The churches of Frederick Darley Jnr: identification and attribution

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HISTORICAL RECORDS AND BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVES GIVE ONLY A GENERAL AND incomplete account of the life of the nineteenth-century architect Frederick Darley Jnr (1798-1872). Although his most significant buildings are reasonably well known and prominently located, the fullest extent of his output, and most particularly his ecclesiastical output, has hitherto been little recognised or, in a number of cases, even identified. The purpose of this article is to give a brief account of the life of Frederick Darley Jnr and to outline his known body of church design work. In the absence of supporting archival material, further stylistic attributions are made by comparisons with his known body of work and by an evaluation of the work of his contemporaries. Having said that, many of Darley's churches can be reliably attributed through architects' drawings, church vestry minutes and signed correspondence. Finally, some additional unattributed churches or church extensions, most notably three by John Semple (1801-1882), can now also be identified.[1]

Frederick Darley Jnr was born in Dublin in 1798, one of twenty children and the second eldest surviving son of Frederick Darley (1764-1841), a builder and developer; he was styled Frederick Darley Jnr until the death of his father in 1841. The extended Darley clan was a building, quarry-owning and brewing family, intermarried with the Guinness family: Frederick junior was the grandson of Arthur Guinness, founder of the St James's Gate brewery. The Darleys were prominent in speculative building on the north side of Dublin.[2] Frederick Darley Snr built some of the houses on Mountjoy Square and was involved with the development of Merrion Square;[3] he was also a freeman of the city of Dublin, a member of the Guild of Merchants, and had been a fellow school pupil of Theobold Wolfe Tone. Active in the affairs of Dublin Corporation for many years, he became joint sheriff in 1798, the year of his son Frederick's birth. Two years later he was made Master of the City Works and alderman, before eventually becoming Lord Mayor

1 – Kilberry Church, county Kildare (1833-36), a church still very much in the 'First Fruits' style
(all photos and drawings by the author unless otherwise stated)

in 1808-09.[4] These numerous social and professional associations forged by Frederick senior would later prove extremely beneficial in helping to establish his son's career as an architect and securing prestigious and lucrative commissions for his practice.

The well-connected Frederick senior saw to it that his sons were given a good start in life; four of them attended Trinity College Dublin, studying Divinity and Law. Frederick junior (hereafter, Darley) was sent, at age fourteen, to serve his time in the office of Francis Johnston (1760-1829) in The Board of Works, who by then had firmly established himself as one of the foremost architects in Ireland, being responsible for numerous prestigious projects in Dublin, such as the General Post Office, Nelson's Pillar, St George's Church on Hardwicke Place, and both the Chapel Royal and Record Tower in Dublin Castle. Johnston was one of the chief facilitators of the Gothic revival in Ireland, so Darley's time in Johnston's office would have been highly important and formative for his own future professional career and particularly for his later ecclesiastical design work.

By the 1820s, Darley's career was firmly established, and while still in his mid-twenties he had already completed significant projects in Dublin, such as the Merchant's Hall and the library at the King's Inns. Darley's appointment for a ten-year period as architect to the Ecclesiastical Commission for the Dublin Province of the Church of Ireland followed in 1833. This commenced at a time of transition, as the Board of First Fruits metamorphosed into the Ecclesiastical Commission following the passing of the Church Temporalities (Ireland) Act of 1833. He was designing new churches and additions to existing churches at a time when the Anglican Church in Ireland had just begun its journey on the road to eventual disestablishment, a transition that was to have a profound effect on the churches he and his contemporaries would later design.

Of the thirty church-building designs in which Darley's involvement can be reasonably established, just a little over a quarter have come down to us in their original, externally unaltered condition. The majority have been extended or otherwise structurally altered in the period since his death, and all of the interiors have had further alterations since the mid-nineteenth century (Plate 2). This wholesale liturgical rearrangement of church interiors was due to a gradually softening attitude in Ireland to high-church ritual and a shift back to the indigenous seventeenth-century roots of the Church of Ireland – what Alexandra Walsham has called 'a mellowing of opinion towards the tangible residues of the Old Religion'.[5] The revival was greatly influenced by the impact of a movement of High Church Anglicans centered on the University of Oxford, known as the 'Oxford Movement', and by the reforming Archbishop Brodrick of Cashel and Emly.[6] Other clergy, such as John Webb, and the layman Alexander Knox, were also influential in bringing about change.[7] The rapidly growing influence of the Cambridge Camden Society, a learned collective of Cambridge undergraduates formed in 1839 to promote the study of Gothic architecture and ecclesiastical antiques, was also felt in Ireland. In response to these developments, an ever-increasing number of church-building alterations were being undertaken by mid-century, the pace of which accelerated as the century wore on.[8]

As noted above, Darley was involved with the building or alteration of thirty

2 – Post-1833 map of the Dublin Province of the Church of Ireland showing the locations of the churches designed by Frederick Darley Jnr

churches during his ten-year term as architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners (see Appendix).[9] In later years he continued to complete projects for the Commissioners, the last being an extension in 1852 to St Stephen's, Mount Street Upper, Dublin.[10] Twenty-seven of these are either complete designs by Darley or are otherwise major interventions, such as the addition of transepts, as at Balbriggan, county Dublin, or Killeskey, county Wicklow. The church at Eglish, county Offaly, appears to be a shared design with Joseph Welland (1798-1860), architect to the Board of First Fruits and subsequently to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.[11] Despite being identical to Darley's nearby Seirkieran, Welland may have been the sole author of Eglish; his is the only name appended to the drawings in the archive of the Representative Church Body (RCB) library.[12] The remaining two – St John's, Sandymount (1850) and [old] St James's, Dublin (demolished and replaced in 1861 by the present church building) – are churches on which Darley carried

out renovations, repairs, or otherwise supervised work, but are not to his design. Fortunately, only two of these churches have been lost – the Bethesda Chapel on Granby Row and St James's. Apart from Caragh, county Kildare, and Eglish, all are still in use, either for religious worship or, in the case of Kilpatrick, county Wexford, as a multidenominational community hall.

STYLISTIC CONCURRENCES: DARLEY, JOHNSTON, SEMPLE AND WELLAND

That the architects Francis Johnston, John Semple and Joseph Welland had a strong influence on the work of Frederick Darley is self-evident.[13] However, it must also be said that this was not simply an uncritical replication, on Darley's part, of their work. He certainly absorbed it, and, on occasion, directly copied details, but his overall body of work still has his own unmistakable signature – an amalgam of the Perpendicular Gothic, the Jacobean and the early-medieval Irish. It is inevitable that Darley's work would echo that of Johnston; Darley had, after all, learned his profession in Johnston's office, in the course of which he would have served his time as a draughtsman on a number of Johnston's projects. It is also possible that Darley's own particular design ideas are evident in Johnston's buildings, it being perfectly feasible that a promising young architect be given design responsibility for some of the less critical elements of a project. St Catherine's, Tullamore, county Offaly (1808-18), is such a case in point. A direct correlation between the modelling of the corner buttresses and pinnacles on St Catherine's and those used later on Darley's own churches, such as St Laurence's, Chapelizod, is readily apparent. Decorative pinnacles or turrets, often disguising chimney flues, are a recurring motif on Darley's buildings and appear on his churches, schools and country house designs. Coolbawn House,[14] county Wexford (Plate 3), in particular,

3 – Coolbawn House, county Wexford (1820-45), despite its ruinous state, still displays its full complement of the 'pepper-mill' type pinnacles favoured by Darley

is liberally festooned with pinnacles of a design very similar to those to be found on his churches at Finglas, county Dublin, and Lorum, county Carlow; likewise his model schools at Athy, county Kildare, and Glengarra, county Waterford.[15] Considering that Coolbawn House was begun in 1820 and took twenty-five years to build, it is hardly surprising that similar details should crop up in the churches that Darley was building during that same period.[16] St Matthias, Killiney (1835), is one of Darley's earliest churches for the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, and has pinnacles on the bell tower that bear a remarkable similarity to the designs of Semple, Darley's immediate predecessor in the Dublin Province (Plate 11d). Semple had earlier used this particular pinnacle pattern in his designs for the Church of the Holy and Undivided Trinity, Rathmines, Dublin (1828), and at Ballynafagh, county Kildare (1831). So, although Darley initially utilised the Johnston and Semple pinnacle patterns in his early work, he would later develop the motif, with variations, in his own way, as at Coolbawn and Carnew, county Wicklow, and in the churches at Finglas and Mullinacuffe, among others.

SCRIPTURAL, MEDIEVAL AND POLITICAL INFLUENCES

If the churches of Semple echo what has been described as the 'austere quality' of the ancient Irish stone-roofed churches,[17] then Darley's designs present a restrained and refined version of that same heritage, utilised, no less than those of his predecessor, to lend legitimacy to the claims of the Protestant church as the rightful heirs of ancient Irish ecclesiastical roots. As Semple borrowed from the simple form and construction methods of early Irish ecclesiastical building, drawing inspiration in particular from double-vaulted stone-roofed churches such as St Doulagh's, Balgriffin, county Dublin, or Cormac's Chapel, Cashel, Co Tipperary, so Darley, inspired by Semple's lead, utilised a similarly restricted palette of elements from that same early medieval heritage. But whereas Cormac Allen convincingly postulates that Semple had set out to replicate the layout of the Solomonic temple as related in scripture, the source of Darley's inspiration – scriptural exegesis or design plagiarism – is not certain. Whichever the case, the outcome was the same: as Allen asserts, 'an architectural form which embodies the essential characteristics of the Temple of Solomon can be interpreted as giving material expression to the legitimacy and moral authority claimed by Church and Monarchy alike.'[18] To be fair to Darley, there is perhaps some evidence for a more deliberate use of symbolism in his church designs, and one that is not simply derivative of the schemes of his predecessor. Elements of his design for the Trinity Church in Gardiner Street, Dublin (1839), for example, allude to the Holy triumvirate in a number of ways: three entrance doors, of which the central is highest; groups of three windows between the corner projecting bays to Gardiner Street; and three ceiling roses over the nave.

A particular example of this medieval influence on Darley's work is seen in his extensive use of the three- or four-light switch-line (or intersecting) tracery-pattern win-

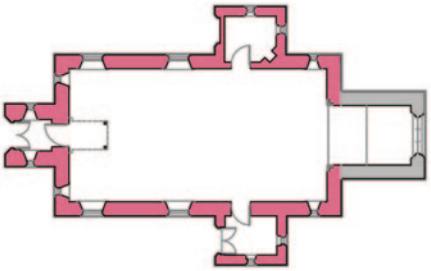
dow, typically as the principal window to the sanctuary. This is a very characteristic tracery pattern used throughout the medieval period in Ireland. Michael O'Neill suggests that it was revived in the late-medieval era by Irish stone masons, precisely because it more readily and satisfactorily solves the problem of the resolution of the tracery arrangement at the top of the three- or four-light window type.[19]

In the wake of the Church Temporalities (Ireland) Act of 1833, which halved the number of bishoprics and archbishoprics in Ireland and left a much tighter fiscal environment in which the Anglican Church could operate, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners found themselves having to make considerable savings in their building and building-maintenance programmes.[20] The work of their predecessors, the Board of First Fruits, had already been curtailed when funding from parliament, which had initially increased on the passing of the Act of Union (1800) and the Church Building Act of 1808, was discontinued altogether in 1823.[21] The most immediate effect on church-building is apparent in the simplification of the plan-form. Accordingly, architects, such as Semple, Welland and Darley moved away from the conventional and almost universal layout of the 'hall-and-tower' model, of which there are literally hundreds of examples throughout Ireland.[22] This drive to simplify, and perhaps standardise, after a period of flux in which the altar came gradually to take precedence over the pulpit in the liturgical arrangement of church interiors, is examined in more detail below.

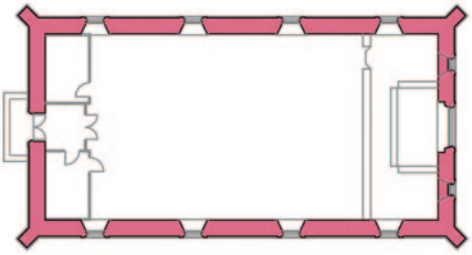
TYPOLOGIES

Discounting his two neoclassical Dublin churches (Trinity and Bethesda), the extension of St Stephen's, Mount Street Upper, and the additions to earlier First Fruits churches at Balbriggan, Killeskey and Kilmeague, county Kildare, the bulk of Darley's church designs can be conveniently grouped into three essential types, here categorised as formative, standard and T-plan, the second one, as the term suggests, being the most common (Plate 4). The deceptively simple form of Darley's plain or standard church needs to be viewed in light of the model of the early Irish stone church. Both the presence of clasping or side-projecting buttresses to the front façade and the simple rectangular plan-form of this type owes more to the early Irish stone church than a mere mimicking of their form. Tomás Ó Carragáin maintains that 'the singular design feature of Irish churches is the monumentalisation of their corners in the form of antae' – referring to the slightly projecting piers, in the form of columns or pilasters, which terminate the walls of a temple naos or chamber – and proposes that 'an interest in the cosmological connotations of the quadrangle prompted the introduction of antae to

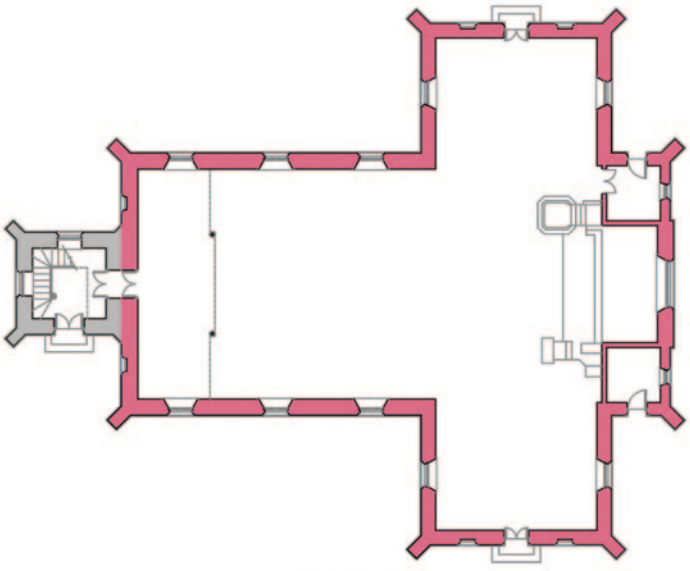
4 – Examples of the three principal building types into which the majority of Darley's churches may be conveniently grouped – formative, standard and T-plan
(from top:) 4a, Cloghleagh, county Wicklow; 4b, Mullinacuffe, county Wicklow; 4c, Athy, county Kildare



Cloghleagh - 1834
(Formative)



Mullinacuffe - 1844
(Standard)



Athy - 1840-41
(T-plan)

5 – Glendalough Cathedral, county Wicklow, tenth-century west façade, with antae typical of the period

opposite

6 – Mullinacuffe church, Shillelagh, county Wicklow (1844), the standard Darley rural model

7 – St Mary's (Dunleckney), Bagenalstown, county Carlow (1841), one of only two T-plan churches that Darley would build, the other being Athy, county Kildare (also 1841)

Ireland' (Plate 5). He continues: 'It does at least seem likely that this interest contributed to the appeal of antae and discouraged the addition of extra cells that would compromise this sacred form.'[23] That Darley went to considerable lengths to maintain an uncompromised rectangular plan-form, complete with clasping buttresses as antae-like corner projections and placing vestry and storeroom as partitioned-off vestibules within the overall building envelope – rather than as built-on additions to the side or rear – does suggest a deliberate intent, albeit one with an underlying economic imperative (Plates 4b, 6).

Ballinatone, Cloghleagh (Plate 4a), Donard (all county Wicklow), Kilberry, county Kildare, and Killiney all belong to a group of what are best described as the 'formative' Darley church, which draw heavily on the classic, if somewhat plain, First Fruits 'Gothick' hall-and-tower model (Plate 1). Nevertheless, Donard aside, Ballinatone, Cloghleagh, Kilberry, and possibly Killiney (before the addition of John William Welland's transepts of about 1870), exhibit a design refinement not typically found in the First Fruits model – that is, two small, symmetrically arranged, multipurpose wings which serve alternately as entrance porch and vestry (Kilberry), as vestry and storeroom (Cloghleagh), or as transepts-in-miniature (Ballinatone). Where such adjuncts are found on earlier First Fruits churches, a less rigidly symmetrical plan-form was the more usual outcome, typically with a vestry to one side only, or alternatively a single transept with a vestry tucked-in alongside.

In the taxonomy of Darley's churches, what might initially be thought of as cruci-

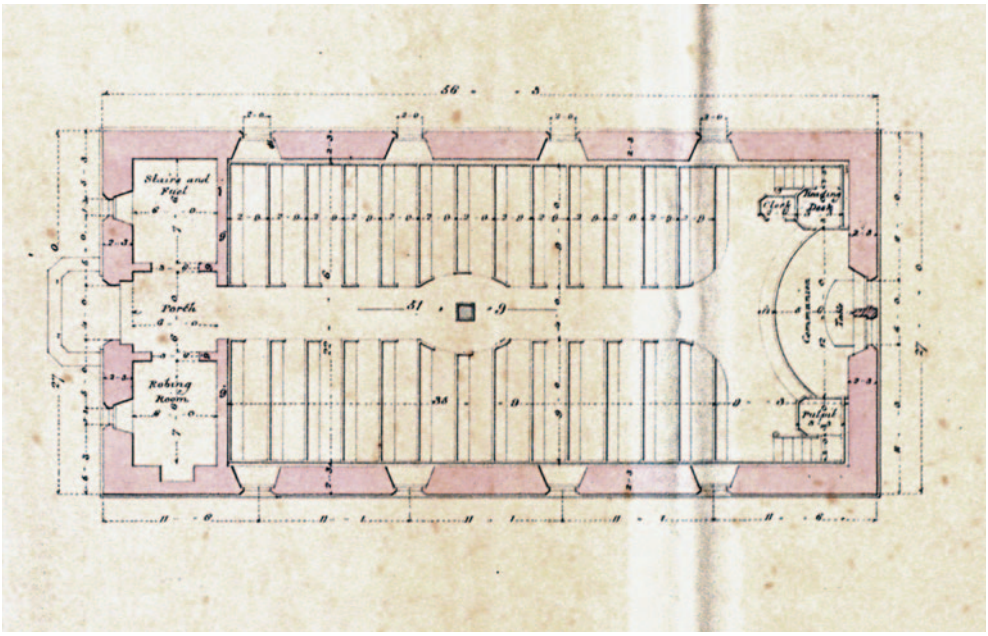
form plan-shape types, are seen, upon closer inspection, to fall outside of that category. While the elements of nave and transepts are present, the projecting chancel which would normally complete that typological form is only barely expressed, as at Athy (Plate 4c), Bagenalstown, and in Darley's original design for Carnew, all of which are much closer in outline to the T-plan or tau-cross shape (Plate 7). This layout has been described as 'a specifically Protestant reaction to the traditional nave, transepts and chancel of the medieval cruciform plan'; the 'ritualistic choir' is replaced by a flat wall or, in Darley's designs, by a half-bay recess, and 'the church becomes a "T" with three non-hierarchical wings focused on a central lectern and communion table.'[24]

In the absence of original records, the churches of Ballinatone, Cloghleagh, Donard and Kilberry are attributed to Darley on grounds of style, time frame and location. But equally, if these churches are not by him, then who are they by?[25] Who else would be designing churches in Darley's district during his period of tenure and in the First Fruits style characteristic of his early phase? Certainly, churches designed by other architects were built within the Dublin Province during Darley's term of office, but most of these can be reliably attributed to particular individuals, or are sufficiently distinct in style and detailing not to be mistaken for Darley's work. An alternative explanation of course is simply that these four churches are the work of other unnamed architects working under Darley, with Darley occupying the lead role and having input into, and final approval of, the designs.

STANDARDISATION AND JOSEPH WELLAND

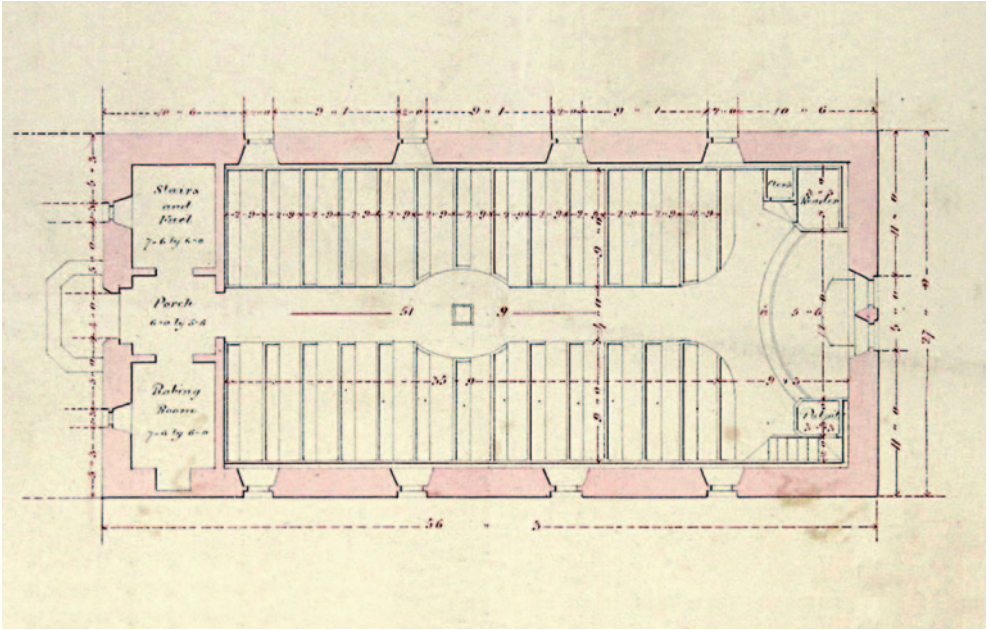
The designs of that most prolific of church architects, Joseph Welland, would also have a great influence on Darley's work and on church design in general in Ireland. Welland was architect for the Ecclesiastical Province of Tuam during Darley's tenure in the Dublin Province, and was later given sole responsibility by the Commissioners for the whole of Ireland. Designing over a hundred churches and carrying out alterations to many more, in their quality and ubiquity his designs were to have a considerable impact on those of his contemporaries.

An examination of the drawings for Eglish and Seirkieran quickly reveal Darley's debt to the designs of Welland, not just for Seirkieran itself, but in the direction that Darley's own standard-model design would take thereafter. The floor plans of Eglish and Seirkieran (Plates 8, 9) are identical, down to the figured dimensions, and there can be no question that one is a copy of the other. The finished buildings are also nearly indistinguishable from each other; both are four-bay, single-cell churches with a bellcote, but without tower, chancel or vestry extensions and with only a minute difference in the overall length between the two.[26] That Seirkieran is a copy of Eglish, rather than the other way around, is further confirmed by the presence of a pronounced batter, or upwardly receding wall incline, to the base of both churches. This is very much a Welland take on



8 – Ground-floor plan of Seirkieran, county Offaly (1839), by Darley
(© Representative Church Body library, fol. 24)

9 – Ground-floor plan of Eglish, county Offaly (1839), by Joseph Welland
(© Representative Church Body library, fol. 23)



a traditional medieval detail, and one that, Seirkieran aside, never appears on any other church by Darley. Darley favoured a pronounced vertical plinth base, projecting 45mm to 75mm beyond the line of the wall-face above. It is, of course, possible that Darley had some input into the design of Eglish, but without further documentary evidence a definitive attribution must remain elusive. What may be said with certainty is that Welland was definitely involved with the design of Eglish, and Darley with Seirkieran. Of course, it may simply have been the case that the Commissioners' required their architects' to use reissued drawings by way of economy, and there was no direct communication between the two men.

The basic three- or four-bay church with western bellcote, refined by Joseph Welland, James Pain and others working for the Board and the Commissioners in the 1830s,[27] was adopted and further refined by Darley during his term, and marked a move away from the ubiquitous hall-and-tower model still in vogue in Anglican church architecture at the time. Two of Welland's churches in this mode, at Kilkenny West, county Westmeath, and Loughcrew, county Meath, serve as fine examples of the type.[28] Alistair Rowan makes a good case for Welland as being the 'driving force that established the architectural style of the Church of Ireland in the early Victorian age'. He continues,

> [t]here is no county in Ireland where his work, or the work of his office and clerks, is not seen. As tastes in the pattern of worship changed, Welland added porches, robbing rooms, chancels, planned new side-aisles, replaced windows, made space for organs ... It thus came about that a standard type of furnishing and finish was to be encountered throughout the Church of Ireland which, like the arrangements which characterized the buildings of a particular Order in the Middle Ages – Augustinian, Benedictine, Cistercian or Franciscan – or the rooms and planning of luxury hotel chains today, spoke of the norms and standard expectations of their time.[29]

Consequently, with such a commonly used and approved model, there was perhaps little freedom of design expression left to the likes of Darley, the borders of specification and taste being dictated by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Semple had also employed a version of the basic three-bay nave with bellcote model a little earlier, at Grangeorman, Dublin (1824-28)[30] and at Tipperkevin, county Kildare (1824-30),[31] but whether Welland was taking his cue from these two Semple examples or was acting solely on instructions from the Board is not clear.

The Board of First Fruits, and later the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, had, as Akenson states, 'served as a dispenser of money for church building and glebe construction, and as a standardizer of financial practices and of certain ecclesiastical practices'.[32] In the process, these bodies had developed a standard set of material specifications for their church buildings in the harsher fiscal climate imposed by the cessation of direct funding from parliament in 1823, and by the passing of the Temporalities Act of 1833. The precise details of what occurred were lost in the Public Records Office fire of 1922. As a

result, it is no longer possible to ascertain to what degree an architect like Darley would have been given design autonomy by the Commissioners, or how rigidly he or his colleagues might have had to adhere to standard specifications; certainly, a degree of standardisation was being imposed, but determining how much of a given design was left to the architect or was simply the inevitable outcome of his following set guidelines cannot now be reliably established. Under the Board of First Fruits a decade earlier, the Semples had been given a freer hand in design matters, but this seems to have been as a result of a particularly good working relationship with Archbishop William Magee of Dublin.[33] This relationship, and the Semples own prominence in church design in Ireland, ended abruptly on the death of Magee in 1831.[34]

One tantalising document which did survive and which points to a possible pattern-book approach to church design is a drawing of a church inscribed 'Killury – Diocese of Ardfert' by Alexander S. Deane.[35] This drawing, dating from 1832, refers to Killury as being 'according to Plan No. 2 for the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for Ireland'. This would strongly suggest that this type of simple, three- or four-bay rural church with a bellcote, but without tower, spire or chancel, was designed specifically within the parameters of a given design criterion. It hasn't been possible to establish the author of the prototype churches for the Commissioners, if indeed it was the work of one architect. In fact, it seems just as likely to have been a collaborative effort among a number of provincial architects in liaison with the Commissioners. The design for Killury is remarkably similar to the Darley, Pain, Semple and Welland churches already discussed, and with overall dimensions, detailing, layout and appearance too similar to be simply coincidental. Deane's drawing of Killury, labelled as a 'Type 2', implies that this style of church was generally referred to as a Type 2 model. In light of this, it is tempting to consider that the hall-and-tower and T-plan designs may also have been referred to by type numbers. Having standard building types with clearly defined limits of size, layout, materials and budget would certainly have streamlined the whole process of building procurement and helped to reduce costs.

THE DARLEY STYLE

Moving from the general to the particular, an element-by-element examination of Darley's churches reveal a debt to the designs of Semple, but also to those of Johnston and Welland. Darley's gothic doorways, for example, display a remarkable resemblance to the narrow deep-set type favoured by Semple, although he did experiment with other styles, the Jacobean being particularly preferred. Curiously, he returned to this earlier Semple-like model in his last complete church design for the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the design for St Mary's, Clonsilla, county Dublin. St Mary's represents in many ways the closing of the circle in Darley's ecclesiastical work, returning as it does to many of the design motifs – western bell tower, prominent but-

tresses, deep-set Gothic-style entrance door – seen at Lorum and his other early First Fruits-inspired designs.

Darley's borrowings from his predecessor in the Dublin Province are not just confined to the use of Semple's designs for prominent elements, such as pinnacles or doorways, but are also apparent in even the smallest details. John Semple's signature elongated, hood-moulding termination detail – later referred to as a 'dropper' by Darley in some of his detail drawings[36] – and found over doorway and window openings on most of his churches, is one such detail employed repeatedly by Darley throughout his years as Ecclesiastical Commissioners' architect. Examples may be found at Caragh, Clonsilla (Plate 10c) and Kilberry, among others. This is a very specific detail, a unique variation on a theme designed originally by Semple, and one which rarely appears on churches other than those by Semple or Darley. Indeed, there is no exact medieval precedent, and apart from some later, and occasionally crude copies made by the firm of Welland & Gillespie when constructing additions to Darley-designed churches, such as at Offerlane, county Laois, and Lorum, only a few examples of this detail by other architects, and all post-dating the bulk of Darley's work, are known to exist.[37] Three examples are worth noting: the Church of the Assumption, Vicarstown, county Laois, a Catholic church dating from 1841 with a west window very obviously copied from Darley's nearby Kilberry; the R.C. Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Balbriggan, a design dating from 1842 by Patrick Byrne, with a particularly elongated version of the dropper to the west windows;[38] and the C. of I. Church of St Mark's, Drumully, county Monaghan, dating from 1845 by Joseph Welland. In a curious way, Darley's dropper detail went through a design gestation that closely mimics that designed by Semple, despite the existence of Semple's fully developed form by Darley's time. Semple employed a shorter and simpler version of the dropper in his earlier commissions, such as at Ballykeen, county Offaly, and at Ballysax and Feighcullen (Plate 10a), both in county Kildare, but then developed it into a more elaborate and elongated form that appears in most of his later work. Likewise with Darley; his early type can be seen at Kilberry, Killiney and Offerlane, with the later version then appearing on almost all of his subsequent designs in the Gothic style (Plate 10).

Oddly, aside from those examples noted above, contemporaries of Semple and Darley did not make use of this novel hood moulding. Doubtless the tenets of the Cambridge Camden Society regarding historically 'correct' details played its part in influencing architects. Consequently, in the virtual absence of imitators, the presence of this ostensibly insignificant detail functions as a sign of a Darley-designed church; in the absence of supporting material, its presence immediately flags the building as a candidate for attribution. Semple may be excluded on the basis that his designs are so unique that they are easily identifiable as a whole without recourse to examination of finer details. As

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10 – A comparison of hood-moulding 'dropper' details

(clockwise from top left:) 10a – John Semple, Feighcullen, county Kildare (1829); 10b – John Semple, St Mary's Chapel of Ease (the 'Black Church'), Dublin (1830); 10c – Frederick Darley, Clonsilla, county Dublin (1845-48); 10d – Frederick Darley, St Matthias, Killiney, county Dublin (1835)

Maurice Craig put it, '[Semple] invented his own brand of Gothic which can be identified at longer range than any style I know.'[39]

Although these design exemplars would continue to exert their influence on the remainder of Darley's ecclesiastical work, Seirkieran (1839) signals an important turning point. Prior to this, he had been building very much in a First Fruits idiom or, as at Lorum, in an overtly Semple-like one. That said, Darley was more assured with his two Dublin City churches built in the neo-classical style, an architectural language he could handle well. But after Seirkieran a noticeable change comes about that would see the emergence of a distinctly 'Darleyesque' church, less deferential to Semple's details or as reliant on Welland's drawings. Darley's approach to church design appears to have been quite formulaic, and there is little variation from building to building. It almost appears as if he had a set of rules by which he would design, or perhaps a set of standard templates in his office which would be copied as required – for example, needle pinnacles were almost always used to cap the corners of the castellated parapet of a bell tower, and castellated pinnacles would invariably appear on the nave and transepts (Plate 7). Dimensionally, there is also considerable uniformity: six of the standard model churches built by Darley were originally designed with the same overall external dimensions of 17.22 x 9.45 metres.[40] Likewise, at the detail level too: aside from very minor deviations,[41] in all cases where Gothic or Jacobean door or window openings have a hood-moulding feature they also have the dropper termination detail. Only two exceptions to Darley's apparently regularised approach to design may be noted – Cloghleagh, county Wicklow, and the somewhat anomalous Chapelizod. Cloghleagh can be immediately discounted owing to the diminutive size of its bell tower. Darley judiciously substituted four miniature 'pepper-mill' bartizans in place of his customary needle-pinnacles on this tower in order to avoid what would otherwise have been an overcrowded and top-heavy composition (Plate 11c). This leaves Chapelizod, which represents the only substantive departure from the norm, and the only such use by Darley of needle pinnacles to adorn the nave of a church rather than the more usual castellated or pepper-mill variety. Darley's original intention for Chapelizod had been to construct a new bell tower, but this tower was dropped from the scheme at a late stage and the original medieval tower retained. This was, no doubt, to save money on construction costs, though it seems more likely it was the cost of demolition and removal of the spoil from the old tower which was the deciding factor in retaining it, rather than the cost of building a new tower per se.[42] It may be that the mason had proceeded with the carving of the needle pinnacles intended for the new tower before the change was ordered, and a decision was made to retain them for use on the corner buttresses rather than discard them. It would therefore appear that Chapelizod is the exception that proves the rule.

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11 – A comparison of pinnacle details

(clockwise from top left:) 11a – John Semple, Ballynafagh, county Kildare (1831); 11b – Frederick Darley, Finglas, county Dublin (1843); 11c – Cloghleagh, county Wicklow (1836); 11d – St Matthias, Killiney, county Dublin (1835)

While these examples portray Darley as being somewhat rigid in his approach to design, the lack of variation in his designs could have been as much due to the pressures of a busy schedule or the result of specific instructions from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Much of Darley's architecture has the characteristic of appearing to be like the work of other architects, but stripped down to the essentials and more restrained in its details. His work is conservative and measured, but is nonetheless sufficiently informed by a solid understanding of both the principles and history of architecture. Opinions on Darley's abilities as an architect are mixed. Edward McParland, while praising Darley's Magnetic Observatory building as a 'chaste Greek Doric pavilion',[43] otherwise suggests that Darley's qualifications for the job as architect to TCD were 'genealogically rather than architecturally convincing'.[44] Darley's contemporaries were more gracious: the English architect Decimus Burton (1800-1881) described Darley as a 'talented architect' whose designs were 'very handsome';[45] likewise, the editor of the *Dublin Penny Journal*, who, in 1832, described Darley's designs for the Picture Gallery of the Royal Irish Institution on College Street, Dublin, as 'an unpretending, but pleasing architectural structure, creditable to the taste of its designer, Mr. Frederick Darley'.[46] Darley's architectural style is also very much a product of its age, the nineteenth-century being defined as much by its stylistic eclecticism as by its development of new materials. The process of replicating medieval styles while simultaneously utilising new building materials, such as cast iron, presented the architect with something of a dilemma – how to serve two masters, history and progress. Consequently, nineteenth-century architects, and Darley was no exception, laboured under what J. Mordaunt Crook describes as a 'burden both intoxicating and asphyxiating, the inexorable burden of history', which for an architect of the period meant 'the burden of archaeology'.[47] It is with archaeology in mind that we can probably best evaluate Darley's buildings.

Much of the utilitarian characteristics of early Irish ecclesiastical buildings emerge in these small, rural, standardized churches, including those designed by Darley. The plain masonry of his entrance façades – relieved only by the essentials of entrance door and west window, and framed by clasping or side-projecting corner buttresses that owe more to the skeuomorphic antae of the early Irish stone churches[48] than to the exalted façades of Canterbury or Chartres – speak of a solid faith grounded in tradition. The narrow lancets of the nave, set between wide expanses of robust ashlar or plain render, echo the form of the simple hermit's cell or oratory more than the English medieval parish church, while the ubiquitous bellcote evokes the hourly call to prayer of the early Irish monastic settlement. This is church architecture at its simplest and most profound. If Darley's church designs have a flaw it is perhaps that this simple and effective palette of elements does not always translate into larger structures successfully. His bigger churches, such as Carnew or Athy, appear barn-like and rather lifeless and empty; the architecture of the intimate does not readily scale up. However, this shortcoming may be explained, at least in part, by the proclivity for absolute regularity in the detailing of church buildings during this period, a uniformity that was alien to what Robert Harbison calls the

'unencompassable multiplicity' of medieval architecture.[49] Charles Eastlake sums up this condition of much of nineteenth-century church design, pre-Pugin, somewhat acerbically: 'It seems astonishing that one of the essential graces of Mediæval architecture, that uneven distribution of parts which is at once necessary to convenience, and the cause of picturesque composition, should have been so studiously avoided at this time.'[50] Ruskin himself was similarly critical, writing that 'the merit of architectural, as of every other art, consists in its saying new and different things; that to repeat itself is no more a characteristic of genius in marble than it is of genius in print.'[51] Darley was, along with the rest of his architectural contemporaries, designing in a climate of increasing industrialisation and mechanisation. Church architecture would have to wait for the acumen of a Pugin or a Ruskin to rediscover the direct connection between what Ruskin calls the 'vitality' and the 'perpetual novelty' of building in the true 'Gothic spirit', and its link to the pre-industrial craftsmanship of traditional building processes.[52]

All of the decorative details utilised by Darley and his contemporaries were ultimately medieval in character; there was no creation of a 'new' style in the Victorian period as such. However, architects worked within these historical idioms and often created buildings of great inventiveness and individual character. In the absence of documentary evidence, tracing these subtle variations and reinterpretations permits attributions to individual architects. Nevertheless, the establishment of direct lines of stylistic influence between one architect and another can be problematic, and care needs to be taken when ascribing particular design features to one author. A designer coming to a building type new to them in design terms, as in the case of Darley in his role as architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, frequently borrows details found in existing buildings. It was, and remains, an inevitable feature of the profession. It is to Darley's credit, however, that he was able to use Semple's decorative details and Welland's plan-forms as a starting point for his own early designs, and thereafter steered his own distinctive course.

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APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF CHURCHES AND CHURCH ALTERATIONS
BY FREDERICK DARLEY JNR.

Kilberry, county Kildare (1833-36)
Ballinatone, county Wicklow (1833-36)
Cloghleagh (Manor Kilbride), county Wicklow (1834-36)
[Old] St James, James's Street, Dublin (1835) – renovations by Darley
Donard, county Wicklow (1835)
Killiney (Ballybrack), county Dublin (1835)
Kilcullen (Yellowbogcommon), county Kildare (*c*.1838) – tentatively attributed to Darley
Balbriggan, county Dublin (1838) – addition of transepts by Darley
Lorum, county Carlow (1838)

Trinity Church, Gardiner Street, Dublin (1838-39)
Bethesda Chapel, Granby Row, Dublin (1839)
Seirkieran, county Offaly (1839)
Eglish, county Offaly (1839) – with Joseph Welland, or Welland only?
Chapelizod, county Dublin (1839) – medieval tower retained with new Darley church
Offerlane (Lacca), county Laois (1840)
Kilmeague, county Kildare (*c*.1841) – new chancel, vestry and gallery by Darley
Athy, county Kildare (1840-41)
Mulrankin (Bridgetown), county Wexford (1840-43)
Bagenalstown (Dunleckney), county Carlow (1841)
Killedmond, county Carlow (1840-46)
Caragh, county Kildare (1841-43)
Kilpatrick, county Wexford (1841-43)
Killeskey (Nun's Cross), county Wicklow (1842) – addition of transepts by Darley
Finglas, county Dublin (1843)
Mullinacuffe (Shillelagh), county Wicklow (1844)
Clonevin, county Wexford (1844)
Kells, county Kilkenny (1844)
Clonsilla, county Dublin (1845-48)
Carnew, county Wicklow (1846-47)
Sandymount, Dublin (1850) – Darley in supervisory capacity only
Mount Street Crescent, Dublin (1851) – extension to east by Darley

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ENDNOTES

The following abbreviation is used:
RCB Representative Church Body library

1 Ballynafagh, county Kildare (1831); Christ Church (extension), Delgany, county Wicklow (1830); and Kinneagh, county Carlow (1831). An additional church at Spiddal, county Galway (1851-52) is almost certainly by a local contractor of the same name rather than the Dublin-based John Semple.
2 Maurice Craig, *Dublin 1660-1860* (Dublin, 1980) 298.
3 Susan Roundtree, 'Brick in the eighteenth-century Dublin town house', in Christine Casey (ed.), *The Eighteenth-Century Dublin Town House* (Dublin, 2010) 74.
4 In addition, Darley Snr became a police magistrate from about 1808 and eventually Chief Magistrate of Police in 1812. C.J. Woods, 'Darley, Frederick', in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, 9 vols (Cambridge, 2009) III, 57-58.
5 Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early*

Modern Britain and Ireland (Oxford, 2011) 274.

6 The movement would eventually develop into Anglo-Catholicism. The main thrust of the movement was to argue for a reinstatement of lost Christian traditions and their inclusion into Anglican liturgy and theology.

7 Alan Acheson, *A History of the Church of Ireland: 1691-2001* (Dublin, 2002) 153.

8 The Cambridge Camden Society later became known as the Ecclesiological Society. At the peak of its influence in the 1840s it had over 700 members, including bishops, deans and members of parliament.

9 This total may rise to thirty-one if the transept addition at St John's Church (1836-38), Yellowbog-common, Kilcullen, county Kildare, can be definitively attributed. Kilcullen, originally a two-bay hall-and-tower type, was built in 1824 with funding from the Board of First Fruits; a south transept was added in 1836-38. The two surviving drawings of Kilcullen in the RCB library date from *c*.1865 and show only minor internal layout alterations. As the only surviving drawings post-date Darley's ecclesiastical work by several decades, and as the 1836 transept has been built in a style matching the earlier church, there is, on the surface at least, no particular documentary or stylistic reason for linking the additional work to Darley. It is nonetheless a strong contender because of the location and date (i.e. within the Dublin Province and built during his term as architect to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners'), and also on the grounds that where Darley has added transepts to an existing church, as at Balbriggan and Killeskey, he has built in the style of the pre-existing church and did not impose his own style. Furthermore, he was particularly active in the area, designing a church in Kilberry and a church, courthouse and model school in Athy in addition to various other works for the Duke of Leinster.

10 The so-called 'Pepper Canister' church, Mount Street Crescent. Darley worked on the design for the extension, by a bay, of the nave, and the addition of an apse at St Stephen's. The design went through a protracted four-year gestation period; drawings in the RCB library have dates spanning the period 1847 to 1851. Darley's design also included an organ room, a vestry and a basement heating-plant room. St Stephen's was originally constructed in 1821-22 to the designs of John Bowden, and completed after Bowden's death in 1822 by Joseph Welland. St Stephen's was also Darley's final ecclesiastical commission for which there are any records or for which any reasonable attribution can be established.

11 Welland was the Ecclesiastical Commissioners' architect for the Province of Tuam, which borders the Dublin Province; consequently, it is a little unusual to have Darley involved with the designs of a church not strictly within his area. This may have been a simple expedient by the Commissioners' due to the workload being experienced by Welland at the time.

12 RCB, Portfolio 23, Diocese of Meath, ground plan of Eglish Church signed Joseph Welland (n.d.).

13 In 1823 or 1824, John Semple's father, also John, who had been appointed architect to the Board of First Fruits for the ecclesiastical province of Dublin, took John junior into partnership. As a consequence, John Semple & Son are named in the directories from 1825 until 1832 as jointly occupying this position, but it is the younger man who is generally regarded as having designed the idiosyncratic series of churches for the Board between 1825 and 1831. For reasons of brevity and clarity they are generally referred to as 'John Semple' or 'Semple' in this text.

14 *An Introduction to the Architectural Heritage of County Wexford* (Dublin, 2010) 79.

15 Glengarra was one of many model schools by Darley. See National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH), entry no. 22902120. See also Dermot P. Healy, 'The re-use of Redundant Churches in Ireland', unpublished MUBC thesis, UCD, 2000.

16 The house was built for Francis Bruen (d.1867), an Irish Conservative Party politician. He was MP

for Carlow Borough from 1835 to 1837, and again briefly in 1839, taking his seat in the House of Commons in London of what was then the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Simon Marsden & Duncan McLaren, *In Ruins: The Once Great Houses of Ireland* (London, 1997) 120.

17 Cormac Allen, 'The Semple Temples: The Church Architecture of John Semple & Son', unpublished dissertation, UCD, 1993, 6.

18 *ibid*., 22.

19 Michael O'Neill, 'The Medieval Parish Churches in County Meath', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, CXXXII, 2002, 35.

20 Acheson, *A History of the Church of Ireland*, 26.

21 Nigel Yates, *The Religious Condition of Ireland 1770-1850* (Oxford, 2006) 34-35.

22 Despite the ubiquity of the hall-and-tower model, Anglican church layouts at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries were far from standardised, with many local variations on the hall-and-tower theme occurring. The change to a simpler and more cheaply produced all-in-one three- or four-bay nave with western bellcote model appears to have been as a result of economies by the Board of First Fruits after the cessation of funding from parliament in 1823 and their successor, the Ecclesiastical Commission, following the passing of the Church Temporalities (Ireland) Act of 1833. However, Semple's response to these economies was by far the most idiosyncratic and imaginative.

23 Tomás Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland* (London, 2010) 40.

24 Niall McCullough and Valerie Mulvin, *A Lost Tradition: the nature of architecture in Ireland* (Dublin, 1989) 77.

25 All four churches are located in Darley's district, the Dublin Province of the Church of Ireland, and were built during his period of tenure to the Ecclesiastical Commission. All share common design details with each other and with other documented Darley churches. Unfortunately, the vestry minutes and correspondence for these churches are silent with regard to the name of the architect.

26 Seirkieran is just 11cm longer, a relatively small discrepancy that can easily be attributed to a marking-out error or other inconsistency in construction methods. Such dimensional variations on site are a common occurrence, even today.

27 Bernard O'Mahony, 'A Standard Realised: the Ecclesiastical Commission Churches of James Pain', *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, XIII, 2010, 96-112.

28 RCB, Portfolio 23, Diocese of Meath, plans, sections and elevations of Kilkenny West Church signed Joseph Welland (n.d.); and unsigned plans, sections and elevations of Loughcrew Church (n.d.).

29 Alistair Rowan, 'Some Country Churches by Joseph Welland', in Terence Reeves-Smith & Richard Oram (eds), *Avenues to the Past: Essays Presented to Sir Charles Brett on His 75th Year* (Belfast, 2003) 150.

30 RCB, MS 934/1, west elevation, plans, section and bill of quantities of Grangegorman Church dated 20th August 1824.

31 RCB, MS 934/3, plans, section, west elevation and bill of quantities of Tipperkevin Church dated 2nd September 1824. Maurice Craig mistakenly claimed that the church was, in fact, never built: Craig, 'John Semple and his churches', *GPA Irish Arts Review Yearbook 1989-90*, 1989, 150. Samuel Lewis, writing in 1837, states that 'The church is a neat edifice, in the later English style, erected about seven years since by aid of a grant of £900 from the late Board of First Fruits, and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have lately granted £164 for its repair.' Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland*, 2 vols (London, 1837) II, 635. The building today is ruinous and heavily overgrown.

32 D.H. Akenson, *The Church of Ireland: Ecclesiastical Reform and Revolution, 1800-1885* (London, 1971) 325.

[33] Magee was a somewhat eccentric divine and mathematician, who nonetheless may have exercised considerable influence on the Semples designs and most particularly the development of the novel parabolic arch vaulting employed in a number of their churches. Strictly speaking they are actually based on an inverted catenary; however, for practical purposes, the curves may be considered the same. Craig, 'John Semple and his churches', 147-48.

[34] Allen, *The Semple Temples*, 4-5.

[35] RCB, Portfolio 2, Diocese of Ardfert, elevations & tracings drawing signed and dated 22nd August 1838.

[36] RCB, Portfolio 17, Diocese of Ferns, plans, sections, elevations and detail drawings for Clonevin Church (n.d.); Portfolio 21, Diocese of Leighlin, plans, sections, elevations and detail drawings for Mullinacuffe Church (n.d.).

[37] Medieval hood-moulding stops are invariably of a floriated or foliated design, or, alternatively, of a simple label type (horizontal termination); human or animal heads are also common. Semple's unique elongated design gives an increased vertical emphasis to window and door openings.

[38] The attribution to Byrne is made by Jeremy Williams in *A Companion Guide to Architecture in Ireland: 1837-1921* (Dublin, 1994) 153. This is not confirmed by primary source material. See Brendan Grimes, *Majestic Shrines and Graceful Sanctuaries: The Church Architecture of Patrick Byrne 1783-1864* (Dublin, 2009) 3, note 7.

[39] Craig, *Dublin 1660-1860*, 295.

[40] Clonevin, Kilpatrick and Mulrankin, all in county Wexford; Finglas, county Dublin; Kells, county Kilkenny; Killedmond, county Carlow. Kells was lengthened on site to 18.95m, although remains a three-bay design.

[41] The main entrance door at Bagenalstown, county Carlow, and the louvered bell-chamber openings to the belfry at Clonsilla, county Dublin; in both cases a plain label-stop termination is used.

[42] Monetary concerns are a recurring theme in the vestry minutes of the period. RCB, MS P.0664.5.1, Chapelizod Vestry Minutes Book, 1808-1870.

[43] To facilitate the construction of the new Arts and Social Science Building at TCD, the Magnetic Observatory was gifted to UCD in the 1970s. It was taken down stone by stone and reassembled at its new site on the UCD campus in 1974-75. It now serves as a digital screening space for the UCD School of English, Drama and Film.

[44] Quoted in Edward McParland, 'Trinity College III', *Country Life*, 20th May 1976, 1312.

[45] Decimus Burton (1800-1881), English architect who undertook some commissions in Ireland, including designs for Dublin Zoo and the Phoenix Park, but declined an invitation to submit designs for lecture rooms for TCD. See 'Burton, Decimus' in the online *Dictionary of Irish Architects* (www.dia.ie).

[46] *Dublin Penny Journal*, 1, no. 26, 22nd December 1832, 203.

[47] J. Mordaunt Crook, *The Architect's Secret: Victorian Critics and the Image of Gravity* (London, 2003) 12.

[48] Ó Carragáin, *Churches in Early Medieval Ireland*, 26-33.

[49] Robert Harbison, *Travels in the History of Architecture* (London, 2011) 118.

[50] Charles L. Eastlake, *A History of the Gothic Revival* (London, 1872) 143.

[51] John Ruskin, *On the Nature of Gothic Architecture* (London, 1854) 15.

[52] *ibid*., 14-16.

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