

Abarta Heritage

WICKLOW TRAILS HERITAGE RECORDING PROJECT

Stories of the Landscape



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



OUR HERITAGE:
WHERE THE PAST
MEETS THE FUTURE

2018
EUROPEAN YEAR
OF CULTURAL
HERITAGE
#EuropeForCulture



Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme
2017–2022



PROJECT AIMS

The key aims of the project were to:

- Carry out desktop research to identify existing sources of information on the project area.
- Identify the key Points of Interest suitable for heritage tourism in the study area and to research their stories.
- To interview local people, historians, landowners and specialists to create an Oral History resource that can be shared on Our Wicklow Heritage online community archive
- Develop recommendations for appropriate heritage tourism products
- To provide training for local community groups interested in becoming curators of CountyWicklowHeritage.org to ensure that the project continues into the future.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With breathtaking scenery from wild mountains to the sea, it is no wonder that Wicklow is known as 'the Garden of Ireland'. Along with stunning vistas, Wicklow also offers a remarkable wealth of built heritage to discover, ranging from 5,000 year old passage tombs on the summits of the Wicklow Mountains, the world-famous ancient monastery at Glendalough, to nineteenth and twentieth century feats of industrial engineering. Wicklow has earned its reputation as one of the key destinations for walkers and outdoor pursuits. Wicklow has an unmatched variety and quality of walking trails. These trails offer visitors the opportunity to explore the flora and fauna of Wicklow, and to discover a story around every corner.

The Wicklow Trails Heritage Recording Project is an initiative of Wicklow County Council Heritage Office in conjunction with Wicklow Uplands Council and supported by the Heritage Council and is an action of the County Wicklow Heritage Plan 2017 - 2022. Wicklow Uplands Council have been working with landowners, communities and other stakeholders to develop walking trails in County Wicklow. There is at present, a linear geographical route, approximately 70km in the east of the county which connects a number existing way marked trails with settlements. Other sections of the route are currently in development. As the route traverses such a large area, this Heritage Recording Project was established to capture the cross section of Wicklow's cultural history and heritage incorporating a diverse landscape of coastline, mountain, blanket bog, reservoirs, river valleys and woodlands. The key aim of the project was to create a database and archive of content that reflects the diverse heritage of the area. This resource can form a baseline of information for future promotional, educational or visitor related products and can be accessed online at countywicklowheritage.org

The Wicklow Trails Heritage Recording Project is an initiative that has the potential to help to engage and empower local communities with their heritage, and to create a platform for a model of meaningful and sustainable tourism.

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INTRODUCTION

Wicklow County Council and Wicklow Uplands Council appointed Abarta Heritage to carry out the Wicklow Trails Heritage Recording Project in June 2018. This project is supported by The Heritage Council and Wicklow County Council's Creative Ireland allocation and is an action of the County Wicklow Heritage Plan 2017 - 2022.

Project Background

Wicklow Uplands Council have been working with landowners, communities and other stakeholders to develop walking trails in County Wicklow. There is at present, a linear geographical route, approximately 70km in the east of the county which connects a number existing way marked trails with settlements. Other sections of the route are currently in development. As the route traverses such a large area, this Heritage Recording Project was established to capture the cross section of Wicklow's cultural history and heritage incorporating a diverse landscape of coastline, mountain, blanket bog, reservoirs, river valleys and woodlands.

The key aim of the project was to create a database and archive of content that reflects the diverse heritage of the area. This archive can form a baseline of information for future promotional, educational or visitor related products. The archive will also form part of the online community heritage hub developed by the Wicklow Heritage Forum - *Our Wicklow Heritage*; countywicklowheritage.org.

An additional aim of the project was to highlight visitor points of interest that are easily accessible for walkers enjoying the Trails. We have also included recommendations about future projects which will build on the work that has been completed as part of this project.

The Wicklow Trails Heritage Recording Project captured and compiled information and identified points of interest, from the coast at Bray all the way down the county to Woodenbridge. To achieve this, Abarta Heritage undertook a number of key tasks, such as:

- Desk-based research
- Meetings with community groups
- Site visits and assessments
- Recorded interviews with local people about the heritage of the area
- High resolution photography (including aerial) of Points of Interest along the Estuary Way
- Mapping of the points of interest.
- Development and population of a database.
- Upload of information to countywicklowheritage.org
- Creation of interpretative and promotional content (including a short promotional video)





The Wicklow Trails Heritage Recording Project is an action of the County Wicklow Heritage Plan 2017–2022. This project forms part of the overall Heritage Strategy for County Wicklow as demonstrated by the policies of the plan outlined below:

Wicklow Heritage Plan Policies (from County Wicklow Heritage Plan 2017–2022)

Theme 2:

Increase understanding of the value of Wicklow's heritage

- 2.1 Research and develop county heritage trails/themed heritage trails, with a focus on publicly accessible heritage sites and attractions in co-operation with other organisations, communities and landowners.

Theme 4:

Facilitate partnership and active community participation in heritage plan actions.

- 4.2 Support the existing and new community led archaeological and heritage recording initiatives by providing training, advice, resources, and networking opportunities.
- 4.7 Develop a project to support the collection of oral histories by communities.
- 4.4 Support the activities of historical societies in county Wicklow through providing opportunities for networking and for reaching new audiences.
- 4.9 Encourage increased active participation by the public in Our *Wicklow Heritage* OWH by; expanding the editorial steering committee to include interested individuals; developing a category for individual heritage groups; host public training days in association with Wicklow Library service; and develop an annual award to recognise contributors.





Project Team – Abarta Heritage

Since Abarta Heritage was founded in 2012, we have helped many national institutions, county councils, community development organisations and the private sector to identify, assess, interpret, conserve and promote their heritage. We focus on digging deep to research and discover the truly meaningful stories, and we love empowering communities to take an active role in the promotion and management of their local tourism assets. We specialise in creating positive and robust frameworks for collaboration between stakeholders, local government and national bodies. We are a team of experienced archaeologists, historians and researchers. This project was led by Neil Jackman (BA, MIAI, MRSAl) and Róisín Burke (MA) who met with local communities and carried out the oral heritage recordings. Neil Jackman visited all the accessible heritage sites along the estuary to assess them for suitability for tourism and to capture images, and Dr Conor Ryan (Ph.D) carried out all oral heritage recordings, the research on the heritage sites identified and digitally mapped the points of interest. Geni Murphy (MA) and Neil Jackman worked on producing the promotional content and the short promotional video.



Acknowledgements

The success of this project was thanks to the participation of the local communities, especially those who chose to share their stories and those who participated in the information evenings. Particular thanks are also due to Wicklow County Council Heritage Officer Deirdre Burns, and Brian Dunne of Wicklow Uplands Council, and Conor Hipwell.

This project was funded by the Heritage Council, and through Wicklow County Council's Creative Ireland allocation, with support from Wicklow Uplands Council.

This initiative comes from the passion and dedication of Reverend Canon Jennings (RIP), who was a tireless champion of Wicklow's heritage.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis



County Wicklow is blessed with an incredible array of natural and built heritage. As such, it was important from the outset of this project to have clarity about what geographical area should be included, and to be consistent with application of a ‘hinterland’ that surrounds the walking routes.

Defining the Project Study Area

The proposed Bray to Woodenbridge walking trail is comprised of a number of existing walking trails, a number of trails that are currently in development and some proposed trails.

The existing trails include the Bray Head Loop, the Sugar Loaf Way, the Vartry Reservoir Loops, the Avonmore Way, the River Walk (south of Rathdrum), Avondale Forest Park and the footpath from the Meeting of the Waters to Woodenbridge.

Trails proposed or currently in development include a route from Belmont to Kilmacanogue via the Little Sugar Loaf, a trail from Great Sugar Loaf carpark

southwards to Carriggower, a trail connecting Annamoe village to the Avonmore Way. The first two of these are primarily along quiet public roads.

There are a number of points along the route where connecting trails have yet to be defined. These include; Carriggower to Vartry, from Vartry to Annamoe and from Avondale to the Meeting of the Waters.

In identifying and highlighting Points of Interest (POI) along the trail route, consideration was given to the fact that it is a walking trail and that long-distance walkers are unlikely to deviate a significant distances from the trail. Proximity to the proposed trail was, therefore, the key consideration in selecting POIs. The majority of the POIs identified are directly on the proposed trail route or within one kilometre of the route. In addition, the Bray to Woodenbridge Trail passes close to the Wicklow Way in the vicinity of Roundwood, Annamoe and Laragh. At their closest point the two walking trails are about 1km apart. This meant that some potential POIs in this area have not been included as they are closer to the Wicklow Way and as such, they are a more natural fit for the Wicklow Way initiative.

Desk Based Research

At the outset of the project, a preliminary list of 50 Points Of Interest (POIs) was drawn up as an outcome of this initial scoping exercise. A range of site were included in this list spanning natural, built, archaeological, ecclesiastical, industrial and political heritage. As well as identifying potential POIs through a number local consultations and meetings, we used a number of key sources:

- ***Archaeological Survey Database, National Monuments Service***

Compiled by the National Monuments Service and available online at www.archaeology.ie, this contains individual entries for over 138,000 recorded monuments. Each record includes a map, aerial photograph, geographical coordinates, site categorisation and a description of the site.

- ***National Inventory of Architectural Heritage***

Compiled by the Department of Arts, Heritage & Gaeltacht and available online at www.buildingsofireland.ie. It contains detailed descriptions of historic buildings and other objects of architectural significance, along with an appraisal of each one and location information.

- ***Ordnance Survey Letters***

Letters compiled by John O' Donovan, Eugene O' Curry and other scholars in the 1830s and 1840s during the mapping of Ireland by the Ordnance Survey. They contain first-hand accounts of antiquities, details of the origin and meaning of placenames, and local folklore and mythology. Individual volumes are available for each county.

- ***Schools Folklore Collection***

Local folklore, stories and customs gathered as part of the Schools Folklore project in 1937– 1938 and held in the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin. The information was gathered through the national school system by pupils with the support of teachers. The collection is currently being digitised with many counties now available online at www.duchas.ie.

- ***National Parks & Wildlife Service Site Synopses***

These documents are compiled by the National Parks and Wildlife Service and are

available online at www.npws.ie. They contain descriptions of Protected Sites around Ireland (National Parks, National Heritage Areas, Special Protection Areas, Special Areas of Conservation and Wildfowl Sanctuaries) and provide details of their ecological and environmental significance.

- ***logainm.ie***

The Placenames Database is maintained by Fiontar, a collaboration between Dublin City University and the Department of Arts, Heritage & Gaeltacht. It can be accessed online at www.logainm.ie.

- ***Geological Survey of Ireland: County Geological Site Audits***

The Geological Survey of Ireland has published reports on sites of geological and natural heritage significance around Ireland on www.gsi.ie. These audits include maps, photographs, location information and a description of each site and its significance.

- ***Heritage Council's Map Viewer***

The Heritage Council's Map Viewer incorporates information from a range of different sources such as: National Museum of Ireland, Local Authorities, Royal Irish Academy, National Biodiversity Centre as well as many other organisations.

- ***Aerial Imagery***

We consulted Bing and Google Maps to get a sense of the location of sites and their state of preservation.

- ***Our Wicklow Heritage***

Our Wicklow Heritage (countywicklowheritage.org) was developed by the Wicklow Heritage Forum as an action of the County Wicklow Heritage Plan. The community heritage archive site showcases the wonderful natural, built and cultural heritage of County Wicklow and encourages communities, local historians and interested individuals to participate by sharing information, stories and photos.

Raising Awareness and Community Engagement

Raising awareness about the heritage along the walks was a key objective of this project. When we began work on the project, we discussed a strategy of engaging with the communities. It was decided that information evenings would be the most appropriate way to inform people about the project. Wicklow County Council and Wicklow Uplands Council organised a project launch event. This event took place in Roundwood on 4th of July and was attended by approximately 25 people. We presented details of the project and put a call out for people interested in becoming curators of information or interested in being recorded to get in touch with us.

Another information evening took place in Roundwood on the 4th of September. Roundwood District Historical and Folklore Society contacted us in August to request more information about the project as many members had not been able to attend our initial information evening. Approximately 15 people attended the additional information evening.

A final information event took place on the 11th of October in the Woodenbridge Hotel. To promote the event, Róisín Burke took part in a radio interview with East Coast FM that had been organised by Conor Hipwell (Communications Officer, Wicklow Uplands Council). During the event, details of the project were presented to attendees and sites were discussed. At each event, a number of suggestions were made regarding sites or individuals to contact and these suggestions were followed up by the team.

Throughout the project, particularly when we have been out on fieldwork in Wicklow, we shared images and stories on the Abarta Heritage website and social media pages to raise awareness of the fantastic heritage that is in the area.

A final event has been organised for Saturday 24th of November. As part of the Wicklow County Council Heritage Office Sharing our Stories half day seminar, we

will present information on the Trails Heritage Recording Project. We will also host a training session for community groups about how to interpret the heritage of an area.



Trails project has its launch



Neil Jackman of Abarta Heritage, Wicklow County Council heritage officer Deirdre Burns and Wicklow Uplands Council co-ordinator Brian Dunne

Myles Buchanan
July 21 2018 12:00 AM

The Wicklow Trails Heritage Recording Project was launched in Roundwood Parish Centre and was jointly hosted by Wicklow County Council and Wicklow Uplands Council.

Brian Dunne, co-ordinator for Wicklow Uplands Council, provided details on the integrated network of the trails that are being developed - with the overall vision of a route from Bray to Woodenbridge getting closer to completion.

'This project will really complement the current trails being developed in the east of the county and offer its visitors an opportunity to fully experience and appreciate the heritage found along the route. It is intended that this project will help inform the future development of visitor and tourism interpretation and to promote this area as part of Ireland's Ancient East,' said Mr Dunne.

Neil Jackman of Abarta Heritage, who have been commissioned to undertake the compiling of information, outlined that the initial research has so far identified over 45 points of interest. The team led by Mr Jackman will be visiting the area in the coming weeks to engage directly with local communities to discover the rich natural, built and cultural heritage found throughout the region.

News of the information evening at Roundwood in the *Wicklow People*

The Fieldwork

Creation of a Database

After carrying out desk based research, sites were evaluated to assess tourism potential and suitability. An initial examination indicated that many of the archaeological sites were situated on private farmland and/or were in a poor state of preservation. Several architectural sites were identified as being private residences and therefore did not have potential as visitor attractions. Other sites were deemed not to have potential as they had low visitor experience benefit, with no distinctive story or compelling characteristics associated with them. Some groups suggested lists of local sites some of which we included and on visiting other sites or researching them, were deemed ineligible. When choosing sites for the database we focused on the following three key criteria:

1. **Access, Consent and Safety** relates to ease of access to the site, whether the landowner has given permission and any safety or conservation or environmental considerations (i.e. would increased tourism prove harmful to the site and its biodiversity).
2. **Visual Aspect** considers the extent to which the heritage site or the journey to it is likely to enthuse or excite visitors, particularly due to its appearance and atmosphere.
3. **The Story** score rates the site on the degree to which it has an interesting and engaging story e.g. historical personalities, events, folklore associated with the site, does it fit an overarching theme?

A heritage database was created to house all the information that was collected during the heritage audit (see appendix one). 50 points of interest were added to the database. During every information event, we explained to all attendees that the list that we have created is not exhaustive and can be developed over time. This database that we have created can be used by communities to promote the fantastic heritage sites in their area.



Following this process, we carried out more detailed research on thirteen Points Of Interest along the route that were identified as have the best potential as visitor attractions. Research was carried out utilising the sources listed above along with local historical publications, journals and newspapers, and interviews with experts and specialists on specific POIs. This information was used to generate a profile of around 300-500 words on each of the key POIs along the proposed walking trail (see list below).

- Bray Head
- Kilruddery House
- Great Sugar Loaf & Little Sugar Loaf
- Vartry Reservoir
- Derrylossary Church
- Vale of Clara & Millennium Forest
- Avondale House & Forest Park
- The Meeting of the Waters
- The Mottee Stone
- Avoca Miner's Cross
- Avoca Village
- Avoca Handweavers
- Woodenbridge

Site Visits

In order to maximise our time in the field, we selected all the top rated sites to visit and photograph. Neil Jackman and Róisín Burke visited each site ranked in the first category and a number of publicly accessible sites ranked in the second. Neil Jackman photographed them in high-resolution using DSLR cameras and [where appropriate] aerial photography from a drone.

Mapping

Maps were produced using open source data and QGIS software along with co-ordinate data gathered during site visits and desk research. Maps were produced to show the location of key Points of Interest that form the database. An overall map was produced and then four individual area maps were also produced showing a breakdown of the points of interest.



Oral History Recording

A key component of this project was to conduct, record and index interviews to broadcast standard with relevant people to give a voice to the Wicklow Heritage Trails. A list of people to consider for interview was then drawn up and the recordings took place at times and locations that were most convenient for the interviewees.

Prior to the interview, each contributor was informed about the project and database and how their contribution would be added to the collection. A consent form was discussed with each contributor and they were given time to review the form before the interview. The audio consent form informs the contributor about the project and that their contribution will only be used for this project. Every contributor signed the form after their interview took place. These forms have been included as part of the archive for this project.

The interviews were carried out using broadcast-quality equipment that records the highest quality digital audio and is very non-intrusive to help to keep the participants at their ease. The audio interviews were edited using the state of the art ProTools Software, that created .MP3 and .WAV (suitable for archive) files. Each interview was catalogued and archived in accordance with oral history best- practice.

The table (opposite) illustrates the contributors to the Heritage Recording Project so far. Further interviews will be carried out over the next number of weeks as contributors become available. These further interviews will be carried out capturing information relating to the archaeology, natural heritage and folklore along the trails.

It is hoped that the local community will continue to add to these recordings for the future, to help to create a rich resource of local heritage.

Name	Theme
Rob Goodbody	Industrial & Mining Heritage of Wicklow Bridge and transportation in Wicklow
Jean Costelloe	Development of Avondale Parnell family history Charles Stewart Parnell and Catherine O' Shea
Michael Carey	Forestry in Wicklow
Nick Coy	Avoca Mines
Dermot Meleady	John Redmond and Woodenbridge
Pat Dargan	Vale of Clara
Ned Fleming	Vartry Reservoir
Matthew Parkes	Geology of Co Wicklow
David McIlreavy	Medieval Bray Project
Rosaleen Durkin	Holy Wells in Wicklow
Chris Corlett	Archaeology of the area
Ivor Kenny	General Holt & the 1798 Rebellion

*Wicklow Heritage Recording Project oral history participants
(up to November 2018)*

Creating an Archive

After compiling all the points of interest into the database and researching all relevant information related to the sites, we are currently working with the curators of Our Wicklow Heritage www.countywicklowheritage.org to ensure that material created can be added to this platform easily. During our Sharing our Stories seminar on 24th of November, we will show interested potential curators of the information how to create an individual archive entry for each POI and how to create thematic archival entries related to broad themes such as landscape, folklore, natural heritage, archaeology etc. It is recommended that a steering committee should be established (see General Recommendations section below). The steering committee could then upload and add information that has been generated during the course of the project to the community heritage archive website in the future.



POINTS OF INTEREST

POINTS OF INTEREST

Each Point of Interest (POI) that was identified during desk based research was given a rating using a traffic light system. Green (1) indicates a POI that is an established attraction or which has strong potential for heritage tourism. There are 13 sites ranked green. Amber (2) POIs have issues or challenges which must be overcome to fulfil their potential, 10 sites are marked in this category. Red (3) POIs have limited potential as visitor attractions, often because they are in private ownership with no access, 16 points of interest fall into this category. This ranking is indicated on maps included in the report.

Map 1: The full Study Area with Points of Interest marked





Map 2: Points of Interest around the Bray area



Map 3: Points of Interest around the Rathdrum area



Map 4: Points of Interest around the Roundwood area



Map 5: Points of Interest around the Avoca and Woodenbridge area

BRAY HEAD

With stunning views over the Irish Sea and the town of Bray, Bray Head is a much-loved landmark. Along with the nearby Little Sugar Loaf and Great Sugar Loaf it forms a trio of prominent ridges in north Wicklow. Geologically, Bray Head is composed of quartzite and slate rocks which makes it more resistant to weathering and erosion. The rock was formed underneath the sea bed during the Cambrian period, around 500 million years ago. More evidence of the distant past can be seen in the Oldhamia that can be found on Bray Head;. Oldhamia are a type of trace fossil and their radial patterns is evidence of small creatures feeding on the sea bed. They date from a time of the earliest invertebrate creatures. The fossils were first discovered by Thomas Oldham of the Geological Survey of Ireland in the mid-1800s, when the rail line along the cliffs was under construction.

Bray Head is also a Special Area of Conservation and is an important habitat for a range of wild birds and plants. The two habitats of significance found on site are Vegetated Sea Cliffs and Dry Heath. A variety of heather and grass species are present, along with five different types of orchid. Amongst the important seabirds which are found on Bray Head are Fulmars, Razorbills, Kittiwakes and Black Guillemots, with the populations of the latter two of national importance.

Today, Bray Head is enjoyed by many as a recreational amenity and there are several walking paths around the head. There are a number of points of interest. The concrete cross on the summit was erected in 1950 to mark Holy Year. A ruined medieval church known as *Raithin an Chluig*, meaning the ‘Little Rath of the Bell’, lies on the northern slopes of the head. To the east of this on the coast there was once a cave known as Brandy Hole which was used by smugglers to bring in goods from France. On the 20th June, 1789, The Dublin Evening Post gave an account of the capture of a smuggler’s ship:

‘A revenue cutter chased and captured a smuggling wherry this morning off Bray Head. The wherry was laden with geneva, tobacco, and raw silk, and some boats seeing the situation of the wherry, put out from the shore and received all the silk which they landed before the cutter could come up. The prize was brought to the Custom House’



KILLRUDDERY HOUSE & GARDENS

Killruddery is considered one of the finest period houses in Ireland. It is owned by the Brabazon family, who have held the Earldom of Meath since the early seventeenth century, and has been their family home for over four centuries. King Henry VIII granted the lands of the Abbey of St. Thomas, which included the area around Killruddery, Bray Head and the Sugar Loaf, to William Brabazon in the 1530s. The first house on this site was built in the early seventeenth century but it was burned during the wars of the 1640s.

A new house replaced this in the 1650s but this structure was extended and significantly altered around 1820 by the 10th Earl. The work was carried out to a design by the noted father and son architects, Sir Richard and William Vitruvius Morrison and the new residence was constructed in Elizabethan Revival style. The notable clock tower is a later addition and was completed in 1909. Its pendulum is powered by a jet of water. About one-third the house had to be demolished in the 1950s, including the tower with its cupola, due to an infestation of dry rot, but Killruddery retains many of its architectural features. The orangery with its domed glass roof contains many beautiful sculptures collected by the family during tours of Italy in the nineteenth century.

Killruddery sits in an 850-hectare demesne and the extensive formal gardens were first laid out in the late seventeenth century, making them the oldest gardens in Ireland to still survive in their original form. A noted French landscape gardener, Bonet, was employed by the Earl to design the gardens, which are said to be modelled on those at Versailles. Perhaps the most interesting feature is the parallel twin ponds, each 187 metres long.

The name Killruddery derives from the Irish *Chill Ruaidhri* meaning ‘Ruaidhri’s Church’. The Ordnance Survey Letters tell us that when the house was being expanded in the 1820s, large quantities of bones were uncovered at the northern end of the house, which may indicate the site of this early church.



THE GREAT SUGAR LOAF

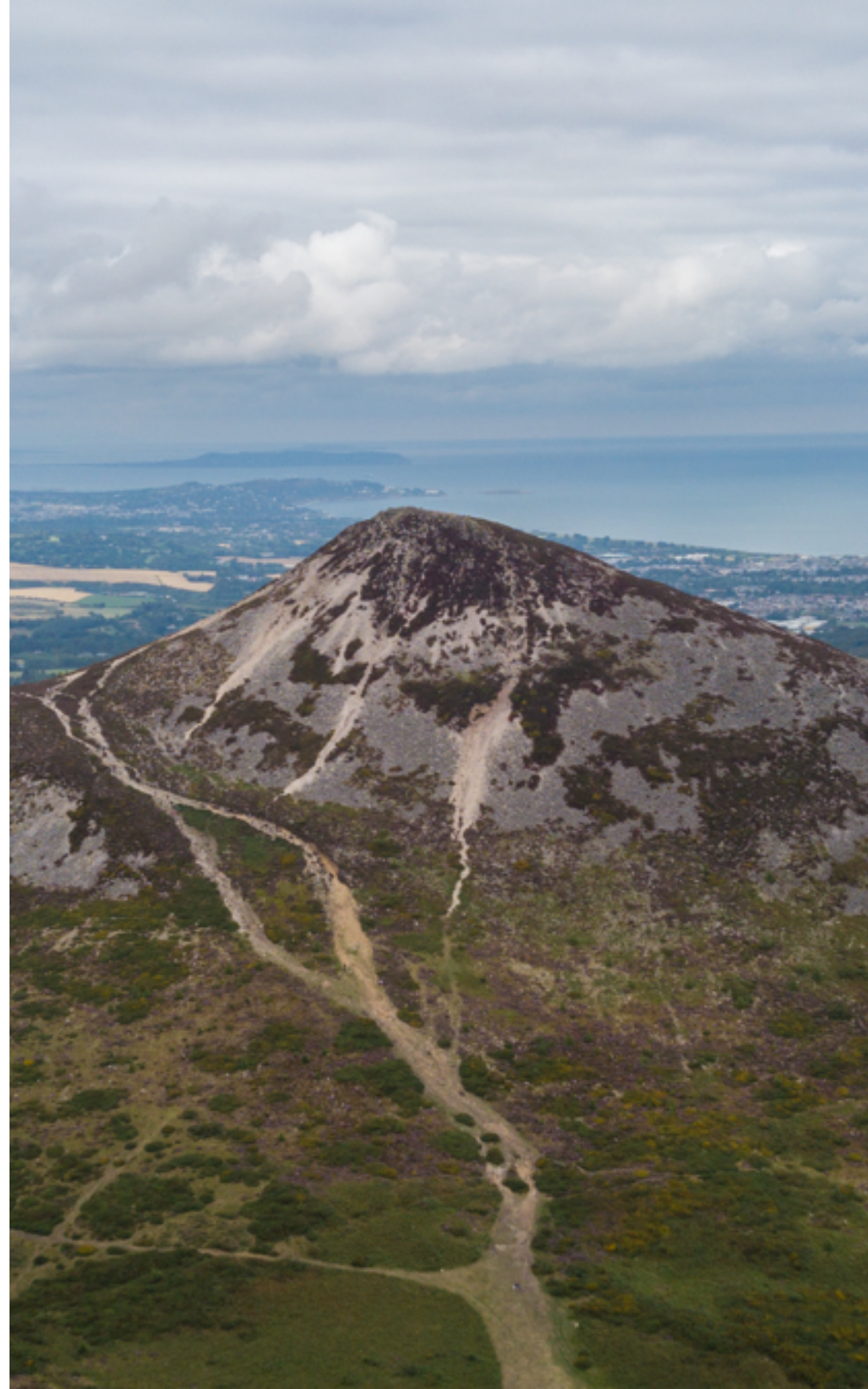
The Great Sugar Loaf is the most distinctive of the trio of landmarks in north Wicklow that also includes the Little Sugar Loaf and Bray Head. It stands over 500 metres above sea level. Its name comes from the shape in which mounds of sugar were produced and sold up until the late nineteenth century. In Irish, the mountain is known as *Ó Cualann*, which derives from the ancient territory around north Wicklow and south Dublin in which it is situated.

Great Sugar Loaf is formed from Cambrian quartz and slate rocks, that are around 500 million years old. During more recent periods of glaciation, when Wicklow was covered by a large ice sheet, constant freezing and thawing over thousands of years shattered the rocks on the mountainside. This formed the conical shape of the mountain and left the slopes scattered with loose and jagged rock fragments known as scree. The pale pink colour of these exposed rocks adds to the visual appeal of the mountain but makes the climb to the summit tricky. The mountain's shape contrasts with the rounded summits of the Wicklow Mountains to the west, where softer granite rock was eroded by glacial action.

The summit of Great Sugar Loaf is a good place from which to view a number of glacial meltwater channels. These deep scars in the landscape were formed by torrents of water from melting ice at the end of the last Ice Age. The Glen of the Downs to the south-east, the Scalp to the north and the Rocky Valley to the north-west are three such examples of this feature. The Rocky Valley is also notable as a place where many fossils have been discovered.

On the northern spur of the mountain there are two prehistoric cairns of 7m and 15m diameter that area also visible from the summit. On a clear day, it is possible to see Snowdonia and other mountains in Wales from the top of the Sugar Loaf.

The mountain a significant amenity of cultural and natural heritage significance and continues to be a popular destination for walkers. The most commonly used route to the summit is from the car park on the southern slopes, but severe erosion has been caused by the large numbers of visitors who access the mountain every year.



VARTRY RESERVOIR

Vartry Reservoir was constructed in the middle of the nineteenth century to provide a new fresh water supply for Dublin City. Dublin was growing rapidly at the time and the traditional source of water from its canals and rivers was proving inadequate for demand. In addition, the link between clean water and public health was becoming apparent at that time. Cholera had arrived in Europe in the preceding decades and the lack of fresh clean water contributed to its spread.

The Vartry Reservoir was an ambitious project at the time and a huge engineering challenge. The site was chosen on the recommendation of a Royal Commission who advised that although it was an expensive option, it was the best choice to provide Dublin with water. The dam was constructed by manual labour between 1862 and 1864 and must have involved huge numbers of workers. The reservoir has a clay core to prevent leakages and the upstream side is faced with stone to minimise erosion.

One of the most unique features of the project is the Draw Off Tower situated just above the dam. This building provided access to pipes which are used to convey water from the reservoir under the dam and into the water treatment plant. The crenellated parapet gives the building the appearance of a small castle.

The key driver of the project was Sir John Gray who was a medical doctor, a member of Dublin Corporation and the owner of the largest newspaper in the country, the Freeman's Journal. When plans for the reservoir were being drawn up, he took the unusual step of purchasing all of the land around Vartry to prevent it falling into the hands of speculators. He then resold it to Dublin Corporation at the same price that he had paid for it. Today he is commemorated with a monument at Vartry and a statue on O'Connell Street in Dublin.





As Dublin continued to grow, it was decided to create a second reservoir in the early twentieth century. This was completed in 1923. Advances in technology meant that machines were used to carry out much of the work, but large numbers of workers were still required and they were housed in temporary accommodation which became known locally as Tin Town.

Construction of the reservoirs led to the creation of important natural habitats and Vartry is now home to a number of species of wildfowl, some of whom migrate here in the winter months. Ducks such as teal and mallard are common while grebes, herons, cormorants, swans and little egrets can also be seen.

Today, the Vartry Reservoirs are owned and managed by Dublin City Council and Irish Water as they continue to play a vital role in the provision of potable

water to South Dublin and North Wicklow. As well as their practical purpose, the reservoir has also become an important recreational asset for the region. There are wonderful walking trails around both of the lakes. The most recent trail, the Ogham Tree Trail is an initiative of Roundwood Men's Sheds (supported by Wicklow County Council and Creative Ireland).

ROUNDWOOD

Roundwood lays claim to being the highest village in Ireland as it is situated approximately 240 metres above sea level. The modern village developed in the nineteenth century around the Catholic Church of St Laurence O’Toole and contains a number of examples of Tudor Revival architecture, most notably the Coach House Hotel. There is evidence of earlier settlement in the area in the form of three ecclesiastical sites at Ballinafunshoge, Knockatemple and Derrylossary, all within a mile of the village. A bullaun stone and an example of rock art can be seen on the northern and southern approaches to the village. The old name for Roundwood was Togher, an old term for a timber or stone causeway built across boggy land.

Several notable figures have associations with Roundwood. General Joseph Holt (1756-1826) was a key rebel leader during the uprising of the United Irishmen in 1798. After the defeat of the United Irishmen at Vinegar Hill, he led a guerrilla campaign in the Wicklow Mountain, where his knowledge of the terrain allowed him to hold out for several months. He eventually negotiated a surrender and was transported to Australia, but later returned to Ireland. In 1998, a memorial to him was unveiled at Mullinaveige to the north Roundwood, where he once lived.

Sean T. O’Kelly (1882-1966), the second President of Ireland, lived at Roundwood Park just south of the village. He was in the GPO during the 1916 Rising, was elected to the first Dáil and became a close associate of Eamon de Valera during the independence struggle. Later he was a founding member of Fianna Fáil and held several cabinet posts in the 1930s and 1940s. He served two terms as President from 1945 to 1959.

Today Roundwood is an important gateway to the Wicklow Mountains and is within easy reach of the lakes and peaks as well as heritage sites like Glendalough and the Vartry Reservoir. St. Kevin’s Bus company was established here in the 1920s and ran a private bus service between Dublin and Glendalough. The Roundwood PURE Mile walk leads north-west from the village and passes places of local heritage interest along quiet country roads.





DERRYLOSSARY CHURCH

The church at Derrylossary is a ruined Church of Ireland church dating from the early nineteenth century which was built on the site of an earlier ecclesiastical foundation. There is no visible trace of the early church remaining on the site, but the oval enclosure over 100 metres in diameter and the three bullaun stones within the site are indication of its ancient origins.

Derrylossary was granted to St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin by the Archbishop of Dublin in the thirteenth century; this is the earliest reference to a church here, but it has been said that the site had links to the nearby monastery at Glendalough. The Church of Ireland building dates from 1820 and was partly financed by the Board of First Fruits. It ceased use as a place of worship in the 1960s and the roof was removed in the 1980s.

Derrylossary is noted as the burial place of two significant figures from twentieth century Ireland, both of whom had local connections, and who were related to each other. Robert Barton (1881-1975) was born and raised at nearby Glendalough House into a wealthy Anglo-Irish family. He served in the British Army in World War I and was in Dublin in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising, where his experiences led him to leave the army and join the Republican movement. Following his election as a TD for West Wicklow in 1918 he served as Minister for Agriculture in the first Dáil. He was imprisoned during the War of Independence but famously escaped from Mountjoy Jail and left a note for the governor in his cell saying that he felt compelled to leave due to the discomfort of the surroundings. Barton was part of the delegation which travelled to London in late 1921 to negotiate the Anglo-Irish Treaty which secured Irish Independence. Barton himself, however, later opposed the Treaty and stood as an Anti-Treaty candidate in the election of June 1922. Although he withdrew from



politics after the Civil War, he later served in a number of public offices, including as Chairman of Bord na Móna.

Erskine Childers (1905-1974) served as President of Ireland for just over one year and died in office. His father, also Erskine Childers, was a first cousin of Robert Barton and also a member of the Anglo Irish Treaty delegation in 1921. The elder Childers was executed during the Civil War after he was arrested in possession of a gun that had been given to him by Michael Collins. Prior to facing the firing squad, he told his then 16-year old son to seek out and shake the hand of all those who had signed his death sentence. Educated in Britain, the younger Childers moved to Ireland in the 1930 and was elected a Fianna Fail TD in 1938. He held several cabinet posts throughout the 1950s and 1960s and was Tánaiste from 1969 to 1973 before resigning to contest the Presidential Election.



TROOPERSTOWN HILL

Tooperstown Hill overlooks Annamoe, Laragh and the Avonmore River and is traversed by the Avonmore Way walking trail. The origin of its name has been the subject of discussion. Some local accounts say that it was used as a base by troopers or soldiers during the Cromwellian Conquest of the 1650s or perhaps later during the 1798 Rebellion of the United Irishmen. However, the Irish language version of Trooperstown is *Tigh an Tearmainn*, meaning ‘the House of the Church Lands’. It is more likely, therefore, that Trooperstown was part of the sanctuary lands of the nearby monastery of Glendalough and that it is one of the many places which reflects mistranslation from Irish into English. Another Irish name for Trooperstown Hill is Maoilín, meaning ‘little round hill’.

An old road from Clara Vale northwards along the eastern side of the hill was once the principal route towards Dublin and was called the Rocky Road. A regular stopping point along this road was marked by a large stone which may be a glacial erratic. This became known as the Bread & Butter stone because travellers would stop here for refreshments.

A holy well once existed in the Trooperstown area known as Fraughan’s Well, which may derive from the Irish *Tobar Fraochán*, or ‘the Well of the Bilberries’. It is likely that bilberries would have been abundant in this upland area before modern afforestation. According to the Schools Folklore Collection, this was situated in a roadside field known as *Páirc an Teampaill*, meaning the ‘Field of the Church’. During Penal Times, mass was said in a cave underneath a tree in this field. The Sites and Monuments Record states that a bullaun stone is located in a field known locally as Church Field on the eastern side of the hill. Close by to the south-east is the former Trooperstown National School, which opened its doors in 1835 and accommodated more than 100 students during its lifetime. The former schoolhouse is now a private residence.

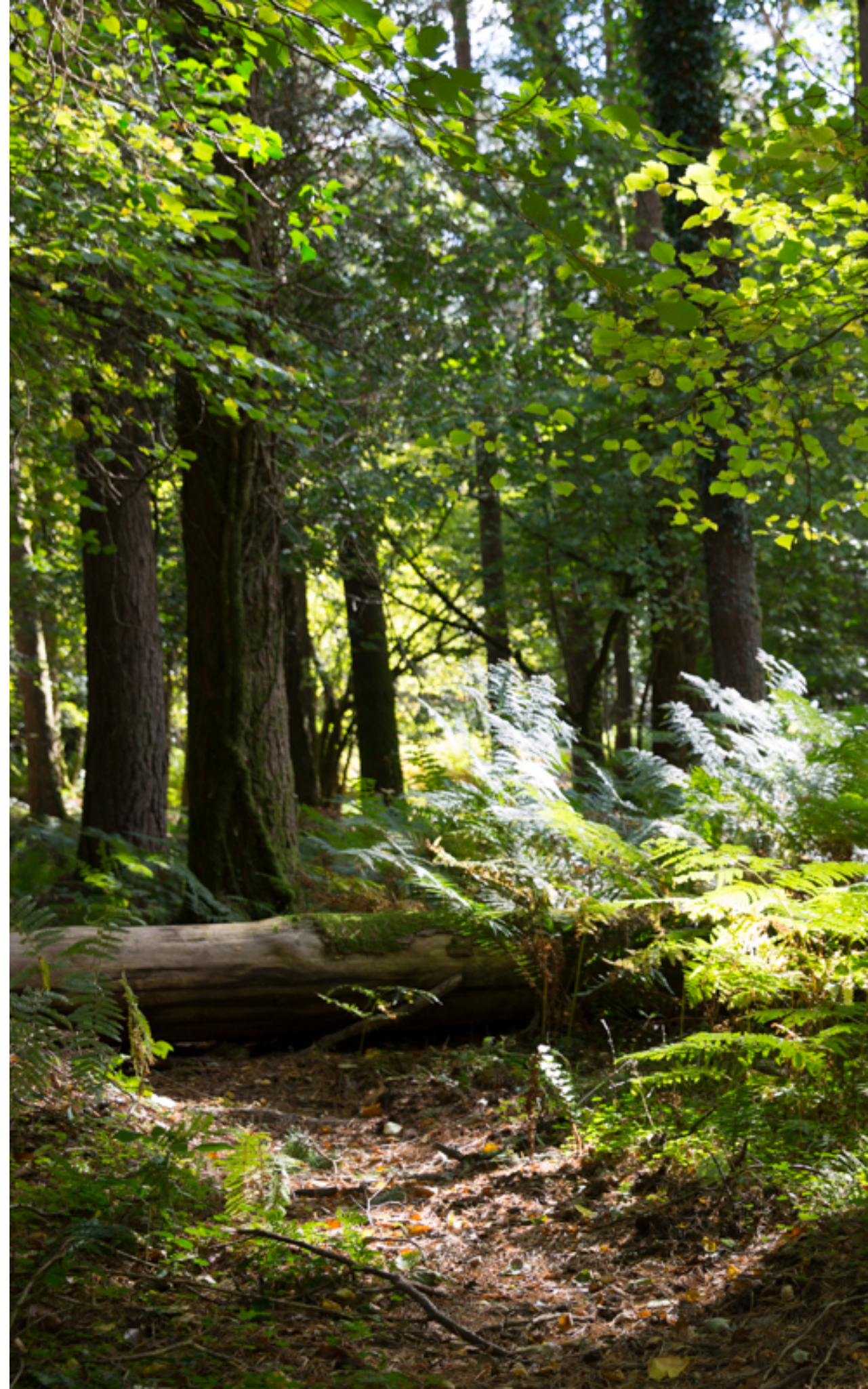


VALE OF CLARA

County Wicklow is known for its many wonderful woodlands but few can rival the beauty of the Vale of Clara. Here the Avonmore River is flanked on either side by broadleaf and evergreen forests as it flows southwards between Laragh and Rathdrum. The Vale is particularly important as a place where old oak woodlands remain intact, particularly on the eastern bank of the river around Croneybyrne. Oak forests would have covered much of Wicklow in the past. This is one of the largest stands of hardwood trees in Ireland and some of the oak forests have stood here since the last Ice Age. Its ecological significance has been recognised by its designation as a Special Area of Conservation, which ensures the future preservation of this significant piece of natural heritage. The Avonmore Way walking trail provides visitors with an opportunity to stroll through the valley. The oak trees are interspersed with rowan, hazel and holly. A variety of birds are present, including less common species like the Jay, Long-eared Owl, Woodcock and Blackcap.

Nestled in the heart of the valley is the picturesque village of Clara. The six-arch stone bridge here dates from the late seventeenth century and is thought to be the oldest bridge in County Wicklow. The fact that the bridge is narrow and can carry just one lane of traffic is testament to its age. Archaeological excavations in 2014 uncovered evidence of a watermill 100 metres upstream of the bridge which was dated to the last decade of the sixteenth century. The Catholic Church of St. Patrick and St. Killian is adjacent to the bridge and was built in 1799. The school beside the church came a century later in 1899. Clara also had a post office, an inn and a shop, all of which are private residences today.

The Millennium Forest at Ballygannon at the southern end of the Vale of Clara just north of Rathdrum. This was one of a number of forest areas planted around 2000 as a part of a national nature conservation project. Over 40,000 oak seedlings were planted here to add to the existing old oak woodlands. The project ensures that the oak woodlands will continue to thrive here and provide a habitat for birds, animals and other plants, as well as a natural amenity for people.





RATHDRUM

Rathdrum is a gateway to the Wicklow Mountains from the south and sits on a high ridge overlooking the Avonmore River. The name Rathdrum comes from the *Irish Ráth Droma*, meaning ‘the Fort on the Ridge’. Today there is no trace of this ancient fort, but Rathdrum was a stronghold of the O’Byrne clan in medieval times before it was wrested from them by Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam in the late 1500s.

Rathdrum’s location was key to its growth and prosperity in the late eighteenth century, when it was chosen by Earl Fitzwilliam as the site for the Flannel Hall. Wicklow Sheep were much valued for their wool and Rathdrum became a thriving centre for the trade in flannel and wool products generally. It is said that produce from over 1,000 looms and spinning wheels in cottages across south Wicklow were traded here and that purchasers came from abroad to procure high quality produce. The woollen trade was hit hard by the Act of Union in 1800 and declined in the following decades. The Flannel Hall was damaged by fire in 1890 and today the only surviving part of the building is used as a community centre.

Other industries in Rathdrum during the nineteenth century included two breweries, a tannery and a corn mill. The corn mill is adjacent to the eighteenth century bridge over the Avonmore river and is the best surviving piece of Rathdrum’s industrial heritage. The worker’s cottages across the bridge from the mill are known as Lowtown due to their situation downhill from the town centre. Monthly fairs were held on Fair Green throughout the nineteenth century where agricultural produce was traded, while the Market Square has also been a focus of commercial activity.





The railway arrived in Rathdrum in the 1860s and this necessitated the construction of a viaduct to bridge the Avonmore. This is an impressive feat of engineering and one of the most notable structures in the town. Around the same time, the neo-Gothic Catholic Church of St. Mary & St. Michael was built to a design by J.J. McCarthy, the most prominent architect of his time. Several features of the church take their inspiration from the monastic settlement at Glendalough.

Rathdrum was the birthplace of Anne Devlin (1780–1851), who was the housekeeper of Robert Emmet, the leader of the 1803 rebellion. She has gone down in Irish history as a heroine due to her refusal to cooperate with authorities and betray Emmet and his comrades in spite of being imprisoned and tortured. Charles Stewart Parnell (1845–1891) was born at nearby Avondale House and

made his first political speech in the Market Square. This same location was later used to shoot a scene for the film *Michael Collins* in 1995.

AVONDALE HOUSE & FOREST PARK

Set in some 500 acres of land, Avondale House is a handsome eighteenth century mansion that was the birthplace and home of the famous politician Charles Stewart Parnell (1846–1891). He became leader of the Home Rule League (later reformed as the Irish Parliamentary Party) and was a passionate campaigner for land reform in Ireland. British Prime Minister William Gladstone said this of him *"Parnell was the most remarkable man I ever met. I do not say the ablest man; I say the most remarkable and the most interesting. He was an intellectual phenomenon"*. Parnell is also commemorated in the nearby village of Rathdrum where you can find the Parnell Memorial Park.

Avondale House was first built in 1777 for Samuel Hayes. He was a barrister, but his legacy is perhaps best known for his pioneering work in forestry. He wanted to reforest Ireland, as by the late eighteenth century, the country was down to less than 1% forest cover. He carried out experimental planting on a grand scale on the Avondale estates, planting different species of trees from around the world to discover what would grow best in Ireland. His experiments have a lasting legacy. You can see a great variety of trees on the estate today, and his discovery that sitka spruce (originally from the North-West United States) was ideally suited to the Irish climate has led to millions of the trees being planted right across Ireland.

The house came into state ownership in the early twentieth century, and with its variety of lovely woodland walks it has become one of Wicklow's top tourist attractions. It is currently undergoing redevelopment, with a new visitor destination that will take visitors 'under' and through the trees, to an incredible viewpoint high over the Avonmore river valley. A new 'living history' experience in Avondale House will open the life and times of Parnell to visitors in a highly engaging way. A new restaurant/ café and pavilion with the story of Irish Forestry will demonstrate how Coillte are at the cutting edge of technology in managing Irelands forest estate.





THE MEETING OF THE WATERS

The Meeting of the Waters is the name given to the confluence of the Avonmore (Abhainn Mhor, Big River) and Avonbeg (Abhainn Bheag, Little River) that join here to form the Avoca River before flowing on to enter the sea at Arklow.

The poetic name Meeting of the Waters derives from a celebrated ballad by Thomas Moore (1779–1852) who penned the lyrics while sitting under a tree here. Moore was born in Dublin and studied law at Trinity College, but had a passion for music and drama. He published several volumes of melodies in the early nineteenth century. Moore's tree was a well-known attraction for many years but after it fell, it was replaced by a newly planted tree.

A bullaun stone can be found within the landscaped park. The steep slopes of the valley either side of the confluence are heavily wooded, with a mix of native tree species such as oak, ash, birch, hazel and holly with coniferous tree species. This is

an important habitat for flora and fauna. A study of the birds in this area found the commonest species represented to be goldcrest, robin, wren, coal tit and chaffinch, with the rare redstart also represented. Excitingly, red kites have been seen once again in the skies over the Meeting of the Waters, after its reintroduction to the Avoca area.

With such a confluence of rivers it is no surprise to find that this is a favourite spot for anglers. For many years the waters were polluted from mine workings, but nature has reasserted herself and brown trout are making a welcome return.



The Thomas Moore Memorial Park commemorates his role as Ireland's 'National Bard'. Some of his most famous works include *The Harp that Once Through Tara's Halls* and of course, *The Meeting of the Waters*:

*There is not in this wide world a valley so sweet
As that vale in whose bosom the bright waters meet
Oh! The last rays of feeling and life must depart,
Ere the bloom of that valley should fade from my heart.*

*Yet it was not that Nature had shed o'er the scene,
Her purest of crystal and brightest of green;
'Twas not her soft magic of streamlet or hill,
Oh! No, – it was something more exquisite still.*

*'Twas that friends, the belov'd of my bosom were near
Who made every scene of enchantment more dear
And who felt how the best charms of nature improve
When we see them reflected from looks that we love*

*Sweet Vale of Avoca! How calm could I rest
In thy bosom of shade, with the friends I love best
Where the storms that we feel in this cold world should cease
And our hearts, like thy waters, be mingled in peace*





Avoca village dates primarily from the nineteenth century and its growth and development were influenced by the nearby mines. It stretches in linear fashion along the eastern bank of the Avoca river from the three-arch bridge, which was built in 1868, uphill to the Catholic Church of St. Mary & St. Patrick, constructed just six years beforehand.

The origin of the name Avoca has been the subject of much discussion. The ancient Greek geographer Ptolemy included a river name 'Oboca' on his map of Ireland from the second century AD, which might infer that the name of the village and river is of extremely ancient origin. However, Avoca was known as Newbridge until the mid-19th century, and there are no references to the placename Avoca in Irish sources prior to then.

One of the best ways to explore the village and its surrounds is by taking the Red Kite walking trail, a 2.5km loop which ascends the forested high ground of

Kilmagig Woods to the east of the village. The walk takes its name from a recent initiative to reintroduce the Red Kite to the area. The project commenced in 2009 and has been a great success; now this bird of prey can be regularly seen soaring in the skies above the valley.

The former courthouse in the village centre is a relatively modest building dating from around 1870, but it retains an important function today as a heritage and tourist information centre. Avoca was the location for the filming of the BBC television series *Ballykissangel*, which originally aired from 1996 to 2001. The village retains pride in its links with the popular show and this is reflected in the names of several local businesses.



One of the most iconic denizens of the village is Avoca Handweavers. First established in 1723, this is the oldest working woollen mill in Ireland. The mill was initially used to grind flour, as well as to spin and weave wool, but after the mill owners invested in a fly-shuttle loom in the 1760s wool became the primary focus. The loom was capable of weaving up to 20 metres of cloth every day. This efficiency was a threat to employment of the local weavers, who reportedly resorted to burning some looms.

After the three Wynne sisters inherited the business in the 1920s, they introduced colour to the previously plain patterns. Avoca Handweavers tweeds was produced and exported, including for use by Italian designer Elsa Schiaparelli. The material was also used for a waistcoat for King George VI and baby blankets for the children of Queen Elizabeth II.



AVOCA MINER'S CROSS

The earliest known evidence of mining in the Avoca Valley dates to the eighteenth century, but it has been said that mining may have taken place here in prehistoric times. Some miners claim to have uncovered ancient implements, but conclusive evidence of prehistoric mining is likely to have been obliterated by later operations.

Avoca was the largest and longest-operating copper mine in Ireland and was worked from around 1720 to the 1980s. Mining took place at six separate locations within a one-mile radius; Avoca West, Tigroney East, Tigroney West, Cronebane, Conary and Shroughmore. The early large-scale mines here were run by English companies who provided the technical and engineering expertise, while the hard labour was carried out by locals. One unusual facet of the mines was that they produced their own coins, the Cronebane Penny, which were used to pay miners and which were accepted in local markets.

Work in the mines was notoriously difficult. Many of those employed there walked long distances each day to and from work. They then had to climb down hundreds of feet of wooden ladders to reach the bottom of the shafts and were faced with a difficult ascent at the end of a hard days work. Conditions underground were dark and cramped and flooding was a constant problem. It is said that up to 2,000 people were employed here at the height of production in the middle of the nineteenth century. The labourers weren't all men, as women and children also formed an important part of the workforce.

The scale and significance of the mines here in the nineteenth century was such that the new railway line south from Dublin towards Wexford was diverted inland to facilitate transport of ore. Prior to that, the ore was transported on hundreds of horses and carts to the port at Arklow for export to Britain for smelting.





Avoca contains the most extensive collection of mining-related built heritage in Ireland. A considerable amount of the nineteenth century mining infrastructure remains in situ, including engine houses, chimney, tramways, adits and shafts. Advances in mining technology meant that much of the operations in the twentieth century involved open cast mining which left large pits and spoil heaps behind.

The Miner's Cross was erected in the 1950s to commemorate those who worked in the mines. A plaque in tribute to the Avoca Miners begins:

*Beneath this soil brave men did toil
Each day, each night, each year
Mid rocks and mud they sweated blood
Through stress and strain and fear.*

THE MOTTEE STONE



The Mottee Stone is a well-known landmark near Avoca and a popular vantage point for walkers. It sits on top of the 250-metre high Cronebane Ridge overlooking the Avoca Valley with spectacular views at all points of the compass. Avondale lies to the north, the Wicklow Mountains with the peak of Lugnaquilla to the west and it is said that the mountains of Wales can be seen to the east on a clear day. Five iron steps have been hammered into the side of the stone so that it is possible to climb to the top.

This is one of the best examples of a glacial erratic, i.e. a rock that was transferred here by glaciers during the last Ice Age. The Mottee Stone consists of white granite, but the underlying bedrock here is volcanic. The nearest source of granite is over 13km away to the north west in the Glenmalur area. This indicates that the Mottee Stone, which weighs over 100 tons, was carried a considerable distance by moving ice. It is a very visible example of the impact of

glaciation on our landscape and the immense power of the ice.

There is considerable local folklore connected to the Mottee Stone. It is known as Fionn Mac Cumhail's hurling ball and it is said that the legendary warrior hurled it from the top of Lugnaquilla mountain to the west. Another tale says that every year on the morning of Easter the stone changes into the form of a woman and heads down the hill to the May Hole, a well near the Meeting of the Waters, to take a drink, before returning up the hill. There is a small hole indented in the top of the Mottee Stone and according to tradition anyone who puts their finger in this hole and makes a wish will see it fulfilled. The brilliant white colour of the stone is probably the reason why many claim to have seen a supernatural glow around it at certain times.

WOODENBRIDGE

Woodenbridge Golf Course is best known in Irish history as the site of a famous political speech by John Redmond MP in September 1914 in which he encouraged Irishmen to join the British Army and fight in World War I. Redmond was the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons and had been working for over 30 years to achieve the objective of Home Rule for Ireland. By September 1914, he had succeeded where Daniel O'Connell and Charles Stewart Parnell had failed. A Home Rule Bill had been passed through Westminster. However, its implementation was suspended owing to the outbreak of World War I. At the time, Redmond was also in control of the Irish Volunteers, a 150,000-member militia that had been formed to bolster the case for Home Rule and as a response to the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force who opposed Home Rule.

On Sunday September 20th 1914, Redmond was returning from Westminster via Dublin to his residence at nearby Aughavanagh. He passed a company of East Wicklow Volunteers who were drilling on the golf course, many on horseback. Redmond made what is thought to be an impromptu speech to the men in which he told them to 'account yourselves as men, not only in Ireland itself, but wherever the firing line extends, in defence of right, of freedom and of religion in this war'. Although in previous weeks Redmond had already encouraged Irishmen to join the British Army, the Woodenbridge speech has been the most quoted of his statements on the issue.

Redmond hoped that by encouraging the Irish Volunteers to join the British Army, the introduction of Home Rule after the war would be guaranteed. He also thought that it would prevent the partition of Ireland by uniting Nationalist and Unionists. However, the war lasted far longer than anyone had anticipated, and took a horrendous toll. Furthermore, those Irish Volunteers who disagreed with Redmond and split from the movement played a key role in the Easter Rising of 1916. Redmond died in 1918 having seen his dream of Home Rule unfulfilled while thousands of Irishmen had been killed in the conflict, including his brother Willie. A monument had been erected on the golf course to mark the site of the speech while there is also a fine memorial park commemorating those who died in World War I.





Recommendation 1 - Heritage Recording Projects in other areas of Wicklow

Following the successful completion of the River Liffey, Blessington Lakes and Wicklow Trails Heritage Recording Projects, it is clear that there is an appetite amongst communities in Wicklow to get involved in more Heritage Recording Projects in other areas of the county. During workshops that we carried out as part of this project, individuals from other communities enquired about the possibility of recording people in their locality and auditing the heritage in their area.

Areas that could be included in future Heritage Recording Projects include the Wicklow Coast, the area south of Aughrim including Shillelagh and Tinahely, west Wicklow including Dunlavin, Baltinglass and Rathdangan. We recommend projects

in these areas follow the same template as previous projects and include an audit of all types of heritage in the area, recording of local stories and community interaction and engagement with workshops held to inform communities about the progress of the project.

Recommendation 2 – Continuation of Oral Heritage Recording

During our work on the Wicklow Trails Heritage Recording Project, it has become clear that there is an incredible wealth of heritage along the trails and very interested and proactive communities that are engaged with the recording and preservation of that heritage. The curation and continuation of the oral heritage recording that this project initiated is a clear recommendation that could be supported by Wicklow County Council and Wicklow Uplands Council.

There are a number of enthusiastic local history groups in this area and they could be supported to become oral heritage recorders and curators. Alternatively, a dedicated oral heritage group could be established to carry out recording in the county. Oral heritage organisations have been created in other counties for example: *Cúimhneamh an Chláir* is an independent, not-for-profit, community based charity that aims to record, document, archive and share the memories, experiences, customs, traditions and practices that characterise County Clare. They are focused on the fact that the current elderly population may represent the last link to an older way of life in Clare. Their aim is to provide a platform for the dissemination of the material we collect through co-operation with community groups, schools, third level institutions, and the broader public.

We delivered an introduction to Oral Heritage Recording at the Sharing our Stories seminar on 24th of November and following on from that, further supports required to facilitate oral heritage recorders in the area can be assessed by the steering committee.

Recommendation 3 – Community Curation of ‘Our Wicklow Heritage’

Our Wicklow Heritage is an online community archive (www.countywicklowheritage.org) which was created by the Wicklow Heritage Forum in 2012 as an action of the County Wicklow Heritage Plan. It is a community heritage archive for storing and sharing stories relating to people, places and topics of Wicklow interest. The website is a powerful resource, that champions the local history of the area and makes it accessible. It is recommended to consider running training sessions in communities to encourage interested individuals to become curators of the content captured during heritage recording projects and to become custodians of the archive which is the ideal platform to share stories of the past and news about heritage projects in local areas. This would allow communities to share the great work that they are undertaking in preserving and collecting stories of the past.

Recommendation 4 – ‘The Story of Your Place’ Training Course

There is scope to run a training course for interested individuals keen to discover more about the heritage of their area. We recommend running an initial course titled; ‘*The Story of your Place*’ in a central location along the trails. The aim of the course is to enable course participants to identify, examine and record the heritage features of their own local area through desk research and fieldwork. Through this training course local community members will be empowered to discover, recognise, promote and conserve their unique local heritage resources. Group project work will enable citizen engagement and mainstream creativity into the conservation of local heritage. This course could include modules on:

- The story of your place; from earliest times to present day
- How to research the story of your place
- How to present information to visitors to your area
- Links that can be made with other areas along the estuary way
- How to tell the story of your place digitally

There are many benefits to running such a course. These include (but are not limited to):

- Bring like minded people together which would create a strong network of interested individuals in the area.
- Increase local knowledge about the heritage all along the walking trails
- Empower local people to get more involved with sharing the heritage of the area and how they can do that digitally
- By creating a strong forum, ideas and new business opportunities can be shared and developed and links can be made to other businesses in the area.

This course should focus on developing the participants research skills so they can develop their own stories and undertake a local heritage recording project. Course participants will discover and engage with their cultural heritage and reinforce a sense of belonging to their local area. Upon completion of the projects, the participants could display their findings in a local exhibition, engaging with their local heritage, space and community.

Recommendation 5 – Schools Landscape Project & Discover Your Trails Booklet

The wealth of heritage of the Wicklow Trails could become an inter-generational project. Transition Year students could be encouraged and empowered to research and collect stories themselves about their heritage and landscape, adding a truly unique insight to the area. By engaging with children now, it may help to develop a lifelong appreciation for the heritage of the Wicklow Trails, thus helping to ensure their protection and value for future generations.

When suitable schools have been identified for participation in this project, short training sessions could be delivered at each school to help to facilitate and empower the teachers and school children to collect and record the folklore of their area and their family stories, using best-practice guidelines and within a framework that ensures all schools can produce a consistent resource. A research booklet could be created for students similar to the *Discover Your Trails Booklet* (produced by Abarta Heritage for the Tipperary Rural Recreation Officer) which details the resources that students can use to uncover the heritage of trails in their area. This well designed and user-friendly booklet will provide the Transition Year students with supports and tools to carry out their own research project on one of Tipperary's Hidden Treasures. The key objectives of the booklet should be to: develop the research, surveying, communication and presentation skills of the students through active and experiential learning and to increase the students' knowledge and understanding of their local heritage in all its dimensions by undertaking their own research project on a chosen trail.

A resource guide for teachers should also be produced which has more details about the heritage of the trails and the processes of researching it so that teachers are familiar with the methodologies that students should employ when carrying out research and recordings.

Recommendation 6 – Unique Wicklow Trails Brand Development

A unified brand or theme which connects all the settlements along the Wicklow Trails should be created. The emerging identity should be created with input from the steering group and all other stakeholders in order to create a consistent message to promote the trails. It is recommended that any brand and symbol that is developed is united decision made by all stakeholders and that the brand is used consistently to avoid any confusion for stakeholders and ambiguity in the marketing. The main factors to consider when deciding on the brand are:

- The brand must be a unified representation of the Wicklow Trails.
- It should be in-line and reflective of broader tourism identities such as Ireland's Ancient East but it should also be able to stand alone as a distinctive and unique tourism product.
- It should be aimed at the core target markets as identified by Fáilte Ireland which are the Culturally Curious and Great Escapers (see failteireland.ie for more information on market segmentation). The Wicklow Trails walks can offer much to both of these key demographics.
- It should focus on responsible, sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism
- It should entice visitors by telling the unique stories of the region through evocative imagery and video
- The brand should be communicated widely to all stakeholders (including local businesses, accommodation providers, tourism bodies etc) with a formal launch event.

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Recommendation 7 – Wicklow Trails Walking Festival

Organising an event to showcase the trails would be a very positive way to attract visitors to an area, particularly outside the main tourist season.

Wicklow Trails Walking Festival

There are numerous walking festivals across Ireland throughout the year, but a walking festival could be organised for a bank holiday weekend during the tourist off peak season. This festival would allow walkers to explore the shorter walks off the main Wicklow Trails route and could have festivities in the settlements along the Trails with music nights in Roundwood and talks in Rathdrum for example. A great example of a community led walking festival is the *Ballyhouna International Walking Festival*. This festival has walks to suit all abilities and ages ranging from the experienced hiker (A Walks) to the regular ramblers (B Walks), feature walks (a *Walk With a Difference*) and community walks to suit families and individuals and for those looking for a more leisurely walk with culture & heritage in the mix. Wicklow Trails offer a range of walks for all different levels of ability with the common theme of incredible heritage connecting all the walks. That could be central theme of any walking festival that is to be developed.

Recommendation 8 – Interpreting the Wicklow Trails

Interpretation is the way in which we tell the story of a site or a place. Good quality interpretation is about communicating the meaning of a place and giving the visitor a deeper understanding and appreciation. Interpretation can take many forms, ranging from interpretive signage to a printed publication or an audio-visual presentation. The stories of the sites should be well told with the highest standard of interpretative signage, brochures or audio guides to allow people to explore independently.

Visible interpretation can also help to ensure high visibility leading to a greater sense of public guardianship as people often ascribe more ‘value’ to sites that are clearly maintained with facilities and signage. This can lead to fewer instances of littering and vandalism.

Interpretation can take many forms and doesn’t just have to consist of standard interpretive panels. New ways of interpreting or presenting our heritage are emerging. A recent initiative - the Creative Ogham Wicklow Project was undertaken by Séighean Ó’ Draoi, Dr Nora White and Roundwood Men’s Shed and supported by Wicklow County Council, Roundwood and District Community Council, Carr’s Farm, Roundwood Community Centre and Creative Ireland. Carved wooden posts with the names of native trees carved in Irish, English and Ogham have been installed beside existing trees on the path way around the Vartry Reservoir. This innovative and creative project could be installed at other locations such as the Vale of Clara or Trooperstown Hill as it is a fantastic way of combining our built and natural heritage and highlighting the connection between our earliest form of writing - Ogham and our native trees.

Interpretation panels are still the most common way of transmitting information at heritage sites. Due to the fact that many sites along the Trails are in natural heritage areas, panels on timber saw horses should be considered. These panels are environmentally friendly, sustainable and blend into the landscape.

Recommendation 9 – Digitisation Programme of Historical Journals

A digitisation programme of historical journals could also be considered. When carrying out research, it became clear that there is an incredible amount of research and a fantastic resource in the historical journals in Wicklow. It is important that this information is digitally archived for future generations. It is recommended that a programme of digitisation of older volumes of the historical journals of Wicklow are digitised. Funding has recently been made available by Creative Ireland for digitisation work and perhaps this funding could be accessed to ensure that this resource is protected for future generations.

It may be worth approaching local schools to explore the idea of establishing a Transition Year Project to carry out the digitisation of the Journals. The pupils would benefit from the outputs by developing skills such as

- best practice in digital archiving
- the use of metadata
- information technology skills
- becoming familiar with historical source material





This Heritage Recording Project has created an archive of content relating to the unique built and natural heritage that can be found along the trails. This archive will be housed in Our Wicklow Heritage (countywicklowheritage.org - the online community heritage hub). The range and diversity of the points of interest encountered during the course of this project show the diversity and complexity of the story of Wicklow. This diversity gives the opportunity for visitors to experience layers of stories, each more intriguing than the last. We hope that the content that has been created as part of this project, can be used to encourage the Culturally Curious visitors to get off the beaten track and explore the trails and communities and stories that this area has to offer.

Our work has helped to inform a database, that identifies sources of information, and the story of each site. It is hoped that the communities that live on these

trails will become the curators of this information and continue to add to it in the future. Throughout the project, we have sought to engage with local communities, groups and individuals and have amassed recordings which give a real insight into the stories of the area. Ghost stories from Avondale House, the fate of miners in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Great Famine, the historic woodlands and the geology of the area are just some of the stories that have been recounted to us during our Oral Heritage Recording programme.

Training in interpreting the landscape has been delivered which will help to engage and empower communities to continue to preserve, protect and record the heritage in their area and to curate the stories and folklore to keep them alive for future generations. The Wicklow Heritage Trail Recording Project is an initiative that forms a solid foundation to enable the local communities to tell their own stories, and to raise awareness of this truly beautiful landscape.

The icon is a stylized yellow castle or fortress. It features a central tower with a crenellated top, flanked by two smaller rectangular structures. The entire icon is rendered in a solid yellow color.

ABARTA HERITAGE

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