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Avondale - How our heritage is presented

by

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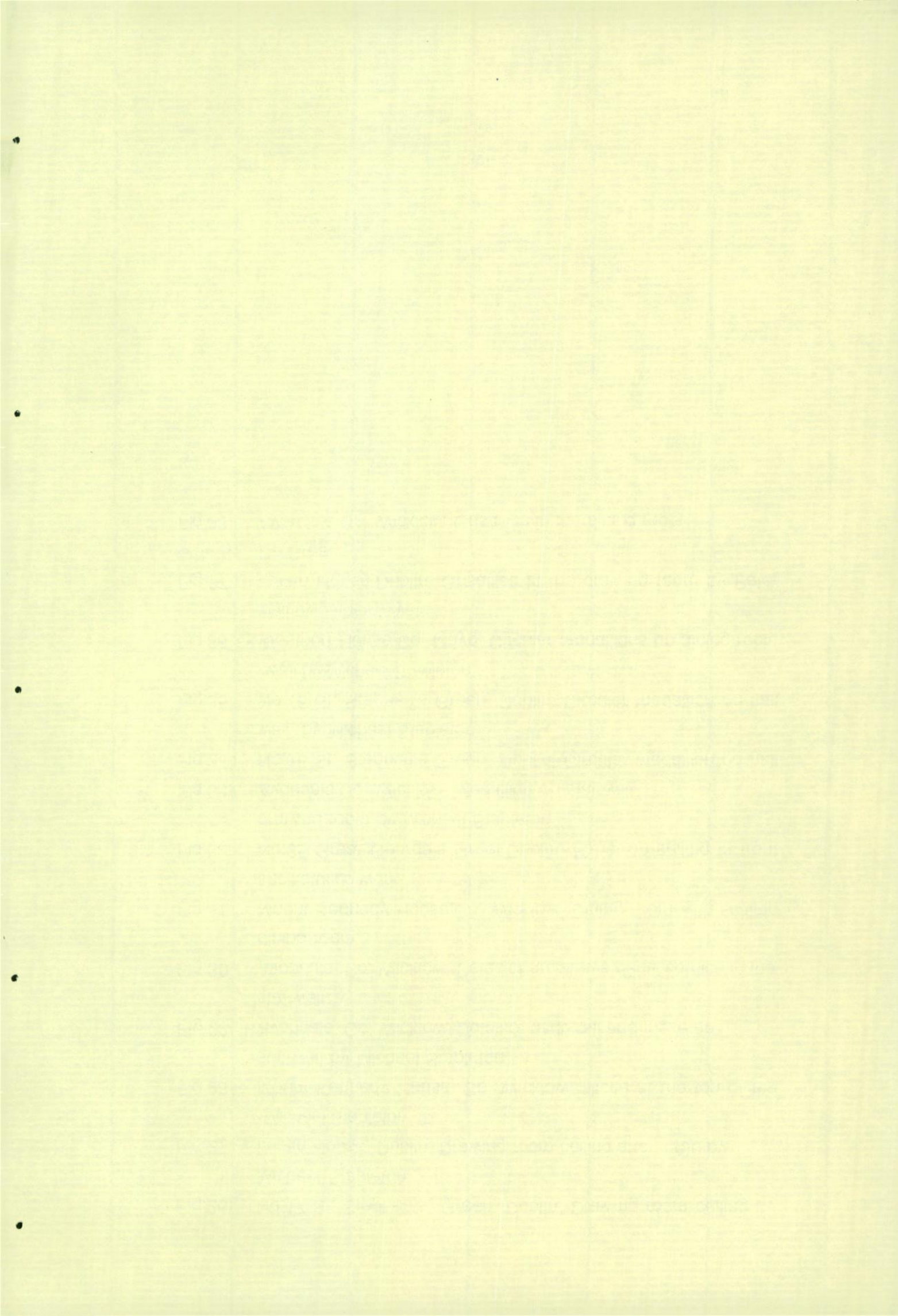
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Introduction

In the Summer of 1993, while employed as a tour guide at Avondale House in Co. Wicklow, once home of Charles Stewart Parnell, known as Ireland's 'Uncrowned King'. I became perceptive as to how, I, as a guide was presenting information to visitors at Avondale. An awareness that essentially enticed an interest in pursuing an analysis of how the nation's heritage is presented to the public.

This thesis will be based on an investigation into how the nation's heritage is portrayed to society and Avondale House will serve as an object for analysis. Avondale, for over two hundred years has been subject to the exploration of it's beautiful, botanical and silvicultural grounds. With so much attention on it's botanical setting there is consequently a serious lack of information presented on the house itself. And if mentioned few links were made between it and the political leader Charles Stewart Parnell. Most of the information obtained contained little information on the House or it's architectural features, it tended to focus on Parnell and the political aspects of his life. Various 'touring about Ireland' books from the eighteenth century proved useful and provided an insight into Avondale and it's locational layout. Information was also gathered from The National Museum of Ireland, newspaper articles on our heritage and from interviews with Avondale's proprietors.

Chapter one will establish how Avondale House was presented prior to the current ownership of The Irish Forestry Board. An analysis of how the Forestry proposes to present the various dilemma's inherent at Avondale and also an investigation into the adherence to their proposed aims and objectives, will be further discussed.

The Forestry's renovations to Avondale in 1991 will provide the bases for discussion in chapter two. It would be my intention to put forward an unbiased interpretation of the proprietary and an analysis of their goals

in their renovation and presentation of Avondale House will be the focus of investigation. An exploration into the architectural merits inherent in the dining room at Avondale will be the main emphasis of this chapter as this is the only room within the House that renders such exploration.

The focus of Avondale as an educator to the public and an evaluation of its classification as a museum, as well as the neglect to exploit the levels of educational avenues inherent at Avondale, form the discussion in chapter three.

The final chapter will look at The Irish Forestry Boards' proposed introduction of a visitors centre and the effects of this development on our heritage at Avondale.

This thesis will evaluate the wealth of cultural and historical heritage encompassed at Avondale and will establish the significance and importance of Avondale to the public.

Chapter 1

How our heritage has been presented at Avondale.

Ireland's native heritage can be interpreted on numerous different levels. Emphasis on various aspects of history is dependent on the focus of analysis. In this instance Avondale House in County Wicklow provides the object for investigation. It's function to society is reliant on the embodiment of judgments, interpretations and evaluations made by it's proprietary in their role as custodians for the nation. Avondale encompasses a collection of past histories which essentially needs to be identified by it's proprietors in order to present an accurate interpretation of it's past. It's synonymous association with Irish Forestry and Charles Stewart Parnell 'The Uncrowned King of Ireland', proffers the dilemma of two past histories of different cultural meaning, within one house. While also linked to social, national, historical and educational issues. This amalgamation of dilemma's and the levels inherent in these issues all present the problem of selecting which is of greater significance to portray to the Irish nation. In order to understand the importance of these levels of classification linked to the House a brief history of Avondale is therefore necessary. Consequently an analysis of the managements interpretations and evaluation of such issues will provide the basis for investigation.

Avondale House is a late Georgian house built in 1779. It had an early association with forestry as its owner Samuel Hayes had a keen interest in afforestation. Hayes, a barrister who represented Wicklow in the Irish House of Commons between 1790 - 1793 was a true enthusiast who in fact wrote a book in 1794 on tree planting in Ireland. After his death in 1795 he bequeathed his beloved Avondale to his cousin the Right Honourable Sir John Parnell, Baronet and Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer in Ireland. He was an excellent farmer and continued to

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year, and the second section deals with the specific results of the work.

2. The second part of the report deals with the specific results of the work. It is divided into three main sections: the first section deals with the results of the work in the field of agriculture, the second section deals with the results of the work in the field of industry, and the third section deals with the results of the work in the field of commerce.

3. The third part of the report deals with the conclusions and recommendations. It is divided into two main sections: the first section deals with the conclusions and the second section deals with the recommendations.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the appendix. It contains the following information:

- a. A list of the names of the persons who have taken part in the work.
- b. A list of the names of the persons who have assisted in the work.
- c. A list of the names of the persons who have been consulted.
- d. A list of the names of the persons who have been interviewed.
- e. A list of the names of the persons who have been interviewed.
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- z. A list of the names of the persons who have been interviewed.

improve the estate in the same way as his predecessor. The fruits of which can still be seen at the grounds in Avondale, Co. Wicklow. Eventually this "most beautiful and interesting demesnes in the kingdom" was passed on to one of the greatest political leaders of modern Irish history, Charles Stewart Parnell (1846 -1891) who, also like his grandfather before him further developed the magnificent 222 acre estate. (Wright, 1827, p.76) Consequently, after his death his birthplace now, a heavily encumbered estate was sold by his brother John Howard in 1891 to a butcher from Phibsborough who planned to knock down the house, but fortunately he ran into financial difficulties. The entire property was then purchased by the State in 1904 and acquired by the Department of Agriculture and has since remained in the hands of the organisation subsequently known as the Irish Forestry Board: Coillte Teoranta.

Initially the Department of Agriculture engaged in planting a series of experimental silvicultural plots laid out in the grounds by A.C. Forbes the then director of forestry and professor Augustine Henry between 1904 - 1913. Further developing the Hayes concept on the preservation and cultivation of trees in Ireland, a bill he presented in parliament in 1788. Thus creating a site rich in educational afforestation information which is unmatched in Ireland to-day.

Avondale House was also used as a forestry school from 1904 - 1923 and from 1933 - 1957. The Department carried out some light maintenance and repairs to the decaying building in 1935 to facilitate members of the forestry staff and trainees who took up residence in the House. However, in 1968 the Office of Public Works, (O.P.W.) the body responsible for the purchase or devise of sites and buildings in Ireland to be held in perpetuity for the public carried out a more extensive job of adapting the House. This was to accommodate necessary dining and kitchen facilities for the forestry school's needs as well as supposedly "preserving and highlighting the main features of the old house." (Forestry services booklet, p.5) The House was then opened to the public in a small capacity under the management of the O.P.W. Only

three rooms were adapted to facilitate the visitors at Avondale, the blue room (the dining room), drawing room and the main hall. The remainder of which were used to facilitate the forestry school.

The adaptation of the house to accommodate the Forestry's needs illustrates the Department's lack of appreciation and evaluation of this historically political associated eighteenth century house. The dilemma of presenting the functional use, characteristic of a house takes precedence over Parnell's significant association to Avondale. Consequently making Avondale House "a machine for living in" as its functional aspects are of greater importance to the Irish Forestry. (Naylor, lecture, 1994)

The An Taisce (1) report in 1977 on the 'Heritage at Risk' views the "loss of house, through decay, vandalism or neglect as a waste the Country cannot afford" and it also believes the house is of great historical importance.

Offering an introduction into Ireland's great artistic wealth and enriching people with an aesthetic experience with an insight into the social history and a better sense of own cultural identity.

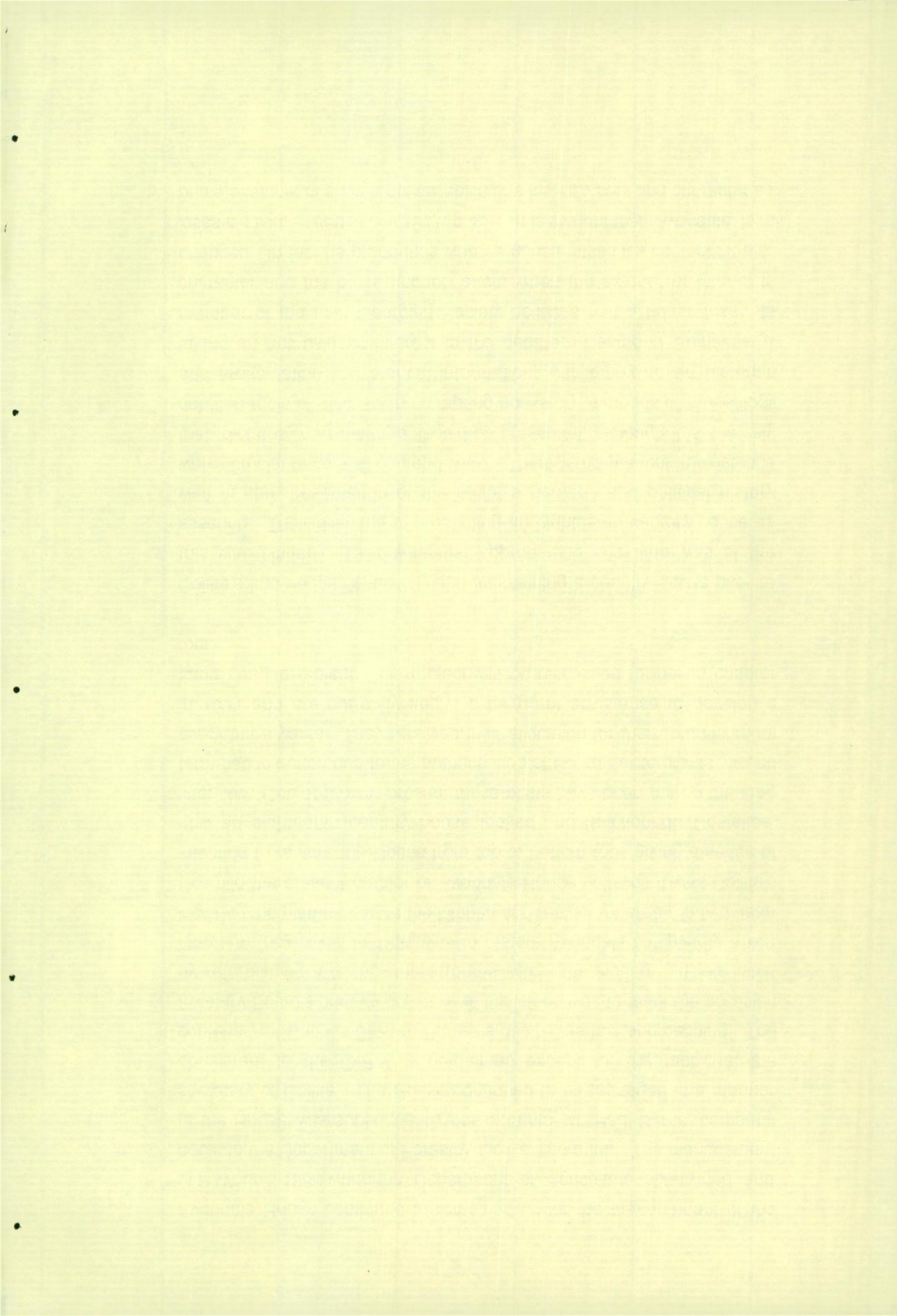
(Mc Parland, 1977, p.10)

Unfortunately the Department of Forestry would prefer to offer an introduction into Avondale's surrounding lands as opposed to the House, as the education of afforestation ranks highest in the battle of which is of greater historical importance. Although their endeavours to expand and develop the existing parklands at Avondale is not necessarily a bad thing as the preservation of the garden, "which is a much smaller but equally significant part of our heritage" is also a "waste the country cannot afford." (Mc Parland 1977 p.10) It is a fine example of where nature and its environment takes precedence over the historic, artistic, educational and architectural merits evident at this House.

(1) A voluntary organisation founded in 1948 to advance the conservation and management of Ireland's natural and built endowments in a manner which are sustainable.

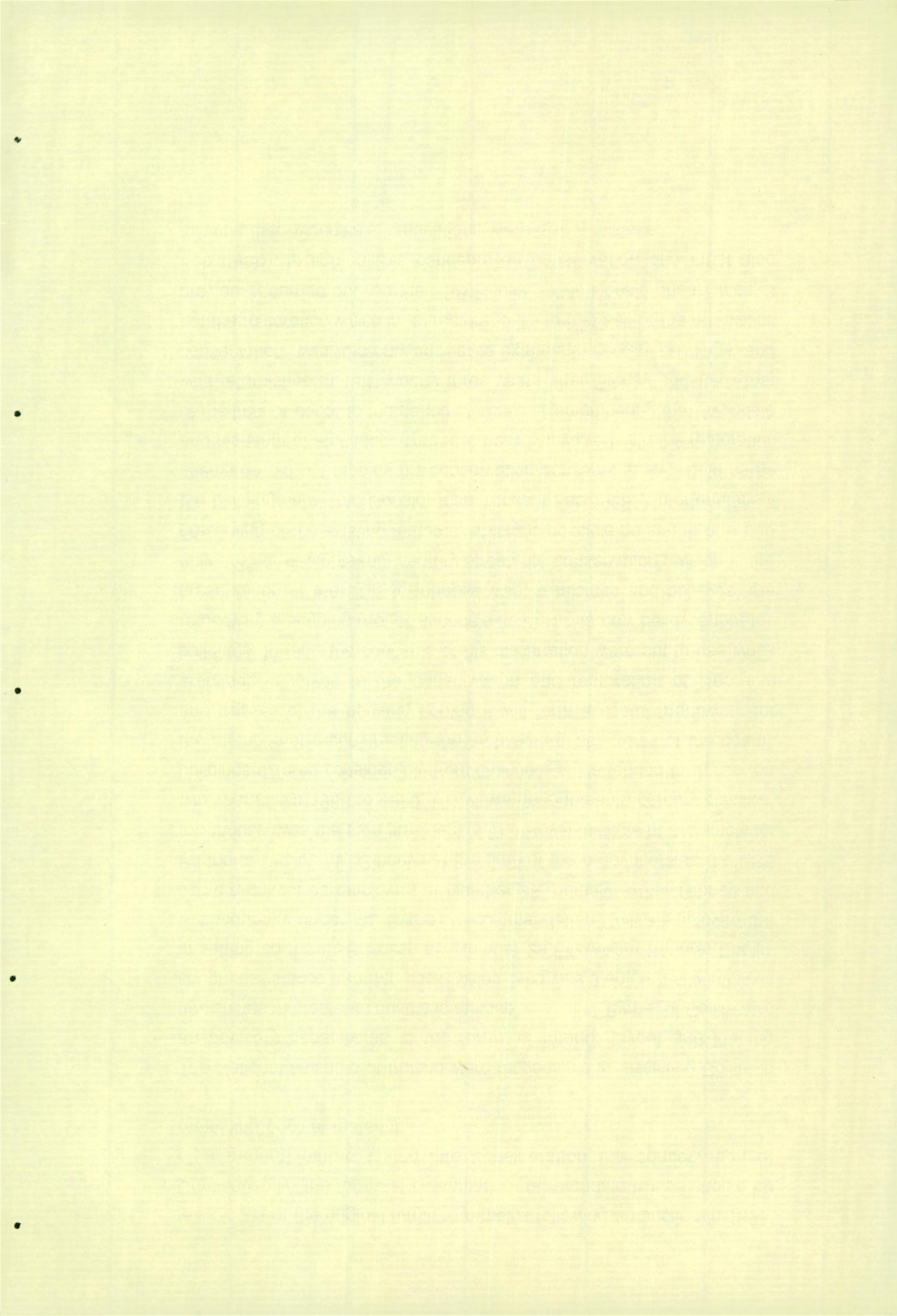
Avondale House continued to remain under the management of the O.P.W. until 1988 when the Department of Agriculture subdivided and became the Department of Forestry, Coillte Teoranta. The management of the House was subsequently passed onto Mr. Paul Byrne, company secretary of Coillte. The House continued to be managed in a manner consistent to the O.P.W.'s guidelines except for the fact that the centenary of Charles Stewart Parnell's death was fast approaching. The Forestry Board's primary objective at this stage was to mark the occasion by refurbishing a further three rooms within the House. Their initial long-term objectives in 1991 was to restore Avondale completely which included the plan to restore the kitchen and restaurant area. In fact Jean Costello the present curator of Avondale House believes it was Coillte's intention to restore the House from top to bottom thus giving a sense of how an eighteenth century house looked and functioned. (Costelloe, interview, Oct. 1994) At present these plans have been put on the long term pause button due to the authorisation of Board Faillte grants, issued every three years. They received their allocation for their refurbishment in 1991 and are currently applying for grant assistance to develop a Land League project. This project will be discussed further in chapter four.

Coillte's knowledge of running and maintaining a country estate prior to this was limited. 1991 was fast approaching and time was of the essence. Their dilemma in presenting an eighteenth century house as well as the presentation of the nation's heritage and political history were crucial factors to contend with. There is no manual in existence that dictates how heritage should be presented, although it is a widely debated topic of discussion prompting books on methods of museology and presentation of historical information, with many an art historian taking an enthusiastic interest in the debates. Desmond Guinness, a member of the Irish Georgian Society believes that a house loses its character and the entire impact alters when the exterior or interior is changed. In fact he propounds when a house "loses it's contents it also loses it's soul". (Guinness, 1971, p.35) It is evident that Avondale is a prime example of such a house which has lost it's soul and character as



few pieces of the original furniture remains following an auction in 1898. Consequently the forms of presentation for Avondale House should be of a general nature taking into consideration the conservation of remaining original material.

The National Museum of Ireland were responsible in assisting Coillte in an advisory capacity as to the forms of interior layout and loaning furnishings to create an aesthetic atmosphere. Mr. Byrne, of Coillte also sought assistance from Mr. Jack Wiley who was then currently involved in setting up the ESB House at Number 29 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin. Subsequently under Mr. Byrne's recommendation Coillte employed the same architect as employed at Number 29, namely Arthur Gibney and Partners, Dublin. Mr. Gibney at the time of the renovations to the ESB townhouse, was the then president of The Royal Institute of Architects for two years from 1988 to 1990. His views on eighteenth century classical buildings differed considerably from Guinness's. He tended to focus on the methods of reconstructing the architectural structures of the beams and trusses of the houses, hoping it will form a useful framework for architects involved in the conservation and restoration of Georgian buildings. In fact the concepts of his dissertation were put to use while remedying a sagging roof at Avondale in 1991. He now believes that the presentation of the ESB townhouse was a mistake and believes "the only answer in eighteenth century streets is conservation", which is the preserving of the existing features, which "is possible no matter how bad the buildings are". (Mc Donald, Irish Times, 3 Feb. 1988) Unfortunately, it seems he did not employ his conservation concepts at Avondale as he and his team of architects were also heavily involved with the restoration of the interior decor to the period of 1850. Remembering that Avondale was refurbished in 1991 nearly three years after Gibney admitted that conservation was "the only answer to eighteenth century buildings" and not the restoration which is to restore to it's former self or the renovation previously carried out on the ESB House. (Mc Donald, Irish Times, 3 Feb. 1988) In light of his concepts on conservation one must also assume that Avondale's 'renovations' were also a mistake.



The detailed documentation that exists on Avondale's refurbishment illustrates that the renovations were carried out according to stipulations by Gibney and Partners. The decision to restore the house to 1850 was a group decision between John Teehan of the National Museum, Arthur Gibney and Partners and Paul Byrne of Coillte. Although the essence of the decision lay with Byrne who admitted to having "very strong and nationalistic" views on the presentation of the House. (Byrne, interview Nov.1994) The period chosen to restore the house cannot solely lie with Arthur Gibney and Partners but their involvement with the refurbishment of rooms and its contents is a direct reiteration of past misdemeanours carried out at Number 29 Fitzwilliam Square.

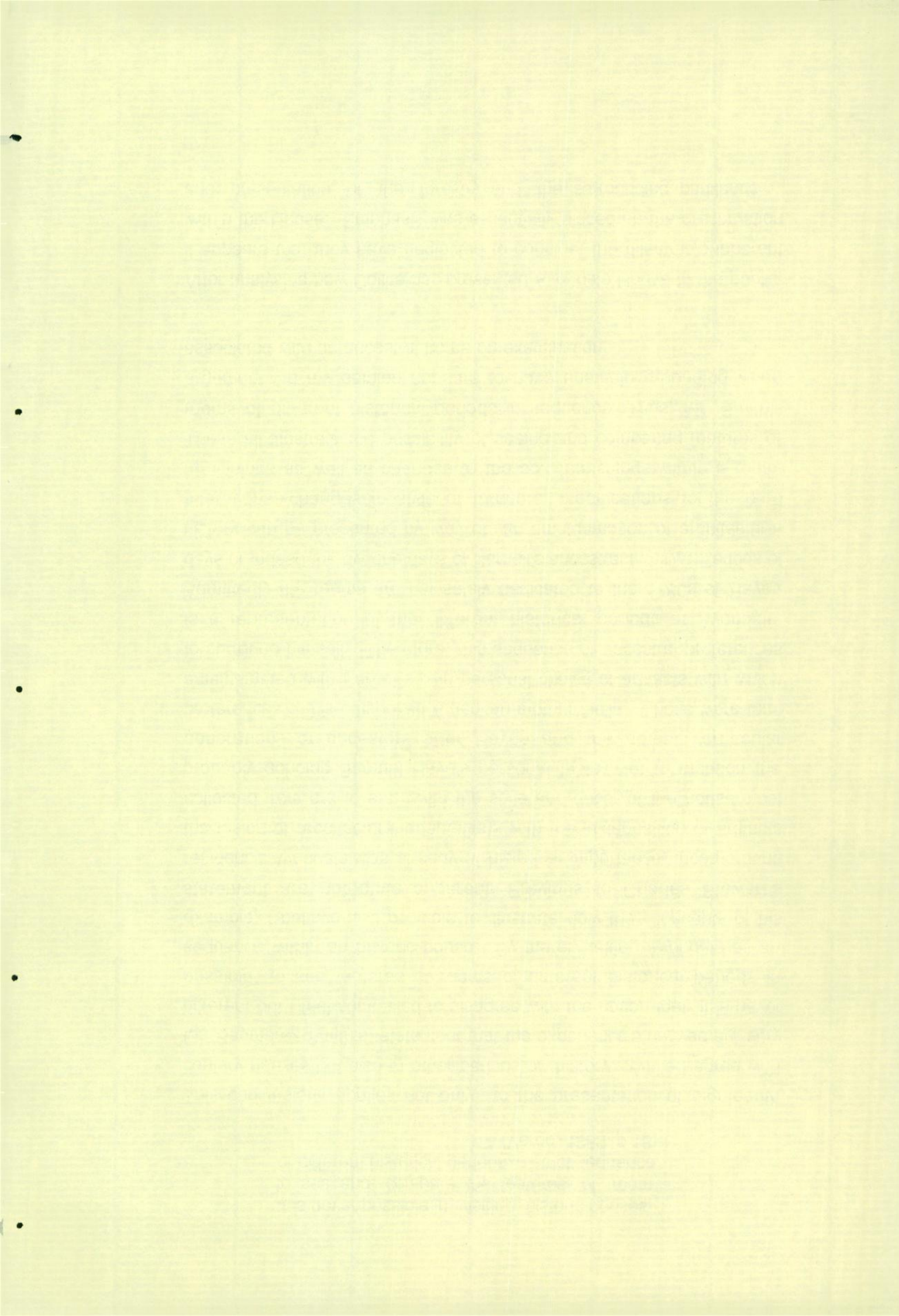
Coillte's evaluation of the situation and their decision to restore the House to that particular period of the nineteenth century while preserving its historical attributes and its presentation to society is one for concern. Their obvious focus is on the surrounding forest and parklands, the house and its contents still presents a dilemma which they neglected to consider when presenting Avondale House to the nation in 1991. The importance of which had already been emphasised by An Taisce fourteen years previously. Yet, Coillte continues to evaluate the importance of the House based on an aesthetically visual level. Not to mention the insufficient portrayal of Parnell's association to the House, Coillte maintains, that since the refurbishment of Avondale is "now a museum to Charles Stewart's memory". (Irish Forestry, introductory pamphlet, 1991)

The Irish Forestry has neglected to consider the forms of presentation or indeed labelling of the House, which is most probably due to the short timescale of the project. This timescale has lead to a lack of awareness as to the dilemma of presenting a museum within an historical house. As Charles Saumarez Smith in the "New Museology" points out there are differences experienced when visiting period rooms within a museum, compared to the completely different experience of visiting an historic house. He believes that,

It is never possible in visiting historic houses,
to see and compare the features of room
of different historical periods in strict sequence.
(Vergo, 1989, p.18)

This conclusion applies not only to the presentation of eighteenth century houses but also to other periods of history. While I agree with Mr. Saumarez Smith's statement that the experiences derived are very different but I feel compelled to disagree with the notion that "it is never possible" to see features of rooms of different historical periods in sequence within an historic house. By merely taking Avondale as an example, I believe it is possible to illustrate how the concepts of his statement are not quite apparent. Previous to Charles Stewart's residency Avondale was already of historical importance, incorporating the fusion of architectural adaptations with the juxtaposition of artifacts collected from era to era, with the style and decor of the house most probably echoing Samuel Haye's personal taste. Not to mention the generations of ancestors after Hayes and the potent vernacular preferences of his outspoken American mother Delia. These were then amalgamated with Parnell's own personal choice of artifacts with which to surround himself. Therefore, this sequence of ancestral preferences is a representation of the different historical periods at Avondale. Admittedly the rooms are not solely dedicated to the 1780s of Hayes days or indeed the bygone days of Parnell's ancestral family. Periods of history can be presented by way of an amalgamation of architectural alterations, changes in style of furniture, modifications to the hard furnishings as well as changes to the soft furnishings within a room. These all illustrate the possibility of seeing and comparing features of rooms of different historical periods in sequence. Thus, Mr. ^{Saumarez} Smith's argument in my opinion appears to have unstable grounding when associated with an ancestral home on examination.

After analysing how Coillte has presented Avondale House to the public, it appears that they have neglected to consider the dilemma's inherent within the House. Emphasis was essentially placed on the preservation and presentation of the forestry and the surrounding parklands



The adaptation of the House to accommodate the Forestry school by the O.P.W in 1968 illustrates a lack of appreciation of Avondale's historical attributes. Coillte continues to maintain this flaw in appreciation for Avondale House. The Forestry's lack of knowledge in the portrayal of a museum within a historical house has resulted in an aesthetic presentation of an interior. Consequently, leading to the presentation of a nineteenth century interior within an eighteenth century house without sufficient focus on Parnell and his links to the House.

Chapter 2

Renovations to Avondale House.

Avondale House has passed through the hands of many generations of Parnellite ancestors and like many other similar historical houses, has been subject to ongoing alterations. It has also been exposed to much abuse, neglect and adaptations to facilitate the needs of various institutions. Its two major renovation projects carried out since the States purchase has resulted in the destruction of certain aspects of national heritage. An investigation into the methods of presenting these alterations and adaptations to the House will provide a basis for investigation. The sourcing of an inaccurate presentation of information to the public as a result of insufficient research carried out at the time of renovation has also given rise to speculation. A possible solution to the identity of the architect accountable for Avondale's execution and an examination into the stuccodore responsible for the fine stucco-work in the dining room at Avondale will be considered. An analysis of assumptions made by Coillte based on their acceptance of historical data without query, will also be subject to exploration.

The O.P.W's restoration plan in 1968 involving the adaptations to the architectural features of the house to facilitate the increasing size of the forestry school, resulted in the destruction of original features within the house. They would have us believe that the renovations were essential and the alterations were necessary due to the general state of disrepair of the house. Generally speaking they employed an aesthetic preservation policy over a conservational preservation of artifacts and architectural features. The renovation entailed the preservation of a rare Bossi mantelpiece which was defaced by forestry members keeping marble splinters as keepsakes. (Fig.1&2) The replacement of original floorboards within the house and the addition of a cement surround

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around the fireplace in the main entrance hall may be attributed to the O.P.W's "preserving and highlighting of architectural features" policy. (Forestry Services Booklet, p.5) (Fig.3) All of which were deemed necessary to meet the requirements of the forestry school. The provision of a residential centre located not fifty yards from the facade of the House was considered necessary for living accommodation. A 1970s style wooden structure that disrupts Avondale's artistic landscape setting, while automatically interfering with the historical links associated to the location. (Fig. 4) The project also involved the destruction of an eighteenth century dower house, to make way for a coach park. It is believed the dower house was utilised by Parnell and his family after his father died. Alas, no known visual information exists of the casino. It was most probably that same rustic dwelling, "quite superior to any little rustic residence" that G.N. Wright "ever saw in this country", when he wrote his book on touring Co. Wicklow in 1827. "It is a superior example of Irish architecture possibly designed by its ambitious owner and architect Samuel Hayes". (Wright, 1827 p. 76) A blatant destruction of history which is lost for future generations.

The Irish Forestry Commission were responsible for the next major adaptation to the House. The refurbishment plan was considered a century after Parnell's death, when Leinster House leaders were discussing how to commemorate his "centenary in an appropriate manner." (John Bruton, Dail papers, 18 Dec. 1990) Charles J. Haughey, the then Taoiseach, assured the Government that Coillte were completing a refurbishment plan for Avondale, once home of Charles Stewart Parnell with assistance from the National Museum of Ireland that would "greatly enhance the ambience of the Parnell Museum". (An Taoiseach, 18 Dec. 1990)

Coillte's involvement at Avondale prior to 1988 was limited apart from their involvement with the forestry school and the lands connected to Avondale. With assistance from the National Museum of Ireland and Arthur Gibney and Partners, Coillte defined a brief that bore fruit in a very short space of time. Just two years prior to Parnell's centenary year of

1991 the Irish Forestry Commission had launched 'Coillte' as a new company at Avondale. The event was so successful that the Irish Forestry Commission only then began to realise the vast "potential of developing Avondale as a facility for corporate events." (Byrne, interview, Dec. 1994) The refurbishment plan was essentially geared to commemorate his death but it also provided Coillte with the opportunity to develop the House to facilitate their own alternative objectives simultaneously.

The brief focused on the refurbishment of three rooms within the House, the nursery, the library and the master bedroom. An additional renovation was also made to turn an old church in the courtyard into a conference hall to facilitate over one hundred people. This aided Coillte's desire to develop facilities for corporate events. Mr. Byrne's views on the forms of presenting Avondale were very defined, so strong that it led to his dissolving of the committee whose immediate task was to ascertain their objectives for the centenary year. It is therefore difficult to determine precisely who was responsible for this decision to renovate the House to the style and decor of 1850, currently evident at Avondale. An unusual choice to select when one considers its significance in relation to the House. Parnell would only have been four years old and also attending school in England at the time. The period chosen would also have had no historical association to Hayes. The decor and style of the House in 1850 would have been evocative of Parnell's parents' personal preferences, presenting no reflection on Parnell himself and his lifestyle. 1850 would also have had no association to the prominent political achievements that Parnell is best remembered for. It is an unusual choice particularly since Avondale is a museum dedicated to Parnell's memory and his toddler days are far from vivid memories.

Even if one were to accept the renovations dedicated to the period of the 1850s. It is still possible to see numerous inaccuracies in its presentation. Very little consideration appears to have been given to conveying a childhood atmosphere even in the nursery. Figures 5, 6 and 7 shows the newly refurbished room with a serious lack of artifacts

associated with a childhood environment as few personal items are on display. The acquisition of original artifacts may have been difficult to obtain. It appears that Coillte neglected to research Parnell's childhood days, as playing with toy soldiers was an activity Parnell and his sister Anna appeared to have been fond of.

The nursery alone was well garrisoned with lilliputian soldiers, of whom Charles commanded one well organised division, while his sister of another and opposing force. (Sherlock, 1982, p31)

The renovation fails to maintain the character of 1850 throughout the House even in the library, also renovated in 1991. The Parnell library complete with fine classical furnishing and an 1840s Carera marble fireplace are supposedly evocative of the 1850 decor but the "sashes, shutters, cases, dado and panelling all call up the neoclassical taste of the original owner" from the previous century. (Coillte, 1991 renovation pamphlet, p.2) Arthur Gibneys associate, Ann-Cuffe Fitzgerald who was responsible for the renovations says, "the whole treatment" of this gentleman's room has been copied from a La Touche, sketch. Figures 9,10,11,12 and 13 show the actual drawings used which date from 1839 almost a decade previous to the desired 1850s decor. They also bear no significance to the fashionable trends of the original owner Hayes, who by 1850 was long since dead. The damask and voile drapes are the only features that are in any way representative of La Touche's drawings. The curtaining and drapery in the master bedroom appear also to have been copied from her sketches. (Fig.14) A presentation of an audio visual was also part of the renovation project, although it was not completed for the centenary year. An analysis of the video presentation is further discussed in chapter three.

A closer exploration of Coillte's renovations to the House has prompted further investigation into the chosen presentation of the period 1850. As a former tour guide of the House I became aware of the presentation of questionable inaccuracies to the public. And a visit to the Victoria and Albert museum in London proved beneficial after a conversation with

Francis Collard from the furniture department, brought to light the questionable classification of some period furniture. Coillte's lack of familiarity with Avondale's architectural attributes as well as its interior treasures has led to a debatable presentation of our heritage. An acceptance of historical information based on an investigation by the O.P.W. and stories according to local folklore has provided the basis for their presentation. The identity of the architect at Avondale is the most intriguing acceptance of information presented to Coillte and subsequently to the public. The architect James Wyatt is believed to be solely responsible for the execution of Avondale House. An Englishman who made his architectural Pantheon debut just seven years before Avondale was built. Their assumption is based solely on the intertwined initials, J. W. on the back of the main door, along with the initials of Samuel Hayes and the date of construction. (Fig.15) A number of factors have led me to believe that their conclusions are not so apparent. Samuel Hayes, for whom the House was built was more than an amateur architect. So much so that his design proposal for Foster Place in Dublin was a close second to James Gandons' revised sketches. (Mc Parland, 1985 p. 87) Although ultimately elements of his designs were utilised by John Foster. Hayes is quoted as saying in a letter to Gandon "except for the windows the building is finished exactly after my (i.e. Hayes) first sketch." (Mc Parland, 1985 p. 86) Figure 16 shows Hayes proposed plans for Foster Place, which bears a resemblance to the windows that "break forward under a pediment" as well as the Doric porch at Avondale. (Jones, 1978, p15) "These dominant pediment lines and portico" are the same feature that Mc Parland believes Hayes was responsible for at Foster Place. (Mc Parland, 1985, p 87)

It is also a possibility that Thomas Cooley and Thomas Penrose, both notable architects may also be linked to Avondale. Both Penrose and Cooley acted as Irish agents for Wyatt, with Cooley supervising Wyatts' design for Mount Kennedy House Co. Wicklow in 1772. (but not executed until c.1782) Mount Kennedy House has similar architectural attributes to Avondale. The classical symmetry achieved by the balance of doors, two of which are false, provides a likeness to the main hall at

Mount Kennedy. Another notable characteristic of Wyatt's design is the location of the stairwell off the main entrance, as he feared it would upset the balance of the room, a feature also evident at Mount Kennedy and other houses designed by Wyatt (Fig.18 & 19).

The architecture of Avondale can also be linked to that of Lucan House, Co. Dublin another house where the owners are unsure to whom to attribute this fine architectural merit. But it is believed that the National Library of Ireland, holding sketches by Michael Stapleton for the fine plaster work on the ceilings and walls and "an unsigned ground plan included in the collection can presumably be attributed to him". (Guinness, 1972, p.133) Stapleton was a notable stuccodore who first appeared on the scene in 1777 according to C.P. Curran in his book on eighteenth century plaster work .(p74) He was also a colleague and neighbour of Thomas Penrose, (c 1780) Wyatt's professional contact in Ireland. It is my belief that Penrose may have supervised at Avondale on behalf of Wyatt, thus leading to an introduction between Hayes and Stapleton who later plastered Mount Kennedy which in all probability was suggested by Cooley, Wyatt's other Irish agent. It may therefore be possible, in the light of such knowledge to link Penrose and Stapleton who were united in friendship to the execution of Avondale House.

Belvedere College in Dublin is Stapleton's masterpiece executed in 1795. It illustrates a 'style' which is reminiscent to the decoration of the dining room at Avondale. Only through further investigation will it be possible to illustrate a link between the above which is not within the remit of this thesis. My intention is merely to instil a sense of query, just enough to place a doubt in the minds of the proprietors of Avondale to reassess, define and develop information in order to present it in a precise factual manner. This style of stucco is referred to in Brien De Breffney's book on 'The Houses of Ireland'.

Good quality stucco work in Wyatt manner can be
found in several houses through out the country
...It occurs in such diverse houses as Avondale,

Co. Wicklow and Ash Hill Limerick.
(De Breffney, 1975, p.760)

This Wyattesque stucco work at Avondale is a suggestion obviously not shared by the Forestry Board. A free and suggestive treatment of neoclassical plaster work which bears strong resemblance to the characteristic 'style' of stucco work at Avondale.(Fig.20) Figures 21 and 22 show features of the dining room or blue room which Coillte believes (without any uncertainty, as their self- guided tour manual states) was executed by La Francini,

Typical late eighteenth century neoclassical design made popular by the Adams brothers. The stucco - work in this room is attributed to the Francini brothers of Italy.

(Coilltes, guide pamphlet ,1991)

This statement could not be further from the truth. The Francini brothers first appeared in Ireland in 1734 when they decorated Riverstown House and reached the height of their career in the 1770s with the rococo-naturalism style. It is also interesting to note that two of the Francinis would have been dead before Avondale was plastered, not to mention that the La Francinis' were renowned for figurative work and not the static neoclassical work seen at Avondale. The character of the stucco-work at Avondale consists of decorative swags and trailing laurel and ivy leaves that are synonymous with the forestry's surrounding parklands. This was due to Samuel Hayes, enthusiastic interest in trees and afforestation. Thus the presentation of motifs exclusive to Avondale, makes the task of tracing recurrent motif characteristics of Stapleton's work a little difficult.

The dining room at Avondale is a celebration of circles, semi-circles and plaques, some mirrored, arranged in a symmetrical manner. The stuccodore even decorated the door leading from the salon to dining room in order to continue the classical symmetry already echoed in the

room, by the placement of a false door on the left hand side of the alcove . (Fig.22)

Comparing figures 23 and 24 of the dining room Avondale with figures 25 and 26 (from Number. 17 St. Stephens Green Dublin) Stapleton's hallmarks become quite apparent upon investigation. The staircase ceiling in Number 17 illustrates notable characteristics of the delicate plaster work ceiling at Avondale comprising of low relief husk chains that follow a guilloche structure in a series of oval shapes similar to trailing acorn leaves that follow the same infinite figure of eight on the ceiling at Avondale. A stylised spray of wheat sheaf juxtaposed with foliage dissect each circle in half as seen at Avondale. (Fig.24) The gilded rosette in the dining room complete with elongated stylised acanthus leaves, radiates out to connect with an outer ellipse segmented into twenty one compartments encapsulating a stylised wheat sheaf to connect with a scalloped outer circle. It is also evocative of semi-circular and fluted fin segments of delicate plaster work at Lucan House. (Fig. 27) Stapleton's work at Mount Kennedy can once again be compared to Avondale, a semicircular niche complete with scoop shell segments beaming from the wreath of leaves is located at the top of Mount Kennedy House . (Fig.28) The familiar foliage used also in the centre of the niche at Mount Kennedy (Fig.28) bears a resemblance to the fan of foliage, central to the spray of spindly stylised anthemion in the alcove that now houses a portrait of Parnell. (Fig. 21)

Detailed cornice moulds, architrave and low relief dado rails provide an excellent source of recurrent motives utilised by Stapleton assisting in establishing Stapleton's involvement at Avondale. The classical scallop shell juxtaposed with a stylised funnel cornets appears under the dentil cornice in the dining room and recur in a repetitive chain of scalloped shells and trailing foliage on the dado rail on the staircase at Avondale. (Fig.29&30) Comparing this to the lofty Corinthian pilasters emphasised by a vertical line of scalloped shell motifs, repeated in the frieze directly under the cornice extending around the room, and also in the architrave above the door in the dining room at Mount Kennedy House. (Fig.31)

The frieze of dancing Etrusian figures above the dado rail on the stairwell at Avondale is also recurrent of compositions characteristic of Stapleton's work as well as Wyatt's. They appear in Number 35 North Great Georges street, a house decorated by Michael Stapleton. Although most figures are separated out, which is suggestive of the over abundance of the 'repetitive' use of moulds produced in this period (Fig.32). An example of Wyatt's use of these figures is suggested to be that sited in Edward Mc Parland's book on James Gandon 'Vitruvius Hibernicus'. It mentions a possible connection of Wyatt to Avondale, "Wyatt seemed to have been involved with the decoration of Samuel Hayes house, Avondale". (p.96) Note the emphasis on the word "decoration" of the house, which is subsequently backed up with reference to a drawing in the National Library of Ireland inscribed with "sketch of ornament of great stairs at Avondale, S. Hayes". which sadly ten years later cannot be found in the Penrose/Wyatt album. The ornamentation referred to could possibly be suggestive of two circular plaques found at the top and bottom of the stairwell at Avondale. (Fig.33) These fine medallions are recollective of plaques at Westport seen in the dining room and a circular plaque seen underneath the stairwell at Mount Kennedy. (Fig.28&36) These examples bear a striking resemblance to the figurative puttos in Number 16 at St. Stephens Green executed by Stapleton in the early years of his career - 1777. (Fig.34&35) These roundels can be found in connection with Wyatt's designs as well as Stapleton's, which makes confirmation of the stucco difficult, as the subject matter and composition usually consist of cherubic scenes. Although, it is possible that these plaques could infact unlock the key to the mystery of who was responsible for the execution of this fine stucco-work.

Some of these plaster plaques can also be included in the decoration of a particular room, which are occasionally replaced by Peter De Gree, grisailles. De Gree first came to Ireland in 1785 but was apparently involved with the decoration of Lucan House in 1775. Figure 37 shows five roundels with darkened backgrounds resulting in figures set against non-sculptural surfaces. These plaques are characteristic of grisailles

found at Avondale. The circular roundel above the fireplace are evocative of the figurative compositions of the oval plaques on the wall opposite the alcove at Avondale. Roundels at Mount Kennedy are also justifiably similar to smaller grisailles in the blue dining room at Avondale displaying a greater sense of depth into the two dimensional surface, due to the diffused background which integrates the foreground, middle-ground and background together. (Fig.38)

The oval plaques at Mount Kennedy may probably have contained plaster roundels or mirrors but they appear to have been substituted for De Gree grisailles taken from Woodstock, Newtown Mount Kennedy Co. Wicklow, only a few miles from Mount Kennedy House. The roundel were originally painted for Number 52 St. Stephens Green a La Touche House, linking Stapleton and De Gree who were involved in a number of joint ventures. Stapleton was connected to the La Touche family through marriage which may explain the use of the La Touche drawings for the refurbishment in 1991.

Therefore, Mount Kennedy House, Lucan House and Abbeyleigh (another Wyatt House) all have very strong Wyatt links, but also have two other features in common. They also contain stucco-work by Michael Stapleton and grisailles by De Gree. Thus strengthening my considered opinion of the involvement of Michael Stapleton with the plaster work in the dining room at Avondale. He may have only executed Wyatt's designs on his behalf in all three cases which penultimately lead to a Wyatt influence with the use of similar and recurrent motifs that can easily be linked to Wyattesque concept of design, remembering that Stapleton was only two years established when Avondale was built and was only an apprentice in 1773 when Abbeyleigh was built. Exploratory investigations have led to the belief that Penrose may have supervised at Avondale on Wyatts behalf and thus leading to an introduction between Haye's and Stapleton: as Cooley may have suggested it at Mount Kennedy after seeing Avondale.

These concepts are only possible suggestions as to the identity of the

architect and or stuccodore of Avondale House. It appears that an exact identity of the architect is impossible without an original architectural plan or accurate written proof to suggest who was responsible for its execution. Therefore Coillte's speculative suggestions as to the identification of both masterpieces should be presented as questionable or possible theories to visitors at Avondale. The presentation of assumptive information to the public is a result of Coilltes acceptance of data from the O.P.W due to their hasty refurbishment to coincide with the centenary year. Coillte's neglect to address these inaccuracies, will ultimately lead to a destruction of heritage and effecting the educational potential inherent at Avondale which is lost forever.

Chapter 3

Avondale as an educator to the Public

Avondale House functions on two levels and can therefore be classified into categories. It can primarily be categorised as a fine example of late Georgian architecture and secondly as an educator to the public. It is classified according to Coillte as a museum to Parnell's memory. This classification of the House and the effects of its categorisation into a museum is of significant importance to the educational role Avondale will play in society. The dilemma presented when considering the forms of establishing a museum within an historical house and the problems incurred when portraying aspects of heritage is a concern Coillte neglect to consider. The effects encapsulated in this classification and the context of meaning this label will have on Avondale will form the basis for investigation throughout this chapter.

The level on which we presume to be educated is dependent on the label or 'term' associated with the House. For example, if a house is classified as a country house and labelled under its estate name then our expectation is less demanding. Consequently one may expect to see a typical and possibly stylised version of a country home and may not be as concerned with the authenticity of the objects or artifacts on display. They are merely illustrating a lifestyle and or evoking a memory of times past.

This concept can change totally when the term 'museum' is linked with an historical house. The level of exception and perception of such an environment immediately alters. Suddenly the age old recollection of dim light rooms and caster driven display cases evocative of traditional museums spring to mind. It also brings to the fore the problematic issues associated with museums which include the conservation of artifacts, the significance of authenticity of objects and their monetary worth as

well as the educational role associated with such institutions. Ludmilla Jordanova's in her contribution to the 'The New Museology', argues that:

It is important to recognise that although labels offer a context within which the item in question can be 'read', this context is limited, selective and manipulative, since it generally invites visitors to perceive in a particular way.
(Vergo, 1989, p.23)

If as Jordanova has stated that labels offer a context which is limited and selective then Avondale's classification of the House into a "museum to his memory" should then focus on Parnell and not the nineteenth century architecture combined with a presentation of life in the house of 1850 that Coillte seem to be presenting. (Coillte introductory pamphlet, 1991) In the case of Avondale House the caption "museum to his memory", triggers a train of associated ideas, images and notions connected with Parnell. Suddenly the focus alters and Avondale is no longer a period eighteenth century house. It now becomes the home of one of the greatest political leaders in modern Irish history. The chain of association goes on to link Parnell with politics, Home Rule and the tragic love affair of Avondale's 'proud eagle' with Kitty O' Shea. The dilemma of presenting this association to Parnell within a museum poses the problem of the form of presentation required within an historic house.

This labelling of Avondale as a museum should have forced Coillte to develop an awareness to the demands made by the public and their audience as museums are currently being asked to justify taxpayers' money forcing institutions to answer to the scholar, the historian, the student and the diverse nature of their audience. According to Paul Greenhalgh museums "no longer exist simply as a receptacle guarding our heritage, or as a haven for scholars." (Vergo, 1989, p.74) They are there to educate the general public and not just for the elite few with a considered opinion. Therefore the question remains to be answered, on what level are Coillte educating the public and has this classification any effect on the methods of presentation considered when it was

categorised?

Coillte's focus according to their glossy colour guide is to create a museum dedicated to Parnell's memory, which suggests the presentation of Parnell memorabilia and artifacts coupled with guided tours attributed to Parnell, including taking in aspects of Parnell's life and career. A guided tour at Avondale currently consists of a brief description of furniture and functional aspects of the room. There is little reference to Parnell's life in the House, there are some artifacts and letters displayed but these are not interpreted in any way for the public visiting. The lack of reference to Parnell is allied with little or no interpretation of other material available for study in this eighteenth century house which includes an assortment of antique furniture, fine late Georgian architecture and the silvicultural plots of which Coillte justifiably boast. It is time that the Irish Forestry realised the distinct advantages Avondale has over other historically situated homes. These are assets that will appeal to the diverse demands of society and they equip Avondale with the necessary requirements to educate their varying audience's and present heritage to differing levels of society. Parnell's home appeals to the public on several different levels with four basic features attracting public interest. Coillte appear to be educating the public on two levels out of these four possible avenues. The first, not necessarily of prime importance, is the contents of the house, which attracts the collector as well as the foreign visitor who is appreciative of the craftsmanship of such artifacts. The presentation of furniture evocative of the period, set in a stereotypical decor entices the visitor to enter into a time-machine that so claims to reconstruct the past, by painting the picture in a visual language with no need for written text.

Secondly, the architectural attributes of this fine eighteenth century estate appeals to the architect and related construction professions, while being a source of reference to the learned scholar. This is a secondary consideration when one considers Avondale's supposed intention to present the House as an icon to Parnell. The two former issues ally Avondale to other similar presentation of country estates, and

the latter are almost exclusive to Avondale House and Forest Park.

The third level of value which Avondale process for interpretation concerns the unique silvicultural experimental plots containing a variety of exotic tree species, planted by Forbes and Henry in 1904. This important botanical site goes unnoticed more often than not. In fact, few books that mention the estate refer to the wonderful botanical setting at Avondale more than the architectural attributes, or indeed it's political associations. Therefore it has an historical role and function that can be further developed as an educational tool and a unique tourist attraction that would attract a broader range of visitors. These experimental plots provide a wealth of historical information to Coillte. Indeed, it is referred to as the cradle of Irish Forestry. Unfortunately the Irish Forestry's awareness of the historical significance of these continental gardens has only benefited elite foresters and has neglected the educational need of society.

The final level and issue concerns the politically steeped associations to Avondale, which in my opinion forms the most significant issue. The historically political links of the house are of great importance, after all Parnell's synonymous association with politics ranks highest even in the most innocent of minds. Surely this is the focus and key to the education that Coillte should be offering to its visitors. It is a unique attraction that no other estate can offer to their visitors. Parnell's political career has directly effected the nation, his uphill battle for the abolition of land rents and his determination to achieve Home Rule in Ireland are predominant achievements that earned Parnell the title of the "Uncrowned King of Ireland". The political achievements are what Parnell are best remembered for and if presented appropriately to the public they could then beneficially educational to the society. If addressed they would also assist in portraying a museum dedicated to Parnell's memory. The three former issues are of importance but the final issue is of greater significance to the education of society particularly the young generation.

History, particularly political history, is a part of Ireland's heritage that has an influence on society. It can be entrusted from one generation to the next and appeals to a diverse sector of society on a variety of levels. It also forms a necessary part of the curriculum at primary and secondary education as well as forming a specialist study at third level education. The presentation of Parnell's lifestyle with an emphasis on his political career is undoubtedly of greater importance to society but the presentation of Avondale as an eighteenth century house can also be important to the public. Consideration should be given to the focus and emphasis placed on various aspects of history. Coillte could present information in accordance to the labelling and or classification of the house. Unfortunately they appear to have sometimes neglected to consider it's museum classification.

Consequently the presentation of this fine 200 year old house with all it's levels of educational classification and artifacts is unparalleled to Coillte's primary interest, forestry. This battle of precedence is obvious on arrival at Avondale, the dilemma of focusing on Parnell and his association to the house is given little consideration compared to the forestry. Particularly when examining the variety of facilities offered to different audiences.

A significant number of groups frequent the house with school groups making up a substantial percentage of the visitors, with the remainder consisting of the over 65's groups and the scholarly segment of the public. Unfortunately all groups receive the same universal package with no consideration given to the vastly different levels of understanding between each audience. For example, school groups receive the same introduction to the House as a group from the Irish Country Women Association who's primary concern is 'who made the curtains'? Admittedly both groups utilise various elements of information that is relevant to their area of study. Although it is my belief that enthusiastic patrons should receive a tour consisting of beneficial and interesting information applicable to their own interest which will further educate them. After all one of the main functions of a museum is to;

Conserve, study, exploit by various means and basically to exhibit, for the pleasure and education of the public. (Hudson, 1975, p.1)

The interaction experience of the visitor and guide is an important factor, however, this depends on the knowledge provided by the tour guides and the ability to interpret for the various forms of visitors. This requires solid training in the historical interpretation of the House and its history and good presentation technique. These need to be acquired and as such there is no guide development at Avondale, training is acquired by hearsay and from other guided tour techniques. The tour consists of a guide around the house where the functional use of each room is described and lengthy descriptions of period furniture.

Apart from this guided tour about the House Coillte offers only one other variation to the public, that of an audio visual echoing the dulcet tones of Dearra Ni Bhriain, who is unfortunately only appreciated by the English speaking population as no provisions were made for foreign visitors that frequent Avondale. The twenty minute video attempts to provide a broad historical account of Parnell's life. As well as addressing "the tragic love story of Parnell and Catherine O' Shea". The love story takes up a considerable amount of footage and although it had an effect on the demise of Parnell's political life it was only an aspect of it. The topics of Home Rule and Land League reform are briefly discussed as there appears to be a tendency to credit the audience with knowledge of such events. This is unfortunate considering that these are events predominately associated to Parnell and the audio-visual is they only time that these issues address Parnell's political career.

The appearance of museums today have greatly altered with the aid of multi-media. Computer aided technology is now playing an important role in education and museums are no longer associated with the classroom environment. Audio visuals used as additional teaching tools can enable school groups to learn in a pleasant environment removed from the laborious classroom. The process of learning becomes a 'fun' experience while being educational at the same time,

as childrens' perception of a dreary museum alters.

Museums, after all present history to society and it is fundamental that our heritage is presented in an interesting and enlightening manner. This is true particularly since political history tends to have a cumbersome effect on students, since their inquisitive minds are engaged on what is currently new and in vogue. For this reason alone it is critical for Coillte and other owners of period houses to adopt a more interactive method of learning, attracting a greater number of people to view our heritage. This ultimately entices the younger generation to learn, both of the lifestyle of their ancestors as well as , in the case of Avondale - demonstrating the significant importance of Parnell's house to society.

Multi-media and interactive devices can aid in the inaccurate assumptions made by the public due to the immensely different levels of understanding of which the public enter our museums. They provide a number of options and levels for customers to choose, learning from visual animated computer programmes as well as basic and advanced literary packages while also proving effective educational information for the visitor. They also help and assist in omitting the spectators ability to read, on average 180 words on billboard panels fixed to the walls in microscopic text. Unfortunately most institutions are short of funding that results in an inadequate supply of technology in the case of touch screen interactive devices aimed at interacting on a one to one basis therefore leading to a significant number of the public having no access to the facility due to the time factor. This could lead to inaccurate assumptions due to inaccessibility of the technology even though supplied.

There is one other disadvantage to interactive technology as well as information provided on billboards and other visually aided forms of communication and it concerns the presentation of 'inaccurate information'. As already established that some of the published references on information on Avondale is suspect. The philosophy of

education is essentially to instruct teach or train in a broad variety of subjects or related interests to society. Therefore society expects to see correct information from institutions that offer educational programmes as the presentation of inaccurate material can defect the original intention of educating. Therefore the presentation of interactive devices as well as insufficient training for tour guides can be just as misleading to the public.

Avondale, a museum by their own admission is responsible for the presentation of objects, artifacts, literature and architectural merits to the general public in an accurate manner. Out of four possible avenues to investigate Coillte have neglected to focus on the most important aspect of Avondale's museum classification, that of Parnell and his political career. As educators to the public, they have failed to comply with the main function of a museum, which is to educate and conserve. Consequently, rendering Parnell's life and career as an non-essential factor and thus depicting Avondale as an 'ordinary' eighteenth century house.

Chapter 4

Avondale: As an interpretive centre

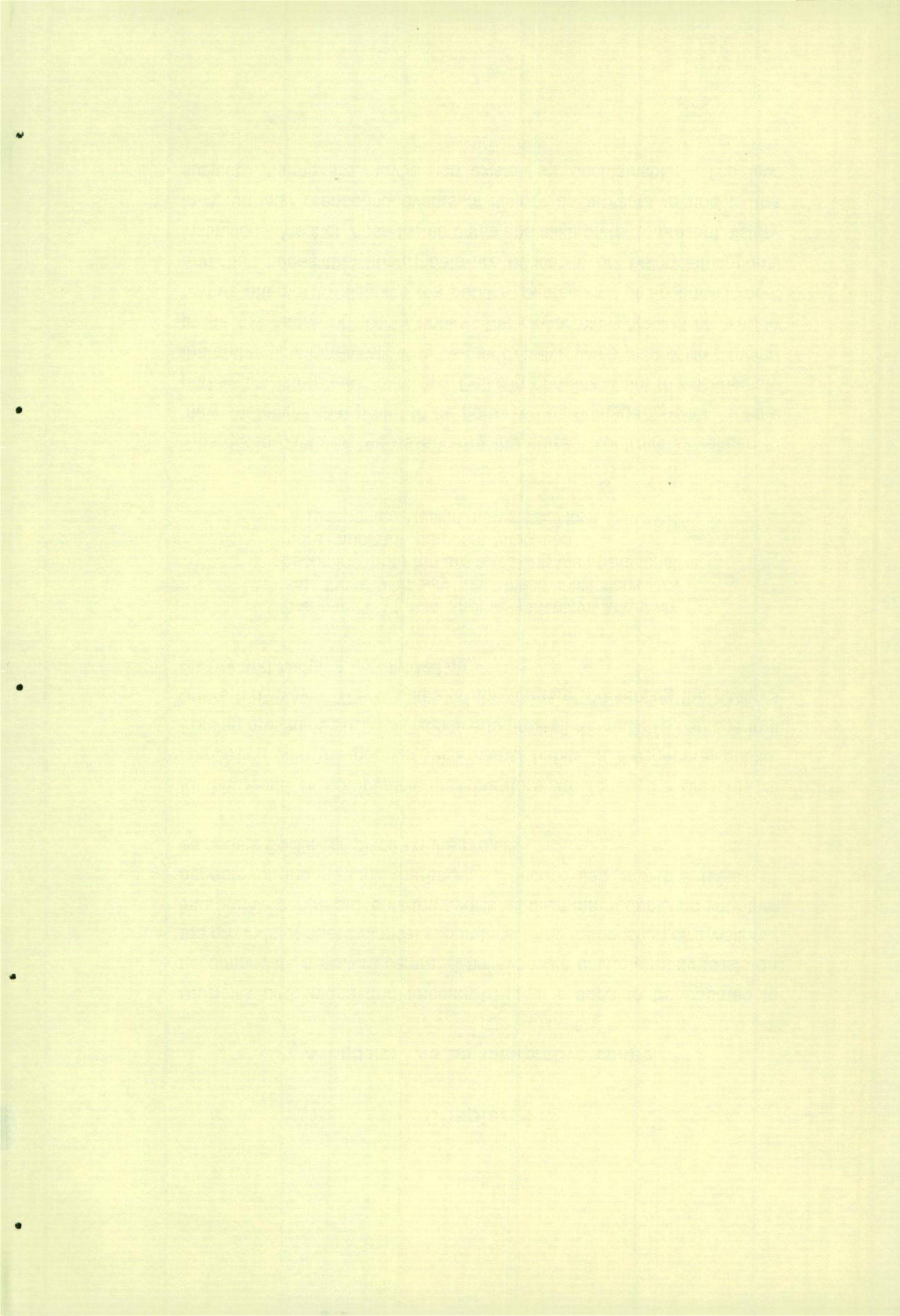
Parnell's birth place and ancestral home is soon to be updated to accommodate a visitors centre. The Avondale estate already exists on the grounds of dual historical importance. The introduction of a visitors / interpretive centre presents the additional dilemma of depicting yet other aspects of the nation's heritage. Concern lies with the levels of emphasis Coillte will place on the project.

In this world of competitiveness curators are faced the dilemma of competing with the popular recreational habits of the general public. Forcing museums such as Avondale to present the nation's heritage in a "more fun" way. The debates on the forms of presenting the nation's history and heritage are divided as,

One person's fun is another's frivolity. And there are those who say that these institutions by becoming more fun are forsaking their traditional, more important purpose -education.

(Carpenter, Design magazine, Nov - Dec.1992)

This quote captures the essence of the current controversy related to 'new' museums that prefer to be portrayed as heritage / visitor / theme parks cum interpretive centres. Enticing phrases claim to encapsulate the authentic moment allowing visitors to relive times past while bringing to life the pages of history books. The clever classification of pseudo names attempt to disguise the publics' perception of an environment and thus hopes that such labels are evocative of being educational institutions. Most of these theme parks and alike prefer to present history in a fun way reenacting events of history as artifacts related to the subject - theme are maybe non existent or unobtainable. The few



objects that are presented are no longer left to speak for themselves, as the interactive computers replace the traditional curator. The old methods of displaying artifacts in display cases are associated with 'traditional' museum education which has now become a laborious method of educating society.

Current labelling associated with museums have become tainted words in our vocabulary due to the blatant destruction they cause to history and a nation's heritage in order to capacitate visitors centres cum interpretative centres. The introduction of purpose built centres on remote unspoiled areas of the country interfere with the landscape simply to present an alternative method of illustrating our heritage. This has caused dismay to a section of society excluding the tourism sector.

Consequently, it is with this prior knowledge of the current situation that the Irish Forestry plan to present our heritage in a supposedly enticing manner. By the year 2000, Coillte plan to create an environment epitomising the Land League movement on a site only two hundred yards from Avondale House. The proposed location for the development will be a near by cow shed, soon to be adapted to meet various requirements as stipulated according to the aspirations of Mr. Paul Byrne. The project has been subject to much discussion amongst the Irish Forestry, with Mr. Byrne believing "neglecting it would be destruction and putting cows in it would also be impractical". He thus believed "by taking natural and national history and creating it into something is in fact developing history". (Byrne, interview, Dec.1994) According to his beliefs,

Everybody wanted something done with the 'big shed' but the cost of doing it would be phenomenal, so it was obvious to put together an idea, to wait for that idea that would fit in with a Bord Failte requirements and grant scheme.

(Byrne,interview ,Dec.1994)

Bord Failte, the body responsible for promoting Ireland's heritage,

incorporating the cow shed to accommodate the extra seventy thousand visitors to Avondale who only visit the wood and parklands free of charge.

Obviously at this early stage one can only assess the Forestrys' proposed aims and objectives until such time that the project is completed. Therefore an analysis of their intentions provides a basis for investigation. The new development will soon be known as a Land League museum and not a 'visitors centre' as initially expressed by Mr. Byrne. The use of museum phraseology obviously meant to entice the visitors conveying a sense of educational worth to the development opposed to the 'fun' element evocative of heritage / visitor / theme parks. Classification causes one concern particularly since Coillte openly admitted to the utilisation of The Ulster American Folk Park in Omagh, Co. Tyrone as a role model.

Omagh's Folk Park is essentially a 'theme park' and is far from worthy of museum classification. Set in a rich agricultural landscape, Omagh's purpose built environment which has no historical links to the location, or indeed association with the site compared to Avondale's Forest Park and House which is already steeped in both a political and an historical landscape. Omagh's Folk Park contains two primary exhibitions an indoor and outdoor display, with numerous subsidiary displays illustrating the events of emigrant life on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. The indoor exhibition illustrates the story of emigration through a series of four themes. Information is presented by way to wall panels consisting of lengthy panels of text juxtaposed with etchings that become cumbersome to the audience. Interactive devices are in short supply but when utilised comprise of textual historical records of Irish emigrants who set sail to America. The computer package contains no visual aids thus limiting access to the non-speaking English visitor. A universal form of visual aids is a factor Coillte should investigate when developing their Land League museum.

Coillte's project will contain related memorabilia and artifacts associated

with Land League movement while a considerable emphasis has also been placed on memorabilia linked to the Irish forestry industry. The old shed is approximately the same size as Omagh's purpose built indoor exhibition centre. The cow shed will be subdivided into five specific categories and will most probably be subject to exterior alterations which is essentially destruction to accomodate this concept. This style is reminiscent of the folk park at Omagh that Mr. Byrne eagerly wishes to portray at Avondale.

The first section will be related to a history of land in Ireland, pre-famine which is "inclusive of a three dimensional map of Ireland based on stone structures". (Byrne, interview, Dec. 1994) Subsequent categories will be critical points to Parnell. The Land League story will be illustrated through accounts of evictions of tenants from the land whilst portraying the landlord's authoritative role in times of aggravated land owning schemes. Home Rule along with the dual achievements of the Irish Land League code will form the main feature of the exhibition. The final category will concern current land policy in Ireland spanning from the days of the Land League leading up to present day agricultural and silvicultural policy.

Coillte not only wish to portray a replica of Ulsters' indoor exhibition, they also intend to produce an outdoor exhibition characteristic of Ireland during the time of famine, which reconstructs life before and after setting sail to America. They wish to capture elements of evocative scenes at Omagh's Folk Park. Mr. Byrne is also "looking at the potential of creating some cottages on the grounds", where "aged and beshawled peasants" in period costume will roam about reenacting bygone tasks of life during the Land League" and "men will tend to their precious plots illustrating the story of tenancy in Ireland". (Byrne, interview, Dec. 1994) Visitors will be encouraged to ask questions and thus discover how their ancestors lived.

The story of Land League evictions and life in shanty huts will soon leap from the pages of history books as interpreted by Coilltes' company

secretary. This aspect of history holds a vivid reminder to the nation of the brutal evictions of tenant farmers from their land. Evoking a sense of vengeance and urgency previously suppressed in the minds of Irish ancestors. It marks a bitter aggression and the strong patriotic determination of the Irish nation, towards the balance of power of the British parliament in the years previous to the Irish free state.

The Irish Forestry's project represents a powerful nationalistic sense of duty to present the history of the Land League as envisaged through the eyes of Mr. Paul Byrne. His feelings and enthusiasm present a strong desire to express a national identity. Although in doing so a part of history will be destroyed beyond retrieve in order to make history. This creation of contemporary history is far from reminiscent of the original historical function of the building - the cow shed.

An impractical use according to Mr. Byrne, as he felt people would not pay in to see cows in a shed. Although this may be unfeasible it is in fact a realistic interpretation of the buildings original use typical of nineteenth century life on a country estate, such as Avondale. This realistic presentation should be considered before the addition of a Land League museum.

Coilltes' intentions to present history in the form of a Land League museum in my opinion is a means of turning their organisation into a profit making establishment. Monetary worth is their primary incentive as the Land League is a reiteration of political, historical, social, and nationalistic concepts already present at in Avondale House. Their project will involve the destruction of an important historical site which is of prime educational significance to society, after all the development is essentially only presenting another side to Parnell's career. Once again Coillte have neglected to consider the dilemma and significance to the location and its relationship to its suggested end use. The presentation of artifacts associative of the Land League museum could quite easily have been presented within the boundaries of Avondale House. Avondale estate is independently historically important and has the

advantage of having a symbolic relationship with the House and its contents. The Land League 'museum' will exhibit artifacts divorced from their original context of meaning. The amalgamation of the Land League project coupled with the history of forestry in Ireland will consequently label Avondale estate as a heritage park therefore forsaking its educational importance and transforming the estate into a fun resort. Coillte should focus its attention on the dilemma of presenting Parnell, Avondale House and its synonymous association with Irish Forestry rather than concentrating on any one aspect that can be achieved within the boundaries of a presentation of Parnell's political career.

Conclusion

Avondale House has served as an excellent example of how our heritage has been presented. The property encompasses the three primary aspects of our heritage, that are viewed as a loss the Country cannot afford. The House, the garden and a collection of memorabilia which in this case is an intangible collection of folklore amalgamated over the centuries by our ancestors. It also offered an insight into an exclusive aspect of our heritage, the life of a prominent figure in Irish history previously only read about in history books. An evaluation of how this history and the methods of presenting heritage was the main focus of this thesis.

Avondale offered numerous avenues of educational classification open to interpretation, unfortunately the selective process of determining which is of greater historical significance was left to the Godfathers of institutions whose primary objective was monetary gain and not the presentation of history. The pitfall essentially stemmed from the fact that Avondale was and still is managed by a company whose primary interest is forestry. Consequently the development of forestry is and will continue to rank highest over Avondale's architectural merits and political associations.

Lack of consideration to identify with the dilemmas incurred at Avondale has in my opinion lead to failure to address the label of a museum and the problems inherent in it's classification. The caption "to his memory" also failed to address the celebrated Statesman. Parnell is a prominent and intangible aspect of history and an exclusive element of our heritage that could have been further developed. Giving the location a sense of educational worth and making it of greater importance than a visit to an 'ordinary' country estate.

Focusing on Parnell's lifestyle and career would also assist in

developing a National identity. Society could identify with Parnell's birth place and home in relation to his political career. This would also assist in placing Parnell in context, making him a realistic 'figure' to identify with and thus instilling a sense of nationalistic nostalgia to Avondale.

Their intention to present a Land League museum is a destruction of history and therefore heritage. They are creating contemporary heritage on a location of no historical association to the proposed development. The Land League aspect of history could quite easily have been achieved within the boundaries of the House without the destruction of an aspect of the courtyard at Avondale. If addressed within the context of the House then the development of the cottages on the lands surrounding could easily have depicted the life of an aristocratic landowner, in comparison to the tenants of his lands. Thus portraying a realistic interpretation of history on the grounds of historical association to the location, without destroying history.

Lack of training and knowledge in the presentation of other aspects of heritage besides forestry has lead to the destruction of history which will consequently be lost for future generations.

In conclusion, if nothing else a lesson has been learned, that once heritage has been tampered with then it is lost forever. It is time, as Desmond Guinness said, "the State should assume responsibility for the maintenance of our heritage", so it is preserved accurately and presented properly without ulterior motives or monetary gain. (Mc Donald, Irish Times, 18 Dec. 1986). The nation has the right to see their heritage without the encrustation of contemporary alterations and refinements made by institutions who subsequently charge the public to see their rightful heritage.

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Fig. 1 Bossi Mantelpiece in the drawing room at Avondale.





Fig. 2 : Detail of Bossi Mantelpiece



Fig. 3: Cement surround around the fireplace in main hall, Avondale



Fig. 4: The annex at Avondale, 50 yards from the facade of the House



Fig. 5: Cradle in the nursery at Avondale.



Fig. 6: Medicine chest in the nursery at Avondale



fig. 7: Day bed in the nursery at Avondale.

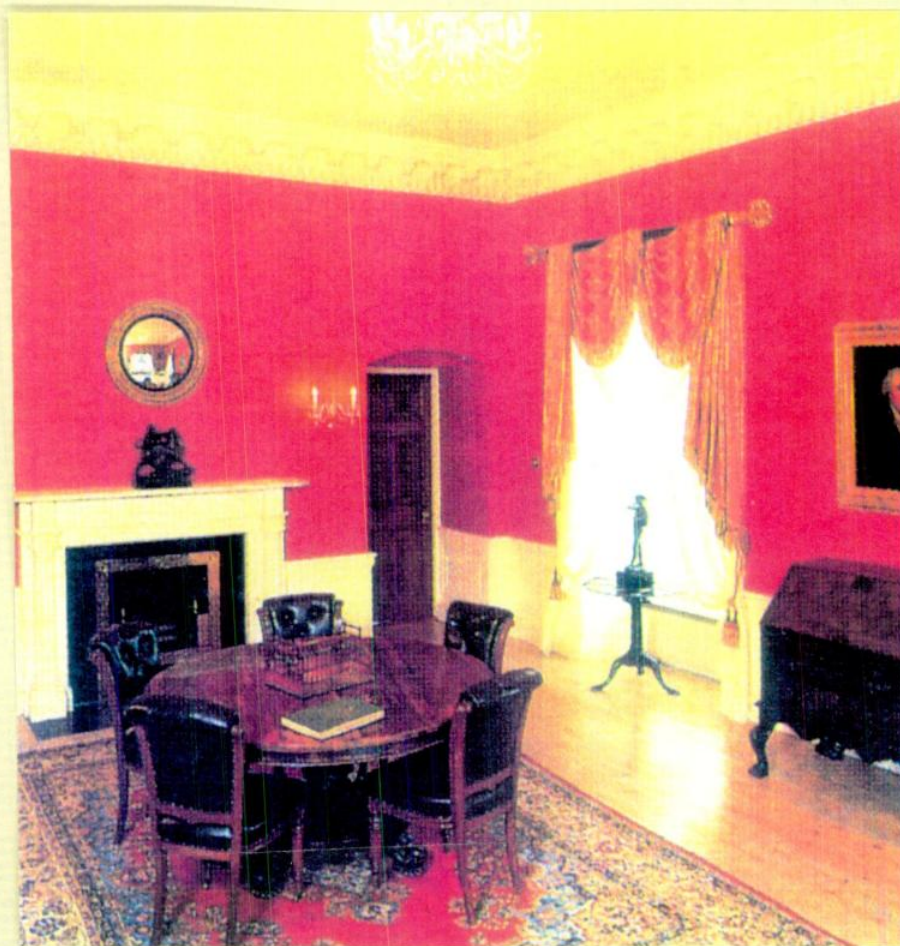


Fig. 8: Library at Avondale after renovation in 1991



Fig. 9: Ann La Touche sketch of the morning room at Marlay House

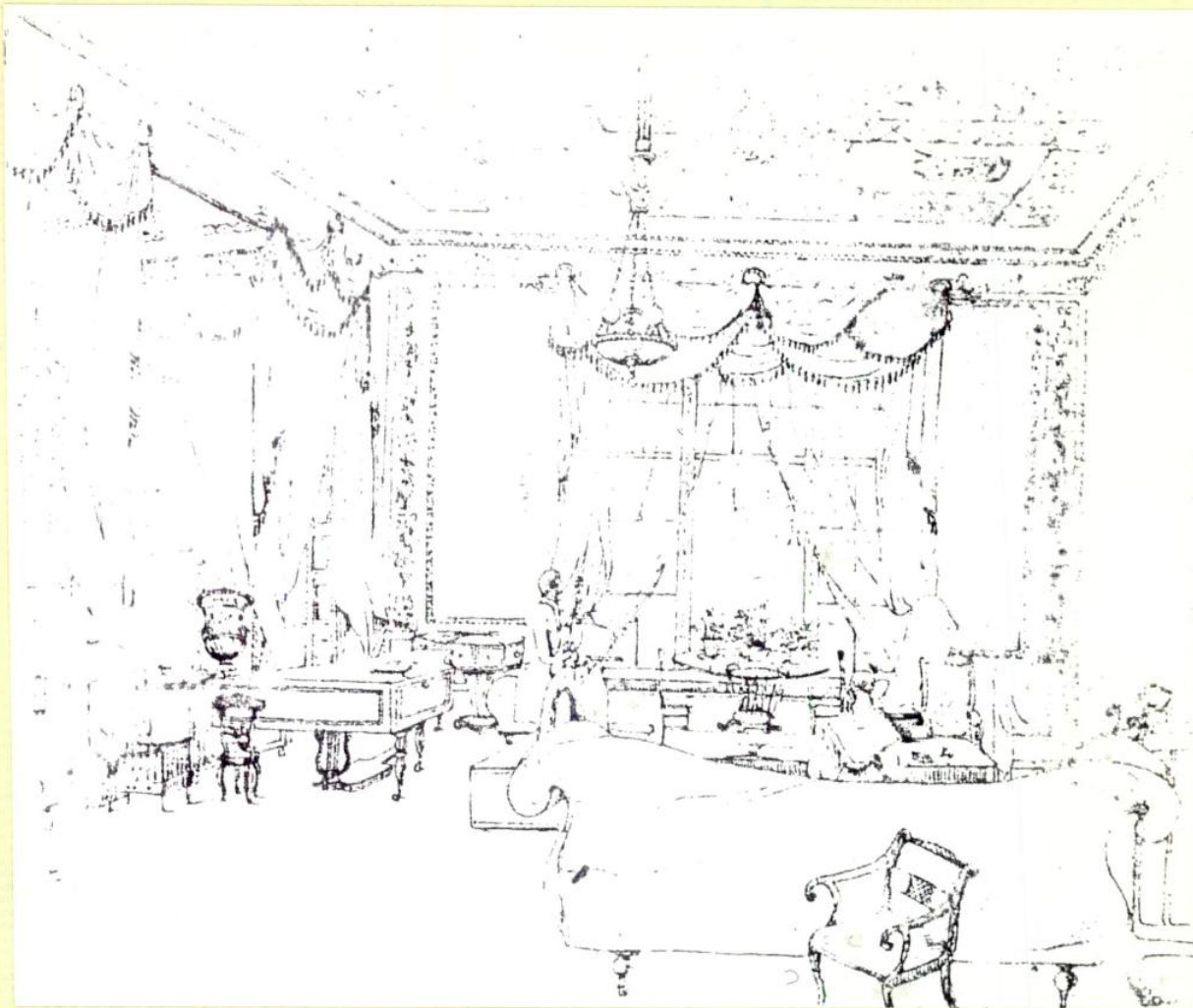


Fig. 10: Ann La Touche sketch of drawing room at Bellevue, Co. Wicklow



Fig. 11: Ann La Touche sketch of book room at Marlay House

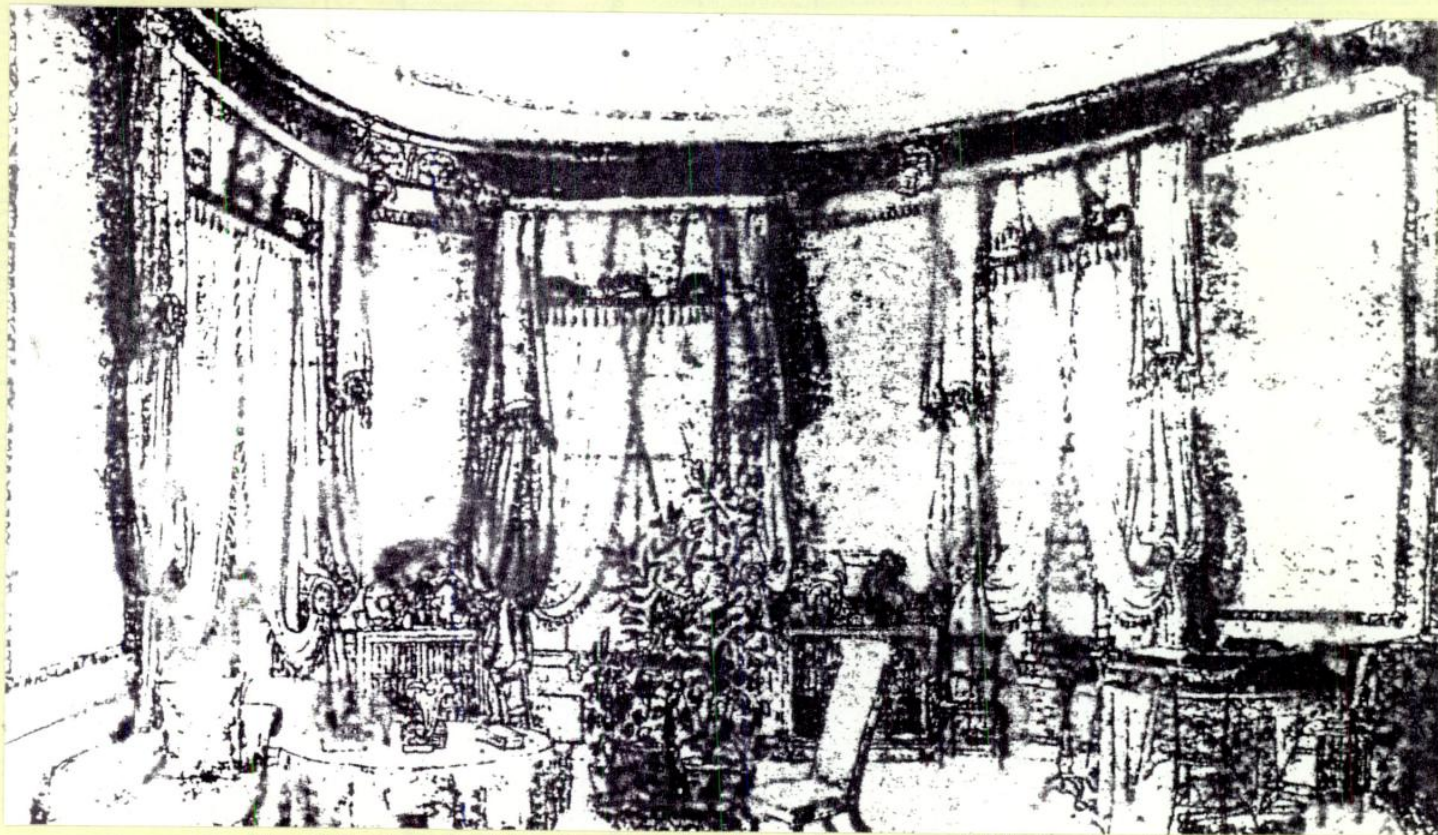


Fig. 12: Ann La Touche sketch of drawing room at Marlay Co. Wicklow

Fig. 13: Ann La Touche sketch of Bow room at Marlay Co. Wicklow

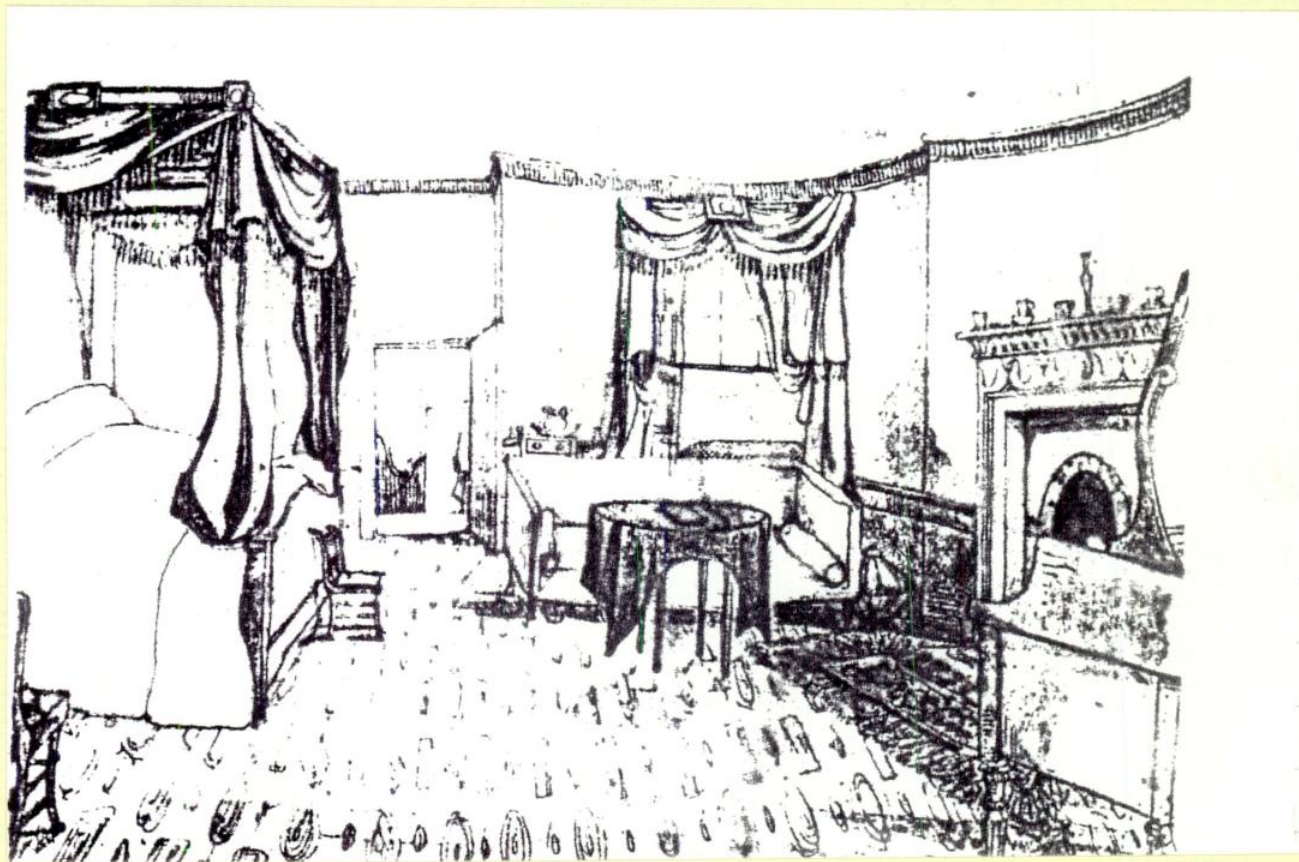




Fig. 14: Drapery on the bed in the master bedroom at Avondale

Fig. 15: Original hall door illustration



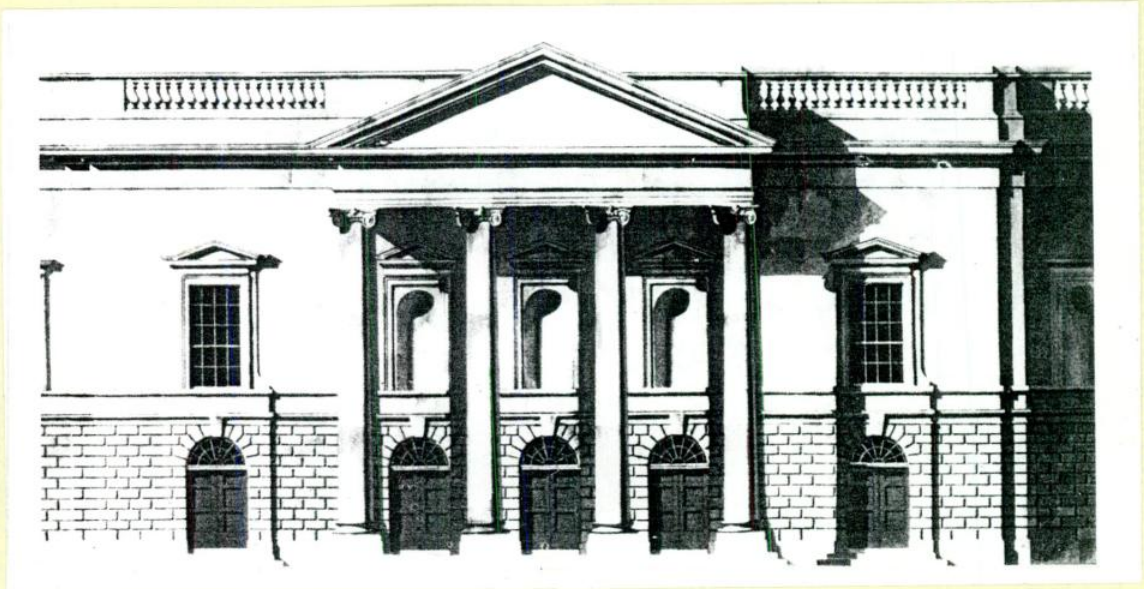
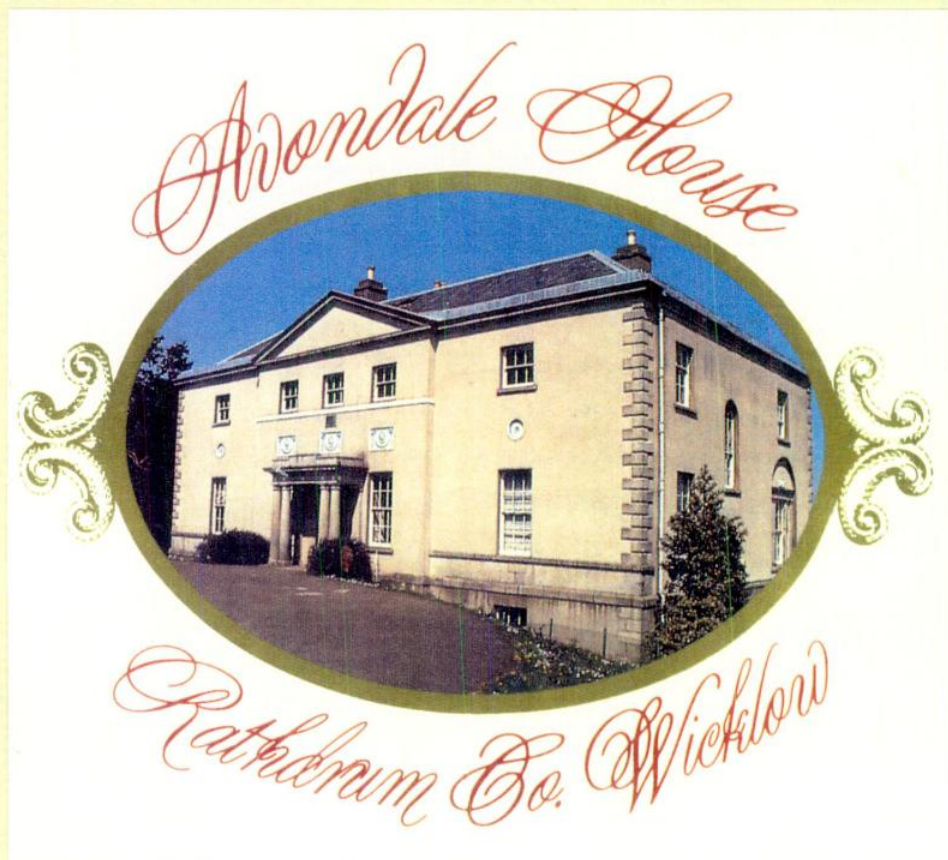


Fig. 16: Samuel Hayes design design for Foster Place , Dublin.

Fig. 17: Exterior of Avondale House.



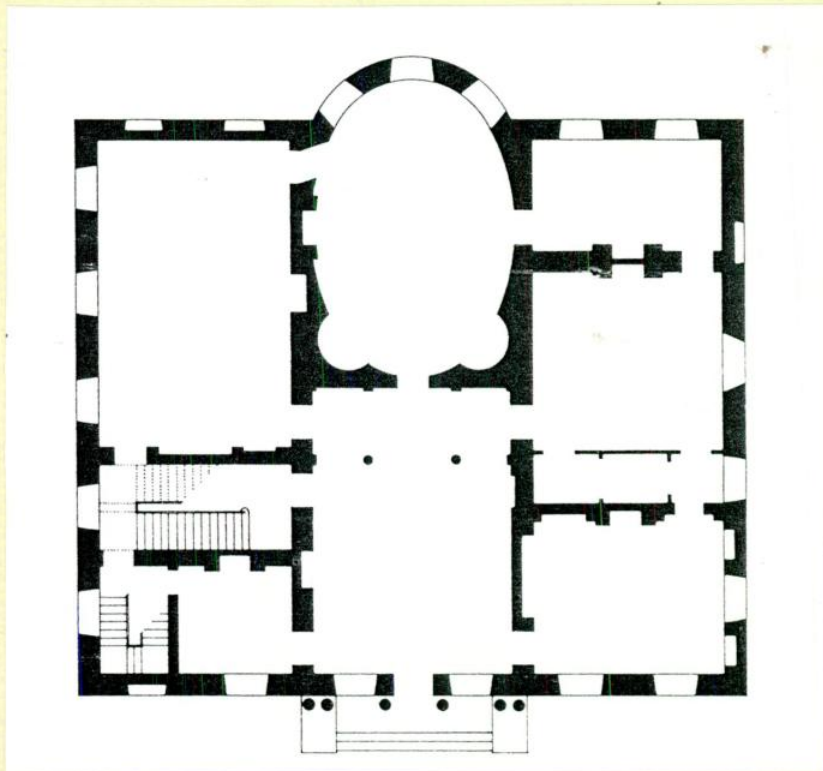
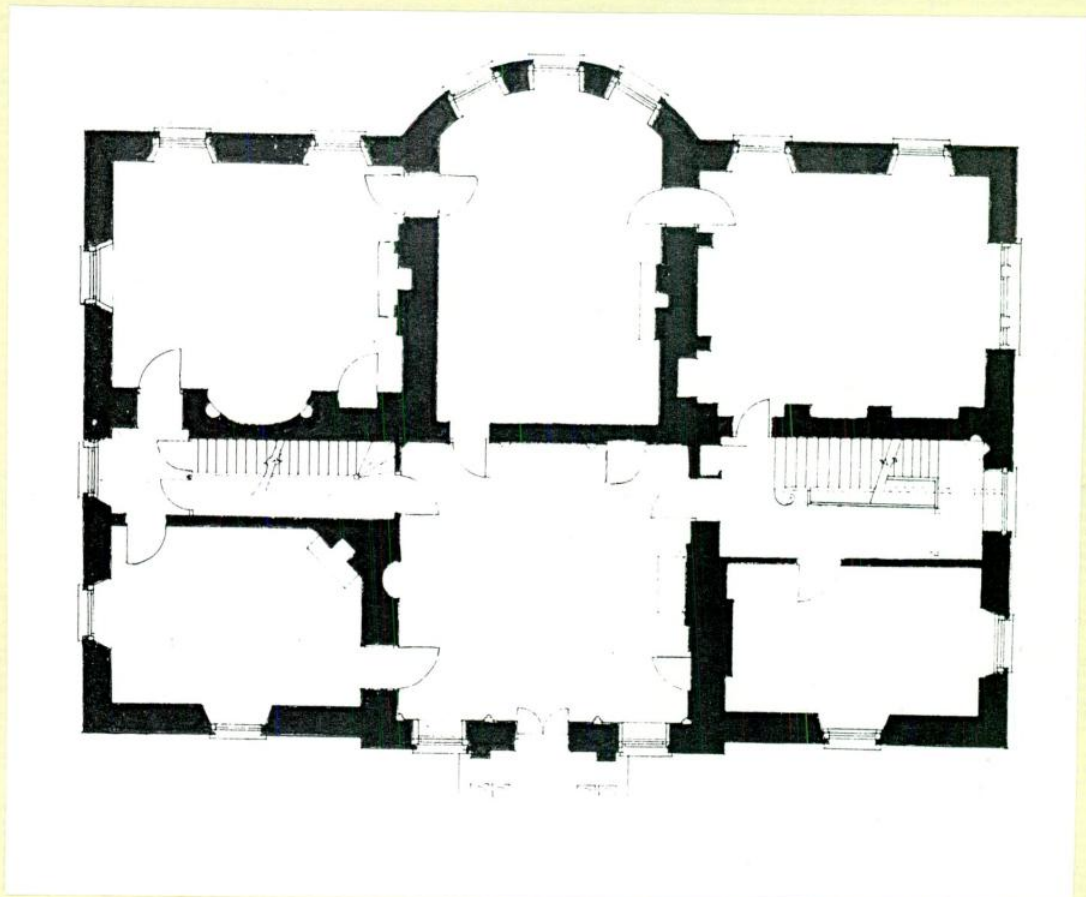


Fig. 18 Ground plan Mount Kennedy House.

Fig. 19: Ground plan of Avondale House.



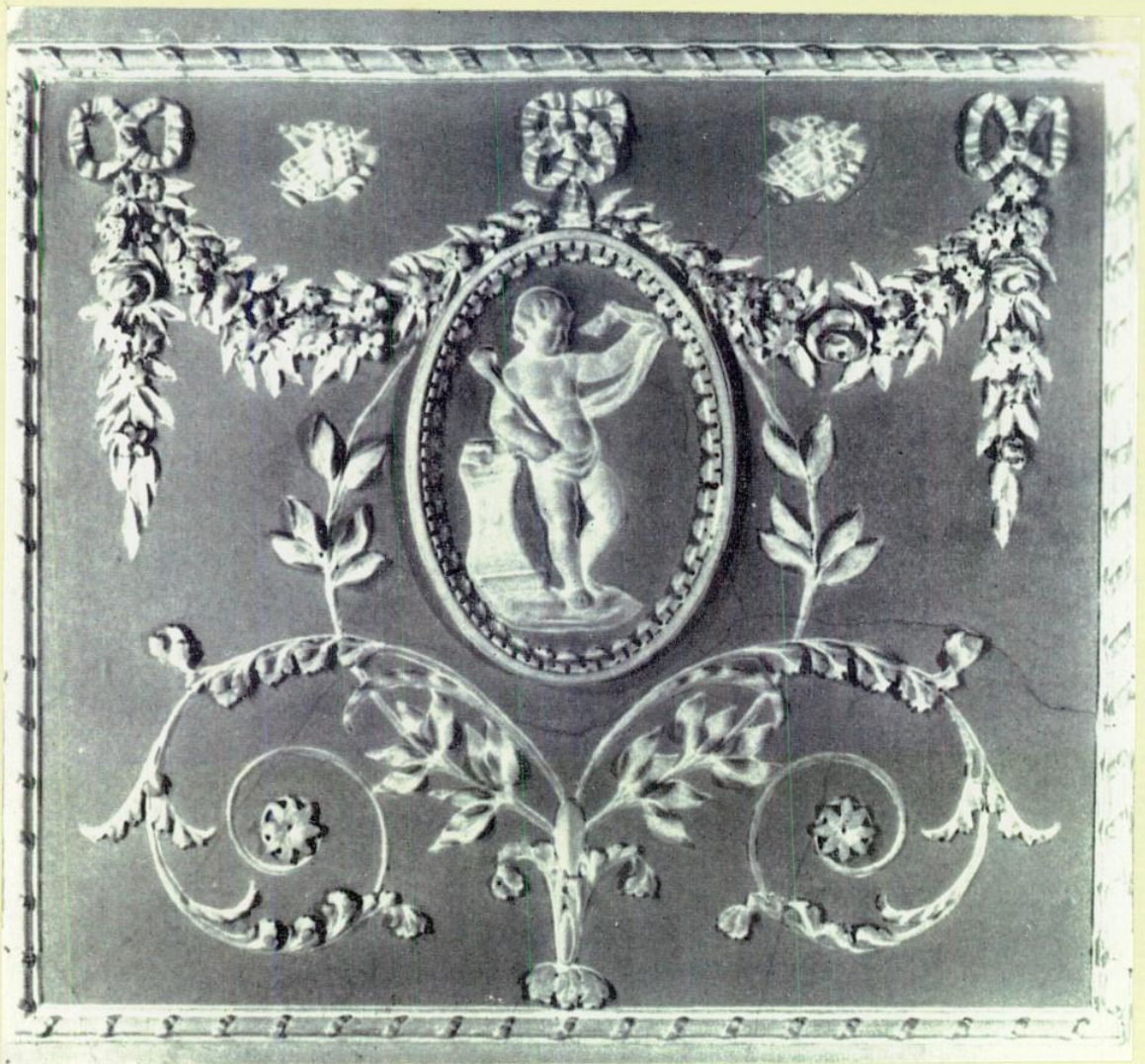


Fig. 20: Decorative plaster work at Belvedere College, Dublin, similar to Avondale's.

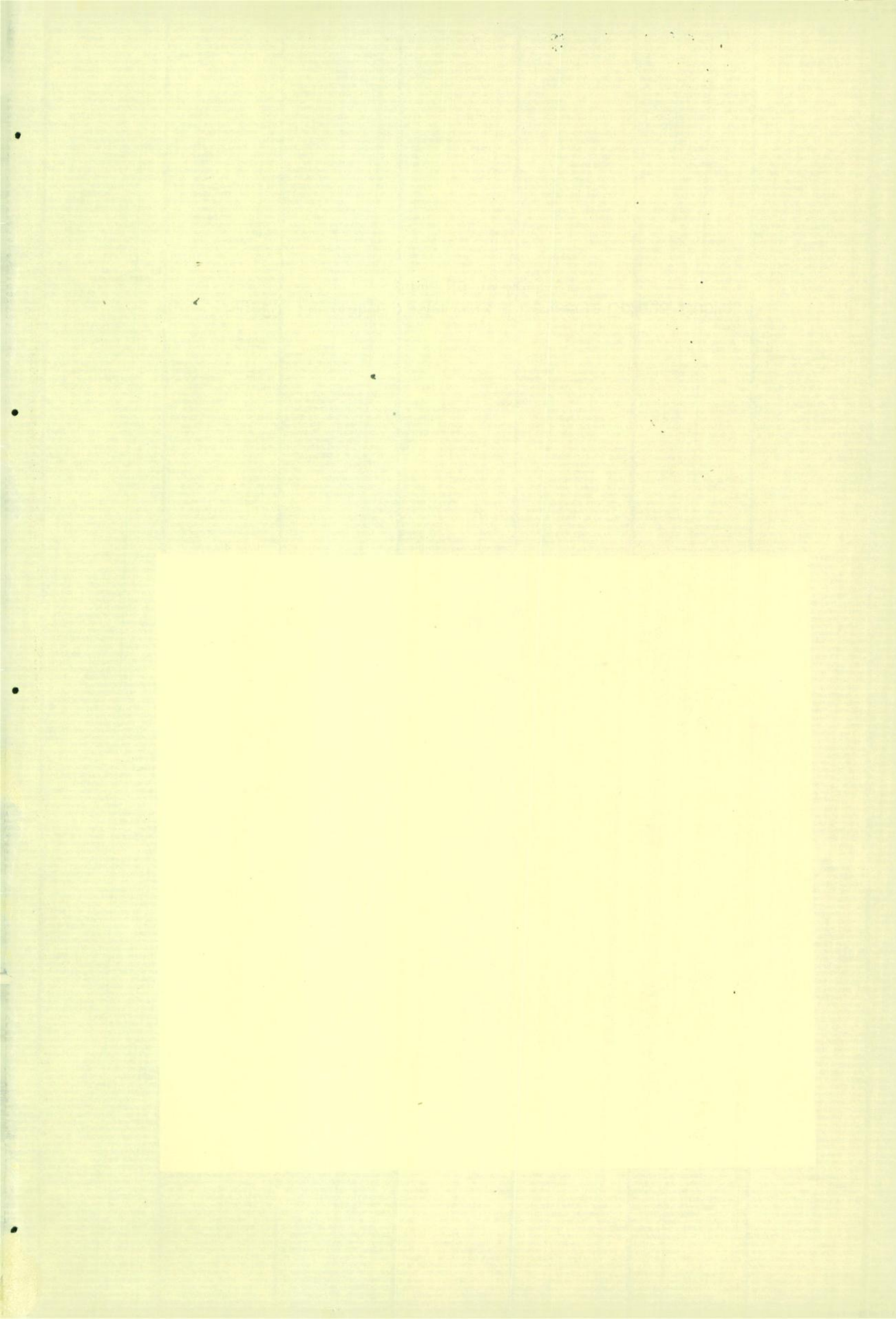




Fig 21

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Fig. 23: Dining room ceiling at Avondale.



Fig. 24: Dining room ceiling at Avondale.



Fig. 25: No. 17 St Stephen's Green. Stair case ceiling by Michael Stapleton.

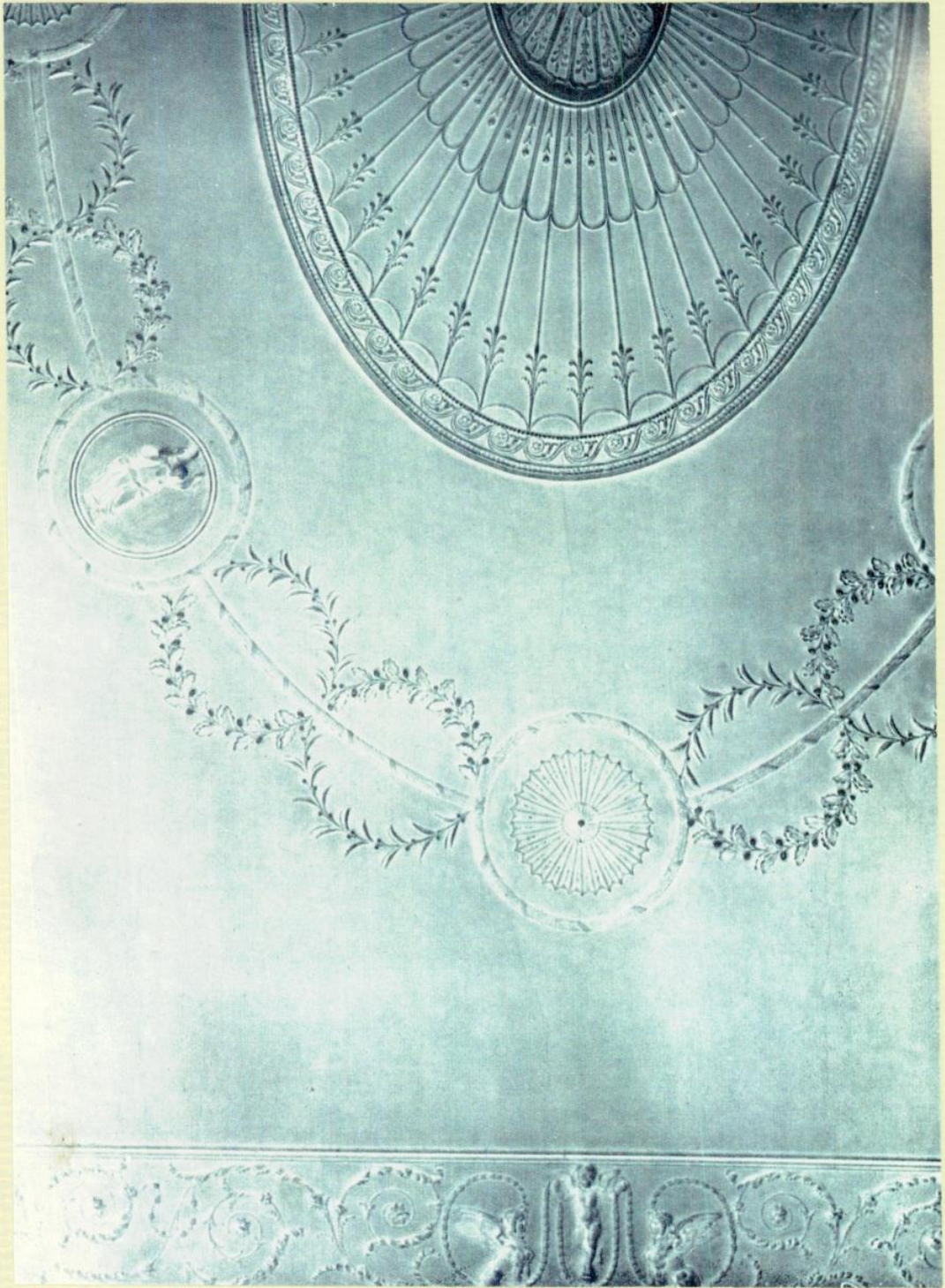


Fig. 26: No. 17 St. Stephen's Green back drawing room ceiling by Michael Stapleton.

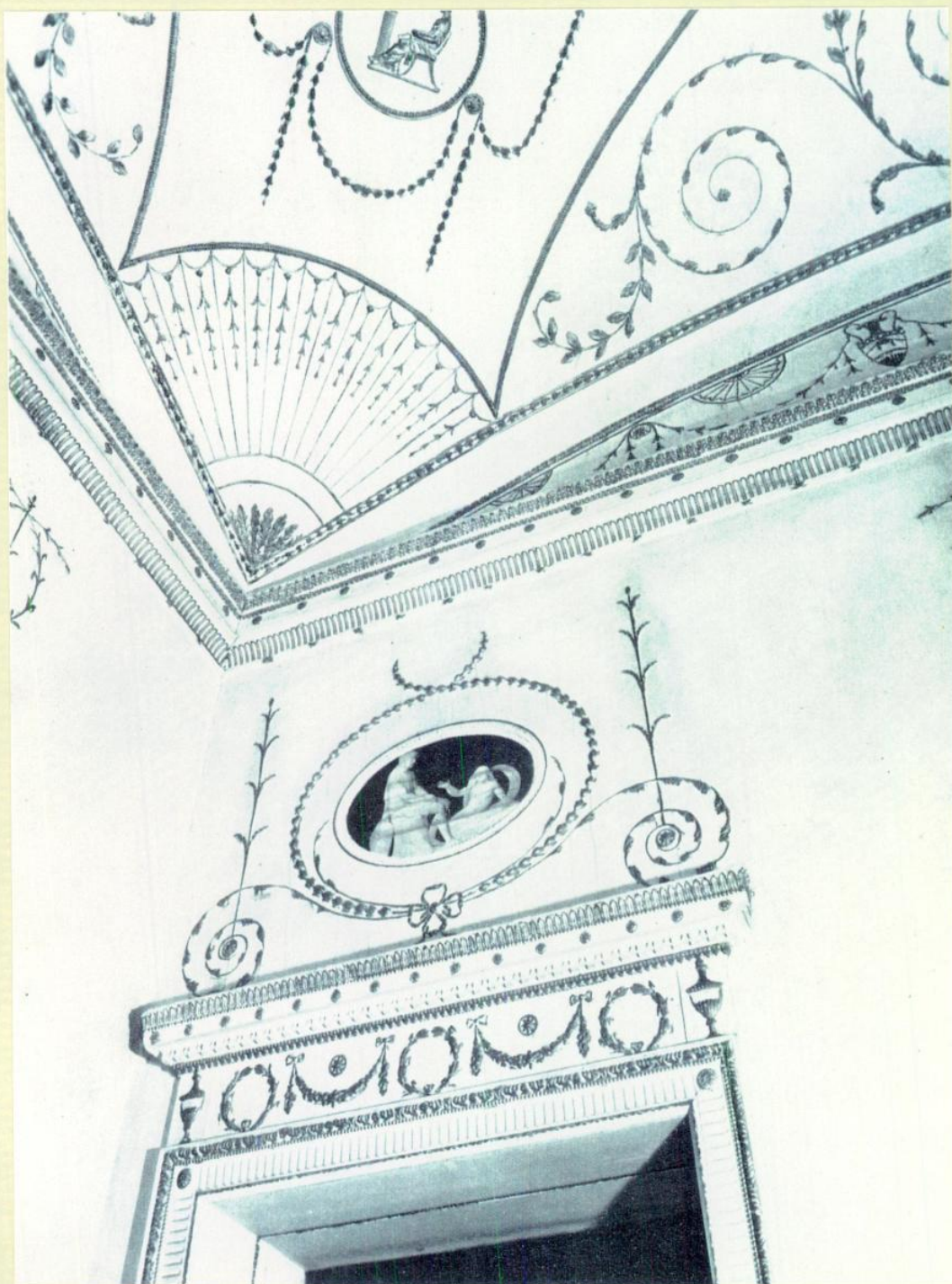


Fig. 27: Lucan House drawing room ceiling by Michael Stapleton



Fig. 28: Niche at the top of the stairwell and circular medallion below at Mount Kennedy House.

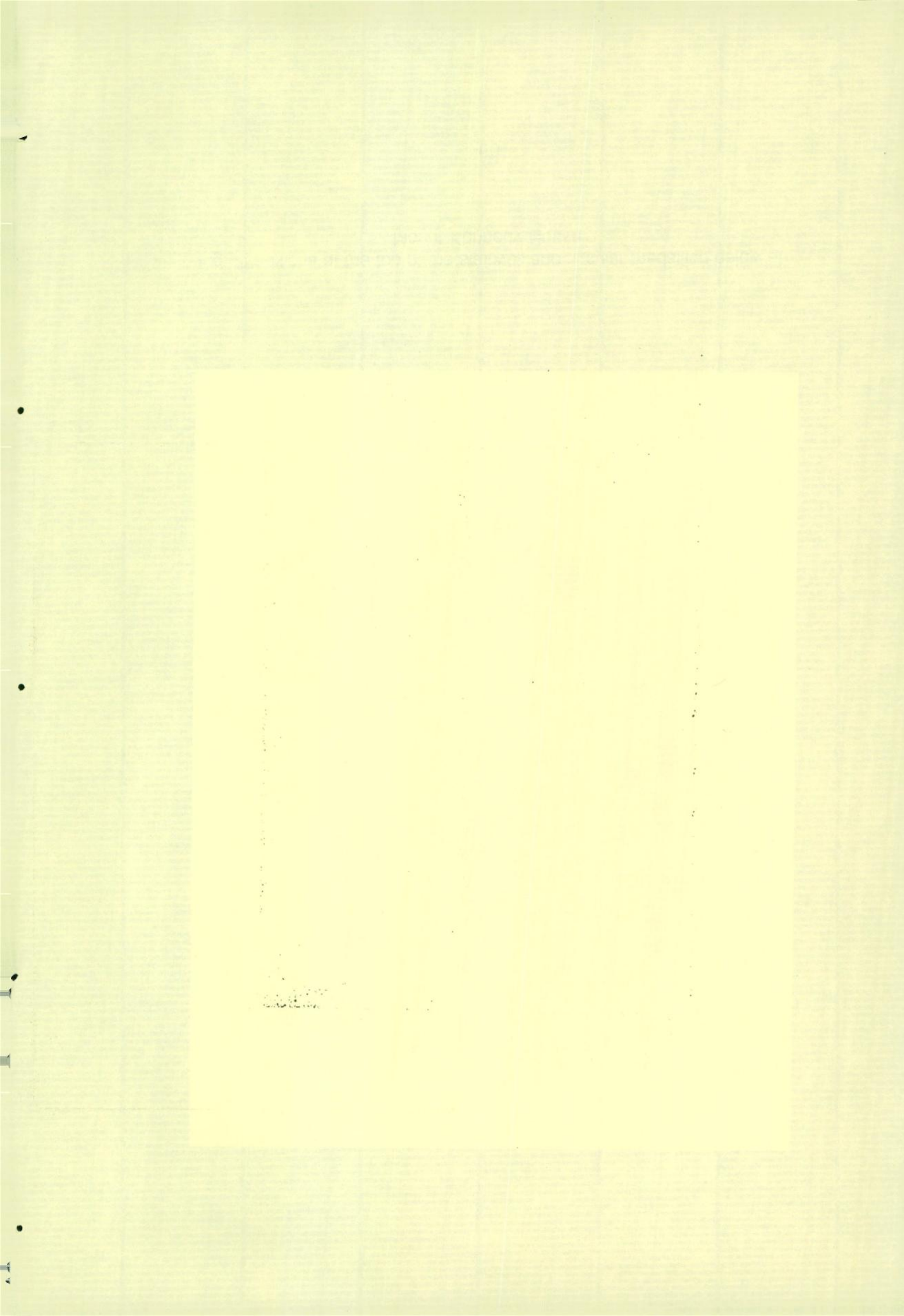
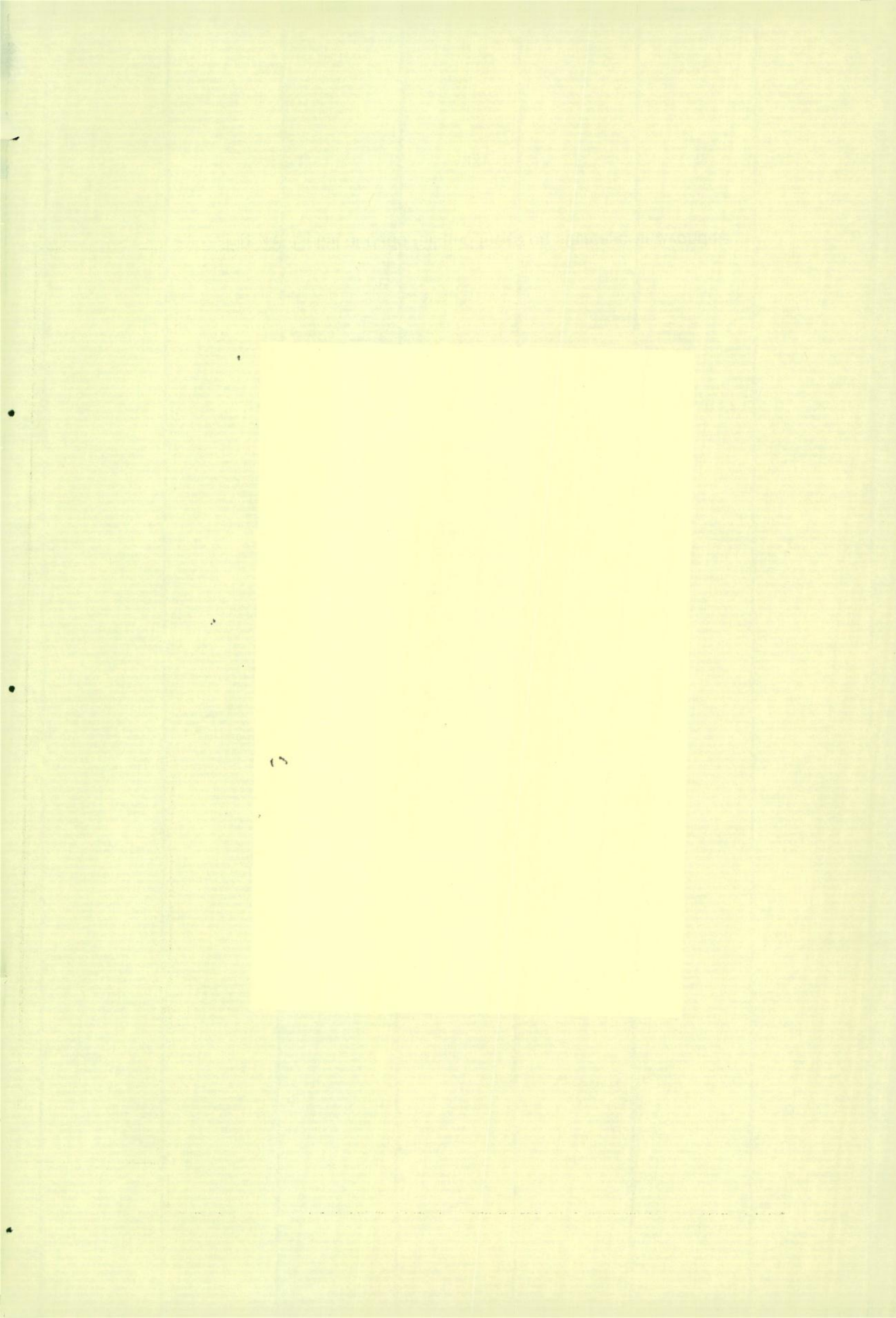




Fig. 29: Detail of dado rail and frieze on staircase at Avondale.



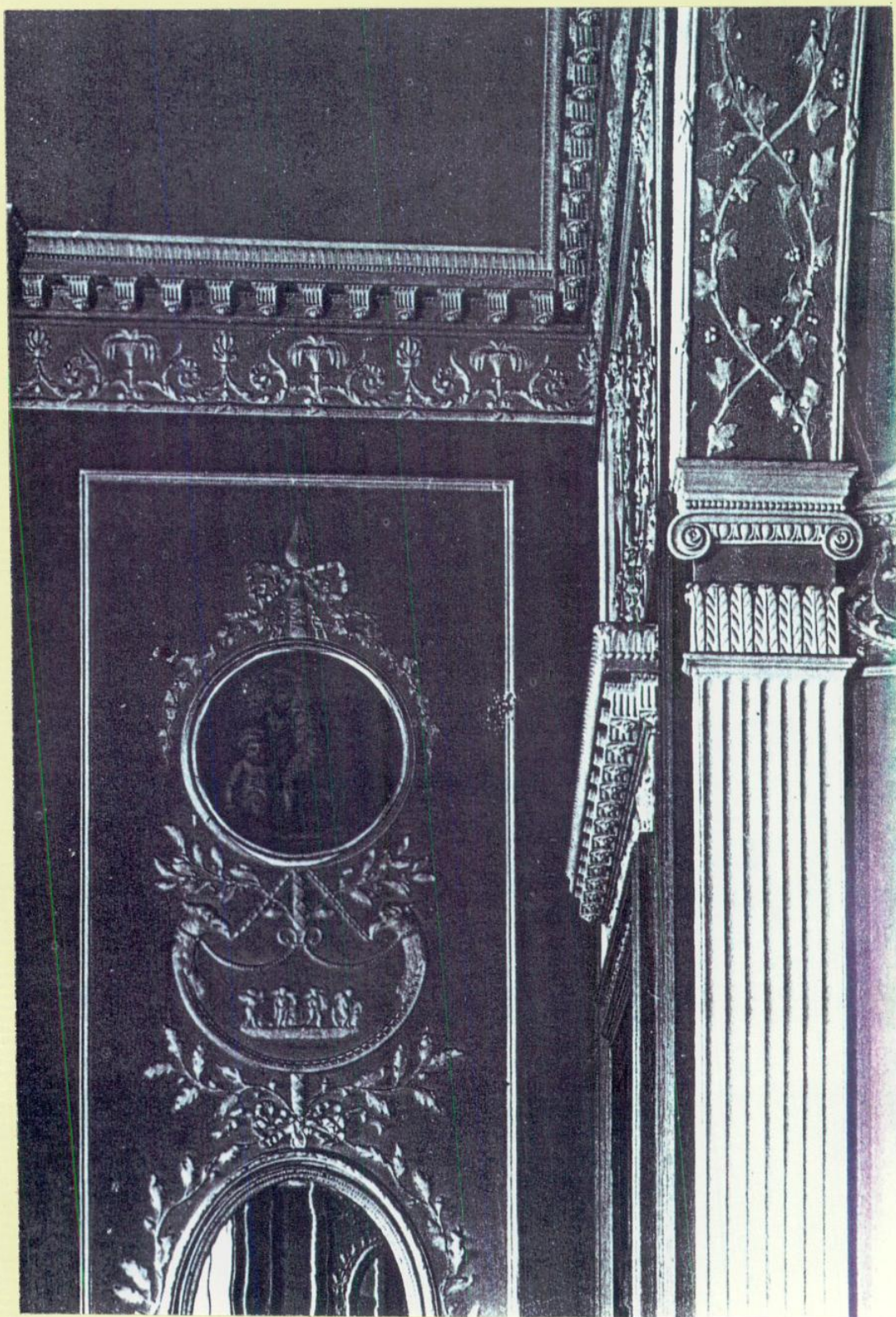


Fig. 30: Detail of architrave and dentil cornice in the dining room at Avondale.

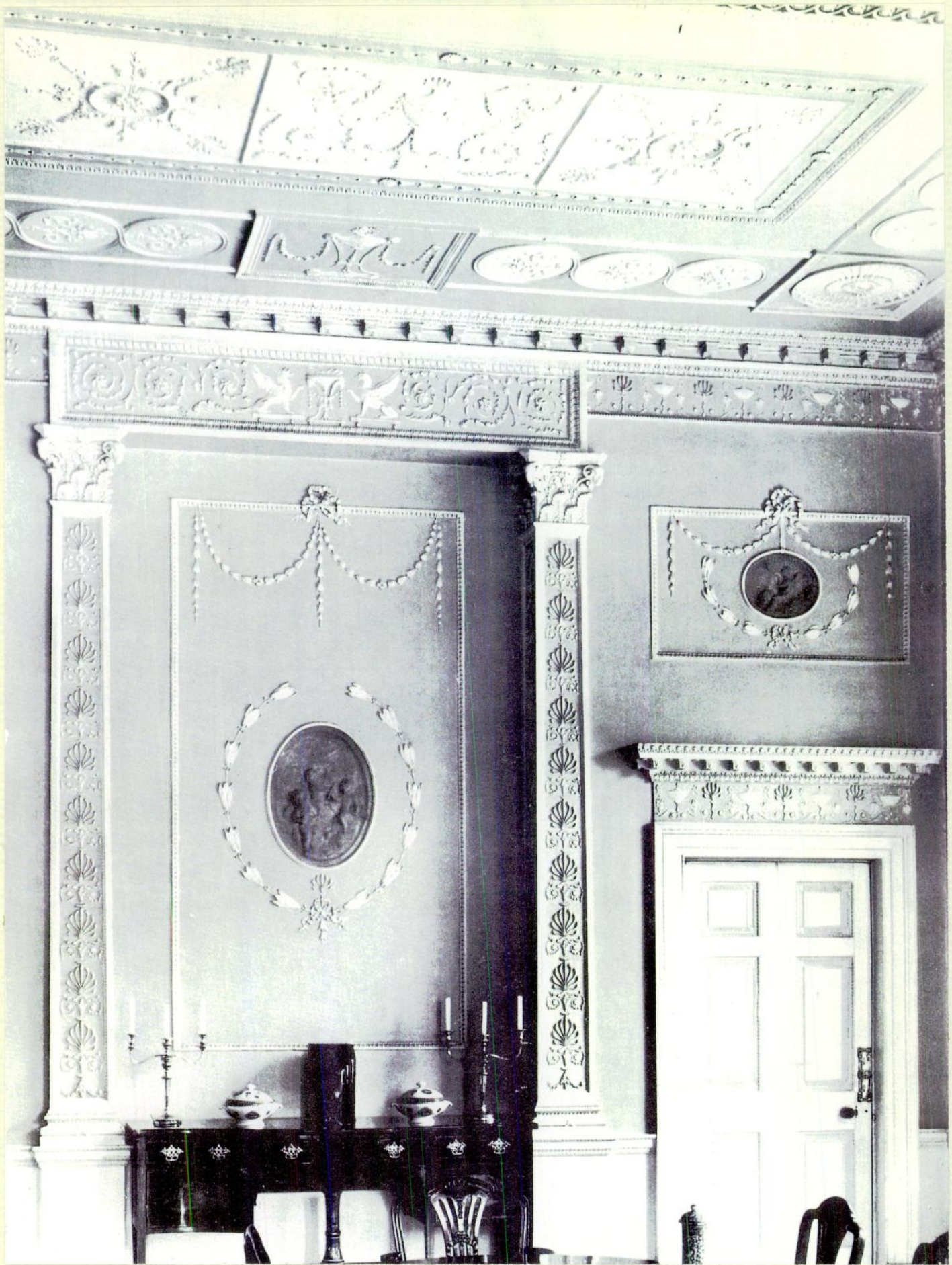


Fig. 31: Dining room with scallop shell stucco work at Mount Kennedy .

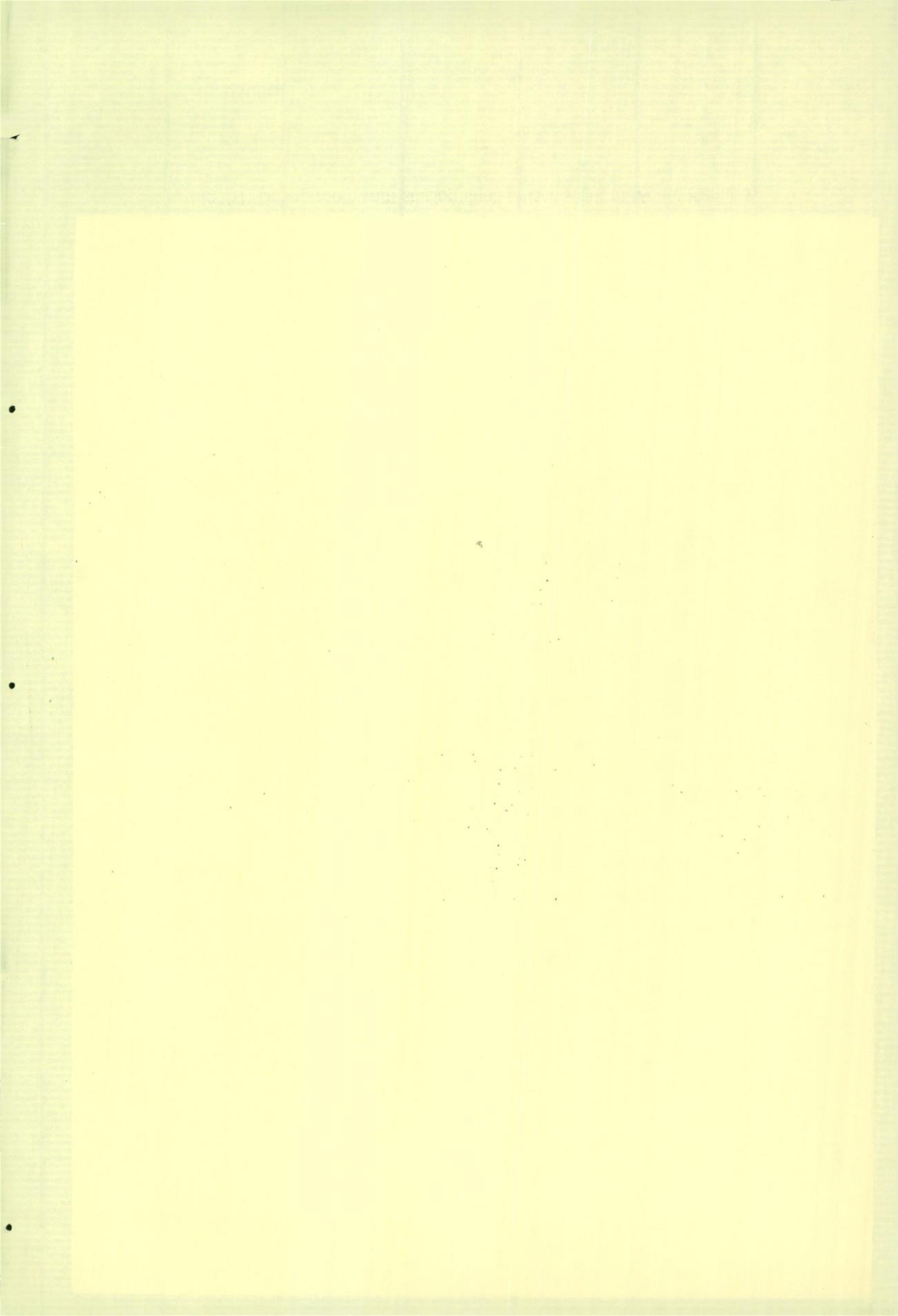




Fig. 32: Detail of frieze on ceiling in the front drawing room by Michael Stapleton at No. 35 Great George's St.



Fig. 33: Medallions on stairwell at Avondale



Fig. 34: Circular medallions by Michael Stapleton on hall wall at No. 16 St. Stephen's Green.



Fig. 35: Circular medallions by Michael Stapleton on hall wall at No. 16 St. Stephen's Green.



Fig. 36: Circular medallions by James Wyatt on dining room wall at Westport House Co. Mayo.



Fig. 37: Grisailles in the drawing room at Lucan House by Peter De Gree



Fig. 38: Grisailles in the dining room at Avondale.

