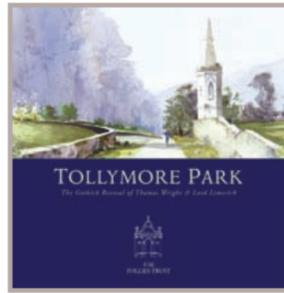


BOOKS

**TOLLYMORE PARK:
THE GOTHICK REVIVAL
OF THOMAS WRIGHT
AND LORD LIMERICK**

by Peter Rankin.



It will not be the fault of the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society (UAHS) nor of The Follies Trust if we fail to acquaint ourselves with the magical landscape of Tollymore Park or the individualistic and enchanting work of the Wizard of Durham, Thomas Wright (1711-1786). Indeed the author of this booklet, Peter Rankin, stated as early as 1975 in the UAHS publication on buildings in the Mourne area that "Tollymore Park is arguably the finest 18th century demesne in the north of Ireland, its estate and garden buildings and structures both in quantity and quality rivalled only by those at Hillsborough and Downhill, its picturesque qualities rivalled by neither".

Thirty years later the UAHS published the Earl of Roden's fascinating account of his family's estate, Tollymore : the Story of an Irish Demesne, which includes detailed reference to the various structures designed or inspired by Thomas Wright. Wright himself has been the subject of a number of publications most notably those by architectural historians Eileen and John Harris whose foreword to this book helpfully sets his work at Tollymore in a wider context; and in 1993 Wright was the subject of an exhibition, with accompanying guide, at Durham University Library. As recently as last month a fascinating account of Wright's work, A polymath in Arcadia: Thomas Wright 1711-1786, was published in the Journal of the Garden History Society by Judy Preston. Wright's own publications on arbours and grottos are described by the Harrises as "the most beautiful design books in the whole century"; his work on the principal ruins, curiosities and ancient dwellings in the county of Louth, Louthiana, published in 1748

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was a direct result of his invitation to visit Ireland by Lord Limerick, in whose ownership Tollymore Park was at this time, and to whom Wright's book is dedicated.

To add to the body of literature on the work of Thomas Wright we now have Peter Rankin's meticulously researched booklet on the buildings and structures at Tollymore Park published by The Follies Trust. This beautifully produced and highly informative work was published to mark the restoration of three of Lord Limerick's follies on the edge of the park. The structures were conserved by The Follies Trust in memory of the historic buildings and conservation architect, Dick Oram, who lived nearby until his death in 2008 and who did so much to ensure that ▶



Above / Folly A.

Below / Horn Bridge, by or after a design of Thomas Wright, erected perhaps c.1770 to take the carriage avenue over the stream and pathway from the house down to the Shimna river.



Above / The Clanbrassill Barn and vista as seen from within the Bryansford Gate.

▶ buildings and structures such as those described in this book should be protected for this and future generations to enjoy. Indeed at the launch of the book at Tollymore, architectural historian Dr Edward McParland drew an elegant parallel between Dick and Thomas Wright quoting the 18th century poet Elizabeth Carter who described Wright as someone who "seems to have had the power not only to conjure up immense celestial worlds but also to enchant all who ever met him with his humour, generosity and eccentricity, his extensive knowledge and unbridled imagination".

The introduction to Tollymore Park describes the families who owned the estate, Lord Limerick (later Clanbrassil) and his descendants and then the Roden family who inherited the estate in 1798. The author also briefly touches on landscape gardening in Ireland and, in more detail, on the work of Thomas Wright at Tollymore in particular the qualities of his Gothick approach there. The bulk of the book of course describes in detail the fifteen structures in the park most of which have a clear connection with Thomas Wright – the

Barbican Gate, the house, the pavilion, the barn, the bridges, the hermitage, the cascade, the follies and the gates. The descriptions are accurate and evocative with frequent reference to that most edible of (Irish?) architectural terms - the bap-stone. It is particularly useful to have information on the structures which we can no longer see for ourselves such as the House which was demolished in 1952. Rankin notes that the house saw an early example of the use of the octagonal or canted bow in Ireland. Wright was an astronomer and mathematician as well as an architect and garden designer

Below / Folly B following restoration in 2010.



and inspiration for his designs often came from his knowledge of astronomy and the planets. The bow window was just one example of Wright using his knowledge of one discipline to inform another and in this case ensured increased light was brought into the building.

This is a readable, beautifully illustrated and informative booklet and easily affordable to boot. Congratulations are certainly due to The Follies Trust which has not only ensured that the enchanting Lord Limerick Follies have been preserved to cheer us all up as we beetle along the road to Hilltown near Bryansford but also, by publishing this excellent booklet by Peter Rankin on the Gothick Revival of Thomas Wright and Lord Limerick at Tollymore Park, has drawn our attention to a magical landscape and delightful structures of major importance on our doorstep. ●

Karen Latimer

Tollymore Park: the Gothick Revival of Thomas Wright and Lord Limerick
by Peter Rankin. The Follies Trust, 2010.
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BOOKS



Above / Thomas Wright 1737 by the Irish mezzotintier Thomas Frye.