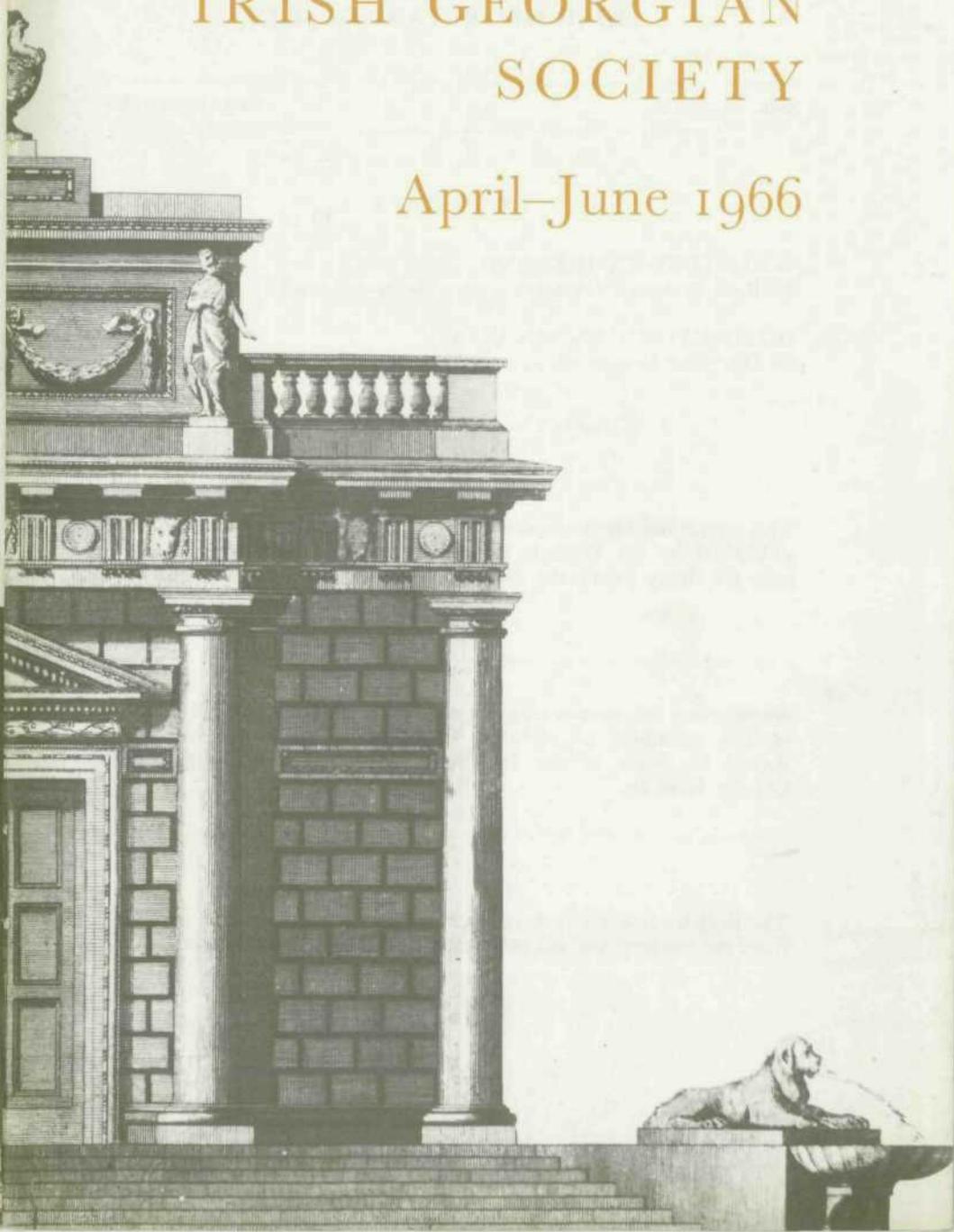


IRISH GEORGIAN  
SOCIETY

April-June 1966



QUARTERLY BULLETIN OF THE  
IRISH GEORGIAN SOCIETY

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APRIL-JUNE 1966

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(C) 1966 The Irish Georgian Society

The engraving on the cover of the Marino Casino at Clontarf was published by Sir William Chambers in 1759. Although in State care for thirty years, the exquisite interior has yet to be restored.

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Application for membership (£1 or \$3 minimum annually, which entitles members to lectures, expeditions and other functions) should be made to the Irish Georgian Society, Leixlip Castle, County Kildare.

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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.

PRICE FIVE SHILLINGS

# FRANCIS WHEATLEY IN IRELAND

by Ross Watson

The reason for Wheatley's arrival in Ireland in 1779 is directly linked with a double crisis in his domestic affairs.<sup>1</sup> According to James Gandon "being a handsome and fashionably dressed young man, with a good address, and mingling with constant visitors to Covent Garden Theatre" (to which he had a free pass) "he met company with whom he became acquainted, that involved him in expenses his limited means did not authorize: and it is probable, that, from his having early contracted expensive habits, he found it difficult, in more advanced life, to restrain his inclinations, and live in accordance with his means."<sup>2</sup> To the problem of debt was added an irresponsible intrigue with the wife of a fellow artist John Alexander Gresse, drawing master to the Princesses, and no doubt to escape from his creditors and an enraged husband Wheatley considered it wiser to leave London until the storm had blown over. He was forced to borrow money from Benjamin West, which he never repaid.<sup>3</sup> It was not Wheatley's first visit to Ireland, but we know nothing about his brief excursion in 1766, although he may then have established contacts which decided him to go there in this emergency.<sup>4</sup>

Dublin in the second half of the eighteenth century was the second capital of the three kingdoms. In this period the residential part of the town was laid out and the Houses of Parliament, the Law Courts and the Customs House were built or enlarged making it fully comparable with any city in Europe. Music and literature flourished: "The Messiah" had been first performed in the Fishamble Street Hall, and if Burke, Goldsmith and Sheridan had left, Mrs. Delany, the friend of Swift, and later, Maria Edgeworth were proof that literary talent yet remained. In the field of art, Irish Grand Tourists such as Lord Miltown and Lord Charlemont had brought back a taste for collecting and Angelica Kauffmann had already visited



Plate 1 The Dublin Volunteers on College Green (1779). *By courtesy of the National Gallery of Ireland*

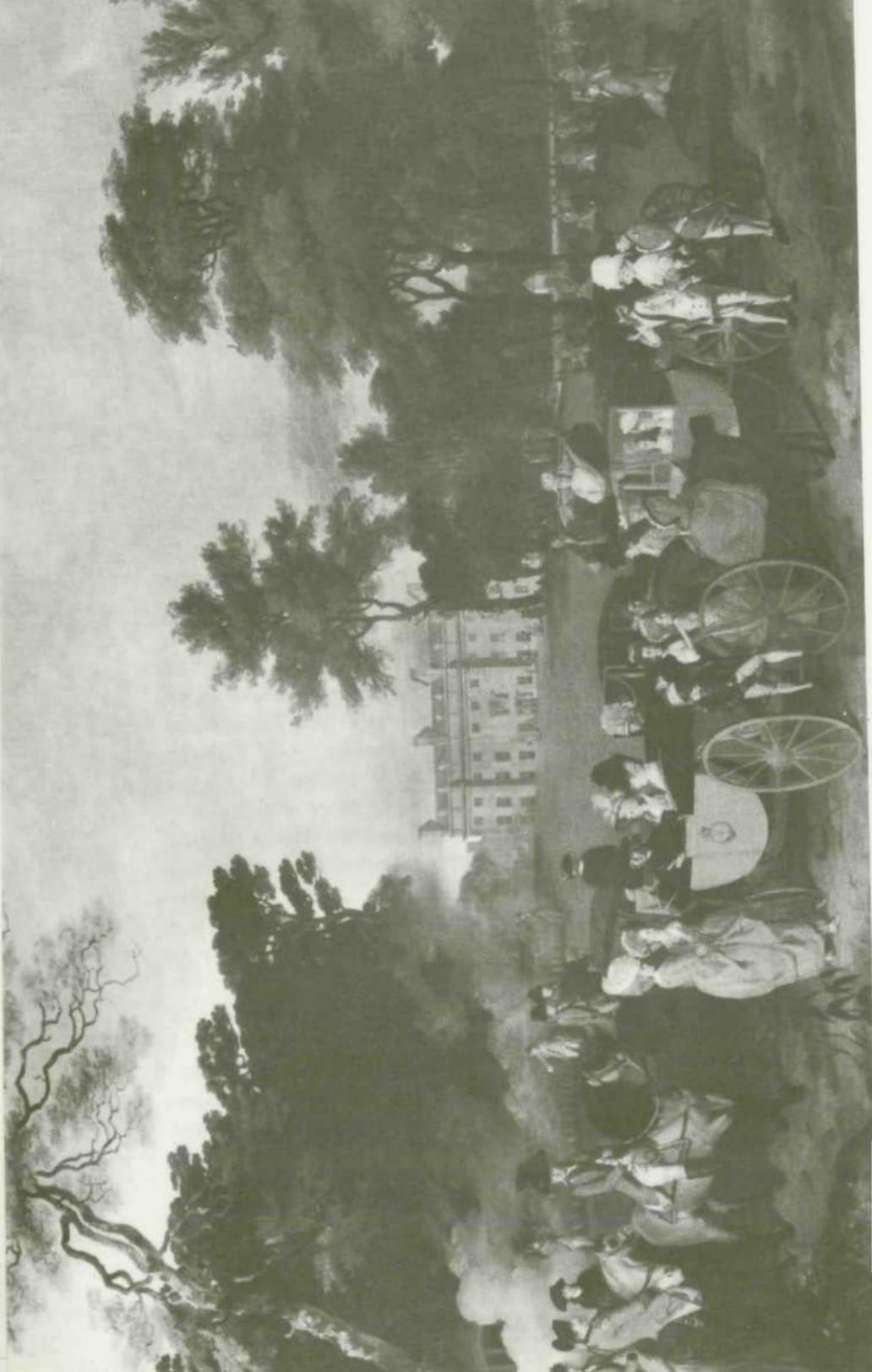
Plate 2 The Irish House of Commons (1780). *By courtesy of Sir Alvary Gascoigne*



Ireland in 1771. Wheatley's choice was therefore a sensible one because contemporary Dublin was likely to appreciate his paintings, so there was no lack of potential patrons. Furthermore, he arrived "at a time favourable for his professional exertions, as at this period, there was great excitement in the Irish Volunteer Corps . . . Wheatley availed himself of this opportunity and being a spectator of one of the first great public meetings . . . he made a drawing of the review, from which he shortly afterwards painted a picture in oil, in which several portraits of distinguished individuals were introduced."<sup>5</sup> (Plate 1).

Whether the painting of the "Dublin Volunteers on College Green" to which the reference above refers, was specially commissioned, or painted by Wheatley with an eye to its eventual sale to the Duke of Leinster, is not clear. It was put up for raffle, but eventually bought by the Duke whose descendant presented it to the National Gallery of Ireland in 1891. The scene represents the Volunteers of the City and County of Dublin parading on 4th November, 1779, to celebrate the anniversary of William III's birth and his landing in England. A statue of the King by Grinling Gibbons, which has since been destroyed, was at that time on College Green. In the background is the facade of Trinity College and behind a belltower by Richard Castle demolished in 1798,<sup>6</sup> with the projecting bays of Pearce's Parliament House on the left of the picture. The central figure is the 2nd Duke of Leinster who is shewn leading the Dublin Volunteers in blue, buff and red. It is a striking instance of the ambivalent attitude of the Anglo-Irish aristocracy that while the Duke, premier nobleman of Ireland, was a General of the Volunteers, his younger brother Lord Edward Fitzgerald was involved in the 1798 Rebellion escaping execution only because he died of wounds inflicted at the time of his capture.

In the absence of adequate English troops, the Volunteers had been founded during the War of the American Revolution to protect Ireland from French invasion. At first the Volunteers were exclusively Protestant (this was so at the time of the painting), but soon Roman Catholics were allowed to join and the movement developed into a political one, demanding economic and legislative independence from England, which culminated in the Repeal of Poyning's



Act in 1782.

Many of the prominent members of the Protestant ascendancy are represented either commanding their troops or serving in the ranks alongside lawyers, merchants and prosperous tradesmen. Luke Gardiner, later Lord Mountjoy, leads the Barony of Castleknock Corps resplendent in scarlet faced in black, with white waistcoats and breeches. Gardiner was to be killed at the battle of New Ross in 1798. It was he who had commissioned Reynolds in 1773 to paint the Three Graces now in the National Gallery, London, to celebrate his approaching marriage to Elizabeth Montgomery, the central figure of the three, appropriately about to decorate the term of Hymen. John Fitzgibbon, afterwards Earl of Clare and Lord Chancellor of Ireland, one of the most powerful and unscrupulous members of the government and a strong supporter of the Act of Union, is one of the troopers, and so is David La Touche, the senior partner of the famous banking house, and a member of the Irish House of Commons. James Napper Tandy is also among the ranks. He represented the more extreme wing of the political movement, and eventually fled to America. He took part in the 1798, was captured and sentenced to death, but allowed to leave the country. An unexpected spectator, sitting at a window on the left with a parasol held over her, is Princess Dashkov who was at that time out of favour with the Empress Catherine and was on a protracted tour of Europe. She records in her memoirs her admiration for Dublin and the wit and sparkle of its society, and attended debates in the House of Commons singling out Grattan for praise.<sup>7</sup> The painting was exhibited at the Society of Artists in William Street, Dublin in the same year and excited considerable attention, bringing Wheatley to the notice of the discriminating public. An engraving by J. Colyer was made in 1784, taken from the water-colour which is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

The next picture Wheatley painted was thematically linked with the "Volunteers", illustrating as it were the next act in the drama. This is the "Irish House of Commons" with Henry Grattan making his famous speech on 19th April 1780 in favour of the motion "that the people of Ireland are of right an independent nation and ought to be bound by laws made by the King, Lords and Commons of



Plate 4. General Irwin at a Review in the Phoenix Park (1781).  
*By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London*

Ireland."<sup>8</sup> (Plate 2). Architecturally the painting is of great interest as it gives a detailed account of Sir Edward Lovett Pearce's old House of Commons destroyed by fire in 1792.<sup>9</sup> That the artist has chosen to commemorate a particular event rather than a general portrait group of the Members going about their everyday business is very much part of later eighteenth century English painting where, beginning in 1771 with West's "Death of Wolfe",<sup>10</sup> and perhaps most closely paralleled in Copley's "Death of Chatham" of 1779-80,<sup>11</sup> contemporary events were recorded with the actors in modern dress. Wheatley's picture has a flavour of political propaganda and in this it looks forward to David's "Oath of the Tennis Court".<sup>12</sup> Yet how undramatic Wheatley is in comparison. There is also something of the detailed portrait groups of Zoffany such as the "Life Class of the Royal Academy," (1772).<sup>13</sup> The polygonal shape of the Chamber gives an overall pattern to the composition to which Wheatley has failed to give added point by not concentrating on the principal figure, who could easily be overlooked as one's eye runs over the benches packed with Members in varying degrees of inattention and apparently quite unmoved by any emotion. It cannot be the completely truthful representation it might seem, as appearance in the picture depended on subscription to an engraving to be done after it: "several of the early subscribers, who had paid half price as sitters for the picture, had been rubbed out to substitute others who had also paid half price as subscribers . . . the picture was never finished, nor at the period produced for public approval."<sup>14</sup> An advertisement appeared in the Dublin Evening Post on 10th October 1801 for an engraving, but this was never carried out. By 1783 the picture had been disposed of by raffle and at the beginning of the nineteenth century was in the possession of Sir Thomas Gascoigne, in whose family it still remains.

Another Volunteer picture shewing a review is now at Waddesdon Manor, Buckinghamshire (Plate 3). It represents Lord Aldborough on his horse Pomposo reviewing the troops in Belan Park, Co. Kildare, his country seat.<sup>15</sup> The 2nd Earl of Aldborough, who died in 1801, was widely known in both England and Ireland for his amiable eccentricity and was a great patron of the turf.<sup>16</sup> A staunch Whig, who was later to vote for the Union, his joining the Volun-



teers is evidence that at this stage there did not appear to be any discrepancy between devotion to the principles of the Glorious Revolution and a desire for greater freedom for Ireland. Only the Rebellion of 1798 brought this brief honeymoon period to an end and forced the Anglo-Irish aristocracy to decide between dependence on England or revolt. During the Volunteer period the Earl raised a regiment known as the Aldborough Legion, presumably those troops drawn up in the left background. The ladies in or standing by the carriage with coronet and monogram are almost certainly the Earl's wife, mother and three sisters, one of whom married the 3rd Viscount Powerscourt.<sup>17</sup>

It is interesting that Wheatley's relations with members of the Volunteer movement should be so close, and although he did paint pictures of two members of the government at Dublin Castle, they should both have been popular figures. One is similar in subject matter to the Aldborough picture: General Sir John Irwin at a review in the Phoenix Park (Plate 4). General Irwin is seen leaning somewhat nonchalantly on his saddle and holding out his hand, in the gesture of a Roman warrior, for a despatch, three officers beside him, and behind, the open space of the Park where the lines of soldiers can barely be distinguished. Irwin, who is wearing the star and ribbon of the Bath, was born in Dublin, and had been Governor of Gibraltar before becoming Commander-in-Chief in Ireland in 1775. He seems to have been a popular and convivial character and was a favourite with George III, as well as being a correspondent of Lord Chesterfield, but extravagance and high living forced him to end his days in Italy. The picture is dated 1781 and is now in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

Also painted in 1781 is the family group of the 5th Earl of Carlisle, still at Castle Howard, Yorkshire (Plate 5). It marks a development in Wheatley's integration of landscape and figures, with much more sensitive treatment of the landscape as something existing of its own right rather than a backdrop to the figures. During his stay in Ireland Wheatley produced numerous water-colours of scenes from Irish life in which a picturesque arrangement of figures in landscape is the main object, but at least he had looked more closely and appreciatively at the countryside. This new feeling, albeit on a

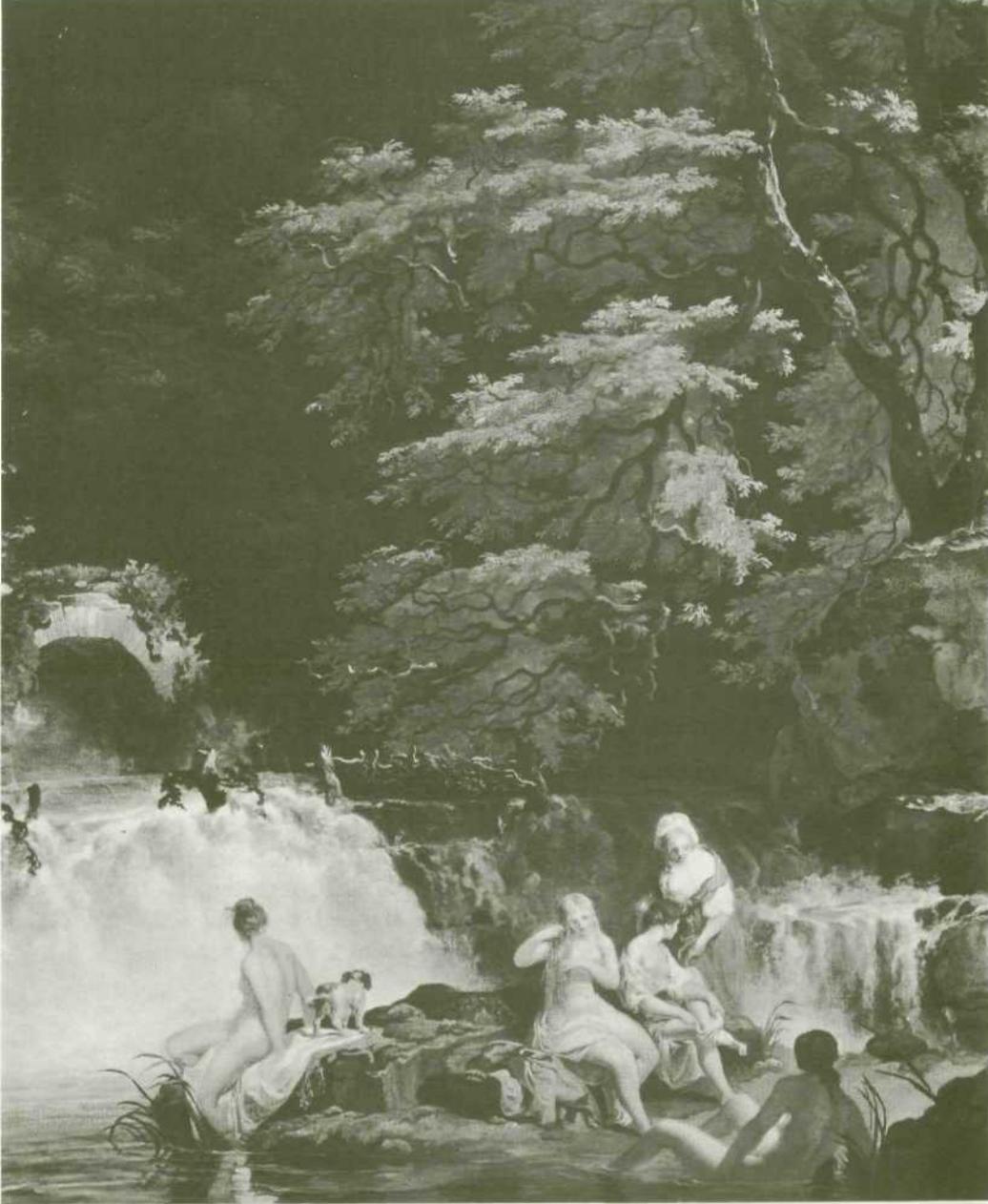
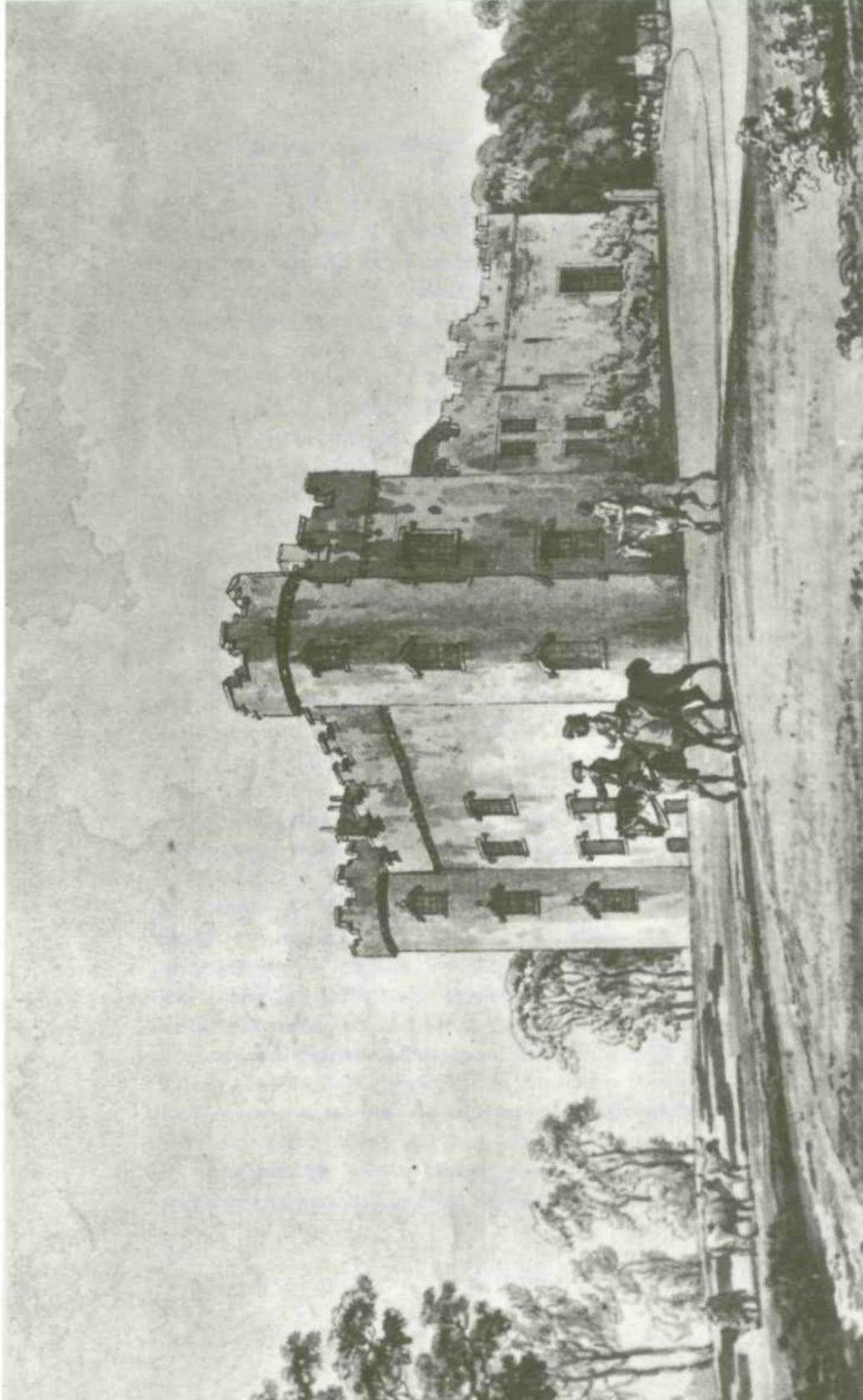


Plate 6 Nymphs bathing at the Salmon Leap, Leixlip. *By courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon*

lower plane, can be compared with Stubbs' paintings such as the Melbourne and Milbanke Families of 1770.<sup>18</sup> Surrounded by members of his family and entourage, the Earl is on a white horse and wears the star and ribbon of the Thistle. It was in the robes of this order that Reynolds has immortalised Lord Carlisle combining the pose of the Apollo Belvedere with the romantic panache and splendour of Van Dyck and Veronese.<sup>19</sup> After a somewhat dissipated youth, when he was one of the best dressed men of his day, extravagance forced him to retire to his estates for a period of retrenchment. His later career was more sober and public spirited, and in 1778 he was on the commission sent to investigate the discontent in North America. To the burden of his official duties was added a disagreement with Lafayette which almost ended in a duel. In October 1780 Lord Carlisle was appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland where he was well liked for his advocacy of greater Irish political independence from England, coinciding with the climax of the Volunteer movement. His resignation in 1782 was widely regretted.

In addition to these ambitious portrait groups Wheatley painted a number of single figures in small half or whole lengths, and made water-colour or oil compositions of Irish fairs and gypsies or sketches of the countryside which must have been used as the basis for paintings after he returned to England. In the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon is a charming view of the Salmon Leap at Leixlip enlivened by a group of local girls masquerading as nymphs (Plate 6). A number of the topographical drawings were later engraved<sup>20</sup>, for instance his view of Malahide Castle (Plate 7). Sometime between 1783, when according to the catalogue of the Society of Artists, Wheatley was still in Ireland, and 1784, when the Royal Academy catalogue gives him a London address, he returned to England. The scandal of his elopement now being forgotten, and the debts he contracted in Dublin, as well as the discovery of his passing off Mrs. Gresse as his wife, suggested a change of scene.

The years in Ireland were only an interlude in Wheatley's career and it was after them that he produced his best known works, the sentimental scenes from lower life, and the Cries of London. Yet the Irish period was not unimportant in the development of Wheatley's style. Never before had he painted pictures so ambitious



in size and in the number of figures, and while the House of Commons and the Volunteers remain unparalleled in his *oeuvre*, on his return to England the portrait group in a landscape became part of his repertoire. If the scale of Wheatley's Irish paintings is exceptional, so is the seriousness of the subject matter, and it raises the question of what were his links with the political opposition. As far as we know, his two most important pictures, the "Volunteers in College Green" and the "House of Commons", were not commissioned, but painted on the artist's initiative. There is no need to suggest that Wheatley was either involved in, or even sympathetic towards, the opposition movement, but it does indicate a political awareness. Perhaps he was astute enough to see what was in the wind and speculated on easily disposing of his pictures and the engravings after them. As a further link with the opposition, he painted a portrait of Grattan, now in the National Portrait Gallery, London, (Plate 8) which was engraved in 1782, which was the climax of the movement for the Repeal of Poyning's Act. Lord Aldborough was a leading Volunteer, and the Earl of Carlisle was at least as well disposed towards Irish freedom as his official position allowed, while both the Lord Lieutenant and the Commander-in-Chief were popular figures. Thus there is unity among Wheatley's major works painted in Ireland as all are connected with the Volunteer movement or with those who were not unsympathetic to it. Why Wheatley chose to paint the most stirring events in eighteenth century Ireland rather than confine himself to his usual run of single portraits and picturesque rustic scenes we cannot know. We can only be grateful that his visit coincided with the Volunteer Movement and that his eye and brush were capable of recording the characters and events of history for posterity.



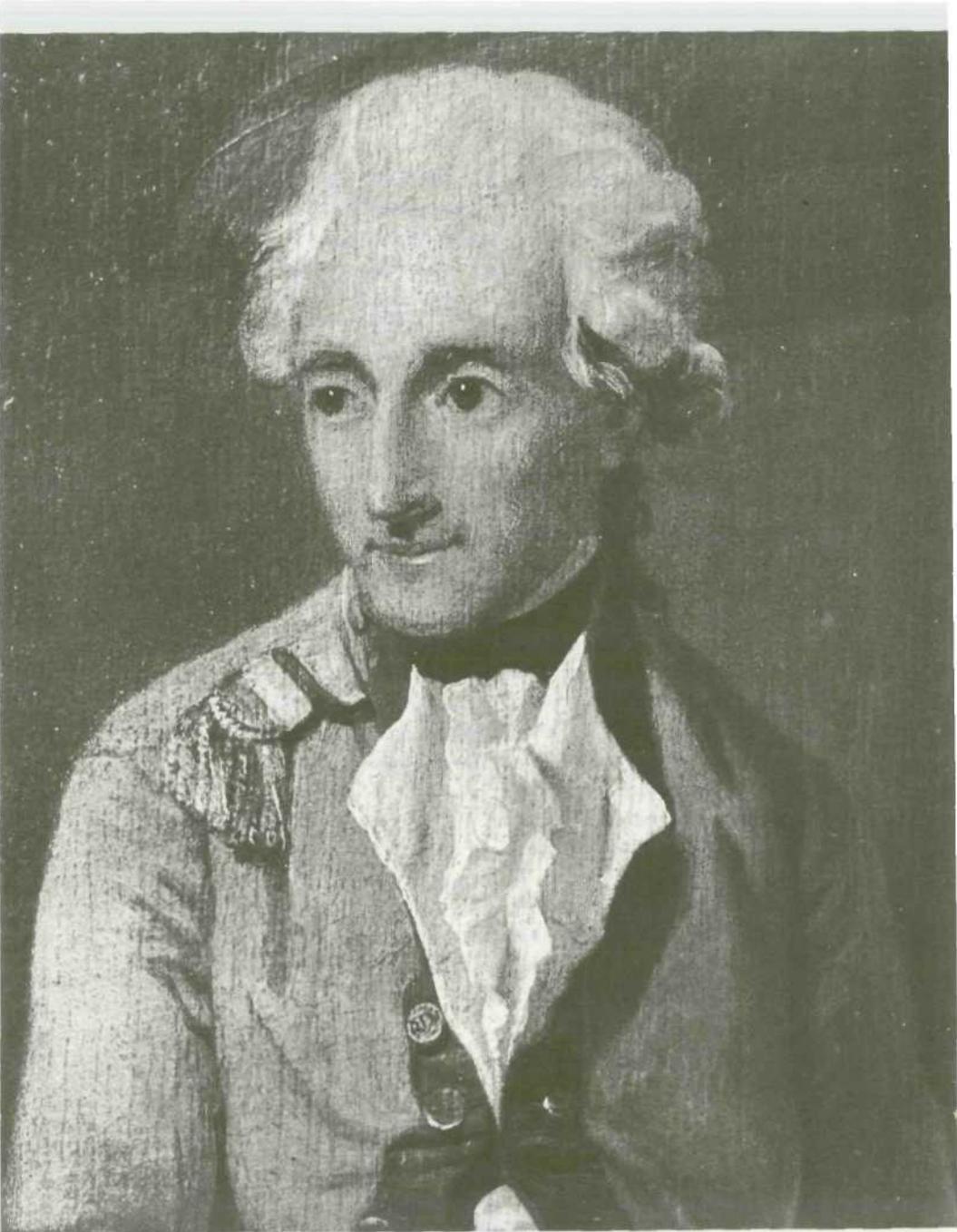


Plate 8. Henry Grattan, M.P. *By courtesy of the National Portrait Gallery, London*

## NOTES

1. This article is an expanded version of a short notice in "Apollo", August, 1965, P- 139-
2. J. Gandon and T. J. Mulvany *Life of James Gandon*, 1846, p. 206.
3. E. Edwards *Anecdotes of Painters*, 1808, p. 268.
4. W. Roberts *Francis Wheatley R.A.*, 1910, p. 2, says 1767 relying on the archives of the Society of Arts.
5. Gandon and Mulvany *op. cit.* pp. 206-7.
6. I am indebted to Dr. R. B. McDowell of Trinity College, Dublin, for this information.
7. Kyril Fitzlyon, transl. *Memoirs of Princess Dashkov* 1959, pp. 149-151.
8. The picture is dated "June 8th 1780" so Wheatley must have worked hard to produce so many portraits.
9. The architecture differs from a drawing by Pearce which has single columns at the angles of the gallery and sculpted keystones in the arches of the lower floor. Illustrated in Howard Colvin and Maurice Craig *Architectural Drawings in the Library of Elton Hall by Sir John Vanbrugh and Sir Edward Lovett Pearce*, 1964, cat. no. I, pi. XLV.
10. Illustrated in Ellis Waterhouse *Painting in Britain 1530-1ygo*, 1953 (168B).
11. Also taking place in Parliament, this time the House of Lords. Illustrated in James Thomas Flexner *John Singleton Copley*, 1948 (24).
12. Illustrated in Walter Friedlaender *David to Delacroix*, 1963 (9).
13. Illustrated in Waterhouse *op. cit.* (190B).
14. Gandon *op. cit.* pp. 207-8.
15. Built in 1743 by Richard Castle and Francis Bindon. It was allowed to decay in the nineteenth century and was later burnt, but a temple and two obelisks survive.
16. Constantia Maxwell *Country and Town in Ireland under the Georges*, 1943, pp. 31-2.
17. Almost certainly the picture exhibited at the Society of Arts, 1783, as "The Review of Irish Volunteers in the Phoenix Park, Dublin".
18. Illustrated in Waterhouse *op. cit.* (182).
19. Illustrated in Ellis Waterhouse *Reynolds* (131).
20. Malahide Castle, Marino, Howth House, Lismore Castle, Glen Molaur, the Salmon Leap at Leixlip and Tarbert were engraved by Thomas Milton in his "Collection of Select Views from the different seats of the Nobility and Gentry of Ireland", published before 1794. St. Wolstan's, Co. Kildare, Enniskerry, and the seashore at Howth, were engraved by W. and J. Walker in the "Copper-Plate Magazine or Monthly Cabinet of Picturesque Prints consisting of Sublime and Interesting Views of Great Britain and Ireland 1792-1804".



St. Stephen's Green, Dublin, 1965—the wreckers at work.  
*Photo: Green Studio*



Mountjoy Square, Dublin (1789 onwards)

# IRISH GEORGIAN SOCIETY

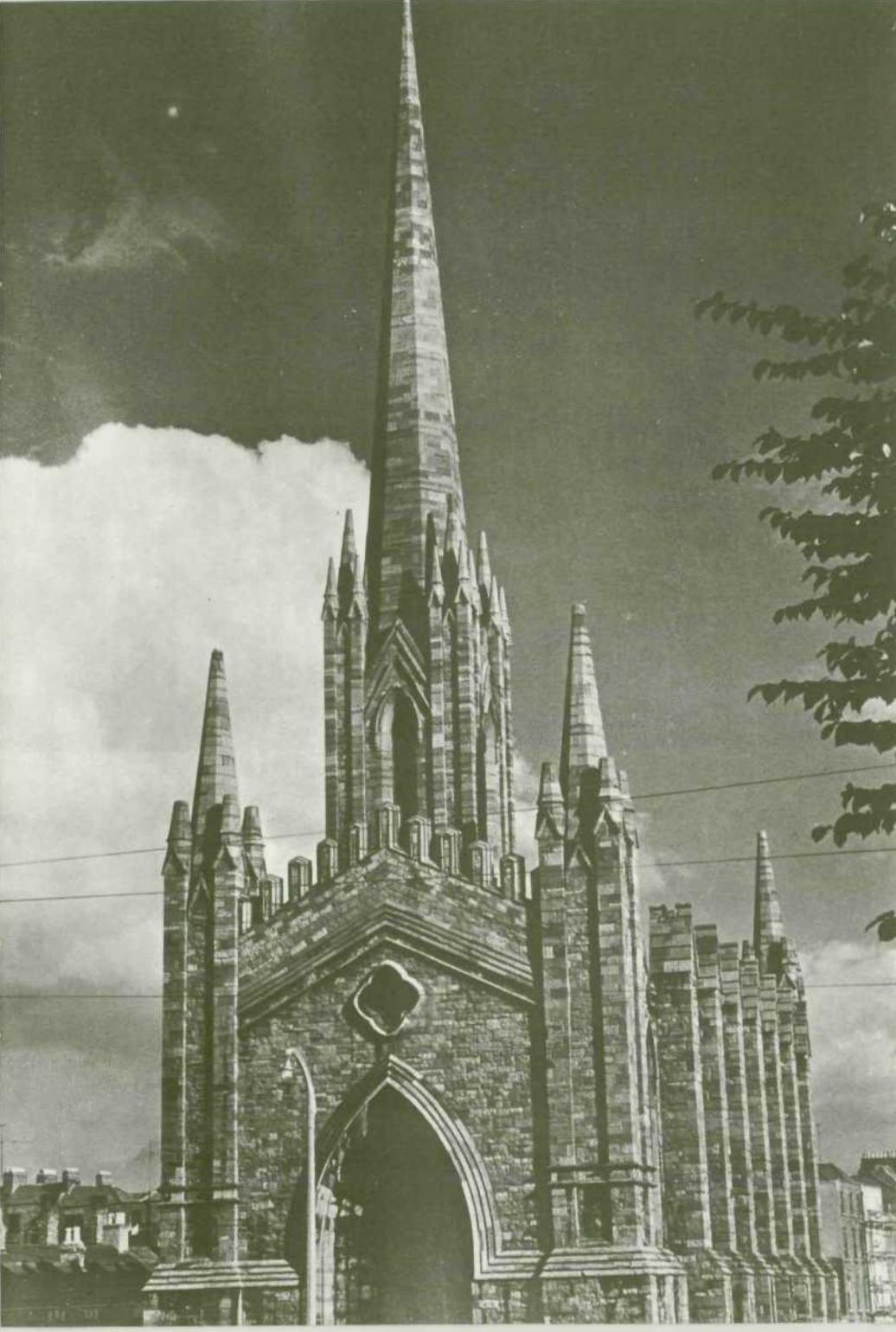
by Desmond Guinness

The Society continues to expand and, if the present rate of growth continues, should have over three thousand members by the end of 1966. We should like to take this opportunity of thanking members for their support, especially for the response to the Riverstown appeal which was particularly generous—no fewer than 128 contributions towards the cost of the restoration project at Riverstown were received within one month of the appeal being sent out. A large membership does bring its problems with it, however, and we receive the strangest enquiries. On one day in February, for instance, we were asked to value some furniture for a member in Limerick (photos enclosed), and to provide hunt ball escorts for the 17 year old daughters of two members in South Carolina (no photos).

The need for an active preservation group in Ireland is obvious. The National Monuments branch of the Board of Works has approximately 800 monuments of all kinds in its care, but only employs one architect and one archaeologist. Indeed, from the figures published it would appear that they spend more on the administrative staff than on those actually engaged in the work of repair and maintenance of these monuments.

The Tourist Board however has an annual budget of £1.8m., some of which has to be spent on trying to lure people to Ireland. What do they use as bait? An empty road, or people playing ball on the beach. How dramatic one of our red brick squares would look, advertising "Ireland's eighteenth century Capital". As our climate is unjustly famous for being wet, few are likely to be brought here by the deck-chair and palm-tree, or be tempted to make the tedious journey just to escape from traffic congestion.

Black Church, St. Mary's Place, Dublin (John Semple, 1830)





Riverstown House, Co. Cork—the Francini room (1745)

The Chapel, Fiddown, Co. Kilkenny (1747)



The Dromana Gateway, Co. Waterford (1849)





Charleville Forest, Co. Offaly (Francis Johnston, 1797-1801). *Photo: Country Life*

Eighteenth century architecture has great popular appeal. People flock to see it in every civilised country in Europe, and even in Russia and America where nearly one *million* people visit Williamsburg every year. Nobody yet knows what treasures Ireland has in store, because our image abroad has always been the thatched cottage. Unless steps are taken soon to preserve the most important areas of Dublin, and to provide grants for the repair and maintenance of significant buildings, we shall have thrown away our greatest national asset.

### MOUNTJOY SQUARE, DUBLIN

In a recent Dublin High Court action, Leinster Estates, who own many houses in Mountjoy Square, were directed to give support to No. 50, the property of Mrs. D. Guinness. By pulling down the adjoining houses (Nos. 49 & 51) they had left No. 50 in a dangerous condition. A preservation order for Mountjoy Square is being sought to ensure that any new facades will conform to the general pattern as laid down by the Gardiner estates in 1789. If anyone is interested in acquiring houses in Mountjoy Square, or its surroundings, the Irish Georgian Society will be pleased to inform them of any available property. It is hoped that No. 50 will become an architectural reference library and archive office for the Irish Georgian Society, when the restoration has been completed.

### THE TAILORS HALL, BACK LANE, DUBLIN (1706)

The last eighteenth century Guildhall to survive in Dublin, this historic building is shored up at present, and will only be saved if enough people show an interest in it and act now. All the facts will be put before a meeting to be held at the Ely Hall, Ely Place, Dublin on Monday, 6th June, 1966, at 8 p.m., and everyone who feels that the Tailor's Hall should be saved, and is willing to help, is welcome to come. An account of the history of the Hall appeared in our Bulletin No. 2, 1960, by William Dillon, who expressed the hope that a suitable tenant would be found to restore it at that time, but six years later it is still empty.

## THE BLACK CHURCH, ST. MARY'S PLACE, DUBLIN

Formerly the chapel-of-ease to St. Mary's, Mary Street, the Black Church was de-consecrated in 1962 and in danger of being demolished, although a solid building of great architectural significance (Bulletin No. 2, 1964). It was designed by John Semple in 1830. The interior consists of one gigantic parabolic arch, and much of the detailing is most original. We were joined by John Betjeman, An Taisce, the Old Dublin Society, the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland and the National Monuments in our appeal to the Church of Ireland to save this building, but its future is still in the balance.

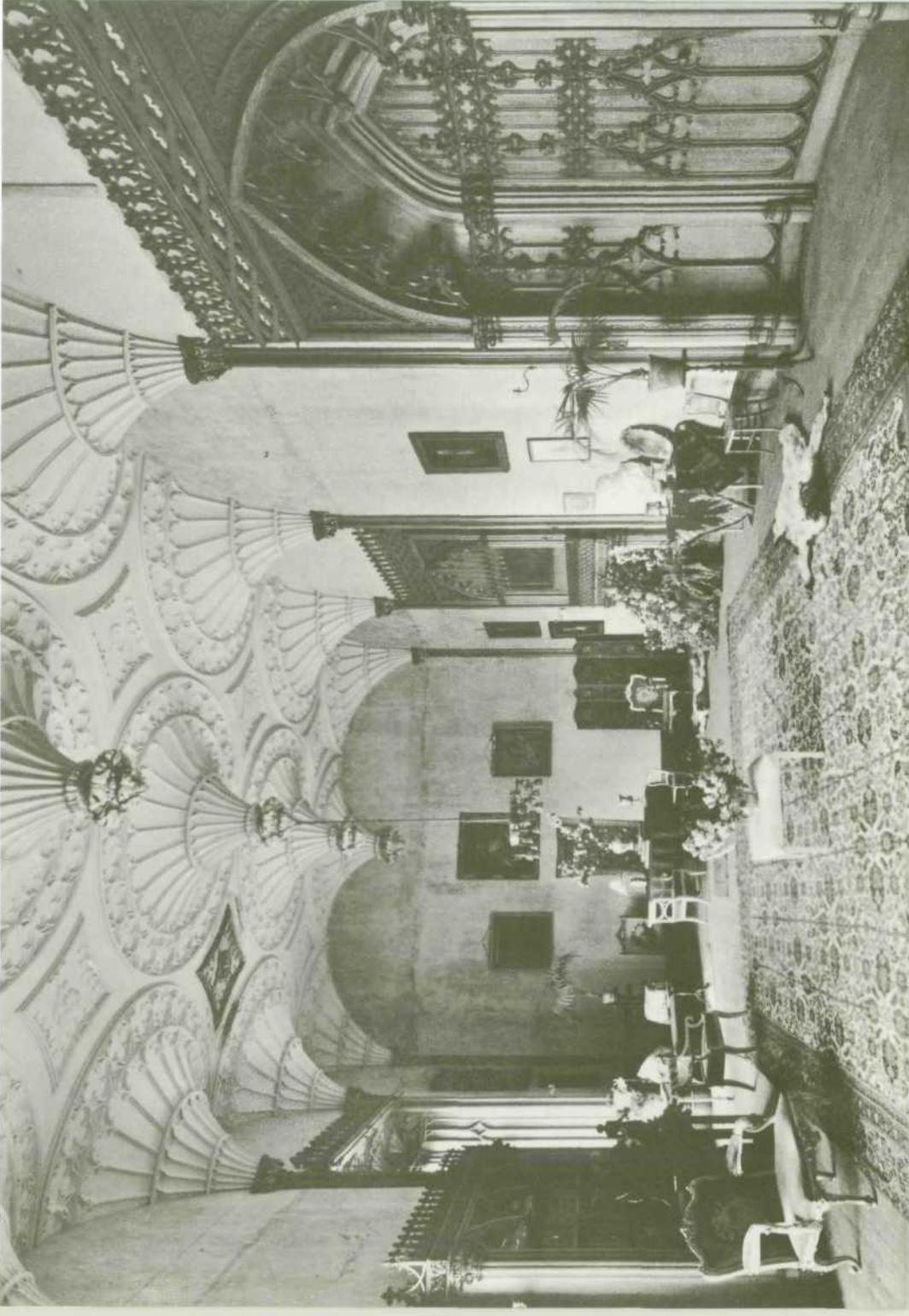
## RIVERSTOWN HOUSE, GLANMIRE, CO. CORK

Volunteers are invited to come to Riverstown between 25-28 April to help prepare for the 1966 tourist season. The house will be open to the public from May—September, 10 a.m.—6 p.m. daily (2/6). Members will be most welcome to attend the Opening which will take place on Sunday, 1st May, 4 p.m. at Riverstown, to which the Munster branch of the Irish National Trust is also invited.

Mrs. M. C. Trippé of Tangier, who is the last of the Jcmmett Brownes of Riverstown House, has very kindly offered the Society a large Album relating to the family which contains estate maps, family trees, and so on, and she has also promised to present the Bishop's Seal which belonged to the Builder of the house, for display at Riverstown. Mr. and Mrs. Finbarr O'Sullivan of Cork and Kinsale have most generously offered the loan of an eighteenth century Cork rent table, a small hunting table, and a Cork barometer, and Mr. Hugh Maude of Carlow is presenting Riverstown with an Irish Chippendale sofa. Mr. Paul Johnston of the Georgian Shop, South William Street, Dublin has given a lantern for the front hall. *We should like to express the thanks of all our members for their great kindness.*

## THE CHAPEL, FIDDOWN, CO. KILKENNY

Volunteers are invited to come and help with the restoration work



in the exquisite chapel at Fiddown, which was described in Bulletin No. 4, 1965, between the 8th and the **uthjune**, 1966. Please **bring** picks and spades, as we hope to dig a ditch around it.

#### DROMANA GATEWAY

The amazing Hindu-Gothick gateway at **Dromana**, Cappoquin, Co. Waterford, is about to be restored by **the** Irish Georgian Society. The only example of "Brighton Pavilion" architecture in Ireland, it dominates a (dangerous) bridge over the River Finisk and now belongs to the Forestry Commission. A pale green onion dome surmounts the Gothick archway, which is flanked by slender minarets that have been falling one by one into the water below.

Mr. Don O'Neill Flanagan, the Waterford architect who is most kindly giving his services free, has prepared the necessary specifications and in January 1966 he met the County Surveyor and Bridge Engineer, a C.I.E. bus tour representative etc., on the site and nothing now stands in the way of the reconstruction. Since we have now agreed with Mr. John Costin, builder, of Cappoquin, an estimate of (£583, donations will be gratefully received and may be sent to the Irish Georgian Society, Leixlip Castle, Co. Kildare.

As Droinana is fairly near both Fiddown and Riverstown, a party from both places will be going there to lend a hand while work is in progress.

#### CHARLEVILLE FOREST, TULLAMORE, CO. OFFALY

Volunteers are invited to help clean up and mend the roof and windows of Charleville, Francis Johnston's most important gothic building in Ireland, between June 15-18. Although it has stood empty for many years now, Charleville only needs to be made watertight to survive until a suitable use can be found for it. It must not be allowed to deteriorate.

#### ROBERTSTOWN GRAND CANAL FESTA, CO. KILDARE

In 1966, the Robertstown Canal Festa is being extended to two weeks, starting July 31st, and the Irish Georgian Society are hoping



The old Canal **Hotel**, Robertstown, Co. Kildare (1801)

**The Courthouse**, Dunlavin, Co. Wicklow.

*Photo: Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland*



to mount an exhibition in one of the rooms of the old Canal Hotel there. Volunteers are needed for looking after the exhibition—please write to **the** Irish Georgian Society, Leixlip Castle, Co. Kildare. The annual Cricket Match will **be** played at Robertstown on Sunday, August 7th, at 3 p.m., according to the rules of 1744.

#### THE DUNLAVIN COURTHOUSE, CO. WICKLOW

Members who visited **Russborough** on July 7th, 1962 will remember that we saw the Dunlavin Courthouse afterwards with its mossy dome made of fluted granite. The building, which houses the local fire engine, has recently had a bad fire, when the engine and many yards of hose were burnt, but fortunately the dome escaped damage. Now is surely the time to restore this beautiful building and find a better use for it. People have suggested that it would make a good Library, or perhaps a centre of the Eastern Regional Tourism Organisation, a Village Hall, or a Museum.

It was erected by the Hon. James Worth-Tynte, P.C., who died in 1758. The building is of cut granite in the Doric style; two porticos project from the domed centre at either end. In 1835 it was repaired by Lady Tynte, at which time the arches were built up and windows inserted. The date of the building is uncertain, but James Tynte married in 1702 and died in 1758. It would be convenient on stylistic grounds to attribute it to Richard Castle and date it c. 1745, but there is no evidence for this. James's son Robert Tynte married Lady Elizabeth Stratford, daughter of the first Earl of Aldborough, who had employed Castle to build Belan, Co. Kildare nearby in 1743, collaborating (as at Russborough two years later) with Francis **Bindon**, and this may have been the link between Tynte and Castle.

#### GILL HALL, DROMORE, CO. DOWN

The Society has now agreed to spend approximately £450 in making Gill Hall watertight, so that the fabric of this important seventeenth century house does stand a chance of survival if the National Trust, or some rich philanthropist, decides it is worth restoring properly. Our architect for this project is Desmond



The finely carved front door at Gill Hall, Co. Down (c. 1670).

*Photo: Lord Rossmore*

Hodges, Malone Road, Belfast, and the building contractor is Mr. Higginson of Lurgan; work was due to start in March 1966. Mr. Richard Gordon of Larne has been most helpful in making arrangements for Gill Hall's rescue.

Gill Hall is one of the oldest unfortified houses in Ireland, built between 1670 and 1680 by John Magill on land granted by Charles II, and it still retains its' carved wood panelling of the period. In 1774 it became the property of the Earls of Clanwilliam **through** marriage with the heiress of Gill Hall, Theodosia Hawkins-Magill. Many ghost stories are told about **the** house, which has the reputation of being the most haunted in Ireland, and which has stood empty and deserted for many years.

*Excellent restoration work is going on now in Dublin **Castle** and at the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham which, being functional buildings in State care, come under the Board of Works' architectural branch. Mr. Martin Burke, architect in charge, describes the work at the*

#### ROYAL HOSPITAL, KILMAINHAM (1680)

In a new coat of copper and gold the spire of the Royal Hospital again stands high and free over Old Kilmainham. Soon the Tower beneath it, too, will shed its scaffolding and Stage I of the restoration will be visibly complete.

The work done has extended over the Chapel, the Great Hall, the Master's Quarters, the Tower and parts of the adjacent West and East Wings. It has embraced eradication of very extensive dry rot and woodworm attacks, removal of a large footage of decayed bond timbering, renewal of the roof coverings, a delicate and dangerous job of underpinning to the Tower, and many other operations too numerous to recite and too complex to describe here. In its total effect, however, the work has brought the North Wing to a condition of structural soundness which it has not enjoyed since its very early years and has paved the way for the more obvious tasks yet to be performed.

These will be carried out under Stage II which will include the more straightforward structural reconstruction of the East, South

and West wings, and the finishing and adaptation of the whole for use as a Folk Life Museum. While still highly technical, the work will raise more problems of an historical and architectural nature than have hitherto been encountered, but preliminary studies have shown that there should be no difficulty in solving them and that all the features that **give** the Royal Hospital its particular character and charm can be retained.

Contributing to this charm are the fields and gardens to the west and north of the main buildings: they make a spacious foreground for Robinson's architectural masterpiece. Despite the constant demand for building sites it has been found possible so far to resist their acquisition, not alone on the ground that to build there would be a form of spoliation, but for the practical reason that they will afford a unique setting for the display of replicas or translations of characteristic Irish village architecture in the form of an outdoor museum, on the lines of the collection at Arnhem.

It will take time to build up the Folk Life Museum, but there is goodwill for the project, and there could not be a more fitting use for which to adapt our earliest major secular building.

The Royal Hospital, Kilmainham (Sir William Robinson, 1680)

*Photo: Martin Burke*

