Irish Big House Basements: A Study of Floor Plans, 1730s–1925

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Abstract for Masters

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Simone Donders

Examinations of the basements of Irish country houses are underrepresented in current scholarship, and few historians use as sources the architectural drawings that depict them. This thesis aims to address the resulting gaps by using a sample of 43 floor plans for the basement levels of 29 country houses across the island of Ireland to analyze the work of architects and how these sources can be used to study these buildings that have fascinated the general public for centuries. The plans are examined based on their materiality and as visual layouts, and the considerations facing architects when designing country houses are discussed.

New statistics are produced about aspects of Irish country house basements such as their depth relative to ground-level, how many rooms they contained, and their general functions. Despite its scope remaining within the realm of architectural planning and based solely on floor plans, this thesis generates research useful to architectural and social historians, especially those conducting "history from below," and suggests several avenues of further research.

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Introduction

The guided tour of Castle Coole in Co. Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, begins in the entrance hall and ends in the basement. Unlike the above-ground floors, which are beautifully dressed, the lowest level of this grand house is characterized by unfinished walls, harsh electrical lighting, and minimal furniture on display. Although few rooms in the basement are included in the tour — the wine cellar, the plunge bath, and the kitchen are the primary focus — the fact that visitors descend the back stairs and walk through spaces used by servants is significant because it represents the growing attention given by curators and tourists to the domain of those who made possible the running of country houses.

While tourism to country houses in Ireland and the United Kingdom has a long history, the focus has traditionally been on the areas of the house designed for the upper classes, and only in the past 50 years or so have the servants' quarters been in the spotlight.[1] The increasing visibility of servant spaces within country houses themselves has gone hand in hand with the general population's fascination with the relationship between the "upstairs" family and the "downstairs" community of staff, as represented in popular television shows such as *Upstairs, Downstairs* and *Downton Abbey*. The effort made by the current staff at country houses such as Castle Coole and Florence Court in Co. Fermanagh, Newbridge House in Co. Dublin, and Russborough House in Co. Wicklow to make spaces such as basements, kitchens, laundries, and courtyards accessible to tourists proves that people care about the lives of the staff who worked at those houses in previous centuries.[2]

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[1] Amanda Goodrich, "Introduction," in *Georgians Revealed: Life, Style and the Making of Modern Britain*, eds. Moira Goff, John Goldfinch, Karen Limper-Herz, and Helen Peden (London: The British Library, 2013), 16; Oliver Cox, "Review: The 'Downton Boom'," *The Public Historian* 37, no. 2 (May 2015): 116.

[2] These four country houses were visited during the fieldwork conducted for this thesis. The guided tours at Castle Coole, Florence Court, and Newbridge House include the basement with varying degrees of set dressing and

A country house, or manor house or stately home or, particularly in Ireland, "big house," in the British and Irish context is the country seat of an aristocratic family and named for its position within the countryside, as opposed to the family's town house in London or Dublin or other city. The term "country house" could not be applied to any residential building in a rural setting. These buildings were "a symbol of the social and economic power of the landed classes," and while they "had a number of practical purposes," they were "defined by the aesthetic prestige of their decoration."[3]

The scope of this thesis is country houses located on the island of Ireland whose plans were drawn between 1730 and 1925. Approaching these houses through architectural drawings that depict them, this thesis focuses specifically on their basement levels. The decision to focus on country houses allowed for this thesis to rest on the solid foundation of scholarship discussing these buildings while exploring an aspect — or level — of these buildings that has to date been understudied by scholars. Most of the current scholarship centres upon English country houses, and writing in the Irish context means that this thesis works to fill the resulting gap. While the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are now separate countries, for the time period covered by all of this project's primary sources except one they were not officially separated, so this thesis covers the entire island as its region.[4] The time period is, admittedly, quite broad, but was purposefully kept so to allow for the inclusion of the most sources possible, which is key for statistical analysis and determining patterns.

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signage; the basement of Russborough House is not included in the tour, but small exhibits, including some about the servants of the house, are installed in rooms adjoining the shop that occupies the central corridor of that level.

[3] Arthur Elton, Brett Harrison, and Keith Wark, *Researching the Country House: A Guide for Local Historians* (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd, 1992), 38; David Cannadine and Jeremy Musson, *The Country House: Past, Present, Future* (New York: Rizzoli, 2018), 81.

[4] The floor plan for Bessborough House is dated 1925, which falls after the signing of the Anglo-Irish treaty in 1921.

The approach of studying buildings by level or storey does not seem to be common within the fields of architectural history or country house studies. It does, however, lend itself quite nicely to working with architectural drawings, which are delineated by storey. Floor plans sit at an interesting junction between being textual documents and representations of material culture — between being written and visual sources — and therefore are deserving of more scholarly attention within History than they currently receive. That basements were almost exclusively used for servant offices and quarters means that this thesis joins the growing "history from below" scholarship (in this case literally below ground), which seeks to balance the long history of excluding the lower classes from the field of History.[5] Instead of focusing on individuals from the lower classes and their lives, this thesis contributes to the small field of scholarship that looks at the spaces where servants lived and worked within country houses, complementing the comparatively large body of work on the spaces used by the families that owned the buildings.

The term "basement" can conjure up feelings of fear, visions of dark and creepy spaces, and associations with horror, dirt, and discomfort.[6] While the basements of country houses in Ireland were often cold and damp and less comfortable than the floors above, many were adequately lit and spacious. Many were not even fully underground. Far from spooky, seldom-used spaces, country house basements were both the structural foundations of the building and where the foundational work of servants was carried out. As Jeremy Musson notes in *The Country House: Past, Present, Future*, "every element of country house life—from the most ordinary daily routines to displays of hospitality—was dependent on servants."[7] And servants

[5] The term "offices" is used quite often in both contemporary and modern sources to describe the spaces used by servants to carry out their work at a country house, whereas "quarters" refers to rooms used primarily for sleeping.
[6] Bernice M. Murphy, "Don't Go Down to the Basement! Serial Murder, Family Values and the Suburban Family Home," chap. 5 in *The Suburban Gothic in American Popular Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2009).
[7] Cannadine and Musson, *The Country House*, 301.

were more often than not placed in the basement. It is true that during certain time periods as architectural styles and plans went in and out of fashion, the architects of country houses were more or less likely to include a basement, but in general country houses in Ireland and the United Kingdom were as likely to have a basement as to not have one. The factors that determined whether or not an Irish country house was built with a basement will be discussed in the second chapter.

The architectural history of large residential buildings in Ireland is a fascinating one. Irish country houses have their roots in castles, which were first built on the island by the English conquerors in the twelfth century. Outside of the large, complex castles built as defensive strongholds, such as at Trim, Co. Meath, most Irish castles were "tower-houses."[8] These buildings, which still dot the Irish countryside as ruins, were usually square buildings characterized by a vertical layout where rooms were stacked on top of each other rather than laid out beside one another.[9] The defense-based practice of placing the entrance of a castle keep above ground level and of using the top floors as the primary living spaces can be seen as continuing into towerhouses, which generally "located their main hall on the top floor."[10] Towerhouses continued to be built well into the seventeenth century, and many families chose to add a wing onto a towerhouse, often changing the principal front of the building in the process, rather than constructing a new house.[11]

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[8] Mark Bence-Jones, *A Guide to Irish Country Houses* (London: Constable, 1988), xi.
[9] Bence-Jones, xi; Peter Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House: A Social History* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson Ltd, 1995), 41; Rolf Loeber, *Irish Houses and Castles 1400–1740* (Chicago: Four Courts Press, 2019), 155.
[10] Loeber, *Irish Houses and Castles*, 155.
[11] Bence-Jones, *A Guide*, xi; Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 75 & 107; Patricia McCarthy, *Life in the Country House in Georgian Ireland* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 3; Peter Harbison, Homan Potterton, and Jeanne Sheehy, *Irish Art and Architecture: From Prehistory to the Present* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 1978), 121.

Overlapping with towerhouses, which perhaps are closer to castles than country houses, are semi-fortified houses, which maintained the central function of defense but began to evolve towards designs that favoured comfort, convenience, and taste.[12] These varied in style by region, included more living space than medieval towerhouses, and had different layouts, including the inner courtyard arrangement that was popular in England through the seventeenth century and a rectangular block with towers on each corner.[13] A major change during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries in Ireland was the adoption of symmetry into elevations and plans, based on classically-inspired buildings from the European continent.[14] Another innovation was the "replacement of the vertical layout of rooms … by a more horizontal layout over two to four storeys."[15] Harbison et al. note that "it was only after 1660 that it became common for purely domestic (as opposed to semi-fortified) houses to be built" and that Irish patrons and architects began looking to England "for examples of the latest architectural styles."[16]

While much inspiration was taken from England or other countries, there was still "substantial room for the development of an indigenous Irish architecture with its own distinctive idiom."[17] Maurice Craig suggests that the first half of the eighteenth century was characterized by a building boom of country houses in Ireland, where around "two dozen or so sizeable country houses were built or at least begun."[18] By the mid-1700s, country houses in Ireland were no longer "blatantly fortified," but still retained some defensive measures such as locks, barred

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[12] Bence-Jones, *A Guide*, xii; Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 99; Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, *Irish Art and Architecture*, 119.
[13] Bence-Jones, *A Guide*, xii; Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 45; Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 114; Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, *Irish Art and Architecture*, 121; Loeber, *Irish Houses and Castles*, 142–44.
[14] Loeber, *Irish Houses and Castles*, 145.
[15] Loeber, 155.
[16] Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, *Irish Art and Architecture*, 123.
[17] Loeber, *Irish Houses and Castles*, 156.
[18] Maurice Craig, *The Architecture of Ireland: From the Earliest Times to 1880* (Dublin: Eason, 1982), 180.

windows, and paved external passages at the basement level, called the *area*, that acted as a dry moat around the building.[19]

From the eighteenth century and beyond, different architectural styles were popular among Irish country house commissioners and architects. Palladianism, with its centre block "joined to subordinate wings by straight or curved links" was brought to Ireland by Sir Edward Lovett Pearce and carried on by Richard Castle.[20] This was a particularly popular style for country rather than town houses, and was fashionable longer in Ireland than in England.[21] Another typical style for Irish country houses during the eighteenth century was the "three-storey Georgian block," sometimes over a basement, which was almost as high as it was long.[22] In these houses, the "principal reception rooms were usually located on the first floor," or the *piano nobile*, continuing the tradition from medieval castles of elevating the main living areas well above ground level.[23] While these were the two most common styles of Irish country houses, many did not fit into either category.[24]

Most late eighteenth-century houses were more modest than the palaces designed by Castle, often two storeys built above a basement, and many country house commissions were for alterations to existing structures rather than new builds.[25] Few Elizabethan or Jacobean houses were built in Ireland, which Jacqueline O'Brien and Desmond Guinness cite as "owing to the troubled times" of those eras in Ireland.[26] At the end of the eighteenth century, Neo-Classicism began to replace Palladianism, which "looked directly to ancient Rome" rather than the

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[19] Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 154–55.
[20] Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 160; Bence-Jones, *A Guide*, xiv.
[21] Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, *Irish Art and Architecture*, 132; McCarthy, *Life in the Irish Country House*, 1.
[22] Bence-Jones, *A Guide*, xiv; Loeber, *Irish Houses and Castles*, 254.
[23] Loeber, *Irish Houses and Castles*, 254.
[24] Bence-Jones, *A Guide*, xv.
[25] Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, *Irish Art and Architecture*, 143.
[26] Jacqueline O'Brien and Desmond Guinness, *Great Irish Houses and Castles* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1992), 36.

contemporary Palladio for inspiration.[27] Francis Johnston, one of the most prolific architects of the turn of the century, was instrumental in the popularization of this style.[28] The revival of Gothic architecture and the "gothicization" of classical houses by adding towers and battlements expressed a similar "Romantic nostalgia" as Neo-Classicism did.[29] The Acts of Union between Ireland and Britain in 1800 caused an increase in country house building that lasted most of the century, and throughout the nineteenth century many landlords built houses for themselves on their Irish estates that they used as primary residences, reducing the practice of absentee landlordism.[30]

In the nineteenth century, Irish country houses sunk somewhat, with the first floor reception rooms being only slightly elevated from the ground, often with a semi-subterranean basement below.[31] Johnston was joined by Sir Richard Morrison and his son William Vitruvius Morrison as the most in-demand architects for the two styles that dominated the first few decades of the century: Classical and Gothic.[32] Johnston's style is often described as more severe, influenced by Greek architecture, while the Morrisons' work was generally "more subtle and less severe."[33] Other styles, such as Elizabethan, Tudor, and Jacobean, were used for some Irish country houses, and the Italianate style made an appearance towards the middle of the nineteenth century, contrasting the severity of Neo-Classicism and the romance of Gothic castles with its "richness and grandeur."[34] Harbison et al. make a distinction between the "Gothick" castles that were fashionable in the early nineteenth century and the "Gothic revival" that spread across

[27] Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, *Irish Art and Architecture*, 138.
[28] Bence-Jones, *A Guide*, xvii.
[29] Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, *Irish Art and Architecture*, 144.
[30] Bence-Jones, *A Guide*, xvii; Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, *Irish Art and Architecture*, 187.
[31] Loeber, *Irish Houses and Castles*, 254.
[32] O'Brien and Guinness, *Great Irish Houses*, 187; Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 221–22.
[33] Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, *Irish Art and Architecture*, 189.
[34] Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, 189–96.

Ireland later in the century.[35] Ireland's rugged landscapes were seen as suiting medieval or medieval-inspired architecture, and several new castles were built in the Victorian era that were modelled directly on medieval architecture, rather than merely suggesting it through castellations and towers.[36]

The Great Famine (1845–51) also had architectural repercussions alongside the unprecedented human catastrophe, causing a more abrupt change between Georgian and Victorian building styles.[37] Whereas country house building was widely practiced in the years preceding the Famine, afterwards the industry was confined to the richest and most sophisticated families.[38] Post-Famine, the castle style dominated Ireland, as those who could afford to build preferred it to "obsolete and boring" classical styles.[39] High Victorianism did not catch on in Ireland, but the Victorian ideals of specialization, privacy, and comfort began to be reflected in the island's country house design.[40] The agricultural depression of the 1880s left landlords even worse off financially than the Famine, and its long-enduring effects meant that few houses in the Edwardian style were built in Ireland.[41] In general, the evolution of architectural styles throughout the nineteenth century meant that by the end of it patrons could choose an architectural style for a country house "almost as [they] would [their] wallpaper."[42] Thus, over the centuries castles came in and out of fashion in Ireland and were joined by a wide variety of country house styles and plans, resulting in a rural environment characterized by large, beautiful residential buildings that shared certain features or shapes but were all unique in their own ways.

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[35] Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, 196.
[36] Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, 196–200.
[37] Bence-Jones, *A Guide*, xix–xx.
[38] Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 249; Bence-Jones, *A Guide*, xx.
[39] Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 289; Bence-Jones, *A Guide*, xxi.
[40] Bence-Jones, *A Guide*, xx–xxi; Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 289.
[41] Bence-Jones, *A Guide*, xxi.
[42] Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, *Irish Art and Architecture*, 206.

Historiography

The historiography of this thesis is focused on three main areas of research: the architectural history of the (Irish) country house, country house planning, and servant spaces within country houses. Before works from these areas of research are discussed, two key social histories of country houses bear highlighting.

First, a book that technically falls outside of the three fields and yet manages to cover all of them in ways more relevant to this thesis than most scholarship within the fields themselves is *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* by Mark Girouard, first published in 1978.[43] Girouard was a leading British architectural historian, and *Life in the English Country House* is widely considered to be a seminal work in the field. As a self-proclaimed social history, this book was one of the first to go beyond discussing the art and architecture of the country house to investigating the lives of those who lived and worked within them. Girouard remains one of the few scholars to have included several Irish examples (unlike many books that have "British" in the title and mention Ireland only offhandedly a handful of times) and to have spent a relatively significant amount of page space discussing the placement and layout of servant spaces.

Second, the book that aligns most closely with this thesis is Patricia McCarthy's more recently published *Life at the Country House in Georgian Ireland*.[44] McCarthy uses many of the same floor plans as this thesis does, and supplements them with other types of primary sources such as inventories to examine how life in the country house functioned during the long eighteenth century. Starting with the entrance to the estate, she takes a spatial approach, examining each space within the Irish big house in isolation. Her section on servant spaces is not

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[43] Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*.
[44] McCarthy, *Life in the Irish Country House*.

extensive, as she writes more on the spaces used by the family and guests, leaving ample room for the research conducted in this thesis.

The first of the three fields included in the historiography for this thesis is the architectural history of country houses. In general, scholars writing on this topic take one of three approaches: focusing on a specific style or architect, giving an overview of the evolution of country house architecture over time, or, particularly in the case of work that centres on Ireland, selecting a dozen or more houses of particular importance and dedicating a chapter to each.

Considering that this thesis spans two centuries and 29 different houses in Ireland, scholarship on individual architects has not proven particularly relevant. Many of the big-name architects who were at the forefront of architectural evolution in the country house sphere — Inigo Jones, Robert Smyth, and Edward Lovett Pearce — did not work in Ireland or were not involved in the houses depicted in the sources used for this thesis. The two widely known, prolific architects who worked primarily in Ireland and who were involved in the houses considered here — Richard Castle and Francis Johnston — have received minimal scholarly attention.[45]

Works on a particular architectural style have been more relevant, and though almost all of the following examples are entirely in the English context they do provide a solid foundation for understanding how the styles are unique, how style influenced the layout of the house, and whether basements were a common feature. Mark Girouard's *The Victorian Country House*, for example, comprehensively describes how the Victorian mindset influenced the design and planning of country houses built during the period, including how the servant offices were

[45] Barbara Freitag, The Troubled Life of Richard Castle, Ireland's Pre-Eminent Early Eighteenth-Century Architect (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2023); Patrick Henchy, "Francis Johnston, Architect, 1760–1829," *Dublin Historical Record* 11 (1949): 1–16.

arranged as a result.[46] Although Megan Aldrich's *Gothic Revival* is not solely about country houses, it includes some basic information about the architectural style as well as a few Irish country house examples.[47] Similarly, John Harris's *The Palladians* centres mostly on England and non-country-house architecture, but does discuss the Palladian style in Ireland.[48] An Irish example is Rolf Loeber's article "Early Classicism in Ireland: Architecture Before the Georgian Era," which looks at the development of country house architecture before Sir Edward Lovett Pearce brought Palladianism to Ireland.[49]

Many books provide a comprehensive overview of country houses over a specific time period, discussing architecture along the way. Notable examples include Dana Arnold's *The Georgian Country House: Architecture, Landscape and Society*, Clive Aslet's *The Story of the Country House*, Christopher Christie's *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century*, Brian De Breffny and Rosemary ffolliott's *The Houses of Ireland*, Rolf Loeber's *Irish Houses and Castles 1400–1740*, and Peter Somerville-Large's *The Irish Country House: A Social History*.[50] Most of these books spend little page space, if any, discussing country house basements or the servant spaces within country houses, and those not specifically about Ireland tend to focus on England. Nevertheless, these general-style works are central to the study of country houses and each has contributed an idea or information to this thesis.

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[46] Mark Girouard, *The Victorian Country House* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).
[47] Megan Aldrich, *Gothic Revival* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1994).
[48] John Harris, *The Palladians* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982).
[49] Rolf Loeber, "Early Classicism in Ireland: Architecture Before the Georgian Era," *Architectural History* 22 (1979): 49–155.
[50] Dana Arnold, ed., *The Georgian Country House: Architecture, Landscape and Society* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998); Clive Aslet, *The Story of the Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021); Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Brian De Breffny and Rosemary ffolliott, *The Houses of Ireland* (London: Avery, 1975); Loeber, *Irish Houses and Castles*; Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*.

A trend particular to books on Irish country houses is for the scholar(s) to write an introductory chapter on the history of the big house in Ireland, with varying degrees of focus on architecture, followed by chapters each dedicated to one house. These books are often large with beautiful photographs of the exteriors and interiors of the houses, and discuss each house's history in terms of when it was built and in which style, for whom it was built and the families who owned and lived in it, any unique features it has, and in some cases how it was destroyed and rebuilt. Examples include David Hicks's *Irish Country Houses: A Chronicle of Change*, Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd and Christopher Simon Sykes's *Great Houses of Ireland*, Jacqueline O'Brien and Desmond Guinness's *Great Irish Houses and Castles*, and Seán O'Reilly's *Irish Houses and Gardens: From the Archives of Country Life*.[51] Although the trend of these books is to focus on the biggest, most architecturally significant, and most historically important houses, all of them include at least a couple of the houses discussed here, providing important background information on them.

As might be expected, basements or offices are mentioned only in passing and the scholars pay little attention to their layout. An unexpected way that these books will be used in this thesis is as fellow surveys that provide data on the proportion of Irish country houses with basements. One other source in this category that needs to be mentioned is Mark Bence-Jones's *A Guide to Irish Country Houses*, which is the most complete catalogue of country houses in Ireland, featuring over 2,000 of them.[52] The entries for each house vary considerably in length and detail,

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[51] David Hicks, *Irish Country Houses: A Chronicle of Change* (Cork: The Collins Press, 2012); Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd and Christopher Simon Sykes, *Great Houses of Ireland* (New York: Rizzoli, 1999); O'Brien and Guinness, *Great Irish Houses*; Seán O'Reilly, *Irish Houses and Gardens: From the Archives of Country Life* (London: Aurum Press Ltd, 1998).
[52] Bence-Jones, *A Guide*.

and rarely give any insight into the plan of the house, but it is the only source that contains information on almost all of the houses discussed in this thesis.[53]

In terms of scholarship on country house planning, again most of the writing is about England. Although too early to overlap with the scope of this thesis, Malcolm Airs's *The Making of the English Country House 1500–1640* discusses the role and use of architectural drawings for country house building.[54] Another book that lies outside of the geographic and temporal scope of this project but is nevertheless useful is *Houses of the Gentry 1480–1680* by Nicholas Cooper.[55] This book traces the evolution of how country houses in England were arranged, demonstrating how they turned from inward facing to outward facing and the innovation of the compact design, discussing the tension between houses that show or hide their internal layout, and spending considerable page space to the rooms that made up the offices. Although the evolution in Ireland differed in many ways and the popularity of certain styles was by no means parallel, much of the information in this book is relevant to understanding the spaces placed within the Irish country house basement.

A source that is perhaps the most forthcoming on the arrangement of country houses, including on the spaces designated for servant use, is Robert Kerr's *The Gentleman's House; or, How to Plan English Residences from the Parsonage to the Palace; with Tables of Accommodation and Cost, and a Series of Selected Plans*, published in 1865.[56] Although writing in the English context, Kerr goes into detail about the various considerations that architects must

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[53] The only house that appears in the sample for this thesis and not in Bence-Jones's book is St. Catherine's House, Co. Dublin; the nearby and similarly named St. Catherine's Park is, however, included.
[54] Malcolm Airs, *The Making of the English Country House 1500–1640* (London: The Architectural Press Ltd, 1975).
[55] Nicholas Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry 1480–1680* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).
[56] Robert Kerr, *The Gentleman's House; or, How to Plan English Residences from the Parsonage to the Palace; with Tables of Accommodation and Cost, and a Series of Selected Plans* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1865).

keep in mind while planning a country house and spends a solid fifty pages on the different rooms that could be included within the offices. As both Professor of the Arts of Construction at King's College, London, and an architect himself, Kerr's insight is particularly valuable.[57] This thesis uses his categories for subdividing the servants' department. *Design and Plan in the Country House: From Castle Donjons to Palladian Boxes* by Alison Maguire and Andor Harvey Gomme makes the most liberal use of floor plans, but its focus on the period before the eighteenth century and its lack of Irish examples place it outside of this project's scope.[58] Nevertheless, the central arguments about how room placement shifted over time and the evolution towards the compact design are relevant to this work, and they do mention country house basements far more often than most scholars.

A few books on Irish architecture do, thankfully, provide some insight into the evolution of country house planning on the island. *Irish Art and Architecture: From Prehistory to the Present* by Peter Harbison, Homan Potterton, and Jeanne Sheehy provides a comprehensive timeline of Irish architecture, including country houses, which this thesis relies on heavily.[59] The scholars do not go into a lot of detail about the specific changes to country house layout and the placement of servant spaces within these buildings, but they do mention several individual houses that exemplify architectural styles and trace which styles were popular in Ireland throughout the centuries. Maurice Craig's *The Architecture of Ireland: From the Earliest Times to 1880* similarly has some discussion on the evolution of architectural styles of country houses in Ireland.[60]

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[57] Jill Franklin, "Troops of Servants: Labour and Planning in the Country House 1840–1914," *Victorian Studies* 19, no. 2 (1975): 212.
[58] Andor Harvey Gomme and Alison Maguire, *Design and Plan in the Country House: From Castle Donjons to Palladian Boxes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008).
[59] Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, *Irish Art and Architecture*.
[60] Craig, *The Architecture of Ireland*.

The third and final area of historiography relevant to this thesis is on the servant spaces in country houses. Because of this project's unique approach that looks at floor plans for the purpose of studying the design of buildings, rather than studying the people who would eventually live and work in the spaces under consideration, much of the growing scholarship on servants in the Irish and wider British context are only tangentially relevant. This thesis is not a social history, and its interest in the lower-class individuals whose lives intersected with Irish country houses does not extend past the rooms and other spaces that were planned for them by architects. As previously mentioned, Kerr's book *The Gentleman's House* includes an entire section on the different room types found in the servants' department of country houses, and his discussions of what to consider when designing those spaces is comprehensive.[61]

The only modern book that deals specifically with the servant spaces within country houses is Christina Hardyment's *Behind the Scenes: Domestic Arrangements in History Houses*.[62] Affiliated with the National Trust, this book's geographic range includes Northern Ireland, although discussing any differences or similarities between the Irish context and that of the rest of the UK seems to have been beyond its scope. Hardyment's thorough and meticulous descriptions of the various types of rooms that were placed in country houses for servant use include much discussion of where a room might be expected to be found within a floor plan, overall providing a base against which to compare the plans examined in this thesis. Jill Franklin's article "Troops of Servants: Labour and Planning in the Country House 1840–1914" is about English country houses but is one of the few sources that specifically investigates the planning and placement of service wings.[63] Although not specifically about Ireland, spaces, or

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[61] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*.
[62] Christina Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes: Domestic Arrangements in Historic Houses* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc, 1997).
[63] Franklin, "Troops of Servants."

planning, Pamela Horn's *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* provides valuable information about servants during the Victorian era, including specific servant positions (that often had designated spaces associated with them) and the different ways that a country house was divided (both in terms of class and architecture).[64]

Ideally, the historiography for this thesis would have included a fourth area of research centered on the country house basement, or even on the history of basements in general, but such scholarship does not seem to exist. Because servant spaces were not exclusively relegated to the subterranean level, and indeed the inclusion of basements within country houses at all varied by architectural fashion and other considerations, it is perhaps unsurprising that nobody has yet to write a book about the country house basement. The one piece of scholarship about a country house basement that exists is Cathal Dowd-Smith's recent article "Life Downstairs in Newbridge House," which discusses the servants' quarters and work rooms in one particular house in Co. Dublin.[65] Oddly enough, scholarship on architecture in general is just as likely to omit discussion of any subterranean aspect of buildings. Katherine F. Benzel's book on rooms, *The Room in Context: Design Beyond Boundaries*, has sections on doors, façades, roofs, and corridors, but none on foundations or basements.[66]Similarly, R. W. Brunskill's *Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture* has chapters on walling and roofing but none on foundations or basements, *The Principles of Architecture* edited by Michael Foster has nothing on basements, and Rolf Loeber's *Irish Houses and Castles 1400–1740* has sections about doors, windows, and roofs but none on basements.[67] The one possible exception is Simon Unwin's *Analysing*

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[64] Pamela Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975).
[65] Cathal Dowd-Smith, "Life Downstairs in Newbridge House," *History Ireland* 28, no. 6 (2020): 22–24.
[66] Katherine F. Benzel, *The Room in Context: Design Beyond Boundaries* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, 1997).
[67] R. W. Brunskill, *Illustrated Handbook of Vernacular Architecture* (New York: Universe Books, 1971); Michael Foster, ed., *The Principles of Architecture: Style, Structure and Design* (Oxford: Phaidon Press Ltd, 1982); Loeber, *Irish Houses and Castles*.

Architecture, which at least includes the ground as a primary element of architecture and notes that "fundamentally all terrestrial architecture depends on the ground for its base, something that we perhaps tend to take for granted."[68] The dearth of scholarship on the country house basement can be attributed to its association with servants, but the absence of discussion surrounding foundations, cellars, and basements within the literature on architecture is somewhat perplexing.

Theory

Like country houses, theses must have foundations, and this thesis is grounded in the concepts within architectural theory of place vs. space, form vs. function, and public vs. private. Although the part of the building this thesis focuses on is intrinsically linked with the lower classes, because it examines the buildings rather than the individuals who inhabited them it does not rely on any form of class theory.

Starting with the most abstract, we can think about what is space, and how it becomes place. Benzel defines space as "the three-dimensional realm in which we and our material objects are located and our events occur," and notes that "an unlimited expanse of space is meaningless to us, and so we divide it into measured portions for our activities and objects."[69] By giving space meaning and structure, we turn it into place. In his book *Vernacular Architecture*, Henry Glassie argues that "architecture works in space as history works in time. … Architecture intrudes on the limitless expanse of space, dividing it into useful, comprehensible pieces. Converting space into places through disruption, architecture brings meaning into the spatial

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[68] Simon Unwin, *Analysing Architecture*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 37 & 70.
[69] Benzel, *The Room in Context,* 17.

dimension."[70] Architecture often plays a key role in this conversion; Simon Unwin describes space as "the medium that architecture moulds into places."[71]

This thesis generally uses the term "space" rather than "place" to refer to a room or location within a building because floor plans exist in a somewhat liminal zone where space is in the process of being turned into place through being divided and defined by a non-user. Here, floor plans are being looked at to understand how an architect divides up space within a building to design an environment for place to be created. This approach follows Arnold's assertion that we should "think about the built environment as space rather than focusing on the architecture that surrounds space."[72] However, the time when users infuse the space of a building with meaning, turning it into place, remains firmly beyond the snapshot of time captured in a floor plan. Ideally, the roles of the designer and the user should align so that "places proposed should accord with places used," but the success or lack thereof in this regard lies beyond the scope of this thesis.[73] Nonetheless, the concepts of space and place form the foundation of this research.

Another useful concept to understand is the tension between form and function. John Shannon Hendrix defines form as "the visual appearance of a building (line, outline, shape, composition)" and function as "the structural and functional requirements of a building (construction, shelter, program, organization, use, occupancy, materials, social purpose)."[74] This dichotomy is relevant to the topic of this thesis because whether to prioritize form or function when designing a country house was at the forefront of architects' minds. Benzel notes that "commitment to pure architectural form may eclipse technology, structure, construction,

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[70] Henry Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 21.
[71] Unwin, *Analysing Architecture*, 37.
[72] Dana Arnold, ed., *Reading Architectural History* (New York: Routledge, 2002).
[73] Unwin, *Analysing Architecture*, 29.
[74] John Shannon Hendrix, *The Contradiction between Form and Function in Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 1.

function, context, and environmental concerns," which were acceptable sacrifices during time periods when the aesthetic of a country house trumped all else.[75] On the other side of the spectrum, at certain times it was fashionable for "the exterior" of a country house to be "the consequence of the life inside," taking its shape and appearance from the arrangement of rooms within.[76] While form is generally more relevant to the upper floors of a building, it dictates the shape, size, and layout of the basement level that this thesis focuses on.

The third set of terms used in architectural theory that are key to this project are public and private. Donna Birdwell-Pheasant and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga, the editors of *House Life: Space, Place and Family in Europe,* note that "all physically bounded domestic spaces are private to the extent that they allow household members to control access to themselves" and that "public spaces, in contrast, are those located beyond the boundaries of home where residents have little or no control."[77] However, within country house studies there is an understanding that certain spaces within a manor were designed to be more or less public or private. The conceptualization of rooms within a country house as "public," or designed for entertaining and hosting guests, vs. "private," for use by the household, and how those places were divided up and arranged within the house evolved over time.

This version of public vs. private runs parallel to another version that we might call private vs. private, which follows the changing ideas of individual privacy that affected the division of spaces within the household — or, in connection to this thesis, the increasing separation between family and servants, and indeed among servants. Hanneke Ronnes's article, "'A Solitary Place of Retreat': Renaissance Privacy and Irish Architecture," tells a narrative of privacy within Irish

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[75] Benzel, *The Room in Context,* 180.
[76] Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture,* 52.
[77] Donna Birdwell-Pheasant and Denise Lawrence-Zúñiga, eds., *House Life: Space, Place and Family in Europe*, (New York: Berg, 1999), 4.

towerhouses and castles at a time when desire for solitude was reflected in the arrangement of buildings, especially in the introduction of closets, which were rooms designed for privacy in a type of building where being alone would have been rare.[78] Like specialization, or the idea that specific rooms have designated uses, privacy is a concept that can be taken for granted by modern individuals, because the buildings we inhabit have certain codified expectations of specialization and privacy. In the time period under discussion here, these ways of imagining and therefore dividing space within a building were in the process of becoming how we understand them today. Privacy, the separation of public and private, and the different levels of private, were at the forefront of architects' minds, and so are key concepts for this project.

Although discussions of class generally fall outside the scope of this thesis, the hierarchy relating to it that existed within Ireland during the time periods under question is a relevant theoretical aspect. Dana Arnold argues that a country house can be seen as "a spatial container for patriarchal values and the hegemony of [the] ruling élite," which she gives as the reason for the lack of scholarly attention paid to the women, children, and servants whose lives revolved around such buildings.[79] She describes the metaphorical function of country houses as being symbols "of the power and wealth of the … social, cultural and political hegemony of the ruling class," which reinforced their physical functions.[80] Such cultural hierarchies were often reflected in architecture through the creation of physical demarcations between those "above" and those "below"; this was especially the case with country houses, where the lower classes often occupied space literally below those above them in the social hierarchy.[81] This structured idea of

[78] Hanneke Ronnes, "'A Solitary Place of Retreat': Renaissance Privacy and Irish Architecture," *International Journal of Historical Archaeology* 8, no. 2 (June 2004): 101–17.
[79] Arnold, *Reading Architectural History,* 141.
[80] Arnold, 141.
[81] Unwin, *Analysing Architecture*, 197–200.

society is therefore relevant to any research on the residential buildings of the upper classes that inevitably also housed individuals from the working classes.

Thesis Roadmap

This thesis seeks to fill in the gaps in current scholarship, giving depth to previously flat and oft-repeated assumptions or facts by shading them in. That basements in country houses were used as storage spaces is undisputed, but few scholars have actually looked at what kinds of storage and how much and where in the basement. The familiar "upstairs/downstairs" dichotomy puts servants belowground, but rarely does the literature actually descend the back stairs to explore the myriad rooms where the servants lived, worked, ate, slept, and socialized. This thesis looks closely at these spaces, using architectural drawings to visualize them as they were designed.

Using a sample of 43 architectural drawings relating to the basements of 29 country houses on the island of Ireland that were produced between the 1730s and 1925, this thesis discusses the plans as historical objects, investigates the considerations facing the architects who created them, and conducts an analysis of information that can be gathered from them. The first chapter introduces the plans and their materiality, exploring what architectural drawings are, what they look like, and how they can be used as historical sources. The second chapter relies mostly on secondary literature to follow an architect's thought process when producing plans such as those used in this thesis. The third chapter dives into analyzing the plans as visual sources, using them to collect data about the basements of Irish country houses. In the conclusion, avenues for future research are presented.

The Plans and Their Materiality

This chapter discusses what, exactly, floor plans are and introduces the individual plans used in this thesis through their materiality. Architectural drawings are not widely used by historians, but they offer a wealth of information about their authors, their audiences, the buildings they depict, and the architectural profession at the time they were created. The sample collected for this thesis consists of 43 floor plans depicting the basement level of 29 country houses across the island of Ireland. Figure 1 below shows the locations of the houses.

Figure 1. Locations of the country houses represented in the sample, created by author using nodegoat.[82]

[82] nodegoat is a web-based research environment for the humanities. https://nodegoat.net.

The selection of these plans was dictated by the physical location of the documents, rather than any other consideration such as location of the house, the date of its construction, the author of the document, or the quality of the source. They were collected from three archives: the Irish Architectural Archive (IAA) in Dublin, the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) in Belfast, and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in London. These archives hold the highest concentration of architectural drawings pertaining to country houses in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, allowing many sources to be gathered from fewer archives, as obtaining material from a large number of smaller and private repositories would not have been feasible for a project of this level and scope.

This method of gathering sources will have undoubtedly introduced certain biases into this work. The RIBA archive, for example, is more likely to hold the works of English or Scottish architects than Irish ones. Most of the drawings at PRONI pertain only to houses in Northern Ireland. At the IAA, most of the drawings accessed are of houses within the Republic of Ireland, and especially in Leinster province where the archive is located. Any drawings kept at the houses they represent or that are held by smaller, local archives are not included in this sample. Furthermore, the works of certain architects might be more or less likely to end up in a public archive. For example, 10 of the 43 plans are by Francis Johnston,[83] and, though he was undoubtedly a prolific architect, his work is grossly overrepresented in the sample, likely due to reasons relating to the collection and preservation of documents. He might have been meticulous about keeping copies of his drawings, rather than leaving them with his clients, for example, and his work was evidently preserved somewhere safe.

[83] Born in Co. Armagh in 1760, Johnston worked as an architect primarily in Armagh, Drogheda, and Dublin. In addition to many country house commissions, Johnston designed ecclesiastical buildings and public buildings in urban settings, such as court houses and town halls. He died in 1829. "Francis Johnston," Dictionary of Irish Architects, https://www.dia.ie/architects/view/2833/JOHNSTON-FRANCIS#tab_biography.

This project further limits its scope by exclusively working with original (or copies of original) plans made by the architect commissioned to produce the drawings. Any reproductions of these original plans, or plans drawn after the house was completed or for any reason other than communicating a proposed design are not included. This is because this thesis uses plans specifically to draw conclusions about the motivations of their authors, and also because including plans drawn by other individuals over the centuries — such as the writers of journal articles and the current staff of houses who create floor plans to put up online — would drastically increase the number of houses in the sample and produce a set of sources too large for a project of this size. The work of architects whose drawings were carefully kept and preserved, were not destroyed by fire or discarded, and were donated to or acquired by a large, public archive is a significantly narrowed selection of all of the floor plans that were ever made for Irish country house basements.

The sample is introduced in Table 1 below, with the houses listed alphabetically. Of the 29 houses represented, 20 are depicted in only one plan; the other 23 plans are spread across the remaining nine houses. In the cases of multiple plans for one house, the plans might show different options commissioned by a patron from different architects, multiple steps in the design process, or an original plan and later alterations. Twenty-six of the plans are for new buildings, while the other 17 are for alterations of existing houses. They are the work of 20 different architects; only two of them are signed by two architects, although a few others are signed by both an architect and a contractor. Of the 43, 15 are unsigned. They range in date from the 1730s to 1925, and cover houses in 15 counties across the four provinces of Ireland. The plans vary in terms of size, quality, legibility, sophistication, and completeness, as will be discussed below. Throughout the thesis, specific plans will be referred to by their house name, as well as a

signifying letter for those houses where multiple plans are included in the sample. The complete set of plans is included in Appendix B, where the drawings are captioned as "Images" rather than "Figures" to distinguish from the plans that are included within the body of the thesis.

Table 1. The plans in the sample.

Name	**County**	**Type**	**Architect**	**Date**	**Signifier**
Ballycurry House	Wicklow	New	[Francis Johnston]	[1805]	A
		New	Francis Johnston	1807	B
		New	Francis Johnston	1808	C
Bessborough House	Kilkenny	Alteration	H.S. Goodhart-Rendel	1925	—
Brownlow Castle	Armagh	New	William Playfair	1833	—
Carton House	Kildare	New	[Richard Castle]	[c. 1739]	—
Castle Bernard / Kinnitty Castle	Offaly	Alteration	[G. R. Pain]	[1833]	—
Castle Coole	Fermanagh	New	Richard Johnston	1789	A
		New	James Wyatt	1790	B
		New	Unsigned	1790/96	C
		New	[Richard Castle]	[<1751]	D
Castle Dillon	Armagh	New	William Murray	1842	A
		New	William Murray	1843	B
		New	William Murray	1844	C
Castlewellan Castle	Down	New	[William Burn]	1854	—
Charleville Castle	Offaly	New	[John Pentland]	[1797]	A
		New	John Pentland	1797	B
Cloncarneel House / Clown	Meath	Alteration	Francis Johnston	1801	—
Corbalton Hall / Cookstown House	Meath	Alteration	Francis Johnston	1801	—
Crum Castle	Fermanagh	New	Edward Blore	[1833]	A
		New	[William Burn]	[<1842]	B
Dunboy / Puxley Castle	Cork	New	John T. Christopher	1866	—
Durrow Abbey / Park	Offaly	Alteration	William Murray	1829	—
Farnham House	Cavan	Alteration	Francis Johnston	1802	—
Headfort House	Meath	New	Francis Johnston	1802	A
		New	[Richard Castle]	[c. 1730s]	B
		New	[Richard Castle]	[c. 1730s]	C
Howth Castle	Dublin	Alteration	James & G. R. Pain	1825	—
Humewood Castle	Wicklow	New	William White	1867	—

Name	County	Type	Architect	Date	Signifier
Killeen Castle	Meath	Alteration	Francis Johnston	1803	—
Lissadell House	Sligo	New	Francis Goodwin	1833	A
		Alteration	Thomas H. Wyatt	[c. 1870]	B
Markree / Mercury Castle	Sligo	Alteration	Francis Johnston	1803	—
Mote Park	Roscommon	Alteration	Sir Richard Morrison	[1816]	—
Mount Stewart	Down	New	Unsigned	[c. 1800]	—
Muckross House	Kerry	New	[William Burn]	[1839]	—
Old Conna Hill House	Dublin	New	Charles Lanyon & William Lynn	1857	—
Portaferry House	Down	Alteration	William Farrell	[1814]	A
		Alteration	William Farrell	[<1851]	B
Roxborough Castle	Tyrone	Alteration	William Murray	1841	—
Slane Castle	Meath	Alteration	[James Wyatt]	[1785]	A
		Alteration	James Wyatt	1785	B
St. Catherine's House	Dublin	Alteration	Francis Johnston	1799	—

Note: Any names or dates within [brackets] were gathered from the archive catalogues rather than the plans themselves. Where a house has two commonly used names both have been included, but the first will be favoured throughout the thesis.

What Is a Floor Plan?

To help understand these sources and what they depict, a brief discussion of architectural drawings, specifically floor plans, is necessary. Architectural drawings are the best source, apart from the houses themselves, for understanding country houses as the division and organization of space. Trying to understand the layout of a building from a written description causes a specific kind of torturous mental gymnastics that can be avoided by *looking* instead of *reading*. Floor plans are a unique source for historians to work with because they are a textual source in terms of existing on paper and being created with pen or pencil, but at the same time are inherently visual sources because their primary form of communication to the reader is through depiction rather than written language.

What, exactly, is a floor plan? Conceptually, it is a visual depiction of an idea. Rendow Yee writes that it is through architectural drawings that a "designer generates, organizes, and formalizes options" for their ideas.[84] Henry Glassie breaks down the process of architecture as "a matter of forming ideas into plans, [and] plans into things that other people can see," in which the plan is the mediator between the idea and the eventual object.[85] Physically, a floor plan is a method of communication. Architectural drawings, which include not only floor plans but also elevations and sections, are created with "the purpose of communicating to contractors an overall design concept and aesthetic concerns, the methods and materials to be used, and the location and configuration of a project."[86] In addition to contractors and builders, patrons or clients are a key group with whom architects need to communicate ideas for a building, and Frank Jenkins notes that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the sets of drawings created for each group were often very similar.[87] Within a set of drawings, a plan is an abstract representation. While some types of drawings "give an impression of what the building will look like," others, including plans, "do not represent things as they are seen; they represent things as they are, or will be."[88] Floor plans allow us to view the building from an angle rarely achieved in real life but that is important because "our lives mainly take place on flat surfaces and our architecture is concerned with the planning of floors."[89]

[84] Rendow Yee, *Architectural Drawing: A Visual Compendium of Types and Methods*, 4th ed. (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons Inc, 2013), 35.
[85] Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture,* 22.
[86] Heather Ball and Brian Shelburne, "Study Collections of Architectural Drawings," *Art Documentation: Journal of the Art Libraries Society of North America* 23, no. 2 (October 2004): 21.
[87] Frank Jenkins, *Architect and Patron: A Survey of Professional Relations and Practice in England from the Sixteenth Century to the Present Day* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1961), 122.
[88] Colin Davies, *Thinking about Architecture: An Introduction to Architectural Theory* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2011), 47.
[89] Unwin, *Analysing Architecture*, 199.

What does a floor plan look like? Below in Figure 2 is one of the plans analyzed in this thesis, which we can use as an example. It has writing on it — indicating the name of the house it represents and which level it depicts and labelling the various spaces — but communicates its information mostly through lines and numbers. Lines or lack thereof represent walls, doorways, windows, staircases, and ceiling vaulting. The numbers in the middle of each room represent its dimensions. With even a brief glimpse at this drawing, we better understand the shape, size, and layout of the building it depicts than if we read a description of it or even visited it. Compared to other plans in the sample, this particular plan is well-preserved and both signed and dated; the penmanship is clear; and while not showing the entirety of the basement (the corresponding plan for the principal floor indicates extensive wings on either side of the central block that did have rooms at the basement level) all of the rooms are at least labelled.

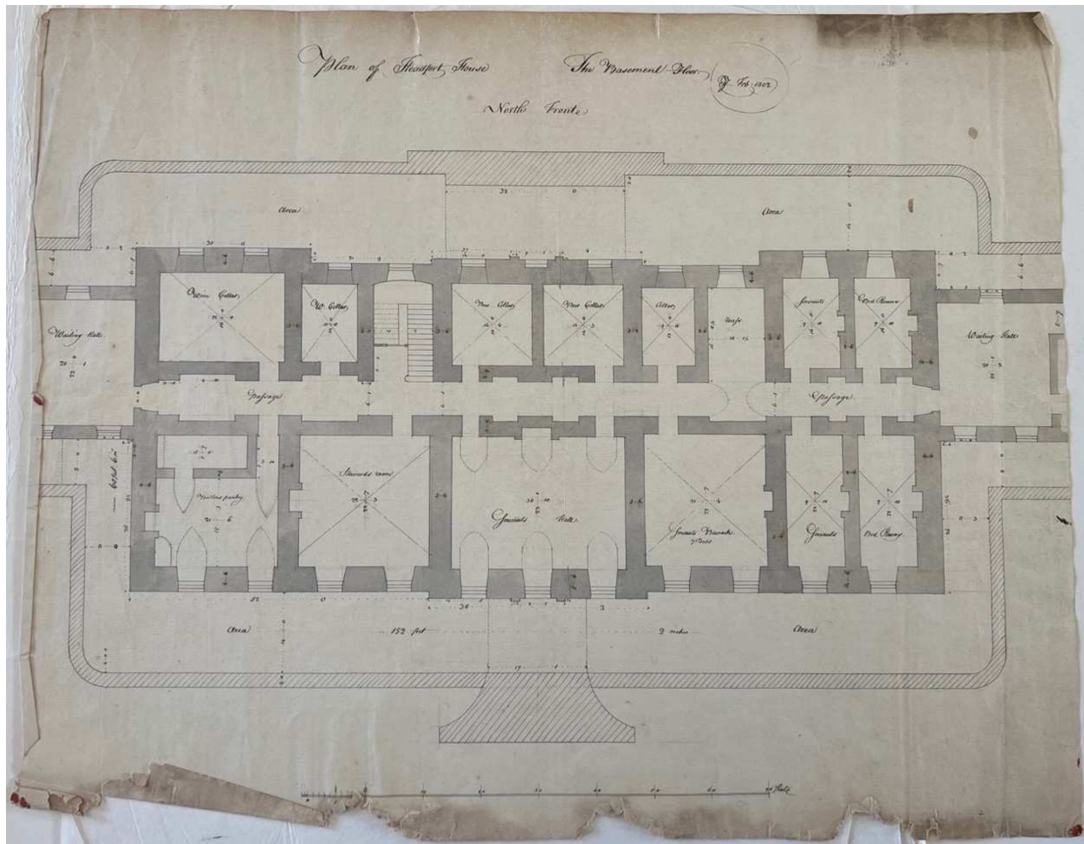

Figure 2. Headfort House A, courtesy of the Irish Architectural Archive (IAA).

The plan for Headfort House A is perhaps one of the more ideal sources for scholars to work with. Even though it is slightly damaged and incomplete, all of the information presented on it is intact and legible. The fact that it is signed and dated and labelled with both the name of the house and the level it represents takes any guesswork out of identifying when it was made, by whom, and for what. Even if Francis Johnston had not signed it, analysis of the handwriting of the labels could be used to identify him as the author of this document. Several of the plans within the sample, such as the four by Richard Castle for Headfort House B and C (Images 26 & 27), Carton House (Image 6), and Castle Coole D (Image 11), are unsigned, meaning that handwriting analysis and secondary sources must be used to determine the author of the plan. In the case of the Ballycurry House A plan (Image 1), the IAA's online catalogue entry describes it as a survey sketch of the old house and offices and gives the document the date of 1805 and assigns it to Johnston. However, the plan is not signed, which is unusual for Johnston, and a comparison of the handwriting used on this plan versus the B and C plans (Images 2 & 3), which are signed, suggests that this plan might not be in Johnston's hand. A word on the bottom right of the plan might be a signature; it seems to read "Arbutus," further complicating the question of authorship.

In addition to depicting the general shape and layout of the proposed house, cardinal direction is given in the plan for Headfort House A through the labelling of the "North Front," and the actual size of the building and rooms can be calculated based on the included measurements and scale ruler. Ink lines and washes of colour are used to clearly indicate the shape, size, and placement of walls, windows, doorways, staircases, and an *area*, plus the vaulting in the ceiling. The plan, however, gives no indication of the proposed site or the materials to be used for constructing the house, suggesting that its purpose was likely to

communicate the design of the house to the patron or to provide a base for the builder to work from, rather than as a technical drawing to be used on site during construction. The lack of information about the site or landscape around the house is more likely to do with the intended purpose of the plan — to show the proposed design to a patron or builder — rather than suggesting that a site had not yet been chosen for the house or that the design could be implemented anywhere. Only one of the plans in the sample, for Howth Castle (Image 28), includes descriptions of the surrounding environment, demonstrating that not including any was the standard.

The Headfort House A plan is drawn on a large (around 2.5' x 2') sheet of thick paper that shows signs of use through the folding, tearing, and discolouring at the edges, but that has also clearly been cared for. It has not been folded in half or quarters, which would be evident through creasing, and no major damage has been done to it, suggesting that it has spent its life handled carefully, stored in a safe place, and transported in a large folder or rolled up. It is stored at the IAA with the two other plans in the set by Johnston for Headfort House, which depict the ground floor and the bedchamber floor. Examining the physical properties and lines on the page of floor plans allows us to determine information about who it was created by, for what purpose, and other interesting facets of its creation. This type of analysis is different to the analysis conducted in the third chapter, where the plans are examined in terms of what they represent. The plan depicted in Figure 2 is a good example of what the plans in the sample look like, but it is not representative of all of them.

Most of the plans are drawn on large, thick sheets of paper that are varying shades of white. The colour of the paper might be reflective of the stock that was available at the time or might demonstrate discolouration over time. Two of the plans, for Castle Bernard (Image 7) and

Lissadell House B (Figure 8 below), are drawn on translucent brownish tracing paper, which is thinner and more fragile than paper and shows pen marks significantly better than pencil. The size of the plans vary considerably and do not show a uniform size or shape; all are larger than 2' x 1' and all are rectangular, but the specific sizes and dimensions vary. Even within the drawings produced by a single architect, such as William Murray, there is often variations in the paper size, even for plans depicting the same house, such as those for Castle Dillon (Images 12–14). In some instances, such as the two plans of Charleville Castle (Images 16 & 17), which are drawn on paper that differs in terms of size, colour, and inclusion or lack of a border, these variations can indicate that they were drawn at different times as part of different sets of plans. Some of the plans are on noticeably thicker paper, such as for Durrow Abbey (Image 23), which has discolouring that suggests it was rolled up, but is for the most part free of wrinkles or tears.

Architectural drawings are larger than standard paper sizes in order to depict buildings on a scale where relevant details can be made clear. In order for the labels and dimensions of the rooms to be legible, the plan needs to be a certain size. In most cases, the room labels are located within the rooms, but some architects, such as Richard Castle and and the architect of Mount Stewart (Image 35), preferred to label the rooms with a letter or number that corresponds to a legend on one side of the page. This allows for the plan to be on a smaller scale while maintaining the legibility of the room labels.

At least two of the plans, for Durrow Abbey (Image 23) and Humewood Castle (Image 29), are made of two sheets of paper that have been glued or taped together. On the plan for Ballycurry House B (Image 2), a small piece of paper has been glued or taped over a part of the bedchamber plan, suggesting that the layout of the that part of the floor was revised. Most of the sample are loose sheets of paper kept within large folders at their various archives, usually in a

set with other plans and architectural drawings for the same house by the same architect, but the plans for Howth Castle (Image 28) and Humewood Castle (Image 29) are located within albums that contain drawings for those specific houses. The Castle Dillon C (Image 14) and Mote Park (Figure 6 below) plans are on paper that has some sort of fabric seam along the edges, perhaps to prevent tearing. Both of these plans are, however, quite wrinkled, showing that taking precautions against tearing did not mean that the document remained in pristine condition.

The plans in the sample vary considerably in terms of physical condition. Many are characterized by minimal creasing and tearing and are not badly discoloured or stained. Others have significant creasing, tearing, and discolouration, which can hamper the legibility and therefore usefulness of the plan. For example, the plan for St. Catherine's House (Image 43) is quite creased and worn, differing significantly from the other plans by Francis Johnston, suggesting that it was not stored with the others or was used on site. A more comprehensive study of Johnston's drawings might show that his earlier plans were not as well cared for, suggesting a change in his methods of storing and transporting his work, or it might show that the preservation of individual plans was dependent on other factors, such as the patron. The presence of ink drops or fingerprints, such as on the plan for Mount Stewart (Image 35), suggest frequent handling.

The plan for Corbalton Hall shown in Figure 3 below, is the most damaged within the sample. The two large holes in the centre of the plan were likely made when the plan was folded in half, and might have been created by liquid or heat causing damage to the paper. The fact that this plan was preserved and moved to an archive even after suffering such damage demonstrates the perceived value of such architectural drawings, even long after the buildings represented have been constructed, altered, and in some cases destroyed. Because of this damage, it is

impossible to determine the full size, shape, and layout of the house depicted. Generally, however, the quality of the plans is good enough that these aspects can be determined and the labels can be read.

Figure 3. Corbalton Hall plan, courtesy of the IAA.

Whether or not the handwriting is legible is another issue entirely. The different writing styles of the various architects, along with time-specific writing standards, such as the shapes of certain letters, common abbreviations, and the names given to rooms, can be obstacles for scholars using these plans. For example, the double "s" found on the Headfort House A plan in

Figure 2 in words such as “Passage” or “Dressing” look more like “fs” in modern cursive writing. In this case, the spelling and therefore meaning of the word is easy to figure out, but not all instances are so straightforward. Sometimes the labels given to rooms seem to be written in coded language — evidently understandable to the plan’s intended audience, but not so for scholars reading them centuries in the future. For example, “Room for a Second Table” (Figure 27) and “Area for Shooting Wine in Cask” (Figure 13) are two labels that appear within the sample where the function of the labelled space is not easily discernable without further research.

Most of the plans are similar to Headfort House A in terms of the amount and type of writing on them, but some have notes written on them by the architect. For example, the two plans for Slane Castle are clearly preliminary sketches, based on the lack of uniformity and completeness of the plans and the copious amounts of notes scribbled on the pages, including one line at the top of Slane Castle B that reads “of no use whatever.” As seen below in Figures 4 and 5, James Wyatt used these drawings to communicate his intentions or ideas for the alteration to his intended audience — the caveat for scholars is that one must decipher his handwriting to access these. The level of damage to these plans also suggests that working documents were not as well cared for.

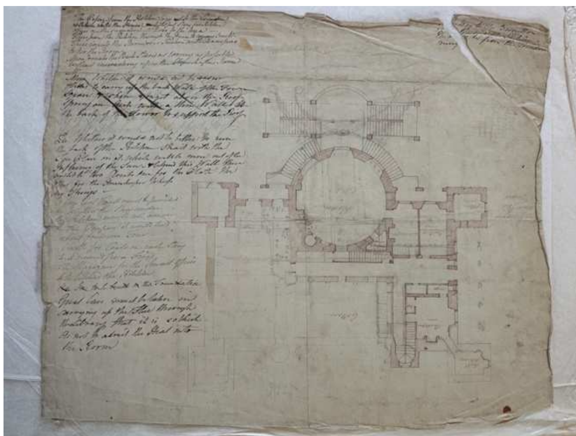

Figure 4. Slane Castle A plan, courtesy of the IAA.

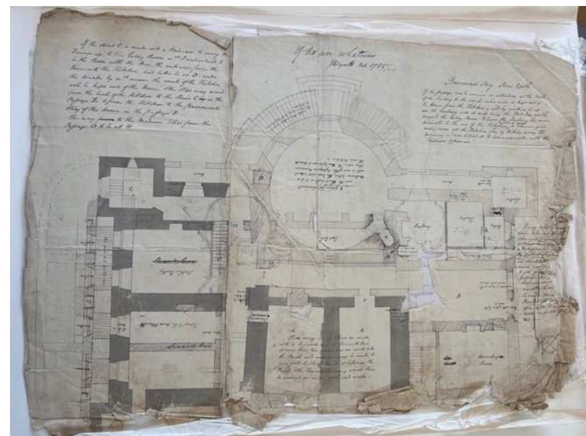

Figure 5. Slane Castle B plan, courtesy of the IAA.

The writing on plans can also sometimes be used to better understand the process of designing alterations. In the plan for Markree Castle (Image 33), the alterations are drawn over the existing building with the original room labels, giving valuable insight into the changing needs of the house. Looking at this document, we can clearly see that a plan of the existing house was drawn up first and the alterations were superimposed on top, rather than the plan showing a version of the house with the alterations already incorporated, as in the plan for Farnham House (Image 24). These two different processes of drawing alterations by the same architect only 11 months apart demonstrates that each set of plans created by architects were unique, not only in terms of the buildings they represented but also in how they were created.

One plan in the sample stands out in terms of the amount of technical information provided. On the plan for Bessborough House (Image 4), which is the latest plan by over 50 years, the direction of door openings are included and all windows and doors are numbered. The plan is numbered 354, suggesting a massive set of drawings created for the house's rebuilding post-fire. Though most of the other plans in the sample are not numbered, the collections of drawings in the archives typically range from a handful of papers to up to 50 separate documents per house. The plan for Bessborough House, when compared with the earlier plans in the sample, shows a huge difference in terms of detail, measurement, and technicality in the plans drawn by architects of country houses in Ireland.

Typically, a set of architectural drawings will include plans, elevations, and sections, spread over many individual sheets of paper. Sometimes these are numbered, such as in the plan for Old Conna Hill House (Image 37), which is labelled "Drawing No. 1." Most of the drawings in the sample only depict the basement plan, of varying degrees of completeness. For example, the plan for Portaferry House B (Image 39) does not depict the entire basement, and on the plan

for Crum Castle A (Image 20) several rooms are left unlabelled. These suggest that when drawing alterations the entire footprint of the house was not always deemed necessary to include and that not all rooms were given purposes by the architect during the design phase. A few drawings, however, depict the plans of multiple levels within a house or also include non-plan elements. The basement plan of Mote Park, in Figure 6 below, is on a large sheet of paper, edged in fabric, that depicts the plans for all four levels of the house. This allows the entire layout of the house to be viewed at once, and is possible because of the relatively small and simple design of the house. For a less-compact house with more rooms, fitting all plans onto one sheet would significantly reduce the level of detail and legibility of the document.

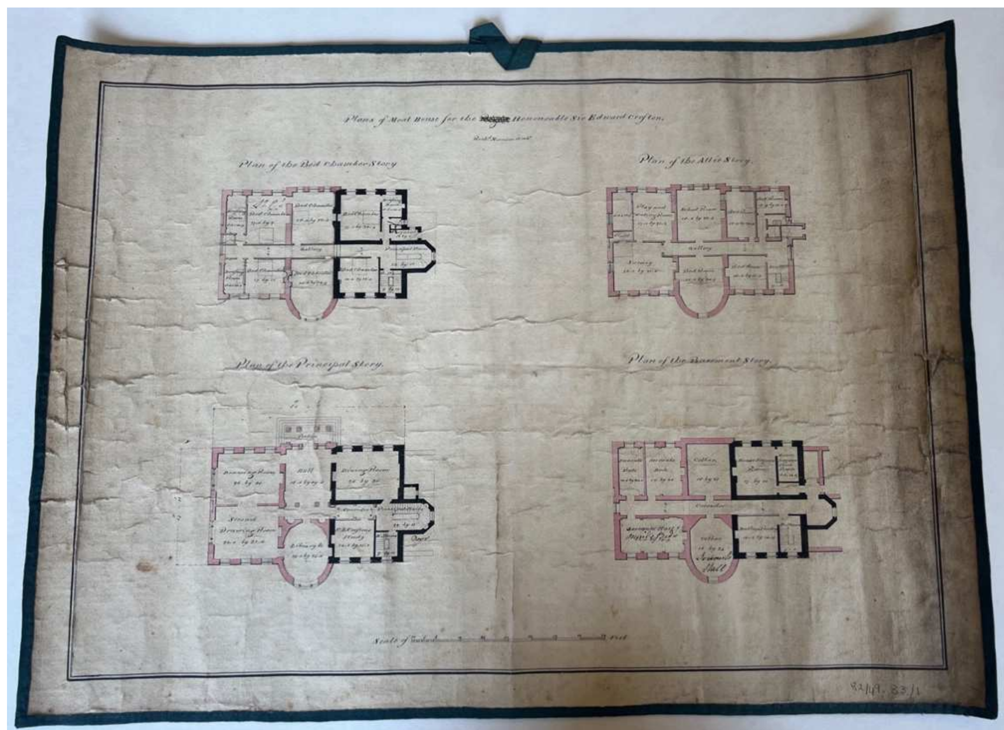

Figure 6. Mote Park full plan, courtesy of the IAA.

The plan for Brownlow Castle, in Figure 7 below, also contains sections and elevations for various elements of the basement and foundations of the house, such as the “Elevation of Archways of Kitchen Passage” and “Section of Pillars below Dining Room.” This demonstrates

that sometimes architects combined representational and visual drawings to provide a more comprehensive depiction of the basement. It also suggests that when arranging the layout of a building such as a country house, architects were thinking about other aspects of design such as structural support.

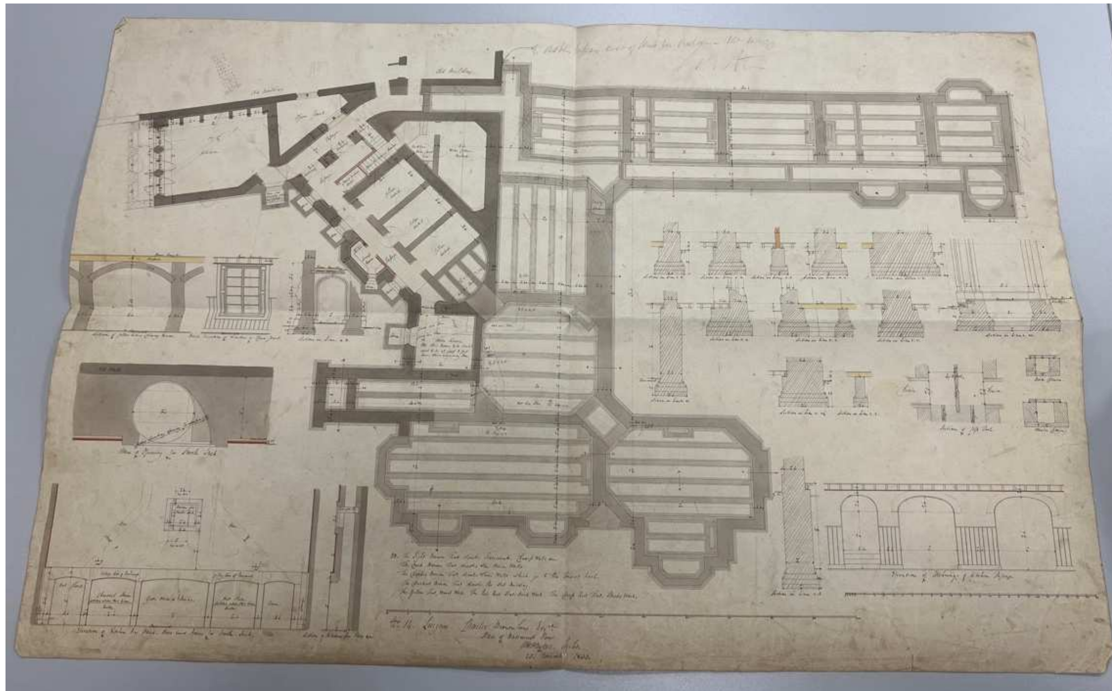

Figure 7. Brownlow Castle plan, courtesy of the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI).

Many houses are represented by several plans within the sample, giving insight into various aspects of designing a country house. The three plans for Ballycurry House (Images 1–3), for example, paint an interesting picture of the design process for a new house, which involved quite different designs and potentially a survey of an existing house, which might have been used in discussions with the patron as a point of comparison. The plans for Castle Dillon tell an interesting story through their materiality. Plan A (Image 12) is the simplest in terms of what information the plan shows — it does not show vaulting like the B plan (Image 13) does, nor does it indicate dimensions beyond room size — and it is the cleanest and best-preserved. The paper has clearly been rolled and has a few rips, but in comparison the B plan is much more

discoloured and torn on the edges and the C plan (Image 14) is very wrinkled, ripped, and creased despite its fabric edges. Plans A and C have pencil marks, but where on A they are indicating changes to the room layout and wall positioning, on C they seem to show plumbing. Taken together, these plans suggest that as a design for an Irish country house was finalized, the plans drawn by the architect became more technical and were also handled more.

The four plans for Castle Coole (Images 8–11), meanwhile, exemplify how sometimes patrons commissioned drawings from multiple architects. This can suggest that the first designs were unsatisfactory or that the patron changed their mind in terms of the style they desired for the house. In other instances, the sample shows houses that were designed and altered, such as Lissadell House (Image 31 & Figure 8 below), or altered multiple times, such as Portaferry House (Images 38 & 39). In each case, having multiple plans for a single house allows us to gain deeper insight into the design process of Irish country houses.

Most of the plans in the sample are drawn in ink, with the walls usually shaded in with grey wash. For alterations, a standard seems to have been to shade the walls of the original building in grey and those of the addition or alteration in red. This can be seen in the plans for Castle Bernard (Image 7), Cloncarneel House (Image 14), Durrow Abbey (Image 19), Farnham House (Image 20), Killeen Castle (Image 26), Mote Park (Figure 6 above), Portaferry House A and B (Images 38 & 39), and Roxborough Castle (Image 40). Later plans in the sample, such as for Castlewellan Castle (Image 15), Crum Castle A and B (Images 20 & 21), Dunboy Castle (Image 22), Howth Castle (Image 28), Humewood Castle (Image 29), Muckross Abbey (Image 36), and Old Conna Hill House (Image 37), shade the walls in colour, usually red. This may represent a change in standards within the profession related to new aesthetic preferences, the accessibility of drawing implements, or the intended audience of such plans. A few plans do not

shade in the walls at all, which hampers the immediate visual effect of looking at the plan and being able to determine the size and shape of the house and its rooms. Pencil is only used on a few plans, such as Ballycurry House B (Image 2) and Charleville Castle A (Image 16), usually to make revisions to elements such as wall placement. This demonstrates that even final versions of plans were often edited. On two plans, pencil is used for all of the room labels, which decreases the legibility of the writing, as pencil marks are thicker and less precise. Particularly on the Lissadell House B plan, shown in Figure 8 below, the use of pencil combined with the plan being on tracing paper and therefore creases showing up as white marks significantly affects the legibility of certain room labels.

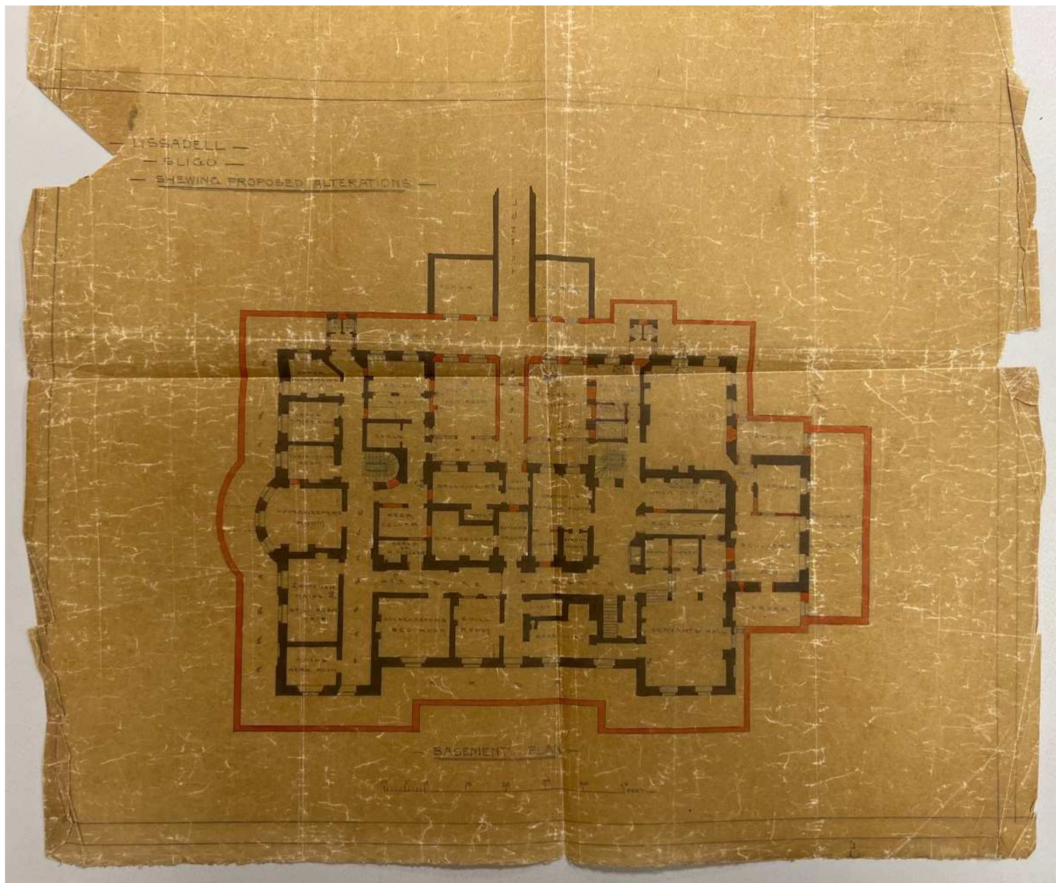

Figure 8. Lissadell House B plan, courtesy of the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the PRONI, and Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth.

Certain aspects of the materiality of these plans, such as the paper size and quality, can only be analyzed by viewing them in person. Handling these documents provides a tactical experience that cannot be replicated by viewing digital copies of them, and therefore certain uses of these plans as historical sources necessitate visiting the archives they are held at. Analysis of the types of paper used by the architects of Irish country houses, for example, would be best conducted in the archive.

For other information gleaned from these plans as material objects, handling them in person may not be necessary but still is ideal. Because all of the drawings referenced in this thesis are hand-drawn, rather than computer generated, accessing the physical plans in an archive provides a very different experience than viewing digital copies of them. While photography and scanning technology can provide high-resolution images of such documents, the level of detail that can be viewed in person is difficult to achieve digitally. While some of the plans are already accessible online — much of the Murray Collection at the IAA has been added to their digital catalogue — these are not usually uploaded in high enough resolution to read any writing on them, making any analysis beyond the general shape and size of the house extremely difficult. Even the photographs that I took in the archive on my iPhone do not provide enough detail to read all of the writing, and any information hidden or obscured by creasing or folding is inaccessible on these digital reproductions. However, accessing these documents in person is significantly more expensive and time-consuming than viewing photographs or scans online.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented floor plans as material objects that can be of great value to historians studying buildings such as country houses or the architects who created them.

Examining the materiality of these documents provides information about their authors, the architectural profession, and the storage and collection practices of architectural drawings. Using this type of analysis to introduce the plans in the sample provides a foundation for the following two chapters, which investigate the considerations that influenced the architects drawing the layouts depicted on the plans and analyze those layouts, respectively.

What Did Architects Have to Think About?

Before we look at the floor plans that form the base of this thesis, we must understand how they came to be created and what they represent. In between receiving a commission for a country house project and producing a set of floor plans, an architect would go through a lengthy process of designing the building.[90] Many different and sometimes conflicting considerations would have to be taken into account so that the design met all expectations of aesthetic and function and so that the levels worked individually and together. This chapter introduces various factors that would influence an architect's decision-making process, so that when we come to looking at the plans themselves, we can understand them from an informed perspective. But first — if a floor plan depicts a work of *architecture*, produced by an *architect*, specifically in the form of a *building* that will be a *house* made up of *rooms* connected through paths of *circulation*, perhaps we should start with defining and conceptualizing those terms.

What is architecture? Michael Foster posits that "architecture is essentially the art of reconciliation. It involves resolving specific and general demands of its users within a projected image of a three-dimensional form."[91] He describes designing a building as a creative process, but one that concerns itself with providing solutions to problems that arise from constraints determined by needs. An architect's job, then, is to take the "huge collection of jigsaw pieces" made up of "preliminary considerations" such as "the purpose of the building, its site, the client's resources, and possible materials," and make choices that "best overcome the obstacles."[92] Not all buildings are considered to be architecture, however. Barbara Miller Lane argues that "nearly everything that encloses space on a scale sufficient for a human being to move in is a building;

[90] Here and throughout this thesis the singular is used to discuss the authors of the floor plans, but a few plans considered in this thesis are signed by two individuals.
[91] Foster, *The Principles of Architecture*, 9.
[92] Foster, 9.

the term architecture applies only to buildings designed with a view to aesthetic appeal."[93] Country houses, as buildings designed to display wealth and status through their beauty and design, therefore fit the definition of architecture.

Works of architecture such as country houses have the ability to "establish and influence relationships, elicit emotional responses, [and] even to affect how we behave and who we think we are."[94] As Mark Girouard notes, "although to some extent architecture follows its own rules it is also conditioned by the society for which it caters. The architects and builders of country houses were not producing pieces of abstract sculpture, but buildings designed to fit a particular way of life."[95] Another way to look at architecture is as "a kind of communication," where "the built environment clarifies social roles and relations."[96] Architecture shapes how lives are lived and how individuals understand the world and their place in it. The role of an architect, then, is a powerful and important one.

Architecture may be "one of the oldest and noblest professions in the world," but at the beginning of the period under consideration in this thesis architects were not necessarily professionals.[97] In his book *Architect and Patron*, Frank Jenkins notes that in the early eighteenth century the architect's profession was characterized by "looseness and informality, with regard to both training and practice," and included "the craftsman-architect and the amateur."[98] The eighteenth century was "the age of the gentleman architect" who belonged to the upper classes and often designed the houses they would live in.[99] Country houses built before the mid-

[93] Barbara Miller Lane, ed., *Housing and Dwelling: Perspectives on Modern Domestic Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 21.
[94] Unwin, *Analysing Architecture*, 3.
[95] Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 12.
[96] Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture,* 22; Lane, *Housing and Dwelling,* 78.
[97] Martin Shaw Briggs, *The Architect in History* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974), 1.
[98] Jenkins, *Architect and Patron,* 91.
[99] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 18.

eighteenth century "often had no one architect, but emerged from a collaborative process between the owner, his friends, an advisor with experience of architecture and the mason who would execute the idea."[100] However, the profession evolved in the late eighteenth century.[101] A system of pupilage became the norm in England, where a student would spend about five years studying under a professional architect while taking classes at a drawing school and possibly spending some time abroad, in order to join the profession that was increasing in status and formality.[102] The Dublin Society established a drawing school in Dublin in the eighteenth century where "most Irish artists and architects received their initial training."[103] This allowed Ireland in the nineteenth century to support "an impressive number of native architects" in addition to the "several English architects [who] had considerable practices there."[104] In terms of the role of the architect beyond producing plans, Jenkins notes that "frequently no supervision was given by the architect" on site, with "the employer settling all questions that arose during building."[105] This demonstrates the separation of roles and the professionalization of the architect, who was trained, had a practice, and left the execution of their design to others. These, for the most part, are the individuals who designed, created, and signed the plans under consideration in this thesis. Their careers revolved around designing works of architecture, specifically buildings that were made up of connected rooms.

"Buildings must meet the needs of occupants," and it was the architect's job to ensure they did.[106] Benzel writes that "a building is an object of use, an everyday experience," and that "a building is a construction made by humans to solve a specific problem within a specific

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[100] Aslet, *The Story of the Country House,* 72.
[101] Jenkins, *Architect and Patron,* 91.
[102] Jenkins, 107.
[103] Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, *Irish Art and Architecture*, 131.
[104] Harbison, Potterton, and Sheehy, 187.
[105] Jenkins, *Architect and Patron,* 136.
[106] Dana Arnold, ed., *The Georgian Villa* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1996), ix.

historical situation."[107] In this thesis, that specific problem is needing a dwelling and workplace for an upper-class household and its staff, and the specific historical situation is Ireland between the 1730s and 1925. People need shelter, and the shelters we create "become one of the several symbols of our very humanity," which is especially the case for country houses, which were both residential buildings and representations.[108] Although a country house is more often seen as "a bench-mark of architectural production and an emblem of a distinctive social system," country houses are, at their core, houses.[109] As Bart Verschaffel argues, "a house is more than a place … [it] is a device for articulating differences and defining a hierarchy in the meanings one lives by."[110] An architect designing a house has to keep in mind that their choices will influence its inhabitants, "who [will] find their daily activities both enabled and constrained by the physical character of the house and its contents."[111]

Buildings, and especially houses, are divided up into rooms. In her book, *The Room in Context*, Benzel writes that "the habitable room is an active link in a positive spatial network that extends and communicates in all directions," and that "rooms have a profound effect on how people view and act in the world."[112] Throughout her book she emphasizes the connectedness of rooms, noting that "a single room, no matter how remote, is part of an association of spaces going off in one or more directions to connect the movements, rituals, and requirements of people who use it."[113] This thesis sometimes takes a room out of context to discuss its function, but it also pays attention to where a room is situated in relation to other rooms and the building

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[107] Benzel, *The Room in Context,* 180.
[108] Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zúñiga, *House Life*, 1.
[109] Arnold, *The Georgian Country House,* xiii.
[110] James Madge and Andrew Peckham, eds., *Narrating Architecture: A Retrospective Anthology* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 243.
[111] Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zúñiga, *House Life*, 9.
[112] Benzel, *The Room in Context,* 13 & 23.
[113] Benzel, 205.

as a whole, as well as to the paths of circulation that it exists within. We may imagine a room as defined by the walls that enclose it, but it is important to remember that it serves "both to separate *and* to join its space to other spaces."[114]

All of this discussion of what is architecture, what role did an architect play, and how we should think about buildings, houses, and rooms, serves as preparation for thinking about the basements of country houses as spaces that were designed for use. Visualizing a country house generally involves how it *looks*, but this thesis approaches visualizing it as an architect does when producing floor plans — as a collection of attached rooms and circulation spaces that make up a building with many functions, two of which are as a dwelling and a workplace.

The Site

Buildings, however, do not exist in a vacuum, but rather on a unique site within a certain environment, which inescapably impacts the building and its users on a daily basis, all of which the architect has to take into consideration during the design process. This section presents an overview of the key practical considerations that the architects whose drawings are analyzed in this thesis needed to keep in mind when approaching a design plan for a new house, which would also be relevant in the case of a commission for an alteration.

To begin with, a site had to be chosen for the country house. One of the key skills required for a country house project was "the ability to assess the advantages and aspects of a proposed site."[115] The general location of the building was primarily dictated by the commissioner; the house would be located on lands they owned, perhaps near a particular locality or on a site near

[114] Benzel, 218.
[115] Cannadine and Musson, *The Country House*, 19.

accessible roads or within an especially picturesque setting. Often, new houses were built in the vicinity of an existing castle or towerhouse.[116]

A country house's "exact position had to be chosen with some care."[117] As much as an architect's lofty ideas shaped the eventual design of a country house, "architecture always depends on things that are already there," and, as Glassie notes, "the environment sets the stakes."[118] A building must be connected to the ground, and a country house cannot be built on ground that will not support it. Foster notes that "the geological conditions of the ground on which the building will stand are important, particularly as far as weight and height are concerned," and this is especially true for a building that is to have a basement.[119] Other natural properties to do with the ground that impact the design of a building include topography, soil, and the water table.[120]

Another key aspect relating to the physical considerations of a country house is the climate. On the subject of the Irish climate, Glassie writes that "the weather is wet. The lanes are muddy and rutted. Dampness absorbs light into darkness."[121] Architectural styles imported from sunnier, warmer climates such as Italy or Greece needed to be adapted to the weather in Ireland, or else leave the users of the house to suffer the consequences. For example, incorporating a portico in front of a country house's entrance in Italy "was an asset in sunny weather when one could sit beneath it, shaded from the sun," but "in the wet Irish (and English) climate it made the rooms behind dark, and it dripped rain, creating a slippery flight of steps for the visitor."[122] In Ireland,

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[116] Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 107.
[117] Airs, *The Making of the English Country House,* vi.
[118] Unwin, *Analysing Architecture*, 70; Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture,* 29.
[119] Foster, *The Principles of Architecture,* 15.
[120] Benzel, *The Room in Context,* 181.
[121] Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture,* 29.
[122] A portico is a roof supported by columns that typically acts as a porch outside of an entrance; McCarthy, *Life in the Irish Country House*, 18.

"cold and damp were persistent problems in houses," and the failure of an architect to make provisions against these issues could make a house unliveable, as the owners of Dromore Castle, Co. Limerick, discovered.[123] The dampness of the ground and frequent rainfall were especially relevant factors in an architect's decisions around including a basement, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

The sun and its path across the sky were also factors when choosing a site for a country house and determining its cardinal positioning. Kerr argues that light is so valuable that "it is a never-failing principle to err here on the side of excess" when it comes to natural light and that "every room in the house and every passage" should receive a sufficient amount of it.[124] This meant choosing a site that received ample sun, preferably on high ground and not overly shaded by trees or other natural features. Ventilation and the problem of smells were also key considerations for architects designing a country house in Ireland. Many working spaces required for the running of a country house, including stables, kitchens, laundries, bakehouses, and brewhouses produced "offensive vapours" that carefully designed ventilation systems could not only remove but also "prevent from spreading or even stagnating."[125] Ensuring that winds did not bring such smells into the house was considered to improve not only the comfort but also the health of the occupants.

In addition to environment and site, a major factor that an architect had to keep in mind when designing a country house was the person who was paying them to do so. The patron "initiated the project, imposed personal preferences and not least paid for it," and while it was the architect's duty to interpret the requirements of all people who were to inhabit the building, it

[123] McCarthy, *Life in the Irish Country House*, 29; Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 289.
[124] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 122.
[125] Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 149; Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 245.

was the patron who had the ultimate say in accepting or rejecting a design.[126] Foster notes that "the essential relationship of trust and understanding between patron, designer and builder has been critical to the realization of any building project."[127]

As the middleman, the architect's job was to create a design that adhered to the patron's wishes and could realistically be built by the contractors. Upon hiring an architect, the commissioner would express desires in terms of architectural style, building materials, and size, and often set limitations as to cost. Building projects are expensive, "architecture is always dependent on economic circumstances," and it was not unheard of for an architect of an Irish country house to get into trouble for overspending a patron's set budget.[128] In addition to budget and style, a patron might favour visual effect over convenience in the plan, or vice versa, which the architect would have to adhere to.[129] However, a skilled architect would be able to look beyond the expressed wants to see the needs of their client; they "must have an intimate knowledge and a sympathetic understanding of [their] client's way of life, his interests and his tastes" and produce a design that will sufficiently accommodate them.[130]

When accepting a country house commission, an architect had to start with the primary considerations of the location and its environment, including the ground, climate, and airiness, and the commissioner's priorities and limitations, including taste, lifestyle, and budget. When it came to the building itself — what it would look like, what shape it would take, and how many levels it would have — many other factors would influence the final design.

[126] Arnold, *The Georgian Country House*, 4; Jenkins, *Architect and Patron,* xiii.
[127] Foster, *The Principles of Architecture,* 18.
[128] For example, builder Mr. Kimberley successfully sued both the patron Mr. William Wentworth FitzWilliam Dirck and the architect William White when the former refused to pay the full bill for the house, which exceeded the budget by £10,000; Witold Rybczynski, *The Story of Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022), 135; Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 289; Mark Girouard, "Humewood Castle, Co. Wicklow—I," *Country Life*, May 9, 1968, 1213.
[129] Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 30.
[130] Jenkins, *Architect and Patron,* xiv.

Basement or No Basement?

Of these, the question of how many levels to design a new country house with is most relevant to this thesis, especially the question of whether or not to include a basement. When approaching a country house commission, an architect's decision to include a basement level or not would be informed by many considerations.

To start with, how common were basements in Irish country houses? A comprehensive study to answer this question has yet to be conducted, but by collecting data from a handful of sources we can gather a rough idea. The first source is the sample of floor plans collected for this project. The 29 houses whose plans this thesis focuses on were chosen from a collection of plans for a total of 50 houses found at the archives, of which at least 33, or 66%, were designed with basements.[131] Looking next at books that include descriptions of many Irish country houses, we can collect other data points to find an average. In *Great Houses of Ireland* by Hugh Montgomery-Massingberd and Christopher Simon Sykes, at least 15 out of the 26 houses, or 58%, have basements.[132] In Seán O'Reilly's *Irish Houses and Gardens*, at least 11 of the 20 houses, or 55%, have basements.[133] Jacqueline O'Brien and Desmond Guinness's *Great Irish Houses and Castles* includes discussion of 53 houses and castles, at least 27, or 51%, of which have basements.[134] The book with the largest sample of houses — Mark Bence-Jones's *A Guide to Irish Country Houses*, which includes description of over 2,000 houses — should be the most promising.[135] By looking through the entries beginning with "A," only 13 out of 102 houses, or

[131] The reason why the sample for this thesis includes only 29 of those 33 houses is that the architect-created basement plans for the other 4 houses were not found at the archives.
[132] Montgomery-Massingberd and Sykes, *Great Houses of Ireland*; here and for the next two books the number of houses with basements was determined both by reading the descriptions of the houses and by looking at the photographs to see if any indicated a subterranean level.
[133] O'Reilly, *Irish Houses and Gardens*.
[134] O'Brien and Guinness, *Great Irish Houses*.
[135] Bence-Jones, *A Guide*.

13%, are described as being “over basement.” This dramatically lower percentage could be because the other books are more likely to feature bigger houses of more historical importance, which might be more likely to have a basement, while Bence-Jones’s book covers a wider range of houses, including smaller ones. However, further examination shows that of the 28 houses discussed in this thesis that appear in *A Guide to Irish Country Houses*, all of which definitely were designed with basements, only 5 have their basement mentioned in their descriptions in the book. Therefore, the relatively low statistic taken from this book likely has to do with inconsistent reporting. The figure still carries value, as it acts as a counterbalance for the other percentages that might lean towards an overrepresentation of larger houses more likely to have basements. Overall, if we take these statistics together — 66%, 58%, 55%, 51%, and 13% — the average comes to 49%, indicating that roughly half of Irish country houses can be expected to have a basement. If this number were lower, it would perhaps excuse the dearth of scholarship and attention that has been given so far to the lowest level of the country house, but the fact is that country house basements are sitting beneath a significant proportion of houses, waiting in the dark for someone to shine a light on them.

To understand the considerations an architect would have to take into account, we must first examine the myriad purposes a basement in a country house served. McCarthy posits that “the Irish basement may have had a triple origin — partly defensive, partly as a damp course and partly as a plinth.”[136] To the first purpose, Somerville-Large agrees that in the mid 1700s “the universal basement” of the country residences of the elite “contributed to protection.”[137] Landlords in Ireland were seldom popular with their tenantry in any time period, but especially in the earlier stages of the island’s colonization defense was a necessary aspect for the “alien

[136] McCarthy, *Life in the Irish Country House*, 25.
[137] Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 154.

aristocracy" to implement in their homes.[138] Discussing his plans for Humewood Castle, which was built in 1867 and therefore demonstrates that needing protection never fully stopped being a factor in Irish country house construction, William White notes that "it was desirable to build a house capable of defence in case of an attack," and building a basement (with iron bars covering its windows) allowed the windows of the "living rooms" to be elevated out of reach from the ground so that they could be bigger.[139] As with the castles and towerhouses of previous centuries, raising a country house off the ground made it safer from attack.

While the arrangement of having "all the most important rooms of the upper-class house" on the first floor may have originated "in security and hygiene," after the seventeenth century the practice "continued as prestige."[140] Here we see the beginning of the division between upstairs and downstairs that "combined status and location."[141] Unwin discusses how "'up' and 'down' have connotations that are symbolic, poetic and emotional," and notes that "the experience of being high, on top, above is different from being low, underground, beneath."[142] In a country house context, this is reflected in the naming of the "*piano nobile* — 'noble floor' — which suggests that some sense of nobility was attached to its being above the level of the ground," and Unwin argues that it would produce a very different experience "to spend most of your life on the 'noble floor' than as a servant in the undercroft."[143] By literally elevating themselves above those who worked for them, aristocratic families in Ireland could imbue the figurative hierarchies that existed between social classes with a physical aspect.

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[138] Arnold, *Reading Architectural History*, 116.
[139] James Horan, *Humewood: A Restoration* (Cork: Gandon Editions, 2018), 253.
[140] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry,* 55.
[141] Cooper, 55.
[142] Unwin, *Analysing Architecture*, 197.
[143] Unwin, 200.

Somewhat related to this is the question of comfort, or different comfort levels, that a country house basement produced. As previously noted, the wet climate of Ireland contributed to persistent dampness in Irish country houses, which should have been at the front of mind for architects. Two tools that architects used against damp were the basement and "the area." Frustratingly unassumingly named and amorphously defined, the *area* is an open space between the exterior wall of a building and the ground that can be as small as the width of a window and as large as a wide passageway that surrounds the entirety of the house, sometimes covered by grills and sometimes open to the air above.[144] Some authors describe it as a "dry moat," which suggests one of its uses, as a form of defense.[145] Its two primary functions, however, were to allow "a minimum of light to enter the kitchen and offices" in the basement and to "[mitigate] against the spread of damp."[146] Pushing the wet ground away from the stone exterior walls lessened the amount of moisture travelling to the interior, and including a basement level so that any damp affected mostly the servants and provided a more comfortable living experience for the family above. If we take Kerr as holding opinions representative of his time, we can see that it was thought to be the case that "servants [were] not so sensitive to low temperature as their superiors," meaning that subjecting servants to living and working in the cold, damp basement likely did not weigh heavily on the minds of architects or their patrons.[147]

In addition to providing a more comfortable living experience, raising a family's living rooms above a basement provided a better view of the landscape from the windows. [148] According to Kerr, "the pleasantness" of a room was dependent on "the relation of its windows

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[144] See Figure 2 of Headfort House A for an example of a plan that shows an *area* surrounding the entirety of the basement level.
[145] Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 218; O'Brien and Guinness, *Great Irish Houses*, 37.
[146] Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 154.
[147] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 245.
[148] Loeber, *Irish Houses and Castles*, 260.

to sunshine and weather" and "the view from its windows."[149] The importance of the view also influenced the construction of tunnels, which Maurice Craig argues is a "well-established Irish device" when it comes to country houses.[150] Many big houses were designed with "tunnels to hide unsightly menials from view once they ventured beyond the confines of the basement."[151] A related consideration to the view from the house is the view of the house. How and from where a house was meant to be viewed could influence whether a basement was advisable or not. Girouard notes of the picturesque movement that its followers were "principally concerned with how a building looked—whether it fitted into a landscape," which would be influenced by whether the offices were hidden away in a basement or a rear courtyard or displayed within symmetrical pavilions.[152] If a house was designed to be viewed from all sides, the unsightly work of the servants could be tucked away through use of a basement, an *area*, and tunnels, whereas if the approach to a house provided views of only the principal front, the offices could be placed behind the house.[153]

All of these factors — defence, status, comfort, and view — could prompt an architect to include a basement in a country house's design. However, the two closely related main factors in whether an architect would design a country house with a basement are time and architectural style. Over the period that this thesis is concerned with, 1730 to 1925, the fashionable architectural styles for country houses in Ireland changed dramatically, and with it the likelihood

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[149] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 123.
[150] Craig, *The Architecture of Ireland,* 245.
[151] Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 197.
[152] Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 30.
[153] The two sides of this spectrum were made clear to me on my tours of Castle Coole and Florence Court, both in Co. Fermanagh. Castle Coole has a fully subterranean basement, an extensive *area* covered over by grating, and a tunnel that directly connects the basement to the stable courtyard, which means that views of it from any direction are unimpeded by any activity carried out in those spaces. In contrast, Florence Court is designed to be approached from one direction, and so while the basement is subterranean at the front of the house, at the back of the house it is at ground level and supplemented by two rear courtyards.

of a house being built above a basement. Although writing about England, which had a somewhat different evolution of popular styles compared to Ireland, Kerr notes that in the eighteenth century "Basement Offices [were] the rule," but that in the nineteenth century the Elizabethan style and its "quadrangular system, with the Domestic Offices on the Ground-floor" took over.[154] Writing about the Victorian era, Girouard notes that "basement offices became increasingly unfashionable for reasons of privacy, freedom of planning and regard for the comfort of the servants."[155] He also makes the argument that the introduction of bell systems, starting in the 1760s meant that "basements could be got rid of, except to contain cellars."[156] Therefore, whether a patron wished their country house to be built in a Palladian style, as a compact block, or with a courtyard, which generally but not always followed the fashions of the time, would often dictate whether the house necessitated a basement or not.

Lastly, the size of the house would have played a role in an architect's decision to design a house with or without a basement. The largest of country houses "might contain 150 people, and a population of forty or fifty would not be out of the ordinary," and McCarthy points out that "the Irish were particularly renowned for their hospitality and for the numbers of servants they had in their homes."[157] The larger the staff required to support a house, the more rooms needed to house the servants and provide them space to work, and often that extra space was found in the basement. A smaller house with a smaller or seasonal staff would be more likely to fit the necessary indoor offices to the back of the ground floor and in an attic. A factor in determining the possible size of a house's footprint was the available roof construction technology.[158] The

[154] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 67 & 81.
[155] Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 21.
[156] Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 219.
[157] Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 20; McCarthy, *Life in the Irish Country House*, 4.
[158] Loeber, *Irish Houses and Castles*, 145.

"major innovation" of the "double-pile and triple-pile plans," or allowing a building to be two or three rooms deep as opposed to only one, allowed the rooms of a country house to be laid out horizontally rather than vertically stacked on top of each other, creating "the possibility of more complex house plans."[159] This structural innovation meant that architects could choose a larger footprint and use that space to move offices out of the basement.

As this section has demonstrated, the factors that architects had to consider when deciding whether to include a basement in a country house were plentiful. The wishes of the patron might have been a priority, but architects had to work within the conditions presented by the chosen site, and implementing a basement or other subterranean features was a key method of controlling the house's relationship with and connection to the ground it sat on.[160] But while deciding to include a basement may have solved certain issues to do with comfort and visual affect, it also thrust upon the architect a whole other set of considerations.

Arranging the Basement

Once an architect determined the need for the basement level, they then faced the not insignificant task of arranging its layout. Girouard writes that "to marshal the immensely complicated accommodation of a Victorian country house in such a way that all the elements were conveniently placed and adequately lighted, that the important rooms had the right prospect and aspect, that no-one saw what they shouldn't see or met those whom they shouldn't meet, was a formidable task for an architect."[161] While the Victorian era, with its increasing prioritization on specialization, might have been particularly challenging for architects, in all cases "the design

[159] Loeber, *Irish Houses and Castles*, 145 & 155.
[160] Unwin, *Analysing Architecture*, 120.
[161] Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 21.

of a house [involved] theorising about how the lives it will accommodate might be lived and producing an appropriate frame."[162] When arranging the internal layout of a country house basement, an architect had to weigh the importance of various considerations to produce a final product that fit within the house's design, provided for the needs of its users, and adapted to the priorities of the time.

A major factor that influenced the layout of a basement was the style and shape of the house, and whether form or function was prioritized. On the one hand, a chosen "structural strategy" will influence the "spatial organization" of a building.[163] If form is valued more highly than function, the internal arrangement of rooms within a country house will be dependent on the form, and convenience of the plan may suffer as a result. This results in houses where the "exterior provides no clue to the arrangements within," which Cooper links to the increasing importance of symmetry.[164] On the other hand, a house might be designed so that "the exterior is the consequence of the life inside," where the arrangement is put together first and the form comes as a result of it.[165] Whether form or function was prioritized would depend largely on the patron's instructions and the prevailing fashion of the time.

When conceptualizing the layout of a country house basement, the architect had to determine the type, number, and size of rooms to be placed at that level. Which types of spaces to include would largely be dictated by the expressed or assumed needs of the client, in terms of the projected size of the staff and which offices were to support the daily life of the family. Kerr notes that "the amount of accommodation must be regulated directly by the list of servants to be kept," while Hardyment writes that "until the early nineteenth century … it was the ambition of

[162] Unwin, *Analysing Architecture*, 105.
[163] Unwin, 173
[164] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry,* 75.
[165] Glassie, *Vernacular Architecture,* 52.

any self-respecting household to be as self-sufficient as possible."[166] This meant not only including outer offices such as a dairy, laundry, brewhouse, and bakehouse, but also making space within the internal offices for the cooking and storage of the products the outer offices produced. Similarly, a larger staff would include certain positions, such as housekeeper, butler, or steward, who would all need their own spaces, which sometimes consisted of an entire suite of rooms.[167]

The time that a house was built would also influence the types of rooms included in a basement, as "new rooms came into being to meet new needs while some rooms dropped out of existence altogether."[168] For example, certain spaces came about due to improved technology, such as water-closets and bath rooms, while others, such as smoking rooms, became more common due to new social practices.[169] Tasks carried out within the bakehouse, laundry, brewhouse, and dairy were increasingly moved off site when landowners could afford it.[170] Within the Irish country house, the number of rooms increased over the centuries as they "changed from spaces that were shared to spaces that [were] private, and from rooms with more general functions to more specialised ones."[171] Within a medieval towerhouse, each level only had one or a handful of rooms, meaning that each room was multi-purpose and people were rarely alone.[172] By the Victorian era, privacy was more highly valued and each room had a designated purpose, resulting in an increase in the number of rooms.[173] Lastly, whether or not other spaces existed on the site that could fit rooms for servant use, such as an attic or a stable

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[166] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 244; Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 70.
[167] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 35.
[168] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry,* 273.
[169] Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 26; Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 256; Jeremy Musson, *How to Read a Country House* (St. Helens: The Book People Ltd, 2005), 177.
[170] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 117.
[171] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry,* 273.
[172] Ronnes, "A Solitary Place."
[173] Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 22.

block that might accommodate rooms for servants on an upper floor, would influence which rooms needed to go in the basement.

The number and size of rooms to be arranged within a country house basement would be determined either by the footprint of the house, if form was favoured, or by the needs of the household, if function was. Kerr favoured larger and fewer rooms to "a large number of rooms of questionable size," especially in bigger houses where it became more difficult to preserve the unity of rooms.[174] He argues that "cramped … arrangements of the Offices have spoilt many houses," and that "there is great danger in making the Offices too complete and elaborate."[175] Thinking more generally, architects had to keep in mind that "rooms must be the right size for the human activities they accommodate."[176]

After determining which rooms went in the basement and their approximate number and size, the architect had to decide where in the plan to place each room, for which many factors would have to be considered. One of the primary concerns when arranging a country house was where to put the kitchen, and its location changed depending on the values of the time. "To want the food to be hot seems to have been a nineteenth-century refinement," prior to which the vast distance between kitchen to dining room was a "deliberate choice" that "allowed for a grand procession" to make up the ritual of serving food.[177] Placing the kitchen "well away from the main body of the house" also reduced the risk of fire, as kitchens were "the source of most domestic fires."[178] Furthermore, "it was considered important to keep the smells of the kitchen separate from the main house," which Girouard notes "all Victorian architects were obsessed"

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[174] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 118–20.
[175] Kerr, 244.
[176] Davies, *Thinking about Architecture,* 60.
[177] Mark Girouard, *A Country House Companion* (Wigston: Magna Books, 1992), 64.
[178] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 190.

with.[179] He reminds readers "that Victorian country house kitchens catered for far larger numbers than their modern counterparts, and that much Victorian cooking consisted of roasting in front of an open flame," which both increased fire risk and produced offensive smells and noise.[180] However, place a kitchen too far away, such as in a pavilion or rear courtyard, and it becomes an inconvenience.[181] Cooper notes that "the solution increasingly resorted to was its placing in the basement."[182]

Because of the great heat generated by cooking, kitchens were "lofty, … often rising through two storeys," and therefore either had their own separate roof if not underneath the main block or took up space in the ground floor plan.[183] They were generally lit from above "to let the light in and the smells out," or else lighted "from the north so that heat from the sun would not add to the high temperature produced by the range."[184] The smells and sounds from a basement kitchen could be contained through many thoughtful design choices, such as arranging doors "to open with their hinge to the chimney, to avoid disturbing the draught to the fire," giving the kitchen separate chimneys and vents, or implementing hatches and lifts, which kept unwanted sounds and odours better contained than doorways and staircases.[185] In her analysis of country house floor plans in the Georgian era, McCarthy notes that "in the vast majority of cases, access to the kitchen was fairly close to the eating room," which is contrasted by Girouard's assertion that "on the whole Victorians chose distance rather than smells," demonstrating the differences over time.[186]

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[179] Musson, *How to Read a Country House,* 193; Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 21.
[180] Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 21.
[181] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry,* 308.
[182] Cooper, 308; Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 151.
[183] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 146; Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 21.
[184] Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 21; Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 146.
[185] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 146; Horan, *Humewood,* 253–54.
[186] McCarthy, *Life in the Irish Country House*, 93; Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 21.

The question of relative proximity between rooms was not relegated to just the kitchen and dining spaces, but was a major consideration for architects arranging country house basements in general. Kerr emphasizes convenience, which he describes as resulting from arranging the various departments in relation to each other to allow for harmony within the house as a whole.[187] Architects had to place each room carefully so that the basement's users could perform their tasks efficiently and without getting in each other's way. Especially in the Victorian era, where houses were divided up "into a great number of highly specialized spaces," if an architect was not careful the basement "could become a warren of small rooms, confused corridors, dark corners, and innumerable staircases," severely hampering the work that took place in them.[188]

The offices were often arranged into groupings that made sense according to the activities that took place within them and who their users were. For example, rooms where food was stored were often placed close to the kitchen.[189] Laundries were usually detached from the house to keep the smells away, and tended to be "arranged in sequence so that the dirty washing went in one end and came out clean at the other."[190] The servants' hall was sometimes considered "the heart" of the house's offices, and "around the hall, separate areas were set aside for every aspect of household management," including the rooms associated with the butler, the housekeeper, storage, and food.[191]

Another set of considerations in the placement of rooms within a basement had to do with the environment. Kerr writes at length about the cardinal direction of rooms, where "such apartments as are designed for general coolness and shade ought to look out in some degree

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[187] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 115.
[188] Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 22.
[189] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 58 & 122.
[190] Hardyment, 222.
[191] Hardyment, 22.

Northward; for the morning sunshine, Eastward; for the noonday sunshine, Southward; and for the evening sunshine, Westward: for morning coolness, Westward; for evening coolness, Eastward."[192] Hardyment notes that certain storage rooms, such as wine cellars, "needed to be dry and of an even temperature," for which they were "best built under the house, on the north side, and well away from the drains."[193] Other rooms that needed to be kept cool, and therefore ideally underground or north-facing and sometimes even without windows, were beer cellars, larders, and dairies.[194]

One way that architects could control the temperature and light within various parts of a country house basement was by orchestrating exactly how underground it was. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 3, some basements were fully subterranean, with either no exterior windows or doors or with light to the basement only arriving through strategically placed *areas* or light wells. Others were semi-basements, not fully beneath ground level. A house could be built "on a slope, so that a sunk basement for the servants … on the garden side became the ground floor in other parts of the house."[195] Hardyment gives an example of a house where "at the front of the house [the] offices appear to be in the basement, [but] behind it the hillside was excavated so that they are on the same level as the courtyards to the rear."[196] In this way, architects could manipulate not only the amount of sunlight and heat that would reach certain rooms but also facilitate the circulation of people between the interior offices in the basement and the outer offices in the yard. Other "basements" were actually mostly above ground, with entrances into them on all or most fronts, sometimes including the main entrance.

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[192] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 125.
[193] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 38.
[194] Hardyment, 97, 110, & 122.
[195] Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 285.
[196] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 22.

Circulation is perhaps a less obvious consideration when arranging a basement, but one that could have a massive impact on the experience of its eventual users. While "it is primarily the basic shape of a building that determines the efficiency of its internal circulation system," an architect's choice in location and number of doors, passageways, and staircases within that shape makes a significant difference in the time it takes for a person to move from one room to another.[197] Another consideration that impacts time is vertical distance, usually in the form of stairs. Benzel writes that "stairs are significant connecting and separating devices that simultaneously manipulate horizontal and vertical movement" within a building such as a country house.[198] An architect could drastically alter the amount of time it would take to complete a task by adjusting the amount of stairs required to climb or descend during the task, the proximity of any doors needed to be passed through, and whether a direct or circuitous route was available through internal or external corridors. Certain facts of design or design principles come into play here: "the larger a space, the longer the journeys between the rooms around it" ; "rooms that open directly into other rooms often align their doorways to form a straight and rhythmic passage" ; and "corridors [provide] a more direct way from one space to another without having to pass through rooms."[199] Overall, a foundational consideration in designing buildings is "the fact that people *move through* them."[200]

Closely related to the consideration of circulation in the arrangement of country houses were the issues of privacy and separation, as circulation was often used to facilitate them or was affected by their imposition. One of "among the most fundamental symbolic messages found in

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[197] Peter Tregenza, *The Design of Interior Circulation: People and Buildings* (London: Crosby Lockwood Staples, 1976), 1.
[198] Benzel, *The Room in Context,* 241.
[199] Tregenza, *The Design of Interior Circulation,* 4; Benzel, *The Room in Context,* 203; McCarthy, *Life in the Irish Country House*, 220.
[200] Benzel, *The Room in Context,* 71.

houses is the coded distinction between public and private," and, as previously mentioned, this distinction had multiple layers within country houses in Ireland.[201] In addition to the family's privacy from the public, achieved through separating public and private rooms on the upper floors of a house, there was the family's privacy from the servants, and indeed the servants' privacy from the family.[202] McCarthy notes that "how segregated the servants were from the family is difficult to quantify in practice," as personal servants would have "their sleeping quarters close to or in the family area, and there was probably little they did not know about those whom they were serving."[203] However, Kerr spends considerable page space discussing the topic of privacy, which at its core consists of the idea that "the family constitute one community; the servants another. Whatever may be their mutual regard and confidence as dwellers under the same roof, each class is entitled to shut its door upon the other and be alone."[204] As, over time, the household evolved from a shared community to two distinct communities, the segregation of the two was embedded within the layout of the house, and it was the architect's job to ensure that the desired amount of privacy was achieved.[205]

A popular method was implementing a set of back stairs, separate from the principal staircase, that allowed servants to move between storeys while performing their duties, which meant that "gentry walking up the stairs no longer met their last night's faeces coming down them" and that "servants [could] have access to all their duties without coming unexpectedly upon the family or visitors."[206] Depending on the size and layout of the house, an architect might implement several sets of secondary staircases for use by the servants and family. Another way

[201] Birdwell-Pheasant and Lawrence-Zúñiga, *House Life*, 4.
[202] McCarthy, *Life in the Irish Country House*, 220.
[203] McCarthy, 220.
[204] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 112.
[205] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 112; Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 285.
[206] Musson, *How to Read a Country House*, 100; Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 138; Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 112.

to separate the communities within a house was to provide more than one entrance, which helped avoid situations where upper-class visitors might "rub shoulders with the tradespeople."[207] This increased desire for separation could result in houses that had half a dozen staircases and as many entrances.[208]

Even among the community of servants segregation could be preferable. Kerr writes that "the several Corridors of the Offices generally must be free from the passage to and fro of persons who are not connected with the business to which they respectively belong," and gives the example that "in a large house the Kitchen must be kept clear of all business but that of the cook."[209] In addition to separation by department, the Victorian era introduced "separation of the sexes," whereby "infinite care was taken to see that men and women slept in different parts of the house, without access one to the other."[210] Separate staircases for men and women servants were not unheard of, and in houses where the servant departments were divided by sex the servants' hall often served as the "point of meeting" between the two.[211]

The arrangement of the offices, whether in a basement or not, was a difficult task for an architect. Kerr notes that "the demands of the servants in respect of convenience are generally more difficult to fulfil than those of the family," and that therefore "the proper arrangement of the Offices is more strictly a test of perfection than that of the Main House."[212] How much care and thought an architect took in arranging the circulation could result in "smoothness and facility" on the one hand or "constant awkwardness and complication" on the other, severely impacting the running of daily operations within an Irish country house.[213] After finalizing the

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[207] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 111.
[208] Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 21.
[209] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 243.
[210] Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 276.
[211] Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 20; Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 243.
[212] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 115.
[213] Kerr, 199.

layout of the various levels of the house, drawing them up on plans, and gaining the approval of the patron, an architect could breathe a sigh of relief, for the bulk of their work was done.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the considerations that faced architects designing Irish country houses and deciding whether or not to include a subterranean level. Basements had to fit into a country house in terms of style and form, and were a key way for architects to manipulate the building's relationship to its surrounding environment. Including a basement produced extra space within the house without enlarging the footprint, allowing for servant spaces to be placed close to the family rooms. Arranging these spaces was one of the most challenging tasks for a country house architect, and the number, type, and size of rooms varied with each house.

The plans that this thesis centres upon cannot tell us the motivations of their creators; as architectural drawings, their purpose is to visually depict the ideas of the architects, not to explain them. Searching for documentary evidence by architects on the subject of motivations for arranging a basement remains beyond the scope of this project, which focuses on visual rather than textual sources. However, a basic understanding of the considerations that may have determined how the floor plans were laid out, as this chapter has provided, will be useful when looking at the plans themselves.

The Plans and Their Arrangements

For centuries scholars have written about the layouts of the aboveground levels of country houses, proving that the plans drawn up by architects and how they decided to arrange certain spaces within these buildings produce results that people think are important. This thesis descends the figurative back stairs to show that the layout of the basement is equally as fruitful in terms of providing information about the lives that were lived in Irish country houses.

While in the first chapter the sources were examined as material objects, in this chapter they are analyzed in terms of the floor plans depicted on them. Each of the 43 documents in the sample have the basement layout of one Irish country house on them, all of unique sizes, shapes, and arrangements. Across the 43 plans, a total of 1,172 rooms or spaces are labelled or indicated, averaging 27 per basement. This number includes unlabelled staircases, corridors, and w.c.s, and any unlabelled rooms or spaces. Most of the unlabelled spaces are small closets adjoined to or lobbies outside of other rooms, whose function perhaps was deemed self-evident, but on a few plans several rooms are left blank. This could be because the architect did not designate a function for the room, or in cases of an alteration parts of the original building that were not to change were not labelled because they were not relevant to the alteration.

Although three of the plans include a stable courtyard on them, this analysis does not include any rooms or spaces related to the stables. This decision was made because scholars generally consider stables separately from the other offices within a country house, and because their minimal representation on the plans shows that they were not often considered by architects to be related to the basement level, unlike other outer offices.[214] Other outer offices, including

[214] Kerr separates "The Domestic Offices" and "The Stabling, and Farm Offices, etc." in his book, and Hardyment does not include the stables within her book, which does discuss dairies, brewhouses, bakehouses, and laundries. Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*; Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*.

laundries, dairies, brewhouses, and bakehouses have been included, although it is likely that not all architects drew these offices on the basement plans. As was pointed out in the first chapter, several of the plans do not represent an entire basement and one plan is so badly damaged that not all spaces in the basement can be seen; the gaps in both cases will slightly skew the data presented in this chapter. The decision to keep these sources in the sample was because they still provide valuable information about the ways in which architects arranged the basements of country houses.

This sample of plans could be used to collect data on many different aspects of Irish country house basements, such as the dimensions of rooms and basements, cardinal placement of rooms, the inclusion or exclusion of certain types of rooms, relative placement of rooms within the basement, paths of circulation, and how concepts such as privacy, separation, and circulation are reflected within them. To keep this thesis within an appropriate length, a small selection of these have been chosen to demonstrate the breadth of analysis possible. Starting more broadly, this chapter determines how far belowground the basements depicted in the plans were and examines the architects' usage of subterranean features such as tunnels and *areas*. Next, the analysis narrows its focus to the rooms within the plans, calculating how many rooms were in each basement, separating the rooms into categories, and looking at the most and least common rooms found on the plans and where they were placed. Finally, this chapter will highlight certain plans from the sample that demonstrate the concepts of separation and innovation. For the sake of simplicity, this thesis will use "room" and "space" interchangeably to discuss thoroughfares including staircases, lobbies, and corridors.

Level Belowground, Tunnels, and *Areas*

While floor plans do not typically include any information about the site of the building, making it impossible to use the sample collected for this thesis to gather any data on how aspects of the environment such as climate, geography, or geology influenced the planning of the house, the plans can be used to determine how far underground the lowest level of the house was intended to be. Functionally, the relative location of the basement's floor to the level of the ground — whether entirely below it, below it in some places but on the same level in others, or entirely on the same level — influenced circulation between the interior of the basement and outside and how much light and ventilation reached the basement. In terms of form, it affected how visible the basement storey was and therefore the overall visual effect of the house.

By analyzing the inclusion or lack of windows, doors, and *areas*, the plans can be sorted into categories based on their relation to the level of the ground. In Figure 9 below, all 43 of the plans are sorted as follows: "cellar," characterized by no external windows or doors; "full basement," where external doors either are not included or they lead into an *area*; "sunk floor," in which an external door leads to a connected yard on one or more fronts while other fronts appear fully underground; and "lower ground floor," where the basement seems to raise the entire floor above it off the ground. In many cases, analyzing the plans in the sample has been supplemented by comparing with the plans for other levels in the house and photographs of the building, which has allowed for more conclusive evidence to be reached. For example, verifying that the only entrances into the ground floor of Humewood Castle, Co. Wicklow, are reached by steps confirms that the basement is aboveground on all fronts. To see if there is any relationship between the term used by the architect for the level under consideration and how far underground it was, both have been included in Figure 9.

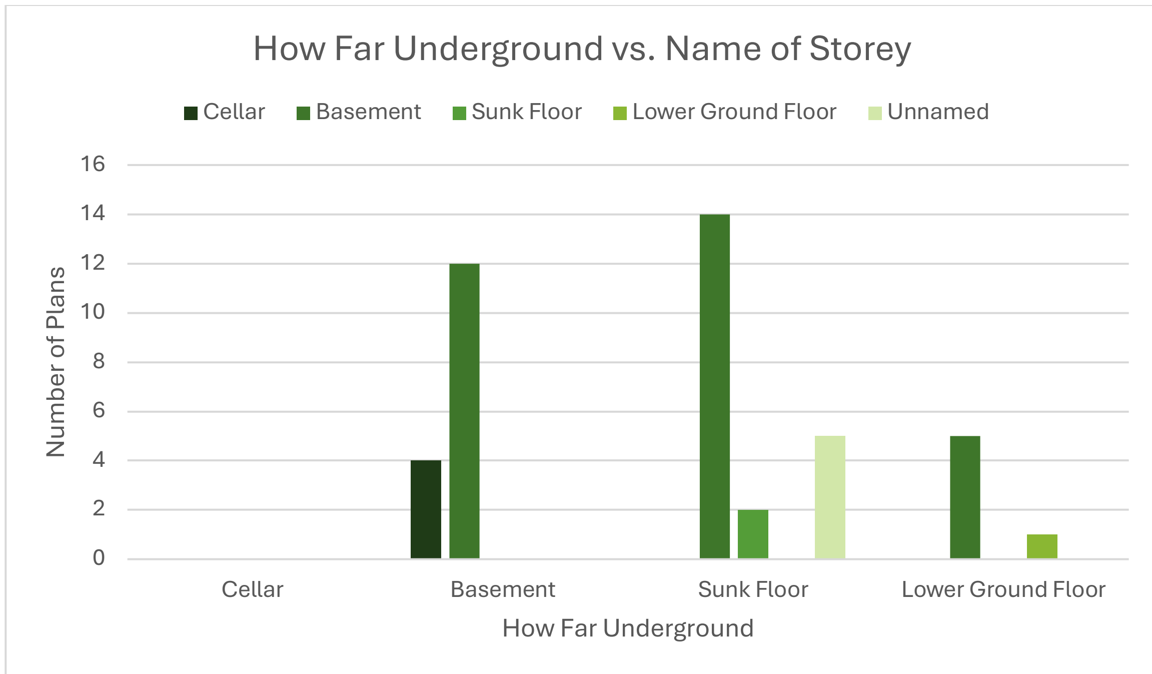

Figure 9. Chart showing how far below ground level the basements represented in the plans are.

Several conclusions can be drawn from the data presented in Figure 9. Firstly, the chart shows that none of the plans in the sample show a "cellar," or a fully subterranean level that receives no natural light. The demonstrates that architects' thinking aligned with Benzel's statement that "to work or live in an enclosed area without natural light impoverishes people environmentally, economically, physically, spiritually, and socially."[215] The comfort of servants may not have been a top priority for architects or their patrons, but at least servants were not forced to live and work in dark, windowless rooms that had no communication with the world aboveground. It should be noted that two of the plans, for Bessborough House, Co. Kilkenny, and Humewood Castle, Co. Wicklow, indicate separate cellars that are at a lower level than the basement and do not have any windows. However, all of the basements themselves have external windows.

[215] Benzel, *The Room in Context,* 237.

The four plans that are named “Cellar,” therefore instead represent storeys that are fully underground but have windows and in some cases doors that lead to an *area*. The term “Basement” is by far the most widely used by architects, though this term is applied to levels that are fully underground, only underground on certain fronts, or rise above ground level on all fronts. The two most common types of basements are full basements, with 16 total, and sunk floors, with 21 total. In the plans represented in these categories, we can see that architects made use of tunnels and *areas* to provide light and access to the lowest level of the house, or used the slope of the ground to adjust whether an entrance into the house led to the basement or to the principal floor. For example, the document for Roxborough Castle, which includes the plans for both the basement and the principal floor, seen in Image 40, clearly shows that at the front of the house the entrance is on the principal floor, while in the courtyard to the back the doors into the house are on the basement level.

In six of the plans, either the main entrance to the house is indicated on the basement plan, such as in Castlewellan Castle, Co. Down, and Humewood Castle, or the principal entrance is reached via a staircase, which allows the entrance to the basement to be reached without descending below ground level. For example, the plan for Crum Castle A, in Image 20, shows entrances into three sides of the basement that do not have steps down to them, while the corresponding ground floor plan includes only one entrance, reached by an internal flight of stairs. Overall, this graph demonstrates the varying degrees of “underground” that the basement level of an Irish country house could be, and the options available to an architect when considering how to situate a house within its environment to allow its users ease of circulation or to provide for the comfort of its inhabitants. A country house built on solid rock could still have

a "basement" without needing to drill down, while a natural slope could be incorporated into the house's design to allow for entrances into different levels of the house.

The house's integration into or separation from the surrounding ground was further manipulated through the use of other subterranean features, such as tunnels or *areas*. Tunnels may be considered by some scholars to be a classic device of the Irish country house, but only four of the plans in the sample indicate one.[216] As discussed in the previous chapter, tunnels were integrated into country house design to allow servants to conduct their work out of sight of the house. Because they needed to facilitate the movement of people and goods, they were often quite large, as seen below in Figure 10, and sometimes had storage spaces attached to them.

Figure 10. The tunnel leading from the *area* around Castle Coole's basement to the stable courtyards, photo taken by author.

[216] Craig, *The Architecture of Ireland*, 245.

Of the four plans in the sample with a tunnel, Lissadell House B is the most obvious, with a clearly marked "Tunnel" appearing in grey, indicating that it was likely built when the A plan was constructed. On the plan for St. Catherine's House, Co. Dublin, there are two parallel dotted lines marking "Subterranean passage from the Kitchen," and of the three plans for Castle Coole, Co. Fermanagh, only C (Image 10) includes the tunnel shown in Figure 10 above, though it is unlabelled and cut off at the edge of the plan. The corridor running from the main block of Mount Stewart, Co. Down, to the laundry and stable courtyards is unlabelled and gives no indication either way of being above or belowground, but I argue that it likely is belowground where it attaches to the house and comes out aboveground by the courtyards.

Figure 11. Detail of the tunnels indicated on Lissadell House B, St. Catherine's House, and Mount Stewart, courtesy of the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the PRONI, Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth, and the IAA.

The data from this sample therefore suggest that a 4/29 or 14% proportion of Irish country houses had subterranean tunnels. However, it is probable that this number is low, and that the data should instead be taken to demonstrate that architects often did not include tunnels on the floor plans for the main house, in the same way that many of the plans do not include outer offices or stables. Still, the few examples on the plans shown in Figure 11 above support the arguments of scholars such as Hardyment and McCarthy who highlight tunnels as a way of concealing the servants, which relates to the form of the house, without disrupting their work,

pertaining to its function.[217] They also demonstrate the variety among the plans in terms of how the basement of an Irish country house was connected to its outer offices; in some instances, the plans show the basement directly opening into a courtyard, but in these four examples a tunnel is used to link the lower level to courtyards or offices further away.

Figure 12. The *area* along the entrance front of Russborough House, Co. Wicklow, photo taken by author.

[217] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 19; McCarthy, *Life in the Irish Country House*, 30.

Of the 43 plans, 15 have labelled *areas* or spaces that very likely represent *areas*. As previously mentioned, *areas* are a space between the external walls of a building and the ground that allows light into subterranean levels, keeps the damp away, serves as a basic form of defence, and can act as an exterior passageway around the house. As shown in Figure 12 above, *areas* are generally paved spaces that separate the external walls of a building from the ground, and are often wide enough to act as a passageway. This particular *area* is only partially sunken and only along the entrance front of the central block, which is one type of *area*, as discussed below. The only plan in the sample that shows an *area* specifically beneath the main entrance to the house, similar to Figure 12 above, is Castle Dillon, Co. Armagh.

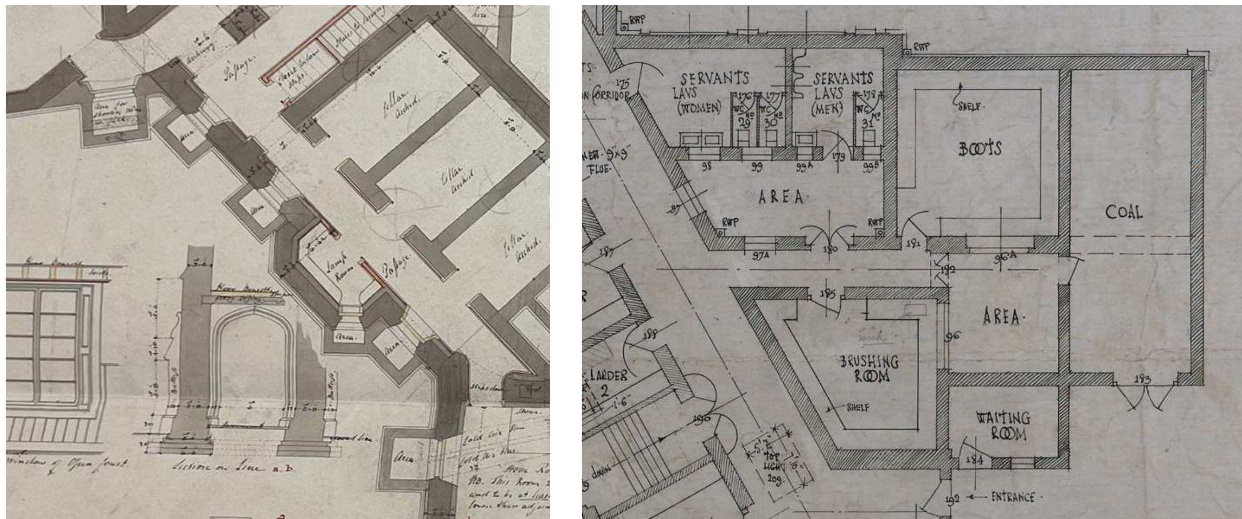

Figure 13. Details of Brownlow Castle and Bessborough House showing their *areas*, courtesy of the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the PRONI, and RIBA Collections.

On the plan for Brownlow Castle, Co. Armagh, several small spaces labelled “Area” are simple light wells, though on that particular plan one is labelled “Area for Shooting Wine in Cask,” the meaning of which is not clear without further research. The plans for Bessborough House label the same two spaces as “Area” or “Court,” depending on the plan, which are small spaces enclosed on all sides that have both windows and doors leading onto them, allowing for light and people to access rooms that in most cases have no exterior windows or doors. These

two examples, shown in Figure 13 above, exemplify how smaller *areas* could be used primarily to bring natural light into the lower levels of Irish country houses.

Figure 14. Details of Castlewellan Castle and Crum Castle B, showing their *areas*, courtesy of RIBA Collections.

Castlewellan Castle, Co. Down, and Crum Castle B, Co. Fermanagh, both have a similar fully enclosed space, which on the latter is labelled "Court" on the basement level but "Area" on the plan for the ground floor. The plan for Crum Castle B also shows a window at the end of a corridor facing the end of a long and narrow space with an unbroken exterior wall that supports a terrace on the ground floor level. Although this space is not labelled, the fact that one window looks into it suggests that the foundations beneath the terrace were not completely closed off. In these two plans, we see architects creating opportunities for light and ventilation to reach spaces in the basement, particularly corridors, that are not along an exterior wall. Especially considering most of these houses were not lit electrically, corridors without windows would be extremely dark, and any room that was lit by sunlight saved the time, money, and effort to illuminate it with tallows, candles, or lanterns.[218] Kerr highlights the importance of lighting and ventilating every room and passage from the "external atmosphere," a philosophy that the architects of these plans were evidently following.[219] A few other examples of spaces that show an unbroken exterior wall on the outside of an *area* that has one or multiple windows facing into it are on the plan for Old

[218] Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 246.
[219] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 245.

Conna Hill House, Co. Dublin, which is unlabelled, and Muckross House, Co. Kerry, which is labelled "Area," both seen in Figure 15 below.

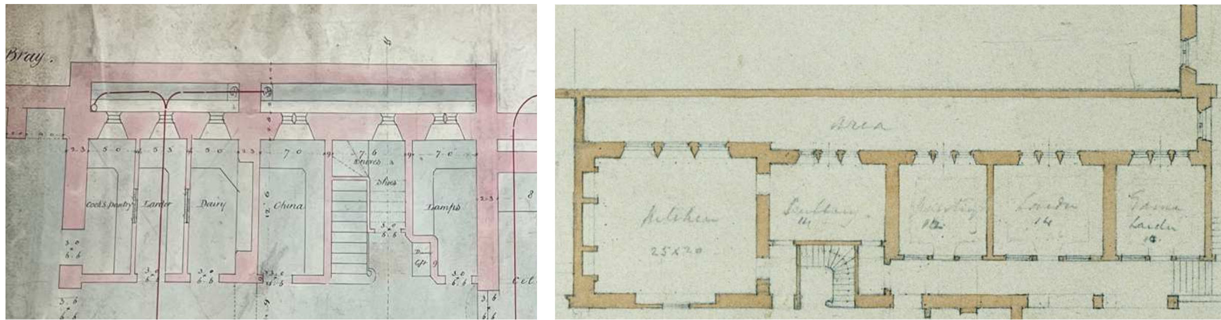

Figure 15. Details of Old Conna Hill House and Muckross House, showing their *areas*, courtesy of the IAA and RIBA Collections.

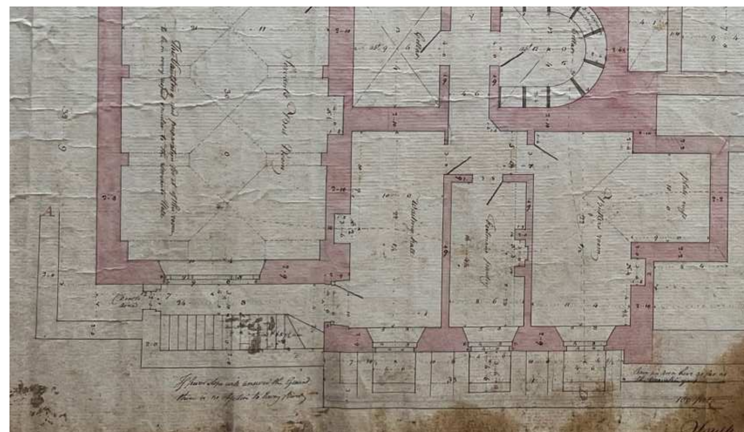

Figure 16. Detail of the Farnham House plan, showing its *areas*, courtesy of the IAA.

A few of the plans suggest or mention an *area* but do not label or visualize the whole thing. On the south front of the plan for Farnham House, Co. Cavan, three small spaces are unlabelled but look like lightwells in the same way that they appear on the plan for Brownlow Castle, Co. Armagh. The southwest corner of the plan, on the left side of Figure 16 above, shows a staircase descending to a space outside the exterior walls, and a "Door to Area" label suggests that an *area* exists for part or all of the west front. However, the unshaded lines representing the exterior wall of the *area* are not drawn very far past the corner, so it is impossible to determine where the *area* ends. Curiously, none of the rooms on the west front at basement level have windows, leaving the purpose of the *area* as mysterious as its full size.

Figure 17. Details of Slane Castle A (above) and B (below and right), showing their *areas*, courtesy of the IAA.

Figure 17 above shows the two plans for Slane Castle, Co. Meath, of which only the B plan labels the two smaller *areas* leading into the circular kitchen, though they are depicted on both. Only the B plan shows the longer *area* spanning almost the entire length of the southeastern front, which is not balanced by a similar space on the northwestern front, breaking the symmetry of the house and perhaps due to the surrounding landscape. This plan is the only one in the sample to include representations of the grills that often covered *areas*, and doors both into and out of the *area* are labelled. The photographs in Figure 18 below show what these grills look like from the ground above and from inside the basement below. In conjunction with the photograph in Figure 12 above, they demonstrate the varying depths of country house basements and their *areas*, as discussed in the previous section.

Figure 18. Photographs showing the area at Florence Court, Co. Fermanagh, from above and below, taken by author.

Finally, five plans in the sample indicate an *area* that surrounds, or nearly surrounds, the full basement level. Unlike the smaller *areas* whose primary function was as light wells to specific parts of the basement, these larger *areas* provide light to a basement that is entirely belowground and can be used for circulation. Perhaps these *areas* also served as a "dry moat" around the house, increasing its defensibility.[220] The plan for Carton House, Co. Kildare (Image 6), clearly shows a uniform "Area" surrounding the main block of the house, with two doors leading into it on opposite ends of the house. The *area* around the main block of Headfort House A, Co. Meath (see Figure 2), is wider along the entrance and rear fronts and narrower outside the sides and wings that continue off-page. Hatched lines indicate the proposed locations of the staircases that will go above the *area* to reach the principal and rear entrances, similar to the

[220] Somerville-Large, *The Irish Country House*, 154–55.

principal entrance of Russborough House, Co. Wicklow, shown in Figure 12 above. No doors into the *area* are indicated on the Headfort House A plan, so it was likely more for allowing light into the basement than as a passage for servants to use, but it is possible that the doors into the *area* were placed on the wings that are not represented on the plan.

Castle Coole B plan (Image 9) shows a uniform “Covered Area” around the entire house except for where it is broken by four solid blocks of wall beneath the main entrance, and only one door leads out into the *area* from the room on the end of the right wing. Castle Coole C plan (Image 10), which is almost identical to B but also indicates what appears to be plumbing pipes, has the same *area* but unlabelled and represented by a dashed line and including two sets of steps out of it. This is also the only plan of Castle Coole to show the tunnel that leads to the stable courtyard, shown in Figure 10 above, and the attached storage spaces that are shown to have openings into the *area* opposite where the door leads into the house.

Figure 19. Detail of Lissadell House B, showing the *area* and the w.c.s, courtesy of the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the PRONI, and Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth.

Lastly, the proposed alterations shown in Lissadell House B, Co. Sligo, show a labelled “Area” encircling almost the entire house. Curiously, the two protrusions from the top of the house that each contain two w.c.s are treated differently, seen in Figure 19 above; the *area* goes around one of them, which has a door into it, but is blocked by the other. This might be due to factors of the landscape around the house, which was perhaps different on either side of the central tunnel, or because passage was only expected to be necessary on the side of the house

depicted on the right side of the plan. The *area* also does not fully encircle the house along the front facing the right side of the document, which only has narrow *area*s at the top and bottom, two new larders that are not flanked by an *area*, and a space outside the scullery. This space, shown in Figure 20 to the right, is a little wider than the rest of the *area* around the house but seems to otherwise be the same, and is labelled “scullery court.” Unlike other spaces labelled “court” on other plans in the sample, this one does not have any doors leading into it and is not enclosed fully by rooms. As one of the main additions to the alterations proposed in Lissadell House B, the *area* surrounding the house suggests that increased light and circulation in the basement were a high priority to the patron commissioning the alteration.

Figure 20. Details of Lissadell House B, showing the *area* and scullery court, courtesy of the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the PRONI, and Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth.

While only 35% of plans from this sample include *areas*, these multi-purpose spaces were clearly a common device used by architects of Irish country house basements. Because these basements were hubs of activity where much of the work required to run a country house took place, literally moving the earth away from their walls to facilitate this work was seen as worth it by both architects and their patrons. As with tunnels, it is likely that more of the houses were designed with *areas* than are shown on the plans. This exploration into the *area*, which is astonishingly seldom mentioned in the scholarship on country houses, proves that allowing natural light into the basement and keeping the damp out were priorities for architects. The variety of *area* sizes and placements discussed in this section demonstrates how both form,

through lowering basements fully belowground while allowing light to still reach them via grated-over *areas*, and function, through providing natural light and circulation paths to subterranean spaces, were at the forefront of architects' minds when designing country house basements.

The Rooms and Spaces in the Basements

Now turning to the spaces inside the basement walls, this section determines the number of spaces within each basement, categorizes them, and discusses the most and least common. The sample of 43 plans displays a wide range of numbers of rooms. This thesis analyzes the number of rooms rather than the size of the basements in terms of square footage because the former can be calculated for all of the plans while the latter would produce incomplete results due to many plans not including the dimensions of the rooms. Furthermore, of the conclusions that can be drawn from both sets of data, I argue that the number of rooms in a basement provides more information about the function of that level, which is related to the arguments of this thesis, than comparing the total size of the house's footprint.

The plans with the most spaces are Humewood Castle, Co. Wicklow, with 68, Lissadell House B, Co. Sligo, and Crum Castle B, Co. Fermanagh, with 55 each, and Muckross House, Co. Kerry, with 52. It is notable that all four of these are dated between 1839 and 1870, during the Victorian era. Several scholars emphasize that increased specialization of spaces was a key characteristic of this time period, which resulted in many smaller rooms instead of fewer larger ones.[221] Whereas in earlier eras, rooms might have been used for multiple purposes or were flexible in their usage, the Victorians preferred assigning separate functions to each room. Some

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[221] McCarthy, *Life in the Irish Country House*, 81; Musson, *How to Read a Country House,* 172–77; Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*.

of this had to do with new technology such as plumbing, which allowed for bath rooms to be fixed spaces instead of baths taking place in bedrooms.[222] That Lissadell House B has so many rooms is especially surprising, considering that the plan does not include any courtyards with outer offices such as laundries or dairies, as Humewood Castle, Crum Castle B, and Muckross House all do, increasing their number of spaces.

The basement with the fewest spaces is Dunboy Castle, Co. Cork, with only 10. Ballycurry House A and B, Co. Wicklow, Castle Coole D, Co. Fermanagh, Killeen Castle, Co. Meath, and Portaferry House B, Co. Down, all have 11 spaces. Of these, the basements in Dunboy and Killeen Castles and Ballycurry House A only cover half or less of the house's total footprint. In a partial basement like these, it is expected that fewer rooms will be placed on the lower level because there is simply less of the house's footprint available to be filled. Ballycurry House B and Castle Coole D are two of the simpler, more compact designs among the sample, and both are from the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries, very different to the sprawling, complex plans of the later nineteenth century discussed above. Figure 21 below presents the total number of spaces per house, sorted into categories. This graph demonstrates that the vast majority of basement plans in the sample comprise fewer than 30 spaces compared to 31 or more — 28 vs. 15. This suggests that either basements with smaller footprints or basements with larger footprints but fewer rooms were generally favoured by architects during the time period under consideration.

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[222] Musson, *How to Read a Country House,* 172–73.

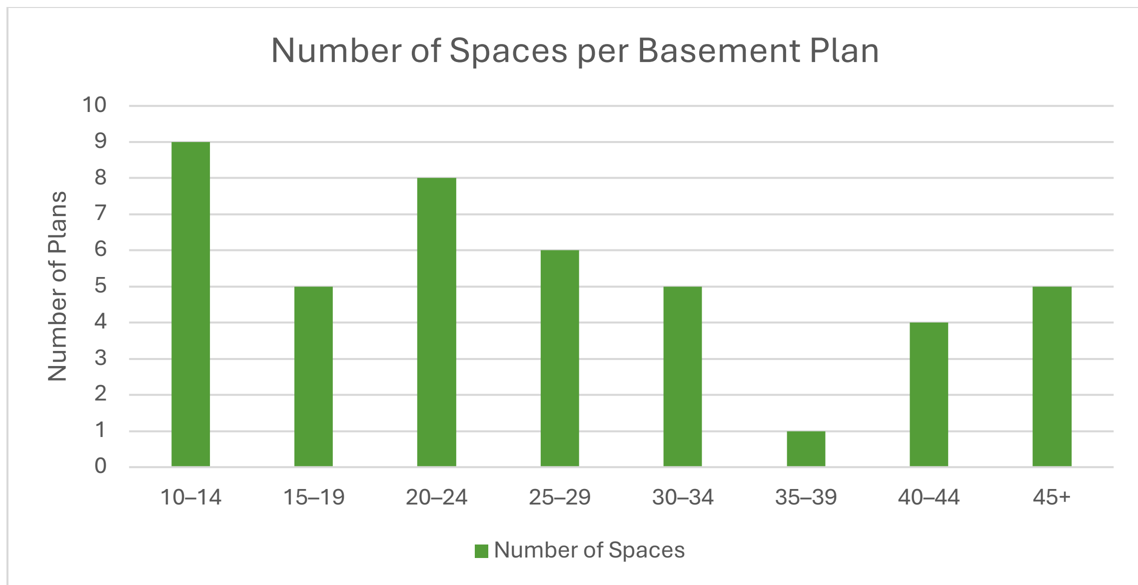

Figure 21. Chart showing the number of spaces per basement plan.

To better understand what functions the 43 basement levels in the sample were designed to accommodate, the rooms within each plan can be sorted by department. For this purpose, this thesis adopts Robert Kerr's scheme of classification for the "Servants' Department," which he subdivides into nine categories. All of the rooms within each plan have been sorted into the following categories, the full results of which are in Appendix A.

1. **The Kitchen Offices:** Kitchen; Scullery; Cook's Pantry or Dry-Larder (and Larder Generally); Meat-Larder; Game and Fish Larders; Pastry-Room; Salting-Room, Smoking-House, and Bacon-Larder; Dairy, and Dairy-Scullery.
2. **The Upper Servants' Offices:** Butler's-Pantry and Appurtenances; Service or Sideboard-Room; Housekeeper's-Room; Still-Room; Store-Room, etc.; China-Closet and Scullery; House-Steward's Office, etc.; Steward's-Room, or Upper-Servants'-Hall; Gun-Room.
3. **The Lower Servants' Offices:** Servants'-Hall, etc.; Housemaid's Closet; Cleaning-Rooms, etc.
4. **The Laundry Offices:** Wash-House and Laundry; Drying-Room, Hot-Closet; Soiled-Linen Closet; Linen-Room, etc.
5. **The Bakery and Brewery Offices:** Bakehouse and Appurtenances; Brewhouse.

6. **The Cellars, Storage, and Outhouses:** Coal-Cellar, Wood-House; Ash-Bin, etc.; Wine Cellars; Beer Cellar; Miscellaneous Cellars; Ice-House; Lumber-Room, Luggage-Room; Fruit-Store; Cistern-Chamber, &c.
7. **The Servants' Private Rooms:** Servants' Bedrooms; Servants' Day-Rooms.
8. **Supplementaries and Thoroughfares:** Corridors; Back-Staircase; Lifts; Water-closets, Baths, &c.; Pump and Pump-room.[223]

What the results from separating the rooms in each basement into these categories show, first of all, is the inherent variety in the sample. No two basements have the same makeup of rooms, reflecting the individual nature that is clear from looking at their plans. Even within a category the variety is clear; for example, Bessborough House, Co. Kilkenny, and Lissadell House B, Co. Sligo, each have 20 spaces in the Supplementaries and Thoroughfares category, while Ballycurry House B and Cloncarneel House, both in Co. Meath, Castle Coole D, Co. Fermanagh, and Mote Park, Co. Roscommon, only have two each. The huge discrepancies in this category are likely due to some plan types requiring more passageways and staircases and incorporating more outdoor spaces, plus the fact that most plans with w.c.s have multiple.

Table 2. The total rooms in each category of Kerr's classification scheme.

Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Other	Total
Totals:	153	163	94	24	8	205.5	89.5	370	65	1,172

Note: Where a room is given two labels as options for its use, that room has been counted as 0.5 of a room for each of the respective categories. An "Other' category has been added for "family rooms," i.e., rooms in the basement not relating to the servants' department, and unlabelled rooms.

Table 2 above provides the totals for each category. This table demonstrates that the most plentiful type of room across the plans in general, with 370 total, are spaces that serve circulation (corridors, staircases, courtyards, and lifts) and water closets. These are spaces that all

[223] The categories for this list and the table in Appendix A have been taken from the titles of the sections within the third division of Kerr's book, "The Domestic Offices." The rooms included in each category have been taking from the chapter titles within each section, except for the final category "Supplementaries and Thoroughfares," in which the chapters are "Ground-Floor Offices" and "Basement Offices"; to create consistency with the rest of the categories, room types from within these two chapters have been included in the list. Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*.

basements, regardless of function, require. Furthermore, it is more common to find multiple staircases or passageways on a plan than, for example, kitchens or plate rooms. Increasing efficiency of circulation is generally achieved through more, rather than bigger spaces, whereas increasing the functionality of a kitchen or plate room is better achieved through providing a bigger space rather than two rooms for the same purpose.

The category with the next highest number of spaces, with 205.5 rooms, has to do with storage, with only two plans not including any cellars or storage rooms. This suggests that storage was a primary function of country house basements in Ireland. Reasons for this include the efficiency of storing certain provisions such as food close to the rooms where food preparation took place and the fact that it was easier to maintain the cool, even temperature required for storing items such as beer and wine belowground.[224] Additionally, huge amounts of fuel, such as coal, turf, and wood, were required to heat these large buildings, which is reflected in the high number of sheds and rooms designated for them on the plans.[225]

The categories for the kitchen department and for the rooms associated with butlers, housekeepers, and stewards have similar numbers, suggesting that two typical functions of country house basements were preparing food and providing workspaces for the upper servants. All country houses, even the smallest, needed a kitchen, and the various activities that all take place within a modern kitchen were spread across multiple rooms during the time period under consideration. All work involving water, such as washing dishes and meat and vegetable preparation, took place in the scullery, while larders were where various foods were kept.[226] Kerr describes the dry larder or cook's pantry as where cooked meat, bread, and dairy products were

[224] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 38; Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 110.
[225] Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, 246.
[226] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 119 & 136.

stored, while the meat larder or wet larder held uncooked meats and sometimes fruits and vegetables; specific game or fish larders could also be included if more space was deemed necessary.[227] The kitchen itself contained the hearth, a central table or sideboards, and shelves full of pottery, dishes, bowls, chopping-boards, and the like, and was where the actual cooking took place.[228] It is unusual, therefore, for a kitchen department to only include a kitchen — most plans with a kitchen also have a scullery and at least one larder. Only three in the sample do not: Brownlow Castle, Co. Armagh, Portaferry House B, Co. Down, and St. Catherine's House, Co. Dublin. Of these, the plans for Brownlow Castle and Portaferry House B do not show the entire basement level, and the kitchen at St. Catherine's House is separate from the main house and no adjoining scullery or larder is indicated. As the only plan where the kitchen is detached from the house and not in an attached courtyard, St. Catherine's House perhaps represents a different approach to the country house kitchen altogether.

The upper servants whose rooms are included in the second category are butler, housekeeper, and steward. Of these, traditionally the steward was at the head of "the domestic army," though Hardyment notes that in the eighteenth century the roles of house and land steward became separate, with the butler taking on the former's responsibilities.[229] The butler generally governed the male servants while the housekeeper supervised the women, and if there was a steward he would oversee both the house and the estate, with his room serving as a dining room for the upper servants.[230] In addition to a bedroom or work room, rooms associated with butlers include plate rooms or vaults (where their valuable contents can be kept under the supervision of the butler) and a butler's pantry (which might also be where the plate is stored in

[227] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 260–64.
[228] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 136; Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 248.
[229] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 29.
[230] Hardyment, 29.

addition to accommodating the serving of wine), while a housekeeper's domain might include a still-room (where tea, coffee, preserves, and biscuits are prepared), a china-room (for keeping expensive china products safe), and a store-room or closet for storing other items to do with housekeeping.[231] Here, the main takeaway is that many rooms across the basement plans were designated for use by upper servants.

The data again show similar, but significantly lower, numbers for rooms dedicated to the workspaces and sleeping rooms for the lower servants; in the case of the former, this might be because the lower servants were less likely to require specific rooms for their work activities, and in the case of the latter, because their bedrooms were placed elsewhere in the house. The most common room in this category is the servants' hall, where the servants ate meals and which in smaller houses could also be used for various cleaning work that in larger or more specialized basements had separate rooms, such as brushing-rooms, lamp-rooms, and shoe-rooms.[232] Because many servants worked in spaces represented in other categories such as the kitchens and laundries or in aboveground parts of the house, it is unsurprising that this number is lower compared to the category for rooms to do with upper servants, even though the number of lower servants would be higher than the number of upper servants.

Twenty-eight of the plans include rooms for servants to sleep in, and these vary in number from 0.5, on Ballycurry House B where one room is labelled as "Bed room or Store room," to 8, on Charleville Castle B, which has several bedrooms for both female and male servants. McCarthy notes that in addition to the basement, bedrooms for servants were placed in the attic storey, in a garret, or in dedicated service blocks separate to the main house, so the relatively low

[231] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 267–75.
[232] Kerr, 277–80.

number drawn on the basement plans is not necessarily reflective of the total number of servants who were accommodated in the house.[233]

Only 10 plans include rooms relating to laundry, and only seven have brewhouses or bakehouses. As offices that either produced unpleasant odours and/or required significant space, the first two were usually positioned away from the main house, and therefore may be less likely to be included in the plan for a basement.[234] Alternatively, the work of the laundries and brewhouses might be outsourced off-site.[235] In terms of bakehouses and brewhouses, it could be that in some cases the baking of bread or the brewing of beer took place within the kitchen department rather than in a specific room.[236] Even accounting for the fact that several of the plans simply omit including outer offices such as laundries, brewhouses, and bakehouses, the data suggests that the architects of Irish country houses either did not consider them as part of the basement or did not include them within the design of the house at all.

Lastly, the "Other" category represents the 60 unlabelled rooms as well as the three plans that include rooms that do not fit within the categories of the servants' departments: a smoke room on the plan for Humewood Castle, Co. Wicklow, a room for "Sir Rob't" on Lissadell House A, Co. Sligo, and a room for "Lord Annesleys," a waiting room as its ante chamber, and a billiard room on the plan for Castlewellan Castle, Co. Down. The fact that almost all of the plans consist solely of rooms designated for or associated with the servants rather than the family presents strong evidence that the basements of Irish country houses were deemed as exclusively for use by the servant community and only rarely would the two communities within the house have the opportunity to cross paths belowground.

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[233] McCarthy, *Life in the Irish Country House*, 208.
[234] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 221.
[235] Franklin, "Troops of Servants," 226–28.
[236] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 104.

This section now turns to analyzing the most and least common room types found within the sample. Perhaps surprisingly, there is only one type of space that is represented in every single plan. Perhaps unsurprisingly, it is staircases. Across the 43 plans there are 118 staircases, for an average of 2.75 per plan. Only 10 plans have just one staircase, 11 have two, eight plans have three, 10 have four, two have five, and two have six. The plans with the most staircases leading to the basement are Castle Coole C, Co. Fermanagh, Mount Stewart, Co. Down, Crum Castle B, Co. Fermanagh, and Muckross House, Co. Kerry. In almost all cases, stairs are located either within or next to a corridor or courtyard, with only eight staircases in total across all plans being located within a specific room or enclosed by rooms. The inclusion of more staircases allowed for more efficient circulation throughout the house, as separate staircases could lead directly to, for example, the dining room, the nursery floor, or a family member's bedroom, streamlining the paths that servants needed to take during their workday. On the other hand, a higher number of staircases also suggests a more complex layout, where paths of circulation are circuitous rather than all flowing through a central backstair.

The room type with the second most instances is the passage or corridor, with 90 of them labelled or indicated across 39 plans. The counting of these spaces is a little subjective in terms of how long a space that connects rooms has to be in order to be considered a corridor or how to count a passageway that has a corner in it, but the fact that only 9% of the plans do not have at least one is significant in itself. In the plan for Ballycurry A, Co. Wicklow, for example, the rooms are directly attached to each other, whereas Charleville Castle A, Co. Offaly, is arranged around an internal courtyard, with most of the house only one room deep and almost all rooms opening directly into the court; the few rooms whose doors do not open into the court are connected to it by a space again too short to be called a corridor. The basement of Cloncarneel

House, Co. Meath, is laid out around a central lobby, and the rooms in the Farnham House, Co. Cavan, basement are all connected to the central vestibule by short passages.

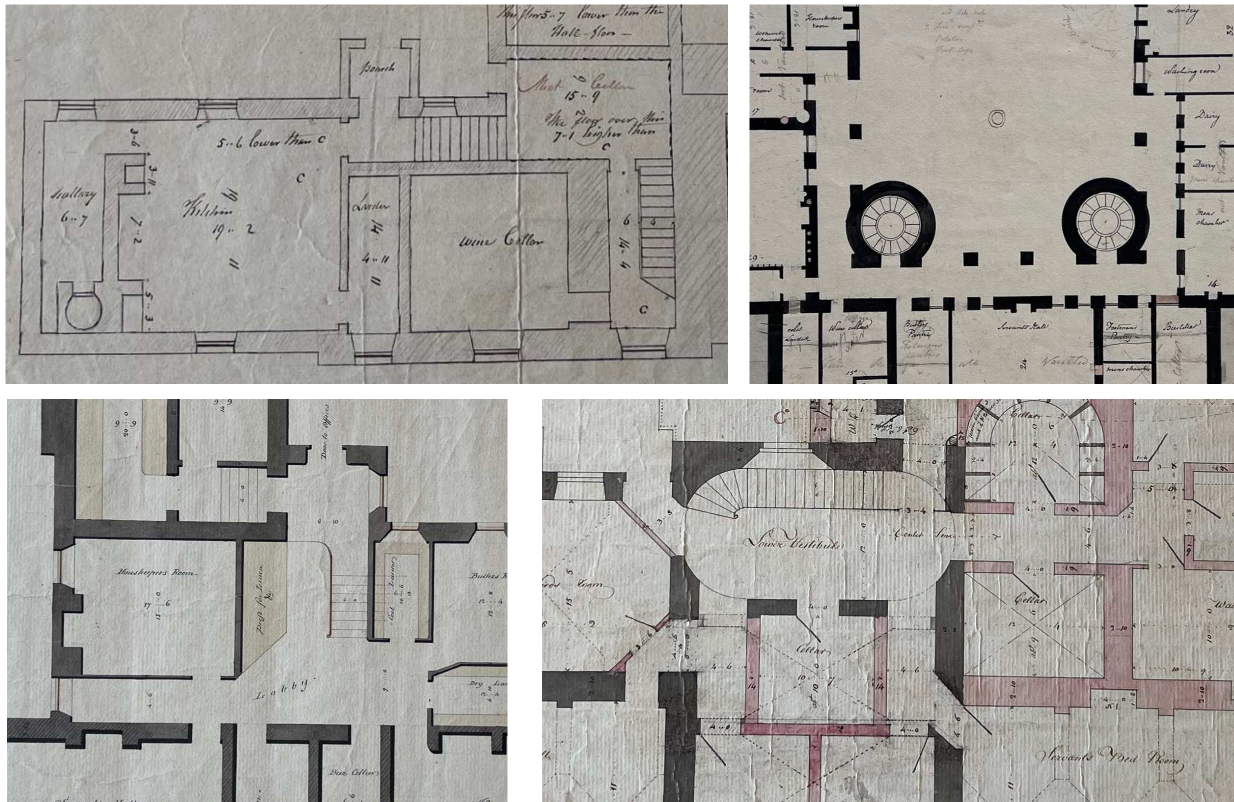

Figure 22. Details of Ballycurry House A, Charleville Castle A, Cloncarneel House, and Farnham House, showing their lack of corridors, courtesy of the IAA.

These four plans make use of circulation spaces more commonly found in the aboveground floors, such as a central vestibule/lobby or rooms set up in an *enfilade*.[237] Because all of the other 39 plans are arranged around central corridors, we can see that separation of rooms from each other and providing spaces that facilitated circulation within and out of basements were priorities for architects designing Irish country houses. None of the basements in the sample are “open plan,” and rarely can the only entrance to a room be reached through another room, with the

[237] Enfiladed rooms are directly connected by doorways, usually along the same line, rather than being accessed through doors that open onto a passageway or lobby. In the plan for Ballycurry House A, for example, the scullery and kitchen could be said to be in *enfilade*.

exception of closets and spaces designed to keep valuables safe.[238] In noting the multitude of passages and corridors that run through nearly every plan discussed, this thesis shows that country house basements were places of movement, where efficient and straightforward circulation was worth the space lost in the adjoining rooms.

The next most common room found in the sample of country house basement plans is the kitchen. Only seven of the 43 plans do not include a kitchen, and two plans, Castle Dillon A, Co. Armagh, and Castle Coole C, Co. Fermanagh, have two kitchens each. The former is likely a case of the architect deciding between two locations for the kitchen, while the latter might have to do with needing structural support in the middle of a large room or the separation of tasks within the kitchen.

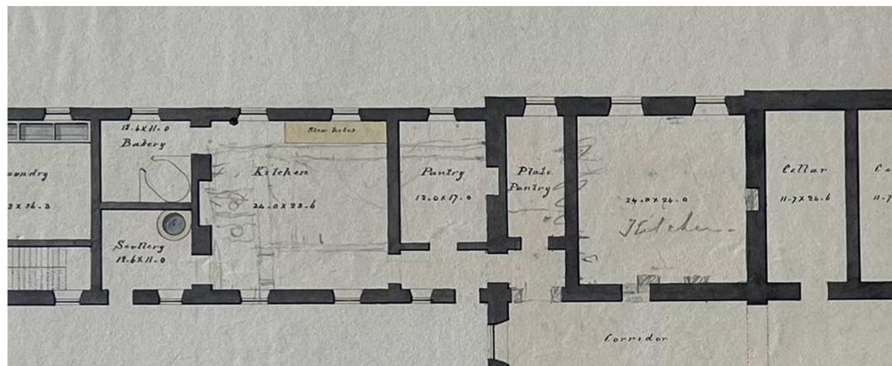

Figure 23. Detail of the Castle Dillon A plan, showing the two labelled kitchens, courtesy of the IAA.

Of the seven that do not have a kitchen, these missing rooms can likely be explained as follows: at Carton House, Co. Kildare, and Headfort C, Co. Meath, the kitchen was probably in a pavilion not shown on the plan; at Castlewellan Castle, Co. Down, and Farnham House, Co. Cavan, it is on the ground floor along with related offices; at Dunboy Castle, Co. Cork, it is probably on the ground floor as well;[239] at Headfort A it is on the ground floor in one of the

[238] Many rooms labelled for use by individual servants, such as housekeepers and butlers, have attached closets on them. Spaces labelled as safes or vaults, plate rooms, or china rooms usually open directly into another room rather than a corridor, to make them less accessible and the valuables stored inside therefore less vulnerable to theft.
[239] A plan for that level was not among the others at the archive.

wings; and none of the floors on the plan for Mote Park, Co. Roscommon, include one so it is likely in a separate building. As shown in the previous chapter, several scholars write that, as a fire hazard and source of smells, kitchens were often placed separate from the main house, but it appears that in most cases in our sample the risk was accepted to have the kitchen close by.[240] Burning down was a relatively-common fate for country houses, and while many Irish big houses that burned down in the twentieth century were done so intentionally, in previous centuries accidental fires were often the cause, and these usually originated in the kitchen.[241] Hardyment notes certain measures that could be taken to prevent the spread of fires in country houses, such as using fire-resistant materials between storeys or fireproofing ceilings, and includes a section in her book on fire-fighting equipment.[242] Of the plans with a kitchen included, only at Headfort House B is it in a faraway pavilion and only at St. Catherine's House, Co. Dublin, is it in a separate building. In the 34 other plans it is within the main basement or placed adjacent to it in a courtyard. The most common auxiliary rooms within the kitchen department are larders, of which 30 plans have at least one kind, and the scullery, of which 29 plans have one.

The servants' hall is the next most widely represented room, with 35 of the 43 plans including one. In only six of these plans is it located in the centre of a symmetrical house, marking the true "heart" of the basement. It is centrally placed within an asymmetrical plan in eight cases; on the remaining 21 plans it takes up one corner of the main block. On a few plans, such as at Headfort House C, Co. Meath, and St. Catherine's House, Co. Dublin, a bedroom is

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[240] Cooper, *Houses of the Gentry,* 308; Girouard, *A Country House Companion,* 64; Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 146; Musson, *How to Read a Country House*, 293.
[241] Of the houses in the sample, many houses including Bessborough House, Castle Bernard, Crom Castle, Dunboy Castle, Durrow Abbey, Mote Park, Roxborough Castle, and Slane Castle have been at least partially gutted by fire at some point. For the purposeful burning of Irish country houses, see Terence Dooley, *The Burning of the Big House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 190.
[242] Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 189–93.

located at the far end of the servants' hall, accessible only through the communal space, shown in Figure 24 below. Noting that 21 out of the 35 servant halls that appear on the plans take up one corner of the main block suggests that there were some oft-repeated patterns when it came to arranging basements, even though for the most part country house basements are unique in shape and layout.

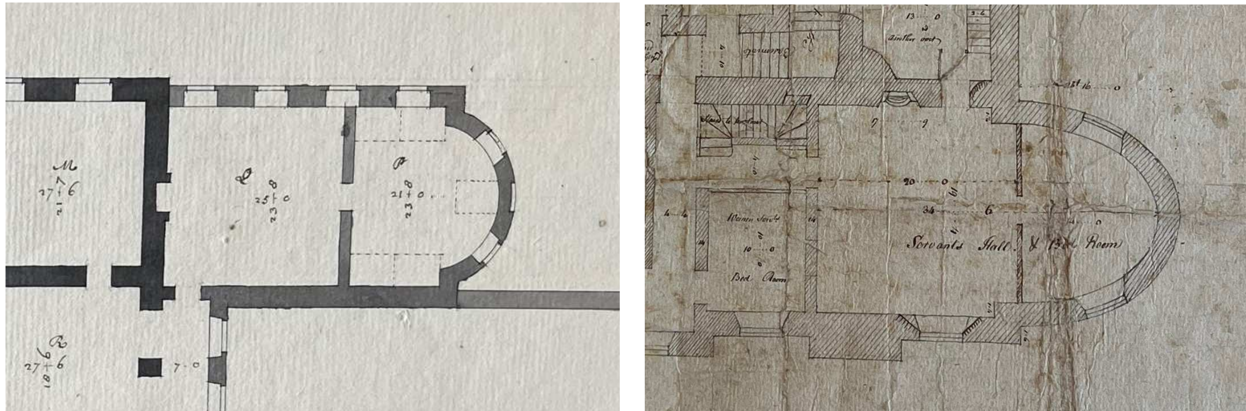

Figure 24. Details of Headfort House C and St. Catherine's House, showing the bedrooms attached to the servants' halls, courtesy of the IAA.

In terms of numbers of rooms across the plans, rather than number of plans with at least one, more cellars and wine cellars appear than kitchens or servant halls. Across 17 plans, 42 rooms labelled "Cellar" appear, plus one "Misc. Cellar," with Crum Castle B skewing the statistics a little with eight labelled "Cellar" rooms. A total of 34 "Wine Cellar" appear, plus three "Wine Vault," one "Wine Pipes," one "French Wines," one "Wine," and two "Madeira Cellar," equalling 42 rooms relating specifically to wine across 28 plans. Beer cellars, on the other hand, number only 18, plus two "Small Beer Cellar," one "Beer and Cyder Cellar," six "Ale Cellar," and one "Ale Vault," for a total of 28 rooms to do with brewed drinks across 22 plans. Unsurprisingly, the only plan with a brewhouse, Mount Stewart, Co. Down, does have a beer cellar. As is to be expected, almost all cellars either have no external windows or only one very narrow window, such as in the plan for Carton House, Co. Kildare. In Headfort House A,

Co. Meath, the windows to the cellars seem to appear on the external wall, but are blocked from the inside. On several plans, including Castle Bernard, the cellars are internal rooms, allowing all of the external walls to provide light where it is wanted. The fact that 28 plans include cellars for wine but only 22 include cellars for beer might point towards the drinking habits of country house inhabitants or towards the different requirements for storing each type of drink.

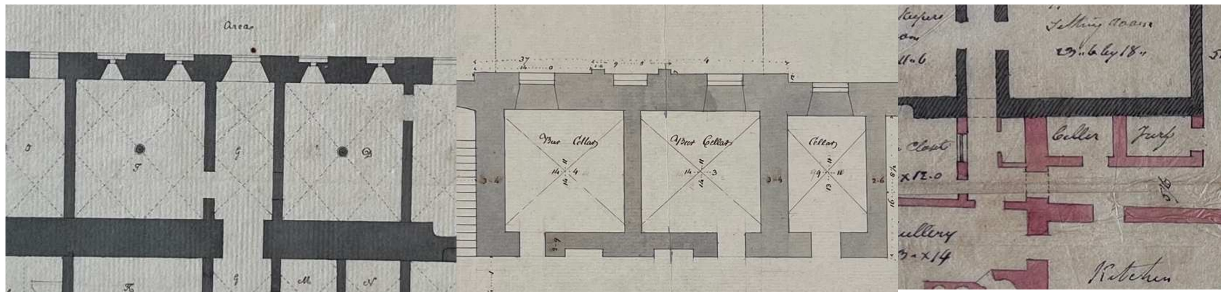

Figure 25. Details of Carton House, Headfort House A, and Castle Bernard, showing the different ways of minimizing light into cellars, courtesy of the IAA.

The small but necessary "w.c." are often visually depicted instead of labelled, and across 19 plans a total of 46 are indicated. Only in two plans, for Bessborough House, Co. Kilkenny, and Dunboy Castle, Co. Cork, are the water closets within a labelled lavatory; the former has separate lavatories for men and women, seen in Figure 26 below. Rather than being used as different terms for the same thing, here the "lavatories" are rooms adjoining onto the small spaces for toilets, showing a progression towards modern bathrooms where toilets and sinks (and baths/showers) are in the same room. On the plan for Castlewellan Castle, Co. Down, in Figure 26 below, we see one of the two only bath rooms in the sample placed next to a w.c., further demonstrating the affiliation of these spaces. In the rest of the plans, the water closets are not within a labelled lavatory or set of related rooms, and are tucked behind staircases or in corners, as in the plan for Crum Castle A, Co. Fermanagh, and sometimes are accessed from a courtyard, such as in the plans for Charleville Castle B, Co. Offaly, and Howth Castle, Co. Dublin, all shown below.

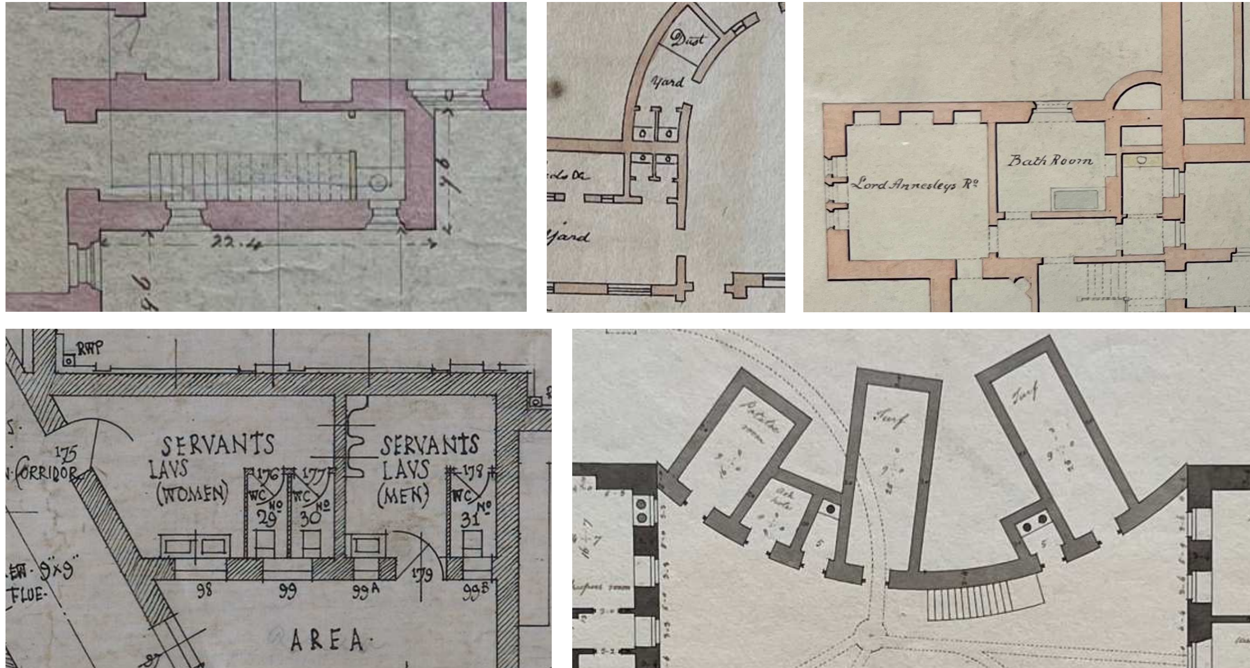

Figure 26. Details of the plans for Crum Castle A, Howth Castle, Castlewellan Castle, Charleville Castle B, and Bessborough House (clockwise from top left), showing the various ways that w.c.s are drawn and placed on the plans, courtesy of the IAA and RIBA Collections.

It is not uncommon for plans with multiple w.c.s to situate two next to each other, which may be to separate use by sex, but none except for Bessborough House are labelled as such. The division of w.c.s by sex on this plan from 1925 may be a reflection of the movement to protect women in the workforce from gendered violence by providing separate spaces for them.[243] The plan for Mount Stewart, Co. Down, has one labelled "Water Closet" and also two small rooms labelled "Necessary," the difference between which is unclear. The earliest indicated w.c., though not labelled, is at Castle Coole B, Co. Fermanagh, from 1790, but even during the nineteenth century they were clearly not commonly installed in basements, as only 16 of the 30 houses from that century have at least one at that level. Analyzing the evolution from the earliest little toilet seat indicated on a plan from the sample at the end of the eighteenth century to the latest plan in 1925 when water closets were placed within sex-separated rooms called lavatories

[243] Peter C. Baldwin, "Public Privacy: Restrooms in American Cities, 1869–1932," *Journal of Social History* 48, no. 2 (2014): 264–88.

demonstrates the changing technologies in plumbing and how they were adapted into Irish country houses.

Both the housekeeper and the butler are significantly represented on the plans, with each position having at least one designated room on 31 and 33 plans, respectively, though not all the same ones. Only five plans do not indicate any rooms for either. On 15 plans there are two or more rooms designated for the housekeeper, and on 14 plans the butler is assigned two or more rooms. The third servant position that architects designated specific rooms in the basement for are stewards, with 10 plans having a "Stewards Room" and one having a "Stewards Office."

In terms of least common rooms, of course there are many room names that appear only once. Several are synonyms or slightly varied ways of describing similar spaces, such as "Open Court" or "Open Space" instead of the more commonly used "Court" or "Courtyard." Some unique room names do, however, suggest interesting uses for space that the architects had to contend with. Mount Stewart is the only house to include both a "Law Office" and "Tenant's Hall" within its basement, although several houses have a "Waiting Room" or "Waiting Hall." The two plans for Slane Castle, Co. Meath, both have a small space off the kitchen labelled "Madeira Cellar," which likely refers to a special type of wine from the island archipelago of Madeira. A semi-outdoor space on the Dunboy Castle, Co. Cork, plan, open to a terrace by way of columns instead of a fourth wall, is labelled "Grotto and Fernery." In the plan for Carton House, Co. Kildare, one of the large corner rooms is labelled "Room for a Second Table," which has an unclear function.

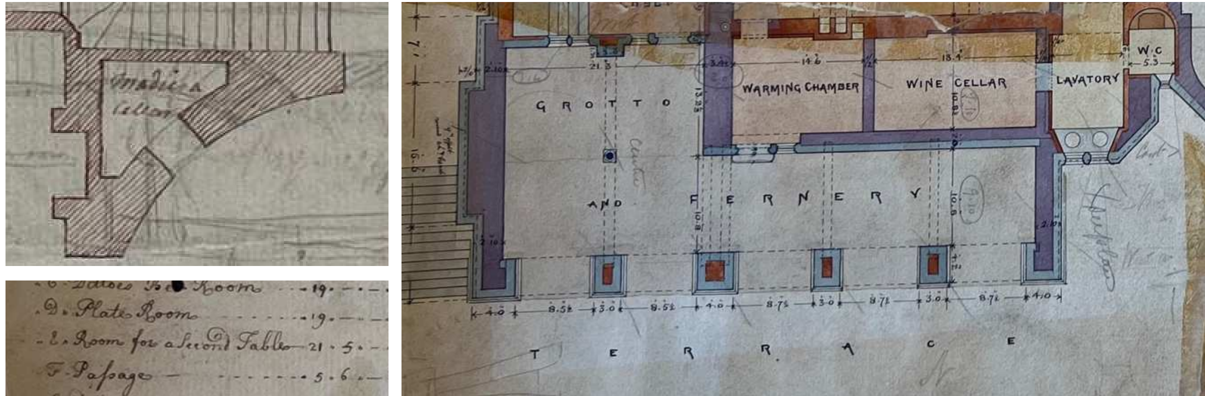

Figure 27. Details of the plans for Slane Castle A, Dunboy Castle, and Carton House (clockwise from top left) showing some unusual room names, courtesy of the IAA.

Several plans have rooms allocated for the cleaning of boots and shoes, and a couple have rooms specifically for knives or knives and forks, instead of or in addition to the more commonly found plate room. Two architects, interestingly enough, combined the two, as we find a "Boots & Knives" room at Humewood Castle, Co. Wicklow, and a small "Shoes & Knives" room tucked under a staircase at Old Conna Hill House, Co. Dublin. In a relatively small basement such as at Old Conna Hill House, combining two usually separated functions makes sense, but in the Victorian Humewood Castle, where most departments within the basement are characterized by separate rooms for everything task, this combination stands out. Perhaps this combination has to do with the tools used for each type of object, if they were similar, or the person who was in charge of both, if it was the same. Kerr mentions both knife-rooms and shoe-rooms but gives no indication that the two might be combined, while Hardyment only describes knife rooms, omitting any mention of shoe or boot cleaning.[244]

[244] Kerr, *The Gentleman's House*, 279; Hardyment, *Behind the Scenes*, 35–36.

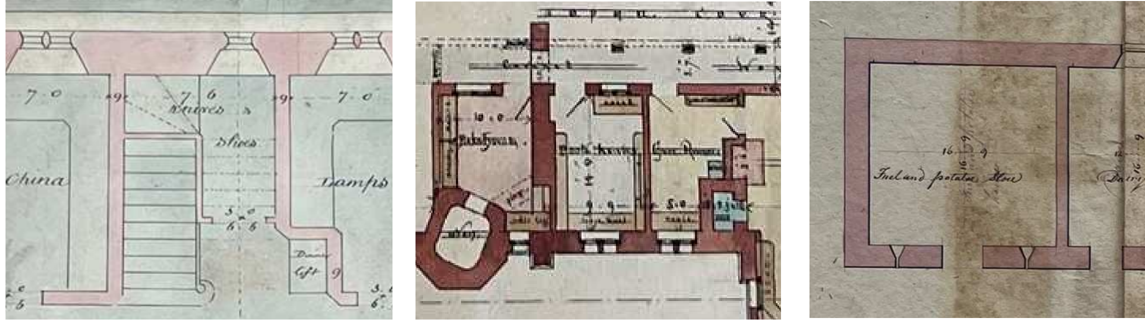

Figure 28. Details of Old Conna Hill House, Humewood Castle, and Durrow Abbey, showing unusual room combinations, courtesy of the IAA.

Another curious combination is the "Fuel and Potato Store" at Durrow Abbey, Co. Offaly. This is the only instance in the sample where food and fuel are stored together, and suggests either that space was limited on this particular plan or that whatever fuel would be used at this house could be stored in the same room as potatoes without negatively affecting them. Pointing out unique combinations of rooms, such as cleaning knives and boots in the same space or storing potatoes and fuel together, suggests that architects were aware of the varied needs of country houses in terms of workspaces and storage spaces and how they endeavoured to provide a place for everything even when there might not have been space for everything.

Examples of Separation and Innovation

In addition to providing data on the numbers and types of rooms placed within Irish country house basements, the sample of plans can be analyzed individually to demonstrate the physical representations of certain concepts or themes discussed in the introduction. One major theme relevant to country houses that is barely touched upon in this thesis but would benefit greatly from a more thorough study of architectural drawings is that of gendered separation. In existing literature, the physical division of space into gendered rooms has been widely discussed in terms of rooms on the family floors, but little scholarly attention has been paid to the similar

division within spaces designated for servant use.[245] The floor plans collected for this thesis alone could be used to produce some very interesting research about the ways in which servants of different sexes were kept separate through the physical arrangement of the houses where they worked. For example, the bedrooms designated for female and male staff on the plan for Charleville Castle B are on opposite sides of the courtyard, seen in Figure 29 below. Similarly, an entire side of the Lissadell House B plan is comprised of female spaces, while the few rooms designated for men, which all seem to be for work rather than sleeping, are placed in the centre of the house with doors that do not open onto the corridor outside the female-coded rooms. These plans, dated 1797 and 1870, show that separation of the sexes within the community of servants existed long before the Victorian era, which is when some scholars note its proliferation.[246]

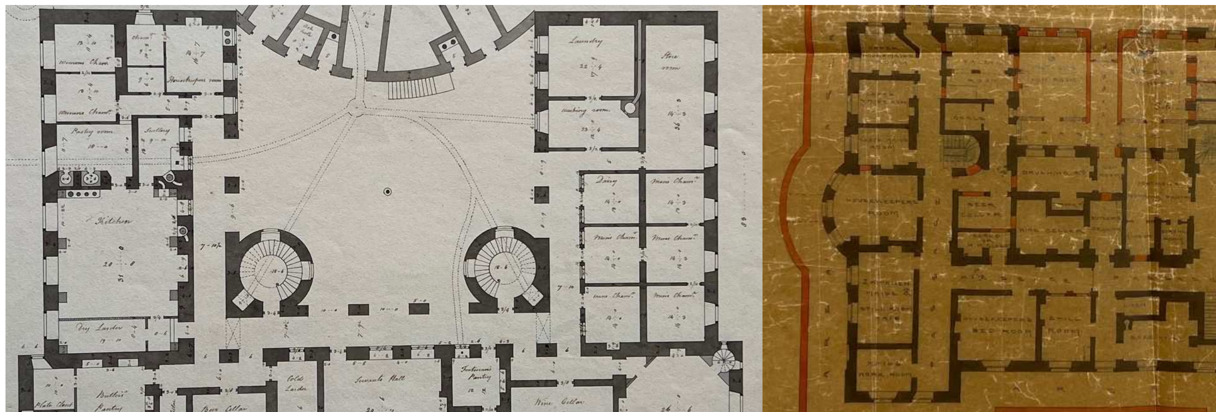

Figure 29. Details of the Charleville Castle B and Lissadell House B plans, showing the gendered division of rooms, courtesy of the IAA, the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the PRONI, and Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth.

An interesting example of how staircases fit into the privacy between servants and the family is seen in the plans for Humewood Castle, Co. Wicklow, where a ground-floor wing of seven bedrooms and one w.c. is physically separated from the nursery wing and the main part of

[245] See, for example, O'Brien and Guinness, *Great Irish Houses*; Musson, *How to Read a Country House*; Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*.
[246] Girouard, *The Victorian Country House*, 20; O'Brien and Guinness, *Great Irish Houses*, 186.

the ground floor, only accessible by a staircase leading up from the basement. This ensures privacy for the servants, but also means that servants sleeping in these rooms but working on the main part of the ground floor would have to traverse two flights of stairs to move between rooms that are physically quite close together. The architect has, at least, put some thought into minimizing this inefficiency for the servants who worked in the nursery wing, where he has included a room for a nursery-maid.

Figure 30. Detail of the ground floor plan of Humewood Castle, showing the servants' wing only accessible via the basement and the nursery wing, which is attached to the main part of the ground floor but also has access to the basement, courtesy of the IAA.

A form of technological innovation that can be found on the plans is in the inclusion of lifts at Bessborough House, Humewood Castle, Lissadell House B, and Old Conna Hill House. While none of these were large enough to carry humans, they allowed for easier movement of food, luggage, and other objects from the basement to the floors above. All of these plans are from the

second half of the nineteenth century or the first quarter of the twentieth century, demonstrating a clear adoption of new technologies within Irish country houses. Interestingly, none of the lifts are within the kitchen — on the Humewood Castle plan it is just outside the kitchen, while at Bessborough House it is in the lobby adjacent to the kitchen. On Lissadell House B and Old Conna Hill House, however, the lifts are down the corridor from the kitchen; this might suggest that they were primarily used for transporting other things, except that the latter is specifically labelled as "Dinner Lift." Perhaps the locations of these lifts are instead related to the placement of the dining room on the floor above.

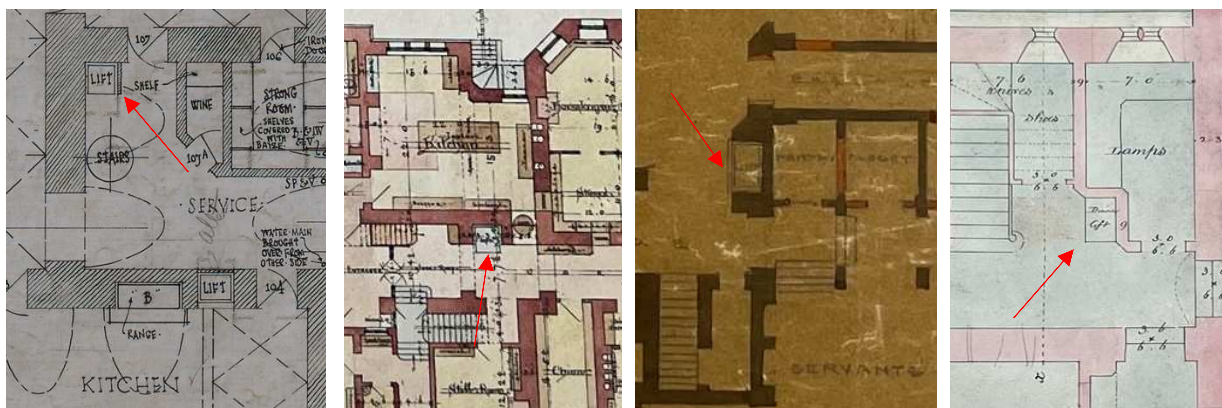

Figure 31. Details of the plans for Bessborough House, Humewood Castle, Lissadell House B, and Old Conna Hill House, indicating the locations of the lifts, courtesy of RIBA Collections, the IAA, the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the PRONI, and Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth.

Conclusion

In this chapter, this thesis turned its focus to the floor plans depicted in the sample to investigate how the considerations presented in the previous chapter manifested in Irish country house basement design between the 1730s and 1925. The analysis and results from this chapter are relevant to not only architectural historians but also anyone using a "history from below" approach to studying country houses. The documents about the servants who worked at country houses, Irish or otherwise, that were created and are available for modern scholars to use were,

for the most part, written by (and for) the upper classes.[247] While floor plans are not necessarily an exception to this, they have the advantage of providing valuable information about servants indirectly.

Members of the upper classes who left evidence about the lower classes for historians to study usually did so in a way that was biased, which must be taken into account. Textual sources that mention individual servants by name, such as letters, are much more personal and subjective than four lines drawn on a large sheet of paper that indicate where that servant was to sleep. Scholars working with such sources need to be aware of personal and societal biases in a way that scholars working with architectural plans do not. Though architects might carry the same biases, they rarely knew the servants for whom they were designing spaces personally. In sketching out the locations of the walls that would contain the lives of servants, architects were thinking of them in very different ways than, for example, the owner of a house or the author of a manual on domestic service, and the audiences of their work was different too.

Architectural drawings may not name servants individually or provide information on what their day-to-day lives were like, but by depicting the spaces they spent time in they provide a foundation for understanding where those lives took place. This is important because human lives are experienced in space — the recipes in cookbooks were followed in a kitchen, the chairs written in an inventory were arranged within a room, and any documents written by servants were likely done so in the privacy that walls and a door provided them. Nothing comes closer to sharing an experience with people from the past than existing in the same physical space that they did, standing on the same floor, seeing by the same light, and feeling the same cold air pressing in from concrete walls, and we are lucky that enough country house basements still exist

[247] Elton, Harrison, and Wark, *Researching the Country House,* 130.

in Ireland that such a connection with the servants who lived and worked in those spaces can be felt. Outside of the tactical experience that material culture can give us, however, architectural drawings are the best way to understand the spatial aspect of the lives of those servants.

Conclusion

The dearth of literature on basement levels within the scholarship on country houses in Ireland and the United Kingdom represents a significant gap that this thesis addresses through the use of architectural drawings. The research presented here is but a preliminary example of the work that can be done with floor plans and of the information that can be discovered about country houses through studying them either as material objects or as documents that emphasize the visual rather than the textual.

As objects, architectural drawings can be used to trace the evolution of architecture as a profession, providing information such as the writing implements and quality of paper used; the standardization or lack thereof of the number and types of drawings prepared for clients; their purpose in terms of who they were made for, how much they were handled, and the level of detail they convey; and their potential value to the architects or clients who took care to maintain their quality (or not), and who facilitated their journey to an archive or repository. All of these details provide evidence in the form of tangible documents about the careers and works of the architects who are responsible for the built environment of Ireland or other nations. Historians can also use these drawings to study the architects themselves, not only to collect or confirm information about their careers, but also to better understand them, their habits and idiosyncrasies, their thoughts, and the effort they put into their work.

As textual documents that are also highly visual in nature, floor plans and other architectural drawings complicate the types of sources historians often use. Unlike letters, account books, inventories, or other written documents that provide information about the people who designed, commissioned, and lived and worked in country houses, architectural drawings bring a spatial element that is key to understanding how people in the past experienced the

world. The size of the rooms that a housekeeper spent her time in, whether or not a lady had to cross paths with her maid on the stairs, how far the food had to travel to get from the kitchen to the dining room table, and whether or not an architect had the foresight to design the vault off of the butler's personal room so that he could keep an eye on the household's valuables might not be indicated in any text-based sources but definitely impacted the day-to-day lives of those individuals. While many of the country houses depicted in architectural drawings are still extant, many of them have been altered over the centuries and some no longer exist, meaning that often the drawings are the best or only source on the spatial experience of those who lived and worked in these buildings.

Especially in the Irish context, many country houses were destroyed during the Irish revolutionary period in the early twentieth century, including Bessborough House, Dunboy Castle, and Roxborough Castle, usually because they were being used as bases for the British army or in retaliation for damage done by the army.[248] More generally, Irish country houses faced neglect and apathy during the twentieth century, resulting in many of them falling into decay or ruin. This was largely because the relationship between Irish people and the country houses built in Ireland, which were usually owned and occupied by Anglo-Irish families, has historically been a tumultuous one, and justifiably so. Starting in the 1980s, however, "the habit of regarding the products of Ascendancy culture as un-Irish began to loosen its grip" and be replaced by a growing feeling of acceptance of these houses as part of Ireland's built heritage and of understanding that though the landlords might not have been Irish, often the architect, the builders, and the servants who worked at the house were.[249] Discussing the nationality of the architects who drew the plans in the sample has largely been beyond the scope of this thesis, but

[248] Dooley, *The Burning of the Big House*.
[249] Judith Hill, "The Conservation of Irish Houses 1984–2004," *Irish Arts Review* 21, no. 3 (2004): 78.

several of them were born in Ireland and worked primarily there. The design work completed by architects such as Francis and Richard Johnston, Sir Richard Morrison, William Murray, John Pentland, and William Lynn for country houses that still stand today is a testament to the Irish talent in the world of architecture.

As key sources on the architectural and social histories of country houses that provide unique information to scholars, floor plans such as those used in this thesis could be used for many avenues of further research. Architectural historians, such as Dana Arnold and Clive Aslet, could use the basement-level plans of country houses to provide depth and concrete data on the topics of servant spaces and servant lives within country houses in Britain and Ireland. These plans depict the literal foundations of the houses, and the feats of design and planning required to fit all of the necessary offices while maintaining usability, if not striving for efficiency, far surpasses anything happening on the upper floors in terms of complexity. And yet, existing scholarship shows a clear bias towards the spaces within country houses designed for family and guest use rather than any spaces designed for servants. This bias likely has to do with class and also with the availability and accessibility of sources that provide information on the lesser-documented working classes. However, this thesis has proven that publicly available sources that can be used to write about these spaces exist and are waiting to be accessed by cultural and social historians interested in filling in the gaps created by these biases. In the future, architecturally focused scholars should step off the principal staircase and tread upon the backstairs, which were often more plentiful and better used, to investigate the spaces that allowed for the functioning of these great houses and how the architects who planned them facilitated the interpersonal relationships within. While the form of country houses has generally been of more interest than their function, architects paid more attention to the function of basements and outer offices than

their form, making these spaces key in any discussion of form vs. function relating to these buildings or indeed to the general evolution of this architectural theory over time.

Floor plans can also add a key spatial element to the work of social historians, helping to pull together the entire story of the country house and its inhabitants. Increasingly, scholars who approach "history from below" acknowledge the fact that the lives of the upper classes, such as the families who owned and lived in country houses, were made possible by a proportionally larger community of people who have traditionally been left out of the history books. Anyone writing a social history about a particular country house, or country houses in a particular era, would be remiss not to include description of the work performed by servants so that the family could get dressed, eat, entertain, play, work, and live — work that often took place in the basement. Looking at floor plans allows for a better understanding of where that work happened and where the daily paths that servants walked took place. Landlords in Ireland were known for their hospitality and the large number of staff they maintained to support their lavish lifestyles, making this avenue of research especially promising in the Irish context.[250]

The limited scope of this thesis demonstrates several key avenues for future research using the plans in this sample and others. For example, the nationality of the architects has not been discussed, but could be examined to compare with the work done on Irish country houses by architects from England, Ireland, and Scotland. A more general survey cataloguing whether the country houses across Ireland — perhaps using the houses included Bence-Jones' *A Guide to Irish Country Houses* as a starting point — were or were not built with a basement level would produce interesting data that could reveal geographical and geological patterns. Further analysis

[250] McCarthy, *Life in the Irish Country House*, 4.

also could be conducted on the size, relative location, and cardinal location of rooms within country house basements, as these topics have been touched upon here only briefly.

Let this thesis serve as a call not only to scholars who should be giving these sources and these spaces more attention, but also to the archivists and curators who control access to these objects. The size of the sample demonstrates that many original architectural drawings for Irish country houses are available in public archives, but more could be done to publicize their availability and usefulness. Although the materiality of these documents — their physical properties — can be key for research discussing them as historical objects, scholars using architectural drawings as textual/visual sources could benefit greatly from high-quality digital scans. While some of the plans in this sample have been uploaded in a digital format on the online catalogue of the IAA and through the RIBApix website, such as Headfort House A, Co. Meath, and Muckross House, Co. Kerry, they are not necessarily legible or all available for public consultation.[251] Those working at public archives or who have architectural drawings of country houses in a less-accessible repository could facilitate scholarly interest on the topic of their servant spaces by making such documents available to researchers digitally. More scholarly interest and any resulting research will help close the gap between existing scholarship on the spaces that servants inhabited within country houses and the clear interest in them shown by the general public.

People have always loved visiting country houses — the tourism surrounding them has roots in the Georgian era when upper– and middle–class "tourists" would visit manors still occupied by their owners.[252] The modern fascination with the relationships between upper-class

[251] The IAA's catalogue can be found at https://iaa-apw.adlibhosting.com/ais6/home and RIBApix at https://www.ribapix.com.
[252] Goodrich, "Introduction," 16.

families and their lower-class servants, as seen in the popularity of shows such as *Downton Abbey*, is increasingly being reflected within country house tourism. Oliver Cox, writing on the wide-reaching effects of this particular show, quotes its creator who in 2012 said that "years ago, when these houses were shown … you saw the drawing rooms and the libraries and the ballrooms and the picture galleries, but the [National] Trust particularly would take over all the kitchens and ancillary rooms for their offices," but that "that is out of date now."[253] Instead of being seen as solely upper-class homes, country houses are now viewed as more complex and complete spaces, making them more relatable to visitors. Cox notes an early example of the servants' quarters being a major aspect of a tour at Erdigg Hall in England starting in 1977, a trend that has grown increasingly popular, reflecting the fact that these areas, "which require the least amount of prior knowledge for meaningful interpretation and engagement by the public, tend to experience the longest visitor dwelling times."[254]

An Irish example of the servants' quarters and offices being incorporated into guided tours is at Strokestown Park House, Co. Roscommon. Nuala C. Johnson wrote in 1996 that during the tour "the spatial division of labor between landlord and servant classes is highlighted through a discussion of the underground passageways" and that "the final section of the tour is set in the dining room and galleried kitchen."[255] At Newbridge House, Co. Dublin, which "possesses one of the most unaltered series of servants' rooms" in Irish country houses today, some of the basement rooms are used as offices by the staff, while others, including the housekeeper's room, the servants' hall, and the kitchen, have been set up to resemble what they might have looked like when they were in use by the staff running the household in previous centuries. These

[253] Cox, "The Downton Boom," 115.
[254] Cox, 116
[255] Nuala C. Johnson, "Where Geography and History Meet: Heritage Tourism and the Big House in Ireland," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 86, no. 3 (1996): 562.

examples demonstrate that the basements of Irish country houses are increasingly being incorporated into country house tourism, making their part in country house life visible to visitors. Using floor plans, this thesis has aimed to do the same to these spaces in the academic world.

The basements of Irish country houses matter because they were an integral part of the communities that lived and worked in these architecturally and historically significant buildings. The families who owned these country houses could not have lived the well-documented and well-studied lives that they did without the daily labour carried out by dozens of servants in the spaces designed for them "down below" by architects. Focusing on the moment between an idea and the built reality that is represented by floor plans, this thesis has shown the usefulness of visual sources when studying these spaces. Architects thought a great deal about the spatial needs of those who ran "the big house," and we should, too.

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Carton House: 96/68.2/1/8
Castle Bernard: 96/68.5/3/1
Castle Coole A, B, C, D: 32/40R57;62;61;43
Castle Dillon A, B, C: 92/46.144;146;151
Charleville Castle A, B: 86/24.10–16
Cloncarneel House: 92/46.210
Corbalton Hall: 92/46.227
Crum Castle A: 92/46.270
Dunboy Castle: 95/149–1
Durrow Abbey: 92/46.842
Farnham House: 92/46.852
Headfort House A, B, C,: 92/46.879 ; 96/68.3/1/2 ; 96/68.3/1/6
Howth Castle: 2024/14.2/2/2
Humewood Castle: 92/47
Killeen Castle: 92/46.904
Markree Castle: 92/46.943
Mote Park: 82/49.33/1
Old Conna Hill House: 92/46.975
Roxborough Castle: 92/46.995
Slane Castle A, B: 92/46.1110;1111
St. Catherine's House: 92/46.1074

Public Records Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast, Northern Ireland

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Appendices

Appendix A: Kerr's Classification

House	Kitchen Offices	Upper Servants' Offices	Lower Servants' Offices	Laundry Offices	Bakery & Brewery Offices	Cellars, Storage, & Outhouses	Servants' Private Rooms	Supplementaries & Thoroughfares	Other	Total:
Ballycurry House A	4	0	0	0	0	3	0	4	0	**15**
Ballycurry House B	3	3	1	0	0	1.5	0.5	2	0	**11**
Ballycurry House C	2	3	1	1	0	2	2	4	0	**15**
Bessborough House	6	5	3	0	0	9	1	20	0	**44**
Brownlow Castle	1	1	2	0	0	4	0	12	0	**20**
Carton House	0	3	2	0	0	5	4	5	0	**19**
Castle Bernard	3	7	3	0	0	4	3	8	0	**28**
Castle Coole A	2	6	2	0	0	4	4	5	1	**24**
Castle Coole B	4	6	3	0	0	3	5	7	5	**33**
Castle Coole C	4	5	2	0	0	3	6	8	5	**33**
Castle Coole D	4	1	1	0	0	2	1	2	0	**11**
Castle Dillon A	6	3	2	2	1	5	0	6	2	**27**
Castle Dillon B	4	5	1	0	1	4	0	5	3	**23**
Castle Dillon C	4	4	1	0	1	9	2	6	1	**28**
Castlewellan Castle	2	0	2	0	0	7	0	13	8	**32**
Charleville Castle A	8	2	2	2	0	2	5	4	0	**25**
Charleville Castle B	6	6	2	2	0	6	8	13	1	**44**
Cloncarneel House	4	2	2	0	0	3	1	2	0	**14**
Corbalton Hall	2	2	5	0	0	0	0	5	3	**17**
Crum Castle A	7	6	3	0	1	9	0	12	9	**47**
Crum Castle B	6	12	3	0	0	13	4	15	2	**55**

House	Kitchen Offices	Upper Servants' Offices	Lower Servants' Offices	Laundry Offices	Bakery & Brewery Offices	Cellars, Storage, & Outhouses	Servants' Private Rooms	Supplementaries & Thoroughfares	Other	Total:
Dunboy Castle	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	8	0	**10**
Durrow Abbey	4	5	1	0	0	3	0	5	0	**18**
Farnham House	0	3	2	0	0	5	1	10	0	**21**
Headfort House A	0	2	1	0	0	5	5	9	1	**23**
Headfort House B	4	2	1	0	0	4	5	14	0	**30**
Headfort House C	0	5	1	0	0	5	4	6	1	**22**
Howth Castle	5	5	5	0	0	9	2	13	5	**44**
Humewood Castle	7	8	8	7	2	8	1	26	1	**68**
Killeen Castle	3	3	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	**11**
Lissadell House A	7	6	6	1	0	7	4	11	1	**43**
Lissadell House B	6	7	5	2	1	10	4	20	0	**55**
Markree Castle	4	10	2	0	0	7	2	10	0	**35**
Mote Park	0	3	1	0	0	1	3	2	2	**12**
Mount Stewart	3	3	5	3	1	7	0	11	1	**34**
Muckross House	8	6	1	2	0	12	4	17	2	**52**
Old Conna Hill House	5	1	3	0	0	5	1	7	0	**22**
Portaferry House A	3	2	3	0	0	5	0	7	0	**20**
Portaferry House B	1	2	2	0	0	2	0	4	0	**11**
Roxborough Castle	3	0	0	2	0	3	4	8	6	**26**
Slane Castle A	1	5	0	0	0	2	0	3	2	**13**
Slane Castle B	5	2	1	0	0	4	0	11	2	**25**
St. Catherine's House	2	1	1	0	0	2	3	7	0	**16**
Total:	**153**	**163**	**94**	**24**	**8**	**205.5**	**89.5**	**370**	**65**	**1172**

Note: Where a room is given two labels as options for its use, that room has been counted as 0.5 of a room for each of the respective categories. An extra category has been added for "family rooms," i.e., rooms in the basement not relating to the servants' department.

Appendix B: The Plans

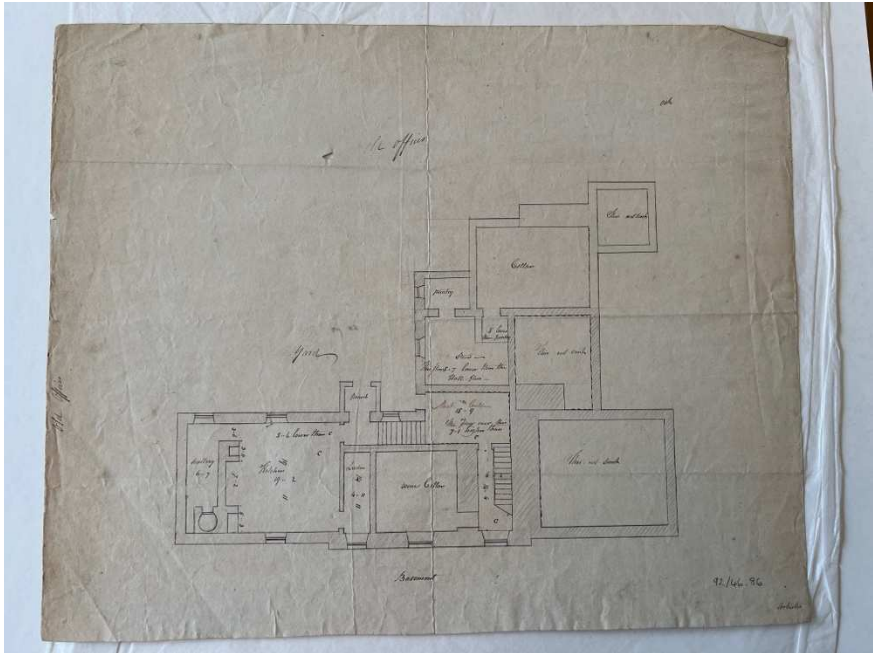

Image 1. Ballycurry House A, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the Irish Architectural Archive (IAA).

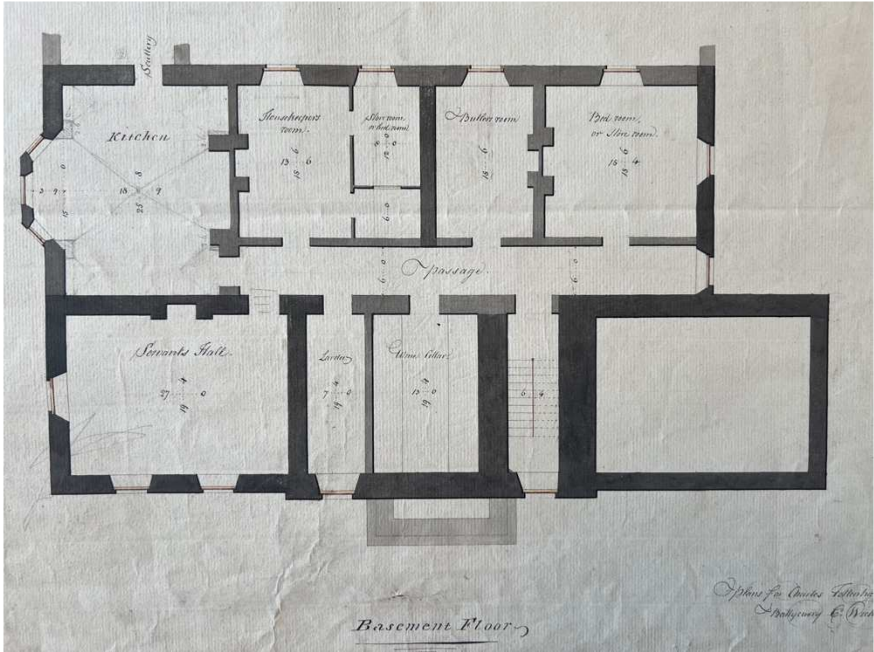

Image 2. Ballycurry House B, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

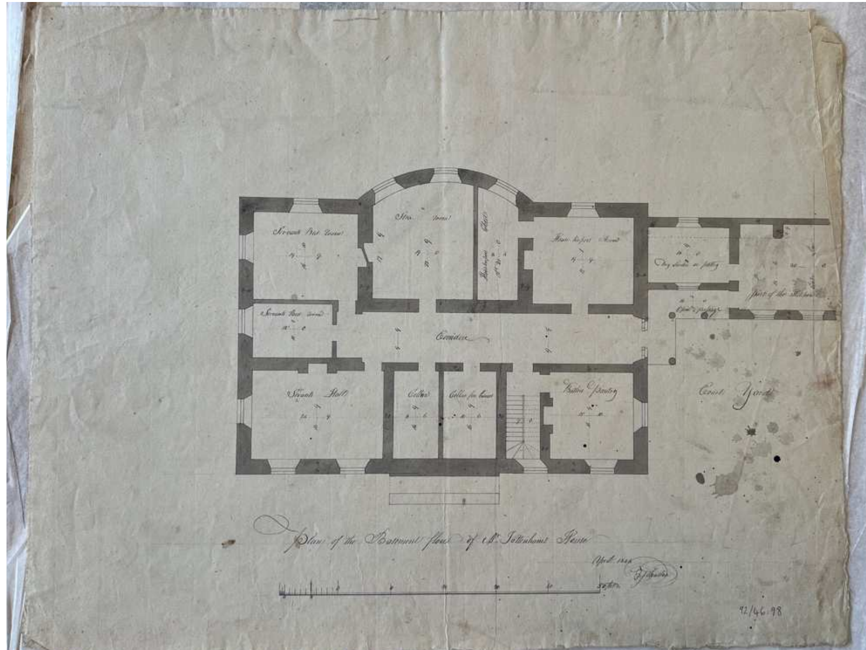

Image 3. Ballycurry House C, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

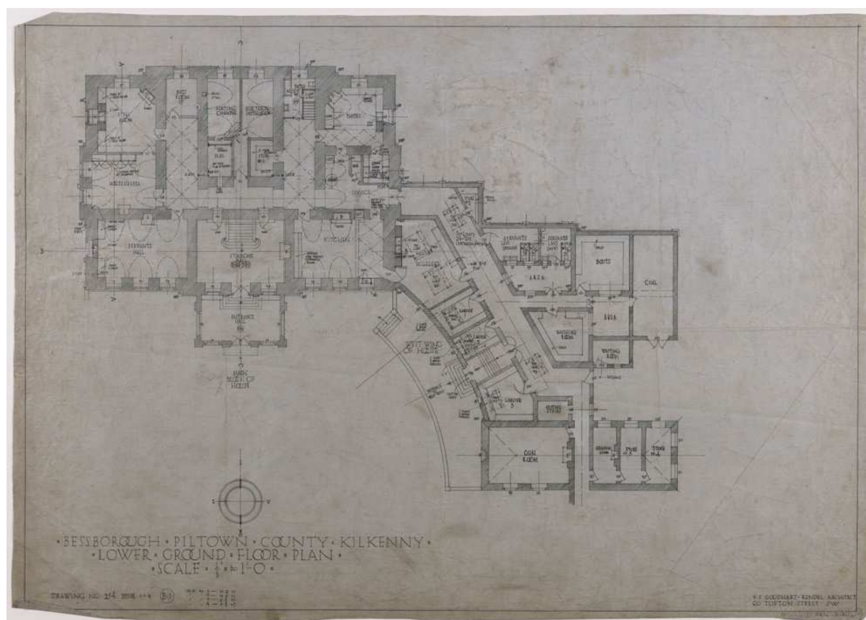

Image 4. Bessborough House, courtesy of RIBA Collections.

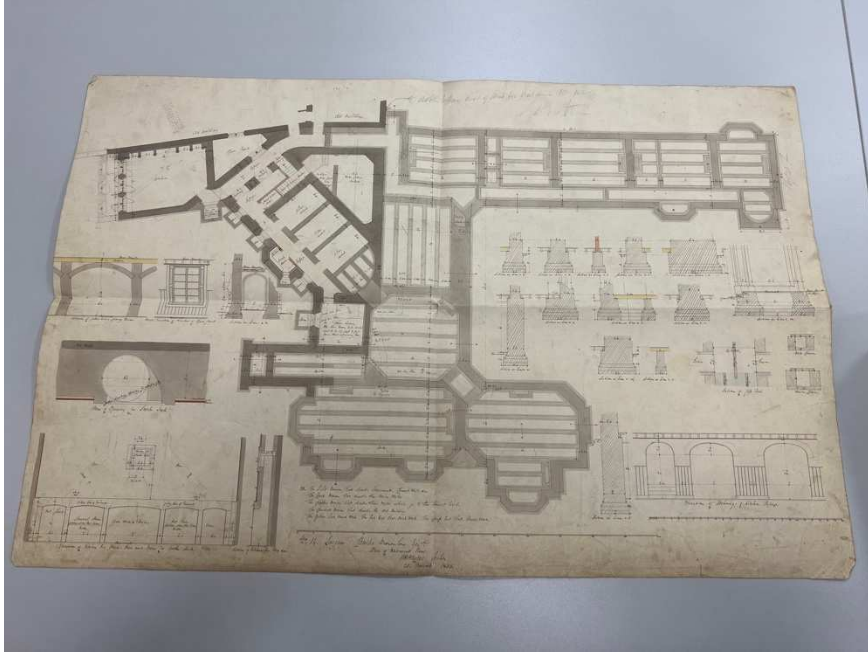

Image 5. Brownlow Castle, D1928 Brownlow Papers, reproduced with permission from the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI).

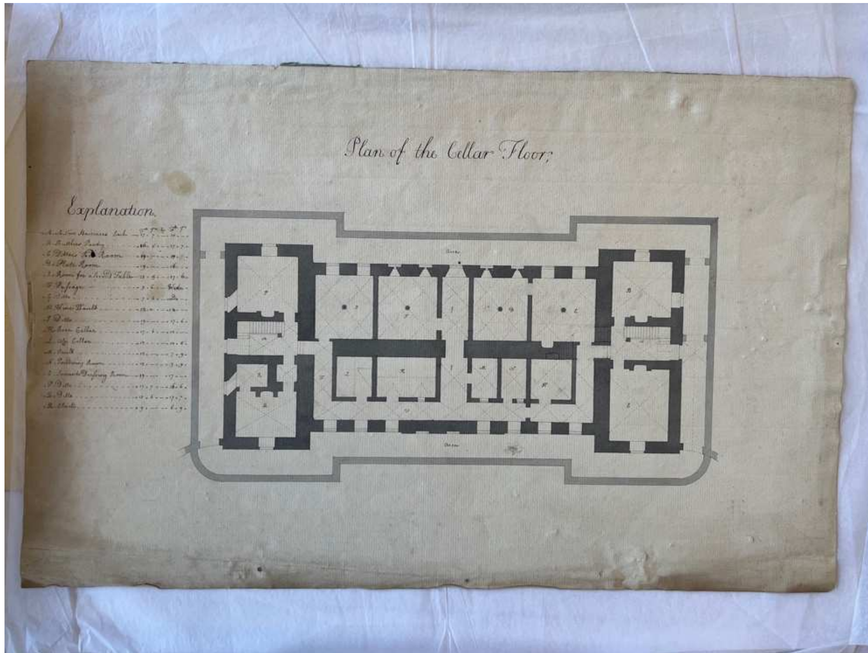

Image 6. Carton House, Guinness Drawings Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

Image 7. Castle Bernard, Guinness Drawings Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

Image 8. Castle Coole A, reproduced with permission from Lord Belmore.

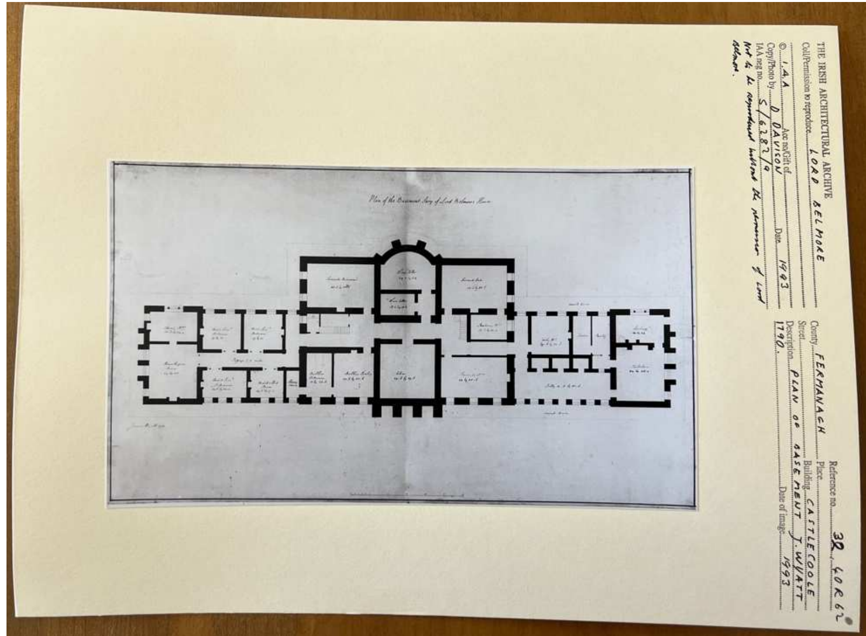

Image 9. Castle Coole B, reproduced with permission from Lord Belmore.

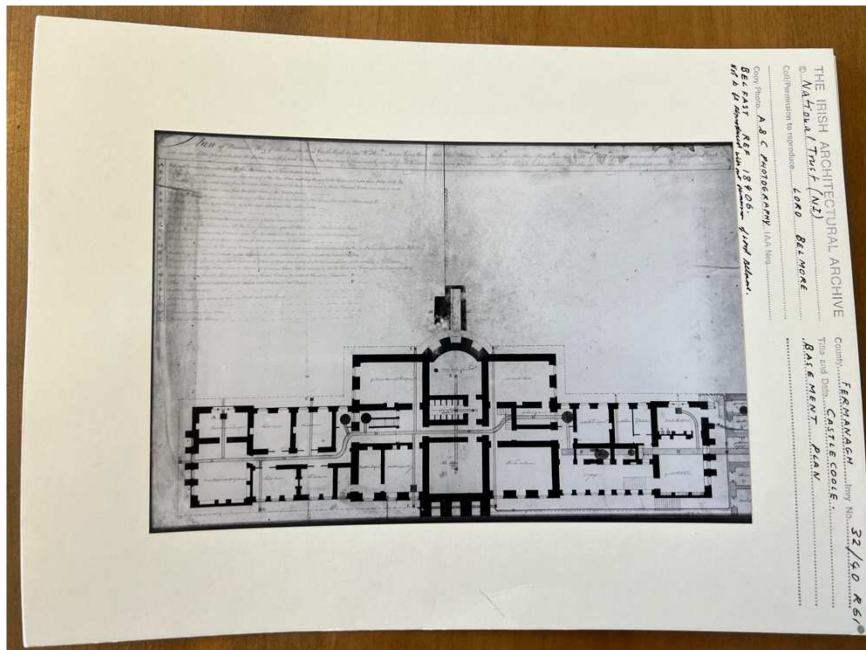

Image 10. Castle Coole C, reproduced with permission from Lord Belmore.

Image 11. Castle Coole D, reproduced with permission from Lord Belmore.

Image 12. Castle Dillon A, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

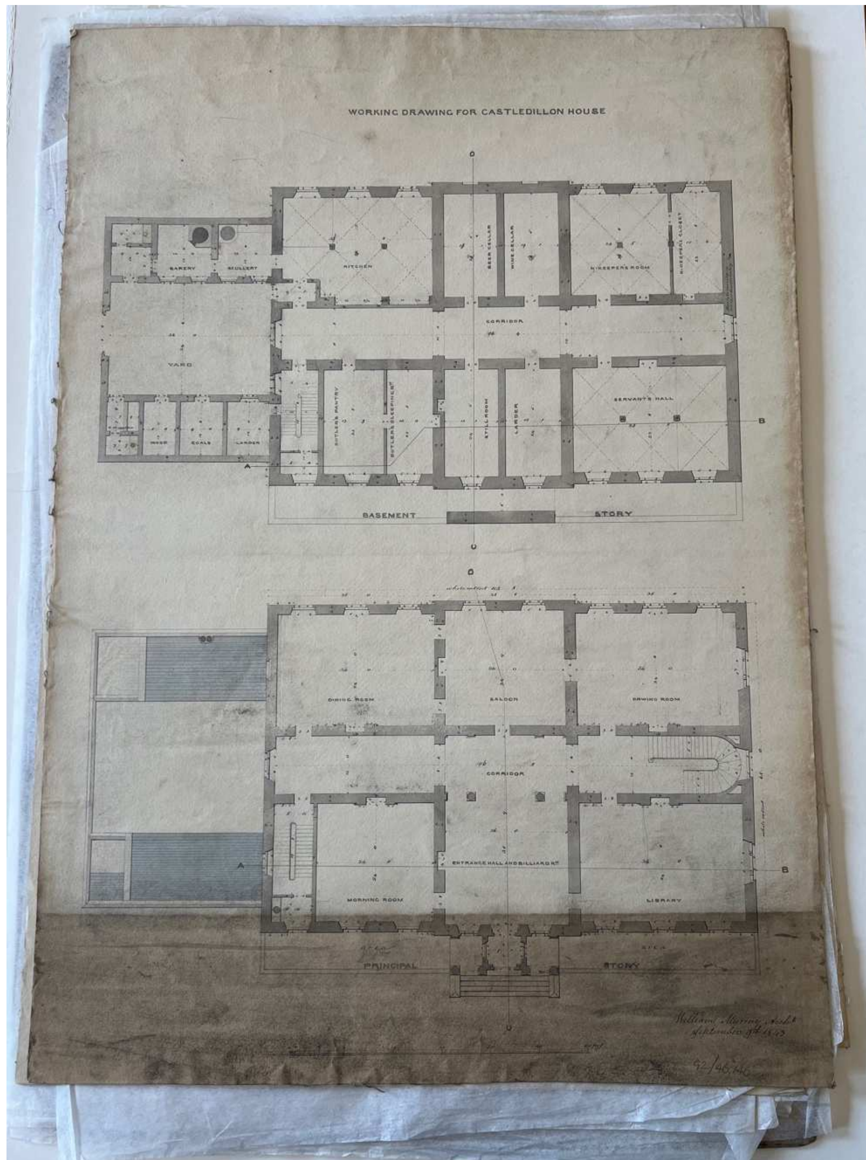

Image 13. Castle Dillon B, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

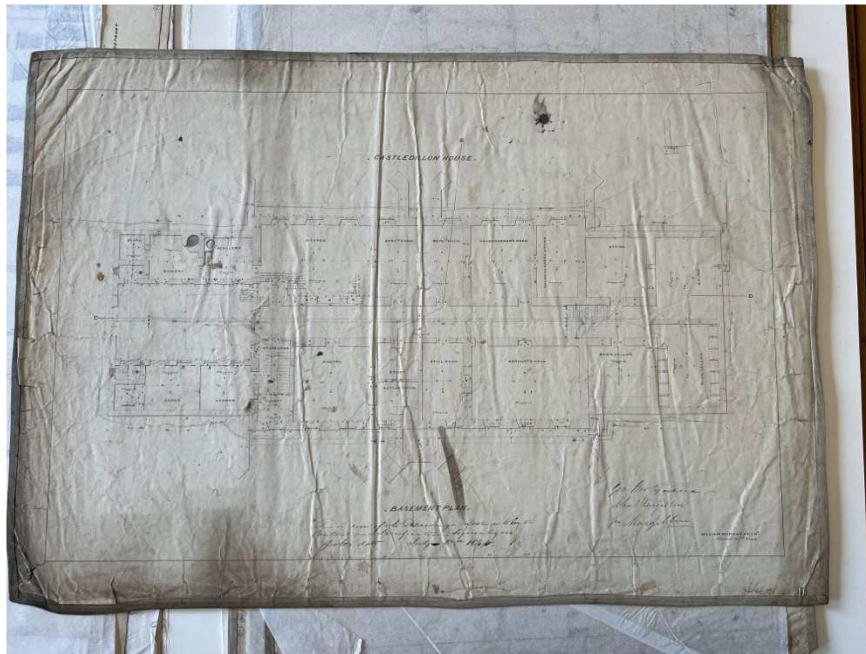

Image 14. Castle Dillon C, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

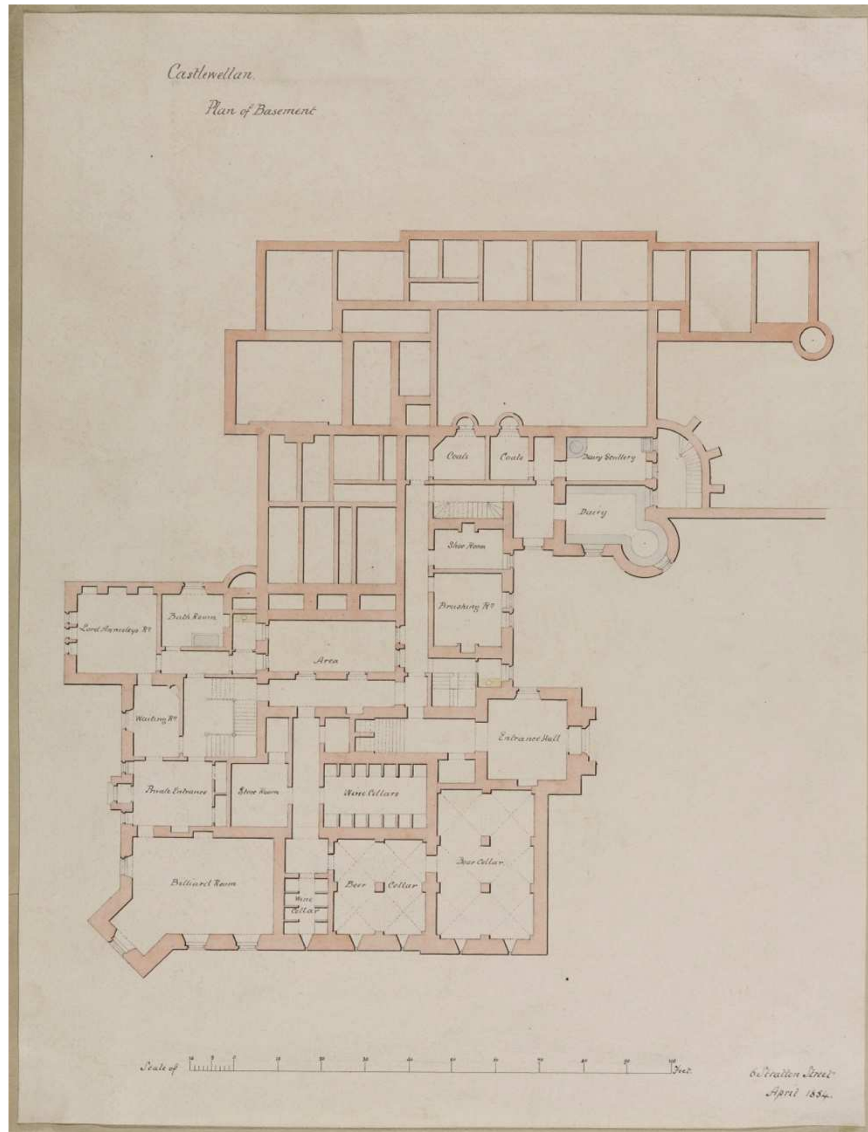

Image 15. Castlewellan Castle, courtesy of RIBA Collections.

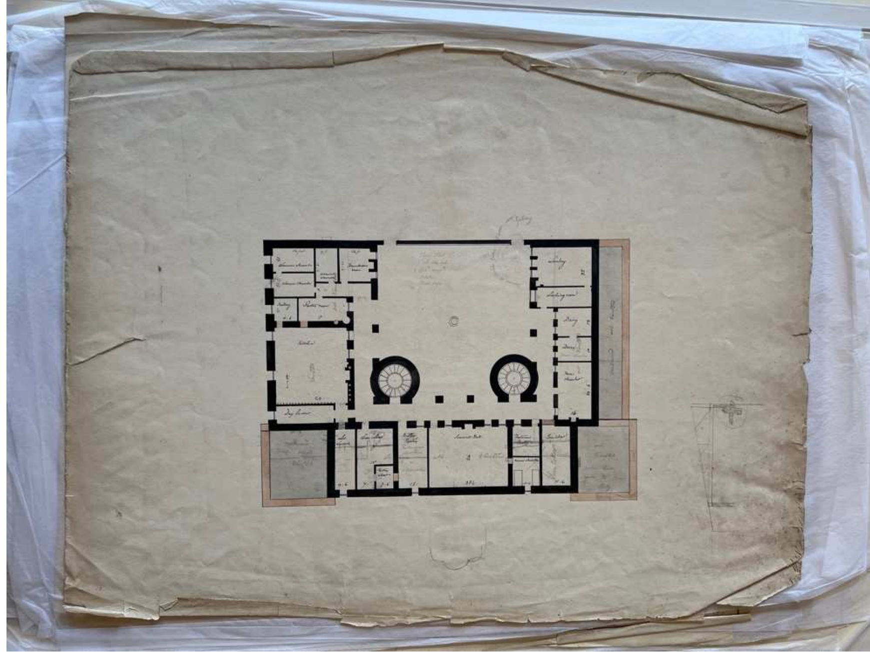

Image 16. Charleville Castle A, Charleville Castle Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

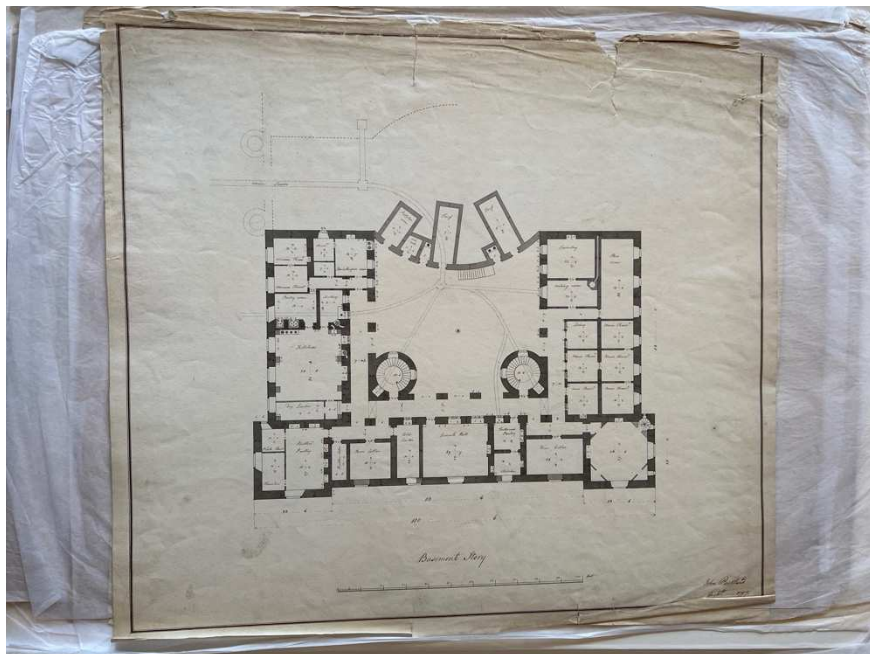

Image 17. Charleville Castle B, Charleville Castle Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

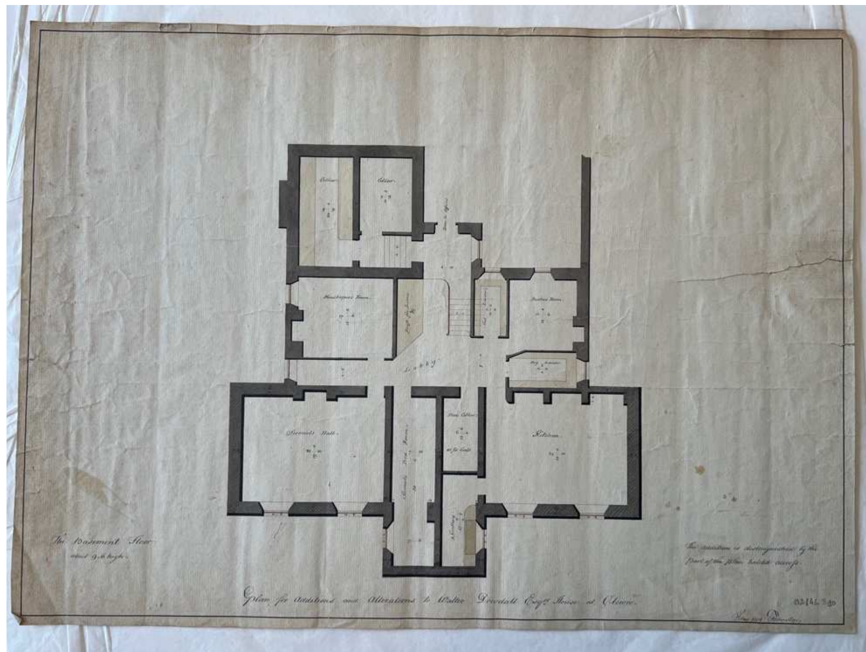

Image 18. Cloncarneel House, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

Image 19. Corbalton Hall, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

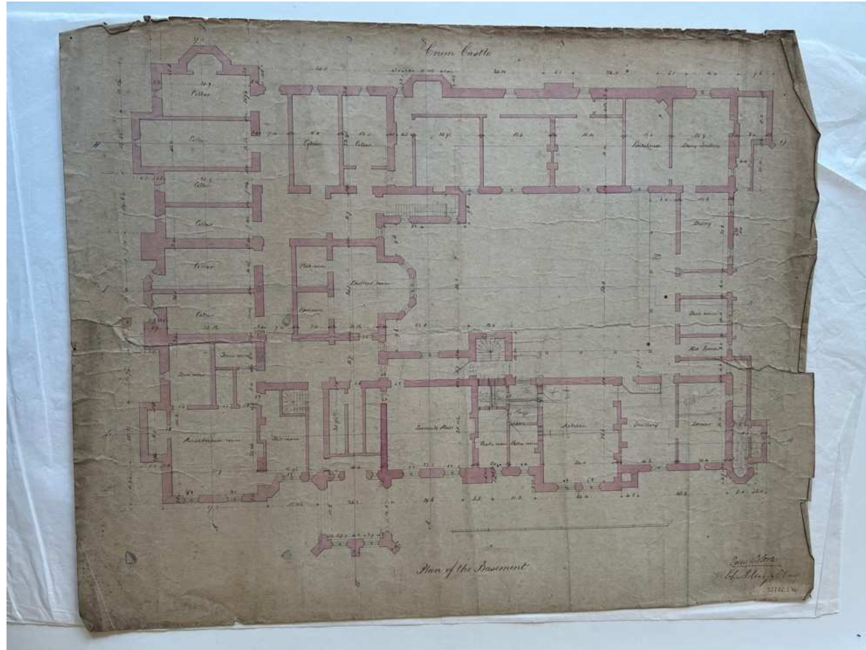

Image 20. Crum Castle A, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

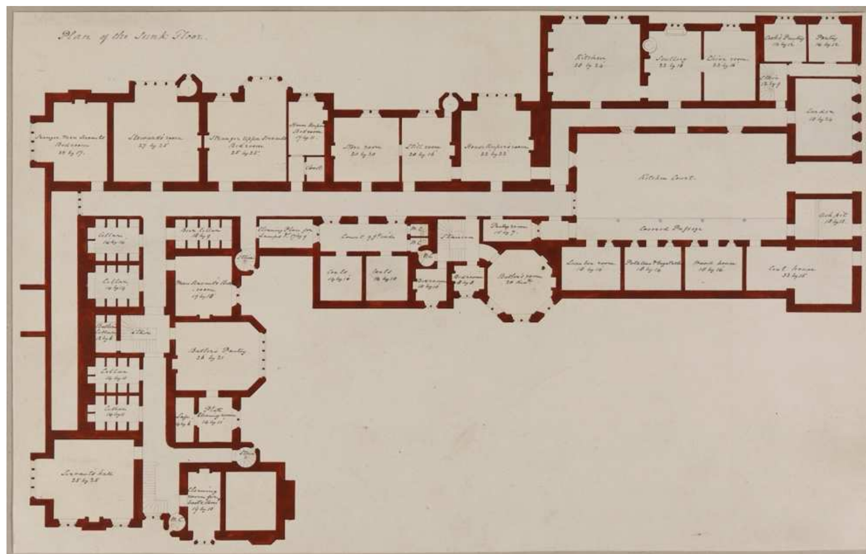

Image 21. Crum Castle B, courtesy of RIBA Collections.

Image 22. Dunboy Castle, Dunboy Castle Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

Image 23. Durrow Abbey, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

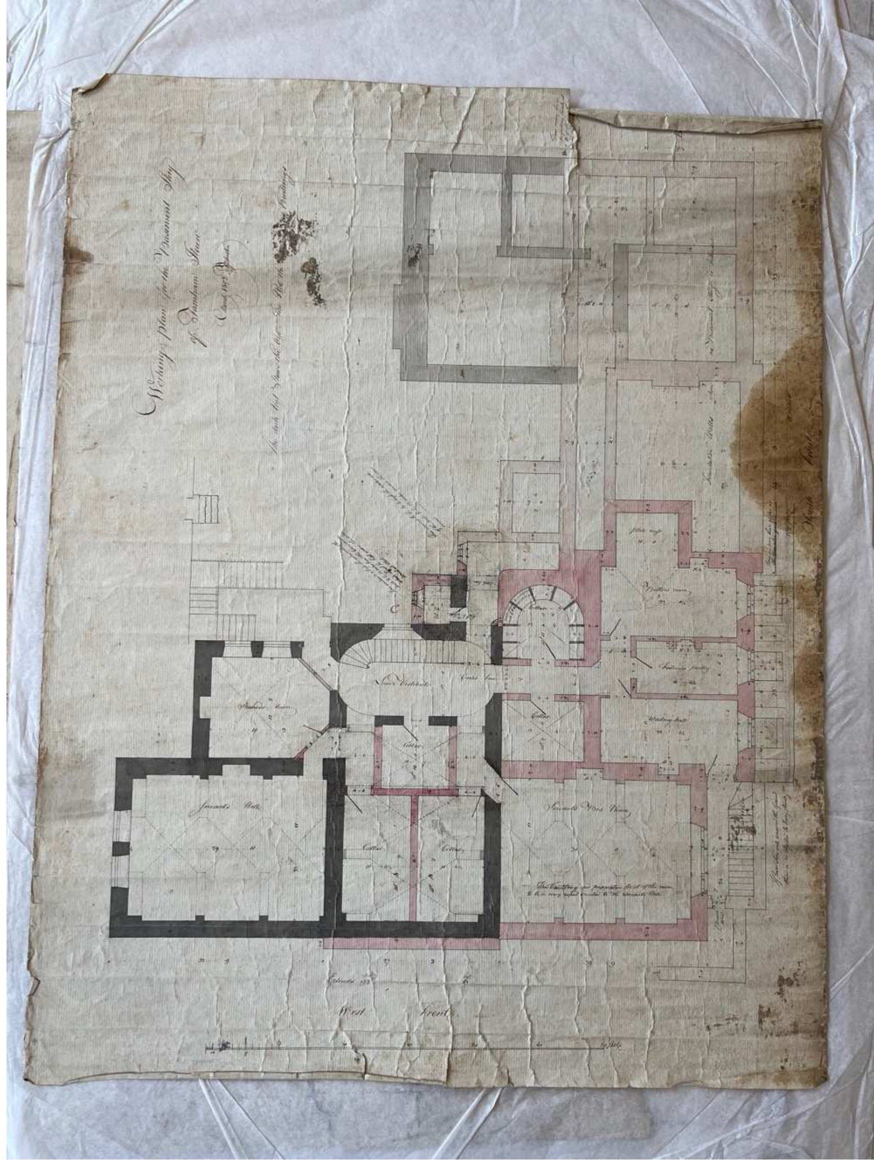

Image 24. Farnham House, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

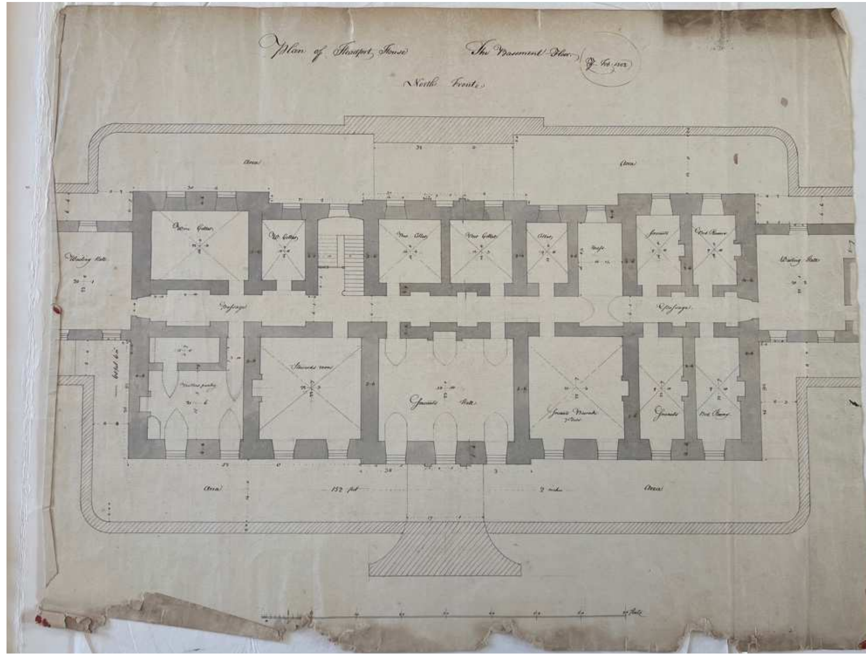

Image 25. Headfort House A, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

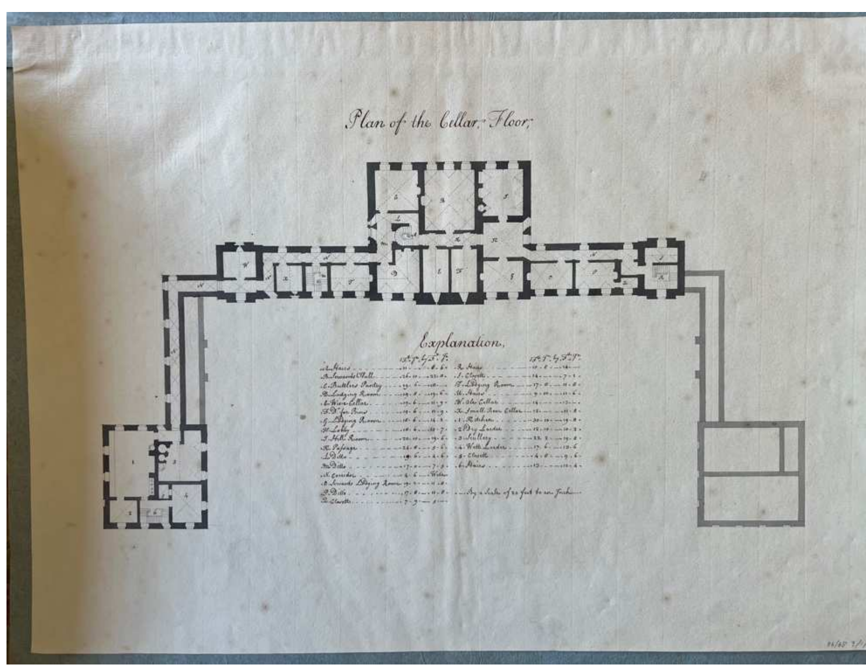

Image 26. Headfort House B, Guinness Drawings Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

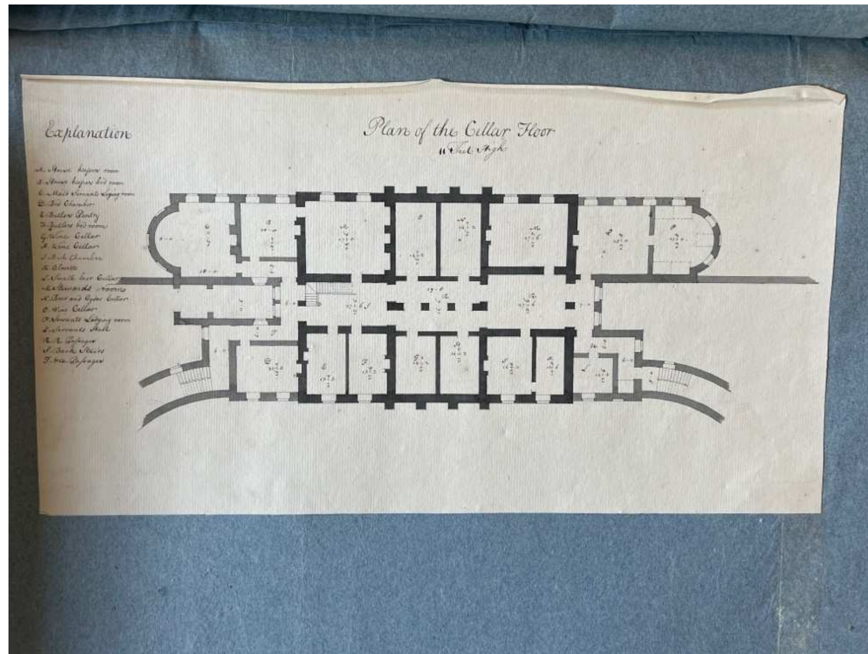

Image 27. Headfort House C, Guinness Drawings Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

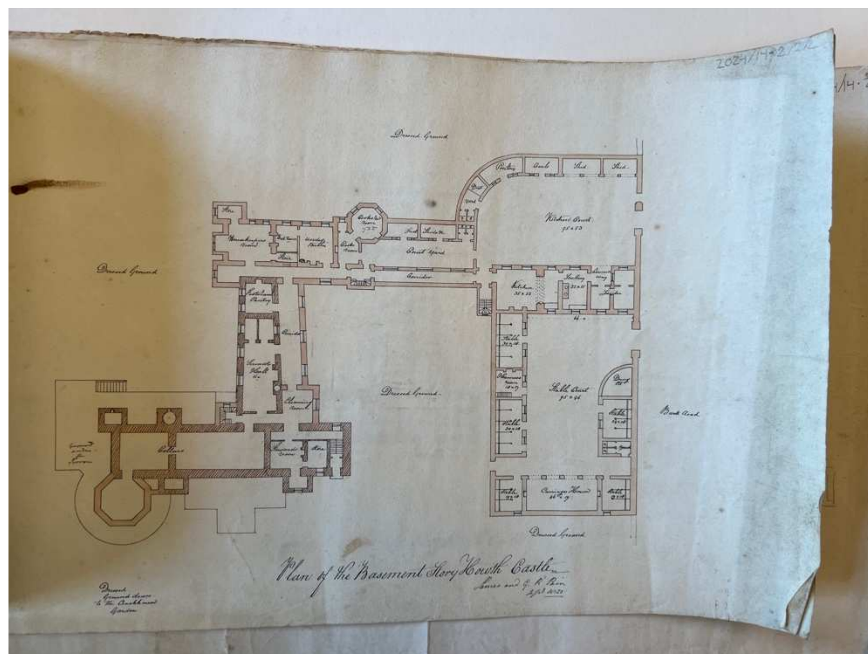

Image 28. Howth Castle, Howth Castle Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

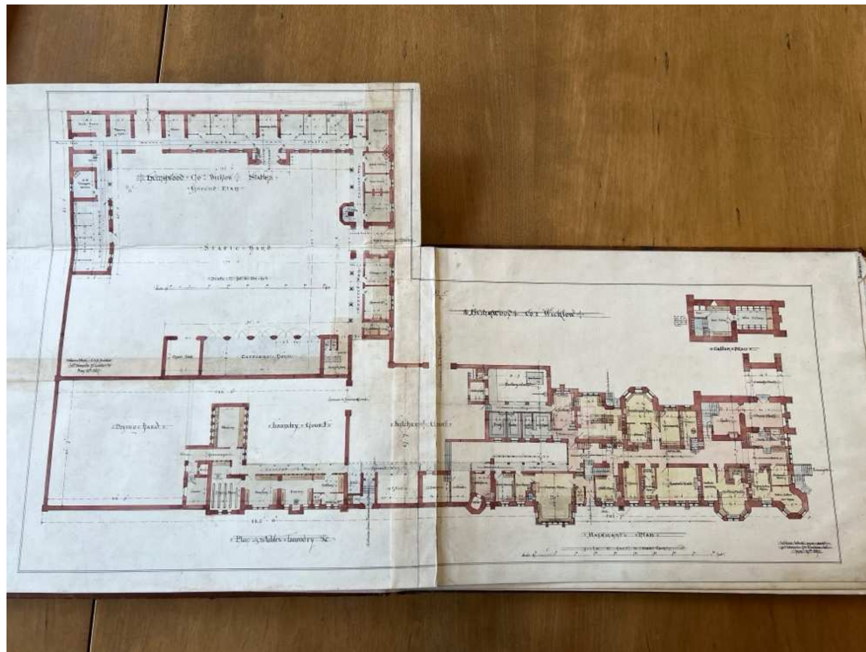

Image 29. Humewood Castle, Humewood Album, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

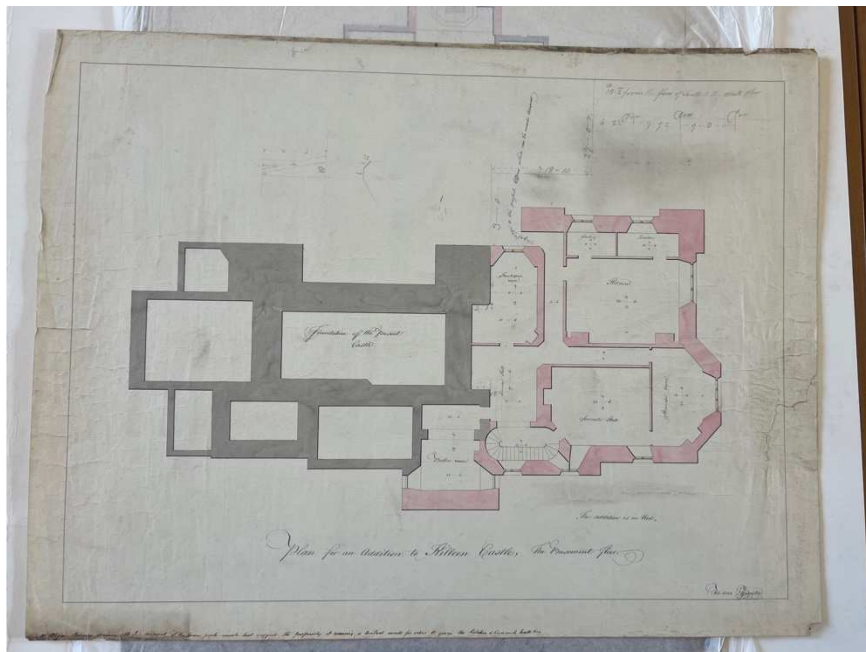

Image 30. Killeen Castle, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

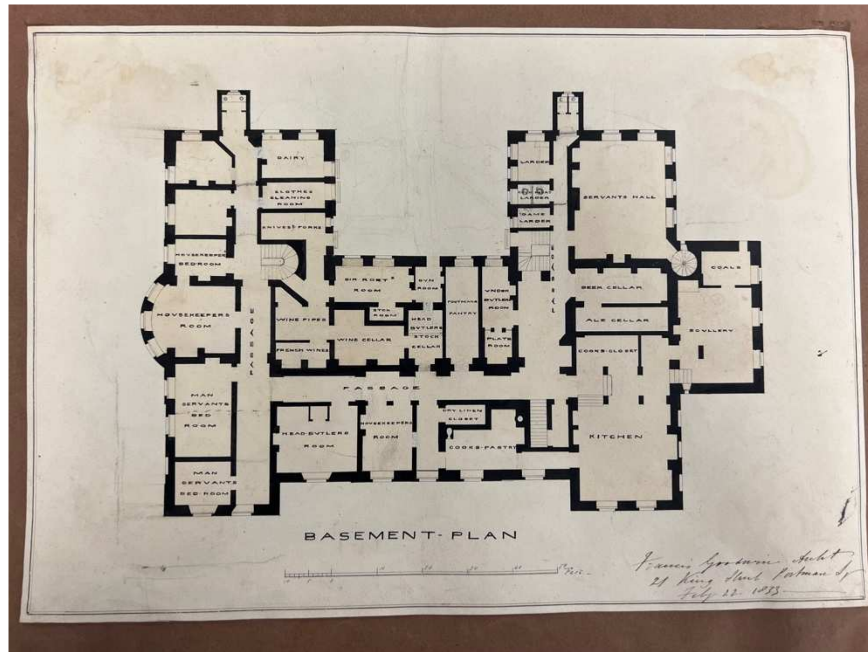

Image 31. Lissadell House A, D4131 Lissadell Papers, reproduced with permission from the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the PRONI, and Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth.

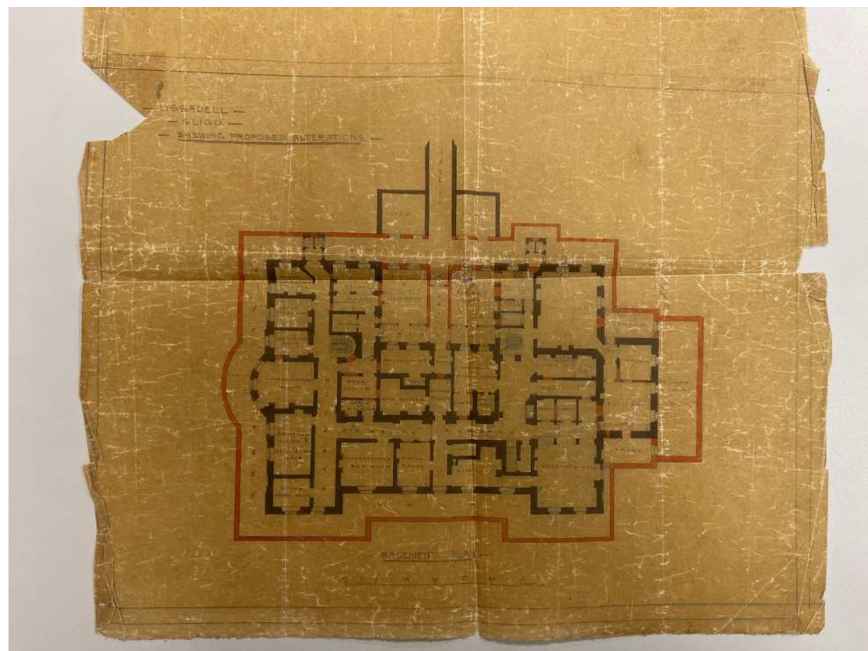

Image 32. Lissadell House B, D4131 Lissadell Papers, reproduced with permission from the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the PRONI, and Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth.

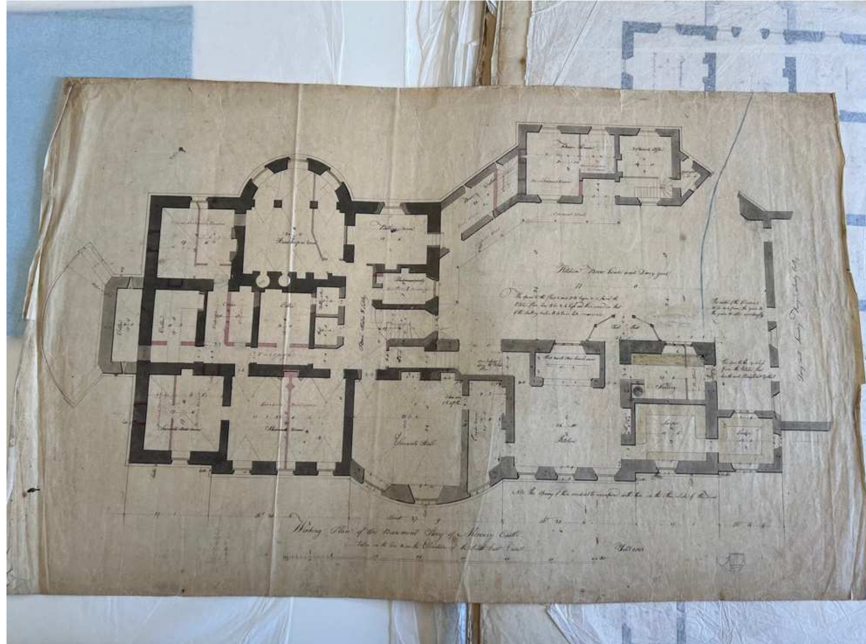

Image 33. Markree Castle, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

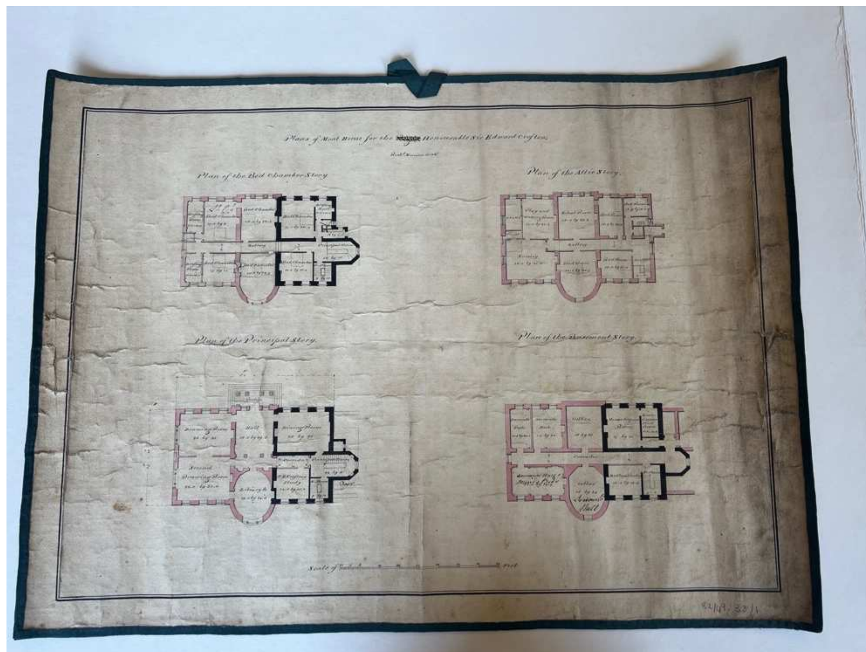

Image 34. Mote Park, McCurdy and Mitchell Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

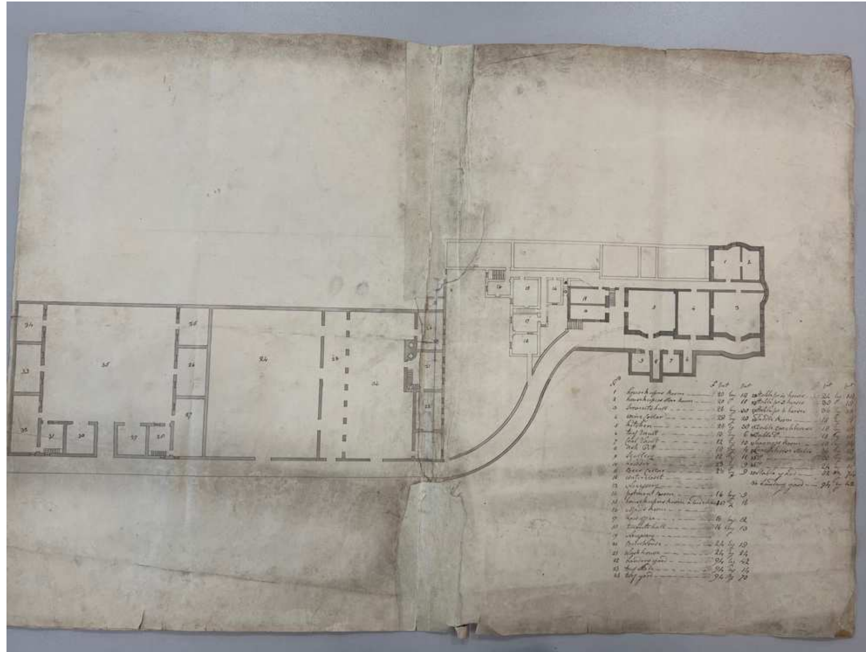

Image 35. Mount Stewart, D654 London Derry Papers, reproduced with permission from the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the PRONI.

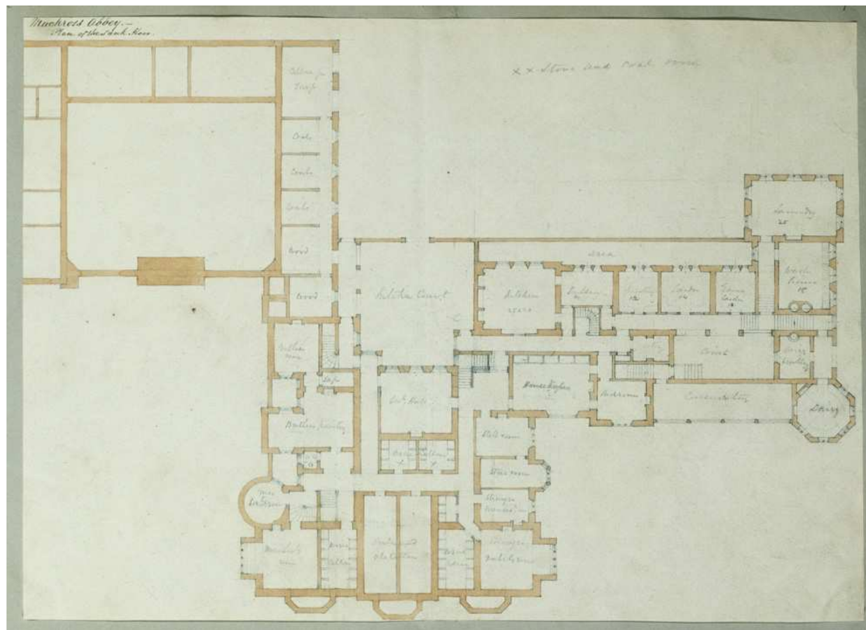

Image 36. Muckross House, image courtesy of RIBA Collections.

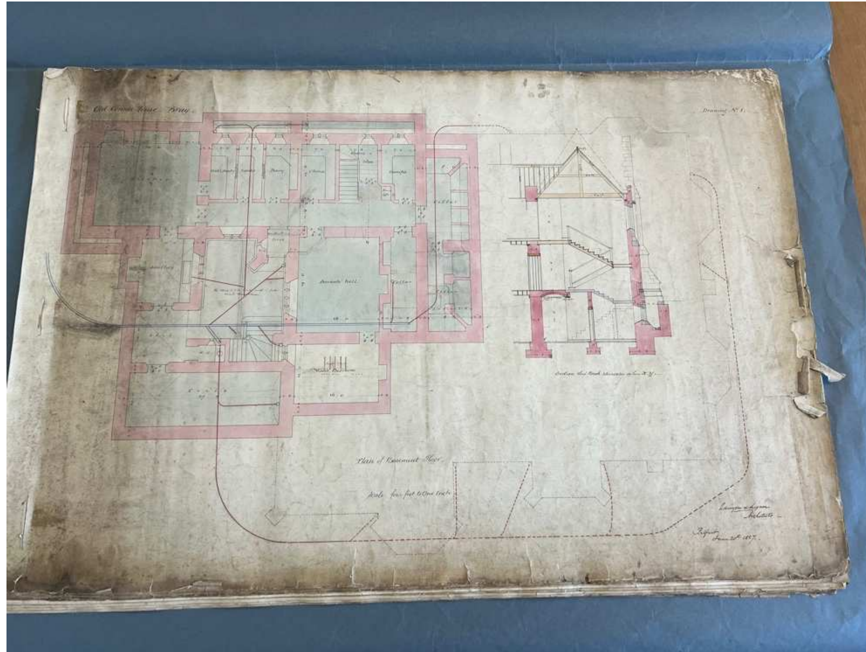

Image 37. Old Conna Hill House, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

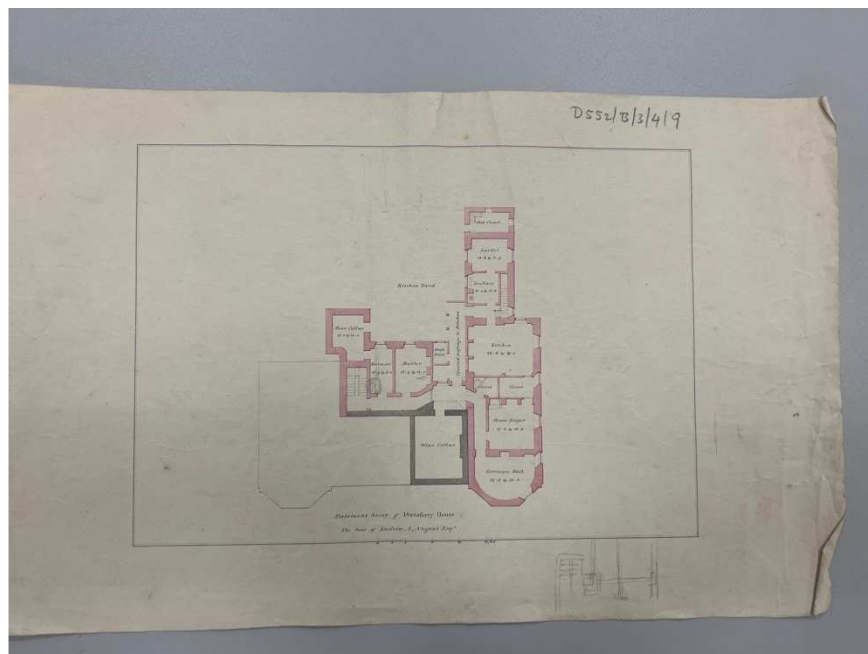

Image 38. Portaferry House A, D552 Nugent Papers, reproduced with permission from the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the PRONI, the Late Sir Richard T. Nugent, Bt, the Late Lady Nugent, and the Late Mrs Elizabeth Cooke.

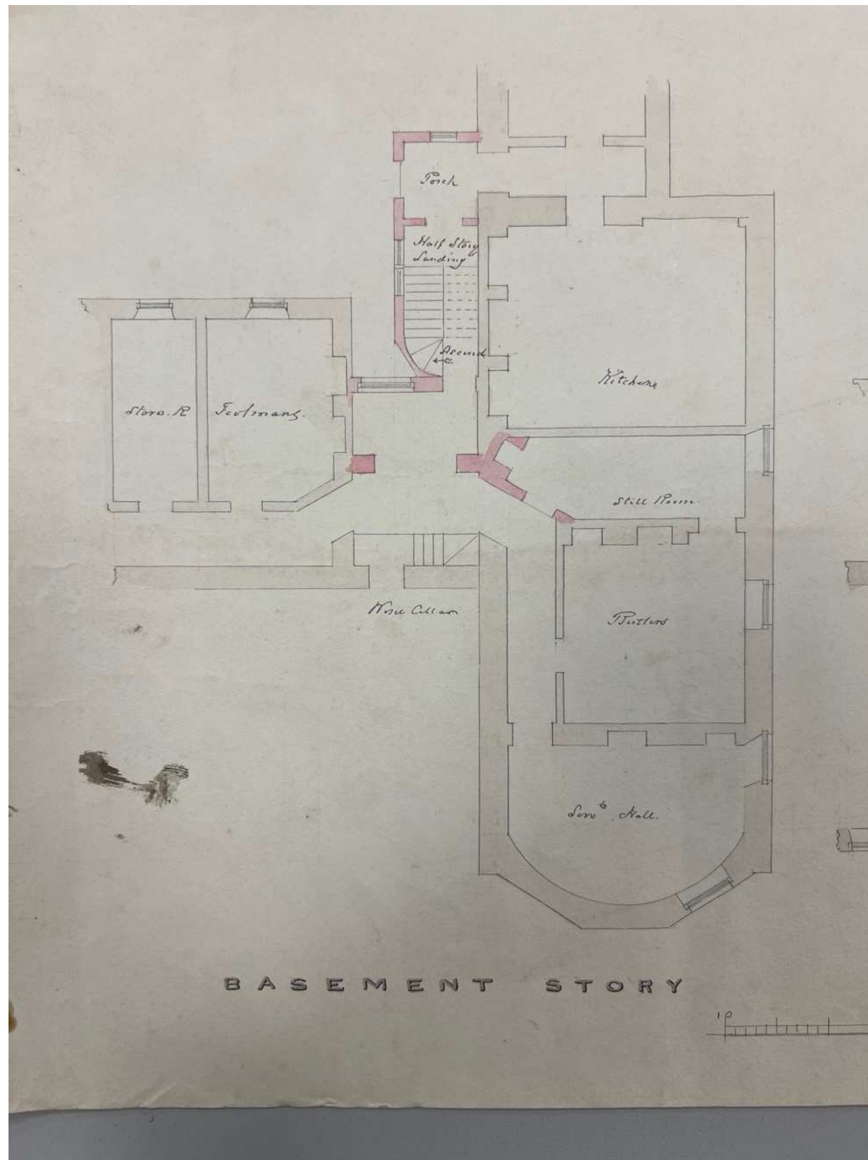

Image 39. Portaferry House B, D552 Nugent Papers, reproduced with permission from the Deputy Keeper of the Records, the PRONI, the Late Sir Richard T. Nugent, Bt, the Late Lady Nugent, and the Late Mrs Elizabeth Cooke.

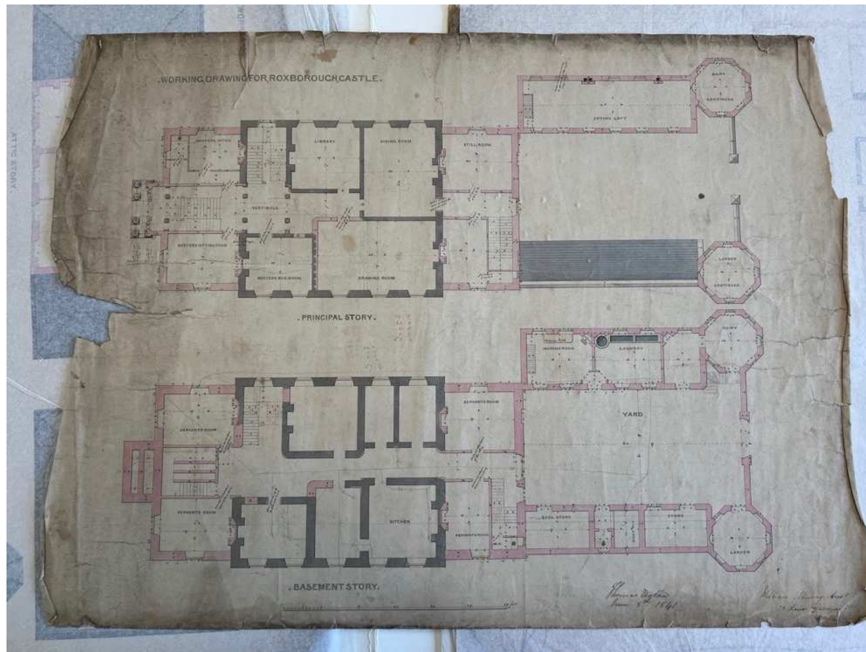

Image 40. Roxborough Castle, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

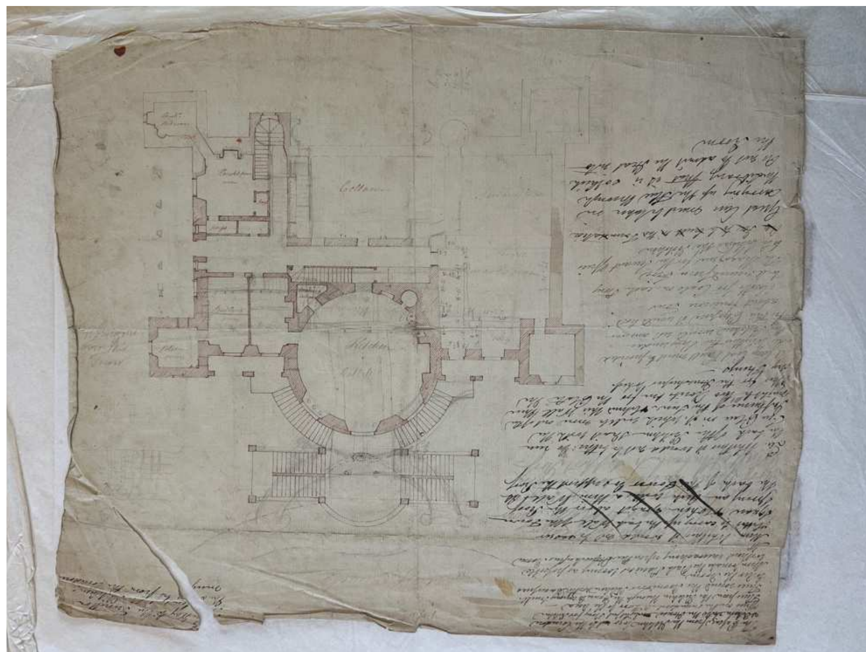

Image 41. Slane Castle A, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

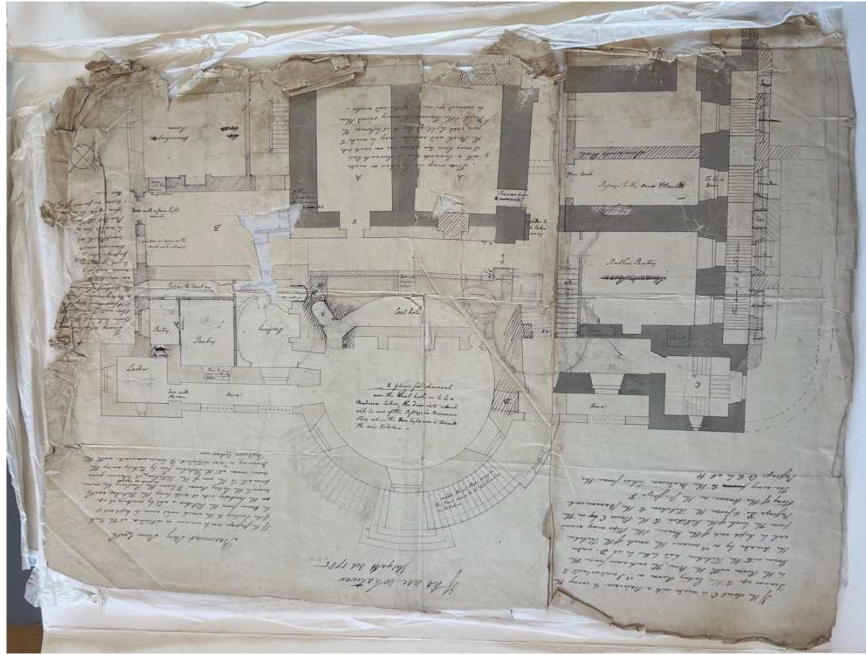

Image 42. Slane Castle B, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.

Image 43. St. Catherine's House, RIAI Murray Collection, reproduced with permission from the IAA.