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National College of Art and Design  
Fine Art, Sculpture

## **Better the Devil you know,**

**an in depth look at three properties,  
the connecting factors being;  
the often corrupt, William 'Speaker' Conolly  
and stories of Devil apparitions and hauntings**

**by Louise Marlborough**

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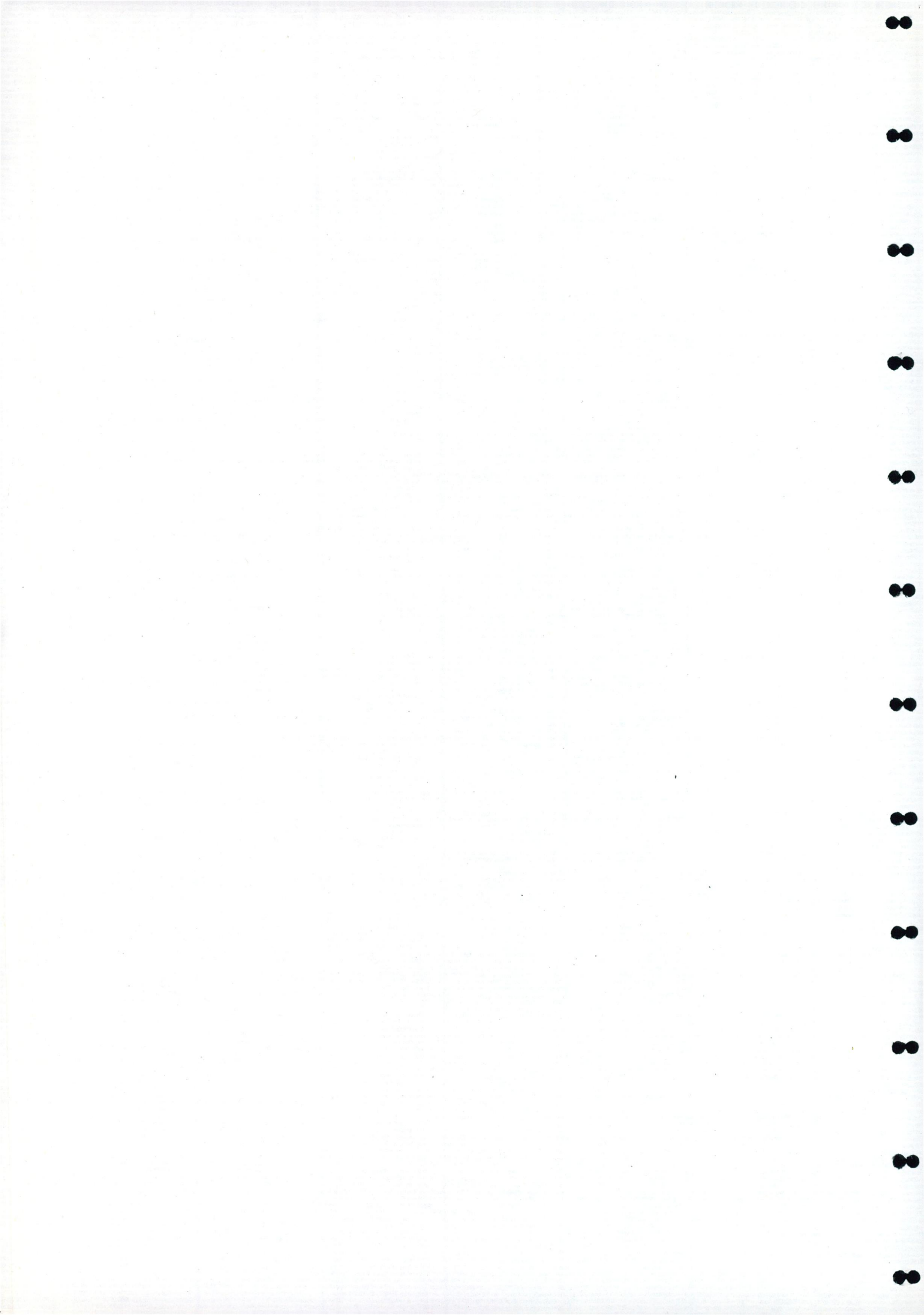


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INTRODUCTION



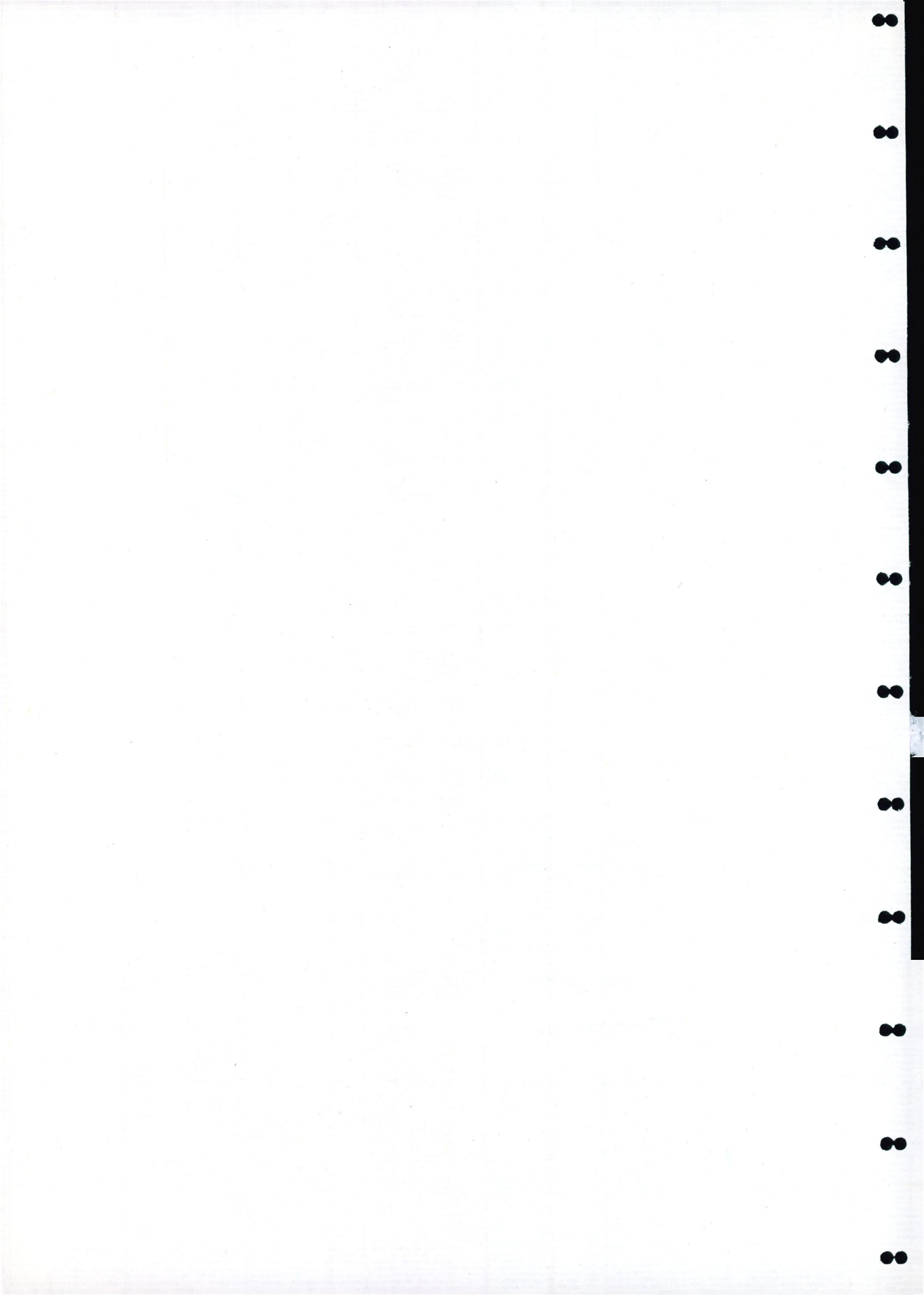
The aim of this thesis is to draw together a body of interdisciplinary information, in a coherent manner. Three distinct buildings will be at the centre of the discussion, namely the Hellfire Club, Castletown House and Rathfarnham Castle. The aim, through examination, is to show the connections between these buildings. The connections I have discovered involve a wide range of topics: cultural theory, biographical details, history, architecture and visual elements.

Why these particular properties, you may enquire? It might at first seem as if they were selected arbitrarily and that there is no obvious connection between them. They exist in isolation to each other, they were built at various times, by different architects, for their own unique purpose. Yet, one factor connects them all, in fact, one individual. The person in question being William Conolly. By the 1720s he owned all three properties, and several others. This was quite a tremendous achievement for one from quite humble beginnings.

Conolly was born in 1662, in Ballyshannon, Donegal. His parents owned an inn but William moved his career in a different direction. He qualified as an attorney. He advanced himself by dealing in forfeited estates in the period after the Battle of the Boyne. His acquisition of land and properties illustrate his great wealth. In a short space of time, he had acquired property in nine counties in Ireland including the aforementioned.

In support of Conolly as the connecting factor, it is believed that the Hellfire Club was built by Conolly in 1725 so that from there he could see two of his other great residences, Castletown House and Rathfarnham Castle. All the windows in the Hellfire Club face north, which gave him a magnificent view. In a visual sense, therefore, these sites are of particular significance.

Stories also connect the three buildings, and the theories that bind these stories are an integral part of the Irish tradition. The Hellfire Club stories which gave it its name, however, date from after Conolly's ownership of it. Many stories surround the building

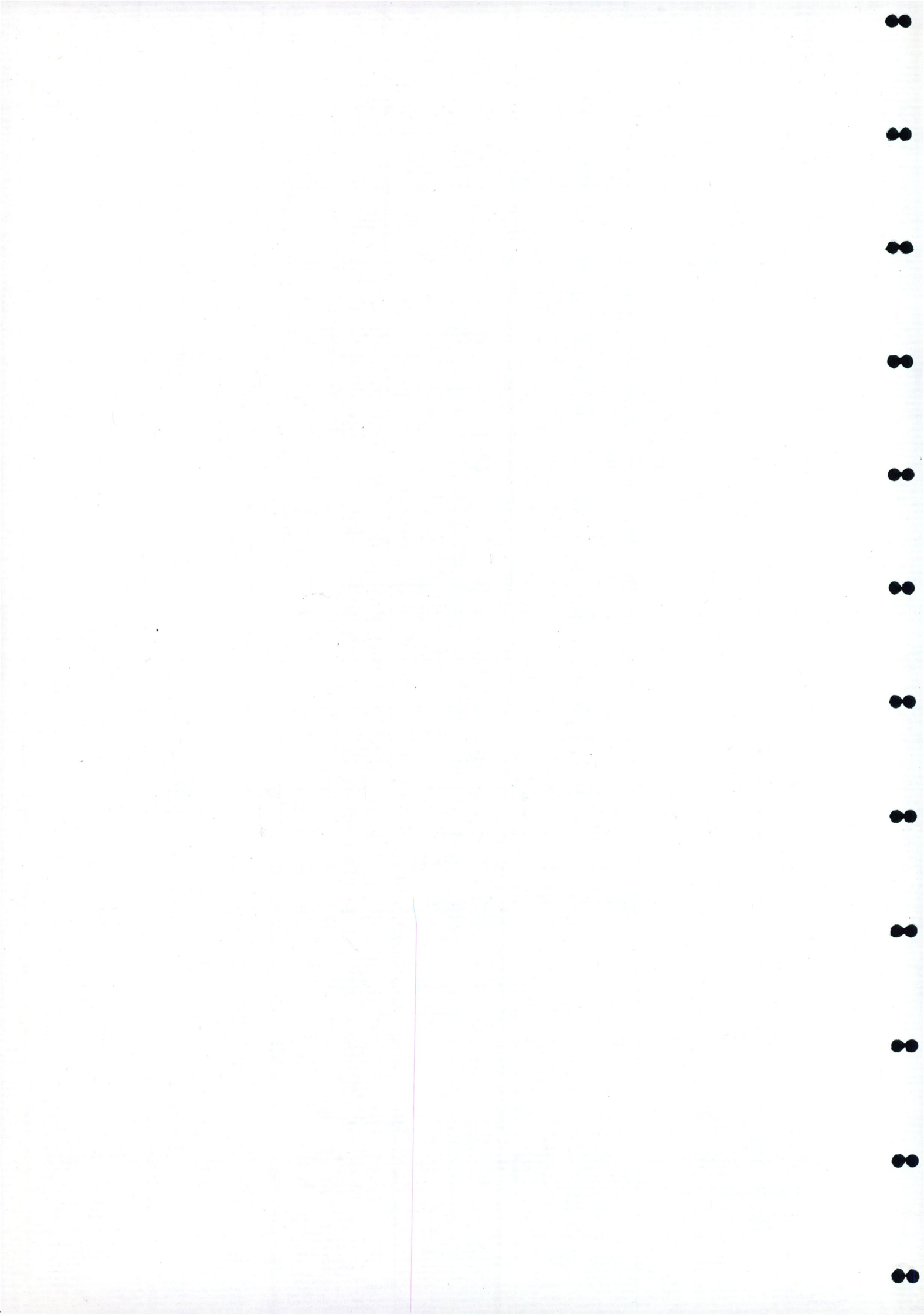


from the 1730s, due to the occupation of the Hellfire Club, who held their meetings there. These relate to apparitions of the Devil, in various forms, most commonly as a huge black cat. The Devil was also said to have appeared at Castletown, in the dining room. Furthermore, the idea of a specific room being subject to supernatural activities, links Castletown House to Rathfarnham Castle the latter of which is alleged to have a haunted room, found at the top of the north-east tower.

As properties of 'Speaker' Conolly, all had the connecting factor of being illustrations of his great and immense wealth. The fact that he had land and property in nine counties in Ireland shows that it was not for domestic reasons that he held all this property. He obviously could not, and he did not live, in them all. It is known that he added to his vast fortune by letting properties, one example is Rathfarnham Castle, acquired in 1723 from Philip, Duke of Wharton. In this way he fully exploited his property. On the other hand, Castletown House was custom built "as a symbol of importance and as a patriotic gesture" (OPW, 1995, p3) as well as a "statement of his own might and wealth" (Mulcahy, 1994, p11). The Hellfire Club was built as a shooting lodge and a summer residence.

On a basic architectural level, the three buildings are in vast contrast. The Hellfire Club is a solid stone building with monumental vaulting and cut stone, which has long since disappeared (fig 1.1) Castletown is a Palladian style building, which is similar to a sixteenth-century Italian town palace (fig 1.2). Finally, Rathfarnham Castle is not as its name suggests, a fortified castle, it is in fact, an Elizabethan House (fig 1.3).

On another note and in relation to the three buildings, certain concepts are brought into play. These are namely identity, globalisation and cultural geography. As part of identity, place is said to encapsulate and communicate identity (Duncan, 1993, p150). Furthermore, at its finest scale a house can be an expression of an individual (Cooper, 1974 quoted in Duncan, 1993, p150). Undoubtedly identity is a construction "which is never complete always in process and always constituting within.... representation" (Hall, 1990, p222 quoted in Barker, 1994, p175). In this manner, the old idea of



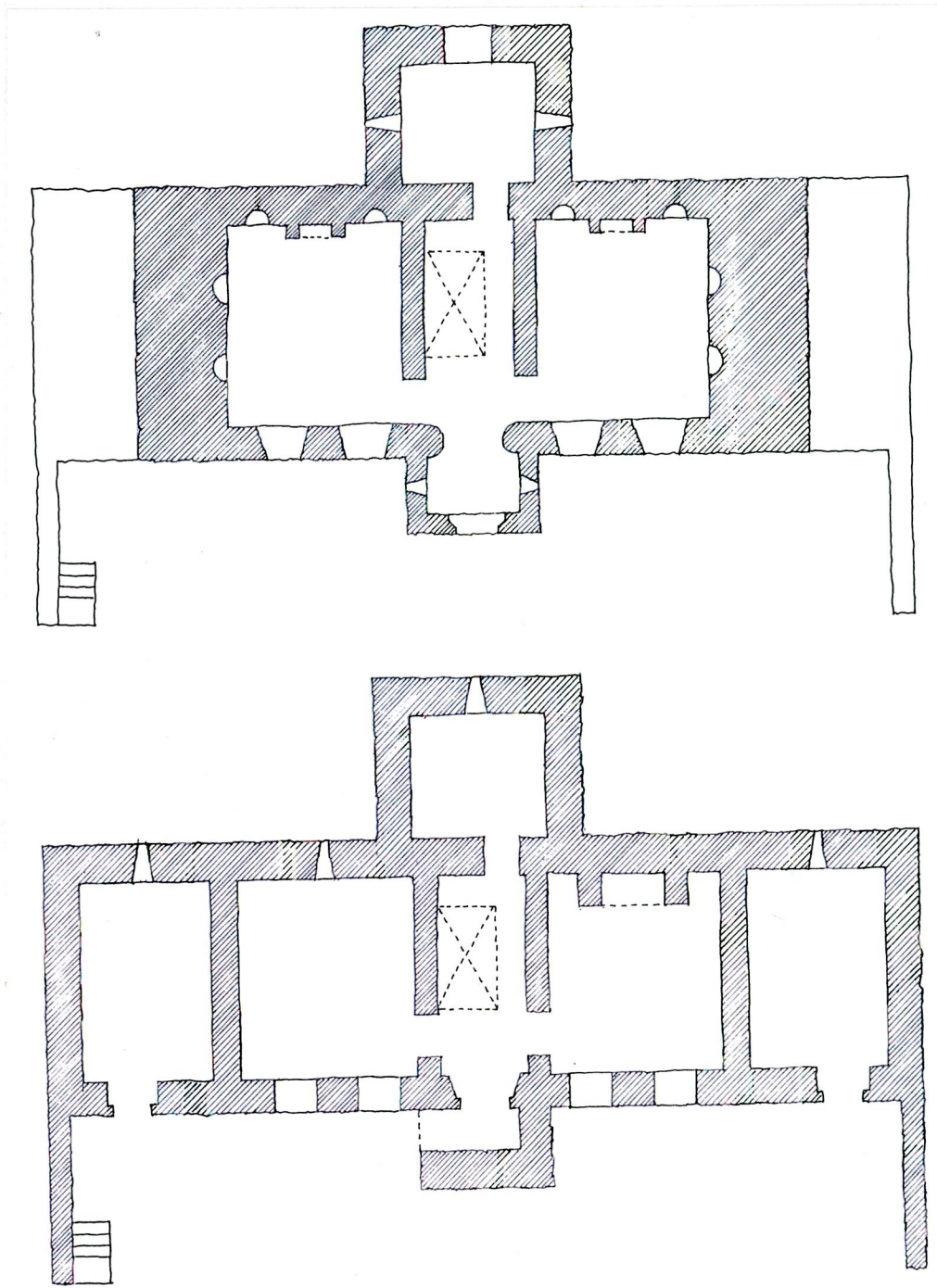
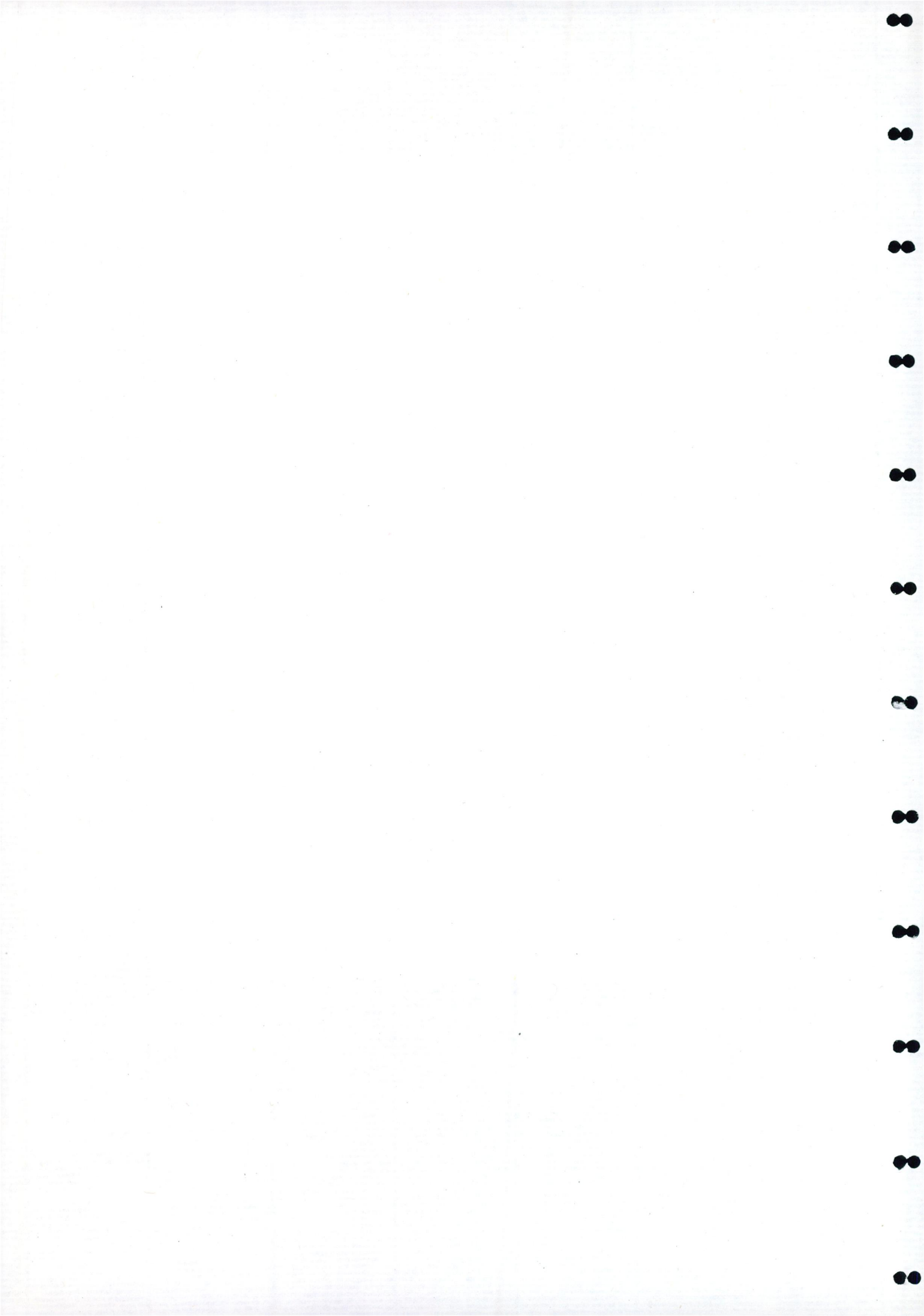


fig 1.1





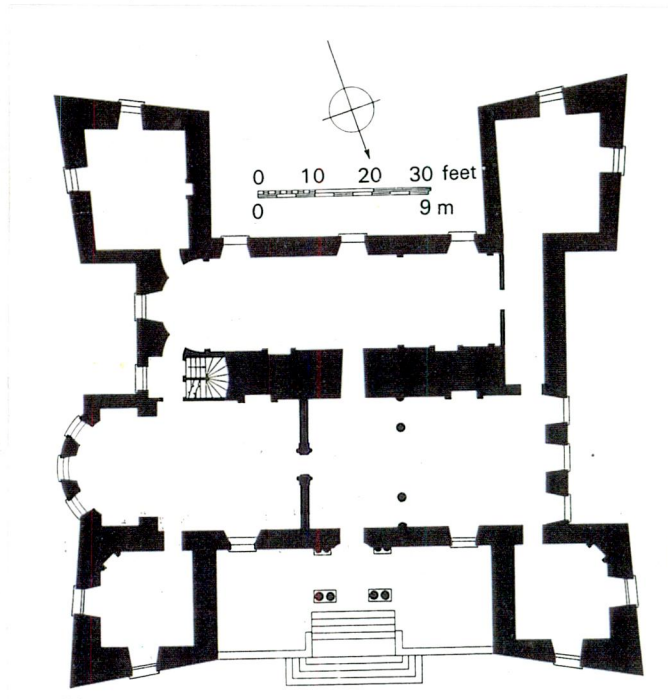
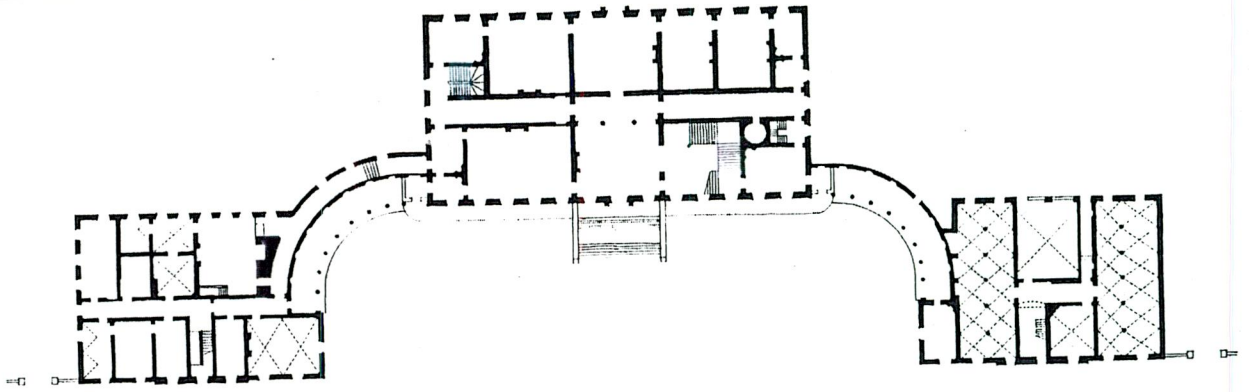
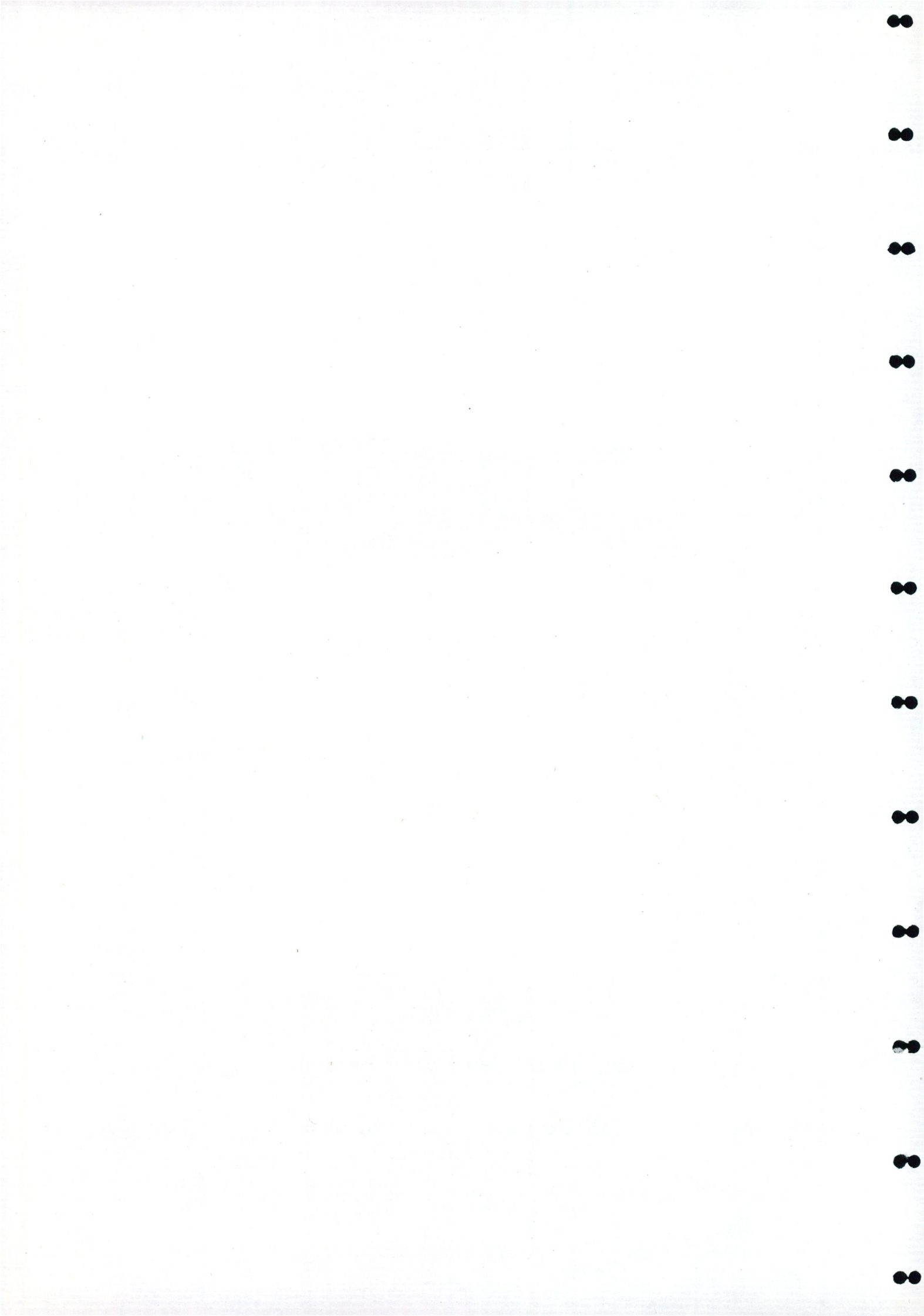


fig 1.2 (top) fig 1.3 (bottom)



identity, "which had stabilized the social world for so long" is in decline. A new identity that is fragmented and representative of the modern individual and the world we live in, is rising (Hall, 1992, p274). Ireland is essentially a traditional society, with an ancient and venerable history that is important to our nation. Anthony Giddens argues that in such a society "the past is honoured and symbols are valued because they contain and perpetuate the expression of generations" (Hall, 1992, p277). While national identity is indeed still well-founded, regional and local identity has become more significant (Hall, 1992, p302). These properties are not at the forefront of national identity. As regional and ethnic differences were subsumed they can be included under what Gellner refers to as the 'political roof' of the nation state (Hall, 1992, p292).

Hall also argues that, globalisation involves a shrinking of the globe and reconstituting it as 'one place' (Hall, 1992, p63). Worldwide links are therefore connected, links that transcend national and international boundaries (Hall, 1992, p65). In this thesis the buildings are linked in a previously unconnected manner. In this new global world, time and space are intensely compressed (Hall, 1992, p67).

Finally, the new cultural geography seeks to recover "the intimate relationship between people" and their environment (Duncan, 1993, p150). Cultural geography, like identity is concerned with a sense of place. Place, and in turn space, as a concept can be traced back and identified in the nineteenth century (Duncan, 1993, p267). Furthermore, space "is created out of the vast intricacies, the incredible complexities, of the interlocking and non-interlocking, and the network of relations at every scale from local to global" (Keith, 1995, p155-156). It would seem to me that not only are the three buildings linked but so too are these concepts. Space as determined in cultural geography can be shown to embody links and connections, like globalisation. In turn identity also refers to place and space, and like globalisation is evolving and changing.



CHAPTER ONE  
Chance, corruption and currency,  
the biography of William Conolly



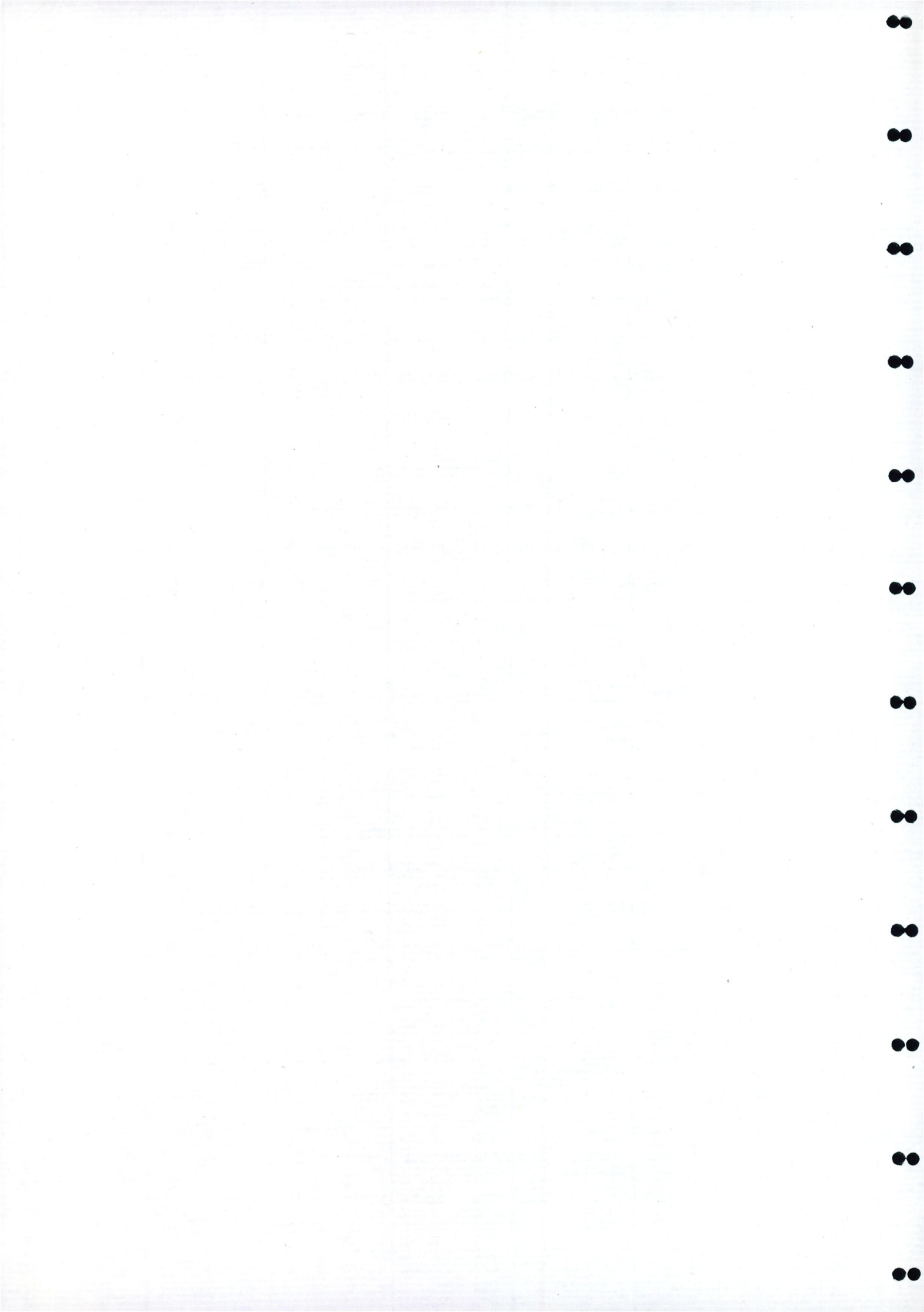
This chapter is primarily a biography of William Conolly. By the 1720's, it was widely acknowledged that William Conolly was the wealthiest man in Ireland. This, however was not always the case. Born in 1662, the eldest child of Patrick and Jane Conolly, it is known that he had a brother and sister, named after his parents. Otherwise little is known of his family background other than that they owned an inn or ale house. It is appropriate, therefore, that there is now a lounge bar in Firhouse, Dublin, called after him. Interestingly this is situated only a couple of miles from the Hellfire Club. His father was attainted in King James' Dublin Parliament in 1689. Due to English visitors and the new Ulster Plantations, they prospered as innkeepers. p 10

William Conolly became an apprentice of law, in Dublin and by the age of 23 he was qualified as an attorney and attached to His Majesty's Court of Common Pleas. In 1692 he secured a position with Captain James Hamilton and remained there for eight years at an annual wage of £10. It was on the 2nd May 1698 that he got his first public appointment. King William III constituted and ordained him to be Collector and Receiver of Revenue for Londonderry and Coleraine. During this time he worked in the North West area of Ulster, where he quickly earned the reputation for being astute and accomplished.

During this time he met Katherine Conyngham, daughter of Sir Albert Conyngham, connected to the Conyngham's of Slane, and they married in 1694. She brought with her a marriage dowry of £2,300. This marriage allied Conolly to some of the most influential Protestant families in Ulster and useful friends in high places. This is one factor that leads me to believe that Conolly used everyone to his advantage. Indeed, one suspects his marriage may have been one of mere convenience, to rise him in the social ranks as there is never any mention of their love for each other, and they never had children. Undeniably, "many noble marriages resemble business arrangements rather than intimate personal relationships" (James, 1995, p109).

Conolly inherited an extensive amount of land and "he purchased a great deal more" (O'Neill, p36). In 1691 he bought Rodanstown, Kilcock which was eight miles from





Castletown and prior to this he lived in Cork Hill, in Dublin city. In 1709, he bought the lands of Castletown, in Kildare for £15,000 from the attainted Earl of Limerick. Rodanstown was his country residence until Castletown was ready to live in. In his winding up of confiscated estates, which contributed to his extreme wealth, his knowledge of law helped.

Again Conolly used the situation and misfortune of others to his advantage. His shrewdness and business acumen undoubtedly contributed to his great fortune.

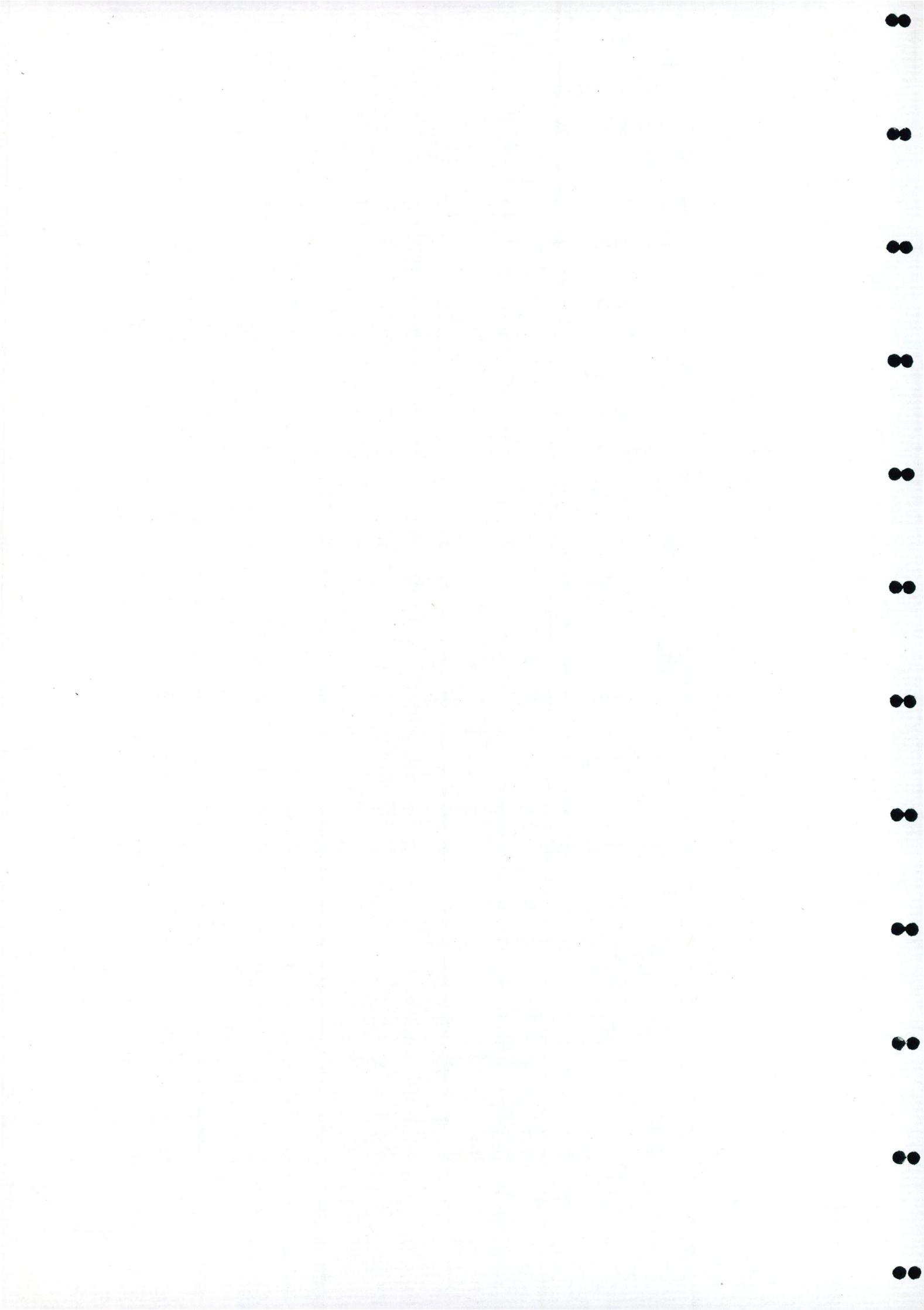
Furthermore, it would appear to me that he did not always gain his wealth and power in an entirely ethical manner, his life was built on a certain amount of luck, but a lot of bribery and corruption as well.

In 1703, he purchased forfeited lands from the Nugents in Meath, Westmeath and Roscommon in addition to the lands of Thomas Plunkett of Meath and John Itchingham and James Gilligan of Wexford. This totalled over 10,000 acres for which he often paid less than £1 per acre, in some cases he paid only one third of the purchase price and the rest in debentures<sup>1</sup>. At this time Conolly seemed to be focused on the purchasing of forfeited properties and subsequent disposal of them to Protestant landowners. His knowledge of the law on occasion tempted him to circumvent it. One such case appears in the Copies and Draughts of Petitions to the House of Commons, respecting the sale of forfeited estates in Ireland (1701-2). Listed as the petition of John Little;

'It is stated that one Boiton Nutley, esq. claimed to have a mortgage to the extent of £12,000 for principal and interest on the estate of the late Earl of Tyrconnell. John Parker, esq. as a near relative of Nutleys proposed to Little, a man of over 80 years of age, and very infirm, that he should personate Nutley and come forward in his character, to assign the mortgage to Parker.' Little refused and Parker then sought the assistance of William Conolly esq. "a cunning intreiguing spark" who 'pretends that his near kinsman Boiton Nutley was arrived in Ireland from England to make his claim to the mortgage. But having a tempestuous crossing, he died before he could do more than make a will leaving the mortgage to Parker. The necessary deeds were perfected. Parker being supported with money by the said Wm. Conolly was about to succeed when Little intervened. A funeral of the alleged testator had taken place in due form; but Little having reason to suspect the proceeding, made enquiry and found that the country people had taken up the coffin (possibly at the instance of

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<sup>1</sup> which are bonds of a corporation or company



body snatchers) and found nothing in it, but "rubbish stones and dirt; and no corps." Parker and Conolly having intimation of the inquiry and its results paid some indigent persons to take up a newly buried corpse in a neighbouring graveyard. They put this corpse into the former coffin with very rich burial ornaments and exposed it the next day at Nutleys in order to confute sinister reports. It happened, however, that the substituted corpse was identified. The family to which it belonged came and claimed the body and thereby the sham was blown.'

'Parker made all he facts known to the Trustees at Chichester House and on 22nd June 1703, the Trustees made an order That £20 be paid Mr. Little for his services on his discovery and detecting the fraudulent claim of John Parker esq. But the penalty imposed by law on fraudulent claims was double the amount of the claim and Little as he advised, petitioned Parliament of his forfeiture against Parker and Conally.' (Boylan, 1978, p20).

This quotation illustrates how Conolly was willing to go to great lengths to get the result he wanted. In other words he would ignore the law, deceive people and appears to have no reservations about behaving in an unethical fashion.

Conolly's purchases, however, were not always confined to forfeited land. As a result of the 1690 Rebellion, for instance, the estate of Limavady, consisting of 1,000 acres was sold by descendants of Sir Thomas Phillips. In 1720, Conolly purchased the Ballyshannon estate from Lord Folliott's descendants. Previous to this there was an on-going dispute between the Folliotts and the Caldwells concerning the fisheries. After 1702 they reached an agreement and the lands were leased to Sir James Caldwell, at an annual rent of £500. So when Conolly acquired it the Caldwells were still in possession of the Lough Erne fisheries and continued to pay Conolly the £500 every year. As time passed and Conolly was the landlord of the Caldwells, due to Conolly's growing power and influence, the Caldwells were even prepared to forego any claims which they had to the fisheries. So even though the Caldwells were paying £500 annually to Conolly, as tenants, they were prepared to give up their claim to the fisheries. This I can only guess is due to Conolly's standing and huge power in society.

Capel Street was a popular area for residences during the eighteenth century, for many wealthy families lived there. Conolly had his town residence there, which was the centre of his political activities. This property was purchased in 1707 from a Mr. Barry. It would seem, however, that Conolly favoured his country residences, so much so that when he died in Capel Street he had his body moved and buried at Castletown. From



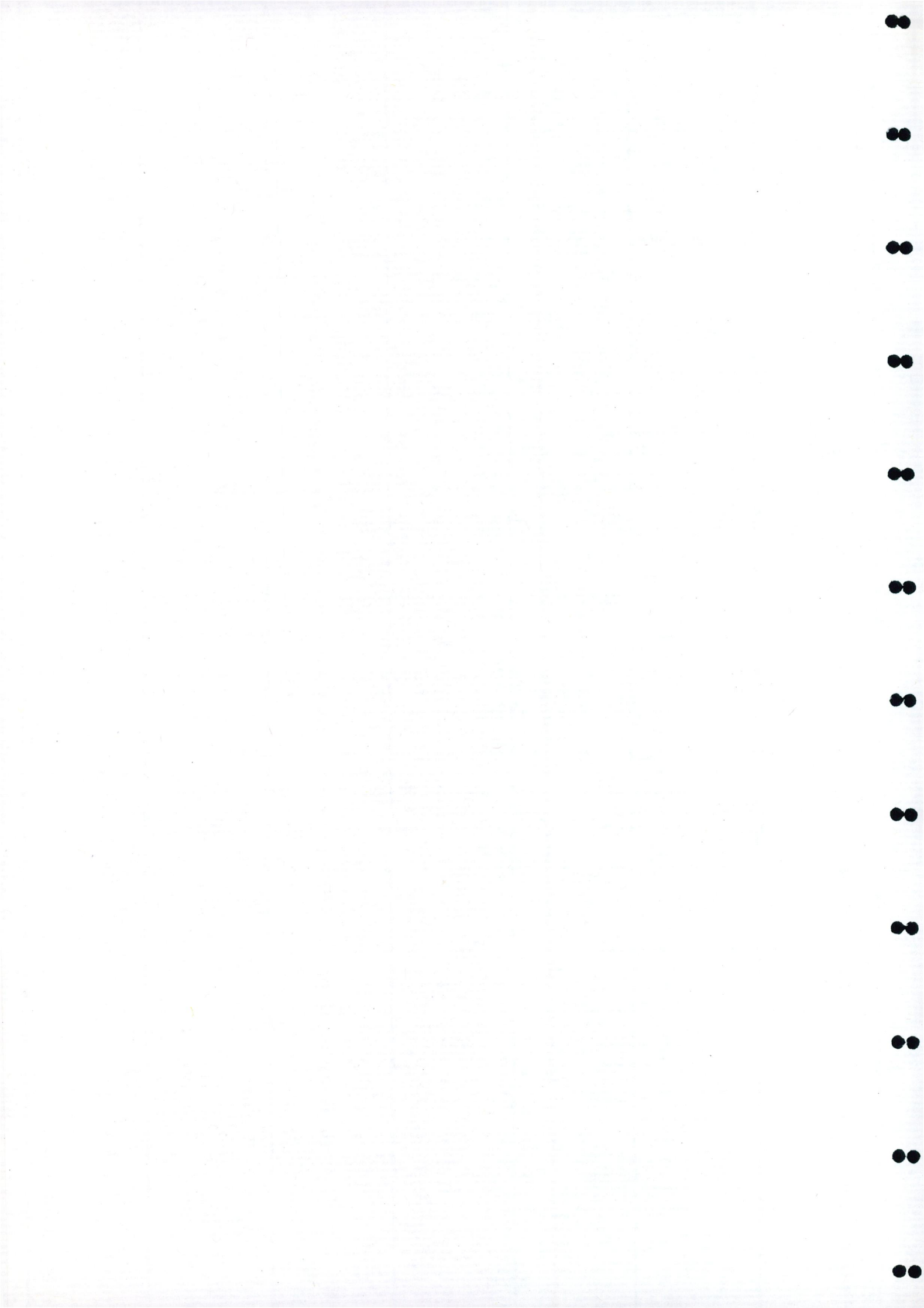
Philip, Duke of Wharton, Conolly bought the estate of his grandfather Adam Loftus in the manor of Rathfarnham for £62,000 in 1723. In addition he purchased the estate of Killadoon, Celbridge in 1725 and it was around this same time that he had a hunting lodge built on Mount Pelier subsequently known as the Hellfire Club. In June 1728 he purchased from Mr. John White, for £11,883 the manor town and land of Leixlip, Newtown and Stacomney. His properties spanned nine counties, namely; Dublin Meath, Westmeath, Roscommon, Kildare, Donegal, Fermanagh, Wexford and Waterford. In addition, in 1709 Conolly's rent roll of £25,000, was the largest of any landlord in Ireland.<sup>2</sup>

At this stage his public life was as successful as his private. And it would seem that they were never too far apart. It was success in each, that influenced the other. This suggests, that facilitated by his marriage and inheritance, he was well respected and in a position to purchase vast quantities of land. As already stated Conolly was an astute man who knew when to take advantage of a situation. It was in the year 1692 that he succeeded in getting elected a Member for the Borough of Donegal. Consequently, this brought power, and therefore he managed to bribe his way into other positions of authority. So, when the equally corrupt Thomas Lord Wharton was sent to Ireland as Lord Lieutenant in April 1709, Conolly secured himself the position of Commissioner of Revenue with a bribe of £3,000. This action and subsequent position, would secure future positions for him. In 1717 he was named one of the three Lord Justices chosen to administer the government in the absence of the Lord Lieutenant. Furthermore, he

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<sup>2</sup> William Conolly's residencies

- 1691, purchased Rodanstown, Kilcock which was his first home
- 1707, purchased a town house in Caple Street, Dublin from a Mr. Barry
- 1709, purchased the lands of Castletown, from the attainted Earl of Limerick, for £15,000
- 1720, purchased the Ballyshannon estate, Donegal
- 1722, construction of Castletown House, Kildare underway
- 1723, purchased Rathfarnham Castle, Dublin from Philip, Duke of Wharton, for £62,000
- 1725, constructed a shooting lodge on Mount Pelier, Dublin mountains, now known as the Hellfire Club
- 1725, purchased Kildoon estate, Kildare from Lord Folliot's descendants, for £52,000
- 1728, purchased the manor town and land of Leixlip, Newtown and Stacomney, including Leixlip Castle, from Mr. John White

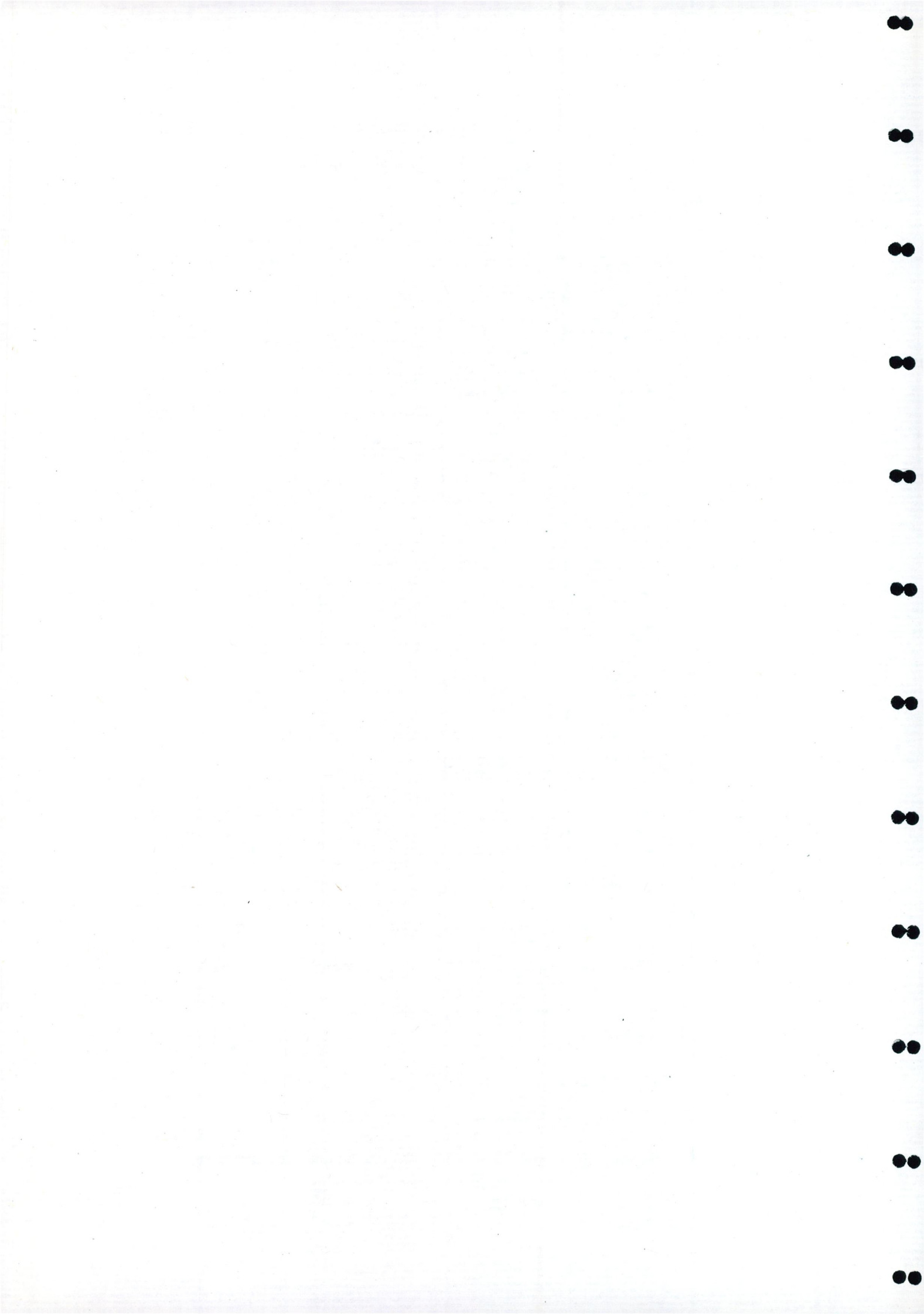


was re-elected on nine subsequent occasions. In receiving this position, as an Irishman, Conolly was greatly resented by new settlers who had come to see themselves as Ireland's gentry .

Conolly never had any issue but he was a generous benefactor. In his will, which he made twelve days before his death, he left his wife, Katherine his estates in north and south Wales, "his mansion house in Dublin, his mansion house at Castletown and all his manor land and tenements in Kildare, Meath, Westmeath and Roscommon". After Katherine's death, they were to pass to his nephew, William to whom he bequeathed direct his estates in Donegal, Dublin, Fermanagh, Wexford and Waterford. He bequeathed Katherine the use of household goods which would pass to William at her death. "He also left her his coaches, chariot and all his horses and cattle" (Boylan, 1978, p28). Furthermore, he left large sums of money to the Conynghams, Pearsons and Burtons. Other benefactors included his sisters, Mrs. Dixon and Mrs. Ball, their children, and his wife's sister, Mrs. Bonnell. The disposal of £400 to any poor relations was apparently left to the discretion of his wife. p. 6

All this seems quite remarkable when one considers William Conolly's lowly beginnings but it was all part of what I consider to be a carefully constructed plan. Money brought power and influence for Conolly, and he thus secured the position as Speaker in the House of Commons which gave him the name for which he is most renowned. This appointment is said to have caused much jealousy, as Conolly was known to have come from the lower classes and to have achieved much of his political success by bribery. He was however, unanimously elected and even re-elected two years before his death. He originally received this honor in 1715 and continued in this position for fourteen years until ill health forced him to resign. It was between the years 1715-27 that the House of Commons was divided into four sections: the Conolly Whigs, the Brodrick Whigs, the remainder of the Tories and the 'country gentlemen'. His health had not been good since the summer of 1728 and he died aged sixty seven, on October 30th 1729.





Sadly for Conolly, time had run out before his dream house was complete but he died the richest man in Ireland, who notwithstanding his dubious business practices, had endeared himself to the people due to his patriotic ideas. Conolly had Castletown built because of his love for his country and he wanted to give something back to the Ireland that would remain long after himself. Conolly was big but Castletown was to be even bigger. Castletown as a patriotic gesture was possibly appreciated by the people, it is therefore fitting that at his funeral a large crowd turned out. They carried white, Irish linen scarves which were distributed also as a patriotic gesture. At this time there were a small group of MP's that chose to inact such gestures. They then followed the procession to Castletown, where he is buried (fig 2.1).





fig 2.1



CHAPTER TWO  
Debauchery, drunkenness and Devil Worship,  
a history of the Hellfire Club



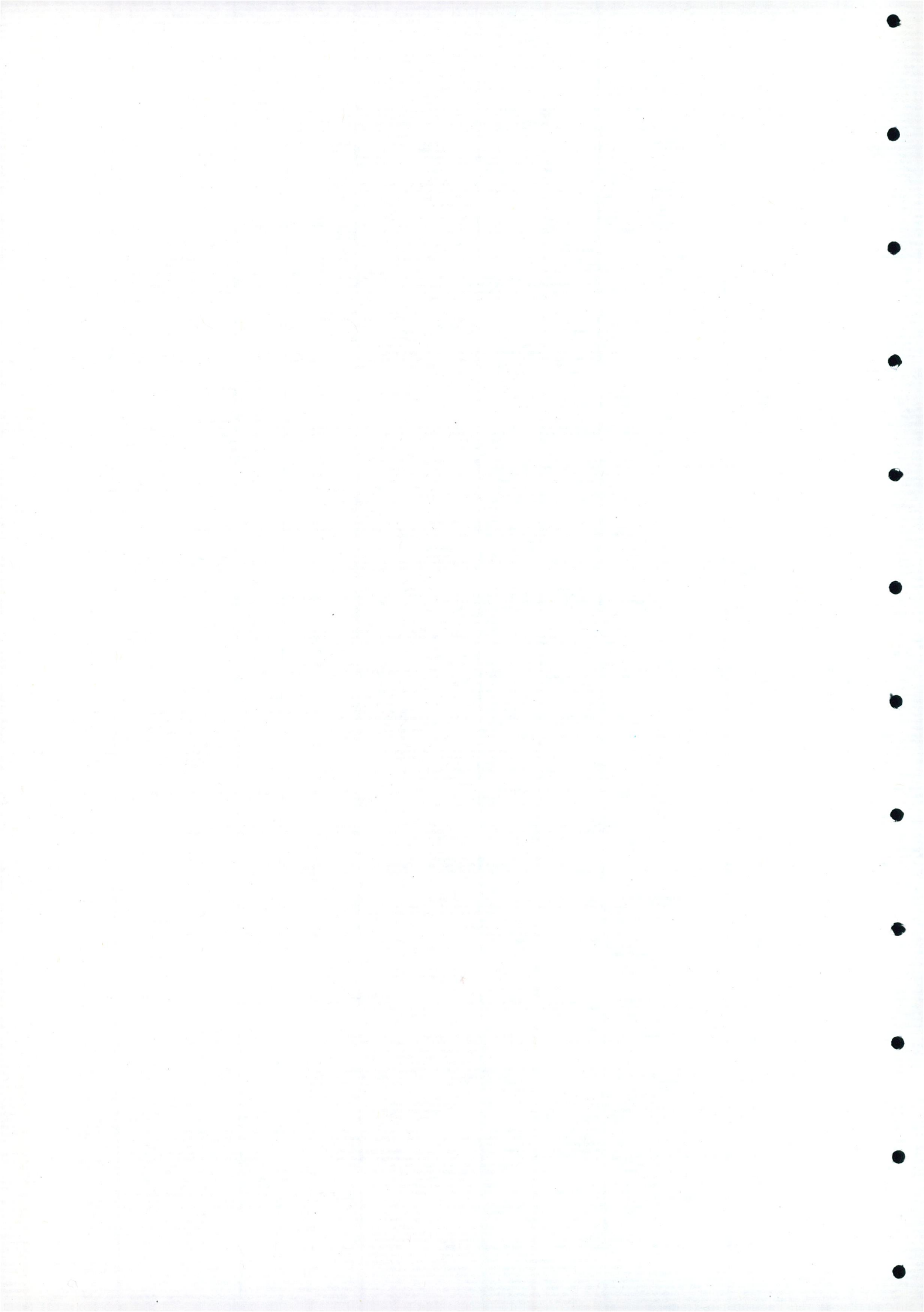
Its long history started 272 years ago, when Conolly had it built on top of Mount Pelier in the south Dublin mountains, four miles from Rathfarnham village and Rathfarnham Castle. To most it is known as the Hell Fire Club, but to others it is the Kennel or the Haunted House (fig 3.1).

The infamous lodge was built by the Right Hon. William Conolly, Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, around the year 1725. It is believed that he built it near the mountain summit so that he could see his two great residences, Rathfarnham Castle and Castletown House from the same spot (Dublin Historic records, vol xii, 1951, p26). Conolly had bought these lands, which formed part of the manor of Rathfarnham, from Lord Wharton in 1723 (O'Neill, p33-34).

In order to build the lodge Conolly had to destroy an ancient burial tomb which from time immemorial had stood on top of Mount Pelier. The cairn was reputedly the abode of a powerful evil spirit, but Conolly, having no respect for legend or spirits demolished it. The tomb had been built during the Neolithic Period (4500BC - 2000BC ) and the stone was subsequently utilized in the building of his residence. The cairn consisted of great stones set edgewise which formed a wall or boundary. Within the structure, smaller stones were heaped and in the centre was a large slab nine foot long, six foot wide and three foot deep. This slab was not raised upon others but lay low with the small stones cleared from around it. There were several other large stones and about sixty yards to the south-west stood a pillar stone, protruding five foot above the ground. These remains have all but disappeared as they were used in the construction of the lodge (fig 3.2).

The house itself was originally a shooting lodge and consisted of two large rooms, and a hall on the upper floor. Each of the rooms were sixteen foot square with two tall windows, eight foot by three and a half foot, which gave Conolly a magnificent view. Each room had a large fireplace and two arched niches on each side. Above the hall and parlour was a small loft. The hall door was reached by a lofty flight of stone steps. The





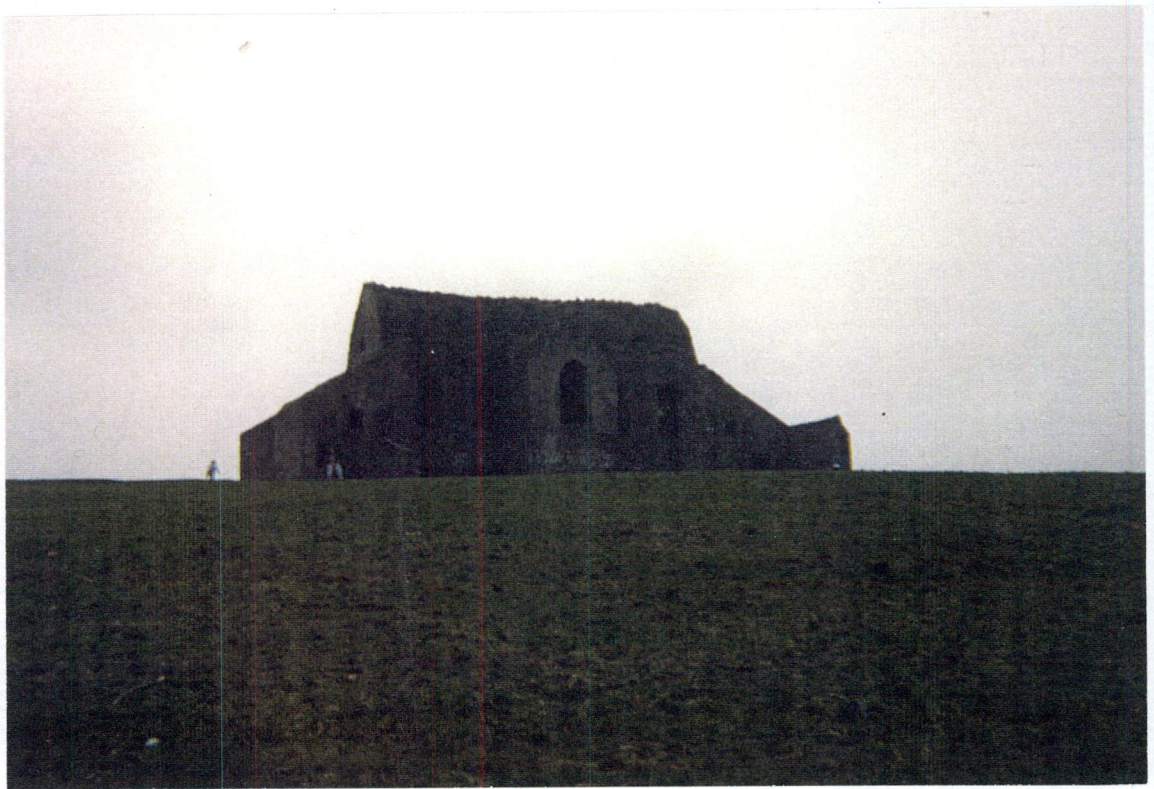
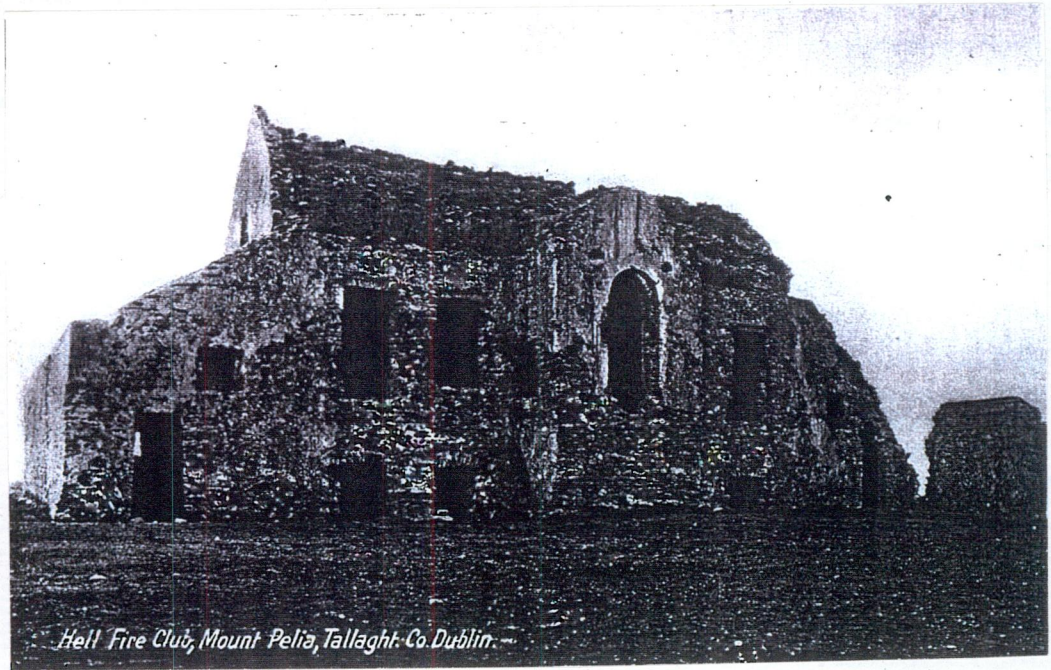
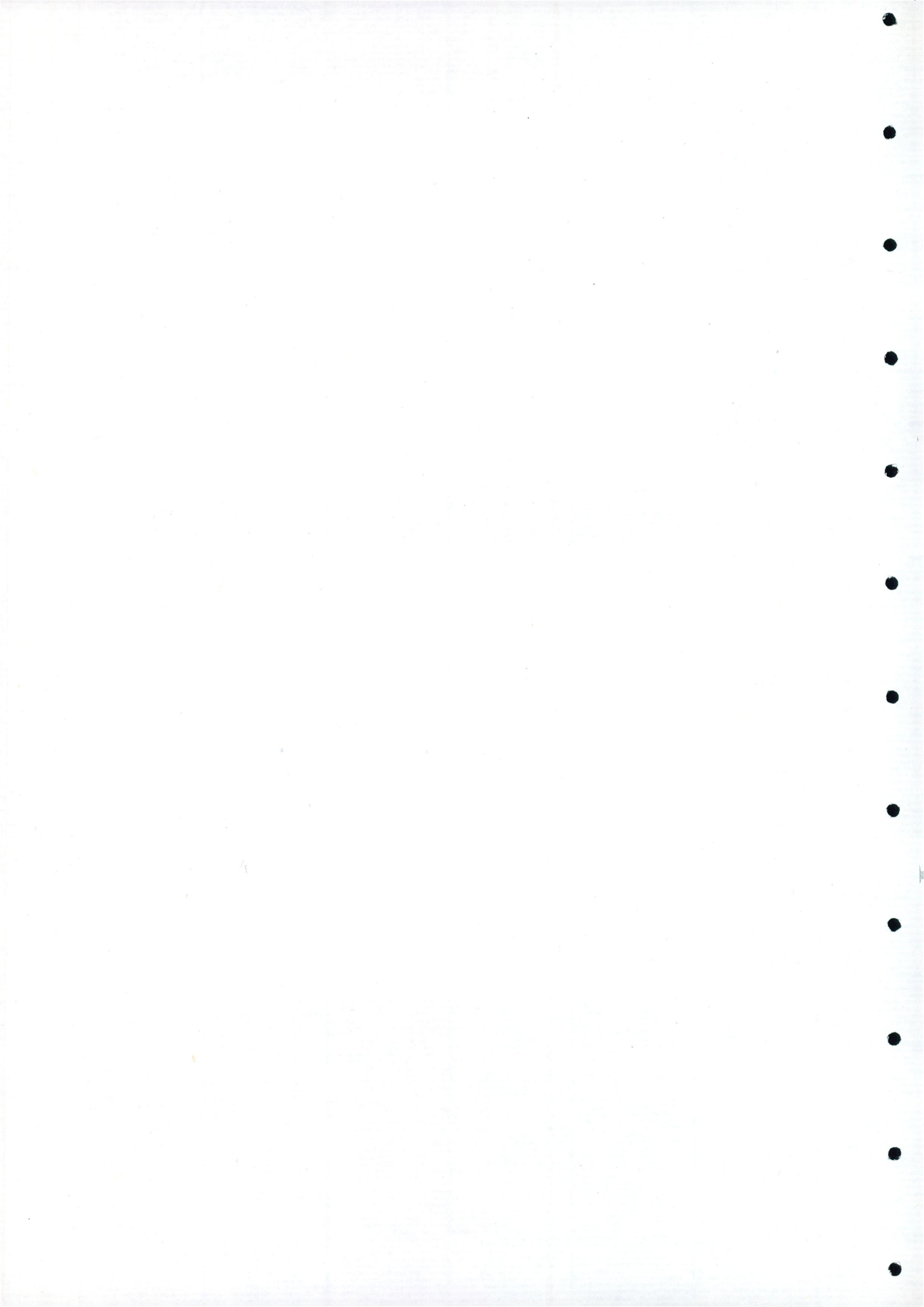


fig 3.1 (top) fig 3.2 (bottom)

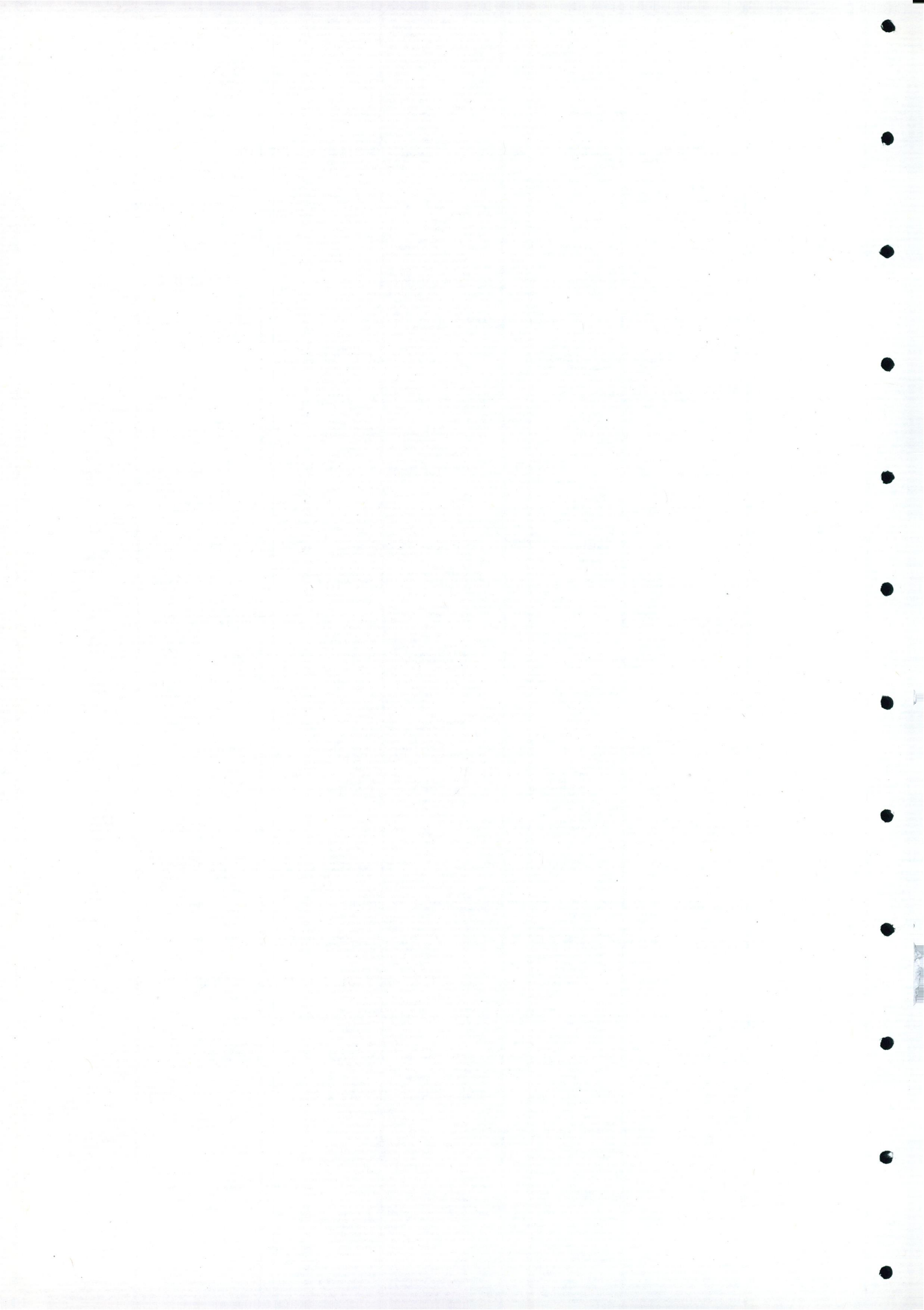


stone from the stairs, along with most of the other cut granite, was used in the building of Lord Ely's hunting lodge, Mount Pelier House, further down the hill.

Under the drawing room was the kitchen. On the other side stood the servant's hall and in addition there were two rooms built at each end of the house. Also there were two small apartments in the return opposite the hall door. All the windows face north, whereas at the back there are only narrow slits, like embrasures. In front stood a semi-circular courtyard with a gate. The walls were very thick but carelessly constructed. The roof, like the floor, was stone. Although it is said that originally the roof was slated, people said the Devil would never allow a roof to remain intact due to the mutilation of the cairn. Squire Conolly would, however, not be dictated to by either wind or devil. He built an arched roof with large stones placed edgewise, and created a smooth surface by using smaller stones and mortar. So well was this done that some of it still remains. The lodge must have been beautifully furnished as Conolly spent £13,000 per annum on the upkeep of the building. After Conolly died in 1729, the furniture was removed by relatives, the lodge locked up and it remained deserted for six years (fig 3.3).

That was until the Hellfire Club started holding meetings there in 1735. This club was not unique, indeed it was part of a much wider socio-economic phenomena, as the original club was set up in England in 1716, in reaction to widespread revolts against the Papacy in the early eighteenth century. It was, however, in 1720 that the most prominent club was founded by Philip, Duke of Wharton. In the year 1721 such movements were banned. Sir Francis Dashwood revived the movement again, in the 1740s. The movement was so intense that it developed into an aesthetic reaction against anything vaguely associated with Rome. Many clubs priding themselves on blasphemous activities sprang up. "Hellfire clubs" however, were specific clubs branching from a suppressed English cult and not only were they anti-papal but they actually indulged in devil worship and satanic rituals.

The first Irish version was established by Richard Parsons, first Earl of Rosse, James



Worsdale <sup>3</sup> and Colonel Jack St. Leger <sup>4</sup>. All members were indeed privileged to be so and such a privilege was granted to men only. The one exception was Celine Blannerhassel who was an active member in the Limerick branch of the Hellfire Club. In Dublin the clubs regular meeting place was the Eagle Tavern, Cork Hill, but they also took possession of the lodge, on the hill and it was decorated accordingly.

“Everything their imagination could conceive from the infernal regions was converted into a mock reality, and nothing was allowed to remain that would remind them of the Christian world. In the hall and entrance to the drawing room, used for orgies, a black cloth hung from the ceiling, with the dreadful inscription ‘ All hope abandone, ye who enter here’ “. This room apparently had a table, and at the top was a roughly carved throne and over it hung a picture of the Devil, painted by Worsdale <sup>5</sup> (fig 3.4). The room was filled with all manner of ghastly ornaments. It was the club’s president, “The King of Hell” who resided on the throne and was dressed in the guise of Satan (Hammond, 1970, p6).

The stories which surround the club still prevail today and are responsible for its name. One such story is entitled “The Devil Playing Cards.” It relates how during one of their first meetings, which involved dressing up in robes and having a feast, the gentlemen played cards in the main room. They were all drinking “scaltheen,” a mixture of whiskey and butter, which they brewed as a sacred drink themselves and used it for their own pleasure. It happened that on the night in question, one of the younger members dropped his cards and when he bent down to pick them up, he saw that one of the ‘men’ at the table had hooves instead of feet.

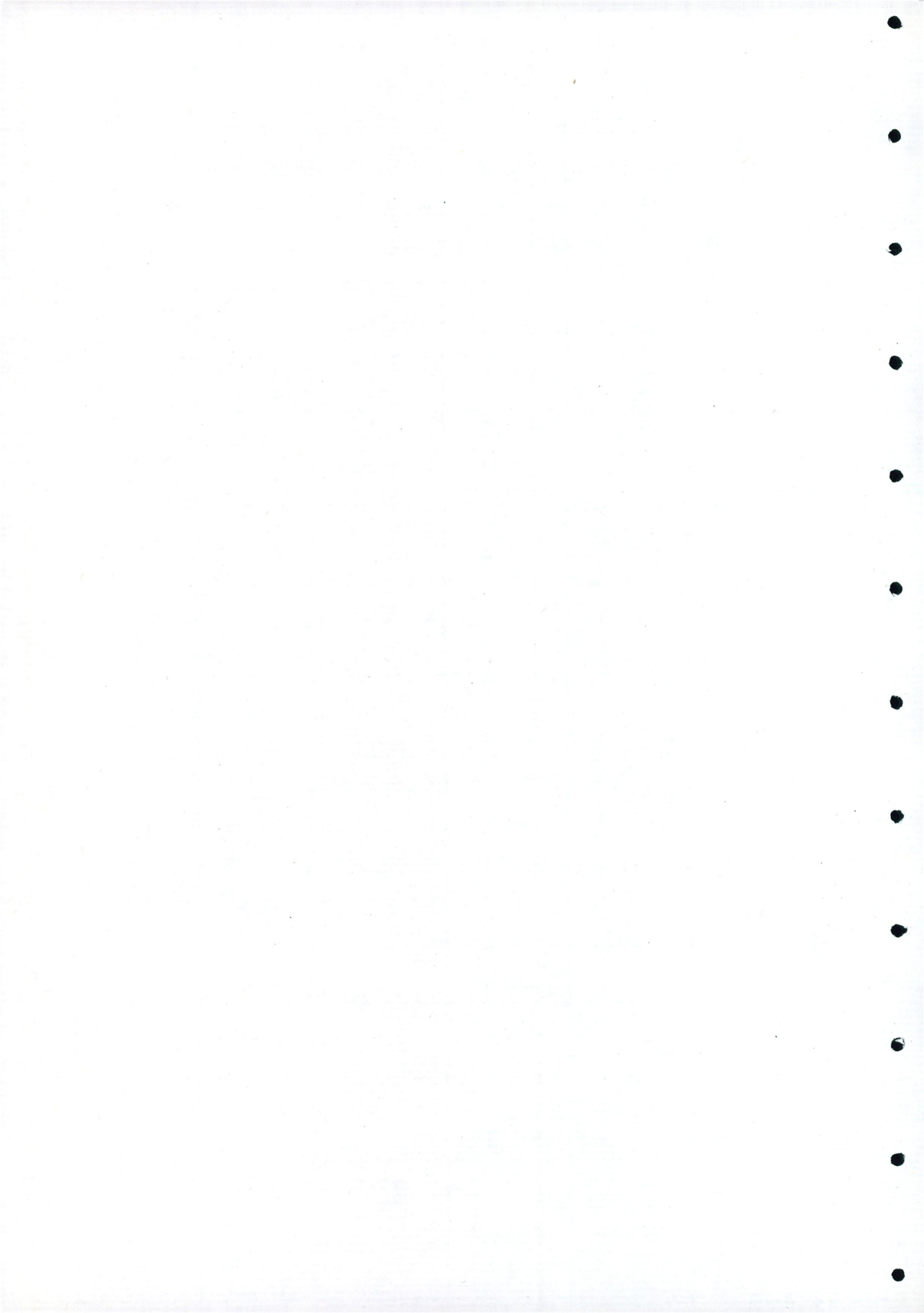
Another story relates how, when they got tired of drinking and performing their ceremony, they went down the hill and seized a poor unfortunate passerby. He was dragged up to the club and his name and address were taken and added to a register.

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<sup>3</sup> who was a well known painter

<sup>4</sup> who was a wealthy landowner that resided in Athy

<sup>5</sup> this painting depicts a group of five men, at a table with a large punch bowl. The men in question are Henry Barry-forth Lord of Santry, Colonel Clement, Colonel Henry Posenby, Colonel St. George of Woodsgift and Colonel Simon Lutrell.



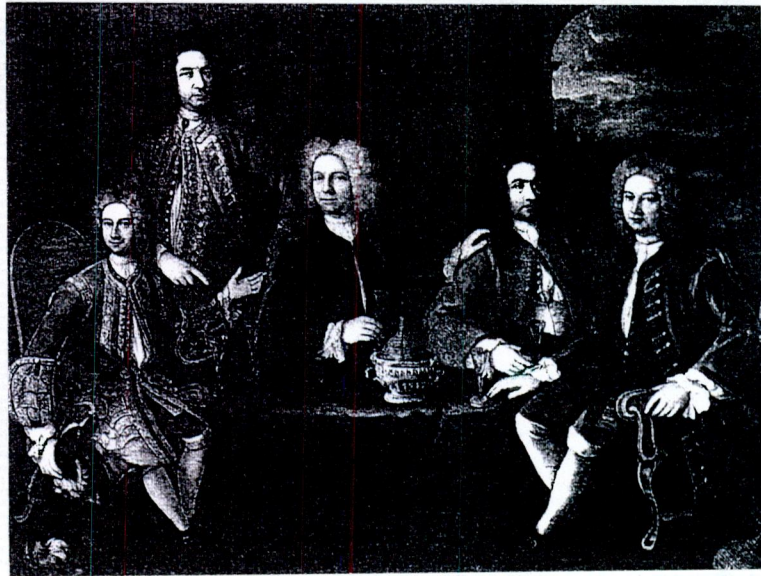
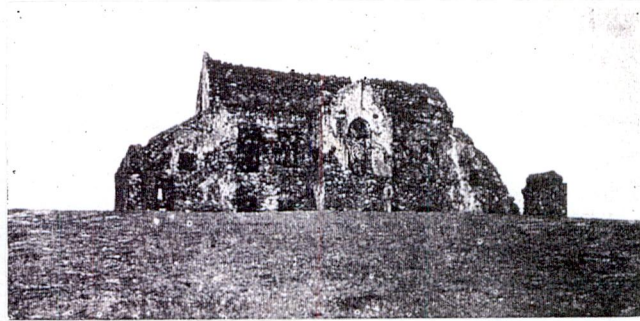


fig 3.3 (top) fig 3.4 (bottom)

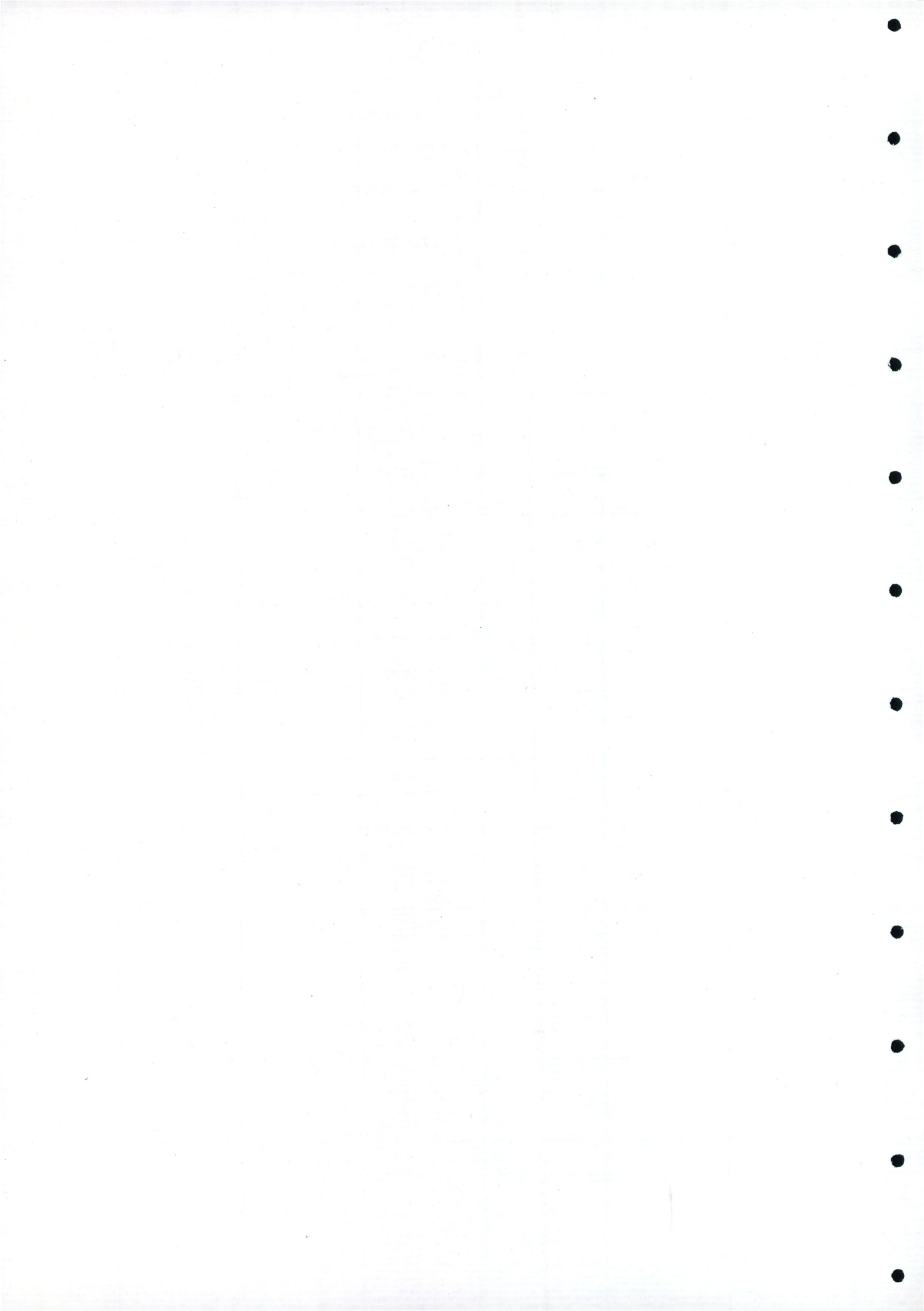




This register was suppose to contain the names of those damned to eternal punishment. He was then told when he would die. After a course of rough treatment and before release, the man had to consume a horn of "scaltheen", while toasting Satan.

Yet another incident relates how one of the members brought his butler to the club. The butler read the inscription over and over and he laughed when he saw their representation of Satan and said he was delighted to meet "such a dear soul." He displayed no sorrow in knowing the date of his death, he drank scaltheen and asked for more. This behaviour was not as anticipated, his Master was enraged and threw a jug of scaltheen over him . The butler was set alight and he ran screaming, and in flames, from the house. His burnt body was found half an hour later in a ditch. This incident, and the death of prominent members of the club was supposed to have caused it's break-up in 1741.

A final story tells how on a winter's night a Catholic priest was returning after administering spiritual rites to a band of mountaineers. A storm had started and he could not find shelter until he came across the club. He could hear sounds and drunken voices and proceeded to knock. Silence descended. The priest was subsequently dragged inside and brought before the "King." The priest was seated, when a black cat was brought into the room on a soft cushion and left on the table. The priest could not contain his anger as the cat was given milk to drink from a human skull. He protested, but was unheard above the shouts from the members. In reaction the priest seized the cat by the throat and threw it at the wall. Only the howls of the cat could be heard as the members rushed at the priest and overcame him. There was a trial which found the priest guilty and he was sentenced to death. He begged for time to pray but instead chanted an exorcism. The cat leapt on the table and fixed it's eyes on the ceiling. Next thing there was a loud crash and the room became red, the lamps fell and set the place alight. The cat took it's original form of a fire breathing fiend and carried the roof off with him. The priest was released and the club swore never to meet again for fear that their patron was coming to claim them.



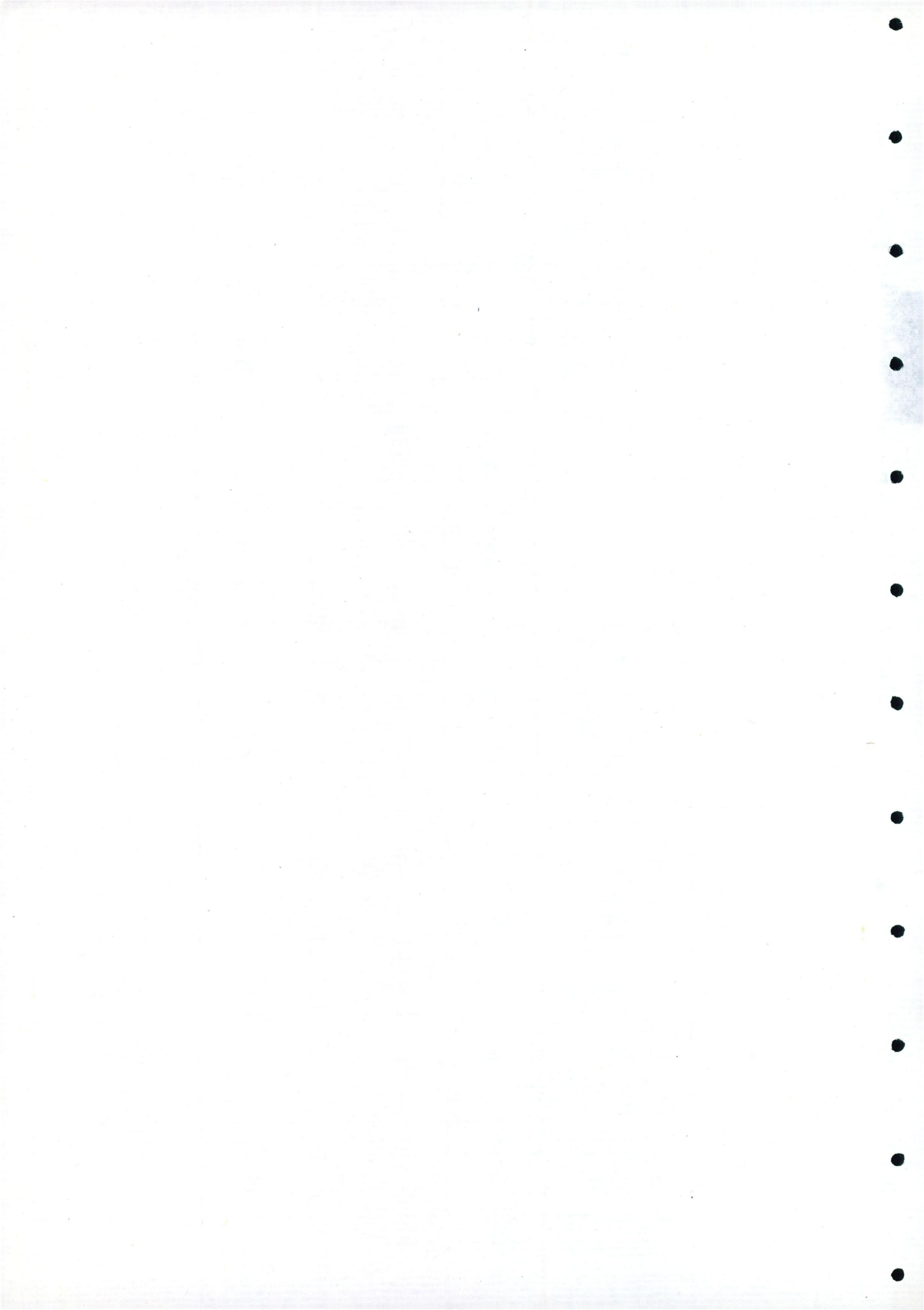
The story of "The Devil playing Cards" is strikingly similar to an incident at Castletown House. Both involved a man dropping something and bending down under the table to retrieve it, and thereby discovering that the Devil was at the table. If one considers the time in which these stories were to have taken place the spoken word had precedence over any other form of communication. There being no such thing as information technology the oral tradition was therefore, very important and it was in this way that such stories would have been spread. It is only now that they are being written down and recorded. It is interesting to note that the word 'myth' originally meant 'speech' or 'word' (Coope, 1997, p9) so in mentioning the oral tradition, and in particular the Irish tradition of storytelling, it is highly relevant.

Myths, indeed, are very important as an "element of literature and that literature is a means of extending mythology" (Coope, 1997, p4). Due to the strong oral tradition these myths have changed over time, we do not know and never really will know their degree of truth, if any. Myths, however, "may be wrong, or they may be used to bad ends but they cannot be dispensed with." They "are our basic psychological tool for working together. A hammer is a carpenter's tool, a wrench is a mechanic's tool; and a 'myth' is a social tool for welding the sense of inter-relationship by which the carpenter and the mechanic, though differently occupied, can work together for common social ends. In this sense a myth that works well is as real as tools, food or shelter are" (Coope, 1997, p69). In this comparison, there is juxtaposition which is also an element in this thesis. That is the drawing together of unlike elements, through history, mixed with myths and cultural theory, to draw a coherent and logical conclusion. As myths work on history, and vice versa, the implication is that myths and history are intertwined. Furthermore, Coope maintains that a myth is not a failed attempt to articulate rational truth but is the creative impulse underlying history (Coope, 1997, p119). While Eliot believes that "myth and history are opposed" and myth remains "aloof from history" (Coope, 1997, p82-83). I cannot agree with Eliot as I believe that myths and history reciprocate each other.



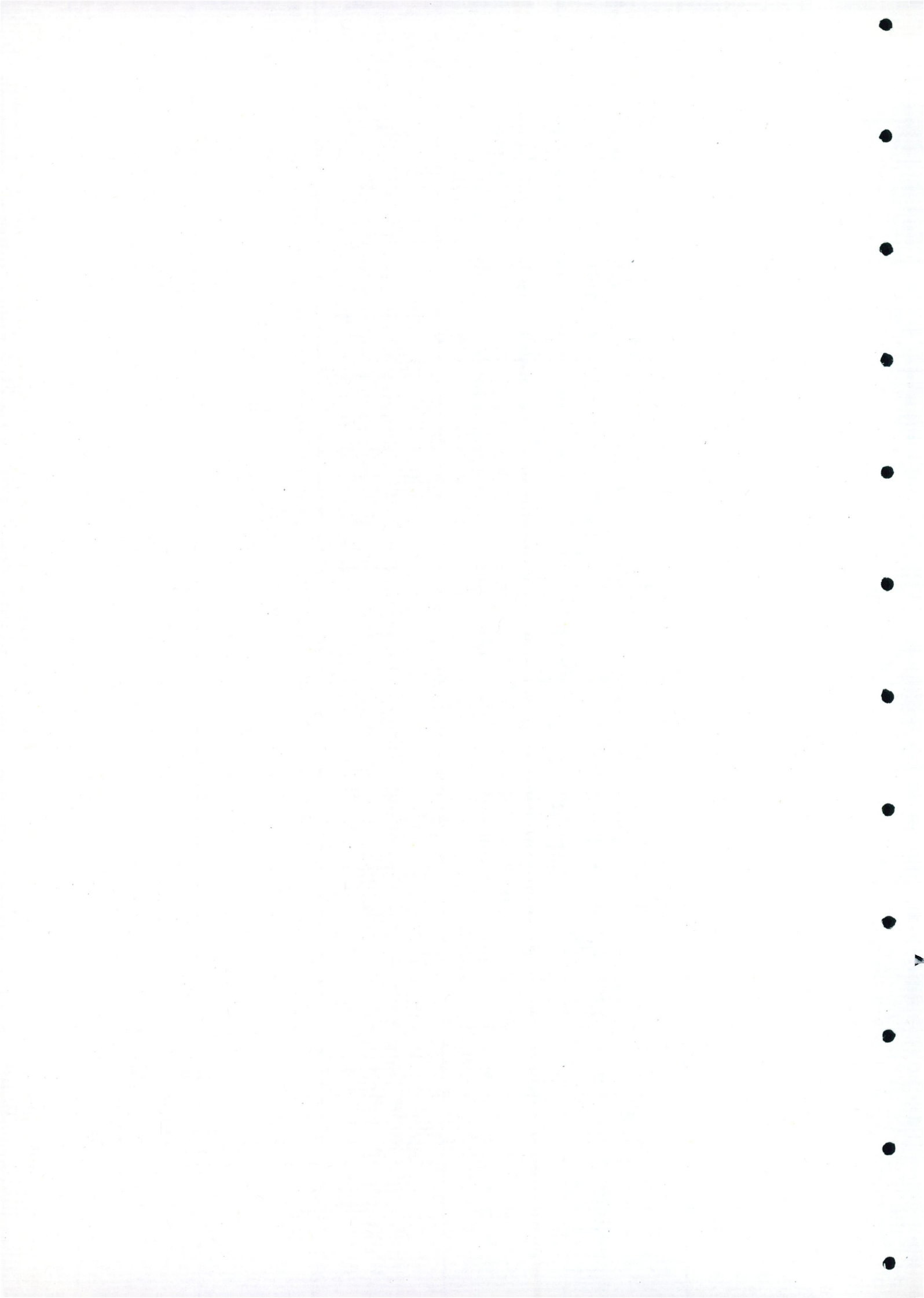
Coope defines myth as “ a sacred story of anonymous authorship” which is retold and “often linked with ritual; that is, it tells of the deeds of superhuman beings such as gods, demigods, heroes, spirits or ghosts; that is set outside historical time” or may deal with the “ comings and goings between the supernatural world and the world of human history.” Myths, however, are often full of seeming inconsistencies but myth-making is still a primal and universal function. An “individual finds meaning in their life, by making of his life a story, set within a larger social and cosmic story” (Coope, 1997, p5-6). In this way myths are a vital element of this thesis and are responsible for drawing connection together.

After the Club’s occupation of the building until 1741, it again remained uninhabited until the arrival of Charles Cobbe, the eldest son of the archbishop of Dublin. According to records he only stayed there two years and in fact died there in 1751. Since that time the structure has largely remained unchanged. In 1763 parts were removed, notably the stairs, to build Kilakee House further down the hill. Later, in 1849 when the Queen visited Dublin, tar barrels were lit, which badly damaged the roof. It was in the 1960s that Coillte Teoranta, who own the building and site, did work to ensure its safety.



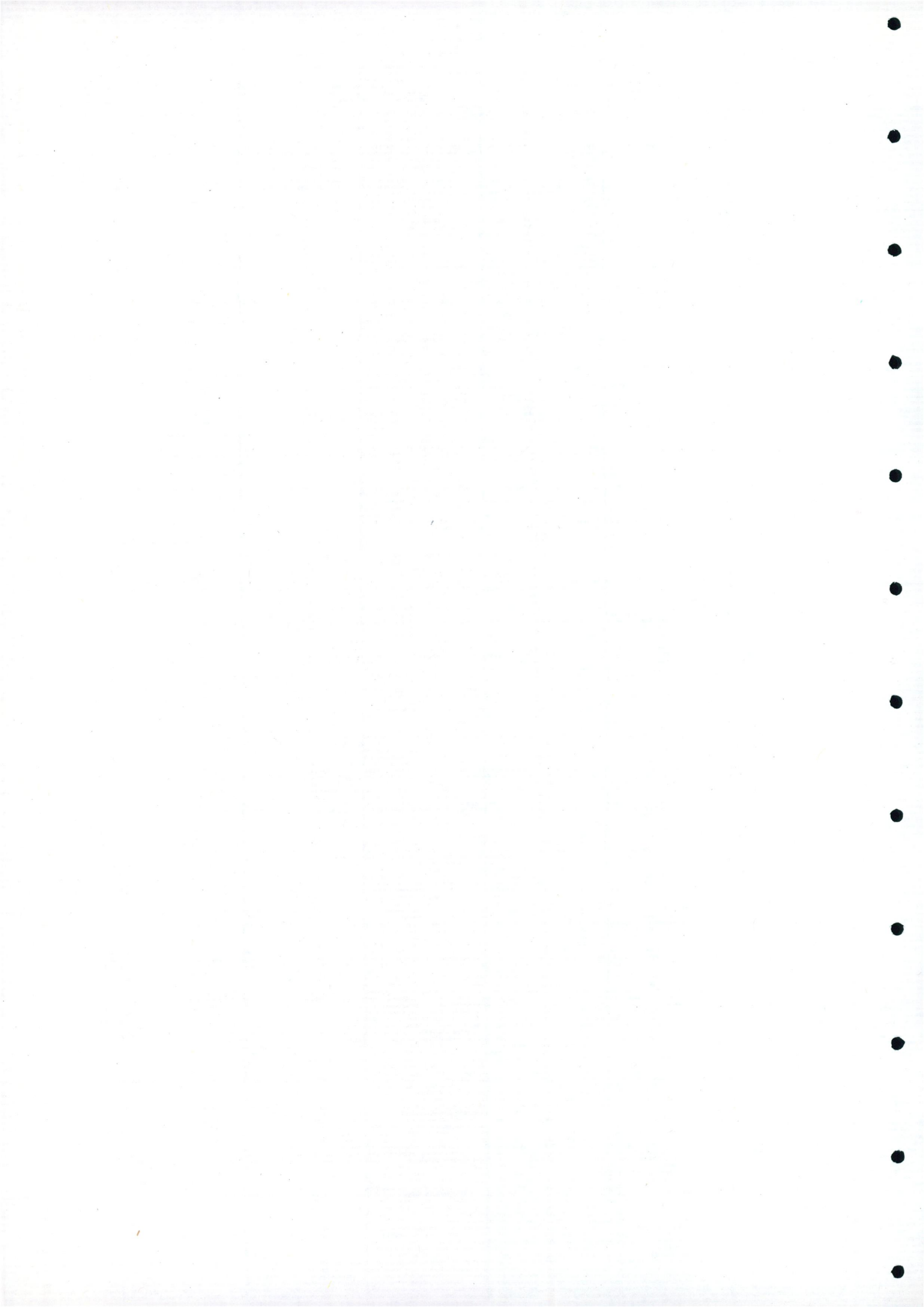
CHAPTER THREE  
Legacy, luxury and Lady Louisa,  
the Castletown chronicles





Stories pertaining to the devil, further relate to Castletown House. As legend has it Tom Conolly, William's great-nephew, had been out hunting and on his return encountered a stranger. Tom was of a generous nature and extended an invitation to return home with him. It was during dinner in the dining room that Tom dropped something, possibly a napkin. He bent down to pick it up and found that his guest had taken off his boots and had hairy feet which looked like cloven hooves; Tom realised that he had invited none other than the Devil to dinner. He immediately asked the 'guest' to leave but received an offensive response. Tom then bade a footman to fetch a priest, who received equally offensive treatment. The priest threw a book at the Devil. It missed and instead cracked the mirror behind. In response the Devil jumped over the table, stamped on the hearth stone, splitting it and disappeared in a cloud of smoke. Both the mirror and hearthstone remain damaged to this day (fig 4.1 &4.2).

Castletown is the largest and grandest Palladian country house in Ireland, a style that was associated with Whig politics. Construction began in 1722 but was not completed at the time of Conolly's death. It stands at a huge 60 foot high and spans over 400 foot in length, including the flanking arches (fig 4.3). A building on this scale undoubtedly reflects its creator, and is "intended to assert his primacy in Irish politics, and the links with London that underpinned" his superiority (Worsley, 1994, p53). Castletown is an important building as it marks the beginning of Irish country houses and nothing so splendid was ever built again. Even by today's standard. Castletown is an awesome sight. It is also quite unique; its unexpected appearance in the eighteenth-century forced historians to look to Italy for its genesis and in turn to Alessandro Galilei (1691-1737). It is, therefore, described as an Italian palazzo set in the Irish countryside. Architecture on this scale proved that the Irish had grasped the full complexity of Classical architecture and were prepared to beat the English at their game. Castletown was different, thirteen bays wide and two and a half stories high, with elegantly modelled cornice and balustrade, the main house is linked by tall Ionic colonnades to substantial wings where vaulted stables celebrated the Irish love of horses. The house is reached by following a straight half mile drive that goes past the house rather than towards it.



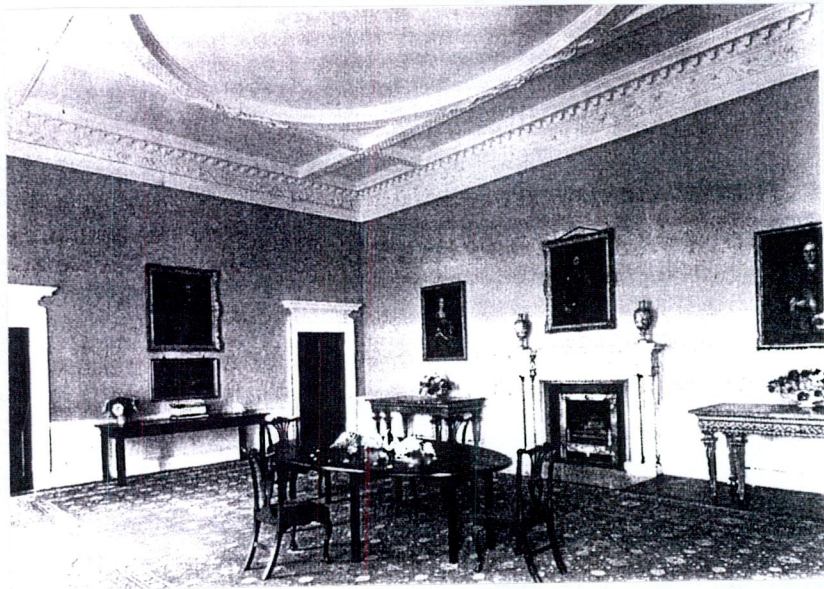
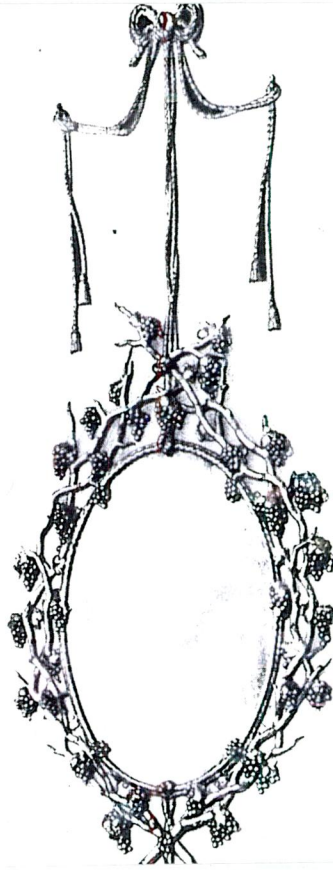


fig 4.1 & 4.2



From Celbridge the "entrance is guarded by two sphinxes that stare forever into each others eyes from lofty perches on the stone gate-columns" (Fitzmaurice Mills, 1987, p84) (fig 4.4).

According to two factors, the thoroughly Italian character of Castletown and the sketch by Galilei, for what it's worth, indicated that Galilei is responsible in some way for Castletown. In January 1719, Galilei, who had been in Ireland for a few months wrote this to an Italian friend "ho fatto varii disegni d'un Palazzo di Villa p. il my Lord Governatore di quel regno." This means a fine country house for an important political figure. It is more than likely that Galilei was referring to Conolly, who as Lord Justice was "Governatori" of the kingdom. Among Galilei's papers is a sketch for a country house, with eleven bays whereas Castletown has thirteen (fig 4.5). Though the sketch has nothing in common with Castletown, the elevation in the lower right-hand corner is very close indeed to Castletown (Craig, 1969, p4). Yet Castletown has nothing in common with Galilei's other buildings including the facade of San Giovanni in Laterano, in Rome, a high-ranking building for which he is known.

Around the same time, the architect, or at least the master mason must also have done work at the garden temple at Drumcondra, because the details of Castletown are remarkably similar. This points to one man: Sir Edward Lovette Pearce (died 1733) who was connected to Galilei through Vanbrugh ( Pearce's cousin ) whom he met at Kimbolton between 1718-19. By 1722, Pearce was a student and probably working under Vanbrugh. Hence the connection. In the last year or so of Conolly's life he collaborated with Pearce over the Parliament House building, and in February of the year he died, he laid the foundation stone for the building. The stone used in the main body of Castletown is a silvery, white limestone of a very fine texture. The wings are of a coarser limestone of rich colours of pink, brown and blue, possibly quarried from Carrigdexter, near Navan, twenty five miles to the north.

Pearce was responsible for the designing of the hall. It is an impressive two-storeyed room with a black and white chequered floor and a black, Kilkenny marble chimney-





fig 4.3 (top) fig 4.4 (bottom)





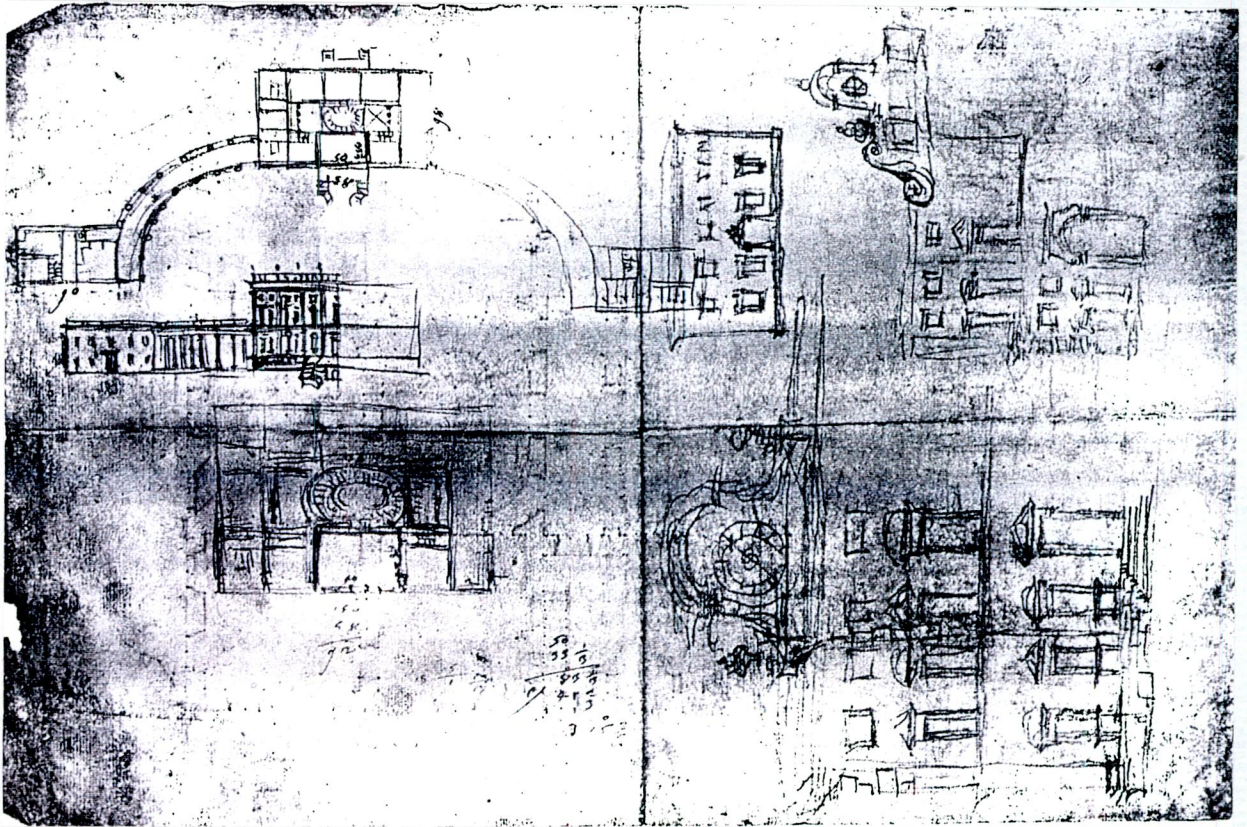
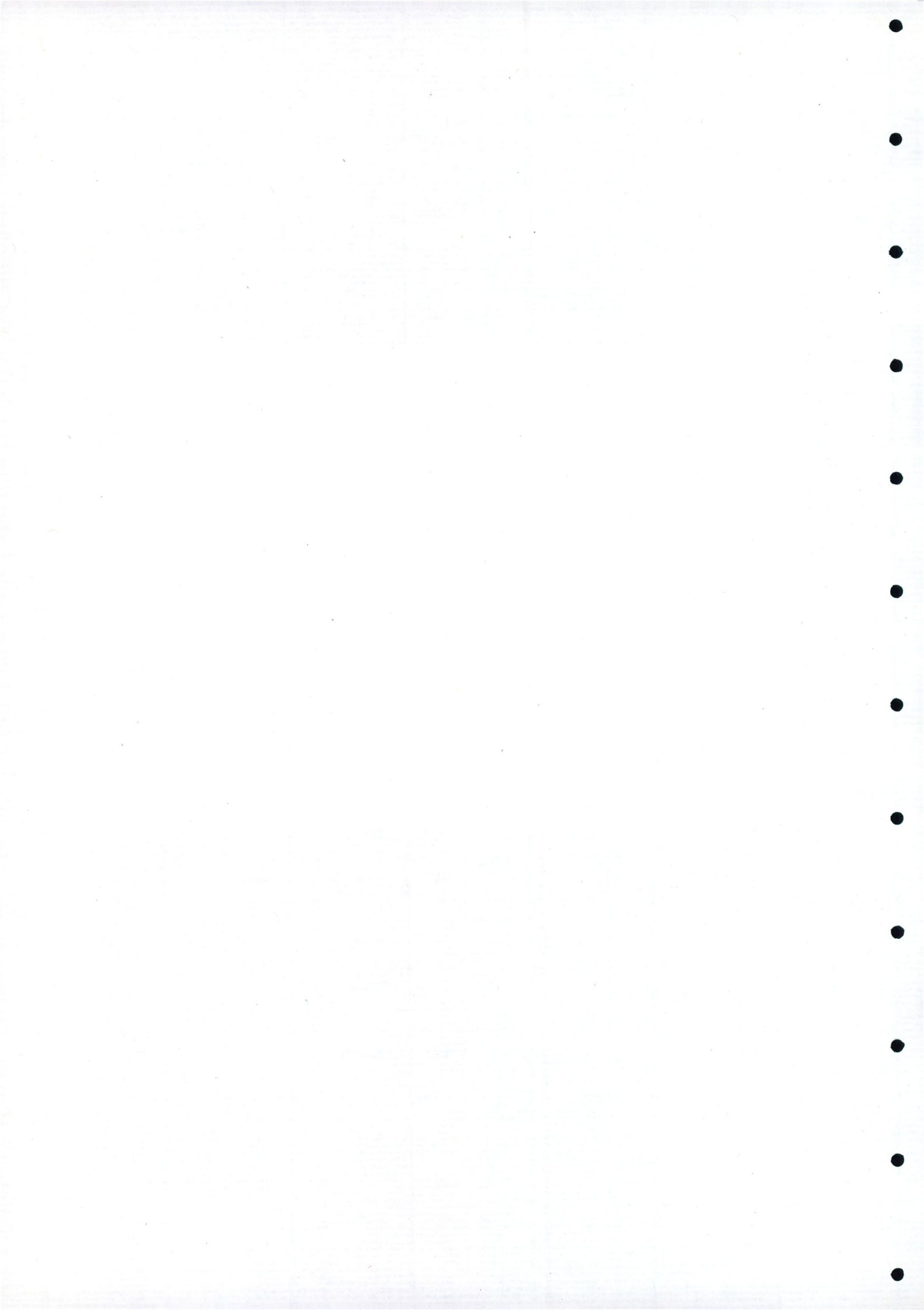


fig 4.5



piece (fig 4.6). Pearce was employed by Conolly in 1724 to complete Castletown, and it was he who added the colonnades and pavilions. However, Castletown was never completed in Conolly's lifetime.

It was not until Conolly's great nephew, Tom Conolly inherited Castletown, married Lady Louisa Lennox and settled there in 1758 that work on the house was renewed. Lady Louisa played an important part in the alteration and redecoration of Castletown during the 1760s and 1770s and she supervised most of the work herself, while her husband was absent on parliamentary business in Dublin and London. Louisa has been described as of "considerable artistic talent" with the capacity for good management and possessing a "charmed amiability". All such factors contributed to Louisa's management and supervision of the redecoration of Castletown. Her qualities are said to have compensated for those of her husband, who, although handsome, was prosaic and affectionately known as 'Flea' (Fenlon, 1987, p124). Tom's involvement in no way matched that of Louisa.

The Dining-Room dates from Louisa Conolly's time and, therefore, reflects mid-eighteenth-century fashions. Previously, a specific room had not been created as a Dining-Room. It was reconstructed to designs by Sir William Chambers, with a compartmentalised ceiling. The two eighteenth century gilt-wood tables and the three elaborate pier glasses<sup>6</sup> are original to Castletown.

The Red Drawing-Room was also redesigned in the style of Sir William Chambers in the 1760s. During the eighteenth-century it was one of the State rooms used for important occasions. "The walls are covered in red damask, which is probably French and dates from the 1820s. The Aubusson carpet dates from about 1850 and may have been made for the room" (OPW, 1995, p13). The furniture belongs to the house and Lady Louisa paid 1 1/2 guineas, which was considered expensive, for each of the Chippendale armchairs. The other chairs and couch were made in Dublin and are

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<sup>6</sup> these are the same glasses mentioned in the story concerning the Devil appearing at Castletown. they are to be found there to this day and are still damaged.





fig 4.6



displayed in a formal arrangement, as they would have been in the eighteenth-century. The bureau was made in the 1760s for Lady Louisa .

On the other hand, the Green Drawing-Room was used by the Conollys to receive visitors (fig 4.7). Again, it was redecorated in the 1760s in the neo-classical taste of the architect Sir William Chambers. This room has recently been restored and the silk walls were specially woven by Prella of Lyon, France. The original silk was reckoned to have been woven in Spitalfields. The Greek decoration found on the ceiling is repeated in the pier glasses and chimney-piece. Originally there were pier tables, of which copies are to be made in the future.

The Print Room which dates from 1768, is unique in its existence as it the only one left in Ireland (fig4.8). During the eighteenth century it was fashionable for ladies to cut out their favourite prints and decorative borders and apply them to walls or screens, Louisa had been collecting prints since 1762. Lady Louisa and her sister Lady Sarah Napier are responsible for this remarkable room.

The State Bedroom is connected to the Print Room, as at the time of William Conolly's death it was an ante chamber to the bedroom. The purpose of the room was largely symbolic and the state bed indicates the owner's immense status. In the nineteenth-century it was transformed into a library and the mock leather wallpaper dates from the 1840s.

The Pastel Room was originally a cabinet used as a dressing room. Now it houses a collection of pastel portraits including seven by the Irish pastellist, Hugh Douglas Hamilton (c.1739-1808).







fig 4.7





fig 4.8



The Long Gallery is found on the first floor and measures almost 80 feet by 23 feet (fig 4.9). The decoration of this room was Lady Louisa's greatest achievement. She abandoned her original idea to replace the heavy, early ceiling, with relief work "for the Irish workmen try one's patience not a little" (Guinness, 1982, p96). Instead she had it painted in Pompeian style; red, gold, blue and beige, to tie in with the work that was being done on the walls. This work was done in the 1770s, by two English artists, Charles Ruben Riley and Thomas Ryder. The doorcases were removed, leaving only one entrance. Portraits of Louisa and Tom were found at either end of the room. The three massive chandeliers, custom made in Venice, arrived in 1776. Louisa declared they were "the wrong blue for the room," however, they still hang there today unelectrified. After its decoration it was used as a living room. From any of the eight windows in this room, one can see Conolly's Obelisk 2 1/2 miles away (fig 4.10). This monument is attributed to Richard Castle and was built as a memorial by Conolly's wife after his death, with its dual purpose, to commemorate her husband and provide employment for the poor during the frost and famine of the winter of 1739. In 1740 Mary Jones wrote:

"My sister is building an obelisk to answer a view from the back of Castletown House, it will cost her three or four hundred pounds at least, but I believe more. I really wonder how she can do so much, and live as she does."  
(OPW, 1995, p19).

Also Mrs Conolly's generosity was widely acknowledged and at the time of her death was mentioned by Mrs Delaney in a letter dated September 1752, which stated "her table was open to her friends of all ranks, and her purse to the poor" (Howley, 1993, p215).

With the absence of a controlling architect, during the period of redecoration, Louisa was exclusively in charge of the changes. She employed a wide variety of trade and craftsmen, such as Sir William Chambers, his mason Simon Vierpyl and Filippo Francini, with whom she worked closely. Chambers never came to Castletown so it is more than likely that his designs were carried out under the supervision of Louisa and





fig 4.9



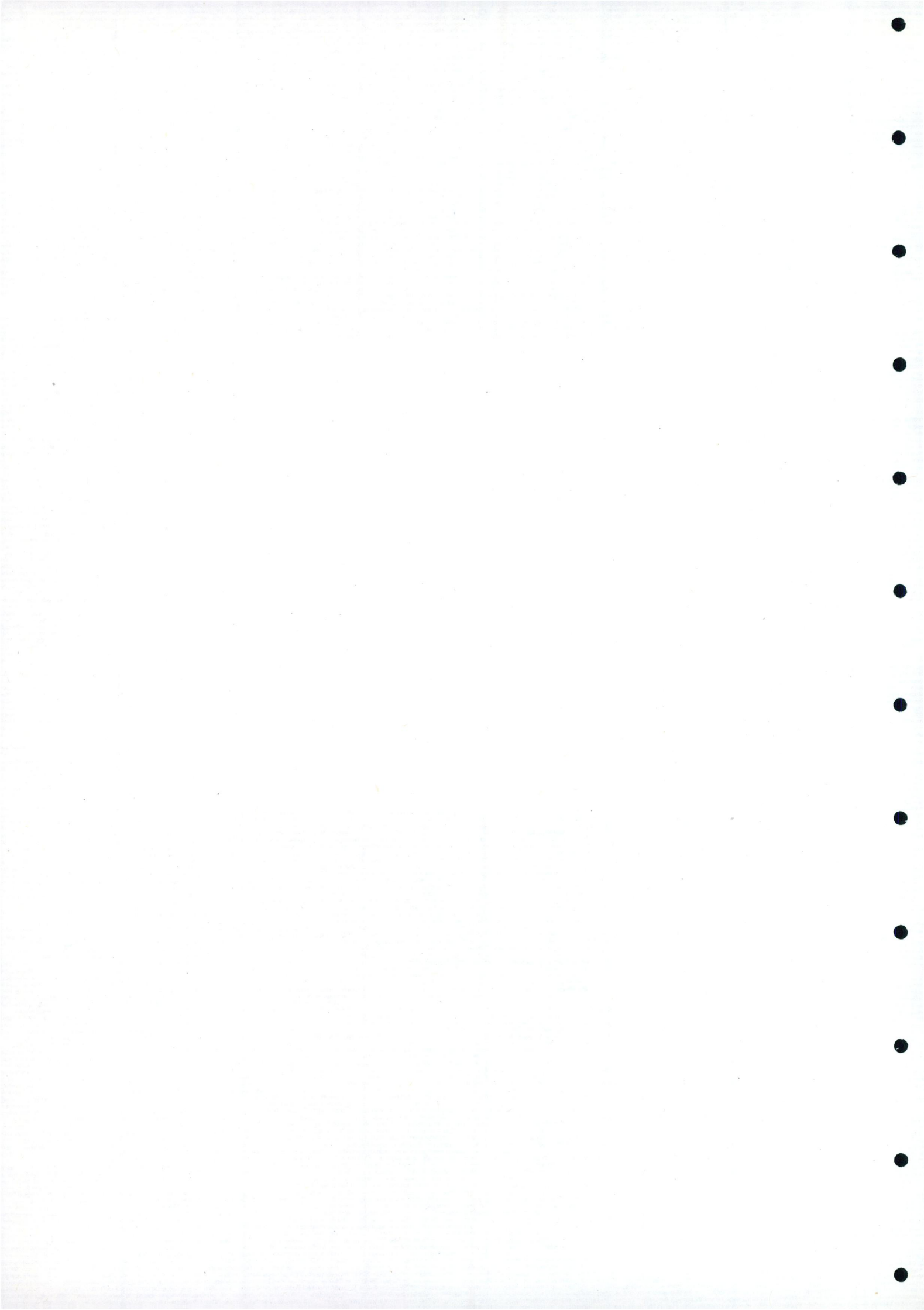
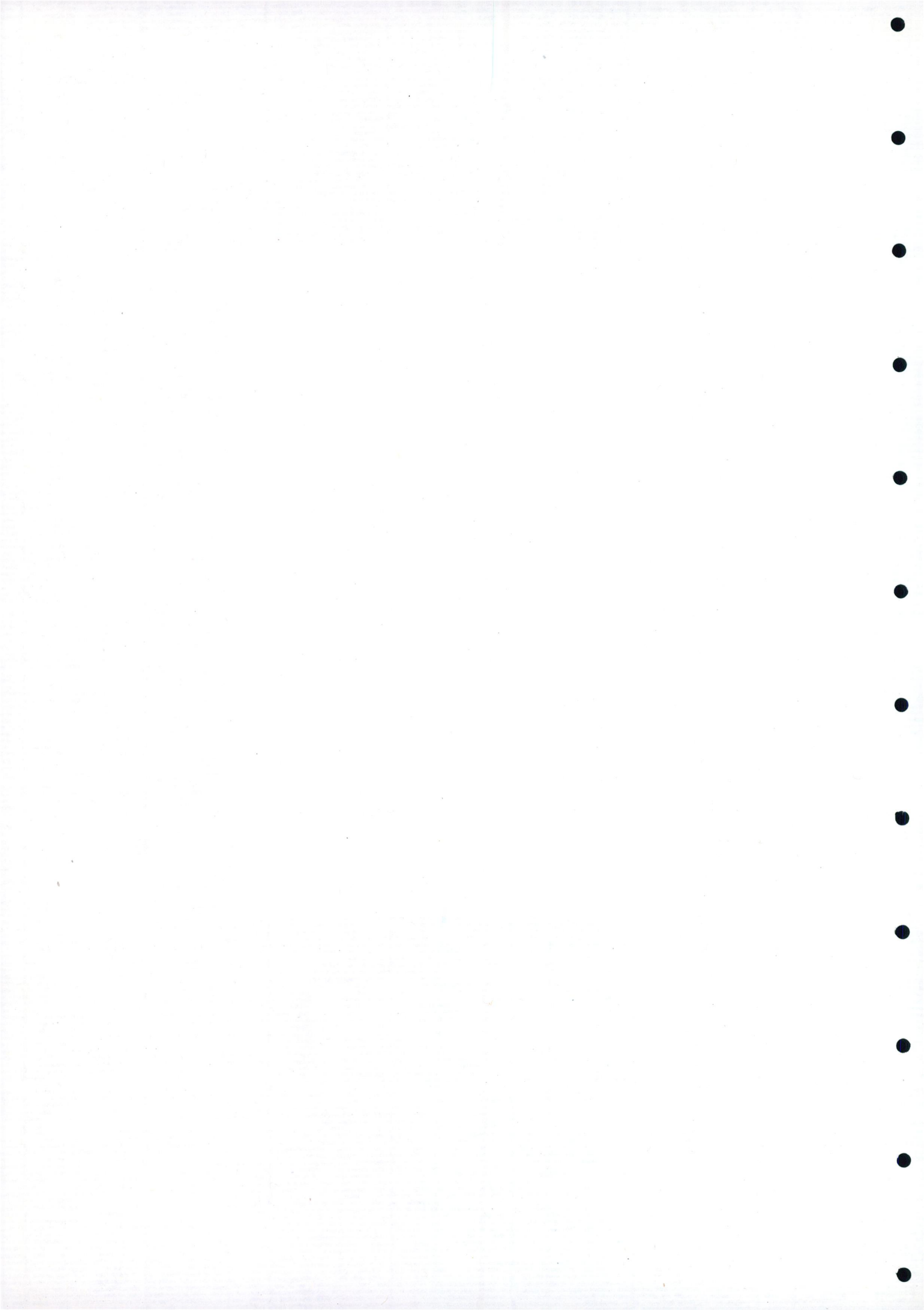




fig 4.10



the foreman Vierpyl. Thanks to Louisa, Castletown is more than a statement by one man about his wealth but is also a model of "good taste and fine workmanship" as well as a "marker in the story of design" and a commendable accomplishment to all those involved (Fitzmaurice, 1987, p90). Her management of the project was quite extraordinary for this time, she demonstrated a great independence and spirit, especially for one so youthful. Work was so intense in the year 1766 that the Conollys relocated to nearby Leixlip Castle for seven months. Two factors caused such a situation: Tom's financial situation and what Louisa referred to as the "slowness of the Paddy workers" (Fenlon, 1987, p126). Louisa's growing confidence is illustrated through her letters, as time went by she expressed her opinions on colour schemes, fabrics and forms of decoration. While at Leixlip she used to travel to Castletown every day to survey the work. When she first arrived at Castletown, Louisa was only fifteen years old and at this young age she was faced with the task of managing approximately one hundred and six servants, organising vast supplies necessary to maintain the household plus the organisation and supervision of the vast redecoration. It is the letters she wrote to her sisters and indeed the Castletown accounts that give us the information and insight that we have today.

Although the Conollys and later the Conolly-Carews remained at Castletown for a further one hundred and forty years, until 1965 no other individual rivalled Lady Louisa. In 1967 the house was in grave neglect, Lady Louisa's work was in imminent danger of being destroyed. The house had been boarded-up and had remained empty until the Hon. Desmond Guinness purchased it, some of the contents and 120 acres. Sadly he was not able to acquire the whole demense, and soon after permission was granted for a large housing estate, just north-west of the house. At that time there was no government support or finance for restoration as there is today. Nevertheless, restoration work commenced and the house was subsequently opened to the public. Desmond Guinness, who took over ownership, devoted a huge amount of effort and resources to restoring and maintaining the house to a high standard as did The Castletown Foundation which superseded him in 1979. The foundation is a charitable



organisation which kept the house open through donations, seminars, musical evenings and leasing out sections to tenants.

Due to the dangerous state of the roof the National Heritage Council were approached in 1991. It was not until January 1994, however, that Castletown House was handed over officially, to the State, under the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, with the Office of Public Works carrying out restoration work. The Castletown Foundation continues in an advisory role and still owns most of the contents. The OPW's first task was "to commission landscape architects, Brady, Shipman and Martin to carry out a survey of the house" and grounds (Mulcahy, 1994, p11). Castletown is consequently closed to the public at present and is under an ongoing programme of restoration work. Its current manager-Joanna Cramsie hopes that Castletown may be used for state functions. Meanwhile, plans are underway to turn Castletown and its grounds into a major tourist attraction. These plans include restoring the original parkland and renovating the house. Heating, for example, is a major issue. There is none at present, and because of the state of the chimneys the insurance company forbids the lighting of fires in the grates. The OPW has pledged £3 million to this work, 75% of which is funded by the EU Regional Development Fund. At present, the estate is only 14 acres but the OPW hopes to acquire 300-400 acres of surrounding land, to restore the house to its original demesne.



CHAPTER FOUR  
Changes, conversions and craftsmanship  
four hundred years of Rathfarnham Castle





Rathfarnham is also linked to Castletown through hauntings and apparitions. In Rathfarnham Castle the 'haunted room' is found at the top of the north-east tower. According to historic accounts, a previous owner while examining plans of the castle was surprised to find one of the tower-rooms was octagonal in form, as there were no eight-sided rooms there at that time. On examination it was discovered that one of the rooms had seven sides and one of its walls had a hollow ring presumably a later addition. Behind the wall a skeleton was found. The spirit of the unhappy victim is said to haunt this room (Dublin Historic Records, vol xii, 1951, p29).

The building was begun in 1583, as a comfortable residence. It had, however, elements of a fortified dwelling. While the original layout is unknown, parts are still visible, such as the stone mullioned windows, some of the original oak roof timbers, and a large stone arch which faces the village. During restoration a number of windows and fireplaces have been discovered

Rathfarnham Castle was extensively redecorated as a Georgian country house, but, with the exception of the new windows and a curved bow added to one side, it clearly remains an example of Elizabethan architecture. It is a rectangular building with four corner towers and consists of three levels, not including the basement. In the seventeenth-century this type of building, which combined both living and fortification, was popular (fig 5.1, 5.2, & 5.3). The living area was central to the building and is surrounded by four towers. A similar plan is evident at a castle in Kanturk, Co. Cork, built about 1610. By the end of the sixteenth-century Rathfarnham was acknowledged as one of the finest castles in Co. Dublin and was the first and largest of a number of similar castles.

Rathfarnham Castle was built for Adam Loftus, Archbishop of Dublin, Lord Chancellor of Ireland and in 1591, the first Provost of Trinity College Dublin. Adam Loftus was married to Jane Purdan and together they reared a very large family, comprising of twenty children. They had seven daughters some of whom were married more than once. Seven of their children died young; only four of his sons came to his



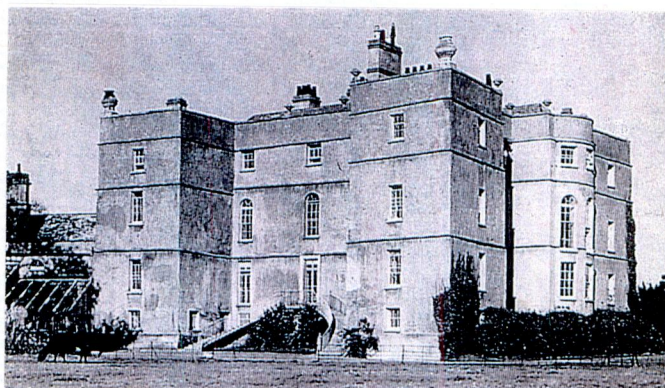


fig 5.1 (top)    fig 5.2 (middle)    fig 5.3 (bottom)



estate, all four served in the army, and only two survived and left issue. After his father's death in 1605, Sir Dudley Loftus; Adam's eldest son, received Rathfarnham Castle. This was the beginning of 186 years of a direct line of descent, from one Loftus generation to the next. Adam's younger son received the family's Wexford property. When Dudley died Rathfarnham passed to his eldest son Sir Adam Loftus, who took up residence there and was a prominent figure in political movements during the reign of Charles I. In 1640 Adam joined the parliamentary party and it was in 1641, due to an outbreak of revolution, that the castle was strongly fortified. During this time every precaution was taken to stop the castle falling into rebel hands. After this the Loftus family declined due to financial trouble. Meanwhile the castle seems to have been derelict, except for occupation by the military. When Adam's eldest son; Arthur got married to Dorothy; daughter of the Earl of Cork, they resided there. After Arthur's, and then Dorothy's death, it passed to one of their sons, also called Adam.

In 1691 Adam was killed by a cannon ball at the Siege of Limerick. It was then, through his daughter, and her subsequent marriage, that the estate passed to the Wharton family. Her husband, Thomas, Marquis of Wharton, was reputed to be one of the greatest rakes of his time. Philip who was his eldest son, succeeded him and due to his extravagant living and his loss of over £120,000 in the South Sea Scheme, he was forced to sell the estate to William Conolly. Conolly acquired it for £62,000 but never actually resided there. It is believed that when Conolly owned Rathfarnham, he employed craftsmen at both Castletown and Rathfarnham. He let Rathfarnham to a number of tenants, including Edward Worth, like Wharton before him. These tenants arranged for the remodelling of the building, including the removal of the battlements and it is from this time that many of the main rooms were established. The Right Rev. John Hoadly, Archbishop of Armagh, had a great interest in the building, which he purchased in 1742. He was responsible for making Rathfarnham famous for its agriculture and fruit gardens. When he died possession passed to Mr. Bellingham Boyle who had married his only daughter, and child. Bellingham also took an interest



in farming and in July 1762 he sent the earliest oats grown in Ireland to market in Dublin.

About the year 1742 the house, known as Whitehall, with its unusual adjacent cone-shaped tower encircled by a winding staircase, known as "Hall's Barn" was built (fig 5.4). These properties are at the back of the demesne which once belonged to Rathfarnham. The bizarre looking tower is coincidentally very similar to a structure called "The Wonderful Barn" which was built by William Conolly's wife in 1743 (fig 5.5).

In 1767 the Loftus family returned to the Castle, when Nicholas Hume-Loftus purchased it. Nicholas was at the centre of a legal case concerning his state of mind and was successfully defended by his uncle, Henry Loftus. The background to this case is that Nicholas had lived with his father and was subjected to cruelty and neglect. Nicholas' mother had died and on turning twenty one, he was entitled to the property left to him by her. Due to Nicholas' weak state his father was able to withhold knowledge from him, and spend the money to which Nicholas was entitled to. At the same time it was in his father's interest that Nicholas appeared capable of managing his own affairs, for in the event of his incapacity being proved, the children of Nicholas' mother's sister, who had married Mr. George Rochfort, would have succeeded the property. Before his father's death, which took place in 1766, the Rochfords had instituted proceedings to have Nicholas' mental capacity legally decided. The Rochfords alleged that Nicholas was an idiot, however Henry-Nicholas' uncle put forward the defense that his condition was entirely the result of the treatment he received from his own father. After a trial that lasted five days and included personal examination of Nicholas, the jury, on which three Privy Councilors and other gentlemen of high degree served, found that the Earl was not an idiot. On appeal this decision was upheld by the House of Lords.

Nicholas later executed a will, and upon his death the castle passed to his uncle, Henry. At this time more remodelling took place including the battlements being replaced by







fig 5.4 (top) fig 5.5 (bottom)



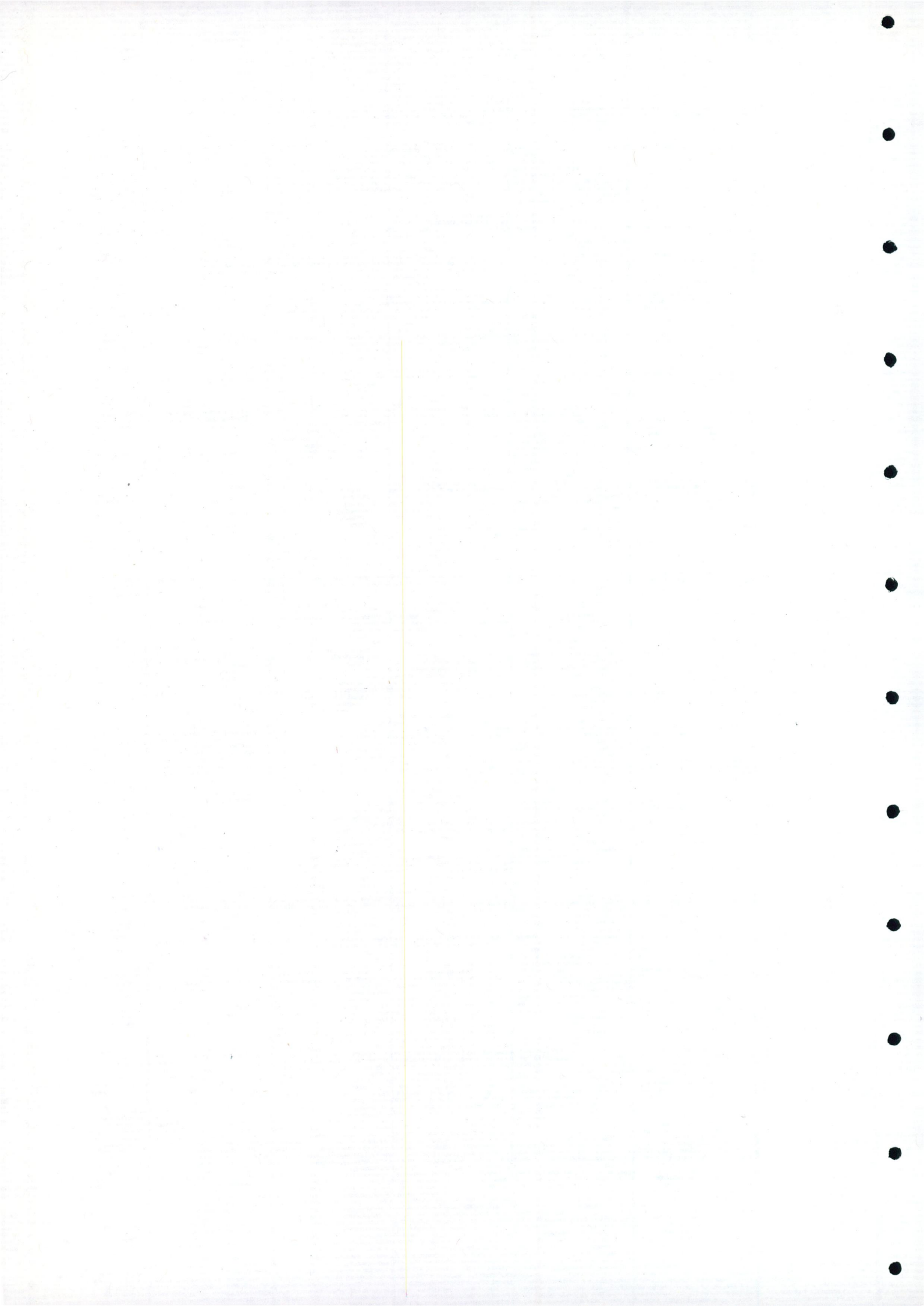
ornamental stone coping. Windows were enlarged and an extension was added on the east side. Henry employed the best craftsmen, artists and architects for the job. These included William Chambers and James 'Athnian' Stuart. Significantly, Angelica Kauffman, the Swiss artist, is responsible for the family portrait which now hangs in The National Gallery of Ireland. When Henry died in 1783 the Castle was well known for its luxury and opulence. Unfortunately, his nephew, Charles Tottenham<sup>7</sup> didn't share the same enthusiasm. Described as "a greedy and shameless nobleman" he removed all the valuables, proposed to demolish the castle and divide the estate into smaller plots for villas. Fortunately, this division did not take place. But by the end of the eighteenth-century the Castle was in a state of abandonment. It was partially dismantled when the family moved to Loftus hall in Co. Wexford and the paintings, statuary and costly furniture were removed.

After this time the Castle fell into the hands of various tenants. At one time, the property was sold to the Roper family, for example, and the demesne used for extensive farming. This marked a long succession of ownership by the ascendancy of Dublin. On occupancy throughout the nineteenth century, details are less forthcoming, although we do know that between the years of 1847 and 1852 it was sold to Lord Chancellor Blackburn, for instance, who installed bathrooms, a large organ in the ballroom and rebuilt the front steps (fig 5.6 & 5.7).

In this century the Castle has undergone significant changes. Sold by the Blackburns in 1913, part of the estate was re-sold for housing, a golf course, and the rest purchased by The Society of Jesus. During the 1920's, there was the addition of large wings to accommodate a retreat house and residence hall and it was utilized as a House of Studies for Jesuit scholastics attending the National University. Although it must be said that they looked after the building well during their time there, after 70 years they wished to sell it causing great concern for its continuity. There were grave fears that it

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<sup>7</sup> Known as "Tottenham in the boot" because he defied conventions by attending the Irish house of Commons fresh from the hunting field, booted, spurred and covered with dust (Dublin Historic Records, vol xii, 1951, p27).



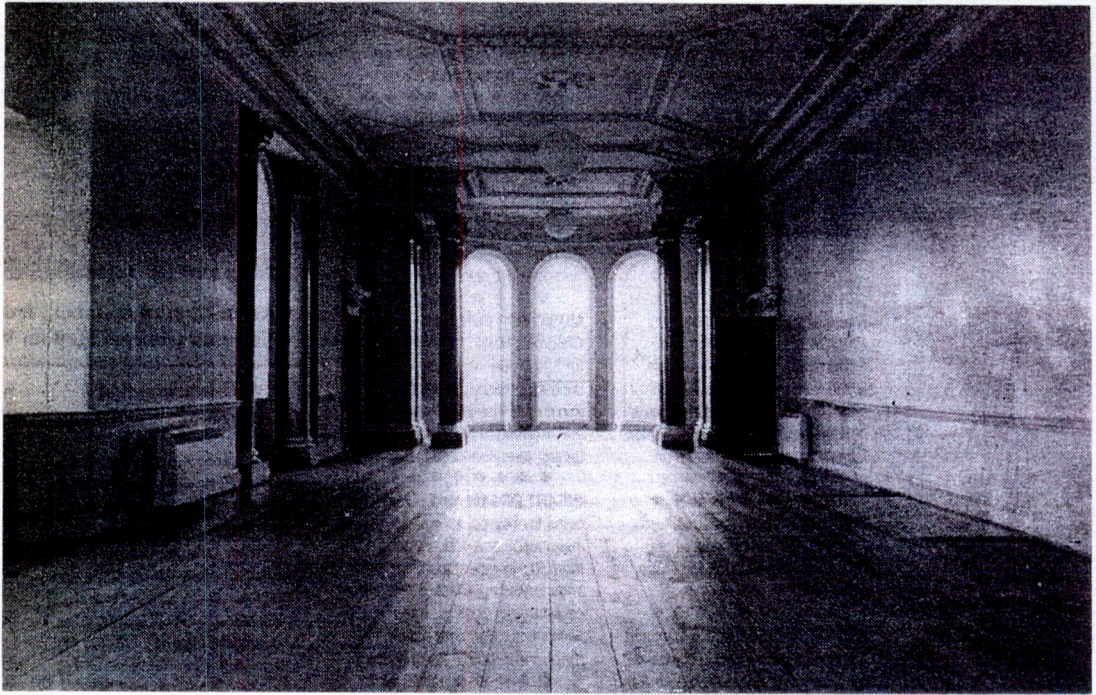


fig 5.6 (top) fig 5.7 (bottom)



might be demolished but this was not to be. In 1986 the Castle's future was secured when it was declared a National Monument and purchased by the Office of Public Works, for the state. This ended over four centuries of near continuous occupation (fig 5.8).

The castle as it stands today consists of a square building, four stories high, with a bastion tower on each corner. The towers stand 96 feet long, 99 feet wide and 56 feet high. The walls slope gently towards the top and are an average of five feet thick. The northern towers, are slightly smaller than the southern, and the semi-circular extension on the east tower was a later addition. The ground floor contains two rooms which are divided by a wall nearly ten feet thick. This wall runs right through the building and another wall, built subsequently, divides it again. At the eastern end, and built into the wall, is a wooden staircase. The south-western room was the kitchen, before a new kitchen was added at the end of the eighteenth-century and it still contains its original fireplace. The facade, including the terrace and portico resulted in the blocking up of the windows of the northern side, and these subsequently became mere cellars. Embrasures can still be seen in the north and south-east towers.

The main entrance, which faces north, consists of a portico of eight Doric columns with a low flight of steps. There is a large hall, and facing the doorway is the drawing room now divided into two rooms. This room was said to contain paintings on the ceiling by Angelica Kauffman which have been removed and replaced with others. The other room, the dining room, was a library during the Jesuits time there, and is now being restored to its original state. A staircase on the north-west tower, since removed, used to lead to the ballroom, which was a chapel during the Jesuit time and is now in the process of restoration. This level also includes a small dining-room and the gilt room, so called on account of the decoration. The third floor has a narrow central corridor which leads to the small bedrooms

Since its acquisition the OPW has carried out extensive research. The Castle has been re-roofed at a cost of £150,000, the 1920's wings removed and the eighteenth-century





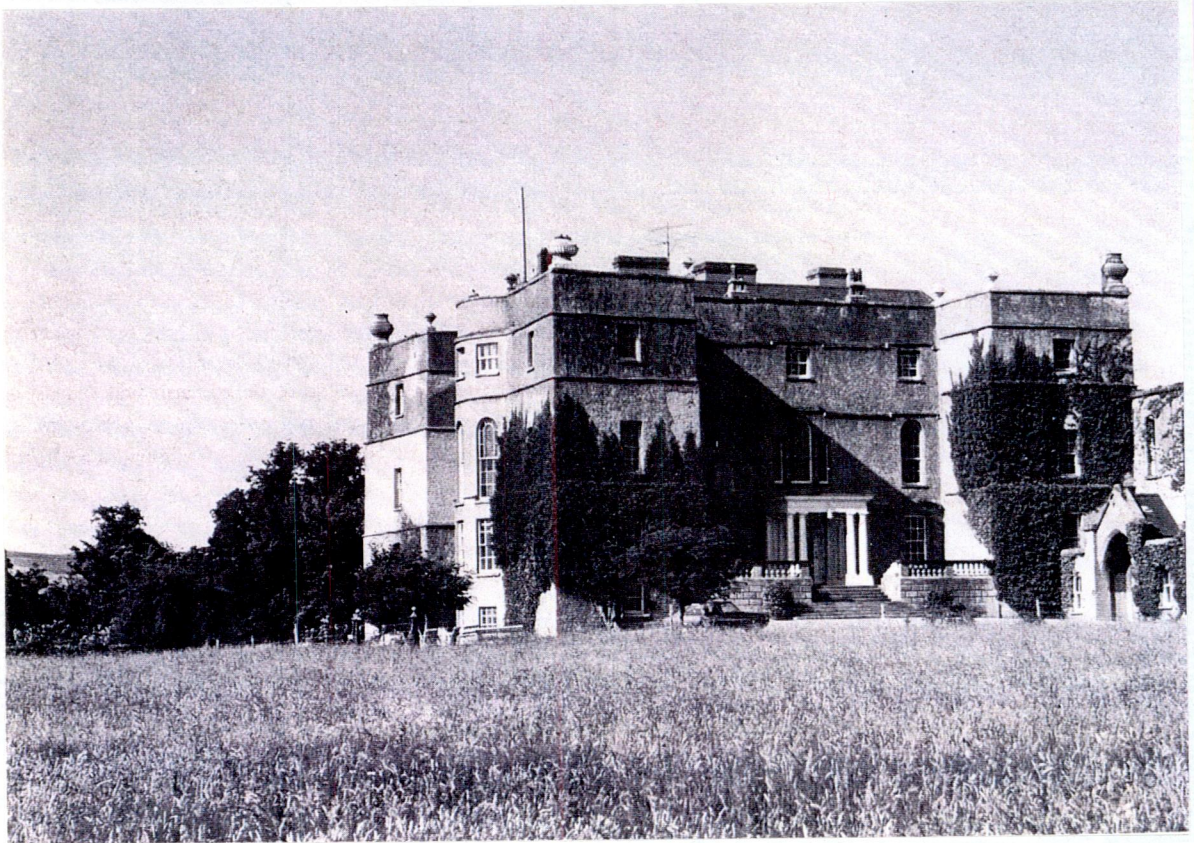


fig 5.8



kitchen wings installed with heat, light, fire and alarm systems. Further work removed dry rot and death-watch beetle infestations. Much work, however, remains to be done and the Castle is presently closed to the public for more renovation and restoration (fig 5.9). Public interest in these developments is enormous. In 1991, during an open day, the public response was so great that 700 people had to be turned away and on that day 2,500 were given a guided tour.



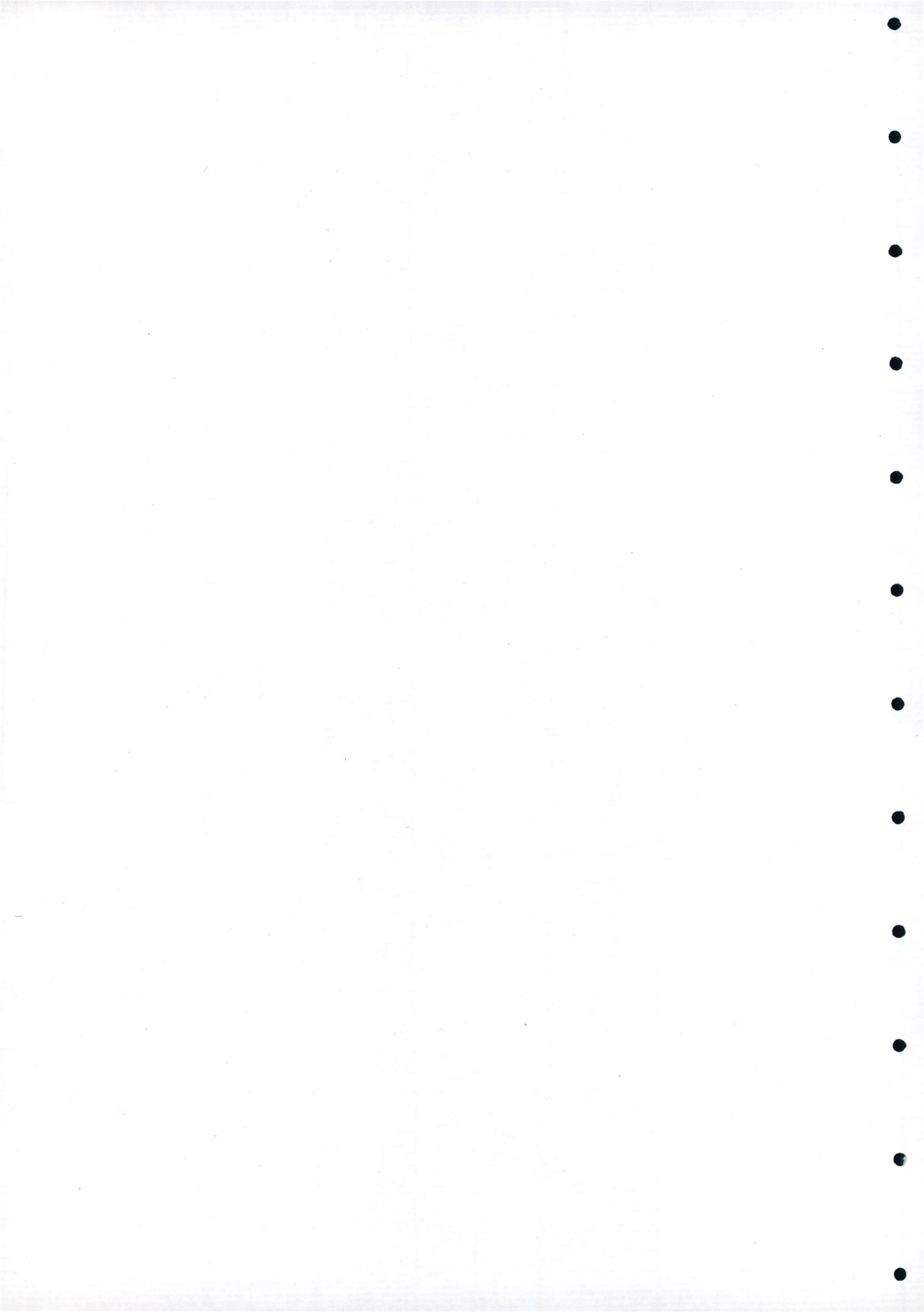


fig 5.9



CONCLUSION





In conclusion, the aim of this thesis has been fulfilled. That is to link several discourses with one goal in mind, to draw connections between the Hellfire club, Castletown House and Rathfarnham Castle. In this exploration, various factors have been employed.

William Conolly as proprietor in the 1720s of all these buildings, is of course the dominant factor. In chapter one, his biographical details are disclosed. This includes how, through luck, knowledge and corruption he gained his tremendous wealth. It was this wealth and subsequent power that enabled him to acquire the three buildings and in turn these were part of his immense collection of properties, in nine counties in Ireland and Wales. By the time of his death in 1729 Conolly had proved himself a dominant and influential figure but what he left behind, in the form of Castletown proved to be even more impressive.

Chapter two begins to create links in the chain. One such link is the fact that the Hellfire Club was suppose to have been built in its assumed location so that Conolly could see his two other great residencies, Castletown House and Rathfarnham Castle. The club's history is a lengthy one and enriched with numerous tales of apparitions and hauntings by the Devil. The commencement of such stories date from after Conolly's occupation of the building, but still prevail today.

It is a story remarkably similar to one from the Hellfire Club that creates another link to Castletown House. As the story goes, the Devil was suppose to have appeared in the Dining-Room. Yet again this was not during William Conolly's time there. As regards the construction and decoration of the house, which is the largest Palladian house in Ireland, it spans many decades. Though William Conolly resided at Castletown, it remained uncomplete at the time of his death. It was not, therefore until Lady Louisa settled there with her husband Tom, that extensive structural work was renewed and decoration commenced. This resulted in Castletown becoming one of the grandest



houses in Ireland. In the 1960s all this was in danger of being destroyed. Times had changed and it was no longer easy to find a figure like William Conolly willing to maintain such a grand house. Desmond Guinness, however, managed to purchase it in 1967. In 1979 ownership passed to The Castletown Foundation and finally to the State in 1994.

Rathfarnham Castle also faced such a dilemma. Built in 1583 and by far the oldest of the three buildings. Rathfarnham Castle has had numerous owners and tenants which both influenced its existence in a positive and negative way. William Conolly bought it in 1723 but never resided there. Instead he accumulated more wealth by letting it to tenants. Rathfarnham Castle is linked to Castletown by two unique factors. Both have specific rooms which possess tales of hauntings. In Castletown it is the Dining-room and in Rathfarnham, its the 'haunted room' found at the top of the north-east tower. Secondly, around 1742 an unusual cone-shaped tower called "Hall's Barn" was built on the Rathfarnham demesne. William Conolly's wife had a remarkably similar structure called "The Wonderful Barn" built in 1743. Like the obelisk it was part of a famine relief scheme, to help the poor.

Finally, theoretical factors play a part too, namely identity, globalisation and cultural geography. These issues relate to the buildings and create connections which have wider implications. It is true to say that not only are these properties linked to each other, but so too are these concepts. Space, as mentioned in cultural geography, embodies links and connections, like globalisation. Furthermore, identity also refers to space and place, which is in the process of change, like globalisation.



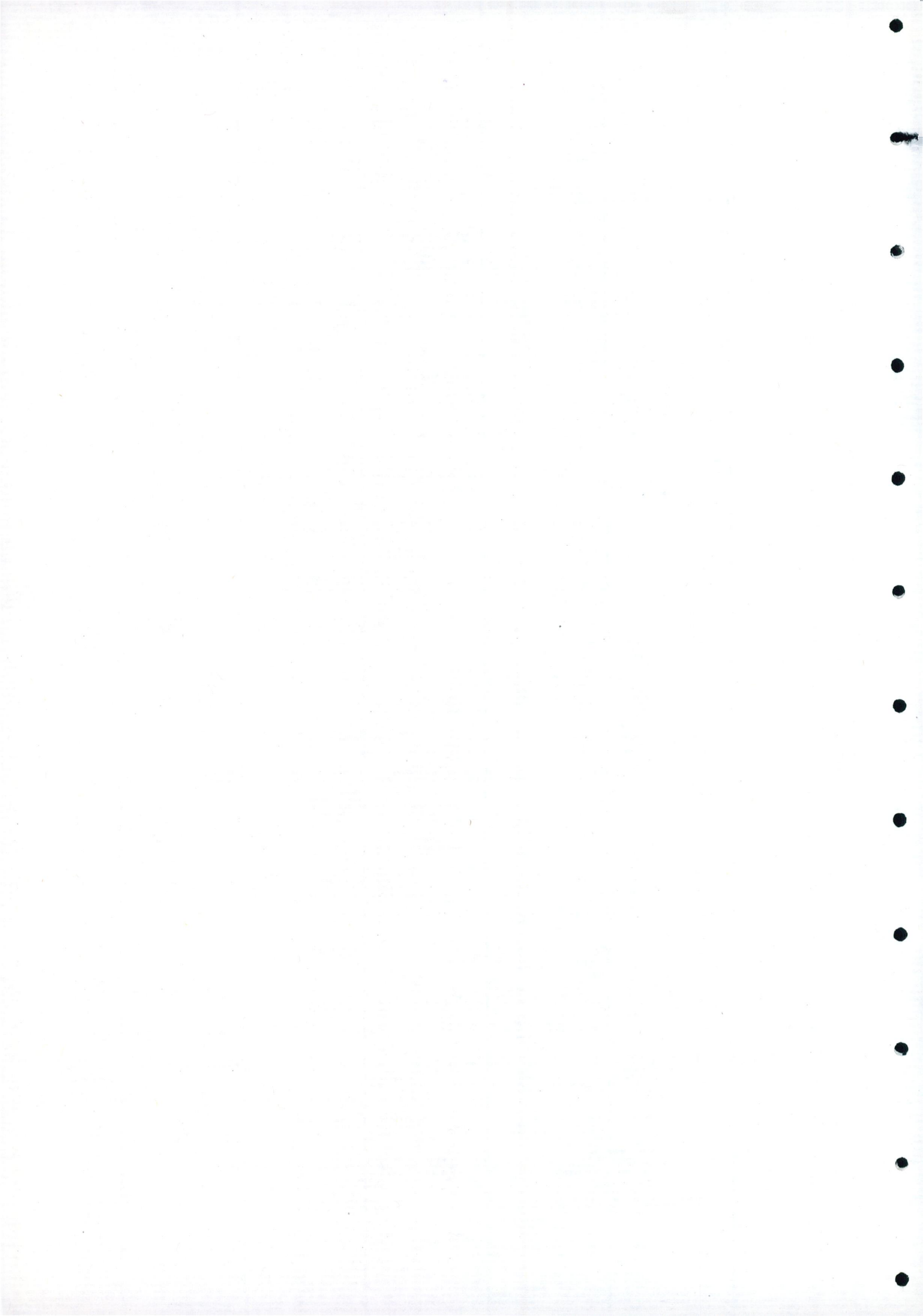
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