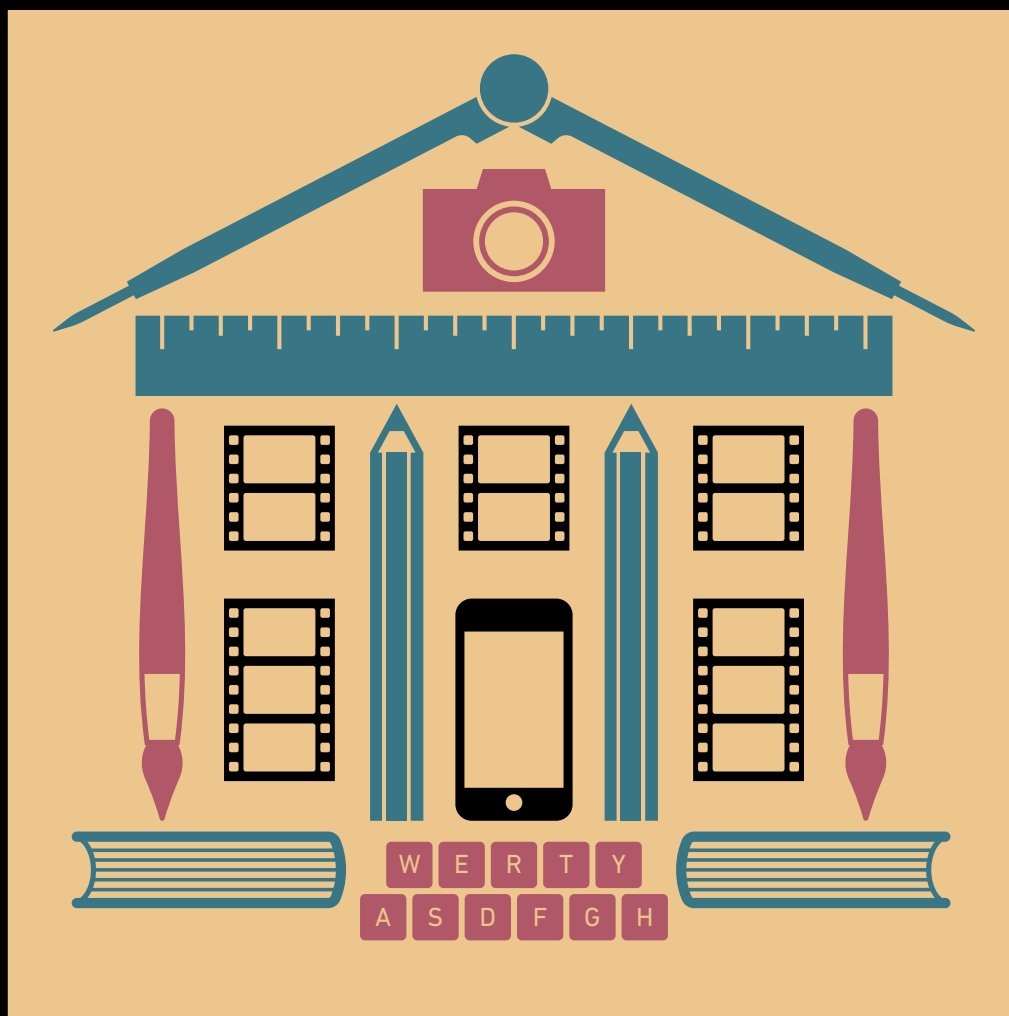


Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates,
History Department, Maynooth University presents

PICTURING THE



COUNTRY HOUSE

21st Annual Historic Houses International Conference
Maynooth University 8-9 May 2023

From the most rudimentary sketch to the finest painting the country house has always been a source of visual inspiration. Owners, architects, designers, artists, photographers, film-makers, conservationists, marketing departments, tourism boards, and visitors have all looked at the country house in multiple ways for different purposes.

Early visions for a new house might remain locked in an owner's head until unleashed by the draughtsmanship of an architect; the finished home and its interiors frequently captivated artists in watercolour, oil or other media. In the 19th century the birth of photography gave rise to more immediate forms of visual representation; cinema, moving pictures, and sound only augmented the impact of houses and their interiors, whether in drama or documentary; tour operators are continually looking to refresh the appeal of heritage; and nowadays the digital universe provides a plethora of possibilities for visual recording, enhancement, and even manipulation. While there is an enormous legacy of visual and written material, every generation looks at the country house with fresh eyes.

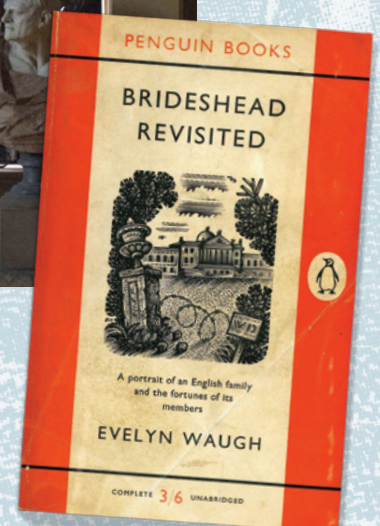
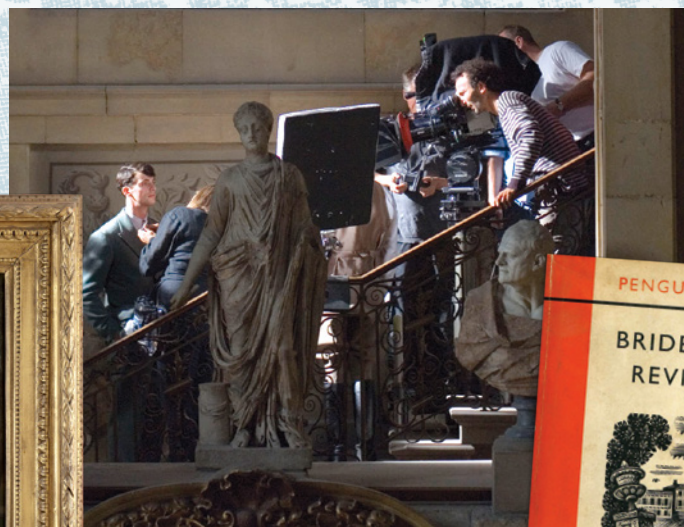
Country houses have not only stimulated the eye they have also inspired the imagination especially through writers and film-makers who have celebrated or explored houses and their settings,

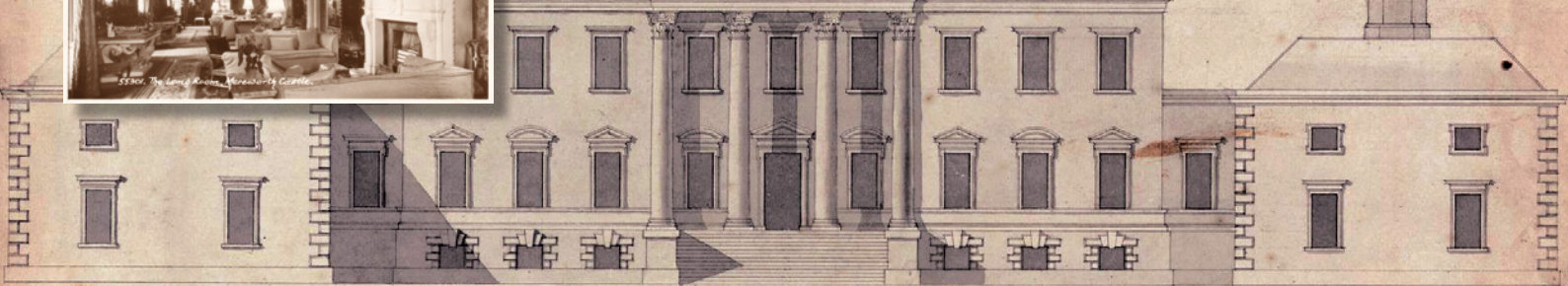
whether factual or imaginative, from guidebooks to novels. There is endless debate as to whether words are more powerful in stimulating the mind's eye than the optical experience itself. Who is to say whether Pevsner is more revealing than Evelyn Waugh for example?

How is it that the term 'country house' can conjure up such varied images and expectations for different audiences? By what means do houses present something beyond their architectural presence? How do they gesture towards an imagined history, or set of values, and do these significances bear any meaningful relationship to the physical circumstances of the building, the landscape, and its occupants?

What is the impact of virtual or augmented reality on opening up new ways of visualising the country house? Have the digital and immersive come to define our responses to these places? As the boundaries between the vicarious and the first-hand begin to dissolve is this an exciting development or cause for concern? What differentiates traditional forms of seeing from innovative ways of perceiving?

Picturing the Country House will examine how the country house has been represented pictorially and imaginatively across the centuries, through paint, pencil, engraving, decorative art, photography, film, sound, words, and other media, including the very latest technologies.





Day 1 Monday 8 May

08.30-09.15 Registration

09.15-09.30 Welcome and opening: Rosemary Collier, Office of Public Works

09.30-10.40 SESSION 1

Adrian Tinniswood 'I say yeah yeah': when the country house met rock 'n' roll

David Murphy Martial imagery: representations of the military and the great house

Sarah Roller 'The past is close to us': how has fiction shaped perceptions of the country house?

10.40 Tea/coffee

11.10-12.20 SESSION 2

Adrian Le Harivel The Spilsbury Taylor sketches at the National Gallery of Ireland

Patricia Wilson 'A degree of grandeur that I was not prepared to expect': the correspondence of Sir Joseph Paxton in Ireland

Anne Casement The ephemeral and the absurd, the country house through the eyes of Lord Mark Kerr

12.20 Lunch

13.20-14.30 SESSION 3

Robert O'Byrne The shifting lens: a century of photographing Ireland's ruined country houses

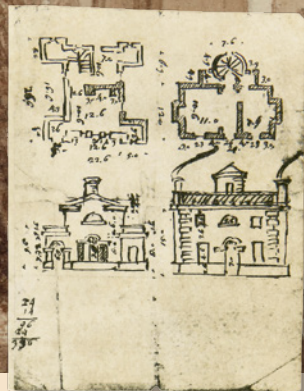
Andrew Tierney Digitising Summerhill: a 3D visualisation of one of Ireland's greatest lost houses

Sophie Chessum Is a picture worth a thousand words? Artist depictions of country houses

14.30-15.40 SESSION 4

Ben Cowell Historic houses, 'historic homes or roofless ruins?' The historic house and its associations

Curt DiCamillo The myth of the American country house



15.40 Tea/coffee

16.10-16.40 **SESSION 5**

Hopwood DePree in conversation with Prof Christopher Ridgway

18.00 Dinner in Pugin Hall

Day 2 Tuesday 9 May

09.45-10.15 Opening: Patrick O'Donovan, Minister of State at the Department of Public Expenditure

10.15-11.25 **SESSION 1**

Úna Kavanagh Visualising country houses through the Clonbrock photograph collection

Nicola Kelly The Irish country house: through the lens of Desmond Fitzgerald, 29th Knight of Glin

David and Edwin Davison A moment in time: the significance of photography in the life of the country house

11.25 Tea/coffee

11.55-13.30 **SESSION 2**

Jeremy Hill Cultural memory in the written, aural and visual worlds of a Wexford country house

Margaret Crowley Royal reflections of the Irish country house

David Hicks Behind the faces on the canvas: early twentieth-century portraiture and the Irish country house

Hélène Bremer Curating contemporary art exhibitions in historic houses

13.30 Closing remarks

13.45 Lunch

Conference Biographies and Abstracts

Hélène Bremer Curating contemporary art exhibitions in historic houses.

Presenting contemporary art exhibitions in historic buildings is a relatively new phenomenon within the practice of contemporary art curators. In the last decades, however, it has become more and more popular to show contemporary art in old houses, churches and cloisters, and the country house also proved to be an interesting place as a venue for presenting new art.

This paper will examine some leading examples of contemporary art in European historic houses, for example: Chatsworth's private collection of contemporary art, Blenheim Palace and Versailles' temporary exhibitions with world renowned artists and Vaux-le-Vicomte's contemporary installation in the gardens. From her own practice Hélène will talk about exhibitions in Ireland, at Castletown House and the Casino Marino.

Hélène Bremer is a Dutch art historian and independent curator specialising in presenting trans-historic exhibitions; connecting the present with the past through the introduction of contemporary art in historic houses.

Anne Casement The ephemeral and the absurd, the country house through the eyes of Lord Mark Kerr

This lecture will examine the considerable legacy of topographical drawings and watercolours created by Lord Mark Kerr (1776-1840), the third son of the 5th Marquis of Lothian, a wealthy Scottish peer. From an early age Mark Kerr showed an aptitude for drawing and painting, and as an adult became a remarkably interesting artist, producing a large number of fantastical drawings, as well as topographical works. Kerr was also possessed of a lively and vivid imagination, and an eye for the unusual, quirky or absurd.

Unsurprisingly, buildings that were ruinous, neglected, or in various sorts of transformation, were of particular interest to him. In this lies much of the value of his drawings today, for the collection includes the only known images of several houses immediately before, or during, a significant transformational stage. It also includes many depictions of picturesque estate buildings, long gone and seldom recorded.

Anne Casement is a freelance historian specialising in the study of historic houses and estates. Her recent study of the building of Garron Tower, Co Antrim was published in IADS 2016 and 2020.



Sophie Chessum Is a picture worth a thousand words? Artist depictions of country houses

The allure of a work of art by an accomplished or amateur artist can be difficult for a curator to resist when considering and displaying historic interiors, exteriors or gardens. Drawing on case studies from Petworth, Clandon Park and other historic houses, this paper will interrogate such depictions, their accuracy, and their influence on the perception of a place and its significance, and how does this compare to written evidence?

Sophie Chessum has been leading curatorship at Clandon Park since the 2015 fire. Recent research and publications have focused on the decorative plaster ceilings and wider aspects of the Onslow family's patronage.

Ben Cowell Historic houses, 'historic homes or roofless ruins?' The historic house and its associations

The Historic Houses Association (or HHA) was established fifty years ago, in 1973, at a time when the UK's country houses were widely perceived to be in a state of crisis. Not long afterwards an exhibition at the Victorian & Albert Museum documented 'The destruction of the country house'. The HHA was therefore born out of a degree of despair and disquiet at the future prospects for the country house. But other, more optimistic reasons also lay behind the association's origins. Its first President, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, wrote a textbook about the country house business, the subtitle of which was 'How to live in a stately home and make money'. A staple image in the popular press at the time was that of aristocratic owners showing crowds of paying visitors around newly opened ancestral homes. This talk will explore the political context that led to the creation of the HHA. It will examine the different ways in which country houses were presented

by the organisation in its earliest years – as both desolate ruins and tourist honeypots. The paper will consider how this somewhat ambiguous country house narrative has developed in the fifty years since the HHA was founded.

Ben Cowell is the Director General of Historic Houses, which represents 1,500 of the UK's historic houses, castles and gardens, all independently owned. Ben has worked previously for the National Trust, English Heritage, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. He sits on the Government's Heritage Council as representative for the interests of private owners of heritage.

Margaret Crowley Royal reflections of the Irish country house

Members of the British Royal Family frequently visited Ireland during the late nineteenth century, and through paintings and photographs memorialised some of the finest Irish country houses where they had stayed. This paper will ask how the royals visualised the role of these houses in the Victorian era, and how the images show local people working in idyllic pastoral roles in the employ of the 'Big House'. Ultimately this paper argues that the royal photographs are a record of a disappearing era, and instead of the photographs promoting the houses and their lifestyle, instead became memorials to a bygone age.

Margaret Crowley is a third-year PhD student at Birmingham University. Her research interests include the British Monarchy and Ireland from the reign of Queen Victoria to King George V.

David and Edwin Davison A moment in time: the significance of photography in the life of the country house.

From the earliest days of photography many owners have taken a great interest in the art, often practicing it themselves to record their houses and gardens. Such photographs have proven invaluable to conservation



architects, historians and those with an interest in period style and the evolution of country houses and their environs. These pictures are generally considered to be permanent and usually readily available. In fact, this is far from the truth; photographs are amongst the most ephemeral of documents. These collections can be of substantial financial value and are sought out by collectors and thus dispersed internationally making them inaccessible for research. Two case studies of such collections will be presented: the first concerns a mid-nineteenth-century Tipperary photographer who photographed his own relatively modest house and the grand houses belonging to his friends, the houses either demolished or greatly altered; the second examines a series of photographs taken in the 1970s, recording a building that met a fiery end not many years later.

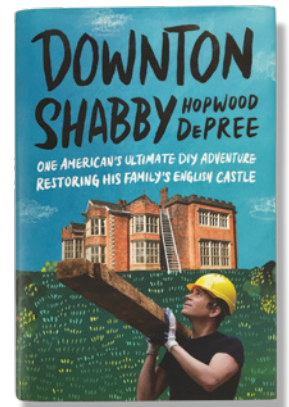
David Davison is an architectural and fine arts photographer and has illustrated numerous books on these subjects. He has exhibited in Europe and the USA and writes and lectures on the history of photography.

Edwin Davison specialises in photography of architecture, fine arts and the conservation/restoration of photographic works, and advises on archival storage and digitisation.

Hopwood DePree, Hopwood Hall, in conversation with Christopher Ridgway

Hopwood DePree graduated from the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, and began his career as a writer/performer and independent filmmaker, winning awards and critical acclaim. He toured the UK with his one-man, stand-up show about the trials and tribulations of renovating his ancestral home Hopwood Hall in Manchester, which culminated at the Edinburgh Fringe, and was also chronicled in his book *Downton Shabby*

(2022). His recent video on YouTube @HopwoodXIV, shows the renovation progress from 2017 to today, and has garnered over 100,000 views.



Curt DiCamillo The myth of the American house

Americans have always longed to imitate their older, more sophisticated, cousins across the Atlantic. This craving has never been better illustrated than the attempts to replicate the great country houses of the British Isles on the shores of North America. But what does an American country house really mean? Very few of these houses are truly a proper country house in the British sense.

They tend to be grand houses positioned on relatively small parcels of land built primarily to show off success and wealth. This lecture will compare American historic houses and the British and Irish country houses they aped and examine the differences in how their respective societies saw and supported great houses.

Curt DiCamillo is an American architectural historian and an authority on the British country house, about which he has lectured and taught around the world. He also serves as the curator of fine art at the New England Historic Genealogical Society. Curt previously worked for The National Trust for Scotland Foundation USA and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

David Hicks Behind the faces on the canvas: early twentieth-century portraiture and the Irish country house

Any portrait, which has originated from an Irish country house, is enriched if one is familiar with the life story of the subject and the provenance of the painting. Behind all the portraits are tales of happiness and misfortune which illustrate that wealth, social status and power do not insulate anyone from the winds of change. Portraits were created to celebrate a great occasion and in many cases they marked an epoch in the happiness of the sitter. Unfortunately not all commissions were successful, the Foster Family of Glyde Court in Co Louth grew to dislike their portrait by William Orpen, but the stories, letters and sketches that survive, regarding this commission and others, are captivating.

David Hicks has written extensively and published two books on the subject of the architectural and social history of the Irish Country House, *Irish Country Houses: A Chronicle of Change* and *Irish Country Houses: Portraits & Painters*.

Jeremy Hill Cultural memory in the written, aural and visual worlds of a Wexford country house

Memory allows reflection and integration of past experience to enable continuity of the past, present and future; benefit then flows to individuals, communities and society. Homes that have been lived in by generations of descendants carry a fuller memory; a country house with the capacity and will to retain its physical collections of various kinds becomes as valuable a store of memory as the cloud. Complemented with segments of stills, video and sound recording, Monksgrange will be viewed through imagined history conjured up by its written, aural and visual record.

Jeremy Hill is an eighth generation occupier of the house and manages the Monksgrange Archive – a vast resource

of family papers, letters, diaries, personal artwork and photographs now facilitating post-graduate research.

Úna Kavanagh Visualising country houses through the Clonbrock photograph collection

This paper examines images of Irish country houses as represented in the Clonbrock photograph collection. These images provide visual documentary evidence of life during significant periods of change in modern Irish history. Many images are situated outside and inside the 'Big House' at Clonbrock. This paper argues that visual images of the house were used to promote the vantage point of the Anglo-Irish landlord family of amateur photographers connected to the Clonbrock House and estate. It will discuss how photographic techniques were implemented to make aesthetic and architectural connections with other country houses in Ireland.

Úna Kavanagh is a PhD candidate at the centre for Irish Studies, University of Galway. Her research focus is the Clonbrock photograph collection and Lady Clonbrock (1836-1928).

Nicola Kelly The Irish country house: through the lens of Desmond Fitzgerald, 29th Knight of Glin

This paper will demonstrate the significance of Fitzgerald's photographic archive, capturing details of the interiors and objects of Ireland's great houses. Fitzgerald personally photographed many of these interiors, wrote prolifically to homeowners, auctioneers, and collectors, seeking photographs and provenance to add to his extraordinary database of Irish furniture and master craftsmen.



Undaunted by the destruction and dispersal of great Irish houses and their contents, he scoured the archives and country mansions of Britain and Ireland accumulating a comprehensive photographic archive of Irish furniture and paintings as well as snippets from diaries, correspondence, inventories, auction catalogues, newspapers and bills. His capacity for placing buildings, landscapes and ornaments in a wider context was further enhanced by his assiduous collection and perusal of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Irish literature.

Nicola Kelly is the archivist at the OPW-Maynooth University Archive and Research Centre, Castletown House. She has worked extensively in her field, specialising particularly in country house archives, for both public and private institutions including the Office of Public Works, Maynooth University, Dublin City University and Trócaire.

Adrian Le Harivel The Spilsbury Taylor sketches at the National Gallery of Ireland

One fascinating source for country houses is the group of sketchbooks by Maria Spilsbury Taylor (1776-1820), acquired by the National Gallery of Ireland in 1995. She was already a celebrity artist in London when she and her husband spent 1814-15 as guests of the Tighe family at Rossana, Ashford, County Wicklow. Spilsbury Taylor made a unique record of family life, attended social events at ornamental buildings on its demesne and noted interesting visitors, with a fascination of the world similar to Jane Austen. There were visits to nearby Mount Usher and Glenealy; trips further afield to Woodstock, Kellyville, Ballycurry, Stradbally Hall, Hamwood and Coolnakilly.

Adrian Le Harivel has spent a diverse career as curator at the National Gallery of Ireland and guided visits to many country houses.

David Murphy Martial imagery: representations of the military and the great house

For centuries, the families of Great Houses in Ireland have been associated with military service at home and also in the territories of Britain's developing empire. This has resulted in these houses becoming repositories of military portraiture, while the houses themselves have also featured as locations in paintings depicting military activity. This paper proposes to discuss these linked artistic traditions and will focus on examples of Irish Great Houses in military paintings. It will discuss some significant examples and also outline how this tradition continued into the age of photography.

David Murphy is a lecturer at the Department of History at Maynooth University.



Robert O'Byrne The shifting lens: a century of photographing Ireland's ruined country houses

Over the past 100 years, many country houses in Ireland have been destroyed or left to fall into ruin. During the same period, how these buildings are represented in photographs has also changed, from objective evidence of damage and loss to a more personalised, often romantic perspective. This talk explores the change in approach and examines how it has affected attitudes towards such buildings, asking whether photographs have helped to alter ways of thinking about the Irish country house, or have just reflected the evolution of a different mindset.

Robert O'Byrne is the former Vice-President of the Irish Georgian Society and author of more than a dozen books, Robert O'Byrne is one of Ireland's best-known writers and lecturers specialising in the country's historic houses and gardens.

Sarah Roller 'The past is close to us': how has fiction shaped perceptions of the country house?

The early twentieth century saw the creation of some of our most famous fictional country houses. Manderley, Brideshead and Howards End (amongst others) have loomed large in popular imagination in a way their authors could scarcely have imagined. Iconic not just for their representations of the throes of a dying era of aristocratic elegance, they also encapsulate in miniature wider debates around class, sex, power, money and societal change. Is it possible (or beneficial) for England's country houses and their owners today to escape the shackles created by their fictional counterparts?

Sarah Roller is Policy and Education Officer at Historic Houses. She holds an MPhil in Public History and is interested in the enduring worldwide appeal of country house novels.

Andrew Tierney Digitising Summerhill: a 3D visualisation of one of Ireland’s greatest lost houses

The burning of Summerhill, Co Meath, during the Irish War of Independence, and the subsequent demolition of its ruin, left a gap in our understanding of a key phase of Irish architectural history. As part of CRAFTVALUE, a four-year IRC-funded research project in Trinity College Dublin, this paper presents a digital visualisation of Summerhill based on surviving evidence of its architecture, including written descriptions, drawings, photographs, and stone fragments. With such digitisation come hybrid ways of viewing the building’s layered surfaces, including structural and crafted features normally hidden from view, providing more complex visual representations than hitherto possible.

Andrew Tierney is an IRC Advanced Laureate Project Fellow (CRAFTVALUE) at TRIARC in Trinity College Dublin and the author of the Pevsner architectural guide *Central Leinster* (2019).

Adrian Tinniswood ‘I say yeah yeah’: when the country house met rock ‘n’ roll

This paper explores the ways in which rock and roll challenged perceptions of the country house in the 1960s and 1970s. For some musicians, it was a place where they could continue their image-making, holding court with a retinue of hangers-on like medieval warlords on

acid. Others found that after they had driven the white Rolls-Royce into the pool and ridden the Harley-Davidson down the great staircase a few times, they grew tired of re-making the country house in their own image. Instead, the country house began to re-make them.

Adrian Tinniswood is Director of Graduate Programmes in Country House Studies at the University of Buckingham, and the author of eighteen books of social and architectural history; he is the author of *The Sunday Times*’ bestseller, *The Long Weekend: Life in the English Country House, 1918-1939* (2016).

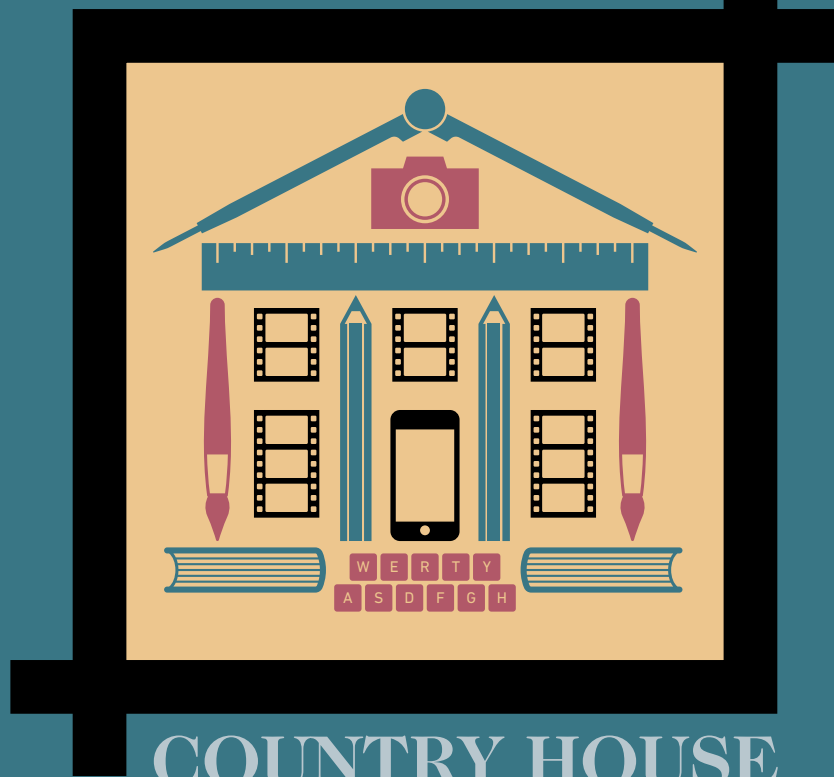
Patricia Wilson ‘A degree of grandeur that I was not prepared to expect’: the correspondence of Sir Joseph Paxton in Ireland

Sir Joseph Paxton (1806-65), head gardener at the Duke of Devonshire’s estate at Chatsworth, Derbyshire, accompanied his employer to his Irish estate, Lismore Castle, in October 1840. The letters between Paxton and his wife Sarah document his impression of the local scenery, the unexpected mildness of the climate, and his reception by the Irish aristocracy. Lismore is important as the site of one of the two last surviving Paxton ‘ridge and furrow’ glasshouses.

Patricia Wilson is an independent garden historian who has recently completed her PhD at Queen’s University Belfast where she researched the nineteenth-century landscapes and gardens of the landed elite in Ireland.



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