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PRICE TEN SHILLINGS



FRANCIS
BINDON

(c.1690-1765)

HIS LIFE AND WORKS
BY
THE KNIGHT OF GLIN

Title page: The carved mahogany frame of Bindon's portrait of Primate Boulter is alleged also to have been designed by him. (Reproduced by kind permission of the Provost of Trinity College, Dublin.)

Note. The ground plans throughout are always of the ground floor and are based on sketch plans and therefore are not totally accurate.

FRANCIS BINDON

I THE PAINTER AND ARCHITECT

The name of Francis Bindon is today only occasionally heard of either as a dim portrait painter to be found in the footnotes of Swiftiana or as the occasional architectural collaborator of Ireland's most prolific Palladian architect, the German Richard Castle. What role he played in the partnership remains somewhat obscure, but Bindon's name after those of Sir Edward Lovett Pearce and Castle ranks third in importance in the chronological history of the Irish Palladian movement. It must with all fairness be added that his stature as an architect also falls conveniently in this category of the third rate.

Bindon's documented *oeuvre* is small but I shall seek to show that a number of houses that cannot stylistically be ascribed to Pearce or Castle probably can be given to him. He designed possibly only one public building, but practised successfully as a portrait painter.¹

Bindon was *par excellence* a gentleman amateur turning his hand from the easel to the drawing board with equal interest, and as he came from a land-owning family, undoubtedly he possessed a private income. His father, David Bindon of Cloony, Co. Clare was M.P. for Ennis, a seat that the family partially controlled, for both the architect and his brother another David at different times represented this borough in the Irish parliament. Bindon was well connected and a further brother, Samuel, had married in 1716 Anne, daughter of Thomas Coote of Coote Hill, who significantly enough was an aunt of Sir Edward Lovett Pearce.² Bindon's obituary states that he "was one of the best Painters and Architects this Nation has

1. See Strickland, *Dictionary of Irish Artists* (Dublin & London, 1913) Vol. I, p. 63-67 for a short biography of him.

2. A MS genealogy of the Bindon family exists in the Office of Arms Dublin Castle. Registered Pedigrees, Vol. 17. Bindon had five brothers and three sisters.

ever produced", and continues saying "he was a most Polite, well-bred gentleman and an excellent scholar which he improved by his Travels abroad."³

It is not unlikely that his interest in architecture evolved through his connection with Pearce and no doubt he became a familiar in the Pearce circle in about 1726 after Pearce returned from his Italian grand tour and English visits. It also should be added that architectural and artistic circles in Dublin were extremely small at this period and obviously these three men formed a coterie of *cognoscenti* bound together by their knowledge of the continent and interest in the arts.

Bindon's birth date is unknown but he seems to have been much the same age as Pearce and Castle.⁴ Before treating his buildings it would be well to review briefly his career as a portrait painter.

In 1733 Bindon was given the Freedom of the Guild of St. Luke in Dublin—the Corporation of Painter-Stainers, and in 1734 he painted the Viceroy, Lionel Sackville, Duke of Dorset.⁵ Evidently hereafter his fashionable patronage was secure and indeed when better painters such as Jervas left for England competition no doubt was slight. Today Bindon is chiefly remembered for his portraits of Swift. According to Pasquin "he lived in habits of intimacy with Dean Swift, Dean Delany and Dr Sheridan, and painted their portraits."⁶ Certainly he painted Swift four times between 1735 and 1740.⁷ Indeed in 1740 William Dunkin wrote "*An Epistle to Francis Bindon Esq occasioned by his painting a picture of the Rev. Dr. Swift, Dean of St. Patricks*" and a few lines of this panegyric are worth repeating:

"Whilst on the Canvas, by your matchless hands
Contest, the Father of his country stands,
We praise the wond'rous Man whose bold Design
Aspir'd to imitate the Form Divine,
What curious Pencil from the Shades of Night
Call'd forth each manly Feature into Light. . . ."

3. Faulkner's *Dublin Journal*, June 4-June 8, 1765.

4. Sir John Gilbert in his biography of Bindon in the *D.N.B.* (London, 1908, Vol. II, p. 508) states he was "born at the close of the seventeenth century".

5. Strickland, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 63. There is a list of some of his portraits in this entry.

6. Anthony Pasquin, *An Authentic History of the Professors of Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture, who have practised in Ireland*, (London, 1796), p. 28.

7. *D.N.B.*, *op. cit.*, p. 508.

8. p. 27. It appeared also in Latin in 1741.

Other sitters included Primate Boulter,⁹ Archbishop Cobbe, and Hercules Rowley.¹⁰ The last two were patrons of Richard Castle. Deane Swift, the editor and cousin of Jonathan Swift wrote that he was "intimately acquainted with that gentleman. [Bindon] In the year 1744 there was a party formed against him, which encouraged a stranger to be a rival in fame: on that occasion I wrote such a poem, as at once damned his rival, and shamed his enemies to such a degree that no further encouragement was given to the stranger, nor was he ever more heard of in Dublin." This diatribe against Bindon's rival in painting concludes:

"Forgive these wild, these undescriptive lines;
You see I cannot reach thy vast designs;
Nor dare I praise, where Arts with Art contend,
The Scholar, Painter, Architect and Friend."¹¹

It can be seen then, that in Ireland Bindon enjoyed a very wide reputation. In fact elsewhere Deane Swift called him "The greatest painter and architect of his time in these kingdoms",¹²—certainly a sublime piece of amiable overstatement.

Bindon seems to have lived mostly in Dublin, for in the various documents relating to his land transactions he is always described as "of the City of Dublin",¹³ though he held part of the family estates near Limerick and Brewer calls him "Mr. Bindon of Limerick".¹⁴ So it seems likely that some of his time was spent in the Limerick-Clare district, for, as will be shown in this monograph, there are examples of his architecture there.

9. Thomas Hallie Delamayne wrote anonymously an ode: *To Francis Bindon, Esq on a picture of his grace Dr. Hugh Boulter*, . . . in commemoration of his charities in the years 1739-40 and 1740-41, (London, 1767). This picture is now at the Provost's House, Trinity College, Dublin. Tradition states that Bindon also designed the carved mahogany frame. (Illustrated on the title page.) Verbal information from the late Provost Dr. McAndrew.

10. See *D.N.B. op. cit.*, p. 508 for further references to his portraits.

11. Quoted in John Nichol, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1812-15), Vol. V, p. 384-5. The rival was probably James Worsdale of Hell Fire fame.

12. Deane Swift (editor), *The Works of the Reverend Jonathan Swift*, (Dublin, 1772), Vol. XIX, p. 250 note.

13. Registry of Deeds, Henrietta Street, Dublin, Vol. 94, p. 458 No. 67232; Vol. 134, p. 453, No. 91712; Vol. 161, p. 629, No. 170197; Vol. 143 p. 450, No. 97770; Vol. 183, p. 433, No. 123381; Vol. 226, p. 289, No. 147342. These documents date from 1738 to 1763.

14. J. N. Brewer, *The Beauties of Ireland*, (London, 1825), Vol. I, p. CXXX.

II BUILDINGS

The suggestion has already been made that Bindon must have been well acquainted with his connection by marriage, Sir Edward Lovett Pearce, and we have heard of Bindon's partnerships with Richard Castle. Strickland ascribes a "Mansion for Lord Desart" to Bindon, though he does not state any evidence for this assertion.¹⁵ However, stylistically Desart Court is almost certainly by Pearce's hand so the fact that Strickland calls forth the name of Bindon may have some now forgotten foundation of truth and it could suggest that Bindon worked there for Pearce up to 1733, the year of Pearce's death and the date of the completion of the house.¹⁶ 1733 therefore is the first date that we have indirectly for any possible architectural activity by Bindon. Albeit two slightly earlier dated houses previously unattributed bear the impress of the Pearce-Castle circle, but are not fine enough in handling, composition or arrangement for Pearce or Castle themselves, and it therefore seems likely that they may be Bindon's earliest known buildings. Furness, Co. Kildare (Plate 1) was built by Richard Nevill, probably in 1731,¹⁷ and though an unfortunate later addition has rendered the house asymmetrical its most significant layout (Fig. 1) can still easily be discerned. The central cut stone block is of three bays, the front door enclosed by an over-wide frontispiece with twin Doric columns and the first floor central consoled and pedimented window is inelegantly capped by

15. Strickland, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 63. He also mentions a "Mansion for Mr. Tighe". This has not been identified, unless Rosanna, Co. Wicklow, a Tighe House is also by Bindon, which stylistically seems unlikely for the exterior has little architectural merit. The Tighe in question was undoubtedly the Right Hon. Richard Tighe, M.P., who drew a portrait of William King, Archbishop of Dublin, engraved by Bindon (Strickland, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 64). He was the father of William Tighe of Rosanna. It is not clear whether Richard Tighe lived there or elsewhere. Rosanna however did originally possess a very fine panelled drawing-room, now somewhere in the United States, which could well have been designed by Bindon. Illustrated in *Georgian Society Records*, Vol. V, plates VIII and IX.

16. See T. U. Sadleir and P. L. Dickinson, *Georgian Mansions in Ireland* (Dublin, 1915), p. 55.

17. Sadler & Dickinson, *Ibid.*, p. 76. The house is dated from a sundial which bears the initials R.N. (for Richard Nevill) 1731.



Plate 1. Furness, Co. Kildare. This photograph has been altered to exclude the later additions over the left hand wing. (Reproduced from Sadleir and Dickinson's *Georgian Mansions in Ireland*, plate LXII.)

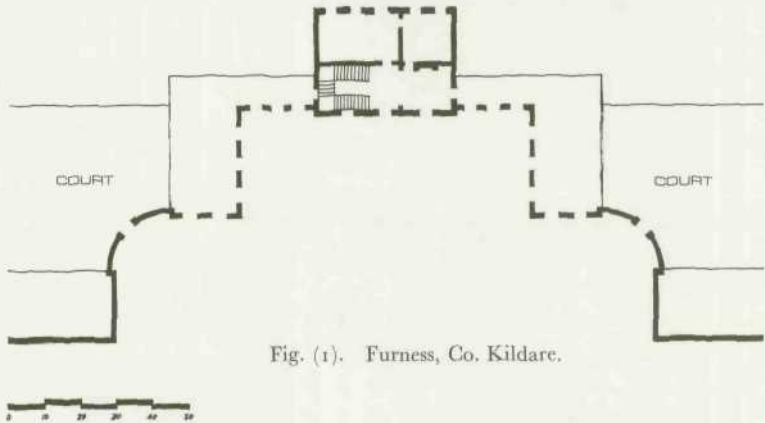


Fig. (1). Furness, Co. Kildare.

a small lunette—in all an awkwardly regulated façade. Flanking this central block are wings and pavilions which lead to small curved quadrants enclosing the kitchen and stable courts. This layout is in fact a smaller version of Castle's Powerscourt, Co. Wicklow, which dates from the same year and is also similar in arrangement to that architect's later Bellinter, Co. Meath. Furness's interior is a simple double pile plan, the front door leading into the staircase hall; a layout reminiscent of the plan of Pearce's No. 9, Henrietta Street. A chimney piece in the hall is taken from Isaac Ware¹⁸ and typical Vitruvian scroll decoration appears on the frieze of the gallery. All these features point to an intimate of the Pearce-Castle circle and Bindon seems a fairly obvious candidate for the authorship of this house.

Another mansion, Clermont, Co. Wicklow (Plate 2) built for the Yarner family which predates Furness by a year,¹⁹ is identical in fenestration though built of red brick with stone dressing and capped by a balustrade. It however lacks the Furness pavilions and quadrants.²⁰ Clermont also shares a like double pile plan, staircase

18. Cf. the mantelpiece in the drawing-room of Castle's Belvedere, Co. Westmeath. See Isaac Ware, *Designs of Inigo Jones and others*, p. 32. The first edition is undated though the second dates from 1735, no doubt the first was out by 1731.

19. The frontispiece is inscribed "Deus Haec otia fecit 1730".

20. A pair of bay windows were added on either side of the façade in 1890.



Plate 2. Clermont, Co. Wicklow,
(Photo by Patrick Rossmore.)

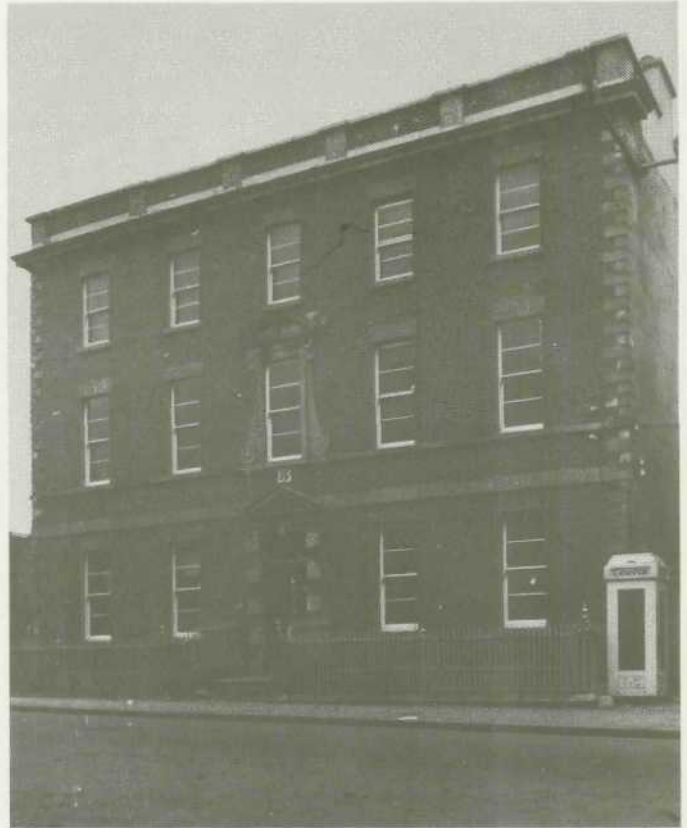


Plate 3. Town House in Drogheda Co. Louth.
(Photo by Patrick Rossmore.)

and rear four-bay façade. However, the interior of the house is much richer with fine fluted plaster ceilings of the Pearce type, marble mantels and the like. It would seem that this work is also probably from Bindon's drawing board.

It is tempting to ascribe the present red brick Police Barracks in Drogheda (Plate 3) to Bindon, for the plan is again of the Furness-Clermont variety with a great staircase confronting one to the left on entrance. The exterior with its orthodox Gibbsian door-case is rendered slightly unusual by the voluted and segmentally pedimented first floor window that rises from the balustrade course and is supported by tiny rather feeble consoles. It is details such as this that suggest the amateur and strengthen, therefore, the possible attribution to Bindon.

In 1735 Bindon painted the famous full length portrait of Swift for William, Lord Howth²¹ which is still in the house, and by 1738 Lord Howth had altered the decayed mediaeval castle into a more habitable residence.²² As Bindon was already employed by Lord Howth it is not too far fetched to ascribe the alterations at Howth to him. A splendid pedimented door incorporating a lion's head and pelt in the frieze was made to lead from a new terrace and steps into the hall. The turrets and battlements of the castle were rendered so as to balance more uniformly and the complete improvement of the exterior with its garden layout can be seen in a bird's eye view of c.1740 still at Howth.²³ The drawing room was redecorated with a fine Inigo Jones type compartmented ceiling possessing an enriched central oval and the chimney piece in this room taken from Isaac Ware²⁴ obviously also dates from the reconstruction. Both these

21. Swift wrote to the Rev. Thomas Sheridan 15-16 June 1735: "I have been fool enough to sit for my Picture at full length for Mr. Bindon for My Ld. Howth. I have just sate 2 hours and a half." Harold Williams (editor) *The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift*, Vol. IV (1732-1736) (Oxford, 1965), p. 352.

22. Francis Elrington Ball, *Howth and Its Owners*, (Dublin, 1917), p. 133, quotes a tablet, long since gone: "This Castle was rebuilt by the Right Honorable William Lord Baron of Howth, Anno Domini 1738." See also Christopher Hussey, "Howth Castle", *Country Life*, Sept. 6, 1930, pp. 280-291 and Sept. 13, pp. 316-321.

23. This must be one of the earliest examples of the castle style revival in Ireland.

24. *Designs of Inigo Jones and others*, p. 48.

decorative interior features are typical of those used by the Pearce-Castle-Bindon group.

Between 1742 and 1743 we know Bindon to have started his collaboration with Richard Castle on Russborough, Co. Wicklow²⁵ and Belan, Co. Kildare. Bindon was probably responsible only for the completion of Russborough after Castle's death in 1751, and Russborough and Belan's architectural features better belong to a biography and description of Castle's life and architectural works in preparation.

Sometime before Sir Edward Lovett Pearce died in 1733 he had written a memorial relating to the siting of a new house at Bessborough, Co. Kilkenny²⁶ for Brabazon Ponsonby, 1st Earl of Bessborough. Evidently nothing was carried out until 1744 and Milton points out "The House was built from the Designs and under **the Inspection** of David [mistake for Francis] Bindon Esq. He was a Gentleman of this Country who professed Portrait Painting and Architecture, and travelled into Italy to improve his Knowledge of these Arts."²⁷ Brewer, writing in 1825, notes "The mansion of Bessborough is a spacious structure of square proportions, composed of hewn stone, but the efforts of the architect were directed to amplitude, and convenience of internal arrangement, rather than to beauty of exterior aspect. The house extends in front 100 feet, and in depth about 80. Viewed as an architectural object, its prevailing characteristic is that of massy respectability."²⁸ Even though the house has been burnt and rebuilt, a porch added and further enlarged by monastic excrescences, it is possible with the help of an old photograph (Plate 4) to see that this pedimented nine-bay façade was of singularly dumpy and inelegant proportions.²⁹ The redeeming architectural feature of the house is to be found in the fine handling

25. Bindon's obituary in Faulkner, *op. cit.*, credits Bindon with the complete design.

26. Howard Colvin and Maurice Craig (editors) *The Vanbrugh Pearce Drawings in the Library of Elton Hall* (Oxford, 1964) p. 27, No. 12.

27. Milton, *Views of Seats*, p. XVIII (1784). Bindon's obituary, Faulkner, *op. cit.* also lists Bessborough as one of his works.

28. J. N. Brewer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 480.

29. Sadleir & Dickson, *op. cit.*, Plate IX, see also the description of Bessborough on pp. 21-28.

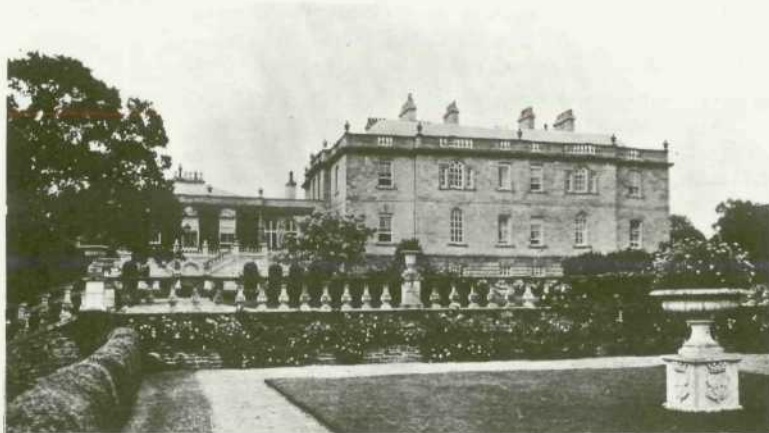


Plate 4. Bessborough, Co. Kilkenny. The entrance front. (Photo reproduced from Sadleir and Dickinson's *Georgian Mansions in Ireland*, plate IX.)



Plate 5. The quadrants at Bessborough, Co. Kilkenny. (Photo by Hugh Doran.)

Plate 6. Bessborough, Co. Kilkenny. The garden front. (From an old photo.)



of the shallow quadrants leading to the flanking pavilions, unfortunately now removed (Plate 5). Here a pair of Gibbs-type doorways were articulated most ingeniously, for the quintuple voussoirs touch the band cornice of the quadrant and support the pediment above the level of this cornice. On either side niches are capped by single key stones that also attach themselves to the band cornice. It is, as will be shown repeatedly, a characteristic mannerism of Bindon frequently to join his elements and build them up together like children's blocks. The facing sides of the pavilions have niches and surmounting lunettes.

Originally, before the fire, the hall at Bessborough had a screen of Ionic columns of Kilkenny marble³⁰ and the saloon was decorated with rococo plaster ceiling and a very fine mantelpiece composed of female herms in profile taken from Kent.³¹ These features are unfortunately now lost to us. Bessborough's garden front (Plate 6) is an uninspiring six-bay breakfront composition with a pair of Venetian windows clumsily adrift on the first floor, awkwardly overwhelming the thin round headed windows of the ground floor.

Lord Bessborough's daughter Elizabeth married Sir Edward Fownes of Woodstock in the same county and no doubt through this relationship Bindon was employed to build a new house for Fownes, probably in the mid forties.³² Though there is no documented date the forties seems likely, for Woodstock (Plate 7) is essentially a rusticated variation of Richard Castle's similar theme at Tyrone House, Dublin (1740) and Rochfort (now Tudenham) Co. Westmeath (1742) being of seven bays, the central three grouped closer together and consisting of four windows on the first and second floors flanking a niche and an oculus. The other two windows on the ground floor that flank the front door have blocked architraves. In the attic floor all the windows are attached in familiar Castle manner to the frieze though with their centre keystones slightly breaking the

30. William Tighe, *Statistical Observations relative to the County Kilkenny*. . . (Dublin, 1802), p. 586 observes that "each shaft [was] an entire stone ten feet six inches high".

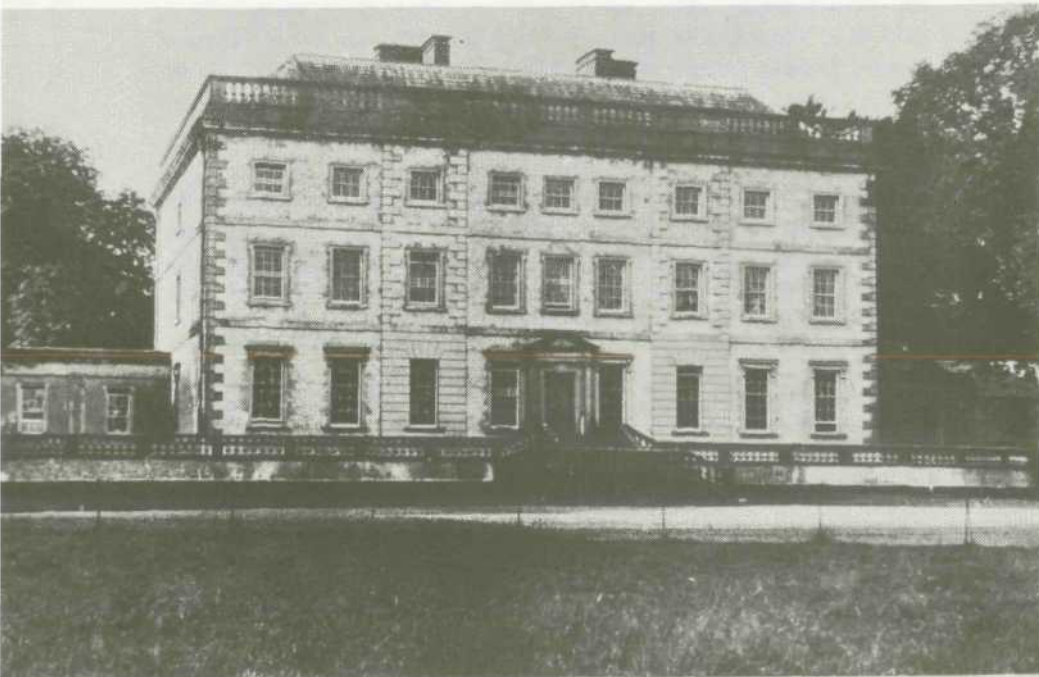
31. William Kent, *Designs of Inigo Jones*. . . , (London, 1727) Vol. I, plate 65. The ceiling and chimney piece are illustrated in Sadleir & Dickinson, *op. cit.*, plate X.

32. The house is listed in Bindon's obituary, Faulkner, *op. cit.*, Brewer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p 474 again calls the architect David rather than Francis Bindon.



Plate 7. Woodstock, Co. Kilkenny. (From a photo of about 1910 in the Lawrence Collection, National Library of Ireland.)

Plate 8. Castle Morres, Co. Kilkenny. (Photo reproduced from *Georgian Society Records*, plate CV.)



frieze's plain surface. The front door already noted with its flanking windows is a curiously opulent composition, for the consoled lunette over the door is engulfed by the entablature and moulded block architraves are not seemingly sufficient support for it, as a pair of Doric pilasters are slid in on either side of the door giving the whole affair an unwarranted ambiguity. The wings and shallow pedimented pavilions on either side of the main block are of a later date.

Though Woodstock is today a burnt out ruin the interior plan can still be understood (Fig. 2). The house is a square with an enclosed light shaft in the middle. Vaulted passages lead to the main staircase to the East and a spiral service stair to the West. This Inigo Jonesian spiral is but another example of the influence of the English Palladians through Pearce and Castle on Bindon's planning.

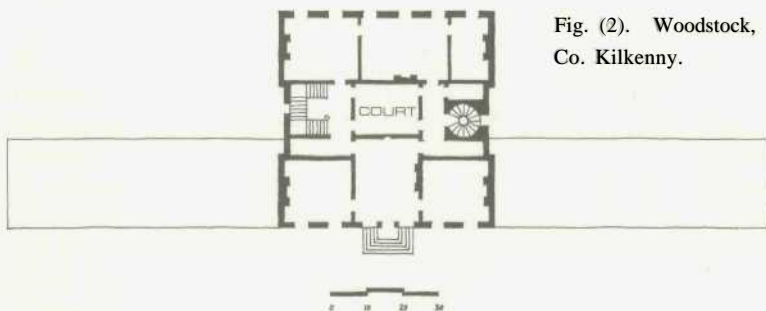


Fig. (2). Woodstock,
Co. Kilkenny.

On the South or Garden front the house is extremely plain—five bays only being relieved by triple keystones on the ground and first floors. Bindon, like Castle at Hazlewood, Co. Sligo, gave little originality or thought to his rear *façade*.

Bindon's third great house at Kilkenny, Castle Morres, built for the family of the same name,³³ has fared worse than Bessborough and Woodstock, for it is now only a pile of stones and rubble in the middle of a state forest. Fortunately photographs exist in the

33. It is listed in the obituary, Faulkner, *op. cit.*, Brewer, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 486 calls it "a large and massy pile of cut stone, erected after the designs of Bindon, the architect employed in building the noble mansions of Bessborough and Woodstock in this county".

Georgian Society Records,³⁴ and they show the main front (Plate 8) to have been one of Bindon's most accomplished performances. The nine-bay façade was relieved of plain and dull monotony by a variety of rhythms, for the central three bays were set close together as at Woodstock and each bay on either side is slightly broken forward and accentuated by coigns and an ashlar ground storey. They were features that seem reminiscent of the *chaînes* of French seventeenth-century architects such as Lemuet or du Cerceau. Lastly the remaining two bays on each end were staggered wider than the central three. Castle Morres was capped by a balustrade and this was reflected by a similarly balustraded area below the ground floor broken by a fine double stairway that led to the Ionic pedimented front door taken straight from Gibbs.³⁵ There is no record of the appearance of the rear façade and unfortunately no ground plan survives.

The hall was decorated with a splendid plaster trophy over the curious voluted Kilkenny marble mantel, the whole surmounted by a broken segmental pediment with an attendant eagle. Opposite a plaster cartouche enclosing a helmet and musical instruments elegantly spilled out of the florid frieze above.³⁶ Again one has to lament the dismal fate of so many of Ireland's more important houses. Curraghmore, Co. Waterford, however, tells a different tale, for this magnificent complex still remains in pristine splendour. Most of the main block of the house has been refaced in the nineteenth century and much of the interior is by Wyatt.³⁷ However, between about 1742 and 1750 Lord Tyrone, the patron of Richard Castle in Dublin, made some interior changes to the house. He employed

34. Vol. V, plate CV.

35. *A Book of Architecture*, (London, 1728) p. 103, left.

36. *Georgian Society Records*, Vol. V, plate CVI & CVII. The mantelpiece just mentioned must have been a Kilkenny product of the Collis marble factory for another now at Kilcreene Lodge taken from old Kilcreene is identical. However, Bindon may have had some hand in altering this now demolished late seventeenth century house. Bindon may have been responsible for more work in Kilkenny and Castle Blundon might be a candidate for this period.

37. See Mark Girouard "Curraghmore", *Country Life*, Feb 7, 1963, pp. 256-260, Feb. 14, pp. 308-311 and Feb. 21, pp. 368-371.



Plate 9. Curraghmore, Co. Waterford.
The Billiard Room Chimney Piece.
(Photo by courtesy of *Country Life*.)



Plate 11. Curraghmore, Co. Waterford. The
quadrants that link the house with the entrance
court. (Photo by courtesy of *Country Life*.)

John Houghton, Castle's stonemason and carver, to sculpt a wooden panel of *St Paul preaching at Athens* which won a premium of £20 at the Dublin Society that year.³⁸ This panel was the overmantel to a chimney piece also probably by Houghton in the present billiard room (Plate 9). The chimney piece is almost identical to the William Kent example already mentioned at Bessborough,³⁹ and

38. Charles Smith, *The Ancient and Present State of the County & City of Waterford*, (Dublin, 1746), p. 8g. Smith gives a very full description of the house but does not mention the stucco work or forecourt, which certainly suggests that they were not in existence in 1746.

39. See Note 31.



Plate 10. Curraghmore, Co. Waterford. The entrance court. (Photo by courtesy of *Country Life*.)

the room has a coved ceiling of profile busts, swags, ribbons and cartouches that is attributable to Paul and Philip Francini⁴⁰—the same stuccodores who had been employed at Tyrone house by Castle and by Bindon and Castle at Russborough. Both the present billiard room and the hall below were called new in 1750⁴¹ so it seems likely that Lord Tyrone employed either Castle or Bindon at about this time. Not only did Lord Tyrone alter the interior of the house but he also built the vast entrance courtyard in most unusual style, for it is obviously modelled on Vanbrugh's forecourt at Seaton Delaval or Blenheim.⁴² It is 550 feet long and 192 feet wide and is the one major exception to the usual Irish wide spreading of pavilion and yards in the Russborough manner. But who was the architect? The answer seems certainly to be Bindon rather than Castle, and if it is his, the forecourt at Curraghmore is certainly his masterpiece.

The detail of the forecourt has an accentuation of rustication that is far closer to Bindon than Castle. The great pedimented stable arches with their blocked Doric columns and pilasters (Plate 10) are obviously much indebted to Inigo Jones's Whitehall Palace designs.⁴³ These twin arches are truly splendid pieces of architecture. On either side we find further arches with moulded block architraves, the keystones of which actually support the sills of heavy lunettes that in turn touch the frieze of the cornice. It has already been noted that this is a particular mannerism of Bindon to pile his elements on top of and touching, each other. Further suggestion of his authorship can be seen in the very shallow quadrants (Plate 11) that join the house to the forecourt for they reflect in layout the Bessborough examples, and finally the five-bay pavilions which flank the front door have a balustrade that is broken by dies with panels in identical manner to Castle Morres.

40. Girouard, *op. cit.*, 259—260.

41. Thomas Rogers to Mr. Edward Burne speaks of Primate Stone's visit and he says [Stone] "desired [Betty the housemaid] to show him the new roome which she did and the new Apartment below. . ." Quoted in Girouard, *ibid.*, p. 259.

42. Vanbrugh's legacy to Ireland through Pearce still living on.

43. Kent, *Designs of Inigo Jones*. . . , Vol. I, p. 24 and Isaac Ware, *Designs of Inigo Jones and others*, p. 40.

Much of the detail of this remarkable complex is Gibbsian. The two side doors at the end of the court come straight from Gibbs's book⁴⁴ and the door and niches in the curving screen walls are, too, much indebted to him. If the architect was Bindon, which seems not unlikely, he is responsible for the finest forecourt in Ireland, and this court represents the peak of his architectural achievement.

Drewstown, Co. Meath is traditionally said to have been designed by Bindon for Barry Barry in about 1745,⁴⁵ and a survey of this large cut-stone pile (Plate 12) would support this tale. There, in the detailing, we see the usual concern with moulded block architraves, for the ground floor of the seven-bay entrance is composed with them. A later porch makes the front more awkward than needs be, though as a whole the windows are uncomfortably placed. The richly voluted and pilastered central first floor widow with its segmental entablature carries up to a further pilastered and segmentally capped attic window which in typical Bindon manner breaks through the frieze of the house. A bow window forms the main ornament on the East front which faces the lake in not dissimilar fashion to Castle's Rochfort, Co. Westmeath. As an exterior it is best viewed from the south-east for here the contrast of bow and breakfront make a not unsatisfying, solidly plump and peaceful image.

The front door opens immediately into a galleried panelled hall with a grand staircase at one end (Plate 13). Heavy segmental and triangular pedimented doors lead off into the other rooms, all of which are relatively plain. The plasterwork in the hall is somewhat crude though the Apollo and rays surrounded by trophies over the stairs are pleasingly executed. As an interior feature this galleried hall is an important hallmark for it rarely occurs in houses of this date in Ireland and it seems always to be associated with buildings that are attributable to Francis Bindon. The only much earlier example of this arrangement was to be found at Platten, Co. Meath.

During the year of the Scottish rebellion of 1745, Col. Francis

44. *A Book of Architecture*, p. 100, Centre.

45. Verbal information from George McVeagh of Dublin whose family owned the house from c. 1780–1950. Taylor & Skinner's *Post Chaise Companion* (1771) call it the residence of the Hon. Barry Barry.



Plate 12. Drewstown, Co. Meath. (Photo by Patrick Rossmore.)

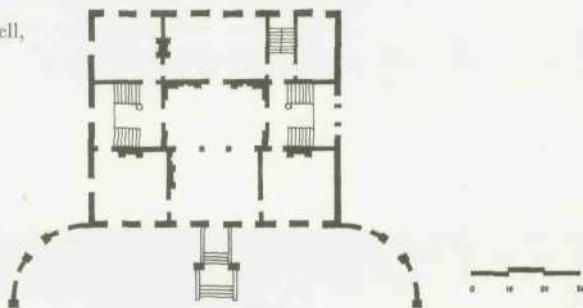


Sadleir started to build a new house, Sopwell Hall in Co. Tipperary.⁴⁶ Sadlier, besides being married to a niece of Bindon's patron, Lord Bessborough, was also a stepson of one of Bindon's brothers, The Rev. Thomas Bindon, Dean of Limerick. A single glance at Sopwell Hall (Plate 14) shows immediately a really barbaric orgy of moulded block architraves. It is a house with many Bindon characteristics.

Sopwell consists of seven bays with a similar rhythm to Woodstock for the pace is quickened over the central three. The keystones of all the windows and the front door are extremely large, those of the first floor breaking into the frieze of the entablature in an exaggeration of the Woodstock variety.

Unfortunately the interior was much altered in 1866-8⁴⁷ though originally the plan (Fig. 3) had reflecting staircases and a layout similar to the typical Pearce plan to be found at Cashel Palace and Desert Court. Again it can be seen how closely Bindon was influenced by Pearce and Castle. The source of this plan lies, as might be expected, in the work of Vanbrugh and Gibbs.

Fig. (3). Sopwell,
Co. Tipperary.



Col. Sadleir's sister married in 1745 John Bateman of Altavilla, Co. Limerick and he started constructing a new mansion in c.1745-46,⁴⁸ undoubtedly to Bindon's designs. The layout is of great interest

46. In the Record Book of the Hon. C. G. Trench at Sopwell Hall (kindly quoted by C. P. M. Trench) is the following: "Col. Sadleir used to go on the scaffolding during the building and read accounts of the rebellion in the papers to the workmen."

47. Information from C. P. M. Trench. At this time one of the staircases and a small room were made into a large reception room. The ground plan here shown has been altered to its original state.

48. A bridge built at Altavilla by John Bateman is dated 1747. The Veneto reminiscent name of the house is typical of the Palladian taste of the period for there is an Altavilla near Vicenza.



Plate 14. Sopwell Hall, Co. Tipperary. (Photo by Patrick Rossmore.)

Plate 15. Altavilla, Co. Limerick. (From an old photo.)



for just as at Curraghmore we will again see, though admittedly to a very much smaller scale, the legacy of Vanbrugh's planning.

Altavilla (Plate 15) consists of a central block of six bays with a breakfront and a straight cornice—a tripartite pedimented door with rusticated pilasters being its only ornament (Fig. 4). The third floor windows are linked to the frieze in an identical manner as at Woodstock. This block is joined to roughly L-shaped side pavilions by curtain walls with niches flanking rusticated doors.⁴⁹ The side pavilions are composed on the second floor with a pair of Venetian windows, the central portion being utilized as a niche⁵⁰—a device used by Castle at Bellinter, Co. Meath and at Nos. 119 and 120 St. Stephens Green, Dublin, and inaugurated in Ireland by Pearce from a Genoese source at Bellamont, Co. Cavan. The rear façade of the house is a version of Woodstock with niche and oculus flanked by two bays, reiterating in extremely simplified form Castle's Tyrone House and Rochfort design. Altavilla, to repeat again, indicates how constantly Bindon was indebted to Castle's architectural vocabulary.⁵¹

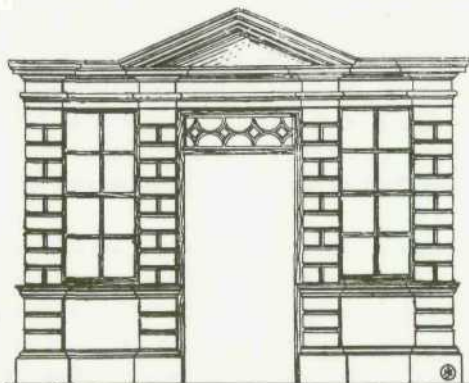


Fig. 4. Altavilla, Co. Limerick. The front door. (Reproduced from a line drawing in Sadleir and Dickinson's *Georgian Mansions in Ireland*, plate XV.)

49. One has been changed into a gate.

50. The fenestration has been altered when the West pavilion was turned into a dwelling house in about 1920.

51. Drawings of interior door architraves, one with a segmentally broken pediment are reproduced in Sadleir & Dickinson, *op. cit.*, p. XV.

The influence of Vanbrugh is shown in the ground plan, (Fig. 5) for the entrance *façade* is composed with curtain walls and pavilions on axis, but the back of the main block is flanked with small curved quadrants that in turn lead to the upright portion of the L-shaped pavilion. In all, this is a miniature version of the layout of Castle Howard or Blenheim.

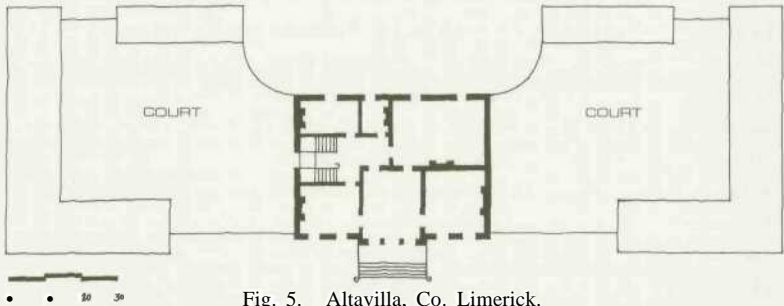


Fig. 5. Altavilla, Co. Limerick.

Altavilla is now a shell and the east pavilion has been shorn of its upper floor, but even in its ruined state much remains to tell the tale of its interesting architectural background. Happily the central block is about to be restored, though without the third floor. The rear *façade* with its oculus and niche directly relates to an important square in Limerick and here it is suggested we see Bindon's only major civic layout, though there is no documentary evidence for this assertion.

St. John's *Square* in *Limerick* is simply a multiplication of the niche and oculus theme by now so familiar in Castle's and Bindon's *oeuvre*. There arc, in fact, only three sides to the square, each end formed by two large houses of five bays in which the oculus and niche are replaced by round and arched windows in the central bays (Plate 16). The remaining eight houses of three bays respectively incorporate the oculus and niche as a convenient link between the houses. The square was started in 1751 and the houses cost £630 apiece.⁵²

52. The scheme was originated by John Purdon who associated himself with Edmund Sexton Pery (Lord Pery), The Rev. Henry Smyth, William Monsell of Tervoe and The Rev. William Cecil Pery (Lord Glentworth). See James Frost, "Building of St. John's Square Limerick", *Journal of the Limerick Field Club*, Vol. III, No. g, p. 40-41.



Plate 16. St. John's Square, Limerick. Detail.

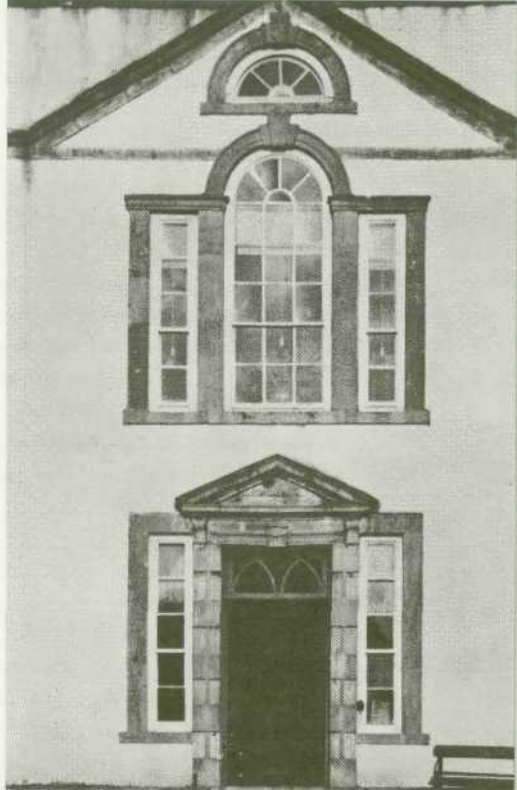


Plate 17. Castle Park, Co. Limerick. Detail of entrance front. (Photo by Stan Stewart.)

Plate 18. Carnelly, Co. Clare. (Photo by Hugh Doran.)



Bindon's work in Limerick may also have included the house of George Evans Bruce, the banker in Patrick Street which boasts a very fine Venetian door with Doric pilasters and triglyph frieze, and another house called Castle Park, near the city (Plate 17) a pleasingly simple five-bay pedimented composition. It has a central Venetian window whose keystone supports the base of the pediment enclosed lunette—a typical Bindon mannerism and very reminiscent of the building up of elements already noted in the Curraghmore courtyard.

Two houses in Co. Clare might well be considered here, for they must date from about the mid-century, and no doubt owe their authorship to Bindon.

The Bindon genealogy already mentioned states that Francis Bindon's sister was married to George Stamer of Carnelly, Co. Clare and it is fairly obvious that he designed his sister's house. It is a plain brick five-bay structure (Plate 18) with a lower three-bay extension. Stone dressings, band courses, window architraves and keystones make it a pleasant enough unpretentious composition. The third attic window keystones touch the frieze of the cornice and the main decorative feature of the front is the Venetian door, borrowed directly from Halfpenny⁵³ or Salmon.⁵⁴

Carnelly has a fine drawing-room (Plate 19) with good stucco work, Kent-type pedimented mirrors, tabernacle frames festoons and a most unusual Corinthian columned "altar piece", of no determinate purpose for the family was not recusant, which encloses a further mirror. Otherwise the remaining interiors of the house are plain.

The second Co. Clare house, Newhall, designed for Randal McDonnell, M.P. is a much more interesting example. The facade (Plate 20) which fronts an older house, is built of beautiful pink brick like Carnelly, but it is composed with a central balustraded and urned octangular bow window incorporating a pedimented front door. On each side are two windows to a floor with single keystones, though the windows on the ground floor have been enlarged at a later date. Surmounting the second floor windows are labelled panels in brick. At either end of the house are bow windows and the whole

53. William Halfpenny, *Practical Architecture* (2nd edit. London, 1724), p. 46.

54. William Salmon, *Palladio Londinensis* (London, 1734), plate XXVIII.



Plate 19. Carnelly, Co. Clare. The drawing-room. (Photo by Hugh Doran.)

Plate 20. Newhall, Co. Clare. (Photo by Hugh Doran.)



house with its massive cornice and roof makes a highly effective and well conceived arrangement.

The front door leads into an elongated octagonal hall with a heavy Doric frieze, the metopes composed of delicious grinning masks, bukrania and the McDonnell crest. The climax, and main feature of this hall, is a magnificent concave sided organ case that takes up the end of the room (Plate 21). It is actually only a cupboard. To the left and right of the hall lie the dining-room and drawing-room, the latter having elaborate plasterwork, festoons and frames probably executed by the same craftsman as the drawing-room at Carnelly.

Roundwood, Co. Leix has been attributed to Castle in the *Georgian Society Records*⁵⁵ but the handling of this five-bay cut stone pedimented façade (Plate 22) seems closer to Bindon, and the rather curious rustication of the central Venetian window points to the amateurish qualities so often characteristic of Bindon's hand. An all too diminutive Gibbs type door leads into a most unusual hall with a gallery (Plate 23)—a Bindon feature already noted at Drewstown. Nevertheless the Roundwood fretwork gallery is quite unique, for it is made up of two convex landings that lead to two bedrooms. The frieze has the usual Vitruvian scroll and except for the drawing-room, which has some plasterwork, the rest of the house is of little interest. No doubt when Bindon was at Roundwood he might have constructed the now demolished arcaded market house (Plate 24) in the local village of Mountrath—perhaps his only public building. A voluted first floor Venetian window sits under a shallow gable or pediment that lacks its lower side, and the whole is lazily punctuated by a dumpy cupola.

A further house in Leix, Moyne, built for the Stubber family, possibly could too, belong to Bindon. It is of five bays with a Gibbs door (now incorporated into a nineteenth-century porch) surmounted by a Venetian window identical to the front door at Carnelly and taken from Halfpenny or Salmon.⁵⁶ Above this and under a "gable pediment" such as just mentioned at the Mountrath market house is a typical Bindon oculus. Now the house has been added to, and

55. Vol. V, p. 100. It was built for a member of the Flood family.

56. See notes 53 and 54.



Plate 24. Mountrath, The Market House. (Photo by Patrick Rossmore/)

with its nineteenth-century roof, dormers and lack of glazing bars it does little to add to the lustre of Bindon's name.

Raford, Co. Galway seems another likely candidate for Bindon's authorship. This *façade*, which is perhaps one of his last works must date from about the late 'fifties. It is a breakfront composition, the centre portion (Plate 25) made up of a tripartite pedimented door surmounted by a large rusticated *therme* window uneasily supported and anchored into the *façade* by four consoles. This is yet another example of Bindon's inability to place motifs convincingly into the fenestration of a front. Above this nevertheless pleasantly illogical window, on the second floor we find two windows flanking an oculus in identical treatment to Bindon's St. John's Square, a further repetition of the Castle idiom. Unfortunately a nineteenth-century hat roof that replaces the original balustrade makes what would have been a surprising and lunatic composition into a rather lamentable caricature. Another Bindon feature lies in the interior, for the hall has a gallery not unlike that at Drewstown and it is interesting to study the plasterwork for it is a transitional between the rococo and the neoclassic.

Perhaps Bindon's very last mansion is Coopershill, Co. Sligo, (Plate 26) although like most of these houses, no documentary evidence exists for it. Tower-like and stark, of similar proportions to Raford, it is made up of two equivalent fronts composed with a central rusticated Venetian window and door, and a third floor three-light window. The fenestration is reminiscent of Castle's demolished Smyth mansion in Kildare Place, Dublin. Coopershill is sited particularly well and stands high above a river reminding one of the feudal strength of the seventeenth-century tower house. As at Raford, the roof is overlapping and nineteenth century. The history of the building of Coopershill is an interesting and typically Irish phenomenon for the house was finished in 1774 though started in about 1755, for Arthur Brooke Cooper "before engaging in the undertaking, had provided for the cost a tub of gold guineas, but the last guinea was paid away before the building showed above the surface of the ground."⁵⁷ Cooper had to sell property, and it took

57. T. O'Rorke, *The History of Sligo: Town and Country*, (Dublin, n.d.), Vol. II, p. 224.

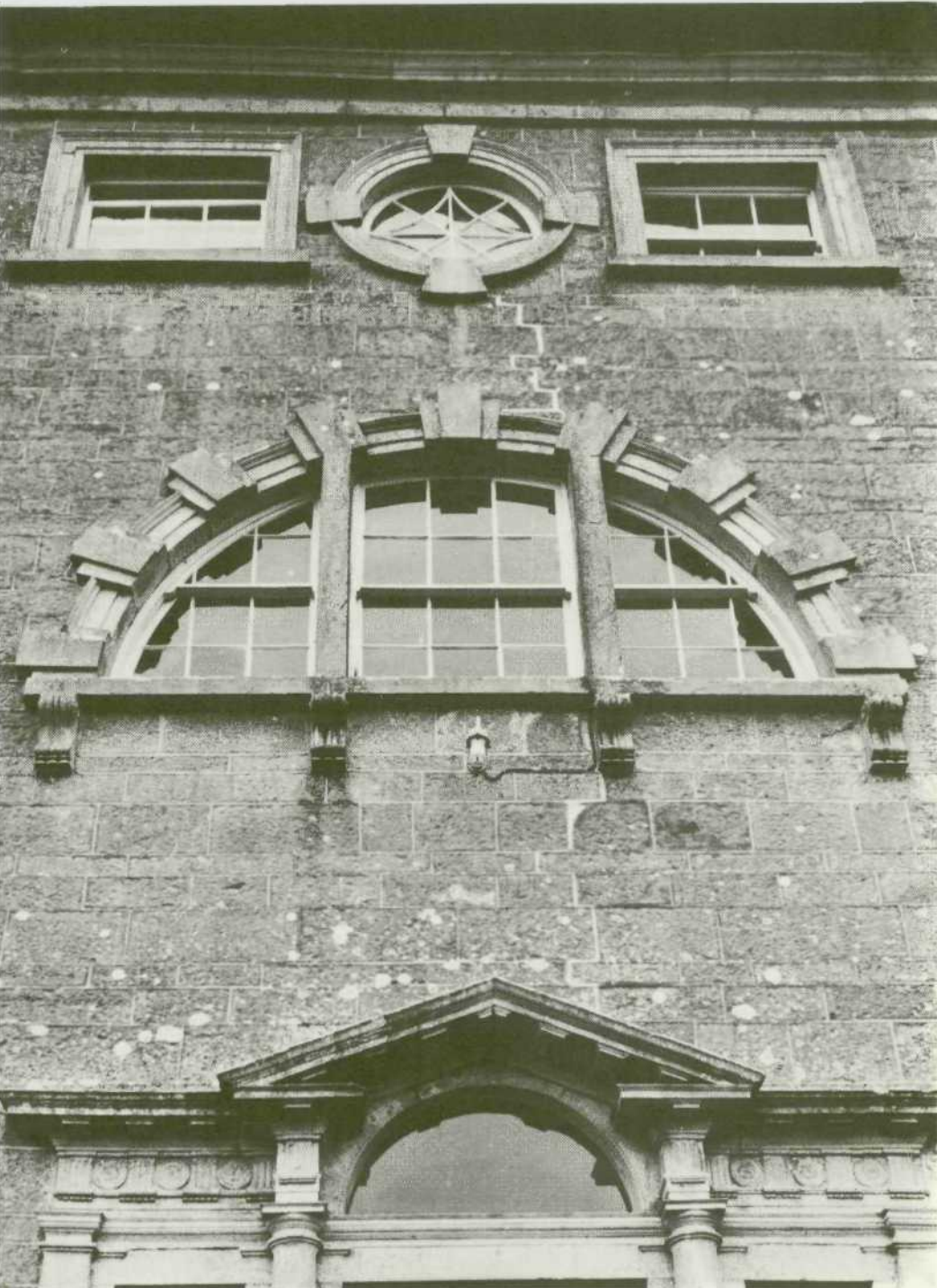


Plate 25. Raford, Co. Galway. (Photo by Patrick Rossmore.)

eight years to quarry the stone.⁵⁸ This twenty years of planning and building explains the extraordinary *retardé* quality of the house considering its recorded date.

All Bindon's documented buildings and a good few new attributions have now been considered. With the major exceptions of the Curraghmore Court and Castle Morres, the Bessborough quadrants and Newhall, his ventures into the architectural field are not particularly distinguished. As he was a gentleman amateur, moving in the best circles in Dublin, he obtained commissions from his friends and relations. He made the most of his connection with the professional Richard Castle and was quite happy to borrow many ideas from him. His houses are mostly in the South and West of Ireland, an area in which Castle had no connections, so theirs was probably a dovetailed and friendly relationship.

On looking at the photographs of his buildings, if indeed they are all by him one cannot help noticing the solid, four square somewhat gloomy quality of many of them. They are often unsophisticated, naive and clumsily detailed but they nevertheless amount to a not unrespectable corpus, worthy to be recorded and brought in from the misty damps that surround so much of the history of Irish Palladianism.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 224.



Plate 26. Coopershill, Co. Sligo. (Photo by Patrick Rossmore.)

III LAST YEARS

Bindon seems to have continued painting portraits until the mid-fifties, and, no doubt through his viceregal portrait painting connections, he was granted a pension of £100 a year in 1750.⁵⁹ In 1754 we find him in the company of an unknown architect, John Wogan, as the only other architect subscribing to John Aheron's *General Treatise on Architecture*, published in Dublin in 1754. By 1758 however he had laid aside his brush and dividers for he had become slightly blind.⁶⁰

He had long since been a member of the Dublin Society⁶¹ and in 1761 he became Member for Ennis, Co. Clare, in the Irish parliament—the borough his family partially controlled, taking the place of his elder brother David who had died in that year. He also inherited more of the Clare family estates. A year later he was made a freeman of Limerick⁶² and in this list he is called "of the City of Dublin".

By 3rd January 1765 Bindon had made arrangements for the disposal of his property: "Francis Bindon of the City of Dublin Esq from the regard and goodwill which he bore unto Francis Ryan of said City of Dublin Painter and in Considⁿ of the many services heretofore done and performed by said Ryan for him. . . . The said Francis Bindon sold and assigned and made over unto the said Francis Ryan. . . . the Dwelling house. . . on the South side of Abbey St in the Parish of St Thomas".⁶³ Today, unfortunately, it is impossible to identify Bindon's residence.

Ryan seems to have inherited most of Bindon's possessions and it is perhaps ironic to note that "Francis Ryan portrait or face painter" had previously applied for admission to the Corporation of Painters-Stayners, the Guild of St. Luke, and had been admitted on condition that he no longer practised as a house painter.⁶⁴

Francis Bindon died "in his chariot, on his way to the country" on 23rd May 1765.⁶⁵

59. *D.N.B., op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 508.

60. Deane Swift, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

61. Henry F. Berry, *A History of the Royal Dublin Society*, (London, 1915), p. 24.

62. Anon, "Index of Freemen of Limerick, 1746-1836", *North Munster Archaeological Journal*, Vol. III (1942-43), p. 105.

63. Registry of Deeds (already cited) Vol. 238, p. 210, No. 154083.

64. Strickland, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 315.

65. Faulkner, *op. cit.*