

Seneschalstown House

Seneschalstown House is located south of Yellow Furze. It is on the first Ordnance Survey maps of the 1830s. In 1901 the house had nineteen rooms, eleven windows to the front and seventeen outbuildings. There were two avenues into the house, the back gates were used most often.

The Aylmer family held Seneschalstown. Edward Aylmer of Seneschalstown was alive in the reign of Charles II. Richard Aylmer of Seneschalstown died in 1746 leaving four sons and eight daughters. Richard Aylmer of Seneschalstown married Miss Deane of Galway in 1764. In 1792 Peter Aylmer of Seneschalstown, the second son of Richard, was sworn in as a member of the United Irishmen in Dublin. The Aylmer family donated the site for the church at Seneschalstown towards the end of the eighteenth century.

In 1837 Seneschalstown House was the residence of Laurence Kelly but the property of the Aylmer family. In 1854 Laurence Kelly held Seneschalstown House and a demesne of 255 acres at Seneschalstown. In 1876 Maria Kelly of Seneschalstown held 457 acres in county Meath. Miss Kelly died about 1880.

Seneschalstown was leased to the Thunder family for many years. Michael Harman D'Alton Thunder was the second son of Michael Thunder of Lagore House. Born in 1842 he was a Justice of the Peace and Captain in the 58th regiment. He retired from the army in 1864. The family had lived at Kilcarne before moving to Seneschalstown. His son was Stuart Harman Joseph Thunder. Stuart Thunder served during World War I and was mentioned in despatches seven times. In 1901 and 1911 Michael Thunder and his family were living at Seneschalstown House. The last of the Thunder family to live locally was Captain Jack Thunder who resided at Brownstown and died in the 1970s.

The Farrell family came into possession of the property around 1914. Christopher Farrell provided the new GAA club with a field to play on in 1932.

Silverstream House

Silverstream House is located in the townland of Balloy, near Stamullen. In 1911 it had twenty eight rooms, five windows at the front and nineteen outbuildings.

According to 'The parish of Duleek and over the ditches' Thomas Preston erected Silverstream about 1843. Brendan Matthews has also written about Silverstream. This house at Stamullen, county Meath was originally situated in 166 acres of land. Accounts and estimates relating to the construction of the house are still in existence.

Thomas Preston was son of the 12th Viscount Gormanston and brother to the 13th Viscount. His father paid the cost of erecting the house. In 1901 the house was vacant. In 1911 the house was lived in by four servants. Thomas died at Silverstream in 1903, his wife Margaret had died at their London residence in 1891. Thomas was Commissioner for National Education in Ireland.

The property passed to his son Thomas Edward, justice of the peace, who died in 1919. Then Silverstream passed to another son Francis Edmund. He sold the property in 1941 and died the following year. The house was acquired by the Order of St. John of God who remained at Silverstream until 1955 when it was disposed of to the Sisters of the Visitation. The Sisters of the Visitation established their first Irish foundation at Silverstream by Mother Theresa O'Dwyer, with three sisters from America and five from England and they were welcomed by the Bishop of Meath, Dr. Kyne. The parish priest of Stamullen, Fr. Peter Fagan and the parish curate, Fr.

Patrick Fagan also attended the service in November 1955. The Visitation nuns are a contemplative order and produce altar breads.

Sion House



Sion House is located near Johnstown, Navan. The house was erected in the middle of the nineteenth century. It does not appear on the first O.S. maps in the 1830s. The house was held by the Metge family. In 1854 John Metge held a house and sixty-nine acres of land from Frances Metge at Alexanderread townland. R.H. Metge, M.P. lived there in the early 1880s.

The Dunville family became associated with Navan in the 1880s. Robert Grimshaw Dunville acquired Sion. The Dunville family ran a whisky blenders business in Belfast. Robert Grimshaw Dunville became chairman in 1874. He was High Sheriff of County Meath in 1882.

In 1901 Robert G. Dunville and his wife, Jeanie, were in residence at Sion. The house had twenty six rooms, eight windows to the front and eleven outbuildings.

In 1890 Robert's son, John Dunville, was appointed Private Secretary to the Duke of Devonshire. John Dunville had had served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Fifth Battalion of the Leinster Regiment. In 1892 John Dunville married Violet Anne Blanche Lambart, the fifth daughter of Gustavus William Lambart, of Beau Parc. County Meath. In 1911 Violet was living at Sion. They had four children: Robert Lambart Dunville, John Spencer Dunville, William Gustavus Dunville and Una Dunville. Second Lieutenant John Spencer Dunville died from wounds he received at Epehy in France in 1917. He was protecting an N.C.O. of the Royal Engineers who was cutting wire which had been laid by the enemy. The Victoria Cross was awarded to him posthumously. His father, John Dunville, received the medal from King George V at Buckingham Palace in August 1917. John Dunville was Master of the Meath Hounds from 1911 to 1915. John Dunville was president of the Irish Aero Club in 1912. In 1910 he crossed from Ireland to England in less than two hours. Robert Grimshaw Dunville died in August 1910 and his son John Dunville succeeded him. John Dunville died in 1929.

In July 1936 St. Martha's College of Agriculture and Domestic Science, Sion, Navan, in charge of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul was opened at Sion. In 1941

An Taoiseach Eamon de Valera and the Minister for Agriculture, Dr. James Ryan, paid a visit to St. Martha's College. This college operated until the 1980's.

Skryne Castle



Skryne Castle consists of a late medieval tower house to which was added a three storey Georgian about 1780 and the building was re-modelled about 1830 with battlements and Gothic windows being added to make the building more picturesque. The castle is close to the motte castle of Adam de Feypo, who was granted Skryne by High de Lacy in the 12th century. Mrs Elizabeth Hickey documented the medieval period in her book 'Skryne and the early Normans.' At the entrance is a single-storey gate lodge dating from about 1860. The first Ordnance Survey maps show an entrance direct to the front of the house. The current entrance approaches the house from the side. The first OS maps also show the site of a chapel in the field to the front of the house.

Skryne gets its name from 'Scrín Cholm Cille', meaning the shrine of St. Colmcille. This shrine was brought to Skryne in 875 to protect it from the attack by the Vikings. However the shrine was lost when the monastery was plundered by the Danes and rivals Irish clans. Adam de Feypo who was granted the lands here by Hugh de Lacy, founded an Augustinian monastery. The tower of this monastery sits on the summit of the hill. Skryne became a borough with its own mayor or provost. In the early 1800s fairs were held on March 17th, June 20th, and Oct. 12th, for livestock, the last being a very large fair for sheep. O'Connell's traditional pub, located near the tower, features in the Guinness White Christmas ad on television.

The castle at Skryne was lived in by the Wilkinson family. A tune called 'Planxty Wilkinson' was composed by Turlough O'Carolan for the Wilkinsons of Tara and Skryne, Co.Meath.

There is supposed to be a ghost who haunts the castle. In 1740 a local squire turned his attention to Lilith Palmerston, a maid at the castle. When his advances were spurned he tried to strangle her, and was hanged for the crime. Shrieks are heard in the castle and a white figures sometimes appears.

In 1837 the old castle had been enlarged and modernised, and was occupied by a farmer. In 1856 Skryne castle and estate was the property of Peter Wilkinson who in 1876 held 586 acres in County Meath. In 1901 Alice Wilkinson and her daughter, Alice, were living at Skryne. In 1942 Skryne was the residence of Mrs. A. Wilkinson. The Wilkinson estate was taken over by the Land Commission in 1940.

In the early 1950s Mrs Elizabeth Hickey and family came to live in Skryne Castle. Mrs Hickey was a well known Meath historian and author. From the re-foundation of the Meath Archaeological and Historical Society in the mid 1950s she took an active role in local history. Probably the most famous of her works was the 'The Green Cockatrice' in which she suggested that the works of Shakespeare were actually written by an Irishman, named William Nugent. She died in 1999 aged 81 years.

Slane Castle





Slane Castle sits on an elevated site overlooking the Boyne river, just outside the village of Slane on the Navan road. A three storey house over basement Slane Castle was erected on the site of an earlier castle. Bence-Jones described Slane as a very large and very early Gothic Revival castle in an incomparable situation along the river Boyne. Major construction commenced at Slane about 1785 and continued for forty years. Rectangular in plan each corner has full-height square towers. The ballroom has exquisite Gothic tracery, spun out like lace.

The demesne buildings, stable block, gates and gatehouses form part of the estate landscape. Within the estate demesne is situated St. Erc's Hermitage and Our Lady's well.

The architects, who were involved in the re-design of the castle and grounds, reads like a who's who of leading Irish and English architects. James Wyatt designed the library ceiling and prepared plans for the house. James Gandon, Thomas Penrose and Alexander Stewart were all involved in the changes in the 1780s. Lancelot "Capability" Brown prepared plans for the parklands, a work completed by John Sutherland. The stables too are reputedly to the design of Capability Brown, the English architect who never came to Slane. "I have not yet finished England" was the reason he gave for not coming to Ireland.

Francis Johnston is responsible for the dramatic gothic gates on the Mill Hill, the hall, staircase and entrance. Sir Richard Morrison drew up plans for the house about 1820.

St. Patrick's Church of Ireland church was erected in 1712 on a site within the demesne donated by Henry Conyngham who complained that the old church on the hill was "of difficult ascent." The Roman Catholic church at Slane was also endowed by the Conynghams and bears a plaque "Mount Charles Chapel 1802".

The Conynghams, originally from the lowlands of Scotland, settled in Donegal in 1611. They took their motto after a Scottish king, who pursued by his enemies jumped into a haycock that the Conynghams were building and kept calling out "Over Fork Over" until he was completely concealed.

Alexander Conyngham, a Protestant clergyman of Mount Charles in Co. Donegal was the founder of the family in Ireland. He had twenty-seven children and died in 1660. Sir Albert Conyngham raised a regiment of dragons to fight for William at the Battle of the Boyne. His son, General Henry Conyngham, took his regiment of 500 soldiers from the army of King James to King William when the battle began to go against James. Whichever king won the Conynghams would have been on the winning side.

The Conynghams purchased the confiscated Fleming estate at Slane following the Williamite Confiscations in 1701. A house was constructed at Slane around the old Fleming Castle.

Albert died in 1705 and was succeeded by his son, William, who lived until 1738. His successor was his brother, Henry, who was created Earl and Baron Conyngham in 1781. When Henry died later that year the earldom became extinct and the barony and estate went to his nephew, Francis Pierrepont Burton, second Lord Conyngham. Francis was the son of Francis Burton, M.P. for Coleraine and Co. Clare and Mary Conyngham. Francis Pierrepont's brother, William Burton, inherited the estates of his uncle and had his name changed to Burton Conyngham in 1781. He served as an M.P. in Dublin from 1761 to 1796 representing various constituencies. The largest flour mill in the country was erected at Slane in association with David Jebb and Blayney Townley Balfour in 1763. On succeeding his uncle William began an ambitious plan to improve the house and estate at Slane. He was a patron of the architect James Gandon and an active member of the Wide Streets Commission. He died, unmarried, at home in Harcourt Place, Dublin, on 31 May 1796, following which the lands he had had for life passed to his nephew, Viscount Conyngham.

Francis Pierrepont married Elizabeth Clements, the daughter of Nathaniel Clements, in 1750. Their eldest son, Henry, inherited Slane. Henry Burton Conyngham succeeded to the title in 1787 on the death of his father, Francis Pierpoint. He was created Marquess Conyngham, Earl of Mount Charles and Viscount Slane in 1816.

Born in 1766, Henry Conyngham, first Marquis Conyngham, was the elder twin son of Francis Pierrepont Burton, second baron Conyngham, by Elizabeth, sister of the first earl of Leitrim. He was a vigorous supporter of Act of Union in the Irish House of Lords.

Born in London Elizabeth Denison married Henry, Viscount Conyngham in 1794. A noted beauty, she was considered vulgar by some elements of society. She attracted the attention of royalty. Tsarevitch Nicholas of Russia was one of her admirers. Elizabeth became the mistress of the Prince of Wales, who became George IV in 1820. In late 1821 King George came to visit his subjects in Ireland although it was rumoured that he had come to Ireland to visit his mistress at Slane. The King stayed in Slane Castle in 1821 and a local story states that the reason the road from Dublin to Slane is one of the straightest roads in Ireland is because it was so designed to get him there quickly. He dined in the spectacular Gothic Revival Ballroom and the bedroom he slept in is known as the King's Room to this day. Elizabeth's relationship benefited the Conyngham family with her husband being raised to the title of Marquess and being awarded a number of royal offices. Lady Conyngham was an influence on George IV as she was against the death penalty and supported Catholic emancipation. The entire family lived with the king and at his expense. The relationship ended on the death of the king in 1830 and Lady Conyngham lived on until 1861. She lived a full and long life, dying aged ninety-two. In her later years she walked to church every Sunday supported by George IV's cane. Her son was the first person to address Queen Victoria as "Your Majesty."

Henry was succeeded by his second but eldest surviving son, Francis, the second Marquess. A general in the army he also held the positions of Postmaster General and Lord Steward of the Household.

His eldest son, George, the third Marquess also joined the army. The title then passed to his eldest son, Henry. Two of his sons, Victor, the fifth Marquess, and Frederick, the sixth Marquess, both succeeded in the titles. Frederick's son, Frederick, succeeded him as seventh Marquess.

In 1883 Marquis Conyngham held 7,060 acres in Meath, 27,613 acres in Clare, 9,737 in Kent and 122,300 acres in Donegal amounting to a total of 166,710 acres

The seventh Marquess Conyngham died in 2009. He succeeded to the peerage in 1974. A captain in the Irish Guards he married Eileen Wren Newsam from nearby Beauparc. He lived in the Isle of Man for a considerable period.

In 1976 the castle was given into the care of his son, Henry Mount Charles, who worked tirelessly to get the castle and estate into a good financial state. The castle was opened to the public in 1985.

From 1981 Slane became known throughout Ireland and the world for its open air rock concerts which were held in the natural amphitheatre below the castle. Acts such as U2, The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Madonna, Bruce Springsteen, Guns 'N Roses, Red Hot Chilli Peppers, David Bowie, Queen, Robbie Williams and REM have performed at Slane. In 1984 U2 lived in the Castle while they were recording the album "The Unforgettable Fire." The album was recorded at the castle and the ballroom was used for one of the videos. In 1991 a real unforgettable fire took place at Slane when a third of the building was destroyed and the rest of the Castle was severely damaged. The building has been painstakingly restored since then. A 10-year restoration programme was completed in 2001 and Slane Castle once again opened to the public.

Smithstown House

Smithstown House is located near Dunshaughlin, just off the Navan-Dublin road. There was a house there in the 1830s but the current Smithstown House was erected in the mid nineteenth century. An entrance avenue was created to the main road for the new house.

William Johnson, a descendant of the O'Neill's of Tyrone, settled at Smithstown. William Johnson's son, Christopher, married Anne Warren of nearby Warrenstown. The Johnsons were tenants of the Warrens.

William Johnson was born at Smithstown in 1715, the son of Christopher Johnson and Anne Warren. William left Smithstown in 1738 to go to the Mohawk Valley bringing with him twelve local families to settle on the Warren lands there. William Johnson was a pivotal figure in British colonial and early Native American fortunes. The story of William Johnson is told in Fintan O'Toole's book "White Savage". Another relative, Guy Johnson, also distinguished himself in America. Guy was supposed to be William's nephew.

The Logan family succeeded the Johnsons at Smithstown. In his 1851 will James Logan left an annuity for the Roman Catholic parochial school of Dunsany. Walter Logan held the house and 294 acres from the Earl of Fingal in 1854. In 1876 Nicholas Logan held 294 acres in county Meath. Nicholas R. Logan, of Smithstown, also held 440 acres in Westmeath. The Logan family left Smithstown in the late 1800s and emigrated to Buenos Aires. In 1901 R.J. Logan owned the house but it was resided in by Annie Eliza Wilkinson. In 1911 Lucy Sophie Chaytor was residing in the house and also owned the property. The house had twenty five rooms, eleven windows to the front and eighteen outbuildings. In 1946 the property came into the ownership of Major Bruce Ogilvy, a brother to the Earl of Airlie. The Major had been equerry to Edward VIII, who abdicated in 1936.

The Beggan family purchased the house in 1956 and operated it as a stud and cattle farm. Paddy Beggan, Smithstown House, was a member of Meath's first ever team to take part in an All-Ireland senior football final in Croke Park. The Royal Meath Equestrian Centre is now located at Smithstown House.

Smithstown House

Smithstown is located on the road between Drogheda and Julianstown. The footprint of the house would appear not to have changed for the last two hundred years. In the 1650s there was a fair stone house at Smithstown.

In 1835 Smithstown House was the residence of Richard O'Callaghan. In 1854 Francis N. Osborne was leasing Smithstown House and 312 acres from Joseph Osborne. The Osbornes were settled at Dardistown Castle.

Francis Nicholas Osbourne of Smithstown married Annie Dillon of Lismullin. Francis Nicholas died in 1864 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Francis Charles Osborne.

In 1849 Francis Osborne of Smithstown was appointed a justice of the peace by Lord Fingal. In 1876 Francis C. Osbourne held 717 acres in county Meath.

In 1911 Francis Charles Osborne and his wife Annie Sarah were living at Smithstown. The house had eighteen rooms, eight windows to the front and twelve outbuildings. In 1918 Geoffrey William Osborne, youngest son of Francis Charles Osborne, was killed in action in France.

Somerville House



Somerville House at Balrath, near Kentstown, was erected for Sir James Somerville in the early eighteenth century. Only the basement from that house survives today as the house was re-modelled at the end of the eighteenth century when the rooms on the south side were re-modelled. The house was re-orientated from back to front about 1831 to the design of Sir Richard Morrison. Rooms on the garden front are much higher than the entrance front as the garden front is two storey while the entrance front is three storey. The ceiling plasterwork in the salon and library is in the manner of Michael Stapleton and could be taken for late 18th century but is more likely to be

early 19th century. The dining room has a domed ceiling. The main entrance to the house is through a grand stone archway named, Ivy Lodge. There is an impressive stable yard with a battlemented octagonal tower. There is a walled garden and there was a rose garden, pigeon house, ice house and bathing house. In front of the house the Nanny river was dammed to create a feature but also to provide a bathing place.

The Somervilles originally settled in Fermanagh at the time of the Ulster Plantation. Thomas Somerville purchased 1066 acres in Meath from the Forfeited Estates Court after the Battle of the Boyne.

In 1729 James Somerville became M.P. for Dublin City, a position he held until his death in 1748. In 1736 he was appointed Lord Mayor of Dublin. Shortly before his death James Somerville was made Baron of Somerville, Co. Meath in 1748. Sir James Somerville, 1st Baronet married Elizabeth Quaile in 1713. He died in 1748 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Sir Quaile Somerville, 2nd Baronet. Born in 1714 and dying in 1772 Sir Quaile married Sarah Towers and was succeeded by his eldest son, Sir James Quaile Somerville, 3rd Baronet. Sir James Quaile Somerville, 3rd Bart was born about 1742. He married Catherine Crofton in 1770. Sir James erected the Church Tower and planted the avenue of lime trees. He was succeeded by his son, Sir Marcus Somerville, 4th Baronet. Sir Marcus was born about 1772 and died in 1831. Sir Marcus married Mary Anne Meredyth, daughter and heiress of Sir Richard Gorges Meredyth, Baronet in 1801. He married Elizabeth Geale as his second wife in 1825. Sir Marcus was M.P. for Co. Meath in Irish Parliament in 1800 and in London Parliament 1801-31. From his election of 1826 there is an itemised bill for the entertainment of voters at a Trim inn. Sir Marcus provided room and board for the voters at the Trim inn and provided raw whiskey, punch, a free shave and haircut. He had trouble keeping the piper sober to play for his voters.

His son, William Meredyth Somerville, born about 1802 became 1st Baron Athlumney. In 1832 William married Lady Maria Henrietta Conyngham, daughter of Henry Conyngham, 1st Marquess of Conyngham and his wife Elizabeth, who had been mistress to George IV. William served as Paid Attaché at Berlin, 1829-32. In 1837 Somerville House was described as the seat of Sir William Meredyth Somerville Bart. A fine mansion in an extensive demesne, it had been recently enlarged and improved, and a handsome entrance lodge erected, the grounds were embellished with an expansion of the Nanny water. He married secondly in 1860. Educated at Oxford, Sir William was returned to Parliament for Drogheda in 1837, a seat he held until 1852, and served under the Liberal Prime Minister, Lord John Russell, as Chief Secretary of Ireland from 1847 to 1852, during the worst of the Famine. He became M.P. for Canterbury in 1854 and continued as its M.P. until 1865. In 1863 he was raised to the peerage as Baron Athlumney of Somerville and Dollardstown and in 1866 he was created Baron Meredyth of Dollardstown. The Somerville family held part of the townland of Athlumney which gave them their title. The water spout with the lion's head was erected by Sir William Somerville. The water supply is said to come from Trinity Well in the nearby woods. He had only one surviving son, James Herbert Gustavus Meredyth Somerville, born March 1865. He died at Dover in 1873 and was buried in Kentstown churchyard. In 1876 Lord Athlumney of Somerville held 10,213 acres in County Meath and 274 acres in County Dublin. James served in the Coldstream Guards and was with Kitchener in Egypt. When James was 53 he married a young Australian, Margery Honor Boan, but died without children ten years later, 1929. He was buried in Kentstown Churchyard and with him died the titles Baron Somerville and Baron Athlumney. Lady Athlumney never re-

married and died in a swimming accident in the river Nanny in the grounds of Somerville House in July 1946 aged 45.

Somerville was inherited by Mr. Quentin Agnew, nephew by marriage to Sir James Somerville, 6th baronet and second and final Lord Athlumney. He took the name Somerville in 1950 but later sold the estate. The estate was broken up in the 1950s into six farms. A former Naval officer Sir Quentin pursued a career as an insurance consultant. His daughter Geraldine Somerville, who was born in Co. Meath, is an actress and has starred in the Harry Potter movies as Lily, Harry's mother.

I was at the auction of the contents of the house and was particularly struck by the number of bells in the servant's hallway. There was a bell for each room.



Spring Valley House



Spring Valley House is located just outside Summerhill village on the road to Kilcock. Spring Valley House was erected about 1770. It once functioned as the dower house for Summerhill House. It is a two storey over basement house. The house may have been constructed in different periods and was altered on a number of occasions. The outbuildings are arranged around a courtyard and include a pigeon loft. In the 1830s there was extensive planting to the east and sides of the house.

Springvalley townland was the property of Lord Langford. In 1835 the townland was divided into two farms, one containing 200 acres was held by Mr. Robert Butler Bryan. On his farm there was handsome house and offices and an apple orchard comprising about thirty acres. The Bryan's had been in residence since at least 1800. In 1800 Elizabeth Bryan of Springvalley was buried in Agher churchyard.

The Shannon family moved to Spring Valley about 1840 and in 1854 Patrick J. Shannon was leasing Springvalley House and 129 acres from Lord Langford. Patrick was the son of Oliver Shannon of Dublin who had married Mary Anne Theresa Murphy of Breemount. Patrick married Maria Chamberlain in 1852 but she died ten years later at the age of 28. Their son, Oliver Joseph Shannon, was the owner of the house in 1901 and was in residence with his sister, Florence. Oliver married Alice Murphy from Breemount House about 1907. In 1911 he and his family were living at Spring Valley. The house had fourteen rooms, fourteen windows to the front and fourteen outbuildings. Mr. Shannon was a member of the Trim Rural District Council and the local magistrate. Mr. Shannon was a friend of Bishop Fogarty of Killaloe who visited Springvalley on a number of occasions. A keen huntsman Shannon was a member of the Meaths and Ward Union hunts. He died in 1940 aged 88. His son, Edward, succeeded at Springvalley.

Stackallan House



Stackallan House is located between Navan and Slane. Erected by Gustavus Hamilton, 1st Viscount Boyne, Stackallan has two formal fronts and is three storeys high with wide eaves. The house was originally known as Boyne House and is generally dated to 1716 making it one of the first of the grand mansions of the eighteenth century. Stackallan is of an older design and so is possibly older again. The house may have been erected in the 1690s. It is a rare example of a pre-Palladian style house. Built largely on a square plan, the house is said to have been designed by Thomas Burgh and John Curle. The interior of Stackallan is dominated by one of the largest staircases in Ireland – one broad long flight of stairs. The staircase ceiling depicts the Hamilton coat of arms surrounded by military trophies. In the 1830s there were two fish ponds and a pigeon house in the grounds. In recent years the house and gardens have been restored and a classical folly and canal have been constructed in the gardens.

Stackallan belonged to the Barnewalls in medieval times and they erected a castle. The lands became the property of John Osborne of London in 1666. John Osborne of Stackallan was M.P. for Meath in 1692. In 1704 the widow of John Osborne sold much of the estate to Gustavus Hamilton and the remainder to Henry Osborne of Dardistown.

The Hamilton family gave their name to the town of Manorhamilton in Co. Leitrim. The Christian name, Gustavus, entered the family in honour of the Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus whom Sir Frederick Hamilton served during the Thirty Years War. Born about 1642, Gustavus Hamilton, was the youngest son of Sir Frederick Hamilton and grandson of 1st Lord Paisley. Gustavus, was the privy councillor to king James II but changed sides to William. He defended Enniskillen and Coleraine against the forces of James in 1689 and also defended Derry. He commanded a regiment at the Boyne where his horse was shot out from under him. He waded across the river Shannon to attack Athlone and became governor of the town. He fought at the Battle of Aughrim. He rose to the rank of Privy Chancellor and Major General. From 1692 to 1713 Hamilton served as M.P. for County Donegal. In 1715 Gustavus was created Baron Hamilton of Stackallan and in 1717 raised to the title Viscount of Boyne. He served as a privy counsellor to Queen Anne and then to George I. He died aged 84 in 1723 and was buried at Stackallan. He was succeeded by his grandson, Gustavus, son of Frederick Hamilton who had died before his father.

Gustavus Hamilton, was the oldest son of Frederick Hamilton, eldest son of Gustavus Hamilton, 1st Viscount Boyne. He was a Privy Councillor for Ireland, M.P. for Newport (Isle of Wight) and commissioner of the Irish Revenue. He died unmarried and was succeeded by his cousin, Frederick Hamilton. When Frederick died he was succeeded by his brother, Richard, 4th Viscount, who married Georgina, heiress to Charles Moore, Earl of Charleville and Baron Tullamore. Richard served as M.P. for Navan from 1755 to 1761. He was High Sheriff of County Meath in 1766. Richard and Georgina had seventeen children and their son, Gustavus, became the 5th Viscount. In 1773 Gustavus married Martha-Matilda, only daughter of Sir Quail Somerville of Somerville. Their son, Gustavus, succeeded at Stackallan in 1789.

In the 1830s the house was uninhabited but was described as a spacious mansion in a fine well planted demesne. The demesne was described as being in bad order. One surveyor said that the house was badly situated on low ground. A countryman remarked "I wonder, sir, they should build a house there; it looks quite drowned."

St. Columba's College was founded in 1843 by the Rev. William Sewell, the Lord Primate of Ireland, the Earl of Dunraven and others. They took a seven year lease of Stackallan House. Six years later the school moved to south county Dublin where it continues to this day.

In 1850 the seventh Viscount assumed the additional surname of Russell, from his father-in-law. In 1866 he was created Baron Brancepeth, of Brancepeth in the County of Durham. The family resided at Brancepeth Castle, Durham and also held lands in Shropshire. In 1883 Lord Boyne held 2,739 acres in Meath with his overall estates in England and Ireland amounted to 30,205 acres.

The house remained in the Hamilton family until 1920 when it was sold to Daniel O'Mahoney Leahy. During the Second World War the Irish army was based at Stackallen House.

Stackallen was purchased by Major Anthony and Mrs. Elizabeth Burke in 1953. Major Burke's family edited the series of genealogical books. In 1964 Major Burke was killed when a horse collapsed on top of him while hunting with the Ward Union. Mrs. Burke opened a stud farm at Stackallen in 1960. The house was sold in 1992 by Mrs. Burke who moved to a former rectory in Beauparc. .

In June 1992 Margaret Heffernan of Dunnes Stores agreed to purchase Stackallen House for £1.65 million but decided not to move to the house later that year and so the house was put back on the market. She decided that the house was too much for

her and she calculated that the restoration and running costs of the house were too expensive for her.

In November 1992 Stackallen House was purchased by Martin Naughton. He is the owner of Glen Dimplex which is the world's leading manufacturer of electrical heating products and also produces a wide range of other appliances.

Stadalt House

Stadalt is located southwest of Stamullin village. It borders County Dublin. Stadalt is a large two storey Italianate house from the Victorian period. A large lake was created at the front of the house which has now been drained. A large flour mill was located near Stamullin and was fed from the artificial lake. There was also a kiln.

The Plunketts held Stadalt during the medieval period before the property came into the hands of the Darcy family. In 1773 Christopher Darcy of Stadalt died. Stadalt became the property of the Walsh family. Rev. Jeremiah Walsh of Stadalt was a descendant of the Walsh family of Laragh. When he died in 1774 he was succeeded by his eldest son, Andrew.

In 1804 William Walsh of Stadalt married Margaret Upton. Stadalt was the seat of W. Walsh in 1835. Stadalt House was pleasantly situated in a demesne of 230 acres. In 1862 William Walsh was residing at Stadalt. The family allowed all their tenants to bring their blighted potatoes to their farmyard to be turned into flour during the famine. In 1861 John Walsh of Stadalt patented a furze crusher which could be used to make the plant suitable for feeding to animals. The machine was exhibited at the Dublin International Exhibition of 1865. The old house at Stadalt was demolished around 1860 when the new house was erected. In 1863 William Walsh captured a burglar in the drawing room of his home. Brendan Matthews recorded that a member of the Walsh family was run over by the train at Gormanstown in 1881. In 1876 William Walsh held 445 acres in County Meath. Henry Walsh died in 1885.

The property then went through the Tunstall-Moore family and Macartney-Filgate families. By 1876 Robert Tunstall-Moore was living at Stadalt. His wife was Mathilde Sophie Blount of Nantes, France. In 1901 Robert Tunstall-Moore, his wife, Mathilda Sophie, his son, George Blount and daughters, Lucy Mathilda, Edith Mary and Eveline Frances were living at Stadalt.

Henry R. Tunstall-Moore of Stadalt House died in 1911. Aged 42 Henry was the owner of a number of racehorses and was a steward of Bellewstown Races for years. He had a cricket green at Stadalt. A cricket team for Stadalt competed in competition from the 1890s onwards. Mathilde Sophie Tunstall-Moore died in 1925.

Lucy Matilda, sister and heiress of George B. Tunstall-Moore married Clement H.R. Macartney-Filgate in 1910. The Macartney-Filgate family were established in north County Dublin and in County Louth. Clement Macartney-Filgate was a commissioner in Scotland Yard before World War I. He died in 1930. His son, Brian, married in 1937.

In 1933 Stadalt was put up for sale. The house had four reception rooms, a billiard room, gunroom and office, butler's pantry, kitchen, scullery, twelve family bedrooms and dressing rooms, two bathrooms and W.C.s, two maidservant's rooms, work room and pantry. Outside there was seven loose boxes, five stalls, mens' rooms, gardens, two tennis lawns, gate lodge and two cottages. In 1936 Mrs. Macartney-Filgate sold the house and 270 acres which was purchased by the Sisters of the Holy Child of Jesus, their first foundation in Ireland. In 1951 the Sisters of Clare took up residence

at Stadalt and founded a home for the children of unmarried mothers. In 1987 the Sisters sold the house and it became a nursing home for the elderly.

Staffordstown House



Staffordstown is two and half miles southeast of Navan. Staffordstown house is a mid nineteenth century house of two storey over basement. It is similar in design to nearby Ashfield and the two may have had the same architect. A range of eighteenth century building adjoins the house.

The Cusack family held Staffordstown in medieval times and their remains are buried in the graveyard at Staffordstown. Sir Thomas Cusack was Lord Chancellor of Ireland in the 1500s. Dying in 1571 there is a memorial stone bearing his arms at Staffordstown. The family erected a castle at Staffordstown but there is no trace of the building today. Robert Cusack held Staffordstown in 1689.

The Rothwell family held lands at Staffordstown. John Rothwell is recorded there in 1810. Charles Rothwell held lands there in the 1850s. Charles Rothwell lived at Staffordstown. His daughter Georgina Eleanor Rothwell died in 1888. In 1878 Georgina married Richard John Butler, son of Whitwell Butler and died ten years later in 1888.

James Butler of Prieststown, Meath had a son, Richard, who became a vicar of Burnchurch, Co. Kilkenny. Thomas Lewis O'Beirne was a good friend of Richard and when he became bishop of Meath in 1798 he asked Richard to come with him. However Richard was settled at Burnchurch and instead Richard's son, also Richard came to the diocese of Meath. Richard became rector of Trim in 1819 and Dean of Clonmacnoise. He was one of the founders of the Irish Archaeological Society, for which association he edited *Clyn and Dowling's Annals*. He published his book on Trim castle in 1835.

In the 1830s Staffordstown parish of 616 acres was held Rev. R. Butler, Trim. Staffordstown House was described as having a large lawn, in which there was a mound and a graveyard. In the north-west of the parish was a plantation called Staffordstown wood.

Whitwell Butler was born in 1798. He was the son of Richard Butler and Martha Rothwell and brother to Rev. Richard Butler. Whitwell Butler fought in the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, where he carried the Colours He married Elizabeth Garnett,

daughter of John Paine Garnett of Arch Hall in 1833. In the 1850s Whitwell Butler held the house and lands of 335 acres at Staffordstown from Rev. Richard Butler. Whitwell died in 1877 and was succeeded by his son, Whitwell, who died in 1881. In 1876 Whitwell Butler of Staffordstown House, Navan held 381 acres in County Meath. Whittie Butler bred racing horses at Staffordstown. His brother, Richard John Butler, inherited the estate. Richard was born about 1840 and died in 1908. His eldest son, also Richard John, was born in 1879 and died in 1964.

In 1901 Richard John and his family were residing at Staffordstown. In 1911 Richard J. Butler held Staffordstown but it was occupied by a cousin, Synolda French. Residing with her was Harriet Cecilia Butler, daughter of Richard John Butler. Synolda French was one of the Butlers of Dunbooyne. When Whitwell died Synolda's father and mother moved to Staffordstown. Synolda's mother died when Synolda was seven and so she was sent to relatives in Dublin returning to Staffordstown for holidays. During one of these holidays a Mr. Groome visited the house. Mr. Groome was searching for the Ark of the Covenant on Tara and Gussie Briscoe of Bellinter provided him with two workmen to provide the labour. Synolda said there were never any British Israelites at Tara, only this one young man, who lost interest after a while and departed.

A Quaker family, the Allens, family lived at Staffordstown in the 1940s. An ancestor of theirs was Richard Allen who was very involved in the anti-slavery movement and the establishment of the Dublin Cholera Hospital.

Stameen House

Stameen House is located in the southern suburbs of Drogheda and in the townland of the same name which is in the parish of Colpe, Co. Meath. Bence-Jones described Stameen as a two storey Victorian house while Casey and Rowan describe it as an Italianite house. The hall has a window with the Cairns coat of arms. The date of construction is unclear with Rowan and Hamilton suggesting 1870.

Stameen House was acquired by William Cairnes in the 1820s. The Cairns family originally came from Scotland. Alexander Cairns settled in Donegal. In 1779 John Elliot Cairnes of Saville Lodge, Co. Tyrone, married Catherine, daughter and heiress of John Moore, of Moore Hall, Co. Down. Catherine was a very determined and single minded lady and was described as being "strong in her prejudices and in her determination to have her own way." She had her favourites among her children, adoring her daughter Anne and son, George, but disliking William, who was born in 1796 and was left only 5s. in her will. She strongly opposed William's decision to go into business.

William became a partner with Mr. Woolsey in the Castlebellingham before establishing his own Drogheda Brewery at the Marsh Road in 1825. It had formerly been Tandy's Brewery. William married Marianne Woolsey of Priorsland, co. Louth and they had a large family.

William Elliott Cairnes of Killyfaddy, Co. Tyrone acquired Stameen in 1825. John McGrane had erected a house at Stameen, called "Cotton Hall." William Cairns purchased it after McGrane died and he commissioned Caldbeck of Dublin to re-design and extend the house.

William had three sons, John Elliot, William and Thomas. John became professor of Political Economy and Jurisprudence in Queen's University, Galway. William served as a Major in the army and married Isabella, only daughter of John Jameson.



William died about 1864 and was succeeded by his son, Thomas Plunkett Cairnes. He united the Drogheda and Castlebellingham breweries into a public company which floated on the stock exchange. He became governor of the Bank of Ireland. He endowed a number of community building projects in Drogheda and even has a wing in the Rotunda Hospital named in his honour. Thomas founded the Cairnes Trust which built a number of houses for 'the working classes' in various districts of Drogheda. Thomas Plunkett Cairnes, was named after his godfather, Rev. Thomas Plunkett afterwards bishop of Tuam. Thomas became owner of the business after the death of his father. Thomas Plunkett was High Sheriff of county Louth in 1886. In 1876 Thomas held 1175 acres in County Meath with John E. Cairnes holding 761 acres and William H. Cairnes holding 259 acres. His sister married John Jameson of the distilling family. He died in 1893 aged 63 years.

Stameen became the property of his son, William Plunkett Cairnes. He was chairman of Cairnes Brewers, chairman of the Great Northern Railway and governor of the Bank of Ireland. He died in 1925. His son, William Jameson Cairnes was killed in 1918 during the First World War. An infantry officer with the Leinster Regiment, William Jameson Cairnes joined the Royal Flying Corps in Egypt and became a Flying Officer on 6 November 1916. He was promoted to Captain on 20 December 1916. Lieutenant Colonel Tom Algar Eliot Cairnes, the son of Thomas Plunkett Cairnes, was born in 1888 and he succeeded to Stameen in 1925. Tom served with the 7th Dragoon Guards and the RAF and survived the First World War. He was decorated with the award of Companion, Distinguished Service Order (D.S.O.) in 1917. Tom served with the RAF in the Second World War. He died in November 1960 aged 72.

In 1961 after the "Colonel" died the property was sold. His son, William David Elliott, served in the Irish Guards and lived at Boltown Hall. Purchased by the Larkin family of Newry it was converted into the Stameen House Hotel.

In 1968 the house was purchased by Swiss hotelier, Willi Widmer, turned into a luxury hotel and re-named the Boyne Valley Hotel. The hotel was re-developed in the 1990s by the McNamara family.

Stephenstown House

Stephenstown is located in the parish of Casteltown, Navan, on the Kells-Ardee road. Stephenstown House was a three-storey house, erected about 1760, with central flat-roofed porch. The remains of an earlier two-storey house is at the south-west gable. There is a courtyard of two storey outbuildings dating from about 1800. Both house and outbuildings are now in poor condition.

In 1836 Stephenstown House was described as a fine house occupied by Henry Owens and well sheltered by trees. In 1854 James Hughes was leasing Stephenstown House and 262 acres from Rev. William Barlow.

In 1876 Jane McKeever was living at Stephenstown. In 1901 and 1911 James McKeever and his family were residing at Stephenstown. The house had nine rooms, ten windows to the front and fifteen outbuildings.

Stirling House

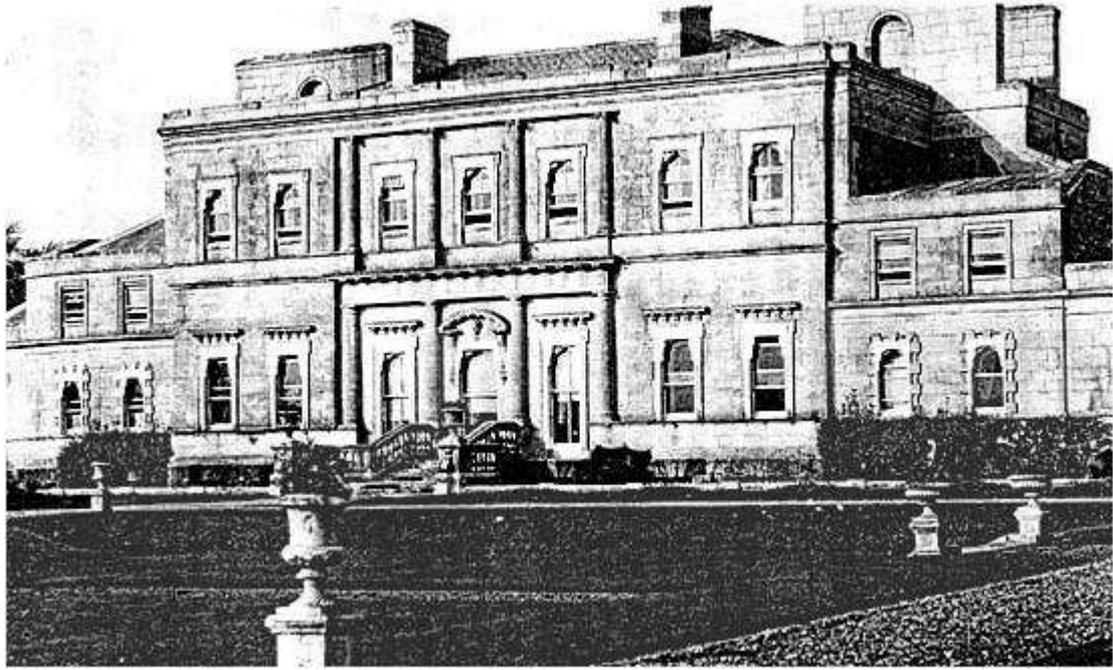
Stirling House is located near Clonee. The house dates from the eighteenth century. William Coates married Mary Bomford in June 1750 and following their marriage they lived at Stirling House. The house appears on William Larkin's map of 1812. The neighbouring estate is Summerseat.

In 1835 Stirling House, pronounced as Starlin, was the residence of Dr. Baker M.D. and was described as being in the south west part of Clonee townland. A two storey slated house with a basement, the house and grounds were in good repair and the demesne contained 103 acres well wooded. Nearby was Stirling Cottage also owned by Dr. Barker which he rented out. In 1874 Henry Oliver Baker of Stirling was appointed a justice of the peace for county Meath.

In 1911 Henry Stewart Johnston, a retired colonel, resided at Stirling. The house had thirteen rooms, seventeen windows to the front and forty-two outbuildings. Colonel Johnstone served with the Royal Meath Regiment from 1865 to 1896, commanding the regiment for the last five years of his service. He married Elizabeth Gerrard of Boyne Hill House, Navan. Colonel Johnston died aged 78 in 1914.

Summerhill House

Summerhill House was considered to be one of the most dramatic of the Irish palladian houses. Crowning a hill to the south of Summerhill village, the house consisted of a main block with curved wings ending in a tower and pavilion. Summerhill House was designed by Edward Lovett Pearce and completed by Richard Castle, two of the greatest architects working in Ireland in the eighteenth century. Two of the ceilings were attributed to the Lafranchini brothers. Summerhill House, described by Mulligan as a 'great palatial mansion,' was erected about 1730 for Hercules Rowley. Bence-Jones described Summerhill as "the most dramatic of the great Irish palladian houses". The house was burned accidentally about 1800, remodelled in the nineteenth century and burned again in 1921. The ruins were demolished in the middle of the twentieth century and some of the stones from the ruins were used at Dalgan Park, Navan, to construct a loggia. To the north of the house site stands Lynch's castle which was converted to a folly on the estate. Near the house stood the family mausoleum.



A mile long avenue to the south of the house was planned. The architect asked to design the gate houses was also working on two gate lodges for a military barracks in India and the two plans became mixed up. Those intended for India arrived in Summerhill and were erected. The houses because of their unusual roofs became known as the “Balloon Houses”. The avenue was never completed as the last third of it stood on public road and so the gate houses were not even part of the demesne.

Though Summerhill House has been demolished, the entrance and tree-lined avenue are reminders of the demesne. The curved wall and gate piers was clearly executed by skilled masons. The entrance acts as a focal point within the village of Summerhill. The village of Summerhill is based on a classical layout, associated with the development of the Summerhill House and demesne. The village consists of a long wide street with a narrow tree-lined green running down the centre. The village green, laid out c.1830 includes a medieval cross.

The ancient seat of the Lynch family had been granted to Henry Jones, Bishop of Meath, for his services provided as Scoutmaster General to Cromwell’s Army. In 1661 Bishop Jones sold the lands to Sir Hercules Langford. The name was changed from Lynch’s Knock to Summerhill.

Sir Hercules Langford died in 1683 leaving a son, Arthur, and a daughter, Mary. He died in 1716. Arthur died without an heir and the estate went to his sister Mary who had married Sir John Rowley in 1671. Sir John Rowley was one of the biggest landowners in County Londonderry.

Sir John was succeeded by his son, Hercules Rowley, MP for Co. Londonderry 1703-42 and heir to Sir Hercules Langford of Summerhill. Hercules Rowley commissioned Sir Edward Lovett Pearce in collaboration with Richard Castle to build one of the greatest and most dramatic of all the Irish Georgian houses in 1731. The house was probably erected in preparation for his marriage in 1732 to Elizabeth Upton. Hercules Rowley died in 1742 when he was succeeded by his son.

Sir Hercules Langford Rowley was M.P. for Co. Londonderry 1743-1760 and for Co. Meath 1761-94. He was a founder member of the Dublin Society in 1731, later the RDS. He was High Sheriff of Meath in 1738. In 1766 Hercules Langford Rowley was elevated to the peerage as Lord Summerhill. Hercules Langford Rowley was known

as 'the incorruptible representative for the County of Meath.' He served in the Irish parliament for a period of fifty-one years. In 1787 he was appointed as one of the commissioners for the making of a canal from Drogheda to Trim. Johnston-Liik recorded that he died in 1794 having been an MP for over 50 years. In 1776 his wife was made Viscountess Langford and Baroness of Summerhill in her own right. Their eldest son, Hercules Rowley, became 2nd Viscount Langford in 1791 on the death of his mother. When he died unmarried about 1795 the estate went to his grand nephew, Hon Clothworthy Taylour who was M.P. for Trim 1791-5 and for Co. Meath 1795-1800. He was created Baron Langford in 1800 having assumed the name Rowley in 1796 in order to inherit Summerhill. While he was M.P. for Trim the other M.P. for Trim was Arthur Wesley, the future Duke of Wellington. Clothworthy voted against the Union in 1799 and for it in 1800 – the title might have had something to do with the change of mind, according to one commentator – 'he had got his price.'

Baron Langford died in 1825 and his grandson, Clothworthy Wellington William Robert, became third Baron Langford. His son, Hercules Edward, became fourth baron in 1854 when he was just six years old. Educated at Eton he rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the army.

He leased Summerhill to the Empress of Austria for hunting in 1879 and 1880 and was her guest for these periods. Elizabeth married the Emperor of Austria when she was sixteen years old. Travelling and her passion for horse riding became the principle activities by which she could escape the court. Arriving in February 1879 a room was converted to a private chapel, a gymnasium was set up and a direct telegraph line installed to Europe. She was loaned a horse and joined the local hunt. The stag they had been chasing jumped through a space into the Maynooth Seminary with the hounds, and the Empress, in pursuit. The President, Dr Walsh, came out to meet the group and on being introduced to the Empress of Austria lent her his coat or gown, invited them in for refreshment and she promised to return. The Empress managed to hunt nearly every day. In the early spring of 1880 the Empress went straight to Summerhill. On the first Sunday she went to Mass at the seminary in Maynooth and took a gift of a three foot high model of St George slaying the dragon. She was unaware that St George was the patron saint of England and when she was told of its significance she ordered shamrock covered vestments from Dublin. She spent some happy time hunting in Meath. The Empress of Austria was assassinated in 1897 by an anarchist in Geneva.

In 1883 Lord Langford held 2231 acres in Meath, 3659 in Dublin and 3855 in Limerick giving a total estate of 9745 acres.

Hercules Edward fourth baron oversaw the disposal of the Summerhill estate. He died on 29th October 1919 and was interred in Agher cemetery. He lost his son and heir in the First World War and his second son was mentally unstable. His brother, William Chambre, took charge of the estate during his last years and after his death. William became 6th baron when his nephew died in 1922.

In 1921 the house was burned to prevent it falling into the hands of the Black and Tans. Beryl Moore recorded that a large four side clock was the only thing left undamaged and it was donated to Kilmessan Church of Ireland church. On the 4th February 1921 Summerhill House was set on fire by the IRA and completely destroyed. Colonel and Mrs Rowley were away. The five servants who lived in the house were sitting together in the kitchen when they heard a knock on the back door. The English butler did not open the door and some minutes later a whistle was blown and the back door battered in. The servants escaped through a door into the basement

and made their way out into the darkness. As they walked down the avenue the house was doused in petrol and the fire started in a number of places.

In 1922 Colonel Rowley, the 6th Baron Langford, sought compensation from the Free State Government and after three years of negotiation with the Compensation Board a sum of £43,500 was paid to the Colonel, approximately one third of the value of the house and contents destroyed in the fire. Colonel Rowley invested the money in gilt-edged stocks and moved to Middlesex, England.

In the early twenty first century the eighth holder of the title was constable of Rhuddlan castle and lord of Rhuddlan, Wales. The family reside at Bodrhyddan Hall.

Summerseat

Summerseat House is a detached three-bay, two storey over basement house located near Clonee in south Meath, near the border with county Dublin. Casey and Rowan describe it as 'a gentleman's box' of about 1750, a rough cast square house to which two wings were added about 1800.

The first of the Garnetts at Summerseat was Samuel, the son of John of Balgeeth and the grandnephew of George of Drogheda. Samuel married Mary Rothwell of Rockfield, Kells in 1772. He was succeeded by his eldest son, Samuel, in 1803. His second son, John Paine, settled at Arch Hall in north Meath.

During the 1798 rebellion nearby Dunboyne was the location of an encampment of Wexford insurgents under the command of Fr. Mogue Kearns. On 12th July the rebels attempted to join forces with northern rebels. The church and much of Dunboyne village was destroyed during the rebellion. In 1798 the resident of Summerseat and his wife took refuge in the attic for a week. The rebels tried to batter down the front door and eventually found entry at the rear. The pewter dishes of the house were melted down to make bullets. The rebels stuck pikes in the paintings. The Hamiltons of Dunboyne had a connection to Summerseat.

Samuel married twice and was succeeded by his eldest son also called Samuel. Samuel was born in 1806 and held estates at Summerseat and Rosmeen, near Kells. He married Martha O'Connor, daughter of Rev. George O'Connor of Ardlonan, Rector of Castleknock. Martha's nephew, Charles O'Connor, the noted Australian engineer, stayed at Summerseat after the famine. In 1835 Summerseat demesne contained 155 acres. The house was described as being a two storey slated house with commodious offices in good repair. The demesne was well wooded and in good repair.

Samuel Garnett died in 1862 aged 87 years and was buried in Dunboyne churchyard. Having no children Samuel was succeeded by his half-brother, Richard. In 1876 Richard held 1195 acres in county Meath. Richard was succeeded by his eldest son, Richard who was born in 1879 and married Bessie Ella Greer of Dungannon in 1901. In 1911 Richard Garnett and his wife, Bessie Ella, lived in the house. The house provides the name for Summerseat Court housing estate in Clonee.

Swainstown House

John Preston, alderman of Dublin, established the family's fortune in the seventeenth century. John acquired nearly 8000 acres in Meath and Queen's County in 1666. One son established himself at Ardsallagh, another at Balsoon and Nathaniel at Swainstown. The youngest son, Nathaniel, was born about 1678 and in 1713 he was elected M.P. for Navan, a position he was to hold until 1760. Nathaniel married, Anne

Dawson, a niece of Joshua Dawson, who developed Dawson Street, Dublin. The name Nathaniel was used by subsequent generations of the family.

Mrs. Delaney visited Swainstown in August 1748 and described her host, Mr. Preston, as 'an old prim beau, as affected as a fine lady: but an honest man, obstinate in his opinions, but the pink of civility in his own house, which is as neat as a cabinet, and kept with an exactness which is really rather troublesome.'

In 1760 Nathaniel's second son, also Nathaniel, succeeded to Swainstown. His fifth son, Arthur, was a Major in the Lancers and following his death in 1788 a magnificent memorial was erected in Kilmessan church. A daughter, Anne, married Joseph Leeson, after whom Leeson Street is named.



Nathaniel was clergyman and in 1751 married Alice, daughter of Sir John Dillon of Lismullen. In 1801 and 1811 Nathaniel Preston is recorded as serving on the Grand Jury of Meath. 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.

Nathaniel and Alice's son, Nathaniel, succeeded them. Their son, Arthur John became Dean of Kildare and later Dean of Limerick. Arthur John's son, also Arthur John, became Canon of Kildare and his son, also Arthur John, inherited Swainstown on the death of his cousin, Nathaniel, in 1903. In the 1830s Swainstown, the seat of Rev. N. Preston, was described as a handsome mansion house with a tastefully laid out demesne and well wooded.

Nathaniel Francis Preston was born in 1843 and married Augusta Florence Caulfield, of Bloomfield, Mullingar, in 1865. In 1876 Nathaniel F. Preston of Swainstown held 1234 acres in Co. Meath and the representatives of Rev. Arthur Preston of Kilmeague held 826 acres in Meath. Nathaniel died in 1903. In the 1911 census Augusta was recorded as living at Swainstown but died later that year.

John Nathaniel (Nat) Preston was born January 1915, the only son of Arthur John Preston, who was killed with most of the Dublin Fusiliers in Gallipoli in August 1915. Arthur had written letters to his wife and father at Swainstown on the day he was killed. When Nat returned from agricultural college in England in 1934 he purchased a Fordson tractor and began farming the land at Swainstown which had been previously let. In 1937 Nat secured a contract to supply C.I.E. with railway sleepers and so established a saw mill.

Swainstown House is located just off the Dunsany road from Kilmessan. Swainstown House is a fine eighteenth century house consisting of a two storey seven bay central block joined to the wings by curved sweeps. The east wing was for servants and the west wing was stables.

Casey and Rowan describe it as an intriguing house of about 1750 built for Nathaniel Preston, brother of John Preston who was building Bellinter at the same time. It would appear that some of the materials used for the house were materials adapted from other buildings. Local tradition says that Swainstown was built from material left over for the construction of Bellinter. Certainly there are oddities and unusual features to be explained. It does look as if Nathaniel got hold of thirteen window lintels and used them for his house. The front door-case is also of unusual design.

The erection of Swainstown resulted in the re-routing of the public road northwards to its present position. As this resulted in the road going over a hill two horses were necessary to pull carts rather than one on the route. According to local tradition one smart operator established a horse hire business at the bottom of the hill.

Kilmessan Church is also associated with the Preston house at Bellinter. Rev. Francis Briscoe was rector of Kilmessan from 1849 until 1885 and his son, Gustavus, was left Bellinter House by John Joseph Preston in 1892.

Syddan House

Syddan House is a three-bay two-storey house, erected about 1880. Its outbuildings were erected around a courtyard. The house has a carved doorcase and spider's web fanlight. The house and outbuildings had red-brick surrounds. The entrance has red brick wall and gate piers with wrought-iron gates.

Samuel John McKeever, his wife, Jane, and their family lived at Syddan House in 1901 and 1911. Jane McKeever of Syddan House opposed Home Rule in 1912 and signed the Ulster Covenant.

Sylvan Park

Sylvan Park was located near Crossakiel. Sylvan Park house was a three storey over basement house. The house was demolished and only the stables remain.

Mr. Grattan lived at Sylvan Park 1786. Rev. William Grattan lived at Sylvan Park. His son, Copeland, died in 1850. Humphrey Grattan, late of Sylvan Park, married in 1854. The Grattans disposed of their interest in Sylvan Park in 1853 through the Encumbered Estates Court.

In 1814 Sylvan Park was the seat of Walter Keating. Walter Keating married Jane Morris of Tankardstown in April 1812. In 1835 Sylvan Park was the seat of Walter Keating and had excellent offices with a neat demesne and a good garden.

The Rowley family acquired Sylvan Park. Standish Grady Rowley was the son of Henry Rowley of Maperath, Kells. In 1876 Standish G. Rowley of Sylvan Park held 1,165 acres in county Meath.

Standish died in 1882 and was buried at Crossakiel. The two first ladies in Ireland to obtain licences to drive automobiles were the Misses Rowley, of Sylvan Park, Kells. These ladies were enthusiastic automobilists. Miss Rowley was the only lady steward in the Gordon Lambert Race. In 1911 the house was occupied by widow, Kathleen Rowley and her two daughters Kea Kathleen and Mabel Geraldine. When the Rowley family left Sylvan Park the Smith family became caretakers of the house. Armstrong Auctioneers of Kells managed the estate. In the late 1940s Sylvan Park was purchased

by W.R. Austin. In 1949 Mr. Austin founded a private pack of foxhounds. His sons Michael and Anthony assisted him in the hunt.