

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

ATHY MUSEUM SOCIETY



BERT HOUSE

Bert House, just two miles from Athy on the Monasterevin side of the town, is the largest mansion in South Kildare. It was built between 1720 and 1730 for Captain William Burgh who was the Comptroller and Accountant General for Ireland. The Architect was his brother Thomas Burgh who also designed Trinity College Library, Dr. Steeven's Hospital and Collins Barracks Dublin. The original building comprised a central block of seven bays, three stories high over a basement. The overlapping side wings were added early in the 19th century.

Captain Burgh's nephew, the son of his sister Elizabeth, was John Foster, the last Speaker of the Irish House of Commons. Burgh's grandson, William Burgh, who represented Athy Borough as M.P. from 1768 to 1776, died in York and a monument to his memory by Sir Richard Westmacott is in York Minster.

Ulysses Burgh, a descendant of the original owner of Bert House, inherited the property and in 1826 he succeeded to the title of Lord Downes on the death of his cousin who had been appointed Lord Chief Justice following the assassination of Lord Kilwardin during Robert Emmet's Rebellion. His daughter Charlotte who succeeded him Lord Downes was the wife of Lt. General James Colborne who lead the 52nd Light Infantry in the Battle of Waterloo. Colborne succeeded to his father's title in 1863 and it was as Lord and Lady Seaton that the couple came to live in Bert House in 1863.