



Welcome to *Baltinglass—Bealach Conglais.*

Baltinglass is located on both sides of the River Slaney in West Wicklow, joined by a three arched stone bridge. The name derives from the Irish, Bealach Conglais, which is a reference to the legend of a huntsman who chased wild boar into a cave. The town owes its origins to the 12th century Cistercian Abbey, the impressive ruins of which remain on the east side of the river. Overlooking the town there is evidence of much earlier human activity at 'The Pinnacle' on Baltinglass Hill, a Neolithic burial site that is visible along with the more modern Holy Year Cross from 1950. The Cistercian monks constructed a weir on the river, allowing them to erect a mill across from the Abbey. In the 1830s Baltinglass Union Workhouse was built on the outskirts of the town. Its fever hospital later became Baltinglass District Hospital.

Baltinglass was the birthplace of Richard Crosbie (born c1755), the first Irish balloonist, and John Thomond O'Brien (1786-1861) who helped to bring independence to Argentina, Chile and Peru.



Stratford Lodge School

Stratford Lodge School is the oldest school in Baltinglass and throughout its history it has occupied four buildings. It was founded in the 1820s by the 4th Earl of Aldborough but his daughter, Lady Elizabeth Stratford, was its patron. It was situated on the edge of Stratford Lodge demesne. When the railway came to Baltinglass the school was demolished to make way and it was transferred to the old bridewell. Eleven years later, in 1895, the new school opened in Church Lane. In 1975 it was replaced by the more modern adjacent building and the old school became the Church of Ireland parish hall.



St. Mary's Church of Ireland

The present Church of Ireland parish church was built close to its predecessor and consecrated in 1884. At the same time the Rectory was built on the site of a tower house sometimes referred to as Baltinglass Castle. It had been the Abbot's residence, and after the dissolution, it was occupied by the Eustaces, Viscounts Baltinglass. The third Viscount took part in the Desmond Rebellion against Elizabeth I. With Fiach MacHugh O'Byrne, he led the rebels to victory at the Battle of Glenmalur in 1580 but ultimately the rebellion failed and the Eustaces lost their lands and their title.



The Abbey and Stratford Tomb

The Cistercian Abbey of Baltinglass was founded in 1148 on land granted by the infamous Dermot MacMurrough, King of Leinster. Of the original buildings only the ruins remain. After the Abbey's dissolution by Henry VIII in 1537, its lands were granted to the Eustace family, along with the title of Viscount Baltinglass. The church continued in use as the Church of Ireland Parish Church until the 1880s and the present tower was added in the 1810s. Built into the ruins of the south transept is the tomb of the Stratford family capped with a stone pyramid.



Courthouse

The present Courthouse was built in the 1810s along with the adjoining bridewell or gaol. The bridewell was closed in 1883 but the cells under the Courthouse may still be seen. For over a decade the disused bridewell was temporary home to Stratford Lodge School. In 1900 it was transformed into Baltinglass Town Hall and for decades was the heart of the town's social activity. Subsequently it was a cinema, a storeroom, a badminton hall and finally in 2000 it became home to Baltinglass Library.



The Pinnacle

The former burial cairn on the summit of Baltinglass Hill, known as 'The Pinnacle', is surrounded by a hillfort named Rathcoran. The cairn dating from around 3000BC was excavated from 1934 to 1936, revealing the passage tombs and chambers within. The stones from the cairn were used to build the large circular wall outside the cairn kerb stones. Rathcoran Hillfort dates from the Iron Age (c300BC to 500AD) and is defined by two ramparts which enclose about ten hectares of hilltop. This is on private land.



Baltinglass Outdoor Education Centre

The buildings now occupied by the Outdoor Education Centre were purpose-built in the 1930s for two other institutions. In 1931 Slaney Valley Co-operative Creameries opened a branch of its operations in what is now the lower building on the left. In 1935 Baltinglass Technical School moved to new premises built to the right of the creamery. After the creamery closed, the building was acquired by the school and an extension was constructed linking the two. This remained the home of Baltinglass Vocational School until 1982 when it relocated to a new site and became Scoil Chonglais.

Site of Stratford Lodge

The Stratford family purchased Baltinglass in 1707. In 1763 John Stratford was granted the title of Baron Baltinglass and in 1777, he became Earl of Aldborough. One of his younger sons, Benjamin, built Stratford Lodge as his residence in the late eighteenth century. He became the 4th earl in 1823. His grandson Benjamin, the 6th and last earl was a hot air balloon enthusiast who took out patents for designs for aircraft in the 1850s. He built a 'balloon house' for his constructions. In 1858 Stratford Lodge was destroyed by fire. The demesne land became a golf course in 1928.

Battle of Baltinglass Post Office

This is where the Baltinglass Post Office was when, in 1950, a dispute began over the position of sub-postmaster. The ensuing prolonged protest caused bitter divisions and brought Baltinglass to the attention of national and international newspapers. Reporters who stayed in the town to cover the dispute named it the 'Battle of Baltinglass'. In 1953 one of the reporters, Lawrence Earl, a Canadian, published a satirical account of the incident as *The Battle of Baltinglass*.

Railway Ticket Office

Baltinglass Railway Station opened in 1885. The arrival of the Tullow to Salins branch railway was a great boost to the town. The station was built on the site of Parke's bleach mill and green, one of two bleach greens for textiles in the early nineteenth century. The railway declined in the mid-twentieth century and the line was permanently closed in 1959. Today the ticket office and station master's house are the only physical remains of the station.

1798 Courthouse & Bridewell

At the end of the eighteenth century the courthouse and bridewell (or gaol) in Baltinglass were located in Mill Street close to the bridge. It was here that 1798 rebels were tried and imprisoned. These institutions were relocated to Main Street in the 1810s and the present building was erected on this site in the 1860s as commercial premises. In 1920-1922, during the War of Independence and the Civil War, it was occupied firstly by the British Army and later by the National Army when it again became a place of detention for rebel prisoners.

IN 1798 BALTINGLASS COURTHOUSE AND BRIDEWELL STOOD ON THIS SITE TO COMMEMORATE THOSE ON ALL SIDES OF THE CONFLICTS OF 1798 - 1903 WHO LOST THEIR LIVES

Town Park & River Walk

South of the town centre is Baltinglass Town Park, with a boardwalk along the river. The park occupies the area that was used in the early nineteenth century as one of the town's two bleach greens. A river walk extends further south along the bank of the Slaney. There is another amenity area on the river north of the town beside the weir. The wildlife that may be seen along this stretch of Slaney includes otters, mink, stoats, brown trout, salmon, heron and swans.

Baltinglass Bridge

The bridge was built about 1790 by the 2nd Earl of Aldborough and it has three arches carried on triangular cutwaters. It is the only crossing of the Slaney within the town. Originally there was a ford slightly north of the present structure which was replaced by a bridge erected by Sir Henry Harrington in the mid-seventeenth century. This appears to have served as the crossing until the present bridge was built.



Jennie Wyse Power's birthplace

In May 1858 Jennie O'Toole was born here. Two years later her family moved to Dublin. In 1881 she returned to the area as a Ladies' Land League activist and met her future husband John Wyse Power, also a political activist. Living in Dublin she ran a restaurant that became a meeting place for leading nationalists. It was there that the 1916 Proclamation was signed. Jennie Wyse Power held various minor public offices from 1902 and was appointed to the Senate in 1922.

McAllister Monument

At the centenary of the 1798 Rebellion fundraising was held for the erection of monuments throughout Wicklow. The one in Baltinglass was to depict Michael Dwyer but due to certain resentment towards him in the town it was decided to give that honour to Sam McAllister, a Presbyterian who deserted from the Antrim Militia and joined Dwyer's band of rebels. McAllister died in the Derrynamuck Ambush in 1799, sacrificing his life to allow Dwyer escape. The foundation stone was laid in 1902 and the monument, by George Smyth of Dublin, was unveiled in 1904. 'McAllister' is now an icon of Baltinglass.



St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church

The building of this church was commenced in 1845. It was designed by John Bourke in Early English Gothic style. Due to the Famine the church was not opened for public worship until 1855. The altar was erected in 1873 to a design by J.S. Butler. The tower, built with stone taken from Lord Aldborough's balloon house, was added in 1887. The stained glass windows are mostly by Mayer of Munich.



