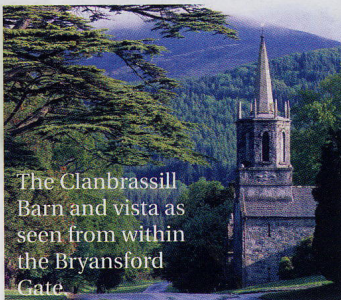
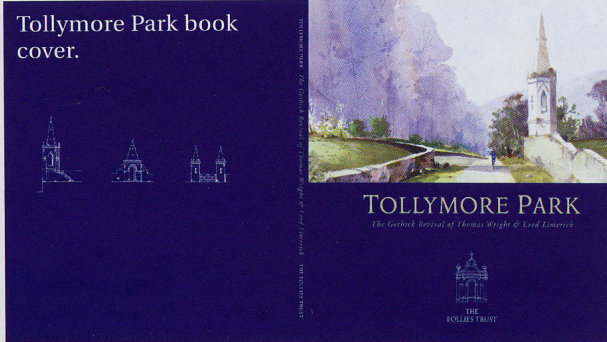
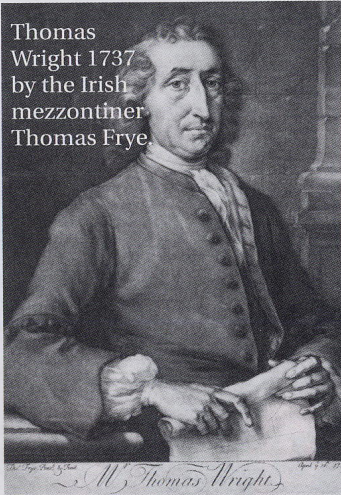


Memorable Days Out

Paul Harron finds a new book on the fascinating history of the curious structures adorning Tollymore Park captivating.



excellent array of supporting images including reproductions of historic paintings and photographs which bring the characters and structures involved to life.

Eileen and John Harris write a foreword telling us about the architect/inspiner of Tollymore's buildings, Thomas Wright (1711-1786), even if he was in their words 'an elusive figure'. An amateur architect and landscape designer whose drawings, they say, were of unparalleled beauty in his time, he was also an astronomer and mathematician who is thought to have satisfactorily explained the origin of the Milky Way in his book on the theory of the Universe in 1750. He became familiarly known, rather colourfully, as 'The Wizard of Durham'. A traveller across Britain, he came into contact through a network of aristocratic connections with James Hamilton, Viscount Limerick, later first Earl of Clanbrassil, of Tollymore, at his home in London, hence his designs for Tollymore.

A great many people will have enjoyed memorable 'days out' or even holidays to Tollymore Park in Co. Down, enjoying the walks, playing 'hide and seek' with the kids, attempting to master the stepping stones without falling into the river and, no doubt, being struck by the wonderful collection of curious buildings and follies dotted around the glorious grounds. Indeed, some readers may well have chosen Tollymore as the setting for their wedding photographs – it may even help that the Clanbrassill Barn looks so much like a pretty country church.

In his preface to this brand new book on Tollymore Park – and specifically its Gothick Revival structures – from the indefatigable Follies Trust, Lord Roden explains that the Park is not just charming but 'one of the foremost eighteenth-century landscape demesnes in the British Isles' and it contains the most extensive example of Thomas Wright-designed or inspired architecture in these islands.

It is in recognition of the importance of these buildings that the Trust has

engaged Peter Rankin to write this informative 56-page book and, moreover, tasked itself to carry out much-needed conservation on Lord Limerick's follies on the edge of Tollymore Park, in memory of the eminent and sorely missed conservation architect Dick Oram who died in 2008 and who lived nearby.

Informative

The publication is a follow-up to the Follies Trust's first book, Knockbreda: Its Monuments and People, another very successful little volume which formed part of the Trust's efforts to help inform the wider public about the monuments, mausolea and follies in our midst, as well as its work in so impressively actually effecting the restoration of important such structures which have been falling into disrepair and deserve some twenty-first-century TLC.

With Tollymore Park, the Trust has followed the same format which it adopted for the companion Knockbreda book: it is very attractively designed and produced, with an

Peter Rankin – retired solicitor with a long-standing interest in architecture, founder member of the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society and author of the UAHS book on the Irish building ventures of the Earl Bishop of Derry amongst various other contributions to the Society's publications – provides a valuable account of both the first and second earls of Clanbrassil as well the later inheritors of Tollymore, the Earls of Roden, before going on to describe in appreciative detail the qualities of Wright's Gothick designs. He also provides a useful contextual chapter on the Arcadian landscape gardens which owe much to William Kent's development of the Picturesque tradition.

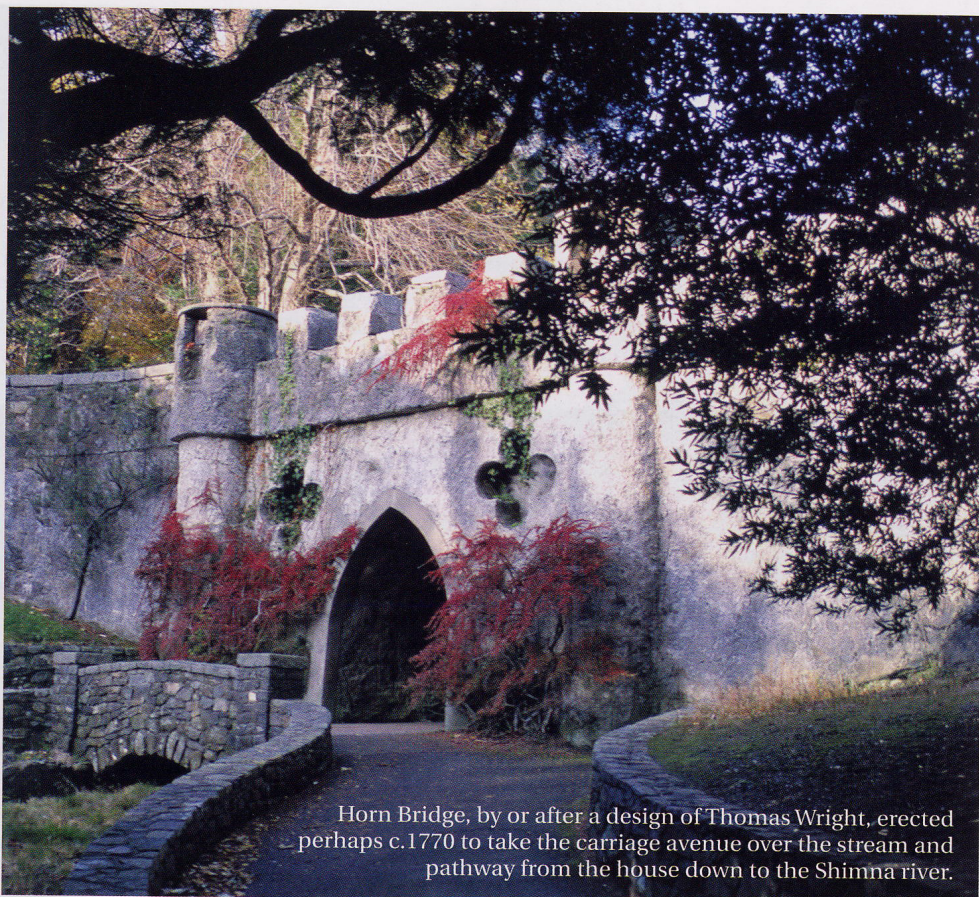
While there are other very fine eighteenth-century demesnes in the north of Ireland – as at Hillsborough and Downhill – Tollymore not only has the largest collection of Wright-related buildings and structures, but for its sheer picturesque qualities set against the Mourne Mountains, it is unrivalled, Rankin argues. Few could argue with that.

Gazetteer and Guide

Following the history about the people and 'setting the scene' in the contextual portion of the book, the second half of it forms a gazetteer of each of Tollymore's buildings and structures. This structure-by-structure approach means that the book can easily be used as a kind of guide book to those structures which survive – alas some have gone, including the main house in 1952 – during a walk through the Park, and many people will value it for that alone. It starts with the Barbican Gate and includes the handsome Clanbrassil Barn and its arched gateway, the Horn Bridge, the quirky Hermitage, the Cascade, the Ivy Bridge, the Bryansford Gate and Lord Limerick's Follies – those ornamental structures mentioned previously which the Trust has restored. These follies with no function beyond the visual, on the very edge of the demesne, are aptly described as 'spirited heralds of the structures of utility, clothed in the garb of delicious architectural embellishments, contained within the demesne itself.'

Perfect Stocking-Filler

Tollymore Park is another fine contribution to Ulster's cultural library. It will be a revelation to anyone interested in the demesne and its history, and, of course, its very special follies. Slim-line it may be, but not only is it solidly researched and meticulously referenced, but it is an elegant book and is very modestly priced at £5. Do make a point of getting a copy – hot off the presses only last month, it would make a great stocking-



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.

filler for anyone with an interest in antiquities, local history and the landscape, or simply for anyone familiar and fond of this wonderful part of the country.

For those who want to find out more about the Follies Trust – a charity with an active volunteer membership and which organises events as well as seeking to restore follies and other

interesting historic structures throughout Ireland – further information can be found at: www.follies-trust.org

Tollymore Park: The Gothick Revival of Thomas Wright & Lord Limerick by Peter Rankin is published in paperback by The Follies Trust, priced £5 and available from selected outlets or via the Follies Trust.

Lord Limerick Folly C, Hillotwn Road, Bryansford, watercolour by George Morrison (1915-1993).

