

Portlick Castle

Glasson, Athlone, Co. Westmeath



For Sale

Portlick Castle was built on charter from King John, by Hugh de Lacy, a Norman baron, sent to Ireland in the 12th century to establish a stronghold over the Shannon at Athlone town on Lough Ree.

For centuries it remained a de Leon [Dillon] castle with 5 sister castles built at Rindoon, Kilkenny west and surrounds.

When Cromwell invaded Ireland during his push westwards over the Shannon, he also sacked the de Leon castles, all except for Portlick castle, seen as a strategic asset it was left intact; and due to some clever dealing by the Dillon lords the castle tower was saved in entirety with its walled yards and fortified quarters and its port at the lakeside.

The Dillon's continued to reside at Portlick, extending the tower structure into a giant portico some 30 feet high, then facing east. For over 300 years, until through the failure of two residing bachelor Dillon brothers to produce heirs, the castle came under the patronage of the Smythe family, Earls of Roscommon.

The Smythes continued to occupy the castle until the 19th century; adding two wings to the structure, converting the Dillon portico into a late Jacobean wing on two floors and later they built the Edwardian wing on the most eastern side of the structure.

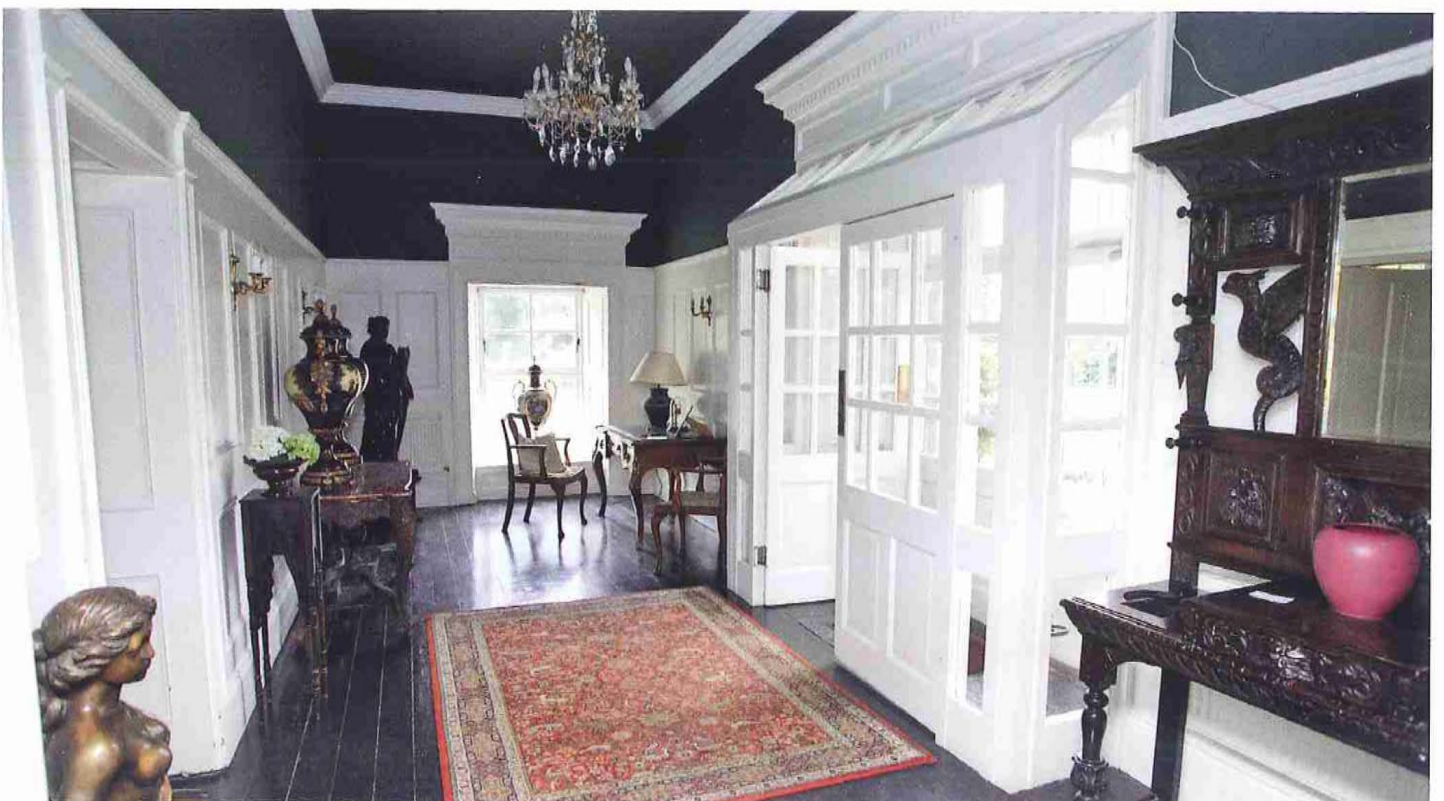
At this stage the castle and estate fell into abandonment, and after several short-lived owner-ships, during the 2nd World War a Norwegian merchant fleet ship owner lived with his family at Portlick and controlled his Atlantic fleet from the castle with one of the first telexes in Ireland.

Recent times and the restoration

In 1989 the property came up for auction. It was purchased by an Australian, Luke Whittington, who had spent 20 years in Italy, up until that time, restoring medieval and renaissance buildings in Tuscany and Umbria.

During the restoration, supervised by Luke, occupying 6 years of patience, care and planning, some of his Italian influences can be seen in the Minstrels gallery: the corridors with their arches and columns and the garden arrangements, kept to simple Arcadian arrangements of trees in harmony with gently sloping lawns and interspaced classic ornaments. All trades employed at Portlick castle were Irish born and came from nearby or as far away as Dublin and Galway to carry out the various works of recuperation.

The finished building passed inspections for domestic use and those for commercial applications. At that time [2000] the work respected all norms and regulations for electrical systems, plumbing and treated discharges. [There is a sewerage treatment plant sunken in the grounds.]



The Estate

The castle estate, once over 12,000 acres in the Smythe period now consists of lakeshore land that comprises 19 acres of pasturelands, oak, beech and poplar woods and another 8 acres of bulrush marshland.

The estate has two wells: one built in recent times, the other 800 years old, built by the Norman settlers.

The Carriage House

The castle has a restored carriage house at the rear and fortified roofed yards.

The two-storied carriage house has 3/4 bedrooms, 3/4 bathrooms, living room with fireplace and separate family sized kitchen.

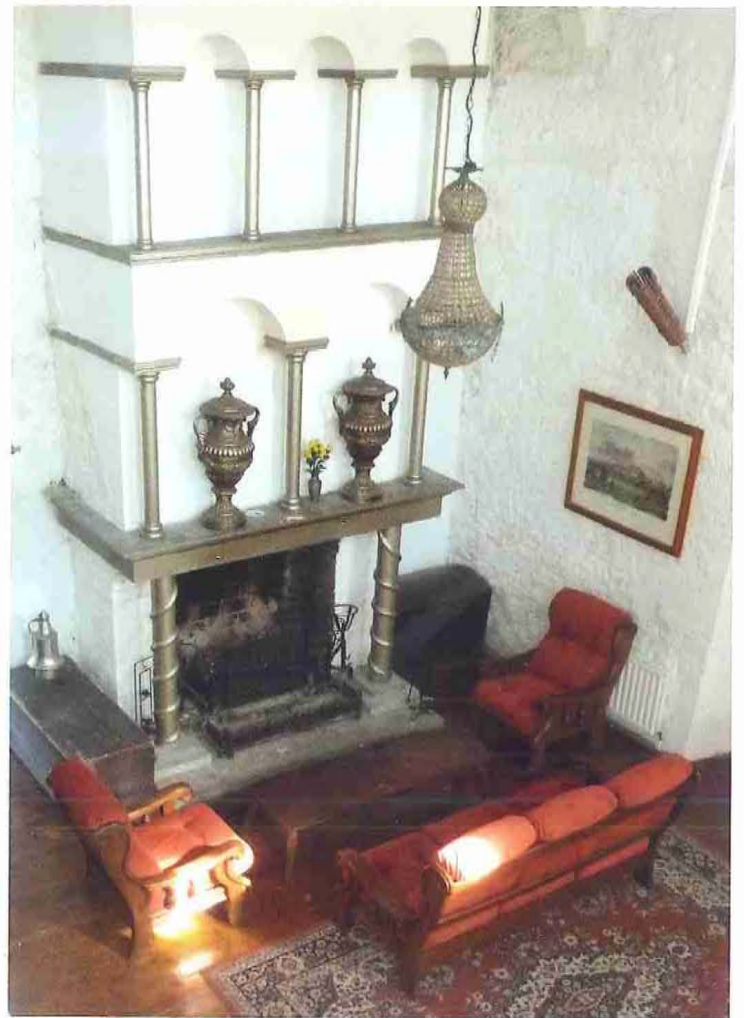
The Yards

The fortified yards have been approved as residences for six dwellings with rear estate entrance and car park. The approval, though lapsed, is not seen as excluded from renewal as the dwellings are enclosed.

The local history and amenities

The history of the area is well known, as a refuge for monks and scholars dating back to the 800's AD, nearby St. Ciaran founded Clonmacnoise, in 850 circa; the many islands on the lake contain interesting medieval relics and ruins, and later in more contemporary times [18th century] Oliver Goldsmith lived and wrote here about 'Sweet Auburn'; Glasson Village was the 'Village of the Roses' and the Three Jolly Pigeons, a mile up the road towards Tubberclair, was the pub in Goldsmith's immortal play; "She Stoops to Conquer". A literary festival is held for the Goldsmith foundation bi annually and is well attended by Irish and overseas guests.

There are numerous golf courses in the immediate vicinity, most well known being Glasson Golf, overlooking the lake, and Glasson and Athlone offer numerous historical pubs and restaurants [Wineport, The Glasson Village Restaurant, Grogans, The Fatted Calf, The Left Bank], with all the modern shopping comforts [shops, specialist delis and supermarkets] of a large city.



Sailing is a well practised activity on the lake. There are several well maintained marinas: Quigleys, Portaneena, Hodsons Bay and the Lough Ree Yacht Club is one of the oldest in the world.

The old weir and locks quarter at Athlone dates back to the 12th century and is dotted with cafes, restaurants, pubs and curiosity shops. King John built a castle there which is now a museum. Dimensions and measurements of the whole Portlick structure, new and old wings and former carriage house are available on request.

An historical note of much greater accuracy about the Norman, Dillon and Smythe heritage can be provided also on request by viewers.

Portlick Castle is the last restored survivor of the ancient castles and towers built on charter by King John in the 12th century, to control the lake and Shannon waterways of Lough Ree against the Vikings and wild celtic bands.



Surrounds

The oak woods at Portlick castle run down to within 15 metres of the lakeshore.

There is a tar-macadamed car park to the castle; two pump houses, a large bulk gas tank for heating and cooking, and a five hundred-metre long driveway with the original piers and wrought iron entrance gates, lined by decorative iron lamps.

To the western side of the estate there is a strip of ancient canal/waterway, bulrushes lowland, which ran freely once from Portlick harbour to the inner lakes, connecting to the southern peninsula of Lough Ree.

This waterway if dredged of silt and made secure would allow for the creation of a safe haven marina for up to 400 boats, and was surveyed for that purpose in 1996.

It would be eligible for EEC and board Failte grants as a tourist development.

It would also serve as a wind farm channel, for prevailing south west/west winds.

The lake adjacent has a softening effect on the atmosphere at Portlick.

The current owner can vouchsafe for the calming effect. It has been described by experts as an area energised by the long body [35 plus kilometres] of pure and unpolluted water.

The interiors, once renewed

The castle has 10 bedrooms with ensuite, four of which are superbly oversized; a Minstrels gallery with 13th century floor to ceiling fireplace; a Victorian style living/drawing room, an Edwardian styled dining room, and a 12th century dungeon room with high arched ceiling in original stone construction.

The kitchen was installed to be spacious, modern and capable of providing food for from 6 to 300 people at a time.

Two additional wings were built in harmonious style with the later period; one wing for a meeting place [and laundry facilities], one wing as a music/concert room for events of an intimate nature. All these areas had easy access to the kitchen.

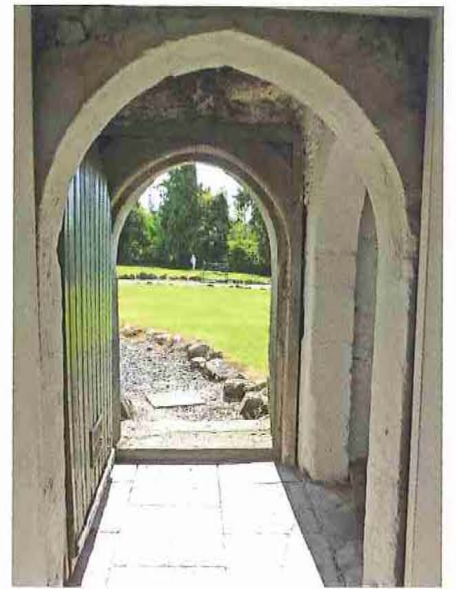
A terrace tops the music room with views over Lough Ree from the battlements, with access from the minstrel's gallery upstairs.

Views from higher tower bedrooms extend over the lake and the green hinterland; nothing escapes the eye from the tower viewpoints.

Later a marquee was added to the north, facing the lake some fifty metres away from the water.









Lake View



Marina



Fishing



Lough Ree Sunset



Golf



Restaurant



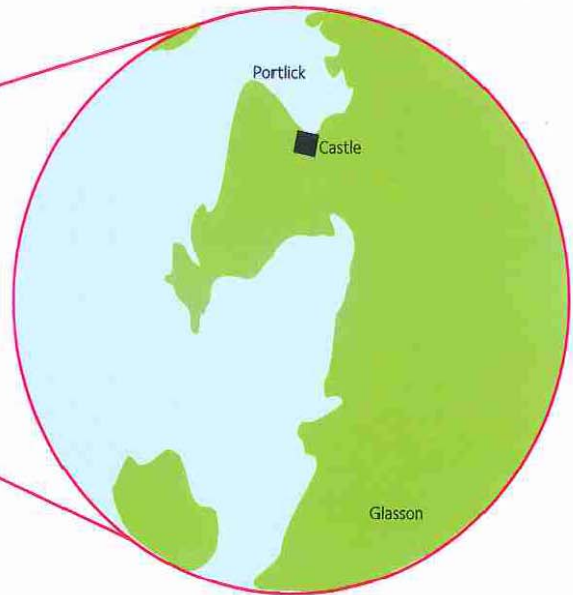
Pub



Village



Cosy Pub



Portlick Castle located near Glasson Village, 6 miles from Athlone Town, centrally located in Co. Westmeath. Motorway access to Dublin and Galway.

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