



Charles Robert Cockerell's encounter with Ireland: drawings, observations and buildings

LYNDA MULVIN

CHARLES ROBERT COCKERELL (1788-1863) WAS A PROLIFIC ARCHITECT WHO CREATED a large body of work, extending to building projects – public and private, realised and unrealised – antiquarian drawings and sketches, but also the written word in the form of his diaries.¹ The dissemination of the principles of classical architecture was central to his life and work. Cockerell, who was based in London, worked on a small number of projects in Ireland during the 1820s, which were localised in an area of counties Meath and Westmeath. This article introduces the drawings, observations and Irish building projects of this most important neoclassical architect, and attempts to delineate his practice in this country.

Cockerell was part of a movement of architects involved in the revision of neoclassical values in the nineteenth century. His work was clearly informed by his perception of antiquity gained through a study of the ruined cities of Greece and Asia Minor. Indeed, such was his familiarity with the classical canon that rather than emulating it in lifeless reproductions, he synthesised perfect control of the classical idiom in each project. In all of his drawings Cockerell worked towards an understanding of classical architecture through close observation of the proportions, scale and measurements of buildings. His central concern was reworking the physical and historical record of the classical world into new designs, and he should be viewed as one of the major architects involved in the dissemination of neoclassicism in Ireland.

Cockerell's architectural practice in Ireland began in the 1820s and was based on close personal and professional relationships with his Irish clients. A letter of 11th October 1820 to his friend and colleague Sir Francis Beaufort, of Navan, county Meath, praises the publication of Beaufort's *Survey of the Coasts of Karamania or a brief description of the South Coast of Asia Minor*.² Cockerell had accompanied Beaufort on the Karamania

1 – *The portico at Lough Crew, county Meath* (photo by R. Callanan)

survey, and had spent four days with him surveying the ruins of the ancient city of Side in Asia Minor as part of his own Grand Tour, conducted between 1810 and 1817. Cockerell mentions in this letter that he had recently been employed by James Lennox William Naper (1791-1868), of Oldcastle, county Meath, where he was to build a new house for the Naper family at Lough Crew.³ This was to be the start of a connection with Ireland which continued beyond 1825, during which time he made two brief visits to the country.

COCKERELL'S FIRST VISIT TO IRELAND: GENERAL SKETCHES AND OBSERVATIONS

COCKERELL'S FIRST JOURNEY THROUGH IRELAND IS RECORDED IN GREAT DETAIL. Setting out from Liverpool on Wednesday, 15th October 1823, he describes a rough crossing by packet steamer to Waterford. Having arrived safely, he sketched plans of the city's architecture, noting how the buildings were generally large in scale.⁴ He made four sketch plans and a section of the Waterford theatre roof, each with a corresponding descriptive note (Plate 2). The town hall, theatre and assembly hall are recorded in outline. He admired the town hall, noting that the stucco surface was made with 'granite dust pounded up to good effect'. He also drew an octagonal glasshouse.⁵ Cockerell admired the Bishop's Palace and drew a plan of the Roman Catholic cathedral, of 1793, by the architect John Roberts, which he described as a 'very beautiful building'.

On the same day as he had arrived, Cockerell set off to Dublin by mail coach. Here he witnessed the new commercial face of the city, visiting the parliament building (recently converted for commercial use as the Bank of Ireland), the Royal Exchange, the General Post Office, the King's Inns, the Custom House and Trinity College. He was certainly acquainted with some of the leading architects working in Dublin. In a diary entry of Friday, 17th October, Cockerell records a meeting with Francis Johnston (1760-1829), architect to the Board of Works from 1805,⁶ who 'told me Mr. Gandon was living near Lucan six miles from Dublin'. James Gandon (1743-1823), Ireland's best-known neo-classical architect, was elderly at this time and died at the end of the year; unfortunately there is no record to indicate that Cockerell met Gandon.

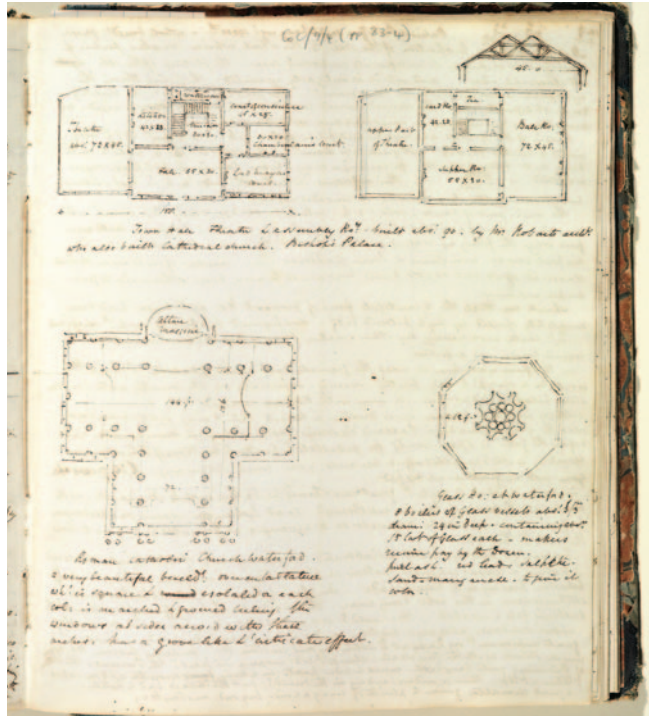
Cockerell presented his first impressions of Dublin's architecture as a palimpsest (Plate 3), combining a brown ink drawing of the façade of Gandon's King's Inns, prior to the addition of another wing,⁷ with a sketch of the building's crest and coat of arms, which he described as symbols of Ireland and the Lord Lieutenantcy.⁸ Cockerell took time to refer to Gandon's other major work in the city, the Custom House (1781-91), and is outspoken in his criticism of the use of the classical orders, as well as the sculpture and decorative detailing: 'much struck with [the] tiny scale almost ridiculous in part the Tuscan, the statues of pediment quite laughable ... and riverheads making mouths at you'.⁹ He was more complimentary about Francis Johnston's work at the General Post Office, com-

Charles Robert Cockerell
(1788-1863)

2 – Drawings and notes of
Waterford

3 – Drawing and notes of
Kings Inns, Dublin

(courtesy Royal Institute of British
Architects)



pleted in 1818, noting ‘the happy proportion of the site to the street which makes the portico of [the] post office so strikingly beautiful and imposing’. However, his appreciation of classical form and proportion was evidently offended by ‘the ionic high attic’ which produced a ‘bad effect, spoiling [the] look of [the] pediment’.¹⁰ Indeed, he went so far as to characterise Johnston’s use of the order as ‘vulgarly executed’.

Johnston’s remodelling of Edward Lovett Pearce’s Parliament House for the Bank of Ireland was admired with less qualification, Cockerell noting how the ‘adjustments to the front elevation and dramatic sweep of curved armature’ provided ‘ample entrance’. Here too, his attention to the details of proportion is clear in his description of how ‘the columns which have 3:6 intercolumniation’ created a ‘beautiful’ effect. Comparing the Ionic bases of the columns at the bank with those at Thomas Cooley’s Royal Exchange (1769-79), he notes how they are ‘obscured ... doing greatest injury to effect ... it would not be difficult to arrange sufficient railing as to show the arch through it.’ More generally, he felt that the Royal Exchange had a ‘pretty elaborate arrangement of columns and pilasters’.¹¹

During his sojourn in Dublin, Cockerell visited Johnston’s St George’s Church, Hardwicke Place (1802-13). It appears that the purpose of this visit was mainly technical, with Cockerell and Johnston discussing preservative treatments for buildings. The diary entry of Friday, 17th October gives insight into contemporary building technology and experimental treatments which were introduced for the protection of Portland stone against air pollution: ‘called on Mr Johnston ... who rebuilt chapel Grecian ... was first to tell him of oiling buildings’. The oiling of stone sealed it to impede the rate of decay and weathering. This sort of preventative intervention was far-reaching and ahead of its time.¹²

Inevitably, Trinity College was also on Cockerell’s itinerary. Describing how the approach to the college entrance ‘always pleases ... always tells its tale’, he notes how ‘the granite walls and Portland dresses look well in semi-circular space before the gate’ and have a ‘beautiful effect as you come in sideways not in front as at Oxford’. The ‘beautiful front’ of the Provost’s House, on the other hand, had been ‘completely spoilt by high pitched roof’ and the ‘centre arch having keystone smaller than sides’, producing a ‘disfigured’ visual effect.¹³

On Sunday, 19th October, Cockerell left Dublin, stopping off, as shall be noted shortly, at the house at Lough Crew, which, by this point, he had been working on for three years. On 24th October Cockerell travelled to Dundalk. Although finding the ‘very fine view ascending to this town’ (perhaps surprisingly) ‘like Italy’, he was less complimentary about its prominently sited courthouse, designed by John Bowden and Edward Parke (1813-19). Describing the building as ‘Town hall with Grecian portico as usual woefully low’, he thought the design ‘disappointing in its primitive simplicity’, and suggested that ‘it will never do till placed on [a] stylobate’.¹⁴

Proceeding to Hillsborough, county Down (Plate 4), on Friday, 24th October, he noted the ‘pretty town, courthouse and church’. Cockerell’s drawing of the town hall (built in 1765 under the patronage of Wills Hill, Marquis of Downshire) shows it at an

4 – Charles Robert Cockerell (1788-1863), drawings of Hillsborough, county Down, Antrim Town Hall, and Shane's Castle, Lough Neagh, county Antrim

(courtesy Royal Institute of British Architects)



oblique angle, with the centrepiece and tower rising above the rooftops. From Hillsborough, Cockerell travelled to Antrim and recorded the town hall in two separate sketches: one, an angled view of the main façade and side elevation with the campanile visible; the other, a general view including a detail of the cornice and eaves. His glowing description of the roof of the town hall, a two-storey building dating from 1726, is swiftly followed by criticism of its technical shortcomings.

Town Ho[use] at Antrim in the Florentine style (the end 40 ft wide) an excellent character in particularly the manner of roof. The cornice it must be confessed that the dripping of the eaves is expressly inconvenient, a flight of steps at the rear is rendered almost impassable by the wet.¹⁵

Cockerell's itinerary in Ireland was not exclusively concerned with the country's classically inspired built environment, and during his time in county Antrim he visited the ruins of Shane's Castle in Lough Neagh, which had been destroyed by fire in 1816. This had been the seat of the Ulster O'Neill dynasty, and had been renamed Shane's Castle in 1722 by Shane MacBrien O'Neill. At the left-hand corner of his notebook, a sketch plan in outline, of rectangular form, is accompanied by the following note: 'built about the time of Elizabeth 1500 to 1600 ... Chimney shafts in Elizabethan manner. Nash built a terrace here of 3 to 400 ft long, all on vaulted arches.' This is a reference to the British architect John Nash (1752-1835), who came to work in Ireland in 1793. Best known for his design

at Killymoon Castle, county Tyrone, Nash added a conservatory to Shane's Castle after a fire in 1816. A painting by William Ashford (1746-1824) shows the completed conservatory to the side of the castle.¹⁶ Following a series of social calls, Cockerell made his way to Belfast where, on Wednesday, 29th October, he concluded the first of his Irish sojourns.¹⁷

THE SECOND VISIT TO IRELAND: DRAWINGS AND OBSERVATIONS ON THE IRISH COUNTRY HOUSE

COCKERELL'S SECOND VISIT TO IRELAND WAS MADE IN AUGUST 1825. ON THIS OCCASION his journey began in Dublin, and he visited several important country houses, including Killruddery, Powerscourt and Castletown. Drawings of these houses were inserted into his *Ichnographica Domestica*, an album of drawings compiled in 1825 devoted to his studies of house plans.¹⁸ A portfolio of his own designs and studies of other houses, it evidently formed a visual reference tool and teaching aid, and annotations on them provide further glimpses of his critical eye.

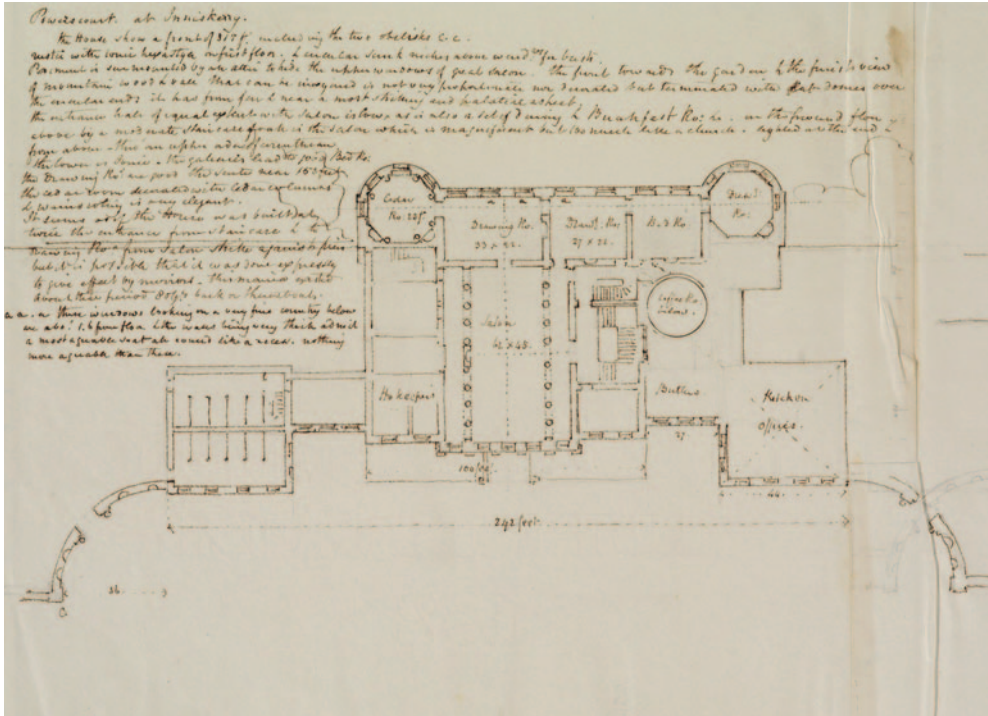
In light of his interest in the work of his Irish contemporaries, it is not surprising that Cockerell visited Killruddery, county Wicklow, which had recently been remodelled by Richard Morrison (1767-1849) in an Elizabethan style. Here he drew an outline plan of the house and gardens (Plate 6) and described how 'it presents two granite facades in the fantastic style of Queen Elizabeth'. While Morrison's new fronts and east elevation were 'additions to an old house', Cockerell notes that they were 'adroitly done'.¹⁹ Furthermore, while 'the offices and gardens are from this date apparently which excuses the style', the overall effect is described as 'lithe especially the staircase', while 'the entrance links to the house very well'. Cockerell's drawing style here is sketchy but each of the rooms in the plan is delineated. The garden features are outlined, with squares indicating the canals as water features in the parkland.

At Powerscourt, Cockerell produced annotated plans of the site (Plate 5).²⁰ Notable features recorded here include a detailed outline of the formal centrepiece with outhouses and services concealed behind flanking screen walls, the garden façade flanked by towers, and the double-height salon. The gardens and out buildings are not drawn in detail. Cockerell notes:

The house shows a front of 518ft including the two corner towers ... with internal Ionic hexastyle and circular screen to niches above w end ... on first floor col[umn]s for busts ... Powerscourt is surmounted by an attic to hide the upper windows of the Great Salon.²¹

While the garden front provided 'the finest view of mountain wood and vale that can be imagined', the architecture of this elevation was 'not very proportionate nor decorated but terminated with flat domes over the circular ends'. Moreover, his descriptions of the

CHARLES ROBERT COCKERELL'S ENCOUNTER WITH IRELAND

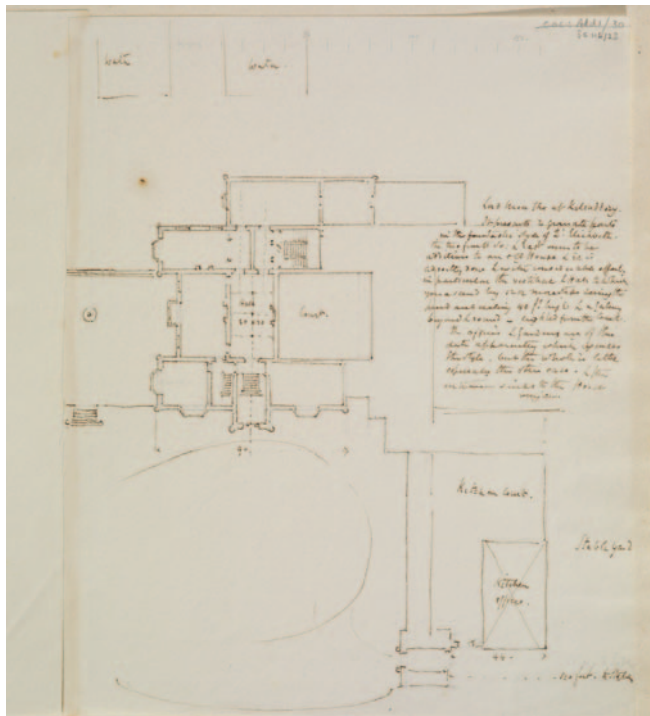


Charles Robert Cockerell (1788-1863)

5 – Plan of Powerscourt, county Wicklow

6 – Plan of Killruddery, county Wicklow

(courtesy Royal Institute of British Architects)



house's interiors are equal parts admiration and condemnation:

The entrance hall of equal extent with Salon ... a moderate staircase of oak in the Salon, which is magnificent but too much like a church lighted from the end ... the galleries lead to 1,000 books ... The drawing rooms ... near 16'0 feet, the cedar [*sic*] rooms decorated with cedar columns and wainscotting is very elegant.

Cockerell was struck by the level of architectural detail of the interior of this grand house. His ground plan, complete with outlying outhouses sketched in on either side of the main building, is of great importance given that it predates much of the later alterations and the ultimate destruction of the house by fire in 1974. His recording of the dimensions of the salon, the relationship of rooms to one another, and related internal features are equally significant.

At Castletown, Cockerell drew in outline the centre block and one wing (Plate 7).²² Castletown was built in the Palladian style for William Conolly MP between 1722 and 1729. As with houses of this type, the services were contained in the wings, with the kitchens on one side and the outhouses on the other. Cockerell describes the house, its setting and external architecture in an inscription on the drawing:

Castletown House near Celbridge belonging to Col Connolly eldest son of Admiral Packanham. The site is flat but well disposed as a park and a long avenue from the town ... the house is of excellent architecture and shows a most imposing front four rows of 13 windows pedimented with unbroken entablature and cornice all round of equal projection ... it is of that liberal and handsome style.

He is also full of praise for the interior:

the hall is decorated with a lofty Ionic order; above is an attic with fanciful square pilasters diminished at the bottom with basket capitals containing flowers ... magnificent arched corridors 10 ft wide paved with marble ... extremely handsome like geometrical steps ... the balustrade completed giving a whole effect of elegance quite new to me.

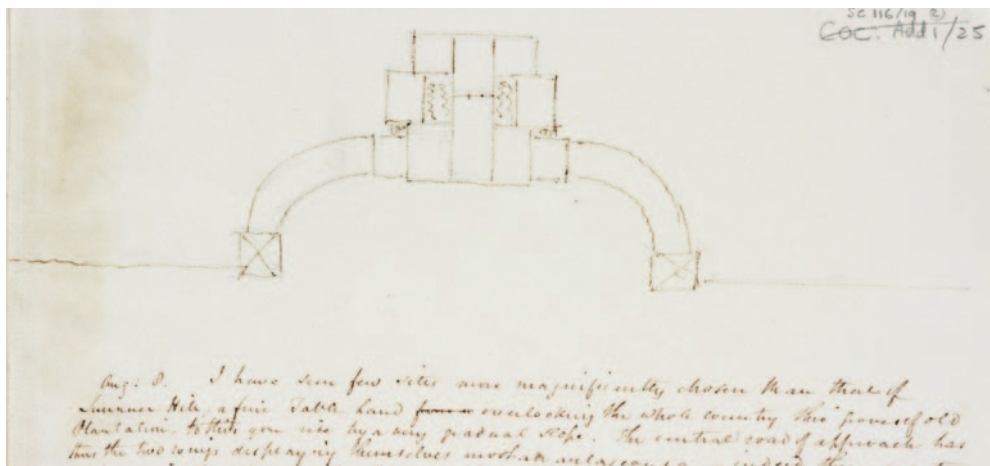
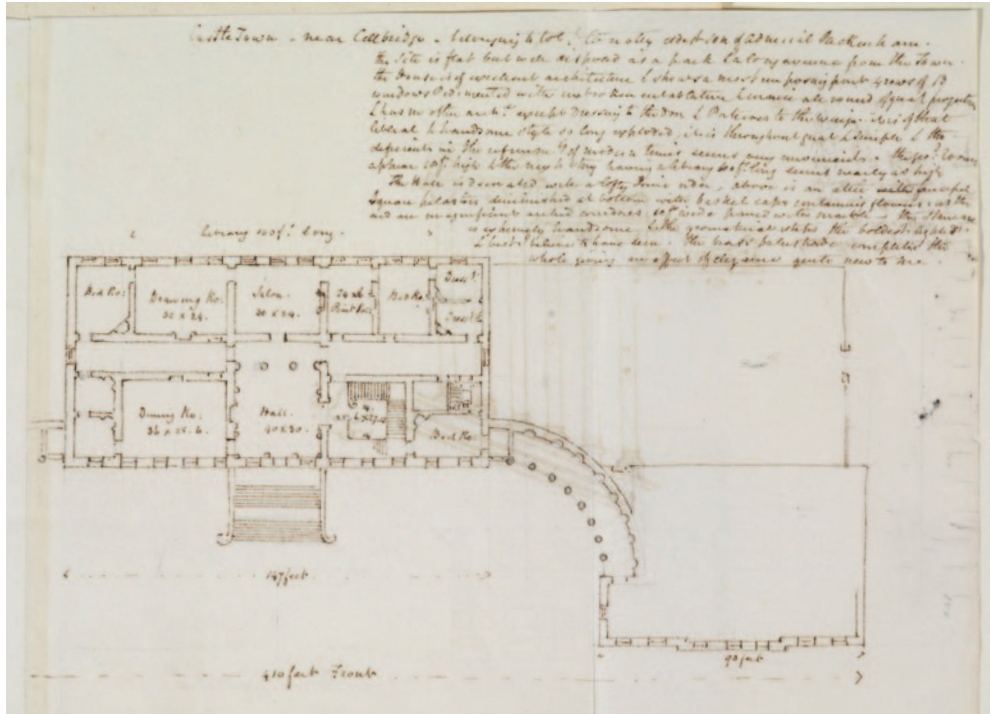
The arrangement of elements and orders, together with use of materials, at Castletown, and the drama of the setting within the demesne, made a lasting impression on Cockerell.

The fourth large house Cockerell visited during his 1825 sojourn was Summerhill, county Meath.²³ Designed in the 1730s by Edward Lovett Pearce and completed by Richard Castle, Summerhill was built for Hercules Langford Rowley, MP, and was one of the very grandest houses in Ireland at this time. Like Castletown, Summerhill was Palladian in style, with a central Corinthian portico flanked by curved two-storey wings

Charles Robert Cockerell (1788-1863)

7 – *Plan of Castletown, county Kildare* (courtesy Royal Institute of British Architects)

8, 9 – *Façade drawing and plan of Summerhill, county Meath* (courtesy Royal Institute of British Architects)



with massive square towers. Twice burnt and since demolished, a dramatic tree-lined avenue and the planned village are some of the few features that remain.

Cockerell's brown ink drawing of the sweeping façade of the house (Plate 8), creating a dramatic frontal emphasis with the focus on the central block and the towers looming in the background, is complemented by his profuse written description.

I have seen few sites more magnificently chosen than that of Summerhill ... The central road of approach has land overlooking the whole country ... the two wings displaying themselves outrageously ... the centre pavilion elegant of Corinthian order.²⁴

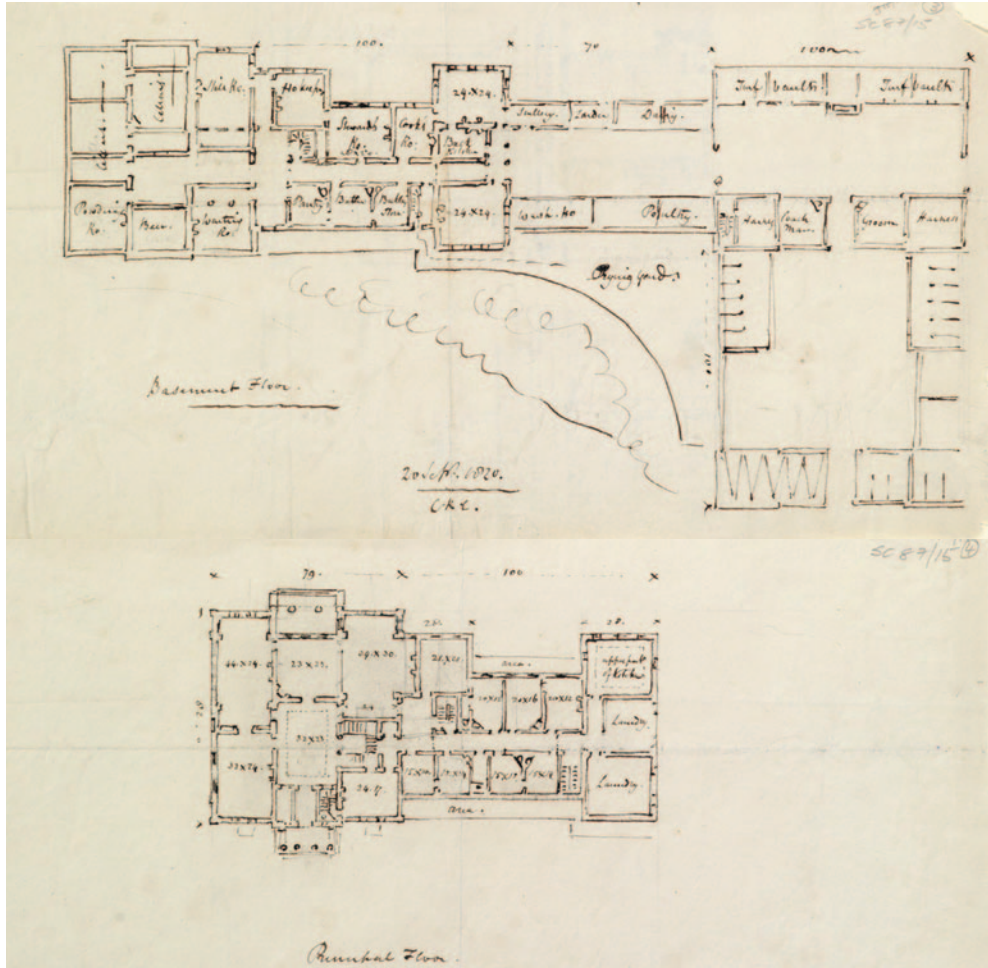
Further descriptions of specific details represent valuable documentary evidence of the appearance of this grand house: 'By a balustrade a broad flight steps leads to the door ... with large pedestals on either side the plinth and base of which forms the parapet and it is quite high enough ... this is much the practice in Irish architecture.' Unsurprisingly, elements of Summerhill's architectural composition did not meet with Cockerell's fastidious critical approach to classical form and proportion, and he notes here that 'the wings are a little too large for the grace and length of the centre'.²⁵ In general, however, Cockerell was effusive in his description of Summerhill. The building made a striking impression on him, and his sketches (Plates 8, 9) are rare records of the house as seen from the perspective of a visiting architect and antiquarian to Ireland.

BUILDING PROJECTS IN IRELAND

AS HAS BEEN NOTED ABOVE, COCKERELL'S BUILDING PROJECTS IN IRELAND CAME ABOUT through the continued patronage of J.L.W. Naper, a wealthy landowner. As well as the construction of a large house at Lough Crew, Cockerell's other projects included an extension to an existing eighteenth-century house at Castlepollard for William Dutton Pollard (Naper and Pollard were related, sharing the same great grandfather), the construction of a school in Oldcastle of which Naper was a patron, and the building of a small manor house at Crossdrum. The following is a descriptive synopsis relating to the drawings produced by Cockerell for these Irish projects.

Lough Crew

Four preparatory drawings, dated to 1820, are among those which survive for the house, the construction of which began in 1823 (Plate 10).²⁶ Together with the Hanover Chapel in Regent Street, this was to be the architect's largest commission of the decade and 'showed the problems of applying knowledge of Greek architecture to county houses'.²⁷ In his drawings, Cockerell emphasises the drama of the landscape as he had in his earlier sketches of ruins at Side, dated to 1812, by including trees and shrubbery surrounding the



10 – Charles Robert Cockerell (1788-1863), façade and plans of Lough Crew, county Meath (courtesy Royal Institute of British Architects)





*11 – The stable block at Lough Crew, county Meath
(photo by the author)*

opposite

*Charles Robert Cockerell
(1788-1863)*

*12 – Plan and elevations of
Lough Crew*

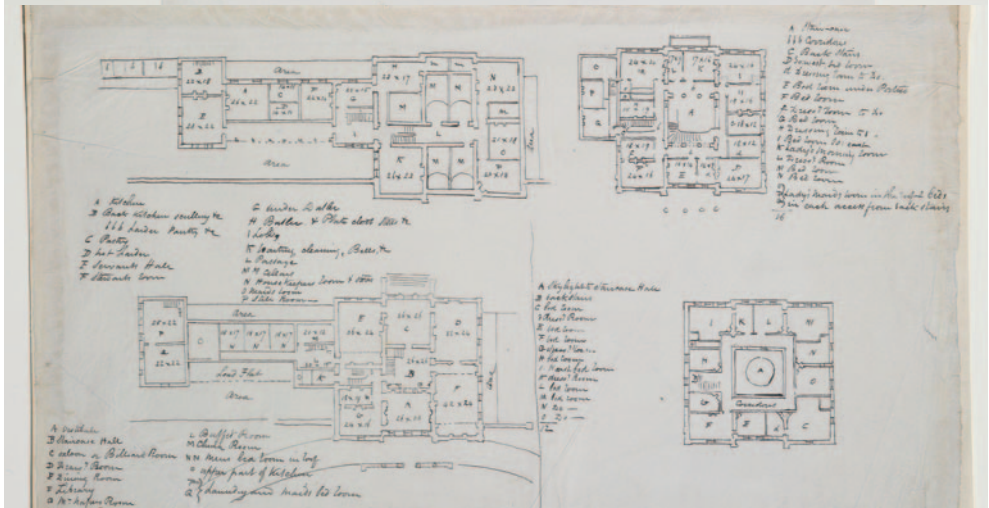
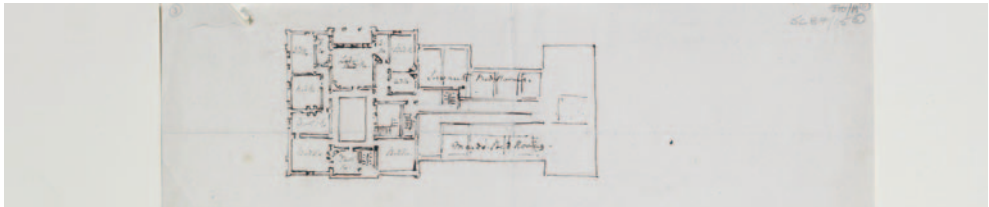
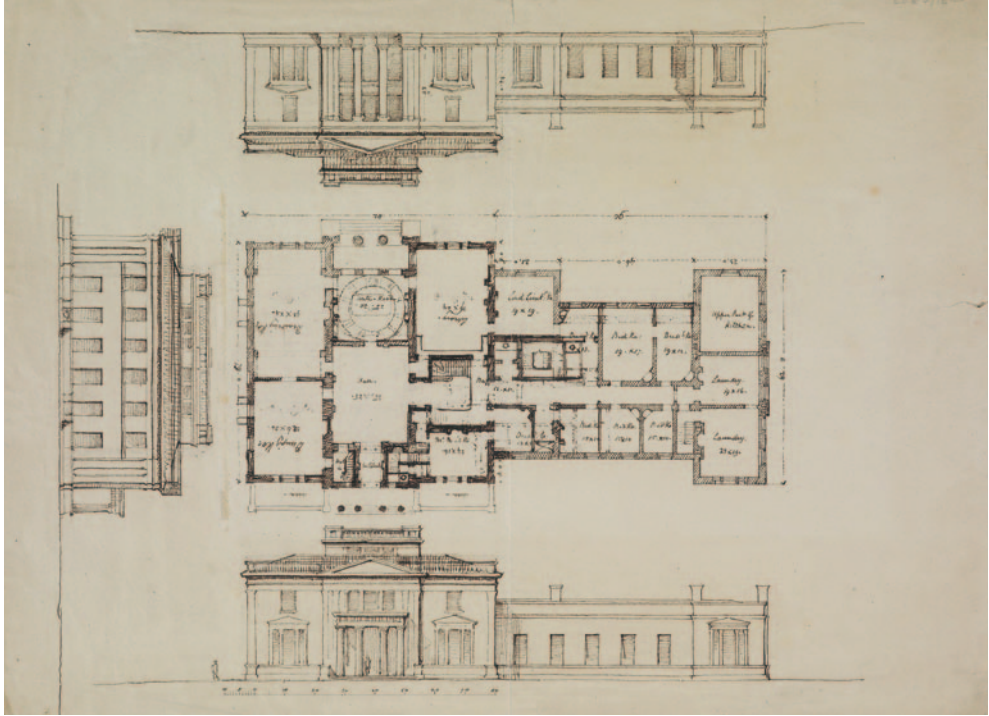
13 – Plans of Lough Crew

*(all courtesy Royal Institute of
British Architects)*

proposed house. This background setting emphasises the mass of the building – a square cube balanced by single-storey wings which consisted of stable buildings. Using varying viewpoints in the drawings, Cockerell emphasises the sweep of parkland in front, increasing the drama of the soaring pedimental façade. The dramatic physical presence of the hills of Slieve na Calliagh as a backdrop must have been an important consideration for the architect, who had such a strong sense of the drama of ancient sites, and the Delphic qualities of the neolithic acropolis atop Lough Crew must have resonated with Cockerell’s archaeological sensitivities.²⁸ The pediment of the main building surmounted the two-storey façade and dominated the centre block, which, in turn, was flanked on either side by pedimented windows at ground-floor level. The garden façade also included a pedimented attic storey. The building was surrounded at roof level by a balustrade.

The long service wing contained kitchens and servants’ quarters, cellars, steward’s room, cook’s room, back kitchen, scullery, wash house, a drying yard and a poultry room. There were additional services in the adjoining stable block, with turf vaults and space in the outbuildings for a hackney coach and a groom’s quarters. The outbuildings and the stable yard were a separate entity, and may be compared to Cockerell’s stable building at Langton House in England, where, in both cases, a deep overhanging roof acted as a covered walkway (Plate 11).²⁹

A further scale drawing shows the principal floor of the house. It is an annotated plan which indicates the principal living areas. The main block of the house was distributed around a central staircase, which was set to the right-hand side of the main entrance hall. The principal circulation route was centred on the passage from the hall to the drawing room, dining room, ante-room and library. Directly opposite the entrance, on the other side of the hall, there was an ante-room and an adjoining room with columnar screen, which led onto the exterior parkland. Of particular interest is the suggestion of a shallow saucer vault over the ante-room to the garden front. Some years earlier, Cockerell had recorded a type of shallow dome in a Roman temple at the ancient city of Side, Asia Minor.





Lough Crew, county Meath

17 – Garden façade

opposite

14 – Aerial view, pre-1968

15 – Front façade

16 – Drawing room

(all courtesy Naper family archive)



Another drawing is a combination of plan and elevation, and was a clear way of presenting information by placing the plan at the centre and the main elevations in section around three sides (Plate 12).³⁰ The dimensions of the rooms are inscribed onto the plan, and reveal that the house was square in form with a projecting wing. Each of the three elevations depicted has a different profile: the grand entrance was emphatic with giant portico, the side elevation had six bays flanked on either end by a flat pilaster motif, and the garden façade had a pedimented Doric order in two sections. The whole entity was united by a continuous balustrade.

There are two further sets of working drawings for Lough Crew. These include an annotated plan of the bedroom floor, which indicates a gallery overlooking a double-height entrance hall, and a composite sheet of design details for the house. Clearly delineating the functions and proportions of rooms, these were evidently working drawings (Plate 13).³¹

Ardraccan limestone was used throughout Lough Crew, and the masonry was of the highest quality. The roof design was problematic. Cockerell described it as being ‘too high an aspect’, and continued, ‘Smirke tells me his objection to copper is that it rises and requires weight to keep it down.’³² A perfectly proportioned lodge was placed opposite the entrance gate to the house. Its Doric order was unfluted in the manner of the Temple of Segesta, Sicily, with the suggestion of fluting marked out on the top drum (Plate 18).

In keeping with contemporary practice, Cockerell’s Irish projects were supervised



Lough Crew, county Meath

*18 – The gate lodge
(photo by the author)*

*19 – Portico
(photo by R. Callanan)*

by local agents – in the case of Lough Crew, a Mr Topples, who had been appointed by Cockerell himself.³³ The architect visited the site for the first time in October 1823. Naturally there was much to inspect.

I saw with much interest Lough Crew, work on which I had put so much time and thought ... all masonry done except upper cornice – roof finishing – proportions seem just but very plain, too bald, after all it is a square house admirably executed.³⁴

A later entry suggests a growing feeling of dissatisfaction with the classical detail employed at the house. Cockerell describes how, having ‘passed sometime looking over the house’ and finding it ‘sadly plain’, he decides that he ‘will never again use the Athenian order except in small scale’.³⁵ Cockerell’s notes on the progress of the building at Lough Crew reveal glimpses of his thought process, and the conflicting influences of the aesthetic and the practical. Reflecting on how the ‘squareness’ of the plan left ‘an unpleasant impression’, he is equally aware that ‘there is no scheme so convenient and compact and economic as the square plan’.³⁶

By September 1827, Cockerell noted that the houses had cost the enormous sum of £22,000, although he estimated that buildings costs, labour and materials, were about 25% cheaper in Ireland than England.³⁷ The building’s subsequent history is recorded in a series of photographs preserved in the family archive, which demonstrate the central role played by the great house for the local community (Plates 14-17). Lough Crew was destroyed by fire in 1968. Part of the massive Ionic portico was subsequently re-erected, and remains a startling image offset against the green rolling terraces of the gardens (Plates 1, 19).

Castlepollard

In 1821 Cockerell designed a new wing for the eighteenth-century house at Castlepollard owned by William Dutton Pollard (1789-1839).³⁸ This was a three-storey, five-bay house, also known as Kinturk House, seven miles from Lough Crew (Plate 20). In the grounds there were outbuildings on the site of an older gaol, with limestone window surrounds and a small bell croft.³⁹ Cockerell made alterations to the entrance and to the rear.⁴⁰ His interventions were precise and accurate, and were a way of ‘modernising’ the eighteenth-century form of the house. He created a symmetrical façade by adding two wings flanking the main entrance portico, with round-headed niches, and linked the sum of the parts with a balustrade. The new entrance portico was single-storey in the Greek Ionic order, as had been seen by Cockerell on the Temple of Apollo at Priene, Asia Minor (Plate 21). This created an elaborate entrance and aggrandised an otherwise plain façade. Cockerell later reflected that he preferred to utilise the orders found on the Eastern temples as they were of a scale and grandeur which he thought more appropriate for modern use than the smaller graceful examples of Attica.⁴¹

Internally, Cockerell created a completely new spacious form and opened up the centre and back of the house by adding a new staircase hall and three large rooms. He



*Castlepollard, county
Westmeath*

20 – Front façade

21 – Front portico

22 – Rear façade

opposite

*23 – Ceiling plasterwork in
main salon*

(photo by R. Callanan)

24 – Interior staircase

(photo by R. Callanan)

25 – Chimney piece

*(photos by the author, unless
otherwise stated; all photos with
permission of HSE)*





made an incision into the back of the house and inserted a T-shaped section, which comprised a double-height hall and a dramatic central staircase compartment lit by a glass dome, which led from the hall up to a bedroom lobby. The staircase itself skirted three sides of the space, with a half turn on each landing. The materials were Portland limestone steps with brass balusters –a combination that Cockerell had seen and admired at Castle-town, which he described as a notable Irish design feature (Plate 24).⁴² He executed a similar cantilevered staircase with brass balusters at Oakly Park in England in 1823.⁴³

To the rear, the new wing was seven bays long with the addition of the three rooms, spanning the length of the garden façade (Plate 22). These rooms, built on a grand scale, were accessed by the grand stair hall and were decorated with elegant ceiling plasterwork bordered with Greek fret pattern, and window surrounds enriched with ornate neoclassical palmette motifs (Plate 23). Cockerell copied many versions of the meander pattern and other plaster details while on his Grand Tour, and filled his notebooks with sketches and



*Gilson Endowed School,
Oldcastle, county Meath*

26 – Façade

27 – Boys' school hall

(photos by the author)



measured drawings. The most elaborate detail is seen in the carving of the drawing room chimney pieces, which feature a Gorgon head in relief as the compositional centrepiece (Plate 25). Cockerell had recently returned from recording the Temple of Apollo at Didyma, where a Gorgon head dominating the sculpture had clearly caught his attention.⁴⁴

Gilson Endowed School, Oldcastle

Cockerell's third Irish building project commenced in the summer of 1821 when he designed a new school for Oldcastle, funded by a bequest from a local benefactor, Laurence Gilson. J.L.W. Naper served as a trustee to the Gilson bequest. The Oldcastle schoolhouse was an unusual building project for Cockerell to take on, but he seems to have been happy to oblige his patron Naper. The contact between the trustees and builder is preserved in the Irish Architectural Archive, the minutiae of its specification demonstrating the number of craftsmen involved in a building project such as this, from stonemason and plasterer, to glazier and ironmonger.⁴⁵

The Gilson school comprised a large central residential building and two separate wings, one for the instruction of girls and the other for boys (Plate 26), a form that follows the typical late-eighteenth-century arrangement of school buildings. Although much of the original building plan has been altered, it is clear that there was also a board room and possibly a chapel. Of two storeys over basement with a five-bay entrance front, each wing had one large hall-like schoolroom with services situated at the back. Steps lead up to a plain fan-lit door, detailed in good-quality stonework of Ardbraccan limestone. The façades of the girls and boys school halls were also delineated in limestone (Plate 27).

Crossdrum

In 1825, while supervising the progress of building at Lough Crew, Cockerell stayed at nearby Lower Crossdrum House owned by Edward Rotherham, who was an agent to the Naper estate.⁴⁶ In Cockerell's notebook he refers to the building of a gamekeeper's house at nearby Upper Crossdrum. This was to be a farmhouse built by Naper, whose occupants presumably worked for and ran the Lough Crew estate.⁴⁷ This may be identical with a surviving house at Upper Crossdrum, associated with the Harman family. A petty gentry family, the Harmans formed an association with Upper Crossdrum as early as 1769. This house is a three-bay, two-storey-over-basement building, with an elegant fan-lit doorway and shallow window surrounds with blocking courses (Plate 28). The house also has a compact orderly arrangement of small-scale outbuildings, with a small house at the centre of the complex. It is perhaps this building that can be identified as the gamekeeper's lodge (Plate 29). The coach house arch is grandly inscribed 'P. Wilson Builder' (Plate 30).⁴⁸

The basement rooms of the main house were purpose-built, with numerous cellars and pantries for the hanging and cold storage of game. This was a standard provision in country house basements, where ceiling hooks would invariably be provided in store



*Crossdrum House, county
Meath*

*30 – Coach house arch
inscribed ‘P. Wilson Builder’*

31 – Game-hooks ceiling

*32 – Bead and reel ceiling
detail*

opposite

28 – Façade

29 – Gamekeeper’s lodge

(photos by the author)



rooms (Plate 31). The building specification, dated 1820, survives among the present owner's records and is headed 'Money expended and paid for the building of a dwelling house at Crossdrum county Meath'. The date of this building coincides with Cockerell's ongoing works at this time, namely Lough Crew House and the school at Oldcastle.⁴⁹ It is tempting to believe that Cockerell was involved in the building of this house and outbuildings.

The architecture and plan of the house have a compactness also seen at the Endowed School, with the staircase to the rear and an asymmetrical arrangement of the main rooms, front to back, on both sides of the hall. There is an underlying precision of design details, such as window surrounds emphasised in finely wrought Ardraccan limestone and hall niches designed to create more lively wall space. A similar device was used in the entrance hall at Castlepollard to enliven the wall surfaces. A bead-and-reel ceiling plaster design in the main dining room can also be attributed to Cockerell (Plate 32). The outhouses include a bell tower detail, similar to that on a building known as the gaol house at Castlepollard. In summary, the architectural form and specific structural and ornamental detail here indicate that, as Watkin suggests, this house and outbuildings may be added to the canon of work undertaken by Cockerell in Ireland.⁵⁰

CONCLUSION

THE DRAWINGS THAT FORM THE BASIS OF THIS ARTICLE INVITE SOME GENERAL COMMENT. Produced by Cockerell between 1820 and 1825, they are grouped here into different categories that reveal different aspects of his practice. The first category is simple outline plans, such as that of Waterford cathedral. This is the kind of drawing typically recorded in his diaries (see Plate 2). A second category comprises preparatory drawings made on site, such as those prepared for building at Lough Crew in 1820 (see Plate 10). The next category relates to free-hand drawings, including annotated observations and attempts to reconstruct a ruined architectural site. A fine example from the drawings of Summerhill illustrates this sequence (see Plate 8). Finally, there are the studio drawings, such as the elevations of Lough Crew, which are more formulaic and were evidently produced for the benefit of the client (see Plate 12). From this range of drawings, on different sorts of notepaper and in different notebooks, we can visualise Cockerell's working process and see the architect in the making.

Cockerell devoted much of his working practice to addressing practical problems such as how to light and heat buildings in northern climates using neoclassical design elements. The use of the saucer dome in Lough Crew, for example, is a good illustration of this kind of academic approach. By his observation and study, Cockerell familiarised himself with the principles of classical architecture. More importantly, his precisely recorded drawings were to form the basis for elucidating the canon of classical architecture in his own day.

Cockerell was clearly sympathetic to Ireland, writing: 'What in Ireland is the consequences of not encouraging pride in their language, religion and nature? Why a total degradation of every good feeling and real advantage to society, a mortal hatred which every day threatens to over-whelm us.'⁵¹ In his studies and drawings of Irish grand houses he increased his knowledge of Irish architecture. Furthermore, he introduced specifically Irish design elements into his own work, such as the balustrade at attic-storey level and the use of brass balusters, which he adapted for the staircase at Castlepollard. He also admired the situation of the Irish houses he visited, and incorporated aspects of the importance of the setting into the siting of Lough Crew.

The sketches, drawings and observations presented here go some way towards explaining the thought processes of the young architect. They serve to highlight his appreciation for the subtleties and nuances of the classical idiom, and signal the importance of neoclassical principles in his Irish oeuvre.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the editorial assistance of William Laffan and Dr Conor Lucey in the final stages of this article. I would also like to acknowledge the assistance of the librarians at the RIBA library, the photographic assistance of Richard Callanan, and the many helpful suggestions made by Prof Michael McCarthy and Dr Edward McParland. I would also like to acknowledge the support of my colleagues at the School of Art History and Cultural Policy in UCD, especially Prof Kathleen James-Chakraborty.

ENDNOTES

The following abbreviations are used:

RIBA Royal Institute of British Architects, London
 Watkin, *Cockerell* D. Watkin, *The Life and Work of C.R. Cockerell* (London, 1974)

- ¹ H. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects 1600-1840*, 4th edn. (New Haven and London, 2008) 260-65. This research is an aspect of a larger project to publish C.R. Cockerell's notebooks which are held in the Gennadius Library, Athens, and the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT. I am very grateful to Dr Conor Lucey who took time to read this article and make many helpful comments on the text.
- ² RIBA, Coc/Add/3/45 (Box 13), letter from Cockerell to Beaufort, 11th October 1820.
- ³ The photographs for this article have been very kindly provided by Naper's direct descendant Charles Naper. See also a set of design drawings of Lough Crew by Cockerell in the RIBA Library Drawings, *Catalogue of the Drawings Collection of the Royal Institute of British Architects C-F* (1972).

- ⁴ RIBA, Coc/9/4 (Box 9), 82-83. Cockerell is a keen observer of building technology as much as architectural aesthetics. See also Watkin, *Cockerell*, 41-46. Watkin notes Cockerell's use of his diary as an aid to self-improvement, both in terms of visual and technical training.
- ⁵ RIBA, Coc/9/4 (Box 9), 83-84. In his annotation, he describes a 'drawing of town hall by Mr Roberts who also blt cathedral'.
- ⁶ Cockerell's encounter with contemporary Irish architects such as Francis Johnson will be considered by the present author in an essay in the forthcoming volume, *The Fusion of Neoclassical Principles: scholars, artists, architects, builders and designers in the Neoclassical period* (Dublin, 2010).
- ⁷ P. McCarthy, *A Favourite Study: building the King's Inns* (Dublin, 2006), 56-57. See also C. Casey, *The Buildings of Ireland: Dublin, The City within the Grand Canal and the Circular Road with the Phoenix Park* (New Haven and London, 2005) 157-61, and E. McParland, *James Gandon, Vitruvius Hibernicus* (London, 1985), 168-74.
- ⁸ RIBA, Coc/9/4 (Box 9), 85-86.
- ⁹ *ibid.*
- ¹⁰ Casey, *The Buildings of Ireland: Dublin*, 147-49. Cockerell notes too that the 'portico of post office is said to have cost £10,000. The whole building cost £80,000'.
- ¹¹ RIBA, Coc/9/4 (Box 9), 85-86.
- ¹² I am grateful to Dr Edward McParland for providing the reference to Cockerell's notes describing the oiling of the steeple of St George's Church from Cockerell's diaries, RIBA Library. For further details on the technical aspects surrounding the oiling of buildings, see J.O. Lewis and L. Mulvin, 'Architectural Detailing, Weathering and Stone Decay', *International Journal of Building and Environment*, 29, no. 1, 1994, 113-28.
- ¹³ RIBA, Coc/9/4 (Box 9), 83-84.
- ¹⁴ The position of the courthouse in the market place at the centre of the town led Cockerell to conclude that it was the Town Hall. It is suggested that the portico of Portland limestone was modelled on the Thesion, Athens. See C. Casey and A. Rowan, *The Buildings of North Leinster* (London, 1993) 268-69.
- ¹⁵ RIBA, Coc/9/4 (Box 9), 85.
- ¹⁶ I am very grateful to Dr E. O'Connor, TRIARC, at Trinity College Dublin, for supplying information on William Ashford.
- ¹⁷ Watkin, *Cockerell*, pls 77-78, 46-47.
- ¹⁸ The RIBA drawings which are discussed in the article are sheets of travel study notes in pen and brown ink, unframed 14" x 8" (35.5 x 20.3 cm). These are extensive descriptive notes of the houses and their situation and surroundings. They are accompanied by freehand but detailed plans. They belong to the corpus of Charles Robert Cockerell's travel records, as contained in the diaries, now at the RIBA, and the manuscript volume, an anthology of houses seen on his travels, broken up at Sotheby's in 1988 and titled *Ichnographica Domestica*, see J. Harris, 'C.R. Cockerell's Ichnographica Domestica', *Architectural History*, XIV, 1971, 5-29. The drawings are referenced by the RIBA as follows: Summerhill House front elevation SC 116/19(1); Summerhill House outline ground plan SC 116/19 (2); Castletown House ground plan SC 116/24, Powerscourt House SC 116/21; Kilruddery House SC 116/23; Lough Crew House SC 87/15 (7); Lough Crew House four pencil drawings SC 87/15 (1-4); Lough Crew House plans SC 84/15 (5) and SC 84/15 (6).
- ¹⁹ RIBA, SC116/23.
- ²⁰ RIBA, SC116/21.
- ²¹ *ibid.*
- ²² RIBA, SC 116-24.

- ²³ RIBA, SC 116-19 (1).
- ²⁴ RIBA, SC116-19 (2).
- ²⁵ *ibid.*
- ²⁶ The four drawings comprise two site drawings and two plans, RIBA, SC 87-15 (1-4).
- ²⁷ *Inside Out: historic watercolour drawings, oil sketches and paintings of interiors and exteriors 1770-1870*, exhibition catalogue, Charles Plante Fine Art (London, 2000) unpaginated, which reproduces a further drawing related to the project: 'No. 7 Section thro' the centre of Lough Crew House from West to East'.
- ²⁸ I am much indebted to Dr Kevin Mulligan for this and several other observations on Cockerell's buildings in Ireland.
- ²⁹ As at Lough Crew, the house at Langton has been demolished although the stable yard has survived. See Watkin, *Cockerell*, pl. 78.
- ³⁰ RIBA, SC 87-15 (7) and SC 87-15 1-4.
- ³¹ RIBA, SC 84-115 (6) and SC 84-115 (7).
- ³² RIBA, Coc/9/4 (Box 9), 59-60.
- ³³ See RIBA, Coc/9/4 (Box 9), 59, 'sent for Topple to do Naper's roof'. See also Watkin, *Cockerell*, 41.
- ³⁴ RIBA, Coc 9/4 (Box 9), 84.
- ³⁵ *ibid.*
- ³⁶ RIBA, Coc/9/4 (Box 9), 85, Monday, 20th October 1823.
- ³⁷ *Inside Out*, op. cit.
- ³⁸ Mark Bence-Jones, *A Guide Irish Country Houses* (London, 1989) 74
- ³⁹ Casey and Rowan, *Buildings of North Leinster*, 268-69.
- ⁴⁰ Watkin, *Cockerell*, 195.
- ⁴¹ See *ibid.*, 139.
- ⁴² *ibid.*, 160.
- ⁴³ For further details on the staircase at Oakly Park, see Watkin, *Cockerell*, 160.
- ⁴⁴ *ibid.*, 201, for further comment on the temple at Didyma.
- ⁴⁵ Irish Architectural Archive, Acc. 85/182; Casey and Rowan, *Buildings of North Leinster*, 449, pl. 85.
- ⁴⁶ Bence-Jones, *Irish Country Houses*, 95: Crossdrum House, County Meath (Rotherham).
- ⁴⁷ Watkin, *Cockerell*, 251. See also Bence-Jones, *Irish Country Houses*, 95: Crossdrum House, County Meath (Harman).
- ⁴⁸ The letter style is very similar to that which inscribes the Endowed School at Oldcastle, suggesting that Wilson was also responsible for its construction.
- ⁴⁹ Watkin, *Cockerell*, 251.
- ⁵⁰ *ibid.*
- ⁵¹ RIBA, Coc/9/4 (Box 9), 81.