

## Mallow Castle

It's always been there, a feature of Mallow, situated between the river Blackwater and the Spa House. If you ask local people about it, the most they'll be able to tell you is that an American owns it from Washington D.C. Well, I'm here to change all that.

The original castle was built by the Normans in 1185 A.D., after the native O'Keefe's had been dispossessed. In 1282, the Desmond Fitzgerald's built a new castle. Soon afterwards, a Baron of the Geraldines, Thomas Fitzmaurice, traded his land in Kerrylocknaun, Connaught, with the Desmond Fitzgerald's.

After Thomas Fitzmaurice died in 1298, the land stayed in Geraldine hands until the rebellion in the closing stages of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when the Earl of Desmond's brother, Sir John of Desmond took possession of it. However, he and his wife, Ellen, had no children, so the castle was not inherited and left to rot.

And rot it did, passing through a stream of owners, including Sir William Pelham and Sir John Norreys of Rycote in Oxfordshire. His brother, Sir Thomas Norreys, inherited the 6,000 acre estate in 1596. The manor lands stretched north for about three miles, almost to Caherduggan, and south to the O'Callaghan Castle of Dromore. It extended west, also towards O'Callaghan land, for about a mile and a half, and east for perhaps half a mile. He suggested that a new fortified building should be built on the site. This was completed after his death in 1599, when, it is said that while going to the Earl of Essex's aid during a skirmish with the Burkes at Killeelty, Co. Limerick he met his end. His daughter, Elizabeth, grandchild of Queen Elizabeth, received a patent of King James in 1615, giving her Short Castle, Mallow Castle and the town of Mallow. She was married, while still a minor, to army officer John Jephson. Up until 1984, their heirs still owned the Castle. Some say their ghosts still haunt the castle. Yet, some also say that, late at night, flickering lights can be seen from a distance at the Castle. Spooky!!!

In 1636, Boyle offered £15,000 for Mallow, but was refused.



Now, Short Castle - what should be a wonderful, historic feature of Mallow, but, put simply, isn't. Let me give you the geography of the ruin. The entrance has a semi-elliptical doorway. As the inside was made of timber it has now

rotted away, leaving you with your imagination to fill in the detail. The building is mainly red sandstone, much of this stone coming from the old castle. The kitchen is an extension, abutting from the main building. The main defensive features were typical slit windows, some of which were updated at a later date. In 1836, part of the east wall fell down. When the Jephsons returned they decided it was too far gone to repair and left it. They built up the stables into what is now called Mallow Castle.

In 1928, the building was made a National Monument. When the McGinn family of Washington D.C. purchased the castle from Commander Maurice Jephson, a family link which lasted almost 400 years was finally broken.

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