



Carolean splendour: re-dating the construction of Beaulieu House, Co Louth

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BEAULIEU HOUSE: CAROLEAN OR EARLY GEORGIAN?

WERE THOMAS SADLEIR AND PAGE DICKINSON CORRECT IN 1915 IN PRONOUNCING Beaulieu House in county Louth to be ‘perhaps the earliest of its kind standing in Ireland’, a view from which Mark Bence-Jones, writing seventy years later and from his own uniquely comprehensive knowledge of Irish country houses, saw no reason to dissent?¹ Or was the building a creation of the reign of George I, as suggested by Christine Casey and Alistair Rowan in 1993, and which, since then, has become the prevailing view?² Family tradition has long held that the current house was constructed by Sir Henry Tichborne (1581-1667), the founder of the family’s fortunes in Ireland, early in the 1660s.³ Against this is the improbability that Tichborne, then in his eighties, would have embarked upon such a project at such an advanced age and before he and his surviving heir, Sir William Tichborne,⁴ had, in 1666, obtained a secure legal title to the property.⁵ In contrast, those who favour an early eighteenth-century date rely upon the ostensibly more certain evidence provided by two letters in the correspondence between Sir Henry Tichborne, Baron Ferrard (1663-1731), the owner of Beaulieu, and his elder half-brother Robert, Viscount Molesworth (1656-1725). These indicate that significant building work was in hand at Beaulieu in the early 1720s under the supervision of a tradesman named ‘Curle’ (by convention only ever referred to by his surname)⁶ – hence Casey and Rowan’s speculation that Beaulieu is the latest of a small group of early Georgian mansions (notably Castle Coole, county Fermanagh, and Conyngham Hall, county Meath, probably Stackallan, county Meath, and possibly Castlebellingham, county Louth) attributable to the bricklayer and mason John Curle.⁷ All date from c.1709-12, with Beaulieu, they believe, following some years later after Sir Henry Tichborne’s ennoblement as Baron Ferrard in 1715.

1 – Willem van der Hagen (1675-1745), *VIEW OF DROGHEDA*

1718, oil on board, 620 x 269 cm, detail showing an all-red Beaulieu House in the background (Beaulieu House collection; © Cara König-Brock)



2 – Carolean classicism: the entrance front of Beaulieu House, Co Louth, begun in 1680/81, attributed to ‘John Curle of Bewly mason’ (photos by Dermott & Wendy Dunbar, unless otherwise stated)

If correct, this re-dating denies Beaulieu its former status as a benchmark Irish house, and redefines it as a late example of Carolean classicism, erected on the threshold of the sea-change in taste heralded in Ireland by Alessandro Galilei’s initial designs of 1717 for William Conolly’s proposed great house of Castletown, county Kildare, subsequently realised by Edward Lovett Pearce, and Pearce’s own design for Bellamont Forest, county Cavan, completed in 1730.⁸ The contrast between Beaulieu and these two celebrated Irish Palladian houses, all seemingly begun within a few years of each other, could scarcely be greater (Plates 2, 3). This is the more remarkable because Beaulieu’s purported builder, Henry, Baron Ferrard, was the younger half-brother of Robert, Viscount Molesworth, an outspoken champion of Italianate neo-classical Palladian principles of design. In fact, it was Molesworth, with the aid of his Italian-based diplomat son, John, who was instrumental in bringing Galilei to Ireland and who lent early encouragement to Pearce.⁹

Beaulieu’s own Dutch-inspired design (Plate 2) is characteristic of the prevailing architectural fashion not of the 1720s, but of a generation earlier. As Roger White acknowledges, were Beaulieu in the Home Counties of England, ‘the inclination would be to describe it as a product of City of London craftsmen, perhaps of the 1640s or 1650s’.¹⁰ Had it been built in the 1660s, its design would therefore have been architecturally revolutionary in an Irish context, although, as demonstrated by the Rev Henry Maxwell’s Finnebrogue, county Down, begun soon after 1662, and Colonel John Eyre’s Eyrecourt Castle, county Galway, also built in the 1660s, by no means unique in that respect.¹¹ With



3 – Neo-Palladianism: the entrance front of Bellamont Forest, Co Cavan, completed in 1730, by Edward Lovett Pearce (photo by Noel Carney)

these other two Irish houses, it belongs to the innovative new compact style of English house, without courtyards or wings, adopted with enthusiasm immediately following the Restoration, and exemplified by Inigo Jones and Roger Pratt's Coleshill House (Wiltshire) of about 1660, Hugh May's Eltham Lodge (Kent) of 1663-64, and Roger Pratt's short-lived Clarendon House (London) of 1664-67.¹² Beaulieu shares with these more celebrated English houses the characteristic Carolean features of ground and first floors of equal heights, attics accommodated beneath high, hipped and dormered roofs, chimneys placed within the body of the building rather than against its outside walls, windows symmetrically arranged, classically framed doorways positioned in the centres of façades, and the articulation of external surfaces with window surrounds, quoins, string-courses, entablatures and cornices (Plates 2, 4). In Ireland it is a great public building, Sir William Robinson's Royal Hospital Kilmainham of 1680-84, which most fully embodies these design principles and with which, therefore, Beaulieu should perhaps be compared (Plates 4, 5).¹³

Nonetheless, to suppose on the strength of these stylistic comparisons alone that Beaulieu is a Restoration-era house would appear to be contradicted by Ferrard's letters, which document the substantial building work upon which he was engaged in the 1720s. These, however, make no mention of work to the house's exterior, and report solely the alterations being made to the interior of the house, notably the installation of wainscoting and moulded timber cornices, redecoration, the reglazing of windows (probably the replacement of mullion-and-transom casements with sliding sashes), and the opening of a



4 – The west and south fronts of Beaulieu House

The hung sashes, originally of nine-over-nine panes, replaced casement windows set within mullion and transom frames in the 1720s and the grey cement render was applied in the early twentieth century.

5 – The west and south fronts of the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham, Dublin

Originally, the string course, window surrounds and sills were all of brick, the render was given a russet wash, the cornice was of timber, and only the central pedimented projections were of stone. Hung sashes replaced casement windows set within mullion and transom frames in the 1760s. (photo: Alamy)



new stairwell to accommodate a Dublin-made grand staircase.¹⁴ Indeed, Ferrard's announcement on 4th September 1722 that 'I have taken up the loft for my great stairs', implies that he was engaged in refashioning an existing building rather than starting anew.¹⁵ Two late seventeenth-century staircases already existed, constructed to give access to the current attics, and even had he wished to do so, it is doubtful that the newly ennobled Ferrard possessed the means to undertake a wholesale rebuilding. His estate was modest and he occupied no sinecure public office, which prompted Sr John Perceval (a man of more moderate political views) to observe of Ferrard that he was a person 'of so small a fortune that, as soon as he got his title he petitioned for a pension to support it'.¹⁶

That Beaulieu represents a fundamental reworking of an older mansion house is undisputed.¹⁷ At issue is when that reworking took place. A house had existed on this site for several centuries, built and modified by successive generations of the Plunkett family. Shortly before or after 1300, John and Alicia Plunkett had founded the adjacent small manorial church with graveyard dedicated to St Brigid (rebuilt in 1807).¹⁸ When their descendant and last of his line, William Plunkett, died in July 1644, the manor of 'Bewly' had comprised one '*domus manconal*' (mansion house), six messuages, one water mill, and 180 acres of arable land, and there are further references to 'the house and lands of Beaulieu' during the Commonwealth period.¹⁹ This was the house used by Sir Phelim O'Neill as his headquarters during his winter siege of Drogheda in 1641-42 and it was into it that the victor of that siege, Sir Henry Tichborne, installed his household in 1649.²⁰ county Louth historian Harold O'Sullivan was firmly of the opinion that it was this Plunkett-built house that was 'further extended and reconstructed' by the Tichbornes, a development which he believed happened 'in the latter part of the seventeenth century', rather than later.²¹

THE HERALDIC EVIDENCE

SUPPORT FOR O'SULLIVAN'S THESIS IS PROVIDED BY THE ARMS PROMINENTLY DISPLAYED within the segmental pediment of the house's entrance doorcase and the corresponding set of arms placed above the monumental portal that faces the front door within the entrance hall (Plate 6). In both cases these appear to be contemporary with reconstruction of the house and to occupy the positions originally intended for them. They share the same design of an interior armorial oval set within a garlanded cartouche, although their materials differ, with limestone for durability on the outside and plaster on the inside. Those in pride of place on the outside are integral to the design of the polychrome white-limestone and red-brick Baroque entrance doorcase. Those placed equally prominently on the inside, in full view of everyone entering the house, pre-date and contrast with the many other sets of arms and monograms displayed within the entrance hall added by Ferrard after c.1720, which are of carved and painted wood.²²

Those on the outside are the pre-1697 arms of the Irish branch of the Tichbornes, founded by the first Sir Henry and the first to establish himself at Beaulieu (*Vair a chief or, a mullet for difference*).²³ Conspicuous by their absence, are the augmentation of the Red Hand of Ulster (*Argent a hand sinister coupé at the wrist extended in pale gules*),



6 – The pre-1697 arms of Tichborne of Beaulieu (the correct blazons are VAIR A CHIEF OR, A MULLET FOR DIFFERENCE) displayed in the pediment of the entrance doorcase, and the arms of Sir William Tichborne (d.1694) impaling those of his wife, Judith Byssse (SABLE, THREE ESCALLOPS IN PALE ARGENT), placed above the answering doorcase within the entrance hall, Beaulieu House

added in 1697 when the second Sir Henry Tichborne became a baronet in the baronetage of England, and the baron's coronet, of which he became the proud bearer when he was elevated to the peerage of Ireland in 1715. The obvious inference is that these are the arms of the builder, from which it follows that the house must have been completed before the second Sir Henry Tichborne became a baronet, and certainly before he became a baron, and therefore either within three years of his inheriting the property or, more probably, during his father's 27-year ownership of it from 1667 to 1694.²⁴ The corresponding set of arms within the entrance hall confirm the latter. They are of Tichborne impaling

Bysse (*Sable, three escallops in pale argent*), and are therefore the arms of Sir William Tichborne and his wife, Judith Bysse, the daughter of chief baron John Bysse.²⁵ On this unambiguous heraldic testimony, it is they who must have been the original builders of the house as it substantially exists (bar the subsequent internal alterations made by their son, Lord Ferrard), which is likely to have commenced before Judith Lady Tichborne's death in late November 1682, and must have been completed before that of her husband, Sir William, in early March 1694.²⁶ Theirs was the decision to rebuild and it was they who approved the design of the new house.

Sir William's father was the Sir Henry Tichborne who ended his long and militarily distinguished life as marshal of the army in Ireland. Sir William (Plate 7) had been born around 1630 and became his father's heir when his twenty-year-old elder brother, Benjamin, was killed at the Battle of Balrothery in July 1647. He too pursued a military career and, like his father, benefited from the patronage of James, Duke of Ormonde, founder of the Royal Hospital.²⁷ He served as captain of horse in the Duke's Regiment of Horse and remained in post under the subsequent colonelcies of Ormond's close ally, the Earl of Granard, and of Ormond's younger son, the Earl of Arran. The Duke counted on his loyalty and entrusted Sir William's sons 'to carry and relay messages' about the situation in Ireland.²⁸ Ormond also regarded Sir William's father-in-law, John Bysse, as a 'friend of his own', and in 1666 he paid Judith Tichborne the compliment of a visit when on a progress as lord lieutenant.²⁹ By 1679 Bysse was probably too old and ailing to occupy his *ex officio* position on the standing committee established to put into execution Sir William Robinson's grand design for the Royal Hospital but it would be surprising if his son-in-law, the son of a field marshal, did not take a personal interest in a hospital intended 'for the relief and maintenance of ancient and infirm officers and soldiers serving the army of Ireland'.³⁰

Judith Bysse (Plate 7), whose first husband was Robert Molesworth, had been widowed in 1656 but was remarried to Sir William Tichborne in 1661, in which year her new husband was elected MP for Swords, county Dublin, where her father wielded influence.³¹ Together, they had five sons and a daughter. Her marriage settlement has not survived but must have made financial provision for any issue she might have from her second marriage, as she was already the mother of the infant Robert Molesworth by her first. Her wealthy father died on 28th January 1680 and she followed him 22 months later.³² Henry, the first of her Tichborne sons, was born in 1663 and in July 1683 he made a prestigious marriage to Arabella Cotton, the daughter of an English baronet and sister of Anne Lady Taylor, wife of Sir Thomas Taylor of Kells, county Meath. It was at his father-in-law's house of Combermere in Cheshire that several of Henry's own children were born. By then, the widowed Sir William, no longer an MP, had resumed his military career, and in 1686, following Ormond's death, was recommissioned by James II and promoted as a major of horse in the Earl of Tyrconnel's Regiment of Horse. Henry Hyde, 2nd Earl of Clarendon, considered him to be 'a very worthy man', and in the 1692 general election Tichborne became MP for county Louth, dying in March 1694.³³

At some stage during this busy military and political career and while managing his small landed estate and providing for his growing family, Sir William Tichborne embarked upon the wholesale reconstruction of the old house at Beaulieu, where the family



7 – Unknown artist, portraits of Sir William Tichborne (d.1694) and his wife Judith Bysse (d.1682), late 17th century, oil on canvas, both 90 x 70 cm (Beaulieu House collection © Cara Konig-Brock)

had been resident since 1649. Before he could do so, however, his finances needed to recover from the initial expenditure of approximately £2,500 made by 1667 to secure the legal title to the house and lands of Beaulieu.³⁴ Help came in January 1680 following the death of his father-in-law. With the financial windfall from that, William and Judith Bysse were finally in a position to refashion the old Plunkett-built house anew. Little did they know that Judith would not live to enjoy the result.

THE DENDROCHRONOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

OAK WAS STILL SUFFICIENTLY AVAILABLE WHEN BEAULIEU WAS BUILT TO HAVE BEEN used both for internal structural beams and construction of the large and complex roof. This, of itself, implies a pre-Georgian date for the house, for pine replaced oak for roofing almost everywhere after 1715.³⁵ Fortunately, oak is ideal for dendrochronological dating, and an analysis of 21 samples taken from exposed and accessible structural timbers in the basement and the attics over the north and south ranges has yielded felling dates, of varying precision, for nine of them (Table 1 and Appendix 1). Samples, such as Q12774 and Q12776, lacking sapwood can provide only a *terminus post quem* for when these trees were felled. More useful for establishing felling dates are timbers where the boundary between the heartwood and the sapwood is preserved (Q12775, Q12778 and Q12831), since Irish oaks typically contained between nine and thirty-two annual sapwood rings. Such timbers give felling dates with margins of error of ± 9 years. This margin can be narrowed when the bulk of the sapwood survives (as in the case of samples Q12837 and Q12838), but most useful of all are timbers which contain

the whole of the sapwood out to the bark edge (Q12772 and Q12773) because these yield felling dates accurate to both the year and season.

In the case of Beaulieu, a major structural beam in the basement beneath the north range with complete sapwood out to the bark edge (Q12773) yields a precise felling date of summer 1679. By combining two discontinuous samples (Q12772), the same felling date was also obtained for a second big beam in the basement. On the opposite side of the house, two timbers within the attic of the south range with nearly complete sapwood sequences (Q12838 and Q12837) are likely to have been felled just a few years after their respective end dates of 1674 and 1677. Another sample from the same attic (Q12831) has an estimated felling date of 1677 ± 9 years. Felling dates for the other dateable timbers are more approximate but fall within the same narrow pre-1696 chronological range (Table 1). Thus, a third beam in the basement (Q12775) was likely felled in 1687 ± 9 years. Three floors above, a sample taken from a main rafter in the attic of the north range (Q12778) gives an almost identical date of 1685 ± 9 years. Another sample taken from a purlin in the same roof (Q12776) lacks the heartwood/sapwood boundary and consequently yields a *terminus post quem* felling date of 1668 ± 9 years, notwithstanding that it was probably felled at much the same time as the other better-dated timbers in this section of the roof. These dates from the north attic are consistent with those obtained from the three timbers in the south attic and support the view that the commodious hipped and dormered roof in its entirety is the product of a single carpentry operation carried out in the early 1680s, following closely upon the flooring over of the basement. The one outlier to this tight dating pattern is a reused timber in the basement (Q12774) felled in 1609 ± 9 years or later. Conceivably, it is a relic from when William Plunkett (who inherited Beaulieu in 1594 and died in 1613) and his son Thomas (1597-1621) owned the house. All others belong to the Tichborne construction phase, and almost exclusively to the lifetime of Sir William Tichborne. With their chronological focus on c.1679, they endorse the armorial identification of Sir William and his wife Judith Byssie as the house's

Table 1 – Estimated felling dates for structural oak timbers in the basement, north attic and south attic of Beaulieu House, listed in descending order of precision. (source: Appendix 1)

| QUB sample identifier | location | no. of measured rings | heartwood (h) / sapwood (s) rings | start date | end date | estimated felling date range |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|--|---------------|--------------|------------------------------------|
| Q12773 | basement | 154 | 27 sapwood, complete | 1626 | 1679 | summer 1679 |
| Q12772 | basement | (23 (105 | 23 sapwood, complete h/s boundary present | 1656 1585 | 1679 1652 | summer 1679 1684 ± 9 years |
| Q12837 | south attic | 116 | 39 sapwood, incomplete | 1562 | 1677 | c.1679 |
| Q12838 | south attic | 130 | 34 sapwood, incomplete | 1545 | 1674 | c.1679 |
| Q12775 | basement | 68 | h/s boundary present | 1588 | 1655 | 1687 ± 9 years |
| Q12778 | north attic | 70 | h/s boundary present | 1584 | 1653 | 1685 ± 9 years |
| Q12831 | south attic | 68 | h/s boundary present | 1578 | 1645 | 1677 ± 9 years |
| Q12776 | sorth attic | 115 | h/s boundary absent | 1524 | 1636 | after 1668 |
| Q12774 | basement | 68 | h/s boundary absent | 1510 | 1577 | after 1609 |



west



south



east



north



8 – The four fronts of Beaulieu House as they may have appeared when first built

9 – Conjectural ground-floor plan of Beaulieu House, c.1680

(both drawings by Shane Cusack and Bruce Campbell)

builders. The documented fitting out of rooms in the south range described by Ferrard in the early 1720s, therefore, took place beneath a roof and behind façades erected forty years earlier by his parents.³⁶

Correlations with other Irish tree-ring chronologies indicate that these oak timbers had no single provenance but originated from a variety of locations across Ulster – from counties Down and Armagh in the southeast to counties Tyrone and Londonderry in the northwest. It is thus improbable that they were felled to commission. Instead, they were probably sourced by a professional timber dealer who arranged for them to be shipped to Drogheda, whence they were delivered to their eventual purchaser, Sir William Tichborne.³⁷ Some months, therefore, are likely to have elapsed between felling and the availability of these timbers on site. Seasoning, however, was not required, since oak is most easily worked when green, which implies that construction began in 1680 at the earliest, or 1681 at the latest. At the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, the 1680 building season began in March, and laying of the foundation stone followed on 29th April.³⁸ Maybe construction of Beaulieu began at the self-same time. Alternatively, the decision to build is more likely to have been taken following John Byssie's death in January 1680, however much that may have been anticipated. If so, it is unlikely to have been until the spring of 1681 that everything was in place for work to proceed.³⁹ First, an 'architect' had to be appointed, plans and designs agreed, costs estimated and finances organised, and independent teams of skilled craftsmen – masons, bricklayers, carpenters, joiners, roofers, glaziers and painters – contracted.⁴⁰ Bricks then had to be fired, other building materials purchased and assembled, the house vacated and the entire household temporarily relocated. Only then can work have begun with the stripping and gutting of the old Plunkett house.



DESIGN OF SIR WILLIAM TICHBORNE AND JUDITH BYSSE'S NEW HOUSE

SIR WILLIAM AND JUDITH LADY TICHBORNE'S NEW HOUSE INHERITED FROM ITS PLUNKETT predecessor its site, orientation, the L-shaped basements beneath its north and most of its east ranges (Plate 9), and therefore its overall dimensions of roughly 25 x 15 metres, and the consequent scale and disposition of its rooms. Like the sibling Plunkett house of Carstown in county Louth just a few kilometres away, what may have begun as a tower house and then morphed into a gabled strong house, with a main floor or floors elevated over a basement and with attic accommodation in the gabled roof space above, probably ended as a U-shaped house of north, east and south ranges whose outline is preserved within the plan of the Tichborne house.⁴¹ With its entrance forecourt and ranges no more than one room deep, it may have resembled Sir Toby Caulfeild's new plantation house of Castle Caulfeild, county Tyrone, begun in 1612, and Archdeacon William Bulkeley's Old Bawn House, county Dublin, built in 1635.⁴² By 1680, however, this defensible Jacobean style of house was fast going out of fashion, and it was evidently Sir William's intention to bring Beaulieu thoroughly up to date and thereby provide a fitting seat for his heirs.

In keeping with other Restoration-era houses, Beaulieu was reconceived as a self-contained rectangular block surmounted by a high hipped and dormered roof of complex



10 – Beaulieu House, uncut and cut-and-gauged bricks (photos by Jason Bolton)

clockwise from top left:

- Deformed over-fired vitrified place bricks in the stable outbuilding. Note that the more well-fired bricks, though unshaped/uncut, are broadly similar in appearance and texture to the cut and rubbed gauged brick of the main house.
- Gauged brickwork of a pilaster at the main house. Note the textural variation of the fired clay matrix, the use of a coloured mortar to repair the arise on the left, and the incision and colouring of the joints with white lime to add definition. The vertical perpendicular joints appear wider than the horizontal bedding joints.
- These bricks in the main façade retain a relatively homogenous brick-coloured surface coat intended to conceal partially fired aggregate, voids, and other surface imperfections. The joints are incised and coloured white with lime.
- This close-up of the high-quality brickwork at Beaulieu reveals the use of a fine but unprocessed brick clay. In this brick, the fired clay matrix includes pebbles (top right) and off-white, partially fired limestone pebbles (right) as well as rounded dark-coloured inclusions.

11 – Beaulieu House, the west doorcase in the south front featuring both moulded and gauged bricks, incised and whitened joints, and carved white-limestone insets

construction, with boldly bracketed eaves supported by 72 handsomely carved modillions on its north, west and south sides (Plates 8, 9). Its kitchen was probably in the basement of the north range, where it was served by the largest of the house's three chimney stacks, centrally located like that in the south range to provide maximum benefit to the rooms that it served. Externally, the former entrance forecourt was walled in to create a shallow recessed centre of three bays framed by two-bay wings, thereby echoing the entrance front of closely contemporary Honington Hall, Warwickshire, of 1682.⁴³ This entrance front and the adjoining garden front placed at a right angle to it were given the full Carolean classical treatment. Handsome red-brick Baroque doorcases with contrasting white Bath or Portland stone details – Corinthian with a segmental pediment on the entrance front, Ionic with straight-sided pediments on the garden front – framed the doorways, and elaborate brick surrounds, which 'appear to hang from the string course and entablature directly above them', framed the windows.⁴⁴ Quoins provided additional articulation. A bold stone plinth at ground level, a string course above the ground floor, and an entablature above the first floor extended round the west and south fronts and emphasised that the ground and first floors were of equal heights. On both floors the windows were of equal dimensions and were probably casements set within timber mullion-and-transom frames (Plate 8).⁴⁵ On the garden front the cramped spacing of the two central bays betrays the difficulty of fitting six bays of windows into the fixed dimensions inherited from the Plunkett house.⁴⁶

Both the entrance and the garden fronts made great show of high-quality ashlar-gauged brickwork, achieved by the highly skilled selection, cutting and shaping of bricks which had probably been fired on site (Plates 10, 11). To enrich and unify the result, a surface colour finish was added to conceal partially fired aggregate, voids and other surface defects in the bricks, traces of which still survive on the entrance front.⁴⁷ For further definition, joints were incised and coloured with white lime. The results are a tribute to the skill of the master bricklayer, especially given that the bricks themselves were far from homogeneous. Their indifferent quality, the sheer quantity used in the main house, adjacent stable outbuilding (Plate 12), churchyard walls and in the walled approach to the house, and the existence of a 'brick field' with a flooded pit to the rear of the house where the land has a lot of clay, suggest that they were made locally.⁴⁸

The redness of the house was certainly one of its most striking features, for in 1718 it was as an all-red house when viewed from afar that Willem van der Hagen depicted it in his topographical painting of Drogheda (Plate 1).⁴⁹ This suggests that originally, before the current early twentieth-century grey cement render was applied (and whatever nineteenth-century stucco that may have replaced), either the flat wall surfaces were faced with brick, coloured and lined, or, as originally at the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, 'given a russet wash, perhaps to make it appear like brickwork from afar'.⁵⁰ Traces of russet-coloured surface deposits are present as part of a lime-based three-coat render beneath the early twentieth-century cement render in an exposed part of the original finish to the masonry plinth at the front of the house.⁵¹ The plainer north and east fronts are likely to have been rendered and given a colour wash from the start. They were treated less elaborately, with little attempt at symmetry (Plate 8). The east front was clearly regarded as the rear of the house and lacked a string course, entablature, and modillion cornice.



Internally, the former entrance forecourt became a single-height entrance hall with great chamber above. This was characteristic of this scale and period of Irish house and is an arrangement still to be seen in the slightly younger Williamite house of Rathaspick (county Wexford). The hall, entered centrally but aligned laterally, was the largest room on the ground floor and likely had a paved floor.⁵² Its handsome big fireplace was served by a chimney built against the former outside wall of the north range. The other principal rooms opened off the hall (Plate 9). From behind a pair of elegant arches in the corner of the common parlour in the north-east angle of the house, stone stairs led down to the kitchen below and a timber closed-string, double-winder, open-well staircase with newel posts, straight banisters, chunky vase-and-bottle balusters and matching mirror balusters (reminiscent of the staircase in the north end of the Royal Hospital's west range), gave access to rooms in the two floors above (Plate 13).⁵³ A similar dog-leg, closed-string staircase with vase balusters, at the junction between the east and south ranges, gave equivalent access to the rooms on their upper floors (Plate 14). Both staircases were plainly



13 – Beaulieu House, the original Carolean staircase which serves the north and east ranges

(from Thomas U. Sadleir and Page L. Dickinson, GEORGIAN MANSIONS IN IRELAND (Dublin, 1915) plate VII)

The passage beneath the stairs on the left leads to the kitchen range, added to form the east side of the stable yard in the early nineteenth century. The frame of the door that once gave access to the stairs to the basement is just visible on the right.

14 – Beaulieu House, the original Carolean staircase which serves the east and south ranges

opposite 12 – Beaulieu House, general view of the original brick stable outbuilding and the damaged broken segmental pediment of the Baroque doorcase in its end gable wall

(photos by Jason Bolton and Dermott & Wendy Dunbar)

intended for use by all members of the household. Each gave access to the attics and via either of them the great chamber could be reached, which occupied the space above the hall and faced west. It could also be accessed from the adjoining rooms in the north and south ranges, the doorway from the north-west bedroom surviving as a deep floor-length cupboard. Overall, this was a tight and tidy plan and accommodated the family and their domestic staff and most essential functions under the one roof. Stabling and accommodation for the outdoor staff were provided in the neighbouring detached brick office range (Plate 12), which, as late as 1766, was the sole substantial ancillary building on site.⁵⁴

THE DESIGNER OF THE HOUSE: ‘JOHN CURLE OF BEWLY MASON’?

WHO WAS THE AUTHOR OF THIS ACCOMPLISHED DESIGN? NOT ONLY WAS IT AS abreast of contemporary architectural taste as the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, but the two buildings also shared many features in common. Apart from their

general principles of design, these included their Baroque doorcases, the polychrome effects achieved by juxtaposing contrasting materials (white limestone and red brick in the case of Beaulieu), the treatment of external window surrounds, prominent use of modillion brackets, the details of staircases, and the wainscoting in their principal rooms. How is this to be explained? Did the surveyor general, Sir William Robinson, provide Sir William Tichborne with a preliminary design for Beaulieu, whose execution was then entrusted to another, given the demands that the Royal Hospital project and his other responsibilities will have made upon Robinson's time and attention? Certainly, once construction began at Beaulieu, someone with practical building experience needed to be present to oversee the project and act as clerk of works. In 1715, for instance, Benjamin Crawley was contracted as overseer and clerk of works at Castle Durrow, county Laois, and required to be on hand throughout the building operation.⁵⁵ At Beaulieu, this role may have been served by a bricklayer of experience and rare skill, given the sophistication of the building's ash-lared gauged brickwork (Plates 10, 11).⁵⁶

Alternatively, Beaulieu's designer may have been someone who received their architectural training under Robinson's supervision in the Board of Works, there being no other institution in Ireland capable of providing an education of that sort. This might explain the Robinsonian style of the result. Or he may have been an independent craftsman-architect who had served an apprenticeship in one of the building trades on either side of the Irish Sea and, with the aid of carpenter's manuals, copy books, and a team of experienced craftsmen, was acting upon instructions from his client, Sir William Tichborne, to emulate components of the designs for the Royal Hospital.⁵⁷ Whoever was responsible for the basic design of Beaulieu, the man most likely to have been responsible for at least overseeing its erection was John Curle, who was described as 'of Bewly mason' when, in 1697, he was admitted as a freeman of Kells, county Meath, where the second Sir Henry Tichborne's kinsman by marriage, Sir Thomas Taylor, was both sovereign and MP.⁵⁸ Curle's appearance at Kells and stated provenance and profession underline the Tichborne/Taylor connection, and imply that it was at Beaulieu, a place with a handsome new manor house but little else, that Curle had gained his reputation as a mason.



15 – Epitaph to Francis Curle, bricklayer (1670-1724), son of John Curle, bricklayer, St Brigid's churchyard, Beaulieu

At Beaulieu, it is as a bricklayer that John Curle is described on the epitaph to his bricklayer son, Francis Curle, now inserted into the wall of the churchyard, which commemorates the death of the latter in 1724 (Plate 15).

Hear Liethl The Body of Francisl Curle Bricklayer sonl of John Curle Bricklaye'l
Who Departed Thisl Life The 27THl Day of June 1724l Aged 55 Years.⁵⁹

From Francis's epitaph, the record of Francis's baptism and that of his younger sister 'Catherine daughter of John Curle and Mary his wife' in the parish register of St Peter's, Drogheda, and the reference in the Kells corporation book to another and presumably elder son called Richard, some of the vital facts of John Curle's otherwise scantily documented life can be deduced.⁶⁰ Thus, if 'Francis the son of John Corle' was baptised on 29th September 1670 and his brother Richard was born maybe a year or two earlier, it follows that John and Mary Curle are likely to have married in the mid-1660s. Before he could marry, however, Curle had to be schooled, apprenticed, and establish himself as an independent craftsman with the prospect of supporting a wife and family, which, for men in his mid-seventeenth-century birth cohort, meant waiting until he was aged 28 or older.⁶¹ That means that he was probably born in or before 1640, grew up during the Civil War and Commonwealth, and came of age at the Restoration.

Since neither John Curle's marriage nor the baptism of his son, Richard, is recorded in the Drogheda parish register, both are therefore likely to have occurred elsewhere. Curle's entry in *The Dictionary of Irish Architects 1720-1940* speculates that he may have been of Scottish origin, but there was no tradition of brick building in Scotland and the Curle family's forenames of John and Mary, and Richard, Francis and Catherine are more consistent with an English provenance, as is the Englishness of Beaulieu's architecture. Restoration Ireland was in need of skilled building craftsmen, and Curle and his young family may have formed part of the 'continuous influx of Protestant craftsmen introduced into Irish urban communities during the seventeenth century'.⁶² By the autumn of 1670, when he first appears in the Irish historical record, he had established himself in Drogheda. There, work was to be had making good the damage inflicted by Cromwell's 1649 siege and, as a further attraction for a trained bricklayer, plentiful supplies of clay suitable for quality brick making were available locally.⁶³ Three years later the baptism of his daughter, Catherine, at St Peter's, Drogheda, in June 1673 reveals that Curle was still there and, therefore, is likely to have been in the town throughout Sir William Tichborne's term as mayor, in 1672, when there is every reason to suppose that the two men became acquainted with each other.⁶⁴ Beaulieu House is the product of this happy conjuncture.

Whatever John Curle's origin, and however and from whom he had obtained his undoubted architectural and bricklaying expertise, he would have been forty and in his prime with a reputation to make when the rebuilding of Beaulieu began in 1680 or 1681. If the design was solely or largely his, it is too mature to have been his first major building commission although it may have been his most ambitious to date. It ought to have led on to other prestigious projects, but whether it did so is unrecorded, and it is not until 1697 that Curle reappears in the historical record when, in his late fifties, he was admitted a freeman of Kells. Like Drogheda before it, Kells was a town in much need of recon-

struction and towards that end, in 1694, the castle had been converted to serve as a market house and courthouse.⁶⁵ Shortly afterwards, in 1698, Curle, then almost sixty, was recruited to undertake work on the Viscount Weymouth Grammar School at Carrickmacross, county Monaghan.⁶⁶ It is Curle's earliest *recorded* architectural commission. Weymouth was domiciled in England, and, knowing nothing of Curle, grumbled to his agent John Fitch, 'I could have wisht you had given me some account of what buildings he has made, where he lives', a wish with which posterity can only concur.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Curle's reputation was clearly growing, for in 1709 he was engaged to design an entirely new house for Colonel James Corry at Castle Coole, county Fermanagh, and to remodel and 'fit up' the old castle of the Flemings at Slane, county Meath, as a suitable residence for the Conyngham family. Accomplished signed plans in his own hand survive for both houses.⁶⁸ A pair of building accounts for the work at Slane are also extant, signed by John Curle and dated February 1712 (new style 1713), when he must have been over seventy.⁶⁹ At much the same time he was probably also responsible for extending and remodelling neighbouring Stackallan House for Gustavus Hamilton.⁷⁰

There are enough close similarities between Castle Coole and Stackallan, and between these two houses and Beaulieu for it to be credible that John Curle was the architect of all three, but a gap of thirty years separated the work of his early maturity at Beaulieu from that of his experienced old age at Castle Coole and Stackallan. All three adhered to the principles of Carolean classicism, whose most eminent Irish exponent was Sir William Robinson, but whose style John Curle had absorbed and made his own. It served Curle well for the duration of his long career, but in a concession to changing taste, Castle Coole and Stackallan were given advanced centres crowned by pediments, and internally, in contrast to Beaulieu, a clear functional distinction was made between their grand main staircases and subsidiary service stairs.⁷¹

Perhaps the recently ennobled Ferrard had hoped to entice John Curle back to Beaulieu to install a similar grand new staircase there, complete the interiors left unfinished at his mother's death, and effect other fashionable improvements. By the 1720s, however, John Curle was either in his eighties or dead, and hence it was probably to Curle's bricklayer son, Francis, then in his fifties, that Ferrard turned for assistance. That was why, in June 1724, when Ferrard's improvements were nearing completion (Jacob Lucas's overdoor in the recently remodelled entrance hall bears the date 1725), Francis was at Beaulieu when he died and was buried and commemorated there. Hence, it was almost certainly to Francis Curle, rather than Francis's father, John, that Ferrard was referring in the letters to Robert Molesworth which have led to the erroneous redating of Beaulieu to the 1720s. The house is, in fact, exactly forty years older, and therefore not as old as family tradition long held, but old enough to be 'the earliest of its kind standing in Ireland'.⁷² In its embodiment of the principles of Carolean classicism it is the finest surviving domestic counterpart of the exactly contemporary Royal Hospital Kilmainham. Together they exemplify 'the unchanged splendour and refinement that once distinguished late seventeenth-century architecture in Ireland'.⁷³

APPENDIX 1

DENDROCHRONOLOGICAL DATING OF SAMPLES TAKEN FROM
STRUCTURAL OAK TIMBERS IN BEAULIEU HOUSE, CO LOUTH

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In an Irish house that is fully furnished and occupied, the prerequisites for dendrochronological dating are the existence of structural oak timbers which retain some or all of their outer sapwood rings and are physically accessible. From long experience, timbers preserved in basements and roof spaces are likely to yield the most useful results. A reconnaissance visit to Beaulieu House to verify its suitability for dendrochronological analysis took place on 16th December 2021.⁷⁴ That provided the opportunity to take sample cores from four oak timbers in the basement and another four in the attic over the north range, which is thought to have formed the core of the original Plunkett manor house. A grant from the Irish Georgian Society then made possible a return visit on 16th May 2022, when a further thirteen samples were taken from timbers in the attic over the south range of the house, whose interiors Henry, Baron Ferrard is known to have been fitting out in the 1720s. Upon analysis, nine of these 21 samples provided dendrochronological dates of varying degrees of precision, the remaining twelve samples lacking sufficient rings to provide a convincing fit with existing master chronologies (Tables A1, A2).

The method of dating employed by the Queen's University dendrochronology laboratory is that described by M.G.L. Baillie and recommended by English Heritage.⁷⁵ With the aid of a microcomputer-based travelling stage, the tree-ring pattern of each cored sample is measured to an accuracy of 0.01 millimetres and the results plotted on a computer screen to facilitate visual comparison. Using the cross-correlation algorithms CROS84 and CROS73, the measured sequences are then compared with each other, and those that match combined to form a site-specific master chronology.⁷⁶ That chronology and any remaining unmatched tree-ring series are then tested against a range of regional and local chronologies, with high *t* scores (** = highly significant; * = significant), verified by a good visual fit, indicating the existence of an optimal chronological match.

Two of the nine datable samples (Q12774 and Q12776) contained heartwood alone, and therefore provided only a *terminus post quem* for when these trees were felled. More usefully, four others (Q12772, Q12775, Q12778, and Q12831) contained the heartwood/sapwood boundary and/or some sapwood, and therefore yielded approximate felling dates on the empirically established principle that a minimum of ten and maximum of 46 annual sapwood rings will once have been present (where these figures indicate the 95% confidence limits of the range derived from British and Irish oaks). In the Belfast dendrochronological laboratory, an empirically determined estimated sapwood range of 32 ± 9 years is used. Two other samples (Q12837 and Q12838) were short of just the outermost rings of sapwood, from which fairly precise felling dates could therefore be derived. The ninth sample alone (Q12773) contained the whole of the sapwood out to the bark edge, where only the spring vessels are present. It yielded the most precise felling date of all, accurate to both the year and season. No greater precision can be hoped for or achieved using dendrochronological analysis.

Unfortunately, none of these dated samples – the shortest with 68 rings and the longest with 154 rings – is particularly long, which is why correlation values obtained from them are lower than would normally be expected for sequences from Ireland. Seemingly, they were sourced from different parts of the country. Samples Q12772 and Q12773, taken from big structural beams in the basement, correlate best with sites from Co. Down and south Co. Antrim, whereas samples from Q12775 (basement), and Q12776 and Q12778 (roof) give better correlation values with site chronologies from north Co. Antrim and Co. Londonderry. Their relatively wide geographical provenance implies that these oaks had been felled and sold for commercial profit and then shipped either to Drogheda or directly to Beaulieu by a professional timber dealer.

Sample Q12773, taken from a major structural beam in the basement but omitting the centre or pith of the tree, is the most precisely dated of the nine datable samples. It comprises 154 annual growth rings and includes all 27 of the outer sapwood rings, the last containing only the spring vessels. Comparison with a suite of regional and local tree-ring chronologies from Ireland yields a highly significant and con-

| <i>QUB sample</i> | <i>location identifier</i> | <i>type of timber</i> | <i>number</i> |
|-------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Q12772 | basement | beam | Sample 1 |
| Q12773 | basement | beam | Sample 2 |
| Q12774 | basement | re-used beam | Sample 3 |
| Q12775 | basement | beam | Sample 4 |
| Q12776 | north attic | purlin | Sample 5 |
| Q12777 | north attic | main rafter 1 | Sample 6 |
| Q12778 | north attic | main rafter 2 | Sample 7 |
| Q12779 | north attic | joist above 'Glory Hole' | Sample 8 |
| Q12827 | south attic | purlin | Sample 9 |
| Q12828 | south attic | purlin | Sample 10 |
| Q12829 | south attic | rafter | Sample 11 |
| Q12830 | south attic | post | Sample 12 |
| Q12831 | south attic | post | Sample 13 |
| Q12832 | south attic | rafter | Sample 14 |
| Q12833 | south attic | beam | Sample 15 |
| Q12834 | south attic | long beam | Sample 16 |
| Q12835 | south attic | cut timber | Sample 17 |
| Q12836 | south attic | beam/truss | Sample 18 |
| Q12837 | south attic | truss | Sample 19 |
| Q12838 | south attic | rafter | Sample 20 |
| Q12839 | south attic | rafter | Sample 21 |

Table A1 – Samples taken from structural oak timbers in the basement, north attic and south attic of Beaulieu House

below

Table A2 – Dendrochronological results obtained from structural oak timbers in the basement, north attic and south attic of Beaulieu House

| <i>QUB sample identifier</i> | <i>number of measured rings</i> | <i>heartwood (h) / sapwood (s) rings</i> | <i>start date</i> | <i>end date</i> | <i>estimated felling date range</i> |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|
| Q12772 | 105 | h/s present | 1585CE | 1652CE | 1684 ±9 years |
| Q12773 | 154 | 27 s complete | 1626CE | 1679CE | spring 1679 |
| Q12774 | 68 | none | 1510CE | 1577CE | after 1609 |
| Q12775 | 68 | h/s present | 1588CE | 1655CE | 1687 ±9 years |
| Q12776 | 115 | none | 1524CE | 1636CE | after 1668 |
| Q12777 | 30 | none | — | — | — |
| Q12778 | 70 | h/s present | 1584CE | 1653CE | 1685 ±9 years |
| Q12779 | 26 | none | — | — | — |
| Q12827 | 41 | none | — | — | — |
| Q12828 | 106 | none | — | — | — |
| Q12829 | 38 | none | — | — | — |
| Q12830 | 46 | none | — | — | — |
| Q12831 | 68 | h/s present | 1578CE | 1645CE | 1677 ±9 years |
| Q12832 | 30 | none | — | — | — |
| Q12833 | 31 | none | — | — | — |
| Q12834 | 10 | none | — | — | — |
| Q12835 | 48 | none | — | — | — |
| Q12836 | 43 | none | — | — | — |
| Q12837 | 116 | 39, incomplete | 1562CE | 1677CE | c.1679 |
| Q12838 | 130 | 34, incomplete | 1545CE | 1674CE | c.1679 |
| Q12839 | 40 | none | — | — | — |

sistent correlation value of $t = 4.70^{**}$ with a chronology from Berwick Hall, Co. Down, and less significant correlations of $t = 3.55$ and $t = 3.58$ with chronologies from, respectively, Gloverstown House and White House, Island Magee, Co. Antrim. These and other results indicate that the measured section of the timber dates from 1526 to 1679, and that the tree was felled following the spring of 1679.

An almost identical felling date was found by combining two samples (Q12772; see Table 1) taken from a second beam in the basement (again omitting the centre or pith of the tree). The longer sample yielded 105 annual growth rings, which correlate with chronologies from Gloverstown House ($t = 3.95^{*}$), White House ($t = 3.92^{*}$) and Hillsborough Fort, Co. Down ($t = 3.76^{*}$). These correlations indicate that the measured portion of the timber dates from 1548 to 1652, with an implied felling date in the range 1684 ± 9 years. The shorter sample of 23 annual growth rings taken from the same timber contained the complete sapwood part of the tree. It is too short to be statistically correlated with other samples, but visual matching with sample Q12773 and other site chronologies indicates a start date of 1657, a felling date of 1679, and a gap of four years between the last year in the longer sample and first year in the sapwood sample taken from this single structural timber.

Two further, relatively robust felling dates were obtained from samples taken from timbers within the attic of the south range. In both – Q12838 ($t = 4.11^{*}$ cf. Gloverstown House) and Q12837 – nearly complete sapwood was present, which indicates that each was felled within a few years of 1674 and 1677, respectively. Although damage on the outer edge of the samples prevented an absolute felling date to be identified, it is likely that, with only a few sapwood rings missing from each, the trees from which these timbers came were also felled in about 1679. A third sample from a post in the south attic, Q12831 ($t = 3.51$ cf. Hillsborough Fort), provided an estimated felling date of 1677 ± 9 years, and was therefore probably felled at the same time as these other timbers from this part of the roof. Evidently, all three dated from the same comprehensive building campaign that must have begun with the flooring over of the basement beneath the north range and proceeded fairly swiftly to the roof.

Felling dates for the other datable timbers are more approximate but broadly in line with the date of 1679 obtained from the pairs of beams in the basement and south attic. Thus, a sample (Q12775) taken from a third beam in the basement contained the heartwood/sapwood boundary but no sapwood, and yielded 68 annual growth rings. In its case, good matches were found with a suite of regional and local tree-ring chronologies from Gloverstown House ($t = 5.07^{***}$), Saintfield Chest, Co. Down ($t = 4.57^{**}$), and Strabane Bridge, Co. Tyrone ($t = 3.90^{*}$). These results indicate that the measured series dates from 1588 to 1655, which, after allowance for the missing sapwood rings, implies a felling date closely contemporary to the other two basement beams in the range 1687 ± 9 years. Three floors above, a sample taken from a main rafter in the attic of the north range and containing seventy annual growth rings (Q12778) also included the heartwood/sapwood boundary. Correlations with timbers from Pottagh House, Co. Londonderry ($t = 3.60^{*}$), Crosskeys Inn, Co. Antrim ($t = 3.45$), and Beech House, Co. Antrim ($t = 3.60$), indicate that the measured series dates from 1584 to 1653. When allowance is made for the missing sapwood, the best-estimated felling date range for the tree from which this timber was taken is 1685 ± 9 years. Another sample from a purlin in the same roof yielded 113 annual growth rings and may have been felled at much the same time. Correlations of $t = 4.11^{**}$, $t = 3.95^{**}$ and $t = 4.03^{*}$ with timbers from, respectively Coagh House, Co. Tyrone, Duncrun Church, Co. Londonderry, and Seacash House, Co. Antrim, indicate that the measured series dates from 1524 to 1636. Nevertheless, without the heartwood/sapwood boundary present, the best estimated *terminus post quem* felling date range for the tree whence this timber came is 1668 ± 9 years. These dates are consistent with those obtained from the three timbers in the attic over the south range, and collectively confirm what the roof's external appearance implies – that the roof in its entirety is the result of a single building operation carried out in the early 1680s.

One last dated sample (Q12774) comes from a reused timber in the basement. It lacks both the centre or pith of the tree and the heartwood/sapwood boundary, and correlates well with chronologies from Armagh Cathedral ($t = 4.40^{**}$), Belleville House, Co. Tyrone ($t = 4.08^{*}$), and Rich Hill House, Co. Armagh ($t = 3.76$). These and other results indicate that the measured series dates from 1510 to 1577. The implied felling date, after allowance for the missing sapwood, is 1609 ± 9 years, but could be later. Seemingly, this timber is a survivor from the pre-Tichborne house built by the Plunketts.

With the sole exception of this one reused early seventeenth-century timber, all the dates obtained from the sampled structural beams in both the basement and attics fall within the maximum range 1668 to

1696, and are therefore almost exactly contemporary with the period when Sir William Tichborne was the owner of the house. The precise felling dates of two of the main structural beams in the basement give a *terminus pre quem* of 1679, and the same date falls within the margins of error of all the other timbers with preserved heartwood/sapwood boundaries. Sample Q12776 from a purlin in the north attic gives a date sometime after 1668, but probably belongs to the same phase of felling and construction. Collectively, these firm felling dates indicate that, after allowance is made for the time taken post-felling for sale, purchase and delivery, Sir William's thorough going rebuilding of Beaulieu is unlikely to have begun before the start of the new building season in March 1680 or possibly that of the following year.⁷⁷ On this evidence, the building of Beaulieu began within a year of the construction of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham.

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ENDNOTES

The following abbreviations are used:

| | |
|-------|--|
| DIB | <i>Dictionary of Irish biography</i> |
| NLI | National Library of Ireland |
| PRONI | Public Record Office of Northern Ireland |
| RCBL | Representative Church Body Library |

- ¹ Thomas U. Sadleir and Page L. Dickinson, *Georgian mansions in Ireland* (Dublin, 1915) 17; Mark Bence-Jones, *A guide to Irish country houses*, 2nd edition (London, 1988) 34. For a similar verdict see Mark Girouard, 'Beaulieu, Co. Louth', *Country Life*, 22nd Jan 1959 (reprinted in Seán O'Reilly, *Irish houses and gardens from the archives of Country Life* (London, 1998) 126-33); Desmond Guinness and William Ryan, *Irish houses & castles* (New York, 1971) 241-44.
- ² Christine Casey and Alistair Rowan, *The buildings of Ireland: North Leinster* (London, 1993) 156; Arthur Gibney, *The building site in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2017) 100, 156; Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd and Christopher Simon Sykes, *Great houses of Ireland* (London, 1999) 80-91; Edward McParland, *Public architecture in Ireland, 1680-1760* (New Haven and London, 2001) 60; Rolf Loeber, Hugh Campbell, Livia Hurley, John Montague and Ellen Rowley, *Art and architecture of Ireland: Volume IV, architecture 1600-2000* (Dublin, 2015) 352; National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (<https://www.buildingsofireland.ie/buildings-search/building/13902509/beaulieu-house-beaulieu-co-louth> (acc. 29th Aug 2021)).
- ³ George S. Montgomery, *A family history of Montgomery of Ballyleck, County Monaghan, now of Beaulieu, County Louth, Convoy, County Donegal* (Belfast, 1850) 80.
- ⁴ The spelling 'Tichborne' is here used consistently to differentiate the Irish branch of the fam-

- ily from the English Tichbournes.
- ⁵ Harold O'Sullivan, 'The Tichborne acquisition of the Plunkett estate of Beaulieu', *Journal of the Old Drogheda Society*, no. 7, 1990, 57-68: 62-63.
 - ⁶ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on manuscripts in various collections*, VIII (London, 1913) 343, 346; NLI, pos. 3753, Henry Tichborne, Baron Ferrard to Robert, Viscount Molesworth, 22nd July 1722; Ferrard to Molesworth, 4th Sept 1722 (Edward McParland generously shared his transcriptions of this correspondence). Ferrard's improvements are discussed in Bruce M.S. Campbell, 'Early Georgian elegance: Henry, Baron Ferrard, and the remodelling of Beaulieu House, County Louth' (forthcoming in *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*).
 - ⁷ Casey and Rowan, *North Leinster*, 156, 184; David J. Griffin, 'Richard Castle's design for Castle Coole, County Fermanagh', in Terence Reeves-Smith and Richard Oram (eds), *Avenues to the past: essays presented to Sir Charles Brett on his 75th year* (Belfast, 2003), 135-37; Toby Barnard, *Making the grand figure: lives and possessions in Ireland 1641-1770* (New Haven and London, 2004), 67; Livia Hurley, 'Public and private improvements in eighteenth-century Ireland: the case of the Conynghams of Slane, 1703-1821', unpublished masters thesis, 2 vols, Trinity College Dublin, 2009, II, figs 1.11 and 1.12; Christine Casey, *Stackallan House, County Meath* (1999) 6, 17-18.
 - ⁸ Patrick Walsh, *The making of the Irish Protestant ascendancy: the life of William Conolly 1662-1729* (Woodbridge, 2010) 181-85.
 - ⁹ Elisabeth Kieven, 'An Italian architect in London: the case of Alessandro Galilei (1691-1737)', *Architectural History*, vol. 51, 2008, 1-31; Edward McParland, 'Pearce, Sir Edward Lovett', *DIB* (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/pearce-sir-edward-lovett-a7245>) (acc. 2nd Jan 2022); Edward McParland, 'Edward Lovett Pearce and the New Junta for architecture', in Toby Barnard and Jane Clarke (eds), *Lord Burlington: architecture, art and life* (London, 1995) 151-65; McParland, *Public architecture*, 9-11.
 - ¹⁰ Roger White, 'The fruits of public service: Beaulieu, Drogheda, Co. Louth, Ireland: the home of Cara König-Brock', *Country Life*, Oct 2015, 36-41: 38.
 - ¹¹ A.P.W. Malcomson, *The Maxwells of Finnebrogue and the gentry of County Down, c.1610-c.1960: a resident and responsible élite* (Belfast, 2023) 39-59; John O'Connell and Rolf Loeber, 'Eyre Court Castle, County Galway', *GPA Irish Arts Review Yearbook*, 1988, 40-47.
 - ¹² Nathaniel Lloyd, *A history of the English house, from primitive times to the Victorian period* (London, 1931) 96-107; Andor Gomme and Alison Maguire, *Design and plan in the country house: from castle donjons to Palladian boxes* (New Haven, 2008) 181, 240; Oliver Hill and John Cornforth, *English country houses: Caroline, 1625-1685* (London, 1966), 28-29, 90-96, 153-54.
 - ¹³ McParland, *Public architecture*, 1. For a detailed architectural description of the Royal Hospital see Christine Casey, *The buildings of Ireland: Dublin* (New Haven and London, 2005) 674-81.
 - ¹⁴ NLI, pos. 3753, Ferrard to Molesworth, 22nd July 1722; Ferrard to Molesworth, 4th Sept 1722, quoted by Montgomery-Massingberd and Sykes, *Great houses of Ireland*, 85.
 - ¹⁵ NLI, pos. 3753, Ferrard to Molesworth, 4th Sept 1722.
 - ¹⁶ Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, T3315/3, ff 93 Philip Percival to John, Lord Perceval, 23rd Dec 1721, cited in Edith Mary Johnston-Liik, *History of the Irish Parliament 1692-1800*, 6 vols (Belfast, 2002) VI, 391-92; John Bergin, 'Perceval (Percival), Sir John', *DIB* (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/perceval-percival-sir-john-a7275>) (acc. 7th Jan 2022). The relevant Journals of the House of Commons of Ireland contain no record of such a pension ever having been granted.
 - ¹⁷ Casey and Rowan, *North Leinster*, 155; White, 'Fruits of public service', 36-39.
 - ¹⁸ John D'Alton, *The history of Drogheda, with its environs; and an introductory memoir of the Dublin and Drogheda Railway* (Dublin, 1844) 396; James Garry, 'Townland survey of County Louth: Beaulieu', *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological & Historical Society*, XIX, no. 4, 1980, 274-84: 276.
 - ¹⁹ *Inquisitionum in officio rotulorum cancellaria Hibernia asservatarum, repertorium*, 2 vols (Dublin, 1826-29) I, Co Louth, 15 Car.I (i.e. 1639-40). William inherited Beaulieu from his father, Thomas Plunkett (1597-1621), when he was three, and almost as soon as he came of age, in 1639, mortgaged the house and its estate to the Peppards, long-established merchants of Drogheda, for £600. Owing to that mortgage,

- bought out by the Tichbornes, the claim to the property of William's infant son Thomas was never upheld; Sir Bernard Burke, *The general armory of England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales* (London, 1884) 809; O'Sullivan, 'Tichborne acquisition', 57, 62, 64.
- ²⁰ D'Alton, *History of Drogheda*, 221-56, 397.
 - ²¹ O'Sullivan, 'Tichborne acquisition', 64.
 - ²² Campbell, 'Early-Georgian elegance' (forthcoming).
 - ²³ The mullet denotes that Henry, although the fourth born, was the third surviving son. On this and other heraldic points, Ciara Kerrigan and Donal Burke of the Genealogical Office, Dublin, gave invaluable advice.
 - ²⁴ Casey and Rowan, *North Leinster*, 486, attach similar significance to the absence of a nobleman's coronet from the representations of Gustavus Hamilton's arms on the façade and on the staircase ceiling at Stackallan, Co Meath.
 - ²⁵ F. Elrington Ball, 'Some notes on the Irish judiciary in the Reign of Charles II, 1600-85 (contd)', *Journal of the Cork Historical & Archaeological Society*, vol. 7, no. 51, 1901, 138-49, 146-7; Robert Armstrong, 'Byssé (Bisse), John,' *DIB* (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/byssé-bisse-john-a1352> (acc. 29th Nov 2021)); Hugh Mayo, 'Robert Molesworth's *Account of Denmark*: its roots and its impact', unpublished PhD thesis, Odense University, 2000, 131-33, 176-79.
 - ²⁶ RCBL, P.0854.01, St Peter's Drogheda Parish Registers 1653-1702, combined register; Judith and William's respective burials took place on 23rd November 1682 and 8th March 1693 (1694 new style).
 - ²⁷ Thomas Wilson, *An account of the foundation of the Royal Hospital of King Charles II near Dublin* (Dublin, 1713) 4-6; McParland, *Public architecture*, 53.
 - ²⁸ Mayo, 'Robert Molesworth's *Account of Denmark*', 177.
 - ²⁹ Ball, 'Irish judiciary', 146; Huntington Library, San Marino, California (copy held in Beaulieu), Judith Tichborne (*née* Byssé) to William Toxteth, 10th Aug 1666.
 - ³⁰ Nathanael Burton, *History of the Royal Hospital Kilmainham, near Dublin* (Dublin and London, 1843) 112, 228; Wilson, *Foundation of the Royal Hospital*, 18-22.
 - ³¹ Patrick H. Kelly, 'Molesworth, Robert', *DIB* (<https://www.dib.ie/biography/molesworth-robert-a5861> (acc. 6th May 2022)).
 - ³² RCBL, P.0854.01, St Peter's Drogheda Parish Registers 1653-1702, combined register.
 - ³³ Charles Dalton (ed.), *Irish army lists of King Charles II 1661-1685* (Dublin, 1907) 23, 58, 64, 69, 73, 79, 94, 121, 131, 148 (I am grateful to John Kirwan and Conleth Manning for providing these references); Johnston-Liik, *Members of the Irish House of Commons*, VI, 391-92; Samuel Weller Singer (ed.), *The correspondence of Henry Hyde, Earl of Clarendon and of his brother Laurence Hyde, Earl of Rochester*, 2 vols (London, 1828) I, 220; RCBL, P.0854.01, St Peter's Drogheda Parish Registers 1653-1702, combined register.
 - ³⁴ O'Sullivan, 'Tichborne acquisition', pp 62-64.
 - ³⁵ David Brown, personal communication (19th Sept 2022); Gibney, *Building site*, 113-17.
 - ³⁶ NLI, pos. 3753, Henry Tichborne, Baron Ferrard at Beaulieu to Robert, Viscount Molesworth, 4th Sept 1722.
 - ³⁷ Gibney, *Building site*, 101.
 - ³⁸ Burton, *Royal Hospital Kilmainham*, 112, 228.
 - ³⁹ Ball, 'Irish judiciary', 147; Armstrong, 'Byssé (Bisse)'.
 - ⁴⁰ Gibney, *Building site*, 38-56.
 - ⁴¹ Casey and Rowan, *North Leinster*, 182-84; Michael Corcoran, 'Challenging narratives: an early modern house at Carstown, Co. Louth', in Thomas Herron and Michael Potterton (eds), *Dublin and the Pale in the Renaissance* (Dublin, 2011) 125-44.
 - ⁴² E.M. Jope, 'Castlecaulfeild, County Tyrone', *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, vol. 21, 1958, 101-07; H.G. Leask, 'House at Oldbawn, Co. Dublin', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 6th series, vol. 3, no. 4, 1913, 314-25.
 - ⁴³ Nikolaus Pevsner and Alexandra Wedgwood, *The buildings of England: Warwickshire* (Harmondsworth, 1966) 313.
 - ⁴⁴ Casey, *Dublin*, 677; McParland, *Public architecture*, 59-60.
 - ⁴⁵ Guinness and Ryan, *Irish houses & castles*, 243; also, McParland, *Public architecture*, 60, 93. Part of one mullion survives, reused as a lintel in the basement.
 - ⁴⁶ An infelicity avoided in John Curle's 1709 design for Castle Coole, where working with an existing structure was not a constraint; Griffin, 'Richard Castle's design for Castle Coole', 136.
 - ⁴⁷ Jason Bolton, 'Beaulieu House, Beaulieu, Co. Louth: historic building materials', unpublished report (Dec 2022) 4-9.
 - ⁴⁸ Bolton, 'Beaulieu House', 22; Gibney, *Building*

- site, 141-7; Maurice Craig, *The architecture of Ireland from the earliest times to 1880* (London, 1982) 146.
- ⁴⁹ Reproduced in Ned McHugh, *Drogheda: Irish historic towns atlas* 29 (Dublin, 2019).
- ⁵⁰ McParland, *Public architecture*, 59.
- ⁵¹ Bolton, 'Beaulieu house', 13-16.
- ⁵² Gomme and Maguire, *Design and plan*, 151.
- ⁵³ Linda Hall, 'Dating through details', in James W.P. Campbell and Michael Tutton (eds), *Staircases: history, repair and conservation* (London, 2014) 145-57.
- ⁵⁴ As shown on Matthew Wren, *A topographical map of the County of Louth* (London, 1766).
- ⁵⁵ Barnard, *Grand figure*, 46.
- ⁵⁶ Bolton, 'Beaulieu house', 4-5, 21.
- ⁵⁷ James Lees-Milne, *English country houses: Baroque 1685-1715* (London, 1970) 12; David T. Yeomans, 'Early carpenters' manuals 1592-1820', *Construction History*, no. 2, 1986, 13-33; Gibney, *Building site*, 24-6, 58-9; Rudolph Wittkower, *Palladio and English Palladianism* (London, 1974) 96-102.
- ⁵⁸ *Dictionary of Irish Architects 1720-1940*, 'Curle, John', <https://www.dia.ie/architects/view/1380/Curle-John> (27th Nov 2021); NLI, Headfort Papers, 25,446 (2), Records of the Corporation of Kells, Michaelmas 1697.
- ⁵⁹ Baptised on 29th Sept 1670, Francis Curle was, in fact, three months short of 54 when he died on 27th June 1724.
- ⁶⁰ RCBL, P.0854.01, St Peter's Drogheda Parish Registers 1653-1702, combined register.
- ⁶¹ E.A. Wrigley and R.S. Schofield, *The population history of England 1541-1871: a reconstruction* (Cambridge, 1989), 424.
- ⁶² Gibney, *Building site*, 24.
- ⁶³ Bolton, 'Beaulieu house', 2-3, 22.
- ⁶⁴ RCBL, P.0854.01, St Peter's Drogheda Parish Registers 1653-1702, combined register.
- ⁶⁵ Anngret Simms with Katharine Simms, *Kells: Irish historic towns atlas* 4 (Dublin, 1990) 3-4.
- ⁶⁶ Michael Quane, 'Viscount Weymouth Grammar School, Carrickmacross', *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. 86, no. 1, 1956, 39.
- ⁶⁷ *ibid.*
- ⁶⁸ Griffin, 'Richard Castle's design', 135-37; Barnard, *Grand figure*, 67.
- ⁶⁹ The accounts were submitted to William Conolly as guardian of William Conyngham, and are preserved in the Castletown papers at the Irish Architectural Archive, 97/84 F/4-I; Hurley, 'Public and private improvements', 19-22.
- ⁷⁰ Casey, *Stackallan House*, 6, 17-18.
- ⁷¹ Compare Ballyburly, Co Offaly, Kilmaccuragh, Co Wicklow, and the Red House, Youghal, Co Cork, all built around or after 1700.
- ⁷² Sadleir and Dickinson, *Georgian mansions*, 17.
- ⁷³ Rolf Loeber, 'Irish houses and castles 1669-90', in Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout (eds), *Irish houses and castles, 1400-1740: a collection of the late Rolf Loeber's essays and articles published in his memory* (Dublin, 2019) 164-211: 211 (originally published as Rolf Loeber 'Irish country houses and castles of the late Caroline period: an unremembered past recaptured', *Quarterly Bulletin of the Irish Georgian Society*, XVI, nos 1 and 2, 1973, 1-69).
- ⁷⁴ White, 'Fruits of public service', 38.
- ⁷⁵ M.G.L. Baillie, *Tree-ring dating and archaeology* (London, 1982); English Heritage, *Guidelines on producing and interpreting dendrochronological dates* (London, 1998).
- ⁷⁶ M.A.R. Munro, 'An improved algorithm for crossdating tree-ring series', *Tree-Ring Bulletin*, vol. 44, 1984, 17-27; M.G.L. Baillie and J.R. Pilcher, 'A simple crossdating program for tree-ring research', *Tree-Ring Bulletin*, vol. 33, 1973, 7-14.
- ⁷⁷ Burton, *History of the Royal Hospital Kilmalham*, 112, 228.