

# JOHN ROBERTS ARCHITECT 1712 - 1796

John Roberts

Architect

1712-1796

William Fraher 1983

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# ACKNOVLEDGEMENTS

The National Library of Ireland.

Reverend & Mrs Brian Mayne (Christchurch Cathedral).

Brian De Breffny.

Country Life.

Waterford City Library.

The Library - Waterford Regional College.

County Library Lismore.

## INTRODUCTION

I decided to write this study on John Roberts firstly because of my interest in the history of Irish architecture and more specifically in that of County Waterford.

I was interested in Roberts work for sometime but found little published material which dealt in detail with his life and work. No comprehensive account of all Roberts known works was available in any form. I felt that there must be more information available on Roberts who was after all one of the most accomplished provincial architects in the 18th century Ireland.

His buildings in Waterford city are well known locally but I was also interested in tracing work by him outside the city and county. I have used a wide variety of source material including various Waterford Histories, The Irish Builder, Country life etc. and more general works. I also closely studied the Waterford buildings in detail and photographed them where possible.

Of course there are a number of sources which I did not have an opportunity to check out, but hope to do so in the future.

I have divided my study into the following areas:-

Firstly I have given some general backround information on architecture in Ireland and Waterford in the 18th century. Next some backround on Robert's Family and early life. The main section then deals with Roberts various building and finally the conclusion.

I have included a note in the Appendices on Patrick Osborne the stuccodore who decorated the interior of the Chamber of Commerce and who deserves to be better known.

## Irish Architecture in the 18th Century.

The blossoming of art and architecture in Ireland at this period

was the result of the relative peace and prosperity.

Town planning began to appear in the provinces on a modest scale,

often as a result of improving landlords, elegant public buildings

were built in the larger towns and cities outside Dublin.

Patronage of art and architecture at this period was mostly by the wealthy Protestant minority. While many of the architects were English or foreign, most of the craftsmen and artists were Irish.

The Dublin Society founded in 1731 was an important factor in creating an Irish school of artists, architects, craftsmen etc.

It established a drawing school in which most Irish artists and architects received their early training.

#### Architectural Styles - Palladian.

At the beginning of the 18th century there was a reaction to the earlier interpretations of the classical style in architecture and a return to a purer classical style. The new style evolved, known as Palladianism in English and Irish architecture of the period. An interpretor of the Palladian style in England had been INIGO JONES (1573 - 1652) later its main exponents were Lord Burlington (1694 - 1753) and Colen Campbell (d.1729) One of the earliest Palladian public buildings in the British isles was the Parliament House Dublin; Castletown, Russborough etc. followed in the same style. Architects practising the style in Ireland were Richard Castle (d.1751) Francis Bindon (1690 - 1765) and Nathaniel Clements (1705 - 77). The Palladian style remained popular in Ireland until late in the century, one of the last exponents was Davis Ducart (d. 1785) he kept the tradition alive in the provinces until the 80%s, even though the Neo-classical style had already begun in England in the 1760's.

#### Palladianism to Neo-Classicism.

The Palladian tradition was continued in Dublin by John Smyth (fl. 1758 - 69) (provost's House 1754 and St. Thomas's church 1758 - 62). Thomas Ivory's 'Blue Coat School' of 1773 is palladian but also has neo-classic elements in the wings.

Neo-Classical architects looked to ancient Rome for inspiration and were exposed to the ancient classical styles through an increasing amount of engraved books on Classical antiquities e.g. Piranesi's engravings were widely used. In Ireland one of the most beautiful and perfect Neo-Classical buildings is the

'MARINO CASINO' at Clontarf C. 1758 built by Sir William Chambers for Lord Charlemont.

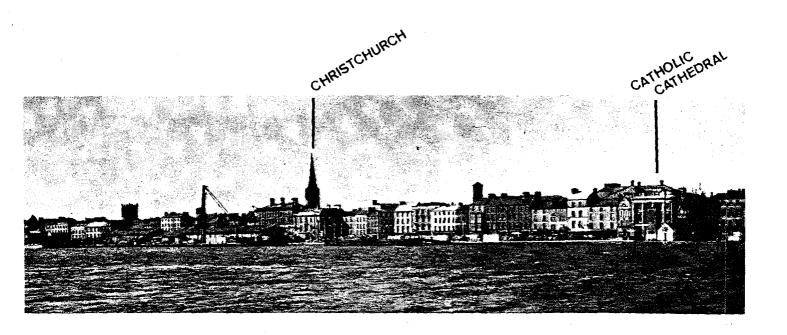
In spite of this new style many of the noted Irish architects,
Roberts, Ducart, Priestly, Smyth, Semple etc., still used
Palladian elements in their work. Other important buildings of
the period were the Royal Exchange by Thomas Cooley the
Four Courts & Custom house by Gandon.

## 18th Century Waterford.

Waterford suffered much after the Cromwellian occupation of the city and most of the prominent Catholic families had to leave. However, Waterford began to recover at the beginning of the 18th century. This time a new group of ruling families appeared, almost all Protestant many of whom were not natives of the city. Catholic chapels were only barely tolerated and those that were built were modest affairs.

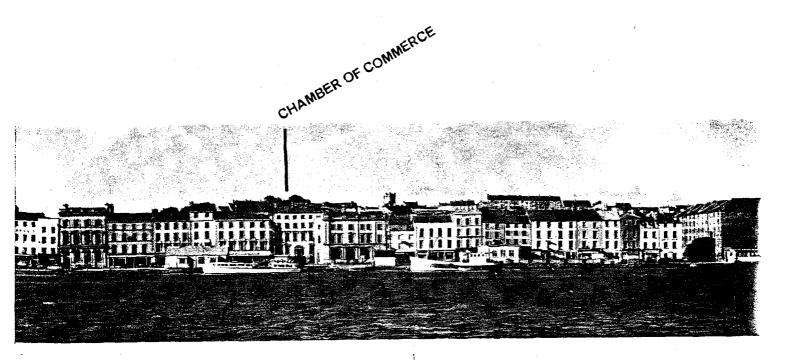
In spite of the injustices the Protestant governing body were determined to improve and embellish the city "They found it decaying, insanitary and ruinous; they left it with buildings both public and private of which it could justifiably be proud, and with the noblest quay in Europe".

The protestant families formed a council of forty who governed the city and included families such as the Boltons, Morrisses, Newports. Alcocks, Carews Congreves etc..



At this period much improvements were carried out to the quay, in 1776 it was paved along its entire length of about a mile. The result of many of these improvements can be seen in Van der Hagen's painting of 1736 in which the quay is lined with substantial merchants houses and the arcaded Exchange of 1715. A new extension to the city was made in 1725 built around three new streets; King Street, Georges St and Hanover St.. Some substantial Georgian houses survive in Lady lane and around the cathedral.

A new Mall was laid out in 1735 and planted with a double row of elms, on either side of which were later built elegant red brick houses, in all this rebuilding John Roberts was to make the most important contribution to the 'great age of Waterford architecture!



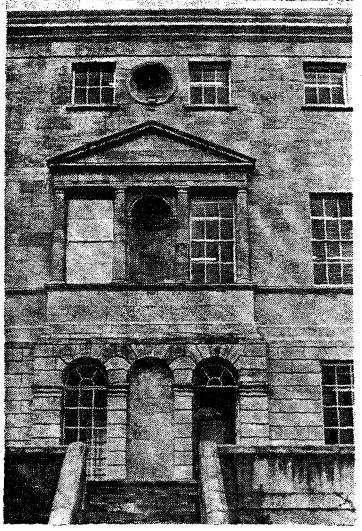


FIG1

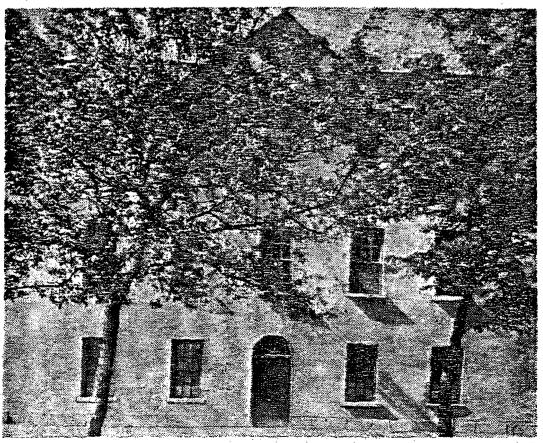


FIG.2

#### THE ROBERTS FAMILY.

In 1680 Thomas Roberts "a Welshman of property and beauty" settled in Waterford where he married and acquired considerable property. He had a son Thomas Roberts who worked as a carpenter and builder and built a new goal for the Corporation in 1727 and brought a water supply to the quay in 1742.

Thomas Roberts in his will of November 18th 1775 refers to his wife Sarah and his son John, to whom he bequeathed his holdings in Bow street.

John Roberts (1712 - 96)

Roberts "went when a young man, to London to improve himself in the knowledge of his profession". Unfortunately, nothing is known of his stay in London or to whom he was apprenticed. While in London he no doubt became familiar with the major buildings, the work of INIGO JONES and buildings like his Queens House at Greenwich, the first strictly classical building in England and his Banqueting Hall. Whitehall.

Jones inspired the Palladian revival in the 18th century headed by Burlington and Kent. He must also have studied the many city churches by Christopher Wren and James Gibbs, indeed he clearly was influenced by Gibbs in his designs for the Protestant Cathedral. We get some insight on his character from an article by W.J. Bayly on the Robert's family:-

Honest John Robert's' as he was called possessed in a high degree the valuable qualities of integrity, thrift and industry and force of character which ultimately led to prosperity and honour for himself and his descendants. In every relation of life he was an exemplary man, a good husband an excellant father and brother.

He was in the habit of paying half the wages to the wives on Saturday morning, that they might purchase to advantage at the early market and he always gave to each the exact money and thus to some extent prevented a visit to the public house for change. Such consideration for the working classes was not usual in those days.

The city of Waterford contained a number of Huguenot families, among them the Sautelles, consisting of Major Francis Sautelle and his daughter and heiress Mary Susanna.

John became friendly with Mary and at about the age of 17 he eloped with and married her. Her father was against the relationship and withheld her inheritance. The couple returned to Waterford and lived in Patrick Street.

The marriage to Miss Santelle turned out to his advantage, as the then Bishop of Waterford and Lismore Richard Chenevix was also friendly with the Sautelles. It appears that Roberts had frequent contact with the bishop. At this period Chenevix was building a new Palace designed by Richard Castle, and through the Bishops influence Roberts was employed as builder.FIG.1

The Bishop also gave Roberts and his wife a lease of the old
Bishops palace. This house was situated at No. 1 Cathedral square FIG.2

The Henrietta Street corner. The house has now been altered but

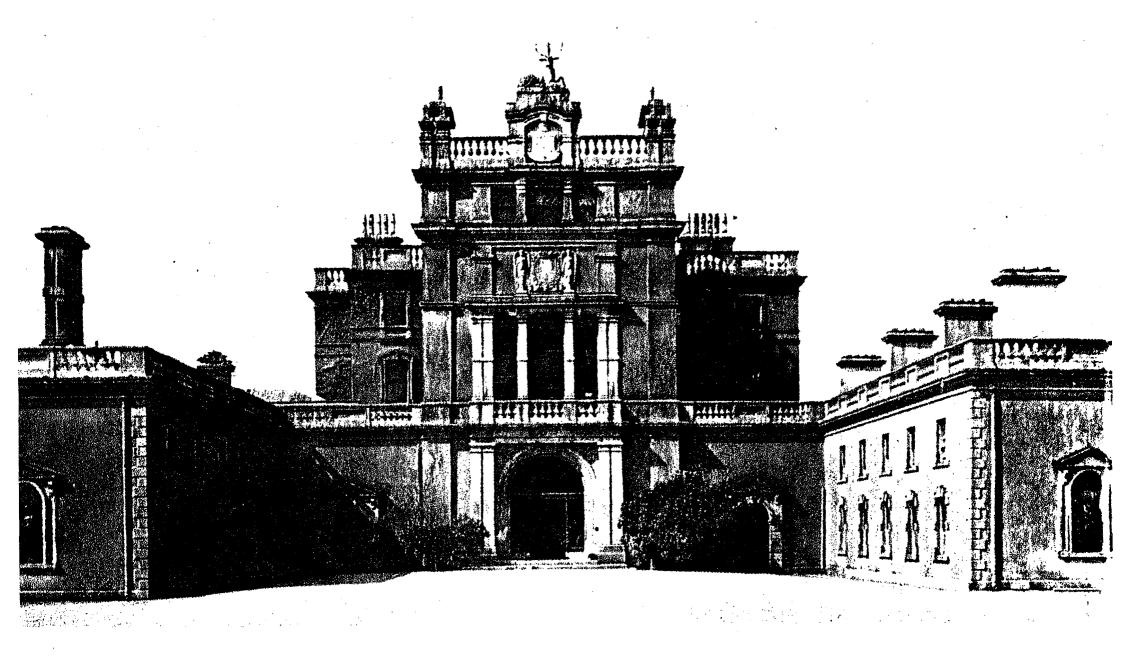
Was originally of three stories and five bays with a central

Pediment and small simple round-headed door. The house is said

to stand on Elizabethan foundations.

Roberts lived here with his wife and twenty four children for over fifty years. He also had a country house outside the city called 'Roberts Mount' or Knockrottin which was leased from Corneli us Bolton.

# Curraghmore House



#### Curraghmore House Co. Waterford

Sir Marcus Beresford was improving his house in the 1740's and it is known that he employed John Roberts to design the magnificent-fore-court. The court is a U-plan, 550 feet long and 192 feet wide, with the house at the west—towering above the forecourt. FIG.3 This tall three storey block is the oldest section of the house being an altered late mediaeval tower house. It was modernised in the 1870's by Samuel Roberts in an Italianate style, the building is topped by a carved stag which is the Beresford coat-of-arms.

The fore-court has matching ranges facing each other of two storeys and thirty-one bays long. The centre pieces of the ranges have magnificent sandstone ashlar coach-houses of five bays with large central arches flanked by blocked doric columns and surmounted by robust pediments.FIG.4

The carriage arches have Gibbsian surrounds and rusticated jambs.

Over the arches are large half-moon windows. The ground floor windows have Gibbsian surrounds and plain windows above.

The ranges are joined to the two wings of the house by quadrants with beautiful central arches with channelled pilasters and heavy cornices.

Flanking the arches are pedimented niches and then doorcases with heavy cornices and scroll keystones. Immediately flanking the house are the two storey balustraded wings of five bays facing each other. The first floor windows have Gibbsian surrounds. On either side of the house are fine doorcases similar to those in the quadrants. The end walls of the wings have a single ni

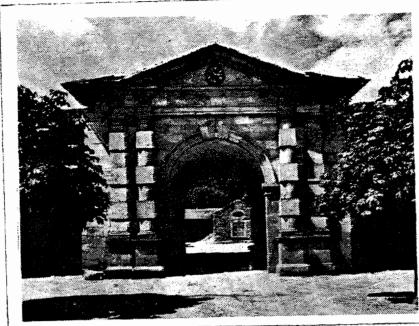


FIG.4





FIG.6

The whole composition is very grand and baroque in its details.

The detailing seems to follow the pattern books of Gibbs, there

are also influences from INIGO JONES. The plan recalls Vanbrugh's FIG.5

entrance yards at Blemheim. Gibb's pattern books were widely used

by builders as a source for designs.

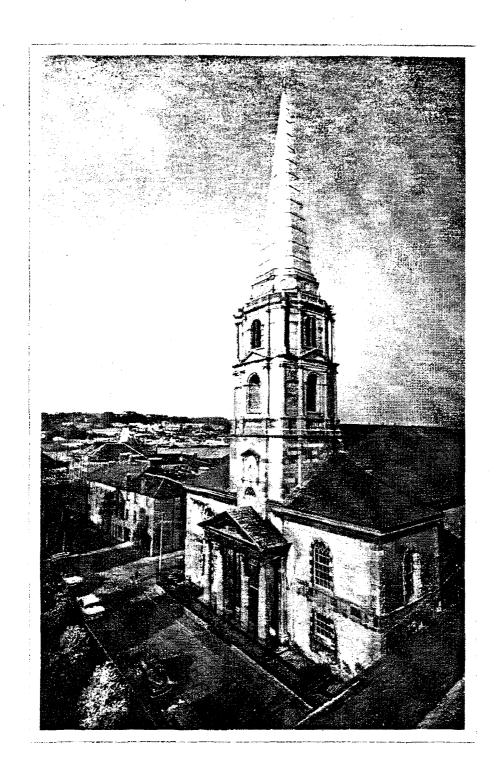
It is interesting that Roberts also draws heavily on Gibbs in his design of the Protestant Cathedral. Brien de Breffny feels that Roberts may have worked with DAVIS DUCART, there is a Waterford connection with Ducart as Patrick Osborne a stuccodore (see chamber of Commerce) decorated Castletown Cox Co. Kilkenny and the Mayoralty House Cork, both buildings designed by Ducart. Contact with Ducart may account for Robert's accomplished and exuberant designs at Curraghmare. It is also worth remembering that Roberts did go to London to study which would have widened his horizons and introduced him to the latest styles. Unfortunately nothing is known of this stay in London it would have been interesting to know whom he studied under or what connections he made with other architects.

In the 1750's Roberts was paid for supplying new windows for the courthouse and cathedral. We hear nothing of Roberts until the rebuilding of the old Christchurch Cathedral in Waterford in the 1770's he possibly did same country house work and he may also have been involved in the rebuilding of the town church of FIG.6

St. Iberius in Wexford in the mid 1770's according to Maurice Craig.

The church is designed in the form of a galleried rectangle with an apse in the middle of one of the long sides containing the alter, and screened by a triple arcade carried on giant Corinthian orders. The latter have a close similarity to the columns of Roberts two Cathedrals in Waterford with the frieze decorated with urns and swags.

# Christchurch Cathedral 1774-92



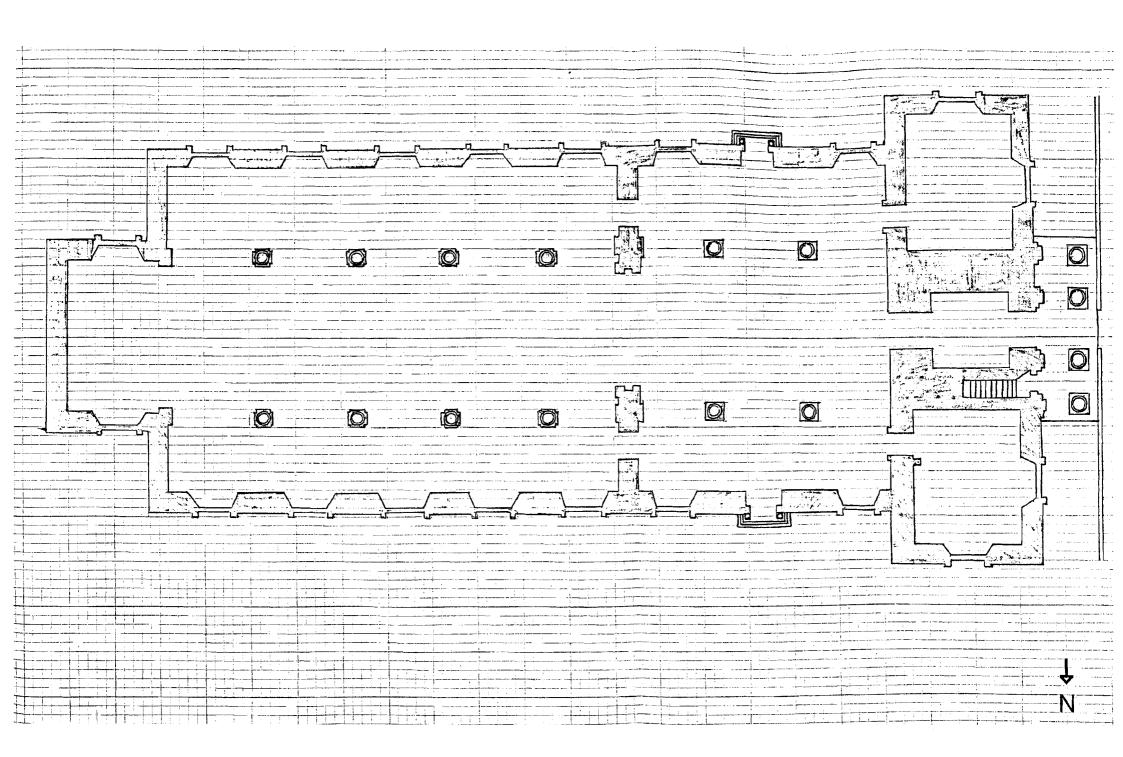
#### Christchurch Cathedral, 1774-92

It is situated on the most elevated site in the inner city and lies in an east/west direction. The original church on the site was a very interesting building of historical and architectural importance and contained much of the original lith century Danish church. A large mediaeval undercraft still exists On the site.

In the 1770s Gothic was not in fashion in Ireland and the Waterford Protestants were in the midst of modernising and rebuilding the city. The old cathedral must have seemed old fashioned and gloomy in comparison to the light airiness of the Georgian architecture of the period. The Corporation were anxious to demolish the building but the Bishop Dr. Chenevix objected to this destruction of the ancient building. However, his opponents arranged that as he passed through the church one morning a quantity of dust and rubble would fall at the appropriate time and bring the bishop to his right senses' and cause him to believe the Cathedral was falling.

Plans for rebuilding the cathedral and Palace were executed in 1739 by William Halfpenny of Bristol. However, these plans were never carried out. In 1773 Thomas Ivory was asked to report on the condition of the cathedral, he recommended that it should be rebuilt.

The work of rebuilding was not given to Ivory but to John Roberts no doubt as a result of Bishop Chenevix's influence.



In January 17th 1774 the cathedral committee met to consider the best method of taking down and re-building or repairing the cathedral. It was decided that the plain plan omitting the RUSTIK work lai afore the committee by Mr. John Roberts for re-building the cathedral appears to be the most eligible of any as yet produced to us. Estimate £3,704 - 5°-6°. The old steeple to be taken down and the bells placed in the French church.

It is evident from the above that several designs were submitted and that the committee picked Roberts 'plain plan' on financial considerations.

The committee also make reference to omitting the 'RUSTICK' work.

It is difficult to know what they mean by this, perhaps Roberts

intended to have a rusticated Lower Level on the exterior.

It took some time to complete the cathedral as subscriptions were being raised as late as 1783 for the steeple, which was thought not to have been in the original design. However, it seems clear that a steeple was intended from the beginning, as can be seen in the following extract from Arthur Young's 'Tour in Ireland' 1776-'79:-

"The new church in this city is a very beautiful one, the body of it is in the same stile exactly as that of Belfast already described; the total length 170 feet, the breadth 58. The length of the body of the church 92, the height 40, breadth between the Pillars 26. The isle (which I do not remember at Belfast) is 58 by 45.

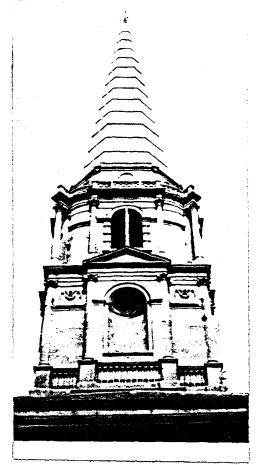


FIG.1011





ST MARTIN-IN-THE-FIELDS: James Gibbs, 1721-6. Model preserved in the church



FIGS 8,9

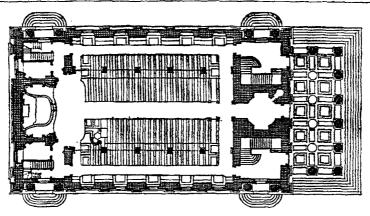


Fig. Plan of St Martin-in-the-Fields.

A room on one side the steeple space for the bishop's court, 24 by 18; on the other side a room of the same size for the vestry, and 28 feet square left for a steeple when their funds will permit. The whole is light and beautiful, it was built by subscription and there is a fine organ bespoke at London.

The new church was built with much of the stone from the ancient cathedral. The walls are of uncoursed random rubble rendered and are about 44 inches thick, limestone is used for dressings, steeple portics etc. The plan is very elongated and follows closely the FIG.7 length and width of the old cathedral. It is evident that Robert's design for the exterior and the plan owe much to Gibbs London church St. Martins (1726).FIGS89

Gibbs introduced the idea of having the steeple rising from the ridge of the roof, whereas Wren and others had previously placed the steeple on the ground to one side. This practice was popularised by Gibbs and was widely imated and used here by Roberts.

The spire is built of the same grey limestone as the Bishop's Palace. It graduates up from a square base in three stages to an octagonal steeple.FIGS 10,11

The first stage is plain, there is a slight breakfront on the four sides, on the side over the portico is a clock covered by an openbed pediment. This feature appears to have been borrowed by Roberts from Gibbs church St. Mary-le-Strand (1714-'77) Beneath the clock is a small diocletian window. The second stage has a niche flanked by lonic engaged columns on pedastals toped by a pediment. On either side of the niches are panels with sways. A balustrade runs around the base of the columns. There is a single engaged column on each corner.

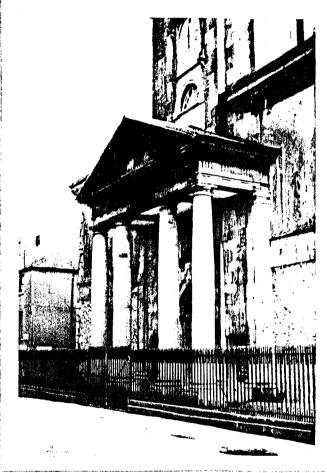
The third stage has central round-headed windows on each side with block and start sides flanked by Corinthian columns.

The corners on this stage are curved and have a single free standing column joined to the tower at the entablature, above is a small a parapet from which the octagonal steeple rises. The steeple being later than the rest of the building has some neoclassical elements in the blank niches, swags etc..

There is a pedimented doric portico which is rather weak. I think FIG.12 it would have helped to have had a larger portico to balance the weight of the tower. This is probably why the tower has been considered top heavy and criticised in the past by writers like Ryland. On either side of the portico are round headed windows FIG.13 with Gibbsian surrounds resting on a limestone string course which runs round the building, underneath are smaller windows which lit the pews under the galleries.

Another fault in the design is the absence of a strong parapet or balustrade, instead there is a limestone cornice under the eaves. A balustrade would have given more strength to the main body of the church and helped to counteract the weight of the tower. The Cathedral at Cashel Co. Tipperary of C.1763 has no balustrade and has a similar cornice treatment to the Waterford church. The style and arrangement of the windows in the side elevations are very obviously borrowed from Gibbs' St. Martins. There are side entrances to the north and south leading into the porch, these have

limestone pedimented doric doorways. FIG.14





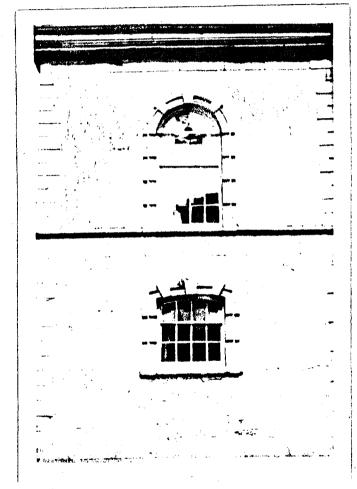


FIG 12

**FIG 14** 

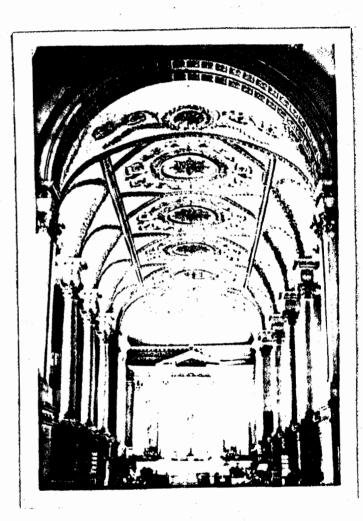
FIG13



**FIG 15** 



FIG16



#### The Interior

On entering through the main door we go through the nartex which opens out into the large porch which is divided from the main body of the church by a large arch which was part of the redesign work executed by Sir Thomas Drew in 1890. On either side of the arch is a doorway with Gibbsian surrounds.FIG 15

The interior plan is unusual with an open ante-chapel at the west end. Some monuments from the old cathedral were re-erected here.

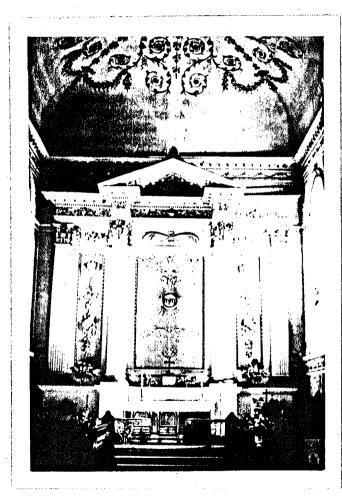
From here one looks down through the rows of corinthian columns FIG 16 to the main Nave 80 feet long and the beautiful pedimented reredos at the east end. There is barrel vault in the nave and separate vaults for each bay in the aisles. There is a paved centre aisle of white marble and black limestone which is the original floor. In the chancel is an excellant reredos with fine gilded plasterwork. The reredos has a pediment supported by four corinthian columns on pedestals. It is divided into three panels, a large centre panel with sun burst motif, swags and scrollwork. The narrow flanking panels have cherubs heads, feliage etc.. The whole was originally topped by four classical urns.

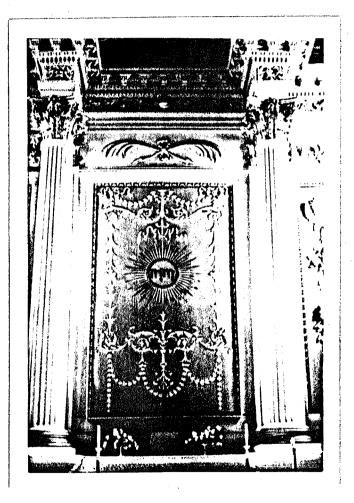
The Chancel is lit by two windows on either side of the reredos.

# The original interior

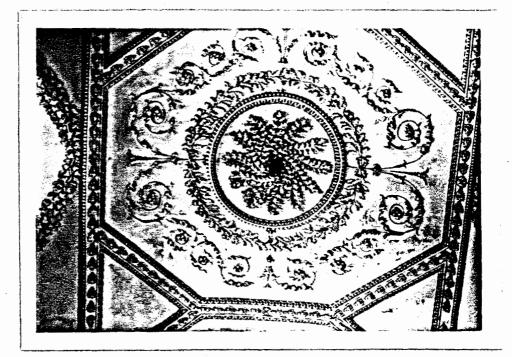
Luckily we know what the interior originally looked liked from an engraving by Thomas Malton Senior. This shows the fine carved balconies resting on the pedestals of the columns. The corinthian columns had channelled pedastals. Underneath the galleries were box p ws which also took up most of the centre aisle. There was a cross gallery and screen supported by fluted lonic columns which held the organ and divided the nave from the porch. FIG 19

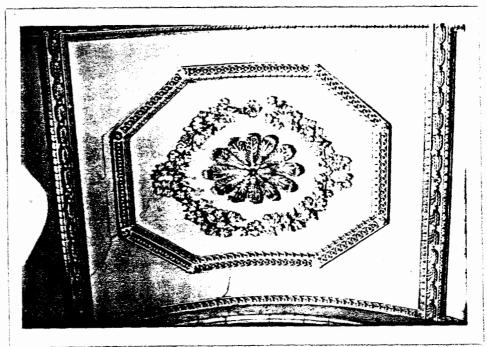


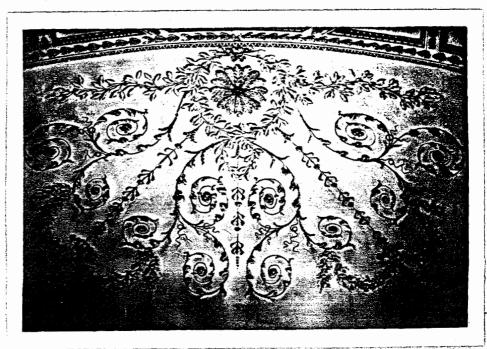




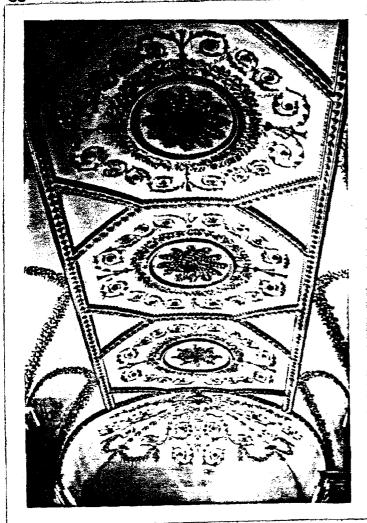
FIGS 17,18



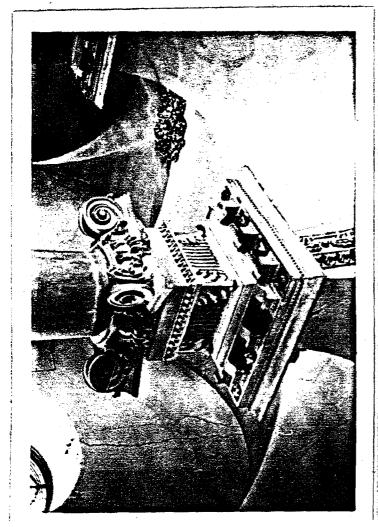


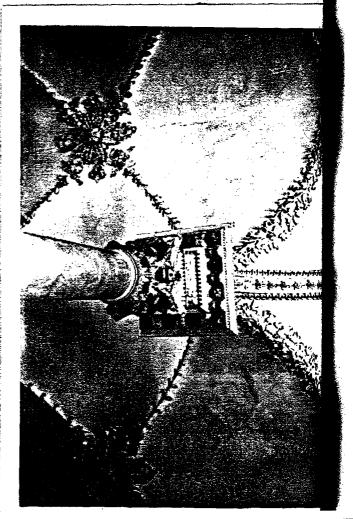












The ceiling was divided into octagonal panels with foliage centre pieces, the side aisles were also decorated at the inter section of the ribs. There was a fire on the 25th October 1815 .....

"occasioned by the neglect of some persons who were employed to attend a stove placed in the organ loft, for the purpose of airing it". This fire destroyed the organ and woodwork and the beautiful ceiling. Ryland writing about the ceiling says:.... "The original design was departed from and the new ceiling constructed in more ornate style than that which preceded it, with foliage enrichment of the arches". FIG 20

The new ceiling is not unlike the original in spite of Ryland's comments. The division into octagonal panels was retained but the swirling foliage in the centre of the panels in more decorative. The craftsman's name is unknown.

# Sir Thomas Drew's alterations 1890-1 (See Appendix 11)

The alterations begun on January 6th 1890 by Thomas Drew a Dublin architect. The balconies were removed and the windows underneath were blocked up. A large arch replaced the gallery and screen at the east end opening up the interior. The sanctuary walls and the column pedestals were decorated with red Cork marble and carved Caen stone. The west entrance doorway was given by Trinity college and was originally on the college library building. The old windows were removed and awful bland stained glass installed in their places. A cornice of urns and swags runs around the walls FIG21 of the nave under the windows, this was a copy of the frieze on the old balconies. Fortunately, the cathedral has been undergoing an extensive restoration programme for a number of years.

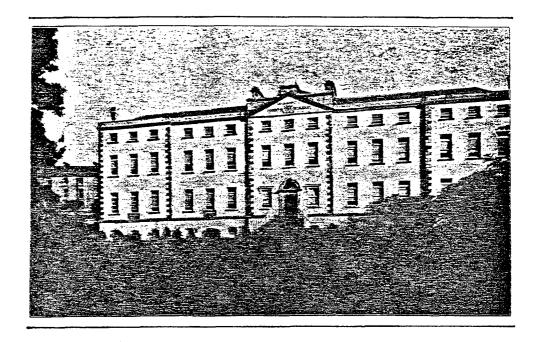
The exterior has been rendered, stonework cleaned and new window.

frames in the original style have been installed to replace the
bland stained glass. It is hoped that the interior will be
restored to its original splendour and much of Drew's inappropriate
'improvements' removed.



FIG 21

# The Leper Hospital - 1779



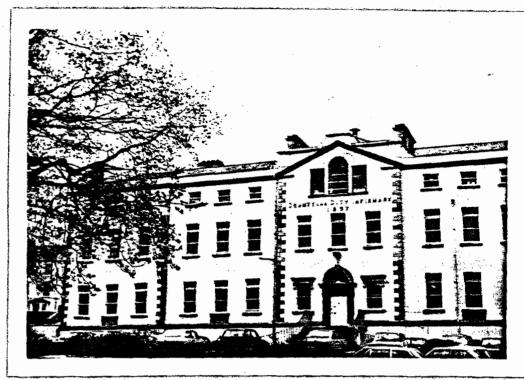
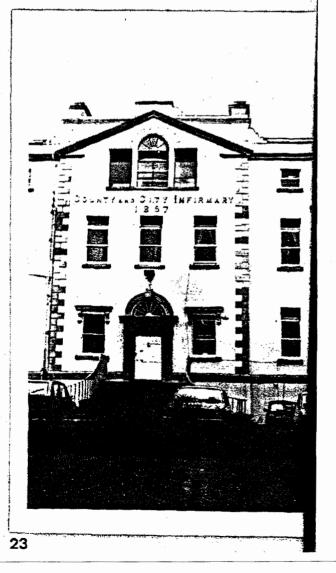


FIG 22





### The Infirmary (formerly the Leper Hospital) 1779

This is the next in date of Roberts Waterford buildings. It is situated on a commanding site on John's hill and was built in 1779. It is a large building of fifteen bays and three stories over FIG22 basement. There is a central three bay pedimented breakfront FIG23 which has a round-headed doorcase with doric frieze and pilasters FIG24 there is a plain parapet over a heavy cornice. The three bays at each end are advanced, all the breaks have raised limestone signs. There are limestone panels under four of the ground floor windows which Roberts probably included to add some interest to the rather uninteresting facade, but they are rather lost in the size of the building.

The top storey of the central breakfront was altered in the late 19th century and a Venetian window inserted. The date is on a side gate to the north.

# The Assembly Rooms 1783



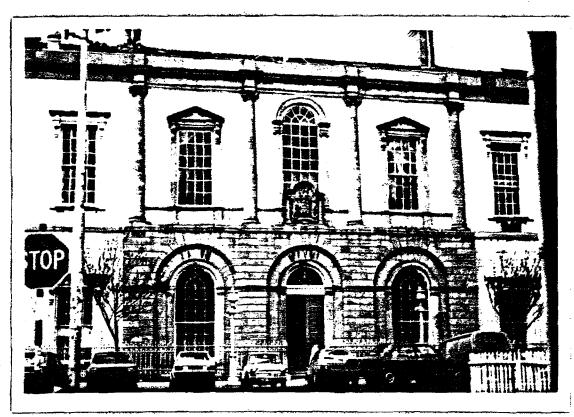


FIG 26

#### The Assembly Rooms - 1783

The assembly Rooms are about a 100 yards from the Cathedral and FIG 25 faces on to the Mall. In 1782 the Corporation decided to let the Bowling Green (on the site of the Tower Hotel) for building it was divided into lots which were put up for auction, except two, which were leased for 35 years at a nominal rent to Cornelius Bolton, Robert Shapland Carew, Henry Alcock, Junand Simon John Newport, with the intention of building a playhouse and Assembly rooms.

In 1783 it was decided to move the site across the Mall to a site under the city wall. The same leasees were given a new 999 year lease at one shilling a year. It was agreed that when the Assembly Rooms were built the Mayor was to have "full use of the intire ground floor for Public Enterainments". In 1787 Prince William Henry was given on "elegant breakfast" by the Corporation in the new rooms and a local newspaper announced the completion of the "Grand Banqueting Room" there in 1788.

In 1813 the corporation bought out the lease for £3,000 and moved the city offices there from the Old Exchange on the quay. The assembly rooms then became the Town Hall, but the 'Playhouse' continued in part of the building.

The building is in contrast to the more robust cathedral and is much more subtle. It is a large nine bay, two storey building. There is a central breakfront of three bays with a channelled FIG 26 ashlar ground floor with inset round-headed windows. On the first floor are engaged lonic columns supporting a cornice and frieze. The central window on the first floor is flanked by pedimented windows, a similar arrangement of windows is used on either side of the breakfront.

- 1. ASSEMBLY ROOMS
- 2-CHRISTCHURCH
- 3. CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL
- 4-CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

ICHARD & SCALES MAP OF WATERFORD 1764.

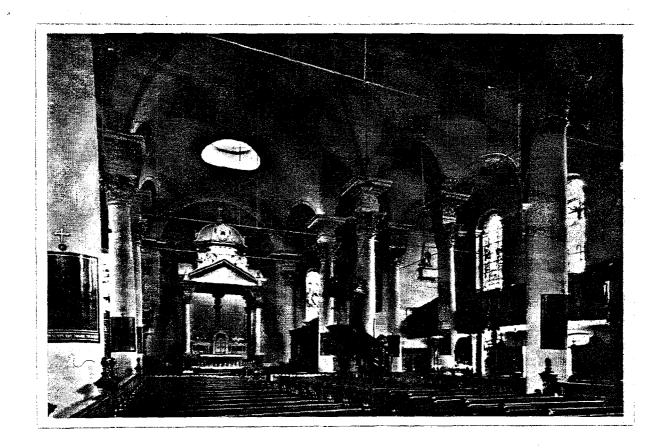
The central breakfront lacks something at roof level to give strength to the whole building. The present parapet is weak and unfinished in appearance. The Waterford coat-of-arms over the door dates from 1893 and is by a Kilkenny sculptor called 0'Shea.

Mark Girouard writing in Country Life says "the design is reminiscent of Thomas Ivory's small public Library in Armagh, which was built in 1771 and probably influenced it". The latter building was in fact designed by Thomas Cooley, I really fail to see much similarity between this building and the Assembly Rooms. In making comparisions I would have thought that it is influenced perhaps by Richard Castle's work e.g. the centre breakfront of the Rotunda Hospital Dublin built in 1750's and Thomas Ivory's "Blue Coat School" Dublin of 1773.

The interior has a series of huge rooms, the decoration is simple, the most notable feature being the large Waterford glass chandelier installed in the Council chamber in 1802.

The rear facade of the building is curiously angled and could possibly incorporate sections of the old city wall, the wall can be seen similarly angled on Richard and Scales map of Waterford 1764.FIG 27

# `The Great Chapel' 1792



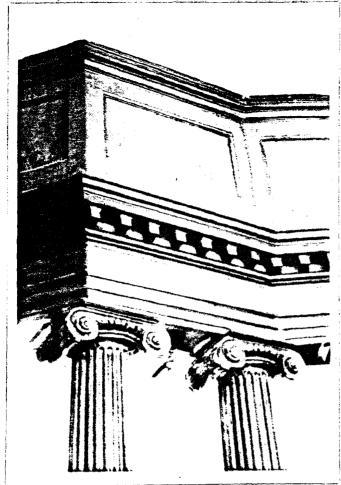


FIG 29

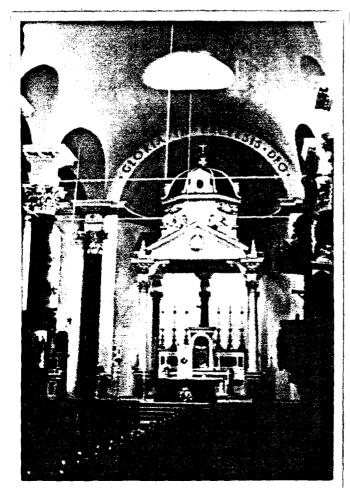


FIG 30

### 'The Great Chapel' 1792

Waterford was ruled at this period by the wealthy protestant families, and it was also the Penal times which required that Catholic churches should be as unobstrusive as possible, when permitted. Any catholic churches that did exist in Waterford were modest affairs and were suitably tucked away in gloomy alley ways, to be tolerated but not seen.

However, the Corporation were becoming more tolerant. On May 5th 1792 a petition was presented on behalf of the Catholics to Waterford Corporation by the Rev. Thomas Hearne P.P., Rev. Paul Power P.P. and Rev. James Power P.P.. In response to this the Corporation granted a plot of land in Barron Strand Street on a lease for 999 years and an annual rent of 2/6.

"It being the earnest wish and desire of this board to accommodate every description of their fellow citizens with every advantage which can tend (by facilitating the Public worship of the Deity) to promote Religion and Virtue".

The plot of land was on the site of the 'Great Chapel" shown on Scales Map of 1764. This seems to have been a reasonably large square building.

The present church has an open interior with giant Corinthian FIG 28 columns with gilded capitals. On each side of the church are bow fronted balconies supported by fluted lonic columns there FIG 29 is a similar balcony at the east end which holds the organ.

The sanctuary was extended 1829 - 37, the Apse was added in 1854.

There is a roof-lit baldachino with reclining angles and lantern FIG 30 dated from the 19th century. The whole atmosphere of the interior

is very Medditerranean in feeling.

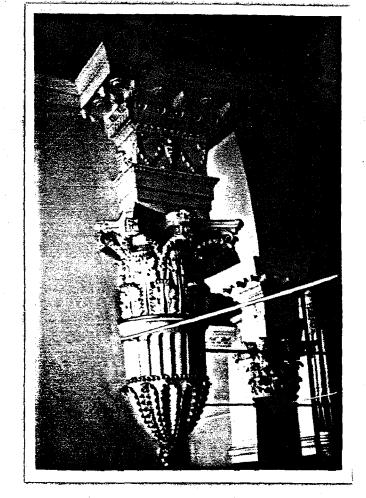


FIG 28

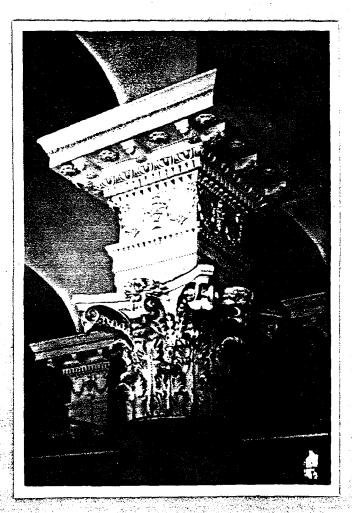




FIG 31

The ceiling was once painted with an elaborate riot of Raphaelesque arabesques, these have now been painted over and the ceiling painted white.

Lewis says that ... "it is a very large building and was erected at an expense of £20,000 raised chiefly by collectors of pence at the chapel doors. The front which will be of the lonic order, is not yet completed, the interior is remarkable for the lightness and elegance of its style, the spacious roof is supported by ranges of columns of the corinthian order; a considerable addition is at present being made to it". The proposed front referred to above was never executed and William Thackeray writing in 1843 made the following critical comments on the building:-"In one of the streets leading from the quay is a large dingy Chapel, of some pretensions within, but, as usual there had been a failure for want of money and the front of the chapel was unfinished, presently the butt-end of a portico and walls on which the stone coating was to be laid. But a much finer ornament to the church than any of the questionable gew-gaws which adorned the ceiling was the piety, stern simple and unaffected, of the people within". It seems obvious from this account that Roberts had intended to include an lonic portico in the design. Thackeray's unflattering referance to the ... questionable gewgaws' ... on the ceiling indicates that it had some docoration, it wasn't the painted arabesques as these were late 19th century.

Downey says that thefront was originally of hewn limestone from Kilkenny quaries. The present Baroque front was erected c. 1893 of both stone and is in keeping with Robert's palladian ideals even though it is a century later.

However, there are two pedimented lonic doorways on either side of the main facade which are probably part of the original design, they are exactly like those in the Protestant cathedral.FIG 31

The catholic cathedral is very warm and Meditterranean, while the Protestant cathedral is cool and northern, Roberts designed both buildings to suit the two religions.

He was over 80 when he designed it but was still mentally and physically active. He was used to getting up at six in the morning to superintend the workmen at the cathedral. One morning he mistakenly got up at three and found the building deserted, he sat down in it and fell asleep. As a result of this he got a chill which resulted in his death soon after at the age of 84.

### Chamber of Commerce c.1795



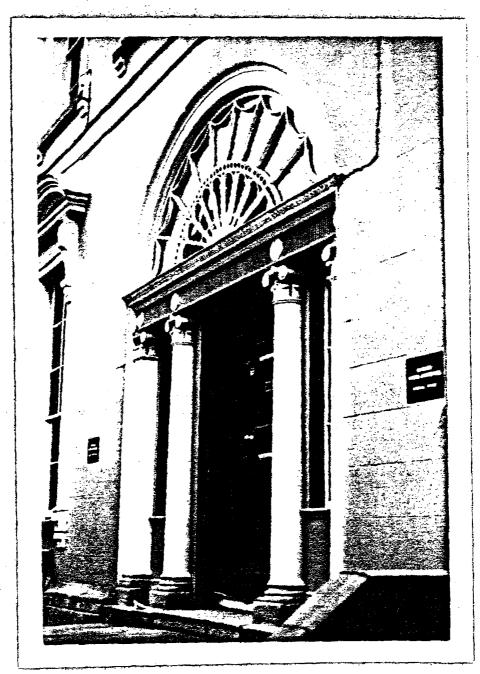


FIG 33

### The Chamber of Commerce C.1795

The building is situated in O'Connell street (formerly King st.) FIG32 and faces down Gladstone street (formerly Georges Street) to the river. This was a fashionable residential street and still contains some substantial Georgian houses, although much altered.

The house was built by Roberts as a private house for William Morris at a cost of £10,000. Downey dates it to 'about 1795' but it is possibly about ten years earlier on stylistic grounds. William Morris's family had been prominent in Waterford. His grandfather owned a big Tan-yard in the city. His father married a Kilkenny Heiress and in 1775 had property in Kilkenny and Co. Waterford valued at £3,000 per annum. His family was one of the richest in Waterford even so the size and magnificence of his house is surprising. The great mass of the house which dominates Gladstone Street is impressive.

It is of six bays and four storeys over basement. There is a beautiful wide doric doorcase with large fanlight. The windows FIG 33 have been given victorian surrounds, the walls are rendered, the basement and parallel raised coigns are of sandstone. The building is topped by a stone cornice and parapet.

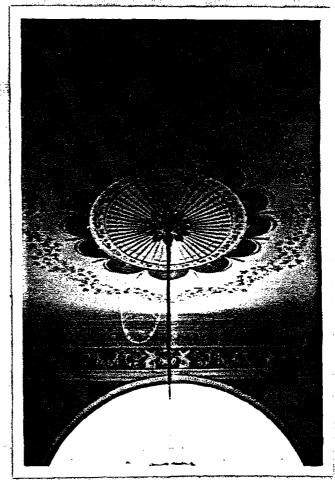


FIG 35

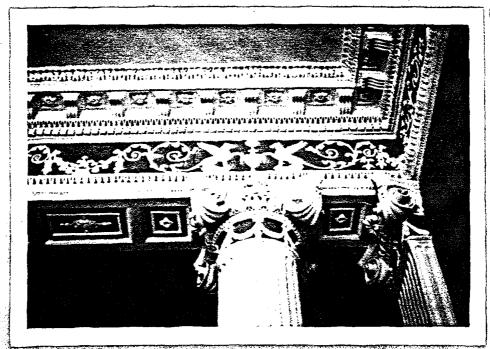


FIG 34

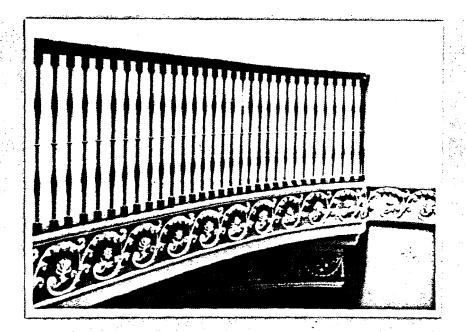
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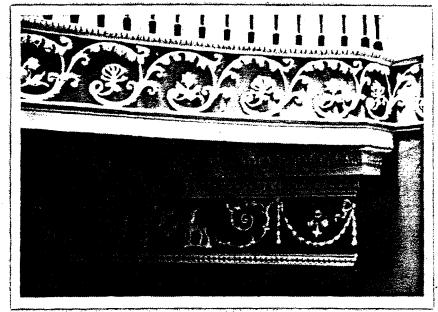
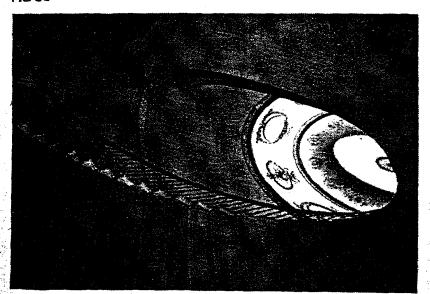


FIG 36



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### The Interior.

Inside the house there are a series of beautiful 18th century rooms which are adorned with exquisite plasterwork which is the highlight of the house.

There is a nice square entrance hall with paired fluted doric FIG 34 columns and entablature, acting as a screen at the north end. There is a beautiful frieze and cornice with winged horses, urns and swags. The ceiling has a fan effect centrepiece with swags and foliage surrounds. FIG 35

A door to the left of the hall at the north end leads into the finest feature of the house, the oval staircase. An exquisite flying staircase of wood ascends the full height of the house, it has delicate brass balasters. The stairwell is top lit by a glass sky-light.FIG 36

There are two delicate friezes running under and off the top landing about half way up the stairwell, with flowers and deers. Apart from these the walls are plain until one reaches the top of the stairs and sees the dome of the stairwell. This is covered in FIG37 exquisite plasterwork with beautiful plaster eagles springing from the wall in high relief recalling Robert West, above are garlands etc.. There are also beautiful curved doorways leading off the stairwell. The whole ensemble makes one of the most elegant staircases in Ireland.

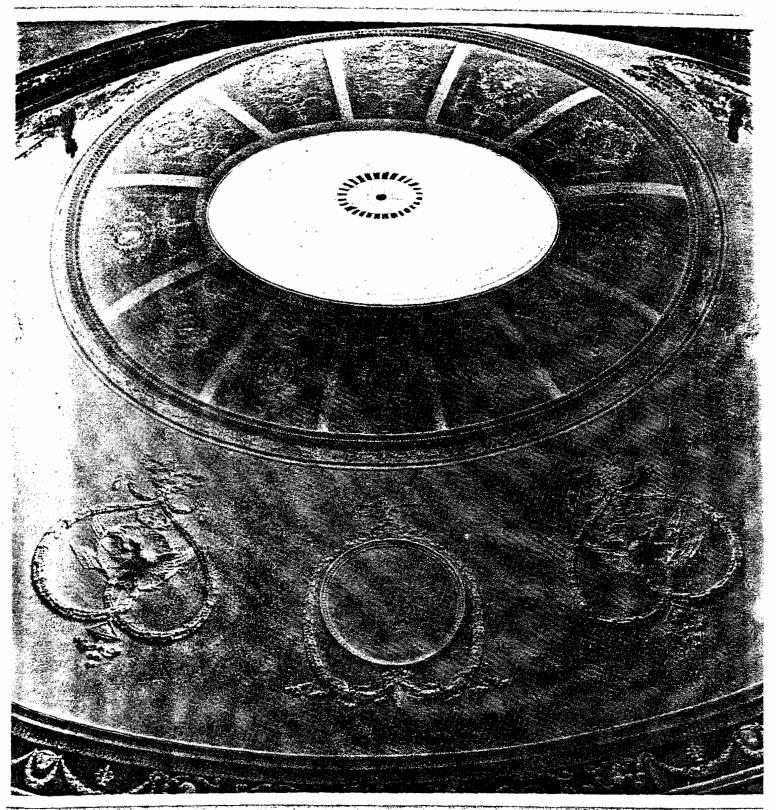


FIG 37

 $\Box$ 

<u>(</u>)

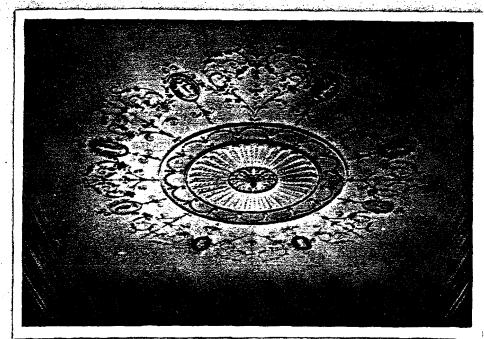
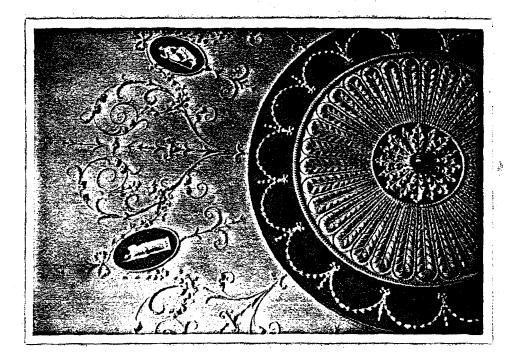
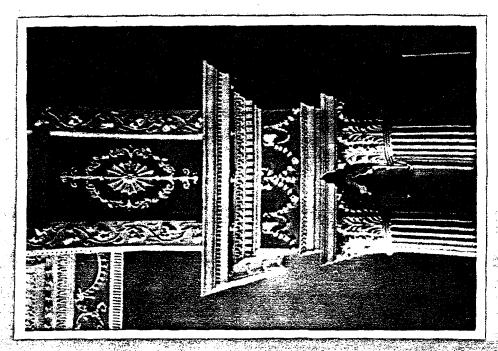


FIG 38





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Maurice Craig in his An Foras Forbartha report on County Waterford says there are similar staircases at Milltown Castle, Cork and Rosegarland Co. Wexford, which may be by Roberts.

A door leads off the stairs to the first floor landing, a large FIG 38 room of similar proportions to the front hall. It has an arched screen with paired fluted columns at the north end. There is a very fine delicate frieze, and a good ceiling with figured medallions. The room to the left has an elaborate ceiling of floral designs FIG 39 with an central classical medallion with figures. In the dining room on the ground floor there is an unusual frieze with forks, spoons a coffee pot and tea urn, eggs and egg cups, ewer and cream jugs.

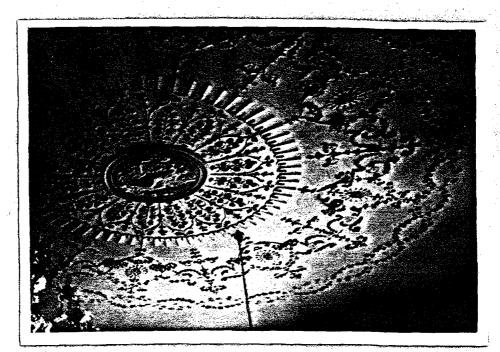
The plasterwork is in the manner of Michael Stapelton and has been attributed to Patrick Osborne a Waterford Stuccodore, about whom little is known. If it is by Osborne then it clearly shows how competant some of the provincial craftsmen of the period were.

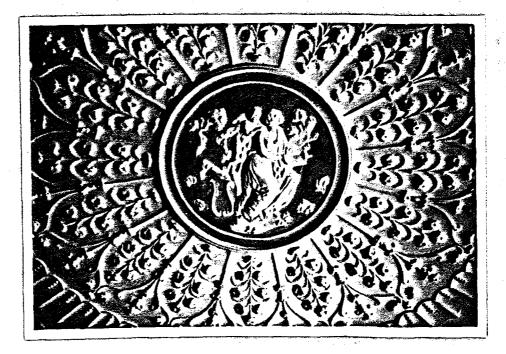
(See Appendix I)

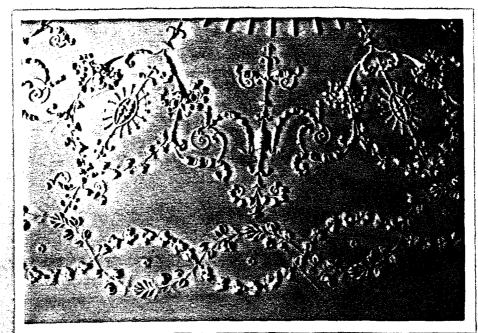
There are elements of neo-classic details both in the planning and decoration of the building.



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### Other Works Attributed to Roberts.

Tyrone House Co. Galway built 1779 has been attributed to Roberts. FIG 39

This attribution is given in an article on the house by Gordon St.

George Marks in the Irish Georgian Society Bulletin. He mentions

a letter from a Gordon Joyce dated November 11th 1970 in which he says:-

"The name of the architect for Tyrone House was Roberts. I met a Grandniece of his about 50 years ago. You know of course that the man forgot the staircase and as a result had to substitute a wretched narrow one, which more or less spoiled the house"

The following is a description of the house from the Georgian Society 12 records:-

Name and Parish:- Tyrone House Drumacor
Architect & Date:- 1779

Original & present owners:- Christopher St. George,

Representatives of the late

Christopher french St. George.



**FIG 39** 

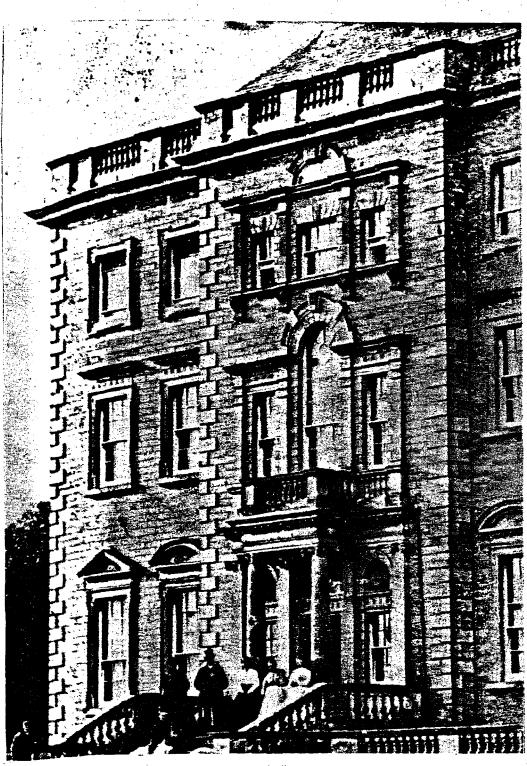


FIG 40

### PARTICULARS:

'Large square house of blue limestone, and portico with two Doric columns; Venetian window in centre; alternate stone coigns. Paved hall is decorated in plaster panels, with classic medallions and festoons; in a niche is a life-size marble statue of Usher, Lord St. George. Spacious dining-room has elaborate ceiling in low relief with oval group in centre, and frieze showing Adam influence. There is a siena and white marble nantel; dimensions similar to the drawing room, which has ceiling in low relief and elaborate overdoors. Pretty Adam ceiling in morning-room, there there is a good mantel in two marbles. Coved Adam ceiling office. Poor staircase.

The house was extremely heavy, built in the Palladian style. It was of three storeys over basement and five bays. There was a central breakfront containing a doric portice and above it two FIG40 Venetian windows. All the windows had architraves. The building was topped by a heavy cornice and balustrade, it had a high roof and two massive chimneys.

The house is unique in its way compared to other Irish houses of the period. It appears to have the heavyness of a 17th century house. There is a very rich sculptural effect in the decorative stone carving. It is difficult to find any particular motif peculiar to Roberts work.

The House was burned in 1922 and its desolate ruin was acquired by the Irish Georgian Society. The house was the inspiration for Somerville and Ross's -

### \*The Big House of INVER\*

Another house which has been attributed bo Roberts, by Maurice Craig is Rosegarland Co. Wexford.

Much of these attributions are speculative with little to back them up. Obviously much more research needs to be done and there is a possibility that plans or letters may be found to throw some light on the buildings and their architects.

#### Conclusion

John Roberts died in 1796 aged 84 years, and with his passing went the great age of Waterford architecture.

In his will dated March 10th 1796 he bequeathed to James Reynett attorney, and Rev. George Louis Fleury, his dwelling house.
"Wherein I now live, situate near Christ Church yard", together with his household goods, plate, linen, etc., his wife to have the use thereof during her natural life. To his son George premises called the 'New Rooms' near the Mall, to his daughter Mary Ann Humphreys he left an annuity of £25. To his other children he bequeathed money and houses in various parts of the city.

It is fortunate that Roberts Waterford buildings survive relatively unscathed apart from the usual 19th century 'Improvements'.

He has made a remarkable contribution to Waterfords architectural heritage and the city can be proud of his buildings. However, Roberts work does have its faults which is, maturally, as a result of being provincially based and not being open to too many new trends and ideas. Roberts was first and foremost a Palladian, but he does use neo-classical elements in his later buildings. His early work is greatly influenced by Gibbs and he may indeed have possessed one of his pattern books. He would also have had an oppurtunity to see Gibbs work in London when he was sent there as a young man.

His early work on the fore-court at Curraghmore house is remarkably accomplished and shows that he did travel outside the country and his liking for Baroque. He may have been in contact with the Sardinia architect Davis Ducart which might account for the Baroque influence in his work.

#### REFERENCES

- 1) 'The Roberts family of Waterford'
  - William J. Bayley Journal of the Waterford Archaeological Society 11 pp. 98-103.
- 2) In James Gibbs (1682-1754) 'Book of Architecture' published London 1728, there is a list of subscribers among which is listed a 'John Roberts Esq., Roberts would have been 17 years when it was published.
- 3) See 'Curraghmore Co. Waterford' by Mark Girouard in country life, 7th, 14th, and 21st February 1963.
- 4) Maurice Craig 'The Architecture of Ireland from earliest times to 1880' Batsford/Eason 1982.
  P. 215

See also 'The Churches & Abbeys of Ireland'
Brian de Breffny & George Mott,
Thames & Hudson 1976 VP. 132.

- 5) In the drawings collection of R.I.B.A. London.
- 6) Bayly op. cit.
- 7) Arthur Young A Tour in Ireland 1776 1779 (p.132-133)
- 8) Edmond Downey The story of Waterford p. 81, Waterford 1914
- 9) Samuel Lewis Topographical Dictionary p. 692 of Ireland Vol 11 London 1837.
- 10) William Thackeray -'The Irish Sketch Book' London 1843 pp. 50-51.
- 11) Gordon St. George Mark 'Tyrone House' in Irish Georgian Society
  Bulletin.
  July December 1976.
- 12) The Georgian Society Records, Vol 5 p. 91. Irish University Press, Shannon 1969.

# Patrick Osborne - Stuccodore.

Little is known about Osborne but his name is recorded on a rare set of accounts giving details of stucco-work done in Castletown

Cox House in Co. Kilkenny which was built by Davis Ducart C. 1767. (A)

The total bill came to £696-10<sup>S</sup>-5<sup>d</sup>. The plasterwork here is Rococo, the drawing room has a well modelled ceiling and the cornice has lions heads. The drawing room has several large plaster panels with festoons, the cornice has lots of birds. FIGS 41,42

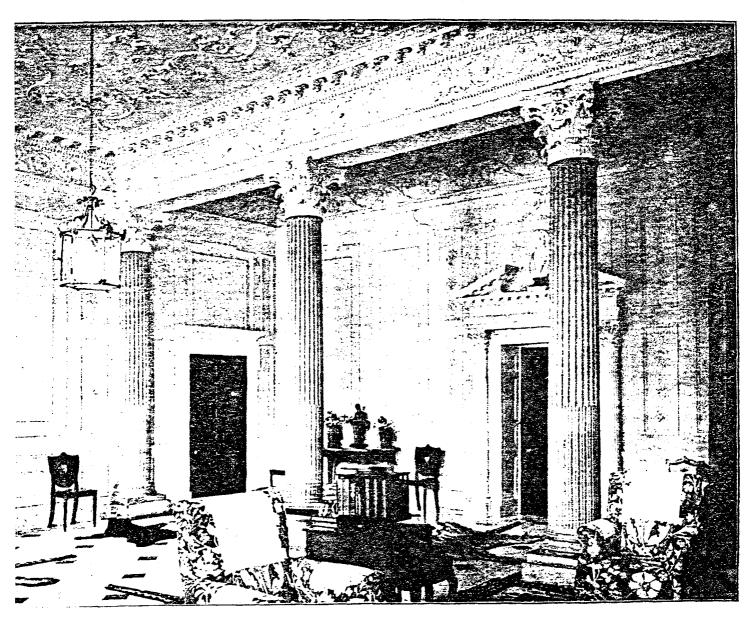
Osborne is also said to have carried out the plasterwork in the (B) Mayoralty house Cork built again by Ducart C. 1773. The staircase ceiling and reception rooms have rococco plasterwork which is less refined than that at Castletown Cox. Stylistically the work at the Mayoralty House is Rococco, that at Castletown is more refined, and that in the chamber of Commerce is in the Adam style and influenced by Michael Stapleton.

Osborne is also said to have executed the stucco work in Cappoquin(C) House Co. Waterford. This is a late 18th century house. The hall has fine Corinthian columns at the back, the staircase is top lit and is also decorated like the Chamber of Commerce.

Osborne is included in C.P. Curran's List of Dublin Plasterers'as (D) working in 1774.

# He also says:-

"In many houses of minor importance throughout the country one may detect the naivety and inconsequence of the untravelled, inexperienced practitioner, but in many others and from an early date the work is in no way inferior, either in conception or execution to that of the metropolitan artists, Patrick Osborne's work at Castletown Cox and the Chamber of Commerce is a notable example".



CASTLETOWN.-THE HALL.

- a) See 'Irish Houses & Castles' Desmond Guiness

  William Ryan

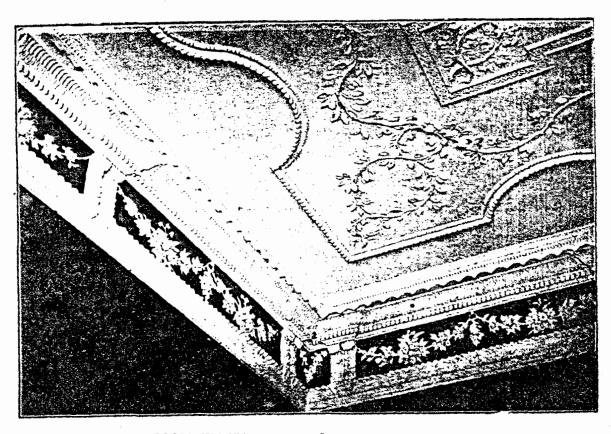
  pp. 218, 223, 282

  Thomes & Hudson 1973

  The Georgian Society records Vol 5

  pp. 72-76

  p. 79,80.
- b) 'Portrait of Cork' T.F. McNamara printed by Watermans, Cork 1981. pp. 50,52,53.
- c) An Foras Forbartha National Heritage Inventory County Waterford 1976. Maurice Craig and William Garner.
- d) 'Dublin Decorative Plasterwork of 17th & 18th centuries'
  C.P. Curran Alec Tiranti, London 1967.
  See (Note 60) pp. 95, 45, 2.



CASTLETOWN FRIEZE IN SALOON.

# EXTRACT FROM THE GEORGIAN SOCIETY RECORDS VOL 5

Since our account of the decoration of Castletown (Cox) was put in type, we have received from Lady Eva Wyndham Quin the following interesting document, communicated to her by Col. Villiers-Stuart, the former owner of the mansion. It is of unique value, both in demonstrating our contention that the plaster-work was carried out by Irishmen, and in informing us of the cost of this type of ornament. Patrick Osborne was probably a Waterford plasterer, though he doubtless received his inspiration either on the Continent, or from imported modellers. Generally speaking, his moulding is softer, more delicate, and confined more to regular forms than the human model, as was the case with the Franchini and Cramillion, whose respective gods and angels sprawl on the ceilings of Carton and the Rotunda Hospital Chapel. John Nowlan, whose name appears as witness at the foot of the Bill, is stated to have been Clerk of the Works during the building operations.

The Mesurement & Bill of the Stucco Work done in yo New Building at Castletown.

294 ft. of Corinthan Entablature in the Great Hall :	and	Drawing	£	s.	d.
Room		. @ 5s. ft.	73	10	0
96 , of ornament Entablature in y Saloon		. @ 5s. per ft.	24	0	0
104 , of Ionic Entablature in y' dining parl' .		- 4s. 6d. ft.	23	8	0
279 ,, of Entablature with dentiles in y back parlour b	break	fast room ,			
& bed chamb over the saloon	•	. @ 15. 3d. ft.	17	8	9
138 , of ornamented cornice in the Corridores each sid	le of	the Great			
Hall &			20	14	0
55 ,, of Scrole ornament on the Great Stairs		. @ 25. 6d. ft.	б	17	б
74 , of Doric Entablature in the Great Stairs .	•	. @ 5s. ft.	18	10	0
24 ,, of Cornice enrich4 under y* gallary of y* Great S	tairs	. 2Os.	2	0	0
85 , of Archatraves round y Wind of Do.		. @ 8s. ft.	2	16	6
446 ,, of Astragal moulding in the Staircase & Hall		@ 3d. ft.	5	11	б
32 , of bedmould under the Strings of the Stairs .	,	. @ 15. ft.	1	12	0
15 , of Cornice moulding on the Gallary of y Stairs		. @ 15. ft.	0	15	0
181 , of Moulding in pannell in the Staircase Wind	₹ ап	d circular			
head door		. @ 3d.	2	5	3
-53 , of Stop moulding round y' wind of y' Stairs .		, @ 2d. ft.	0	8	10

-	€.	s.	d.
1806 ft. of Moulding on pannells of the Staircase & Hall . @ 4d. f	t. 🕉	2	0
151/2 ,, of circular archatrave round y' staircase door . @ 1s. f	. o	15	6
791/4 ,, of plain Entablature in y bedroom over y back parl . @ 110	l. 3	13	6
1591 , of plain cornices in y bedroom over y back parl . @ 5d f	t. 33	2	1.1
760 , of plain mouldings in the uper Story @ 30	l. 9	10	0
102 , of Staff moulding in the uper Story	l. o	I 2	9
758 yds. of plain coated ceilings @ 6d. p. yd	l. 18	19	0
1906 , of coated walls	39	14	2
173 " of cove ceiling	6	9	9
707 , of wall plaistering for Paper @ 3d. ,	8	16	9
Breakfast Room Ceiling ornamented and 3 in y cornice	. 18	0	0
Dining Parlour Ceiling ornament <sup>4</sup>	. 34	2	6
Walls of the Dining Parlour pannell and ornament	. 55	0	0
Drawingroom Ceiling ornament <sup>d</sup>	. 45	10	Q
Saloon Ceiling ornament <sup>4</sup>	. 45	0	0
Hall and Staircase Ceilings ornamented	. 60	0	0
4 Corinthian Capitols in the Hall	. 11	7	6
4 Circular Head Wind in the Hall & Salloon . @ £2 5s. 66	. 9	2	0
43 Festoons in the pannell of the Great Hall @ 16s. 3d		18	9
56 Festoons in the Great Stairs @ 115. 43/20			0
	£696	10	_5 ==

Rec<sup>d</sup> from His Grace the Lord Arch Bishop of Cashell the sum of One hundred & Sixty-two Pounds, five shill<sup>s</sup> and ninepence, which with severall sums rec<sup>d</sup> before makes the sum of Six hundred and ninty-six Pounds ten shill<sup>s</sup> and five pence being the Contents of the within bill and in full of all Acc<sup>ts</sup> this nineteenth day of Aug<sup>t</sup> 1774.

per sert. Jnº Nowlan. Patk Osborne.

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# THE IRISH BUILDER

#### DEC. 11878

### NOTES OF WORKS.

WATERFORD CATHEDRAL.—It is proposed to re-creet the spire of Christ Church Cathedral, Waterford.—The cost is estimated at about £2,000, of which £800 is already in hand. At a meeting on the 16th nlt., held in the Protestant Hall, a sum of £360 was collected, including £100 from the Marquis of Waterford, and £100 from the Bishop of Cashel

# JAN.1 1891

#### RESTORATION OF WATERFORD CATHEDRAL.

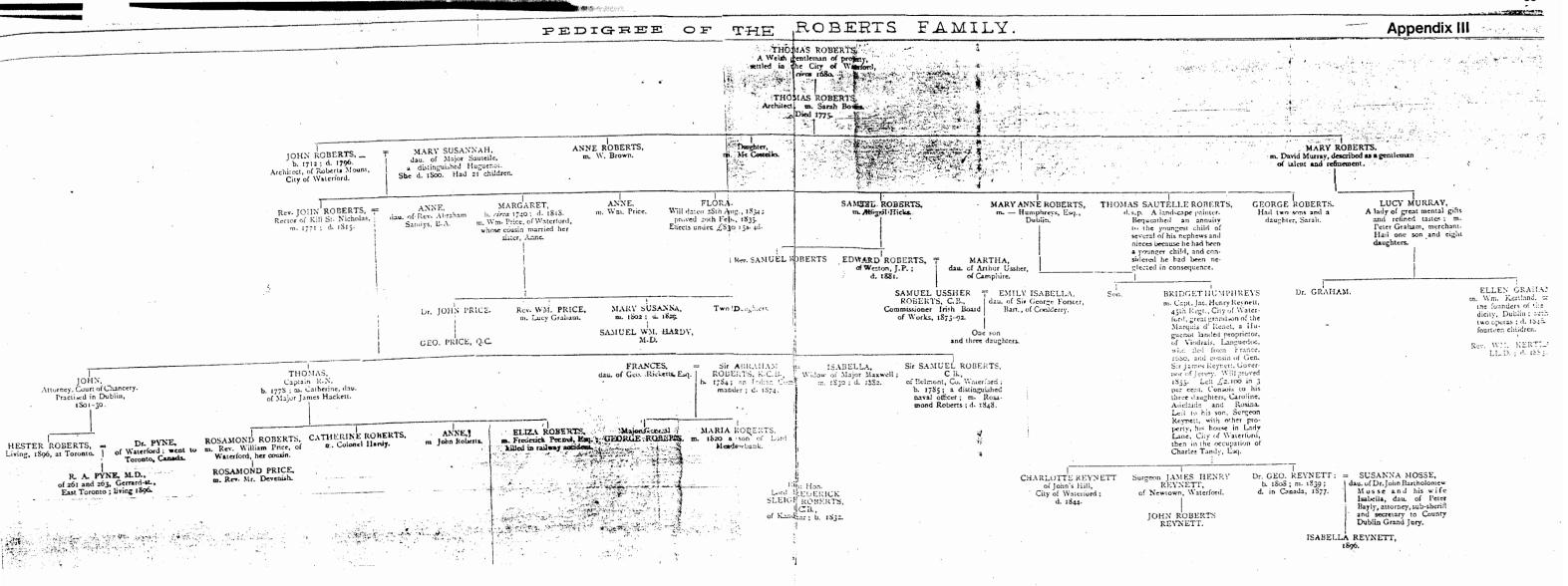
CATHEDRAL.

It is now just a year since the work of restoring the Cathedral began; and those who have had an opportunity of inspecting its progress have from time to time noted that extra works have been undertaken and improvements suggested by Mr. Drew have been adopted and in several cases already carried into effect. A handsome marble liming with stone base and cornice, to correspond with the marble pedestals of the pillars, has been added to the side walls of the chancel enclosure. The chancel windows have been raplaced by new windows in keeping with those in the inner vestibule, and a very ornamental cornice has been carried from the corner pillars to the top of the reredos. The harsh and prison-like appearance of windows has been quite removed by a simple but effective moulding round the opes. It was not at first intended (from motives of economy) to put now windows into the outer vestibule, but when the new arch which practically makes the interior one was finished, the old sashes hooked so out of keeping with the new, that many members of the congregation expressed a wish to have them also renewed. The Select Vestry, however, did not feel justified in incurring this additional expenditure, amounting to about £150, and this improvement would not have been undertaken but that some friends volunteered to present five of the six windows, and possibly before they are finished, the remaining window may also be presented. It was found necessary to re-floor the whole of the church with wood and marble pavement, and a cut-stone plinth has been placed under the panelling of the outside walls.

# RE-OPENING OF WATERFORD CATHEDRAL.

The Cathedral of the Trinity, Waterford, was re-opened on the 26th ult, after having undergone alterations, which were commenced on January 6, 1890. The alterations that have been made are a development of the capabilities of the original building. The old galleries have been removed, and the building up of the lower range of windows, and the lighting from the upper windows is part of the work carried out. The church, which was divided into two sections, has now been opened up by an arch. With the part of the work carried out. The church, which was divided into two sections, has now been opened up by an arch. With the removal of the cross-wall and cross-gallery came the removal of the organ to the east end. The dark closets called "stalls," formerly under the gallery, have also been removed. At the east end of the church an enclosure of seats for clergy and choristers together has been made. The choir fittings are of oak. The pulpit embodies, in a new design, parts of the former one, which was a memorial of the late Bishop Daly. The marble lonic columns on which the body of the pulpit formerly rested, now are grouped around it, and surmounted with a deep entablature and cornice. The chancel floor is of Italian mosaic, executed by Oppenheimer after the architect's general plan, designed by Mr. R. Canlfield Orpen. The arms of the See of Waterford, and the device of the capitular scal appear on either side, and an emblem of the Trinity, adapted from an ancient one found on a token among the ancient burials in Christ Church, Dublin, pervades the design. The altar rails are of gilded Wrought, ironwork, executed of gilded Wrought, fromwork, executed ancient burials in Christ Charch, Dublin, pervades the design. The altar rails are of gilded wrought fromwork, executed by Singer and Sons; of Frome; Somerset, and are surmounted by a brassrail. The sanctuary walls are lined with red Cork marble, and carved Caen stone, as adado that corresponds with the pedestals under the nave columns. On the walls will be placed two marble tablets, one of which states that the sanctuary floor is a memorial of the late Mr. and Mrs. Meara, of May Park. On the other will appear the following memorial of the Cathedral:— The Danish Christchurch, or Cathedral of Waterford, was founded here by Ragnvald, son of Sigtryg, the Norseman, circa 1050. It was extended by salesin; and adorned by the Anglo-Normal Markers in the Early English style, are saided. There was added to it in the fourteenth and filteenth centuries, Trimty Parish Charch and the chapels of St. Nicholas, St. Saviour, St. Catherine, and St. James—these buildings (the foundation whereof yet remain beneath the present floor) were pulled down in 1773. The new cathedral completed 17773.

John Roberts, architect. Partially destroyed by fire, 1818. Altered, adorned, and adapted to cathedral use, 1891—Thomas Drew, R.H.A., architect. The old tesselated marble floors have been re-laid in the long central passage from the west ent to the choir. The west entrance doorway, not yet erected, will be the gift of the Board of Trinity College, Dublin, It is some 180 years old, recently removed from the college library, and mades of stone from Scrabo mountain, in the Go. Down. Architraves have been added to the windows, formerly rude apertures in the walls, and the windows bave been filled with muliions and new the action of the college library and mades of stone from sorabon mountain, in the walls, and the windows bave been filled with muliions and new three of the college library and made of the college library and made of the windows have been filled with muliions and new three of the college library and made of the college library. rude apertures in the walls, and the windows have been filled with mullions and new glazing of leaded cathedral glass. The walls glazing of leaded cathedral glass. The walls have been coloured in two tints, divided by a carved cornice taken from the old gallery front. The nave has been re-seated with newly-constructed henches out of the materials of the old ones. The monuments have been cleaned and restored throughout. The architectis Mr. Thomas Drew, R.H.A., F.R.I.B.A., of Dublin. Mr. A. P. Sharp, Dublin, has been the contractor for the work at a cost of about \$24,000. The carving is by Mr. Henry Emory, of Dublin. ahour P4.000 Fine Emory, of Dublin.



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