

BEHIND THE DOORS OF THE BIG HOUSE

How the other half lived



■ New book reveals Upstairs-Downstairs life in Kerry

■ Historians examine world of county's landed elite

A GROUNDBREAKING new book featuring contributions by some of the county's leading historians on the history of the Big House in Kerry has been published by Tralee couple Maurice and Jane O'Keeffe.

BY COLIN LACEY

The homes of the county's gentry and nobility the length and breadth of Kerry are explored in the lavishly illustrated volume, via the iconic buildings which once dominated the local landscape.

Twelve historians contribute to the book, which also features photographs from the collection of the late Tralee historian Russell MacMorran, who travelled the county with his camera cap-

turing images of buildings many of which have been demolished and lost to time.

According to Maurice and Jane O'Keeffe, the book is hugely significant.

"It's groundbreaking, as such a work which presents the social history of the Big House in Kerry has never been written before.

"Rather than an architectural history, people are very much centre stage," Maurice said.

Jane, who has written four chap-

OPENING DOORS TO A FORGOTTEN WORLD

Some of the county's foremost historians explore the rise, peak and demise of the Big Houses of Kerry in the new book which examines the history of well-known houses and estates, including:

- Ardferf Abbey
- Beaufort House
- Tralee Castle
- Kilmorna House
- Tarbert House
- Kilcoleman Abbey in Milltown
- Callinafercy House
- The Reeks, Killarney
- Kilmurphy House, Castleisland

- Belville House, Portmagee
- Ballyheigue Castle
- Muckross House
- Killarney House
- Collis Sandes, Tralee
- Derryquin Castle
- Rossdohan, Sneem
- Churchill House, Tralee
- Flesk Castle, Killarney

Amongst the contributors are Dr John Knightly, Dr Declan Downey, Tom Dillon, Kay Caball, Jane O'Hea O'Keeffe and Dr Patricia O'Hare, while former Tánaiste Dick Spring contributes a chapter titled 'The Spring Journey: from Lavenham to Kerry'.

Maurice.

The husband-and-wife team were joined in the book's publication by their daughter Helene, a UCC lecturer, who designed and laid out the 320-page volume.

The new publication coincides

LAUNCH: Maurice and Jane O'Keeffe have published a new book on the Big House in Kerry with contributions by the county's foremost historians.

with the centenary of the destruction of many of the Big Houses during the War of Independence and Irish Civil War.

According to Maurice, the book "covers an area of Irish history which hasn't been looked at before and examines in-depth the lives of the people that lived in the Big Houses in the past".

"Every single article is just fantastic with lots of new information. The book is scholarly but still very readable," he said.

The book, which will retail at €39, features a foreword by Sir Adrian FitzGerald, 24th Knight of Kerry, and an introduction by Milltown native Dr John Knightly.

"The Big House in Kerry: A social history" will be available in the coming weeks in all Kerry bookshops and from www.irish-lifeandlore.com.

ters for the book, said she has a life-long interest in Irish Big Houses.

In 2013, she published 'Voices from the Great Houses: Cork and Kerry' drawing on the extensive sound recordings of Irish Life and Lore which she runs with