

The Burtchaell Album

Sketches of Brandondale

This album of sketches was created by Mary Burtchaell
of Brandondale circa 1850.

There are fifty-four sketches, many of them showing
Graiguenamanagh and its surrounding areas.

Album of Sketches by Mary Burtchaell



GRAIGUENAMANAGH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

This Album of Sketches by Mary Burtchaell is on loan from Graiguenamanagh Historical Society to Kilkenny County Library Authority, which has kindly agreed to display it in accordance with the experts' recommendations at Graiguenamanagh Library.

The album is entitled 'A Life Illustrated, Vol. 1, Sketches taken from Nature', by Mary Burtchaell of Brandondale.

It measures 12" X 8" and contains fifty-four sketches from around the mid 1800s – all of them in pencil.

Many of the sketches are of Graiguenamanagh and Tinnahinch. Sketches of Kilkenny, Gowran, Borris, Dunmore East and other places in Ireland are also included, as are Welsh and English scenes which Mary sketched while visiting there.

It is virtually certain that some of the Burtchaell family took the album to Canada, probably after Mary's death in 1894. Later, a member of the family sold it, but when parting with it expressed the hope that the album would somehow, some day, make its way back to Graiguenamanagh.

The original purchaser subsequently sold the album to Edward Bowe from whom the Graiguenamanagh Historical Society acquired it in 2007.

Mary Burtchaell

Mary Burtchaell was born in 1826 and died in 1894. She was the daughter of David Burtchaell, Justice of the Peace for Counties Kilkenny and Carlow and Seneschal of Graiguenamanagh. Mary lived at Brandondale with her elder sister, Sarah, and her other siblings. She never married. As is evident from her diaries, she was a very devout person who professed the Protestant faith.

In the diaries which she kept throughout her life, she quietly chronicled the affairs of her family and of the happenings of Graiguenamanagh and its neighbourhood in the mid 1800's. Most of her diaries known to be extant are found as Mss. Nos. 7800-7811 at The National Library of Ireland in

Dublin. Her diaries for the period 1868-76 are held at Rothe House, Kilkenny. The diaries throw an interesting light on various happenings in the Graiguenamanagh of that period, as seen from Brandondale House -. Having perused them when giving Fr. James Burtchaell some help with his 'History of the Burtchaell Family', the writer received a copy of that history, which may now be inspected in the Local History Section of Graiguenamanagh Library.

The Burtchaell Family

The Burtchaell family were of Cromwellian origin and came to Graiguenamanagh from Wicklow in the late 1600's. From then until the death of Mrs. Sarah Burtchaell in 1932 they had a close and important connection with Graiguenamanagh area. Like other New English families who gained political influence in County Kilkenny, they became relatively small landowners. However, when Peter -who built Coolroe House - married into the wealthy and powerful Rothe family and who, on his wife's death, inherited her wealth, the family's situation changed dramatically.

The Rothe connection was immensely important and enhanced the Burtchaells socially, financially and politically; so much so that four years after his marriage, Peter was appointed by the Lord Lieutenant to the very lucrative post of Surveyor and Collector of Revenue. One of Peter's sons, David - later to become Sir David - lived at Brandondale. He was the father of Mary Burtchaell, whose sketches are the subject of this article.

Acquisition of the Album

The first knowledge of the album's existence came to Graiguenamanagh through Edward Bowe of Toronto. He was seeking some Graiguenamanagh contact and got in touch with The Waterside Restaurant informing them that he had an album of sketches that he believed originated in Graiguenamanagh – and that he was willing to sell it.

Not being interested, the restaurant got in touch with the undersigned who contacted Owen Doyle, chairperson of the Graiguenamanagh Historical Society.

Contact was then made with Edward Bowe with a view to obtaining further information and, if deemed desirable, of conducting negotiations with a view to acquiring the album.

In due course, after receiving copies of the sketches and on receipt of a favourable report on the album from the writer's son, who is resident in Toronto, negotiations with the owner took place and, having agreed a price, arrangements were made for payment and for transport of the album to Graigue.

Assessment and Restoration

The Graiguenamanagh Historical Society, funded the purchase with a substantial and gratefully received contribution from Graiguenamanagh 800.

On receipt of the album, contact was made with the Curator of Prints and Drawings at the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin and the album was brought there to have it expertly examined and assessed.

After a thorough inspection, the Curator and the Paper Conservator of the gallery offered their assessment and advice. Employees of the National Gallery are not authorised to give a valuation of any work of art but both experts were very complimentary to the work and the Society's enterprise in acquiring the album and they later sent their assessment of the album, a copy of which appears over, to the Graiguenamanagh Historical Society.

John Joyce

GAILEARAI NAISIUNTA NA hEIREANN

National
Gallery of
IRELAND**RE: @ Album of Drawings by Mary Burtchaell**

Bound album of 54 pencil sketches, 'A Life Illustrated' Vol.1 on cover. Dimensions: c. 200 x 300mm (12" x 8"). Dates from the mid nineteenth century, the last drawing is dated 1871.

The title page is inscribed: 'Sketches taken from nature by Mary Burtchaell of Brandondale'.

The album consists of detailed pencil sketches of Graiguenamanagh and the surrounding area. There are also a number of drawings of other locations in Ireland and England. Many of the drawings are dated. Brandondale is a large country house on the outskirts of the village.

The sketches are made on sheets of handmade paper (in good condition) which are stuck onto a heavier paper which is bound into the album. The gatherings have been tightly sewn together which has put a lot of pressure on the album and so the binding (probably mid to late 19th century) has cracked. Although the sheets themselves are in good condition the binding is very fragile and is in need of urgent conservation.

The album could have been made specially to hold the drawings as there are no extra leaves at the end of the book. There is a cloudy whitish deposit at the back of the album (inside the cover) which is probably not mould but dust.

For display: a special Perspex cradle should be made to support the album when it is on display. Any particular page should only be shown for limited periods (not more than 3 months) every 10 years or so.

This book is of great importance in local historical studies. It provides a record of this thriving town at a particular period in the nineteenth century. It will be of great use to architectural, social and local historians and will be of much interest to people living in or from the area. It is a useful document in terms of social history as it shows the type of drawing engaged in by ladies and gentlemen of the upper classes.

I would recommend that the album should be conserved as a matter of urgency to ensure its preservation. It should, in addition, be stored in an archival standard solander box, specially made to fit this album. It is a good example of the work of a competent amateur artist of the nineteenth century. It is wonderful that the Graiguenamanagh Historical Society managed to acquire this item and so save it from being broken up and sold as individual sheets as often happens with such albums.

Anne Hodge
Davey
Curator of Prints and Drawings

Ranson
Paper Conservator

The Burtchaell Album

The cover of the album bears the title 'A Life Illustrated, Vol.1'.

The Title Page is in Indian ink and is entitled:
'Sketches taken from Nature by Mary Burtchaell of Brandondale'.

The gold-leaf edged pages are original. The album contains fifty-four sketches – many of them of Graiguenamangh and the surrounding areas. The sketches appear to have been inserted in the album without any attempt to place them in chronological or other order. Some sketches are unfinished and, in a few cases, it is not possible to identify the subject matter. Brief comments on the sketches are given hereunder.

GRAIGUENAMANGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

A LIFE ILLUSTRATED



VOL. 1.

SHEEPHAST

TAKEN FROM NATURE

BY

MARY BURTCHAELL

of

BRANDONDALE

*



1. KILFANE HOUSE - THE ENTRANCE FRONT. Sketched on 1st September 1843, Kilfane at that time was the home of Sir John Power. A note says that he was a great friend of the Burtchaell family.



2. GOWRAN CASTLE - THE GARDEN FRONT. Gowran Castle was the seat of Viscount Clifden who owned Graiguenamagh. The sketch was done in 1843. A note says the Clifden's were cousins of the Burtchaells. If so, the family were well connected.



3. DOWNSTREAM FROM BRANDONDALE. Brandon Hill, Ballyogan Wood and the Barrow are portrayed in this scene.



4. GLENGARRIF, CO.CORK. This is the view across the lake looking from the island towards the little houses used by the boatmen who ferry visitors from the mainland to the beautiful island garden. The towering mountains make an impressive backdrop.



5. TINNAHINCH, sketched on October 10th 1843. Tinnahinch Castle, the lock and weir are included. Part of the bridge and a Coffey Dam (see No. 7 below) are visible, as are two little houses, one of them with a chimney, immediately at the Tinnahinch end of the bridge. Only one of these survives. The house that stood on the site that 'Boats Bistro' now occupies, together with two other smaller buildings, look towards the Barrow. John Kelly's starch factory, which commenced operations in 1842, may have been using these houses and he appears at that time to have been extending his 'manufactory' by erecting a building adjacent to them, the outline of which is barely discernible in the sketch. The houses facing us in the distance appear to be those on the east side of Tinnahinch street. O'Driscoll's is clearly visible.



6. THE BARROW VALLEY. This sketch, looking downstream from Baron's Knock was done in 1854. Graiguenamagh (Silaire) Wood is on right foreground. Tinnahinch Wood is to the left, with Brandon Hill in the distance. Two boats are shown on the river. The Barrow was playing a huge role in the economy of Graiguenamagh in the 1840's.



7. THE VIEW FROM BRANDONDALE IN 1844. Tinnahinch Castle is again prominent in this sketch. Two houses appear to its right in the middle distance. Immediately downstream from the bridge a Coffor Dam is visible. In 1843/4 the Barrow Navigation Co. were enlarging the old dockyards there and to keep the water out while the works were in progress, they built a Coffor Dam immediately below the bridge. The fact that such a dam existed at one time has long since left the folk memory.



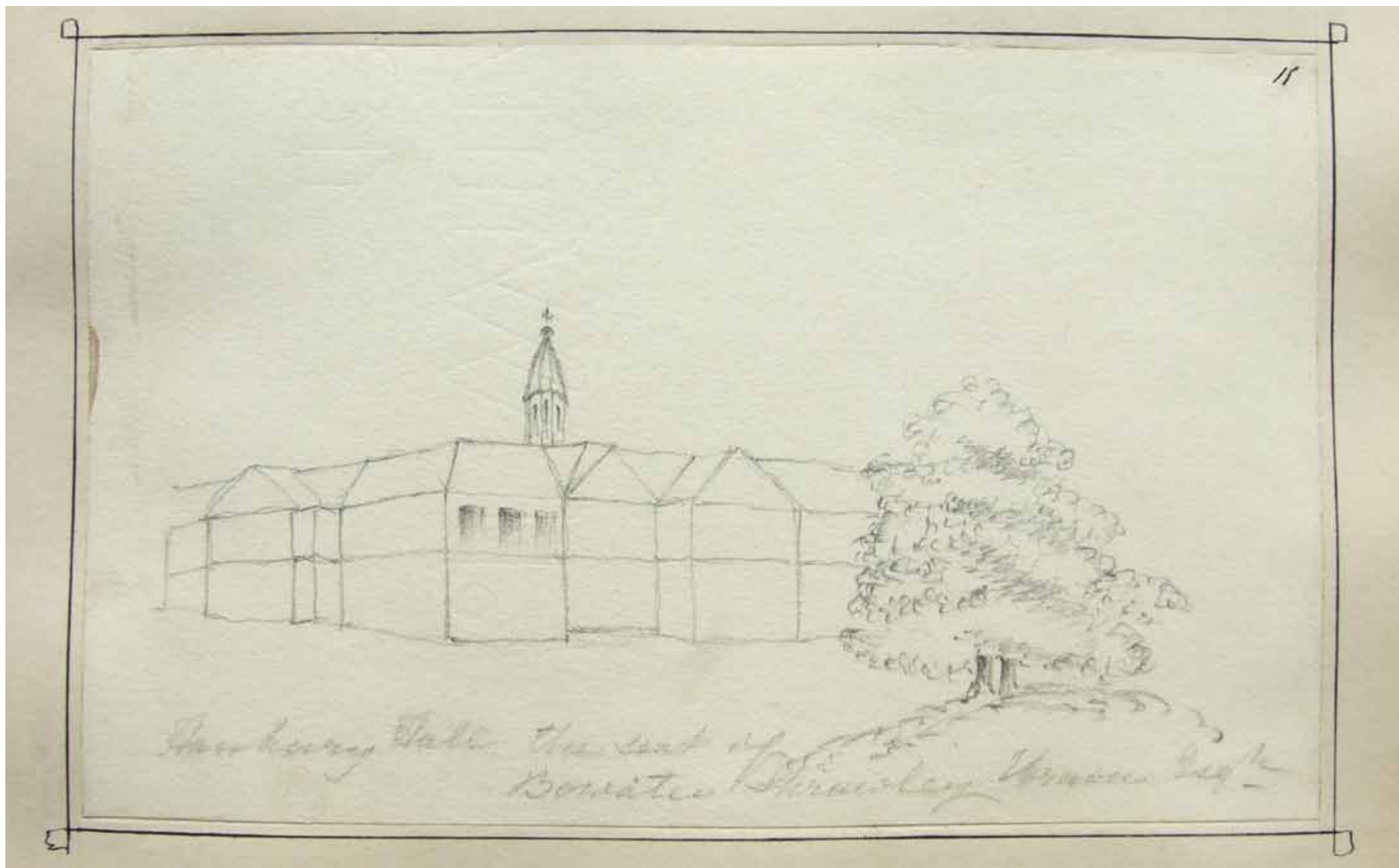
8. A VIEW FROM BRANDONDALE IN MARCH 1845. This sketch shows Ballyogan Wood and, through the foreground trees, the Barrow and the distant countryside.



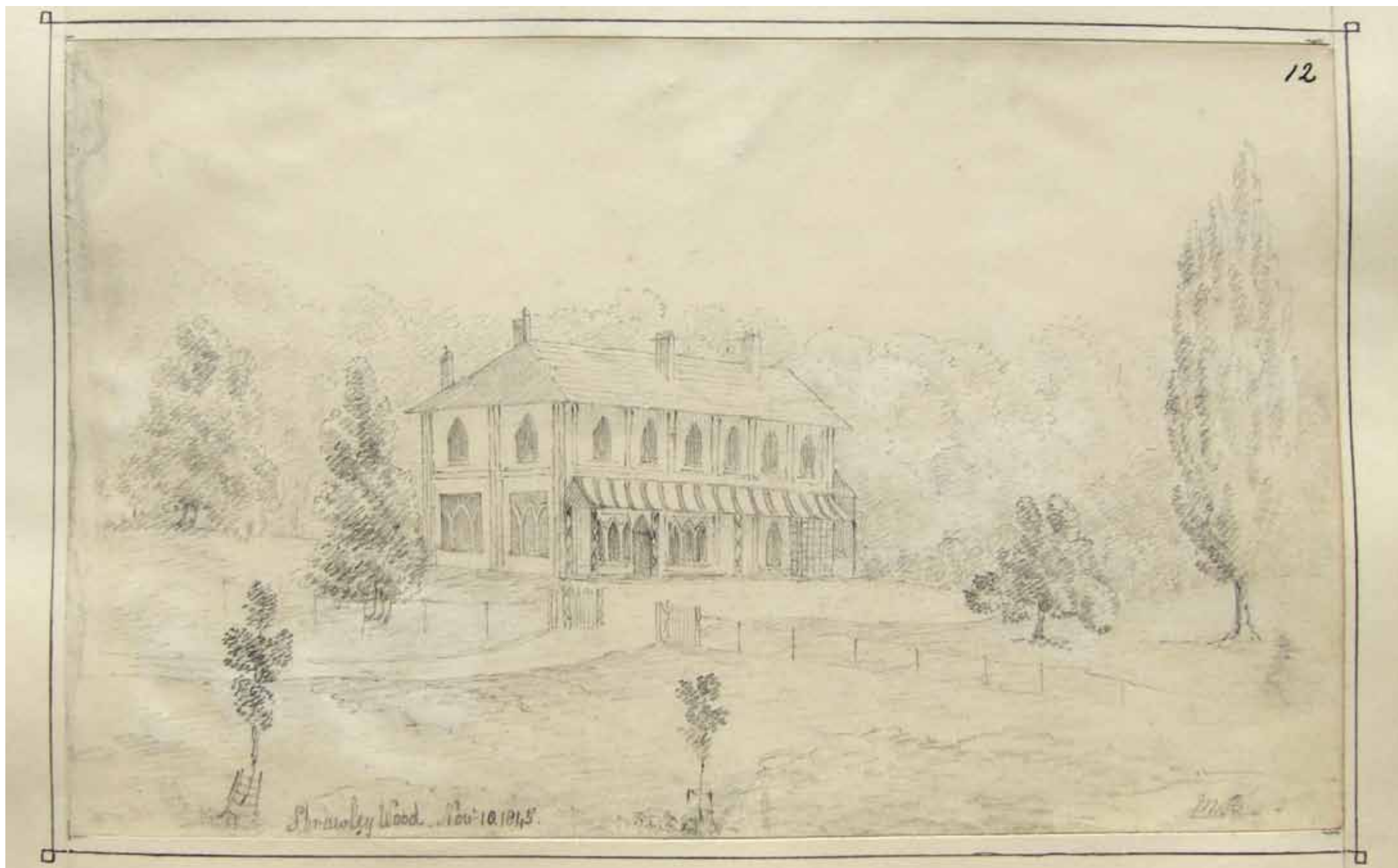
9. THE MENAI BRIDGE, an unfinished sketch, done from The George Hotel, near Bangor, Wales in August 1845.



10. WHITBOURNE COURT, Hertfordshire. An undated Sketch.



11. BOWATER, an unfinished sketch of Hassbury Hall, near Bowater, Shrawley, Worcester.



12. SHRAWLEY WOOD, "My friend's place", on the River Severn near Worcester in East Wales. Sketched on November 10th 1845 and initialled "MB".



13. SHRAWLEY CHURCH. Worcester, November 1845.



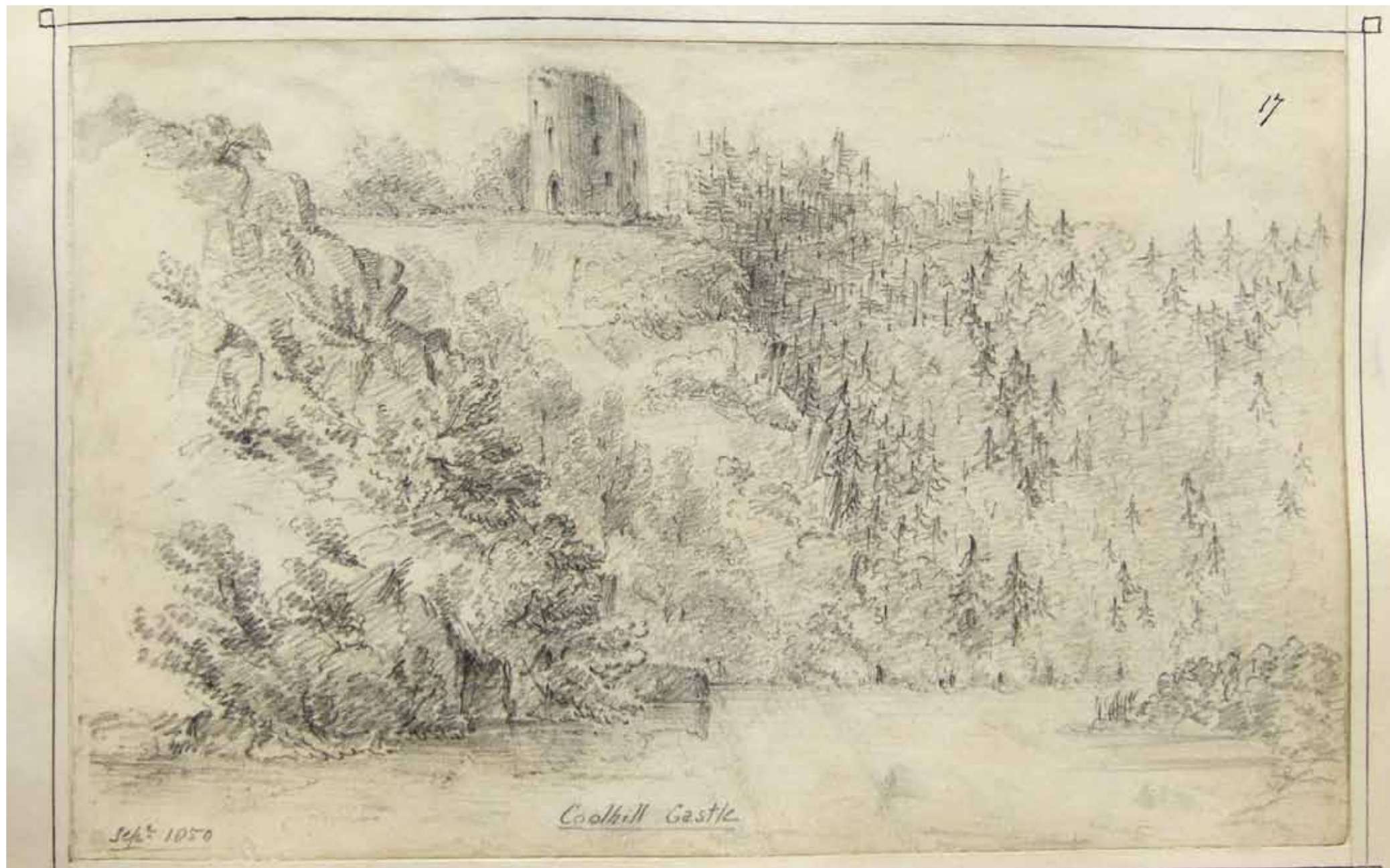
14. WHITBOURNE COURT, Hertfordshire, sketched from the riverside in October 1845. Initialed "MB".



15. WHITBOURNE COURT - A nearer view of the house.



16. BRANDONDALE HOUSE - An Unfinished Sketch.



17. COOLHILL CASTLE. This view from Killeen, way down beside the Barrow below Ballavarra, was sketched in September 1850. What appear to be a pier and part of a building are discernable at the bottom of the cliff.



18. POULMOUNTY. Looking down the Barrow from a point opposite Coolhill Castle, this scene was sketched in September 1850. A boat and two fishermen appear in the picture. In the distance, a farmhouse is discernable on the centre left, as is what appears to be a limekiln towards the centre right of the sketch.



19. A RURAL SCENE. - Whitbourne Hill, Hertfordshire.



20. THE SEVERN VALLEY – an area of outstanding beauty in Herefordshire.



21. BRANDONDALE HOUSE, A particularly fine sketch, undated and unsigned. Is it possible that this was done by one of Mary's tutors?



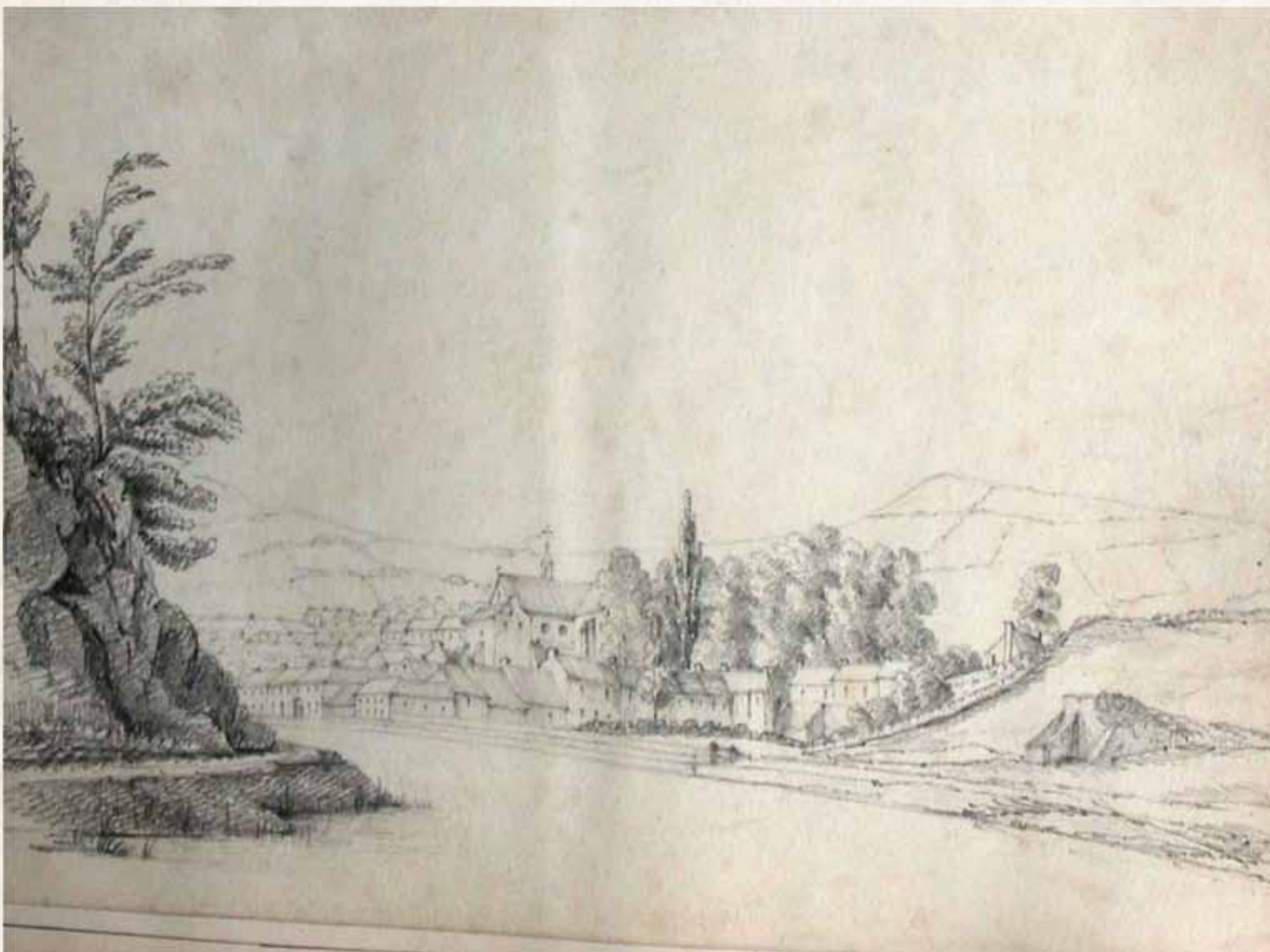
22. BRANDONDALE HOUSE, as seen from the Barrow. Sketched in 1852.



23. BRANDONDALE – an unfinished sketch.



28. THE RIVER NEAR CHILCOME, NEW ROSS.



29. Graigueamagh.

This interesting sketch was done from the Barrow Tow Path above the Devil's Eyebrow about 1855. Part of Tinnahinch Rock appears in the left foreground. The Abbey Church with belfry is clearly visible towards the centre. The very high five-storeyed building this side of the church can only have been the Rosseter Brewery which Ignatious Rosseter, who came from Co. Wexford to marry Catherine Kelly of Knockeen, established in the early 1700's. The brewery, produced a black beer and continued to operate until about 1800, but had gone out of business when this sketch was drawn. In all probability, this is the only existing picture of the brewery.

On the extreme right of the sketch is the 'Fives' alley at Maher's Hill. 'Fives' was a game like handball that was played in a court with various hazards and ledges projecting from its walls. This resulted in an unpredictable bounce of the ball and made the game a very fast one, demanding great skill and agility. The Fives Alley also appears in a pencil sketch done from the same position by R. Gibbs, an itinerant artist, about 1810. At that date, the alley appears to have been in a much better condition than it appears to be in the later Burtchaeall sketch.

The Osiery Quay and the gate leading to Maher's Hill appear very much as they are today. The archway at the Quay is probably that which still leads into the yard of The Waterside Restaurant. Teehan's yard, at the bottom of Barrow Lane, is recognisable. Running from it, up Barrow Lane, most of the houses depicted have long since been replaced. Note the gap between Mary Lennon's and Pat Butler's house and what appears to be another ball alley at this side of Butler's. To the right of that, a few other houses run towards Whitehall. The last house on the right must be Whitehall House.



30. A VIEW FROM BRANDONDALE GROUNDS. Tinnahinch Castle and the Canal Agent's house appear in this sketch. The far-distant tower of St. Peter's Church is featured.



- 31 A VIEW FROM BRANDONDALE. In this sketch, done about 1860, the bridge, the weir and Tinnahinch Castle, are included. The houses on the right, other than the Well Cottage to the left of the group, are difficult to identify. Some houses at the near end of St. Mullins Street, of which there now is no evidence, seem to have been in existence in 1860. To the left of the sketch is the Abbey Church. Note that the west end of the building is unroofed. That part of the church had been roofed and converted into a Protestant Church by Parson Owns in 1754 but it was never used as such. When St. Peter's Church (on extreme left) was built at Whitehall in 1809, the 1754 roof was removed from the Abbey Church and used there. In 1812, the main part of the Abbey Church, having been renovated and roofed, became the Catholic parish church of Graiguenamagh. It was not, however, until 1886 that the west end was again roofed.. Between 1809, when the roof was removed, and 1886, when it was replaced, the west end was used as a burial ground.



32. PETER'S RESIDENCE. A fine sketch of what may have been the house in which Mary's brother lived at Kilkenny.



33. ANOTHER BURTCHAELL RESIDENCE – dated August 1837, but unidentified.



34. CINDERFORD CHURCH. Glostershire. A nice sketch of that church in 1857.



35. LORD DOVER'S PLACE – Lord Dover was a relation of the Clifdens of Gowran. The location of the mansion featured in the sketch has not been identified.



36. BORRIS HOUSE. Mary called it "Mc Murragh's House". This sketch, initialled "MB", was drawn in 1863 from what is now the second green at Borris Golf Club. There is virtually no change in the scene since. A little note claims a Burtchaell relationship with the Kavanagh family.



37. BROOMVILLE, Ardattan, Co. Carlow. August 1859. This may be Henry Burtchaell's house at Carlow.



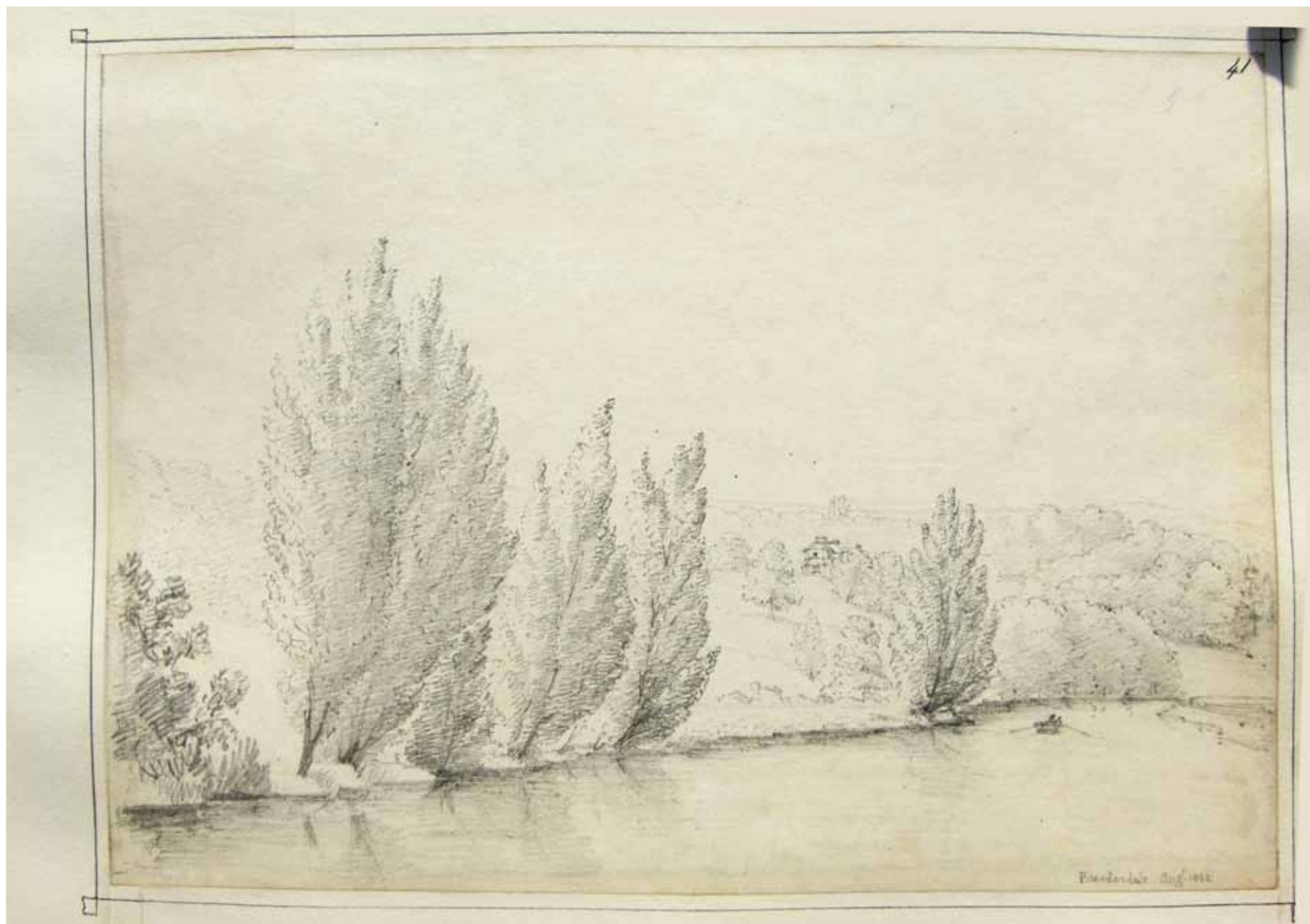
38. FROM BROOMVILLE IN AUGUST 1859



39. THE VIEW FROM BROOMVILLE IN 1867.



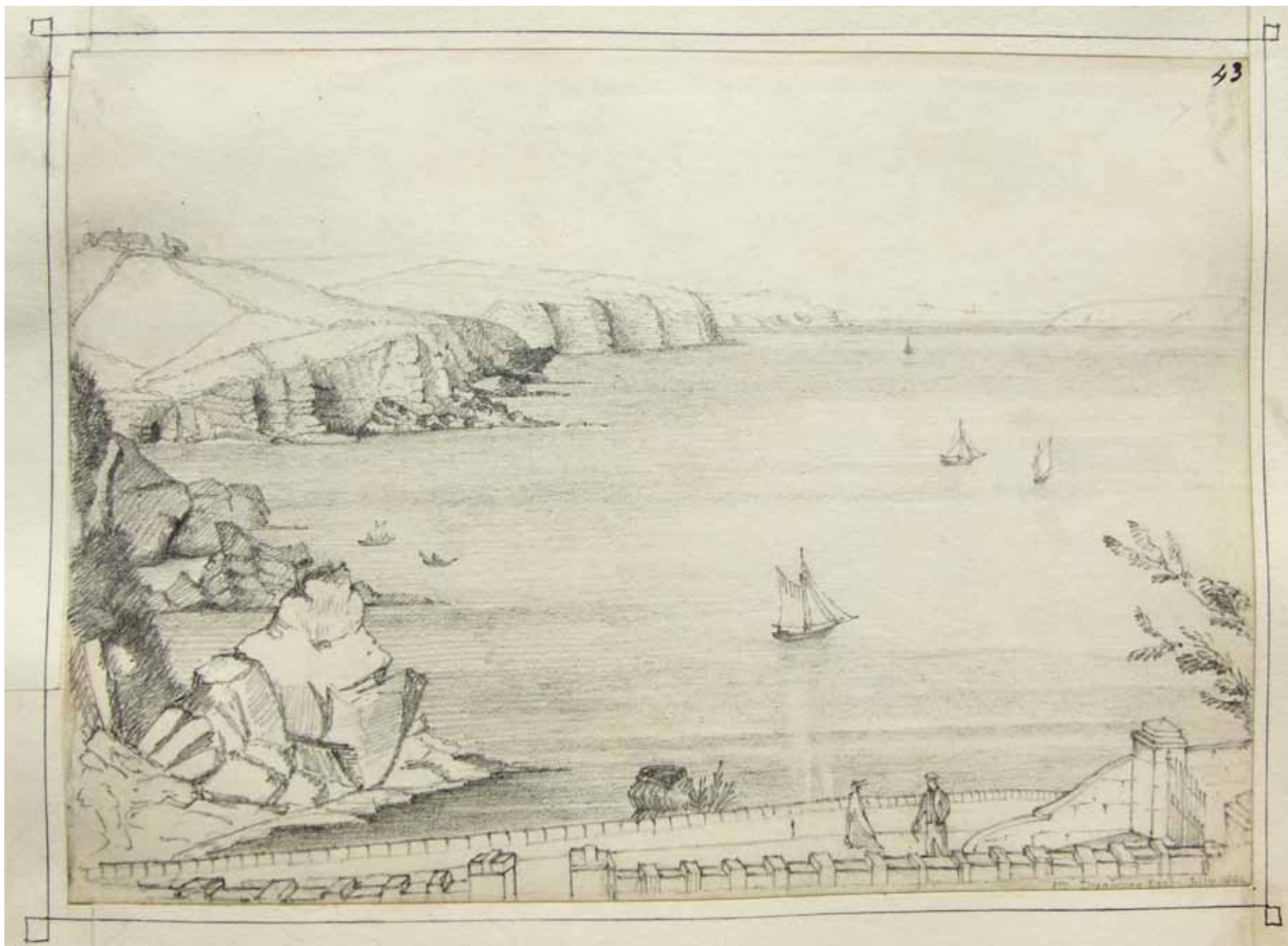
40. FROM BRANDONDALE in June 1862. In Mary's only portrait-shaped drawing, the belfry and part of the eastern and the southern gables of Duiske Abbey are discernable. The far distant St Peter's Church at Whitehall is also in the picture. The sketch is initialled 'MB'. Mary, a staunch and devoted Protestant, never failed to depict St. Peter's when the opportunity arose.



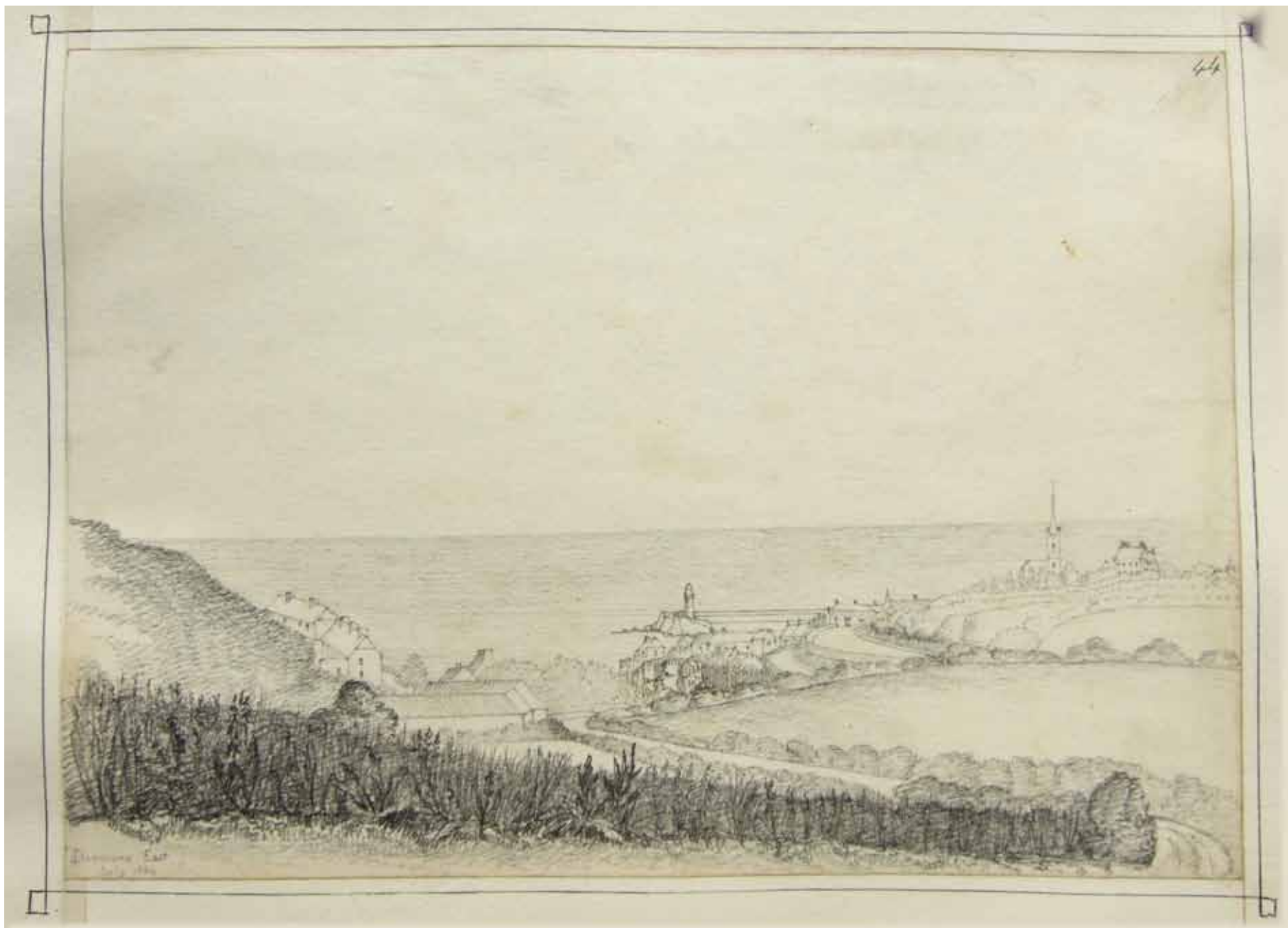
41. TOWARDS BRANDONDALE. This scene, which has changed little over the centuries, was sketched from the Co. Carlow side of the Barrow in August 1862. Note the little boat.



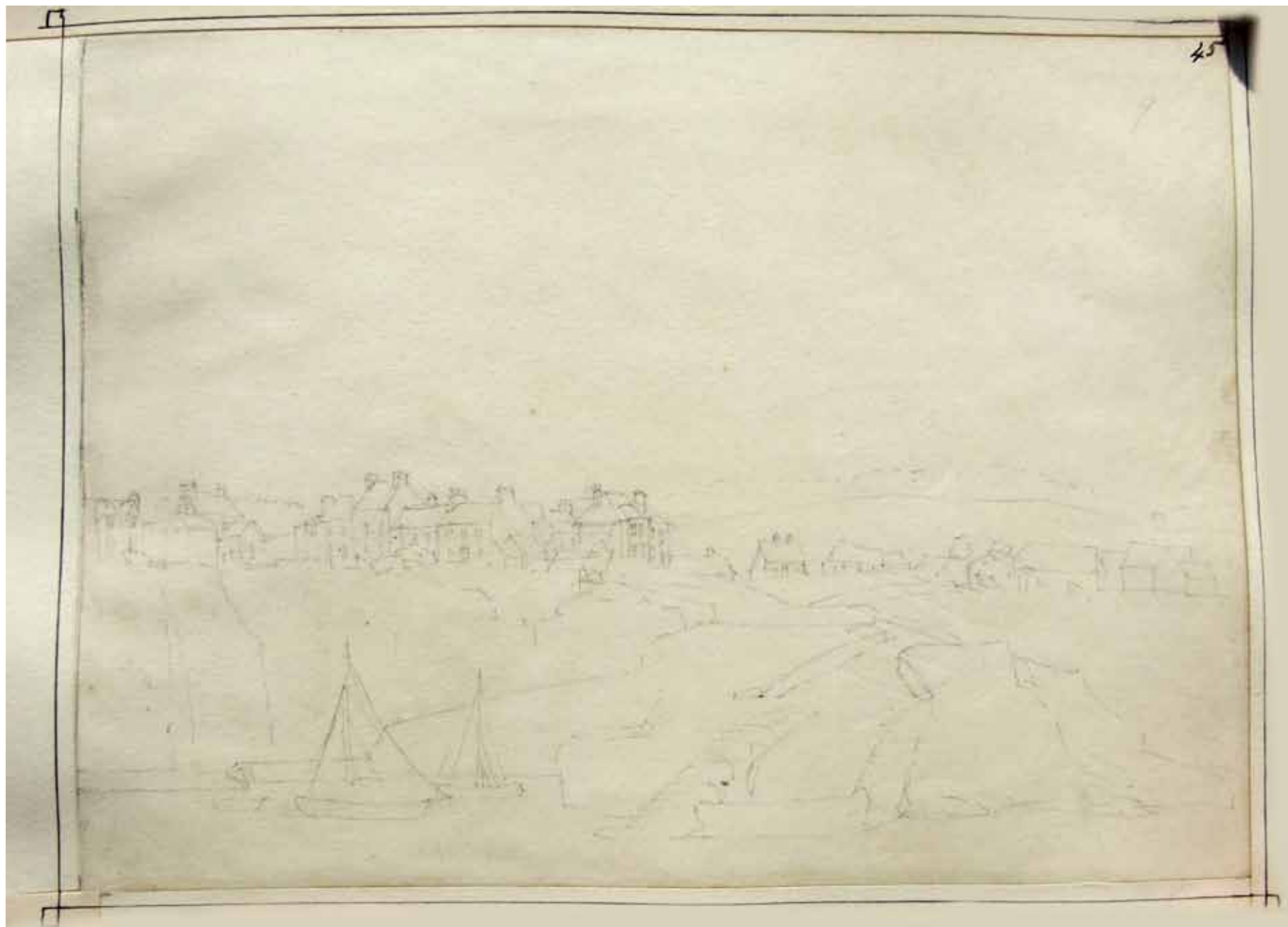
42. KILLINEY BAY near Dublin. An unfinished view, sketched in October 1862.



43. DUNMORE EAST. This is a panoramic view of Dunmore East where the family went on holidays. The sketch was done from the hotel grounds as six boats sailed in the bay. Two figures are shown in the foreground, the lady wearing a long dress, no doubt a fashionable one in her day.



44. DUNMORE EAST. A view of the village and harbour, sketched in July 1864.



45. DUNMORE EAST, an unfinished sketch done from the pier. Undated.



46. A VIEW OF PROSPECT HOUSE, Lydney, Gloucestershire in 1866.



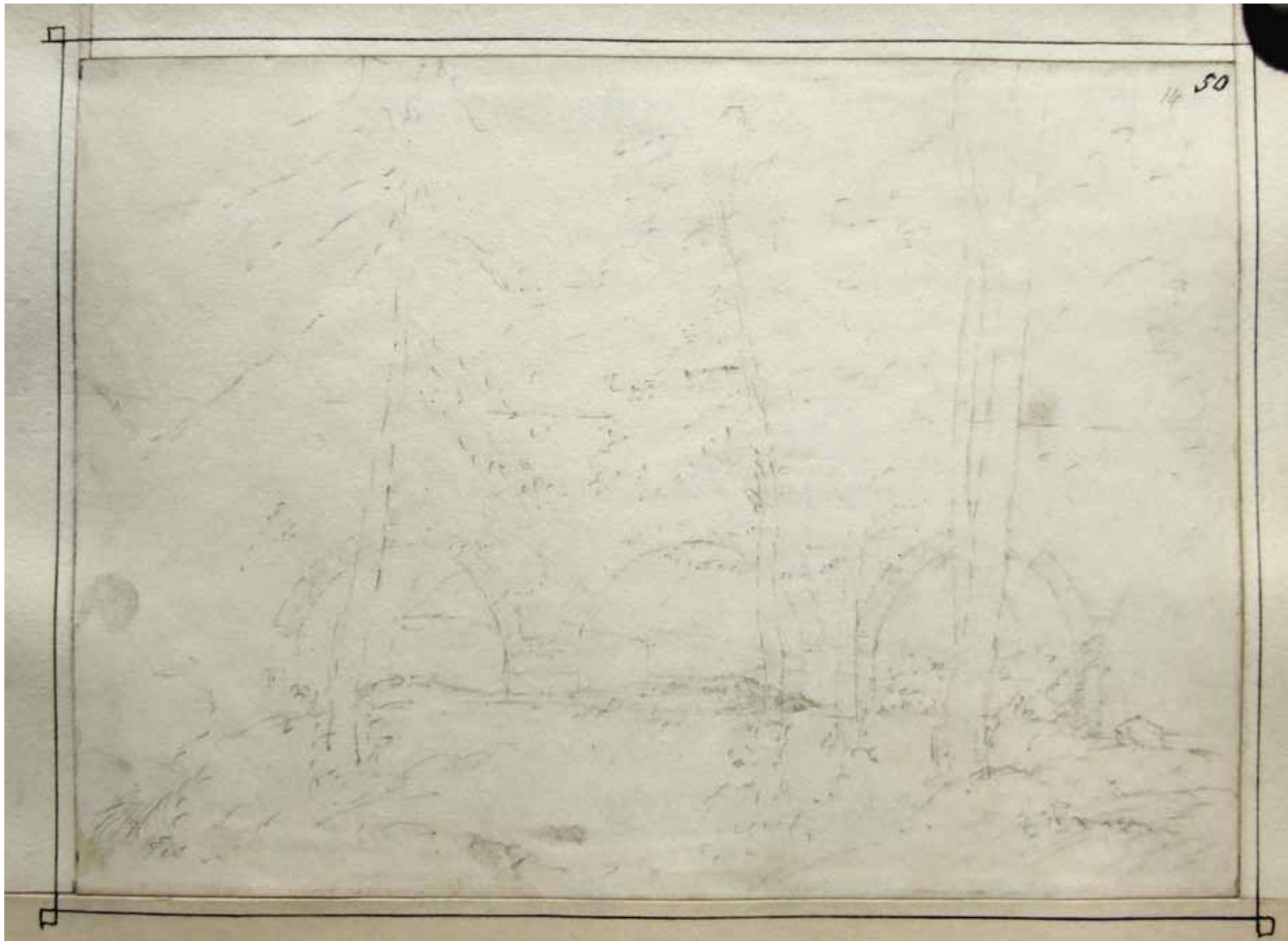
47. PROSPECT HOUSE, Lydney, A close up view in June 1866.



48. GLENBROOK IN JULY 1866. The location of this 'Glenbrook' (one of many) has not been identified



49. FROM SCHUSAMOR. At the time this work was done the old coach road ran along by the Barrow and the sketch was probably done from it. The sketch looks down towards Bahana Wood, with Blanches' eel weir in the centre of picture. Note the house (long since gone) on the summit of Dowling's Rock on the right and the house on the opposite side of the Barrow.



50. COOLROE BRIDGE. This unfinished sketch is almost certainly one of Coolroe Bridge, looking upstream towards Coolroe House, which at that time was a Burtchaell residence.



51. A STUDY OF PINE TREES. Undated



52. KILMANAGH RECTORY, near Tallagh, Co Dublin. This sketch bears the inscription "Sketched October 1868, finished September 1871".



53. THE VIEW FROM KILMANAGH RECTORY in Oct. 1868.



54. A CHURCH, This sketch is unfinished. The church is not identified.

Acknowledgements

John Joyce	Writer and Historian
Owen Doyle	Chairman of Graiguenamanagh Historical Society
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