



## THE CASTLE CONSTRUCTION

When the castle was built it was known that the country was unsettled, so it was designed as a place of defence as well as one of residence. The castle was built with mostly local stone and in the style of a French chateau, with high walls, a steep roof, dormer windows and corner turrets. The walls were about 5 feet thick, with loopholes for musketry. The stairs were built of stone, and spiral in construction. Through the outer hall ran an open stream of water for the use of inmates in case of siege, and above the dormer windows were carvings which are still traceable. Outside were originally two courtyards, one surrounded by high walls, and the other inside the higher walls. The inner courtyard was marked by two stone pillar mounted with round stone balls. Inside the courtyard were stables, coach houses, byres, sheep pens, a brew-house and dovecot. Outside the courtyard there was a wash-house and a scutch-mill and in the little glen on the other side of the river was a corn mill. Today, Ballygally Castle is much enlarged and modernised with 44 luxurious ensuite bedrooms; however the old Castle has been preserved and it retains many of its original features, including several turreted bedrooms.



## THE GHOST

Every castle has to have at least one ghost of some kind, and the Ballygally has been recently reported to have as many as three! The one we know most about - The Ghost of Ballygally - has been around for the best part of 400 years. The popular theory is that the ghost is that of Lady Isabella Shaw, wife of Lord James Shaw. Lord Shaw wanted a son, and when his wife delivered his heir, he snatched the baby from his wife and locked her in a room at the top of the castle. While trying to escape to search for her beloved child, Lady Isabella fell to her death from the tower window! Another theory is that she was actually thrown from the window by the cruel Lord Shaw or one of his henchmen!

Lady Isabella's ghost is reputed to be a "friendly" spirit who walks the corridors of the old castle. Over the years many guests have reported strange experiences and have felt a presence in their rooms! There are also endless stories of unexplained noises in the night and an eerie green mist over the castle! The hotel is so fiercely proud of their permanent resident that they have even dedicated a bedroom to her, "The Ghost Room" in one of the turrets in the oldest part of the castle.



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# The history of BALLYGALLY CASTLE



BALLYGALLY  
CASTLE



## INTRODUCTION

Ballygally Castle, affectionately dubbed “the hidden jewel in the Hastings Crown”, was purchased by the Hastings Hotels Group in 1966, and it received official four star status from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board in early 2007. This improved rating is a reflection of the superb levels of service and furnishings throughout the Ballygally.

Over the years various extensions and renovations have transformed it to the charming hotel it is today. All developments at the Castle have been very carefully undertaken so as not to distract from the history of the original building, as the hotel's unique character comes from the fact that it dates back to 1625. The Ballygally Castle is unique in that it is the only 17th Century building in Northern Ireland still being used as a residence today!



**William Hastings**  
Chairman - Hastings Hotels Group Ltd.



## The History

Ballygally Castle was built in 1625 by James Shaw and his wife Isabella Brisbane. Over the main entrance door to the Castle, leading to the tower is the inscription



Above this is a shield with the coat of arms of the Shaw and Brisbane families and the letters J.S and I.B., representing their initials.

James Shaw, a native of Greenock, Scotland, came to Ireland in 1606 to



seek his fortune. After Shaw came to the Ballygally area in 1613, he came into possession of a sub-grant of land, at the low rent of 24 pounds Sterling yearly, from the Earl of Antrim. It was on this land that the castle was built.

It is probable that the original building was more extensive than the current remains of the ancient Castle indicate, for it served as a place of refuge for the Protestants during the Civil Wars. During the rebellion of 1641 the Irish garrison stationed at Glenarm tried on many occasions to take the castle, but they were never successful in gaining entry.

Ballygally passed through many troubles and was used again as a fortress as late as the 18th Century. Towards the middle of the 18th Century considerable addition was made to the



castle buildings as the squire, one Henry Shaw, married a Miss Hamilton, who had two sisters and they all came to live within the castle.

During this time the castle was handed down from fathers to sons and in 1799 passed to William Shaw, who was the last squire of Ballygally. In the early 1800s the Shaw family lost their lands and wealth and the estate was sold to the Agnew family for £15,400.

The castle was for several years occupied as a coastguard station, and then once again as a private residence by Reverend Classon Porter and his family who resided there for many years. It was then taken over by the Moore family who eventually sold it to textile millionaire Mr Cyril Lord in the early nineteen fifties, who refurbished it

as a hotel. The Hastings Hotels Group purchased the hotel from Cyril Lord in 1966 for £40,000 and have, over the years, undertaken a series of major refurbishment programmes.

