



parish church, in which the priest would have lived. At several ancient graveyards in west Wicklow, even where all evidence of the medieval parish church has disappeared, for example at Hollywood, there are several medieval grave-markers, decorated with crosses. In the towns of Arklow and Wicklow monasteries were founded. The Dominican priory of Arklow has almost entirely disappeared, but the remains still survive of a Franciscan friary that was originally on the edge of the medieval town of Wicklow.

The Gaelic revival

A basic weakness of the Norman Conquest was that there were not enough Normans to settle all the lands, even in Wicklow, which was so close to the centre of Norman rule in Dublin. In many cases the native Irish had remained working the lands that they had previously owned. For the first hundred years after their arrival the Normans and the native Irish lived in harmony. Gradually, however, the Irish tenants began to revolt against their new landlords, and the Norman estates, including those owned by the archbishop of Dublin, were losing profits. This came to a head in 1316 when Edward Bruce of Scotland invaded Ireland and nearly took control of Dublin itself. He failed to take the city, but he burned the town of Arklow to the ground. Some years later, the populations in the major towns and cities were devastated by the plague known as the Black Death. This was a period of serious instability for the Normans, who were in danger of losing all control in Ireland. The native Irish were quick to take advantage of the situation. In Wicklow the O'Byrnes and O'Tooles began to use the mountains as their fortress. The Wicklow Mountains became known as a 'land of war', where the O'Byrnes and O'Tooles were out of reach of even the most daring of the king's soldiers. For nearly 300 years these families terrorised the countryside around Dublin and were a thorn in the side of the Normans. On one occasion, in July 1402, the lord mayor of Dublin led the armed citizens against the O'Byrnes, led by Donncha O'Byrne, who were defeated in a



battle that took place at Ravenswell in Bray. Even towards the end of the sixteenth century the Irish of the mountains, under the notorious leadership of Feagh MacHugh O'Byrne, posed a formidable threat to the inhabitants of Dublin. Feagh earned his ferocious reputation as the Firebrand of Wicklow after he defeated a large force of English soldiers that had made the dangerous journey to confront him in Glenmalur in August 1580. Even after Feagh MacHugh O'Byrne's capture and beheading the O'Byrnes continued to reject English rule in Wicklow, and defeated another English force of soldiers led by Henry Harrington in 1599, in what was known as the Battle of Wicklow. In the end, however, the O'Byrnes and other Irish families were too divided amongst themselves to prevent the expansion of English rule in Ireland. Finally, after the Battle of Kinsale in 1603 and the Flight of the Earls in 1607, the old Gaelic way of life ended, and a new period of British rule began. In Wicklow this new beginning was symbolised by the final formation of its county boundaries in 1606—the last county in Ireland to be formed.

Opposite page top: Church tower at Burgage, near Blessington.

Opposite page bottom: Medieval grave-marker at Hollywood.

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 Wicklow County Council, Wicklow
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Medieval Wicklow — sites to visit

Outlined below are a number of medieval and later sites in County Wicklow that may be suitable for visiting. If you are considering visiting any of these sites you should check that the site is accessible and suitable for your group prior to your visit.

There may be other sites in your local area which may be suitable for visiting such as local graveyards. Information on archaeological sites in your local area may be found in the Archaeological Inventory of County Wicklow and in the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) maps. Both are available in your local library.

It is very important to note that any sites located on private land must not be visited without the landowner's permission.

St Mary's Church, Downsil

A small 16th century church situated near the Old Downs village, just to the south of the Glen of the Downs and not far from Willow Grove Pub. There is a small belfry on the west gable.

Black Castle, Wicklow Town

Situated on a rocky promontory, overlooking the harbour in Wicklow town, the site consists of a deep rock-cut ditch and the remains of the keep. The castle was first recorded in 1174 in a grant from King Henry II and later formed part of the medieval borough of Wicklow. The castle may be on the site of an earlier promontory fort. Travilahawk Beach, directly under the castle ruins, is the reputed landing point in Ireland of St Patrick in AD 432.

Kindlestown Castle, Delgany

The ruins of this 13th century castle are located in Upper Kindlestown, south-west of Greystones. It was built by the Archibald family with the ground floor originally roofed by a barrel-vault.

Threecastles, Oldcourt

Situated almost 5km north-east of Blessington is the 14th-century keep of a castle. The third storey is barrel-vaulted. It has a number of fireplaces and a stair turret.

Castleruddery Motte

Castleruddery Bronze Age stone circle and medieval motte are situated about 4km south-west of Donard. The stone circle is 30m in diameter and is enclosed by an earthen bank. The nearby motte guards a river crossing and is enclosed by a defensive ditch.

Wicklow Gaol

The 18th-century gaol, located on the southern side of Wicklow Town beside the courthouse, gives a unique insight into the harshness of prison life in the 18th century, the passion of rebellion, the cruelty of the transportation ships and hope of a new life in Australia. Address: Wicklow's Historic Gaol, Kilmant Hill, Wicklow Town
 Telephone No.: 0404-61599
 Website: www.wicklowhistoricgaol.com

Opening arrangements:

Date	Day	Time
Mid-March–end October	Daily	09:30–17:00
Night tours	Friday	18:30–20:30

Dwyer-McAllister Cottage, Derrynamuck

This three-roomed thatched house, 9km south-east of Donard, was reconstructed in 1947 and further restored in 1992. It is associated with the Wicklow rebel Michael O'Dwyer and is equipped with furniture, utensils and pikes from the 1798 period.

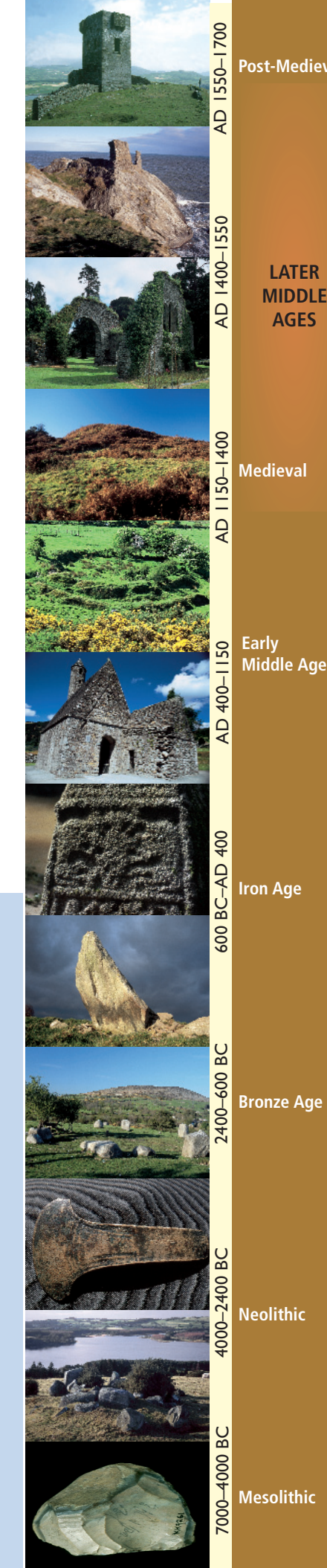
Open to the public mid-June to mid-September, daily 2–6pm.
 Address: Derrynamuck, Knockanrigan
 Telephone no.: 0404-45325/52
 (Glendalough Visitor Centre).

Opening arrangements:

Date	Day	Time
Mid-June–mid-September	Daily	14:00–18:00

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Information on all sites provided by Glendalough Visitors Centre, based on the OPW National Monuments of County Wicklow



AD 1550–1700
 AD 1400–1550
 AD 1150–1400
 AD 400–1150
 600 BC–AD 400
 2400–600 BC
 4000–2400 BC
 7000–4000 BC

Post-Medieval
 LATER MIDDLE AGES
 Medieval
 Early Middle Ages
 Iron Age
 Bronze Age
 Neolithic
 Mesolithic



County Wicklow

In the later Middle Ages



Baltinglass Abbey.

Richard de Clare, better known as Strongbow. Now Diarmait MacMorrrough was set to challenge Rory O'Connor for the title of high king of all Ireland, but he died before he could achieve this. It is unlikely that MacMorrrough ever intended to give Strongbow or the other Normans lands in Leinster. He most likely intended to use their help to win the high kingship of all Ireland, and as payment for their services to leave them with the towns of Dublin, Waterford and Wexford, or maybe even force them back to England empty-handed. After MacMorrrough died, however, Strongbow and the Normans seized control of Leinster.

Watching these developments in Ireland from across the sea, the king of England, Henry II, made the journey to Ireland in 1171, in order to make sure that Strongbow would remain loyal to him and would not establish himself as a rival ruler of Ireland. The king granted much of the lands of Leinster to Strongbow, and Strongbow in turn gave lands to those Norman knights who had helped take the land. One of these was a Yorkshire man, Walter de Ridelesford, known to his peers as a brave and noble warrior. Among his grants were lands in Kildare and Dublin, as well as much of the land around Bray. The king did not give away all of the lands in Leinster, and in Wicklow he kept for himself lands at Newcastle and also Glencree, where he established a Royal Forest. After the year 1180 many of the lands in Wicklow that had once been owned by the monastery of Glendalough came into the possession of the archbishop of Dublin. These included Castlekevin, where a large castle was built at the centre of a large estate. Elsewhere the archbishop divided up lands amongst his friends and family. For example, he gave land at Hollywood to his nephew, Geoffrey de Marisco. In this way many of the lands of Wicklow were redistributed amongst the recent Norman arrivals, and the native Irish ruling families were forced to settle for smaller parcels of land than they had once owned.

The Norman Conquest

By the middle of the twelfth century many of the Viking towns, such as Dublin and Wexford, as well as the Irish ruling families had forged strong trade and political links with England, and also with mainland Europe. One of these Irish rulers was Diarmait MacMorrrough, king of Leinster. The lands that now form the county of Wicklow were ruled by a number of less powerful families, who were all answerable to Diarmait MacMorrrough as king of Leinster. An example of Diarmait MacMorrrough's contacts with Britain and mainland Europe can be found in Baltinglass, where he founded a Cistercian abbey in 1148. The Cistercian order of monks had its origins in France some years before, and Baltinglass was only the second such Cistercian abbey to be founded in Ireland.

In the year 1166 Diarmait MacMorrrough was forced to resign as king of Leinster by the high king of Ireland, Rory O'Connor of Connacht. Diarmait was forced to go into exile in England, but he was not willing to give up his title as king of Leinster without a fight. While in England, he convinced several Norman knights to accompany him back to Ireland and assist him in winning back the kingship of Leinster. He achieved this in 1167 with the aid of a small band of Welsh and Flemish knights. Over the next few years further numbers of Normans arrived, and Diarmait's strength grew until finally, in August 1170, about 200 armoured knights and 1,000 men-at-arms arrived under the leadership of



Motte at Hollywood.



The Black Castle, Wicklow.

the centres of Norman rule. Some of the earliest Norman castles were of timber, though today only the earthworks of these survive. These earthworks are known as 'mottes' and consist of large, pudding-shaped mounds of earth, on top of which would have stood timber castles. The timber castles have long since disappeared and have left no obvious trace, but the large mounds on which they once stood can still be seen at several places, including Killamoat near Rathdangan, as well as Donard and Hollywood. It is easy to think of wooden castles as being less impressive or less substantial than the stone castles that we are more familiar with. There is little doubt, however, that these timber castles were very well built and designed to withstand attacks in the same way as the stone castles that were built at that time.

The more important castles, and those which were properly funded, were of stone, such as the Black Castle in Wicklow town. The site for this castle was well chosen, as it was surrounded by the sea on three sides, leaving only one small piece of ground to be defended by a large ditch cut through the underlying rock. Access across the ditch could only be gained by a drawbridge that could be raised when the castle came under attack. Unfortunately much of this castle has since fallen into the sea that once defended it.

Over the last few hundred years many of Wicklow's castles have disappeared, including castles that once stood at Baltinglass and Bray. Fortunately, several impressive castles still survive, for example at Oldcourt in Bray and Threecastles near Blessington. Even here, however, these are only fragments of what were once much larger castles. At Threecastles the remains of where a building was once attached to the tower can clearly be seen today. This is less obvious at Oldcourt, where the tall tower contains the stairs that gave the inhabitants access to the ground and first floors of a large hall building that has disappeared. The



Oldcourt Castle, Bray.



shape of the roof of this building can still be seen high up the wall of the tower. At Newcastle the building that survives is a gatehouse, which provided access into a large courtyard that has disappeared. There were most likely towers along the courtyard wall and buildings within it that have also disappeared. Near Greystones, the castle of Kindlestown takes its name from the man who probably built it, Albert de Kenley. Only one tower and a section of the enclosing wall survive of the castle at Arklow, which may have been the largest in the county.

Norman churches

When the Normans selected a place to build one of their castles, they usually chose a site near an existing and already ancient church and graveyard. Once their castles were built, they sometimes turned their attention to rebuilding the nearby church. The churches that they built were larger than the older churches that previously stood at these sites, and were intended to serve as parish churches, in the same way that modern churches do today. Examples of these medieval parish churches can still be found today, for example at Donard and Killiskey near Ashford. At Burgage the tower commonly called a castle was originally the tower that stood to the west of the medieval

Top left: Threecastles Castle, Blessington.

Middle left: Kindlestown Castle.

Left: Newcastle.

Above right: Franciscan friary at Wicklow.

