

Building British Identity: British Architects and the Tudor-Revival Country House in Ulster, 1825-50

Writing in 1840, Thomas McAnaspie criticized the ‘false patriots’ of Ireland who were frequently employing ‘English and Scotch workmen ... in the erection of their Mansions’. Nowhere was the practice referred to by McAnaspie more in evidence than in the province of Ulster in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Of the Ulster houses designed by British architects in this period, the majority were in the Tudor-Revival idiom. My research seeks to understand why Ulster patrons, in particular, favoured this type of house and why they insisted on employing British architects to achieve it.



The resolution of the central research questions in my work has demanded the use of an empirical methodological approach based on a careful analysis of key Ulster houses, and of the documents associated with their creation. This approach has revealed that in addition to being designed by British-based architects in the so-called ‘British national style’, Tudor-Revival houses such as Lough Fea, Co. Monaghan (illustrated) were typically executed by British craftsmen, ornamented with British emblems and built using British materials.



The strength of this British architectural context suggests the intention of Ulster patrons to use building as a means of expressing their unionist identity, and offers insight into the nature of cultural contiguity in Britain and Ireland in the nineteenth century.

Sources:

■ Hunt, T. F., *Exemplars of Tudor Architecture adapted to Modern Habitations*, London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1830.

■ Robinson, P. F., *Domestic Architecture in the Tudor Style*, London: J. Williams, 1837.

■ The Shirley Papers, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, D3531.



Image Credits: Photographs of Lough Fea House, Co. Monaghan (1825-46) taken by Myles Campbell, reproduced by permission of Philip Shirley.