



# A ‘good figure’: the story of George Cockburn (1764-1847) as revealed through contemporary letters and papers

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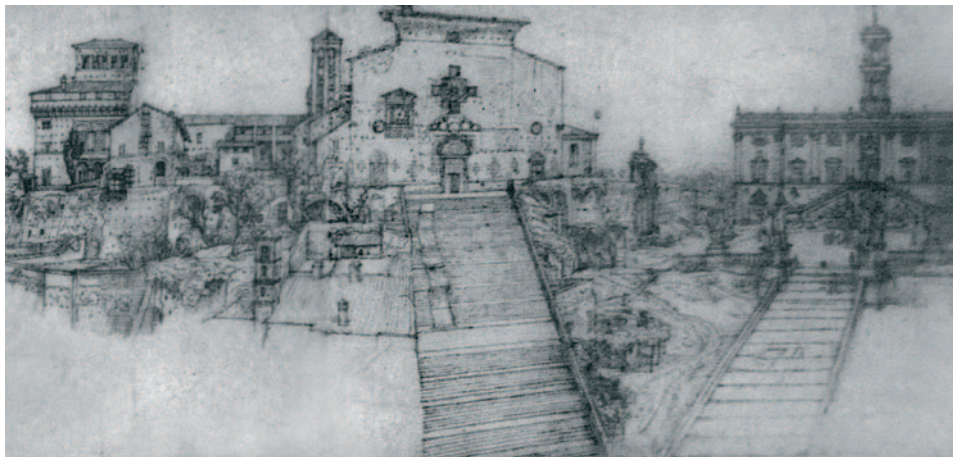
JANE MEREDITH

**B**UT FOR DR EDWARD MCPARLAND’S INTEREST IN ANDREW CALDWELL (1733-1808), this article, or the thesis on which it is based, would probably never have been written, or at least not by this writer. Caldwell (Plate 1), the owner of the Newgrange estate, county Meath, was a barrister and fine arts connoisseur with a special interest in architecture. McParland was of the opinion that, writing under the pseudonym ‘L’, he was probably the author of the important series of ‘essays’ published in the *Freeman’s Journal* between 27th December 1768 and 7th February 1769 (the time of the Royal Exchange competition). These critical essays were considered by McParland to be ‘the most explicit recommendation of neo-classicism to be published in Ireland in the eighteenth century’.<sup>1</sup> An article written by Luisa Vertova in the *Burlington Magazine* in July 1995, entitled ‘A late renaissance view of Rome’,<sup>2</sup> reinforced the belief that Caldwell had a special interest in architecture. It concerned the discovery in an English private collection of a previously unpublished late-sixteenth-century pen-and-ink drawing entitled *View of the Campidoglio, 1598-1603* (Plate 2). Inscribed on the back of the drawing was an annotation reading: ‘sent from Rome to Andrew Caldwell by his uncle Colonel Heywood 1776’. It turned out that not only was the private collection owned by a descendant of the Caldwell family, but that another family member, living in Suffolk, owned a considerable archive of Caldwell Papers, which included nine bound volumes entitled *Caldwell of Newgrange*. These proved to be a veritable trea-

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1 – Martin Ferdinand Quadel, *ANDREW CALDWELL (1733-1808)*

c.1779, oil on canvas (private collection)



2 – VIEW OF THE CAMPIDOGLIO

*sent from Rome to Andrew Caldwell by his uncle, Col. Nathaniel Heywood, in 1776*

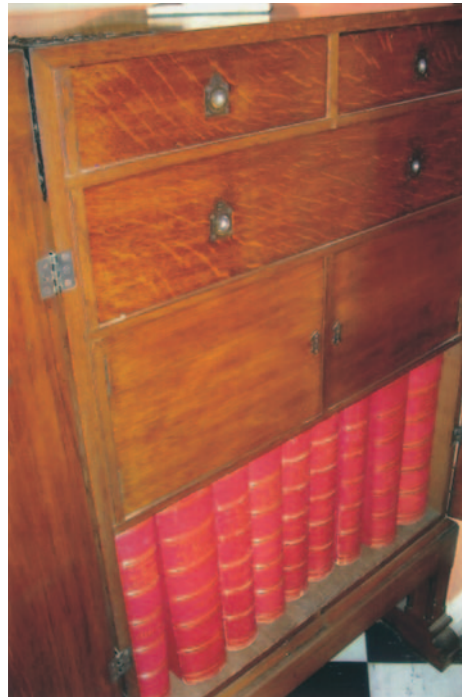
*1598-1603, pen and ink, 37 x 107 cm (detail) (private collection)*

sure trove, and their discovery heralded, for this writer, the beginning of a year of excitement and discovery which involved a (temporary) move to England.


The beautiful cabinet containing the archive (Plates 3, 4) was specially commissioned in 1869 by Captain Charles Benjamin Caldwell (1809-1896). This Caldwell was at that time the owner of the Newgrange estate, having inherited it from his father, Charles Andrew Caldwell, in 1859. For many years, he continued living at his London home in Clarges Street, Mayfair, but some years before he died he moved, with his wife Sophia Frances (Cust), to Bray, county Wicklow. It was he who organised the collection, assembly and binding of the Caldwell Papers, employing John Tuckett (Plate 5) to do the job, and also to compile the family pedigree. In April 1942, Sotheby & Co, of 34-35 New Bond Street, London, in their valuation of heirlooms under the will of C.H.B. Caldwell (Charles Henry Bulwer, who inherited the Newgrange estate from his uncle Charles Benjamin in 1896),<sup>3</sup> specified that ‘The family letters, papers, accounts, deeds, medals and orders contained in nine volumes, three drawers and two small cupboards in a metal bound cabinet’<sup>4</sup> were among the heirlooms. The majority of correspondence in the nine bound volumes in the cabinet concern Andrew Caldwell (sixty-eight letters written by him to family members, and 353 to him), as well as a considerable number of letters written between various family members and friends. Numbered among his relatives, friends and correspondents were Lord Charlemont, the antiquarian Joseph Cooper Walker, the Shakespearian scholar Edmund Malone, the founder of the Linnean Society James Smith, the artists Conrad Gessner and John Warren, Lord Bessborough, Brian Lawless (later to become Lord Cloncurry), Coquebert de

Montbret, the Bishop of Dromore, Frederick Hamilton (brother of Sir William), Lord Mountjoy, Thomas Pennant (Welsh naturalist and antiquary), Lady Eleonor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby (the ‘Ladies of Llangollen’), his special friends Frederick Trench and the collector and bibliophile Alexander Mangin, to name but a few. Of the sixty-eight letters written by Andrew Caldwell, thirty were to his father (many describing his life at Glasgow University, where Adam Smith was one of his teachers) and twenty to his nephew and ward George Cockburn, the subject of this article. Of the 353 letters received by him, only six were from Cockburn. As Cockburn was not the subject of the thesis being researched, no effort was made during the year in England to trace further correspondence between him and his uncle. However, on returning to Dublin (and again tipped off by McParland) I attended a lecture given by Dr Ray Astbury who, because of his interest in the classical marble artefacts collected by Cockburn on his travels (many of which are exhibited in the UCD Classical museum), had discovered that the National Army Museum in London held a considerable number of letters exchanged between Cockburn and his uncle, Andrew Caldwell. Painstakingly, from a microfilm, Astbury had transcribed nearly all of them. We then did a swap, and found, to our

*3, 4 – Cabinet (1869) especially made to house the Caldwell papers, bound in nine volumes*




*Captain Caldwell*



**J<sup>RO</sup> TUCKETT,**  
**BOOKBINDER,**  
*To the Queen & Royal Family,*  
**66, GREAT RUSSELL STREET, BLOOMSBURY.**

1871	Plan of New Grange cleaned & flattened	- 10 -	
21	<span style="margin-left: 20px;">Spent under glass</span>		
	Transcript sent to Edinburgh (Grant of Arms)	- 3 -	
20	Letters & papers 2 Vols Crown folio Half bound		
	Morocco Cloth sides &c &c 1878	1 10 -	
	Do Mending & guarding the papers in D <sup>o</sup>	2 12 -	
	Wares Ireland Fols. caps. Folio bound in calf	- 15 -	
	Parquetage of Ireland Royal 4 <sup>to</sup> Full		
	bound calf dupes of the full 8 <sup>vo</sup>	17 -	
	Dressy Fabrics 5 Vols Royal 8 <sup>vo</sup> D <sup>o</sup>	2 5 -	
	Chart of Antimony Crown 8 <sup>vo</sup> D <sup>o</sup>	- 6 -	
	<del>Zoologia Myrtica D<sup>o</sup></del>	<del>- 6 -</del>	
	New light of Alchemy 12 <sup>mo</sup> D <sup>o</sup> D <sup>o</sup>	- 5 6 -	
	Collins Philosophy improved D <sup>o</sup> D <sup>o</sup>	- 5 6 -	
	Valentine Will & Testament D <sup>o</sup> estimating	- 6 -	
	Vanity of Arts Crown 8 <sup>vo</sup> D <sup>o</sup> D <sup>o</sup>	- 6 6 -	
	Macrococosm & Micrococosm D <sup>o</sup> D <sup>o</sup>	- 6 6 -	
	<b>£ 10 14 -</b>		

2<sup>d</sup> for J Tuckett  
 7 Farreent  
 19/7/71



5 – Letterhead and account (detail) from John Tuckett, who bound the Caldwell papers

opposite

6 – Robert Hunter  
 MRS COCKBURN c.1761-69,  
 oil on canvas, 74 x 61 cm  
 (private collection)

great satisfaction, that several of the Caldwell letters were in answer to Cockburn's, and vice versa. It is therefore on these two sets of papers, together with further material found in the British Library, that this article is based.

In his early years, Cockburn (hence to be called George) led a happy and uncomplicated life. He was the only child of Dublin merchant and army agent George Cockburn senior (1712-1775) and his wife Ann (1734-1769), Caldwell's sister. At some time after their marriage in 1761, Ann's portrait was painted by Robert Hunter (Plate 6),<sup>5</sup> and a break in the story is called for here in view of new information in the Caldwell Papers concerning this artist.

Until now, the exact year of Robert Hunter's death has not been known, although he was generally thought (by Strickland, among others)<sup>6</sup> to have died in or after 1803. As Anne Crookshank points out in her article in the *Irish Arts Review* on



Robert Hunter,<sup>7</sup> Hunter's name continued to appear annually in the *Dublin Directory* until 1803, although Crookshank does not think that he painted much after the sale of his paintings in 1792. She suggests that, like many people who don't change names in the telephone directory, he simply forgot to take it out, but assumes that he died in 1803 or shortly afterwards. The new material would seem to confirm that, in fact, he died in January or February 1801. Andrew Caldwell knew him and regretted his death. In a letter to Edmund Malone dated 5th February 1802 he wrote:

It is strange how soon with most people minute circumstances are forgotten, I had occasion to call the other day on old Mrs. Hunter, she is bedridden & her memory failing, Hunter is dead just 12 months, & the Granddaughter could not recollect the date or day on which he died, poor Hunter is a great loss to one, he was full of Anecdote of Painters, Engravers and other ingenious

Artists that were either of this country or ever came into the Country, he knew them all, he had been long consider'd as the Senior of the Profession.<sup>8</sup>

To return to Ann, she was never in the best of health, and early in 1763 became dangerously ill. She recovered and was taken to convalesce at Bristol Hott Wells. In June 1763 her husband wrote to his mother-in-law, Eliza Caldwell:

Ann recovers wonderfully, has a vast appetite ... She drinks asses milk half a pint between five & six, rises at seven, at the Wells before Eight, drinks three glass of watter 30 Minuts between each glass when she exercises in the post chace (for we are obliged to keep on) comes home to Brekfast, on horseback by ten, rides on the Downs for two houres, to the Well half after twelve, takes another Glass Watter, Dinnes at two, at four drinks the Watter again, home to tea, then to the rooms, at nine she craves some light thing for supper (a Rabitt or so) & in bed by ten. This method pursued will make her well & strong in a short time, that I hope to be at home by the beginning of August.<sup>9</sup>

Ann must have been pregnant at the time of their return as George was born in February 1764.<sup>10</sup> The family lived in considerable comfort in their house in Cavendish Street (now 7 Parnell Square), an inventory of the entire contents of which Cockburn senior compiled in 1763. The original of this inventory was discovered recently in the British Library,<sup>11</sup> and what a relief it was to find it. The inventory had been available before this (held by the Irish Architectural Archive),<sup>12</sup> but was only a copy of a copy of the original. This was made, in a school notebook, by C.P. Curran, in his very difficult to read spidery handwriting. He wrote that it was 'made by me from a copy lent me by Mr. Naylor of Liffey Street and made by him from the original in his possession. He purchased it at the Hamilton Rowan sale at Shanganagh Castle.' The beautiful clear handwriting of the original inventory is shown in Plate 7, and it lists every detail of the contents of the furniture and equipment of the house, room by room, down, for instance, to the last chair, piece of kitchen equipment, item of jewellery ('a Brilliant Diamond Ring 1 stone 15 grams £113 15s 0d'), chair cover, ring 'for pulling out the window shutters', picture, etc. The pictures (it is not made clear whether they are paintings or prints) are not separately listed but are included in the inventory for each room, and there are 140 of them altogether, of which only twenty are attributed, excluding twenty-four Dixon flower-and-bird pictures. The estimated value of the pictures ranges from £1 0s 0d to £56 17s 6d ('A picture sent from Rome by Col. Forester'), and there is a preponderance of attributions to sixteenth-century Netherlandish painters – Ferdinand Bol, Jan Fyt, Jan Wyck, David Teniers the Younger, Franz Hals, Adriaen Brouwer, Rembrandt van Ryn, Swanenburgh and Jan Both. Two Irish painters are listed, Butts and Samuel Dixon, and the English landscape painter Richard Wilson is represented

twice. The French painter Jean-Baptiste Jouvenet contributed one of the most highly valued pictures, *Eneas & Venus*, at £25. The line-up of painters is impressive, but it is important to keep in mind that mistaken or wishful attributions were common in the eighteenth century, as, indeed, they can still be to this day. However, this original record of the entire contents of a mid-eighteenth-century Dublin gentleman's house is an important find, and awaits further study.

The family was not to enjoy its peaceful existence for long because, on 20th April 1769, Ann died tragically young, and George, only five years old, was left motherless. While Cockburn senior grieved for his young wife, Charles and Eliza Caldwell mourned the loss of their eldest daughter. On 26th August 1769 Charles wrote to his wife: 'My ever dearest, ... I rejoyce at the account you give of little George and hope he will be spared to make some amends for our dear Nancy [their pet name for Ann] that is gone.'<sup>13</sup> Although later to become a boarder at Dr William Darby's school at Bally Gall, near Portarlington, at first the young George continued to live at home in Cavendish Street with his father, fondly supervised by his maternal grandparents and two maiden aunts, Francis (Fanny) and Henrietta, who all still lived a short distance away in their family home in Henry Street. On Sundays, the two families (including George's uncle Andrew Caldwell) would meet in the Strand Street Presbyterian Meeting House, their regular contributions to which are recorded in the Strand Street subscription books.<sup>14</sup>

With his father's death in May 1765, any kind of order and security that had been established in the eleven-year-old George's life after the death of his mother was disrupted. His father had appointed Andrew Caldwell as his guardian, and there's no doubt that this responsibility totally disrupted Caldwell's life as well. He was a forty-one-year-old barrister, a bachelor, with little experience of children, who almost overnight was required to assume responsibility for George and his affairs. As the Caldwell Papers show, he took this responsibility very seriously, moving into Cavendish Street and keeping meticulous accounts tying up Cockburn senior's affairs and relating to household expenses and George's needs.<sup>15</sup> At the time of his father's death, George was home from boarding school recovering from measles, and for attendance on him Caldwell recorded that Dr Cleghorn was paid £11 7s 6d. His education features largely in the accounts, including such items as:

To Dr. Darby's fees for the year ending 25 October 1775: £27 8s 6d; Latin master: £1 2s 9d; Writing master: 11s 4d; Drawing master: 11s 4d; Paid yourself going to school: 2s.8d; Coachman for bringing you to school: 1s 1d; Expenses on the road to & from Portarlington: £1 15s 10d; Butter, Bread, Sugar & Chaise Hire to Ballygall: 2s 2d; the Drawing Master 6 months ending this day: £4 18s 2d; Hudson for cleaning your teeth: 2s 2d; You and Master Cleghorn going to the Play: 6s 6d; You for Toys & Presents: 14s 0d;



19 <sup>th</sup>		Street Parlour		13	
		Polish English Paper	4	14	
		73 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> Yards of Guilding	6	13	10
		do Parandole & Two Lagned Sockets	4	14	
		do Looking Glass	25		
		Ten Chairs & Two Arm Chairs <small>10y. 10 Chairs 2. 2. 8. 1A 2m Chairs 2. 2. 8. 1A-16</small>	18	16	
		do Shaving Chair	1		
		do Mahogany Chestern Stand	1	10	
		do Mahogany Side Boards	3	8	3
		do Mahogany Coope for Bottles	1	1	8
		do Mahogany Breakfast Table	1	10	
		do Mahogany writing Desk & Drawers cast in Lead	11	7	6
5		Twentyn Pictures	68		
		do Steel Grate & Fire Irons	4	11	
		do Marble Italian Chimney Piece w <sup>th</sup> Gilt decorations	16		
		do Fire Screen folding	2		
m.		do Carpet Brought from Lawley	8	5	
		Two Maron Window Curtains 13 Yards in each at 3/4 A. 6. 8 making 16. each 1. 12.	5	18	8
		Two Italian Shades for the Windows	4		
		Four Lagned Rings for Pulling out the Wind <sup>er</sup> Shutters	8		
		Four Lagned Pins for the Window Curtains 10 each	3	4	
		One of Deys best locks for the door going into the Hall	1		
		One do for the door going into the back Parlour	1		
1765 June 24 1770. March 25		One Willton Carpet. w <sup>th</sup> 26 <sup>th</sup> making 56 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> yds at 6/6 <small>1765 Jan<sup>ry</sup> 1. 3 1766</small>	18	5	7 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>
		A View of the Rhine by Franckenburghy <small>my Whit<sup>ch</sup></small>	1	14	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub>
		A Sleeping Parour	1	16	6
		A Dining Chair at D <sup>o</sup>	1	16	6
		Carried to Opposite Side	21	3	14

7 - Inventory of household furniture, Cavendish Street House, 1st January 1763  
(detail, p.21; original in the British Library)

the Fencing Master: £2 5s 6d.; the Riding Master: £2 5s 6d.; for Barley Sugar to you: 2s 8d; You for Pocket Money etc. in Easter Hollidays: 5s 5d; Maintaining Shoeing etc. your little horse 14 months: £14 0s 0d; Mrs. Caldwell on your account: £26 0s 0d.

The frequent mention of Mrs Caldwell (Plate 8) in the accounts is significant as, from the beginning, she was a constant presence in Cavendish Street, and on the death of her husband Charles in March 1776, she and her two daughters moved there permanently, leaving Alicia Caldwell (Charles's sister, her nephews' and nieces' much loved 'Aunt Ally') in Henry Street. This must have lifted an enormous weight from Andrew Caldwell's shoulders, although their presence did not always please him, as we learn from a letter George (now in the army) wrote to him from Florence in March 1783: 'I feel much for your present situation in Cavendish Row, as you are obliged to see the fireside & 3 old women every morning & which you seem to dislike so much'.<sup>16</sup> There can be no doubt that George was upset by all the sadness and upheaval in his young life and that this was reflected in his behaviour is suggested in Dr. Darby's letter to Andrew Caldwell dated 3 April 1776. It reads:

Sir, ... Believe me I do not wish yr little Ward to leave me either at Easter or Whitsuntide – At this Season I give but 5 days & at Whitsuntide but two; Very few Boys leave me at either time, those only who have their Parents in Town – I shall with Pleasure keep him the two long Vacations, for I know he will be very troublesome to you & good Mrs Caldwell. I am with great Esteem Dr Sir Yr most Obedt Humble Servt Wm. Darby.<sup>17</sup>

It seems that, even though he only came home for occasional holidays, the responsibility of looking after George weighed heavily on Caldwell and his mother, and the summer of 1777 found Caldwell in London, staying with Lord Bessborough (for whose Irish estate he was the agent and his friend, Peter Walsh, the manager) and looking for a suitable boarding school for George. In a letter to his mother dated 26th July 1777 Caldwell wrote:

I had conversation upon the subject [a school for George] with Mr. Eustace, poor Cockburn's great friend, he is a man of much Wisdom and Experience, he is strongly against our sending George so far away from us, and advises to get a tutor to stay with him in the vacations that would be a constant companion and never leave him to the servants or improper company, but this you know is utterly impracticable nor have we room for such a Person'. Referring to one possible school Caldwell continues: 'the terms are pretty high, but then our little fellow would be taken the best care of possible and Canning thinks there are no vacations allowed'.<sup>18</sup>



8 – Martin Ferdinand Quadel, *ELIZABETH HEYWOOD, WIFE OF CHARLES CALDWELL ESQ. OF DUBLIN*  
c.1779, oil on canvas, 91 x 79 cm (detail) (private collection)

It is obvious that Caldwell has no wish to take heed of Mr Eustace's wise and kind advice and that, as far as he is concerned, one of the advantages of the school under discussion is that there are 'no vacations allowed'! This becomes even clearer in a subsequent letter to his mother when, the first school having fallen through, Caldwell writes, on 7th August: 'I really don't know what to do, every place I have enquired about there is the same objection, & the Masters & their families constantly go away in the Vacations, thinking it necessary after the laborious life they lead.'<sup>19</sup> He also notes that nowhere has he found anything that can compare with the Quakers at Ballitore. At last, on 25th August 1777, Caldwell writes that he has found a suitable school at Chiswick, and that the master, Mr Rose, keeps eight or nine boys with him during the vacations, for which 'some additional consideration is paid'.<sup>20</sup> Caldwell urges his mother to get George despatched as soon as possible and to try to find 'some kind person' who will undertake to accompany him on the journey. He tells her that Mr and Mrs Rose will not expect George to be 'completely well rigg'd' and have undertaken to purchase any 'cloaths' he may need, and Mr Rose has requested that George should bring with him a copy of Robertson's 'History of America' unbound, which can be purchased at Wilsons on Dame Street. In a letter to his mother dated 29th August 1777 Caldwell writes: '...your Account of George is very unpleasant, I am the more confirm'd in my determination not to stir from this 'till I see him fairly settled here. I plainly perceive there is not an hour to be lost ... contrive any way in the World or any Expence to send George over.'<sup>21</sup> On 31st August 1777 Mrs Caldwell wrote to her son:

this morn I have parted with our Darling Child nothing but absolute necessity could have reconciled me to it, there is a good prospect of his getting safe to you I believe he will land tonight he went in the Clermont Packet, and there was a Genteel young Gentleman a Captain Doyn that Fanny addressed, when she told her name he said he knew her family very well that he was going to London & woud with pleasure take all the care he could of the Child ... I gave George 14 Gns he declared he would not go if he did not get all the mony. I persuaded him to put 10 Gns in the trunk & [illegible word] enough he put it in one of his shoes & 4 Gns & sum silver in his pocket he went away in great health & spirits. I went for him on Friday and by talking to Darby I found out the reason he was so very desirous to leave the school, he was the Ringleader & Contriver of a Baring out & vowed he would shoot [illegible word] if he broke into the Room & George told me he certainly would have fired at him but not with Balls, and that Darby never was so fond of him since & gave him harder lessons and Darby told me if you had consulted him he would have advised to do what you have done, for he did not think he would ever have come to much good if he was kept here. I would

advise you to acquaint the man he is going to as much as you can of his Temper he can't bear Contradictions, and is very resolute in accomplishing his on schemes, and he openly declares he hats the Book, if the man should press him or forse him too much in that respect I am apt to fear he will run away or do some desperate thing ... he says he will go into the Army ... he has a great dale of sense and if he can be managed may make a Good Figure, he must be kept in aw & yet I don't believe he would bear severity – I don't know but that one whipping might do him good tho he always says let me see the man that durst do it don't let him see this letter he would never forgive it.<sup>22</sup>

Fanny Caldwell wrote to her brother at the same time: 'Be sure tell the Gentleman what a queer indulged child he has been ever since he was born & that his manners are to be attended to as much as the improvement of his mind & to make him hold up his Head – Oh how I long to have him safe with you.'<sup>23</sup>

And so, the young George, now thirteen years of age, embarked on the next stage of his life in high spirits. He enjoyed the adventure of the journey, and soon settled down into his new school, which was not the one Caldwell had originally chosen for him. On 4th September 1777 Caldwell wrote to his mother:

he is not to go to Mr. Rose's, but to Mr. Crawford's in the same Neighbourhood, after I had almost determined on the other, I got an intimation ... that at Rose's school the living was too poor & wretched and would not answer for a Gentleman's child ...the appearances [of the new school] are delightful, beyond Hackney, the House magnificent, charming Gardens, and every thing in a fine stile, the Master is a Clergyman ... Mr. Crawford tells me the whole expence including every possible charge, will be about a hundred and ten or twenty pounds pr ann, I think that nothing in a case of this importance, and as he is to remain in the Vacations of which there are but two, it is rather cheap.<sup>24</sup>

We hear no more of George until, in a letter to Caldwell dated 7th May 1781, his friend William Cleghorn writes:

I have had the pleasure of seeing Mr. George frequently & find him much improved. He really has acquired a justness & propriety of thinking on a variety of subjects above his years. His taste for painting is very considerable, & his judgement better than that of many, who have seen many more paintings. His understanding is excellent and am sure under your direction it will be well cultivated.<sup>25</sup>

There was to be little opportunity for Caldwell to 'direct' his ward (although, as we shall see, George continued to cultivate his taste in painting independently of his

uncle) because in a letter, also written on 7th May 1781, George dropped a bombshell: he had joined the army. This is an important letter, and as it heralds the beginning of his life career in the army, it is transcribed in full below:

*From George Cockburn, London, 7 May 1781, to his uncle Andrew Caldwell at Cavendish Row, Dublin.*

Dear Uncle

I wrote to you the day before yesterday to tell you that I got a Commission in the 1st Regt of Guards; Mr. Forbes advanced the money, & you will be so good as to send over £1300 to pay him. It is not likely I shall be sent abroad, but if it should happen so I must not hear of any objection from Ireland, for I will go. I should be obliged for my own honour. I should have no objection to go abroad, but as I know you would not like it, I hope it may not happen, indeed there is no likelihood of it, but if it should happen so, you must be content, for I would go. I am now satisfied (you will say for the first time in my life) & my friends must be satisfied, for I am resolved to stay in the Army. Perhaps they think I will quit in 4 or 5 years, but they will find themselves much mistaken. I shall stick to the Guards.

I sent you a Catalogue of the Exhibition.<sup>26</sup> It is thought a very bad one.

I want 12 Shirts & stocks immediately. I have but the 8 which I got in Dublin, they must be made & sent directly. I must get half a dozen here for I have not enough to have a clean one every day. If I cant have them in 3 weeks time, don't have them made, but let me know & I will then get them here. I could not do without for a longer time.

As to money it will cost £100 to fit me out & I must have £200 a year beside pay & £100 at setting out – that is the least that any of the officers have. You will write to Mr. Forbes about it & also desire him to pay for the Cloaths I mentioned to you.

The Commission cost £1100.

I shall take proper care of myself here, you may depend. As to boarding with anybody, or any of that sort of thing, I would not do it, or anything of the kind upon any account. I told you my Plan, beside there is a regular dinner at the Tilt, where the officers go if they chuse it, & are charged so much a head, & when they don't dine pay nothing of course.

Col. Heywood [George's great-uncle, his grandmother's brother, who was for 30 years equerry to the Duke of Gloucester] has been very civil to me. I shall follow his advise & yours but shant trouble myself about anybody else's for I know that the People in Dublin know no more about the Guards than the Pen I am writing with. Now the whole thing is settled you need give

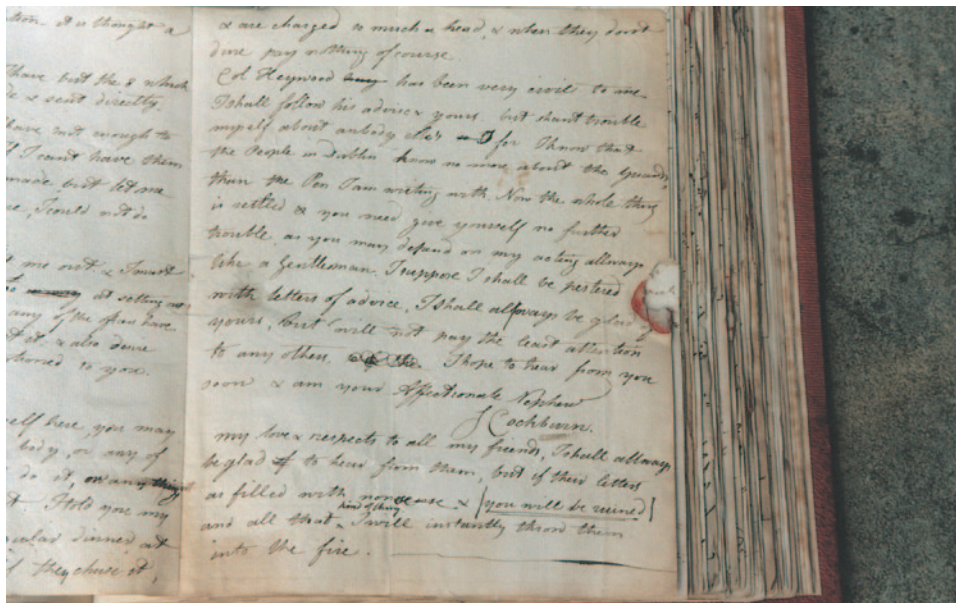
yourself no further trouble, as you may depend on my acting always like a Gentleman. I suppose I shall be pestered with letters of advice, I shall always be glad of yours, but will not pay the least attention to others. I hope to hear from you soon & am your Affectionate Nephew G. Cockburn. My love & respects to all my friends, I shall always be glad to hear from them, but if their letters are filled with nonsense (you will be ruined) and all that kind of thing I will instantly throw them into the fire (Plate 9).<sup>27</sup>

As it turned out, George was to leave England sooner than he had anticipated, and on 20th August 1782 he informed his uncle that he was to set sail from Portsmouth for Gibraltar almost immediately with Lord Howe's fleet. He wrote:

I like the Army and ought therefore to learn my duty & Gibraltar is the place for making a soldier ... one thing I beg is that if you should disapprove of it, you will not make any work about it or show it, as it could not be of the least use now, & I hope you will excuse me when I say that it would make you appear ridiculous.<sup>28</sup>

His presence in Gibraltar, while it was under siege, was George's only experience of military war service throughout his long army career. During his time there he acted as aide-de-camp to General Elliot, and from there he began the correspondence with

9 – Detail from George Cockburn's letter to Andrew Caldwell, dated 7th May 1781, informing him that he had joined the army (private collection)



his uncle that was to continue throughout his several European tours as he availed of all the opportunities the army offered him for travel abroad. No young man could have grasped this opportunity more eagerly, and sadly space will only allow for a small selection of his experiences – taken from the sixty-six letters exchanged between Caldwell and George – to be mentioned.

George was not long in Gibraltar. He arrived on 12th October 1782, and barely three weeks later was writing to his uncle that he was planning to return to England shortly as Gibraltar was ‘well fortify’d by nature, & a vast deal by art & the Spaniards seem at last to give up all thoughts of taking it’.<sup>29</sup> He considered that being an aide-de-camp was only a civility, and ‘to say the truth tho anyone would think an Aid Camp to Gen. Elliott must have a vast deal to do, they have just nothing at all. In military business he does every thing himself; & in respect to attendance he requires none.’<sup>30</sup>

And so, in November 1782, armed with route advice and some very important introductory ‘proper letters’ from General Elliot, George, aged only eighteen, set off on his own mini-Grand Tour, which was to end in London just six months later in May 1783. His tour started in Italy, in Leghorn (Livorno today), which he reached after a terrible six-week voyage when his ship ran aground on the rocks off the coast and was nearly lost. In spite of his alarming storm-tossed journey, he still managed to write to Caldwell from the ship, and stressed, as he was constantly to do thereafter, that whatever his uncle wanted in the way of books, pictures, drawings or ‘anything’ he would do his best to acquire them and promised to take great care of them. His journey from Leghorn continued, via Pisa, to Florence (twice), Rome (twice), Naples, Turin, Geneva, Lyons, Lausanne and Paris. Italy did not impress him and he wrote to his uncle from Florence on 1st January 1783:

In truth I am not much in love with Italy ... The Travelling machines worse than a Dublin car, & tho I believe you think the Irish more addicted to theft, and cheating than any other nation, I assure you that the Lower People here are infinitely worse (money they say is in their blood) but you meet with more civility, & a willingness to oblige from the Gentlemen than in England. I saw the famous [Uffizi] Gallery yesterday. A vast collection of Pictures, Statues, & Antiques, but like all other great collections, would take up a great deal of time to examine well. I shall see it two or three times more.<sup>31</sup>

He moved on to Rome, about which he wrote in a letter from his next port of call, Naples, that in the five weeks he was there he had become ‘well acquainted with every thing remarkable’,<sup>32</sup> but nevertheless felt the need to see most things again. It was during this, his first visit to Rome, that he had his portrait painted by Hugh Douglas Hamilton (Plate 10).<sup>33</sup>

The 15th February 1783 finds George writing to his uncle from Naples,





10 – Hugh Douglas Hamilton, *GEORGE COCKBURN (1764-1847)*

*c.1783, oil on canvas, 25 x 20 cm (whereabouts unknown)*

*(cat. 46, TRICORNS AND TURBANS, exhibition of British portraits, 1987, Martyn Gregory Gallery, London)*

where his ‘proper letters’ from General Elliot held him in good stead as he met the governor, General Acton, and England’s ambassador to Naples, Sir William Hamilton, whose marriage to Emma still lay in the future. George informed Caldwell of the terrible earthquake that had occurred on 5th February 1783 in Calabria, in the toe of Italy, where it was estimated that ‘near a hundred thousand people [had been] lost’.<sup>34</sup> No circumstantial account was available, but the frigate that had brought the news was ‘to sail the first wind to the relief of the poor persons who have survived, but at present the wind is contrary, & the weather bad so that it may be some time before she gets there’.<sup>35</sup>

Having visited Rome for a second time, George himself suffered ‘contrary’ winds during his voyage from there back to Leghorn to collect some baggage, from where, on 20th March 1783, he wrote of his uncomfortable journey:

The Danish ship I came over in was bad indeed, I had the whole Cabin the dimensions was about six feet square & 5 high, so you may imagine how pleasant the time was. The Captain was a very honest good fellow, & done all in his power to make his devil of a Vessel agreeable; there were only 8 people captain sailors passangers & all.<sup>36</sup>

In the same letter, commenting on his second, shorter visit to Rome, he writes: ‘You mention’d in a letter ... Pope Julio’s palace [which today, known as the Villa Guilia, houses one of the world’s premier collections of Etruscan artefacts], & I found it out, but no one resides there, & it is difficult to get in being all shut up. I hear there is some good architecture about it but it is nothing in Rome.’ Later, from Florence, he wrote that although he considered he had seen ‘everything’ in Rome, to describe it would take up too much paper and he would wait until he saw his uncle to tell him about it. He did, however, inform him that he had acquired ‘Volpati’s [Giovanni Battista Volpati, 1633-1706] fine prints of Raphael’s Rooms in the Vatican’,<sup>37</sup> which he considered very cheap ‘at about four pounds’,<sup>38</sup> and offered to send to Rome for a set for Caldwell if he so wished. He was so impressed with Rome that he assured him that should he (Caldwell) ever go there, he would never return!

Moving on, and travelling via Bologne (where he saw many fine pictures which, unfortunately, he did not have the space to elaborate on) and Modena, George arrived in Turin at the beginning of April. He wrote:

I think myself now at home, as the people here are civilized. Such a race as the Romans I never saw, no one law to keep the common people in order. They seem (tho that is the case in Florence & Naples) never happy but when cover’d with dirt, & I assure you that I never saw in the worst part of Ireland, so much misery, dirt, & impudence as in Italy, & all the Foreigners I have seen are of the same opinion.<sup>39</sup>

Early April saw George in Lausanne, whence he writes:

I arrived here this morning from Geneva, where I stay'd 3 days. I shall return tomorrow & the next day set out for Paris. I had fine weather for my journey over the Alps, & the passage is in fact nothing. Some people are fond of making difficulty's of the most trifling things. I had my carriage taken in pieces at the other side of Mount Cenis, cross'd over it (16 miles) & had the carriage ready again with trunks & every thing in 8 hours. This is a poor & dirty town, but in a most charming situation near the Lake of Geneva. The country about it very rich & the people good natured & obliging. Such fellows as the Italians I never saw & hope never to see again. They are much worse than the Savages of America, but the Frenchmen & Swiss I like much.<sup>40</sup>

Nearing the end of his tour, on 20th April, George began his month's visit to Paris, which he thought would, like London, require half a year to know well. Politically it was an exciting time to be there as Benjamin Franklin and David Hartly (a member of the British parliament who represented the British monarch, King George III, at the signing of the Treaty of Paris on 3rd September 1783) were both in town. George writes: 'The English in general visit Dr. Franklin, and the Irish never omit I am told. I have not seen him, as having a Commission it would be improper as yet. I am told he is very cunning, & will take in Mr. Hartly who is at present here treating with the Americans.'<sup>41</sup>

Finally, on 30th May 1783, having been abroad for less than eight months, George arrived back in England, having sailed from Calais to Dover. On that day he wrote a disgruntled letter to his uncle telling him that:

I am in no humour to write tonight, I had some things which I put in my Great Coat Pocket to escape the Custom house officers, & some lace for Mrs. Riall [his future mother-in-law]. I got them safe to the Door, & Davy's thick head forgot to take them out of the chaise, however as the Postillions of this country are honest I hope to get them, & Davy shall walk tomorrow to Dartford – 16 miles – for them, so I hope a march of 32 miles will put some memory into him.<sup>42</sup>

For the next two years the correspondence dries up, but we learn from other sources that George was promoted to captain-lieutenant in the 105th regiment in 1784, and transferred in 1785 to the 65th regiment, then quartered in Dublin. This regiment was sent to Canada in 1785, but its colonel, the Earl of Harrington, seeing George's great potential, kept him behind for recruiting duties and to study the Prussian autumn manoeuvres. So, on 9th September 1785, we find George once more abroad on army business, this time in Brussels, having begun what was to be a lightning

tour, as he is back in London in November, only two-and-a-half months later. He covered a lot of ground during this short time (visiting Belgium, Holland and Germany for the first time, and France for the second) carrying out his military duties, satisfying his curiosity about countries and people new to him, and seeing as much art and architecture as he could, remembering all the while to report conscientiously back to his uncle.

In Ghent he had bought some pictures and was most anxious to hear from Caldwell, who had a large collection of his own, that he approved of his choice. He wrote: 'Mr. Loridon de Ghellinck at Ghent is disposing of his cabinet. I bought 8 for Fifty-one Guineas. I dare say you will think I have been taken in, however wait till you see them.'<sup>43</sup> As we shall see later, Caldwell's approval of his purchases, which heralded the beginning of George's own collection, confirmed that, young as he was, he had already developed a discerning taste for painting. He had also seen 'Mr. Dannoots the bankers' cabinet, which he considered to be very good.

By 27th September 1785 he was in Cologne, having travelled through Belgium, visiting Namur, which he found delightful, Liege, which he considered to be 'a vile place, & full as dirty as Naas',<sup>44</sup> Spa, which equally failed to please, and Verviers, which he thought to be a pretty town. Once into Germany, he stayed in Aix-la-Chappelle for six days, not because he liked it – he considered it to be as bad as Spa – but because he met up with some officers there and then passed through what he considered to be the well-fortified town of Juliers. It comes as no surprise that he didn't like Cologne either, considering it to be 'very large, very ugly, badly built, dirty, narrow ill paved streets; but for all that looks well at a distance'.<sup>45</sup> After a quick dash to Bonn, he planned to set off for Dusseldorf, 'from which place I shall go to Wesel to see 12 Thousand Prussians'.<sup>46</sup> This trip was, of course, connected with his military commitments, which, because of the nature of this journal, have been played down, but a notebook kept by him confirms that, throughout his travels, he was concerned with 'the organization and administration of the British army and those of Germany, Austria, Holland, Spain and France'.<sup>47</sup>

Wesel impressed him greatly, and now in Antwerp, which he had reached via Maastricht, Louvain, Brussels and Malines, he wrote, on 28th October 1785: 'I was very lucky as the next day after my arrival was the Garrison review, a Capt. civilly lent me a horse, & I was greatly entertained. It was the best review I ever saw. There was 8 Thousand men in the field.'<sup>48</sup> Antwerp pleased him, although its hours and climate did not: 'I dine some times at the table D'Hote (that is I dine at their supper). Their hours do not suit me. I am up every morning at six, breakfast at eleven, dine at six, and as the opera is over by eight, go to bed at nine. The weather has been constantly as bad as possible since I left England.'<sup>49</sup> He informs Caldwell in this letter that, when he was in Dusseldorf, he had bought himself a set of prints 'from Rembrandt's pictures', and had also purchased a set as a gift for his uncle. In

a later letter, learning that Caldwell already owns this set, George asks him to present them to 'Mr. Mangan' (Alexander Mangin, Caldwell's great friend, who owned a large print collection).<sup>50</sup>

No one was happier than George's grandmother, Eliza Caldwell, when his tour was over. She wrote:

I sincerely congratulate you on your safe return to England it was true joy to me, after many fears & anxious thoughts about you, I hope you have Don with the Continent for I believe you have seen every spot in it, & by your own Acct. you went thro much fatigue & had great Escapes & I cant help bleaming you for putting your health & strength to such unnecessary trialls, but so far it has given proof of a good Constitution, but you had better not repate it too often for fear of an unfortunate Nick.<sup>51</sup>

His uncle, too, was glad to see him home, and had good reports of the paintings George had bought in Ghent. He wrote:

The Pictures are extremely well for the money, which in the article of Tableaux was a meer nothing, they are all of a convenient size and we can easily hang them up, but at present they remain in the St. Parlour for me to look at – the Frost Piece is the best and a pretty little Picture, the next is the Table Hill & the Dutch India Man, but it is crack'd thro' in coming over, I expect it was join'd formerly, the Frost prevents its being glew'd but shall Doctor it up soon & glew Canvas behind the crack will not be very visible, this picture seems to have been rub'd in the Cleaning. The Van Goyen seems to have been much repainted, the De Oliegar<sup>52</sup> very well but he is not a very capital hand, the old Peasant probably a fine copy, for you never would have got a real Teniers for that Price. The Boors in the Cottage very pretty, I suspect my large Piece of the Wedding [*A Dutch Wedding by Ostade*]<sup>53</sup> is by the same hand, the two little moonlights exceeding cheap and pretty, I never heard the name before, Smeester, & suppose he may be some modern Artist, Hunter the Painter lik'd them all extremely well.<sup>54</sup>

For a while George divided his time between England and Ireland, spending some time at the home of his aunt, Catherine Riall, in Clonmel, and courting his first cousin, Eliza Riall, whom he planned to marry. However, in August 1888, he was on the Continent again, this time in Holland, trying hard to understand Dutch politics:

This town [The Hague], the Windsor of Holland is all for the Prince ... from what I can find out the entire of the middling People are Patriots, The Cannaille as they call them here, & the courtiers (which you will perhaps reckon Canaille) are for the Stadtholder... Every person from the highest to

the lowest is forced to wear orange cockades, indeed men & women are cover'd with orange ornaments. Such are the changes; for ten months ago, that colour was so disliked that they dare not bring Carrots to Market ... I saw all the Court at the Play last night, & was at a review by the Stadtholder in the morning; he is the image of Lord Corhampton, but not so clever I fancy.<sup>55</sup>

Of Rotterdam, as of so many towns and cities he visited, George had little good to say:

Rotterdam is certainly situated with every possible advantage for Trade, and a bank which was at the entrance of the river, was swept away by the Ice in 1784 which has been of great service for large ships but I confess I never was more disappointed in the appearance of a Town. I had heard much of it, & think it a vile, nasty stinking Town as ever I saw, the houses all hang over, many of them as much as the Tower at Pisa. The Quay is destroyed by the Trees, which are very proper & desirable in the country, but of no use in a Town; but darkens the houses & prevents the circulation of the air.<sup>56</sup>

He liked the Dutch better than their towns, however, and considered them to be 'a good natured, quiet, honest people'.<sup>57</sup>

Somehow or other, in spite of his being constantly on the move, George's mail always seemed to catch up with him, and there was a letter awaiting him from his uncle when he arrived in Hanover in mid-October 1788. As well as containing family news, Caldwell informed him of the death of Gainsborough:

Stewart the Painter has resolved to go directly to London the Death of poor Gainsborough leaves such a prospect open, that Stewarts Head is fairly turn'd with the Expectation, I can't get a sight of him, he is always in the Country, I want to get home your Picture, I did intend to have the Madames [presumably his mother and sister] by him & perhaps my own, but I suppose he will not undertake them now.<sup>58</sup>

From this it would seem that Caldwell was acquainted with Gilbert Stuart, and that George's portrait had already been painted by him, but there was no further mention of it in the correspondence, and although it is shown in Lawrence Park's book on Stuart (Plate 11),<sup>59</sup> its present whereabouts is unknown.

Although Stuart returned to London at least twice,<sup>60</sup> he finally settled in Dublin, painting numerous commissions until his departure for what had become the United States in 1793. In fact, he did 'undertake' a portrait of Caldwell, and this is also listed in Sotheby's 'Valuation of heirlooms under the will of C.H.B.Caldwell dec'd',<sup>61</sup> where it is valued at £40. On 19th November 1969, by order of the trustees of the Caldwell estate, Sotheby's sold the portrait, describing it as a 'Portrait of

Andrew Caldwell of Dublin (1733-1808), half length, in black coat, striped silk waistcoat and white lace cravat, in a painted oval. 27in by 24in.' This portrait has now been traced to America and is the property of the United Missouri Bank of St Louis, Missouri, who have given permission for its reproduction here (Plate 12).

In this same letter, Caldwell also urged George to 'be sure to see the fine jet d'eau at the Gardens of Herrenhausen at Hanover the highest in Europe, I believe 100 ft, but there should be a very calm day.'<sup>62</sup> Later, George recounted that he had been unable to see the jet, not because the gardener had been ordered not to play from 1st October, not because he was only to play it in the summer on Sundays (the Tip (or bribe), he explained, was above all orders in Germany and would have easily overcome these obstacles), but because the pipes had been filled and covered with horse dung to prevent the cold from spoiling them!

When he arrived in Brunswick a month later there were two more letters from Caldwell waiting for him, to which he replied at some length. His letters of introduction had once more stood him in good stead, and he wrote that he had found the duke and duchess (Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbützel, and his wife Princess Augusta Charlotte) 'as polite as possible to the English, a great deal more so than they deserve, as they have been guilty of every excess. One fellow not long ago, had the impudence to piss from the boxes on to the Parterre, in the middle of the Opera, however he was well trounced for it he took his beating very quietly.'<sup>63</sup> George reported that although the Duke and Duchess were in great distress because of the recent death of their daughter, Auguste Caroline Friederike, there was 'not the slightest appearance of it. I believe Great People take things very coolly.'<sup>64</sup> George thought little of the palace of Wolfen-Buttel, which, in spite of its fine library, he considered to be not worth the time it took to pass through the Rooms: 'Such an execrable collection of Daubs I never saw, the walls are cover'd.'<sup>65</sup> The duke was an experienced campaigner and a master of modern warfare in the mid-eighteenth century, so was very a useful contact for George, who was invited to dine with him throughout his stay in Brunswick. The duke was not able to help him during his quick trip to Magdeburgh, though, as 'the Commanding Officer positively refused to let me see the fortifications, however, the Tip is superior to orders, even in Prussia. The poor man might have saved himself the trouble of refusing, for I saw every thing.'<sup>66</sup>

Back in Hanover, George wrote a long 'Military dissertation' to his uncle detailing his observations of the activities of the Prussian army, feeling that as he had seen 'Seven days great manoeuvres at Berlin & Potsdam, & for 2 months in detail',<sup>67</sup> he was as well qualified as anyone else to give an opinion, but his next letter, written from Hesse-Cassel, was more concerned with domestic details. On his twenty-sixth birthday the following year, George was to become legally responsible for his own affairs, which had been managed by his uncle since his father's death in

11 – Gilbert Stuart,  
CAPTAIN GEORGE COCKBURN  
(1764-1787)

c.1788, oil on canvas, 76 x 64 cm  
(detail) (whereabouts unknown)  
(from GILBERT STUART, *AN  
ILLUSTRATED DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF  
HIS WORKS*, 4 vols, compiled by L.  
Park (New York, 1926) III, 106)



12 – Gilbert Stuart, ANDREW  
CALDWELL (1733-1808)

c.1790, oil on canvas, 69 x 61 cm  
(detail) (courtesy UMB Financial  
Corporation, Kansas City, MO)





1775. Some time thereafter he was planning to marry Eliza Riall, and therefore asked Caldwell to begin to look for a house of his own for himself, his mother and Fanny (Harriet having since died), and vacate the Cockburn house in Cavendish Street, if possible some time during the following summer. He went on to say that he liked Hesse-Cassel, which was a fine town in a beautiful situation. The Landgrave had a good collection of pictures and there was a handsome square in which was a museum. The front of the museum he considered to be 'very like that of the New hall in Dublin College where Dr Baldwins monument is ... There is a Circus not so large, or near as handsome as that at Bath.'<sup>68</sup>

George was to stay on the Continent for some time longer, finally arriving in Paris in February 1789, having visited Frankfurt, Mons, Valenciennes, Cambray and Peronne. A 'venerable yew tree' in the cloister of Peronne's 'very handsome church' reminded him of Mucross Abbey, but the 'French are not however as superstitious as the Killarnians, as they have cut off several branches; it is still very handsome and large.'<sup>69</sup> In a long letter to his uncle, written from Paris on 16th March 1789, George explained why he had decided to spend more time abroad rather than return to Dublin in April and propose to Eliza Riall as he had originally planned. He wished to act honourably and felt that as he would not be in a position to make a settlement on Eliza until he came into his estate on his twenty-sixth birthday, he might as well, 'having now seen almost every country except the south of France and Spain', rectify that situation and, in the process, 'encounter the Pyranees'.<sup>70</sup> Anxious to learn Spanish, George decided to base himself in Barcelona, where he stayed several weeks learning the language from an excellent Spanish master. With his usual enthusiasm he continued his sightseeing, and described his visit to Mt Serrat, which was

certainly a most extraordinary mountain. There is a Convent of Benedictines on it, & they are tolerably hospitable. I went as the Paddys would say to the very tip top. I may say I slept two nights in the Clouds. The path up the mountain as far as the Convent is very narrow and dangerous, something like that to the top of the waterfall at Powerscourt. The Convent is halfway to the top. I was near three hours going to the convent, & half a day to see the Hermitage on the mountain above the Convent. It is very high, & going up I fancied myself in a Balloon, as the hills & villages below just appear as a little unevenness or spot on the regions below. I came down by the other side of the mountain, so that I saw it completely.<sup>71</sup>

He also enthused about the colourful torchlight Corpus Christi religious procession, with its bands, embroidered banners, marching monks of different orders, and the balconies of all the houses on the route filled with people dressed in their best, with ornaments and flags hanging from the windows.

Although he was later posted to Guernsey, this was to be the last letter that George sent to his uncle from the Continent, probably because travel in Europe was made difficult by the French Revolution and then the Napoleonic Wars, and by the time the army sent him abroad again (to Sicily in 1810), Caldwell was dead. Still only twenty-five years old, he had embraced every opportunity offered him throughout his three mini-Grand Tours. His collection of classical artefacts did not start until later, when he went to Sicily, but, as we know, he had taken every opportunity to look at paintings, having trusted in his own judgement enough to buy the Ghent paintings and the Volpato and Rembrandt prints, as well as carrying out ‘commissions’ for Caldwell.

No doubt because he always had plenty of varied news for his uncle, and because his paper space was limited, he seldom had an opportunity to describe in detail the many ‘good collections’ of pictures he had seen, which must have been frustrating for Caldwell; similarly with collections he had not liked, as with the ‘execrable Daubs’ on the walls of the palace of Wolfen-Buttel. No doubt, again because of limited space, his descriptions of the architecture of the cities and towns he visited was limited, although perhaps his youth showed in his often negative (‘nasty, dirty, stinking’) choice of vocabulary for what he had seen. Nevertheless, his few mentions of fine architecture were often tempered by his opinion that it did not always measure up to that of England or Dublin; for instance, his opinion that although he considered Hesse-Cassel (whose Landgrave he reported also had a good collection of pictures) to be a fine town in a beautiful situation, with a museum very like the new hall in Dublin College (William Chambers’ Examination Hall), its Circus was neither as large or as handsome as that of Bath. He carried Ireland in his head wherever he went, comparing, for example, the steepness of the picturesque climb to the top of Mt Serat with the narrow and dangerous path to the top of the Powerscourt waterfall, and the cloister adjoining an old church in Pironne with Muckross Abbey.

The next time we hear from George is in the summer of 1794. Since we last heard from him he had married Eliza Riall (in March 1790), fathered three children (Catherine, in January 1791, George in January 1792, and Elizabeth in February 1793), and settled into his house in what had now been renamed 7 Rutland Square East, his uncle having bought a house further up the street, number 12 (which, until a few years ago, housed the Ierne Ballroom). The 11th August 1794 finds George in Southampton, aboard ship and about to sail with his regiment for Guernsey. He complains of the chaos at Southampton: ‘Such bustle, misconduct, hurry & confusion as there is here you can have no idea of. Regiments embarking that have neither Arms Officers or cloathes – one would imagine were not likely to conquer Les Sans Culottes, but such is the system.’<sup>72</sup> In his reply to this letter, Caldwell hopes that George and his regiment will not be sent further than Guernsey, which he





believed ‘the sans culottes [do not] have any intention of attacking, & therefore no occasion to have well appointed steady Troops for its Defence’.<sup>73</sup> George was to stay in Guernsey until the spring of 1795, and was not happy there. Several members of his regiment had died, having travelled from Southampton in ships ‘which were but lately arrived from the West Indies, & with a contagious fever on board’.<sup>74</sup> There was a shortage of food, and the men were half-starved, but ‘Oceans of Jin to be had for almost nothing, & in consequence the paddy’s are very frequently what they call Hearty. It is altogether the worst place I know to send a young Regt. to.’<sup>75</sup> The redeeming feature of the island, in George’s opinion, was the wealth of beautiful plant life, which, knowing his uncle’s interest in botany, he described in some detail.

From the time he arrived home from Guernsey in the spring of 1795 until 1806, when he left to take up a command on the English staff in Hull, Sunderland and Chelmsford, George spent most of his time in Ireland, and it was during this time that his last three children were born (Phineas in November 1795, Ann in May 1797, and Mary in August 1805) and he acquired his country estate, Shanganagh Castle in Shankill, county Dublin. It must also have been during these years, some time after Hugh Douglas Hamilton’s return to Dublin from Italy in 1791, that George retained him to paint a portrait of his wife Eliza and two of their children (Plate 13), but it is not clear which two. A label affixed to the painting reads, ‘Lady Cockburn and her two children. H. Hamilton. RHA’. As Hamilton died in 1808 and George was not knighted until 1831, this can’t be right, and one must assume that whoever labelled the painting was unaware of the date of George’s knighthood. There was no mention of Hamilton, or either of the portraits, found anywhere in the correspondence studied.

The land Cockburn leased comprised just over a hundred acres and was bought in three lots, two in June 1800, and one in

13 – Hugh Douglas Hamilton, *LADY COCKBURN AND HER TWO CHILDREN*, oil on canvas, 150 x 150 cm

*This portrait must have been painted some time after Hamilton’s return to Dublin in 1791. He died in 1804 and George Cockburn was not knighted until 1841. It must be assumed that whoever labelled the portrait was unaware of the date of his knighthood. (private collection; photo Michael Gray)*

May 1801.<sup>76</sup> Part of this land had been leased to Joseph Kathrens in 1759,<sup>77</sup> whose widow completed building the house he had started, and, in 1769, sold her interest to George Roth, who named the house Fairview.<sup>78</sup> The house was subsequently let to a succession of tenants, the name of one of them, (Sydenham) Snow, appearing beside it on Taylor & Skinner's *Maps of the Roads of Ireland*.<sup>79</sup> By October 1780 we learn from a letter from his uncle, written from London, that George has settled into his country home and is very taken up with farming. Caldwell writes:

The Poultry etc. I shall remember, the Admiral [George's uncle, Benjamin Caldwell, who commanded the *Agamemnon* before Nelson] roars at sending Turkeys to Ireland, but tho' we are pretty well off, yet there are curious improv'd breeds, & this is the place to procure every thing that the world affords.<sup>80</sup>

Over the next two decades, George was to enlarge and remodel his house to provide suitable accommodation for his growing family and visiting friends and relations, and for his considerable collection of books, paintings and classical marbles. A letter from Caldwell in July 1804 suggests that by then the work was well under way: a 'gentleman' he had met at a large dinner had 'expressed his surprise at what was doing at Shanganagh, he imagined you had got enough before.'<sup>81</sup> In fact, he had hardly started. George had engaged the architect Richard Morrison to carry out the work, and the Irish Architectural Archive's publication *The Architecture of Richard Morrison and William Vitruvius Morrison* records two visits to Shanganagh by Bryan Bolger, his measurer, one dated 1805.<sup>82</sup> In 1954 the exciting discovery was made by workmen carrying out alterations to Shanganagh Castle for the Office of Public Works of a letter written by George in 1818, enclosed in a bottle and sealed into the chimney turret for his picture gallery, which was under construction using the remains of a former tower on the site. Not only do we learn from this letter that new building was still underway, but also George's thoughts and opinions, as a fifty-four-year-old man, on religion and the politics of the day, and following the discovery of two cannon shot in the demolished tower, his 'take' on how they came to be there.

By the time the work was finished, the original house would hardly have been recognisable. It had been extended, and a profusion of battlements and turrets added to the exterior (Plate 14). Brewer wrote that at Shanganagh, Morrison had 'confined to the outward portion of the building all allusions to the gorgeous but rude manners of times long past' while adapting the interior 'to the habits of refined life – to the customs of society intent on intellectual pleasure as well as hospitable entertainment'.<sup>83</sup> George wished the future owners of the house as much pleasure and enjoyment as he had had in it, and hoped that 'as I am at all events the Improver and chief builder of it ... they will do me The favour to Drink to my memory a



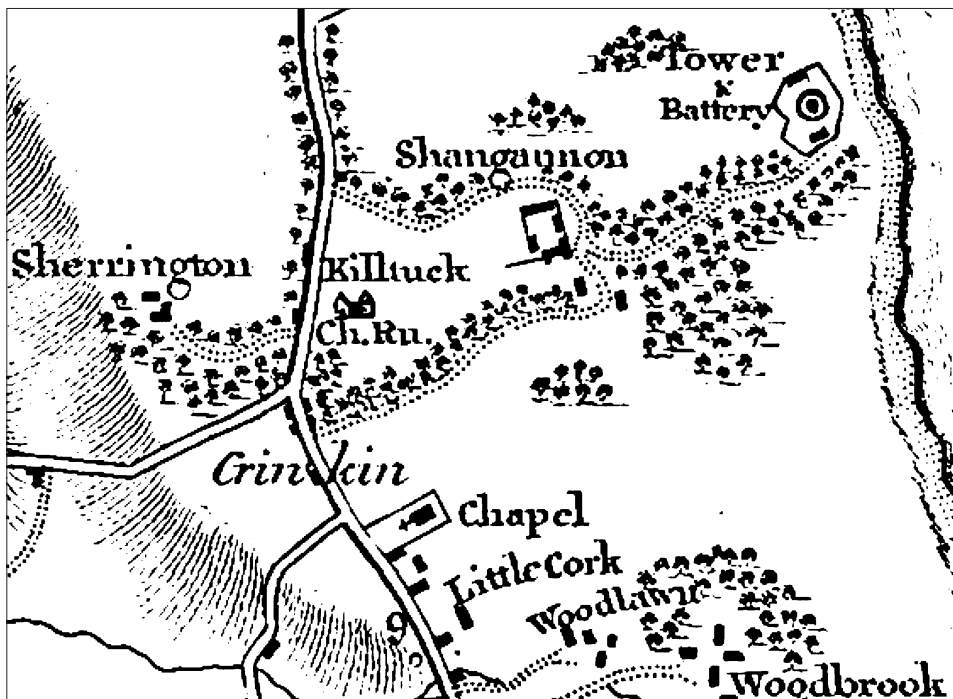
14 – Drawing of Shanganagh Castle, 1857 (artist unknown)  
(private collection)

Bumper of Good Claret.’<sup>84</sup>

He was not to enjoy his country life for long, and 1806 finds him back in England at the start of his tour of duty there. Meanwhile, Caldwell was happy to move in to Shanganagh (which he called ‘The Shan’) in a caretaking capacity, and spent much of the rest of his life there, learning about farming and enjoying the company of visiting family members. One such member was his nephew Charles Andrew Caldwell, only son of his brother Benjamin, who had come to Ireland to visit the Newgrange estate, which, in the fullness of time, he was to inherit. He was not used to Irish hospitality, and wrote to his mother:

The host in Ireland can never say to his Guests ‘Well you do not seem inclined to drink any more wine, will you go to the drawing room?’ Such a speech would be an insupportable breach of hospitality. The Master of the house sits till his company gradually drops off, & if one is a toper, there he must stay. Give me (at least in this instance) the inhospitality of the other side of the water.<sup>8</sup>

During Caldwell’s time at Shanganagh, a tragedy happened on the estate. In August



opposite 15 – John Taylor's map of 1816, published in two sheets at the scale of 2" to the mile detail showing 'Shanganon' and the Martello Tower and Battery.  
 (Thanks to Andrew Bonar Law for locating and copying this detail.)

1807 his friend Peter Walsh wrote:

It can be only by very blameable Neglect or great Ignorance in the Persons directing the Work that so fatal & awful an event should occur as that which you mention to have happened in the Well sinking for the Martello Tower at Shanganna [Plate 15], as it is always easy to ascertain the State of the Air in a Well before Men descend into it, by lowering a lighting Candle in a Lanthern.<sup>86</sup>

Fortunately this was the only tragedy occurring at Shangannagh before Caldwell's death there on 2nd July 1808. At this point, of course, the correspondence between uncle and nephew ceases, but we know from Astbury's article in *Classics Ireland*<sup>87</sup> that in April 1810 George was put in command of a division of the army of occupation in Sicily, which position he had to resign in November 1810, having been awarded the rank of lieutenant-general. He now had the leisure to pursue his interest in classical architecture and artefacts, and although this part of his life is not record-



16 – *Ferdinando Cavalleri, GEN. SIR GEORGE COCKBURN*  
*oil on canvas, 84 x 69 cm (detail) (private collection)*



ed in the correspondence studied, we learn from Astbury that before returning home the following year, he travelled widely in Sicily, no doubt building up his collection as he went.<sup>88</sup>

An unknown contributor to the Caldwell Papers wrote of George's life after his return from abroad in 1811:

[he] was not afterwards employed [by the army], probably owing to extravagant opinions in religion and politics. He attained the rank of General in 1821. He was made a Knight Commander of the Hanoverian Guelphic Order, by George the 4th on his visit to Hanover in 1821 and received the Grand Cross of that Order from King William 4th, by whom he was Knighted at Brighton in 1831.<sup>89</sup>

At some time subsequent to his knighthood, the Italian painter Ferdinando Cavalleri (1794-1865) painted his portrait (Plate 16). We know that on his return, George settled down in Shanganagh, running his estate, becoming a magistrate for the counties of Dublin and Wicklow, pursuing his interest in Irish and English politics, writing and publishing numerous pamphlets and letters and, in 1815, publishing a work in two volumes, entitled *A Voyage to Cadiz and Gibraltar, up the Mediterranean to Sicily and Malta*, in 1810 and 1811.

Apart from one letter written by George to his cousin Charles Caldwell on the death of his (Charles') father Admiral Benjamin Caldwell in November 1820, we hear little of him in the archive correspondence until November 1835. Much of his 1820 letter is taken up with his anxieties about his daughter Eliza's forthcoming marriage to Augustus Heyman, and reminds us of his own concerns when planning to propose marriage to his cousin Eliza Riall. This letter is important, and therefore the relevant passage is transcribed in detail:

Now as to the other point, Eliza's marriage ... The Gentleman is about 27 years old, & a Lieut in the Scotch Grey, by name Heyman. No young man can have higher character – we have known him intimately above a year, & he appears to be as amiable as you or I could desire – But Fortune my Dear Charley there is the rub I do not think great riches at all necessary to happiness, but a certain quantity is, for I am of the old opinion that when Poverty comes in, love is apt to fly out & in these times, what may do extremely well for a man & even a wife, without children, becomes a struggle, with a large family, & which generally comes in proportion to want of means – The young man is a favourite of mine, & yet for the above reason, I in truth, threw all the cold water I could on the match, but it is now determined on – His fortune is 20 Thousand Pounds & his Commission – but it is all in the funds, & you know I have a very bad opinion of the good old Lady in

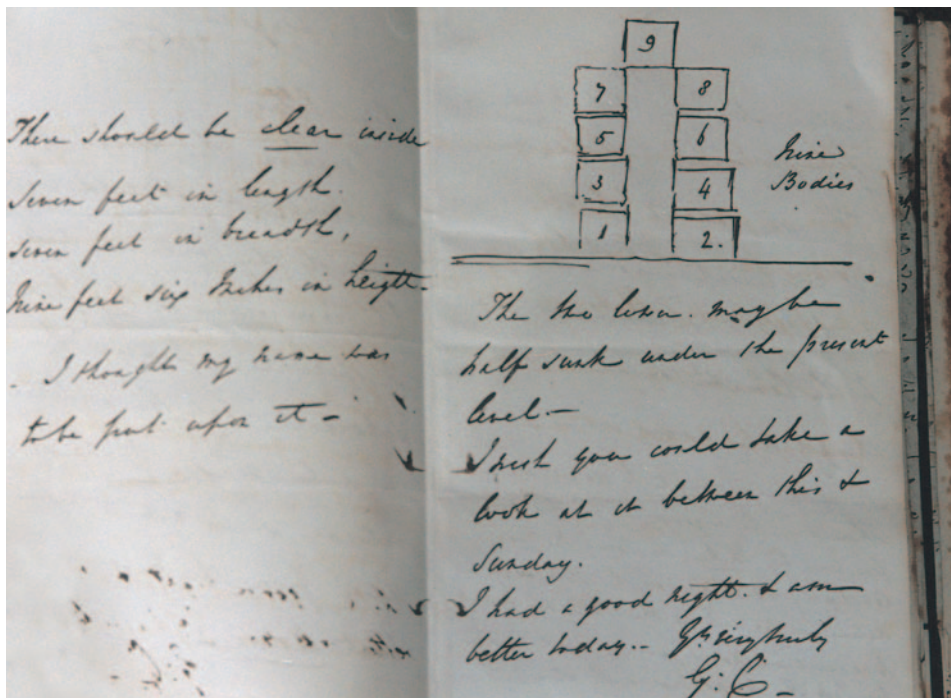
Threadneedle Street – moreover eight thsd. of it belongs or rather the interest, to his Mother for her life, & she is not aged – so that with Eliza’s fortune the utmost they will have during the Mother’s life will be £800 a year – & I confess I think this is too little for Ladies or Gentlemen to Embark in Matrimony upon – He has consented to take from the old Lady (i.e. funds) & invest in Mortgage by Trustees, as much as will secure Eliza a [illegible word] of £400 a year, otherwise I would not have consented.<sup>90</sup>

The next two letters from George are to his first cousin Charles Andrew Caldwell, and concern their grandmother’s portrait (Plate 8). In the first, dated 30th November 1835, he writes: ‘I am glad to find that there is at least one of the Family anxious to preserve a most Capital Likeness of one of the best of women that I now in my old age, & remembering from almost infancy, declare to be in my opinion almost unequalled for every good quality possible to human nature’,<sup>91</sup> and in the second:

as to Grand Mother’s picture I should be happy to oblige you, but you ask what I would not give to mortal, or will ever part with during my Existence. I have left it to you at my death, but till then, would not give it to St. Peter & half a dozen more Saints if they came down from Heaven to beg it, unless by a command from God; & Lady C- should she outlive me, will not like to part with it. After she & yourself are under the sod, no person in the World (Geo Caldwell excepted) would give Ten Pounds for it, tho admirably painted by Quadal, & never was there a better likeness taken.<sup>92</sup>

Happily, this beautiful sensitive portrait still remains in the family, as does that of her son Andrew Caldwell (Plate 1), painted at the same time. The Moravian animal painter Martin Ferdinand Quadel (1736-1793) was known to be in Dublin in 1779, and also to have painted portraits, but these two are the only Irish ones that have so far come to light.

Although he was not to die until two years later, in his letter to his nephew Revd George Caldwell (his brother Charles’ son) in May 1845, George clearly felt that he was coming to the end of his life. He was suffering with an enlarged prostate gland and was in considerable pain. The ‘medicals’ had told him that chances were against his recovery, and he anticipated that he would soon be joining twelve of his ‘most intimate friends’ who had died in the last twelve months. In the meantime, he busily got on with preparations for his departure: ‘I am ... having my coffin ready a handsome mahogany – & a pretty Tomb & small Vault as they tell me in the Dublin Pere La Chaise [Harold’s Cross cemetery] – so I take matters philosophically.’<sup>93</sup> Only the day before he had written to Nicholas Ellis about this tomb, which was to hold nine bodies and measure inside ‘seven feet in length, seven feet in breadth, nine feet six inches in heighth’ (Plates 17, 18).<sup>94</sup>



17 – Detail from letter written by George Cockburn to Nicholas Ellis, 20th May 1845, in which he sets out design and measurements for his tomb in Harolds Cross Cemetery (private collection)

George died at home on the morning of Wednesday 18th August 1847. Although not well, the previous Monday he had insisted on going downstairs to attend prayers with all the household, including the servants, to mark the anniversary of the death of his youngest daughter, Mary, the year before. That was the last time he was able to leave his bed. His wife Eliza described his last moments in a letter to her nephew Charles Caldwell:

The Doer came at nine and on going to him, he could not speak and the pulse was nearly gone – strong wine, brandy and water were given but all was of no avail, the vital spark had fled. You may imagine my horror on going into the room, expecting to find him strengthened by so much sleep, to see him actually expiring. Oh, I shall never forget it'.<sup>95</sup>

He was eighty-three years old, and at the time of his death was fourth general in seniority in the British army. Eliza lived on for another three-and-a-half years, and was interred with him (and probably their daughter Mary, if the building had been completed at the time of her death) in the 'pretty tomb' he had designed in Harold's Cross 'Pere la Chaise' cemetery.



*18 – George Cockburn's family tomb in Harold's Cross Cemetery*

George Cockburn had lived his life to the full, never regretting his decision to join the army, travelling widely, building up his collection of Classical artefacts, devoting himself to his wife and family and their Shanganagh home, becoming a magistrate for the counties of Dublin and Wicklow, and, on occasion, committing his strongly felt political views to paper.<sup>96</sup> Long before she died, his proud grandmother had already become aware that he had, indeed, made the 'Good Figure' she had so confidently predicted for him in the days of his turbulent youth.

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## ENDNOTES

The following abbreviations are used:

CP                Caldwell Papers, private collection, Suffolk  
 NAM             Cockburn Papers in National Army Museum, London

- <sup>1</sup> Edward McParland, *James Gandon* (London, 1985) 38.
- <sup>2</sup> Luisa Vertova, 'A late renaissance view of Rome', *Burlington Magazine*, July 1995, 445.
- <sup>3</sup> CP. The estate finally passed to the Land Commission in February 1932 when Charles Henry Bulwer, as the landlord, received a net amount of £28,804, payable in 4 % land bonds.
- <sup>4</sup> CP.
- <sup>5</sup> This portrait, painted by Robert Hunter, and one of George Cockburn senior, used to hang on either side of the drawing-room fireplace in the home of the late Patricia Heyman. (George Cockburn's daughter Eliza married Augustus Heyman in 1822.) Disturbed before they had finished the job, the burglars escaped with George, but had perforce to leave Ann behind.
- <sup>6</sup> Walter G. Strickland, *A Dictionary of Irish Artists*, 2 vols (Dublin 1913) I, 536.
- <sup>7</sup> Anne Crookshank, 'Robert Hunter', *Irish Arts Review*, 1989-90, 169-185.
- <sup>8</sup> Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. letters c.15, f.109-110, Andrew Caldwell to Edmund Malone, 5th February 1802.
- <sup>9</sup> CP, George Cockburn to Mrs Elizabeth Caldwell, 7th June 1763.
- <sup>10</sup> The online *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (OUP 2004-07) gives George as having been born in 1763, but the family pedigree, compiled by Mr Tuckett, gives 1764 as the year of his birth, and other letters in the Caldwell Papers confirm this date.
- <sup>11</sup> British Library, Cockburn Papers, Add 48314.
- <sup>12</sup> Irish Architectural Archive, Curran notebook, 14.
- <sup>13</sup> CP, Charles Caldwell to Elizabeth Caldwell, 26th August 1769.
- <sup>14</sup> The Strand Street congregation subsequently merged with that of Eustace Street Meeting House to form, in 1863, the core congregation of the new Dublin Unitarian Church on St Stephen's Green. The joint archives of Strand Street and Eustace Street meeting houses, which

- were held in the Unitarian Church, have recently been entrusted to the care of the Royal Irish Academy, where they will be available for general consultation.
- <sup>15</sup> British Library, Cockburn Papers, Add 48315.
- <sup>16</sup> NAM, George Cockburn to Andrew Caldwell, 22nd March 1783.
- <sup>17</sup> NAM, William Darby to Andrew Caldwell, 3rd April 1776.
- <sup>18</sup> CP, Andrew Caldwell to Mrs Elizabeth Caldwell, 26th July 1777.
- <sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, 7th August 1777.
- <sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 25th August 1777.
- <sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 29th August 1777.
- <sup>22</sup> CP, Mrs Elizabeth Caldwell to Andrew Caldwell, 31st August 1777.
- <sup>23</sup> CP, Fanny Caldwell to Andrew Caldwell, undated.
- <sup>24</sup> CP, Andrew Caldwell to Mrs Elizabeth Caldwell, 4th September 1777.
- <sup>25</sup> CP, William Cleghorn to Andrew Caldwell, 7th May 1781.
- <sup>26</sup> Royal Academy Exhibition, 1781.
- <sup>27</sup> CP, George Cockburn to Andrew Caldwell, 7th May 1781.
- <sup>28</sup> NAM, George Cockburn to Andrew Caldwell, 20th August 1782.
- <sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, 1st November 1782.
- <sup>30</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>31</sup> *ibid.*, 1st January 1781.
- <sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, 15th February 1783.
- <sup>33</sup> John Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701-1800* (New Haven and London, 1997) 222.
- <sup>34</sup> NAM, George Cockburn to Andrew Caldwell, 15th February 1783.
- <sup>35</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, 20th March 1783.
- <sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, 22th March 1783.
- <sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, 2nd April 1783.
- <sup>39</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, 12th April 1783.
- <sup>41</sup> *ibid.*, 23rd April 1783.
- <sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, 30th May 1783.
- <sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, 9th September 1785.
- <sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, 27th September 1785.
- <sup>45</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>46</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>47</sup> British Library, Cockburn Papers, Add 48317.
- <sup>48</sup> NAM, George Cockburn to Andrew Caldwell, 28th October 1785.
- <sup>49</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>50</sup> *ibid.*, 16th November 1785.
- <sup>51</sup> CP, Mrs Elizabeth Caldwell to George Cockburn, 26th November 1785.
- <sup>52</sup> Was unable to identify this artist.
- <sup>53</sup> National Gallery of Ireland, no. 20 in bound volume of catalogues collected by George Meade. *A Dutch Wedding by Ostade*, no. 98 in catalogue for posthumous sale of Caldwell's pictures, framed prints and drawings, held on 1st and 2nd March 1809 at his house, 12 Rutland Square East, by Thomas Jones.

- <sup>54</sup> CP, Andrew Caldwell to George Cockburn, 9th January 1786.
- <sup>55</sup> CP, George Cockburn to Andrew Caldwell, 20th August 1788.
- <sup>56</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>57</sup> CP, George Cockburn to Mrs Elizabeth Caldwell, 12th September 1788.
- <sup>58</sup> CP, Andrew Caldwell to George Cockburn, 18th October 1788.
- <sup>59</sup> Lawrence Park, *Gilbert Stuart, An illustrated descriptive list of his works*, 4 vols (New York 1926) III, 106.
- <sup>60</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), Gilbert Charles Stuart (1755-1828).
- <sup>61</sup> CP.
- <sup>62</sup> CP, Andrew Caldwell to George Cockburn, 18th October 1788.
- <sup>63</sup> CP, George Cockburn to Andrew Caldwell, 16th November 1788.
- <sup>64</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>65</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>66</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>67</sup> *ibid.*, 24th November 1788.
- <sup>68</sup> NAM, George Cockburn to Andrew Caldwell, 10th December 1788.
- <sup>69</sup> *ibid.*, 12th February 1789.
- <sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, 16th March 1789.
- <sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, 17th June 1789.
- <sup>72</sup> *ibid.*, 11th August 1794.
- <sup>73</sup> CP, Andrew Caldwell to Lt Col George Cockburn, 14th August 1794.
- <sup>74</sup> NAM, George Cockburn to Andrew Caldwell, 23rd September 1794.
- <sup>75</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>76</sup> Registry of Deeds, 528/167/34606; 523/419/346087; 535/576/353035.
- <sup>77</sup> Registry of Deeds, 199/43/131495.
- <sup>78</sup> I'm very grateful to Rob Goodbody for giving me the information about Joseph Kathrens' lease of the land, and especially grateful to know that a house was already standing on the land leased by Cockburn.
- <sup>79</sup> George Taylor and Andrew Skinner, *Maps of the Roads of Ireland* (Dublin (1778), 1783) and unabridged facsimile (Shannon, 1969) 140. My thanks to Rob Goodbody for drawing my attention to this map and Andrew Bonar-Law for emailing the relevant detail to me.
- <sup>80</sup> CP, Andrew Caldwell to George Cockburn, 17th October 1800.
- <sup>81</sup> *ibid.*, 28 July 1804.
- <sup>82</sup> *The Architecture of Richard Morrison and William Vitruvius Morrison* (Irish Architectural Archive, Dublin, 1989) 158-59.
- <sup>83</sup> James Norris Brewer, *The Beauties of Ireland*, 2 vols (London, 1825-26) I, 273-74.
- <sup>84</sup> Peter Pearson, 'Shanganagh Castle and the bottle letter', *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*, III (Dublin, 2000) 162.
- <sup>85</sup> CP, C.A. Caldwell to his mother, Mrs Caldwell, 28th August 1806.
- <sup>86</sup> CP, Peter Walsh to Andrew Caldwell, 26th August 1807. This tower has since been completely eroded by the sea.
- <sup>87</sup> Ray Astbury, 'Sir George Cockburn an Irish traveller and collector', *Classics Ireland* (1966), 1-17.
- <sup>88</sup> He was eventually to have a large collection of such artefacts, many of which are now in University College Dublin's Classical Museum.

- <sup>89</sup> CP. Notes found among the Caldwell Papers headed 'General Sir George Cockburn, Kt. And GCH', author unknown.
- <sup>90</sup> CP, George Cockburn to Charles Andrew Caldwell, 12th November 1820.
- <sup>91</sup> *ibid.*, 30th November 1835.
- <sup>92</sup> *ibid.*, 28th February 1843.
- <sup>93</sup> CP, George Cockburn to Revd George Caldwell, 21st May 1845.
- <sup>94</sup> CP, George Cockburn to Nicholas Ellis, 20th May 1845.
- <sup>95</sup> CP, Eliza Cockburn to Charles Andrew Caldwell, 20th September 1847.
- <sup>96</sup> General George Cockburn, *Six Letters on subjects very important to England* (Edinburgh, Dublin, London, 1831).
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