



Charles Lanyon at Glenarm

ANNE CASEMENT

SIR CHARLES LANYON (1813-1889) HAS BEEN CALLED THE ‘FATHER OF ULSTER architecture’,¹ and is arguably the province’s best-known and most successful architect. This is primarily due to his association with such landmark Belfast buildings as the Queen’s University, the Palm House in the Botanic Gardens, and the Customs House, together with several fine country houses, particularly the home of the linen magnate Andrew Mulholland at Ballywalter Park, county Down.

Charles Lanyon was born in Eastbourne, Sussex, in 1813,² but enjoyed a long and distinguished career in Ireland following his appointment as county surveyor for Antrim when merely twenty-three years old.³ In the early years of his twenty-five-year tenure of the Antrim surveyorship, he established a significant reputation in a variety of fields. His flair for architecture was amply demonstrated by his first country house commission in Ulster – Drenagh House, county Derry, completed around 1836 for Marcus Connolly McCausland. This chaste, carefully wrought design, with its fine central hall, was his earliest essay in the Italianate style he was later to make incomparably his own.⁴

Lanyon had been trained primarily as a civil engineer, having been articled to Jacob Owen (1778-1870) during his time as clerk of works to the Royal Engineers Department in Portsmouth, and subsequently principal engineer and architect to the Board of Works in Dublin. This training enabled him to deal with other, less conventional challenges, such as those associated with the construction of the new Antrim Coast Road. Here his expertise was to be severely tested by the notoriously unstable geology and challenging topography of the coastal strip, and he was to win lasting local fame as the architect of ‘The Big Bridge’, the triple-arched, eighty-foot-high viaduct which sweeps the Coast Road majestically across the Glendun river (Plates 1, 2). Not surprisingly, Lanyon was proud of this bridge – a handsome and noble structure – completed in 1839.⁵ By 1839/40, the construction of the road was in its final stages, and Lanyon was busy with other work, most notably the

1 – *Glendun and the viaduct* (courtesy Ulster Folk and Transport Museum; photo W.A. Green, WAG 1249)



2 – *Glendun viaduct*

(courtesy Ulster Folk and Transport Museum; photo W.A. Green, WAG 2965)

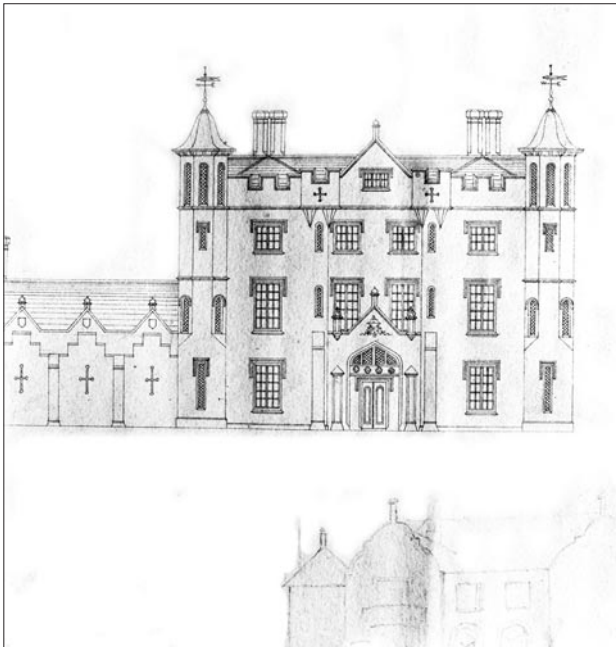
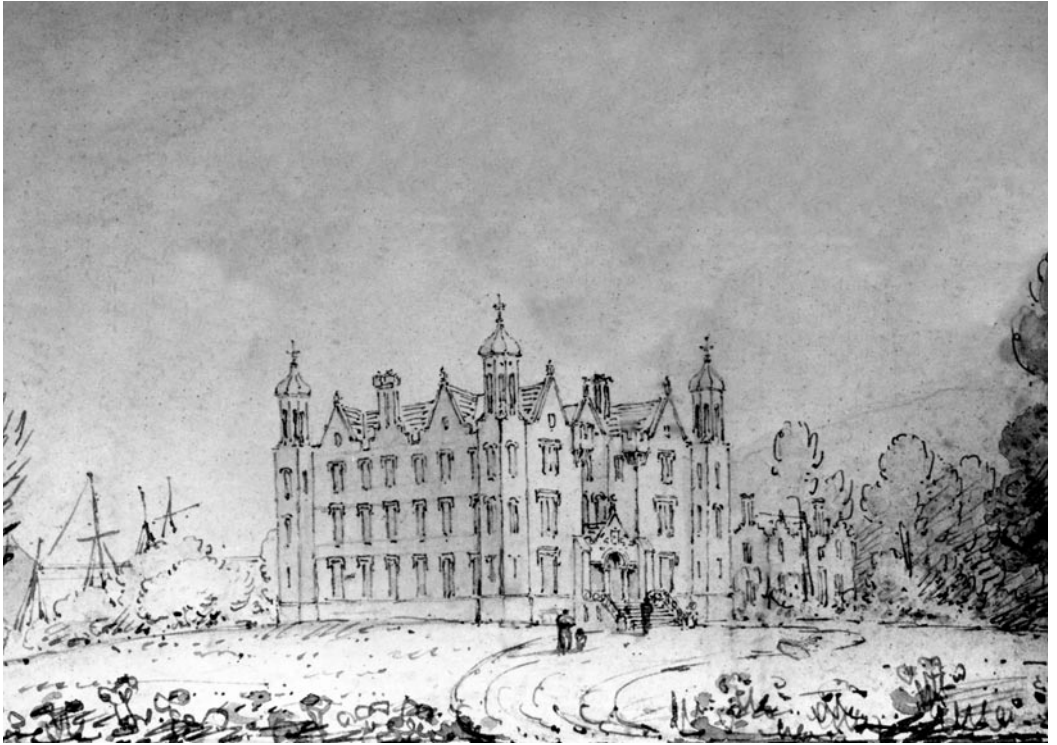
Palm House in the Belfast Botanic Gardens, one of the earliest examples of a curvilinear glass and cast-iron structure. There was also a series of commissions in counties Down and Antrim for the Church Accommodation Society, where he employed a simple, almost impoverished Gothic style.⁶ He was, as it turns out, also engaged on a project for Edmund McDonnell (né Phelps, 1779/80-1852), the occupier of Glenarm Castle, which lay directly beside the route of the Antrim Coast Road.

McDonnell was the second husband of Anne Catherine, Countess of Antrim in her own right, who had died in 1834. They had no children, and under the terms of his wife's will, Edmund retained a life interest in the bulk of her land in county Antrim, and a right of residence at Glenarm Castle. A few years after their marriage in 1817, William Vitruvius Morrison (1794-1838) produced several plans, elevations and sketches for work to the castle,⁷ which involved the remodelling of a much earlier house with an already complicated history. The original Jacobean double-pile house had been refashioned in Palladian mode around 1756 by Christopher Myers (1717-1789), who had added a pediment to the entrance front and transformed the original horizontal Tudor windows into Venetian ones, thus giving a vertical emphasis. Curved sweeps linked the main block to adjacent pavilions. It has been suggest-

ed that the insertion of a short section of crenellation on the north front, flanked by a pair of mini-bartizans, may also have occurred at this time.⁸ This Gothic element was strengthened in the early 1800s by the removal of the pavilions and curved sweeps, and the insertion of pointed arched windows on the ground and first floors and an arched entranceway on the south front, flanked by pointed sidelights. A small extension was also added to the east in the Regency style.

This was the situation inherited by Morrison, who was renowned for his mastery of the Tudor Gothic, a style which his contemporaries credited him with introducing into Ireland,⁹ and which might be expected to have had a particular appeal to a family whose lands were secured to them by Queen Elizabeth. At Glenarm, he drew on his earlier work, most notably at Miltown House, county Kerry, and proposed to throw an Elizabethan cloak over the existing building.¹⁰ Three schemes are known to have been suggested by Morrison, all including the addition of four corner towers, a porch on the south front, and a multiplicity of gables around the perimeter of the roof. Myers's pediment on the south front was to be removed, changes made to the existing fenestration, and the south-east wing remodelled and substantially extended. The evidence for a scheme involving the enlargement of the main block is provided by a lively perspective view, in pen and ink, which shows the entrance façade with the outer bays extended to create a U-shaped front, and a large porch filling the centre at ground level. Corner bartizans flank the central section, and high gables link the main block to the corner towers (Plate 3). The entrance front of this scheme is similar to Morrison's unexecuted design for the front of Miltown House (Plate 4), though at Glenarm the Tudor-arched doorway has been replaced by a more Palladian porch. One of the remaining schemes is illustrated by a single perspective view (Plate 5), whilst a number of finished design drawings exist for the other (Plate 6). Both these schemes show the house encased in a new Elizabethan or Jacobean skin, with Flemish gables and an elaborate porch projecting in the centre. The perspective view shows a Palladian-style porch, similar to that envisaged in the enlarged scheme, whilst the porch depicted in the set of design drawings offers clear evidence of Morrison's knowledge of the forms of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century English Classicism.¹¹

A sketch of the south and west fronts, executed by Anne Catherine's brother-in-law, Lord Mark Kerr (1776-1840), in 1828 (Plate 7),¹² shows that the alterations were carried out in more than one stage, and that the proposal to enlarge the house was abandoned, presumably on the grounds of cost. By this time, only the addition of the four Morrisonian corner towers and the south-east wing had been undertaken,¹³ creating a visually disconcerting, but presumably perfectly serviceable hybrid house.¹⁴ Curiously, when the work was finally completed, the designs adopted for the porch, the windows on the ground and first floors, and the chimneys differed from Morrison's proposals for Glenarm.



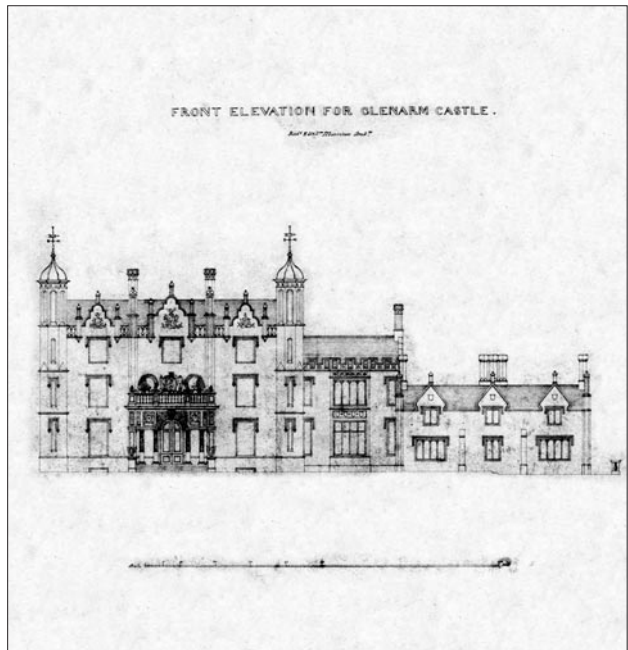
3 – William Morrison
*Untitled sketch of
Glenarm Castle*
n.d., pen and ink drawing
(courtesy Viscount Dunluce)

4 – William Morrison
*Front elevation of Miltown
House, c.1818 (unexecuted)*
(courtesy Irish Architectural
Archive)



5 – William Morrison
A FIRST DESIGN FOR
IMPROVEMENT & RESTORATION
OF GLENARM CASTLE
n.d., wash drawing
(courtesy PRONI)

6 – Richard and William
Morrison, FRONT ELEVATION
FOR GLENARM CASTLE
c.1821-22 (courtesy PRONI)





7 – Lord Mark Kerr, GLENARM CASTLE S&W FRONTS
1828, wash drawing, 11.5 x 18 cm (courtesy Hector McDonnell)

A variety of factors, such as the availability of funds,¹⁵ and the reorganisation of the estate following Anne Catherine's death in 1834,¹⁶ probably contributed to the postponement of the project. Such factors, together with evidence gleaned from contemporary written accounts and drawings, have led to the suggestion that the remodelling might not have been completed until the 1840s,¹⁷ substantially later than was previously thought.¹⁸

Following further investigation of the Antrim Papers, it is now possible to date the commission for the completion of the work to 1840, and to identify the architect involved not as either William or Sir Richard Morrison, but Charles Lanyon.¹⁹ An agreement, dated 27th February, between Edmund McDonnell and three Belfast builders, John Robinson,²⁰ Thomas Kelly and John Brown, sets out clearly the terms and conditions of the contract agreed between these parties. This relates to the expenditure by 1st July 1840 of £1,020 on a scheme of works for the castle in the Gothic style, all the stone to be sourced from the Pollockshaws quarry in Scotland.²¹ Detailed specifications are provided for the stonework cladding of the south front and the mullioned windows on its ground floor, together with the porch facing this front, including the perforated balustrade over the arches, the several pin-

nacles or turrets on the point of the gables, and external and internal detailing. Reference is also made to the finishing of the several gables built on the north and west fronts, and the Gothic windows on their ground floors – to be of cut stone; and to the chimney shafts on each elevation – to be of stone perforated with a circular hole thirteen inches in diameter. The details specified concur with those shown on William Lawrence’s late-nineteenth-century photograph of the south and west fronts (Plate 8), and that still exist today.²² The appearance of the porch on an 1844 water-colour of the house has been taken to indicate that originally it was open.²³ No glazing contract survives which would settle this point.

Lanyon’s role in relation to the proposed work at Glenarm Castle is apparent in the wording of the 1840 agreement which states that ‘the said Edmund McDonnell hath appointed Charles Lanyon Esquire to be the Architect to superintend the said Works, during the pleasure of said Edmund McDonnell’. Despite the absence of any correspondence between Lanyon and McDonnell, or signed drawings by Lanyon for Glenarm Castle, the architect’s specific connection with the works set out in the 1840 agreement strongly suggests that he was also responsible for their design and for providing ‘such full size drawings as may be furnished’, as described in this agreement – for instance, for the mouldings on the south front. At this time, Lanyon is unlikely to have had architectural assistants capable of undertaking such work, as was later the case.

There is also a second, subsidiary contract between Edmund McDonnell and James Cameron for the expenditure of £217 17s 6d by 1st July 1840 on a carefully detailed scheme of improvements to the roof, involving re-slating with Bangor blue slates and work to the gutters and flashings. Again the architect in charge is Charles Lanyon.²⁴

By 1840, almost twenty years had elapsed since William Morrison drew up proposals for the castle. The emergence of firm evidence that his scheme was not completed within his lifetime poses the question as to whether procrastination on the part of the family was partly due to their dissatisfaction with some of his proposals, perhaps especially for the porch. With Morrison out of the picture, Edmund McDonnell was completely at liberty to select another architect. He may have been drawn to Lanyon not only because he could not fail to be aware of the talent and capabilities of this aspiring young county surveyor,²⁵ but also because they almost certainly shared an affinity for Italian architecture.²⁶ Lanyon has been credited with work to the court house in Glenarm, carried out in 1838 under the auspices of the Antrim Grand Jury, and is said to have carried out several private commissions for Jury members in the 1840s.²⁷ Edmund McDonnell had served as foreman of the aforesaid Jury, and it is interesting to contemplate whether he and Lanyon conspired together to grace the Glenarm court house with an Italianate campanile.²⁸

The design of Glenarm Castle, as completed under Lanyon’s supervision in

the 1840s, was clearly influenced by some of Morrison's unexecuted proposals for Glenarm, especially for the porch and stepped gables. The porch reflects elements of two of Morrison's schemes, most notably in the incorporation of Tuscan-style pillars with partly fluted shafts. Lanyon would have been constrained by the need to integrate any new work with the existing Morrison features. That he succeeded in his task may be judged from the fact that no commentator appears to have suggested that the porch, for instance, might be a substantially later addition by an architect other than the Morrises. Yet stylistic evidence to support such a contention is not hard to find. For instance, the string courses at the bases of the corner towers do not align with those at the bases of the slender corner shafts of the porch, and the string courses at the bases of the towers supporting the corner turrets do not align with the string courses at the bases of the finials crowning the corner shafts of the porch. Though Charles Lanyon was never a committed student of medieval architecture, his early Gothic churches are said to display some real knowledge of historical detail.²⁹ Certainly, at Glenarm, the design of the Gothic tracery which was inserted into the ground floor windows – a mullioned shaft surmounted by a cusped quatrefoil – is convincingly neo-medieval.

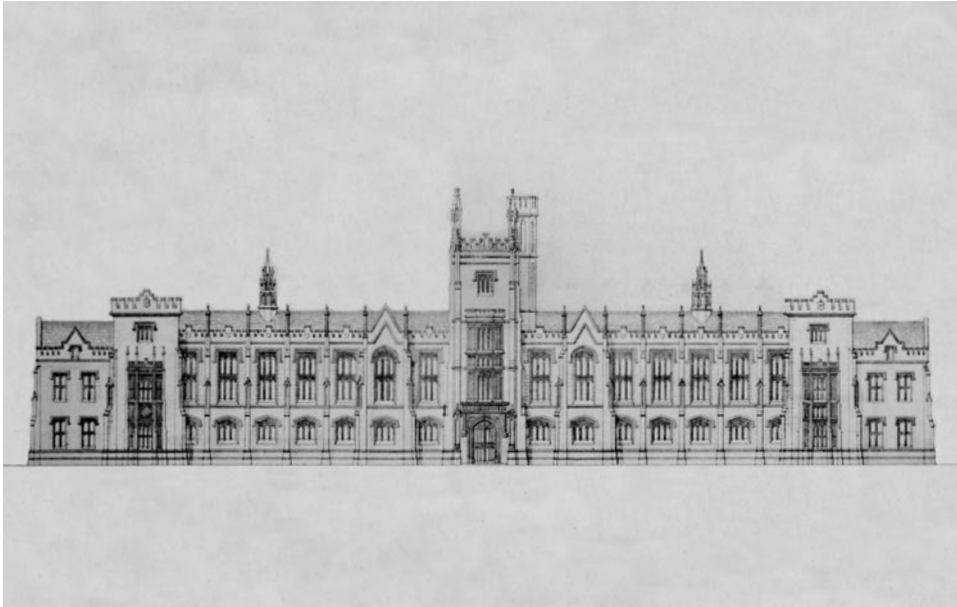
To conclude, there is now strong evidence to suggest that the final appearance of Glenarm Castle in the





8 – Glenarm Castle

late nineteenth-century (courtesy National Library of Ireland)



9 – *Charles Lanyon, front elevation of Queen's College, Belfast*
 (courtesy Northern Ireland Environment Agency)

1840s was due as much to the intervention of Charles Lanyon as to William Vitruvius Morrison. In such a case, Glenarm has a claim to be considered Lanyon's earliest essay in a Tudor revival style. It is this style that he would later elaborate and refine in a variety of commissions, ranging from schools at Whitehouse and Craigs, almshouses at Carrickfergus, the courthouse at Ballymena (all in county Antrim), and the Institute for the Deaf and Dumb and Blind in Belfast. This manner reaches its apogee in the Queen's College (later the Queen's University of Belfast) (Plate 9), which must be considered as the high point of early Victorian architectural achievement in Belfast.³⁰

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Professor Alistair Rowan for his assistance in the preparation of this article, Viscount Dunluce for showing me the Morrison sketch in his possession, and Philip Smith of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency for discussing the implications of the Ordnance Survey valuations with me. Also Frederick O'Dwyer for information relating to the building history of Glenarm Castle, and Ann Martha Rowan and the staff of the Irish Architectural Archive for being their wonderfully helpful selves. My thanks are also due to Viscount Dunluce, Hector McDonnell, Deputy Keeper of the Records at PRONI, National Library of Ireland, Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Irish Architectural Archive and Northern Ireland Environment Agency for permission to reproduce photographs and drawings in their possession.

ENDNOTES

The following abbreviation is used:

PRONI Public Record Office Northern Ireland, Belfast

- ¹ Paul Larmour, 'The father of Ulster architecture', *Perspective*, May-June 1994, 53-54.
- ² Paul Larmour, 'Sir Charles Lanyon', *Irish Arts Review Yearbook, 1989-90*, 200-06. This account has been used throughout this article as the authoritative source of material pertaining to Lanyon's life and career.
- ³ Prior to this he briefly held the county surveyorship of Kildare, but only one possible commission dates from this time.
- ⁴ Alistair Rowan, 'Ballywalter Park, Co. Down – I and II', *Country Life*, CXLI, 2 and 9 March 1967, 456-60, 516-20; 'Palazzo Mulholland' in Peter Rankin (ed.), *Ballywalter Park* (Belfast, 1985) 13-21; and *North West Ulster: The counties of Londonderry, Donegal, Fermanagh, and Tyrone* (Harmondsworth, 1979) 249-50.
- ⁵ C.E.B. Brett, *Buildings of County Antrim* (Belfast, 1996) 276.
- ⁶ Larmour, 'Sir Charles Lanyon', 202, notes that so long as Lanyon carried out his county duties efficiently, there could be no objection to him undertaking private commissions.
- ⁷ PRONI, D/3560/3/1-7, c.1825; D/3560/1, 1811-50, album entitled 'Glenarm Castle and its Vicinity' and endorsed 'Lady Louisa Kerr, 1835' and 'Lady Letitia MacGregor, 1870': D/3560/1/38. Terence Reeves-Smyth, 'Jewel of the Glen', *Irish Arts Review*, 23, no. 3, Winter 2006, 126-31: 130 notes that final drawings were prepared in 1821-22 and exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1823.
- ⁸ For more details, see Frederick O'Dwyer, 'In search of Christopher Myers: pioneer of the Gothic revival in Ireland' in Michael McCarthy and Karina O'Neill (eds), *Studies in the Gothic Revival* (Dublin, 2008) 51-111: 66-69.
- ⁹ John Morrison, 'Life of the Late William Vitruvius Morrison, of Dublin, Architect' in John Weale (ed.), *Quarterly Papers on Architecture*, I, part 1, paper 3 (1844) 1-8: 4.
- ¹⁰ Terence Reeves-Smyth, 'An Elizabethan Revival House in Ireland. Edward Blore and the Building of Crom, Co Fermanagh', in Terence Reeves-Smyth and Richard Oram (eds), *Avenues to the Past: essays presented to Sir Charles Brett on his 75th year* (Belfast, 2003) 321-52: 327, notes that by the 1820s the term Elizabethan embraced 'Tudor Gothic', 'Elizabethan' and 'Jacobean' revivals, all of which often tended to merge into one another.

- ¹¹ PRONI, D/3560/3/1, c.1825, Front elevation for Glenarm Castle by Richard and William Morrison; PRONI, D/3560/1, 1811-50, album entitled 'Glenarm Castle and its Vicinity' and endorsed 'Lady Louisa Kerr, 1835' and 'Lady Letitia MacGregor, 1870': D/3560/1/38, sepia watercolour 'A first design for Improvement & Restoration of Glenarm Castle, by William Morrison, Esq. Archt.' The sketch showing the enlarged scheme is in the private collection of Viscount Dunluce. Although its authorship is unclear, it can be attributed to W.V. Morrison on stylistic grounds.
- ¹² M.R. Kerr, 'Scratches from Nature', 3 vols, unpublished MSS, II, Oct 1828.
- ¹³ The design of the towers is similar in all three Morrison schemes, and reflects the design of the towers as built, but the design of the south-east wing is different in each scheme, and the design as built accords with none of Morrison's proposals.
- ¹⁴ For a fuller discussion of the building history of the castle, see Anne Casement, 'The Irish world of Lord Mark Kerr...', *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, IX (Dublin, 2006) 40-85, 56-65; Reeves-Smyth, 'Jewel of the Glen'.
- ¹⁵ Which might have been expected to improve following the opening up of trade and communication resulting from the construction of the new coast road, which was completed in 1842.
- ¹⁶ She was succeeded by her sister Charlotte, who died the following year, resulting in further disruption.
- ¹⁷ The first known depiction of the castle with the present porch and without the Myers pediment is dated 1844 (see note 23), and no accounts written prior to this date have been found which specifically mention either the porch or the gables on the main block of the castle. For further details, see Casement, 'The Irish world of Lord Mark Kerr...', 40-85: 62-63.
- ¹⁸ Reeves-Smyth, 'Jewel of the Glen, 130, gives the date of execution as 1831-32. O'Dwyer, 'In search of Christopher Myers', 69, acknowledges the possibility that the work may have been completed substantially later than previously thought, with the caveat that, if this were the case, operations would have been supervised by William Morrison's father, Sir Richard Morrison, William having died in 1838.
- ¹⁹ PRONI, Earl of Antrim Estate Papers, D/2977, D/2977/43, Glenarm Castle, 1840-1931: D/2977/43/1, Edmund McDonnell and John Robinson, et al, 1840.
- ²⁰ Probably the John Robinson who, according to the Irish Architectural Archive, *Dictionary of Irish Architects* (ww.dia.ie), appears to have remodelled Rockhill House, county Donegal for John Vandeleur Stewart in 1853, though Rowan, 'Palazzo Mulholland', 20, attributes this work to Charles Lanyon.
- ²¹ The agreement specifies the Pollockshams quarry in Scotland, but this is almost certainly a misspelling of Pollockshaws. Residents of Pollockshaws worked the fine sandstone in the Giffnock quarries, which was extensively used for building work in nearby Glasgow. Trade also took place with Belfast. The tender price excluded the cost of transporting the stone from Scotland, which was to be borne by McDonnell. The choice of Pollockshaws may have been influenced by the need to blend the new stonework with that of the existing corner towers.
- ²² PRONI, Lawrence Photographs, T/1248: T/2418/2/323, late nineteenth-century photograph of Glenarm Castle, Co Antrim, 2321 W.L.
- ²³ PRONI, D/3560/1 1811-50, album entitled 'Glenarm Castle and its Vicinity' and endorsed 'Lady Louisa Kerr, 1835' and 'Lady Letitia MacGregor, 1870': D/3560/1/39, sepia watercolour of Glenarm Castle by Lady Louisa Tighe, 1844; Reeves-Smyth, 'Jewel of the Glen', 128. If the porch had been open, and thus not a habitable room, it might explain why it was not itemised

in the 1859 valuation, despite the fact that the valuation sheet includes a sketch plan of the ground floor of the castle, where the porch is specifically identified. A porch of this size would customarily have been valued separately. The failure to do so might support the idea that it was unglazed if it were not for the fact that the corner towers were valued separately, and they were filled with rubble and thus also uninhabitable. No later nineteenth-century valuations exist to act as a comparison for a period when the porch is known to have been glazed.

- ²⁴ PRONI, Earl of Antrim Estate Papers, D/2977, D/2977/43, Glenarm Castle, 1840-1931: D/2977/43/2, articles of agreement between Edmund McDonnell and James Cameron..., 1840.
- ²⁵ The line of the new coast road immediately east of Glenarm traversed a former deer park belonging to the McDonnell family, and construction involved blasting back the chalk headland to create a platform wide enough to accommodate the road, and high enough to prevent it being washed away.
- ²⁶ Edmund McDonnell left Glenarm for Italy in 1850, and died and was buried in Rome in 1852.
- ²⁷ Larmour, 'Sir Charles Lanyon', 202.
- ²⁸ This campanile resembles that added by the 9th Earl of Antrim in 1852 to the former market house in the centre of Ballymoney, county Antrim, which W.D. Girvan in *Historic Buildings, Groups of Buildings, Areas of Architectural Importance in North Antrim* (Belfast, 1971-72) 38, likens to the clock tower in the stable yard at nearby Dundarave, also by Lanyon.
- ²⁹ Larmour, 'Sir Charles Lanyon', 203.
- ³⁰ *ibid.*, 203-04.