

*In 1983 Major Willson put St Clerans on the market. A brochure with attractive photographs was prepared. In addition the following document was given to prospective buyers. Below you will find the original text with a commentary in grey boxes.*

#### FURTHER NOTES ON ST. CLERAN'S

If you have seen the brochure and some photographs of St. Clerans, you will know something about this very beautiful Irish house. But there is a bit more to St. Clerans than one finds in brochures and maps, here you can read of just a little.

St. Clerans undoubtedly is very much above the average Big House, and yet St. Clerans is NOT a mansion. It is much more of the Manor House style and now in this year of 1983 it is all so easy to run. Undoubtedly, Sir John Morrison made a very good job of it in circa 1800. Look at his work on the Four Courts in Dublin for instance. His work was admired at that time and is still remarked upon.

*The architect was not Sir John Morrison. It was Richard Morrison and he did not have a title. The Four Courts building was designed by Gandon. Richard Morrison designed the front*  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four\\_Courts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Courts)  
*part of St Clerans in 1806.*

A great joy at St. Clerans is that in the main house passages do not exist. From entering the front door there is first the Entrance Hall. This has six electrically lit niches for flowers mainly. The floor is of marble, and what about this marble? Well, it obviously came from under the sea, or rather, it was once under the sea. All the oyster fossils and much other proof of life at the time show this up very clearly. Two of America's leading archaeologists on separate visits to St. Clerans, whilst looking for oil under the seas around Ireland, were quite recently asked about this marble floor and how old it was. They replied as follows, and not on the same visit; One said "It's really impossible to say" (and he then gave various reasonings and details) "but it is a very minimum of seven million years old". The other, when asked, similarly pointed out many things of interest, but the age of the floor was a problem to him also. He was slow to comment on this point when asked, but eventually said "The age? Well that's .quite impossible to say, except with some intelligent vagueness, but I won't avoid the question then. This floor cannot be less than 20 million years old". So, that's some flooring, isn't it, in the Entrance Hall, and, furthermore, under the flooring is the Central Heating. So there is no radiator at all visible in this area.

*The hall is floored with polished black limestone. It was marketed throughout the world as "Merlin Black Marble". It came from a quarry at Merlin Park, Galway*

But look above you and you will see a very beautiful ceiling in excellent condition. You are now in St. Clerans household, with lovely doors leading to the Inner Hall, the Drawing Room and, opposite to it, the Dining Room. Both these large rooms have bay windows at one end, and each have two windows overlooking the fountain. Naturally these rooms are curtained but at night-time they are often best left open. The fountain, imported from

France, and the whole of the front of St. Clerans is floodlit and the stone Haha ditch is unseen and no interruption to the view is caused by any stonewall or other fencing.

Stand at the front door, listen to the rapidly running stream from Sarsfield Bridge, ponder on a little Trout fishing, think of perhaps a good day's hunting out with the Galway Blazers, or cast your eyes around some of your guests. You may see some twinkling stars in the skies above you and, maybe even certainly, there may be some twinkling starry eyes under your own roof that night. For some reason, in fact there may be many reasons, women like St. Clerans. Spirits and good wine do, of course, help. A little money helps too sometimes, but take away the drink and the cash if you like and in St. Clerans there is, always a good deal left. And thus it has been so for many years. Well known people have lived here. Not just for the grandeur of St. Clerans, for St. Clerans just does not

Those beautiful light switches are still in use.

have the grandeur of some of the larger Irish houses. But it does have that certain mystique, that certain 'Je ne sais pas quoit'. Did John Huston put this there perhaps? John was that very gifted Film Producer who

spent a fortune on St. Clerans during his occupation. Everything has been done to the highest standards. No plastic light switches for John, so many of them are the 'switch on here' and 'switch off there' type, all of brass or bronze, magnificent Central Heating and Air Conditioning, some Kitchen too - with almost everything. The present owner now has a 4-oven oil-fired Aga and this is operational even during electricity failures since the Aga is gravity flow fed from a very carefully concealed fuel tank hidden up a nearby Yew tree.

*The plastic tank in the yew tree was taken down in 2014. It stood on rusty builder's scaffold. It was a true eyesore. The tree must be much happier now!*

This was all new in 1978 and just two fills of the tank a year keeps the Aga going 24 hours a day and the Kitchen and Break-fast Room always warm. But in the Summer perhaps when it is not necessary to use the Aga for 3 or 4 months, there is a very well fitted Moffat electric stove with its own ventilation chimney just above. And there's something else

rather joyful too. This is a very specially fitted Barbecue Grill (a la John Huston of course) with again its own chimney. Here also is a French fireback mounted on a copper shield and electrically lit. Steaks and other things grilled over charcoal, all done to a turn on this barbecue, are readily remarked upon. And lo - because of all this, what has the present owner had to do? Quite

*Clearly the cost of heating was a serious worry. The use of a breakfast room to save heating costs implies that dining room was left unheated and too cold. John Huston was also surprised at the energy consumption.*

simple really. Because of the rising oil prices of the last decade he has separated the kitchen a little. There is now a little Breakfast Room, and six (eight have been known) people can sit in comfort watching the barbecue do the cooking and look out over the Garden Level Courtyard and its three niches of floodlit Japanese fish (John Huston again). Remarkably this Breakfast Area does not look at all new fangled. It has fitted in rather well, minimizing meal-servicing and movement, and vastly more economical of heating. Yet nothing in the kitchen is spoilt. There are still the old Spanish tiles surrounding the Aga, the electric cooker, the barbecue, and under so many of the fitted wall cupboards.

There are three fitted refrigerators, a dishwasher, a double sink, electrical extras abound. There is a lift or elevator. This connects the Kitchen to the massive deep-freeze and laundry below, to the foodstore, and to the nearby' office room. Thus, everything in the kitchen is always accessible and the lift operates to the First Floor above the Kitchen. Excellent for breakfasts in bed, etc., and also for the very well fitted linen cupboard with its so many fully divided cupboards.

A continuous log fire in the Study during the Winter months means that the central heating can be dispensed with. But hey! American guests may not agree with this, and a Burmese Prince did once ask for some more heat. But any visitors staying overnight with the present owner have most often found a Turf fire burning in their bedrooms, or an electric fire when they arrive. Turf in Galway is easily obtained and a ten-ton lorry load will last several years. St. Clerans is so well treed that there is always some tree falling, or branches

breaking, and the actual buying of coal does not happen. It's oil for the Aga, turf for the Study, and massive logs for the Dining Room (and the candles lit on the two chandeliers just each side of the fireplace) and many candles on the dining room table, and one can dine in St. Clerans in 1983 as though Time had not passed these last 100 years. But the existing most beautiful dining table is virtually a MUST for this room. It can seat 22 with ease - just 10 each side and Himself and Herself at each end. This table looks as though it was especially built for this dining room in St. Clerans, and yet one knows it wasn't, since it was brought here in 1976 by the new owner.

The Study is the only other room on the ground floor in St. Clerans. Entered off the Inner Hall, it is a man's room undoubtedly. Not much of the female touch here, though it is essentially practical and relaxing. Massive bookshelves and cupboards underneath mean one fortunately has no need for further unattractive metal filing cupboards. It can very easily be kept a much used and always tidy room. And the Drinks are not exactly on view, being easily kept in the whole brand new Stereo System. It is all fitted and all the discs etc. have their own nesting places. John Huston certainly never intended his discs or tapes to

be scratched! He was fastidious in so much of his desires and is still considered one of the greatest Movie Makers. But, after St. Clerans, he more or less settled permanently in Mexico. Undoubtedly a great loss to County Galway. and still hanging in the Study is his metal chandelier, and the hidden lighting under the bookshelves gives this room its warm and gentle feeling. Undoubtedly, the Study is the Command Post in St. Clerans though it does have an adjoining

*More energy worries! A fire in the study heats the study, not the house.*

*The house had 27 open chimneys, each one venting warm air to the sky. Most have been capped to save energy.*

*At that time there were two 'apartments' in the house. One was on the ground floor. A later owner, Merv Griffin reincorporated them into the house so that there are many more rooms on the ground floor now.*

*That chandelier still hangs in the study.*

door through the 3-foot thick wall into the Drawing Room. All the St. Clerans outside walls are really thick stone, absolutely sound and never need painting.

The roof is slate.

The staircase from the Inner Hall leads to a central area on the first floor. By day this is lit by a large window overlooking the stone courtyard and by a skylight above. All the bedrooms lead off this very attractive area, indeed there is a table here also of some beauty, and many guests have been known to write here during their stays. One further room is also here. This is the First Floor Boudoir with pretty fireplace and all the walls covered in a claret silk brocade. In the centre there is a chandelier, antique and valuable also. The five bedrooms on the first floor and the fabulous Dressing Room all have access to this upper hall. The Dressing Room is probably the best fitted in the whole of Ireland. From it one can obtain access to the roof and the water tanks. It is easy to walk around the whole of the roof space. A TV aerial is on the roof and, with a new aerial, BBC programmes can be picked up. There are 3 television sets in St. Clerans and signals are good.

St. Clerans is now divided into three, as with fewer guests and no resident children, James Willson did not require so many bedrooms. After all, there are at St. Clerans:-

In the House - 5 Doubles  
Boudoir - 1 Double, if used as such  
Courtyard Bedroom - This is a double bedroom with its own bathroom and lavatory

All the above bedrooms have adjoining bathrooms

St. Clerans West Wing  
Apartment - 1 Double Bedroom and 1 Single Bedroom  
Lower Garden Level  
Apartment - 3 Double Bedrooms and 1 Single Bedroom  
In the Mews Adjoining - 1 Double Bedroom

So what have we for sleeping in St. Clerans? It's 10 double and 3 single bedrooms, 9 bathrooms and 10 lavatories. Satisfied?

Apart from the Halls and the Kitchen, St. Clerans has fully fitted carpeting and all windows are curtained.

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The boiler room at St. Clerans is a room full of machinery, time switches, circulating pumps, fuse boards, and fortunately now a basin for those dirty hands or dirty boots. Even the most experienced Fox-hunters may return home with muddy boots and all the clothes may be dried from hangers in this boiler room. Both oil

*In 2013, the boiler was moved from the house to a separate outside building. Safety was the prime consideration. That boiler is now for standby only. The main heat sources now are a wood boiler and heat pumps.*

engines were renewed just recently. Those existing had by no means worn out but the newer models are more economical.

The Lower Garden Level apartment is virtually a house on its own now. It has its own front door through the very pretty walled courtyard. It is completely private. At present it is Tenanted (one month's notice either side). This apartment has :-3 Double Bedrooms / 1 Single Bedroom / 2 Complete Bathrooms / 1 Drawing Room / 1 Storage Room / 1 Study or Living Room / 1 Breakfast Room / 1 Kitchen fully electric / Own fuse board and meter. From the Drawing Room (huge log fires) there is access through French doors to another paved and sunken courtyard. Excellent wide stone steps lead upwards to the garden. Really excellent Cocktail Parties and Barbecues have been held here and the sunken courtyard with its 3 lit-up Japanese fish in separate niches are a little unique for Galway.

It is true there is good trout fishing in the stream and lakes in St. Clerans, but the Vendor has never seen fish like these Japanese ever hooked during his sojourn here. Patiently he has waited for a mermaid in his lake but has reluctantly to admit that they are seemingly a salt water species. In 1975 his son Nicholas travelled by canoe from St. Clerans to the sea, and was picked up there at Moran's Oyster Cottage. And what oysters Morans sell during the Season. The World and his wife frequently come to Morans for the oysters and their other shell fish. Longer by canoe, but only some 20 minutes from St. Clerans by car, you can have the best oysters in the world, and Morans have supplied us with the World Champion Oyster Opener. In fact, the name 'Moran' and the 'Oyster' are Internationally known now as changeable words!

*The vendor was Major James Willson.*

*Sadly Nicholas Willson died while canoeing on the River Liffey near Dublin.*

*There are salmon and trout in the river. As the salmon stocks are recovering, salmon fishing is banned but trout fishing is allowed.*

Craughwell, the home of the Galway Blazer Foxhounds, is but 3 miles from St. Clerans and St. Clerans has often been the home of Masters, or ex-Masters of Hounds. It is ideally suited for same and the historical connections between St. Clerans and Horses and Hounds and Foxhunting, and indeed horse racing and breeding, are legion. A few of those recently involved are the following :-

John Huston, M.F.H., The Galway Blazers

Philip Profumo, M.F.H., The Glaway Blazers

Charles J. Bishop, M.F.H., The East Galway Foxhounds

Eamon Walsh, M.F.H., The Galway Blazers

Joseph McGowan, M.F.H., The Galway Blazers

James Willson Previously M.F.H, ct the Kildare and Westmeath Foxhounds.

Roy Strudwich. Previously M.F.H. of the Bicester Hounds and East Galway Hounds.

Eamon Walsh sadly had a heart attack and died whilst out hunting with the Blazers in November 1982. It was not on account of the size of the walls! Almost certainly due to over-work in his legal profession. Eamon lived at St. Clerans in the delightful Stud Cottage with its beautiful stabling.

Joseph and Anne-Marie McGowan found St. Clerans too far from his building activities in and around Dublin. Be that as it may, they nevertheless are an enthusiastic hunting couple, and to notify their friends of their loyalty to horses they did no less than win the Gold Cup at Cheltenham with their horse Davy Lad in 1977. The Cheltenham Gold Cup is the highest award in the British Isles over fences. Joseph himself now rides in races and in Three-Day Events, and we shall hear more of him. Nobody now ever hears any more about James Willson and a horse. After an 85% fatal accident in January 1972, James Willson put on a lot of weight, gave up Jumping (Horse-jumping of course. Nothing more glamorous like Parachute Jumping could be implied) for a long while and seems to have hung up his boots. They are the major reasons for him leaving St. Clerans.

*Fatal accidents are usually 100% fatal!*

Besides fox-hunting and trout fishing and nearby oyster eating, and, and, and, the following could be, and should be, done at St. Clerans, and quite economically too. A Commercial Trout Farm could be established. Various tests have been carried out, the stream etc. inspected, and the professional opinion is that scope for a Commercial Trout Farm exists.

A Turbine Generator could be installed and, whilst not producing an income, a turbine generator would create great savings. In fact, Eamon Walsh and James Willson had agreed to share the cost of building this. But to date nothing has been constructed. Certainly the fall and the cubic.secs in the stream are sufficient throughout the year to dispense with all bought electricity and fuel oils. The outgoings saved would be equivalent to many thousands of pounds of earned income. Here there could be some very economical heating and lighting produced.

*The trout farm never went ahead. Other such farms in the area failed.*

*The turbine did not go ahead either but it is now under consideration again. It would produce 18kW for about six months and a lesser output for much of the rest of the year. That 18kW would power the house including the heat pumps. Any surplus can now be sold to the grid.*

Around St. Clerans there are many beautiful trees. The garden is easily kept, being mostly grass lawns, 2 long flower beds and 3 rosebeds, and a small green-house. No whole-time labour is required unless there be some involvement in horses. There are some excellent stone stables. St. Clerans is extremely private, being partly surrounded by a stream and lake, and the only vehicle entrance way is over a stone bridge. St. Clerans is in many ways independent too. An excellent pump house supplies the house and estate with limitless water from the stream. The Aga cooker fuel oil tank needs filling but twice a year. The domestic boiler tank holds 1,200 gallons, and a fuel meter has been installed. This tank was completely emptied and scrubbed out in 1981 and is as good as new. Very recently four further fuel tanks have been constructed behind the garage. They are connected in pairs. Two were built to hold diesel fuel for road vehicles and two to hold fuel for tractors etc. All four are as new and have scarcely been used.

*There were no stables.*

Adjoining St. Clerans is an excellent stone built garage for four cars with a small tool room adjoining. This room has a separate entrance and is ideal for puppies etc.

Within St. Clerans there is a long fire hose on each of the three floors. Fortunately this has never had to be used in earnest, but it has been tried out in practice about every two years - the last time in 1982. Insurers note these hoses with approval! Furthermore, each room, pump house and garage is connected to an extremely sensitive Fire Alarm System. This may come into action of its own accord once or twice a year. Some occasions here have been as follows: Someone over-smoking some bacon whilst cooking; someone moving some smoking cinders whilst cleaning grate; some turf placed too near a fire during a dinner party; too many people just smoking cigarettes at a cocktail party in the study. But isn't it better to be warned too soon than too late!

St. Clerans has, apart from a direct dial telephone, three outside telephone lines - one for the house, one for each apartment and one for the mews has been paid for but not yet connected. A virtually complete internal telephone system also. This was also connected to the Stud Groom's Cottage and Eamon Walsh's house. So guests may lie in bed and talk to New York or wherever.

Undoubtedly, St. Clerans is one of Ireland's finest Manor style houses, and in most excellent condition throughout. But of course a paintbrush is obviously required here and there. It is a house which could be very readily

*The remaining pages are missing! If anybody has a complete copy we would love to see it!*

*The final complete sentence implies that a major redecoration job was required.*

*St Clerans was purchased by jointly by two California families of Irish descent, the Rogans and Harneys. They were lawyers. They used St Clerans as a holiday home.*

Back to the St Clerans web site. <http://www.stclerans.com>