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A front lawn fit to fight in: Contextualising Mary Rosse's defence works at Birr Castle, Ireland (1846–48)

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A front lawn fit to fight in: Contextualising Mary Rosse's defence works at Birr Castle, Ireland (1846–48)

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines a nineteenth-century designed landscape in the form of the bastioned ditch which surrounds Birr Castle, County Offaly, Ireland, and the role of contemporary politics and military experience in its design and execution. Using contemporary plans, letters, and newspapers, it analyses the designs against the backdrop of the political and social climate of Ireland in the 1830s and 1840s to demonstrate how the unrest of the period influenced designed landscapes, and reflected the motivations and anxieties of its creators. This is a fresh contribution to militarised designed landscapes in the British Isles, which have previously centred on earlier English examples. Unique both geographically and in date, Birr Castle widens the existing discourse on such designs.

KEYWORDS

Designed landscapes; gentry estates; military architecture; military gardens; Ireland; 19th century

Introduction

Surrounding Birr Castle, Birr, County Offaly, Ireland, is a deep ditch with stone-revetted inner sides surmounted by a low earthen rampart. The overall design extends approximately 520m in length, 3–4m deep, and around 5m wide from the tops of the scarps to the counterscarps. At the front of the property these designs form a central bastion (Figure 1), overlooking the landscaped gardens of the wider estate and the Leviathan, the large telescope that Birr Castle is best known for (Figure 2). At the back of the property, facing towards the town of Birr, these defensive ditches are heavily overgrown, contain ruined outbuildings, and are surrounded by a substantial castle wall built at an earlier date.

These defence works were designed between 1846 and 1848, as a collaborative project by Mary Parsons, Countess of Rosse (1813–85), commonly known as Mary Rosse – wife of Sir William Parsons, 3rd Earl of Rosse (1800–67) – and her uncle, Major Richard Wharton Myddleton, a retired British Army officer (1795–1885). Traditionally the defences have been understood as one of the Parsons family's charitable attempts to provide employment to the local area during the Great Famine (1845–52), in which potato blight devastated crops, increased food prices, unemployment and starvation, and decimated Ireland's population through death and emigration. However, this was also a period in Ireland's history which saw nationalist, Catholic, and agrarian movements threaten and clash with the country's Anglo-Irish and protestant elite landowners. This research argues that civil strife, the fear it generated, and the need to preserve the established hierarchy of power, are essential for understanding the defence works at Birr Castle.

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Figure 1. View directly facing the bastion and castle. The use of ramparts elevates the opposite side of the ditch, though have lost definition over the years. *Source:* produced by author.

Discussion of the designs has remained underdeveloped and uncritical since Mark Girouard's brief mention of them in *Country Life* as 'Vaubanesque¹ fortifications – complete with culverts, demi-culverts and other refinements of 17th-century military strategy', though they are much simpler than the works of Vauban and his contemporaries (Girouard, 1965b, p. 528). An extensive work examining the 3rd Earl's life included a chapter focused on Mary (McDowell, Alison, Countess of Rosse, & Davison, 2014); however, discussions of the defence works remained slim, overshadowed by her other scientific and artistic achievements.

Birr Castle was first constructed in the 1620s by Laurence Parsons (*d.* 1628), whose family had come over to Ireland as English plantation settlers establishing the town of Birr, which until the end of the nineteenth century was named after them, Parsonstown. Prior to the building of the defences, the castle had been redesigned in a neo-Gothic style, largely by Lord Rosse's father. While defensive elements are found in neo-Gothic architecture, such designs were representative of aesthetic trends rather than genuine military concern (Girouard, 1965a, p. 469). Birr's bastions, ramparts, and ditches are a stark contrast to the Gothic revivalism of the rest of the property and other estates, instead reflecting contemporary notions of military architecture. That the designs might have served a true defensive purpose has only been entertained in passing (Girouard, 1965b; Loeber, 2015), and the research presented here represents the first attempt to consider them in any significant depth.

The discourse on military gardens and landscapes

Research into British and Irish military gardens over the last 50 years has focused on English gardens of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where contemporary military architecture was incorporated into country estates (Dixon Hunt, 2021; O'Neill, 1981; Tatlioglu, 2008;



Figure 2. Views of the bastioned front lawn taken from the roof of the castle. Originally, a flower garden was intended for the middle of the lawn. The famed ‘Leviathan’ telescope can be seen just behind the trees centre left. *Source:* produced by author.

Williams, 2000). Generally, these have been quantitative studies, each covering a variety of militarised gardens, for which the motivations behind their design could vary: displaying power and stability; commemorating war; showcasing mathematical and scientific knowledge; or simply for entertainment. More symbolic examples utilised clipped trees to represent standing armies, rather than the incorporation of actual military engineering (O’Neill, 1981; Tatlioglu, 2008; Williams, 2000).

With themes of commemoration, many of these designs reflected the past, yet they could also represent potential futures. In times of political tension or the threat of war, militarised gardens could have provided genuine defence, revealing the anxieties of their owners. Williams (2000, pp. 67, 69) suggests the ditch and bastion work which began in 1719 at Seaton Delaval, Northumberland – close to the Anglo-Scottish border – may have been done with the memory of the 1715 Jacobite rising in mind, serving as a precaution in the likelihood of a resurgence.

Regarding specific features of landscape architecture, ha-has – sunken walls which provide uninterrupted views of the surrounding countryside, whilst also acting as a barrier to wildlife and livestock – were seen as a repurposing of military engineering from the late seventeenth century onwards (Mansbach, 1982). Dixon Hunt (2021, p. 107) suggests the use of military bastions at estates like Grimsthorpe, Lincolnshire, in 1711 was a peaceful use of martial engineering to allow garden occupants to formulise understandings of the natural world beyond the confines of the estate. Birr Castle’s front defence works bear the look and function of a ha-ha, but by the late eighteenth century such designs had moved away from their military origins stylistically; as such, this return to a martial emphasis is unusual (Williamson, 1995, p. 46).

Examining such architecture in Britain’s colonial holdings reveals ulterior purposes as O’Kane (2021) argues of Phoenix Park, Dublin, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Here, layering of militarised spaces to include picturesque public areas could obscure their military nature by creating ‘centers of civility and politeness’ (O’Kane, 2021, p. 322). O’Kane’s work lends itself to broader topics of control and power, such as Mukerji’s (1997) in-depth work on the gardens of Versailles as a demonstration of the might of the French crown.

Methodology

This article is a qualitative case study of Birr Castle’s 1840s defence works, allowing the space for an extensive deconstruction of its architecture and the motivations behind its creation. To achieve this a wide range of sources are brought together: the surviving remains of the defence works as they stand today, their associated plans, private correspondence written to and from the Parsons family, as well as contemporary British and Irish newspaper articles covering the family and civil unrest of the period.

The motives of the garden’s designers will be assessed, informed by Tatlioglu’s (2008) emphasis on the importance of contextualising military gardens with the wider political and social factors of the period. Birr Castle’s defences were devised at a time when landowners faced pressure from disenfranchised groups—Catholics, tenant farmers, nationalists—who saw elite families in opposition to their goals of liberation. When these groups adopted violent methods, as with the Ribbonmen², we see the impact it could have on the family, and the potential it had to inform their architecture. The life and values of Mary’s husband, and her uncle’s military career are also considered. A close reading of surviving letters from uncle to niece, held at Birr Castle Archives (BCA) are used to gain insight to their relationship as family members, and as design partners.

The paper then describes the site as it is today, and analyses the surviving plans (held at BCA), highlighting specific military elements and terminology, and noting any key deviations both at the time of the construction and today. Of the design’s uses, consideration will be taken of how they could be used for peaceful purposes, and how their military function could be obscured as a result of non-military uses (Dixon Hunt, 2021; O’Kane, 2021).

The designers

Mary Rosse

Mary was the eldest daughter of John Wilmer Field (1775–1837) of Heaton Hall, West Yorkshire, marrying William Parsons, (then known as Lord Oxmantown), in April 1836. After her father’s death, Mary inherited a large part of his estate and rentals, which roughly amounted to £6,000,000 in land, and £260,000 in rental today. This influx of funding made many of the construction, creative, and scientific projects at Birr Castle possible, and so too the defence works (McDowell, Allison, Countess of Rosse, Davison, 2014). Only six years later *The Illustrated London News* (1843) praised Mary’s work at the castle and around Birr, demonstrating that her involvement in similar projects was already well established:

She has with most exquisite taste improved and made delightful the ground about the castle, and freely opens them for their accommodation ... She has raised the tone of its society; but she has done what reflects much more credit on her mind: she has taken the most lively interest in the poor, and is constantly improving and changing in order to afford them work. (*The Illustrated London News*, 1843, p. 166).

Here we see a duality in Mary’s interests, reflecting both her artistic drive and the need to help the township of Birr. The multifaceted nature of her works articulated in this newspaper article could equally be true of the later defence works, as a product to symbolise her creativity and charity, but with the added awareness of the need for a defensible home.

In her youth, Mary would have had knowledge of Ireland's instability as her uncle Richard had served there in 1823 suppressing agrarian dissidence, in living memory there had also been the failed 1798 Rebellion by Irish republicans. Following her marriage and immigration, Mary would have become even more aware of the political troubles of Ireland, and of the potential threats that her family faced as members of the country's landed elite. Calls for greater Catholic equality and separation from Britain grew across Ireland in the 1830s, resulting in attacks on county landowners. In 1839, Hector John Graham-Toler, 2nd Earl of Norbury, was assassinated in broad daylight outside his home at Durrow, County Offaly, by Ribbonmen. Norbury's daughter Elizabeth had been married to Mary's brother-in-law, Laurence Parsons, and the events deeply affected her own husband, Lord Rosse (Hogan, 2014, p. 113; Shields, 2014, p. 136). Mary's son, Randal Parsons (1848–1936), attested to this in recollections of his childhood, remembering the caution his father took at his own estate:

I can remember times of great unrest, murder and robberies of arms. My father used to go out to the telescope to observe with pistols in his pockets. The lands near the telescope were kept cut down to a foot or two [30–60cm] in height, so as not to afford cover for an evilly disposed person to be concealed. Yet I do not think there was any real danger, as the family was very popular ... The King's County Militia had their headquarters in the new stables and my father was Colonel of the Militia, so we felt quite secure. The lower windows of the castle were furnished with iron linings to the shutters and all necessary precautions were taken. (Parsons, n.d., as cited in Mollan, 2014, p. 6).

Randal's recollections offer an insight of how Lord Rosse had not only designed the immediate landscape surrounding the castle to provide safety, but also maintained the wider landscape of the estate to ensure vigilance against potential assailants. That the county militia was headquartered in the castle stables and that Lord Rosse had a chief role in their organisation, made the Parsons family active participants in the maintaining of British control in Ireland, and thus potential targets for attack.

In a broader European context, during the years of the design's drafting, countries across the continent experienced upheavals leading to the 1848 Revolutions. Irish participation in this, in the form of the Young Ireland Rebellion, was minor, in part because the Great Famine had limited the ability for mobilisation (Kinealy, 2009, p. 282). In hindsight, upheavals in the late 1840s were quickly forgotten, though elite landowners at the time could not have known that. Mary's designs being influenced by the need to keep her family safe during a time of county, country, and continental uprising against traditional hierarchal structures were not unwarranted.

The gender subversions of Mary's designs are also worth highlighting. While the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have been understood as periods of active involvement by women in creating and maintaining garden landscapes and architectural projects (Groag Bell, 1990, pp. 473–474; O'Kane, 2004), that she places military defence works on them – generally regarded as masculine forms of architecture – lends itself to the perceived gravity of the threats the estate faced. Mary is part of a long tradition of elite women who took an active role in the defence of their estates, most notably in the 1640s during the English Civil Wars (Plowden, 1998).

The experiences of Lord Rosse were a likely inspiration for his wife's designs at Birr Castle. In March 1820, an event known as the 'Siege of Birr' took place, in which hoax death threats of alleged Ribbonmen were made to Mary's future husband and his father. This resulted in a large battalion from Templemore being sent to guard the castle and town (Shields, 2014, pp. 127–128). Though these threats would amount to nothing, his mother was said to have been heavily distressed by the experience, expecting her husband and children to be killed (Cooke, 1875, p. 110). Real or imagined, it served as a reminder of the very genuine tensions in the country at the time.

Lord Rosse also displayed anxiety over the possibility of separation of the Union, his words being published in a local paper that there would 'be an immediate clashing followed by a complete separation, and that followed by a civil war as sanguinary as any on record' (*The King's County Chronicle*, 1848, p. 1). His correspondence with Major-General John Fox Burgoyne

(1782–1871) in late 1843 give details of his interests in military defence. Burgoyne served in the Royal Engineers, having extensive experience of the sieges and siegeworks of the nineteenth century, and at this point was chairman of the Board of Public Works in Ireland, during which he produced a report on how to best secure the country against insurgency in 1844 (Sweetman, 2008). Only Burgoyne's replies are kept at BCA, but for Lord Rosse to have reached out to such a leading figure on military engineering underlines how serious he was about the matter.

In a letter dated 1 January 1844, Burgoyne replied to a letter from Lord Rosse agreeing to send him 'a copy of a paper I have drawn up on the Defence of Building' (BCA/J/7/1, p. 1). In Lord Rosse's subsequent reply, he seems to have recounted to Burgoyne the advice he had given on the use of sandbags, possibly looking to him for affirmation that his suggestions were sound. Indeed, Burgoyne's follow-up letter on 9 January praised the advice as 'excellent', going on to stress the importance of flanking positions, 'Flanking³ a building however & particularly the doors, by fire from a height not easily obstructed is the best security against any thing' (BCA/J/7/5, pp. 1, 3). Malcomson (2008, p. 73) has suggested Lord Rosse reached out to Burgoyne for advice on fortifying Birr Barracks at nearby Crinkle, or for his own mock fortifications. If so, Burgoyne's remarks on the importance of flanking positions, and providing fire from a height may have explained why a bastioned ditch was included in the designs.

Richard Wharton Myddleton

Richard Wharton Myddleton was Mary's maternal uncle through his sister Anne (1779–1815), and would visit her at Birr many times throughout his life, travelling from his home, Leasingham Hall, Lincolnshire, accompanied by his wife, Francis (Wharton Myddleton, 1879, p. 197). Presumably, it was during these trips that Richard helped conceptualise and oversee these designs, though he would also communicate his ideas via letters.

Of his military record, Richard served in the 12th and later 71st Regiment of Foot, fighting in the Peninsular War and serving in the army of occupation in post-Waterloo France until 1818, with later service in Ireland (1823), Canada (1825–32), and Bermuda (1832–34) (Bromley & Bromley, 2015, p. 112; Wharton Myddleton, 1879, pp. 166, 170–171). Both his military training and the countries he toured would have provided him with the knowledge needed to assist with the designs at Birr Castle.

Richard's service in Ireland made him familiar with the potential threats his designs sought to prevent. In 1823 he served in Ireland as part of the 1822 Insurrection Act, his company travelled to Castletownroche, County Cork, where they apprehended suspected agrarian agitators (Wharton Myddleton, 1879, p. 171). Soon after, newspapers reported how a 'Captain Middleton' (a misspelling of Myddleton), survived an assassination attempt while travelling on horseback from Formoy to Castletownroche, where assailants' gunfire had missed him in a roadside ambush. The motive of the attack was speculated as revenge against Myddleton 'having being active in the late arrests' (*The Belfast Commercial Chronicle*, 1823, p. 2).

Surviving letters from Richard to Mary suggest a close relationship between the two. On 22 October 1853, he mentions sending her the first sampler⁴ his sister Anne (Mary's mother), had made at school:

I hasten to fulfil my promise of sending you the first piece of work my dearest sister Ann now half a century old ... I do not part with it without considerable upset ... take it then my dearest Mary & Treasure it up as memento of her who died too soon (BCA/J/19).

In a letter dated 26 July 1856 – sent following a partially surviving letter of sketches for the gates to the entrance of the castle – Richard admitted to rushing these concepts:

I was so ashamed of the hurried and unfinished state I sent the plan of your Entrance Gates off ... you will have the kindness to let me know what you really think of this design for a Gate. (BCA/J/19).

Richard admits that after sending the earlier letter it had been on his mind ever since, suggesting he was just as invested in these plans as Mary. The underlining of 'really think' by Richard, suggests Mary had possibly been reserved in airing her feelings towards his designs previously, perhaps out of not wanting to offend her uncle. Unfortunately, none of the letters discuss the design process of creating the ditch itself.

Both designers had first- or second-hand experiences of the need to provide adequate defences for Birr Castle. For Mary it would have been to defend her home and family, while still putting her architectural stamp on the estate. Whereas for Richard, his military experiences in Ireland would have made him well aware of the threats his beloved niece's family may have faced. Combined with the potential knowledge of military engineering he held, Richard would have been both willing and capable of offering help.

The plans and surviving remains

Birr Castle faces directly northwest, however, in the plans the ditches are named in relation to their position to the front of the property, as opposed to their genuine geographical positioning. The north, east and west defences create a recessed lawn at the castle's entrance. Of the four ditches, the north ditch remains the most intact. Its scarp with the addition of its grass-covered ramparts, makes it taller than its opposite counterscarp by a few feet. The counterscarp is sloped, covered entirely with grass as a natural continuation of the wider landscape. Crossing the north ditch is a keep, also designed by Mary. Overgrowth of vegetation and the poor condition of the buildings



Figure 3. Framed designs for the defence which surround Birr Castle. Note the unexecuted ornate flower beds intended for the front of the property. True north orientated northeast. Source: BCA/O/32-3.⁶ Image taken with the permission of Birr Castle Archive.

within the east and south ditches prevents them from being accessed, though it was once possible to do so from the small garden at the back of the castle. The ground space here is wider than in the north ditch, achieved using near-vertical stone counterscarp walls, as opposed to the grass slopes. These sides are enclosed in the castle's large outer wall. The west ditch has been altered considerably, the counterscarp and the land beyond it were flattened to create a garden terrace in the twentieth century. On this side, a steep slope leads several metres down to the River Camcor.

With the security provided by topography along the west ditch, and the earlier walls along the eastern and southern ditches, it is possible that the northern front received the most militarised design with its central bastion to make up for its lack of pre-established defences. As part of the Birr Castle's front entrance, the decision to include military architecture may have been a display of the family's power to those who approached.

The known designs for the defence works consist of three plans, two of which include Richard's handwriting; presumably, the sketches were his (Malcomson, 2008, p. 114). The most striking design feature is the unexecuted flower garden intended for the front of the castle where the lawn is today (Figure 3). Two of the plans are similar (one with Richard's writing, the other not) in that they only focus on the flower garden (Figures 3 and 4). Both had issues with scaling, as the garden did not properly line up with the entrance doors of the castle and is offset towards the carriage drive. In the plan without Richard's writing, a series of eight yellow squares are interspaced along the slope into the flower beds, which may have represented urn and pedestal planters, as one is faintly sketched on the side of this plan (Figure 4).

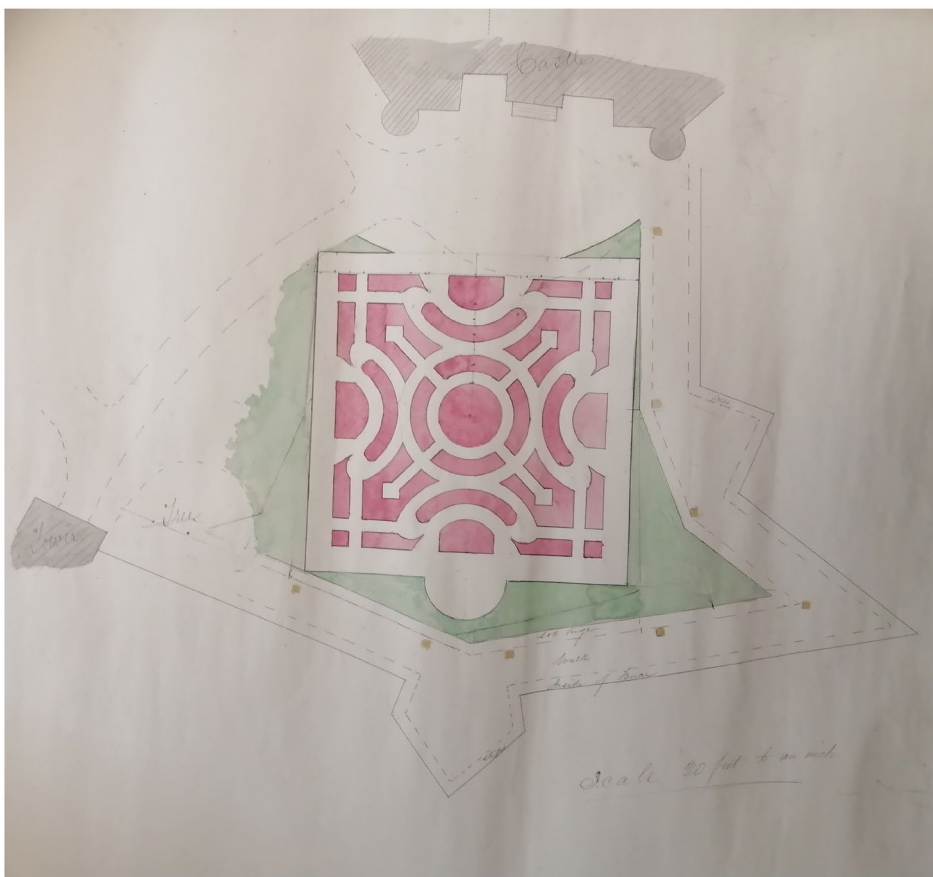


Figure 4. An incomplete plan of the front-facing defence works. True north orientated southwest. Source: BCA/O/34. Image taken with permission of Birr Castle Archive.

The last plan is the most complete, showing how the defence works surrounded the entirety of the castle, and military terminology is used throughout by Richard in labelling the bastion, ramparts, ditches, and palisades (Figure 5a). Of note in the unexecuted flower garden for this plan are four grey circles, which may represent another attempt to incorporate the ornate planters. These non-combative features show that these designs were conceptualised as multifaceted spaces that could provide defence and pleasure. The north ditch was blocked at each end preventing further access into the ditch works: its north-western point by a wire fence that is now gone, and its north-eastern point by an iron palisade, though this area is now so overgrown it is unknown if elements of it remain.

Steps, which are now blocked, were built into the central bastion leading into the ditch, whilst steps on the counterscarp lead towards the telescope. Steps are also present on the west side of the front-facing defence works leading into the west ditch, and through some sort of tunnel path that led to the river walk and suspension bridge. It is possible these steps leading down from the bastion would have been gated for added security, just as the entrance from the south-west bridge which crosses the west ditch does today (Figure 5b).

The plan shows buildings intended to be located within the east and south ditches, which are now derelict: the workshop in the south ditch, which Mary used to create the iron gates for the keep; and the laundry and drying rooms in the east ditch (Figure 5c). Included at the bottom of this plan is a cross-sectional view of the castle (Figure 5a), spanning from the north to the south ditch, which demonstrates how the south ditch's walls supported a roof for the workshop. The plan also depicts an unrealised curtain wall running across the east ditch, and a proposed extension to the castle itself (Figure 5c).



Figure 5. (a) Framed presumed the final design of Mary and Richard's defence works. True north orientated northwest. Source: BCA/O/32-3. Image taken with permission of Birr Castle Archive.

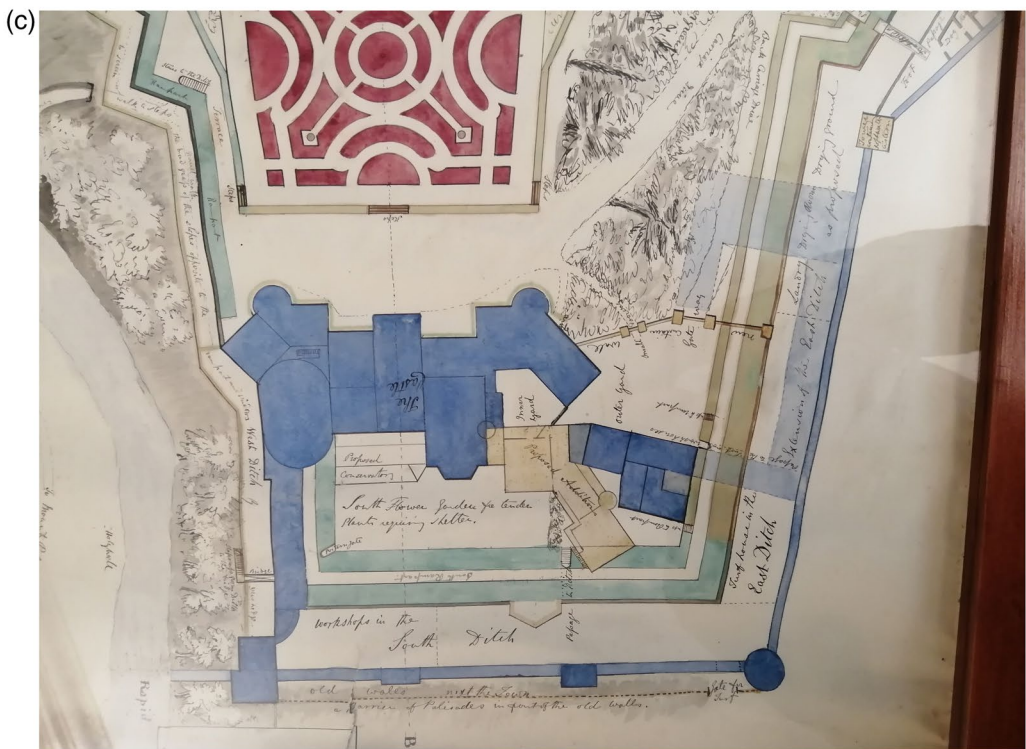


Figure 5. (b) Detail of the north ditch and bastion. True north orientated northeast. Source: BCA/O/32-3. Image taken with permission of Birr Castle Archive. (c) Detail of the south and east sides of the ditch. True north orientated northeast. Source: BCA/O/32-3. Image taken with permission of Birr Castle Archive.

An additional watercolour sketch shows the designs for the front gatehouse keep. Similar in style to the cross-sectional drawing of the castle. The intended military use of this is explicit, with the keep being stationed by soldiers (Figure 6).

The contrast between the harsh angles of the military bastions and ditches against that of the rounded shapes provided by the flower beds may have been an attempt to lessen the martial nature of the space, either making the location more pleasurable to the families' eyes, or as O'Kane's (2021) study of Phoenix Park suggest, a deliberate attempt to conceal or lessen power at a site that was peaceful.

Comparing the plans to the site today, the most obvious omission is the front flower beds. The only horticultural consistency that remains here is the inclusion of the trees that run alongside the carriage drive from the keep. Richard's letters shed possible light as to why this part of the plans was never followed through. In a heavily damaged letter dated 28 October 185[?]⁵, Richard wrote to his niece:

I must say your [gardeners?] have not a fair chance. The [grounds?] under Gardeners are miserable material to work with and in your case far two [sic] few under any circumstances for the [quantity?] of ground to keep in order. (BCA/J/19).

Clearly one possible reason for the plans of the garden falling through was the quality of the estate's assistant gardeners, be that down to a lack of skill, experience, or motivation, as well as their low numbers, making the work necessary to complete the flower beds impractical. This harsher tone directed at the assistant gardeners may be reflective of Richard being accustomed to the discipline and expertise of the engineers and sappers of his service. This honesty towards Mary, especially after he had asked for the same from her in the earlier letter, is again revealing the closeness of their relationship.

Despite the flower garden never being realised, the subsequent lawn provided the ideal space to host events. In February 1851, Lord and Lady Rosse hosted a fireworks display, using the front lawn as the stage for the event. A depiction of the event from *The Illustrated London*



Birr Castle Archives

Figure 6. Watercolour plans of the keep. Note the soldier on the station in the right-hand picture. Source: BCA/O/30. Image provided courtesy of Birr Castle Archive.

News (Figure 7) shows elevated crowds at the back of the drawing, suggesting the ramparts provided higher seating for the rear members of the crowd.

With the opening up of the west ditch through the creation of the garden terrace (Figure 8), the stone scarp's heat-retaining quality has allowed plants requiring warm climates to grow, such

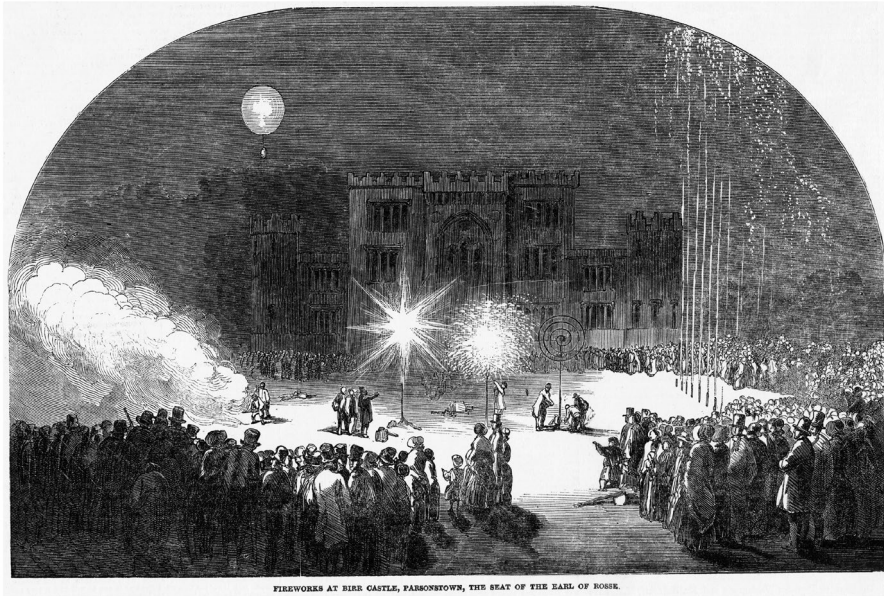


Figure 7. The front lawn of the castle being used for a fireworks display. *Source:* The Illustrated London News, 1851, p. 137. © Illustrated London News/Mary Evans Picture Library.



Figure 8. View looking towards the castle from the north-west of the ditch, which has been opened up to create a terrace garden. Trees and flowers are grown against the ditch wall, allowing plants from warm climates to successfully flourish. *Source:* produced by the author.

as *Magnolia delavayi* (Bowe, 1986, p. 124). In these instances, the use of military architecture for non-martial purposes is reminiscent of Dixon Hunt's (2021) examinations of peaceful uses of military designs in earlier English gardens.

Conclusion

This case study shows that the military designs around Birr Castle, and the nature of their origins, are complex. The political situation in Ireland, threats to the Parsons, and the military experience of Richard Wharton Myddleton combine to create a particular set of circumstances which contributed to the conceptualisation of the defence works. The overtly military nature of these designs should not be understood solely as Richard using his knowledge of military engineering from his past career to aid his niece in one of her many projects. Both designers had experience of the specific political and social problems in Ireland which would put Mary and her family in danger as members of the landed elite.

This article has advanced the knowledge of the incorporation of militarised designs on country estates. Compared to earlier English examples where relative stability meant military designs were to commemorate the past, at Birr Castle they were inspired by county and countrywide upheavals past and present. These were designs which were meant to provide a sense of protection for those within, whilst conveying a sense of impenetrability and power to those looking from the outside. Yet, these designs were not entirely Spartan – they were also conceived as spaces to be enjoyed, such as the undeveloped flower bed on the front lawn, and the subsequent space it provided to host events like the fireworks display. Whereas the workshops along the south ditch provided a location for Mary and Lord Rosse's creative endeavours.

Notes

1. Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban (1633–1707), the famed French military engineer.
2. Supporters of Ribbonism, an agrarian popular movement of poor Catholics against their living and working conditions, in opposition to landlords and the Orange Order.
3. This and all subsequent underlining was done by the letter authors.
4. A piece of embroidery or cross-stitching made as a display or test of the maker's skill.
5. Due to severe damage the last number of the date is illegible.
6. Due to BCA/O/32 and 33 being framed it is unknown which one is which specifically.

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N/A.

Notes on contributor

Nathan Atherton (MRes) is a PhD candidate at Manchester Metropolitan University. In partnership with the National Trust, he is examining how early modern Britain understood the holistic benefits of greenspaces. He is also interested in the incorporation of military architecture and commemoration within gardens, and what this says about their owners.

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