

Foreword

THE KNIGHT OF GLIN

PERHAPS ONE OF THINGS THAT MOST DIFFERENTIATES THE IRISH GEORGIAN Society from other heritage and conservation bodies is this journal and the fact that the publication of research on Irish art and architecture has been at the heart of the Society since its inception. It is very pleasing, then, for me to introduce another volume of *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, especially one packed with so much new research, and at a time when scholarship on Irish art and architecture seems to be flourishing like never before. Increasing the store of knowledge of the past can only benefit our understanding of the present and influence how we view the future. The scrupulous scholarship this journal promotes permeates and informs all aspects of our activities. It is a publication of which the society should be immensely proud, the only such periodical dedicated to the visual and applied arts in Ireland. The standards of scholarship pioneered by its succession of editors is exemplary: each submission goes through rigorous scrutiny, not just by the editor but by a distinguished editorial board and independent scholars working in any given field.

While it has often fallen to the Irish Georgian Society to lament the neglect of our built heritage, the current mini-renaissance in Irish architectural and art historical scholarship must be celebrated, and it is hoped that the awareness of the past that this brings will change attitudes (public and political) towards the vestiges of our architectural heritage. The past year has seen the publication of several important studies which bring different approaches and a nuanced awareness of issues of context to the study of Irish art and architecture. First and foremost amongst these has been Christine Casey's volume on Dublin in the *Buildings of Ireland* series (published by Yale) – the culmination of ten year's work. Christine, it may be noted, is a former editor of the *Irish Georgian Society Bulletin*, the precursor to this journal. Also to be singled out is Finola O'Kane's thought-provoking study of Irish landscape gardening, and the first volume of Anthony Malcomson's magisterial study of Nathaniel Clements. We eagerly await the second installment, which will

shed much light on Clements' architectural practice. It is also very pleasing that after many years, Samuel Chearnley's *Miscelanea Structura Curiosa* has finally seen the light of day in a particularly handsome and scholarly volume compiled by our own editor William Laffan. The *Miscelanea* was published by Churchill House Press and, in a most encouraging initiative, CHP plans further volumes under William's stewardship; a catalogue of my own collection of topographical views of Ireland will be launched in January 2006 – to which many members of the Society have contributed – while I understand that monographic studies of Thomas Roberts and Michael Stapleton are also under way.

Toby Barnard has continued his remarkable publishing record with his indispensable *Guide to Sources for the History of Material Culture in Ireland*. Despite its title, it is a highly amusing read, and at times a trenchant critique of sloppy thinking and practice in the world of Irish heritage – though, pleasingly, Toby singles out this journal as a valuable resource for scholars. Lord Roden has produced an exemplary study of the history of the landscape of Tollymore Park. Also to be warmly congratulated is Peter Murray and his team at the Crawford Art Gallery in Cork for their quite remarkable exhibition of James Barry's work and the accompanying scholarly catalogue. Gandon Editions Kinsale, who design and produce this journal for us, produced the catalogue, which is one of the most elegant books published on Irish art in recent years. Perhaps the National Gallery will consider a similar show to mark the bicentenary in three years time of that other great Irish neo-classicist, Hugh Douglas Hamilton.

This journal continues the tradition of the *Bulletin*, while greatly extending its scope. The large body of research published in the *Bulletin* is now available on CD-ROM. A further important tool for scholars has recently been assembled by Emmeline Henderson, the Society's Conservation Officer – a catalogue of all Irish theses and dissertations relating to architecture and the allied arts. This will go on-line shortly, and it is hoped that information about it will also be published in hard copy, possibly in the next volume of this journal.

The sheer range of material and variety of approaches included in this volume of *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies* shows the vitality of research into Irish art and material culture. Charlotte Yeldham gives a wholly new account of Maria Spilsbury Taylor's time in Ireland. This will form a chapter in her forthcoming book on the subject, and anyone who has further information on the subject is requested to get in touch with Charlotte via the IGS office. Tony Hand, himself a mining engineer, investigates the Ardraccan quarry, the source of limestone for so many eighteenth-century Irish buildings. Rachel Finnegan uses unpublished material to examine the collecting and patronage of the 2nd Earl of Bessborough; Ruth Thorpe sheds important new light on the career of Thomas Cooley, while Seán

Lynch (a visual artist whose latest installation piece was exhibited at this year's Kilkenny festival to great acclaim) offers a careful reading of the stuccowork façades executed by Pat MacAuliffe in Listowel and Abbeyfeale. Further architectural studies include Kevin Mulligan and Patricia McCarthy's well-argued investigation of the career of Dominic Madden, which explores much new source material. This is the first part of a substantial contribution to our knowledge of the architect; the second will be published next year. As part of his ongoing research into his family's patronage, William Molesworth offers a fascinating iconographic investigation of a group of Florentine baroque medals. Joseph McMinn follows up his previous article for the journal on Swift and architecture with an important account of the Dean and painting. Mary Plunkett explores in detail, and for the first time, the illuminated manuscripts of Sr Mary Clare Augustine Moore, while the volume ends with a delightful piece by Mairead Dunlevy on Dublin fireworks.

The present is the last volume of the journal to be funded through the generosity of the estate of the late Paul Mellon. We are deeply grateful for this munificence, and hope that the previous five volumes we have published as a result is a worthy homage to a great collector and patron of the arts.

This is a time of great change for the Society, with encouraging developments such as the establishment of the Irish Heritage Trust. It is time to look forward as well as back, and I am delighted to be able to welcome Nick Sheaff as our new director. Nick has returned to Ireland after twenty-one years. He previously served as the first director of the Irish Architectural Archive. His experience in the world of business will be invaluable to us. Finally, I must thank William Laffan, whose scholarship on Irish art is now well known, for all the hard work that editing this journal entails.

Many years ago, in less happy times for Irish scholarship. Maurice Craig and I introduced our book *Ireland Observed* with the quote from Kierkegaard: 'It is not worthwhile remembering that past which cannot become a present.' Much has changed for the better since then, and the scrupulous investigation of Ireland's past which this journal encourages will, I hope, make for a better future for Ireland's material culture and built environment.
