

17. The archaeology of parks and gardens, 1600–1900: an introduction to Irish garden archaeology

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Introduction

Historic gardens rank among the greatest cultural achievements of our heritage. This chapter provides the mainstream historical archaeologist with a brief overview of the archaeology of Irish gardens over the three centuries from 1600 to 1900. Garden historians, with their primary reliance on documentary information, have dominated the study of historic gardens, and archaeology has contributed little to the subject until comparatively recently. With the growth of interest in historical archaeology and the recognition that the study of past garden activity cannot move forward without the input of those trained primarily in archaeological methods of field survey and excavation, the subject has progressed (Pattinson 1998; Williamson 1999). Garden archaeology is a small term for a much larger theme. It is a convenient umbrella term for what in practice consists of analysing a large segment of the historic landscape and its development. Many other terms could be used, such as park archaeology, demesne archaeology, the archaeology of designed landscapes and so forth, but for the present it is convenient to employ the term 'garden archaeology'. Like other branches of archaeology, the central focus of garden archaeology is to identify and date elements in the landscape belonging to the past, using the surviving physical evidence. As a subfield of historical archaeology, garden archaeology also relies upon analyses of surviving documentary evidence. For more detailed overviews, the reader is directed to some excellent summaries of the main developments of Irish gardens during this period, including Nelson and Brady 1979, Lamb and Bowe 1995, and Reeves-Smyth 1999.

Garden design, 1600–1900

Garden design during this long period went through many different styles. Reduced to its simplest, it is characterised by the use and interplay of two contrasting styles, the formal and the naturalistic. At a basic level, these styles can be interpreted as representing humankind's two different approaches to nature and the landscape. The formal approach expresses the human desire to control nature and to order the

landscape, while the second expresses a desire to replicate nature's most pleasing aspects.

Three main periods can be defined in the study of gardens between 1600 and 1900: the early formal period from 1600 to 1740, the period of the natural landscape park from 1740 to 1840, and the Victorian design era from 1840 to 1900. The early formal period commenced with a simple stylistic formula derived from medieval, and particularly monastic, gardens. Early formal gardens employ small enclosed spaces with planting laid out in geometric beds (most often rectangular or square), with trees planted in straight lines or other geometric constructions, and the provision of a path system to facilitate walking. Scale and elaboration varied according to the status and wealth of the owner. Towards the end of the seventeenth century and at the beginning of the eighteenth century this evolved into a much grander formal scheme, with the house at the centre of a large geometric and often axial design (Nelson and Brady 1979; Lamb and Bowe 1995; Reeves-Smyth 1999).

By the middle of the eighteenth century a strong reaction against the rigidly formal regime in design had been sparked by appreciation of the natural landscape with its freshness and lack of predictability. The outcome was the invention of the landscape park. The adoption of the landscape park as the setting for the house can be read as a reaction against the loss of tree cover in the landscape, the need for a stronger landscape statement of status, and the desire to block out the surrounding enclosed landscape of cultivated fields (Taigel and Williamson 1993).

By the middle of the nineteenth century a more temperate reaction against the rote application of the landscape park theme (which tended to leave the house somewhat incongruously marooned in the middle of broad acres of lawn and wood) revitalised garden design. A formal element of landscaping was reintroduced but largely confined to the immediate vicinity of the house. This formality was achieved by the return of parterres and the almost universal creation of terraces, where the terrain allowed, on the garden front of houses. The parterres were similar in design to those of the seventeenth century, but tended to be more elaborate and grander in scale. Landscape parks were not abandoned but an explosion took place in planting, with the introduction of a wide variety of new plant species from all parts of the world. By the high Victorian period horticulture had reached a zenith of achievement not surpassed since. In the closing part of the century, reaction against formalism again took place, led by an Irish gardener, William Robinson, who promoted the concept of the wild garden and coping with nature (Lamb and Bowe 1995; Thacker 1994).

Parks and gardens, 1600–1740

In terms of garden archaeology, it is convenient to divide this long period into two parts, *c.* 1600–60 and 1660–1700. In the seventeenth century the provision of

pleasure-grounds around castles, fortified residences and other houses of high status was an almost universal feature. In the excavation of these sites close attention should therefore be paid to the detection of elements of garden archaeology. In the first rank of gardens dating from between 1600 and 1660 are those that were laid out alongside grand houses designed to reflect the power and status of their owners. For example, Sir Arthur Chichester, the lord deputy of Ireland, was responsible for three great gardens attached to his house at Joymount at Carrickfergus, his castle in Belfast and his residence in Dublin (now the site of the Bank of Ireland opposite Trinity College). Similarly, Richard Boyle, the Great Earl of Cork, created a great garden at Lismore Castle at the same period (Reeves-Smyth 1999).

The fourth, fifth and sixth O'Brien earls of Thomond developed a distinguished garden at Bunratty which won the lavish praise of the papal nuncio, Cardinal Rinuccini, in 1646: 'I have no hesitation in asserting that Bunratty is the most beautifull spot I have ever seen. In Italy there is nothing like the Palace and grounds of Lord Thomond. Nothing like its ponds and parks and its three thousand head of deer.' With allowance made for diplomatic hyperbole, this garden must have ranked among the greatest in Ireland, as befitted the status of the owners. Sadly, almost nothing survives above ground at Bunratty. Lower down the social scale, the gardens of the gentry were laid out in similar fashion, albeit at a much more modest size. Irish gardens in the seventeenth century were not insular but readily adopted international styles. Most of the earlier settlers were well travelled and were thus familiar with the gardens not only of England and Scotland but also those of the Continent.

Until relatively recently there was a strong tendency to view the seventeenth century in Ireland as an apocalyptic period punctuated by episodes of wholesale warfare, from the end of the Nine Years' War to the Great Rebellion in mid-century, and the Williamite Wars at its close. In terms of gardening, however, the seventeenth century was a period of considerable cultural achievement and continuity. While many gardens were neglected or temporarily abandoned during times of strife, and some were lost altogether, most recovered relatively quickly and with fresh vigour when peace returned. Suspension of garden activity forced by civil unrest was normally followed by the opportunity to remodel the garden in the latest fashion.

Following the Restoration in 1660 there was a resurgence in house-building, accompanied by the development of the pleasure-ground. The new era of stability encouraged the Irish nobility and gentry to further embellish their residences with elaborate gardens. Contemporary descriptions give an idea of the character of late seventeenth-century gardens. Typical of the period is the garden laid out by Sir Robert Colville in c. 1675–85 around his house at Newtownards, Co. Down, and described in Montgomery's *Description of the Ardes* in 1683 (Quinn 1972). Colville acquired the Newtownards estate from the Montgomery family, the earls of Mount Alexander, in 1675 and proceeded to rebuild the Montgomery mansion, burned accidentally in

1664, and to lay out a new garden. The new house was described as 'a large double-roofed house with stables, coach-houses and all necessary or convenient edifices with inner, outward and back courts'. The garden features include 'spacious well planted olitory, fruit and pleasure gardens, which have fishponds, spring well, long broad sanded walks and bowling green, all whereof walled about and reared (with divers curious hewn stone gates, uniformly regarding one and other in a regular and comely manner): the whole considered, there is few such, and so much to be seen any one dwelling in Ireland, nor any so great done by a gentleman at his whole expense' (*ibid.*, 40). The garden was situated at the head of Strangford Lough on flat ground probably reclaimed from salt-marsh in the previous centuries. Little of the surrounding landscape, including the lough, could be viewed over the garden walls except to the west, where Scrabo Hill dominates the skyline. Colville intended to enclose the hill as a deer-park but it is unclear whether this was ever executed.

The seventeenth-century garden at Newtownards is a good example of the potential archaeological complexity presented by early gardens, despite its comparatively small size. A Dominican friary stood on the site from the thirteenth to the middle of the sixteenth century, when a tower-house was built. In 1606 James Montgomery partially reused the friary ruins to construct his manor-house on his newly acquired estates in north Down. The location continued to be used as a residence until the middle of the nineteenth century. During most of the twentieth century a factory occupied the site. Remarkably, in spite of this varied history some of the landscape features have survived, including the garden wall and the ponds. Similar complexity relating to continuous occupation is to be encountered at most sites, and probably the most difficult features for the archaeologist to interpret are those relating to gardening.

Deer-parks were a prominent feature of demesnes from the seventeenth century onwards. The provision of venison for the aristocratic table and the thrill of the chase made them an almost obligatory element of most country seats, and even comparatively small houses had associated deer-parks. Many of the early deer-parks were created through the conservation and enclosure of pre-existing native woodland. On Lord Conway's estate in south-east County Antrim a large block of the medieval forest of Killultagh was set aside for a deer-park, and at the end of the seventeenth century at least 3,000 acres of this forest survived (Young 1896, 256). In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries many deer-parks were spatially separated from the house and garden and located on woody parts of the estate. Later, as woodland became scarce and its aesthetic value came to be appreciated, deer-parks were incorporated into the landscape design. Deer are a migratory species, and to curb this natural urge deer-parks were enclosed by high fences or walls. The remains of this enclosing element form the most conspicuous relic landscape feature of the once-common deer-park.

Gardens of this period also featured bowling-greens, walks, walls, courts, beds, ornamental waterworks and fish-ponds, ornamental stonework and small garden structures. The construction of artificial lakes and ponds in formal shapes became increasingly popular during this phase. Usually referred to as canals, these continued the late medieval tradition of fish-ponds or stews and were mainly stocked with carp and tench, although their primary function was ornamental. The Irish environment with its abundant marsh and bog made canals especially common in Irish gardens of the period. The construction of water features involved a considerable investment in labour, and often they were created as relief work during the frequent periods of famine. Canals varied greatly in size, depending on the resources of the landowner. Most were filled in or abandoned during the succeeding naturalistic phase, but others survived to be marked on the first edition of the OS six-inch survey of the 1830s and 1840s, where they are usually designated as 'fish ponds'. Others appear on aerial photographs, where they can easily be confused with other archaeological features. The remains of early formal gardens can be discovered by field survey at most parks and gardens that possess early eighteenth-century dimensions, as fossilised formal elements in an otherwise naturalistic scheme.

The landscape park, 1740–1840

In the middle of the eighteenth century the concept of imitating the natural landscape came to the forefront of garden design. The ideas behind this movement away from the formal had been steadily growing for many years but were brought into fashion by several prominent landscape designers, the most influential of whom was probably 'Capability' Brown. In landscape terms, the new ideas can be seen as a reaction against the rigidity and predictability of formal design, coupled with the desire for something new and liberating. On another level, especially in Ireland, interest in recreating a natural landscape can be seen as a reaction against the surrounding treeless farmscape outside the garden. The concept was simple yet radical and consisted of creating a naturalistic setting for the house among trees and pasture. The effect on the Irish landscape was dramatic and effectively created islands of planting within open spaces, many of which still dominate the countryside. In terms of size and number, and apart from field divisions, the landscape park is probably the greatest heritage feature in the Irish landscape. The formula used was fairly predictable and consisted of stock features found repeatedly throughout Ireland and the British Isles. These include a perimeter belt of trees, a winding approach to the house (the latter framed with wings of trees and overlooking a vast lawn) and, ideally, a lake. In this scheme signs of overt gardening were subdued and hidden in a walled garden well screened from view.

Historic landscape surveys

The Irish landscape is filled with abandoned parks and gardens. In a short drive through any part of the countryside the eye is drawn to ruined demesne walls, the shells of gatehouses, relic plantations and the shadows of former landscape parks and features of a past era of large-scale gardening and landscaping. This highly visible element in the cultural landscape, the result of cumulative development over four centuries, presents a considerable challenge for heritage management. Ireland lags far behind Britain in appreciating this resource. In Britain the problem was approached by compiling inventories and lists of gardens of historic merit on a regional basis, leading to a register of those of outstanding importance. In Northern Ireland, the Environment and Heritage Service has completed a Heritage Garden Inventory, and parks and gardens are also included as heritage sites in the 26 regional development plans now in preparation in Northern Ireland.

Increasingly, the conservation of parks and gardens is becoming an issue in the Irish planning system. The situation has changed from official indifference to one where historic parks and gardens are being recognised as national assets. Some are protected, but the basic step of county lists and inventories has yet to be taken in the Republic. A potent influence has been the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme, administered by Bord Fáilte, providing grant aid for the restoration of a series of parks and gardens in both private and public ownership. A requirement of the grant application is the commissioning of a garden archaeological survey of the property, and this has led to a large number of comprehensive surveys. Some county councils have carried out restoration projects on important parks under this project. These include, among others, Dun Laoghaire and Rathdown Council at Marley Park, Dublin (McErlean and Jupp 1997), Westmeath County Council at Belvedere (Reeves-Smyth *et al.* 1997), Kilkenny County Council at Woodstock (Reeves-Smyth and Jupp 2000) and Mayo County Council at Turlough Park (McErlean and Jupp 1996b). To these can be added a number of private trusts and owners who have commissioned surveys under the scheme in advance of restoration, including Kylemore Abbey for the restoration of the Victorian walled garden at Kylemore (McErlean and Jupp 1995a; 1995b) and the earl of Rosse at Birr Castle Demesne (McErlean and Jupp 1996a). A garden archaeologist was normally retained as part of the restoration team at many of these projects, and the surveys and subsequent archaeologically supervised restoration or conservation work have contributed greatly to the advance of garden archaeology in the country.

The most pressing requirement in Irish garden archaeology is for more field survey. This should take the form of historic landscape surveys of individual parks and gardens, using a set approach that has been proved to yield the best results. The latter has two purposes: the first addresses the normal archaeological concerns of identifying and interpreting archaeological features, and the second is as a management tool for

conservation. To serve these purposes, reports should be divided into two parts. The first part should consist of interpretative syntheses of the park or garden's development, identifying the formative chronological phases and evaluating the design elements. The second part should be a large-scale map-referenced gazetteer of all features in the park, with description, interpretation and advice on conservation. The following case-studies exemplify this approach.

Castle Ward, Co. Down

Castle Ward, on the shores of Strangford Lough, is one of the best-preserved examples of a late eighteenth-century landscape park in Ireland, containing within its demesne of 792 acres some very important elements of garden archaeology (McErlean and Reeves-Smyth 1986). Castle Ward was the seat of the Ward family (later Viscounts Bangor) from their arrival in Ireland in *c.* 1580 until the death of the sixth viscount in 1950, when the National Trust acquired the property. Its present appearance is the result of cumulative development since the end of the sixteenth century, and three formative periods in the park's history are discernible. The first occurred between *c.* 1720 and 1750, when Judge Michael Ward laid out an extensive garden in the formal style around his newly built Queen Anne-style house. Between *c.* 1758 and 1767 his son Bernard laid out a landscape park in the naturalistic style as a setting for his new, eccentric, mansion-house. The third formative phase, in the middle of the nineteenth century, was carried out by Major Andrew Nugent, the second husband of Lady Bangor, under whose direction the park was enlarged and extensive new plantations were made. Since 1860 few developments of any significance have taken place in the Castle Ward park.

Soon after his marriage in 1710 to wealthy County Down heiress Anne Hamilton, Judge Michael Ward built a new house to replace the rather cramped accommodations attached to the old tower-house of Castle Ward. The house was finished by 1720 and attention turned to the creation of matching pleasure-grounds. These were treated in typical formal style, with features including canals, yew terraces, a garden mount, woodland walks and a decoy pond. Sometime between 1748 and 1755 a mock classical temple was added. In spite of later landscaping improvements, elements that remain from this early garden include the larger of the two ornamental canals, the temple water, the yew terraces and the temple. The Queen Anne house itself was demolished in the mid-nineteenth century and little of the original planting around the dwelling remains.

Around 1759 Judge Ward's son, Bernard Ward (later first Viscount Bangor), commenced landscaping the demesne in the new naturalistic style popularised by landscape designers like Capability Brown to complement his new mansion. The

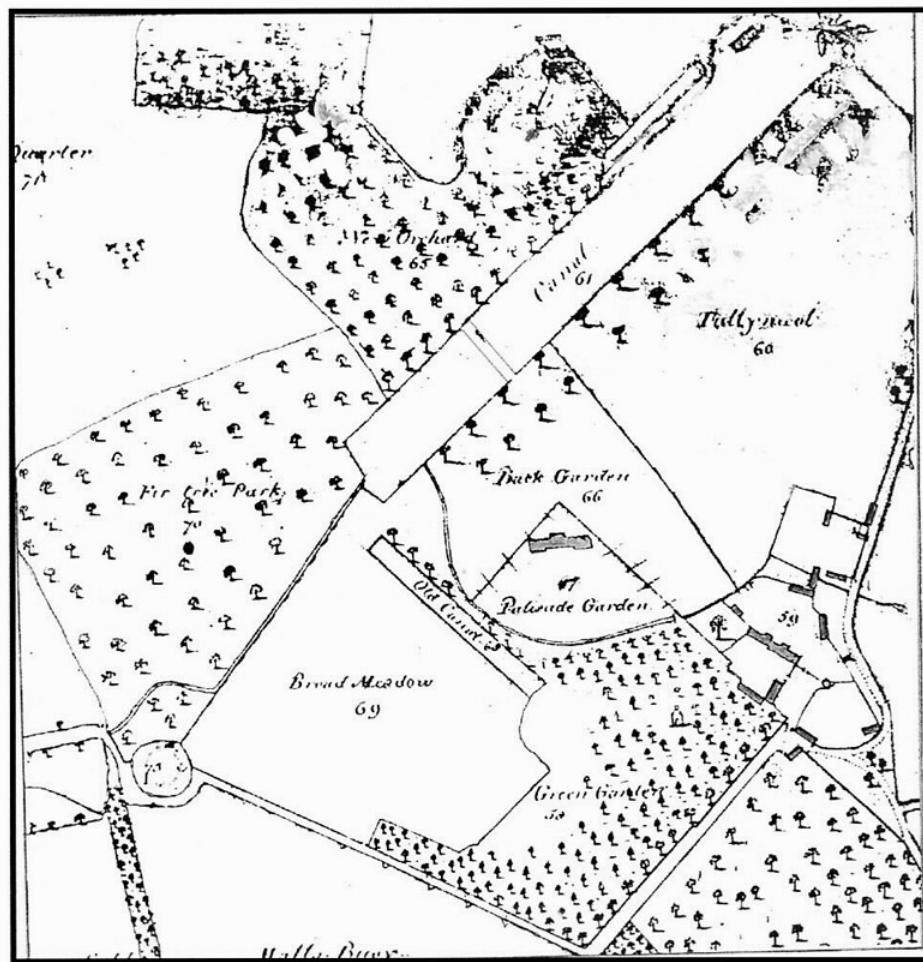


Fig. 17.1—Detail of Castle Ward from an 1800 demesne map (McErlean and Reeves-Smyth 1986).

features of the new park are typical of Brown's style and are reflected in a host of new or remodelled parks laid out in Britain and Ireland in the mid- to late eighteenth century. Major elements in the Castle Ward design included two avenues to the new house, a perimeter screen around the park, clumps of trees, open spaces of lawn and pasture, and a deer-park.

The Castle Ward estate was in Chancery between 1781 and 1828 owing to the insanity of the second viscount, at which time the park suffered considerable deterioration. With the 1841 marriage of the widow of the third viscount to Major Andrew Nugent of Portaferry House, situated opposite Castle Ward across Strangford Lough, a vigorous new period of landscaping and enlargement began. The park was extended to the shore on the north-east and over demesne farmland on the west. Within the older park extensive new plantations were established. New gatelodges

were built and the farmyard was given a make-over, including a castellated appearance to match the late sixteenth-century tower-house. Around the house the formal style returned with the creation of a terraced garden and sunken parterre with an elaborate bedding layout. Later in the century the large walled garden was augmented by new hothouses and greenhouses. Subsequent landscaping developments have been few.

Castle Coole, Co. Fermanagh

The landscape park at Castle Coole (Fig. 17.2), set in the rolling drumlins and lakes of County Fermanagh, is the setting for what is widely regarded as Ireland's finest neo-classical mansion, designed by James Wyatt and built at the behest of the first earl of Belmore, Armar Lowry-Corry, at the close of the eighteenth century. A historic landscape survey of Castle Coole carried out for the National Trust in 1984 (McErlean 1984) demonstrated the park's importance for Irish garden archaeology. In its present state, the Castle Coole park is largely the result of a formative phase that took place between *c.* 1780 and 1820, when a large landscape park was created. The significance of Castle Coole for garden archaeology lies in an underlying residual content of early eighteenth-century formal landscaping and planting. Less obvious but also of great interest are the extant elements of the pre-park landscape in the form of farms and field systems. The post-medieval origin of the park commenced in 1611, when Roger Atkinson was granted the estate of Coole under the Ulster plantation scheme. By 1619 he had built a house and bawn beside Lough Cole, which were subsequently burned during the 1641 rebellion. In 1656 John Corry—whose descendants, the earls of Belmore, are still resident at Castle Coole—bought the estate and repaired the castle, although it was destroyed again in 1689.

When settled conditions returned in the early eighteenth century, Colonel James Corry built an elegant house on the site of the plantation castle, laying out pleasure-grounds and enclosing a deer-park. Some of his oaks still survive and form part of the living heritage in the park. Major improvements took place between 1726 and 1741, when the estate was under the guardianship of Colonel Armar during the minority of his cousin, Leslie Corry. During this time the demesne was enlarged and a large formal garden was laid out, with an ornamental canal and elaborate parterres. Still surviving is an oak avenue planted around 1730, and much of the archaeology of the formal garden is intact.

The formal garden at Castle Coole is a fine example of early to mid-eighteenth-century gardening style. The plan is strictly geometrical, in defiance of the uneven terrain on which it is situated. The house stands at the centre of an axial cruciform plan, with the central shaft formed by an oak avenue leading from the coach road to the front door of the house and continued on the other side of the house by a long



Fig. 17.2—Castle Coole landscape park. (Environment and Heritage Service.)

canal. The cross-bar to the north of the house is composed of a range of service buildings, kitchen yard, stable yard, farmyard and haggard. To the south it is carried on by an avenue and plantings. The garden front of the house faces east and is composed of three major features: a sunken bowling-green, a sunken parterre and a formal wilderness. Facing the centre of the house and extending eastwards from the garden is a long, banjo-shaped formal canal, approximately 250m in length by 25m in width. It was excavated on the edge of a boggy area and no doubt served as a

drainage work as well as ornament. At its eastern end is a small earthen platform serving as a viewing-point facing up the canal and over the formal garden to the house. With the creation of the later landscape park this canal was allowed to slowly silt up, but remained prominent enough in 1834 to be marked on the Ordnance Survey six-inch map as 'Old Fish Pond'. To the south of the formal garden was the orchard and melon ground. Many of the features of this formal garden were discovered by aerial survey, and many very minor earthworks, such as the layout of parterres, have survived on the ground. Dendrochronology was employed to date planting horizons, including the oak avenue of c. 1730.

James Corry's great-grandson, Armar Lowry-Corry, who became the first earl of Belmore in 1797, laid out the present landscape park between 1780 and 1820. The process of planning an ambitious park required the taking in of surrounding leasehold land. It is fortunate that two large-scale maps commissioned as part of the planning process for this new park exist. One shows the existing demesne and the other the proposed park. Both maps are undated and the landscape designer is unknown. From other evidence the maps are believed to date from around 1783. Not all of the proposed landscape designs were implemented. The proposed changes were radical and consisted of a major transformation of the visual aspects of the landscape. The design was very much in the style of a Brownian park, with its stock features of a perimeter screen blocking out the surrounding farmscape, clumps of trees crowning the tops of drumlins, large open spaces of lawn, and views over water. In 1813 the park was extended to the west, and in 1817 a new stable and farmyard complex was designed by Richard Morrison and was accompanied by the last major plantations at Castle Coole.

Belvedere, Co. Westmeath

Belvedere is arguably one of the finest designed landscapes in Ireland and a superb example of mid-eighteenth-century taste. Westmeath County Council acquired the property in 1982 and commissioned a historic landscape survey in 1996 as a first step in a restoration project (Reeves-Smyth *et al.* 1997). The park at Belvedere can be regarded as a masterpiece of theatrical landscaping, intended to produce a variety of garden scenes and moods. It is also one of the earliest examples of the 'naturalistic' movement in eighteenth-century landscaping in the country.

The park at Belvedere was created as the setting for a modest Palladian house or casino designed by Richard Castle in the 1740s as a country retreat for Robert Rochford, later first earl of Belvedere. It was created on a virgin site on the picturesque eastern shore of Lough Ennell. The designer is unknown but the plan probably owes much to Robert Rochford himself, reputed to be a man of taste and fashion. Belvedere is probably much more famous for locking his wife up in another family house for 31

years after accusing her of infidelity with his brother in 1743! The lands on which the park stands came into the possession of the Rochford family at the end of the seventeenth century. Their principal seat at Gaulstown, five miles to the south-east, boasted a fine formal garden laid out some time between 1710 and 1720 with all the stock elements of a garden of that period: symmetrical design, lime avenues, bosquets, wildernesses, terraces and canal. Traces of the formal design at Gaulstown can still be observed on the ground today. The outstanding surviving features of the park at Belvedere are three dramatic follies placed as set pieces in the park's scenery. No eighteenth-century plans of Belvedere survive, but the original composition can be reconstructed through landscape analysis. The mid-eighteenth-century park was composed of large expanses of open grass framed by perimeter tree-planting, mainly beeches, further embellished by carefully positioned single and multiple trees. Views of Lough Ennell were filtered through trees or framed with open space. The original treatment of the lake views changed considerably in the early twentieth century, when the lowering of the water-level by drainage schemes introduced a new fringe of land around the lake, subsequently covered by woodland. The great interest of Belvedere is its romantic follies, making it a fine period piece of mid-eighteenth-century taste for gardens of illusion and surprise. The follies were constructed in the 1740s and are among the earliest examples of the Gothic Revival in Ireland and Britain. The most dramatic in scale and effect is the Jealous Wall, a mock ruin with elements of Gothic and Romanesque styles, designed to imitate the façade of a ruined abbey or church. It was originally 54m long, of which 44m survive. Apart from embellishment, the wall blocked out views to the south, where Rochford's brother had built a mansion called Tudenham. The Jealous Wall is perhaps the most impressive garden folly in Ireland.

At the northern end of the park, framed by wings of planting and visible from a great distance, is the Gothic Arch. The third surviving folly is an octagonal gazebo situated on a hill with views over the lake and dominating the scenery in the middle section of the park. The architect responsible for designing these distinguished small buildings is unknown, but a probable candidate is Thomas Wright, who is known to have worked in County Louth in the mid-1740s and whose style is very similar.

The preservation of the mid-eighteenth-century design at Belvedere resulted in part from the fact that the family rarely used the house during the first half of the nineteenth century. A new phase of landscape design was initiated in 1852, when Charles Brinsley Marley inherited the property and took up residence. The main change to the park's scenery was the introduction of conifers into the predominantly beech treescape of the eighteenth century. After the Victorian fashion, however, the immediate surroundings of the house were considerably altered and given a formal treatment, with the construction of four balustraded terraces planted with symmetrically spaced Irish yews. At the southern end of the terraces a huge rockery was built, forming a rock face about 10m high and 60m long, marking it as one of the

largest examples of the Victorian garden craze for rockeries in Ireland.

Other major nineteenth-century additions to the Belvedere landscape include an ornamental walled garden. Plans for this were commissioned from the prominent landscape designer Ninian Niven, but it is unclear how much of his design was actually carried out. In the first half of the twentieth century little change occurred, except for the creation of a fine flower garden with a collection of rare plants by Charles Howard Bury, who then owned Belvedere. By the time of their acquisition in 1982 by Westmeath County Council the park and house had fallen into decay. This acquisition was followed by a period of 'passive conservation', saving the property from death by ill-informed renewal. In 1997, following the recommendations of the historic landscape survey, the council commenced an ambitious restoration programme of the park, follies and house. A potentially tragic loss of a mid-eighteenth-century landscape masterpiece was thus averted.

Conclusion: gardens for archaeologists

Historic parks and gardens, by virtue of their great number and ubiquity, are extremely important heritage features of the Irish historical landscape. They present a considerable conservation challenge that can only be properly addressed by an increase in field survey and evaluation. Their importance is underpinned by their great amenity value for present and future generations. Other considerations include their aesthetic significance as works of art and the fact that they can be viewed as representing some of the greatest cultural achievements of the past.

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The post-medieval archaeology of Ireland, 1550–1850

Edited by
Audrey Horning, Ruairí Ó Baoill,
Colm Donnelly and Paul Logue

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What can archaeology tell us about the modern history of Ireland? This timely volume addresses that question by providing an overview of the post-medieval archaeology of Ireland and establishing a framework for its interpretation. The first half of the volume contextualises the development of post-medieval archaeology

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through individual chapters on the historiography and archaeology of the Munster and Ulster Plantations, on urban archaeology in seven major settlements, and on the role of archaeology in furthering our understanding of rural, maritime, and riverine landscapes. The second half of the volume highlights subfields within post-medieval archaeology, including industrial and maritime archaeology, and then focuses upon the study of specific classes of material culture and archaeological data. This includes domestic architecture, churches, gardens, as well as ceramics, glass, coins, tobacco pipes, textiles, and firearms. The twenty-eight

chapters in the volume constitute revised and updated versions of papers presented at the inaugural conference of the Irish Post-Medieval Archaeology Group (IPMAG), held in Belfast in 2001, and designed as a forum for outlining the past, present, and future of Irish post-medieval archaeology.

In 1999, the Irish Post-Medieval Archaeology Group (IPMAG) was established to pursue the following aims: undertaking initiatives to raise the profile of post-medieval archaeology within (and beyond) Ireland; fostering greater contacts between those individuals engaged in researching the archaeology, history, and culture of post-1550 Ireland; and lobbying for increased academic attention to be paid to the material legacy of the post-medieval period.



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COLM DONNELLY AND PAUL LOGUE

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