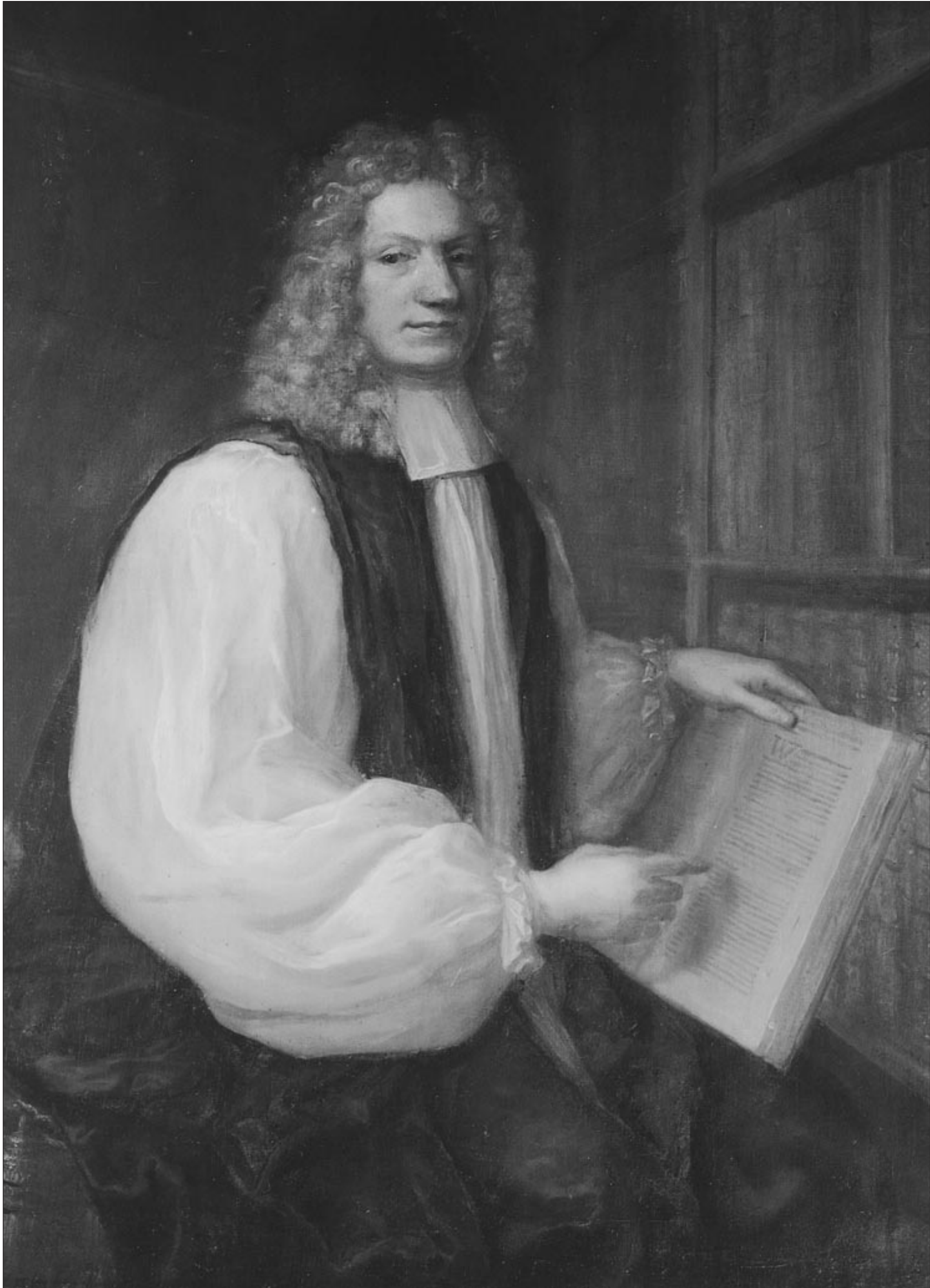


1 – Hugh Howard, Portrait of St George Ashe
(courtesy Board of Trinity College Dublin)

From Imperial Schatzkammer to the Giant's Causeway: collecting in eighteenth-century Ireland

TOBY BARNARD

In 1690 St George Ashe (Plate 1), a recent graduate of Trinity College Dublin, soon to be its provost and later a negligent Church of Ireland bishop, was in Vienna. Ashe acted as secretary to the English ambassador, Lord Paget of Beaudesert. More to the point, Ashe, a man of learning and curiosity, used the opportunity to scan the contents of the Imperial Library and the Schatzkammer, the imperial treasury of rarities and curiosities. In a letter to an acquaintance back in Ireland, he described the layout and contents of the Schatzkammer, with its thirteen cabinets holding precious and bizarre objects.[1] A few years later, Samuel Molyneux devoured the sights and sensations of London before crossing to continental Europe. Molyneux inspected a large variety of ancient and modern buildings. In addition, he was admitted into private collections of paintings, engravings, antiquities and curiosities. He singled out for particular praise those of lords Halifax and Pembroke; the latter had recently returned from a spell in Dublin as Lord Lieutenant. He also visited the museum of Dr Woodward. Over the last collection – the first systematic assemblage of geological items, later deposited with Cambridge University – Molyneux enthused that it 'contains the most elucidating materials that I have seen to a history of nature's hidden processes within the formation of minerals'.[2]

The reactions of Ashe and Molyneux introduce several themes deserving further pursuit. The most obvious is the fact of travel outside Ireland, and how it introduced travellers to fashions which they might then ship back home. One vogue was the assembling of cabinets of curiosities, treasuries, or – in Woodward's example – 'elucidating materials' that revealed 'nature's hidden processes'. Woodward, indeed, issued a manual to guide novices in harvesting and codifying geological specimens, and subsequently published a detailed catalogue of his collection, again as a model

for others.[3] Secondly, the origins and functions of collections can throw light on wider intellectual and cultural currents.[4] Both Ashe and Molyneux were involved in co-operative efforts of investigation and improvement. For a time these endeavours were systematised by the Dublin Philosophical Society. Ashe had been present at its foundation in 1684, along with Samuel Molyneux's father, William. Samuel resuscitated the society for a year or two in Queen Anne's reign. Groups as much as individuals made collections. Sometimes, indeed, institutional collections stood a better chance of preservation and survival than those of private collectors, which were at risk of being dispersed after their owners' deaths.

A third point, evident from the approach of Ashe and Molyneux, is how making collections might advance the public good. They were not mere whimsies or self-indulgences, but intended to assemble materials through which the secrets of creation could be probed and better understood. Eventually, more precise knowledge would aid profitable exploitation. To take merely one example: geological specimens could be analysed in order to detect ores which could then justify investment in mining.[5] More precise information about the terrain of Ireland was not only a prelude to profiteering, but would confirm the omnipotence and omniscience of the deity which had created it. In this spirit, the study of the natural world – the book of nature, as it was often called – was deemed a form of worship, and particularly recommended to the clergy. One of their number, Richard Barton, active during the 1740s in the investigations of the Physico-Historical Society – a successor of the Dublin Philosophical Society – and obedient to the injunction, stated that 'the handiwork of God was a suitable subject for his ministers'.[6]

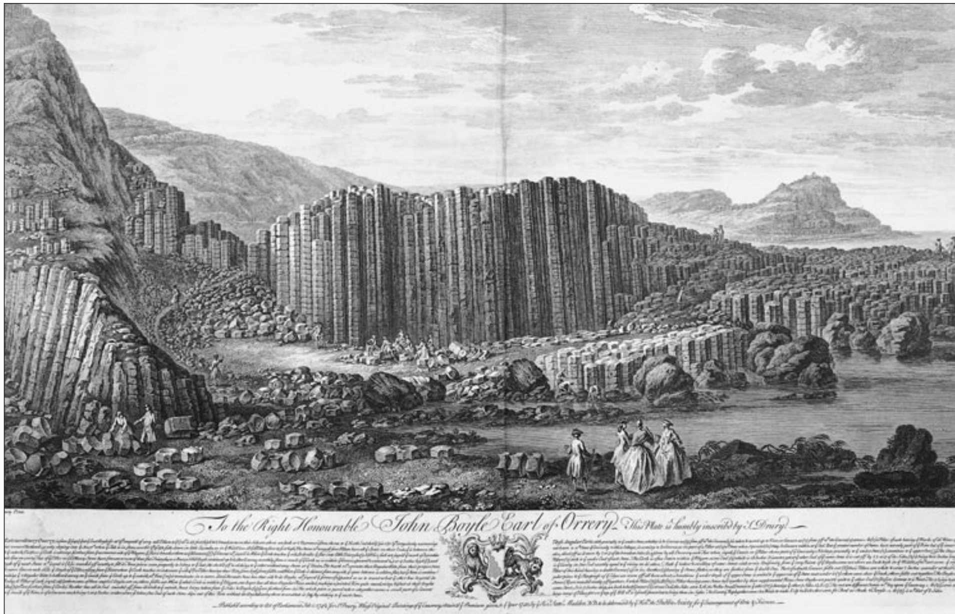
Apparently random assemblages of fossils, precious and semi-precious stones, petrifications and other mysterious objects do not immediately conform to the objects most usually connected with collecting: books and paintings. Of the collections formed in later-seventeenth and eighteenth-century Ireland, by far the most numerous and seemingly the earliest in date were indeed those of books and manuscripts.[7] Such collections are considered here only in so far as they relate to the principal themes. There were a few voracious bibliophiles whose addiction had to be fed by snapping up whatever rarities came on the market. They resembled collectors of other kinds of objects in employing agents who searched for rarities outside Ireland. Passionate book-collectors insisted that their libraries had practical purposes. In common with assemblages of antiquities and curios, if properly ordered and catalogued the volumes could spread useful knowledge more widely. Yet, alongside the purposefulness with which different collections were made, items frequently entered them by haphazard and serendipitous routes.

Paintings were the second object of desire. In collecting them, the inhabitants of Ireland lagged behind those of England, which in their turn trailed behind the

connoisseurs of western Europe. In the seventeenth century, only the Ormondes at Kilkenny (Ireland's one ducal family) could properly be regarded as having a collection, housed in a gallery and shown to favoured guests.[8] By the start of the eighteenth century, one or two institutions – notably Trinity College, but then the Royal Hospital at Kilmainham, and even some of the chartered trading companies of the capital – were gathering collections of paintings. For the most part, and in distinction from the Ormondes' gallery, the canvases were portraits of worthies closely associated with the particular place. So, provosts, fellows and distinguished alumni hung in Trinity; governors of the hospital at Kilmainham; and masters and wardens in the guilds' halls. Most of these images were either presented by the subjects themselves or by sycophants.

Visitors and commentators continued to stress the backwardness of Ireland in the business of collecting pictures. A few prominent aristocrats were regularly credited with owning the only worthwhile galleries. This was perhaps to take an unduly restrictive view of what constituted a collection, and to endorse a familiar but sadly distorting notion that cultural innovation in eighteenth-century Ireland was monopolised by peers. This continues: only in republics, like France, America and Ireland, do those with titles receive so much deference. Some proud of their collections endowed them with the same ethical and moral worth that were invested in libraries, cabinets of fossils, and albums of pressed plants. These purposes are most loudly proclaimed in contemporary descriptions of two of the most notable: George Berkeley's, displayed in his episcopal palace in the hamlet of Cloyne, and Samuel Madden's, housed at his Fermanagh seat of Manor Waterhouse. Berkeley, an ardent crusader for improvement, annexed music, statuary, architecture and political economy to the cause. So too did Madden, a founder of the Dublin Society in 1731, then its reviver early in the 1740s. His pictures belonged to an ensemble in which landscape gardening, architecture, and practical improvements in manufactures all featured.[9] Berkeley and Madden seemed to subscribe to contemporary theories which arranged painting according to a hierarchy of genres and attributed to the highest – history painting – a capacity for moral enlightenment along the lines advocated by Lord Shaftesbury.[10] The same thinking led Madden to include painting and statuary among the activities which would be rewarded with premiums under the auspices of the revamped Dublin Society of the 1740s.

The reasonably well-known collections of Madden and Berkeley were not the only ones in Ireland before 1750. The right to import and auction paintings in Dublin had first been granted in 1681.[11] It may not have been exploited immediately, yet, in the 1690s, the younger John Evelyn, temporarily in Dublin, decided to sell part of his collection there. Canvases other than the family portraits were auctioned.[12] The availability of imported art, much of it engraved on paper, together



2 – Susannah Drury, View of the Giant's Causeway
(courtesy Bodleian Library, Oxford)

with the opportunities to make collections, albeit modest in price and pretension, may have been seriously underestimated.[13] These supplies of 'improving' imagery, and the concern to improve the techniques through which it was produced, united in a project more directly linked with the cabinets of curiosities and proto-museums. It is reasonably well known that an early recipient of a bounty from the Dublin Society was a young lady, Susannah Drury, who painted the Giant's Causeway in county Antrim. Miss Drury, 'a young gentlewoman', 'a modest and well-behaved young person', spent several months at the bleak and remote spot, sketching the phe-nomenon. Plates were then engraved from her sketches (Plate 2).[14] This was not the first time that the Causeway had been drawn and engraved. In 1693, Edwin Sandys, the leading Dublin engraver of the day, an 'excellent artist', journeyed to county Antrim with the local Church of Ireland bishop to depict what others, encouraged by the Dublin Philosophical Society, had tried to describe in words. Sandys was paid £13 for these images.[15]

The origins and significance of the Causeway had long excited speculation. Pieces or 'pillars' from it were in demand among assiduous collectors. In 1697 William Molyneux, while defending in print Ireland's legislative sovereignty, sent a segment to the prime collector of the time, Dr (later Sir) Hans Sloane in London. 'Such a rude trifle' was thought worthy of Sloane's notice, not least because he had

himself originated in Ulster.[16] Within a decade, Molyneux's son Samuel looked forward enthusiastically to inspecting the natural wonder. He was supplied with samples, as also of petrified matter from Lough Neagh, by a Mr Neve from Magherafelt.[17] Others continued the interest. In 1741 a new Dean of Clogher, John Copping, awaited samples of the basalt columns from Boyd of Ballycastle, another improver besotted with the doctrines of the Dublin Society and Physico-Historical Society.[18] Indeed, the Causeway was so renowned that the Bishop of Derry, Thomas Rundle, felt that pieces would make an appropriate present to the poet Alexander Pope, and soon adorned the latter's grotto at Twickenham.[19]

The trade in bits of the Giant's Causeway catered to the interest in the rare and wonderful. Some were sent to the curious in Dublin, not simply to enrich their collections, but in the hope that scientific analysis would penetrate the mysteries of its formation. But it is equally noteworthy that many of the pieces were shipped from Ireland. This reminded that the pre-eminent collectors were outside the island. Sloane and Dr Richard Mead were at this juncture the nonpareils. In consequence, Sloane received – usually unsolicited – a miscellany of oddities and artefacts: petrified moss sent by another improver, Dobbs; coins unearthed at Howth; motley shells; stones dug from a bog in the King's County.[20] This notion that the better destination for artefacts uncovered in Ireland was England inspired other gifts, such as the head of a giant elk presented by Bishop Wetenhall of Dromore to the Royal Society in London.[21] In the same mode, Ralph Thoresby in Yorkshire, the leading collector of coins, interested himself in a rarity found in Ireland by Thomas Putland, a functionary of the Irish treasury.[22] In time, the Putlands – quintessential Dublin rentiers – would become significant collectors, but as yet they had not acquired the habit and so did not keep the finds for themselves.

Sloane, as has been stressed, knew and was revered by virtuosi in Ireland. Acquaintances corresponded with him long after he had settled in London; tourists from Ireland saw and wondered at his collections. Two known to have done so were St George Ashe and Samuel Molyneux. The first was by then a hardened traveller, Molyneux a mere novice, although he had already ventured into the remoter regions of Ireland.[23] There was a tendency to deprecate what Ireland had to offer, and, in contrast, to enthuse, maybe excessively, over what was on view elsewhere. However, more than a courtly deference made Ashe praise Sloane's assemblage – reckoned the largest and most remarkable at the time – or the Schatzkammer in Vienna, thought by some a wonder of the modern world. As tourism gathered pace, travellers from Ireland headed for the standard spectacles, thereby experiencing what was common to the prosperous throughout much of Europe.[24] The curious viewed collections of paintings and statuary: the Arundel marbles or the contents of Northumberland House, Hampton Court and Wilton House in Wiltshire. Further

3 – Sir Joshua Reynolds,
GENERAL JOHN GUISE
(courtesy Christ Church, Oxford)

opposite
4 – French, c.1720-40,
GENERAL GUISE AND THE CONNOISSEURS
(courtesy Christ Church, Oxford)

afield they were dazzled by the offerings of the Netherlands and Italy. These visits familiarised the untutored with what were accounted masterpieces, and inculcated a taste for collecting. Many accounts concentrate on the few who, especially from the 1740s, descended on Italy, commissioned works there, and patronised the local dealers and antiquaries. However, only a small proportion of those who travelled for pleasure beyond Ireland could afford to return with canvases by Claude, Batoni and Richard Wilson, or the fancies and fakes purveyed by Roman traders. The Netherlands were a much readier source of wares.

Handiest and least expensive as mementoes of these trips were engravings. Indeed, an enterprising group with strong Irish connections in the 1720s intended to cash in on this market by pioneering and popularising a new form of coloured engraving of favourite paintings. Collecting engravings has not received the attention it deserves, partly because the details of what arrived in late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century Ireland are frustratingly difficult to retrieve. Odd glimpses – a visitor to Rome from Ireland in 1688 or another in Paris of the 1730s – reveal the passions of the Irish.[25]

The provincial awestruck in front of acknowledged masterworks was a

favourite trope; it readily accommodated the reactions of the bemused and ignorant Irish. This was not how they always behaved. Tourists from Ireland, like their counterparts from other countries, couched their responses to what they were told to see in words that they were told to use. The quickening pace of travel hastened the printing of guidebooks and cribs so that the untutored could bluff their way around the palaces and galleries of Europe. Even so, a series of travellers from Ireland, both in England and in continental Europe, judged independently. They struggled to express the feelings evoked by works as various as the Raphael cartoons, then at Hampton Court, or a now-vanished altarpiece after Raphael drawings of St Paul striking Elymas the sorcerer in the cathedral at Chester.[26]

At this stage, one example must suffice. In early Georgian London, the equivalent for paintings to Sloane's miscellaneous collections was the collection of General John Guise (Plate 3). The general claimed a vestigial Irish link, via an ancestor's friendship with Archbishop Narcissus Marsh. Be that as it may, he welcomed visitors from Ireland – if vouched for – into his London house where the pictures were hung. One such unidentified guest, introduced to Guise by the heir of Lord Cavan, was not intimidated. In particular, he was sceptical about two alleged

Michelangelos: he thought that they looked little more than primed canvases. The sightseer moralised, 'this shows what sort of people connoisseurs are, and that all their curiosities are to be valued only by the great warmth and ardency of their own fancies and imaginations' (Plate 4).[27]

The critical note by this Irish observer, presently anonymous, sounds two warnings. Numerous itinerants crossed from Ireland into Britain, and then some ventured further. Not all arrived as cultural innocents or visual illiterates, although most acknowledged how seeing more enhanced their appreciation. Those who returned to Ireland, even if they were not laden with artistic booty, often retained an interest in the arts and collecting which they continued to express. Moreover, Ireland offered richer pickings for the hunters after the curious than is sometimes allowed. One reason was warfare. English and Scottish conquerors of Ireland habitually belittled the culture of the defeated. Notwithstanding this disparagement, Ireland was not altogether barren of novelties which might detain the interested. Again, most obvious among the treasures uprooted and transferred to newcomers were manuscripts and books, particularly those previously owned by now suppressed monasteries or by Catholic owners driven into exile. The Book of Kells was a striking example. Bestowed on Trinity College by its warrior vice-chancellor, Henry Jones, during the Cromwellian interregnum, it soon attracted the scholarly interest of those investigators of other aspects of Ireland through the Dublin Philosophical Society in the 1680s. Many other ancient documents and treasured books circulated in the unsettled conditions of the warfare in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Ireland. Prizes were to be had, but moved along lines which can seldom be recreated in their entirety. Typical are the Irish manuscripts of Henry Bathurst, an English lawyer who became a judge in Munster and proprietor of Old Park overlooking the harbour of Kinsale. In 1675 he bequeathed his doubtfully gotten gains to a brother, the head of an Oxford college, but the Bathurst collection is not now to be found there.[28]

Intermittent bursts of collective endeavour to forward the study of Ireland's topography and past encouraged collections. The successive groups, Hartlib's friends in the 1650s, the Philosophical Society, then the Dublin Society from 1731 and the Physico-Historical Society in the 1740s, valued samples on which they could experiment and speculate. As a result they encouraged their collection. Also, provincials, hearing of these Dublin cognoscenti, sent in curiosities. Samuel Molyneux, picking up where his father and uncle had left off, established contact with John Keogh in Roscommon. Keogh duly despatched to Molyneux a giant's tooth and a massive dog's skeleton from a second correspondent, James Reynolds, in county Leitrim.[29] Similarly, in 1708, another of Molyneux's correspondents, this time Walter Atkins, a vigorous cleric from county Cork, obliged with reports and examples of what had been unearthed in excavations on Lord Midleton's estate.[30] These materials were

more than curiosities; they might help determine the veracity of more general theories about the earliest settlements in Ireland, the origins of Christianity and building there, or on pre- and post-lapsarian worlds.

A network of informants across the country was the ideal to which the learned collectives in Dublin aspired. In the main what was wanted from the provincial members were reports, but sometimes objects were also despatched. The problem was that once these materials arrived they had somehow to be stored. This was possible so long as the offerings remained few, but too many antlers, skeletons and columns from the Giant's Causeway would soon burst the closets of the fellows of Trinity, who, for the most part, made up the activists in these incipient societies.

The university promised secure and durable locations for collections. Oxford, with the Ashmolean Museum and the Bodleian Library, offered an obvious model. Soon enough Dublin University had its own impressive collection of books, to which were added a physic garden, with its useful plants, and a chemical laboratory, which may also have boasted collections for experimentation. During the 1690s, 'an handsome new skeleton of a man' was displayed in a chamber abutting on the old library. The skeleton had been presented by the physician Charles Gwithers. In a second chamber were kept 'a great many manuscripts, medals and other curiosities'. By 1729 the college possessed 'a little museum' as part of an ensemble, with an anatomy theatre, laboratory and herbarium, given striking architectural form.[31] These resources resembled those found in the Low Countries and Italy.[32] In 1732 the English visitor Loveday noted that the new library, not yet in use, included a room reserved for 'the museum of curiosities'. For the moment the curiosities were housed next to the chemical laboratory. One type of object was 'rare herbs pasted on paper in glass picture cases'. The anatomy school also contained striking exhibits, notably a skeleton of a man astride the skeleton of a horse, suspended from the ceiling.[33] Other treasures were added: two classical statues sent by an alumnus who had become a merchant in Hamburg; a gallery of portraits; and in the 1740s a series of commissioned busts of college notables (Plate 5).[34]

The collections associated with the Dublin Philosophical Society lacked the security of those in the college. The Society's meetings ceased after 1708, when, presumably, its possessions were dispersed among the surviving officers. Conspicuous among them was Samuel Molyneux, but his move to England did not increase the chances of survival. When, in 1730, his library was auctioned, it included 'all his mathematical, optical and mechanical instruments' useful to his (and perhaps even his father's) earlier experiments.[35] The Dublin Society seems not to have been so keen to assemble or receive donations. It is true that it was given, unsolicited, samples of volcanic rock from county Kerry. But this may have been an isolated donation. The Society preferred to stage exhibitions of modern inventions. In 1734, for

5 – The Long Room, Trinity College Dublin, showing busts of college notables
(photo David Davison; courtesy Board of Trinity College Dublin)

example, it organised a display of innovative farming implements in rooms adjacent to the House of Lords.[36] These were advertisements of its practical concerns, not museums. In contrast, the Physico-Historical Society, the group which in the 1740s sprang up alongside the Dublin Society, complementing and sometimes competing with it, did acquire a collection. In 1744, the well-meaning master of the free-school in Cavan, the Reverend James Moore, donated a horn 'of extraordinary shape'.[37] Next, the Society employed Isaac Butler as a botanist to collect rare plants, in rather the same way as earlier in England the Royal Society had used Thomas Willisel.[38] Others enlarged the collections: Charles Smith, the Dungarvan apothecary and author of histories, both natural and civil, of Cork, Waterford, Kerry and Limerick, unearthed fossils, stones and shells. Another enthusiast, the Lurgan curate Richard Barton sent down more materials from the neighbourhood of Lough Neagh.[39] The Physico-Historical Society cared enough about these goods to ask a member, James Simon, to prepare a repository for them.[40] In 1748, at least, the fossils were to be catalogued; probably the plants as well.[41]

The Physico-Historical Society undoubtedly retained the utilitarian objectives of its precursors. Hopes persisted that, through the minute study of clays and rocks, manufacturing techniques could be advanced. After the Physico-Historical Society petered out early in the 1750s, some of its preoccupations were continued by a smaller group, the Medico-Politico-Physico-Classico-Ethico-Puffical Society. Its members studied minerals, and proposed a museum to house fossils.[42] The Society sponsored botanical investigations that may have resulted in a *hortus sicus* being collected.[43] In 1766 one of its members, Samuel Caldwell, returning from Aix-la-Chapelle, entertained his colleagues with various 'substances'. The effects are not recorded in the society minutes; nor whether the substances were then to be stored somewhere.[44] These ephemeral groups, lacking permanent quarters, found it impossible to preserve their miscellaneous collections. Either they were dispersed to the individual members' custody or passed to successor bodies. The most important of these, which acquired a stable home, was the Royal Irish Academy.[45]

These groups, although wedded to utility, were fascinated by the odd. The curiosity of some members embraced relics of the Irish past. The Physico-Historical Society, in its publications, reiterated the credo of the earlier groups: namely that Ireland, with its untapped potential, was ripe for improvements, and that 'the English in Ireland' were solely responsible for what so far had been achieved.[46] Precious artefacts supported these contentions. Throughout the seventeenth century, ancient objects fashioned from precious metals were valued as bullion rather than as antiquities.[47] Hopes of profit led promising sites to be ransacked. The prospect of converting the objects easily into cash left scant space for an aesthetic or historical appreciation. But once collectors were known to pay a good price for rarities, then

discoveries were more likely to be touted for sale to the cognoscenti. In 1747 the luminaries of the Physico-Historical society inspected an ancient gold plate belonging to Lord Newport, the Lord Chancellor. Newport, whether in his official or a private capacity, seems to have gathered a collection of such valuables; maybe the Lord Chancellor was given first refusal on treasure trove. During the 1750s the Medico-Politico society concerned itself with a gold plate, coins and medals, reputedly Roman, found in the north of Ireland. It is not clear whether these objects were sent to the Society in Dublin for opinions and safety.[48] In a similar way, Sloane had been apprised of the discovery of a copper trumpet in county Kildare in 1726.[49] Appreciation of the quality of the craftsmanship was slowly competing against avarice at the intrinsic worth of the metal. Moreover, curiosity about the past suggested by this material evidence could be detached from polemic over which ethnic or confessional group pioneered or monopolised such skills in an earlier Ireland.

A better appreciation of the shared past told, perhaps, of more relaxed conditions, in which the recently installed Protestant proprietors felt more confident that the new order would endure and thrive. Accordingly, survivals from an older Ireland were prized. The circumstances which brought rarities to light changed. In the seventeenth century, war delivered precious goods as well as land to fresh owners. Many more articles were probably destroyed. By the eighteenth century the characteristic exertions of improvers, set on foot by groups like the Dublin Philosophical Society or Dublin Society, were more likely to reveal the hidden as fields were ploughed, bogs drained and woodlands felled. In 1738 the Bishop of Cork informed Lord Egmont, an absentee owner of large estates in the diocese, of the recently discovered skeleton of a man alleged to have given suck to a child. The bishop thought it 'a most extraordinary natural curiosity ... I cannot forbear letting your lordship partake with me in the amusement.'[50] Paradoxically, improvement stirred an enthusiasm for relics of 'primitive' times. Yet, it would be dangerous to predate or exaggerate the extent of these antiquarian tastes. The topographical artist Jonas Blaymires was disappointed by the luke-warmness with which his engravings of medieval buildings were greeted.[51] Similarly, collectors deemed few productions of Ireland deserving of a place in their drawers or on their shelves. In 1726 the Reverend Nicholas Knight hoped 'to give the world a distinct view of the ancient and present state of Ireland in four parts'. To further this project he appealed for 'rarities of art and nature to be communicated'. Nothing seems to have come of Knight's design.[52] Moreover, the choicest discoveries tended to be earmarked for the discerning elsewhere, notably Sloane.

Collectors in Ireland generally looked overseas for their wants: books, paintings, prints, coins, medals, and even plants. Evidence abounds of these foreign quests: the plant-hunting expeditions in Jamaica on behalf of the Rawdons of Moira

county Down, which then spread a taste for exotic plantations among their neighbours and kindred. Here the only difficulty, as Brilliana Rawdon complained in 1703, was that the exotics were too dear for most in the region. Perforce, they made do with curiosities more easily and cheaply obtained, including the arbutus or strawberry tree, in high repute and cultivated in the south-west.[53]

Coins and medals, important alike in establishing the chronology of obscure societies and tracking forgotten trades, were prized by the virtuosi pushing back the frontiers of knowledge. Ashe, while in Vienna, promised to bring back for one of his Dublin friends, John Madden, also an avid collector of manuscripts, sufficient ancient and modern medals to satiate him.[54] A member of a prominent Ulster Presbyterian family, Samuel Haliday, in Switzerland, looked out for medals which would please the exacting Sloane.[55] A fillip to these collecting passions among Dubliners was offered by the cultivated Viceroy, Pembroke, and his exquisite aide-de-camp, Sir Andrew Fountaine. The latter, an acknowledged connoisseur, published a treatise on Saxon coinage, and stimulated a more discriminating attitude among Irish collectors, with whom he stayed in touch.[56]

Those who owned Fountaine's treatise on Anglo-Saxon and Danish coins included the notable book collector and fellow and benefactor of Trinity, Claudius Gilbert. Dr Gilbert also coveted and bought rare coins.[57] This genre of collecting reached its apogee when Lord Charlemont commissioned a coin cabinet from Chambers (Plate 6).[58] Before that, in 1720, Trinity College had caused a cabinet to be made, thereby suggesting that the private interest of fellows such as Claudius Gilbert, Robert Howard and John Ellwood spilled over into institutional collecting.[59] The Squire of Barbavilla in Westmeath, William Smythe, in conjunction with a well-travelled brother, ordered from Dublin a finely made cabinet which was probably intended for the display of coins and other curios (Plate 7).[60]

The forming of collections was eased by the brisk traffic in appropriate artefacts and the appearance of specialist dealers. Travel gave more people from Ireland opportunities to see and purchase. Use of the chances is shown by the Howards, sons of the foremost physician in Dublin at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. One, Hugh Howard, studied painting and employed his slender talents with the brush in London. The necessity to live on what he thereby earned was ended by a fortunate marriage. Meanwhile, he developed a lucrative sideline as intermediary for collectors. Hugh Howard's best markets were in England, but he did not ignore his native Ireland. He returned to paint some luminaries of Trinity College, so enlarging the modest gallery at the university (Plate 1). He also supplied customers in and around Dublin with works of art. A brother on the spot, Robert Howard, successively Bishop of Killala and Elphin, assisted. Bishop Howard was a willing customer for what Hugh Howard purveyed – decorative and furnishing pic-

6 – Lord Charlemont's medal and coin cabinet, designed by Sir William Chambers (1723-1796)
(courtesy Courtauld Institute of Art Gallery)

7 – Cabinet at Barbavilla, county Westmeath
(courtesy Mrs Valerie Bunn)

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tures, often with rather speculative attributions to distinguished masters like Guido Reni, Luca Giordano, Andrea del Sarto, Pellegrini, or Gaspar Poussin.[61]

This traffic was not entirely in one direction. The Howards, mingling easily in the upper echelons of Irish Protestant society, spotted desirable items already in Ireland. One in particular haunted Hugh Howard. It was a 'Caricatura' belonging to General Frederick Hamilton. At first, Hugh Howard wheedled to borrow it in order that he might copy it. Soon, it seems, he wanted to buy it outright in the hope then of selling it well.[62] The Howards exemplify the shadowy side of picture-dealing in early eighteenth-century Ireland. Their optimistic attributions, touched-up canvases, and complete forgeries matched the gullibility and cupidity of many would-be buyers.

More germane to the theme of collecting is the route by which the Caricatura had come to Ireland. Its owner Frederick Hamilton was one of a group, important alike in the cultural and socio-economic life of Protestant Ireland. Hamilton, originally from county Londonderry, rose high in society thanks to a successful career as a soldier. In retirement, surrounded by improvements and possessions, he was esteemed as much for his taste as his valour.[63] In this he was not unique among high-ranking officers. Continental warfare under William III in the 1690s, and then the War of Spanish Succession, gave ample opportunities for Protestants from Ireland – as from England and Scotland – to prosper and travel. Almost certainly, Hamilton's picture had been picked up while he was in the Low Countries, possibly though the good offices of the quartermaster of his regiment.

The latter functionary, William Leathes, also hailed from the north of Ireland. His forte was supplying fellow officers of the Royal Irish Regiment. Staying on as George I's emissary in Brussels, Leathes continued to cater to the varied wants of his comrades even after they had left the ranks. He knew his way around the art markets of the Low Countries as thoroughly as he knew the textile trades and the East India imports of the same region. Leathes' acumen rendered him invaluable to those back in Ireland, such as General Hamilton or Lord Kildare, who sought the wares of the United Provinces and Austrian Netherlands. Leathes himself made a collection, mainly of paintings, but it has only a tangential link with Ireland, since he retired to an estate in Suffolk. The remnant of the collection is in Christ Church mansion in Ipswich. Yet he acted as a conduit to bring goods from continental Europe to the grand and not so grand in Ireland. He helped a sister acquire engravings which enlivened her Dublin house. This was at almost the same moment that the viceregal couple, the Ormondes, lightened the look of the Castle by hanging its drawing room with engravings.[64]

Whether such decor should be dignified as a collection is a testing question. Two points emerge from this cursory assemblage of scattered information. At least some of components of collections were present in late seventeenth and early eigh-

teenth-century Ireland, and in greater quantities than has often been supposed. Books, paintings and prints are the easiest to spot. However, there are odder items. By the 1730s a suit of armour was to be found in the Hall of the Painter-Stainers' Company of Dublin. It was presented by Colonel Joshua Paul, a Carlow squire of austere Protestant mien. It had previously belonged to a Pooley – perhaps the painter. Another member of the company was requested to make a face and hands for it, and equip it with a pair of boots and sword.[65] It is impossible to know if it was a painter's prop to assist in the portrayal of military heroes or the nucleus of a collection. The second point must be that what seemed aimless – the amassing of lumps of stone, petrified wood, dried flowers and bleached bones – was undertaken in the name of improvement as much as of amusement. Sentiment, serendipity, convention, even one-upmanship could dictate what entered collections. But delight and enlightenment were never far away. Unfortunately, the collections which have left the clearest traces and the collectors whose motives are sometimes recorded tend to be the ones who exercised power and asserted standing through the activity. Improvement through the rapt contemplation of a heap of stones may seem – and may be – the sublimation of psychological derangement.[66] But seventeenth and eighteenth-century enthusiasts in Ireland as elsewhere knew that collecting was a sociable, not a purely solitary pleasure that could yield public benefits as well as private gratification.

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ENDNOTES

The following abbreviations are used:

BL	British Library, London	PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast
Bodleian	Bodleian Library, Oxford	RDS	Royal Dublin Society
CRO	County Record Office	RIA	Royal Irish Academy
NA	National Archives, Dublin	TCD	Trinity College Dublin
NLI	National Library of Ireland		

1 TCD, St George MSS, photocopy 175a, St G. Ashe to A. St George and S. Lightburn, 9/19 December 1690; same to unknown, 18/28 December 1690; R. Distelberger, 'The Habsburg collections in Vienna during the seventeenth century', in O. Impey and O. McGregor (eds), *The Origins of Museums: the cabinet of curiosities in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe* (Oxford 1985, reprinted Thirsk 2001) 51-61.

2 Southampton Civic Archives, Molyneux MSS, S. Molyneux, tour, D/M, 1/3, f.94. For the collection: J.M. Levine, *Dr Woodward's Shield: History, Science and Satire in Augustan England* (Berkeley, London and Los Angeles 1977) 93-113; H. Torrens, 'Early collecting in the field of

geology', in Impey and McGregor (eds), *The Origins of Museums*, 289-90.

[3] J. Woodward, *Brief instructions for making observations in all parts of the world* (London 1696); J. Woodward, *Fossils of all kinds digested into a method* (London 1728).

[4] Examples of the approach include: Impey and McGregor (eds), *The Origins of Museums*; M. Swann, *Curiosities and Texts: the culture of collecting in early modern England* (Philadelphia 2001).

[5] BL, Evelyn MSS, formerly at Christ Church, Oxford, C. Monck to J. Evelyn, 29 October 1694, 16 March 1695[6]; mining company materials, *ibid*., box viii.

[6] R. Barton, *Lectures in Natural Philosophy* (Dublin 1751) 111-12. A good guide to the Society's work is E. Magennis, '"A land of milk and honey": the Physico-Historical Society, improvement and the surveys of mid-eighteenth-century Ireland', *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 102C, 2002, 199-217.

[7] T. Barnard, 'Libraries and collectors, 1700-1800', in R. Gillespie and A. Hadfield (eds), *Oxford History of the Book in Ireland*, volume 2, forthcoming; E.A. Boran, 'Libraries and collectors, 1600-1700', *ibid*.

[8] J. Fenlon, *The Ormonde Picture Collection* (Dublin 2001); J. Fenlon, 'Her grace's closet: paintings in the duchess of Ormond's closet at Kilkenny Castle', in *Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society*, xxxvi (Dublin 1994); J. Loveday, *Diary of a tour in 1732 through parts of England, Wales, Ireland and Scotland* (Edinburgh 1890) 30-1; Markham, *John Loveday of Caversham, 1711-1789* (Salisbury 1984), 499.

[9] NA, M 2533, W. Henry, 'Hints towards a natural and typographical [sic] history of the Counties Sligo, Donegal, Fermanagh and Lough Erne', 464-5; A. Crookshank and D.A. Webb, *Paintings and Sculpture in Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin 1990) 94, 158-64.

[10] L. Lippincott, 'Expanding on portraiture: the market, the public and the hierarchy of genres in eighteenth-century Britain', in A. Bermingham and J. Brewer (eds), *The Consumption of Culture, 1600-1800: Image, Object, Text* (London 1995) 75-85.

[11] R. Loeber, *Biographical Dictionary of Irish Architects* (London 1981) 109, under Trotter, Robert.

[12] BL, Evelyn MSS, J. Evelyn to J. Evelyn, 26 March 1694, formerly at Christ Church, Oxford; Anne Crookshank and D. Fitzgerald, Knight of Glin, *Ireland's Painters, 1600-1940* (London and New Haven 2002) 52.

[13] B. Cowan, 'Arenas of connoisseurship: auctioning art in later Stuart England', in D. Ormrod and M. North (eds), *Art Markets in Europe, 1400-1800* (Aldershot 1998) 153-63; Crookshank and Glin, *Ireland's Painters*, 51-64.

[14] RDS, minutes, 26 October 1738; BL, Sloane MS 4057, f.68v, J. Copping to H. Sloane, 22 August 1741; A. Crookshank and D. Fitzgerald, Knight of Glin, *The Watercolours of Ireland* (London 1994) 28, 30.

[15] Bodleian, Lister MS 36, ff.57, 182, Sir R. Bulkeley to M. Lister, 22 July 1693, 13 April 1697; *Philosophical Transactions*, xx, 1698, 209-23; K.T. Hoppen, *The Common Scientist in the Seventeenth Century: A Study of the Dublin Philosophical Society*, 1683-1708 (London 1970) 105, 269, n.67; Pollard, *Dictionary of the Dublin Book Trad*e (London 2000) 508-9.

[16] BL, Sloane MSS 4036, f.367; 4037, f.9, W. Molyneux to H. Sloane, 13 November 1697, 8 January 1697[8]; Crookshank and Glin, *The Watercolours of Ireland*, 34; Hoppen, *Common Scientist,* 182.

[17] BL, Sloane MS 4041, ff.190-90v, 235, S. Molyneux to H. Sloane, 5 August 1708; W. Dereham

to same, 26 October 1708.

18 BL, Sloane MS 4057, ff.68-9, J. Copping to Sir H. Sloane, 22 August 1741; C. Dallat, 'Ballycastle's eighteenth-century industries', *The Glynns*, 3 (1975) 7-13.

19 BL, Sloane MS 4057, ff.109, 117, 130, J. Copping to Sir H. Sloane, 15 February 1741[2]; A. Pope to same, 30 March 1742, 22 May 1742.

20 BL, Sloane MSS 4052, ff.113, 189; 4054, f.200, T. Adams to H. Sloane, 15 May 1732, 19 September 1732, 14 March 1735[6].

21 BL, Sloane MS 4042, f.48, Bp. E. Wetenhall to H. Sloane, 27 September 1709.

22 BL, Sloane MS 4039, f.305, T. Putland to R. Thoresby, 27 November 1696, copied in R. Thoresby to H. Sloane, 7 June 1704. For Thoresby as a collector: P.C.D. Brears, 'Ralph Thoresby, a museum visitor in Stuart England', *Journal of the History of Collections*, i, 1989 213-24; *Musaeum Thoresbyanum* (London 1764).

23 BL, Sloane MS 4043, f.129, St G. Ashe to H. Sloane, 9 March 1712[13].

24 A. Maçzack, *Travel in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge 1995).

25 PRONI, D 695/226, p.29, S. Waring, tour notebook; NLI, PC 225, D. Molyneux to R. Howard, 20 June 1736; T. Clayton, *The English Print, 1688-1802* (New Haven and London 1997) 45; T. Barnard, *The Grand Figure: the material worlds of Ireland*, forthcoming, ch. 5.

26 BL, Add. MS 27,951, f.69v, 'Itinerarium Londinense', 1761.

27 BL, Add. MS 27,951, ff.64-4v, 'Itinerarium Londinense', 1761; cf. *ibid*., Add. MS ff.93v-94, 'Itinerarium Bristoliense', 1772; J. Byam Shaw, *Paintings by Old Masters at Christ Church, Oxford* (London 1967) 9.

28 Gloucestershire CRO, D 2525, Bathurst of Cirencester MSS, box 45, will of Henry Bathurst, 24 August 1675; T. Barnard, 'Learning, the learned and literacy in Ireland, 1650-1760', in T. Barnard, D. Ó Cróinín and K. Simms (eds), *'A Miracle of Learning': Studies in Irish manuscripts and learning. Essays in honour of William O'Sullivan* (Aldershot 1998) 207-32.

29 Southampton Civic Archives, Molyneux MSS, DM 1/2, f.26, J. Keogh to S. Molyneux, 22 December 1707. For Keogh, see Hoppen, *Common Scientist*, 32-3, 155, 194.

30 Southampton Civic Archives, Molyneux MSS, DM 1/2, ff.25-6, W. Atkins to S. Molyneux, 10 April 1708. On Atkins: T. Barnard, 'Protestants and the Irish language, c.1675-1725', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 44, 1993, 243-72, reprinted in T. Barnard, *Irish Protestant Ascents and Descents* (Dublin 2003) 179-207; Hoppen, *Common Scientist*, 193.

31 TCD, MUN/P/4/28/42; TCD, MUN/P/4/32/15, bursar's vouchers, *c*.1724, 26 January 1729[30]; E.A. Boran, 'The function of the library in the early seventeenth century', in V. Kinane and A. Walsh (eds), *Essays on the History of Trinity College Library* (Dublin 2000) 39-52; Southampton Civic Archives, Molyneux MSS, D/M 1/3, f.129, S. Molyneux to unknown, 28 February 1712[13]; E. MacLysaght, *Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century* (Shannon 1969, 3rd ed.) 378; E.C. Nelson, 'Botany, medicine and politics in eighteenth-century Dublin and the origin of Irish botanical gardens', *Moorea: the Journal of the Irish Plant Society*, 6, 1987, 34-6. For Gwithers, see Hoppen, *The Common Scientist,* 166, 180-1.

32 E.J. McParland, *Public Architecture in Ireland, 1680-1760* (New Haven and London 2001) 147; M. Hunter, 'The cabinet institutionalized: the Royal society's "Repository" and its background', and W. Schupbach, 'Some cabinets of curiosities in European academic institutions', in Impey and McGregor (eds), *The Origins of Museums*, 217-30, 231-44.

33 Loveday, *Diary of a tour in 1732*, 54-5.

34 NLI, French of Monivea MSS, envelope 6, D. French to R. French, 14 April 1747; NLI, PC

227, Wicklow MSS, R. Howard to H. Howard, 18 September 1707; Bodleian, Smith MS 58, 257, T. Smith to N. Marsh, 4 November 1707; J.K. Bailie, 'Memoir on two large medallion busts which are preserved in the manuscript room of the library of Trinity College, Dublin', *Transactions, Royal Irish Academy*, 22, part 2, 1855, 85-107; J.H. Todd, note in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 2, 27, 1841, 49-52; Crookshank and Webb, *Paintings and Sculpture in Trinity College Dublin*, 132.

35 *A catalogue of the library of the Honble. Samuel Molyneux, deceas'd* (London 1730); *A Catalogue of the Pitt Collection* (Southampton 1964).

36 RDS, minutes, s.d. 29 March 1733, 12 December 1734.

37 RIA, MS 24 E 28, Physico-Historical Society minutes, 15 May 1744.

38 RIA, MS 24 E 28, Physico-Historical Society minutes, 28 May 1744, 1 October 1744, 1 and 10 June 1747, 6 July 1747, 9 February 1747[8], 19 December 1748.

39 RIA, 24 E 28, Physico-Historical Society minutes, 1 April 1745, 5 August 1745, 7 December 1747, 7 March 1747[8].

40 RIA, 24 E 28, Physico-Historical Society minutes, 7 April 1746.

41 RIA, 24 E 28, Physico-Historical Society minutes, 14 March 1747[8].

42 RIA, MS 24 K 31, minutes of the Medico-Politico Society, s.d. 22 July 1756, 6 January 1757.

43 RIA, MS 24 K 31, minutes of the Medico-Politico Society, s.d. 7 December 1756, 7 April 1757, 5 May 1757.

44 RIA, MS 24 E 5, papers of the Medico-Politico Society, 19 February 1766.

45 R.B. McDowell, 'The main narrative', in T. O Raifeartaigh (ed.), *The Royal Irish Academy: A Bicentennial History, 1785-1985* (Dublin 1985), 19, 37-41.

46 G. Boate, *Irelands naturall history* (London 1652), 114; W. Harris, *The antient and present state of the county of Down* (Dublin 1764) xii-xiv.

47 D.M. Beaumont, *The Gentry of the King's and Queen's Counties: Protestant landed society, 1690-1760*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2 vols (Dublin 2000), ii, 123-5.

48 RIA, MS 24 E 28, Physico-Historical Society minutes, 18 May 1747; *ibid*., MS 24 K 31, minutes of the Medico-Politico Society, s.d. 8 July 1756, 1 September 1757; 'Find of treasure trove, 1665', *Journal of Kildare Archaeological Society*, vii, 1912-14, 189.

49 BL, Sloane MS 4048, f.209, 'A draught of a copper trumpet found ... Griffinrath, Co. Kildare, by Rev Sankey Winter ... 15 February 1725[6]'.

50 *Philosophical Transactions*, no. 461, 810, 813.

51 T. Barnard, 'Art, architecture, artefacts and ascendancy', *Bullán*, 1, 2, 1994, 26.

52 Printed proposal, *Whereas the Revd. Nicholas Knight, D.D.* (Dublin 1726) 2 (copy in Marsh's Library, Dublin).

53 BL, Evelyn MSS, C. Monck to J. Evelyn, 29 October 1694; *ibid*., Sloane MS 4039, f.190, B. Rawdon to H. Sloane, 26 September 1703; E.C. Nelson, 'Sir Arthur Rawdon (1662-1695)', *Proceedings of the Belfast Natural History Society*, 2nd series, x (Belfast 1982).

54 TCD, St George MSS, photocopy 175a, St G. Ashe to unknown, 18/28 December 1690; W. O'Sullivan, 'Dr John Madden', in Kinane and Walsh (eds), *Essays on the History of Trinity College Library*, 104-115.

55 BL, Sloane MS 4046, f.132v, S. Haliday to H. Sloane, 13 February 1715[16]. For Sloane's collection: M. M. Archibald, 'Coins and medals', in A. MacGregor (ed.), *Sir Hans Sloane: collector, scientist, antiquary* (London 1994) 150-66.

56 BL, Sloane MS 4041, ff.10-10v, T. Molyneux to H. Sloane, 7 August 1707; NLI, PC 227, R.

Howard to Hugh Howard, 15 July [1707], 18 September 1707; Southampton City Archives, Molyneux MSS, D/M, 1/3, pp.79-80, S. Molyneux to unknown, 20 December 1712; Hoppen, *The Common Scientist*, 192-3, 195; J. Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy, 1701-1800* (New Haven and London 1997) 376-7.

[57] A. Fountaine, *Numismata Anglo-Saxonica & Anglo-Danica breviter illustrata* (Oxford 1705), now in TCD, pressmark SS b 19; NLI, MS 8390/1, bills of Sir A. Fountaine to R. Mead, 1729; *ibid*., MS 8390/2, 'Dr Gilbert's memorandum' on coins struck in England.

[58] C. O'Connor, 'The Charlemont House medal cabinet', *Irish Arts Review*, i, 2 (Dublin 1984), 23-7.

[59] TCD, MUN/P/24/18, bursar's vouchers, 20 April 1720. The price of £12 suggested it was large and elaborate.

[60] This piece is discussed in Barnard, *The Grand Figure*, ch. 4.

[61] NLI, PC 227, bill, 1 April 1729.

[62] NLI, PC 227, H. Howard to R. Howard, 2 January 1734[5], 20 November 1735, 4 December 1735.

[63] Barnard, *A New Anatomy*,196-7.

[64] Dublin City Libraries, Gilbert MS 81, abstract of records of St Luke's Guild, 18 October 1733, 21 February 1737[8].

[65] J. Brown, *Kings and Connoisseurs: collecting art in seventeenth-century Europe* (New Haven and London 1995); W. Muensterberger, *Collecting: An Unruly Passion* (Princeton 1994); S.N. Pearce, *On Collecting: an investigation into collecting in the European tradition* (London 1995); Swann, *Curiosities and Texts*.

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