

Introduction: the Bulletin and the Journal

DESMOND GUINNESS

IN 1957 MARIGA AND I WERE RENTING CARTON, THE GREAT HOUSE NEAR Maynooth, Co Kildare, designed by Richard Castle in 1739 for the Earls of Kildare, later the Dukes of Leinster, which had been sold to Lord Brocket in 1949. We had been looking for a farm to buy, specifically one with a beautiful house. Kilshannig, Bellamont Forest and Rathbeale Hall were all for sale, as were numerous other architectural masterpieces, but living at Carton, surrounded by a thousand acres of beauty, was such a pleasure that, until we had to, we were in no hurry to move. During our stay there, in 1956 and 1957, we had no responsibilities as to the farm, the house or the garden. We were therefore free to explore Dublin, as well as the rest of the country, and our mutual interest in and concern for Ireland's architectural heritage had time to develop.

The white and gold organ in the saloon at Carton had been installed in 1857, and the Music Association of Ireland arranged a concert to celebrate its one hundredth anniversary while we were living there. It struck me that the programme was very elegantly printed, in a beautiful typeface, using red and black on a handmade cream paper. We were told that the Dolmen Press had printed it, and, when in 1958 we started to plan the *Quarterly Bulletin*, we went to Liam Miller, who owned the Press, and he agreed to undertake the printing for us. More than that, he laid out the title page, helped to word the membership form, and generally encouraged us in this leap into the dark.

Maurice Craig, an old friend, then working in London, wrote 'A note on courthouses' for the first quarterly issue, dated January-March 1958. Thomas Ulick Sadleir's widow produced a piece by him on 'Industry at Celbridge', which, as Sadleir had been a mainstay of the original Georgian Society, forged a significant link with the past. The fledgling Irish Georgian Society was officially founded on 25 February 1958, fifty years to the day after the founding of the Georgian Society in 1908. The original society was to last five years and publish five photographic volumes as a record of buildings and interiors 'doomed to decay and disappear-

ance'. It was not a preservation group in that it did not engage in planning battles or undertake restoration work as does its successor. When the five years had run their course, the Society came to an end.

The Dolmen Press used to set each letter in the old way of printing, and illustrations had to be clustered together on art paper instead of going with the text. Accordingly, from 1963 the Dolmen Press was deserted temporarily for a printer with off-set litho, allowing the illustrations to interleave more freely with the text. The first article to benefit from this was that on the 'Irish career of Gilbert Stuart', by Charles Merrill Mount. An engraving of the Conolly Folly, taken from a vignette on Noble and Keenan's map of Co Kildare, published in 1752, was on the cover of the first issue, and the cover designs changed from year to year. The folly was soon to become the Society's first job of restoration and repair (1960), and has served as our distinctive emblem ever since.

The *Bulletin* has provided an invaluable platform for the rediscovery of the rich history of Ireland's architectural and artistic heritage. Many architects who have worked in Ireland have come from other countries, and some even left their mark here without setting foot. The Irish careers of William Robinson, Richard Castle, John Nash, Sir William Chambers, Sir John Soane, and Decimus Burton have all found a place in the *Bulletin* over the years, as well as artists such as the painter Francis Wheatley. A complete list of contents of the *Bulletin* is appended to its last issue.

The present volume, *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies – The Journal of the Irish Georgian Society*, celebrates our fortieth anniversary. It is the first volume of the revised and updated academic publication of the Society and recognises our present wider remit. As we are no longer concerned solely with Georgian architecture, this new manifestation of the *Bulletin* acknowledges the importance of the entire spectrum of Ireland's post-medieval architecture and its special need for protection, interpretation, understanding and appreciation. We hope that you will enjoy our new *Journal* as much as the *Bulletin*.

The Society owes a debt of gratitude to the many people involved in the development of the new *Journal*, not least the authors who have contributed so much through their researches. In addition, the Irish Georgian Society would like to thank the following bodies for their generous support of this publication: The Ireland Funds, Marc Fitch Fund, Esme Mitchell Trust, and the School of Irish Studies Foundation.

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co-founder of The Irish Georgian Society