



The conservation of the Red Drawing Room at Castletown

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THIS PAPER ADDRESSES THE RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION PROCESS THAT HAS INFORMED recent conservation works in the Crimson or Red Drawing Room at Castletown. Known simply as the Red Drawing Room since 1967, the recent conservation works in this room have been a collaboration between the Office of Public Works (OPW) and the Castletown Foundation, with grant aid from the Apollo Foundation.¹ The underlying philosophy of the works has been to secure the decoration of the room as a totality. This includes both the grandeur of Tom and Lady Louisa Conolly's 1760s creation as well as the decorative refiguring of the early 1870s. Despite the vicissitudes from which the house suffered in the later twentieth century, these have survived to give the room a remarkable atmosphere and a sense of accumulated history. Preserving the silk textiles in this room has been a slow task involving new research, much consultation and the employment of the latest conservation techniques. The following account charts the process of analysing and executing the conservation works.

When Castletown first opened to the public in 1967 the house was largely interpreted in terms of the eighteenth century, dominated by the creative spirits of Speaker Conolly, his wife Katherine, and subsequently by their nephew Tom and his wife Lady Louisa. In recent years an appreciation has developed that the architectural and decorative history of the house is more complicated. In the nineteenth century, Lady Louisa's great, great nephew Thomas Conolly (1823-1876) carried out extensive redecorations throughout the house in the years before his death in 1876, works which included the Red Drawing Room. Since work began in 2014 gathering material for Castletown's Conservation Management Plan, the rooms have been interpreted as multilayered survivors of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with their conservation forming part of their continuing history.² Alongside this inclusive approach towards the interpretation of the house, respect for surviving historic textiles and paint surfaces has increased, particularly in the Red Drawing Room, where current research and conserva-

1 – *The Red Drawing Room photographed in 1961 (Irish Architectural Archive: Hugh Doran Collection)*

tion works are concerned with preserving this grand, highly patinated interior.

Conceived almost certainly as a wainscoted common parlour in the 1720s, the Red Drawing Room is situated on the ground-floor north enfilade between the Green Drawing Room (or Saloon) and the Brown Study. Remains of the early panelled decoration probably survive hidden beneath the present scheme, although it has not yet been possible to investigate their nature, as was the case during the restoration of the adjoining Green Drawing Room in 1985.³ The Red and the adjoining Green drawing rooms were radically altered by Tom and Lady Louisa Conolly in 1764-68, almost certainly influenced by works carried out at Leinster House for the Duke of Leinster.⁴ As a result, the published designs of Serlio and the influence of the British architect Isaac Ware are evident in the ceilings, mahogany doors, carved doorcases and joinery supplied in lengths by Richard Cranfield, who was paid £223 1s 5d on the 14th September 1768.⁵ In September of that year, the white Cararra chimney pieces in both rooms were brought over from London, possibly supplied by Deval & Son.⁶ Both rooms were hung in silk damask; remains of the Green Drawing Room's pale-green Spitalfields silk were discovered during the 1985 restorations. Evidence of the Red Drawing Room's 1760s silk has not been found, but in August 1770 it was described by Lady Sophia, Countess of Shelburne as a 'damask of four colours'.⁷ Much is still unknown about the late eighteenth-century furnishing of this drawing room. However, some of Tom and Lady Louisa's furnishings survive *in situ*, and between these, Lady Louisa's letters and the eighteenth-century items evident in the c.1880 and 1912 photographs and the 1894 inventory, the impression created is of an elegant room that was redolent of her aristocratic yet informal personality.

Both rooms were hung with new silk in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. No household accounts have been found to confirm this, but it is assumed that this work was carried out by Thomas Conolly (1823-1876) – hereafter referred to as Thomas Conolly II – between his marriage to Sarah Eliza Shaw (1846-1921) in 1868 and his death eight years later. The Green Drawing Room was hung in a plain dark-green silk, and the Red Drawing Room in a crimson hand-woven damask. In the 1893-94 inventory the green silk was described as 'much faded, old & torn in places'.⁸ This silk was subsequently cut down to the level of the gilt fillets, and the walls were painted blue and then, after 1967, dark green. The Green Drawing Room was re-hung with new silk in 1985 in a restoration intended to return it to its 1768 appearance. This restoration was a highly symbolic act of triumph over adversity on the part of the Castletown Foundation, the then-owners of the house, as the original house contents had been recently secured for posterity through a public appeal. The additional generosity of donors and advisors made possible the return of one room to the decorative glamour of Lady Louisa's period.⁹ While the Foundation's achievement remains, other conservation perspectives have inevitably developed since 1985, and these have formed the basis of the philosophy for the current conservation of the adjoining Red Drawing Room.

While the restrained architecture of the Red Drawing Room reflects the late eighteenth-century neoclassical taste of Lady Louisa, decoratively the room is dominated by



2 – *The Red Drawing Room, c.1986*
 (courtesy Davison Photo)

the mid-nineteenth-century crimson silk. The paintwork of woodwork and ceilings has not been renewed for at least a century, and the large and dominant Aubusson carpet seems to date from the mid-Victorian redecoration. Since 1967 the Red Drawing Room has mainly contained furniture original to the house, although not necessarily to this room, and has featured a dense and a changeable picture-hang, including some original but also loaned and bought-in portraits and landscapes (Plate 2). The original furniture includes the carpet, the pier glasses and perhaps some of the Chinese Chippendale seat furniture, all of which were *in situ* in 1893-94. The two most iconic Castletown pieces – Mrs Conolly’s painted cabinet and the large mahogany writing bureau – were, in 1893-94, respectively in the Long Gallery and a ground-floor corridor. Recently, two encoignures have been a notable repatriation. Made by Roger Vandercruse (known as ‘La Croix’), the Parisian *ébéniste*, they were bought by Lady Caroline Fox for Lady Louisa in 1763.¹⁰ They were sold by Christie’s on 19th May 1966 and bought back for Castletown in 2014.¹¹ Amongst the pre-nineteenth-century items that are gone are the ‘4 white and gold Louis XVI elbow chairs in same figured crimson silk’ and the ‘steel and brass Boule cabinet in ebony wood’ that were listed in the 1893-94 inventory and can be seen in the c.1880 photograph (Plate 3).¹²

The survival of significant 1760s architectural fittings alongside 1870s decoration,



illustrate two different periods of the house's development and present difficult decisions as to how best preserve and present this space in a meaningful way. This interpretive conundrum is not peculiar to the Red Drawing Room, and as the Conservation Management Plan develops it will attempt to address the complexities of history and the visitor experience in all the public spaces. The deterioration of the Red Drawing Room's textile wall-hangings due to light damage, fluctuating atmospheric conditions and less than careful re-hanging of pictures over the decades, has been a matter of concern for many years. Although appreciated for being redolent of the shabby grandeur for which Castletown has been noted, the deteriorating condition of the silk was increasingly at odds with the conserved appearance of the other rooms open to the public. In the 1893-94 inventory, the room was described as having walls 'covered in crimson & white figured silk to match furniture and in good condition, one small tear to left of fireplace'.¹³ Images taken by Hugh Doran in 1961 (Plate 1), five years before the contents sale, show huge picture canvases still *in situ*, but the silk around the chimney piece is deteriorated and patched with what are presumed to be reused window curtains of the same material. This deterioration continued once the house opened to the public, and between 1991 and 2005 five reports were commissioned from textile conservators in an attempt to address the issue of decay.¹⁴ Faced with these huge walls of extremely delicate and damaged material, the approach of the experts differed. Some recommended removal of the silk and wet cleaning, while some recommended reusing silk from behind pictures to reinforce

areas of poor quality. Others recommended the application of adhesive panels from behind, and others proposed *in-situ* treatment with various forms of netting.

Financial constraints, urgent structural repairs and the difficulties of tackling environmental issues at Castletown prevented an active campaign of conservation within the Red Drawing Room until recent years. There was also considerable debate within the OPW and the Castletown Foundation not only about the correct conservation approach, but also ethical and aesthetic considerations of conservation versus replication. This debate touched on the fundamental question of what and how much was to be preserved and presented at Castletown. The damaged silk and old paintwork could either be seen to be distracting from the fine architecture and fittings or as important reminders of changing historical decorative fashions and the variable fortunes of the Conolly family. Ultimately there was agreement that the layers of history evident in this room must be preserved if possible. In 2006 and 2012, Ksynia Marko, a National Trust textile conservation advisor, was asked to assess the previous treatment proposals and to make suggestions for a practical way forward in both the medium and long term.¹⁵ By 2012 the internal environment of the house had been controlled and a careful regime of household conservation in place. As part of the preparatory work for the Conservation Management Plan, the silk was considered not in isolation, but in relation to the furnishings within the drawing room, the north enfilade of adjoining spaces, and the developing overall philosophy of presentation and interpretation of the house.

In August 2012 Ksynia Marko identified the damage that exposure to light and environmental conditions had done to the silk (Plate 5). It had fractured across the warp, creating ragged splits, seams had split and shrunk, and it was all brittle and very dirty.¹⁶ The north wall, hidden from light, was in the best condition; the south wall was in the most advanced state of decay. Subject to trials and further discussion, four possible approaches were proposed – full replication, full conservation, a holding treatment or partial treatment and replication, weighing up the pros and cons of each. These options were developed fur-

4 – *The Red Drawing Room photographed after the 1966 contents sale*
(courtesy Irish Architectural Archive)

opposite

3 – *The Red Drawing Room, facing south-west, c.1880*
(courtesy Chris Shaw)





5 – Ksynia Marko discussing the potential treatment proposals, 2012

6 – Ksynia Marko and May Berkouwer working on the silk conservation of the west wall, 2015

7 – May Berkouwer working on the lower section join between drops 13-14 on the East Wall

opposite

8, 9 – The east wall drop 5 before and after conservation

10 – The silk damask design

(photos 5, 6, 7: the author; photos 8, 9, 10: May Berkouwer)



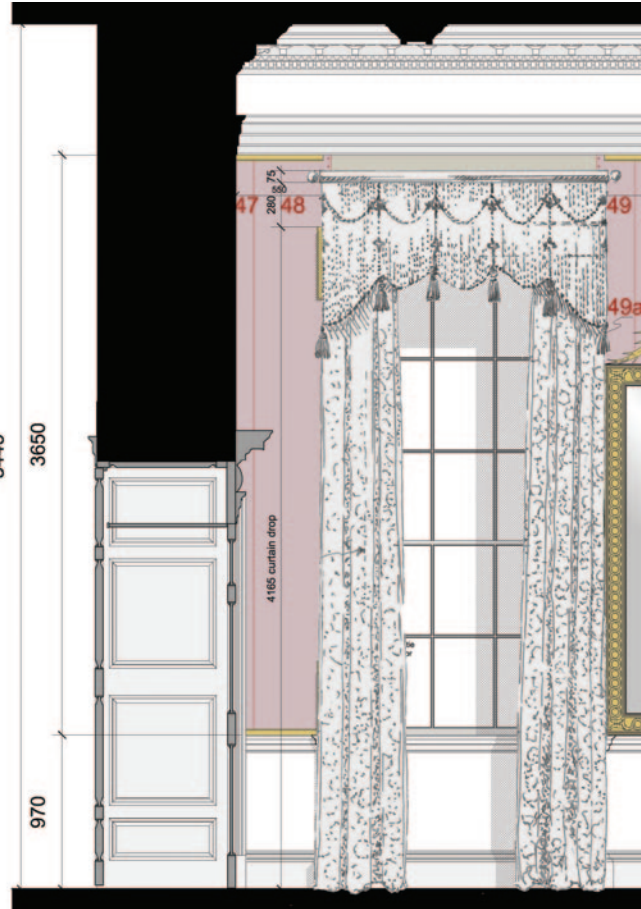
ther in May 2015 when May Berkouwer, an independent textile conservator, assessed the project. Working on the basis of minor intervention, she proposed different treatments for each wall and its individual problems.¹⁷ One of the concerns was that if some of the silk was conserved and some was replaced, they would not sit comfortably together. The garnering of experienced outside comment has been a feature of the project, and has included informal advice from a number of experts.¹⁸ Although opinions varied, there was general appreciation for the faded beauty of the ensemble. A conservation trial on a section of the west wall of the drawing room was commissioned in November 2015, enabled by a legacy generously bequeathed to the Castletown Foundation by the late Professor Kevin Nowlan. Different treatment options were under consideration, and trials were needed to check technical issues relating to the varied condition of the silk damask. This innovative and highly technical work involved removing old repairs, gently vacuuming some and surface-cleaning other parts of the silk, supporting damaged fabric with silk crêpe attached to the rear, humidifying and rejoining split silk, patching, netting and infilling lost areas (Plates 6-9). The results were deemed a success by the OPW and the Castletown Foundation, and in December the Foundation agreed to fund the remainder of the west wall as a memorial to Kevin B. Nowlan. In November 2015 board member Frances Bailey visited the Royal Apartments in the Pitti Palace in Florence and noticed the close similarity between the wall coverings there and those in the Red Drawing Room at Castletown. Penelope Jenkins subsequently made a



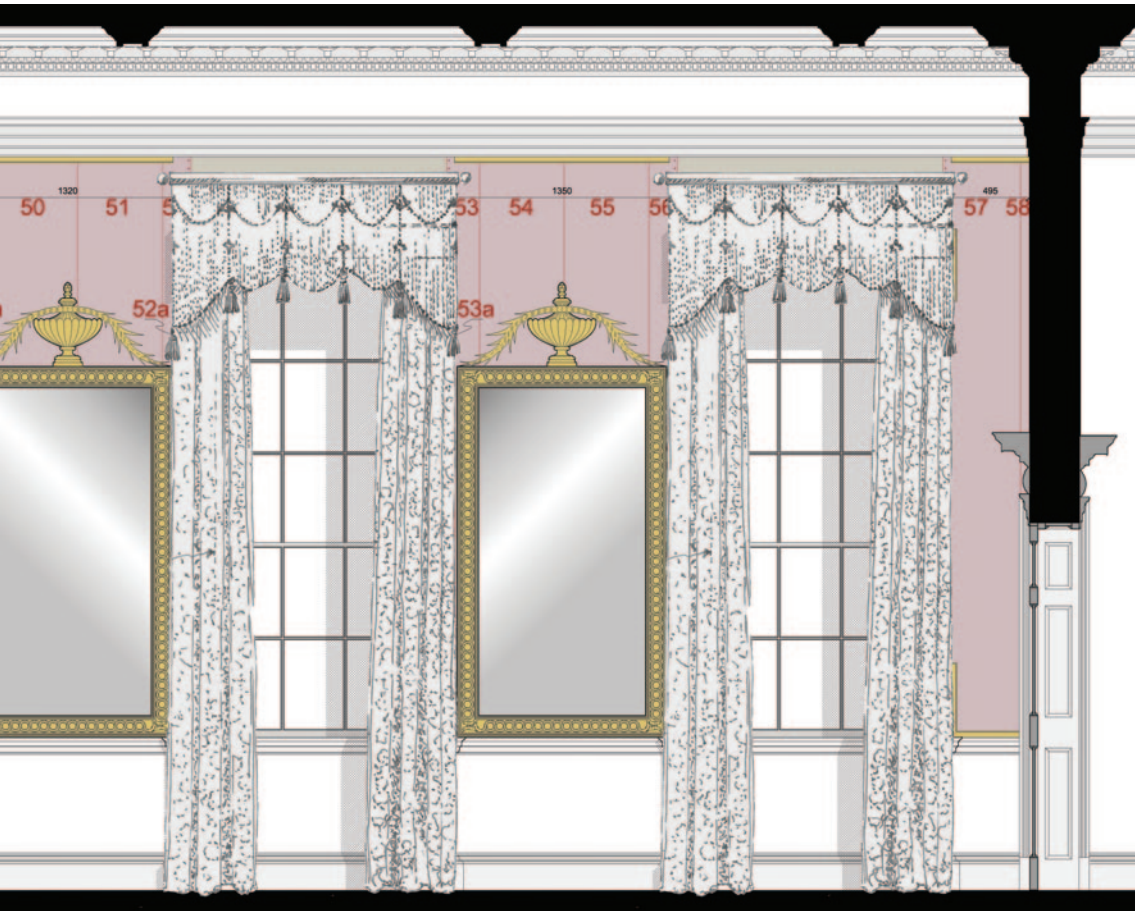
detailed comparative study of the Castletown silk with the green-coloured and similarly patterned material in the Salon Verde of the Pitti Palace in 2016. This had been supplied by Francesco Fullini in 1854/55 for the Dukes of Tuscany.¹⁹ She also compared it to the crimson silk in the Sale delle Udienze in the Palazzo Reale, Genoa, dating from 1843 and bought from Bernardo Solei for the King of Sardinia. It has not yet been proven that the Castletown material is Italian, or indeed whether Tom Conolly II was influenced by the Palazzo Pitti Royal Apartments, which he visited with his wife Sarah Eliza on the 28th February 1871, spending a day looking at its treasures.²⁰

As part of the ongoing research on the room, Richard Humphries (Humphries Weaving, Suffolk) was commissioned in September 2014 to determine the nature and quality of the 1870s silk, as well as options for replication (Plate 10). His report identified the silk as being of the highest quality, undoubtedly hand-woven on a Jacquard loom, using semi-tonal weave structures to create variety and surface shine. It was considered possible that it was intended to be a replica of Lady Louisa's 1760s original.²¹ Nineteenth-century technical advances, however, allowed for tonal variations between the white and crimson silks, creating a four-colour effect. Despite the dirty and delicate condition of the silk, the report gave all involved in the project a heightened appreciation of the Victorian scheme. In May 2015 David Sheehan carried out a measured survey of the room and its silk hangings, which enabled plans to be developed for curtains, a potential picture-hang and the placement of furnishings.

In September 2015 Annabel Westman was commissioned to develop designs and specifications for new curtains. In February 2016 she also examined minutely the evidence in the room, the 1893-94 inventory, old photographs, as well as the fragmentary remains of nineteenth-century curtains surviving elsewhere in the house.²² As a result she developed a template with David Sheehan for a fringed valance, trimmings and draw curtains (Plate 11). In March 2016 the OPW produced a statement of significance for the



11 – Proposed curtains for the Red Drawing Room based on reconstructed evidence (courtesy Sheehan + Barry Architects)



room where the agreed approach for the conservation and holding treatments of the silk was set out.²³ This was in line with the Foundation's belief that all works at Castletown should be informed by historic research and that, if possible, all periods of history should be reflected in the presentation of the house. The west wall was substantially conserved by July 2017. As anticipated, the old silk is still recognisably patinated and faded in places, but it is no longer forlorn and ragged but cared for and 'held' for future years.

In the summer and autumn of 2017 the OPW funded the conservation of the east wall (Plates 12, 13), with that of the north planned for the spring of 2018. Upon the conservator's recommendations, the south wall will be treated rather differently.²⁴ As it is far more degraded and fragile, it will be cleaned, conserved where possible, patched and netted. Much thought was given to the possibility of replacing this wall with new fabric, but in the end the overall harmony of the room was considered most significant, and a holding process for the old silk agreed upon. In March 2017 the Apollo Foundation generously agreed to grant-aid the holding treatment for the south wall in 2018. Upon completion, it is hoped that the conservation works will enhance the visual harmony of the room, thus

providing a more suitable backdrop to other decorative elements.

Parallel with the conservation works of the wall silk, a schedule of repair and conservation for other elements of the rooms was drawn up by Dr Dorothea Depner of the OPW and the Castletown Foundation. Although no redecoration is planned, a paint analysis survey will be commissioned to determine the chronology of colour schemes on woodwork and plasterwork, and to identify the presence or otherwise of any gilding. A key factor in the future success of the space is the need for curtains for the three windows. While a plain, suitably coloured fabric was a consideration, it was generally agreed that the most accurate option would be to reproduce the nineteenth-century silk to be made up as curtains as close as possible to the originals. Following Richard Humphries' 2014 analysis of the silk, his assistant Jenny Newman, using the best preserved fabric from the north wall and a tiny fragment from under the gilt fillet, drew up the intricate pattern. Colour assessments were initiated and samples were woven to compare modern weave quality, thread size and colours. Sets of samples were considered by the conservators, Annabel Westman, the OPW and the Castletown Foundation, resulting in further trials (Plate 14). In early 2017 the new fabric was commissioned, and delivered to Castletown in December. The tender for the curtains and trimmings was agreed, manufacturers approached, and with Annabel Westman as consultant, they will be commissioned and made in 2018. In 2016 the Foundation commissioned John Hart to repair and conserve the Chinese Chippendale furniture which has stood in the room for the past fifty years. The velvet plush upholstery was cleaned and conserved by early 2018, and six additional chairs from this suite will be re-covered in the newly woven reproduction damask.

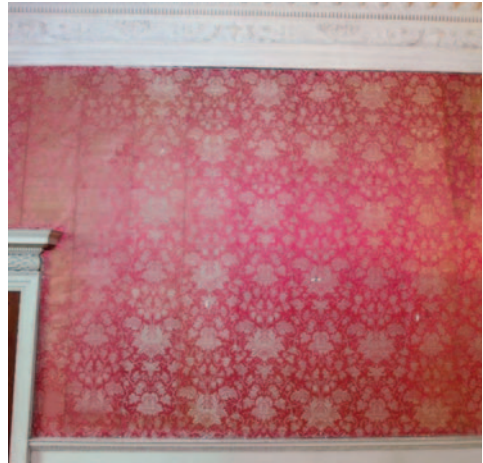
Part of the conundrum facing the analysis of the Red Drawing Room is the incomplete surviving evidence relating to how it was furnished in the pre-Victorian era. References to decoration in Tom and Lady Louisa's household accounts and correspondence between the late 1750s and the 1780s have been quoted elsewhere; however, few can be related directly to the Red Drawing Room.²⁵ Neighbouring houses like Carton and Killadoon have inventories dating from the early nineteenth century which give a sense of how important rooms belonging to the Conolly relatives and neighbours appeared at the end of Tom and Louisa's lives. However, each of these houses has always differed significantly from Castletown, and parallels are only of a general kind.²⁶ The much later 1893-94 inventory at Castletown is the only detailed record known to survive of the contents, and in the Red Drawing Room (referred to as Crimson Drawing Room) it indicates a collection containing elements from the later eighteenth century through to the late nineteenth century. The Red Drawing Room contained up to eighteen mainly religious pictures. In addition, and surviving in the room today, were the eighteenth-century items mentioned above – the pier glasses now attributed to Richard Cranfield and James Jackson, the La Croix cabinets, and some of the Chippendale suite of seat furniture. The most striking original item still *in situ* is the huge Aubusson rug that appears to date from the 1870s. A 'Bombay' pair of console tables and suite of gilt seat furniture (now in Prehen, county Derry), a Boule cabinet, a large gilded centre table (subsequently in Carton

and then Courtown House, county Kildare) and other items of seat furniture are no longer in the collection. Their arrangement may be seen in the c.1880 (Plate 3) and 1912 photos of the room (see p.103). With the exception of the recently acquired Lacroix cabinets, the original furnishings that survive today were purchased by Desmond Guinness before and during the 1966 contents sale, and acquired by the Castletown Foundation between 1985 and 1987.

The lack of Victorian furnishings in the collection today creates a historical imbalance in the room, but illustrates the post-1967 sympathy for the eighteenth-century interpretation of the house. With our new understanding of Tom Conolly II, the ambition now is to trace these items and, if available, return them for display. The most notable loss in the present collection are the eighteen pictures present in 1893-94. In 2013 Aidan O'Boyle was commissioned to report on the nature of the mid-nineteenth-century hang and its context in relation to other earlier Irish collections.²⁷ Significant pictures were identified both in this report and in subsequent consultations (see pp.98-107). While it is possible that some Red Drawing Room pictures had been collected by previous members of the Conolly family, those listed in 1893-94 appear to be a mid-nineteenth-century assembly by Tom Conolly II of religious paintings, dominated by large canvases hung in single file. There

12, 13 – *The east wall before and after conservation 2017 (photos: May Berkouwer)*

14– *Annabel Westman assessing a woven sample in November 2015 (photo: the author)*



were some significant pictures, including Murillo's *Christ after the Flagellation* (see p.104), bought from the collection of the exiled French King Louis-Philippe, a Vasari, *The Garden of Gethsemane*, previously in the collection of Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland, and a Holy Family after Correggio, attributed to Mazzolini.²⁸

In 1875, the year before his death, Tom Conolly mortgaged Castletown for £98,000; in later years this caused his widow Eliza and his trustees considerable problems, resulting in a court order to sell chattels.²⁹ This, and the subsequent letting of the house, was presumably the reason for the 1893-94 inventory being drawn up. When the room was photographed for the *Georgian Society Records* in 1912 (see p.103), the picture-hang had been slightly altered as a result. Subsequently, there were sales of furniture and, perhaps, paintings to the Wills family (who rented the house from 1910), and in 1952 and 1957 at both Sotheby's and Christie's, so that by 1961 when the room was photographed by Hugh Doran some of the religious pictures had been replaced by large portraits (Plate 1). The remaining pictures were dispersed at the 1966 house sale held by Jackson-Stops & McCabe, and by Christie's in London.

In 2013, consultations with the National Gallery of Ireland as to how best to hang the room were held. One possibility was to hang a loan collection of religious paintings alongside reproductions of the most important originals in a manner similar to that described in the 1893-94 inventory. In August 2017 the OPW was generously offered a large loan collection of portraits, religious and classical subjects from the Schorr Collection. Previously on display in Hillsborough Castle, county Down, and in Birmingham City Art Gallery, these will form a denser hang of sacred and other subjects which will complement the architecture and the interior furnishings.

As the nineteenth-century appearance of the Red Drawing Room is more greatly understood and appreciated, its creation appears to be bound to the later life of Tom Conolly II. Lena Boylan wrote of how Conolly 'lived recklessly and exceeded the extravagances of his eighteenth-century namesake in his equipage and entertainments'.³⁰ No written evidence in his diaries and accounts has as yet been found as to the alterations that he seems to have affected to the house on his return from his travels in 1865. Tom's marriage to Eliza Shaw in 1868 (which brought a £10,000 settlement) and a series of land sales in the late 1860s may perhaps have been the incentive and facilitator for these works.³¹ A recently discovered reference in *The Freeman's Journal* is perhaps significant:

5 April 1871 from our 'London Correspondent'. A London telegram says that one of the residences of Mr Thomas Conolly, MP, in the County Kildare, is to be taken for a royal residence, and that the Queen and the Prince of Wales will reside there during a portion of each year.³²

If, indeed, this was the aspiration, and if Castletown was the residence in question, then it might explain and date the refurbishment works, which included the re-hanging of the Green and Red drawing rooms with new silk, the partial redecoration and reordering of the Long Gallery, and the creation of a library in what was formerly a ground-floor bed-

room, now called the State Bedroom.³³ In 1871 a smoking room in the east wing was created for hunting parties, with dated chimney pieces. Related to this are seven architectural drawings still in the house of the unexecuted project for an elaborate Italianate new east wing, attributed to Frederick Darley.³⁴ Further research will hopefully clarify this mid-nineteenth-century renaissance of Castletown. The significant material found in recent years underlines the obligation not to obliterate evidence through insensitive conservation and restoration.

Generally this project has illuminated the importance of aged and conserved textiles in guiding the aesthetic appreciation of an historic interior. It is hoped that the conserved Red Drawing Room walls will offer an atmospheric context for the collections. The vision for the room has been the conservation of the wall silk, the creation of new curtains replicating those of the 1870s, the creation of an imaginative picture-hang that complements but hides the most damaged areas of silk, and the display of furniture that is both indigenous and relevant to the collection. Castletown is not only a symbol of the greatness of historic Irish decorative endeavours, it is also a survivor – of generations of one family and the vicissitudes of time. Exercising a lighter touch in terms of conservation and replication will allow the interior to remain ‘a faded canvas’, enabling imaginative visitor interaction.³⁵

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the members of the Castletown Foundation, the staff of the OPW, and May Berkouwer, Frank Lawrence, Simon Lincoln and Ksynia Marko for their help in the preparation of this article.

ENDNOTES

The following abbreviations are used:

IAA	Irish Architectural Archive
OPW	Office of Public Works
TCD	Trinity College Dublin

- ¹ This project has been overseen by Mary Heffernan, OPW General Manager, and, since January 2016, co-ordinated by Dr Dorothea Depner.
- ² The need for a single source of information which would inform decisions on the conservation and management at Castletown has been apparent for many years. Since 2014 a database of all relevant information has been compiled by the OPW, and within the house an architectural room by room assessment has been drawn up. In consultation with the Castletown Foundation, a framework for the plan has been developed which has been enormously influenced by those drawn up for the National Trust (NI). This carefully assesses the prevailing character and significance, history, conservation and presentation of each space. It is hoped that this project will be completed in the near future.
- ³ According to the Elton Hall plan, the chimney was situated on the west wall and this room was originally accessible from the west corridor. Howard Colvin and Maurice Craig (eds), *Architectural Drawings in the Library of Elton Hall by Sir John Vanbrugh and Sir Edward Lovett Pearce* (Oxford, 1964).

- ⁴ David Griffin, 'Castletown, Co. Kildare: the contribution of James, first Duke of Leinster', *Irish Architectural & Decorative Studies*, I, 1998, 120-45.
- ⁵ TCD, Conolly Papers, MS 3964, Personal account books of Thomas Conolly, 1767-1770, 24th September 1768.
- ⁶ David Griffin, 'Castletown, Co. Kildare'.
- ⁷ Bowood House Archives, Diary of Lady Sophia, Countess of Shelburne, 1st August 1770.
- ⁸ IAA, Castletown Papers J/11, Inventory 1893-94 (amended in 1898) of Castletown taken in conjunction with the resettlement of the Castletown estate.
- ⁹ Those who have helped Castletown were commemorated and acknowledged on donors boards erected by the Castletown Foundation and the OPW in the ground-floor east corridor in 2015 and 2017.
- ¹⁰ William Laffan, 'A Gift between Sisters', *Irish Arts Review*, no. 31, 2014, 152.
- ¹¹ Thanks to the advice of John O'Connell, John Whitehead, and others.
- ¹² The bouffe cabinet was sold on 19th May 1966 by Christie's in London.
- ¹³ IAA, Castletown Papers, J/11, Inventory 1893-94 (amended in 1898) of Castletown.
- ¹⁴ The conservation proposals were made by Cliona Devitt, 1991; Historic Royal Palaces, 1995; Cliona Devitt and Cathy McClintock, 1997; Alexis Bernstorff, 2000; Dominique Rogers, 2005.
- ¹⁵ Ksynia Marko, 'Textile Conservation Advisory Report', unpublished report for OPW, 7th April 2006.
- ¹⁶ Ksynia Marko, 'Report of visit to review the options for the treatment of the 1870's red silk wall coverings lining the Red Drawing Room', unpublished report for the OPW (instigated by the Castletown Foundation), 17th August 2012.
- ¹⁷ May Berkower, 'Red Silk Damask Wall Coverings, Castletown, Co Kildare: assessment of condition and treatment options', unpublished report for OPW, June 2015. Both Ksynia Marko and May Berkower had worked on similar projects in the UK. In 1993 May had worked on the 1860s silk in the drawing room of the English Heritage-owned Brodsworth Hall, Derbyshire, and in 2001 Ksynia had conserved the 1830s damaged silk in the drawing room at Felbrig Hall, Norfolk, a property of the National Trust. Both rooms had problems of decaying silk, and in both properties the philosophy was to retain the damaged and faded material and to conserve *in situ*. Although not identical to Castletown, the success of these projects suggested that it might indeed be possible to save all of the silk wall coverings in the Red Drawing Room.
- ¹⁸ Those informally consulted included Julius Bryant, Keeper of Word & Image Dept, V&A Museum; Alec Cobbe, designer and artist; Christopher Gibbs, antiques dealer and historic adviser; John Goodall, architecture editor, *Country Life* magazine; John Harris, architectural historian; David Mlinaric, interior designer and former advisor to the National Trust; Jeremy Musson, architectural historian and author; Sean Rainbird, Director, National Gallery of Ireland. Alison Docherty generously gave her advice and experience gained from her conservation works at Hopetoun House, Edinburgh.
- ¹⁹ Penelope Jenkins, 'A Study of the Silk Wall-Coverings in the Red Drawing Room of Castletown House' (BA thesis), TCD, 2016. It has been noted that while similar, there are differences in scale between the pattern of the damask at Castletown and that at the Palazzo Pitti. Current research by the K.B. Nowlan Bursary recipient Laura McKenna promises to further elucidate the European exemplars for the Red Drawing Room and the motivation in emulating these royal audience chambers.
- ²⁰ IAA, Accession No. 98/79, 1864-71, Diaries of Thomas Conolly (1823-76) 1870-71. I am indebted to Suzanne Pegley for this information.
- ²¹ Richard Humphries, 'Weaving Advisory Report: Castletown, Co Kildare: The Red Drawing Room', unpublished report for OPW, October 2014.
- ²² Annabel Westman, 'Red Drawing Room, Castletown House, Celbridge, Ireland: fabric and curtain design', unpublished report for OPW, 14th September 2015. Also 'Specification for making the three

crimson wool bullion pelmets with silk covered moulds and tassels for ornament' 28th September 2017 (unpublished) for OPW.

- ²³ In the statement prepared in association with Aisling Ní Bhriain of the OPW they outlined that they wished to conserve all surviving silk in the Red Drawing Room in Castletown, while acknowledging that methods adopted for each wall would need to respond to the condition of the silk. The conservation principles informing the works would include research and analysis, expert conservation advice, minimum intervention, reversibility where possible, repairing and preserving rather than replacing, and respecting earlier interventions of interest. The aim of intervention was not to achieve a perfect, seemingly flawless finish, but to reinstate the historic character to the room.
- ²⁴ Ksynia Marko, May Berkouwer 'Report of a visit to trial conservation treatment options for the 1870's red silk wall coverings in the Red Drawing Room with recommendations and estimates for further treatment', unpublished report for OPW, November 2015.
- ²⁵ David Griffin, 'Castletown, Co. Kildare'. See also Christopher Moore, 'Lady Louisa Conolly: mistress of Castletown 1759-1821', in J. Fenlon, N. Figgis and C. Marshall (eds), *New Perspectives: studies in art history in honour of Anne Crookshank* (Dublin, 1987) 123-41.
- ²⁶ The 1805 Killadoon inventory is the earliest surviving of seven in the possession of the Clements family and held at Killadoon, Co Kildare. The 1818 Carton inventory was purchased in 2015 by the Castletown Foundation and is held in the OPW-Maynooth University Archive and Research Centre at Castletown, MSPP/CAR/1.
- ²⁷ Aidan O'Boyle, 'A Report on the Arrangement of the Red Drawing Room at Castletown House', unpublished report for OPW, 2013. Further pictures were identified by members of the Castletown Foundation with generous assistance and advice from Alastair Laing.
- ²⁸ The Murillo painting hangs in Krannert Museum at the University of Illinois and the Vasari is now owned by the National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo; the whereabouts of the Mazzolini has not yet been established.
- ²⁹ I am indebted to Suzanne Pegley for providing this information from *The Nationalist and Leinster Times*, 3rd May 1890, which revealed that Conolly had mortgaged the entire Castletown estate for £98,000, which included lands in Donegal, Dublin and Kildare. Suzanne Pegley, 'Landscapes of Power: the social network of the power elite in mid-Victorian Ireland, case study of Thomas Conolly (1823-76) of Castletown, Co Kildare', unpublished PhD thesis, Maynooth University, 2017.
- ³⁰ Lena Boylan, 'The Conollys of Castletown', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society*, XI, no. 4, 1968, 44.
- ³¹ Pegley, 'Landscapes of Power'.
- ³² *The Freeman's Journal*, 5th April 1871. I am indebted to Suzanne Pegley and Frank Lawrence for this recently discovered information.
- ³³ Castletown almost certainly is the residence referred to, as Leixlip Castle, the other significant Conolly Kildare property, was let in the 1870s to Judge Edward C.S. Cole. John Colgan, *Leixlip, Co Kildare, Vol. 1* (Tyrconnell Press, Leixlip, 2005) 88. The proposal for a royal residence may have been intended to correct the absence of one in Ireland when compared with England, Scotland or the Isle of Wight.
- ³⁴ David Griffin, 'An Architectural History of Castletown', in Elizabeth Mayes (ed.), *Castletown, Decorative Arts* (OPW, Trim, 2011) 43.
- ³⁵ A useful guide to the philosophy behind the approach to the conservation of the room has been Margaret Ponsonby, 'Textiles and time: reactions to aged and conserved textiles in historic houses open to the public in England and the USA', *Journal of Textile History*, no. 42, 2011, 200-219.