

WESTPORT STUDY DAY 2017

CELEBRATING 250 YEARS OF THE BROWNE FAMILY
AND THE TOWN OF WESTPORT

Westport House, County Mayo
Friday 10th November 2017

The Irish Georgian Society and Mayo County Council, in association with Westport Historical Society and Westport Tourism, are partnering to deliver a study day which will celebrate the history and heritage of Westport House and its planned Georgian town. 250 years ago Peter Browne of Westport House placed an advertisement in the Dublin Faulkner's Journal, on St. Patrick's Day 1767, advertising for tradesmen to construct the new town of Westport ...and so began the genesis of one of Ireland's greatest pieces of Georgian town planning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Westport Study Day is supported by Mayo County Council, Mayo Local Community Development Committee as Mayo Local Action Group, South West Mayo Development Company Limited, The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, The Department of Rural and Community Development, and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's Government Policy on Architecture.



The Westport Study Day is an action of the Irish Georgian Society's Conservation Education Programme. The Irish Georgian Society's Conservation Education Programme is supported by the Apollo Foundation, Ecclesiastical Insurance; Merrion Property Group and Heather and John Picerne.



This study day is recognised for Continuing Professional Development by the CIF Register of Heritage Contractors, Engineers Ireland, the Irish Landscape Institute, the Irish Planning Institute and the Royal Institute of Architects Ireland.



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James Wyatt, *Designs for Gates from Demesne going out into Town of Westport*. 1805. Westport House Collection

PROGRAMME

- 9am** Registration with tea and coffee in the main hall of Westport House.
- 9.30am** Tour of Westport House by **Kathryn Connolly** and talk on heritage of Westport town by **Bronagh Joyce**, Director of Westport Historical Society and Heritage Centre.
- 10.30am** Welcome, **Tom Gilligan**, Director of Services, Mayo County Council and **Donough Cahill**, Executive Director, Irish Georgian Society.

MORNING SESSION

The Browne Family: the socio-political context and the architecture of Westport House.

Chair **Donough Cahill**, Executive Director, Irish Georgian Society.

- 10.45am** *The Act of Union - Its background, and its political, economic and social consequences*
Dr Martin Mansergh

The Act of Union, enacted two years after the suppression of the 1798 Rebellion, brought to an abrupt end less than two decades of legislative independence achieved by Grattan's Parliament. It was initially widely, but not universally, welcomed as putting Ireland on a more equal footing and as creating new UK-wide market opportunities, but it removed élites and decision-making from Ireland. It failed to live up to its promise, both with the long delay to Catholic Emancipation and, more devastatingly, with the failure of Britain at the time of the Great Famine to prevent a natural disaster from becoming a humanitarian calamity. On the other hand, the Union did facilitate important and even far-reaching reforms, and in much of North-East Ulster was credited with facilitating its industrial prosperity, with the result that Northern Ireland remains part of it.

11.15am *The Brownes of Westport House: aristocracy, politics and the exercise of power in County Mayo; 1780-1830*

Dr Gordon Kennedy, Dublin City University.

Any myopic view of the Brownes' historical legacy should be challenged and counter-balanced by a broader understanding of the family's political impact during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The family was vigorous and violent in the aftermath of rebellion and in the face of threatened agrarian outrage. But it was also actively involved in several key political questions of the period, from the Patriot parliament and the regency crisis to the Catholic question and the viability of Ireland's economic prosperity. Denis Browne was an extremely capable and active parliamentarian, magistrate and land owner. Lord Sligo was the archetypal 'improving landlord', whose contributions to Westport town and its environs can still be seen and enjoyed today. Historical memory tends to dwell on the darker aspects of life. However, if both the negative and positive aspects of the Brownes' lives are examined, then a more balanced appreciation of the family's historical legacy can become apparent.

11.45am *The incremental construction of Westport House and its Architects*

Kevin Blackwood, Principal, Blackwood Associates Architects

This paper will elucidate the complex building chronology of Westport House, the architecture of which encompasses the work of three celebrated Georgian architects: Castle, Wyatt and Ivory. Understanding the architecture of the house is critical to ensuring appropriate conservation planning. Using architectural drawings, additional primary sources and close inspection of the building fabric, Blackwood will explain how understanding the history of Westport House informed his supervision of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht funded roof repairs. Consideration will also be given to future phases of conservation works required to ensure this fine country house survives into the future.

12.15pm *Miscellaneous Musings on the Architectural History of Westport House*

Dr Aidan O'Boyle

Insights into the contributions of the various patrons and architects involved in the architectural development and evolution of Westport House between Richard Castle's initial construction in 1731 and the destruction of Benjamin Dean Wyatt's library wing in 1826.

12.45pm *Tipperary - The lost legacy of William Leeson*

John Flannery, President, Ormond Historical Society

This presentation will describe the architecture of William Leeson in Tipperary, most of which has unfortunately been destroyed. Using archival sources, it will look at the chronology of the houses which Leeson designed and the styles employed.

1pm **Questions & Answers**

1.15pm - 2.15pm LUNCH

AFTERNOON SESSION

The Georgians - the Great Irish Urbanists and Westport's Picturesque Landscape

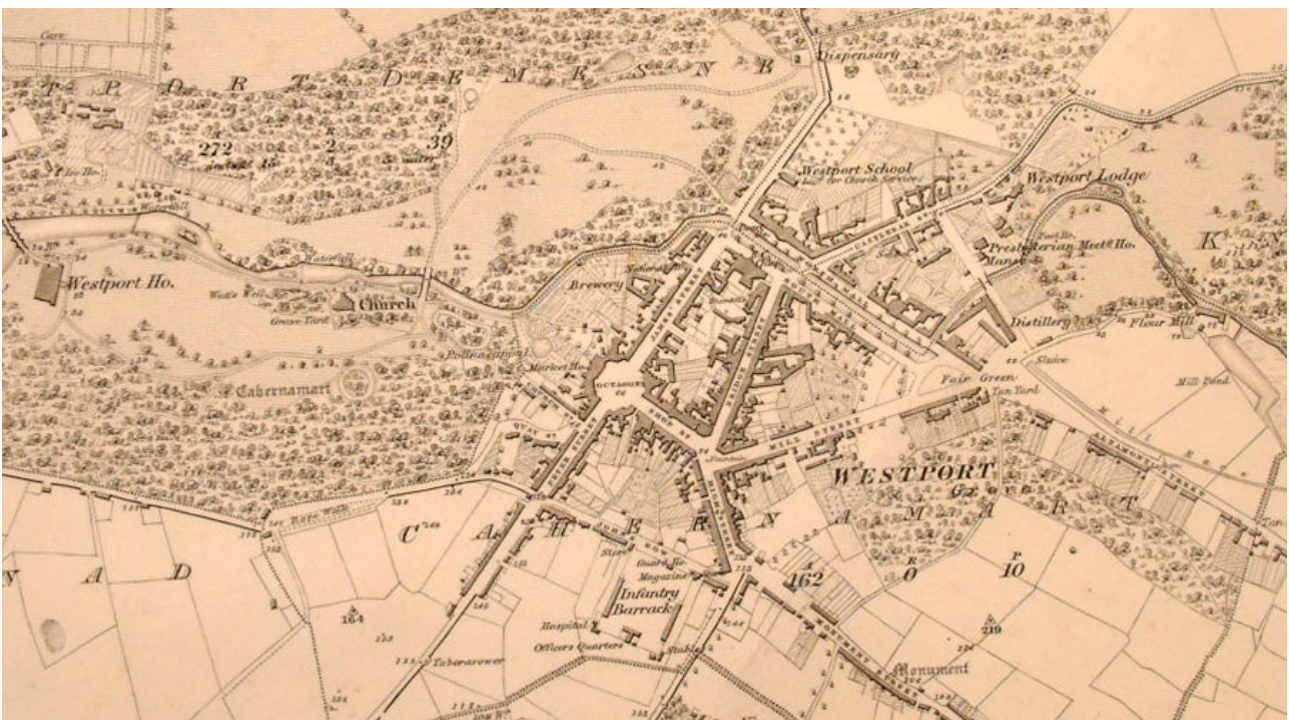
Chair: **Colm Murray**, Architecture Officer, The Heritage Council

2.15pm *'Et in Arcadia Ego'; the picturesque origins of Westport Estate and Town*
Fintan Duffy, School of Architecture, Waterford Institute of Technology

Westport owes much of its character to a symbiotic relationship between the estate and the town. In Westport's case however, aesthetic principles were consciously applied, from the formal town planning of its expansion in the mid-18th century to its interface with the estate, as well as its broader insertion in the sublime landscape of West Mayo. This paper will examine these themes against the aesthetic backdrop of the picturesque movement which has so powerfully influenced Westport.

2.45pm *Town planning and urban development in the age of Enlightenment and an introduction to the RIA's Irish Historic Towns Atlas for Westport*
Dr Eamon O'Flaherty, Associate Professor, School of History, University College Dublin

Eighteenth-century Ireland experienced an unprecedented and, by European standards, substantial phase of urbanisation during the eighteenth century. This talk looks at the origins and development of Enlightenment ideas of town planning on European and Irish cities in the period, looking at European examples like Trieste, Bordeaux and Edinburgh, and analysing planned developments in Ireland in the cases of Dublin, Limerick and Westport. The talk concludes with a brief account of the Westport Irish Historic Towns Atlas, now in preparation.



Westport town, Mayo, Ordnance Survey first edition, sheets 87 and 88, surveyed 1838, published 1839. Trinity College Dublin

3.15pm ***Holy Trinity Church, Westport***

Aine Doyle, MUBC, conservation consultant

Holy Trinity Church Westport was designed by Sir Thomas Newenham Deane (1827-1899) and built between 1869 and 1872 in a style which came to be known as Ruskinian Gothic. This church, which is of national significance, represents a continuation of the Browne tradition of selecting only the finest architects and craftsmen to embellish their estate. George John Browne, the Third Marquess of Sligo (1820-1896) made a significant personal financial contribution towards the building of the church and the importance of his artistic judgement and patronage of the outstanding interior decoration of the church cannot be underestimated. The combination of architect and patron produced a scheme of remarkable coherence which was completed within twenty years of the date of consecration of the church. This talk will look at the story of the design of the church and its role as an eye catcher located at the interface between the grounds of Westport House and Westport town, linking designed landscape and urban streetscape and continuing the tradition of the Picturesque which had been so influential in the evolution of the town from the 1760s through to the 1830s.

3.45pm ***The Irish town, a work of art and a place to live***

Gráinne Shaffrey, Principal, Shaffrey Architects

The Irish town is the result of sophisticated and considered planning and design. Its fundamental purpose as a place to live collectively has been under threat over the last few generations. However, at a time where most decisions we have to make as a society need to consider future sustainability, recovering the culture of living in the town becomes an increasing imperative. Articulating the qualities and possibilities of towns has therefore become more important than ever.

4.15pm ***Westport, the past 20 years***

Simon Wall, Architect, West Mayo Municipal District, Mayo County Council

During this time Westport has experienced its largest building programme since Georgian times, from Section 23 tax designation, through the 'Celtic Tiger' years to the present day. Throughout this period the town has won many accolades including: three national Tidy Towns wins, and was in 2012 assessed by The Irish Times to be 'The Best Place to Live in Ireland'. Its most recent public realm space and associated sculpture is the national winner of the RIAI public Choice Award 2016. Westport has been designated a 'Smarter Travel' demonstration town, through national competition, and is a pioneer in the development of urban and rural greenways, including the international award winning 45km Great Western Greenway linking the town to Achill Island. Simon will discuss Westport's holistic approach to town planning, and its recent use of a community investment company to deliver its new 225 seat Town Hall Theatre, located on the town's main civic space, the Octagon.

4.45pm **Questions & Answers**

5pm Close and thank you, **Siobhán Sexton**, Architectural Conservation Officer, Mayo County Council.

BIOGRAPHIES

Kevin Blackwood is an architect with a broad experience in the conservation and adaptation of historic buildings and sites. As well as managing the practice he has been responsible for the design and project management of a series of important public commissions. After graduation he trained with the National Monuments Service of the Office of Public. Blackwood Associates Architects is a Grade 1 RIAI Conservation Accredited practice, established in 1996. The practice has executed a rich variety of projects ranging from major works to important public buildings and National Monuments, to small interventions in order to adapt, or rescue, lesser-known historic structures.

Donough Cahill is the Executive Director of the Irish Georgian Society, where he oversees its strategic and day-to-day operations and works with the Irish Georgian Foundation's Committee of Management, its sub-committees and working groups and with the Society's North America and UK based membership in promoting the appreciation and protection of Ireland's architectural heritage and allied arts. Most recently he was responsible for overseeing the restoration of the City Assembly House, which now serves as the Society headquarters and as a hub for promoting heritage and culture in the heart of the Georgian city.



George Moore, *Westport Demesne*, 1761 Westport House Collection



Holy Trinity Church, Westport. National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. Photo by James Fraher.

Aine Doyle is a conservation professional with 15 years' experience in the public sector who now works freelance as a conservation consultant. With an MA in Art History from UCD and a Masters in Urban and Building Conservation, Aine's work focuses on assisting building owners in accessing funding to carry out conservation works through preparation of grant applications for the Built Heritage Investment Scheme, Community Heritage Grant Scheme, GLAS Traditional Farm Buildings Grant Scheme and Structures at Risk Fund. Her work also involves preparation of Conservation Management Plans, Architectural Heritage Impact Assessments and supporting documentation for planning applications and Section 57 declaration applications. In 2016 Aine prepared a Conservation Management Plan for Holy Trinity Church Westport. Contact: aine.doyle1@gmail.com

Fintan Duffy, B.Arch, MUBC, MRIAI is in practice with dhb architects and teaches design and conservation in the School of Architecture, Waterford Institute of Technology. Having graduated from UCD School of Architecture in the mid-1980s, he trained in France before returning to Ireland to complete his Masters in Urban and Building Conservation in 1998. His work in practice is primarily conservation-driven with more recently an emphasis on urban conservation and renewal projects. His current research interest is on the nature of compatible re-use in the context of loss of meaning in historic places.

John Flannery compiled and presented the popular Talking History at Steeples talks on local history. He has lectured extensively to historical societies and schools throughout Munster. He is currently president of the Ormond Historical Society, based in Nenagh and a founding member of Tipperary in the Decade of Revolution. Among the topics John has featured are 'The life and times of John Toler - the first Lord Norbury'; 'Kilbooy and the Pritties'; 'Denis (Sonny) O'Neill - one man's wars'; 'Some landed estates in North Tipperary' and 'The Encumbered Estates Act and land ownership in Tipperary'.

Dr Gordon Kennedy lectures on Irish history at the Boston University Overseas Programme located at Dublin City University. He completed his PhD thesis (St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra) in 2010. His doctoral thesis examined the role of the Brownes of Westport House in the suppression of revolutionary violence in the west during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It also focused on the family's economic and social endeavours during that period. He is currently working on publishing his thesis with the co-operation of a leading Irish academic publisher.

Dr Martin Mansergh is vice-chair of the Government's Expert Advisory Group on Centenary Commemorations. He is a former diplomat, political advisor to three Taoisigh, and elected member of the Seanad and Dáil, serving as Minister of State from 2008-2011 with special responsibility for OPW and the Arts. He had a particular involvement in the Northern Ireland peace process, both as a back-channel and as a negotiator of the Downing Street Declaration and Good Friday Agreement, and was a co-winner of the 1994 Tipperary Peace Prize and later a member of the Council of State during President Mary McAleese's second term. He received a doctorate at Oxford in 1973 for research on pre-revolutionary French history, and published *The Legacy of History for making peace in Ireland* (2003), and is also the author of numerous articles in newspapers and journals.



Westport House, Westport. National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. Photo by James Fraher.



James Arthur O'Connor, *Town of Westport and Clew Bay*, 1825. Victoria and Albert Museum.

Bronagh Joyce is a local historian, a secretary of Westport Historical Society and the manager of the Clew Bay Heritage Centre. She conducts guided walking tours of Westport town.

Colm Murray is the Architecture Officer of the Heritage Council, with qualifications in architecture, planning and building conservation. His current work areas include the heritage-led urban regeneration, energy use in traditionally-built buildings, the development of training provision in traditional building skills, and the role of values in conservation decision-making. He is a former member of the Historic Buildings Council of Northern Ireland. He has tutored and lectured in architecture and planning at universities in Dublin and Waterford. He has been a member of ICOMOS Ireland since 1999.

Dr Aidan O'Boyle is a Mayo-born art historian working in Dublin. He is a graduate of the Department of History of Art and Architecture at Trinity College Dublin. He completed his Ph.D. thesis on 'The assembly, display and dispersal of art collections in Ireland 1750-1850', in 2011. He has published articles on both art and architectural history.

Dr Eamon O'Flaherty is Associate Professor, School of History, University College Dublin. O'Flaherty has written the Limerick volume of the RIA's Irish Historic Towns Atlas and articles on various aspects of urban history. He is currently working on a study of Irish urbanism in the 17th and 18th centuries and, with Siobhán Sexton, on the Irish Historic Towns Atlas Westport fascicle.

Siobhán Sexton is the Architectural Conservation Officer for Mayo, with qualifications in architecture and building conservation. Further to the completion of her MUBC thesis Representing Westport: The Contribution of Historic Sources to the Conservation of the Designed Landscapes of Westport, she is currently carrying out research with Dr. Eamon O'Flaherty for the Irish Historic Towns Atlas Westport fascicle. She provides support for conservation-led projects in Mayo and the promotion of traditional building skills.

Gráinne Shaffrey is the Principal of Shaffrey Architects, a RIAI Grade 1 Conservation Architectural Practice. Established 50 years ago in 1967 by Patrick and Maura Shaffrey their work today covers a broad range and scale of architectural practice, including design and conservation of new and existing buildings, urban design, and research. Most projects are set within an existing (historic) context.

Simon Wall, Architect, West Mayo Municipal District, Mayo County Council has been Town Architect to the Town of Westport Co Mayo for almost two decades; he is responsible for the built environment as part of the Town Management team.



The Sentinel, by sculptor Ronan Halpin. Photo by Michael McLaughlin.



The Mall, Westport, Co. Mayo.

The Mall, Westport, Co. Mayo. Lincenhall Library, Belfast.

BOOKING FORM

Return booking form and payment (€25 per person) to:

Irish Georgian Society, City Assembly House, 58 South William Street, Dublin 2.

All cheques payable to: Irish Georgian Society

Online booking available at: www.igs.ie; by phone 01 6798675 or email info@igs.ie

Name of Delegate(s) (as to appear on badge) _____

Address: _____

Tel No: _____

Email: _____

Please specify any dietary requirements: Coeliac Vegan Vegetarian

No. of Places Required: _____ Cheque/Visa Amount: _____

Visa/Mastercard/Laser No:

Name on Card: _____

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Please ensure that you provide the Society with your contact details in order that we may notify you in the unlikely event of changes to the programme.

Cancellation Policy: full refunds on cancellations made up to Monday 6th November 2017. After that date no refunds permissible.