

*1 – Ballyfin, county Laois: aerial view c.1950
(courtesy Sir Christopher Coote)*

New light on Ballyfin and the mysterious Dominick Madden, part I

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As I find you are a Catholic Gentleman and of the highest respect in the profession I would not wish you or your offspring would be disgraced by that Madden who does business for you and visits at your House.

SO BEGINS A LETTER FROM SIR CHARLES COOTE'S CARPENTER AT BALLYFIN, JOHN Pamer, to Christopher Dillon Bellew of Mount Bellew, Galway (Plate 2), warning him of the consequences of associating with the architect Dominick Madden.¹ From a position of marked obscurity, the discovery of a series of letters in the Mount Bellew papers in the National Library has sharpened the focus on this curious architectural personality, and provides justification for a more in-depth investigation of his origins and career. Much that has previously been written about Madden is dependent solely on secondary sources and relates to his association with the three west of Ireland Roman Catholic cathedrals of Tuam, Ballina and Ennis. His association with these important early modern foundations seems disproportionate to his relative obscurity, and marks him out as something of an anomaly.²

Curiosity is heightened by his known involvement with Ballyfin (Plate 3), a building project that constituted one of the most important country house commissions of the period. While his involvement had been brought to light some time ago by Dr Edward McParland, the extent and nature of his work there for Sir Charles Coote (1792-1864) has never been very well understood because of the absence of appropriate material.³ The discovery of the letters written by Madden to his client, Christopher Dillon Bellew, unexpectedly helps clarify a great deal about the evolution of Ballyfin, while offering some precious information for the old house which it succeeded. The material also helps expand our knowledge of Madden's career and allows his known oeuvre to grow considerably. While Madden's designs for Ballyfin, or indeed any of his cathedrals, have not yet been discovered, there are a

number of drawings, principally in the Mount Bellew and Blake papers, which also allow some assessment of his architectural ability (Plates 4, 5).⁴ However, the material also focuses attention on his personality, with Pamer's letter, in particular, rousing immediate curiosity by hinting at the reasons for the difficulties in defining Madden's character. That he was something of a miscreant emerges in revelations about his early career with the Board of Works, and continues to the end of his career with the circumstances of his dismissal as the superintending architect of Tuam cathedral, an interesting conclusion to a career characterised by enduring mediocrity, but perhaps somewhat redeemed by the modest talents of his assistant, Peter Madden, who, while possibly a relation, continues to enjoy certain obscurity. Dominick Madden's ability as an architect, his later career as cathedral architect, and professional relationship with Peter Madden, will form the basis of Part II.

That Dominick Madden might have warranted particular, and certainly undesirable attention in his own time is hinted at in the opening lines of Pamer's letter to Bellew in 1823, and confirmed by what has been uncovered of his early career. The origins of the architect have proved difficult to trace, though there are grounds for assuming that his origins, like those of his name, were in Galway.⁵ It can be assumed that he is the Dominick Madden referred to in a letter dated 24 July 1810 from Francis Johnston, Architect and Inspector of Civil Buildings at the Board of Works, read before the Board explaining that Madden's career with the Board commenced with his appointment in 1805 as an overseer of the buildings in the Phoenix Park under Robert Woodgate, Johnston's predecessor.⁶ It is also clear from the letter that, by this time, he had already been employed 'for many years by Mr. architect Woodgate ... as clerk of works superintending the execution of several civil buildings at the Phenix Park'.⁷ He was evidently competent enough, and sufficiently well thought-of by Johnston, to be proposed as successor to John Behan as Measurer of Works to the Board, and was ultimately appointed on 28 January 1808, with an annual salary of £195.⁸ However, his tenure was brief, as he was dismissed from office, in disgrace, on 24 January 1810. The Board stated at that meeting that Madden 'had not faithfully fulfilled the duties of his situation under ... Johnston ... which induced the Board to suspend him and recommend his dismissal as a person unworthy of holding any situation under Government'.⁹

The circumstances surrounding Madden's dismissal provide a fascinating insight into the workings of the Board, revealing the capacity for abuses that existed within its structures, the extent to which these occurred, and revealing that Madden was perhaps simply unfortunate in being caught. As O'Dwyer has noted there were irregularities evident from the very beginning of the establishment of the Board of Works' new arrangements after 1801.¹⁰ Madden's predecessor, John Behan, had also experienced difficulties in the job, mostly it seems with Woodgate, but perhaps only in exchange of personalities as he was never accused of wrongdoing, and managed

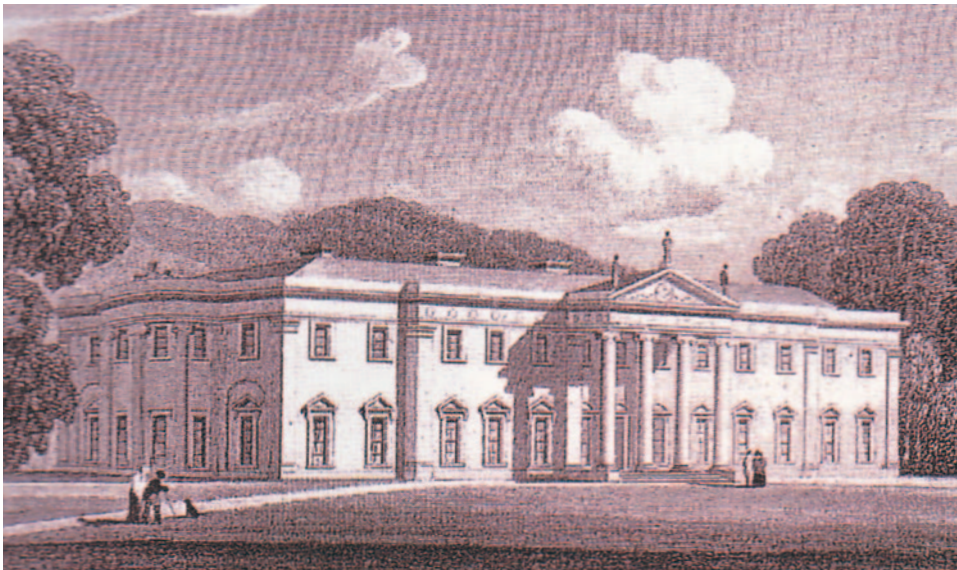
to remain in his position until he resigned in November 1807.¹¹ Both Woodgate and Behan had been sworn into office at a meeting of the board on 12 January 1802. Their relationship was clearly an unhappy one when, within months, certain irregularities led to disagreements between them, resulting in Woodgate seeking Behan's dismissal.¹² That Woodgate may have been largely responsible is suggested by O'Dwyer. He states that Woodgate had a rather cavalier attitude towards regulations and, in a report of 1812 that found irregularities in the Board's operations, Woodgate, who had died in 1805, could be 'singled out for attack'.¹³ As Madden found out, there were ample opportunities to line one's pockets from the public purse at the time, and, after a lengthy examination of the evidence, it eventually cost him his job, though not entirely his reputation.

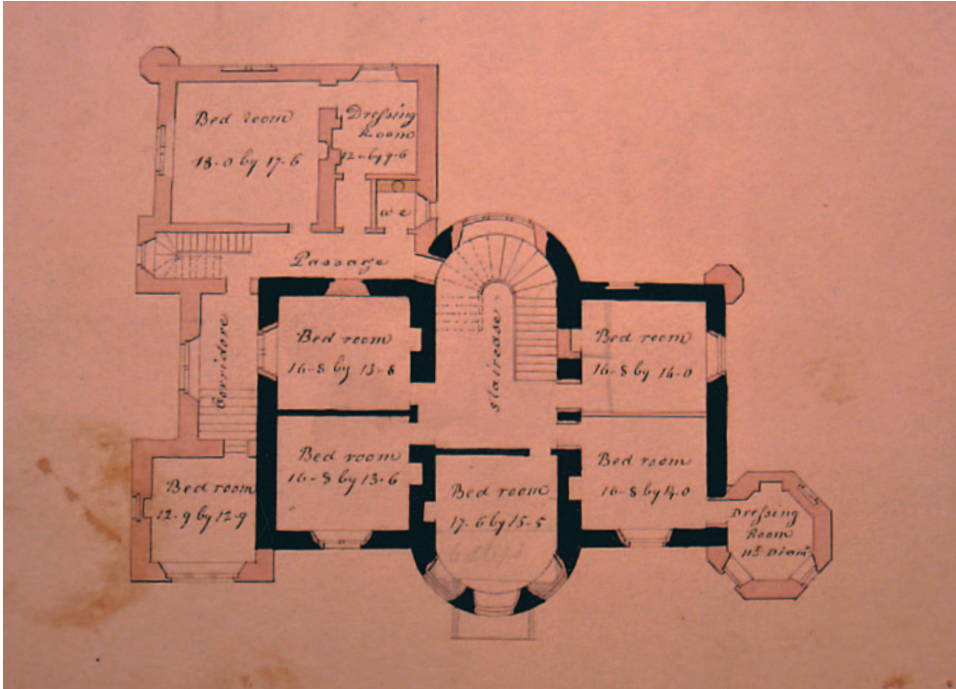
Madden's problems with the Board began when he took ill in October 1809, suffering, as Johnston claimed to the Board, from a 'rheumatic complaint which renders him incapable of doing the business of his office'. As the quarterly accounts were due to be 'examined as to their measured quantities', the Board decided that it was necessary to appoint someone on a temporary basis to replace him and 'who will be compensated ... either by Mr. Madden, or by the Board, from the salary payable to him as measurer of works'.¹⁴ Given the events that were to follow, this may reflect the instigation of a concerted effort by Johnston to expose his measurer's delinquencies. It appears that on foot of this examination, it was found that Madden, in his capacity as overseer of labourers employed at lodges in the Phoenix Park, was guilty of irregularities that included discrepancies between the times of workmen's employment at the park and the weekly returns forwarded by him to Johnston. Another charge levied against him at a board meeting on 12 January 1810 was that he had taken a 'secretary' (secretaire or desk), made by Kirchoffer cabinet-makers,¹⁵ destined for the Vice Regal Lodge but placed in temporary storage, which was later seen in Madden's house in Prussia Street. The following day Johnston produced a list of articles alleged to have been removed from the park by Madden, which included a mahogany pillar four-post bedstead and curtains, the secretaire, a mahogany desk, tallboys, carpets, window and bed curtains, feather beds and blankets, with a large four-post bedstead and 'mahogany pillar wagon roof bedstead and curtains', suggesting the degree of vice-regal splendour that Madden had established at his own private residence.¹⁶ Madden was ordered to return all the articles, and was suspended from his position until further notice. It was found that, during the period 6 February to 3 September 1808, Madden had overcharged the public by £63.0s.4d by fraudulent returns of labourers' pay, and that if such a check had been maintained over the two years of his office, the amount charged by him to the public would be seen to be much greater. Madden returned most of the goods he had taken from the stores in Dublin Castle, but he was dismissed from his position on 24 January 1810, and replaced by Bryan Bolger three days later.¹⁷



2 – *Mount Bellew House, county Galway, seat of Christopher Dillon Bellew (1762-1826)*
(from J.P. Neale, *Views of Seats...*, III, 1820)

3 – *Ballyfin, county Laois, seat of Sir Charles Coote (1792-1868)*
(from J.P. Neale, *Views of Seats...*, 2nd series, IV, 1828)





Brook Lodge, county Galway

4 – First-floor plan showing proposed additions by Dominick Madden, c.1826-29

5 – Proposals for Gothicismisation by Dominick Madden, c.1826-29

(both courtesy National Archives)



With so much evidence against Madden one might have expected him to go quietly; but it proved not to be the end of the matter. Madden informed the Board on 30 March 1810 that he was still unwell, and asserted that he was owed almost six months' salary.¹⁸ This was refused, as it was claimed that he had not yet repaid the money owed to the public nor returned all the furniture removed by him from the Lord Lieutenant's lodge in the Phoenix Park, later valued by Johnston at £43.10s.¹⁹ However, unbowed, he appealed in early July to the Lord Lieutenant for his unpaid salary, and stated in his letter that 'several instances of improper practices by persons under this Board' should be investigated. This was supported by evidence supplied by a Thomas Blake, who appears to have been employed by the Architect's Office, although in what capacity remains unknown.²⁰ He wrote to Johnston on 16 July of his shock at being sacked from his job, and pleaded to be reinstated, 'otherwise I shall lay before Government and to you sir the whole proceedings of the architect's office which will tend to make matters disagreeable to some parties concerned in said office'.²¹ The reasons for his removal are not given, but it seems that Madden and Blake had joined forces to spill the beans, and when the Board met on 26 July, twenty-five charges of misconduct at the architect's office alleged by Blake had indeed been laid before them.²² Madden's persistence and apparent vindictiveness, and his equally deviant accomplice, hint at the underlying problems within the Board, suggesting that a certain degree of corruption was accepted, almost as a legitimate perquisite of employment, and that Madden's only fault was to have been so widely exposed. This is manifest in the content of their allegations.

Most of the charges levelled by Blake were against the architect William Farrell, who worked as Johnston's clerk, and while he was asked to respond to them, the responsibility for explanations rested largely with Johnston. Convinced that Madden orchestrated the charges, both men refuted the allegations, while Farrell accepted that there had been, in what seem like minor deviations, some breaches of duty on his own behalf. One of the carpenters, examined under oath, admitted executing some work at Madden's house in Prussia Street whilst employed at the Vice Regal Lodge. The work included three framed doors, sashes and frames for a 'new addition built at the rear', and some items of furniture.²³ According to Johnston, Madden had been treated very well, his wages were increased, and he was allowed accommodation in the Architect's Office at the Phoenix Park as he had no residence there. However, when it was reported to Johnston that Madden had brought his wife to the park and was preparing accommodation for her in the Architect's Office, he was immediately ordered to remove himself and his spouse from there.²⁴

The Board in their report made the point that while they had proof of Madden's defrauding the public by £63.0s.4d, they are 'led to suspect that his malpractices were of greater extent than what could be detected for it is evident that

I do not think it necessary to take up the time of the Board further, as on their own investigation they will see into every thing better than I can explain, and it really has now become necessary for me to say, that if my time is taken up in daily answers to the malicious and unfounded Representations of Dominick Madden and Thomas Blake, whose Characters must be well known to the Board, I must give up doing any other business.

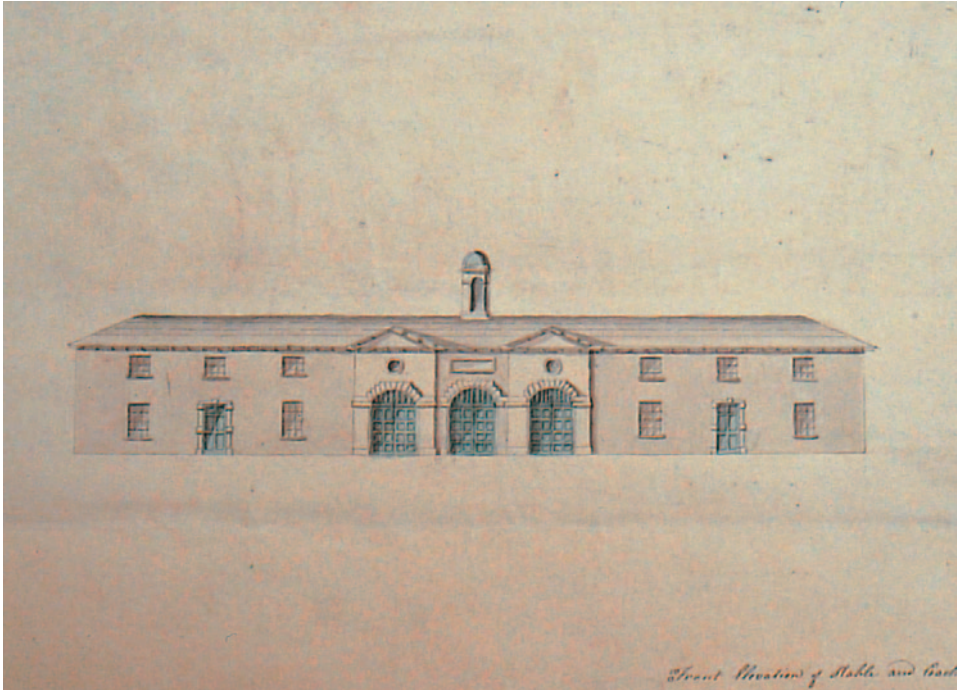
I am Sir Dear
Francis Johnston
A.P.H.

Prof. Robinson Esq;
Ap. + Ld.

6 – Board of Works Minute Book, 30 July 1810. Francis Johnston expresses his exasperation with ‘the malicious and unfounded representations of Dominick Madden’ (courtesy National Archives)

since his dismissal a very considerable saving has occurred under that Head of Expenditure’. Added to that sum is the valuation of the items not returned by Madden, making a total charge against him of £106.10s.4d, which exceeded the amount of salary due to him at the time of his dismissal, therefore his salary claim was inadmissible.²⁵ They were also of the opinion that Madden’s insinuations were unfounded and malicious (Plate 6).²⁶ As a result of the lengthy enquiry, which had taken up much of the Board’s business that year, it was found that, despite his ‘general good conduct’, Farrell should be dismissed from his office, and ordered Johnston to do so. Johnston was cleared of any wrongdoing, but the Board confirmed the architect’s responsibilities to his office and ‘strongly impressed upon ... [him] to be circumspect in future respecting the conduct of persons ... and ... on no account whatever ... allow any irregularity on the part of any officer ... to pass without being formally represented to the Board’.²⁷

Three months after his formal dismissal from the Board, and more than a week after failing to procure his unpaid salary, Madden appears to have been forced to give up his house beside the Phoenix Park; on 24 April he assigned his interest in 54 Prussia Street to George McDermott of Dublin.²⁸ It is unclear if he remained in

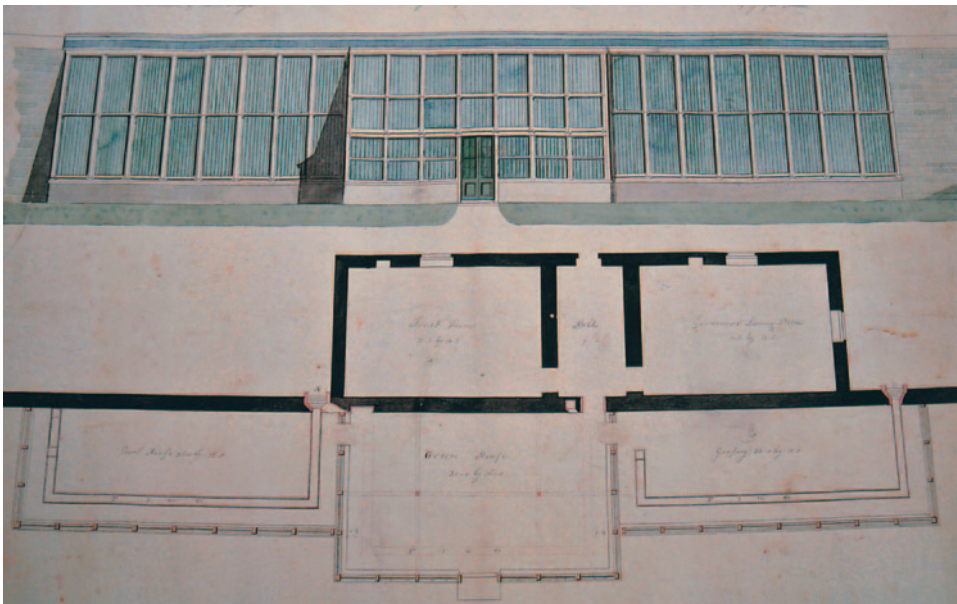


(Plates 8-15 courtesy National Library of Ireland)

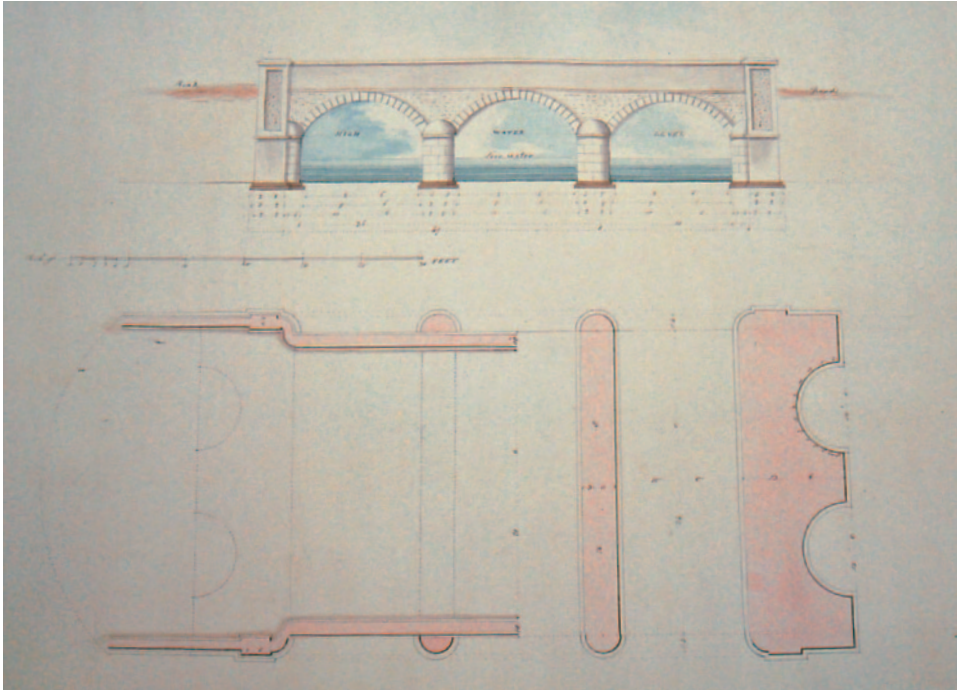
Mount Bellew, county Galway

7 – Elevation of stables by Dominick Madden, 1818

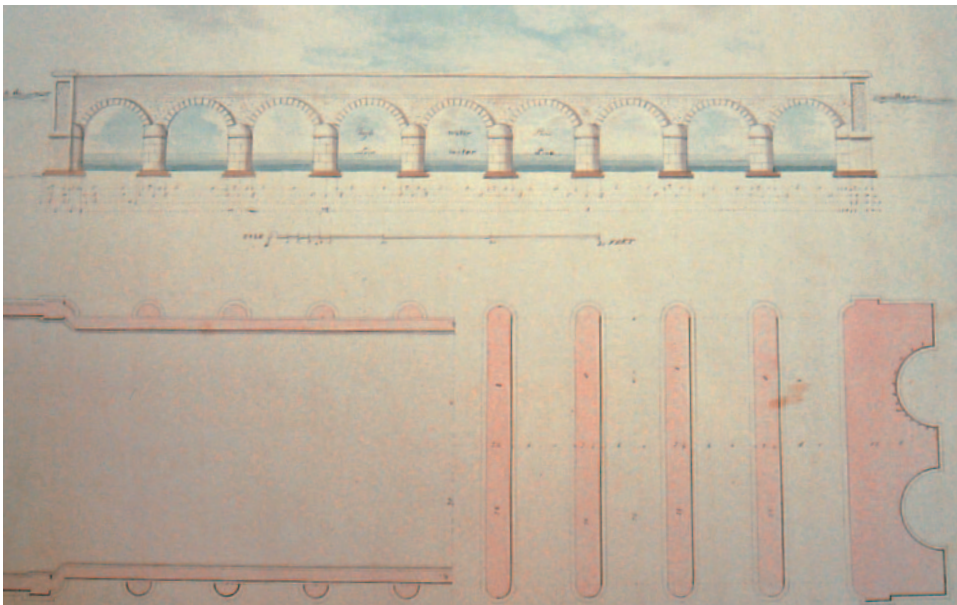
8 – Design for a glass house by Dominick Madden 1820: elevation, plans and sections



NEW LIGHT ON BALLYFIN



*Mount Bellew, county Galway
9, 10 – Designs for two bridges by Dominick Madden, 1820: elevations and plans.
Neither of these designs appear to have been executed.*



Dublin, though he was obliged to correspond with the Board and attend its enquiry over the course of the year. It has not been possible to trace his whereabouts for much of the following decade, but it appears that after some years in the wilderness he ultimately moved to the west of Ireland. That Madden had established connections with Galway is confirmed through his later association with Colesgrove, a property located close to Craughwell on the road to Loughrea. He gave it as his address in 1825 and was still resident there, and farming, two years later.²⁹ A partial genealogy of the Madden family of Colesgrove implies that the family had been associated with the property since the early eighteenth century, although they seem to have held possession of it from the Hardiman family.³⁰ The Madden family were still in evidence at Colesgrove into the nineteenth century when Martin Madden occupied the property in 1802,³¹ and Joseph Madden appears in 1814,³² however, by 1823 the property had passed to the Burkes of St Cleran's, when James Hardiman Burke advertised for the rental of 'the house, offices, garden, and about 300 acres of the lands of Colesgrove'.³³ No relationship between Dominick Madden and the previous occupants of Colesgrove has been established; his residency there may be coincidental, or possibly he was drawn to take up the lease on an old family property when offered in 1823.³⁴

It is possible that one of the earliest commissions following his remove from Dublin to the west of Ireland involved the enlargement of Kilcolgan Castle near Clarinbridge in Galway. Dominick Madden is the only person given the appellation 'architect' in the early nineteenth-century household account book of Christopher St George (1754-1826), where the majority of the entries relate to building works involving the extension of the castle and the building of out-offices.³⁵ From this source it is known that between 1810 and 1814, the castle's six hearths and twenty windows were increased to seventeen hearths and fifty-six windows.³⁶ By 1817 Madden was employed by Christopher Dillon Bellew, for whom his major commission was represented by a chapel within the demesne of Mount Bellew House (Plate 11).³⁷ The extent of the architect's work at Mount Bellew at this time can be gauged from the sum of some £173 he acknowledged from Christopher Dillon Bellew in September 1818, which he describes as 'not only a full discharge of all dealing between us but more than double what I am legally entitled to up to this date' (Plate 7).³⁸ Between 1817 and 1826 he made proposals for glass houses, bridges and modest alterations to the yards, and additions to the house, though the extent to which any of these were executed is difficult to establish (Plates 8-10, 12-15). He continued to be employed after 1826 by Bellew's widow Olivia, and their son and heir, Michael Dillon Bellew, but disappears after 1827.³⁹ The most substantial commission which Madden appears to have enjoyed at this time was at Dalgan Park, near Headford, inside the Mayo border with Galway, where he appears either to have either rebuilt or extensively remodelled the house for Patrick Kirwan.⁴⁰ It was while



7 – *St Mary's Church, Mount Bellew, county Galway:
tower and nave by Dominick Madden, 1820-22*

engaged here that Madden appears to have enjoyed his greatest deviancy as, according to John Pamer, Dalgan was a house 'that pleases him much where he can have his choice of six women every night brought to his bedside'.⁴¹

It is clear that from this time on, Madden was chiefly employed in the west of Ireland, benefiting from the close allegiances and relationships between Galway gentry families, mostly the descendants of the original tribes, such as the Blakes (Plates 4, 5) and the Kirwans, and almost all Roman Catholic. However, by far the most substantial commission he received at this time was for the rebuilding of Ballyfin (Plate 3), and in the context of its location and its patron, especially when compared with his previous commissions, it represents something of an anomaly in his oeuvre. The trouble surrounding Madden's integrity and competence as an architect make Sir Charles Coote's choice of architect for Ballyfin intriguing, and the basis for introduction to him remains a mystery.⁴²

Perhaps an explanation lies in the original intentions of Sir Charles Coote not to rebuild Ballyfin, but rather to finish what had already been begun in the eighteenth century and never properly completed. The house which Sir Charles Coote (Plate 16) acquired in 1813 was largely the creation of William Pole and his wife,

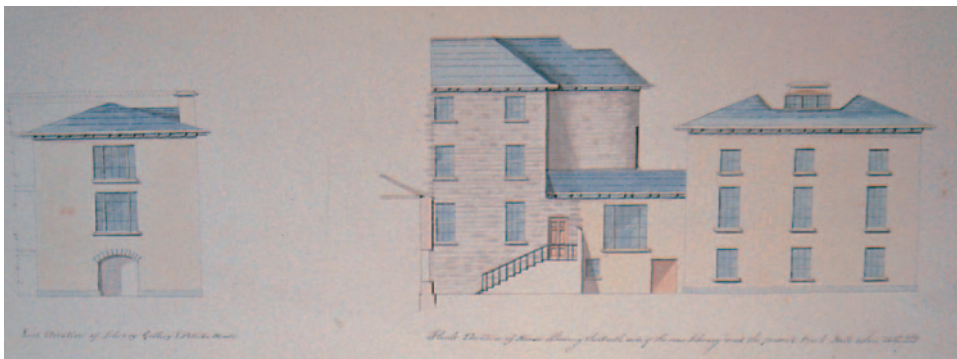


Mount Bellew, county Galway

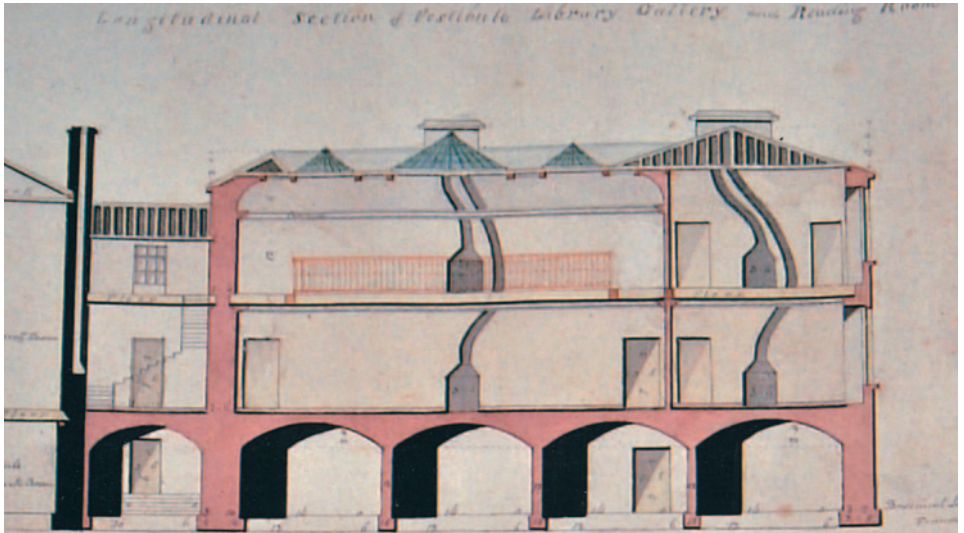
12 – ‘Elevation of stable offices for Michael Dillon Bellew Esq.’, signed ‘D. O’Madden’, 1827
The drawing relates to Madden’s earlier one of 1818 for Christopher Dillon Bellew (Plate 8). The designs appear to derive from a drawing by Richard Morrison contained in the same folder as the additions to Mount Bellew House.

opposite 13 – Additions to Mount Bellew House: ‘Longitudinal section of vestibule, library, gallery and reading room’, 1817. This is Madden’s earliest dated drawing.

below 14, 15 – Additions to Mount Bellew House by Dominick Madden, 1817 (top), 1819 (bottom)
These are more accomplished than his earlier drawings. It is not known if these designs were ever carried out.



NEW LIGHT ON BALLYFIN



*Section of New addition proposed to be made to St. John's House showing the Library Room and Reading Room
 Floor Plans Roof and Down Light also the Principal Members of Platforms and Gallery of Vestibule
 Library Reading Room Vestibule Gallery Part of Stairway and Basement story which are to be built.*

SOUTH FLANK of New Addition.



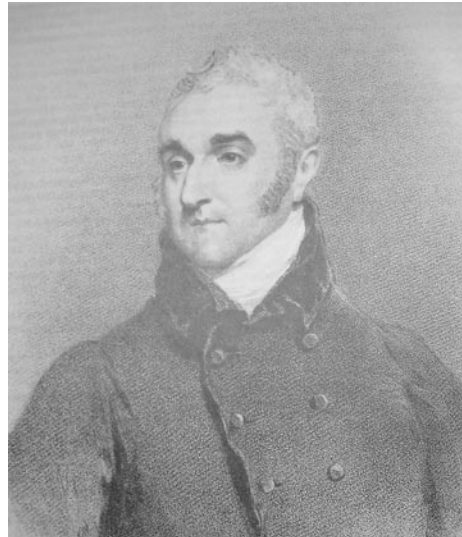
*Scale of Feet
 0 10 20 30 40 50
 Section of New addition
 to St. John's House showing
 the structure of the roof
 and building of Vestibule
 and Reading Room*

Lady Sarah Moore, who had adapted and extended an earlier eighteenth-century house. The appearance of this house is known from two late eighteenth-century engravings (Plates 18, 19), made some years after William Pole's death when in the possession of his successor William Wellesley-Pole (1763-1845) (Plate 17).⁴³ It is possible that included in the purchase of Ballyfin were the long-awaited proposals for its completion; if so, it was almost ten years before its new owner firmly set about rebuilding with the employment of Dominick Madden. That he waited so long can have had little to do with financial constraints as the Mountrath estate was producing a rental income at the beginning of the nineteenth century of upwards on £35,000.⁴⁴ The Napoleonic wars could only have enhanced his circumstances after Ballyfin was purchased: Irish agricultural production had risen considerably as a consequence, with most landed estates becoming more profitable. The end of the Napoleonic wars and the signing of peace treaties in 1814-15 opened up European travel once more and revived the distinctly eighteenth-century practice of Grand Tours, which had been curtailed ever since the French Revolution. It is likely, therefore, that Sir Charles seized the opportunity presented by European peace to travel rather than engage himself in the task of rebuilding Ballyfin.⁴⁵ Further suggestions for a tour appear with a number of works of art, originally at Ballyfin, which may have been



16 – Watercolour by Benjamin Burnell, SIR CHARLES HENRY COOTE, 9TH BT. (1792-1864), c.1805. The young Sir Charles had inherited the Irish estates of the last Earl of Mountrath in 1802 and purchased Ballyfin when he reached his majority. (courtesy Sir Christopher Coote)

17 – Engraving by C. Picart after a painting by William Owen, WILLIAM WELLESLEY-POLE (1763-1845), 1815



acquired as part of such a trip (Plate 20).⁴⁶ However, the association between Sir Charles Coote and Gaspare Gabrielli offers evidence that a Grand Tour was not necessary for these works to have been acquired. Gabrielli was an Italian artist, perhaps Roman, who was first brought to Ireland in 1805 by Lord Cloncurry to decorate his house, Lyons in county Kildare, which, at that time, was being remodelled by Richard Morrison. The artist remained in Ireland for some time, returning to Italy in 1819 – it appears at Lord Cloncurry’s behest – to act as agent to collect works of art – a role he also played for Sir Charles Coote, as a letter sent from Rome by Gabrielli in 1822 demonstrates.⁴⁷ It is not known precisely when Sir Charles returned from the Continent and whether he returned first to Ireland or travelled directly to London, where he seems to have spent most of 1822. Shortly before the middle of January 1820, Dominick Madden had been engaged to rebuild Ballyfin, when he writes to Christopher Dillon Bellew of being detained at Ballyfin ‘as Sir Charles and Lady Coote wishes me to finish and perfect the arrangements for the additions to Ballyfin House which I hope to have perfected next week’.⁴⁸

This explanation would appear to indicate that Madden was retaining much of the original house, although he also reveals that the arrangements which he has made, and which have received the patrons’ general approval are ‘amazingly extensive’.⁴⁹ However, much more is revealed in his next letter from Ballyfin, written at the end of December when in a postscript he writes: ‘I find I have got the character of making a good new house out of an old one which Sir Charles and Lady Coote expect me to do here’, and then makes an extraordinary and tantalizing assertion when he adds: ‘I find by Mr. Wyatt’s plans it has failed [Sir Charles] ... and I have serious apprehensions of it puzzling me also.’ And then goes on to say: ‘Indeed Sir Charles and Lady Coote has received me very kindly and ordered me the apartments Mr. Wyatt occupied when he was here.’⁵⁰ The reverence which his comments imply towards ‘Mr. Wyatt’ strongly suggests that he means James Wyatt, who had died in 1813. Might Sir Charles have commissioned such plans directly from Wyatt soon after his purchase of Ballyfin, and subsequently been forced to abandon them when the architect was tragically killed?⁵¹ If so, could Sir Charles Coote have replaced one of the most celebrated architects in England with an unknown and, at best, a mediocre one? However, it seems much more likely that Coote had inherited these proposals by his purchase of Ballyfin, with Wyatt having been earlier commissioned by William Pole or his successor, William Wellesley-Pole.

At Ballyfin, a quantity of interesting eighteenth-century joinery can be found dispersed throughout the secondary areas of the house – evidently survivors from the old house reused in the rebuilding. These include window shutters (Plate 21) and door architraves found in the suite of ‘bachelor rooms’ east of the dining room. Here it is evident that the shutters were cut down to fit the windows of the nineteenth-century house. The surfaces carry a carved fluted border within recessed pan-



18 – *View of Ballyfin*, an engraving by Thomas Milton after a painting by William Ashford, 1787

19 – *View of Ballyfin from ANTHOLOGIA HIBERNICA*, July 1794





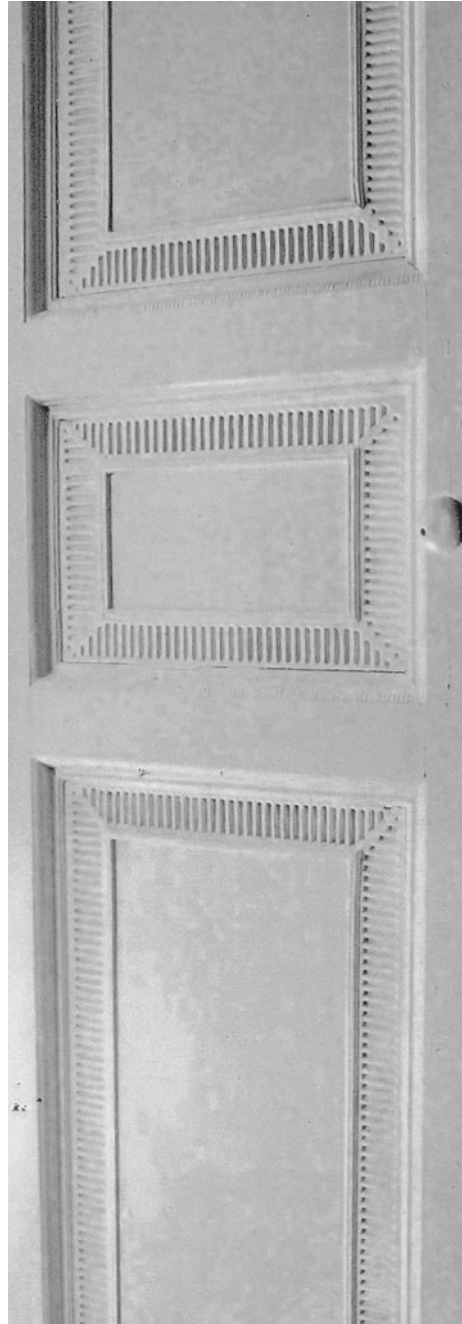
20 – Interior of the Library at Ballyfin, late nineteenth century photograph

Many of the works displayed, including the statuary were acquired for Sir Charles Coote by the artist Gaspare Gabrielli. (courtesy Sir Christopher Coote)

els, and the same decoration can be found on the inner face of two mahogany doors reused in the bowed bedroom. In stylistic terms all of these joinery elements can be dated to the 1770s, but most interestingly the neo-classical character of the decoration finds very close affinities with window and door joinery found at Abbeyleix – the house Wyatt designed in 1773 for Lord Knapton, and not far from Ballyfin.⁵² With these similarities it is possible that Wyatt had been employed by William Pole for the extensive additions and improvements to the house. Pole was forced to abandon his proposals due to the death in 1780 of Lady Sarah Pole, whom Beaufort described as mortally ill in 1779.⁵³ His own death followed in 1782. It is clear from sources that he had intended to enlarge the house even further. Thomas Milton stated in 1787 that ‘it is not quite completed as the old house stands where the left wing is intended to be built’, and in 1794 *Anthologia Hibernica* stated that ‘the principal part of the edifice was never perfectly finished’. William Wellesley-Pole may seem a stronger candidate given that Wyatt’s first recorded visit to Ireland was in 1785, not long after Wellesley-Pole succeeded; however, there are no strong indications that he ever added to the house.⁵⁴

As an active politician it is difficult to know exactly how much time

Wellesley-Pole devoted to Ballyfin and the extent of any improvements to the house and demesne; neither Milton's or *Anthologia Hibernica*'s accounts, written during his occupancy, attribute any aspect of the estate to him.⁵⁵ *Anthologia Hibernica* indicates that the place was uninhabited in 1798 and goes on to say that if reoccupied 'might justly be considered the most elegant country seat in that part of the Kingdom'.⁵⁶ Only much later is it suggested that any contribution was made by him, when a number of improvements to the demesne are enthusiastically referred to by Sir Charles Coote (a distant kinsman of the future owner), who believed that when completed, would leave Ballyfin 'unrivalled'.⁵⁷ He refers in particular to the new approach from Maryborough which he says was formed 'after Mr. Pole's own design', and is described as possessing 'as much elegant taste and happy design as can be seen, [and] ... certainly in the grandest style possible'.⁵⁸ However, his description of the house as a 'half square' (which implies an inverted U-plan), may be taken to represent the same house described in the earlier texts (Plates 18, 19).⁵⁹ Some additions to the house may have been made by Wellesley-Pole, but possibly only of a minor nature; his considerable absence from the property and eventual disposal suggests that it never warranted rebuilding or extension.⁶⁰ However, Sir Charles Coote's reference to the old part of the house is as enigmatic and unhelpful as the earlier sources.



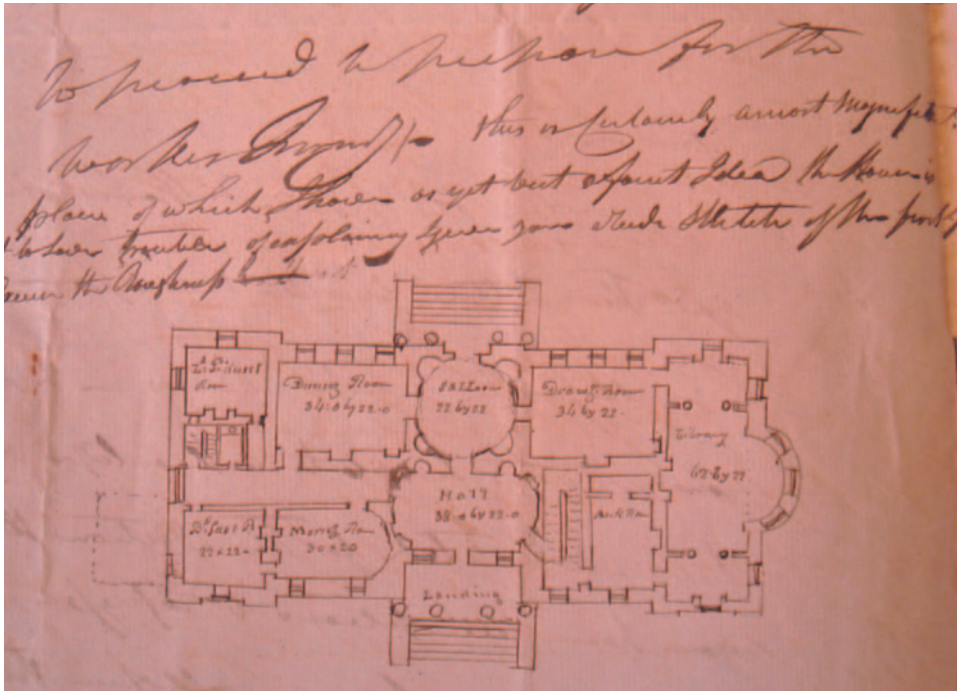
21 – Ballyfin: detail of eighteenth-century shutter reused in one of the 'batchelor rooms'

Relating to both Milton's comments and those of *Anthologia Hibernica*, and suggesting, as they had, that the house plan has not been completed along the lines intended by William Pole, Coote defines one side of the square as old, which, based on the earlier illustrations, we might presume, with not a little uncertainty, to be associated with the western block. To generate even greater confusion, he adds that it 'will be converted into a green house'.

Dominick Madden was again at Ballyfin in April 1821.⁶¹ Within a month, work on the house was close to commencement when he wrote from Emo Park

'I have previous to my leaving Ballyfin yesterday morning submitted the plans and arrangements for the improvements at Ballyfin to Sir Charles and Lady Coote with the estimates for executing same all of which are approved of and orders given to proceed – a purpose for this wasted journey? (Plate 22).⁶²

However, by July 1821 the works had run into serious problems. The first indication came when an associate of Madden's, John Clarke, wrote to Bellew to explain that Madden was indisposed, and unable to attend to his work at Mount Bellew as a consequence of having fallen 'so very ill'. The reason, he explains, was that as Madden had recently been confined in the west, he was obliged to entrust 'his business' at Ballyfin 'to a Foreman that was highly recommended'. However, having received 'a letter from Sir Charles Coote saying that if he was not here that Night he would call on a Mr Morrison, from Lord Meath's', he hastened his way to the site to discover that 'the foundations and cutstone that was laid' in his absence was found to be 'all wrong'. In consequence he was 'forced to remain at Ballyfin twelve or fourteen days under the hot sun' in order 'to have the whole of what was done in his absence taken up again ... [to] have these works regulated', with the result that he contracted a 'billious' and 'nervous' fever. He goes on to state that Madden was being attended by a fleet of doctors, but ominously reports that he is 'sorry to say as yet, the reports are by no means favourable'.⁶³ However, his condition was evidently not terminal, and Madden writes himself to Bellew a couple of days later, perhaps motivated by a need to limit any damage that may have been done by Clarke's letter.⁶⁴ Work clearly continued apace, so that by the end of November Madden could report that he had 'commenced putting on the roof' and intended to remain for some ten days or so to attend to it.⁶⁵ By December Madden's time at Ballyfin appears to have been drawing to a close, when he revealed he had received a letter from Coote requesting to see him in Dublin before his departure for England, and the urgency was such that he was forced to proceed immediately, complaining to be 'very ill prepared for the journey not having even a shirt with me'.⁶⁶ The subject of the meeting is not known, but the consequences may be guessed at; Madden's last letter to Bellew from Ballyfin was sent the following February, and by November Morrison had been employed and Madden's account fully discharged – at least as far as Sir Charles



22 – Sketch plan of Emo Court, county Laois, drawn by Dominick Madden in a letter to Christopher Dillon Bellew, May 1821

Madden's reference to imitation 'porfree' columns in the library, perhaps indicating that they were scagliola is intriguing given the present ones are of Connemara marble. (courtesy National Library of Ireland)

Coote was concerned (Plate 23).

Madden's eventual dismissal from Ballyfin is attributed by John Pamer to 'the neglect of his business through nightly drunkenness and prostitution'. At face value, this seems to reinforce the impression of a disreputable character, but the cautious might suspect an embittered employee with malicious intent: perhaps Pamer was the 'foreman that was highly recommended' and to whom Madden had entrusted the work that ultimately had to be redone. Pamer's concern with religion offers a motive in an attempt to discredit someone who did not observe the same religious or moral piety as one who admits to having received guidance from his own 'director in spiritual affairs'.⁶⁷ The moral carpenter bids Bellew to write to Sir Charles Coote at his London residence, Connaught Place, 'to know how many Thousand Pounds he lost by' Madden suggesting 'did he not loose five thousand from a calculation for all the money he drew' – a claim that certainly provides a character match with the miscreant we know from the Board of Works. He further claimed that 'Sir Charles had to come over himself to put him out as there was so much lost by the building

and the work not going on and he continually drawing money.’ This can certainly be accepted by the sequence of events gleaned from Madden’s own letters. The late timing of Pamer’s warning to Bellew is explained when he writes that despite having been advised to write to Bellew some twelve months before, had postponed doing so ‘until I would see if he would stop in that Country’. However, it appears that Madden had informed him ‘in his drunkenness at Sir Charles Coote’s’ that ‘he was to continue there’, having, it appears, received ‘encouragement ... in that Country from a Lady of high rank’. The message ends with a somewhat menacing postscript: ‘As I am a stranger to you I request you will take notice of this or you or your offspring will mark the Consequence.’ Bellew’s reaction is not recorded and there is no indication that he took it at all seriously. Madden continued to be employed at Mount Bellew until 1825 when Bellew died. The relationship between Madden and Bellew was always, at the very least, a cordial one, and Bellew could be particularly friendly and encouraging: in a reply to Madden’s news from Ballyfin he wrote that he found the ‘accounts of all you see and are engaged in extremely welcome and gratifying’, and when expressing his pleasure at the architect’s satisfactory completion of proposals for Ballyfin he added, ‘Indeed I could forsee no other Result’.⁶⁸ Bellew was certainly charitable toward Madden, as demonstrated in their earliest correspondence, where Madden reveals he had received a payment

23 – Copy letter from Sir Charles Coote’s agent Charles Sandes, addressing Dominick Madden’s bill supplied in November 1822 for works carried out at Ballyfin; also shown is a copy of the bill outlining the extent of Madden’s involvement in the original design

(courtesy Sir Christopher Coote)

Copy
 Portlavington
 14th November 1822

Dear Sir

Your acct which I this morning recd^d so far exceeds my Idea what it should be that I cannot think of discharging it without first acquainting Sir Chas Coote, nor do I consider that there is the least chance of his giving directions to have it paid in its present state as you told him in my presence at Ballyfin last July that you & Co^{rs} would cover all your exp^s as far as that goes I am authorized and ready to settle your acct whenever you please

Yours truly
 Chas. S. Sandes

D^o Madden Esq^r

Copy
 Sir Chas. Coote Esq^r
 To Genl. Madden Esq^r

W^o King - £6613-7-11
 Cont^{rs} H^onds - 1475-13-7
 Balance - 1991-19-5

 23281-0-5

To Plans Elevations specifications and estimate 1822-10-5
 • cont^{rs} £23500-0-5 at 2% p^{er} cent 470-0-0
 • Exp^s for 1823-14-15-5 p^{er} cent p^{ro}vision 315-10-0
 • W^o of the Works at 5% p^{er} cent 1125-0-0
 • My Salary at Ballyfin agreeable to Sir 75-0-0
 • Cont^{rs} Coote's disburse May 1822 10-0-0
 • Travelling Exp^s for Board House 100-0-0
 • Board's cont^{rs} of the Works of the Works 7-9-3
 • Messing fees 60-19-3
 • Plans for 3 Columns Plans at 3 p^{er} cent 10-0-0
 Total Amt - £1157-17-0

‘more than double’ he could say he was ‘legally entitled to’. The payment elicited a reply that implies Madden had much to be indebted to Bellew for, and he vowed to ‘ever feel grateful and ... make it my ardent duty to merit that feeling which is manifested in your kind letter’.⁶⁹

There are no known designs surviving for Madden’s work at Ballyfin, and the extent of his work there has been known almost exclusively from his bill (Plate 23). Some idea of the building’s appearance may be gleaned from Morrison’s correspondence with Sir Charles Coote, and the original form of Madden’s plan is strongly indicated in the earliest of Richard Morrison’s proposals (Plate 25). Morrison’s reaction to Madden’s plan for the house may be some gauge of its character: ‘I cannot but express my satisfaction at the escape you had, for certainly in its present form it is not calculated to give you satisfaction or do credit to this country.’⁷⁰ Madden’s building was essentially proposed as a long symmetrical H-plan, comprising two substantial end-blocks with a recessed connecting range dominated by a portico (Plate 24). Morrison’s objections are made clear when he avers that ‘the great extension of this plan is ... a great objection to it ... the wings are all out of proportion with the centre, which with their great projection give the idea of three houses united rather than of one harmonious whole.’ (Plate 25) His words are easily justified with the general view offered to accompany his revisions to the plan (Plate 24). From the evidence contained in Madden’s bill and its delineation in Morrison’s plans, only the west block was built, and it is from this section that the designs for the present library and vestibule seem to derive. It is unclear how far the interiors had been completed, but the exterior certainly must have been largely finished by the time Morrison was asked to take over: in one letter he refers to ‘purposely altering’ to four ‘the five windows in the part of the house executed’.⁷¹ The walls of Madden’s block were evidently built in ashlar, possibly also the sandstone from Clonaslee used later by Morrison.⁷² However, the quality of the work generally must have been questionable, as indicated in Morrison’s comments when referring to the section of the front wall which had to be taken down and rebuilt to answer his designs: he remarked that such action offered the advantage that the existing ashlar could then be ‘properly cut and bonded, which it is not at present’.⁷³

The employment of Richard Morrison and, by association, his son William Vitruvius, was a progressive step, yet the full import was not immediately evident to Sir Charles, as he originally attempted to engage the architects at a reduced fee – clearly an indication of how sorely felt his encounter with Madden had been in financial terms.⁷⁴ To convince Sir Charles of his worth, Richard Morrison responded by appealing to any social pretensions his patron may have possessed. He offered an impressive roll-call of previous patrons, and declared that, with the exception of Francis Johnston, there was not at that time in the country ‘any architect ... in whose hands you could place your business, with a prospect of such a result as you would

desire'.⁷⁵ Yet it is unlikely that Sir Charles needed to be persuaded of the Morrisons' capabilities; these were, by 1822, well established and well known, and in any case Morrison possessed all the confidence necessary to convince him. Richard Morrison knew as much about social pretension as any of his clients; he belonged to the third generation of architects, 'distinguished as much by their ambitious professionalism as by their often remarkable buildings'.⁷⁶ His professionalism can certainly be seen in his statement recognising the equal status of Francis Johnston. There seems little surprise, therefore, that the Morrisons, as the most sophisticated architects of their generation, should be given the task of rebuilding Ballyfin for the Cootes. It is perhaps not insignificant that the father and son were at this time also employed by Lady Caroline Coote's relations at Killruddery in county Wicklow, who must surely have been a source of recommendation for the firm, and that Lord Powerscourt, who already had supported Morrison's cause, was also related to Lady Coote.⁷⁷ What is most extraordinary is that with all these possible recommendations for Morrison, and the ambition to create a seat worthy of his position, Sir Charles had ever chosen Madden in the first place.

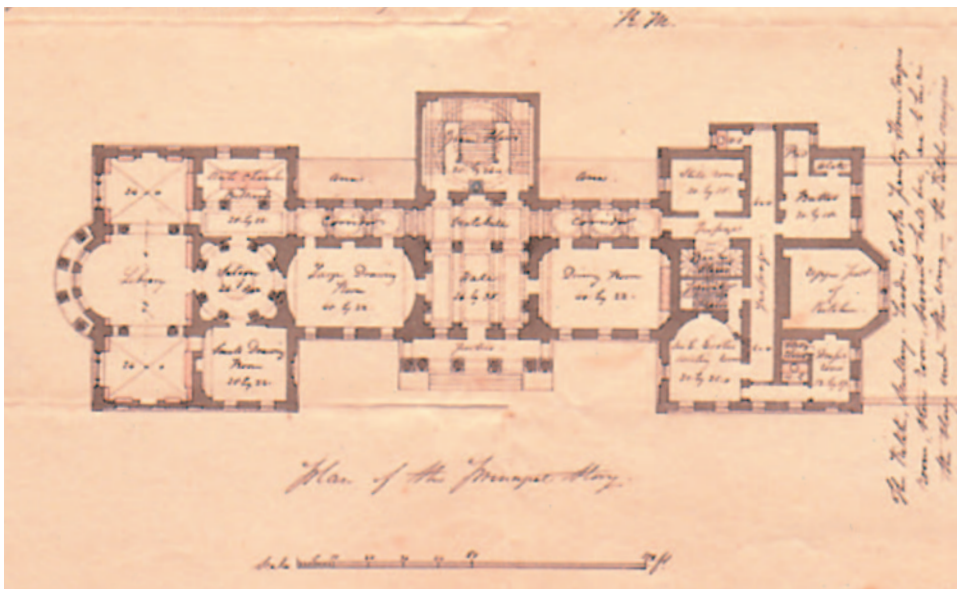
Two sketch plans (Plates 26, 27) by Morrison draw close attention to the relationship that originally existed between the old house and yards, and as a result revise our understanding of the architectural history of the house. The drawings are quite similar to each other, and correspond closely to the plan of the house and kitchen range as built. They were evidently prepared following a careful consideration of the existing proposals and the circumstances of the buildings on the site. The drawings are just two in a numerous collection of schemes that reveal the Morrisons' attempts to deal with the deficiencies of the existing plans. One particular group (Plates 24, 25) represents more minor alterations to what must reflect Madden's original arrangement for an extended H-plan, and Morrison's discontent is clearly expressed on them. In one of the simpler sketch plans (Plate 26), the outline of the original H-plan proposal by Dominick Madden is over-laid by Morrison's revised scheme, and was presumably designed to support Morrison's advocacy of a contracted plan. Morrison's persistent bias towards a revised scheme (Plates 28-30) was clearly supported by common sense which he could easily justify: 'by the new plans the extent of the building is shortened ... this whilst it amends materially the objections to the site of the building and improves its external form and proposals, will likewise save much expensive cut-stone.'⁷⁸ The house as originally proposed by Madden was to extend 220 feet, with the result that less than forty feet separated the house from the yards. Morrison's contraction (Plate 27) was achieved by hiving off the kitchen block so that it was placed in the background, sunken at a lower level and given only the most tentative connection to the house. This provided an arrangement which he justified with the statement that he 'never knew a convenient house where they were differently circumstanced'.⁷⁹ By contracting the plan in this

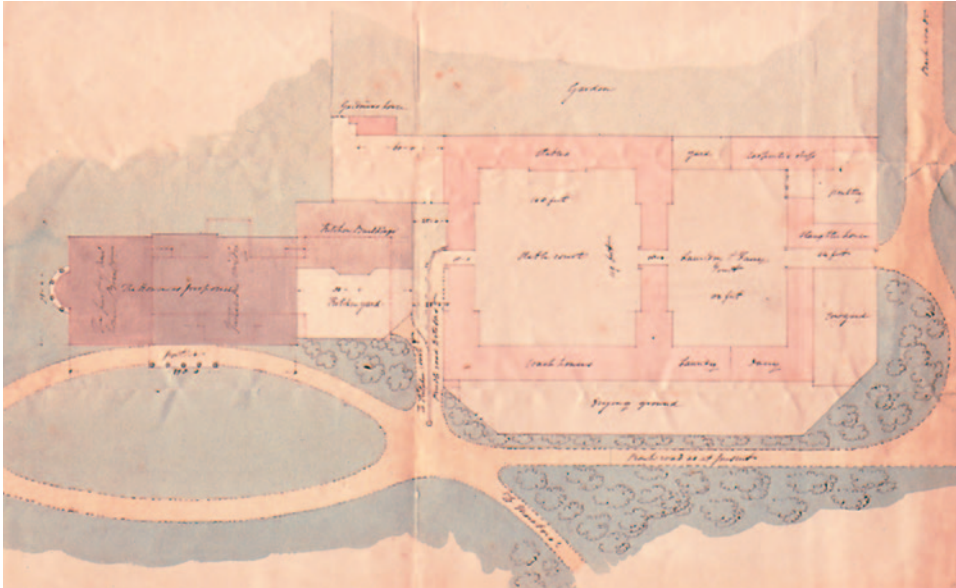


Ballyfin, county Laois

24 – Perspective view by William Morrison, c.1822,
to illustrate the revised arrangement of the H-plan. (both illus courtesy Sir Christopher Coote)

25 – Ground-floor plan by Richard and William Morrison, c.1822
The plan is clearly derived from Madden's original scheme. Richard Morrison's disapproval of it is clearly stated
even after having removed 'some of its most objectionable defects.'

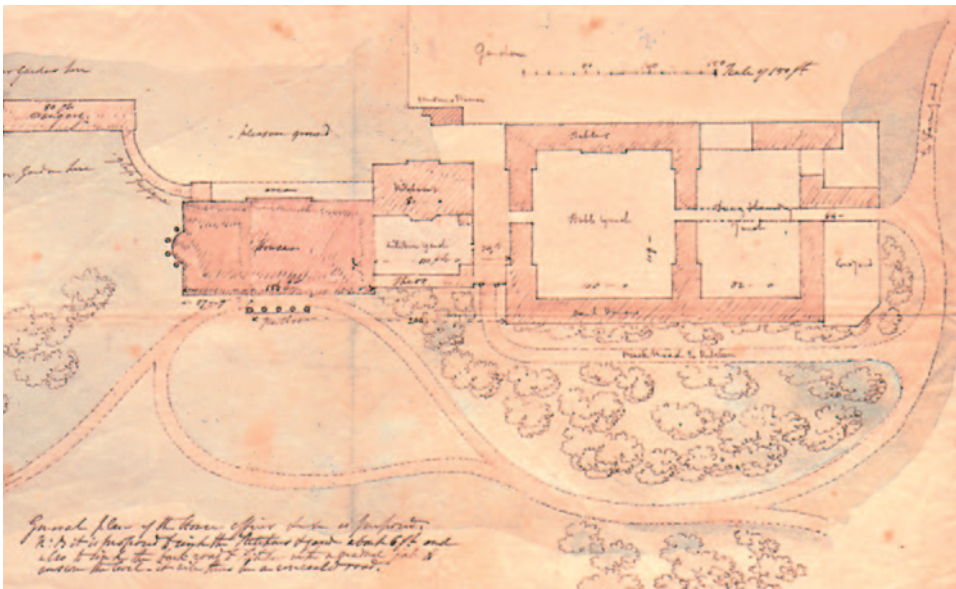




Ballyfin, county Laois

26 – Sketch plan, c.1822, by Richard Morrison, contrasting a revised scheme for a contracted plan with the existing and partially completed H-plan associated with Dominick Madden

27 – ‘General plan of the house, offices & co. as proposed’ by Richard Morrison, c.1822. Note the provision for an orangery and an octagonal green house. (both illus courtesy Sir Christopher Coote)



manner, a distance of just over 100 feet could be achieved between the house and yards, which in the architect's view 'afford the power of covering the offices etc. by planting' so that 'their contiguity will in other respects not be disadvantageous'. However, the difficulties concerning the contiguity of the house and offices were further compounded by the alignment of the house behind the south façade of the yard complex (Plates 26, 27). In all the proposals submitted by Morrison which advocate a contracted plan, the distance of Madden's completed range from the yards remains constant, irrespective of the length of façade proposed, indicating that it was to remain central to any new proposals. This remains so even when a more radical departure is proposed in his earliest correspondence, delivered with the tentative suggestion to Sir Charles that he consider the possible advantages of altering his ideas so as to place the new building to the east of the completed wing rather than to the west.⁸⁰

When the present relationship of the house to the yards (Plate 1) is compared with Morrison's sketches (Plates 26, 27), it becomes evident that the house is now located much further west and differently aligned – in fact, much further south than is represented by any of these drawings. The distinctions between the two become most evident when the relationship between the gardener's house, the walled garden and the house in these plans are compared with the Ordnance Survey. When measured on the ground, a distance of 200 feet separates the house and yards – twice what Morrison had originally hoped to achieved – while it stands approximately sixty feet south of its original alignment. Consequently, the house is immediately dominant from the approaches.⁸¹ The only reasonable explanation for this was that a completely new, and more advantageous site was chosen.

The possibility that Morrison may have based his drawings on inaccurate details is certainly suggested in his very first letter when he complains of the paucity of material with which to consider the proposals.⁸² However, more than a week later, having received further plans, he could state that 'it appears on an examination of them that the documents which we before had [Madden's drawings?] and on which we founded the sketches forwarded to you were correct.'⁸³ All the measurements taken from Morrison's plans, when checked, correspond precisely to the existing buildings with the exception of the distances at issue here. The stable yards and ancillary buildings, though now radically altered, retain their historic footprint sufficiently to correspond to the information in the plans. As a consequence, there seems little reason to doubt their veracity. Close examination of the differences between

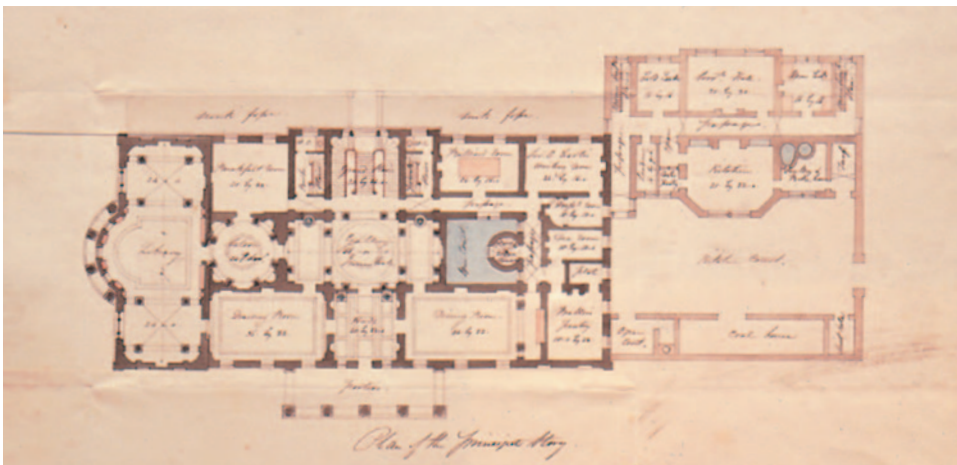
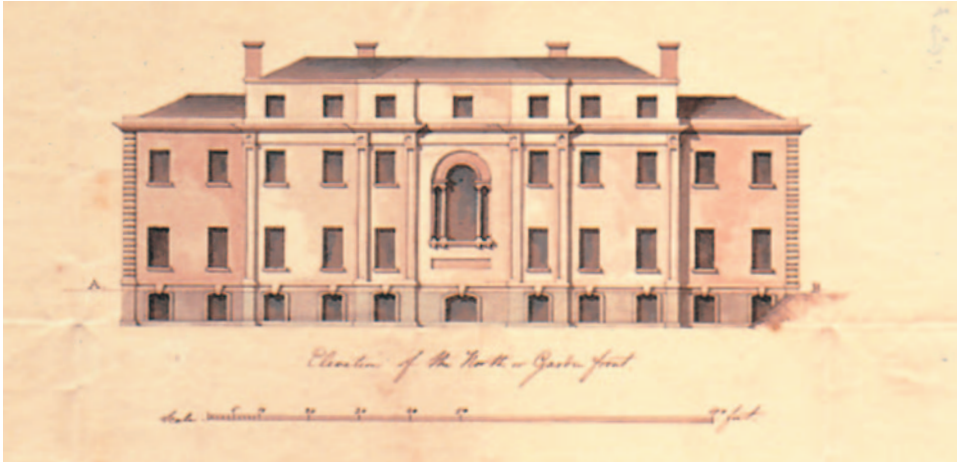
Ballyfin, county Laois: unexecuted proposal by Richard and William Morrison, c.1822.

28 – North elevation

29 – Perspective view (unexecuted proposal by William Morrison, c.1822)

30 – Ground-floor plan (all illus courtesy Sir Christopher Coote)

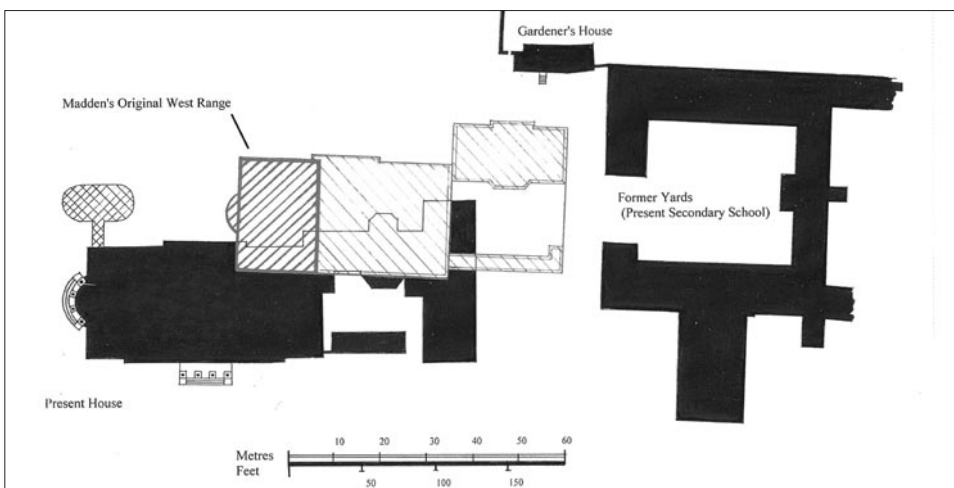
NEW LIGHT ON BALLYFIN



the site where the house was originally proposed and of the present site indicates that most of the original building lay outside the footprint of the present structure (Plate 31). When the site of Madden's wing is superimposed on the present plan, it is shown to project, at most, half its extent into part of the space represented by the present dining room, the adjacent stairs and former schoolroom, and perhaps intruding slightly into the saloon and stair hall. The apparent differences between the angle of alignment in the original building and the present structure, although small, make it unlikely that any of the original structure was retained in the new house.

What seems incredible is that a patron so sorely exposed to financial loss in his initial encounter with Madden should have so radically abandoned a building which had cost him dearly, even when the architect had assured him that, with its many deficiencies, it still could, with careful consideration, be adequately redeemed.⁸⁴ Perhaps all the complications associated with its evolution (not least the memory of an odious architect?), made it easier for Sir Charles and Lady Coote to begin afresh, persuaded by the confidence of a more competent architect.⁸⁵ In response to the increased financial obligations of a more radical plan, Sir Charles Coote sold the town of Jamestown in Leitrim, which his namesake had founded in the seventeenth century, and committed his resources to achieving what must be considered one of the most decorated houses of the period.⁸⁶

31 – Plan showing Madden's completed range incorporated within the Morrisons' earliest proposals for a contracted arrangement, overlaid on the ground plan of the existing house and outbuildings (drawn by Kevin V. Mulligan)



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors wish to thank all those who have assisted them in their researches. Particular thanks are due to Dr Edward McParland, who provided an initial indication of Madden's involvement and misdemeanors with the Board of Works, which led to the minute books and the unexpected discovery of a wealth of material relevant to the architect's early career. We are extremely grateful to the owners of Ballyfin for every assistance, with a particular word of thanks to Jim Reynolds. We thank Sir Christopher Coote Bt., who has given welcome encouragement and made available much of the material that is central to this article. We also wish to acknowledge the assistance of Aideen Ireland and the staff of the National Archives; Tom Desmond, Joanna Finegan, and the staff of the National Library, and also the staff of the Irish Architectural Archive.

NOTE

Part II of this article will be published next year in volume IX of the journal. All photographs by Kevin V Mulligan unless otherwise stated. In the captions, 'Ballyfin' denotes Max Communications images (March 2003) for Ballyfin Demesne Ltd.

ENDNOTES

The following abbreviations are used

NA National Archives, Dublin

NLI National Library of Ireland

OPW Office of Public Works

- ¹ NLI, Mount Bellew Papers, MS 27,214 (4), letter from John Pamer (the precise spelling of the name is difficult to read, and could, instead, be Parner), carpenter of Sir Charles Coote, to Christopher Dillon Bellew, 30 May 1823.
- ² The cathedrals were erected at the time of Catholic Emancipation in a provincial Gothic that eagerly anticipates Pugin and McCarthy, and their significance will be discussed in Part II. The chief references to Madden can be found in Lord Killanin and M. Duignan, *The Shell Guide to Ireland* (1967, and later editions); M. Craig, *The Architecture of Ireland from the Earliest Times to 1880* (London 1982); J. Williams, *A Companion Guide to Architecture in Ireland, 1837-1921* (Dublin 1994). A more recent account of Madden and his cathedrals can be found in P. Galloway, *Cathedrals of Ireland* (Belfast 1999).
- ³ E. McParland, 'Ballyfin, Co. Leix...', *Country Life*, CLIV, no. 3977, 13 September 1973, 702-05; no. 3978, 20 September 1973, 774-77. Up to now the architect's association with Ballyfin was based entirely on his final bill of November 1822, wherein Madden provides his original estimate for building a new house to a tripartite plan, while attempting to claim his percentage of the works already executed. Coote Archive: letter from Charles L. Sandes to Sir Charles Coote, 14 November 1822.
- ⁴ So far, the only other collection of drawings by Madden, in addition to the Mount Bellew material, is amongst the Blake of Ballyglunin papers in the National Archives (M6931/63),

- including a group of designs for Brook Lodge, Galway (c.1826), which will be discussed in greater detail in Part II of this article.
- ⁵ The Maddens, or O'Maddens, were one of the old Gaelic families, descended from the chiefs of Silanchia and Hy Many, who were established in the Longford barony of east Galway, and whose importance had diminished by the seventeenth century. See S. Mulloy 'The Transfer of Power: Galway 1642-1702' in Gerard Moran and Raymond Gillespie (eds), *Galway: History & Society* (Dublin 1996) 213, 220-01. For comprehensive family histories, see F. Madan, *The Maden Family and Maddens* (1930); T.M. Madden, 'The Maddens of Silanchia', *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, I, 1900-01, 184-195; II, 1902, 21-33; T.M. O'Maden, *The O'Maddens of Hy Many* (1894). See also 'Madden of Tinode', *The Landed Gentry of Ireland* (1899).
 - ⁶ NA, OPW 1/1/1/3-2D/56/95, Board of Works – Minute Book 1809-1811, 267. Woodgate, originally a carpenter, was articled to Sir John Soane in 1778, and in 1793 was employed by the architect at Baronscourt as Clerk of Works. By 1799 he could claim to Soane to have designed his first country house – Castle Blayney in county Monaghan, and in the same year had established himself as an architect in Dublin, eventually succeeding Vincent Waldré as architect to the Board in January 1802, after Lord Hardwicke transferred Waldré to the Barracks inspectorate. It is evident from the minute books that Woodgate had died in 1805. C.E.B. Brett, *Buildings of County Down* (Belfast 2002), 94; Soane Museum, Private Correspondence XV.A.2.5-6: letter from Woodgate to Soane, 18 November 1799 (we are grateful to Professor Alistair Rowan for this reference); F. O'Dwyer, 'Building Empires: Architecture, Politics and the Board of Works 1760-1860', *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, V (Dublin 2002) 135.
 - ⁷ In this capacity he continued under Johnston. Madden confirmed that he had been employed as overseer in the park at 'a salary of £116 per annum for upwards of eight years', which would indicate that he was appointed soon after Woodgate's own appointment. NA, OPW 1/1/1/3-2D/56/95, Board of Works – Minute Book, 1809-1811, 290, 293.
 - ⁸ NA, OPW 1/1/1/2-2D/56/95, Board of Works – Minute Book, 1 May 1807-16; Nov 1809, 243.
 - ⁹ *ibid.*, 54.
 - ¹⁰ The evolution of the Board of Works in the eighteenth century was difficult, often characterised by a myriad of plots and intrigues centred on battles between personalities, which ultimately resulted in the formation of separate branches after the Act of Union, the Barrack Department with responsibility for military buildings and the Board of Works for civil buildings. The circumstances are extensively detailed by O'Dwyer, 'Building Empires', 135.
 - ¹¹ A letter from Behan to the Board (dated 10 November) was read out to the Board on 13 November 1807, informing them of his necessity to resign his position following his appointment as 'third architect to the Barrack Department'; NA, OPW 1/1/1/2-2D/56/95, Board of Works – Minute Book, 1807-1809, 220.
 - ¹² O'Dwyer, 'Building Empires', 135-38.
 - ¹³ *ibid.*
 - ¹⁴ NA, OPW 1/1/1/2-2D/56/95, Board of Works – Minute Book, 1 May 1807-16 Nov 1809, 483. On 15 January 1810, Johnston nominated 'Mr. Matthew Williamson as a person well qualified to do the duties of check measurer ... whose long experience, thorough knowledge of the business, and integrity are well known by some of the gentlemen of the Board.' The Board approved Williamson's appointment on a temporary basis, NA, OPW 1/1/1/3-2D/56/95, Board

- of Works – Minute Book, 1810-1811, 39. The appointment is interesting because Madden was later (*ibid.*, 296) to claim that Johnston ‘twice used all his influence when vacancies occurred both with the Board of Works and at the Castle to procure the situation of Measurer to the Board of Works for his cousin, Mr. Williamson’. The relationship seems to be confirmed by the fact that Williamson’s mother was, like Johnston, from Armagh, and that he or his brothers, Arthur and John, had worked for Johnston. Matthew and Arthur appear earlier in the minutes (NA, OPW 1/1/1/2-2D/56/95, 2 April 1808, 269), sharing an address at Paradise Row, when they are named as security for Edward Cloney, Slater, in connection with ‘additions to the intended Stamp Office’ then being moved to the former Powerscourt townhouse on South William Street. Little is known of the brothers other than that they were successfully involved in property development in Rathmines. Matthew, the eldest, perhaps by then deceased, did not share in the later partnership with his brothers when they designed the Argory, a country house in Armagh, in 1820, and produced designs for Emo Court, county Laois in 1822. C.E.B. Brett, *Buildings of County Armagh* (1999) 95-97; E. McParland, *James Gandon, Vitruvius Hibernicus* (London 1985) 107, 196, 296. The Williamsons’ drawings for Emo are in the Irish Architectural Archive and are illustrated in *An Introduction to the Architectural Heritage of County Laois* (National Inventory of Architectural Heritage, 2002) 20.
- ¹⁵ Trading at 62 Henry Street, Dublin, between 1796 and 1812. D. Fitzgerald, Knight of Glin, ‘A Directory of the Dublin Furnishing Trade 1752-1800’, in Agnes Bernelle (ed.), *Decantations: a Tribute to Maurice Craig* (Dublin 1992) 47-59.
- ¹⁶ NA, OPW 1/1/1/3-2D/56/95, Board of Works – Minute Book, 1810-1811, 35-36.
- ¹⁷ *ibid.*, 42, 54, 59. Bolger continued as Measurer to the Board until 1831 when he sought permission to retire; E. McParland, ‘The Papers of Bryan Bolger, Measurer’, *Dublin Historical Record*, XXV, no. 4, September 1972, 120. See also T. Kelly, ‘Papers of Bryan Bolger, 1792-1834’, *Dublin Historical Record*, III, no.1, September-November 1940, 8-18.
- ¹⁸ NA, OPW 1/1/1/3-2D/56/95, Board of Works – Minute Book, 1810-1811, 88.
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*, 196.
- ²⁰ Thomas Blake’s name might suggest that he belonged to a scion of the Galway family that would later employ Madden, which may be of some significance to their relationship. However, Blake has not been identified in any of the published family genealogies – Burke’s *Landed Gentry of Ireland* or *Irish Family Records*.
- ²¹ NA, OPW 1/1/1/3-2D/56/95, Board of Works – Minute Book, 1810-1811, 207.
- ²² *ibid.*, 208.
- ²³ *ibid.*, 258.
- ²⁴ *ibid.*, 265.
- ²⁵ *ibid.*, 265-6.
- ²⁶ *ibid.*, 298.
- ²⁷ *ibid.*, Minutes for Saturday 18 August 1810, 289.
- ²⁸ Registry of Deeds, 623/40/426492.
- ²⁹ In March 1825 he wrote to thank Christopher Dillon Bellew for the ‘very liberal (and on my part) unmerited consideration of sending me such a very valuable and handsome present of farming utensils’. Two months later he complained from Colesgrove of a financial disappointment, having ‘expected money to purchase some stock for want of which my land lies compleat waste’, NLI, MS 27,214 (4). There are no indications for a permanent address before 1825, and his work appears to have forced a peripatetic existence with most of his correspon-

- dence addressed from his place of work, i.e. Dalgan Park or Ballyfin. When in Dublin he appears to have stayed at the Talbot Hotel, Britain Street (Parnell Street); NLI, MS 27, 214 (3).
- ³⁰ NLI, GO MS 176, partial genealogy of Madden of Coalsgrove, county Galway, c.1720-1790. The genealogy confirms the close relationship established at this time between the Maddens and a number of the old Galway families still prominent in the eighteenth century, including those of Daly, Dillon and Donelan.
- ³¹ NA, Index to Prerogative Wills 1536-1810 (vol. XX9).
- ³² A. Leet, *A directory to the market towns, villages, gentlemen's seats and other noted places in Ireland* (Dublin 1814).
- ³³ *The Connaught Journal*, Monday, 3 November 1823. The ownership of Colesgrove by the Burke family can be explained by the marriage between James Burke of St Clerans and Penelope Hardiman, daughter of Robert Hardiman, Esq., of Colesgrove, Loughrea, sometime before 1777; see family of Cole-Burke in Burke's *Irish Family Records* (1976).
- ³⁴ Madden's birthplace, date of birth or parentage have not yet been established.
- ³⁵ M. Keegan, 'Index to Persons in Household Account Book kept by Christopher St. George of Kilcolgan Castle, Oranmore, Co. Galway, 1 Jan. 1810-29 Dec. 1819', *The Irish Genealogist*, 7 (1886-1989) 101-12. Frustratingly, the details or dates associated with the accounts are not given, and the list simply constitutes an index of names prepared by Keegan. The account book is in a private collection.
- ³⁶ *ibid.*, 101.
- ³⁷ The earliest dated item from Madden to Bellew concerns a detailed specification 'of the manner of executing the sundry works proposed to be done in building the proposed new additions to Mount Bellew', which is dated 17 January 1817, MS 31,994 (4). Significantly, a letter from the architect and garden designer Alexander MacLeish to Bellew, dated to 1816, outlining the extent of his business and abilities indicates that Dominick Madden was unlikely to have been his first choice, MS 27,209.
- ³⁸ MS 27, 214 (5).
- ³⁹ The drawings for Christopher Dillon Bellew were acquired by the National Library in 1995 as part of the Mount Bellew papers (NLI, Annual Report, 1995, 14). Most of the drawings by Madden, and including one by Richard Morrison, are held in the Department of Prints and Drawings; AD3569 (1-20); AD1935-6. Other drawings and related material can be found in the manuscripts collection: MS 27,209; MS 27,214; MS 27,216; MS 27,270; MS 31,994.
- ⁴⁰ Many of Madden's letters to Bellew after 1817 were written from Dalgan Park; they cease after October 1822. John Pamer, in his revealing letter to Christopher Bellew, confirms Madden's role when he refers to 'Mr Kirwan's of Dalgans where he was Architect', MS 27,214 (4).
- ⁴¹ Pamer also implies an improper relationship, possibly with Mrs Kirwan, when he alludes to 'the encouragement' Madden was receiving 'in that country from a Lady of high rank ... married to an old man', and who 'was to have some thousands a year and a fine demesne during her life as it was not possible ... [her husband] could live long from his size and age'.
- ⁴² In a letter to Christopher Dillon Bellew in 1821, Madden requested letters to be forwarded to him 'under cover to Sir Charles Cootes Bart., Heath House, Emo', MS 27,214 (7). This may have some significance for Madden's introduction to Ballyfin, as, at this time, Heath House was the residence of Dowell O'Reilly, a member of a prominent Catholic family, who, through his wife Elizabeth, possessed connections with the Knox and Blake families of Mayo and

- Galway; Burke's *Irish Family Records* (1976), 675-81. Heath House was later acquired by a branch of the Blake family; see M. Bence-Jones, *A Guide to Irish Country Houses* (1988) 151.
- ⁴³ T. Milton, *A collection of select views from different seats of the nobility and gentry in ... Ireland* (London 1783-93); *Anthologia Hibernica: or Monthly collections of Science, Belles Lettres and History for July 1794*.
- ⁴⁴ Sir Christopher Coote, *Ballyfin: a Condensed Background Historical Summary, 1600-1920, for the Purposes of Ballyfin Restoration Project* (2002) 2.
- ⁴⁵ Sir Charles and Lady Coote may not have pursued a proper Grand Tour and possibly did not leave until late in 1817 when, in September, Lady Caroline Coote's sister, Lady Cremorne, is recorded as having been delivered of a son (and heir) at Ballyfin, *Limerick General Advertiser*, 7 September 1817; *Lodge's Peerage* (23rd ed., 1854) 158-59. It is understood that the Coote's son Robert was born in Geneva in 1820; Edward McParland, Ballyfin research file, Trinity College Dublin: correspondence from Sir John Coote to Edward McParland, 4 July 1973. As it is unlikely that Lady Coote would have travelled in the later stages of her 'confinement', it may be taken that they had, by then, been in Europe for some time, and were perhaps preparing for their return journey.
- ⁴⁶ In particular, there are references to two paintings, *The Transfiguration* after Raphael by Herzog, and *The Last Sacrament of St. Jerome* after Domenichino, both apparently copied from the originals in the Vatican in 1817 and 1819 respectively, while two figural sculptures by Rudolph Schadow (1786-1822) were signed 1817; M. Carey, *Ballyfin from 'Condensed History' of the Queen's County and of Kildare* (1903). Rudolf Schadow (1786-1822) was the son of Johann Gottfried Schadow, a German neo-classical sculptor whose work surmounts the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. His brother William von Schadow was a painter and member of the proselytising group of painters known as the Nazerenes. Rudolf Schadow's Ballyfin sculptures were sold in 1923. Coote Archive, auction catalogue, Bennetts, Dublin, 2 July 1923.
- ⁴⁷ Coote Archive: Gaspare Gabrielli, Rome to Sir Charles Coote, Connaught House, London, 22 November 1822. The letter from Gabrielli to Sir Charles Coote is a most valuable document and confirms the important role the artist played for his Irish patrons. In it he refers to seven cases dispatched from Leghorn, which included the two statues by Tadolini and his own painting of the Roman Forum. It is also known that Lord Meath, when in Italy between 1816 and 1817, ordered marbles, paintings and chimneypieces through Gabrielli, which suggests that he had probably become established as an agent and dealer before this date: Killruddery Papers: J/3/31 1816-19, works of art purchased in Italy by 10th Earl of Meath through Gaspare Gabrielli. We are grateful to Lord Meath for access to this material. Significantly, Lady Meath was Lady Caroline Coote's aunt, *Lodge's Peerage* (1854), 382-83. There are many parallels between the activities of these patrons at this time. The victory at Waterloo is suggested as the reason for providing Lord and Lady Meath with the opportunity to travel instead of proceeding with their plans by Francis Johnston to remodel the seventeenth-century house at Killruddery. In 1816 they were in Italy, and had returned home by 1819. By June the following year they had received estimates for their rebuilding under the Morrisons, D. Fitzgerald, Knight of Glin and J. Cornforth, 'Killruddery, Co. Wicklow II', *Country Life*, CLXII, no. 4177, 21 July 1977, 146-9. For further discussion of the relationship between the Cootes and the Meaths, see K. V. Mulligan, 'Ballyfin, County Laois' (unpublished report), vol. I, 2002, 24-25.
- ⁴⁸ NLI, MS 27,214 (3). This letter confirms that the Cootes were in residence at Ballyfin at this time rather than on the Continent, as suggested above (note 45). Madden explains that the

house was crowded, and goes on to list the house party, no doubt with the intention of impressing the Bellevs. The guests included Lord Landaff (Francis Mathew (1768-1833), 2nd Earl of Landaff of Thomastown Castle, county Kilkenny, a seventeenth-century house that was enlarged and remodelled by Richard Morrison in 1812); Lord Portarlington (John Dawson, 2nd Earl of Portarlington (1781-1845) of Emo Court); Lord Louth (Thomas Oliver Plunkett (1757-1823), 11th Baron Louth of Louth Hall); Lord and Lady Cremorne (Richard Thomas Dawson (1788-1827), 2nd Baron Cremorne of Castle Dawson (Dartrey), county Monaghan, and his wife Anne-Elizabeth-Emily Whaley, sister of Caroline Coote); Lady ? (illegible); Mr and Mrs Whaley (probably Caroline Coote's parents); Sir William Hort (possibly Sir Josiah William Hort of Castle Strange, Middlesex – a descendant of Rev. Josiah Hort builder of Hortland, county Kildare); 'Mr. Hort staying here with Captain and Mrs Saynds' (Sir Charles Coote's agent, Charles Launcelot Sandes (b. 1791), who had married Coote's only sister Mary in 1815, see Sandes of Indiaville in Burke's *Landed Gentry* (1846)); Mrs Coote (Sir Charles Coote's mother?); Mr & Mrs Carr (these are not identified; however, Charles Sandes' son Charles married Isabella Carr in 1842, daughter of Ralph Carr of Cocken, Durham). Madden concludes that there were a number he did not know.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, Sir Charles' close interest in the project is confirmed by Madden's assertion that he is 'so amazingly cautious that he does not leave me a moment to myself'.

⁵⁰ MS 27, 216 (1). In the same letter he continues to describe 'the situation here is beautiful, both wood and water', and confirms Sir Charles Coote's employment of the landscape architect, John Sutherland, who, he says, 'has done a great deal here, but nature prepared it well for him'.

⁵¹ The architect was violently killed in a carriage accident in September 1813, H. Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1600-1840* (1995) 1110.

⁵² Similar detail may also be found in other examples of Wyatt's work, such as Westport House, where he provided designs for the interior in 1781, Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1116.

⁵³ C.C.Ellison, 'Remembering Dr. Beaufort', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society*, XVIII, no.1, January-March 1975, 27.

⁵⁴ Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1108, 1120. James Wyatt was employed by Arthur Wellesley for the redecoration and repairs to Apsley House in 1807. There is a possibility that Madden's 'Mr Wyatt' refers to the architect's eldest son, Benjamin Dean Wyatt (1775-1855), who was closely connected with the Wellesley family. Perhaps significantly, Benjamin Dean Wyatt's earliest known Irish commission was for a theatre at Westport House in 1812. However, apart from later work at Westport House, no other Irish commissions are known. See Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1104.

⁵⁵ As well as serving as an MP, he held a number of official positions, including Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant from 1809 to 1812 (in which post he had succeeded his brother Arthur, later Duke of Wellington) and Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1809 to 1812. Significantly, he resigned from both of these posts in August 1812, the year in which he prepared to sell Ballyfin, NA, D.20,319. Sir Charles Coote reached his majority in 1813 and seems to have made the purchase in the same year. For Wellesley-Pole's political career, see E.M. Johnston-Liik, *History of the Irish Parliament 1692-1800*, 6 vols (Belfast 2002) 525-27. Wellesley-Pole was later elevated to the peerage as Baron Maryborough in 1821, and on the death of his brother in 1842, succeeded as 4th Earl Mornington.

⁵⁶ *Anthologia Hibernica*, 2.

⁵⁷ Sir Charles Coote, *General View of the Queen's County* (1802) 117-19. Coote was the eldest of

the twelve illegitimate children of the 1st (and last) Earl of Bellamont and a distant cousin of his namesake who later acquired Ballyfin. Sir Charles Coote produced a number of statistical surveys for the Royal Dublin Society.

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Notwithstanding that the earlier descriptions are not easily reconciled with the views of the house they illustrate.

⁶⁰ The disposal of the mansion and demesne alone, while retaining some 11,000 acres surrounding it, would suggest that the house and demesne held little real value for Wellesley-Pole. The real reason may have been his son's fortuitous marriage to the co-heiress of the Earl of Plymouth in 1812. William Pole-Tylney-Long-Wellesley benefited from the Child fortune of £25,000 per annum and some £300,000 'ready cash', together with the great house of Wanstead. The fortune was short-lived as he 'died a pauper through his extravagance'; by the time of his death in 1857 he had been so dissolute that his obituary could state: 'He was redeemed by no single virtue, adorned by no single grace.' Johnston-Liik, *History of the Irish Parliament*, 526; *Complete Peerage*, 2972. Wellesley-Pole is known to have employed the prominent English architect and landscape designer John Webb (c.1754-1828) at Ballyfin (Coote, *General View*, 66; see also Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary*, 1031-32). There may be some connection with Wellesley and Webb's involvement at Wanstead Grove in view of the Wellesley-Pole's son's succession to Wanstead. However, for a recent discussion of the involvement by Humphry Repton in a designed landscape for Wanstead, see S. Jeffrey, 'How Repton saw Wanstead', *County Life*, CXCIX, no. 15, April 2005, 98-101.

⁶¹ MS 27,214 (7).

⁶² *ibid.*, from Madden to C.D. Bellew, Emo Park, Portarlington, 21 May 1821. Of Emo he says: '...this is certainly a most magnificent place of which I have as yet but a faint idea, the house is, but to save trouble of explaining I give you [a] rude sketch of the first floor plan – excuse the roughness – This house I very much admire the external appearance is a compleat specimen of architecture as far as it is finished and commands very fine views of the park which is eight hundred acres finely wooded ... There is also about fourteen acres of water which his lordship speaks of extending. The library is an uncommon handsome room the columns are in imitation of porfree [*sic*] marble with guilt [*sic*] composite capitals well executed and looks really a dignified room with a great quantity of books and as far as the binding goes they are uncommonly fine.' The reference to imitation Porphyry columns in the library, perhaps indicating scagliola, is intriguing given the present ones are of Connemara marble.

⁶³ MS 27,214 (6). The manner in which Madden's misfortunes at Ballyfin are preceded by illness, and ultimately blamed on others, has a resonance with his earlier career with the Board of Works.

⁶⁴ MS 27,214 (3). Madden, in his letter, is more discreet in his explanation, simply complaining from an inflammation of his eyes that derived from a cold in his head, caught when 'travelling outside the Mail Coach at night on my way here, being called back from town unexpectedly by Sir Charles Coote to assist him to establish his Board of Works'. By 5 August he was able to report (from Maryborough) that he was now able to sit up for the first time, having 'removed in here to be near Dr. Jacob to whom I am intensely indebted for so speedy a recovery. I am this two days mending properly and hope to be able to proceed to Dalgin Park next week...'

⁶⁵ MS 27,214 (2).

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, His haste is also such that he is forced to ask Bellew to inform Madden's servant to pro-

ceed with his things to Morrison's Hotel, Dawson Street.

- ⁶⁷ That this was the case is further suggested when he writes to Bellew that 'finding out from my Clergyman that you were a Roman Catholic and his advice to honour those heads of our Church from being disgraced he desired me to give you this Caution ...'. Madden's apparent drunkenness seems at odds with an interesting document in the Mount Bellew papers: 'Tom Hayden, sworn in the presence of Mr. Madden not to take either spirits or any mixture with spirits in it, whether punch, grog or otherwise, for twelve months from this day [23 May 1818], and not more than a quart of malt liquid in twenty-four hours during that time.' J. Clarke, *Christopher Dillon Bellew and his Galway Estates, 1763-1826* (2003) 33. Further interest to this story comes in 1820 when Madden, seeking to use the Mount Bellew smith, Mr Hayden, at Dalgan Park writes: 'should Hayden come he may by good conduct have the best of bottle.' MS 27,216 (1).
- ⁶⁸ MS 27,214 (1).
- ⁶⁹ MS 27,214 (5). It will be remembered (note 29) that in 1825 Bellew gave Madden a gift of 'plows, harrows & harnesses', MS 27,214 (6).
- ⁷⁰ Coote Archive, Richard Morrison to Sir Charles Coote, 7 September 1822.
- ⁷¹ *ibid.*, 10 September 1822.
- ⁷² Clonaslee is located some twelve kilometres north-west of Ballyfin, across the Slieve Bloom Mountains.
- ⁷³ Coote Archive, Richard Morrison to Sir Charles Coote, 29 September 1822.
- ⁷⁴ In view of his encounter with Dominick Madden and the full discharge of his fee of 5% on works completed, Sir Charles Coote's assertion to Morrison that 'a capable architect' would undertake his business at 3% is intriguing; *ibid.*, 25 August 1822.
- ⁷⁵ Morrison, perhaps deliberately condescending, lists four patrons, all peers for whom he had carried out substantial commissions in the previous ten years; *ibid.*
- ⁷⁶ McParland, May 1973, 1462.
- ⁷⁷ The 4th Viscount's first wife was Lady Caroline Coote's aunt Catherine Meade, second daughter of the 1st Earl Clanwilliam; *Lodge's Peerage*, 130.
- ⁷⁸ Coote Archive, Richard Morrison to Sir Charles Coote, 7 September 1822.
- ⁷⁹ It appears that much of the proposed site for the kitchen range was already sunken as Morrison says early in September that the new kitchen offices and yard would 'occupy the space which has been excavated for the new wing'; *ibid.*
- ⁸⁰ In this Morrison does recognise the disadvantages, such as the extensive alterations that would be necessary to make the existing building conform to such a plan, and that the existing block has no basement area as required on this side of the house. Coote Archive, Richard Morrison to Sir Charles Coote, 29 August 1822.
- ⁸¹ These measurements are based on a site survey carried out by Paul Corrigan & Associates, 24 January 2003.
- ⁸² Coote Archive, Richard Morrison to Sir Charles Coote, 29 August 1822. In the same letter he also remarks: 'I think if I am not misinformed as to the localities, that the principle ... on which those designs are formed is not the rational and true one...'
- ⁸³ *ibid.*, 7 September 1822.
- ⁸⁴ It is perhaps also worth pondering why it was not more appropriate to re-site the stable yards; considering the simplicity of the architecture and materials there, little difficulty could have been presented by placing them elsewhere. It was perhaps the overall relationship of the yards

to one another and the walled gardens which decided against this, and made a new site for the house more attractive, despite the greater expense. Some difficulty also remains in understanding why, if the position of the house had moved, no basement was provided beneath most of what has, up to now, been considered as Madden's wing. The provision of a basement beneath the billiard room certainly could have been dug out from the existing building. However, the same reasons that decided that there would be no basement under Madden's wing may have decided this, as it may have been desirous not to have household activities conducted beneath the principal reception rooms.

⁸⁵ The resulting decision to abolish Madden's block, and presumably also most of the remaining eighteenth-century structures, is perhaps difficult to reconcile with some of Morrison's words; for example, he constantly reassured Sir Charles that minimal alterations were necessary to adapt his design to the existing buildings, in one instance asserting that 'it is a principle to which I have adhered to remove as little of what has been done as is consistent with the objects to be obtained', Coote Archive, Richard Morrison to Sir Charles Coote, 10 September 1822. Furthermore he had responded to Sir Charles' question about relocating the entrance to an alternative position with the comment that while 'doubtless the entrance front should not be on the south side ... after giving much consideration to the subject, I do not think that any arrangement of your plan can be made that would change the entrance front without involving alterations and expenses that I cannot recommend'; *ibid.*, 17 September 1822. The difficulties surrounding this situation can be explained almost entirely by the dearth of material for the events that followed the initial consideration of proposals. The correspondence between the architect and patron ends abruptly at the end of 1822 when so much had yet to be discussed. However, the only letter in this collection from Sir Charles Coote makes it clear that further drawings were still being produced; *ibid.*, 17 September 1822

⁸⁶ NLI, O'Beirne papers, MS 8647 (1).