



Killenure, as the home of the Cooper family until the 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

Growing up in the grounds of the castle must have left a very deep impression on Austin, that developed into a love of history and desire to record the built environment. In 1774 at the age of fifteen, he left Killenure and went to work in the Treasury in Dublin Castle. His brother Samuel inherited the property and developed the house. Always close, Samuel's diaries record that Austin was a frequent visitor to Killenure and the brothers' family and business interests ensured that they saw a great deal of each other.<sup>3</sup>

In the late 18th century, the Treasury officers in Dublin Castle all shared a deep interest in recording Ireland's ancient past. In his monograph on Austin Cooper, Liam Price writes 'this interest in Irish antiquities that seems so marked among the members of the Treasury Office staff was probably due to the personality of the Right Hon. William Burton Conyngham (of Slane Castle) who was made Teller of the Exchequer shortly after Austin Cooper became a clerk there.<sup>4</sup> It was no doubt Conyngham, Treasurer of the then newly founded Royal Irish Academy (1785) and 'one of the leaders of cultural society in the Ireland of his day',<sup>5</sup> influenced and encouraged Cooper to utilize his talent for drawing along with other colleagues including artist and antiquarian Gabriel Beranger.<sup>6</sup> The Cooper family kept many of Austin's albums of drawings and detailed notes and the surviving archive is celebrated in two books, the Price publication in 1942 with money left for the purpose by Austin's great-grandson, Albert Damer Cooper. More recently Peter Harbinson edited Austin's manuscripts (both his own drawings and those he collected, now in the National Library of Ireland) in *Cooper's Ireland: Drawings and Notes from an Eighteenth-Century Gentleman* (2000).<sup>7</sup>

There is no doubt that as a high office holder in the government administration of his time, a member of the Dublin (later the Royal Dublin) Society and a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, Cooper was a distinguished gentleman. His library alone had over a thousand historical works and documents, included the impressive and valuable collection of the late

1 Killenure Castle by Austin Cooper 1793. This was his birthplace and childhood home and his last on-site drawing. Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

2 View of the castle with Georgian house and sculpture *An Sinsear Clotógach*, by Padraig Mc Goran. Photo Mike Searle

3 Killenure Castle, Co Tipperary. Photo James Fennell

4 *NestLed* by Tony O'Malley for OAK 2012. Photo by the artist

5 *Folded* by Niall O'Neill for OAK 2012. Photo by the artist



the two buildings. Current owners, sculptor Eavaun Carmody and industrial designer Emmet Sexton were struck by the magic of this place and in 2007 they brought to Killenure Castle their love and experience of restoring old homes. Eavaun feels it is a privilege for their family to be custodians of the treasure that is Killenure Castle and hopes that people will enjoy seeing it with a new lease of life each summer through the imaginative events they host such as Open Art Killenure 2012 (OAK), where many invited artists responded to Killenure Castle and the resulting work made a sculpture trail around the grounds (Figs 4&5).

Two hundred-and-fifty years ago, Austin Cooper (1759-1830) was rambling around the ruined castle with his older brother Samuel. Their father William Cooper (1721-1769) was Diocesan Registrar in Cashel and he established

