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National College of Art and Design
Faculty of Design
Department of Design

**THE REDEVELOPMENT
OF
POWERSCOURT HOUSE, COUNTY WICKLOW
BY
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Dedicated
To
Noirin



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Introduction

The subject of this thesis is the recent redevelopment of Powerscourt House, Enniskerry, County Wicklow. This study will examine the Palladian house, designed by Richard Castle in 1730s, and the subsequent redeveloped in 1996-97. After an accidental fire in November 1974, the house was lying in ruin until the 1996-97 redevelopment. The house has not undergone a restoration, but has had a modern interior installed.

Powerscourt House (fig.1), which is one of Ireland's best known country houses, with its gardens and demesne known the world over is visited by an estimated 150,000 people per year. The estate is located to the north of County Wicklow, 22 kilometres south of Dublin City centre and 5 kilometres west of Bray, adjacent to the village of Enniskerry (fig. 2).

Powerscourt was in the hands of the Wingfield family from 1603 until it was sold to the Slazenger family in 1961. Since 1974 the burned out structure of the house (fig.3) had been closed to the public and did not reopen until 1997, when the redevelopment of the building was carried out by it's owners.

The redevelopment, which involved the re-roofing and weather sealing of the building, incorporates a restaurant and retail shop units into the house. A golf course and clubhouse was also opened on the grounds of the estate and houses were built near the entrance gate, the Eagle Gate, as part of the overall project.

Although the overall proportions of the building have been maintained the house has not been restored to its former glory. The redevelopment of Powerscourt could be described as an exercise in

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Fig.1 Powerscourt House, Enniskerry, Co. Wicklow (North Front, 1971)

damage limitation rather than a restoration. None of the original detail of the building's interior has been reconstructed. The exterior of the building has been reconstructed to its original appearance but the interior with its bare brick walls and exposed electrical cabling and mechanical services could be the interior of an old warehouse or grain store. The restaurant contains a mixture of period details and modern fittings. As a result of the original layout of the building, the shop units have a certain chaos about them with one leading into the next. The high quality Irish designed and manufactured and foreign products they stock seem to compliment and fit in well with the feel of the building.

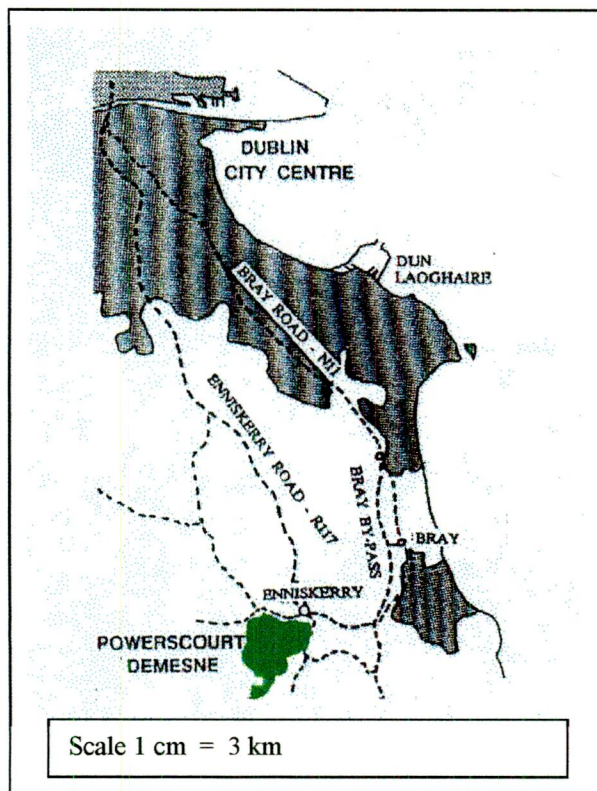


Fig. 2
Map showing the
location of
Powerscourt
Estate

Since the opening of the newly developed Powerscourt, the house and grounds have become accessible to more people than ever before. It is now possible for anyone to sit in the restaurant, which is situated where the eighteenth century study, drawing room and

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dining rooms were, and admire the spectacular view, a view which was once available only to a chosen few. It has become an amenity and tourist attraction, with its gardens, golf course, shops, restaurant and exhibition area providing a day out.

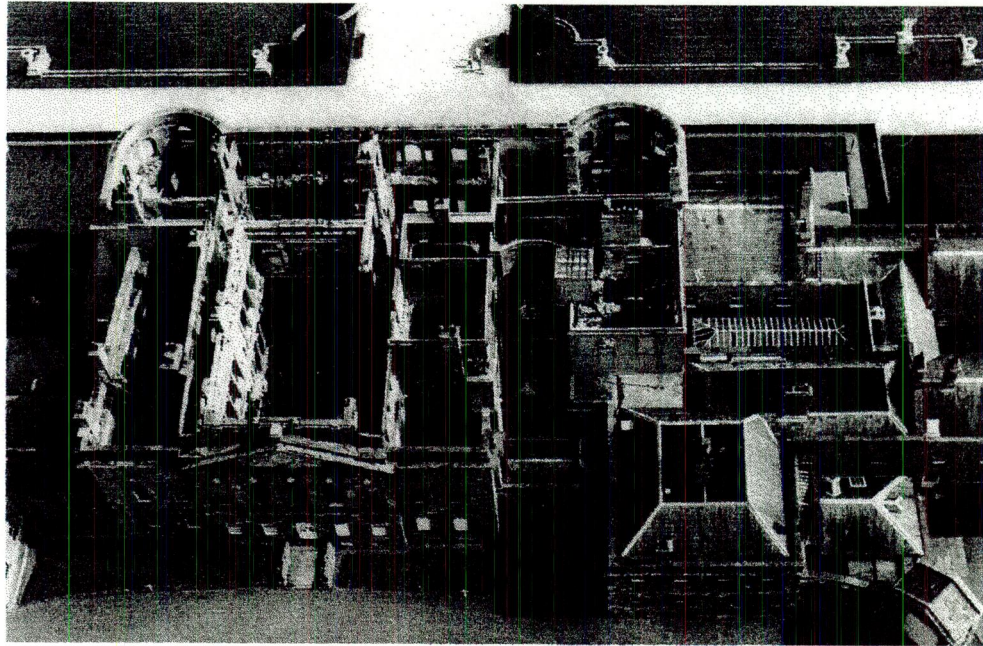
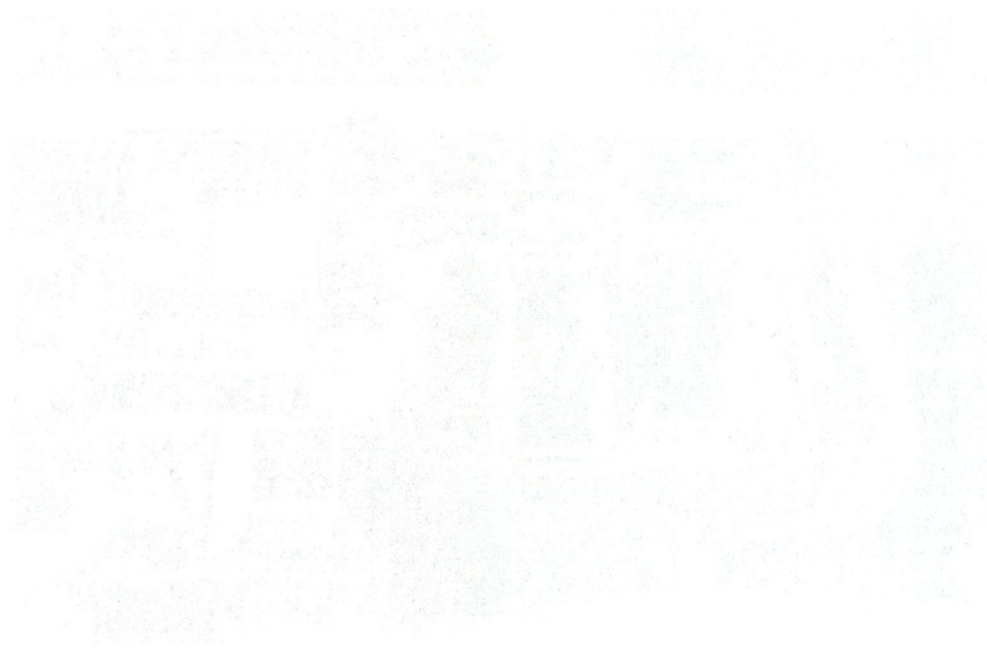


Fig. 3 The burnt out shell (1975)

Were it not for the recent construction work the house would surely have fallen into total decline and would probably have had to be knocked to the ground eventually. But notwithstanding this, does it do justice to this house to open it as a commercial venture in an attempt to save it from ruin? The client brief for this restoration specified “that nothing should be done in its present phase that would ultimately compromise the future restoration of the overall house” (Power (Ed.), 1997, p.34). So is this phase just another chapter in the history of the life of this once great house? Is it the ruin or making of it?

This study will examine the history of Powerscourt House, from its origins as a fortress in the Wicklow Hills to its growth into one of



Ireland's finest Georgian houses up until the fire of November 1974. The study will then examine the recent redevelopment of the house, with its restaurant and shops and consider the design implications of this development within the context of a grand eighteenth century country house.

Powerscourt House is the primary source for this work and so was visited regularly during the course of the study. People connected to Powerscourt and involved with its development were important sources. Sarah Slazenger, Marketing Director, Powerscourt provided useful information on the history of Powerscourt, the re-development and the future of the house. In particular she provided an insight into the philosophy behind the reconstruction. Simon Pratt of Avoca Handweavers was contacted in relation to the development of the restaurant and the shops. He also discussed the type of products offered for sale there and the type of customers they are aimed at. Paddy Byrne, who works for builders Cleary Doyle Contractors, the main contractors on the re-development had facts relating to the reconstruction and in particular in relation to some of the specialised materials and processes used. Matt O'Connor at the National Building Agency Ltd. discussed the contents of, and made available the eight volume Environmental Impact Study, (1989) on Powerscourt and its demesne. Of particular use was volume six, which was compiled by David Griffin at the Irish Architectural Archive. This contained a detailed description of every room in the house as they were before the 1996-97 re-development. Volume five contained detailed information into the proposed development of Powerscourt House and Estate. Anthony Abbott King's thesis Historic Houses and

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their Adjoining Lands: an Integrated Approach to their Redevelopment, (1996) provided details concerning planning issues relating to the re-use of old buildings for new purposes. The Irish Architectural Archive provided the use of their library and their extensive collection of photographs and documents.

This thesis does not attempt to assess the historical background of the construction and development of Powerscourt but surveys the principle secondary material available on the house.

Although Maurice Craig's Dublin 1660-1860, (1980) does not deal with houses outside Dublin it provides a useful account of Richard Castle's work. To examine Powerscourt within the architectural context of Ireland, Desmond Guinness and Jacqueline O'Brien's Dublin a Grand Tour, (1994), Guinness and William Ryan's Irish Houses and Castles, (1971), Guinness' Georgian Dublin, (1979) and Guinness and Julius Trousdale Sadler Jr's The Palladian Style in England, Ireland and America, (1976) were consulted. The Irish Georgian Society Records, (1909), contain details of Georgian interiors, as does John Woodforde's Georgian Houses For All, (1978).

The Seventh Viscount Mervyn Wingfield's A Description and History of Powerscourt, (1903) provided the personal insight of someone actually living at the house. This covered the history of the house and details of its contents along with first hand information from the latter half of the last century. This was useful in establishing the development of the house over time. It also included the odd anecdote about elephant hunts in India.

For a history of the house and contents and the demesne, Christopher Hussey's articles Powerscourt I, Powerscourt II, and



Powerscourt III in Country Life, 1946 were very useful. David J. Griffin's "Richard Castle's Egyptian Hall at Powerscourt, Co. Wicklow" in the Georgian Group Journal, 1995, is a detailed account of the saloon before the fire.



Chapter 1

Historical Background to the Architecture

This chapter will examine Powerscourt historically from its beginnings as a fortification in the Wicklow hills in the thirteenth century. It will follow through to its position as one of Ireland's greatest Georgian houses and on until it was burned in November 1974. This chapter will also look at the people who had the greatest influence over the shaping of Powerscourt; namely the Wingfield dynasty and the architect Richard Castle (c.1690/5-1751). Finally the plan of the building as it was just before the fire will be examined.

The site on which the Powerscourt estate is built was originally church lands until around 1292 when it came into the ownership of Eustace de Poer from whom it got its name (Hussey, 1946, p.1062). He probably had a fortress there and held onto the lands for the next twenty years until they were sacked by the O'Byrne tribe and then taken over by the O'Tooles. The O'Tooles held onto these lands for a further two hundred years until the end of the fifteenth century when the Fitzgeralds took over and fortified Powerscourt, building a tower there (Hussey, 1946, p.1062). It was destroyed by the O'Tooles in 1535 on the fall of the Fitzgeralds and held by them until in 1603 it was granted to Sir Richard Wingfield by James I for services to the crown (Hussey, 1946, p.1062).

Richard Wingfield had been a professional soldier and had fought in Flanders, France, Portugal and in Ireland where he distinguished himself in Queen Elizabeth's Irish civil strife by putting down the

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wild Wicklow sept, the O'Tooles and the O'Byrnes. She made him Marshal of Ireland in 1600 and later in 1618 he was ennobled as Viscount Powerscourt by James I (Bury, 1953, p.93).

By the Wingfield grant of 27 October 1603 Sir Richard Wingfield received:

the manor of Powerscourt, containing one ruinous castle...and all lands in the middle of Fercullen conteininge in itself 5 miles in leinth and 4 in bredth, for the most part mountain and stonie, to hold for 21 years at a rent of £6 Ierishe (Stokes, 1963, p.9).

Six years later the lands were granted to him forever.

Sir Richard Powerscourt died childless in 1634 and the title of Viscount was not revived until in 1665 it fell to his cousin's grandson. The title expired at his death due to a lack of male heirs. It was revived in 1742 for the third time for Richard another cousin. The First Viscount Richard Wingfield of the third creation initiated the construction of Powerscourt house circa 1740 (Wingfield, 1903, p.31).

The house was designed in the 1740s, by the architect Richard Castle (who changed his name from Cassels) from Hesse-Kassel in Germany (Craig, 1980, p.129). He had been brought to Ireland by Sir Gustavus Hume in 1727 to build a house for him on the shores of Lough Erne in County Fermanagh (Craig, 1980, p.129). He soon moved to Dublin where he quickly built a reputation for himself. He became the most prominent architect in the city for the next twenty years and is responsible for more houses than any

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other architect of the time, only to be surpassed later by Francis Johnston (Craig, 1980, pp129-130). His first Dublin house was 80 St. Stephens Green built for Bishop Clayton of Killala in 1730. He went on to design the Printing House and the Dining Hall at Trinity College, Newman House, 85 St. Stephen's Green, Tyrone House on Marlborough St., and Leinster House on Kildare St. He designed Carton House, County Kildare for the Earl of Kildare and designed Russborough House in County Wicklow, Summerhill in County Meath and Belan, now ruined, also in County Kildare (Craig, 1980, pp 131-135). At this time in Ireland he was possibly the principal country house designer. David Griffin in the Georgian Group Journal, 1995, describes him as "Ireland's most prolific Palladian architect".

The house was built on the site of the original castle (Hussey, 1946, p.1065). The castle governed the layout of the house to a large extent as it was incorporated into it. Richard Wingfield (1697-1751) hired the services of Richard Castle in 1731 to work on modernising the house. It is not known exactly what buildings stood or what their condition was at that time but they must have been habitable. An auction catalogue dating from 1728 still exists at the National Library of Ireland.

It is clear from the catalogue that the house itself was quite substantial: the Great Parlour had four windows and contained among other things twenty-four walnut chairs; the Dining Room had five windows and twenty-two chairs. (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers)

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Plan

Powerscourt house as designed by Richard Castle in the 1740s is built in the Palladian style. This style was widely used in the design of large and medium sized houses throughout the eighteenth century and was popular among Irish landowners. The Palladian formula combined house and farm buildings together to form a palatial composition (Abbott King, 1996, p.84).

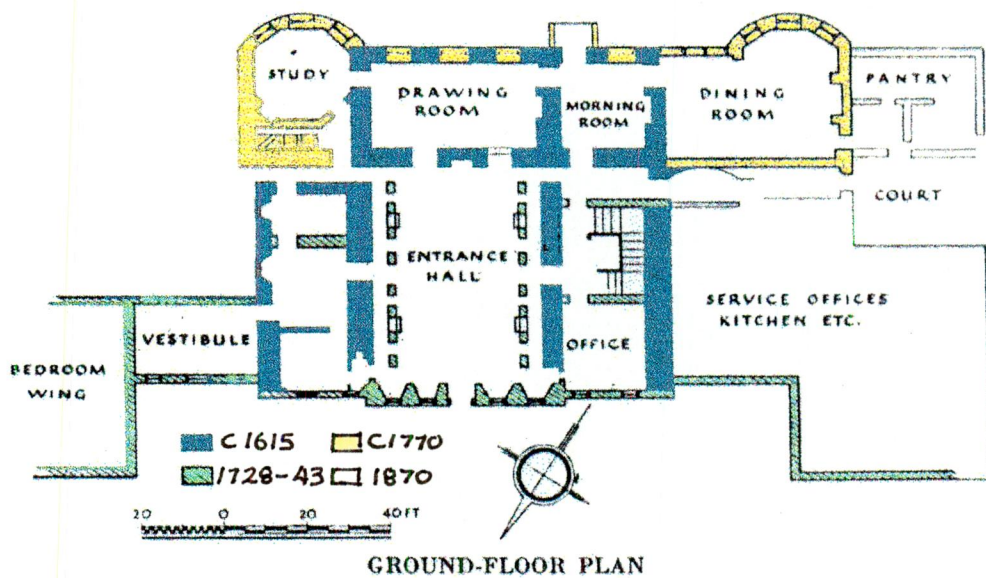


Fig.4 Ground floor plan

The ground floor plan view in (fig.4) shows the building at four stages of development from circa 1618 to 1870 and onwards. The outline of the fortress can be seen, with its thick walls, represented here with blue lines. It clearly encloses the entrance hall designed by Castle in the 1740s, on three sides. The north or entrance front, bedroom wing to the east and kitchen and offices to the west and the quadrants which terminate at two obelisks, are annotated in dashed lines to indicate that the work was carried out by Castle in the 1740s. There are also two triumphal arches set half way along



the quadrants. These contain gates into what was the stable yard to the east and a courtyard to the west. The south front, although designed by Castle was not completed until after his death, around 1760 (Hussey, 1946, p.1065). This area is indicated by light shading. All other work was carried out after 1870 (Hussey, 1946, p.1065).

The two curved bays of the south front house the study and dining room. The morning and dining rooms are also located within the old fortress to the south of the house. The saloon is positioned directly above the entrance hall. To the rear of the saloon and above the study, drawing room, morning room, and dining room are the Cedar room, drawing room, small drawing room, and Lady Powerscourt's sitting and drawing rooms. To the west of the south front is a two storey by three bay dining block added in 1881 by architect John MacVicar Anderson (1834-1915).

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Chapter 2

The Facades

Chapter two examines the exterior facades of the building and the setting, the garden in the Dargle valley at the foot of the Wicklow hills, into which the house is set.

The north front of the house was designed and built by Richard Castle between 1728 and 1743 (fig 1). The south front was also designed by Castle but was not completed until 1760-1770, which was some time after his death. It seems also that some modifications were made to Castle's original plans of the south façade. A painting of Powerscourt by George Barret in 1760 (Paul Mellon collection), (fig.5) shows a slightly different building to the one that was eventually built.

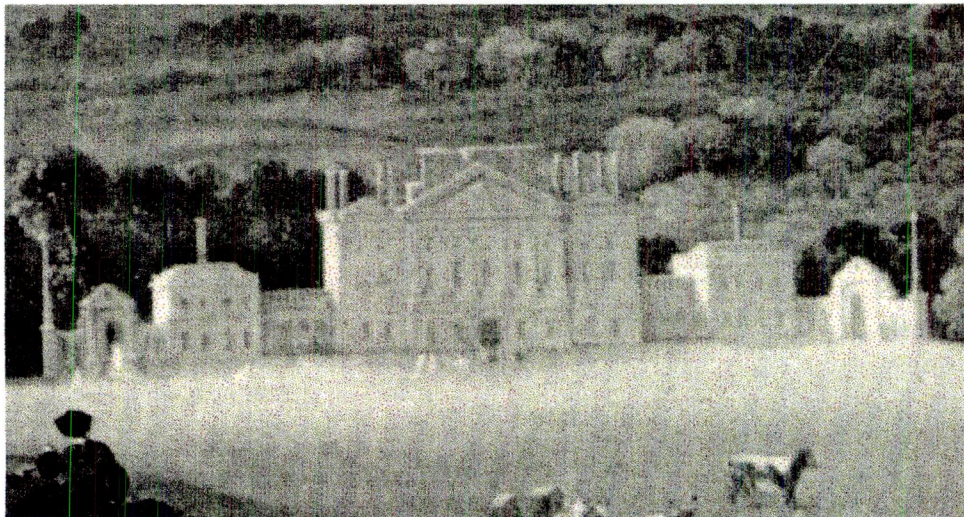


Fig. 5 Powerscourt by George Barret (1760). (Coll. Mellon)

It shows a more pure, uncluttered roofline, without the domes of the towers or any other additions. Barret, who possibly invented romantic landscape painting, may have used some poetic licence here, but notwithstanding this, Castle's plans were probably for this

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cleaner shape, as with Leinster House (fig.6) which he designed in 1745. The domes can probably be attributed to Richard Wingfield the First Viscount Powerscourt as he was said to be fond of these circular rooms (Guinness, 1965, p.35).

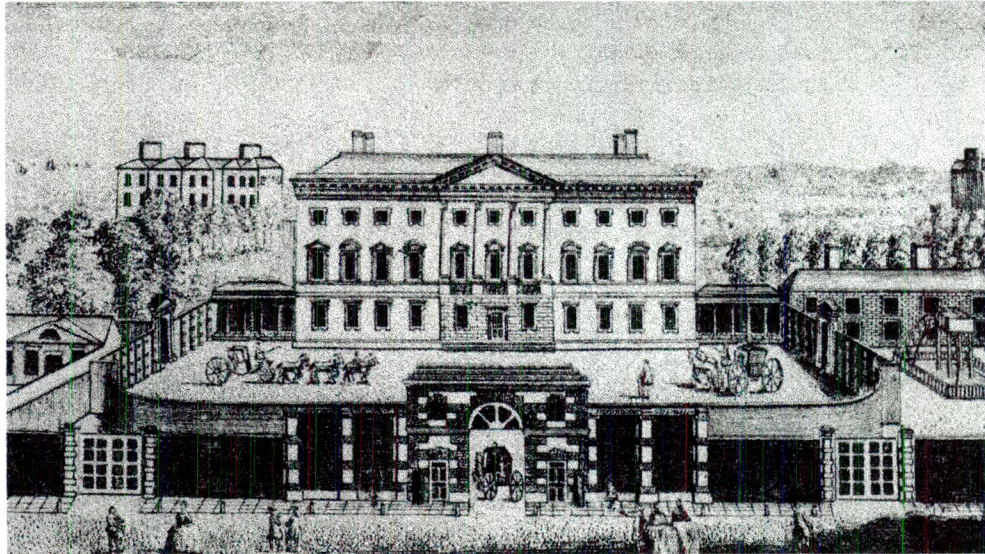
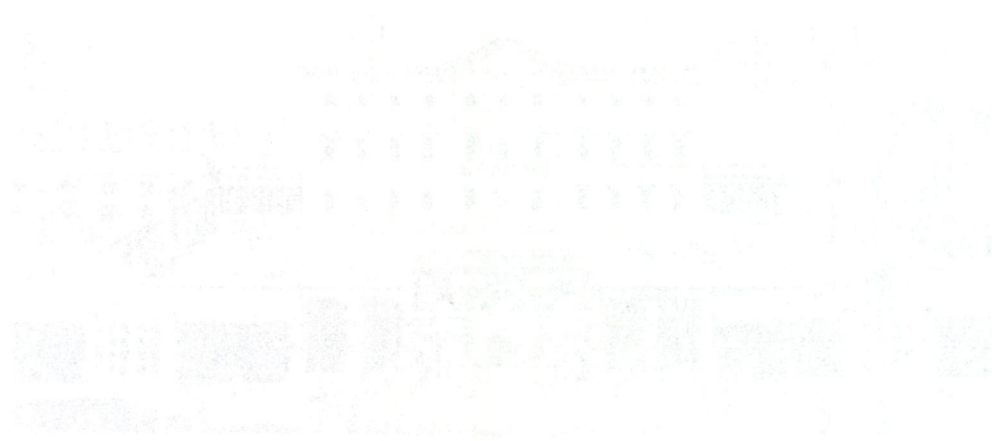


Fig.6 Leinster House, Dublin (1756)

The north front is prolonged to achieve the maximum effect. The central block is linked by arcading to pavilions, then triumphal arches and finally obelisks surmounted by eagles terminate the facade.

The main block comprises a rusticated ground floor, nine bays wide, with a central pedimented frontispiece five bays wide. The floors above have a pediment supported by seven giant order pilasters and backed by a blind attic. Mounted on the tympanum of the pediment is a giant cartouche in Portland stone surmounted by the arms of Richard Wingfield (1697-1751) and his wife Dorothy Rowley (d.1785). There is no coronet on the coat of arms, which suggests that the carving was done before 1743 when Richard Wingfield was created third Viscount (Hussey, 1946, p.1064). The



pediment sits on an entablature with a pulvinated frieze and modillin cornice. There are five circular niches on the second floor of the front. Richard Castle is attributed with introducing the circular niche to Irish houses (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). The niches contain five marble busts. The busts to each side of the central one represent Roman emperors. The one in the centre is of an unknown woman, but was christened Empress Julia by the Seventh Viscount after his wife (Wingfield, 1903, p.77). The attic is three bays wide with blind windows and is bracketed by giant volutes. It encloses the upper section of the grand saloon. To each side of the pediment are cast iron balustrades, which were not shown in George Barret's painting of 1760, and may have been a later addition.

The saloon and the entrance hall take up the entire pedimented section of the front.

The windows of the ground floor have triple keystones. Above the main entrance door is a semi-elliptical fanlight. This was an early nineteenth century addition to allow more light into the entrance hall (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). Leading to the doorcase are granite balustrades. On the end of these are nineteenth century cast iron lamp standards. Gilded coronets surmount the lamp standards. Only the ground floor of the frontispiece is rusticated. The bays to either side are not rusticated but have rusticated voussoirs above the windows.

The piano nobile has five windows in the central block. The three central windows have arched heads that are supported by Tuscan pilasters. The two outer windows are flat headed with shouldered architraves.

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Straight rusticated arcading links the pavilions to either side of the central block. Above the arcading are granite balustrades. The pavilions, four bays wide and two stories high have rusticated window architraves.

The pavilions are linked to Tuscan triumphal arches and finally to the obelisks which terminate the front, by quadrants. Castle uses volutes to link the triumphal arches to the quadrants. The obelisks are mounted on rusticated pedestals. Castle used a similar layout with a pedimented central block linked by arcading to pavilions at Russborough and Carton. He also used quadrants or curved colonnades and incorporated triumphal arches into these fronts, extending the front to its widest to achieve the maximum effect.



Fig. 7 The South Front, which is offset from the North Front by three bays.

The south front (fig.7) of Powerscourt (1760-1770) now three high was originally only two, the third being added in 1787 (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). It is thirteen bays wide and is finished in



rusticated granite. The bows at either end of the front each have three bays.

An unusual feature is the fact that the south front is offset from the north front by three bays . This is because of the fact that the house was built around the original medieval castle, which originally stood on the site. Some of the walls of the original castle were extremely thick (2 metres) and so interfered with the spacing of the windows in the front. Castle added two bays to the west end of the original castle and clad them in granite. The result is that the north and south fronts are out of alignment with each other. On to each end of the south front he added the bows. "Castle may have introduced the bow to Irish architecture" (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers).

In the central bay (which is offset) there is an engaged Roman Doric doorcase with a window above it surrounded by large volutes. All of this is surrounded by a segmental arched recess, two stories high. Above this on the second or attic story is a paladian recessed window and to each side of this there are flat-headed windows with shouldered moulded architraves. The windows of the ground floor and first floor are also flat headed with shouldered architraves set into arched recesses. The windows of the bows are arched.

The whole front is capped with a moulded granite cornice.

The ogee domes on top of the bows, were copper covered and elliptical in plan view. Mounted on top of the domes were weather vanes. The roof was flat and lead covered. Cast iron octagonal pots capped the granite chimneystacks. The domes and roof were destroyed in the fire of 1974.

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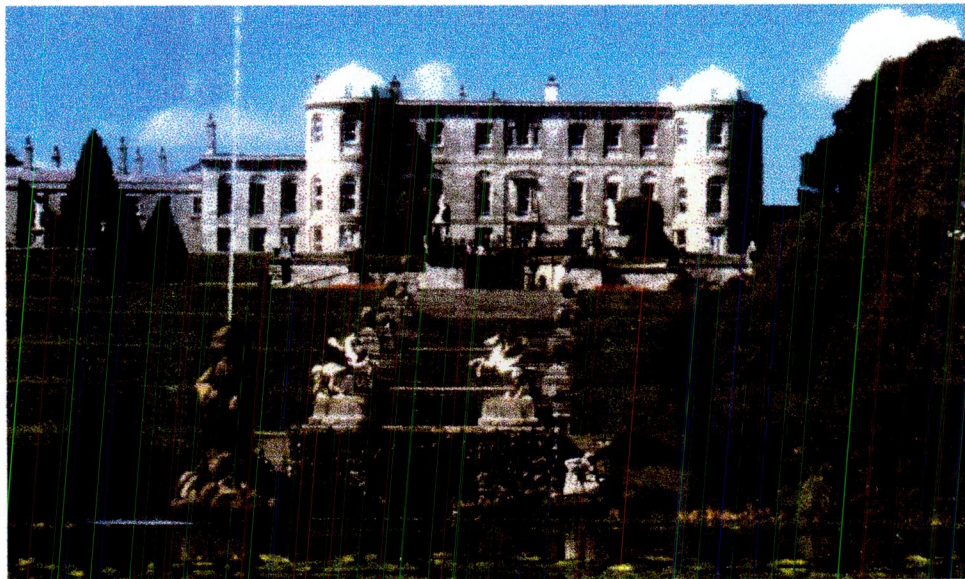


Fig.8 The Italian Terraced Gardens

Gardens

Powerscourt house is placed in a most picturesque setting. It is positioned with its north front facing into a large plateau. The land to the front of the house was a large area of open space probably used for grazing cattle. Around the edge of this space trees were planted with paths running out at diagonals in a fan like pattern. According to Matt O'Connor of the National Building Agency these paths or tracts could have been different rides, possibly used for hunting (O'Connor, 1997.). The south front stands above a valley, the Dargle valley, which drops away from the house, eventually leading to the impressive Sugarloaf Mountain in the distance. This drop has been laid out in Powerscourt's famous Italian style terraced gardens (fig.8). There are drawings of the gardens in Volume I of the Powerscourt Albums, housed at the Irish Architectural Archives, which are thought to be attributed to Castle. Although originally designed by Castle, a lot of the work was carried out later by the architect Daniel Robertson who was

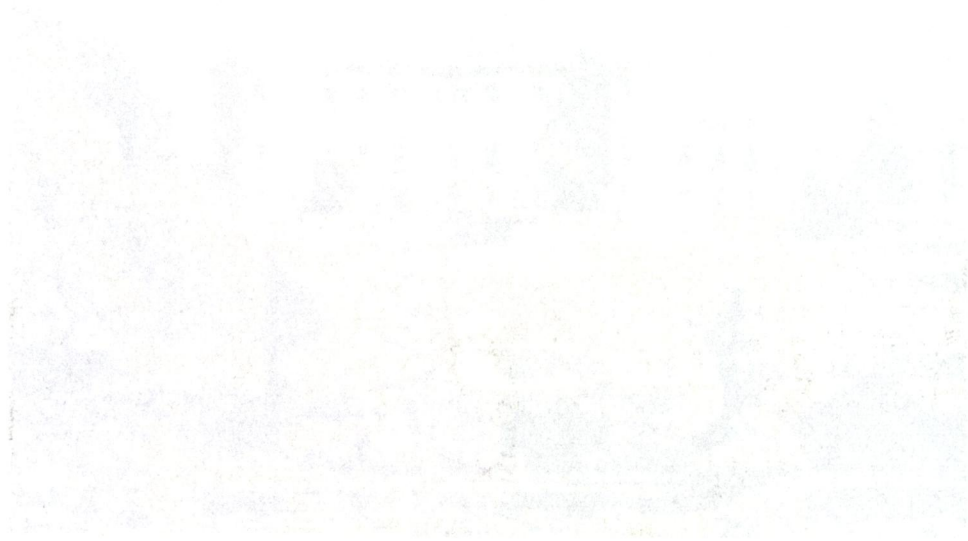
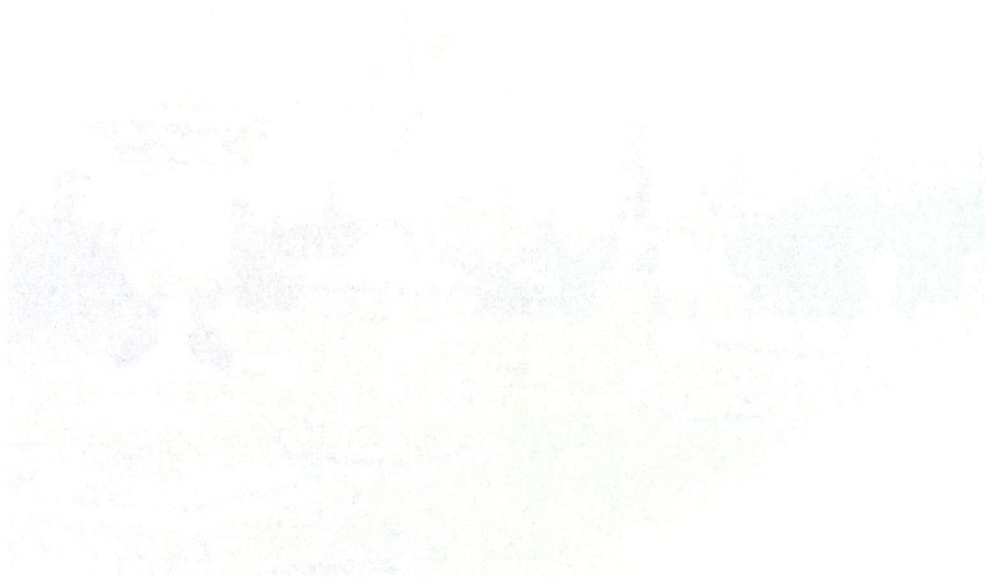




Fig. 9 The statuary which runs along the south front above the formal gardens

employed by the Sixth Viscount in 1841. Subsequent work was carried out by F.C. Penrose classicist and architect, who was employed by the Seventh Viscount in 1870. He installed statuary (fig.9) that had been collected by the Sixth Viscount but had remained in its crates until then (Vol.4, Environmental Impact Study, no page numbers).



Chapter 3

The Interiors

This chapter will deal with the interiors of the building and some of its contents.

The rooms of most significance at Powerscourt were the entrance hall and the saloon. The layout of the interior of the house has to an extent been governed by the original structure around which the house was built. The castle, which stood on the site for centuries, was incorporated into Castle's design.

The Entrance Hall

The entrance hall (fig, 10), positioned where the original castle courtyard was, was entered through the main entrance door in the centre of the pedimented section of the north front. The proportions of the hall were unusual for a country house of this time. "Most Irish houses of this period were equipped with front halls that impressed with their height but that at Powerscourt impresses with its length" (Guinness, 1972, p.326). The front hall was a large space measuring around sixty feet by forty feet but with a ceiling height of only around twelve feet. Along the sides of the hall were two rows each with nine arches. The columns served to support the colonnades in the saloon, which was positioned directly above the entrance hall. Four of the arches were blocked by four fireplaces. These were of Regency date (Hussey, 1946, p.1065). The ceilings running along the passageways created by the arches were vaulted and finished in stucco. The detail of the plasterwork was of scallop and cockle shells, "typical of German Baroque

1. Introduction

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interiors of the late Seventeenth-and early Eighteenth-century” (Bury, 1953, p.94). A very small amount of this plasterwork remains in one or two arches of the entrance hall. The room was decorated with suits of armour, canons and a large collection of antlers. The antlers were arranged around the walls and suspended from the ceiling as chandeliers. Some of the antlers hanging from the ceiling had carved painted wooden sculptures, known as Lusterweiblen, and were of sixteenth and seventeenth century Austrian and Tyrolese craftsmanship. One pair of antlers was from the long extinct Irish elk and measured 12 ft. 2 ins. across its span.



Fig.10 The Entrance Hall (1971), shortly before the fire

A guest arriving at the house for the first time would have been very impressed by the impact of this hall due to its wonderfully detailed plasterwork. This room was totally destroyed, with the



exception of a few details and is a great loss to Irish historical architecture.

The Staircase Hall

The saloon, located above the entrance hall, was approached through the staircase hall (fig.11) located just off the hall. The staircase was constructed in 1730s. It was of open well, open string design similar to ones found in other Castle buildings such as Russborough Co. Wicklow, 85 St. Stephen's Green Dublin and Tyrone House Dublin. It was "typical of the work of Richard Castle" (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). The staircase was constructed in mahogany and had the appearance of being cantilevered. It had a wrought iron balustrade. The balustrade may have been a later addition as Castle was inclined to use balusters in the form of Tuscan or Doric columns (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). Also "in 1733 Joseph McCleery, carpenter, was paid for employing a turner to turn balusters" (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers).

The lower section of the wall of the main staircase lobby was rusticated. This is similar to the lower section of the Powerscourt town house staircase. Although the rustication could be typical of Castle, the Powerscourt Town House was designed by Robert Mack in 1771 and therefore the country house staircase could have been a remodelling of the original staircase, done by him. The windows were of stained glass carrying the family coat of arms. They had arched heads supported by Roman Ionic engaged columns and pilasters. The ceiling featured an oval domed centre rising from a cove, the corners of which were decorated with





Fig.11 The Staircase Hall before the fire (1971)

emblems of music, war and the chase (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). This room was badly damaged in the fire with only some parts of the wrought iron balustrade and sections of the plasterwork surviving.

The Saloon.

The saloon at Powerscourt was amongst the grandest rooms in any house in Ireland (fig.12). It takes up almost the entire centre block of the house above the entrance hall, forming the core of the house. It would appear that the entrance hall and the saloon above it owe their shape to the layout of the original castle. They occupy the space that would have been the U shaped courtyard in the original building.

The saloon measures 55 feet long by 41 feet wide and not 60 feet by 40 feet the measurement most often quoted (Griffin, 1995, p.121). It is 40 feet in height. Castle's design is based on Palladio's version of Vitruvius's description of "an Egyptian Hall," on which Lord Burlington based the assembly room at York (1731-3) (Hussey, 1946, p.1066.).

Andrea Palladio designed buildings which were influenced by ancient Roman architecture. Castle and others including Lord Burlington and Thomas Jefferson adapted his style (Abbot King, 1996, p.82). The typical Palladian country house consisted of a central block linked by curved or linear wings to smaller blocks on either side. This style was popular among Irish landowners in the eighteenth century and was widely used around the country.

10/10/10 10/10/10 10/10/10



Fig.12 The Saloon before the fire (1971)

1871

In all three cases (Palladio's, Burlington's, and Castle's) colonnades on the long side formed narrow aisles which supported an upper order of Colonnades or pilasters. Castle used fluted Roman Ionic columns on the lower order supporting the fluted Corinthian pilasters above, on the long walls. On the shorter north and south walls he replaced the colonnades with pilasters with arched recesses and windows between them.

In the original Egyptian Hall the room was lit in the lower stage but here Castle placed windows in the upper section of the room, as did Burlington in the Assembly rooms. Moving the windows to the upper section of the room offered a good solution to the problem of lighting the room. It meant that the hall could be located in the centre of the building with rooms off it to either side, but still be lit from the sides. The north wall of the saloon had five windows in the lower section, which spanned the entire centre section of the north front.

The saloon was positioned directly above the entrance hall. The entrance hall has two rows of brick arches, one along either side that supported the colonnades in the saloon above.

The interior of the saloon was lavishly decorated. The ceiling was a highly detailed compartmented ceiling surrounded by a Corinthian modillion cornice and was heavily gilded. Burlington's ceiling was plain. The colonnades and pilasters, which had been painted to look like Sienna marble with black and white marble bases, were revealed by the fire to be constructed from Wicklow granite. Along the long sides of the saloon were eight colonnades and at the centre of these were arches, which vaulted in towards the inner walls of the side arches. These arches were identical in scale

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to the ones in the shorter walls. The ceilings of the aisles behind the colonnades were flat and at the same height as the architrave. The panels of the lower walls were replastered in the nineteenth century but it is evident from the fire that they were redone to Castle's original scheme (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). The upper order of the north and south walls had three blind windows. The outer windows had architraves surmounted by triangular pediments. The centre blind windows of the short walls and the long walls had segmented pedimented Roman Ionic aedicules.

The floor of the saloon was a walnut parquetry floor, which reflected the layout of the ceiling above. This was a feature that Castle used in a number of his houses and in the Cedar Room of this house. Similar floors (reflecting the layout of the ceiling above) can be seen in Russborough, Co. Wicklow and Tyrone House, Dublin. It is believed to be an idea introduced by him from his native Germany (Griffin, 1995, p.119). The floor must have been highly finished and polished as "Samuel Derrick writing in 1767 described 'the floor so slippery as to render it useless'" (Griffin, 1995, p.119).

The Saloon had a fireplace positioned between the two centre colonnades of the east wall. It would appear that the room had no fireplace until in 1868 Signor Pegrazzi, sculpture of Verona was commissioned by the Seventh Viscount to carve the chimneypiece. It is based on one in the Doge's Palace, Venice (Griffin, 1995, p. 122). The fireplace included a pair of wrought brass firedogs by Giovanni Bologna from the Zambecarri Palace in Venice (Hussey, 1946, p.1062). The grate was made by Messrs Feetham, Soho Square, London. The front of the grate had two doorknockers



attached to it. These were acquired by the Sixth Viscount and attached also by Messrs Feetham. The idea was that anyone who wanted to warm their feet by the fire could hold onto the doorknockers while doing so (Griffin 1989, no page numbers).

The saloon was furnished with pieces gathered mostly by the Sixth and Seventh Viscounts. The large amount of gilt in the room was accentuated even more by the two massive Italian Baroque gilt chandeliers bought in Bologna by the Sixth Viscount (Hussey, 1946, p.1066). When lit there must have been a strong golden hue, with all the gilt, the polished walnut floor and the yellow 'sienna marble' to reflect the light in the room. The saloon was the pride and joy of the house. A lot more effort was put into this room than any other room in the house. It was positioned in the central position and given two stories plus an attic story. It was designed to achieve the maximum impact with its size and its detailed decoration. With the exception of a few details the room was totally destroyed. Its destruction was the loss of a great architectural treasure.

The Drawing Room

On entering the saloon the large double door leading to the drawing room could be found in the centre of the south wall. This room was used as the main reception room (fig. 13). The room originally had five doors, the double doors from the saloon and two each in the east and west walls. In 1947 the two doors nearest the north wall of the room were removed and the openings filled in. This shows a sense of the house being lived in, where alterations are carried out to suit the inhabitants. The house was not a museum.

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The remaining doors were all of mahogany with fluted friezes and cornices on consoles above the doors. The ceiling was flat with a large detailed coving and had a large star shaped centrepiece surrounded by an oval garland of flowers. The fireplace was mounted against the west wall. Its chimneypiece was constructed of Sienna marble in 1775 and was bought from Messers. Hodges, Westmoreland Street, Dublin by the seventh Viscount (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). It originally came from a house in Aungier Street. A Chinese Chippendale mirror hung above the mantle. This was purchased in 1836-7 from Tyrone House, Dublin (Hussey, 1946, p. 1067).



Fig.13 The Drawing Room with carpet woven by Lady Powerscourt (1932-40)

Of interest in this room was the carpet woven by Lady Powerscourt in 1932-40. It measured 26 ft by 16 ft. and was modelled after a carpet worked by Lady Grace Fitzroy, daughter of Charles II



(Hussey, 1946, p.1066). This room was completely destroyed by the fire with the exception of the steel fire grate and a small section of the ceiling cornice.

The Cedar Room

Adjoining the drawing room to the east was the Cedar room (Fig. 14). This room was most likely designed by Richard Castle and is rated as “the most important small Palladian domestic interior in Ireland” by David Griffin (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). It got its name from the panelling in cedar that completely covered the walls of this octagonal shaped room. At the angles where these panels joined each other there were engaged Corinthian columns. The ceiling was in the shape of an octagonal coffered dome. As with the saloon the inlaid floor reflected the design of the ceiling. The original mantle was replaced in the early nineteenth century by a white marble one of Greek Revival design. This room was amongst the most exceptionally detailed rooms in the house. It too was unfortunately completely destroyed by the fire in 1974.

Small Drawing Room

Located on the far side of the drawing room is another, smaller, drawing room. The decoration of this room dates from the same period, late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, as the main drawing room. The ceiling was from that time and the four-panel doors dated from the early nineteenth century. This room was completely destroyed in the fire.

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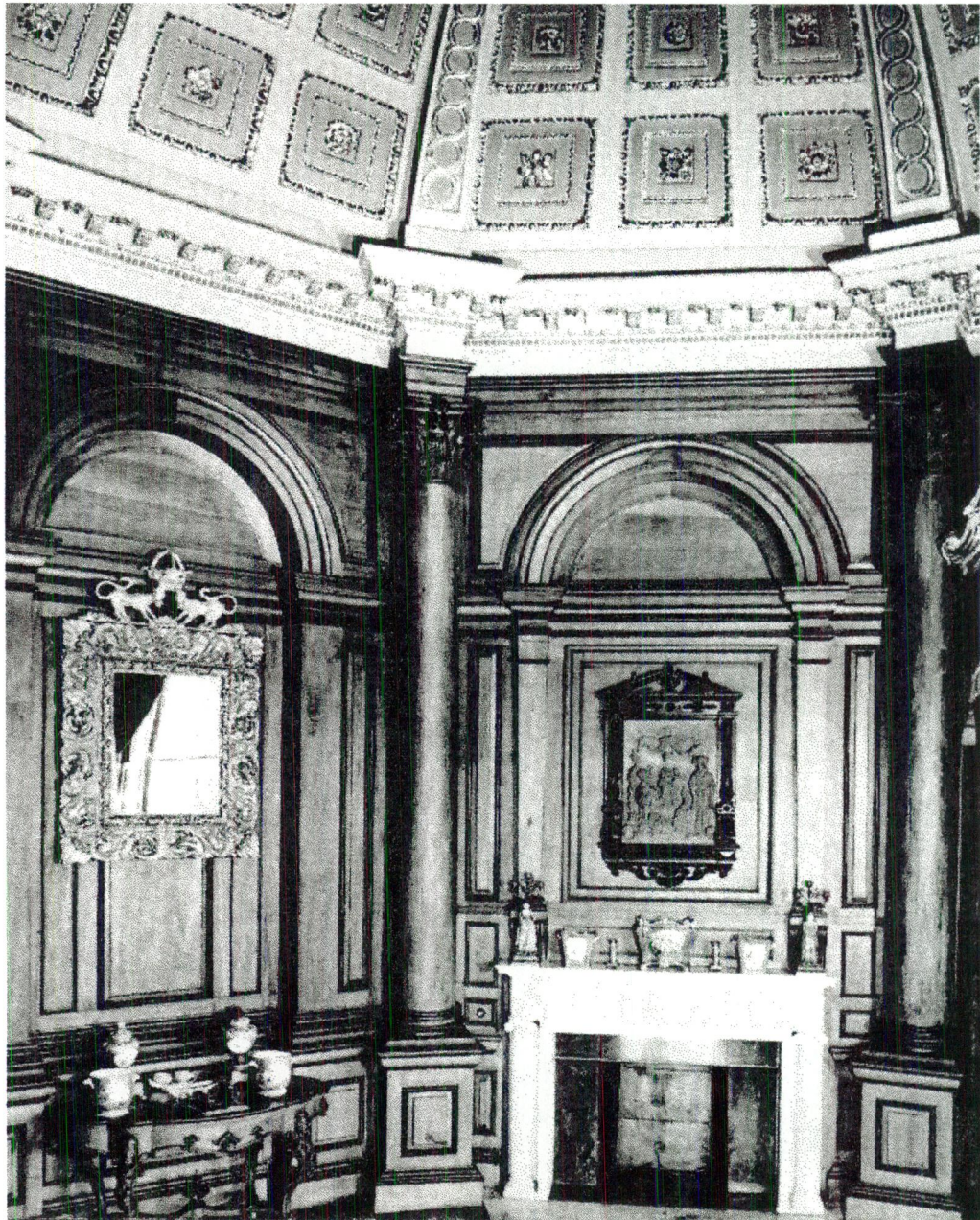


Fig.14 The Cedar Room before the fire

Lady Powerscourt's Sitting Room and Bedroom

Off the Small Drawing Room to the west was a sitting room known as Lady Powerscourt's sitting room. Adjoining this room to the west side is Lady Powerscourt's bedroom. John Mac Vicar Anderson remodelled these two rooms in the 1880s. Drawings by



him of these rooms still exist and are filed in the Powerscourt Albums, Album I, (housed at the Irish Architectural Archives) compiled by the Seventh Viscount around the end of the last century. The Seventh Viscount bought the eighteenth century mantles and brass grates in the bedroom and sitting room from Messrs Hodges, Westmoreland Street Dublin (Wingfield, 1903, p.59). The sitting room was completely destroyed by fire. The bedroom was partially destroyed by the fire. Surviving fittings such as the Doric columns of the bed recess were removed and placed in storage.

The Long Room

To the east of the saloon and running almost its full length was the long room.

This room was originally three rooms which date from pre-Richard Castle times when they were part of the castle. They served as nurseries in the time of the Sixth Viscount. Daniel Robertson was commissioned by the Seventh Viscount to convert these rooms into a library. Robertson drew up plans in 1843 and 1844 and commenced work. He put a bay window into the east wall, but with the death of the Sixth Viscount in 1844 all work ceased (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). The bay window was subsequently removed in 1881 as it was found to be dangerous and replaced with a tripartite window. The room remained unfinished and was used as a storeroom until in 1894 the Seventh Viscount employed Sir Thomas Dean, Architect, to finish it (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). Dean's previous works included the National Library and Museum, Kildare Street, Dublin and the facade for St.

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Ann's church Anne St. Dublin (Craig, 1980, pp 112-113.). Along the east wall of the long room he placed three fireplaces. The centre one, made of white marble with two figures of flora at either side of the opening, was given to the Seventh Viscount by his stepfather the Fourth Marquis of Londonderry. The window and door openings were decorated with small Jasper columns (fig.15), which had been bought by the Sixth Viscount in Venice in 1840 (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers).

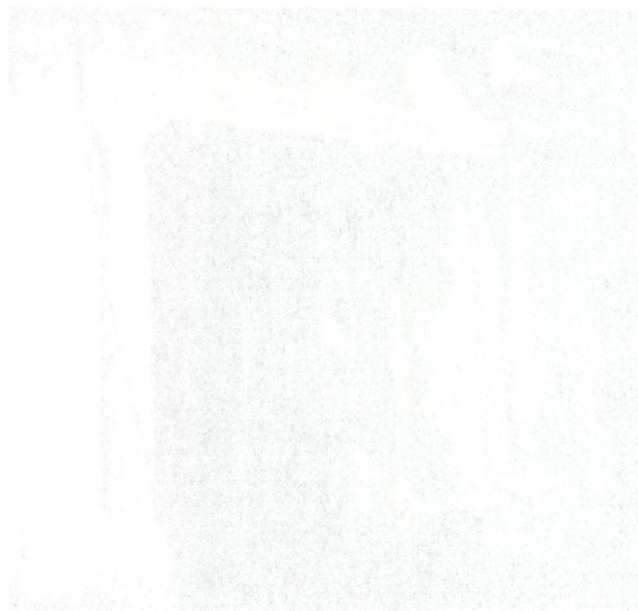


Fig. 15
Surviving
Jasper columns
in the Long
Room (1998)

There was a brass plaque fixed to the wall which read,

The Long Room was decorated in 1895 by Mervyn Edward 7th Viscount Powerscourt. The marble columns were bought from Italy, by his father, 1840, who had intended to make the room a library, and the columns had been 55 years at Powerscourt, before being used. Sam. H. Bolton, Builder, Dublin (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers).

The long room was destroyed by the fire in 1974.



Drawing Room

Located at the south end of the Entrance Hall is a door, which leads to another drawing room. This room, which overlooks the terraced gardens, was previously a library and before that the dining room. It had eighteenth century raised and fielded shutters and nineteenth century four-panel mahogany doors. The chimneypiece was eighteenth century white marble inlaid with Sienna marble and had a plaque depicting a cherub leading a lion (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers).

With the exception of small parts of the decorative friezes, this room was totally destroyed.

The Octagon Library

The Octagon Library was located to the east of the drawing room in the east tower of the south front, directly under the Cedar Room. It was fitted with bookcases and had imitation book spines covering a door in its north-west wall. One of these books, positioned where the keyhole was, was entitled "Key to Paradise", a reference to the lavatory which used to be down the passageway behind the door. This was in place in the time of the Sixth Viscounts (1843) (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). The room was subsequently turned into a billiards room and by 1957 it was Lord Powerscourt's study (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). The bookcases had been removed and a modern brick fireplace had been installed. This fireplace was replaced by an eighteenth century white marble one by the time of the fire in Nov. 1974, which once again destroyed everything.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for ensuring the integrity and reliability of the data collected. This section also outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze the data, highlighting the challenges faced during the process. The authors note that while the data is generally consistent, there are some discrepancies that require further investigation. The second part of the document provides a detailed analysis of the results, showing that the data supports the hypothesis that the system is stable under the conditions tested. However, the authors also identify some limitations to the study, such as the relatively small sample size and the lack of long-term data. Finally, the document concludes with a summary of the findings and a list of recommendations for future research.

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The Morning Room

The morning room was positioned on the opposite side of the Library/Drawing Room from the Octagon Library (fig.16). This room's use changed many times over the years. In 1843 it was used as a breakfast room. In 1903 it was known as the Morning room and then in 1957 it was referred to as the Anteroom (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). The frieze and cornice of the ceiling in this room was the same as that of the Library. The fireplace was eighteenth century, constructed from white and Sienna marble and the shutters, also eighteenth century were raised and fielded. This room was totally destroyed in the fire.

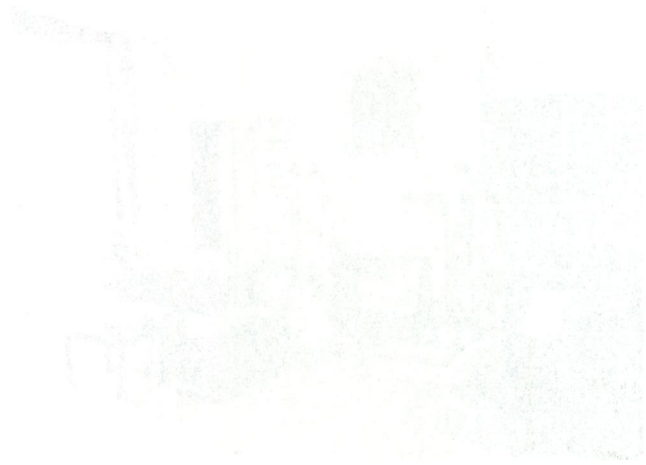


Fig.16

**The Morning
Room (1956)**

The Dining Room

In 1881-82 John MacVicar Anderson converted two rooms, Lady Powerscourt's bedroom and her boudoir, into the Dining Room (fig. 17). To remove the wall from between the two rooms he inserted girders into the ceiling space above and suspended them from the second floor level (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). By doing this, he left no trace of the room ever having been divided, which was a requirement of the Viscount Powerscourt. Messrs. G.



Jackson, Rathbone Place, London designed and installed the “Adams” style ceiling (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). Lady Powerscourt’s bathroom was replaced by a sideboard recess which was flanked by alabaster columns with spiral shaped shafts (fig.17), bought at Christies and thought to be from an Italian church (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). The mantle was marble and was thought to have come from a Venetian palace. The grate, which was in the Paris exhibition of 1867, was made by Messrs Feetham & Co. Soho Square London (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers). This room and its contents survived the fire but the architectural fittings and the floors have since been removed. The fire surround and grate along with other contents have been sold at Christie’s auction of 24-25, Sept. 1984 (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers).



Fig.17 The Dining Room with Spiral Alabaster Columns

West Wing

The West Wing of the house contained the kitchen and utilities.

East Wing

Castle originally built the East Wing of the house as a stable. In 1886-1887 the stables were knocked by the Seventh Viscount and the east pavilion converted to bachelor quarters. The stables were relocated to the home farm on the west side of the house. The east pavilion was converted to self-contained living accommodation after the fire of November 1974 (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers).

Chapter 4

After the fire.

The restoration of a building such as Powerscourt, badly damaged by fire and the subsequent exposure to the weather, is a difficult task. Not only is the work to be carried out difficult but it is also difficult to decide what should be repaired, what should be removed, what should be preserved or replaced with replicas. In the case of Powerscourt, the house contains elements from medieval times and various periods up until this century. With older sections of the house having been exposed by the fire, which of these should get priority during a restoration? Should the house be restored to the condition it was in immediately before the fire or would it be better to pick a particular period? Would a total restoration be desirable? What are the merits of walking through an eighteenth century house that has been constructed at a time when we are about to enter the twenty first century. Does an old house like this one need to have a purpose or function? Must it be turned into a hotel or leisure centre or theme park or is there a value in a building being a building for a building's sake?

The Slazenger family decided to undertake the restoration of Powerscourt House and in 1989 employed The National Building Agency (NBA) to devise a plan to restore the house. The primary objective of the National Building Agency was to address the restoration of the house, but on examination found that the whole estate had been neglected and needed attention. The parkland and trees were in decline and would have to be considered in the overall scheme, thus adding to the expense of the project. As there were no grants available, and the present income of the estate



through agriculture, a sandpit and tourism were not enough to finance the restoration, a plan that generated income was sought (National Building Agency, Environmental Impact Study, 1990, paragraph 0.1.0.).

The National Building Agency carried out its Environmental Impact Study and devised a number of broad options. Included in these were:

“(A) To continue as present without undertaking the restoration of the house and amenity landscape, and to let time and nature take their course.

(B) To sell large areas of the estate to generate capital to restore Powerscourt House.

(C) To sell the entire estate.

(D) To develop the demesne as a place of increased amenity resort open to the public and to restore Powerscourt House with a new and sustainable use” (National Building Agency, Environmental Impact Study, 1990, paragraph 0.2.0.).

The last option, option D, was the one favoured by the owners.

Powerscourt demesne has been the subject of ongoing development and improvement since the 14th century, the estate has very rarely stood still in terms of development. It is the considered view of the owners that option D is consistent with the ongoing development of the demesne adapting to the socio economic needs of each period of time (National Building Agency, Environmental Impact Study, 1990, paragraph 0.2.1.4.).

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY
5800 S. UNIVERSITY AVENUE
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

RECEIVED
JAN 15 1964

FROM
DR. J. H. GOLDSTEIN

TO
DR. R. M. MAYER

RE
POLYMERIZATION OF STYRENE

BY
DR. J. H. GOLDSTEIN

AND
DR. R. M. MAYER

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

1964

With this option the house would have undergone a total restoration and reconstruction with the development of other buildings, amenities and housing around the estate. The house would be rebuilt as a luxury five star hotel. The important rooms of the house, the saloon, entrance hall, drawing rooms and dining rooms would be restored and would serve as the main function rooms of the hotel. Although the building is of many different eras it was decided that it would be restored to the time of most importance. This was considered to be the Richard Castle design of the 1740s (O'Connor, 1990, paragraph, 0.3.2.0.). Any structures from earlier times, exposed by the fire, would be studied and recorded. Structures such as the lift shaft which was added at the end of the nineteenth century and which interferes with the overall effect of the Palladian north front would be adjusted or removed (O'Connor, 1990, paragraph, 0.3.2.0.). The south front of the house as it stood was imbalanced and it was proposed to construct a new two-story bedroom wing on the eastern side of the house to reflect the west side (O'Connor, 1990, paragraph, 0.3.2.0.). This would provide the necessary bedrooms either side of the main block. It would also balance the south front as presented to the formal gardens. The extending of the house on the east side had been proposed before, firstly by Frederick Darley (Junior) in the 1830s, and again by Daniel Robertson in 1843 (Griffin, 1989, no page numbers) but neither of these schemes had been carried out. To finance this rebuilding, other developments would have to be carried out around the estate.

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A 150-bedroom hotel with a conference centre was proposed for a site near the Killing Hollow to the east of Powerscourt House (O'Connor, 1990, paragraph, 0.3.3.0.).

A Day Visitor Centre was proposed to continue to allow public access to Powerscourt. This would be located in an old gravel pit located near the gardens and surrounded by mature trees. Parking facilities and a tourist shop and tearooms would be provided. A bridge would be constructed to allow pedestrian access from the visitor centre, across the Killing Hollow to the gardens (O'Connor, 1990, paragraph, 0.3.4.0.).

A country club was to be situated to the west of the house on the site of the existing farm buildings. The club would have three parts, an 18-hole golf club with clubhouse, an equestrian centre and a main recreation building containing a restaurant and function rooms, squash courts and a swimming pool (O'Connor, 1990, paragraph, 0.3.5.0.).

A championship golf course was proposed for the area in front of the north front of the house. It was to be constructed using the natural topography of the landscape with the addition of greens and tees. New broad leaf trees would be planted to restore the land to the condition and layout, as drawn up by Thomas Reading in 1740. This layout existed as recently as forty years ago but since then trees have died and the landscape has changed. The clubhouse for this golf course would be located to the northeast of Powerscourt House just off the Beech Avenue. The building would be two stories high, of straightforward rectangular shape with a slate roof. The lower level would be hidden by an existing mound and would accommodate locker rooms and utility areas. The upper level

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which would be level with the golf course would accommodate the bar and function rooms (O'Connor, 1990, paragraph, 0.3.6.0.).

The National Building Agency plan also proposed to build residential accommodation on the estate. This was necessary in order to properly finance the restoration of Powerscourt House and Estate. There would be three types of accommodation on the estate spread around six different locations. The three types of accommodation proposed were tourist residential, retirement residential and private residential.

Tourist residential

The proposal was for 113 units, 80 self contained one and two story houses and 33 self contained apartments. These were for tourists who wanted to stay in non-hotel accommodation. They would be constructed using existing farm, mill and laundry buildings, and some purpose built buildings. The new buildings would maintain the style of construction and layout of the existing buildings. They would be located near the west side of the Powerscourt House (O'Connor, 1990, paragraph, 0.3.7.1.).

Retirement Residential

The retirement housing would be located in a woodland clearing 350 metres to the west of Powerscourt House. The housing would consist of a 38 unit two story courtyard complex, three single story units and some communal buildings (O'Connor, 1990, paragraph, 0.3.7.2.).

Private Residential

This would be located at four different locations around the estate. The first of these is Eagle Gate where 150 units would be built. It

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is located in a 35-acre gravel pit near the village of Enniskerry and is screened from the estate by a commercial conifer plantation. It would comprise of 122 houses in eight house types and 28 apartments (O'Connor, 1990, paragraph, 0.3.7.3.).

The second scheme of nine detached dormer bungalows would be located near the North lodge on the north end of the estate and would have access directly onto the Glencree road.

The third site, a seven-acre field, is also near the north lodge. Twenty seven detached houses were proposed for this location which is surrounded on four sides by trees.

Ten detached houses were proposed for a site close to the country club.

Master Plan

A masterplan was produced as part of the overall plan to ensure that the work would follow a specific structure. The plan would be implemented over a ten year period and contained a phased approach to the development of housing and amenities and the restoration of the house. The intention was that only a certain amount of housing and amenities could be constructed before work had to be carried out on Powerscourt House. Then more houses could be built and further work done to the main house. This was to be a requirement of the planning authority designed to ensure that the estate would not end up with 350 houses and all the other planned developments but with Powerscourt House still in ruin.

The overall development plan of the estate also provided an income

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which ensured that, once the house was restored and all other building work done, the estate could be maintained in the future.

In April of 1991 the Slazenger family sought planning permission from the Wicklow County Council Planning Authority. It included the eight volume Environmental Impact Study prepared by the National Building Agency Ltd. and incorporated the views of the Wicklow County Council with whom the National Building Agency had been in close contact during the preparation of the submission (Abbott King, 1996, p.90). There were objections to the application made by local residents groups, environmentalist groups, the office of public works and an Taisce. An Taisce's objection was that the scale of the development would be injurious to the amenities of the estate. The other objectors were afraid of the impact such a development would have on the Powerscourt Demesne and the village of Enniskerry (Abbott King, 1996, p.90). The Planning Authority amended the application several times and eventually granted permission for a modified development with less residential units. Permission was refused for the nine houses at the north lodge, the retirement homes, and the country club housing. Permission was granted for the two hotels, the two golf courses, the leisure centre, the visitors centre and for 150 houses at the Eagle Gate site.

The plan for the development of the estate with housing and amenities was a large one.

In 1994 the Slazenger family decided that the plan for the conversion of the house into a hotel would limit public access to the formal gardens and submitted a revised application. This new proposal incorporated the restoration of the principle rooms of the



house and conversion of other rooms into tearooms, a restaurant and a conference centre and the building of 100 rather than 150 houses at the Eagle Gate. Permission was granted with no refusals.



Chapter 5

The Redevelopment

Powerscourt House was opened to the public by President Mary Robinson on Friday 27 June 1997 for the first time since the fire of 4 November 1974. The house that was opened is an altogether different house to the one that was burned twenty-three years previously. In this chapter the present house will be examined to see how it fits in with the overall history of the house.



Fig.18 North front (1998), with Georgian panes and plate glass

Powerscourt House as it stands today could hardly be described as Powerscourt House Restored. The Richard Castle North front, which survived the fire quite well, has been repaired in keeping with Castle's original designs. The windows, however, are glazed with a mixture of Georgian panes and plate glass (fig.18), which takes from the overall appearance of the front. In Castle's design they all had glazing bars, as was the norm at the time (Griffin,



1989, no page number). As the nineteenth century progressed, plate glass windows became popular, replacing those with glazing bars. Apart from the glazing the north front looks striking and is an excellent example of the work of Richard Castle.



Fig. 19
Section of the
South Front
with Georgian
panes and
plate glass

The south front, which also survived the fire well, has been repaired to the Castle design as executed in 1760-1770. Here too the window glazing alternates between panes and plate glass which looks non-authentic (fig.19). The domes on top of the bows which were completely destroyed by the fire have been replaced. Here, instead of using copper, green glass fibre has been used to imitate copper. This works quite well and presumably saved a lot of



money, but the plastic quality of the domes is apparent even when viewed from the ground.

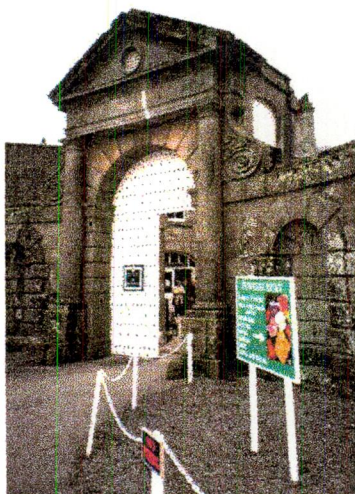


Fig. 20
Development
at Eagle Gate

The 1990s interior of the house is quite different from that of the house that was so badly burned in the fire of 1974. The garden rooms of the south front, now house a restaurant. The kitchen, service areas, servant's rooms, pantries, and larders of the west wing now house the shopping area. The entrance hall, which had its magnificent plasterwork destroyed in the fire, now houses an exhibition of the history of Powerscourt. Above the entrance hall the saloon, which was totally destroyed in the fire, has had a partial restoration. No room has had a complete restoration or even anything approaching it.

Fig. 21

The building is now entered through
the West Triumphal Arch





Prior to the 1996-97 development of Powerscourt, pressure had been increasing on the Slazengers to do something with the house. This was mainly because they had been informed that the building was gradually sinking into greater disrepair and would eventually end up collapsing into the garden. Also, visitors to the house would always ask what were the plans for the future of the house (Slazenger, 28/1/98). The number of visitors too, to the garden was increasing every year and the facilities to deal with them, coffee shop, shop and toilets were proving to be inadequate. So something had to be done. (Slazenger, 28/1/98). The National Building Agency was contacted to investigate the options.

The proposed restoration, Option 4 (from Chapter 4), as put forward by the National Building Agency and for which planning permission was sought has not been carried out. A much more subdued approach has been taken. According to Sarah Slazenger, manager of Powerscourt and granddaughter to the original Slazengers who bought Powerscourt in the 1960s, a simpler approach was better. "There is no way that the garden could remain open to the public if the house was a five star hotel" (Slazenger 28/1/98). It would be impossible to charge people a few pounds to walk around the garden and expect others to pay hundreds to stay at the hotel. Also the development would have meant the building of a two-story extension onto the east wing. The proposed extension was described as "disastrous and ugly" by Sarah Slazenger. Also "the cost (of the whole development) would have been astronomical" (Slazenger, 28/1/98).

Although planning permission was sought for the building of the hotels, houses and other amenities, (Option D) there was never

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really an intention of getting into such a full scale development. Planning permission was sought for the maximum development to see what possibilities were available, then the development was scaled back to what is there now (Slazenger, 28/1/98).



Fig. 22 The shops at Powerscourt offer a range of quality products

The planning permission for the 100 houses at Eagle Gate was the key to the development (fig.20). The timing was just right also, with the dramatic increase in property prices and the demand for housing, the necessary cash could be raised. Also to make the houses more appealing automatic membership to the new golf club on the estate was available to anyone buying a house (Slazenger, 28/1/98). By not converting the house into a hotel and by scaling down the development of housing and other amenities on the estate less money was generated. This meant that less cash was available to put into the development of the house and therefore only a partial restoration could be carried out. The details of this



restoration of the house and the use the house has been put to will be assessed in the remainder of this chapter.



Fig. 23 The layout of the shops is unclear with one leading into the next

The building is no longer accessed by the front entrance hall, but through the west Triumphal arch in the north front (fig.21). Once through the arch and into the courtyard, newly constructed toilet facilities to cater for the public are positioned to the right hand side of the yard. These were constructed incorporating some of the original walls of the building and roofed using old slates. The house itself is entered through a door on the opposite side of the courtyard from the Triumphal arch. This entrance which would have lead into the domestic area, the kitchen and service offices, now leads directly into the shopping area of the house. The shops are located in the rooms where the kitchen, kitchen corridor, butler's pantry, butler's room, serving room, servant's room,



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larders and pantries were located. These rooms have had all doors and architraves removed and the plaster has been stripped from the walls to reveal the brickwork underneath. The ceilings are flat plastered and the floors are mostly of timber planks with some stone flags. There are shops selling woollen garments (fig.22), jewellery, crockery, preserves, gardening products, a bookshop and a shop specialising in Waterford Crystal. The shops are run by Avoca Handweavers, Kilmacanogue, Co Wicklow, as is the restaurant. There is a certain chaos about the warren like layout of most of the shops with one shop leading into the next (fig.23).



Fig. 24 The bookshop in the newly glazed courtyard

The bookshop is in the glazed courtyard located behind Castle's west pavilion (fig. 24). This used to be an open yard but with the construction of a glazed wall on the open end and a glazed roof with pine beams above, it is now a bright, airy space. There is an escalator running up the side of this courtyard to a balcony level

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constructed above. This escalator looks very out of place and does nothing for the appearance of the space. According to Sarah Slazenger the escalator will be necessary to accommodate extra visitors. The plan is to open more shops and galleries on the first floor level of the west wing, where the servant quarters were located (Slazenger, 21/1/98).



Fig. 25
The
restaurant
serves a
range of
quality food

The Restaurant and Shops.

The restaurant and shops at Powerscourt House are run by Avoca Handweavers, who are located about two miles down the road at Kilmacanogue, County Wicklow. Avoca Handweavers manufacture and sell a range of quality goods. They are well known for their hand weaves and produce their own range of clothing and knitted garments. They also source and retail a wide range of goods including pottery, glass, jewellery, foodstuffs and some other items that are directed towards the tourist market. Their restaurants provide a wide range of quality food (fig.25), which has become well known. Avoca Handweavers was

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purchased by the Pratt family in 1974. Although the history of the factory goes back as far as the 1700s, it was not actually producing any product when it was bought in 1974. On acquiring the factory the Pratts reopened it and built it into a business with outlets around the country at Kilmacanogue Co. Wicklow, Avoca Co Wicklow, Bunratty Co. Limerick, Letterfrack Co. Galway, Molls Gap, Kenmare, Ring of Kerry and one each in the United States and Canada.



Fig. 26

The exposed brick, concrete floors and steel decking had to be converted into a restaurant over a short period of time

According to Simon Pratt, who is a co-director of Avoca Handweavers and Powerscourt along with his sister Amanda Pratt, there were a few reasons why they opened at Powerscourt. Powerscourt, Pratt considered, would be a good place to market their type of goods and to serve their type of food. “It fits in well with the Avoca type of product” (Pratt 28/1/98). Also, as Powerscourt is located close to Avoca’s Kilmacanogue shop, Pratt considered that it would not be beneficial to have the competition in his own backyard! He also felt that there was enough overflow

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business from the Kilmacanogue shop to make the Powerscourt venture viable (Pratt 28/1/98).

Time was very short from Avoca Handweavers getting the contract to open at Powerscourt, January 1997, to the time of the opening on 22 June 1997. They were walking into a premises with bare concrete floors, exposed brick walls and the steel decking of the concrete floors over head for ceilings (fig.26). They had to come up with a style for the restaurant and shops, carry out the necessary construction work and install the shop fittings and merchandise in a relatively short time. Also some of the merchandise would have to be sourced.



Fig 27

Tiffany blue is the predominant colour used in the restaurant

It was decided that Amanda Pratt, director, buyer and designer at Avoca Handweavers would take on the task of designing the interiors herself. To try to imitate what was there before the fire would have been very expensive and would have taken too much time. “To do a cheap imitation would have been a sham, so a fresh approach was necessary. Anyway none of the original furnishings or paintings survive” (Pratt, 21/1/98).



“I decided the best approach was to be bold and fresh, using simple window casings, plain walls with one strong colour and furniture that was simple and practical.” Quote from Amanda Pratt (Egan, 1997, p.76). With these ideas in mind Pratt proceeded to design the restaurant and shops. The restaurant is located in four rooms, formerly the Octagon Library, the Drawing Room, the Morning Room, the Dining Room and there is a terrace in the garden on the south front. For the floors Pratt ordered special nine inch planks which were stained in “piano room brown” (Egan, 1997, p.76). The wider planks are more in keeping with houses from the Powerscourt era.



Fig.28
Swedish
Skansa style
chairs in the
restaurant

The predominant colour used in the restaurant is Tiffany blue (fig.27). The inspiration for this colour came from a Tiffany’s shopping bag according to Simon Pratt (Pratt 21/7/97). Other than white this blue is the only colour used in the restaurant. It is used on some of the walls of the restaurant, the legs of the tables and on some details in the shops. The furniture used in the restaurant is simple and plain (fig.28). The chairs are a Swedish Skansa style painted a creamy white. The tables are also simple but contain some clever details, which link them to the modern new design of the restaurant but are also a reminder that the restaurant is located

in an eighteenth century house. The table tops are painted creamy white and the legs are painted Tiffany blue. Each of the legs has vertical grooves moulded into them, in imitation of the style of fluted colonnades or pilasters. The grooves are painted in gold paint. There are Roman inscriptions on the side panels of the tables, again painted in gold. Amanda Pratt scoured Latin for Today for the lettering and words. According to Simon Pratt the lettering is frivolous, just a bit of fun. (Pratt, 21/1/98). But it is a subtle if not humorous link back to the Palladian architecture of Powerscourt House.

Two Waterford Crystal chandeliers hang in two of the four rooms of the restaurant. The eighteenth century Italian marble mantelpieces of these rooms have long since gone, either destroyed in the fire or subsequently sold at auction in 1984. These have been replaced by new stone fireplaces (fig.29), surmounted by gilt overmantels which pick up the gilt on the tables.



Fig. 29

**The new mantelpieces in
the restaurant**

The octagon room (fig.30) with its balloon back chairs, fireplace with overmantel, glass chandelier and period style window casings

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works very well. The room, although plain and simple and lacking any of the paintings or furnishings of the original eighteenth century room is in perfect keeping with the style of the original eighteenth century house. The pottery and crockery used in the restaurant is a new range, also Tiffany blue, which Avoca Handweavers specially commissioned from potter Geoffrey Healy, Kilmacanogue Co. Wicklow. The range which is also on sale in the shop is titled Avoca Blue.



Fig. 30 The New Octagon Room

The serving area of the restaurant is located in what was formerly the Drawing Room (fig.31). The Morning Room now contains a seating area (fig.32) and the Dining Room now known as the Café Bar (fig.33) contains a central bar area which is used to serve coffees and desserts. There is a terrace (fig.34) which runs across the south front of the house. This currently runs along the length of the Dining and Morning Rooms but there are plans to extend it to



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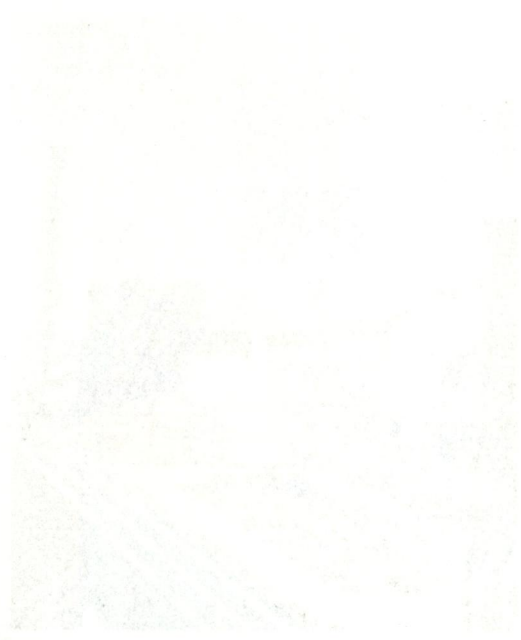
take in the area adjacent to the octagon room and the garden café. It is presently surrounded by a wooden lattice fence but in the new plans for the terrace it will be surrounded by balustrades modelled on the ones found at the front of the house. According to Simon Pratt, Michael Slazenger (who was the previous generation to Sarah Slazanger), did not want to alter the outside of the house. He was apprehensive about doing anything that would alter the exterior, even the laying of paving slabs across the back of the house (Pratt, 28/1/98). The north and south facades were hardly damaged by the fire and the garden was as it always had been. Whatever about making alterations inside the house, it had after all been burnt down, the outside of the house should remain the same. But in the end Slazenger conceded to laying the existing terrace and with further negotiations has agreed to extend the paved area and construct the balustrade (Pratt, 28/1/98).



Fig.31

The serving area of the restaurant is located in what was the Drawing Room of the eighteenth century house

The Café Bar was originally designed to be a restaurant with a chef working within the central oval shaped station. “The intention was



that it would have waiter service and a relaxed atmosphere” (Pratt, 28/1/98).



Fig. 32 A seating area in the restaurant in what was the Morning Room with fireplace, overmantel, and Waterford Crystal chandelier

What he didn't count on was the unprecedented success of the venture immediately it opened on 22 June 1997. “On the first day of opening (Sunday 22/6/97) we served 3,000 people in the restaurant” (Pratt 28/1/98). The restaurant was designed to seat 250 people. For the year ending 1997, the number of visitors to Powerscourt has risen to 250,000 from 157,000 the previous year (Pratt, 28/1/98). In the six months that the restaurant and shops have been open the number of visitors to Powerscourt has increased by over 60%.



**Fig. 33
The Café Bar
situated in the
Dining room**



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As a result of the success of the restaurant and shops at Powerscourt, Pratt has been forced to shut down the shops and restaurant from 1/2/98 until 1/3/98. This is to allow for alterations to be carried out. The restaurant will get a new layout, designed to better cope with the larger crowds. The shops will have some of the doorways widened and some walls removed. Also the stock will be assessed to determine what has worked and what hasn't.



Fig. 34
The terrace runs along the South Front overlooking the formal gardens

When the Pratts decided to open at Powerscourt it was with the intention of creating a new brand, completely separate from the Avoca name. “We decided to trade on aspects of the house” (Pratt, 28/1/98). The idea was to create a new label, the Powerscourt label and use it to market a range of products including garments, pottery and foods. “In the end we had to include Avoca products along with the Powerscourt ones. Short runs (of a product) through the factory were not feasible.” (Pratt, 28/1/98). The products on the shelves in Powerscourt include foods, preserves and chocolates with the Powerscourt label (fig.35) and pottery and clothing with the Avoca brand. There are other well known brands such as Burberry of London, Magee, Waterford Crystal and a range of Newbridge cutlery designed by Paul Costelloe.

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The products on sale at Powerscourt are quality items. If there was too much tourist tack, that would be a disaster for the Irish market. Too much Aran would lose credibility and Christmas business, yet a lot of the customers are tourists. (Pratt, 28/1/98). “We have to balance the tourist products with the other products. We want to stock products that I would be proud of, that Irish people would be proud of” (Pratt, 28/1/98).

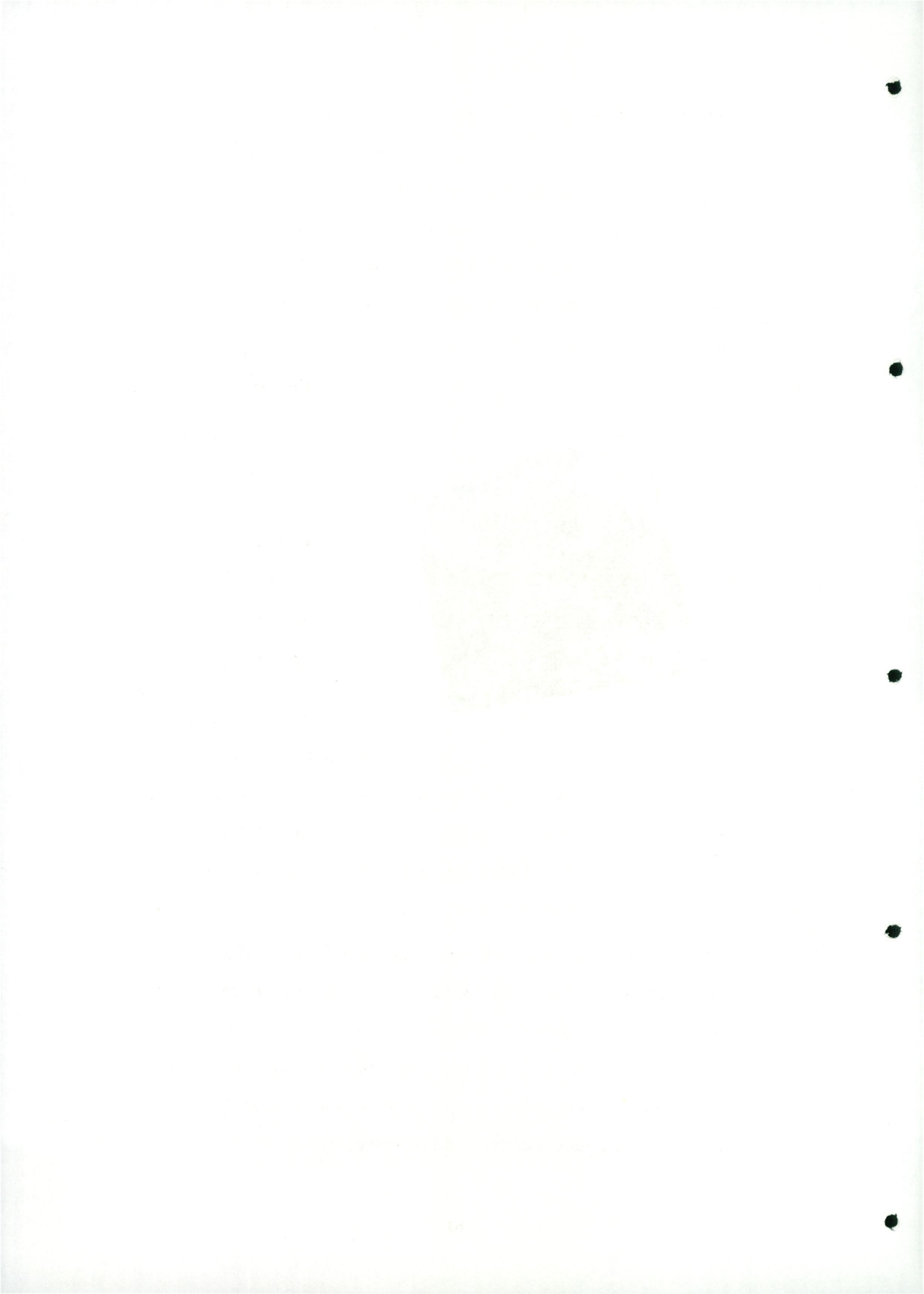


Fig. 35

The Powerscourt bag has an illustration featuring the house and garden as part of the product identity

The restaurant at Powerscourt is bright and spacious, with a fresh atmosphere and even with its modern design it still has the character of an eighteenth century house. This is due to its sympathetic design with attention paid to the smallest details as well as the overall appearance.

The restaurant has one of the most spectacular views of any restaurant anywhere, overlooking the terraced gardens, the Dargle Valley and the Sugarloaf Mountain. A very positive sign too, is the willingness of the Pratts to close down their business for a month to make alterations in order to improve the restaurant and shops and therefore the total experience of Powerscourt.



Entrance Hall

The entrance hall at Powerscourt is no longer the entrance hall, but now houses an exhibition space (fig.36). The entrance is now located inside the house, near the shops, just off the glazed courtyard. The space is dramatically different from the room that stood in this place before the fire of 1974. The lighting level is low, as opposed to the bright white plastered and painted room of Richard Castle's designs. With the exception of a few small details none of the magnificent plasterwork remains. The ceiling is painted black, presumably to accommodate the film show of the history of Powerscourt, which is shown every 20 minutes or so. The arches, which were once adorned with the scallop and cockleshell plasterwork, are now bare brick. The floor of the hall, originally of Portland stone has been replaced by a new Portland stone floor. There is a free standing screen in the middle of the floor, which is used to show the historical film. This is surrounded by a frame which has the scallop and cockleshell design moulded into it. This is a reminder of what was here before. In front of the screen are around 30 loosely placed seats, which seem to have little in common with the room either before or after the fire. Behind the screen is more of the exhibition. This comprises mostly of flatwork such as photos, drawings and copies of paintings, with some statuary. There is also a scale model of the entrance hall with the saloon above it (fig.37), which gives a good idea of what these rooms must have looked like.

This room as it stands today is nothing like the entrance hall of Richard Castle. The brick arches, are in there own right, quite interesting looking but are nothing when compared to the splendid

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plasterwork that once covered them. There is a flat black ceiling where there was once a highly decorated compartmented one. None of the collections of antlers, armour or canons survives.

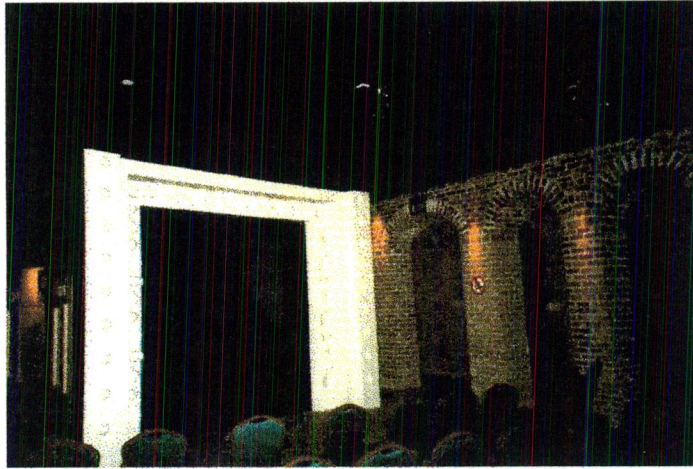


Fig.36
The
entrance
hall now
houses an
exhibition

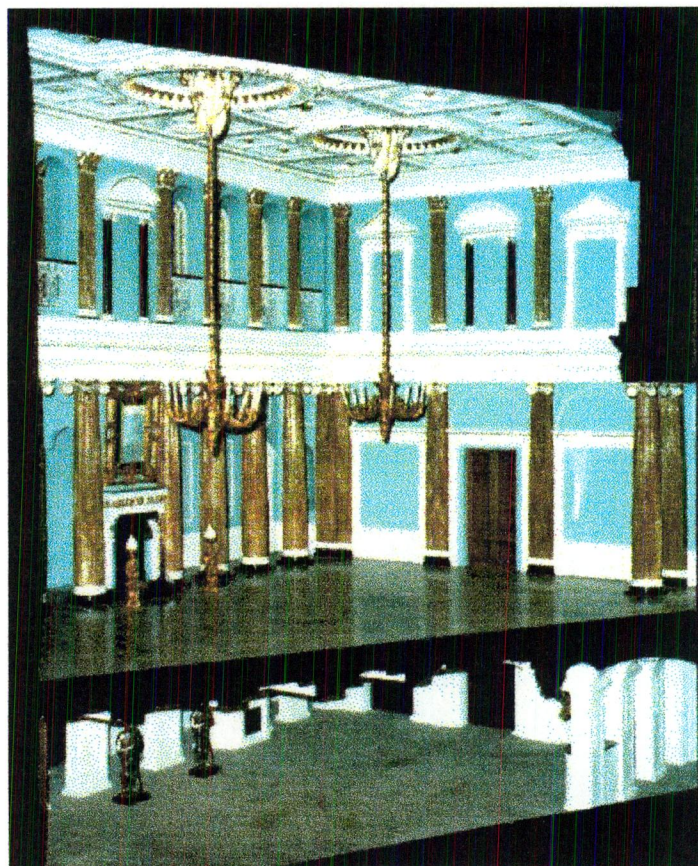
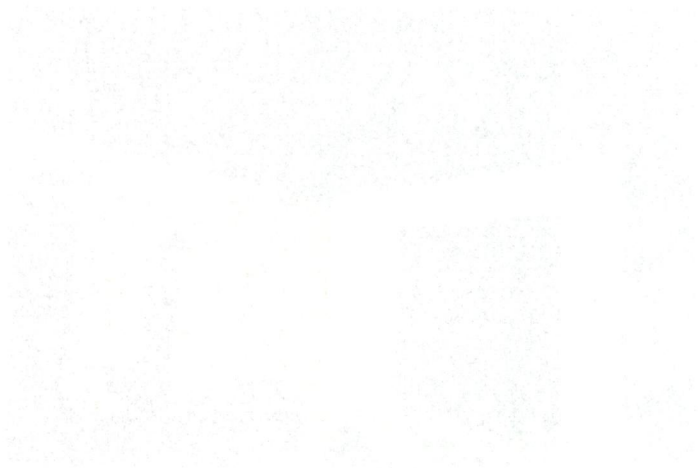


Fig. 37
Scale
model of
the Saloon
and
Entrance
Hall as
they stood
before the
fire

The film show of the history of the house and the Wingfields is very informative. The scale model of the saloon and entrance hall



is also interesting, but overall the exhibition is disappointing. There is nothing here, of the original eighteenth century house, for a visitor to come face to face with. If the museum had a room restored to its original condition or even a section of a room, with original furniture and clothing such as ball gowns etc., there would be something tangible to look at. As it stands visitors to the house do not really get to see anything of the original eighteenth century house. According to Simon Pratt the exhibition is a problem area in that it does not provide a “rainy day attraction”. He believes that it could be improved (Pratt 28/1/98).



Fig. 38
The Staircase
Hall with it's
reconstructed
stair and
balustrade

Staircase

The saloon, located directly above the entrance hall, is accessed via the main staircase. The staircase itself (fig.38) has been

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reconstructed in keeping with the eighteenth century original which was destroyed in the fire. Some of the original wrought iron balustrade survived the fire and this was copied to construct a new balustrade. The cantilevered mahogany steps have also been copied exactly to the originals. What is missing though is all the elaborate plasterwork and rusticated bottom section of the room. The two stained glass windows in the hall, which were completely destroyed in the fire, have been replaced with simple Georgian style windows with frosted panes. While the replacement staircase itself is impressive the overall effect of this room is only a shadow of the original eighteenth century room.

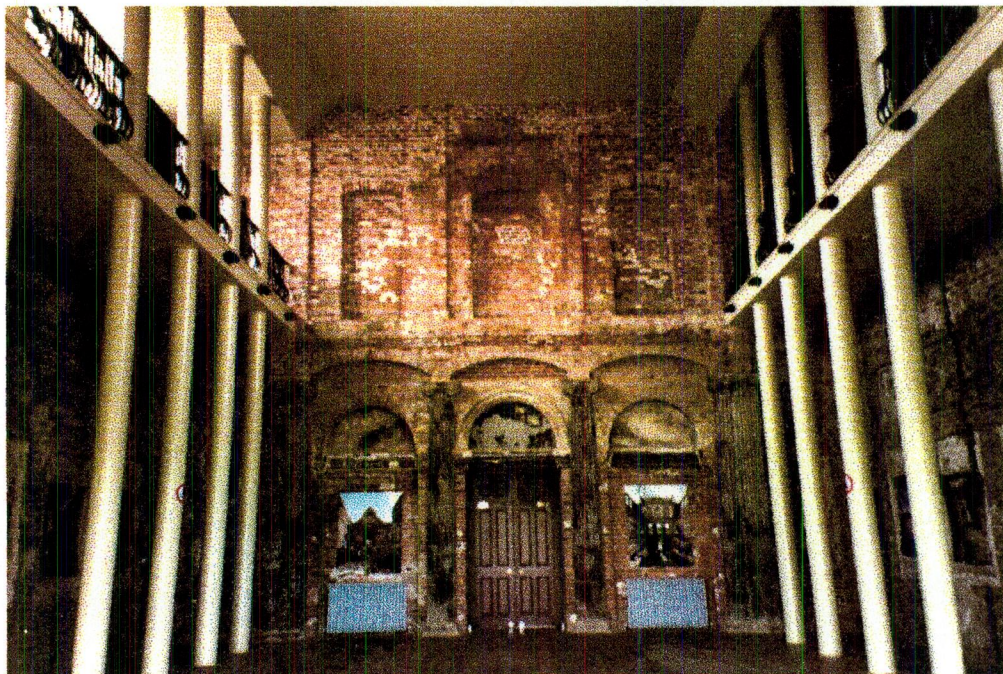


Fig. 39 The Saloon (1998)

The Saloon

The staircase leads to the saloon, located above the entrance hall. The saloon (fig.39) was by far the most ornate and most impressive room in the house. In fact it was amongst the most impressive

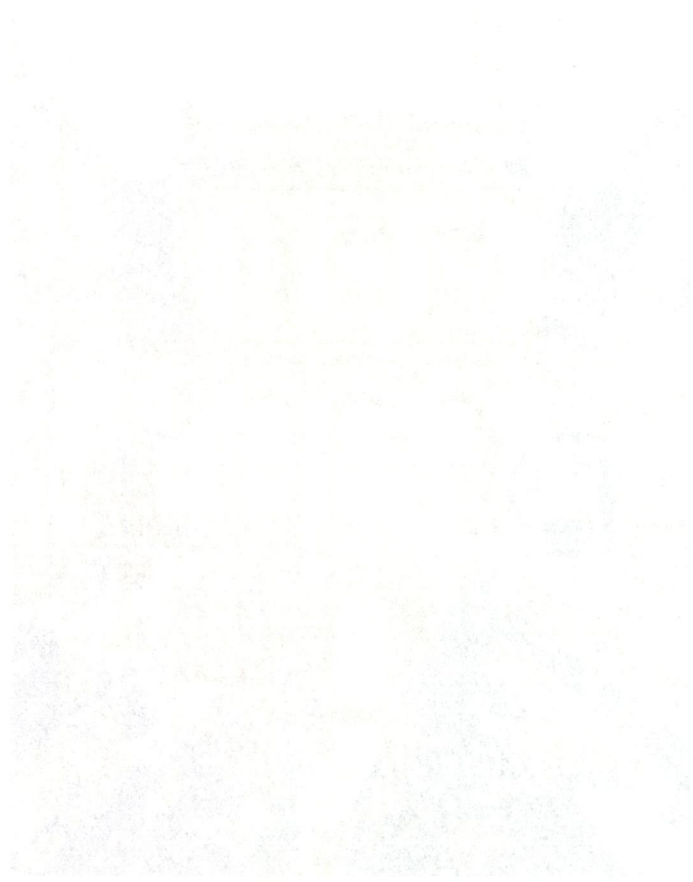


rooms of any houses in the country. The saloon as it stands today, after the 1996-97 development of Powerscourt House, does not compare with the eighteenth century interior. Gone are all the elements which made it the room it was. Gone is the walnut parquetry floor, the gilded compartmented ceiling, the Sienna marble finished colonnades and pilasters, the gilt chandeliers and the Italian marble fireplace. What stands today is basically the brick shell of the original saloon.



Fig.40
The Saloon
and
Entrance
Hall under
construction

The photograph of the saloon in (fig.40) with the entrance hall below it was taken in the early days of the reconstruction during 1996. The picture shows the brick arches of the entrance hall being repaired. To reconstruct the arches 45,000 bricks had to be replaced as they had been destroyed in the fire. The replacement



bricks used have the same appearance as the original bricks. According to Paddy Byrne, Foreman, Cleary and Doyle Builders, Wexford, who carried out a lot of the restoration work, the mortar too was made to an original eighteenth century recipe. "It is a lime based putty which remains active and allows the walls to breath and should be good for a few more hundred years" (Byrne 28/1/98).

The floor of the saloon is constructed from steel and concrete and finished in solid oak planks. It has underfloor heating which is important to keep the room warm and free from damp and it also minimises the visual impact of a lot of heaters running along all the walls (Byrne 28/1/98).

There has been no attempt made to recreate the eighteenth century compartmented ceiling of the saloon. It has been replaced by a flat plastered one. The fluted colonnades and pilasters have been replaced with steel columns. Basically a roof has been put on top, windows replaced and a new floor installed.

But this is only the beginning. The intention is to keep working away at the Saloon and to keep on repairing and replacing aspects of it. The next job, which will be starting soon, is to re-clad the colonnades and repaint them in their Sienna marble finish (Slazenger, 28/1/98). "It would be nice to have at least one room in the house restored, but it may take 20 years" (Slazenger, 28/1/98). So it is possible that, given time and adequate funding, the saloon may someday be restored to its eighteenth century splendour. The house with its shops and restaurant and the gardens and garden centre and the golf club are all generating an income, which is being reinvested into the house. According to Slazenger,

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it is important that it “washes its own face”, in reference to the enterprise paying for itself so that the restoration work can continue (Slazenger, 28/1/98).

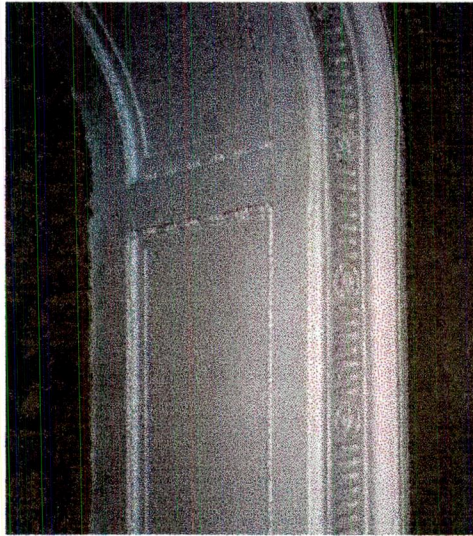
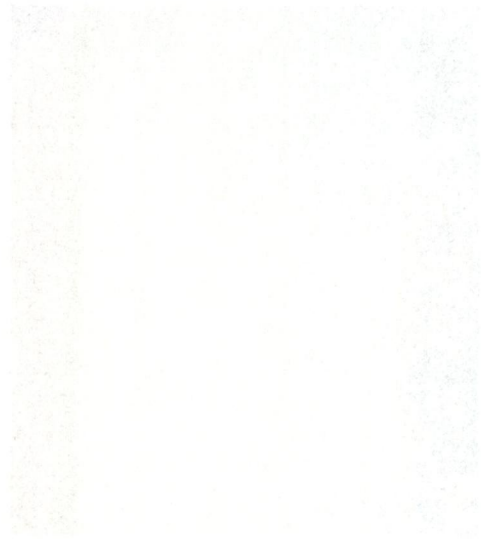


Fig.41

A restored section of plasterwork in Lady Powerscourt's sitting room

Attention is being paid to the standard of work on the house. The use of old bricks and old style mortar in the repairs to the entrance hall is an example of this. Lime putty mortar was also used to seal in the windows in the fronts. The windows themselves were reconstructed in timber and then painted with paint mould paint of the type originally used on them (Byrne 28/1/98). Another example of attention to detail is with the plaster details on the arches surrounding the alcoves in what was once Lady Powerscourt's Sitting Room (fig.41). Here the plaster had been destroyed on the upright sections, but it had survived across the top. To repair it to its original condition, a mould was made of the surviving section and new sections cast to replace the damaged ones. Again lime-based plaster was used, this time with original style jute sacking for structural strength. The overall effect is of a moulding that looks as good as the original and is constructed from the same materials.



Conclusion

There were several schemes and plans to restore Powerscourt offered and discussed and in the end one was executed. The restoration carried out from 1996-1997 has its merits and its pitfalls. The building has been saved from destruction by time and the elements but has not been restored in the true sense of the word. It has been sealed from the weather and fitted out with interesting amenities and is open to the general public. In the case of the National Building Agency's option D, access to the house and a great part of the estate would have become limited to a small minority.

The restoration proposed by the National Building Agency would also have involved the construction of new sections to the house, changing the shape and appearance of the house. How these new sections would be handled, whether or not they should be constructed to look like new build or as if they were a part of the original Castle design are important. It is possible that any alterations to the house such as the addition of bedroom wings, might harm the integrity and standing of the existing building. The restoration as carried out in 1996-97 did not alter the layout or the proportions of the house and so did nothing to limit any further restoration work.

The National Building Agency's proposed option D included a large amount of construction work around the estate and the conversion of the house into a hotel. The reason behind this is that they identified that it would take a lot of money to completely



restore the house and demesne to what they considered to be an acceptable condition. According to Matt O'Connor of the National Building Agency the 1996-97 restoration does not allow for the generation of any more capital and therefore no further work can be carried out unless financing can be raised from an outside source (O'Connor, Dec 1997).

But a different approach has been taken. Rather than raising the finance and carrying out the restoration immediately, a more long term restoration programme has been chosen. It may take 20 years to restore the saloon or maybe even forty or fifty, but in the mean time the house and gardens are there to be enjoyed by the general public. The advantage of carrying out a job such as this over a long period, is that time can be taken over decisions and hopefully hasty or rash modifications will be avoided.

To date, the standard of work carried out on the house has been high with respect paid to the integrity of this eighteenth century house. The restaurant's design is very much in tune with the Richard Castle designed house. Although the shops have not been restored they contain quality merchandise and have been fitted out simply and tastefully. They are not out of place in this eighteenth century house.

The facades of Powerscourt survived the fire well and have been repaired to the original eighteenth century design, with the exception of some of the glazing. The decision to construct a terrace with a balustrade all the way across the south front of the house is questionable. It is necessary from a commercial point of view and will be a huge attraction during the summer months but it leaves a lot to be desired when it comes to the integrity of the

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house. Unlike the interior of the house the exterior is totally original eighteenth century in design so it is important to maintain this and not carry out half hearted modifications.

The treatment of the interior of the house has been good in general. A lot of it was totally gutted by the fire. This has been roofed, and new floors, ceilings, doors, windows and electrical and mechanical services have been installed. This has saved the building from further destruction and enables further work to be carried, either restoration or adaptation to new uses such as the shops and restaurant. The principle room, the Saloon is undergoing a gradual restoration. Presently the room is not of much use. It is too large for most applications and doesn't have enough original detail left to make it an attraction worth looking at. But eventually it should be of interest and an extra attraction to visitors to the house. There is little point in restoring all the interiors of the house to their former glory because it was so badly destroyed, but to restore one room as an attraction is a good idea.

The treatment of the exhibition space located in the Entrance Hall is probably the biggest disappointment of the development. There is a need for some aspect of the original house to be on show. The saloon will eventually offer this but in the meantime this should be the job of the exhibition. At the moment the only authentic eighteenth century aspect of the house is the exteriors and the gardens. There is a need for something original inside the house as well as outside. It cannot be all shops and restaurants, there must be a balance.

The Slazenger's choice of development for Powerscourt was a good one. The house and gardens are there to be enjoyed by the

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general public. The integrity of the house has been maintained with few modifications to the eighteenth century design. With its new function and its adaptation to the needs and lifestyles of a different time Powerscourt House lives on.



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MEMORANDUM

TO : [Illegible]

FROM : [Illegible]

SUBJECT : [Illegible]

[The remainder of the memorandum text is illegible due to extreme fading.]

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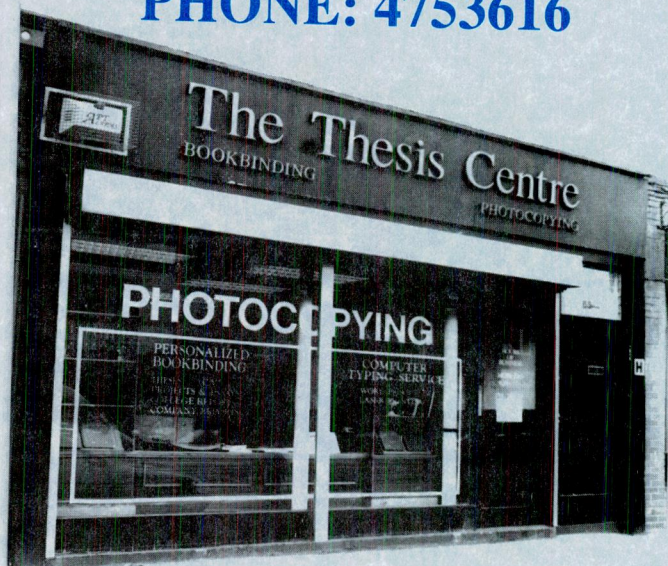
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