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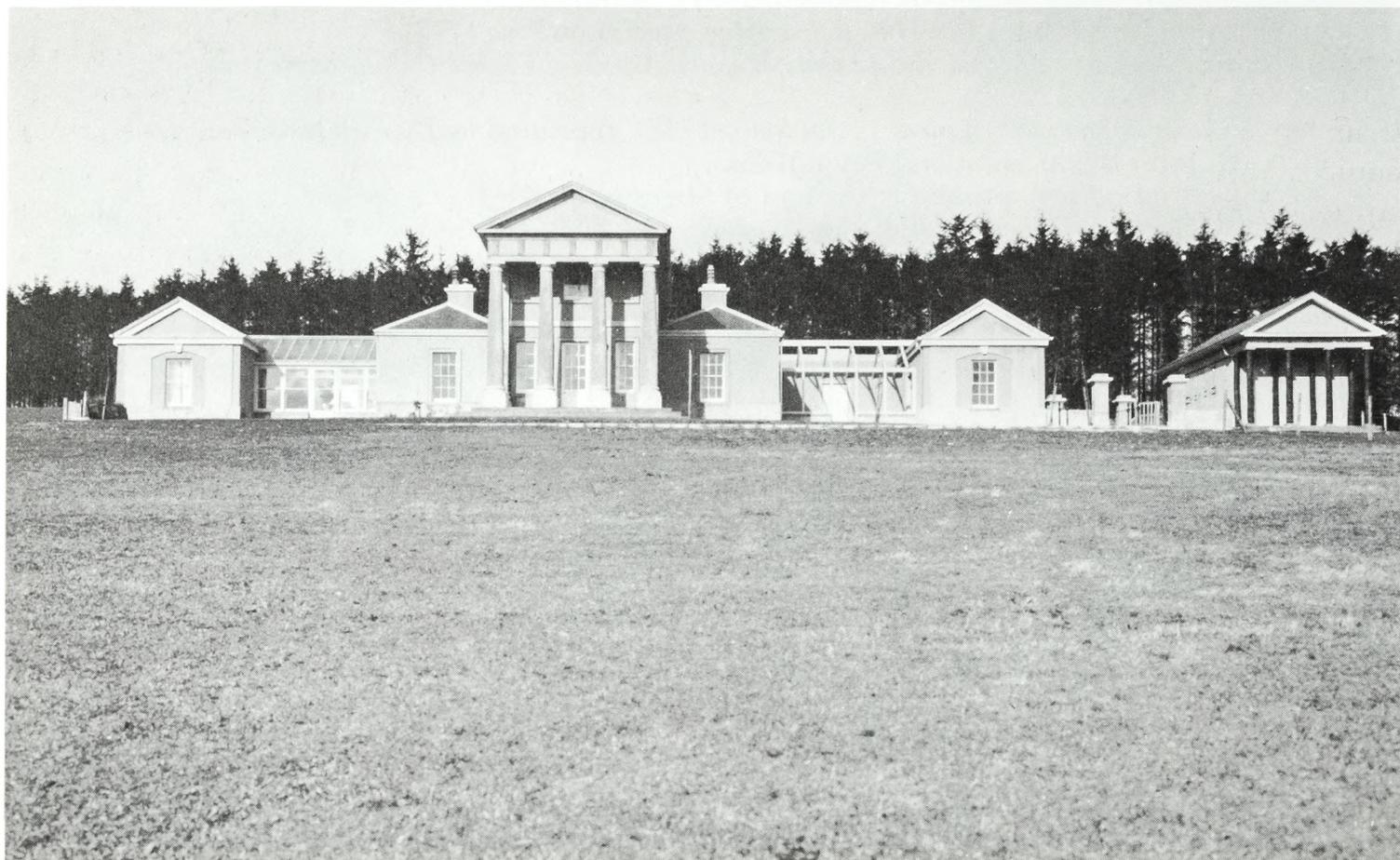
John Redmill, 'Mount Temple,  
Russborough, Co. Wicklow', *The Georgian  
Group Report & Journal*, 1986, pp. 74-76

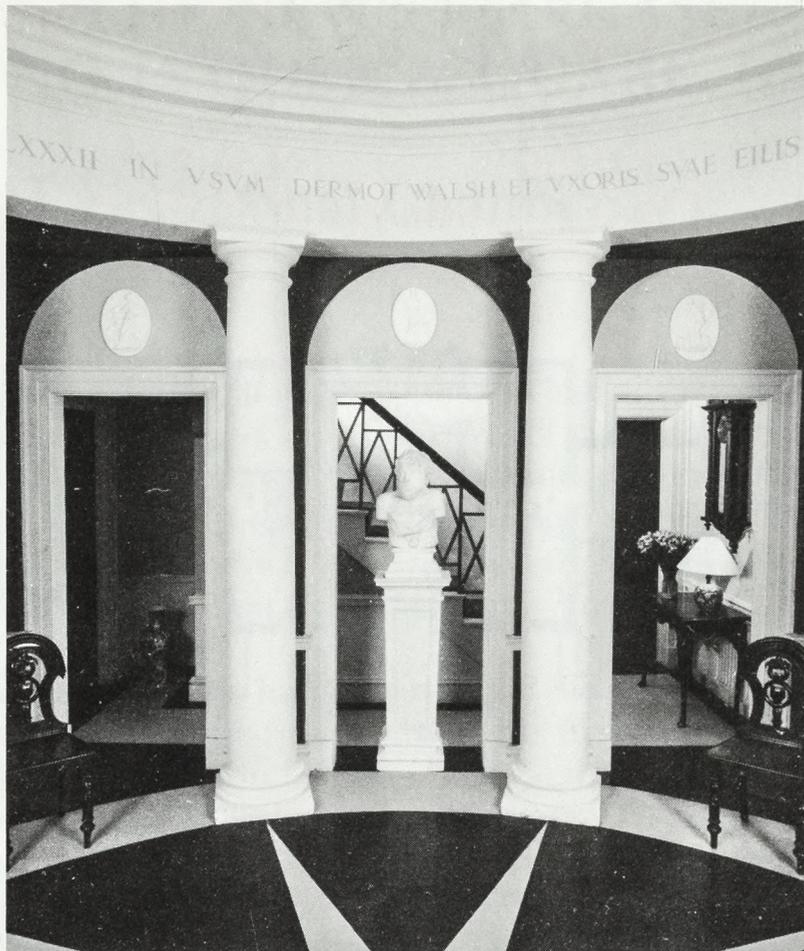
# MOUNT TEMPLE, RUSSBOROUGH, CO. WICKLOW

Yet still entirely we must not reject  
Some imitation of these Sacred Domes  
Since this our happy Isle enjoys the Bliss  
That each man's house a sacred Temple is.

(Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, *The Country Seat*, 1727)

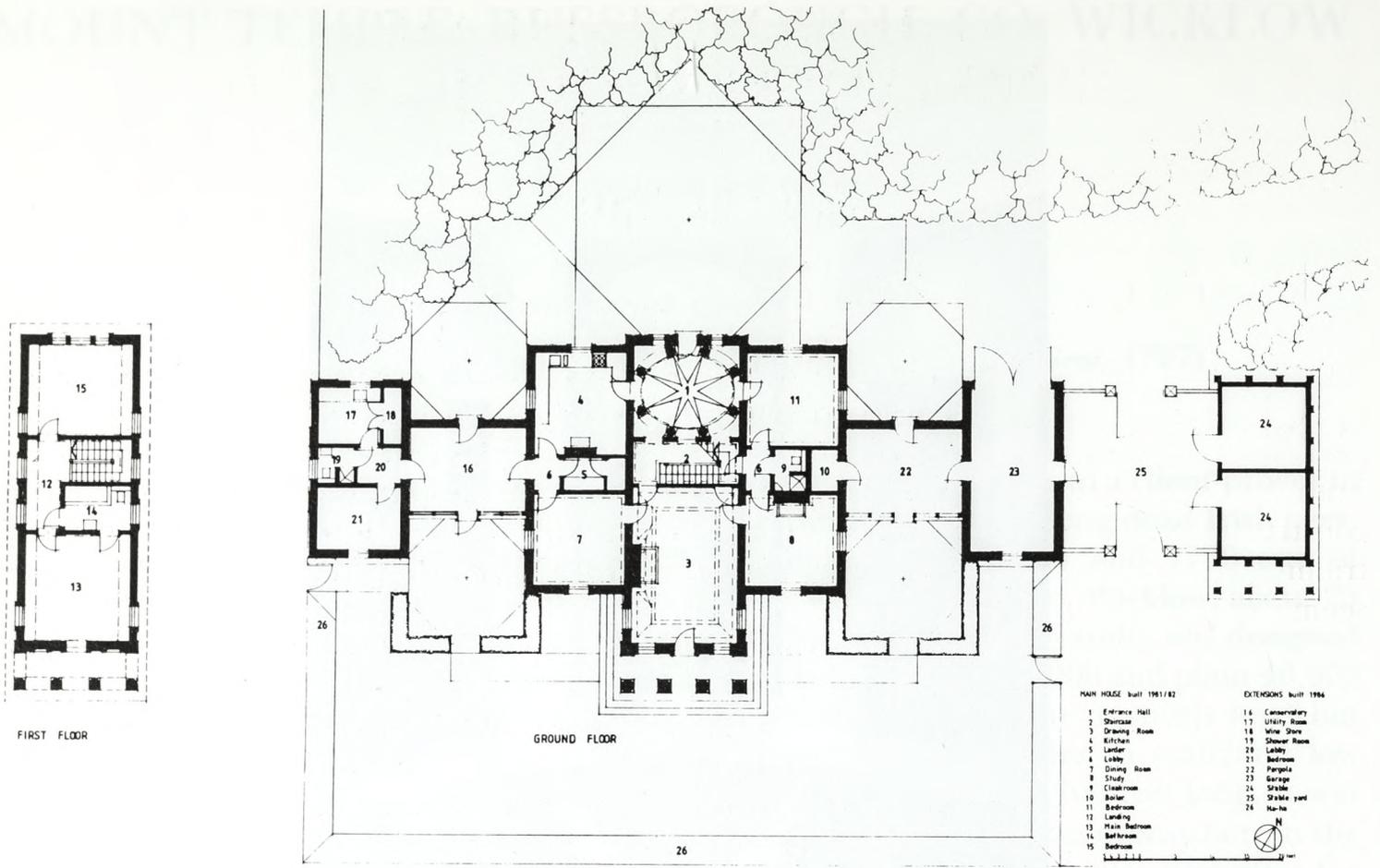
It is not often that a casual and flippant remark made by an architect to a client proves to be the inspiration for a new house, and also fulfils the intention of a long dead Irish peer. Joseph Leeson, 1st Earl of Milltown (d.1783) built between 1741 and 1750 one of Ireland's finest (and longest) Palladian country houses, Russborough, Co. Wicklow, about 25 miles south-west of Dublin. Russborough, built of the local silver-grey granite, was designed by Richard Castle (d.1751), and it is said that Milltown had to spend £30,000 and plant 40,000 beech trees before this bleak and wild tract of land was ready to receive the relatively small but lavishly decorated main house. This is linked by quadrant colonnades to matching low pavilions, with service courtyards beyond, the whole composition being 700 feet long. It was intended to ornament the view from the Saloon with a Doric temple as an eyecatcher on the hill to the north of the house, but this was not built. The daunting but challenging brief for designing a new house for this position was given to architects O'Neill Flanagan and Partners by a Dublin doctor and his wife in 1979, when they bought the site from the present owner of Russborough, Sir Alfred Beit.





The job architect, John Redmill, suggested that a Doric temple be built, inspired by designs prepared by Sir William Chambers in 1768 for a house for the 1st Earl of Charlemont, a friend of Milltown, but with the proportions and details modelled on the Russborough pavilions and colonnades. These designs had to be adapted for the clients' exacting requirements; the house was to be planned with a minimum amount of circulation space, an impressive Entrance Hall and Drawing Room, a separate Dining Room, a Study and at least three bedrooms. Thus it evolved, with the main rooms facing south towards Russborough, and the entrance to the north. The portico of local limestone frames the view from the Drawing Room and is purely a landscape feature. The very simple construction of rendered concrete cavity blockwork walls with concrete external cornices cast in-situ, and traditional timber floors and roofs, allowed as much as possible of the limited budget to be spent on the interior, a traditional Irish attitude. The plaster cornices, columns etc., of the interiors were all specially designed and made for the house.

The Entrance Hall is a rectangle containing eight Roman Doric columns supporting an elliptical entablature, reminiscent of the Hall at Claremont, Surrey (Soane, 1772); the architectural elements are painted white, with black walls, a floor of black and white linoleum, and the ceiling painted to suggest the sky. The Chinese Chippendale staircase is based on one at the Marino Casino, near Dublin (Chambers for Lord Charlemont from 1759), which proved a useful source of inspiration. The Drawing room is modelled on the Saloon there, both in its general form and position, and its colour of sky blue, or 'verditer'. The windows of the bedrooms above have deliberately low sills so that the superb views across the park can be appreciated whilst lying in bed. The Doric curtain poles and the Drawing Room sofas, designed by Redmill, are made of beech, as are the floors of the reception room.



The house was completed in late 1982, but it was decided in 1985 to extend it on both sides, with matching pavilions providing a much needed garage, utility room and conservatory. Redmill designed these in the manner of Francis Johnston, Ireland's leading neoclassical architect of the early 19th century, who was influenced by both James Gandon, a pupil of Chambers, and John Soane. The conservatory and matching pergola are used as links to the pavilions, echoing the layout of Russborough. Just as work started, however, a further extension to the east was asked for, to provide stabling for two horses. This was based by Redmill on Chambers's evolution of 'The Primitive Buildings', as illustrated in his 1759 *Treatise on the Decorative Part of Civil Architecture*; it is a little classical temple, with tree trunks for columns, rope capitals, and horseshoes as triglyphs.

All that is now required to complete this miniature Palladian vision is the planting of beech trees in the demesne, to provide a suitable landscape setting for the Doric temple and the sheep that graze the surrounding field.

*(John Redmill trained at the Kingston School of Architecture, where he qualified in 1970. Finding that his interest in historic buildings went against the prevailing modernist ethos, he joined Donald Insall, where he worked on the saving of the shell of The Grange, Hampshire. In 1978, he moved to Dublin and currently works with O'Neil Flanagan and Partners. Assistant Architect for the restoration of the Casino at Marino (Sir William Chambers 1758–1776) for the Office of Works, he designed replacement chimneypieces and other lost details. Whilst continuing to work in Dublin, John Redmill has been Tutor for the Post-Graduate Course in Conservation at the Architectural Association, London, since 1982.)*