

Lissadell House



Ardtarmon Castle, Co. Sligo
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This new house was built of limestone quarried in Ballymote and transported across Sligo Bay. It was designed in an austere Greek revival style. The Spartan exterior of the house was not the initial design of the architect. In his work *“Domestic Architecture”* Goodwin refers to Sir Roberts’ changes:

“In altering the original design, with the view of reducing expense to a comparatively moderate sum.....the author has been much indebted to the judicious hints of Sir Robert Gore-Booth himself”.

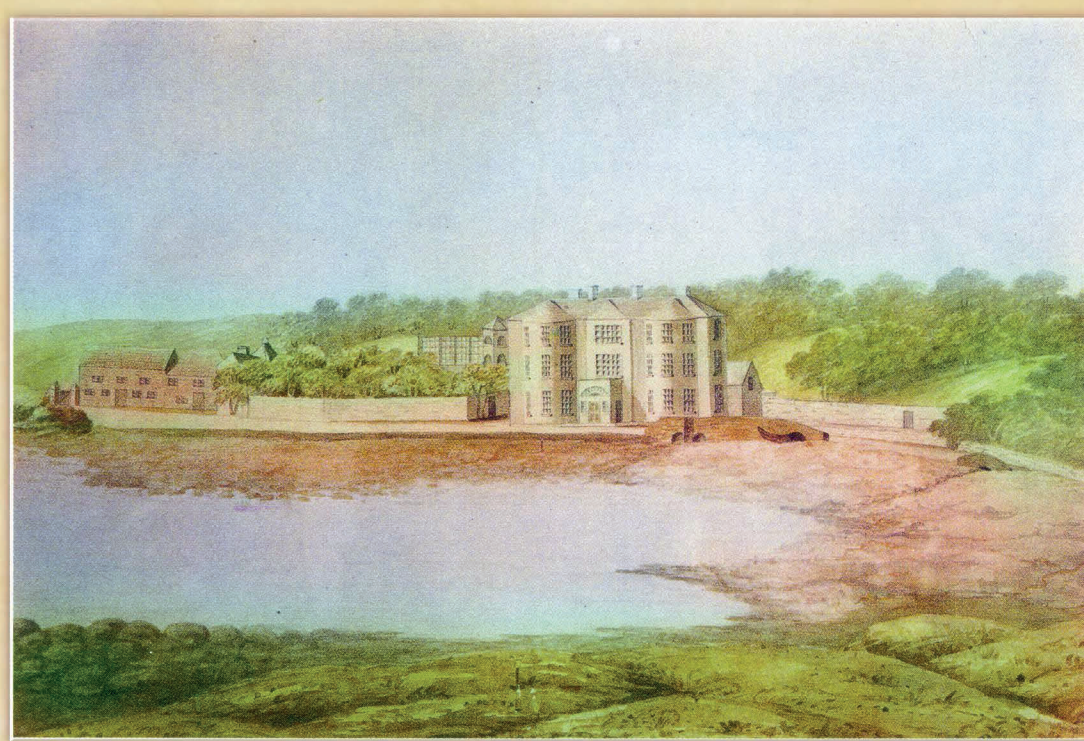
It is a two story house over a basement with very little external ornamentation apart from some Doric pilasters and corner pilasters. Sir Robert also required symmetry and the pursuit of this resulted in a total of eighteen blank windows. There is considerable appreciation of local weather conditions, in the planning and placing of the Porte Cochère or entrance porch, which allowed those visiting, to alight from their carriage sheltered from the weather and enter in an ordered and comfortable way. Upon entering, there is a double height hall partially top light with square Doric columns below and Ionic above and a double staircase of Kilkenny marble broken, on the return of the staircase, with a fireplace. The main feature of the house internally is the large Gallery. This is a double height room lit by side windows on the east, clerestory windows on the east also and roof lights. On the same floor was a bedroom suite along with the dining room and drawing room.

The house thus had a large space for entertaining large numbers but smaller and more intimate rooms for lesser gatherings. Between the drawing room and the dining room is a small room used by Constance in her youth. The room became known as the ‘glory hole’. The window pane still displays her name etched on one of the glass panes. Upstairs were a range of bedrooms capable of housing the family and guests.

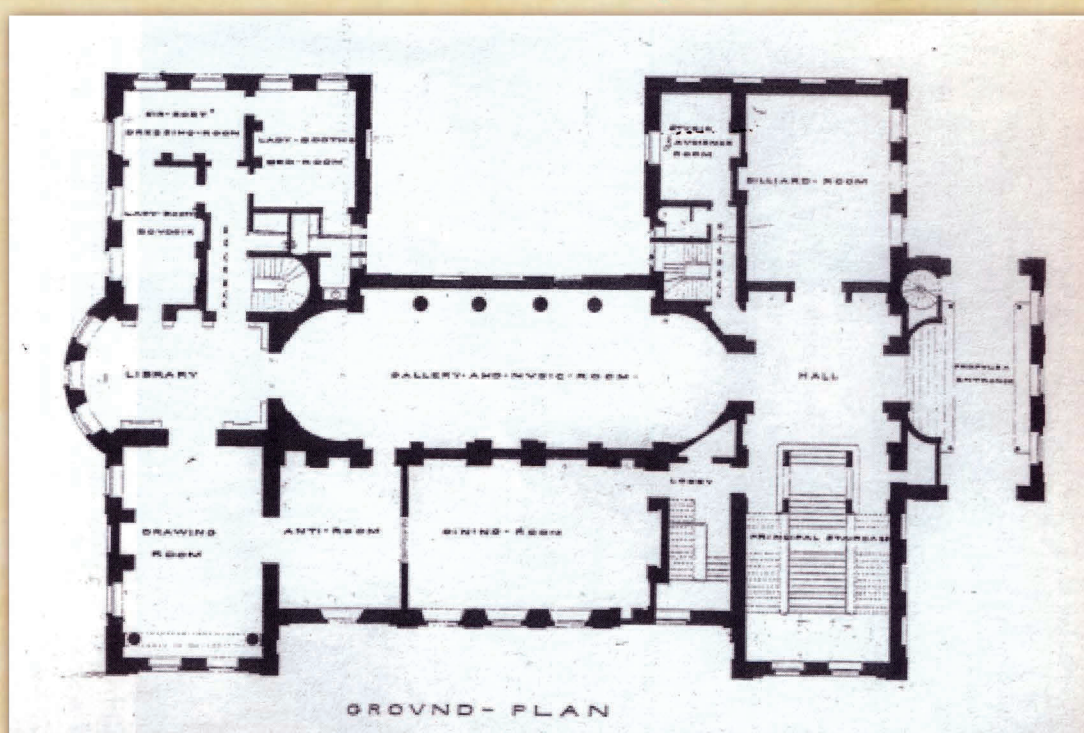
The drawings of the house published in *“Domestic Architecture”* do not include what for contemporaries was a great source of wonder. The house was lit by gas produced locally. The gasometer was located at a distance from the house. Magnificent gilded gasoliers were hung in the Gallery, Ante room, Bow room, Dining Room and Staircase Hall and a pair of bronze torchère placed along the wall in the gallery provided light and it was for a number of years the only house in Ireland lit by its own locally produced supply of gas. In around 1853 a pair of male figures, one modelled as a Saracen the other a Crusader, both holding torchère, were added to the lighting in the Gallery.

The Gore-Booth Family moved from Ardtarmon Castle to Lissadell in the 1750’s. Ardtarmon Castle had been their home for over 100 years and was built as a defensive structure that the more settled times of the eighteenth century made outmoded and unfashionable. From the early eighteenth century Ireland witnessed a new style of architecture in large country houses. Evidence of this style that survives in Sligo is exemplified by Hazelwood House.

In the period of 1830-1835 Sir Robert Gore-Booth (4th Baronet) built a new house at Lissadell. This was the house in which Constance spent the majority of her childhood and had many happy memories of it. The new house designed by Francis Goodwin was placed on a more elevated part of the demesne, about 500 metres from the original house. Very little has been published regarding the long demolished original house built in the mid eighteenth century but a surviving watercolour shows it to have been located close to the sea shore. The transport of supplies from Sligo and elsewhere would have been more easily undertaken by water than by land. It had a bow front facing both south and to the shore to maximise morning and evening light in the rooms behind and was built in a Georgian style.



Old Lissadell House
by Francis Goodwin
© Gore-Booth Family Collection



Ground Floor Plan of Lissadell House
by Francis Goodwin
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