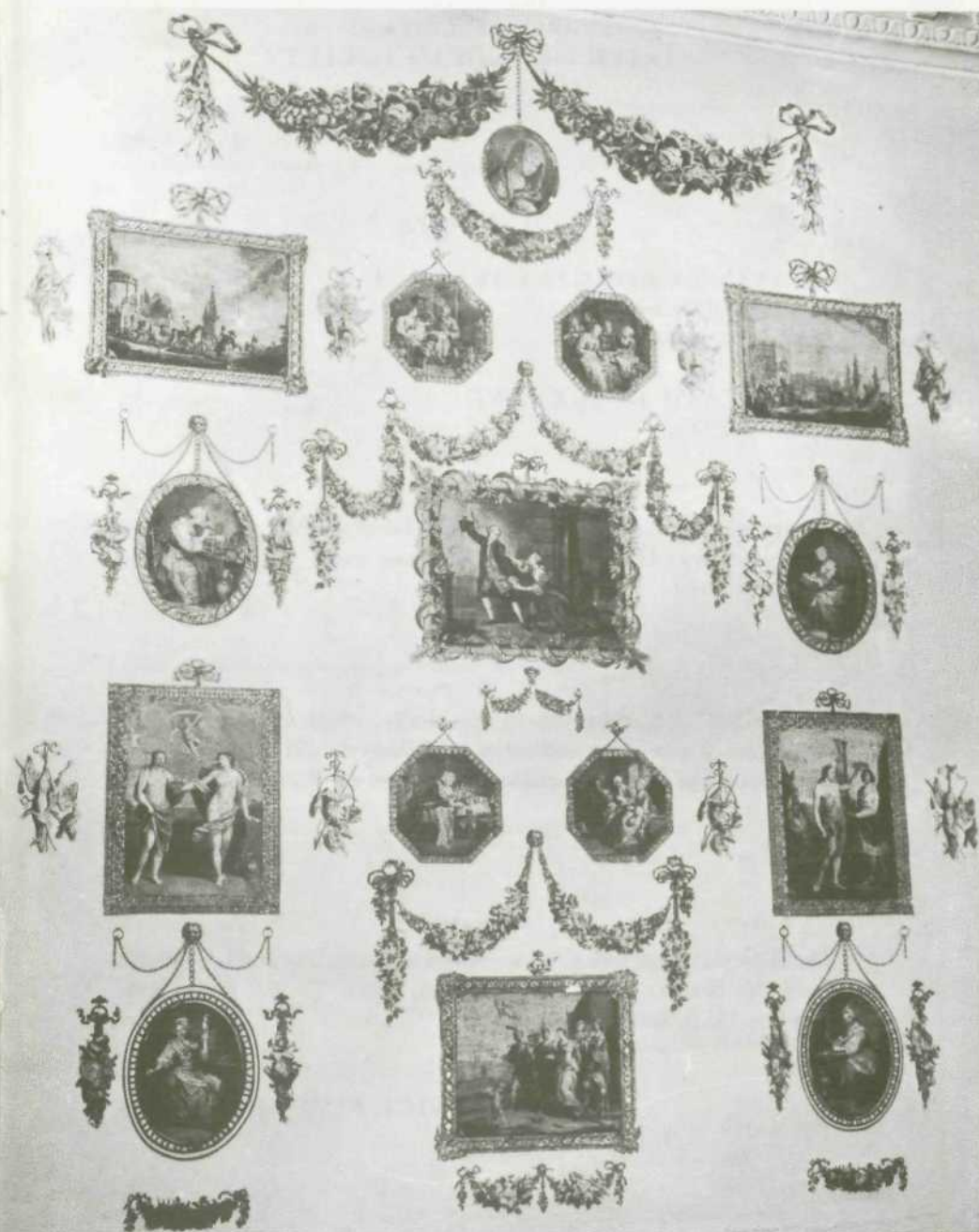


IRISH GEORGIAN SOCIETY



April-June 1965

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IRISH GEORGIAN SOCIETY

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The cover is a photograph by Lucinda Lambton of the Print Room at Castletown, Co. Kildare, which was made by Lady Louisa Conolly c. 1770.

Application for membership (£1 annually, which entitles members to lectures, expeditions and other functions) should be made to the Irish Georgian Society, Leixlip Castle, County Kildare.

The Bulletin is sent free to all members of the society and is available from the Society and all booksellers, price £1 for four issues, post free (U.S. subscription \$3).

PRICE FIVE SHILLINGS

VISITING GEORGIAN IRELAND

by Desmond Guinness

Southern Ireland is probably the last country in Europe that has not really begun to open its great houses to the visitor (except at Westport and Bantry). There are a number of reasons for this; firstly there is no house of the size of Blenheim where the family can continue to live in privacy while thousands of visitors are admitted at the same time. Secondly, there is no official encouragement from our government, nor have we a powerful National Trust as yet to help the 'stranded gentry'. It might be a means of preserving some of our best houses and castles for the future, as well as spreading the tourist load to different parts of the country, if some such scheme were started. A friend of mine who owns a lovely house not far from Dublin once remarked that it was strange he **never** had callers asking to see it, especially as it was visible from the road. I replied "If you put the 'No Admission' sign in Irish, you might get a few more".

A **few** country houses can be visited in Ireland, and as so many people ask what *can* they see I am listing them here **for** the convenience of our members. I have also included some of the less obvious buildings to see in Dublin.

Powerscourt, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow (Plate i) has really no place here, as the house is not open to the public, but the entrance façade alone is worth the pilgrimage. The thing is to pretend to want to see the garden, which is open from Easter to October, daily 10 a.m.-5.30 p.m., at 2/6 (teas). The house was built by Richard Castle in 1731 for the 1st Viscount Powerscourt, and is in lovely country 12 miles from Dublin.

Travelling north from Dublin, Mrs. Pyke-Fortescue at Stephentown House, Dundalk, opens her Georgian house to the public from the middle of May to the end of September from 3-6 p.m.





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on Thursdays and Fridays, for 2/6. It contains family portraits, chandeliers, etc.

The North of Ireland has an excellent National Trust, which owns several great country houses as well as areas of scenic beauty. Continuing your journey north, you find Derrymore House, Co. Armagh, a thatched 18th Century Manor house $\frac{1}{2}$ miles Northwest of Newry, which is open from 2-6 p.m. Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, from April to October (1/6).

Address House, 7 miles west of Portadown in Co. Armagh, is a Georgian house with fine plasterwork and pictures, open April-September Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, and from May-September on Sundays also from 2.30 to 5.30 p.m. (2/-).

To the east is Castleward, Strangford, Co. Down which has one classical (Plate 2) and one Gothick front because Lord and Lady Bangor, who built it in 1765, could not agree as to the style—the interior also reflects their opposing tastes (their marriage did not last long). Castleward is open from April to September on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 2-5.30 p.m. (2/6). The demesne is open every day.

The Mussenden Temple is perched on a cliff four miles west of Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, and was built by the Earl of Bristol, Bishop of Deny, in 1783, (Plate 3). It is open daily; apply for the key at the Bishop's Gate lodge.

Springhill, one mile south-east of Moneymore, Co. Londonderry, is basically a 17th Century manor house, open from April-September on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and from May-September on Sundays also, from 2.30-5.30 p.m. (2/6).

Castlecoole, $\frac{1}{2}$ miles south-east of Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh was built in 1789 for the 1st Earl of Belmore by James Wyatt, and is set in a magnificent park (Plate 4). It is open from April-September on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, and from May-September on Sundays also, from 2.30-5.30 p.m. (2/6). In contrast to Wyatt's restrained Grecian taste Florence Court (Plate 5), 7 miles south-west of Enniskillen, contains rich rococo plasterwork of c. 1750. It is open at the same times and on the same days as it's neighbour, Castlecoole.

Returning southwards across the border, there is Westport



House, Westport, Co. Mayo (Plate 6), which belongs to the Marquess of Sligo. Westport was designed by Richard **Castle** in 1731, and built over the dungeons of Grania **O'Malley**, the Pirate **Queen** from whom Lord Sligo descends. There are additions by **Thomas** Ivory, and a magnificent collection of Irish pictures, furniture, silver etc. Open April—September from 2-6 p.m. daily (3/6) (Teas).

Bunratty Castle, 7 miles north-west of Limerick, has been roofed and restored to house Viscount **Gort's** collection of **medieval** furniture, tapestries etc. It is open daily April-September from 10 a.m.-8 p.m. and **the** rest of the year from 10-5.30 (3/6). It is said to give an excellent picture of 15th and 16th century life in Ireland.

Bantry House, Banlry, Co. Cork is open from April to mid-October, Mondays and Thursdays 10 am.—1 p.m., Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays 3—6 p.m. (5/-)- One of the most fascinating houses, beautifully situated, it contains the Earl of Bantry's collection of tapestries, furniture etc. Grounds open daily (1/6) except Sundays.

Riverstown House, Glanmire, Co. Cork, which was built by Jemmett Browne, Bishop of Cork, in 1745, contains a room with magnificent Francini plasterwork (Plate 7). Restored in 1965 by the Irish Georgian Society, it will be open from May to September this year from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. (2/6) by kind permission of Mr. John Dooley. Riverstown House (Tel. Glanmire 821205) is only 300 yards from the main Cork-Dublin road, 4 miles from **Cork**,

DUBLIN

I would like to add a few of the most interesting and less well-known things to see in Dublin, for the benefit of our overseas members. The most perfect furnished interior is that of the former House of Lords (Plate 8) in the Bank of Ireland, College Green. Dating from 1730, it contains two tapestries woven in Dublin by "Jan van Beaver, ye tapestry weaver" in 1735, depicting the Battle of the Boyne and the Siege of Derry. There is a superb Waterford chandelier, and a statue of George **III** by Bacon. It may be visited during banking hours (10 a.m.-12.30 p.m., **1.30—3** p.m.) EXCEPT in



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March, April, September and October, on application to one of the uniformed porters.

The College of Heralds, where ancestry can be traced, forms part of the Dublin Castle courtyard (Plate 9). A lovely building dating from the 1750s, it houses the heraldic museum which is open from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. and 2.30—4.30 p.m. from Monday to Friday.

St. Werburgh's Church, (1759) near Christ Church Cathedral is the most perfect Georgian Church in Dublin, and has recently been well restored. Being in a poor Parish, it has avoided nineteenth-century stained glass gloom and preserves the cheerful atmosphere of an assembly room. To gain access, go down the street to the left of the church, through a passage in a house to the right and enter by a side door. The church is open 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Marsh's Library, next to St. Patrick's Cathedral, is the oldest public library in Ireland (1707). The original carved oak book-cases and musty atmosphere are entrancing, and the decorative cages, where readers were locked in to prevent pilfering, still survive. It is open to the public on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 10.30 a.m.-12.30 p.m.

On Sundays, from 3-5 p.m., tours are taken round Kilmainham Gaol, which is being restored as a national shrine by a voluntary committee (1/—). Nearly all the famous men in the struggle for Irish nationhood were imprisoned here; Emmett, Parnell, Lemass, de Valera, and Sean T. O'Kelly to name but a few. The building is as grim and dramatic as its history.

The best rococo plasterwork in Dublin is the ceiling by Cramillion of the Rotunda Hospital Chapel (1751), open at all reasonable times. Go to the front door of the hospital in Parnell Street, push it open (there is no bell) and mount the stairs: the Chapel is directly over the front door. The light switches are in the passage to the right of the Chapel door, and a car key or sharp object is needed to switch them on. If in difficulties, call to the Lady Superintendent's office, and she will arrange to have the light switched on. The stained glass windows that make the Chapel dark are, of course, a recent addition.

The Marino Casino, (Plate 10) in the grounds of the O'Brien Institute, Griffith Avenue, Clontarf, was designed as an elaborate



garden pavilion by Sir William Chambers for the "Volunteer" Earl of Charlemont. The only non-functional eighteenth-century building maintained by the State, the interior has yet to be restored but its quality is superb, matched only by the perfection of the stone lions and chimneys (Plate 11). Obtain the key from Mr. Draper, the caretaker, who lives in the lodge of the next entrance beyond that of the O'Brien Institute, on the way towards Malahide, along Griffith Avenue.

Dublin is best explored by night, when marvellous plaster ceilings will come to life in the most surprising places, and when the giant grey stone buildings are asleep. Then you can feel the spirit of the eighteenth century, as faithfully as in a Malton print.

JOHN NASH IN IRELAND

by Terence Davis

*"Augustus at Rome was for building renown'd
And of marble he left what of brick he had found;
Rut is not our Nash, too, a very great master?—
He finds us all brick and he leaves us all plaster."*

(Quarterly Review, 1826)

There is scarcely a shred of mystery about Nash the architect. We can examine his plaster palaces in Regent's Park, his remaining country houses, cottages and public buildings. But of Nash the untiring traveller we know very little and we can only guess how many of his far-flung sites he visited personally. In England these sites stretch from Co. Durham in the north to Cornwall in the south and their positions make them the most impressive triangle if London is taken as its eastern apex. The triangle is dotted with his buildings in Devonshire, Monmouthshire, Herefordshire, Gloucestershire, Cheshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Middlesex and is fringed by many others in Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire and Lancashire on the west and Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight on the south. We can assume that Nash spent much time travelling to and from these widely scattered sites up to about 1812, by which time he was irrevocably swamped by the challenge of re-developing the West End of London for George IV.

But we have forgotten Ireland and the great mansions he raised in the counties of Antrim, Tyrone, Galway, Roscommon and Tipperary. Together they form a précis of the English works. They comprise four Gothic castles, three Classical houses and lavish Classical alterations and additions to Caledon, Co. Tyrone. Unfortunately Nash's diaries were destroyed upon his death—all



except the last volume in which he described his failing health and last few days of life at East Cowes Castle. Doubtless the other volumes contained day-by-day accounts of his visits to clients over distant parts of the British Isles, but how much time he spent in Ireland may never be known. His work there belongs to the comparatively carefree years when, for a time in partnership with Humphry Repton, he enjoyed the patronage of the newly landed gentry before finally forsaking country houses for the richer fields of royal favour in London. Perhaps Shanbally Castle in Co. Tipperary represents Nash's last design for a great country house.

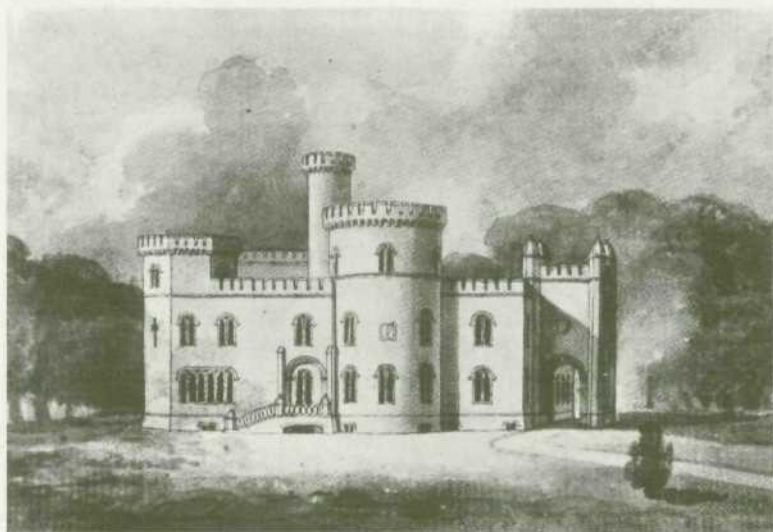
Shanbally Castle (No. i) can be dated about 1812 and was Nash's largest Gothic house in Ireland, rivalled even in England only by a more forbidding pile—Ravensworth in Co. Durham. Great ranges of Gothic windows linked castellated towers at each end of the south front and the interior contained well-detailed Gothic rooms with plasterwork of considerable refinement. The original plans (undated) are preserved at the R.I.B.A. library and a note in George Repton's hand states that the plans were a gift from his father, Humphry. The house has now been almost entirely demolished.

The most romantically sited of all the Gothic houses is Lough Cutra Castle, set high above the tree-fringed lake and commanding magnificent views of the surrounding countryside (No. 2). The building was entrusted to James Paine, and Lough Cutra was much enlarged in 1856 by Lord Gough, who had bought it from Nash's client, the first Lord Gort. The additions were heavy and ill-proportioned and turned a neat and successful composition into an unwieldy and rambling one. The interior, which has been neglected for many years, is entirely Gothic, in contrast to several of Nash's Gothic houses which contained Classical detail. The present Lord Gort. has recently bought back Lough Cutra, 100 years after it had left his family.

The least pleasing of the Gothic essays was Kilwaughter Castle in Co. Antrim—a melancholy addition to an existing seventeenth-century castle (No. 3). Its drab, cement-rendered walls contained some interesting rooms (one circular) but the detailing was poor and **the total effect** could have been little more than an exercise in Gothic gloom. The whole fabric is now disintegrating.



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Killymoon Castle, Co. Tyrone, is best remembered by George Repton's drawing which shows the haunting moonlit composition almost exactly as it was executed at the turn of the century (No. 4). The drawing suggests a pale-plastered composition of curved and flat surfaces with every window arched and every tower and wall castellated. This ideal was lost in reality and the small stones used give a much tougher look to the Saxon composition (No. 5). The plan is ingenious and one which Nash used in various forms elsewhere, containing rooms of elliptical, octagonal and square shapes. Killymoon cost £80,000 to build, was sold some years ago for £200 and **survives** in good condition.

In **contrast** 10 the feudal splendour of Killymoon, one of Nash's two considerable Irish monuments in Classical style is the Ionic garden front at Caledon, Co. Tyrone (No. 6). This is an ingenious re-modelling for the Earl of Caledon of an earlier house by Thomas Cooley. By the addition in 1794 of a coupled Ionic colonnade terminating in restrained domed pavilions, Nash lent a metropolitan air to this remote Irish house.

Farther south lay another splendid Classical mansion, Rockingham in Co. Roscommon, designed for Lord Lorton of Boyle in 1810 (No. 7). Nash borrowed motifs and features from earlier compositions—sphinxes from Southgate Grove, a solid dome from Casina at Dulwich and an Ionic colonnade from Witley Court; the result was one of his most imposing classical compositions. The house was mutilated beyond recognition only twelve years after completion by the addition of an extra storey and the removal of the dome. Two disastrous fires subsequently damaged the house which is now a ruin.

Lissan Rectory, Co. Derry (No. 8) was built in 1807 and is a modest offspring of Italianate Cronkhill in Shropshire (No. 9). In both these compositions a round tower is an important feature and a colonnade with chamfered columns claims the south front. These elements are less well manipulated at Lissan and the round tower is **banished** to the end of an office corridor away from the main block. But the building has great charm and, with the exception of an unexecuted design for the Dowager Lady Longford, is the only Italianate composition by Nash in Ireland.



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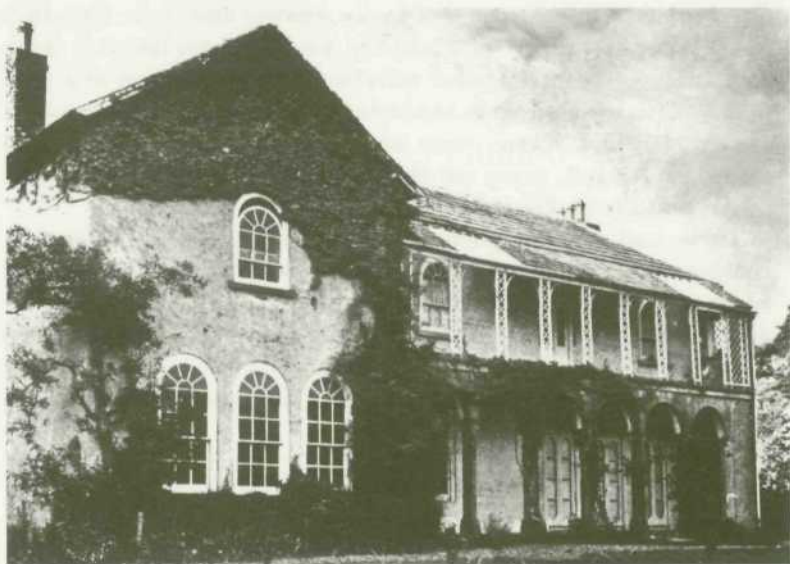
The remaining house is Gracefield Lodge in Co. Leix and gives us a hint that Nash did not always visit or supervise his buildings but merely sold his plans from England. An engraving by **Neale** shows the house to be an altogether pleasing cottage orne, **with** Gothic and Tudor details, embellished with impressive ironwork (No. 10). In reality it is nothing of the sort; banished are the important Gothic porch, the balanced fenestration and the decorative barge-board and we are left with a simple villa (No. 11). We may safely assume that Neale made his engraving from Nash's original design and that the thrifty client instructed the local builder to modify the plans. Gracefield is set in beautiful country and enjoys panoramic views.

Whether Nash, therefore, actually supervised the building of his Irish houses we may never know, but it is possible that he gained several trusting clients by showing them designs of his English works. The first Lord Gort admired East Cowes Castle when he visited it and a similar house emerged on the shores of Lough Cutra. Perhaps then, Lord Lorton knew Casina at Dulwich and commissioned Nash to produce a grander version of it in Co. Roscommon. Had the rector of Lissan seen the designs for Cronkhill in the Royal Academy of 1812? Or did Nash visit the sites of his Irish clients, suggest a house suitable for the landscape and send over designs without again appearing on the scene? Did James and George Richard Paine, once apprentices in Nash's office, who settled in Ireland, carry out their master's instructions for houses other than Lough Cutra?

These and other mysteries may not be solved and we must content ourselves with Nash's statement to Farington when he said he "had travelled in the three Kingdoms 11,000 miles in the year and in that time had expended **£1,500** in chaise hire". Letters from Nash and his wife to clients suggesting dates, and the *three* kingdoms statement, are the only clues to suggest that Nash did, in fact, ever visit Ireland at all.



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Since this article was written, the author has discovered a letter from Lord Lorton of Boyle, date 2nd July 1809, in which he explains to James Stewart of Killymoon that Nash had visited him at Rockingham to discuss various alterations.

The letter is in the possession of Mr. Marcus Clements of Lough Rynn, Co. Leitrim.





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