

## Kilbrew House

Kilbrew House, near Ratoath, consisted of a main block flanked by towers and faced south. The rear of the house also had flanking towers. Behind the mansion stood an extensive oblong courtyard with kitchens, bake houses, laundry, brewery, stables and coach houses. To the front of the house stands Kilbrew Graveyard. An ice house stood to the south of the house. A spa well 200 yards south of house was mentioned in 1789 as being good for asthma, bronchitis and dropsy and visited by a large number of people.

Robert, third of the four sons of Henry Gorges of Batcombe, was a third cousin of Queen Mary, wife of William of Orange. Robert was secretary to Henry Cromwell, son of Oliver Cromwell in 1655 and arrived in Ireland as Lord Lieutenant of the State's forces. Robert Gorges established the family at Kilbrew. Robert was one of the forty-four who signed the Proclamation of Richard Cromwell as Lord Protector on the death of Oliver Cromwell. Robert married Jane Loftus establishing links to many of the old families in Ireland. Charles II appointed him to a government position. From 1665 he acted as agent for the Duke of York's lands. He was Member of Irish Parliament for Bandon Bridge 1661-6 and Ratoath 1692-3. Robert served as secretary to the Duke of Schomberg who fought at the Battle of the Boyne. Dr. Robert Gorges acquired the manor of Kilmoon in 1665 from the Archbishop of Armagh. He acquired lands in Ulster, Tipperary and Galway amounting to 7084 statute acres. Kilbrew had been the home of the Barnewall family. During the 1689-90 period some of the Barnewalls unsuccessfully attempted to recover their property. Robert died in 1701.

Robert was succeeded by his son, Richard, who was born in 1662. In 1694 Richard Gorges secured the re-grant of lands in the barony of Ratoath and purchased forfeited estates after the battle of the Boyne. The amateur architect, Thomas Burgh, advised Quartermaster-General Richard Gorges on how to build garden walls at Kilbrew in 1702. Richard served as captain in the Grenadier Guards during the Williamite Campaign in Ireland. He then fought in Flanders and on returning to Ireland in the mid 1690s was appointed Adjutant-General of His Majesty's forces in Ireland. He raised a regiment for foreign service and it became known as Colonel Richard Gorge's regiment. Richard served as M.P. for Ratoath from 1713.

In 1704 Richard in his forty third year married the widow of Sir Tristram Beresford, the heroine of the ghost story. Miss Nicola Sophia Hamilton married Sir Martin Beresford. She was also fond of Lord Tyrone. In 1704 sometime after her marriage, it was agreed that Lord Tyrone, Sir Martin and Lady Beresford, should pass one Christmas at Colonel Gorges' house, Kilbrew. One night, after the family were all retired, Lady Beresford was surprised to see the door of her chamber open, and Lord Tyrone walked in. He told her he had been on the way to Kilbrew when he died. Tyrone asked her for the ring off her finger and told her that her current husband would die and she would marry Richard Gorges and that she would die on the birth of her second son. Horror struck she refused to give the ghost the ring but he took it, marking her wrist in the process. She wore a black ribbon to cover the marks for the rest of her life. Sir Martin did indeed die and she did marry Richard Gorges. Nicola already had a son by Sir Martin and then she had three daughters with Richard Gorges. She then fell pregnant again and a son was born. Her husband told her it was a daughter but when she found out she grew very fearful. While getting some air she saw Lord Tyrone, fainted and took to her bed and died a few days later. Sometime later her son by her first husband married the daughter of Lord Tyrone. There are many variations on this ghostly tale and other locations other than Kilbrew are named. Another story has it that as young people Nicola and Lord Tyrone made a pact that

whichever died first they would come back and visit the other thereby proving the existence of an after-life.

After the death of Nicola Richard Gorges married Dorothea, widow of the earl of Meath. Dorothea, who was a small lady, was known as Countess Doll of Meath. She died on 10 April 1728 and the General died two days later. A commentator wrote:

‘She first deceased; he for a little tried,  
To live without her, liked it not, and died.’

Jonathan Swift wrote

‘Under this stone lie Dicky and Dolly,  
Doll dying first, Dicky grew melancholy,  
For Dick without Doll thought living was a folly.’

Luke Gardiner, the Dublin city developer, was guardian of the eldest son, Richard who was born about 1708 and died in 1778. Gardiner developed what is now O’Connell Street, Mountjoy Square and Gardiner’s Street. Richard had two handsome country houses, Kilbrew and Ballygawley, and probably a town house. Richard was High Sheriff of Co. Meath 1731, Member of the Irish Parliament for Augher 1739-60; Enniskillen 1761-8, and a professional soldier in the Dragoons. Richard died in March 1778 at Marlborough Street, Dublin.

Hamilton Gorges inherited on the death of his father Richard in 1778. Within six years he seems to have got himself into serious financial difficulties as he was very hospitable. He liked good company. He repaired Kilbrew House to the extent of spending £5000 on it and planting 400,000 oak, ash, elm and other timber trees. In 1792 Hamilton Gorges became M.P. for Meath replacing his first cousin, Gorges Lowther. Captain Hamilton Gorges, an officer in the yeomanry was captured by the rebels in 1798 but was rescued. He was against the Act of Union and continued to oppose it despite the offer of a lucrative government position and title. Hamilton died in 1802 and he was succeeded by his son, Hamilton. Demands for payments from creditors continued. Hamilton lived on the continent for a period as it was cheaper. Hamilton married Alicia French of French Park.

In the 1830s Kilbrew was described as a fine mansion having an extensive demesne and was the property of Mr. Murphy of Dublin. The Murphy family continued to hold the property until the 1920s. The house stood abandoned surrounded by a wooded demesne. Names were given to the features of the demesne - Flying Gate shrubbery, Decoy Avenue leading to Decoy wood. The Clump, Sharley’s hill, the Pigeon field lawn, the lower lawn, Aspel’s Clump, The Long Shrubby, the Pond Shrubby, the Round Shrubby, House Lawn and Round Berry Clump.

When Hamilton died in 1838, his son and heir, also Hamilton, only succeeded to some lands at Kilmoon, all the rest had been sold. Hamilton Gorges married Gertrude Frances Bennet and they had one child Isabella Corisande Gertrude Gorges, who died in 1910. Hamilton lived at Primatestown, a hunting lodge. The last of the male line he died in 1866 from a fall from a horse and the property went out of the family. By 1878 Kilbrew House stood in ruins.

William Murphy of Mount Merrion, Kilbrew and Ballymaglasson was born in 1771. He had four sons and five daughters. His eldest son, John William, succeeded him at Ballymaglasson while his youngest son, James succeeded him at Kilbrew. William, son of John William, succeeded to Kilbrew. He was succeeded by his son, William, who in turn was succeeded by his son, William Brudenell Murphy. His son, was Captain Reginald Francis Brudenell Murphy.

Kilbrew continued in the Murphy family until the 1920s when it was divided up by the Land Commission. In the 1940s part of the house had been converted to

outhouses. The roof remained on the main house until the 1960s but by the 1980s it was a true ruin. There is an interesting article by Margaret Nugent on Kilbrew House in the Curraha Jubilee book.

## Kilbride House



Photo: Noel Fagan

Kilbride house at Moymet, Trim was the residence of the Longfield and Rotherham families. In the eighteenth century Kilbride was held by the Longfield family with Robert being recorded as owner in 1712. Robert was the son of John Longfield who was born at Denbigh, Wales and was born there in 1652. He obtained grants of lands in Meath, Westmeath and Clare. A friend of Jonathan Swift he died in 1711. William Longfield is recorded at Kilbride in 1723. The family seem to have died out later in the century. In 1835 Kilbride, Moymet was the property of Lord Shelburne. His agent, John G. Dawson, had his residence adjoining the old castle near the south side of the townland. John S.A. Rotherham was the occupier of Kilbride castle in 1856 and his son, George Augustus, is listed as owing 262 acres in 1876. Sarah Brinkley married George Rotherham as his second wife. His daughter by his first marriage, Emily Constance, was married to Alexander Macaulay of Cushendall, co. Antrim. In 1911 George and his wife Jessie Rotherham were living at Kilbride. In 1942 the property was in the hands of Mr. Joyce. The castle stood in his farmyard. In 1989 the ruins of Kilbride house were used for a scene in the film, "Fools of Fortune". A night scene I remember seeing the sky lit up with flames as the house was "destroyed". "Fools of Fortune" was released in 1990. Made by Pat O'Connor, it starred Julie Christie. It depicted a Protestant family caught up in the conflict between the British Army and

the I.R.A. during the War of Independence. This film was based on the story by Irish novelist, William Trevor.

## Kilcarn

In 1835 there were three significant houses in Kilcarn civil parish. Kilcarn Lodge, a neat cottage, was the property of F. Murphy. Lower Kilcarn House, the property of W. Dillon, had a large lawn fronting the house and two large orchards attached. Upper Kilcarn House, described as a gentleman's seat with a small piece of ornamental ground attached, was the property of Mrs. Barry.

The lands at Kilcarn upper and lower were confirmed to Richard Barry, Dublin merchant, in 1627. Richard Barry was Mayor of Dublin in 1610 and an M.P. He was the son of James Barry. The family were a branch of the Barrymores and settled at Santry. Richard Barry was succeeded by his son, James Barry, a prominent lawyer who was created Baron Barry of Santry in 1661. The third Lord Barry leased the lands at Kilcarn to Charles Barry in 1702.

Philip Barry was born in 1773, the son of Philip. Philip was curate of Paynestown in 1817 and rector Navan from 1819 to 1831. Rev. Philip Barry is buried in Kilcarn graveyard.

Kilcarn Lodge or Park was home to the Murphy family. The Murphy's owned a distillery in Navan and were a Catholic family. Major Murphy was a magistrate in the 1760s. Kilcarn Park was damaged by fire in 1922. The outbreak of fire was believed to be an accident. The house was unoccupied at the time, in preparation for some repairs in order to be tenanted. Kilcarn Park then came into the hands of the Carolan family. The property was divided in 1923. Kilcarn Park was in the ownership of the Dublin jeweller Peter McDowell in the early 1990s for three years. He sold it for in excess of £1 million in 1993. Kilcarn Park has eight bedrooms and two main reception rooms.

## Kilcarty House

Kilcarty House, Kilmessan, is described as a 'hobby-farm' designed by Thomas Ivory for Dr. George Cleghorn, professor of anatomy at Trinity College. It consists of a detached two-storey gabled farmhouse, with low lean-to wings and curtain walls. The two farm buildings extend back forming the sides of a courtyard behind the house. Constructed in the 1770s Casey and Rowan state that modesty and simplicity are the qualities of this handsome building and further describe it as a compact and practical house. Maurice Craig said 'the total effect is one of bland serenity'. Craig wrote that Kilcarty occupies a pivotal frontier between farmhouse and the mansion. A hobby farm, the owner only had to look out the back windows to see the farmyard. "The everyday dress and vernacular affinities of Kilcarty cloak a design of exceptional subtlety and refinement, Craig wrote, even after thirty years of looking at the building he noticed new aspects to it. "When real thought has gone into the making of a building, there is no limit to the times one can, and should, look at it." Mulligan described Kilcarty as 'one of the finest examples of a vernacular Palladian design'

George Cleghorn, was born near Edinburgh in 1716. He was involved in the establishment of the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh. Appointed surgeon to the 22nd regiment of foot at the age of nineteen, he was stationed at Minorca, where he spent thirteen years. He wrote a book entitled 'Observations on the Epidemical Diseases in Minorca from the Year 1744 to 1749'. In 1749 he went with the regiment to Ireland. Dr Cleghorn settled in practice in Dublin in 1751. In September 1753 Cleghorn was elected as Anatomist at Trinity College. In 1756 he published in Dublin

a pamphlet, entitled “Index of an Annual Course of Lectures by George Cleghorn, Anatomist to Trinity College, and Surgeon in Dublin”. This was really a syllabus of his lectures, and is the first anatomical work published in connexion with the School of Anatomy at Trinity College.

In 1761 George Cleghorn was appointed Lecturer in Anatomy. He is credited with the first description of infectious hepatitis. From this period till his death in 1789, Dr Cleghorn enjoyed a lucrative practice. Due to declining health he spent more and more time away from the city, finding the pleasures of the outdoor life more rewarding. In 1784 Cleghorn was elected a member of the College of Physicians of Ireland; he was also one of the original members of the Royal Irish Academy. Cleghorn was married but had no children of his own, About 1774 Cleghorn’s only brother, John, died in Scotland, leaving his widow, Barbara, and nine children, and Cleghorn brought this family to Dublin in order to oversee their education. Three of this family, William, James, and Thomas, were educated for the medical profession and studied with their uncle in the Trinity College School, and subsequently in Edinburgh. One of these, William Cleghorn, took the degree of MD at Edinburgh in 1779. In 1786 Cleghorn was still delivering anatomical lectures at Dublin. He was unwilling to retire from the professorship until one of his nephews was in a strong position to apply for the vacant chair. Cleghorn died in Dublin three years later, in December 1789. His nephew, James, took over the Anatomical School. George died at Kilcarty on Tuesday, December 22, 1789, and in his will he left to his nephew George his estates in County Meath, and to his nephews, James and Thomas, to be equally divided between them, his library.

George Cleghorn acquired a considerable estate in the county of Meath, of which his nephew, George Cleghorn of Kilcarty, was High Sheriff in the year 1794.

William Cleghorn was born in 1751. His father died young, so he and eight siblings were raised by his uncle, George Cleghorn of Kilcarty. After studying at Trinity College, in 1779, he finished a doctoral dissertation at the University of Edinburgh. He died just four years later, but in that time had developed the concept of a caloric, a subtle invisible fluid used to explain heat. Cleghorn's caloric was used for the next sixty years. In 1818 Bishop Plunket thanked Surgeon Cleghorn for his donation towards the new chapel at Kilmessan.

In 1814 Kilcarty was the residence of Ross Fox and in 1835 it was described as a good house with a demesne of 150 acres, well laid out and wooded. The demesne was leased by Mr. Rourke from the proprietor, Rev. N. Preston of Swainstown. In 1854 the land was held by the representatives of James Cleghorn MD so the family seem to have held onto the leases on the land. Hugh Geraghty occupied the house from 1854 until his death in 1878 and his widow remained in the house until 1900. Hugh’s son, William, purchased the house in 1903. Dying in 1909 the property passed to his sister Mary. The house was sold in 1939 to the O’Beirne family.

## Kilcooley

Kilcooley House, just off the Trim-Navan Trim, is a handsome gentleman farmer’s house, erected about 1780. There was a lodge at the end of the short avenue. The Carshore family held the property in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Adam Carshore of Kilcooley raised the Trim Yeomanry Corps, together with his nephew, Edward Elliot Chambers of Crow Park, Trim in 1796. Having taken part in the suppression of the 1798 rebellion the corps disbanded in 1814.

In 1835 the Chambers family seem to have taken the lease on Kilcooley as the townland was the property of Mr. John Backett of Trim, held under a lease by John

Elliott Chambers and let by him to undertenants. Kilcooley House was the residence of Mr. Purden. In 1876 Philip E. Purdon of Kilcooley was listed as owning 63 acres in Meath. He could have had other lands held by leases.

By the early twentieth century the Hewitt family were in residence with Austin and Julia Hewitt being recorded as living there in 1911. Julia Hewitt died in 1934. The three storey house is now the residence of the McManus family.

## Kildalkey House



Kildalkey House is two storey over basement house and is now the parochial house. Walter Nangle erected a house at Kildalkey in 1725. The current house may date from about 1840. It became the residence of the parish priest of Kildalkey and in 1903 the parish purchased the house.

The Nangle family of Kildalkey sprang from Walter Nangle, the eight and youngest son of Sir Thomas Nangle, 17<sup>th</sup> Baron of Navan. Walter was born some time before 1561 and the family became well established at Kildalkey by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Jocelyn Nangle of Kildalkey was involved in the rebellion of the 1640s. Walter Nangle was born in 1700 and inherited the estate at Kildalkey on the death of his father in 1721. He married twice and was succeeded by his son, Edward. Edward's son, James Francis Nangle, became a Justice of the Peace in 1797 and was appointed Deputy Governor of County Meath. James Nangle of Kildalkey died at his seat in 1812. He was born in Spain as some of the family had moved abroad during the penal days. He was succeeded by his uncle, Walter Nangle. Walter's son, Charles, inherited Kildalkey in 1843. Charles married Cecelia, daughter of Richard Barnewall, of Bloomsbury, and the widow of John Connolly of Newhaggard. They lived at Newhaggard House. Charles died bankrupt in 1847 and the Kildalkey property left the Nangle family. The Hodgens family came into possession of Kildalkey estates. Thomas Hodgens bequeathed £1000 for the establishment of Almshouses at Kildalkey

and an annual bequest of £60 for the inmates. The Hodgens family lived mainly in Dublin leasing out their Kildalkey estates.

## Killeen Castle



Killeen Castle, near Dunshaughlin, is a large castellated house, incorporating a medieval building. Tradition states that the first castle erected at Killeen was by Hugh de Lacy about 1180 but the present structure has a central core from the fifteenth century, with many alterations in the following centuries.

From 1403 until the 1950's, the castle served as the seat of the Plunkett family, Earls of Fingall, and the family's five and a half centuries of unbroken connection with Killeen is exceptional by any standards. In 1403 the first of the family, Christopher Plunkett, married Joan, only daughter and heiress of Sir Lucas Cusack of Killeen. In 1432 Sir Christopher Plunkett was created Baron of Killeen.

Sir Christopher divided his estate between his eldest two sons, the second son taking possession of sister castle, Dunsany and the elder son continuing as Lord Killeen. The dividing line between the two Plunkett estates at Dunsany and Killeen is said to have been decided by a race between the wives of the brothers. At an agreed time each wife set out from her castle and where they met the boundary of the estate was set. The lady from Killeen having a downhill advantage ensured that the estate at Killeen was larger than the Dunsany one.

A mid-size fortified tower house was constructed at Killeen. Just as at Dunsany the Plunketts erected a church to serve their home. The church, dedicated to St. Mary, was erected around 1425 and there is a nearby holy well also dedicated to Our Lady.

The tenth Baron Killeen, Luke Plunkett, was created Earl of Fingall in 1628. His first wife was Elizabeth O'Donnell, niece of Red Hugh O'Donnell. Another family member, George Plunkett, married the niece of St. Oliver Plunkett, whose vestments were later preserved in the castle library.

During the Penal days the Dunsany branch of the family became members of the Established Protestant religion and held Killeen in trust for their Catholic relatives. Like other Catholic families the Plunketts sent their sons abroad to serve in foreign armies with Luke and William Plunkett serving in the Austrian army. Robert, the sixth earl, served in the French army.

The Plunkett lost their title due to their support for King James at the Battle of the Boyne but the family petitioned for its re-instatement. This eventually happened in 1795 and the castle was re-modelled at this time. The eighth Earl of Fingall employed the noted Irish architect, Francis Johnston, to carry out renovations to the castle. He also consulted Thomas Wogan Browne of Clongowes Wood and Daniel Augustus Beaufort, rector of Navan and amateur architect, who prepared drawings for alterations. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Arthur James, Lord Fingall, was a proponent of removing anti-Catholic laws and yet in 1798 he led the government forces on Tara against the United Irishmen. The eighth earl, Arthur James, was created Baron Fingall in 1831.

In 1841 much of the castle was demolished and rebuilt in the style of Windsor Castle with two new towers being added. When completed it was said that Killeen had 365 windows, a window for every day of the year, a similar story is tendered for a number of large houses in Ireland.

In 1876 the Earl of Fingall of Killeen castle held 9,589 acres in county Meath. On the twenty first birthday of the eleventh earl, Arthur James Francis, the butler of the house got so drunk that a fire destroyed a number of the most valuable paintings in the house including a number of Van Dycks. The wife of the eleventh earl, Elizabeth ‘Daisy’ Burke, wrote a memoir of her life entitled *Seventy Years Young, Memories of Elizabeth, Countess of Fingall* which was published by Collins of London in 1937. Living in a castle was an expensive business. One of the Killeen servants defined a great house as a place where ‘as much was thrown out as used.’ When funds were short, the castle was leased to an American who complained that it took a ton of coal a day to heat it. The Eleventh Earl and his wife, Daisy, lived the country life with the Earl being Master of the Meath Foxhounds. The Earl commented ‘if you didn’t hunt in Meath you might as well be dead.’ Lord Fingall also loved cats and at one stage had more than sixty in one of the towers of the castle. There is said to have been a ghost a Killeen, a powdered footman. The eleventh earl was chairman of the unionist convention which opposed the introduction of Home Rule in 1892.

The library at Killeen was a noted feature of the house with the bookcases provided by Daisy, Countess of Fingall. The art collector, Hugh Lane, was involved in its re-decoration around 1900.

The twelfth Earl of Fingall, Oliver James Horace, inherited Killeen in 1929. He sold Killeen Castle and estate in 1951, to Sir Victor Sassoon with the Earl managing the stud farm established near the castle. In 1953 the Earl and Countess moved to a modern house built on the lands and most of the house contents were sold. Sassoon died in 1961 and his heirs sold the estate in 1963 to art dealer and racehorse owner, Daniel Wildenstein.

The twelfth Earl moved from the estate to Corballis on the Dunsany estate, then to The Commons. He and his wife attended the ceremonies for the canonisation of St. Oliver Plunkett in 1975. All three titles became extinct on the death of the twelfth Earl in 1984.

In 1978, the castle and estate were sold to Basil Brindley, who continued the stud farm operation. On 16 May 1981, the castle was destroyed in an arson attack, being

left abandoned for many years. The attack was said to be associated with the H-block protests in Northern Ireland.

The lands and buildings were sold again in 1989, to a local entrepreneur, who initiated development plans. A plan proposed the conversion of the castle into a high-end hotel, the installation of a championship standard golf course designed by Jack Nicklaus and the construction of more than one hundred units of luxury housing on the estate. Various plans were proposed over the next decade and a half with actual construction commencing in 2005. In 2006 Killeen castle was the successful bidder for the 2011 Solheim cup, the first time Ireland has ever hosted this event.

'The Archaeology of Killeen Castle, Co Meath' presents the results of the archaeological survey, testing, monitoring and excavations that took place within the demesne from January 2005. Mary Rose Carty has published a book about the castle, 'History of Killeen Castle'.

## Killyon Manor



Located near the Hill of Down in south-west Meath, Killyon house is a three storey T-shaped plan house. Incorporating a medieval tower house the house has an eighteenth century porch. The house dates to the early or mid eighteenth century to which is added a nineteenth century ballroom. Architect William Farrell would seem to have been involved in Killyon Manor as well as the Mangan's house at Clonearl. London architects, Warwick & Hall, were employed by Captain Arthur Tilson Magan in 1907 prepare designs 'in the English manner' for the reconstruction of Killyon Manor, Archbishop Adam Loftus, chaplain to Queen Elizabeth I and first provost of Trinity College, was the founder of the family in Ireland. Sir Thomas Loftus, third son of

Archbishop Loftus, was granted lands at Killyon in 1610. His son, Dudley, married Cecilia, daughter of Sir James Ware, auditor-General of Ireland. Their eldest son, Thomas Loftus, was MP for Clonmines 1727-60 and resided at Killyon. His son, Dudley succeeded to the estates.

In 1817 Elizabeth Georgina Loftus, daughter of Dudley Loftus of Killyon Manor married Colonel Thomas Lowther Allen of Kilmer and was widowed at age of 21. She then married William Henry Magan of Clonearl, Daingean, Co. Offaly. Together they owned very large tracts of the best grasslands in Ireland, and other valuable properties, including one hundred and sixty-five acres of Dublin. They built and staffed a great house, and filled it with treasures. William was known as 'The Magnificent'. Killyon House was not inhabited in 1835 and its offices were nearly in ruins. The river was dammed to make a feature of the water. When Clonearl was burned in 1846 the family's main seat became Killyon.

William Henry Magan died in May 1840. His heir was William Henry known as 'William Henry the Bad.' He married Lady Georgina Hill in 1849. William was an M.P. and High Sheriff of Westmeath. He is said to have treated people with contempt and shod his horse with shoes of gold. His mother was known locally as the four foot faggot and did much to alleviate the suffering during the Famine. When she died her coffin was supposed to have had nails of gold.

William led a wild life, dying childless in 1860 at 42 years of age. The Magan fortune then returned to his mother, Elizabeth Georgina Loftus Magan. In 1876 Mrs. E. G. Magan, address Killyon, Hill of Down, Co. Westmeath, owned 4,418 acres in Co. Meath, 5604 acres in Westmeath, 2374 in Kildare, 1023 in Offaly and 165 in Dublin, a total of 13584 acres. She managed the estates until she died in 1880, designating her only surviving child, Augusta Elizabeth Magan as her heir.

Augusta inherited all the Magan estates, twenty thousand acres and valuable houses in Dublin at the age of 55. She had been betrothed to Captain Bernard of Castle Bernard, Co. Offaly but he chose to marry a widow instead. It is said that a wedding feast had been prepared by Augusta for her marriage at 77 St. Stephen's Green, now Loretta Hall. When the groom failed to arrive Augusta closed up the room and the house and it was not re-opened until after her death in 1905. Colonel Bernard died in a horse riding accident at Mullingar in 1882 and so this wedding must have been set for well before that date. His coffin was wheeled along the railway platform on a trolley. Lady August acquired the trolley and it remained in her sitting room for the rest of her life. Augusta lived in her bed-sitting room, just one room in the whole of the house. She eventually became a recluse in Killyon manor. She was kind to her staff and to animals. Augusta mismanaged the estates and left them in shambles by 1905, when she died without an heir. Her will specified that her cash, investments, personal possessions, and household contents were to be sold, with the proceeds going towards the building of hospitals, including one to the memory of Colonel Bernard. Accordingly, the entire contents of both the Dublin townhouse and Killyon Manor were auctioned in Dublin in 1906, but the houses were in such a mess that the contents of each room was sold as it was, unseen by the purchasers. Sovereigns and £5 notes were found in all sorts of places including teapots, kitchen utensils and even chamber pots. She buried the family jewels and the estate was reduced due to mismanagement and no funds were available to build a hospital, never mind three. After her death the estate was contested.

A relative of the Magans, Colonel Arthur Shaen Magan purchased the house and the surrounding parkland. Arthur Tilson Shaen Magan, born in 1880, married Kathleen Jaen Biddulph. Arthur achieved the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Army

Service Corps. He served during World War I and was mentioned in dispatches. In 1926 the estate was sold by the Land Commission. He lived at Correal, Co. Roscommon. Following Colonel Magan's death at Killyon in 1965 his son William Morgan Tilson succeeded to the estate at Killyon.

William Morgan Tilson Magan was born in 1908. He married Maxine Mitchell in 1940. Educated at Sandhurst, he reached the rank of Brigadier in the British Army. He served in India. He fought in the Second World War and served in Palestine in 1946-7. In 1951, Magan was appointed to M15 as director of the overseas department and was engaged in Malaya, Kenya, Nyasaland, Borneo and Aden. He served as Assistant Under-Secretary in the War Office from 1953 to 1968. He was awarded an O.B.E. in 1946 and a C.B.E. in 1958. He lived at Killyon House and at St. Michael's House, Tonbridge, Kent. As one of the last of the family to live there William published the story of the house and family in a book entitled 'Umma-More'. He died in 2010 aged 101.

The manor was sold about 1970 to Lord Rivers Carew who lived there for a period. It was then purchased by the Purcell family who have restored the house and gardens.

## Kilmer Lodge

Kilmer or Kilmur Lodge, Ballivor was described in 1835 as a neat and comfortable house of 'modern architectural style'. Stones from the abandoned Dominican abbey of nearby Donore were used for the upper storey of Kilmer House. Four storeys high, the house was erected in 1790 by Richard Allen, who resided there until 1812. It was then occupied by his son, T. Louther Allen, Colonel 18<sup>th</sup> Light Dragoons, until 1817 and after that it was inhabited by a caretaker. In 1818, Mr. Coffey was in residence at Kilmer and Bishop Plunket dined there in August on his visitation of the parishes of Meath.

In 1820 Elizabeth Loftus, daughter of Dudley Loftus of Kilyon Manor, married Colonel Thomas Lowther Allen of Kilmer. Allen died shortly after the marriage leaving Elizabeth a widow. In 1835 Kilmer townland and house/lodge were the property of Alexander Montgomery who resided in Dublin. Alexander Montgomery married Frances Tisdall of Charlesfort. Alexander Montgomery, son of Alexander Montgomery of Kilmer House, was born in 1846 and became a Justice of the Peace and High Sherrif of Meath in 1888. Henrietta Ann Montgomery, eldest daughter of Alexander Montgomery of Kilmer married Claud Chaloner of Kingsfort in 1875. Henrietta Ann's brother, Archibald Vernon Montgomery of St Mary's Abbey in Trim, was active in the Meath Protestant Orphan Society in 1864, was elected its President in 1935 and died in office in November 1943.

## Kilrue House

Kilrue House stood to the south of Ashbourne and southeast of Ratoath. In ruins in 1836 the house has completely disappeared. The site of the house is occupied by modern farm buildings today.

The first Berford in the Ratoath area was Geoffrey de Burford who witnessed a charter about 1210. The first to be of Kilrue was Roger Birford of Kilrowe who appears in records from 1363-73. There is a detailed genealogy of the Berfords of Kilrue in *Riocht Na Midhe* by Hubert Gallwey in 1979. Michael Berford was the owner of Kilrue in 1641. The Down Survey parish map of Ratoath dating from about 1655 depicts a large building or castle contained within the townland of Kilrue.

'Kilrow', a stone house or castle was inhabited by Richard Berford. Richard Berford died in 1662, but his nephew Michael Berford succeeded in reclaiming much of the family lands restored following the restoration. The remainder of their lands were forfeited following the involvement of Ignatius Berford in the Jacobite administration, though Michael's widow, Margery, remarried George Lowther who succeeded in reclaiming a small portion of the lands.

The castle at Kilrue was either adapted to make a house or demolished and a house erected in its place. The castle at Kilrue is mentioned as late as 1703. In 1745 a mansion house is recorded at Kilrue.

The Lowther family came to Ireland from Lowther, Westmoreland, northern England and settled at Skryne. George Lowther of Skryne Abbey married Frances Piers of Tristernagh, Westmeath. Their son Edward married Mary, daughter of Patrick Cusack of Gerrardstown. Their son, George established the family at Kilrue.

George Lowther was M.P. for Ratoath 1705-16 and M.P. for Coleraine 1713. Born in 1684 he married Jane daughter of Sir Tristram Beresford, sheriff of Meath 1715. He purchased 323 acres in Meath from the Court for Forfeited Estates after the Battle of the Boyne. George married Jane Power, daughter of the 5<sup>th</sup> Baron Le Power and Curraghmore. M.P. for Ratoath George died in 1716. Their son was Marcus married the heiress Catherine Crofton in 1743 and adopted her surname in addition to his own. M.P. for Ratoath from 1753 to 1760 and 1769 to 1776 he was created Baronet Lowther-Crofton, in 1758. George Lowther died in 1717.

George's eldest son, Gorges, succeeded at Kilrue, was born 1713, he was Sheriff of the county of Meath in 1739. He became MP for the borough of Ratoath in the same year, served until 1760 when he became M.P. for Meath. Gorges Lowther was father of the Irish House of Commons, in which he sat for fifty years. In 1787 Lowther was appointed one of commissioners for making a canal from Drogheda to Trim. He was a very popular man in the parliament and was fond of cockfighting. On his death the House, by unanimous vote, went into mourning for three days. Gorges served as Sheriff of Meath in 1739. When he died in 1792 his tenants removed his coffin from the hearse at Kilbrew and carried it on their shoulders to the church at Ratoath where he was interred in the family vault.



Lowther Lodge, Dublin. Photo: Kieran Campbell

Gorges' was succeeded by his son, George who held Kilrue and Lowther Lodge, Balbriggan, Co. Dublin. Lowther Lodge is in north county Dublin, north of Balbriggan, near the sea. Abandoned in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century it stands as a ruin in the middle of a field of wheat. I visited the area when it was proposed that a new port for Dublin be located there. George was MP for Ratoath 1761-8. George died in 1785 and was succeeded by his son, Gorges Lowther.

Gorges Lowther was M.P. for Ratoath 1790 to 1800. An officer in the 5<sup>th</sup> Dragoon guards, he served during the 1798 rebellion. He was against the Union. After the Union he received £15000 for the disenfranchisement of Ratoath. He sold Kilrue and settled at Hampton Hall, Somerset. Gorges wrote a number of libellous and controversial works. He died in 1854, aged 85.

The Lowthers were associated with horse racing. A relation of the family, Hugh Cecil Lowther, the fifth earl of Lonsdale, presented the Lonsdale belt for boxing.

In 1854 Robert Rathbourne was landlord of 390 acres at Kilrue. Colonel Arthur Hartley held an estate at Kilrue in the 1920s.

## Kilsharvan House



Photo by Michael Fox

The main house at Kilsharvan dates from 1820 and it also incorporates a 17<sup>th</sup> century miller's house. Kilsharvan was the residence of the Armstrong, McDonnell, and Shorter families for 200 years. A tulip tree in front of the house is reputed to be over 400 years old. The oldest part of the house may date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Today, an attractive two storey house with shallow bows and a Doric portico the house stands on 37 acres of woodland, paddocks and gardens which run down to the river Nanny. The noted artist, William van der Hagen, died 1745, painted the overmantle at Kilsharvan. The oil on canvas is entitled *A Capriccio Landscape with Shepherds Beside Ruins in a Romantic Landscape* and dated 1736.

According to *The parish of Duleek and over the ditches* Kilsharvan house includes the original miller's residence. Andrew Armstrong established a flax mill and linen industry at Kilsharvan in the 1780s. Andrew Armstrong married Catherine Anne McDonnell in 1814. Catherine came with a dowry of £3,000 and her father provided a further loan of £2,000 to Armstrong to purchase Kilsharvan, which he had been leasing. Armstrong re-directed the river, erected a weir and a millrace of over one mile long. The Bleach Field was upgraded with the addition of a circular watchtower for the production and the protection of the linen. In 1827 Armstrong mortgaged

Kilsharvan and raised a further £3,692 for works at the Mill and to construct the fine stone cut buildings in the farm and stable yards. In 1833 Nicholas Austin remodelled Kilsharvan for Andrew Armstrong 'in a style which does infinite credit to his taste, and that of his architect, Mr Austin Nicholls, of Drogheda'.

Armstrong upgraded Kilsharvan to a fine gentleman's residence. He even considered building a "piazza", the type of veranda he had seen on the great houses in Charleston, South Carolina, while there overseeing his import and export business.

His only son and heir, George Andrew, was killed in the battle of Ferrozopore in India in 1845, aged just 21 years of age. The property then passed into the hands of Armstrong's in laws, the McDonnells.

The McDonnells originated in County Antrim and were a noted medical family. In 1920 Penelope McDonnell Stevenson offered to donate to the Ulster Medical Society a bust of her great-uncle, Dr James McDonnell. McDonnell had been one of the leading physicians in Belfast in the early 19th century. When the society disposed of its building in 1965 the bust was offered to the Royal Victoria Hospital but it vanished a short time later. In 1937, Dr Robert Marshall gave to the Royal Victoria Hospital a bronze copy of a bust of McDonnell. The marble original dating to 1844 is now on permanent loan to the Ulster Museum. Another copy of the bust was on display at Kilsharvan House while the family were in residence. It is possible that the Kilsharvan bust was the original bust, and that after its exhibition at the RA in 1842, copies were made for other branches of the family.

Sir Alexander McDonnell, eldest son of Dr. James McDonnell, was born at Belfast in 1794. He became a barrister in England but returned to Ireland where he became commissioner of the Board of Education in 1839 where he did outstanding work. While he was an ardent Protestant he sought to provide the religious instruction of choice for pupils. He became a privy councillor of Ireland in 1846, resigned his commissionership in 1871 and was created a baronet in 1872 in recognition of his services. He died in Dublin in 1875 but was buried at Kilsharvan.

James's son, Dr. John McDonnell of Kilsharvan, performed the first operation in Ireland under anaesthesia using ether for an amputation in 1847. His son Dr. Robert McDonnell gave the first transfusion of human blood in Ireland in 1865. Robert was a surgeon who served in the Crimean war and later became President of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. James McDonnell, of Murlogh, co. Antrim and Kilsharvan was a barrister at law and he died in 1904.

Col. John McDonnell of Kilsharvan, Justice of the Peace, was Lieutenant Colonel in the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion Leinster regiment and served in World War I. Killed at Tores in 1915, his son, Robert, succeeded him on being born the same day, 7 May 1915.

Robert McDonnell, the last of the McDonnells died of wounds at Barce in 1941 during World War II and his mother married Captain Woods of Milverton Hall, Skerries and spent alternative halves of the year at Kilsharvan and Milverton. She adapted the old mill to produce a coffee substitute during the World War, produced from the roots of the dandelion plant. Mrs. Woods died in 1969 and was succeeded by Louisa McDonnell-Shorter and her daughter, Lucita. Louisa died in 2007.

The house and some adjoining land was sold in 1998 to the Duffy family. Restoration work has been ongoing in Kilsharvan since then with the gate lodge and garden being restored. The nearby cemetery of Kilsharvan dates back to the thirteenth century.

## Kingsfort

Kingsfort House was located near Moynalty in north Meath. Nearby Cherrymount was the first home of the Chaloner family before their new home of Kingsfort was constructed. Kingsfort was completed in 1736 by John Chaloner. The house takes its name from the townland in which it is situated Rathinree, which is the Irish for the fort of the king. There are five ringforts nearby.

Described as a big regular house set in pleasantly rolling countryside Kingsfort was a brick built house of two storeys over basement. A number of rooms had plasterwork and even though the house is ruined fragments of the plasterwork are still visible.

Rev. John Chaloner was born in Shropshire in 1658, studied at Trinity College and became a clergyman in Errigal, Co. Donegal. He became a navy chaplain on board 'The Royal Sovereign' a ship despatched to the West Indies to combat piracy. Tradition is that Chaloner managed to acquire a considerable sum of money during this period and in 1704 having returned to Ireland purchased the estate of Captain Stopford near Moynalty.

John Chaloner succeeded his father in 1732 and completed the new house at King's Fort in 1736. In 1778 John Chaloner was succeeded by Richard who was responsible for major landscaping at Kingsfort.

Richard laid out the Glen, a valley between the two Chaloner houses. He constructed a waterfall, a small lake with an island, a dog's graveyard and a small two roomed lodge. He was known to his friends as 'Dicky of the Glen'. Richard Chaloner showed his party allegiance to the Whig party by planting oaks on his estate at Kingsfort. In 1784 Richard Chaloner was appointed High Sheriff of Meath for the year.

Richard Chaloner kept a diary of domestic events from 1810 to 1817, the title page bears the inscription – 'To record domestic happenings, in which I took a considerable part. It will be a pleasure at some time to bring them back to mind.' Portions of the diary were reproduced in "Not so much to one side" by Valentine Farrell and there is a copy in the local studies section of the County Library, Navan. Richard made changes to the interior of the house around 1815 and he also rebuilt the staircase.

Richard Chaloner died in 1832 leaving Kingsfort to his eldest daughter's second son, Richard Cole-Hamilton, who took the name Chaloner.

In 1835 Kingsfort House was described as "a superb building, with suitable offices and a garden attached. It is situated in the centre of the townland and is the seat of Richard Chaloner. The estate is elegantly adorned with plantations, lakes and ornamental grounds."

In the 1860s the family possessed a mighty bull which they named Sovereign in honour of the Navy ship of Rev. John Chaloner. The bull won many prizes at the RDS and at shows up and down the country. The bull survived an attack of foot and mouth and when it died was buried in one of the ring forts at Kingsfort, renamed in his honour, 'Sovereign's Fort.' A poem was even written in honour of the bull.

In 1876 Richard Chaloner of Kingscourt, Moynalty held 2,100 acres in County Meath. Richard Chaloner was a noted breeder of Shorthorn cattle. In 1879 Richard Chaloner's shorthorn bullock won first prizes in all the major shows in Britain and Ireland. Richard Chaloner died in 1879, leaving Kingsfort to his nephew Claud Cole – Hamilton who assumed the name of Chaloner in the terms of his great-grandfather's will. Claud died on 21st June 1917. He was succeeded by his son, Claud Willoughby Chaloner who was a Major serving with the Royal Enniskillen Fusiliers. He and his wife settled at Cherrymount and leased Kingfort for a period before selling it in 1937. The Chaloner family married into the Bomford family and Peter Bamford's website

on the Bomford family is a brilliant source of information on the Chaloner family and their relatives, the Bomfords.

The last of the Chaloners, Desmond, attended Trinity College and served in the British Army from 1943 to 1947 during the Second World War. His grandfather had died at Kingsfort in 1917 and his grandmother had lived on there until 1927. His father had lived at Cherrymount and it was here that Desmond was born. Desmond Chaloner died in England in 2010.

Kingsfort was sold to Mr. Forest and then to Mr. Anthony McCann, who stripped the house. The slates and roof were removed in the 1950s. The estate had been broken up by the Land Commission in 1936.

## Knightsbrook

Knightsbrook House is located to the south of Trim. John Perceval of Knightsbrook was MP for Granard for 1692-1713 and for Trim 1715-19. The son of Sir Philip Perceval of Dublin he held lands at Granard. John married Martha, daughter and heiress of Edward Knight of Westmeath. This is where the Knights came into the place name. Following a difficult negotiation in 1716 Perceval sold Jonathan Swift 20 acres for a glebe at Laracor. Swift preserved the family in a rhyme: "Mr Percival is ditching, Mrs Percival in her kitchen, Mr Wesley switching, Mrs Wesley stitching, Sir Arthur Langford riching". When John's son, Robert, later wrote to Swift looking for unpaid rent and tithes, Swift responded with an insulting letter. John and Martha Perceval were buried in Laracor.

The family also held lands in Cavan and Leitrim. They held lands at Fosterstown and Knightsbrook. John's son, Robert of Knightsbrook, was MP for Trim 1717-27 and for Fore 1727-60. He was Sheriff of Meath 1720 and High Sheriff 1723. Robert was a founder member of the Dublin Society in 1731 – later the RDS. Robert married Jane Westby in 1717. his sister, Jane married Arthur French of French Park in 1722.

Robert died in 1777 and was succeeded by his son, also named Robert. Robert died about 1814 aged 64.

On 17 October 1807 at Mary le-bonne (Marylebone) Church in London, Col. Hawkshaw of the 22nd Regiment of Native Bengal Infantry, married Anna Maria Percival of Knightsbrook, county Meath, Ireland. On 14 January 1813 Westby Perceval of Knightsbrook married Charlotte Wilhemina, eldest daughter of Major-General Hawkshaw of the Indian's Company Service at Marlebone church, London. They had 10 children, including Westby Hawkshaw Perceval.

In 1835 Knightsbrook was the residence of Mr. Dalton, the tenant of Knightsbrook Demesne. The house had a ruined and uncomfortable appearance. There were several detached trees around the place but they were described as being without regularity or beauty. The house had two good gardens. In 1835 the house was described as being formerly the residence of Mr. Percival. In 1837 it was noted that of Knightsbrook, formerly the handsome residence of the Perceval family, only the outoffices remained. The first Ordnance Survey maps of about the same time show Knightsbrook House with an avenue from the Trim-Laracor road near Stella's Cottage and a rear avenue to the farmyard across a ford on the Knightsbrook river.

The estate at Knightsbrook was sold by Westby Perceval under the Encumbered Estates Act of 1848 and the family purchased lands at Canterbury in Australia and then moved to Tasmania in 1853.

Westby Hawkshaw Perceval, eldest son of Westby, was born at Knightsbrook in 1821. On 5 June 1851 Westby-Hawkshaw Perceval, eldest son of Westby Perceval of Knightsbrook married Sarah-Brook Bailey at Southsea, Hampshire, England. They

emigrated to New Zealand and their son, Sir Westby Brook Perceval, was born on 11 May 1854 in Launceston, Tasmania before they arrived in New Zealand. Westby Hawkshaw Perceval and his wife converted to Roman Catholicism. Westby Hawkshaw Percival served as a lieutenant in the Mounted Police, Melbourne, Australia. He gained a reputation as one of Rangiora's stormiest and most colourful settlers. His son however was a cautious, studious and quietly spoken lad. In 1867 he won a scholarship to Christ's College, Christchurch, where he showed high academic ability. At the age of 16, in May 1870, he was received into the Catholic church, whereupon his father, also a convert, donated a section for Rangiora's first Catholic church. Westby Hawkshaw Percival died on 5 November 1872 leaving his son sufficient property to assure him a fairly large independent income.

Percival now travelled to England and read law at the Middle Temple, London. Returning to New Zealand his involvement with the campaign for a railway from Canterbury to the West Coast soon led him into politics. Perceval became Member of Parliament for Christchurch South. Perceval spoke in the debate over the Private Schools Bill, which won him widespread popularity among New Zealand Catholics and helped earn him a papal knighthood in 1891.

In September 1891, when Perceval was 37, his career took an unexpected turn: Premier John Ballance appointed him agent general for New Zealand in the United Kingdom. In London Perceval was popular and highly regarded as an active and effective agent general. From his arrival in December 1891 he made a good impression and was soon invited to join the board of the Royal Colonial Institute. His address to them in May 1892, depicting New Zealand as a land full of potential and safe for British investment, immigrants and tourists, won high praise from Ballance. In Perceval's hands the role of the agent general was redefined, with new emphasis on publicity, finance and trade. His successor, however, took most of the credit for several policies initiated by Perceval, such as the appointment of a dairy expert to monitor the condition of New Zealand produce. Perceval worked hard to promote New Zealand.

Perceval was stunned by the announcement in January 1896 that he was to be replaced. Perceval chose to stay in England. He was already on the boards of several banks and companies doing business in New Zealand. Perceval served as Tasmania's agent general from 1896 to 1898. Perceval spent the rest of his life in England, where he enjoyed golf and motoring. He died in Wimbledon, Surrey, on 23 June 1928.

A pedigree for the family from 1100 to 1841 is in the National Library, Dublin.

## Lagore House

Lagore is located just east of Dunshaughlin, not far from Ratoath. Lagore House was described as a fine modern house in the 1830s. The gatelodge at Lagore is attributed to the renowned architect, Francis Johnson.

The Boltons family held the position of rector of Ratoath for nearly a hundred years. Henry Bolton was appointed in 1677 and he was succeeded in 1688 by Dr. John Bolton, who resigned in 1720 and was succeeded by Richard Bolton, who held the position until his death in 1761. A close relative, Thomas Lee Norman, then became rector.

John Bolton was appointed Dean of Derry in 1699. Swift hoped for the position but it is said he would not pay the bribe involved in securing the position. John Bolton died in 1724.

Robert Norman, M.P. for Derry 1733 married Sarah, daughter of Very Rev. John Bolton of Lagore. Their son, Thomas, was born in 1715 succeeded to Lagore. The

daughter of Thomas, Florinda, married Charles Gardiner and they became the parents of Luke Gardiner, who developed much of Dublin's Georgian north-side. Thomas was succeeded by his son Robert, who died without an heir in 1771.

In 1799 the lands were transferred to the Thunder family. The Thunder family were a merchant family in Dublin before acquiring lands at Balleally, Lusk, Co. Dublin. When Lagore was acquired Ballaly was retained as a dower house. Michael Thunder of Ballaly, Co. Dublin was the father of Patrick Thunder of Lagore. In 1798 Patrick married Elizabeth Taaffe of Smarmore Castle. Dr. Plunkett, Bishop of Meath, stayed with Patrick Thunder at Lagore when he visited Ratoath on his visitation of the diocese in 1800 and again in 1819. There was a private oratory in the house.

Patrick Thunder died about 1827 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Michael. Michael Thunder born in 1802, was High Sheriff of Meath in 1850. He married Charlotte Mary D'Alton in 1834. Their eldest son, Patrick, succeeded to the estates and the second son, Michael settled at Sencehelstown. Michael served in the Rutland Regiment and retired from the army in 1864 as a Lieutenant. In 1837 Lagore House was described as a handsome residence in a richly wooded demesne, abounding with stately timber.

In 1839 William Wilde and George Petrie visited Lagore House to see the artefacts which had been dug out at the site of the crannog in Lagore bog.

Michael's eldest son, also Michael succeeded him on his death in 1875 but only lived for four years longer and so the estate went to Patrick Thunder. In 1876 Michael Thunder of Lagore held 1,065 acres in Meath but the family also held lands in Westmeath, Kildare and Dublin amounting to a total estate of 2,002 acres.

Patrick Thunder of Lagore and Ballaly, Co. Dublin, was born in 1838. In 1871 he married Mary Anne de Penthony O'Kelly. Their son, Michael was born in 1874. In 1870 there was a family vault erected in the grounds of Ratoath Church. Patrick Thunder died in December 1912. In 1901 Patrick Thunder owned Lagore but it was resided in by Higgin Holmes Chippindall. Patrick and his family were residing at Balleally.



Michael Thunder

Michael Thunder, son of George Thunder of Lagore, was killed during World War I. a member of the Royal Flying Corps he died as a result of an accident in 1916. Wing

commander Michael Dalton Thunder of Lagore in the RAF was the first man to fly non-stop from Ceylon to Perth in 1943.

In 1926 the untenanted lands of Patrick Thunder were acquired by the Land Commission. The house and surrounding lands were held by the family until November 1941 and they held onto a lodge which they still owned in the 1960s.

Mrs. Claudia Burgoyne and her son Major Mark Teeling Watters purchased Lagore House and lands from the Thunders in 1941. Major Watters had returned from WWII. The estate had a dairy and a modern bottling plant. Mrs. Burgoyne moved to St. Mary's Abbey, Trim. Mr. Clements purchased Lagore. In August 1952 a fire destroyed the building. A modern house was erected on the site by the Walsh family. In 1956 the O'Hare family purchased Lagore.

## Lakefield House

Lakefield is located off the road between Crossakeel and Collinstown. Casey and Rowan describe Lakefield, Crossakeel, as a deceptive house. While it appears as standard two-storey over basement of mid-nineteenth century date it actually dates to the mid-eighteenth century. The house has black marble chimneypieces. An early date is supported by the surrounding plantations, clumps of trees including oaks. To the south of the house is the artificial lake which gives the house its name. This lake is called Pigotstown Lake.

The house belonged to the Battersby family. John Battersby of Lakefield was the third son of William Battersby of Smithstown. A Justice of the Peace, John was born in 1722. Alexander Battersby of Lakefield, son of John Battersby, was Justice of the Peace. He married Elizabeth Cusack in 1807.

In 1830s John Battersby of Lakefield was a magistrate for county Meath. The building was described as a neat stone house, pleasantly situated with suitable outbuildings and a garden.

Robert H. Battersby of Lakefield, held 329 acres in County Meath in 1876. Blaney T. Balfour of Lakefield, Crossakeel, held 76 acres in Co. Tyrone in 1876. In 1878 Robert Henry Battersby of Lakefield patented an apparatus for saving life at sea. In 1901 and 1911 Frederick O'Neill and his family lived at Lakefield. The house had thirteen rooms, eleven windows to the front and sixteen outbuildings.

## Larch Hill House and Demesne



Larchill or Larch Hill is located near Kilcock in the townland of Phepotstown and parish of Kilmore. Just off the Kilcock-Dunshaughlin road Larch Hill House is a plain two storey house facing south overlooking a miniature park which contains a collection of rustic follies and garden buildings. Bence-Jones described it as 'a plain

but pleasant house.’ A two-storey country house, built about 1780 Larchhill is perhaps better known for its ornate garden, which has been restored in recent years. The creation of the ornate garden and landscape at Larchhill is difficult to date.

Richard Prentice, a haberdasher from The Coombe in Dublin occupied Larch Hill in the late eighteenth century. He may have established a *Ferme Ornée* at Larchhill and constructed the follies although they are generally dated to later. Mr. Prentice was declared bankrupt in 1790, owing ten thousand pounds to a Mr John Smith in Galway. In 1790 the lease at Phepotstown was taken over by Thomas Watson. The Watson family were a Quaker family from Baltracey, Edenderry. The house at Larch Hill may have been constructed at this time. Thomas died in 1822. His brother, Samuel Eves Watson, took a lease on Larchhill when he married Margo Doyle in 1811. In 1820, Samuel E. Watson inherited half the estate of his uncle, Samuel Russell, in Hodgestown, Timahoe. This brought together four estates with a total area of 1,627 acres. When he died in 1836 his grandson, Samuel Neale, got the estate but he had to take the name Watson in order to inherit. In 1837 Larch Hill, Kilmore, Kilcock was the residence of S.E. Watson. Its grounds were embellished with grottoes and temples. Samuel Neale Watson, as he was now known, married Susanna Davis in 1840 and lived mainly in Dublin. Samuel Neale Watson died in 1883. Seamus Cullen has researched the history of the Watson family.

The Barry family resided at Larchhill from the 1880s until 1993. Christopher and Maria Barry donated the Stations of the Cross to Moynalvey church. Christopher died before 1911 leaving Maria a widow.

There is a some suggestion that the development of the gardens began with Robert Prentice in the eighteenth century. The follies and fermee ornee were further developed by the Watsons between 1810 and 1830. 'Ferme Ornée' gardens were the most fashionable gardens of the mid 18th century. The intention was to create a pastoral paradise, embellished with ornamental buildings, statuary, water features and picturesque walks. There are ten follies at Larchhill, the most important being the Shell Tower in the walled garden, the lake island castle Gibraltar and the Foxes Earth.

The Foxes Earth consists of a mausoleum and folly. An artificial mound was created and a rustic temple erected on top. There is a stone bridge to the site. Gibraltar consists of a triangular-plan miniature fort with corner towers and turrets. Set in lake the structure has gun loops and is castellated. Mock naval battles were fought across the lake. Cockle Tower consists of a three-stage circular-plan castellated tower with remains of ornamental shell work to interior. When Mrs. Watson got ill, they tried to take her to hospital but she refused saying ‘I will in Larchhill stay, dead or alive.’ When she died her ghost could be heard knocking on the hall door. A priest was called and he confined her spirit in the round tower and locked and sealed the doors and windows. The next owner opened the building, moving the remains to the local churchyard. The spirit of Mrs. Watson still wanders Larchhill. An ornamental dairy is located south of the walled garden. There is a boathouse on the lake. The rustic temple consists of six columns set on a hexagonal plan, supporting a rubble stone dome.

Mr. Watson feared that he would be re-incarnated as a fox and if the hounds followed him he would have cover at Larchhill. After his death a number of hunts at Larchhill were unsuccessful as the fox made an escape into the fox’s covert. Twenty men were despatched to prevent the fox entering the covert on the next hunt but the fox jumped into the lake and made its way to the covert. An old huntsman said it was Mr. Watson making his escape and the hunt avoided that territory for a period. The erection of the follies is sometimes wrongly attributed to Robert Watson, Master of the Meath Hunt.

In 1994, when the de Las Casas family bought Larchill, the follies were derelict, the lake had been drained and the walled garden lost to grazing. With a grant from the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Programme and a FAS Community Employment project, the garden, follies, lake and parkland were restored between 1994 and 1999. The project has won many awards. In 2002 Larch Hill was the first Irish recipient of the European Union's prestigious Europa Nostra Award for Cultural Heritage.

## Lennoxbrook

Lennoxbrook is located near Carnaross on the main Carnaross-Kells Road. In 1835 Lennoxbrook was described as a neat residence with some small portions of plantation around it.

The Molloy family farmed at Lennoxbrook. J.C. Shaw wrote an article in the *Irish Genealogist* in 1960 on the family. John Molloy leased Lennoxbrook from James Lennox Napper of Loughcrew in 1735. His grandson Edward born 1746 and died in 1814, he was sovereign (mayor) of Kells and captain of the Kells militia. He probably fought against the rebels on the Hill of Tara in 1798 as he and the Upper Kells Infantry company erected a memorial in Kells churchyard to William Wright, one of the Upper Kells Infantry who was killed at the Battle of Tara on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1798 aged 56. Edward was succeeded at Lennoxbrook by his second son, James Dutton Molloy and his son Edward was the last of the Molloys at Lennoxbrook. The last of the family, Edward Molloy, died in 1867 and a broken column over his grave commemorates him. Edward Molloy was born in 1799 and married Laetitia Booth Bell.

## Lionsden



Lionsden House



Dovecote at Lionsden

Lionsden House is located at Castlerickard, near Longwood in south west Meath. The house was erected in 1788 by Godwin Swift IV. John O'Donovan said the name Lion's den was a fancy name. O'Donovan preferred Irish names. Beaufort's map of 1797 showed Lion's Den. The name could be a play on Richard the Lionheart or through the Fitzleon family. A two-storey over basement house it has bow ends. The ground floor accommodation includes an entrance hall, a drawing room, a living room, dining room, kitchen, utility room, back hall, bathroom, boot room and boiler room. Upstairs are six bedrooms and bathroom. There are two rooms in the basement. The house is vaguely similar to Roristown, Trim. Lionsden was the centre of a small estate which had canals, two ornamental lakes, a fishpond and a dovecote. Lionsden is currently accessed by what was the back entrance. The main entrance to the house still stands with its original gates but its gate lodge has been removed. There is a dovecote and a lake near the house.

Godwin Swift was the first of the family to be associated with Lionsden and Castlerickard. He was the uncle of Dean Jonathan Swift. The main seat of the Swifts was Swiftsheath, Co. Kilkenny. The Dean's second cousin was Deane Swife, born in 1707, who met Jonathan in 1720. Jonathon described him as a "puppy" probably more like the modern word "pup". Despite this Jonathan gave him a loan of funds based on the security of Lionsden estate. Deane Swift wrote an Essay on the life of Jonathan Swift and edited Swift's works which included the bulk of Swift's letters.

Captain Henry Hoener de Mamile, of Nancy, France married Anna Marie Caroline Swift in Belgium in 1833. The couple moved to Lionsden about 1835, shortly before the birth of their second son Oswald. They gave him the second name of Napoleon. Anna Marie died in childbirth in 1849. Their children seem to have emigrated to Australia and America. In 1854 Honeur De Mamiel held Lionsden from Godwin Meade Swift.

Goodwin Meade Pratt Swift of Swiftsheath, Co. Kilkenny was granted a patent in 1856 for an aerial chariot or apparatus for navigating the air. He constructed what he called an "aerial chariot" which consisted of a boat-shaped carriage with one wheel at the front and two at the rear with silk covered wings. The device was drawn forward by an aerial screw or propeller turned by a winch and gear system. He constructed his chariot in the dining room of the house and then widen the doors to get the device outside. He had it hoisted to the top of Foulksrath castle and had his butler climb

inside before pushing it over the edge. It plummeted to the ground and the butler broke his leg. The butler received a pension for life. In Castlerickard church there was a brass tablet which read: 'Godwin Meade Pratt Swifte, Viscount Carlingford, natus 13<sup>th</sup> August 1805, obit July 4<sup>th</sup> 1864'. In Castlerickard churchyard the Swift family vault is surmounted by a large three-sided pyramid. The stonework fits tightly together, to form an almost smooth surface. Erected about 1815 the pyramid is inscribed 'Swifte' on west elevation.

In 1901 the house was vacant but owned by the Swift family. In 1911 the house was vacant.

## Liscarton Castle



Liscarton Castle is located north of Navan, just off the Kells road and on the banks of the river Blackwater. A castle dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> or 16<sup>th</sup> century it consisted of two towers joined by a hall. One of the towers was later adapted to make a dwelling house. A medieval church stands close by and a large farm building complex was erected near the house.

Liscarton Castle was held by Sir William Talbot in 1633. Sir William Talbot was father of Richard Talbot, Duke of Tyrconnell, lord deputy of Ireland under James II.

William Cadogan was born at Somerset in 1601. Member of Parliament for Monaghan from 1639 to 1649 Cadogan defended Trim castle during the troubles of the 1640s. He was appointed governor of Trim Castle and also took charge of putting down rebels around Dublin. He settled at Liscarton and was High Sheriff of Meath in 1658. He died in 1661. His son, Henry was a barrister in Dublin. Henry died 1713/4.

Henry's son, William, became a noted officer in the British Army. Born at Liscarton in 1672 William became an outstanding officer in the British Army. A friend of John Churchill, 1<sup>st</sup> duke of Marlborough, Cadogan served with distinction in the War of the Spanish Succession. He served in the Low Countries and fought at Blenheim. In 1715 he was appointed to lead an army to put down the Jacobite rebellion. In 1716 he was made Baron Cadogan and in 1718 he was made an earl. A teapot which was filled from the bottom was named the "Cadogan Tea Pot" as Cadogan was the first to possess such an item. A lidless teapot it had a funnel at the bottom for filling. Cadogan was made commander in chief of the army after Marlborough's death in 1722. He died in 1726 at Kensington, London.

In the early nineteenth century Liscarton was in the hands of Gerrard family. In 1835 Liscarton was described: "The ruins of an old castle that originally consisted of two

strong quadrangular towers connected by a hall. One tower still stands in a dilapidated condition. The hall has disappeared and the second tower shortened and thatched and made into the residence of T. Gerrard, the owner of the corn mill'. The Gerrards of Liscarton are buried in Donaghpatrick graveyard. Thomas Gerard of Liscarton died in 1763.

Thomas Gerrard of Liscarton died 1784 aged 68. William Gerrard his son died 1792 aged 39. In 1814 Liscarton was the residence of Thomas Gerrard and was described as having considerable outworks, the only part then remaining was an arched gateway, about sixty yards from the main body of the building.

The lands of Liscarton belonging to Thomas Gerrard, William Gerrard and James Cullen were sold by the Encumbered Estates court in 1855. Thomas and William were described as gentlemen but James was described as merchant.

Liscarton was in the hands of Cullen family in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In 1876 James Cullen of Liscarton held 745 acres in County Meath. James was the son of Hugh and Mary Cullen of Leighlinbridge, Co. Carlow. James Cullen was the younger brother of Cardinal Paul Cullen. Paul Cullen spent thirty years in Rome and was friends with Pope Gregory XVI and Pope Pius IX. Elected Archbishop of Armagh in 1850 and then Archbishop of Dublin he became the first Irish Cardinal in 1867. At the First Vatican Council Cardinal Cullen proposed the precise and accurate formula for the definition of Papal Infallibility. The cardinal visited his brother's home at Liscarton, staying there in April 1872 while recovering from a cold.

James Cullen died at Liscarton in 1886. James Cullen married Kate Lynch and they had three sons. Their son, Paul, became President of Castleknock College. Their son, Hugh, succeeded to Liscarton. Hugh married Mary Hester Colgan in 1888. Hugh died in 1937 and was succeeded by his son, also Hugh. Hugh served as an officer in World War I and was wounded. His brother, Edward, was a chaplain who served at the front during the war. Marrying in 1944 Hugh lived at Liscarton until his death in 1965 and the following year the property was sold.

## Lismullen House



A suggested date for the construction of the house is 1720 –1740 when there was an optimistic period after the Boyne. Lismullen is a typical gentleman's residence,

nothing unique about its design, sited to maximise the use of local scenery. At the turn of the twentieth century the mansion had twenty one rooms and thirty four outoffices. The house had an entrance hall, study, dining room, drawing room, back hall, principal staircase, butler's pantry, two lavatories and bathrooms, eleven bedrooms, dressing rooms and strong room. The house was decorated with many paintings including a Gainsborough, a Reynolds and portraits of family members and family connections. A door from the main house led into a kitchen, with a scullery and larder. The out offices included a larder, dairy, tiled laundry, apple loft, storerooms and stables. There were three coach houses and a motor house. These out offices were entered through an archway from the back avenue. At the back of these buildings was a large farmyard, hay barn, walled in garden, pleasure ground, conservatory and tennis court.

The Dillons were a prominent family of the Pale. Lodge's Peerage states that the Dillons of Lismullen were descendants of Thomas, the third son of Sir Robert of Riverstown. William Mallone, Irish papist, was in possession of Lismullen in 1640 but during the Cromwellian confiscation the entire parish of Lismullen and 172 acres at Clonarden in the neighbouring parish of Templekeran parish were allocated to Arthur Dillon. Arthur's son, John, added further lands to the estate in the Williamite confiscations. Sir John Dillon's close connection to Ormond may have resulted in William of Orange spending a night at Lismullen after the Battle of the Boyne. A number of personal items were said to have been given to the Dillons by William of Orange in 1690, two days after the Battle of the Boyne. The items included a glass decanter, a glass posset bowl, a bed-coverlet and two pairs of gauntlets.

John was succeeded by his grandson, John Talbot Dillon who as Member of Parliament for Wicklow introduced a successful bill for some relief of Catholics from the penal laws in 1782. For this support of the Catholic cause Sir John Dillon was created a baron of the Holy Roman Empire by Emperor Joseph II of Austria. On 22 February 1783 John Dillon received Royal License to use the title and was created baronet by George III on 31 July 1801. Sir John Dillon, his son, Charles and Nathaniel Preston formed a company to exploit a vein of copper ore on the Walterstown lands of Nathaniel Preston. There appear to have been two Sir John Talbot Dillons living at approximately the same period in the nineteenth century and the lives of both having some common events are often confused by writers.

Sir John Talbot Dillon had six sons and three daughters. His eldest son died before his father. His three remaining older sons, Charles Drake, Arthur Richard and William, held the title of baronet in succession following his death. In March 1847 the stables of Sir William Dillon of Lismullen were rented as extra accommodation for paupers by the Dunshaughlin Board of Guardians as the work house at Dunshaughlin was at full capacity.

The fifth son, Rev. Ralph Dillon, left a son, John, who succeeded on the death of his cousin, in 1852. This John was the father of Sir John Fox Dillon.

Sir John Fox Dillon married Marion Louisa Dykes and the couple had only one child, a daughter, Millicent, born in 1895. Sir John enjoyed hunting and was a member of the Meath Hunt and the Norfolk Hunt. Sir John was a candidate in the first Meath County Council elections, running in Tara district. He received twenty-seven votes but failed to get elected. The 1898 Act stipulated that three seats on the new council were reserved for outgoing members of the Grand Jury and Sir John Dillon was one of the three selected. Sir John had donated a site for a new church at Lismullen and contributed a large amount to the construction costs.

Sir John remained as churchwarden until his death in 1925. Lady Dillon commissioned a window from Harry Clarke in February 1929 as a memorial to her husband for the new church at Lismullen. The window *The Ascension* was installed above the altar in March 1930. Lismullen church was demolished in 1964 as a result of declining attendance. The Clarke window was removed to storage in Trim and sold by the church authorities in the 1990s.

Sir John grew tobacco to support Sir Nugent Everard in his efforts to introduce the industry on a commercial basis in Meath at the turn of the century. He also supported Everard's experimentation with the growing of hemp to provide the raw material for cordage and as shelter for the tobacco crop. Sir John invented a machine to scotch the hemp and proposed that the 10,000 tons of hemp imported annually from Russia and Poland be produced in Ireland. In 1918 Sir John Dillon disposed of 1,693 acres of his estate at Lismullen under the Land Acts.

In early 1923 a renewed outbreak of violence occurred in the area surrounding Lismullen. Despite his military experience Sir John was not prepared for the arrival of the arsonists. On 5 April 1923 a group of men stole a trap at Knockmark, drove to Dunsany Stores and took petrol which they took to Lismullen. Later that night a large party of men gained entrance to Lismullen house and set the place alight. When the house was destroyed by fire very few items were saved. Sir John found time to send a note to Killeen to warn the Fingalls that the arsonists had said that Killeen was next. The motive for the burning is not clear with various reasons being put forward at the time.

In 1923 he and his family left Ireland behind to purchase a property, Longworth Hall, in England. Under the Damage to Property (Compensation) Act of 1923 Sir John Dillon received £10,942 to rebuild his house. The new 'modern residence' at Lismullen was built on the foundations of the destroyed house which was 'of a very old fashioned and inconvenient type'. The replacement house was as undistinguished as its predecessor being described by one observer as 'a modern tasteless building' in 1942. Sir John Dillon died suddenly on 1 November 1925, at his residence, Longworth Hall, at the age of 82.

Since Sir John had no son a distant cousin, Robert William Charlier Dillon, was the heir. Robert's father died 6 October 1925, just a month before Sir John's death so Sir Robert inherited the estate at eleven years of age.

The Dillon lands at Lismullen were compulsory purchased by the Land Commission in 1963.

The house and garden were sold on for charitable and social purposes and became a residential conference centre and a hospitality training centre. It is owned by the Lismullin Educational Foundation, an educational charity, which in 2000 completed a major development of the site and facilities. These are inspired by the spirit of the Prelature of Opus Dei and reflect a Christian outlook on life and culture.

## Loughcrew House

Loughcrew house is located near Oldcastle on the road to Kells. In medieval times Loughcrew was the home of the Plunkett family and is the supposed birthplace of St. Oliver Plunkett. The grounds host the annual Mass in honour of St Oliver Plunkett every July.



Loughcrew House with Temple of the Rains (remains of earlier house)

The Napier family erected a house at Loughcrew in 1673. An Irish longhouse, its foundations may be traced in the layout in part of the gardens. Bence-Jones described Loughcrew as a large and severe neo-Classical house by C.R. Cockerell. Charles Roberts Cockerell designed the new house at Loughcrew in 1821 for James Lennox William Napier. He also designed a lodge, the lake, garden and conservatory. The entrance front had a giant Athenian Ionic portico. Cockerell was unhappy with the finished houses as his client had added features to the exterior. The house was said to have a curse on it, it was burned three times in 100 years. "Three times will Loughcrew be consumed by fire. Crows will fly in and out of the windows. Grass will grow on its doorstep". Following the third fire the house was demolished in the 1960s and a smaller house was erected. The giant Ionic portico which survives is a notable feature in the surrounding landscape. The imposing gate lodge, opposite the entrance gate, was designed by C.R. Cockerell. The firm Deane, Thomas Newenham & sons were architect for the re-building of the main house after the fire of 1888.

Sir Robert Napier was made Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer in 1593 by Queen Elizabeth I. James Napier received lands at Loughcrew as a result of the Cromwellian Plantation. James was a brother-in-law of the man who surveyed Ireland for the confiscations, William Petty. Napier served as High Sheriff for Co. Meath in 1671. James Napier was an M.P. for Athboy 1695-9, for Trim 1703-13 and for Co. Meath 1715-18. In the eighteenth century the family married into the Dutton family and one elder son received the title Baron Sherborne with his younger brother inheriting Loughcrew.

James Lennox William Napier was born in 1791 and inherited the estates on the death of his father, William, later that year. In 1824 James married Selina Skipwith and their son, James Lennox was born in 1825. In 1826 J.L. Napier of Loughcrew became master of the Ballymacad and he built the kennels in an old mill at Ballymacad. James, senior, died in 1868.

In 1837 Loughcrew House was the residence of Jas. L.W. Napier, and described as a magnificent structure in the Grecian Ionic style, erected from the designs by Mr. Cockerell, of London, it was faced entirely in hewn limestone, had a noble portico, contained some good paintings by old masters. The mansion, the outoffices (which are in superior order) and improvements in the demesne are stated to have cost upwards of £80,000. The demesne comprised about 900 plantation acres of which nearly 200 were planted, the principal approach was by a lodge of elegant design and the scenery in the vicinity was of a pleasing character.

In 1883 James Lennox Naper held 18, 863 acres in Meath and 176 acres in Westmeath. The estate today is reduced to 200 acres. In 1901 James L. Naper held Loughcrew. The house had fifty rooms, twenty nine windows to the front and six outbuildings. James Lenox Naper, aged 75, lived at Loughcrew with his sister in 1901. There were thirteen servants living in the house but additional servants and workers lived on the estate. In 1911 William Lenox Naper, aged 32, and his wife lived at Loughcrew. There were nineteen servants living in the house.

William Lenox Naper, was awarded the Military Cross for services in the Royal Horse Guard during World War One but he died without issue and his widow Adela married the colourful adventurer, Rodney Matthews, in 1946. The gardens at Loughcrew were developed and opened as a visitor attraction. An annual opera festival is held at Loughcrew.