



# Mayo Heritage

Newsletter

North Mayo Heritage Centre



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*We profile*

## **TURLOUGH HOUSE**

*(Image: museum.ie)*

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If you are interested in professional help to research your family history or are curious about your ancestry, why not contact us?



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# Turlough House

Turlough House, situated near Castlebar is a historic country estate renowned for its elegant architecture and rich cultural heritage. Surrounded by lush gardens and picturesque landscapes, the house exemplifies the grandeur of Irish aristocratic residences from the 18th century. Today, Turlough House stands as a testament to Ireland's historical aristocracy and offers visitors a glimpse into its storied past through its well-preserved interiors, extensive grounds, and connections to local history.

The name of the village and the estate comes from the Irish *turlach*, meaning a lake that dries up during the summer months. Turlough House was designed by Thomas Newenham Deane who also designed the building which is now the Kildare Street Branch of the National Museum of Ireland.

The house and estate was owned by the Fitzgerald Family. The Fitzgeralds descend from the noble Gherardini family in Florence in Tuscany. They came from Italy to Normandy in 1057 and then to England.

Turlough house was built to replace an older building on the estate. It remained in the Fitzgerald family until it was sold in 1991. The style of the house is often referred to as Victorian Gothic. It has an open central Gothic porch, on each side of which is the coat of arms and family motto. The family boar crest and the date 1865 is positioned above the trefoliated arch. There is a great triple stained glass window in the centre of the symmetrical entrance with red marble collarettes. The family crest and motto is also incorporated into the window design.

The Fitzgeralds arrived in Mayo around 1677 where they settled and built the first house at Rockfield in Turlough. The most notable of this family was George Fitzgerald [1748-1786] who was known for his brave and reckless horsemanship. A renowned duellist, George was involved in many disputes and family quarrels. He was found guilty of murder and hanged in Castlebar in 1786. At its largest, Turlough Estate consisted of 8,500 acres.

In 1915 the estate was sold for the sum of £71,534 under the 1903 Land Act to the Congested Districts Board, which was established to initiate economic improvements along the western seaboard. The re-purchase of the Demesne lands of 375 acres was allowed by the Act.

In 1991 the house and 36 acres were purchased by Mayo County Council. The house was renovated and an adjacent museum building was constructed to house exhibitions as the original house was too small. The museum opened in 2001. It is now known as the National Museum of Ireland Country Life. It is the first branch of the National Museum of Ireland to be located outside Dublin.



It is home to the National Folklife Collection. Over four floors the exhibition portrays the life of ordinary people in Ireland between 1850 and 1950. Learn about the lives of our ancestors through farming, fishing, hunting, clothing textiles, furniture, fittings, crafts, trades, customs, religion, transport, and leisure. The museum has both temporary and permanent exhibitions. The upstairs of the house is used as offices for the museum staff but downstairs is open to the public.

The original gardens of Turlough House are now maintained by Mayo County Council and the Office of Public Works. They are home to the ruins of the original house, ornamental glasshouse (which was rebuilt in 1991 having been damaged in a storm in the 1930's), vinery, artificial lake and manmade island plus much more. Turlough House and Garden are open to the public.

## Sources:

*Museum.ie,  
Turlough House,  
Wikipedia*

All images from [museum.ie](http://museum.ie)

