

offered to wall Askeaton Town and make the castle a refuge for the English in those parts. James I also constituted the Constable's lands to be the Manor of Rock Barkeley, and established a fair and weekly markets. In a second letter, dated 25 April 1611, the King promised the Constablenesship of Limerick to Maurice Berkeley after his father's death, a tribute to the family's loyalty to the Crown.

THE WALLED TOWN was incorporated as a borough on 20 October 1612. Edmund Drew was the first provost and the burgesses were Sir Francis Berkeley, Edmond Ley, Roger Rue, Gilbert Rue, William Rastell, Henry Widnam, John Eaton, Anthony Cooper, John Green, John Atkinson, John Stokes and Andrew Davys. Sir Francis Berkeley received his Askeaton holding at an annual rent of £87.50 under various terms, one of which was an obligation to erect houses for over fifty English families. Many of these early English Protestant settlers later established some of the "county" families of Limerick, Tipperary and Clare. Berkeley looked after the interests of his Irish neighbours as well as those of the new settlers. On one occasion he was accused, and found guilty, of harbouring Irish husbandmen on his lands, but the charges were dropped by the authorities, who had few friends to spare in the West Limerick of the early seventeenth century.

THE ROCK BARKELEY HOLDINGS, or *seignory*, including the town, contained 1200 acres of demesne, 900 in fee-farm, 1200 evicted, 1100 leased and 36 in other tenures. Francis Berkeley could muster 21 foot-soldiers and 7 horsemen, and he "succeeded in undoing much of the ravage of two civil wars, before his death, which took place at Askeaton Castle on December 20th 1615". His sons Maurice and Henry succeeded him but died young. By 1626 the estate had passed to two of Francis's daughters, Elizabeth, the wife of George Crofton, and Gertrude, the wife of John Taylor. None of his other daughters appear to have inherited. One of them, Frances, was married to Thomas Blayney of Tregonan, Denbighshire. Frances was an ancestress of the Crofton, Blayney, Ormsby and Browne families, while her sister, Gertrude, was an ancestress of the Barons Massy, the Taylors of Hollypark, and through her daughter, the Gores, the Gore-Hickmans, and the Westropp.

THE 1655 CIVIL SURVEY described the mid-seventeenth century town. "Asketton town and lands, beinge a mannor with the Priviledge of a Courte Leete and Court Barron, five plowlands and a halfe with a Castle and a great stone buildinge, an Abbie and church; a corporate Town; two mills, whereof one belongs to Mrs. Crofton, with a

greate Bridge, a fishing Leape. Three Eele wears, Three Salmon weares, Two ffares in the yeer and a markt once in the weeke." In 1690 unrest in the area prompted Richard Taylor of Ballinort to correspond with King William's officers. He complained of the dangerous state of his district and asked for a garrison to be stationed in Askeaton although the castle was ruined but still worth repairing.

THE EARL OF ORRERY tried to persuade Queen Anne to refit Askeaton Castle in 1712. He wrote: "This castle was built and fortified as a stronge hold by the Earl of Desmond, and was of great and singular service to him in his Rebellion in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth: the town was made a Burrow and corporation by letters patent from King James the First ... It is scituated [sic] in an Island made by a Division of the River about one hundred yards above the Castle, and united again at a less distance below to which the tyde flowes and makes it a navigable river to the Shannon where it empties itself after a course of Three mile and is one of the best passes for crossing that river into the County of Clare. The want of wch conveniency was of great detriment and delay to the speedy reducing of Limerick in both the late rebellions of '41 and '88 ... it will alsoe be of great security to the Protestants already settled there, as well as an encouragement to others to settle, there being at present no barracks near to protect them from the insults of Irish Rapparees". Orrery described Askeaton's proximity to the "Confines of Kerry" which made it a key to that county and commanded the best passes from there "for carriages, etc., which may be annoyed or sustained by this garrison ... it will also greatly secure the navigation of the Shannon, there being noe fortress now Thereon from the mouth of the River to the city of Limerick, the sixty mile distant". The Earl related how ruinous the fortress was by 1712, but suggested that if the government provided him with £500 for its repair he would maintain it at his own expense from then onwards, on condition that he was appointed governor "at the usual allowance and with the accustomed profits made to the other Governors of Corke and Limerick". Queen Anne paid little attention to his request. The castle remained a ruin.

THE HELL-FIRE CLUB PREMISES is located alongside the ruins of Askeaton Castle. This ruined building may date from the late seventeenth century, although other accounts date it from the 1740s. The original Hell-Fire Clubs were established by Lord Wharton, later the Duke of Wharton, in 1720, but were abolished by a Royal proclamation on 28 April 1721. Another such club, founded by Sir Francis Dashwood, may have evolved

from the meeting of a coterie of literary men at some unspecified date between 1748 and 1755. Dashwood claimed it was an offspring of the Dilletanti Society which he helped to found in 1732. His more notorious society — The Amorous Knights of Wycombe. The Monks of Medmenham. The Medmenham Monks, The Order of St. Francis. The Franciscans. Dashwood's Disciples, or The Brotherhood of Saint Francis of Wycombe — became better known as the Hell-Fire Club, a name which its members did not use until towards the end of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Rumour, gossip and hearsay abounded about the clubs' activities: membership flourished: and clubs were formed in places as far apart as Dublin, Edinburgh and Paris. The membership included at least one Prime Minister, the Earl of Bute; a Chancellor of the Exchequer. Sir Francis Dashwood, Baron Le Despencer: a First Lord of the Admiralty. John Montagu, the Earl of Sandwich: Thomas Potter, Paymaster-General, Treasurer for Ireland, and son of the Archbishop of Canterbury: John Wilkes, Lord Mayor of London: various cabinet ministers: several members of Parliament: distinguished wits; aspiring politicians: and the cream of Georgian society. The society also possessed a female membership. The Nuns of Medmenham, which included Frances, Viscountess Vane, authoress of *The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality* and many other rather dubious "ladies". Chevalier D'Eon de Beaumont, a French diplomat, is believed to have been a member of both the nuns' and the friar's orders. The members masqueraded as Satanists. Some of them may have been interested in the occult but the club-houses and grounds of the various Hell-Fire Clubs were devoted to more earthy pleasures. Young and not-so-young bucks indulged in drinking bouts, heavy gambling sessions, and frequent orgies. The Hell-Fire Clubs are also thought to have had a more serious aspect. Sir Francis Dashwood's passion for black magic is believed to have been a reaction against Catholicism and organised religion generally, and to have been as much a political force as a social one. A portrait depicting the only known female member of the Askeaton Hell-Fire Club hangs in Glin Castle. The club-house contains a curved bow on one side of each of its two main fronts, one of which may be the earliest example of a Venetian window on the curve, anywhere. During the nineteenth century this building was used as a barracks.

THE TOWN was disenfranchised by the Act of Union. £15,000 was paid in compensation to the Earl of Carrick, Lord Massy, Sir Vere Hunt and Sir Joseph Hoare. The Corporation became extinct. Richard Taylor, Vice-Provost

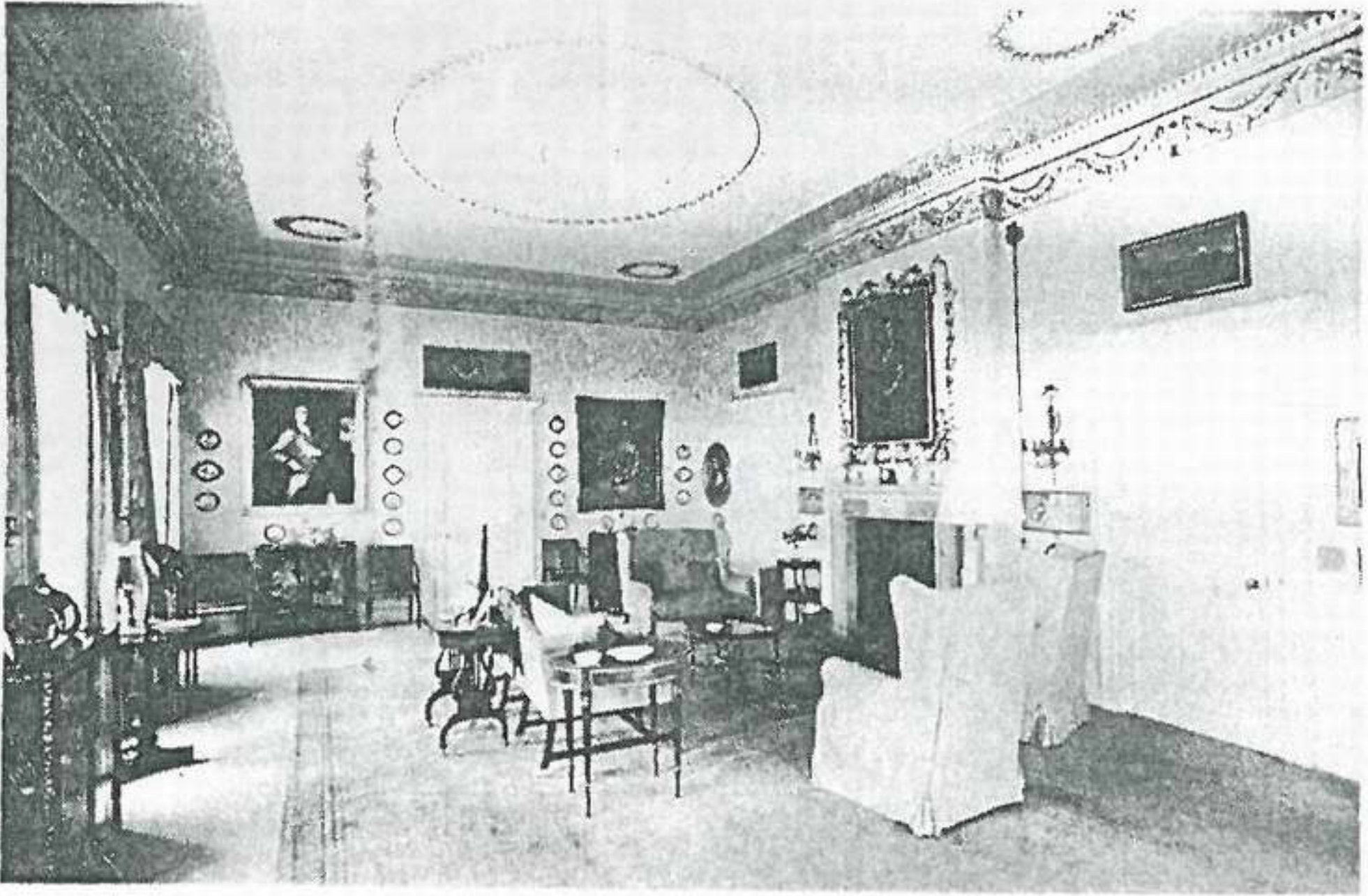
than likely that her dowry helped to complete it. Margareta Maria's portrait, a copy of a miniature (see illustration 16) by Joseph Daniel of Bath (c. 1760-1803) which in the library, hangs by the front door with a print of her father's great house, Forde Abbey in Dorset, underneath it. One cannot help but feel that his English wife may well have been a sophisticating influence in the wilds of Glin, and her miniature shows her to have been a beauty. The front door has an unusual fanlight formed in the shape of a butterfly, and the splendid brass bound lock is Dublin made. The first portrait (see illustration 14) on the right-hand wall is by Philip Hussey of about 1775 depicting Thomas Fitz-Gerald, the father of John Bateman. Underneath it is a family tree of the Fitz-Geralds of Ballynard, an offshoot of the knights of Glin, which emblazons their arms and those of the earls of Desmond and Kildare. The next picture on the same wall is the full-length of Richard Fitz-Gerald being brought the challenge to the duel. The full-length opposite is, according to tradition, a portrait of Edmund FitzGibbon, the last White knight who died in 1608. However, date-wise it has to be of his descendant, the first Lord Kingston, and it is attributable to the younger John Michael Wright (*fl.* c. 1690-1710). The Kingstons tried unsuccessfully to revive this romantic title at the time of George IV's visit to Ireland in 1822. Underneath this portrait stands an early-nineteenth-century copy of an ancient Irish harp. Over the carved stone mantelpiece is a sporting picture by Alexander Francois Desportes (1661-1733) who was one of Louis XIV's favourite painters. It originally hung in the collection of Lord Emly at Tervoe, outside Limerick. The remaining portrait on the left-hand wall is another likeness of John Bateman Fitz-Gerald painted by Joseph Wilson. The smaller oils of horses and yachts are all by Lady Rachel Fitz-Gerald, daughter of the 4th earl of Dunraven, a well-known yachtsman who contended the America's Cup twice. The Royal Yacht Squadron burgee of one of his yachts, *Valkyrie*, which raced in 1897, is on the right-hand side of the front door. His sextant can be seen on the sideboard below the portrait of Lord Kingston.

Above the doorcases are a set of four bayonet holders, decorated with the Fitz-Gerald arms, and some other martial trophies. These probably date from 1796 when John Bateman raised a yeomanry

corps known as the Glin Cavalry in preparation for a French invasion. The furnishings of the hall include the wooden lantern copied by the architect Detmar Blow (c. 1867-1939) from the Venetian Renaissance example in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. It belongs to a set made for the long gallery at Adare Manor. The Irish baroque side tables bear the arms of the FitzMaurice and Creagh families, and date from about 1750 to 1760. On the Creagh table stands a reproduction of the map showing the siege of old Glin Castle in 1600, and by it is a cannon ball from the siege, found in the Glin river. In a case on the table, with a collection of medals of Roman Emperors, is a stone axe-head dating from the stone age which was found in the field in front of the castle in 1977. The centre table is a typical mid-eighteenth century Irish piece with its goblin masks and cabriole legs. A set of ten hall chairs of about 1790 bear on their backs the two Fitz-Gerald crests (see p. 21). The primary crest consists of the knight's helmet, and the war cry of the Desmond Geraldines, *Shanid aboo*, that is, *Up Shanid*. The secondary crest is of a two-towered castle. This is reproduced in the turreted folly which can be seen nearby across the fields by the river. In front of the windows are two marble statues *Cupid in disguise* and *A ballerina* by the well-known English royal academician, John Gibson (1791-1876) who spent much of his time working in Rome. In the left-hand corner on the square piano, which bears the Limerick retailer's transfer, is an eighteenth-century Spanish zither.

Drawing-Room

The plasterwork of the drawing-room (see illustration 30) is somewhat coarser and more provincial than that of the hall and, as the ceiling is similar to two others in houses in Limerick and Tipperary, it is probable that more local plasterers were employed to decorate it. A fine marble chimney-piece of *pietre dure*—inlaid marble—is by an Italian craftsman, Pietro Bossi, who worked in Dublin between 1782 and 1798, when he had to flee the country owing to his involvement with the United Irishmen. Above it is a splendidly carved and gilt mid-Georgian frame on a portrait by John Lewis (fl. 1740-1757) of



30. The Drawing-Room, Glin Castle

Margaret (Celinda) Blennerhassett of Riddlestown, County Limerick, who is said to have been the only lady member of the **Limerick Hell Fire Club**. She was a daughter of Jeremiah Hayes of Cahirguillamore. The Limerick Hell Fire Club and its Dublin counterpart seem to have been a break-away group from the Freemasons. The Limerick branch of the Club met in the old house in Askeaton Castle. In a conversation piece of the Club by James Worsdale (c. 1692-1767), in the collection of John (Jack) Sweeney, of Corofin, County Clare, Celinda appears as the only lady. The portrait of her at Glin Castle, with its frame, and a number of other Blennerhassett portraits were inherited by Desmond Fitz John Lloyd Fitz-Gerald, knight of Glin, on the death of his cousin, Clara Fosbery, *née* Blennerhassett of Riddlestown, in 1904. Above the doors on either side of the chimneybreast are two gouaches by Susana Drury (1733-1770) of the Giants Causeway in County Antrim. These, with two others now in the Ulster Museum, obtained a premium of £25 from the Dublin Society in 1740. They were later engraved by Vivares of London. the portraits at the end of the room on either side of the door are, on the left, a member of the Browne

family of Mount Browne, Rathkeale, County Limerick, whose most dramatic connection with Glin is that a Browne tried to abduct one of Colonel John Bateman's sisters at the end of the eighteenth century! On the right, is a striking but somewhat primitive portrait by Philip Hussey of Ellis Agar, Countess of Brandon, displaying the corporate rolls of the boroughs of Thomastown and Gowran, County Kilkenny—boroughs which she controlled in the Irish parliament. Above the door is a decorative piece said to be of Nelson's Lady Hamilton posing as Hebe by Angelica Kauffman (1740-1807). The oval sketches by the bow window are by the 4th earl of Dunraven. An early Sir John Lavery (1856-1941), a study for his large picture *Ariadne* of 1887, and an oval Lely-school portrait of Barbara Villiers, duchess of Cleveland, hang in each corner. (My mother, now Veronica Milner, was born a Villiers of the Clarendon family.)

The porcelain hanging on the walls and placed elsewhere in the drawing-room is a botanical set decorated about 1810 by a painter who may have worked for the Worcester pottery. Some pale mauve pottery on the chimney-piece was always in the house and is the remains of a very large service. It is probably Staffordshire, and is likely to have been manufactured by the Turners of Lane End in Staffordshire between 1810 and 1820. The pair of oval, gilt Girandoles between the windows are Dublin-made and reflect, as does the frieze and ceiling plasterwork, the English neo-classical style associated with Robert Adam and James Wyatt. A pair of Chinese lacquer cabinets and stands are Chien Lung and date from the end of the eighteenth century. The black-marble inlaid table with its floral bouquet dates from the mid-nineteenth century, and is undoubtedly Florentine.

The Library

The foremost feature of this room (see illustration 31) is the notable built-in, mahogany, broken-pedimented book case with the bust of Milton. One of the two middle compartments artfully conceals the door which leads back into the staircase hall. The ceiling plasterwork with its oak wreath leaf and delicate frieze is probably by the same hands which executed the hall; however, the painted border of

Askeaton

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"The Knight
of Glin"

Gaughran, A.