



# Leamaneh and Dromoland: the O'Brien ambition, part II

## ‘Obliges me to dip my Hands in Mortar’: Catherine O'Brien's influence at Dromoland

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FINOLA O'KANE

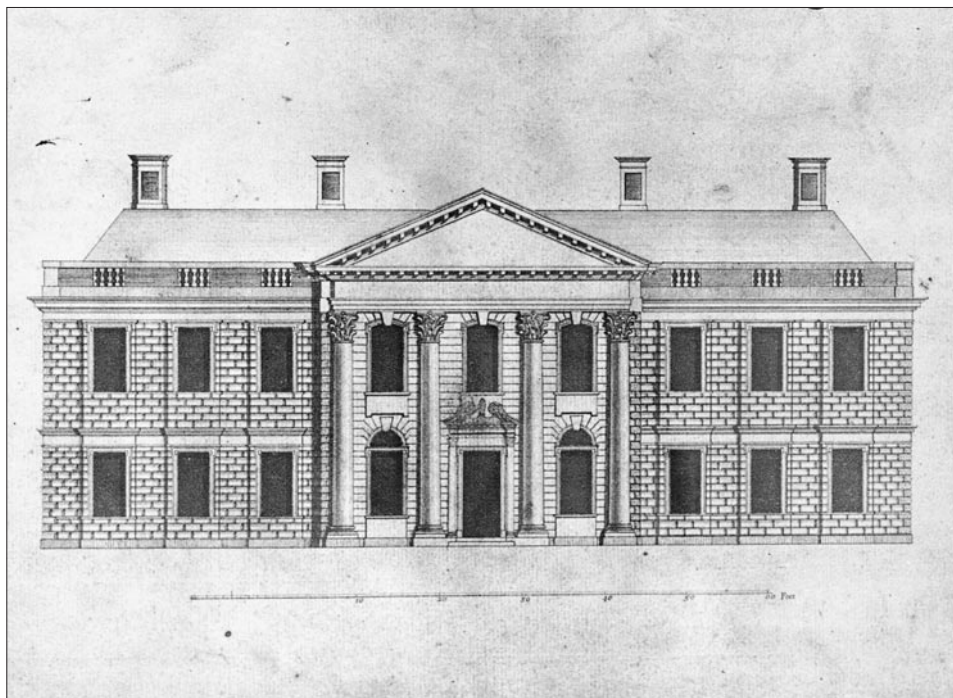
THIS PAPER CONTINUES THE STORY EXPLORED IN ‘LEAMANEH AND DROMOLAND: the O'Brien ambition, part I’. It suggests that Catherine O'Brien (c.1681-c.1730), Sir Donat O'Brien's formidable daughter-in-law, commissioned Thomas Burgh (1670-1730) to reconfigure Sir Donat O'Brien's alterations to Dromoland Castle during the period of her son's minority from 1717 to 1726. Burgh provided her with architectural expertise and working drawings, and these were later redrawn by John Aheron. The principal evidence for this interpretation lies in the correspondence between Donat O'Brien and Thomas Keightley, the correspondence between Catherine O'Brien and Thomas Burgh, the Dromoland accounts and the Dromoland Album of drawings. The extraordinary working drawings, which this album contains, describe the extension and alteration of an existing mansion and its successful conversion into a classical centrepiece in a great baroque garden.

The attribution of the eighteenth-century Dromoland mansion (Plate 2) is particularly important for Irish garden history. The great baroque landscape design depicted in the anonymous drawing *Ichnographia Dromolan* defines the apex of early eighteenth-century Irish landscape design (Plate 1). The baroque garden, concerned with axes, set pieces, and the manipulation of scale found it difficult to separate architecture and landscape. The garden remained very much a built

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*1 – The Dromoland Album: ICHNOGRAPHIA DROMOLAN*

*This drawing includes, at its centre, the footprint of the house described in Drawing No. 31 of the Dromoland Album (Plate 3). (NLI, MS 2791; courtesy Irish Architectural Archive)*



2 – *The Dromoland Album*, ‘The East Front of Dromoland House extending 105 Feet’  
 (NLI, MS 2791, p.29; courtesy Irish Architectural Archive)

environment, and architect and landscaper had to collaborate closely. The principal contender for a dual role is thought to be Thomas Burgh, with some collaboration from Browne the Contriver, and an exceptional level of involvement provided by their client, Catherine O’Brien.

Sir Donat O’Brien added a new wing to the old castle of Dromoland in the second decade of the eighteenth century. It was standing in 1714, when Thomas Keightley, Catherine O’Brien’s father, asked ‘leave at a venture whether you will let me ride by your new building at Dromoland’.<sup>1</sup> Sir Donat’s accounts record that on 20 May 1714 a certain Dennis Flinn was paid ‘by Halpenny to compleat 15s for 15 days worke as a Mason in the new building on the South Side the New House and Tower’.<sup>2</sup> These accounts document its construction in detail,<sup>3</sup> and the various trades employed in the construction of a building are all represented, from masons, joiners, and slators to the final duties of the upholsterer.<sup>4</sup> The new wing must have been nearing completion in November 1714 when Samuell Cooke was paid ‘for so much house paynting as he Computes without measuring ill to 1200 yards £6 10s’.<sup>5</sup> The substantial sum of £100 was paid to ‘Royen ye Upholsterers’,<sup>6</sup> and another uphol-

sterer, one Richard Purcell, spent '100 dayes worke furnishing the new house' in 1715.<sup>7</sup> The workers were entertained at Sir Donat's expense, with Dennis Bourke playing for '4 days & 4 nights on his bagg Pipe at the lime Kiln'.<sup>8</sup>

Sir Donat started building again in 1716 when Robert Whittycomb was paid 'for making & bringing 100 thousand bricks, the rest to be pd ... according as his hon[our] shall forward ye workes £4 19s 5d'.<sup>9</sup> The final building accounts from the months before Sir Donat's death in November 1717 record a March payment to 'Edward Everard for Setting two large Squares of Glass in the lower Gallery', and in May to 'six masons 5s each towards 4 days worke done ... about the Castle'.<sup>10</sup> The 'total Hearthmoney out of 20 chimneys in Dromoland' came to two pounds in 1717.<sup>11</sup> John McInerny was Donat O'Brien's principal gardener at Dromoland in 1713,<sup>12</sup> when some planting was also afoot, with a delivery of 'Umber' and 'Yellow Oakes' in 1714.<sup>13</sup>

#### CATHERINE O'BRIEN'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH THOMAS BURGH

In the immediate aftermath of Sir Donat's death, Catherine O'Brien wrote to Thomas Burgh, the architect, to beg for his 'assistance and advice' in order to improve 'the very terrible condition' that she found 'this house [Dromoland] in'. This obliged her 'to dip' her 'Hands in Mortar, an imployment w[hi]ch however agreeable', she 'should hardly ingage in at present were there not an absolute necessity for it'. She hoped to 'do it with something more succes both for beauty, & conveniency, than the part already don[e]'. She sought his 'assistance and advice', and 'in order' that he could provide a service, she sent him 'as exact a draught' as she could 'get drawn here of yt part finisht, and the Castle, as it now stands'.<sup>14</sup> This undated letter and a letter of Thomas Burgh's (not in response) are transcribed in Appendix 1.

Catherine O'Brien's letter reveals some information about Sir Donat's alterations to Dromoland. He had left a castle 'half pull'd down, all open at the --- & so ill joynd to ye new Wing':

S[i]r Donat him self was almost brought to consent to have the fore part of the Castle thrown quite down, the workmen haveing assured him the New Stone facing would be in danger both of falling & letting in Water between the old & new Work.

Catherine was 'determined', if Burgh approved, 'to pull it intirely down to the Ground & build a new front'. She would not, however, consider 'the other Wing' except 'on paper, not knowing how I can pretend to pleas a young Gentle Man' (her son and Sir Donat's heir Sir Edward O'Brien). She predicted that upon reaching his

majority, he would 'have seen enough to improve the spirit of building he brought into the World with him too far to like w[ha]t will be don[e] so long beforehand for him'. She wanted to 'pull down imediately after the Hollidays' [Christmas 1717] so 'that no time may be lost in the building this spring'. That would allow her to 'see the most of it finish't this summer; All Materials being on the place'. She sent Burgh a 'Draught of the three flowers', and stated that 'the Garrets are the Worst that ever was seen & must not be so in the New Building'. Her man, Rice, was sent with the drawing to 'explain the Draught better than I have don it on paper, & receive directions from you that may be of great use when he comes down'.

She then began to discuss what she had in mind. As she was not 'over fond of a flatt two Storeys', Burgh was to try to 'make it proportionable to ye Building', but she 'would not have it be as low as Castle Martin', county Kildare, her father's house.<sup>15</sup> She had confidence 'that one draught would be a sufficient Gide', and 'so sent no more but leave the whole to yr [Burgh's] contrivance from the wing already built'. The existing building had 'only Cellars w[hi]ch are very good, one Common hall, so yt the new building must goe as low as this to make Necessarys as a Stewards parler, Landry & other Conveniencys'. Thus, any new building was to have a basement.

The one letter from Thomas Burgh to Catherine O'Brien is dated 18 February 1717 (Appendix 1).<sup>16</sup> This letter is not a response to the long letter of Catherine O'Brien, and its tone and content suggest that there were intervening letters. The brief style of Burgh's letter, and his careful reference 'yours of the 3rd' indicates a continuing correspondence. The subject matter of Burgh's letter – the provision of a basement and its lighting and access – is connected to the instructions contained in Catherine's letter, which indicates Burgh's letter refers to a design which he had provided, and which Catherine was fine-tuning. His provision of rates for cut stone, ashlar work and brickwork suggests that Catherine was attempting to price the new design from drawings, which she had to hand. Catherine O'Brien's accounts also prove that substantial building work was completed at Dromoland during the period of Edward O'Brien's minority:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| To Artificers att Dromoland folo. 30 & 31                   | £188 17s 4d  |
| To cash pd for Materials for the sd work as in folo. 31     | £78 3s 6 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> d                 |
| To Labourers att Dromoland as in folos. 32 & 33             | £614 2s 2d   |
| To Artificers at Leamaneh Corrofin &c. as in folos. 34 & 55 | £94 6s 1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>4</sub> d                 |
| To Labrs at Do. as in folo. 36 & 37                         | £111 17s 7 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> d               |
| Materials for said work as in folo. 38                      | £24 15s 10 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> d <sup>17</sup> |

## THE EVIDENCE OF THE DROMOLAND ALBUM DRAWINGS

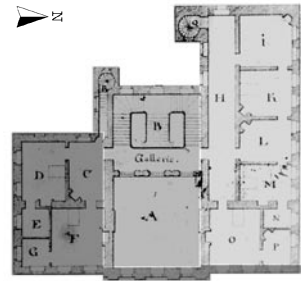
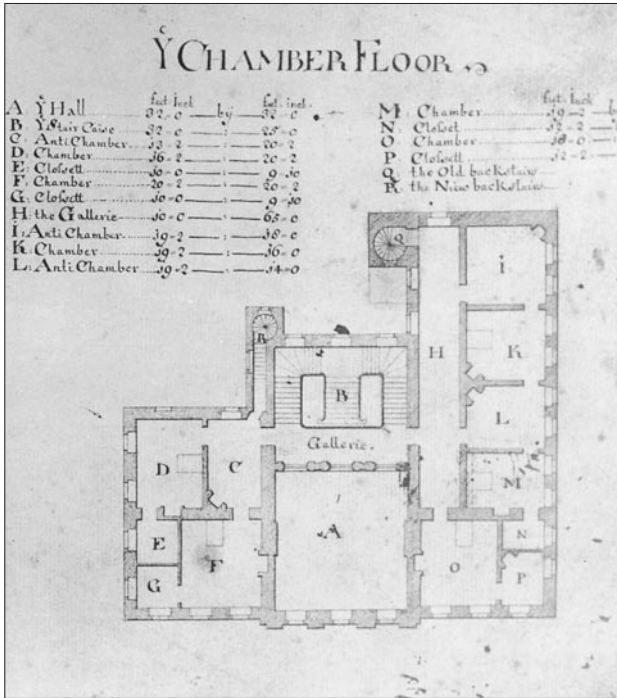
John Aheron has been credited with the production of many of the drawings in the Dromoland album of architectural designs. He intended to publish them in his book *General Treatise of Architecture* (1754), 'which was the most ambitious architectural publication to emerge from Ireland in the eighteenth century'.<sup>18</sup> One of the drawings is dated 1740.<sup>19</sup> What is doubtful, however, is whether he designed the depicted buildings. Christine Casey, in her ground-breaking thesis, *Eighteenth Century Architecture in Ireland: a bibliographical approach*, is sceptical that Aheron could have designed Dromoland at that stage in his career:

The directional drawings for Dromoland House demonstrate a thorough understanding of masonry construction, and it is plausible that Aheron was here making tidy formalised presentations of existing drawings, perhaps of Gilbert's instructional designs.<sup>20</sup>

She suggests that it is 'perhaps possible that the initial concept of Aheron's project was simply a monograph depicting the new buildings and improvements at Dromoland'. She sets a 'scenario suggested by the drawings in the Dromoland album' with Aheron's arrival in Dromoland 'as a young man, probably in the mid 1730s and perhaps as an apprentice to a carpenter or craftsman involved in O'Brien's ambitious new building project'.<sup>21</sup>

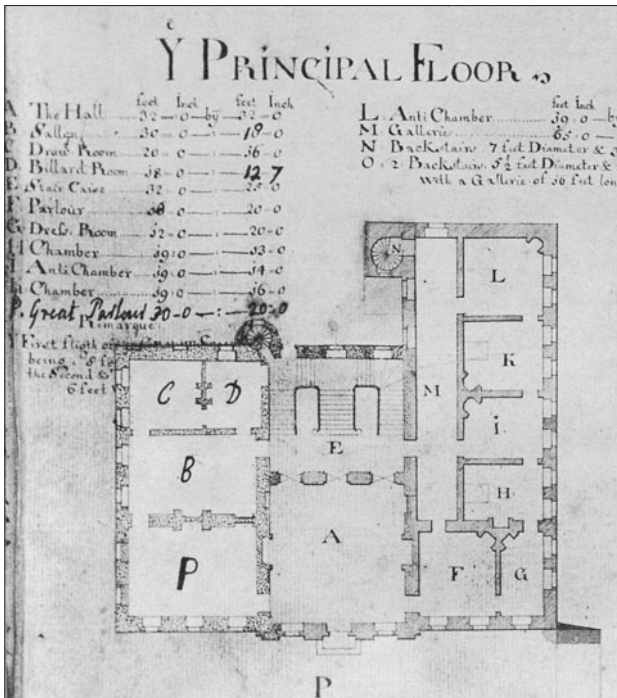
John Aheron's drawings in the Dromoland Album include a plan of Dromoland House. This drawing, No. 31 (Plate 3), follows two proposals for the façade. The plan also corresponds with the more detailed 'directional' drawings of Nos 39, 40, 41 and 42. The drawing's legend clearly distinguishes between 'the Old backstairs Q' and 'the New backstairs R'. Thus the plan describes the alteration of an existing building. That part of the building, which is served by the 'old stair' is considered to be the 'new wing' built by Sir Donat in 1714 (Plate 4). This wing is depicted in a nineteenth-century view (Plate 5). An ungainly ten-bay building, it was enlivened by a breakfront pediment. Dormer windows lit the attic storey, and the long spinal corridor was optimistically labelled 'The Gallerie'.

Drawings 39, 40 and 41 contain the detailed information which an architect typically provides to the builder for construction on site. This level of information is typically not provided in a book. Drawing No. 41 contains an annotated detail of the elevation entitled 'Proportion of ye Whole Entablature with a Part of the Springer for Ye Pediment' (Plate 6). The note 'here Stops the Cornice of Ye Standing Building' locates the position of the old cornice. The plane of 'ye Nacketh of ye old wall' is clearly marked on the plan detail drawing behind the plane of 'ye Nacketh of ye new wall'. The principal east elevation of the eighteenth-century Dromoland



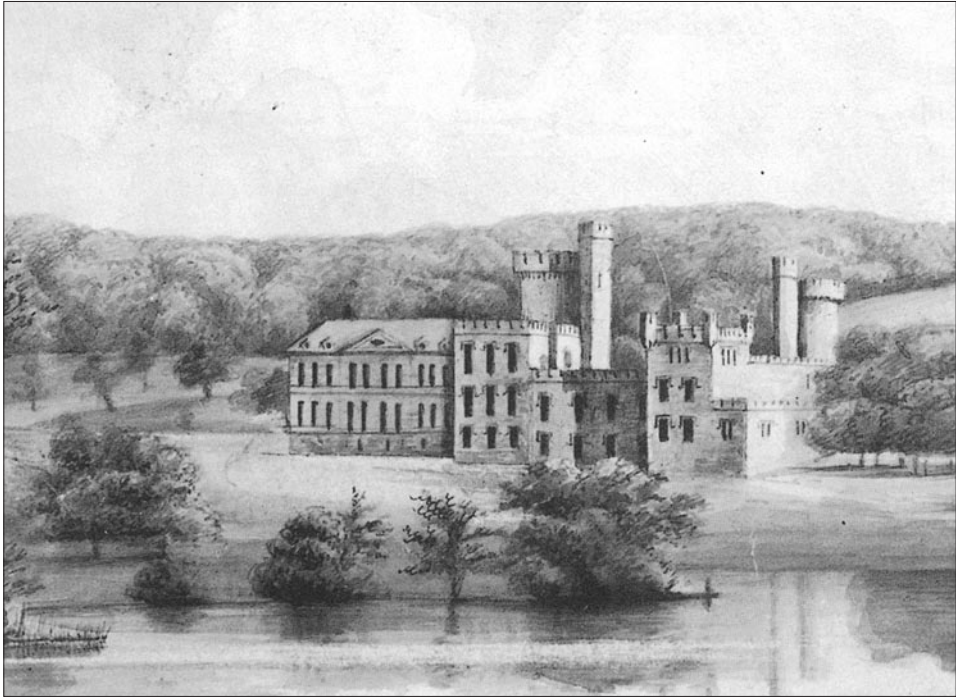
4 – Diagram of Dromoland’s eighteenth-century building stages (superimposed on ‘Ye Chamber Floor’ plan)

- Sir Donat O’Brien’s ‘new wing’, 1714
- Sir Donat O’Brien’s ‘new building on the south Side, the New House’, 1717
- Catherine O’Brien and Thomas Burgh’s ‘new front’, 1717-1718



3 – The Dromoland Album: plans of Dromoland House, ‘Ye Chamber Floor’ and ‘Ye Principal Floor’

(NLI, MS 2791, p.31; courtesy Irish Architectural Archive)



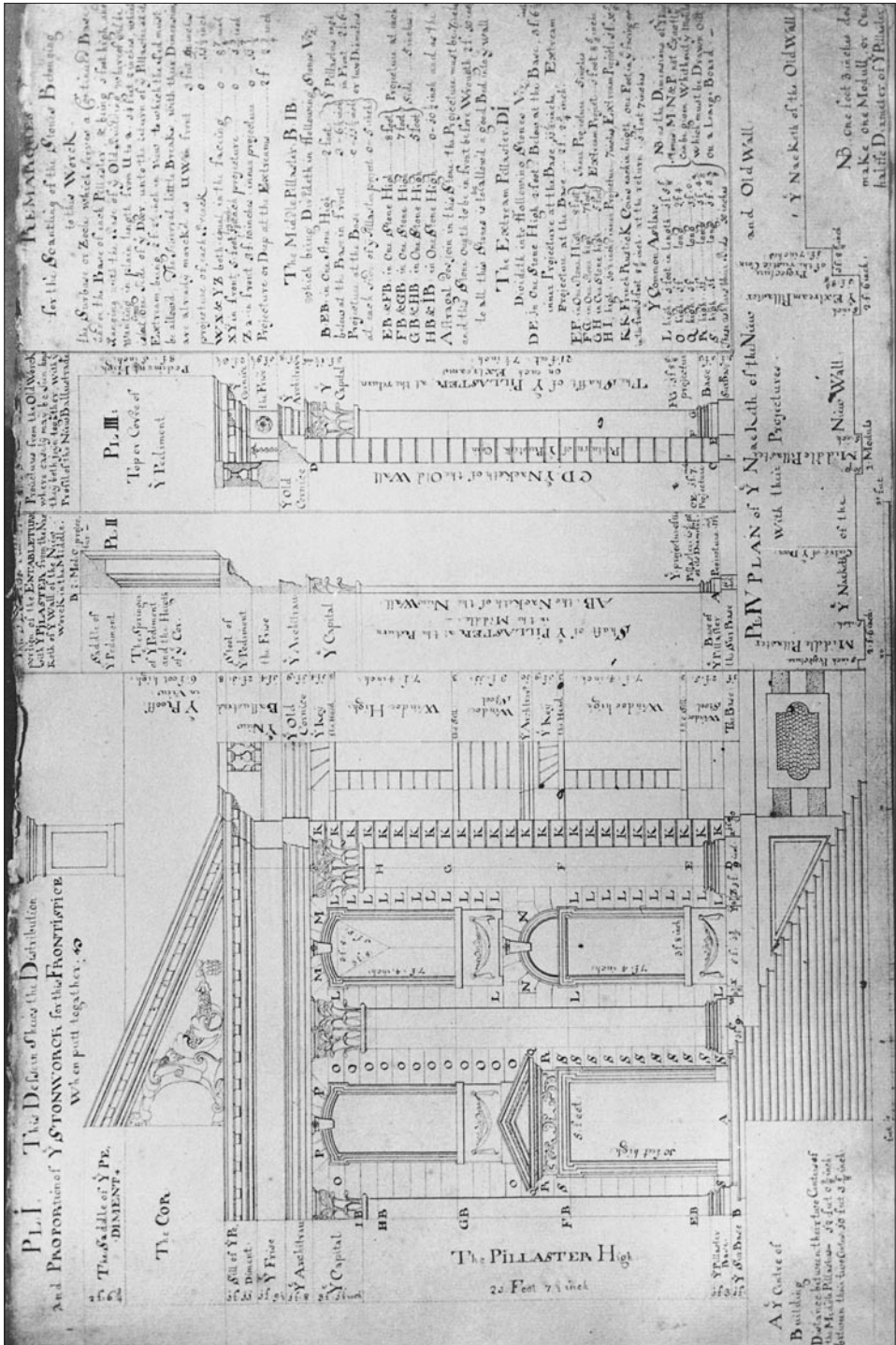
5 – *Probably by Grace O'Brien, this watercolour shows the eighteenth and nineteenth-century mansions before the older was demolished*

*(from Grania R. O'Brien, THESE MY FRIENDS & FOREBEARS: THE O'BRIENS OF DROMOLAND (Co Clare 1991) 7)*

House depicted by drawings Nos 29, 30 and 43 in the Dromoland Album was applied to an existing building (Plate 2). By retaining the 'old cornice', the existing building determined the position, proportions, height and number of storeys of the new elevation. It resolves the puzzle put to Mr Burgh by Catherine O'Brien: 'to build no further than the front building', to 'make it proportionable to ye [existing] Building', and to 'leave the whole to your [Burgh's] contrivance from the wing already built'.

In 1714 Sir Donat paid for work completed 'in the new building on the South Side the New House and Tower'.<sup>22</sup> This new work is thought to have been the hall and staircase block, which is located south of Donat's wing (Plate 4). It was probably constructed on or beside the old medieval castle of Dromoland. It was this new work which was 'so ill-joyned' as to have occasioned Catherine's plea for help from Thomas Burgh. The width of the stair hall and the 'new back stairs' on the Dromoland plan is forty feet (Plate 3). This corresponds with Catherine's stipulation to Burgh: 'You are confined in depth to 40 foot & half from out to out the present





**P L I** The Defect of the Distribution  
And Proportion of the Frontispiece  
When put together, 49

**P L II** The Springs of the Pediment  
of the Capital

**P L III** Top of Capital  
of Pediment

**The Middle Pillar B B**  
Arch having D in Right on following, 6 inches  
of the Base in Front 2 feet  
of each side 2 feet 6 inches  
of each side 2 feet 6 inches  
of each side 2 feet 6 inches

**The Extram Pillar D D**  
Do not only following, 6 inches  
of the Base in Front 2 feet  
of each side 2 feet 6 inches  
of each side 2 feet 6 inches  
of each side 2 feet 6 inches

**The Plan of the New and Old Wall**  
The Plan of the New Wall  
The Plan of the Old Wall  
The Plan of the Middle Pillar  
The Plan of the Extram Pillar

**The Defect of the Distribution**  
The Proportion of the Frontispiece  
When put together, 49

**The Springs of the Pediment**  
of the Capital

**Annotations:**  
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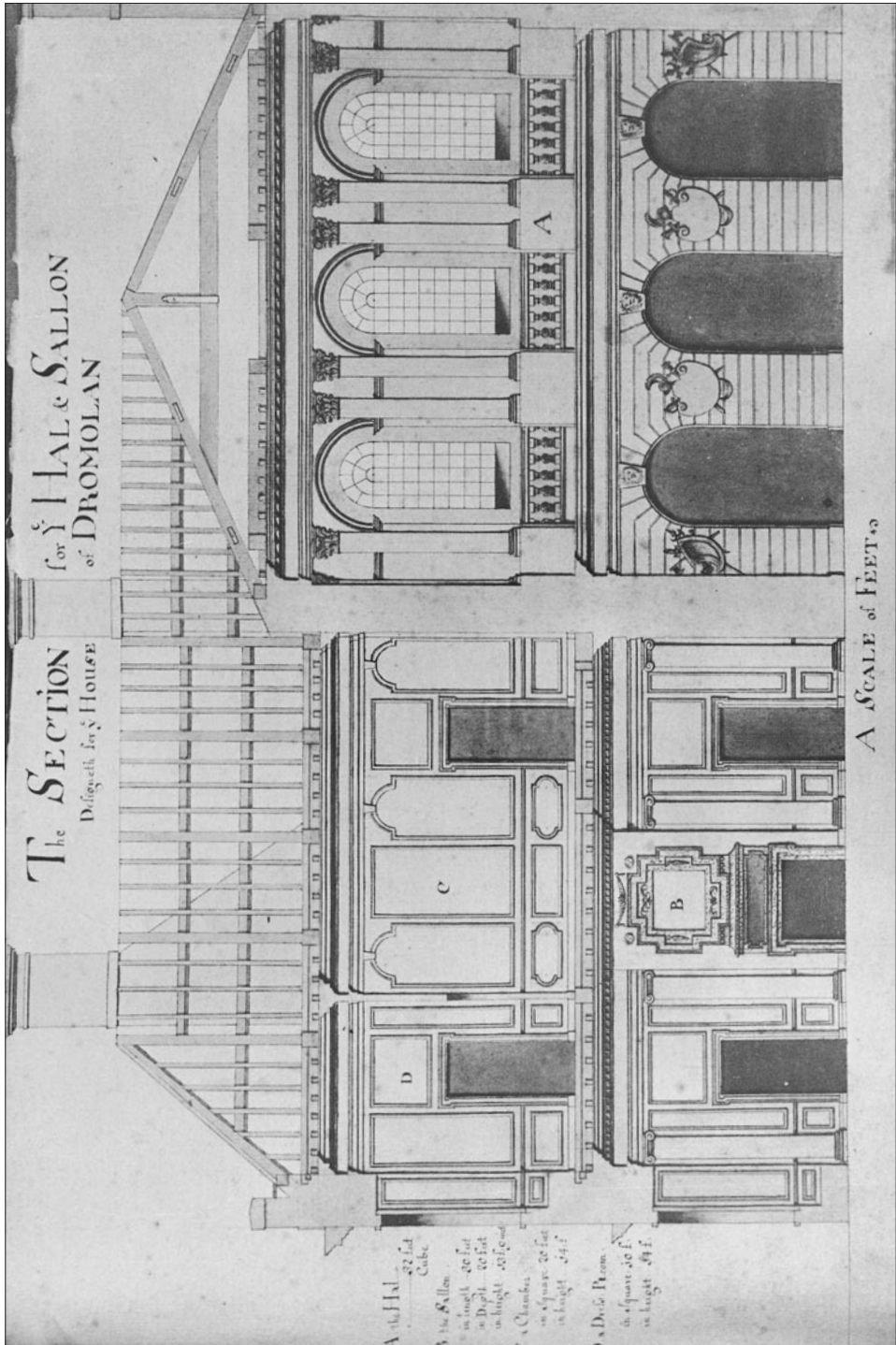
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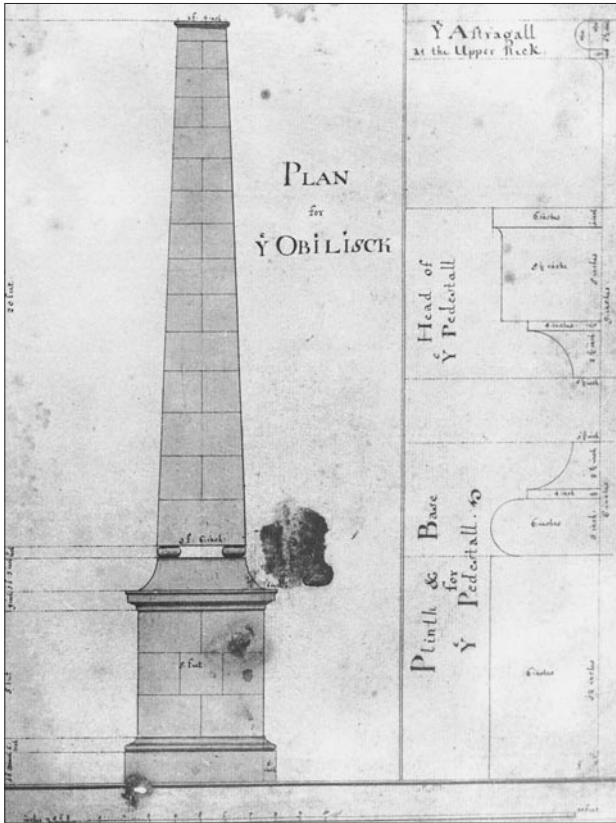
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The Springs of the Pediment  
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8a – *The Dromoland Album*,  
‘Plan for y Obilisk’  
(NLI, MS 2791, p.30)

preceding pages

*The Dromoland Album*

6 – ‘This Dessein Shews the  
Distribution and Proportion  
of ye Stoneworck for this  
Frontispice when putt  
together’

(NLI, MS 2791, p.39)

7 – ‘The Section for ye Hal  
& Sallon designeth for ye  
House of Dromolan’

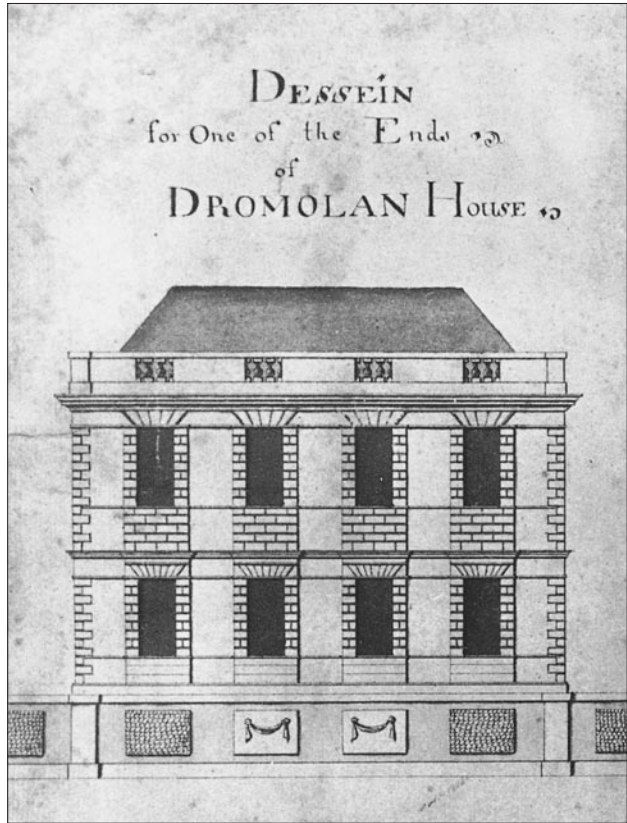
(NLI, MS 2791, p.42)

(all photographs of Dromoland  
Album courtesy Irish Architectural  
Archive)

building being one Room and Great Stays.’ This room, with its gallery and great stair beyond, are thought to be depicted in the drawing of ‘The Section for ye Hal & Sallon designeth for ye House of Dromolan’ (Plate 7). If Donat’s hall, gallery and great stairs were retained, Catherine’s distinction between ‘wing’ and ‘front’ can be understood, as ‘the ‘front’ was a façade of applied cut stonework. The awkward resolution of the building’s plan resulted in the unusual four-bay south elevation (Plate 8b). This was the inevitable result of Catherine O’Brien’s instruction that ‘for the other Wing I will not engage further in that than on Paper not knowing how I can pretend to please a young Gentleman’.<sup>23</sup> This south wing was evidently reworked at a later stage (probably by Edward O’Brien, the young gentleman), when attempts to lengthen its four bays into six bays are evident in the plan’s overlay and new legend (Plate 3).<sup>24</sup>

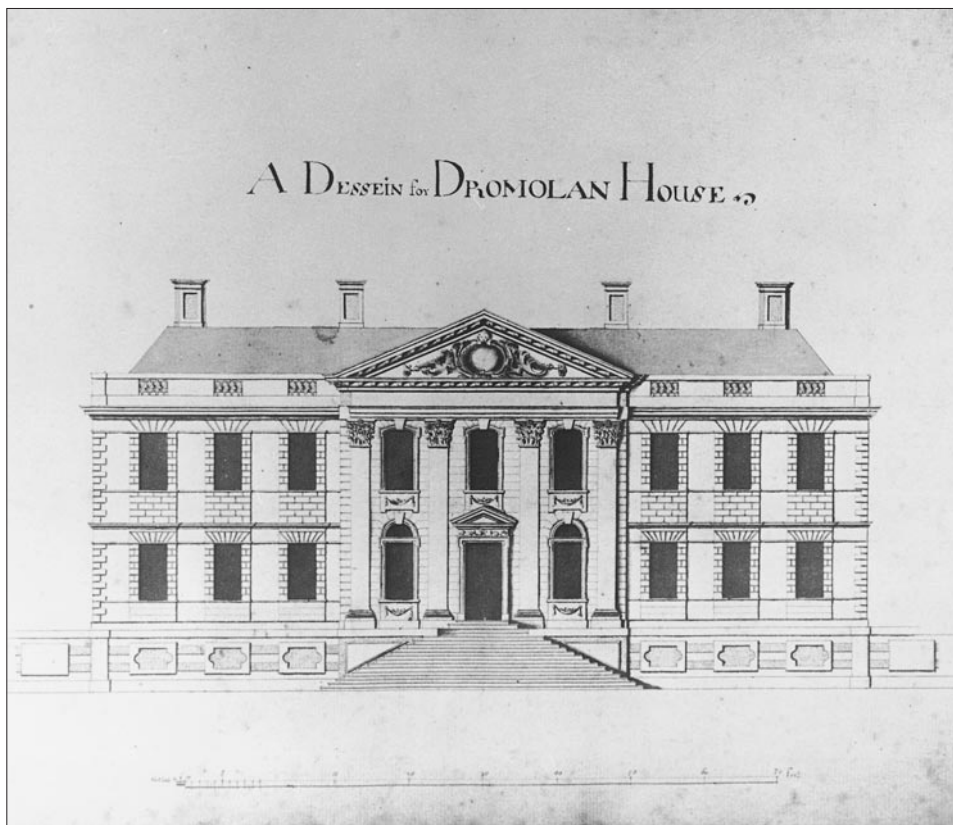
Catherine O’Brien was ‘determined to build no further than the front building’, and instructed Thomas Burgh to make it ‘108 foot the length of the present Wing’. The first Aheron drawing of Dromoland’s east elevation is entitled ‘The East

8b – *The Dromoland Album*,  
 'Dessein for one of the Ends  
 of Dromolan House'  
 (NLI, MS 2791, p.33)



Front of Dromoland House extending 105 Feet' (Plate 2). The clear desire was to make a square overall plan. One side of the square had been constructed by Sir Donat, the next side by Catherine and Thomas Burgh, and the last was to be left for her son Edward. The stipulation of a front measuring 108 feet was almost met, when adjusted for a satisfactory proportion.

Catherine had also sent Burgh a 'draught of the upright part of the front to shew you the kind of Stonework'. This would enable Burgh to 'see the difficulty of removeing even the six windows in the two storeys now made'. She maintained that 'no other Stonework can be now made but to answer yt, but for ye Castle wch is the Center the Stones are now cut after the manner you find there described'. If Burgh did not 'approve of them they not being laid may be alter'd'. She appears to be instructing Burgh that any new stonework had to 'answer' what had been completed, but that any cut stone, which had not yet been laid, might be 'alter'd'. Drawings 39, 40 and 41 provide a degree of information consistent with the reuse of stonework. The cut stones are all individually lettered (Plate 6). Unfortunately,



9 – *The Dromoland Album, 'A Dessein for Dromolan House'*

(NLI, MS 2791, p.30; courtesy IAA)

'given the rarity of eighteenth-century working drawings, there is little context in which to place the Dromoland designs'.<sup>25</sup> Burgh would, however, have possessed the technical expertise to produce such drawings, which, as Casey suggests, John Aheron probably lacked.

There is an evident progression in the east elevation designs for Dromoland House (Nos 29, 30 and 51).<sup>26</sup> No. 29 has no basement and three steps leading up to the door (Plate 2). In No. 30 a wall conceals the basement storey, and some eighteen steps provide access to the first-floor level (Plate 9). Catherine O'Brien's correspondence with Thomas Burgh was particularly concerned with access to the level of the front door and with the correct provision of offices at basement level. Burgh's response was to describe a means of providing access to the first-floor level if a substantial basement was provided (Appendix 1). This would seem to explain the design development.

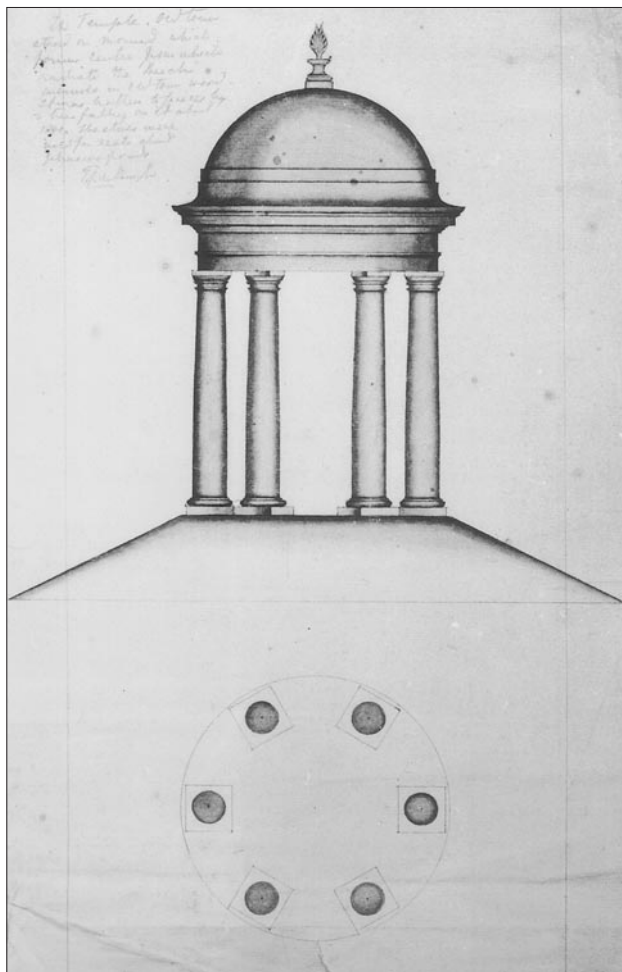
Christine Casey remarks that the elevation design is a 'curious blend of seventeenth-century classicism with up-to-date Palladianism'.<sup>27</sup> If Burgh designed a new elevation for a building, three bays of which were already built (the gable of Sir Donat's wing), the 'curious blend' of styles is no longer a mystery. The client's brief to her architect accepted that this would be the result.

While, on the one hand, a long regular block with a low balustraded roof and a dominant central portico has much in common with Colen Campbell, the vigorous all-over rustication and giant Corinthian order are more reminiscent of John Webb at Greenwich. Both models were readily available for consultation in *Vitruvius Britannicus*.<sup>28</sup>

Rolf Loeber remarks that Burgh typically 'did not introduce Palladian ideas into his buildings, except at his own house at Naas, nor did he subscribe to *Vitruvius Britannicus*, but employed a kind of classicism whose derivation and origin are undetermined'.<sup>29</sup> Oldtown, Naas, county Kildare, was Burgh's only known domestic work of architecture, and he appears therefore to have considered the Palladian style particularly suitable for that sphere. Further connections between Oldtown and Dromoland are suggested by comparing the Oldtown drawings with those of the Dromoland Album. Oldtown possessed an elaborate baroque garden, with a circular garden temple of six columns, which stood on a 'mound which forms centre from which radiate the beech avenues in Oldtown wood' (Plate 10).<sup>30</sup> The eight-column rotunda of Dromoland's 'Temple on the Mount', described by the *Ichnographia Dromolan* [K], still stands (Plate 14).

Who, then, was really responsible for this ambitious house and garden? If we are to accept the evidence of Aheron's initial laudatory preface, then Edward O'Brien would seem to have played a principal role in actually designing the buildings and other improvements on the estate. Aheron himself is a second major contender, while a third possibility is Thomas Gilbert, the author of a group of six designs for chimney pieces and decorative joinery work in the Dromoland Album.<sup>31</sup>

This paper suggests that Aheron redrew existing drawings, and that his third elevation, entitled 'Edward O'Brien 1741', was a retrospective and sycophantic attempt to include Sir Edward in the historic design process. Thomas Gilbert may have worked for Sir Donat O'Brien rather than his grandson, as many accounts for the purchase of marble fireplaces and the completion of wainscoting and panelling work appear to coincide with the signed Gilbert drawings in the Dromoland Album.<sup>32</sup> John Tobyn was paid sixteen shillings for bringing 'twenty pieces of Marble, great and Small from Barnaby De Mau from Kilkenny' in 1714,<sup>33</sup> and Sir Donat may have been particularly delighted with 'Mr Phillips ye Exciseman who presented his Honnr with a Kerry Chimney piece'.<sup>34</sup> The Thomas Gilbert 'born in



10 – Oldtown drawings: anonymous drawing of a temple, entitled ‘The Plan of Oldtown Temple destroyed by fall of trees about 1881’ (courtesy Irish Architectural Archive)

1706, a member of the Dorsetshire mason-builder family’, could not have completed the work, but perhaps Thomas Gilbert ‘recorded as a stonecutter on the Dublin Parliament House in 1739’ did.<sup>35</sup>

Edward O’Brien, the last contender, did build Dromoland’s surviving Palladian stable block. Encrusted with extensions of the modern luxury hotel, it can be accurately dated from its inscription: ‘In Equis Patrum Virrus, 1736’ (Plate 12). Aheron’s drawing of the building, which he drew in 1740, does not depict the existing building (Plate 11). Edward O’Brien, like his father Lucius before him, ran into debt shortly after his marriage. He also gambled extensively on horses, occasioning a recriminatory series of letters from his own son Lucius in the 1770s.<sup>36</sup> It seems unlikely that this man could have had the funds to rebuild Dromoland. The stable

block, which he dedicated to the horses he loved so well, was probably his principal contribution. He was also responsible for the octagonal gazebo (Plate 13) on the hill by the entrance to Dromoland. Sir Edward viewed his horses exercising on the 'gallops' which surround the hill. Did he follow his mother's and grandfather's directions, and the advice received from their architects, Halpenny, Gilbert, Burgh, Browne, and others? Could the great *Ichnographia Dromolan* drawing of a baroque garden at Dromoland (Plate 1) have been commissioned by Catherine O'Brien in the 1717-26 period, rather than by Sir Edward O'Brien in the 1740s, as has been previously supposed?

### THOMAS BURGH: GARDEN DESIGNER?

The title, incorporating the word *ichnographia*, suggests the work of Stephen Switzer, who published his book *Ichnographia Rustica* in 1718. Is it possible that he worked for the O'Briens, given that he visited Ireland at the instigation of Robert Molesworth in 1719?<sup>37</sup> What exactly was the 'contriver Browne' supposed to do, and, given his documented small pay of £3 11s 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d in total,<sup>38</sup> would he have designed the great baroque garden of Dromoland for such a fee? Browne was associated with promoting Switzer's landscaping style in Ireland, and Mrs Da Cunha recommended his services to her nephew Valentine Browne, the Earl of Kenmare:

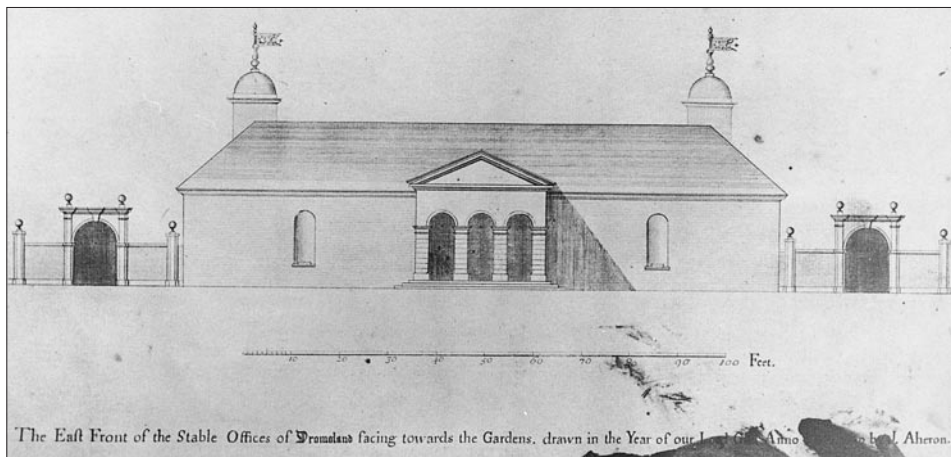
I've enquired about a gardener for you, and am in hopes to get you one to your satisfaction, but am told there is one Browne who has been for several years employed by most of the people of quality of Ireland, who has a greater genius for "lyeing" [laying] out new ground than any body of this time, and I find my brother Aylmer thinks you cant have a better contriver, and he you'll hire here may execute what you and Browne resolve upon.<sup>39</sup>

The same Earl of Kenmare had been obliged to build a new family mansion, when his ancestral home, Ross Castle, county Kerry, was confiscated by the government.<sup>40</sup> It is perhaps significant that Thomas Burgh had been commissioned by the government to survey Ross Castle barracks on their behalf.<sup>41</sup>

Catherine O'Brien betrayed her own landscaping ambitions in her letter to Thomas Burgh:

there are no Coatches at all built, neither is there any Avenue as yet made – Garden but I design a straight Avenue to ye Hall door from Assolus to wch the Engl of the Stable lyes directly but the front will lye right to ye Right Hand of the Court.





11 – *The Dromoland Album*, ‘The East Front of the Stable Offices of Dromoland facing towards the Gardens, drawn in the Year of our Lord [ink damage] Anno 1740’ by J. Aheron (NLI, MS 2791, p.24; courtesy Irish Architectural Archive)

12 – *Inscribed gateway to the eighteenth-century stable block at Dromoland* (photograph: the author)

Her accounts for the period of Edward O’Brien’s minority reveal that the creation of walks, avenues and other landscaping features was in motion at Dromoland in the 1720s, and it was she who paid ‘Brown the contriver’:

‘To Artificers employed in repairing Dromoland...

|             |  |                                       |
|-------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1720 July 6 | Cash pd. Michael Kelly for Brown the Contriver | £1 5s 6 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> d |
| Nov. 23     | Cash pd. Brown the Contriver                   | £2 6s <sup>4</sup> / <sub>2</sub>     |

She also paid Hugh Devine for ‘Levelling the Semicircle at Dromoland’, and for ‘his work round the Logh’.<sup>43</sup> Most of the accounts are unfortunately not specific: ‘Danganback Labs. for their work at Dromoland ... £12 9s 8d’.<sup>44</sup> The totals are substantial however, with a total of £359 10s 2d paid ‘to Labrs. Employed in the afore-

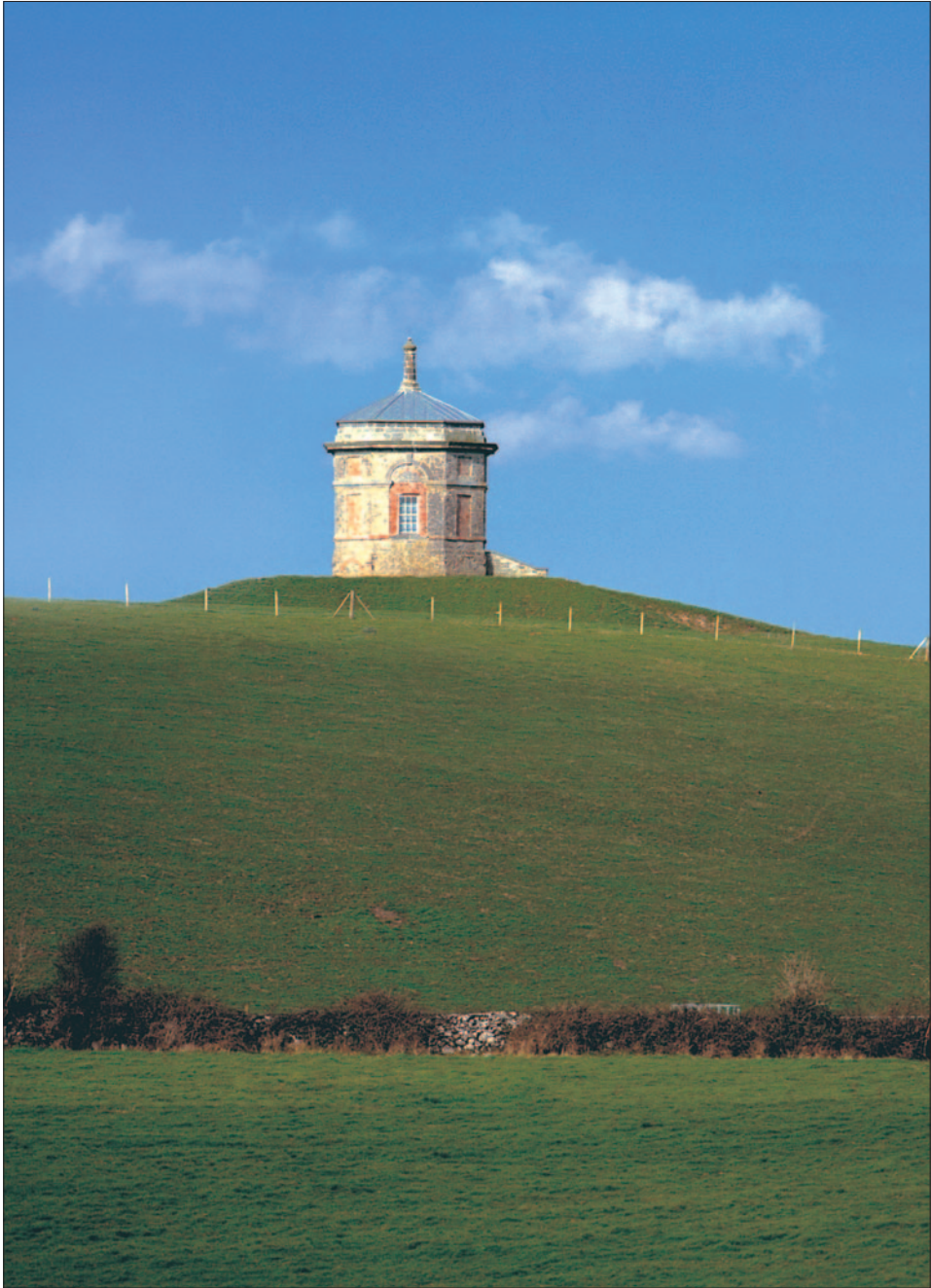
mentioned works att Dromoland & att Making up the Sluics & Seabanks which were rais[d]? down by the force of the weaves and Storms, Making of Ditches, Avenues, high roads & c.'<sup>45</sup> Work continued into the 1720s, when Teige Kelly was paid for 'the Walks thorrow the Orchard & thorrow the Spring Garden together with the amendment in the Swoop in the Newmarket roads'.<sup>46</sup>

Thomas Burgh's hydraulic and engineering expertise would have been particularly valued in the baroque garden. Somebody with such expertise planned drawings of 'The Figur of ye Lock', and 'Directions for building O'Bryan's bridge according to the following Draught' (drawings 49, 50). The impressive O'Brien's Bridge, which still stands, was complete in 1713 when Donat O'Brien's accounts record that he 'pd his Honn ye Earle of Inchiquin to shew what his Honn. Is still out of Pockett on acct. of O'Brien's bridge'.<sup>47</sup> Burgh may have been introduced to Sir Donat O'Brien as a competent engineer. As the O'Brien architectural and landscaping ambitions grew, he provided other requisite services.

## CONCLUSION

O'Brien ambition in architecture and landscape design was substantial. It also encompassed most of the county of Clare, as their country seats and estates were many: Corofin, Cratloe, Stone Hall, Ennistymon, Leamaneh and Dromoland itself. With their friends and relatives, the Inchiquins, they also put in train some ambitious infrastructural and urban development projects: O'Brien's Bridge, the port of Clare, and the redevelopment of Corofin. In the latter half of the eighteenth century Lucius O'Brien and his father-in-law, Robert French of Monivea, county Galway, planned and sponsored great land reclamation projects in the Shannon region.

An air of provincial independence and self-sufficiency marks many of these endeavours. Thomas Keightley 'had some reason to think the Queen would make' Sir Donat 'a noble man' if he 'had any inclinations to it' in 1713. He had also informed 'Lord Inchiquine of such a thinge & wrote to him too at the same time about the Matter'. Apparently neither cousin had any interest in advancement to the peerage, and Keightley 'never heard one word of answer'.<sup>48</sup> This ambivalence is also evident in the family's design activities: Leamaneh or Dromoland, retain or demolish, convert or improve. Decisions were affected by family fortune, family connections and family politics, in order to create an architecture of family identity.



*13 – The Dromoland Gazebo, erected in 1774 by Sir Edward O'Brien*

*The gazebo was restored in 2002 by the Dromoland Turret Restoration Trust, which received a grant from the Irish Georgian Society (photo: Donal Murphy, Barry Mason Photography; courtesy Howley Harrington Architects)*



*14 – The eighteenth-century temple at Dromoland  
(photograph: the author)*

## APPENDIX 1

## CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN CATHERINE O'BRIEN AND THOMAS BURGH

(NLI, Inchiquin Manuscripts, folder 1830) Inscribed on the outside leaf: 'Copy to Mr. Burgh about House of Dromoland & changes required'.

Sir,

The very terrible condition that I find this house in. By the Castle being half pul'd down, all open at the top, & so ill joynd to ye New Wing, that wee are always a swimming in some part or other of the house, obliges me to dip my Hands in Mortar, an employment, wch however agreable it is to me, I should hardly ingage in at present were there not an absolute necessity for it, but that I may do it with something more succes both for beauty & conveniency, than the part already don, I beg your assistance and advice; & in order to it I send you as exact a draught as I can get drawn here of yt part finisht, and the Castle, as it now stands: by ye proportion of the rooms, doors, Windows & Chimneys you will easily perceive that there is not one right in the whole house, nor can a bed stand tolerably in any one bedchamber but, that I am easy about, & shall not goe about to mend except in the Room to the front, because I would not have the new spoylt to make them uniform to these: Sr Donat him self was almost brought to consent to have the fore part of the Castle thrown quite down, the workmen haveing assured him the New Stone facing would be both in danger both of falling, & letting in Water between the old & new Work. I am determind (if you approve it) to pull it intirely down to the ground; & build a new front, but for the other Wing I will not ingage further in that; than on paper, not knowing how I can pretend to pleas a young Gentle Man that by that time will have seen enough to improve the spirit of building he brought into the World with him too far to like wt will be don so long beforehand for him: I will begin to pull down imediately after the Hollidays if you advise that no time may be lost in the building this spring, for busines will oblige me to return hither again so early in the Year yt I hope I may see the most of it finish't this summer; All Materials being on the place: I sent ye Draught of the three flowers, the Garrets are the Worst that ever was seen & must not be so in the New Building: I have sent for Rice down & if pleas to talk with him he will explain the Draught better than I have don it on paper, & receive directions from you that may be of great use when he comes down. I am not over fond of a Hall two Storys, if you can make it proportionable to ye Building, and lyse? It ought to be, without it, but I would not have it be as low as Castle Martin was, that being a wors fault than the other: I have considerd that one draught would be a sufficient Gide to you & so sent no more but leave the whole to yr contrivance from the wing already built, only I must observe to you that there are only Cellars, wch are very good, & one Common hall, so yt the new building must goe as low as this to make Necessarys as a Stewards parler, Landry & other Conveniencys: & remember that I am determind to build no further than the front building so that you must contrive both fore Stayrs & back Stayrs in yt part: the length of the front must be 108 foot the length of the present Wing is ye same; you are confined in depth to 40 foot & half from out to out the present building being one Room & Great Stayrs. I must farther tell you yt the Garrets bad as they are cant be remedyed in the front at least wt ever may be don here-after in ye next Wing becaus we cant strip ye front:

I must observe to you that there is a Stable built on the Right hand as you come in, that is 34 foot Wide from the Corner & 32 forwards from the front of the building, the Stable is 74 foot long from out to out. there are no Coatches at all built, neither is there any Avenue as yet made –Garden but I design a straight Avenue to ye Hall Dore from Assolus, to wch the Engl of the Stable lyes directly but the front will lye right to ye Right hand of the Court: I have also sent you a draught of the upright part of the front to shew you the kind of Stone work, the blanks are the Windows, & where you see them black are one intire Stone by wch you will see the difficulty of removeing even the six Windows in the two storys now made yt I complain of & yt no other Stone work can be now made but to answer yt, but for ye Castle wch is the Center the Stones are now cut after the manner you find there described, but if you do not approve of them they not being laid may be alter'd : as to the form of the Great Door Case, & Windows (number & all) I leave yt to you to direct likewise the ornaments at top.

Thomas Burgh, Dublin to Mrs Catherine O'Brien at Dromolan near Ennis, 18 February 1717  
(NLI, Inchiquin MSS, folder 1830)

Madam,

Yesterday I receiv'd yours of ye 3rd whereby you desire my opinion concerning ye lowering a rising ground in order to procure light to rooms on ye Cellar floor. The difference of Level between them is (as I take it)  $7\frac{1}{2}$  feet, and that woud make ye number of steps for ascending into ye House too many in case that heighth were sunk to ye level of ye floor. For removing that objection and preventing so troublesom & expensive a work I offer to your consideration the sinking a trench ten foot broad as low as ye said floor, raising a wall to support ye bank of earth & to cope it handsomly with flat cut stone. Opposite to the Door of entrance, an Arch may be turned for supporting a large half-paie and ye number of steps may be as few as you please. By this method your windows will be sufficiently lighted, and ye hill may be only levelled in itself without ye expence of sinking deep or removing large quantities of earth, and ye charge as well as inconvenience of many Steps will be avoided; and your gunpowder may be saved for better purposes.

You desire to know ye rates of Brickwork and of hewing stones for plain and molded works. The rates that I allow are as follow, for workmanship Only

For a Perch of Brickwall £4 11s 0

Cutting plain Ashlar work each foot 11s  $6\frac{1}{2}$ d }

Molded Bases Architraves & Cornices £1 } in stone

If what I have here writ afford you any satisfaction in your enquiry, I shall have pleasure in that I have been able to do you service, so I shall in eviry case where any endeavours of mine may give you proof of my being Madam

Yo' most faithfull obedt servt Tho. Burgh'.

## APPENDIX 2

DROMOLAND: LEGEND TO *ICHTNOGRAPHIA DROMOLAN* (Plate 1)

(NLI, Inchiquin Manuscripts, MS 2791)

## 'Ye References'

|    |  |     |  |
|----|--|-----|--|
| A: | The Mansion House and Offices  | Q:  | A Parterre towards the Lake or Basin   |
| B: | The Quadrangular Stable  | R:  | The Lake or Basin  |
| C: | The Barn   | S:  | A Communication between the Lake and Assolas River                                     |
| D: | The Malthouse  | T:  | Part of the New & Old Orchard  |
| E: | The Garden House   | U:  | The New Kitching Garden  |
| F: | The Great Court in Ye Principal Front  | V:  | The Haggart  |
| G: | The Grand Avenue with ye Circle at ye end in the Center of which is a Triumphal Arch   | W:  | A grove  |
| H: | The New Planted Improvement of the Garden  | X:  | The East Parterre covered with a Wood, cutt into Walkes and lined with an Arcade Hedge |
| I: | The Great Gravel Walk leading to ye Temple, and the central Cull through Assolas River | Y:  | The New Mellonry with a Nursery of fruit Trees   |
| K: | The Temple on the Mount  | Z:  | The Obelisk near the Park Gate   |
| L: | The Canal Cutt through Assolas River   | AE: | is the Park Gate to ye North   |
| M: | The Serpentine Walk  | AB: | Are partly the Woods which join the New Improvements                                   |
| N: | The Bowling Green with an Arcade Hedge & a Mount at the end of it                      | NB: | In the Gardens what is marked with Green are the grass Walks                           |
| O: | A Scrole, round a Mount  |     |  |
| P: | A Fruit Closett  |     |  |

The Parterre, Court, Yards and Gardens

contain A[rces] R[oods] P[erches]

## APPENDIX 3

## THE DROMOLAND ALBUM

(NLI, Inchiquin Manuscripts, MS 2791)

## LIST OF DRAWINGS [titles in square brackets are those given by the author]

|      |   |    |  |
|------|---|----|--|
| page |   | 5  | A Triumphal Arch, An Obelisk, End of ye Triumphal Arch |
| 1    | Direction for a Triumphal Arch            | 6  | Plan for the west Par Terre and ye Scrole              |
| 2    | Plan for ye Obelisk                       | 7  | Plan for ye Bowling Green                              |
| 3    | The Proportion of ye Gates for ye Offices | 8  | Plan for ye Bowling Green [replica of No. 7]           |
| 4    | A Plan for ye Kitching Garden             | 9  | Plan of the New Mellonry                               |
| 5a   | Dessein for ye Great Avenue               | 10 | Untitled   |
| 5b   | Dessein for ye Great Avenue               |    |  |

|     |  |     |   |
|-----|--|-----|---|
|     | [other design seemingly for east<br>parterre, Dromoland]   | 33  | Dessein for one of the Ends of<br>Dromoland House   |
| 11  | Untitled   | 34  | Untitled [Plan for a parterre]  |
|     | [2 Chimney pieces inscribed: 1st signed<br>Thomas Gilbert, 2nd signed: Gilbert<br>gulit Marble 4 ft 0,11,2 Picture & frame<br>4,4,0.5 – Ft.7 folio 20]   | 35  | Untitled<br>[Garden plan near stables Dromoland]  |
| 12  | Untitled [Chimney pieces]  | 36  | The Gazebo  |
| 12V | Untitled [Room elevations]   | 36V | Untitled<br>[Stables details and ceiling plan]  |
| 13  | Untitled [Chimney pieces]  | 37  | Untitled [Stables details]  |
| 13V | Untitled [Chimney pieces]  | 37V | Untitled [Stable plan and elevations]   |
| 14  | Untitled [Chimney pieces]  | 38  | Untitled [Arcade]   |
| 14V | Garden Pavilion  | 39  | This Dessein Shews the Distribution<br>and Proportion of ye Stoneworck for<br>this Frontispice when putt together |
| 15  | The front of ye Stable Office into the<br>Garden   | 40  | Directions for ye Door  |
| 16  | [Window frames]  | 41  | [Details] including 'Proportion of ye<br>whole Entablement with a part of the<br>Springer for ye Pediment'        |
| 17  | [Carriage details]   | 42  | The Section for ye Hal & Sallon<br>designeth for ye House of Dromolan   |
| 18  | [Wainscotting]   | 43  | Untitled<br>[Original ground floor plan of<br>Dromoland House & Triumphal arch<br>elevation]                      |
| 19  | Untitled [Design for a canal]  | 44  | Untitled [Small house designs]  |
| 20  | Untitled [Stone brackets]  | 45  | Untitled [Iron gates]   |
| 21  | Untitled [Alternative plan for<br>Dromoland's east parterre]   | 46  | Elevation of Custom House at Clare  |
| 22  | Untitled [Room elevations]   | 47  | Elevation of Custom House at Clare  |
| 23  | Untitled [Brick piers]   | 48  | Y Elevation of the Vorder End of ye<br>Great Court in Perspective, Ye Plan of<br>ye Vorder end of ye Great Court  |
| 24  | The East Front of the Stable Offices of<br>Dromoland facing towards the Gardens,<br>drawn in the Year of our Lord [ink<br>damage] Anno 1740 by J. Aheron | 49  | The Figur of ye Lock  |
| 25  | Untitled [Garden buildings]  | 50  | Directions for building O'Bryan's bridge<br>according to the following Draught                                    |
| 26  | Untitled [Plan for stables]  | 51  | Edward O'Brien Baronet 1741   |
| 27  | Untitled<br>[Plan and elevation of design proposal<br>for Leamaneh Castle, county Clare]   | 52  | Untitled  |
| 28  | Untitled<br>[Garden plan for Leamaneh Castle,<br>county Clare]   | 53  | Dessein for a Temple  |
| 28V | Untitled<br>[Stairs external and elevation]  | 54  | Plan for a Stable Office  |
| 29  | The East Front of Dromoland House<br>extending 105 Feet  | 55  | Untitled [Arcade]   |
| 30  | A Dessein for Dromolan House   | 56  | Untitled [Temple]   |
| 31  | Untitled [Plans of Dromoland House]  | 56V | A New design drawn for the Hon. Mr.<br>Barnet   |
| 32  | Untitled [Arcade]  | 57  | Lodge for Edward O'Brien'   |



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to Dr John Olley and Desmond FitzGerald, the Knight of Glin, who read or commented on aspects of this paper.

## ENDNOTES

The following abbreviations are used:

Casey, *Eighteenth Century Architecture* Christine Casey, *Eighteenth Century Architecture in Ireland: a bibliographical approach*, 2 vols (unpublished PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 1992)

NLI National Library of Ireland, Dublin

- <sup>1</sup> NLI, Inchiquin Manuscripts, folder 2583, Thomas Keightley to Sir Donat O'Brien, 6 May 1714. The misattribution occurs in J. Ainsworth (ed.), *The Inchiquin Manuscripts* (Dublin, 1961) 118: no. 381: '6 May 1714, Mrs. M. Forde (from Dublin) to Catherine O'Brien'.
- <sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, MS 14470: Domestic and Estate Accounts of Donat O'Brien, 20 May 1714.
- <sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, MS 14468, Domestic and Estate Accounts of Donat O'Brien: '1713 May 20, pd. John Maly [?] Mason ... to compleat 17s6d for 21 days worke there 10s 2d ... pd. Lawrence Lennane, Mason ... to compleat 17s6d for 21 days of the like worke there 9s 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d'.
- <sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, MS 14469, Domestic and Estate Accounts of Donat O'Brien. On 2 December 1713 Richard Southwell was paid £8 for '18 thousand & hundred Slatts [slates?] deld. in at Dromoland'. Jon Dwyer, the joiner, was paid £6 10s 9d for the '2419 foot & 73 inches of Wainscott done by him about ye small parlor and drawing roome'.
- <sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, MS 14471, Domestic and Estate Accounts of Donat O'Brien, 12 November 1714.
- <sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 9 December 1714.
- <sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, MS 14472, Domestic and Estate Accounts of Donat O'Brien, 5 October 1715.
- <sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, MS 14471, Domestic and Estate Accounts of Donat O'Brien, 4 December 1714.
- <sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, MS 14474, Domestic and Estate Accounts of Donat O'Brien, 28 May 1716.
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, 15 March 1717 and 18 May 1717.
- <sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, MS 14475, Domestic and Estate Accounts of Donat O'Brien, 6 April 1717.
- <sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, MS 14468, Domestic and Estate Accounts of Donat O'Brien, 18 October 1713.
- <sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, MS 14470, Domestic and Estate Accounts of Donat O'Brien, 15 August 1714.
- <sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, folder 1830, 'Copy to Mr. Burgh about House at Dromoland & changes required' (Appendix 1).
- <sup>15</sup> Catherine O'Brien's father Thomas Keightley first leased and then bought Castlemartin in county Kildare.
- <sup>16</sup> NLI, Inchiquin Manuscripts, folder 1830, Thomas Burgh, Dublin, to Mrs Catherine O'Brien at Dromoland, near Ennis, 18 February 1717 (Appendix 1).
- <sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, MS 14369, p.1, Mrs Catherine O'Brien's account with Sir Edward O'Brien 1719-1722.
- <sup>18</sup> Casey, *Eighteenth Century Architecture*, I, 87.
- <sup>19</sup> NLI, The Dromoland Album, MS 2791: 'No. 24: The east front of the Stable offices of dromoland facing towards the Gardens drawn 1740 by J. Aheron'.
- <sup>20</sup> Casey, *Eighteenth Century Architecture*, I, 96.

- <sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 100.
- <sup>22</sup> NLI, Inchiquin Manuscripts, MS 14470, Domestic and Estate Accounts of Donat O'Brien, 20 May 1714.
- <sup>23</sup> *ibid.*, folder 1830: 'Copy to Mr. Burgh about House at Dromoland & changes required' (Appendix 1).
- <sup>24</sup> The original plan, without the six-bay overlay, appears on drawing No. 43 of the Dromoland Album.
- <sup>25</sup> Casey, *Eighteenth Century Architecture*, I, 96.
- <sup>26</sup> It is noted that the orientation of Dromoland House is inconsistent throughout the Dromoland Album. The true orientation of the east front from the OS maps is north-east. The 'East Front of Dromoland' is occasionally oriented by other Aheron garden drawings as the north front. This adds a further layer of confusion to the album. It also suggests that John Aheron was not working as an architect on site.
- <sup>27</sup> Casey, *Eighteenth Century Architecture*, I, 93.
- <sup>28</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>29</sup> Rolf Loeber, *A Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Ireland 1600-1720* (London 1981) 32.
- <sup>30</sup> NLI, De Burgh Papers, P 4576, Plans of Oldtown House, and of Oldtown Mills, 1721; plans and estimates for an obelisk, 1746; maps of the estate of the Burgh family in Oldtown, Gallows Glen, Naas, etc, with names of tenants, 1787-1850.
- <sup>31</sup> Casey, *Eighteenth Century Architecture*, I, p.95.
- <sup>32</sup> These drawings also occur early in the album, and it does appear possible that the album was bound in some order of date. The interspersed drawings of Leamaneh and other unidentified sites further confuse the issue.
- <sup>33</sup> NLI, Inchiquin Manuscripts, MS 14469, Domestic and Estate Accounts of Donat O'Brien, 9 January, 1714. None of the fireplace drawings corresponds with the one fireplace depicted on the Aheron section drawing of No. 42 (Plate 7).
- <sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, MS 14470, Domestic and Estate Accounts of Donat O'Brien, 21 September 1714.
- <sup>35</sup> Casey, *Eighteenth Century Architecture*, I, 96.
- <sup>36</sup> NLI, Inchiquin Manuscripts, folders 2075-82, 2085.
- <sup>37</sup> Edward Malins and the Knight of Glin, *Lost Demesnes* (London 1976) 16.
- <sup>38</sup> NLI, Inchiquin Manuscripts, MS 14369, Mrs Catherine O'Brien's account with Sir Edward O'Brien 1719-1722, 6 July 1720.
- <sup>39</sup> Edward MacLysaght (ed.), *The Kenmare Manuscripts* (Dublin 1942) 121.
- <sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 130.
- <sup>41</sup> I am indebted to Dr Jane Fenlon for this information.
- <sup>42</sup> NLI, Inchiquin Manuscripts, MS 14369, Mrs Catherine O'Brien's account with Sir Edward O'Brien 1719-1722, 1720.
- <sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, 12 February 1722.
- <sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, 32.
- <sup>45</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, MS 14370, Mrs Catherine O'Brien's account with Sir Edward O'Brien 1719-1722, 16.
- <sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, MS 14468, Domestic and estate Accounts of Donat O'Brien, 1713.
- <sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, folder 2582, Thomas Keightley to Sir Donat O'Brien, 12 September 1713.