Some Georgian Houses of Limerick and Clare

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Castle as residences were abandoned almost altogether early in the 17th century, and were frequently replaced by those very tall strongly built houses of which the Roche house on Newcastle Hill, near Castletroy, is an excellent example. But alas, most of the buildings of the 16th and 17th centuries are in ruins. The only one we can recall not in actual ruins is Carrick Castle, but the Ormonde family have allowed it to decay rapidly. Tudor plaster-work is in pieces on the floors, and the lovely mantlepiece was removed to Kilkenny Castle.

At the turn of the 18th century the influence of Palladio, who had re-introduced classical building into Italy as early as 1570, began to be felt in Ireland as in England, and large, handsome, if somewhat gloomy houses were built in and near Dublin, such as Leinster House, Castletown, and the Provost’s House in Trinity College. As the century progressed the lighter Grecian style began to replace the Roman; plasterwork became lighter and more graceful, and the heavy rusticated doorways were replaced by pillars of the Grecian Orders.

In the main, this style of architecture, called Georgian because it extends practically from the beginning to the end of the Four Georges, relies for its effects on the proportion of solids and spaces, and their inter-relation. In the earlier houses the proportion of wall exceeds that of window, but as the building technique improved the windows become larger.

This paper, the extension of a lecture to our Society, is intended merely as an annotated list of the Georgian remains of Limerick and Clare, and it is hoped to continue it in future numbers. But unlike the lecture, family details have been reduced to the bare minimum, as the authors feel that justice would not be done to either in the same paper. In fact, after a little research they feel that the inter-relations and ramifications of Limerick County Families are such that a separate paper would be needed for each family concerned. They do not feel competent to perform such a task.

SHANNONGROVE. This is one of the earliest and finest houses in the county, and in its simplicity has more character than many a more elaborate building. It is right on the banks of the Shannon, near Ringmoylan, and facing Rineanna Airport, but the back of the house is now used as the entrance. Wide stone steps, in two flights, narrow as they approach the well-cut doorway with its baroque shield over the rounded pediment. The latter breaks the plain stone curving which encircles the house, and separates the two stories. The three dormer windows and lovely brick chimneys give an unusual roof line. These four chimneys are set diagonally and are joined by a diamond-patterned brick screen. The old front doorway is of even better design and the shield bears the arms of the Bury family and the date 1709. The interior is panelled in wood like Mount Ievers, though the rooms are much smaller, and like Mount Ievers also the fire places are set in an angle of the rooms. The house is said to have been built as a shooting lodge for the Burys.

COOPER HILL. Built in 1791. The most noticeable features are the perpendicular rows of coign stones outlining the edges of the house, and the slightly advanced central block with its pediment and pedimented.
doorway. The hall has some pleasant plasterwork and a good inner door, fanlight, and an alcove. It was built by a descendant of the Cromwellian soldier of legendary fame, Cornet Cooper.

**BALLYMACREESE.** Built by Abraham Green in 1710, according to date cut on stone pediment of doorway. The steps to the doorway consist of a series of semi-circular plates and may not be contemporary with the house.

**BALLINAGARDE.** Built by the Crokers in 1774 at a cost of £10,000. The central pedimented block stands on a raised platform on which one would expect to see pillars. The present entrance is through a graceful pavilion of Grecian design surmounted with lions and eagles. The arrangement of the steps is attractive, with the straight steps leading to a platform from which rise a rounded flight to the door. The blank back wall is relieved by an alcove. The ornamental garden had some rather provincial classical statuary, and our photograph shows Heracles in position.

**GRANGE.** According to Mr. Grene Barry, this house was built by Hamman, of Carnarry, who also built the County Courthouse. It was also occupied by the Crokers and was dismantled a few years ago, when its fine fire-places, interior doors, and painted ceiling were destroyed and dispersed.

**ASHHILL TOWERS.** Built by Chidley Coote. In 1837, Mr. Eyre Evans "embellished" the building with castellations, side-towers, and lancet windows, with interior to match in good "Old Walter Scott Baronial" style. When we come round to what is now the back of the house we are astonished to find a very handsome Georgian mansion of great length, containing three doorways. The central portion is beautifully morticed on to the main building, all of well-dressed stone. There is a Venetian window over the central doorway. Inside there is some good plasterwork of Adam design, a contemporary mantel-piece, and the remains of a decorated light in a pretty plastered corridor.

**ATTYFLYN.** This is an early Georgian house, which has been altered in Victorian times but still retains much of the grace of its former self. The rooms are small, but well-lit, and the front bears the crest of the Westroppes, (a lion rampant) by whom it was probably built. Our most famous antiquarian, Thomas Johnson Westropp was born there.

**MOUNT IEVERS.** Built about 1730(1) when Sixmilebridge was a flourishing town, evidence of which still remains in a number of well-cut street names and the arcaded market house. The original front is now the back of the house, the latter in stone, the former in brick, of a pink hue, said to be Dutch and to have been passed from hand to hand from the oil-mill, to which point the river was tidal. The windows are flush with the front of the house and have the usual Georgian small window-panes and thick glazing bars. As one views it from the road from the village to the Clare Hills, through the long open grass avenue flanked by trees, it looks most attractive, being very square and formal, and strangely like a doll's house. The hall has a large stone fireplace, and a dated iron grate-back, both probably from the earlier house, drawn by Dineley. On the left is a panelled drawing-room with a beautiful Bossi mantel-piece with ivy-leaf decoration. Over this, painted on the wall is a panoramic view of the brick-front of the house, with sentry-boxes and fish ponds in the foreground, and the ornamental gardens, pigeon-house, Burnratty and the Shannon behind. The dining-
room on the right has an angled fireplace and is furnished with family portraits. There is a fine 18th century fireplace in the back hall from which a massive staircase, almost Jacobean in style, with heavily moulded cornices and deeply panelled ceiling. From the spacious landing two bedrooms open, each of which has fine mantelpieces, and in one of them is a painted wall-panel of "The Woman of Samaria at the Well," a poor painting, very provincial in style. The plasterwork here has been destroyed by dampness. The house is said to have been designed by Rothery.

Carnelly. Built by the Stamper family in the earlier half of the 18th century. A three-storey house of a mellow red-brown brick with plain stone coursings. The stone doorway has a triangular arch and two side windows. The inner door in hall has a surround of square blocks, joined by herring-moulding. The salon, rather low for its length, has two Corinthian pillars with corresponding pilasters at one end, perhaps intended as the altar of a private chapel. Between the windows which run on one side of the room are heavy floral mouldings while the ceiling is stuccoed.

Newhall. Built by Charles MacDonnell, of Kilkee, in 1764. The coursing, doorway and its surrounds, the keystones over windows and the balustrade are all of cut stone. The panels in the brickwork over the upper windows are of unusual design. The rectangular front is relieved by the round bay at each end, but particularly by the segment of the hexagonal two-storied porch, containing the doorway and five windows. The hall continues the hexagonal pattern of the porch and has a deeply moulded cornice of dice patterned squares alternating with the MacDonnell arms.

Tervoe. Built in 1785 by Colonel William Monsell, and "newly repaired," according to The O'Donovan survey letters, about 1830. Possibly the side pavillons were added at this time, and even the porch with its doric pillars. The rear side of the house, facing the river is on a raised stone platform, and each end terminates in a bow. The rooms have late Adam decoration with delicate friezes and pilasters. The double doors are of mahogany.

Glin Castle. Built about the 1770, this beautifully kept long white house ends in two perfect bays, with slightly curving windows, glazed with small panes of thin glass. The hall has two Corinthian pillars and a ceiling of Stucce in low relief, delicately painted. The staircase of the inner hall curves up on either side and meets to form a light graceful stairs to the first floor gallery from which the bedrooms open. The well of the stair case is lit by a Venetian window and both it and the stairs are painted cream, with carved garlands picked out in white. An inscription cut in stone over an arch of the courtyard has the date 1615.

Castlepark. Built round the Castle of Ballygannan in the latter half of the 18th century. The stone decoration in front is very attractive, and the back, the older part of the house has a very complicated series of floor levels. O'Donovan says it was improved and rebuilt by Christopher Delmage in 1833 for £2,000.

Kilballyowen. Built towards the end of the 18th century by the O'Gradys on the site of their former residence. Most remarkable feature is the series of outside wall-plaques.

(1). However, there is a significant entry for March 1750, in the Minute Book of the Masons, etc., of Limerick, admitting Two Jevens from Clare, two from Kildare, and one from Dublin, all "gents" or merchants to the freedom of the guild. Could this have been the date of completion of the big house?—R.H.