



LOUGH DERG ON THE SHANNON HERITAGE TRAIL





INTRODUCTION

Lough Derg and its surrounding landscape of mountains, woodlands, islands, rocky shoreline, grasslands and rivers has influenced the lives of the people who have occupied its shores and islands in the past and into the present.

Historically, Lough Derg has been both a peaceful site for religious solitude and a corridor of strategic military importance.

The remains of monastic settlements associated with early Irish saints provide echoes of prayer, pilgrimage, art and study. Ruins of the medieval houses of the European religious orders - Dominicans, Franciscans and Augustinians - dot the lakeshore. Numerous medieval parish churches, ancient graveyards and holy wells provide linkages to past lives and customs.

As an access lane to the centre of the country, any invader or defender who controlled this waterway held the strongest hand. From his strategic vantage point at Kincora, commanding the southern narrow exit from Lough Derg, Brian Ború and his fleet travelled up and down the Shannon attacking Viking invaders in the late 10th century.

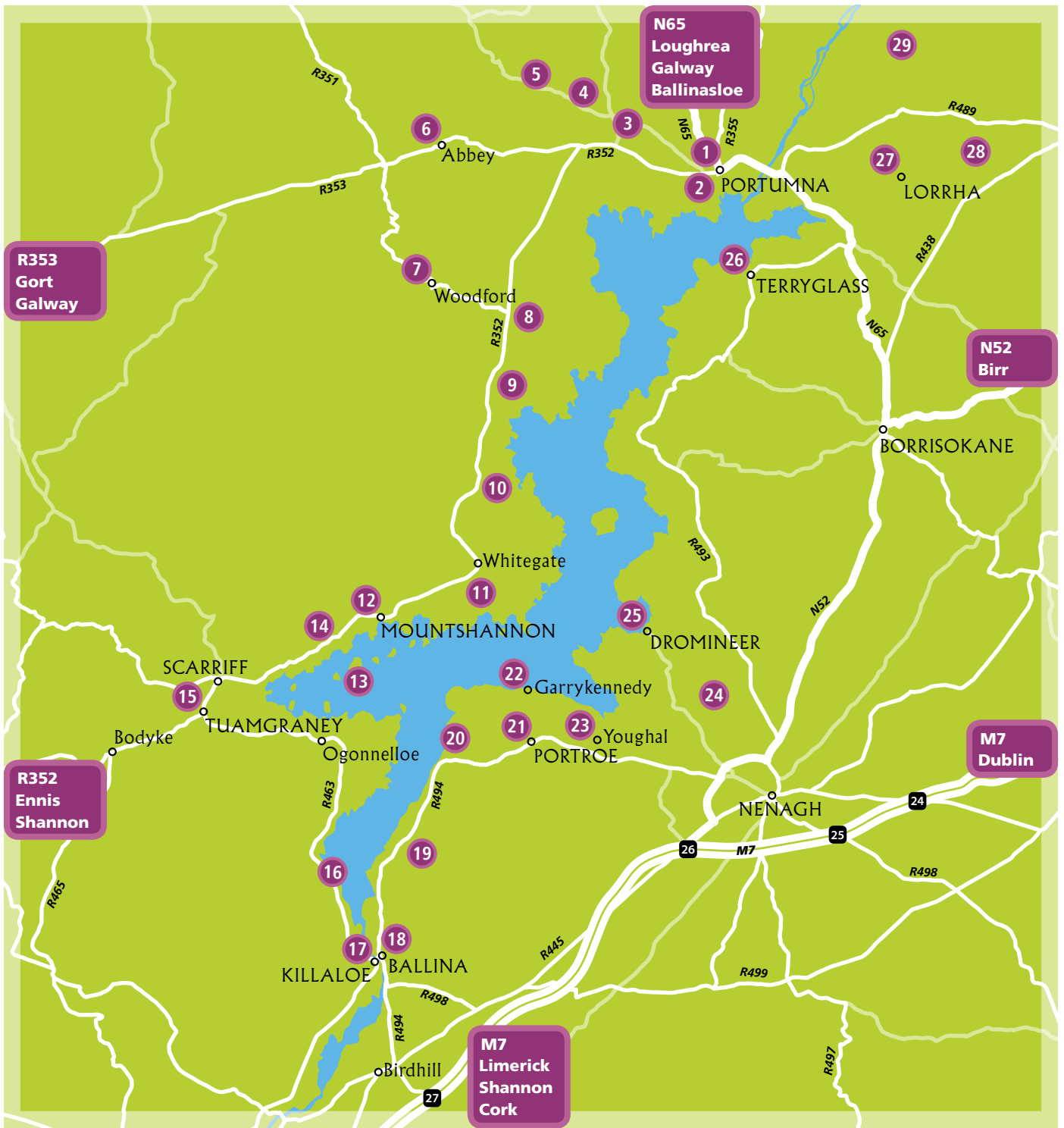


From early medieval times and up to the 17th century, the ancient Gaelic chieftain families of the O'Briens, the O'Maddens, the O'Kennedys and the Mac Egans commanded territories bordering on the lake.

Great expanses of oak forests, bog iron ore and a ready water supply resulted in a vibrant iron industry developing on the west shore of the lake in the late 17th century. 18th century entrepreneurship created the village of Mountshannon around a local linen industry. On the east shore, slates were being quarried in the Portroe region from the mid-18th century. Such industries utilised Lough Derg and the River Shannon as a distribution route. Steam powered boats up and down the waterway and stone harbours were constructed.

Today, activity tourism is the dominant industry. Watersports, cruising, angling, walking, cycling and horse riding are all available.

We invite you to explore the wonderful heritage of Lough Derg along this looped trail, which provides you with details of the people who have lived here and how they interacted with the lake. Join the trail at any of the towns or villages along the shore and discover and explore the legacy they have left behind.



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PREFACE

The Heritage Council applauds the initiative taken by the three local authorities of Clare, Galway and North Tipperary, to make “visible” to the wider world, the heritage of Lough Derg.

Over the past eight years, the built, cultural and natural heritage of the lake has been the focus of effort by a range of bodies, starting with the Waterway Corridor Study on the Lower Shannon (2004-5) led by the Heritage Council with the support of Waterways Ireland, Shannon Development and the local authorities of Clare, Galway and North Tipperary.

Through the County Heritage Plan system, three local authorities followed up on the corridor study with a heritage audit conducted by Colin Becker, which was subsequently elaborated by Headland Archaeology, both of which form the basis for this brochure, accompanying CD and apps.

The purpose of these initiatives is to draw attention to the heritage of the lake, to see the interconnections between people and place, and to promote the value of the lake as a whole, rather than as series of rival destinations. The perspective from water toward the land around its edges, we hope, will also seep through. It is an important step towards increasing the broader appreciation of Lough Derg.

The information in this brochure will be of interest to locals and visitors alike, and should encourage greater exploration of this heritage resource. All those involved in this initiative are to be very much congratulated.

Michael Starrett,
CEO, The Heritage Council

PORTUMNA

PORTUMNA TOWN

SAT NAV: 53.0913, -8.2199



The Irish placename 'Port Omna' translates as 'port' or 'landing place of the oak'. Situated at an important and strategic bridging point where the River Shannon flows into Lough Derg, the history and development of Portumna town is deeply connected with this waterway.

In ancient times this region was part of the Gaelic territory of 'Uí Maine' or 'Hymany', ruled by the O'Madden family from the 5th century. In the early years of the 13th century the Norman, de Burgo family (later Earls of Clanricarde), took possession of most of Connaught, including Portumna.

An order of Cistercian monks built a chapel in Portumna in 1254, which was succeeded by a Dominican priory in 1426.

In 1618 the Earl of Clanricarde established his seat of power at Portumna with the building of the present day castle. It was the establishment of this castle that laid the foundations for the development of the modern town of Portumna.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, the Shannon waterway became a very important trade route, with the canals providing the link in the transportation of goods from the west of Ireland to Dublin. Portumna became a vital part of this network. Two stone harbours were constructed to accommodate the large steamers that carried goods and passengers up and down Lough Derg.

The rising prosperity of Portumna at this time is expressed through its architecture. Georgian doorways adorn many of the fine houses and some historic timber shop fronts are still in evidence. Neo-Gothic design can be seen in the ruins of the town's first Catholic Church - St. Brigid's Chapel (1826) and in Christ Church built around 1832. The Court House, dated 1847 is built in a classical style.

However poverty was also present and in 1852 a workhouse was opened in Portumna to cater for the poor of the surrounding region, following the end of the Great Famine.

Portumna today is a popular service centre for coarse fishing on the River Shannon and Lough Derg. Other recreational activities include horse riding, cycling, wildlife watching and water sports. Portumna Forest Park is a public recreational park on the shores of Lough Derg. 'The Irish Workhouse Centre' provides an insight into the social history of 19th century Portumna.

PORTUMNA BRIDGE

SAT NAV: 53.0915, -8.1948



The strategic location of Portumna Bridge represents the first crossing point of the River Shannon north of Killaloe. It was crossed by ferry before a wide-span timber bridge was built by Lemuel Cox in 1796. This bridge was partially rebuilt in 1818 and replaced in 1834 by a stone bridge which incorporated an iron swivel bridge manufactured in Robert Mallet's foundry in Dublin. Remaining features from this time are the stone piers of dressed limestone masonry with rounded ends and support cut stone parapets and the bridge operator's house, which is located in the centre on Hayes' Island. The house retains its original features including a hipped slate roof, cut stone chimneystack, two-over-two pane timber sash windows and cut stone sills.

In 1911 the bridge was redesigned by C. E. Stanier of London to the specification of the Tipperary North Riding County Surveyor, J. O. Moynan. The road is supported on a steel structure of plate girders with parapets of riveted steel plates. The piers on the Tipperary side of the bridge are concrete-filled cast-iron cylinders which continue above parapet level and are capped by domed tops with finials.

In 2008 the iron swivel bridge was replaced with a welded steel structure by L&M Keating Ltd, from Kilmihil in County Clare. Delivered in sections, it was assembled on site and lifted into place using a 500 ton mobile crane. Some elements of the existing bridge were removed, refurbished and reinstalled; these included the rack, stabilising and slewing wheels. The refurbishment involved shot blasting, non destructive testing, repair and painting.

HARBOURS

SAT NAV: 53.0924, -8.2015



During the heyday of steam navigation between the Shannon and Lough Derg, two stone built harbours were constructed at Portumna to accommodate the water traffic. Large steamers towing up to four barges, transferred passengers and goods to Portumna where they were loaded onto smaller steamers which worked the upper areas of the Shannon and the canals. As you proceed from the bridge to continue your journey into the town of Portumna, Connacht Harbour is located to your right. Built from split stone, much of this harbour retains its industrial features including a well-maintained cast-iron crane and some historic storage buildings. Today, the harbour is an important tourist amenity, as a key mooring area for rental boats. The trailhead for the Hy-Many Way walking trail is located at the head of the harbour.

The second harbour is located further upriver on the eastern bank. Known as Portland Harbour, it was built around 1828 and a saw mill and hotel were developed alongside. It now forms part of a privately owned marina.

THE IRISH WORKHOUSE CENTRE

SAT NAV: 53.0998, -8.2230



One of 163 workhouses built in Ireland between 1840 and 1853 to cater for the homeless and destitute, Portumna was opened in 1852, following the end of the Great Famine. As with most Irish workhouses, Portumna was built to the austere architectural design of the Poor Law Commissioners' architect, George Wilkinson (c.1814-1890). There are seven main buildings within the complex, all of which are well preserved. Significant interior features have survived in the accommodation blocks. Timber eaves are present on the tallest blocks, along with clay ridge tiles, cement rendered chimneystacks, and cast-iron rainwater goods throughout the complex. The larger blocks have square-headed window openings with tooled limestone sills and timber casement small-pane windows. Segmental-headed doorways are present throughout, with dressed limestone surrounds and timber doors, some with overlights.

Portumna Workhouse today is the site of a conservation and redevelopment project driven by a dedicated local team. Partially open to the public as an interpretive centre it explores the social history of the workhouse system in Ireland. Local guides provide the visitor with an overview of the Irish Workhouse and place it in its historical and social context. A short audio-visual film, made in conjunction with the Galway Film Centre, examines social issues such as the practice of splitting up families, on entry to the workhouse system. Visitors can stroll at their leisure through the girls' courtyard, the women's dormitory block, the matron's quarters, the women's courtyard and the laundry building.

2

PORTUMNA DEMESNE

PORTUMNA DEMESNE

SAT NAV: 53.0894, -8.2204



Passing along the main street of the town turn left before the Church of Ireland Church. After approximately 100 metres turn right through the gates of Portumna Demesne.

Portumna Demesne was developed by the Earls of Clanricarde in the 17th century as the principal seat of their Galway estates. Today, the remains include one of Ireland's most important 17th century manor house/castles (Portumna Castle), a priory and the site of a 19th century Gothic mansion.

PORTUMNA CASTLE

SAT NAV: 53.0894, -8.2204



At a cost of £10,000, Richard de Burgo, Earl of Clanricarde, built a semi-fortified Jacobean manor house on the shore of Lough Derg in 1618. Known today as Portumna Castle, this was to be the main seat of the de Burgo family for over 200 years.

The architecture of the manor house marks the transition from the fortified structures of the medieval period to the more elaborate country houses of the 18th and 19th centuries. It is a three-storey rectangular block with a tower on each corner. Defensive features include, shot holes through which weapons could be fired, openings in the floor of projecting walls at the top of the castle through which missiles could be dropped (machicolations) and a wall surrounding the castle roof to protect the soldiers (battlements). The boundary is surrounded by a limestone wall containing three gates, with the main entrance guarded by flanking octagonal gate lodges and an overhead machicolation.

Decorative elements of country house living, with a Renaissance influence, include elaborate entrances to the front and rear of the house, multi-light windows with finely tooled stone divisions between the lights and mouldings above the window. Each storey is two rooms deep with a central corridor and timber dividing walls. Fireplaces and recesses are found on all floors, including the basement where the kitchen was located and two substantial clusters of tooled stone chimneystacks are a prominent feature of the roofline.

The formal gardens at Portumna Castle were laid out in the 17th century and were the first Italian or Renaissance gardens to be introduced to Ireland. The inner courtyard, known as the *Grianán*, was the ladies pleasure ground. It contained shrubs, seats, pathways and lawns, where the ladies of the castle congregated, did their embroidery, and discussed womanly affairs.

In 1826, a fire destroyed the castle leaving only the external walls standing.

The building remained in ruins until its acquisition by the Office of Public Works in 1968, after which major restoration work began. Today, the ground floor of the house and the gardens are open to the public. Restoration work continues on the upper floors of the house. The castle is approached from Abbey Street or Castle Avenue in the town of Portumna, entering through the Castle gates. The approach to the castle is via the Adam gates, Gothic gate and finally the Tuscan gate. The gardens and gates have all been restored. The Gothic gate now serves as the reception office and it contains a cannon and gun carriage from the Battle of Aughrim, reputedly belonging to the Williamites. Nine such cannon were found in the gardens during restoration works.

There are many stories associated with the history of Portumna Castle. One story relates that one of the young de Burgo children fell out of an upper window of the castle. Its fall was broken by the family dog, Fury, saving the child's life. An inscription above the main doorway in the south wall of the castle commemorates the dog. Differing versions of the story describe the dog as a wolfhound or a beast of a large size. Archaeological excavation as part of the restoration work on the castle revealed the buried remains of a medium to small sized dog which were interpreted to be that of the famous Fury. These now form one of the displays in the interior of the castle.

DOMINICAN PRIORY

SAT NAV 53.0952, -8.2188



On the edge of the woods to the southeast of Portumna Castle are the ruins of a Dominican Priory. Built originally in 1254 as a Cistercian chapel, it was taken over by the Dominicans around 1414. The Priory was suppressed during the Reformation and came into the ownership of the Earl of Clanricarde in 1577. It was abandoned by the Friars around 1712 but used as a Church of Ireland Church from 1762 until the completion of the existing Church in 1832. Today, the remains of the priory consist of a central chancel and nave church with a south side projection (transept), a tower (only half of its original height), domestic buildings and a cloister that was partially restored in 1954.

It is traditionally held that Patrick Sarsfield married Honora de Burgo at Portumna Priory on the 9th of January 1689. Sarsfield was a commander in the Jacobite army. After defeat at the battle of the Boyne and Aughrim by the Williamites, Sarsfield rallied the defeated army to lead the defence of Limerick city. When eventually defeated he was responsible for the signing of the Treaty of Limerick.

PORTUMNA FOREST PARK

SAT NAV: 53.0822, -8.2539



Easily accessible by water and road, Portumna Forest Park, originally part of the castle demesne, offers a recreational area of mixed woodland, open parkland, scrub, marsh, lake shore and nearby off-shore islands. Facilities include designated walking trails, parking areas, toilet facilities, observation points and a viewing tower. Adjacent to the Park is a marina which provides access from Lough Derg.

Covering almost 600 hectares, this park is a designated wildlife sanctuary supporting one of the largest populations of red squirrel in Ireland, an extensive herd of fallow deer, pygmy shrew, stoats, badgers, foxes, otters, pine martens and many other small mammals. Eighty-five different bird species breed here, including mute swans and the tiny goldcrest. The lakeshore supports many different types of wildfowl, both resident and migrant.

Centuries year old knarled oaks, majestic beeches, giant evergreens from Western North America, colourful larches from Europe and Japan, blue Atlas cedar from Africa, maples from Canada and Europe, native conifers, yew and juniper make up the attractive mixed woodlands.

Historic features include 'The Yew Walk' and 'The Beech Grove', also known as 'the Ladies Tea Garden'. A ringfort, which possibly dates to between 500 and 1000 AD is found in the north-eastern section of the park.

The car park of Portumna Forest Park is the former site of a Neo-Gothic mansion. Following the fire which destroyed Portumna Castle in 1826, Ulick John, the 14th Earl of Clanricarde, built a mansion here in 1862. Designed by the notable Irish architect Sir Thomas Newenham Deane, it was a two-storey building with a high pitched roof, steep dormer-fronted gables, spiral roofed towers and very ornate masonry work throughout. In 1916 the house was inherited by Henry Viscount Lascelles after the death of his great-uncle the last Marquis of Clanricarde. Restoration works were planned but the building was destroyed by fire in 1922. In 1958 the stones of the ruined building were re-used in the building of St. Brigid's Catholic Church in the town square of Portumna.

When Portumna Demesne was acquired by the Irish state in 1948, the woodlands were placed under the care of the Forestry Service.

3

GORTANUMERA

GORTANUMERA CHURCH

SAT NAV: 53.1126, -8.2845

Leaving Portumna along the R352 take the road, signposted for Tynagh, to the right and after approximately 4 km you will come to Gortanumera Church on the left.

This Neo-Gothic style Church was built in 1934-5 using stone taken from a disused Church of Ireland Church in Ballygar, north County Galway. It is laid out in a cruciform pattern with two side projections (transepts). As you pass through the main entrance doorway note the fine carving and moulding above the door. Upon entering the church the large ornamental stone window behind the altar commands your view. The stained glass depicts the Ascension of Our Lord into Heaven. It was created to the design of John Earley a famous ecclesiastical architectural designer who was based in Dublin. Other items of interest are the wood beamed ceiling and the Celtic Revival style altar railings.



KILCORBAN

KILCORBAN ECCLESIASTICAL SITE

SAT NAV: 53.1249, -8.3062

From Gortanumera, continue along this third class road for a further 2km and take a right hand turn signed 'Kilcorban cemetery (priory)'.

As you enter the graveyard at Kilcorban you will immediately notice a small well with a shrine dedicated to 'Our Lady' on your left. This ecclesiastical site at Kilcorban is renowned for its wood carved statues. 'The Kilcorban Madonna', a statue of the Madonna and Child dating to the late 12th or early 13th century is the oldest wooden statue surviving in Ireland. It is currently housed in the Clonfert Diocesan Museum adjacent to St. Brendan's Cathedral in Loughrea. Other later statues are the 'Kilcorban St. Catherine' (15th century) and the 'Kilcorban Calvary group' (16th or 17th century).

In 1466 the Dominican Order from Athenry were granted possession of Kilcorban by Thomas de Burgo, bishop of Clonfert.

In the north-east corner of the graveyard are the remains of the medieval church much of which dates to the 15th century. The original entrance is through an arched doorway in the west gable. Above the doorway is a carved head of

sandstone which may be 12th century in date. The north wall of the church and a transept survive. Look out for a second carved head on the north wall. This later carving is thought to represent the Virgin Mary. The transept was reconstructed as a private chapel by Anthony Francis, Earl of Westmeath, in 1920 in memory of his ancestors, the Nugent Family who lived at nearby Pallas Castle (the next stop on this trail). A mural plaque bearing the Nugent family coat of arms is fixed to the east exterior wall of the chapel. It is made of a yellow stone known as Coade Stone.

A bullaun stone and some medieval grave-slabs can be viewed in the small courtyard on the east side of the chapel. The bullaun stone has a hollow basin in its surface. Such stones were used in the past for the grinding and processing of cereals, ores and pigments and as holy water fonts. The water which collects in the bullaun stone at Kilcorban was believed to provide a cure for warts. When the bullaun stone was moved from outside the church to its present site in 1986, a pebble carved with the chi-ro (an early Christian form of the cross) was discovered.

The east gable of the church has a 15th century ornamental stone window.

PALLAS

PALLAS CASTLE

SAT NAV: 53.1265, -8.3621

From Kilcorban, return to the third class road and turn right. After approximately 3km turn left down a narrow lane to Pallas Castle (not signposted).

Pallas Castle or 'Caisleán an Pailise' (The Castle of the Palisade) is an extremely well preserved tower house, built by the Burke family around the year 1500. In 1677, during the Cromwellian confiscations, it was assigned to the Nugent family, who subsequently received the title Earls of Westmeath. The family coat of arms is found above the gatehouse entrance.

This five-storey tower house is within a bawn or yard. The wall surrounding the bawn still retains its walkway around the top for the soldiers, two corner towers and a two-storey gatehouse. All five floors of the castle are intact with a vaulted stone roof over the third storey and windows with stone divisions framed in arches on the fourth floor. Other features in the castle include fireplaces (one with a carved stone head), a guard room, a 'dog hole' and an oven that is believed to be a later feature.

Within the bawn are the remains of a 17th century house and an 18th century malthouse.

6



ABBEY

ABBEY VILLAGE

SAT NAV: 53.1025, -8.3907



Returning to the third class road, continue into the village of Duniry and turn left to the village of Abbey. Park at the designated car park opposite the present day Church. An illustrated map board provides details of the Village trail.

Abbey village derives its name from Kilnalahan Abbey. The name Kilnalahan is a variant of the original Irish name *Cinéal Feichín*, or Tribe of Feichín. Feichín was a 6th century Gaelic chieftain.

KILNALAHAN ABBEY

SAT NAV: 53.1030, -8.3922



Kilnalahan Abbey was the only Carthusian Foundation in Ireland. The Carthusian Order was founded in the Charteuse area of France in 1084 AD by St. Bruno. John de Cogan founded a Charterhouse at Kilnalahan for the Carthusians around 1252. It survived under the Carthusians until 1321 and was granted to the Franciscan Order in the 1370s. It is the ruins of the Franciscan buildings that are visible at the site today.

The buildings suffered during the Elizabethan wars and religious suppression, but protected by the Clanricarde family, the friars managed to repair the monastery and remain in residence until the end of the 18th century.

Quite a substantial portion of the outer walls of the domestic buildings of the former Abbey survive. As you enter into the former cloister area, where there are now burials, the remains of the dining room (refectory) are visible to your left in the form of a large fireplace on the second floor and an oven on the ground floor of the west wall. The east wall of the cloister survives and continues as the east wall of the choir (where the monks sat) of the church. The south wall of the nave (where the general congregation sat) of the church and a small section of the south side of the west gable survives while nothing of the north wall of the nave survives. A small sub-octagonal

holy water stoup is located on the surviving corner of the west gable wall. This is fitted externally suggesting that there was a porch over the west door originally. Attached to the south of the nave are a vaulted sacristy and a side chapel for the Burke or de Burgo family. The tombs of the de Burgo family occupy much of the space within the side chapels. Externally over the window of the side chapel is a carved head.

A rectangular graveyard surrounds the ruins of the abbey. Close to the entrance/exit gate to the graveyard are the remains of a small chapel occupied by the tomb of the Nugent Family of Pallas (see Pallas Castle and Kilcorban Cemetery). Their family crest, a cockatrice, is carved on the vault.

Tommy Larkin, who was arrested during resistance to the land evictions in Woodford, Co. Galway in the 18th century and subsequently died in Kilkenny gaol is buried close to the Nugent chapel. It is said that thousands lined the funeral route in the greatest public demonstration of sympathy and solidarity ever recorded in rural Ireland. A Celtic Cross marks his grave, its inscription dedicated in both Irish and English.

LADYWELL

SAT NAV: 53.1048, -8.3934



Ladywell is located to the north of the Abbey. Dedicated to Our Lady, this 'holy well' is associated with a 'pattern' of prayers recited around a series of 'stations'. There are six stations in all, four of which consist of low mounds of stone. The fourth station is the Ladywell (the water of which is said to cure toothaches and diseases of the eye) and the fifth station is the wart well (its water is said to contain curing properties for warts).

A penitential stone marks the location from which the pilgrim must walk back and forth, kissing the stone each time. Offerings are left on a small bush, often in the form of rags tied to the branches. The instructions for the rounds indicate 'you may tie a rag to the bush as a symbol of your detachment from worldliness henceforth'.

The specified period of worship at the well is from the 15th August (Feast of the Assumption) to the 8th September (Birthday of the Blessed Virgin).

During the 1980s the well and its associated structures were restored by the local community.

7

WOODFORD

WOODFORD VILLAGE

Sat Nav: 53.0524, -8.4001



Travel along the R353 from Abbey towards Gort. At the T-Junction with the R351 turn left to Woodford.

As you arrive in the picturesque and quiet village of Woodford it is hard to imagine that this was once a bustling industrial mining centre. Great expanses of oak forests, local resources of bog iron ore and a suitable water supply attracted English investors to East Clare in the late 17th century. The industrial roots of Woodford village are reflected in its Irish name 'Gráig na Muilte Iarainn', which translates as 'Village of the Iron Mills'.

The ironworks at Woodford were begun by Sir Henry Waddington, an English settler.

Three mills went into production and skilled Welsh workers were employed. The iron works of East Clare declined when coke-smelting replaced charcoal as a fuel in the second half of the 18th century.

Patrick Sarsfield, the famous commander in the Jacobite Army, defeated by the Williamites in 1691, passed through Woodford on his retreat from the Battle of Aughrim to Limerick.

During the late 1800s the area became the focus of the land wars when the Earl of Clanricarde evicted many of his tenants. In retaliation the tenants blockaded themselves into the houses and standoffs between the constabulary and the tenants ensued, the most famous of which was the 'Siege of Saunders Fort'. Several of the resistance were subsequently jailed in Kilkenny prison where a number died due to neglect. One of those was Tommy Larkin, who became known as a martyr and his name lives on in the local Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) teams known as the Tommy Larkins.

THE BAY

SAT NAV: 53.0487, -8.4089



When you have reached the bottom of the main street of the village, take the road to the right where the Woodford River is spanned by a triple arched stone bridge. Just above the bridge are a weir and a small lake locally known as 'The Bay'. In the early 20th century the water passing over the weir was used to power a turbine which provided electricity for the village. As you stand on the bridge looking towards the weir, the site where the electric turbine stood is to your right. Earlier, in the 19th century, the water from the lake was directed through a mill race to power a corn mill which stood across the road, on the opposite riverbank.

THE GROTTTO

SAT NAV: 53.0504, -8.4002



Beside the bridge is a statue of The Virgin Mary, built in 1954, to commemorate the Marian Year. The stone base of this shrine is the altar of a Penal Church which formerly stood at Lough Atorick (west of Woodford in the Sliabh Aughty Mountains).

THE GAOL

SAT NAV: 53.0496, -8.4000



The two-storey sandstone building which faces the community park on the banks of 'The Bay' is a former Royal Irish Constabulary barracks and gaol. It is currently a private residence.

WOODFORD HERITAGE CENTRE

SAT NAV: 53.0491, -8.4000



Climbing Bark Hill, you come to another two-storey sandstone building on your right. Built in 1843, this former boys' national school was re-used as a parochial hall in 1925. In the 1980's part of the ground floor was transformed into a branch library and heritage centre. Today it is a designated centre of the Irish Genealogical Project. The East Galway Family History Society offer a genealogical research service, local heritage research and publishing facilities.

A series of newspaper illustrations relating to the land wars of the late 1800's have been reproduced and are on display in the centre. Woodford village came to national prominence at this time, when a local group resisted the eviction policies of the landlord Clanricarde. Thomas Saunders had rented a 49-acre farm on the Clanricarde estate since 1868. He improved the land and built a farmhouse, using money he had saved having worked in Australia for ten years. In August 1886, Saunders and his family, including nine children, were evicted owing one year's rent, despite having offered to pay the arrears plus costs. Twenty-one local men locked themselves into the house. This action became known as the 'Siege of Saunders Fort'. Eventually the men were overcome and sent to prison.

DERRYCRAG NATURE RESERVE

SAT NAV: 53.0438, -8.3899



Leaving Woodford Heritage Centre to your right, turn left onto a third class road beside Woodford Catholic Church. Just before the second school on the right, take the footpath into Derrycrag Wood Nature Reserve.

Fragments of the original oak wood that covered South Galway and East Clare up to the late 17th century, before being removed to provide the charcoal for the iron industry, are evident at Derrycrag. Due to its considerable conservation significance as an old oak woodland, Derrycrag, a designated Nature Reserve, is being managed to gradually remove more recently planted conifers and allow natural regeneration of native tree species.

Elements of the ground flora, associated with the original oak woodland persist beneath the conifers, especially where mature Scots Pine is present. Hard fern, great wood-rush, wood-sedge and bilberry and a diversity of mosses are found in the more open areas. Along the Woodford River bank, which flows through the Reserve, there is a remarkably rich flora, including the Red Data Book species alder buckthorn and three plant species which are otherwise scarce in Ireland: blue-eyed-grass, lesser meadow-rue and wild columbine.

Pine marten, badger, red squirrel, fox, fallow deer, bats, kestrel, sparrow hawk and jay are some of the inhabitants of the Reserve. Rowan, downy birch, holly, yew, hazel and ash are locally abundant native trees. Designated walking trails enable visitors to explore the Nature Reserve.

DERRYCRAG HOLY WELL AND SHRINE

SAT NAV: 53.0438, -8.3899



Entering Derrycrag Woods from the footpath by the school, walk for approximately 100m along the woodland path, before descending to the left along a worn track through the trees down to the river.

Derrycrag holy well and shrine are found on the banks of the Woodford River among the trees in Derrycrag Nature Reserve. The well has two sections divided by a large flagstone. A mound of stones, approximately one metre high, on top of which statues of The Blessed Virgin and other saints have been placed in a wooden shrine, is located beside the well.

Local folklore suggests that curative powers associated with the well originated in the late 1700's when a blind man, urged by a voice in his sleep, drank water from the well and his sight was restored. Following this event a pilgrimage round developed at the well. The round consisted of pilgrims saying a prayer by the shrine followed by further praying while undertaking three rounds of the well crawling on bare knees. This ritual was repeated nine times, on one or several days. The official dates designated to the 'round' at Derrycrag are the last three Saturdays in July. Another tradition at Derrycrag involves tying rags to the branches of nearby bushes and trees as votive offerings.

8



LOOSCAUN

LOOSCAUN CHURCH

SAT NAV: 53.0413, -8.3496

Continue along the road from Derrycrag turning right onto the R351 at the T-Junction. At the next T-junction turn right onto the R352. After a very short distance take the first road to the left, signposted for Rosmore Pier and Looscaun Church.

You are now close to Saunders Fort where the famous siege occurred during the land wars of the 1800s. When the constabulary were approaching from Portumna, the bell in Looscaun church was rung to warn the occupying tenants.

BOLEYNANOLLAG

ST. ANNE'S HOLY WELL AND BOLEYNANOLLAG CILLÍN

SAT NAV: 53.0264, -8.3483

After passing Looscaun Church turn right just before Rosmore bridge. Take the second turn right and St. Anne's Holy Well is on the right hand side of the road.

The well at Boleynanollag is dedicated to St. Anne, whose feast day is the 17th of July. Dug out of the natural bedrock, concrete steps have been built to allow access. According to local folklore, the water from the well can be used to cure warts. A small grotto has been built beside the well.

To the southeast of the well is a raised stony platform known as the cillín or children's burial ground. Cillíní are the burial sites of unbaptised babies, suicide victims and strangers of uncertain religion, used from at least the 18th century up to the early 20th century in Ireland. The burial of these individuals on consecrated ground was prohibited by the Roman Catholic Church. These monuments are often found in close proximity to a religious site such as the holy well here at Boleynanollag. Locally sourced unworked stones set into the ground mark the graves and a large white cross marks the area as a burial ground.

10

DERRAINY

DERRAINY BRIDGE AND CILLÍN

SAT NAV : 52.9747, -8.3731

Continue south on the R352 through Gorteeny. Turn left onto the L8094 road. Continue along this narrow road for approximately 0.5km until you come to a small bridge.

On the west side of Derrainy Bridge is a burial and pilgrimage site. Known locally as 'Deraney Kyle' - *Doire Aon Oíche* – 'The Oak Wood of one night' according to local legend the wood sprang up overnight.

Enclosed by a wooden fence, paths are set out using white painted pebbles. A low burial mound or cillín is located to the rear of the site.

The Cillín at Derrainy is unusual in that it is the site of modern day pilgrimage. There are several stations of worship, including a bullaun stone, a rustic stone cross, statues of the Virgin Mary and a shrine. The bullaun stone is a boulder with round bowl-like hollow. Bullauns are often associated with early medieval monastic sites.

The road which crosses the bridge is locally known as 'Sarsfield's Walk'. It is believed to be part of the route taken by Patrick Sarsfield, commander in the Jacobite army, as he retreated to Limerick with his forces after being defeated by the Williamites at the Battle of Aughrim in 1691.

CLONRUSH

CLONRUSH GRAVEYARD AND CHURCH BAY

SAT NAV : 52.9325, -8.3583

Returning to the R352, continue through Whitegate village, turning left onto a third class road before leaving the village. Take the second turn to the left. Keep left at fork in the road. Continue for 1km to end of road. You are now in the townland of Meelick, on the shores of Church Bay. Clonrush church and graveyard are located on your right.

Enclosed by a stone wall, access to this graveyard is through a modern gate in the east wall, along a road known locally as 'thatched cottages road'. Earlier access points are marked by a number of stone stiles. Before the construction of the approach road, funerals from the west travelled across a farmland track while others came by boat landing in nearby Church Bay and entering through a stile in the south wall.

Historical references to 'Meelick Abbey', a church, priest's house and a stone oratory connected to St. Colman indicate that this ecclesiastical site may date back at least to the 12th century.

As you enter the graveyard, a small stone roofed building known as 'Pollcolman' or St. Colman's Oratory is located

to your left. It dates to the twelfth century and the stone floor flags are said to hold the imprint of St. Colman's knees where he knelt to pray. At the far end of the graveyard are the east gable and sections of the north and south walls of a ruined church. A 16th century Gothic window, carved from limestone in contrast with the sandstone of the wall, is inserted into the earlier 12th century window in the east gable. A large stone 17th century archway, known as the 'Funeral Gate' is attached to the south wall of the church. It is thought this may have been the doorway of a small building used to house a coffin overnight prior to a funeral. The custom of carrying the coffin through this arch and resting it momentarily on the ground on the outside of the arch, prior to burial, survives today.

Between 1989 and 1992 the Clonrush Heritage Society undertook conservation work on the church and St. Colman's Oratory. An archaeological excavation revealed a broken quern (stone used for grinding cereals), pieces of iron slag and two rotary quern fragments. These objects indicate that iron-working activities and corn milling may have been taking place either at or close to the site, possibly in the early medieval period.

An interesting variety of grave memorials, including uninscribed marker stones, simple inscribed slate slabs, rustic iron crosses, 18th and 19th century recumbent stone slabs, mid to late 19th century vaults, mausoleums and table monuments indicate the continuity of burial here over the centuries.

Take a short stroll to the south of the graveyard and you will look out over Church Bay towards Church Island on Lough Derg. Extensive reed swamps provide good habitat for wildfowl such as moorhen, coot, little grebe, great crested grebe and mallard among other wildfowl species.

MOUNTSHANNON

MOUNTSHANNON VILLAGE

SAT NAV: 52.9320, -8.4288

Continue along the R352 from Whitegate to Mountshannon.

The Irish name for the area of Mountshannon is '*Baile Uí Bheoláin*', meaning 'townland of Ó Beoláin', historically anglicised as Ballybolan. The village has its origins in the 18th century.

In 1738, Alexander Woods, a Limerick linen manufacturer, leased part of the old medieval parish of Iniscealtra. A nominal rent was to be charged for the first four years, on condition that he would build before the first of April 1742, '*50 staunch and tenantable houses fit for tradesmen and manufacturers to dwell in, a slated house for religious worship, a school and a market house*'.

By 1751 seventy girls were working in a spinning school and several weavers, shoemakers, carpenters and blacksmiths were operating in the village. However, following the untimely deaths of Woods and a number of his successors, and a subsequent determined effort by the English Government to curtail Irish manufacture, the linen industry in the parish collapsed. In 1796, a French visitor to the town reported that the town was in ruins.

The landlord families of Reade and Tandy were to dominate

the social and political life of the town for the next 130 years. The Reades built Woodpark House and the family lived there until it was burnt down in 1922.

The Famine and its effects reduced the population from 2,510 in 1841 to 1,457 in 1851. The loss would have been greater were it not for the efforts of the local landlords. Philip Reade spent £10,000 on various work projects and food supply to the poor. George Tandy's widow, Mary, died on July 30th, 1878, and the following resolution was passed unanimously by members of the Mountshannon Dispensary Committee:

'Her attention in private and public to the wants and relief of the poor has been remarkable during her very long and useful life - the last 38 years of which she has resided in this parish. During the famine she contributed largely to the relief of the destitution which existed and from that period she has been a constant and extensive employer as manifested in the vast improvement of her estate over which she has presided as a considerate, indulgent, liberal landlady'.

In the 1920's the Irish Land Commission took over the Reade and Tandy estates and distributed the land among the tenant farmers. This paved the way for the development of Mountshannon village as a focal point for the farming community in East Clare.

Situated on the shore of Lough Derg, Mountshannon today is a popular location for fishing, watersports, cruising and sightseeing. An annual Arts Festival is held in May and a Traditional Music Festival in September. There are several surviving buildings of historical interest.

ST. CAIMIN'S CHURCH OF IRELAND CHURCH

SAT NAV: 52.9325, -8.4271



As you enter Mountshannon, St. Caimin's Church of Ireland church is located on your right hand side. Built to a simple plan with a west tower capped with a spire, its surroundings of mature trees and graveyard enclosed by iron railings and stone wall evoke a sense of peace and timelessness.

The first phase of the church was built in 1789 by the mason John Boyle, under the instruction of the local landlord family, the Tandys. A grant of £390 was received from the Board of First Fruits, an institution of the Church of Ireland, established to build and improve ecclesiastical buildings in Ireland.

Local rubble sandstone was used with the corner stones cut to fit. Gothic features include simple tall pointed windows, a triple lancet leaded glass window in the east gable and a pointed arch door opening in the south wall.

In 1830 the tower with its stepped wall and spires was added by John Boyle Junior. The bell cost £8 and was cast by Sheridan Bros. of Dublin and bore the inscription '*Éireann go bráth*' (Ireland forever). The small lean-to vestry at the northeast corner of the church was added sometime between 1840 and 1892.

The graveyard surrounding the church contains various cut stone grave markers and mausoleums including the vaults of the Tandy and Reade families.

THE FORMER METHODIST CHURCH

SAT NAV: 52.9324, -8.4273



Adjacent to St. Caimin's Church of Ireland church is the former Methodist church built in the early 1800's and remodelled in 1886. It was used as a Church of Ireland school between 1914 and 1932 and later as a residence.

MOUNTSHANNON MARKET HOUSE

SAT NAV: 52.9319, -8.4277



Mountshannon Market house was built around the year 1740. Built with exposed rubble walls, it is a detached three-bay two-storey building with gabled central bay and slated half-hipped roof. There are three arched openings on the ground floor, forming an arcade, two of which were blocked up around 1920.

In 1837, Samuel Lewis wrote that markets were held in the market house on the 28th of February, May, August, and November; and that a patent existed for a monthly fair, but this was not held.

AISTEAR INIS CEALTRA

SAT NAV: 52.9309, -8.4304



Continuing along the main street you will come to the entrance to Aistear Inis Cealtra, a 1.8 hectare community park, on the left. The keystone of the entrance arch is dedicated to the memory of Paddy Bugler, a local politician, who was extremely active in the development of this

amenity. As you pass under the arch take note of the island of Inis Cealtra and its monastic ruins straight ahead.



The word 'Aistear' means journey or pilgrimage and its use closely reflects the importance of Inis Cealtra as a medieval pilgrimage site. The park

maze takes the form of a journey/pilgrimage through time, measured by the history of spirituality

in Ireland. There are seven spaces within the maze, each of which depicts a period of Irish history, from prehistoric times through to the modern era. The illustrated interpretation provided for each of the seven spaces provides an understanding of the spiritual beliefs at that particular time and replicated in timber, stone and foliage are associated symbols of that spirituality.

Other facilities within the park include a children's play area, a recreational green area, an outdoor performance area and a labyrinth. You can walk through the park to directly access the harbour at Mountshannon where boats can be hired or trips can be organised to Inis Cealtra.



THE BERKENHEIER-SHEEDY OAK

SAT NAV: 52.9356, -8.4332



Exiting Aistear Inis Cealtra through the exit/entrance close to the shore of Lough Derg and crossing the road to the grassy area by the shore, you will see an inscribed stone beneath a young oak tree. The tree, known as the Berkenheier-Sheedy Oak, was planted to thank the local Sheedy family for fostering a German refugee during the years 1947 and 1956.

INIS CEALTRA

INIS CEALTRA

SAT NAV: 52.9153, -8.4503

Guided boat trips to Inis Cealtra can be taken from Mountshannon Harbour.

Inis Cealtra, also known as Holy Island, derives its name from 'Inis' (island) and 'Cealtair' (church). The ecclesiastical origins of the island are associated with St. Colm of Terryglass and St. Caimin. St. Colm founded a monastery on the island around the year 520 AD. St. Caimin was abbot on the island approximately 100 years later. Excavations have revealed traces of the early monastery and its graveyard in the area around where the Round Tower stands today. A small, mud-walled oratory built in the 7th or 8th century and some large round huts with internal subdivisions were revealed.

Historical references indicate that the monastery continued to flourish after the death of St. Caimin and this is supported by the wealth of stone recumbent slabs dating from the 8th to the 12th centuries. It became a noted centre of learning and was plundered by the Vikings in 836 AD and again in 922 AD.

After these setbacks it grew in strength again in the late 10th century, as it came under the patronage of the Dál

Cais dynasty of East Clare. Brian Ború, a member of the Dalcassians who rose to the status of High King of Ireland and led the defeat of the Vikings at Clontarf in 1014, is said to have been responsible for the building of the round tower and repairs to St. Caimin's Church. Marcán, the brother of Brian Ború, was appointed the Bishop-Abbot of Inis Cealtra until his death in 1003.

Structural change for the Irish church was introduced with The Synod of Rathbreasail in 1111. The country was divided into ecclesiastical provinces, dioceses and later parishes. Inis Cealtra was assigned to the diocese of Killaloe and the island and a portion of the mainland became the parish of Inis Cealtra. St. Caimin's became the parish church.

The Reformation in the 16th century brought the dissolution of the monasteries. The churches were unroofed and have remained so ever since with the exception of St. Caimin's which was re-roofed by the Board of Works in the 20th century.

By the 17th century the island had become a place of pilgrimage. In 1607 Inis Cealtra was one of the "Notable Shrines" in Ireland to which Pope Paul V attached a Plenary Indulgence at the request of the Earls who had fled to Rome after the disastrous Battle of Kinsale. Two years later in 1609 Sir Arthur Chichester complained that there were 15,000 people gathered on Holy Island during the week before Easter. In 1680 Thomas Dyneley, an English journalist, wrote that *'here once a year the superstitious Irish go to do penance and are enjoined to walk around barefooted seven times and they who fear hurting their feet hire others to do it'*. In 1836, Philip Dixon Hardy wrote an eyewitness account of the station there on Whitsunday; *'They were there to perform the vows made during their sickness if they recovered or as proxies for others'*.

The main group of buildings visible today on Inis Cealtra centre on St. Caimin's Church.

THE ROUND TOWER



The round tower of Inis Cealtra is without a roof and it is possible that it was never completed. Excavations and restoration work carried out in the 1970s, failed to uncover any stones that may have belonged to a round tower's cone-cap. Although they may have been reused in other buildings, the legend that the tower was left "unfinished" because the

mason was distracted by a beautiful blonde witch grew in strength. Other folklore associated with the building is that St. Cosgrath, an anchorite (hermit), lived and died in the tower in the 10th century.

FRAGMENT OF A HIGH CROSS



Between St. Caimin's and the round tower is the shaft of a 9th century High Cross, the head of which is affixed to the interior of St. Caimin's, along with other carved or inscribed stones.

ST. CAIMIN'S CHURCH



St. Caimin's church is the chief building on the island. The nave, which may date to the late 10th century, has projections (*antae*) at both gable ends which are characteristic features of early Irish mortared stone churches. In the late 12th century a Romanesque doorway was added

to the west wall and a chancel inserted between the antae of the east gable. In the church interior are a great variety of crosses, monuments, gravestones and a sundial which can be viewed on a guided tour. The church is normally locked to prevent theft.

THE PILGRIM'S PATH

St. Caimin's Church stands at the east edge of a complex of earthworks, consisting of low banks forming small enclosures, with roads or paths between them known as "The Pilgrim's Path". Excavation showed these to be post-monastic, formed in the Middle Ages and later, to cater for the growing annual Whitsuntide pilgrimage or 'pattern', which brought huge numbers of people to the island before the custom was suppressed in the 19th century. These pathways afforded the pilgrims dry conditions underfoot in wet weather. The pilgrims began their 'round' at St. Caimin's by reciting the Apostles Creed, praying to Saints Colm and Caimin, and all the unlisted saints of the Saints' Graveyard.

ST. MICHAEL'S ORATORY

Part of this complex, a D-shaped enclosure around the uncovered foundations of a small building or church, is known as St. Michael's. Recently identified as an oratory, it was marked on the 19th century Ordnance Survey map as '*Garaidh Mhichaeil*' (Michael's garden) and may have functioned as a children's burial ground.

ST. BRIGID'S CHURCH



South of St. Michael's is another small enclosure within which is a small ruin known as St. Brigid's church (and sometimes referred to as the Baptism Church or the piggery). This tiny building has a Romanesque west doorway dating originally to the middle of the 12th century but rebuilt in 1879. In 1839, on 'the night of the Big Wind', the church was devastated and was subsequently rebuilt as a herdsman's house and later used as an ironworks and bronze works.

THE SAINT'S GRAVEYARD



The 'Saint's Graveyard' is on the east side of St. Caimin's Church. It is accessed through an archway in the dividing wall between the church and the 19th century graveyard. Located in the 'Saint's Graveyard' is a small building known as 'The Oratory' or '*Teampall na bhFear nGonta*' (the church of the wounded men). The original structure dates from approximately 1200 AD but it was extensively rebuilt around 1700 AD as a mortuary chapel for the O'Grady family. Eleventh century grave markers in the 'Saint's Graveyard' bear Irish inscriptions and the oldest examples are in situ between the oratory and the east gable of St. Caimin's Church. The headstone of Cosrach, 'the miserable one', who died in 898 AD, is inscribed by a footprint and in the south-west corner is a structure, inscribed 'the grave of the ten'.

THE CONFESSIONAL

A small stone structure known as 'The Confessional' is located outside the north wall of the 'Saints' Graveyard'. Excavations revealed that this structure has been rebuilt many times and that there had been an earlier timber structure within a rectangular fenced enclosure. The present structure was used as a confessional during the pilgrimages of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but its original use is still unknown. It was last excavated in 1977 and rebuilt in 1979.

ST. MARY'S CHURCH



St. Mary's church is located almost due south of St. Caimin's Church. It belongs to the early 13th century and is the largest building on the island. In 1210 St. Mary's replaced St. Caimin's as the parish church. It was later altered, repaired and rebuilt. Part of an early 17th century memorial was removed and served as an "altar" in Whitegate until a new church was opened there in 1870. The memorial was returned to St. Mary's in 1880. The original doorways of St. Mary's are blocked up, one on the south, the other on the north side. Internally there are several inscribed graveslabs and a 17th century O'Brien family tomb in a rustic baroque style.

THE BARGAINING STONE

A particular feature of interest is a stone known as the Bargaining Stone. Associated with contract making, the stone has a hole through its centre. It is said that the monks secured possession of the island by shaking hands through this stone and marriage contracts were also made in the same way.

There are many other features of interest on the island, including the Holy Well, known as the 'Lady's Well', the remains of a high cross, known as 'The Cross of Cathasach', the remains of a cottage north of the Confessional and five bullaun stones.



WOODPARK

WOODPARK FOREST PARK

SAT NAV: 52.9298, -8.4582

As you leave Mountshannon and continue your journey along the R352 towards Scarriff, Woodpark Forest Park is located 1.5km from the village on the right hand side.

Once part of the Woodpark Estate, home of the Reade family, this public recreational area is open throughout the year. Facilities include car parks, information boards, woodland walks and picnic areas. Its use as a venue for art workshops during the annual “Iniscealtra Arts Festival” has led to the installation of various sculptures and woodcarving throughout the park.

Mixed woodland of oak, ash, beech, birch, holly, sycamore, hazel and rowan grows alongside sections of conifer plantations and areas of wet woodland. The forest floor supports a diverse range of wildflowers, mosses and grasses. Two rivers run through the park providing wetland habitat for various flora and fauna.

The former site of Woodpark House is located close to Woodpark Golf Club.



TUAMGRANEY

TUAMGRANEY VILLAGE

Sat Nav: 52.8984, -8.5401

Tuamgraney or 'the tomb of Grían' is the supposed burial place of *Grían* an Irish sun goddess. Unfortunately she is the first recorded suicide in Ireland. Drowned in Lough Graney, her body floated down the Graney river to Lough Derg. It was recovered at Derrygraney and buried at Tuamgraney. Locally, the lime tree that grows on the limestone outcrop in the centre of the village green is considered to be her grave.

O'GRADY'S CASTLE, TUAMGRANEY

SAT NAV: 52.8970, -8.5399



Built in the 16th century to command the nearby ford, from which the adjacent town of Scariff or '*Scarbh*', meaning 'the rocky ford' takes its name, this castle is named after the O'Gradys, a prominent local family in medieval times. The family held a hereditary right to positions of influence in the church and local economy. They are associated with the monastic sites of Clonrush in Whitegate and Inis Cealtra on Lough Derg. Cenfaela O'Grady, was both chief and abbot of Tuamgraney, before his death in 1185. The family coat of arms and their motto '*Vulneratus non Victus*', (wounded but not defeated) is depicted on a stone in St. Caimin's church on Inis Cealtra.

This three-storey castle is built to the typical plan of an Irish tower house, a medieval fortified residence. It has thick walls of roughly dressed rubble stone laid in irregular courses, the corners of which are supported with tooled angled stones (quoins). Above the doorway, in the south wall, are the remains of a stone arch which suggests that there may have been an earlier larger entrance. A recess, the width of the doorway, runs to the upper storey where it continues under a machicolation. The machicolation is a defensive feature used to drop missiles onto would-be attackers attempting to breach the doorway. There would originally have been a wall around the roof, used for lookout and defensive purposes. The most notable window is a large pointed-arch opening in the wall opposite the entrance.

TUAMGRANEY HANDBALL ALLEY

SAT NAV: 52.8966, -8.5398



Adjacent to the castle is the local handball alley. Such alleys played a large role in the cultural and political life of local Irish communities in the early 20th century. Playing handball was associated with large, often day-long, gatherings with people waiting for a game, spectating and engaged in betting and sometimes match-making activities. The introduction of high enclosing walls in the 1950s resulted in such gatherings becoming more formalised.

Tuamgraney was the home handball alley of Pat Kirby and his brothers. Pat began playing handball at the age of seven and went on to become All Ireland senior champion fifteen times and World Champion eight times. He moved from Ireland to America and joined the USA professional circuit. He now lives in Tucson, Arizona and is recognised as one of the best handballers ever. His skill is commemorated with an engraved stone outside the handball alley in Tuamgraney. This commemoration stone also marks the centenary of the Tuamgraney Handball Club (1911-2011) and the memory of Dr. Edward McLysaght, who was responsible for the original building of the alley.

An interpretative board providing a comprehensive map guide to local heritage features and sites around Tuamgraney is located inside the front wall of the ball alley grounds.

ST. CRONAN'S CHURCH AND EAST CLARE HERITAGE CENTRE

SAT NAV: 52.8967, -8.5395



St. Cronan founded a monastery at Tuamgraney around the year 550 AD. Sometime after 949 AD and before his death in 964 AD, Cormac Ua Cillín, an abbot of Tuamgraney built a church from local sandstone. This church was subsequently repaired under the patronage of the High King of Ireland, Brian Ború, around the year 1000 AD. The nave, located at the western end of what is St. Cronan's Church today, is the remains of the original 10th century church.

As you approach the entrance, note the way the side walls project out on either side of the gable (*antae*), the huge stones that were used in the walls (cyclopean masonry) and the leaning side stones of the doorway topped by a massive lintel stone. All these features are characteristic of Irish church building in the 10th century.

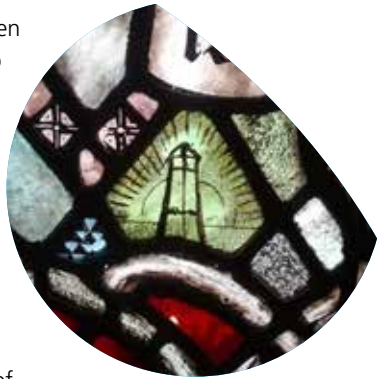
In the 12th century, the church was extended when a slightly narrower chancel was added. The carved windows in the south and north walls are in a Romanesque style, but with features particular to the west of Ireland and classified as 'School of the West' architecture.

The magnificent stained glass in the east window was created by Alfred Childe in 1906. Childe was a co-founder of the famous 'An Túr Gloine' glass studio. The window commemorates the lever family of Mount levers, Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare and depicts the Ascension into

Heaven. The glass was transferred here when the Church of Ireland church in Sixmilebridge was demolished.

Above the most western window in the south wall of the chancel is a carved head. Such heads were common features of medieval churches. It is held locally to be a representation of St. Cronan. A second carved head is on display in the church. This 3D representation of a woman's head was removed from the exterior wall of the church. This is unlikely to have been its original location as it is carved to be viewed from all sides.

St. Cronan's Church has been in use as a place of worship since before the year 1000 AD and today this ancient structure houses the East Clare Heritage Centre and tourist information point. The East Clare Heritage Group was formed in 1989 as a not for profit voluntary group, with the primary objective of protecting, promoting and creating access to the heritage of East Clare. Visitors to the centre will encounter a vast array of implements, visuals and audio-visual presentations relating to the social, historical and cultural life of the region. Other attractions organised by the Heritage Group include musical recitals and concerts held in the Church, arrangement of guided boat trips to Inis Cealtra Island and local historical walks and talks.



16



RINAMAN POINT

RINAMAN POINT / TWO-MILE-GATE AND BALLYCUGGARAN WOODS

SAT NAV: 52.8344, -8.4639



Leaving Tuamgraney continue on the R463 through Ogonnelloe, until you come to a large designated parking area beside the University of Limerick Activity Centre on the shores of Lough Derg.

You are now at Rinaman Point/ Two-Mile Gate amenity area and one of Lough Derg's two Blue Flag Beaches. Public facilities include a parking area, lakeshore picnic area,

trailhead for the Ballycuggeran Loop Walk (distance of 5.6km) and a link onto the long distance walking trail – the East Clare Way.

Both waymarked walking trails pass through the adjacent Ballycuggeran Woods, a Coillte owned Woodland Park, located on the slopes of Crag Hill. The placename Ballycuggeran or '*Baile Ni Chogarain*' in Irish translates as 'the home of the O'Cuggerans' who were an important family at the court of Brian Ború, the High King of Ireland in the early 11th century. Aoibheal's Rock, the legendary abode of Aoibheal, *bean sí* of the Dál Cais (Brian Ború's family tribe), is located on Crag Hill. She is most famously reputed to have appeared to Brian Ború on the eve of the battle of Clontarf warning him of his impending death.

In the past oak woodlands covered these slopes, but they were cut down in the early 19th century to supply the local iron industries. Aoibheal is said to have left her home when this happened. Today spruce, larch, fir, oak, beech and ash are the main tree species and badger, fox, woodcock and pheasant utilise this habitat. Wild goats inhabit the upper slopes.

17

KILLALOE

BRIAN BORÚ FORT (BÉAL BORÚ)

SAT NAV: 52.8189, -8.4516



As you approach Killaloe town, the entrance gate to Béal Ború is found on the left hand side near the Killaloe town entrance signs. A tree lined walking track leads from the turnstile gate to the fort.

Occupying a strategic position overlooking the point where the River Shannon exits Lough Derg, this large earthen ringfort controlled an important crossing point between the east and west banks of the River Shannon possibly from prehistoric times and into the 13th century. Believed to have been occupied by the Dál Cais (Brian Ború's family tribe), this powerful ancient Gaelic tribe controlled access

up the river from Killaloe. The name Béal Ború means cattle tribute, as cattle were driven across the river at this point and offered in tribute to the local chieftains.

Born in 941, at the time when the Vikings were invading Ireland, Brian Ború belonged to the O'Brien clan and the ancient Gaelic tribe of the Dalcassians. At the age of 35, he became the leader of the Dalcassians and two years later, King of Munster. He assumed the High Kingship of Ireland in 1002 and built his palace at Kincora in nearby Killaloe. In 1014 his army gained victory over the Vikings at the Battle of Clontarf, but tragically Brian was killed after the battle by a retreating Viking.

Over 800 stone implements including stone axes, hammer stones and perforated stone sinkers for lines and nets have been found at this site, indicating its importance since prehistoric times. An archaeological excavation at Béal Ború in 1961 revealed the presence of an earlier earthwork beneath the fort that we see today. Important finds included two Hiberno-Norse coins, minted between 1035 and 1070, indicating that this earlier earthwork probably continued to be occupied into the 11th century. It was possibly abandoned after being destroyed during local wars in 1116.

In the early 13th century, due to the strategic importance of the location, the Anglo-Normans occupied and strengthened the site, building up the high earthen bank, deep ditch and raised centre that we see today on top of the earlier earthwork.

In 1690, Patrick Sarsfield crossed the River Shannon here at Béal Ború on his way to Ballyneety to intercept the Williamite siege train.

TOBERMURRAGH

SAT NAV: 52.8093, -8.4490



As you enter Killaloe town take the lower road towards the river. Tobermurragh is signposted on your left and is a short walk from the roadway along a designated pathway.

According to tradition the eldest son of Brian Ború, Murrough, was baptised with water from this well known as 'Tobermurragh' or 'Murrough's Well'. Murrough, along with his father was killed at the Battle of Clontarf in 1014.

Today a red-brick hexagonal structure covers the well. This was built in 1899 under the instruction of the then landlord Major Ingham. A carved limestone channel diverts the water away from the well. This well was used to supply drinking water to the town of Killaloe before a piped water scheme was put into operation.

KILLALOE / BALLINA BRIDGE

SAT NAV: 52.8081, -8.4391



On the opposite side of the road from Tobermurragh a signposted pathway, known as Aillebaun, leads up the hill to a viewing point providing panoramic views of the River Shannon, Killaloe Canal and the bridge.

Control over this strategic crossing point of the lower River Shannon has many historic links especially with King Brian Ború and his palace at nearby Kincora. The earliest reference to a bridge at Killaloe is when St. Flannan's father, Turlough is reported to have 'bounded over the city bridge' on his return to Lismore after visiting Flannan in Killaloe. An entry in the Annals of Inisfallen in 1071 refers to the rebuilding of a bridge, presumably wooden, at Killaloe in a fortnight. It is also recorded that Turlough O'Connor after plundering Kerry crossed Killaloe Bridge in 1119. Killaloe was subsequently burned three times; in 1142, 1154, and under the name of Kincora in 1160. The Cromwellian account books record that the bridge was repaired in 1652. In 1760 the first coach service between Dublin and Killaloe crossed the bridge.

Today 'Killaloe Bridge', is a magnificent 13 arch stone bridge, spanning the River Shannon and connecting the towns of Killaloe and Ballina and the counties of Clare and Tipperary. Construction began on this stone bridge around 1770, but there have been many alterations to facilitate changing economic, social and environmental conditions since then. The oldest remaining sections of the bridge are the five arches and six embrasures, into which pedestrians can retreat from heavy traffic, on the Killaloe side, which date to 1780. An additional arch was added on the Killaloe side to accommodate the construction of the canal in 1799. Major flooding in 1822 caused structural damage and in 1825 the five central arches of the bridge had to be replaced. An inscribed plaque commemorates this partial rebuilding. In 1843, three wider and higher segmental headed arches, to facilitate increasing boat traffic were constructed on the Ballina side of the bridge. A branch of the Great Southern & Western Railway was brought to Ballina in the 1860s and a railway arch was added to the Ballina side of the bridge.

As you look down on the river today the waters are deep and calm. But in the past the water level was much lower and rapids were prevalent. This is why it was such an accessible and important crossing point. The town of Ballina on the eastern shore is named after 'the mouth of the ford', *Béal an Átha*. As the importance of the River

Shannon increased in the 18th century as a routeway for steam powered boats, the rapids at Killaloe hindered navigation. In 1799 a canal was opened on the west side of the river to facilitate the passage of boats past the rapids.

Between 1925 and 1929 the Shannon Hydroelectric Scheme was constructed with the building of a dam and the installation of turbines downriver at Ardnacrusha. When the scheme was implemented the upriver water levels rose and the rapids at Killaloe were covered. Boats could now navigate up the river without resorting to the canals. In 1929 the central lifting bridge was installed at Killaloe to facilitate this passage and the canals and their associated structures became largely redundant.

Before the rise in water levels, numerous eel weirs were constructed along the length of Killaloe Bridge to trap migrating eels as they swam downriver. The existing structure on the south side of the bridge forms the Killaloe Silver Eel Weir. It consists of a metal walkway and a series of steel wattles and hydraulic frames that are used to set and lift a series of coghill nets which trap the eels as they pass through the bridge. The ESB Fisheries Conservation operates a Shannon Eel Management Programme where eels are captured at Killaloe, transported and released below the dam at Ardnacrusha to conserve stocks.

KINCORA – SITE OF BRIAN BORÚ'S PALACE

SAT NAV: 52.8070, -8.4443

Following the sign for 'Kincora Palace Site' continue up the walkway from the viewing point to the top of the hill. The area surrounding St. Flannan's Catholic Church is Kincora, the former site of King Brian Ború's palace.

Breaking with tradition, Brian Ború chose to rule over Ireland from his home region at Killaloe instead of Cashel, County Tipperary. He had his family home at Kincora rebuilt and strengthened as befitting his new status as King. There are no visible remains of Brian Ború's palace today but Mac Liag, Brian's bard left us a description. The

site was enclosed by a circular stone wall within which stood timber and wicker houses and a great hall. Brian, entertained guests in the great hall and the cooking was done in the centre of the hall with the smoke escaping through a hole in the roof. Outside the circular enclosure, numerous small houses were scattered as far as Béal Ború. This great palace was the centre of authority in Ireland between 1002 and 1014 AD. As you stand on the site, imagine the panoramic view of the River Shannon and the surrounding countryside which would have been visible from the palace. This allowed Brian and his soldiers to keep watch for approaching enemies.

However it was inside the palace that Maolmordha, Brian Boru's brother-in-law and King of Leinster, was insulted during a game of chess. He swore revenge and in 1014 with the Vikings of Dublin, he fought in the Battle of Clontarf against Brian.

ST. MOLUA'S ORATORY

SAT NAV: 52.8070, -8.4443



In the grounds of St. Flannan's Roman Catholic Church on the hill of Kincora is the small stone oratory of St. Molua.

The name Killaloe (*Cill Lua*), originates from 'the Church of Lua'. Lua was a 7th century monk, who founded a monastery on a nearby island in the River Shannon, subsequently known as Inis Lua (Lua's Island). The name 'Molua' derives from the popularity of the saint as people came to refer to the saint as "my Lua" – 'mo' being the Irish for 'my'.

St. Molua's small church or oratory originally stood on Inis Lua (also known as Friar's Island). The construction of the Shannon Hydroelectric Scheme between 1925 and 1929 involved a rise in the river's water level and the subsequent submergence of Friar's Island. Before this happened, St. Molua's Oratory was dismantled stone by stone and transported to Killaloe on a specially built barge. A rope was stretched between the shore of the river and the island and the workmen "handed" the barge between the shores. Two small temporary jetties were built on the shore and an inclined trackway with truck and winch were used to transport the masonry across land. The oratory was rebuilt in the grounds of St. Flannan's Catholic Church in July 1930.

An early example of a nave-and-chancel church, it presents two phases of building. The single-storey nave (where a small congregation assembled) was probably built in the 10th /11th century and is likely to have had a roof of timber or thatch. Possibly in the 12th century the chancel was added to the east end of the nave. This was around the same time that St. Flannan's Oratory was being built. It may be that Muirchertach Ua Briain commissioned some of the masons working on St. Flannan's to build this new chancel.

The pitched stone roof of the chancel is a rare example of stone roof building from this time. The narrow dimensions of the building and the use of mortar allowed the construction of this straight-sided roof without an internal propping arch. It is amazing to think that this stone roof has survived for almost a thousand years.

Lintelled doorways provide access through the western end of the nave and the southern wall of the chancel. There is a modest round arch linking the chancel and the nave. Two aumbry niches (recesses in which sacred vessels and liquids are stored) are located internally to the east end of the north and south chancel walls.

ST. FLANNAN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE CLARKE WINDOWS

SAT NAV: 52.8070, -8.4443



Built in 1838 St. Flannan's Catholic Church is particularly well known for its beautiful stained glass windows which were executed by or connected to the studio of the internationally renowned stained glass artist Harry Clarke (1889-1931).

'The Scanlan Window', to the right of the altar, commissioned in 1927, was created by Harry Clarke. It consists of a main panel depicting the Presentation of our Lord by

Mary and Joseph in the temple; a top panel depicting the Annunciation and a lower panel depicting the Holy Family's flight into Egypt.

Two other windows in the chapel also have a connection with Harry Clarke. 'The Ryan Window', to the left of the altar, was made in the studio of J. Clarke & Sons, the father of Harry. The main panel depicts the figure of a bishop, probably that of St. Patrick and is flanked by other panels with depictions of angels, the Child Jesus, St. Joseph and the dying St. Francis.

A third window 'The Courtney Window' in the south wall depicts the Sacred Heart. This window is also thought to have been executed in the Harry Clarke Studio.

Although completed in 1838, this church was not consecrated until 1840 by Bishop Patrick Kennedy. The sermon was given by Fr. Matthew, who is famous for leading the Temperance movement in Ireland. It is said that by the following day some twenty thousand people had taken the temperance pledge at Killaloe.

ST. FLANNAN'S ORATORY

SAT NAV: 52.8063, -8.4391



Continue downhill, along Main Street from St. Flannan's Catholic Church and at the bottom of the hill, cross the road to the grounds of St. Flannan's Cathedral and Oratory.

St. Flannan's Oratory, also sometimes known as 'Brian Ború's vault' and believed to be on the site of the monastic settlement of St. Flannan, is located in the northwest corner of

the graveyard that surrounds St. Flannan's Cathedral. The building originally had a chancel (the portion of a church which contains an altar) to the east, which no longer survives. The oratory has two storeys and is double-vaulted. There is a barrel vault over the ground floor, while a steeply pitched stone roof forms the second vault over the upper storey. The Romanesque style doorway in the west wall is similar to a distinct type of doorway known from south-eastern and eastern England in the last decade or so of the 11th century. It is so similar in design and workmanship that it is assumed it must be the work of a mason trained in that area of England. The design of the rest of the building and its windows are however similar to others found in Ireland. Muirchertach Ua Briain, King of Munster, is believed to have commissioned the oratory and may have had the chancel of St. Molua's oratory constructed at the same time. St. Flannan's Oratory may have been used as a mortuary Chapel where the bodies of the dead reposed before burial, a Reliquary Chapel for the housing of the relics of saints or as a house for anchorites. There is a documented case of such an occurrence in Killaloe in 1077, in the Annals of Inisfallen, where an anchorite (a person who has retired into seclusion for religious reasons) died while in Killaloe.

ST. FLANNAN'S CATHEDRAL

SAT NAV: 52.8063, -8.4391



The earliest church at this site was built around 1160 AD by King Donal Mór O'Brien. In 1185, the men of Connacht destroyed it in retaliation for a raid by Donal on their territory. The elaborately decorated Romanesque doorway located in the south-west corner of the

present building is possibly a remnant of the early church. This doorway is one of the best preserved examples of Romanesque architecture in the country. Over 130 patterns of plants and animals (no two patterns are exactly alike) are coupled with carved chevron and V-shaped carvings. The two grave slabs which are located at the base of this doorway also date to the 12th century. They are reputed to mark the burial place of Muircheartach O'Brien, Brian Boru's great grandson and the last of the Dál Cais tribe to be High King of Ireland, who died while on a pilgrimage to Killaloe in 1119.

Built in the 13th century the present building is cross-shaped in layout, with a bell tower located over the crossing. The bell tower was raised twice, first about 1800 in order that Bishop Knox could view it from his palace at nearby Clarisford and secondly in 1900 to accommodate a new set of bells.

The east window with its triple light and decorated hood moulding dominates the church. It measures over 11m high and nearly 5m wide. It has a Romanesque-styled arch over the central light and a set of pointed-Gothic style-arched sidelights. The piers between the lights have

decorated capitals. The stained glass was installed in 1865 in memory of the Hon. Ludlow Tonson (Bishop from 1839-62) and was designed by Messrs. William Warrington of London.

Projecting stone brackets along the north and south walls have decorated capitals of varying designs with intricate detail. They display an array of decoration that is characteristic of the 'School of the West', a style of late Romanesque architecture found in the west of Ireland and generally referred to as a transitional style.

Up to the 19th century, the south transept was used as the Bishop's Court where pleas for marriage licenses were heard and penalties for various offences were dealt out. It is documented that a sinner had to do a '*..public penance in the Cathedral ... bare legged and bareheaded in a white sheet and make an open confession of his crime in a prescribed form of words*'. Today this transept functions as a side chapel. The north transept was closed off in 1880 and used as a Chapter Room. It now functions as a vestry.

A large oak screen divides the nave. Its purpose is to conserve heat for small congregations while the lower panels can open to accommodate larger numbers.

Housed within the nave are three important historic artefacts:

- A 12th century High Cross, which originally stood in Kilfenora County Clare, was brought to Killaloe in 1821 by Bishop Mant.
- An ornately carved rectangular font with a cross and foliage design which may possibly date to the 13th century or earlier.
- A fragment of a High Cross shaft which has been inscribed with ogham and runic. Ogham is an early form of writing which is based on the Latin alphabet and consists of an arrangement of inscribed 1-5 parallel lines and notches which are cut along the side or across the edge of a stone to represent the sounds of the Irish language. The ogham inscription often gives a person's name, usually male, and an immediate antecedent or tribal ancestor. The stones may have functioned as memorials, grave markers or territorial

markers and date from the late 4th to the early 8th century AD. Runic is an alphabet used to write Germanic languages before the Latin alphabet was adopted. The Viking Runic inscription reads 'Thorgrim carved this stone' while the ogham inscription reads 'A Blessing upon Thorgrim'. The stone was discovered by Professor MacAllister in the nearby wall in 1916.

A large ornate organ built by Nicholson and Lord of Worcester, England dating from 1900 and featuring nearly 1,500 pipes is housed within the Cathedral and the building is sometimes used as a musical concert venue.

St. Flannan's Cathedral changed from a Roman Catholic to a Church of Ireland place of worship after the Reformation and is still in use today.

ST. FLANNAN'S WELL

SAT NAV: 52.8066, -8.4406

St. Flannan's Well is situated outside the current boundaries of the Cathedral graveyard, but is likely to have originally been located within a larger historic enclosure. The well is located in the garden of the Allied Irish Bank opposite the Cathedral. St. Flannan's Feast day is December 18th and traditionally a pattern was held at the well with pilgrims approaching along the Aillebaun (path up to Kincora), also known as Bóthar Flannán (Flannan's Road). Until quite recently, water from the well was used for local baptisms.

This garden was originally part of the Cathedral burial ground (human bones have been exhumed from the garden). Beside the well stands a Sheela-na-Gig, (female exhibitionist figure) the head of which has been lost. The original location of the Sheela-na-Gig is unknown.

THE KILLALOE CANAL

SAT NAV: 52.8100, -8.4491



As you leave St. Flannan's Cathedral turn right towards the Canal.

Built in 1790 under the direction of the Shannon Steam Navigation Company, the purpose of the canal was to allow the safe passage of boats, by avoiding the dangerous rocks and rapids that existed in this stretch of the River Shannon before the Shannon Hydroelectric Scheme was implemented. The canal was a vital link in the navigation route between Limerick and other ports on the Shannon. It remained in constant use from 1799 until 1929, after which water levels rose over the rapids with the construction of the Ardnacrusha Dam and Parteen Weir downriver.

The canal is stone lined and roughly dressed and split stone blocks form the walls of the piers that separate the canal from the river. Downriver of Killaloe Bridge, overlooked by St. Flannan's Cathedral, is South Pier and upriver is Pier Head. Three locks (Killaloe Lock, Moys Lock and Cussane Lock) controlled the water levels. Also associated with the canal is the Lock Bridge which facilitated the movement of boats under the road that linked with Killaloe Bridge.

Stretches of a grass track along South Pier are the remnants of a towing path for horses which were once used to pull the barges along the canal. Some historic mooring

rings and bollards also survive. Features associated with past industrial activities along South Pier include a goods shed, three cranes (two of which ran on a short section of railway), a winch mechanism, a slipway and quay which was used to hoist boats up to a dry dock for repair. A former mill located at the very south end of the pier was, at different times, used in the processing of wool, corn and marble. It is currently in use as a warehouse for the ESB (The Electricity Supply Board). The southern section of the canal below the former mill was flooded as part of the Shannon Hydroelectric Scheme including the lower of the three locks - Cussane Lock.

Pier Head is located to the north of Killaloe Bridge. Important elements of industrial and maritime heritage located here include the Shannon Steam Boat Offices, a dry dock, a milestone that lets you know that Killaloe is '0 Miles' and Limerick '12 Miles', mooring rings and bollards, two white-painted beacons marking the entrance to the canal and recessed cut stone stairwells which gave access to the water.

In the 1800s, before and after the Famine, Pier Head was the place of departure for thousands of emigrants, who were brought to Limerick by boat and from there by ship to America and Dublin for onward journeys to England and Australia.

The Pier Head has recently been refurbished and the lock gate restored as part of the Killaloe Canal Improvement. Mooring facilities for pleasure boats are provided.

The original Steam Boat Offices, which were the headquarters of the Shannon Steam Navigation Company, are now used as a storehouse by Killaloe Coastguard.

A dry dock, located immediately to the north of the entrance of Pier Head, was originally built for boat repairs and building. A corrugated-iron pump house survives to the northern side adjacent to the lock gate.

This dry dock was the place of assembly for the 'Lady Lansdowne', a large paddle steamer which was launched at Killaloe on the 4th March 1834. It was 130 feet (39.62m) long, 17 feet (5.18m) wide and weighed 148 tons. The

boat was built in sections at the Birkenhead Iron Works, Liverpool (later to be the Cammell Laird foundry) and assembled at the Pier Head, Killaloe. The Lady Lansdowne was significant in that it was the world's first iron ship with watertight bulkheads and the first powered iron ship to be constructed at Birkenhead. It could float at a shallower draft than similar sized wooden vessel and therefore could enter shallow harbour areas on the Shannon River and Lough Derg. The Lady Lansdowne could tow up to four barges ferrying goods, livestock and passengers around Lough Derg. For example cattle could be towed in a barge from Killaloe to Portumna by the Lady Lansdowne, to Shannon Harbour by a smaller steamer and then taken by canal to Dublin for export, within three days. At the end of her working life, in 1868, the ship was beached in the shallows on the Ballina side of the river opposite Pier Head, where she is still submerged.

BRIAN BORÚ HERITAGE CENTRE

SAT NAV: 52.8077, -8.4405



Located on the site of the former lock-keepers cottage of the Killaloe Canal, the Brian Ború Heritage Centre serves as an information centre, tourist office, shop and community library. Facilities include a touch screen information point, reservations facility for local attractions and accommodation and an audio-visual presentation of local history. The centre is open from April to September each year.

The audio-visual presentation charts the history of Killaloe and its nautical links with the River Shannon and Lough Derg, from the arrival of Christianity, through the lifetime of Brian Ború to the development of the Shannon River as a transport system in the 18th century.

MEMORIAL STONE

SAT NAV: 52.8081, -8.4391



An inscribed memorial stone incorporated into Killaloe bridge commemorates three members of the I.R.A. They are Michael Mc Mahon, Alfred Rodgers and Martin Gildea and a civilian Mike Egan who were executed by the 'Black and Tans' (British Auxiliaries) on the bridge in November 1920.

BALLINA

WASHERWOMAN'S BRIDGE

SAT NAV: 52.8082, -8.4374



After crossing Killaloe Bridge turn right and after approximately 50m a short laneway leads to Washerwoman's bridge.

In 1867 the Great Southern and Western railway line was extended to a wharf beyond Incha Hill, on the site of the present day Lakeside Hotel. This provided easier access to the deep water jetty and river traffic. However this development cut off a right of way to the river, which

was used by the local women to wash clothes and house ware. When their protests were ignored they lay across the cutting and refused to move. Their actions resulted in the 'Washerwoman's Bridge' being built to allow them access to the water.

This bridge provides access today to a riverside walk along the banks of the River Shannon.

TEMPLEKELLY CHURCH AND GRAVEYARD

SAT NAV: 52.8022, -8.4337

Continue on the Limerick road out of Ballina or downriver along the riverside walk from Washerwoman's bridge to the riverside parking area. Diagonally across the road are the ruins of Templekelly Church and graveyard.

A church was recorded at this site as early as 1291. Constructed from local sandstone, the remains of the late medieval church visible today consist of the south, east and west walls surviving to their full height, while much of the northern wall is destroyed.

In the western wall there is evidence of a two storey structure, with windows on both levels. A two-section window with ornamental stone work survives in the east gable. A pointed arch doorway is located to the western end of the south wall. An arched niche to the east end of the interior south wall forms the stone basin (piscina) in which the priest washed his hands and altar vessels. It has a six leaf pattern carving around the drain hole. There are a number of graves in the church interior. An O'Brien family tomb is located in a segmental-arched niche in the interior south wall.

Many of the gravestones, in the surrounding graveyard, date from the 18th century and display an unusual arrangement of inscriptions and symbols. These include artistic representations of skull and cross bones, a variety of cross forms, angels and representations of animals coupled with deeply incised geometric ornamentation. Several are of slate which may have come from the slate quarries of nearby Portroe. One corner of the graveyard is

known locally as 'the strangers plot' or 'the gallery' which was reserved for those outside the parish, wanderers and unknown persons.

The grave of Rev. Patrick McKeogh who was the parish priest of Ballina and died in 1760, is said to have been used as a hiding place for pikes used by the United Irishmen towards the end of the nineteenth century. The graveyard also contains a World War II



headstone, that of Sgt. John J. O'Brien who was a Wireless Operator and Air Gunner in the RAF, aboard the Halifax R9497 which was a four engine bomber and which tragically crashed after a mid-air collision shortly after take-off at Riccall Airport, York, on the 19th August 1943.

GRAVES OF THE LEINSTERMEN

GRAVES OF THE LEINSTERMEN

SAT NAV: 52.8513, -8.3990

Return to Ballina and take the R494 in the direction of Portroe. After approximately 4.5km take the right turn (signposted for Graves of Leinstermen/Millennium Cross). Follow narrow road uphill for approximately 2.5km, where you will find the mapboard marking the Trailhead of the 'Graves of the Leinstermen 6km Looped walking trail'. To the left of the mapboard walk a few metres to the standing stones.

The Graves of the Leinstermen is located on the summit of Tountinna, part of the Arra mountain range. It comprises a number of scattered stones lying on the ground with a single standing stone. It is likely that all the stones were upright at some time. The stones vary greatly in their size and type. They include conglomerates, granite, limestone and other sedimentary types. A low earthen bank occurs immediately to the west of the surviving upright stone. It lies in a northeast to southwest direction.

A second associated site 'Knockaunreelvon' is located approximately 780m to the northeast. This site consists of a large natural boulder that protrudes at an angle from the surface of the ground and is known locally as the 'Tomb Stone of the King of Leinster'. Behind the boulder is a stone cairn.

According to local folklore, the High King Brian Ború is associated with both of these sites. One story concerns Brian Ború's daughter who was engaged to the King of Leinster. As the Leinster King was on his way to fetch his betrothed at Kincora, Ború's wife, who did not like the match, sent soldiers to hide on the hill and ambush the Leinster King. A fight ensued in which several of the Leinster men were slain and the King was mortally wounded. He ordered his men to carry him to the summit of the mountain so that he might die in sight of Leinster, and so they did facing the burial in that direction. The slain soldiers were in turn buried down the hillside under the stones called 'The Graves of the Leinstermen'.

Another version of the story states that the King of Leinster arrived to pay his rent to the High King, Brian Ború. When the Leinster King arrived at Kincora, Brian's wife, Gormfhlaith, called the Leinster King 'a sneak' for paying taxes and sent him away. However she then told her husband that the Leinster King would not pay tax. Ború, in a passion, went with all his men and he caught up with and defeated the Leinster men on the slopes of Tountinna Mountain. When the Leinster King fell, Brian came to abuse him and having heard about his wife's behaviour he was very sorry and carried him up to where he could see Leinster and sat by him till he died and buried him there.

CASTLETOWN

CASTLETOWN

SAT NAV: 52.8834, -8.3947

Return to the R494 and continue north, passing a viewing point known as 'the Lookout' which gives spectacular views over lower Lough Derg.

Approximately 1km from the Lookout take the sharp turn to the right at a three road junction.

Continue along this tree lined road until you reach a church and graveyard on the left hand side.

The remains of a medieval complex are visible at Castletown.

Surviving features include a fortified house, the site of a watermill and a medieval church and graveyard.



MEDIEVAL CHURCH AND GRAVEYARD

Sat Nav. 52.8837, -8.3945



The original sections of the medieval church and graveyard at Castletown date to the late 16th /early 17th century and are contemporary with the fortified house.

Additions were made in the late 17th century. These include a buttress on the northeast corner, three windows in the north wall, two in the south wall and a late 17th / early 18th century single-storey building added to the west gable. This small building has a fireplace in the west gable with a protruding external chimney stack. The west gable of the church features a two-centred doorway and a small round-arched bellcote. The east gable has a round-arched window. In more recent times the remains of this sandstone church have been conserved.

The graveyard is roughly rectangular in shape and is enclosed by a 19th century stone wall. It contains a range of gravemarkers, slabs, tombs and headstones dating from at least the early 18th century, though some undated carved slabs may be earlier. Of particular note are carved gravestones that have good examples of folk art. This graveyard received an annual award from 1998 to 2005 consecutively as 'best burial ground' in the district from the local authority.

SITE OF WATERMILL

Sat Nav. 52.8839, -8.3948

As you leave the graveyard and continue along the lane towards the lakeshore, you will see a grinding stone which may have been part of the watermill recorded at this site. The stone is



mounted on a stone pillar to create an ornamental feature in the garden of a private house. A small stream runs through the garden which is likely to have been the mill race.

FORTIFIED HOUSE

Sat Nav. 52.8885, -8.3997



Further along the lane the remains of a large fortified house, located on private land, are visible from the road. Described in the mid-17th century as *'the Castle of Castletowne situated*

close by the Shannon together with a Barbicon and a slate house', Donogh O Bryen was listed as proprietor of this property in 1640. The doorway arches, along with the stone dressing on the jambstones, indicate a seventeenth-century construction date. Part of this fortified house is constructed from red brick and according to local knowledge there is a field to the north (the field directly to the east of the entrance to Castlelough Recreational Area) which is called the 'Brick Meadow'. This field gained its name when it was ploughed and several bricks were unearthed.

CASTLELOUGH WOODS

SAT NAV: 52.8935, -8.3916



Continuing along the lane the entrance to Castlough Woods recreational area is reached adjacent to the lakeshore. Facilities include parking, toilets, picnic areas, swimming area, walking trails, a bike rack/stand and an information map detailing local trails and cycling routes. The long distance walking trail, the Lough Derg Way, passes close to the site.

Oak, beech, silver fir and various conifers are the main trees found in the woodland, providing a habitat for a range of woodland fauna including badger, fox and pine marten and red squirrel. Typical birds which may be spotted include chaffinch, great tit, jay and pheasant. The lake edge supports a fringe of reed swamp where species including otter and a range of wildfowl are likely to be found.



PORTROE

PORTROE VILLAGE

SAT NAV: 52.8850, -8.3443

Return to the R494 and continue your journey to the village of Portroe.

Portroe Village and neighbouring Garrykennedy was the centre of an important slate quarrying industry from the mid-18th century up to the mid-20th century. Slates were quarried on nearby Corbally Hill by the Mining Company of Ireland from 1826. Up to 700 men and boys were employed in the slate industry in the 1830s. Welsh experts were brought in to oversee the industry and train local people. So many were involved at Corbally that it had its own Welsh-speaking community at this time. Around 1841 the quarry was taken over by the Imperial Mining Company. During the Famine years many of the skilled Irish craftsmen emigrated to Vermont in the USA to work in the slate quarries there. Later the quarry became the property of the Killaloe Slate Company. The quarry ceased operation in 1956.

At the height of the activity, the slates were transported by horse and cart to Garrykennedy for distribution by boat.

GARRYKENNEDY

GARRYKENNEDY HARBOUR

SAT NAV: 52.9050, -8.3448



Turn left in the centre of Portroe village and continue for approximately 2.5km to Garrykenny Harbour (Signposted)

The harbour at Garrykenny was constructed by the Steam Navigation Company in 1829 for shipping slates from the Irish Mining Company mines in the surrounding Arra mountains. The walls of the harbour are constructed of square limestone blocks and local tradition has it that some of the building stones from the nearby castle were used in its construction.

Garrykenny Castle was built by the O’Kennedy clan in the 15th century. It was in ruin by the 17th century after the Cromwellian wars.



YOUGHAL VILLAGE

YOUGHAL VILLAGE

SAT NAV: 52.8894, -8.3119

Approximately 1.5 km from Portroe on the R494, take the left turn at a crossroads. Continue along this narrow road turning left at the T-junction and then right at the intersection where a church and graveyard are found.

The placename Youghal is derived from the Irish 'Eochail' meaning yew-trees. A local name for Youghal Village is Youghalarra.

MEDIEVAL CHURCH

Sat Nav. 52.8893, -8.3563

The early ecclesiastical site of Youghal is associated with St. Conlan. Today the ruins of a sandstone church, dating possibly to the 12th -13th centuries are found here. Recent conservation work has resulted in the remaining walls being capped.

Most of the south wall survives. On the interior is what may be a round-headed wall cupboard for storing the altar vessels (aumbry) or space for a stone basin where the priest washed his hands and altar vessels (piscina). There is also a round-headed single-light window in this wall. On the east side of the window an incised Maltese cross and angel can be seen. Externally, at the west end of the south wall, approximately

2m above ground level, a carved stone head protrudes from the wall. It has ear length hair, bulging eyes near the top of the head, no nose, a long neck and a chin outlined by a curving groove.

Beneath this head are three rectangular blocks of stone, one above two. The upper-most block has an incised inscription which reads 'ST. Coea' and underneath this 'ne 433'. The lower west block is incised with a Maltese cross and the east block with two angels.

Very little of the east gable and none of the west gable survives. The north wall is mostly collapsed but the remains have been capped and conserved. Broken slate graveslabs have been concreted into the internal base of this wall.

The church is located in the northwest corner of a large rectangular graveyard containing 18th and 19th century memorials, many of which are made of slate. There were several operating slate quarries in the Garrykennedy and Portroe areas in the early 19th century.

A handball alley, which is still in use, was built around 1930 inside the west end of the medieval graveyard. It has mass concrete walls, rendered internally and iron netting supports and a square-headed door opening.



HOLY WELL AND TREE

Sat Nav: 52.8924, -8.3124



On leaving the church and graveyard, continue along the road marked cul-de-sac from the graveyard. After

approximately 200m turn right down a laneway. Continue for approximately 500m where a holy well is located to the right beside a large pond.

The holy well at Youghal is associated with St. Conlan and was described in 1840 as a place *'at which diseases are said to be cured and superstitious ceremonies performed'*.

The well consists of a natural spring which flows into an open pond. It has been enclosed by a hexagonal drystone wall and covered by a flat slab of slate which has been partially cut to allow easy access to the water. Several small wooden painted crosses have been inserted on top of the wall and on a small mound surrounding the well. There is a rag tree (hawthorn) in front of the well and a stone altar to the rear containing a wooden statue possibly representing St. Conlan.

LIMEKILN

Sat Nav: 52.8976, -8.3104



Returning to the road from the holy well turn right and continue along the road to the lakeshore.

Located adjacent to the road close to the shore is a large well preserved limekiln. It dates to approximately 1780 and is strongly linked to the industrial heritage of Lough Derg, where water transport played an important role in transporting quick lime from industrial kilns such as this to other centres around the lake and elsewhere.

BALLYARTELLA

BALLYARTELLA

SAT NAV: 52.9024, -8.2401

Returning to the intersection where Youghal church and graveyard is found turn left and continue along this road, turning left at the T-junction onto the R494. After approximately 0.5km turn left and travel along this narrow road for approximately 3km before crossing the R495 and continuing on for 1.5 km to the T-Junction. Turn right at the T-junction to Ballyartella mills and the Nenagh River.

Ballyartella is located on a historic fording point on the Nenagh River, where a medieval tower house was erected in the sixteenth century. A flour mill, built here as early as the 16th century, subsequently developed into a woollen mill in the 19th century. The bridge which currently spans the river at Ballyartella dates to the 18th century.

The 10km Slí Éala Walking Trail follows the Nenagh River linking the village of Dromineer, on the shore of Lough Derg, to Ballyartella and the town of Nenagh. The name Slí Éala translates as 'Swan Way' and derives from the many Mute Swans which are found on the river. The Nenagh River is a major trout fishery controlled by the Ormond Angling Association.

BALLYARTELLA CASTLE

Sat Nav. 52.9017, -8.2395



The ruins of Ballyartella Castle are located on top of a natural rock outcrop on the west bank of the Nenagh River. It is poorly preserved with only the east wall surviving up to the second floor and some of the foundations of the west wall visible. Classified as a tower house it dates to the 16th century. At Ballyartella, the natural defensive qualities of rock outcrop along with an important fording point over the Nenagh River played important roles in the positioning of the castle.

The castle was in ruin by the 1650s and is described in the Civil Survey (1654-56) as '*a ruined castle irrepayreably demolished*' with The Countess of Ormond listed as proprietor. It is likely to have suffered under the Cromwellian wars.

THE WOOLLEN MILLS

Sat Nav. 52.9018, -8.2392



The site of Ballyartella Mill has had a long association with milling which can be traced back as far as the 1500's with at least three separate mills constructed at the site over the centuries.

The Hanly Woollen Mills

BALLYARTELLA

was established here in 1893, when Dennis Hanly and his son John, who were operators of a number of hand looms, moved their machinery to Ballyartella, taking over the vacant water powered flour mill. In 1950 a fire destroyed much of the original mill complex. Only the lower two floors of the once six-storey mill block remain along with a portion of rubblestone wall. An iron axle shaft which once supported the timber wheel that powered the mill is preserved to the east of the complex.

However the mill was rebuilt and is still in operation today, under the direction of the Hanly family.

BALLYARTELLA BRIDGE

Sat Nav. 52.9016, -8.2390



Ballyartella Bridge is a magnificent five-arch bridge which dates back to approximately 1720. It is Protected Structure, recorded in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage Survey of North County Tipperary. There is possible evidence of wicker centring (a woven wicker arch which was placed between the piers and allowed for the construction of the arch) which is of historic architectural interest in terms of the construction of the bridge.

DROMINEER

DROMINEER

SAT NAV: 52.9259, -8.2772

The origins of the village of Dromineer date back to at least the 12th century, as evidenced by the presence of a medieval church and castle. The introduction of steam navigation to the Shannon in 1827 opened up a new era in trade. Goods were loaded on barges at Dublin, carried via the Grand Canal to Shannon Harbour and transferred to more powerful lake steamers for transportation down the Shannon to the quay at Dromineer. The importance of the harbour at Dromineer grew due to its capacity to accommodate the larger steam boats which ferried up and down the lake. Dromineer in the 19th century was a very important import and export point for North Tipperary, especially before the railway came to Nenagh in 1862.

The town has a historic steamboat quay, a boat house and a vernacular house known as 'Neddy's Cottage'. The reuse of a warehouse as a hostel has preserved more of the historic appeal of the area. Other built heritage highlights include a number of corrugated-iron houses. There is also access to the Slí Éala Walk along the Nenagh River.

THE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

Sat Nav: 52.9243, -8.2781



The church ruin is the earliest surviving structure within the village. It is listed in the ecclesiastical taxation of the Diocese of Killaloe in 1302. The remains of a rectangular building are visible today with large cyclopean coursed masonry surviving intact in the north wall and west gable. The south wall is largely destroyed. A long, round-headed single-light window opens in the centre of the eastern gable with diagonal tooling marks on some of the sandstone jambs and head. A small aumbry (used to store chalices and other vessels) is located off-centre to the south in the east gable. The west doorway was rebuilt in recent years and it incorporates some decorated Romanesque

masonry. Similar pieces can be seen in the surrounding graveyard wall.

A voussoir (or arch stone) decorated with a human face and beak heads in Romanesque style has been inserted into the external wall to the right of the doorway.



DROMINEER CASTLE

Sat Nav: 52.9258, -8.2773



Dromineer Castle is located on the lakeshore adjacent to the later steamboat pier. The Civil Survey of 1654-6 lists John Cantwell of Cantwells Court in Kilkenny as proprietor in 1640.

The earliest section of the castle is classified as a hall house, which generally date to the 13th and 14th centuries. Originally two stories high, it had a wooden floor carried on large timbers set into joist-holes in the side-walls over the ground floor with a possible first-floor doorway at the east end of the south wall near the south-eastern corner. The hall was long and rectangular (external dimensions: 11m N-S; 15m E-W) with a wall thickness of approximately 1.2m and constructed of roughly coursed limestone rubble with a base-batter.

The hall house was converted into a tower house in the 15th /16th centuries and raised into a four-storey building. There is good evidence of a stepped wall on the top of the south wall at wall-walk level and an angle tower. A bawn (surrounding yard) wall extends from the northeast corner around the south side. A deserted medieval village is also recorded within the area of the current village of Dromineer, which would have been associated with the castle and church.



TERRYGLASS

TERRYGLASS

SAT NAV: 53.0547, -8.2045

Terryglass or *Tír Dhá Ghlas* – meaning ‘land of the two streams’ is believed to have been the site of a 6th century monastery associated with St. Columba. The monastery survived three major fires in 801, 1112 and 1164 AD; in the 9th century it was plundered by the Vikings and in the 12th century there are references to the monastery being attacked by unknown assailants.

Sometime around 1160 AD an anthology of Irish prose, verse and genealogy, now known as the Book of Leinster, was produced here. It is believed to be the work of Áed Ua Crimthainn, a 12th century abbot of Terryglass. The book is now housed in Trinity College Dublin.

A town grew up around the monastery and by the 14th century a Town Charter had been issued.

Today the village is a vibrant tourism centre with the remains of a medieval church, graveyard, two holy wells, the base of an early cross and a bullaun stone testament to its important ecclesiastical past.

MEDIEVAL CHURCH AND GRAVEYARD

Sat Nav: 53.0550, -8.2043



The remains of the north wall of the medieval church forms the south wall of the graveyard in the centre of Terryglass village. The poorly preserved north, south and west walls are all that survive of the medieval church. The east gable collapsed in the 1960s and a public house now occupies this area.

The north wall has a small arched blocked doorway. The south wall contains a large arched doorway and a small recess in which an inscribed stone has been placed. The inscription reads: *'Flann poet of Connaught rests within slain 893 AD'*. Above, in another recess is set a stone with a monk-like figure carved in relief. These stones are modern additions.

Parts of the graveyard may date back to the medieval period, but there are no memorials visible that date to this time. There are a large number of 18th century upright memorials and some recumbent slabs.

St. Columba's Church of Ireland church was built adjacent to the south-east corner of the graveyard in 1808. Today it is in use as a private residence.

HOLY WELLS



St. Columba's, Sat Nav: 53.0558, -8.2042

Take the road from the centre of the village to the Quay. After approx. 100m take the laneway to the right signposted 'St. Columbas well'.

Close to a stream, surrounded by trees, St. Columba's well is enclosed by a semi-circular wall. Located adjacent to the well is a holy tree or rag tree, where offerings are left by visitors to the site. According to local tradition, the well is accredited with having the power to cure headaches.

St. Aughs, Sat Nav: 53.0589, -8.2064

Continue along the road to the Quay. As the road widens at the quay, take the footpath to the right signposted 'St. Augh's Well'.

This second well is dedicated to St. Augh, who is believed to have lived in Terryglass during the 9th century. The water from the well is believed to cure eye ailments. Traditionally it was visited on Saturdays during the month of May, between sunrise and sunset. During this visit, a pattern was undertaken which involved starting on the east side of the well and continuing around to the other three sides reciting the following prayers: The Creed, five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys. Once these prayers were completed, the eyes were washed with the well water while a small offering was left nearby.

Local folklore tells us that St. Patrick baptised converts at this well on his visit to Terryglass.

CEMETERY OF THE HOLY CROSS

Sat Nav: 53.0566, -8.1976



As you leave Terryglass along the R493 roadway, you pass the Roman Catholic Church and adjoining graveyard. Within the graveyard is a modern Celtic Cross mounted on the base of an earlier cross. The cross base is of conglomerate rock and is thought to have been the base for the shaft of a High Cross, which would have marked the site of the early monastery of St. Columba. Beside the base is a bullaun stone. It is conglomerate rock with a hollow carved out on its surface. Such stones were used in the past for the grinding and processing of cereals, ores and pigments and as holy water fonts. They are often associated with early monastic sites and this stone may have been part of the early monastery at Terryglass.



LORRHA

LORRHA VILLAGE

SAT NAV: 53.0917, -8.1207

*Continue along the R493 through Carrigahorig Village.
Take the second turn to the left signposted for Lorrha.*

The forerunner to the village of Lorrha dates back to the monastic settlement of Ruadhán, who died in 584 AD, broadly suggesting a 6th century date for the establishment of the site. There are many legends attributed to Ruadhán, but he is probably most famous for his curse on the High King's residence at Tara after the king, Diarmuid Mac Cerbhaill, had violated the sanctity of the church by taking a hostage from its protection. The downfall of Tara from a once thriving royal residence is credited to Ruadhán.

There are records that indicate that the monastic settlement at Lorrha was raided by the Vikings on at least two, and possibly three, occasions between 845 and 922 AD. Despite this, the foundation retained a vibrant scholastic tradition. The most famous manuscript associated with the site is the Stowe Missal, which was in Lorrha in the 11th century and remained there until at least the end of the 14th century.

Today the visible remains of this important ecclesiastical complex at Lorrha consist of fragments of an early medieval

earthen enclosure, the bases of two high crosses, bullaun stones, a holy well and a late medieval church.

The Normans arrived in the late 12th century and built a timber castle on top of an earthen motte at Lorrha. The remains of the motte are still visible today. They strategically positioned their settlement within the early monastic enclosure. From here they conquered the local clans of the O'Carrolls, O'Kennedys and Hogans. An Augustinian Priory was established around the year 1130 AD and Walter de Burgo, a Norman lord, established a Dominican Friary in 1269 AD. Many of the clerics associated with these religious houses were members of the local Gaelic clan families. By the 16th century the O'Kennedys were in possession of the parish of Lorrha and they manifest their power in the restructuring of highly defensive tower houses at Lackeen and Redwood.

EARLY MEDIEVAL MONASTIC ENCLOSURE

SAT NAV: 53.0917, -8.1207

The remains of two earthen banks with an intervening ditch can be traced in the fields at Lorrha. They are most visible adjacent to the river opposite the present day Roman Catholic Church and in the graveyard surrounding the Church of Ireland and Medieval Church. This is probably the original earthen bank enclosure which surrounded the 6th century monastic site.

DOMINICAN PRIORY

SAT NAV: 53.0912, -8.1258



The remains of a Dominican Priory, established by Walter de Burgo (1st Earl of Ulster) in 1269, are located in the grounds of the present day Roman Catholic Church. All that

is visible today is the Priory church. The site of the domestic buildings is now occupied by the Roman Catholic Church.

Built with roughly coursed limestone, the Priory Church consists of a nave and chancel. As you approach the building from the street you are facing the east gable, where the lower half of a large triple-light lancet window survives. Continuing along the path you can enter the chancel through a pointed limestone doorway which is located off-centre in the north wall. Opposite this entrance, in the south wall, are six pairs of Gothic style twin-light windows, a triple-light flat-headed window and a single-light lancet. The north wall has a series of destroyed single-light lancet windows at its west end. The west gable of the church collapsed in 1939 and was subsequently rebuilt.

Internally, midway along the south wall there is a projecting block of masonry which contains a possible altar with piscina (basin used for washing communion vessels) and sedilia (priest's seat). According to local tradition a wooden statute of St. Ruadhán was kept in a niche in the south wall.

In the nave of the church close to the east window are two well-preserved 17th century memorials to the local O'Kennedy and MacEgan families.

Following the dissolution of the monasteries in 1552, the Dominican Priory was possibly abandoned and re-established in the 1620s. The recorded 17th century Dominican clerics have distinctly local surnames such as Kennedy, Hogan and Egan.

ST. RUADHÁN'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Sat Nav: 53.0912, -8.1259



It is uncertain how long the Dominican Priory continued in use, but the present Roman Catholic Church was built in 1812. A simple T-plan church it retains its original roof and timber supports. The church was refurbished in 1977 by Anthony and Barbara O'Neill, the altar, ambo and sedilia are by Imogen Stuart, tabernacle by Niall O'Neill and wooden cross by Michael Killeen.

BULLAUN STONES

Sat Nav: 53.0913, -8.1259



Bullaun stones are often associated with early monastic sites and two are located on either side of the entrance to the Roman Catholic Church. The stone at the southeast corner is a roughly sub-circular block of conglomerate rock with an off-centre sub-oval depression. The second at the northeast corner, also a conglomerate, has a very deep-sided central bowl. Adjoining one side of the bowl there is a shallow semicircular hollow. The original location of these stones is unknown.

MILL

Sat Nav: 53.0914, -8.1259



On the bank of the Lorrha River, opposite the Dominican Priory, are the ruins of a small building. Its position suggests a mill and historical references have been made to a medieval mill in Lorrha. Some of the architectural features of this building are similar to a fortified medieval residence. The building may have functioned as a mill with accommodation.

THE AUGUSTINIAN PRIORY

Sat Nav: 53.0919, -8.1214



Leaving the Dominican Priory, proceed up the main street of Lorrha taking the first turn to the right along a side street. On your left hand side are the ruins of an Augustinian Priory adjacent to a hand ball alley.

The Augustinian Order was established in Lorrha around the year 1130 AD. A priory was constructed within the original ecclesiastical enclosure of the 6th century monastery of St. Ruadhán. The major manuscripts, relics and the stone church of the earlier monastic foundation passed directly into the care of the Augustinian Priory.

The remains of the Priory buildings visible today date to the 15th century. They consist of a rectangular church with domestic buildings attached to the south.

The main doorway to the church is located in the west gable. It has a pointed arch with a moulding of round and hollow parts (ogee-shaped) topped with hook shaped finials. The lower part of the doorway has been blocked and has the appearance of a window.

On top of the doorway is the carved head of a woman wearing a horned headdress. Though carved several centuries later, local tradition holds that this carving depicts the wife of Walter de Burgo. Directly over the doorway there is a twin-light with a window shaped like a three lobed leaf (trefoil) above. There is also a twin-light window in the east gable.

Most of the south wall is destroyed and forms part of a modern ball alley. The possible remains of a two-storey sacristy are located in the northeast angle of the Priory. Three medieval limestone grave slabs are located at the east end of the church.

The Augustinian Priory lasted in Lorrha for over 400 years despite the Reformation. All of the known Priors appear to be of Irish descent, so it is likely that the locally powerful O'Kennedy family were one of the main patrons of the priory.

ST. RUADHÁN'S WELL

Sat Nav: 53.0917, -8.1217



On the roadside, opposite the remains of the Augustinian Priory, is a well, known as 'Ruadhán's Well'. It is rectangular and enclosed by a D-shaped stone wall with cobblestone paving. It is believed to have been part of the original monastic site. The bell of St. Ruadhán, which was found in the well, is housed in the British Museum, London.

LATE MEDIEVAL CHURCH

Sat Nav: 53.0912, -8.1198



Just beyond the Augustinian Priory, on the same side of the road, are the remains of a possible 11th century church onto which a Church of Ireland Church has been constructed. These buildings are within a large graveyard.

There is a historical reference in the Annals of Inisfallen to a stone church in Lorrha in 1037 AD and it may refer to this ruined building. It is believed that this church was constructed on the site of St. Ruadhán's early monastery and would have been preceded by a timber church. An archaeological excavation dated a number of burials beneath the church to between the late 8th century and late 10th century. The bases and damaged shafts of two high crosses survive within the modern day graveyard. It has been suggested that the iconography on the crosses is indicative of the 9th century. The remains of the banks and ditch of the original ecclesiastical enclosure of the 6th century monastery are clearly visible within the modern graveyard.

All that remains today of the 11th century church, are the ruins of a rectangular structure, built of locally derived limestone blocks bonded with lime mortar and laid in rough courses. The west gable has corner projections (*antae*), a characteristic architectural feature of early Irish churches. The original doorway from the 11th century was in the centre of the west gable. It was replaced by a more ornate version located in the south wall sometime in the late 12th or early 13th century. Walter de Burgo, Earl of Ulster, who founded the neighbouring Dominican Priory in 1269 AD, may have been responsible for this change. The carved head over the door is thought to be that of de Burgo. This doorway was modified in the 15th century when a new inner section was inserted bearing several carved motifs including a pelican drawing blood from its breast to feed its young, a drink reference to the Eucharist.

A priest's residence was added to the west end of the church in the 15th century.

This medieval church would appear to have functioned as the parish church during the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries. The present Church of Ireland building was constructed in 1815 at the east end of the medieval church.

THE MOTTE

Sat Nav: 53.0913, -8.1187



Further along the street from the Church of Ireland graveyard an artificial flat topped hill is visible behind a low wall.

The Normans arrived in Lorrha in the late 12th century and built a defensive structure known as a motte and bailey at this site, within St. Ruadhán's original monastic enclosure and adjacent to the river. A motte is a flat-topped hill, built of earth and gravel, on top of which the Normans constructed a wooden tower. To one side of the base of the hill, an oval shaped enclosing bank was built. This enclosure is known as the bailey. The Butlers became the Norman overlords of the region up until the 17th century.

Continuing along this road you ascend a hill, known locally as Gurtcree Hill (the hill of the slaughter). The 'Annals of the Four Masters' records that in 1599, John O'Hogan, a Prior in Lorrha, was slain by the O'Kennedys of Lackeen Castle. O'Hogan was seemingly making his way from the Augustinian Priory in Lorrha to the small chapel at nearby Curragha when he was apprehended. It is believed that he was hung from a tree on the hill.

One suggested theory for the murder is that the Prior intervened in a family dispute involving a woman who became pregnant by one of the O'Kennedys, letting his feelings on the matter be known from the altar. Another suggests that O'Hogan disapproved of the O'Kennedys support for Redmond Burke, an Irish rebel.

LACKEEN

LACKEEN CASTLE AND MILL

SAT NAV: 53.0887, -8.0743

At the T-junction take the road to the left. After a 90 degree bend take the first road to the left. Lackeen Castle is on the left hand side of the road.

Lackeen Castle dates to the 16th century and was the main stronghold of the O’Kennedy clan who were in possession of the whole parish of Lorrha by this time.

Well preserved, this four-storey tower house stands within a pentagonal bawn (walled courtyard) which has a rounded-headed gateway and the remnants of a high wall. Constructed of local limestone, the doors, windows and corner stones are all chiselled, while the walls are rubble stone. The building has a series of defensive features. A rectangular opening above the entrance doorway is known as a machicolation, through which missiles could be dropped on any enemy trying to breach the door. A strong oak door would have been inserted in the doorway and if this was breached a ‘murder hole’ was located inside the door, through which missiles could be dropped from the first floor. Three inner doors protected a guard room to the right, a ground floor room straight ahead and a spiral staircase to the left. The main living chamber was on the

first floor where the remains of a fireplace are visible and a small vaulted room over the guard room. At this level the staircase changes to the opposite wall, so that the enemy had to move out into the open before ascending further. There are several chambers and passages set within the walls and a garderobe (toilet) accessible from the upper floor. The upper floor was the main chamber of the lord and lady of the castle. Its importance is highlighted by the more elaborate and larger windows than those found elsewhere in the castle. Above this chamber are the battlements, where the soldiers had an excellent view of the surrounding countryside.

The tower was in ruin by the 1640s following the Cromwellian confiscations and was replaced by a house, within the bawn, of which an external chimney and part of the gable wall can be seen. This in turn was replaced by an 18th century two storey farmhouse known as Lackeen House, which is in ruin today.

Below the castle, on the banks of the river are the remains of a watermill, which may be medieval in origin. Remnants of a medieval settlement known as 'Piperstown' have been recorded in the fields surrounding the castle, which indicates the importance of this location in medieval times.

In 1735, John O'Kennedy found a 9th century manuscript, enclosed in its shrine, hidden in the walls of Lackeen castle. The Stowe (or Lorrha) Missal is one of the oldest Mass books found in Europe. It was written in Latin and Gaelic and was used in the monastery of St. Ruadhán in Lorrha in the 11th century. The manuscript is held in the Royal Irish Academy and its beautifully jewel adorned protective shrine is housed in the National Museum, Dublin.

According to local folklore, a member of the O'Kennedy clan was one of the few people ever to catch a 'Pooka' (a fairy or shape shifter that can assume various pleasing and terrifying forms). Upon bringing it back to Lackeen Castle, the Pooka warned that it would burn the castle down with its breath. O'Kennedy agreed to let the Pooka go but only on the promise that the Pooka would harm no breed, seed or generation of the O'Kennedy family.

REDWOOD

REDWOOD CASTLE

SAT NAV: 53.1389, -8.1065

Leaving Lackeen continue along the narrow road, taking the first turn to the left and then a right at the T-Junction. You will then come to the T-junction with the R489. Turn left. After approximately 1km take the third class road to the right signposted for Redwood. After approximately 1 km, turn left for Redwood Castle.

The first castle at Redwood was built by the De Cogans, an Anglo-Norman family in 1210 AD. In 1350 the castle became the property of the local Irish chieftains, the O'Kennedys. The O'Kennedys' main base was at nearby Lackeen Castle and they gave Redwood Castle to their chief 'Brehons', the MacEgans.

The title 'Brehon' is taken from the Irish word '*Breitheamh*' - a judge. The Mac Egans of Redwood were experts in historical study and the practice of the ancient Irish Brehon law. They founded a school of history and law here at Redwood. It flourished at the end of the 16th and into the 17th century. Its location close to the River Shannon enabled students from all over Ireland to gain easy access. Two of the most famous students to attend this school, were Michael O'Cleary one of the Four Masters who

compiled the famous Annals and Duaid McFirbis, the author of Irish Genealogies.

The Cromwellian invasion of Ireland in 1649 heralded the decline of the school. The castle was besieged in 1653 and practically burnt to the ground. It remained a ruin for the next 300 years.

In 1972, Michael Egan from Castlebar, County Mayo, bought Redwood Castle and undertook its restoration. The castle opened to the public in the early 1980s.

Today, the tower house is accessed through a two-centered doorway in the ground floor but the earlier doorway situated on the first floor is still visible. A spiral stair connects three of the four floors and it exhibits signs of the types of constructions used in the different phases of building at the castle. Many features have been restored including the stepped battlements, the south-west overhanging corner turret (bartizan), and the chimney stack allocated in the north wall. Other interesting features present in the tower are a twin garderobe (toilet) chute and a sheela-na-gig (female exhibitionist figure) under the east face modern balcony.

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For more information about visiting Lough Derg, see www.discoverireland.ie/lakelands

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LOUGH DERG ON THE SHANNON HERITAGE TRAIL

The Lough Derg Heritage Project arose from work carried out by the Heritage Council in 2005 and 2006 culminating in the publication of the 'Waterways Corridor Study 2006'. Phase 1 of this project took place in 2009 and 2010 and resulted in the production by Colin Becker of a heritage inventory for the lake. A more in-depth audit of over 90 heritage sites was carried out in 2011 by Headland Archaeology. Both sets of work highlighted the importance of this rich heritage resource, the need for further research and the future development of sustainable heritage products.



This Lough Derg Heritage Trail booklet is part of a suite of products including a smart phone app and audio recordings, which were developed as a result of the findings of the above studies, with the aim of promoting a greater awareness and understanding of the heritage of Lough Derg for both local communities and visitors to the region.

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