

# Wicklow Mountain Views



The Newsletter of Wicklow Uplands Council

Autumn 2011



## Letter from the Chair

Many people have asked the question what does the Wicklow Uplands Council do? What are its significant achievements? The answer is that we do many things and have achieved a great deal, but perhaps our most

significant achievement is that we have brought together, around one table, many diverse and sometimes opposing groups and achieved consensus on what seemed to be intractable problems. The most notable example of this was on the issue of access for walkers. The work Wicklow Uplands Council has carried out, in co-operation with others, has resulted in Wicklow experiencing few of the confrontations that have been commonplace in other parts of the country. Many trails and access routes have been opened up and continue to be opened up with little or no controversy.

In addition to the Council's work with private landowners and farmers, a number of factors play a part in making the Wicklow uplands such an attractive walking destination; the fact that we have a large national park in the centre of the county, the volume of forests which are accessible through Coillte's open forest policy and most of all the intrinsic natural beauty of the place. As anyone who lives in or travels the hills at weekends can testify, there is no shortage of walkers in the uplands. We have however failed to fully reap the economic/tourism benefits of our high visitor numbers. The stark reality is that not enough walkers stay overnight or choose to spend money in the county and we cannot criticise them for that. Our challenge is to help create the conditions whereby those walkers and their friends and families will want to stay and spend money in the area.

When people ask the question "what does the Wicklow Uplands Council do?", it reveals a key weakness; we have not sold ourselves or what we do particularly well. In light of this, on September 30th at 7.30pm the Council is holding an open meeting in Roundwood Parish Hall at which we will explain what we do and what we hope to achieve. The theme for the evening is 'Community led tourism – the key to Wicklow's prosperity'.

The last twelve months has been a period of adjustment for the Council involving a reshaping of the organisation. Like everyone else in the country, we have had to cope with the downturn in the economy so, with the assistance of County Wicklow Partnership, we engaged in a full review of the organisation. We retained the services of Dr Kathy Walsh who in conjunction with the board produced a three-year Strategic Plan 2011-2013.

We moved into new offices in the Parish Hall in Roundwood during the second half of last year, where we now hold our monthly board meetings.

Colin Murphy, our long serving Chief Executive Officer, retired in June and we have appointed Cara Doyle to the position of Co-ordinator. Colin, who took up the position in 1999, has played a major role in the development of the organisation and was particularly successful in forging relationships with our sponsors and partners. We wish him all the best in his retirement. Murt O'Keeffe and Pat Ewen, two of our longest serving directors, decided to step down at the Annual General Meeting this year. Both, in their different ways, have made significant contributions to the Wicklow Uplands Council and we wish them well.

Cara Doyle is I believe a dynamic appointment. She is a former employee of Wicklow Uplands Council who has worked in New Zealand for the last four years in the Queenstown Lakes District, Parks and Reserves. She has the right mix of energy and experience to bring the Council to another level.

Through all the change and adjustment our work progresses. We continue to administer the PURE project in conjunction with our statutory partners. Our work with the village interpretative panels also proceeds.

The oral history of the Wicklow Mountains holds many stories of hardships endured in snow, stories of people being isolated without food, of sheep being lost in blizzards and even the odd avalanche. An old sheep-man once said to me "you could go to bed wealthy and wake up a pauper". For years we experienced a succession of mild winters and, with talk of global warming, we thought we might never see snow again. The last two winters have seen a return of the snow and temperatures lower than I have witnessed in my lifetime. In the

winter of 2009/2010 Wicklow County Council, like many other local authorities, was ill-prepared for the extreme conditions. Their focus was to maintain access on main roads and in towns, which left many rural areas cut off for a prolonged period. In summer 2010 we met with Wicklow County Council and attempted to set up a modus operandi for future weather emergencies. The line of communication with the Council seemed to work reasonably well in the severe weather of December 2010. Our role in this matter is in assisting the County Council to deliver an acceptable service to upland communities.

One of the topics which has come up again and again at meetings over recent years has been the deteriorating state of the heather on our hills and the implications this has for sheep farming, recreational use and the danger of fire. This year, in conjunction with the Irish Uplands Forum, we held a series of meetings and set up a working group to advance the issue. We believe this will be an important project in the future.

Finally, our work could not continue without financial help and we have been very lucky with the loyalty of our patrons through these tough times. The Heritage Council remains our key sponsor and we are extremely grateful for their backing. Denis O'Brien has been a long time friend of the Council and has substantially increased his support this year. We also appreciate the continuing assistance of Wicklow County Council. We look forward to working with all of our partners and members on improving life in the Uplands for the people who live, work and recreate there.

**DECLAN O'NEILL**  
Chair, Wicklow Uplands Council



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Different Nation - Different Station

Wicklow Mountain Views –  
The Newsletter of Wicklow Uplands Council  
Issue Number 21: Autumn 2011  
Published by: Wicklow Uplands Council Ltd.  
Editor: Cara Doyle





# Hidden History Hill Walk



To celebrate National Heritage Week 2011, Wicklow Uplands Council organised a 'Hidden History Hill Walk' at Lough Dan on Sunday 28th August. The walk was led by local history expert Dr Chris Corlett, Archaeologist with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Lough Dan Scout Centre provided temporary car parking for walkers in a field near the scout centre. From there, local farmer and B&B owner Sean Byrne ferried walkers by minibus to the start of the walk at 'Pier Gates'. Due to transport limitations, bookings were essential. Demand for the walk was unprecedented, with fifty people participating on the day.

Dark clouds gave way to sunshine as the group set off on the descent to the gate lodge at Luggala. The hills were awash with colour, the purple heather in full bloom. Along the way walkers enjoyed panoramic views of the mosaic of

farmland and forest of the Cloghoge valley, giving way to a backdrop of open mountain.

After a brief welcome and introduction by Cara Doyle from Wicklow Uplands Council, walkers listened eagerly as Dr Chris Corlett began to reveal the secrets of surrounding landscape. Chris led the group over stone stiles and along mossy lanes to the ruins of hidden farmsteads and spoke of the resilient people who lived in these parts. He pointed out a series of houses flanking the road from the Cloghoge Brook to Lough Dan which would otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Along the way, a large herd of deer grazed the open fields and, on disturbance bounded to an adjoining oak wood. The herd size was estimated at 200 animals, testament to the growing issue of deer numbers in the Wicklow hills.

The group stopped for lunch at a disused farmhouse beside the 'stepping stones' over the Cloghoge River before continuing past the shores of Lough Dan, the largest natural lake in Wicklow. The last leg of the walk proved the most difficult under foot, with wet ground conditions after a period of heavy rainfall in the previous days. After crossing the river, the group were welcomed to the townland of Carrigeenduff by Sean Byrne where his family has lived for generations. Sean relayed stories of the families who lived in the area, cutting turf from a nearby bog, hunting rabbits, growing vegetables and foraging for whatever nature had to offer.



*Dr Chris Corlett leads the group to a ruined farmhouse*

Once in a while a supply of flour and sugar was sourced from Roundwood but, in general, self sufficiency prevailed.

As the rain loomed once again, walkers made their way back to the car park via the 'agreed access route' overlooking Lough Dan. This access route was developed in 2007 in agreement with local landowners and in co-operation with Wicklow Uplands Council, County Wicklow Partnership and Wicklow County Council.

Wicklow Uplands Council wishes to thank all who participated in the hill walk, but especially Dr Chris Corlett for bringing the history of the area to life. Thanks also to Sean Byrne who provided transport, Scouting Ireland for temporary car parking and not least, the local landowners who permitted access to this beautiful area.

**Cara Doyle, Co-ordinator  
Wicklow Uplands Council**

## Kildare Wicklow - A New Destination



At the end of 2008, Fáilte Ireland had to rethink their tourism strategy, due to the sudden downturn in the world economy. After some research, they decided to concentrate

their efforts and resources in developing ten 'destinations' around the country where most visitors traditionally go. One of these areas covers the east coast of Wicklow, the Wicklow Mountains, and the eastern part of Kildare. With a view to this, Fáilte Ireland decided to create the 'Kildare Wicklow Destination'.

Fáilte Ireland's objective is to package and promote the destination, improve the attractions, enhance the visitor experience, and support local providers. The initial stage of the development of our destination has been to create a logo (recently launched), and work is currently ongoing to develop a driving route that will connect key tourism attractions and scenic locations around both counties. Some promotional activities have already been organised through the national press and online media. Fáilte Ireland is also running a series of workshops in both Wicklow and Kildare designed to help the local trade to promote and run their businesses more effectively.

Some concern has been raised regarding the difficulty of promoting two very different counties such as Wicklow and Kildare. Some tourism providers have questioned whether there is a danger that Wicklow will lose some of its identity by being amalgamated with Kildare. I prefer to believe that this initiative is offering Wicklow the opportunity to increase its exposure both at home and abroad.

Firstly, this gives Wicklow and Kildare an opportunity to create our own destination, rather than being an extension of Dublin – we still get a very small amount of visitors staying in Wicklow compared with the massive volume of day-trippers. Secondly, we must welcome the fact that

Fáilte Ireland will dedicate time and resources to the development and promotion of this destination. This should increase our visitor numbers and improve our visitor's experience and will give us the opportunity to reach and attract new markets. Finally, Wicklow is being given a strong platform from which we can feature and promote our own tourism brands.

Wicklow County Tourism, with the support of Fáilte Ireland and various local organisations, is working hard at packaging the best of what Wicklow has to offer with the objective of both entertaining visitors and attracting new ones. Wicklow already enjoys a very strong and popular brand with the 'Garden of Ireland'. Our gardens and heritage homes already draw huge crowds from all over the world. Wicklow also has the potential to become Ireland's premier outdoor destination with a wide variety of activities to choose from. We are also looking at developing other 'experiences' around Wicklow's strong heritage, our unique coastline and the quality of our local produce and artisan foods.

This new initiative has strengthened the collaboration and support between the various organisations in Wicklow and Kildare. Under the new destination, Wicklow County Tourism and Fáilte Ireland are once again endeavouring to reinforce this partnership for the greater benefit of the trade. Beyond our borders, Tourism Ireland is already starting to promote our destination through their various media platforms. Let's hope that in time, all the efforts and resources spent, will enhance the experience of our visitors, and more importantly, attract more people to stay in our beautiful county.

**Frederic Verdier,  
Tourism Development Officer  
Wicklow County Tourism Ltd**



# The Ruined Farmhouses of the Cloghoge and Inchavore Valleys

The largest example of a fossilised 18th/19th century farming landscape in Wicklow, if not the country, is the Cloghoge Valley between Lough Tay and Lough Dan, and the adjoining Inchavore Valley extending west of Lough Dan. The Cloghoge Valley is largely formed by two townlands; Cloghoge and Ballinrush. Today these two valleys are largely uninhabited and only used for small scale sheep grazing. This provides an exceptional opportunity to examine on an unprecedented scale the former settlement and land use in one of the remotest parts of the Wicklow Mountains, albeit less than 30km due south of Dublin's O'Connell Street. Over the last number of years I have attempted to survey and record the former houses, field systems and accompanying cultivation ridges that have survived to this day largely untouched. At first glance this landscape has a largely uniform appearance. However, as I came to study the remains in greater detail, I began to notice that there are significant differences in how the landscape was settled, divided and used.

Cloghoge townland forms the western side of the Cloghoge valley, from Lough Tay at the north, to Lough Dan and the Inchavore River at the south. About 1787 Peter La Touche acquired Luggala at the north end of Lough Tay where he established a hunting lodge. Soon after Cloghoge was attached to this estate.

There is little evidence of earlier settlement in this valley, except for a bullaun stone near the ford of Aghavourk (now bridged) across the Cloghoge Brook. However, situated near the northern shores of Lough Tay are the remains of a sod house and a series of lazy bed ridge and furrows, probably dating to the mid 18th century. It is unlikely that this building, which would have detracted from the fine views of Lough Tay, was allowed to remain standing once La Touche built his nearby hunting lodge.

In the 1841 Census, the population of Cloghoge was 148 inhabitants in 19 households. The Great Famine took its toll later in the decade and by 1851, the population had reduced to 95 but notably the number of households remained unchanged. In fact, the greatest decline in the population took place during the 1850s. There are local traditions of sudden large-scale evictions and clearances on the estate, but in reality this is likely to have been more gradual. About 1851, David La Touche embarked on an extensive drainage

scheme with a view to establishing improved sheep pastures on the Luggala estate. By 1855, there were only eight houses listed in Griffith's Valuation, when none of the tenants held any land or commonage. This implies that the clearance of the land was well advanced. By 1861, the population stood at just 14, living in two houses.

Little is known about the success or otherwise of these early attempts to establish a sheep farm but, in September 1872, there was a large auction of some 4000 Cheviot Sheep at Luggala. This flock was established by David G. Stiell in 1867 with "Hogget Ewes selected from the purest flocks in Scotland". Stiell's tenure had expired, but the annual sheep sale at Luggala would remain a calendar event for several decades.

The settlement in Cloghoge is generally dispersed and where it occurs in clusters there are two or three houses. The ruined houses are generally one or two roomed dwellings, both direct and lobby entry types, with many featuring later outbuildings attached at one end. One house near the Cloghoge Brook has a large range of outbuildings that imply winter housing of cattle and dairy farming. Elsewhere the outbuildings are small and imply a very limited number of stock, with a primary emphasis on cultivation – in particular hand dug 'lazy bed' ridge and furrows. Only one haggard has a small stand for a hay rick and in two yards are what may be the remains of outside 'duck houses' for domestic fowl. A number have small gardens attached – frequently preserving evidence for spade dug cultivation. There was plenty of mountain grazing available and good access to mountain bogs for turf cutting. It is tempting to see the lazy beds as representing potato ridges, but it is known that oats and rye were also grown in this way throughout the Wicklow uplands.

The eastern side of the Cloghoge valley is formed by the townland of Ballinrush. While Cloghoge was almost entirely cleared during the 1850s, settlement in Ballinrush continued for another century. Unlike Cloghoge, the population in Ballinrush remained stable throughout the 1840s and 1860s, with seven inhabited buildings listed throughout the 1841, 1851 and 1861 censuses. In 1841, there were 38 inhabitants, and by 1851, despite the Famine, the population increased slightly to 43.

Many of the lower slopes of Ballinrush are very steep and cliffed, making them unavailable for farming or settlement. Therefore many of the farms are scattered along the 1000ft contour. There are several formal gardens and haggards at the Ballinrush farms, featuring the remains of rick stands for hay and corn stands for grain. Corn stands were designed to dry and store grain (usually oats in Wicklow) for the spring threshing, as well as to keep rats out. The presence of such corn stands in Ballinrush may highlight cereal cultivation at high altitude. Within the haggard of one house is a corn stand and a rick stand. This farm is some 1200ft above sea level, and the highest in the valley.

Carrigeenduff is a large townland much of which continues to be settled and farmed today, but the northern portion of this townland, i.e. the area overlooking Lough Dan and the Inchavore River, is today uninhabited. While this valley continued to be inhabited and actively farmed until about 1960, the settlement and land use pattern remained largely unchanged since the late 18th century and is remarkably different to that found at the neighbouring Cloghoge valley.

The main settlement consists of a cluster or clachan of six houses on low ground near a small stream that feeds into Lough Dan. At about 700ft above sea level, this is the lowest settlement in either valley. It is reputed that there was cultivated land associated with these houses close to Lough Dan. The land extending to the west along the southern side of the Inchavore River is low lying and appears to have served as large meadow and grazing areas (i.e., the inse mhór from which the river takes its name). This is further supported by the fact that in the farm haggards are a series of circular and rectangular stands for hay ricks. It seems most likely that the land was farmed here along a form of rundale, which is not evident elsewhere in the valley.

## Acknowledgements

*With thanks to Garech Browne, Tom Clinton, Sean Byrne and Criostóir MacCárthaigh.*

**Dr Chris Corlett, Archaeologist,  
Department of Department of Arts,  
Heritage & the Gaeltacht**



*The Cloghoge Valley*



# An Update from Project PURE

## Protecting Upland and Rural Environments

The PURE project is a partnership project and the first of its kind in Ireland which incorporates statutory and non-statutory organisations, including; Wicklow County Council, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council and South Dublin County Council, as well as Coillte, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Fáilte Ireland, and the Wicklow Uplands Council, funded by The Department of Environment Community and Local Government and was established to combat illegal dumping/fly-tipping in the Wicklow/Dublin uplands.

Since the establishment of the PURE project, the lo-call-phone-line 1850 365 121, and the PURE office, have received over 3,700 reports of illegal dumping resulting in over 3,600 collections and the removal of approximately 1,500 tonnes of rubbish from the landscape.

This amounts to over 1,500,000 kg of rubbish. If you were to put all of this rubbish into standard household rubbish bags you would fill over 214,000 bags. It is difficult to comprehend the amount of rubbish that the project has actually removed from the uplands. If you lined up each of the bags that the PURE project has removed from the uplands they would stretch over 214 kilometres in length, which is longer than a journey from Glendalough to Ballinasloe in Galway.

Due to the current economic downturn PURE has seen an increase in small scale illegal dumping, in particular domestic rubbish bags. However, it would appear that the historic dumping sites of a larger size have been removed from the county. A continuing problem for the project is householders and businesses handing over their waste to illegal waste collectors. To highlight this problem the project appeared on the RTE programme 'Ear to the Ground' in January 2011, appealing to the general public to check that waste collectors have a waste collection permit before handing over their rubbish.

In 2010 a number of people were convicted and fined for handing over their waste to unauthorised waste collectors. A court case in October 2010 saw the conviction of a 'bogus waste collector' who collected waste from a business in Arklow and then dumped it just outside Arklow Town at the viewing point in Kilcara. In April 2011, an individual responsible for illegally dumping waste in the upland area on the Military Road close to Aughavannagh was fined the maximum amount of €3,000.

Last year the project launched an environmental initiative entitled 'The PURE Mile'. The PURE Mile aims to foster a greater appreciation and awareness of our country roadscapes by rewarding and acknowledging local community efforts who adopt a mile of road in their area. The competition was a great success and over ten communities participated in 2010/2011. Mr. Phil Hogan T.D. Minister for the Environment Community and Local Government presented the PURE Mile Awards on the 14th September at the Brooklodge Hotel. Congratulations to the 'Old Road' community from Mullinacuffe, Tinahely who were overall winners for 2011. The evening also marked the official launch night of the 2012 PURE Mile Competition.

Ian Davis, Project Manager, PURE

**TO REPORT DUMPERS AND DUMPING LO-CALL**

**1850 365 121**

Further information on the project and PURE Mile 2012 is available at: [www.pureproject.ie](http://www.pureproject.ie)



Dumping at Ballynultagh near Shillelagh



Ballynultagh after clean up

### Wicklow Uplands Council endorses Leave No Trace

*"Promoting and inspiring responsible outdoor recreation through education, research and partnerships"*



The seven principles of Leave No Trace:

1. Plan ahead and prepare
2. Be considerate of others
3. Respect farm animals and wildlife
4. Travel and camp on durable ground
5. Leave what you find
6. Dispose of waste properly
7. Minimise the impacts of fire



Dumping on the Sally Gap

# High Nature Value Farming in the Wicklow Uplands



Vegetation Management Working Group at the Wicklow Gap



Sundew Drosera - the carnivorous plant

Wicklow Uplands Council and the Irish Uplands Forum are developing a proposal for a High Nature Value Farming Scheme which is hoped will support farming in the Wicklow Mountains. After two public meetings, a broadly based Working Group has been established. This group is now working on a proposal to apply for funding from the EU to develop this scheme. The idea grew after a group of farmers from Wicklow Uplands Council visited the Burren where farmers are paid to follow a locally developed programme aimed at preserving its famous flora, geology and archaeology. In contrast to REPS, the national agri-environmental scheme, the Burren scheme is specific to the Burren and was developed in close consultation with farmers.

Arising from this initial contact, representatives from the Burren came to Wicklow in March and addressed a very well attended public meeting in Glendalough. Dr Brendan Dunford, an ecologist, and Michael Davoren, a Burren farmer and representative of Burren IFA explained how the scheme came about through local research which was carried out by a partnership between the IFA, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Teagasc and funded by the EU. Without grazing animals, the famous Burren flora was getting overgrown by scrub. It was accepted by all agencies that farming was essential and that special support was needed.

There are similarities between the situation in the Burren and the Wicklow uplands. Both areas are important for biodiversity and farming is under economic pressure in each of these areas. Farming is also needed to retain the characteristic habitats of the uplands. Without grazing, the lower slopes of the Wicklow hills will become covered in tall heather impenetrable to walkers, vulnerable to massive fires and eventually be colonised by woodland.

In the Burren, farmers can now farm according to a farm specific conservation plan. The plan relates to regulating stocking, timing of grazing, scrub clearance and stone wall rebuilding. The current programme involves 117 farmers who receive an average of €5,500 per annum with the highest payment of circa €8,000. These payments are higher than those awarded under REPS. Farmers were involved in developing the 'Farming for Conservation Scheme' in the Burren. This involvement and that of committed ecologists and partner agencies convinced the government to allocate scarce resources to this scheme.

Upland vegetation management and the traditional practice of burning were the principal topics at a follow up meeting. Of particular interest was a table prepared by Dr Brendan O'Hanrahan of the Irish Uplands Forum which showed the apparently arbitrary dates on which burning is permitted in various countries. The limited time for burning in Ireland is considered unduly restrictive and unworkable by many upland farmers.

Table 1.

Dates when burning is permitted in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland (North and South).

Country	Types of Ground	Season Starts	Season Ends
Ireland	All	1 September	31 March
Northern Ireland	All	1 September	15 April
Scotland	Upland (above 450m)	1 October	30 April
	Lowland (below 450m)	1 October	15 April
England	Upland	1 October	15 April
	Lowland	1 November	31 March
Wales	Upland	1 October	31 March
	Lowland	1 November	15 March

Discussions at the public meetings covered many issues relating to farming and wildlife including the economics and prospects for upland sheep farming, best ways of managing heather for biodiversity and the history, role and regulation of burning. The working group formed after the public meetings and subsequently met onsite in July to look at various types of upland habitats on land within the Wicklow Mountains National Park and on privately owned land near Glenmalure. At this meeting farmers and ecologists offered opinions on the value of the land from their various perspectives.

The Working Group continues to work on developing a proposal to the EU to fund the necessary research. The final output will be presented at a public meeting later in the year. If you are interested in learning more about this project or getting involved please contact Cara Doyle at Wicklow Uplands Council.

Mary Tubridy  
Irish Uplands Forum

## Colin Murphy Retires - Thanks a Million Big Brother

The first time we met was in Ronnie Petrie's house beside Lough Dan. Colin registered as a deadly serious, rather severe and alarmingly efficient person. He had an unfamiliar northern accent, unusual for a Director appointment at the heart of the Wicklow Mountains. He was armed with a laptop computer, and really the only saving grace was that it was an Apple Mac. Ten+ years on, for me Colin is the closest thing to a local substitute for a big brother. I came to rely on his calm determination to keep the Council and myself on the rails, showing impeccable judgement, and encouraging me to pursue the creative notions which came up, usually from himself, for subjects like the bunkbarns and the grand idea for converting the vast stoneworkers sheds in Ballyknockan into a regional scale recreational park and granite museum. Interesting maybe that these examples single out two projects which never made it, and that is because the project successes are well known. Colin (almost) never allowed us to be petty or divisive in our relations with one another and was able to demonstrate, over a decade, that reason, compromise and consensus were the only way forward. His legacy to the organisation is a fierce belief that this is the ONLY way to run an organisation and the wry humour which accompanied Colin's advices carried a welcome flavour of northern determination. Colin knows, with enough on our plate, not to lose the friendship and good humour which are irreplaceable traits of the meetings. As is Colin, irreplaceable. We know he will be back in one guise or another, and we hope that his missions in Glenree will not keep him from looking over his shoulder at us. Thanks a million, big brother.

Philip Geoghegan, Vice Chair, Wicklow Uplands Council



# A Tradition of Milk Production in Wicklow

Farming in Wicklow is often perceived as sheep and some livestock farming. Less is known about the strong tradition of supplying milk for the Dublin market which has been ongoing in Wicklow for many years.

As a result of our proximity to Dublin, milk has been the main source of income on many small Wicklow hill farms. Before the time of modern transport or coordinated collections by our now efficiently run Plc's, milk was sent to the dairy via railroad. For years Wicklow had a train service that ran to Woodenbridge and Tinahely, Shillelagh in the east and Blessington and Baltinglass in the west covering Donard and Kiltegan. In those days, a dozen cows reared many a family.

Traditionally milk came from the less fertile land up long lanes, where combines could not reach. Communities such as Ballycoogue, Kiltegan, Tinahely and Baltinglass prospered around milk supply and still remain as strong milk producing areas.

Wicklow farmers have developed and grown their business steadily over the years. The average milk quota in Wicklow is over twice the national average and the suckler cow herd size is also twice the national average. Sheep numbers for the county have dropped but flock sizes have increased.

Milk from farms in the uplands of Wicklow is worth €30 million to the local economy. With a high output multiplier and low import content and with the income generated by farmers spent locally, growth in agriculture has an impressive knock on effect to the rest of the economy. Every €100 of agricultural output produces an additional €73 of output, creating a total of €21.9 million extra to the Wicklow economy in 2010.

Wicklow farmers have been proudly producing food in an environmentally sustainable way to the highest quality, safety and animal welfare standards and with the best traceability in the world. However, as a primary producer, we are not getting a fair cut in the food chain.



*Friesian cows grazing at Ballinaclesh*

The ever increasing power of the retailer poses a serious challenge to our viability.

In light of the importance of carbon footprints, it is vital we support locally produced food whether it is milk, vegetables or meat. This food has been produced in a tradition of good practice handed down over generations.

With the event of Harvest 2020, the Irish farming and food industry continues to be a major driving force in our economy. Ireland's agri-food industry is the largest Irish-owned producer sector, accounting for over 60% of exports from Irish-owned manufacturing. This sector is the back-bone of the rural and wider economy, supporting 300,000 jobs nationally. Food Harvest 2020 has set targets for growth in the food industry, including farm-level output growth of €1.5 billion and export growth of €12 billion. Demand for food is projected to increase by 50% between now and 2030. Wicklow farmers are in a great position to continue to develop and run efficient businesses and to reap the benefits of this harvest.

**Stephen Arthur, Ballinaclesh Dairy Farmer**

## Developing the Sheep Meat Sector in County Wicklow by Selling Lamb Directly to Consumers



County Wicklow Partnership commissioned a recent study on the feasibility of setting up a business to brand and sell Wicklow lamb. The purpose of the study was to look at the structure and profitability of

sheep meat production in Wicklow and to make recommendations as to how local sheep meat producers might develop a Wicklow lamb brand with the specific aim of improving the profitability of their farm enterprises.

The main recommendation resulting from the study is for farmers to increase margin by selling seasonal, free range natural Wicklow lamb over a six month year from July to January directly to consumers. A two pronged approach is recommended, initially selling via farmers markets and then selling on-line. This route is likely to bring the maximum sustainable return to group members over a long period of time, whilst offering benefits in terms of food quality, price, food miles and traceability to consumers. In the medium term the team suggests that the group gives consideration to selling the market retail operation to a killing butcher to allow it to

focus on the on-line retail operation and farming, having established a brand name for Wicklow lamb.

Specific recommendations include:

- ▶ The Wicklow Hill Lamb group must clearly define their ability to supply, addressing issues including maximum and minimum supplies, weekly throughput and seasonality. It is suggested that the way to do this is to form a small tightly managed producer group to sell directly.
- ▶ Direct Sales – Farmers' Markets. A costs analysis was presented and breakeven is put at 16-20 lambs per week over three markets; Friday, Saturday and Sunday.
- ▶ Direct Sales – on-line and telephone sales with a central collection point or delivery via courier. Several examples of both delivery forms exist around the country for meat products.
- ▶ Direct Sales to local food service/high-end restaurant trade.
- ▶ Distribution routes need to be agreed by the group.

- ▶ A brand name and Trade Mark should be developed and registered.
- ▶ A pilot supply chain and distribution project benchmarked against other similar projects needs to be undertaken.
- ▶ Develop a comprehensive database of suppliers and food businesses.
- ▶ Access to food market intelligence focusing in on the Lamb sector would be beneficial. Bord Bia is keen to help.

The team that worked on this study became highly motivated by it and are keen to develop the project further. They felt that an active, focussed group can deliver a highly profitable food business to an eager local consumer but to do so will require a lot of work on the part of all group members and supporters. The team sees the farm market operations of Leitrim Organic Farmers and the on-line meat retail operations of Whelan's butchers in Clonmel as excellent templates against which to benchmark.

**Jim Fitzsimons**  
**Wicklow Cheviot Sheep Owners Association**

# Wicklow Communities - Promoting Local Heritage

Over the past five years, Wicklow Uplands Council has worked with a number of local communities to develop a network of heritage interpretative panels in towns and villages throughout County Wicklow. This project relies on strong community participation and community groups are encouraged to take ownership of and actively develop their panel. To date, the project has received funding from County Wicklow Partnership (Leader), The Heritage Council and the Department for Environment, Heritage and Local Government through its Environmental Fund.

From 2007 to 2010, six panels were developed in Aughrim, Blessington, Dunlavin, Laragh, Rathdrum and Roundwood. Three additional panels are currently being developed in co-operation with local communities in Kilmacanogue, Rathdangan and Newtownmountkennedy. The project has aimed for fair geographical spread across the county.

Each panel comprises a hand drawn watercolor painting of the town or village which is overlain with information on the history of the area, its buildings and sites of historical and natural heritage interest. Activities of interest are also identified. The project encourages local communities to rediscover and appreciate their local heritage and to promote it to those visiting the area. More than ever, it is vital that we promote our rich and unique heritage effectively. Provision of information is just

one way to improve the visitor experience and to develop Wicklow as a prime visitor destination.

Kilmacanogue Area Residents Association (KARA) is working on the Kilmacanogue panel. The panel draws on rich Christian history of the area with its ancient church sites and on the times when the famous Jameson Family lived in Glencormac House.

Rathdangan Community Council is using the recently developed heritage trail book as a resource for the development of their panel. It features Killamoat Church with its two stained glass windows by the world renowned artist Harry Clarke. The panel also draws on the dark history of the 1798 rebellion and on a golden era in GAA during the 1920s and 30s.

Newtownmountkennedy Tidy Towns is preparing a comprehensive history of the village. Among the main sites identified, are Mount Kennedy House & Demense, the Druid's Glen, the Battle of 1798, Newcastle Hospital and headquarters of Coillte.

Given ongoing availability of funding, Wicklow Uplands Council plans to continue to develop the project with three new interpretative panels. If your community would like to take part, please contact the Wicklow Uplands Council office to express your interest.

**Lenka Mulligan**  
**Project Co-ordinator,**  
**Wicklow Uplands Council**

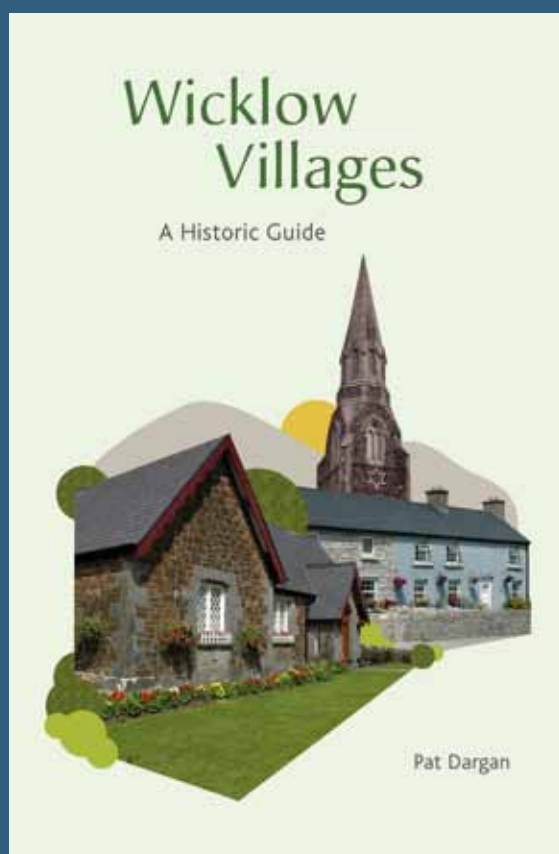


*Aughrim Interpretative Panel*



*Rathdrum Interpretative Panel*

## Appreciating Wicklow's Villages



There are thirty plus villages scattered throughout county Wicklow, each one acting as a hub for the local and wider community, forming the focus around which most community activities occur. While there is a general awareness that each village looks different, the significance of this and reasons behind it are largely overlooked in our day to day lives. A new publication from the Heritage Office of Wicklow County Council sets out to encourage us to look at this aspect of our heritage with new eyes by giving the historical background to how each village developed, and highlighting aspects of the architecture, landscaping, layout or natural setting that contribute to their attractiveness.

In *Wicklow Villages – A Historic Guide*, author Pat Dargan categorises Wicklow villages into three distinct categories according to historic origins. Included are; the Monastic settlements such as Donard, Delgany and Kilcoole which originated between the eight and ninth centuries; the planned Estate Villages such as Dunlavin, Tinahely, Shillelagh and Enniskerry in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and the chapel villages in the nineteenth century (whereby the lifting of restrictions on the building of Roman catholic churches by the enactment of Catholic Emancipation in 1829 resulted in a number of new churches, many of which formed the nucleus around which settlements such as Roundwood and Aughrim developed). As well as giving the historical background, the publication highlights positive modern interventions such as local authority development, community landscaping, street furniture and village interpretation which all serve to define and enhance local character and distinctiveness.

The book is designed as 'food for thought' for many community based groups looking to improve their areas. With this in mind there is a reference section for further sources of information and importantly for other potential sources of funding. Included in this is the current LEADER programme operated by County Wicklow Partnership which has funds earmarked specifically for village improvements. The publication was produced by Wicklow County Council with support from the Heritage Council as an action of the County Wicklow Heritage Plan. Copies are available to purchase at county buildings and local outlets for €4.50 or can be ordered directly by forwarding €4.50+ €1.00 P&P to Heritage Office, Wicklow County Council, County Buildings, Wicklow Town. For credit card purchases please call 0404 20100.

**Deirdre Burns, Wicklow Heritage Officer**



# REGISTERED DIRECTORS 2011/12

## NOMINEES OF THE FARMERS & PROPERTY OWNERS PANEL



**Declan O'Neill**  
Chairman



**John Byrne**



**Pat Dunne**



**Sean Malone**



**Jim Fitzsimons**



**Philip Maguire**

**John Murphy**

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Secretary



**Pearse Connolly**



**Roy Stewart**



**Pearse Foley**



**Claire Chambers**



**Phylis Mates**



**John Mullen**

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Treasurer



**Dairine Nuttall**

## CO-OPTIONS



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**Pat Mellon**



**Stephen Arthur**



**Thomas Healy**



**Michael Sheehan**

**Seamus Holden**



Nomination Pending



Nomination Pending



Nomination Pending

## STAFF



**Cara Doyle**  
Co-ordinator



**Margaret Murphy**  
Administration Officer

*Front cover photo:*

*Sally Gap Road courtesy of Thomas O' Toole*

## WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL

Wicklow Uplands Council is an independent, voluntary organisation with charitable status. The Council provides a forum where interested non-statutory organisations and individuals can have their say in the decision making process affecting the sustainable development of the local environment in the spirit of Local Agenda 21. The Council was formally established in January 1997 and has since endeavoured to implement its core mission:

### MISSION STATEMENT

'To promote the sustainable use and enjoyment of the Wicklow Uplands in partnership with the people who live, work and recreate there'.

### WICKLOW UPLANDS COUNCIL SEEKS TO

- Build consensus and trust
- Foster a partnership approach to sustainable development
- Manage/transform conflict
- Protect and enhance the uplands environment
- Undertake initiatives with support from the local people
- Engage in initiatives that make economic sense

Opinions and views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Wicklow Uplands Council Ltd.

## Wicklow Uplands Council focuses on issues affecting the Wicklow Uplands

