

The Guinness family has always had a certain *Great Gatsby*-esque glamour. There's the Black Stuff, of course, which goes to the heart of being Irish – and which brought the family great wealth. There's the fact that they used that wealth to become patrons of the arts. There are the great Irish houses they own and preserve, usually in the most beautiful of surroundings. And then there's the way in which they are often caught up amongst the most exciting names and events of the day. From Catherine Guinness, who was Andy Warhol's PA in the 1960s, to Jasmine Guinness, present-day model, muse and general It girl, style goes hand in hand with the Guinness name. So it's little wonder, really, that when the Hon Desmond Guinness and his late wife, Mariga, founded the Irish Georgian Society (IGS) back in 1958, it had instant kudos.

But it also wielded power. In the past, the IGS has saved some of our most-loved landmarks. Places like Castletown House, Co Kildare; Damer House, Co Tipperary; and Tailors' Hall, Dublin, were all saved from the wrecking ball through the efforts of the IGS. This is one of the Society's main aims, along with courses on craftsmans' techniques that are in danger of being lost – stone-cutting,

woodcarving and restoring sash windows, and their publication, *Irish Architectural and Decorative Studies*.

"I have grown up within the IGS," says Jasmine Guinness. "It gave me my social conscience and the realisation that if we want to save our history from the bulldozer, we must get up off our arses and do it. My grandfather Desmond has worked very hard for 50 years and I feel so proud of him whenever I drive through Dublin or go to Castletown [House], just imagining what they would be like without his years of campaigning."

And now there are the Young Irish Georgians, a fairly recent development, established in 2004 by the Society's director,

Donough Cahill, and Emmeline Henderson, the conservation research manager, to boost the numbers of young members, to put (Hunter) welly behind their lobbying, bring new blood to the Society and increase income. If we're to take Jasmine Guinness's words as a cue, it's easy to see that being a YIG is about much more than wild parties and lawn tennis.

"When Emmeline and I founded the YIGs," says Donough, "we were actually following the lead of the IGS chapter in London, where they had started to organise architectural tours for younger members and their own friends. The first YIG outing in Ireland was a day trip with Desmond Guinness, where he brought us around the

"MY GRANDFATHER, DESMOND [GUINNESS], HAS WORKED VERY HARD FOR 50 YEARS AND I FEEL SO PROUD OF HIM WHENEVER I DRIVE THROUGH DUBLIN OR GO TO CASTLETOWN [HOUSE], JUST IMAGINING WHAT THEY WOULD BE LIKE WITHOUT HIS YEARS OF CAMPAIGNING."



"What's really great is that we're finding loads of pre-existing younger Society members who were more or less dormant. Now, having tested the waters with YIG events, they've realised how inclusive, interesting and fun the Society is, and are attending regular events too." Emmeline Henderson, IGS conservation research manager, pictured right, with Donough Cahill, IGS director, and Nesta Fitzgerald, artist.