



carlow – trails of the saints  
*ceatharlach – bóthar na naomh*



carlow  
through the waters of time



**Fáilte Ireland**  
National Tourism Development Authority

SOUTH EAST IRELAND



## Introduction

County Carlow is one of Ireland's hidden gems. It is a county rich in its archaeology and diversity of archaeological sites; distinctive in its architecture with its creative use of native Carlow granite.

It is a county whose documented history reflects its active involvement in every phase of early and medieval Irish history and whose natural physical beauty is one of Ireland's best kept secrets.

But most surprising of all is the county's central role in the monastic and ecclesiastic life of Ireland. From Agha Church to the monastic site of St. Mullins, the medieval settlement of Old Leighlin, the living traditions of Carlow's saints, Moling and Laserian, Carlow offers a richness of heritage, a depth of specialist literature and an ease of access unlikely to be equalled in any other part of Ireland.

by Dr. Maurice Manning, Chancellor,  
National University of Ireland (NUI) and  
President, Irish Human Rights Commission

Carlow is a county with an exceptionally rich ecclesiastical heritage with a number of sites of national significance. These include the monastic site at St. Mullins, the Romanesque doorway at Killeshin, the medieval Cathedral of Old Leighlin, the eighteenth-century College and the nineteenth-century Catholic Cathedral in Carlow and the exquisite Adelaide Memorial Church at Myshall. However, in developing a trail of Carlow's religious history the intention has also been to take in examples of less well-known sites, to bring visitors to parts of the county that are less-travelled and introduce them to places which have an equally important place in the ecclesiastical history of the county. We do hope you enjoy your visit.

Is contae le hoidhreacht luachmhar eaglasta é Ceatharlach ina bhfuil roinnt mhaith láthaireacha de shuntas náisiúnta. Ina measc siúd tá an láthair mainistreach i dTigh Moling, an Doras Rómhánúil ag Cill Uisean, an Ardeaglais mheánaoiseach i Seanleithglinn, Coláiste na hochtú haoise déag agus Ardeaglais Chaitliceach na naoú haoise déag i gCeatharlach agus an Séipéal Cuimhneacháin Adelaide ársa i Miseal. Agus conair de stair reiligiúnach Cheatharlach á chruthú againn áfach, bhí sé mar aidhm againn chomh maith samplaí de na láthaireacha nach bhfuil chomh hiomráiteach a chur san áireamh chun cuairteoirí a mhealladh chuig codanna den chontae nach bhfuil mórán cur amach acu orthu agus iad a chur ar an eolas faoi láthaireacha atá chomh tábhachtach céanna i stair eaglasta an chontae. Tá súil againn go mbainfidh sibh taitneamh as bhur gcuid.

*Photographs featured on the front cover left to right: Carlow Cathedral; The Statue of Innocence, Adelaide Memorial Church, Myshall (courtesy Dr. M.J. Blade); St. Laserian's Cathedral, Old Leighlin and St. Mullins ecclesiastical site. Watermark: ninth-century High Cross at St. Mullins.*

## Driving the Trails of the Saints

### Dear Visitor

We are delighted that you have chosen to explore Co. Carlow in south-east Ireland and its wealth of religious sites. 'Carlow – Trails of the Saints' is made up of three separate driving routes which between them cover the entire county of Carlow and feature some 51 ecclesiastical attractions. Many of these are deemed to be of national significance including for example the Romanesque doorway at Killeshin, the medieval cathedral at Old Leighlin and the monastic site at St. Mullins. The intention has also been to feature less well-known sites, which have however, an equally important place in the ecclesiastical history of the county. All of the sites are rich and varied and have been selected to allow you discover the special peace and spirituality which encapsulates this county, and the characters and people who moulded its ecclesiastical landscape.

St. Patrick's Trail in the northern part of the county covers a distance of 77km (48 miles) while St. Laserian's Trail in mid-Carlow is 69km (43 miles) in length. St. Moling's Trail which takes in south Co. Carlow is 70km (44 miles). All routes feature a mix of regional and country roads. All of the towns featured have a full range of banking, postal and hospitality services to meet the needs of the visitor.



*Sheep farming in Co. Carlow*



*Ecclesiastical trail signs*



*Wildlife at Templemoling*



*St. Mullins ecclesiastical village*

Each route is prefaced by a map with all attractions numbered and linked to the text which follows. A glossary of ecclesiastical terms features at the back of this publication and are identified within the text by the following symbol✚. More in-depth information on each site is provided on the home page of [www.carlowtourism.com](http://www.carlowtourism.com) together with a downloadable mapping facility suitable for Sat-Nav usage. This allows you to navigate your way from one site to the next with ease.

Each trail can be comfortably driven in a day. However, with three trails to experience we encourage you to relax, overnight and enjoy the fascinating history of Carlow's ecclesiastical heritage at a leisurely pace.





Killeshin Romanesque Doorway



St. Brigid's Well, Myshall



Saint John's Church of Ireland, Nurney

## Introduction to the Religious History of Carlow

Carlow has an exceptionally rich ecclesiastical heritage spanning at least fifteen centuries. The oldest sites with ritual or religious significance are probably the holy wells, which may have been visited for centuries prior to the coming of Christianity. Carlow was Christianised in the late fifth century and in the ensuing decades, followers of St. Patrick set up monasteries across the area.

The timber buildings of these early foundations have disappeared but the remnants of their stone churches survive, often delighting with magnificent Romanesque✚ carving. In the twelfth century Leighlin was formally instituted as a diocesan centre and construction of the cathedral church at Old Leighlin began. St. Laserian's Cathedral is one of Ireland's most important medieval churches and is still in use for its original purpose.

Following the Reformation in the sixteenth-century, monastic houses were dissolved and restrictions were placed on Catholic worship by the Penal Laws✚. Rising population and the lifting of the Penal restrictions in the late eighteenth century saw a huge resurgence in Catholic building across the county. These new churches sent out both spiritual and aesthetic signals and in their dedications, stained glass and funerary monuments paid tribute to the early saints of Carlow.

At the same time the Church of Ireland also embarked on a building campaign, erecting churches whose elegant lines and graceful spires can be seen from afar. Their interiors were frequently austere with decoration kept to a minimum. In contrast, the Church of Christ the Redeemer (the Adelaide Memorial Church) built as a memorial church, adopted a very ornate neo-Gothic✚ style with an interior filled with striking examples of iron and stone work.

The selection of Carlow's ecclesiastical sites included in these trails faithfully reflects the county's religious and cultural history. They constitute a key part of the county's landscape and identity and command our attention and respect in the twenty-first century.

## The People of Passion and Piety

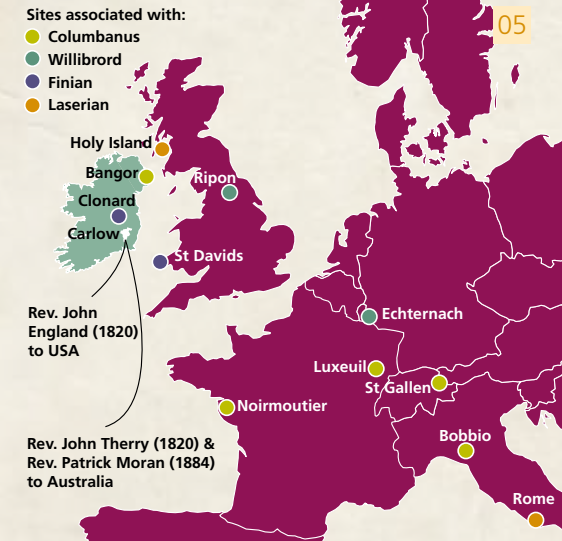


There are at least twenty two early saints associated with Carlow and its area. Some were born and spent their lives here; others came to be educated or to found monasteries. Some embarked from the county on great missionary endeavours, such as Willibrord who left the monastic school of Clonmelsh (Garryhundon) in 690 to preach the gospel in the Low Countries and founded the monastery of Echternach in Luxembourg. Columbanus c. 540-615, traditionally believed to have been born near Myshall, is regarded as the first great Irish missionary on the continent where he founded many monasteries including Luxeuil in France and Bobbio in Italy.

St. Fintan, known as the 'father of Irish monasticism' spent his early years in Carlow before founding his monastery at Clonenagh, Co. Laois. St. Fortiarnán (Fortchern) left his native Meath and travelled down to Carlow to set up monastic communities at Killoughternane and Tullow. He was the teacher of St. Finian, himself known as a great educator. Finian left his native Carlow to study in Wales before establishing the famous monastery of Clonard in Co. Meath. St. Laserian, who was from Ulster, studied at Clonard and later came to be abbot of the monastery of Leighlin initiated by St. Gobban c. 600.

St. Moling (615-697) founded the monastery at St. Mullins ('Tigh Moling) and is associated with several sites in the south Carlow area. In the northeast of the county the monastery at Clonmore had a succession of saintly abbots, including Maedhóc, Oncho and Fionnán Lobhar.

The majority of sites along the routes have associations with one or more of these saints. These associations are sometimes in the form of remains of buildings and monuments linked with saintly foundations but they are also evident in the dedications of later churches and the iconography of stained-glass windows. The saints of early Carlow still play an active role in the religious lives of contemporary Carlovians and indeed contemporary Europeans.



This map shows the influence of Carlow Saints in Europe and later, Carlow trained clergy in the USA and Australia.



Head of St. Laserian taken from the pulpit in Carlow County Museum.



Stained glass featuring St. Fortchern in the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Borris (above) and St. Finian (in text, St. Finians RC Church, Clonard, Co. Meath) – courtesy T. Doolan.



View of Carlow from Oisín Park, Killeshin  
Courtesy J. Galloway



Adelaide Memorial Church, Myshall  
Courtesy T. Doolan



St. Fortiarnán's Church, Killoughternane  
Courtesy T. Hunt



## The Three Trails

### St. Patrick's Trail

Named after St. Patrick, who is reputed to have baptised the King of Leinster in north Carlow, this trail takes in the county's two largest urban settlements of Carlow and Tullow. Both towns have a rich ecclesiastical tradition and were in the forefront of the nineteenth-century revival of Catholic places of worship and education. The beautifully carved doorway at Killeshin and the crosses and holy well in the peaceful village of Clonmore are excellent examples of the county's early Christian and medieval heritage while a stopover at the O'Meara tomb in Bennekerry churchyard will introduce the visitor to a famous Carlow artist.

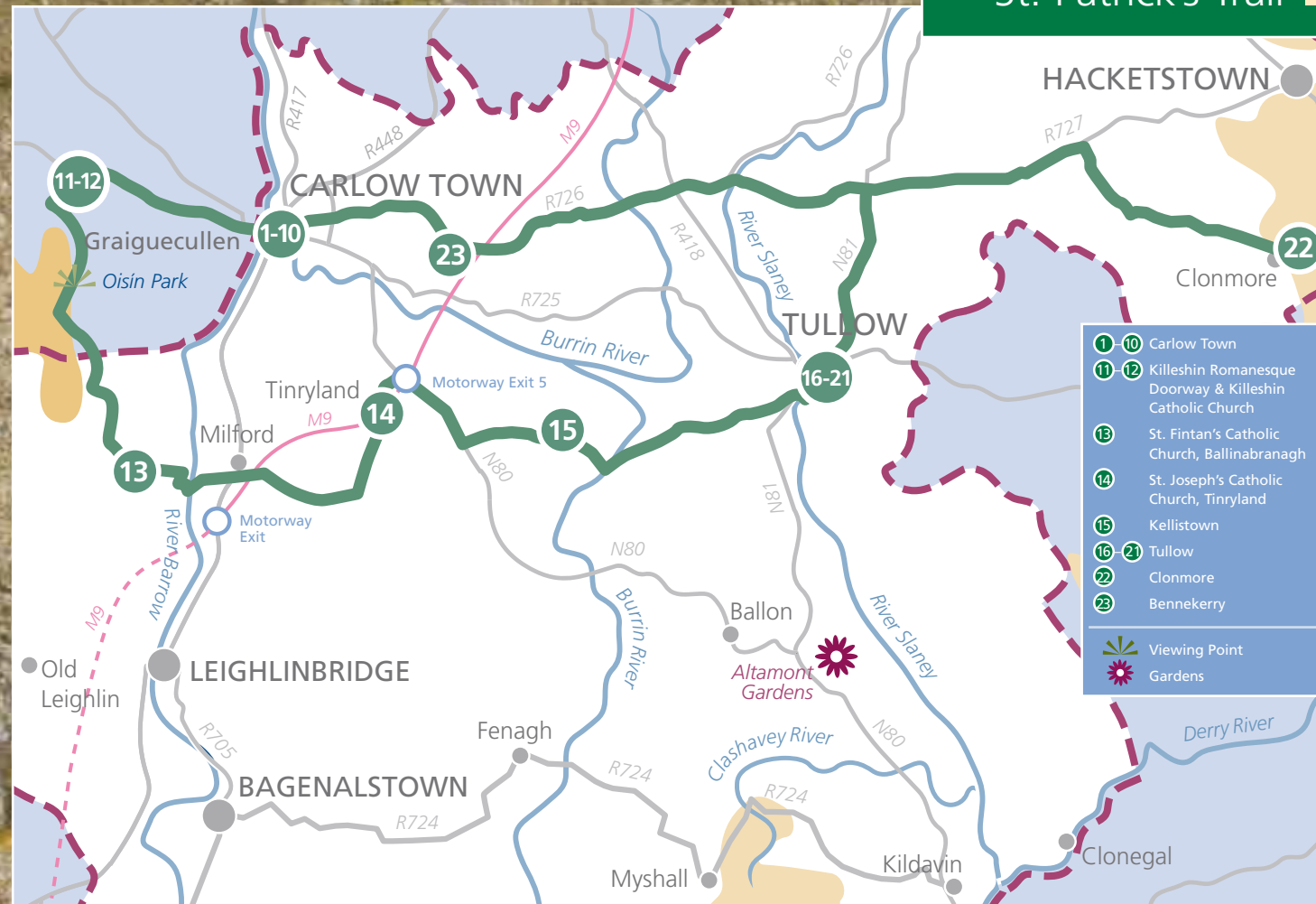
### St. Laserian's Trail

A visit to one of Ireland's finest medieval churches, St. Laserian's Cathedral in Old Leighlin, makes a perfect start to this trail which meanders through the heart of the county towards Myshall at the foot of the Blackstairs Mountains. In Myshall, the visitor can admire the exquisite Adelaide Memorial Church with its exuberant decorative work. The trail also includes the Quaker<sup>+</sup> burial grounds at Ballykealey and Ballybrommell which remind us that the county included communities whose belief systems operated outside the mainstream Catholic and Church of Ireland faiths.

### St. Moling's Trail

St. Moling, the seventh-century saint, ranks among 'the four great prophets of Ireland'. The monastery he founded at St. Mullins, beside the River Barrow, is the highlight on this trail which bears his name. There are, however, other exceptional experiences awaiting the visitor. The isolated Temple Moling in Ballinree and the diminutive early medieval church at Killoughternane are set in breathtaking scenery and surrounded by the calming sounds of nature. The trail also includes the beautiful medieval Cistercian church in Graiguenamagh, now adapted for modern worship.

For a full list of attractions and facilities in each town please visit [www.carlowtourism.com](http://www.carlowtourism.com)







Altar of Carlow Cathedral (above)  
JKL Statue by John Hogan (right)

Spire of Carlow Cathedral (below)



## Carlow – *Ceatharlach*

Carlow Town, the county capital is strategically positioned at the meeting point of the Rivers Barrow and Burren. This trail enjoys a strong association with St. Patrick, Ireland's national saint. Relax and enjoy discovering its rich Christian heritage in settings which radiate peace and spirituality.

St. Patrick's Trail starts in Carlow Town with all sites within easy walking distance of the town centre. It is advisable to park your car in a central location and enjoy wandering through the winding streets and lanes at your ease.

① **Carlow Cathedral** was built between 1828-33 to replace a parish chapel which had become too small for the growing population of the town. It was among the first Catholic cathedrals consecrated following the act granting Catholic Emancipation<sup>+</sup> in 1829.



The cathedral was built by Bishop James Doyle (known as JKL) and financed through public subscription. Bishop Doyle, viewed by many historians as the outstanding bishop of the nineteenth-century, was a church reformer, a prolific political writer on the state of Ireland and a prominent social activist. He was renowned for his evidence on Catholic Emancipation<sup>+</sup> delivered before British Parliamentary committees. His impressive marble memorial statue, carved by the Irish sculptor John Hogan in Rome, represents the bishop with one arm aloft and the other resting on the shoulder of a figure symbolising Ireland, kneeling by his side in an attitude of hope.

The cathedral's architect was Thomas Cobden and it is generally regarded as his most outstanding church building. The granite, neo-Gothic<sup>+</sup> exterior features a graceful entrance tower which rises some 46 metres and may have been modelled on the Cloth Hall in Bruges, Belgium and medieval towers in England.

Open: Monday – Friday 7.15am – 7.00pm, Saturday 9.00am – 7.30pm and Sunday 7.45am – 8.00pm | Admission: Free [www.kandle.ie](http://www.kandle.ie)

*Painting by Thomas Cobden of Carlow Cathedral and the North Wing of Carlow College, both designed by him.*



### DID YOU KNOW...

Lecture rooms in the college are named after famous alumni. The John England Room is named after the first bishop of Charleston, USA (1820-42), while the Therry Room commemorates a pioneer of the Australian Church. Famous lay alumni include James Fintan Lalor, the agrarian agitator and social activist, the Fenian John O'Leary and Frank O'Meara, the impressionist painter.



To mark the bicentenary of the opening of the college an exact replica of the plain un-inscribed high cross from nearby Sleaty was erected in the grounds. Immediately opposite is a modern work entitled Sun Stone. This is by the German artist Paul Schneider and it is aligned with the sun at the summer solstice.

Open: Daily. Entry into the College buildings is restricted at certain times. Visitors should report to the receptionist at the main entrance | Admission: Free

② **Carlow College**, otherwise known as St. Patrick's College is Ireland's oldest third-level Catholic College. It was founded in 1782 and opened in October 1793 following the relaxation of the Penal laws<sup>+</sup> which restricted Catholic education. Dr. James Keeffe, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin along with his successor, Bishop Daniel Delany, were the driving forces behind the foundation of the college. Its aim was to educate boys for the professions and for the priesthood. During the period 1793-2001 over 3,300 students of Carlow College were ordained priests and they have served all over the world. The college has also educated generations of politicians, poets and leaders.

The chapel of the Sacred Heart in the Hiberno-Romanesque<sup>+</sup> style is particularly interesting. It was erected to mark the centenary of the college and now functions as the College Library. An exhibition relating to the history of the college can be seen in the corridor leading into the Library.



Carlow College (above) / Carlow College Coat of Arms (below)



Former chapel in Carlow College, now the P.J. Brophy Library





*A leisurely stroll through the streets of Carlow Town reveals a rich ecclesiastical history. This stretches all the way back to the sixth century when St. Croine Bheag, a female recluse, was associated with the area now known as Templecrooney near the Haymarket. Tradition holds that it was she who advised St. Columbanus (see St. Laserian's Trail) to leave home to follow his monastic vocation. There was also an early monastery in Carlow founded by St. Comgal of Bangor.*

**3-7 Carlow's churches** Carlow was an important medieval town and its parish church may have stood on the site now occupied by **St. Mary's Church of Ireland**. The present building dates from the early eighteenth century although the spire was added in 1834 during extensive renovations overseen by Thomas Cobden. Cobden was also responsible for the design and building of the **Scots Church** on the Athy Road. This opened for worship in 1819 to serve the Presbyterian congregation in the town.

**St. Clare's Church**, Graiguecullen was originally built in 1852 as St. Anne's Church of Ireland church on the Athy Road in Carlow. In 1927 after a period of disuse the church was sold to the Catholic Parish of Graiguecullen and stone by stone the church was brought across the River Barrow and rebuilt by local company Thomas Thompson.

Finally, there are two late nineteenth-century churches in the town. The '**Old Church**' in the grounds of St. Dymphna's Hospital, which now houses the Carlow Military Museum and the **Methodist Church** on the Athy Road.



**8-10 Carlow's convents** In 1811 the **Presentation Sisters** arrived in Carlow and founded a convent and school at the junction of Tullow Street and College Street. The buildings now house the Carlow Library, Tourist Office and Museum while the tiny 'nuns' graveyard' can still be visited at the rear. In 1837 the Sisters of Mercy founded **St. Leo's Convent**, which continues to provide education to the town. In 1893 the **Poor Clare sisters** came to the town – they moved into their present Monastery beside St. Clare's Church in 1900. Although the order has limited contact with the outside world, visitors are welcome at certain times of the year.

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Cross Graiguecullen Bridge and proceed straight ahead on the R430 signed to Castlecomer. In Killeshin village take a left signed to Oisín Park. Park just past church ruin on the right. Distance 5km.

## Killeshin – Cill Uisean – the church of Uisean

**11 Romanesque Doorway** St. Patrick introduced Christianity into Ireland in the fifth century and heralded a golden age of Christianity which produced a rich heritage of architecture and ecclesiastical art. Killeshin was the site of an early monastic settlement associated with saints Diarmait and Comgán. St. Mugen who was abbot here in the sixth century is believed to have taught St. Laserian (d.639) the first bishop of Leighlin. In the eleventh century the monastery suffered as a result of dynastic rivalry in Leinster. It was burned in 1042 and 1077 and thereafter went into decline.

The present church was built c.1150 and is well worth visiting not just for its beautiful Romanesque doorway, one of the finest examples in the country, but for its scenic setting. Nestling in peaceful countryside, it has such wonderful views across the Barrow Valley to the Blackstairs Mountains that it has been called the 'The Balcony of Carlow'. The doorway is also one of only a small number of doorways in Ireland with a triangular gable above the arches. Partially reconstructed, the doorway has four orders, with capitals bearing heads with intertwined hair and an arch with foliage and animal motifs. It appears that the sculpture was intended to be painted as was common in the twelfth century. Take some time to imagine the painstaking craftsmanship that went into the elaborate carvings on the doorway.



Down the hill on the right, **12 Killeshin Catholic Church** was built in 1819-20 to the design of Thomas Cobden. It is a modest but spacious building in stone and brick with Gothic windows and polygonal turrets on each corner.

Romanesque doorway open: Daily, daylight hours. Parking limited  
Killeshin Catholic Church open: Daily from 11am, daylight hours  
Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Continue uphill taking the left fork towards Oisín Park. At the top of the hill turn left and proceed downhill into Ballinabranagh village. Church is on the right. Distance 9km.



Gothic east window at Killeshin / Detail on doorway  
Killeshin Romanesque Doorway (below)





St. Fintan's Church, Ballinabranagh



Stained glass window to the memory of Myles Keogh in St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Tinryland



## Ballinabranagh – *Baile na mBreatnach*

The early nineteenth-century ⑬ **St. Fintan's Catholic Church** is a fine example of a spacious 'barn-style' building. Features of note include the marble altar which was presented to the church by Cardinal Moran (see page 31).

To the left of the church, in the carpark, can be seen the tiny schoolhouse where John Conwill, a local teacher, taught John Tyndall, of nearby Leighlinbridge, between 1836 and 1838. Tyndall was an internationally famous scientist and inventor of the Light Pipe whose work in the 1860s opened up the debate on the greenhouse effect. Other famous figures taught by Conwill include Cardinal Patrick Moran and the brothers Patrick and John Foley who became respectively Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin and President of Carlow College.

Open: Daily, 10.00am – 6.00pm | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Continue out of village and take a right and then a left over Milford bridges. At the R448 turn left and immediately right. Another left turn brings you into Tinryland. Church is on the left. Distance 8km.

## Tinryland – *Tigh an Raoilinn*

⑭ **St. Joseph's Catholic Church**, built in 1819, contains the striking stained glass window to the memory of Captain Myles Keogh who was born in Leighlinbridge in 1840 and was killed at the battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876.

Keogh went to America in the 1860s to fight with the Union side in the Civil War. He had been promoted to the rank of Company Captain when he fell with General Custer in the famous battle. The Sioux Chief, Red Horse apparently remarked that Keogh was the bravest man they ever fought.

Open: Daily, 9.30am – 5.00pm | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Continue out of village and take a right signed to Carlow. At the N80 take a right and proceed through two roundabouts until a left turn is signed to Kellistown. Continue straight towards the church on a prominent hill. Distance 6km.

### DID YOU KNOW...

St. Joseph's claims to be the first rural church in Ireland to use electric light due to local man Mr. Paddy Dowling, who played an important part in bringing electricity to rural Ireland in the 1940s.

## Kellistown – *Cill Asna* – St. Osnadh's church

Ruined nineteenth-century ⑮ **Church of Ireland church** with remains of medieval church behind. Situated on an elevated site overlooking rich rural countryside, this ruinous First Fruits church† dates from 1810. It has an austere simplicity and comprises a three-bay nave† with lime rendered walls and pointed windows. The earliest church to occupy the site was a monastery associated with St. Osnadh and a round tower survived here until the nineteenth century.

The site has strong associations with St. Patrick and the medieval church, whose remains can be seen behind the nineteenth-century church, was dedicated to him. The remains reveal a large rectangular structure built from granite boulders. In the thirteenth century St. Patrick's, Kellistown was in the possession of the Augustinian Priory of Kells, Co. Kilkenny.

Open: Daily, daylight hours | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Turn around and follow road signed to Tullow. Take a left at the junction, proceeding through the village of Rathoe and continuing into Tullow. Cross the bridge and carry on up the main street. Distance 7km.

## ⑯-⑰ Tullow – *An Tulach* – The Hill

With its picturesque location on the banks of the River Slaney, Tullow is a lovely example of a traditional Irish Town and is known locally as the granite town because of the fine stone used in its walls and public buildings.

Tullow's enduring connection with '**Brave Fr. Murphy**' of Boolavogue, Co. Wexford is commemorated by a fine statue in the town square. Described as the most wanted and notorious insurrection leader of the 1798 rebellion against British rule, Fr. Murphy was executed in Tullow. The famous song Boolavogue is dedicated to his memory.

*Then, Fr. Murphy from old Kilcormack,  
Spurred up the rocks with a warning cry;  
'Arm! Arm!' he cried, 'for I've come to lead you,  
For Ireland's freedom we'll fight or die!'*

*Boolavogue  
by P.J. McCall*

Kellistown churches – courtesy D. Lalor (left)



Statue to Fr. John Murphy in the square in Tullow town







Bishop Daniel Delany Museum

Brother Colm O' Connell with a group of Kenyan runners



The former Methodist church, now Tullow Museum



Tullow was a location of ecclesiastical importance from at least the late fifth century when a monastery was founded by St. Fortiarnán (Fortchern). No traces of this remain although the large granite cross base and font in the churchyard of the present **St. Columba's Church of Ireland church** may have been associated with the early monastery. In the fourteenth century an Augustinian Friary was founded on the south side of the River Slaney but again there are no substantial remains.



During the early years of the nineteenth century, Daniel Delany, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, saw education as a pathway to a fuller and better life for all. To progress his vision he founded the Brigidine Sisters in 1807 and the Patrician Brothers in 1808. He also founded the present **Catholic Church of the Holy Rosary**. The church was dedicated in 1805; the tower and steeple were added in 1833. The fine **Bishop Daniel Delany Museum** in the Brigidine Convent gives a history of these orders and displays artefacts associated with the bishop.

#### DID YOU KNOW...

*During the 1960s Cork born Patrician Brother Colm O' Connell was educated at the Patrician Colleges of Mount Wolseley and Ballykealy. Since 1976 he has been based at their school at Iten, Kenya from where he has trained more international and Olympic athletes than any other school in the world.*

Open: Please phone the Brigidine Convent in advance of your visit T: 059 915 1308  
Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

TULLOW MUSEUM Open: For opening details, please visit [www.carlowtourism.com](http://www.carlowtourism.com)  
Admission: Free | Parking: Yes, in the town centre

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Take the N81 signed to Rathvilly. After approx. 5km turn right onto the R727 signed to Hacketstown. Take a right onto the L2008 signed to Ballyconnel and Clonmore. At next crossroads take a left to Clonmore. Distance 17km.



Clonmore is one of Carlow's most important early Christian sites with a wealth of history for visitors to discover. The present road cuts through the monastery founded by St. Maedóc around 600 A.D. No traces of the monastic buildings remain but the importance of the site is attested by the presence of two large crosses, nineteen cross-inscribed stones, an ogham<sup>†</sup> stone and two bullaun<sup>†</sup> stones.

The monastery of Clonmore flourished from the seventh to the eleventh century and at least six saints were associated with it. As well as St. Maedóc (also called Mogue), these included St. Fionnán Lobhair and St. Oncho who is said to have been buried in the cemetery along with a substantial collection of relics. The monastery was an important pilgrimage site and it also attracted less welcome visitors in the form of Viking raiders who attacked the monastery on Christmas Night 836.



Clonmore houses a fascinating collection of crosses featuring exceptional examples of craftsmanship including one very unique piece. This unusual slab dated to the ninth or tenth century with a distinctive 'tree of life' motif is situated at the back, on the right. St. Mogue's Well is now protected by an enclosure and surrounded by a pleasant garden area through which a stream runs. Look out for the fine tripled-holed bullaun<sup>†</sup> stone nearby at the side of this stream.

#### DID YOU KNOW...

*In recent times a movement of people in South East Ireland have endeavoured to breathe life into an age-old tradition of socialising, music and fun. The "House of Song and Story" in Clonmore is an attempt to revive what was known in the past as 'The Rambling House' where people would gather of an evening to discuss local events, share stories and listen to music played by the gathered musicians. For details of upcoming events visit [www.carlowtourism.com](http://www.carlowtourism.com).*

Open: Daily, daylight hours | Admission: Free | Parking: At nearby pub in village centre

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Return on the L2008 signed to Rathvilly. Take a left onto the R727 and continue straight crossing the N81. At the junction with the R418 turn right and immediately left onto the R726. Continue until a left turn signed to Sion Cross. Bennekerry church is on the left. Distance 22km.

Collection of cross-inscribed slabs



The West Cross, also known as the Mission Cross and Mogue's Cross







Frank O'Meara picture (above), courtesy Mary Stratten-Ryan;  
Towards Night and Winter 1885 by Frank O'Meara (below) –  
Courtesy Collection: Dublin City Gallery, The Hugh Lane



## 23 Bennekerry – *Binn an Choire* – Hill of the Sheep

Frank O'Meara (1853-88), an internationally famous nineteenth-century impressionist artist is buried in St. Mary's Catholic Church. His tomb is designed after the medieval doorway at Killeshin.



Frank spent his early years in Dublin Street, Carlow where his father Dr. Thomas J. O'Meara was medical officer and honorary professor of animal physiology and zoology at Carlow College. O'Meara studied at Carlow College before moving to Dublin to complete his education. In the early 1870s he moved to Paris to study art. He became associated with the Plein-Air or Open Air style of painting and is regarded as the most noted Irish painter in that style. The Hugh Lane Gallery on Parnell Square in Dublin carries a selection of his important works.

Frank O'Meara returned to Carlow in the spring of 1888. He was suffering from malaria which he had had for approximately seven years. He died at the family home with his father present. He was only 35 years old. He was buried at the family graveyard in Bennekerry where his family erected this impressive tomb.

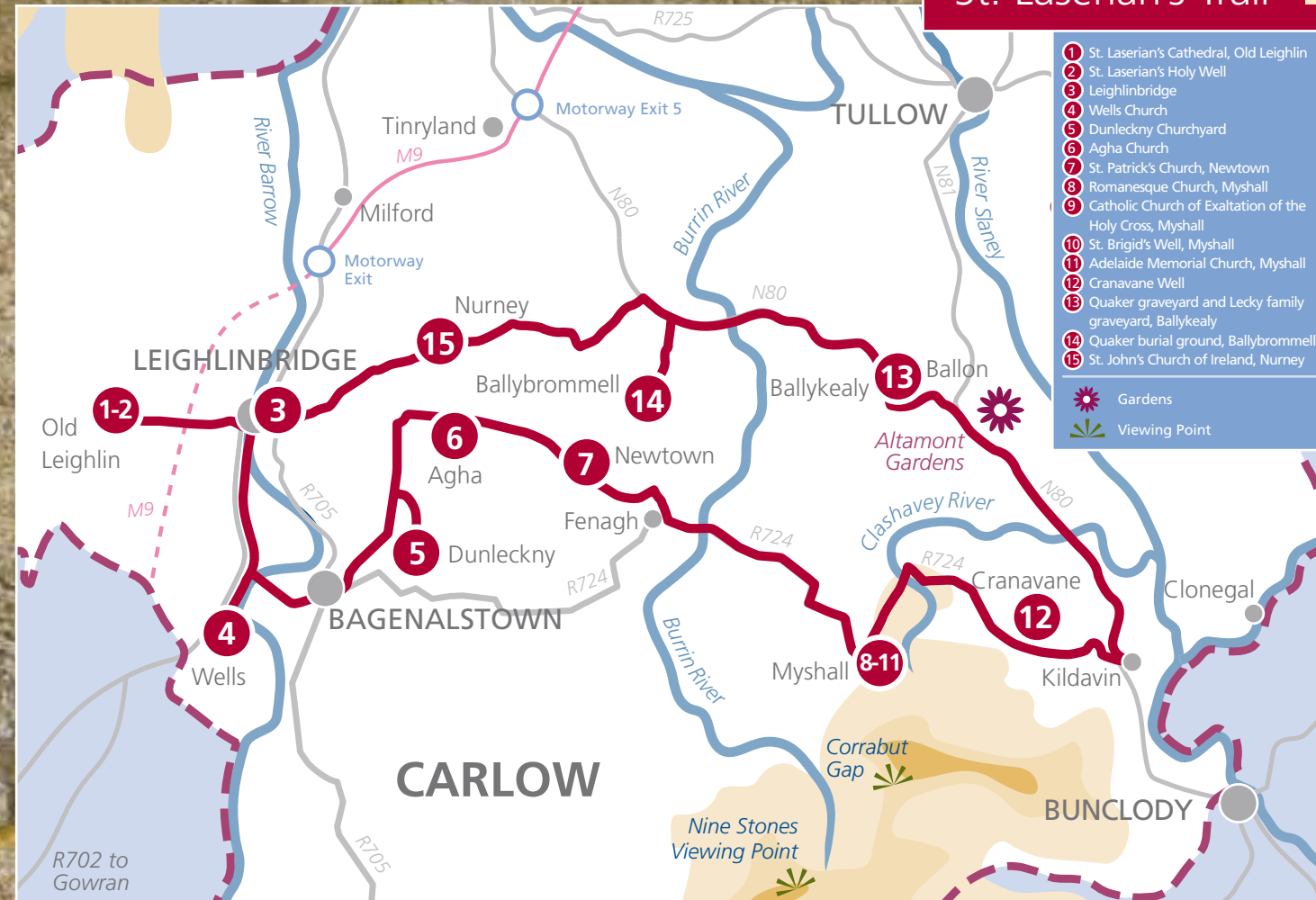
Open: Daily, daylight hours | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

↳ Directions to the next site: Return to the R726 and take a left turn to drive into Carlow. Distance 3km.

### DID YOU KNOW...

A brother, a sister and Frank's mother died before he was 20 and these tragedies had a lasting effect on him. His paintings are beautiful but there is a sadness or loneliness involved which reflects this loss. Some refer to the atmosphere created by his paintings as a silent and dreamlike Celtic Twilight.

For a full list of attractions and facilities in each town please visit [www.carlowtourism.com](http://www.carlowtourism.com)







St. Laserian's Cathedral



Main nave of St. Laserian's Cathedral

Carved head on the sedilia

The pulpit



St. Laserian's Trail covers the mid-Carlow area, featuring a number of sites of national significance including the medieval Cathedral at Old Leighlin as well as the impressive Adelaide Memorial Church at Myshall. Enjoy discovering these ancient sites, tucked away in green valleys or up high on open countryside surrounded by an expanse of sky. Perhaps a moment of quiet contemplation will provide insights into the secrets and mysteries contained within.

St. Laserian, sometimes called Molaise, was the founder of the See of Leighlin and its first bishop. He was born about the year 566. He studied in Rome and was sent to preach the word of God in Ireland. In fulfillment of this mission, Laserian visited many parts of Ireland including Leighlin.

## Old Leighlin – Seanleithghlinn

The picturesque village of Old Leighlin is home to one of Ireland's gems of late medieval architecture. ① **St. Laserian's Cathedral**, Carlow's oldest working building, was built on the site of a monastery founded by St. Gobban c. 600. St. Laserian (Lasrain or Mo-Laise) became abbot c. 620 and the settlement grew to eventually accommodate some 1,500 monks.

② **The holy well** which can be found 100 metres west of the church is dedicated to St. Molaise and features an early ringed cross said to denote the place where St. Laserian conversed with St. Finbar of Cork. Laserian, who was originally from Ulster, is celebrated for the Synod held in Leighlin in 630 at which the Irish Church adopted the Roman method for arriving at the date of Easter.

In 1111 Leighlin was constituted a diocese and thereafter the church here assumed cathedral status. The present building was started by Bishop Donatus (1152-85) and continued under his successors. Much of the fabric dates from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The tower dates from the late fifteenth century, while the Lady Chapel was attached to the north side of the choir<sup>+</sup> in the sixteenth century.

St. Laserian's Cathedral features architecture from every century since it was built. The stone interior of this beautifully preserved church is illuminated by large Gothic<sup>+</sup> style windows and a magnificent stained glass window behind the altar. One of the glories of the cathedral is the intricate ribbed vault<sup>+</sup> of the crossing<sup>+</sup> tower. The beautifully carved sedilia<sup>+</sup> reflect the cathedral status of this building. This is one of the few churches in Ireland that has four seats, rather than the usual three. It is suggested that the fourth seat was for the Bishop. Cathedrals normally provided a special chair for the bishop but Old Leighlin may have just provided a place on the sedilia.

### DID YOU KNOW...

*The date on which Easter is celebrated has always been a cause of difficulty and disagreement throughout Christian history. The main Latin churches throughout Western Europe used the Roman system of prediction. In the seventh century the less accurate Celtic system was in use in Ireland. This caused unnecessary dissent and St. Laserian overcame the problem persuading the Irish Bishops gathered in the Synod of 630 to adopt the Roman system. This was no mean feat given the Irish church's tradition of independence in thinking and practice but it greatly helped in unifying the church. This achievement was confirmed for the Western Church at the Synod of Whitby in 664 A.D.*

There are two fonts in the church, both of which are older than the building. The earlier font consists of a massive piece of Kilkenny marble, hollowed with rough hand tools. The other font known as the Gowran font is more decorative.

There are some fine nineteenth-century pieces in the cathedral. The Bishop's throne is richly carved as is the timber lectern in the traditional form of an eagle. This lectern was made in memory of Thomas and Sophie Vigors. The Vigors family of Burgage, Leighlinbridge were closely associated with the church and there are thirty two memorials to the family throughout the building. The east window designed by Catherine O'Brien, is a beautiful memorial, depicting Saints Moling, Bridget, Fiach, Canice, Patrick, John, Paul and Laserian.

Open: end May – end September, Tuesday – Saturday 11.00am – 4.00pm or by arrangement.

T: 086 248 0922 | Guide available on request | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Return to R448 Carlow – Kilkenny Road. Drive straight across the road taking the turn off for Leighlinbridge (marked). Distance 3.2km.

Eleventh-century font / The east window by Catherine O'Brien



Sedilia (above) / Depiction of St. Laserian (below)





Memorials in the Garden of Remembrance to the Carmelite Order (left) and World War 1 (right) – courtesy N. Parnis



The Black Castle (above)  
The Sculpture Garden (below)



## Leighlinbridge – *Leithghlinn an Droichid*

The attractive village of ③ **Leighlinbridge** lies along the banks of the River Barrow with beautiful riverside walks and a tradition of gardening that comes alive each year for the national Tidy Towns Competition and the Floral Festival Trail.

It was in this peaceful and scenic location that the first Irish Carmelite monastery was established. The Priory of St. Mary was founded c.1271 by a member of the Carew family. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the friars received financial grants from the English crown to help them maintain the important stone bridge over the River Barrow. The monastery stood on the east bank of the Barrow, near the present Black Castle. It was suppressed by Henry VIII in 1540 when the buildings included a church, dormitory, hall, two chambers and a kitchen. The friars also had a large garden and an eel weir on the river. The Carmelites returned to Leighlinbridge in 1730 and remained until the friary was finally closed in 1836.

In the Garden of Remembrance spend some time looking at the memorial stones to the Carmelite order and to the Sisters of Mercy. There are plaques to Brian Mulroney, Prime Minister of Canada (1984–1993) whose family hailed from the area, John Tyndall and Nicholas Vigors. Visit Ireland's first all county World War 1 memorial, listing the men from Carlow who died in the Great War.

The Sculpture Garden is dedicated to three of Leighlinbridge's most famous sons – Cardinal Patrick Francis Moran – Australia's first Cardinal (see St. Molings Trail), John Tyndall, the scientist and mountaineer (see St. Patrick's Trail) and Captain Myles Keogh (see St. Patrick's Trail).

### DID YOU KNOW...

*In 2001 Leighlinbridge won a gold medal in the European Entente Florale Competition, the first Irish village to do so in twenty five years. The award is in the Garden of Remembrance.*

Open: Daily, daylight hours | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

↳ **Directions to the next site:** At the Garden of Remembrance drive straight ahead, away from the village centre in the direction of the R448 Carlow – Kilkenny Road. At the R448 turn left and continue for 4.8km. Wells Church is on the left hand side. Distance 5.6km.

## Wells

④ **Wells medieval parish church** Few medieval parish churches have survived in Carlow and Wells must have been one of the largest. Medieval sources refer to the parish church of Wells in 1262 and the visible remains date to this period although they have been restored in more recent times.

Walking around the ruins one can trace the impressive form of a long nave† and chancel† church built with limestone rubble and granite ashlar†. The church is surrounded by an enclosed and well-maintained graveyard which is still in use today.

Open: Daily, daylight hours | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Return on R448 and take second right signed Muine Bheag/Bagenalstown R724. Continue for 2km and turn left at Kilree Street (R705). Take the first right onto Market Square. Take a left onto R705 opposite St. Andrew's Catholic Church. Turn right onto R705 after 250m. Take first right to Dunleckney. After 2km turn right and the graveyard is .6km on the right hand side. Distance 6.8km

## Dunleckny – *Dún Leicne* – Fort of the Hill Side

⑤ **Church of Ireland church** The churchyard at Dunleckny contains the ivy-covered ruins of two churches. The detached three-bay, single cell† Church of Ireland was built in the late eighteenth but abandoned in the early nineteenth century.

The other church is much older. At the beginning of the thirteenth century this church was granted to the nunnery of Graney. The present remains consist of a rectangular structure which is probably medieval in date.

In the older church is a plaque to the memory of two eighteenth-century parish priests. It was erected by Fr. Michael Pendergast in 1810 and commemorates his uncle and grand-uncle, both, like himself, priests of Dunleckny. This reveals a typical tradition of priesthood within Irish families.

There is a private graveyard for two influential local families the Bagenals and Veseys of Dunleckney Manor in a corner of the site.

Open: Daily, daylight hours | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Cross the road, taking an immediate turn to the left. Continue for 3km to a crossroads and turn left. Agha Church can be viewed from a gate 100m on the left hand side of the road. Distance 3.2km.



Wells Church (above)  
Dunleckny Church and graveyard (below)



### DID YOU KNOW...

*Walter Bagenal founded the nearby town of Bagenalstown in the 1700s. He had visions of mirroring the city of Versailles in northern France and built a grand courthouse and some public buildings. Shortly after his efforts were frustrated by the re-routing of the coach road away from the town. His courthouse is now the town library.*



View of Agha Church



Lintelled doorway on west facade



## Agha – *Achadh* – Field of the green tillage

Standing firm in the heart of Carlow's farmland are the remains of ⑥ **Agha Church** which has been described as 'one of the most striking examples of pre-Romanesque<sup>+</sup> architecture in the country'. Agha's early history is obscure although it is mentioned in the Life of St. Fintan and may have been subordinate to Fintan's monastery at Clonenagh, Co. Laois. In 866, Agha, which was positioned on the borders of the Irish kingdom of Uí Dróna, was raided by the Vikings and the men of the neighbouring kingdom of Ossory. The present church, part of which dates to the tenth century, may represent a rebuilding which was undertaken in the wake of that attack.

The tenth-century phase of the church consists of the west gable and part of the south wall. This phase is characterised by very regular and well-coursed masonry. Field stones of similar dimensions were carefully chosen and the overall uniformity of the masonry is unique. Large square blocks were used to form the lintelled door surround and deep antae<sup>+</sup> are present.

The character of the masonry in the second phase of the building is very different and lacks the regularity of the earlier phase. It is possible to clearly see the distinctive differences between the two styles in the south wall of the church. The later phase appears to date from the twelfth century and the fact the church was extended at this time may indicate an increased population in the area. This coincided with a reforming period within the Irish church and perhaps a boost in church attendance.

Close to the church are two cross bases and a medieval sundial. The sockets in the cross bases suggest that they would have supported fairly small crosses, perhaps similar to the Nurney cross. The area around the church was used as a burial site for unbaptised infants up to the nineteenth century.

Open: Daily, daylight hours | Admission: Free | Parking: Limited

NOTE: While Agha church is located in the middle of a field, it can be viewed clearly from a gateway immediately adjacent to the roadside.

↳ **Directions to the next site:** At Agha Church return uphill and drive straight ahead for 1.3km before turning to the right for 2.2km. Distance 3.5km.

## Newtown – *An Baile Nua*

⑦ **St. Patrick's Church** is an early nineteenth-century church built in the Gothic-revival style. It has been described as a reduced version of Cobden's Carlow Cathedral and is regarded as one of the finest Gothic<sup>+</sup> barn-type churches in Ireland.

The granite-built church dates from c. 1830 and has a T plan. The attractive, three-bay exterior has a large central window flanked by quatre-foil<sup>+</sup> windows over doorcases. In the centre of the façade<sup>+</sup> is a mosaic of the Blessed Virgin, dated 1954, celebrating the Marian year. Above this is a bellcote which in turn is surmounted by a cross. The bell dates from 1900 and was cast by a Dublin foundry.

The interior has retained its three galleries and simple Gothic reredos<sup>+</sup>. The decorative plasterwork on the ceiling is particularly eye-catching and is believed to be the work of Italian refugee artisans who were working locally in Fenagh House at the time the church was being built. The decoration features the motif of the grape and the grain.

The stained glass windows are by Joshua Clarke who was the father of Ireland's most famous stained glass artist, Harry Clarke. His vibrant piece depicting St. Patrick, the church's patron, is of significant artistic merit.

### DID YOU KNOW...

*In the graveyard behind the church can be seen two granite slabs with circular apertures. These are believed to have come from a watch-house located in the cemetery to deter corpse stealing for medical research or financial gain.*

Open: Daily | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

↳ **Directions to the next site:** From church continue straight on passing the school on the left hand side. After 2km turn right for Fenagh. On the outskirts of Fenagh village turn left at the roundabout and take the road for Myshall. Distance 8.6km.



Newtown Church – exterior (above) interior (below)



The watch stones, at the back of church on the right hand side (below)





## DID YOU KNOW...

*In the graveyard you will see a double bullaun stone and if the sun hits the Blackstairs in the right way, you might see two vertical lines called the Witch's Slide running down the side of the mountain. Together these landmarks form a colourful ancient story about a Carlow witch who had a falling out with her neighbour, threw a stone (said to be the standing stone in Clonee), slid down the mountain and fell to her knees where she left two imprints in the bullaun stone!*

Double bullaun✚ stone in front of the Romanesque church (below left)

The Adelaide Memorial Church – The Last Supper behind the altar (below right) and carved detail (below middle) – both courtesy of Dr. M.J. Blade

Myshall – *Míseal* – Low Plain

Myshall lies at the foot of the northern slopes of the Blackstairs Mountains which provide a magnificent backdrop to the rich pasture lands and winding country roads which surround the village. St. Finian, known as the 'tutor of the Saints of Ireland' and founder of the celebrated monastery of Clonard, Co. Meath, was born in Myshall about 470 AD. The village contains the remains of a ⑧ **Romanesque church** that Finian founded in the sixth century.

Local tradition also links St. Columbanus, Ireland's first great European saint, with the area. Tradition holds that he was advised by St. Croine Bheag of Carlow (see St. Patrick's Trail) to leave home to follow his monastic education. His journey took him to Bangor which enjoyed a close association with Carlow town. A stained-glass window in the ⑨ **Catholic Church of Exaltation of the Holy Cross** commemorates Myshall's association with St. Columbanus.

⑩ **St. Brigid's Well** is an ancient holy well that is now a modern shrine.

## ⑪ Adelaide Memorial Church

This church was raised by John Duguid of Dover, England, in memory of his wife Adelaide and his daughter Constance who was killed in a riding accident while visiting friends in Myshall. Described as an architectural gem, it was designed by George Coppinger Ashlin, one of the foremost architects in the country as a miniature of Salisbury Cathedral in England. It stands in beautifully maintained grounds, accessed by a yew-lined drive.

The memorial statue of 'Innocence' carved from Sicilian marble commemorates Constance, and in fact it was the sculpture's inability to withstand the harsh Irish weather in its original outdoor location that prompted John Duguid to build the Adelaide church protectively around it.

No surface in the building was left unadorned and delicate carving can be found everywhere and especially on the Bathstone which lines the interior. Trefoil✚ designs predominate apart from the panels near the mausoleum where John, Adelaide and Constance Duguid are buried. Here the English rose and Scottish thistle are found; (Mr. Duguid was of Scotch descent, his wife was English).

The finest materials were used everywhere. Behind the altar is a luminous fresco depicting The Last Supper, adapted from Leonardo da Vinci's famous painting at Milan.

The church was consecrated in September 1913 and continues, under the name of The Church of Christ the Redeemer, to provide a beautiful place of worship for the local Church of Ireland community.

Open: Key available locally from Mrs. Bridie Daley, white bungalow opposite church grounds.  
T: 059 915 7671 | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes, in the village

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Continue on R724 in direction of Kildavin for 5.5km. Cranavane Well is on the left hand side of the road (signposted). Distance 5.5km.

The Adelaide Memorial Church – entrance and delicate carving – courtesy Dr. M.J. Blade



The Adelaide Memorial church exterior – courtesy T. Doolan







Cranavane Well (above) – courtesy T. Doolan  
Lecky Family gravestone (below)



## Cranavane – *Crann an Bháinín*

Set in an untouched rural landscape the ⑫ **holy well at Cranavane** is closely associated with the early medieval Barragh church, the ruins of which lie some 400 metres to the west. This church was linked with St. Finian who was born nearby in Myshall. It was the custom to dip coffins in the water of the well before burial in Barragh graveyard.

The waters of the well are believed to cure a range of ailments including soreness of the eyes, pains and hurt limbs. People from the surrounding area come to the well, particularly in the month of May. The Patron or Pattern day✚ on May 3rd attracts many visitors.

In the nineteenth century large gatherings at the well could sometimes become rowdy and drunken, leading to the suspension of visits. Nowadays the recently restored well and its surrounding area offer a haven for those seeking peace and tranquillity.

Open: Daily, daylight hours | Admission: Free | Parking: Limited

↳ **Directions to the next site:** From Cranavane follow the R724 to Kildavin Village and from there follow signs for N80 to Carlow through the village of Ballon. The Quaker graveyard and Lecky family graveyard are on the outskirts of Ballon Village on the left hand side of the road. Distance 13km.

## Ballykealey – *Baile Uí Chaollaí* – O'Kealy's town

⑬ **Quaker graveyard and Lecky family graveyard** - The charming village of Ballon is rich in archaeological heritage. Located on the outskirts of the village is the Quaker graveyard also strongly associated with the Lecky family for whom nearby Ballykealey House was built in 1830. Twenty six members of the family are known to be buried in this Quaker✚ plot.

By the late nineteenth century most of the family had become members of the Church of Ireland and a new family graveyard was consecrated in 1880. The graveyard remained in use until 1950. It includes a memorial to Captain John Lecky, killed in Mesopotamia in 1915 and the grave of Molly Grace (nee Lecky) a section officer in the WAAF who was killed in 1942 while flying her plane during the Second World War.

Open: Daily, daylight hours | Admission: Free | Parking: Limited

↳ **Directions to the next site:** From Ballykealey continue straight ahead on N80 in direction of Carlow for 5km. Take a left hand turn signed for Fenagh and continue for 2km. Ballybrommell is on the left hand side of the road. Distance 7km.

## Ballybrommell – *Baile An Bhromailigh*

Along with Ballykealey graveyard this ⑭ **Quaker burial ground** is a reminder of the once thriving Quaker✚ community in Co. Carlow. Quakerism evolved in the North of England in the seventeenth century and made its first inroads into the Carlow/ Kildare region during the Cromwellian plantations of the 1650s. Many Quaker families settled in the Fenagh area, the most notable of whom were the Watson's and the Leckys who purchased large farms at Kilconner and Ballykealey respectively.



The low curving wall and arched pedestrian gateway bearing the legend 'God's Acre – the Garden of Sleep' were erected by Fielding Lecky Watson (1873-1943) as a memorial to members of the Lecky and Watson families. Among the small number of individual graves are those of Fielding Lecky Watson's daughter, Corona North and her husband Gary North. Corona's simple gravestone reminds visitors of her lifetime dedication to nearby Altamont Gardens, widely recognised as the jewel in Ireland's gardening crown. The gardens are an enchanting blend of formal and informal gardens with riverside walks covering over 40 acres (16 hectares).

### DID YOU KNOW...

Noted nineteenth-century historian W.E.H Lecky was the owner of nearly two thousand acres of land in both counties Carlow and Laois. Following his death in 1903 these lands were sold and the proceeds given to endow the Lecky Chair of History at Trinity College Dublin. In 1906 a statue of Lecky made by Sir William Goscombe John was unveiled in the College grounds.

Open: Daily, daylight hours | Admission: Free | Parking: Limited

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Return to N80 (2km). Turn left at N80 and continue for 600m, taking the first turn to the left marked Nurney. Continue for 5km until you reach the village of Myshall. Distance 7.6km.

God's Acre 'Garden of Sleep' – courtesy R. Jones  
Lecky Watson coat of arms



Altamont Gardens, near Ballon





The High Cross at Nurney (below)

St. John's Church of Ireland Church, Nurney (below right)



There was an early monastery at Nurney but the only traces that remain are the two granite crosses. The head of one cross can be seen in the churchyard. The other, complete cross is in a private field at the back of the church.

Open: Daily, daylight hours. Church open only during church times or by appointment.

T: 059 917 1957 | Admission: Free | Parking: Limited

➡ Directions to the next site: Continue downhill and turn right at the end of the road, followed by an immediate left. Follow signs to Leighlinbridge. Distance 4.7km.



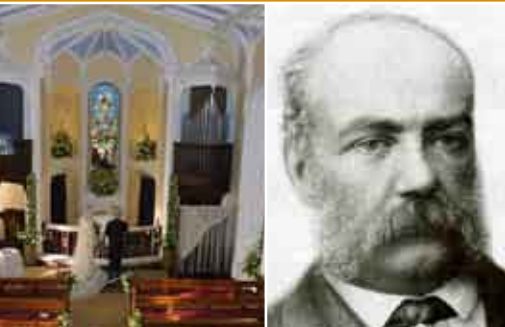
## Nurney – *An Urnaí* – The Oratory<sup>+</sup>

On a clear day, the views from **15 St. John's Church of Ireland Church** are magnificent, stretching across the verdant landscape of west Carlow as far as Kilkenny itself. At the end of a walled entrance avenue visitors are greeted with a small but well proportioned single cell<sup>+</sup> stone church with three bays and a handsome needle spire which can be seen from afar. It was built by the Board of First Fruits<sup>+</sup> c. 1790.

For a full list of attractions and facilities in each town please visit [www.carlowtourism.com](http://www.carlowtourism.com)







St. Moling's Chapel, Borris House (left)  
Arthur MacMurrough Kavanagh (right)

Borris House (below)



The beautiful Barrow Valley is the dominant physical landmark in this trail which covers the southern part of Co. Carlow. Since time began Carlow has carried much of its history along her rivers. The influence of these waterways can be seen today in the many prehistoric sites and early Christian settlements scattered throughout this area of the county.

St. Moling was born in 614 in Sliabh Luachra in Kerry and studied to be a monk in Ferns, Co. Wexford. Placenames such as Mullinakill, Co. Kilkenny, Timolin, Co. Kildare, Monamolin, Co. Wexford and St. Mullins, Co. Carlow, as well as St. Moling's Wells, such as the one at Brosna, Co. Kerry highlight the popularity of St. Moling in many places in Ireland.

## Borris – *An Bhuiríos* – Burgage Land

Borris is a granite, Georgian village, full of charm and heritage, situated in the fertile valley of the River Barrow, below the gentle curve of the Blackstairs Mountains.

In the centre of the village is ❶ **Borris House**, which dates to the eighteenth century and stands on the site of a late medieval castle. The house is also the ancestral home of the MacMurrough Kavanagh family, who trace their descent from the MacMurrough Kings of Leinster.

In the early nineteenth century the Kavanagh family adopted the Protestant religion and built a private chapel. This chapel is a three-bay single-cell✚ church built in the Tudor Revival style, c.1820. Now detached, it was connected to the house up until the 1950s.

The site of the ❷ **Sacred Heart Catholic Church** in the village of Borris was provided by the MacMurrough Kavanagh family. It is a large, T-plan, barn-church✚ built in 1820. The stained-glass window over the main altar depicts the crucifixion with Saints Fortchern, Brigid and Fiachra underneath.

### DID YOU KNOW...

Arthur MacMurrough Kavanagh, probably the most famous of all the modern Kavanaghs, was born in 1831 having only six inch stumps where his legs and arms should have been. However, despite his physical condition he became a real all-rounder, travelling extensively in Europe, Asia and India and excelling at boar hunting, shooting, yachting and fishing and was an inspiration for the disabled worldwide.

❸ The **Catholic Girls' School** is a two-storied, five-bay building which dates to 1832. It has an elaborate Tudor-Gothic✚ revival façade with crenellated turrets on the corners. The main feature is a slender, gabled, three-stage tower with an open lantern on top flanked by projecting porches. The tower is believed to be the work of Thomas Cobden. The building now houses the local library.

Sacred Heart Catholic Church open: 7.00am to 6.30pm daily | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

Borris House open: selected days throughout the year | T: 059 977 3105 | [www.borrishouse.com](http://www.borrishouse.com)

Admission: Fee applies | Parking: Yes

↳ **Directions to the next site:** From Borris take the R705 in direction of Bagenalstown. After 5.3km turn right, signed Ballinkillin. Take the first left after 1km. St. Laserian's Church is on the right hand side in the centre of the village. Distance 6.6km

## Ballinkillin – *Baile an Chillín*

❹ **St. Laserian's Catholic Church** is a large T barn building with a date stone of 1793, although the present structure probably dates from 1830.



In the churchyard you can see a large replica of a nineteenth-century high cross erected by Patrick Francis Moran to commemorate his parents. Patrick Francis Moran was born in Leighlinbridge in 1830 and attended school at Ballinabranagh (see St. Patrick's Trail). He was orphaned at age eleven whereupon he was taken to Rome by his uncle, Paul Cullen, who was Rector of the Irish College there. Moran was granted his doctorate at the age of 22 and ordained one year later. He returned to Ireland in 1866 and was appointed Bishop of Ossory in 1872. He spent 12 years in Kilkenny before moving to Australia to take up the position of Archbishop of Sydney. He became a Cardinal in 1885 and spent the rest of his career in Australia. When he died in 1911 at the age of 81, a quarter of a million people witnessed his funeral procession through the centre of Sydney. He is buried in St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, a church built by John Therry, a Carlow College graduate. Both their graves can be seen in the crypt of Sydney Cathedral.

Open: Daily, daylight hours | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Continue straight up the hill and follow this road for 2.1km to reach Lorum Church on the left hand side. Distance 2.1km.



Borris Library (above) / Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Borris (below) – courtesy M. Hutton







Lorum Church (above)  
Templemoling cemetery (below) – courtesy R. Jones



Stone with footprint of St. Finian



## Lorum – *Leamhdhroim* – Ridge or Long Hill of the Mallows

⑤ **Church of Ireland church** Evidence of three different churches can be found on the site at Lorum. The nineteenth-century seven-bay church stands on elevated ground in a striking setting about 3.5 km from the River Barrow. It was built about 1838 to the design of Frederick Darley who also designed the gate piers which reflect the detailing of the church. Close by are the remains of an eighteenth-century church while to the south and east of this building are the barely discernible traces of a much earlier church.

There was a monastic settlement in the area associated with St. Laserian to whom a nearby well is dedicated (see St. Laserian's Trail). Early nineteenth-century sources record the presence of a 'steeple' at this site which may indicate the former presence of a round tower. The base of a high cross lies a few paces south of the eighteenth century building.

Open: Sunday, 10.15am – 12.30pm or by appointment. T: 087 227 0929 / 059 977 5179

Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

↳ **Directions to the next site:** From Lorum Church continue straight on for 1km. Turn right for 3.8km until you reach a stop sign. Turn left at this cross roads for 1.6km, taking a right hand turn signed Templemoling Cemetery. Continue for 3.8km until you reach Templemoling Cemetery on the left hand side. Distance 10.2km.

## Ballinree – *Baile an Fhraoigh* – Town of the Heath

⑥ **Templemoling Cemetery** This peaceful site, in a beautiful landscape setting and enclosed by a well defined circular hedge contains the ephemeral remains of an early church site associated with St. Moling. One can also find here a stone reputed to show the footprint of St. Finian. When one visits the site it is easy to understand why early Christians would have drawn spiritual solace from this place of isolated contemplation. The raised, rubble-strewn area in the centre may preserve the outline of a rectangular church. The modern cross and altar demonstrate that the spiritual ethos of the site is appreciated into the twenty-first century.

Open: Daily, daylight hours | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Continue straight ahead for 1km through a crossroads and turn right. St. Fortiarnan's Holy Well is .5km from this junction on the right hand side of the road and St. Fortiarnan's Church directly across from here. Distance 2.9km.

## Killoughternane – *Cill Uchtarnáin* – Church of Fortiarnán (Fortchern)

⑦ **St. Fortiarnán's church** Against the backdrop of the Blackstairs Mountains stand the remains of this diminutive rectangular church which dates back to the tenth or eleventh century. It is testament to the building skills of these early stone masons that all four walls are still intact almost one thousand years after they were first built.



Known as the 'white church', it is associated with St. Fortiarnán (Fortchern) who was a disciple of St. Loman of Trim, one of the companions of St. Patrick. Fortiarnán left his native Meath and travelled down to the kingdom of Uí Dróna where he founded a monastic community at Killoughternane.

St. Fortiarnán's monastery has been described as one of the earliest missionary schools in Ireland and among those who studied here was St. Finian. After Killoughternane, Finian went to St. David's monastery in Wales before returning to found the famous monastery at Clonard, Co. Meath.

Don't miss ⑧ **St. Fortiarnán's Holy Well** in the field across the road from the church. The well, which has been recently restored, has been visited through the centuries. According to local history, "there was more than a newspaper could hold of cures of people who came from county Wexford across the mountains". In the nineteenth century a local woman cleaning the well found a chalice and paten. These artefacts date to the late sixteenth century and may have been hidden in penal times by a priest who was celebrating open-air masses nearby.

Open: Daily, daylight hours | Admission: Free | Parking: Limited

↳ **Directions to the next site:** Continue straight on through a crossroads for 2.8km. Turn left at stop sign and continue for 6.7km to Borris Village. Turn left at the crossroads in Borris Village and follow R729 New Ross road for 12.3km to the village of Glynn. Turn right for St. Mullins in the village, passing the church and continue for 7km to reach St. Mullins. Distance 28.8km.



(above) View of St. Fortiarnan's Church



(left) Chalice and paten recovered by local lady at St. Fortiarnan's Well. – courtesy T. Doolan

(below) St. Fortiarnan's Holy Well – courtesy M. Hutton







Aerial view of ecclesiastical ruins with River Barrow behind Graveyard at St. Mullins



## St. Mullins – *Tigh Moling* – St. Moling's House

St. Mullins is beautifully situated on a high wooded promontory on the east bank of the River Barrow, overlooked by the Blackstairs Mountains to the east and Mount Brandon to the west. St. Mullins is one of the county's most important archaeological sites containing aspects of both religious and secular history. It is very much a place of tradition with both the graveyard and holy well still in use by local people.

⑨ **St. Mullins - ecclesiastical ruins** This important monastery was founded by St. Moling in the seventh century and it had close links with Ferns in Co. Wexford and Glendalough in Co. Wicklow. It has been a place of pilgrimage since medieval times and St. Moling's Well is still venerated for its powers of healing.

### DID YOU KNOW...

*Many stories are still told of St. Moling and his miracles including the digging of a mile long water course with his own hands to power his mill, a task which took seven years.*

The ecclesiastical ruins are in the grounds of the Church of Ireland church and they include five churches and the remains of a round tower. The monastery probably contained several high crosses but only the upper portion and base of one solid-wheeled cross remains. The wheel shows a large figure of Christ.

The Teampall Mór is the oldest church, parts of which may date from the tenth or eleventh century. South of the Teampall Mór lie the remains of the largest church, the 'Abbey', which is probably fifteenth century. The chancel✚ retains its original altar and sedilia✚. To the east of the 'Abbey' is a tiny oratory of uncertain date, dedicated to St. James.

To the south are two further structures, probably churches, and probably post-medieval in date. The larger building has an unusual diamond shaped window in the east wall. The smaller building now functions as a mausoleum for the Kavanagh family (descendants of the Mac Murchada kings of Leinster). Here can be seen a modest memorial to King Art Mac Murchada Caomhánach who was poisoned at New Ross in 1417. It is claimed that such was the popularity of Art that as his body arrived in St. Mullins for burial, the funeral procession was still leaving New Ross some 15km away.

The churchyard lies in the shadow of the Anglo-Norman motte and contains a fascinating collection of eighteenth and nineteenth-century gravestones. During penal times, mass was said in the structure in the graveyard and over the altar is an aperture through which a warning could be communicated to the priest from a watcher positioned on the motte.

Each year on the Sunday before July 25th people gather in great numbers to celebrate mass at the Penal Altar, and remember the steadfast Catholic faith of their ancestors through difficult periods in Irish history. The eighth-century Book of Moling, which may have been produced in St. Mullins is now in the library of Trinity College, Dublin. It is a very significant illuminated manuscript.

⑩ **St. Mullins – Holy Well** The site has been a place of pilgrimage since medieval times and St. Moling's Well is still venerated for its powers of healing. Friar Clyn, the Kilkenny chronicler reported that in 1349, while the Black Death was raging in the area, thousands of people made a pilgrimage to wade in the water of St. Moling's Well.

## ⑪ **Templenabo – *Teampall na mBó* – Church of the cow**

A short distance outside the village of St. Mullins lie the remains of an early medieval church. This church is said to have been built in thanksgiving to St. Moling who freed the area of Ossory from paying a tax in cows, known as the Boroma tribute, to the High Kings of Ireland.

This is also the site of a children's burial ground where unbaptised infants were buried in former times. An annual mass is celebrated here on June 17th the feast day of St. Moling. This tradition was first established by the local community in 1996, during a year long series of events to commemorate the 1300th anniversary of Moling's death, and has continued since. Local children play an important role in the mass which commemorates the unbaptised babies.

Open: Daily, daylight hours. Heritage centre open Mon – Tues, 9.00am – 5.00pm all year round; June to the end of October, Sunday 2.00pm - 6.00pm. Other times by arrangement.

Tel: 087 997 7090 or 051 424 913 | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes

↳ **Directions to Templenabo** from St. Mullins – return to water pump at cross roads and turn right. Continue up the hill and Templenabo is on the right hand side. Distance 1.4km.

↳ **Directions from Templenabo** to Graiguenamanagh – Continue straight up the hill. At the end of this road take a left in the direction of Graiguenamanagh. Continue straight ahead and take a left at O' Driscoll's Pub on outskirts of Graiguenamanagh. Distance 7.4km.



St. Mullins - Round tower (above)  
Holy well (below) Templenabo







Duiske Abbey (above) – courtesy R. Jones  
Doorway at Ullard church (below)



# Graiguenamanagh – *Gráig na Manach* – The grange of the Monks

A popular boating centre on the River Barrow whose character reflects a bygone time when the town was an important focal point for commercial boats. One of Ireland’s finest Cistercian monasteries was founded here in 1204 by William Marshal who became Lord of Leinster following his marriage to Strongbow’s daughter Aoife de Clare. It was called 12 **Duiske Abbey** from the stream that flows nearby. The church was restored in 1974-80 and consists of a nave+ and chancel+ with an aisle on each side.

To truly imagine what the church must have been like when the monks lived here, take a look at the chancel+, the crossing+ and the east windows. The church originally had aisles extending along the full length of the nave on the south and the north. There is an excellent model of the original monastic settlement in the interior of the church.

Originally the monastery would have spread over some five acres. In the graveyard to the south of the chancel there are two small granite high crosses. These would have been important educational tools of the time, bearing stories of early biblical significance.

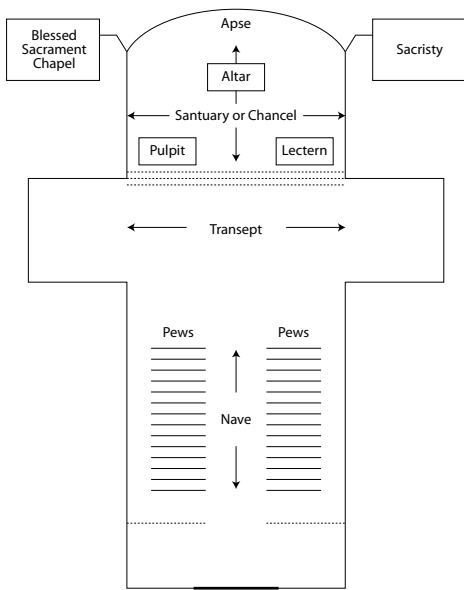
Open: Daily 9am – 6pm summer, 9am – 5pm winter | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes  
↳ **Directions to the next site:** Follow R703 and Upper Main Street to reach roundabout. Take the third exit onto Carlow Road R705. After 4.7km take a turn to the right. Ullard Church is on the left hand side after 240m. Distance 6.1km.

## Ullard – *Iolard* – Apple Garden

13 **Church and high cross** On the borders of counties Carlow and Kilkenny you will find the ruins of a monastery founded here in the seventh century by St. Fiachra. The remains consist of a twelfth-century Romanesque+ church and a high cross. The worn heads above the doorway are said to represent a meeting between St. Moling and St. Fiachra. The doorway has been tampered with over the years but it retains its attractive proportions and decorative style.

Open: Daily, daylight hours | Admission: Free | Parking: Yes  
↳ **Directions to the next site:** Return to R705 (240 metres) and turn right in direction of Borris and R705 for 3.3km. Turn right at R702 and continue for 1.1km into the village of Borris. Distance 4.6km.

Antae	Projections of the side walls of early churches to support roof timbers.
Ashlar	Masonry comprised of squared stones.
Barn-church	Church built to a simple T plan with a large internal space. This style was often used by the Catholic Church in the early nineteenth-century.
Bullaun Stone	Stone with man-made circular depressions usually found near early church sites. Various functions have been suggested for these stones, some ritual and some associated with metal-working or grinding of corn.
Catholic Emancipation	The repeal of the discriminatory Penal Laws which was completed by 1829.
Chancel	The eastern part of a church, usually where the main altar is situated.
Choir	Part of church commonly occupied by singers, situated between the nave and the chancel.
Crenellation	Notched parapets, resembling those on a stone castle.
Crossing	The intersection of transepts and nave.
First Fruits Church	A Church of Ireland church whose building was financed by the Board of First Fruits established largely through the influence of Jonathan Swift (1667–1745).
Gothic	Style of architecture, originating in the middle ages, characterised by pointed arches. When used in more recent times, it is described as neo-Gothic or Gothic revival.
Nave	The main aisle of a church, occupied by the congregation.
Ogham Stone	Stone bearing inscription in ancient Celtic alphabet comprising straight lines.
Oratory	Chapel or other place for private prayer.
Patron or pattern day	Day on which graves are visited and mass celebrated in graveyards.



St. Clare’s Roman Catholic Church, Graiguecullen – courtesy M. Doyle







Ullard Church (above)  
High Cross at Graiguenamanagh (below)



Penal Laws	Legislation passed between 1695 and 1728 which severely curtailed the practice of the Catholic religion in Ireland and the participation of Catholics in public life.
Quakers	Popular name for a group of Christians who use no scripture and believe in a simple, pacifist lifestyle. They call themselves The Society of Friends.
Quatre-foil	Open-work design or ornament divided into four lobes.
Reredos	A screen or panel behind an altar.
Rib Vault	An arched roof or ceiling in which the surface is divided into webs by a framework of diagonal arched masonry ribs.
Romanesque	Style of early medieval architecture characterised by round arches. Sometimes called ‘Norman’.
Sedilia	Seats for clergy on the south side of the chancel, often located in niches.
Single-cell church	Simple structure without aisles or projections.
Trefoil	Three-lobed form of ornamentation, especially in tracery.

Some Further Reading

*An Introduction to the Architectural Heritage of County Carlow*, Department of the Environment and Local Government. (2002).

- Brindley, Anna & Annaba Kilfeather, *Archaeological Inventory of County Carlow*. (Dublin, 1993).
- Comerford, Michael, *Collections relating to the Dioceses of Kildare and Leighlin*. 3 vols. (Dublin, 1883-6).
- Duffy, John & John McEvoy, *The Churches of Kildare and Leighlin, 2000 A.D.* (Strasbourg, 2001).
- McGrath, Thomas, (ed.) *Carlow History and Society*. (Dublin, 2008).

*Carloviana*, Annual Journal published by the Carlow Historical and Archaeological Society. Available in Carlow Library and local shops.



Cross at St. Mullins, showing large figure of Christ



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Inventory of Architectural Heritage*

carlow  
trails of the saints



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Carlow Tourism also provides a full range of literature on the County Carlow area.

Sites featured above left to right: Clonmore Crosshead, Clonmore; St. Fortiarnán's Church, Killoughternane;  
Carlow College, Carlow town; Wells Church, Wells, Bagenalstown.

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