

# There's spooky goings on in Kilkea Castle

## Room 222 has strong links with wizard Earl

By Brian McLaughlin

MYSTERY, intrigue and eerie happenings in the dark of night, when the spirit world is abroad, shroud room 222, believed to be haunted.

The place Kilkea Castle, four miles from the village of Castledermot, built by the Normans in 1180 and once the home of the Fitzgeralds. On the exterior it looks like any other old castle in a good state of preservation. But besides being a luxury hotel, Kilkea has room 222.

Throughout the centuries the castle was the centre of violent happenings, and many a time up to 400 persons would take shelter behind its awesome walls, while bloody battles were raging between the native Irish, the Catholic Royalists and the Puritans.

In the original tower is room 222, where the 11th Earl of Kildare, Garrett Og, the "Wizard" practised the "Black Art."

Garrett Og, it is alleged, had acquired the art of metamorphosis — form changing — and according to the legend due to incessant "nagging" by his wife, who prevailed on him to show her all his powers and transform himself in her presence, he set her three trials and warned her "that if her gentle heart gave any sign of fear he must from her for ever part."

"The river Griese that runs near the castle rose in wild and sweeping flood and whirled around the castle wall and through the doorway flowed, but soon again it fell away, for she no terror showed."

Then a fishlike creature in the form of a serpent wriggled on the ground and entwined itself about the lady's feet, but she showed no fear and it slunk away.

As a final test an ancestor from the spirit world "moved silent through the room and

now flitted further off and now flitted near," still the lady did not bat an eyelid.

Garrett succumbed to his lady's wishes and changed into a small black bird and lit on her shoulder. But lo and behold, from behind a chest up sprang a cruel cat, the Earl's lady swooned with terror and on recovery found that the Earl along with his cortege of knights had disappeared.

The legend has it that the Earl and his knights sleep enchanted until the spell is past and every seven years, "to where the Currags plain lies wide, they start, upon their chargers all, and round its borders ride and then to Kilkea Castle unto the haunted room, and back again to Mullaghmast, for so it is their doom."

An ancient prophecy says that the Earl will eventually come victoriously and rid Erin of all its enemies.

A likely story the cynics will say, but the mystique surrounding the room in the tower lives on to the present day. Mr. William Cade, the present owner of Kilkea Castle, recounted to me his own experience.

After showing three visitors room 222, he was conducting them to the top of the tower when one of the visitors discovered he had left some article in the room. A space of about 50 seconds had elapsed between their leaving the room and their returning to it again.

On entering they found that the bed which beforehand had been neatly made up, was in a shambles with the bed clothes tossed and scattered about. Mr. Cade maintained that he had locked the door before leaving it and as the room was in an isolated part of the castle, there was no question of "trick-acting."

Guests who spent the night in room 222 told of hearing

footsteps overhead and female voices, yet all that is over this top room in the tower is the wind and the rafters.

What is the explanation for these apparently occult occurrences? Mr. Cade believes there must be some logical explanation, he does not believe that a spirit from the other world, be it that of Garrett Og Fitzgerald or some evil potent, haunts room 222.

There is definite proof, he said, that Garrett Og actually died and did not just disappear! His death is registered in Somerset House in England! Yet he can not explain his own experience. Can the noises be attributed to mice cavorting in the early hours of the morning? This would hardly explain the tossed room, though.

Fortified by the presence of Mr. Cade and the hotel manager, Mr. Dan Lynch, I ventured up the winding stone staircase of the tower that leads to room 222. An eerie silence cast its spell and as we neared the ill fated room, something inside me said go back, but with a certain trepidation I went on.

The number 222 printed in bold black lettering stared at me. Mr. Cade knocked on the door as if expecting a reply. He unlocked the door and we entered. A small room with a neatly made bed, perhaps expecting a spirit visitor, a shower, toilet and wash basin confronted me. Nothing happened, the moment was lost. But then who could expect a spirit to oblige in the light of day.

Room 222 lies unoccupied, it alone knows the secret that baffles. July ends another seven year cycle and the "Wizard Earl" and his knights are expected to return. Perhaps the mystery will unfold itself on the night of July seven? I'll be there to find out.



This is room 222 at Kilkea where our photographer took picture to get this spooky effect. Standing in as the receptionist Grace Connolly.