

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE
NAAS LOCAL HISTORY GROUP



JIGINSTOWN HOUSE

There have been many “big houses” built in Ireland over the years, some magnificent, some grand and some ordinary. For a small country we have a unique history of country houses and this has been greatly influenced by the fact that we were an occupied country for so long and have had our fair share of landlords over the years. However we have in Naas the remains of one such big house, unique in all of Ireland both for its design and the story it has to tell.

Stretching along one side of the Newbridge Road it now presents a somewhat deserted picture but it does beg the question of what it must have been like in its earlier days. It made architectural history when it was built in the late 1630's being the first large-scale brick building in Ireland and for that matter one of the largest buildings of its kind in either Britain or Ireland. The story goes, that the red brick used in the building was imported from Wales and that it was transported from Dublin to Naas hand to hand by people forming a long human chain. “Why should the truth ever get in the way of a good story”. It was built by Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford who was then Lord Lieutenant for Ireland and a favourite with the court in London. It was to be a residence “fit for a King” and it is reported that Wentworth had it built to please the King of the time, Charles 1. It was reputed to have cost \$20.000 to build, but it is still not clear if in fact it was ever completely finished. The house did contain marble decoration as well as the red brick and still retains some very interesting architectural features like its vaulted underground cellars. It was a huge building the frontage measuring over three hundred and fifty feet and consisted of two storeys over a groined vaulted basement. There are still remains of elaborate fireplaces, windows and staircases. The shape of a sunken garden can still be seen at the rear and one of the remaining pavilions at the bottom of the garden has been incorporated into a nearby farmhouse. The story of its owner is a sad tale. Wentworth who had previously been well respected at court fell out of favour with his enemies plotting against him whilst he was in Ireland. They accused him of treason and managed to have him tried for this supposed crime. He was returned to England, tried, subsequently convicted and executed at Tyburn in 1641. The ruins were declared a National Monument in 1969 and gladly are now being repaired for preservation by the Office of Public Works.

Larry Breen