

Foreword

THE KNIGHT OF GLIN

AS USUAL, WE MUST PAY HOMAGE TO THE ESTATE OF THE LATE PAUL MELLON, which has generously underwritten the cost of volume VII of *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, the Journal of the Irish Georgian Society. Seven years have passed enormously quickly, and I think that interest in the varied content of our journals has considerably grown since our first volume in 1998. We are attracting some notice, and more contributors are anxious to appear in print in our pages.

This year uncovers the extraordinarily intimate and poignant life history by William Laffan and Brendan Rooney of an almost totally unknown early nineteenth-century painter, Thomas Foster, who is retrieved from the shades by the discovery of an album of cuttings about the artist by that important Cork antiquarian Thomas Crofton Croker. He died for the love of an actress, and though his paintings are not of the first order, the artistic life and death of an Irish artist in London is brought together as a fascinating piece of social history.

Jane Fenlon, the acknowledged expert on Irish painting in the seventeenth century, charts the biography of Thomas Pooley and helps us to look at the sporadic beginnings of the history of Irish portrait painting.

A little further back in the seventeenth century, Finola O’Kane, who has been working on the history of Irish gardening and landscape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, has shown signs of the birth of a formal landscape tradition in the fastnesses of county Clare. Leamaneh still stands as a fortified manor house, and its attendant gate house was removed to Dromoland, where it embellishes the walled garden. It is encouraging to record that the Dromoland Castle Hotel is beginning to restore some of the formal planting and has conserved the domed rotunda, and a number of charitable bodies, including the Irish Georgian Society, has rescued the gazebo on its hill from total decay.

The saving and restoration of Castletown House in county Kildare was the first and greatest work that the Irish Georgian Society achieved, and it is timely that



Castletown House, county Kildare
(photograph: David Davison)

Michael McCarthy, who is retiring from the Professorship of the History of Art Department at University College Dublin, has noted the memorial tablet of Castletown's part-architect in Rome.

Turning to smaller-scale buildings, Paddy Bowe has chronicled so many of the sporting lodges of Ireland, where passionate sportsmen of the past hung their tackle and primed their rifles. They would then walk miles and miles every day, bringing back relatively sparse bags. However, the fishing in these days is sadly a ghost of past times, and one has only to look at those enormous stuffed fish, balefully peering out of their cases, to record the fantastic catches that this country once proffered.

The late-eighteenth century is represented by an important article on the marble inlayers Bartoli and Bossi. Donald Cameron compares and contrasts the differences of the two craftsmen and carries on the work of Conor O'Neill in volume I (1998). Funnily enough, the proof of Bossi's activities in this field was only discovered in a Dublin newspaper as this article was going to press, and we must acknowledge the labours of John Rogers in his abstracts on the craftsmen of Dublin and

advertisements from eighteenth-century Dublin newspapers. This should be an important database in the future.

The early nineteenth century is covered architecturally by Anne Casement in her important work on that magnificent National Trust house, Mount Stewart, now probably better known for its gardens. The rest of the nineteenth century is well represented by two well-researched articles by Ann Wilson on the building of the impressive St Colman's Cathedral in Cobh, and Colum O'Riordan on the Dublin Artisans' Dwellings Company. These prove that we are not just interested in the eighteenth century.

I think that the variety in these pages is self-evident, and it is only now for me to give heartfelt thanks to Nicola Figgis, who has done us such signal service over the last three years. She will be concentrating instead on her teaching programme at University College Dublin, and also assisting with a joint UCD, Trinity College and National Gallery project in the Herculean task of revising, with new biographies and illustrations, W.G. Strickland's monumental lynchpin *Dictionary of Irish Artists*, published so long ago in 1913. I hope that everyone involved in Irish art history who reads these pages will give every assistance possible.

Since its inception, the *éminence grise* of this journal has been Eddie McParland, who has read every word of every article, every year, and the quality of the journals has enormously benefited from his scholarship. His last book, *Public Architecture in Ireland 1680-1760* (New Haven and London 2001), is a monumental achievement to the seventeenth and eighteenth century in this country, and we wish him well in his new researches.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure to record that William Laffan, a young Irish art historian, who has already edited *The Cries of Dublin* by Hugh Douglas Hamilton for the Society, and who co-authored the article on Foster in this volume with Brendan Rooney, will be our next editor. He is at present editing for the Irish Georgian Society the extraordinarily bizarre collection of architectural drawings by Samuel Chearnley, *Miscellanea Structura Curiosa*, from the Birr Castle library, which will be published early next year. It is also exciting for me to record that he is editing for the IGS a full catalogue of the Irish watercolours and drawings in my own collection, some of which will be exhibited in the Irish Architectural Archive in 2006.

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