

Grand Georgian residence and a Victorian manor on impressive Boyne Valley estate for €10m

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FULL TEXT

"Owen fell in love with the lands and I fell in love with the house," Prof Alice Stanton says of Dowth Hall, which selling agent Sherry FitzGerald Country Homes describes as one of the oldest farms in the world, with 6,000 years of documented history.

Today it's home to food research company Devenish, and the property, along with Netterville Manor, is now on the market as a result of a restructuring of the Belfast-based agritech company where Stanton, of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, is director of human health at Devenish Nutrition.

Stanton is married to Owen Brennan, executive chairman of Devenish. "We bought the property both as a business and a family home, but now we are in a different position and our children have grown up," says Stanton.

"A fantastic estate on the river Boyne ... doesn't come to the market often," says selling agent Roseanne de Vere Hunt. "The current owners have done so much of the hard work through their historical investigations, and now Dowth has the benefit of full planning permission for another four years for its full renovation," she says.

The sale also includes Netterville Manor, a significant and refurbished Victorian residence measuring 562sq m (6,049sq ft) in the heart of the Boyne Valley - which was used as a research facility by Devenish - and is now laid out with four bedrooms and a rather impressive grand library.

An old Norman tower sits to the side of the manor, which was the original home of the Netterville family. In about 1720 they decided they wanted a more contemporary home and by 1745 Dowth Hall was built. Later, in 1877, the family developed an alms house for widows and orphans to a design by architect George Coppinger Ashlin, which became known as the Netterville Institution - a fine example of Victorian Gothic architecture - today known as Netterville Manor. It has a new castellated structure used as a function room, which overlooks a lake to the rear. It's quite intriguing that the properties have been connected for the past 250 years.

Besides the two important houses, the sale includes a whopping amount of fertile lands which are part of the Brú na Bóinne Unesco world heritage site: a total of 223 hectares (552 acres) to be precise. The property is bounded by the river Boyne, with private access and fishing rights to the river, and includes a private grass airstrip directly adjacent to the estate. Devenish purchased the fertile lands to investigate sustainable and regenerative agriculture to allow a more productive and economic method of farming to produce low-carbon beef and lamb by precision soil sampling. The lands here are one of 12 exemplary sustainable farms worldwide listed in the Global Network of Lighthouse Farms, a network that describes its members as farms "that have found radical solutions to address sustainability challenges" and "are already in 2050 in terms of providing sustainably produced food and ecosystem services".

Netterville Manor, which Devenish purchased about three years after Dowth Hall, was used as a research centre and previously as a family home. Dowth Hall, which has superb architecture, dimensions and impressive plasterwork, needs restoration but the Brennan family began that journey over the past decade. The roof was repaired and it took five years to dry the property out, so it is now protected from water damage and all dry rot has been treated. In addition, the family undertook extensive research, groundwork and guidance with heritage architects into what needs to be done to fully restore the house - especially the striking plasterwork, which is attributed to stuccadore Robert West. Permission was granted until 2027 to fully renovate the property and stables. There are a few options for intended purchasers of the estates. If it is bought in one lot, to include Dowth Hall, Netterville Manor and 552 acres for €10 million, new owners could stay at Netterville during the restoration of Dowth

Hall. Dowth Hall, with seven bedrooms extending to 970sq m (10,440sq ft) on 368 acres, is listed at €6 million, while Netterville Manor on 100 acres is listed at €2.85 million. There is also an 84-acre farm across the road for €1.25 million.

It's quite the property, and the lands include about a quarter of the world heritage site and three significant monuments of the 50 or so between Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth, according to Stanton. There are also five properties and a lovely old walled garden surrounding Dowth Hall, and the lands here have spectacular views over the Stone Age passage tomb at Newgrange.

This slice of agricultural history, which has been farmed since the Neolithic era, comes with a 15th-century castle, an impressive Georgian residence and an equally spectacular Victorian manor, and is now on the market through Sherry FitzGerald Country Homes.

DETAILS

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