

# Constance Markievicz

## IN THE CAUSE OF IRELAND

### Lissadell House



*Lissadell House, Co. Sligo*  
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*Lissadell House Circa 1970*  
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Close by the house is a large stable block, built in the same period, capable of housing the number of horses and ponies necessary to provide conveyance and mounts for hunting. In later years a pack of hounds was also housed here for use by the Lissadell Harriers. The stable block was connected to the house by a subterranean way. The house surrounded by the park or demesne thus formed an enclosed world, where entrance was by invitation. Escape from this world was by horse, pony or carriage and this is what Constance did from an early age. Riding was escape from the strictures of a governess, the necessity for manners and elegance of conduct and the burden of being the eldest expected to lead by example.

Williams and Gibton, Upholsterers and Cabinet Makers, supplied much of the furniture for Lissadell House and it was noted in the Sale Catalogue for the contents in 2003 that:

*"Williams and Gibton must have had access to the architect's plans as there are distinct links between the house and the furniture: a pair of Egyptian-columned mahogany bookcases have the same laurel wreath at the Chimneypiece in the Ante-Room and a rosewood writing-table has the same foliage -wrapped design as the Dining Room chimneypiece."*

The house was thus furnished and designed in a complete way. Some older furniture, from presumably the earlier house, was also to be found in Lissadell in earlier times.

The house also accommodated the servants and their work area in the basement. There was a kitchen, and a whole range of offices for all the normal domestic activities of the nineteenth century. The servants were the domestic link between the family and their immediate surroundings. While the family were related to the local gentry they lived miles away while many of the staff were from immediately local families.

The most notable feature of the house added after this period were the portrait murals executed on the pilasters of the Dining Room by Casimir Markiewicz. The murals depict Mr. Thomas Kilgallon (the butler/former valet to Sir Henry) Mr Wood, the forester, Mordaunt Gore-Booth, (Constance's youngest brother), a self-portrait and the family dog.

The poet and dramatist W.B. Yeats made a number of visits to Lissadell and described the family as "a very pleasant, kindly, inflammable family, ever ready to take up new ideas and new things". Constance continued to see Yeats in London while she studied there and their mutual interest in the spiritual was a connection. On one occasion she brought him to a séance and also unsuccessfully tried to get him to defend her honour and that of her friend, Anna Nordgren, in a duel. The house and the sisters Eva and Constance were immortalised after their deaths by W. B. Yeats in his poem:

#### *In Memory of Eva Gore-Booth and Con Markievicz*

The light of evening, Lissadell,  
Great windows open to the south,  
Two girls in silk kimonos, both  
Beautiful, one a gazelle....\*

.....

Many a time I think to seek  
One or the other out and speak  
Of that old Georgian mansion, mix  
Pictures of the mind, recall  
That table and the talk of youth,  
.....

The house is now owned by Constance Cassidy and Edward Walsh and is open to the public, normally from the end of March to the end of September. On the 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015 HRH the Prince of Wales and his wife HRH the Duchess of Cornwall visited Lissadell on their tour of Sligo.

*\*The gazelle referred to is in fact Eva Gore-Booth*



CHRISTIE'S

8 KING STREET, ST. JAMES'S  
LONDON SW1Y 6QT  
TEL: 020 7839 9060 FAX: 020 7839 1611

4 MAIN STREET, BLACKROCK  
DUBLIN, IRELAND  
TEL: +353 1 288 1000 FAX: +353 1 288 0838

*Lissadell House Auction Catalogue  
Back Cover 2003*

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*HRH, Charles, Prince of Wales with  
his wife Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall  
and Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Charles Flanagan - 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015*  
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