

Monastic Way



DUBLIN - the beginning of the 'Eiscir Riada

Christchurch Cathedral, Dublin, Ireland is situated on a low hill overlooking the river Liffey.

Looking south from the river, the road rises towards the cathedral which is partly obscured by a modern office block situated on the site of the 9th century Viking city. Archaeological finds from the Viking excavations can be seen in the **National Museum** of Ireland.

When Christchurch is viewed from the south, the footpaths alongside the red-bricked buildings emphasis the hill on which Dublin stands.

The hill on which Dublin is built is **Esker Riada**, all that remains of an Ice Age river that flowed under an ice cap 5km high about 20,000 years ago.

Evidence of Esker Riada can be seen intermittently between Dublin and the **River Shannon**. This high point in the landscape was used as a means of travelling between monasteries which were, in fact, early Irish towns.



Christchurch, Dublin



Christchurch, Dublin

Obelisk and Taghadoe - the beginning of the 'Eiscir Riada

As **Maynooth** is approached a monument can be seen on the North side of the motorway.

This large, obelisk-crowned triumphal arch is 43 metres high and was built in 1740 in order to block the view from neighbours in **Castletown**.



Taghadoe Church and Round Tower can be visited before entering Maynooth. It was the site of **St. Tua's** monastery (8th century).

Maynooth

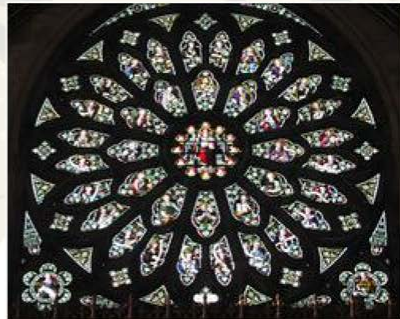
St. Patrick's College Maynooth, originally a seminary founded in 1795, is now part of the **National University of Ireland**.

At the entrance lie the ruins of various buildings associated with the Earls of Kildare, the earliest dating from the 13th century.



St. Patrick's College, founded in 1795 was the greatest Irish seminary, supplying priests throughout the world.

The university campus includes two fine squares and the College Chapel and museum.



Old Bog Road

Between **Maynooth** and **Enfield** is a site marked "**The Old Bog Road**" as mentioned in the popular song.

Ferans townland, also mentioned, is in the locality.

It's author, Teresa Brayton, is buried in **Cloncurry** churchyard - a medieval church with adjoining tree-crowned Motte.

A **Motte** is a steep sided, artificial round mound with a flat top on which a wooded tower/castle was built.

At the foot of the mound, a raised enclosure, a **Bailey**, included a dwelling and other buildings. Both Motte and Bailey were stockaded.

Mainly Anglo-Norman and dated to the late 12th/early 13th century.



A short walk northwards leads to a peaceful section of the **Grand Canal**.



Clonard

In **Clonard**, the unused Church of Ireland marks the site of a monastery founded by St. Finian in 515. Through this distinguished seat of learning passed the "Twelve Apostles of Ireland" - founders of many famous Irish monasteries. Ciaran of **Saigher**, Ciaran of **Clonmacnoise**, Colmcille of **Durrow** and **Iona**, Brendan of **Clonfert**, Brendan of **Birr**, Colum of **Terryglass**, Mobhi of **Glasnevin**, Ruadhan of **Lorrha**, Senan of **Iniscathay**, Ninnidh of **Loch Erne**, and Laserian. Students numbered 3,000 at one time.

The **Vikings** pillaged the monastery five times, burning it three times in one week of 1045. However, it continued as a religious establishment until the early 19th cent.

A **Motte and Bailey** can be seen in an adjacent field. Trees growing on these mounds are not cut in order to avoid offending the "wee folk" and their resulting anger.



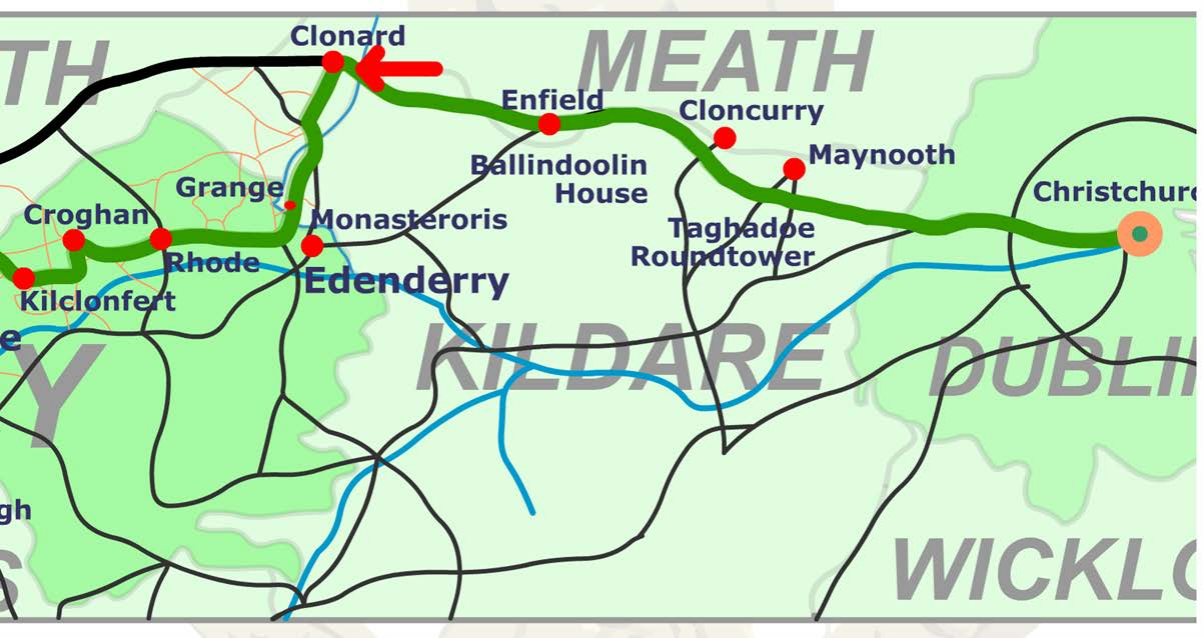
Clonard

Hidden behind the altar of the Roman Catholic church can be seen the sole remaining relic of medieval **Clonard** (15/16th cent.) - a **stone baptismal font**. Octagonal in shape, the font is circular with a central hole to drain the baptismal water straight to the ground.

Stained-glass windows by **Hogan** show events in the life of St Finian.

Opposite the R.C. church in "The Monastery Inn" can be found a brochure on "**Clonard Heritage Trail**".





Clonsilla

MEATH

Enfield

Cloncurry

Maynooth

Ballindoolin House

Taghadoe Roundtower

Christchurch

Grange

Monasteroris

Edenderry

Croghan

Rhode

Kilclonfert

KILDARE

DUBLIN

WICKLOW

Ballindoolin House and Gardens.

Georgian country house and farmyard surrounded by large gardens and ancient woodlands - **Heritage and Nature Trail.**



Rahin Wood is a pleasant place for walk and a **relaxing picnic.**



Grange

Grange Castle and Gardens, a 15th century Tower House is currently being restored.



Further additions, in the 17th cent., include ornamental battlements and Jacobean chimneys.

A Walled Garden, Labyrinth and Georgian Cottage give a varied view of life over 500 years.



Monasteroris - Edenderry

Edenderry town blossomed with the arrival of the Grand Canal in 1802 and the building of The Town Hall (1826) and Society of Friends Meeting House (1813).

Monasteroris, a Franciscan monastery, built in **1325**. It is an example of a castellated monastery because of its strong defences. The remains of a dove-cot or pigeon house, on top of a mound or motte, some remnants of the massive defensive walls of the monastic buildings and a small parish church are all that remain.

Rhode, a small village whose economy was based on a peat fired power station, but now demolished, is reassessing its future in tourism and small business. A view from an esker shows the original power station.



Croghan Hill

Extinct volcano - Mentioned in Spenser's "Fairy Queen".

Croghan Hill stands out as an important feature in this peat dominated landscape. It is the vent of an extinct volcano with ash and basalt found nearby. It's origins date back to an era c. 250 million years ago.

A cairn at the top of Croghan Hill is about 4,000 years old (c 2,000 B.C.). It may conceal a passage grave or several burial chambers.

On the hillside below the cairn are the remains of a hill fort with a date between 300 B.C. and 400 A.D.

On the eastern slope of the Hill can be seen an old graveyard, the walls of which may have come from Bishop Mac Caille's Church (founded 5th Century.) situated probably in the N.W. both inside and outside the current wall. In addition undisturbed cultivation ridges can be seen close by.

In the area there are Holy Wells, Standing Stones, deserted Medieval Village, ancient bog roads, and O'Connor Faly's Castle.



Kilclonfert

The carved heads of **Kilclonfert** R.C. Church are its outstanding features.

Kilclonfert Graveyard, a distance removed from R.C. church, contains the remains of a possible medieval church of the 13/15th cent.

This replaced an early monastic site of the 6/8 century. Folk tradition survives in the **Holy Well** and "pattern day" on 13th August.



Rahugh

At **Rahugh** Catholic Church it is advised to climb up (inside the churchyard and along a path near the wall) to the Bell on the Hill. This Bell is situated on an Esker ridge - all that remains of a river that ran under a five kilometre high ice sheet which melted about 20,000 years ago.

These eskers became the high points in the countryside and were used as roads to move from monastery to monastery when wetlands and bogs predominated.

The meandering nature of the river can be seen in the outline of the trees which now cover the eskers.

Where quarrying has taken place, it is possible to examine a cross section of the contents of these ancient rivers. Sand, gravel and even large cascading boulders that intermingled in the raging torrents under the ice can be clearly seen.

Some of the original natural environment that developed after the Ice age still remains. **Eskers** were difficult to cultivate and wild plants and grass species exist alongside ancient woodlands that cover the sand and gravel deposits.



Rahugh

A monastery was founded here by **St. Hugh** in the 6th century, inside a rath or fort. In addition to the remains of an old church can be found St. Hugh's Well and Headache Stone.

St. Hugh's **Headache Stone** is a carved grave slab with a slight depression in the centre caused, so it is said, by constant kneeling.

Leaving Rahugh we pass over a bridge which crosses the now disused Canal between Ballycommon and Kibeggan.



Durrow

Durrow - "the plain of the oaks", is the site of one of the earliest and most important monasteries founded by **St. Columcille** about 550.

Although the monastery no longer exists, physical evidence of its importance remains, as do the anniversaries and festivals in the locality.

Now in State hands, Durrow will become the focus of conservation.

Over the coming years, it is hoped that more of the original monastery may be revealed.

The present mansion dates from the 18th century, built with stones from an earlier castle and improved in early 20th cent.

Nearby, in the woods, stands a motte.



Durrow

The most visible signs of the early **Christian monastery** consist of a High Cross and engraved grave slabs.

Exposed to the elements for nearly **1,500 years** but now removed from the elements into the nearby church, they will become preserved for many more millennium.

The **High Cross** at Durrow is 4m high and made from one piece of sandstone plus a capstone. Carved in c. 950, it mainly shows scenes from the gospels and may have been used as a teaching aid. The shape of the cross may have originated in a wooden cross, with the ring used to hold the frame together.

The capstone at the top of the cross represents the shape of an early monastic church with a shingled roof.



South Face

Underneath Arm - Three heads with a serpent twining around them.

Durrow

West Face

Under Crucifixion:-

Three Figures (Arrest of Christ ??)

Figure seized by two men (scourging at the pillar)

Soldiers guarding tomb

Inscription ORDO:- (Pray for) Dubthach

Under the Capstone :-

Trinity -Father, Son and Spirit

Under the Trinity:-

The Dove

Under the Dove:-

Figure with Bird and Horn:Crucifixion:Figure with mirror.

East Face

Across Centre:-

David playing Lyre - Triumph of Christ - David and Lion.



Durrow

Cross Slab with ORDO (Pray for) Cathalan carved at bottom.

Found buried six to eight inches deep c. 1897. Interlace ornament in the panels.

Two figures in small panel on either side of the circle.



Interpretive model of Monastic Durrow, created by local school children.

Their image of the monastery as it may have appeared at the height of its fame.



Book of Durrow

The **Book of Durrow** is a small illuminated manuscript which can be seen in Trinity College, Dublin in same building as the Book of Kells.

It has 248 pages and contains the Latin text of the four gospels. The Internet is well endowed with samples of the beauty of the book of Durrow. - e.g. <http://celtdigital.org/Durrow.htm>



Durrow

The crozier of **St. Columcille** is in the Royal Irish Academy. It is 1.25 metres in length.



A 7th/8th century ringheaded pin found during a field walk in 1986.



Tihilly

A monastery founded by **St. Fintan** in the 6th cent.

The ruins of a small church remain together with a **9th century High Cross**.

A crucifixion and Adam & Eve can be seen on the west face.



Tullamore

Tullamore, the **capital town** of County Offaly (formerly Kings County) was relatively late in developing. An 18th century creation, following a calamitous balloon fire, Tullamore now lies at the centre of a significant midland monastic heritage.

Tullamore Dew Heritage Centre / Local Tourist Office and the Offaly Historical & Archaeological Society display distillery and canal history and also cater for the genealogical requirements of both counties of Offaly and Laois.

The R.C. Church, rebuilt after a fire in 1983 is worthy of a visit both for its architecture and stained glass windows.



Tullamore Church - Stained Glass - <http://www.tullamoreparish.ie/>



Tullamore

A couple of photographs from a recent balloon flight show the layout of the town.

- Aerial view of the town with St. Catherine's at bottom right.

- In the centre of the photo, surrounded by buildings, is one of the highest points in the town and possibly the hill which gives the town its name. Possible site of early windmill. **Tulach Mhor** meaning Big Hill or Big Mound. The competing site from which the town is said to derive its name is the hill where **St. Catherine's** church now stands.

- A fine example of ancient structures in the landscape at the Meelaghans very close to the town. Both these contain large boulders with one having nine holes - one 30 cms in diameter.



Site of Tulach Mhor



Over head view of Tulach Mhor

Tullamore

Charleville Castle built in 1801 (architect Francis Johnston) is one of the local jewels. Recent research has shown that with proper development its long lost gardens and landscaping would lift Charleville into Irelands top ten of similar attractions.



Lynally

Founded in the 6th century by **St. Colman** in a large forest and became known as **Lann-Elo**. He died 610 and is buried in Lynally. No trace remains of the early Christian ecclesiastical enclosure.

The earliest phase of the present church is to the west and dated earlier than 1210. Memorials in the church and graveyard show that the church was used up until the early 19th century.



Lynally

17th century armorial plaques and 18th century graveslab.



Lynally

A **Motte** stands in the same field as the church and, across the road - its bailey. A **holy well** also existed but has now been filled in.

Two **grave slabs** which were found close-by are now in the National Museum.



Communication between Lynally and Rahan was then and still is, by means of an esker with views over Tullamore towards Croghan Hill in the distance. The Grand Canal which now separates both monasteries is a relatively modern intruder into the landscape being built in 1804.



Rahan

In **Rahan** and its hedgerows can be seen the outline of the original monastic enclosure. On the ground the bumps and hollows reveal the layout and streetscape of the early monastery. A large outline north west of the Church of Ireland could point to a "duirteach mor" or large church.

Beneath the soil are the secrets of earlier centuries.

Rahan is ranked alongside Clonmacnoise for its early Christian architecture and archaeology.



Rahan

Above the ground are the remains of three, originally nine, churches together with their artwork of the highest standard.

The monastery at **Rahan** was founded in the 6th cent. by **St. Carthage** also called **Mochuda**, a Kerryman of noble birth. His monastic rules were very strict. The monastery believed to have been a centre for lepers, though this is disputed - based on the anglicisation of the Gaelic word "lobhar" meaning weak or sick.



The size of the monastery can be seen from the fact that 847 monks, exclusive of lay attendants and pupils, were driven from Rahan in 630. **St. Carthage** settled in Lismore, County Waterford. The reason for this expulsion is not known. Did monasteries in the neighbourhood, jealous of its reputation, drive out Carthage? Or was it due to a dispute over the calculation of the date for Easter?

The interior of the Church of Ireland has many **Early Medieval** features. Originally cruciform in design, it has been much modified. Starting as a 12th cent building (maybe earlier), then modified in the 15th cent., a nave being added in 1732.

St. Constantine resigned as King of the Briton (Welsh) and traveled as a pilgrim to become a monk in Rahan. His name was given to many generations of the **O'Molloy**, a clan of **Fearcall** where Rahan is situated.

Rahan

The second church, roofless, has a **Romanesque** doorway with intricately carved side columns. Notice the doorway, narrower at the top than the bottom. Two of the windows also have carvings.



Rahan

Rahan possesses some of the outward signs of a monastery, Cross (now missing), bullaun stones (in the area), Sheela -na -gig (in Athlone Museum).

North window (External)

-Carving of serpent or cockatrice - mythical offspring of a cock's egg. Webbed feet.

-Winged animal. Also Bird



Rahan

East Window (External)

·Rose Window - high on East end



Window in E. Gable of larger Church



·Detail Rose Window



Rahan

·North Window (Internal)

·St. Carthage.

·Chancel Arch



Rahan

- Chancel Arch Detail



Rahan

North Wall

·Inscribed Cross



CM - Constantine Molloy



·Scull & Crossbones

Rahan

Portion of Bullaun Stone

An artificial, basin-like hollow in a large stone. A feature of early monastic sites.

Often said to have been the result of constantly kneeling in prayer. Many were used for grinding corn or medicines.



Shiela Na Gig

· **Sheela-na-gig** from Rahan now housed in Athlone museum.

· Sheela-na-gigs are stone carvings of naked females, either standing or squatting, with one or both hands touching or pointing to the genitalia. Often found carved as church ornaments.

A mystery surrounds their origins, use and whether originated in a wooden format, in a similar way as the high cross.



Clara Bog

Bog covers about one third of County Offaly.

At **Clara Bog Nature Reserve** is an example of a raised bog together with its vegetation which can be visited by travelling along a walkway.



How Was the Bog Formed?

The raised bog at Clara started to form over 10,000

Conas a cruthaíodh an Portach

Cruthaíodh é de rís a shéile thar phléisséin a thosaigh 10,000 ó

Shallow lake (10,000 years ago)

Lach Éideamhain (10,000 bliain ó shin)



Encroaching fen sedge

Imoill Mheige agus dul thar scriob



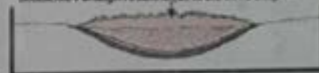
Bog peat formation

Máin Phortach agus cruthú



Raised bog surface (today)

Éamhaiclé Portach Ardaithe fós lá éad inlé ann



Lemanaghan

St. Manchan's early Christian monastery, founded in the 7th century, was situated on an island surrounded by wet bogland.

Now it can be easily visited.



Lemanaghan

Leading from the **Holy Well** and Holy tree is a stone lined causeway (recently cleared), which connects the church to **St. Mella's Cell** or Oratory. It is a spiritually rewarding experience to traverse this causeway in silence and contemplation.



Lemanaghan

A 6th century crozier, 1.25 metres in length, was found beside a wooden tither, or pathway, which has been dated to **AD 596**.



Boher Shrine

· Signpost to Ireland's finest Reliquary.

· Stained Glass - St Manchan

Stained Glass - Detail of shrine

· 12th Century, portable, tomb shaped shrine or reliquary of St. Manchan.

· Figurines not part of original 12 century - Rings were for carrying the shrine.



Boher Stained Glass

Stained Glass by the Harry Clarke studio



-In foreground ruins of an Augustinian Abbey at Doon/Esker. In the background can be seen Doon Castle complete with its own sheela-na-gig.



Clonmacnoise



Clonmacnoise

Foremost early monastery.
545 AD.

- 6000 inhabitants.
- High crosses & 400 grave slabs.
- 13 churches, 2 round towers, 500+ graveslabs, 3 high crosses,
- 10th century wooden bridge.
- Nun's Church (1167).
- Sheila-na-gig on chancel arch.



Clonmacnoise

Bullaun Stone



Hill of the Scriptures



Clonmacnoise

Early 19th Century Fort. Main portion of this fort is on north side of the road, west of the Shannon. It was to have been used to halt the French if they invaded from the West. An identical fort was to have been built in Killurin, County Offaly.

Shannon Bridge.

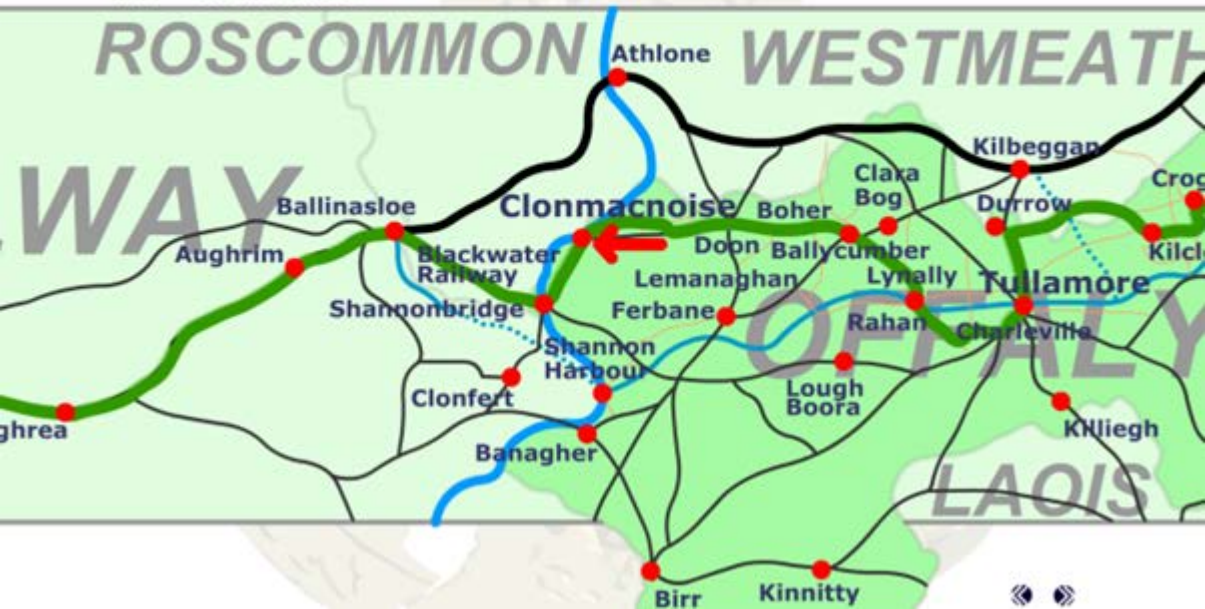
Early 19th Cent Fort. Copy was to have been built in Killurin.



Monastic Way



MAP - Clonmacnoise



Ballinasloe

Additional Monastic way- **Clontrusket**, then **Clonfert**, founded by **St. Brendan the Navigator**, which has a superb Irish Romanesque doorway.



Also Banagher & Birr

Clontrusket

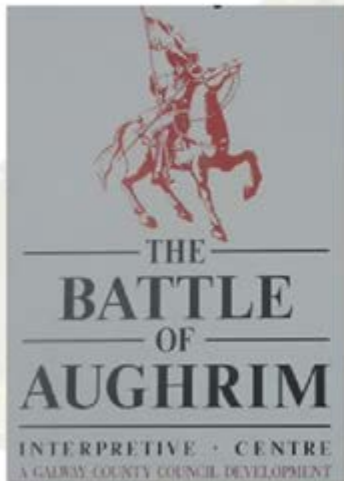
A short diversion (12k round trip on Portumna Road) can be made to visit St. Mary's Abbey.

Originally a monastery founded in 805 by **St. Baodan**.

Visit 14/15 century buildings.

Aughrim

Site of **Battle of Aughrim**, 12 July 1691, which decided the struggle between **King James II** and **King William III**. This struggle is evident in the Northern Ireland political divisions of modern times.



Loughrea

St Brendans Cathedral.

One of the finest ecclesiastical symbols of the Celtic revival.

Showcase of arts and crafts in Ireland from 1903 to late 1950's.

Audio tour available.



Loughrea

Marble behind Altar.

Stone Carving - Traditional woman by Michael Shortall

Stone Carving - "Patrick" by Michael Shortall

Stone Carving - Celtic Intertwine by Michael Shortall



Loughrea

Virgin & Child by John Hughes

Modern 2004 Century Carving by Thomas Glendon.



Stone Carving -
St. Brendan by
Michael Shortall



Confessional grill by
Michael Scott.
Virgin & Child by
John Hughes.



Loughrea

Ironwork by Michael Scott
Stations of the Cross by Ethel Rhind

Pew end by Michael Scott.

St. Joseph by Michael Healy & St.
Brigid by Evie Hone.



