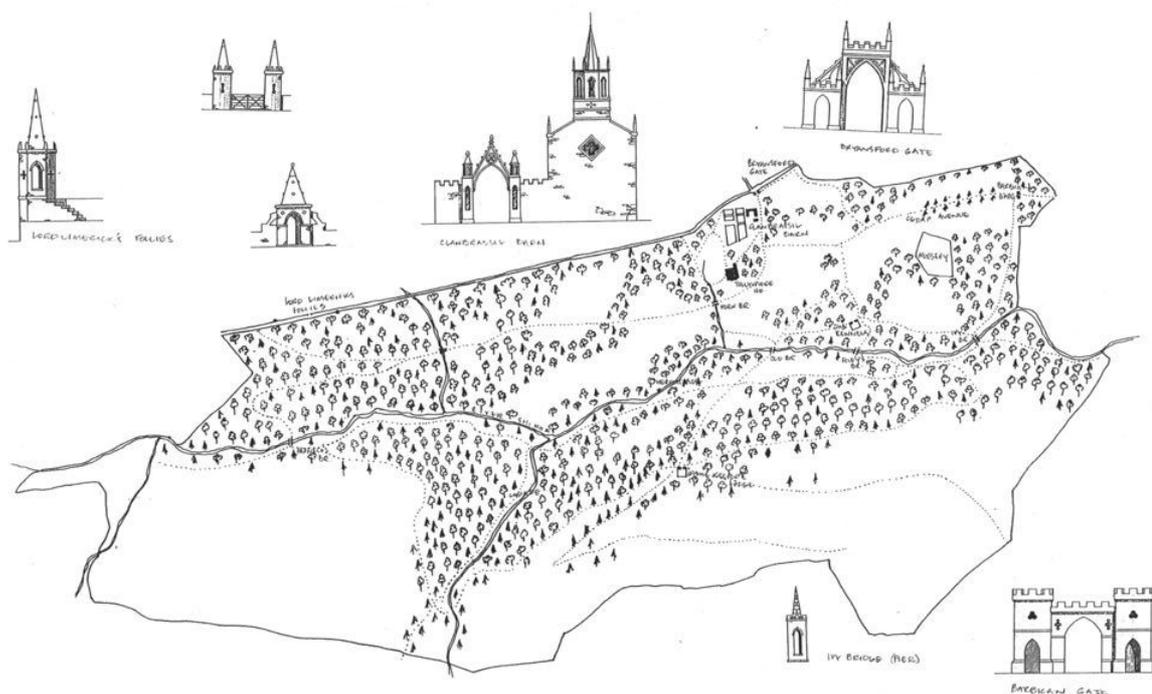


TOLLYMORE PARK – A GUIDE TO THE FOLLIES & GARDEN BUILDINGS



Tollymore Park by James Howley

This guide shows how the follies and garden buildings in Tollymore Park inter-relate with each other and the landscape for which they were designed. They were specifically created and positioned to provide a very clear and easily read framework to the demesne. The appearance of a folly or building in a particular location directs the observer to recognise some special quality which warrants greater attention. Not all buildings fulfil this dual function, but it is surprising just how many do.

Follies and garden buildings were found not only within demesnes but were in many cases located around the outer edges, sometimes set into boundary walls to create variety or mark a point of entry. They may also have been constructed to give clues to ownership and so avoid confusion with the walls of nearby demesnes; or in the case of gate lodges, to provide a foretaste of the main house beyond.

Tollymore Park needed little improvement when Thomas Wright, the garden designer, mathematician and astronomer known affectionately as the 'wizard of Durham', and Lord Limerick commenced work in the eighteenth century. The demesne had the Mourne Mountains as a magnificent backdrop, the Shimna river flowing through it and the sweep of Dundrum Bay just two miles away. The estate – still largely intact today, though without its house – is vast in scale and is one of the greatest natural-style demesnes found anywhere in Great Britain or Ireland.

The demesne's follies and garden buildings are mainly concentrated in two separate zones. One of these is around the perimeter on the northern and eastern sides, which are bounded by roads. (The southern and western edges run into the mountains.) The second is along the Shimna Valley, which runs west to east along the full length of the demesne. Nearly all of the buildings are of relatively modest scale and simple construction. Most are of rubble-stone, with rough-cast render. Naturally-sculpted bap-stones (so called because of their similarity to small, round loaves of bread) provide occasional embellishment. Of the two groups, the buildings on the perimeter are the most elaborate.

Two of these perimeter structures, the Barbican and Bryansford Gates, mark the major entrances to the demesne. The castellated Barbican Gate (*fig. 1*), c.1810, on the eastern edge, was probably the principal entrance, as it leads into a grand avenue of mature cedars before sweeping around to where the house originally stood. Tollymore House was demolished in 1952 – it occupied the site now used as a car park. The gate has two circular crenellated towers on either side of a pointed archway, with quatrefoil loopholes, blind trefoil reveals and a walkway between the towers above the gate.



Fig. 1 Barbican Gate

On the northern edge is the Bryansford Gate (*fig.2*), which is in a refined cut-stone Gothick style, in contrast to the cruder rough-cast of the Barbican Gate. The three-arched gateway was erected in 1786, of finely cut granite with crocketed pinnacles and a battlemented parapet. A pair of flying buttresses spring from the pedestrian gate openings alongside. The Bryansford Gate may have been intended only as a service entrance as it passes both the barn and the stables on its way to the front of the house. It does, however, provide one of the most memorable and enduring views of Tollymore, which has changed little since the time of its creation. This includes the spire of the mock-church barn, framed by the central arch of the gateway, with the distant mountains rising above the tree-line (*fig.3*).



Fig.2 Bryansford Gate



Fig. 3 View of the demesne looking through Bryansford Gate

On the Hilltown road, the White lodge or West gate lodge (*fig. 4*) marks a minor entrance to the estate. It was designed by John Birch in a half timbered Tudor Revival style and erected in 1876.



Fig. 4 West gate lodge, Hilltown Road

Clanbrassill barn (*fig. 5*) was built c.1760 of rubble stone with granite detailing; the tower and spire were added in 1789. The building is rectangular in shape with a shallow pitched roof; the spire rises from an octagonal drum with blind and louvred openings. Above the cornice are eight slender granite pinnacles. The building has openings in a variety of shapes, from rectangular windows to a pointed arch fanlight and ventilator, and lozenges with quatrefoils inside. The courtyard at the side of the barn is entered through an elaborate archway flanked by blind recesses topped by stone lanterns with acorn finials. There is also much bap-stone decoration in evidence here.



Fig. 5 Clanbrassill Barn (James Howley)

The mid-eighteenth century Horn bridge (*fig. 6*) is a rendered structure with a central pointed arch flanked by blind quatrefoils, piers and a crenellated parapet. This bridge has some design features in common with the Barbican Gate. Just above the Horn bridge is the Lion's mouth fountain (*fig. 7*). Probably dating from 1810-20, this is a cube-shaped granite block with decoration and a small moulded lion's head with water spout.



Fig. 6 Horn Bridge
(*photograph ©James McEvoy*)



Fig. 7 Lion's mouth fountain

Apart from Horn bridge, there are a number of interesting crossings over the Shimna river. These include Ivy bridge (*fig. 8*), which has a date-stone of 1780 and the letter 'C' surmounted by a coronet. Foley's bridge (*fig. 9*) is single span, of rubble stone construction, and dated 1787; the arch is semi-circular with large, inset bap-stones. The bridge is narrow, with low, sloping parapet walls which appear to grow from the rocks on either side of the river. The dedication 'Ht Foley' is probably for one of the nieces of the Countess of Clanbrassill, both named Harriet. The Countess's maiden name was Grace Foley.



Fig. 8 Ivy bridge



Fig. 9 Foley's bridge

The earliest structure spanning the Shimna is Old bridge (*fig. 10*), inscribed 'IH 1726' and 'Repaired 1822'. The Altavaddy bridge, built between 1780 and 1800 (*fig. 11*) is located on the Spinkwee river, close to its confluence with the Shimna. It carried the drive across the river. Parnell's bridge, which has a date-stone of 1774, is said to be named after Sir John Parnell, one-time Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer and a friend of the 2nd Earl. Maria's bridge was erected c.1815 and named after the wife of the third Earl of Roden.



Fig. 10 Old bridge



Fig. 11 Altavaddy bridge



Fig. 12 Hore's bridge

Hore's bridge (*fig. 12*) has a date-stone of 1824 on one parapet and a scallop shell on the other. All the bridges in Tollymore are vital links in an extensive network of serpentine paths that wind through woodlands, and run alongside and across the river, creating one of the most memorable and delightful walking routes to be found in any Irish demesne.

There are records of wooden bridges which have not survived; beside the Hermitage (*fig. 13*) are the fixings of a suspension bridge erected in the nineteenth century and demolished in 1936. The Hermitage was built c.1770 in memory of Lord Clanbrassill's friend, Lord Monthermer. It is 12 feet long, located 20 feet above a deep pool in the Shimna river and built – with a domed ceiling – into the rock. A hermitage was an important part of an eighteenth century designed landscape, and this one at Tollymore conforms to the ideals of the time. It is well hidden and has all the necessary components for contemplation: a beautiful romantic location in a natural landscape, with a bench inside and a pool of water below.



Fig. 13 The Hermitage

Lord Limerick's Follies

On leaving the demesne through the Bryansford Gate, continuing along the boundary wall on the northern edge of the demesne, you encounter the small cluster of follies known as Lord Limerick's Follies (*figs. 14-16*). They were erected c.1780 to identify and relieve the monotony of a dull boundary wall, and to provide a sample of the delights to be found within. Two of the follies are entrances, one providing pedestrian access to the estate and the other to a field.



Fig. 14 Folly A

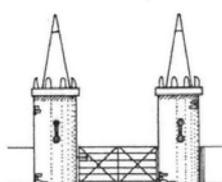


Fig. 15 Folly B



Fig. 16 Folly C

Folly A is a cube-shaped structure with a pyramid on top (*fig. 14*). There are bap-stones on each face and an egg-shaped bap-stone as a finial. Small, stepped flying buttresses on either side link the folly to the boundary wall. The blocked recess was once an entrance to the demesne. Folly B (*fig. 15*) is a pair of cylindrical, lime-rendered gateposts leading into a field. Each pier has a conical spire with a surround of bap-stones and blind arrow-slits. Research indicates that the present gate is probably a replica of the original. Folly C (*fig. 16*), the tallest folly, looks like a church spire and was the boundary marker between the Clanbrassill and Downshire estates. It is located opposite one of the original entrances to the demesne. Like follies A & B it is an interesting play on geometric shapes: the base is circular and the middle section is a hexagon topped by a tall, tapering cone with bap-stone decoration. There are alternate, blind quatrefoil loopholes and pointed arch recesses around the hexagon, and a set of stone steps lead to a small landing.

In 2010 follies A, B and C were conserved by the Follies Trust in memory of the conservation architect Dick Oram, with funding from his family, friends and colleagues.

Primrose Wilson.

The author of this article is indebted to James Howley, who allowed her to use and adapt his material, drawings and map. All the drawings in the text are by James Howley, and are his copyright.

The following publications provide more information about Tollymore Park:

- Howley, J. (1993). *The Follies and Garden Buildings of Ireland*. London: Yale University Press. Reprinted with a new chapter in 2003.
- Rankin, P. (2010). *Tollymore Park – the Gothick Revival of Thomas Wright & Lord Limerick*. Belfast: Follies Trust.
- Roden, Earl of. (2005). *Tollymore: the story of an Irish demesne*. Belfast: UAHS.