

Wicklow is a hilly county and its vernacular houses were built to sit comfortably into its characteristic topography. Houses often run across a slope with high ground against the back wall. Some run down the slope with stepped or sloped floors inside, the roof ridge sloping with the terrain, and the windows stepped down across the front of the house.

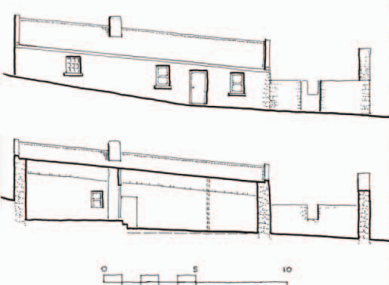
The landscape in Wicklow ranges from central mountains to lowlands and coastal settings with traditional farmland and more than usual amounts of forest. Since the 17th century Irish farmsteads are typically located on the land worked by the farmer. A cluster of substantial farmhouses near Baltinglass is an interesting exception and may owe its origin to Anglo-Norman settlement patterns found in south-eastern counties.

Clusters known as “clachans” developed in pre-Famine Ireland as rural populations grew and poorer land in previously unsettled upland areas was needed. The clachan was a grouping of smaller houses cultivating land communally in the “rundale” system. They were most common in the west of Ireland, but also occurred in the Wicklow, Blackstairs and Slieve Bloom Mountains, where farms follow some patterns more common to the north and west of the country than to the surrounding lowland areas.

Individual or grouped farmyard complexes distinguish the rural countryside, and are often the landmarks of a locality. The vernacular dwellings and farms of Wicklow are an essential element of the dramatic landscape for which this county is renowned.



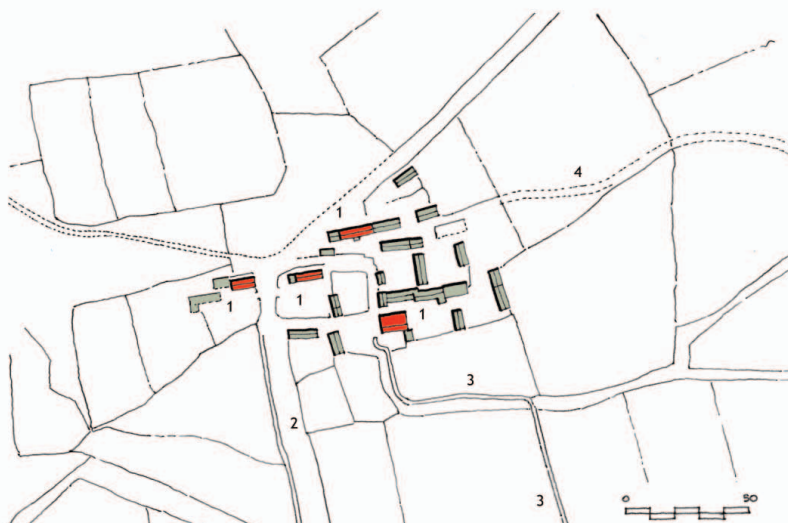
Irish farmhouses usually stand away from each other on their own farms.



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A cluster of vernacular buildings at Davidstown recalls a bygone era and adds to the beauty of rural Wicklow



Map of a clustered settlement of four farms at Muckduff Lower, near Baltinglass
1. Farm houses, yards and outbuildings; 2. Approach road; 3. Stream; 4. Disused route.



Traditional buildings are an essential component of the renowned Wicklow landscape



Wicklow houses often step down a natural slope

Houses built on slopes often have higher ground against the back wall

Map of crossroads settlement at Davidstown

1. Farmhouses, yards and outbuildings; 2. Road;
3. School; 4. Church.



A corner seat of stone is an important feature of a locality which can easily disappear



Vernacular buildings fit into natural contours in a way which modern houses seldom do



The roadside setting of a vernacular farmstead adds simple dignified beauty to a country road