

Hazelwood House

History & Architecture



Built by architect Richard Castle for Owen Wynne, this exquisite, but progressively brutalised house superbly located in mature woodland on the banks of the Garavoge River, is one of County Sligo's most neglected treasures. It is a splendid and imposing example of the Palladian-style. In spite of abject neglect and inappropriate alteration, it is testimony to the quality of the building that it has survived relatively intact. An abundance of fine stonework attests to the high quality craftsmanship employed in its construction and pays tribute to those whose vision was responsible for its conception. In addition to its very high quality architectural value the house is important both socially and historically.

HISTORY

The original name for the area is Annagh (Eanach) meaning "marsh" and was on land belonging to the O'Conchobhair Sligh, Lords of the territory of Cairbre Drom Cliabh.

There was an O'Connor castle located here that according to O'Rorke (1889) was at Castle Point on Lough Gill south of the present house. This area belonged to the O'Connor's throughout the Medieval period before passing to the merchant Andrew Crean in the early 17th century, then to Lord William Strafford.

In 1635, during the planning for the aborted Plantation of Connacht, the estate was bought by Sir Phillip Perceval acting secretly on behalf of the Lord Deputy Wentworth and Sir George Radcliffe. Subsequent allegations claimed that Perceval tricked O'Connor into selling by claiming that it belonged to the Crown and would be subject to Plantation without any recompense to O'Connor. The hostility created by this was instrumental in the Sligo gentries taking part in the 1641 rebellion.

In 1687 it went to Thomas Wilson and in 1722 to the Wynnes



The house, which originally stood in a wooded estate of 15,000 acres, was designed by architect Richard Cassels c.1730 for Lt-Gen. Owen Wynne, a descendant of the Welsh Wynne family from Merioneth.

- On his death in 1737, the estate passed to his nephew, also Owen Wynne (1686- 1755) who was an Army officer.
- He was succeeded by his son, a third Owen, who was High Sheriff of Sligo for 1723 and 1745.
- The house then passed to the latter's son, a fourth Owen (died 1789), who was an M.P. for County Sligo in the Irish Parliament and an Irish Privy Councillor.
- His eldest son, a fifth Owen (1755–1841), inherited the house on his death and was also an M.P. for County Sligo in the Irish Parliament and High Sheriff.
- He was followed by his son, John Arthur Wynne (1801–1865), MP for Sligo Borough and High Sheriff for 1840.
- John Arthur's son, a sixth Owen (1843–1910), High Sheriff for 1874.
- The sixth Owen Wynne was the last Wynne to occupy Hazelwood House and died without a male heir in 1910.
- His daughter Murial and her husband Philip Dudley Percival then occupied the house, selling off the livestock and machinery until they left Hazelwood in 1923.



The house then stood empty until 1930, when a retired tea planter named Berridge lived there, carrying out repairs and renovations before the house and lands were sold to the Land Commission and the State Forestry Department in 1937.

In c.1943 the house was occupied by the Irish Army and after the war sold to the Department of Health for use as a psychiatric hospital. In c.1969 it was sold again to the Italian manufacturing company SNIA S.p.A. to use as part of a nylon yarn factory complex which they built to the rear of the house. The

factory closed in 1983 and was acquired in 1987 by the South Korean company Saehan Media, who produced video tapes on the site until 2005. The property was sold in April 2006 for €7-€10 million to a local consortium, Foresthaze Developments, who applied in 2007 for permission to develop the site. The application was refused by Sligo County Council and the owners served with a notice to improve the fabric of the building to ensure its preservation. Empty since 1987 the house itself is now boarded.



ARCHITECTURE

- It is a detached multiple-bay two- and three- storey over basement limestone mansion, built c. 1731, occupied by Wynne family for two- hundred years, lay empty from c. 1923-1930, the estate except the house sold to Land Commission and State Forestry Department c. 1937, occupied by Irish Army c. 1943, house purchased by Department of Health c. 1947 for use as psychiatric hospital c. 1947, bought by Italian manufacturing company c. 1969 and incorporated into factory complex, and lain in poor condition since c. 1987.
- Three-bay three-storey over basement main house three bays deep, five-bay single-storey quadrants to east and west sides curving forwards to, three-bay two-storey wings each three-bays deep, three-storey flat-roofed fire escape c1970 to the North East of the house, three-bay two three-bays deep, three-storey flat-roofed fire escape c1970 to the North East of the house, three-bay two storey house, three-bay two-storey south-west wing c. 1870 attached to south of west elevation of main house, various single- and two-storey buildings c. 1870 to south of west wing and west of main house.

- Hipped slate roofs, lead ridge and hip cappings, ashlar corbelled chimneystacks, lead-lined parapet gutters to main house, half-round cast-iron gutters on eaves corbel course to wings, cast-iron downpipes. Ashlar walling to north elevation main house and quadrant wings; uncoursed rubble walling to east, south and west elevations main house; ruled-and-lined smooth-rendered walling to wings; plain rusticated quoins to south elevation and ground floor north elevation main house; moulded plinth, first floor platband and sill course, plain frieze, modillion cornice and parapet blocking course to main house; tooled ashlar quoins to wings.
- Square-headed window openings to main house; Gibbs surrounds to ground floor, eared architraves to first floor, kneed and eared architraves to second floor; north elevation with first floor central aedicule with Ionic columns and pilasters and round-headed niches flanking window with swag in niche over set within archivolt, second floor with recessed circular niches flanking central window; south elevation with first floor central Venetian window with Doric pilastered aedicules flanking window with archivolt containing cartouche over; painted two-over-two timber sash windows c.1900. Round-headed openings to quadrant wings set in pilastered arcade, openings blocked-up, circular spherical recesses in frieze over each opening.
- Square-headed window openings to wings, Gibbs surrounds to ground floor, plain ashlar surrounds to first floor, openings blocked up.
- Pedimented entrance doorcase to north elevation, main house; Gibbs surrounds to square-headed entrance door opening flanked by square-headed windows, cartouche in tympanum; timber panelled door c. 1970 with painted timber flanking pilasters, moulded transom, round-headed plain-glazed fanlight in archivolt; windows blocked-up; stone approach steps with flanking ashlar walls terminating in pedestals surmounted by urns.
- Venetian doorcase to south elevation, main house; central door opening with archivolt with keystone flanked by square-headed sidelights with Gibbs surrounds; painted timber panelled double doors c. 1900, glazed three-pane overlight, plain-glazed sidelights; stone staircase over basement area, flanked by giant consoles.
- Interior with room off hall with cross-vaulted ceiling with decorative plaster enrichments; dentilled cornice; fluted Ionic pilasters flanking doorcase with consoles, cornice and overdoor all heavily enriched.
- Two-storey stable block ranges to east; hipped slate roofs to north range, pitched slate roof to south range, clay ridge and hip tiles, half-round cast-iron gutters on eaves corbel courses; uncoursed rubble limestone walling; square-headed window openings, moulded ashlar surrounds to main openings, brick dressings to secondary openings; segmental-headed carriage openings to north and south ranges, ashlar dressings; elliptically-headed openings to south range, brick dressings.
- Situated in parkland, now in use as industrial premises, factory complex to south, approximately three-kilometres from Sligo town, Garavogue River to the west.



Currently, the Hazelwood Estate is set to become a major tourist attraction following the announcement of ambitious plans for the historic site by its new owners, David and Sue Raethorn. They have outlined their vision with a restored Hazelwood House taking its pride of place as the centrepiece of the project.

Among the proposed plans is the establishment of a whiskey distillery business which would be developed in the old Snia/Saehan factory behind the house.

The building will also feature a whiskey visitors experience tour, a Michelin starred restaurant and number of different cafés when it opens to the public.

Outdoor activities are also being planned as well as a water taxi service which will take visitors between the estate and Sligo Town. Hazelwood House will eventually to be restored once again to its former glory. Their vision is that by 2023, Hazelwood will be attracting 200,000 visitors to Sligo per annum. A very exciting prospect for the people of Co. Sligo.