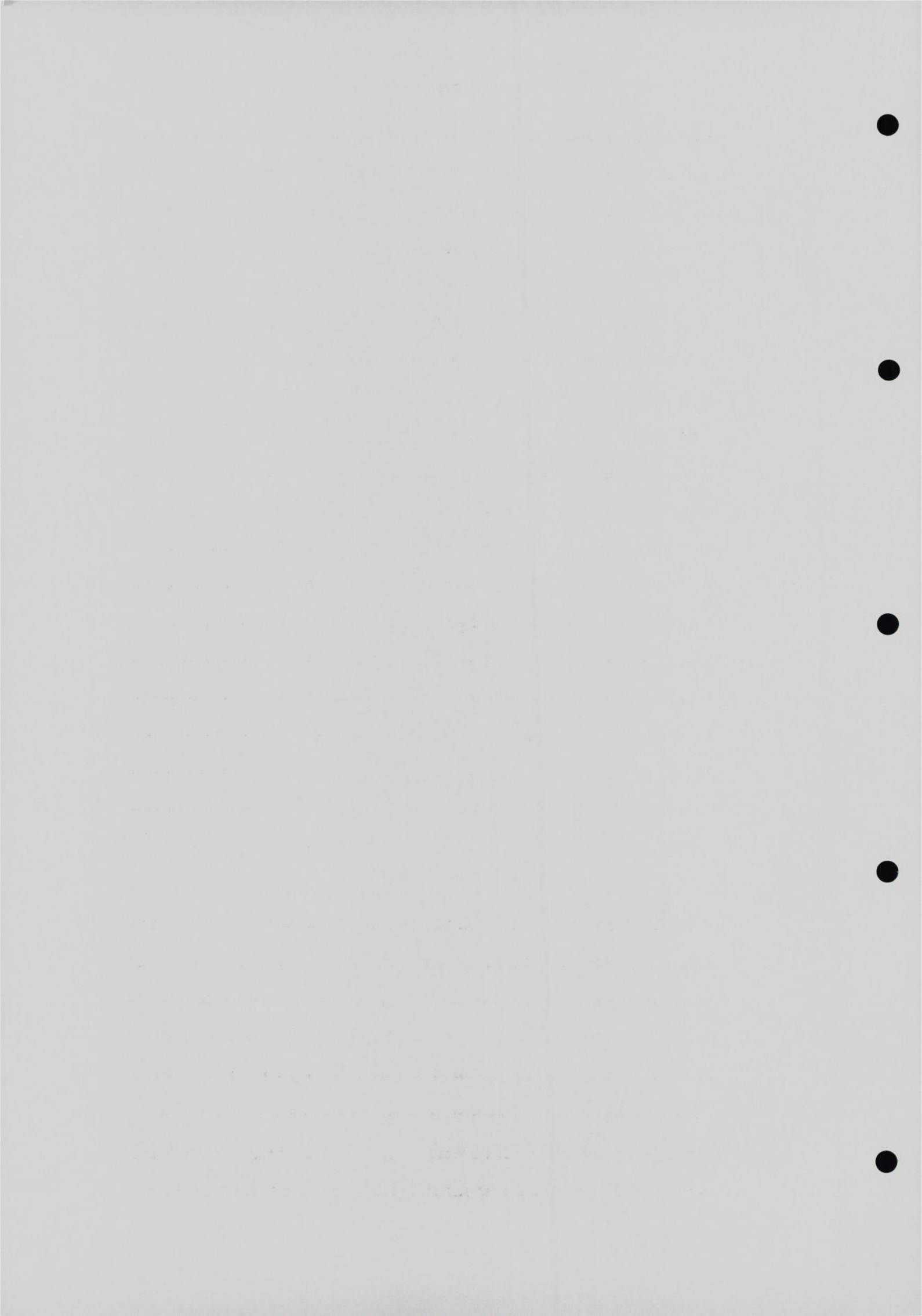


moulded cement and plaster would have been much more versatile but less resistant to the elements. Limewash was used mainly in the exterior covering of the house. This improved weather resistance of porous stone and the fact that limewash was often tinted with umber or ochre suggests a decorative function.

Brick was not used until the middle ages in Britain so it would have been used in Ireland some time after this. Brick became similar to the size and type of brick used today, by the mid 17th century. Several acts of Parliament in England fixed the size of bricks throughout the country and this would subsequently have affected the nature of bricks in Ireland.² In earliest buildings where brick has first been used the brickwork is often irregular, this can be said to be the case in the brickwork at Cavanacor. A number of brickwork construction techniques would have come across from England from the early 1600's onwards and these would have been put into use in Ireland. English bond became widely used in brickwork by the end of the 16th century and Flemish bond was introduced in the 17th century. It had replaced English bond completely by the end of the 17th century.

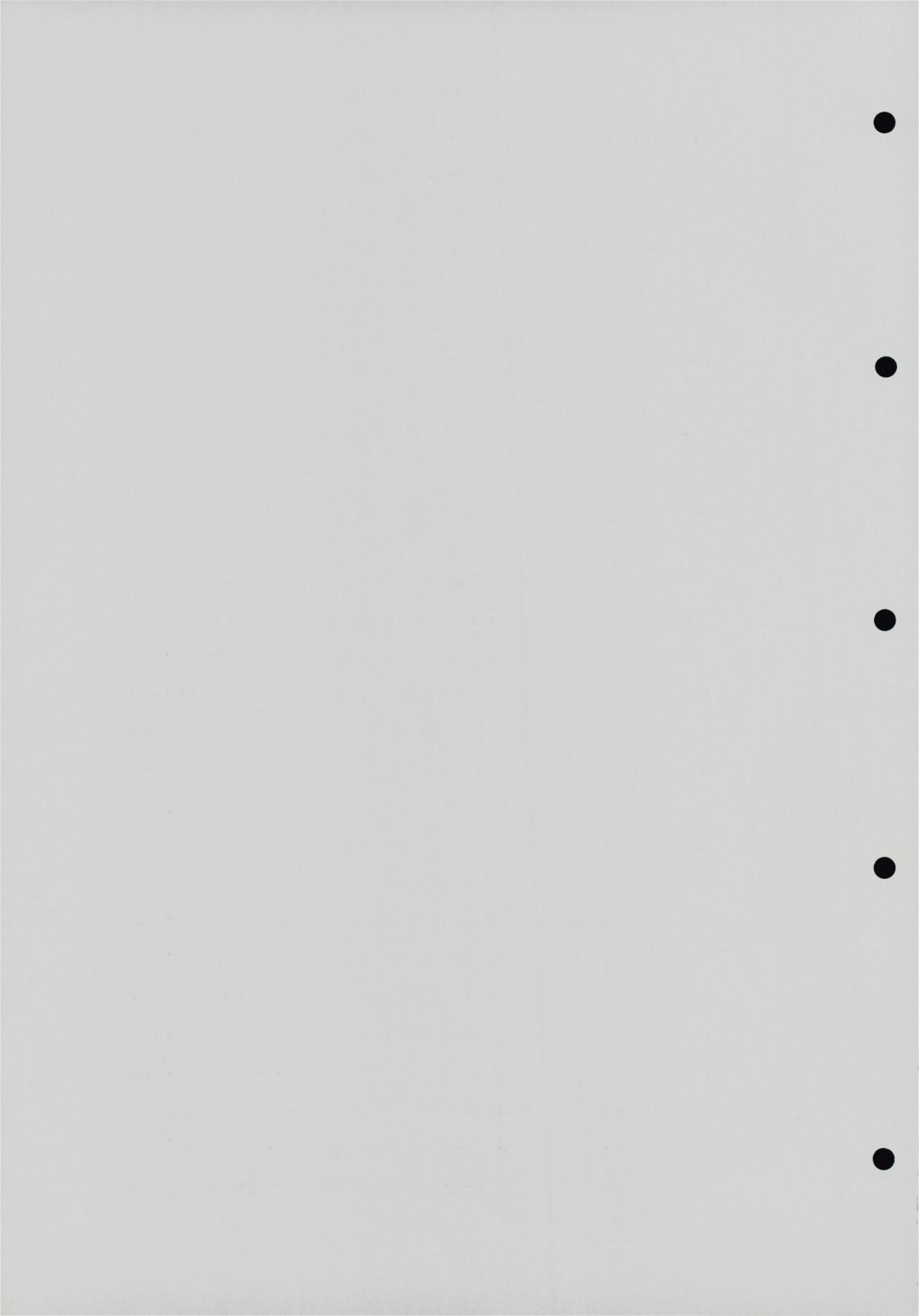
In the 16th, 17th and early 18th centuries red brick was popular. By the 18th century grey and brown brick were being used. As Cavanacor employs red brick in its construction throughout the complex this could point to the fact that the brickwork is of

² In 1776 the fixed size of brick was 8.5 by 4 by 2 inches. A brick tax was introduced after 1784 and larger bricks were being made as the tax was calculated on the number of individual bricks and not the volume of brickwork (some were as large as 10 by 5 by 3 inches). Another tax was introduced in 1803 on these large bricks, so to avoid this the size of the bricks was reduced to 9 by 4.5 by 3 inches. The brick tax was done away with in 1850 and since this date the size of bricks has been predominantly standardised.



earlier origins (Pl.8,10). A large amount of the brickwork throughout the complex seems to be later patching (Pl.7,10). But in some walls of the outbuildings there are small fragments of brick mixed in with the stonework. It could be assumed therefore that these are pieces of earlier brick employed in the construction of these outbuildings. It is possible to speculate what the window surrounds of the main house looked like before the house was completely pebbled-dashed as the servant block which was part of the main house originally has not been pebbled-dashed. The brick window surrounds of the windows in the servant block can be seen quite clearly. The bricks used in these surrounds are significantly longer and thinner than other bricks in the complex. These bricks are not as long and thin as the earliest red bricks but still probably date from mid to late in the 18th century. It is also interesting to note that there are smaller blocked up windows beside the larger windows which again point to this particular buildings early origins. One window has not been bricked up but is quite unusual in comparison to other windows in the building both in its size and its form, it is not however the same size as the smaller bricked up windows (Pl.17)

Cob is a primitive form of concrete made of chalk, mud and straw and it has been used in constructing the walls at Cavanacor, mainly in the outbuildings. When other materials became available, cob tended to be used mainly for smaller houses. The materials and methods used would have varied from locality to locality. Cob was used until the 19th century but by this time it was often faced with brick or tiles. Older cob houses were usually plastered or limewashed, and were built of a base



of stone, flint or brick. When the wall thickness is tapering from a maximum thickness at the base (built to a batter) then the building would probably been constructed from cob. It is not easy to date cob, but by considering its use in relation to the size and plan of the house at Cavanacor it can be useful in establishing the dates of construction of individual parts of the house. Some form of cob has evidently been used in the construction of the byre part of the strong house and in many of the other outhouses. However this may have only been used because the outbuildings wouldn't have been considered as important as the main house so therefore could be constructed in inferior materials.

Roofs need renewal more often than walls and a tiled or slated roof needs stripping and relaying about every hundred years. At Cavanacor it is obvious that the roof was completely rebuilt once if not several times (Pls.11,12,13). The beams used in this house were of the plain stop chamfered type and this type of beam was found in simple buildings until the early 18th century. Some of the beams from the original roof have been used as supports in the out buildings. Stone slates were available from the nearby town of St Johnston, so as this house is a fine building it would obviously originally have been built using these slates rather than thatch. Originally the slates would have been fixed using wooden pegs or occasionally sheep's bones. They would have been normally laid in diminishing courses, with the smaller slates used higher up the roof slope. This is very obvious in several of the outbuildings which are extremely old and could give an idea of how the roof of the main house would have looked before it was re-roofed (Pl.14). This laying in



diminishing courses may have been partially for aesthetic reasons as well as to make use of the heavier slates near the bottom of the rafters. It also reduced the number of joints in the slates. Usually the older the house the steeper the roof pitch and this can sometimes indicate the age of the house. The older materials used needed a steep pitch to throw off the snow and rain and as generally houses were only one room deep this presented few problems. The earliest roofs did not usually have gutters or downpipes and when these first appeared they were usually made out of lead. When the house was built first it can be assumed that there were no gutters or downpipes used in the construction. The present cast iron gutters and downpipes are rounded so that the back is in no danger of rusting and they were probably added to the house at a later date.

The materials used in the construction would have been obtained locally as normally, materials were not transported for long distances until the coming of cheap transportation by canal, rail or modern roads. The proximity of the house to the river Deelee however, could have facilitated the transportation of large bulky goods, which weren't available in the locality.

The general form of the house, including the materials of the walls and roof has been noted in relation to the styles and periods of architecture they fall under. I would now like to look at the architectural features, of doors, windows and chimneys.

Very early exterior doors were hung directly onto walls or on heavy section timber frames. Strap hinges were used and there are a number of these employed in the hanging of doors in the outbuildings at Cavanacor, these hinges are hung on pins or





Fig. 13.

13. Front facade of Cavanacor from left.



Fig. 14.

14. Front facade of Cavanacor from left, in the mid 1930's. Notice the flat roof on the porch.

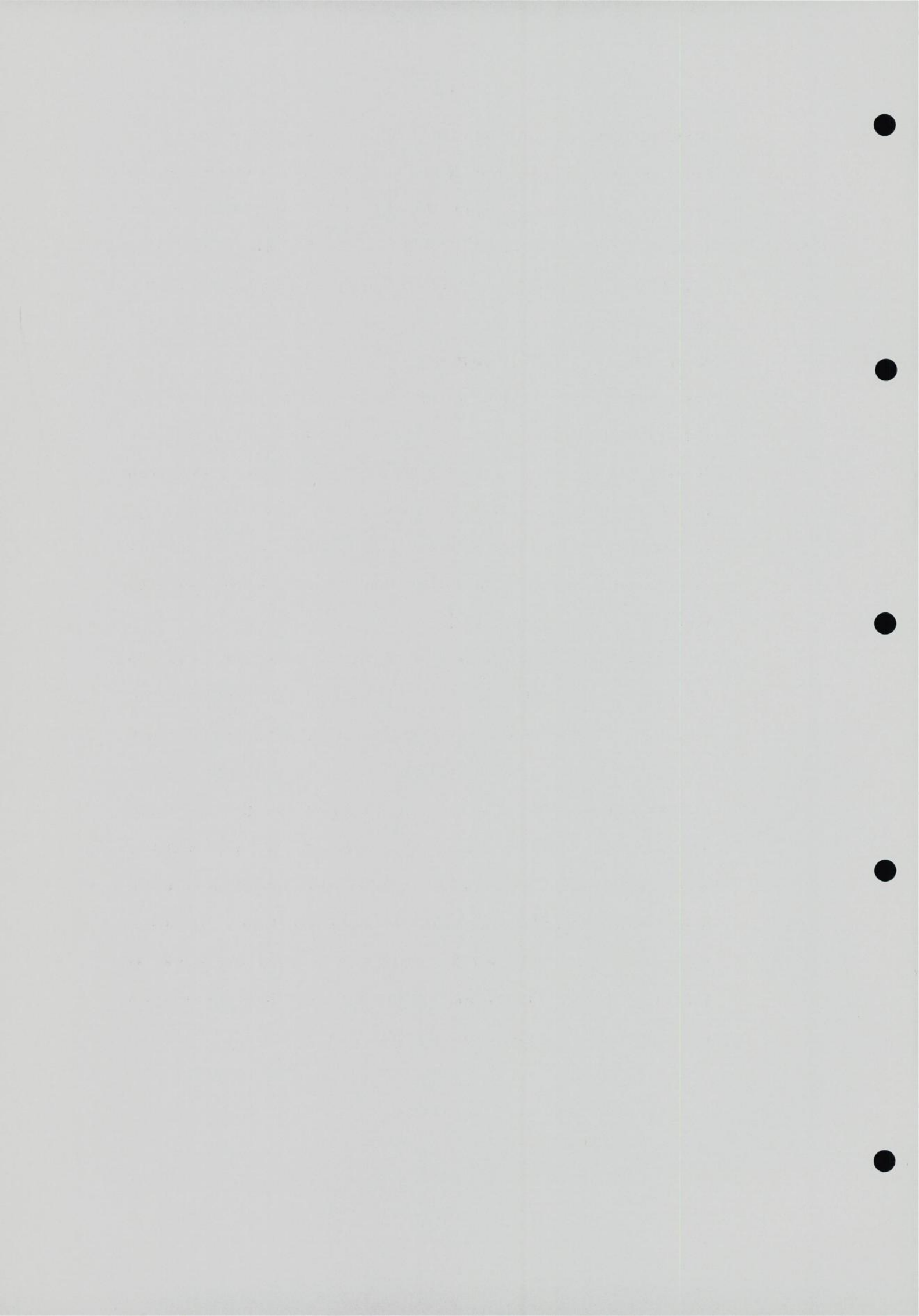
“rides”. By the end of the seventeenth century the plain square frame was common. In smaller and plainer houses this form is found from earliest times but in better houses as with Cavanacor the door frame is often moulded. The doors of this period were constructed of vertical planks, strengthened with horizontal rails on the inner face. The joints between the planks might be rebated, or covered with moulded fillets and sometimes the planks themselves were moulded and shaped in section. These doors were smaller than in previous times and doors were mainly made out of oak in wealthier houses and continued to be made into the 18th century. The doors used in Cavanacor which would have probably replaced earlier doors are panelled with eight panels, these are moulded and raised and date to the late 18th century onwards (Pl.34).

The treatment of the head of an external door can also be useful in dating. The porch at Cavanacor is a later addition done in the late 19th century but it could have replaced a “Lean-to” or pentice roof on brackets. Porches were originally functional, protecting the door from the weather and making the house more draughtproof. The roof of the porch at Cavanacor was originally a flat roof but problems with damp probably necessitated the need for a slanted roof (figs.13,14). The opportunity was taken however, as with many features, to introduce decorative elements reflecting the current architectural fashion. The porch at Cavanacor is typically Regency in style (Pl.15). The front entrance to Cavanacor is understated in its ornamental detail with a modillion frieze below a beautiful six segment lunette fanlight. There are two rosettes above each of the Roman Tuscan columns and a central larger rosette above the doorway itself. The door is



a six panelled mid to late 19th century door and opens into a small porch area which was originally flat roofed with a crenellated surround (figs.13,14). Inside there is a larger plainer fanlight with four rectangular segments above which there is a lunette with six triangular segments. This fanlight has an unusual splayed opening into the hallway and is above an inner double door (Pl.22).

In earliest times only the wealthy could afford glass and the glass was used with leaded panes. In the sixteenth century rectangular or diamond shaped panes were common, with iron opening lights, this has been used in several windows at Cavanacor, these windows probably date to the late 17th century onwards (Pl. 18,19). These early windows were generally long and low in proportion with more of a horizontal than a vertical emphasis. The proportions had changed however by the mid 17th century, particularly in the larger houses of Ireland such as Cavanacor. There was a strong influence from the Renaissance and the windows were becoming taller and narrower, probably to compliment the increased ceiling heights now becoming popular. The windows of this type were often two lights in width and had a horizontal member (a transom) as well as a vertical mullion. These were probably used at Cavanacor before they would have been updated in the 18th century to what they are today; that is the doubled-hung timber sash window, divided into small panes by glazing bars so typical of the Georgian style (Pl. 41). In the earlier sash windows the frames were flush to the walls and the glazing bars were quite heavy in section. London building acts of 1707 and 1709 required the sashes to be set back four inches from the wall face. This change would have subsequently



affected other parts of England and then in due course could have travelled across the sea to Ireland. The windows in the house also have quite light glazing bars and this places them in a time around the turn of the 19th century as the glazing bars were becoming progressively lighter in section and had become very thin by the early 1800's.

Some earlier windows actually had their mullions cut out to accomodate timber sashes or in other cases timber sashes were fitted between the mullions replacing the lead lights and iron frames. This probably didn't happen as the sash windows seem to predominantly have been made from scratch. A large Georgian window can be seen alongside an earlier smaller bricked up window in the T-shaped return the exterior walls of which have not been pebble-dashed.

The positions of the chimneys from the exterior can often tell us a lot about the basic plan of the house. Stacks on the end gables suggest symmetrical design of plan usually of the late 17th and 18th centuries. Both stone and brick were used from the start and sometimes cob for the lower part of the stack below the roof and occasionally for the whole structure. Sometimes, because of their exposure to the weather, chimneys built of soft stone often deteriorated more quickly than the main walling, and they were sometimes rebuilt in brick. This could have happened at Cavanacor as a number of the chimney stacks have brick used on the exterior in the middle of a stone wall (Pl. 7).



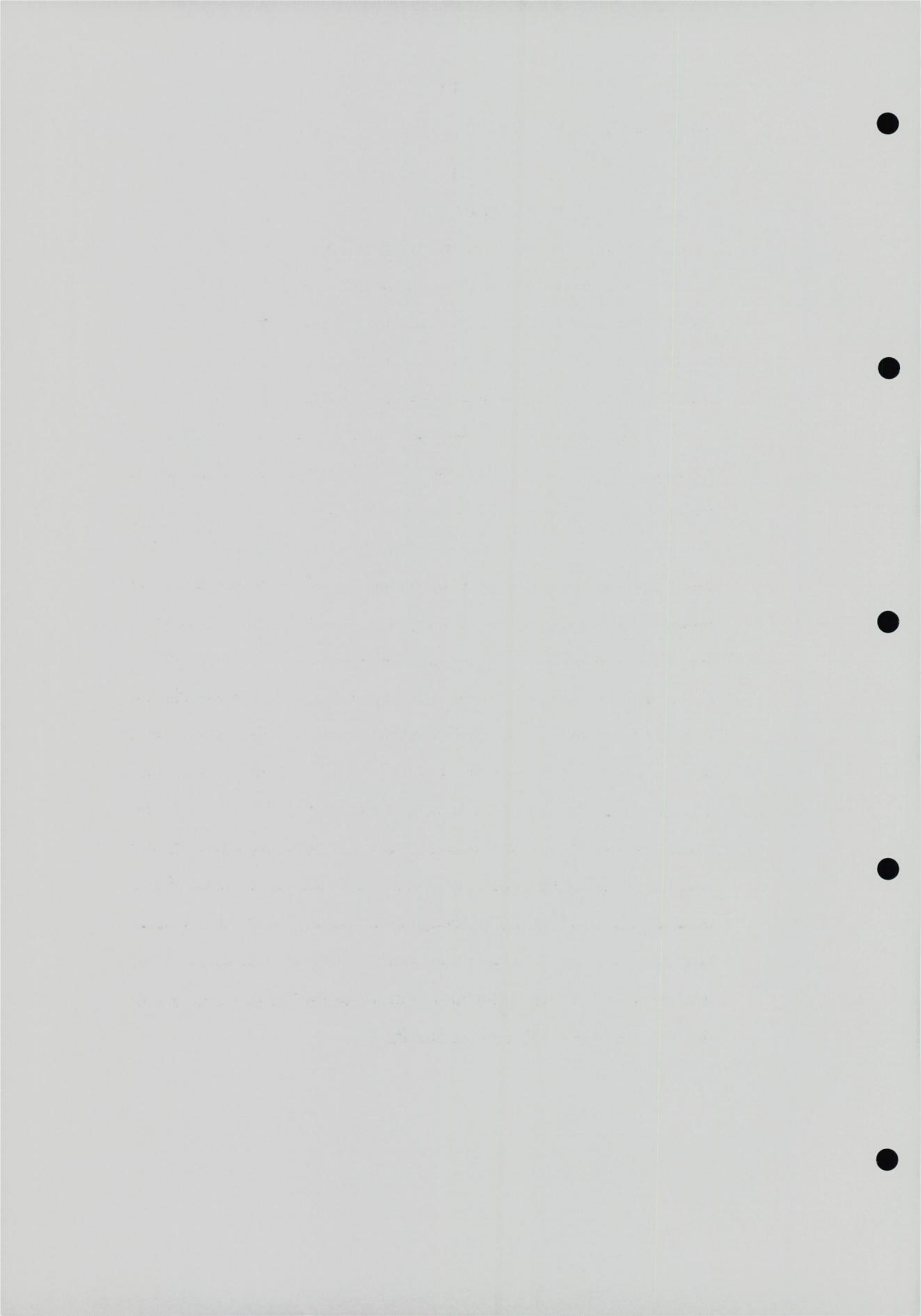
CHAPTER 3: SURVEY OF THE INTERIOR OF THE HOUSE.

3.1: INTERIOR FEATURES.

Through comparing and contrasting both the interior and exterior features of the house it is possible to begin to pick out the original form of the house and the successive alterations and additions detailed by the completed survey.

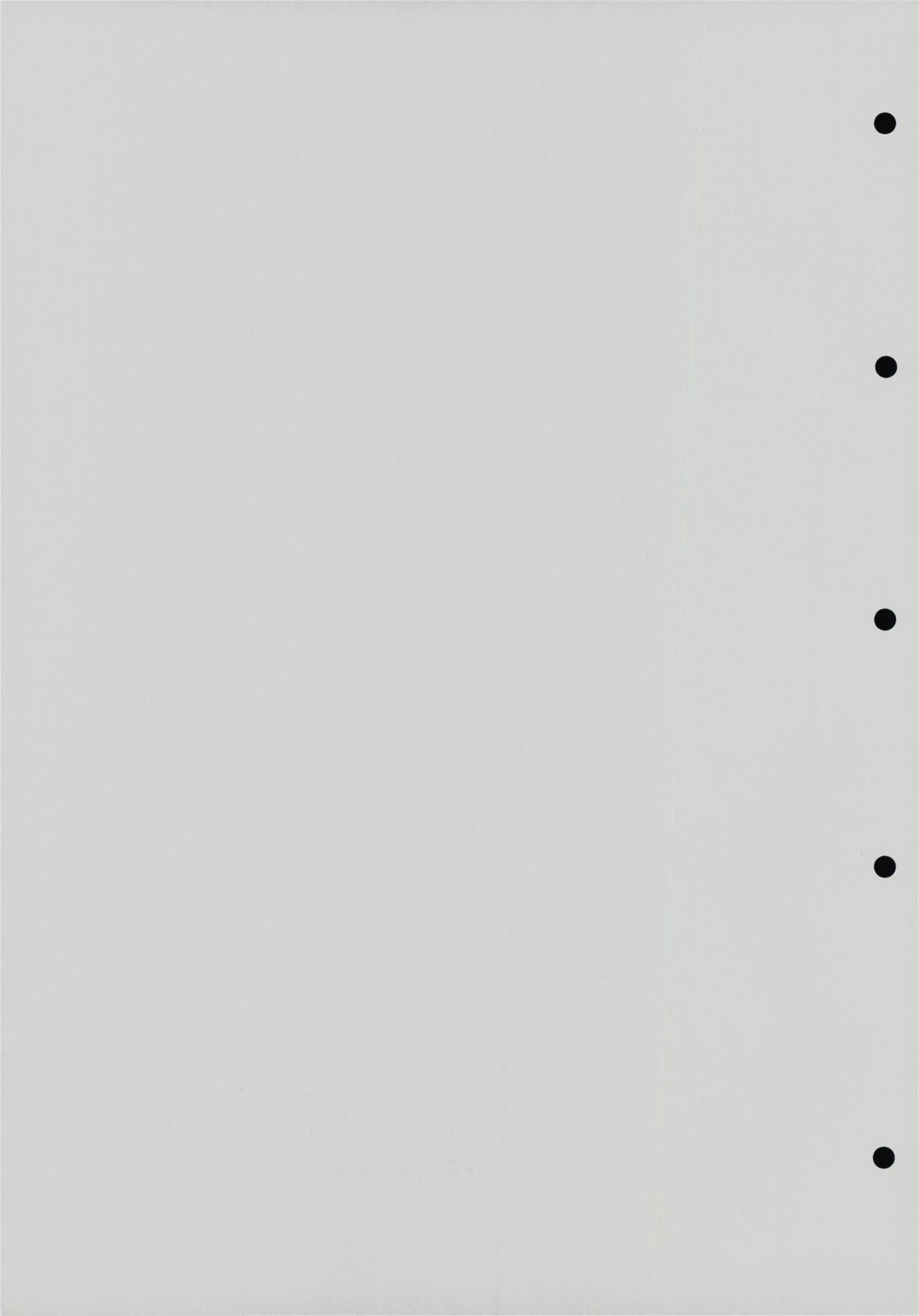
The most important features in dating a house seem to be the plan form and the roof structure of the house. As it is known that the roof was completely reconstructed, there won't be many clues given by the positioning of beams and thickness of timber used. Photographs taken of the interior structure of the walls enable comparisons between the materials used and the type of construction and the techniques employed from the Plantation times onwards (Pls.12,13).

As argued earlier, the house could have originally have been a single pile form with the middle interior wall as an exterior wall which was then changed to a double pile form at a later date. This is also evident from further examination (Fig. 4). The central wall is very thick and is running straight through the middle of the house parallel to the front and back walls. It is very difficult to detect any blocked up window or door openings but there are several other features as well as the thickness of the middle wall that could prove that the house was 'doubled' up in the 18th or 19th centuries. There is a central gulley in the roof running along the middle wall so that the front part of the roof is separate to the back. Also the cellar underneath the house, which is very early is only under the front part of the house ending at the base of the middle wall.



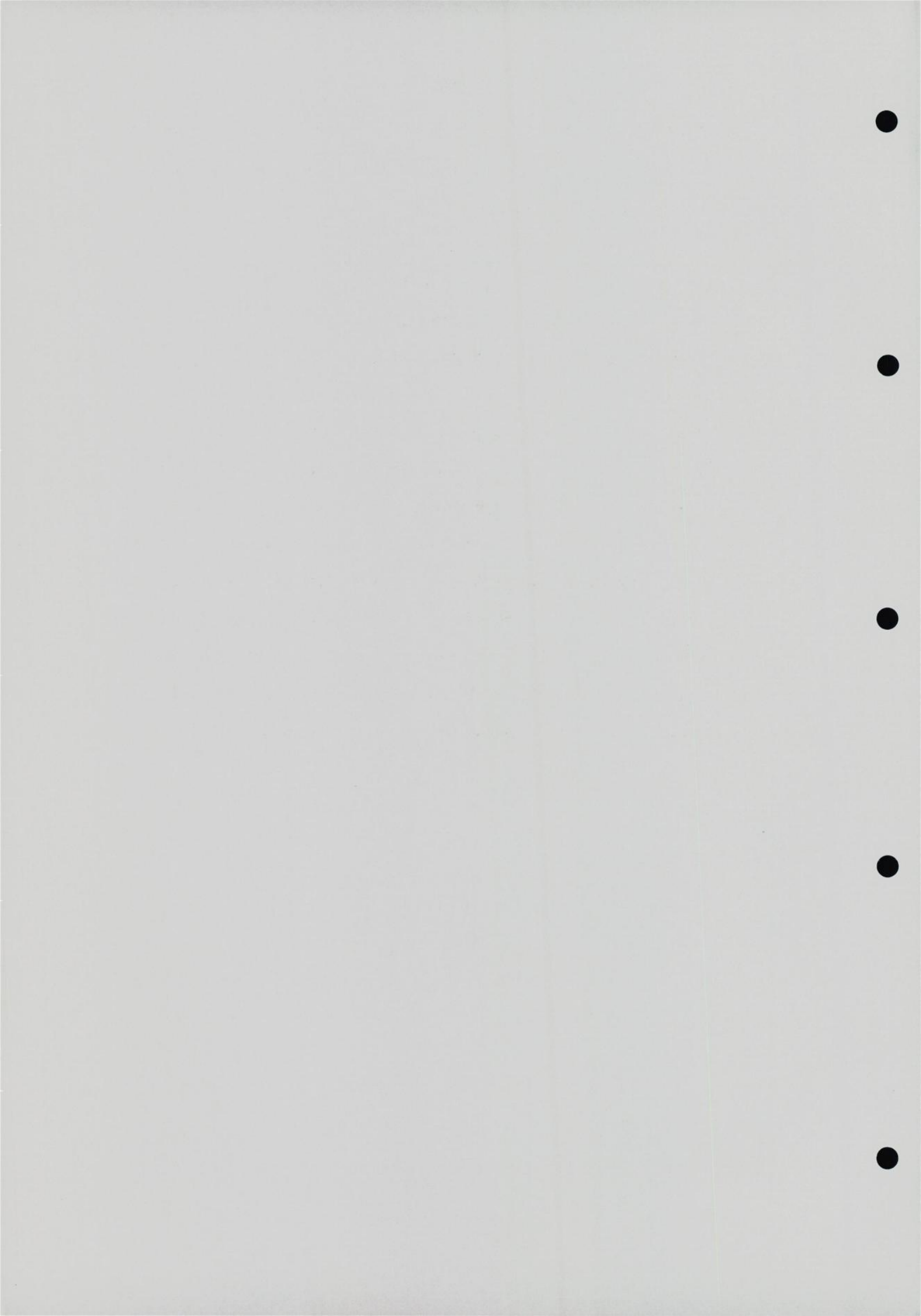
The stairway in the house also finishes at this middle wall and is a 'dog-leg stairway' which is quite an early design dating to the late 16th or early 17th centuries (Pl.20). Also on the stairway, set well into the middle wall, there is a large display cupboard which could be hiding a blocked up back window (Pl.20). In thoroughly inspecting both roof spaces it is possible to determine, from comparing their construction and noting the materials used, that the front part of the house was built first.

The 'Dog leg stair' was used in the late 16th century, but became more common from seventeenth century. It is a closed string stair with turned balusters (Pl.20), used first in larger houses from the 16th-18th centuries. This all suggests that the main stairway would have been an original feature of the house when it was first built in the early 17th century. So this type of stairway would have been in fashion when the house was being built around 1611. This could prove that the staircase is original to the first building of the house and will tell us a great deal more about the layout of the house. The early 'dog leg' stair had closed strings (the outer framing members), with the edges of the treads and risers framed into and concealed behind the strings (Pl.46). They were generally of oak, and the mouldings of the handrails, balusters and capping to the strings were often quite bold in character. Oak was used in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries but by the eighteenth century imported mahogany had become more popular for the handrail.



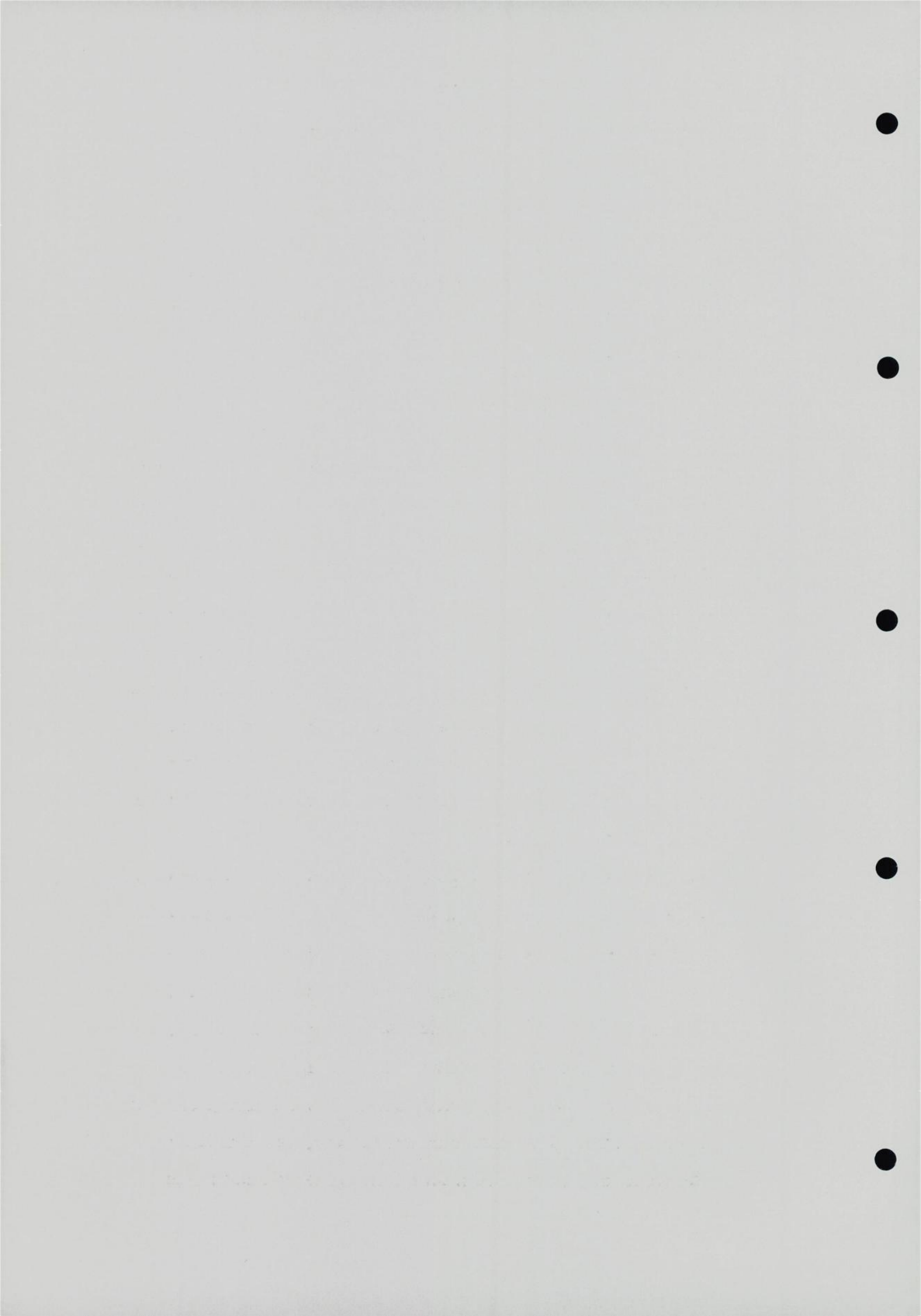
3.2: ANALYSIS OF THE FLOOR PLAN IN RELATION TO THE STRUCTURE OF THE HOUSE.

The strongest feature apparent from studying the ground floor plan is the dimension of the mid wall dividing the two first rooms and hallway from the rear of the house (today's kitchen and living room). This wall is equal in width to the exterior walls forming the front portion of the house. This feature points towards the suggestion that the original house was one room deep. Looking at the floor plan for the ground floor (Fig. 4) the original house seems to have been a rectangular one room deep house, this incorporates the large hallway and stairwell with a main room off to either side (drawing room and dining room). This is supported by study of evidence in the roof space above the back part of the present day house, as there are remains of an exterior wall and roof between the rafters and the floor of the attic. The back part of the present day house, sitting room bathroom and corridor would have originally been one room which was probably added in the mid to late 18th century. There are not many substantial walls in the rear part of the house and this was because there was some rebuilding with the use of partition walls in the 1960's. For example, today's sitting room, bathroom and corridor at the back of the house would originally have been one room. There have been partition walls constructed and this is very obvious from examining the decorative moulding in the various rooms which is untouched but conforms to the original structure of the room. The rear wall is the only heavy structural wall in the back part of the house. The original kitchen area (now demolished) seems to have been part of the original complex as well as the servant's quarters connected to it



(Figs.9,10,11,12). This would mean that the house comprised two different buildings which were connected together sometime in the 18th or 19th centuries.

There are other additions to the ground floor level which are not so speculative, including the front porch and the south west window extension in the drawing room. The first floor plan corresponds in details concerning the layout of the main walls and the front part of the house is distinct in its proportion and detail from the rooms lying to the rear. The wall that would have been the rear wall of the original house is quite crudely dressed at the point where it was broken through to accommodate a corridor running southeast to northwest. It now serves as access to the first floor bathroom and a rear bedroom. It once would have given access to the detached building (at first floor level). It is possible that there was a doorway (now a cupboard) on the stairwell return which would have been entered up steps giving entrance to the rear/servants section of the house.



3.3: TOUR OF THE FRONT THREE ROOMS.

As discussed, the front hall, the dining room and the drawing room at the front of the house, seem to be the oldest part of the house. An account (using photographs) of how these three rooms have been decorated will give the reader an idea of the house as it exists today.

Originally the 'inner door' to the hall with the plainer 'fanlight' was the main door (Pl. 22). The porch was added in about 1870. The mouldings of the ceiling in the hallway are very plain and broad, dating from the early 1700's (Pl. 36). In later centuries the mouldings became much more decorative and the drawing room and dining room have slightly more elaborate mouldings on the ceiling (Pl. 37). The carved panel doorways with the 'lugged door surrounds' date back to the early 1700's (Pl. 34). The 'luggs' refer to ears because the architraves jut out like ears. The matching wooden archways at the back of the hall are an interesting feature and provide a screen for the grander front of the house from the servants area. The stairs are wide and shallow and of generous proportions.

Some of the furniture and paintings were already in the house when the present occupants arrived and the rest has been added to. The hall table is Jacobean with heavy floral carving, drop handles and barley sugar legs. The early Irish oak arm chair dates from the 1600's and is the kind of chair that King James sat on under the sycamore tree when he dined at Cavanacor (Pl.31). The blanket chest is Irish oak and would have been used to store clothes and bedding before the wardrobe was invented. The engravings are scenes from life in the 1800's and the plates



above are a mixture of early Beleek, Willow pattern and hand painted plates. The grandfather clock is Georgian and strikes the hour. Its face has been replaced with a grandmother clock round face and the body is made of mahogany(Pl.22).

In the drawing room the full depth of the earlier part of the house can be viewed. The floor is very old judging by the width of the floor boards which were hand made. Many of the features of the drawing room are original, for instance the shuttered windows and casings (Pl.21).

As can be seen from the appearance of the rooms themselves the house was not built on a grand scale, it was semi-fortified, well proportioned but of an earlier type of plantation house that was not so ostentatious as later architecture.

Underneath the drawing room is a very early cellar, which would have been there for storage. The intricately carved cupboard is from the same period as when the house was built and is called a court cupboard or chest on chest. The key holes have been filled in and the two chests have been put together to make a cupboard with a canopy added. The piano is a Steinway dating from about 1875 and is still in good working order. The mirror is a Regency ornamental mirror and the corner cabinet is Georgian. The painting above the mantel piece is by my father Eddie O'Kane and shows the spot where King James II dined.

The alcove was added about 1910. Prior to that there would have been a plain window there.

The Chinese gentleman on the mantelpiece is the God of Longevity and carries a peach in his hand and peach stones on his staff, the fruit of Longevity.



In the dining room the fireplace is of more recent date, but behind the fireplace is a much bigger opening so that the original fire place would have been much larger (Pls.23,24). The square piano dates from 1840 and was made by Broadwood of London, who lead the field in piano making at that time. One of these was sent to Beethoven as a present. Sadly carpenters in the latter half of the century turned them upside down for work benches because they were so sturdy. The bookcase dates from the 1880's and the chairs are in the Cromwellian style dating from 1845. The other two chairs are William and Mary cane back hall chairs with heavy carving in oak. Throughout the room there are portraits of the period. They are not, however, portraits of the inhabitants of Cavanacor. They nevertheless give a feeling of the changing times and the type of dress worn throughout the ages. The painting above the fireplace is an early Irish oil from about the time of Barbara and Magdalen Tasker. The house changed names again in 1823 when it was inherited by a daughter Mary Keyes who married Major Benjamin Humfrey who was an officer in a regiment in the Far East in the 1850's. At that time there was no photography and officers were trained in drawing and painting so that they could map and record for reconaissance purposes. There is a small watercolour by Major Humfrey in the dining room. There is also a small drawing of dogs by Sir Edwin Landseer, the famous English artist who sculpted the lions at Trafalgar square. He was a favourite of Queen Victoria.

The Estate Map dates from 1875 (map 3) and was an original estate map drawn by a local firm. It shows the extent of the Cavanacor estate at the time, including Tyleford, which amounted



to 100 acres as opposed to 10.5 acres today. According to the census of that time 60 people worked at Cavanacor. As can be seen from the map the formal gardens were twice the size they are today and further back a second yard which appeared around 1823 was gone by the early 1900's.



CHAPTER 4: Summary

4.1 The gardens at Cavanacor (see Pls.47-59)

The eighteenth century brought a period of relative peace in Ireland. After the tumultuous wars of the 1600's, houses no longer needed to be fortified, large windows could look out onto gardens and rural estates.

The garden at Cavanacor has evolved with the house. A walled garden lies to the south west of the house with an orchard beyond. To the front is a parkland and shrubberies with a grass tennis court added this century. On the east side of the house lies more parkland and woodland which extends northwards and acts as a perimeter to the property. There are a great number of interesting cast-iron gates throughout the garden and the surrounding landscape. Some have very interesting details whilst others are very plain in design (Pl.16)

The walled garden is laid out in rectangles, with garden walls on three sides, and it faces south east. These parterres are intercepted by gravelled walks and bordered by box hedges and shelter is provided by the walls so that many tender plants flourish.

The central lawn, surrounded by herbaceous borders, to the side of the house shows clear signs in times of drought, of having been a knot garden or early herb garden, intricately laid out in triangles.

The walled garden is divided into four areas; herbaceous, vegetable, soft fruit and shrubbery. Below this on the other side of the west wall is the old orchard, containing many early



varieties of cooking, eating and crab apple, as well as plum, damson and pear. This orchard was laid out formally in the 19th century (map 3) but has since reverted to its natural state.

As with many mid 17th century gardens in Ireland, Cavanacor is encircled by parkland and woodland walks, on a smaller scale as became a gentleman's residence.

There are many of the original plants still in existence in the walled garden at Cavanacor. A wide range of scented roses such as *rosa rugosa*, *rosa gallica*, *rosa mundi* and *rosa alba* grow at random throughout the herbaceous border and need little attention as, being the earlier roses they are virtually disease free. The mellow walls form a perfect background for the predominantly pastel tints of the older roses.

The entire garden is divided by a double trellis, a support for early climbing roses and honeysuckle and a natural divide between flower and fruit. In the herbaceous borders are a wide variety of older perennials. Deep blue flag irises, blood red and white peony roses, fuchsias, hostas, hellibores, lavender and ladies mantle fill the beds at different times of the year. Some of the shrubs have grown to a great height through being in a sheltered site for many years, for instance there is the thirty foot Japanese lantern tree and the ten foot high camelia as well as an enormous pieris and many rhododendron in the centre of the garden. Lace cap hydrangeas flank the front doors and virginia creeper covers part of the front facade.

In the parkland stands one of the most famous sycamore trees in Ireland(Pl.52). Here King James II dined on the 20th of April 1689 and throughout the parkland stand many old beech,

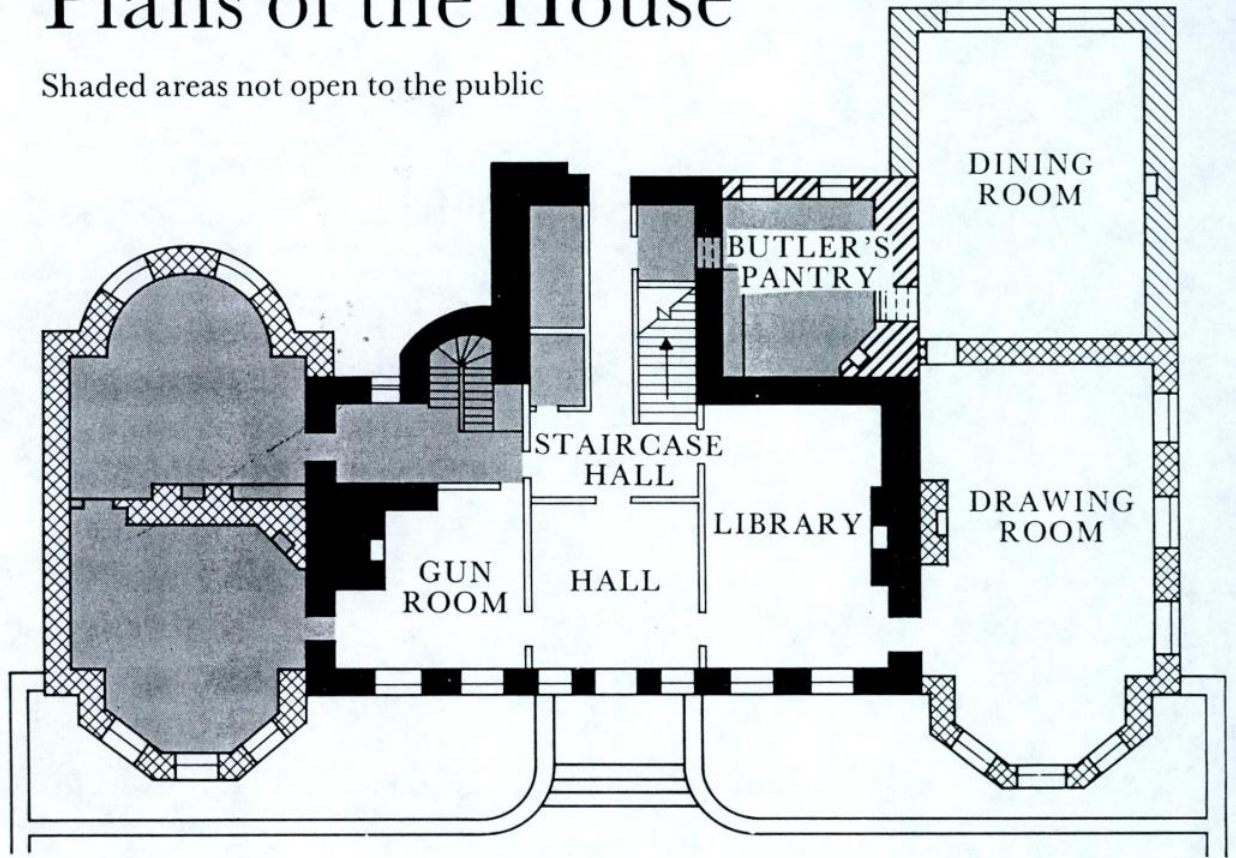


oak, elm, ash and sycamore. The parkland and the woodland area are home to many wild flowers. In early spring single and double snowdrops abound and are followed by many of the early varieties of scented daffodil and narcissus and banks of bluebells and anemones cover the woodland area.



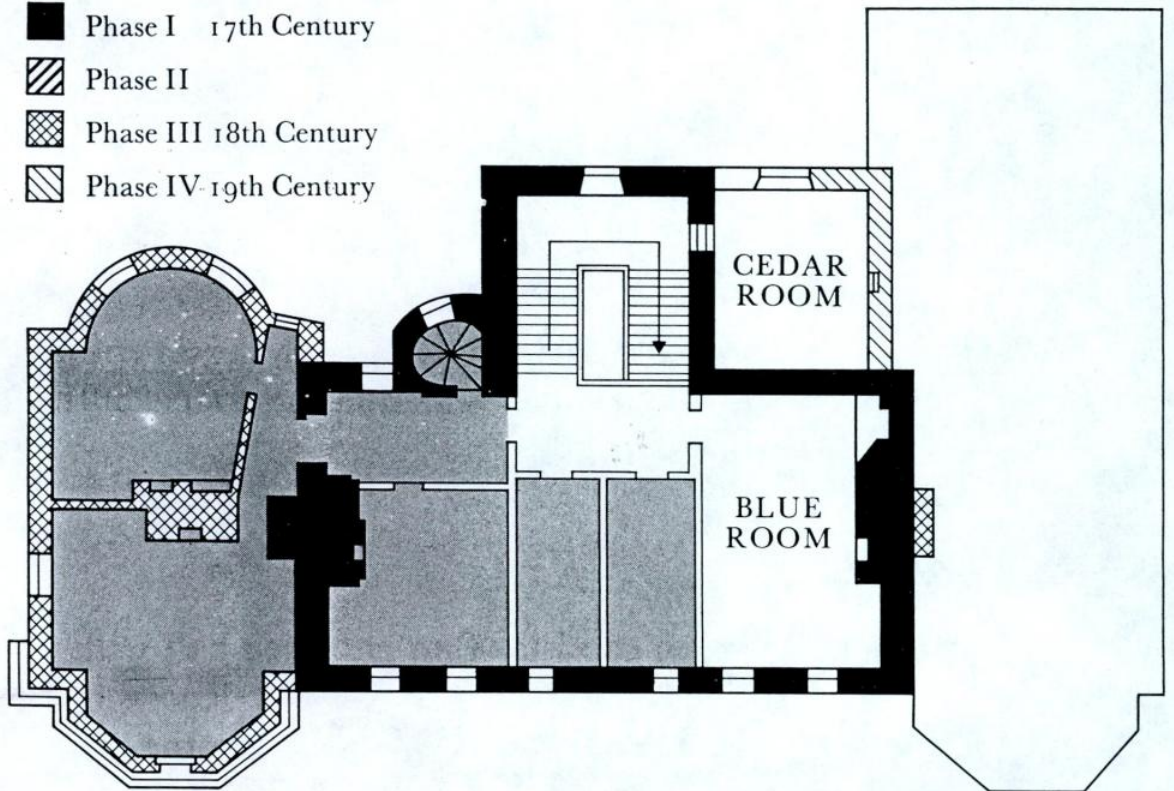
Plans of the House

Shaded areas not open to the public



Ground Floor

- Phase I 17th Century
- ▨ Phase II
- ▩ Phase III 18th Century
- ▧ Phase IV 19th Century



First Floor

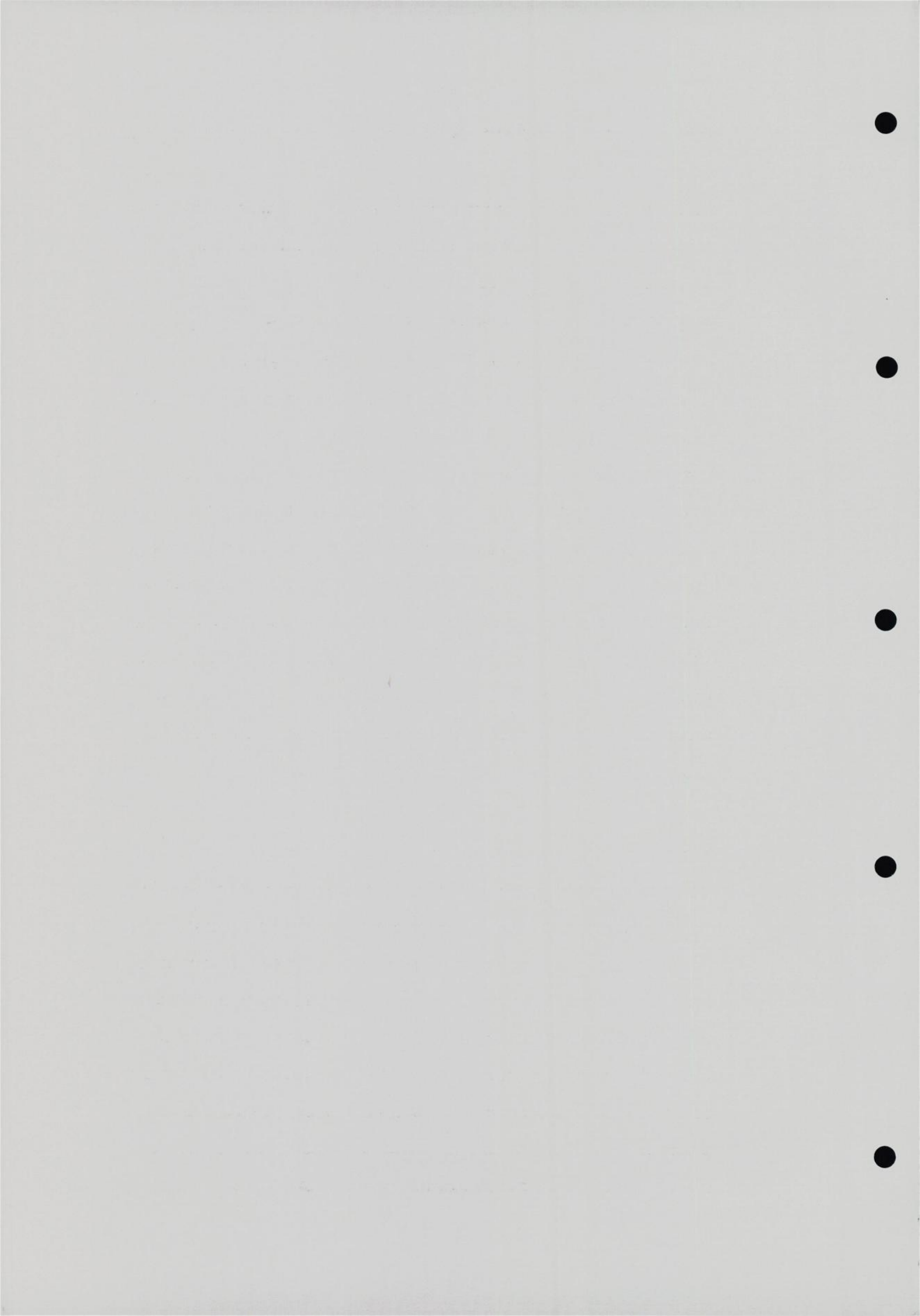
4.2: Comparisons with Springhill, comparing plan forms and internal and external features.

Set in a wooded demense, Springhill is one of the prettiest houses in Ulster, not grand or elaborate in its design, but with the air of a French provincial manor house. To Sampson, writing in 1802, it brought to mind 'something of the ancient dignity of resident landlords', and the view of its main facade glimpsed down a long avenue still does much the same today.

(Rowan, 1979, p.425)

The original form of the house at Springhill is T-shaped, consisting of an entrance hall with a single room opening off each side. Beyond the hall there is a area containing the staircase. All the rooms of the house were redecorated in the mid-eighteenth century, at this time the wings were also added to the house. The T-plan of the main block of Springhill recalls the plan of earlier houses. The house has a symmetrical front facade (as at Cavanacor) and at the back it does not conform to any symmetry and is rather jumbled.

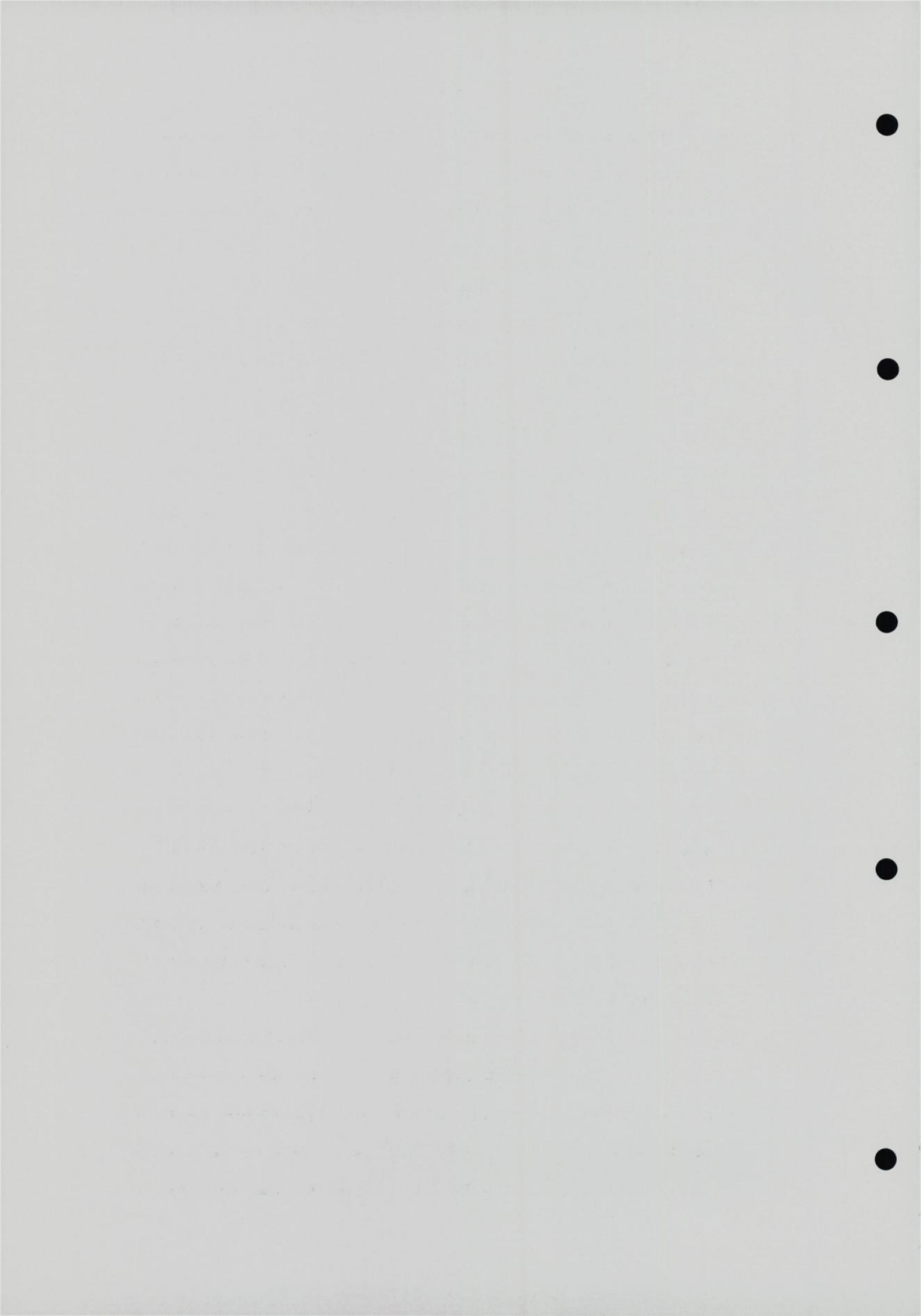
The exterior appearance of Spring hill, although a grander house, is comparable to Cavanacor (Pl. 25,26). The porch at Cavanacor is known to be a later addition and this would have made the earlier entrance similar to the front doorway at Springhill. There is no fanlight at Springhill and it is possible that the second interior fanlight is also an addition to Cavanacor at an earlier stage(Pl.22). At present on entering the front doorway at Cavanacor there is a slender double door entering into the hall, probably added at the time of the porch addition. The hall is very similar in plan to the hall at Springhill. It is an ample space, symmetrical, with fine panelled doors. There are two plain arch openings in the hall, one leading to the kitchen and



rear of the house and one leading upstairs. This does not appear in Springhill as there is only one door leading to the back of the house and the stairs. The wainscoating at Cavanacor seems later than that of Springhill but is of a similar type. The doors at Cavanacor are six panelled which is an earlier feature than the eight panelled doors of Springhill. The doors are deep-set and have four field panels in the recess, similar again to Springhill. The hall cornice seems earlier than that of Springhill although both are very plain (Pls.35,36).

The main drawing room at Cavanacor is much larger than the gun room at Springhill but if the drawing room were to be divided in two, as the beam down the middle of the room could suggest, then it would have been of similar size. The drawing room is quite plain and lit to the front by two windows and to the south side by a 'sun trap' outpost, which was added on to the house around the turn of the century. The windows are almost identical to the ones in the gunroom of Springhill and have original wooden shutters and glass (Pls. 40,41).

The staircase at Springhill is seventeenth century (Pl.42,43). The treads are made of oak and the handrail and balusters are alternately plain and spiral fluted and are carved from yew. The plain balusters are similar to those at Cavanacor (Pls.45,46). However the structure of the staircase at Springhill is much more elaborate than that of Cavanacor which is of a strong sturdy kind with wide treads and low risers (Pl.44). The balusters are three to a tread as at Springhill. The staircase at Springhill, although not being of the Dog-leg type, bears similarity to it on a much grander and more elaborately constructed scale. The half landing



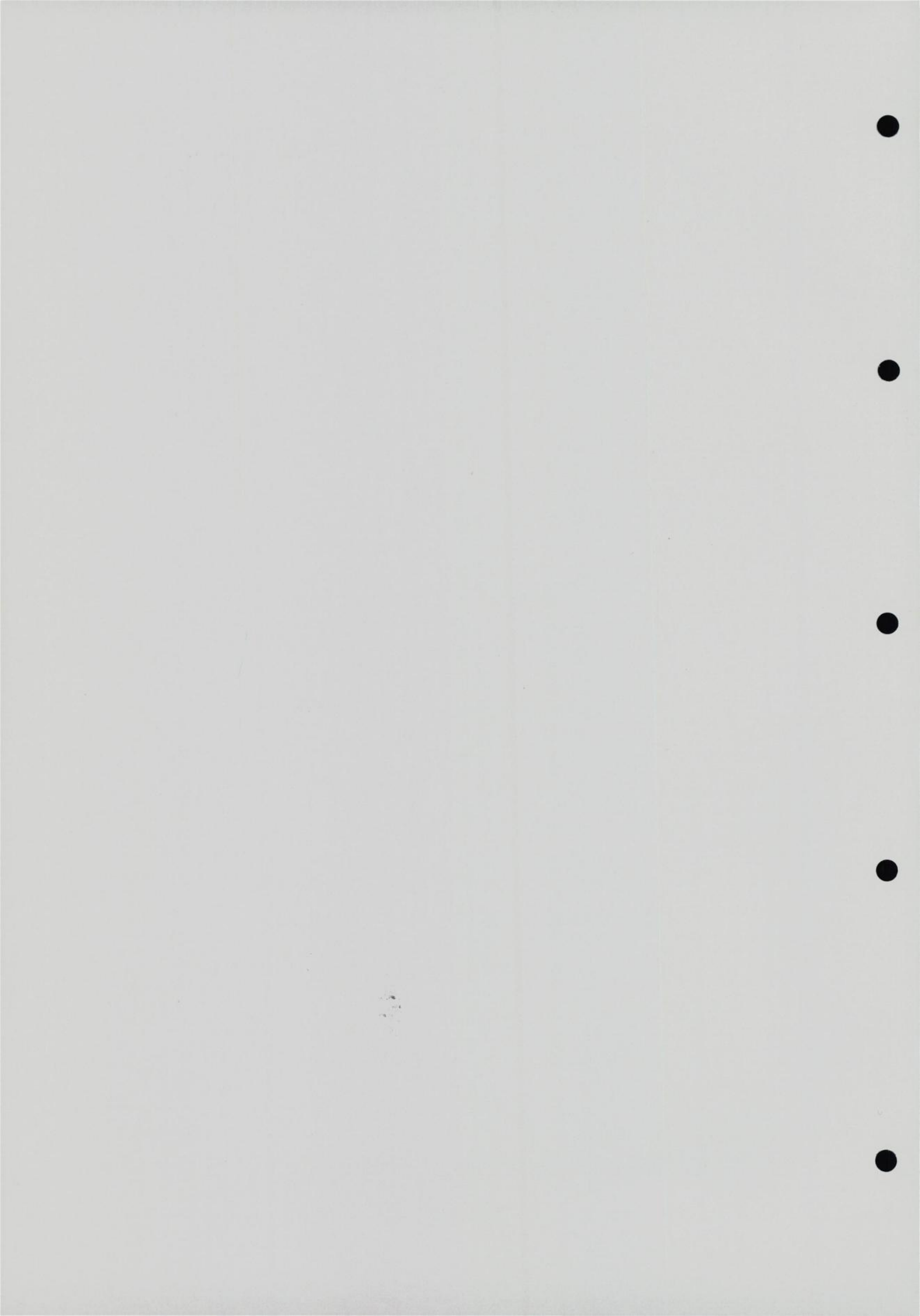
at Springhill is much more substantial than that of Cavanacor, it is almost like a balcony and has a small nursery off it. However the top landing at Cavanacor is much larger than at Springhill and is more like a mezzanine in shape. It is lit from a back window rather than from a front window as at Cavanacor. The landing at Cavanacor has four door openings off it all with lugged surrounds and at Springhill there are three doorways also with lugged surrounds.

The basement occupies the area under the front drawing room at the southern side of Cavanacor. It consists of two chambers both lit and ventilated by splayed openings in the southwest wall of the house at garden level. The first chamber was widened at the time of the extension to the drawing room. There is a drain in the second chamber and this flows out under the front wall of the house. This means that the original house would have had an inbuilt water supply which would be essential in times of siege. The chambers could have been used for cold storage or possibly as an early wash room. The fact that the house was built on the side of a hill also makes it necessary to have a drainage system in this area. The basement at Springhill although much more extensive, bears a lot of similarities to that of Cavanacor. The entrance to the basement at Springhill was originally situated under the stairs (although it has since been blocked up) as is the entrance to the basement at Cavanacor.

This brief outline of some of the comparisons between Cavanacor House and another plantation house shows that the building methods employed in the 1600s were reasonably uniform. Springhill does not however have a great element of fortification employed in its construction. The main house is set well outside



the enclosed yard area. But at the time when the house was built in the late 1600s there would have been less of a need for defensive features. Also the area in which Springhill is situated (a prosperous farming region in the middle of the Ulster plantation territory) places it in a different category to Cavanacor which is situated on the frontier so to speak.





Map 1

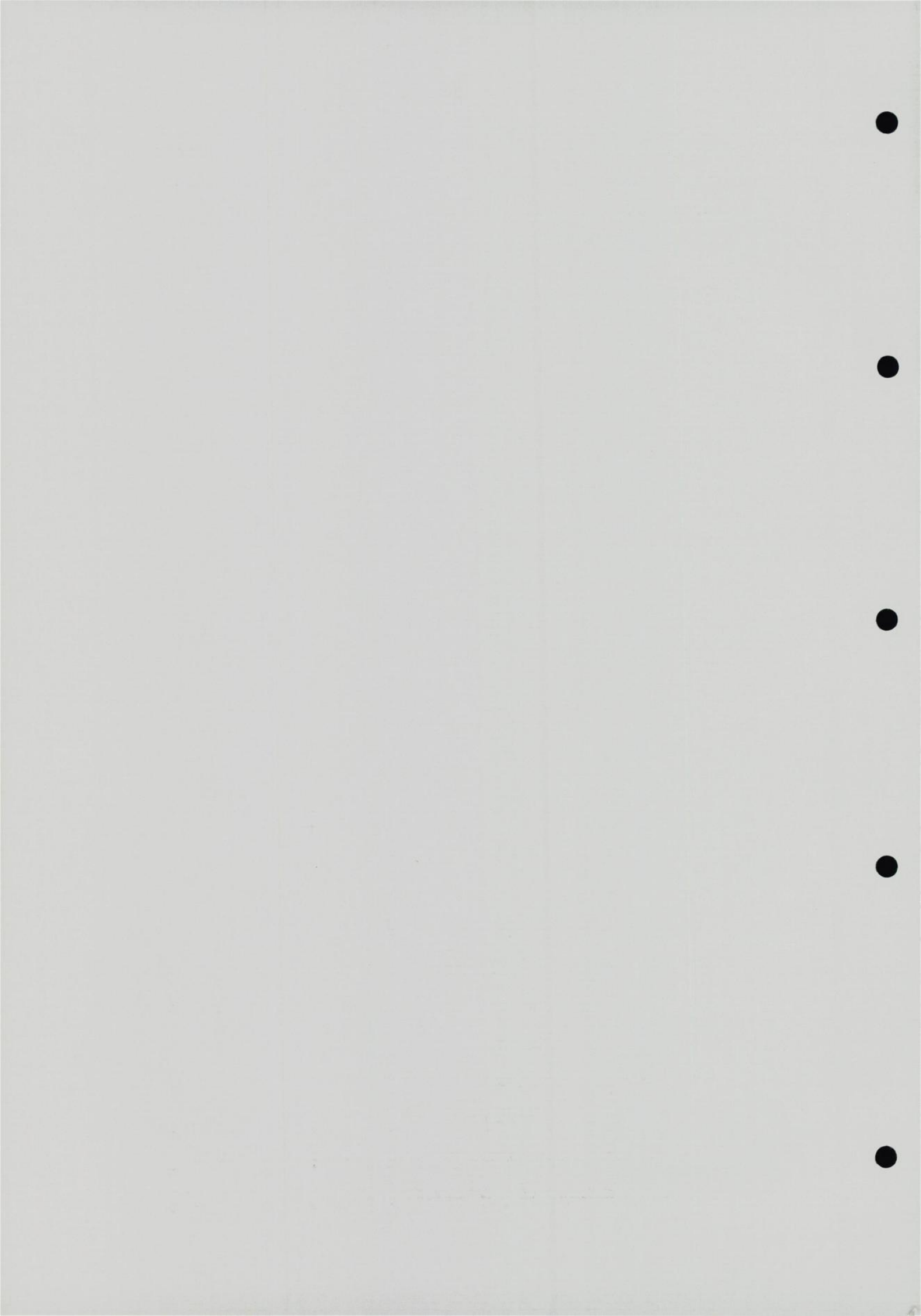
a) Detail of 1820 map.

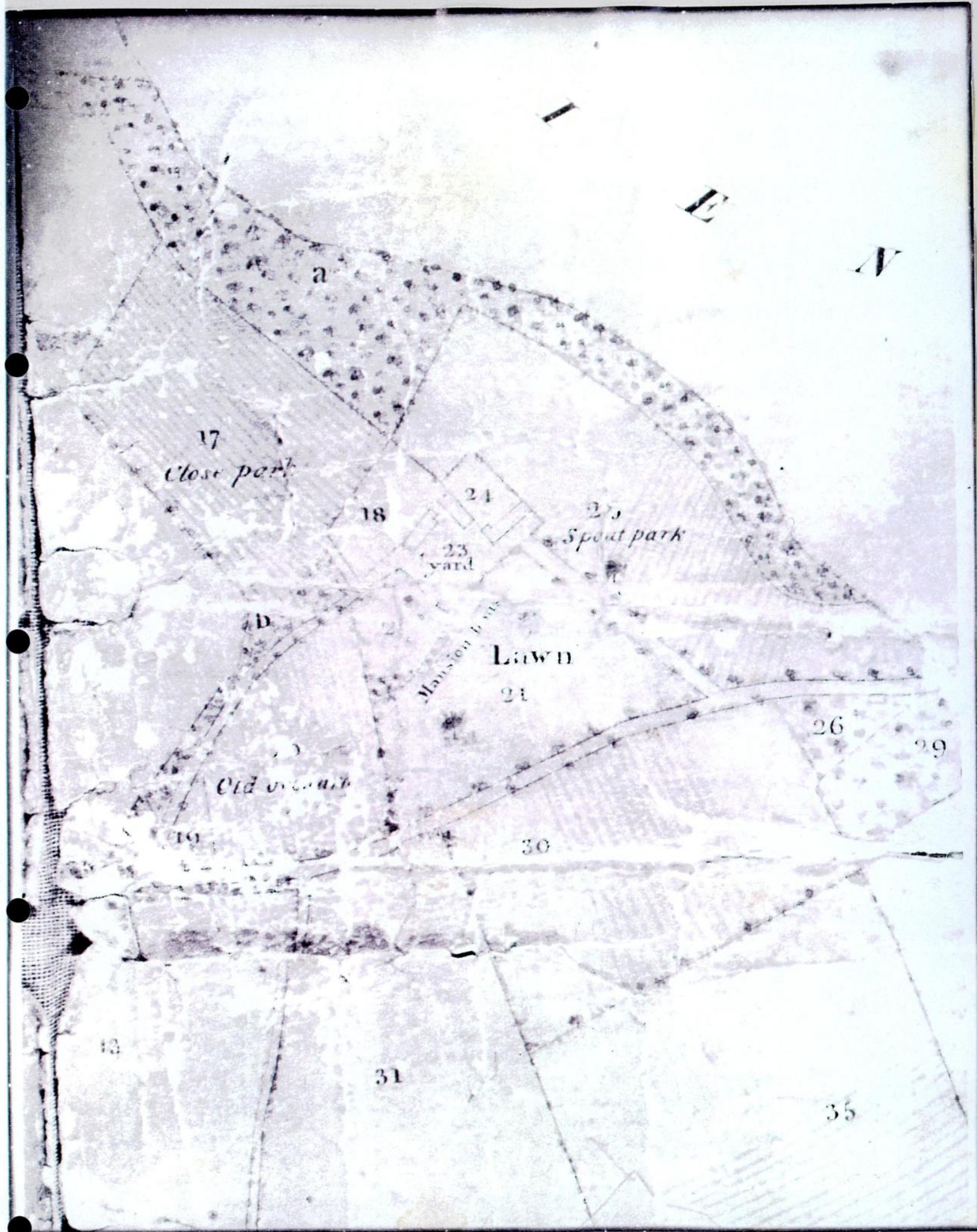
4.3: Calculated proposal of the original form of the house and its development using a concluding analysis of maps dating from 1800's and 1900's; 1820, 1832, 1875, 1905 until the present day.

When the house was first built in the early 1600's it would have consisted of a single pile main house to the front as stated previously. The house would have been entered from the back as the lack of a driveway up to the front door in the 1820 map suggests (map 1). The kitchen, which has been demolished in the recent past would have been separated from the house as would the servants quarters. The building at the top of the yard would have been used as a stronghouse to retreat to in times of need it would also have functioned as a store and byre for the animals. The other buildings in the yard would of served as stables and extra storage areas. The whole complex would have been very secure and functional.

As the need for defense against attack lessened, the need for aesthetic architecture refurbishment and landscape gardening increased. This can be seen in the developments at Cavanacor during the 1800's.

It is possible that the house was originally part of a defensive bawn, it is not uncommon to have the house included in the defensive structure. According to Ian Mc Cullough and Valerie Mulvin the house itself can play some part in the defense of the external circuit and there are others again that place the house within the bawn in a centralised way. The house itself is joined to the front wall.



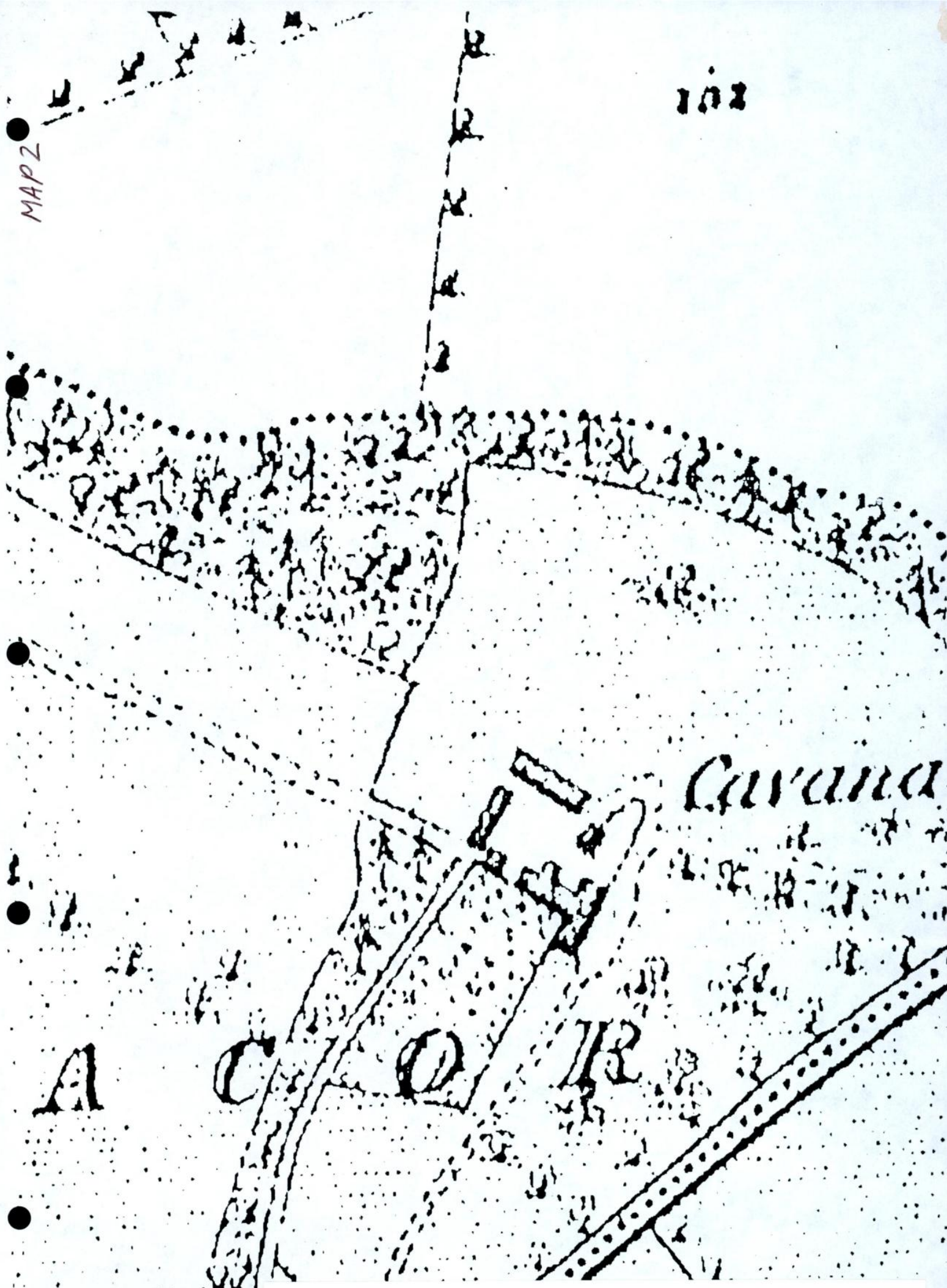


Map 1

b) Detail of 1820 map.

MAP 2

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2. 1833 ordinance survey map of Cavanacor and surrounding townlands.

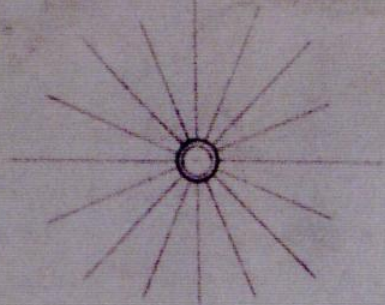
Map of
CAVANACOR AND TYLEFO

situate in the

Parish of Clontleigh

Barony of Raphoe
and

COUNTY OF DONEGAL



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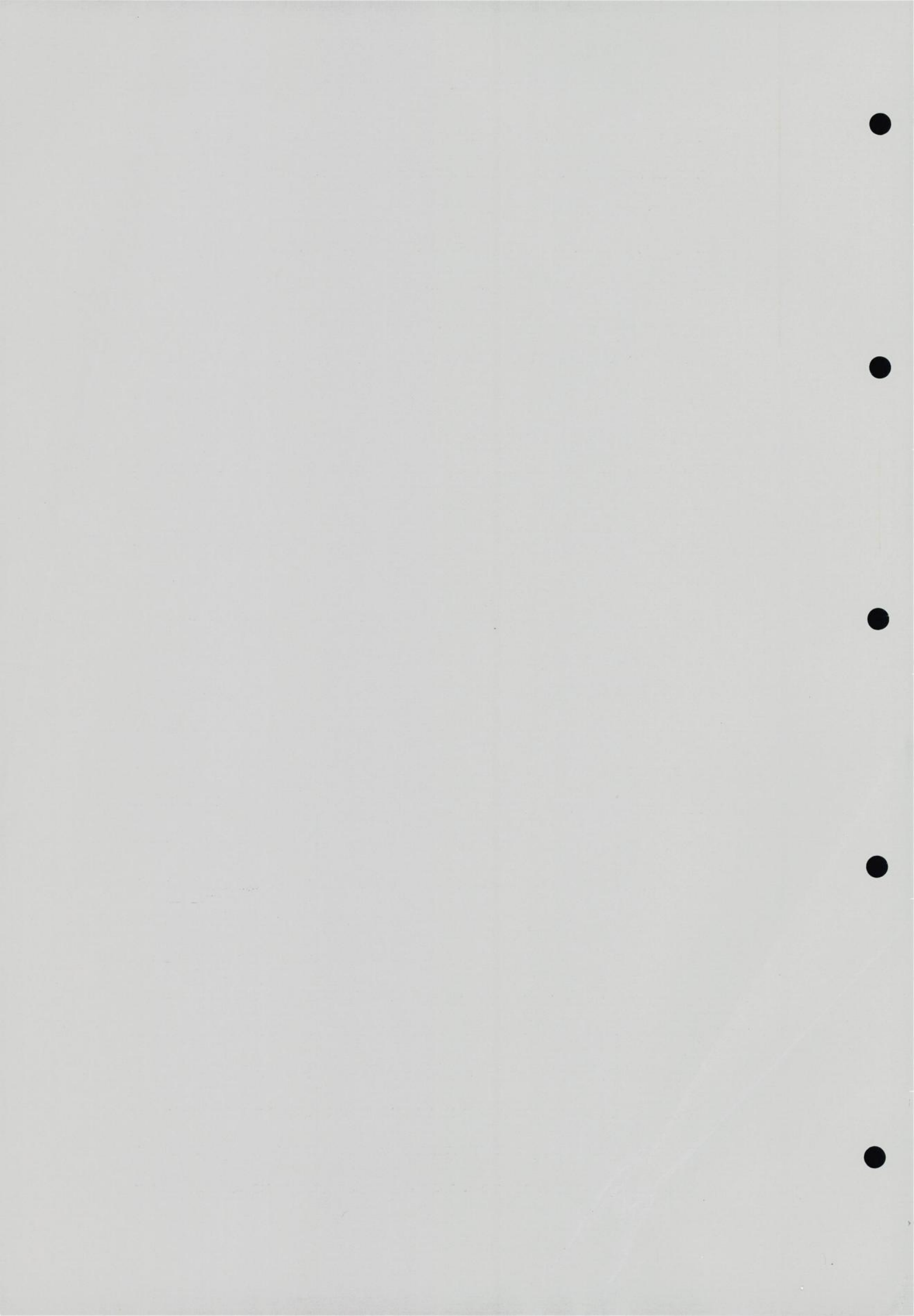
Cavanacor House

Map 3

b) Detail of 1875 map.

The 1820 map illustrates the house at the end of the Keyes era of habitation just before Mary Keyes married Major Humfrey in 1823 (map 1). The driveway that is connected to the front driveway and runs across the front of the house in a semi circle reconnecting with the road (map 1) is a later addition as it is present in the 1832 O.S. map and also in the 1875 map but not in the 1820 map (maps 1,2,3,). This suggests that the later addition of this driveway was added for decorative and functional purposes which corresponds with the social context of the time. The 18th and 19th centuries brought a period of relative peace in Ireland after the tumultuous wars of the 1600's. Houses no longer needed to be fortified, large windows could look out onto gardens and rural estates. It was around this time that Major Humfrey married into the Cavanacor estate and this would also have brought change. It was probably he who instigated the construction of the driveway as it had become fashionable for the horse drawn coach to drop off its occupants at the front door and then exit by a different driveway.

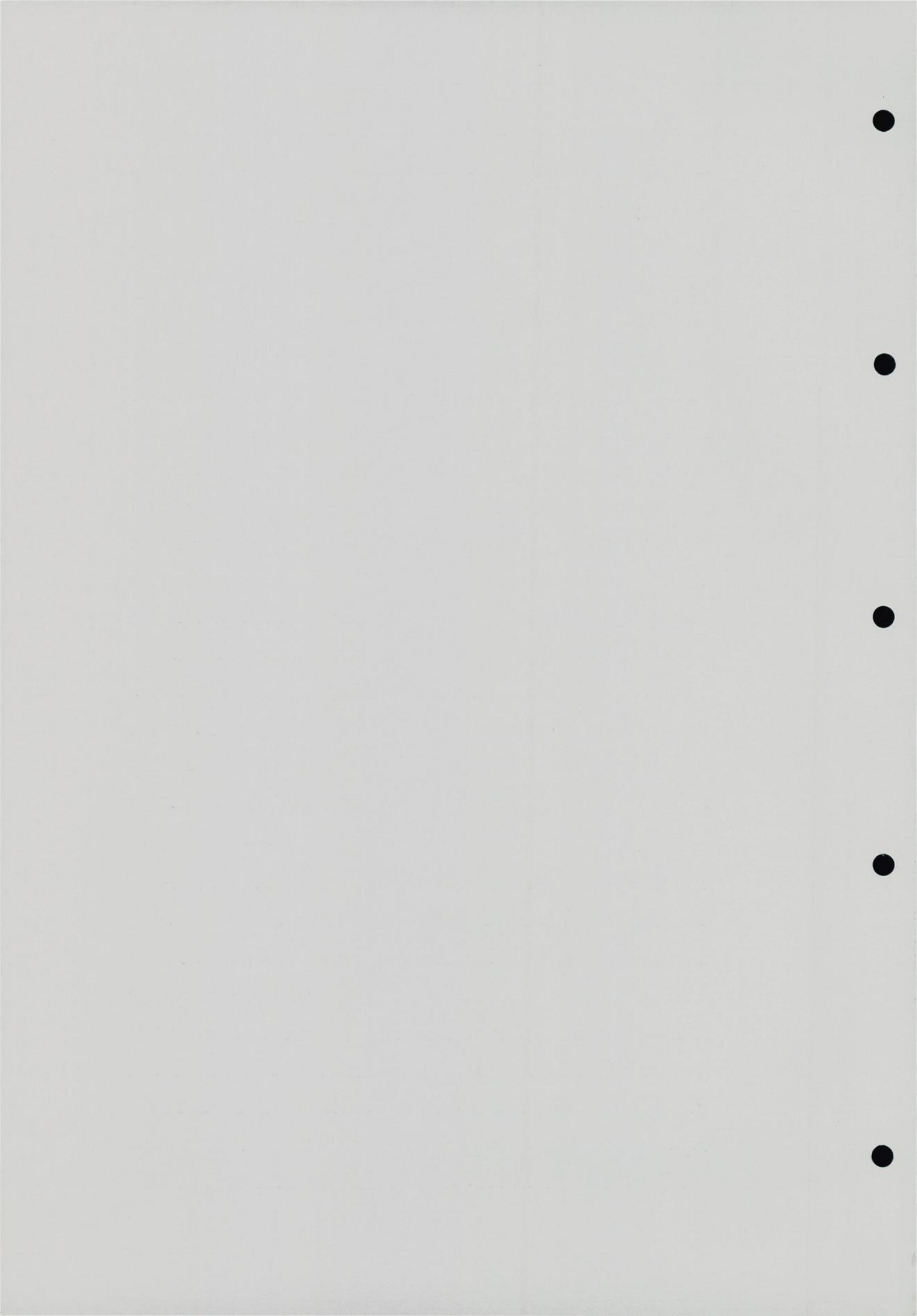
In the 1820 map we see 'The place where King James crossed marked on the map at 'Tileford' (map 1). There are several other interesting details in this particular map, firstly the fact that the driveway doesn't go up to the front of the house as I have stated previously and secondly that the 'straight' driveway leads up to a building at the top of the driveway. This building which disappears by the time the 1833 ordinance survey map is drawn up, is a very substantial building about the size of the strong house. Another detail which I have noticed is the extensive orchard which is unusually named 'Old orchard'. This obviously points to the house having been there for some time as we already

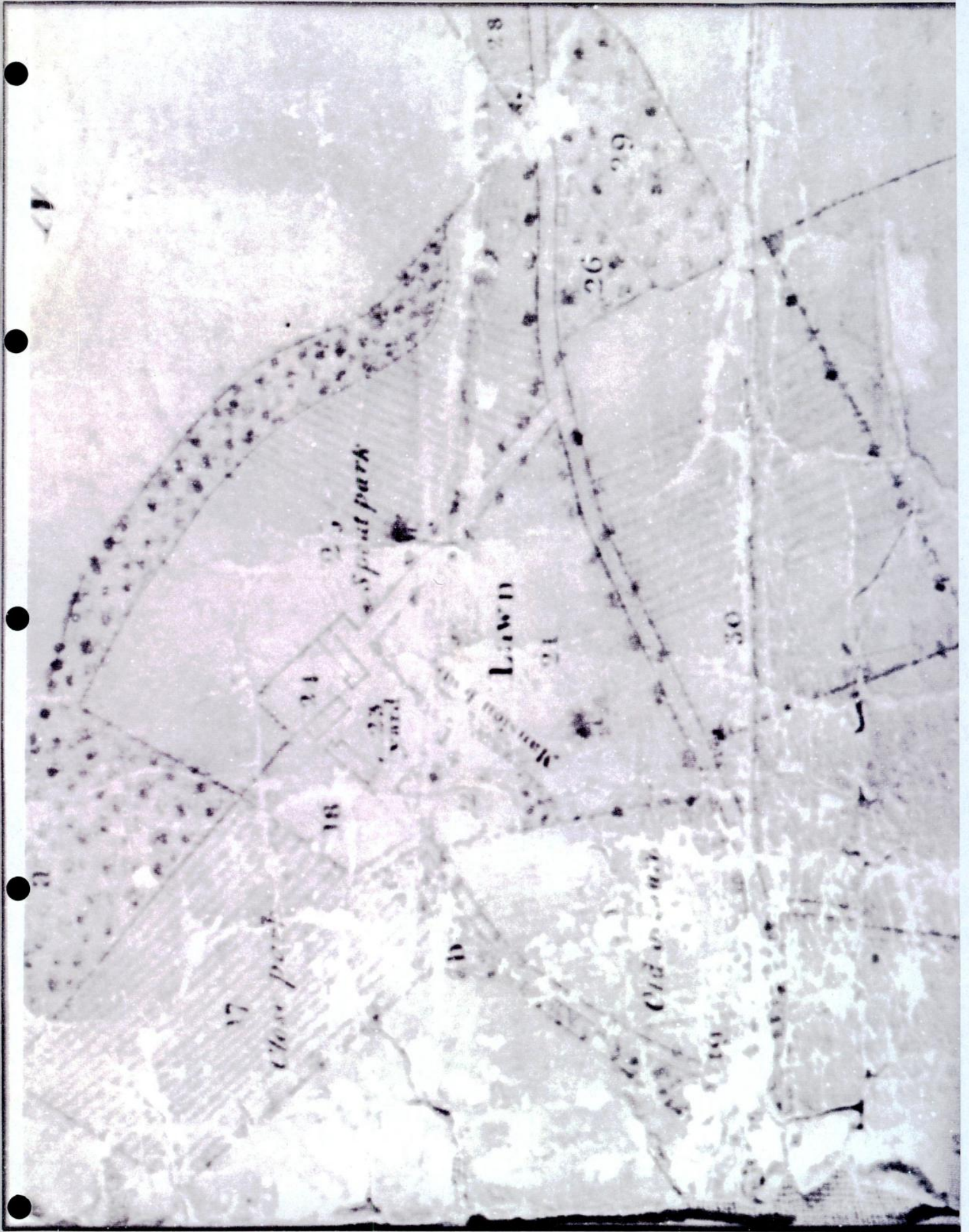


know. This orchard occupies the area where the present day orchard stands as well as a substantial amount of the garden and what is the back drive today.

The house and enclosures would have been extremely secure in the form suggested by the 1820 map. The windows would have been a lot smaller in the front facade. If the house was entered from the back this would add to the defensive quality. The building at the top of the yard is consistent throughout all three of the maps and this could prove that it was also included in the defense as a stronghouse to which the inhabitants could retreat to in times of danger. There are gunholes in this building at both ground and first floor level and this also adds to the defense (Pl. 4).

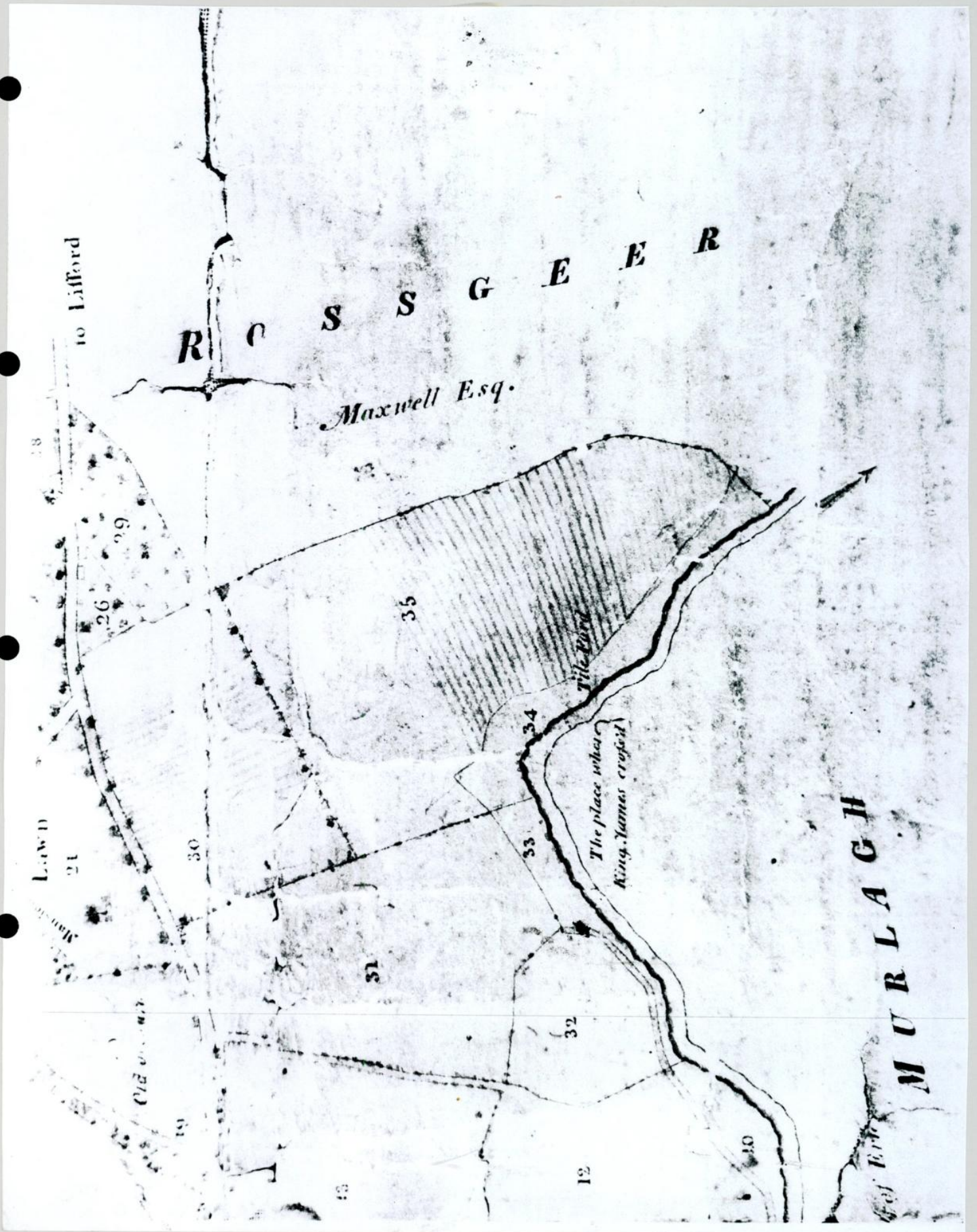
By 1832 Major Humfrey had instigated the construction of the new back driveway which runs through the old orchard (map 2). The wall or hedge row division in the 1820 map, dividing the old orchard from the front lawn and garden has been completely removed (map 1). A new division has been erected, presumably the present day garden wall. It is interesting to note that in the lower part of the present day garden there are a substantial amount of fruit trees including apple, pear and plum trees, as well as gooseberry, black and red currant bushes most of these are very old varieties. From consulting the 1820 map it can be seen that this part of the garden was originally part of the old orchard (map 1). By 1833 the substantial building at the top of the driveway had completely disappeared (map 2). An unusual little building has appeared in the bottom right hand corner of the yard. Also there is a protrusion extending out of the back of the house towards the yard probably out of the kitchen area. From





Map 1

c) Detail of 1820 map.



Map 1

d) Detail of 1820 map showing place where King James Crossed.



closer inspection of the area where this extension would have stood it can be seen that it would have covered a circular constructed man-made well about twenty feet deep. A lady who worked at Cavanacor in the early part of this century said that this was the case in her time and that this part of the house included sinks and washing equipment including a pump. The building was two storey and above there was a toilet and bathroom. It can be seen from the 1875 map that this is the case as the protrusion in the 1832 map has been joined to the main house. In 1820 it can be seen from the map (map 1) that the garden was relatively understated in its plan. But by 1875 it has become a well developed formal garden with an elaborate path system (map 3).

It is the 1875 map where the most changes are evident, a second yard appears with two smaller buildings one of which is still standing and a very large building which was presumably for keeping livestock in or perhaps more stables (map 3). The Spout park of the 1820 map has been made into an upper lawn. The stables have been extended and there is a circular horse track to power a threshing machine which was in the stable block itself. The gardens have become much more extensive and consist of upper and lower formal gardens as well as upper and lower lawns. A gate lodge also appeared at the bottom of the front drive between 1833 and 1875. By 1905 the second yard had completely disappeared apart from one of the small buildings which still stands today. The house remains the same and so does the other out houses of the main yard as well as many of the other features throughout the complex. Today many of the features remain the same as the 1905 map apart from the fact that



the whole kitchen area has been demolished and subsequently internal features have been adjusted.

As stated previously Cavanacor house has been in continuous habitation since it was constructed in the early 1600's. It has also belonged to the same family from the time of its construction until the 1950's. Since then it has belonged to two owners,

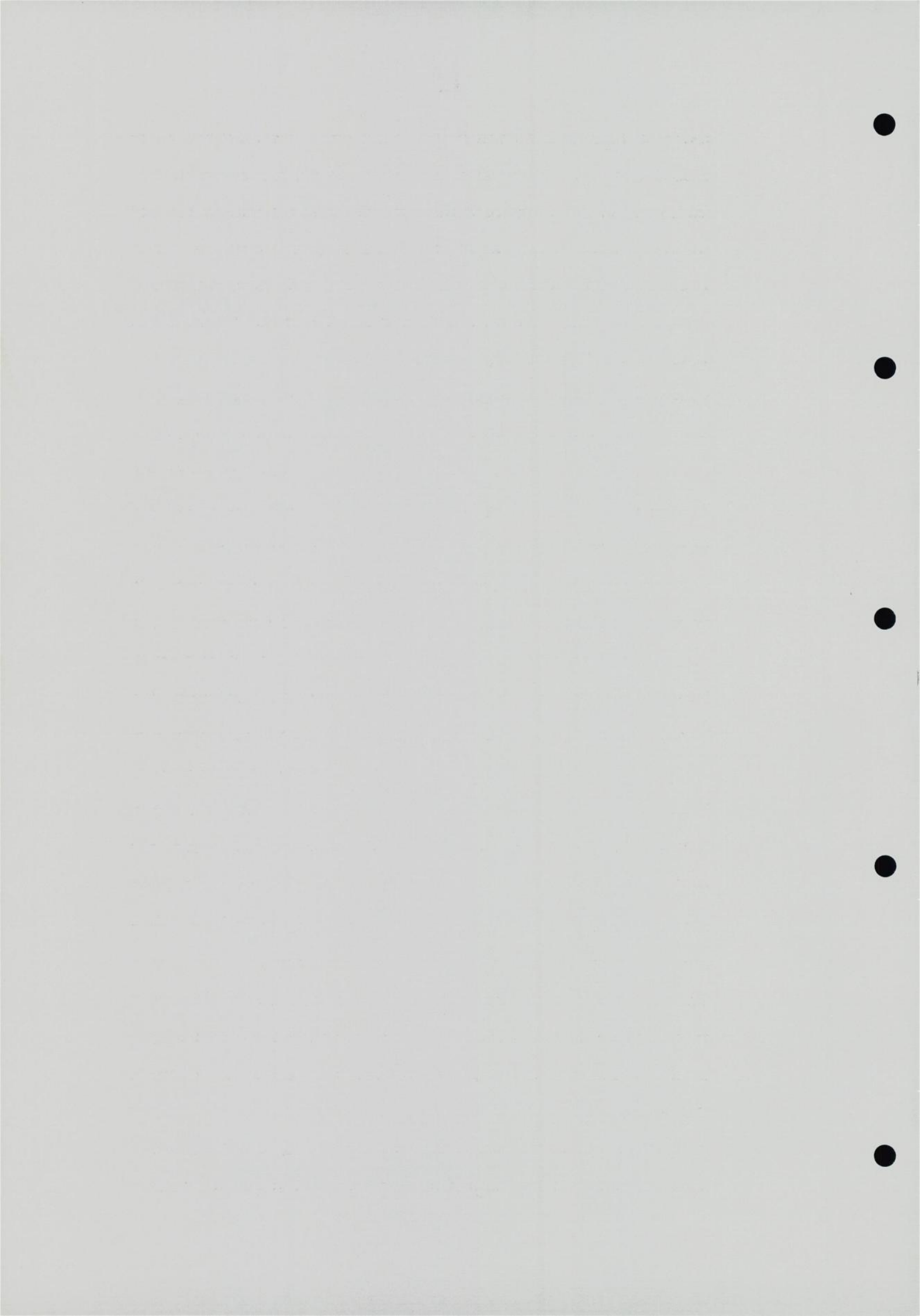
Ms Clark who demolished the kitchen area at the back which seperated the main house from the servant living area and the Mss. Snodgrass. My parents bought the house in 1974 and have lived in it ever since.



Epilogue.

The experiences I have had over the last year have greatly influenced my studio work. But instead of drawing me away from my home and family, the travelling has made me much more curious about where I live. Even on exchange in Rotterdam I would use photographs from home to work from in order to find some point of departure. I needed something tangible, something I could relate to before being able to digest the many experiences I had whilst travelling. In a way I was relying on my memories to help me to deal with the new surroundings. But personal memories can be deceptive and it is impossible to relive the past. An event is recollected or an object becomes important for many different reasons. It is impossible to ever retrieve the initial sensation experienced, and therefore it can be unhealthy to try to do so. It can also be said that it is more impossible and unhealthy to try to retrieve the past of others and set it out year by year to be taken as gospel by whoever may choose to read it. However it is very important to study the past and learn from it, without taking it for granted that what is read is what happened. It is so easy to be misled into thinking that the printed word is the truth, but as the truth is unattainable all we can hope for is a personal interpretation of the truth.

By researching into the history of my house I have begun to realise why I have become the individual I am today, even though I am not related to any of the people who lived in the house before my family bought it, even though I never knew any of these people, they have secretly influenced me, my parents, my brothers and sisters. I would not have cut my leg on the garden



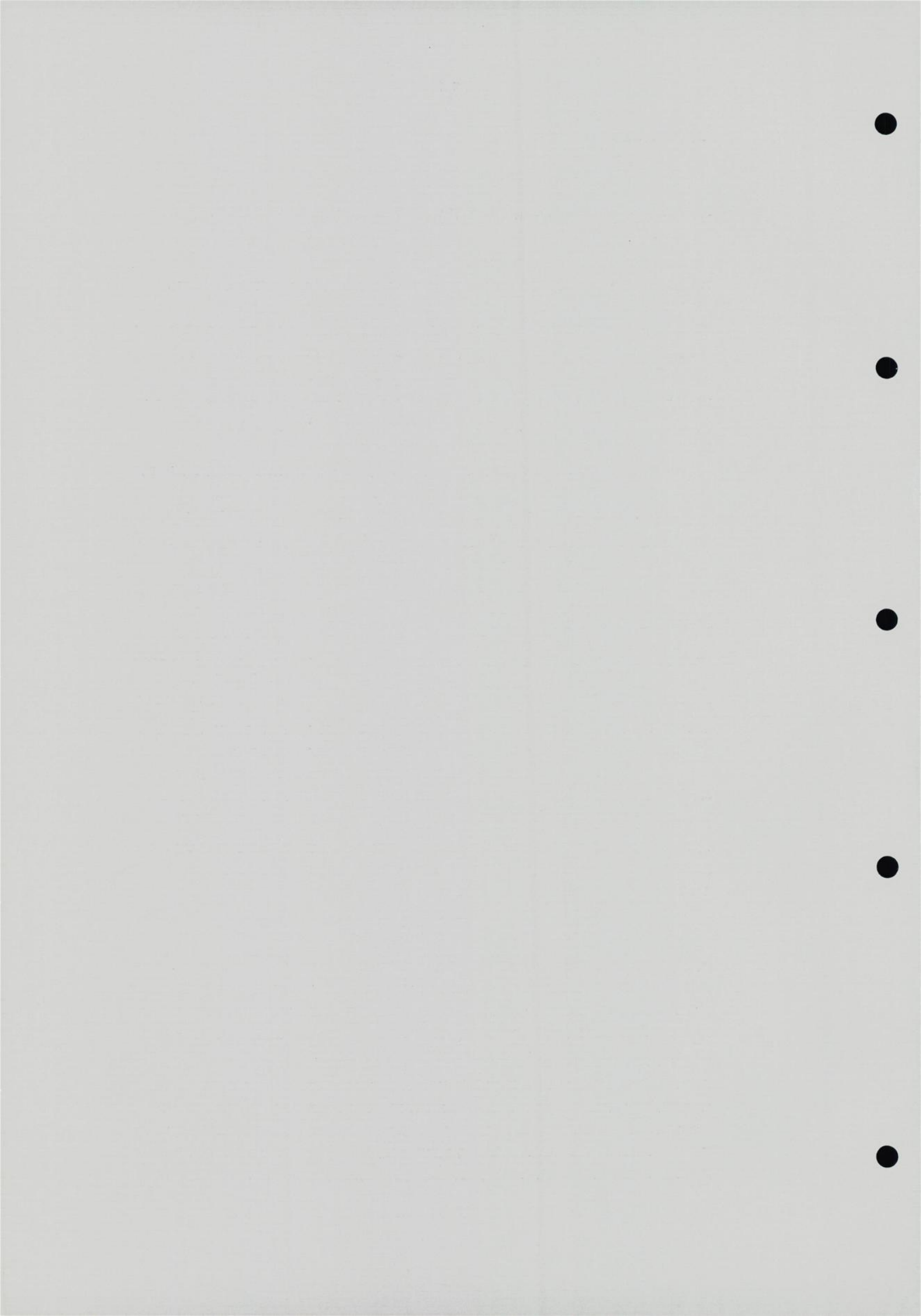
fence at the age of eleven if it had not been erected there, there would not have been such a wealth of source material and influence on my art work if the various inhabitants hadn't stored so many artefacts throughout the sheds and outhouses. The amount of space and the vastness of the surrounding parkland is a luxury for a child living in the world today and this freedom has subsequently influenced my outlook on life.

Researching the history of a building such as this, over four hundred years old, could be assumed to be an impossible task as the documentation, both visual and written is extremely limited. This is partly due to the fact that very few people could read and write all those years ago and also the means for visual documentation were extremely crude. This lack of resource to document the everyday occurrences which shape society, led to a much more simplistic and minimal depiction of the past. Everything was stripped down to the bones and described with a honest clarity, this simplicity encourages imagination, innovation and persistence of study. Since the invention of photography man has become more accustomed to having the gaps filled in for him both in visual and written material. This encourages faith in the truth of the material studied. Nowadays, just as in the past, there are lies being told, but they are becoming easier to believe. They are not untruths in what they depict, but more in what they omit. The arrival of virtual reality is the next step, it is developing at such a fast rate that soon it will be easy to believe that one is walking on Mars or is a fly on the wall in Kafka's 'Metamorphosis'.

By writing about Cavanacor house I am in a way affirming my own existence in this world as well as the existence of those



around me. It is becoming more difficult today to see the 'wood for the trees'. The vastness of the media makes it impossible to discern what is reality. For me it is very important to understand my own immediate environment, to appreciate it, in order to make full use of the tools that technology has dropped on my doorstep. This may only be a personal view but I am sure it is a valid one. This study of my home becomes, as Van Gogh's powerful depiction of his bedroom became, an essential self-portrait. Things that I have noticed have come about through critical examination and observation of the existing material, but as with painting a still life one can never capture every subtlety of shadow or quality of tone. It is only possible to represent what is seen or remembered and let the viewer's imagination fill in the gaps.



APPENDICES.

1. "O'Donnell saw them advancing, and rejoiced at seeing them coming; and he placed his soldiers in their proper stations fronting them, with their warlike weapons; and he did not permit to shoot at them until they had arrived at the opposite bank of the river. They afterwards met together hand to hand, and a sharp and furious battle was fought between both parties. The two hosts of cavalry rushed to the charge, and began to fight with large spears and greenhead lances. Niall O'Donnell gave Manus, brother of O'Donnell, a thrust of a sharp, long lance under his shoulder blade, piercing the armour with which he was clad, he buried it in his body, and wounded his internal parts....."

*Dael, now Deel, or, as it is called by the decendants of the scottish settlers, Dale-burn, a river which flows through the barony of Raphoe, and discharges itself into the Foyle a short distance to the north of the town of Lifford.-See note (e) under the year 1557, p. 1557, supra."

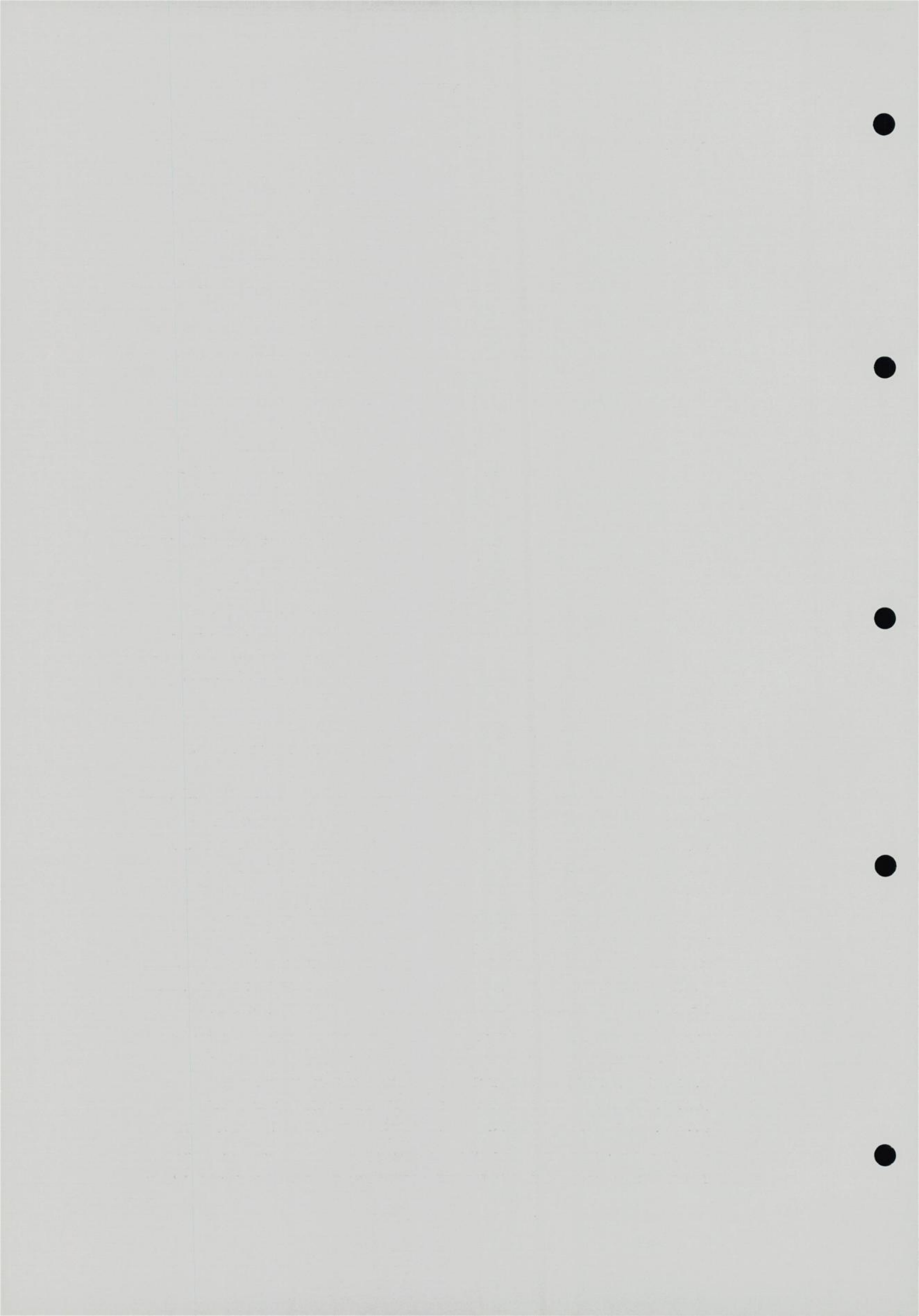
2. "HUMFREY OF CAVANACOR: Humfrey, Benjamin-Geale, Esq. of Cavanacor, co. Donegal, Lieutenant-colonel in the army, served in the 45th regiment during the Peninsular war, for which he has a medal and nine clasps; J.P. and high sheriff in 1848, born 28 september 1793; married 3 July, 1823, Mary, only child and heiress of William Keys, Esq. of Cavanacor, and has issue,

1. William, born 16 July, 1824; died April, 1826.

2. John-keys, born 16th June, 1828; an officer 53rd regiment, afterwards a capt. in the Donegal militia; married 6 March, 1857, Bessie-Harriet, 2nd dau. of Henry William Wray, Esq. of the Castle Wray branch of that family, and by her (who d. 3 Jan. 1859) had a son, Benjamin Geale, b. 3 March, 1858....."

Burke's Landed Gentry pg.744

3. Line 5.- "Ballindrate." A small town on the Earl of Earne's estate, part of it in the townland of Moneen, and part in that of Millsesshagh: Sir Richard Hansard built a house near this town, a short time before his death. It is thus mentioned in his will, a copy of which is in Perogative Court:- "I keep only out of general donation, the stone house lately erected at Monyn, together with two sessocks of land allotted and adjoining to the said house, which I bequeath unto John Hansard. of Vouslabey, in the county of Lincoln, Gentlemen." This will, however, was disputed by Sir Richards Brother, and upon trial, it was found to



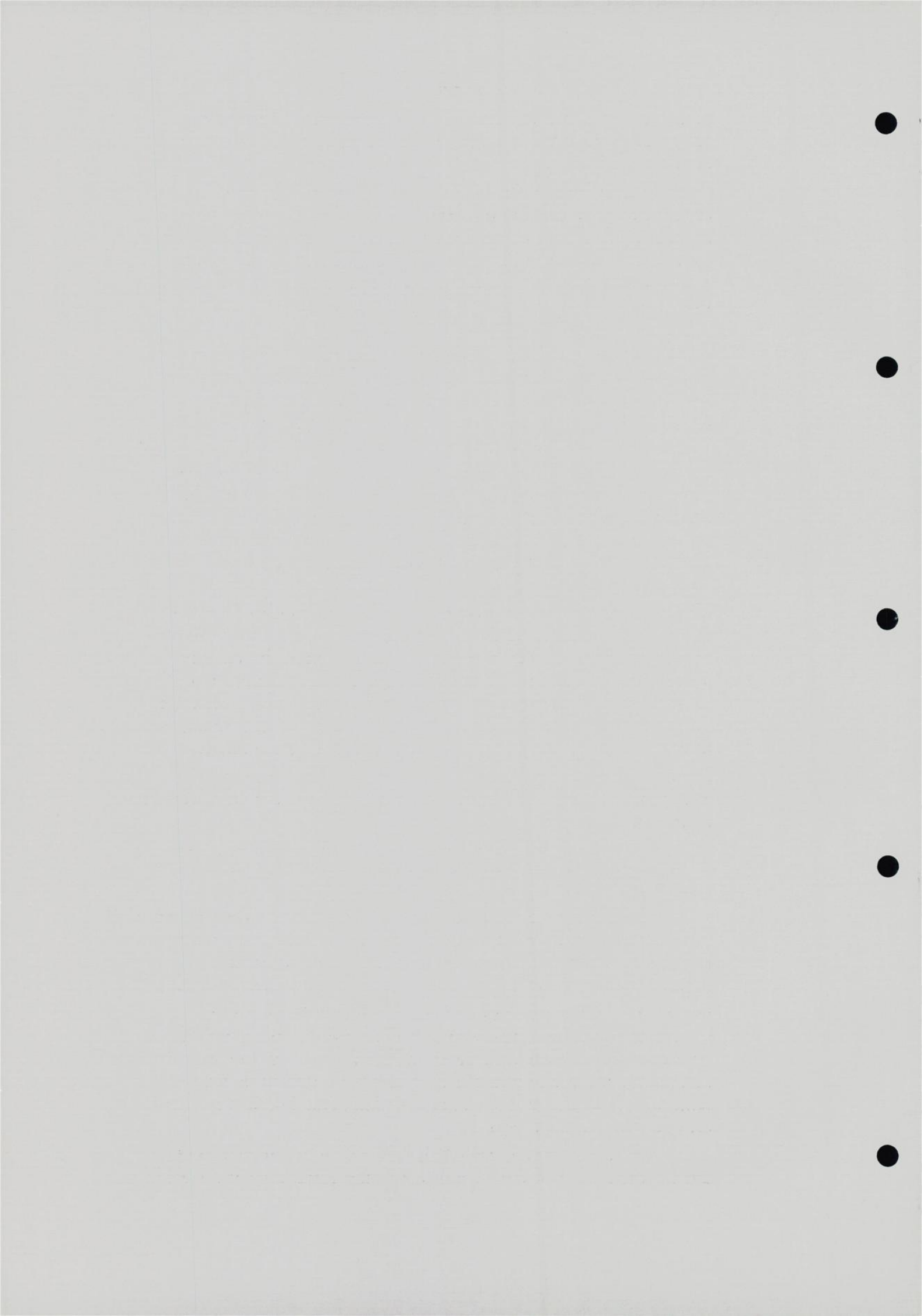
be null and void from the beginning, he having had no feofment of the property, to enable him to bequeath it from his next heir.

On the low level grounds between this town and the house of Cavanacor, a great body of protestant Noblemen and gentlemen assembled with their regiments of horse and foot, a short time before Londonderry was invested by James's army. This circumstance is thus recorded in the Armagh Manuscript, Lib. 1. Sec. xv.:-

“Well did the northern Protestant foresee
The dire effects of this new tragedy,
How that religion and estates must go,
If they yield all up to the common foe;
A foe that's seldom merciful and kind,
To any person of a different mind.
They muster'd up near thirty thousand men,
Both horse and foot, in warlike discipline.
They chose Lundy the general, and did grace
The brave Lord Blaney, with the second place.
Next him Sir Arthur Rawdon-these they be
our northern forces foot and calvary.
Upon a spacious plain near Ballindrate,
In gallant order these brave regiments met.
The sound of drums and trumpets rent the sky,
To England's banner these brave chiefs did
fly.”

Grahams Derriana pg.53.

4. James Knox Polk was the eldest child of Samuel Polk and Jane Knox. He studied law and married Sarah Childress in 1824. He was a member of the House of Representatives from 1825-1839. He also was Speaker of the House from 1835-1839, and he was Govenor of Tennessee from 1839-1841. He had always been a strong supporter of Andrew Jackson (“Old Hickory”) and was often referred to as “Young Hickory”. Jackson gave his backing to Polk's Presidential campaign and he was elected President on 12th of November 1844. Polk was an extremely hard working President. He was one of the few American Presidents to complete during his Presidency, the full Presidential programme, which he had laid out on taking up office. During Polk's presidency there was a dramatic expansion in the size of American territory and a securing of her boundaries. His government moved decisively to annex Texas. He settled the Oregon boundary dispute with Britain by treaty on June 15th 1846. Territorial disputes lead to war with Mexico. The United



States' army took possession of Mexico City on September 14th, 1847. The peace treaty resulted in the acquisition of more than 500,000 square miles of territory in the Southwest and the Rio Grande River was recognized as the boundary. Polk approved the acquisition of California, Utah, and New Mexico. He was regarded by historians as one of the greatest Democrats ever. At the close of his term of office (March 4th, 1849), he retired to his home in Nashville, Tennessee, where he died on June 15th 1849.

5. THE FAMILY OF KEYES, with appendices. Being the papers of the late Brigadier General Sir Terence Humphrey Keyes. K.C.I.E., C.S.I., C.M.G. Edited by L.G. Pine.

Research into the early history of the Keyes family was undertaken by the late Sir Terence Keyes, who died in 1939 before the results of his investigations could be published. The various drafts of Sir Terence Keyes' work were subsequently edited by Mr L.G. Oine and are now published here. 1961.

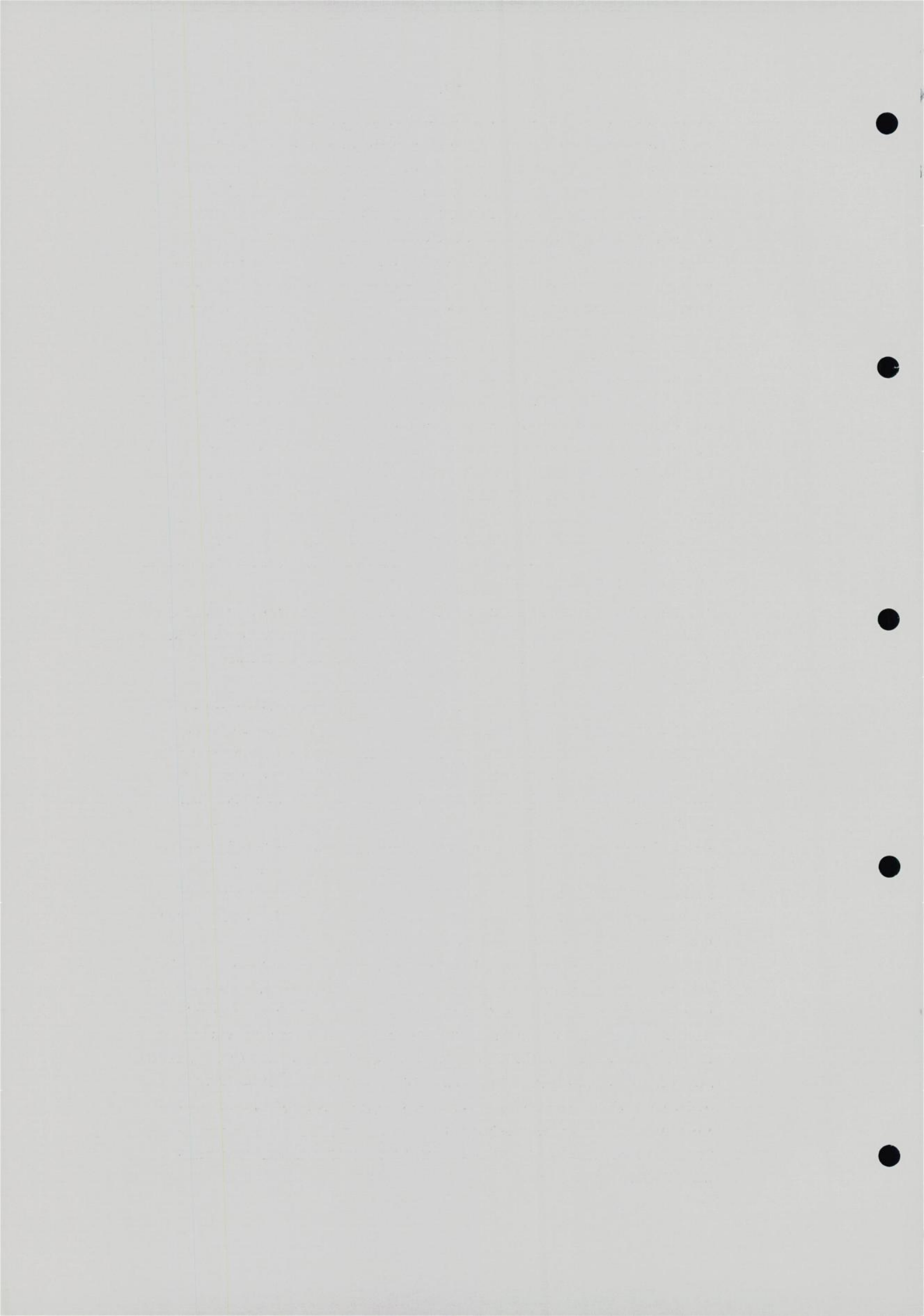
EXTRACT: CHAPTER SEVEN. IRELAND.

Thomas Keyes died intestate, and his eldest son, also Thomas, who was not yet of age took out letters of administration in the perogative court of Canterbury in conjunction with his step uncle, Sir Reginald Scott. So complicated had the family affairs become that it took some years to unravel them, and it was not until 1578 that young Thomas set off to the wars in Ireland. Two of his uncles had already secured Captaincies, an expensive business, and his sister, Isobel, who had married William, the eldest son of Sir Anthony St. Leger, the Queen's Deputy, was also in Ireland.

Thomas Keyes first appointment was as Assistant to the Trenchmaster, a very able and distinguished soldier, Richard Hansard.

The army in Ireland was shamefully treated. They lived in the most insanitary conditions, were half starved and were kept so short of pay that they were driven to looting to keep themselves alive. In consequence they dwindled away till there was grave danger on more than one occasion of their being overwhelmed by the Irish and their Spanish Allies. Richard Hansard who had been seriously wounded was sent to England to raise another company in 1601. When he returned he brought with him Thomas Keyes' young son John, and Thomas rejoined him as Captain of his company.

Hansard was soon sent to the north and made governor of the Liffer, a tract of land controlling the fords over the river



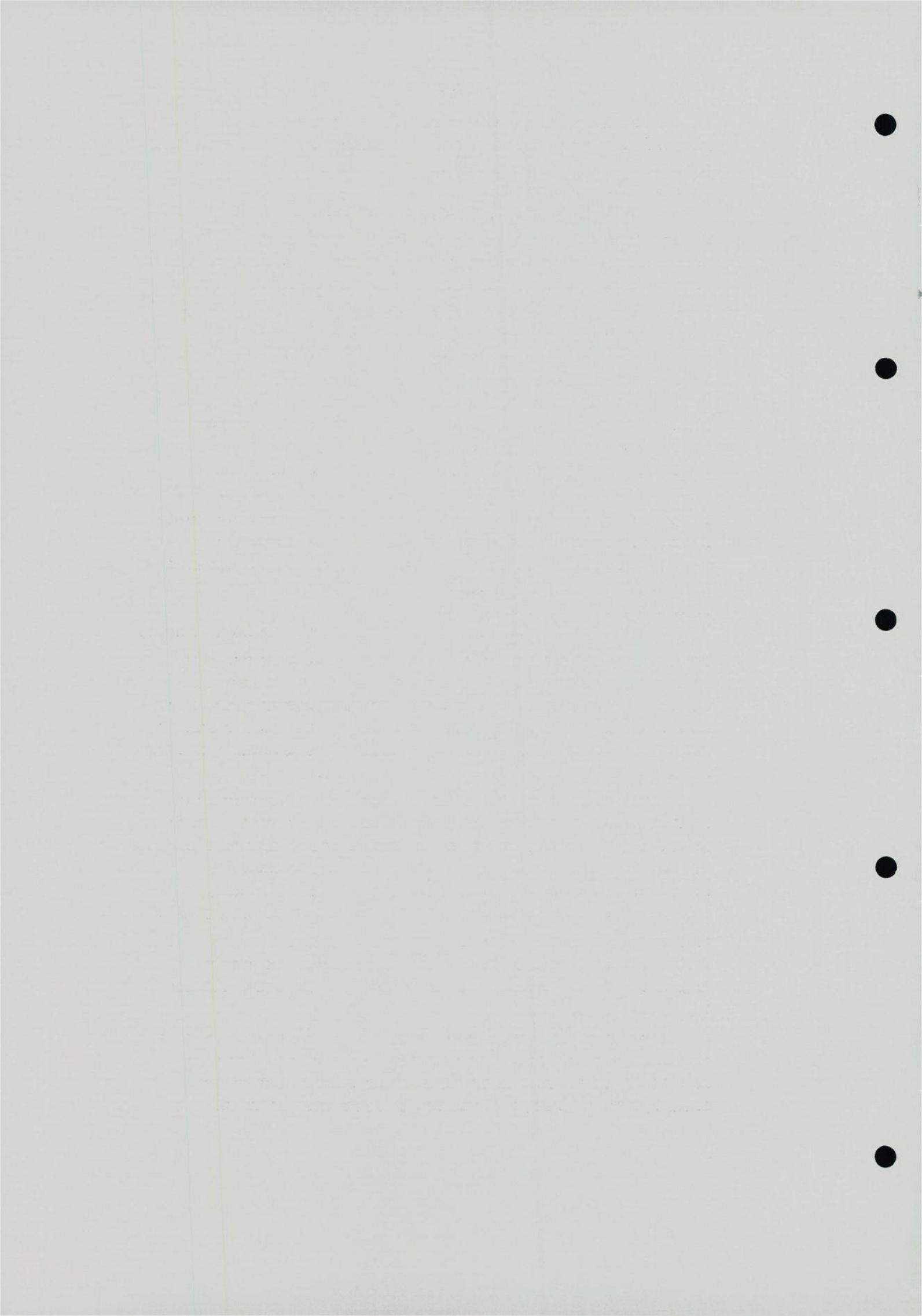
Foyle and its affluents, and consequently controlling the roads from the south to Derry. Here his company and the Keyes, father and son, were engaged on the familiar task of building. Two forts were built at Lifford and strong posts at two other fords. In the Liffer, Sir Richard Hansard, for he had been knighted and made one of the Commissioners for the Government of Ireland, was engaged in duties much akin to those of a Political Officer on the Indian Frontier, dealing with the chiefs of the tribes and only holding the country in the immediate vicinity of the forts. To add to the likeness of the conditions, the greater number of the tribesmen of that part of Donegal were named nomad cattle drovers.

When the Earls of Tyrone and Tyrconnel fled the land and the Plantation of Ulster was decided on (1611), Sir Richard Hansard was one of the few English Officers who refrained from the indecent scramble for escheated lands that took place. Some time afterwards he was given 1000 acres,- a small grant compared to those given to absentee courtiers or to James the First's Scots who were naturalised as Englishmen for the purpose. Even this grant he devoted to building and endowing a church and school at Lifford.

Hansard's officers had been given small plots of land before the Plantation on which to build strong houses near the fords, and to Thomas Keyes and his son John fell sites at Lifford and Ballindrait.

Many of those who had received grants never came near their cheaply acquired property and let the land out, on terms amounting, except for a small head rent, to ownership. On these terms Thomas Keyes took the estate of Clonfade near Lifford; but he was getting too old for pioneering work, and found the taxes so burdensome that he handed over Clonfade to his son John and betook himself to Derry, which was being planted by the city of London and changed its name to Londonderry. Londonderry was in the throes of forming a new constitution, and Thomas Keyes became one of its two Sherriffs in the first year (1623) the new order of things.

John Keys, for so the family spelt their name for the next 200 years, cleared and developed Clonfade, while another of Hansard's officers, Roger Tasker, did the same by a similar adjoining property, Cavanacor. In 1645, John Keyes' only son, John, married Barbara, daughter and co-heiress of Roger Tasker, and on the marriage, Roger Tasker made over Cavanacor by deed of gift to Barbara. The two properties together included 1400 acres of the best arable land in those parts, Corkoran Island in the Foyle and the houses and mills in Ballindrait, besides some tracts of hill grazing.



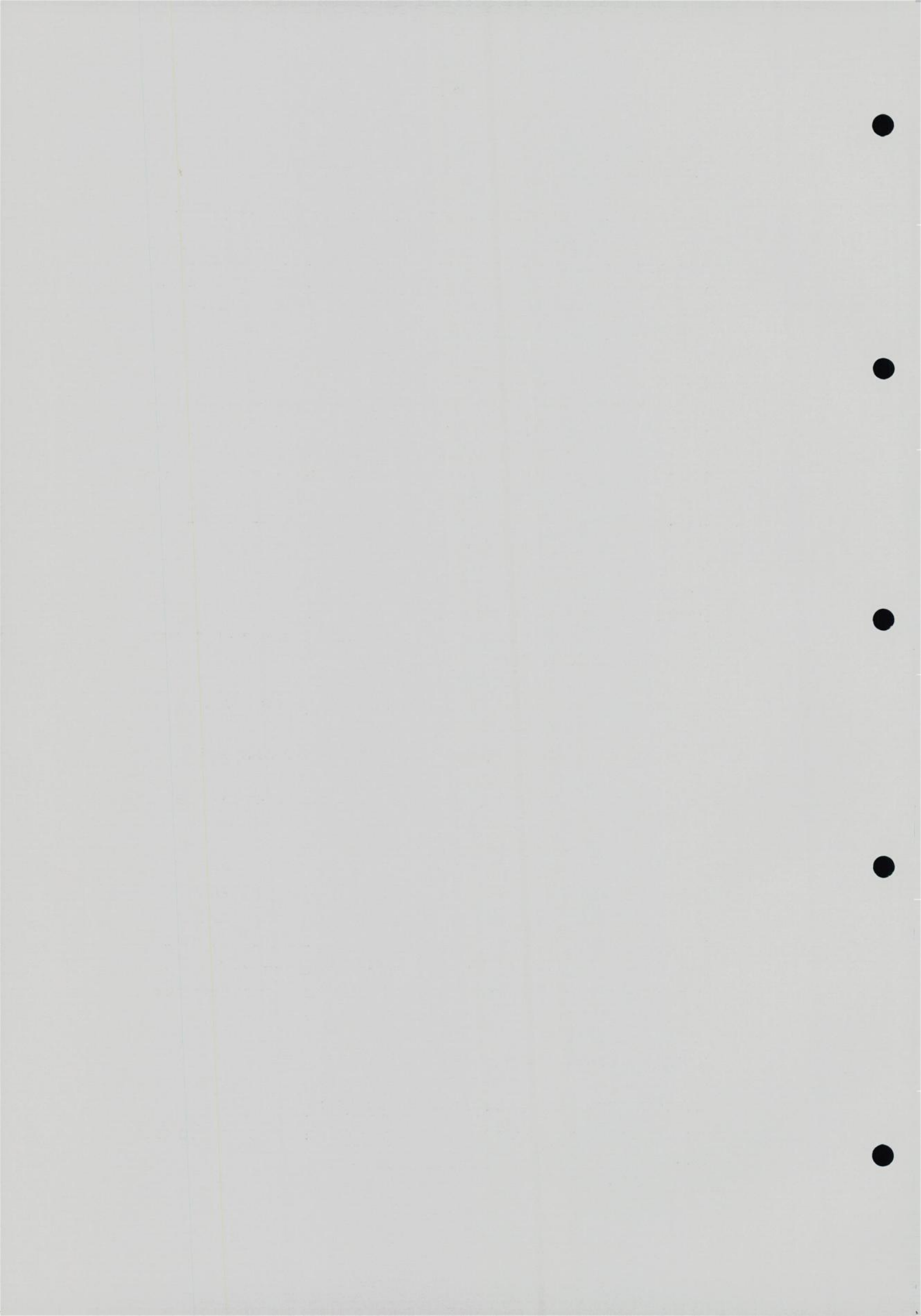
This John Keys was succeeded by his eldest son, John, the third of his name. The property remained undivided, and John's three brothers, George, Thomas and Frederick lived in three different houses on the estate.

The even tenor of life in Donegal was rudely disturbed by James the Second's orders to replace all the Protestant officers and troops in Ulster by Catholics, but the Protestant Gentry of Ulster were soon enheartened by James' abdication. The next year James' attempts to regain his throne with a Franco-Irish army brought home to the Protestant gentry of Ulster, how serious was their position. It soon became clear that Londonderry was James' quarry. At a council of war held in that city, it was resolved to hold the fords over the Foyle and the Finn. The Protestant gentry of the neighbourhood assembled in the Cavanacor meadows to co-operate with the troops from Londonderry under Governor Lundy and with the other contingents opposed to James. There was much desultory fighting on April the 14th and 15th round the fords, but Lundy abandoned his positions in the most shameful manner and headed the flight to Londonderry. On arriving there he shut the gates in the faces of the newly raised corps and the crowds of refugees who were flocking into the city.

John Keys stuck to Cavanacor, but his three brothers joined the garrison, George in an irregular corps and Thomas and Frederick in command of companies of Lord Charlemount's Regiment. On James' arrival at the fords he halted at Cavanacor and dined under a tree which still stands on the lawn in front of the house. Cavanacor House was spared in consequence, but the other three houses on the estate were burned.

John Keys was succeeded by a fourth John, but this one died without issue, and Cavanacor went to his brother, William of Clonfade while his younger brother, Tasker, inherited one of the family houses in Ballindrait. This William's only son predeceased him leaving five sisters, of whom the eldest, Deborah, married her second cousin, Nathaniel, grandson of the George Keyes of the time of the seige of Derry, and so united once more Clonfade and Cavanacor. The youngest sister, Margaret, married her first cousin, Roger, son of the Tasker Keyes of Ballindrait.

Deborah Keys died soon after her son, George was born, leaving him Cavanacor, but this line terminated in a granddaughter, Mary, who, in 1823, married Captain Benjamin Humfrey, thus taking Cavanacor out of the Keys family.



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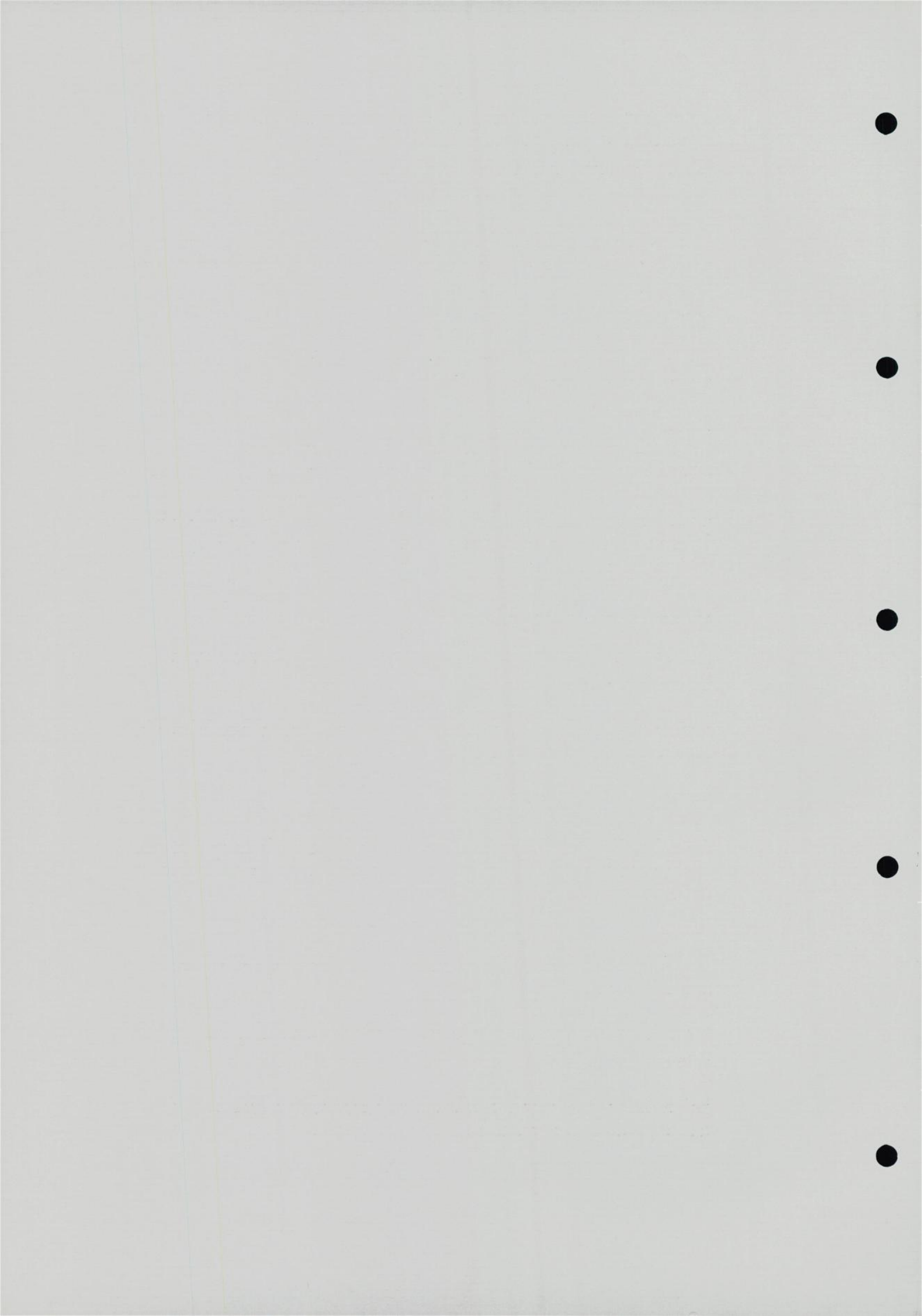
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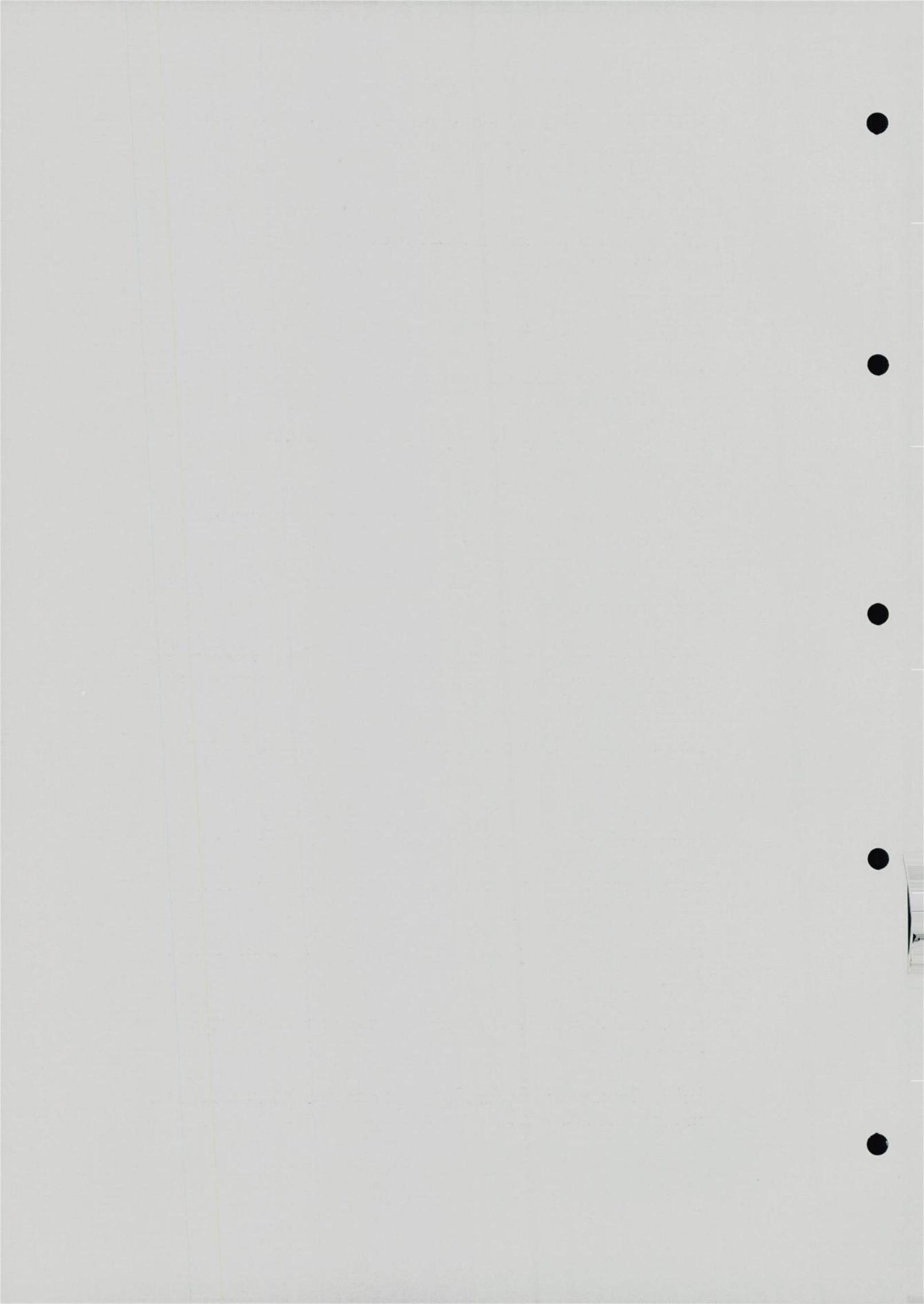
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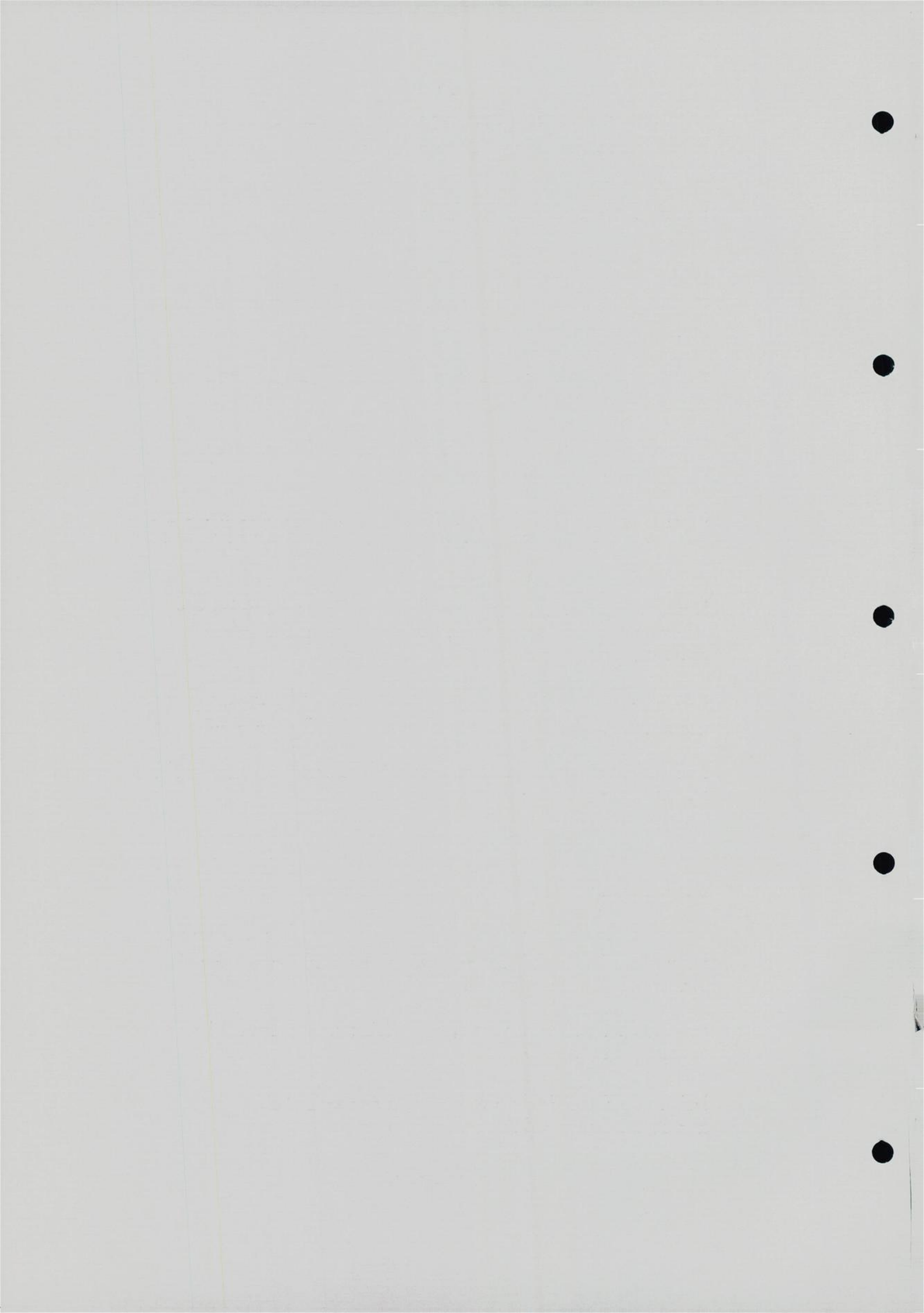
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