NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

FACULTY OF DESIGN
DEPARTMENT OF FASHION AND TEXTILES

A DOCUMENTATION AND ANALYSE OF THE
CHANGING INTERIOR OF BELVEDERE HOUSE
CO WESTMEATH

BY
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INTRODUCTION

Belvedere house, Co. Westmeath has always fascinated me, from the first time I visited it in 1984. At that time Westmeath County Council owned the property. The house was closed to the public, one could view the gardens only, but the terraced front with its magnificent view of Lough Ennel and the 'Jealous Wall' with its extraordinary history were enough to capture my imagination. The only view I had of its interior at that time was through its windows. I went back in June 1993, the house was still closed to the public but I managed to persuade the grounds keeper to show me around the interior. I was very surprised by what I saw, while the grounds had been maintained beautifully, the interior had been totally neglected, showing evidence of a leaking roof and sections of the ceilings in the West bedroom and landing were falling in.

I shall be documenting and analysing the changes to both the building and interior room by room from 1828, when Charles Brinsley Marlay inherited the property to the present day. The rooms selected for this discussion include "Own room", Hall, Drawing room, Dining room, and the East and West bedrooms. There is no documentation of the houses interior prior to 1828 so I shall be concentrating on the changes the last three private owners made and looking at the role of taste and individuality which were important influences on the changes made. Most of the information on the interior was obtained from the Architectural Archives report documenting Belvedere, Co. Westmeath 1991 and their series of photographs of the interior from the 1960's, 70's and '80's. The Christie's Catalogue of the 1980 sale proves invaluable for information on the various objects and paintings that were

contained in the house. I also gathered information from the GPA Irish Art Review yearbook 1989 - '90 and two Country life magazines of June 1961.

An interesting fact regarding the ownership of the house is that from the time it was built in the 1740's the house was almost exclusively lived in by gentlemen, as the Knight of Glin wrote, 'Lord Belvedere lived a gay and extravagant bachelor life there' (foreword, Christies Catalogue, July 9th 1980). This description remained an accurate one for all who inherited Belvedere thereafter. This male dominated presence was sure to influence the changes made to Belvedere's interior.

A lot has been written on the houses history and on the house itself but of a descriptive nature and there is no account of the relevant changes undertaken by its owners, so photographs and the publication mentioned already were invaluable in recording the changing interior.

The Role of Westmeath County Council (who own the property today) in their contribution to the restoration and development of the house will be analysed. The merits or disadvantages of the involvement of bodies such as county councils in projects such as this will be discussed also. Other aspects of the current debates on restoration of fine houses will be reflected in the discussion on the best way to restore and show Belvedere. Is the correct process to restore it to its original or leave it as it is today, unfurnished and neglected where the visitor can but admire the ceilings, the fine joinery and of course the architecture of the building itself, which is quite unique.

This proved to be a difficult area to gain information especially as regards the county council. They were not forthcoming with information on their plans for Belvedere or on granting me access to photograph the houses interior.

The first chapter will look at the background to Belvedere house, including the gardens, the houses' exterior and any alternations that were made, it will also look at the houses layout and give a brief introduction to the last 3 private owners and how the County Council came to acquire the house and what their original plans were. The main rooms will then be discussed, these include the entrance hall, drawing room, dining room and the East and West bedrooms. The decorative and structural changes of all these rooms, using photographs from 1960 to the present day, will be analysed. The final chapter hopes to look at the County Councils role in the preservation of Belvedere house and look at bodies which work for the preservation of Irelands old buildings, such as The Irish Georgian society and The Irish Architectural Archives. The growth in enthusiasm for old country houses and the increasing number of houses being agreed to the public will also be discussed.

CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND

This chapter will discuss briefly the background to Belvedere house. As much is written on the general history of the house in publications such as Country life June 22, 1961. This section discuss the background to the changes in the exterior with some reference to those undertaken in the interior.

Belvedere house, situated on the shores of Lough Ennel near the town of Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, is one of the most distinguished houses in Ireland. It was built in the early 1740's by Irelands most prolific Palladian architect of the time, Richard Castle. It was one of the few examples of a medium - sized house (nearly 100 feet long), built during the 18th century for pleasure not for show. It was built as a fishing lodge for Robert Rochfort; the 1st Earl of Belvedere, who spared nothing to ensure its attractiveness. He laid out the grounds with taste and decorated them with ornamental buildings; a vast Gothic ruin Plate 1 which backs on to the stable yard and still stands today became known as 'The Jealous Wall', was built as a ruin. It is said to be the largest constructed ruin of its kind in Ireland.

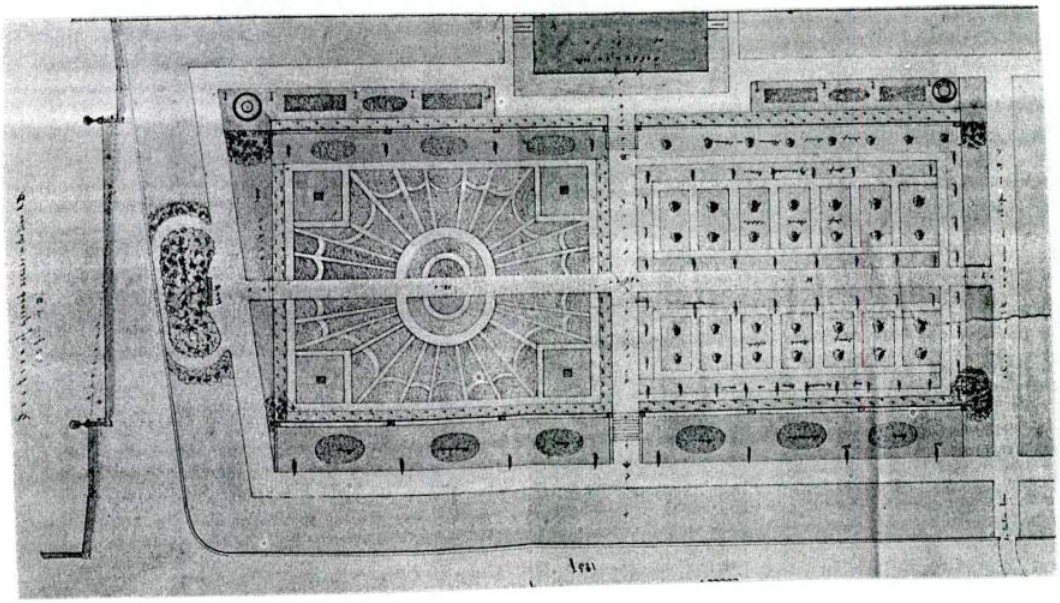
(Plate 1) 'The Jealous Wall'

To the north of the house is the gothic Arch, Plate 2, a focal point built in the mid - eighteenth century as a mock entrance and consists of a rectangular castellated stone building. This together with the 'Jealous Wall', ensures that two of the best follies in Ireland are to be found at Belvedere and add immeasurably to the uniqueness of the estate. These garden buildings, the settings and planting of the park and the quality of the house and the interior show that Lord Belvedere was a man of considerable taste.

(Plate 2)
The Gothic Arch

Charles Brinsley Marlay, the third last private owner of Belvedere who lived there from 1828 to 1912 was responsible for the addition of the stone steps and terraces which lead from the house towards the lake, plate 3. The architect of these terraces if unknown; however an unexecuted design for a terraced fruit and flower garden does exist, dated September 1857, Plate 4, and signed Ninian Niven[1].

(Plate 3) Stone Steps and terraces leading towards the lake 1994.



(Plate 4) Plan for a terraced flower and fruit division in the Garden at Belvedere, Ninian Niven, 1857.

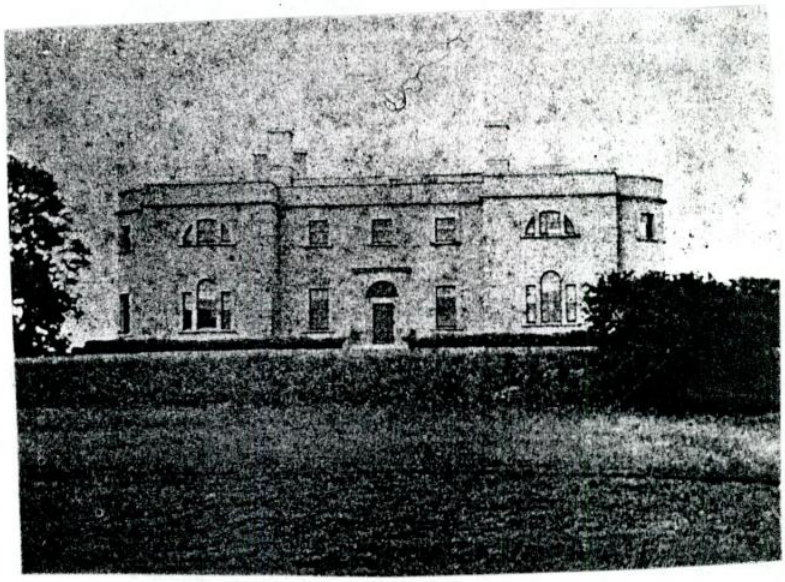
THE GARDENS

Lt. Col. Charles K. Howard Bury, the second last private owner who lived there from 1912 to 1963 whose principal addition to Belvedere was the laying out of the Edwardian walled garden with its herbaceous borders, shrubberies and several glasshouses. The three and a half acre garden might be divided into two parts, consisting of the walled garden and the arboretum surrounding the house. The most striking aspect of the walled garden is its unusual narrow rectangular shape which on entering, permits a panoramic view of its colourful interior. It still retains all the hallmarks associated with an 18th century pleasure garden. According to Westmeath County Councils guide book Belvedere, when Col. Bury developed the garden, he brought to it some exotic plants he had collected from his travels. Many of the plants he brought to Belvedere's gardens still grow there like the gentian blue echinops and the old 18th century introduction forthergilla.

There are about 12 acres of grounds outside the walled garden, containing more of Bury's plants. All about the house are walks and avenues with stately parkland trees and a variety of shrubs. Many of the trees and shrubs in the arboretum are rare specimens. There are metasequoias (Dawn red wood) trees which according to the Councils guide were planted in the late 1940's. In and around the garden area are the Peacocks[2] and Peahens, which were introduced to Belvedere by Howard Bury prior to 1940. The gardens were very overgrown at the time of acquisition by the Council in 1981, but today after much work the garden has been restored to its former brilliance. The council have opened the gardens to the public every summer since 1985.

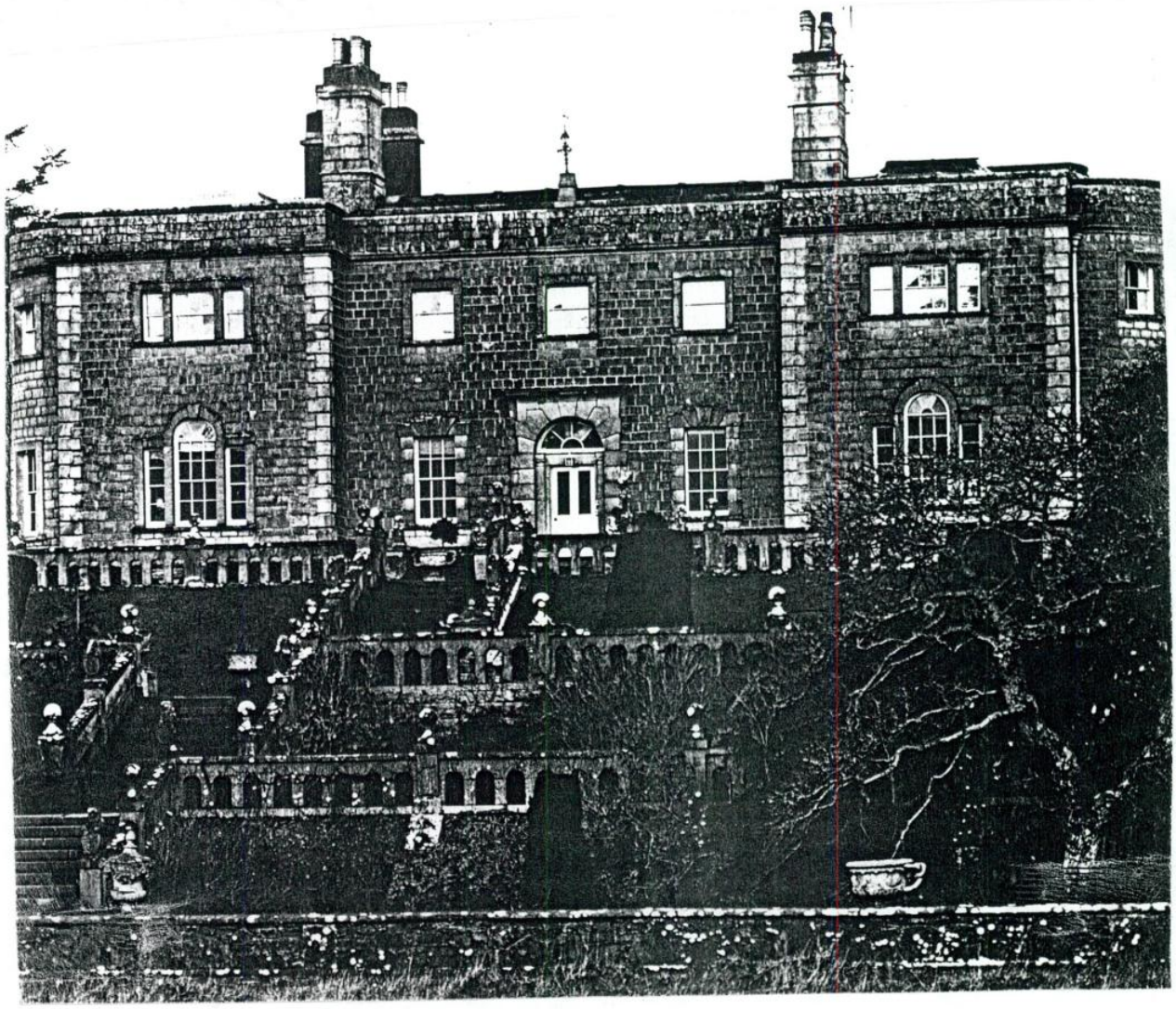
EXTERIOR

Belvedere house is faced in limestone laid in small blocks, the front consists of five bays, the central three are slightly recessed between projecting wings and venetian ground floor windows. There are bow-windows at either end of the house and according to the Architectural Archives 1991 Report on Belvedere's exterior, these may well be the earliest example of this feature in Ireland. The first floor windows were originally semi-circular or "Therme" windows Plate 5, but were altered circa 1860 by Marlay, by squaring them off into tripartite windows Plate 6. This I believe rather spoiled the restrained composition of the original facade,



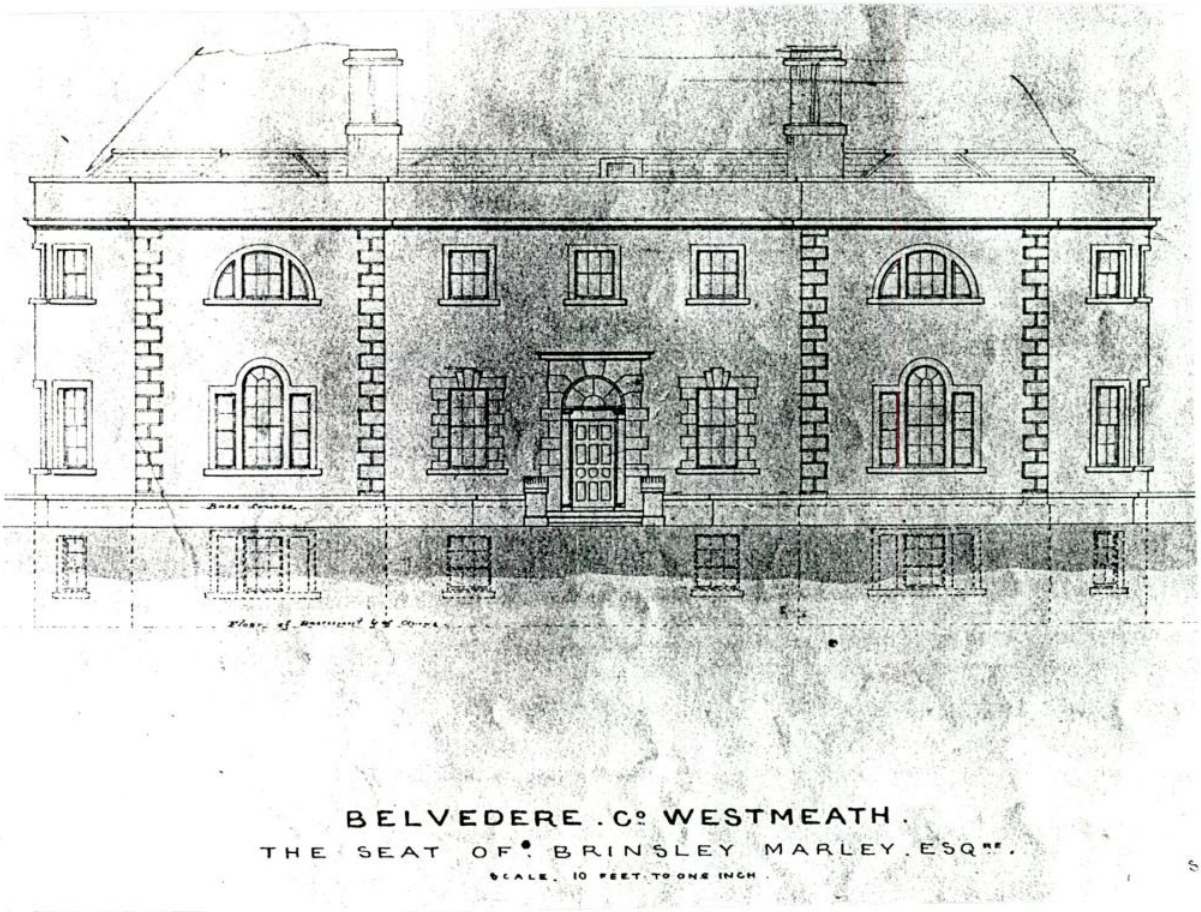
(Plate 5 from Photograph taken before 1860, with original "therme" windows. (Note there are no terraces).

where the "therme" windows reflected the central rounded heads of the venetian windows and the fanlight above the door. The fanlight today has late 18th or early 19th century grazing bars, was probably smaller, extending only the width of the door originally. The windows each side of the door have rusticated architraves. The window sashes are also early 19th century replacements maybe by Marlay who came to Belvedere in 1828.



(Plate 6) Belvedere house, after "Therme" windows had been squared off, 1980.

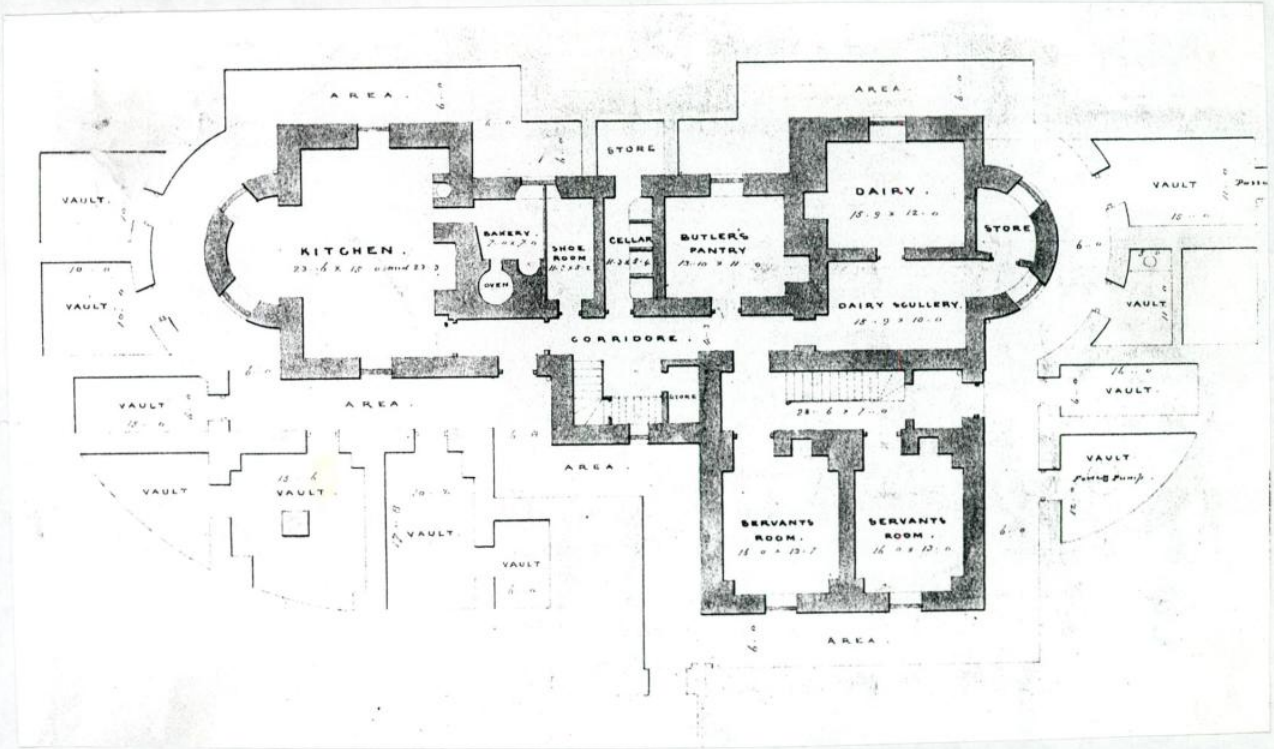
The exterior is finished with a moulded cornice above which is a parapet which hides most of the lead and slate covered roof. There is a wrought iron weather vane on the parapet above the door which was probably added in the present century. The chimney stacks also seem to have been extended in this century and the glazed front door is also a 20th century replacement, the original front door is shown in Sandham Symes' survey of 1857 Plate 7.



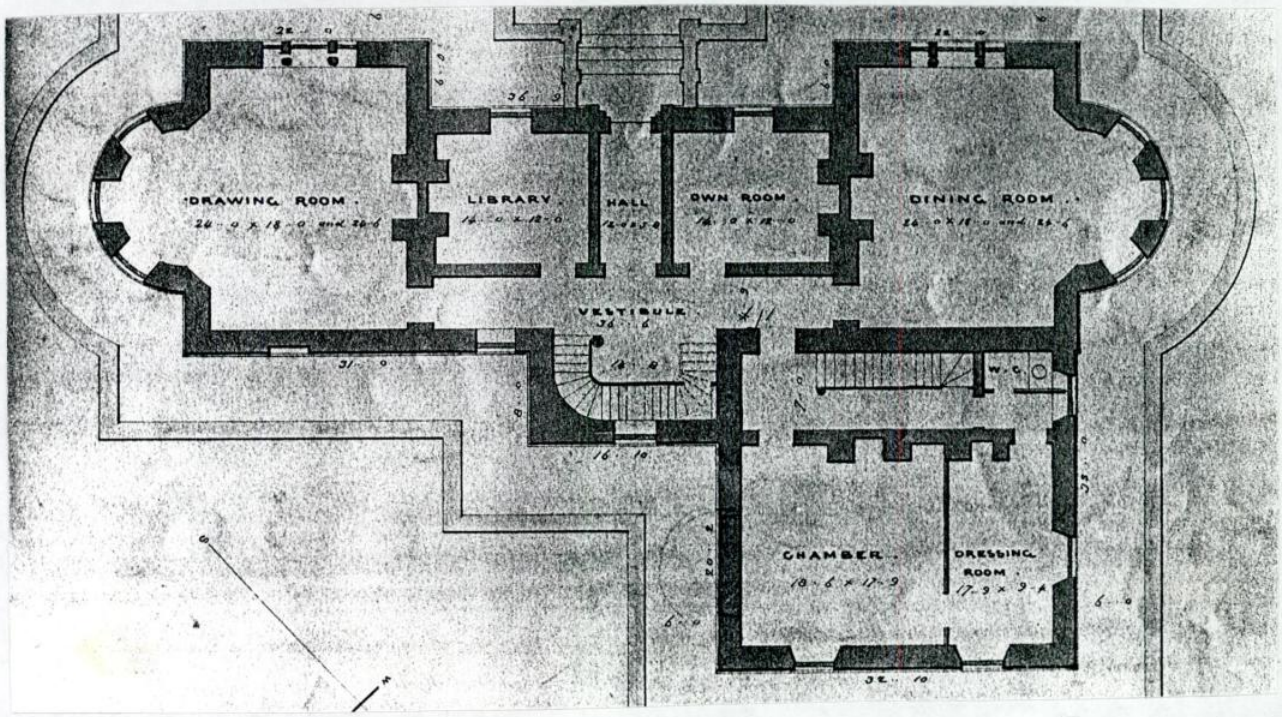
(Plate 7) Survey of front of house 1857 by Sandham Symes.

INTERIOR LAYOUT

Belvedere house consists of a vaulted basement Plate 8, which contains the offices, kitchen and servants room. The ground floor consists of the drawing room at each side of the house, each lit by a venetian window looking on to the lake and a bow window at the side. Between them were two small rooms (now run together to form the hall), a corridor and the main staircase Plate 9.



(Plate 8) Basement floor plan, before 1857, from Architectural Archives.



(Plate 9) Ground floor plan, before 1857, from Architectural Archives.

The floor above has a parallel arrangement of two large bedrooms above the dining room and drawing room, and two smaller rooms between them. At the west end of the house a short wing projects to the north, making the plan L-shaped, this contains three more rooms and the back staircase, and was perhaps built a little later than the rest, the staircase at any rate being of late 18th century type.

The interior fittings are expensively and tastefully finished with joinery embellished with the finest quality carving balustraded staircase. However, the most remarkable feature of the building which is still in evidence today is the rococo plasterwork on the ceilings in the hall, drawing room and dining room.

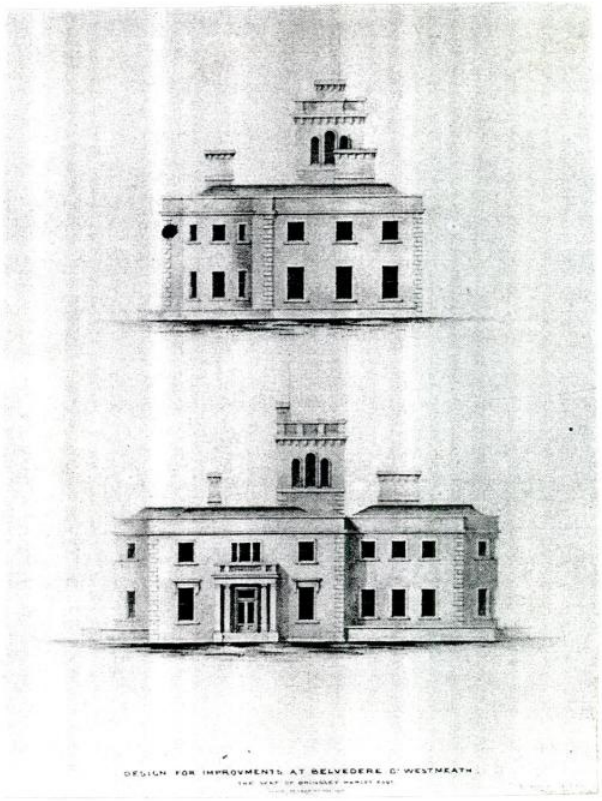
CHARLES BRINSLEY MARLAY

When the first Earl of Belvedere died in 1774, extravagance had left the estate in debt, but by 1786, the family finances had sufficiently recovered so that the heir, the second Earl could afford to build what is perhaps the finest late-eighteenth century townhouse in Dublin, Belvedere house[3], Great Denmark St., facing down North Great Georges Street.

The second Earl's death in 1814 without children led to the extinction of the Earldom and other titles. The Earls only sister, Jane, Countess of Lanesborough inherited the estate and following her death at the age of ninety in 1828 the estate passed ultimately to her great grandson, Charles Brinsley Marlay. He was a well known connoisseur, who during his long life built up a large collection of paintings, drawings, books and objects d'art. He specialized in Italian pictures of the 15th and early 16th century and Dutch paintings of the 17th century. The main

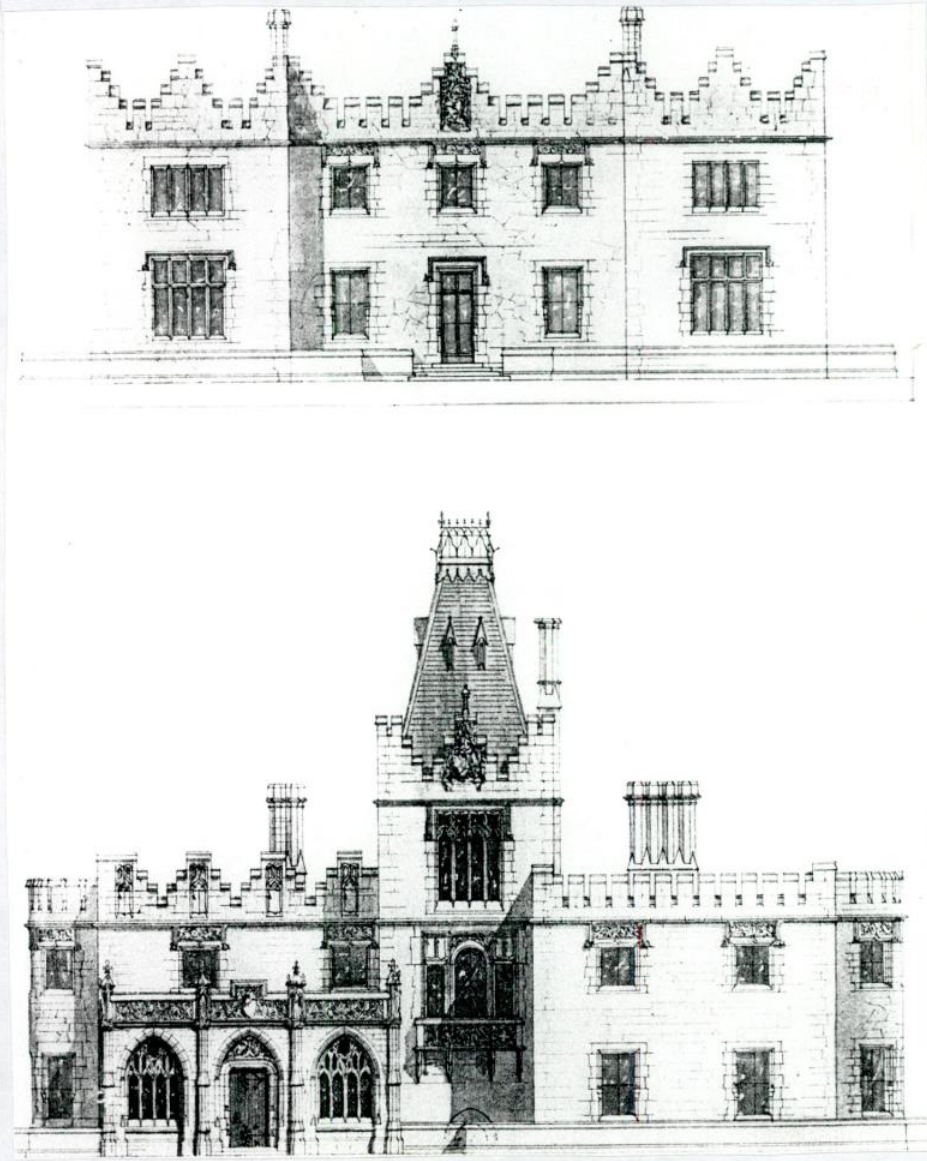
part of his collection was displayed at his London home, St Katherine's, Regents Park. On his death in 1912, the collection together with an endowment was bequeathed to the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. His other paintings remained at Belvedere, until Christies sale in July, 1980.

Marlay seems to have been happy to leave Belvedere unaltered until the 1850's when he had a number of designs commissioned for alterations and additions to the house and garden. All of these designs incorporate from the front to the rear. One design, in the French renaissance manor house style, proposed adding a sloped roof with dormer windows. This design is signed by the Gothic revival architect William Slater. Another design Plate 10 signed Sandham Symes, 1857 is in the Italiante classical style. It suggests a main entrance at the rear, ornamented with an ionic porch,



(Plate 10) Design for improvements to Belvedere House by Sandham Symes, 1857, from Architectural Archives.

adding a colonnade between the projecting wings of the original entrance front and a tower. A design dated 1850 Plate 11 is in the French Gothic style, it proposed a high roofed tower above the staircase and included out of place Irish Battlements in place of the parapet. The next scheme, unfortunately unsigned is more restrained and keeps with the Palladian character of the house. The entrance doorcase is derived from York Watergate, Victorian Embankment gardens, London attributed to Sir. Balthazar Gerbier, according to the Architectural Archives report.



(Plate 11) Plan for front and rear elevations C. 1850.

Thankfully none of these plans were carried out. The only changes made to the facade by Marlay was the alteration of the first floor windows already mentioned.

LT. COL.CHARLES K. HOWARDS - BURY.

On the death of Charles Brinsley Marlay in 1912, the Belvedere property was left to his cousin Lt. Col. Howard - Bury. Born in London in 1882, he was a Bury of Charleville forest, Tullamore, Co. Offaly, on his mothers side, and on his fathers side a son of the Duke of Suffolk - was a Howard who took the name Howard - Bury.

He served in the British Army from 1903 to 1923 according to Belvedere House and Gardens guide book, 1984. For many years he represented Bilston and Wolverhampton in the House of Commons and was Parliamentary secretary to the under secretary of state for war. He was the last surviving high sheriff for County Offaly and the last surviving Deputy lieutenant for County Westmeath. Colonel Bury was a traveller, flower lover, Botanist and big game hunter. He was best known for his mountaineering expeditions and achieved fame as leader of the first ever expedition to tackle Mount Everest. The story of the "Abominable Snowman" emerged from this expedition. His account of his expedition is told in his book "Mount Everest : The Reconnaissance".

When the first Labour government came to power in England in the 1930's he became disillusioned and retired to live in Belvedere, Co. Westmeath, bringing with him many of the species he had collected from his exotic travels. He became close friends with Mr. Rex Beaumont in England and in 1941 Rex came to live with him in Belvedere. They maintained the house and gardens with artistry and both were well loved in Co. Westmeath as philanthropists and

patrons of the arts. Bury was most charitable and was a genuine benefactor of many worthwhile causes. Lt. Col. Charles K. Howard - Bury died in September 1963 aged 81, without close relatives. He left Belvedere house, estate and his considerable fortune to Mr Rex Beaumont.

REX BEAUMONT

Rex Beaumont was larger than life, colourful and talented, he was horse - breeder, poet, farmer, gardener, friend of the famous and patron of the poor. As a poet he had two private audiences with the late Pope Paul, he published one collection of poems "me, myself and I". He numbered the King of Sweden among his friends. The King celebrated his 21st birthday party at Belvedere house. Beaumont was an effervescent personality of good - natured disposition.[5] He gave money to orphans through schools and to local charities. His great affection for Belvedere was evident in the standard of the properties upkeep during the years he lived there. He maintained the garden to perfection and he carried out the last alteration to the house, the extension of the hall after 1963.

Sadly, on July 9th 1980, most of the contents of Belvedere house were sold by Mr. Beaumont to pay debts incurred as a result of trying to maintain the condition of the house and gardens. The sale, by Christies of London and Hamilton and Hamilton, realised £146,000. On July 20th, 1980, it was reported in the 'The Sunday Press' that Mr Beaumont was having informal talks with the government about the selling of Belvedere to the government to be used for private government events, such as unofficial meetings of EEC ministers and to accommodate foreign guests of the government. In 1975, the coalition government had to borrow Farmleigh, Castleknock, Co. Dublin, from Lord Iveagh for such a meeting.

Owing to the refusal of Beaumont to allow developers into his house, many offers for conversion were passed over. In 'The Sunday Press' article, Beaumont said he planned to live in Belvedere house for the foreseeable future. He hoped an arrangement would be made whereby Westmeath County Council would maintain the grounds which they could open to the public (Sunday press, July 20th, 1980)

WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL

The property including the house was acquired by Westmeath County Council from Mr. Rex Beaumont in late 1981. In 'The Westmeath Examiner', October 24th, 1981, it was reported that the valve of Belvedere estate was far in excess of the amount being sought by Mr Rex Beaumont, but because if his magnanimous nature to Westmeath, he was prepared to allow the property to be availed of and its amenities enjoyed by the people. No information as to the amount the council payed for the property was available from the council but it was believed to have been in the region of £250,000, with an annual payment and right of residence in part of the property to Mr. Rex Beaumont.

The Council at the time of acquisition said in 'The Westmeath Examiners' article that "development of the estate to the maximum, for the benefit of the county and the nation, through its tourist potential, will be undertaken with the best advice and an amenity provided, which will be second to none anywhere in the country". (Westmeath Examiner, October 24th, 1981).

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER 1

1. NINIAN NIVEN (1799 - 1879) was head gardener to the chief secretary for Ireland and curator of the Botanic Gardens. He became secretary to the Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland in 1847. His nursery was at Drumcondra where he specialised in fruit trees. His best known surviving work is Iveagh gardens, Dublin.

2. There are still plenty of Peacocks and Peahen remaining at Belvedere today being looked after by the Council staff.

3. The foremost exponent of the Adam style in Dublin, Michael Stapleton, was both architect and stuccodore and it provides a complete contrast in style to Belvedere house in Co. Westmeath.

4. Lt. Col. Bury saw large footed animal tracks in the snow. The native guides ascribed them to the "Metohkangmi" meaning "Abominable Snowman". Bury felt they were the tracks of Tibetan wolves in his despatch to 'The Times' he put exclamation marks after the words "Abominable Snowman", but where the article was printed the exclamation marks were gone and for many the legend became fact.

5. Rex Beaumont also mixed a great deal socially, he did all his own shopping, attended race meetings and was life president of the Lough Ennel preservation society, president of the local painters society, and of the Lough Ennel fishing club.

CHAPTER 2

THE ENTRANCE HALL

The entrance hall at Belvedere is an amalgamation of two rooms. This chapter hopes to document this amalgamation and show not only decoration changes but also structural changes undertaken to this area, firstly by Marlay and subsequently by Beaumont.

The hall was the first room to be seen by visitors and was a room of great importance. In larger country houses such as Belvedere, a tendency developed from the 1820's to view the hall romantically as the heart of the home. It was a room for show, indicating the antiquity and nobility of the owner's family, rather than for practical use. Later in the century, this type of hall became more of a living-room, smaller and more practical to heat and to manage. (Eashake, 1986, pp41).

Belvedere's entrance hall was originally one bay in width and measured 12' x 5'8, with no doors on the right or left, an arched opening probably led to the main staircase.

"OWN ROOM"

The room described as "own room" in Plate 9 page 17 was originally one bay in width and measured 14'x 12'. The room was finished with a panelled oak dado, with carved skirting board and chair-rail enriched with a vitruvian scroll. The window case has lugged architraves, enriched with egg and dart mouldings and panelled shutters also in oak. The door to the staircase also had a lugged architrave in oak. The chimney-piece Plate 12 was also in oak with marble slips next to the opening. From assessing the photograph it shows the entablature of the chimney-

piece was decorated with a garland of fruit and flowers, and with some classical elements in the carved mouldings. The fireplace is decorated with coloured tiles set into the recess. Until the mid 1960's a pedimented overmantel incorporating a painting surmounted this chimney-piece as shown in Plate 13, it was probably a 20th century reproduction although it was in the same style.

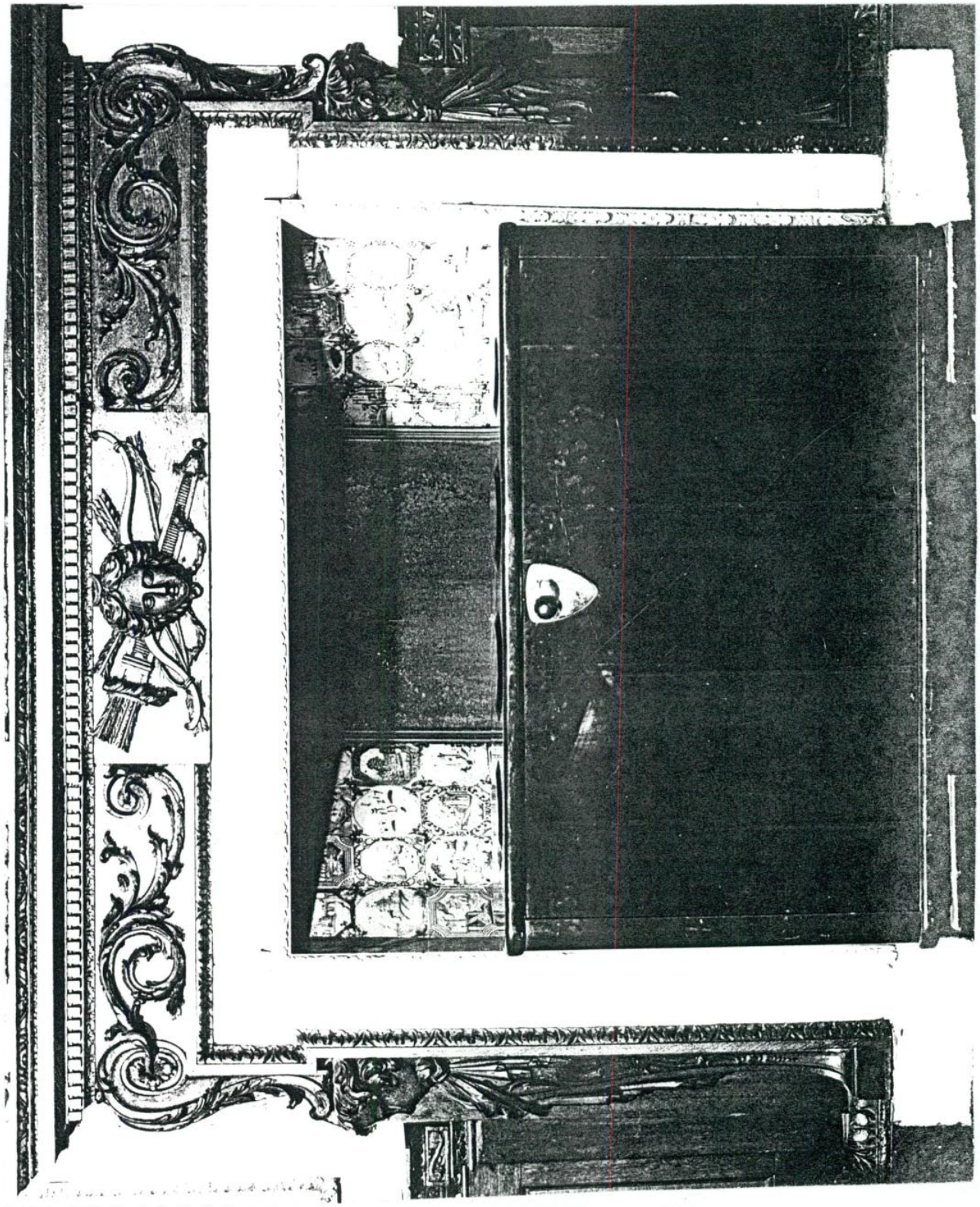
(Plate 12) "Own Room" chimney-piece.

It was sold to Mr. W. Dillon, a Dublin Antique Dealer and presented to the Tailors Hall from where it was later stolen, and never recovered. The chimney-piece is still largely intact in Belvedere House today.

(Plate 13) "Own Room, 1961 with 20th Century overmantel.

THE LIBRARY

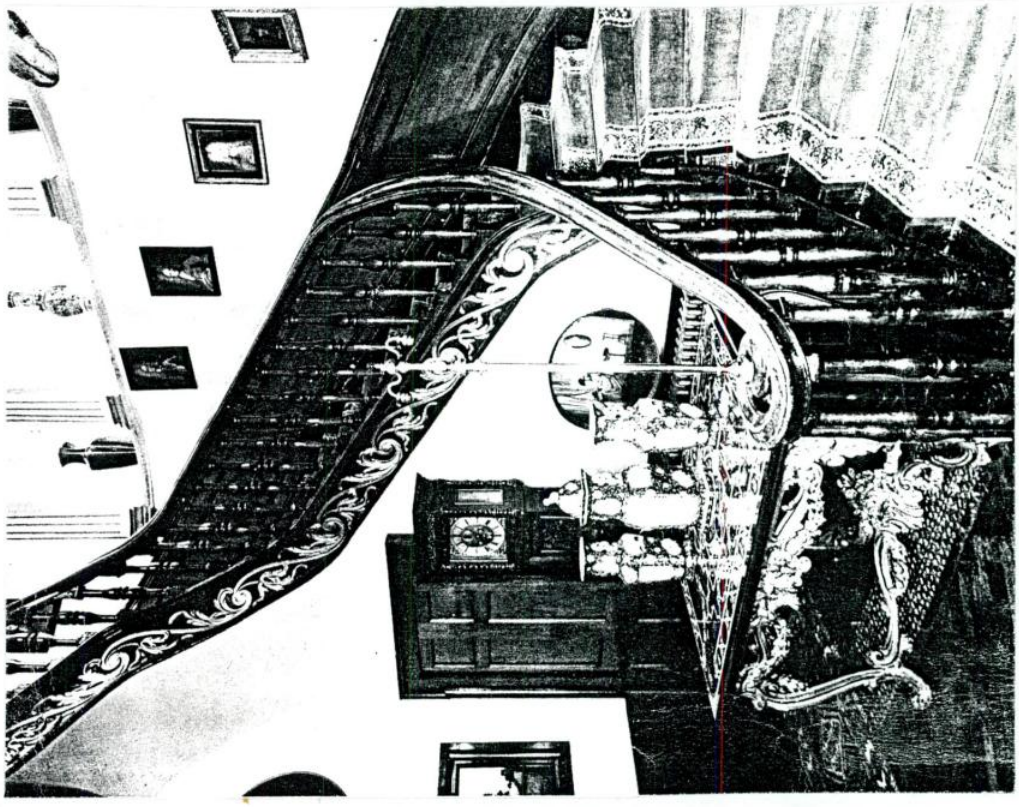
The library had identical dimensions, 14' x 12' as that of the "own room". The plan of the room is also identical. The room was finished with a similar enriched entablature to that in "own room" and hall. The panelled dada window shutters, architraves and door architraves were all identical to those in "own room". The chimney - piece shown in Plate 14 is of carved oak, with marble slips beside the fire opening enclosed by carved oak shouldered mouldings. The frieze of this chimney-piece has a central plaque representing Diana, the huntress with bow and arrows. The chimney-piece is also decorated with Dutch blue and white tiles set into the room. These were very popular in the late 18th century.



(Plate 14) The former library's chimney-piece.

THE STAIRCASE

According to the Architectural Archives Survey, the pine staircase Plate 15 is an open well, closed string design and has balusters of Palladian design. The string is decorated with a running vitruvian scroll (Architectural Archives 1991). The dado panelling of the staircase wall is pine with a dado rail similar to the staircase handrail. At ground floor level the room originally had two windows, one each side of the staircase bay. That nearest the dining room was converted into a door, during the late 18th or early 19th century when the rear wing was added, it gives access to the back staircase. Underneath the main staircase is a panelled door with a lugged architrave which gives access to a store staircase, which leads to the basement. The window nearest the drawing room has a lugged architrave in oak and panelled shutters.



(Plate 15) The main staircase, 1961

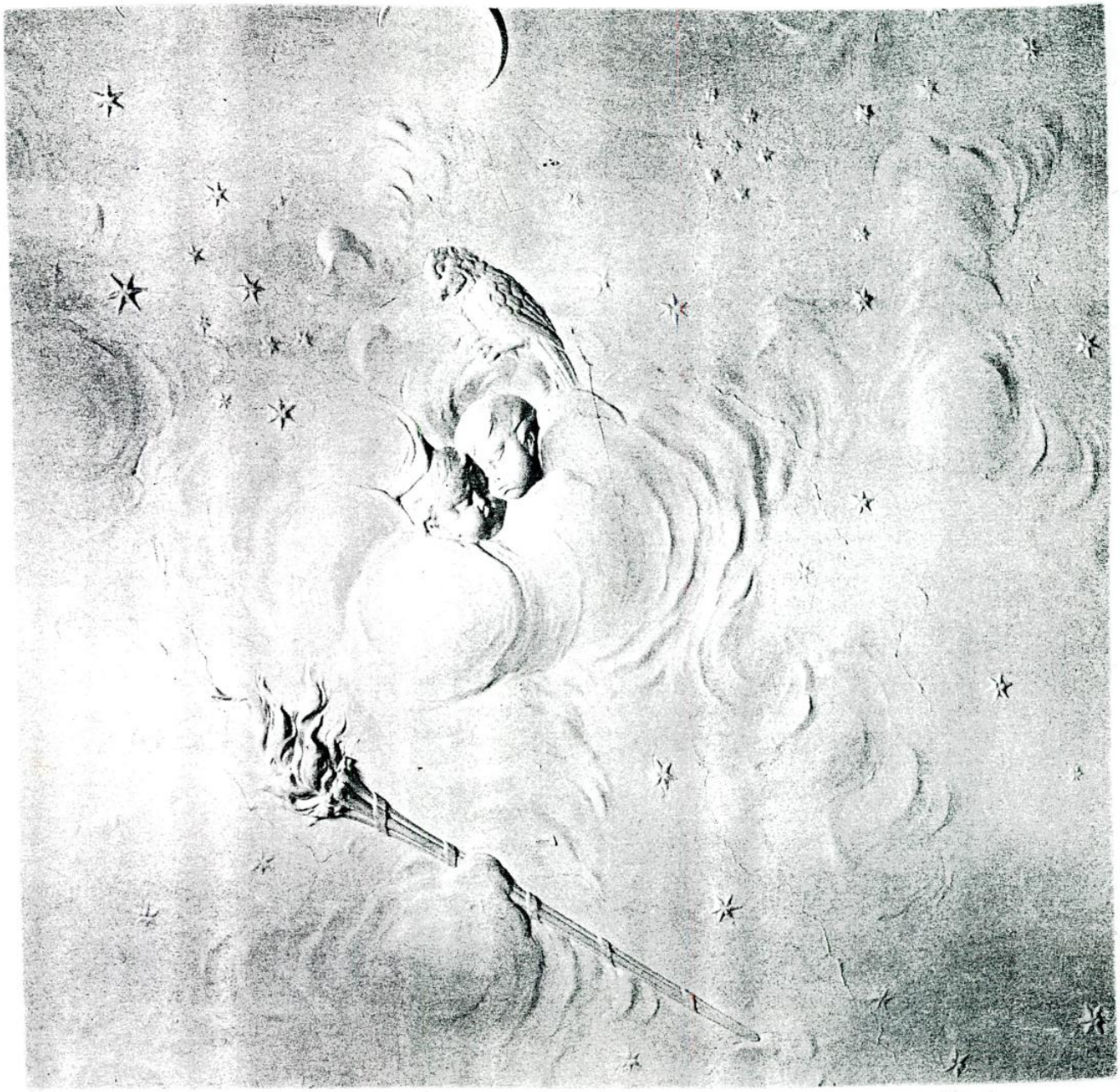
The oak dado is panelled also. The doors to the drawing and dining room have full entablatures. The upper level of the staircase is lit by a venetian window, with fluted doric pilasters. (Survey 1980, page 9)

CEILINGS

The most remarkable feature of the "own room" and also of the library, Drawing room and dining room and still in evidence today is the rococo plasterwork on the ceiling. According to Mark Giravard, "it is the most inventive and freest rococo style plasterwork in this country"(Country life, June 29, 1961). The ceilings possess a delicate sense of spacing, a lightness of touch and gaiety that puts then in a class of their own. Among some of the documented literature on these ceilings is 'Irish Eighteenth - Century Stuccowork and its European sources' by Joseph Mc Donnell.

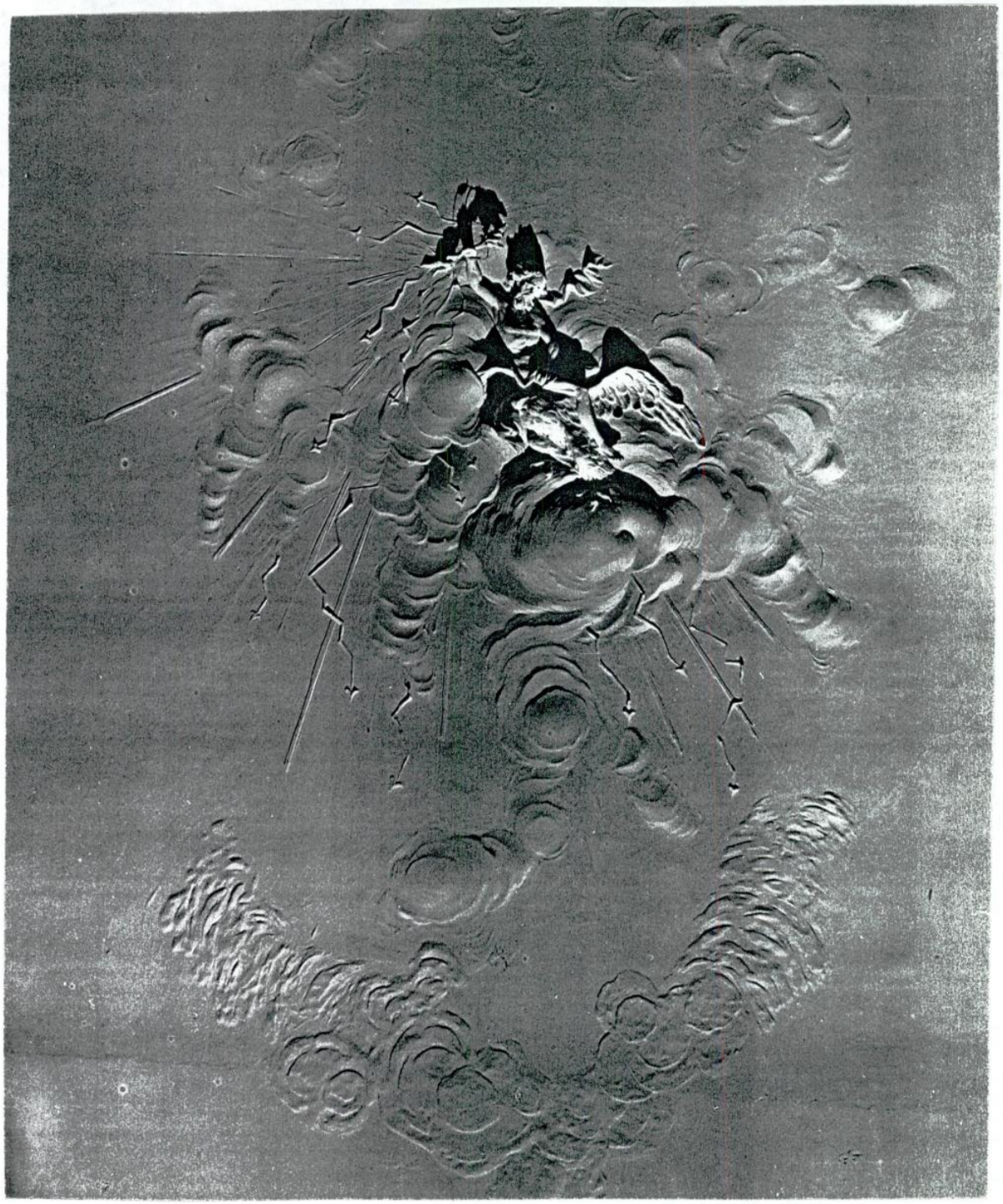
The ceilings of the two rooms, "own room" and the library are very simple. The ceiling of the library is decorated with a skyscape, sprinkled with stars, the moon, and owl, a torch and a pair of cherub heads, representing sleep and the night, Plate 16. On the "own room" ceiling jupiter sits astride and eagle scattering lightning across the clouds from the thunderbolt in his hand Plate 17.

The closest comparison to the Belvedere ceilings in Ireland are those which were formerly at Mespil House, now re-erected at Dublin Castle (State Apartments) and áras an Uachtaráin Plate 18. There is no documentary evidence as to the plasters name in either case, but there is little doubt that both were the work of a foreigner. The only foreign plasterers working in Ireland at that time whose Work is documented were the Italian Francini brothers and the Frenchman Bartholomew Cramillion. There is a good



(Plate 16) Skyscape sprinkled with stars, Library ceiling.

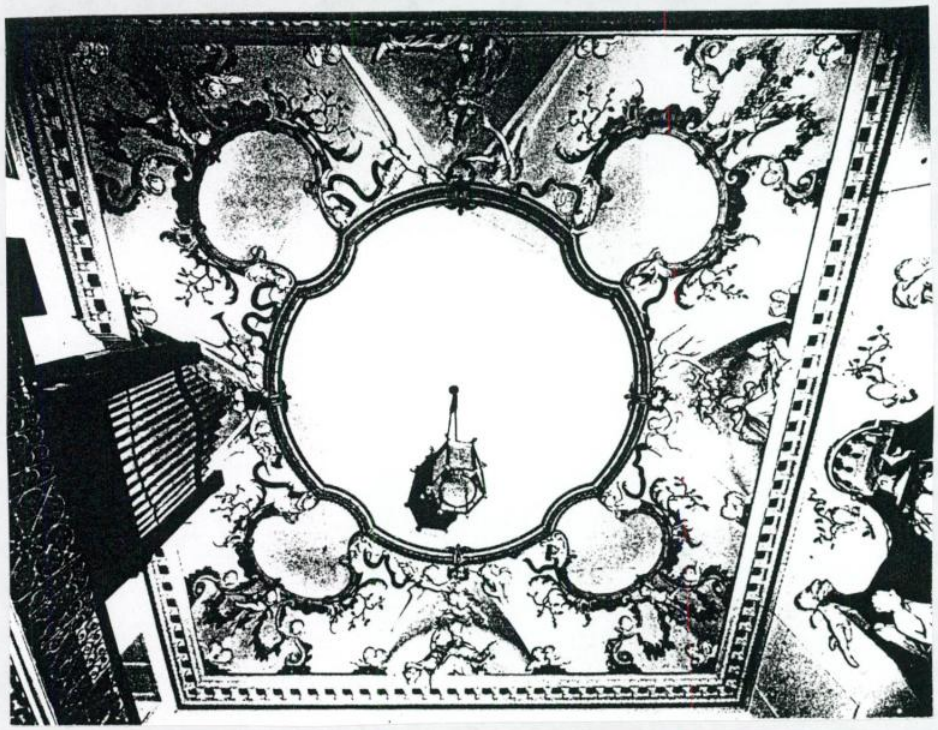
deal of Francini plasterwork is existence, comparison with which makes it clear that the Belvedere and Mespil House ceiling are by a different plasterer. The only know work of Cramillions is the magnificent Rococo ceiling of the rotunda hospital chapel in Dublin Plate 19. This ceiling is so different in scale and intention from the more intimate and domestic ceilings at mespil house and Belvedere that comparison is difficult. However, it is



(Plate 17) Jupiter astride and eagle scattering lightning across the clouds "Own Room" ceiling.

thought that Cramillion may have been responsible for the work in all three places, but unless further evidence comes to light the mystery remains unsolved. (Mc Donnell 1991 pp - 13)

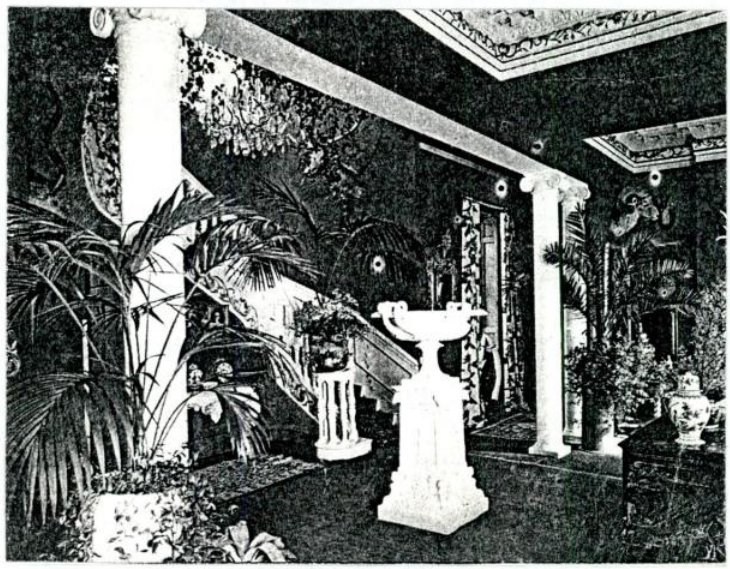
(Plate 18) áras An Vachtaráin, Phoenix Park. Dublin Council of State Room, Aesop ceiling.



(Plate 19) Rotunda Hospital Chapel: stuccoed by Barthelemij Cramillion between 1755 and 1758.

HALL ALTERATIONS

After 1857, Charles Brinsley Marlay joined the entrance hall and "own room" to form a larger hall. The hall was altered twice, the second time after 1963 when Mr Rex Beaumont inherited the house. Beaumont removed the wall between the original hall and the former library and between the library and the main staircase. He replaced the wall between the three rooms and the staircase with a screen of ionic columns, the capitals of which face each other, instead of the front and rear walls Plate 20. The left over door architraves, linings etc. were used to form the present small internal porch. After comparing the hall in 1961 as shown in Plate 20. I prefer the earlier hall when the room was divided into the library and "own room" the hall is too large after 1963 and resembles a hotel lobby with the bold patterned carpet and potted plants.



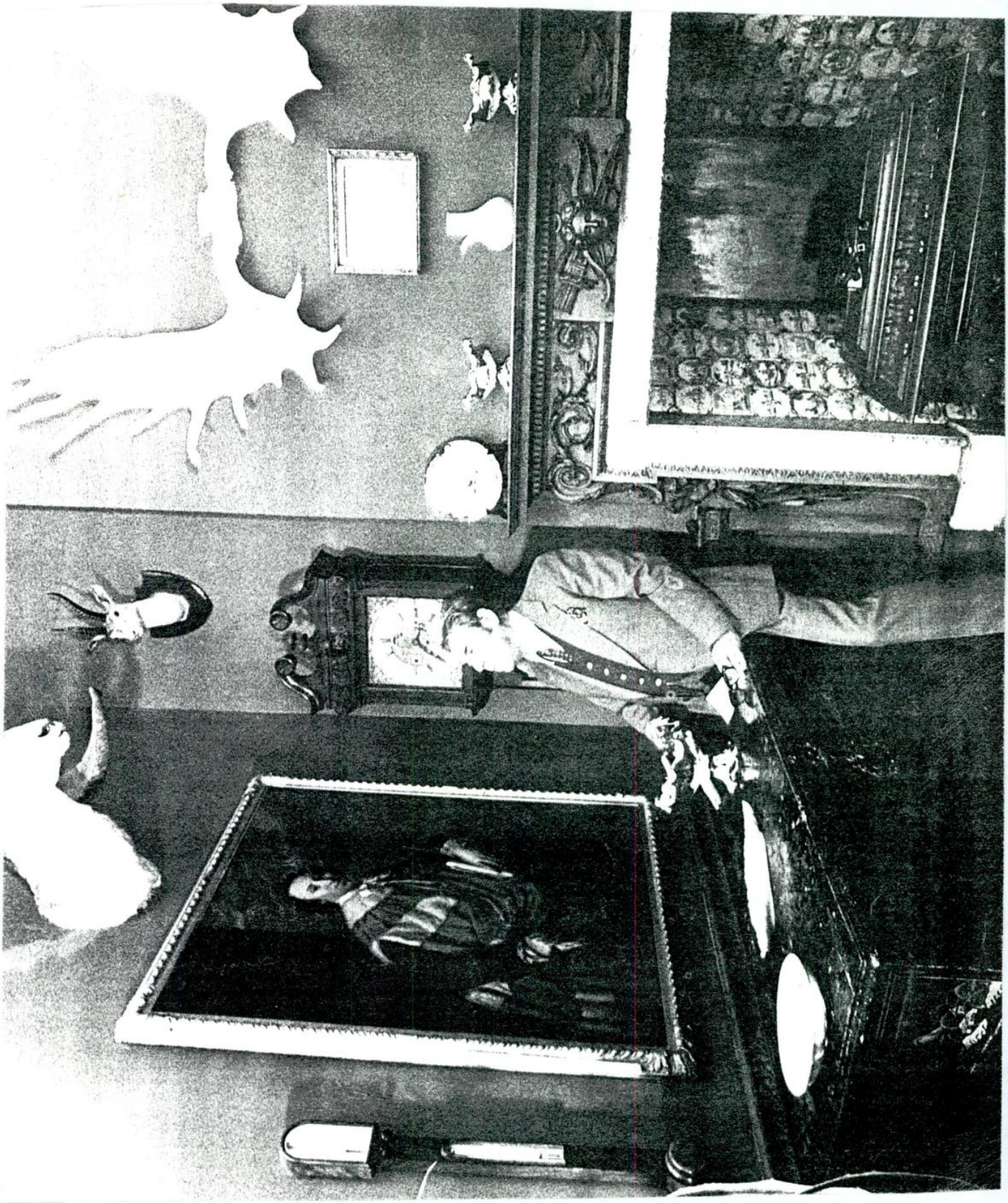
(Plate 20) hall showing ionic columns Rex Beaumont put in after 1963.

THE VICTORIAN INFLUENCE

The earliest photograph of Belvederes interior are from 1961 when Lt. - Col Howard - Bury lived there. He had inherited Belvedere in 1912 and had divided his time between his home in England and Belvedere until the 1930s when he retired to live in Belvedere full-time.

The Victorian era lasted from 1837 to 1901 and Belvedere House had been decorated in the Victorian style from the time Charles Brinsley Marlay lived there and retained some Victorian characteristics right up to the 1960s where Bury and Beaumont were residents. The Victorian Age was characterised by attention to detail and lavish ornamentation - a time when nothing was "too much" in the way of pattern, colour and design "(Wissinger, 1990, cover sleeve).

In Burys time in Belvedere, the library still existed Plate 21. Plate 13 page 27 and Plate 15 page 29 were both taken in Bury's time. The walls in both photographs are painted white, decoration critics of the victorian era felt that the colour choice depended on what the room was used for. Entry halls were considered sober rooms and the most appropriate colours for paint or paper were grey stone or drab. Charles Eastlake, author of the books Hints On Household Taste - the classic handbook of Victorian interior decoration, felt that walls in the entry should be painted rather than papered, because wallpaper could not stand up to the heavy traffic found in the hall. To Victorians the surface of the wall was perhaps the most important thing is the room. The most common form of wall decoration consisted of tall, scaled baseboards, a chair rail at the walls midpoint and a plaster cornice at the top, just below the ceiling. This composition appeared in Belvedere's ground floor rooms.



(Plate 21) The Former Library. Mr Rex Beaumont, the last private owner of Belvedere, looking at the Robert Hunter Portrait of the 1st Earl of Belvedere.

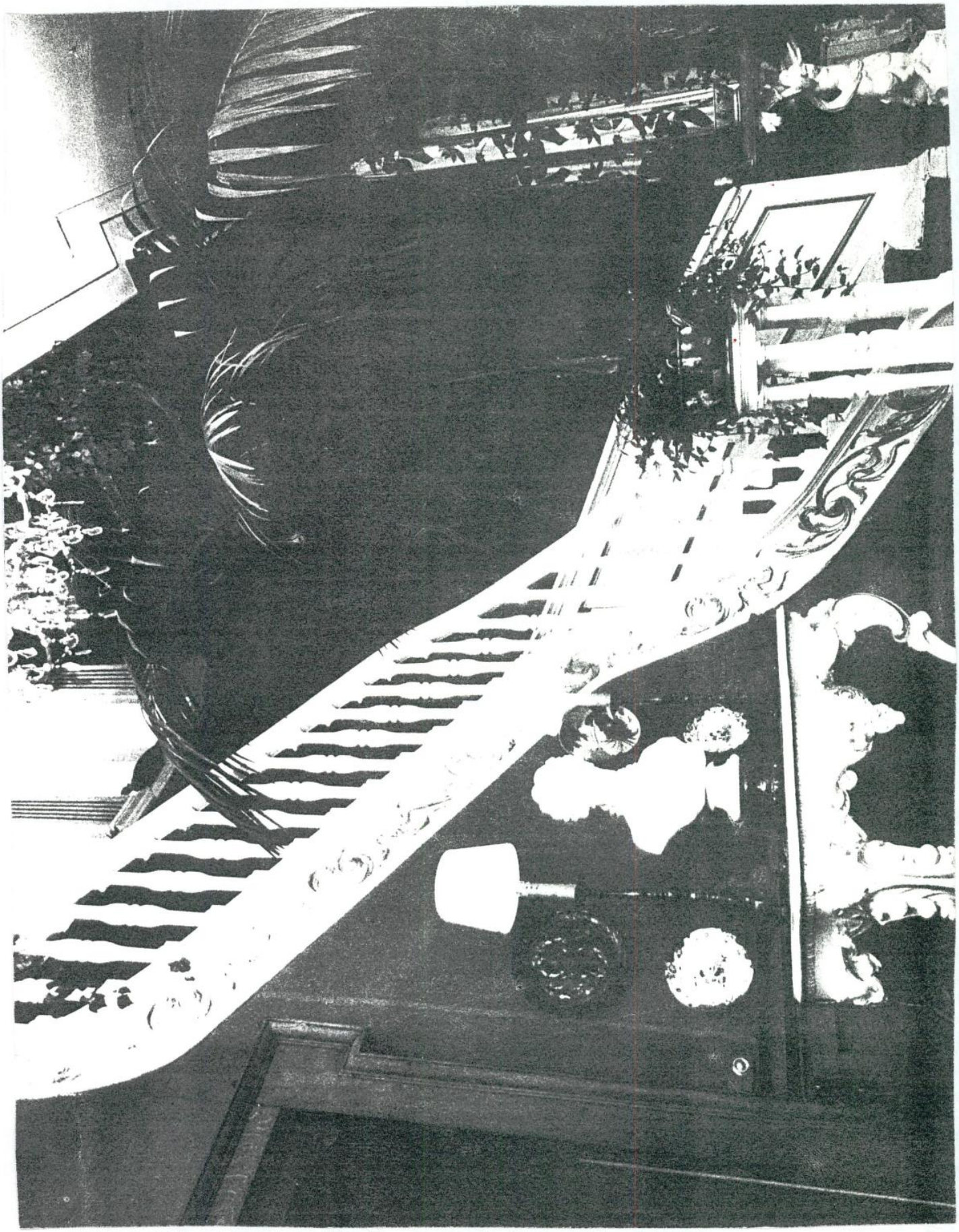
During the middle Victorian period from the 1850s to the 1870s, home owners employed an often conflicting (at least to modern eyes), combination of colours on ceilings, walls and woodwork in a single room. Colours such as crimson and purple, yellow and gold, deep red and rich brown were used or contrasting colours such as red and royal blue yellow and dark purple and black and white. (Wissinger, 1990, P 52). Rex Beaumont may have been influenced by this trend of vibrant colours when he painted the walls of hall crimson in the 1970's. This choice of colour may also have been an influence of the '70's style of decoration which used garish colour schemes.

In Burys time as seen in Plates 13 and 15 the flocks of Belvedere's hall were covered with rugs over polished wooden floors which were popular in Victorian times. The rug patterns appear ornate, and according to the 1980 Christies catalogue there were two cavcasion rugs in the hall and a Hamadan rug woven on a black ground with three lozenges within a brown border with stylised animals and fish. The rugs remained in the hall until 1980 when Mr Rex Beaumont covered the whole ground flock with wall-to-wall carpeting as seen in Plate 40 page 61.

The Main staircase as already described in this chapter was painted white Plate 22, in the 1970's by Mr Beaumont, he also painted the oak dado panelling of the staircase wall white. You can see the comparison and the change that this created by comparing Plate 15 page 29 and Plate 22. Beaumont's painting of the pine staircase made it appear more projected and has picked out the closed string design. It also stands cut dramatically against the walls which he had painted crimson. The effect is a startling contrast to the hallway illustrated in Plate 15. On a further comparison of the two illustrations. The table in

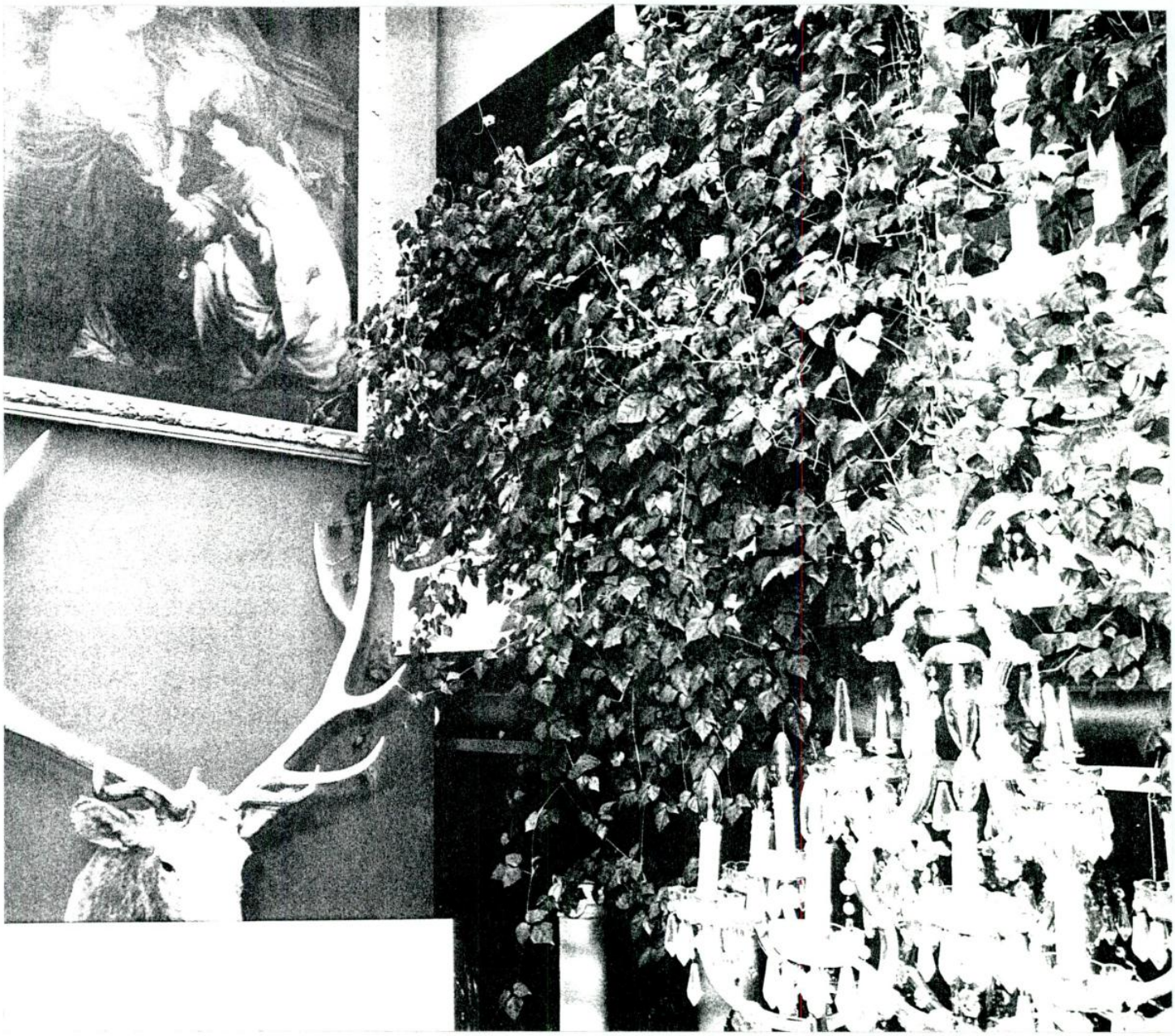
Plate 15 under the stairs was changed by Beaumont as seen in Plate 22 to a white Rococo style table, this table is later to be seen in Plate 64 page 88 in the west bedroom. On this table in Plate 22 is a carved bust, and according to the 1980 catalogue a pair of 17th century Dutch pewter candlesticks with multibaluster stems on three-cornered bases chased with foliage and claw-and-ball feet (Christie's 1980 p33). Replacing the tall porcelain vases are an eclectic mix of plates hung on the wall.

The hall reflected Bury's two great passions, plants and hunting. It was alive with a splendid array of tropical plants and mounted animal head adorned the walls, see Plate 13, page 27 and Plate 21 page 36. These included a pair of rams heads, a pair of Gazelles' heads, a pair of goats heads, a pair of roe deer's heads, a kudu's head, a pair of braun bears heads, a ten-point red deer's head and a pair of Irish Elk's Antlers, now painted white and the only ones remaining in Belvedere today, one over the chimney piece in Plate 21 and the other over the former "own room" chimney-piece across the hall.



(Plate 22) The Oak Staircase painted white 1970's.

Over the staircase hung a beautiful cut-grass chandelier plate 23 with scrolled frame supporting

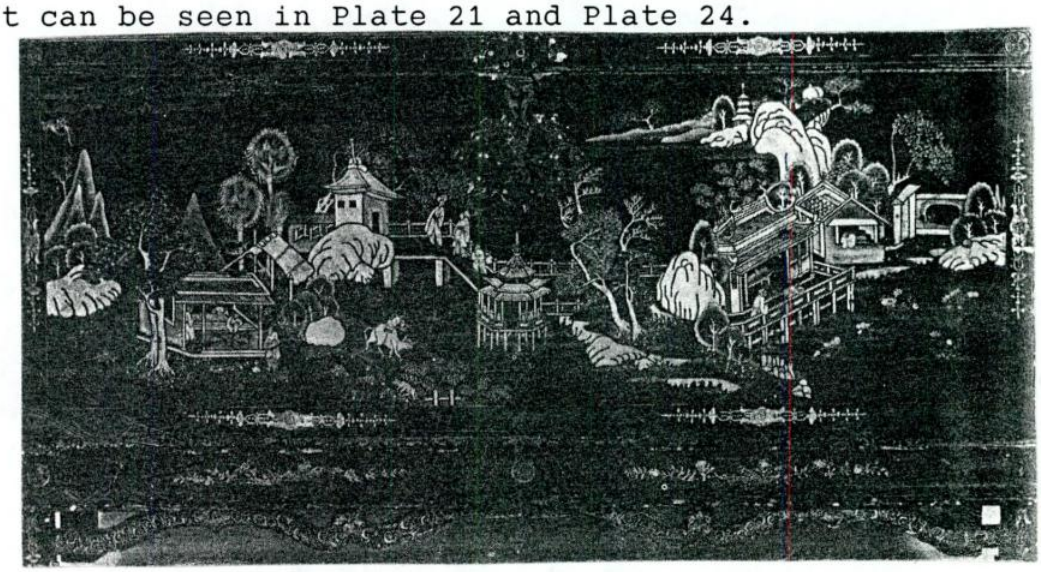


(Plate 23) Cut-glass chandelier which hung over the main staircase.

Numerous entwined branches with twelve giltwood nozzles with lobed circular drip-trays, suspending bead drops and joined by swags, surmounted by a vase shaped corona. It measured 42 in high, excluding chain suspension. (Christies 1980, p18).

Among the paintings in Belvederes hall which were part of Charles Brinsley Marlays collection was a portrait by Robert Hunter of Robert Rochfort, 1st Earl of Belvedere dressed in his peers robes, see Plate 21 now in Newman House, and Van Dyke's the Blessed Herman kneeling before the Virgin Plate 23.

Beside the chimney-piece of the former library, see Plate 21, stood an Irish Georgian Mahogany longcase clock by George Walker, 94 inches high. Also in that part of the hall, was a beautiful 18th century Chinese export black lacquer coffer with moulded rectangular hinged lid and engraved brass lockplate, painted in gilts with Chinoiserie landscape, on moulded stand and square legs. It can be seen in Plate 21 and Plate 24.



(Plate 24) A Chinese export Black Lacquer Coffer, 18th Century. It stood in Belvedere's former library.

There was a fine selection of tables in the hall, all documented in the 1980 Christies Catalogue, they included a regency mahogany breakfast table and a satin-wood Sutherland table with a moulded rectangular fall-flap top on turned legs and bar feet. There were brass and copper jardinieres and a variety of lamps, including a middle-eastern brass trumpet-shaped lamp whose baluster stem and domed base were pierced and engraved with hieroglyphics. A white-painted cast-iron vase-on-stand stood in the middle of the hall after 1963 Plate 20 page 35 as shown in the catalogue. It was of neo-classical design, the vase had an egg-and-draft moulded border with scrolled handles on fluted socle, the rectangular plinth base with panels cast with Egyptian figures surmounted at the corners by ram's heads on a mounted square base case with foliage and anthemions divided by sphinxes. (Christies 1980 p.16)

THE ROLE OF TASTE AND INDIVIDUALITY.

"Scientific observation shows that taste and all cultural practices are linked to ones upbringing and education". Stephen Bayley, Author of "Taste", an exhibition about values in Design committed himself to the view that taste is "really another word for choice", whether that choice is "to discriminate between flavours in the mouth or objects before the eye". Thus Bayley claimed that taste did not have anything to do with values, beyond questions of personal whim. He claimed there really can be no such thing as "good taste" or "bad taste". Bayley's view of taste and also the view of John Blake, Deputy director of the British Design Council who maintains that a person's taste is characteristic of the person, like his height, the shape of his nose or the colour of his hair, are two of views I agree with and indeed both views can be applied in the context of the interiors of Belvedere.

The treatment of the hall by Howard-Bury and Beaumont differed in many ways. Bury's use of colour was more subtle that Beaumont's. Beaumont seemed to like strong rich colours which are generally used to make a room appear smaller. As Beaumont had extended the hall after 1963 by letting the library into the hall already extended by Marlay, the walls needed a darker colour to bring the hall more together. The white-painted staircase and the white columns stood out dramatically against the crimson red walls. Beaumont's decorative flair reflected his larger that life, colourful personality. The hall also reflected Bury's tastes and passion for plants and flowers and of course hunting. The hall was an electric mix of styles and objects from Marlay, Bury and Beaumont.

COUNTY COUNCIL.

When Westmeath County Council bought Belvedere in 1981 all the furniture etc. had been sold. They opened the house to the public in the summers of 1985, 86 and 87, but nothing was ever done to the houses interior by the Council. I walked around Belvedere House in June 1993 and it was obvious it had been neglected with damp patches on the dining room ceiling, and sections of the landing and west bedroom ceilings falling in. I went back to the house on the 17th January 1994. The Council were repairing the roof with the aid of an EEC grant. In an interview I had with Ciaran Murphy, a spokesman for the Council, on the 18th October 1993, he said that The Council were looking for £150,000 to repair the roof and hoped to have the repairs finished in February. Mr. Murphy proved unhelpful with my questions, all he would tell me was, the council "would not be restoring the house to its original state with furniture" and that they " hope to have the house opened to the public in April 1994". It is

difficult to assess just exactly what the Council are going to open the house as. (Murphy, 18th October 1993) The photograph shown in plates 25,26 and 27 were taken in January while the roof was being repaired. There were broken windows and a lot of damage to the walls. The carpet had been taken up and the stairs and chimney - pieces were covered up for protection.

(Plate 25) The White-painted staircase covered up while roof is being repaired. January 1994.

The analysis of the hallway as with the other selected interiors has mainly been undertaken through the examination of photographs, and plans from certain dates. The photographs-documented at different times the contents and layout have been provided by the Christies Catalogue. Without specific written information it is difficult to assess many of the changes undertaken, but the photographs do record and in many cases through comparison and analysis do provide evidence of many changes in the interior, reflecting the taste, fashionability and individuality of each new owner.

(Plate 26) The Medallion cornice and damaged walls of Belvedere's hall, January 1994.

(Plate 27) The ionic columns in Belvedere's hall, the capitals of which face each other instead of the front and rear walls, January 1994.

CHAPTER 3. THE DRAWING ROOM

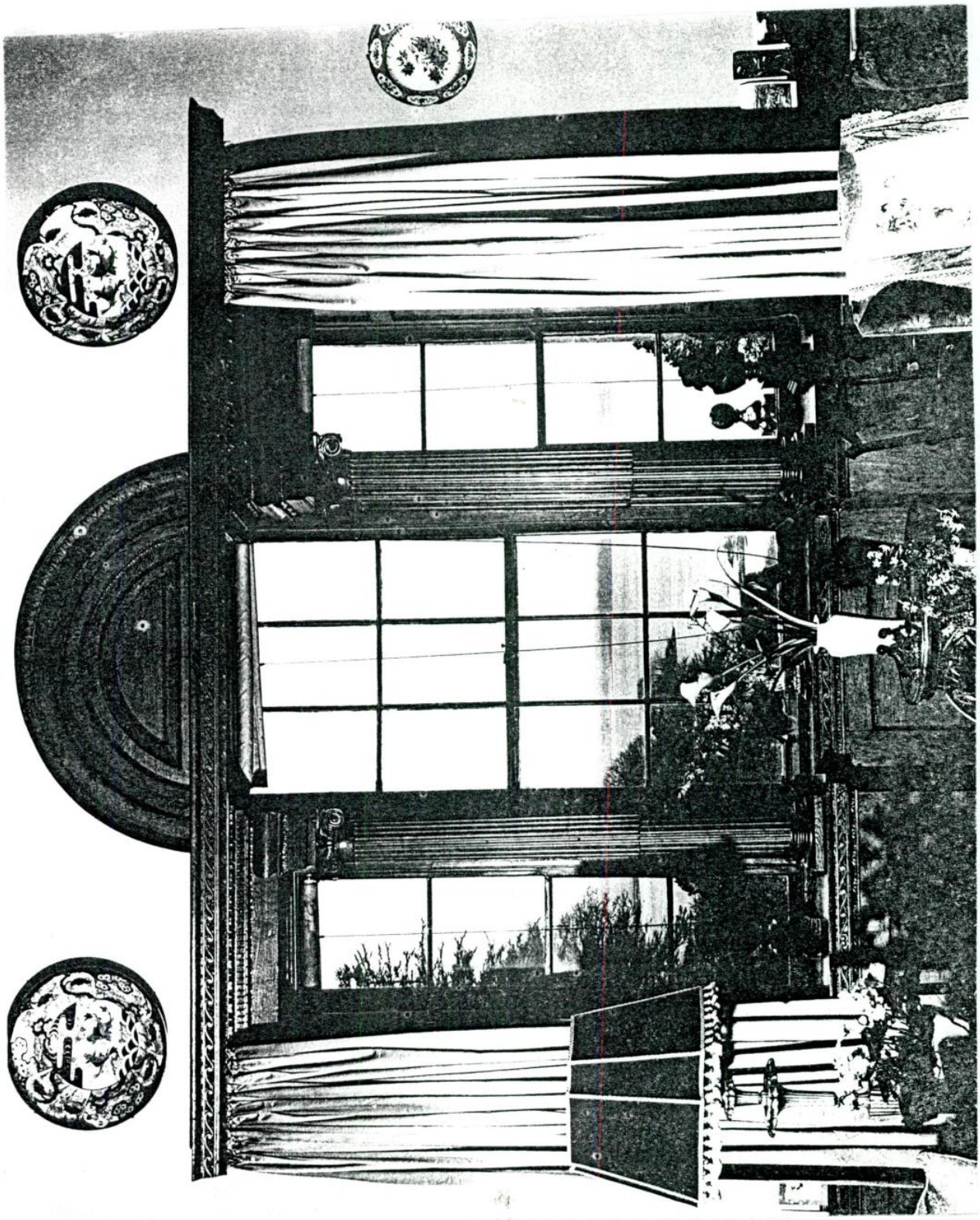
This chapter will focus on the drawing room and its changing environment from 1961 to 1994 and as with chapter two, much of the analysis is undertaken through a study of photographs, taken at different times, which document and show these changes.

The drawing room was used for receiving guests and socializing particularly before and after an evening meal, its name and function derived from the traditional withdrawing room to which everyone withdrew after dinner. It was the most important and prestigious room, almost always at the front, and in larger houses, taking up most of the first floor.

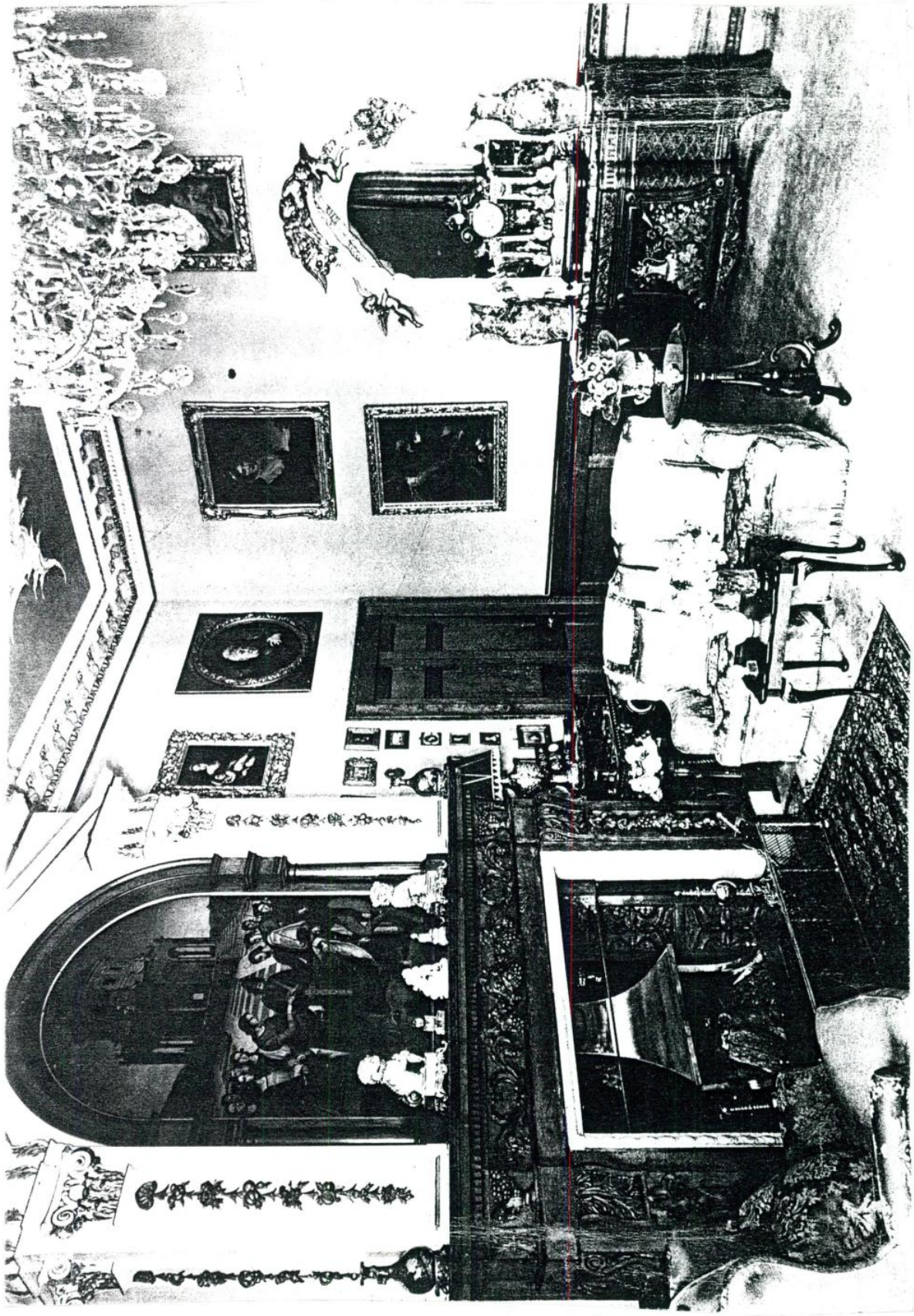
Belvedere's drawing room measured 24' by 18' as shown in plate 9, excluding the bow window. The joinery was all executed in oak, such as that of the other ground floor rooms, consists of a panelled dado, enriched with a carved chair - rail and skirting board. The venetian window Plate 28, identical to that in the dining room is decorated with fluted ionic columns and pilasters, the arched top of the central section has been filled in with an oak panel. According to the Architectural Archives report, the curtain pelmet is make from a left over length of carved chair - rail, taken from one of the rooms used to form the present hall (Architectural Archives Report 1991, Plate 10). The room has a very fine original oak chimney - piece with carved marble moulding, to the fireplace opening. The frieze of this chimney - piece has a central plaque with a lion head mask. Until the late 1960's or early '70's, the chimney supported a pedimented overmantel, Plate 29. Charles Brinsley Marlay was responsible for the addition of this overmantel to the

chimney - piece in Victorian times. This rather heavy ornate overmantel incorporated a copy of Raphails "la Sposcilizio" which greatly reflected the great masters style. It was sold by Beaumont in the late 1960's or early 70's. The chimney - piece itself still remains at Belvedere today.

In the 1961 illustration (plate 29) this pediment is of a whitish colour with the carved details including corinthian columns and poliagee picked our in colour. However, in the illustration from the late 60's, early 70's (Plate 36) the chapter hopes to show



(Plate 28) The Venetian window of the drawing room.



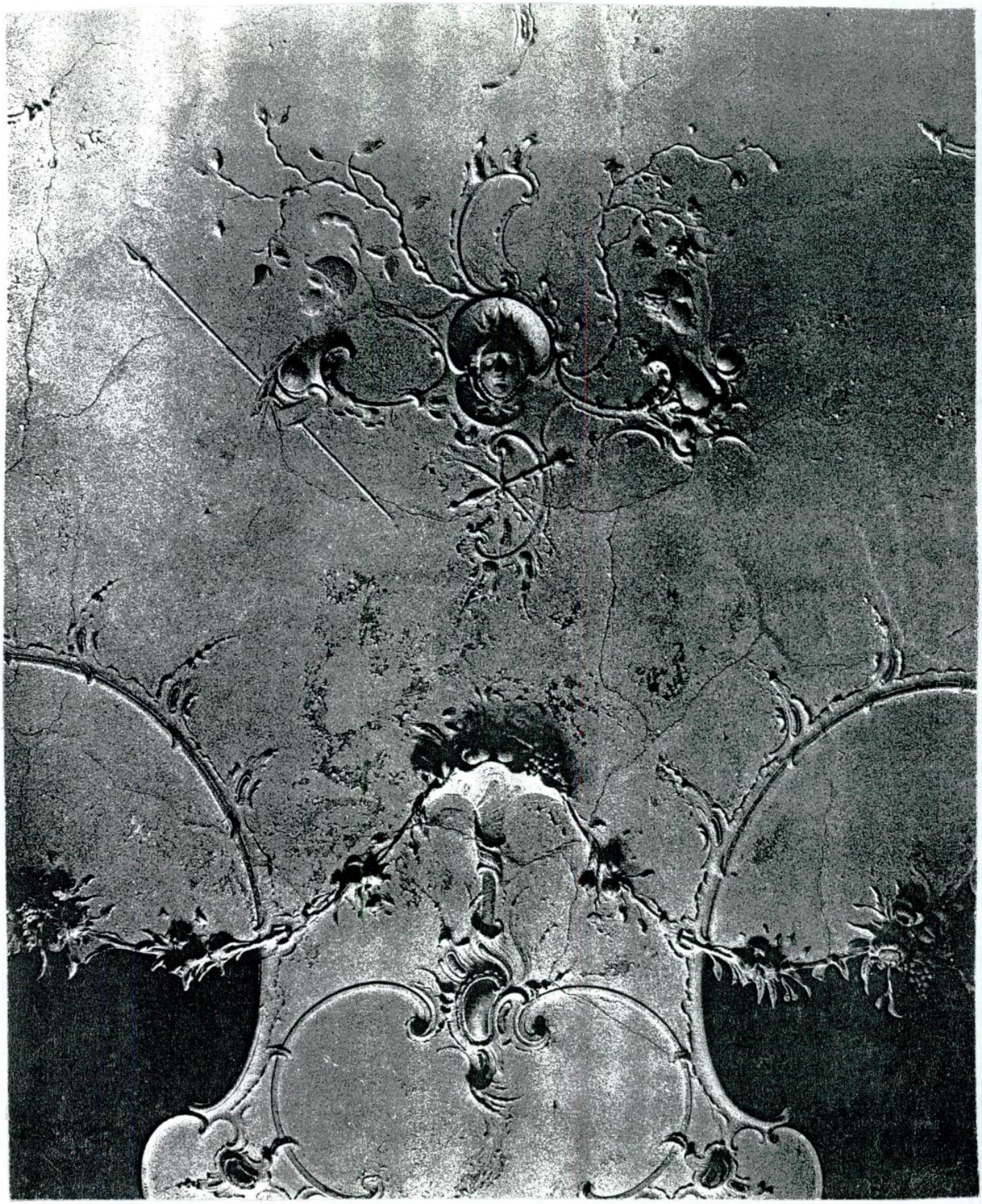
(Plate 29) Drawing room with Marlays pedimented ornate over-mantel incorporating a copy of Raphaels "La Sposcilizio". 1961.

CEILING

The plasterwork of the drawing room and dining room ceilings are more elaborate that the hall ceilings. The work in the drawing room, Plate 30, is rococo at its most delicate, with scrollwork that flickers and crackles like flames around the edge of the ceiling and stretches out a long tongue into the curved recess of the bow window, medallions of Juno, Venus and Minerva centre the drawing room ceiling (Mc Donnell 1991 Plate 13). In 1961, Mr Rex Beaumont painted the ceilings of both the drawing room and dining room. In the drawing room, he painted the outer band dark grey and left the whole centre panel white. There is no recorded reason for this paintwork. Maybe his love of constant change (which would explain the systematic rearranging of the furniture and objects d'art from room to room) or the influence of trends or perhaps it was just the blending of his own flamboyant taste and style with the individual strengths of the house.

THE DRAWING ROOM IN 1961

The earliest photographs of the drawing room documented here are from 1961, Plate 29 and Plate 31. According to the original photograph of Plate 31, the walls were painted a light blue, Plate 32 and the outer band of the ceiling was already painted dark grey. Blue silk damask curtains hung on both windows. There was a three - seater sofa and a pair of similar easy armchairs, all upholstered in an ochre mercerised weave. According to the Christies catalogue, the carpet was a Beige wilton strip carpet. In Plate 29, there is a caucasian rug woven on a red ground with a large hexagonal lozenge woven.



(Plate 30) Drawing room ceiling detail: Venus, Juno and Minerva.

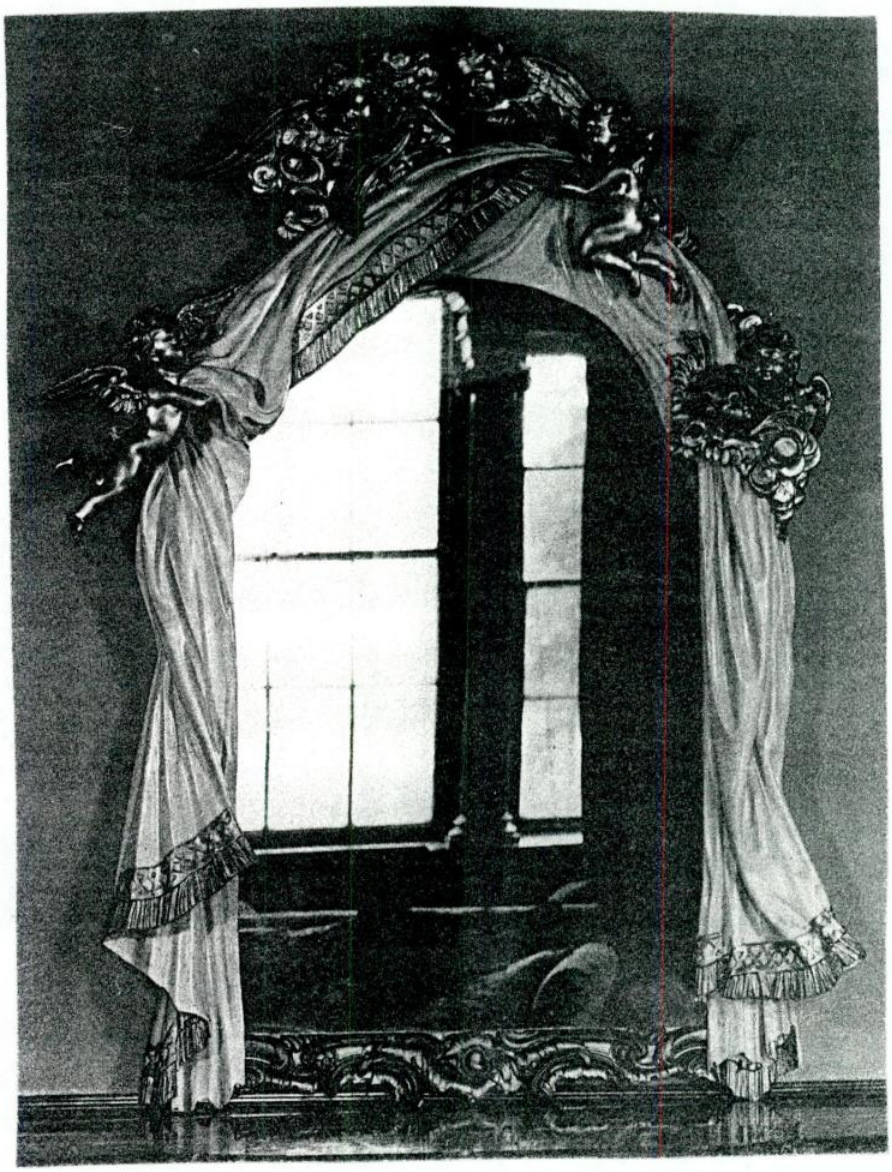
(Plate 31) The Drawing Room, 1961, with the georgian giltwood mirrors each side of the chimney-piece.

(Plate 32) The lightblue 'moonstone' colour, the walls of the 1961 drawing room were painted.

with stylised trees and foliage within a broad blue border, measuring 75in x 51ℓin in front of the fireplace. In plate 31, there is a different rug, it is a Hamadan rug woven on a pink ground with stylised trees within multiple borders which measured 101in x 418in. One difference between the two photographs is the addition of two mirrors, one each side of the chimney- piece of plate 31. There are of course differing small occasional tables and a number of the paintings to either side of the chimney-piece have been changed.

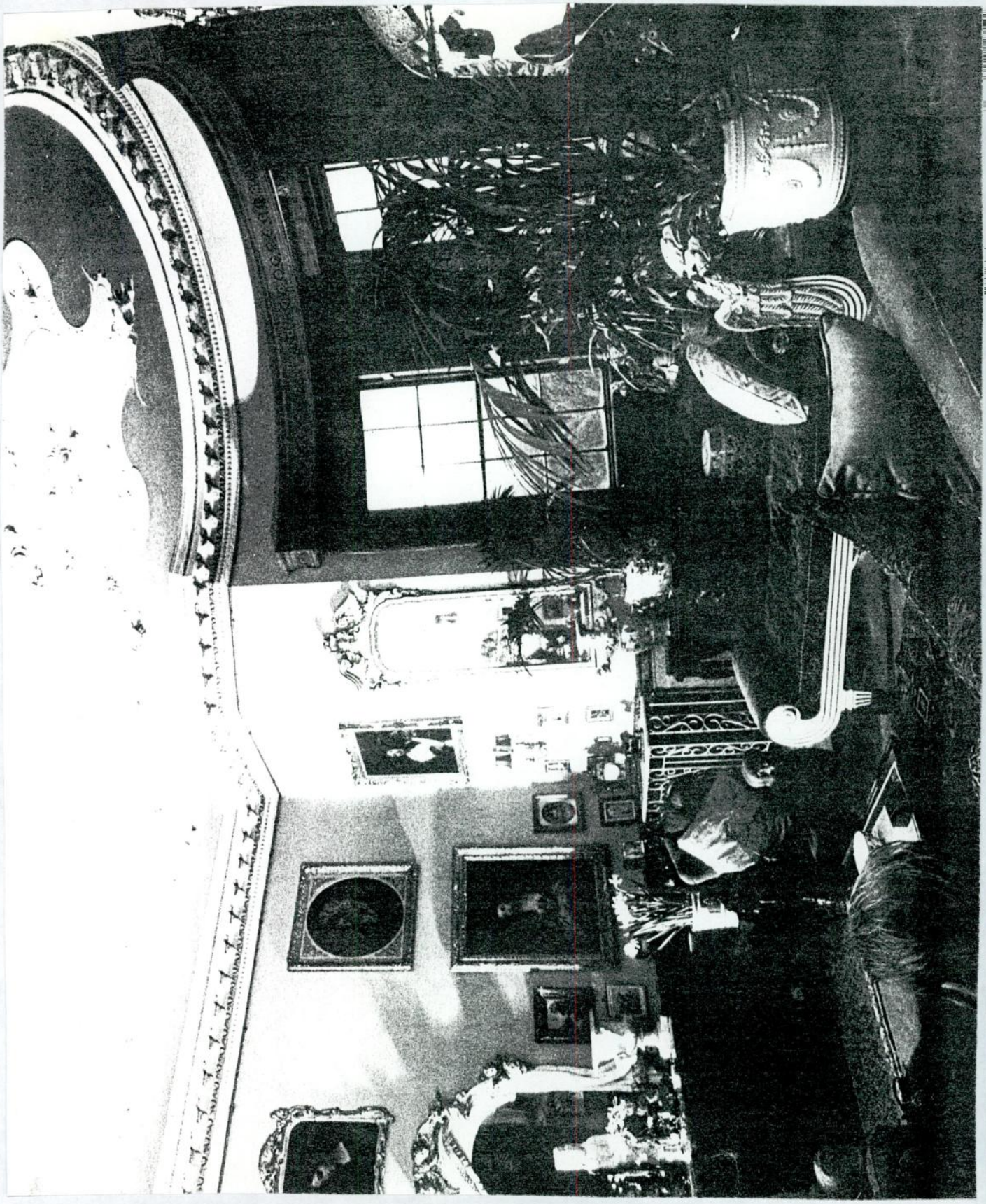
MIRRORS

There were many Rococo mirrors spread throughout the house. The most unusual of these, Plate 29 and Plate 33, in the drawing-room came from Colonel Bury's other house, Charleville Forest, Co. Offaly. According to Christie's catalogue, the mirror depicted to the right hand side of plate 29 was a 19th Century Austrian Giltwood and white painted aermantel mirror with arched rectangular plate in elaborate frame carved with drapery swags and winged putti, the base with Rococo c-scrolls.



(Plate 33) An Austrian giltwood and white painted overmantel from the drawing-room.

Also, in the drawing-room flanking the bow window, Plate 34, were two George II giltwood Pier glasses with rectangular bevelled plates in moulded frames carved with anthemions, the broken arched crestings centred by foliate cart? suspending hare-bells, the scrolled bases carved with foliage and centred by scallop shells. they measured 83in x 29in (Christies 1980 pg.17). There were two more mirrors which hung in the drawing room and can be seen, one each side of the chimney-piece of Plate 31. The



(Plate 34) The drawing-room with two George II Giltwood mirrors, the white-painted and gilded clay-bed and beside it is a Victorian Walnut Balloon back armchair.

mirror to the left of the illustration is an Irish Georgian giltwood mirror, with rectangular plate in a moulded frame carved with flower-heach and flanked at the sides with s-scrolls, suspending hare bells surmounted by an arched broken pediment centred by an urn of flowers and carved with rosettes. It measured 61in x 35in. The mirror to the right was one of a pair of Irish Georgian giltwood mirrors with rectangular plates in moulded frames pierced and carved with foliage and flower-heach terminated by scallop shells, the arched broken pediment is carved with rosettes and surmounted by flower sprays (Christies 1980 pg.26). All of these mirrors were later sold in 1980.

DRAWING ROOM FURNITURE

Under the mirror to the left of (Plate 31) stood a mahogany cylinder bureau of Louis XVI design, "with pierced bran gallery and rectangular top, the sliding cylinder enclosed a fitted interior with five brass-banded drawers below, on fluted tapering legs". It was a 19th Century piece stamped Bertram & Son., Dean St, Oxford Street, W, (Christies, 1980, pg. 30).

On the other side of the room was a beautiful french mahogany and marquetry commode by G. Durand after a design by Riesener, it can be seen in Plate 29 and Plate 35. It had "a moulded serpentine breche violette marsle top and ormolu frieze cast with entrelac and foliage" and it was fitted with three drawers between ormolu mounted angles cast with foliage suspending hare bells, fitted with two parquetry cupboard doors flanking a central marquetry panel inlaid with urns and a basket of flowers and fruit terminated by ormolu scrolling foliage and on scrolled feet, made 1834 and stamped (Christies 1980, pg.31).

(Plate 35) A French Mahogany and Marquetry commode by G. Durand, 1834, from the drawing-room.

As shown in Plate 29, it was used as a base for the 19th Century overmantel mirror. Two undocumented chinese vases and what appears to be a highly ornate clock are shown in ~~stood~~ on this photograph. There is also no record of this clock in the Christies Sale Catalogue of 1980. In Plate 34, an alabaster campana-shaped vase stood on the table. it had gadrooned everted rims, classical figures on the body and scrolled fluted handles ~~on fluted~~ ? and a square base.

On the mantle-piece of Plate 29, stood a pair of Louis XV ormolu mounted chinese polychrome lions enamelled in colours, one holding a cub, the other with it's foot on a ball, the ormolu bases cast with scrolling foliage on scroll feet, both 18th Century. Also on the mantlepiece were a pair of Japanese imari baluster vases painted in gilts and iron-red on a blue ground with birds, trees and foliage. In Plate 31, the Chinese lions have been moved on to the bureau and between them stands a 19th Century french bronze and ormolu mantel clock of Louis XVI design.

Also in the drawing-room were a pair of Italian white painted plaster gilt console tables with caved serpentine clamask-covered tops on naturalistic bases moulded with putti supporting foliate branches. One of the tables can be seen to the right of Plate 22, page 39, in the hall. A Regency white-anted and gilded day-bed, Plate 34, covered in persian style velvet upholstery, the headboard carved with s-scrolls centred by a lion mask between eagles heads on fluted supports and square legs terminating in scaly scrolled ormolu feet. Also seen in Plate 34, beside the day-bed is a Victorian walnut balloon back armchair with padded back, surmounted by a mask and upholstered seat on lion monopodia legs and paw feet.

Plate 36 was taken in the late 1960s or early 1970s, as the overmantel is gone and has been replaced with a painting from Charles Brinsley Marlays collection. It is a painting of the Duchess of Rutland[1] landscape by Richard Buchner. Also in Plate 36 hung Cornelius Van Cleeve's painting 'The Virgin and Child' and 'Portrait of Miss Gunning' by Sir Joshua Reynolds, both can be seen over the door. To the right of Plate 31 can be seen an oral portrait of the heads of Rt. Mon. Thomas Marlay's children. According to the information for the sale inscribed on the back: "Mr. Marlay's children, Bishop of Waterford, Col. Marlay, Mrs. Levinge, Mrs. Grattan" it was from the 19th Century English School (Christie 1980 pg.65). Above the cast-iron radiator cover in Plate 34, is a Hugh Douglas Hamilton, half length portrait of Catherine Maria, Countess of Charleville, dresses as a Bacchaute, holding a pair of symbols.

There were many still life paintings, including 'A still life of a Tazza of Peaches and Grapes' by Abraham Van

(Plate 36) The Drawing-room, late 1960s or early 1970s with Richard Buchner's painting of the Duchess of Rutland over the chimney-piece.

Beyeren, and 'Roses, Tulips and Iris' by Ian Brueghel the Elder, Plate 37. There were two painting by Barthel Bruyn, 'Portrait of a Nobleman' and 'Portrait of a Lady', Plates 38 and 39. There were many religious paintings. 'The Madonna of the Magnificat' by Botticelli, 'Christ and the woman of Samaria' by Lo Spagna and 'The Virgin adoring the Christ Child' by Raffaelino Del Garbo.

(Plate 37) 'Roses, Tulips and Iris' by Jan Brueghel the Elder.

(Plate 38) 'Portrait of a Nobleman' by Barthel Bruyn

(Plate 39) 'Portrait of a Lady' by Barthel Bruyn

Most of these paintings were displayed in the drawing-room. They contribute greatly to the appearance of the comfort in the room because of the interesting variety of paintings and the way they were arranged on the walls.

THE DRAWING-ROOM IN 1980

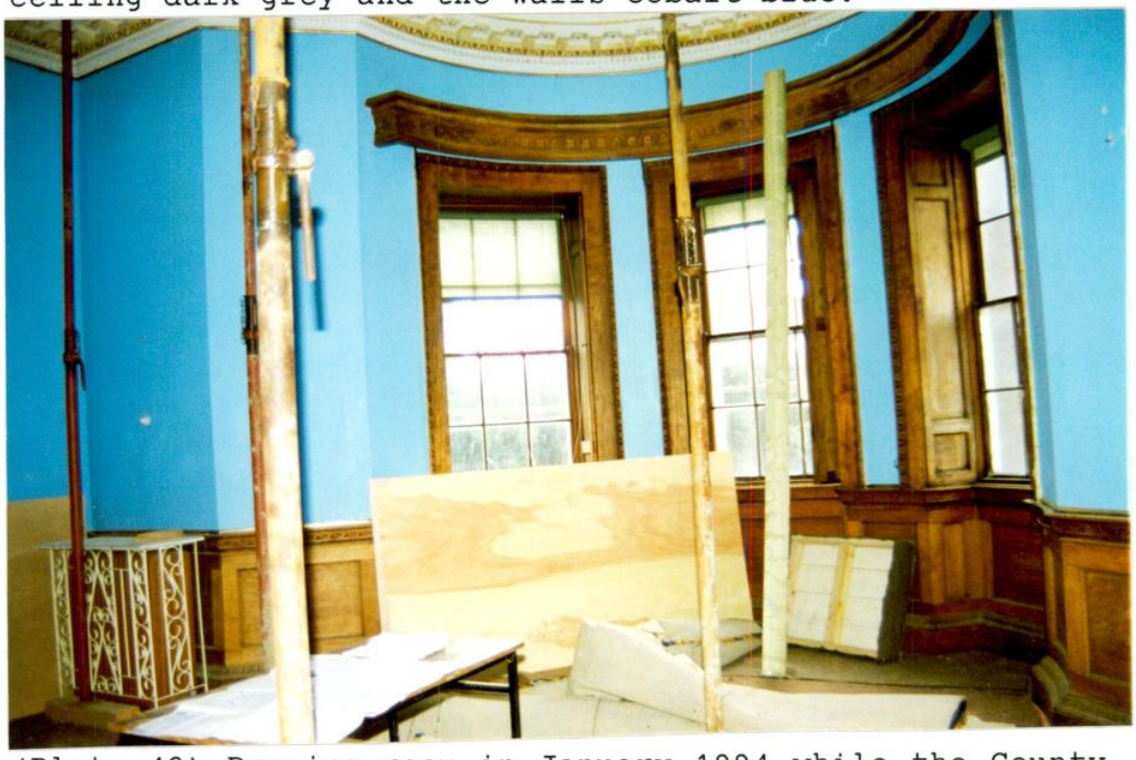
The only remaining documented photograph of the drawing-room is from after the 1980 Auction, Plate 40. It is a complete contrast from the plates from the 1960s. The room looks bare in comparison to Plate 34. The walls were painted a cobalt blue, see Plate 41, which made the room look smaller than it would have with the light blue walls of the 1960s and less furnishings. There were no curtains on the windows, just roller blinds. There was a modern beige velvet upholstered three-seater sofa and two matching armchairs and three-seater sofa and a matching foot-stool and a variety of floral and striped cushions. A modern coffee table, lamp table supporting a modern lamp and a pedestal table. The floor was covered with wall-to-wall modern carpet that Beaumont put in, in the late 1970s. The only items that are pre-auction were the white marble bust, the white baluster vase, the oval giltwood mirror and the Victorian walnut armchair.

THE DRAWING-ROOM IN 1993 AND 1994

The drawing room shown in plate 41 is a photograph which I took in January 1994 while the County Council were repairing the roof. The carpet had been removed and there was a lot of damage done to the walls. There were iron supports attached to wooden beams which ran across the plaster ceilings.

(Plate 40) The 1980 Drawing-room after the Christies Auction.

(Plate 41) Drawing-room in June 1993 with outer band of ceiling dark grey and the walls cobalt blue.



(Plate 42) Drawing-room in January 1994 while the County Council were repairing the roof on the house.
(Walls appear lighter due to camera's flash).

(Plate 43) The Drawing-room, January 1994 with Iron supports attached to wooden beams which run across the plaster ceiling.

(Plate 44) The Drawing-room, January, 1994 with the carpet taken up, the chimney-piece is covered up and damage done to the walls.

The drawing-room remained much the same from the 1960s (the earliest photographs of the room) up until 1980. In Bury's time the room was decorated with quite simple but elegant taste. Light blue painted walls which contrasted well with the heavy dark wainscoting. A plain beige carpet with colourful area rugs bringing a brightness to the room. He furnished it with elegant furniture which besides being elegant also appear practical. The original plaster and woodwork, antique fireplace and light filled bay window are all wonderful but what really gave this room heart and soul were it's qualities of comfort and warmth.

ENDNOTES FOR CHAPTER 3

1. The Duchess, Catherine Louisa Marlay, was the only daughter of Charles Brinsley Marlay of Belvedere.

CHAPTER 4: THE DINING ROOM

Belvedere's dining room which measured according to the architectural archives report 24' x 18', excluding the bow window is identical in size and plan to the drawing room. The joinery is all executed in oak, like that in the other ground floor rooms and also consists of a panelled dado, enriched with a carved chair-rail and skirting board. The venetian window, identical to that in the drawing-room Plate 28, page 47 is decorated with fluted roman ionic columns and pilasters. The upper central part of the venetian window was filled in with a semi-circular panel, at sometime during this century, perhaps, to make it easier to curtain. The present curtain rail was formerly the chair-rail of one of the rooms used to form the present hall (Architectural Archives Report, 1991, page 9). The chimney-piece which is original Plate 45 is rather fine carved in oak with rococo like foliage and scrolls, with an egg and dart enriched moulding in marble. It supported a rococo overmantel incorporating a painting of a dog by F. Snyders Plate 46, until it was sold in 1980. An unusual feature of the dining room and drawing room is the canted corners to the bow projections.

CEILING

The plasterwork on the dining room ceiling is a little heavier and bolder than the drawing room ceiling. There is an outer ring of scrollwork and an inner ring of clusters of fruit and flowers (one cluster of fruit in a bowl supported on the back of a flying dragon). But the innermost section of the ceiling is without elaborate ornament, being left as a clear field across which a knot of four puffing cherubs blow knots of scudding clouds Plate 47. In 1961 Mr. Rex Beaumont painted the fruit,

Plate 45 The oak dining room chimney place

Plate 46 Painting by F Snyders which was incorporated into the dining room overmantel.

Plate 47 Dining room ceiling

flowers and cherubs in natural colours and picked out the clouds and ornament white against a darker background.

THE DINING ROOM IN 1961

In 1961 the earliest photograph of the dining room, as shown in Plate 48, the walls appear to be painted in a mid-tone colour. The floor is covered with a large plain rug with a double border and geometric design at the corners and centre. According to the Christies catalogue the room is furnished with a rectangular round-ended mahogany dining table, a set of six George III mahogany dining chairs with arched rectangular backs carved with hare-bells and with pierced vertical vase-shaped splats. The upholstered seats covered in "William Morris" pattern cotton chintz, on square tapering fluted legs. There was also a set of fair George III mahogany dining chairs with foliate carved scrolled top rails and pierced and interlaced vase-shaped splats, the upholstered seats also covered in William Morris pattern chintz, on square chamfered legs and stretchers. The curtains and the pelmet over the venetian window may be the same William Morris design as that on the chairs.

There was an Irish Georgian mahogany sideboard with ledge back, the bow-fronted top inlaid with chequered lines and fitted with four drawers inlaid with quartered medallions divided by oval paternal, with two cupboard doors below inlaid with shell medallions, on square tapering legs. The room was decorated with plats mounted over the venetian window, paintings and the second mirror of the pair of Irish Georgian giltwood mirrors, the other one can be seen in the drawing room Plate 31, page 51 to the right of the chimney-piece. Col. Bury formed a superb collection of silver, some of which can be seen in Plate 48. His collection included three Charles II porringers.

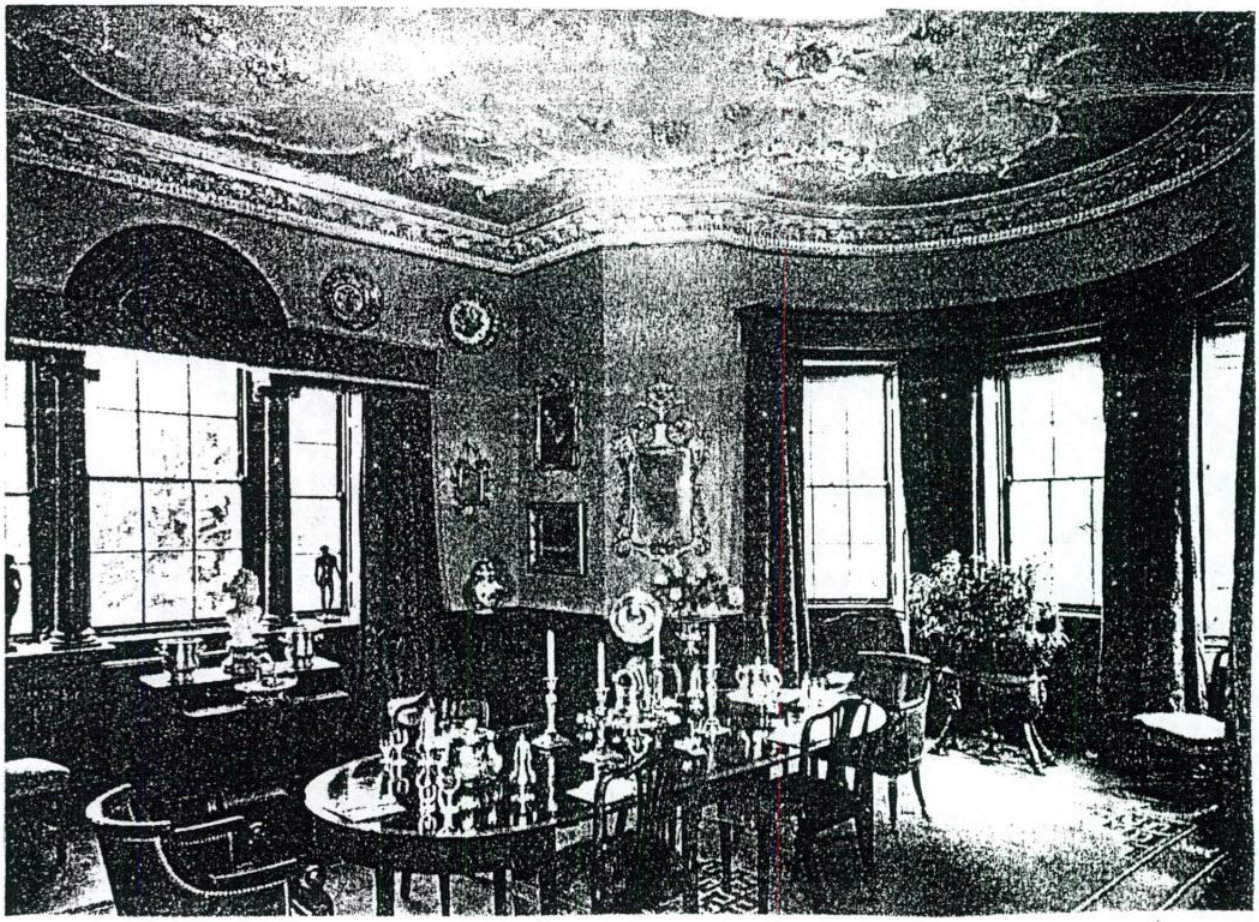


Plate 48 The 1961 Dining Room

All his silver was sold in a Christies auction in December 1964, a year after Bury died.

THE DINING ROOM IN THE LATE 60's, 70's

The photograph shown in Plate 49 was taken in the late 1960's or 1970's and appears much plainer than the photograph in Plate 48. There is less furniture, paintings and objects d'art. The walls appear paler and may be the grey-white that they are today. According to the Christies catalogue the floor is covered with a blue matting almost covered by a large persian design rug woven on a blue ground with foliage within a cream coloured border. It measured 17ft x 11ft. Mushroom coloured silk curtains replaced the patterned curtains in Plate 48. The dining table is replaced by a mahogany breakfast table with a circular top on reeded supports and scrolled legs. All of the George III mahogany dining chairs still remained. In the bow projection is a mahogany winetable with a circular top on turned stem and tripod base. There is a giltwood mirror with rectangular plate in a moulded frame. Vases of flowers on the tables liven up this room but were probably arranged specially for the photo.

Both the dining room of 1961 Plate 48 and that of the late 60's or early 70's Plate 49 were quite tastefully furnished and decorated. Rex Beaumont entertained a lot in the 1960's and 1970's and often had dinner parties for his friends. The dining room showed a lot more restraint than the other rooms he had decorated, for example, he kept the walls a simple grey-white colour. Both rooms were decorated with a simple elegance and neither one really suggests a bachelor existence.

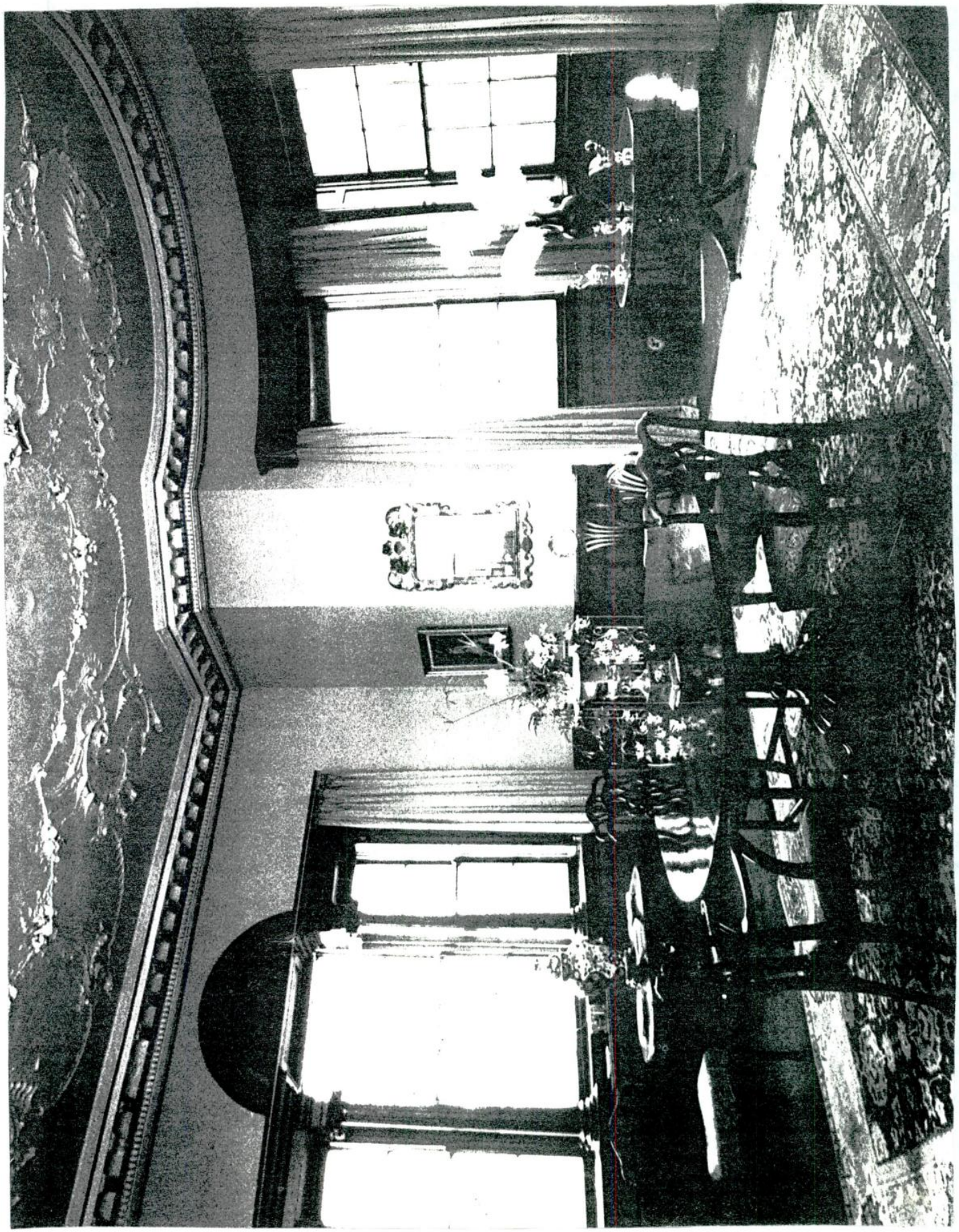


Plate 49 Late 1960s or early '70s dining room

THE DINING ROOM IN 1980

The photograph Plate 50 was taken in 1980 after the Christies auction. Like the 1980 photograph of the drawing room, the room looks totally different from that in Plate 48. It is of course taken from a different view point. All the antique furniture, paintings and objects d'art are gone. A modern mahogany veneer dining table, set of chairs, sideboard, round serving table and display cabinet have been introduced but the first thing that stands out in comparison to the illustration in Plate 48 is the intensive, loud carpet pattern, which is dark blue with bands of large gold stylised leaves as the basis for the pattern, see Plate 51.

The room is sparsely decorated. There are no paintings or mirrors on the walls. There is a silver candlestick holder and a covered compote on the tables. Two stuffed pea-hens on the mantle-piece and what appears to be a circular tray. There is a vase with peacock feathers and two plates on stands on the cast iron radiator cover and some ceramics in the dresser. There appears to be a light-weight curtain draped the full length of the wall inside the dining room door. There is no window on that wall so the purpose of the length of fabric is a mystery, unless it is chinese hand-painted silk.

THE DINING ROOM IN 1993 AND 1994

In June 1993 it was evident, the dining room had been neglected, the modern furniture still remained but the council had removed the few remaining objects that had decorated the room in 1980 and there were damp patches on the dining room ceiling. Plates 51 and 52.

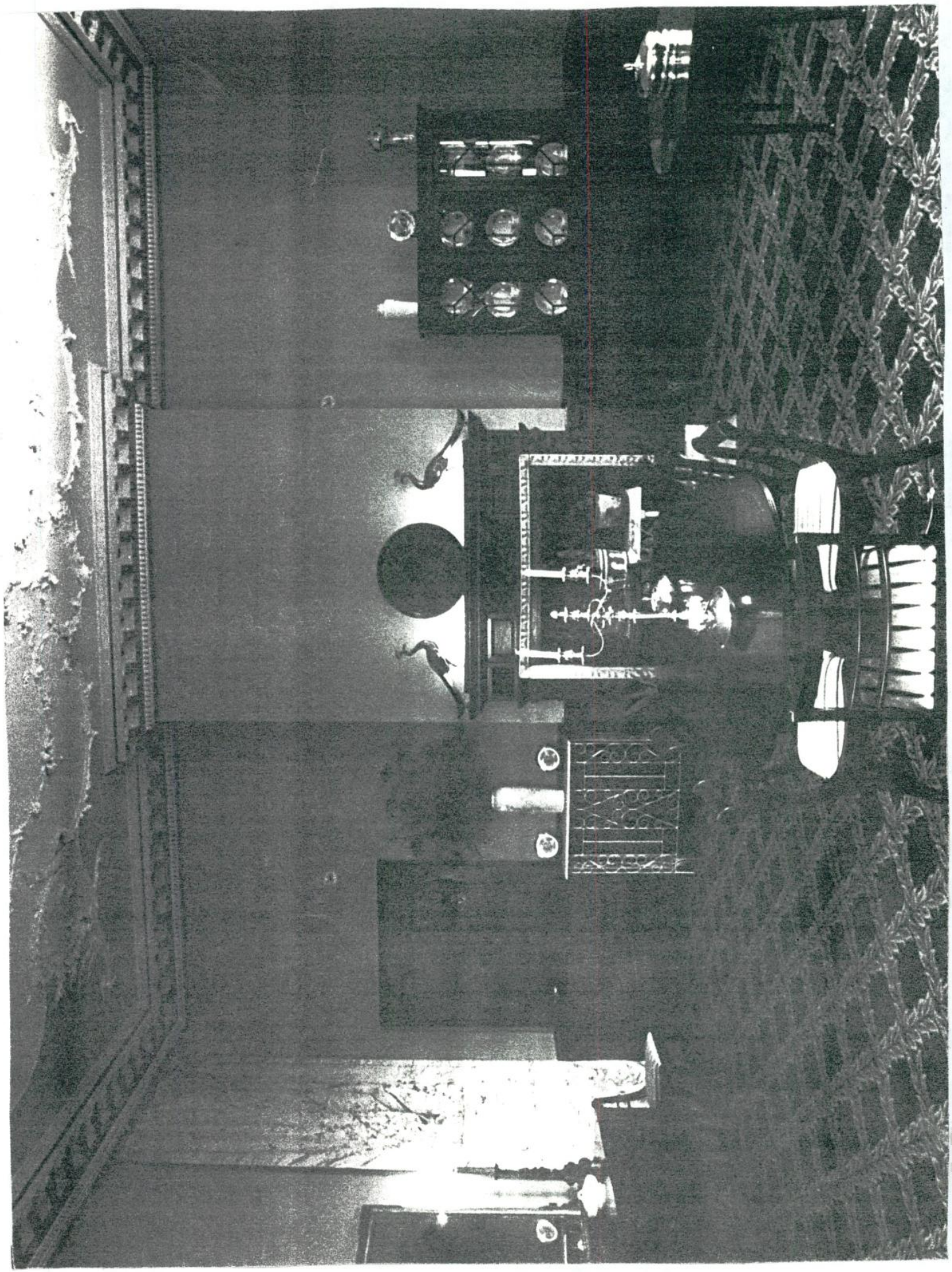


Plate 50 The 1980 dining room

The illustration in Plates 53 and 54 were all taken in January 1994. The room was filled with scaffolding as with the drawing room, iron posts were erected to wooden beams which ran across the plasterwork ceilings. There were rolls of carpets from the bedrooms and the dining room thrown about the floor. The wainscoting looked dull and was covered with debris.

Plate 51 The dining room in June 1993

Plate 52 Damp patches on the dining room ceiling, June 1993

Plate 53 Dining room, January 1994

Plate 54 Wainscoting covered in debris in dining room, January 1994

CHAPTER 5: THE BEDROOMS

On the first floor, there are four bedrooms, two larger bedrooms above the drawing room and dining room and two smaller ones between them. The east bedroom above the drawing room has, like the other bedrooms, a simple moulded Doric cornice above which rises the cove of the ceiling. The flat of the ceiling is framed by a simple moulding. The door to the landing has eight panels and a shouldered architrave. The tripartite window to the front of the house is a 19th century addition, carried out for Charles Brinsley Marlay, already referred to in Chapter 1. The carved garlands of flowers, which decorate the divisions of the windows, are probably 18th century, saved from the earlier windows. The other alteration to this room was the partitioning off of the bow projection to form a dressing room. This was probably carried out in the late 18th or early 19th century. The main feature of the room is the 18th century carved painted pine chimney-piece of outstanding quality Plate 55. The attractive engraved brass fiddle shaped grate is a late 18th century addition.

THE EAST BEDROOM 1960

The East Bedroom shows a mixture of modern furniture and antiques. It is not decorated as the other rooms of 1960. The illustration shown in Plate 56, dates from 1960. The bedroom was painted an unusual mix of colours, selected by Mr. Rex Beaumont, the colours are still there today. The walls and ceiling were painted cadmium yellow. The moulded cornice, and the moulding which frames the ceiling were painted bright blue as was the skirting board.

The cove was painted a lighter alpine blue, this gave the effect of a lower ceiling. The doors were painted white.

Plate 55 East bedroom chimney piece

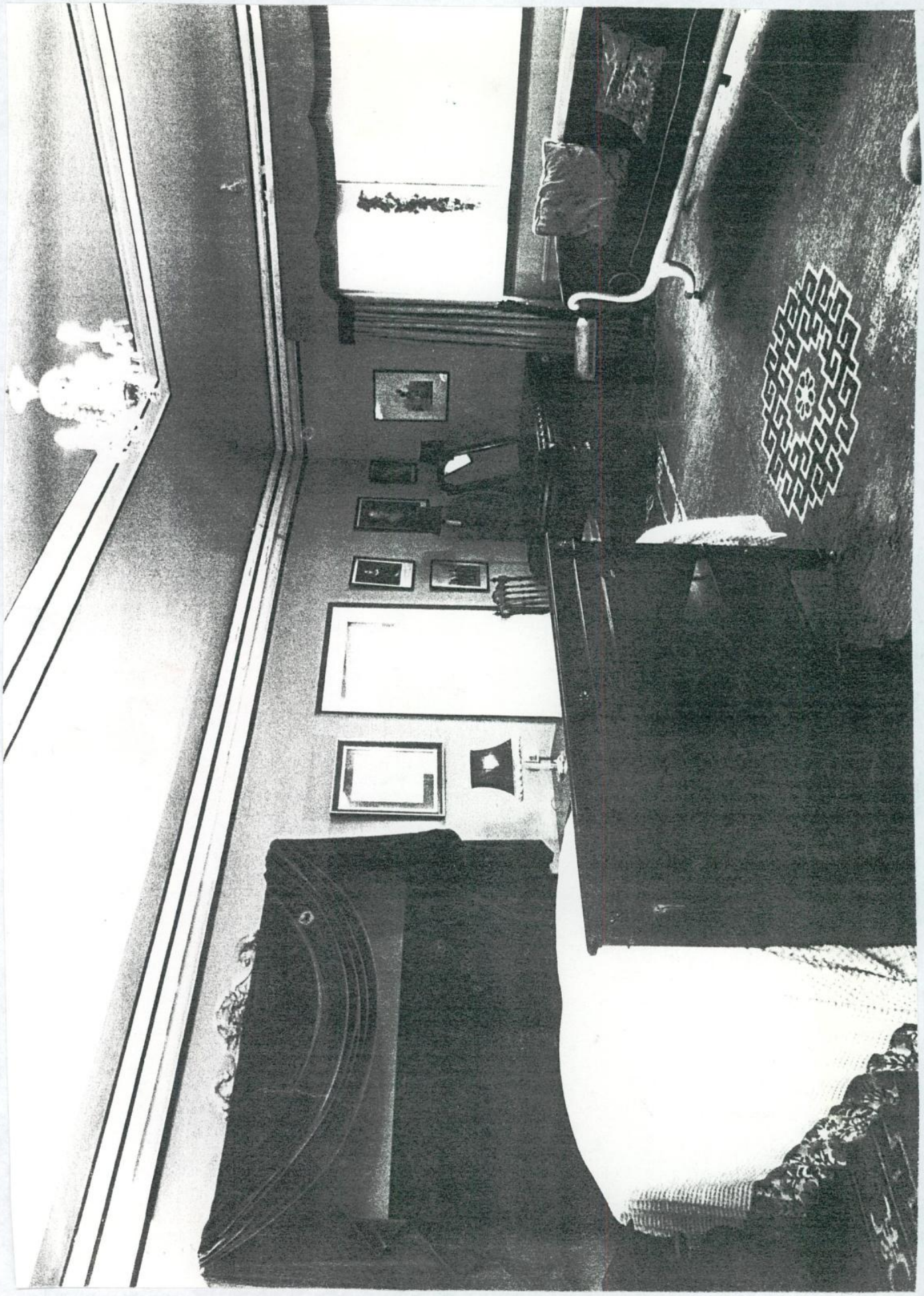


Plate 56 The East Bedroom, 1960

This colour combination can be seen in Plates 60 - 62. The curtains and pelmet were a gold heavy satin damask with brown and gold trim on the pelmet. A similar carpet as the one in the dining room in 1961 as shown in Plate 48, page 68 was covering the floor. The bed was a double mahogany bed with panelled head and foot board carved with Greek key ornament and paterae, it had a green velvet canopy. The bed had a floral printed valance and a white bed spread. A regency white-painted settee with splayed legs stood in front of the Venetian window, upholstered in red velvet.

In the corner was a Victorian mahogany dressing table, which shows an oak dressing table mirror with arched rectangular plate in a moulded frame. Also on the dressing table were a pair of mahogany candlesticks with urn-shaped nozzles on baluster stems and circular basis. A pair of mahogany bedside tables with rectangular tops on turned legs, stood one each side of the bed, each one had a modern lamp on it. There was also a set of four Victorian ebony dining chairs with scrolled top rails and baluster spindle backs with upholstered seats and turned legs. The room was lit by a cut-glass chandelier with multi-baluster stem supporting five scrolled candle branches joined by swags of bead drops. The walls were decorated with framed prints.

THE EAST BEDROOM 1961

Plate 57 dates from 1961 and shows the opposite side of the east bedroom. The only change appears to be the floor covering, instead of the plain carpet with the central geometric design, is a Persian carpet woven on an ivory ground with stylised trees and flowers within red and blue multiple borders. Over the chimney-piece is an elaborate regency giltwood overmantel mirror with divided

Plate 57 The East Bedroom, 1961

Plate 58

18th Century Dutch armoire

rectangular plate in a moulded frame carved with c-scrolls and foliage supporting a broken pediment carved with rosettes and ho-ho birds. Another giltwood mirror hangs inside the door. This one is an Irish Georgian giltwood mirror in a moulded frame carved with scrolling foliage and shells. Behind the door is an oak cabinet-on-stand with a moulded cornice, two cupboard doors inlaid with floral designs on turned legs. Also in the east bedroom, but not shown in Plate 57 was a fine 18th century Dutch marquetry armoire which was described in Christies catalogue as having a shaped moulded cornice centred by a carved cartouche fitted with two panelled cupboard doors inlaid with typical designs endorsing shelves and three small drawers above two short and two long drawers, on hairy claw feet, Plate 58. Also shown in Plate 57 were two satin covered armchairs.

The east bedroom in the 1960's reflected the decorative style of the rest of the house at that time. It was furnished with an eclectic mix of furnishings and objets d'art. Mr. Beaumont painted the room in 1960 and was probably influenced by the 60's philosophy to not be afraid to give expression to your own taste in making your selections, ~~as it's your home~~. The only hesitation I would have in saying the room was decorated in good taste would be the colour scheme of the walls and ceiling, which do not meet with my taste, but maybe because my taste in colour schemes comes from todays idea of taste and fashion.

THE EAST BEDROOM AFTER 1980

The last photograph from the Architectural Archives collection of the east bedroom Plate 59 is from after the 1980 auction. All the furniture that was in the room in the 60's had gone, the only thing that remained of that

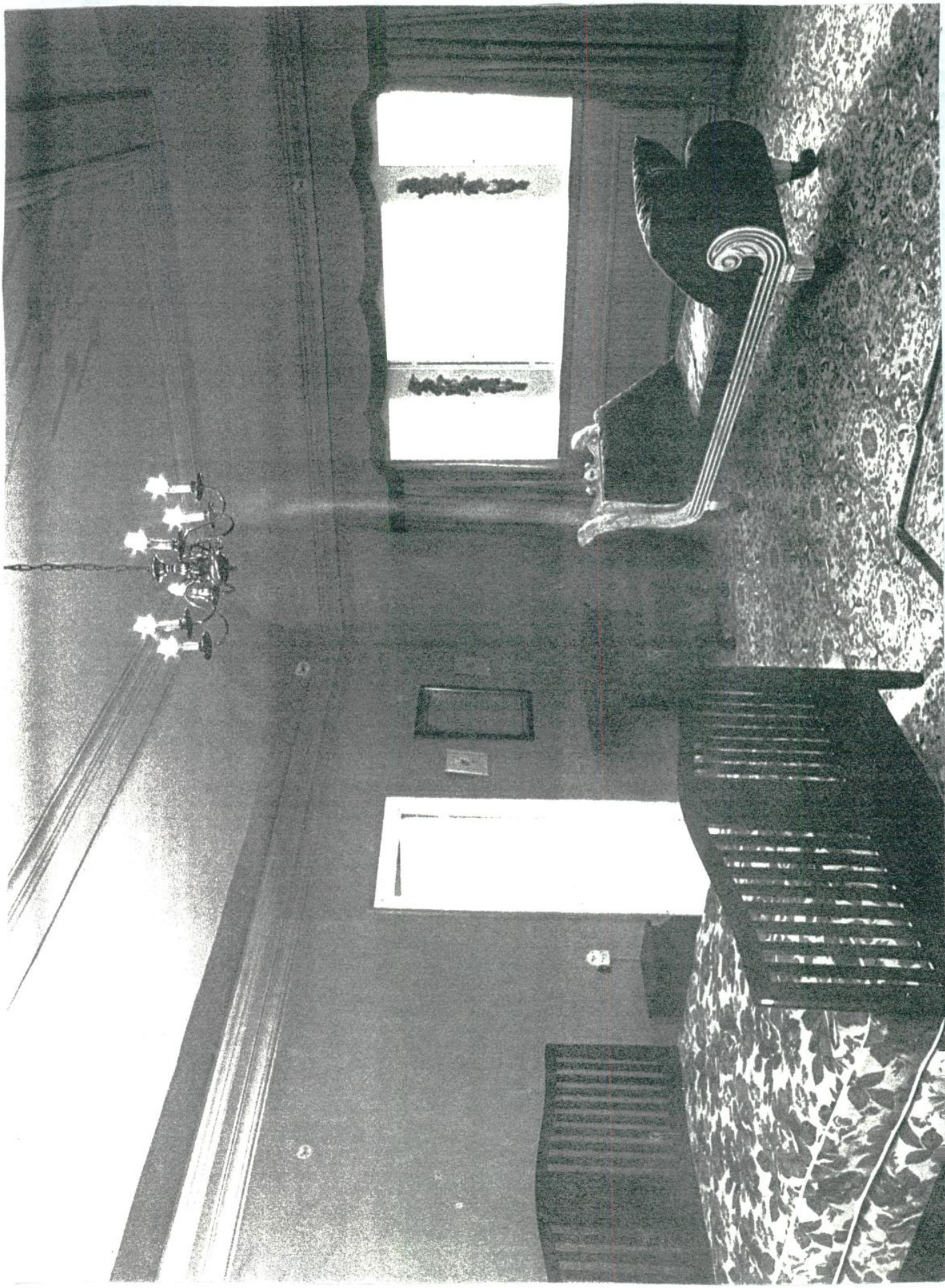


Plate 59 The East bedroom after 1980

time were the curtains and pelmet. The carpet had been changed to a beige and cream stylised floral pattern, see also Plate 60. The cut-glass chandelier has been replaced by a brass one. There is a regency white-painted and gilded day-bed similar to the one in the drawing room of Plate 34. There is a modern bed-side table, dressing table and stool and double bed also in room.

THE EAST BEDROOM 1993 AND 1994

Plate 60 is a photograph taken in June 1993. The room appears the same as that in Plate 59 except for a mahogany veneered modern wardrobe, a brown and pink floral settee, and the gold silk damask curtains and pelmet are thrown on the floor.

Plates 61 and 62 were taken in January while the roof repair was going on. The council workers have striped away the plaster walls and the coving. The venetian window frame has also been removed for a complete overhaul.

The west bedroom above the dining room is of identical plan and dimensions to the east bedroom. The same alterations were also made, the squaring off of the semi-circular window and the creation of a dressing room in the bow projection. The ceiling cornice and cove are identical to those in the east bedroom as are the door and architrave. The chimney-piece Plate 63 is white-painted pine and similar to that in the east bedroom. It has blue and white Dutch tiles surrounding the fireplace opening.

THE WEST BEDROOM 1961

The room in 1961, Plate 64, was painted in the same colours as the east bedroom. The walls were painted the same cadmium yellow but the ceiling, coving, skirting

Plate 60 The East bedroom, June 1994

Plate 61 The East bedroom, January 1994

Plate 62 East bedroom coving, January 1994

board and doors were painted white. The outer rims of the moulded cornice and the simpler moulding which framed the ceiling were painted the same Alpine blue as the cove of the east bedroom. Similar furnishings to the east bedroom include the curtains and pelmet in the gold heavy satin damask. The carpet was a modern floral broadroom carpet.

The furniture consisted of twin beds with white padded headboards with darker trim. The same white rococo table with turned legs as was in the hall. Plate 22, page 39 is seen here in Plate 64 as a dressing table. On it is a Victorian mahogany toilet mirror with oval swing plate on scrolled supports and moulded serpentine base filled with two hinged compartments. In front of the window is a regency ebonised and gilded day-bed with fluted frame and turned legs upholstered in gold silk damask like the curtains. In front of the day-bed is a white-painted and upholstered square stool. There is also a mahogany bed side table and three mahogany dining chairs with upholstered seats. The room was lit by a brass chandelier with five candle branches and cut-glass bead drops, and also by a modern table lamp which was on the bedside table.

In Plate 63 there is a Regency giltwood overmantel with a rectangular divided plate in a moulded frame with ball encrusted cornice applied with ram's masks suspending swags of fruit and flanked by corinthian columns. In front of the chimney-piece is a steel serpentine fender. To the left of the chimney-piece is a mahogany book-case with a desk-flap and to the right, but unfortunately not in Plate 63, is a William IV mahogany wardrobe with two panelled cupboard doors flanked by turned pillars and with a single long drawer below, on a moulded base. The walls of the west bedroom were decorated with mounted decorative

Plate 63 The West bedroom chimney piece

plates and paintings, one painting which can just be seen between the twin beds in Plate 64 is an oval quarter length portrait of Charles Brinsley Marlay as a child, from the 19th century English school. Inscribed on the back was "Charles Brinsley Marlay aged three years and three months, June 1832". There were many vases including a pair of Japanese imari baluster vases and covers with birds and foliage on a white ground.

THE WEST BEDROOM 1980

The remaining photograph from the Architectural Archives collection of the west bedroom Plate 65 is from 1980 after the July auction. All the signs of wealth and comfort are gone with the antique furniture, curtains and paintings. The twin beds are the only pieces that remain from the earlier photographs. The floor is covered with a dark swirling patterned modern carpet. The satin damask curtains have been replaced with a pair of floral patterned cotton curtains. There is a modern mahogany chest of drawers and bed side table with a hideous lamp. A modern black leather swivel armchair and a television in the room. The only wall decoration is a modern landscape picture.

THE WEST BEDROOM 1993 AND 1994

Plate 66 was taken in June 1993, like all the other rooms it had been neglected. The coved panel and cornice had fallen in and the curved beams were exposed. Plates 67 and 68 were taken in January of this year. Plate 67 shows the destruction that has been done to the west bedroom. Most of the coving and front wall plaster have been striped away. Plate 68 is the bathroom off the west bedroom, which was made by partitioning off the bow projection in the late 18th or early 19th century. It was painted the same colours as the bedroom and today has been

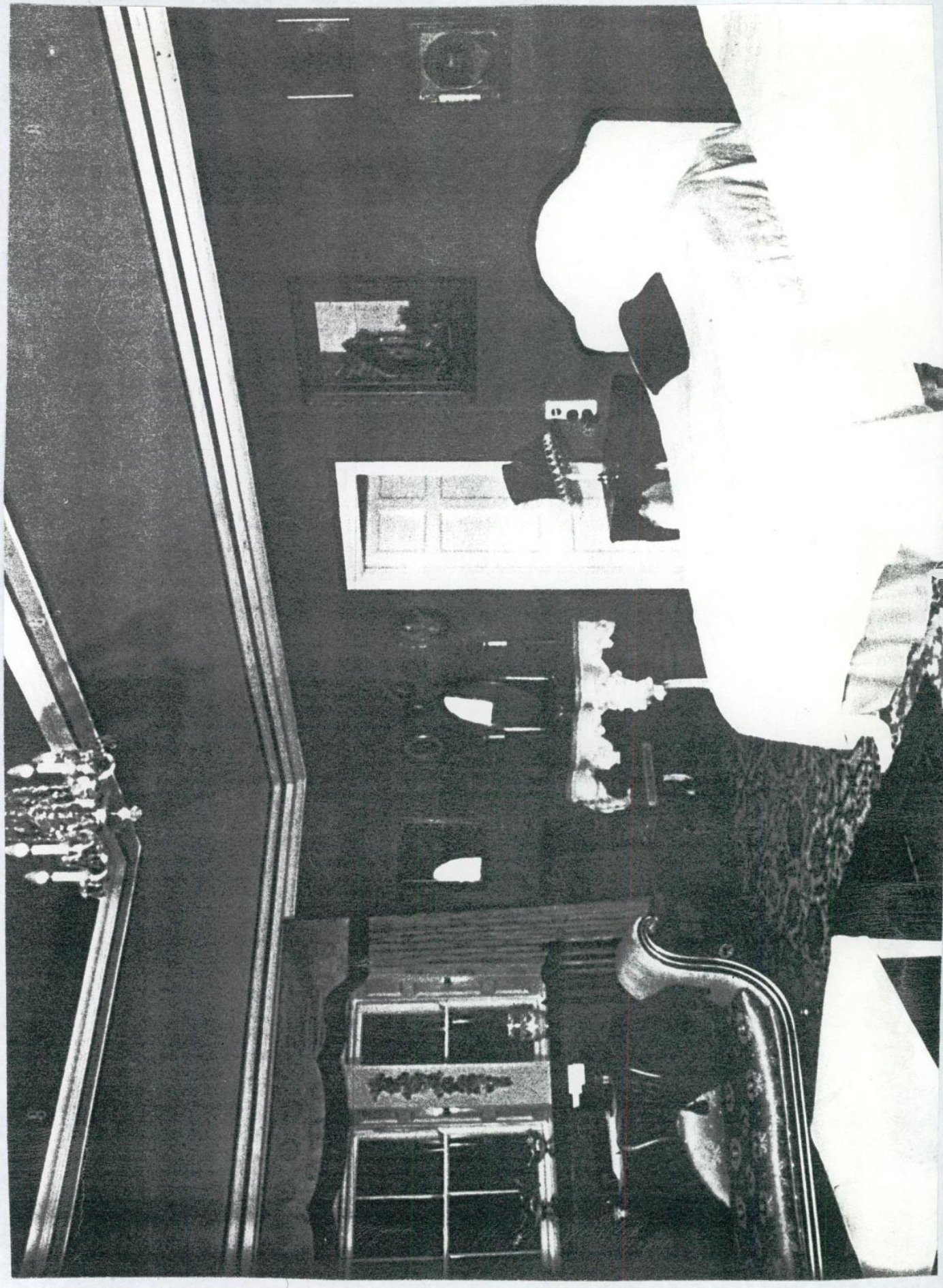


Plate 64 West bedroom, 1961

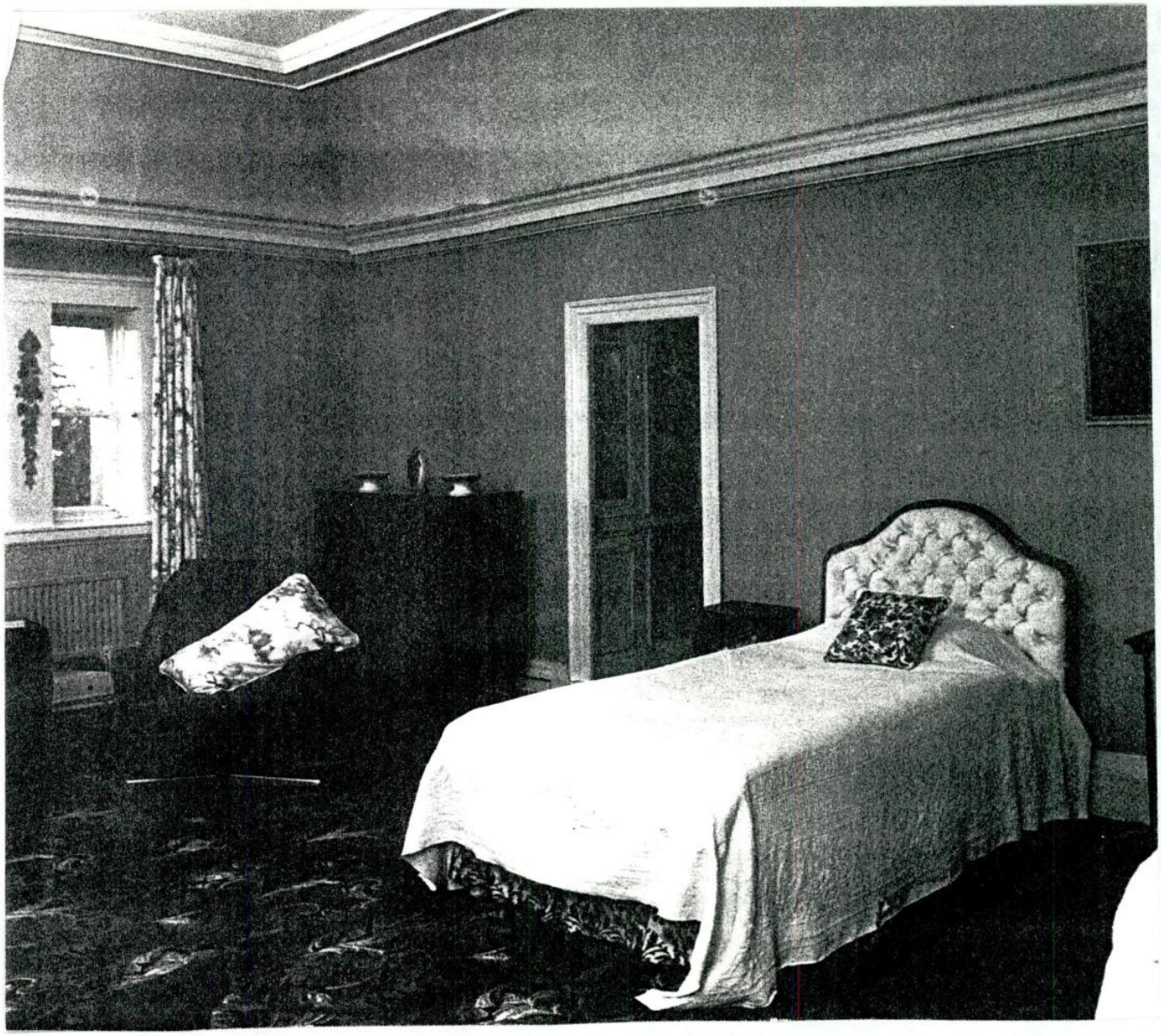


Plate 65 West bedroom, 1980

Plate 66 The West bedroom, June 1993

Plate 67 The West bedroom, January 1994

Plate 68 The West bedroom dressing room, January 1994

taken apart like the rest of the house in the councils efforts to repair the roof.

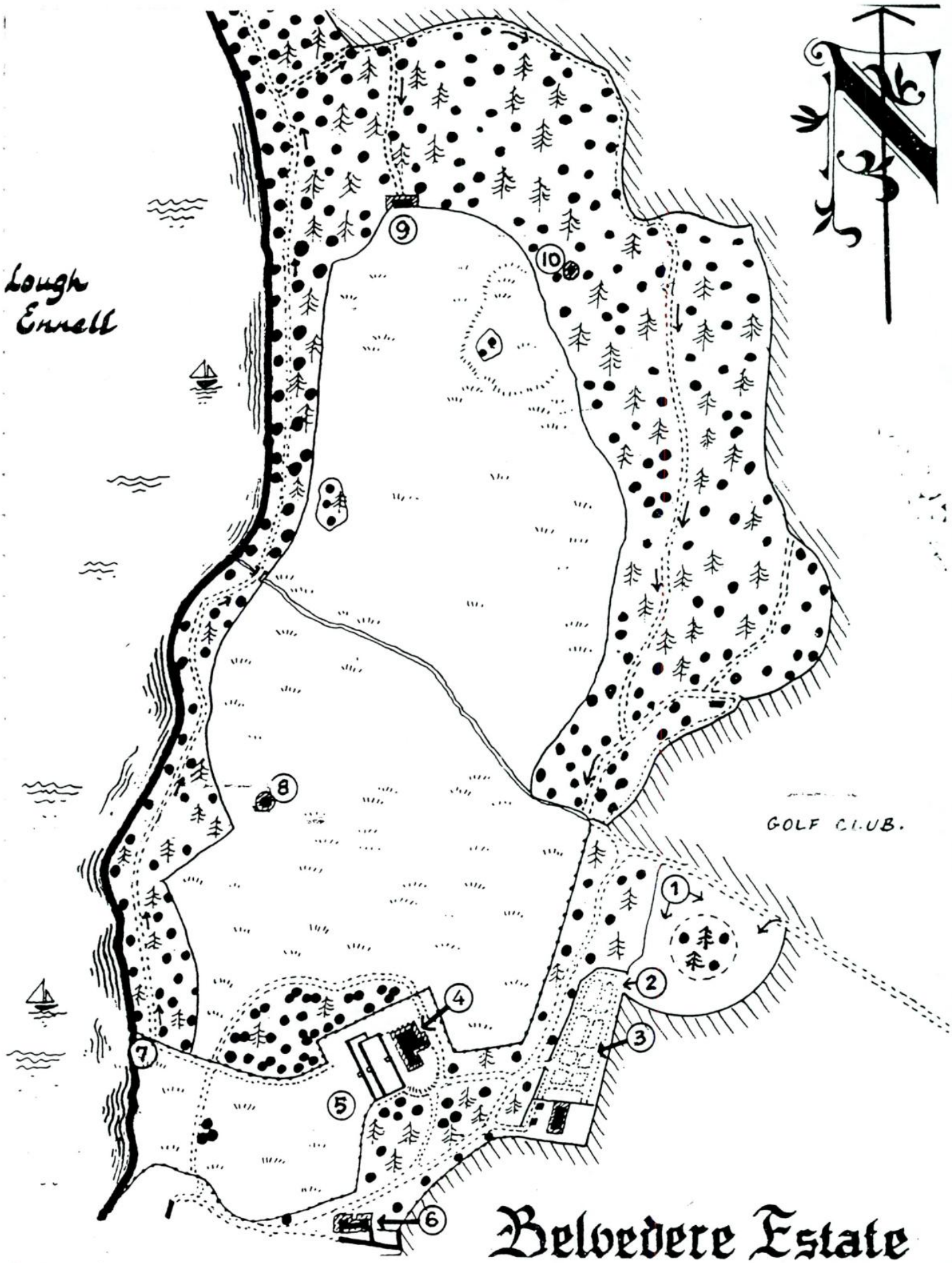
CHAPTER 6: BELVEDERE'S FUTURE.

Westmeath County Council bought Belvedere Estate from Mr. Rex Beaumount in late 1981, as Beaumont was still living in the house as part of the sale agreement, the council were confined to maintaining the grounds.
The gardens including the walled-garden were very overgrown at the time of acquisition by the council. By 1984 considerable clearing and regular maintenance had been carried out by the council staff, with the result that the garden has been restored to its former brilliance - works have also been undertaken on the woodlands and parklands with the removal of many of the over-mature, dead trees.

By 1988, when Mr. Rex Beaumont died, the council had built a carpark and walks throughout the grounds. They also developed the lake shore area including a walkway through the woodlands Plate 69 and major renovations were carried out on the stables. But Belvedere House remained untouched until November 1993 when the County Council received an EEC grant of £150,000 to repair the leaking roof. They hope to have the repairs completed in February 1994. As yet, the Council have not published any plans for the house and were not forthcoming with any information.

ENTHUSIASM FOR OLD HOUSE RESTORATION.

Since the early days of this century, there has been an growth in enthusiasm for old country houses. Out of concern for repair, restoration and furnishing of manor houses and castles, and the rediscovery of the 18th century, have led to concepts of country house preservation. Interior decoration has played a



Belvedere Estate

1. CARPARK
2. ENTRANCE TO WALLED GARDEN
3. WALLED GARDEN
4. HOUSE
5. TERRACES
6. JEALOUS WALL, STABLES & CLOCK TOWER
7. ENTRANCE TO WOODLAND WALK
8. GAZEBO
9. GOTHIC ARCH
10. ICEHOUSE

Plate 69 Belvedere estate trail guide

significant role in this development, because while the origin of interior decoration goes back to the collaboration of architects and upholsterers in the late 17th and 18th centuries, it is a prevalent occupation and interest of the present century. Today, interior decoration is based on the acceptance of the situation that a family rarely lives in a house for even one complete generation. The influence of interior decoration has been closely related to the growth of American influence on the area of interior design and also of its own acceptability and the growth of antique dealing as occupations for artistic and educated people.

The preservation movement has been an essentially middle-class one and that is of significance in the growth of Britain's national trust. The trust has achieved an alliance between owners of country houses, most of whom have inherited their property, and people of different backgrounds and enthusiasms prepared to work for the preservation of landscape, buildings and works of art: and together they have won widespread public support for their aims as well as the goodwill of Government like many English institutions the trust has sought aristocratic support also.

Ireland's enthusiasm for country houses has had a long history and during the last century this enthusiasm has increased dramatically. So perhaps not surprisingly its popularity has had a marked influence on tastes in interior decoration. In the last 25 to 30 years the so-called "country house style" has developed from being one fashionable among a small circle of people to a popular one in decoration. In the Irish Republic there is also a National Trust (An Taisce) founded in 1948, which has a strong membership and branches throughout the country but

it has not yet undertaken specific restoration projects on buildings nor does it have any in its care so far. However, they published a seminal report on the future of historic houses, gardens and collections in the Republic of Ireland. Successive governments and collections in the Republic of Ireland. Successive governments have responded to its advice: tax concessive governments have responded to heritage properties, legislation in finance acts which offset the costs of repairs for houses of cultural and historical value against tax liabilities and afforded relief from capital taxes in cases where the public had reasonable access to such properties.

The Irish Georgian Society was formed in 1958 by Mr. Desmond Guinness, to work for the preservation of Ireland's architectural heritage, with particular reference to the georgian period. It carries out rescue and repair work and has helped to save many buildings that were abandoned to the mercy of wind and weather. Its main achievement has been the saving of Castletown House, Co. Kildare, a magnificent Palladian house, which for 16 years served as the society's headquarters and to which members enjoy free access. Castletown became the first house open to the public in the Dublin area. An independent body owned and ran Castletown up until January 1994 when the house was officially handed over to the state. Then Guinness bought Leixlip House, a romantic house with sturdy towers and elegant Georgian gothic windows standing above the Liffey. They did not have much money to spend on its repair or furnishing but they turned it into a complete and convincing Irish country house, very carefully thought out but achieved with such confidence that it seemed natural and not contrived. Thus the serious interest in 18th century Ireland joined forces with an interest in the lock of the houses and many people

were influenced by this combination, among them the Knight of Glin. Not only did it inspire people to be bolder in decoration but it gave heart to a number of younger people who had inherited daunting, decaying country houses in Ireland and saw for the first time how they could cope with them. (Glin, 1988, p7).

The Irish Georgian Society has an unparalleled record over its thirty six years of existence of saving and restoring houses such as Castletown, Damer and Roscrea, and roundwood near Mountrath. There now is in Ireland an academic basis for the preservation and planning of the architectural heritage, namely the Irish Architectural Archive. (Glin, 1988 p7).

Prior to 1976 Ireland was the only state in the EEC without an official national buildings record. Its historic architecture was largely unprotected, often unknown or unrecorded. So the Irish Architectural Archives was founded in 1976 to supply these needs with the support of An Taisce, and with financial assistance from the Heritage Trust, the Archive has now become the central body for the sturdy of Irish historic architecture. It is an essential national resource with photographic and documentary records of over 20,000 buildings.

THE GROWTH OF OPEN HOUSES.

According to the Knight of Glins book, "Vanishing Country Houses of Ireland". In 1986, properties in the Republic of Ireland affiliated to the historic Irish tourist houses and gardens association were visited by over one and a half million people. In the same year 30% of all holiday makers (42% of North American visitors) visited historic houses and gardens while a mere 15% engaged in fishing and

8% in golf. Ireland's country houses as ruins would be a wasted national resource. It is accepted that we should not pollute our lakes or plough up our golf courses. The case should be equally obvious that we cannot let our country houses disappear (Glin, 1988, p6).
When Riverstown House, Co. Cork, was restored by the Georgian Society and opened to the public in 1966, it was only the third house in the Republic to open its doors to visitors on a regular basis. The society has always believed that state involvement in the saving of the Irish heritage will only come about through tourism.

The picture is one of activity on the part of voluntary bodies concerned with the survival of historic buildings as cultural and economic assets. Individual trusts (such as the Castletown foundation which until recently owned Castletown House and the Irish Georgian Foundation which leases Doneraile Court) have set precedents in the non-governmental area. In addition, individual arrangements have been entered into with the state (as at Mount Congreve, Co. Waterford, and Glenveigh Castle, Co. Donegal) or with local authorities and tourist bodies (as at Malahide Castle, Co. Dublin, Newbridge House, Co. Kildare and Belvedere House, Co. Westmeath) to ensure the survival of important properties.

A house that can be compared to Belvedere, in that they are both owned by County Councils is Newbridge House, Co. Kildare. The house, contents and demense were brought by Dublin County Council and subsequently opened to the public. The difference between Newbridge and Belvedere House, is that in Newbridge the furniture, paintings and possessions that were built up over two hundred and fifty years and the intimate insight they provide into the past are there for all to see. Therefore, Dublin County

Council had more to work with, the house had a lived-in feeling and more to offer the viewing public, unlike Belvedere. However, this does not excuse Westmeath County Council for the way they let the house deteriorate in recent years and who are only now, beginning to rectify the damage. The Council's great plans for Belvedere Estate when they bought it in 1981 have evaporated. Their plans now are much simpler; to repair the damaged roof and not much more. They have no plans to restore the houses' interior to its original or even to the 1960's, or 70's interior.

~~I asked~~ Mr. Joe McDonnell, a member of the Irish Georgian Society, in an interview in November, ~~how~~ maintaine of that the Irish Georgian Society " would like to see the house's interior restored, as close to its original as possible with special emphasis on the Rococo plasterwork ceilings" (McDonnell, Nov. 25th 1993).

In an unfurnished house like Belvedere, whose sole use is to be shown to visitors, the impact of these visitors must be considered and they must be given an experience that is as rich and enjoyable as possible. It is a matter of degree how far one goes in this, but there must be some compensations for the loss of contents over the years and that living feeling the inevitable goes when the owners move out. However, at the same time whatever is done must not lose touch with either reality or credibility. There can be no absolute and timeless answer to such problems, and each generation will restore country houses in different ways just as they will decorate them in different ways.

In one sense, Belvedere House is fortunate, that it was acquired by Westmeath County Council and that they are

finally putting some work into it. Belvedere could have easily become one of those properties that come on the market, properties which should have passed on to the custodianship of a caring state and have instead fallen into disrepair, other have languished waiting for a buyer. Instead, when it is opened to the public in April it will make a useful contribution to the tourist attractiveness of the country and thus to the economy. The tourist industry could not afford to lose Westport House and Bantry House and Bunratty Castle and their like.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has discussed and examined the changing interior of Belvedere House, Co. Westmeath from the time Charles Brinsley Marlay lived there in 1828 to the present day. No visual information on the interior could be obtained prior to 1960 but information on all structural alterations prior to that year were recorded and the interior when Charles K. McWard-Bury and Rex Beaumont resided there from 1960 to 1981 was documented.

The aim of this thesis was to document the changes made to the houses' interior from as far back as was recorded and to discuss the role of the County Council in their contribution to the restoration and development of the house. In doing so, the background to Belvedere house was first discussed, this included a brief documentation of the gardens, the houses' exterior and any alterations that were made and the interior lay-out. A brief introduction to Charles Brinsley Marlay., Col. Bury and Rex Beaumont's background was given, and how Westmeath County Council came to acquire Belvedere and what their plans for the estate were at that time.

The main rooms were then discussed, these included the entrance hall, which was an amalgamation of two rooms, the library and 'own room' and showed not only the decorative changes to these rooms but also the structural changes. The changing environment of the drawing room and dining room from 1961 to 1994 was then documented and the changing interiors of the East and West bedrooms from 1960 to the present day. Without specific written information it was difficult to assess many of the changes undertaken to these rooms, but the photographs, which came form the Architectural Archives, Belvedere Survey, 1991, provided a record and in many cases through comparison and analysis, showed the relevant changes to the interior,

reflecting the tastes, fashionability and individuality of each of the last three owners.

Finally, the work the County Council have done so far on the gardens was discussed and the fact that until this year, they left the house untouched. It then looked at the growth in enthusiasm for old houses in this country and as a result the setting up of bodies, such as An Taisce, The Irish Georgian Society and the Irish Architectural Archives, which all work for the preservation of Ireland's Architectural heritage which is very relevant when discussing how and why Belvedere House should be restored. The increasing number of Irish Country houses being opened up to the public is then examined, and the affect they have on Ireland's tourist industry. A comparison is also made between Newbridge House and Belvedere House as they are both run by County Council bodies. Although Westmeath County Council neglected Belvedere House for years, it was concluded that it was lucky in a sense that the Council bought it when it did or it may have fallen into disrepair like so many fine houses around the country.

After researching and documenting the changing interior over the past thirty years, and all the structural alterations prior to that, I would have to agree with Joe McDonnell's view on how to best restore and show Belvedere to-day, which was discussed in the last chapter. I too, would love to see Belvedere House restored to it's original interior with all it's original furniture and furnishings, but as that would be impossible because there is not documented evidence on how the original interior looked, I would like to see the rooms restored to it's 1960 interior which is illustrated throughout the thesis, with all the antique furniture, paintings and objets d'art, which could be traced through the 1980 Christies Belvedere Sale. I realise this would be a monumental task for the Council to undertake but even if they examined the

illustrations documented there and furnished the house with antiques as close to the 1960s fittings as possible. It would give the house a lived-in feeling that the general viewing public like to see in old houses.

As the trend for restoring country houses has grown in recent years, I believe this was a valuable and interesting area to document. As was confirmed in the thesis, more and more people are going to view old houses opened to the public each year and they are proving to be a major boost to the tourist industry in Ireland. Hopefully, Belvedere House will be no exception when it is opened to the public this year.

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