WELCOME to Bryce House, Ilnacullin, Garinish Island, former home of the Bryce family. The 37 acre island, its buildings, collections and world famous gardens were gifted to the Irish people in 1953, following the death of the last owner Roland L'Estrange Bryce.

On account of its strategic position in Bantry Bay, Garinish Island was originally occupied as a British military garrison in the early nineteenth century. To defend against the threat of a Napoleonic invasion, the British War Office erected a Martello tower – one of the first in Ireland – on the island’s highest point around 1805.

The 1901 Census of Ireland shows that the island was inhabited by the Sullivan family: Mary, a widowed farmer, and her four adult sons, Florence, Michael, Patrick and Timothy, who worked as labourers, fishermen and boatmen. All five shared a three-roomed cottage and were still residing there a decade later.

The island was sold in 1910 to John Annan Bryce, the Belfast-born M.P. for Inverness Burghs in Scotland. He and his wife Violet (née L’Estrange) had been regular visitors to Glengarriff on the mainland for some years previously. The Bryces commissioned the eminent English architect and garden designer Harold Peto to assist in the development of their new property, which they named Ilnacullin (an older name for the island that existed in the area).

Work began on Peto’s Arts and Crafts style island garden scheme as early as 1911. Peto also prepared plans for an extravagant mansion but it was never
constructed and the modest gardener’s cottage, built in 1912, became the Irish retreat of the well-travelled and well-connected Bryce family.

Violet took up permanent residence in 1923 and later opened up the island gardens – planted by her late husband – to the public. Her son Roland extensively remodelled the cottage and continued to add rare and interesting plants to the gardens which flourished under the management of head gardener, Murdo MacKenzie.

After passing into state ownership in the 1950s, Ilnacullin was entrusted to the management of the Office of Public Works and cared for by a team that included Murdo MacKenzie and the Bryces’
housekeeper, Margaret O’Sullivan, who had devoted their lives to the family and their legacy.

One of the guiding principles for the management of Ilnacullin has been to honour the wishes expressed in Roland’s bequest, specifically the condition that the Bryces’ house and its contents be kept intact. An exception was made for two watercolours by J.M.W. Turner transferred in 1972 to the National Gallery of Ireland.

While the house has been upgraded to provide public access, it has been carefully conserved to respect its historic integrity and to reflect the lives and times of its former inhabitants. Furniture, artworks and artefacts have been put back in place using information gleaned from archival materials, photographs and a 1954 inventory.

Ilnacullin is one of the great gardens of Ireland and Bryce House is a fitting memorial to the creators and custodians of this unique place – their lives and dedication continue to inspire those now charged with its care.
For more than half a century, a brilliant Scottish gardener named Murdo MacKenzie (1896–1983) managed the gardens created by the Bryces along with a skeleton staff of between four and six workers. Much of the early planting, done by John Annan Bryce, had perished during winter storms and it was not until Murdo was appointed as head gardener by Violet in 1928 that the gardens began to flourish. He established important shelter belts and built up the internationally significant collection of rare plants. He also kept meticulous records and maintained correspondences with botanical authorities around the world, and as far away as Australia, sending specimens for identification and research.

After Ilnacullin passed from the Bryce family into the care of the Office of Public Works in the 1950s, Sidney F. Maskell, Assistant Principal Architect, was appointed to manage the island with Murdo remaining on as resident overseer. Maskell supported Murdo’s policy of replacing the losses which had occurred since the original planting while improving the condition of the soil and the density of the shelter. Many of the gardening books and periodicals found throughout the house were procured by Murdo with the help of Maskell who facilitated the delivery of supplies and exchange of plants.

The climate of Garinish Island has been carefully observed for over 100 years. Long before the formation of the Irish Meteorological Service in 1936, a network of weather stations was established around the Irish and British coastlines, by the naval authorities in London, to provide storm warnings for ships at sea. The island’s daily rainfall and humidity levels were measured using some of the equipment displayed and noted in large bound volumes with cumulative data being reported.
at intervals. Murdo and his team carried on this practice – which continues to this day.

Murdo was recognised for his outstanding work with several awards and medals. In 1966, he was awarded the Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland’s Gold Medal, an award similar to that presented to Roland Bryce twenty years earlier. The following year he was elected as an Associate of Honour by the Royal Horticultural Society in London. Though officially retired in 1971, Murdo continued to live and work on the island and was recognised for his long service by Bórd Fáilte (the Irish Tourism Board) and by the United Dominions Trust who presented him with their Endeavour Award in 1982. Murdo, who was unmarried, died in 1983 at the age of 87.

One of the artworks in Murdo’s study, *Near Dubrovnik*, a watercolour by Lily Florence Waring (1877–1966), features Cypress trees – possibly Italian – like those found on the island. As well as being a suffragette, Waring was both an artist and writer, who exhibited in the Paris Salon and Beaux Arts Gallery in London. She was a member of the School of Slavonic and Eastern Studies at London University and wrote on the Balkans, a region dear to Roland’s heart. During the First World War, she received an Order of St Sava Fifth Class medal, a decoration of the Kingdom of Serbia, for valuable services rendered there; Roland too was in Serbia at this time.
Margaret O'Sullivan’s Bedroom

When Margaret O’Sullivan (1908–1999) first arrived at Garinish Island to work for the Bryce family in the 1920s, little did she think that she would spend her life here and eventually become mistress of the house! The youngest of 12 children of a farmer from Bocarnagh, three miles from Glengarriff on the mainland, she was a teenager when she went to work in place of her sister who had emigrated to the United States of America.

Margaret served as housekeeper first to Violet Bryce and later to her son Roland, forming with him and Murdo MacKenzie a remarkable friendship that was the key to the island’s reputation and success. Over the years, the well-known trio welcomed hundreds of native and foreign dignitaries, and thousands of sightseers.

During her lifetime, Margaret had the distinction of serving tea to almost all of the Irish presidents and was photographed with President Sean T. O’Kelly and his party in the 1940s.

After Roland’s death in 1953, Margaret continued to live and work at Ilnacullin as resident hostess, showing the same generous service to the Irish state as she had to the Bryces, charming everyone that she met with her easy manner.

Margaret’s bedroom provides a glimpse into the private world of this dedicated and quiet-spoken woman, known to most as Maggie. It contains some of her most treasured personal possessions such as her rosary beads, holy water and her picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus which had pride of place in the room. She was a ferociously independent woman by all accounts, rowing herself to the mainland in her own boat. Every Sunday, regardless of the weather, she rowed across to attend Mass there, accompanied by her dog!
As the island’s last permanent inhabitant, Margaret lived alone in the house during the 1980s and early 1990s, coping admirably with the challenges of island life. In 1992, she was honoured by Glengarriff Tourism and Development Association for her contribution to tourism in the locality. Margaret was unmarried and died in 1998.
The kitchen was the sole domain of Margaret O’Sullivan, who managed the house for more than sixty years. A call bell system of the type visible in this room was more typically found in the servants’ quarters of larger town and country houses; this house relied almost entirely on Margaret. Others assisted from time to time, particularly on special occasions, but it was she who generally did the cleaning, polishing – and entertaining. She shopped for food and provisions on the mainland, in Glengarriff or Bantry, selecting produce according to season and taking it back to the island by boat.

Writing an appreciation of his friend in 1980, Murdo MacKenzie noted that Margaret took everything in her stride and made everyone who visited feel at home. She taught herself how to cook and kept notebooks in which she wrote down recipes, remedies, cleaning tips and other housekeeping notes. She prepared homely meals for people at the highest levels of Irish society using the utensils, saucepans and ceramics on display.

The pantry contains several fine china tea
and dinner sets belonging to the Bryces, of which some may have come from their London house.

For many years, the island’s inhabitants relied on a small power plant that generated just 110 volts of electricity and barely met requirements. It was not until December 1952 that the island was connected to the full 220 volts electrical supply from the mainland by means of an overhead cable slung between pylons over 200 yards of water. There were fewer power outages thereafter!

Dining Room

The Bryces and their guests enjoyed relaxed breakfasts, lunches and dinners here with the French doors providing good light and a view to the terrace. The room houses an imposing fireplace with heavy entablature supported at each side by fluted tapering pilasters topped with carved lion-heads and moulded capitals, and terminating in carved paw-feet and a square plinth. It is likely that it was originally intended for the Bryces’ unrealised mansion near the Martello tower.

The table is laid with a very fine ‘Poppy’ ceramic set – one of several owned by the Bryces – alongside John Annan’s monogrammed napkins. Another set of fine china is stacked on the side board. The most remarkable items in this room however are the three Old Master drawings on the walls.

The first is a depiction of a battle scene, in charcoal, ink and sepia wash, attributed to Salvator Rosa (1615–1673). This picture originally hung at the Bryces’ London home, 35 Bryanston Square, but was auctioned off in 1923 along with the entire contents of the residence, including John Annan’s ‘valuable and famous’ collections. A label affixed to the rear indicates that it was purchased by B.H. Austin and returned to Roland in 1925. Other items from the London collection may
also have found their way back to the Bryces and into their collection at Ilnacullin.

The second work is a pencil, pen and ink wash picture of mythological figures or Olympian Gods by Abraham van Diepenbeeck (1596–1675). Although there is no indication that this work was sold at the auction at 35 Bryanston Square, it might have come from there as John Annan’s hand writing is visible on the reverse. The third Old Master work is a depiction of a Grand Tourist at the ruins of an Egyptian temple, an interesting watercolour of a collaborative nature attributed to Mauro Antonio Tesi (1730–1766) and Giambattista Tiepolo (1696–1770).
Terrace

This sheltered area beyond the Dining Room features two large marble urns sitting on rectangular stone pedestals. Both urns have wide lips with egg and dart ornamentation and two masks appear on each side of each container. Both pedestals are decorated with a wreath on one side.

Visible beyond the urns is a two-tiered, wall-mounted water fountain with arched backing of limestone and Carrara marble. Many of the marble treasures that make up the collection at Ilnacullin were supplied to the Bryces by Harold Peto, the designer of the island’s gardens. He was an admirer of the Italian Renaissance and collected antique artefacts on his travels to incorporate structure and form into his garden designs and create synergy between architecture and nature.

As a collector, Peto viewed antiquities as a ‘revelation of authenticity of the sacred nature of the object as originally crafted … and as artistic art objects’. Such objects are plentiful on the island and were utilised externally as well as internally. One of the most striking can be viewed on the patio: a carved marble wall plaque, probably Venetian, depicting a winged lion with one paw resting on an open book, on which the Latin inscription reads PAX TIBI MARCE, EVANGELISTA MEUS (Peace be with you, Mark, my evangelist). The lion is a recurring motif at Ilnacullin.
The symbiosis of architecture and nature espoused by Harold Peto was demonstrated well at his own house and garden at Iford Manor in England. In his *Boke of Iford* (compiled in 1917 and published posthumously), he described how cohesive it was to arrange architectural objects in a chronological manner from Roman to Romanesque to Gothic and Renaissance, ‘completing the cycle from the classic to the Renaissance’.

Peto’s approach is echoed here in the grouping of the Bryces’ collection of marbles in the staircase and on the first floor landing.

The first set piece in the staircase consists of two sections of concave marble frieze dating to around the twelfth or thirteenth century. The first section from an archivolt, or intrados of an arch, depicts the predecessors of Jesus Christ, with a bare-faced figure with a halo holding a quill in his right hand – possibly St Mathew, *imago hominis* – amidst foliage. The second section shows the central figure of Christ with halo in *orans* (praying hands extended) pose. Again, the concave form indicates that it came from an intrados or archivolt.

The second sequence dates from the thirteenth century and features a central ecclesiastical figure, crowned as a bishop, or more likely as a pope, holding a crosier in his left hand and his right hand raised in benediction, representing the power of the *sacerdotium* (ecclesiastical hierarchy). Framing this are a pair of thirteenth-century engaged barley twist columns of white crystalline Carrara marble from Northern Italy, which were once attached to a tomb, pulpit, altar, *cancelli* choir screen or rood screen. Above these sits a carved head of niche with a central rosette and cable border, a common detail in family chapels and decorated niche above statuary.

Hanging in pride of place at the top of the staircase are two oil paintings by the English artist, Ethel Wright (1886–1939): one is a portrait of John Annan Bryce, the other of his wife Violet. The label on the back of John Annan’s portrait states that it originally hung in the Royal Academy of Arts in London. Given the support demonstrated by the Bryce women for female suffrage, it is worth noting that although Wright was known as a society portrait painter, she was keen to highlight women’s skills and potential. Her painting of the militant Christabel Pankhurst, daughter of Emmeline, can be seen in the National Portrait Gallery in London.
First Floor Landing and Hallway

While the staircase features sculptural marbles from the Bryces’ collection that are strongly representative of the Romanesque period, both Gothic and Renaissance examples can be viewed on the first floor landing.

The first panel is of the Gothic period and depicts the Christian Annunciation Scene in a rectangular grey limestone plaque framed with a border. It portrays the angel Gabriel, kneeling to face the enthroned Virgin Mary, announcing that she will become the mother of Jesus, the Son of God. The inscription AVE MARIA GRATIA PLENA DOMINUS and an urn with lilies lie between the figures. The white lilies are symbolic of Mary’s purity while the urn is a symbol of containment and feminine purity, and of heaven.

The Renaissance piece, dated to the sixteenth century, is a roundel, one of Peto’s preferred motifs. This pale limestone roundel depicts the tilted head of a bearded man in high relief with a torch flanking the right side. The facial features suggest a comic gesture and the radiate headdress is that of a courtly figure of a supposed jester. The focus on the head as an image with the face in three quarter pose and eyes as mirror of the soul, was a primary motif in Renaissance sculpture.

The library on the landing is one of a number in the house and contains only some of the hundreds of books collected by the Bryces and Murdo MacKenzie. Distributed throughout the house are artworks received by Roland from several Irish women artists who spent time on the island. The painting in the hallway, entitled Hungry Hill, is by the Irish Olympic medal-winning artist Letitia Marion Hamilton (1878–1964). Born at Hamwood House, County Meath, Hamilton studied under William Orpen at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, as well as the Slade School of Fine Art in London. She exhibited with the Royal Hibernian Academy, of which she was a member, and with the Water Colour Society of Ireland. She was also a founding member of the Society of Dublin Painters along with Paul Henry and Jack Butler Yeats.

Hungry Hill is located on the Beara Peninsula, just across the bay from Garinish Island.
Bryce Curiosities Room

The Bryces were keen travellers who amassed an impressive collection of artworks, antiques and artefacts. The contents of this room evoke the travels and collecting interests of John Annan Bryce who spent many years working and travelling in Asia before returning to Britain in the 1880s as a director of several commercial investment, banking and railway companies.

Once he had completed his education in England, John Annan travelled to Rangoon, then capital of Burma (Myanmar), to pursue a career in commerce. He served on the Legislative Council of Burma and, later, was Chairman of the Rangoon Chamber of Commerce. As a senior figure in the influential Wallace Brothers firm he had regular contact with the British Secretary of State for India, Lord Randolph Henry Spencer-Churchill. He was also a council member of the Royal Geographical Society which published his paper ‘Burma: the country and people’ in 1886.

While in Burma, the adventurous John Annan made several expeditions into unknown regions of modern-day Thailand. Venturing where no European had gone before, he collected treasures in remote parts by standing in the centre of a village and calling upon the natives to produce their possessions for his inspection. Upon making his selection, he compensated them according to what he thought was fair.

The Bryces’ London home at was well known by art connoisseurs, museum representatives and society people as a treasure house of Italian paintings, antique Persian carpets, Dutch marquetry and rare furniture, Chinese, Burmese and Siamese bronzes, metal works and wood carvings, ivories, jewellery, tapestries, porcelain, glass, silver plate, books and curios.

The Bryces’ eclectic tastes and interests were also revealed at Ilnacullin. John Annan’s fascination with
the Far East is illustrated by the Burmese wooden statues, Chinese ceramics and Indian metals displayed. Although the London collection was sold after John Annan’s death in 1923, the Irish collection has remained as it was left by his son Roland in 1953. He added several artworks, including Beauty in the Rain, an exquisite Japanese ukiyo-e woodblock print by Kitagawa Utamaro (1753–1806) which he received as a Christmas gift in 1930.

**John Annan Bryce and Harold Peto Room**

This room celebrates the collaboration between John Annan Bryce and Harold Peto that resulted in the creation of one of Ireland’s most beautiful and important island gardens.

Harold Ainsworth Peto (1854–1933) was a leading Edwardian landscape architect and garden designer. He was the son of a prosperous builder, engineer and railway-contractor and spent his childhood at Somerleyton Hall in Lowestoft, Suffolk, England. In partnership with the architect Ernest George he designed houses in Kensington and Chelsea, as well as a number of country houses. In 1883, he became a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).

Like the Bryces, Peto travelled extensively and kept diaries recording his travels to Europe, the United States of America and Japan in the 1880s and 1890s. He enjoyed an illustrious career as a garden designer and had several ongoing commissions including the
gardens at Buscot Park and West Dean in England and Isola Bella in the French Rivera. From 1899 he also worked on his own house and garden at Iford Manor, Wiltshire, which provided him with the ideal landscape setting for experimenting with new design concepts, particularly the incorporation of artefacts collected during his travels.

Peto was known to the Bryces for some years before they acquired Garinish Island. In 1905 – possibly while searching for a suitable Irish retreat – John Annan had taken him to visit a number of gardens in County Cork, including those at Fota. Five years later he commissioned Peto to help him to transform his rugged outcrop into an exuberant island, complete with an extravagant mansion and extensive gardens.

Between 1911 and 1914, more than 100 local men were employed in realising Peto’s Arts and Crafts style garden scheme: moving soil, blasting rocks, planting trees, laying paths, as well as building a walled garden and a tall clock tower. The outstanding feature was the Italian garden, a formal architectural garden set in a naturalistic Robinsonian context, with vistas and views of the dramatic mountain scenery on the mainland and of the sea. Structured design elements included a colonnade screen, a temple, flights of steps, a sunken garden,
open pavilions, and a Casita, or small house, built of Bath stone.

A main formal axis linked the Italianate garden, Casita, formal lawn and walled garden. Parallel to this was an informal garden running from the Grecian Temple through the ‘Happy Valley’, a grass glade lined with plantings, up a rocky outcrop to the Martello tower. The two axes are linked at each end, and centrally through glades, bog gardens and The Jungle with its tree ferns. The garden scheme at Garinish Island is a stunning example of Peto’s methodology, combining planting with architecture and antiquities, but it is also testament to John Annan’s vision.

John Annan had a keen interest in horticulture, as had his father, and was convinced that a range of exotic plants could thrive on the island. He reported to his brother James in January 1911 that winters there were mild, the weather ‘sometimes warmer than in summer. The winter colouring has more variety... so many are the exquisite shades of red... brown and green.’ The mild micro-climate of Glengarriff harbour, owing to the warming oceanic influence of the Gulf Stream, allowed him to introduce ornamental plants from India, China and other places that he had travelled – as documented in his notebooks on display in this room.

Also on display are the plans for the Bryces’ new mansion designed in collaboration with Belfast architects Young and Mackenzie; Robert Young was John Annan’s first cousin. Intended to rival nearby properties like Bantry House, the mansion was to stand on the island’s highest point, incorporating a mix of elements, the obsolete Martello tower and a wide array of sculptural treasures. The house was never constructed on account of the outbreak of the First World War and financial difficulty on John Annan’s part.

Much of the statuary intended for use in the mansion was utilised instead within the gardener’s cottage, the Bryces’ residence from the 1920s. Above the fireplace in this room is a square plaque of Carrara marble, portraying the dual motif of rampant lion and part of a heraldic coat of arms, which dates to the sixteenth century. This and the many other artefacts on the island – statues, vases, fountains, iron gates and a spectacular marble sarcophagus – reflect the connoisseurship of Peto and of the Bryces.

Opposite: Architectural drawings by Harold Peto
The photographs in the room show John Annan and Violet’s four cherished children: Roland L’Estrange, Nigel Erskine, Margaret Vincentia (Margery) and Rosalind Violet (Tiny). In their youth, they travelled with their parents to Glengarriff where their mother encouraged them to participate in the local community.

Margery came to the attention of the press after making her début in society in 1909. Like her mother, she held strong views on female suffrage, siding against both her father and uncle. In 1911, she made news by leading a great procession of women suffragists through London, dressed as Joan of Arc, on horseback. It is tempting to speculate that she may have provided some inspiration to the playwright George Bernard Shaw who visited Garinish Island while writing *Saint Joan* a decade later. Margery herself loved to act and appeared in several plays and films.

Margery’s photograph albums and scrapbooks, held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, show that she was adventurous, sharing the Bryce men’s penchant for travel and mountaineering. They also contain sketches and images of friends and relatives at social gatherings in London, sometimes in fancy dress. Some of the most poignant images are of Nigel, a bright young man, who died in 1910, aged just 17 years. The previous year at Eton, he had composed 9 verses dedicated to his
Roland L’Estrange Bryce's Bedroom

The contents of this room represent the life and times of Roland L’Estrange Bryce, eldest son of John Annan and Violet. Although he spent his formative years in England, Roland was proud of his Irish connections and visited Glengarriff annually with his parents, helping them to promote the locality.

Roland was educated at Lambrook, Eton and Oxford and went on to have a distinguished career as a diplomat with the British Foreign Office. He travelled the world and was the Times (London) correspondent in Belgrade, Serbia, during the First World War. He held diplomatic posts in the West Indies, Austria and Serbia where he was responsible for settling the boundaries of that country and of Yugoslavia. He might have been expected to follow in the political footsteps of his father and uncle but, as his friend Patrick Buchan-Hepburn, M.P., noted in 1953: ‘a combination of physical handicap [poor eyesight] and material circumstances, which meant always a constant struggle and of which only a very few were aware, conspired to build a wall of difficulty around him.’

Thus, he retired to Ilnacullin to assist his widowed mother with the upkeep of the gardens. Like his father, Roland was an avid amateur botanist and worked hard, under the direction of the head gardener, Murdo

mother, entitled *Glengarriff and Garnish* [sic], which were later printed by the family for private circulation. Rosalind was the only one of the Bryce siblings to marry. She wed Algernon James Riccarton Tudor-Craig at Christ Church, Mayfair in London in 1923. Given that the bride was still in deep mourning after the death of her father, no reception was held after the wedding ceremony. The Tudor-Craigs had two sons: James Algernon Nigel and Michael L’Estrange.

There are interesting artworks by two Irish women artists in this room. The first is an untitled watercolour attributed to Rosalie Franks, a Dublin painter who exhibited with the Watercolour Society of Ireland, and a friend of the Bryce family. She stayed on the island, is listed in address books belonging to Violet and Roland and there are two more signed works by her in the collection. The scene in this painting is similar to the one by AE (George Russell) in Violet’s bedroom.

The second, *Cyclamen*, is a gouache painting by Sylvia Cooke-Collis (1900–1972). Cooke-Collis was born in Glanmire and raised at Annes Grove, County Cork. She studied under Mainie Jellett in Dublin, with whom she became friends, after attending the Cork School of Art. Her work is featured in the Crawford Art Gallery, Cork, the Ulster Museum, Belfast, and Greyfriars Municipal Art Gallery, Waterford. A member of the Dublin Painters Society, Cooke-Collis presented works to Roland after staying on the island.
MacKenzie, to develop the gardens John Annan had created. In 1946, he was awarded a Gold Medal by the Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland in recognition of his efforts.

In the years after his mother’s passing, Roland extended the cottage and upgraded the outbuildings, a construction project that continued through much of the Second World War and cost more than £5,000. W. J. Barker, the Managing Director of British Knapen Ltd, experts in the cure of damp and dry rot who carried out work at the Casita pavilion in 1940, saw the island as ‘Peace on Earth’ against the horror of war, ‘two opposites that seem incredible’.

Photographs of Roland show him to have been a big, broad-shouldered man with red hair and bushy eyebrows above his distinctive scholarly spectacles. He liked to smoke tobacco as his selection of monogrammed cigarette cases, lighters and ashtrays reveal. He also enjoyed golfing and was President of the Glengarriff Golf Club. He continued to travel and was fond of Africa, writing to Margaret O’Sullivan from Sudan in 1949.

He also added several works to his parents’ art collection. The ink drawing in this room, *Man with a plumed hat*, has been attributed to the Italian Baroque painter Giovanni Guercino (1591–1666). Guercino painted few portraits of identified sitters but he did produce several studies of the human figure, like this sleeping figure, aiming to create character types that could be used as templates in different compositions.

Roland’s real triumph was one of personality and he had many literary, artistic and political friends. After the establishment of the office of President of Ireland in 1937, and during the inaugural presidency of his friend Dr Douglas Hyde, Roland initiated informal discussions proposing to bequeath Ilnacullin to the state. Letters in the Bryce archive, sent to and from this house, show his efforts to secure state custodianship for his beloved island. The government was initially unwilling to accept responsibility for the property because of concerns about its financial viability, but later accepted the bequest.

Roland, who was unmarried, died in 1953 at the age of 64 and was laid to rest in Bantry Abbey Cemetery.
When John Annan Bryce, M.P., purchased Garinish Island in 1910, his elder brother James was British Ambassador to the United States of America and one of the most respected statesmen of the early twentieth century.

The brothers were born in Belfast, County Antrim. They inherited a love of nature, mountain climbing and travel from their father who was a schoolmaster and Fellow of the Geological Societies of Dublin and London. In the 1840s, the Bryces moved from Belfast to Glasgow, where James and John Annan attended secondary school and university. Both men also studied at Oxford where James later became Regius Professor of Civil Law. In this capacity, he presented honorary degrees conferred by the university: the animal painter and sculptor, Sir Edwin Landseer, was a recipient in 1870. A brass plaque on the mahogany writing bureau displayed in this room reads: THIS TABLE BELONGED TO LANDSEER.

The library shelves are full of publications on various topics including several by James who was a very prolific writer. His book, *The Holy Roman Empire* (1864), established his international reputation as a legal historian while his classic study of American political
institutions, *The American Commonwealth* (1888), won him many friends in political, educational and literary circles. A close friend and advisor of British Prime Minister William E. Gladstone, he entered politics in 1880, sitting as a Liberal Party member in the House of Commons. His intellectual distinction made him a valuable asset and he held a number of prominent cabinet posts. After serving as Chief Secretary for Ireland (1905–1906), he was sent in 1907 to Washington D.C. where he was a tremendously successful ambassador.

James was popular with the American public and responsible for improving diplomatic relations between the U.S.A., Britain and Canada, a key aim of the Sulgrave Institution, of which he was a member. After he retired as ambassador in 1913, he was given the title Viscount Bryce and appointed to the International Court of Arbitration at The Hague, Netherlands. He reported on German atrocities in Belgium during the First World War as well as the Armenian genocide in the Ottoman Empire and he advocated the establishment of the League of Nations. His *Modern Democracies* was published in 1921 and, the same year, in his last speech in the House of Lords, he urged the adoption of the treaty that established the Irish Free State.

The solemn portrait, painted in oil by the French artist, Auguste Joseph Delécluse (1855–1928), belies James's boundless energy. He travelled extensively and received honours and awards around the world, including degrees from 31 universities, of which 15 were in the U.S.A. The Sulgrave Institution recognised his continued endeavours ‘in the cause of friendship among English speaking peoples and as between them and all other people of good will’ with a lavish testimonial dinner in New York City in 1921.

King George V counted James as a friend and, after his death in 1922, sent condolences to his widow, Marion, Viscountess Bryce, stating that he had been ‘a trusted counsellor to whom I could always turn’. Commemorative busts were installed in the Trinity Church in New York and in the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington D.C. where Bryce Park was also dedicated to his memory by Princess Margaret (sister of Queen Elizabeth II) in 1965.
Violet L'Estrange Bryce's Bedroom

The monogrammed items in this room belonged to Violet L'Estrange, the London society lady of Irish ancestry who married John Annan Bryce in 1888. Though born in Mauritius where her father was a British army officer, Violet always felt at home in Ireland and became attached to Glengarriff after first visiting with her celebrated cousins, Constance and Eva Gore-Booth of Lissadell, County Sligo.

After the Bryces purchased Garinish Island in 1910, John Annan set about planning a house and gardens while Violet set about promoting Glengarriff in an attempt to stimulate the local economy. She also established the Glengarriff Agricultural and Industrial show, using her political connections to garner government advice and financial assistance. A strong-willed and outspoken woman, Violet supported women's suffrage, siding against her husband and her brother-in-law, the British ambassador at Washington, on the issue. Her daughter Margery was also a prominent suffragette and, owing to their connections, both women made headlines in the English and American press.

With construction work continuing on the island for most of the 1910s, the Bryces rented properties when they visited Glengarriff. They leased the Eccles Hotel for a number of years and, during the First World War, Violet ran it as Queen Alexandra's Home of Rest for Officers, the first convalescent home for army officers in Ireland. She also spent some months working with the French army at Compiegne and reportedly had the band of the Irish Guards sent to Ireland to improve enlistment in the British army.

Despite coming from a British military family, Violet identified with the local community during the Irish War of Independence, supporting Irish nationalism and condemning the reprisal activities of British government forces, known locally as the 'Black and
Tans’. In October 1920, she was invited to address a meeting in Wales on the subject of reprisals in Ireland but was arrested by British authorities at Holyhead and deported to Ireland. She was detained in a Dublin prison for several hours before being released without charge. John Annan expressed his outrage at the unlawful treatment of his wife in a letter published in the *Times* (London). The incident was covered in many international newspapers and questions were also raised in the House of Commons.

After the death of her husband in 1923, and subsequent disposal of their London property, Violet retired to her island retreat. The peace and beauty of the place attracted friends who were prominent figures in the Irish literary and cultural revival that accompanied the Home Rule movement of the early twentieth century. One such friend was AE, the painter, poet, playwright, journalist, editor, critic and mystic George Russell (1867–1935), who stayed on the island in the summer of 1923. Violet’s diary records that she picked wild strawberries for him in the rock garden by the Casita while he painted the view, hanging in this room, of the glade known as Happy Valley.

Over the decades, Violet wrote several profile-raising articles in newspapers and society magazines extolling the natural scenery and amusements of Glengarriff and Garinish Island and vying to have County Cork recognised as ‘Ireland’s Riviera’.

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**Murdo MacKenzie’s Bedroom**

Head gardener Murdo MacKenzie was born the son of a gardener in Forres, Scotland, in 1896. He saw active service in the First World War with the Seaforth Highlanders and later became a forester at the Darnaway Estate in Morayshire. He came to Garinish Island after responding to an advertisement placed in the *Gardener’s Chronicle* by Violet; it was a coincidence that her late husband had been MacKenzie’s local M.P.

During the 1920s, it became necessary for the Bryces to consider the island gardens as a commercial venture by opening them to the public. However, the gardens by then had become neglected and strong winds had damaged much of John Annan’s early planting. Murdo
successfully guided the restoration of the gardens, establishing shelter belts of Scots and Monterey pine and developing the splendid collection of rare plants for which the island is now famous.

Violet and her son Roland relied heavily on Murdo’s expertise and together they turned the gardens into one of the great success stories of Irish horticulture. Murdo – known as Mac to his friends – and the housekeeper Margaret were given lifetime use of the house by the Bryces and they both lived there after they were officially retired.

Above the fireplace hangs a wonderful watercolour, Reflections, Garnish Island, Glengarriff, 1943, by Cork artist and Bryce family friend, George R.S. Penefather (1905–1967). Originally exhibited in the Royal Hibernian Academy, the painting features the pond with the statue of Mercury in the Italianate garden, and the Casita in the background. Penefather also has a watercolour painting, Pond and Trees, Reflections, Glengarriff, dated 1945, in the Crawford Art Gallery in Cork.

Drawing Room

In the early 1900s, 35 Bryanston Square, the Bryces’ magnificent London home was known as a Liberal Party stronghold, and meeting place for high society figures. Though described as a ‘medium-sized town house’, the London property leased by the Bryces was much larger than their cottage on Garinish Island. It had 9-10 bedrooms, a bathroom, boudoir, library, dining room and a ballroom. The house had telephones, a service lift and central heating as well as a garage with rooms over at the rear. The vivacious Violet hosted dinners, balls, charity concerts and lectures in connecting reception rooms on the ground floor which were lavishly decorated in the Renaissance style.

In 1905, members of the British royal family attended a concert held there in aid of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Prince Bariatinsky of Russia was reported there in
1911, presiding over two landmark lectures delivered by Monsieur C. Bouvier of the Académie Française on ‘La Femme’ – Bouvier contended that it was necessary that the laws and customs affecting women in Europe should be reformed. Nonetheless, Violet held house parties for her daughters to mark their ‘coming out’ in society and encourage encounters with potential suitors; dates fixed for dances during the season were published in the newspapers. Rosalind made her début at a ball given by her mother in May 1912. The Times (London) reported: ‘A large number of guests were present and many dinners were given. The decorations consisted of pink sweet peas and arches of pink rambler roses.’

After the First World War, the demise of their finances and eventual disposal of their London home and its contents in 1923, the Bryces entertained extensively in Ireland. With tennis parties in the summer and bridge parties in the winter, the Bryces almost always had guests staying in the house or in the Casita. Afternoon tea was taken at the Casita when guests were playing tennis, or at the ‘look out’ through the French doors of the Drawing Room.

In the evenings, guests retired to this large, bright room with its comfortable sofas, mahogany side tables, books and artefacts. Strains of music drifted across the room from the square wooden gramophone but there was no designated ballroom as in the London house. The decoration of this room was modest too. Among the artworks in the room are two lovely pencil and crayon drawings by the English artist, Edward Lear (1818–1888): The Himalayas near Nakunda and Kinchinjunga from Darjeeling. These works were in keeping with the interests and travels of Roland’s father while his uncle James’s monogrammed linen table napkins can be seen alongside the Hammersley and Co. china tea set with the pale yellow border.

A browse through the Garinish Island visitors’ books reveals an interesting array of famous guests over the decades, many prominent in cultural and political life. From the 1920s, the Bryces received literary figures like AE (George Russell), Padraic Colum and George Bernard Shaw – who won a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1925 and an Oscar (Academy Award) for his work on the film Pygmalion in 1938 – as well as Irish presidents and high-ranking politicians.

One of the most notable visitors at Ilnacullin was Roland’s friend, Dr Douglas Hyde, who served as the first President of Ireland from 1938 to 1945. As an Irish language speaker, he conversed freely with Roland’s housekeeper, Margaret O’Sullivan, as Gaeilge, an experience she was pleased to recall in the early 1990s. Hyde was a leading figure in the Gaelic literary revival and wrote under the pseudonym An Craoibhín Aoibhinn (the delightful little branch). He sent many of his writings to Roland and the library contains specially autographed first editions of works like Songs of St Columcille, The Children of Lir and Deirdre.
Outer Entrance Hall

The lithograph prints, after Sir William Nicholson (1872–1949), depict the social and political world of the Bryces at the turn of the twentieth century. One of the most important figures in their circle was William E. Gladstone (1809–1898), a Liberal Party politician who served as British Prime Minister on four separate occasions. John Annan’s illustrious brother James was one of Gladstone’s closest advisors, serving as his Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and as a member of his last cabinet. Though a passionate Liberal, James was reluctant in his support of Home Rule for Ireland, warning Gladstone of the opposition he would encounter from Liberal Presbyterians in Ulster.

Despite his brother’s prominence from the 1880s, John Annan did not enter politics until the early 1900s. He was elected in 1906 as a Liberal M.P. for Inverness Burghs, Scotland, and served for a time on the Royal Commission on land congestion in Ireland. He successfully held his parliamentary seat for twelve years, occasionally visiting key towns in his constituency – Inverness, Fortrose, Forres and Nairn – to report on his stewardship and, as would be expected, to rally votes in advance of election contests.

Gladstone’s picture hangs alongside depictions of Queen Victoria, the Prince of Wales and Prince Otto van Bismarck, the English writer Rudyard Kipling,
the American artist James McNeill Whistler, the High Court judge Sir Henry Hawkins, the military commander Lord Roberts and the imperialist Cecil Rhodes. There are also a number of photographs of Gladstone in the Bryces’ collection.

In conserving the Bryces’ collections, and presenting the house as it was when the last owners lived there, the Office of Public Works has begun the work of researching the lives of the people who created, developed and cared for this unique place. Not only has the research shed light on an interesting family and period of history, the archival material collated will be a valuable aid to future planning for Inacullin in order that the island gardens can be enjoyed and understood better by present and future generations.

Opposite: William E. Gladstone, lithograph print, after Sir William Nicholson
There is a bay, girt round by mountains wild,
And wooded to the very margin of the shore,
Where boulders lie upon each other piled,
Which from the heights some ancient glacier bore.

Out in the middle of this bay, so dear
To me and mine, a rugged Island lies,
With grassy slopes beset with boulders; there
A Castle stands – the apple of our eyes.

… … …

The storm has passed – the wind now gently lulls
The waves, so lately on destruction bent,
Firm Garnish stands, while round it sweep the gulls,
Magnificent in every element.

- Extracts from *Glengarriff and Garnish* [sic] by Nigel Erskine Bryce, Eton, 4 December 1909.