



BALLYGALLY
CASTLE

Settlers, sieges *and spirits*

The story of
Ballygally Castle



Beautifully refurbished, the hotel has preserved the castle's unique character and many of its features.



THE CASTLE IS CAPTURED

In 1680 the castle was actually captured by the 'Tories' of Londonderry - dispossessed Irish chieftains who had lost everything following the 1641 rising. However, with a bounty on their heads, they did not stay long and soon returned to the then plentiful woods.

HOW IT ALL STARTED

Ballygally Castle has a history steeped in conflict, intrigues and ghosts.

Completed in 1625, Ballygally was built in the first turbulent decades of the Plantation of Ulster, when thousands of English and Scots were settled on land confiscated from the Gaelic Irish chieftains. Not surprisingly it was built with defence in mind.

Owner James Shaw, a Scot, built the castle in Scottish style with a steep roof, high walls, corner turrets and dormer windows. Its walls are five feet thick and studded with 'loopholes', narrow vertical slits through which muskets could be fired.

THE SIEGE OF 1641

The castle came under attack during the 1641 rising, when the Gaelic Irish rose against the English and Scots settlers. Although a nearby Irish garrison controlled the countryside around and tried to force their way in, the inhabitants held out.

They did not all survive. John Jamieson sent his two sons and daughter out to fetch corn. One son was hung by rebels and his daughter taken prisoner.

BALLYGALLY CASTLE TODAY

After centuries of private ownership, Ballygally Castle was turned into the elegant Candlelight Inn in the 1950s by 'Carpet King' Cyril Lord, who became famous from the TV ads for his carpet company. Its candelabra brand was designed around distinctive light fittings, some of which can still be seen in the 1625 Room.

Sir Billy Hastings bought Ballygally Castle in 1966. Beautifully refurbished, the hotel has preserved the castle's unique character and many of its features.



A view along the beach to the headland of Ballygally

© National Museums Northern Ireland

Settlers, sieges *and spirits*

This door is one of ten, each skillfully carved from fallen trees at the Dark Hedges. Each unique door represents an episode from the sixth season of *Game of Thrones*
Courtesy of Hastings Hotels



CAIRN CASTLE AND GAME OF THRONES

It is possible that some stones used in the building of Ballygally Castle were plundered from ancient Cairn Castle, which once stood on nearby rocks.

A legend suggests it was built by the King of Antrim, Mac-fionn to (unsuccessfully) confine his beautiful daughter Claovala from an unwelcome suitor.

Today the Cairncastle area is best known as a location for *Game of Thrones*. In the very first episode, Ned Stark executed a deserter from the Night Watch here and other scenes were shot nearby.



Ballygally Castle by Joseph William Carey RUA (1859–1937)
Courtesy of Hastings Hotels

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT
The Shaw coat of arms from above our front door. The letters refer to James Shaw, who built the castle, and Isabella Brisbane, his wife.
Courtesy of Hastings Hotels

Ulster Transport poster by Eileen Costello (1911–1976). These travel posters were produced by railway and ferry companies, to entice holidaymakers to explore the Ulster countryside
Courtesy of Hastings Hotels

The Ballygally Castle, said to be one of the most haunted hotels on the island
Courtesy of Hastings Hotels

‘DOG’ CHAIRS

One of a pair of armchairs (above) made from Irish Bog Yew, show busts of historic Irish warriors, supporting the ancient arms of Ireland. The elbows are represented by Wolf Dogs, one in action, the other recumbent.

They are believed to have been designed by Mr Arthur J Jones of Dublin, and were originally exhibited at the Great Exhibition of 1851 at Crystal Palace.



GHOSTLY GOINGS ON

Ballygally Castle is renowned as one of the most haunted places in Northern Ireland.

A regular ghostly visitor is thought to be Lady Isabella, wife of James Shaw, who built Ballygally Castle. The story goes that her husband only married her to produce an heir. The moment their son was born, he snatched the baby and had Isabella locked in a room at the top of the castle. Trying to escape, she plunged to her death. You can visit the Ghost Room in the tower but no one is allowed to stay there anymore.

ABOVE
Lady Isabella Shaw
Courtesy of Hastings Hotels

RIGHT
Are you brave enough to venture up the spiral staircase and visit the room of Lady Isabella? One of the turrets in the oldest part of the castle has a dedicated bedroom to her, “The Ghost Room”.
Courtesy of Hastings Hotels



ABOVE
The castle is set within ancient walls which contain the most exquisite castle gardens with a flowing stream running through, forming a small island.
Courtesy of Hastings Hotels

LEFT
Ballygally Castle first appears on a map prepared by Sir William Petty in the 1680s (marked as ‘Ballygilly’).
Courtesy of Hastings Hotels



Ballygally Castle has a history steeped in conflict, intrigues and ghosts.

1625 GODIS PROVIDENSIS MY INHERITANS



DOORWAY TO HISTORY

The castle still has its original door with the date 1625 above it. Nearby is an inscription, 'God's providence is my inheritance'. The initials above the door, JS and IB, refer to James Shaw, who built the castle, and Isabella Brisbane, his wife. Their coat of arms is shown on the shield.

A GHOST DRESSED IN SILK

Another ghost is known for knocking on bedroom doors late at night and for the rustling of a silk dress in the corridors. Some believe it is the playful spirit of Madam Nixon, one of owner John Shaw's widowed sister-in-laws, who came to stay at the castle after her husband's death.

The old gate to the hotel,
leading to the top of the tower.
Courtesy of Hastings Hotels



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