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Stratford's Robertstown estate during the 1840s

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Stratford's Robertstown Estate during the 1840s

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STRATFORD'S ROBERTSTOWN ESTATE DURING THE 1840s

by Desmond Norton¹

I. Introduction

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the author acquired about 30,000 letters pertaining to estates, in various parts of Ireland, managed in the 1840s by Messrs James Robert Stewart and Joseph Kincaid (denoted SK in what follows). Based in Dublin, this firm was then the most important land agency in Ireland. Until they became the author's property, the letters had not been read since the 1840s. Addressed mainly to SK, they were written by landlords, tenants, clergymen, civil servants, financiers, shipping agents, SK's local agents, etc. The author has been researching them in preparation of a study entitled Landlords, Tenants, Famine: Business of an Irish Land Agent in the 1840s. The letters of Co Limerick interest pertain to the estates of Gertrude Fitzgerald near Kilmallock, to the lands of Sergeant Warren in the Ballingarry district, and to some of the properties of Colonel Stratford. It is correspondence on the latter which is the primary focus in the present essay, which draws on draft Chapter 10 of the larger study near completion. It is important to note that the SK correspondence was not written for publication, or for purposes of propaganda; hence, except when the writer of a letter was seeking some form of favour, it is plausible to take the view that the SK correspondence depicts generally accurate perceptions of reality on several estates in various parts of Ireland during the 1840s.

Apart from lands in Clare, Colonel John Stratford also owned well over 2,000 statute acres in several townlands in the Barony of Shanid, Co Limerick². Most of these were opposite Aughinish Island. Although the townlands were located in three different parishes -- mainly in the parish of Robertstown but also in the parishes of Shanagolden and Loghill -- it was common to refer to these Stratford properties as constituting the Robertstown estate. The townland of Robertstown was in the centre of the property. The tidal part of the Robertstown River separates Aughinish Island, on the Shannon estuary, from the mainland. The fact that some of the Stratford townlands -- in particular, Ardaneer, Churchfield, Dysert and Islandmacteige -- were contiguous to the Robertstown River meant that they could be subject to serious flooding at times of high tides combined with high winds: hence, adequate protective embankments were essential.

Between the late eighteenth century and circa 1840, the Robertstown estate was held under a long lease by Lady Clonbrock, who resided in the vicinity of Ahascragh in Co Galway³. The existence of this lease meant that even if he had wished to do so, Stratford could not have implemented any improvements on the estate during those years. Lady Clonbrock sublet all⁴ or most of the estate to a middleman named Stephen Dickson, who had died on some date shortly before February 1841. On 10 February 1841, his brother, Richard Dickson of Limerick City, wrote to SK:

Having rec'd no answer to my letter to Col. Stratford except through you, I beg to know whether it is his intention to entertain my proposal of taking a lease of Robertstown during Lady Clonbrocks life, & receiving a sum of money to fine down the rent. I have laid by a sum of 5000 £ for this purpose In case of our agreeing I should wish to remove the excessive population of paupers by sending them to America & locating them there. The expense attending this necessary measure & the season now being at hand for such a removal makes it desirable for me to know soon whether I am to prepare for it or not.

Dickson, who was a clergyman⁵, added the postscript: "I should expect a Lease for Ever".

At an advanced age, Lady Clonbrock died⁶ around the beginning of June 1841. Probably on the advice of SK (who commenced as active managers of Stratford's Limerick estate early in 1841), Stratford decided not to grant a lease to Dickson, whose tenancy was terminated. On 5 June 1841, Dickson wrote to SK:

During the short time the [tenancy of the Robertstown] property was mine I hope I took as much care of it, as if it were to have continued, permanently so, & I was particular in the removal of obnoxious characters from the Estate In doing so I had the advantage of the active & zealous exertions of the excellent agent I employed (Mr Arthur Vincent, son of the [Church of Ireland] Clergyman of Shanagolden Parish⁷) whose local knowledge of the property & of every individual upon it enabled him to select such as would be good tenants, while he removed the bad, & considerably reduced their number It would be impossible for you to obtain the services of a person better qualified than Mr Vincent, to advance your object [of developing the estate].

Three days later -- on 8 June 1841 -- Dickson again wrote to SK:

May I take the liberty of recommending the Bearer of this, James Moran, a most respectable & intelligent

tenant at Ardaneer, to you for the situation of Driver [ie., bailiff] on the property fallen by the Death of Lady Clonbrock, as he has acted in that capacity for me with zeal & activity, & ... he ... is a conscientious fearless person in the discharge of his duty, a character essentially & peculiarly necessary upon that Estate.

In line with Dickson's recommendations, SK appointed Arthur Vincent as principal local agent, and Moran as bailiff, on the Robertstown estate. Vincent's salary was about £55 per annum⁸. He was not a tenant on the Stratford lands in the pre-famine years; however, his brother Berkeley was. This brother died in 1845, and in 1846 Arthur Vincent became a tenant on the Stratford land formerly occupied by the brother⁹.

Although Stratford seems to have visited his Robertstown estate on no occasion in the 1840s, he did subscribe to the dispensary at Shanagolden¹⁰. Like his brother Edward Wingfield whose estates in Sligo were also managed by SK, he was a Tory in politics. He firmly opposed pressures for repeal of the Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland. During the Spring and Summer of 1843, Daniel O'Connell held a series of "monster meetings" on the issue. Stratford expected his tenants to stay clear of such agitation for repeal. On 31 July 1843, Vincent wrote to JR Stewart from his and his father's residence at Shanagolden House:

I enclose Col Stratford's letter; on receipt of which I apprised the tenants of the Col's sentiments "with regard to the repeal". And although there was an immense meeting near this [place] on Sunday last, not a tenant on the Estate attended it, and they said, if Ireland had many such landlords, no repeal would be wanted: as the crowds were marching through, the tenants were groaned, and hooted, at for not following them The Priests headed each party, all marching in regular order.

Vincent again referred to the tenants' stance on the issue of repeal when he wrote to JR Stewart on 29 August 1843:

I received yours of the 25th enclosing Col Stratford's pleasing answer about his tenants not joining the Repealers. They are all very happy at not doing so as he seems so much against it. They are still greatly persecuted and I am held up to public scorn for attempting to notice the tenants on the subject.

Stratford's views on the matter of religion seem to have been similar to those of his twin brother: he may have been a bigot. It should, however, be recognised that as a member of the

Established Church, it was only to be expected that Stratford would contribute to that Church: it cannot be concluded, just because Catholics contributed to their Church, that they too were bigots. In 1841 Stratford wrote that "the approval of the Parish Priest has little weight on me"¹¹. When JR Stewart first visited the Robertstown estate, in 1843, the Rev Mortimer Collins, Parish Priest of Shanagolden, sent or handed to him a written communication¹² requesting that he use his influence with Stratford "regarding the chapel of Robertstown". This, he indicated, had "no gate, no yard, wall, no fence, nor enclosure of any kind to defend it from the intrusion of animals of every description, not to mention the nuisances deposited by them not infrequently at the very doors of the Chapel". Rev Collins added:

At the time of its being built, I refrained from making any application to the Hon'ble proprietor of the soil, knowing the income accruing to him then out of Robertstown was inconsiderable: but I hope he will not consider it in any way intrusive now to request through you, that he will have the goodness to order the Chapel yard to be walled in for us I will erect pillars of cut stone and an iron gate at my own expense.

Facing the main road from Limerick City to Foynes, the Catholic church at Robertstown today has three old walls surrounding its sides and rear, thus preventing farm animals from entering the church grounds from neighbouring fields. The SK correspondence provides no evidence on the question of whether Stratford assisted in their construction. However, the correspondence does indicate that he was happy to assist the Church of Ireland, both on and off his estates. Thus, on 13 April 1848, Rev David Whitty wrote to Stratford from the vicarage in Foynes, informing and requesting:

I have established a school in the parish of Shanagolden, which the Lord has entrusted to my ministry for the last year, with great trouble and against very great opposition, in connexion with the Church Education Society. The opposition to the project was so great that I could only get one person in the whole place to set a house to me for the purpose, and that one, that is both too small, and unsuitable in every way, besides the lease of the person I have it from is almost expired, and when that occurs I shall lose it altogether. Thirty four children attend it daily Had we [larger] accommodation we should have had upwards of seventy. The Reformation Society is going to assist me to build one [a schoolhouse] and therefore knowing you to be disposed to promote Scriptural education among the

peasantry ... I hope you will not refuse to assist either by an annual subscription or donation, or the accommodation of a site as near the village of Shanagolden as convenient Since I came here thirty seven have left the church of Rome under the most unfavourable circumstances.

On 17 April 1848, Stratford wrote to SK stating that the clergyman's letter "ought to be attended to in a reasonable manner & which I leave to your discretion". Writing on his brother's behalf on 5 June, Edward Wingfield instructed SK to donate "about £5, which is one 6th of the sum required". Stratford donated a further £5 in July¹³, and it may be the case that he granted a further £5 in August¹⁴. On the thirteenth of that month, Rev Whitty informed SK that "the School is going on well notwithstanding that the times are so unpropitious and the converts generally standing resolute tho' greatly persecuted".

Stratford assisted Church of Ireland missionaries elsewhere. In the early 1840s he contributed to the Ventry and Dingle Institution in Kerry, as well as to the Loochoo Mission (in China?). And late in 1848 he informed SK that he had "written to the Rev'd Edward Nangle to call on you for Ten Pounds, as a subscription to the Charitable Achill Mission"¹⁵ (in Co Mayo).

II. Squaring the Land and other Pre-Famine Improvements

In the early 19th century, much of the land in western parts of Ireland was held under a system called rundale. Land was held in common by tenant farmers, and was usually divided among them so as to ensure that each of them received a share of both the good and the bad land. In practice this meant that an individual tenant could be farming several strips scattered over various fields, and because there were few fences, the system gave rise to disputes over the exact definition of the strips to be farmed by an individual tenant, who was sometimes periodically switched from one strip to another. This system involved economically sub-optimal use of land. On several of the estates managed by the firm in the early 1840s, SK sought to terminate the system. The process of assignment of distinct blocks of land to individual tenants - who now usually got only one block of land - was generally called "the squaring of the land".

One of Vincent's first major tasks as SK agent was to oversee rationalisation in the structure of holdings -- the squaring of the land. This implied getting rid of several small tenants, most of whom had hitherto been virtually landless. On 9 October 1841, he wrote to SK:

I have just received the Ejectments and shall have

them served according to your directions without delay
.... I will want more copies, as from the number of
Cottiers and Cabin occupiers those you sent will not
be sufficient.

Vincent again referred to ejectment in a letter to SK in
December¹⁶:

I am most anxious to get rid of those wretched
paupers, and will exert myself to do so. I am sorry
the Habere [a writ issued by a plaintiff after
obtaining judgment in ejectment¹⁷] runs out so soon as
the 11th Jan'y [1842], as it will be dreadful if we
are obliged to turn them on the world at that
inclement season. If it ran to March at which time
Emigration commencing we would have no pity for them.

In view of the considerations just outlined, on 11 January 1842,
Vincent requested SK to have the Habere (which may have applied
in principle to the entire tenantry of the estate, thereby giving
SK the power to quickly eject any tenant) renewed. If the Habere
did apply generally, it would have given SK some flexibility in
shifting tenants from one location to another during the process
of squaring.

Many of those who were removed from the Robertstown estate at the
time of squaring received assistance to emigrate. There had, in
fact, already been some emigration to America from the estate
before SK started to provide assistance: a letter from Vincent,
written in December 1841, refers to the plight of a tenant named
Sheahan who had nine children and a wife at home; Vincent advised
him to go to America, "where he has two sons already"¹⁸. The
sums which SK provided to individual families in assisted
emigration from the Robertstown estate were probably quite small.
Thus, on 22 December 1841 Vincent wrote to SK:

Although you have given me the liberty of assisting
those poor cottiers to emigrate I should like to have
your advice on the matter, as to what you thought
would be right for me to give. What has struck my
mind to offer, is, one pound to each member of the
family young & old, but not to confine me to this sum
where I saw a little advance was necessary. I think
£100 or £150 [plausibly close to £15,000 in
purchasing power of the year 2000] in this way would
clear off a good many paupers.

The levels of payment contemplated by Vincent in December 1841
did not satisfy all of the cottiers. Vincent therefore suggested
that some of them should be offered more. On 29 January 1842,
he wrote to SK:

There are six families on [the townland of] Srulawn [Sroolane] comprising in all 37 individuals who look to us for assistance to Emigrate I ... told them that they might expect £1, each. This does not at all seem to suit them and they say we may keep this much as it would be of little or no assistance to them [to go to America]. The very least which I think will quiet them is £2 each, and as we are not likely to have many more applications I would be for giving it to them.

The sums paid to emigrants from the estate in 1842 are unknown.

Late in 1841, Martin Carroll, a land surveyor, came to the estate to plan the squaring of the land, as well as some new roads for access. As on other estates investigated in the larger study at present near completion, it was not the case that all of the tenants were content with the squares projected for them, in the present context by Carroll and Vincent. Two of the tenants indicated their objections in petitions which they sent to Stratford himself¹⁹ in February 1842. In December 1841, Vincent wrote²⁰ to SK: "That horrid fellow James Bridgeman is not at all satisfied at what is allowed him. He wants all his former holding". On 1 January 1842, Vincent reported to SK:

James Bridgeman brought a plough & pair of horses yesterday and commenced sowing wheat in a part of the farm which is not intended for him. I went to the ground & as I did not see Bridgeman I ordered the ploughman to desist, otherwise I should summon him for trespass. He did not stop for me so I had him summoned for the next Petty Sessions.

It seems that James Bridgeman, along with many or all of the other tenants on the lands to be squared, had an ejectment decree outstanding against him, but that none of them had been executed. Note that the existence of such a decree, or decrees, would have given SK leverage in inducing tenants promptly to move to their newly assigned squares. On 11 January 1842 Vincent wrote to SK:

I this day took the Bailiff and a party of the Tenants with me to dispossess him [Bridgeman], but before going to his place I called on Mr Carroll to come and shew me the different divisions so as to give those they were intended for, possession He James refused to give up; and just as I was setting the men to pull down his house, some of his friends broke in his door which he had fastened inside, and brought him out, and they begged of me there to grant him his pardon. His wife clung to me and cried mercy. I could not resist the call and stopped further proceedings. So the remainder went off quietly and I

gave the possession to those the farm was divided out for, according as Mr Carroll shewed me their several boundaries I feel assured this act towards Mr Bridgeman, though undeserved, will meet your approbation. In justice to the tenants I must say they acted entirely as I wished, and were quite ready to support the Bailiff in the execution of his duty.

Following the events of 11 January 1842, it is likely that James Bridgeman moved peacefully to his newly assigned holding: in the early 1850s there was a James Bridgeman farming close to 10 statute acres of Stratford land on the townland of Robertstown²¹. Another tenant refused to move. This probably meant that he was given no land on the estate, and it probably benefited a widow. Thus, on 10 January 1842 Carroll the surveyor wrote to Kincaid:

The fields marked No.s 32 & 33 in Shrulane [Sroolane] are yet to be disposed of, Edward O'Donnell having refused them as not being suited to him. They contain about 1a. 2r. 0p. I would propose to give them for the present to Widow Maddigan who was removed from Dysert, where she had held about two acres for upwards of forty years. She has in consequence of her removal been reduced to great distress and if you have no objection to this arrangement I would be glad of it as I recommended her removal from Dysert.

Although some of the land on the estate was not to be squared until the Autumn²² of 1843, it seems that most of the tenants had moved to their new holdings by the end of February 1842. This meant that new houses had to be built. Also, some new roads had to be constructed for access.

Many of the houses, or cabins, to which the tenants were moved were in a very dilapidated state. They therefore sought financial assistance from SK to repair, or, more frequently, to build. In a letter to SK, 29 January 1842, Vincent proposed "that we will give slate and timber which they will buy as cheap as they can and bring us the dockets for payment". This was the practice which was most often adopted; however, in some cases payment of a fixed sum in cash was agreed in advance. Most of the new houses, which were usually built by the tenants themselves, were slated rather than thatched. Apart from the fact that the houses would last longer, an advantage of this practice, as Vincent pointed out in various letters, was that the straw could be saved for manure. For example, on 1 August 1842, Vincent wrote to Kincaid:

Thos. Kelly of Hazelfield [townland] who we arranged should remove to his brother Mich'ls farm has been with me respecting his house which is ready for roofing. Mr [John, not to be confused with James

Robert] Stewart [an agricultural adviser employed by SK on various estates] made an estimate of the cost of Slate and Timber. He thinks about £7-10 would do all and as the poor man is now living in the wretched Cabin you saw his brother in which is not fit for Pigs, it would be a great act of kindness to give this allowance, and more particularly so, as it will spare straw which is so much wanted in Hazelfield to make manure.

Vincent again referred to dilapidation in a letter to JR Stewart, 5 July 1843. Referring to two tenants in Dysert, he wrote:

[John Barrett's] house is in a very tottering state and is not worth losing to repairs. He has a large family and is greatly inconvenienced not having room. John Lynch has a small house, only the kitchen and one room. This house is a good one for the size but having a family of twelve he is obliged to have them all nearly sleeping in one room, and as he has no offices this house would answer those purposes well, by building a comfortable house for himself. As this is the most idle month of the summer ..., should you sanction their building they could do so now better than at any other time.

Apart from receiving assistance in building their houses, some tenants obtained financial aid for the construction of farm offices. For example, on 17 March 1843, Vincent informed Kincaid that "John Connors offices are 60 feet long and 16 broad in the clear, containing a Dairy, Stable and Barn. The Timber, Slates and Laths cost £32-8-2". In July 1843, Vincent recommended that Patrick Madigan be allowed £12 for slates and timber on a stable and cowhouse which he wanted to build²³.

Writing from Shanagolden on 27 April 1843, JR Stewart reported to Kincaid:

I am not I confess satisfied about the Houses, as I think they might have been much better & more commodious without any additional cost to Col Stratford by the walls being two or three feet higher ... and I suspect they have been more lavish of timber in the roofs than if they paid for the timber themselves.

Apart from the planting and harvesting seasons, the building of structures on the estate was in progress from early in 1842 until late in 1843. On 19 October 1843, Vincent wrote to SK: "I think we wont have many more applications for building".

Along with housebuilding, 1842 was a year in which some new roads

were constructed on the estate. On 29 January 1842, Vincent informed Kincaid: "I will order the roads to be commenced immediately". The roads in question had been planned by Martin Carroll, the surveyor, as works of utility rather than as devices for employment-creation. Some of the work was performed directly by the tenants themselves, for which they received allowances against rent; however, it appears that most of it was conducted by hired labour, under the supervision of John Stewart, the agriculturalist²⁴. It is probable that the labourers were paid about one shilling a day: on 14 June 1842, Vincent wrote to SK that "the usual wages given to Labourers in this country is a shilling a day without feeding. When fed they generally get 10d, and in some cases only 8d when the Landlord makes a specific agreement when setting a house and plot of ground for Labour". The road works were virtually completed²⁵ by September 1842. Their construction meant that in 1846, when many roads were built elsewhere as public works, Stratford's Limerick estate was amply endowed with useful roads. Thus, some of Stratford's improvements in 1842 and 1843 were to have adverse effects on his tenants during the famine.

In a letter of 5 March 1842, Vincent informed SK that "the tide rose to a frightful extent It broke the bank [alongside the Robertstown River] ... & inundated all the low lands to a great extent". John Stewart, the agriculturalist, first arrived²⁶ on the estate in April 1842, and was given accommodation by Moran²⁷, the bailiff, in Ardaneer²⁸. One of his first tasks was the recruitment of labour for the clearance and widening of the Robertstown River²⁹. In the Summer of 1843 he supervised the repair of embankments along the river³⁰. However, on 15 October 1844, he wrote to SK that the tides had again come over the embankments at Dysert. Thus, he was obliged to supervise "a good repairing"³¹ in November 1844.

In the Autumn of 1842, Vincent and John Stewart turned their attention to drainage³². It seems that most of the drainage was conducted directly by the tenants themselves, on their own lands, under Stewart's supervision. On 31 December 1842 Vincent wrote to SK:

Draining is going pretty well. Foley of Knocknabooly [townland] is doing a great deal and doing a wonderful good to his farm One place where the cows have been drowned in former years is now so dry that the cows can grass upon it I have got Ambrose to begin furrow draining Ed. Dempsey has also commenced furrow draining.

On 11 February 1843, Vincent informed SK that "the tenants are draining pretty generally and the drains appear to be all well done and judiciously laid down". JR Stewart visited the estate in April 1843. On the 27th of that month he reported to Kincaid:

"I have been over a good deal of the Estate and like very much what Stewart has been doing or getting done by the tenants". More extensive drainage works in progress during the Winter of 1843-4 involved the employment of hired labour³³.

John Stewart oversaw other improvements in the topography of the estate. Very shortly after his arrival, he went to the townlands of Craggs and Hazelfield, and marked out two places for sinking water pumps which, according to Vincent, "the tenants here are in the greatest need of, being completely run dry"³⁴. It is, however, probable that Stewart's most important contribution to the estate was in inducing the tenants to change their methods of husbandry. One of his first requests -- in April 1842 -- was that SK should send down a turnip barrow, because "he could not get it in Limerick"³⁵. Unlike the potato -- which was mainly for human consumption -- the turnip was a multiple purpose crop, which was relatively free from disease. On 7 June, Stewart informed SK that "most of the farmers are sowing a few turnips. I got a good many of them to sow rye grass and clover", to enrich the nitrogen content of the soil.

On 1 August 1842, Vincent reported to SK that "if this lovely weather continues a great deal of wheat will be fit for the sickle next week. Everything is looking most cheering to the farmers". However, referring to the wheat on 19 August, Vincent wrote to SK that "never did I see farmers more disappointed. From its appearance before being ripe all expected a full average crop but now the fields show the quantity far short, besides the great injury done by the summer storms in breaking the stalk". On 7 September, John Stewart explained to SK as follows:

The cause of the bad wheat is this. Where they find a good spot of ground they crop it with potatoes and wheat alternatively for 10 or 12 years and not giving the land good manure [they] will never have good wheat until they change their way of farming.

On 31 December 1842, Stewart wrote to SK referring to the Winter wheat:

There could not be a better looking growth of wheat at this time of the year, but what I am afraid of is that the ground is exhausted to continue the growth until the ripening season, that is, that the wheat loses its growth before the ear is fully full. Another thing is when there is not sufficient nourishment in the ground to ripen wheat, the stalk loses the sap and falls to the ground and that becomes useless. This I am sure to be the cause of such a bad crop of wheat This Estate has been cropped with wheat for a great number of years past. Now the only remedy is to get the tenants to sow as much as possible of their lands with

clover and grass seeds I have tried to impress [this] upon the whole of the tenants.

There was a lime kiln on the estate in Ardaneer³⁶. John Stewart's letter of 31 December 1842 indicates that several tenants had been supplied with lime earlier in the same year, and that they were expected to pay for it. Thus, he wrote:

Lime is in good demand for manure but none of the tenants who got lime before and has not paid for it is to have any more until they pay for the first, but such as got none before is taking it.

A letter dated 1 March 1845, from Vincent to SK, indicates that those tenants who obtained lime from the person who operated the kiln were then in receipt of an allowance from SK of two and one half pence per barrel³⁷.

Consistent with a desire to encourage improvements in the practice of husbandry, it seems that SK provided some form of assistance to Joseph, son of one of Stratford's Co Limerick tenants named Patrick Bridgeman. Joseph Bridgeman studied practical agriculture between 1842 and 1846. However, the nature of SK's assistance is not clear³⁸.

John Stewart was optimistic when, on 8 June 1845, he wrote from Robertstown to SK:

I am glad to state that crops of all kinds are looking very well here. I am sure when Mr Kincaid see[s] the clover crops on this Estate that he will say that he saw no better this year. For instance James Walsh of Robertstown was offered 3/- per perch for his clover & yet they are grumbling to pay for the seed I got them last year There is a good many of the tenants sowing turnips ... and some of them are using guano. I am also glad to say that the nursery [which seems to have been set up only recently by Stewart] is doing very well. I shall have 40000 Thorns fit for planting out [in order to grow fences] next winter as fine as ever I saw.

III. Rents and Distress, 1842-5

The reader may have inferred from the foregoing that the pre-famine years under SK's agency must have been a period of prosperity on the Robertstown estate. However, this was not the case.

On 5 March 1842, Vincent wrote to SK: "The Tenants I fear will not be able to meet us well [in payment of rent] as they made money of almost every grain of corn they had to clear off Mr Dickson's arrears".

Following a recommendation by Vincent, SK granted abatements³⁹ -- which were once and for all -- in the rents in the Spring of 1842. However, relief of rent could not have been of much use to landless labourers. On 4 June 1842, Vincent reported the plight of "many poor labourers who were in great distress, as great distress prevails here just now from the want of general work and the high price provisions have risen to lately". In this context, Vincent added that the timing of the commencement of some works of improvement, which involved the hire of labourers, was fortunate.

Vincent's rent receipts from the estate remained poor throughout 1842. This meant that during the Summer, he had to write to Dublin asking for money to be sent down to pay the labourers. On 14 June he sought £40 "to meet the next pay day and pay off other emergencies", and on 22 June he asked for £100. On 12 December he reported to SK that one reason why he was "very unsuccessful in collection of the arrears" was that although some of the tenants had some wheat, oats and pigs, they were keeping them "expecting a rise in the markets which I fear there is no chance of".

For one tenant in 1843, a marriage settlement was the source of the rent. On 11 February 1843, Vincent wrote to SK:

James Dempsey who buried his wife on Xmas Eve, I hear is going to be married and is getting £150 fortune. This will make him a good tenant. I hope it is the case as he is deeply in arrear and has no means without selling some stock which he cannot well spare.

Dempsey was again a married⁴⁰ man by 3 March 1843.

Rent receipts from the tenants in general remained poor in 1843. On 12 October, Vincent wrote to SK that "wheat is very bad and prices low. Loud calls on all sides for abatements". One week later -- on 19 October 1843 -- he explained to SK:

I am very sorry you think that I have not exerted myself to make the Tenants pay their balances of the Septr. 1842 rents I did not like, from the agitation and the excited state of the country all last summer, to distrain [ie. to seize assets in lieu of rent] as I feel quite certain we could not get bidders for a single beast.

In this passage Vincent was referring to the agitation for the

repeal of the Union between Great Britain and Ireland, including O'Connell's "monster meetings". It may also be the case that he was scared by tales of events in neighbouring Co Tipperary of which JR Stewart might have informed him: In April 1843, JR Stewart wrote to Kincaid from Limerick City, and stated that a passenger on the coach upon which he had travelled had provided him with "details of murder and outrages as we came from Roscrea to Nenagh, every turn in the road opening a view of some Hill or House where there had been a scene of violence I start at 9 o'clock on a car for Askeaton & hope to be at Mr Vincents at 1 o'clock"⁴¹.

Vincent again referred to distraint in a letter to SK dated 1 March 1845, in which he reported:

I have been endeavouring as much as possible to get rent from the widow and small cotters without going to extremes but as I cannot succeed by quiet means I find I must have recourse to distraining which I will do immediately everywhere I find means.

The SK correspondence provides no evidence that any tenant was ejected from the Robertstown estate between the Spring of 1842 and the end of 1845. Nor is there any evidence, over the same period, that any of Vincent's threats of distraint were implemented.

In a letter to SK dated 7 July 1845, John Stewart wrote to SK from Robertstown describing an experience, the form of which was to be repeated on many occasions and in many places during the famine. He informed as follows:

I commenced sinking the small river from Ellaha bog on this day week. I got on very well last week with it but I had to stop the work today on account of so many men crowding about me for work. Some of them wanted work right or [w]rong. So I ... stoped the work for the day The poor about here are very ill off. The are coming in crowds to me asking for employment.

There seems to have been a partial failure of the potato in the Robertstown district in 1843. On 7 June of that year, Vincent wrote to SK that "numbers are complaining of a failure in the general sowing of the potatoe crop". On 5 July, however, he reported to SK that "I dont think there will be near the amount of failure in this crop that was dreaded".

What is generally known as "The Great Irish Famine" followed widespread failures of the potato crop in Ireland late in 1845 and its total failure in 1846. The earliest indication in the SK correspondence of the partial failure of the potato on the Robertstown estate in 1845 is in a letter from John Stewart to

SK, 29 October 1845, in which he reported:

I cannot find a single field that the rot has not made its appearance in Mr Vincents potatoes were reported to be all gone. I went to examine them and found the above statement to be the fact. When the potatoes are dug dry and the pits well ventilated I think puts a check to the rot. In low damp wet situations hereabouts the rot is much worse.

Vincent wrote to SK on 8 November, indicating his concern:

Nothing can be worse than the state of the potatoes. I fear all will be lost before Xmas Famine stares us in every quarter if the corn is not left in the country.

As was also the case on some other estates, the potato failure of 1845 does not seem to have had any immediate adverse effect on rent receipts. In November, Vincent sent SK £165 in half notes⁴², and Stewart Maxwell of SK was elated when he wrote to JR Stewart from Shanagolden on 13 December, reporting: "We have got a splendid receipt on this Estate £1250 and perhaps may get a little more". However, Maxwell's degree of success was not to be repeated in the few years which immediately followed.

IV. Famine

Relief

A Relief Committee, of which Vincent was both Vice Chairman and Treasurer⁴³, was formed at the beginning of April 1846. As explained by Vincent in his letter to SK dated 18 April, on the second of that month the Committee first met at Shanagolden

for the purpose of getting subscriptions to purchase Indian Meal and other provisions to be disposed of at prime cost to the distressed in this neighbourhood [This] will keep down the high price which huxters generally take advantage of in country Villages when a scarcity prevails The only steps taken as yet by the Committee ... is their having taken a house to store and sell Indian Meal ... & directing the Secretary to apply to the different landed proprietors for subscriptions.

In the same letter of 18 April, Vincent reported:

Several meetings have been held to promote public works of various kinds I am sorry to say that

none of the intended works come at all near our Robertstown district as the roads about the neighbourhood are all so good I think we will have to make out some work on the property.

Because few (if any) of the Robertstown tenants were employed on public works early in the Summer of 1846, SK's agents sought to contrive schemes of useful employment on the estate. A high tide had flowed over the embankments of the Robertstown River in February, causing much flooding. Late in that month, John Stewart recommended that "the whole of the banks on this Estate wants a thorough repairing except the few breaches that was repaired last year"⁴⁴. In May, Vincent recommended very major works on the lands contiguous to the river⁴⁵. None of these proposed works was conducted during the Summer of 1846.

In June 1846, John Stewart recommended a new road in Robertstown, work on which was in progress on 9 July, when Stewart wrote to SK that "the road could not be better laid out to suit all parties".

On 7 October 1846, Vincent reported to SK, stating that fourteen new programmes of public works had been granted for the barony of Shanid (in which the Robertstown estate was located). However, they had not yet commenced. He added that the works were urgently needed, because "the people are conducting themselves with great propriety under the great sufferings. The potatoes are all gone from the labouring class and nothing can equal the awful state they are in". On 10 October, Vincent wrote to SK that "the Indian Meal has risen to 2/- per stone this day. What a mistake it was in Government allowing the merchants such a monopoly in trade. A starving population will never be content with this state of affairs". If a labourer, with a wife and five children, was fortunate in obtaining employment, the most he could expect to earn was 1/- a day. Given the price of meal, with this sum he could buy only seven pounds weight of it -- only one pound of meal per person in his family. Vincent feared that there would be outbreaks of violence on the estate. On 25 October he wrote to SK from Shanagolden:

There have been two large meetings of the people in Askeaton within the last week. The Bakers shops have been plundered of all Bread Discontent is beginning here but no outrage as yet. Several houses have been visited within the last week and deprived of arms, among the rest Moran [the bailiff] whose gun was taken. A Mr Massy ... was attacked last night. He was [away] from home. They took his gun, a case of pistols & two swords. A woman in her fright leaped out of a window and broke her back. She is in a dying state. There was a very large meeting here this day by Proclamation for Employment of the Poor

Captain Kennedy attended on the part of the Board of Works. I dont know what the result will be, but the people are most pressing and I fear if not immediately set at work nothing will keep them quiet. They assembled in the Village from all quarters and the crowds were immense and very turbulent and impudent. Believe me we have very serious times before us.

On 31 October, Vincent reported to SK:

I wish very much the Govt. would set [proposed public works on] the Robertstown Embankment in progress as we want employment in that quarter greatly. There are no [public] works of any kind struck off near Robertstown and the poor are in much distress. I has obliged to employ a few men to stop the heavy breaches on the Banks lately broken by the storm You have no idea of the state we are in here. I went to Limerick this week to purchase Indian Meal for the Relief Committee and could only get 5 ton in all the City The people are getting into despair and a resort to the stock [of animals] is greatly to be apprehended. Numbers leaving this [district] are selling off so much that stock have fallen greatly [in price]. The fairs are thronged with cattle and no buyers to be found for them, all apprehending the same danger. God only knows when this calamity will end.

It seems, pending the provision of adequate employment, that SK tried to purchase meal for distribution on the Robertstown estate⁴⁶. A letter to SK dated 1 November, from WH Hall⁴⁷, an agent in Limerick City, reported that "at present there is no Corn Meal here of any kind for sale The last price of Indian Corn Meal was £18 per Ton Supplies are daily expected & with your sanction I will purchase 2 Ton the first opportunity".

It would appear that public works on a large scale were not in progress in the Robertstown district until December 1846, when Vincent wrote to SK asking the firm to use its influence at the Board of Works to secure an appointment for him in the district⁴⁸.

The Need for Seed Potatoes

On 28 February 1846, John Stewart wrote to SK:

We are all consternation about the potatoes having the seed decaying so fast. A failure of the growing crop is greatly dreaded. Numbers of the poor are now quite out of provision I fear we have no pleasant

prospect before us this summer.

On 18 April, Vincent asked SK to intervene on the matter of seed potatoes. Thus, he wrote that "the first and most important step to be considered [by SK] in my opinion for the future would be to send if possible a supply of good seed to be distributed in small portions among the tenants".

SK immediately contacted WH Hall who, on 24 April, informed the firm that "there are not any sound seed potatoes for sale at our quays [in Limerick]. A cargo is daily expected to Mr Abraham⁴⁹ Seedsman from Lincolnshire On arrival I will communicate with you & Mr Vincent". Vincent next considered the possibility of getting the seed from Cork City -- from Mr Bewley of the Society of Friends. On 27 April, Vincent wrote to SK that "we have no chance of procuring seed potatoes from Cork for the Robertstown tenants in as much as there are no Boats plying or sufficiently seaworthy to employ at Foynes for the trip". On the following day, however, WH Hall informed SK that "the cargo of seed potatoes ... arrived She [the ship] has 100 Tons of apparently fine Seed & which is selling @ 10 pence per stone". Early in May, Vincent sent for two tons of this seed, for the Robertstown tenants⁵⁰.

Rents

On 10 February 1846 Vincent informed SK:

I sat at home this day waiting for the Robertstown tenants to pay after the Fair of Rathkeale, but to my surprise Dan Healy [?] was the only person who paid his balance. I know they can pay well but the fear of a scarcity is keeping them all back. I gave them to next Monday, the Fair of Askeaton which after that some do not come forward I shall have to distrain.

A letter from Vincent to SK, 19 February 1846, is the only definite indication that Vincent had distrained properties of tenants on the Robertstown estate. This action paid off: on 28 February, he was able to send SK first half notes for some £135 from the Robertstown tenants.

On 10 October 1846, Vincent wrote to SK that he feared "very much that rents will be very hard to get in this year". Given the potato failure, the high price of meal, and the lack of employment, this expectation was hardly surprising. Referring on 31 October to the tenants on the Robertstown estate, Vincent informed SK: "I am not getting in any rent from them". On 13 December, he indicated to SK that Maxwell had just visited the estate on a money-gathering tour, and that "Maxwell was wild with the tenants which I hope it may have the effect of bringing in

more of the Defaulters on tomorrow".

Unfortunately, the SK correspondence does not contain a single letter from the Robertstown estate in 1847. However, rent receipts in that year may have been satisfactory, given the hard times. This is inferred from a letter of October 1848 from Stratford to SK, in which he wrote: "I shall be glad to hear from you ... whether the tenants are likely ... to pay their Rents, as last year [1847] tho I cannot expect to the same extent. I hope there will be no great difference"⁵¹. However, earlier in 1848 Stratford had written: "I cannot expect payment of Rents to any amount"⁵². It may be the case that some of the tenants felt that Vincent pressed too hard for the rents in 1848: on 7 September of that year, Stratford wrote to SK that he was "very sorry to see in the Papers some time ago that Mr Vincents house [Shanagolden House] was attacked & plundered". On 20 December 1848, JR Stewart, who had just come from Shanagolden, sent from Limerick City a letter of credit (a financial instrument facilitating transfer from one bank account to another) for £320 as an enclosure. In the accompanying letter, he stated that "I think a good deal more will be paid to Vincent".

The SK correspondence does not reveal any cases of ejectment from the Robertstown estate during the famine years. Furthermore, the letters contain no evidence of distraint after February 1846. However, these observations must be qualified in view of the fact that the letters for 1847 are entirely missing, while those for 1848 are very thin.

Emigration

It seems that there was some emigration from the estate at a very early stage in the famine: on 19 February 1846, Vincent informed SK:

A few of the Cottiers on the Robertstown Estate are inclined to Emigrate. Will you allow me to give them some allowances on getting their holdings thrown down. I think it would be well to lessen them.

In a letter dated 6 March 1846, from Limerick City where he was attending the assizes (and where "several cases for murder are to be tried"), Vincent again referred to the cottier emigrants. He explained that "they never had any land more than a cabbage garden I should think that £20 should cover the whole". However, the latter sum was not acceptable to the cottiers, as a group. On 17 March, Vincent reported to SK:

With respect to the allowances you would give the Cottiers on giving up their Cabins I cannot get one who will accept of £5, as all their other effects when

sold would not make as much as would pay their passage to America. What they look for is £2 for each member of the family. In former years the people had their potatoes which afforded them great assistance towards emigrating but this year we have them not. Even the few who want to sell can hardly get buyers as in less than a fortnight half the Barrel of potatoes will be decayed I fear the landlords will have to give assistance in some shape or other to the support of their tenants this summer and I think £100 could not be better converted than in thinning the poorer portion of Cabins on this property.

Apart from the cottiers early in the year, emigration to America from the Robertstown estate in 1846 seems to have been low. A letter from Vincent to SK, dated 26 April, mentions two tenants who had recently gone to America; however, the correspondence for 1846 provides no further mention of emigration from the district to America. As already indicated, the correspondence does not contain a single letter from the Robertstown estate in 1847. However, it is likely that there was some assisted emigration from the estate in the Spring: as is indicated in Chapter 9 of the larger study from which the present essay is drawn, early in 1847 Vincent supervised a programme of emigration of some of Stratford's tenants in Clare. The only subsequent reference to emigration from the Stratford lands is in a letter dated 20 December 1848, posted in Limerick City by JR Stewart. In this he indicated that he had just come from Shanagolden, and he added: "I have arranged for Exporting 3 or 4 families & if we were merely wanting to get people off could send lots more. But of course I only send those who have land & whose Rent which they are unable to pay would [from new tenants] soon come to the Cost of Emigration".

V. Closing Observations

Many of the tenants on the Robertstown estate regarded Stratford, JR Stewart and Kincaid as paternal figures who wielded great influence, especially in the context of obtaining employment for them. One such tenant was Cornelius O'Shea, a member of "a numerous and helpless family on 3 1/2 Acres of Land"⁵³ on the townland of Robertstown. On 18 January 1842 he wrote asking Kincaid to help him obtain an appointment in the Water Guards; he did, however, add that "if this cannot be obtained anything which your goodness may deem proper is acceptable to me". On some date (probably early) in 1843, he decided to try JR Stewart. Stating that "he considers himself a Burthen to his father", and describing himself "a good Scholar and able to fill many Situations", he again sought "a Situation in the Water Guards or any other Situation that your Hon'r would be pleased to place him"⁵⁴. On 13 November 1843 he delivered a letter to Shanagolden

House, addressed to JR Stewart who was presumably then staying at the Vincent residence. It read: "I take the liberty to call to your mind the promises you made me on your former visit to this Estate which was that you would get me a situation in the Dublin Police. By doing so you would confer an everlasting compliment on me".

Young O'Shea was still on the Robertstown estate early in 1846, when he decided to go to London to see Stratford himself. On 10 March of that year, Edward Wingfield (Stratford's twin brother) wrote to SK from Stratford Place (John Stratford's residence in London), as follows:

A gosing lad of the name of Cornelius O'Shea called here at 6 o'clock in the morn'g with a letter from Mr Vincent recommending him for a situation in the Custom House. A greater simpleton you never beheld, nor a more foolish act could anybody do than to send a poor booley [a seasonal cow-herd] like him on such an expectation without any previous notice on the probability of success & without a penny in his Pockett. I hope he got safe back with his bag of Cloaths & the assistance my brother compassionately gave him to pay for his return. I mention this that you may write to Mr Vincent, who ought to have more sense than act so foolishly & put the poor young fellow to such fruitless trouble & expense.

O'Shea's subsequent fate is unknown. It appears that there were no O'Sheas⁵⁵ residing on Robertstown townland in 1852.

On 17 March 1846, Vincent replied to a communication from SK in regard to O'Shea's visit to London:

I regret much having sent Cornelius O'Shea to London but as Col. Stratford interested himself about a journeyman [a qualified mechanic or artisan who works for another] named Fleming last year, the people here think he can get anything he asks. I will be more cautious in future how I act in this way.

Vincent was not consistently "more cautious": in a letter from London to SK dated 17 April 1848, Stratford noted: "With this I send you ... an application from a Michael O Connor for a situation under Government, with a certificate from Mr Vincent, which I returned to O C. telling him I had no Interest with Government, of which Mr Vincent sh'd have mentioned to him, & not have encouraged him to come here at considerable trouble & expense".

It was not the case that all of the requests by Robertstown tenants for the use of "influence" to obtain employment for them

ended in failure. Thus, on 22 December 1841, Vincent wrote to SK:

Cornelius Madigan & Philip Stack begged I would mention to you how much obliged they feel for all the trouble you have taken to get them provided and as there is no prospect of your getting them either into the Life Guards or the Blues, they will join the City of Dublin Police. They will call upon you the second Thursday in January.

Alas, however, for poor Madigan: he failed to pass examination by the police doctors in Dublin⁵⁶.

Stratford and his Dublin agents received several petitions from the Co Limerick tenants concerning matters other than employment. An example is that addressed to JR Stewart at Shanagolden House in 1846 (no exact date provided). It was written by a tenant on Craggs townland named Conor Kinane, who "Humbly Sheweth":

That Petitioner begs leave to state that his three orphan Sisters are confined to the bed of sickness for the last ten weeks labouring under a malignant fever during which time he has lost all his little means to nourish them while in that state. The small quantity of potatoes which ... had been intended for their support these hard times he had to sell, also a pig which he intended to have helped him to pay his rent, together with other things too tedious to be mentioned here had to be sold in order to nourish these patients as above mentioned.

That they are now in a surviving state if they had sufficient nourishment. But the little means being exhausted renders them truly miserable, suffering under poverty, misery and destitution.

May it therefore please Mr Stuart [JR Stewart] to take Petitioners case into his humane consideration by representing the State of these unfortunate beings to the Honourable Wingfield Stratford for some relief.

How JR Stewart responded is unknown. However, a letter to SK dated 25 October 1846 indicates that Stratford was prepared to assist individual tenants who were in a state of destitution. In this he wrote as follows:

I have just rec'd the enclosed. I think it right to know from you or Mr Vincent, whether the Petitioner is in the situation she represents herself to be Sh'd she however turn out to be greatly in want I am willing to assist her, but at all times & particularly

just at this time when universal Distress is visited on the County, many imposters will take advantage of it & misrepresent the condition they are in Consider where Charity is to be dispensed, among my Tenants, & the lower classes & assist them accordingly everywhere, in the best manner.

The foregoing suggests, although he seems to have been a religious bigot, that John Stratford held generally humane attitudes towards his tenantry. SK, the firm which managed his estates in Ireland, and many of that firm's employees, also indicated compassion towards those below them in the economic and social ordering. On the several estates throughout Ireland managed by SK in the 1840s, formal ejectment was relatively infrequent, and then it was implemented as a measure of last resort (in some cases because those ejected were believed to be criminals). *On the various estates which the firm managed, SK's typical approach to tenants seriously in arrears was as follows:* First, if the tenant had assets, SK sought to distrain those assets in lieu of voluntary cash payments of rent. Second, if a tenant had no assets of significance, and if SK believed that the tenant was not viable in the long run, then SK sought "voluntary" surrender of the land, usually in exchange for compensation upon departure. In several cases the initiative for surrender of a holding, in exchange for compensation, came from the tenant. Compensation often took the form of a contribution towards the family's passage to America, and/or provision of clothing for the passage. When SK sought "voluntary" surrender of land from a tenant whose viability was deemed hopeless and when the tenant refused to surrender, then SK tended to seek an ejectment decree. This of course involved time (usually several months after the service of a Notice to Quit) and explicit legal costs at Court: hence, it was in SK's own commercial interests to avoid having to seek formal ejectment decrees. Even in those cases in which ejectment decrees were obtained, we cannot be sure that the tenants were terminally ejected: the SK correspondence of the 1840s, combined with the Griffith Valuations of the 1850s, indicate many examples of tenants on various estates against whom ejectment decrees were intended or sought, but who were still on their holdings in the 1850s (indicating that the ejectments were not terminally executed). These observations may surprise some readers. However, a great deal of evidence on the points raised immediately above will be found in several chapters of Landlords, Tenants, Famine.

NOTES

1. The author is Senior Lecturer in Economics at University College Dublin. In connection with the present project, he thanks the Business Research Programme, Michael Smurfit Graduate School of Business, UCD, for financial assistance. In the present essay, some words mis-spelt in letters from which extracts have been quoted have not been corrected. In my own text (as distinct from that in quoted extracts) placenames are generally spelt as in official publications of the 1850s and 1860s.

2. **County of Limerick, Barony of Shanid comprising a portion of The Unions of Glin, Newcastle & Rathkeale, Primary Valuation**, General Valuation Office, Dublin 1852. Note that the **Valuation** does not list Stratford as immediate lessor of every townland which he owned (as revealed in the SK correspondence) in the Robertstown district in the 1840s.

3. Letter from James O'Donnell, (addressee not indicated), 6 December 1799; Ambrose Leet, **Directory to the ... Noted Places in Ireland**, Second Ed., Brett Smith, Dublin 1814, 113.

4. It is probable that the Dicksons rented the entire Robertstown estate: a letter from Richard Dickson to SK, 11 June 1841, indicates that his half year rent charge, paid to SK, was £327-3-1.

5. Leet, 383.

6. Richard Dickson to SK, 5 June 1841.

7. Only the tower of the Church of Ireland structure at Shanagolden remains today. According to Patrick Mangan of Shanagolden (aged 89 in 1998), services were held in the old church until circa 1915, and apart from the tower, the church building was demolished around 1940.

8. JR Stewart to Kincaid, 28 June 1841. Vincent was also paid travelling expenses.

9. Vincent to SK, 17 March 1846; **County of Limerick, Barony of Shanid ... Primary Valuation**, 1852, 90.

10. Vincent to SK, 12 October 1843.

11. Stratford to SK, 14 October 1841.

12. Rev Mortimer Collins to JR Stewart, 27 April 1843.

13. Edward Wingfield to SK, 12 July 1848.

14. Rev David Whitty to SK, 13 August 1848.

15. Stratford to SK, n. d., October 1848.
16. Vincent to SK, n. d., December 1841.
17. In the 1840s, after obtaining judgment in ejectment, the plaintiff had to enforce it by issuing a writ of Habere (Latin infinitive "to have"), addressed to the sheriff of the county in which the land was situated. The sheriff had to make a Return (a written confirmation of what he had done) to the writ if it was executed. If the writ was not enforced within a certain period, no Return was made and, in order to make it legally valid, the Habere had to be renewed. I thank Andrew Lyall of the Faculty of Law at University College Dublin for these details.
18. Vincent to SK, n. d., December 1841.
19. Widow Leahy to John Stratford, n. d., February 1842, and Bridget Ryan to John Stratford, n. d., February 1842. See also John Enright to Edward Wingfield, n. d., December 1841.
20. Vincent to SK, n. d., December 1841.
21. **County of Limerick, Barony of Shanid ... Primary Valuation, 1852, 89.**
22. Martin Carroll to SK, 11 August 1843.
23. Vincent to JR Stewart, 20 July 1843.
24. Vincent to SK, 25 April 1842; John Stewart to SK, 7 June 1842; Vincent to SK, 22 June 1842.
25. Vincent to Kincaid, 1 August 1842, and 3 March 1843.
26. Vincent to SK, 7 June 1842.
27. Vincent to SK, 23 April 1842; John Stewart to SK, 7 September 1842.
28. Barrington Son & Co to SK, 1 September 1845.
29. Vincent to SK, 4 June 1842; John Stewart to SK, 7 June 1842.
30. John Stewart to SK, 7 June 1843; Vincent to SK, 15 and 31 July 1843.
31. John Stewart to SK, 2 November 1844.
32. Vincent to SK, 27 August 1842.
33. Vincent to SK, 23 December 1843.
34. Vincent to SK, 19 April 1842.

35. Vincent to SK, 19 April 1842.
36. Edmund Walsh to Kincaid, 24 March 1842.
37. See also Stephen Ambrose to Kincaid, n. d., January 1845.
38. In a letter to SK dated 17 January 1845, Joseph Bridgeman mentioned that he had spent three years studying practical agriculture. He stated, given the small size of the farm held by his father from Colonel Stratford, that he was "more encumbrance than help to him". He therefore asked SK to secure for himself an appointment on the Dublin and Cashel line of rail, on which work had recently commenced. However, he was a student at an agricultural college in 1846. On 16 April of that year, Vincent wrote to SK: "Enclosed I send £2-10 from Patrick Bridgeman for Board & Tuition due in advance for his son". Griffith's **Valuation** of 1852 indicates that Patrick Bridgeman then held 53 statute acres of Stratford land on the townland of Robertstown. Today, a Peter Bridgeman resides and farms, at the edge of the estuary of the Robertstown River, on the townland of Robertstown. As is indicated in Chapter 7 of the larger study near completion, in 1848 an agriculturalist named Peter Bridgeman came from the Stratford estate in Co Limerick to the Wingfield townland of Coolrecuill in Co Sligo in order to supervise improvements there. It is very likely that this Peter was related to the aforementioned Joseph Bridgeman.
39. Vincent to SK, 4 April 1842.
40. Vincent to SK, 3 March 1843.
41. JR Stewart to Kincaid, n. d., April 1843.
42. Vincent to SK, 18 November 1845. Transmission of half notes was a common method of securely transferring money through the post. One half of a given banknote would first be sent. Then, following receipt of an acknowledgement to the sender that the first half had arrived at the intended recipient's address, the second half would be sent.
43. Vincent to SK, 27 July 1846.
44. John Stewart to SK, 24 February 1846.
45. Vincent to SK, 7 May 1846.
46. It might have been the case that some of the meal was intended for Stratford's Clare estate.
47. Listed by I Slater, **National and Commercial Directory of Ireland**, Manchester and London 1846, Section on the Towns of Munster, 265, as house, land and insurance agent, 16 Thomas St, Limerick.

48. Vincent to SK, 13 December 1846.
49. John Abraham & Sons, 8 Georges St, Limerick. See Slater, Section on the Towns of Munster, 262.
50. Vincent to SK, 7 May 1846.
51. Stratford to SK, n. d., October 1848.
52. Stratford to SK, 1 February 1848.
53. O'Shea to Kincaid, 18 January 1842.
54. O'Shea to JR Stewart, n. d., 1843.
55. **County of Limerick, Barony of Shanid ... Primary Valuation, 1852, 89.**
56. Vincent to SK, 22 January 1842.