

mount leinster heritage drive



carlow
through the waters of time

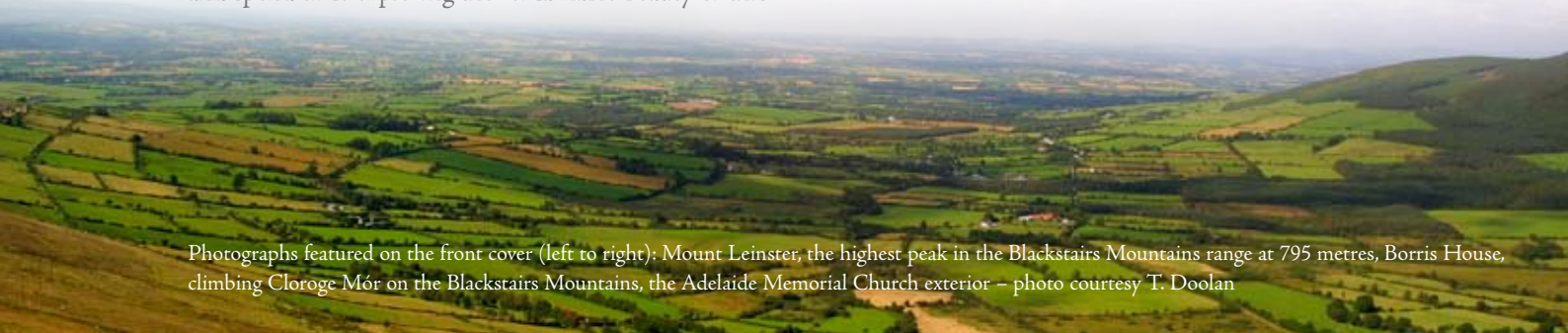
introduction

The Mount Leinster Heritage Drive is a 75km (47 miles) driving route through the beautiful countryside of rural south Carlow taking in the towns and villages of Borris, Bunclody, Clonegal, Kildavin, Myshall, Fenagh and Bagenalstown. Notable features in the landscape include the Blackstairs Mountains, and Mount Leinster, its highest peak at 795 metres. The Blackstairs are part of an extensive area of granite rock which extends from Dun Laoghaire near Dublin to Brandon Hill beyond Graiguenamanagh in County Kilkenny.

Identifiable road signs make the Mount Leinster Heritage Drive an easy-to-follow tour while large map boards in the centre of each village or town provide further information. The trail can be joined at any point and driven in an anti-clockwise direction. The trail can be completed in a day if so desired. However, we encourage you to relax, overnight and spend time exploring the remarkable beauty of this

undiscovered part of Ireland. It is a journey not to be rushed and visitors will appreciate the unhurried pace of life in this area. Traffic jams are an exception with delays more likely to be caused by a herd of sheep lazily moving from one pasture to another.

The secret to discovering the true beauty of the Mount Leinster region is to spend time exploring its hidden treasures and getting to know the local people, who are renowned for their friendliness. Each twist and turn of the road will reveal a new delight – beautiful unspoiled villages, breathtaking scenery, interesting rock formations, heather clad hills, grand country homes and ancient heritage sites. Visitors with a taste for the outdoors will appreciate the superb range of activities including the South Leinster Way long distance walking route, shorter looped walks, hand gliding and cycling routes.

A wide-angle aerial photograph of the Blackstairs Mountains in south Carlow, Ireland. The landscape is a patchwork of green fields, brown hedgerows, and small clusters of buildings. The terrain is hilly and rolling, with a clear view of the mountain range in the distance under a bright sky.

Photographs featured on the front cover (left to right): Mount Leinster, the highest peak in the Blackstairs Mountains range at 795 metres, Borris House, climbing Cloroge Mór on the Blackstairs Mountains, the Adelaide Memorial Church exterior – photo courtesy T. Doolan

-  Heritage
-  Scenic Walks
-  Stately Homes
-  Gardens
-  Church
-  Parking
-  Viewing Point
-  Picnic Area



Borris House, one of the few Irish estates that can trace its history back to the Royal families of ancient Ireland.



Borris viaduct



*Below left: Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Borris
courtesy M. Hutton*

Below right: Teeing off at Borris Golf Club



borris village

Borris is a Georgian, granite village, full of charm and heritage nestling in the fertile valley of the River Barrow and is a gateway to nearby Mount Leinster and the Blackstairs Mountains. With its traditional Irish street-front and spectacular mountain setting, this village is a popular stop for those boating or walking in the area. The name denotes a borough or region.

The MacMurrough Kavanagh dynasty, former Celtic Kings of Leinster, is central to this picturesque village of old stone buildings and the family still live at Borris House in the centre of the village. Borris prospered in the late 1800s as Arthur MacMurrough Kavanagh, the landlord of the time, developed a sawmill and built new cottages for his tenants. He also instigated the construction of the impressive 16-arch viaduct, situated at the lower end of the village, which carried the now defunct Great Southern and Western Railway line between Bagenalstown in County Carlow and Ballywilliam in County Wexford. In 1857, his mother Lady Harriet visited Corfu and was impressed by the lace-making industry there. She brought lace making back to Borris and ran it as a cottage industry, providing valuable local employment. Borris Lace soon became famous for its beautiful, intricate patterns and found its way to stately homes as far away as Russia. Borris House is open on selected days throughout the year with tours featuring either the “Incredible Mr. Kavanagh”, the Borris Lace Collection or Lady Harriet Kavanagh as well as the private chapel and the splendid reception rooms. For more information visit www.borrishouse.com or telephone 059 977 1884.

The Sacred Heart Church, situated on the main street was built in 1820 with a façade of granite decorated with limestone which incorporates a Romanesque style doorway. The stained glass window over the main altar is particularly noteworthy and consists of three granite-framed panels portraying the crucifixion, with the three under portions depicting St. Fortchern, Brigid and Fiachra. Open daily.

Today, Borris is a busy village serving its surrounding rural hinterland ensuring a full range of visitor facilities including excellent accommodation and dining options. The village is a mecca for walkers providing easy access to the South Leinster Way, a long distance walking route, and the Blackstairs Mountains where some of the county’s most satisfying

walks are to be found. Novices will find peace and tranquility on the Barrow Way walking route, a flat walk which runs alongside the River Barrow, Ireland's second longest river. The walk can be joined 2km (1.2 miles) outside the village at Ballytiglea Bridge on the Graiguenamanagh Road (R705).



A local tourist information point has been established at the CRISP Computer Centre, Lower Main Street, Borris telephone 059 977 1899 which also provides internet access and e-mail services for visitors.

Famous connections – Arthur MacMurrough Kavanagh

Arthur MacMurrough Kavanagh, probably the most famous of all the Kavanaghs, was born in 1831 to Thomas MacMurrough Kavanagh of Borris and his second wife Lady Harriet. Despite medical concerns beforehand, nothing could have prepared the family for the handicap with which their third son was born, the reason being that he was deformed, having only six inch stumps where his legs and arms should have been. However, despite his physical condition, he grew up to be the most extraordinary member of his family and a source of inspiration for the disabled worldwide. He became a real all-rounder, travelling extensively in Europe, Asia and India and excelling at boar hunting, shooting, horse riding, yachting and fishing.



In February 1853 Arthur took over the running of the estate, which was severely neglected at this time, due to the effects of the Potato Famine. He was widely recognised as a progressive landlord, improving farming methods and undertaking much building in the village. Aged 35, he was elected M.P. for County Wexford, and in 1868, he was returned for County Carlow. He died on Christmas morning 1889 at the age of 58. He was unique for the determined way in which he overcame his physical disabilities to lead a full and active life.

Directions from Borris to Nine Stones Viewing Point

Take the first left after the Bank of Ireland building at the end of Borris Village, passing under the 16-arch viaduct. 3km (2 miles) outside the village turn to the left following the clearly identifiable signs to reach the Nine Stones Viewing Point. Distance from Borris Village to the Nine Stones Viewing Point 12km (7.5 miles).

Climbing Cloroge Mór on the Blackstairs mountain range



Alignment of Nine Stones at the Nine Stones Viewing Point



Hang gliding from the Nine Stones



Walking in the Blackstairs



the nine stones viewing point

The Nine Stones Viewing Point provides an unrivalled vista of the rich and colourful Carlow countryside spread out like a tapestry before you. Eight counties can be viewed from this spot – Carlow, Laois, Kildare, Wicklow, Wexford, Waterford, Kilkenny and the mountains of Tipperary, and on a clear day the coast of Wales, to the east. On the lower side of the road, you will see an alignment of nine small stones in the ground. These are said to commemorate nine shepherds lost on Mount Leinster in some distant winter storm, hence the origin of the viewing point's name.

This area forms part of the South Leinster Way long distance walking route, a 102km (64 miles) walk which runs from Kildavin in County Carlow to Carrick-on-Suir in County Tipperary. The area features some of the best walks in the county including the Kilbrannish Forest Recreation Area. Situated 3km (2 miles) from this viewing point at the Nine Stones, immediately adjacent to the Mount Leinster Heritage Drive on the Bunclody Road, the forest offers 2 looped walks (3 kilometres (2 miles) and 5 kilometres (3miles)). Ample car parking, together with picnic facilities and a map of each route are provided. Mount Leinster is also an internationally renowned location for hang-gliding and paragliding and a multi-directional site. Whether you are a spectator or enjoy participating, this venue provides a most enjoyable day's entertainment with colourful take offs set against fabulous scenery. Most Sundays from March to October, weather permitting.

The area contains extensive tracts of forest, owned by Coillte, a commercial company operating in forestry, land based businesses and renewable energy. In all some 2,354 hectares (5,816 acres) of forest, mainly spruce, larch and fir are situated on the north eastern slopes of Mount Leinster.

The Blackstairs Mountains is a designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the EU Habitats Directive for its extensive areas of dry heath. The higher, steeper slopes are covered with a dense, tall carpet dominated by heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) and Bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) with small amounts of Crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), Bell Heather (*Erica cinerea*) and Cross-Leaved Heath (*E. tetralix*). Lower down the slopes, the heath is dominated by Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) and Tormential

(*Potentilla erecta*). Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) is also abundant on the lower slopes. The Blackstairs Mountains is also the only example of moorland above 300 metres in counties Wexford and Carlow. Small numbers of red grouse have been recorded in the past. The most common form of land use in the area is grazing.

As you look from the Nine Stones, the hill to the right of Myshall is Croaghaun. St. Finian, known as the ‘tutor of the Saints of Ireland’ and founder of the celebrated monastery at Clonard in County Meath was born in Myshall circa 470 A.D. and set up an establishment near to Croaghaun in Rossacurra. On the side of Mount Leinster between the Nine Stones and the head of the Burrin River are the Cailín Slipes – two tracks allegedly made by the feet of a giant’s daughter sliding down the side of the mountain. They are raised, peat-covered tumbled-down walls similar to those in the Céide Fields in Mayo. (Source: Mr. Michael Conroy – *Carlow Granite: Years of History Written in Stone*)

On either side are hills of schists and slates while behind us rises Mount Leinster, the highest point of the granite-cored Blackstairs Mountains at 795 metres. The nearby road has been used to access Mount Leinster and the transmitter, since it was first built in 1961. The mast on top transmits national television and radio (RTÉ) to the region. An older name for Mount Leinster is Suidhe Laighen which in Irish means “the seat or meeting place of the men of Leinster”. Set a little apart from the TV enclosure, you will find an old monument in the form of a large cairn. The people who lived in these regions c. 5,000 years ago often sought out prominent hill tops on which to bury and commemorate important members of their communities.

The rocks exposed around the Nine Stones are slates, preserving beds of quartzite and mudstone. These beds tell of a time when this region was covered by an ocean. The sediments were displaced from distant continents onto the deep seafloor by earthquakes or storms. This ocean shrank as the continents approached each other, driven by the Earth’s internal engine, and finally colliding with each other.

[Directions from the Nine Stones Viewing Point to Bunclody](#)

Continue straight ahead and turn right approx. 2km (1.25 miles) from the Nine Stones Viewing Point, where signposted. Distance from Nine Stones Viewing Point to Bunclody is 11km (7 miles).



Below left: Mica Schist – found on Slievebawn and Tomduff

Below right: granite, principle rock type of the Blackstairs Mountains



Newtownbarry House and Gardens



Streetscape of Bunclody



bunclody town

Bunclody is a small, market town with a growing population of approx. 2,300 inhabitants, situated on the Wexford/Carlow border where the Rivers Slaney and Clody meet. The name Bunclody is the anglicised version of an Irish descriptive 'Bun Clodaigh' which roughly translated means 'the end of the stony stream'. The stream in question is the Clody, which ends where it joins the River Slaney at the Slaney Bridge, separating the town of Bunclody on the Wexford side from Carrigduff on the Carlow side. The wide main street, the Mall, planted with lime trees and the stream down its centre makes Bunclody an inviting place to stop and discover the delights of this town, nestled at the foothills of the Blackstairs Mountains.

The first written reference to Bunclody dates from 769 A.D. Annála Riactha na hÉireann contains a vague reference to a hermit living there. Tradition tells us that when, in the 4th century, the Hy Kinsella marched to open up new territory near Croghan Mountain in North Wexford, they marched down the Slaney Valley and encamped for some years at Bunclody where the Round O'Rath is located.

The town of Bunclody is situated in an undulating landscape of fertile agricultural land, considered amongst the finest in the country. The early history of Bunclody, or Newtownbarry as it was known from the mid 1700s until 1950, dates back to the 17th century. Until then, the important centres would have been at nearby Clonmullen and Clohamon where the MacMurrough Kavanagh's (former Kings of Leinster) had their family residences. Sir Murchadh's Cavanagh's daughter was Eilíonóir to whom the North Wexford poet, Cearúll Óg Ó Dálaigh, wrote several love poems. She is remembered in tradition as Eilín A Rún and the Eileen Aroon Festival is held in the town each year in her memory. Eilíonóir (or Eilín) is interred in Old Kilmyshall graveyard approximately 3.5km (2 miles) from Bunclody Town.

'Lucy's Wood' to this day bears the name of Lady Lucy Annesley, wife of John Maxwell-Barry, who owned Bunclody in the 18th century. It is she who is credited with laying out

the town in its present fashion, including the picturesque stream, which bisects the Main Street. By bringing underground ducts from the Mall stream, running water was provided to the houses on either side of the Main Street many decades before such a service became the norm.

Bunclody passed through several owners before being purchased by the Hall-Dare family circa 1861. Newtownbarry House was built between 1863 – 1889 under the direction of Sir Charles Lanyon (1813 – 1889) and remains in the family. The five acres of gardens which surround the house feature an 18th century sunken garden with a pond, stone grotto arches, a Rose Garden and lake. Open from mid-May – beginning of August Tuesday – Friday, Sunday and Bank Holidays. Other times by appointment. Telephone 053 937 6383 www.newtownbarryhouse.com

St. Mary's Church of Ireland was built in 1776 and an extension added about one hundred years later by the Hall-Dare family, contains a beautiful 'rose window' that is well worth viewing.

The town was the scene of the historic Battle of Bunclody on June 1st 1798 during the 1798 Rebellion. A plaque on the Slaney Bridge and a Celtic Cross in the nearby cemetery at Chapel Road, commemorate that sad event and serve as a memorial to those who fell there.

The River Slaney is a valuable natural amenity in Bunclody. An 18 hole golf course, Bunclody Golf and Fishing Club is situated immediately adjacent to the town centre. The course is a perfect balance of both rural and state of the art amenities featuring a large thatched club house and Ireland's first golf elevator, linking the 17th green to the 18th tee. All are set against the backdrop of over 300 acres of stunning parklands offering players a unique and challenging golfing experience. Telephone 053 937 4444 www.bunclodygfc.ie

Directions from Bunclody to Clonegal

From Bunclody travel along the N80 in the direction of Carlow. After 7km (4.5 miles) take the signposted right hand turn to Clonegal Village. Clonegal is 5km (3 miles) from this point. Distance from Bunclody to Clonegal 12km (7.5 miles).

Bunclody – access point to Mount Leinster and the Blackstairs Mountains



Bunclody Golf and Fishing Club



Huntington Castle and Gardens



Clonegal Bridge and the River Derry



clonegal village

The village of Clonegal lies between the Rivers Derry and Slaney, surrounded by hills of forest and farmland. It is often referred to as the “Switzerland of Ireland” for its outstanding natural beauty. In ancient times the village was known as Moyacomb or “Plain of the Two Hounds”. The two hounds belonged to Fionn MacCumhall, a famous hunter warrior of Irish mythology who is said to have rested here during his pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne. Fionn was due to marry Gráinne, the beautiful daughter of Cormac MacAirt, High King of Tara, but after meeting Diarmuid she refused to marry him. Thereafter Fionn pursued Diarmuid and Gráinne the length and breadth of Ireland for over 16 years before Diarmuid was killed by a wild boar. The story of Diarmuid and Gráinne is one of the great romantic legends of Ireland.

The great forest, Fiodh Doracha, which once surrounded the village, was the site of a battle between the King of Leinster, Dermot MacMurrough Kavanagh and the High King of Ireland Rory O’Connor. It was after this battle that MacMurrough Kavanagh left Ireland for England in 1166 to seek the help of Henry II and thus changed the course of Irish history for hundreds of years to come.

Clonegal Bridge in the village was mentioned in the annals of the 14th century and later in the Down Survey of 1650. It has been rebuilt many times and its stonework shows the different building methods used over the years. The village was of strategic importance in former times, being the only pass from the midlands into Wexford and the sea, north of the Blackstairs.

In the 17th century, trade was booming with America with much of the produce being exported in oak barrels. Clonegal’s great oak wood provided much of the raw material to build the oak barrels and the village prospered at this time. The ruling Kavanagh Clan was defeated and Huntington Castle was built as a fortress to supervise the area. Many strangers came to the village at that time, hence the current meaning of Clonegal as “Meadow of the Stranger” or “Cluain na nGall”.

Huntington Castle was later converted into a residence by the Esmonde family who then set about building a fine 17th century estate village near their gates. The avenue approaching the castle from the village is planted with French limes dating from 1680 and leads up to gardens which were laid out in Italian style. Other features include the “parterre” to the side of the house, the fish ponds on either side of the centre walk through the wilderness and the Yew Tree Walk. Almost 700 years old, the Yew Walk is one of the finest examples of its kind in Ireland. Guided tours are available daily from 2pm – 6pm during the months of June, July and August and at weekends during May and September. Other times by request. Telephone: 053 937 7160/552 www.huntingtoncastle.com

The 19th century in Clonegal was a time of chapel building and the houses near the church date from that time. St. Brigid’s Catholic Church on the Carlow Road was built in 1824 while St. Fiaac’s Church of Ireland on the Tullow Road was built in 1819. St. Brigid’s is a fine church with a truncated granite spire, Corinthian columns in the Sanctuary and a lovely plaster ceiling. St. Fiaac’s is a gothic church while the mound on which it is built may date from the early Christian period. The village also features the Weavers Cottages built to the direction of Alexander Durdin of Huntington Castle in 1690. They were lived in by weavers when the trade was at its height and, following restoration feature weaving and spinning demonstrations from time to time and many articles and pictures from by gone days. Make sure to pay a visit to the historic garden, which has been designed to attract as wide a variety of species as possible. Open by request. Telephone 053 9377575.

Clonegal is a favoured location for walkers, marking the end of the Wicklow Way, a 132km (83 miles) way-marked walking trail, which starts in Marley Park, Rathfarnham, Dublin. The village also features a 7km (4.5 miles) Slí na Sláinte walk via Ballyredmond and Clonogan Woods which starts from the Wicklow Park opposite the Weavers Cottages in the centre of the village.

Directions from Clonegal to Kildavin

Cross over Clonegal Bridge and take the next right in the direction of Kildavin. Distance from Clonegal to Kildavin 4km (2.5 miles).

Clonegal streetscape



Weavers Cottages, Clonegal



Countryside around Clonegal, favourably referred to as the Switzerland of Ireland





Spellman Hall, dedicated to Cardinal Francis Spellman, Archbishop of New York (1889 – 1967)



kildavin village

Kildavin is a small picturesque village, off the main Carlow – Wexford Road (N80). As with many Irish place names prefixed by “Kil”, it is not clear whether this refers to an early church (Cill) or an ancient wood (Coill). On the one hand, there is a burial ground nearby on the banks of the River Slaney which is said to be the site of the ancient church of St. Dubhan, the Black-Headed One or in Irish Cill Damháin. In the 5th – 6th century St. Dubhan of Rath Dubhain is said to have flourished here. On the other hand, there are records of a large wooded area known as “Leveroch” in the neighbourhood which stretched from the Blackstairs to the Wicklow Mountains.

The parish hall is referred to as the Spellman Hall and is dedicated to Cardinal Francis Spellman, Archbishop of New York (1889 – 1967) whose grandmother Ellen Keogh (1834 – 1914) emigrated from nearby Kilbride in 1850. The Cardinal donated monies for this building and also for sporting facilities at nearby Spellman Park, the Gaelic Athletic Association (G.A.A.) ground. The G.A.A. fosters the traditional and indigenous sporting pastimes of Gaelic football and hurling.

Hang gliding over the Blackstairs Mountains



The simple but striking church opposite the start of the South Leinster Way is St. Paul's Church of Ireland. It was built at a cost of £850 in 1812 by the Society of First Fruits. St. Lazerian's is the Roman Catholic Church further up the village and dates to circa 1830. It was fairly rudimentary and was described in 1860 as having no seats and a clay floor. The parish priest of the time, a Fr. Dunne arranged for a stone floor and seats to be installed. This work was funded by selling some of the "seats" to the more wealthy parishioners – £7 upwards could buy you a guaranteed family seat.

The area once had a forge, cornstore, woolstore and a mill at nearby Ballypierce. There are several sandpits in the Kildavin area which are being quarried. These were deposited by the various ice sheets that covered the country during the ice ages c. 10,000 years ago. The type of deposits near Kildavin are referred to as "high beach" and are quite rare, with only Lahinch in County Clare having similar deposits.

Near the village on the road from Clonegal is a fine masonry bridge of fairly standard design dating to around 1800. It straddles the border between the counties of Wexford and Carlow and is referred to as Young's Bridge. This stretch of the River Slaney is particularly attractive.

Directions from Kildavin to Myshall

In Kildavin follow signs follow for the R724 in the direction of Myshall. 3km (2 miles) from Kildavin you will pass the Holy Well at Cranavane (well signposted), whose waters are believed to cure a range of ailments. Distance from Kildavin – Myshall 9km (5.5 miles).

The South Leinster Way long distance walking route starts in the village of Kildavin and runs for 102km (64 miles) before finishing in Carrick-on-Suir in County Tipperary. The first stretch of the walk covers a distance of 22km (14 miles). The Way starts by leaving Kildavin along quiet country roads before ascending via forestry tracks to a point near the Corrabut Gap. Mountainy tarmac roads are then followed over the slopes of Mount Leinster and down to the village of Borris.



St. Paul's Church of Ireland



St. Lazerian's Roman Catholic Church



Double bullaun stone in the church graveyard



Remains of the church dedicated to St. Finian in the 6th century



myshall village

The village of Myshall lies at the foot of the northern slopes of the Blackstairs Mountains which provide a magnificent backdrop to the rich pasturelands and winding country roads which surround the village. The area enjoys a long religious history with St. Finian known as the “Tutor of the Saints of Ireland” born in the townland of Rosacurra near Myshall in 470 A.D. St. Finian founded three churches in the vicinity – Rossacurra, Drumpea and Kylmaglush and also established the celebrated monastery of Clonard, Co. Meath. The village contains the remains of a Romanesque church that Finian founded in the sixth century. Local tradition also links St. Columbanus with the area. A stained glass window in the Catholic Church of Exaltation of the Holy Cross commemorates Myshall’s association with this great European saint.

In the graveyard of the Romanesque church 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.

Described as an architectural gem, the origins of the Adelaide Memorial Church are traced back to a love story which ended in tragedy. It was built by a businessman John Duguid of Dover who raised it in memory of his wife Adelaide and his daughter Constance who was killed in a riding accident while visiting friends in Myshall. It was designed by George Coppinger Ashlin, one of the foremost architects in the country as a miniature of Salisbury Cathedral. It stands in beautifully maintained grounds, accessed by a yew-lined drive.

The church was built on a cruciform plan with a high pitched roof. The building materials were limestone and granite. The memorial statue of ‘Innocence’ commemorates Constance. 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. The key is held locally by Mrs. Bridie Daly (white bungalow opposite church grounds telephone 059 915 7671 – please phone in advance).

Rathnageeragh Castle, located outside the village bears every evidence of having been a place of considerable extent. The remains consist of a square gatehouse of two storeys. It was originally used as an out fort by the Kavanagh family until 1631 and appears to have been destroyed by Cromwell in 1650.

Famous connections – Peter Fenelon Collier and Dr. Joseph Byrne

Peter Fenelon Collier was born in Myshall on December 12th 1849, son of Robert Collier and Catherine (Fenelon) Collier. The family left for the U.S. in 1865 in the aftermath of the Famine. Collier had two ambitions in life – to acquire an education and to be successful. He set up his own printing works in New York in 1880, publishing the works of Shakespeare, Dickens and others for the mass market. He revolutionised volume book selling by introducing an instalment payment plan. The success of his book publishing company led to the launch of Colliers Weekly, a campaigning paper which attracted some leading US writers of the period, including Mark Twain. By the time of his death in 1909 his company had an annual turnover of \$12 million and book sales topped the 52 million mark. His bequests in Carlow included a magnificent trophy presented to the Carlow Agricultural Society, 1,000 books to the Carlow Young Men's Society and 600 books to Fr. James Coyle, P.P. for Leighlinbridge Library.

Dr. Joseph Byrne, a native of Myshall parish, was an eminent New York surgeon. Prior to his death in 1945, he made a bequest to his native parish for the purpose of assisting the educational needs of its children. The resulting fund continues to be administered by the Byrne Trust.

Directions from Myshall to Fenagh

At the water pump in the centre of Myshall Village turn to the right and follow the R724 to Fenagh.
Distance from Myshall – Fenagh 6km (4 miles).

The Statute of Innocence – courtesy Dr. M.J. Blade



The Adelaide Memorial Church exterior – courtesy T. Doolan



fenagh village

Lying on the R724 regional road between Bagenalstown and Myshall, the village of Fenagh is known for its architectural design and beautiful granite buildings. The location of the village commands picturesque views of nearby Mount Leinster and the Blackstairs Mountains.

The old Catholic Church formerly stood on the site now occupied by the Protestant Church at the end of the village; all traces of it, however, have been completely destroyed although some Catholics are still interred in the adjoining burial-ground. Close to the church there was a castle well fortified by strong ramparts and a double fosse, formerly the seat of one of the Kings of Leinster. In the intervening years this too has been destroyed.

Outside Ballydarton House, on the outskirts of Fenagh Village, is a fine example of the Carlow Fence, a decorative fence made of granite pieces, quarried locally, and laid horizontally over vertical posts. The Carlow Fence is particular to the area and is a striking example of vernacular heritage.

Fenagh is also renowned for its annual steam rally, held in September each year, one of the longest running and most successful steam rallies in the country having been established in the mid seventies when the restoration of steam engines and threshing mills became popular. The rally features vintage tractors, cars and farm machinery and is a great day out for all the family.

Famous connections – the Pack Beresford's and the Lecky Watson's

County Carlow could claim the title of the most gentrified county in Ireland. Until the early decades of the 20th century, as many as sixty gentry houses dominated the landscape of the county and the people who resided within had a major influence on the economic and social life of their tenants. One of the most famous families associated with the Fenagh area was the Pack Beresford's. At the end of the 18th century William Carr, the illegitimate son of the Marquess of Waterford received an estate of 2,253 hectares (5,567 acres) in Fenagh from his father and with it the title Viscount Beresford. An absentee landlord, his attitude

Church of Ireland in Fenagh



Old post office in Fenagh village



towards his tenants was tough and uncompromising and few estates in the county witnessed the level of evictions experienced by tenants of Beresford. However, Viscount Beresford was credited with running a very well organised estate – a fact recognised in an architectural competition run in 1841 when he won a medal for the high standard of cottages built for his labourers. Viscount Beresford died without an heir and the estate was inherited by Denis William Pack, the son of Viscount Beresford's half-sister. He came to live in Fenagh House and immersed himself in the political life of his adopted county, earning the title of Deputy Lieutenant, a Justice of the Peace and High Sheriff in 1856. The last of the family to live in the area was Commander Denis John Pack-Beresford who took a serious interest in farming and was the founder President of the Irish Pig Breeders Association and a member of the Royal Dublin Society. When he died in 1986 the two hundred year Beresford association with Fenagh ended with the sale of the estate for £650,000 by his son.

Another prominent family associated with the Fenagh area was the Lecky Watson's, a Quaker family. The first of the Watson's arrived in Ireland from Cumberland in the early 1600s, settling at Ardristan near Tullow. Samuel Watson (1714 –1784) was the first of the family to live at Ballydarton outside the village of Fenagh and it was his grandson, John Henry II, who was the first master and one of the founders of the Tullow Hunt in 1808. In 1874 Captain John Watson of nearby Ballydarton House and the British Cavalry 13th Hussars created the first set of written rules for playing polo. Another member of the family hunted down the last recorded wolf in Ireland on the slopes of Mount Leinster. Corona North, one of the last surviving members of the Watson family in County Carlow inherited the great gardens at Altamont from her mother and went on to turn the gardens into one of the best-loved and most-visited attractions in the country. Following her death in 1999, they were bequeathed to the state and the people of Ireland. Many of the family including Corona North are buried outside the village of Fenagh at a place called "God's Acre" in Ballybrommell.

[Directions from Fenagh to Bagenalstown](#)

Upon arrival in Fenagh Village (outside Church of Ireland) take a turn to the left. At the top of the village follow the road to the right for Bagenalstown. 5km (3 miles) from Fenagh you will notice Ballymoon Castle on your right hand side. Distance from Fenagh – Bagenalstown 9km (5.5 miles).

God's Acre 'Garden of Sleep'



Altamont Gardens



St. Patrick's Catholic Church, situated closeby in Newtown



Dunleckney Manor – ancestral home of the Bagenal family, founders of Bagenalstown



Quayside, Bagenalstown



Bagenalstown Railway Station, considered one of the finest in the country



bagenalstown

Bagenalstown, otherwise known in its Gaelic version as Muine Bheag is sited on a pleasant stretch of the River Barrow and derives its name from Walter Bagenal, who in founding the town, had visions of mirroring the city of Versailles in northern France. Shortly after he had made an impressive start in the 1700s by building a magnificent square courthouse, his efforts became frustrated due to the re-routing of the coach road away from the town. He left more than enough however, for visitors to enjoy with handsome stone public buildings including the impressive Courthouse, now a public library.

Dunleckney Manor, on the outskirts of the town was the seat of the Bagenals for over 300 years. Parts of the original house, dating to 1612 are incorporated in the present Tudor-Gothic structure, which was designed by Daniel Robertson and built in 1820. Tours available on selected days throughout the year, telephone 059 972 1932 in advance.

The arrival of the railway in 1846 rejuvenated the town, and its neo-classical style makes it one of the finest stations in Ireland. It is a seven bay, two storey construction in an Italianate villa style. Today the building still retains its charm in a largely unaltered state. It is attributable largely to William Deane Butler although interestingly the celebrated railway engineer and “Father of Irish railways” William Dargan (1799 – 1867) was a native of nearby Carlow Town. This former mill town made full use of the Barrow Navigation to transport grain, beet, coal, turf and Guinness, amongst other goods by barge, the evidence of which can be seen in its fine industrial architecture. River and canalside warehouses were used for storing agricultural produce such as cereals.

St. Andrew’s Catholic Church was built in 1820 on a site provided by the Newton family, successors to the Bagenals. The stained glass behind the altar is worthy of particular attention.

Nowadays, riverside walks, picnic tables and a picturesque lock enhance this fine town. The Barrow Way long distance walking route passes through the town. Bagenalstown has been twinned with the French town of Pont Pean since 1999.

4km east of Bagenalstown, on the Fenagh Road, is the ruined Ballymoon Castle which dates to the 14th century. The castle – as striking as it is unusual – comprises a courtyard about 80 feet square, delimited by granite walls, eight feet thick and twenty feet high. Square towers project from three sides while a formidable gatehouse is a feature of the fourth. It is thought that the castle was probably built by Roger Bigod or by a member of the Carew family between 1290 and 1310. Access direct from the road.

Ballyloughan Castle was built in the 13th century and consisted of a large open courtyard with a curtain wall and moat outside. Only a small square tower remains, as well as the entrance gate which is flanked by two large rounded towers. The castle originally belonged to the Kavanaghs before passing into the hands of the Bagenal family of nearby Bagenalstown and following this, the Bruen family in the early 19th century. Access direct through private land.

Famous connections – John Lucas and Henry and Margaret Rudkin

John Lucas: Only two Carlow men have ever received the honour of the Victoria Cross, which to this day remains the highest award given for exceptional bravery by members of any branch of the British Military Service. One of these, Sergeant Major John Lucas, was born in Glasgonny, Bagenalstown in 1823. Lucas was decorated for maintaining his position under heavy fire in an attack during the New Zealand Maori Wars.

Henry and Margaret Rudkin – famous bakers: The American branch of this famous family was established by William Rudkin of Wells, Bagenalstown who settled in New York in 1855. His grandson Henry and wife Margaret developed a bakery business from their kitchen at Pepperidge Farm in Fairfield, Connecticut into a multi-million dollar corporation spread across the United States. Rudkins Mills on the quay in Bagenalstown was owned by the family prior to their emigration to the United States of America.

Directions from Bagenalstown to Borris

On the outskirts of Bagenalstown cross over the bridge following the signs for town centre passing by St. Andrew's Church. Take the next turn to the left and follow the road for Borris. Distance from Bagenalstown – Borris 12km (7.5 miles).

Below right: Rudkins Mills, Bagenalstown



Bagenalstown Courthouse by night



St. Mary's Church of Ireland Church



Photos below left to right: Bunclody Town, Church of Ireland – Fenagh Village, Railway Station in Bagenalstown, Huntington Castle and Gardens and St. Paul's Church of Ireland, Kildavin.



Visit us online at: www.carlowtourism.com

For further information on Co. Carlow or to make an accommodation booking please contact:

Carlow Tourist Office, College Street, Carlow

t: + 353 (0) 59 9131554 f: + 353 (0) 59 9170776 e: carlow@faipteireland.ie

or Carlow Tourism, The Foresters' Hall, College Street, Carlow

t: + 353 (0) 59 9130411 f: + 353 (0) 59 9130477

e: info@carlowtourism.com w: www.carlowtourism.com

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

Details pertaining to famous Carlovians within this publication have been reproduced by kind permission of local historian Mr. Jimmy O'Toole. For further information visit www.carlowbooks.com



Fáilte Ireland
National Tourism Development Authority



The publishers gratefully acknowledge photographic contributions. The publishers cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions but where such are brought to our attention future publications will be amended accordingly.

Published by Carlow County Council in conjunction with Carlow Tourism
DESIGN www.penhouse.ie