



‘Gallwey’s Castle, Carrick’: Edward Cheney’s drawings of Ormond Castle in the early nineteenth-century

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‘MUCH OF THIS FINE OLD BUILDING HAS BEEN TAKEN DOWN; THE HABITABLE part and two square towers alone remain...’¹ This quotation from William Shaw Mason’s statistical account written in 1816 describes the appearance of Ormond Castle, Carrick on Suir, county Tipperary, during the early decades of the nineteenth century. An album of drawings with several views showing this notable Irish building around that time has recently come to light.² These previously unpublished drawings have been attributed to the English artist Edward Cheney (1803-1884), and a watercolour of the same building by his brother Robert Henry Cheney (1801-1866) was also included in the sale.

Ormond Castle is famous mainly for its interiors, where elaborate decorative plasterwork survives from the sixteenth century when Thomas Butler, 10th Earl of Ormond, added new buildings around 1565 to two towers and other earlier structures on the site (Plate 2). The Cheney drawings are important because they are comprehensive and they show views of the buildings that comprise Ormond Castle from all four points of the compass. The views of the west elevation are unique in that no other drawings of that elevation with such detailed architectural features have been found. Dating from the month of June 1837, the drawings make an interesting comparison with earlier views of the castle by Purcell of 1782 and Thomas Sautelle Roberts (1760-1826) of 1796 (Plates 3, 4), and later drawings from 1855 by George du Noyer (1817-69) (Plates 8-11).

1 – Edward Cheney, *EAST ELEVATION OF ORMOND CASTLE*
(all Cheney drawings courtesy Office of Public Works; photos Con Brogan)



*2 – Principal elevation of Ormond Castle, Carrick on Suir
(courtesy Dept of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government; photo Con Brogan)*

Edward Cheney and his brother Robert Henry (generally known as Henry) were members of a well-known English military family from Badger Hall in Shropshire. Following the death of their father, General Robert Cheney, in 1820, Henry and his mother went to live in Italy, where they settled in the Palazzo Sciara in Rome around about 1825. Edward followed later. The brothers moved in artistic circles, while their mother and sister also painted. Peter de Wint (1784-1849), who was the most successful watercolour teacher of his time, is known to have influenced Henry's work, although Edward's watercolours are thought to have been painted in the manner of Antonio Senapé (1788-1859).³

Henry travelled back and forth to England looking after the maintenance of Badger Hall, and while there he also painted the houses and parks of his friends. On the evidence of albums of dated drawings, they are both known to have toured Ireland, and the drawings of Ormond Castle were executed over four days, from 23rd to 26th June 1837. The Cheney brothers also travelled extensively in Europe, drawing and painting scenes in Rome, Venice, France and Austria among other places.



Ormond (Carrick) Castle

3 – Thomas Sautell Roberts, 1796 aquatint, engraved by J.W. Edy (courtesy National Library of Ireland)

4 – Purcell, 1782 engraving (detail) (courtesy National Library of Ireland)



THE DRAWINGS

FOR THE ARTIST, THE APPEAL OF ORMOND CASTLE, APART FROM ITS AGE, PROBABLY lay in its ruinous appearance with tall towers and ivy-clad walls. Much of the external render had fallen off, ivy clung to some of the walls and there were overgrown gardens with unkempt shrubbery, all elements for creating a picturesque riverside scene, popular subject matter at that period.

At the time of the Cheney drawings, the castle appeared semi-derelict. Early structures in the lower courtyard and between the towers had been taken down. According to Shaw Mason, this had happened shortly before 1816, the date of his publication, *A Statistical Account or Parochial Survey of Ireland*. All of the drawings in question are inscribed 'Gallwey's Castle, Carrick' and dated to various days in June 1837. The inscriptions refer to John Galwey's occupancy of the building. Galwey, who acted as the Ormond agent in Carrick on Suir, had lived there for at least six years (1774-80). He has also been described as a Waterford wine merchant and as 'a very rich Roman Catholic merchant'.⁴ Mr Wogan, a solicitor, who was appointed seneschal for the Marquess of Ormonde at his Manor Court, succeeded Galwey as tenant of the castle. It was during Wogan's tenancy that the old buildings were taken down.

The drawings are uneven in the quality of detail they provide, with those of the east and west elevations being the most accurate architecturally. In these depictions, the window details and other features, including the decorative render, are faithfully reproduced. A more generalised approach is taken in the depiction of the north and south elevations, where the buildings are shown as more ruinous, possibly to create a more 'romantic' image.

THE WEST ELEVATION (Plate 5)

all drawings 1837, pen and ink and brown wash, 16 x 27 cm
inscribed 'Gallwey's Castle. Carrick. June 22, 1837'

This is the only known drawing from this viewpoint that shows clear architectural detail. It is also the earliest of the four drawings, and is a carefully finished work. On the exterior of the buildings, the render on the walls may be clearly seen, as well as decorative quoins to the corners of the north range and the tall west tower. Render has also been used to add emphasis to the angles on the staircase tower.⁵ It is difficult to say whether this is part of the original sixteenth-century decoration, although it is known that the buildings were rendered at that time. Ormond Castle was described by the Gaelic poet Flann McCraith, writing about 1590, as 'this snow-white mansion and ... handsome, rustic-planned, white-washed'.⁶ In this draw-



5 – Edward Cheney, *WEST ELEVATION OF ORMOND CASTLE*

ing, the west tower is shown fairly intact, rising through an impressive five storeys; its eastern wall collapsed in the early twentieth century. A section of the roof of the tower is also shown in place. Adjacent to it is another tall staircase tower, and beyond, the conical base of the missing oriel window that probably lit the dais end of the demolished Great Hall. Ruined ivy-covered walls extend down to the river. Horizontal string courses and similar window styles link the tower and north range. These would have been inserted in order to unify the disparate structures during the sixteenth century building programme. The garden area shown in this view was previously the site of the earl's privy garden that was approached through a doorway at the foot of the angular staircase tower. What appears as a low wall to the right of the drawing may be part of a sixteenth-century garden building.⁷

THE VIEW FROM THE SOUTH-WEST (Plate 6)

inscribed 'Gallwey's Castle. Carrick. June 28, 1837'

This drawing inscribed serves only as an addendum to the view above because it is neither as detailed nor as well finished.⁸ Details such as windows have been fudged;



also the condition of the staircase tower is concealed behind shrubbery, and the west tower is shown in a more ruinous condition. Overall, its main value is to depict the proximity of the river at that time, while also showing the ruined walls and buildings of the lower courtyard from a different viewpoint.

THE EAST ELEVATION (Plate 1)

inscribed 'Gallwey's Castle. Carrick June 23, 1837'

Like the west elevation, here the render is carefully delineated, and it can be seen that a panelled effect has been created in this medium above the multi-light oriel window.⁹ The windows on the ground floor of the main building in this view appear to be single-light, and do not have hood mouldings above them, which, it has been suggested, was the original form of all of the windows at that level.¹⁰ Once again the decorative quoins on the corners of the tall tower are delineated. Old arrow loops from earlier days are visible also, and the windows on the upper storeys are mainly of a pattern that served to unify the disparate buildings.

THE NORTH ELEVATION (Plate 7)

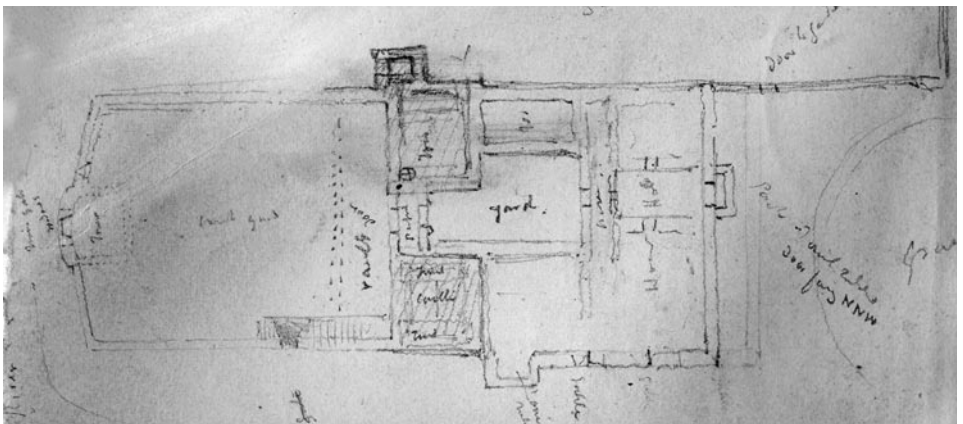
inscribed 'Gallwey's Castle. June 24, 1837'

This is similar in treatment to the view from the south-west in that it is composed without much detail as a picturesque image. Here the tall towers, depicted in a semi-ruinous state, dominate the lower north range, while trees and overgrown shrubs mask other details. Once again the panelled effect in the render is visible above the oriel window of the principal entrance.

COMPARISONS

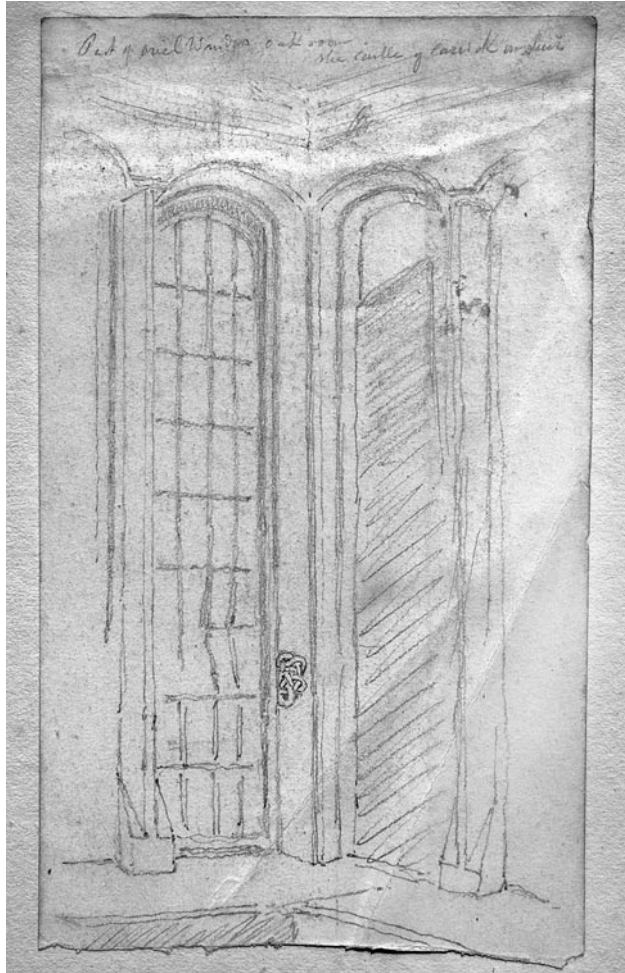
WHEN COMPARISON IS MADE BETWEEN THE CHENEY DRAWINGS AND TWO depictions dating from the late eighteenth-century by Sautelle Roberts and Purcell respectively, the main difference may be seen in the view of the lower court, which is shown to be packed with buildings (Plates 2, 3). Some of these buildings were similar in type to the north range, indicating a sixteenth-century build, while others, such as the Great Hall, would have been from an earlier

6 – *Edward Cheney, A VIEW OF ORMOND CASTLE FROM THE SOUTH-WEST*





8 – George du Noyer
ORMOND CASTLE FROM THE EAST
1855, watercolour, inscribed 'Thomas Butler Earl of
Ormond's castle of Carrick on Suir erected a.d. 1565'

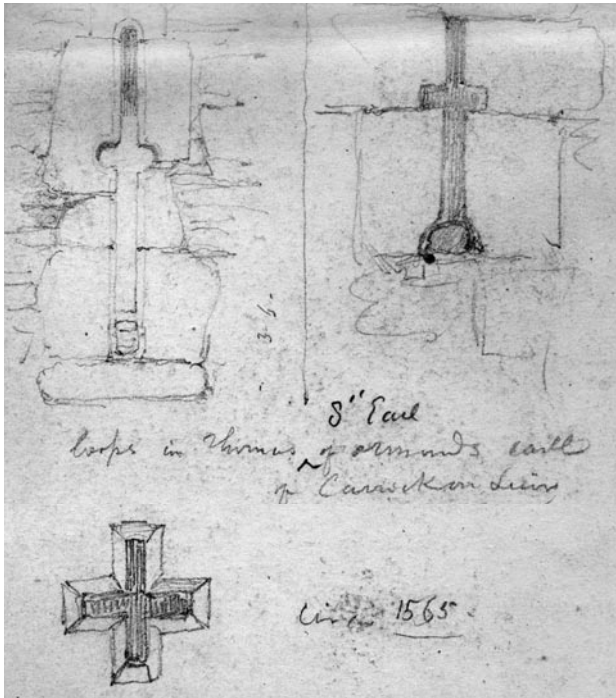


9 – George du Noyer
ORMOND CASTLE, THE ORIEL WITH MASON'S MARK
1855, pencil, inscribed 'Part of oriel windows oak room
the castle of Carrick on Suir'

opposite

10 – George du Noyer
ORMOND CASTLE, GROUND PLAN
1855, pencil, inscribed 'Plan of the castle of Carrick on
Suir built a.d.1565 by Thomas Butler Earl of Ormond'

(Plates 8-11 courtesy Royal Society of Antiquaries of
Ireland; photos Con Brogan)



11 – George du Noyer
 ORMOND CASTLE, THE LOOPS
 1855, pencil, inscribed 'loops in
 Thomas 8 Earl of Ormond's castle
 of Carrick on Suir, Oct 1850'

phase of building. The architectural details depicted by Cheney are more accurately drawn in the views from east and west than those in the engravings, where the orientation of some of the buildings in the lower court cannot be easily determined.

Another interesting comparison may be made with a collection of drawings executed during 1855 by George du Noyer (Plate 8). Du Noyer's drawings reveal a more antiquarian interest in the buildings, and he must have examined the structures closely to have discovered the mason's mark on a stone mullion in the earl's chamber (Plate 9), and also when he drew the ground plan to a minute scale (Plate 10). While du Noyer's views of the buildings are accurate enough, his more detailed drawings focus on features such as the 'loops' in the walls (Plate 11) and the eighteenth-century painted portraits in the entrance hall.

Overall, the Cheney images, particularly those of the west and east elevations, which are clear and concise architecturally, emphasise the building's antiquity while adding to our store of information about this evocative structure. They also confirm that decorative render was used on the exteriors so that when it was newly applied they would have appeared as gleaming white rather than the pervasive grey stone now accepted as a feature of early buildings in the Irish countryside.¹¹

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ W. Shaw Mason, *A Statistical Account or Parochial Survey of Ireland* (Dublin, 1816).
- ² Christie's, South Kensington, sale, 12th October 2005, lot 116, Edward Cheney, an album of 167 works.
- ³ Introduction to catalogue of sale, Christie's, South Kensington, sale, 12th October 2005, and *New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
- ⁴ W. Nolan, 'Patterns of living in Tipperary, 1750-1850' in William Nolan (ed.), *Tipperary History and Society* (Dublin, 1985) 296.
- ⁵ It is probable that the decorative render dates from the original sixteenth-century scheme, and some later eighteenth-century plastering has been applied over it. Remnants of sixteenth-century decorative render may still be seen to the side of the gateway in the inner court.
- ⁶ Flann McCraith, stanzas from 'Panegyric to the Earl of Ormond', *Journal of the Butler Society*, I-VI, 473.
- ⁷ For more information on this garden building, see J. Fenlon, *Ormond Castle* (Dublin, 1996; revised 2008) 56.
- ⁸ There is another, slightly later drawing of the same view by Cheney that is inscribed and dated 'Carrick July 13. 37'. Initially it appears to be a sharp and detailed image. However, the artist has omitted the west tower staircase altogether, while the proportions of the west side of the north range are too broad.
- ⁹ There are similar plasterwork panels on the interior of the oriel in the Long Gallery.
- ¹⁰ See reference to the windows of Myrtle Grove, county Cork, Tadhg O'Keefe, 'Plantation-era great houses in Munster' in Thomas Herron and Michael Potterton (eds), *Ireland in the Renaissance c.1540-1660* (Dublin, 2007) 280, and in conversation with Maurice Craig.
- ¹¹ Among other notable buildings in Ireland that have whitish render with decorative elements either in the quoins or incised details are Portuma Castle, Roscommon Castle and Burntcourt, county Tipperary.