

## **MALAHIDE CASTLE RECENT HISTORY**

In 1976, Dublin County Council purchased Malahide Castle and its 268 acre Demesne, including the world famous gardens. In its day this was one of the largest purchases made by a local authority in Ireland. Dublin County Council entered into an agreement with Dublin Tourism and Ireland East Tourism to manage the Castle. The aim of the project was to preserve one of Ireland's most historic Castles, open to the public and display the National Portrait Collection in an appropriate setting. Its intention also was to collect, preserve and display a collection of Irish Period Furniture. Those objectives have been achieved and the Demesne has been developed as a Regional Park.

In the Castle, the visitor may enjoy The Oak Room, an outstanding example of a 16th century richly carved oak panelled room. The Irish Oak is of the same Oak as was used by King William Rufus to roof Westminster Hall many years ago. The Great Hall, overlooked by a Minstral's Gallery was built by Thomas Talbot in 1487 and is a medieval room retaining its original features. The Library is a room chiefly remarkable for its painted and gilt leather wall covering. The Drawing Rooms were constructed between 1765 and 1782 and are painted a wonderful Malahide orange terracotta colour, which acts as a magnificent foil for the gilt framed paintings. Off the Drawing Rooms are two circular turret rooms, ideal settings for the collection of pastels of Irish families by Hugh Douglas Hamilton. The bedrooms contain four-poster beds and many interesting boudoir items.

Though the 1976 Castle auction caused the dispersal of some wonderful pieces of Irish furniture, the vast majority of the Talbot hereditary collection still remains to be enjoyed to day. From the Guild Chair and Hall lantern to the Booker Mirror and 18th Century Peat Buckets, the Castle is rich in Irish furniture. The beautiful inlaid marble table in the Drawing Room was made by the Italian craftsman Pietro Bossi circa 1780. He lived in Ireland until 1798 but, unfortunately he never passed his skill on to anybody else and so this form of inlaying died with him. His motto was:- "One God, One Bossi". A fine collection of Irish sidetables and Chippendale Chairs are to be seen. Guilltwood Mirrors help to embellish the lacquered tables, wine coolers and wall sconces. Though the Albert Durer Altar-Piece, which belonged to the ill-fated Mary Queen of Scots and said to have been purchased by Charles II for £2,000, may be gone and the handsomely carved chair, once the property of Robert Bruce no longer to be seen, yet much remains to delight the visitor.

Malahide Castle is the ideal setting for Ireland's National Portrait Collection. Before the auction, the National Gallery was able to reach agreement to purchase thirty-one family portraits thus preserving as a unit Malahide Castle's most representative family collection of Irish Jacobite Portraits.

This collection has been added to since 1976. One painting, in particular, which always catches the attention of the visitor is Van Wyck's painting of

the Battle of the Boyne in the Great Hall. (INCLUDE IMAGE IF AVAILABLE)  
The paintings not only reflect members of the Talbot family but also the O'Neills of Killyleagh, the O'Reillys of Ballinlough, the Nugents of Delvin, and various other families with whom they inter-married together with some of their descendants down to the present day.

In general, the paintings in Malahide Castle create a panorama of Irish life over the last few centuries and constitute a colourful pageant of Irish history. Hours of enjoyment may be had in viewing the portraits of such well-known Irish personalities as: Henry Grattan; Patrick Sarsfield; Wolfe Tone; Jonathan Swift (author of Gulliver's travels) and Daniel O'Connell.

A fine military painting represents the Battle of Ballinahinch which was fought in 1798. Other portraits calling for attention include: Self-Portrait by Nathaniel Hone the Elder, a Dublin founder member of the Royal Academy in 1768; James Gandon 1743-1823, architect of the Custom House and Four Courts; William Osborne's Ward Hunt, painted in 1873, depicting Ireland's most famous stag hunt where each person can be identified, and Richard Talbot, Duke of Tyrconnel, who was King James's Commander at the Boyne.