

A Brief History

Elm Hall was built by Gerald Cuff in 1726.

Gerald was the son of Sir James Cuff who was one of Oliver Cromwell's commissioners in Connacht.

Operating from Loughrea, Co. Galway, Sir James had overseen the acquisition of the land of Connacht "to the end it be planted with such as are Protestants or of the English nation".

Hundreds of Cromwellian soldiers, transplanted and adventurers became the new owners.

In the process, the Cuffs amassed thousands of acres throughout county Mayo - in Tyrawley, Ballinrobe, Belcarra and other areas. Closely aligned to the Gore, Browne and Knox families the Cuffs became one of the most powerful families in Mayo.

Elm Hall was built in a townland originally known as "Trián na hAbhann". It was a plantation house with extensive gardens, its own deer park, and a "Leisure House" on the bank of the nearby Manulla River.

It was let to the Jordans of Murrisk in the 1770s and to members of the Browne family of Westport from the 1780s until the early 19th century.

A daughter of this house, Louisa Browne became the wife of George Henry Moore, M.P. of Moorehall and the mother of George Moore, the novelist.

In 1797 Gerald Cuff's grandson, James Cuff of Elm Hall and Ballinrobe, was created Baron Tyrawley and a member of the Irish House of Lords.

He is thought to have supported the Act of Union.

He is buried in the family vault in Ballinrobe churchyard.

One year later, during the 1798 Rebellion, Elm Hall was reduced to ruins - presumably by General Humbert's victorious French troops and his Irish insurgents, during the so-called "Races of Castlebar".

In the 1800s the Cuffs lived at Deel Castle, Crossmolina and Ballinrobe Castle but still owned over 3,000 acres of land in the Belcarra area - and had hundreds of tenants.

The last of the Cuffs, Colonel St. George Cuff, a veteran of Waterloo, was a benevolent landlord but his niece, Harriet Gardiner, who succeeded him was very cruel to her tenants.

The nearby Eviction Cottage museum tells the story of the hardship she inflicted on her tenantry.

Elm Hall (Belcarra)

