

Welcome to Tinahely.

Tinahely is a charming market village located in a valley in South Wicklow near the Carlow and Wexford border. The village and its surrounding rural hinterland have a fascinating heritage of human settlement and we hope that this board informs you of some of the rich tapestry of our long history.

The story of Tinahely goes hand in hand with the glorious rural landscape that surrounds the village. From the majestic Wicklow Hills to the magical Tomnafinnoge Oak Woods, the people of Tinahely are privileged to be the current custodians of this natural and built inheritance.

We hope that you enjoy your time with us and that you may someday return to make your own impression on the continuing story of Tinahely....

Wicklow Uplands Council and Tinahely Community Projects wish to acknowledge the financial assistance provided under the built heritage element of the Environment Fund by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht towards the development of this interpretative panel.



Market Square

Tinahely is unusual in that it possesses a diamond shape village centre layout. This village plan is mostly found in Northern Ireland and was fashionable of village design in the nineteenth century. The Market Square building was used as an indoor market and a furniture shop while at one time the Church of Ireland primary school was located upstairs. The building and the square are the focal point of the village and many public events are held in this area. The ground floor is the current home of Tinahely's much loved and used public library.



Tinahely Courthouse

Tinahely Courthouse was completed in 1843 and was used as a working Courthouse, complete with holding cells until the early twentieth century. The building fell into disrepair following its use as a Courthouse, but through the support of the Irish training and employment authority (FÁS) and local fundraising, it was restored to its former glory during the late 1980s and early 1990s. It is now the home of a professional, atmospheric and intimate Arts Centre which presents and supports local, national and international artists of a wide and varied nature.

Whitefield Cemetery & Killavenny

The cemetery at Whitefield was once the location of a Catholic Church but now only the historic cemetery remains. It is reputed to contain graves from the tragic period of the Great Irish Famine of the 1840s which caused widespread suffering, disease and death, in conjunction with mass emigration from the Tinahely area. In November 1850, Father Thomas Hore the local Catholic Priest led former Killavenny tenants aboard the clipper ship Ticonderoga and set sail for the United States of America and a new beginning.

Black Tom's Cellars

Black Tom was a nickname printed on pamphlets to tarnish the reputation of Thomas Wentworth (1593-1641), Earl of Stafford and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Wentworth was a towering political figure in the tumultuous period leading up to the beginning of the English Civil War and had a ruthless reputation when he was sent to Ireland as the King's representative known as the Lord Lieutenant in 1633. In Ireland, he managed to succeed in proving himself unpopular with both the Catholic and Protestant population leading to his blackened name.

Although a strong supporter of King Charles I, Thomas Wentworth was ironically convicted of high treason and was beheaded on 12th May 1641 on Tower Hill in London. On hearing of the King's agreement to his execution, Wentworth was said to have famously remarked "put not your trust in Princes".

His association with Tinahely dates to the beginnings of the Coollattin Estate which was owned initially by Thomas Wentworth. The foundations for a hunting lodge were being constructed in Tinahely leading to the area being referred to as Black Tom's Cellars and are located near the Wicklow County Council Offices in Tinahely. Wentworth's lands in Wicklow were retained by his descendants and the Coollattin Estate endured until the mid-twentieth century.



Iron Age

Birth of Christ



Early Christian Era

St. Patrick brings Christianity to Ireland.

AD 500



Tinahely ringfort built.

A ringfort is an enclosed dwelling which dates mainly from the period c.500-1200 AD. It consisted of a circular area enclosed by a large earth or stone bank with a deep outer ditch. They ranged in diameter from 15m to 60m. The bank was often surrounded by a timber palisade or fence. Circular houses were located within the centre of the ringfort which were

gradually replaced by rectangular houses. The ringforts were built by the elite who practiced mixed farming and grew crops. There is one recorded ringfort in Tinahely which measures 29m in diameter and is located on a SE facing slope. It is defined by a partly levelled earthen bank which is 7m in width and varies from 0.3m to 0.7m in height. There are no surviving internal features.



First Viking raid in Ireland 795.

The medieval period in Ireland began around 900 AD. This was a time of massive social change with the arrival of Christianity the new and soon to be dominant religion. The late fifth century saw the beginnings of extensive missionary activity in Ireland. St Patrick, Ireland's national saint, is the best known of the early missionaries. Archaeological evidence for early medieval Christianity includes cemeteries, hermitages, and pastoral church sites along with large and small monasteries.



Church at Kilcommon built 9th century.

AD 1000

Additional monuments found in isolation and associated with ecclesiastical sites include holy wells, souterrains, bullaun stones, ogham stones and crosses. Kilcommon church contains evidence of early Christian activity in the form of an earlier enclosure and a font. There is no trace of an early church however the existing Church of Ireland was built on the original site in the nineteenth century.



Normans invade Ireland 1169. FitzWilliams family arrive in Ireland.

Medieval period



AD 1500

Tinahely Castle foundations built.

Tinahely during the late nineteenth and twentieth century was home to one of the largest horse fairs outside of Ballinacree. They were held quarterly with traders and

horses arriving in the village from all over the country. The horse fairs provided much needed work and social excitement in the village when they were held.

Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Stafford, founder of Coollattin Estate, beheaded on 12th May, 1641.



1798 Rebellion. Tinahely burnt to the ground.

Born out of Tinahely's connection and love with the horse, the first agricultural show was held in 1937. The show has grown from humble beginnings to being awarded the title of Wicklow County Show in 1971. Held on the August Monday Bank Holiday each year the show now takes place at a

Great Famine 1845.

Railway comes to Tinahely 1866.

Tinahely Horse Fair.

Tinahely Agricultural Show - first held in 1937.

purpose built, spectacular 71 acre site at Fairwood which hosts up to 25,000 visitors. The Show Society is made up of local volunteers who ensure that the event is a highlight of the Irish rural calendar and now one of the largest agricultural one day shows in Ireland.

1798 Monuments

Tinahely and its surrounding hinterland played a prominent part in the 1798 rebellion led by the United Irishmen. The Tinahely area with its location on the Wicklow, Wexford, Carlow border was a hive of activity during this turbulent period in Irish history. The village itself was destroyed by rebels during the many violent events of that year as it had a reputation for supporting the hated yeomen who were the British Crowns militia fighting the local rebels. Battles and skirmishes also took place in Ballyrahan, Gurteen and Toberpatrick. Of the many violent and tragic events that took place in the area during 1798, one of the most evocative was the execution of brothers Philip and Patrick Lacey at Ballinglen Bridge on the 21st June 1798 by yeomanry. They were recognised at the bridge while returning home after taking part in the defeat at Vinegar Hill, which effectively ended any hope of success for the rebels. Their graves are located at Preban Cemetery.

The Coollattin Estate

The Coollattin Estate which at its height contained a massive 90,000 acres, was founded by Thomas Wentworth the first earl of Stratford. Later the estate came to be held by his descendants the Fitzwilliams, one of the wealthiest families in Britain. Many of the surrounding villages to the estate, such as Tinahely owe their very foundations to the existence of the Coollattin Estate and the Fitzwilliam family. Tinahely is regarded as an estate village rebuilt with support from the Fitzwilliams following the destruction of the 1798 rebellion.

Toberpatrick Holy Well

There are many St. Patrick's Wells across Ireland - this one is located in Toberpatrick, Tinahely. Toberpatrick means 'Patrick's Well' in Irish, and is reputed to have been blessed by Saint Patrick on his travels around Ireland 1,500 years ago. The well was restored in the early 1990s. The well was also used as a source of spring water for many families in the area. Today it remains a respected site with religious medals, rosaries and other items often placed on the tree above the well, as people offer their prayers at this holy site.

River Derry

The Derry River rises north of Tinahely and flows through Shillelagh before entering the Slaney at Clonegal. It is primarily regarded as a spawning river for the Slaney. The Derry River holds small brown trout, one of Ireland's most popular native freshwater species. The Derry name derives from the Irish for oak (dair) alluding to the history of oak woodlands in the area.

Luke O'Toole GAA Monument

On the link between the Ballycumber and Kyle looped walks lies a monument to Luke O'Toole who was the first full time General Secretary of the Gaelic Athletic Association from 1901 until his death in 1928. O'Toole who was born in Ballycumber was instrumental in the promotion of the GAA as Ireland's largest sporting and cultural organisation. He was also a key figure in the purchase of Croke Park, the GAA's historic headquarters and in steering the young organisation through the War of Independence, the aftermath of Bloody Sunday and the tragedy of the Civil War. His grave is located at Killavenny cemetery in Tinahely.

Walks from Tinahely



Railway Walk

The Railway line from Woodenbridge to Shillelagh was built to facilitate access to the Fitzwilliam Estate at Coollattin and to improve the local economy. At the considerable expense of the Fitzwilliam family the line was opened in 1866 with stops at Woodenbridge, Aughrim, Ballinglen, Tinahely, and Shillelagh. The steam railway era brought many advantages to local trade and agriculture in the area and supported Tinahely's development as a market village. The line proved too expensive to keep open due to a shortage of coal caused by the Second World War and the last passenger train was in 1944. The line was left to be reclaimed by nature, but due to the work of Tinahely Community Projects and the generous support of the landowners, the local sections of the railway track were reconstituted as a flat walking trail, providing a wonderful amenity for young and old. The first section of the walk opened in 2007.

Wicklow Way & Tinahely Looped Walks

The Wicklow Way is one of Ireland's best known and loved walking trails and runs from Marley Park in South Dublin to the small village of Clonegal in Carlow. At a length of 127km, it continues to be one of the most travelled of Ireland's long distance walking trails. Tinahely is one of the closest villages to the Wicklow Way and has provided shelter, sustenance and entertainment to many weary walkers over the years. Building upon that legacy, there are now several looped walks off the Wicklow Way in the surrounding hills around Tinahely providing additional trail walking for those interested in seeing more of the beautiful Wicklow landscape.

Tomnafinnoge Oak Wood

Tomnafinnoge is one of the last remaining mature oak plantations in Ireland. The magnificent oak was planted by the Fitzwilliam Estate several hundred years ago, and timber from the forest is said to have been used in the construction of Trinity College, Dublin, Kings College Cambridge and St Paul's Cathedral London. During the 1980s a public campaign by locals, politicians and artists such as U2's 'The Edge' ensured the survival of the woods and they are now protected as a 'Special Area of Conservation' owned and maintained by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Tomnafinnoge Wood is a magical site for walking and includes a 2km walk along the Derry River and two looped walks; the Oak Walk 3.2km and the Hazel Walk 1.3km.

Dermot Troy Birthplace

Dermot Troy (1927-1961) was a famous Irish Tenor who was born on Barton Street, Tinahely. Troy is acknowledged as Ireland's finest lyric tenor since John McCormack. By the time of his sudden death in 1962 he had gone on an extraordinary journey from singing as a member of a musical group in Inchicore to performing as the principal lyric tenor of the Hamburg Opera House, one of the most prestigious in the world. Dermot Troy shared the stage with some of the most famous sopranos of the twentieth century, including Maria Callas, Joan Sutherland and Elizabeth Schwartzkopf.

Tinahely Timeline