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**NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN  
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**CHARLEVILLE CASTLE, TULLAMORE, CO. OFFALY  
A GOTHIC REVIVAL CASTLE**

**by**

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## INTRODUCTION

Charleville Castle is a little known building in Tullamore. Its style of architecture, the Gothic revival, will be discussed briefly examining when the revival took place and why Gothic architecture was an influential source for Charleville Castle. Strawberry Hill played an important part in the Gothic revival. Its concepts of borrowing from Medieval sources and applying to domestic interiors also influenced Charleville Castle. The architect, Francis Johnston, will be discussed in relation to Charleville Castle. Some of Johnston's later work will be examined to show how he was influenced by the design of Charleville. This will also show how a craze for the Gothic revival began in Ireland after the construction of Charleville. Through information received from Bridger Vance, the present owner, the family history of the Castle will be examined especially in relation to Charles William Bury, the first owner. Original photographic documentation will give examples of Gothic detailing which are typical of the Gothic revival. These examples will show how Bury borrowed detailing from Medieval sources and applied them to the domestic interiors of Charleville Castle.

As a source of inspiration for Charleville Castle my research has shown that Strawberry Hill was very influential. Illustrations will show design aspects and detailing from Strawberry Hill which I feel are directly related to some of the detailing in Charleville. Finally, through articles obtained in the architectural archives, Charleville Castle will be discussed in relation to modern times, how it has survived through the various changes of ownership and what the future has in store for it.

The main aim of this thesis is to look at a little known building on which very little has been written. The Castle will be put into a broad context which will examine not only the family history but also various aspects leading up to and influencing the choice of Gothic revival for its architectural style.





## CHAPTER 1

Charleville Castle was designed and built in the Gothic Revival Style. This chapter will examine why Gothic architecture was an influential source and its survival will indicate reasons how and why the Gothic Revival Style was chosen for Charleville Castle. The typical patron of Gothic revival architecture will be examined to give an example of the lifestyle of the owners of Charleville Castle. Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill will be introduced as an important aspect of the Gothic revival and, finally, Gothic details will be examined in various Gothic Cathedrals to give an example of the true origins of the Gothic detailing in Charleville Castle.

According to Megan Aldrich, the Gothic revival began in the early 18th century and declined as an active architectural tradition at the close of the 19th century. (Aldrich, 1994, p.9). It remained an option for the aristocratic ladies and gentlemen and was often the choice of those with intellectual or artistic learning. The Gothic revival was most influential in England although it was also influential in Germany and France in the 19th century.

### WHY THE GOTHIC STYLE WAS INFLUENTIAL

The primary source of inspiration for Charles William Bury's decision to build in the Gothic style began with looking back on Gothic architecture itself. Ruined abbeys and fortified castle residences were also looked at by revivalists and antiquarians as they were seen as both picturesque and romantic. There was a quality in structure and craftsmanship about the Gothic style which was seen as magnificent and extraordinary in terms of engineering.

The quality work of the stone mason was something which had been lost over time and for an example in excellence of craftsmanship the Gothic style was studied during the



Gothic revival. Medieval Churches and the Gothic design were associated with feelings of piety, sacredness and spirituality. The emotional properties of the style were stressed. These show a different, more positive attitude towards Gothic architecture which also helped the style to become more influential as a design source.

The amount of freedom which was to be seen in the Gothic style was also admired. Variations in structure and ornamentation were seen when comparing Gothic buildings of different periods and regions. This freedom gave the craftsmen the opportunity to show their individuality and therefore resulted in styles which were vibrant and unrepetitive. Seen as a welcome change from the regularity and formality of classical design, the Gothic style was admired because of its asymmetry, variety of forms and its organic nature. All of these factors contributed to great freedom in design.

Although the Gothic style is best suited to churches and cathedrals, its own particular ornament and structure could quite easily be scaled down to suit smaller buildings. It is very important that the style should be so adaptable because the concept of borrowing from medieval churches to furnish modern rooms was fundamental to the Gothic revival.

## THE SURVIVAL OF GOTHIC

The Gothic style was always influential as an architectural source of inspiration and it is generally believed that interest in it was never really lost. According to Kenneth Clark, there was always a tiny stream of Gothic which never quite disappeared and just as it seemed doomed, the antiquarians took it up (Clark, 1962, p.1.). The revival of the Gothic began in the 16th century before the style itself was even extinct and it was widespread by the late 18th century.

Gothic was helped to survive by architects such as Christopher Wren who rebuilt the





old Gothic cathedral of St. Paul in London when it was badly damaged by the great fire in 1666. By the end of the 17th century an appreciation of the Gothic was developing amongst antiquarians and scholars. John Vanbrugh also worked in the Gothic style on Vanbrugh Castle, Blackheath, London 1717-26.

Owners of buildings which were medieval in date often wanted to make appropriate architectural improvements. Castellations were mainly used to do this. The use of castellations shows the early development of the concept of picturesque which was particularly relevant to the beginnings of the Gothic revival.

Nicholas Hawksmoor was another architect who worked in the Gothic style - he designed the west towers of Westminster Abbey and the quadrangle of All Souls College, Oxford. These architects did not primarily work in the Gothic style but adapted to design in it when it was required of them. Rather than influencing the Gothic revival, architects continued a style of Gothic building and provided a

"stream of Gothic ornament flowing without a break from the 17th century churches and chapels through Wren and Hawksmoor to the revivalists Batty Langley and Horace Walpole". (Clark, 1962, p.12.).

The Gothic also survived through many traditional churches built in the 17th century. Church restoration was always needed and therefore carvers had to follow a tradition of ornament which was many centuries old. In country districts traditional techniques of building and style were handed down over generations. In some of these areas domestic architecture naturally remained in the Gothic style as a result of handing down techniques to the next generation. This is an example of how the Gothic style led a natural way of life in some country districts and how it was a survival rather than a revival in these areas.



The third and most important way in which Gothic survived was in the form of Gothic sentiment. The Gothic age was one of faith and worship - people liked to be seen as pious and the Gothic age evoked lavish worshipping of God. People travelling through villages and towns always noted the churches and cathedrals. Antiquarians especially took up the Gothic style as there was a certain romantic air about destroyed, crumbling buildings and ruined abbeys. Here the interest was not always in the architectural aspects but more so in the feelings that were evoked from the sight of these ruined abbeys. Many Gothic ruins were a main source of inspiration for literature, ie, Gothic novels in the past. The settings of these ruins which were often remote and surrounded by trees, were ideally suited to evoke feelings of romance and fear in their novels. This romantic sentiment also carried through to paintings, sculpture, ballads and poetry.

Even though the Gothic style was very distinctive, it was not always chosen for its visual and aesthetic properties. The Gothic style provoked much literature both in romantic novels and theoretical works. It also gave rise to discussion and debate about where the style came from, what it meant and how its forms of ornament were used. This renewed interest in the history of the Gothic style made it become the choice of design for the thinking, educated and literate people who wished to become associated with the literature, scholarship and all concepts of the Gothic style. At this time the typical patron of the Gothic revival architecture would have been an aristocratic lady or gentleman such as Charles William Bury and his wife, Charlotte Maria Tisdall, owners of Charleville Castle. Educated in England, Bury would have had antiquarian learnings. He would also have had the money to design and build his fairytale castle in any style he wished. The style he chose was one which was often chosen by those with intellectual or artistic learnings. (Charlotte Maria Tisdall was known to have done some paintings of the castle later). It was also a style chosen by those who particularly wanted to associate themselves with the past.





## STRAWBERRY HILL

The Gothic revival cannot be mentioned without discussing the importance of Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill. Walpole was a writer and dilettante. He bought a small villa in 1749 in Twickenham on the Thames. In 1750 he decided to gothicize it and by 1753 part of it was finished. This Gothic villa was to be the most influential folly erected in England in the 18th century, and it became a complete statement of the development of the picturesque theory in England. Walpole's idea of a sham castle in which to house his collections was inspired partly by the fashionable enthusiasm for collecting and museum making.

The idea of sham castles influenced and appealed very much to Walpole and his contemporaries. Sham ruins stimulated the imagination and inspired novels, paintings and ballads which were a sharp contrast to the classical traditions. Being in quite a secure society, their imagination was fired and thrown into a daydream world of adventure, recklessness and romance. According to Kenneth Clark, sham castles were seen as monuments to a mood, and are now called follies (Clark, 1962, p.37).

Walpole's own novel The Castle of Otranto was a great success and Strawberry Hill itself plays the part of a sham ruin.

The Gothic style is mainly a structural style and pillars, vaults and pointed arches are used to form this structure. Horace Walpole took Gothic detailing and used it as a form of decoration for his villa. After gothicizing his villa he had now made it look like a castle from a fairytale. His ideas of copying design aspects from the ancient work of cathedrals, altars and tombs were transferred into his own villa. He brought their details to his fireplace, doors, stairways, ceilings, walls and furniture. The Gothic detailing was transferred into any area of his villa where he thought he could fit it. Horace Walpole was the first to go about this transformation and his ideas were



fundamental to the Gothic revival. As Horace Walpole was a wealthy, well learned and well known antiquarian at the time, his ideas were noted and respected.

Strawberry Hill became the source and model for Gothic buildings throughout Europe. I feel that Strawberry Hill had an obvious influence on Charles William Bury's choice of design for Charleville Castle and it will be discussed later in conjunction with the interiors.

## ORIGINAL SOURCES

The basic structure and the source for much of the detailing in both Strawberry Hill and Charleville Castle came from many great medieval cathedrals. Originally Gothic architecture had been developed as an ecclesiastical style and, therefore, it contained the most vast and impressive interiors that man could create, built to house as many worshippers as possible.

Vaulting in the chapel of Henry VII's Westminster Abbey 1503-9 was one of the principle sources of the Gothic revivalists. They would have been influenced by the richness of the decoration. For example, the form of the stone pendant hanging down with lacelike tracery surrounding it would have been much admired and copied by the revivalists. This form of decoration merged the ornamental with the functional and was an ideal way in which to use ornament, as the modern Gothic revivalists did not want to give up functionalism in the place of ornament.

Salisbury Cathedral shows us a good example of how fan vaulting can be taken from a medieval cathedral and adapted to a ceiling. In both Strawberry Hill and Charleville Castle resemblances can be seen to the mid 14th century cloisters of Gloucester Cathedral in the fan vaulting where the colonettes of the wall are spread out at the ceiling into ornate fanlike shapes. Figs. 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4 illustrate quite clearly



where the source of inspiration for Strawberry Hill and Charleville Castle lie. The basic shapes and structures are clearly present for the star shaped ceilings, the vaulting and the decorative fan vaulted ceilings.

By looking at the Gothic style we can see why it was so influential at the time, how it was associated with quality work, sacredness and spirituality, freedom and adaptability in style.

Gothic architecture was an influential source of design for Gothic revivalists. The survival of the style indicates why it remained popular and how it became the choice of design for Charleville Castle. The Gothic revival was a style often chosen by the aristocratic who were also influenced by Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill. Walpole's inspiration came from Gothic Cathedrals which are the true origins of the Gothic revival.







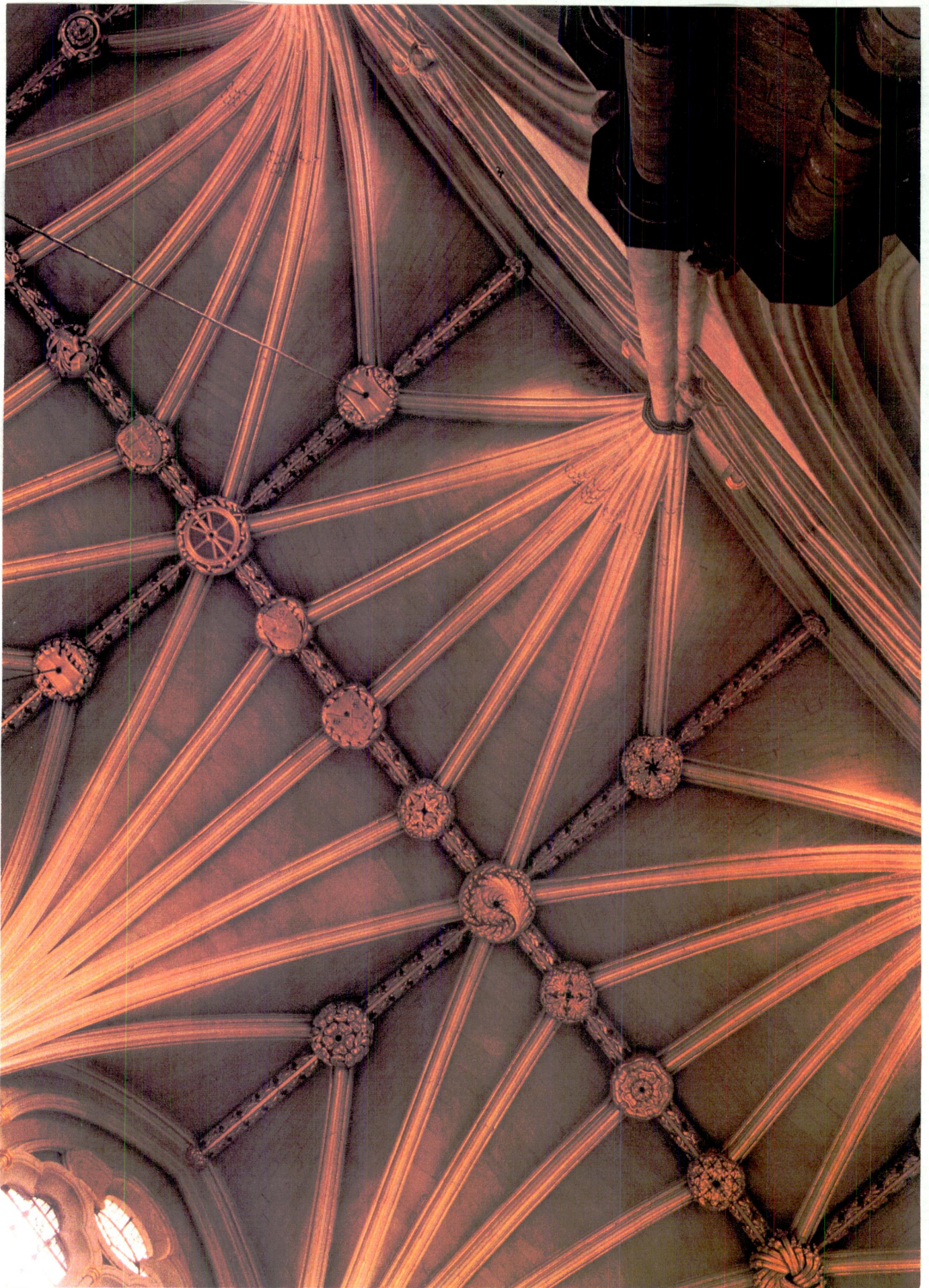
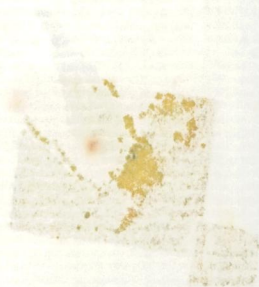
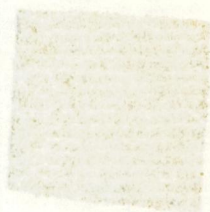


Fig 1.1 - Nave Vaulting in Westminster Abbey







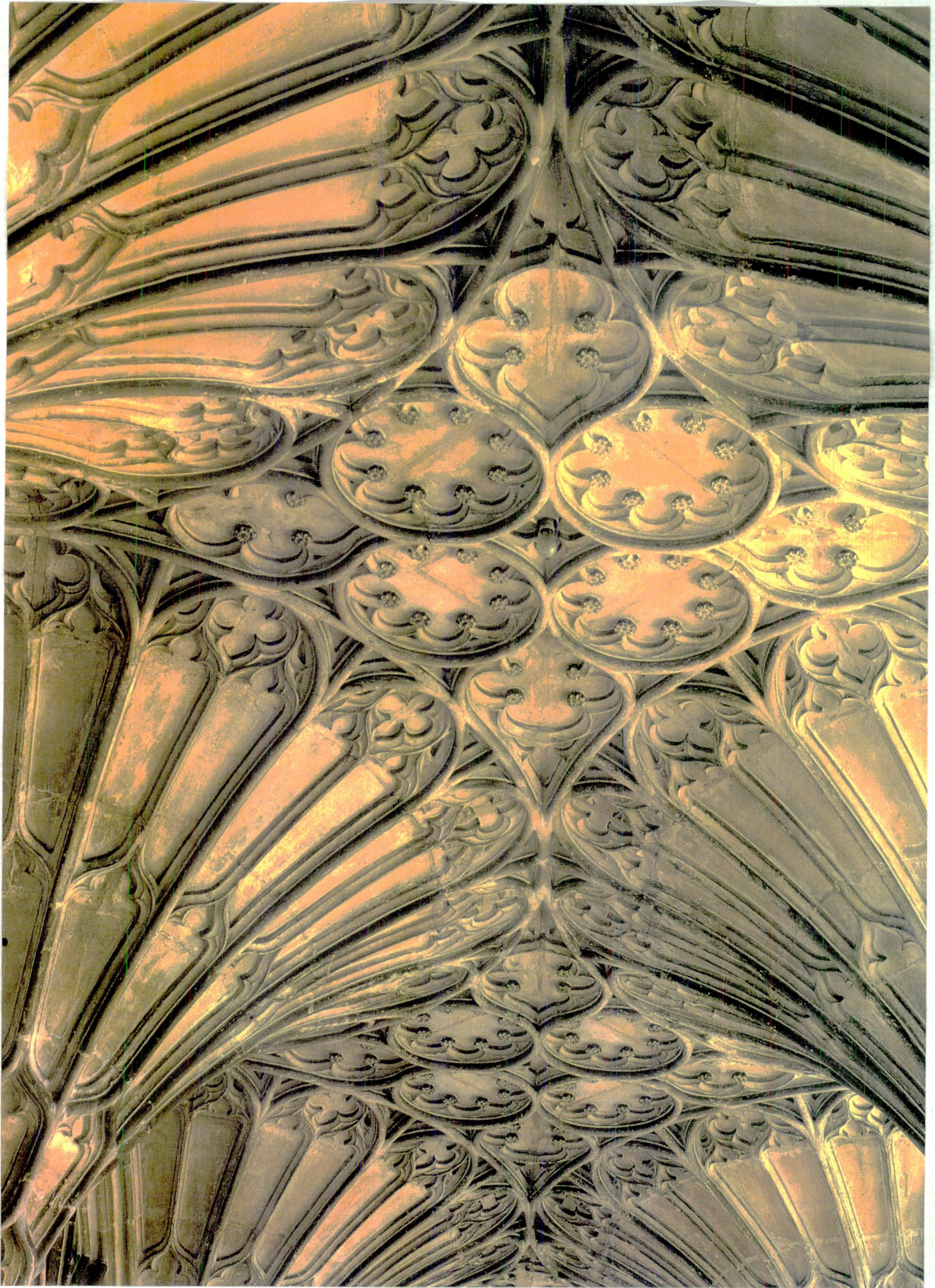
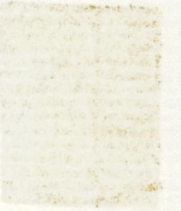


Fig 1.2 Fan Vaulting of the Cloister of Gloucester Cathedral 1350-64







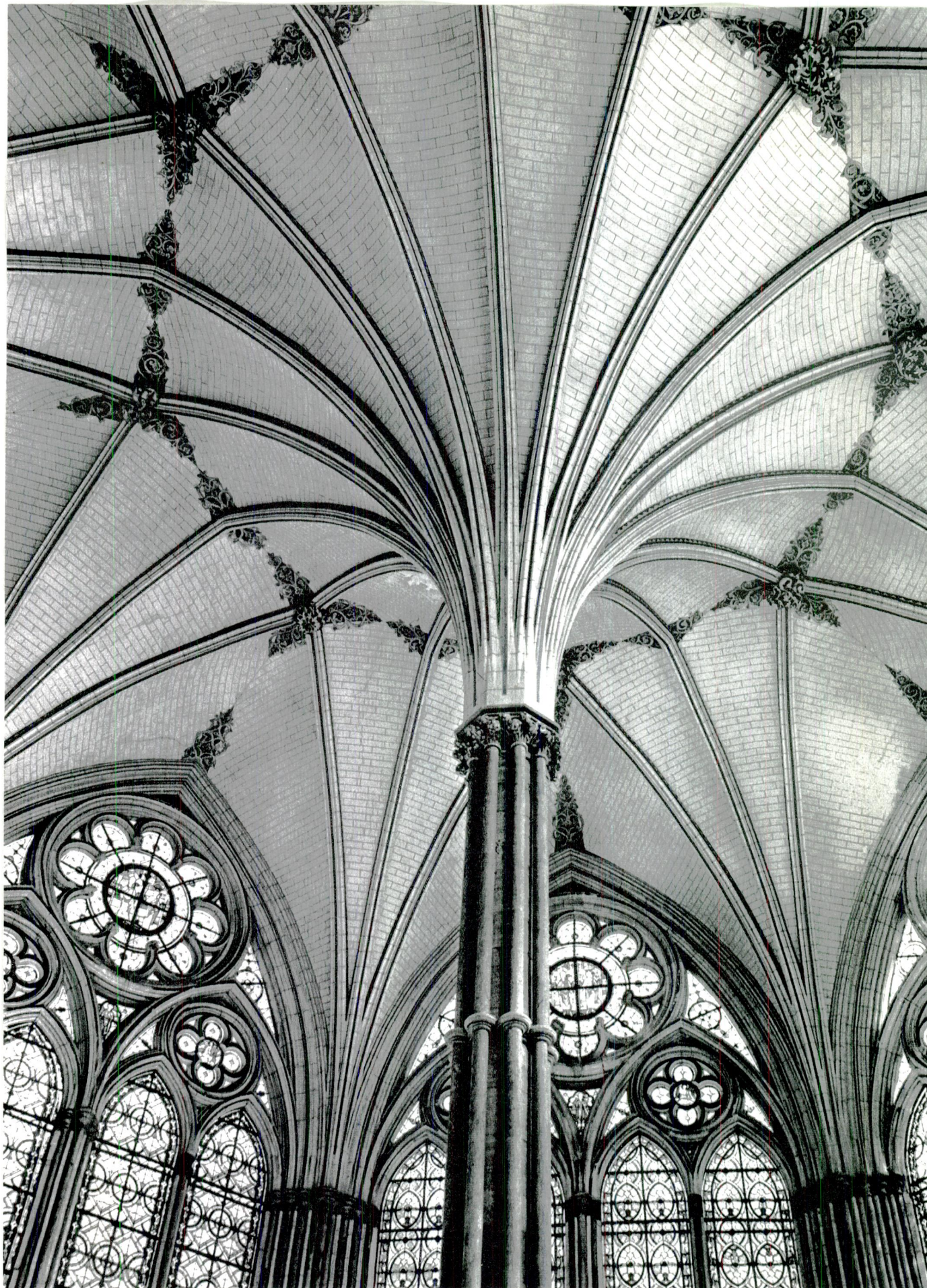
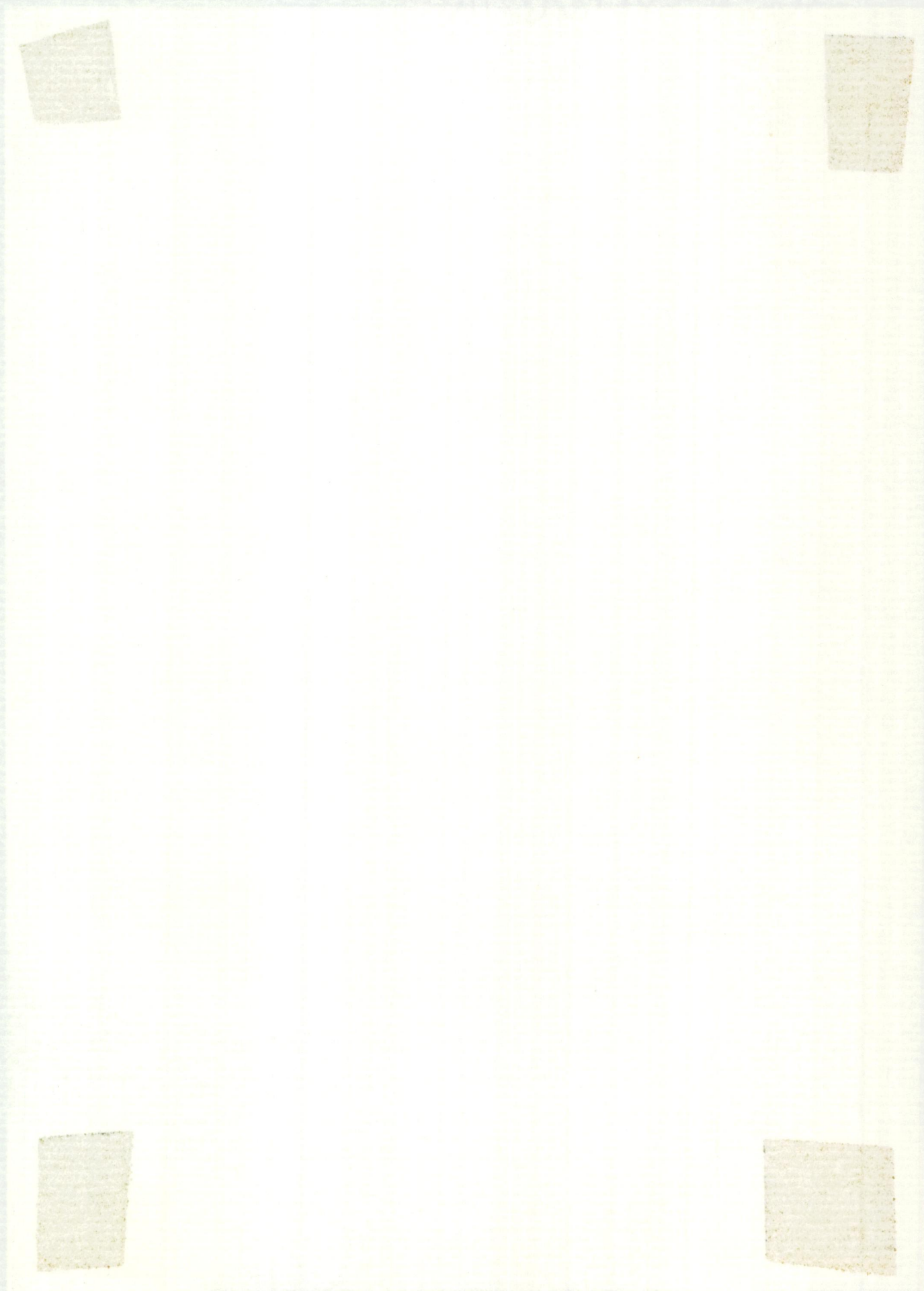


Fig 1.3 - Chapter House, Salisbury Cathedral







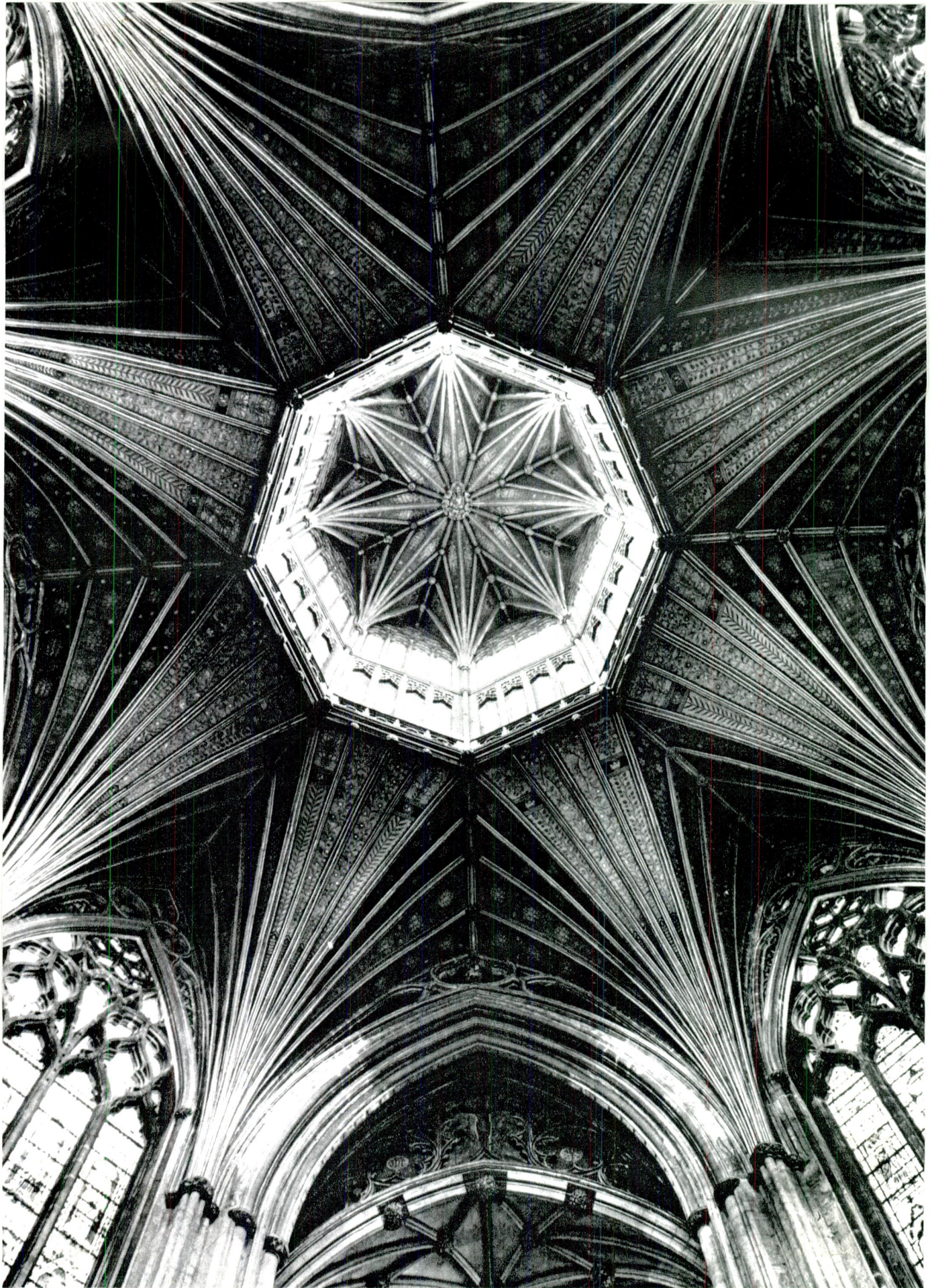
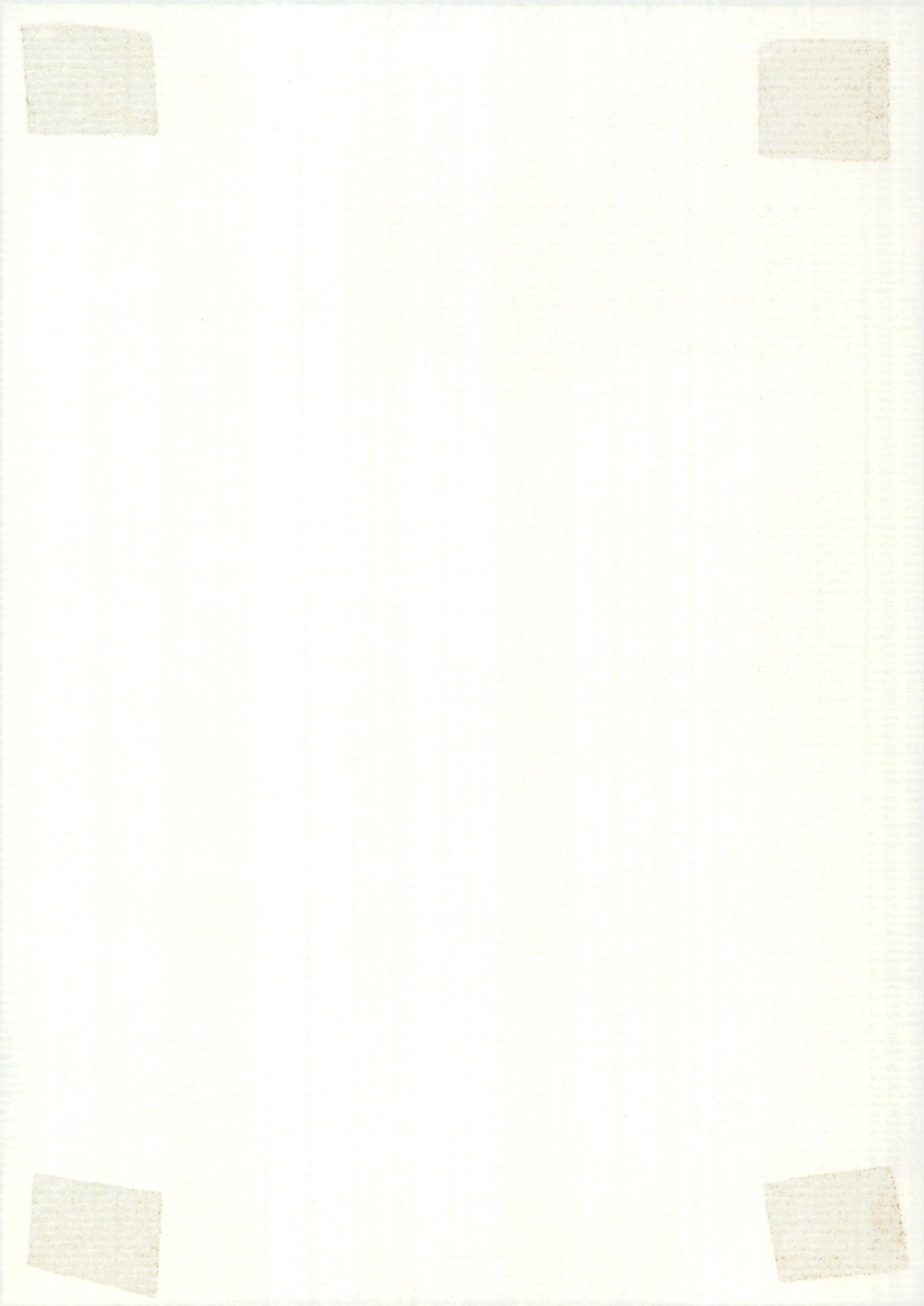


Fig 1.4 - Octagonal Lantern, Ely





## CHAPTER 2

Charles William Bury and Charlotte Maria Tisdall, the owners of Charleville Castle had a strong input into its design and the architect, Francis Johnston carried out many of their specifications. By examining some of Johnston's later work (after Charleville, 1800) this chapter will examine how the craze began for the Gothic revival in Ireland. This will also show how Charleville Castle was an extremely influential source of design in its own right.

### THE DESIGN OF CHARLEVILLE CASTLE

Charleville Castle was built by Charles William Bury (1764-1835). He was a wealthy landowner and had an antiquarian interest. According to Mark Girouard's Country Life article, when in Rome on the grand tour in 1789, Bury had acquired plans from the Romano-Scottish James Byres for a new neoclassical house on a very palatial scale (fig.2.1), but these plans were never carried out. (Girouard, 1962).

This shows that Bury had the neo-classical style in mind originally as the style of building for his new house.

In the end however, possibly due to the strong influence of his wife, Charlotte Maria Tisdall, whom he married in 1798, Bury decided to build a Gothic style castle. Mark Girouard describes how it seems likely that anything Bury achieved in his career, was the result of hard shoves from his energetic, ambitious and intelligent wife. The architect employed for Charleville Castle was Francis Johnston but in the Country Life article Mark Girouard suggests that Bury and his wife had decided what they wanted in their design and Johnston merely worked out the finished article and more credit should be given to them for the design of the house.





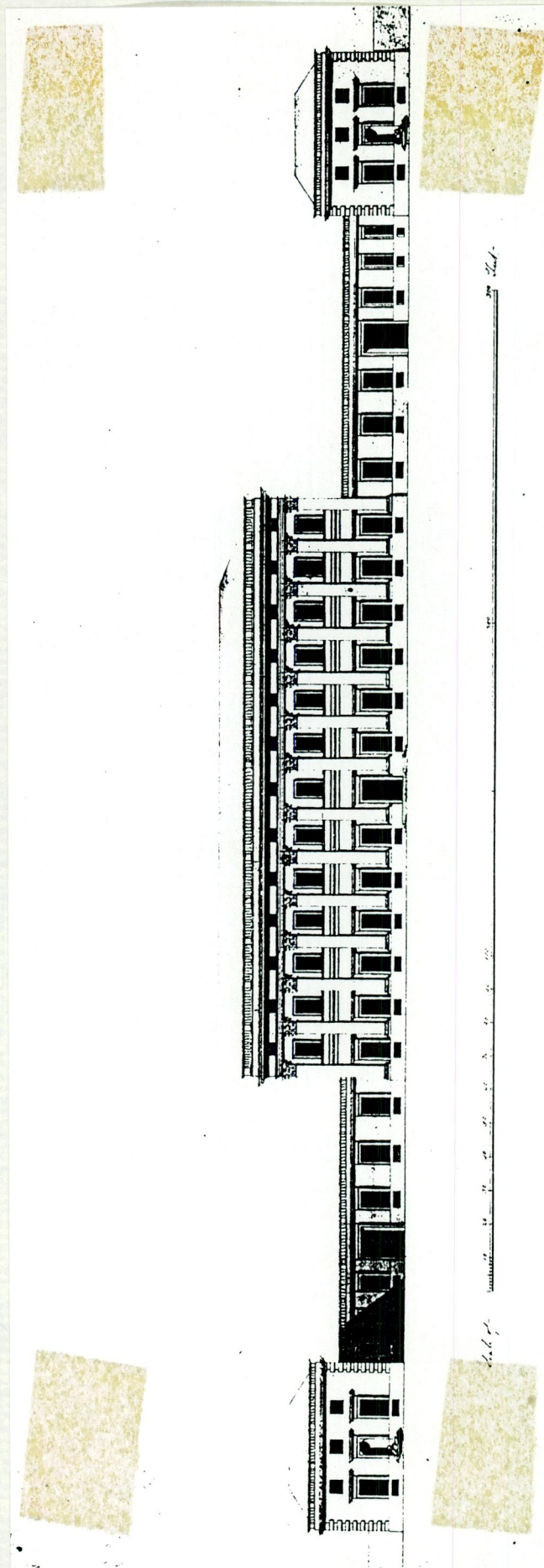


Fig 2.1 Plans for a Neoclassical House by James Byres





The approximate date when the present castle was started is given in a letter from Lady Louisa Connolly to Charlotte Maria Tisdall as November the 8th 1800:

"I am very glad to hear that you have begun your castle for I think that there are few occupations more entertaining than building, and Lord Tullamore (Bury had been given this title in 1797) I am sure will enjoy it much having planned it all himself." (Girouard, 1962)

This letter would certainly suggest that Bury was very involved in the design of the Castle himself.

Another example of Bury's involvement in the design of the Castle which Mark Girouard gives is that of several designs for Charleville Castle, one of which represents an early project for the new house. This design is quite close to the design that was finally carried out. It appears to be the work of an amateur and could possibly be Bury's own sketches of what he wanted. His wife, Catherine Maria Tisdall, was also known to have been artistic and fig.2.2.(a) has been attributed to her on the basis of its similarity in style to her initialled design for a Gothic window. It is alternative decorative schemes for the entrance, hall and drawing room.

Fig. 2.2 (b) - Stairway, Plasterwork, Vaulting - Today

Fig. 2.2 (c) - Fan Vaulting - Today

Here we can see similarities in what is present at the Castle today, especially in the top drawing. There is an ornate stairway with a gallery. The structure is similar with its plasterwork and vaulting on the ceiling. In the drawing room (more so in the second drawing), the fan vaulting inspired by Strawberry Hill can be seen quite clearly.

Fig 2.3 shows one of Bury's own drawings of a project for the Castle. Apart from the trunk tower and the pointed arch over the main door, it can be noted that his drawing and the present day Castle are very similar. The round tower is there, the octagonal tower, the stables, the placement of the windows, the battlement and the basic structure are certainly very like what we can see today. In the end Bury must have had a major say in how the Castle was designed.





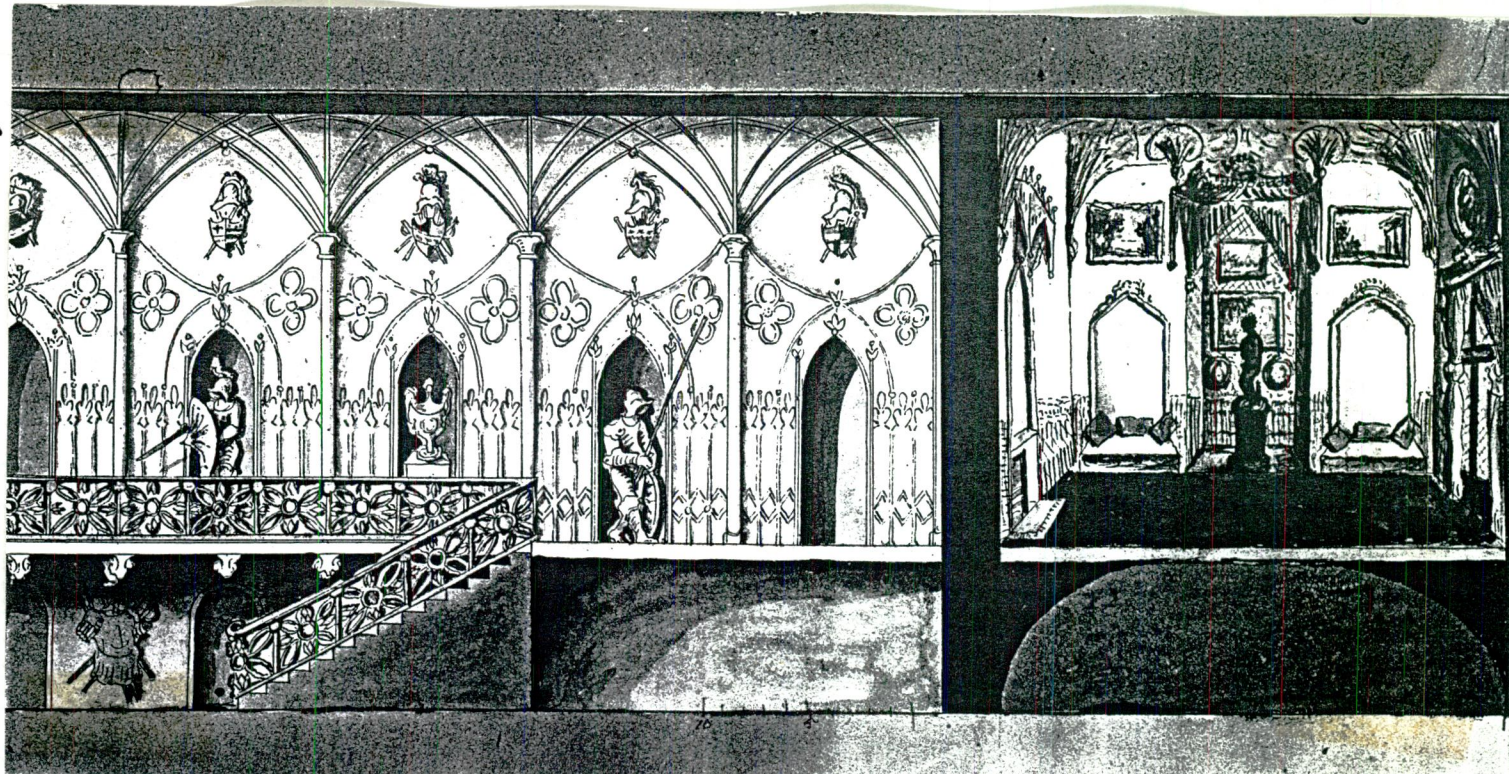


Fig 2.2a Original Drawing for Charleville

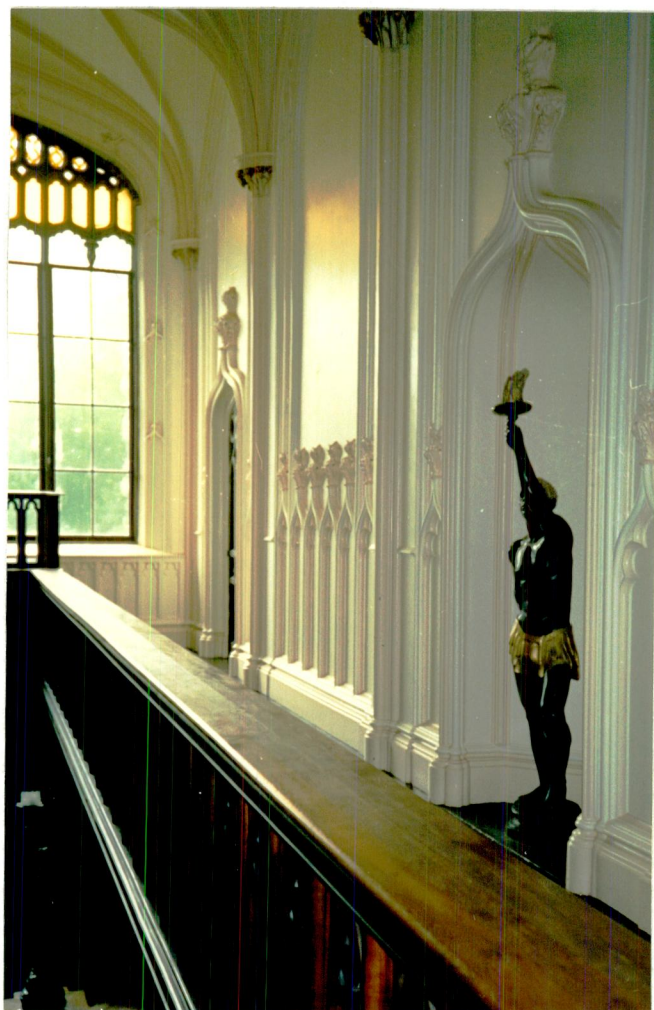


Fig 2.2b Vaulting and Plasterwork as it is today



Fig 2.2c Fan Vaulting as it is today







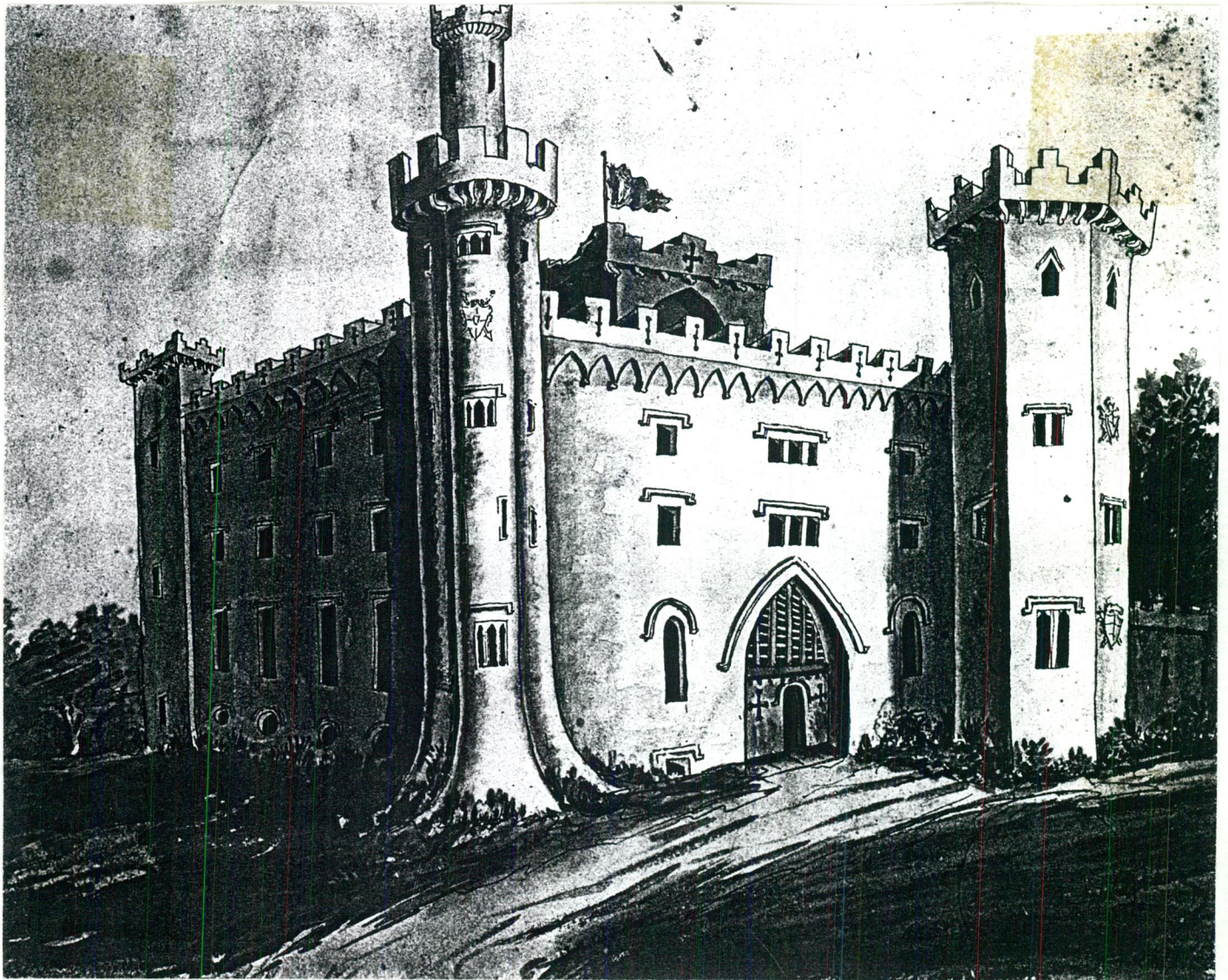
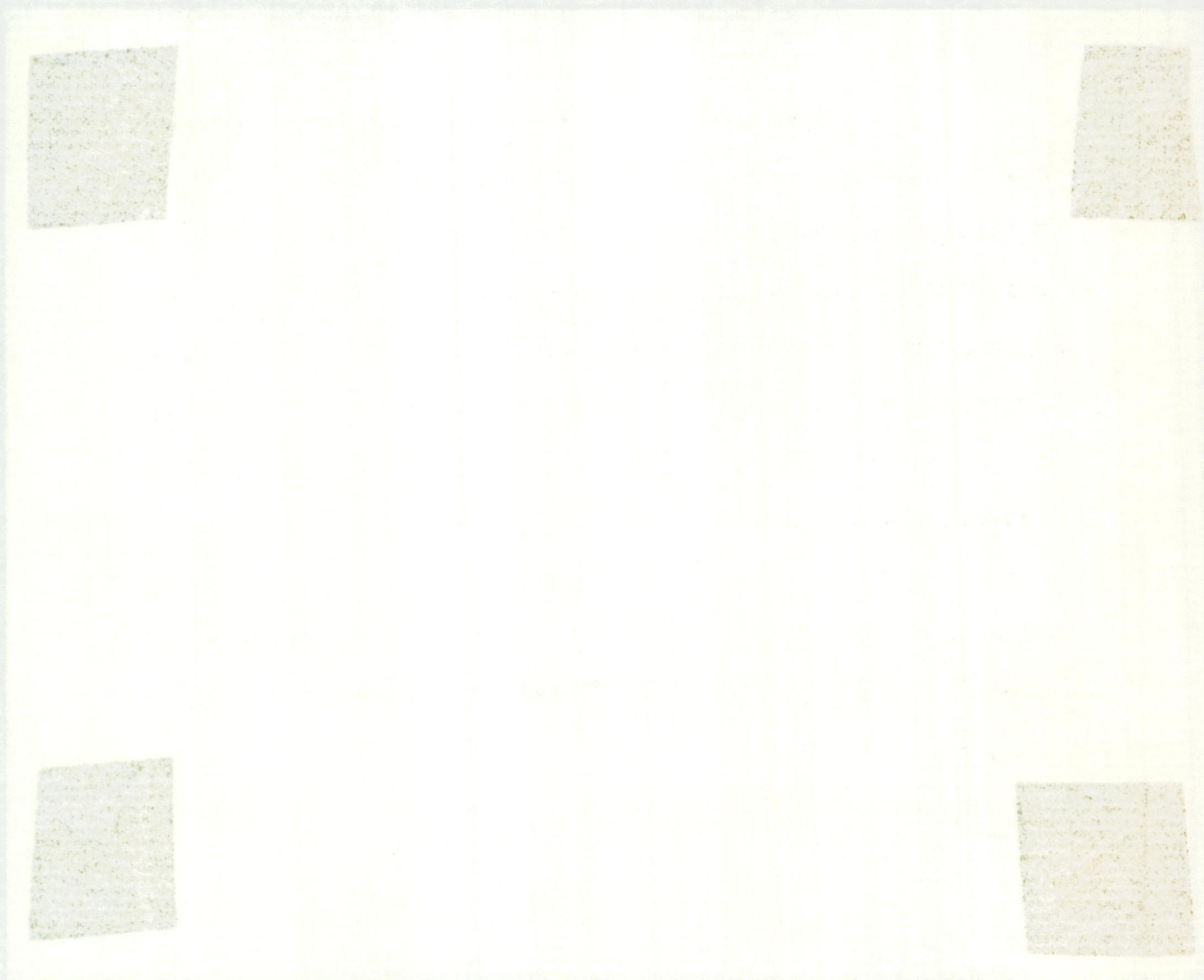


Fig 2.3 Original Sketch for Charleville by Charles William Bury







In the 18th Century there was a small number of Gothic houses or older houses remodelled with Gothic trimmings. They are only a small group and none of the examples are really related. Charleville Castle (fig 2.4) was the first example of a Gothic building which was sensational enough to create a fashion: once the idea caught on it began a craze for these fairytale castles which were perfect for the mood of romance, adventure and wildness discussed in Chapter 1.

### FRANCIS JOHNSTON

As mentioned earlier, Francis Johnston 1760-1829 was the architect employed. He was one of Ireland's greatest native born architects. He was born in Armagh and then was sent to Dublin by Richard Robinson, Primate of Armagh, to study with architects Thomas Cooley and Samuel Sprail. Johnston was appointed to the Board of Works in 1805. Two of his public buildings included the General Post Office on O'Connell Street and St. George's Church, Hardwicke Place, built in a classical style.

Up until 1800 Francis Johnston had done a certain amount of Church work in the Gothic style, but nothing domestic, with the possible exception of alterations to Slane Castle. He has been described as the leading architect after James Gandon and was equally at home in both neoclassical and Gothic styles. Guinness & O'Brien (Dublin, A Grand Tour, 1994, p140). Johnston's Gothic building and alterations to houses is more relevant in this context than his neo-classical style of building.

### ALTERATIONS TO SLANE CASTLE

During the design and rebuilding of Slane Castle, the Conynghams consulted many different architects over the years, so much so that, at times, it is confusing and difficult to decipher who designed what. When Lord Conyngham was succeeded by his nephew in 1781, the Castle was rebuilt to the designs of James Wyatt and this work was completed by Francis Johnston. Wyatt had designed a classical hall for the first





Fig 2.4 Exterior of Charleville Castle







Lord Conyngham as early as 1775, and various other architects produced designs for Slane at this time including Capability Brown who designed and built the Gothic stables. (Guinness, Ryan 1972 p262).

"In an important letter written in 1820, Francis Johnston states that James Wyatt had been at Slane in 1785 to rebuild it, and that he (Johnston) had finished the hall, staircase and entrance to the Castle, as well as the steeple of the Church and the Gothic gate opposite the mill" (Guinness, Ryan 1972, p265).

In this letter Johnston tells us exactly how he was involved and exactly what he did. If he were not so specific it might have seemed more likely that Johnston, not Wyatt, had designed the great round library at Slane (Guinness, Ryan 1972, p265). It has been shown that the Gothic library at Slane is important as one of the first Gothic interiors in a neo-gothic house or castle in Ireland. Even though Francis Johnston was not apparently the designer of the Gothic library, in his later work in the Chapel Royal and Killeen Castle Johnston seems to have been influenced by it, as some elements of detailing are similar in the three buildings.

#### KILLEEN CASTLE

Killeen Castle, Dunsany, Co. Meath, was remodelled in 1802 for the 8th Earl of Fingall. The architect chosen was Francis Johnston. The castle was originally a stronghold dating from the Anglo-Norman Invasion at the end of the 12th Century. Killeen Castle and Dunsany Castle were barely one mile away from each other. Both were originally owned by Sir Christopher Plunkett. His elder son inherited Killeen and is the ancestor of the Earl of Fingall and the younger son inherited Dunsany and was created the first Baron Dunsany. In 1802 Francis Johnston produced some inventive and original designs for the design of the medieval castle of Killeen. Unfortunately, these original designs were never used. Lord Fingall was also seen to have sought the advice of Thomas Wogan Browne who was a wealthy businessman and architect who





was known to have designed for other 18th century castles. Johnston's designs were altered and they were used in the end, but they also incorporated some of Thomas Wogan Browne's ideas.

In Fig 2.5 we can see clearly some of the elements which have been carried through from the design of Charleville Castle. Elements of decorative Gothic carving can be seen on the banisters and the door. The use of the quatrefoil design as decoration is seen in many areas of Charleville Castle. A flight of stone steps with Gothic balustrades of oak leads up to the level of the main ground floor rooms. At the top of the steps is a long and narrow hall with the magnificent fan vaulted ceiling. The library, dining room and drawing room open off this hall. Strong similarities can be seen in Charleville. The use of the Coats of Arms was seen in one of the original drawings for Charleville Castle and were more than likely used at the time, although they are not there today. The alcoves and the plasterwork surrounding them were widely used around the main staircase in Charleville also.

James Shiel was employed to make additions and alterations to Killeen Castle for the 9th Earl of Fingall when he took over the title in 1836. The Castle was sold in the early 1950s and remained unoccupied but maintained until it was destroyed by fire in 1981. It is now a ruin.

## MARKREE CASTLE

Markree Castle in Co Sligo was transformed by Francis Johnston from an 18th Century House into a castle in the same year as Killeen Castle, 1802. Joshua Cooper commissioned Francis Johnston to enlarge this house. Johnston extended the front of the house to more than twice its original size to form a new garden front with a central curved and Irish battlemented tower. The entrance was in the adjoining front where Johnston added a porch. This might give us an indication of how after 1800 when





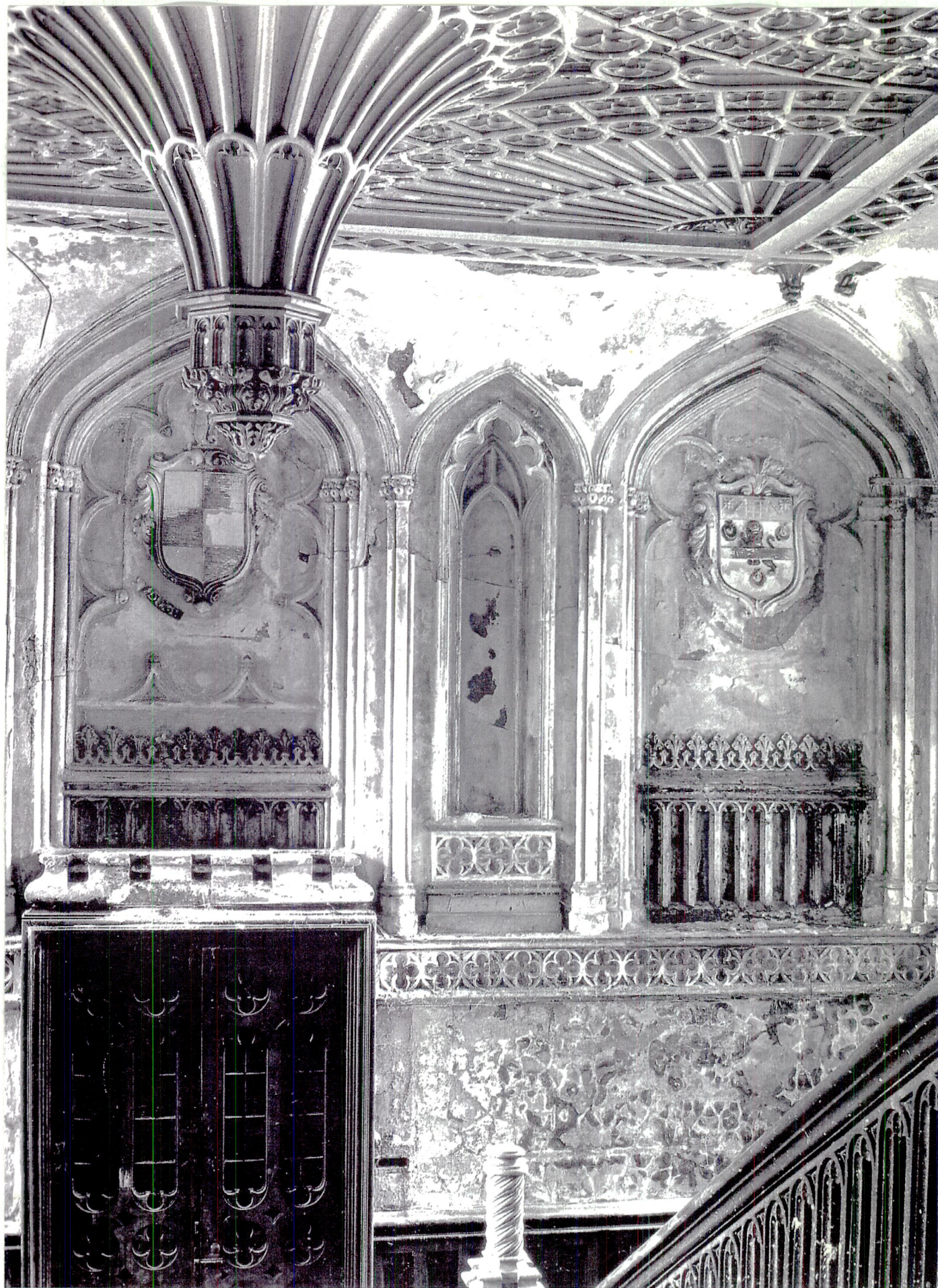


Fig 2.5 Main Entrance of Killeen Castle, Co Meath







Charleville Castle was built, there was a growing demand to have a Gothic style house. Today the Castle is derelict and very little of Francis Johnston's interior still survives. (Fig. 2.6) This is the entrance hall as it was in 1986.

This photograph was probably taken looking down from the top of the stairs. The vaulting on the ceiling still remains. It is also similar to the vaulting on the ceiling of the main entrance and stairway in Charleville Castle. Fig. 2.7 is also the main stairway. This time the picture is looking straight up from the bottom of the stairs. Here we can see more clearly the plasterwork surrounding the pointed arches of the doorways and alcoves. The structure of the doorways and the decorative plasterwork gives the building an ecclesiastical feel which is certainly present in most aspects of Charleville Castle.

#### PACKENHAM HALL

Packenham Hall, now called Tullynally Castle, was gothicized between 1801 and 1806, beginning with designs by Francis Johnston. Originally Packenham Hall was a squat Georgian house and was castellized for the 2nd Earl (3rd Baron) who may have been inspired by the castle at Inverary, Scotland, which he visited in 1793. It is interesting to note that the basic structure of the exterior of Charleville Castle, being a high square block with towers at the corners and a square tower-like lantern rising from the middle, derives from Inverary Castle also. Francis Johnston's involvement began in 1801 with the building of the portcullis entrance porch. His work can be seen in the ground plan (Fig 2. 8) along with the successive layers of Gothic additions by James Shiel, Richard Morrison and J Rawson Carroll.







Fig 2.6 Main Entrance of Markree Castle, Co Sligo



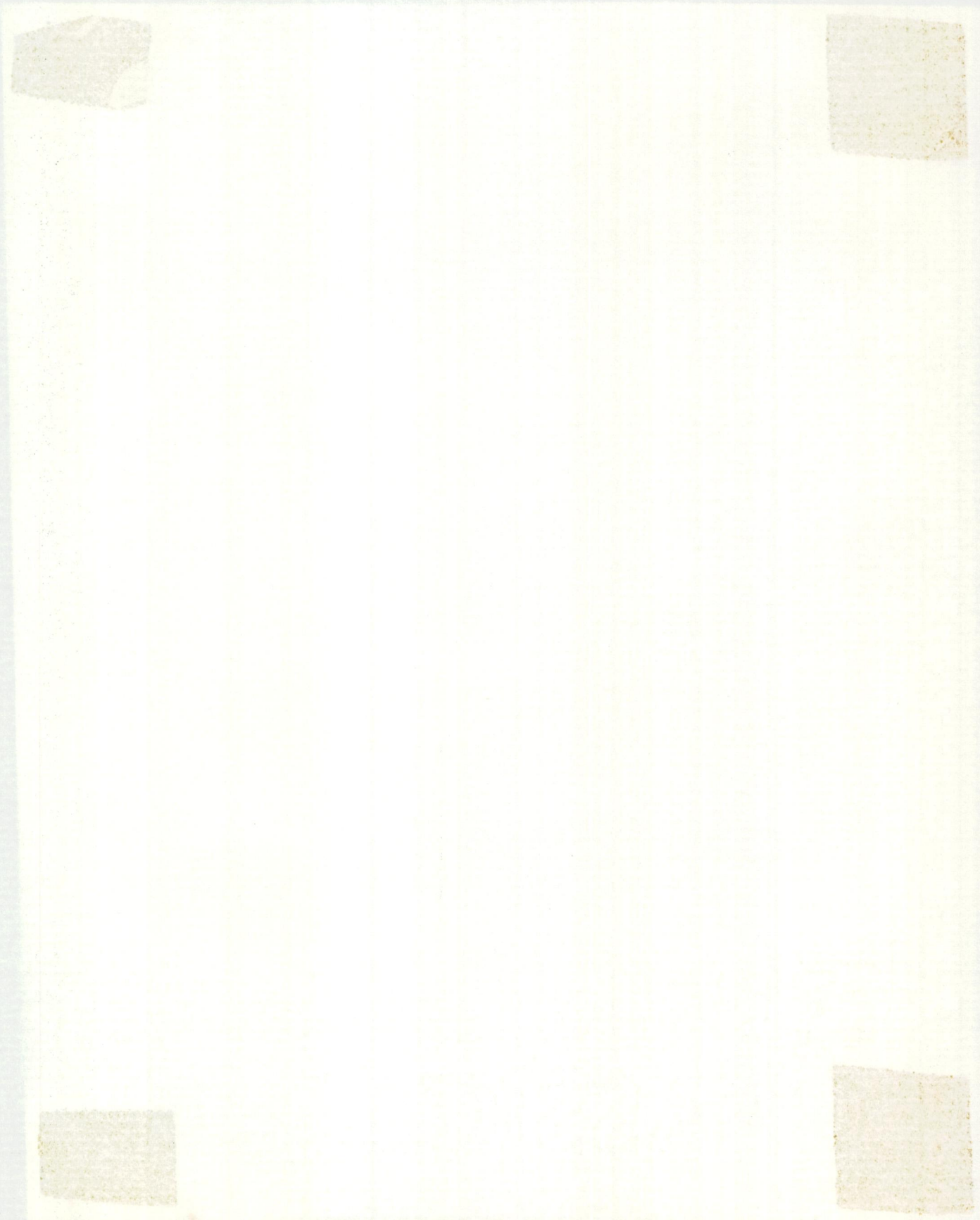






Fig 2.7 Entrance of Markree Castle, Co Sligo







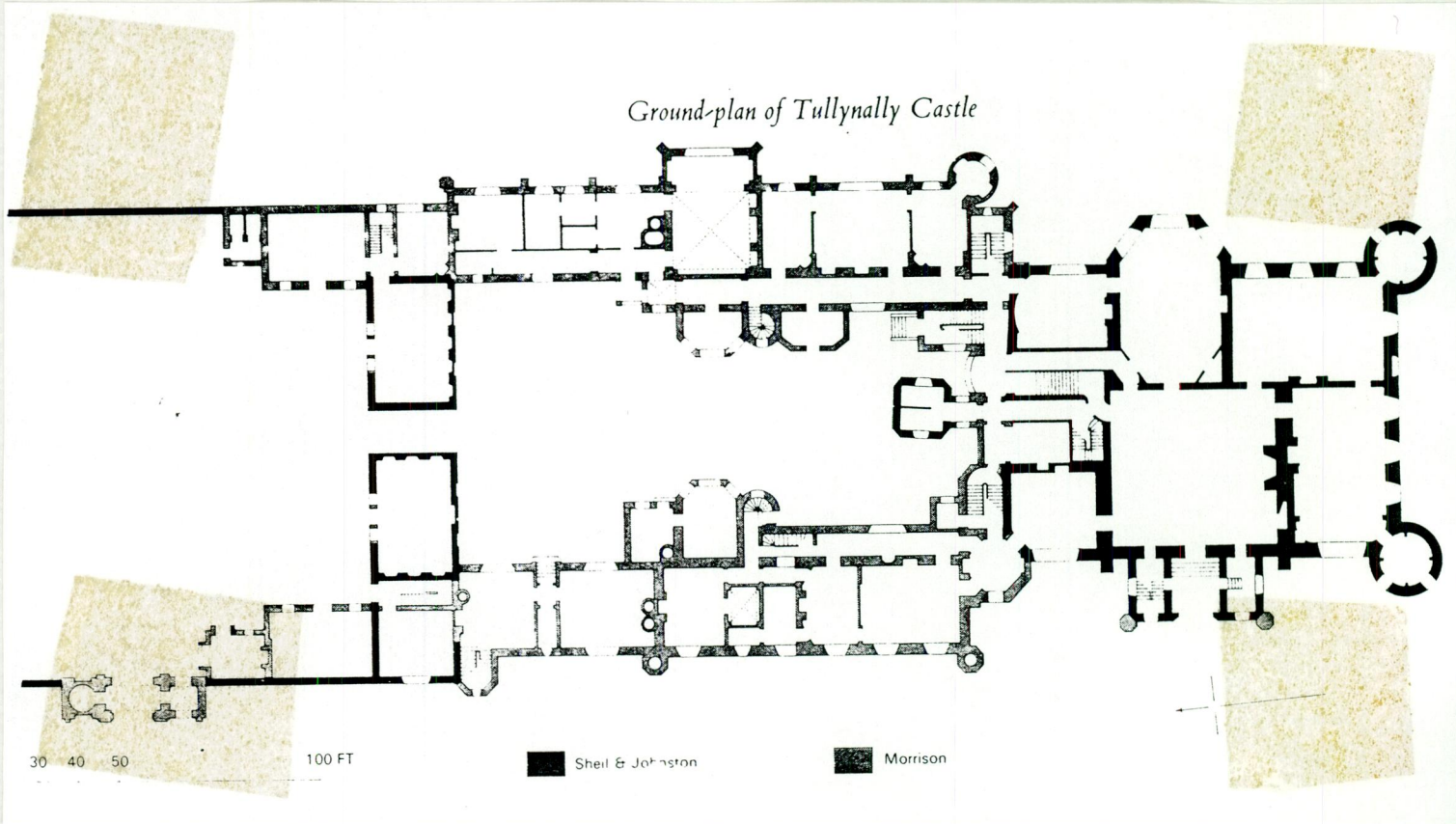


Fig 2.8 Ground Plan of Tullynally Castle







Tullynally Castle again illustrates how the craze was growing for the Gothic style. Johnston had only mildly gothicized the Castle in 1801, but by 1806 this design was felt to be too tame and therefore a series of towers were added, changing it (as it was then) from Pakenham Hall House to Pakenham Hall Castle. It is also an example of the desire to possess a picturesque, medieval castle at the time. It is now called Tullynally Castle.

### THE CHAPEL ROYAL

After Francis Johnston was appointed to the Board of Works in 1805, he was kept busy by a programme of official buildings such as the General Post Office (1814) and the Chapel Royal (1807). However, in 1807 Johnston began work on a Gothic revival chapel for the Viceroy and his Court within the walls of Dublin Castle. Construction continued up until 1814. It is interesting to note that the decoration of Charleville Castle was continuing at this time. Johnston had been gothicizing castles for the few years preceding the design of the Chapel Royal and this was once again another opportunity for him to put this ecclesiastical style of architecture into use. The decoration of Charleville may once again have influenced Francis Johnston in some aspects of his design in the Chapel. The oak galleries are ornately carved in black bog oak as is the pulpit which is the main feature of the Church. The vaulting on the ceiling which is plasterwork painted to look like stone (Fig 2. 9) is similar to that of the main entrances in Charleville and Markree Castles, as in the fan vaulting which is also present in Charleville and Killeen Castles (Fig 2.10).

Bury and his wife had a very strong input into the design of Charleville Castle. The influence that the design of Charleville Castle had on Francis Johnston can be seen in some of his later work. This is an example of how the craze for the Gothic revival style had spread in Ireland. It also shows how influential the design of Charleville Castle was itself.





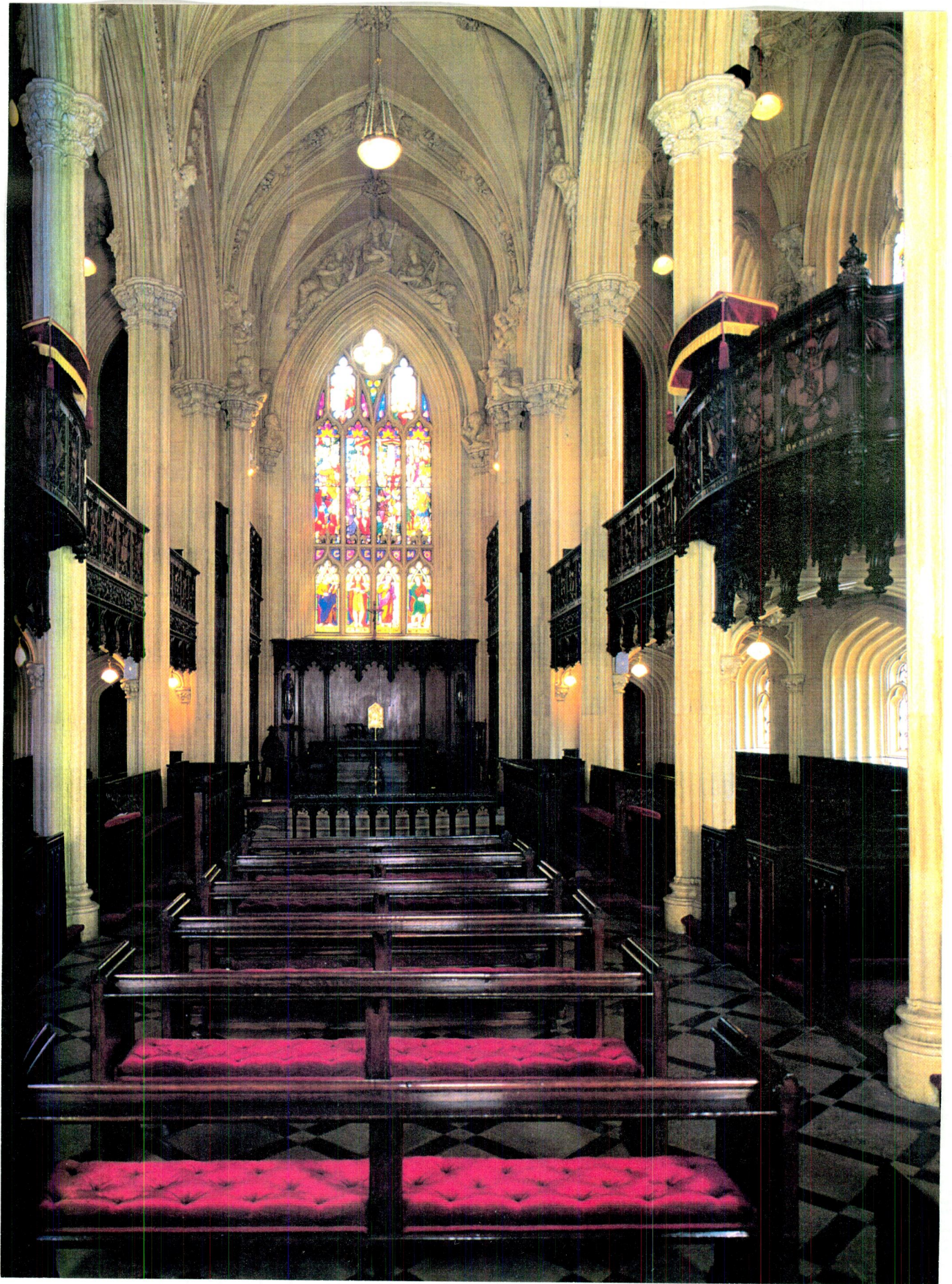


Fig 2.9 The Chapel Royal, Dublin, Vaulting and Woodwork



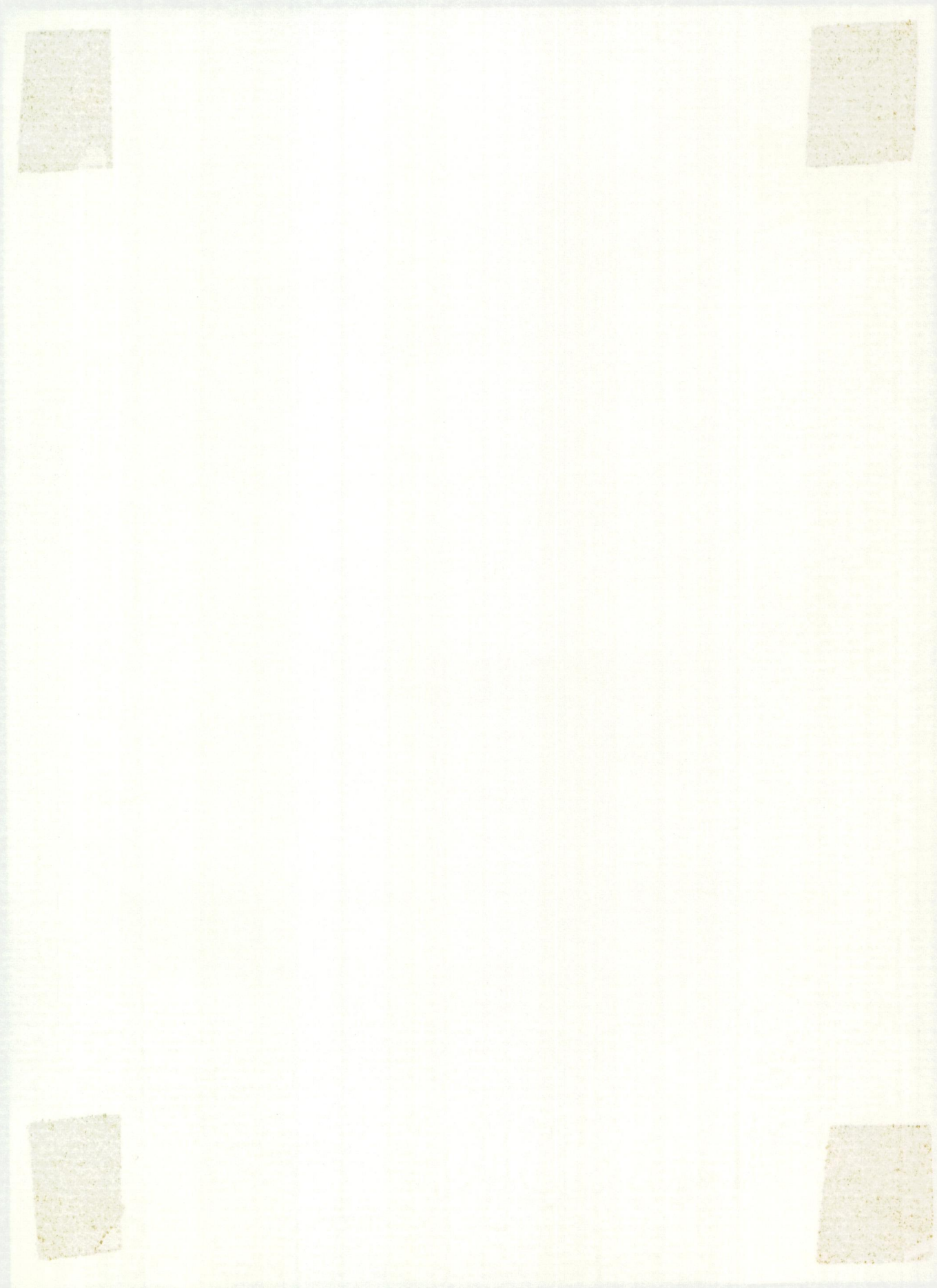
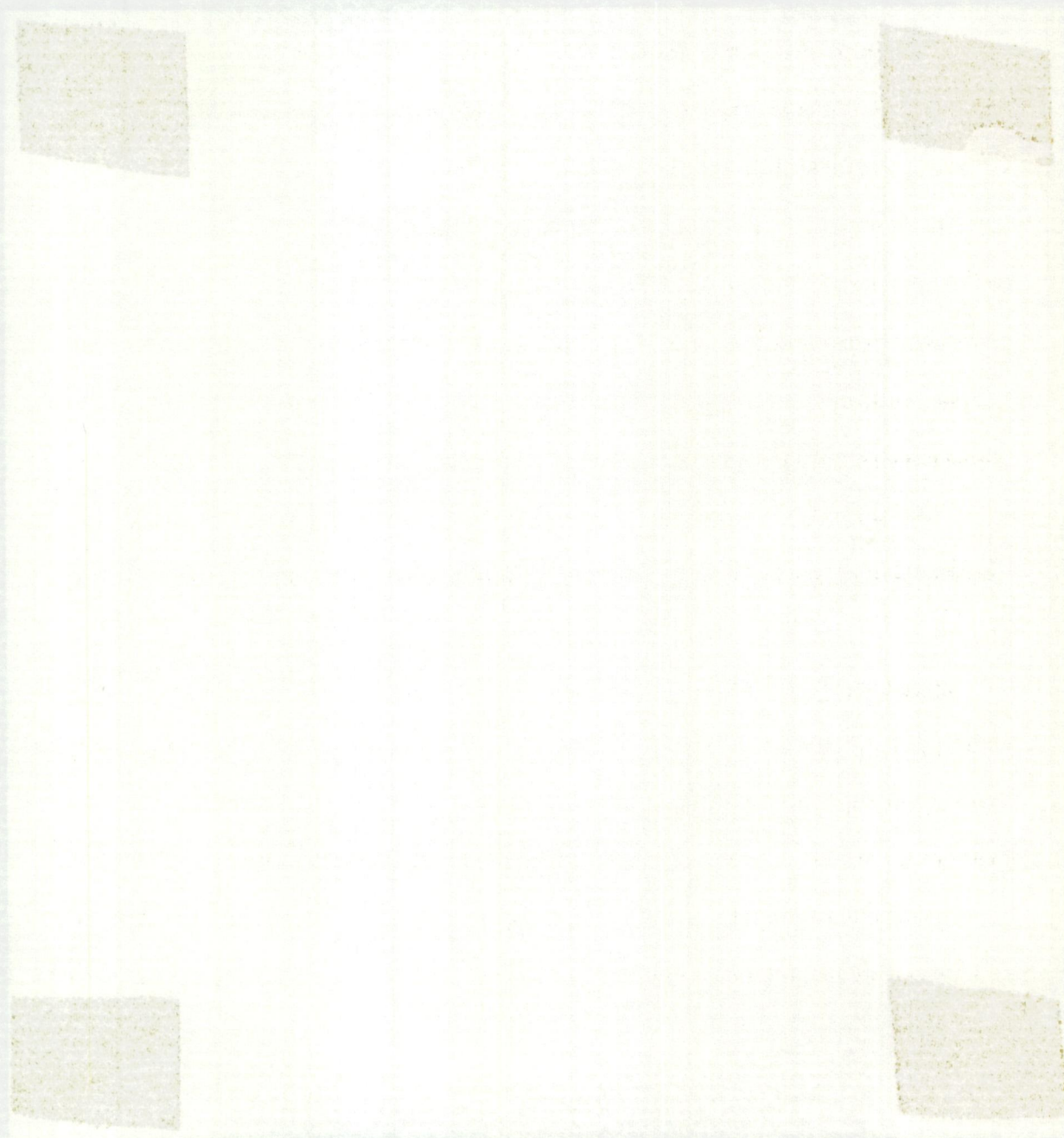






Fig 2.10 The Chapel Royal, Dublin







### CHAPTER 3

Through information received from Bridget Vance, the present owner of Charleville Castle, this Chapter will examine the lifestyle of Bury and his family. It will discuss the extravagant construction of the Castle in terms of the exterior and the landscaping, both of which are important aspects of the Gothic revival. The family background will be traced up until 1931 when the Castle became unoccupied.

Charles William Bury was born in 1764, a wealthy landowner who had inherited his wealth partly from the Bury Estates in Co Limerick where the family had settled in 1666 and partly from property in Co Offaly which he had inherited through his father's mother who was the only sister of Charles Moore (1712-64), Earl of Charleville and Baron Moore of Tullamoore (as it was spelt then). Bury himself was created Lord Tullamoore in 1797, Viscount Charleville in 1800 and Earl of Charleville in 1806.

According to Mark Girouard's Country Life article 1962, Bury had been in Rome on the grand tour in 1789 and had acquired plans from James Byres to build a neo-classical house on a very grand scale (fig. 2.1). Bury would have been well educated in England and as part of his education he would have developed architectural and antiquarian interests. Rather than just reading about these great buildings, historical paintings and objects of art, the tradition was, for an up and coming gentleman, to go and visit them, to see them firsthand. The grand tour may have been seen as an intensive course in the languages and heritage of half a dozen European nations or simply a prolonged holiday for the idle children of the nobility, yet it still provided an awareness and understanding in both ancient and modern history, literature and art. Young men could also acquire a fluency in foreign languages, the social graces of the European society and a knowledge of the ancient World. Greek and Latin were still the main subjects of education and formed the basis for any informed understanding of





history, literature and art. The grand tour would have educated Bury in appreciation of both modern art and the traditions on which it was based.

In 1798 a new building was proposed for Bury, who was seen as an up and coming gentleman. He had just married Charlotte Maria Tisdall and this was to be their new home. The Castle was designed and plans were made up by Francis Johnston. Work appeared to have begun in 1799, but it progressed extremely slowly. Through examples of Bury's letters given in Mark Girouard's Country Life article, we can gather that the house took a considerable amount of time to finish. At the end of 1804 Bury had just been to see Francis Johnston who acknowledged that things went on too slow at the Castle. Bury also wrote on January 6 1805 that "the appearance of the Castle is, I think, improved by the offices already built . . . . . I think the Castle may be made very comfortably habitable in the course of next summer". By the following January Bury had not moved in and he reported that "two impudent redbreasts have already taken possession of the Castle which I think a good omen" (Girouard, 1962). Also, from further letters we can gather that in June 1808 the decoration of the interior was still going strong and in May 1811 the painters were at work graining the woodwork of the staircase. The Castle was not finished by the end of 1812, although it was almost done by then. However, the family moved in long before the workmen moved out.

Lord and Lady Charleville, as they were now called, had now moved into the Castle, where they had many wealthy visitors and entertained them lavishly. In another letter Lady Charleville describes how, when the carriage with the guests arrived, the horses were taken away at the edge of the park and the carriage was pulled by hand whilst two bands played God Save the Queen. She also describes how thirty eight people sat down for dinner and that magnificent full dress liveries had been made for the servants,





and a uniform of blue and scarlet, for the upper men (Girouard, 1962). Charleville was designed and built without much thought or concern for the expensive cost of it and when the Castle was finished the lavish lifestyle continued profusely.

## THE EXTERIOR OF CHARLEVILLE CASTLE

Charleville Castle has an exterior which was made of quality stonework. Many Irish castles were built of rubble and plaster as quickly as possible and as cheaply as possible. (Girouard, 1962). Charleville was built of stone throughout, from the watch tower to the stables. Charleville had the advantage of being newly built, therefore its design was not restricted by the need to adapt and incorporate an older building. This also meant that there is a consistency about it, in both its construction and its style. The entire Castle was treated in the Gothic style and it did not have to combine with a classical style, as was the case in many castellated houses where remodelling took place. The exterior consists of a high square block with towers at the corners and a square tower-like lantern rising from the centre. As mentioned earlier, it was influenced by Inverary Castle in Scotland.

The exterior of the Castle gives a certain amount of variety and contrast to look at. The towers surrounding the Castle are various different shapes and sizes and the offices and stables are long, low buildings contrasting with the height of the rest of the Castle. (Fig.3.1). The garden side of the Castle has smaller, narrower, square towers (Fig. 3.2), whilst the front entrance also has varying towers. The left hand side (Fig.3.3) is circular and reaches the height of 125 feet with the aid of a turret. Inside it has an open circular stone staircase which begins on the first floor and reaches up to the top of the turret, giving a most magnificent view. (Fig. 3.4). The tower on the right hand side (Fig.3.5) is octagonal in shape and its structure enables the interior of the tower to provide octagonal shaped rooms combining 8 pointed star shaped ceilings





and floors in the library and small boudoir. The exterior structure of this tower gave great scope for the interior, as will be seen later.

Another aspect of the exterior of Charleville which was important was the landscaping. Lord and Lady Charleville made many alterations to their Estate as it was important to them that their fairytale castle would be picturesque from a distant view. According to Bridget Vance, present owner of the Castle, a lake within the grounds was improved by a number of small islands which were made. A new lake was also made out of a piece of moorland running through the estate on the south side. A designer was also employed to build a lake on the north side. This lake was built so that the view from the Castle would not be spoilt by the road but would look across it to the lake beyond. Today these lakes are dried out and overgrown.

Three avenues or entrances were laid out by a Scot referred to as a Mr Lawdon. This was probably Mr John Loudon, who was later to become a famous botanist and garden designer. At the main gateway, a stone arch was built on the west of the estate, even though the town of Tullamore lay to the east. The reason for this could have been because this entrance contained a bridge going across the river and it was considered to be more picturesque. There was a long avenue from a red gate which was the nearest point to Tullamore and was used as the tradesmen's entrance. Lastly, there was an avenue across the south lawns which was used by the family on their way to Church. It is quite clear even today to see the layout of the garden itself. Five avenues of Irish yews fan out from the south front to the raised terrace walk. The yews fan out into the shape of half of the Union Jack Flag and is particularly visible from an aerial view. Fig. 3.6 shows the avenues of yew trees beginning to fan out.





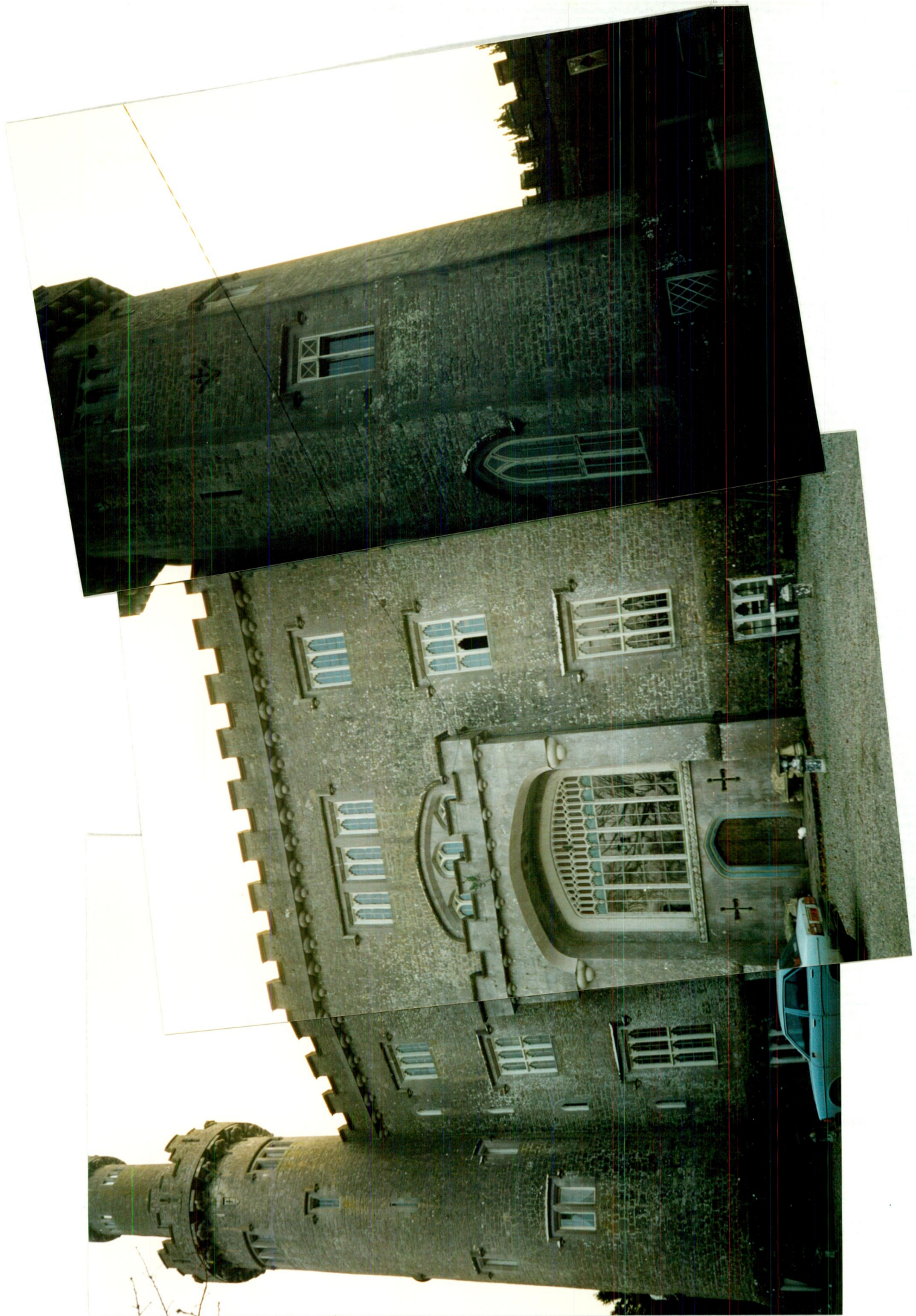


Fig 3.1 The Exterior of Charleville Castle



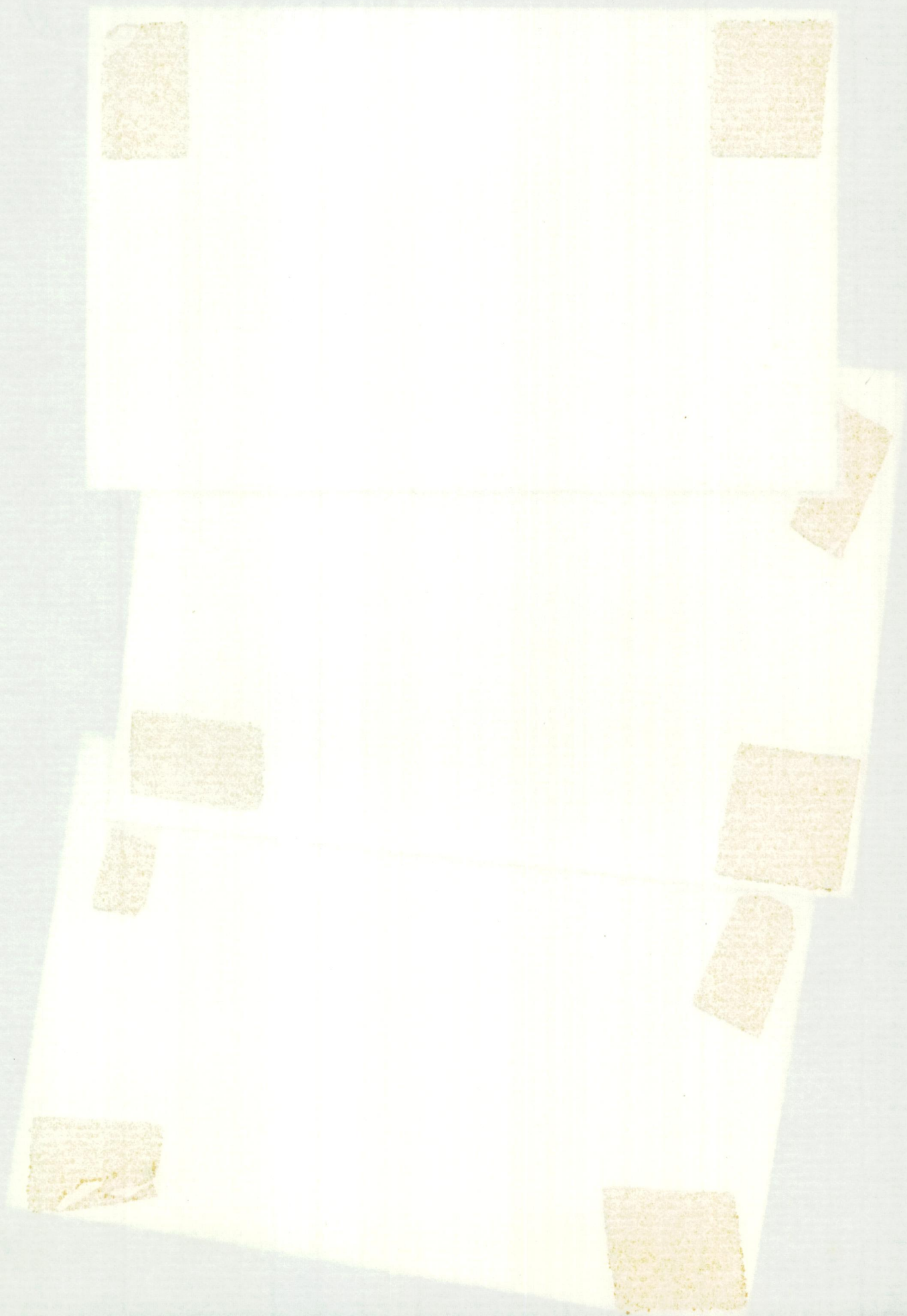






Fig 3.1 The Exterior of Charleville Castle







Fig 3.2 Square Tower



Fig 3.2 Round Tower







Fig 3.4 Interior of Round Tower



Fig 3.5 Octagonal Tower





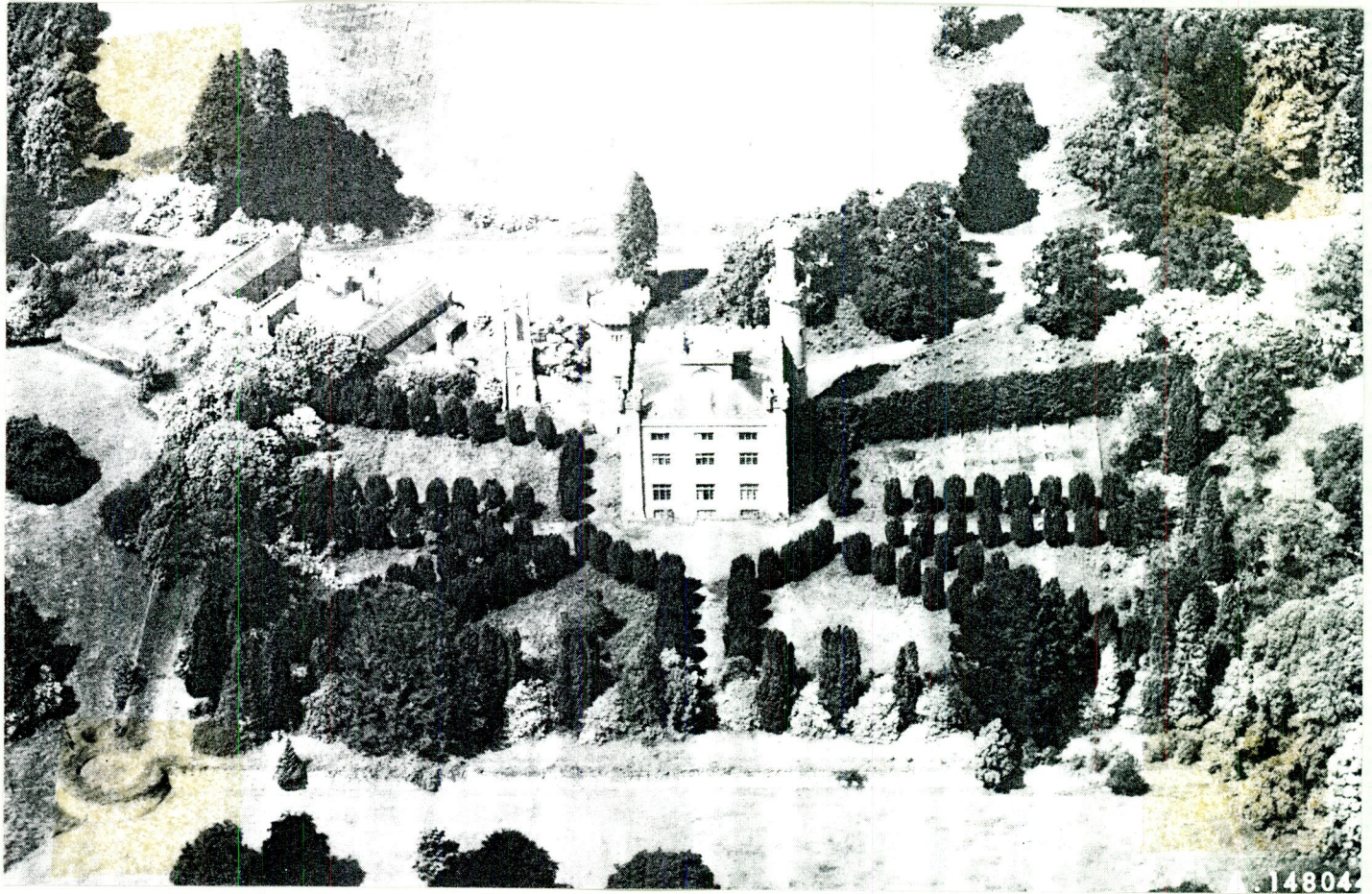


Fig 3.6 Landscaping of Yew Trees







Apart from his own estate, Bury was also interested in the town of Tullamore itself. While Johnston was in Tullamore to supervise work on the Castle, he also designed and built the Protestant Church, under instruction from Bury. Bury also established a school (1810), a gaol (1826), perhaps the County Infirmary (now the County Library) for which Lady Charleville certainly collected money. It was the ambition of Bury to raise Tullamore to the dignity of the Capital of the County, in which he succeeded, for in 1833 Tullamore replaced Philipstown as the County Town.

This large expenditure on both private and public building suggests a large income. According to Bridget Vance, it has been estimated that Bury's revenue from rents alone was from £10,000 to £15,000 per annum, although the Bury family still owned land in Limerick. It is also interesting to note that the present owners great-great grandmother was evicted from the land by the Burys for not paying rent. The present owner, who is American, did not know this when she purchased the Castle.

On Bury's death in 1835, he was succeeded by his only son, Charles William Bury, the second Earl. He married Beaujolois Harriet Charlotte in 1821 and they had four sons and two daughters.

The second Earl continued on his father's reputation as a benevolent landlord and continued to do much for the town of Tullamore. Even though the First and Second Earls had enormous incomes, they still lived a lifestyle which was way beyond their means and in 1844 the Estate lands in Limerick were sold. The Charlevilles moved abroad leaving the Castle shut up until the Third Earl inherited it in 1851. On his death in 1859, the Estates came to his son, the Fourth Earl. The Fourth Earl died unmarried in 1874, and was succeeded by his uncle, Alfred Bury, Fifth Earl, youngest son of Charles Bury, Second Earl. He died in 1875 and the Estates came to Lady Emily Howard, a daughter of the Third Earl, on the condition of her and her husband taking





the name of Bury. Lady Howard Bury was succeeded by her son Col. Howard Bury. Neither of them lived continually at the Castle, using it mainly for shooting parties in the Winter.

Charleville Castle had not been lived in since Lady Howard Bury died in 1931. From this date the Castle began to fall into disrepair. What was once a magnificent castle, well looked after on the exterior and richly decorated and equally well looked after by teams of servants in the interior, had, after 1931, begun to suffer badly from vandalism. Windows which were once made of the most exquisite stained glass, were smashed to gain entrance into the Castle. Bury and his family lived an expensive lifestyle. This can be seen through the construction and landscaping of the Castle where no expenses were spared.

The exterior of Charleville and its elaborate garden layout are both typical of the Gothic revival. This Chapter has shown how the picturesque and the romantic aspects of the style are particularly evident in this Castle. Today the present owner is trying to repair the vandals' work.





## FAMILY TREE

John Moore  
1st Baron of Tullamore  
d 1725

Charles Moore 1712-1764 — only sister —> Jane M William Bury  
(Bury's Grandmother from

whom he inherited the Land)

1st Earl  
(Grandfather of Bury

John Bury 1725-1764

Builder of Charleville Castle  
1798

Charles William Bury  
1764-1835  
1st Earl of Charleville 2nd Creation

He had one son who  
became the 2nd Earl

Charles Bury 1801-1851  
2nd Earl

Succeeded by his son  
the Earl

Charles Bury  
1822-1859  
3rd Earl

Alfred Bury  
1829-1875  
5th Earl

Succeeded by his son  
the 4th Earl  
whp died unmarried  
in 1874

Charles Bury  
1852-1874  
4th Earl

Catherine Hutton  
1851-1904

Lady Emily  
Howard Bury  
1856-1931

Succeeded by his uncle  
son of 2nd Earl

Col. Hutton

Col. Howard Bury

Succeeded by daughter  
of 3rd Earl provided she kept  
the name Bury

Major Hutton Bury





## CHAPTER 4

This Chapter will describe the interior of Charleville Castle through illustrations.

These illustrations will hopefully show how the concept of borrowing from Medieval Churches and Cathedrals was applied. Attention will be paid to Gothic detailing and structures rather than interiors as a whole or the furniture in the interiors, as much of it is not relevant.

The Chapter will be broken into Sections according to the rooms dealt with. Each room will be discussed in the order that was seen when brought on the tour of the Castle by the present owner. Because not every room was allowed to be seen, only a limited number of rooms (the main ones) will be discussed.

### THE INTERIOR OF CHARLEVILLE CASTLE

Charleville Castle is much better known for its Gothic revival interior than it is for its exterior as a Castle. In its design Bury said himself:

"The intention is to exhibit specimens of Gothic architecture, as collected from cathedrals and chapel tombs, and to show how they may be applied to chimney pieces, windows, ceilings, balustrades, etc." (Girouard, 1962)

This is exactly what Bury did in the interior of the Castle. By tracing back to the Gothic sources as done in Chapter 1, we can see the origins of much of the detailing in his chimney pieces, windows and ceilings.

Bury also says about his interior:

"In truth, I did not mean to make my house so Gothic as to exclude convenience and modern refinements in luxury." (Girouard, 1962)

### MAIN ENTRANCE AND STAIRWAY

The Castle is now open to the public by appointment with the owner. The tour of the Castle begins by going through the main entrance where an enormous portal frames the





hall window and front door (Fig 4.1) . Through the door we are faced with a flight of stairs which is bold and impressive. Your eyes are drawn along the lines of the stairs, balustrades and galleries to the great double doors that lead to the gallery.

Through looking at Johnston's work on the entrance of Markree Castle (Fig 2.8) and the vaulting in the Chapel Royale (2.12), it could be said that they are all quite similar.

Fig. 4.1 shows the stairs on entering the main door. It is seen looking down from the end gallery. An overall view of the stairs, its symmetry and also the detailed

plasterwork surrounding the doors can be seen here. Fig 4.2 gives a view from the top of the stairs and gives an idea of the "dramatic essay in vanishing perspective" as

described by Mark Girouard. It also shows the enormous hall window which is just above the main door. This is one of the windows which would probably have

incorporated the use of stained glass. Fig 4.3 illustrates the gallery where the use of ecclesiastical carving can be seen. An overall view of the plasterwork and vaulting on the walls, ceiling and surrounding the figures in the alcoves is also illustrated.

Fig 4.4 is a detail of the vaulting meeting the ceiling and wall. Fig. 4.5 is a direct view of the vaulting and Fig 4.6 is a detail of the plasterwork on the walls.

All of these photographs of the main entrance give an overall view of its structure, design and detailing. Similarities can be seen in original Gothic structures (Fig 1.2 and 1.3). They can be seen in Lady Charleville's original hand drawings of the design of the Castle. (Fig 2.2(a) and also in Francis Johnstons later work in the entrance of Markree Castle. Johnston was known to have remodelled a number of stairways and entrances and Charleville Castle would probably have influenced him in his design.







Fig 4.1 Main Entrance



Fig 4.2 View from Top of Stairs







Fig 4.5 Gallery



Fig 4.4 Vaulting





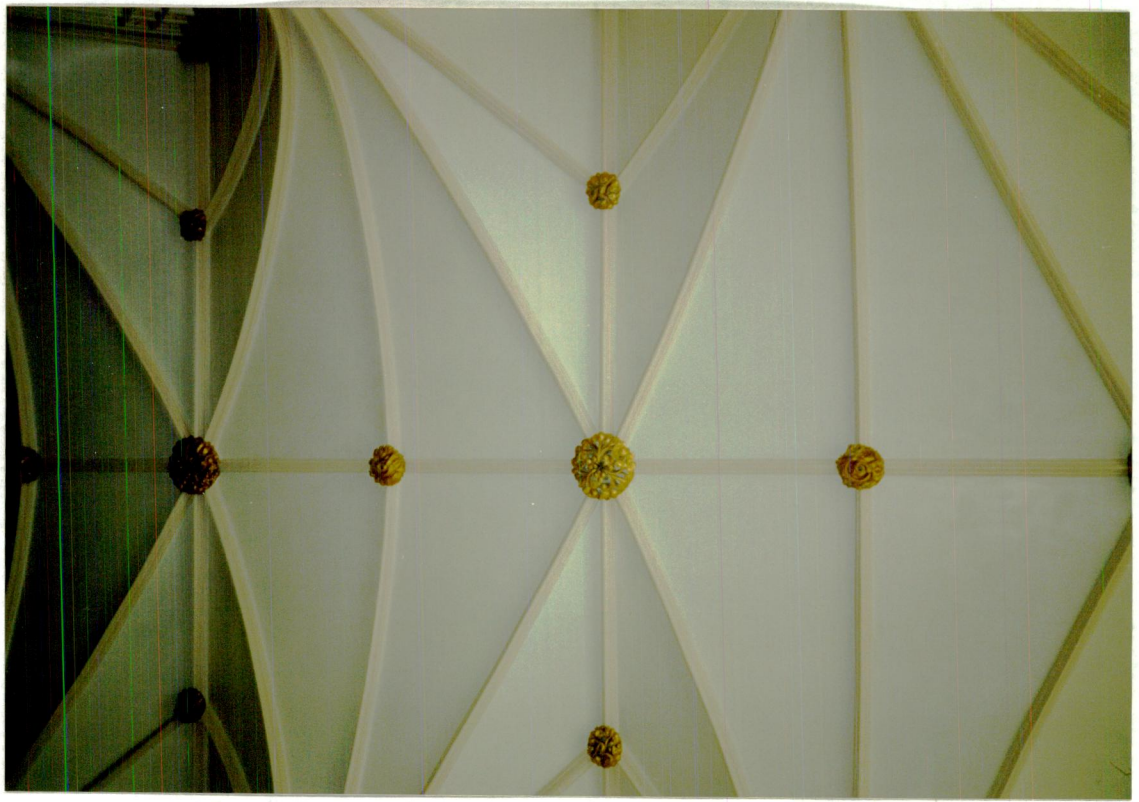
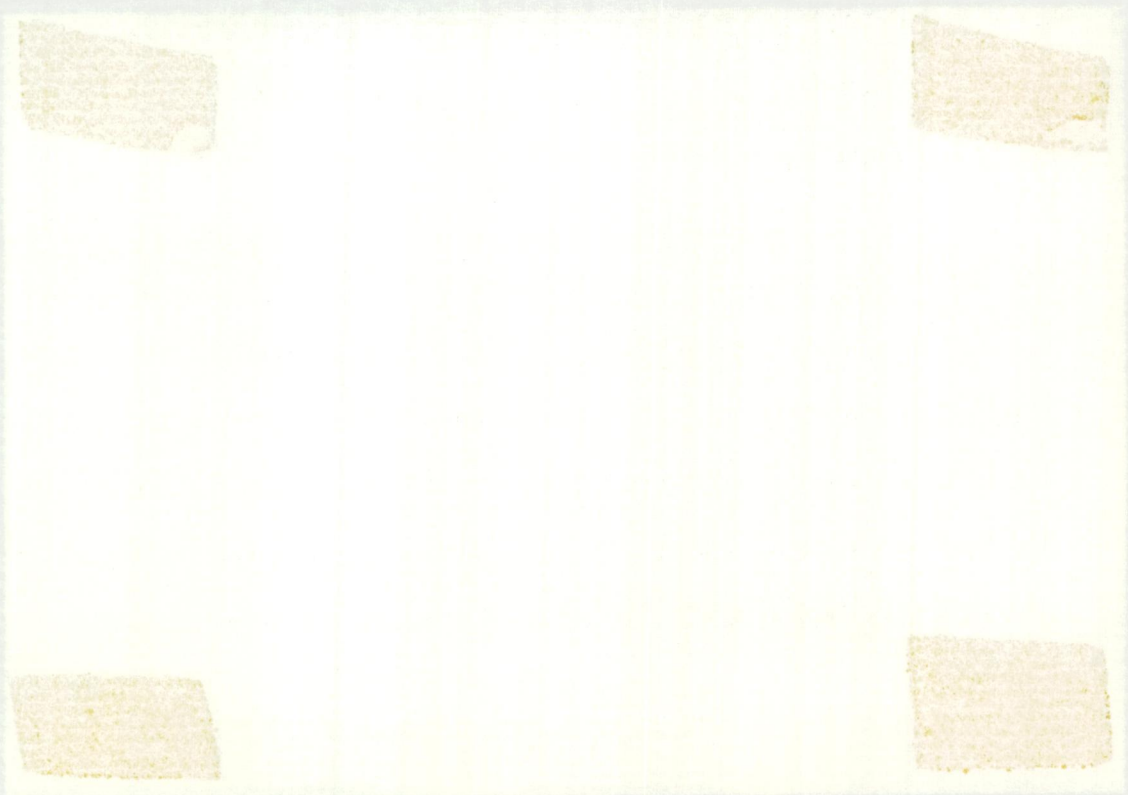


Fig 4.6 Plasterwork

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Fig 42 Aerial





## THE GALLERY

One moves from the entrance and stairway through the great double doors into the gallery. This room is over 120 feet long and is the full length of the south end of the Castle. It is a very good example of how the use of Gothic detailing was employed and transferred to doors, bookcases, ceilings, and fireplaces. It has been described by Bridget Vance, the present owner of the Castle, who quotes Matt McNulty, Head of Bord Failte as "one of the finest Gothic interiors not only in Ireland but also in Europe".

Figs. 4.7, and 4.8 are one of a pair of doors, which form the other side of the carved doors to the right and left at the top of the stairs in Fig. 4.1. Their detailed tracery is delicate and is a fine example of how the Gothic style could be applied. Fig. 4.9 is the fan vaulted ceiling. It was inspired by the ceiling in Strawberry Hill and although the ceiling in Strawberry Hill seems to be much more ornate and intricate, the design and structure of the ceiling in Charleville Castle is similar.

Figs. 4.10, 4.11, and 4.12 are views of the fireplace of which there are two. Gothic detailing can be seen especially in the mirror and the plasterwork surrounding it (Fig. 4.11)

Although more organic than ecclesiastical to look at, Fig 4.12 shows a very definite form of Gothic detailing for capitals. The oak leaf and acorn can often be seen as a form of detailing. Another original piece in the gallery is the bookcase. Fig. 4.13 shows the upper section of it where the oak leaf detailing is repeated and combined with the pointed arches. Fig. 4.14 is the bottom section of this bookcase. The bookcase and the fireplaces are some of what is left of the original castle and along with the fan vaulted ceiling, the structure and design of this room undoubtedly shows that the inspiration is Horace Walpole's fan vaulted gallery at Strawberry Hill (Fig 5.2)







Fig 4.7 Gallery Door



Fig 4.8 Detail of Gallery Door







Fig 4.9 Fan Vaulting



Fig 4.10 Fireplace







Fig 4.11 Top of Fireplace



Fig 4.12 Detailing on Fireplace







Fig 4.13 Gothic Detailing on Bookcase



Fig 4.14 Lower End of Bookcase





## THE DRAWING ROOM

The drawing room was the next room to be visited. Its carved door (Fig.4.15) is a single version of the great double doors at the top of the stairs. It is on the left hand side and the dining room door which is exactly the same lies opposite it. Fig. 4.16 and 4.17 are overall views of the drawing room and the Gothic detailing here remains in the great shutters (Fig. 4.16). The panelling around the wall in Fig. 4.18 is also an example of the architect's desire for ornament and balance in design as the door in this illustration leads nowhere; there is a brick wall behind it. Gothic detailing can also be seen in Fig. 4.19 in the form of the pointed arches surrounding the case which is an original feature of the Castle.

## THE DINING ROOM

The dining room (Fig.4.20) is an overall view published in Mark Girouard's article, from the time that the house had been decorated by Col C K Howard Bury.

The panelling in Fig.4.21 is interesting as it is very similar in style to the upper staircase in Strawberry Hill. It also may be intended to work with the ceiling (Fig.4.22) designed by William Morris at a later date. It contains the coats of arms of the Burys and the Moores. The fireplace in this room (Fig 4.23) is a copy of the west door of Magdalen College Chapel, Oxford. Fig. 4.24 is a detail of the enormous shutters which are also seen in the Drawing Room (Fig.4.16).







Fig 4.15 Carved Door of Drawing Room



Fig 4.16 Drawing Room







Fig 4.17 Drawing Room



Fig 4.18 Drawing Room Door







Fig 4.19 Case in Drawing Room



Fig 4.20 The Dining Room



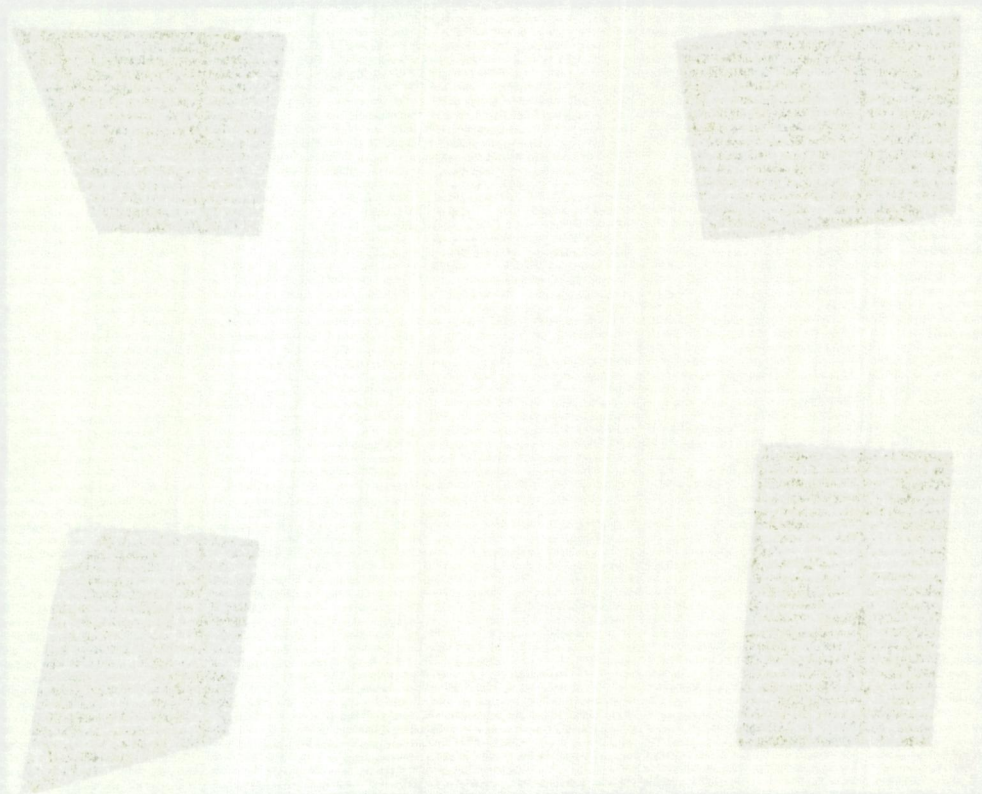






Fig 4.21 Panelling on Wall



Fig 4.22 Heraldry on Ceiling







Fig 4.23 Fireplace

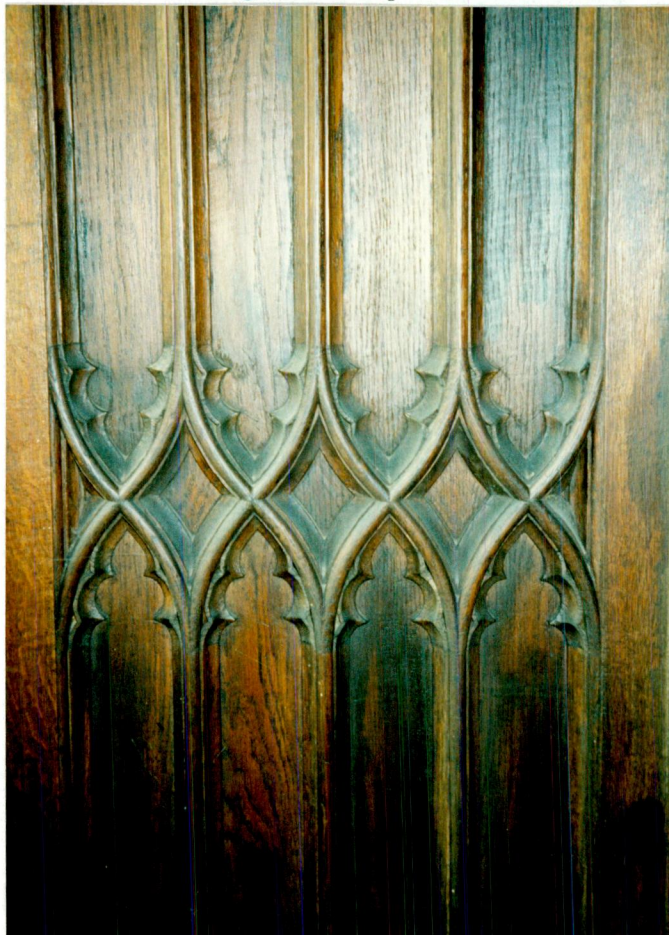


Fig 4.24 Detail of Shutter





## MAIN STAIRCASE

The main staircase is possibly the most lavishly Gothic section of the interior. Fig. 4.25 is an example of the enormous area it covers: All the plasterwork, much of it contrasting in detail, scale and shape, was painted to look like carved wood. The yellow colour is how a previous owner had painted it and the present owner is trying to restore it to its original finish.

Fig. 4.26 is a detail of the bottom of the stairs illustrating the balustrades which would all have been individually carved. The detail, again with the pointed arch shape, was typical of the Gothic revival. The complicated and intricate design was produced on an enormous scale. Figs 4.27, 4.28 and 4.29 show details of the carving on the stairs and wall. Fig 4.30 is a view looking directly up the stairs at the ceiling. This shows the massive scale of the stairs. As a contrast to the decorated and completed areas of the main entrance, the gallery, dining room and drawing room, the stairs is an area that yet has to be redecorated and repaired. The structure and detailing of the stairs are the most interesting factors.

## THE OCTAGONAL TOWER

Because of its structure, the octagonal tower gave the scope to design smaller, unusually shaped rooms. Fig. 4.31 is a round bedroom. The interesting feature of this room is that even the door itself is carved into a rounded shape to accommodate the circular perimeter.







Fig 4.25 Main Staircase



Fig 4.26 Bannisters  
58







Fig 4.27 Detail on Main Stairs



Fig 4.28 Detail on Main Stairs









Fig 4.29 Detail on Main Stairs



Fig 4.30 View of Stairs





Fig.4.32 shows the star shaped ceiling of the small boudoir as it was called. The pink colour showing through is the colour a previous owner had painted it. The ceiling of this room gives rise to pointed arches on the walls and on the star shaped wooden floor, (Fig 4.33). The door in this room, Fig.4.34 is also curved and has elaborate Gothic detailing. Some of its design also incorporated the practical elements which Bury wished to incorporate. This door also contains shutters behind the Gothic carving which let air in or out to provide a draught when the fire was lit.

The other star vaulted ceiling is in a small library-like room. The ecclesiastical feel is most evident in this small room as it is often compared with a church confessional box by visitors. Fig. 4.35 is a detail of the star shaped vaulting seen in Chapter 1. This room may also have been inspired by Walpole's cabinet off the gallery in Strawberry Hill. Fig 4.36 is a full length view of one of the cabinets in the room. It is very Gothic in style.

Fig.4.37 is the only remaining piece of stained glass which is left in the entire Castle, the rest having been smashed by vandals. From the detail in this small illustration it can be said that the rest of the stained glass must have been most elaborate particularly as stained glass tended to play a large part in the Gothic revival. Fig.4.38 is a detail of the fireplace in this room. It shows elaborate carving and detail and is not, perhaps, as typical of the Gothic style as most of the other detailing in the room.

Part of the tour also leads onto the second floor which is in need of repair. Figs 4.39 and 4.40 show some of the Gothic structure in vaulting and carving.







Fig 4.31 Round Room



Fig 4.32 Star Shaped Ceiling







Fig 4.33 Star Shaped Floor



Fig 4.34 Curved Door







Fig 4.35 Star Shaped Ceiling



Fig 4.36 Gothic Cabinet





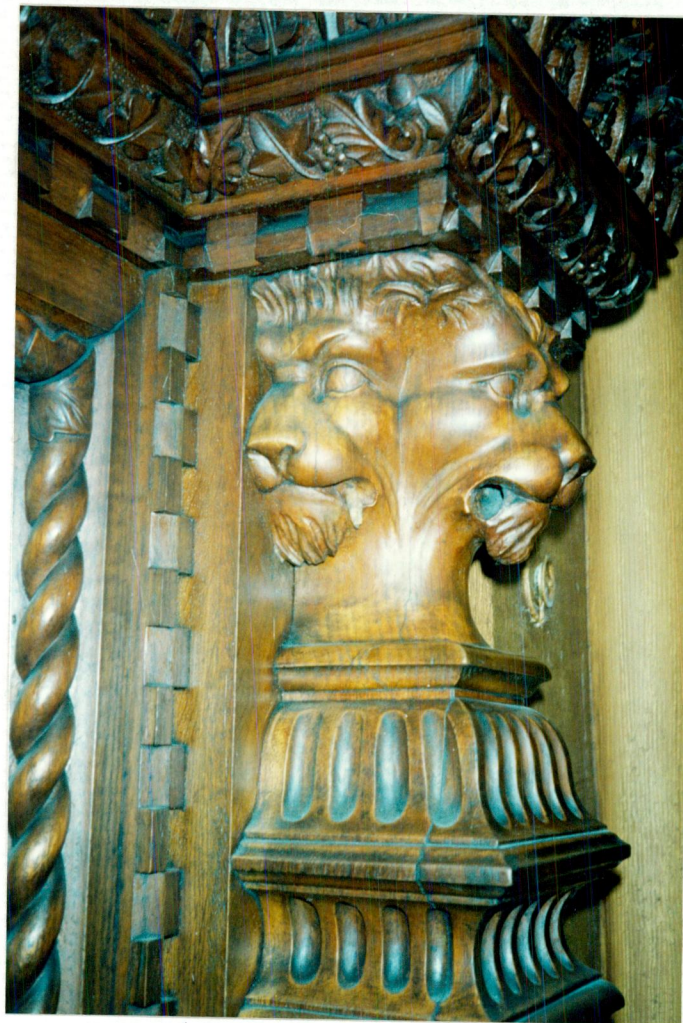


Fig 4.37 Detail of Fireplace



Fig 4.38 Remaining Stained Glass





Fig 4.41 and 4.42 are illustrations of nursery wallpaper. It was designed by a student of William Morris at a later date (some time in the 1860s was suggested by the present owner). It is not entirely relevant as an aspect of the original 1798 design, although it is interesting to note that even when decorating a nursery many years later, the most fashionable wallpaper obtainable was chosen at the time. The artist for both wallpapers, which were in separate rooms, was probably the same. The structure of the bedrooms seen on the second floor was quite simple, most of them square rooms with a fireplace and large windows. Many were badly in need of repair, with floors and ceilings falling in.

Bury's aim when building Charleville was to show how details from Gothic cathedrals could be taken and applied to domestic interiors. Bury succeeded in doing this and this Chapter has shown through original photographic documentation of details in various rooms, how the Gothic style has been applied. Details such as vaulting, plasterwork, carving structure and design were looked at in conjunction with aspects of the interior, such as the fireplaces, ceilings, bookcases, stairway and walls. It was shown in this chapter exactly how the Gothic design was taken from its original source and used in the design of Charleville Castle.







Fig 4.39 Gothic Vaulting



Fig 4.40 Gothic Detailing







Fig 4.41 Nursery Wallpaper

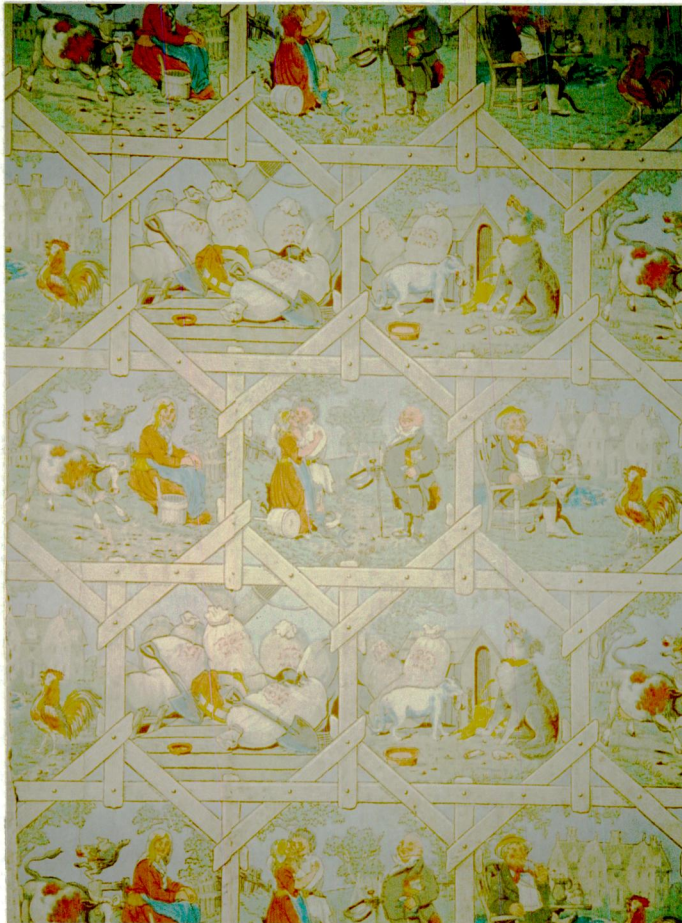


Fig 4.42 Nursery Wallpaper







## CHAPTER 5

### THE INTERIOR OF STRAWBERRY HILL AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CHARLEVILLE CASTLE

While researching the design of Charleville Castle, Strawberry Hill came up as a source of inspiration for the fan vaulted gallery in Charleville. By comparing illustrations of both Strawberry Hill and Charleville (seen in the last Chapter), the direct influence is clearly visible. However further research of Strawberry Hill, suggests that it played a far more influential part on the design of Charleville Castle than merely on the design of the fan vaulted gallery. The most obvious influence is the concept of borrowing from medieval buildings and applying their details to domestic interiors. Bury used precisely this method of decoration for his Charleville Castle. The question of why he used this method can be asked as the Gothic style generally was not used as a style of decoration in Ireland in 1798. In my opinion, the answer is the influence of Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill. This Chapter will discuss the various rooms in Strawberry Hill which bear relation to Charleville Castle. This will perhaps suggest the reason why in 1798 Charles William Bury chose the Gothic style as a form of design for his Castle.

Strawberry Hill was mentioned briefly in Chapter 1. With regard to the Gothic revival it has been described as a Gothic folly and was not always taken seriously, although its influence on subsequent interiors cannot be denied. Horace Walpole himself was a writer and dilettante, seen as a man who had taste which he acquired in the study of great art of the past. He was also seen as an informed initiator of artistic innovation in the 18th century.

Unlike Charleville Castle, there is much documentation about Strawberry Hill. This can be found from Walpole's own detailed description and that of visitors to the villa





(perhaps Bury could have visited it himself whilst on the grand tour); there is an account book and a scrap book with original drawings. We can also gather information from Strawberry Hill itself which remains intact today.

Strawberry Hill began as a small house in Twickenham on the Thames. Although this was a modest house, it was in an excellent and a fashionable location. Walpole bought the house in 1749 and by 1750 had decided to rebuild it in the Gothic style. His own choice of design was influenced by William Kent whom he admired, favouring the irregularity and asymmetry which Kent had introduced into his garden design.

Other designers involved in Strawberry Hill were Richard Bentley and John Chute. Between them they tried to form a sort of committee which would decide on various alterations, to choose from the originals from which they could copy detailing and to censor the designs when they were made. Chute and Walpole liked to display their Gothicism by copying fireplaces from medieval shrines. Walpole was the first patron of Gothic who was to insist on the copying and interpretation of ancient work. This concept was to influence many and was also the basis on which Bury and Johnston designed Charleville Castle. Batty Langley's Ancient Architecture was also used as a source for the battlements, pinnacles and quatrefoil windows of the exterior.

However, it is the interior rather than the exterior of Strawberry Hill that made it such a landmark in the Gothic revival. Similarly, Charleville Castle is also much better known for its interior rather than its exterior.





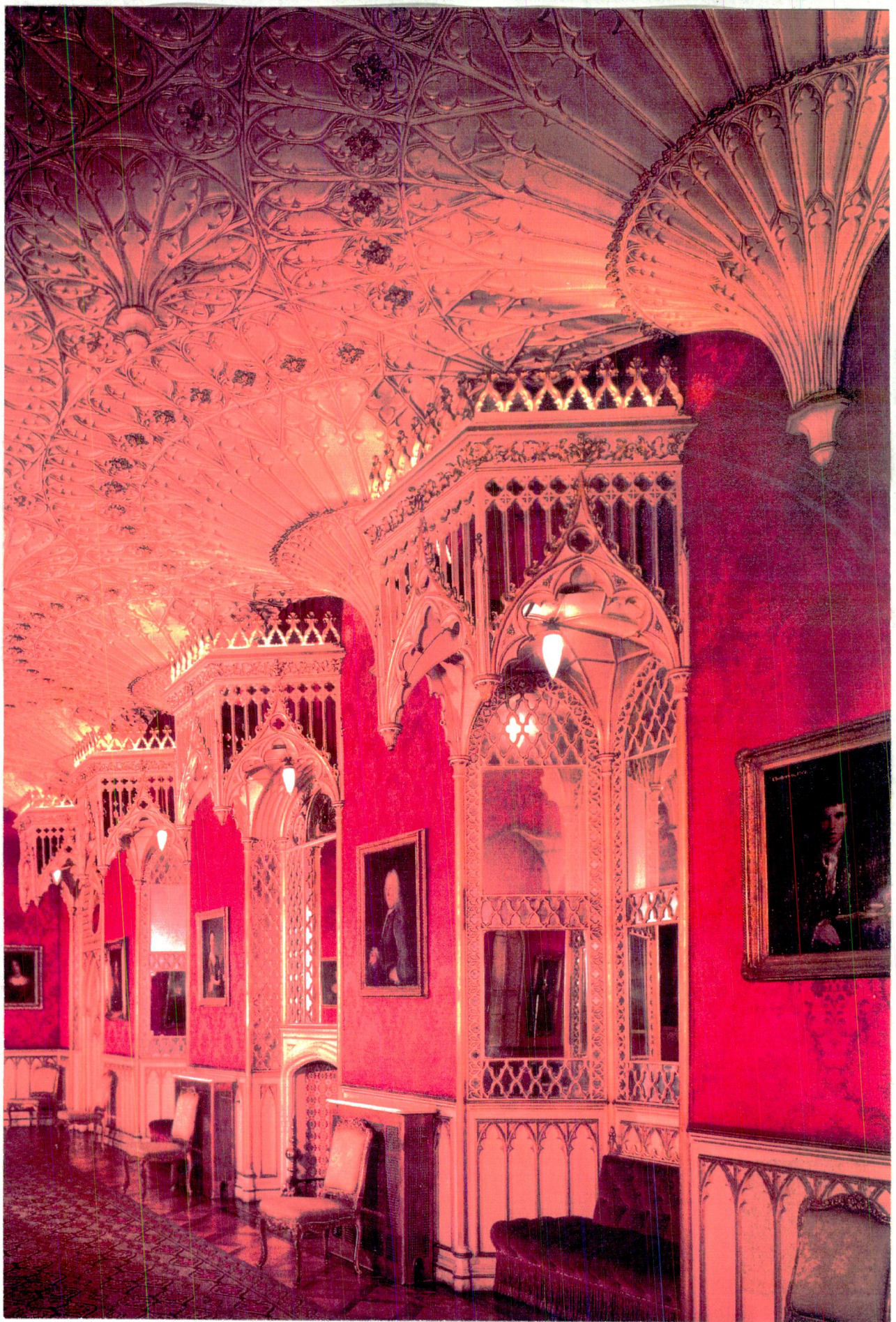


Fig 5.1 The Gallery







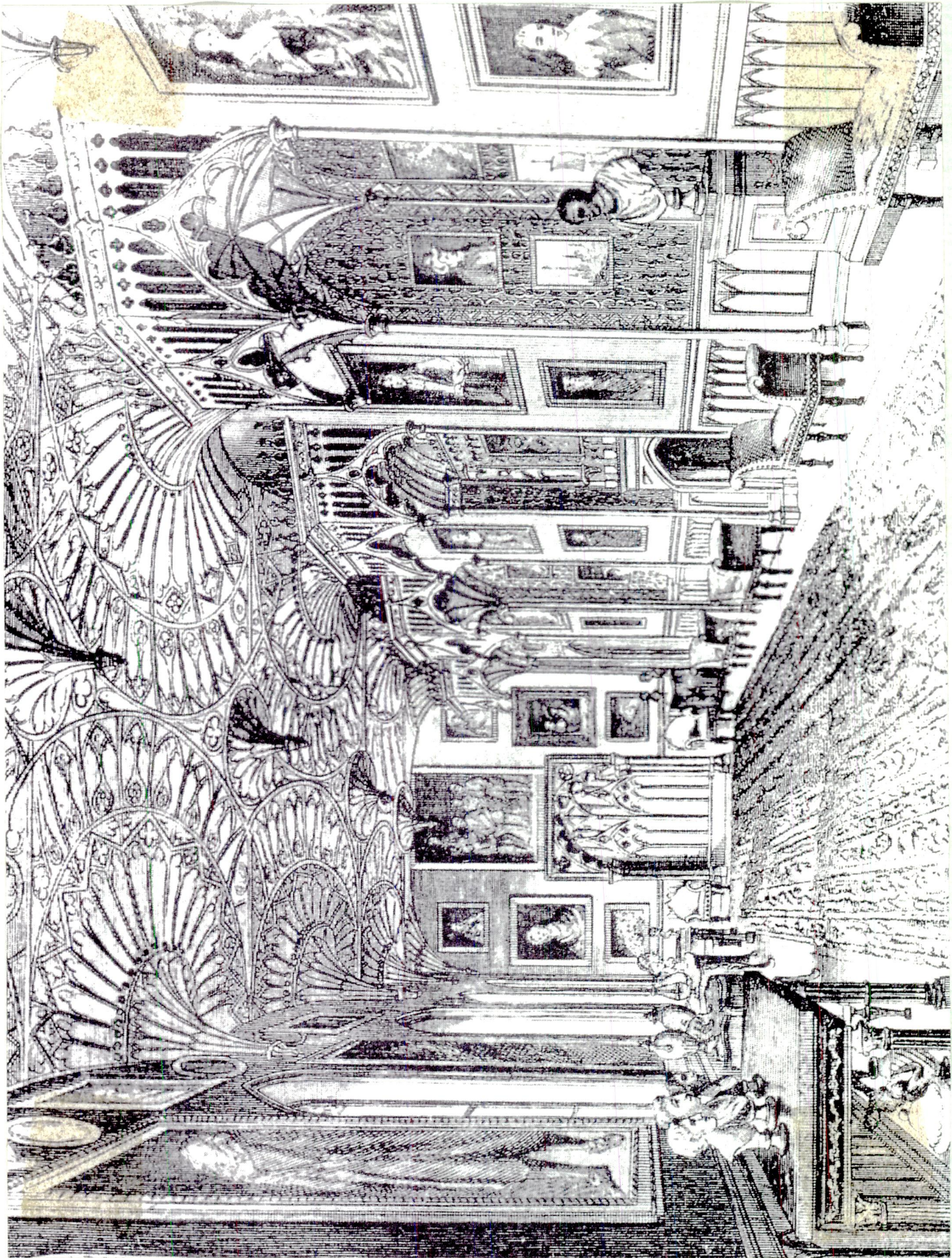
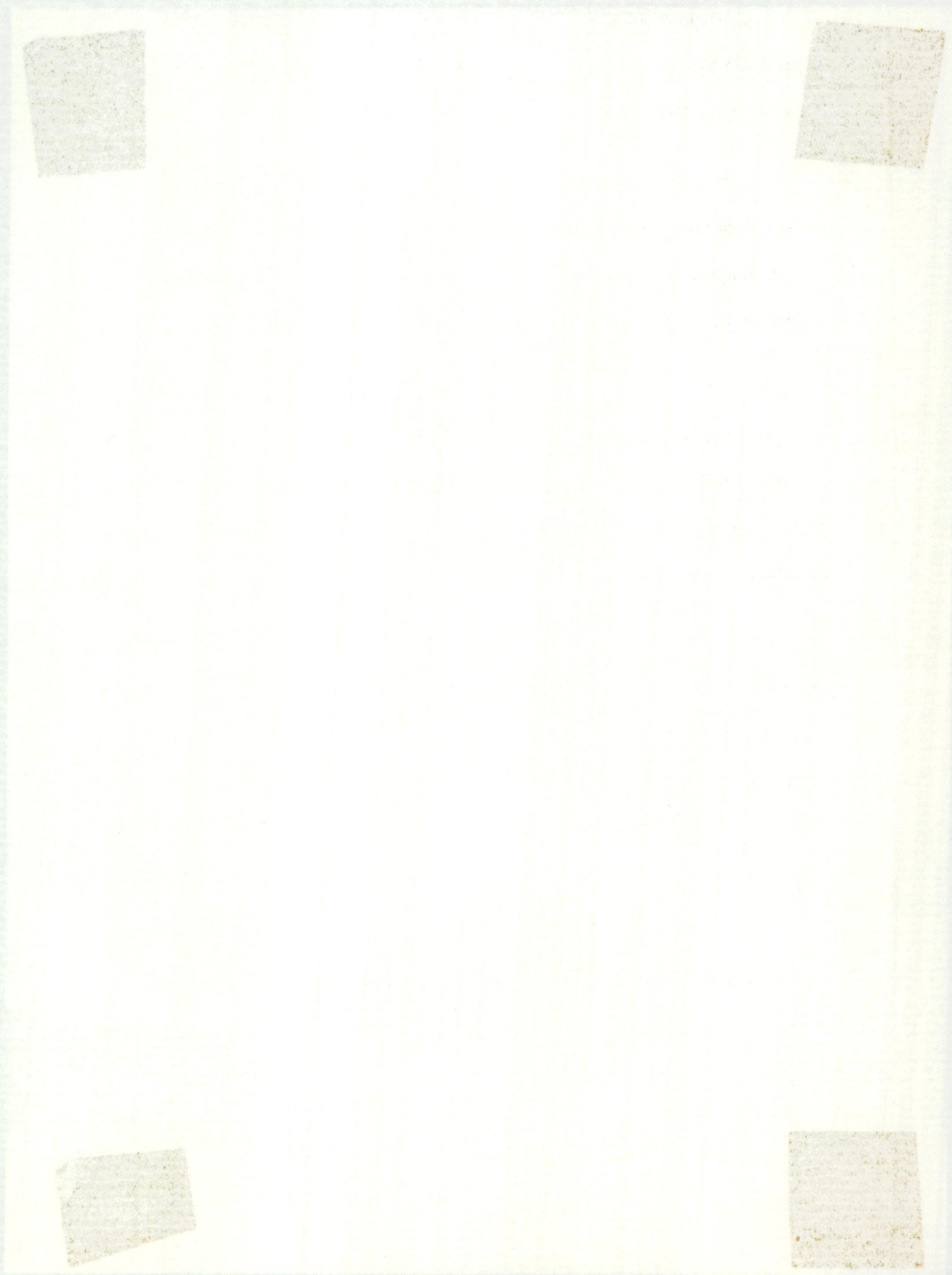


Fig 5.2 The Gallery







## THE GALLERY

The Gallery in Strawberry Hill Fig 5.1, 5.2 is possibly the most obvious example of a room which inspired the design of Charleville Castle. Here Walpole's interest in copying real medieval monuments is evident as his source for this room was Henry VII's Chapel at Westminster Abbey.

Although the vaulting is more ornate and the plasterwork more intricate in Strawberry Hill, it can be seen here that it was a definite source of inspiration for the gallery in Charleville Castle (Figs 4.9 and 4.10). Walpole's gallery was begun in 1760 and finished in 1763. As described in The Gothic Revival, the ceiling which was made of papiermache sham vaults was copied directly from the pendant vaulting of Henry VII's Chapel at Westminster Abbey. (Aldrich, 1994, p.66).

The design of the fireplace in the gallery has been described as a little out of place in the decorative scheme of that room which is dominated by the rich grain vaulting of the ceiling. (McCarthy, 1987, p.84). McCarthy goes on to give Walpole's own description of the gallery ceiling as being "richer than the roof of paradise" and continues with his description of the fireplace:

" its lack of antiquity was disguised by its being encased in one of the five niches (designed on the model of the tomb of Archbishop Bouchier in Canterbury Cathedral) which projected from the north wall of the gallery and served to break the monogamy of its length" (McCarthy, 1987, p.85).

It is interesting to note the structure of the fireplace and the purpose of the niches as they were called. Once again, on a scale which is not as decorative, the design of the fireplaces and bookcases in the gallery at Charleville show some similarities to Strawberry Hill. These appear in the form of Gothic detailing and the use of mirrors





above the fireplaces and cases (Fig 4.11, 4.13). The gallery at Charleville was also a very long room and the use of two fireplaces and an ornate door between them may also have served to break the monogamy of the rooms length.

No expense was spared at Strawberry Hill either and red silk was used to decorate the walls, making it look rich in both texture and colour. Today the walls in the gallery at Charleville are painted in light colours, but according to Bridget Vance, the present owner, the original colour scheme may have been in rich or dark colours.

#### THE TRIBUNE:

One of the rooms off the gallery of Strawberry Hill was called the Tribune (Fig.5.3) and was originally known as the Cabinet. According to Walpole, it was intended to have all the air of a Catholic Chapel - bar the Consecration (McCarthy, 1987, p.85). It is interesting to note that in Charleville Castle, the small room in the octagonal tower is ecclesiastical in style and has often been described by visitors to the Castle, as looking like a confessional box. (Figs 4.35, 4.36).

Both in Charleville and Strawberry Hill the ceilings of both rooms are star shaped. Strawberry Hill had a skylight with an eight pointed star, which was yellow stained glass and gave an ecclesiastical glow to the interior. The vaulting of this ceiling is inspired by the ceiling of the Chapter House at York Minster while the detailing of the vaulting itself is based on the flowing tracery of the stained glass windows of York Minster. The carpet for this room at Strawberry Hill was woven especially and it repeated at its centre, the star shape of the skylight. This idea was also present in the wooden floor in the room at Charleville.

Walpole used the tribune to display his collections. He was a collector of art and antiquities and fortunately had a desire to share his collections with the public. The





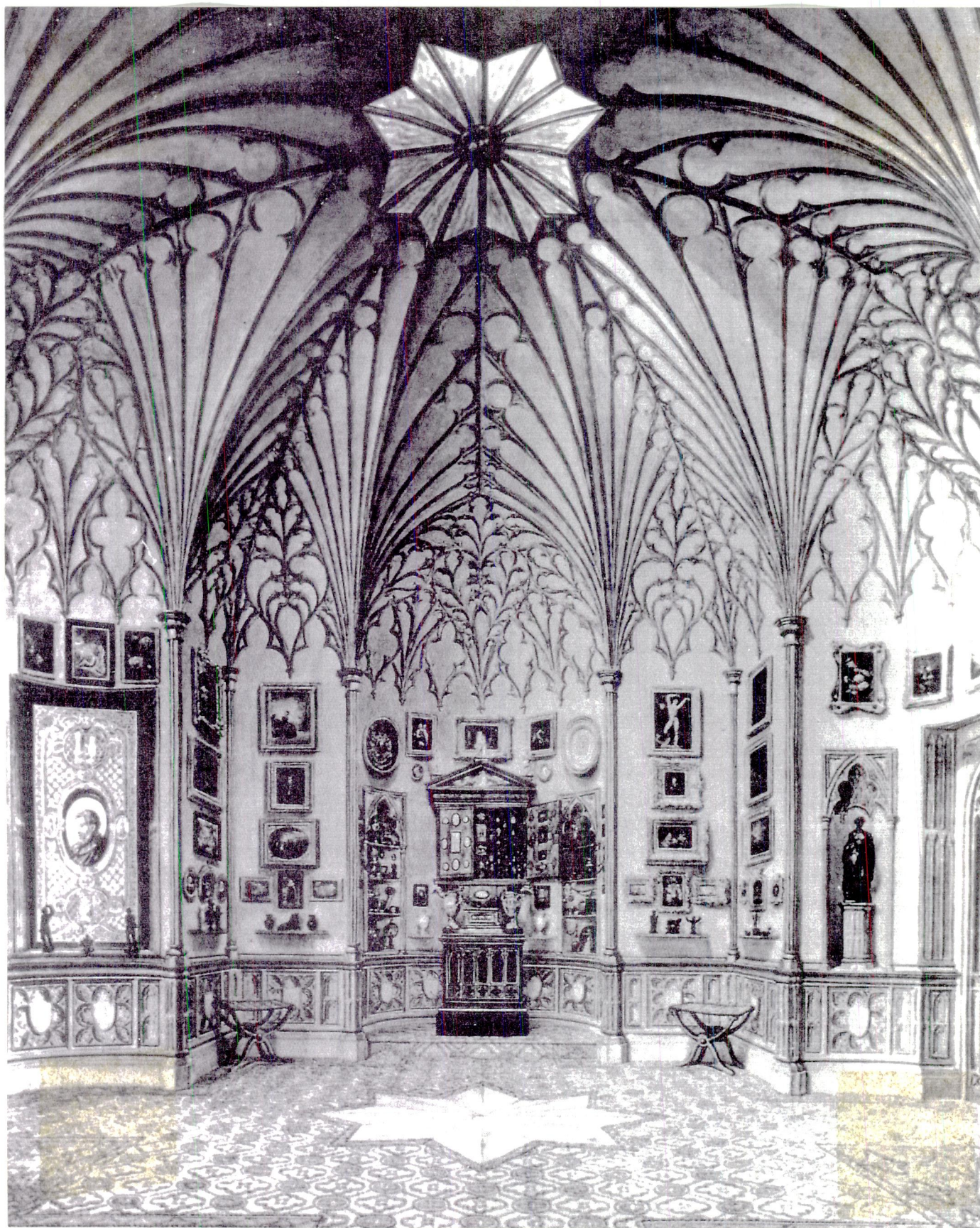
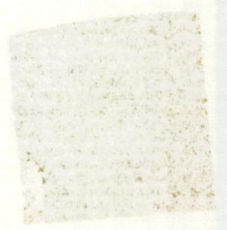


Fig 5.3 The Tribune



W32K





Tribune was the room in which he displayed the rarest objects of his collections. The tour of Strawberry Hill would have finished in the Tribune as it housed the high points of interest of the collections.

The cabinets in the octagonal tower room in Charleville also housed many ornaments including a large collection of Beleck pottery. Obviously the collection in the cabinets were not of great artistic interest, but it is still interesting to note that the cabinets in the room were to serve the same purpose (Fig 4.36).

### THE LIBRARY

The Library Fig 5.4 was a most important room to a man who read and wrote as much as Horace Walpole. The library was designed in 1753 by Richard Bentley. However, this design was to be rejected by Walpole as he was beginning to find Bentley's work over imaginative and eccentric. He chose John Chute's more literal adaptation of an antiquarian print of the choir of the Gothic St Paul's Cathedral in London (Aldrich, 1994, p65).

Walpole varied his designs to be very closely modelled on his own collection of Gothic architectural illustrations. The chimney piece in the library was modelled on a print of a tomb and panels of late medieval stained glass were inserted into the windows.

The ceiling of the library was designed by Walpole and Bentley. It incorporated the coats of arms of Walpole's ancestors, both real and imaginary. This is an interesting aspect of the design as heraldry was incorporated into aspects of Charleville Castle also. The original drawings for the main entrance (Fig 2.2a) show the use of coats of arms and the entire ceiling in the dining room (Fig 4.22) was devoted to it. This ceiling, designed by William Morris, shows an elaborate design of heraldry and the coats of arms of the Bury and the Moore family. In Walpole's library this shows





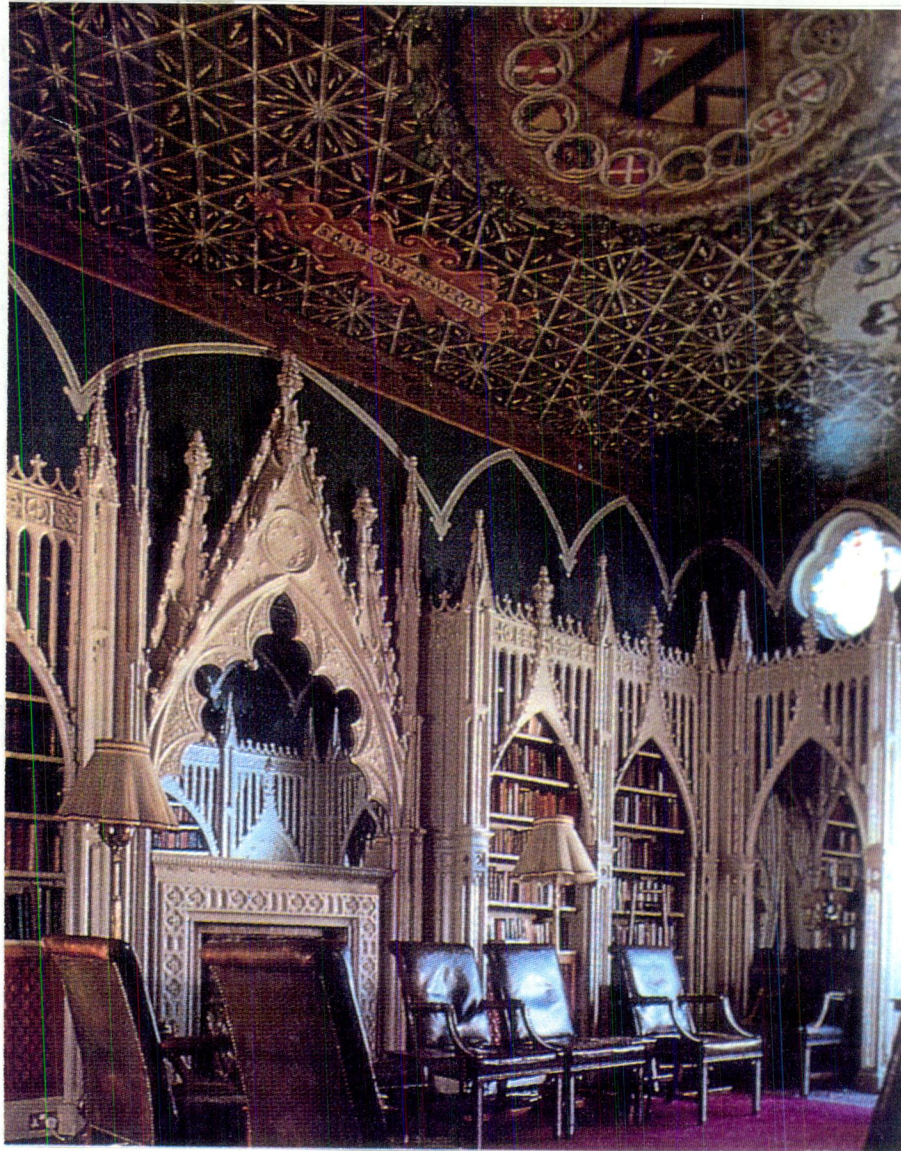
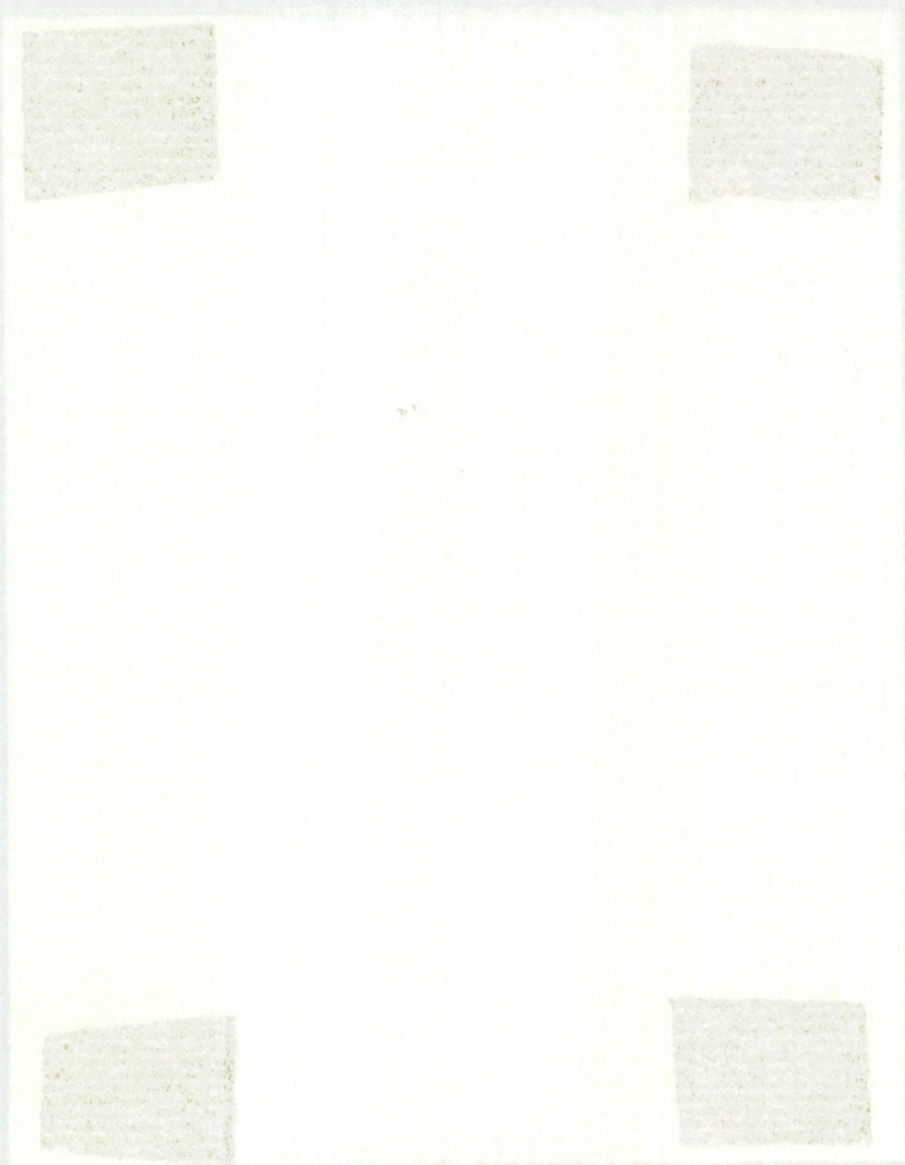


Fig 5.4 The Library



Q 1720





(according to Aldrich, 1994, p.65) a preoccupation with genealogy and the decorative use of heraldry which were to become an aspect of the Gothic revival. Another example of heraldry can be seen in Killeen Castle, (Fig 2.5). This shows how it was popular not only in Charleville Castle but also in the later work of Francis Johnston.

## THE GREAT PARLOUR

The Great Parlour is an earlier example of Walpole's Gothicizing and can be said to be somewhat tamer than some of the other rooms in its Gothic detailing. This room has a papiermache pendant frieze surrounding it. The fireplace, which is the focal point, was designed by Bentley. It is an example of his imaginative, pinnacled and lacelike design and its shape was loosely based on a Gothic tomb design, but not directly copied as Bentley liked to use his imagination. This room was also known as the refectory so, presumably, it also served as a dining room. The walls were decorated in textured wallpaper to imitate stucco and also on the floor there was rush matting to introduce a further monastic touch. Walpole also wanted furniture which was as authentically Gothic as possible. He got Bentley to design some chairs for him in ebonized beech, which he believed to be medieval. The backs of these chairs (Fig 5.5) were designed to resemble traceried stained glass windows from a Gothic cathedral. This furniture was highly original as there was no real prototype. It was sold after Walpole's death and according to Megan Aldrich, the first Earl of Charleville Castle was an admirer of Strawberry Hill and purchased a chair designed by Bentley for the great parlour from the sale following Walpole's death. (Aldrich, 1994, p.70). A sketch with one of these chairs in it can be seen in the drawing room of Charleville Castle. This may indicate the style of furnishing in Charleville Castle at the time or it may indicate Bury's desire to obtain Gothic style furniture.







Fig 5.5 Gothic Chair Designed by Bently





## THE HOLBEIN CHAMBER

This room (Fig 5.6) got its name from the copies of Holbein's paintings which were made by George Vertue and were kept in this room. The Holbein chamber served as a combination of guest bedroom and museum as it also contained other objects of antiquarian interest. The bed was screened with an elaborate design by Richard Bentley whose source of inspiration was the late Gothic choir screen of Rouen Cathedral. The ceiling is made of papiermache and was designed by Johann Hendrich Muntz.

The suite of chairs in this room were made of ebony and Walpole bought them at an auction believing that they were of the Tudor style, but they were in fact East Indian. Until now, most of the furniture in Strawberry Hill had been designed and produced to look like the Gothic style. For Walpole, this suite of chairs began a concept of furnishing with antiques. At the time this was seen as eccentric. According to Michael McCarthy this set the patterning for such antiquarian exercises in the interior decoration for three quarters of a century, because all the arrangements at Strawberry Hill were so widely publicized. The concept of decorating with antique furniture may also have encouraged Bury to furnish Charleville with antique furniture. Today the Castle is decorated with antique furniture of different styles, but I have not concentrated on it as I feel that it is not as relevant as the Gothic structure and detailing in the Castle which remains today as an original aspect of its design.





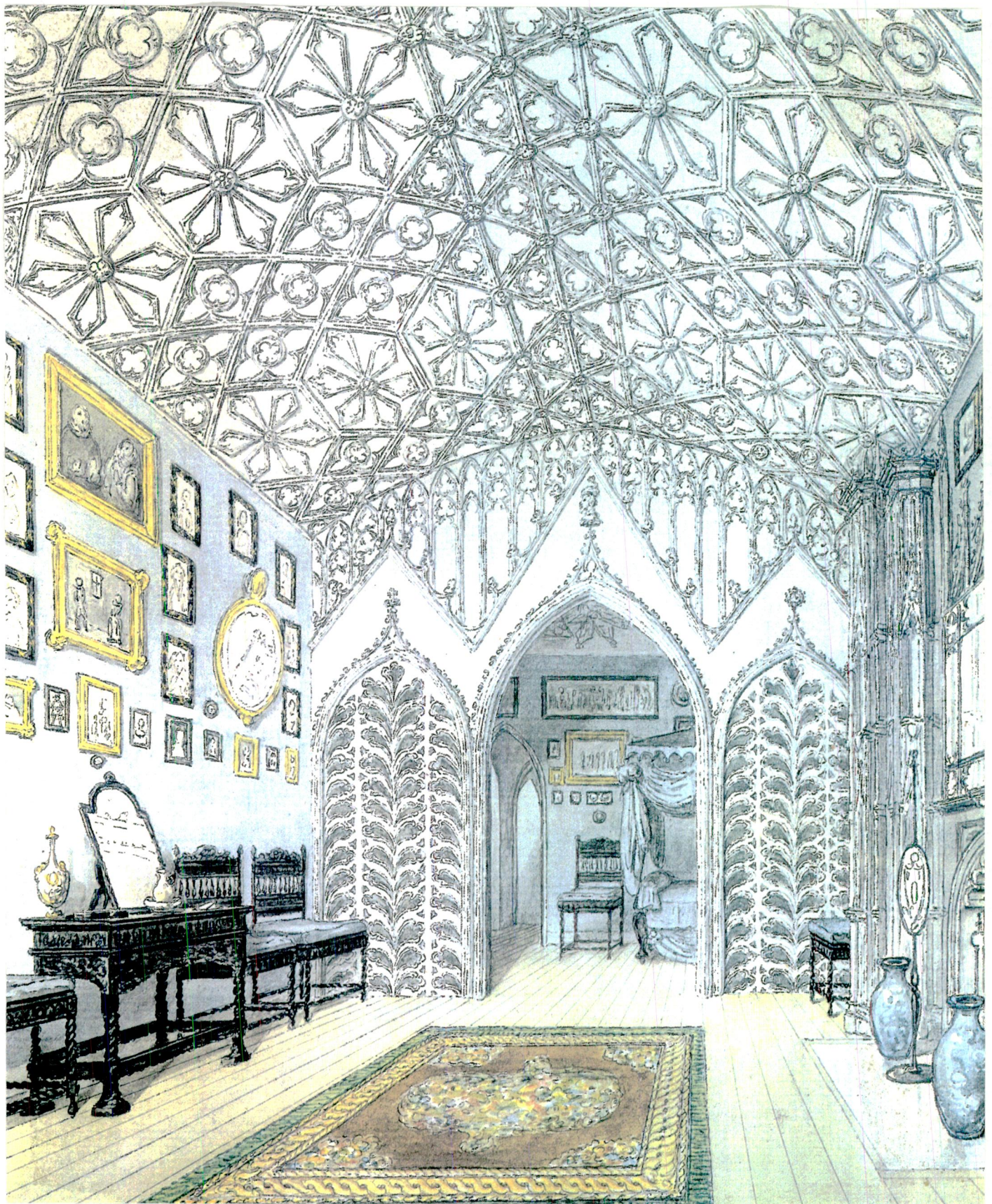


Fig 5.6 The Holbein Chamber



21/12/2019

Dear Sir,

I am writing to you regarding the matter of the...

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]



## THE STAIRCASE

The upper staircase (Fig 5.7) was designed by Richard Bentley and Walpole himself. It was derived from Prince Arthur's Tomb in Worcester Cathedral which was found as an illustration in one of Walpole's books. According to Megan Aldrich :

"Bentley also used continental sources seen in the pierced balustrading, with its flower like forms and cusped mouchettes. Walpole described the staircase as the most particular and chief beauty of the Castle in 1953 when it was being decorated" (Aldrich, 1994, p60).

This stairs were again the product of Bentley's lively imagination. He was to design much of the earlier interiors in Strawberry Hill. The quite large flower style motif is a contrast in design to the long and pointed Gothic style, and a similar motif can be seen in the dining room at Charleville Castle in the panelling on the walls (Fig 4.21). It is also present in the ceiling by William Morris which incorporated the coats of arms (Fig 4.22). It is also interesting to note that the original design for Charleville by Charlotte Maria Tisdall herself, (Fig 2.22) possesses this motif in the balustrades of the stairs and the gallery. This is yet another example of the influence that Strawberry Hill had on Charleville Castle.

Throughout this Chapter it can be seen how Strawberry Hill had more of an influence on Charleville Castle than merely one fan vaulted gallery. Aspects of the structure and design in Strawberry Hill can be seen repeated, often in a less ornate manner, in Charleville .





Similarities between Strawberry Hill and Charleville Castle may be seen in Walpole's gallery, tribune library, great parlour and stairs. All of these examples of rooms in Strawberry Hill show, firstly, a highly original approach to decorating in the 1750s and, secondly, an approach which was to influence many, one of which is Charleville Castle. In turn, Charleville Castle was also to influence many as it began a craze in gothicizing castles in Ireland after 1800.







Fig 5.7 The Staircase





## CHAPTER 6

### CHARLEVILLE CASTLE FROM 1931 TO THE PRESENT DAY

From 1931, after Lady Howard Bury's death, Charleville Castle became unoccupied. Her son Col. Howard Bury took it over, but only opened it for shooting parties. Some of the furniture was transferred to the Howards' estate in Belvedere, near Mullingar, and the rest of the furnishings were sold by public auction. After this, the Castle began to suffer badly from vandalism which can still be seen today on the second floor.

Major William Hutton Bury took over in 1949, but did not live in it. The Castle was seen in England as a vampire bank, during the filming of an advertisement for Barclay's Bank. This is how Mr. Michael McMullen discovered it in 1972. According to William Garner's 1985 article in the Irish Times Mr McMullen found out that the Castle was in Ireland and came over immediately. He bought it from the owner, Major Hutton Bury and began repairing the roof and windows. Although some of the plasterwork on the walls was destroyed, fortunately, none of the Gothic ceilings were too badly damaged. Mr McMullen then began on the restoration of the interior. An interesting description of McMullen's restoration work is found in a 1992 article in the Irish Independent by Milo Drummond:

"What he had done to it was almost beyond belief. Every single musty surface of the truly enormous interior had been newly decorated in the most extraordinary colours - gold, pink, mauve, green, purple and puce being just a few. These were, we were told, authentic period colours." (Drummond 1992).

McMullen had apparently, filled the Castle with Victorian furniture, silver, glass and different objects. Again, according to Milo Drummond, he had restored the Castle almost single-handedly, his days spent high on ladders and scaffolding and his nights immersed in Victorian style books.





For the time that Michael McMullen owned the Castle, he was seen by the local people of Tullamore as being a very eccentric man. This was shown in an article of 11th July, 1985 in the Irish Times where he was suing the Charleville Estate Co., Tullamore, which owns the land surrounding the Castle. McMullen claimed that he had no privacy because of people going up to the building. He claimed that over the years he had behaved in an abnormal manner towards the public who were rightfully using the lands and this had caused him to become a target of ridicule and hatred among the local community.

At a local auction McMullen discovered a very important series of drawings which documented the design of Charleville Castle. Some of these drawings were for the neo-classical house by James Byres, some were for Gothic style gates and ornamental urns by John Pentland, who also designed some classical houses with Gothic dress, and then some of the sketches were believed to be by Bury himself, and they were in an amateur hand and were quite similar to the Castle as it was designed and built. This discovery was very important in tracing the history of the design of the Castle. In May 1981, Michael McMullen decided to auction the Castle and his enormous collection of antique furnishings.

In 1987, Bridget Vance and her mother, American businesswoman Constance Heavey Alagna, bought Charleville Castle. They owned a catering business in New York, which they sold before they came to Ireland. Their original plan for Charleville Castle was to turn it into an hotel. At this date they were seeking a Bord Failte grant for some of their plans. The grant was refused so plans for a country house bed and breakfast, with a restaurant and tearooms were made. These plans have not yet been realized, but in the meantime Bridget Vance has been working on restoring the Castle.





Her work began with trying to undo some of Michael McMullen's hallucinatory colour schemes (Some of his bright pink can be seen showing through on the star shaped ceiling in Fig. 4.32).

To make ends meet, Bridget opened the Castle to the public, conducting guided tours, hosting wedding receptions in the gallery and offering pre-booked banquets for up to 100 people. In an article in the Irish Times in 1993 by Katie Donovan, Bridget Vance describes how in the beginning she applied for all sorts of grants and got nothing. When they finally got £4,000 for visitor toilets, they had to match it by 50% and even this did not make much of a dint in their own costs. She also describes how, in her own opinion, the reason she is not getting much support is a lingering resentment of people in Ireland towards the Big House. This is ironic, because she is descended herself from someone who lived in a thatched cottage and was evicted by previous owners of the house.

Even though Bridget Vance has had many setbacks in her dreams for Charleville Castle and very little financial help, she is still optimistic for the future of the Castle as she works on its restoration every day. Unfortunately, Tullamore does not attract as many tourists as other towns and because of its location, Charleville Castle is not well-known, even though it has been described as one of the finest Gothic revival houses in Europe (Bridget Vance, quoting Matt McNulty, Head of Bord Failte). The Castle has also been put on the list of the top ten castles in Ireland that are to be saved. At the moment, Bridget Vance's last hope for Charleville Castle is that the State will take it over, that they will restore and refurnish it to turn it into a sort of tourist and heritage attraction and possibly a Bed and Breakfast. She is hoping that she will be left to run it.





## CONCLUSION

Charleville Castle was designed in 1798 in the Gothic revival style. The origins of the Gothic revival lie in Gothic architecture itself as it was a strong and influential source. The concept of borrowing from Medieval sources, scaling down and transferring to domestic interiors began with Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill. These ideas were widely used and were influential in the design of Charleville Castle.

Through illustrations, it can be seen that the initial designs for Charleville were dictated by Bury and his wife. Their architect, Francis Johnston was influenced by the design of Charleville Castle, this may be seen in examples of his later work such as Killeen Castle, Co Meath and Markree Castle, Co Sligo. After the construction of Charleville a craze began in Ireland for the Gothic revival style. These examples also show that the design of Charleville Castle was influential itself.

Photographic documentation gives examples of Gothic detailing in both the exterior and interior of Charleville. Through comparisons, these illustrations show how Gothic details were taken from their Medieval sources. Walpole's concept of borrowing and transferring to the domestic interior was then successfully applied to Charleville Castle.

By taking a closer look at Strawberry Hill it can be seen precisely how influential Walpole's designs were in the design of Charleville. Like Walpole, Bury's intention was to exhibit specimens of Gothic architecture which were applied to the domestic interior. He achieved this and his ideas remain for us to see today.





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