



Duleek is in County Meath, 40 minutes drive from Dublin and just 15 minutes from Newgrange and Brú na Bóinne.

If you are interested in further information regarding heritage sites and tourist attractions in Meath, please contact Meath Tourism. The staff will also be delighted to assist you in reserving accommodation should you wish to spend a night or two in the area.

Tourist Information Centre
Railway Street, Navan
County Meath
Telephone + 353 (0)46 73426

You may also wish to visit Meath Tourism's website: www.meathtourism.ie



Stepping Stones to Duleek's Past Duleek Heritage Trail

Meath

This Heritage Trail is an application of the Meath Brand Identity, financed by LEADER II, the EU Initiative for Rural Development, 1995–1999.



Meath
Heritage

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The Stones of History

Duleek takes its name from *daimh liag*, meaning house of stones and referring to an early stone-built church, St Cianan's Church, the ruins of which are still visible in Duleek today. The Duleek Heritage Trail has been conceived as a series of stepping stones through the village and its long and varied history.

It began as an early Christian monastic settlement. St Patrick established a bishopric here about 450 AD, which he placed in the care of St Cianan on November 24, 489. The place was sacked several times by the Norsemen between 830 and 1149 and was also pillaged by the Anglo-Normans in 1171. In April 1014 the bodies of Brian Ború and his son lay in state in Duleek on their way to Armagh. The 12th century saw the reconstitution of the original monastery as St Mary's Abbey.

The first Anglo-Norman Overlord of Meath, Hugh de Lacy, established a manor and constructed a motte castle at Duleek. About 1180 he granted St Cianan's Church, together with certain lands, to the Augustinians. The churchyard of the now disused Church of Ireland church occupies part of the site of the early monastery.

The village's four crosses and the lime tree on the village green are reminders of Duleek's links to the struggle between William and James and to wider European unrest at the time of Louis the XIV of France.

On a more romantic/adventurous note, Duleek is also associated with a Robin Hood type highwayman – *Collier the Robber* – who used the Duleek Commons as a base from which to rob passing stage coaches. Besides offering bandits a hideout, the Commons is particularly noted for its distinctive flora and fauna and its wild-bird activity.

We hope you enjoy exploring present-day Duleek by following the stepping stones of the Duleek Heritage Trail.

A map is provided on the inside back cover of this brochure.



The Priory Church
View of the ruins
of the Priory Church.
c. 18th Century

The Stations of the Duleek Heritage Trail

1 Duleek Courthouse

Duleek Courthouse was built in 1838 by John Trotter as a sessions house for the Meath Grand Jury. It was designed by Francis Johnston. The main architectural features are the Doric door-case and fanlight, a simplified eaves pediment and corner quoins. The building was used as a courthouse until 1960 when it was converted to a library and environmental offices. Its best-known magistrate was Judge Stephen Trotter who was responsible for the erection of Duleek House.

2 Connell's House

Close to the Courthouse along the western perimeter of the village green is Connell's House, the oldest house in Duleek. This building was in existence at the time of the famous Battle of the Boyne in 1690.

3 Parochial House

The original house was built in 1795. It was built in three stages and was acquired by Fr John Kearney to accommodate the parish priest and the curate. It was re-roofed in 1993 and presides over the very elegant village green.

At the back of the house are substantial stables and other outoffices which in earlier times were used for parish animals. These were built in 1898 and in more recent times have been refurbished as meeting rooms for parish groups and community activity.



The Lime Tree
The oldest and largest lime tree in Ireland

The Lime Tree

William of Orange and Mary accepted the throne of England in 1688, supplanting King James II who took refuge with his ally and sponsor Louis XIV of France. The tensions between James and William would reach their highpoint in 1690 at the Battle of the Boyne in Meath, where James was defeated.

4

Huguenots

The Huguenots arrived in Ireland in order to escape persecution for their religious beliefs in France. Many families settled in Duleek where their industry contributed greatly to the local economy. It is interesting that, following the Battle of the Boyne, King James was loudly cheered at Donore while a few miles away, at Duleek, he was jeered – this has been noted from an old Gaelic school verse.

In Duleek at that time there was a very significant colony of Huguenots (French Protestants) who had fled persecution in France.

Subsequently to the Battle of the Boyne the people of Duleek planted two saplings entwined around each other, one an ash (native to these islands) and the other a lime (foreign and exotic) to represent Mary and William. The ash was still alive in 1849 and was referred to by Sir William Wilde following a visit to Duleek. It did not however survive into living memory. The lime tree, representing William, is still standing and is the oldest and largest lime tree in Ireland. The indent into which the ash tree was embedded is clearly visible on its north side.

5 St Cianan's R.C. Church

Duleek was the site of the first stone church in Ireland. It was dedicated to St Cianan, a bishop appointed by St Patrick. Duleek is an area steeped in the religious history of the early church in Ireland.

The present building was erected in 1812 and improved in 1869. It was extended and a new gallery built in 1966 to cope with the enlarged congregations. Refurbishment was carried out in 1989 which is commemorated by a plaque in the porch. In that year the church welcomed Cardinal Tomas O'Fiach of Armagh and two bishops of Meath plus a huge congregation to celebrate 1500 years of the Christian faith in Duleek. Much admired are the church's high ceiling, the stained glass windows and the ancient baptismal font.

6 Larrix Street and Kingsgate

The name Larrix Street is thought to originate from the French *Le Roi*.

The term Kingsgate relates to the period around the Battle of the Boyne and in particular to King William's encampment in that locality

The Weaving Industry

The weaving industry was introduced to Duleek by the Huguenots in the 17th century. They built their houses in rows of ten to twenty five on each side of a narrow lane. The craftsmen made their own hand looms from local timber. About 250 families were engaged in the weaving industry in Duleek prior to the advent of steam looms. They worked late into the night by the light of rush tallow candles which in turn were made locally by the Stapleton family in the ruins of St Cianan's Church.

It took these weavers about two weeks to manufacture twenty-five yards of cloth which was subsequently sold in the Linen Hall in Drogheda. The weavers also dyed the wool and linen thread, the last of the dye-houses being Wherty's, the family which gave its name to Wherty's Lane. In 1904 James Kelly was the first and only weaver to introduce power looms in Duleek.

Fruit Industry

Also located in the Larrix Street-Kingsgate area of Duleek is the fruit-growing industry. This was introduced to the locality around the turn of the 18th century.

Individual fruit farms are referred to as *plantations* and the introduction of the industry followed a visit by Duleek people to Blairgowrie in Scotland. The industry was thriving up to and including the period of the second world war at which time Duleek and its environs were the premier fruit-growing location in Ireland. To this day, a small number of dedicated growers, such as Jim Conlon, Jim Curley and P. McCabe, continue the tradition in the Larrix Street-Kingsgate area.



St Mary's Abbey

It was in St Mary's Abbey that the bodies of Brian Ború and his son lay in state on the journey from Clontarf to Armagh in 1014 following the Battle of Clontarf.

St Mary's Abbey

One of the great churches of the 12th century, St Mary's Abbey, was built by the Augustinians on lands presented to them by Hugh de Lacy, Overlord of Meath and surrounding areas.

7

In the 16th century a massive square tower was built alongside the earlier round tower. The latter is no longer standing but the *scar* where it was joined onto the square tower is clearly visible on its northern face.

In the churchyard are two Celtic high crosses – The North Cross and The South Cross. These are believed to date from the 10th century. They are similar to The Great Cross of Monasterboice. Within the church are

some early cross-slabs, a Romanesque pilaster-capital and the base and head of the South Cross. In the aisle are some 16th and 17th century monuments including an effigial tomb of Dr Cusack, Bishop of Meath 1679-88. Also here are two tombs – one covers the remains of Lord Bellew who was killed in action at the Battle of Aughrim 1691 and a mensa-slab is supported by tomb-surrounds bearing the arms of Bellew, Plunkett, Preston and St Lawrence. The east window (bearing the arms of Sir John Bellew and Dame Ismay Nugent beneath it) is a 1587 post-Gothic replacement. The remains of this abbey are joined in the grounds by the now disused St. Kienan's Church of Ireland church which was built in 1816.

Interred in the graveyard are the remains of Catholic, Church of Ireland and Huguenot believers.

The ruins of St Cianan's original stone church, built in 489, are to the northwest of St Mary's Abbey and across the road from it.



The Wayside Cross
The finest Bathe-Dowdall cross in Duleek.

8

Bathe-Dowdall Crosses

These are more pillar than cross, having instead of arms a deep band of stone carved with angles bearing religious emblems.

Duleek Wayside Cross

In the village marketplace is a charming monument erected by Janet Dowdall in 1601 in the memory of her late husband, William Bathe of Athcarne Castle. This is somewhat similar to the Bathe-Dowdall crosses which are seen at the entrance to Annesbrook House and at Whitecross near the entrance to Athcarne. Carved on the west side of the projecting band is a small heart encircled by a ring representing conjugal love.

9 Duleek House

Duleek House was built in the 1700s by Judge Stephen Trotter who was MP for the area at Westminster. He made this his principal residence. It is reputed that window-sills of the house were plundered headstones of monks from previous centuries. A statue of Judge Trotter MP stands in at the Law Society, Blackhall Place, Dublin. The statue which stood in the porch of the Church of Ireland church was removed, for safe keeping, at the time of deconsecration of this church and is the work of Flemish sculptor Peter Scheemakers. The restoration of the statue was commissioned by the Irish Heritage Council.

The Monastic Grange of St Michael's

This grange or manor farm was established by Walter de Lacy as a cell of its mother-house at Llanthony Secunda at Monmouthshire. It acted independently of the Irish civil and religious authorities, giving its allegiance solely to Llanthony Secunda. The Llanthony cartularies give a detailed description of the buildings which occupied the site. All that can now be seen are the Church of St Michael and the high cross.



Athcarne Castle
It is believed that King James II slept here on the night before the Battle of the Boyne.

Athcarne Castle

About a mile upriver from Annesbrook stand the ruins of Athcarne Castle situated on the banks of the Hurley River (in turn a tributary of the River Nanny). In the 1930s most of the land was acquired by the Land

Commission and divided. The castle was retained by James Gernon who regaled locals with tales of the Klondike gold rush. He was the last occupant of the castle which was partially demolished in the 1950s.

There is a magnificent panoramic view of Athcarne Castle and the East-Meath/Louth countryside from a vantage point about 200 yards above Riverstown Cross on the Ardcath road.

Monument to the Croppies

During the 1798 rebellion a number of Wexford insurgents who travelled to Tara were making their way from the skirmish there to join the United Irishmen in Co. Down. While marching from Tara to Drogheda they stopped to rest at The Deens and called to a farmer's house (currently occupied by McGranes), where they were allowed to sleep in a loft in the farmyard. It is alleged that an inquiry from the pursuing yeomen gained a betraying wink from the farmer's wife towards the direction of the shed. The yeomen pushed swords through the wattles and the rebels were discovered and summarily executed. A monument to their memory is erected at The Deens along the road to Athcarne Castle and about two miles from Duleek.

The current occupant of the lands on which the Croppies were both found and hanged stated that the tree on which the Croppies are said to have been hanged fell in a storm a few years ago. Some time shortly afterwards a water-diviner while surveying the locality made the comment, "Blood was spilled here" (he was unaware of the local history).

10 Duleek Commons

The Commons is divided into two distinct areas by a wide pass. The first area of approximately one hundred acres is due north of the village while the second much smaller area is called the East or *Off* Commons. Much of the village of Duleek is situated in the townland of Commons. The land, which is predominantly marshy, is of significant interest because it contains a rich variety of plant and wild-bird species. Local people had traditional rights to graze their livestock and geese.

The Paramadda river, which rises in Thomastown bog, passes through the village and through the North Commons to join the River Nanny at Duleek Bridge just south of the village.

Collier the Robber

Collier the Robber, an alleged highwayman who attained notoriety during the early 19th century, is associated with the Commons. He was a Robin Hood-type character who was born in Bellewstown in 1780 and used the Commons on occasion as a hideout. Folklore has it that he attended a wedding in the area while a substantial sum was on his head. His first steps in crime were when he helped a young woman free her father and three brothers who had been arrested for horse-thieving. From here he progressed to mail coach robberies. He escaped hanging by being transported to Australia. Much folklore has built up around Collier.

11 The Berford Cross

The Berford Cross was erected by William Moore, a wealthy landowner from Downstown, in memory of his wife Thomasina Berford who died on December 17, 1635. It is referred to in Dean Cogan's 19th century *History of the Diocese of Meath* "There is an old Irish cross in the graveyard and another in the town has the following – *Pray for the soul of Thomasina Berford wife unto William Moore of Downstown, who died December 17th 1635.*" The cross stood along the Downstown road until road improvements were being carried out between 1740–1760. It was moved to Duleek churchyard with the intention of being placed over a named grave. However, the caretaker recommended that this request be turned down and the cross was eventually placed at the rear of the Courthouse where it became overgrown with weeds.



Berford Cross
Dating from the 17th century, the cross has an interesting history.

In 1867 it was moved to the west gable of the Catholic church where it remained until 1961 when Fr Cuffe identified it as the cross referred to by Dean Cogan a century earlier. In 1981 it was moved to its present site at the east end of the village of Duleek at Mill Hill. So ends a journey that started 350 years ago and embraces erection, neglect, loss, oblivion and eventual rediscovery.



Bridge of the Maudelynes
The oldest bridge in Duleek

12

The Nanny Bridges

The oldest bridge is the three-arch one south of the modern bridge. This modern bridge was built in 1954 following very severe floods, to replace an earlier one which had been in existence since 1884. The three-arch bridge is mentioned in the statute rolls of 1459 and was called Bridge of the Maudelynes. It probably dates from around 1200 and was renovated in 1587 by the Bathe-Dowdall family. A plaque on the bridge commemorates this event and reads:

THIS BRIDGE WITH THE CAUSIES
WERE REPAIRED AND BUILDED BY
WILLIAM BATH OF ATHCARNE
JUSTICE AND JANET DOWDAL HIS
WIFE IN THE YEAR OF OUR
LORD 1587, WHO SOULES GOD
TAKE TO HOS MERCIE. AMEN.

There are two overflow arches in the causeway, located east of the Maudlin Bridge and forming a third separate bridge.

Boyne Battle Site

It was close to the Nanny Bridge that the last engagement of the Battle of the Boyne 1690 took place. The Jacobites placed their five remaining cannons on the high ground opposite (Baw Hill) and attempted to hold up the Williamite advance as they tried to cross the narrow bridge over the Nanny – the surrounding area was impassable due to the boggy nature of the ground. The Williamites eventually crossed and pursued the Jacobites as far as Naul.

13

Coach House or 'The Buildings'

Mass Rock
The Mass Rock is located at Dorey's, Knockisland at the back of the Baw Hill. This was used during penal times to serve the faithful during a time of persecution. A lookout point is still referred to locally as *The Watching Park*. A member of the Dorey family is still in residence at the same farm.

The house on the Ashbourne-Drogheda road at the end of the causeway at Duleek was originally built as a coach house/post office and dates back to about 1800. It was here that coach-horses were changed on the Dublin-Belfast route. The route came from Ardcath across the causeway to Duleek before going on to Drogheda. The hill coming down from Ardcath to the Coach House is reputed to have been a favourite hold-up point for *Collier the Robber*.

The view of Duleek House from the Coach House across the river is very attractive.

Bathe-Dowdall Cross

Opposite the gates of Annesbrook is the second of the Bathe-Dowdall crosses, erected by Janet Dowdall wife of William Bathe of Athcarne who died on October 25, 1599 and is buried in the old churchyard in Duleek.

Annesbrook

Approximately two miles from Duleek village along the Drogheda/Ashbourne road we come to the lovely old house of Annesbrook, now a private residence. It commands a beautiful view of the River Nanny and the surrounding countryside. An interesting feature is the entrance gate which is set in a stone-built archway – it has the gatekeeper's kitchen to one side and his

bedroom to the other, and is known locally as *The Pockets*.

Annesbrook was honoured by a visit from George IV in 1821. In honour of the King's visit a portico and dining hall were added to the house. However, the King declined to enter the new edifice. In 1842 William M. Thackeray visited the area and is said to have been most impressed by Annesbrook. Just over the fence is the townland of Keenogue, which as the name implies was the birthplace of St Cianan, patron saint of Duleek. He was the first bishop consecrated by St Patrick. St Cianan's Well may still be seen at this location.

Nearby, a Bronze Age burial site was discovered in or about 1930. The site was dated at approximately 1800 BC. Artefacts from here were transferred to the National Museum where they are on display.

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References

Donal Synott, Director
National Botanic Gardens, Dublin
N. Sharkey
IWC (Irish Wildbird Conservancy)
Annals of Duleek, Peter Moss
A History of Duleek, E. O'Boyle

Also in the area

If you have enjoyed this heritage trail and are interested in seeing more in the area, you certainly will not be disappointed. The following heritage attractions are all within easy driving distance of Duleek:

The Hill of Tara

This magical site has been home to gods and goddesses, to druids and warriors, and the High Kings of Ireland. The hill's spectacular landscape is marked by ancient earthworks, mound formations and the ruins of royal enclosures.

Brú na Bóinne

Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth, the three distinct neolithic burial sites collectively referred to as Brú na Bóinne, represent one of Ireland's most intriguing and significant heritage landmarks. Their ancient grand passage tombs provide a mysterious glimpse of the beliefs and rituals of Ireland's neolithic cultures.

Hill of Slane

It was here that St Patrick lit his famous Paschal fire to celebrate the Easter feast and symbolically ignite the flame of Christianity in Ireland. The Hill of Slane also offers a superb view of the Boyne Valley.

Ledwidge Cottage Museum

Known as Meath's poet laureate, Francis Ledwidge was born in Slane in 1887. This cottage commemorates the short and tragic life (Ledwidge died in 1917 in the First World War) of this fine writer.



Duleek

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|----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. Duleek Courthouse | 6. Larrix Street and Kingsgate | 11. The Berford Cross |
| 2. Connell's House | 7. St Mary's Abbey | 12. The Nanny Bridges |
| 3. Parochial House | 8. Duleek Wayside Cross | 13. Coach House or 'The Buildings' |
| 4. The Lime Tree | 9. Duleek House | |
| 5. St Cianan's R.C. Church | 10. Duleek Commons | |