



Free Guide

Discover Ireland's rich heritage!

New
Boyne Valley
Drive Map
Enclosed





wander through time

Discover Ireland's rich heritage!



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FOR MORE INFORMATION GO TO WWW.BOYNEVALLEYDRIVE.IE

Detailed map available at the back of the guide



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“So memorable in ancient history, and so rich in monuments of the past is it ... that the history of Ireland might be written in tracing its banks.”

William Wilde,
The Beauties of
the Boyne (1849)



The Boyne Valley

The Boyne Valley is situated in the east of Ireland. It is at once Ireland's ancient capital and its most sacred and mythical landscape. In 1849 William Wilde, father of Oscar, wrote of the Boyne that the history of Ireland may be traced through its monuments. This remains true today. Moreover, its sites and monuments are amongst the best examples of their kind in Europe and are all within a short distance of each other. In one day you can visit the great prehistoric tombs at Brú na Bóinne (Newgrange) and the site of the infamous Battle of the Boyne. You can look out from the Hill of Tara, sharing the view with the ancient High Kings of Ireland, or be mesmerised by the detail of the Celtic Crosses at Kells.

You can stand in awe at the gates of Trim Castle, the largest Anglo-Norman castle in Europe, or pay your respects at the shrine of St. Oliver Plunkett.

Boyne: River & Valley

The River Boyne is the principal waterway in Leinster, the most easterly of the Irish provinces. The river rises at Trinity Well, near Carbury, Co. Kildare and meanders slowly north-eastwards through the gentle and fertile plains of Co. Meath before entering the Irish Sea at Drogheda, Co. Louth. The valley through which it flows is a landscape of large farms, celebrated for their fine pastures, picturesque villages and thriving towns. There is a long history

of continuous human settlement along the banks of the Boyne – stretching back over five millennia. So why did prehistoric people settle and thrive along the banks of this river? The answer lies in the landscape and climate of the region.

The richness of the soil in the lands bordering and drained by the Boyne was ideal for Neolithic farmers (who began to arrive in Ireland around 4,000 BC). Moreover, the east coast of Ireland, between Dublin and Drogheda, is the driest part of the country and ideally suited to growing crops. The river was valuable as a source of food and, long before roads, its waters were

vital for travel and trade. The River Boyne, which derives its name from the legendary Celtic goddess Bóann (see Myths & Legends, p. 52), has long been recognised as one of Ireland's most important waterways.

In the 2nd century AD the Greek geographer, Claudius Ptolemy recorded the outline of the island of Ireland in the form of a set of coordinates showing different geographical features such as headlands and rivers. He included on this map, in his own language, the names of several Irish tribes, cities and rivers, including 'Bouvinda' – the Boyne.

Boyne Valley

Archaeological & Historical Timeline

Our journey begins 9,000 years ago after the great ice sheets that covered Ireland during the last Ice Age had retreated. The island was wild, uninhabited and heavily wooded. The first people – Stone Age hunters – were drawn to Irish shores – were drawn to Irish shores in search of food.

Mesolithic Period 7000 – 4000 BC

c. 7000 BC
First Mesolithic hunter-gatherers arrive in Ireland



Neolithic Period 4000 – 2200 BC

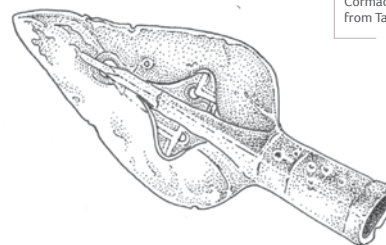
c. 4000 BC
First wave of Neolithic farmers arrive in Ireland

c. 3200 BC
Newgrange, Dowth & Knowth

c. 3000 BC
Loughcrew

Bronze Age 2200 – 600 BC

Early activity at Tara



Iron Age 600 BC – 400 AD

227 – 266 AD
Legendary King of Ireland Cormac Mac Airt reigns from Tara

Early Christian Period 400 – 790 AD

433 AD
St. Patrick returns to Ireland & lights Paschal fire at Hill of Slane

521 AD
St. Buite, founder of Monasterboice, dies

Viking Age 790 – 1169 AD

804 AD
Kells monastery founded by monks from St. Columba's foundation, Iona

980 AD
Battle of Tara

1007 AD
Book of Kells stolen

1022 AD
Tara abandoned as seat of the High Kings of Ireland

1142 AD
Mellifont Abbey is founded by St. Malachy of Armagh

1152 AD
Synod of Kells

Medieval Period 1169 – 1550 AD

1169 AD
Anglo-Normans arrive in Ireland

1172 AD
Henry II grants Meath to Hugh de Lacy

1173 AD
Trim Castle built by Hugh de Lacy

1194 AD
Drogheda-in-Meath granted charter and 'officially' founded

1494 AD
Poynning's Law passed in Drogheda

1512 AD
Slane Abbey is constructed

Post-Medieval Period 1550 – 1800 AD

1641 AD
Rebellion

1649 AD
Cromwell's Siege of Drogheda

1681 AD
St. Oliver Plunkett martyred

1690 AD
Battle of the Boyne

1699 AD
Newgrange is 'discovered'

1785 AD
Slane Castle is reconstructed

1798 AD
Rising



Industrial Age 1800 – 1900 AD

1808 AD
Millmount Mortello Tower is constructed

1843 AD
One million people attend Daniel O'Connell's 'monster meeting' at Tara

1847 AD
Worst year of the Great Famine, known as 'Black '47'

1855 AD
Boyne Viaduct railway bridge completed

1887 AD
Francis Ledwidge, poet, born outside Slane, Co. Meath

Modern Age 1900 – present

1953
Pierce Brosnan, former James Bond, & honorary OBE, is born in Navan

1986
Freddie Mercury & Queen play Slane Castle

1993
Newgrange, Knowth & Dowth become UNESCO World Heritage sites

May 2008
Visitor Centre at the Battle of the Boyne site officially opened by Taoiseach Bertie Ahern and First Minister of Northern Ireland, Dr. Ian Paisley



Trim contains more Medieval buildings than any town in Ireland

Trim is situated on the banks of the River Boyne in an area of fertile plains. The town developed around Trim Castle, straddling the river to the north and west of the castle. In the 13th century the town was enclosed within a circuit of stone walls. Augustinian (1202), Franciscan (1260), and Dominican (1263) friaries were established, indicating the growing prosperity of the town. In the later medieval period Trim became an increasingly exposed frontier, standing between the hostile worlds of the Anglo-Normans and the Gaelic Irish.

Aside from Trim Castle, which dominates the town, the fragments of the medieval town are still clearly visible. The wall which circled the settlement is visible in part, mainly around Castle St. and Emmet St. west of the castle. The Sheep Gate is the only surviving of several medieval gateways to the town. The jagged Yellow Steeple was formerly a seven-storied church tower belonging to St Mary's Augustinian Abbey, it gets its name from the colour of the stonework in the evening sun. St Patrick's Church (Church of Ireland) is primarily a 19th century structure, though with medieval remains.

The tower on its west face incorporates the arms of Richard, Duke of York, Lord of Trim and Viceroy in Ireland from 1449. Interestingly, Ireland's oldest complete and

unaltered bridge (dating from 1393) crosses the Boyne at Trim (on Bridge St., Trim).

A few kilometres downstream from Trim stand the ruins of Newtown Trim – a large medieval cathedral, two monasteries and a small church. These ruins symbolise the failed attempt by the first English Bishop of Meath, Simon de Rochfort, to establish a rival town to de Lacy's Trim.

During the early 1700s Jonathan Swift, author of Gulliver's Travels, lived at Laracor, near Trim, where he served as vicar to a small congregation. Arthur Wellesley, better known as the Duke of Wellington or 'the Iron Duke', was educated at Trim and spent much of his childhood at the nearby Dangan Castle, his father's country house (now in ruins). He



is credited with Napoleon's defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, and later served as Prime Minister of Great Britain (1828-30). Don Ambrosio O'Higgins (1720 – 1801), the Spanish Viceroy of Peru and Chile, was born at Dangan Castle. His son, Bernardo O'Higgins, went on to become the 'Liberator of Chile'.

The town of **Athboy** – 17km west of Navan on the N51 – offers a heritage trail, and spectacular views across the county from an Iron Age fort atop the Hill of Ward where, right up until the 12th Century, the wild, Pagan festival of 'Oiche Samhain' (Halloween Night) was celebrated (October 31) with ritual bonfires to herald the arrival of Winter. It is believed that Halloween began here at the Hill of Ward. This is celebrated annually through the Halloween Spirits of Meath Festival.

Housed in the Old Town Hall building Trim Visitor Centre has an audio visual presentation titled "The Power & the Glory". Here visitors can learn more about life in medieval Trim and County Meath as well as

more about how the coming of the Normans affected the area. The visitor centre also has a tourist information point, gift and coffee shop.

Did you know? There is a small Gaeltacht (Irish-speaking community) at Ráth Cairn (Rathcarne), near Trim. In the 1930s a total of 443 people from Connemara in the west of Ireland were resettled on land acquired by the Land Commission. It received official recognition as a Gaeltacht in 1967.

In Trim town you can walk along the River Boyne and see the ruins of St. Peter & Paul Cathedral and the Hospital of St John The Baptist. Visitors can call into the Visitor Centre for a town map and more details about the walk.

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David McLean DMC-Photography

Trim Castle is the largest, best-preserved & most impressive Anglo-Norman castle in Ireland

Trim get its name from the Irish Áth Truim, meaning 'The Ford of the Elder Trees', indicating that this was an important fording point on the River Boyne. Such was the significance of this crossing point that by the fifth century a chieftain's dún (fort) and an early monastery were sited here.

In 1172, shortly after the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in Ireland, King Henry II granted Hugh de Lacy the Kingdom of Meath, along with custody of Dublin. The King feared that Strongbow (Richard de Clare) might set up a rival Anglo-Norman kingdom in Ireland.

For strategic reasons, de Lacy decided to make Trim, rather than Drogheda, the centre of his newly acquired lordship. De Lacy converted a ringfort into a wooden castle with a spiked stockade. This structure was seen as a threat by the Gaelic Irish and in 1174 Rory O'Connor,

King of Connacht (and last High King of Ireland), attacked and it was destroyed. The following year work began on a more permanent stone replacement and over the following decades Hugh de Lacy (d. 1186) and his son Walter constructed the largest Anglo-Norman castle in Europe.

Initially a stone keep, or tower, replaced the wooden fortification. The keep was remodelled and then surrounded by curtain walls and a moat. The wall, punctuated by several towers and a gatehouse, fortified an area of about 3 acres. Most of the castle visible today was completed by 1220.

The unique twenty-sided cruciform design of the keep (with walls 3m thick) is an example of the experimental military architecture of the period. It served as both the domestic and administrative centre of the castle. By 1500 much of Ireland was back in the hands of Gaelic Chieftains and the territory under English control had been reduced to an area around Dublin, known as 'The Pale'. By this time Trim Castle was in decline, however, it remained an important outpost protecting the north-western frontier of The Pale.

Over the centuries Trim Castle was adapted to suit the domestic needs of its owners and the changing political climate. However, much of its fabric has remained unchanged since the height of Anglo-Norman power in Ireland. Even today when standing within the walls of the castle

Trim Castle

visitors can get the sense of security that would have been felt by the de Lacy family in a hostile landscape. Although, standing outside the walls you can sense the intimidation that must surely have been felt by the native population.

Did you know? Trim Castle served as a 'castle double' for York Castle in Mel Gibson's 1996 Oscar-winning movie Braveheart.

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* An Artist Impression, as it might have looked in its heyday, illustration by Uto Hogerzeil



Bective Abbey



Bective Abbey was founded in 1147 for the Cistercian Order by Murchad O'Maeil-Sheachlainn, King of Meath.

It was Ireland's second Cistercian Abbey; a 'daughter house' to nearby Mellifont (see p. 36). Bective became an important monastic settlement, but was suppressed following the dissolution of the Monasteries under King Henry VIII in 1543. The lands were then rented, and the monastery began to be used as a fortified house. The tower was constructed at this time, granting the structure an imposing appearance.

The remains now visible at the Abbey date mainly from the 13th to 15th centuries. They include the church, chapter house and cloister. The cloister ruins are particularly well-preserved and feature pointed, gothic arches typical of Cistercian architecture.

The Order had been founded to recapture the original simplicity of monastic life; this was reflected in their restrained buildings. The cloister - a covered passageway which opened onto and surrounded an enclosed courtyard - was an essential element, separating the world of the monks from that of ordinary people. Today, the ruins provide a maze of passageways with dead ends and interrupted staircases, all asking to be explored.

Did you know? The word cloister comes from the Latin word, 'claustrum', meaning enclosure. Bective Abbey was used as a location for the film 'Braveheart' (1995).

GPS: 53.581866, -6.703720

Ardmulchan Church

The ruins of Ardmulchan Church and Graveyard lie on an elevated site overlooking the River Boyne. Probably built in the late 12th century, the Church's remains include, at the west end, a handsome square bell tower. The tower's ground floor is almost intact, vaulted with an elaborate stairway. Very little else of the original building is extant, but the site offers luxuriant views of the Boyne's historical landscape - the ruins of Dunmoe Castle, the round tower at Donaghmore, the belfry of Slane Abbey.



Did you know? Many sites along the River Boyne are connected with the Celtic cow goddess, Bóinn (from which the Valley derives its name).

GPS: 53.6718102, -6.628602

Skryne Church

A 15th century church ruin, known locally as Skryne Tower, perches atop The Hill of Skryne. The Church ruin is well-preserved, displaying medieval pointed arches and an impressive tower. The Church has long been associated with St. Colmcille (a.k.a. St. Columba), founder of the monastery at Kells. The name Skryne derives from the Irish Scrín Cholm Cille, meaning 'Colmcille's shrine': legend suggests the Saint's relics rested for a time in the old monastery. An attractive carving of a male figure is to be found inside the church ruin, above a doorway - allegedly a rendition of St. Colmcille/Columba.



Did you know? At the foot of the tower is a pub and stables that feature in the Guinness "White Christmas" television advertisement.

The Hill of Tara was the seat of the High Kings of Ireland and the most sacred site in ancient Ireland

The Hill of Tara is a low-lying ridge located between Navan and Dunshaughlin in Co. Meath. It is said that a quarter of the landscape of Ireland can be seen from the hill. Tara gets its name from Teamhair na Rí meaning 'sanctuary of the kings' and it is important as the traditional inauguration site of the ancient High Kings of Ireland. Although few of its monuments survive the test of time, it is an evocative place, much celebrated in Irish myth and legend.

Tara was an important site long before the High Kings. A passage tomb known as Dumha na nGiall (meaning 'the mound of the hostages') is the oldest visible monument and dates from around 3,000 BC. However, Tara became truly important in the Iron Age (600 BC to 400 AD) and into the Early Christian Period. In 433 St. Patrick from the nearby Hill of Slane lit the Paschal fire in defiance of the pagan King of Tara (see Myths & Legends, p. 52).

Tara was the royal centre of Mide (meaning 'the middle kingdom'), the fifth province of ancient Ireland. It incorporated the present Co. Meath and what is now

Westmeath and large parts of Cavan and Longford. The title 'King of Tara' always implied a special power, however, it was not until the 9th century AD that the title became synonymous with The High King of Ireland.

One of the most interesting monuments at Tara is the Lia Fáil (Stone of Destiny), which is a standing stone located within an area known as the Forrad (The Royal Seat). This was the inauguration stone of the Kings of Tara. According to tradition, when a true Irish or Scottish King placed his foot on Lia Fáil it cried out to announce his rightful reign. Other monuments include



Teach Miodchuarta (The Banqueting Hall), Rath na Rí (The Fort of the Kings), Teach Cormaic (Cormac's House), Rath Gráinne (The Fort of Gráinne), Rath na Seanadh (The Rath of the Synods) and Claoin Fhearta (The Sloping Trenches).

Although Tara was finally abandoned by Mael Shechlainn, High King of Ireland, in 1022 it continued to play an important symbolic role in Irish history into the modern period. In 1843 an estimated one million people gathered there to hear Daniel 'The Liberator' O'Connell speak against the Union of Great Britain and Ireland. In 1902, in a letter to the Editor of The Times, Tara was described by Douglas Hyde, George Moore and William Butler

Yeats, key figures in the Gaelic Revival, as 'the most consecrated spot in Ireland'.

Did you know? A group of British Israelites nearly destroyed Rath na Seanadh (The Rath of the Synods) between 1899 and 1902. They believed the Ark of the Covenant was buried there.

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Situated in the heart of the Boyne Valley, Navan is an ideal base from which to explore the nearby attractions of Brú ná Bóinne, the Hill of Tara, and the historic towns of Kells and Trim

The burgeoning town of Navan lies at the confluence of the rivers Boyne and Blackwater. It is the county town, or administrative capital, of Co. Meath. The name Navan has long confused etymologists. It is thought that it may take its name from the Irish An Uaimh, meaning 'the cave' or perhaps from Nuachongbhail, meaning 'new habitation'.

Navan lies at the confluence of the rivers Boyne and Blackwater which has long been a site of strategic importance. A burial site close to where the two rivers meet has been identified as Dún Dubchomair, where a Viking fleet is reputed to have landed. The Anglo-Normans also recognised the importance of this location and around 1185 Joselyn de Angulo converted a nearby glacial mound into a motte and bailey castle. Legend tells that this mound was the burial site of Oadhba, the wife of Éremón, a Milesian invader from Spain (see *Myths & Legends*, p. 52). In the later medieval period Navan was a walled town and, like Trim, was an outpost of The Pale.

The ruins of Athlumney Castle facing Navan across the Boyne are located in the town. It consists of two distinct buildings; an original tower house built in the 15th century and a Tudor mansion built around 1600. The house was burned by the Maguire's in 1649 rather than allow Oliver Cromwell shelter within its walls.

Navan is famous for being the birthplace of Francis Beaufort (1774 - 1857), who developed the Beaufort Scale of wind force. In 1805 Commander (later Admiral) Beaufort published a method of measuring the wind at sea based on the sails a frigate could safely hoist. The Beaufort Scale,



as it came to be known, was adopted by the Royal Navy in 1838 when it became mandatory for all ship's log entries. The 13-point scale ranges from 0 (calm) to 12 (hurricane); with this scale also came descriptions of the state of the sea. From this standard, sailors were able to predict how ships would react in certain wind speeds.

Navan is also the childhood home of Pierce Brosnan, the fifth actor to play the acclaimed role as James Bond. Comedians Dylan Moran and Tommy Tiernan, and television personality Hector Ó hEochagáin also hail from the town.

Navan, offers a variety of quality accommodation, restaurants and bars, and is an ideal base for touring the Boyne Valley. There are enjoyable walks around the town, particularly along the Boyne River and canal at the last ramparts.

Navan town has a self guided signed walking trail – Navan Points of Pride. Commence at the Solstice Arts Centre where a brochure, map and audio guide can be obtained.

Did you know? Navan is the only palindromic place in the Republic of Ireland, meaning that its name is spelled the same from left to right, or right to left. Europe's longest palindromic placename is Assamassa, Portugal and the shortest is Ee, Netherlands (Holland).

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Brú Na Bóinne (Newgrange)



Brú na Bóinne is one of the largest and most important prehistoric megalithic sites in Europe

Brú na Bóinne is the name given to an extensive and hugely important archaeological landscape situated on the north bank of the river Boyne, 8 kilometres west of Drogheda. The site is dominated by three large passage tombs – Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth – which were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1993.

Brú Na Bóinne (Newgrange)

Passage tombs consist of a burial chamber reached by a long straight passage lined with stones, and set within a large mound known as a cairn. They are usually sited on hilltops and grouped in cemeteries. Although primarily burial sites, they also served as status symbols, focal points for the community, places to honour dead ancestors and as territorial markers.

Constructed during the New Stone Age (or Neolithic Period, from Greek “neo” meaning new and “lithos” meaning stone) the tombs at Brú na Bóinne are around 5,000 years old. Although the people who built these tombs were primarily farmers they also possessed expertise in engineering, geology, art and even astronomy.

At dawn on the morning of the winter solstice, and for a number of days before and after, the main chamber at Newgrange is illuminated by a beam of sunlight for 17 minutes. This alignment is too precise to have occurred by chance. It is thought that Newgrange is the oldest surviving deliberately aligned structure in the world. Although Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth were constructed around 3000 BC activity at the sites continued for many millennia. Knowth for example, served as a burial site in the Iron Age, as the royal seat of the King of Northern Brega in the Early Christian period, and as an Anglo-Norman Motte in the Early Medieval Period.

There is no direct access to Newgrange and Knowth; all admission is through the Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre which is located near the village of Donore. The excellent exhibitions at the visitor centre include a full scale replica of the chamber at Newgrange. Visitors are brought from the centre to the monuments by shuttle bus.

Art

The art is one of the most important features of the monuments. Some of it is spectacular: wonderful combinations of spirals, lozenges, chevrons, triangles and arrangements of parallel lines and arcs. Knowth has about 45% of all the art known from Irish tombs and nearly 30% of all the megalithic art in Europe.

Excavation revealed that many stones are carved on their undersides and on the sides turned inwards to the cairns. It may not always have been important for the whole design to be visible. Perhaps the art was to be seen by the spirits of the dead or by the deities. Perhaps the act of carving transformed the stone into something extraordinary and that once this had been done, it was no longer necessary for the art to be seen. Whatever the significance of the art to the builders of the monuments, we can no longer interpret it. No matter how we try to analyse or make sense of the art, we cannot see it as our ancestors saw it 5000 years ago.



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Dept of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht



©National Monuments Service
Dept of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Visitors to the sites over many years have favourite theories. Many people suggest that some of the spiral and concentric circles represent the movement of the sun and stars, a fascination with the changing seasons and how the cycles related to their own lives. Another theory is that the carvings on the stones are maps: maps of the area, maps of the otherworld, maps of the stars. Many think that the art represents images seen by shamans using hallucinogenic drugs during rituals. Other suggestions include the notion that the carved stones were used as meditation devices or that they represent music or energy lines.

Did you know? Constructed around 3200 BC, Newgrange is 500 years older than the pyramids of Egypt and 1,000 years older than Stonehenge in England.

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Notes:

Visitor Centre and Newgrange is open all year round. (excl. 24-27 December). Knowth is open from Easter to end of October. Last admission to the visitor centre is 45 minutes before closing time. Last admission to visit any of the sites is 2 hours before closing time. Please note this site can be extremely busy during the summer months – early arrival for booking of the tours is recommended. See www.heritageireland.ie for additional information.
(Groups of 15 or more must prebook)

Duleek Abbey began life as a monastic settlement when, in 450 AD, Patrick, the Patron Saint of Ireland, established a bishopric there

Duleek derives from the Irish Damhliag, meaning ‘stone house or church,’ and refers to the 5th Century construction, possibly the first stone building in Ireland.

Care of the bishopric was granted to one of St. Patrick's followers, St. Cianan. The ruins of his church can be seen opposite those of the Priory. During the 9th and 10th centuries, the monastery suffered near constant raids by Vikings settled at nearby Drogheda. Incredibly, the small community survived. In 1014, the Vikings were defeated by the Irish High King, Brian Boru, at The Battle of Clontarf. Boru was slain; his body lay in Duleek Abbey before being brought to Armagh for burial.

The impressive ruins are the remains of an Augustinian Priory, St. Mary's Abbey, established in the 12th century. Outside, a beautiful, 9th-century High Cross bears elaborate carvings typical of the period- the crucifixion, scenes from the life of the Virgin Mary, symbols of the Evangelists.

Did you know? During the 19th century, Duleek Commons was a hideout for “Collier the Robber” – a Robin Hood-style highway man eventually transported to the penal colonies. King William is said to have slept in Duleek Abbey after the Battle of the Boyne. A heritage trail of the town begins at The Courthouse in Duleek.

GPS: 53.655455, -6.418489





The Battle of the Boyne is one of the most significant events in Irish history

The Battle of the Boyne was fought between King William III and his father-in-law King James II on 1 July 1690. The kings were rival claimants to the English, Scottish and Irish thrones. Protestant King William (of Orange) had deposed Catholic King James in 1688.

William's army (called Williamites), numbered some 36,000 men and was made up of English, Irish, Scottish, Dutch, Danish and Huguenots (French Protestants). The opposing army (called Jacobites) were mainly Irish Catholics, reinforced by 6,500 French troops sent by King Louis XIV. The Jacobites chose the River Boyne as the best defence against the Williamites progress south towards Dublin. Drogheda was garrisoned and a force of 25,000 men was positioned at Oldbridge, the most likely crossing point. The armies camped on opposite sides of the river.

William's battle plan was to trap the Jacobite army in a pincer movement. He sent a force of 10,000 men towards Slane which drew the bulk of the Jacobites upstream in opposition. With 1,300 Jacobites posted in Drogheda, only 6,000 were left at Oldbridge to repel 26,000 Williamites. All the fighting took place on the south side of the river as the vastly outnumbered Jacobite forces defended their position against the advancing Williamites. William himself crossed at Drybridge with 3,500 mounted troops. The Jacobites retreated across the river Nanny at Duleek and regrouped west of the Shannon to carry on the war.

William's victory at the Battle of the Boyne was the turning point in James' unsuccessful attempt to regain the Crown and ultimately ensured the continuation of Protestant supremacy in Ireland. Of the 61,000 men that fought in the battle, a relatively small number were killed: 1,000 Jacobites and 500 Williamites. The Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre is located in the recently restored 18th century Oldbridge House, which is on the battlesite.

See p. 38 for Townley Hall Woods Trail which takes visitors through King William's Glen where the Williamite troops were victorious at the Battle of the Boyne.

Did you know? The Battle of the Boyne was the largest ever assembly of troops on an Irish battlefield.

Contact Details:

Battle of the Boyne Visitor Centre, Oldbridge House, Drogheda, Co. Meath
T: +353 (0)41 9809950
F: +353 (0)41 9849873
E: battleoftheboyne@opw.ie
W: www.battleoftheboyne.ie
GPS: 53.722699, -6.412969

Notes:

Events Calendar including details of living history displays is available at www.battleoftheboyne.ie

Drogheda was an important Anglo-Norman settlement and one of the largest walled towns in Medieval Ireland



Drogheda derives its name from the Irish Droihead Átha meaning 'Bridge of the Ford'. It is the largest town in Co. Louth – Ireland's smallest county – which is named after Lugh, the great god of the Celts. Although the origins of the settlement are obscure, the town certainly owes its development to the coming of the Anglo-Normans.

Drogheda proper began as an Anglo-Norman port founded by Hugh de Lacy after whom the de Lacy Bridge in the town is named. Around 1180, it developed as two settlements on opposite banks of the Boyne estuary, downstream from the ford from which it gets its name. Drogheda was granted its charter in 1194. The Anglo-Normans made Drogheda one of their primary strongholds, completing the town walls in the mid 13th century. The walls enclosed and fortified an area of 43 hectares, north and south of the Boyne, making it one of the largest walled towns in medieval Ireland. Drogheda-in-Louth was the larger of the two

towns with a walled area of 32 hectares. After years of conflict and rivalry, the two boroughs were conjoined as a single town in 1412, and in 1898 the southern portion of the town was transferred from Co. Meath to Co. Louth.

St. Laurence's Gate, which led to the Friary of St. Laurence, is widely regarded as one of the finest of its kind in Europe. It consists of two lofty circular towers, connected together by a wall, in which there is an archway. It was originally known as the east gate but it was renamed in the 14th century because the street led to the Hospital of St. Laurence. Visitors can appreciate the spectacular dimensions of the medieval walls south of the gate at Featherbed Lane. Twice the walls and gates of Drogheda held strong against invasion, firstly when Edward Bruce attacked the town in 1317 and again in 1642 when Sir Phelim O'Neill attempted to take Drogheda. In 1494 Parliament met at Drogheda and enacted the infamous Poyning's Law which remained in force until 1801 when The Act of Union made it redundant. In 1649 Cromwell breached the walls and sacked the town, massacring 3,500 soldiers, civilians and clergy, and deporting captives as slaves to Barbados. Drogheda surrendered to King William after the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. Millmount Tower & Museum and St. Peter's Church, housing the shrine of St. Oliver Plunkett are also within the town.

The Tholsel building on West Street (image p.24) was erected in 1770 on the site of the old mediaeval wooden Tholsel, it was for almost 130



years the centre of municipal authority. The Tholsel has been for countless generations a local trysting place, and before the advent of radio and television,

with their constant time checks, Drogheda's clocks and watches were set by its dependable old time-piece. Sessions of the Irish Parliament were held regularly in the town, either at the Franciscan Friary now Highlanes Gallery or at the Tholsel of 'Drogheda in Meath'. Poyning's Law (which made the Irish Parliament subservient to the English Parliament) was enacted in 1494, in the Tholsel.

Did you know? The Boyne Viaduct at Drogheda is Ireland's greatest example of Victorian industrial architecture. The bridge, which carries the Dublin-Belfast railway line, was opened in 1855.

St Patrick landed at the mouth of the river Boyne, near Drogheda, in 432AD when he arrived in Ireland to introduce Christianity.

Contact Details:

Drogheda Tourist Office
The Tholsel,
West Street
Drogheda, Co. Louth

T: +353 (0)41 9872843

W: www.drogheda.ie

E: droghedatouristoffice@gmail.com

GPS: 54.039671, -6.185043



St. Peter's Church

St. Peter's Church is among the finest Gothic Revival Churches in Ireland and is famous for housing the shrine of St. Oliver Plunkett. The first church on this site was constructed in 1791, and the present one – built in the 1880's – incorporates elements of the earlier structure.

The imposing façade is built of local limestone. The lavish interior includes a special chapel which houses the preserved head of St. Oliver Plunkett (1625 – 81), the last Catholic martyr to die in England. Plunkett was born at Loughcrew, near Oldcastle, Co. Meath. Educated by the Jesuits at the newly established Irish college in Rome, he was appointed Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All-Ireland in 1669. He was arrested in 1679 on false charges of plotting to bring a French Army into the country, and of organising Irishmen for rebellion. A trial at Dundalk collapsed in 1680. He was



transferred to England and found guilty of high treason. In July, 1681, Plunkett was hanged, disembowelled, and quartered at Tyburn. His remains were recovered immediately and entrusted to the Sienna Nuns of the Dominican Convent at Drogheda.

Plunkett was beatified in 1920, and canonised in 1975 by Pope Paul VI.

Contact Details:

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T: +353 (0)41 9872843
E droghedatouristoffice@gmail.com
GPS: 53.714927, -6.352415

Notes:

Mass in honour of St. Oliver Plunkett is held in St. Peter's, the last Saturday of every month (6.15pm).

Highlanes Gallery

Highlanes Municipal Art Gallery, which opened in 2006, is one of Ireland's most important visual art spaces. Serving the North East region, it presents a programme of national and international temporary exhibitions, as well as exhibitions drawn from the Drogheda Municipal Art Collection, a fascinating collection dating from the mid-18th century.

The gallery is sited in the former Drogheda Franciscan Church and Friary known, locally, as 'High Lane Church'; the building – gifted by the Franciscan Order to the people of Drogheda in 2000 – has carefully and lovingly preserved the character of the original.

The gallery houses the town's most treasured heirlooms: a ceremonial sword and mace presented to Drogheda Corporation by King William III after the Battle of the Boyne. Only towns that have successfully withstood sieges were presented with such swords: Drogheda's is particularly fine, while the accompanying solid silver mace is one of the largest, and most magnificent, in Ireland.

Contact Details:

Highlanes Gallery,
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E: info@highlanes.ie
W: www.highlanes.ie
GPS: 53.715474, -6.348706



Millmount Museum and Martello Tower are situated on high ground in the heart of Drogheda near to where the river Boyne finally meets the sea

Shortly after the Anglo-Norman King Henry II granted him the Kingdom of Meath in 1172, Hugh de Lacy constructed a motte and bailey on a huge mound overlooking the River Boyne. A more substantial stone fort replaced the earlier structure.

According to Irish mythology, the mound was the burial place of Amergin mac Miled, druid, bard and judge of the Milesians. Amergin was the son of Míl Espáine and brother of Éremón (see Myths & Legends, p. 52). The true origin of the mound is unclear, however, it is thought that it may be a large passage tomb, similar to those at nearby Brú na Bóinne.

This castle formed part of the defences of the town during Cromwell's siege of Drogheda in 1649. The garrison was massacred when they surrendered to Parliamentary troops on September

11th, 1649. In the early 1800s the earlier fortifications were demolished and replaced by a Martello Tower as part of a series of defences erected along the Irish coast by the British in expectation of an invasion by Napoleon Bonaparte. Millmount Museum houses various exhibitions dealing with archaeology, folklife, local history, geology, industry and military history. The museum also contains one of the four surviving examples of an ancient type of fishing vessel, called a coracle, that were once a common sight on the Boyne. Coracles were made of wicker and covered with animal hide, or



more recently with canvas. It was almost square but with rounded corners and was operated by two people – one paddling at the bow, the other manning the nets.

Millmount Cultural Quarter offers a wide ranging experience including the museum, martello tower and an array of craft shops, artists' studios and a café.

Did you know? The fort at Millmount was considerably damaged during the Irish Civil War (1922–23) when it was occupied by Anti-Treaty forces and was shelled for several hours by the Irish Free State Army. It was restored by Drogheda Corporation and opened to the public in 2000.

Contact Details:

Millmount Museum,
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F: +353 (0)41 9841599
E: info@droghedamuseum.ie
W: www.millmount.net
GPS: 53.712482, -6.350055

Notes:

Please note last tour is 60 minutes before closing.

Beaulieu House

Beaulieu House is a 17th Century house and gardens with a collection of classic racing cars

Beaulieu House is situated on the north bank of the river Boyne between Drogheda and the Irish Sea. The estate was originally owned by the 'St. Oliver' branch of the Plunkett family and was acquired about 1650 by Sir Henry Tichbourne, who was Marshall of the Army in Ireland and Governor General of Drogheda at the time of the Restoration of Charles II.

Beaulieu House was turned into the house we see today by the Tichbournes in the mid 17th and early 18th Century and has remained largely unchanged since. Originally a stone Plunkett Castle, the present structure is a mixture of brick and stone which was rendered in the late 19th Century, leaving exposed the Dutch brick surrounds to windows and doors. The Dutch style is unique in Ireland.

The walled garden is believed to have been designed by Dutch artist Willem Van Der Hagen, who settled in Ireland in the 1720s,

and is one of the earliest examples of a walled garden in Ireland.

Gabriel DeFreitas, the current owner of Beaulieu House, is a tenth generation descendant of Henry Tichbourne. There is a museum on site which displays a collection of classic racing cars and memorabilia. Guided tours of the house, four-acre walled garden and museum are available.



Did you know? The current owner of Beaulieu House, Gabriel DeFreitas, had a very successful career in motor racing in the 1960s and 1970s under the name of Gabriel Konig.

Contact Details:

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W: www.beaulieu.ie
GPS: 53.727708, -6.295246





The Cross of Muiredach at Monasterboice is the finest High Cross in Ireland and is highly regarded as one of the best surviving examples of Irish religious art

Christianity was introduced into Ireland, probably from Roman Britain, during the 5th century AD, around the time of the collapse of the Roman Empire. Monasterboice is one of Ireland's earliest and best-known religious sites. Its name derives from the Irish Mainistir Bhuithe meaning 'the monastery of Buite'.

St. Buite, Buite mac Bronaig, was an Irish monk and follower of St. Patrick. In 480, according to legend, St. Buite on a return trip from Rome raised Nechtan Morbet, the King of Pictland (Scotland), from the dead. Another legend states that he ascended into heaven via a golden ladder lowered from the skies by angels. St. Buite died on the day St. Columba was born (7th December, 521).

The site comprises two churches and a round tower. Although round towers were originally thought to have been places of refuge from Vikings, the Irish name for these towers – cloic theach meaning a bell house – hints at another possible function. The tower at Monasterboice was burned in 1097, destroying the monastic library and other treasures. However, it is still in excellent condition, though without its

conical cap. It is the second tallest round tower in Ireland, after the one on Scatterry Island, Co. Clare.

The Vikings occupied the site for a period until they were routed by Domhnall, King of Tara, in 968. St. Buite's monastery remained an important centre of spirituality and learning for many centuries until the establishment of Mellifont Abbey in 1142. The site also contains two of the finest High Crosses in Ireland – the South Cross (or Cross of Muiredach) and the West Cross (or Tall Cross) – which date from the 9th century. The sandstone crosses are finely carved and depict biblical scenes from the Old and New Testaments. Today the image of the High Cross is recognised internationally, not merely as a religious icon but also, as a symbol of Irish cultural heritage.



° An Artist Impression, as it might have looked in its heyday, illustration by Uto Hogerzeil

High Crosses

High Crosses, also known as Celtic Crosses, are distinctive ringed crosses that have become a symbol of Celtic Christianity. They are free standing and often of monumental proportion.

Standing almost 5.5m in height and carved from a single block of sandstone, the South Cross at Monasterboice is arguably the finest and best preserved High Cross in Ireland. It is often referred to as the Cross of St. Muiredach because of an inscription at the bottom of the shaft which translates as 'a prayer for Muiredach who had this cross made'. It is thought that this refers to

Muiredach Mac Domhnail, who was Abbott of Monasterboice from 890 – 923.

Did you know?

The West Cross, appropriately named the Tall Cross, is the tallest high cross in Ireland, standing at around 7m. Kirbuddo (near Forfar, Scotland) also derives its name from St. Buite and is twinned with Monasterboice.

Contact Details:

Monasterboice Tour Guides
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West Face (top to base)

Ascension of Christ (top of cross)

Peter denying Christ (left arm)

Crucifixion (centre of cross)

Resurrection of Christ (right arm)

Christ flanked by Peter & Paul (upper panel)

Thomas meeting the Risen Christ (middle panel)

Soldiers arresting Christ (lower panel)

Dedication to Muiredach (base)



West Face (Illustration)

Cross of St. Muiredach

High Cross (known as the South Cross, or Cross of Muiredach), Monasterboice, Co. Louth



East Face (Illustration)

East Face (top to base)

St Paul & St Anthony (top of cross)

The Saved Souls (left arm)

The Last Judgement (centre of cross)

The Damned Souls (right arm)

Adoration of the Magi (upper panel)
Moses Drawing Water from the Rock (upper middle panel)

David & Goliath (lower middle panel)

Cain slaying Abel (lower panel, right)

Adam & Eve (lower panel, left)

Mellifont Abbey was one of the wealthiest and most influential monastic houses in medieval Ireland

Mellifont Abbey is situated in a tranquil valley on the banks of the River Mattock, a tributary of the River Boyne. The Abbey derives its name from the Latin Font Mellis meaning 'fountain of honey'. Many medieval monasteries founded by continental orders bore Latin names. Mellifont is the only one that survives as a current placename in Ireland.

St. Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh, along with a community of Irish and French monks (trained at Clairvaux, Burgundy), founded Mellifont Abbey in 1142 on lands granted by Donogh O'Carroll, King of Oriel. It was the first Cistercian monastery established in Ireland and over 20 other Cistercian houses were founded directly or indirectly from it. Mellifont also became one of the wealthiest abbeys in Ireland with vast holdings of land in the fertile Boyne Valley.

The Abbey was consecrated in 1157 amidst great ceremony at a national synod, which was attended by the leading clergy of the time and Murtaugh MacLochlainn, the

High King of Ireland. Mellifont heralded a new era in Irish monasticism. Prior to its foundation, older Irish monasteries (such as Monasterboice) were essentially independent self-governed spiritual centres, under the direction of an Abbott who was largely his own master. These older monastic sites were often not affiliated to any other monastery or even to any religious order.

Mellifont was dissolved in 1539 and passed into the hands of Sir Edward Moore who converted the abbey buildings into a residence. In 1603, following Irish defeat at the Battle of Kinsale, Hugh O' Neill, the Earl of Tyrone, formally submitted to Lord



Mountjoy at Mellifont Abbey signing the Treaty of Mellifont. This sounded the death knell for Gaelic civilisation in Ireland. During the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 King William based his headquarters at Mellifont. The house was abandoned and fell into disrepair in the early 1700s.

Although the remains of the Abbey are fragmentary, Mellifont is historically and architecturally significant. It was the first abbey in Ireland to be laid out according to the European cloistral plan – buildings constructed around a central open space. Its distinguishing feature is an octagonal lavabo, constructed about 1200, which functioned as a place for the monks to wash their hands in a symbolic gesture as a preparation for prayer. Lavabo means 'I shall wash'. The lavabo, the chapter house and the late medieval gate house remain partly intact. The layout of the remainder of the abbey can be seen from foundations revealed during excavations.



Did you know? Devorgilla (often described as 'Ireland's Helen of Troy'), whose elopement with Dermot MacMurrough led to the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in 1169 is buried beneath the chancel pavement at Mellifont. In 1157 she donated 60 ounces of gold, along with altar cloths and a gold chalice to Mellifont. She died there in 1193 at the age of 85.

Contact Details:

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W: www.heritageireland.ie
GPS: 53.74281, -6.465561



Townley Hall Woods

The Woods form part of 60 acres of rolling parklands surrounding the magnificent Georgian mansion of Townley Hall

Built in 1799, the house is not open to the public. However, Townley Hall Woods feature a pleasant walking trail which ushers visitors through an area steeped in history, while providing lovely views of the Boyne.

The Woods are close to the site of the Battle of the Boyne which saw the Protestant King William III (a.k.a. "William of Orange") and his father-in-law, Catholic King James II, fight for control of England, Scotland and Ireland (1st July 1690).

The trail takes visitors through "King William's Glen" where the ultimately victorious Williamite troops – all 36,000 of them, along with their hospital, stores, wagons and thousands of horses – set up camp. And from where King William launched his surprise attack on the troops of his father in law.

Nature: The woodlands were planted around 150-200 years ago. Trees are mainly oak, beech, ash, sycamore, European silver fir and Scots pine. Flora includes blackthorn, holly, hazel, elder, ground ivy, briar and several varieties of broadleaf woodland. The forest is home to red deer, red and grey squirrel, badger, rabbit, hare and fox. It is also a haven for resident and migratory birds.

Did you know?

The visitor centre in nearby Oldbridge chronicles the epic battle (see p. 22).

GPS: 53.734372, -6.438562



Francis Ledwidge Museum

The Francis Ledwidge Museum is located in the poet's birthplace, a typical 19th Century labourer's cottage

Here, in this modest dwelling, the poet's life is chronicled through pictures and writings.

Ledwidge's talent was evident from an early age; an "erratic genius" was his schoolmaster's verdict. Ledwidge (1887 -1917) was supported by local aristocrat, Lord Dunsany, who arranged for the poet's work to be published in the literary magazine, 'The Saturday Review', exposing him to a wider audience.

At the Third Battle of Ypres, Belgium, on 31st July, 1917, he was in a company of men carrying out essential repairs to a road damaged by enemy artillery, when a German shell exploded. Ledwidge, who had attained the rank of Lance Corporal, was killed alongside several of his comrades. He was 29.

In the tranquil garden behind the museum stands a replica of an original monument

commissioned and erected by the City of Leper (Ypres), Belgium, at the exact spot where the poet was killed. This memorial to Ledwidge is inscribed with lines from a verse of his poem "Lament for Thomas MacDonagh":

**"He shall not hear
The bitter cry
In the wild sky
Where he is lain."**

Contact Details:

Francis Ledwidge Museum
Slane, Co. Meath
T: +353 (0)41 9824544
E: info@francisledwidge.com
W: www.francisledwidge.com
GPS: 53.706870, -6.526697

Slane Village and Slane Castle

Slane Castle is the residence of Ireland's most famous aristocrat Henry Conyngham, the Marquess Conyngham

It is set on the grounds of a magnificent 1,500 acre estate, just upriver from the site of the Battle of the Boyne. Following the Williamite War (1689 – 91), half a million Irish acres were confiscated from those who had supported James II. The Conynghams purchased the estate in 1701, following these confiscations. Previously, the lands were owned by the Flemings, Anglo-Norman Catholics who had supported the Jacobites.

Slane Castle in its existing form was reconstructed under the direction of William Burton Conyngham, together with his nephew, the first Marquess Conyngham. The reconstruction dates from 1785 and was undertaken by two of the most distinguished architects of the day: James Gandon, who designed The Custom House and The Four Courts in Dublin; and Francis Johnson, who designed Dublin's General Post Office (GPO). The gorgeous parklands were laid out by landscape architect, Capability Brown, often



referred to as "England's greatest gardener". In 1991, a fire in the Castle completely destroyed the eastern wing. The Castle re-opened to the public following a 10-year restoration programme, funded by the Conyngham family. In recent times, Slane Castle has become internationally famous for its summer concerts. Its natural amphitheatre attracts as many as 80,000 fans annually: Thin Lizzy, Queen, The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, David Bowie, Guns N' Roses, Neil Young, REM, Bryan Adams, U2, Stereophonics, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Oasis and Madonna have performed under the shadow of the Castle.

The Village 'Square'

Slane is one of the most attractive villages in Ireland, created in the 1760's by the Conynghams, a military family who rose to prominence at the time of William III. The centre of the village, known as the 'Square'

(actually an octagon) has four identical Georgian houses, referred to locally as "The Four Sisters". Interestingly, the houses were built at different times, and there never existed four such ladies. Follow the self-guided signed Slane Heritage Trail commencing at the Slane Cottages. Obtain a map at the Slane Hub on Main street.

Slane Cottages

Slane's noteworthy cottages are situated at Cavan row which got its name from labourers who came from nearby County Cavan to work on the Estate. Locals say it was called 'Lilac Lane' due to a Lilac tree located at the end, now sadly gone.

Did you know? U2 recorded part of their 4th studio album, The Unforgettable Fire, in Slane Castle. The video for the U2 song "Pride (In the Name of Love)" was shot in the Gothic Revival Ballroom, created for George IV's State Visit in 1821.

Contact Details:

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GPS: 53.711981, -6.565441

Notes:

The Courtyard Cafe opens June, July & August
Sunday – Thursday 10 – 5pm with Slane Castle
tours 10 – 6pm. Check website for details.





The Hill of Slane rises 158m above the surrounding countryside and can be seen from the Hill at Tara, 16km away

A well-preserved tower is to be found among the ruins of a Franciscan Monastery, dating from 1512, itself built on site of a monastery founded by St. Erc, a follower of St. Patrick.

The ruins of a college, built to house four priests, four lay brothers and four choristers, also remain. These were built by the Flemings (Barons of Slane from the 11th - 17th Centuries) for the Franciscans; the family's coat of arms can be seen on the west wall of the college quadrangle. Thirty years after its foundation, the monastery was dissolved by King Henry VIII, its lands and wealth appropriated. In 1631, the Flemings restored the monastery. It became home to Capuchin monks, who, in turn, were driven out in 1651 by Oliver Cromwell.

Did you know? A ceremonial lighting of a great fire on The Hill of Tara (then the seat of the High King) occurred every spring equinox: It was forbidden to light any other fire until this one was ablaze. Legend suggests that, in 433, in defiance of the pagan High King Laoire, Patrick lit a Paschal fire on the Hill of Slane. Though angry, Laoire was so impressed by Patrick's devotion he allowed him to continue his missionary work.

GPS: 53.717413, -6.539246

Together with Newgrange and Knowth, Dowth forms part of the Brú na Bóinne (Mansion of the Boyne) passage tomb complex

Historical evidence suggests the tomb was plundered in 1059, and set fire to in 1170. The mound was also subjected to a blast of dynamite in 1847, when either crude excavations or plundering was being carried out.

Historical evidence suggests the tomb was plundered in 1059, and set fire to in 1170. The mound was also subjected to a blast of dynamite in 1847, when either crude excavations or plundering was being carried out. As a result of the blast, two passage tombs were unearthed. With shorter passages and lower roofs, these are not as spectacular as Newgrange or Knowth, but still worth investigating. As at Newgrange, the entrance to the passageway is aligned with the sun so that during the winter solstice light moves along the left side of the passage, into the circular chamber, where three burial stones are then illuminated.

A short stroll from The Dowth Cairn is a memorial to John Boyle O'Reilly (1844–1890), poet, journalist and writer. A member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood - a secret society dedicated to fighting British rule - he was arrested, and transported to Western Australia. He escaped to the U.S. where he became

a prominent spokesperson for the Irish community, via lectures, writings and his editorship of the Boston newspaper, "The Pilot".

Did you know? In the 18th century, a teahouse was built atop the mound by Sir John Netterville, owner of nearby Dowth Castle. It has been suggested that from it he could "attend" a nearby church service - via telescope!

GPS: 53.704570, -6.451397



Donaghmore Round Tower

The cemetery at Donaghmore contains the ruins of a church and a fine example of an Irish Round Tower

Saint Patrick is said to have first founded a monastery here, giving charge of it to one of his followers, St. Cassanus. The existing ruins, however, do not date back that far.

The architectural style of the church indicates it was built in the 15th Century. Most likely, it replaced an older church built in the Romanesque style; a carved Romanesque head is incorporated in the south wall of the bell tower. The round tower predates the church and was built in the 9th or 10th century. It is well-preserved though missing its conical cap. Unusual features include the stone carvings of heads and a crucifixion above and around the doorway. It displays wonderful rough limestone masonry and may have been built by the same builder as the tower at Glendalough, Co. Wicklow.

Did you know? Round Towers were almost always constructed within monastic settlements, soaring above the landscape, topped off with a conical cap; doorways at a height, upper stories lit by a single round window. Was the purpose to withstand Viking attacks? The height permitted attackers to be seen; monks could gather treasures/manuscripts and flee to the

tower, using a rope ladder to reach the doorway, pulling it in behind. But couldn't the wooden door be set alight? And wouldn't the tower act as a "chimney", smoke suffocating those inside? A simpler theory is that the round tower may have been used as a belfry.

GPS: 53.658933, -6.661491



Donaghpatrick

Saint Patrick's Church was built in 1896, designed by J.F. Fuller, an authority on the Hiberno-Romanesque style

In 1862 the London-trained Fuller had answered an advertisement for a district architect under the Irish Ecclesiastical Commissioners; he was chosen from among 97 candidates: St. Patrick's is one of his finest creations.

It incorporates a medieval tower-house to the west which adds significant archaeological interest. The form is enhanced by the retention of many original features and materials, such as the well-executed rock faced limestone, and its cut stone dressings. The Church has pointed arch window openings with carved limestone tracery, dressings and hood mouldings. There is a simple, timber-battened entrance door, and cut stone limestone gate piers set off by cast-iron

gates. Inside, the stained glass windows - by Heaton, Butler and Bayne - add artistic interest. It is thought that the Church came into existence when the first Royal Chieftain of Ireland to be baptised by St. Patrick made a gift to the missionary of the site: This was the first public administering of baptism, recognized by the then Irish royalty; it marked a significant advancement in Patrick's progress.

GPS: 53.696443, -6.758828

The heritage town of Kells contains many fine examples of early Christian architecture

Kells derives from the Irish Ceanannas Mór, meaning ‘great residence’. Long before the coming of Christianity, Kells was a royal residence associated with the legendary Conn Ceadchatach (Conn of the Hundred Battles) and Cormac mac Airt.

In 550 St. Columba, also known as St. Colmcille, established a religious settlement at Kells. In 563 he went into self-imposed exile on the Isle of Iona, off the west coast of Scotland and founded another settlement. The island was raided by Viking fleets in 795, 802 and again in 804 when sixty-eight people were killed. Shortly after, the community of St. Columba’s monastery on Iona were granted lands at Kells as a safe haven from invaders.

Generally, monastic settlements were surrounded by a circular boundary wall called a vallum, which acted as a frontier between the holy world within and the secular world outside. They often contained a church, graveyard, high crosses, monk’s cells and from the late 10th century round towers also became a feature.

The first church at Kells was completed by 814 and in 878 the relics of St. Columba were relocated from Iona, which was now prospering. However, Kells itself was raided by the Vikings in 919, 950 and 969, and many times throughout the 11th century, this time by the Irish. The most famous treasure created by the community of St. Columba is the Book of Kells, a highly ornate version of the four gospels in Latin. It was written around the year 800, though it remains unclear whether it was written in whole or part at Kells.

Although Kells became an important Anglo-Norman walled settlement, it is its monastic heritage that best survives. Kells’ round tower, though roofless, stands at a height of 25m. In 1076 Murchadh Mac Flainn, who was fighting for the High Kingship of Ireland, was murdered in the

tower. The tower is surrounded by several finely carved high crosses, in various states of preservation. A stone church known as St. Columba’s House, dating from the 9th century is possibly the oldest surviving structure in the town. It is a classic example of an early Irish church with a steeply pointed stone roof.

The Kells Courthouse was originally designed in 1801 by Francis Johnson, who also designed the GPO on O’Connell St. Dublin. The Market Cross of Kells, which dates from the 9th century and depicts scenes from the Old and New Testaments, can be seen at the junction of the Navan / Dublin (N3) road and the Slane road in front of the Kells Heritage Centre. Commence the Kells Historic Trail at the Kells Civic offices where a map can be obtained.

Did you know? The Kells Crosier, dating from the late 9th or 10th century, is in the British Museum, London. In 1850 it appeared without explanation in a solicitor’s office in the English capital.

Contact Details:

Visitor / Heritage Information Centre,
Reception area - Kells Town Council,
Kells Civic Offices, Headfort Place,
Kells, Co. Meath
T: +353 (0)46 9240064
E: kellstouristoffice@meathcoco.ie
W: www.meathtourism.ie
GPS: 53.726754,-6.874169





Spire of Lloyd



The only inland lighthouse in Ireland, The Spire of Lloyd is an 18th century “folly”

Follies were decorative buildings commonly erected during the 18th century. Built in 1791, it resembles a giant Doric column topped with a glazed lantern.

The Spire had a commemorative rather than functional purpose: it was erected to the memory of Thomas Taylor, 1st Earl of Bective, by his son. Yet it is called the Spire of Lloyd since it sits on the Hill of Lloyd, named after Thomas Lloyd of Enniskillen. The Spire stands at 30 metres (100ft) tall, and offers wonderful vistas of the surrounding countryside. On a clear day,

it is possible to see as far as the Mourne Mountains in Co. Down.

Did you know? In the 19th Century, the Spire was used to view horseracing and hunts.

GPS: 53.730616, -6.908040

Patrickstown Viewing Point

It is possible to walk up Patrick's Hill from the viewing point at Patrickstown. Part of the Loughcrew complex of passage tombs, Patrick's Hill has several “cairns” (or mounds) which conceal Neolithic passage tombs. There are also the remains of several standing stones.

Patrick's Hill is one of three hilltops that make up Loughcrew; the site itself spans a ridge of land that runs roughly east-west across the middle of Ireland. The Loughcrew hills are the highest in Co. Meath, and are each peppered with various monuments. The other hills in the complex are Carnbane West and Carnbane East.

Oldcastle

The town of Oldcastle was the 18th century creation of the Naper family, who received parts of the Plunkett estate following the cromwellian wars. Due in part to the continuation of a Gaelic way of life, the area suffered badly during the Great Famine (1845-'9) in comparison with richer, more arable and more progressive areas in the southern part of Co. Meath. The poorest inhabitants were obliterated by starvation and emigration. Nonetheless, land patterns still visible today reveal a strong attachment to pastoral farming of 'Gaelic' culture.

GPS: 53.770124, -7.162657



GPS: 53.749760, -7.085113





Loughcrew

Loughcrew, with a concentration of around 30 passage tombs, is one of the most important prehistoric cemeteries in Ireland

The Loughcrew complex is a megalithic cemetery containing around 30 passage tombs and is situated around the summit of three hills near the town of Oldcastle, Co. Meath. Nearby are the restored 17th Century Loughcrew Gardens which also holds the key to the Loughcrew Cairns site.

Loughcrew is roughly contemporary with Newgrange (3200 BC). Neolithic communities built large communal tombs, or megaliths, for their dead. There are four main types of tombs, each being named after a particular and defining feature (court tombs, portal tombs, passage tombs and wedge tombs). The typical passage tomb is cruciform in plan with a long central passage leading to a main chamber, off which there are three smaller chambers. The dead were cremated and the remains placed in the chambers above the ground. The tombs were then covered in great mounds of earth and stones called 'cairns', though often these do not survive.

A distinguishing feature of Irish passage tombs is the presence of rock art – carved or picked designs on the internal or external stones of the tomb. The art is abstract in form with circles, spirals, arcs, lozenges, triangles, zigzags and flower motifs being common. Certain symbols seem to have been favoured at particular tombs or cemeteries; spirals at Newgrange, concentric rectangles at Knowth and rayed circles at Loughcrew.

One of the best-preserved and most accessible tombs at Loughcrew, known as Cairn T, appears to be the central tomb of the whole complex. It faces the rising sun at the vernal (March) and autumnal (September) equinoxes which shines through the passage to illuminate symbols carved onto the back wall of the chamber. This tomb is reputed to be the resting place of Ollamh Fodhla, a legendary king of Ireland.

Did you know? Slieve na Callaigh gets its name from the Irish Sliabh na Callaí, meaning 'Hill of the Witch' or 'Hag's Hill'.

Contact Details for Loughcrew Cairns:

OPW, Cortown, Oldcastle, Co Meath
T: +353 (0)49 8541240 (seasonal)
Off season contact Loughcrew Gardens (see below)
E: brunaboinne@opw.ie
W: www.heritageireland.ie
GPS: 53.744371, -7.11884

Contact Details for Loughcrew Gardens & Adventure Course:

Loughcrew, Oldcastle, Co Meath
T: +353 (0)49 8541356
E: info@loughcrew.com
W: www.loughcrew.com
GPS: 53.735319, -7.142460

Loughcrew Gardens are generally open March to October every year. The site is full of history, beauty, fantasy, and atmosphere making the Gardens a magical experience. The ancient Yew Walk, medieval motte and St. Oliver Plunkett's family church create a spirit of history with a 'grotesque' grotto with tortured pillars guarding a rockery of fantasy tree fairy sculptures.

With something for all the family, the hidden story of Alice In Wonderland and a small playground keep the younger visitors happy, while the insect walk with giant bugs and hidden reptiles appeals to the older children. The canal, ponds, the water mill and cascades all create a stunning atmosphere.

Myths & Legends

The Boyne Valley is central to many of Ireland's most famous and fantastic myths...

Boyne: Mythical Origins

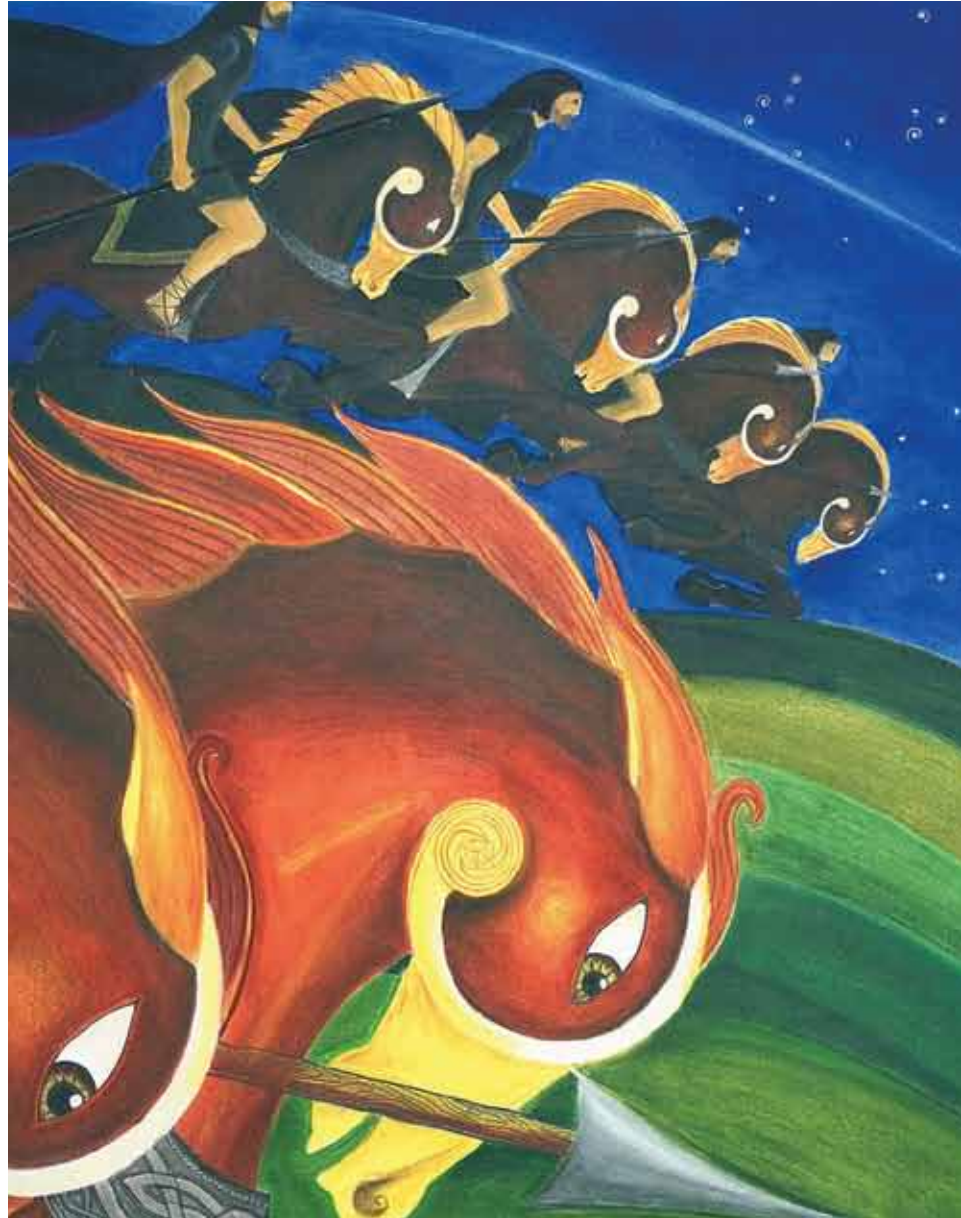
The River Boyne derives its name from the legendary Celtic goddess Bóann (or Bóand). The story goes that there was once a magical well – the Well of Wisdom (Tobar Segais in Irish) – which belonged to Nechtain, King of Leinster and husband to the goddess Bóann. Nechtain was very protective of his magical well and no one but he and his three cup bearers were permitted to visit it. One day Bóann decided to visit the well and see for herself its wonders. Some say she walked around the well three times counter sun-wise, others say she merely peered into its magical depths. Whatever the case, the waters of the well rose up – blinding, mutilating and drowning the goddess – and then rushed seawards turning into a river. Though nothing remains of the mythical well, its waters remain in the form of the River Boyne, named after the drowned goddess Bóann.

The Milesians

According to Irish mythology a man by the name of Míl Espáine is the common ancestor of all of the Irish. The story goes that there was a tribe in the north of Spain known as the Milesians, or the Sons of Mil. They invaded Ireland, dispossessing the Tuatha Dé Danann, and divided Ireland into provinces: Ulster in the north, Munster in the south, Connacht in the west, Leinster in the east and, at the centre, Tara. According to tradition, Éremón Mac Miled was the first Milesian King of all Ireland, and a contemporary of King David (biblical King of Israel, who ruled c. 1000 BC). He is the ancestor of the Úi Néill and the rulers of Leinster, Connacht and Airgiallia.

While in Spain, Éremón (son of Míl Espáine) married Odbha, who bore him three sons. After a time he abandoned her in favour of another woman (Tea, who would later give her name to Tara). When Éremón invaded

The Cattle-Raid of Cooley - Illustrations courtesy of www.celticcolor.com





The Salmon of Knowledge - Illustrations courtesy of www.celticcolor.com

Ireland, Odbha followed him but died of grief soon after arriving on account of her husband's rejection. Her three children raised a mound in which to bury her. It is thought that Navan may take its name from the Irish word for cave (An Uaimh) – the cave within the mound in which Odbha's remains have rested for the past three thousand years.

The Cattle-Raid of Cooley

The Cattle-Raid of Cooley (in Irish Táin Bó Cuailgne, pronounced – Tawn Bow Cool-in-ya), written more than 1,200 years ago, is Ireland's greatest legend and one of Europe's oldest epics. In this saga Queen Maeve of Connacht and her husband Ailill decide one night to compare their possessions. After much discussion, it becomes evident that Ailill owns a great white bull, Finnbennach, of which Maeve has no equal. There is only one bull in Ireland of equal to Finnbennach, the great brown bull of Cooley. Cooley is a peninsula in modern day Co. Louth. Maeve decides she must have the Brown Bull and so begins the story of the Táin. Maeve and her armies set off from the Royal Palace at Rathcroghan, Co. Roscommon (passing near modern-day Kells, Co. Meath) in pursuit of the Brown Bull. The only thing that stands in her way is Cúchulainn, the greatest of all Celtic heroes, who defends the Brown Bull and the lands of Ulster, as his fellow warriors lie asleep under a spell. The Boyne Valley is associated with many

of the tales central episodes: Cúchulainn intercepted Maeve's army at the village of Crossakeel, Co. Meath to try to delay their march to Ulster.

The Salmon of Knowledge

The Salmon of Knowledge (in Irish, An Bradán Feasa) is a creature from the Fenian Cycle of Irish Mythology. It features in the narrative The Boyhood Deeds of Fionn, which recounts the early adventures of the legendary Irish hero Fionn Mac Cumhail.

According to Irish mythology the first thing to ever come into creation was a hazel tree, and in its branches was contained all the knowledge of the universe. This hazel tree flourished over the Well of Wisdom (Tobar Segais) within which lived a great speckled salmon. The story goes that the salmon ate the hazel nuts which on occasion fell into the well, thus acquiring all the wisdom of the universe. It was foretold that the first person to catch and eat the salmon would gain this knowledge and that a man by the name of Fionn would be the one to do so. Nonetheless, many tried and failed, until a poet named Finnegas having spent seven years fishing the Boyne caught it. He is believed to have caught the salmon at Féic's Pool (Linn Féic), known as the 'Pool of the Boyne', near Slane, Co. Meath.

Myths & Legends

Finnegas instructed his apprentice, a young boy named Deimne Maol, to prepare it for him. Deimne burned his thumb bursting a blister on the cooking salmon. Instinctively he put his thumb into his mouth to ease the pain and in an instant he acquired all its knowledge. When Deimne brought the cooked meal to Finnegas, his master saw something in the boy's eyes that had not been there before. When asked by Finnegas, Deimne denied that he had eaten of the fish. When pressed, he admitted his accidental taste. What the old poet hadn't known was that Deimne had another name, given to him by his mother – Fionn, meaning her fair-haired one. It was this incredible knowledge and wisdom gained from the Salmon of Knowledge that allowed Fionn Mac Cumhaill to become the leader of the Fianna, the famed heroes of Irish myth. He was killed at Áth Brea or 'Ford of Brea' on the Boyne.

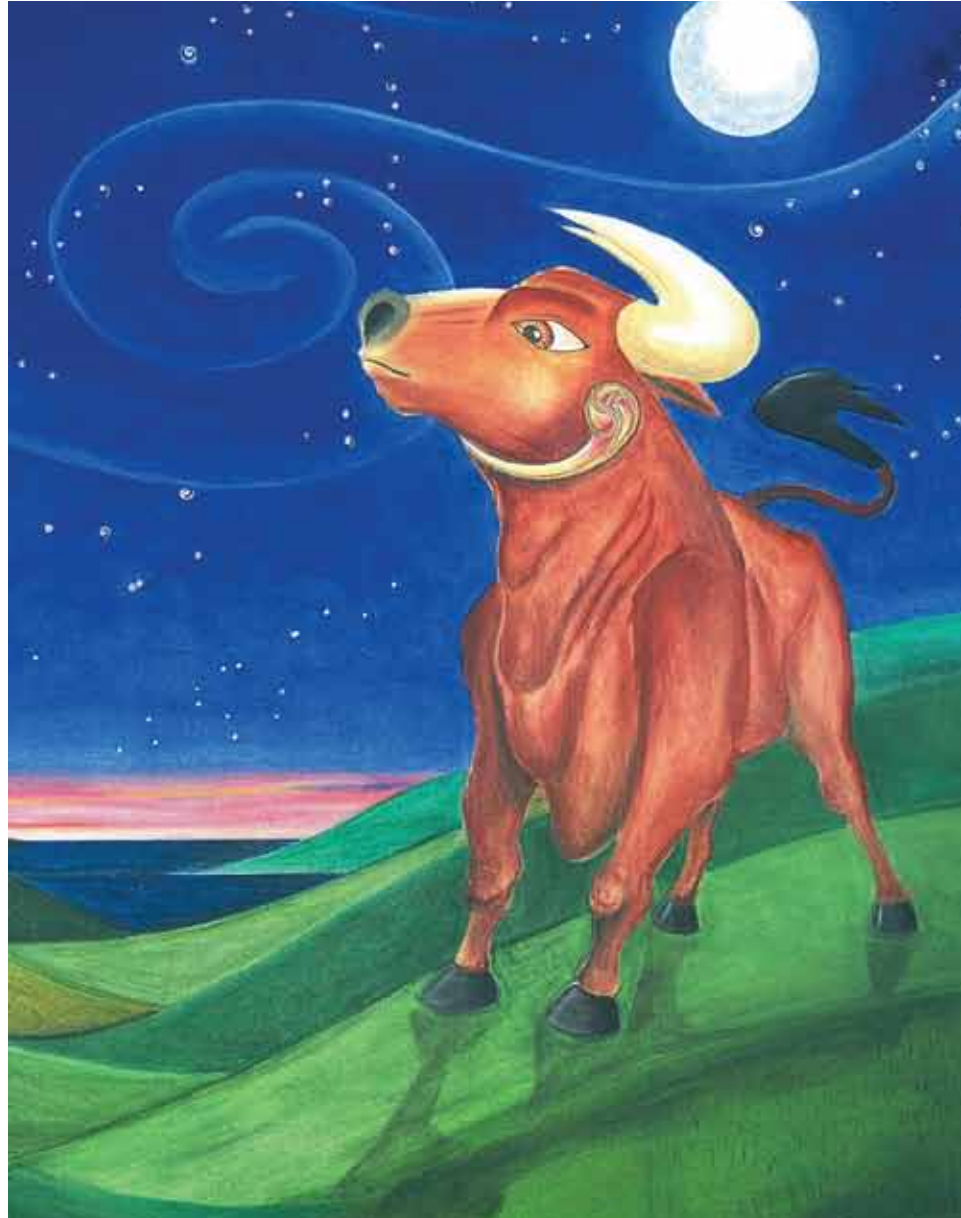
The Coming of Christianity

According to Irish mythology the Fir Bolgs were one of the races that inhabited Ireland before the Milesians, from whom the Irish are descended. The Hill of Slane is said to be a burial mound for their leader, King Sláine, and it was from him the hill is named.

However, the Hill of Slane is most closely associated with St Patrick. According to tradition, in 433, as the druids prepared

to celebrate the Feast of Tara, St. Patrick celebrating Easter lit the Paschal Fire in direct defiance of the pagan ritual. The fire was observed from the Hill of Tara and the druids told King Laoghaire that unless it was extinguished that same night, it would never be put out. The king was outraged, but every time he and his druids challenged St. Patrick with their magic they were defeated. Eventually, and reluctantly, the King and his followers converted to Christianity. St. Erc, who was the only person to pay due homage to St. Patrick during the stand-off, founded a monastery on the Hill of Slane.

The Cattle-Raid of Cooley - Illustrations courtesy of www.celticcolor.com



Your Road Map

See detailed touring route map inserted at the back of this brochure

Take your car and explore the Boyne Valley in your own time and space.

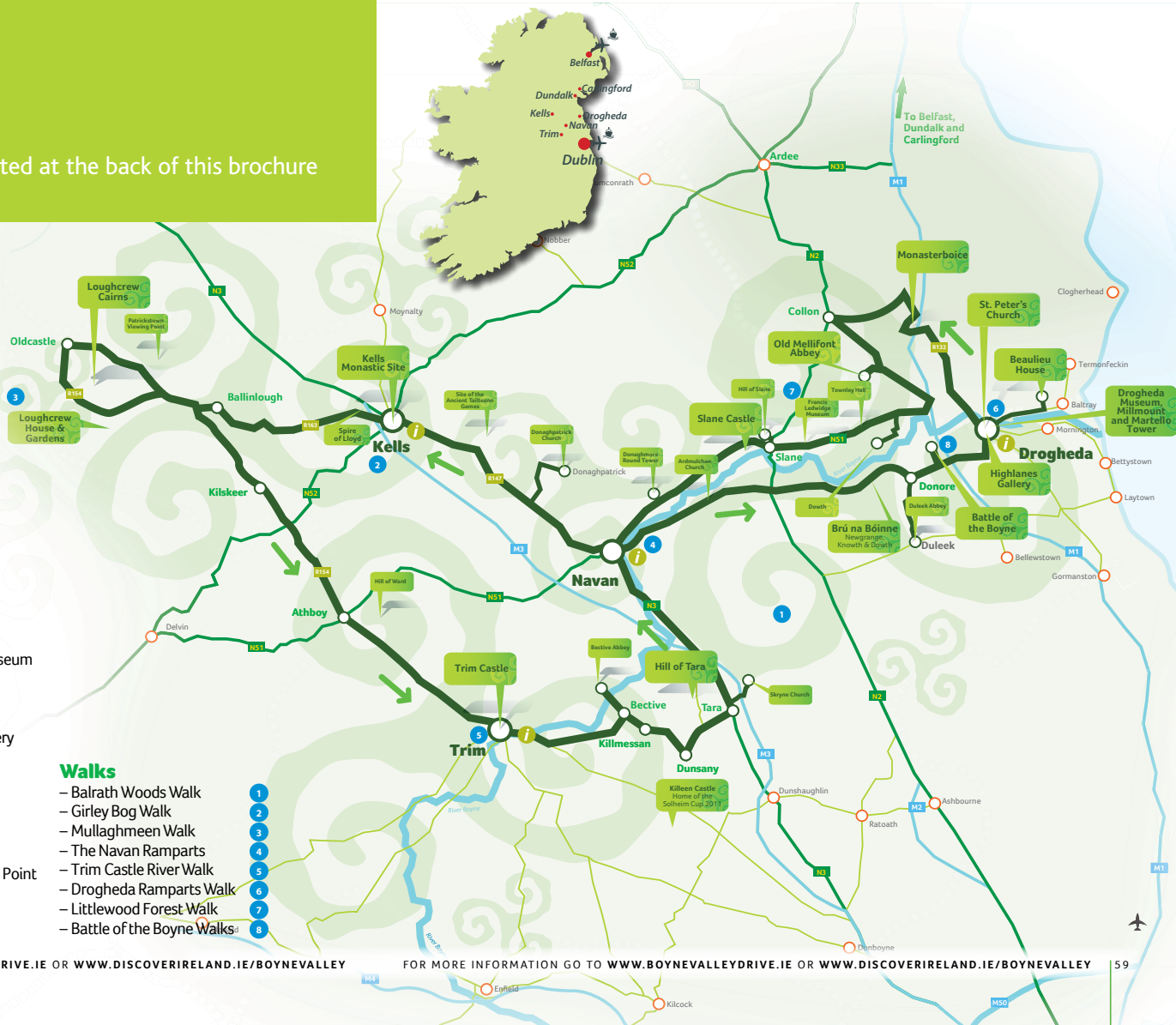
There is a signed driving route that will take you all around the Boyne Valley. This route brings you to the main towns and villages and to the sites mentioned in this brochure. Also there are many sites of historic interest along the way where you can stop and explore in your own time. These are as follows (towns are in bold text):

- **Trim Heritage Town**
- Trim Castle
- Bective Abbey
- Hill of Tara
- Skryne Church
- **Navan town**
- Ardmulchan Church
- Brú na Bóinne – Newgrange & Knowth
- Duleek Abbey
- Battle of the Boyne
- **Drogheda Heritage Town** (includes St. Peter's Church & Highlanes Gallery)
- Drogheda Museum, Millmount
- Beaulieu House
- Monasterboice

- Old Mellifont Abbey
- Townley Hall
- Dowth
- Francis Ledwidge Museum
- **Slane Village**
- Hill of Slane
- Slane Castle
- Donaghmore Cemetery and Round Tower
- **Navan**
- Donaghpatrick
- Kells Heritage Town
- Kells Monastic Site
- Spire of Lloyd
- Patrickstown Viewing Point
- Oldcastle
- Loughcrew

Walks

- Balrath Woods Walk
- Girley Bog Walk
- Mullaghmeen Walk
- The Navan Ramparts
- Trim Castle River Walk
- Drogheda Ramparts Walk
- Littlewood Forest Walk
- Battle of the Boyne Walks



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BOYNE
VALLEY

wander through time

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T +353 (0)41 9872843
W droghedatouristoffice@gmail.com


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Headfort Place, Kells, Co. Meath
T +353 (0)46 9240064
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Millbrook Road, Oldcastle, Co. Meath
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Navan -Solstice Arts Centre and Tourist Information
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W www.discoverireland.ie/boynevalley
www.boynevalleydrive.ie

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