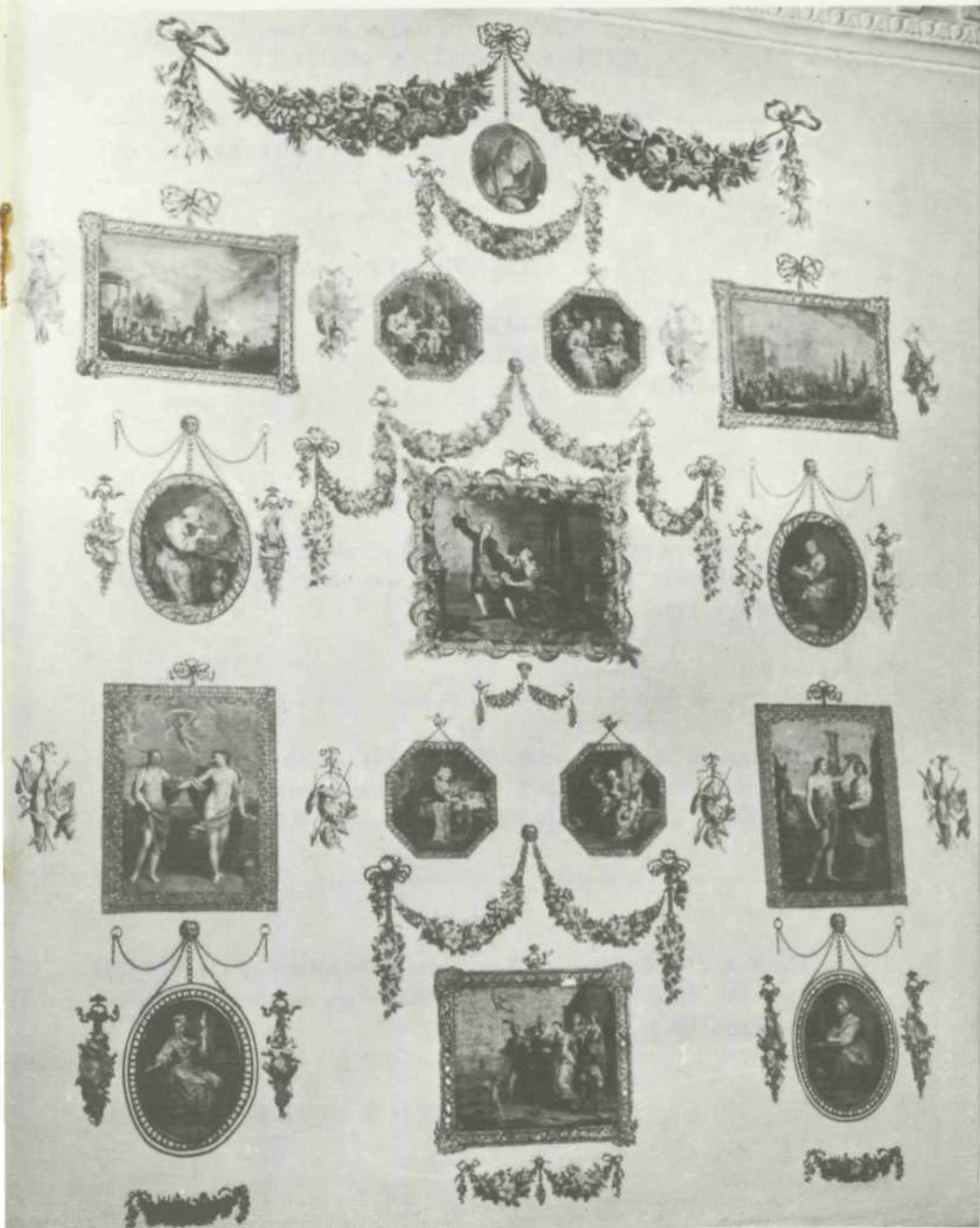


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July-September 1965

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FRIEND OF CHARLEMONT**
by John Harris

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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 Conollyc. 1770.

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PRICE FIVE SHILLINGS

Drawing Room, with a characteristic Chambersian ceiling composed of an oblong central compartment of three full circles and semi-circles, surrounded by a border of alternating plaster reliefs and painted panels, the latter (now removed) attributed dubiously to Angelica Kaufmann, although probably by Cipriani if they were supplied from London.

ROXBOROUGH (Co. Tyrone) (Plates 24-25).

1st Earl of Charlemont.

Unexecuted design for a Hunting Lodge (1768).

Designs: R.I.B.A., J4/36, inscribed "Lord Charlemont's hunting seat"—a plan for project A; Soane, 43/423, plan for project A; V. & A., 3370, 3371, 3419, plans for project A; 3418, elevation project A; 3420, 3450, 3372, plans project B; 3354, 3420, elevations project B.

Manuscripts: R.I.A., Chambers to Charlemont 15 April 1768, reported in Charlemont letters I, 285-86; Charlemont to Chambers, 1768, reported in Charlemont letters II, 372.

Mention of this Hunting Lodge occurs in the correspondence for 1768; the design was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1769 (exhibit no. 15); then no more is heard about the project. It must have been a passing whim on Charlemont's part and almost certainly intended for his country seat in County Tyrone. If it was built, then it was rebuilt early in the nineteenth century, rebuilt again, and then destroyed. The architectural importance of the designs lies in their uncompromising neo-classical style, one associated with the generation of Peyre and Neufforge. The elevations are, in fact, similar to engravings published by the latter architect.

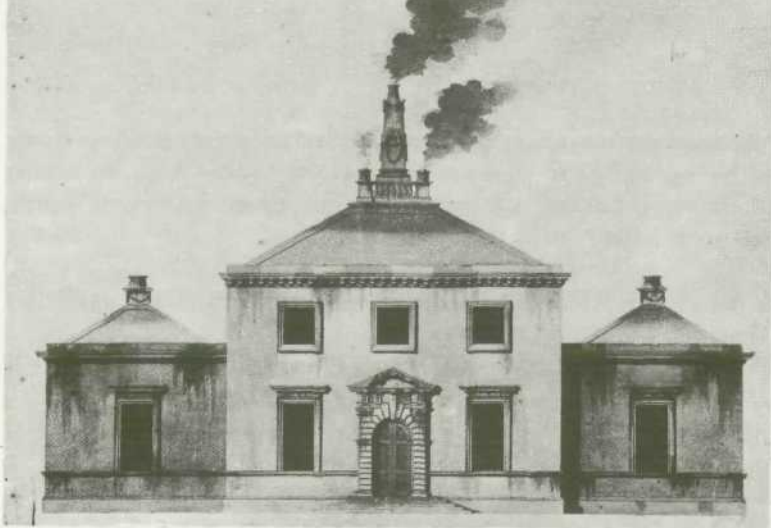
SLANE CASTLE

Earl Conyngham.

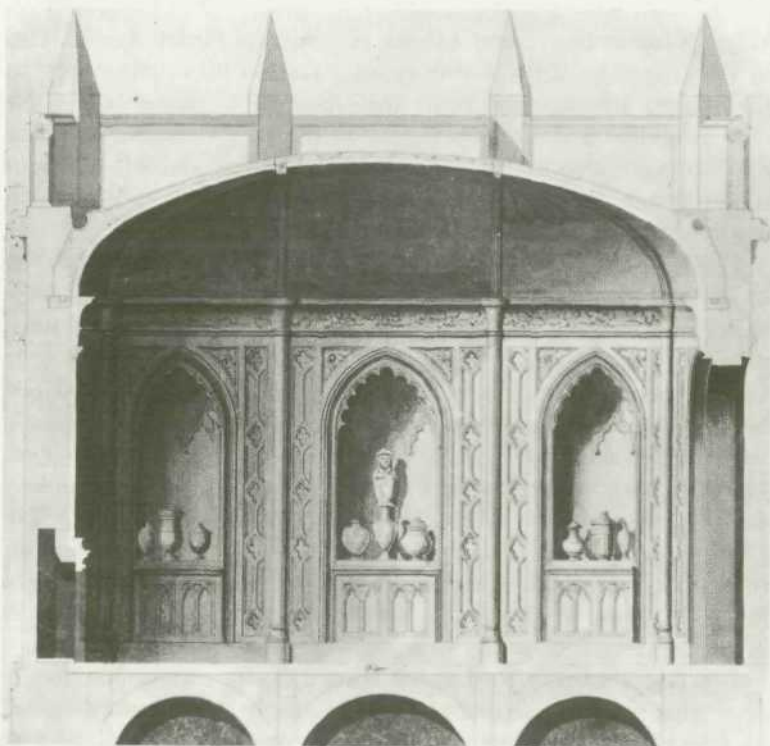
Work of unknown character (? 1760s).

Designs: M.M.A.N.Y., design for a chimneypiece inscribed "General Burton". Slane Archives, *Plans of Slane Castle* 1783 containing No. 5, an elevation of the principal front, and No. 6, a "Proposed Elevation" signed "WC".

Literature: A. J. Rowan, "Georgian Castles in Ireland—I", in



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SIR WILLIAM CHAMBERS, FRIEND OF CHARLEMONT

by John Harris

Who was the commoner, friend of an Irish Lord, who could receive from that nobleman such marks of regard as "farewell my dearest", or be told that his architectural designs were, "like everything else that comes from you, . . . perfectly pretty"? He was William Chambers, born in 1723 of Scottish parents in Gothenburg, Sweden. As far as we know he was educated in England, probably in Ripon, which had later been described by him as to evoke "sweet scenes of my youth". But the very first documented date we have in his career is April 1740 when he set sail on the *Fredericus Rex Sueciae* bound for the East. For nine years Chambers pursued an increasingly lucrative career in the Swedish East India Company, ending up as an Assistant Supercargo and, we may believe, very rich. But merchant venturing gave way to architecture, and in the Autumn of 1749 Chambers installed himself in the famous *Ecole des Arts*, the school of architecture run by that great theorist and teacher, J. F. Blondel. There in Paris one could obtain the very best course of instruction available in Europe, and Chambers met the friends with whom he was to remain closer in spirit than even those he was to know later, and more intimately, in London. Names such as Peyre, Cochin, Le Roy, and Soufflot, epitomise the leaders of French Neo-classicism in the sixties and seventies. It is important to emphasise Chambers' attitudes and position as a student in the European mainstream of architectural thought. The Swedes would go straight to Paris for their instruction, the English never. They

would go straight to Rome. Once we place Chambers in this international context we shall discover the answers to many later problems, not the least that concerning the derivation of the plan of the Casino at Marino.

After Blondel came Rome and a close association with the *pensionnaires* of the French Academy there. Chambers was based upon the Eternal City (excepting a short return to Paris to meet his future wife in 1752) from the Winter of 1750 until the Spring of 1755. We must envisage him not as a student dependent upon an academy of instruction, but as a rather well-to-do man leaning towards middle-age, for in 1750 he was 27, and that was five years older than the average age of Rome students.

The most important design he made there under the influence of the French Academy was the Mausoleum (Plate I) designed to house the remains of Frederick, Prince of Wales, and dated 1751. It is a key building in the chronology of Chambers' architectural achievement and must have been proposed for Kew Gardens, thereby indicating prior relationship with the Prince or Princess Augusta. In fact, there is very good circumstantial evidence that Chambers designed **the** House of Confucius built at Kew in 1749. What surprises us most about the Mausoleum is its advanced Neo-classic taste. Here, on paper, is a gravely-composed antique-style building preceding by nearly fifteen years the Mausoleum in J. M. Peyre's, *Oeuvres d'Architecture*, 1765.

The answer to the apparently sudden emergence of this dramatic design lies not in published or built projects, but in the theoretical designs made by the circle of the French Academy in Rome, not only around 1750 but from as early as the late thirties. **Apart** from certain antique derivations and the combination of sources drawn from antique and modern Rome, one of the characteristics of these designs is their play upon what may be called the columnar exercise. The authors are fascinated by the arrangement and manipulation of the column. There is a link by association and friendship between Chambers, **Jardin**, Dumont, Le Lorrain, Piranesi and Le Geay—names that span a period of twelve years. Le Geay should perhaps be called the father of French Neo-classicism, for his columnar plans were admired in Rome before 1741. So fantastic and un-

"he understood **architecture very well** and **left** a very good **specimen of his knowledge in** that art by an elegant house built on a plan of his own at Lucan". Chambers, Stevens, Vesey, Staplcton, VVyatt; too many cooks?

RATHFARNHAM CASTLE (Co. Dublin) (Plate 23).

Henry **Loftus**, later Earl **of Ely**.

Possible partial encasing of exterior. Interior decorations (1770-1).

Designs: **R.I.B.A.** J4/37, 38, plans of ground and parlour floors.

Manuscripts: B.M. Add. MS 41133, 11, 26V-27, 43V-44, 6<v>, 95V-96 (22 April 1770—11 **March 1773**).

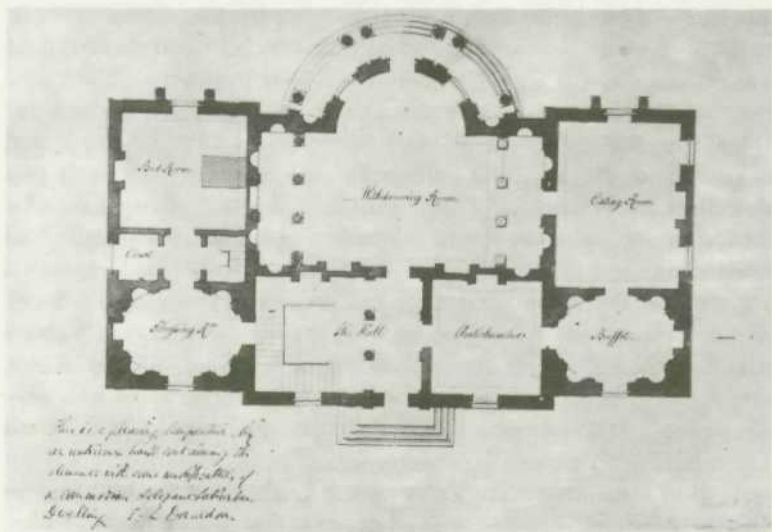
Literature: *The Georgian Society*, V, 1913, 77—78 and pis. LXXXI—LXXXV1F1.

When Rathfarnham came into the possession **of Henry, Lord Loftus in** 1769 it was basically a 16th century **castle** with square towers at the angles. Although **the** house may have been **refaccd** before this date, it is clear from **the** letters that all the later **Georgian** interiors, e.g. **the** Gilt Room. **Breakfast** Room, **Gallery** and other minor-rooms, were commissioned by Lord Loftus and executed with modifications to Chambers' designs.

The first designs were almost complete by 22 April 1770, the date of the first surviving letter. **Having** been received by Loftus, these designs were entrusted to his workmen who apparently found them difficult to understand and **execute**. In a letter **of 29 January** 1771 Chambers comments, "I am apt to think **your Lordship's** workmen are rather careless in perusing the designs and seldom read what is written upon them which occasions their **difficulties**." The problems, however, were amicably **settled** and **in** March 1772 Chambers wrote **to thank** Loftus (then Earl **of Ely**) for payment of his bill **of** £82 17s. *od.* He said, "it would make me happy to visit Ireland on many accounts and whenever it happens I shall certainly **not** fail to pay my respects to your Lordship. In the meantime it gives me great Pleasure to hear that the Execution of the Designs answers your Lordship's Expectations". Owing, no doubt, **to** the poor supervision or second-rate workmanship, the rooms designed by Chambers look provincial. The one exception is the Gallery or



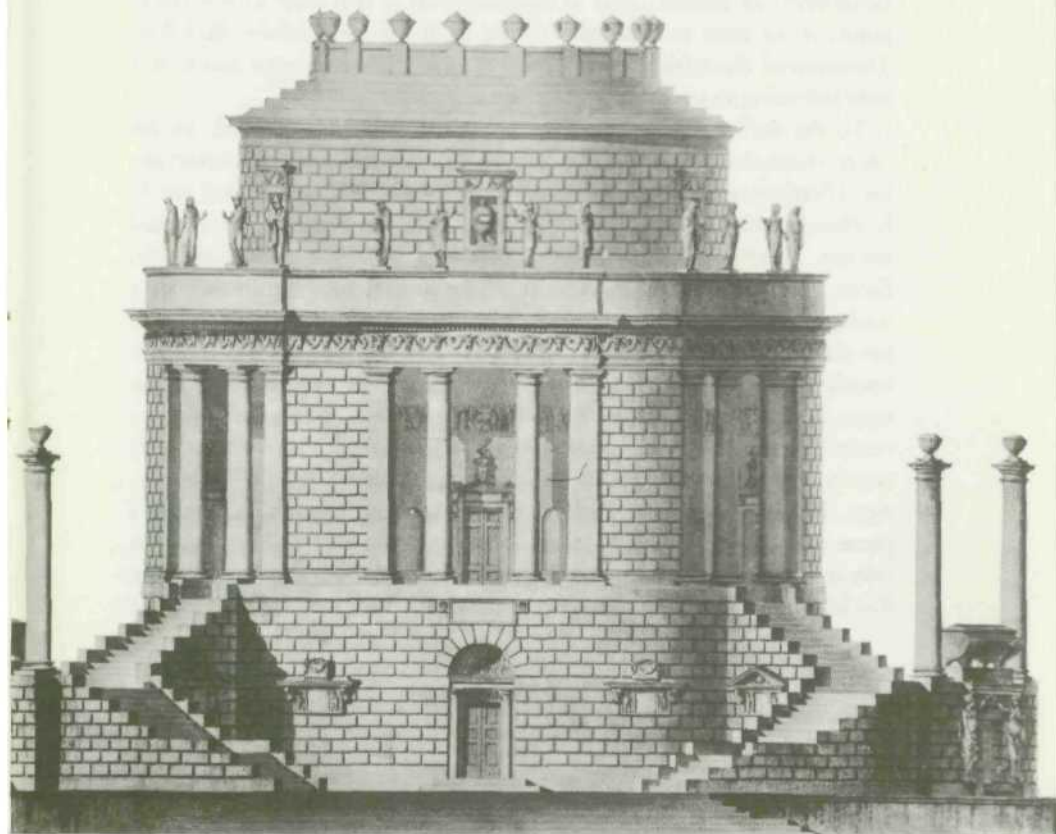
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compromising was his attitude to design, that in later years it brought him to poverty. In 1766 Chambers befriended him in London, when Le Geay must have made his exquisite drawing of the Casino, set in a neo-classic frame **designed by** Chambers (Plate 14). It was either given to Lord **Charlemont** or was **purchased** by that Earl **at** the sales held after Chambers' death in 1796.

There is no proof that Chambers met **Charlemont** in Rome. But the evidence is overwhelming that he did. If we examine Sir Joshua Reynolds' *The School of Athens* painted in Rome in 1752 we shall find among the dilettante portrayed there, Sir Thomas Kennedy, **Lord Bruce** and Robert Wood. **Then** if we turn to Chambers' great *Treatise on Civil Architecture* ("**the** best book and most exempt from prejudice that ever was written in that science", Walpole called it) published **in** 1759, we shall find **all** these men receiving a dedicatory plate, in **friendship** or as potential **patrons**. We know that Chambers was in (the thick of the milords, cicerone



and dilettante hob-nobbing in Rome, so it is natural that he might have been noticed by Charlemont.

Charlemont returned to London in January 1755, Chambers in June that same year. In October Charlemont had taken his place in the Irish House of Lords and there can be no doubt that he had already decided to settle in Dublin. We don't know exactly when he was attracted by Chambers' architectural abilities, but certainly not around April 1755 when he was in treaty with Luigi Vanvitelli for a temple. Yet already he had begun to adorn his new country house called Donneycarney, soon to be renamed Marino. Rosamund's Bower, an "erection in the enriched gothic style" may have been designed by Johann Henry Muntz, a Swiss painter and friend of both Walpole and Chambers. Or possibly the initiative to use Chambers may have come through the Conolly's at Castletown, where Chambers might have been employed from as early as 1757. Lady Louisa Conolly was a Lennox, one of three sisters whose father, the Duke of Richmond, was employing Chambers at Goodwood in Sussex. And as confirmation of this year as a starting point, if we turn to Chambers' first plan for the Casino (R.I.B.A. Theoretical Sketchbook) we shall find it drawn on the back of a note referring to events then (Plate 11).

To the end of Chambers' life, Charlemont was his friend. In the early years they would have met in London at sporadic intervals, but Charlemont's devotion to the Irish brought him less and less to England, although when there one can imagine architect and patron meeting at the tables of Burke, Johnson or Goldsmith. Even in 1769 Chambers was advising Charlemont that 'as your lordship so seldom visits London, would it not be better to give up your house in Hertford Street. It must stand you one way or another in at least £200 a year, whereas you might at anytime upon eight days warning get a ready-furnished house fit for your reception in any part of the town, which as your stays are short would never stand you in fifty pounds a year" (Charlemont 1, 297). In any case, after the first ten years of building Charlemont's purse was drying up, and after 1775 he could have only executed minor alterations to his buildings. The most important was the Rockingham Library, a long room with apsidal ends opening off

substituting newer and more pleasing ornaments in their place at Lord Charlemonts and in other works, but this I leave absolutely and implicitly to you, if I am to have a pediment the lower Greek one will suit the Situation best, if you turn over that elegant magazine of drawings, the book which I have often admired, you'll find Several designs there which will suit me, and you may depend both on my friendship and my pleasure in executing any work of yours, that it shall be finished *Unguem*."

Building activities do not seem to have been begun, however, until the following summer or autumn, for visiting Lucan on 25 June 1775, Lady Louisa Conolly wrote "The house . . . is almost pulled down, and I hear wont be habitable these two years" (Letters, Lady Louisa Conolly; edited by Brian FitzGerald (Irish Man. Comm.)), and even in 1783 Thomas Milton could say "This building has not been finished more than two years." So plans were first discussed in 1773 and the villa finished *c.* 1781.

It is extremely difficult to apportion out responsibility for this design. Firstly it is not a characteristically Chambersian one, although the use of a portico rising *above* the cornice level does occur on a design for a large villa in the Victoria and Albert Museum, there quite definitely a drawing by Chambers. This in turn is related to a similar project in the National Museum of Stockholm (Tessin 2296) drawn by Edward Stevens (Plate 22), but is, in any case, probably related to Chambers' design for rebuilding the palace of Svartsjo made about 1770 or 1774, and exhibited at the Royal Academy by him in 1775, where it was described by Walpole as "handsome and simple". Stevens may be an important figure in the development of Lucan, because he had been a pupil of Chambers between 1762 and 1766, had exhibited a design for the Royal Exchange in Dublin in 1770 and in a letter to Charlemont dated 2 August, 1775 Chambers said: "Vesey's friend Stephens, a very ingenious pupil of mine, died at Rome about two months ago, which is a loss to the arts, as he was very promising" (Charlemont letters, I, 332). Bearing in mind both Chambers' and Stevens' concern with Lucan, it is perhaps frustrating to remember that Vesey was a Professor of Architecture in Doctor Johnson's Utopian university, and that Boswell said of him,



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the centre part of the corridor link at Charlemont House. This occurred in the mid-seventeen-eighties, when James Gandon was the leading London-trained architect practising in Dublin. His Custom House was of 1781, the Parliament House of 1785, and the Four Courts of 1786. Gandon was a natural choice for Charlemont. He had been Chambers' pupil and even as early as 18 January, 1777, had been recommended to Charlemont by Chambers because of the latter's pre-occupations at Somerset House: "... and if, while I am so much occupied, your lordship should be in want of any designs, Mr. Gandon, of Broad Street, an old pupil of mine, and very ingenious, would I dare say do them to your lordship's satisfaction. He knows nothing of this recommendation, nor have I seen him these seven years but in the street. Yet, from various designs of his which have appeared in the exhibitions, I think he merits encouragement, and wonder he has been so little employed. Your lordship's protection would probably make him more known than he now is, and more valued according to his deserts" (Charlemont, 1,338).

One other architect deserves to be remembered as a possible subscriber to the Marino scene. He was Johann Henry Muntz, a Swiss painter and something of an amateur architect. He is better known as Horace Walpole's protegee with an avid interest in the Gothic revival. Muntz could have designed Rosamund's Bower, whose description in 1835 (Craig 123) suggests a Gothic building of a family with the Cathedral at Kew, designed by Muntz about 1758 and built under Chambers' supervision. Then in 1762 Muntz made designs "of an Egyptian Building for ye Rt. Hon. Lord Vicount Charlemont" (Plate 26) that appears to be nothing more than a gothic rotunda with a few Egyptian antiquities displayed in its gothic niches. And even in 1768 Muntz seemed to have been supplying designs for Charlemont, for Chambers could comment, "I have seen Muntz and pressed him to finish your lordship's designs several times. He says now your lordship shall have a sketch of it by next post" (Charlemont 1, 286).

As a politician Charlemont's reputation is secure; as a patron of architecture he deserved to be remembered as one who could place implicit trust in his architect. For this reason alone Chambers

was able to build the Casino, one of the most perfect small temples of its type **in Europe**. Chambers found pleasure in designing it, and Charlemont in living there. I think no one will deny the sincerity of Charlemont's epitaph to Chambers, composed soon after 1796:

To

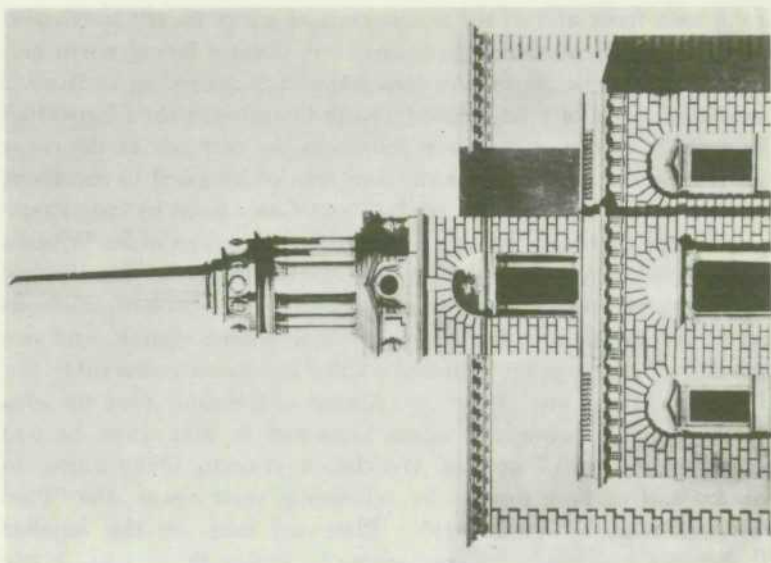
"Sir William Chambers, Knight, **Etc.**,
Fellow of the Royal Academy,
And Professor of Architecture,
The Best of Men, and the First of English Architects,
Whose Buildings, Modelled From His Own Mind,
Elegant, Pure and Solid,
Will Long Remain the Lasting Monuments
Of That Taste,
Whose Chastity Could Only be Equalled
By The Immaculate Purity of The Author's Heart,
James Earl of Charlemont, His Friend,
From Long Experience of His Worth and Talents,
Dedicates This Inscription
To Him and Friendship."

Letters, Vesey to Chambers 3 January 1773.

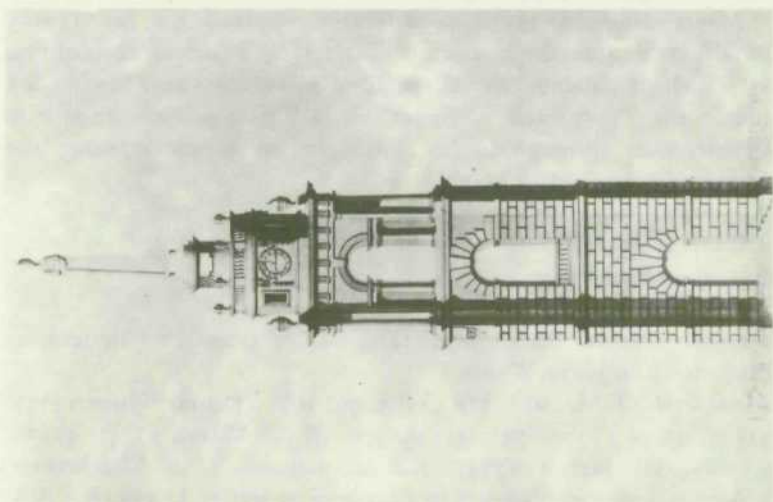
Literature: Milton, Thomas, *The Seats and Demesnes of . . . Ireland*, I, 1783 pi. **III**; *Country Life*, 31 January 1947, 278-81.

Vesey's decision **to** rebuild his house at **Lucan** is first expressed in a letter to Chambers dated **3 January** 1773: "I have got the Landskip of Lucan and its environs and wish to shew you the Situation and aspects of a place which I am persuaded will receive great Embellishments from your hands." To this Chambers replied on 5 May: "I have been **out** of town else your Elevation should have been done and Plans altered sooner. I wish **the** Elevation may please you. I think it is not amiss, and as you mean to build with stone the additional Expense will be trifling." A month later Chambers sent Vesey his bill, "more in compliance with **your** desire than my inclination", for "Drawings lor finishing the Rooms, such as Cornice door Entablatures Window Architraves Bases surbase, etc. £6 6s. *od.*" and "Various Plans Elevations Sketches and Designs for a Villa £26 5s. *od.*" The drawings for finishing the rooms were in **all** probability not intended for Lucan, but rather for Vesey's town house in London. Of the "Various . . . designs for a Villa", Chambers provides a more detailed description in a letter of 19 June: "There are four plans, the Elevation and The Section, the windows do not come perfectly regular on one side but I have contrived it so that the difference will scarcely be perceptible . . ." (B.M. Add. MS 41133, 103V).

This letter provides an interesting link between Chambers' lost designs and the executed villa, in which the windows are in fact irregular on one side, proving, furthermore, that Vesey must have incorporated some part of his old house in the new fabric. The final form of the projected (new) villa was rather long in the making. After six months of discussion several features still remained unsettled. On 28 March 1774 Vesey wrote to Chambers "I am much more intent in finishing the South front of your Plan at Lucan this summer . . . I pray You'll give me any rough sketch for a portico of four columns that commands a long view of the river, is situated near **a** pretty brook and opposite to an open grove. You have taught me to think pediments but common architecture by



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LIST OF PLATES

1. Mausoleum to Frederick, Prince of Wales, 1751-52.
Victoria and Albert Museum.
2. **Charlemont** House. Plan.
Reproduced by courtesy of The Cresset Press.
3. Charlemont House. Elevation from Pool & Cash.
4. Chesterfield House. From Isaac Ware, *Complete Body of Architecture*, 1756.
5. **Theoretical** design. Isaac Ware. From *Complete Body of Architecture*, 1756.
6. Charlemont House. Ceiling design by Chambers. *V. & A., London.*
7. Charlemont House. Ceiling design by Chambers. *V. & A., London.*
8. Designs for candlesticks by Chambers. *Sir John Soane's Museum.*
9. Marino House. Plan.
10. Marino House. Elevation.
11. The Casino. First plan, c. 1757. *R.I.B.A., London.*
12. The Casino. Plan as published in 1759.
13. The Casino. Elevation as published in 1759.
14. The Casino. View by J. L. Le Geay in a frame designed by Chambers. *In the collection of Miss Lambart John.*
15. The Casino. Chimneypieces published in 1759.
16. The Casino. Detail of sculptural embellishments.
Photo: Alislair Rowan.
17. Trinity College. The Theatre. *Elevation from Pool & Cash.*
18. Trinity College. The proposed tower. *Elevation from Pool & Cash.*
19. Chambers' design for St. Marylebone church. *V. & A., London.*
20. Chambers design for Woodstock church tower.
Bodleian Library, Oxford.
21. Lucan House, Co. Dublin. *Photo: Lucinda Lambton.*
22. Design for palace of Svartsjo, Sweden. Perhaps by Edward Stevens to Chambers' design (?). *National Museum, Stockholm.*
23. **Rathfarnham** Castle.
24. Design for projected hunting lodge. *R.I.B.A., London.*
25. Design for projected hunting lodge. *V. & A., London.*
26. J. H. Muntz. Design for Lord Charlemont's Egyptian Room.
W. S. Lewis Collection, U.S.A.

CATALOGUE OF PROJECTS

List of Abbreviations

- Add. MS Additional Manuscripts, British Museum.
B.M. British Museum.
Charlemont The Charlemont correspondence as calendared
I or II in Historical Manuscripts Commission, 12th
Report, Appendix Part X, Vols. I and II, 1891.
Craig M. Craig, *The Volunteer Earl*, 1948.
M.M.A.N.Y. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
R.A. Royal Academy, London
R.I.A. Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.
R.I.B.A. Royal Institute of British Architects, London.
Soane Sir John Soane's Museum, London.
V. & A. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

CARTON (Co. Kildare)

20th Earl of Kildare or 1st Duke of Leinster.

Unexecuted projects for rebuilding main block of house.

Designs: Plans and elevations in the possession of The Hon. Desmond and Mrs. Guinness, Leixlip Castle, Co. Kildare.

Literature: *The Georgian Society*, V, 1913, 59-67; *Kildare Archaeological Society*, IV, July 1903-5.

These designs are unfortunately unsigned, but their elevations are Chambersian, related stylistically to his projects for building a palace in Richmond Gardens that can be dated between about 1768 and 1775. In all probability these Carton designs belong to a period after Kildare's elevation to the Dukedom in 1766. During this period Duchess Emily's sister, Lady Sarah Bunbury, was employing Chambers at Great Barton and, of course, her other sister, Lady Louisa Conolly, had already employed Chambers at Castletown.

CASTLETOWN (Co. Kildare)

Rt. Hon. Thomas Conolly.

Internal alterations and design of gate piers (1759+).

Literature: *Correspondence of Emily, Duchess of Leinster*, ed. B. Fitzgerald,

1759 west front and to see at the ends of wings on the north and south sides, his porticoed pavilions: the Theatre facing north and the Chapel facing south. We now know that according to Byron's axiometric view of i 780 (reproduced in Craig) only the Chapel had been built by then. Chambers found on the east side of the court an archway designed by Castle, and this he intended to surmount by a tower and spire shown by Pool and Cash. Even in 1793 Payne could hope that this "beautiful steeple from a design of Sir William Chambers" would be built. The stylistic derivation of this element of Chambers' project is interesting. In 1770 he had been commissioned to prepare designs for a new St. Marylebone church, and one scheme (V. & A. 3433) included a spire and tower remarkably like the later Trinity one (Plate 19). Almost at the same time the idea of this type of tower was again suggested to him when he was called in by the Vestry of Woodstock church, Oxfordshire, to survey and prepare designs for rebuilding their tower. His "Plan of Woodstock Tower in 1776" (Plate 20) takes up this familiar theme of a neo-classic interpretation of a design that returns firstly to Gibbs, then to Wren's city churches. (For Woodstock, cf. H. M. Colvin, "The Rebuilding of Woodstock Church Tower" in *Oxford Arch. Soc. Rpt.* 87 (1949), 9-14.)

Myers must be given considerable applaud for his Trinity buildings because they conform fully to the Chambersian tradition for excellent cutting and presentation of stonework. They do not reflect the "perplexed measures" that Chambers mentioned to Charlemont, although in his statement the perplexions are not necessarily ascribed to Myers.

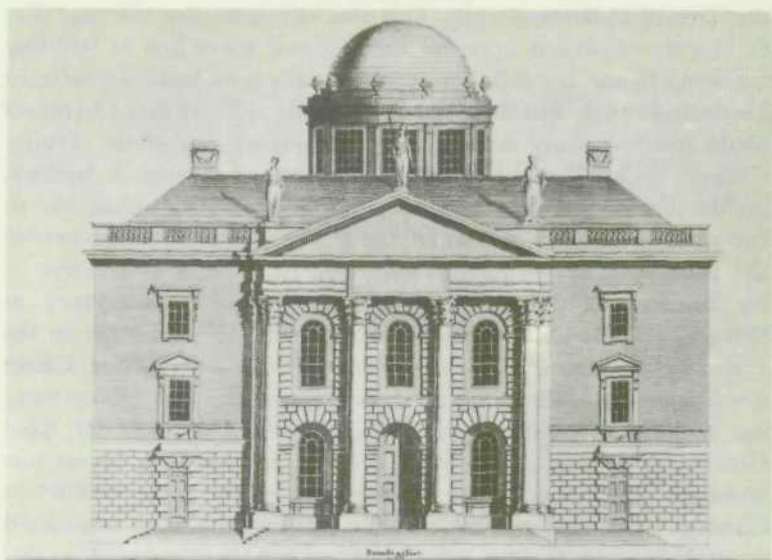
LUCAN HOUSE (Co. Dublin) (Plates 21-22).

Agmondesham Vesey.

Design for a new villa (1773-75)-

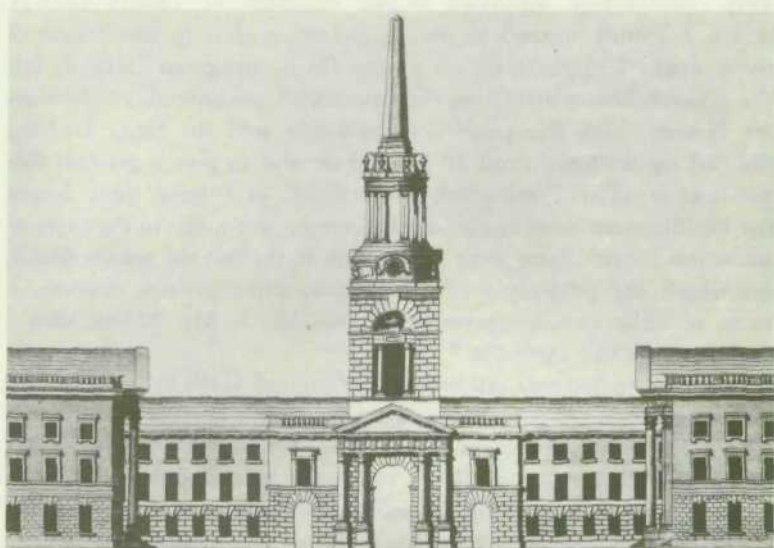
Designs: Dublin, National Library, survey plans and designs by Stapleton and James Wyatt.

Manuscripts: B.M. Add. MS 41133, 99, 103V (January—June 1773); 41134, 27 (4 June 1773); 41135, 77V-18 (28 March 1774); 41136, 16—16v (28 March 1774). R.B.A., Chambers to Charlemont, 2 August 1775, as reported in Charlemont letters I, 332. R.I.B.A.



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The FRONT of the THEATRE in TRINITY COLLEGE.



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III, Dublin, 1952, 23; *The Georgian Society*, V, 1913, 43-54 and pis. XXVII, XXVIII, XXXI; *Country Life*, 15 August 1936, 170-175; 22 August, 196-201.

The **evidence** for Chambers' participation in the internal completion of this great Irish house is contained in a letter written by Lady Louisa Conolly to her sister, Lady Emily, Countess of Kildare, on 28 July 1759. In this she enquires about "finishing" for the "great room" at Castletown which "they" (presumably the decorators) "were to send the rest of it afterwards, or else Mr. Chambers the architect, had explained to Mr. Verpaille". These finishings may refer to the completion of the Gallery, where the scheme of decorations includes oval and rectangular inset painted panels attributed to Cipriani. "Mr. Verpaille" is, of course, Simon Vierpyle the mason, who was at this time building the Casino at Marino to Chambers' designs. In addition to the Gallery, to Chambers may be **attributed the** decorations of the Red Room, the Print Room, the Blue Drawing Room, and in general the character of the work may be compared to that at Leinster House (q.v.). At Castletown is a volume of drawings possibly by Vierpyle. In addition to many designs and engravings of urns, there are also two designs for Chinese temples possibly drawn by Chambers.

DUBLIN: Charlemont House (Plates 2 8)

1st Earl of Charlemont.

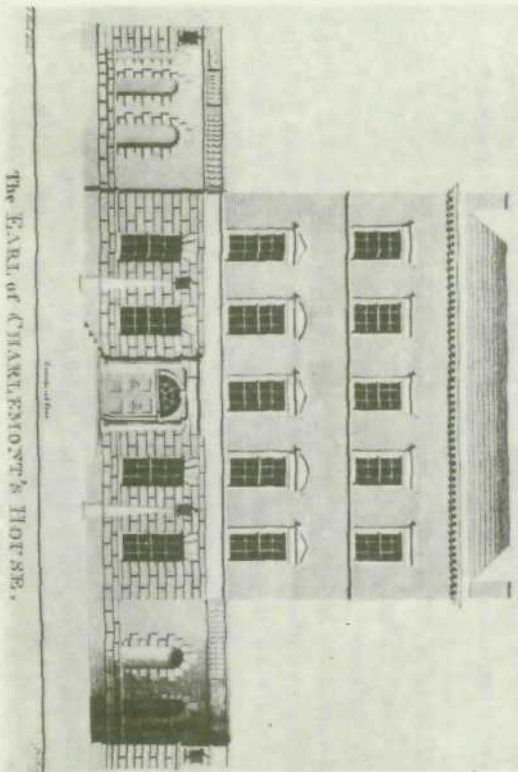
Townhouse (1762-75).

Designs: M.M.A.N.Y., hall chimney piece; V. & A., 2216.28, detail of a moulding; 4969.1910, design for chimneypiece, inscribed "Ld Charlemont's Eating Room"; 7078.31, detail of a moulding, inscribed "String for a Stair Earl Charlemont's hs in Dublin".

Manuscripts: B.M. Add. MS 41133, 75 (13 June 1772); Add. MS 4i'35, 64-64V, 71-72 (17 April 1774; 3 August 1775).

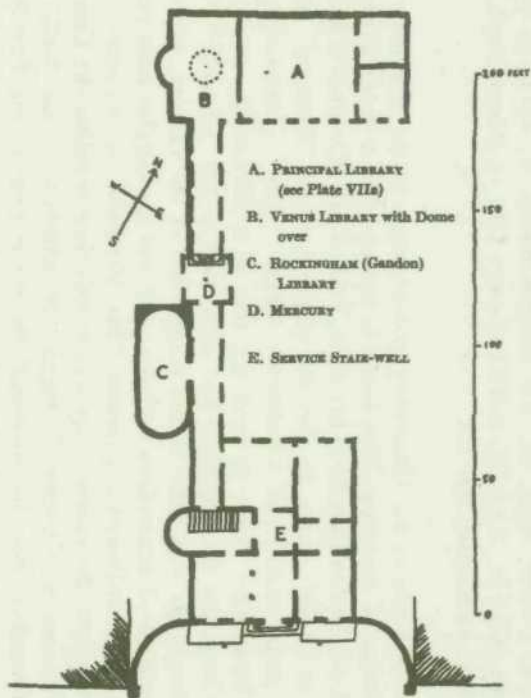
R.I.A. Dublin. Charlemont letters as reported in H.M.C. 12th Report, App. Pt X, vols 1 & 2, 1891, and two unreported letters, Charlemont to WC of January 1768 and 9 July 1775.

Literature: Chambers, *Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture*, 3rd ed. 1792, plate of "utensils". Craig, M., *The Volunteer*



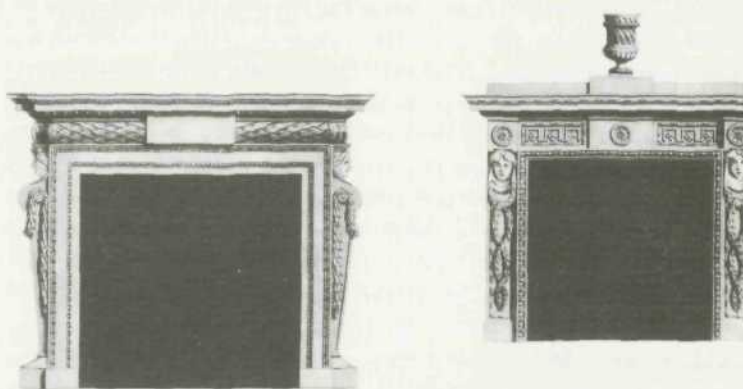
THE EARL OF CHARLESTON'S HOUSE.

Sketch-plan of Chariemont HOUSE: ground floor



the Trinity Minutes of 1775. This was, of course, just the year that Chambers embarked upon his architectural marathon of building Somerset House, a public project that totally occupied his time until his death in 1796. For this reason it is highly unlikely that Chambers could have seriously contemplated the supervision of the Trinity College work. This he entrusted to Graham Myers, a builder, architect and probable speculator, about whom we would like to know more. In 1777 he was an architect to the "Commissioners of the Barracks and Civil Buildings", and in 1785 he was entrusted by Trinity College to design their important Observatory at Dunsink (cf. M. C. Donnelly: "Astronomical Observatories in the 17th and 18th centuries", in *Academie Royale de Belgique, Classe des Sciences, Memoires*, XXXIV, fasc. 5, 1964). This Observatory has similarities to Chambers' 1769 observatory designed for King George III at Richmond and it may be possible that Myers was originally pushed on to the Dublin scene in the same manner as Gandon. Chambers' responsibility for the Trinity designs is summed up by him in the 20 May 1779 letter to Lord Charlemont. He said: "A couple of years ago I was requested to make designs for some very considerable additions to the buildings of Trinity College which I readily agreed to on a supposition that in the course of these works I might have an excuse for a voyage to Ireland, but the great difficulty attending the vast work I am now about (Somerset House), and the perplexed measures sent me from Dublin, obliged me to desist; and all I could do was to give a general disposition of what I intended, from which as I have since learnt the buildings are now executing. If there be any merit in the general intention I may claim some little share in it; but the whole detail, on which the perfection of these works must greatly depend, is none of mine and whatever merit that has is Mr. Myers who I understand is the operator."

The two engravings published by Pool and Cash in March 1779 are valuable documents because they must have been prepared from Chambers' original designs. They show, firstly, the Theatre (Plate 17), not to be built until about 1793 and then modified above the parapet line and, secondly, an unexecuted scheme for the east side of the court (Plate 18). Chambers intended one to pass beneath the



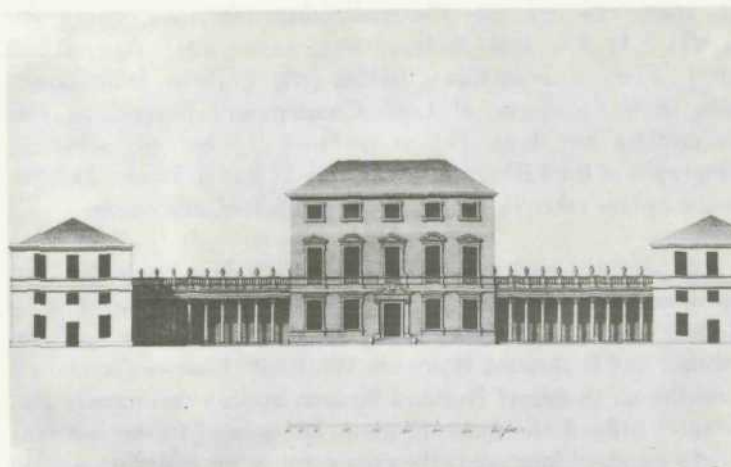
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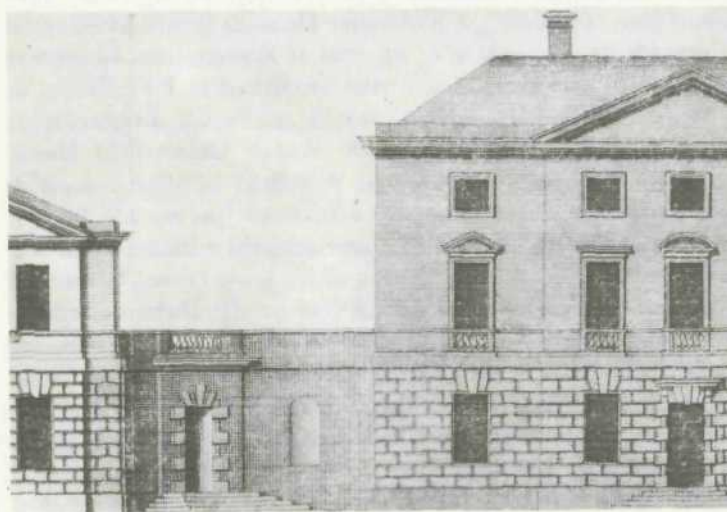
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Earl, 1948, 126-133. *The Georgian Society*, IV, 1912, 23-33^{and} pis. VII-XI; *The Irish Builder*, 1903, xxxvi, 121; Pool, R., & Cash, J., *Views . . . in the City of Dublin*, 1780; Sothcby, Wilkinson & Hodge, Sale Catalogue of Lord Charlemont's library, 10 July 1867 and for ten days. This is prefaced by the only surviving photographs of the Library rooms. Office of Public Works, Dublin: measured plans taken in 1917 of the house before conversion.

In 1762 Lord Charlemont provided Chambers with his first opportunity to design a complete town house. Before this date he had only made alterations to certain London houses, such as Pembroke and Richmond Houses in Whitehall. Charlemont chose a site on the north side of Rutland Square, and on this narrow plot Chambers utilised the space to great advantage, for he not only erected a standard frontage to the square, but at the end of the garden he also built a magnificent Library wing linked to the house by a spatially interesting corridor whose inner wall was punctuated by niches (facing windows), and which was broken into two parts by a square vestibule to allow easy transition from a lower to a higher level. As would have been expected from one who was at that moment refining the Palladian villa tradition for his own villas (Roehampton, 1760 etc.), Charlemont House is firmly based upon such precedents. For example, whereas at Roehampton Chambers took Foots Cray as his model, a villa attributed to Isaac Ware, so here Ware must be laid under tribute for the facade. In particular, the two sources for the facade are Ware's Chesterfield House (Plate 4), and a theoretical design published in Ware's *Complete Body of Architecture*, 1756 (Plate 5). Charlemont was not a rich man, and, as at the Casino, he seems to have adopted a leisurely attitude towards the building and furnishing of his town house. It was sad that the Library rooms were demolished by the Dublin Corporation in 1929. In so doing they destroyed what was undoubtedly Chambers' finest room. But in many ways the dispersal and total disappearance of Charlemont's furnishings is even sadder. The correspondence shows that Chambers designed a grandiose medal cabinet carved by Joseph Wilton, painted by G. B. Cipriani, and adorned with ormolu by Sefferin Alken and Mr. Anderson; supplied



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will look clumsy." Then on 30 January Chambers was sending "a drawing for the chimney vases of the casino which I think will look well and leave room **for** the smoke to pass . . . These vases will do best of lead or some sort of metal painted and sanded to look like stone. I am not sure of the measure, as I cannot find any figured copies of the casino. They must therefore be drawn correctly on board to the full size, then cut out, and put in **place**, by which means you will be able to judge of the proportion. With regard to the statues, they are proportioned to the columns, and cannot be made less; their heads now reach to the underside **of** the attic-cornice and they will when seen from below, particularly if the spectator be near, appear higher than the attic, but that will have no bad effect. However, the plinth on which they stand may be made a little lower, making its top to level with the top of its mouldings as it doth in the design". Finally, on **18 January 1777** he was reminding Charlemont of an unpaid bill that included "Drawings and directions for painting the vestibule of the casino" costing two guineas and submitted on 30 January 1773. These letters succinctly emphasise the very long time it took to build the Casino, and they accurately reflect Charlemont's financial stringencies, **for he** was never a rich man, although he was building like one.

DUBLIN: Trinity College (Plates 17-20).

Theatre, Chapel and unexecuted project for a tower and spire (1775+)-

Manuscripts: **R.I.A., Chambers** to Charlemont 20 May, 1779; reported in Charlemont letters, I, 349-50; R.I.B.A. Letters, Chambers to anonymous, referring to Graham Myers; Trinity College, Minutes of the Board, 4 March and 6 December, 1775.

Literature: Payne, J., *Universal Geography*, Dublin, 1793, 197; Pool, R., & Cash, J., *Views . . . in the City of Dublin*, 1780; Wright, C. N., *An Hist. Guide to Ancient & Modern Dublin*, London, 1821, 33-34; Craig, M., in *Trinity II*, 1959, 14-16 "The West Front of 1769".

The early history of this great project is obscured by a surprising lack of documentation, but the beginning may be pin-pointed by



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"French tables", probably side tables; and such items as girandoles and candlesticks. The latter were also the work of Anderson the ormolu chaser and were described by Chambers as "Triton" candlesticks (Plate 8).

DUBLIN: Leinster House.

1st Duke of Leinster.

Redecoration of apartments on the **first** floor of the garden front (1767 +)-

Manuscripts: R.I.A., Chambers to Gharlemont, 25 August 1767, reported in Charlemont letters, I, 283.

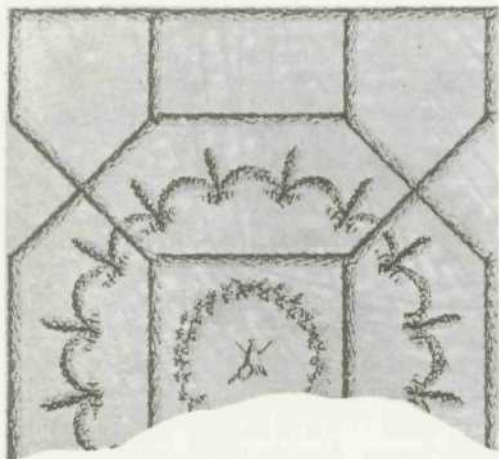
Literature: Mac Criosta, M., Leinster House, 1955; *The Georgian Society*, IV, 1912, 43-61, and pis. XVIII-XLIX.

Leinster House was designed as Kildare House in 1745 by Richard Castle for the 20th Earl of Kildare. Its Countess was (significantly for Chambers) Lady Emily Lennox, one of the three daughters of the Duke of Richmond, who was one of Chambers' earliest patrons. All were to employ him on various projects: Lady Emily for un-executed ones at Carton (q.v.), Lady Louisa at Castletown (q.v.), and Lady Sarah at Barton Hall, Suffolk. The possible link between Chambers and the new works at Leinster House, prompted by Kildare's elevation to a Dukedom in 1766, may be contained in a comment made by Chambers to Charlemont on 25 August 1767. He said of Duchess Emily, "I shall with great pleasure obey her grace's commands on this and on all other occasions on which she shall please to honor me with them." There is no doubt that what Chambers may have supplied in the way of designs were altered in execution by Dublin craftsmen. But in a room may be found a Jonesian type of chimneypiece very similar to one designed for Milton Abbey, Dorset in the 1770s, and in another room is a ceiling almost identical to one at Lady Louisa's Castletown.

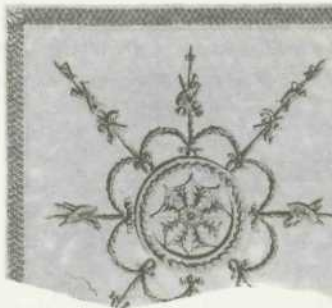
DUBLIN: Marino House (Plates 9-10).

1st Earl of Charlemont.

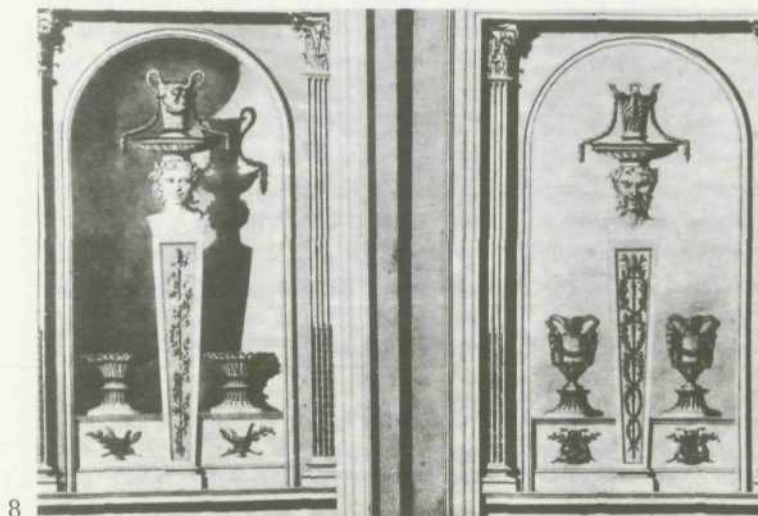
Probable refronting, and alterations to earlier house. Gate piers (1758-75).



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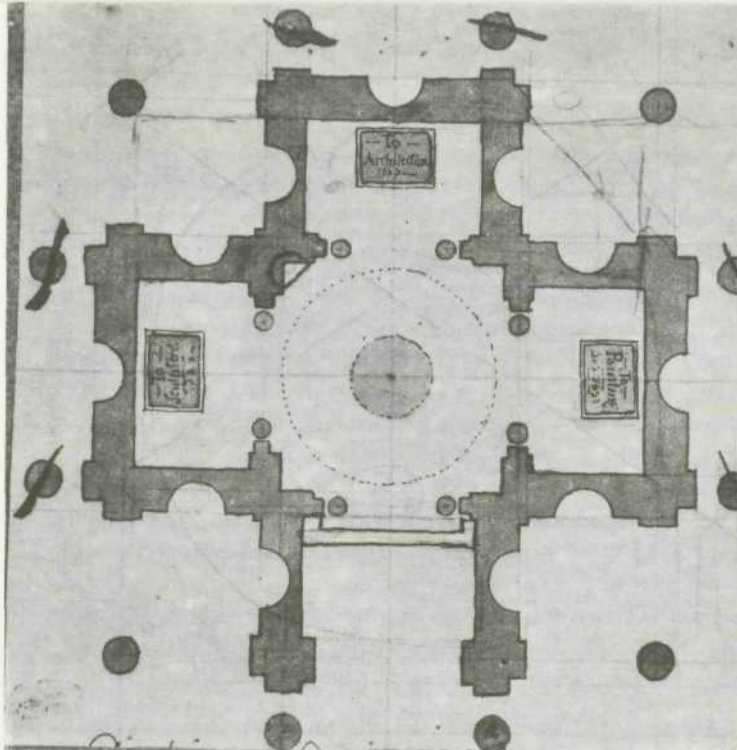
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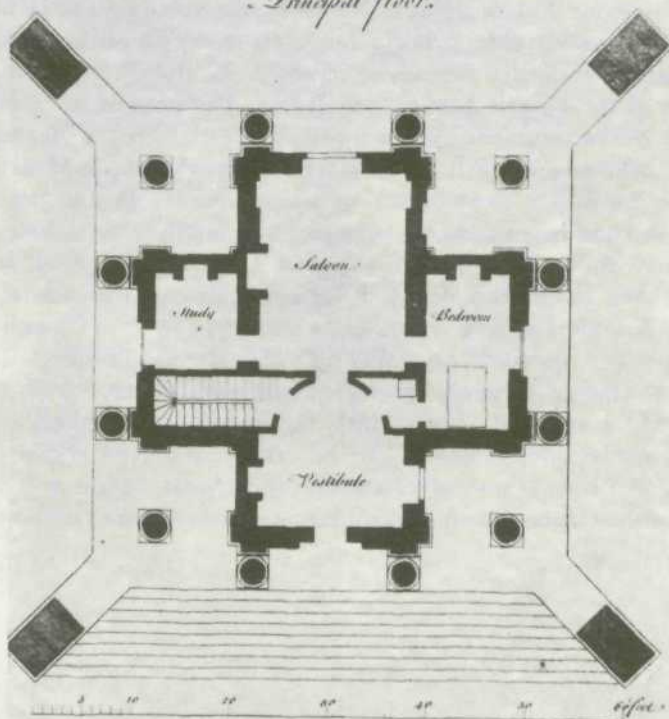
referring to events in 1757 (Plate 11). The first intimation we have that Charlemont was considering such a temple occurs on 24 December 1755, but not in connection with Chambers. For on that day John Parker, a painter in Rome, wrote to Charlemont about "the temple your lordship ordered by Vanvitelli", the Neapolitan architect whose "extravagant demand" had not met with Charlemont's approval.

The correspondence reported by the Historical Manuscripts Commission only begins in 1767. Chambers said on August 25th: "The pattern head and also the pattern for the cove, cornice of the casino were sent off a good while ago; they must be found to hand before this and, I hope, safe. I sent to Barret to tell him he must contrive to send by first opportunity the sample of the sky blue as the things I had to send were already gone and therefore it could not go with them. I am sorry there is no person in Ireland to rely on for fixing the tints of the painting, as there is no possibility of sending patterns over unaltered, the want of air always making a very considerable alteration in the colours before they arrive at Dublin." The problem of correct colouring worried Chambers considerably, for even on 22 March 1769 he was still discussing the Casino decorations: "I had forgot the alterations in the colour of the room of the casino and it appears to me a difficult point to settle. I fear all that blue will look heavy if the hangings be light blue; I would recommend that the entablature, doors, etc. of the room should be dead white touched with blue and that the cove parts of the ceiling be done with izinglass and flake-white to be of a more brilliant white than the entablature, etc. etc., the coffers of the cove a light blue, as also the ground of the galoss running round the flat part of the ceiling in oil, and that the Apollo's head and rays be flake-white, and the flat ground round it of as faint a blue flat in oil as it is possible to make. If your lordship should not approve of this method, the walls may be blue to the top of the entablature; but it should be a light blue and rich with gold upon the ornaments; and with regard to all the ceiling parts, the white must predominate, but the coffers and ground of the galoss may be blue, the mouldings gilt and the Apollo's head and rays white and only heightened or streaked with gold, for if it be solid gold it



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Principal floor.



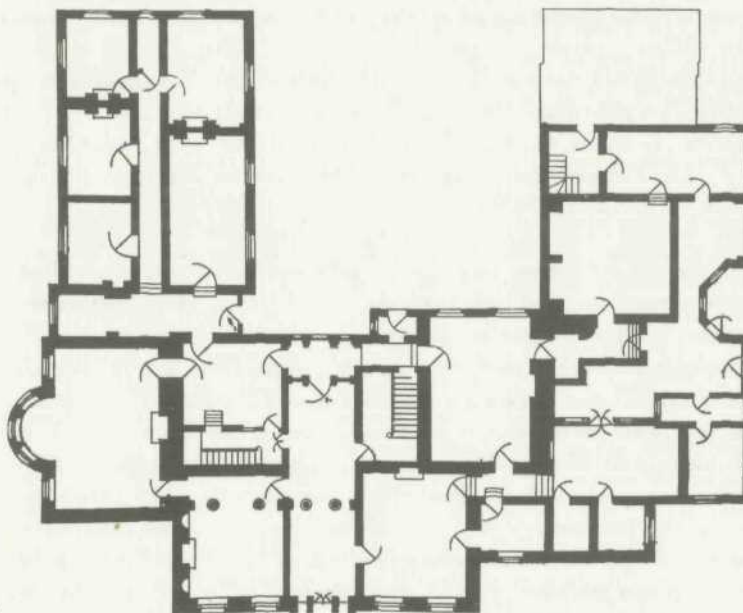
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Designs: V. & A., 7074.45, design for a Doric gate inscribed "Lord Charlemont".

Manuscripts: R.I.A., Chambers to Charlemont 25 August 1767; 9 February 1768, reported in Charlemont letters I, 283, 285.

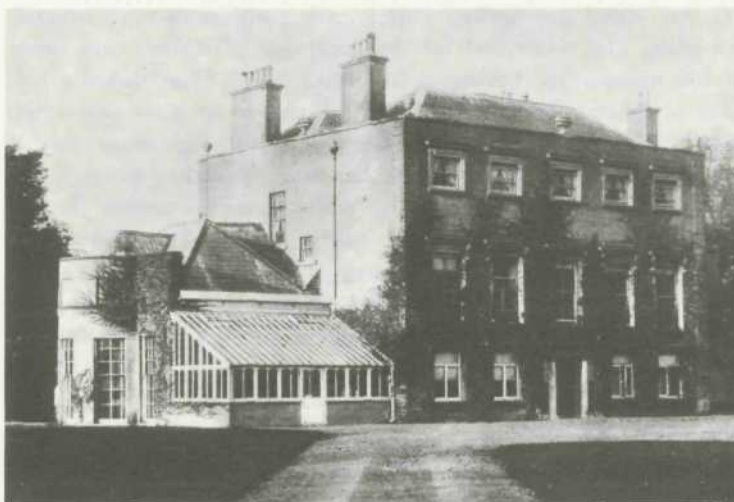
Literature: Bowden, C. T., *A Tour Through Ireland*, 1791, 78; Craig, M. J., *The Volunteer Earl*, 1948, 123; *The Georgian Society*, V, 1913, pis. CXVI, CXVII, CXXI.

When Lord Charlemont acquired this house in 1755 it was called Donneycarney and had only been built a few years. He immediately renamed it Marino and seems to have taken fairly prompt steps to make it habitable and decoratively up-to-date. The Georgian Society's three illustrations are of great value. They show the entrance front, the gate-piers, and reproduce a plan. And from these it is fairly clear that Marino House never was grand, for we know that Charlemont preferred to devote his attentions to his park, the Casino, and his town house. The alterations to Marino may have been Chambers' first commissions for Charlemont, and if so, they may have run parallel to the Casino designs of circa 1757. On the other hand, in 1759 Chambers published in his *Treatise* a monopertus temple dedicated to Lord Willoughby, that in the 1792 edition bears the added inscription, "afterwards considerably augmented in its plan, and contrived for the reception of statues and other valuable antiquities, belonging to the Earl of Charlemont's collection at Marino". So this part of Marino is at least post-1760. It can be seen as the octagonal structure to the right-hand side of the plan (Plate 9). Marino House has long since disappeared, but the gate-piers remain as an eloquent reminder of Chambers' design. The griffins (now removed to the college grounds) were designed by G. B. Cipriani, for on 9 February 1768 Chambers had written "Inclosed I send Cipriani's drawing for the dragons of the gate at Marino", a letter that followed one of 25 August the previous year when Chambers had sent the designs for the ironwork of these gates, saying, "In obedience to your lordship's first letter I herewith send a design for the iron gates of the entrance to Marino, done in the manner your lordship desires. My clerk has misunderstood my sketch and committed a mistake or two in the drawing which I



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PLAN OF MARINO (CO. DITILIN).



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have endeavoured to correct in the margin as there is not time this post for drawing it more correctly. I fancy the smith will understand it sufficiently".

DUBLIN: Marino House: Casino. (Plates 11-16).

1st Earl of Charlemont.

Temple in the grounds, called the Casino (1758-1776).

Designs: M.M.A.N.Y., designs for chimneypieces, as published in *Treatise*, 1759; R.A., red chalk perspective of Casino for Diploma submission, March 1773; R.I.B.A., theoretical album, 5a; V. & A., 3342.43, 3342.44, 3342.46, plans and elevations.

Manuscripts: B.M. Add. MS 41133, 27V-28 (31 January 1771); R.I.A. correspondence between Chambers and Charlemont, 25 August 1767 to 18 January 1777, reported in Charlemont letters I, 283-86, 291, 304, 314-15, 337-3⁸-

Literature: Chambers, *Treatise on Civil Architecture*, 1759, pis 35-6; Craig, M. J., *The Volunteer Earl*, 1948, 134-42; and Appendix III, 264-5; *The Georgian Society*, V, 1913, pis CXIX-CXX.

In Charlemont, Chambers found the perfect patron, the very rare person who was prepared to implicitly accept and execute a given set of designs. Because of this Chambers was able to do in Ireland what he was not able to do in England, to design an uncompromisingly neo-classic monument cradled in the Franco-Roman circles of the French Academy in Rome. The plan of the Casino is one of the columnar exercises beloved by the French Academicians, belonging in spirit to Chambers' contemporary, J. M. Peyre, to his immediate predecessors in Rome, N. H. Jardin and N. Dumont, and beyond them to Piranesi and finally to Jean Laurent Le Gay, the father of French neo-classicism. The Casino has been dated 1761-2, for example, by the supposed date on the foundation stone. But this is incorrect, because in the 1759 edition of Chambers' *Treatise* it is described as "building" and Horace Walpole could write to George Montagu on 30 December 1761 to ask "is his **villa** finished? I am well pleased with the design in Chambers". Its initial conception, however, can be taken back even earlier, for in the R.I.B.A. album of Chambers' theoretical designs is a first plan of the Casino drawn on the back of a sheet of paper with notes