



*1 – The interior of Dublin City Hall (formerly the Royal Exchange)
(photo: David Davison)*

Thomas Cooley before the Dublin Royal Exchange

RUTH THORPE

‘The Royal Exchange is one of the principal ornaments of the City, from the combined advantages of an excellent Situation, beautiful Form, and fine display of architectural Elegance.’¹ This is as true at the beginning of the twenty-first century as it was when James Malton wrote these words at the end of the eighteenth. The restoration by Dublin Corporation of the building known as City Hall (Plate 1) at a cost of £5.7 million has revealed what had been concealed for 150 years. By removing the internal walls inserted when the Corporation bought the building in the mid-nineteenth century, and by carrying out a careful restoration programme, the scale of the achievement of the architect of the Royal Exchange in the late 1760s and the 1770s can be appreciated once more.

To the modern eye, the interior has a curiously contemporary appeal: the open area, suffused with natural light from three sides and from above; the use of Portland stone both inside and out; the abstract beauty of the base mouldings created by the geometrical composition of the space; and the sheer spatial thrill of moving around beneath the dome and along the ‘walks’, experiencing a variety of vistas. It seems appropriate that the public now finds the building has ‘modern’ qualities. In its time it represented innovation and Ireland’s first public display of the new architectural taste – neo-classicism. It was also arguably one of the finest interiors in that style in Europe during the 1770s.

Given this, it is surprising that not more is known about the architect of the Royal Exchange, Thomas Cooley (1741-1784). Winner of the competition staged in 1768-69 by the Dublin merchants, his reputation has never quite recovered from the controversy that surrounded that competition. Little interest has been shown in his early career or in investigating the reasons for contemporary comment on his professional ability.

The restoration of the building provided the impetus to explore Thomas Cooley’s background and career before he arrived in Dublin in 1769, as well as his

influences and the world from which the Royal Exchange emerged. The main difficulty in researching Cooley's early life and career is the paucity of primary sources relating to him. A late eighteenth-century writer provided basic biographical details, and these have been accepted and repeated in secondary sources since then. Taking these details as a starting point, each statement was examined in turn, and attempts made to establish its veracity and significance through primary sources in London.

EARLY CAREER

Thomas Cooley's early life and career have remained largely unexplored, to the extent that, although it is known that he was working in London for the architect Robert Mylne (1733-1811) at the time he won the Royal Exchange competition, some have wondered if he might have had family connections with Dublin before he arrived in 1769.² After all, one of the principal tradesmen employed on Edward Lovett Pearce's Parliament House in 1730-31 was an Edward Cooley who was paid £245 for plastering.³ The Thomas Cooley who entered the Dublin Society School of Architectural Drawing in 1765⁴ may well have been a relative of Edward Cooley, but there is no evidence that either of them was related to the Thomas Cooley who was born and grew up in the City of London.

In tracing Cooley's family background and the first steps in his career, the archives of the City of London livery companies proved to be a valuable source. Not only do these records list the dates individuals became apprenticed and the names of their masters, they also give their father's name, trade and parish. Thomas Cooley's parents, William and Mary, had him baptised in the parish of St Katherine Coleman (north of Leadenhall Street, Aldgate) on 11 July 1741.⁵ William Cooley, a master mason, took on two apprentices in the 1730s and 1740s,⁶ but he did not take on his son, and by the time Thomas's brother Richard was apprenticed to plasterer Jonathan Crook in June 1761, their father was dead.⁷

The writer of an article on Thomas Cooley in *Anthologia Hibernica*, nine years after his death, states that he served his apprenticeship to a London carpenter called Reynolds.⁸ Yet the Minutes of the Carpenters' Company show he was bound, from 3 August 1756, to carpenter George Wright for a consideration of £31.10s.⁹ The normal term for an apprenticeship – seven years – is specified, but Thomas Cooley did not go on to become a member of the Carpenters' Company.¹⁰ If Cooley did join a carpenter called Reynolds at a later date, it is likely to be one of the two John Reynolds who were members of the Carpenters' Company from the 1720s. One gained his freedom in 1722/23, the other in 1729/30.¹¹

Cooley's next job, according to *Anthologia Hibernica*, was as 'clerk to Mr Grenill, carpenter to the board of works'. William Greenell held the post of Master

Joiner of the King's Works from 25 November 1761 until 1782, and was one of the principal craftsmen employed at Somerset House.¹² Greenell does not appear to have been a member of either the Carpenters' or Joiners' Company. He was clearly a prosperous man. By the time he made his will in 1790 (he died the following year), he had £7,500 in the Bank of England, and left among other bequests a large amount of silver plate and a house in Great Portland Street, along with an adjoining carpenter's shop and yard, coach house and stables.¹³ If we assume that Cooley stayed for a time with George Wright and then worked for another carpenter or joiner called Reynolds, it is unlikely that he went to work for Greenell before the end of the 1750s. We know that Cooley joined Mylne's office in June 1764.¹⁴ By exploring the work Greenell is known to have undertaken in the first half of the 1760s, we can gain some indication of the type of architectural projects to which he was exposed.

The minutes of the King's Works record that in June 1761 William Greenell succeeded John Smallwell on his death as 'joyner by patent' (Master Joiner), and was instructed to attend the clerk of works at New Park Lodge.¹⁵ James Paine had been clerk of works there since 1758. William Chambers and Robert Adam had already become joint architects of the King's Works in February 1761.¹⁶ Built in the late 1720s, New Park Lodge was the residence of the ranger of Richmond Park. While Princess Amelia held the post (1751-61), Stephen Wright had begun to add wings connected by curving tunnels to the main block of the Palladian villa (faced with Portland stone, hence its present name White Lodge). These alterations were unfinished when George III came to the throne and appointed as ranger his confidant, the Earl of Bute. Paine was responsible for spending almost £6,000 on repairs and alterations to the lodge from 1761 to 1764. As well as being paid a monthly allowance in his capacity as 'Joyner to His Majesty',¹⁷ Greenell was paid sums for work on particular buildings, mainly New Park Lodge, in the period 1761 to 1764.¹⁸ A search of the accounts for New Park Lodge and the other projects being undertaken by the King's Works in the first half of the 1760s shows that Cooley was not on the payroll.¹⁹ If he did work for Greenell in the years before he joined Mylne, it must have been on Greenell's own payroll, and probably, as *Anthologia Hibernica* states, as his clerk.

Greenell's other projects are less well documented. He also worked for James Paine in 1762-63 on alterations to a house in Albemarle Street for Lady Howe, the widow of Lord Howe, but no details exist on the nature of the work.²⁰ While working in Greenell's office, Cooley may well have had the opportunity to view architectural publications. Greenell subscribed to the first volume of Paine's *Works*,²¹ and just a few years after Cooley joined Mylne's office, Greenell, along with his fellow office-holders at the King's Works (Thomas Worsley, Henry Flitcroft and Stephen Wright), subscribed to both volumes of *Vitruvius Britannicus* produced by James Gandon and John Woolfe.²²

Whatever Thomas Cooley's role at New Park Lodge and in Greenell's business, proof of his competence as a draughtsman during this time and his desire to be noticed as an architect lies in competition entries. The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce records that he was awarded prizes in 1763, 1764 and 1765 for designs by persons under thirty years.²³ He won third share, ten guineas, in 1763 for a 'Design of a London House for a Person of Quality, 125 Feet Front, by 300 Feet Depth in the Palladian Style with Plan, Elevation, Sections & C'. The following year, he won second share, twenty-one guineas, for a 'Design of a country-house and Offices for a Person of Quality, on an Eminence with Prospects on three sides, decorated in the Palladian Style with Front Elevations, longitudinal and transverse Sections, and Plans of the different Stories'. In 1765 the brief was to design the elevation of a street after the Greek or Roman style, and he won second share, fifteen guineas. None of these competition drawings survive in the RSA's archives.²⁴ In 1763 Cooley was beaten into third place by James Gandon, who received the second share. In 1764 Gandon, who was still working in William Chambers' office, took first share to Cooley's second. As Edward McParland has noted, this marked the beginning of a competitive relationship that was to last until Cooley's death.²⁵ When, just a few years after the RSA competitions the order was reversed, much more was at stake.

EXPERIENCE WITH ROBERT MYLNE

However sketchy the information about the first eight years of Cooley's working life, it seems he was well trained by the time he joined Robert Mylne's office in London in 1764. Mylne's diary entry for 11 June describes him as a clerk, rather than an apprentice, and just six months later Mylne noted that he had 'sent Cooley to attend the Marquis of Lorn on ground for stables' (at Argyll House, London).²⁶ Mylne obviously thought him capable of meeting with a patron, and an important one at that, who, as the 5th Duke of Argyll, would be one of Mylne's most valued private clients.

Cooley spent five years in Robert Mylne's practice before moving to Dublin, and his experience there was to be crucial to the building of the Royal Exchange (Plate 2). Robert Mylne was just 26 in 1759 when he returned from five years in Rome and entered the competition to design Blackfriars Bridge. Not only did he defeat William Chambers among other established architects in the competition, but he was also given the job of constructing the bridge.²⁷ Work began immediately after the announcement in February 1760.

Later in his career Mylne was to concentrate on engineering, but when Cooley joined him in the middle of his busiest decade, he was in the process of

building up the architectural side of his practice. The number, scale and diversity of the projects handled in the office during the years Cooley was there is impressive. As well as Blackfriars Bridge (opened in 1769), other smaller bridges were built, a London club, several country houses, and alterations to London houses and country houses were made, along with numerous surveys and unexecuted designs for both bridges and buildings. When Cooley joined this highly professional and efficient practice, Mylne had one other assistant, Robert Baldwin (d.1804). He had served an apprenticeship with Matthew Brettingham (1699-1769), joined Mylne in February 1763, left in late 1766, and in 1768 became an assistant of George Dance (1741-1825), the City Surveyor.²⁸ Baldwin's annual salary was £50, while Cooley was taken on at £40 (plus breakfast and lodging, changed in early 1766 to forty guineas), probably reflecting Baldwin's greater experience and his role on the Blackfriars project.²⁹ Cooley has often been described as a pupil of Robert Mylne, but Mylne's diaries show that throughout his career he seems to have had no interest in taking on pupils (other than his own son). Instead, he employed assistants and paid them a proper salary.³⁰

Perhaps it was a large job that prompted Mylne to take the unusual step of employing more than one assistant. Almack's Assembly Rooms (demolished) in King Street, London, had to be completed 'with great haste' in just ten months from May 1764.³¹ Here, Cooley would have had the experience of working on a large scale for public assembly. The advertisements Mylne wrote for Almack's show the bias of an architect. He described the entertainment as 'a Ball, in a Room 90 feet long, 40 Feet broad, and 30 feet high; Tea and Cards in separate rooms; and a Supper in a room 65 Feet long, 40 Feet broad and 20 Feet high...' Horace Walpole described the club as having 'a vast flight of steps' on which the Duke of Cumberland was forced to rest two or three times.³²

Thomas Cooley's time as Mylne's assistant is likely to have been character-building. James Elmes, who knew Mylne in his later career, hardly dared to ask him a question when visiting his office, and described him as 'a man of austere manners, of violent temper' who was known to kick the tools of workmen out of windows if they 'dared to reply to him'. Elmes is also the source of the often-quoted comment on Mylne's character: an Irish tradesman is supposed to have said of him that he was 'a rale jintilman, but as hot as a pepper and as proud as a Lucifer'.³³

Robert Mylne kept his diaries primarily to record how he had spent his time, and what expenses he had incurred, so that clients could be charged accordingly. They also provide an insight into the running of his office and household, since every transaction with his staff seems to be noted. From the references to Cooley in the diaries, it is possible to reconstruct his role in Mylne's office and home. When Mylne bought a house in Arundel Street in 1764 in which to live and work, Cooley moved from his lodgings to join the household, and was responsible for dealing

with housekeeping accounts.³⁴ He was also trusted with other aspects of Mylne's financial affairs. From April 1766 until January 1769, Cooley paid Mylne at intervals for the sale of prints. These may have been the plan and elevation of the bridge published in 1766 by Robert Baldwin,³⁵ but are more likely to have been the view of a bridge under construction which Piranesi, a friend of Mylne's from his time in Rome, had engraved from Mylne's descriptions, and which was published in the same year.³⁶

In his role as office manager under Mylne's watchful eye, Cooley would have had experience of running large jobs efficiently. Blackfriars Bridge, which opened a few months after Cooley left for Dublin, came in slightly under budget at £159,750.³⁷ After Baldwin's departure in 1766, Cooley was Mylne's chief assistant, and as such would have had to act as his deputy, if necessary, when Mylne was out of London. Cooley's other tasks would have included some surveying work as well, of course, as drawing. He seems, for example, to have done the working drawings for Tusmore, Oxfordshire (1765-71, demolished) to which Mylne made amendments.³⁸ Tusmore, with its giant Ionic order on the east and west fronts, was designed and built for William Fermor whom Mylne had met in Rome. The same absence of ornament is evident at Wormlebury, Hertfordshire (1766-70), for Sir Abraham Hume, which also shows the type of 'fastidious restraint' in Mylne's architecture that Colvin says is prophetic of the neo-classical simplicity of the 1790s.³⁹ Cooley would have also worked on a more unusual project in 1767, the extensive rebuilding of a house in Great Windmill Street, London, for Dr William Hunter, a distinguished Scottish anatomist. As well as a living area, Mylne designed a library and museum room which was over fifty feet long and top-lit, and an anatomical theatre.

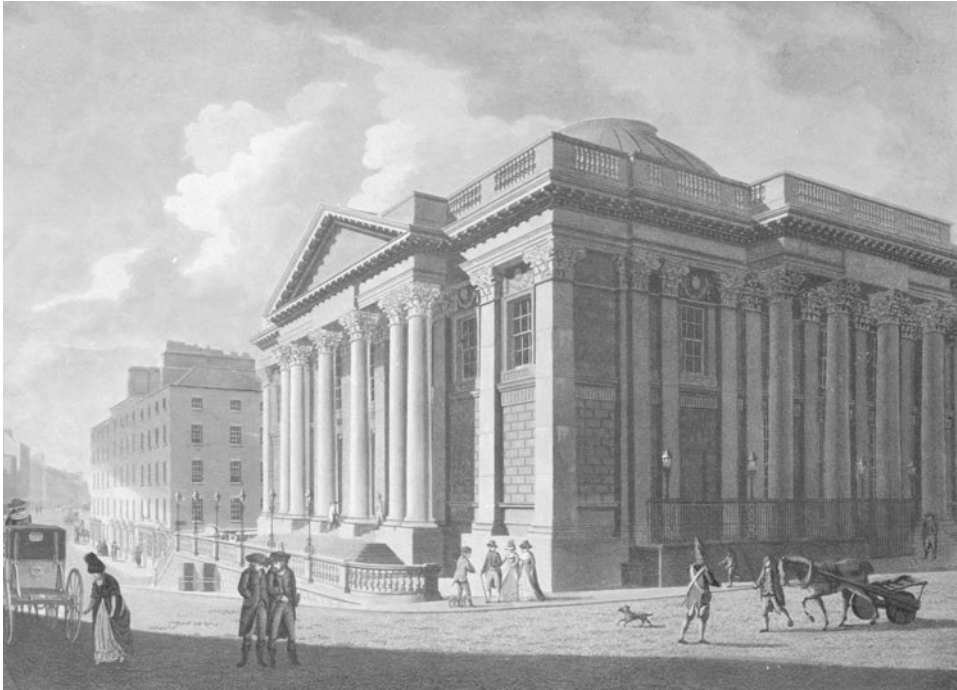
If the above represented the total sum of our knowledge of Thomas Cooley and his background before 1769, it would be difficult to reconcile it with the superb quality of cutting-edge design revealed in the Royal Exchange building. Much greater insight into Cooley's architectural influences is provided by a sketchbook in a private collection.⁴⁰ Soon after the Caledon sketchbook was discovered, Edward McParland identified it as Cooley's and recognised its significance in allowing us to trace the architect's education. Cooley is not known to have travelled beyond the British Isles, but here is evidence of his knowledge, through Mylne, of exciting Franco-Roman designs, of the influence of the ideas of Sir William Chambers and of the buildings of Sir Christopher Wren which surrounded him as he grew up.⁴¹ Yet, at the time of the competition, Cooley was not generally viewed as an educated architect, capable of the spatial imagination displayed on the pages of the Caledon sketchbook, but was portrayed as a mere pawn.

COMPETITION AND CONTROVERSY

The air of controversy and intrigue that surrounded the competition to design the Dublin Exchange is well recorded in newspapers and pamphlets of 1768-69. Contacts played a vital role. Had the Earl of Northumberland had his way in 1764, however, the merchants would not have had an architectural competition at all. When, as Lord Lieutenant, he wrote to the Wide Streets Commissioners that he believed the new exchange should be sited to terminate the view from Capel Street, Essex Bridge and Parliament Street, he also requested the dimensions for the building and offered to 'endeavour to procure a proper Plan from some able & experienced Person here'.⁴² Perhaps the able and experienced person he had in mind was Robert Adam. Adam was engaged in remodelling the interior of Syon House,⁴³ and Northumberland paid him to design the base for a statue of King George III for the Dublin Royal Exchange.⁴⁴

Northumberland was not alone in thinking Ireland needed to look to London for 'a proper Plan'. Four years later, in the face of a stagnant architectural environment in Ireland, a writer in the *Freeman's Journal* declared that the need to employ an English architect was 'to obvious to be insisted on'.⁴⁵ This belief was echoed in an advertisement a few weeks later announcing that the deadline for receiving plans for the new exchange was to be extended to 1 January 1769. A map of the ground was to be sent to London to be displayed in the Royal Exchange there. The trustees, the notice announced, were 'intent on obtaining the most elegant and commodious Plan of which the ground appropriated for that Purpose is capable; and, disposed, at the same Time, to take this Opportunity of exciting a laudable spirit of Emulation, among persons of Genius in Architecture...'.⁴⁶

The merchants were determined to make an impact on Dublin with the new building. Yet William Chambers, writing from London, did not put much store by the trustees' taste and good judgment in architecture leading them to choose the best design for their exchange, never mind setting new standards in Ireland. Thanking Lord Charlemont for taking the trouble 'to procure me the making a design for the Dublin Exchange', he went on to express the view that the merchants might be led by baser inducements: 'I shall not be surprised however if all your lordship's efforts should prove ineffectual, for a hundred guineas to a mercantile soul is an argument too powerful for oratory to remove. Nothing but another hundred guineas will bring it about.'⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Charlemont was still attempting to encourage Chambers to produce a design at the end of February 1769, after all of the other entries had been received and exhibited. Chambers replied on 22 March that he was happy to hear that the merchants had postponed their decision for a month because he was much too busy to consider it properly, but it is clear, as he moves on swiftly to Indian wallpaper and colour schemes for the Casino at Marino, that the Dublin Exchange



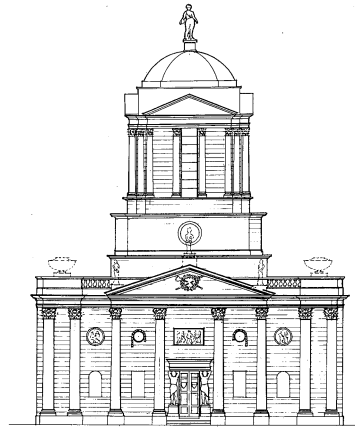
2 – *View of the Royal Exchange by James Malton*
 (courtesy National Library of Ireland)

competition was not a high priority.⁴⁸ In any case, by the time he wrote, the premiums had been announced.⁴⁹

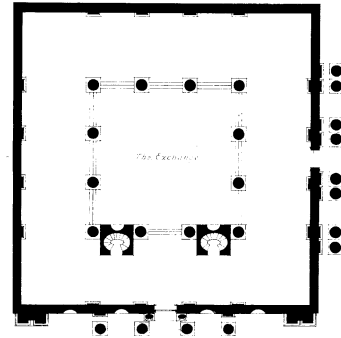
Others also expressed doubts about architectural merit being the merchants' only guiding light. James Gandon had found an enthusiastic champion for his design (Plate 3) in Joseph Dean Bourke who had been introduced to him by Viscount Carlow. Bourke, Dean of Killaloe in 1768 (later to become Lord Archbishop of Tuam and Earl of Mayo), had encouraged Gandon to enter the competition. Bourke had delivered Gandon's plans to the trustees and suggested he write a letter responding to criticisms Bourke had heard. When the trustees met on 22 February 1769, Bourke personally presented Gandon's letter on his design, and referred to particular friends of his speaking in favour of Gandon's design. He warned Gandon, however, that 'Mr Cooley is the person now talked on for the first premium; if so, it is hard to say how they mean to dispose of the rest, and it is now publicly reported that this was the point determined on before any plans were obtained.'

This suggests a strong source of influence indeed. Bourke continues: 'It is said that Mr. Cooley is a friend of Mr Mylnes, whose interest with the citizens of

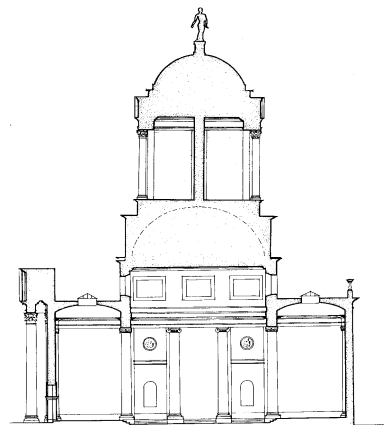
London has great weight with some of our merchants here.’ Unfortunately, Bourke did not elaborate on the identities of the various parties involved: ‘How far this may be the case I do not take upon myself to say, nor do I wish to have my name mentioned, but this is the public report...’⁵⁰ What was this ‘interest with the citizens of London’? Were the Dublin merchants influenced by merchants there? At first it may appear that the list of merchants on the building committee provides scope for exploring links with merchants in the London Royal Exchange. A floor plan of the London exchange shows that each important nationality or trading group had its own position.⁵¹ The Irish, along with the Scots, were located at the north entrance. Were individual trustees of the Dublin Exchange and those on the building committee swayed by close contacts in London?⁵² No specific references have been found in the records of the Joint Grand Gresham Committee, administrators of the London Royal Exchange, to the building of the Dublin exchange. The Dublin merchants certainly had special friends in London who were prepared to represent their interests. For example, during the prolonged battle to prevent the new Custom House from being built to the east of the city, two London-based merchants, in particular Robert Nixon⁵³ and Robert Allen, supported their counterparts in Dublin, and were duly rewarded with snuff boxes engraved with their arms.⁵⁴ However, the type of links which might have



The Royal Exchange, 1768-69
above Façade below Plan opposite Cross-section



3 – Reconstruction of James Gandon’s design for the Royal Exchange (from Hugo Duffy, James Gandon and his times (Gandon Editions, 1999))



influenced the outcome of the architectural competition are likely, in the opinion of Louis Cullen, to have been personal rather than formal, and, as such, difficult to explore.⁵⁵

A more positive clue to the suspected source of influence lies in an account in the *Freeman's Journal* of how Mylne came to win the Blackfriars Bridge competition when 'all men of Skill and Taste' favoured the plan by a native of England (Chambers). Naturally, no names are mentioned, but the writer clearly points his finger at the Scottish Earl of Bute: 'The other [plan] was drawn by a Countryman of a Great Courtier: the piece had some merit; but its best Recommendation was, the keen air its Author came from.' The writer goes on to accuse Bute of duping the king over his allegiance to Chambers. 'The Favourite affected to patronize that his master liked; but secretly exerted his interest, for the other: the issue was, that (when it came to the Vote), the best plan obtained but a single vote.'⁵⁶ Mylne was declared the winner in February 1760, just months after Chambers had dedicated his Treatise to the Earl of Bute.⁵⁷

The anti-Bute, anti-Scottish sentiment is blatant, as the *Freeman's Journal* correspondent continues:

A Pupil of the successful Artist has honoured our Exhibition too, with a Sample of Caledonian Genius and I hear the same Interest is strongly bestirring itself here, to make a Bias towards him. A Whipmaker sent to Daub us, to mock us; the Scot would force his Scholar's (or rather his own) Plan upon us, to dupe and insult us: but the same hated influence, which failed a smart-tongued secretary last winter, will be found ineffectual to prejudice the integrity of our Trustees now.⁵⁸

The author ends this tirade with the assertion that there are many artists of distinguished abilities in Ireland.

What of this accusation that Mylne was the true designer of the competition entry? Why would he do such a thing? Roger Woodley believes it would have been totally out of character. If we are to accept that Mylne and his contacts did exert influence, we must assume that he was keen for some reason to promote his assistant's independent career as an architect. Did he, for example, have in mind expanding his practice to Ireland where he would have an able assistant on hand to oversee building projects? Mylne was certainly interested in projects in Ireland, providing an unexecuted design for the Belfast Charitable Institution in 1770.⁵⁹ His brother William came to Dublin in 1776 as Engineer to the Dublin Corporation and Pipe Water Committee. Following William's death in Dublin in 1790, Robert erected a monument to him in St Catherine's Church on Thomas Street.⁶⁰

Perhaps, after five years of working together and living in the same house, Robert Mylne acted simply out of friendship. No correspondence has been found to

suggest Mylne and Cooley kept in contact after Cooley moved to Dublin. If we accept that Mylne used his contacts to increase Cooley's prospects in the competition, what of the suggestion that Bute was involved? Was Bute in the habit of promoting fellow Scots, secretly or otherwise? It is true that for his own architectural jobs, with the exception of a couple of minor projects, he employed Scottish architects. James Craig and George Patterson, who were paid for work on Mount Stuart House, were both from Edinburgh, but since this property is in Scotland, no prejudice can be deduced. Neither is it surprising that Bute employed the most fashionable architect of the day, Robert Adam, for larger projects at Lansdowne House in London and Luton Hoo.

Roger Woodley's examination of Mylne's City contacts shows that he was by no means universally popular. He had the consistent support of the Bridge Committee, and of its chairman, City Solicitor John Paterson, in particular. (Several members of the committee, including Paterson, became private clients.)⁶¹ Crucially, Paterson was part of the Bute faction at a time when many of the City's politicians were resentful of Bute's influence on George III, and xenophobic towards both Scots and Irish in general. The Bridge Committee was responsible to the Common Council, which rejected, for six years after the bridge opened, Mylne's claim for the by then customary 5% cost of the project plus 1% cost of materials. Paterson made considerable efforts on Mylne's behalf to resolve the issue.⁶² Having explored the possibilities for the Common Council's prevarication over paying Mylne, Woodley has concluded that his association with Bute and Scotland is the most likely explanation. Yet Woodley describes Mylne's connections, in his early career, with Bute, Scotland and the court circle as 'probably reluctant, and never particularly strong'.⁶³ There is one further difficulty with the Bute theory. The Earl went to the Continent in August 1768 for the good of his health and did not return until 1770.⁶⁴ Even if Bute, or someone in his circle, was championing Cooley's entry as a favour to Mylne, their contacts in Ireland are unknown. Perhaps further research in this area will reveal the true nature of the influence from London which provoked the contemporary comments above.

The role of spite in Cooley's treatment in the press must not be discounted. Parallels might be drawn between the resentment felt when Mylne, as a young, unknown and inexperienced Scot won the Blackfriars competition in 1760 and similar sentiments when another outsider, this time a young Englishman – and a mere assistant at that – looked set to win the Dublin Exchange competition. Jealousy and a sense of Irish inferiority cannot be excluded as reasons for attacks on Cooley in newspapers and pamphlets. One pamphleteer took the opportunity of the trustees' requests for comments on the designs displayed at the beginning of 1769 to speak out against the influence of 'foreigners', to attempt 'to wipe out this bitter sarcasm which lies against all the workmen in the kingdom', and at the same time promote

his own entry.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, accusations of Mylne using his influence to have Thomas Cooley selected persisted long after Cooley's death. The writer of the article on Cooley in the 1793 *Anthologia Hibernica*, was in no doubt that it was the might of Mylne rather than Cooley's talent that won him the first premium:

Mr Milne's interest, connection and reputation, recommended Mr Cooley very powerfully to the committee, for his plan was certainly inferior in simplicity, elegance, utility and architectural beauty to many others, particularly that of Mr Gandon, of whose excellence as an architect, the courts of law, the custom house and Carlisle-bridge, will be perpetual monuments.⁶⁶

The benefit of hindsight on Gandon's highly successful career in Ireland, and Cooley's less than spectacular career following the Royal Exchange weigh heavily on this opinion on the merits of the competition entries. Yet the building itself left a different impression on James Malton at the end of the century. His comment on Cooley and the Exchange was that it is 'a specimen of great ability, and evinces the judgment and impartiality of those who employed him'.⁶⁷

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to Dr Edward McParland for his encouragement and guidance. I also wish to thank Dr Roger Woodley for sharing his knowledge of Robert Mylne.

ENDNOTES

The following abbreviation is used:

PRO Public Record Office, London

- ¹ J. Malton, *A Picturesque and Descriptive View of the City of Dublin...* (London 1792-99).
- ² C.P. Curran, 'Cooley, Gandon and the Four Courts', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, LXXIX, 1949, 20-25.
- ³ *Journals of the House of Commons of Ireland*, 19 vols (Dublin 1796-1800) IV, part 2, appendix xxxiii.
- ⁴ G. Willemson (ed.), *The Dublin Society Drawing Schools, Students and Award Winners 1746-1876* (Dublin 2000) 20.
- ⁵ Guildhall Library, London, MS 17,834/1.
- ⁶ Cliff Webb, *London Apprentices XXVII, Masons' Company* (London 1999).
- ⁷ Cliff Webb, *London Apprentices XXXIV, Plaisterers' Company* (London 2000).
- ⁸ *Anthologia Hibernica*, July 1793.
- ⁹ Guildhall Library, London, MS 4329/17. This sum is considerably higher than the usual fee paid to take on an apprentice, and suggests that Cooley may have had a higher status than an apprentice taken on for a lower amount. The sum paid to Richard Cooley's master was also high at £30.
- ¹⁰ Guildhall Library, London, List of Freemen, Carpenters' Company, MS 2174/2.
- ¹¹ *ibid.*
- ¹² H. Colvin (ed.), *The History of the King's Works*, 6 vols (London 1963-82) V, 472.
- ¹³ PRO PROB/11/1201, f 68.
- ¹⁴ Royal Institute of British Architects, London, Mylne's Diaries, MYFAM/12/1, 11 June 1764.
- ¹⁵ PRO WORK/4/12, 16 June 1761.
- ¹⁶ *ibid.*, 4/13, 21 February 1761.
- ¹⁷ *ibid.*, 5/62, Abstracts of accounts. This payment varied between £2.5s and £2.6s.6d.
- ¹⁸ *ibid.* He also received payments for work on Winchester (February 1762) and Westminster (March 1762).
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*, 5/63. Also AO1/2464/197-8, Paymaster's Accounts 1762-63. Cooley is not mentioned in the minutes which detail the appointments, dismissals and deaths of every labourer and craftsman. WORK/4/12.
- ²⁰ P. Leach, *James Paine* (London 1988) 192. Payments to Paine in Messrs Coutts & Co, private ledgers. This house is not listed by Colvin. The Survey of London has not yet surveyed Albemarle Street and has no information on the building.
- ²¹ *ibid.*, 220.
- ²² J. Gandon and J. Woolfe, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, 2 vols (London 1767) IV; (London 1771) V, subscription lists.
- ²³ *Register of the Premiums and Bounties given by the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce from the original institution in the year 1754 to the year 1776 inclusive* (London 1776).
- ²⁴ R. Dossie, *Memoirs of Agriculture and other Oeconomical Arts*, 3 vols (London 1768-82) III. These competition details are taken from a volume of memoirs published by R Dossie. Curiously, Cooley is described as 'a pupil of Mr Milne's' in 1763, 'Archit. Constr. Dublin

- Exc.’ in 1764, and ‘Designer of Public Buildings in Ireland’ in 1765. Since the source of Dossie’s biographical information is unknown and is clearly incorrect, and since this volume was not published until 1782, we must assume that he wrote these descriptions with the benefit of knowledge of Cooley’s subsequent career, and then attempted to make it fit.
- ²⁵ E. McParland, *James Gandon Vitruvius Hibernicus* (London 1985) 7.
- ²⁶ Royal Institute of British Architects, London, Mylne’s Diaries, MYFAM/12/1.
- ²⁷ Mylne’s only practical experience by 1760 was an unfinished carpenter’s apprenticeship, a background Cooley shared.
- ²⁸ H. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of English Architects, 1660-1840* (New Haven and London 1995) 95.
- ²⁹ R. Woodley, ‘Robert Mylne: the Bridge Between Architecture and Engineering’, unpublished PhD thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, London, 1998, 44. The Bridge Committee expected Mylne to pay a clerk who could act as his deputy as Surveyor of Blackfriars Bridge. This was Baldwin up to his departure in 1766. Throughout the rest of Mylne’s career he generally kept only one assistant on an average salary of £40. Cooley’s wages were often paid in arrears, particularly up until August 1767.
- ³⁰ *ibid.*, 46. Woodley notes Mylne’s diaries give no indication that he ever took on or considered taking on formal fee-paying pupils, even though Sir Robert Taylor had already instigated this type of professional training.
- ³¹ Survey of London, 45 vols (London 1960) XXIX , 304-07.
- ³² *ibid.*
- ³³ J. Elmes, ‘History of Architecture’, *The Civil Engineer and Architect’s Journal*, X, 1847, 340.
- ³⁴ Mylne did not marry until 1770.
- ³⁵ R.S. Mylne, *The Master Masons to the Crown of Scotland and their Works* (Edinburgh 1893).
- ³⁶ Piranesi wrote from Rome in November 1760, requesting ‘an exact copy’ of the bridge.
- ³⁷ R. Woodley, ‘“A very Mortifying Situation”: Robert Mylne’s Struggle to get Paid for Blackfriar’s Bridge’, *Architectural History*, 43, 2000, 172-86.
- ³⁸ The main annotations are in Cooley’s handwriting.
- ³⁹ Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary*, 680.
- ⁴⁰ The sketchbook is owned by Lord Caledon. Photographs of the 67 pages which have legible sketches are in the Irish Architectural Archive (1/92 Y 1-71). Edward McParland discusses his attribution of the sketchbook to Cooley in ‘The Early History of James Gandon’s Four Courts’, *Burlington Magazine*, CXXII, no. 932, November 1980.
- ⁴¹ The Caledon sketchbook is the subject of further research by the author.
- ⁴² Dublin City Archives, Minutes of the Wide Streets Commissioners I, 1758-65, 194-96, 28 July 1764.
- ⁴³ Other architects employed by Northumberland were Henry Keene and James Paine, who both worked on Alnwick Castle, Northumberland, in the 1750s and ’60s, but it was Robert Adam whom he most favoured at Syon House and Northumberland House.
- ⁴⁴ Sir John Soane’s Museum, London, Robert Adam Drawings, 49/63 and 64: *A Design for a Pedestal for the Exchange at Dublin, 1770.*
- ⁴⁵ *Freeman’s Journal*, 3-16 August 1768.
- ⁴⁶ *Freeman’s Journal*, 30 August-3 September 1768.
- ⁴⁷ Chambers to Charlemont, 16 November 1768, *The Manuscripts and Correspondence of James, First Earl of Charlemont*, I, 1745-83, Historical Manuscripts Commission, Report 12,

- appendix part X (London 1891) 290.
- ⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 291. Chambers to Charlemont, 22 March 1769.
- ⁴⁹ *Freeman's Journal*, 14-18 March 1769.
- ⁵⁰ J. Gandon, *The Life of James Gandon* (Dublin 1846; reprint 1969) 33-34.
- ⁵¹ Both Baldwin's *Directory to London* and the pocket book in which Mylne kept his diary, *The Gentleman and tradesman's daily journal*, had a floor plan of the London Royal Exchange as a frontispiece.
- ⁵² Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, Minutes of the Guild of Merchants, MS 12D29, 12 March 1770. The building committee consisted of: William Colvill, Edward Strettell, Alexander Jaffray, George Maquay, Abraham Wilkinson, Thomas Read, John Connor, Joseph Linan, George Sutton, William Thompson, Robert Magee.
- ⁵³ *Kent's Directory for 1771* (London 1771) shows Robert Nixon as a merchant in Lothbury, and John Strettell, one of the Dublin sugar trading family, as a merchant in Riches Court, Lime Street.
- ⁵⁴ Royal Irish Academy, Dublin, Minutes of the Guild of Merchants, MS 12D29, 14 June 1774.
- ⁵⁵ Private communication.
- ⁵⁶ *Freeman's Journal*, 18 February-4 March 1769.
- ⁵⁷ *Dictionary of National Biography*, XIX, 94-97. Bute became First Lord of the Treasury in May 1762. From the beginning of George III's reign, Bute was reviled by the populace for being a favourite and a Scotsman. He was incessantly mobbed, lampooned and caricatured. He resigned from office in 1763, and from 1765 ceased to communicate with the king on political matters, but he continued his political career and was re-elected a Scottish representative peer in 1768. (In 1778 Bute's daughter Caroline married Viscount Carlow, later 1st Earl of Portarlington, one of those chiefly responsible for bringing Gandon to Ireland.)
- ⁵⁸ *Freeman's Journal*, 18 February-4 March 1769.
- ⁵⁹ A.E. Richardson, *Robert Mylne Architect and Engineer 1733 to 1811* (London 1955) 86.
- ⁶⁰ T. Ruddock, *Travels in the Colonies in 1773-1775, Described in the Letters of William Mylne* (Athens and London) 88.
- ⁶¹ Woodley, "'A very Mortifying Situation'", 72-186. Woodley quotes Mylne, writing of the Bridge Committee before the competition entries were under serious consideration, of having the assurances of 'a man of great weight among them, who is very much my friend'. Mylne was eventually paid £4,209 in March 1776. The bridge had been open since November 1769.
- ⁶² Woodley, 'Robert Mylne', 146.
- ⁶³ Woodley, "'A very Mortifying Situation'", 184.
- ⁶⁴ Alice Coats, *Lord Bute 1713-1792* (Aylesbury 1975) 46.
- ⁶⁵ Anon, *Observations on the Several Plans Exhibited for a Royal Exchange to be built in the city of Dublin. Together with some account... therein* (Dublin 1769).
- ⁶⁶ *Anthologia Hibernica*, July 1793, 35.
- ⁶⁷ Malton, *A Picturesque and Descriptive View of the City of Dublin...*
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