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HUNTINGTON CASTLE
1615 - 1995

BY
JACINTA EDGE

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1995



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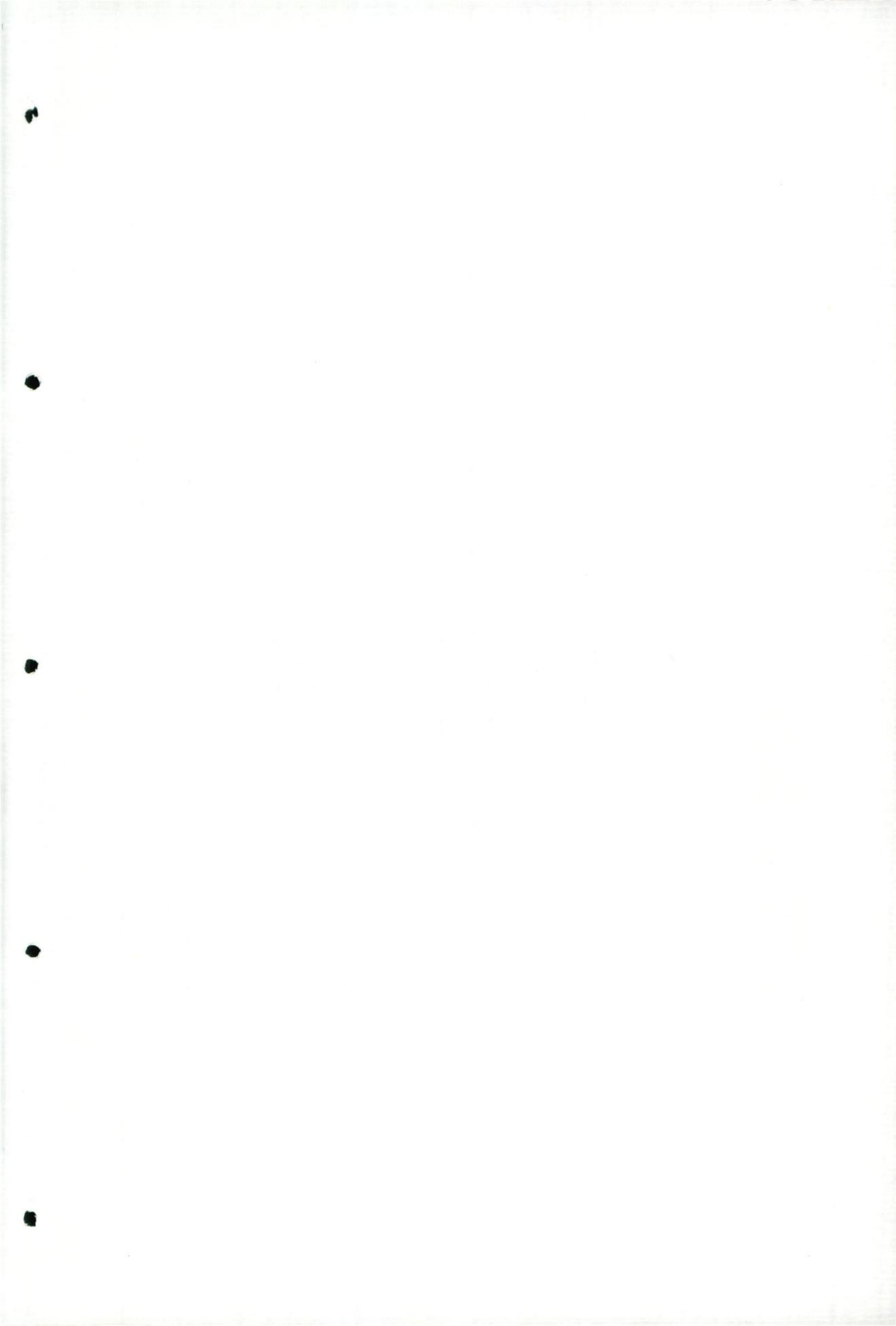


ILLUSTRATION 1

HUNTINGTON CASTLE





INTRODUCTION

Huntington Castle stands in the village of Clonegal on the borders of counties Carlow, Wexford and Wicklow and although it may seem to have no major importance today, it obviously once did as Cannon Ffrench wrote in 1904:-

"Clonegal is not only the name of a valley and a parish, but it is also the name of a considerable village, that once was a fair and market town, boasting its distillery, brewery, tan yards and a notable market for the sale of woollen stuffs".

Cannon Ffrench goes onto mention Huntington Castle as:-

"... the old, grey ivy covered castle of the Esmondés ... - a most picturesque old castle with immensely thick walls built of small stones. It has a well in the vaults to provide against seige and a strong iron gate between the double doors of entrance still remaining".

It is not only the building structure and the many stories I have heard about Huntington Castle which I have grown up with that has prompted me to write about this castle but also the people. For this castle is probably one of the few houses left in Ireland today which can trace its ancestors right back to 1615.

Each member of the family brought about some element of change no matter how small the Huntington Castle and indeed some of these characteristics changed the area of Clonegal, starting with the arrival of the Esmondés in 1615 then onto the Durdins and finally the Robertson, who remain today. The reason for the change of name was the lack of male heirs, thus allowing the female to inherit and bring her married name into the house.

This element of ancestry within the house down through the ages is what I set out to document, beginning with the family tree.



In order to understand why Huntington was built and how the Esmondés came to live here, this will be the subject of my first chapter. The second chapter is a brief account of the various branches of the family tree.

The third chapter will be the longest as it spans well over 300 years and deals in some detail with the various members of the family during this extensive period.

Chapter four deals with the furnishings of the house including family portraits and other interesting objects. The fifth chapter discusses the grounds, which are probably one of the oldest gardens left in Ireland today.

Finally, the concluding chapter, will look at the future of Huntington Castle, with the present generation of the Robertsons.

When I first took on Huntington Castle as a thesis topic, little did I realise the difficulties I would have in actually finding information, as there has been very little written on the castle - mainly due to its misleading address, its geographical position so close to the Wexford, Wicklow and Carlow borders, that it is often confused and left out. Along with the fact that most of the information regarding Huntington Castle dating from 17th Century onwards is only available from Oxford University, this I did not realise till I had completed my research.

I was fortunate that Mr. & Mrs. Robertson were willing to help me with tours and information in the form of annals, newspaper clippings, maps, with these sometimes contradicting themselves they all proved helpful. I was also helped by such local historians as Mr. W. White whom made the task much less daunting than it would otherwise have been.

CHAPTER ONE

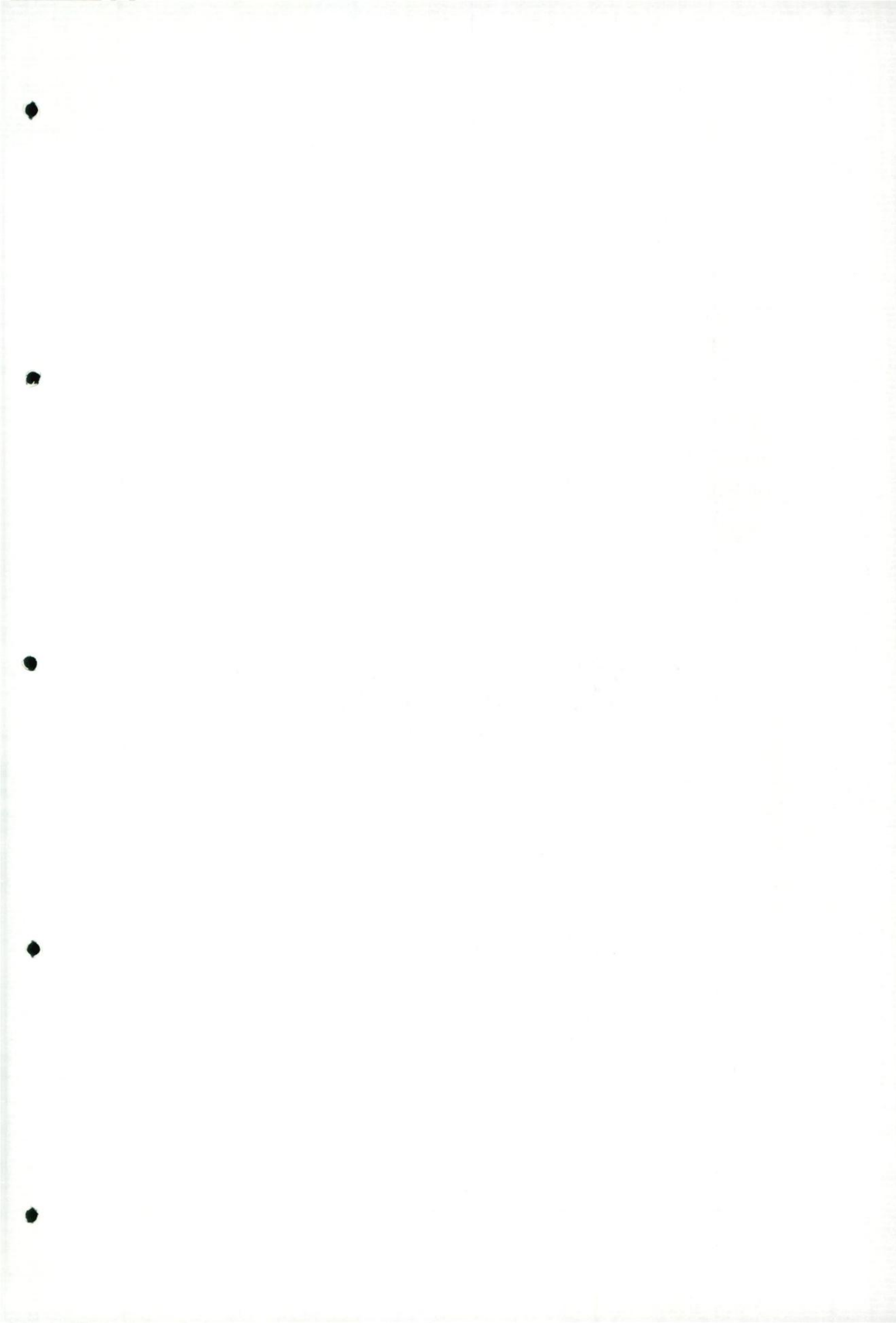
- BACKGROUND -

Huntington Castle formerly known as Clonegal Castle or earlier again as Clonegan Castle is situated in the village of Clonegal on the River Derry. Looking at Illustration 2, the map shows that the estate is bounded on the south by the River Slaney which forms the only pass between Dublin and Wexford travelling between the Wicklow and Blackstairs Mountains. Although Huntington is north of the River Derry and therefore within county Carlow, it has a postal address of Huntington Castle, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford due to being closer to Wexford than Carlow, these different addresses often mislead people to the actual true whereabouts of Huntington Castle.

Now that I have confirmed the Huntington Castle is indeed Clonegal, Co. Carlow, you may wonder why anyone should build in what now seems such as remote and quiet part of the countryside. This has not always been the case because Clonegal once known the Leveroch was of strategic importance.

This district called the 'Leveroch' (place of large trees). Illustration 2 was as the name would suggest, a thickly wooded area, with the majority of these trees being oak, stretching roughly between the Blackstairs and the Wicklow Mountains.

It is here that the first inhabitants such as the Fir-Bolgs and Celts travelled from the coast up along the rivers to settle here on the banks of the Derry and Slaney. In time, the Leveroch became known as the parish of Moyacomb (plain of two hounds) and later again the parish of Clonegal or Cluain-na-nGall (meadow of the stranger).



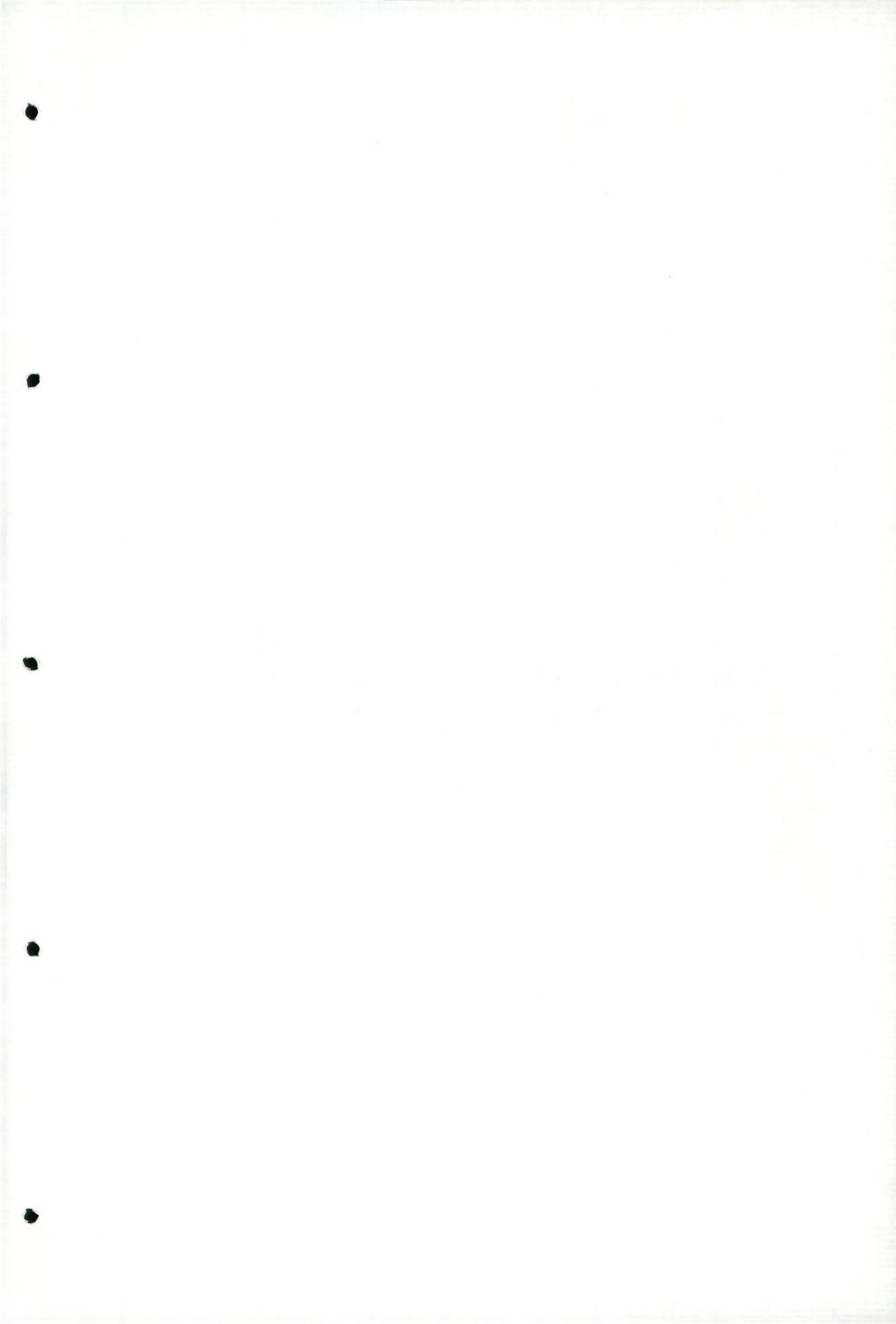
As Clonegal under the patronage of the O'Neills of Leinster grew more important due to the fact that there was an increase of population throughout Leinster bringing an increase of travel from inland counties through Clonegal into Wexford Port. As Clonegal was situated in the only Pass. Illustration 3 between the port and south regions with the exception of "The Pass of Gowran" which was towards the midland and not Wexford (see map).

Clonegal remained unconquered by Henry II because it was so mountainous and forested, it was not easily defeated. Hence, Richard II found it convenient to make a present of the district to the Kavanaghs. These Kavanaghs were a Sept or a family group and unlike many other districts in Ulster and Leinster, you could describe the language and social structure as Gaelic but they were not feudal as the land was not held by the head of the family but by the group. So it was the Kavanagh family that reigned supreme, building strongholds at Clohaman, Clonnullen and Clonegal (see Illustration 2). It is believed that this castle at Clonegal was built in the 14th century which later develops into Huntington Castle.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1558-1603, while the Kavanagh held most of Carlow and north Wexford, the other two families that held much of what is today Co. Wicklow, were the O'Tooles and Byrnes. Now England had gained in power, she did not want Ireland to retain its freedom, so in 1565, Queen Elizabeth appointed Sir Henry Sydney.¹ Lord Deputy reported that:

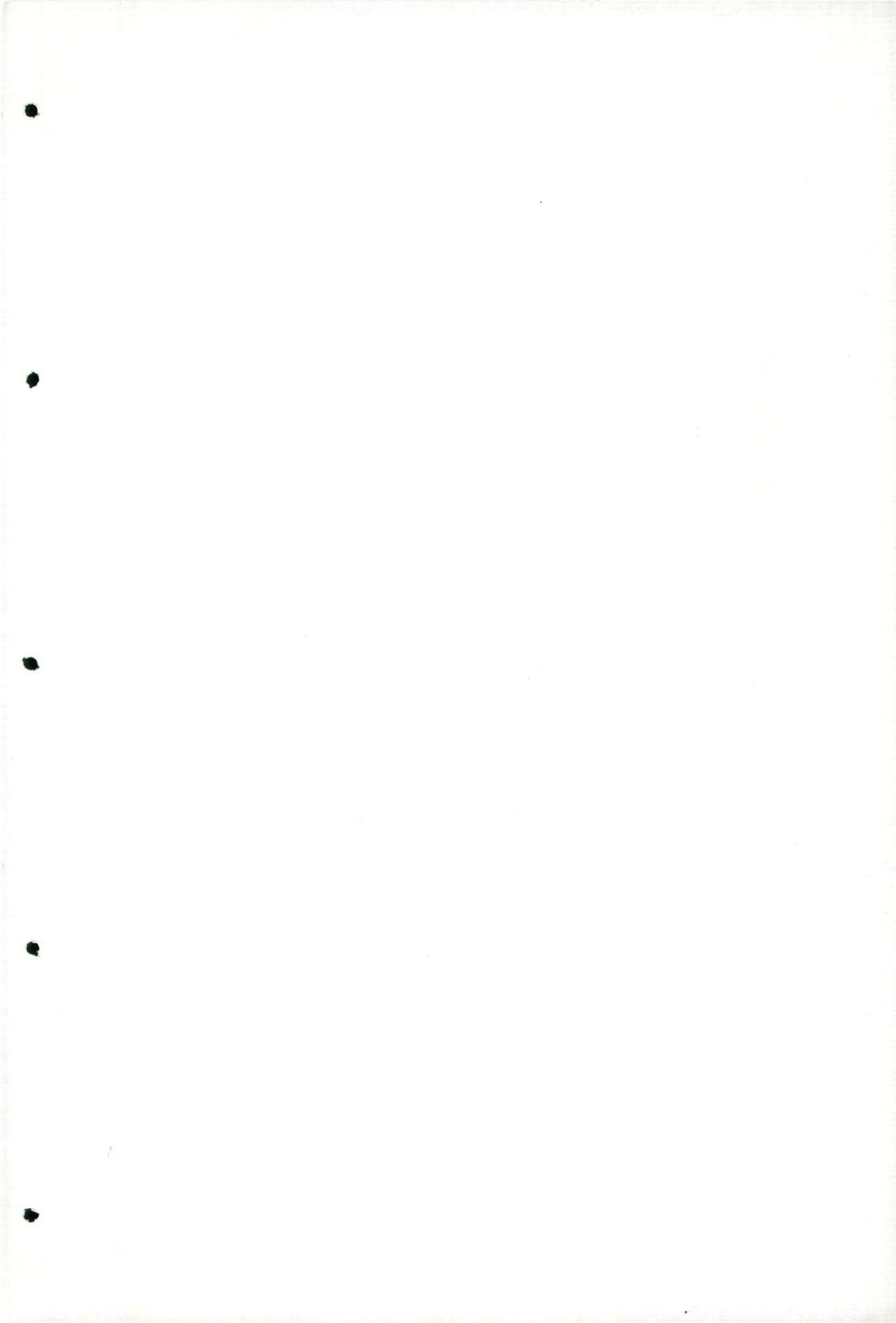
"The state of the country is represented as most deplorable at this time. The people reduced to the greatest poverty, the soldiery licentious and unpaid, the Kavanagh, Birnes and other domineering and devastating at will. In short, it appears that all this time neither life nor property of the well-disposed subject was secure".

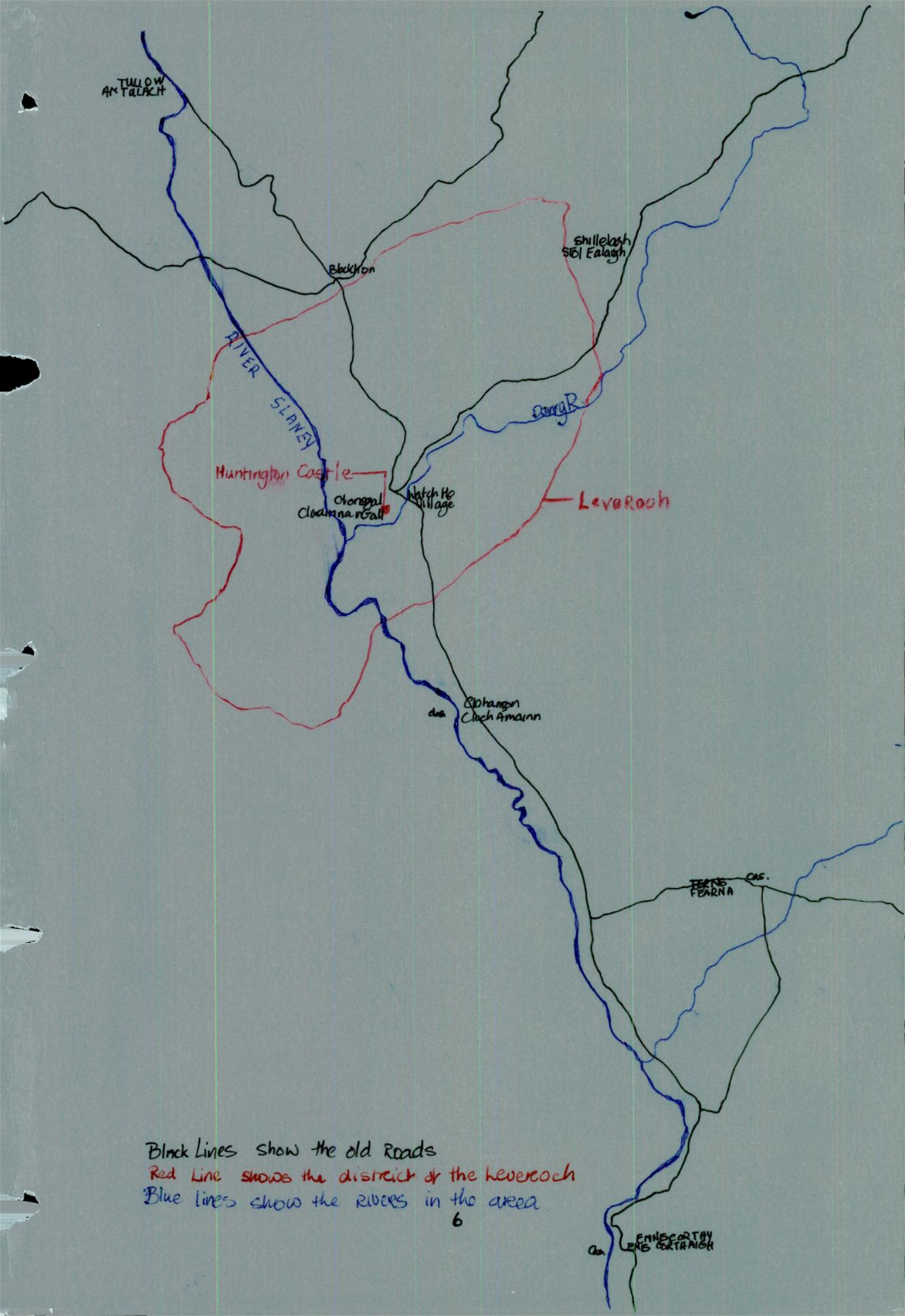
¹ Chapter XX from History and Antiquities of the County of Carlow, by John Ryan Esq., M.R.S.I.



It was then in 1588 that Queen Elizabeth decreed that Wicklow and North Wexford must be conquered and controlled, the only way that this could be done was to defeat the Kavanaghs and remove Donall Spanneach (who was one of the foremost leaders of the Irish against English oppression) and Fiac Hugh O'Byrne and replace these rogues with reliable tenants, allowing the English to rule and control all activities along the River Slaney.

The Irish Chieftains did not give up easily and rebelled against the Queen, leading to the destruction of three kings' castles including the Clonogan Castle (later Clonegal), this Kavanagh stronghold and along with its lands was confiscated with its surrounding lands and granted to the Netterville Family and later sold to the Esmond's in 1615.





Black Lines show the old Roads
 Red Line shows the district of the Leveroch
 Blue Lines show the rivers in the area

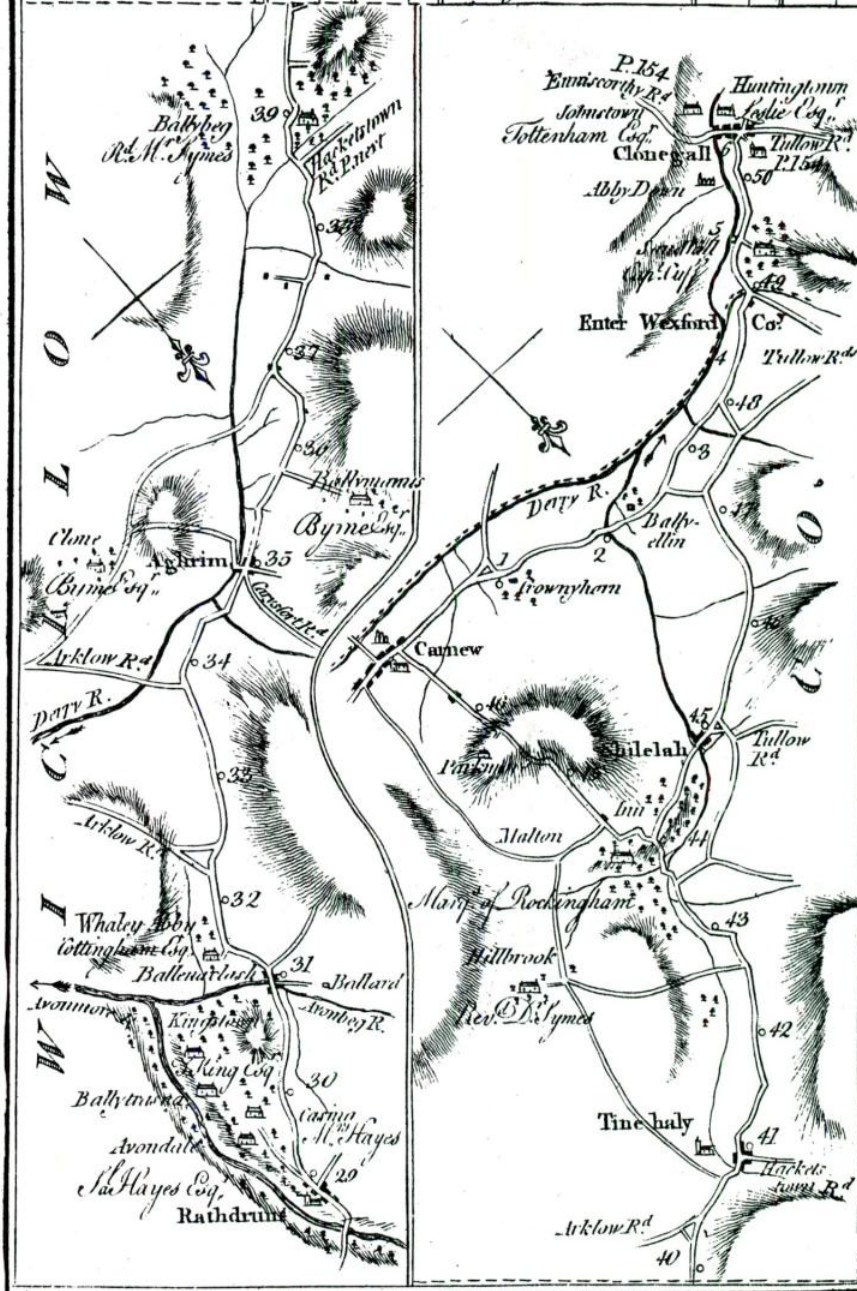




ROAD from DUBLIN to CLONEGALL & CARNEW.

Pages 140 & 141, show the Road from Dublin to Rathdrum by the Black Bull, on the Wexford Road.

	M.	F.	M.	F.		M.	F.	M.	F.
Bony	10	..	10	..	Tinehaly as before	41	..	41	..
Rathdrum	18	7	28	7	Carnew	5	7	46	7
Aghrim	6	1	35	..	From Carnew to Clonegall	6	1
Tinehaly	6	..	41	..					
Clonegall	9	5	50	5					



Terry sculp. Published as the Act directs 24. Sept. 1778.

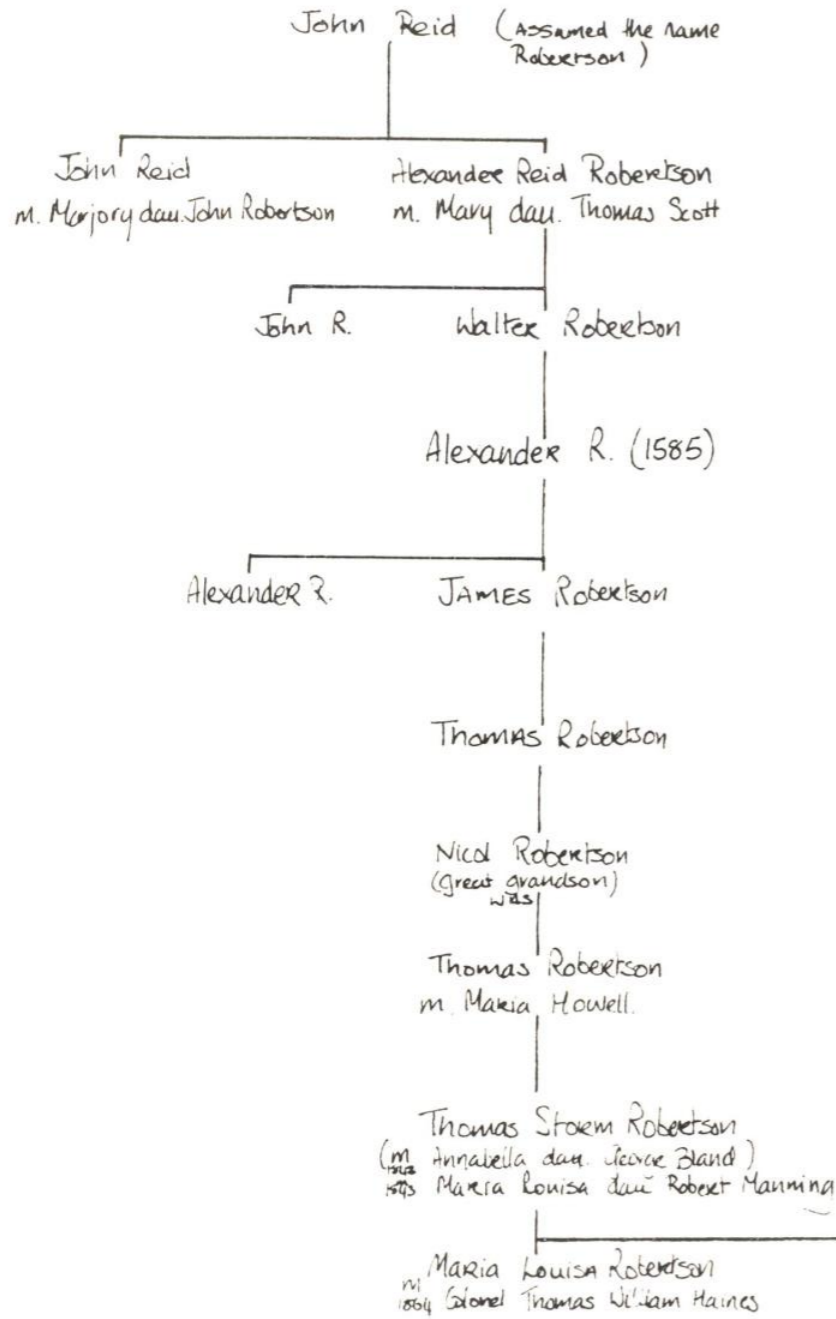
ILLUSTRATION 3

The Pass between North and South regions also known as The Old Coach Road p145. of The Taylor + Skinner Maps of Roads of Ireland surveyed 1777, published 1778, photocopy from Carlow Library.



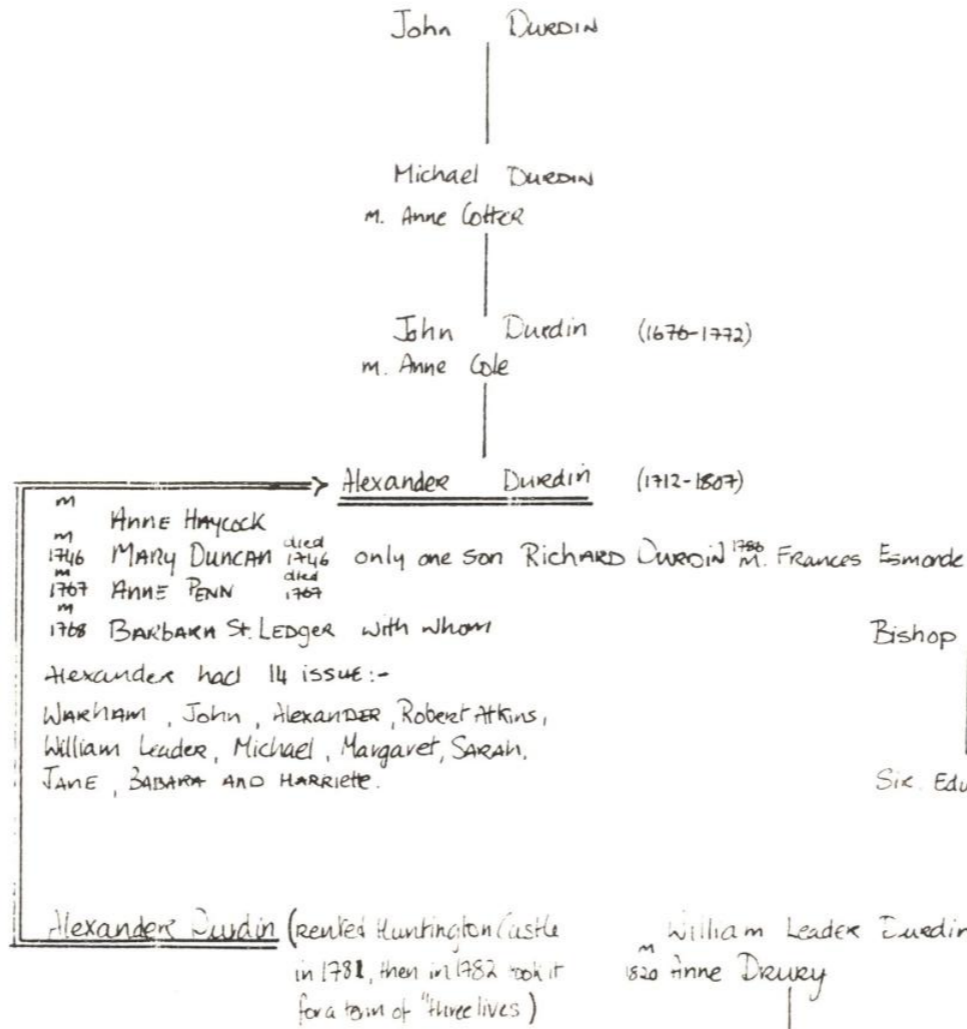
Robertson

Robertson are presumably the ancestors of John Reid an ancient Scottish family. Thus John Reid was styled Baron of Stathloch, then assumed the name Robertson.



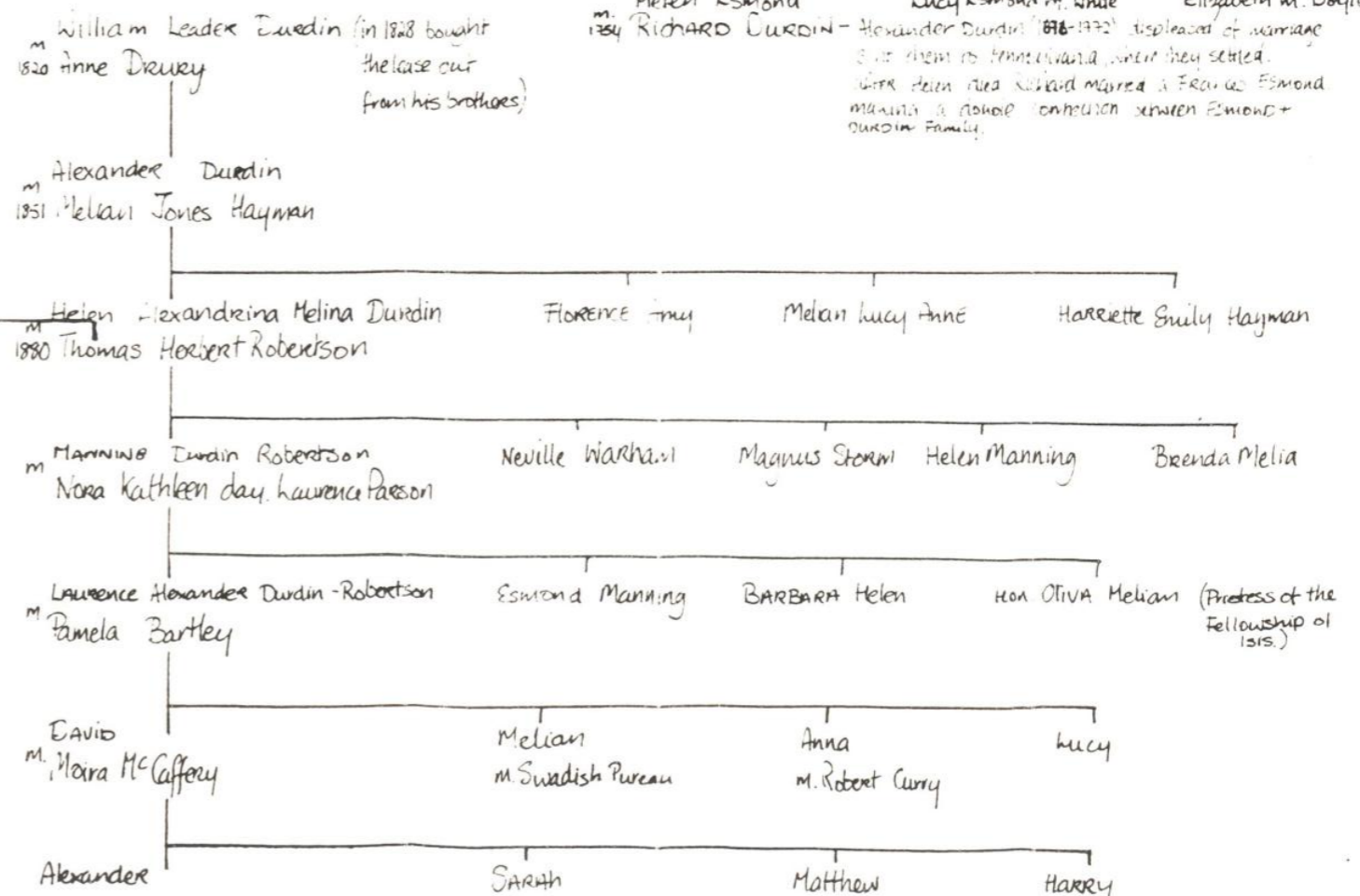
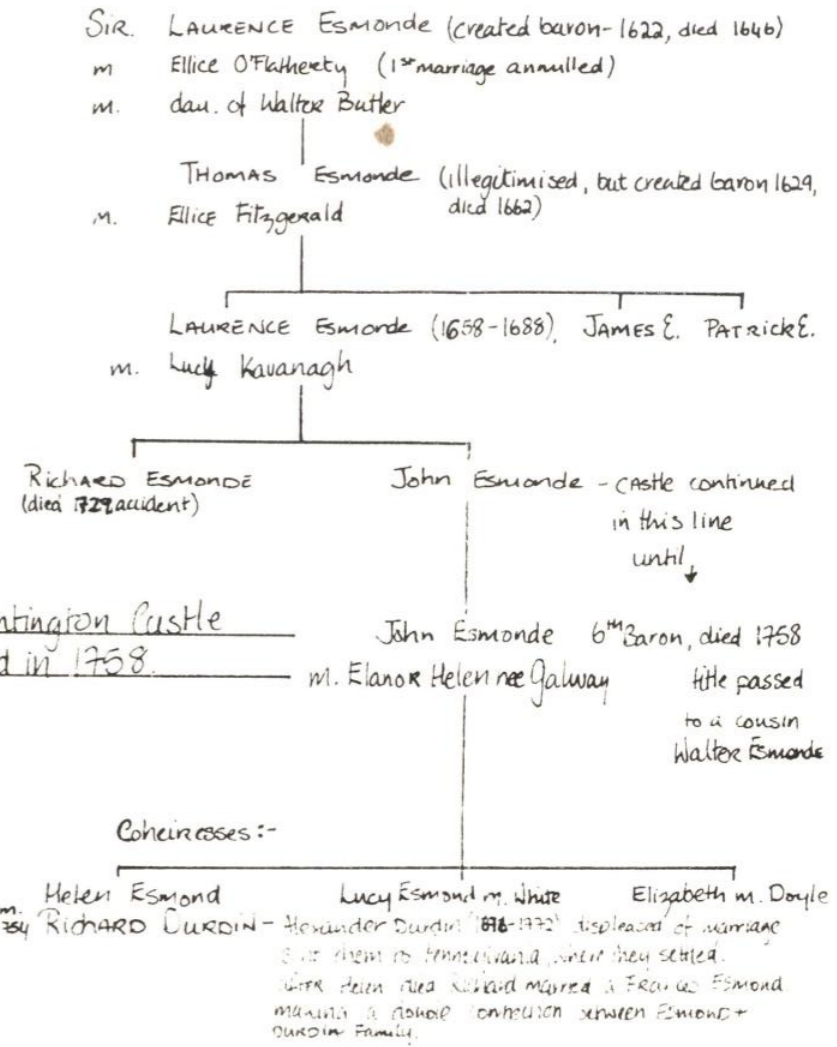
DURDIN

Durdin ancestors hailed from Essex, England. In 1639, John Durdin came to Cork, then, in 1641 he fled back to England at the outbreak of war, however he returned to finally settle in Cork.

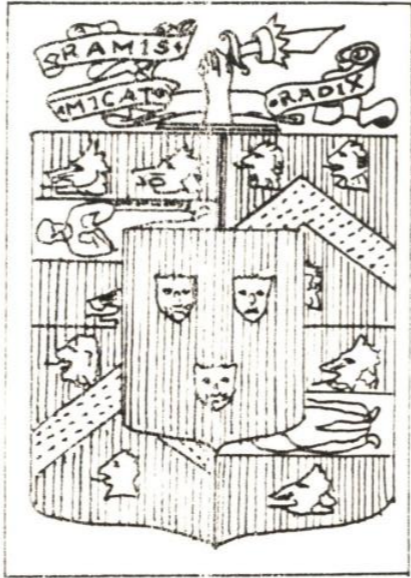


ESMONDE

Descendants of Esmonde Kt, of Honington of Lincolnshire, England, whom in 1170, accompanied Strongbow to Ireland.



CHAPTER TWO
- OUTLINE OF FAMILY TREE -



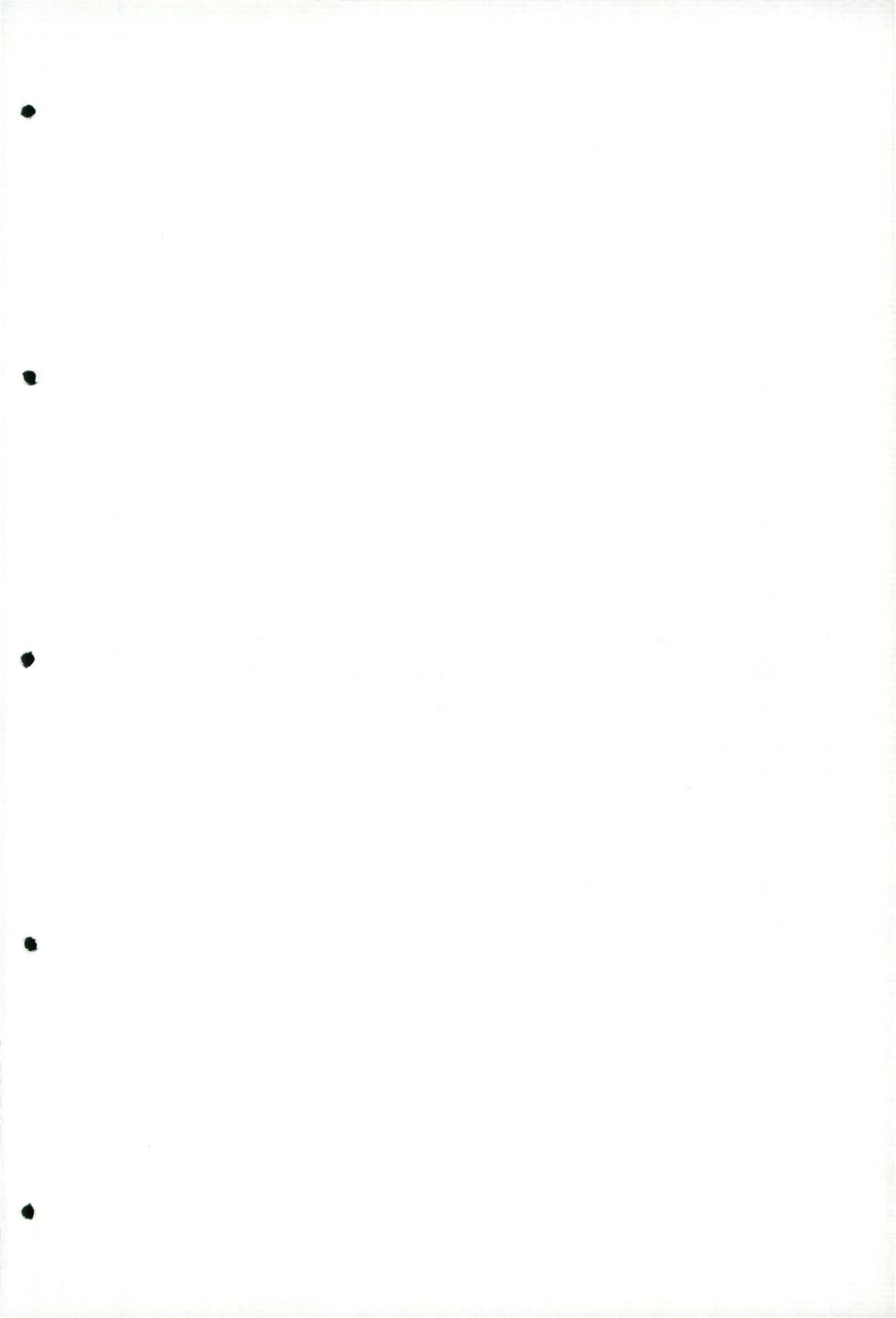
CHAPTER THREE
- HUNTINGTON CASTLE
UNDER THE OWNERSHIP OF ESMONDE 1615-1758 -

Lord Laurence Esmonde the new owner of Clonegal Castle in 1615 and the man who was about to change the area of Clonegal, would have been described as a loyal and noble servant to the crown. This did not go unnoticed as King James created him Baron Esmonde in 1622, made major of the Army in Ireland, Governor of his majesty's Fort Royal Duncannon and one of his majesty's Honourable Priory Council in Ireland.

In 1619, Lord Esmonde was one of the appointed Commissioners to survey the confiscated territory land in Leinster and one particular task given to Lord Esmonde was to survey and map out² "The County of Wicklow" - from Dublin, Carlow and Wexford before Wicklow was delineated". These maps are still present in printed form and hanging along the staircase wall of the tower in Huntington Castle today (Illustration 32 and 33). This position did not make him a popular man among the natives and he is reputed to have packed jails and to have tortured witnesses in order to deprive the chieftains of their land which was the very land that the Lord Esmonde owned.

Although, a defensible castle had not been built in some time, Lord Esmonde found it necessary to build one in Clonegal to try and keep the peace in what was then a turbulent district. Evidence of this can be found as late as 1635 in Brereton's Travels as he had to be accompanied by guides in a journey from Carnew to Enniscorthy travelling through Clonegal. It is also interesting to note from this piece what he saw in Clonegal i.e. "thousands of oak logs,

² Ref. from Clonegal Castle by the Rev. Laurence Durdin-Robertson.

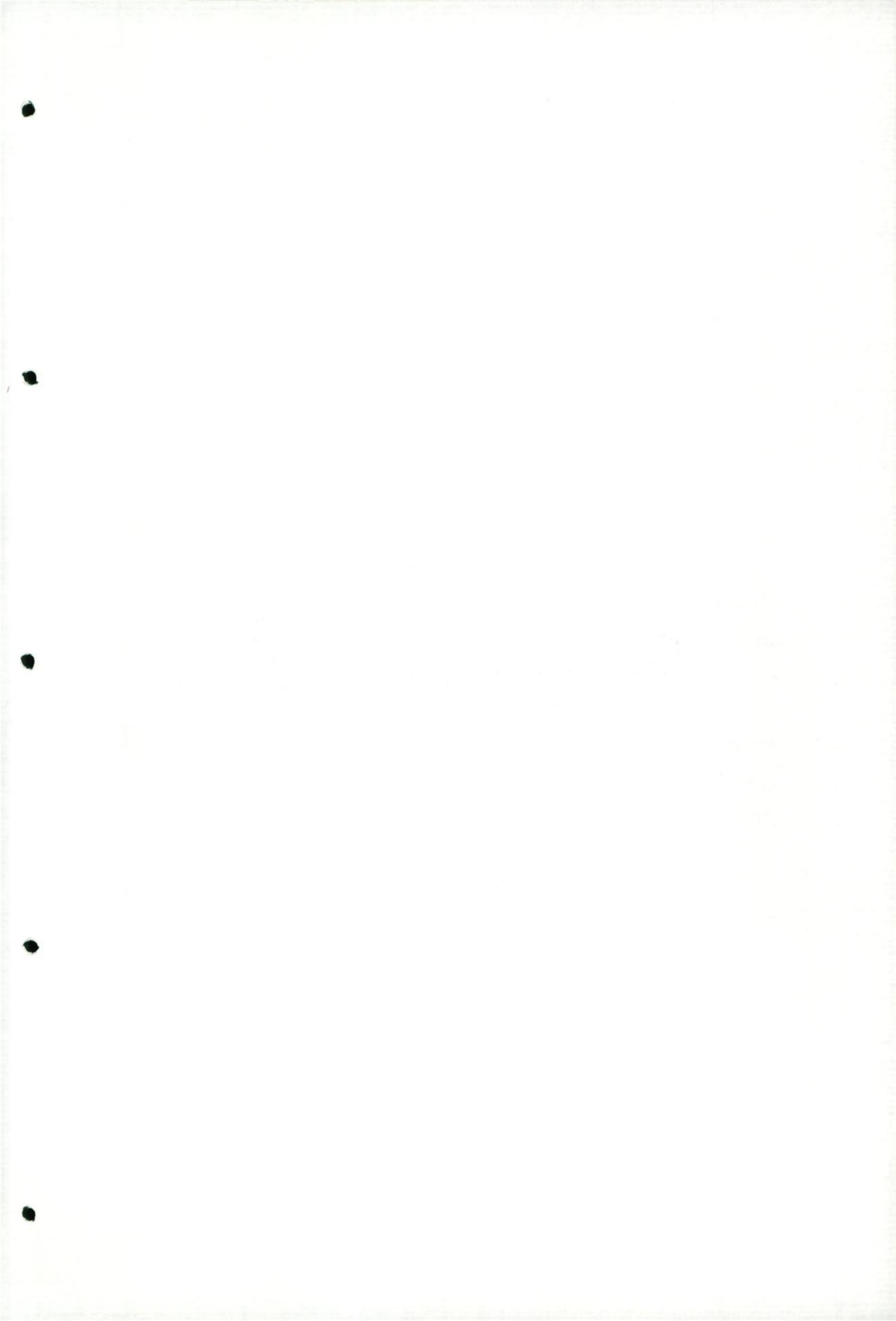


floating along the Derry" giving us the notion that deforestation of the area was in full swing. With this timber it could be used for either smelting iron or the wood itself was floated down the Slaney onto Wexford where it could be exported to the continent and no wonder why the English wanted control over such a wealthy little spot.

Quickly, Laurence Esmonde set about turning the castle at Clonegal into a fortress, using the Kavanagh castle as his basis. It is probable to assume that the castle was in very bad repair, hence Laurence Esmonde used the materials from the original castle to build the present one.

This building commenced in 1625, using the local granite and quartz available it was built on a batter, with the walls measuring 6ft thick at the top, in all taking 5 years to complete. It is also thought that the original fortress and battlements and towers some reaching at least 10ft high although there are no definite records of this. However this fortress differed much from the first castle (Illustration 19) as its new layout is exactly that of which James I laid down for the keeping of the land of that area. With dimensions of 40ft x 60ft with a semi-circular tower at the back of the keep.

At this stage, the castle is thought to have had 5 floors with a thatch roof, as a nearby castle at Carnew is known to have had dating 1580. These 5 floors would have been unpartitioned, the basement including the Old Kitchen with a very wide fireplace, the dungeon - stone vaulted having no flight or ventilation except a port-hole 8 inches long and 2 inches wide and the Druid Well. The Druid Well is a 15ft well which the castle was built over, it is supposed to date pre-Christian and has never been known to go dry and is still in use today. This would have been a great asset to a fortress in times of civil war or rebellion as the castle would be shut up and with a supply of provisions, they could hold out in a long seige.



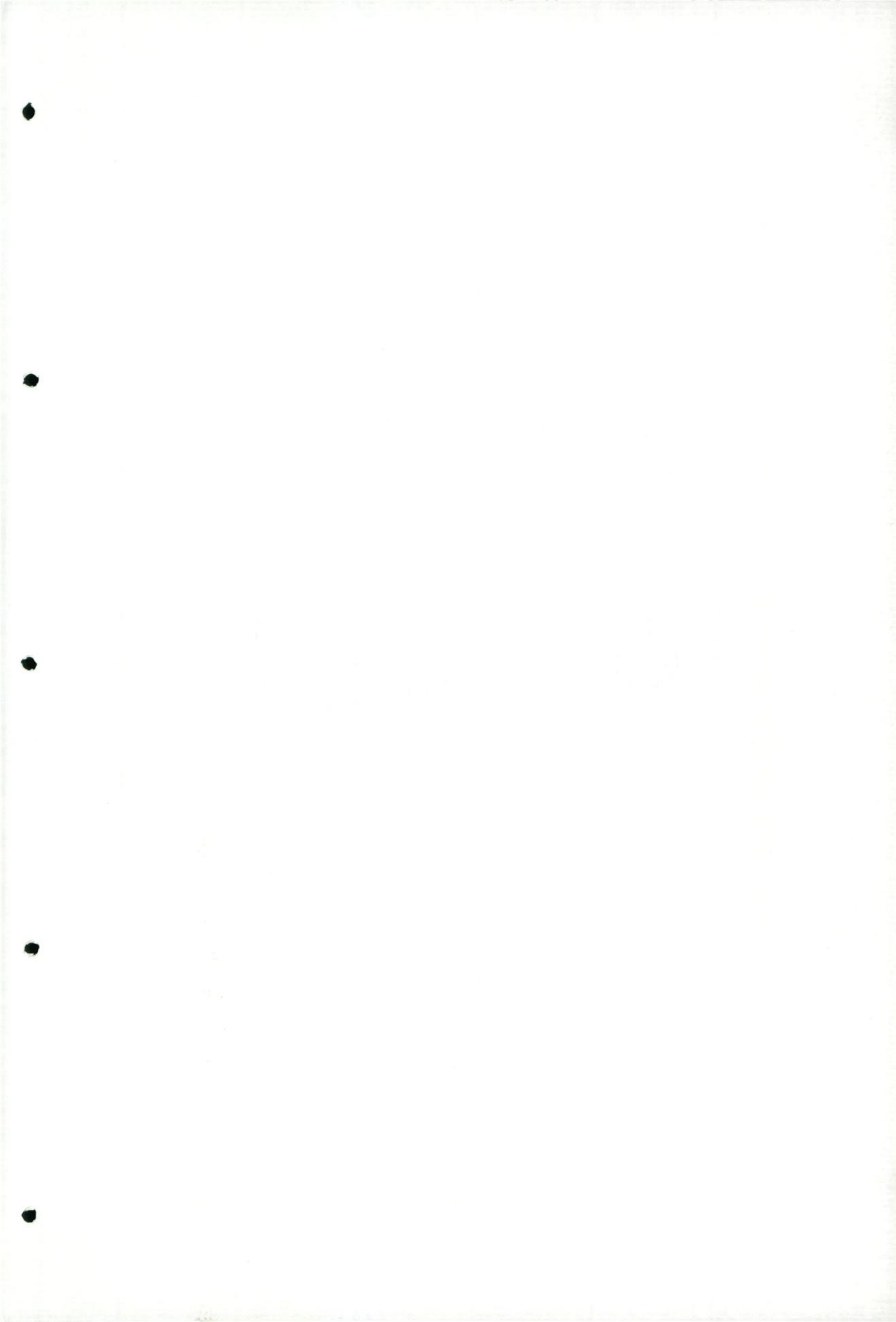
Returning to the various levels in the castle, after the basement the next floor was the ground or first floor (Illustration 23) which was one large room including a large granite fireplace (Illustration 34). With the date 1625 on the key stone, which still remains intact along with the original double doors that on the north east wall. These double doors were the original entrance to the castle, the right door has a spy hole and the left also has a spyhole through which the muzzle of gun would protrude. The second and third floors were large open rooms and the fifth floor i.e. the attic is said to have been large enough and high enough to hold a fair sized bedroom.

Whatever about the castle's interior being different today, the grounds around it were very different for although there was an old Abbey to the north west of the fortress (See figure 19), the courtyard was certainly at the front as H. Robertson in 1888 recorded from A. Durdin in 'Annals of Huntington Castle':-

"Durdin remembered a wall running from the conservatory to the remains of wall north of the Yew Walk, the only opening along this was in the south east wall was the first row of steps nearest the house which were always there. The north east wall ran across the tennis court (now the lawn directly in front of the castle) passed white gates with an archway and turned in the Abbey north west wall".

Along with excavations done in the late 70's by Rev. Laurence Durdin - Robertson, where they found fragments of pottery, clay pipes and oyster shells, all leading to the conclusion that courtyard was definitely in the front and was most likely used as bawn for sheltering animals.

Once more looking at Lord Esmonde, he married an Irish Lady Elice O'Hathery, however this marriage was annulled on the grounds of being "mere Irishry", mainly difference in religion and he later married a daughter of ^{the} great Butler family. From his first marriage he had one son Thomas, but since this marriage was invalid, he was therefore illegitimate, hence his son did not



succeed to his father's peerage (subsequently in 1629, Charles II created him baronet and seeing as though there was no issue from Laurence Esmonde's second marriage, the castle and lands were passed on to Sir. Thomas Esmonde (ref. to Chapter 2 Family Tree).

Was the castle ever used as a garrison? Well indeed it was and as Cannon French wrote³

CLONEGAL A THEATRE OF MUCH MILITARY ACTIVITY

For in 1641, there was a rebellion in Ulster, then in 1642 Civil War broke out in England between Crown and Parliament. Most of central Ireland was held by a Provisional Government known as the "Confederate Catholics of Ireland", their capital at Kilkenny and their main port was Wexford. These confederates held most of the areas around Clonegal so in order for Lord Ormond to reach Wexford he had to pass through Clonegal and as Clonegal was held for the crown by Dudley Colclough (a friend of the Esmond's who commanded the garrison). It is known that in August 1643 a detachment of Ormond's men rested at the castle on its way to New Ross which they intended to attack before proceeding to Wexford. Cannon French, M.R.I.A. wrote⁴:-

"when Lord Ormond left Dublin in 1642, at the head of an army of 2,500 foot and 800 horse, with "two brass silverness and four brass field pieces" for the purpose of opposing the confederates, he rested his troops at Clonegal and doubtless felt more sure of a friendly reception there than he would elsewhere, as it was situated on the estate of Lord Esmonde, the founder of Huntington Castle an old trusted military commander who was a strong supporter of the unfortunate King Charles I".

³ Clonegal its valley and its battles by Cannon F. French M.R.I.A., from The Journal of the Proceedings of the royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, Part 4, Vol. XXXIV, 4th Quarter, December 1904).

⁴ Ibid.



All this time, Lord Esmonde found himself commander of Duncannon near Fethard, guarding the approaches to Waterford which he held for Lord Ormond. However, he did not observe the truce of 1643 between Ormond and the Confederates and continued on hostilities, which led to his own death in 1646 and evidently the loss of some of his land to these confederates. It is not known whether it was his son Sir Thomas Esmonde who restored these lost lands under Cromwell or whatever, but they were won back in 1662 the year of Thomas Esmonde's death.

Another battle which took host in Clonegal, took place in 1650, when Lord Ormond took another visit, however this was very different to the 8 years previous. As Cromwell had landed in Dublin in 1649 and by 1650, Cromwell's troops under Colonel Reynolds, having first taken one castle in Tullow (see map - Illustration 2), marched onto Clonegal. By now Owen Roe O'Neill's men from Ulster had taken refuge in Wicklow along with Donal Kavanagh, grandson of "the Spaniard" decided to take their last stand.

These clans determined to stand against the Cromwellians lay in ambush behind the houses of either side of the street and as soon as the Cromwellians arrived, they rushed forward, however the carnage was dreadful. This surprise attack on the Cromwellians explains why they treated the Clonmullen Sept with such severity and why they garrisoned the surrounded castle so strong. Evidence of this is found in writings by Canon Ffrench⁵ as he writes:

"They placed a garrison at Clonegal doubtless in the castle of Clonegan for we find three years after the battle of Clonegal in 1653, that Dudley Colclough Esq., petitioned the government for payment for the goods and provisions made use of by the garrison at Clonegal".

⁵ Clonegal its valley and its battles by Cannon F. French, M.R.I.A. from The Journal of the Proceedings off the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland. Part 4, Vol. XXXIV. 4th Quarter, December 1994.



This is the last of these battles that we hear of for some time in the history books of Clonegal and so THOMAS ESMONDE succeeded his father's throne. It is not reported that he resided in Clonegal castle, however Clonegal is passed onto his son also Laurence Esmonde in 1662.

Up until now, Clonegal Castle has been a fortress. A place for soldiers, a place for fighting now with this new generation of Esmondés, there is a total turnabout. The whole area of Clonegal changes not only in physical appearance and building structure, but in atmosphere for instead of fighting against the locals, they are working with them. This was probably initially brought about by the marriage of Laurence Esmonde to Lucy Kavanagh, thus uniting the old owners of the district with the new ones, the Esmondés.

Sir Laurence Esmonde returned from France in 1680 to reside in Clonegal Castle. To make it liveable, he needed to change it from a fortress to a residence and from other sources it was not unusual for the living quarter in Irish castles to be adjacent to the fortified keep, so we can assume that the Esmonde wing was added in 1680 (Illustration 5 & 6) which remains today, right of the tower block, along with the back-up that when the ceiling of the kitchen of this wing was being restored, various beams were discovered to be signed by workmen dated 1678.

This was not the only addition as he added the porch (Illustration 7) to the front which has its own door and a gate across it to strengthen it which is still present. At this stage, the battlements and turrets must have been removed, probably to make it more like a home not a fortress, as we also have the roofing of the castle in slates and by doing so, he slightly lowered the castle. I believe that the stairs was introduced at this stage as he partitioned the rooms, panelling the Drawing Room and Dining Room accordingly.

ILLUSTRATION 5

A view of Huntington Castle from the Avenue.

*The Esmonde Wing is to the right of
the original tower block. (September 1994)*





ILLUSTRATION 6

Another angle of the Esmonde Wing.

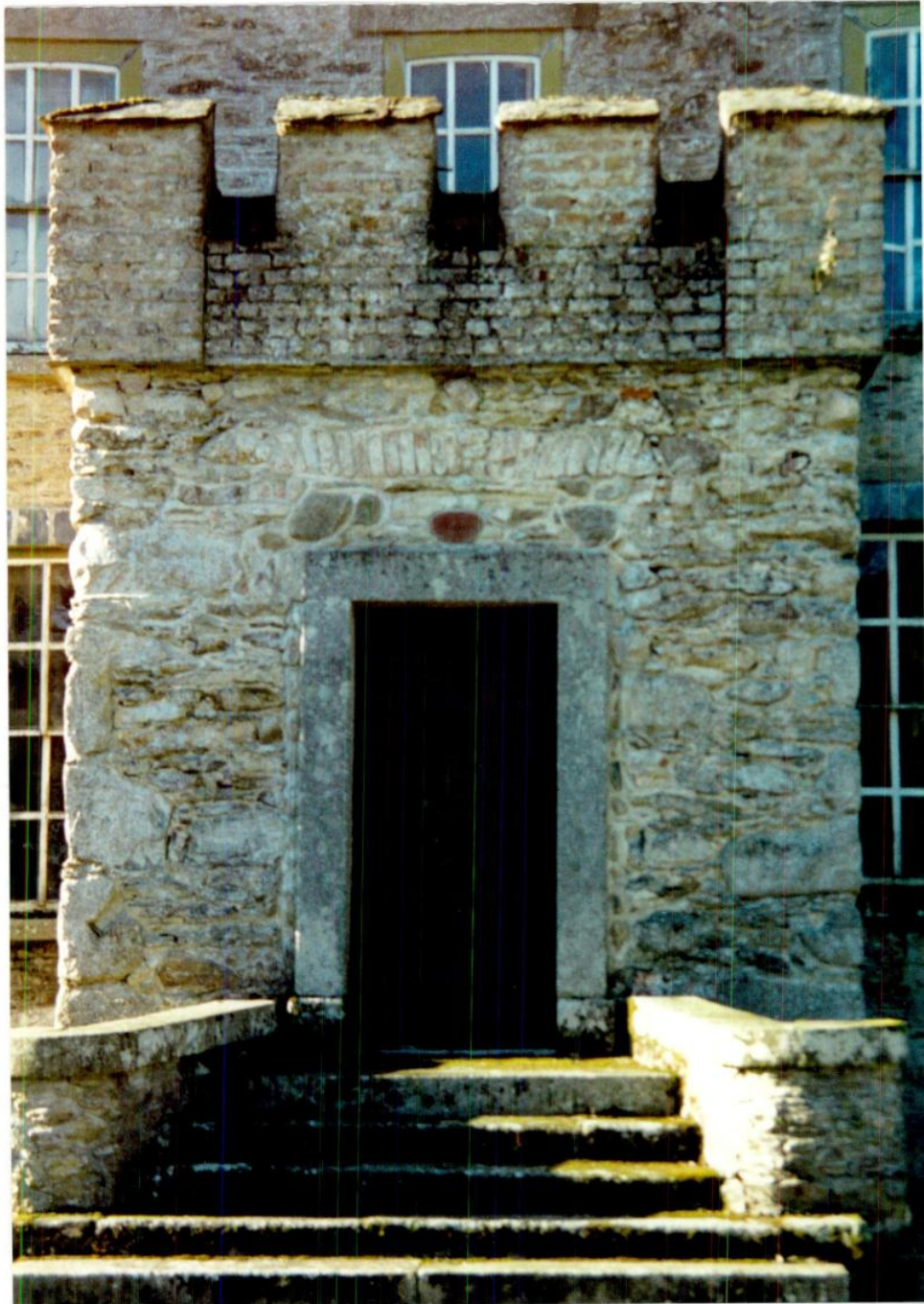
The section with the last 2 windows were a later addition.





ILLUSTRATION 7

Closer detail of the Porch added in 1680 (September 1994).





It is worth noting that these were not the only rooms panelled as later Mr. A. Durdin recalls in 1889 "that the Drawing Room, the Blue Room and Red Room (these are rooms above the Drawing Room) all on separate storeys and on both side of the house were probably panelled. Another addition to the Blue room (See Illustration 47) was an unusual granite carved fireplace.

It is thought that these Esmondés may have used the Abbey which is in ruins, as a Chapel, although there is some disputes that there may have been a chapel in what is called the Led Room (see Illustration 31). What is known is that the courtyard here incorporating the abbey was removed (see Illustration 20) and the building of the back courtyard introduced with the Mill as well as a few stables, possibly using some of the stones of the front courtyard and allowing the ground in front to be made with a drive to the porch.

The name of the castle is even changed at this stage, formerly known as Clonegan or Clonegal Castle, it is now renamed Huntington Castle, after a place called 'Hunnington' in Lincolnshire from which the Esmondés originally came. The name "Huntington" probably came about through the mispronunciation of Hunnington, mispronounced and all, this name still remains today. To the grounds, Sir Laurence planted an Avenue in the front of lime trees, which he had brought back from France. The whole garden was laid cut at this time in a symmetrical form corresponding to the classical style of landscape fashionable during the late 17th century in France. Notes of this garden and particularly the avenue were taken by Charles Topham⁶:-

"Huntington is likewise contiguous to poor Clonegal. Here is the delightful seat of Mr. Durdin which commands a very extensive prospect. A superb avenue leads from this to Clonegall. The exuberant branches of the venerable trees at either side form a shade through which neither sun, rain or wind can penetrate".

⁶ Charles Topham Bowden, 1791, M. A. Durdin was in residence who wrote in a "Tour through Ireland".

Many changes occurred now, for the Esmondes not only bettered their castle but the surrounding town of Clonegal, as they are responsible for the building up of the village into an estate village (Illustrations 8, 9 & 10), you can see some of these buildings at the entrance to Huntington Castle which still survive and are being lived in today. Clonegal developed to an extent that it had a large distillery and at least ten malt houses along with holding one of the biggest frieze fairs.

This wealth and prosperity was not to continue and develop as the Esmonde family ran into financial difficulty along with tragedies such as the death of Laurence's son, Richard, who accidentally shot himself with a fowling piece while trying to discharge the gun in the hall of Huntington Castle - this bullet mark is still to be seen about 2 feet up from the ground in the panelling to the left of the pair of front doors. It was shortly after this when Laurence died, with the result the castle was handed down to his youngest son, John.

Unfortunately, with all these tragedies, Huntington Castle went into decline for by 1740, it is reported that much of the land had already been sold. However, the castle remained in the Esmonde family until 1758 when Sir John Esmonde 6th Baron died, leaving his widow Elanor and three daughters, Helen, Lucy and Elizabeth, but no sons. The castle was left to the three coheiresses and titled passed onto Sir Walter, Another branch of the family. It was then decided due to strained circumstances, that Elanor's brother had a mortgage on the house to put the castle up for auction. Elanor commissioned Charles Frizell to value the property and Huntington Castle was sold by "Public Chant" to the highest bidder for £2,000 to a Bishop James Leslie.



ILLUSTRATION 8

*Taken from the road entrance to Huntington Castle.
The houses on either side would most likely have been built
when Sir Laurence Esmonde (2) was in command
and the estate was booming.*





ILLUSTRATION 9

Cottage right to the entrance.





ILLUSTRATION 10

House left to the entrance of Huntington Castle.



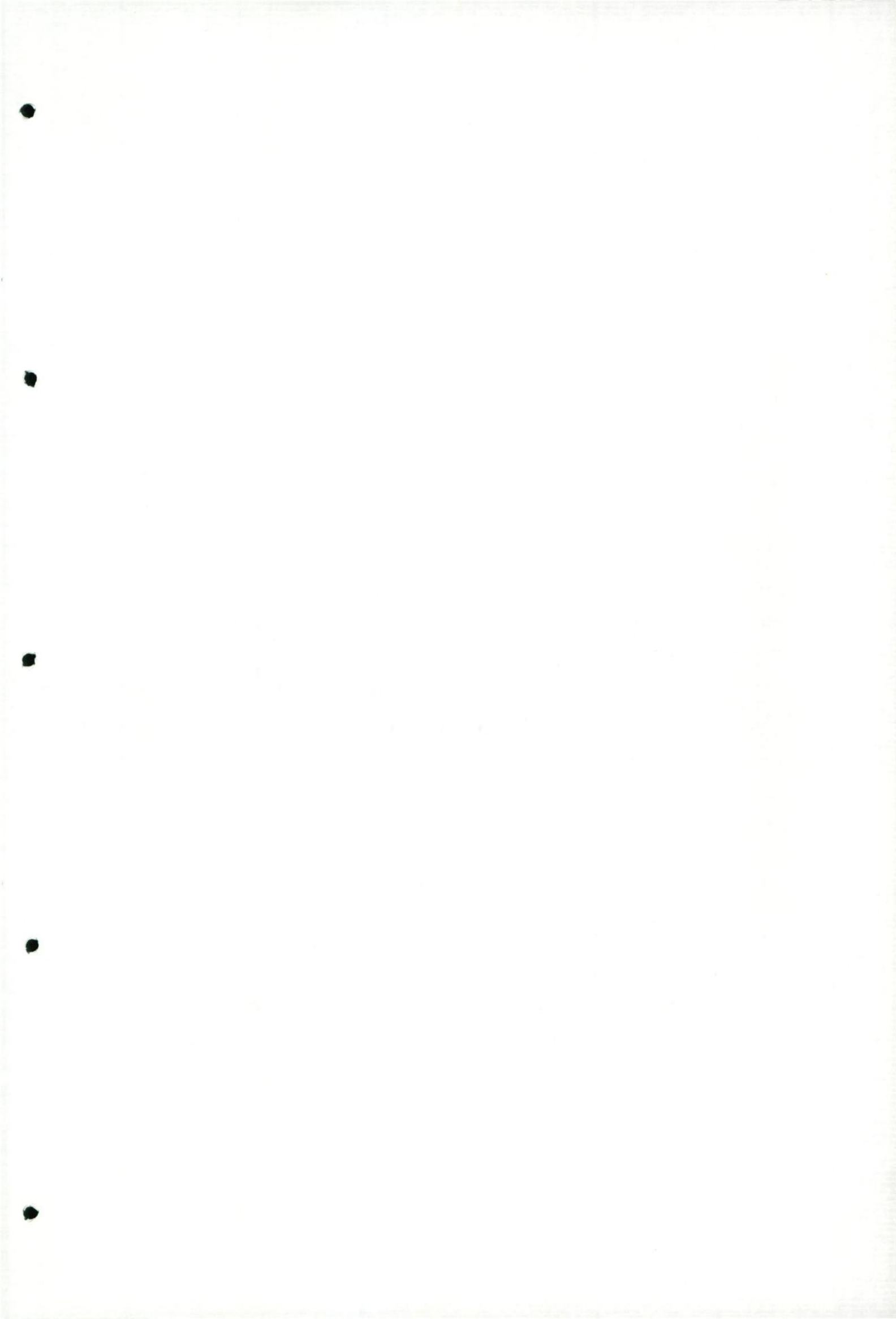


BISHOP JAMES LESLIE 1758-1781

I feel that this was one of the largest mistakes made with Huntington Castle as Bishop Leslie had no real love or interest in the house. He did not bring about any changes or even repairs. Apart from a story that the balusters of the first and second flights of stairs did not extend as far as the stairs, the last of the threads having no baluster. This story goes that the Bishop used to trip at this particular spot, hence a newel-post of mahogany was installed there it now goes by the "Bishop's Post".

Obviously, from the house he took no interest in the place for within these few years, he had allowed the village and estate to fragment. Finally in the event of his death, it went to his eldest son Edward, who there appears had it mortgaged to the Hon. Mrs. Halliburton a niece of the Bishop.

What is very important and to note here, is these are the only years when the house is owned by a complete stranger, luckily not for long for it returns to the family in a round about way when Durdins decide to lease it, first renting it, leading to them purchasing Huntington Castle.



DURDINS 1781-1880

Previous to Mr. Leslie buying Huntington in 1754, Helen Esmonde (ref. Family Tree), one of the heiresses to Huntington Castle, married Richard Durdin in whose family the castle had remained ever since. It was Richard Durdin's father Alexander Durdin who had married four times, firstly to Miss Duncomb, secondly Mary Duncan, by whom Richard was born, thirdly to Mrs. Anne Penn, widow of William Penn, the grandson of the founder of Pennsylvania, and it was through this marriage that he acquired property in Pennsylvania and some Penn silver, finally his fourth wife Barbara St. Leger, with whom he had 14 children and bought Huntington Castle.

Although Alexander Durdin (I) disagreed with the marriage between Richard and Helen on the grounds that she was Roman Catholic, he sent them off to Pennsylvania where they settled, however, he was interested in Helen's home i.e. Huntington, so much so, that he rented it for a term of "Three Lives", at an annual rent of £117 from Mrs. Halliburton. This move was probably what saved Huntington Castle from destruction, for the house is reported to have been greatly out of repair and on this account £200 was remitted from Alexander Durdins rent over a period of two years providing he spent that amount on the house and the surrounding buildings.

Occupying the castle only on occasions which were mainly sporting ones, Alexander Durdin made quite an impact in restoring Huntington Castle for about the time he moved into the castle, the Romantic Movement was in full swing, one result of this movement was the building on of battlements of bricks and plaster which were not in keeping with the original building, but did give the romantic feeling of the charming princes and princess stories.



Staying with the exterior, he enlarged the windows on the ground floor as they were originally in the form of enlarged port-holes since the time of Laurence Esmonde of 1615. Then late again in 1769, the windows on the upper storeys were enlarged to correspond and appear balanced from the outside.

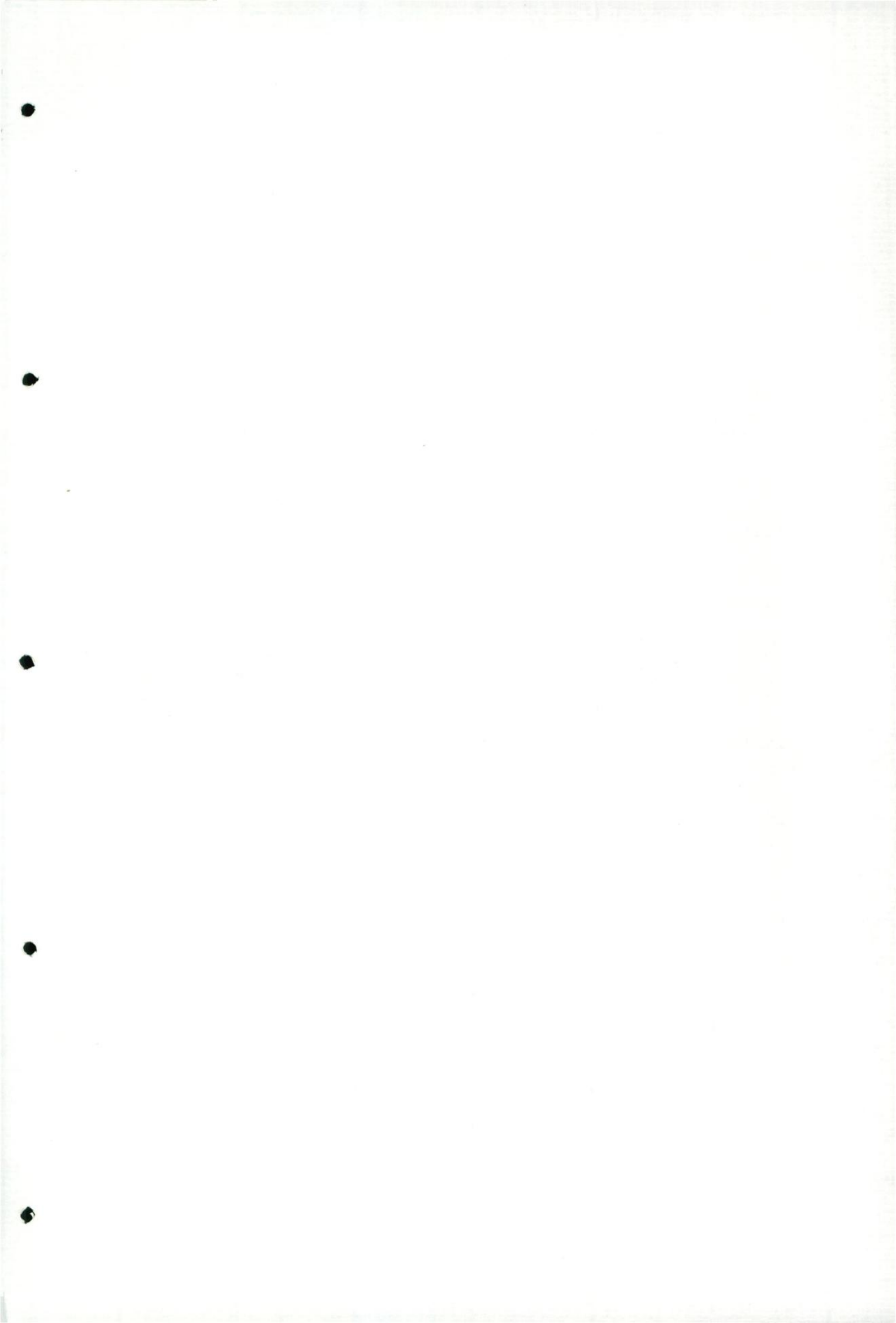
Alexander Durdin changed the kitchen from the basement onto the ground floor (see Illustration 25) at the back of the hall, making a passage from the kitchen to the hall through the back of the fireplace. This allowed food to be served quickly into the Hall, which was and is still, used as a Dining Room. This passage also allowed the Dining Room to be cleaned up just as quick.

These changes mentioned happened before 1798, when the entire district fell into the hands of the Rebels, with the exception of Huntington Castle and the village of Clonegal which it tended to. As Huntington Castle had a large courtyard. The Kings forces rested here, forming a citadel.

This rebellion in itself brought some more changes as the windows that had just been enlarged, had to be blocked up once again. It was during these times that people turned to Huntington for safety, many Protestant families such as the Bracksles and Crohns, took refuge in the castle and were safe from the Rebels.

Shortly after this in 1807, Alexander Durdin (I) died, leaving the house to his four sons by Barbara Leger, William Leader, the youngest of these sons, finally brought the lease out by 1827 from his brothers and purchased the rights from Mrs. Halliburton.

William Leader Durdin had a short life in Huntington Castle, nevertheless, he helped to bring the Romantic Movement on a stage further by decorating the porch, staircase and the main rooms of the house in a colour scheme.

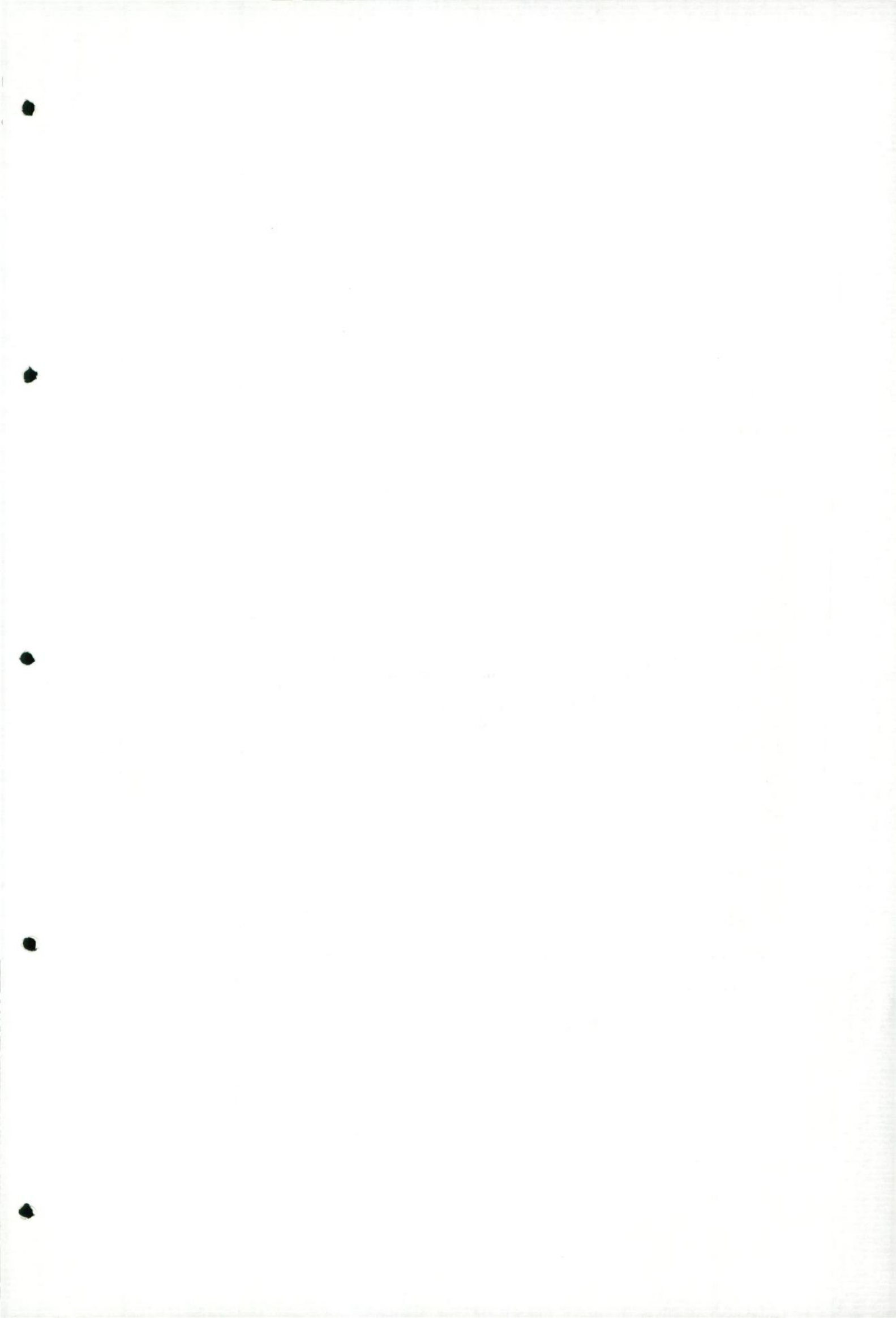


This colour coding of the rooms has managed to remain with the house to the present day, not by colour necessarily, but by reference. For example, The Pink Room today is not pink, but in actual fact has been many colours but always referred to as The Pink Room.

Mr. W.L. Durdin, a doctor by profession, appears to have been extra kind and helped the people of Clonegal during the famine which added to the decline of the area and this may also have shortened his life. Within this lifespan he had married Anne Drury (see Family Tree) and they had one son Alexander (II) who was to become the new heir in 1849.

This Alexander Durdin (II) in my opinion, was one of the most influential associated with Huntington Castle for a long time. In 1860, (see Illustration 26), he built on the Dining Room (now the Tapestry Room) and the Library above it; also the Tower Room including the tiled passage, the Pillar Room - previously the Pantry and Scullery. It derived this name from pillars standing in it, the housekeepers room over the potato house and also some of the stable houses such as The Red House. This was a cowbyre and a corn loft and additional pigstyes.

He also developed the gardens with the introduction of terraces, ponds and bridges. He planted new shrubs and scotts pine. As for the courtyard (see Illustration 21), he took out the wall which ran diagonally across from north to south which had been used to support some hen houses and pigsties. About this time, the old Abbey at the side of the castle is said to have been used as a kennel for harriers. This is not all, for he built the original conservatory at the southeast side of the house. Next task, inside was the installation of central heating, starting beneath the conservatory and running through various rooms in the house. The radiator in the Library is among the originals, still in use. He did not stop with the installation of heating, but the entire house had a



system of plumbing introduced. By 1870, he had added the Back Porch (see Illustration 25) and then oak panelling was put through the passage, along with the addition of some doors between the Hall and the Drawing Room, were previously to this, there was a window with some storage about it.

It seems this man was determined to have every mod con of the day in Huntington Castle, when then he took the giant step of installing electric light in 1888. Thus making it the second house in Ireland to have its own electricity. Huntington Castle was ideally located for such an event, as it is so closely positioned to the River Derry, allowing a turbine to be built to create the power for electricity from the water. This scheme was arranged not by Alexander Durdin (II), but his son-in-law Herbert T. Robertson. The operation was carried out by Mr. John Heur and electrical engineer of Dunleer, Co. Louth, along with labour men from Co. Louth and Clonegal, thus creating needed employment, the job was completed as the Daily Express April 14th 1888 reported:-

"Electric Light in Ireland... an installation of electric light has just effected at Huntington Castle, Co. Carlow, the residence of Alexander Durdin, Esq., J.P.L.L.D. It appears that it became desirable to erect a turbine to pump water in the summer for the use of the house, stable and gardens and for filling ponds and it was decided at the same time, to utilise the power for electric lighting ...".

This feat must have seemed amazing at this time, for an electric light bulb was installed on the top floor of the castle so that the local people could look up and see the new wonder. Alexander Durdin (II) had an incredible amount of energy which he obviously gave willingly to the development and betterment of Huntington Castle. He died in 1892, having 4 daughters. He left the castle to his eldest daughter Helen who had previously married Herbert Robertson in 1880, and thus the name of Robertson appears into the Family Tree and consequently into the line of owners of Huntington Castle.



ROBERTSON 1892-TO DATE

Considering that the castle was originally his wife's inheritance, Herbert Robertson took a great interest in Huntington and proceeded to undertake many changes with the estate. Although devoted to political issues in England, leading to him being elected as M.P. for South Hackney. He was also active in Irish affairs, notably in the Land Purchase Act, with the outcome that in 1899, he became High Sheriff for his Irish home of County Carlow.

So deeply interested in his wife's Family Tree, that he published for private circulation only, "Stemmata Robertson of Durdin". This showed the genealogical tables of his and his wife's ancestors. Today, it is held in Huntington Castle and indeed, I found it extremely helpful in realising and following the ownership of Huntington Castle.

Between the years 1892-1893, Herbert Robertson undertook to change and rebuild the conservatory to what it is today (see Illustration 11 & 12). His son Manning Robertson who was at that time residing in London, was responsible for this new design (see Illustration 29) and although it was supposed to include iron wrought railings, we can see from the photographs 11 & 12, today, that this never happened. What did take place, was that Manning Robertson decided to add his own touch by getting the balconies carved in granite by local masons. At one stage of the previous owners life, Alexander Durdin II, an attempt had been made to enlarge the basement windows. Although I do not know at what precise date this attempt occurred, it did have a detrimental effect in that it caused the upper floor to cave in, to such a manner that a beam at one end of the Drawing Room above sank, destroying the handworked ceiling in this room.

ILLUSTRATION 11

A view of the Conservatory from the Yew Walk





ILLUSTRATION 12

*Conservatory as it is today,
with the unusual granite balcony,
done by Manning Robertson.*





This ceiling is recorded to have been hand painted, alas, it is no more. After this event, it appears from the visitors book of Huntington which was used more as a diary of events, that Herbert Robertson replaced the previous girder with an elaborate fibrous plaster, not just in the Drawing Room, but it was continued into other rooms such as the Hallway and Dining Room (see Illustration 13 & 14). Although these ceilings may not be exclusive as you could order this type of decoration by the square yard from the army and navy stores catalogue it did nevertheless add an air of notability to the place.

By 1902, this plaster work had spread further into the inner passages, then came the new flooring of the old castle and by the end of spring, Herbert Robertson had the castle entirely refloored. The craftsmen responsible were local carpenters i.e. Wallace Carpenters. After which he had tiles laid in the Conservatory and along the tiled passage. This job was carried out by Italian workers who are reported to have rowed a lot at this time, often ending up in fights!

Although Helen Robertson did not reside much at Huntington Castle preferring to live in her new Bristol home, Herbert Robertson took the liberty in 1907 to build an Anglican Chapel in dedication for her. It is said to have been panelled with organ and all other necessary equipment.

These were not the only men to fight, for again in June of 1922 - 14th April 1923, during the Civil War, Huntington Castle saw 5 successive Free State soldiers use this house as its headquarters for the rounding up of their irregulars in counties Carlow, Wicklow and Wexford. Luckily, no damage was done to the house, however proof of their stay can be seen in the visitors book, where they left their signatures. During this time, all silver and valuables were hidden in the secret room which is cleverly situated underneath the south east bay window of the Tapestry Room which allowed for their safe-keep.



ILLUSTRATION 13

Detail of the ceiling in the Hall.





ILLUSTRATION 14

The ceiling plasterwork in the Dining Hall.



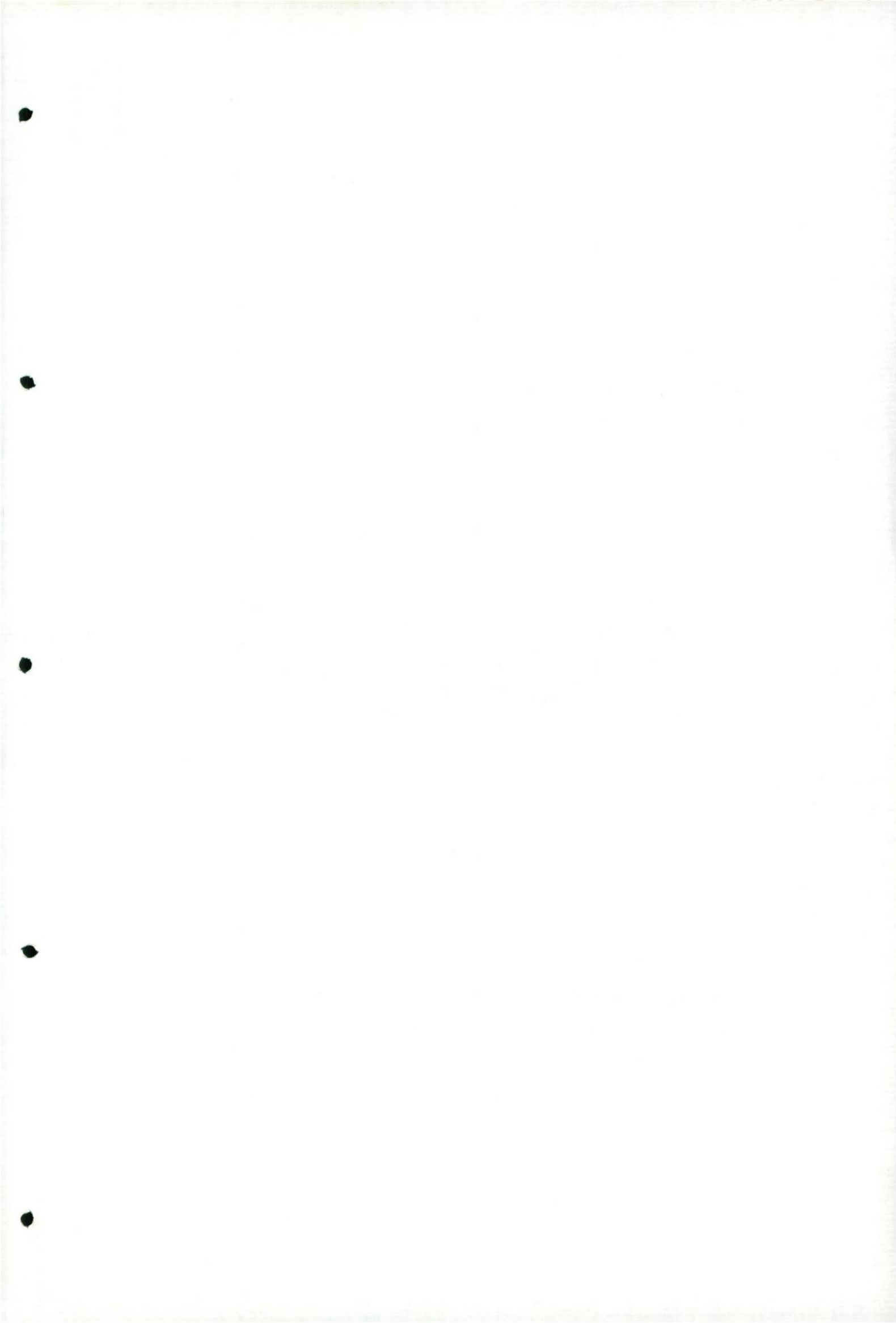


How the entire gardens looked at this stage, I am a little uncertain. There is record of Herbert Robertson adding to the garden. The photocopy (Illustration 55) was taken c. 1924 and shows that they were formal. However, this is just one section of the garden and it did also include other areas such as the lakes and the wilderness. I also believe that it may have been Herbert Robertson who built the tennis courts at the side of the house. This assumption comes from the idea that Huntington Castle was used mainly as a holiday home for this couple, thus having so many sporting activities being along the river facilitated fishing and swimming etc.

When Helen died in 1932, she passed the estate of the castle and land of approx. 156 acres (see Illustration 28) onto Manning Durdin Robertson, realising that the castle would be in good hands. The map (Illustration 28), was drawn up in 1905 and previous to this I am unsure as to how much land was present with the Huntington Estate, however this land calculated here is still with the Robertsons.

Helen Robertson eldest son Manning was to follow in the footsteps of his ancestors of improving the house. He did not do this alone for in 1912, he married Nora Kathleen Parson, together their interest must have touched every aspect of life.

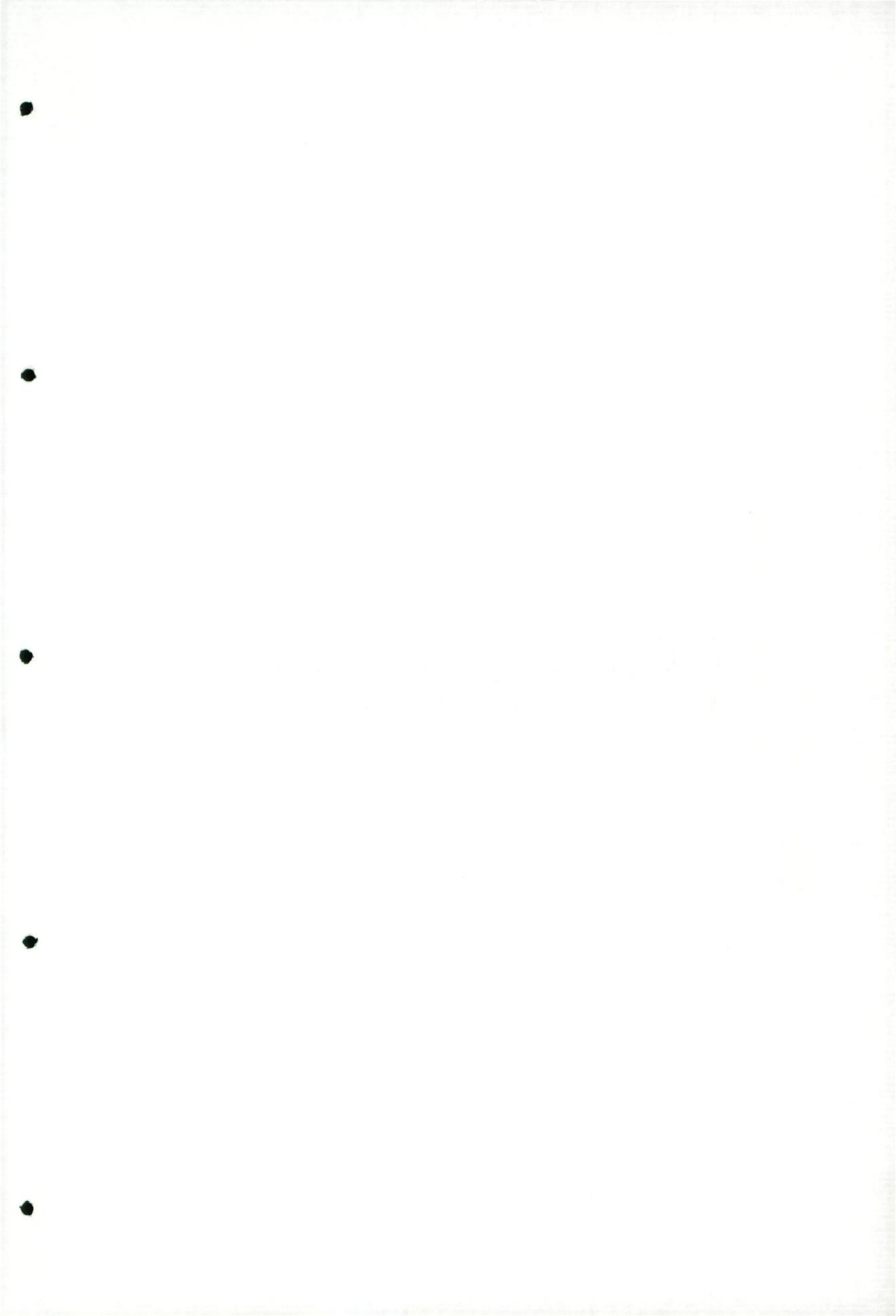
Manning Robertson, F.R.I.B.A., M.T.R.I., M.R.I.A.I., F.R.A.S., as you can see was a well learned man, a naturalist, a musician, a sportsman and a lover of the fine art. All of these adding to his profession as an architect. Like his ancestors before him, a High Sheriff of County Carlow in 1921 and the last person to hold such a position. Often described as one of the pioneers of town-planning, he was the author of many books on architecture and town planning he was also one of Dublin's three Planning Consultants in joint collaboration with Professor Abercrombie and Mr. L. Sydney Kelly.



As for his wife, Mrs. Nora Robertson, she did not stand in the shadows of her husband. Coming from a wealthy background, the only child of Lieut. General Sir Laurence Parson of Birr Castle. At the age of eight, taught to fish, as past-time which grew with her and she became one of the most noted fisherwomen of her time. She was luckily positioned in her new home at Huntington Castle as there was a fishing stretch of at least two miles which was excellent for Salmon. This love of fishing lead her to write and publish books such as "Thrifty Salmon" and "Further Thrifty Salmons". Her love of the outdoors did not stop at fishing for she was a keen gardener, a good tennis player and no better place for to reside but at Huntington. Her interest did not just remain to her house and grounds, but to the entire Clonegal area with the event that she was the President of the Clonegal branch of the I.C.A.

The combination of these two people led to the development of Huntington Castle to height it had probably never reached before. The changes they brought about included levelling lawns and moving the tennis courts to directly in front of the house. Although this in my opinion took from the house. It is said that the many championships tournaments they held there was amazing in that they brought many famous names into the small village of Clonegal. Sport must have been a great love of theirs for Manning bought the sand banks adjoining the Derry near its mouth so he could have his own 18 hole golf course laid on the banks of the Derry and the adjoining Slaney.

Manning himself worked a lot in concrete as this was like a new invention at this time, and today, you can see relics of this dotted through the gardens and the courtyard in the form of sculptured slabs at the stage there were swimming pools and bridges and then in 1927, he built the Fishing Cabin, naturally enough from his own plans which are well documented and written about as it must have been one of the first in this country and certainly the first made out of concrete.



Staying outside, he removed the battlements and turrets for at the stage, they were very dangerous and more of a hazard than anything else. While also removing the ivy from the house as it was only going to pull down the plasterwork and repaint the front of the house.

According to the plans of the house (see Illustration 29), Manning Robertson altered the back of the house in such a way that it remains today in photos 15 and 16. As we can see from the plans - this gives another lavatory, cloak room, etc., as well as bedrooms upstairs.

With two such outgoing people residing in the castle, you can imagine it was no better place to host parties and fire work displays and even today, Huntington is still remembered for the house parties that took place with the local community strictly anglers on a fishing expedition. This entertainment did not just entail parties, but Mrs. Robertson developed her own theatre in what was the ^{hill}hill in the courtyard (see Illustration 18). She named this theatre "The Shamrock Theatre" and a description from The Free Press, September 10th 1904 reads:-

"a remarkably well-appointed little theatre, lighted by electric light, fitted with an ancient building, which provides a large gallery as well as the ordinary ground floor, and was probably capable of seating about 150 spectators, and contained even more than that number and witnessing a series of performances which would not have done discredit to professionals and was surprising when found at a country home".

These performances were crammed and obviously enjoyed with the proceedings usually going to the Red Cross or some charity. However there were many more types of entertainment to be had in Huntington such as Fancy Dress, etc., thus showing the type of friendly people that existed in Huntington.

ILLUSTRATION 15

*Taken from the courtyard in the back.
The later additions such as the Porch and bedrooms, etc.
were done in a Victorian red brick.*





ILLUSTRATION 16

*Second half of the previous photo.
The room with the long windows on the upper storey
at the left of the picture, was the Chapel,
during Herbert Robertson's time.
However, it is now converted into a bedroom.*





ILLUSTRATION 17

Entrance into the back courtyard.

To the left of the photo you can see one of the turrets.



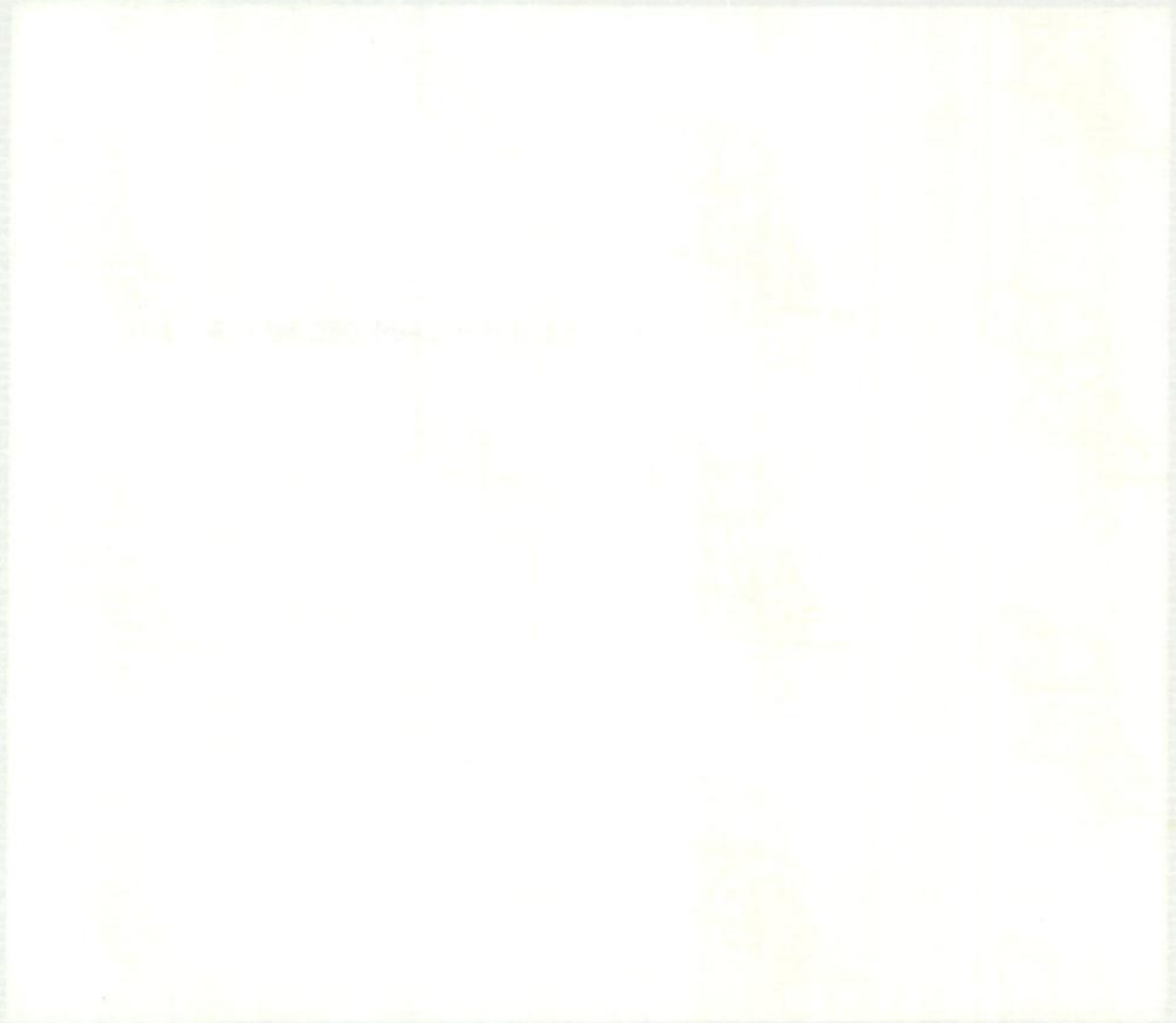


ILLUSTRATION 18

*One of the buildings in the back of the courtyard,
once a stable and then later "The Theatre"*





After Manning Durdin Robertson died in 1945, his eldest son LAURENCE ROBERTSON became the new owner. However, he was not present in Huntington for quite some time, while he took his B.A., then M.A. and even serving in the Irish Army when war broke out in 1940. Finally in England, by 1948, he was ordained into the church and it is not until 1957 that he returned to Huntington to live. All this time, Mrs. Nora Robertson still continued to reside at the castle with the rest of her family and friends, while taking on another step in 1956 when the old generator for electricity was switched off and the state electricity was brought to this house.

In 1949, during Laurence's stay in England he had married Pamela Barclay, shortly after they came to live in Huntington. Laurence founded a local Social Welfare Scheme, such were his interests to well being of his local community.

During Laurence's time in Huntington, he carried out some excavation in the late 70's, where he found several pieces of fragments of pottery and clay pipes. he also did a few alterations to the house but not as many as his predecessors as he seemed to have become interested in alternative religions in the 60's.

The few changes that he did make would have included the removing of ivy yet again from the house and the adding of the battlement and towers again as they have come down and back up several times by different owners. Tennis courts were removed to allow an uninterrupted view of the avenue from the house and vice versa, some of the banks in the gardens were removed with the addition of a concrete temple added to the garden (see Illustration 56) by Laurence.

Along with Laurence's sister, Olivia, they founded the Fellowship of Isis, a representative of goddesses of all faiths, which has become synonymous with Huntington today. The basement of the castle was converted into a temple, with shrines representing each sign of the zodiac.



Laurence seemed to become totally immersed in this and it appears to me, that the house in latter years fell into disrepair. However David Robertson, Laurence eldest son came into control of Huntington Castle after Laurence's death and is seeing to it, that Huntington will be repaired in such manner that it will suit their needs as a house to be lived in, with a house that has a history which should be remembered fondly.

And so tradition continues of change and evolution. So the next time I visit Huntington, it will more than likely have changed yet again. I have included plans of how the different storeys of the house look today (see Illustrations 29, 30 & 31). However they are in constant change due to the fact that some are indeed in need of repair so it is impossible to give any judgements on these changes as they are only in the process and not finished.



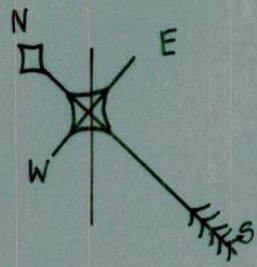
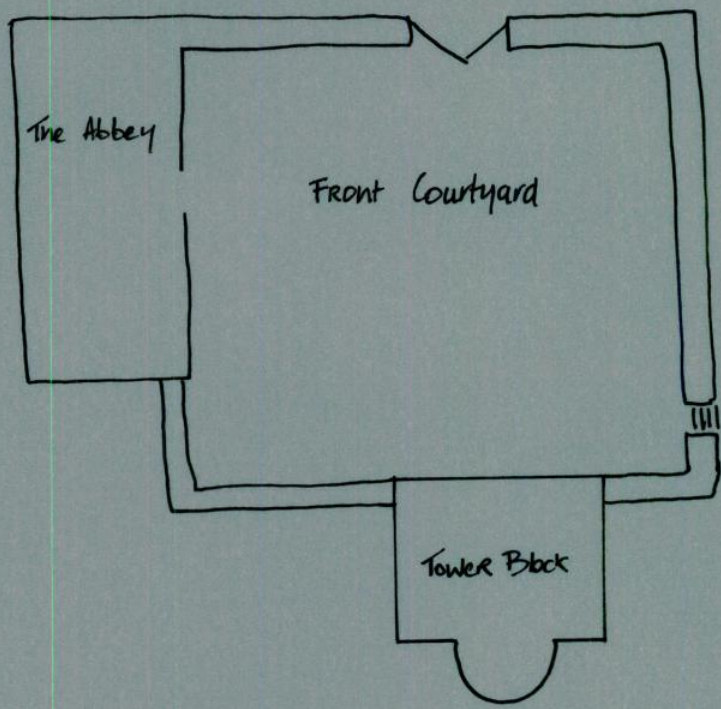
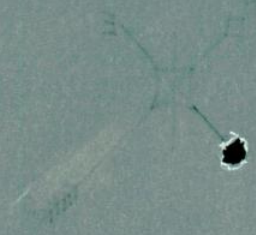


ILLUSTRATION 19
 Plan of the grounds in 1630



AVENUE

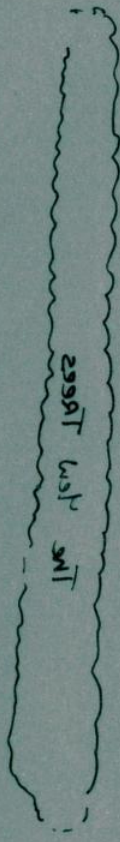
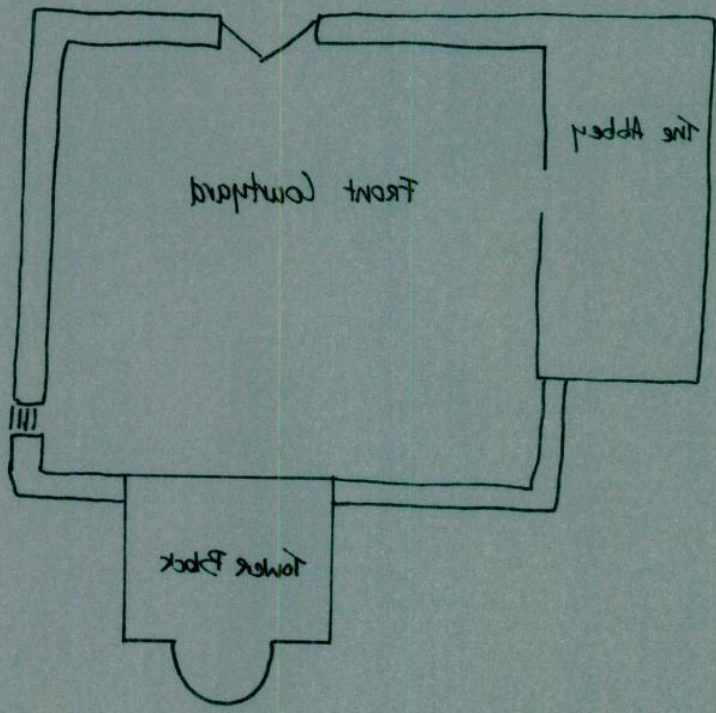
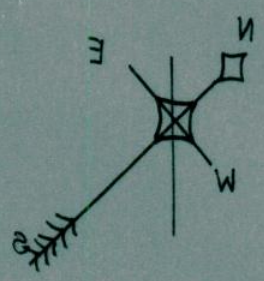


ILLUSTRATION 19
Plan of the grounds in 1830



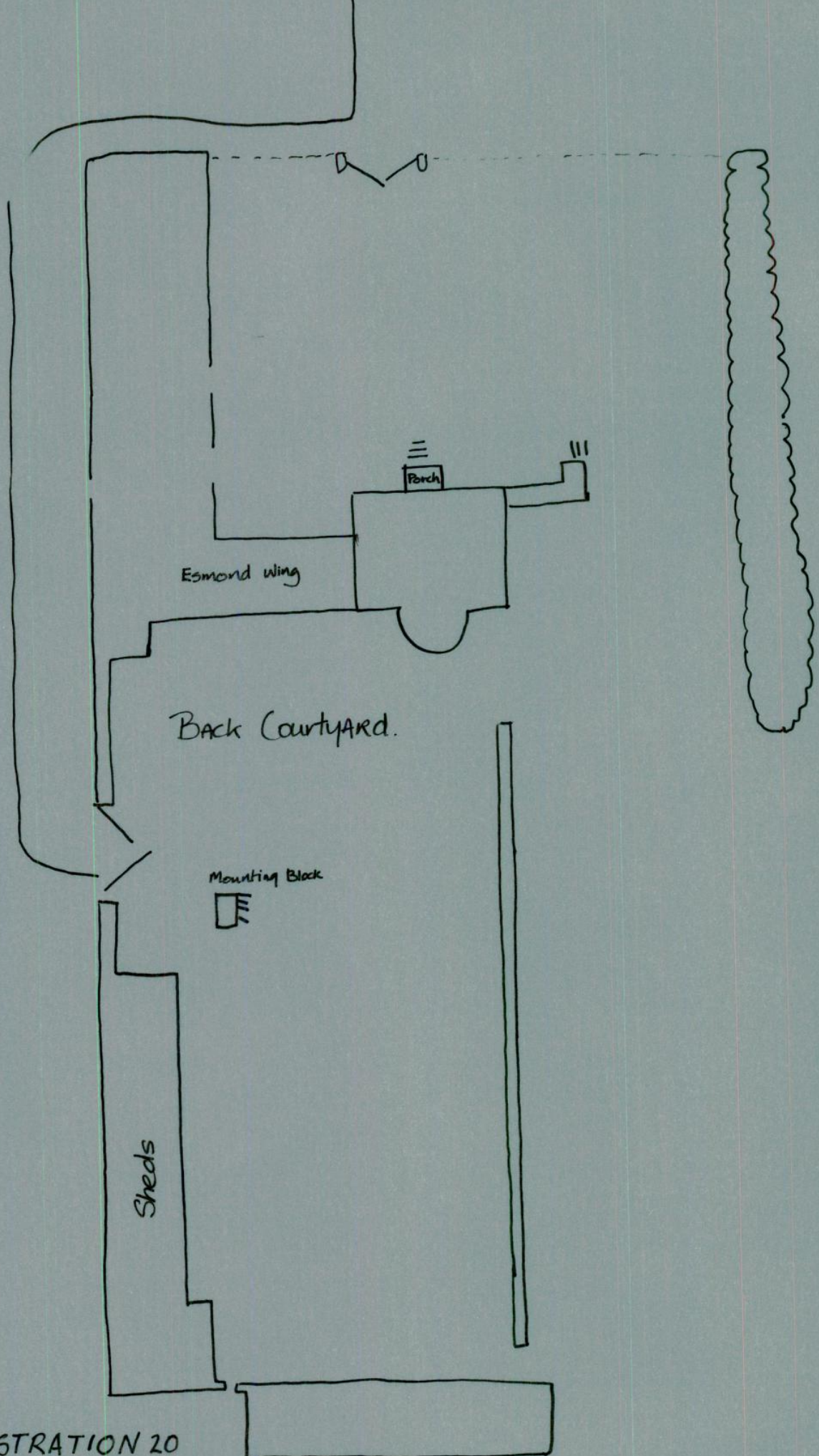


ILLUSTRATION 20
Plan of the grounds in 1680

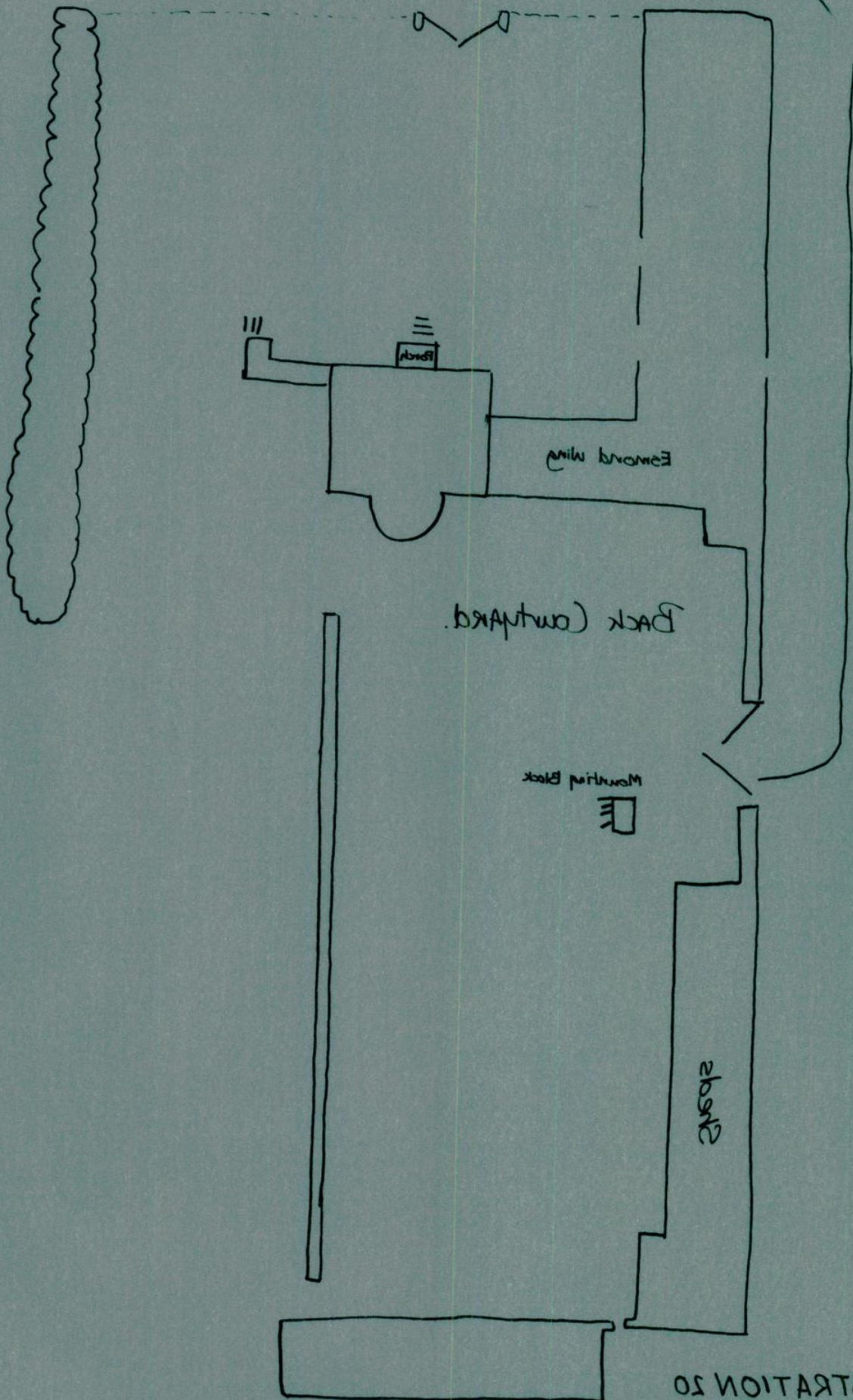


ILLUSTRATION 50
Plan of the grounds in 1880

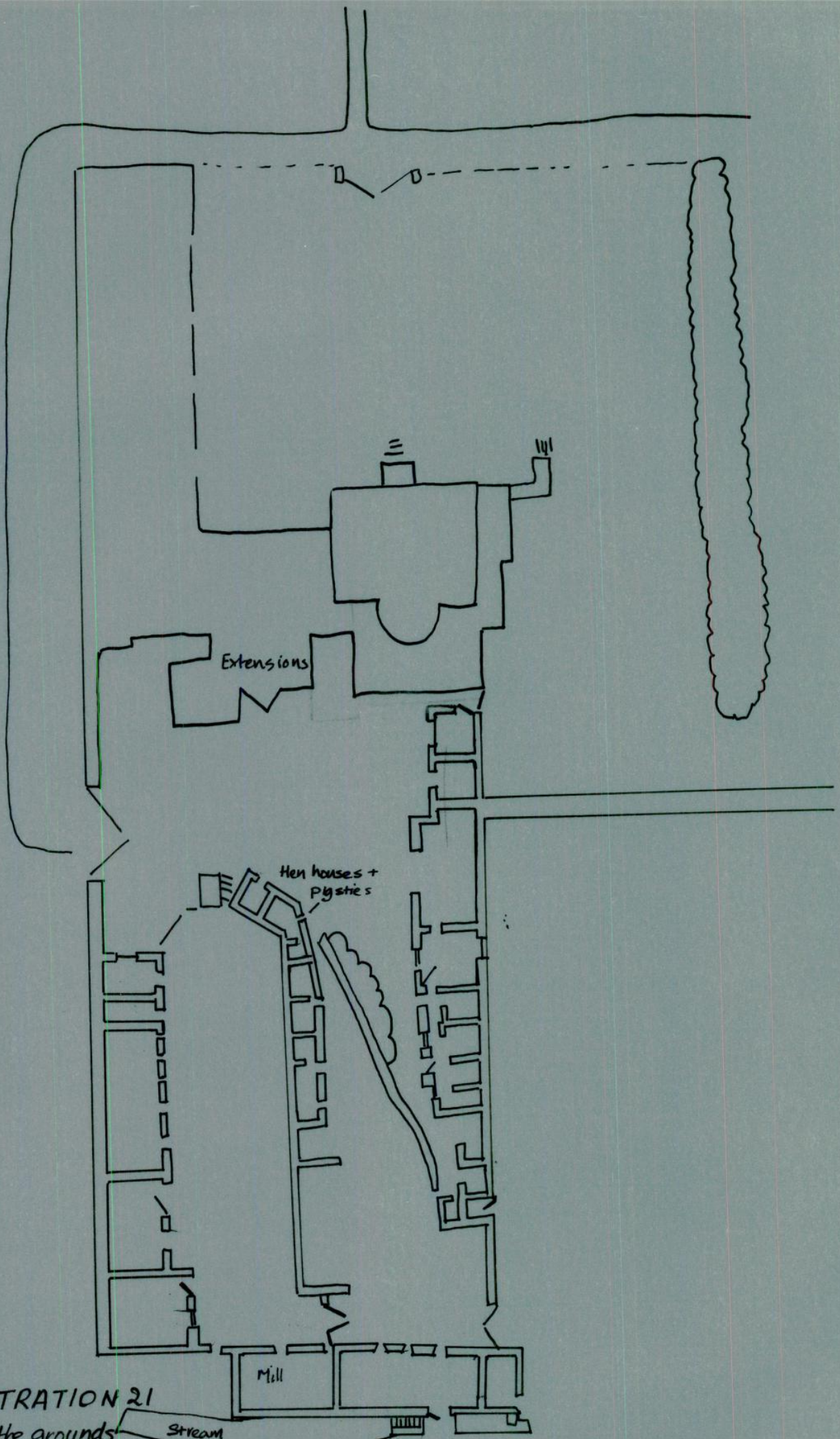
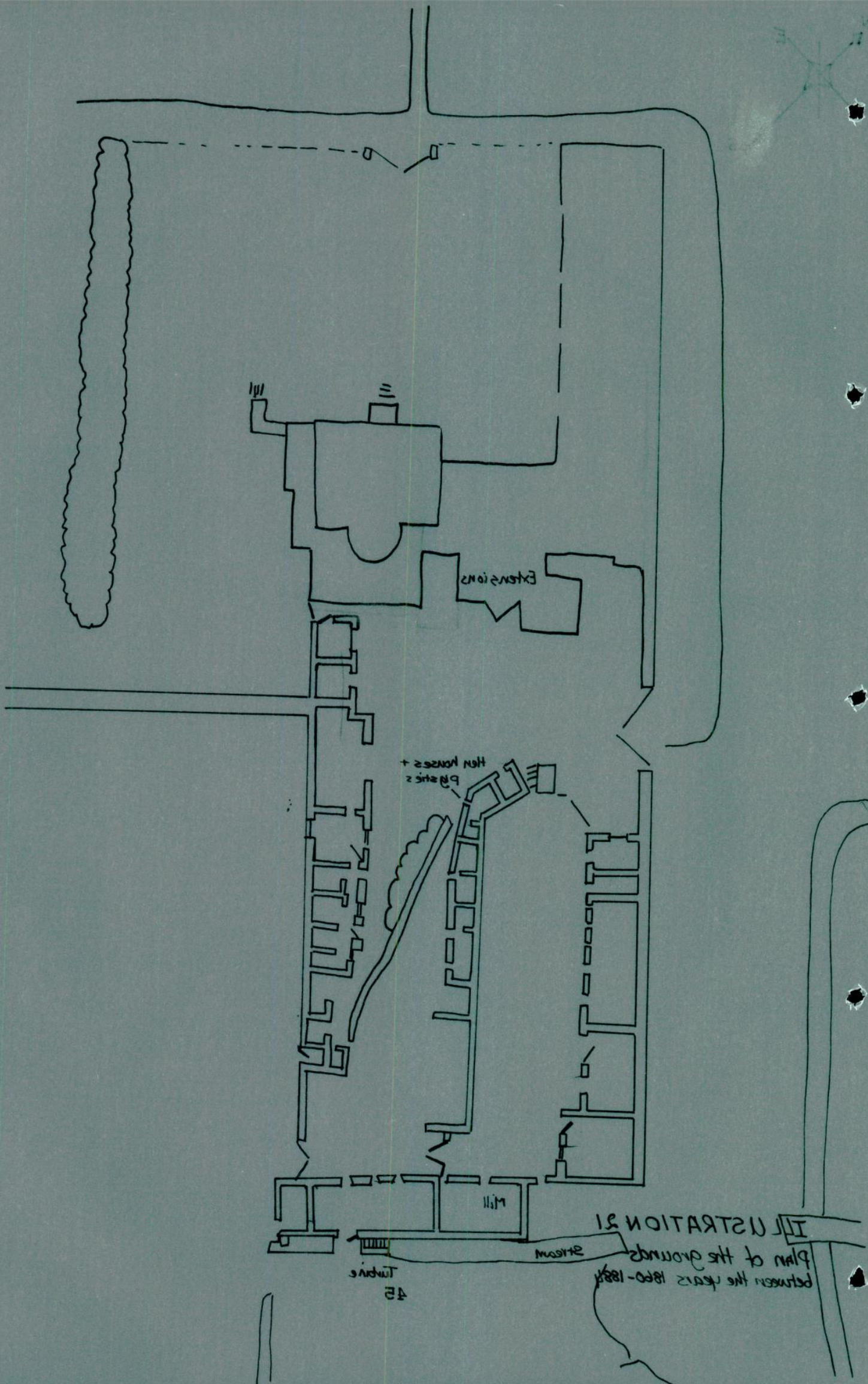
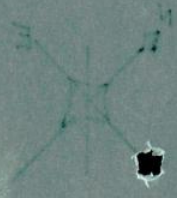


ILLUSTRATION 21
Plan of the grounds
between the years 1860-1884

Turbine
45



PLAN OF THE GROUNDS
BETWEEN THE YEARS 1880-1884
ILLUSTRATION 21

Temples
42

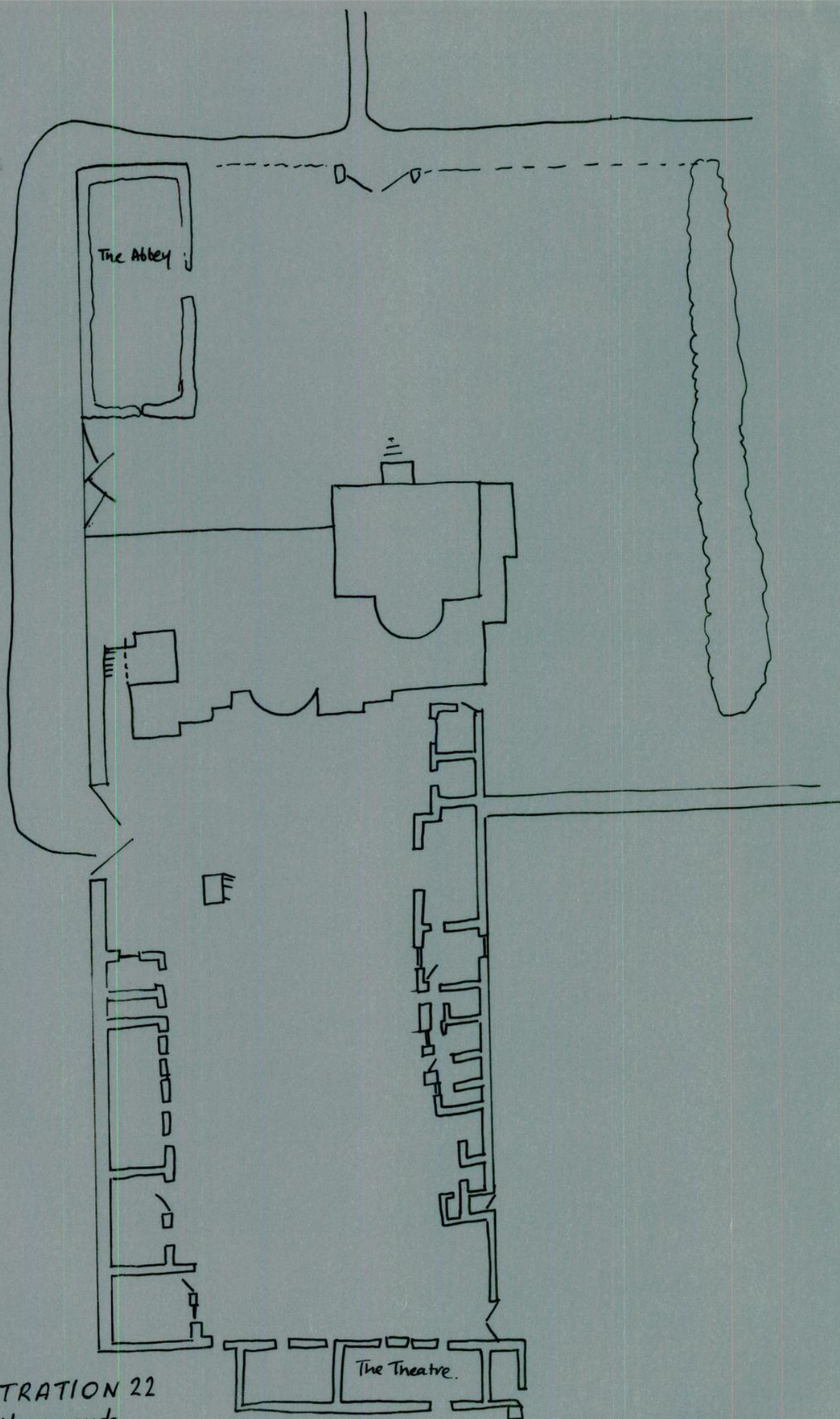
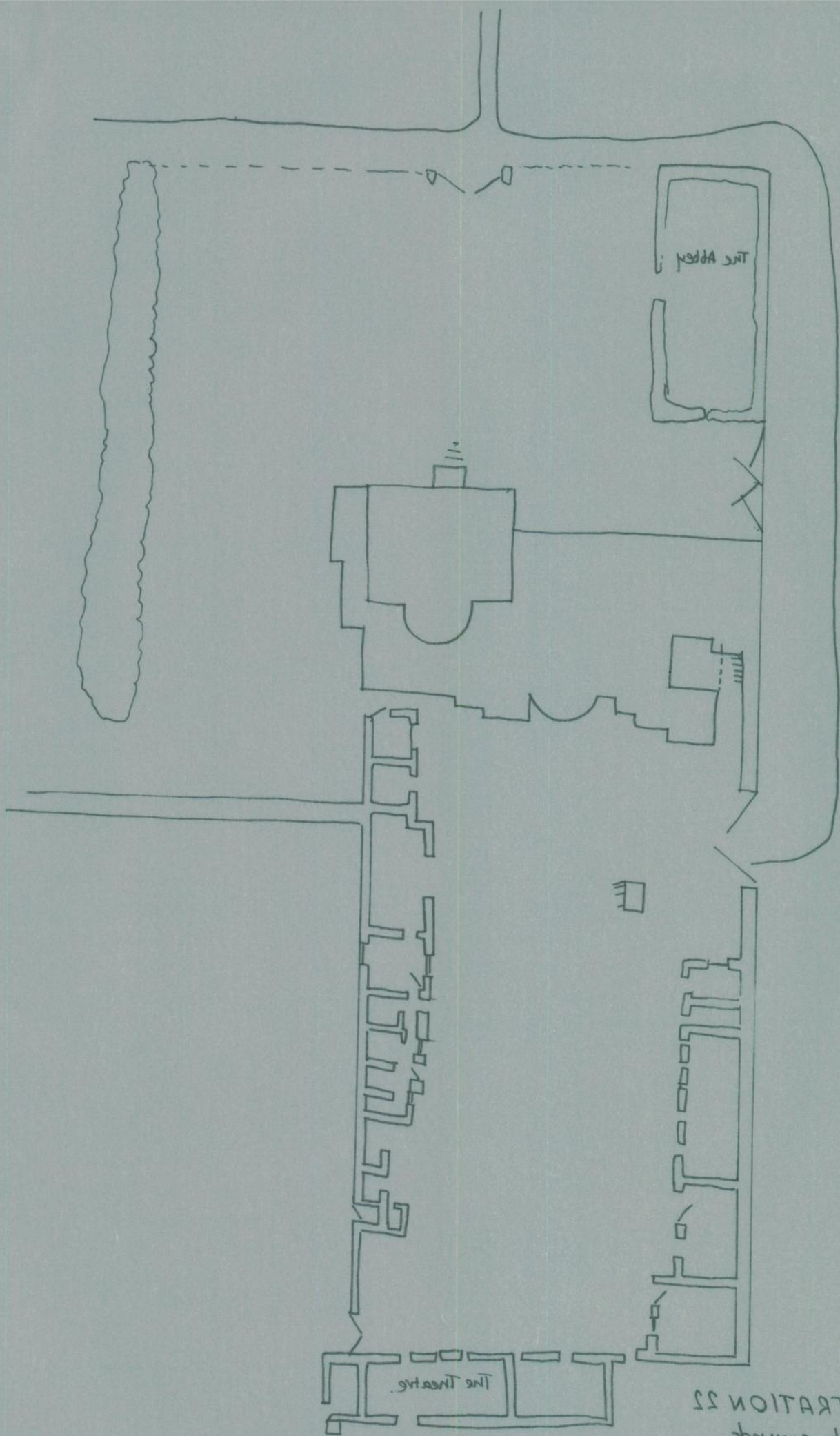


ILLUSTRATION 22
Plan of the grounds
after 1884



OFFICE
PLAN OF THE
ILLUSTRATION 22

48

The library

The office

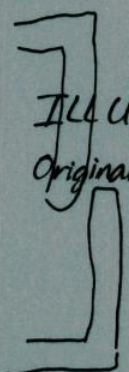
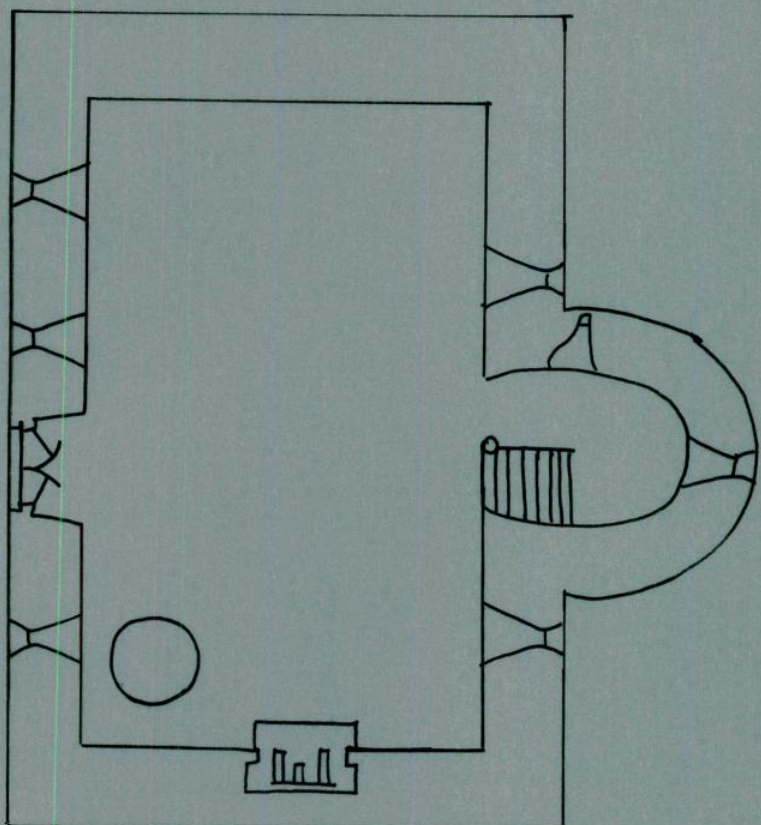
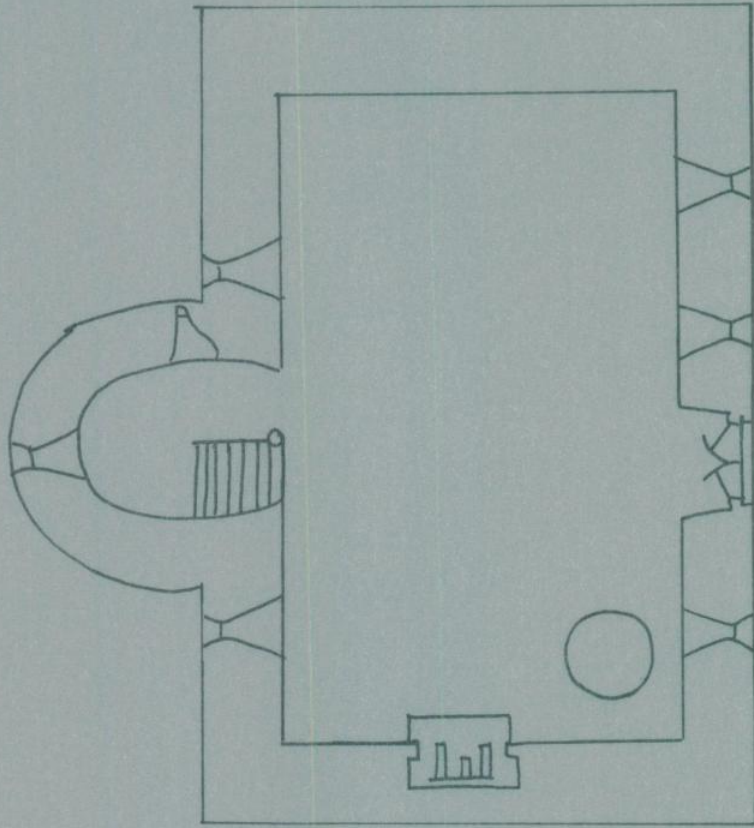


ILLUSTRATION 23
Original Tower Block of 1615



47

Original tower block of 1912
 ILLUSTRATION 23

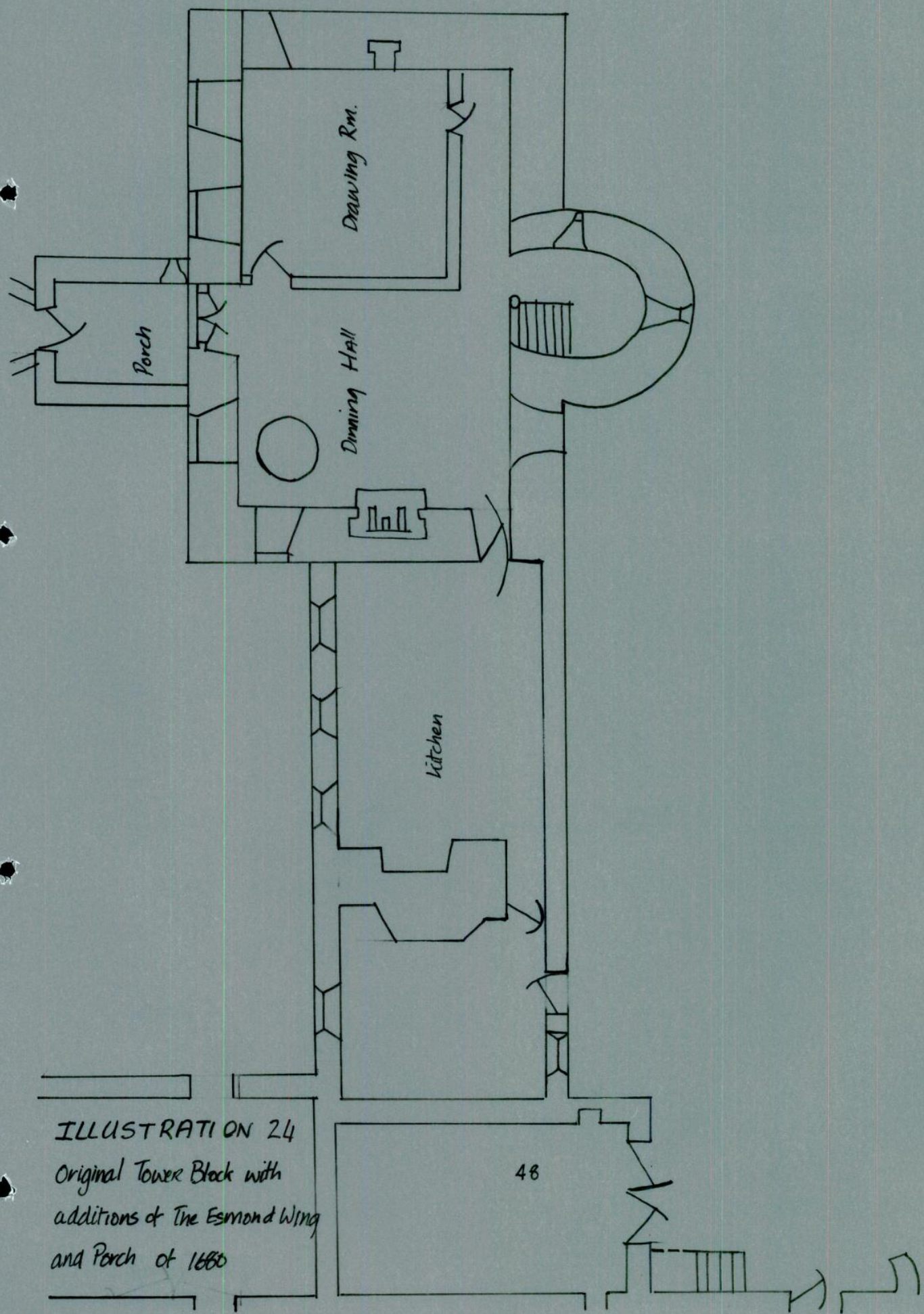


ILLUSTRATION 24
Original Tower Block with
additions of The Esmond Wing
and Porch of 1680

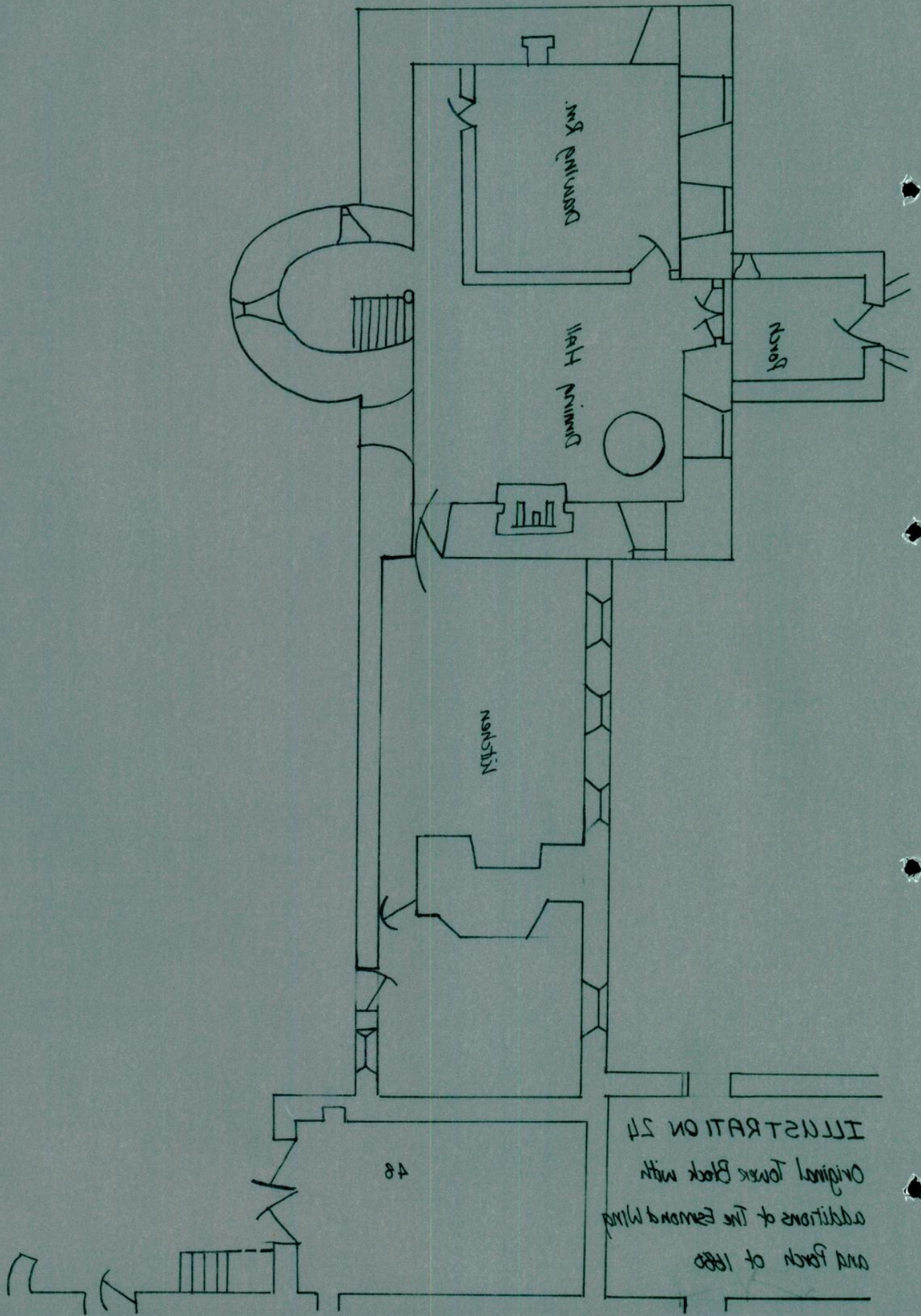


ILLUSTRATION 54
 Original Tower Block with
 additions of the Edward Wind
 and porch of 1880

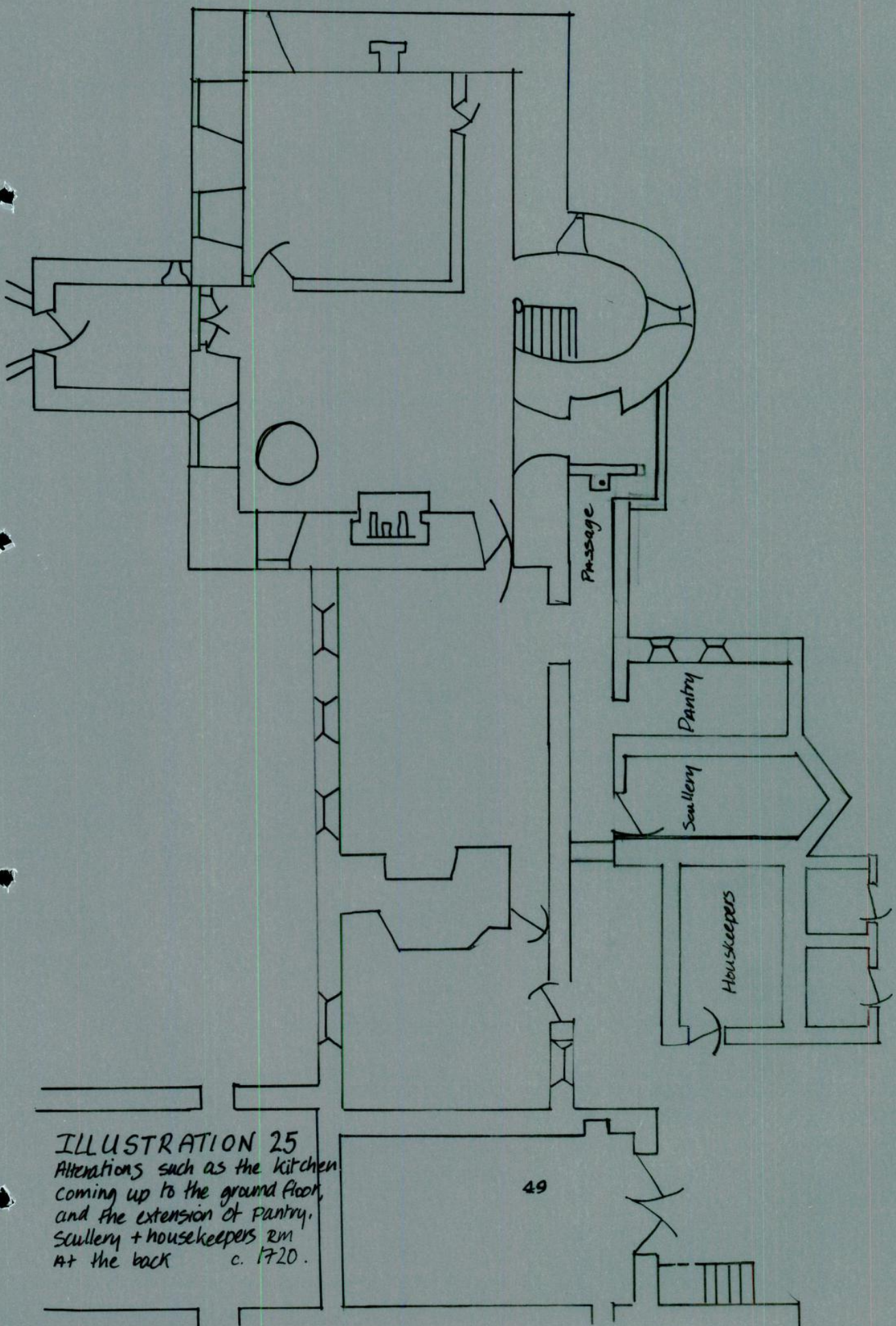
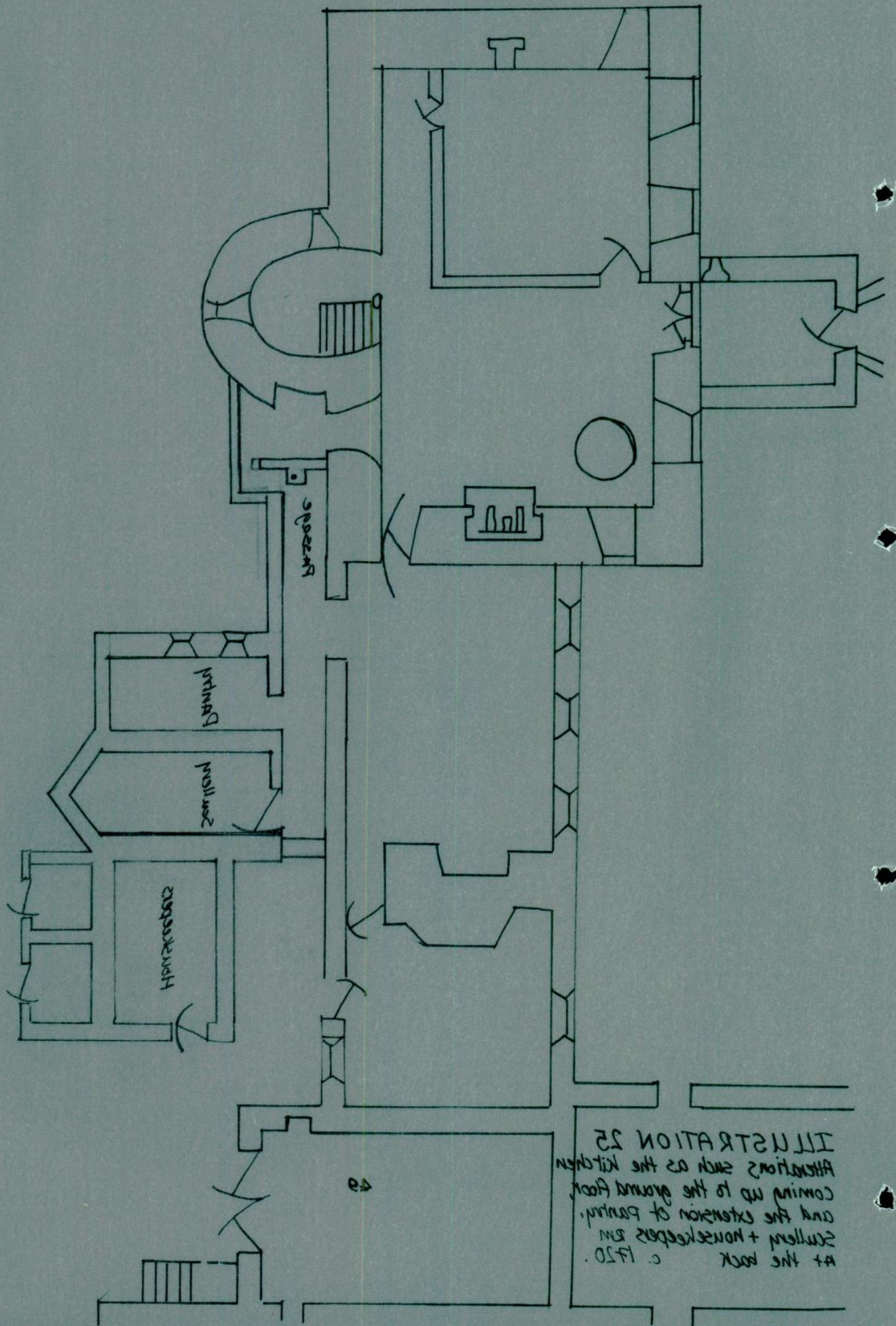


ILLUSTRATION 25
 Alterations such as the kitchen
 coming up to the ground floor,
 and the extension of Pantry,
 Scullery + housekeepers rm
 at the back c. 1720.



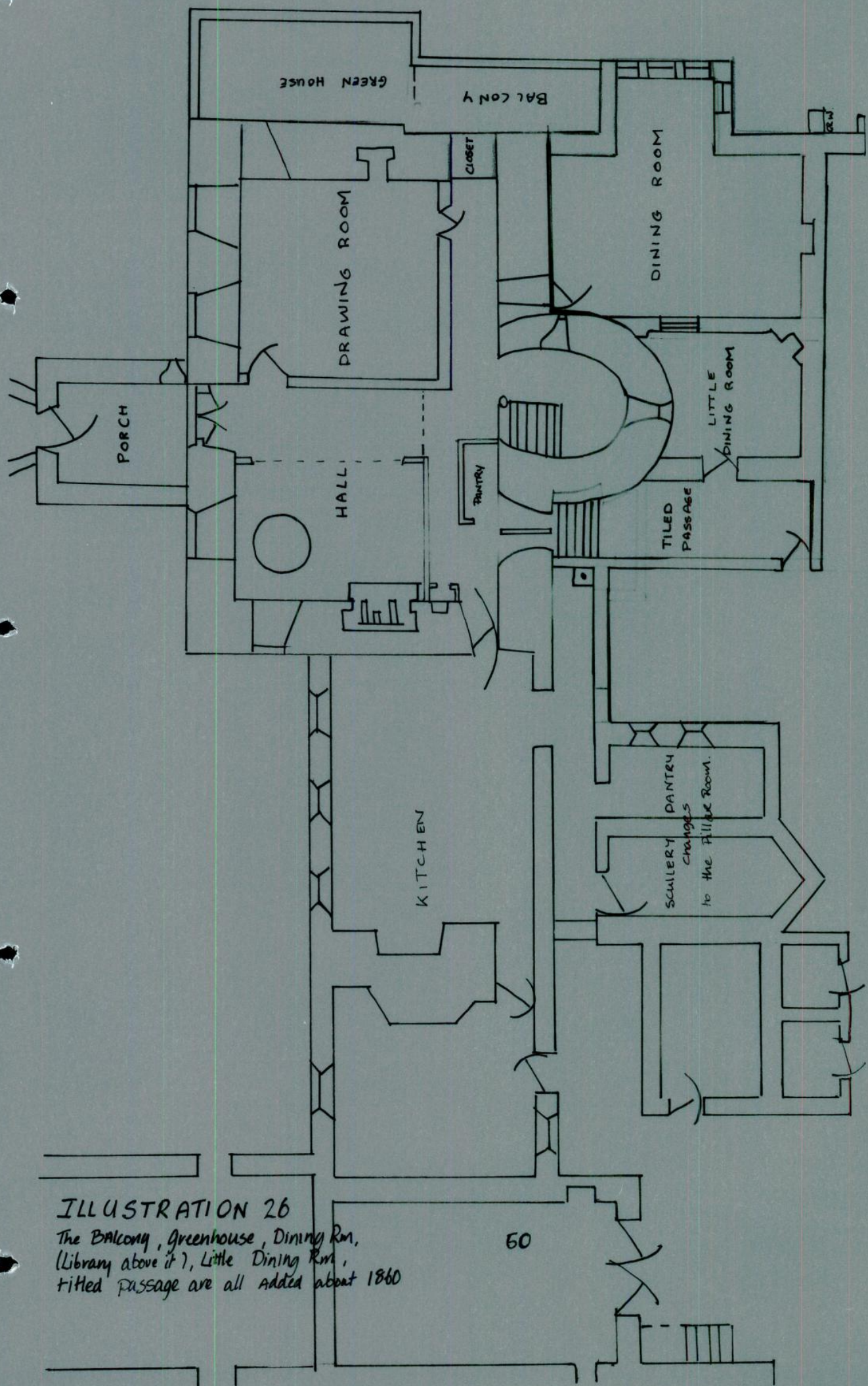


ILLUSTRATION 26
 The Balcony, Greenhouse, Dining Rm,
 (Library above it), Little Dining Rm,
 tiled Passage are all added about 1860

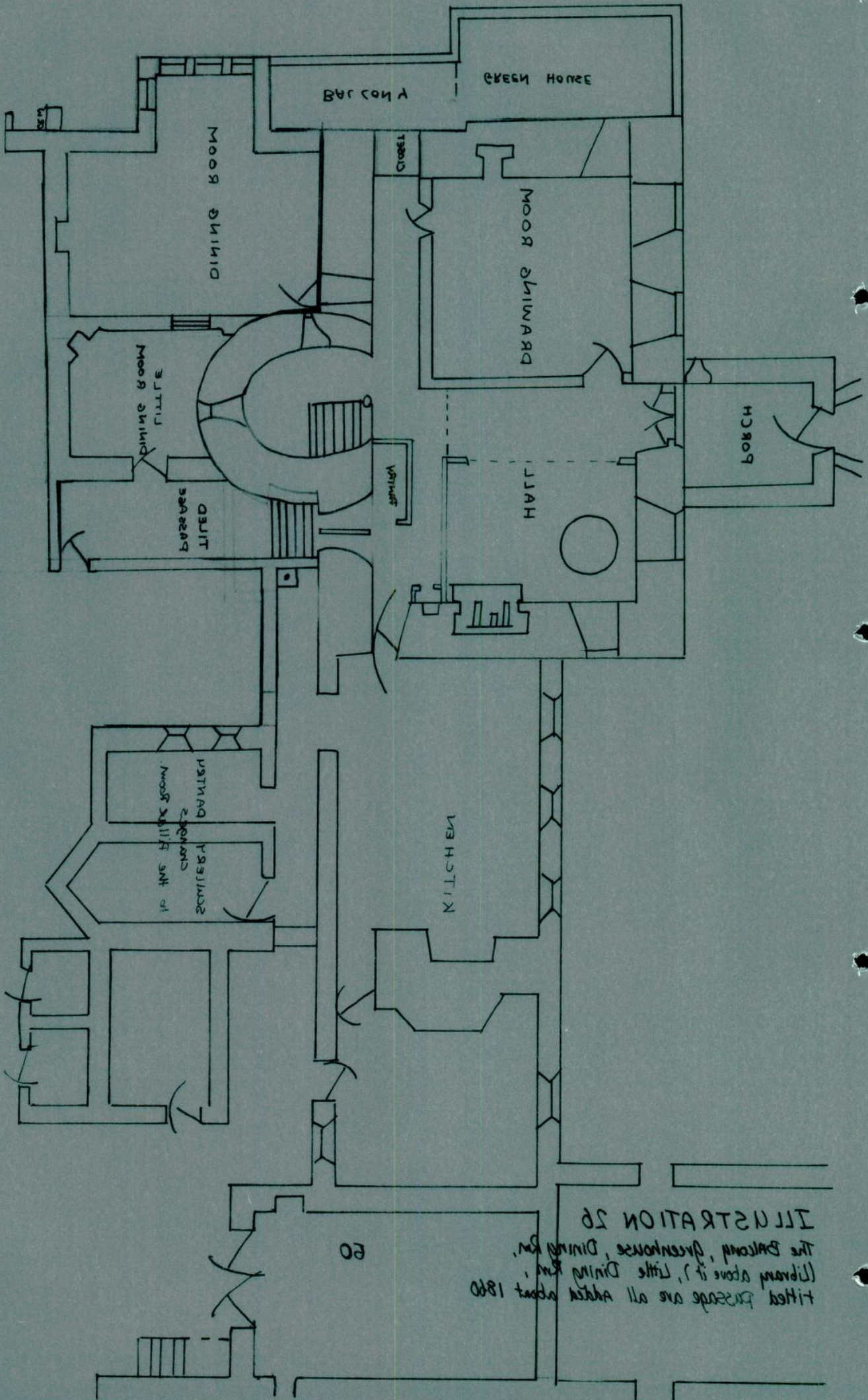


ИЛЛЮСТРАЦИЯ 58
The Balcony, Greenhouse, Dining Room,
(Lined above it), Little Dining Room,
Tilted Passage are all added about 1880

50

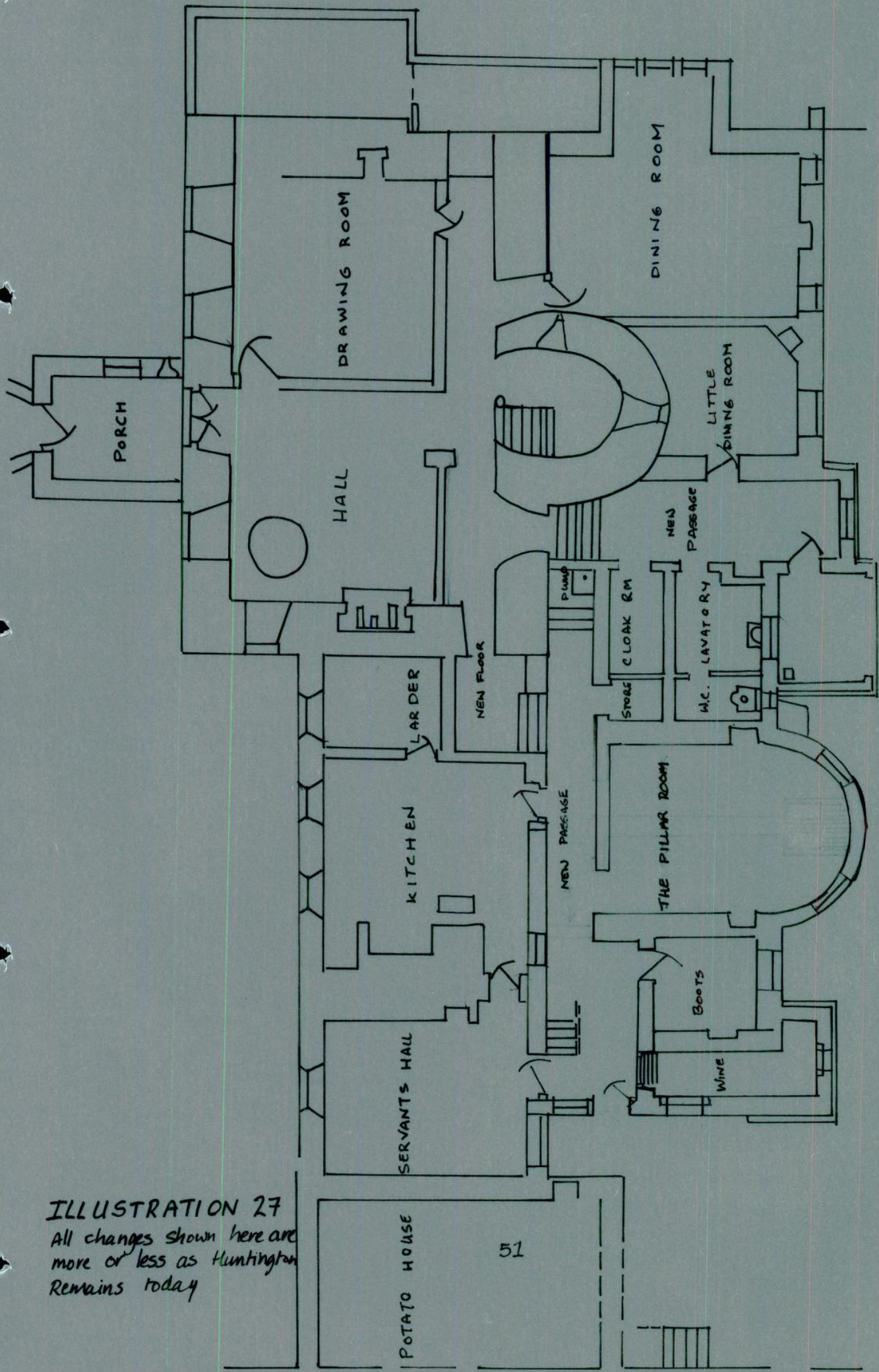


ILLUSTRATION 27
 All changes shown here are
 more or less as Huntington
 Remains today

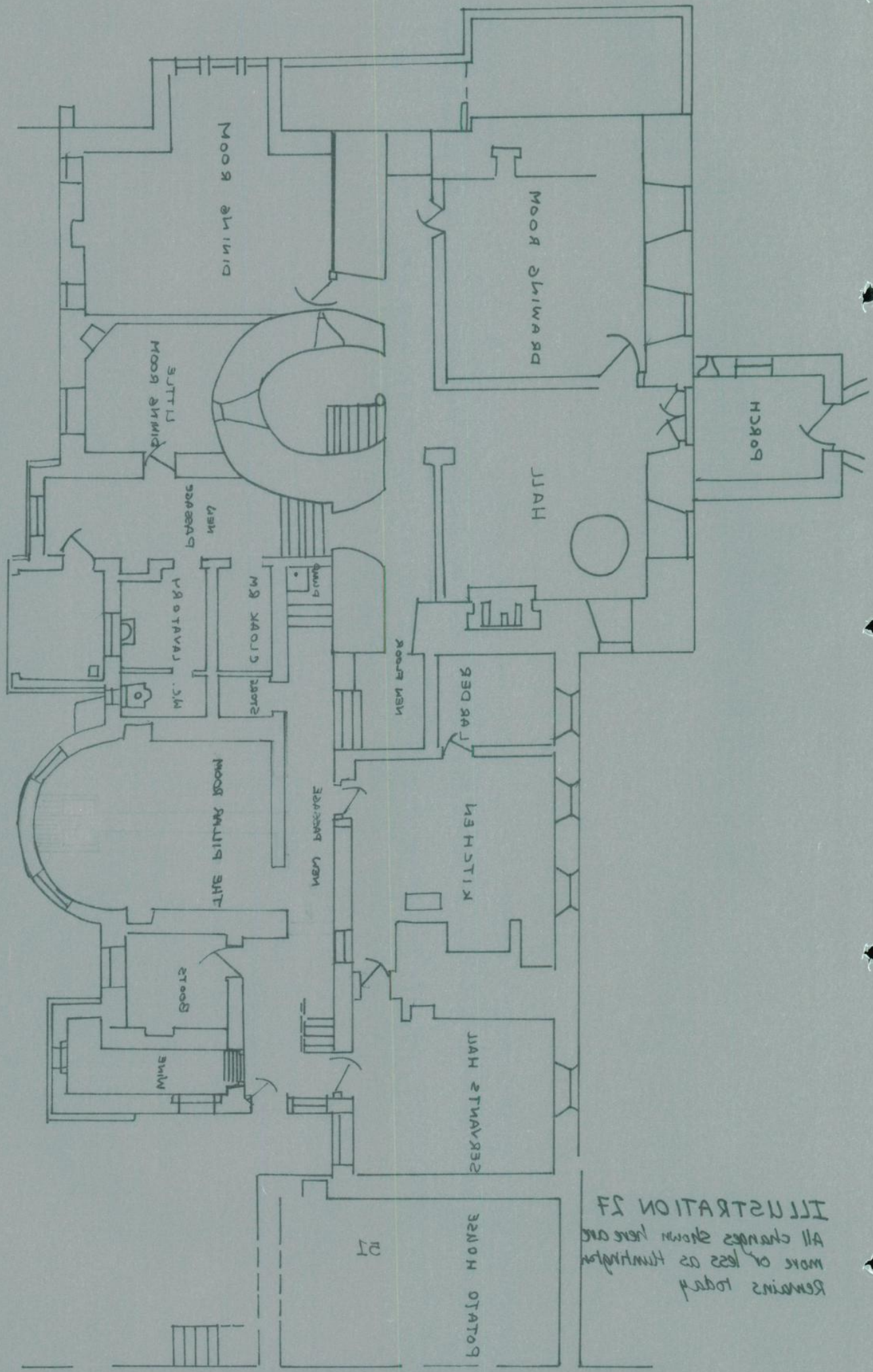


ИЛЛЮСТРАЦИЯ 25
 Remaining layout
 more or less as furnished
 All changes shown here are

25

reference to areas — Irish Measure

No	Area	a.	r.	p.
1.	Bridge Meadow	5	1	14
2.	Bush Meadow	6	0	35
3.	Chapel Field	6	1	19
4.	Grove Meadow	7	2	0
5.	Briary Field	7	1	8
6.	Bog Meadow	7	2	4
7.	Kennel Meadow, Brick Field	20	1	2
8.	High Field + Brownes Field	2	0	0
9.	Triangle Field	1	2	25
10.	Upper Mill Race Field	1	2	32
11.	Lower Mill race Field	1	2	37
12.	Hickeys Paddock	1	0	11

13. Wexford side of Derry River

13.	Ballyshrongu Farm	0	3	0
14.		0	2	20

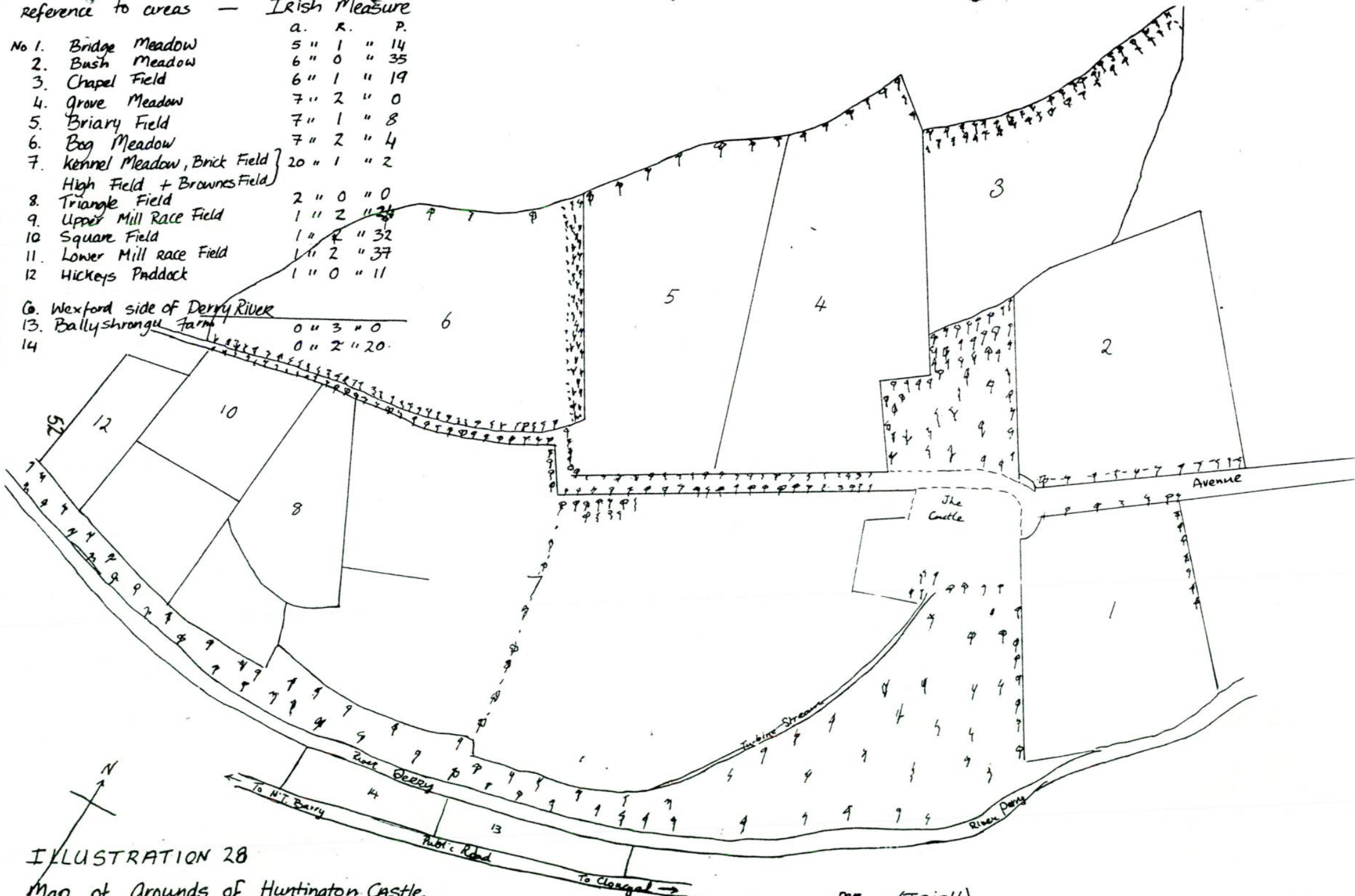
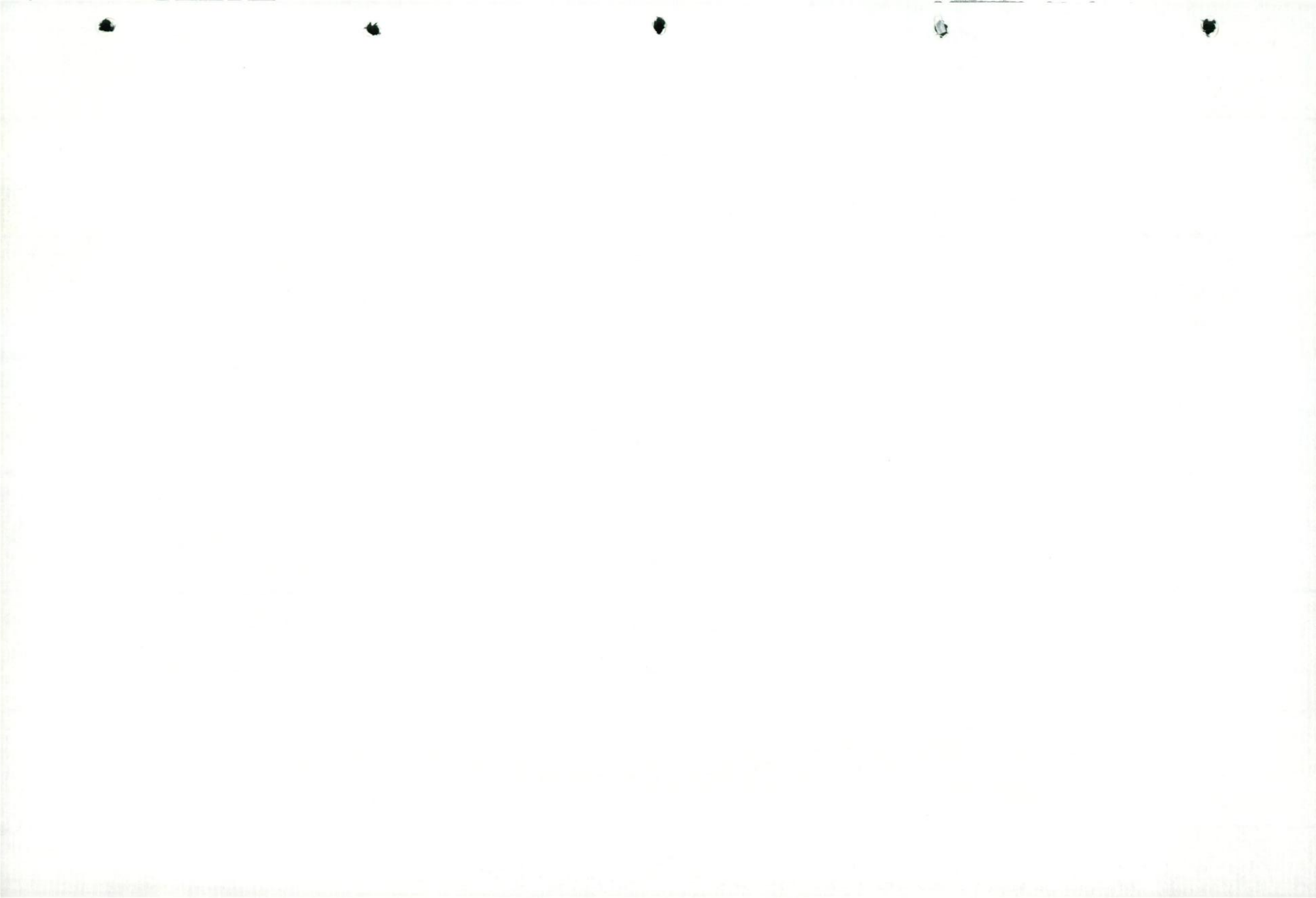


ILLUSTRATION 28

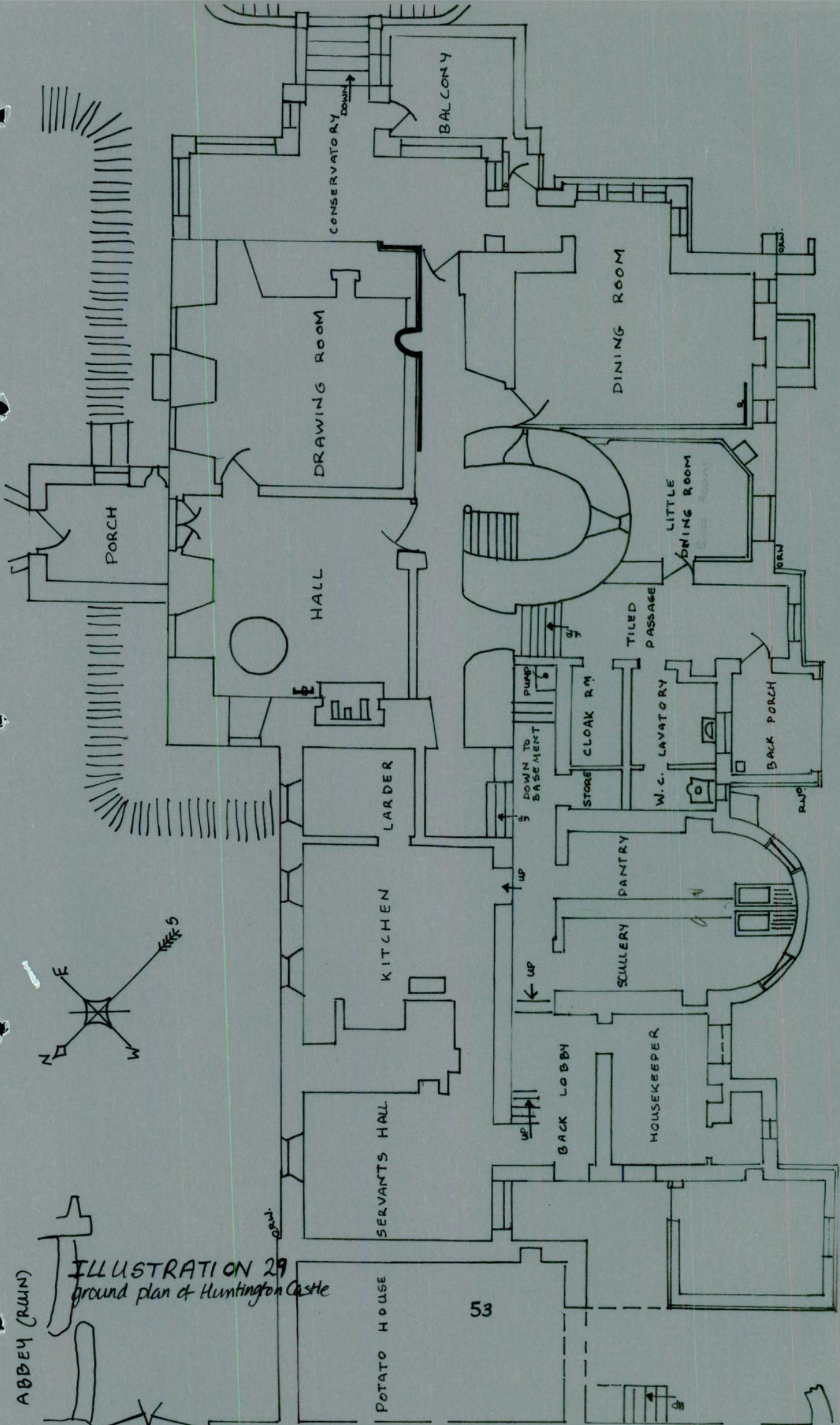
Map of Grounds of Huntington Castle

Wm. V. Neely - Certificate Surveyor + Mappers - Full total Area - 92 acres 3 Roods 3 pors (IRISH)

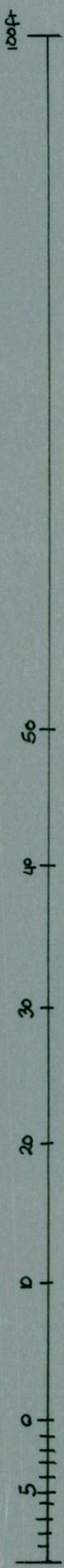


ABBAY (RUIN)

ILLUSTRATION 29
ground plan of Huntingdon Castle



S T A B L E Y A R D



POTATO HOUSE 53

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D R A Y E J B A T S

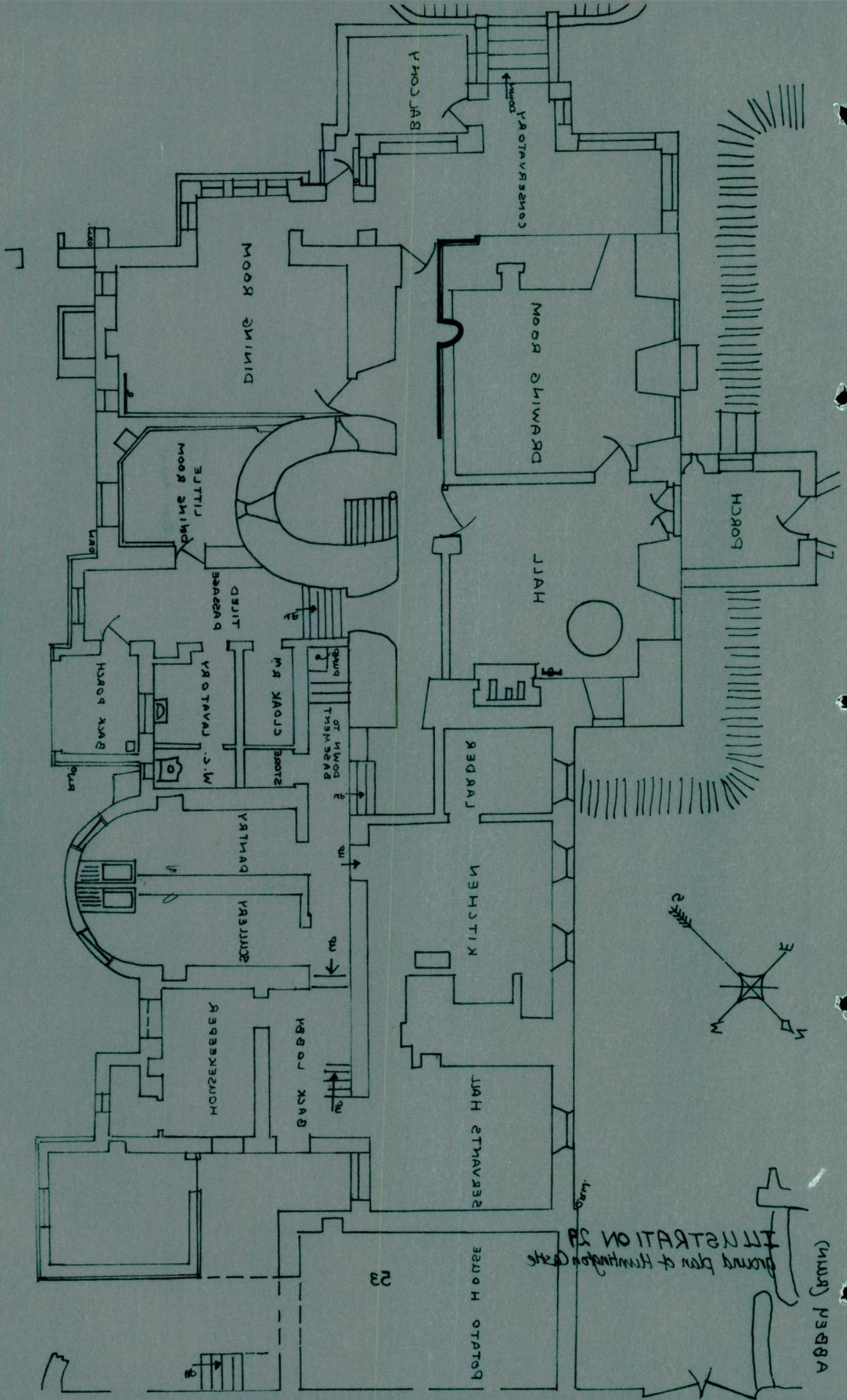


Иллюстрация по плану дома в Хамптон-Гейтс

ПРИЛОЖЕНИЕ (ИМЯ) ПИЩА

23

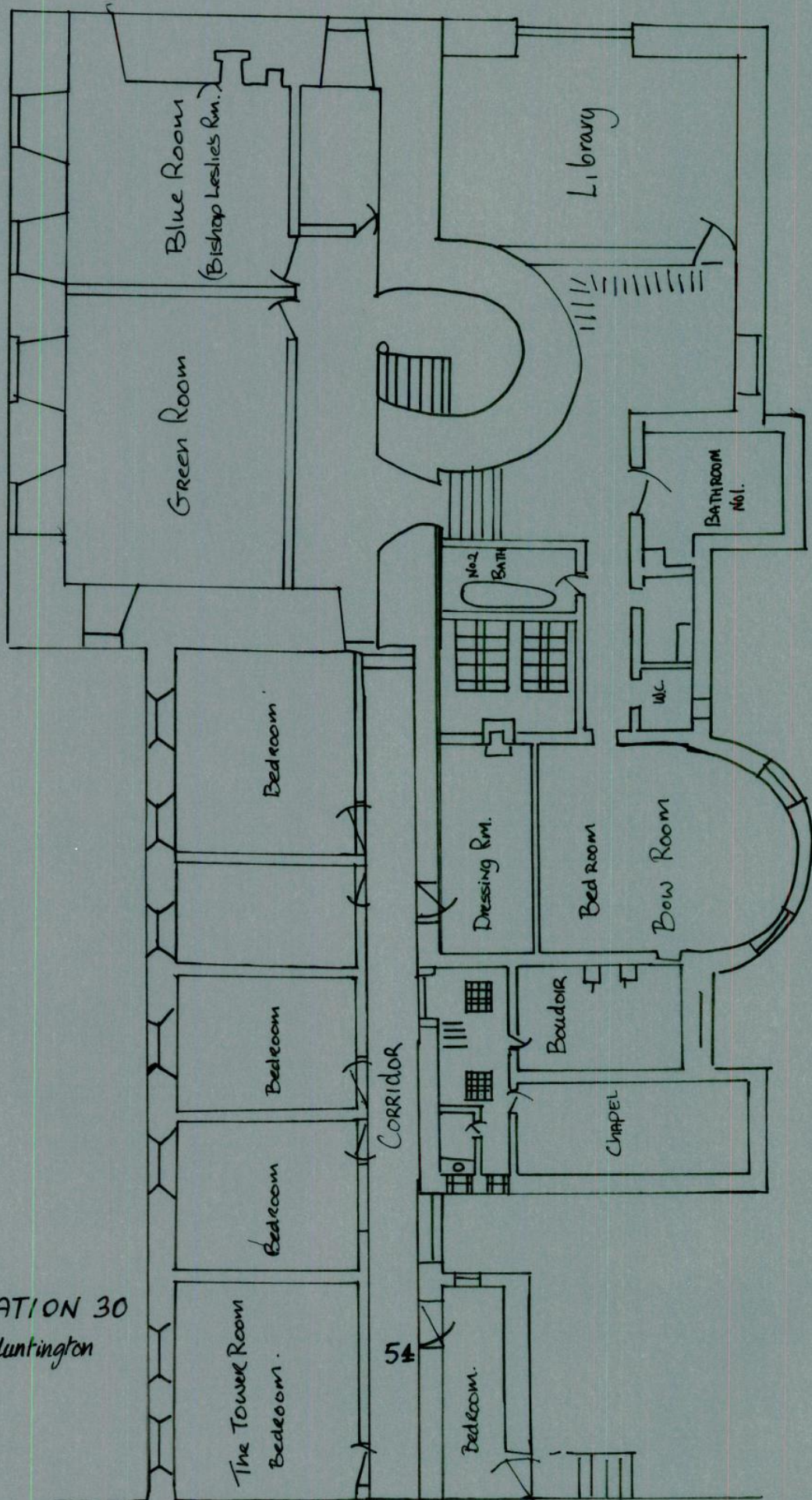


ILLUSTRATION 30
2nd floor of Huntington

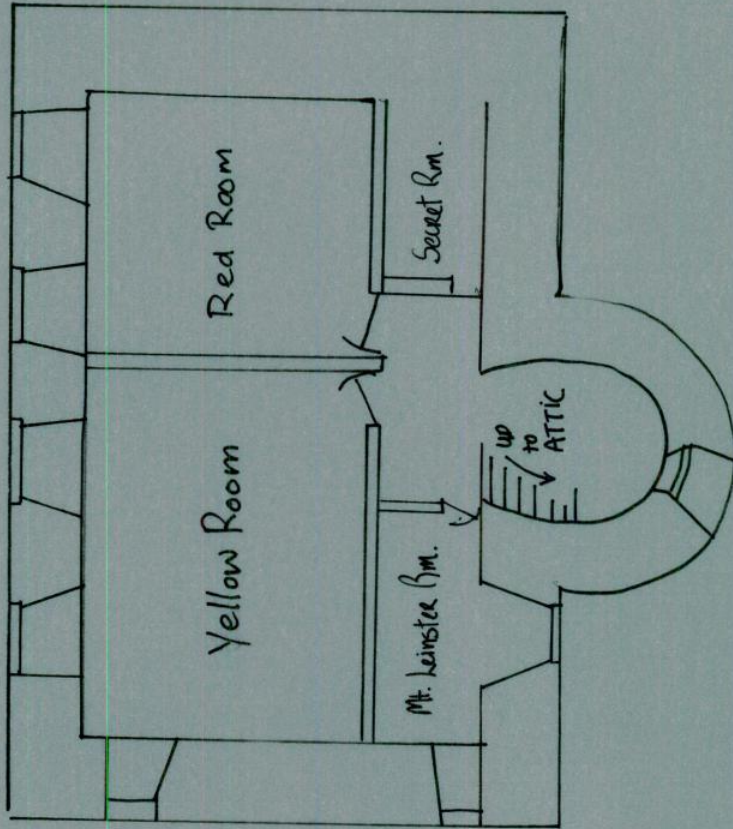
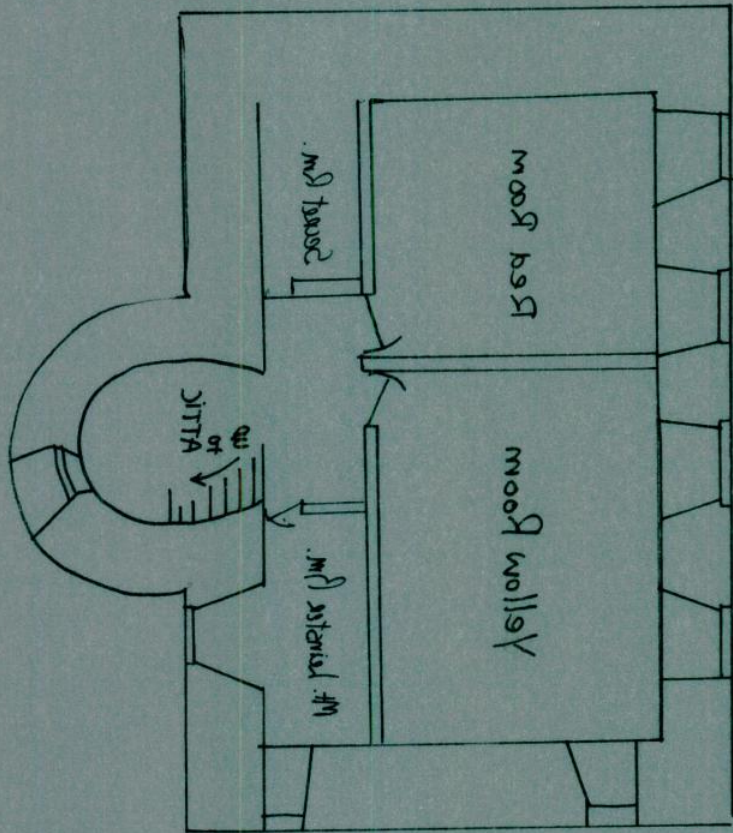


ILLUSTRATION 31
top floor of Huntington Castle



top floor of Huntington Castle
 ILLUSTRATION 31



CHAPTER FOUR

- FURNISHINGS AT HUNTINGTON CASTLE -

It would be an impossibility to record all the furniture to date in Huntington Castle, so I will need to make a selection along with the fact that a lot of the furnishings present today, have been introduced lately by the Robertson family from 1900 onwards. Nor do we know what may have existed there before, thus as although the structures of the building was documented in the form of plans, there was no documentation regarding what furniture may have existed. All I can do is presume that the furniture was of modest value and in keeping with a castle of its size.

There are a few exceptions for along the panelled walls of the tower on the second flight of stairs (see Figure 32 & 33), there are some magnificently preserved printed maps of Ireland and her counties, dating from about 1605 to 1680. These maps would have become the possession of Huntington Castle when its first owner Lord Laurence Esmonde was appointed commissioner to survey the confiscated lands in Leinster, this I have already mentioned in Chapter 2.

One map of particular interest is "The County of Wicklow" as it shows from Dublin, Carlow and Wexford before Wicklow was delineated this being one of jobs of Sir Laurence Esmonde to create this county, which from c. 1620 onwards, Co. Wicklow appears on all maps. Another point of interest with these maps is the ones showing Ireland in a different position as viewed from Wales. The preservation of these maps with such strong colour and detail is probably due to the fact they are placed along the wall of the staircase with very little light thus allowing them to hide away from the danger of damage from the sunlight.

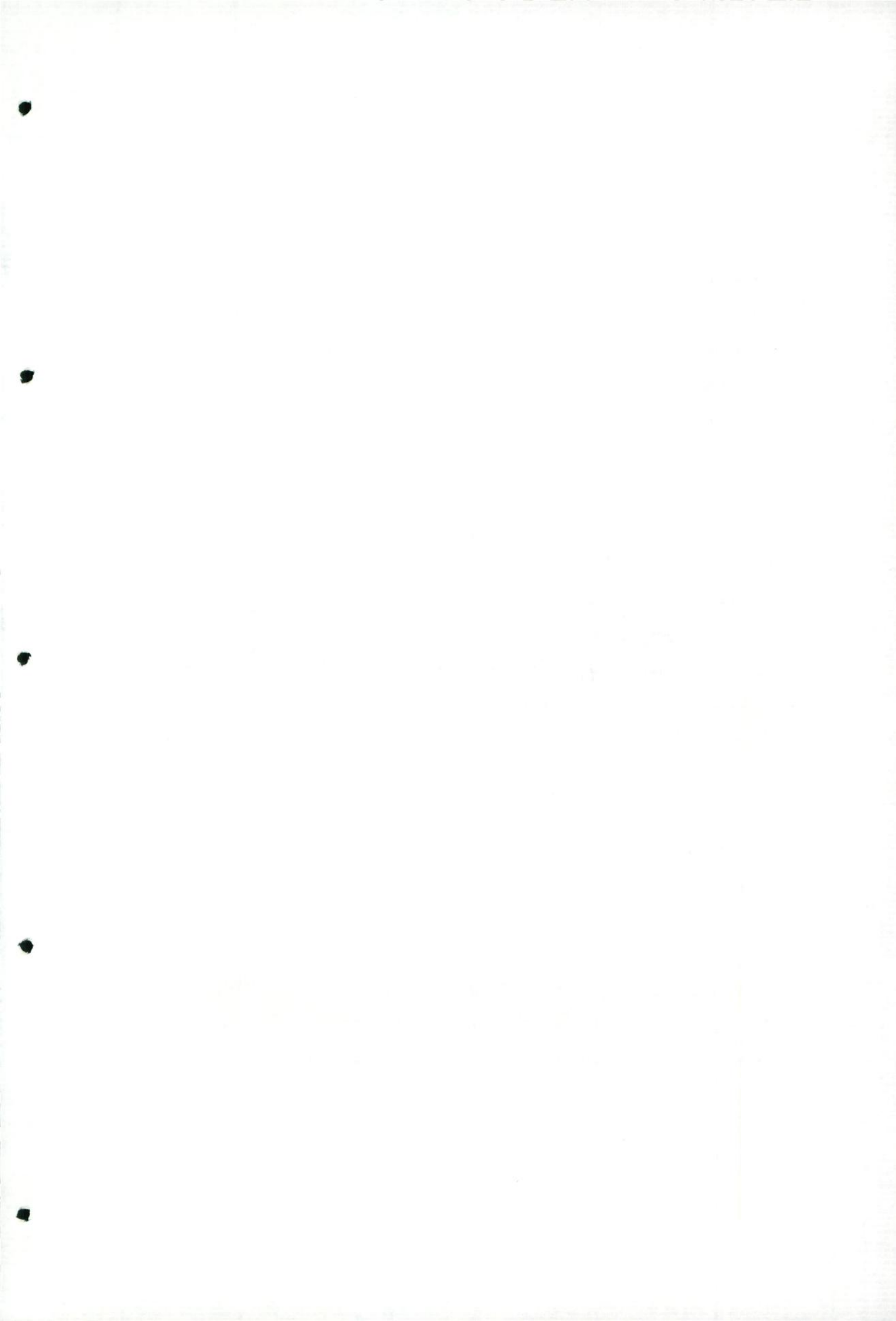


ILLUSTRATION 32

*Printed maps dating from 1605,
on the second flight of stairs in the tower.*





ILLUSTRATION 33

*The maps show different views of Ireland,
as seen from Wales.*





A tour of the house would naturally start with the (1) Hall, leading onto (2) The Tapestry Room, (3) The Conservatory and (4) Bishop Leslie's Bedroom.

1. THE HALL

Part of the original keeps dating from 1615, this room is now used as the main Dining room and probably has been since 1625. One of the most striking features of this room is the granite fireplace situated on the northwest wall. This fireplace is the original, dating 1625 which is carved on its keystone (see Illustration 34). At the back of this, you can see an ingenious idea of a carefully positioned passage, which leads from the back of the fireplace, through the thick wall of the castle, into the kitchen, allowing for the quick serving of food.

Directly over the fireplace, your eye will be immediately drawing to the fine portraits (see Illustration 34). Although the artists of paintings are unknown, the majority were presumably painted by travelling artist. The earliest painting recorded in Huntington Castle is probably that done of Sir Wm. S. Leger M.P. - Lord Deputy of Munster 1627 and is placed on the south east wall. Unfortunately I only got part of this portrait in Figure 39. Beside this, is the portrait of Barbara St. Leger, his granddaughter. She is of major importance to the house as she was the first Freemason in the house and arrived with her husband Alexander Durdin. Other portraits to be found in the Dining Room are those of Mrs. William Leader Durdin i.e. Mary Ann Drury, daughter of William Drury (B. 1801-D. 1883). It should be noted that the baby's chair (see Illustration 36) in this room came into the house with Mary Anne Drury and it is said to be baby Lysida's chair, which Milton wrote about in his poem "Lysida". Also these are the same Drurys that were the founders of the Drury Lane Theatre in Dublin.

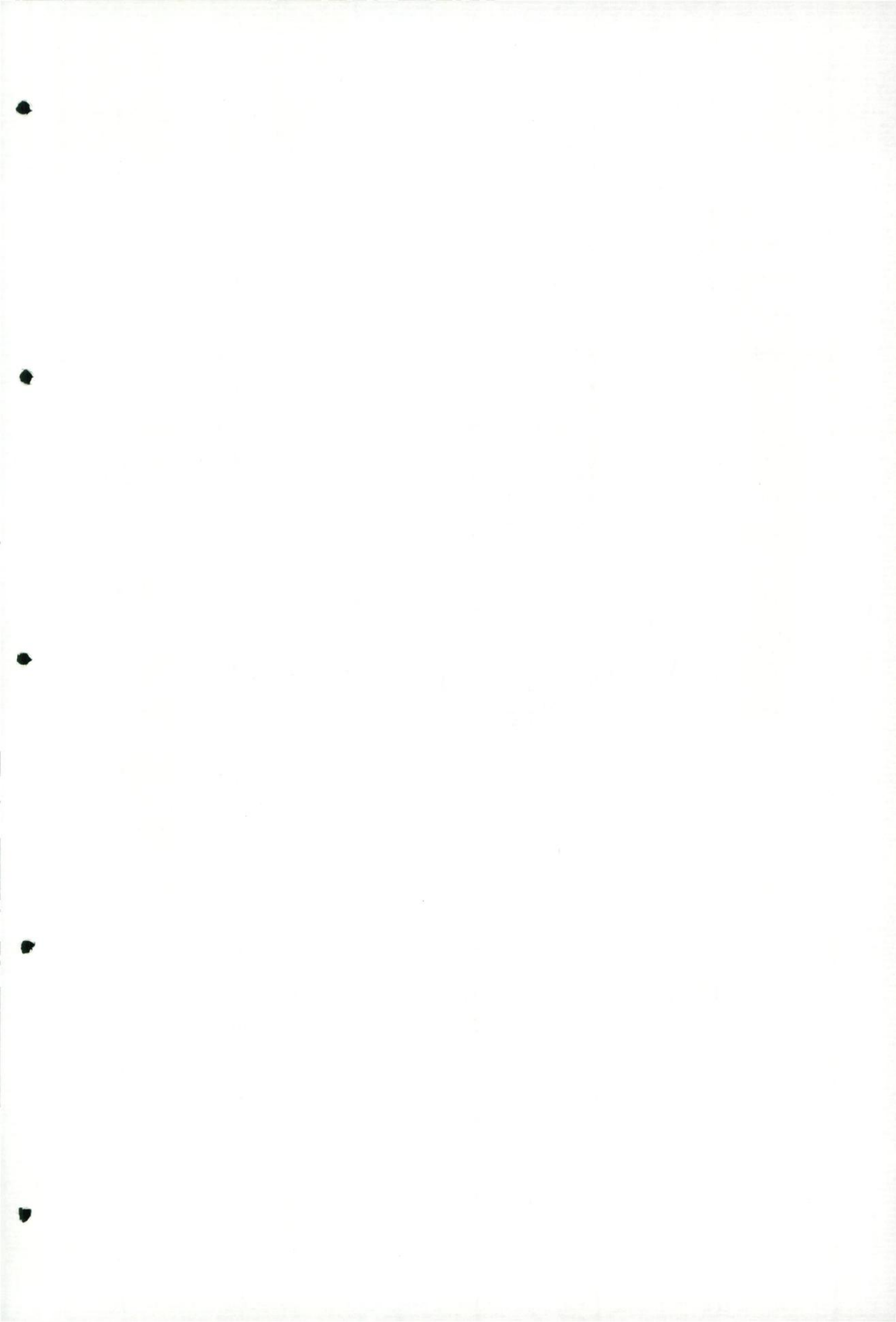


ILLUSTRATION 34

*Fireplace in the Main Hall, with the date of 1625
in the keystone with family portraits over the fireplace.*





ILLUSTRATION 35

Portrait of Matthew Jones.





Returning to the portraits over the fireplace, these include on the left Lieut. Edward Jones B. 1688, D. 1746 (see Illustration 34), grandfather of Melian Hayman, next in the centre is Helen wife of Arundel Hill, daughter of great Lagbe and maternal great grand mother of Mrs. Herbert Robertson B. 1752, D. 1830. Right to this is Matthew Jones (see Illustration 35), Collector of Youghal, father of Mrs. Melian Hayman, B. 1719, D. 1768.

The wall opposite the fireplace hangs 2 portraits. One of Mrs. Alexander Durdin (I), Melian Jones Hayman and the second of Mr. Alexander Durdin (II), B. 1821, D. 1892. Also on the north west wall, is a stained glass window (see Illustration 38), showing the heraldry history of the castle. This was made in 1870 by Powell, a glass artist.

Behind all these portraits are some unusual bedown Arab tent-hanging from Tunisia (see Illustration 34, 36 & 37), bought by Mrs. H. Robertson in about 1900, where they have remained ever since and hidden behind these tent hangings are the original oak panelling installed by Laurence Esmonde in 1680.

On the north east wall of the Hall, is a pair of double doors. these were the original entrance to the keep, which now enter into the porch, a later addition in 1680. The right of these doors has a spy hole and the left another spy hole through which the nuzzle of gun can protrude.



ILLUSTRATION 36

The Baby Chair of "Lysidas".





ILLUSTRATION 37

Taken from the Porch Doors, looking into the Hall.





ILLUSTRATION 38

*Stained Glass Window by Powell (1870),
showing the heraldry ancestry of the families
in Huntington Castle.*

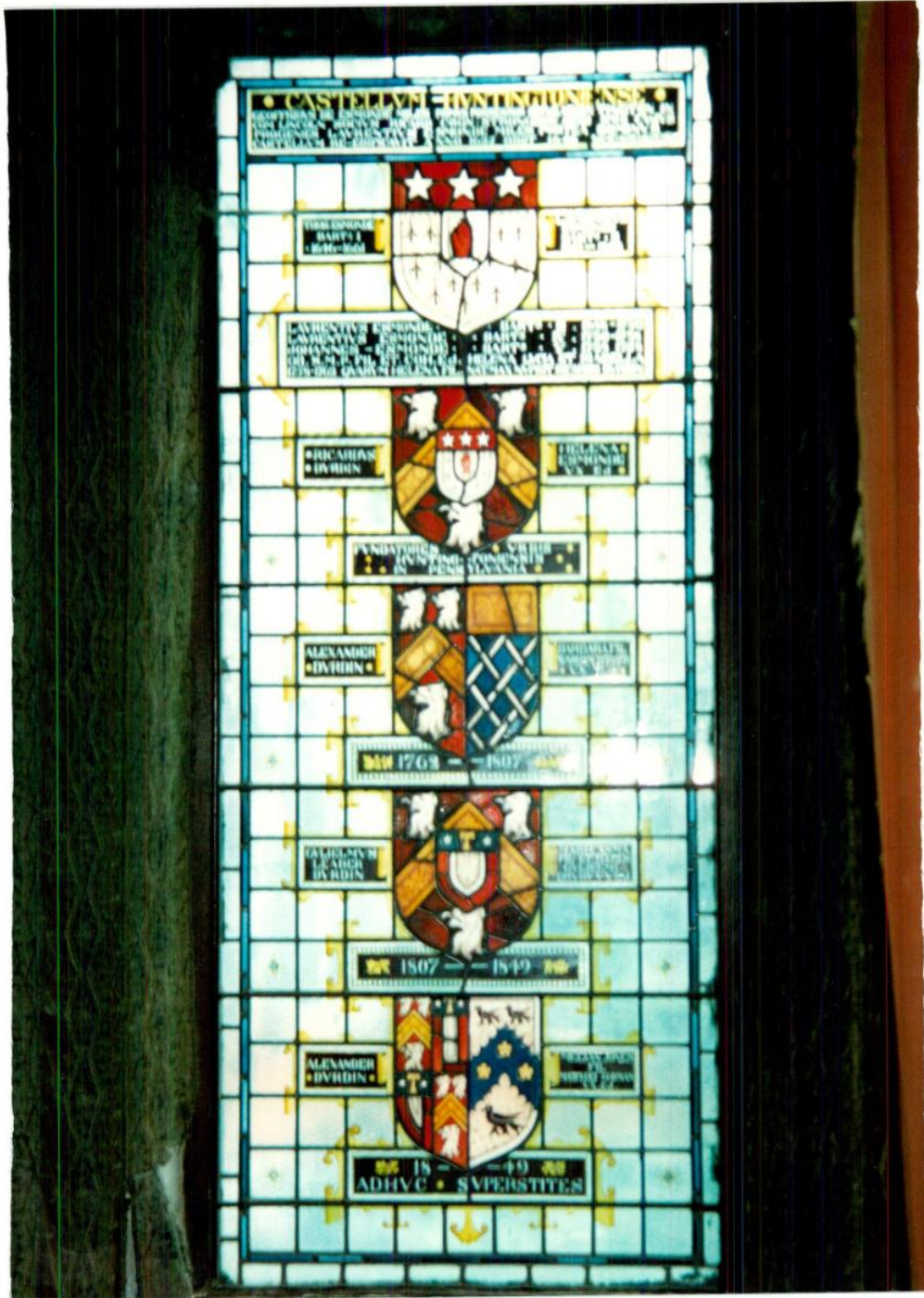




ILLUSTRATION 39

*Portrait of Barbara St. Leger to the left,
with her grandfather on the right.*





The most recent addition to the hall, would most likely be the ceiling dating approximately 1902 and it is rumoured that an early oak ceiling is supposed to be hidden underneath. This remains unsolved so far. As for the remaining furniture in the room, it has all been brought in from later dates and the silver shown in the photos is plate silver unfortunately.

Coming out of the Dining room and immediately at the entrance to the tower along the staircase (See Illustration 40), are some delightful sketches of Mrs. Nora Robertson, retrace your steps to the Dining room and turning left and proceeding down the hall, one finds on the left hangs some more (see Illustration 41) portraits of the Rev. Samuel Hayman B. 1818, D. 1886, opposite the Rev. Atkin Hayman and further on the left is Matthew Hayman B. 1789, D. 1867, before entering The Tapestry Room on the right.



ILLUSTRATION 40

*Drawing of Mrs. K. Robertson on the first flight of stairs,
on the tower block.*



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ILLUSTRATION 41

*Portraits along the Hallway from Dining Room,
leading to the Tapestry Room and Conservatory.*





Finally, she accepted M. Robertson M.P. (Conservative for S. Hackney)

2. THE TAPESTRY ROOM

Originally built for the use as a Dining Room by Alexander Durdin II in 1860. However, it was not until the 1900's that it became The Tapestry Room as it remains today.

As you enter the room to the right of you on what would be the north west wall of the room, there is a slit or loop-hole, which would have been one of the original windows of the keep.

Hanging on this wall is a very large tapestry believed to be an Aubusson Tapestry carpet of about 1750 (see Illustration 41 & 42), although this is up for debate and more likely to be 19th century. Mrs. Robertson is said to have bought it from a sergeant of the R.I.C. who had taken it while in France and this was introduced to the room in 1900. This carpet is starting to show the worst of its environment as it is badly positioned facing a 3 bay window which catches the morning sun, in turn adding to the destruction of the fibres.

The south west wall contains a heavy granite fireplace with some 19th century French loomed tapestries decorating the wall. On this tapestry hang some portraits of Lord Laurence Durdin-Robertson's children painted by a local artist Desmond McCarthy in 1964.

Directly opposite these paintings is another painting with a sad story, "the Slaney Valley" by Cecil G. Lawson, an unfinished painting of about 1871. It contains a view of the Slaney Valley from one of the fields on the farm. This painting was started when Cecil Lawson was staying at the castle, as he was one of the three proposed suitors of Helen Durdin.

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1917

1917

1917

3. THE CONSERVATORY

Once you come out of the Tapestry Room, take a turn to your right and

ILLUSTRATION 42

*The Aubosson Carpet, with regency couch,
in The Tapestry Room.*



ILLUSTRATION 43

*Conservatory - fresco painting by Mrs. Manning Robertson,
Barbara Robertson and Mr. Jarret, an architect.
(September 1994).*





ILLUSTRATION 44

Concrete Slab, late 1930's (September 1994).

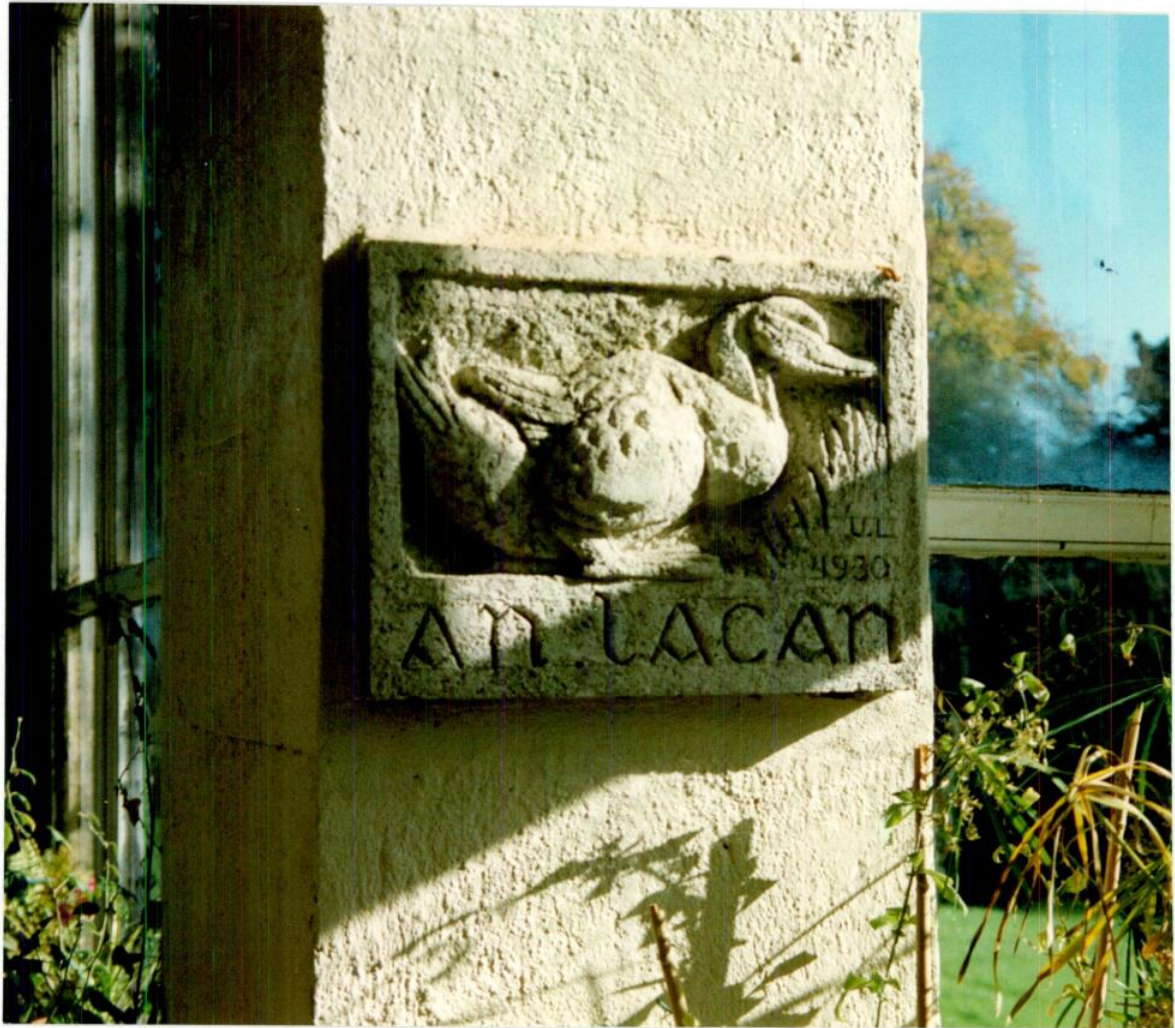




ILLUSTRATION 45

Concrete slab showing the family coat of arms.

(September 1994).





4. BISHOP LESLIE'S BEDROOM

On the first floor, is the room known as Bishop Leslie's Bedroom. In William Durdin's time, this was the Blue Room, now painted green, it is directly over the old Drawing Room. It is now more popularly called Bishop Leslie's Room as he is reported to return to this room as a ghost.

However, it does have many other interesting items such as a very early fireplace on the south east wall, dating about 1720 beautifully carved with a shell centre-pieces and undamaged. It is unusual in that it is granite and not marble which they usually come as (Illustration 47).

Through the south east window, you can look onto the Yew Walk and out of the north east one can see right down the Front Avenue. Beside this window, is a wardrobe containing a beautiful embroidered Chinese mandarin's robe and some uniforms (see Illustration 48) of Lieut. General Sir. L.W. Parson, who is in Illustration 49 , obviously coming from Nora Robertson.

The four poster bed in this room is high and square with a small stair, to enable one to get into it and dating about 1835 (see Illustration 46). It also is the proud owner of an unusual bedspread, hand knitted in c. 1835 by Honor Byrne one of the housemaids at that time.



ILLUSTRATION 46

Four poster bed in Bishop Leslie's Bedroom.



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ILLUSTRATION 47

The unusual granite fireplace of 1720.





ILLUSTRATION 48

Lieut. Gen. Parson's wardrobe.



ILLUSTRATION 49

Lieut. General Parson





Other interesting portraits in the house can be found along the staircase more recent but better known because of the artist. Mr. Manning Robertson was painted by Sean O'Sullivan, who also painted portraits of people such as W.B. Yeats and DeValera (see Illustration 50).

Coming up along the staircase, is a beautiful portrait of Olivia Robertson (see Illustration 51), as a young woman painted by Florence Pielou.

These are paintings by no means the only paintings within the house as the Robertson family are all artists, writers, etc., in their own right and add their own works to these which I have selected mainly because of the content and ancestral linkage with the house.



ILLUSTRATION 50

Mr. Manning Robertson, painted by Sean O'Sullivan.





ILLUSTRATION 51

Portraits of Manning Robertson & Olivia Robertson.





CHAPTER FIVE

- THE GARDENS AND GROUNDS -

THE GROUNDS

The entire estate of Huntington Castle only covers a small portion of what it once did. It now possesses approx. 154 acres. Still within this area, it holds many things of interest without looking at the castle.

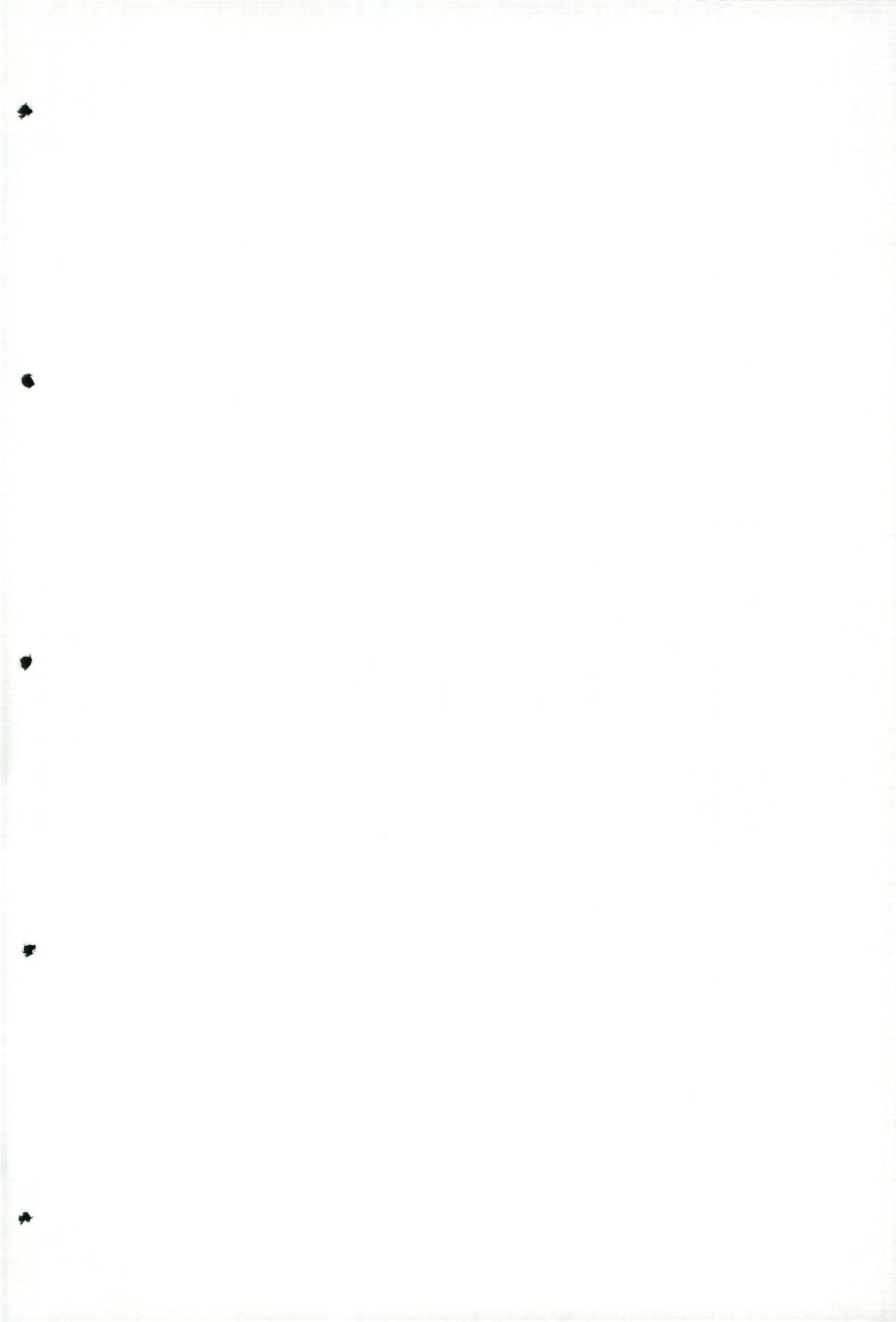
Bullanstone

As you come up the Avenue to Huntington Castle, across behind the trees lies the Bullanstone in the Bridge Meadow (see Illustration 52). Dating most probably pre-Christian, it is believed that this stone was used for the grinding down of corn.

The Abbey

The Abbey (Illustration 53) can be found to the north of the castle, in ruins now. It may have formed part of the Abbey of Moycomb. These remains consist of two very old cells, which have been oratory chapels, which have 3'6" roofs and date back to the 13th century (Illustration 54).

Although there is no written evidence it may have been used by Fransican Monks while some believe that it may have been associated with Augustinian Abbey of Downe, or Abbey Down; what is certain that it must have had some connection with an abbey as on the grounds of Huntington along the southside of the front lawn, there is a Yew Walk dating back over 600 years and most likely planted by monks.



This Abbey Down which it is most likely to have had connections with, although no longer present was situated two miles to the east. It is said to have been founded by the Danes, who perhaps at one time extended their dominion inland from the coast as far as Clonegal.

Legend has it that students came from many parts of Europe to study here and possibly it maybe from them that the valley of Cluain na Gall derived its name of "The Meadow of the Gaul or Stranger".

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ILLUSTRATION 53

The Abbey

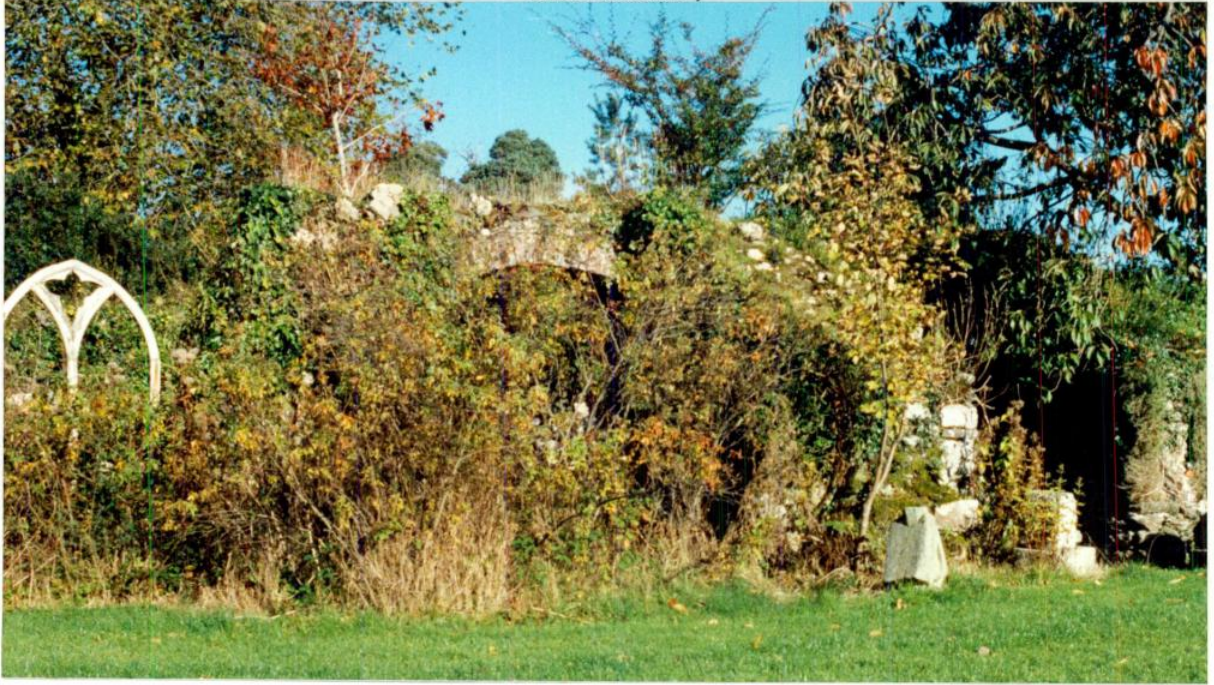


ILLUSTRATION 54

The Cells within the Abbey.



[Faint, illegible text block]

SMITH BROS

[Faint, illegible text block]

THE GARDENS

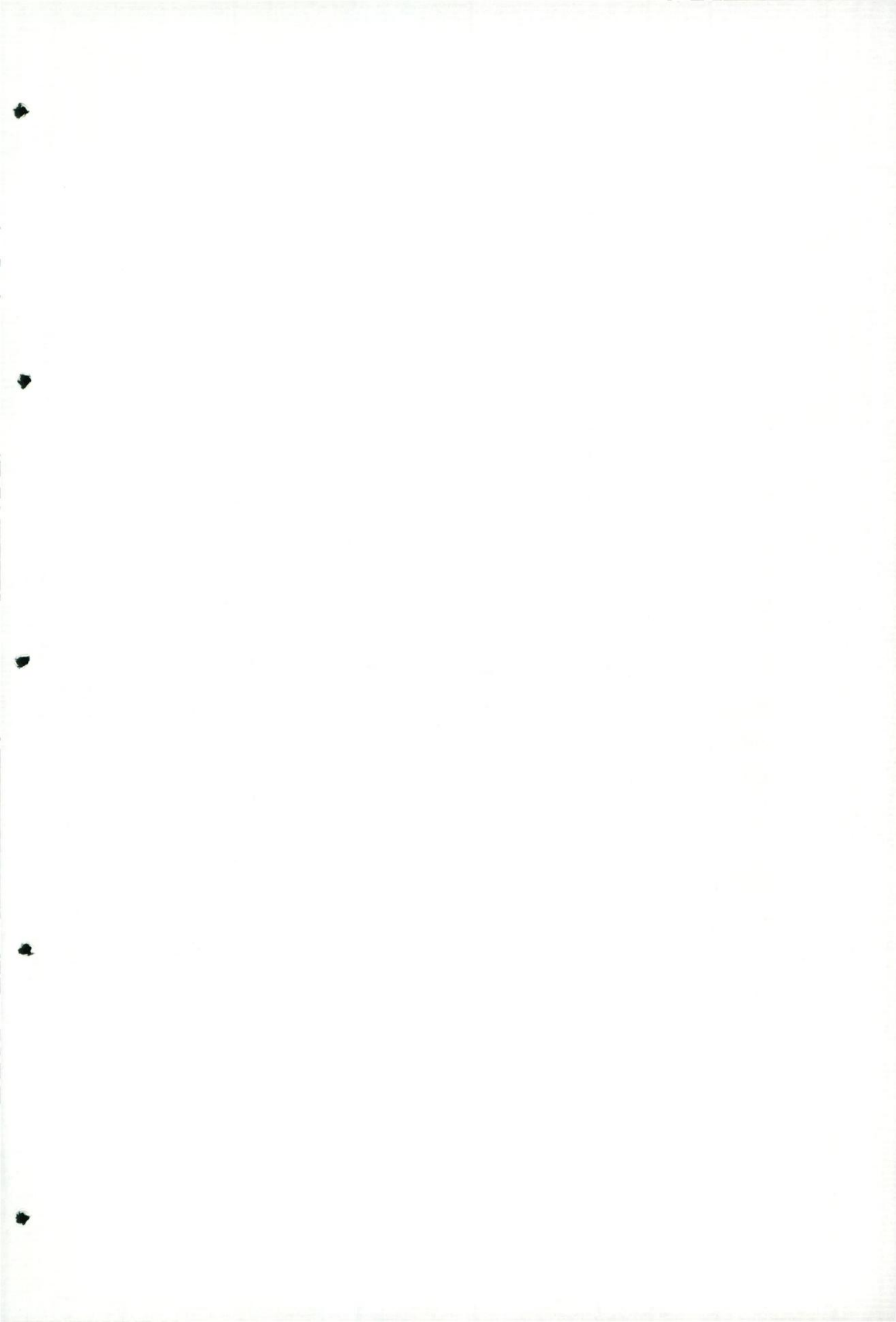
The gardens are said to be the second oldest in Ireland and although they need attention, there are many old and rare specimens of trees and shrubs.

Originally the gardens are said to have been terraced in Italian style and according to the fresco painting in The Conservatory (Illustration 43), this is true and from a photograph taken c. 1924 (Illustration 55). They were placed axially with the summit of Mount Leinster just 9 miles away. At this time, they are supposed to have included a swimming pool, tennis courts, golf courses, bridges dividing the gardens into sections such as the wilderness.

Today, there are just some remains of this garden (Illustration 56), as the pond remains in the garden. The yews that once were trimmed are now taking their more natural course, as these formal gardens were replaced by a more Irish landscape.

Among this garden there are still some unusual trees, the most renowned being in what is called The yew Walk (Illustration 57). The Yew Walk at Huntington although comprises of a common yew is *Taxus baccata* Linnaeus and widespread throughout the northern hemisphere it is the largest such Yew Walk known. It is thought to be over 600 years old and part of the old abbey next to the castle (see Illustration 53) contains a line of 120 yew trees approx. 120 yards long, with returning ends at eight angles to the mainline, forming an enclosure for the terraced gardens.

The largest tree is at the north west end by the arcaded wall, measuring 4ft high in width 12ft and 9 inches. The trees remaining are packed closely together and in many cases, the stems have joined several times at different levels, creating an arched appearance along this mysterious walk.



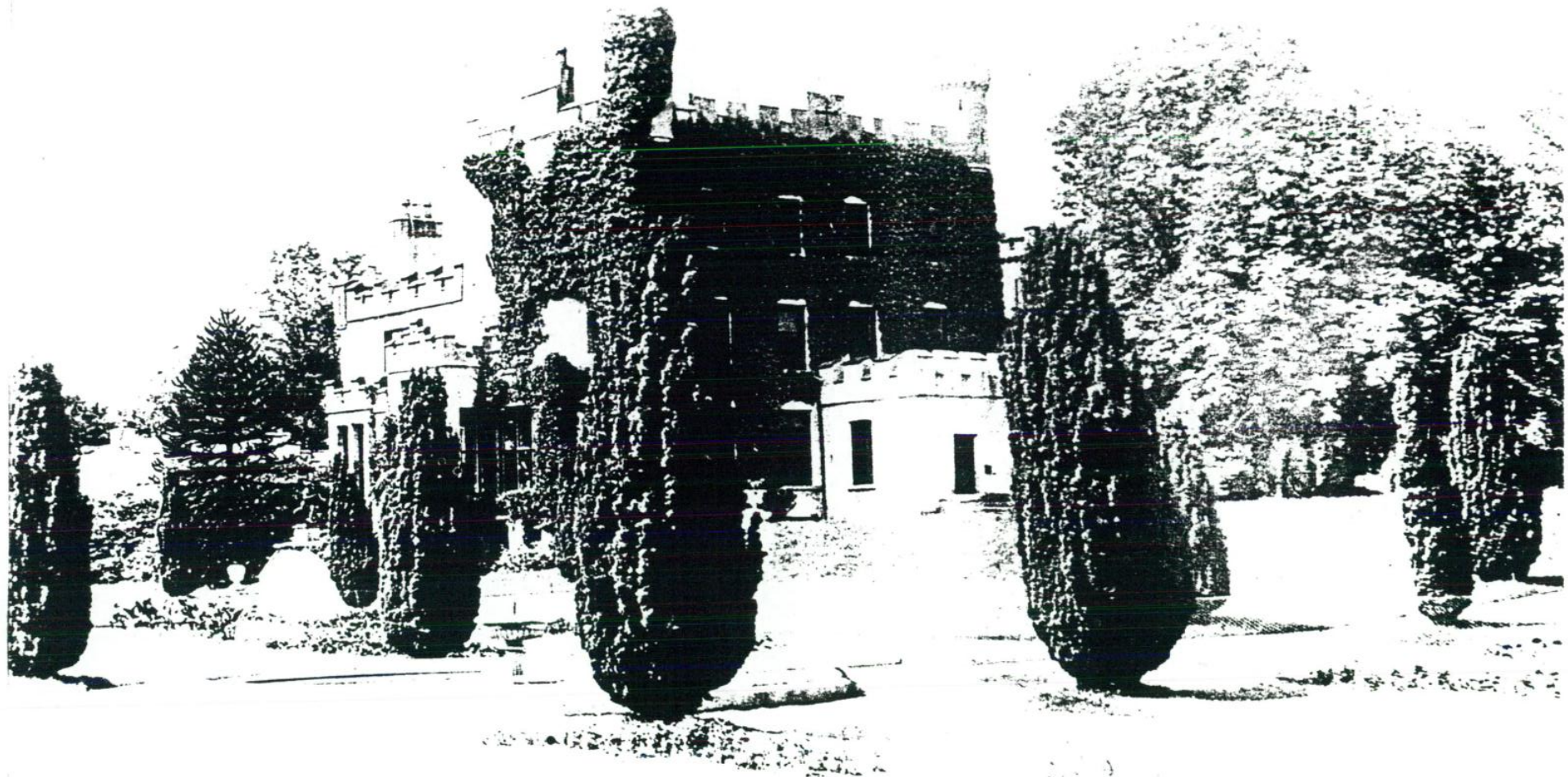


ILLUSTRATION 55 *Grounds of Huntington CASTLE in c.1920.*



ILLUSTRATION 56

What remains of the garden layout today.



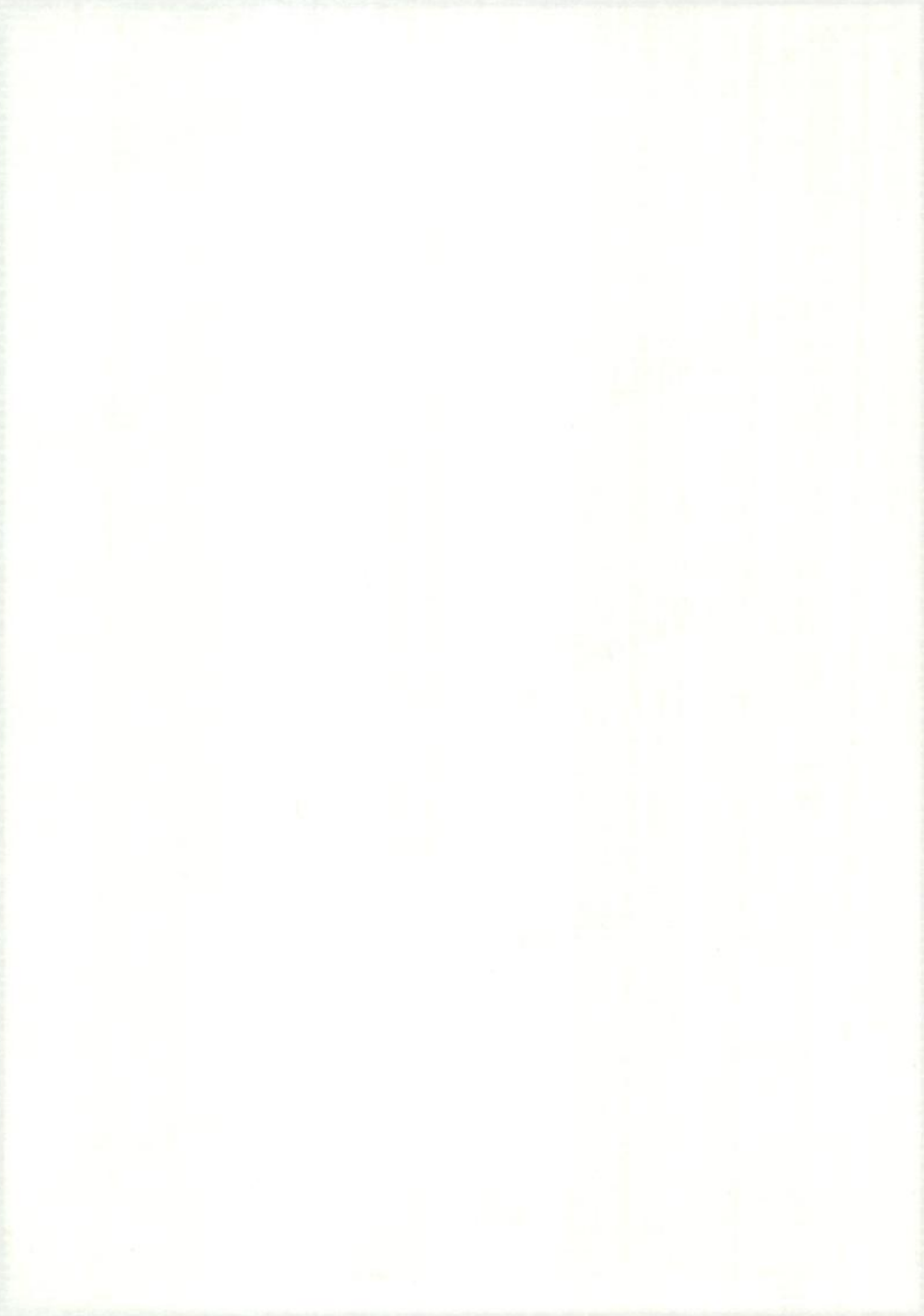


ILLUSTRATION 57

The Yew Walk over 600 years old.





ILLUSTRATION 58

*Entrance from the back courtyard into the garden,
at the side of the house.*





Other interesting objects scattered throughout the gardens are those concrete slabs (Illustration 58) which often contain little scenes or animals similar to the duck (Illustration 44) in The Conservatory.

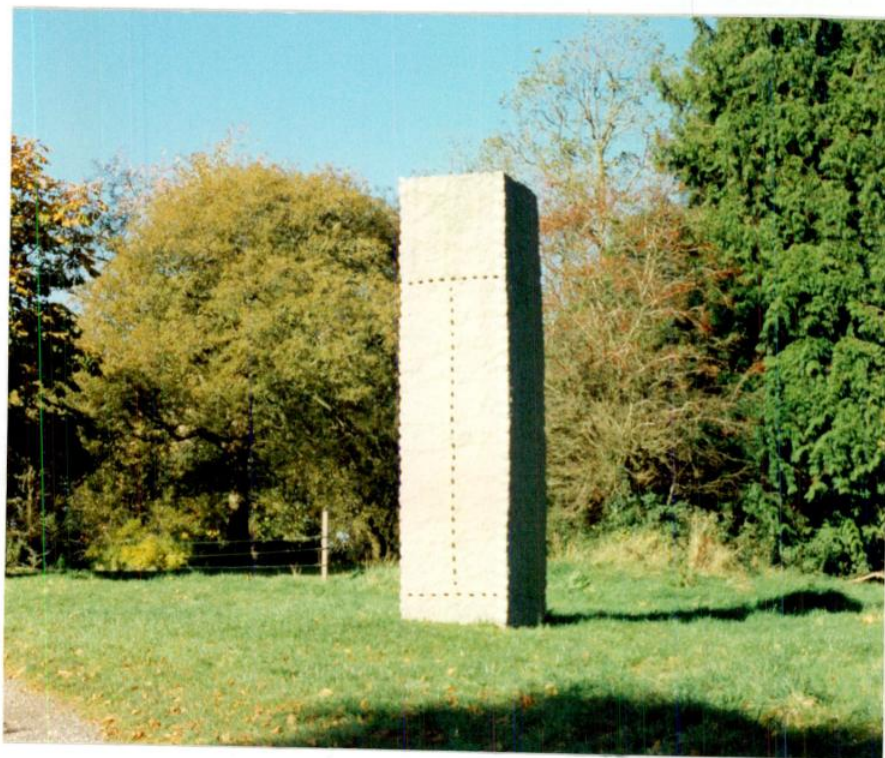
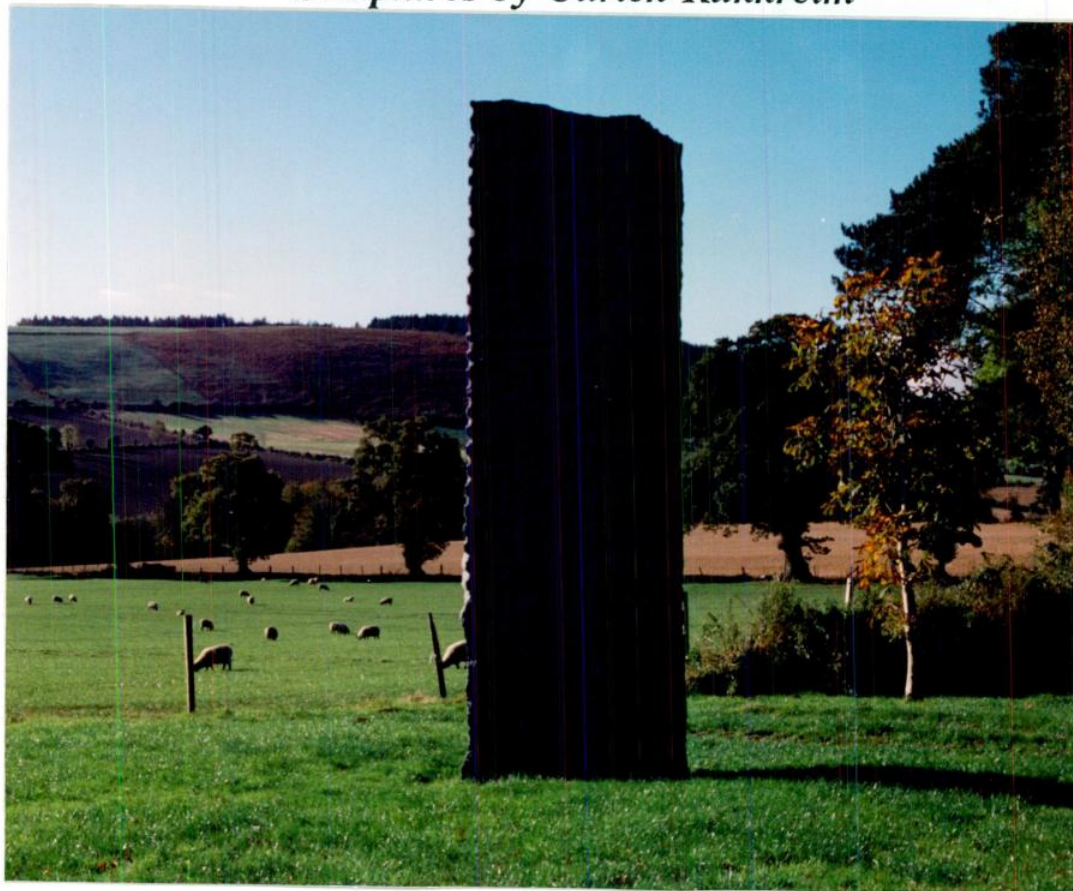
A more recent addition to Huntington is the work of a well known German sculptor Ullrick Rukkriem, who also lives at Huntington and has erected these granite monoliths (Illustration 59) near what is called Bush Meadow which at the back avenue (Illustration 60 - at the top of the front avenue).

Thus, Huntington is still associated with arts and how they encourage change and developments of all styles.



ILLUSTRATION 59

Sculptures by Ullrick Rukkeim





CONCLUSION

Huntington Castle contains a wealth of information relating to styles of the past. It has welcomed development and improvement and just like a mirror of its environment, it reflects the people who have chosen to live here. It has reigned supreme over its district, when its owners did and has declined when its owners were careless and without these people would not have survived till today otherwise.

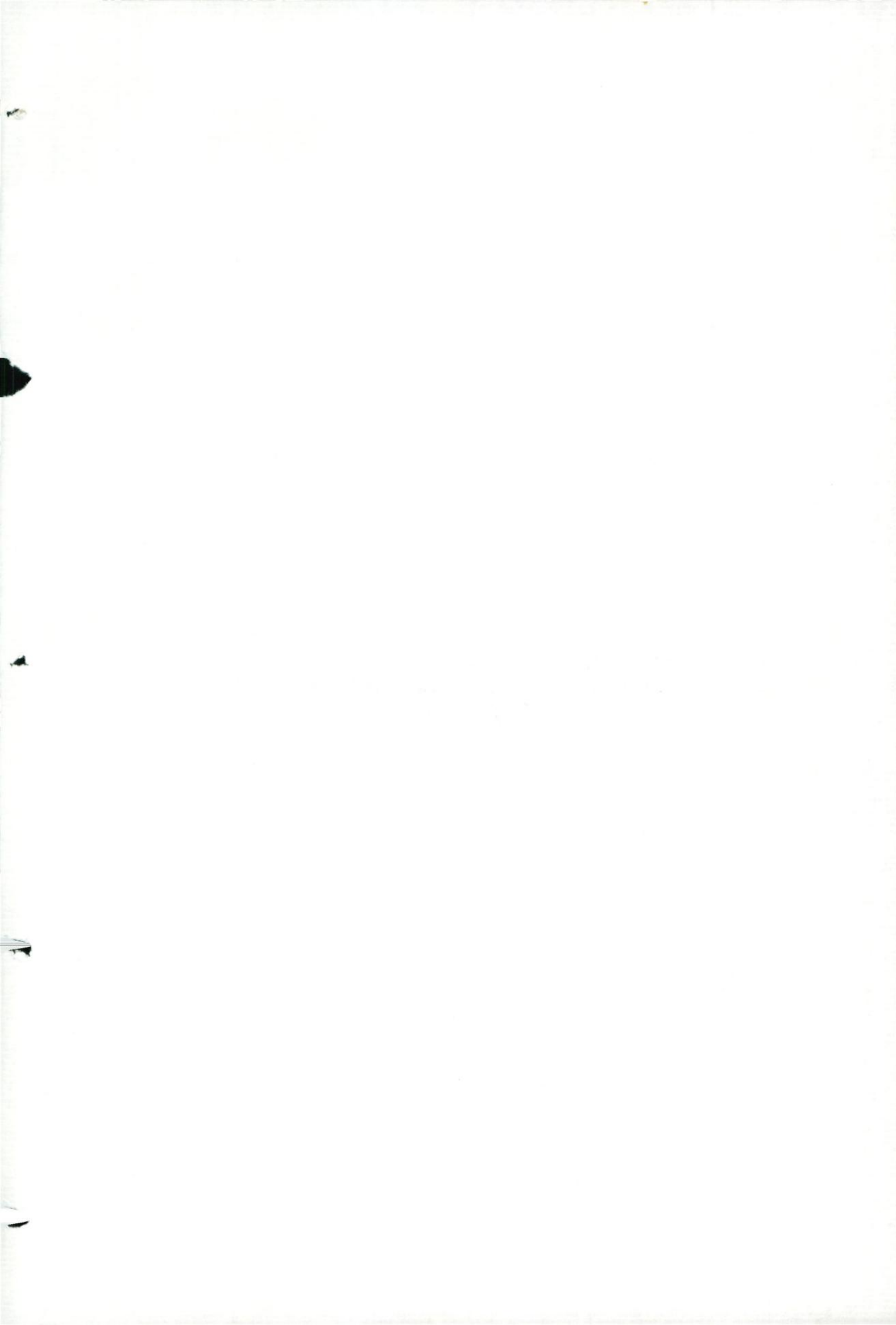
this is not to say that its perfect. For it is in need of extensive repair, although its present owner David Robertson has plans to repair and rebuild Huntington, in such a way that it will reflect its past, but with a new vigour, that will allow it to be part of everybody's heritage and yet the house of a family.

I understand that Mr. Robertson is hoping to receive some various forms of heritage grants and I personally hope that they are given this financial support as we all would benefit from it.

With this financial aid, Huntington should be developed into its original style of a plantation house of the 17th century, similar to the Illustration 55, which would also mean the reconstruction of grounds, perhaps even extending into the surrounding village of Clonegal.

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