

Fáinne Cnoc Shliabh gCuillinn

Ring of Gullion Heritage Tour



Ring of Gullion
Landscape Partnership



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www.ringofgullion.org

Fáilte go Fáinne Cnoc Shliabh gCuillinn

Welcome to the Ring of Gullion

The Ring of Gullion Heritage Tour follows a route in and around the spectacular volcanic landscape of South Armagh. The tour offers visitors a chance to explore exceptional countryside rich in geology, archaeology, wildlife and folklore. Throughout the tour you will discover ancient monuments, quiet villages and breathtaking views.

South Armagh lies within a region long associated with an ancient frontier that is as old as the earliest records of human habitation in Ireland. It was along these roads and fields, and over these hills and mountains, that Cúchulainn and the Red Branch Knights, the O'Neills and the O'Hanlons roamed, battled and died. This area reflects the mix of cultures from the Neolithic Era to the present day. It is an area which has always represented a frontier: from the ancient Iron Age defences of the Dorsey, through the Anglo-Norman Pale, and latterly to the modern border. It is alive with history, awash in scenic beauty and bursting with culture.

The Ring of Gullion is a unique geological landform - unparalleled elsewhere in Ireland or the UK - and was the first ring dyke in the world to be geologically mapped. The ring of low, rugged hills forms a 'rampart' around the heather-clad Slieve Gullion. Rich semi-wild habitats of heath, bog and woodland contrast with the neatly patterned fields and ladder farms. Slieve Gullion's mysterious reputation arises from its associations with myths and legends and the wider area's rich archaeological heritage.



Ballymacdermot Court Tomb



Craigmore Viaduct

Derrymore House

Caisleán Bagenal, An tIúr Bagenal's Castle, Newry

Rediscovered in 1996 and now a museum and Visitor Centre, Bagenal's Castle survived enveloped in the premises of the former McCann's Bakery on Abbey Way. Nicholas Bagenal built the castle in the environs of the site of the Newry Cistercian Abbey, founded in the twelfth century.

Bagenal, who appears to have come to Ireland after being implicated in a murder, served for a period of time as a mercenary for the O'Neills, before receiving a general pardon in 1543. He entered the service of the English Crown and in 1547 he was appointed Marshall of the Army in Ireland. In 1550 he was given a lease "of the college or house of Newry".

Bagenal's "New Castel" is prominent in the earliest known map of Newry, which depicts the layout of the late sixteenth century town.

An Tarbhealach Craig Mór Craigmore Viaduct

This 18 arch viaduct, opened in 1852, is one of the most impressive railway structures in Ireland. It sweeps across the valley of the Camlough River, carrying the Belfast to Dublin railway line. The highest arch rises to 126 feet, making Craigmore Ireland's highest viaduct.

Craigmore Viaduct was designed by the Scotsman Sir John MacNeill. MacNeill built railways in countries around the world, including Africa and Scandinavia, but here in South Armagh he's well known for the railway bridge which passes over





Ballintemple Viewpoint

the Newry to Camlough road known locally as the Egyptian Arch. The bridge was selected to represent Northern Ireland on the design of the £1 coin issued in 2006.



Teach an Dhoire Mhóir Derrymore House

Now owned by the National Trust, the thatched property was built in the late 1700s by Isaac Corry. Corry was the local Member of Parliament for Newry for 30 years and was also Chancellor of the Exchequer for the old Irish Parliament in Dublin. He built Derrymore House on land left to him by his father. It was described by Sir Charles Coote as 'without exception, the most elegant summer lodge I have ever seen'. The house is set in over 100 acres of beautiful parkland and woodland. This was laid out by John Sutherland, who was a follower of the renowned landscape architect Capability Brown.

It is widely believed that the drawing room of Derrymore House is where the draft terms of the Act of Union were drawn up in 1800. This room is now known as the Treaty Room.

There were in fact two Acts – one for the Parliament of Great Britain and one for the Parliament of Ireland - and these twin Acts united the Kingdom of Great Britain and the Kingdom of Ireland to create the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland.

Not the most popular man in Newry, Isaac Corry had a road built to bypass the town as he preferred to avoid travelling through it on his way to attend Parliament in Dublin. Today, this road is still known as the Chancellor's Road.

An Sruthán Bessbrook

Bessbrook dates from 1845, when the mill in Bessbrook was purchased by the Quaker Richardson family. They built the village as we see it today in order to provide accommodation for the mill workers. The village was a social experiment based on the Quaker philosophy of the 'three Ps': no public house, no pawn shop, and consequently no need for police. The streets, terrace houses and squares of Bessbrook are all made from the

local hard-wearing Bessbrook granite. It's interesting to note that Bessbrook was the inspiration for the later model village built by Cadbury at Bournville near Birmingham.

Bessbrook's links with the linen industry date back to the 1750s, when John Pollock established a bleaching business here. It's believed he may even have given Bessbrook its name – Pollock's wife was called Elizabeth, or Bess, and the Camlough River, or brook, runs through the village.

Linen comes from the flax plant and for around two hundred years flax was a very important cash crop throughout South Armagh. Indeed, the area was particularly well suited to its production. Flax produces two products: linseed oil from the seeds, and linen thread from the fibres of the plant's stalk.

Bessbrook used to have its own hydro-electric tramway, only the second such tramway in the UK and Ireland! It opened in 1885 and was used to transport workers, as well as raw materials and finished goods, between the mill and Newry. It was cleverly designed, because the wheels of the tramway could run on both road and rail, so it wasn't necessary to build a line through Newry. The tramway remained in operation until 1948.

The Bessbrook Spinning Company flourished for many years, with linen business peaking around 1900. Production rose during the Second World War, but trade ceased in 'The Brook' in the early 1970s, from which time the mill became an army base until it was vacated in 2007.



Ballykeel Dolmen



Dolmain an Bhaile Chaoil Ballykeel Dolmen

Dolmens, or portal tombs, are the simplest and perhaps the most spectacular of all the Neolithic tombs. The entrance or portal is between the two upright stones and originally a single chamber stood at one end of a cairn, a great mound of stone and earth.

Portal tombs were built in the Neolithic Era, probably in the centuries around 3500 BC. Without their protective cairns and with their stony frames and massive capstones revealed, local people have called them fanciful names and woven tales of fairies, giants and witches around



Dorsey

the ancient stones. This elegant dolmen, set on the edge of a terrace ringed by low rugged hills, is known locally as the Hag's Chair.

Béal Átha an Airgid agus Na Doirse Silverbridge and the Dorsey

Silverbridge is the meeting point of three townlands: Legmoylin, Carrigans and Carnally. Local folklore connects the name Silver Bridge with the Ulster chieftains, O'Neill and O'Donnell. After escaping from Dublin Castle, the two made their way back to their own people at Glasdrummond. While they were heading back to Tyrone, they met an old man at this river crossing and they gave him a few coins some of which fell into the river and it became known as Silver Bridge.

The Bealach Mor na Feadha (meaning 'the great way of the Fews') passed through here over the ford along the big road from Tara to Armagh. In 1014, Brian Boru's funeral came down this road following the Battle of Clontarf where he was killed; in 1603, Hugh O'Neill took this road after his surrender at Mellifont; and in 1690, King James took this route on his way to do battle at the River Boyne.

The Bealach Mor na Feadha passed through the Dorsey, or 'the Gateways', which dates to around 100 BC. The Dorsey is two roughly parallel massive earth bank and ditch



Creggan Graveyard

ramparts, which run through South Armagh. They are believed to have been a fortified outpost for a kingdom that was based in Emain Macha ('Navan Fort').

The Dorsey may later have been incorporated into a more extensive defensive system known as 'The Black Pig's Dyke'

The purpose of the earth works is obscure, but it seems that the Dorsey may have been as much about controlling access along several key routes as barring it. The Dorsey has a connection with the O'Neills – Hugh O'Neill fortified it extensively during the Nine Years' War.

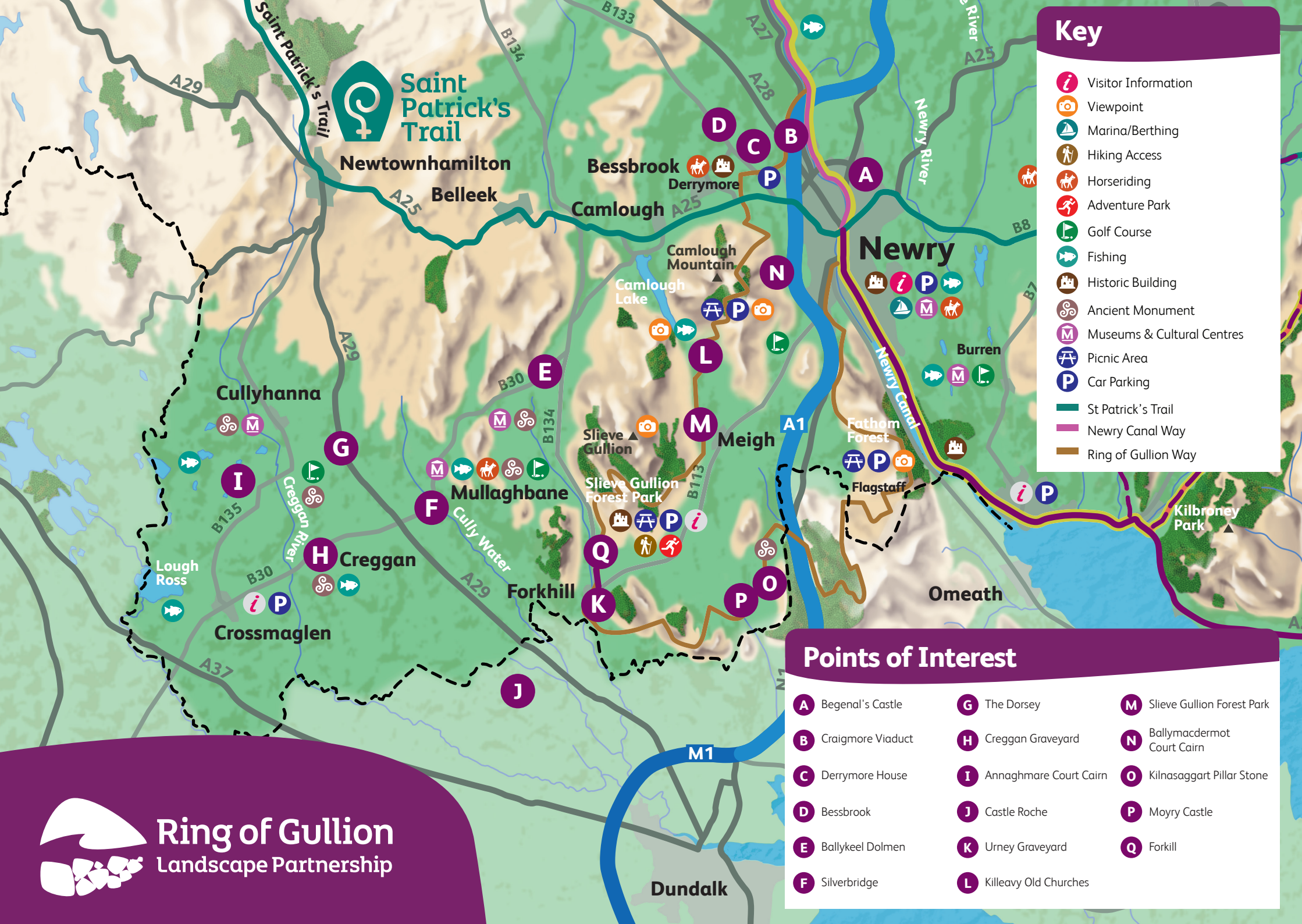


Reilig an Chreagáin Creggan Graveyard

This beautiful church and churchyard is one of the most important and historic properties in Ulster. Creggan

Church was founded by the O'Neills in 1480 and they built their castle a few miles away at Glasdrummond. The O'Neills buried their dead in a vault in front of the altar of the original church; however, in 1758 the present replacement church was built on a different site and so now the vault can be found outside the church.

The graveyard is shared by the main religious groups and it's said the entire history of South Armagh is to be found in Creggan Graveyard. It's the burial place of the last of the South-East Ulster Gaelic poets – Padraig Mac Aliondain, Art McCooey and Séamus Mór MacMurphy. Séamus Mór MacMurphy was a rapparee who was hanged at Armagh Gaol in 1750; in fact, Johnson of the Fews, the High Sheriff of Armagh who had him hanged, is also buried here.



Key

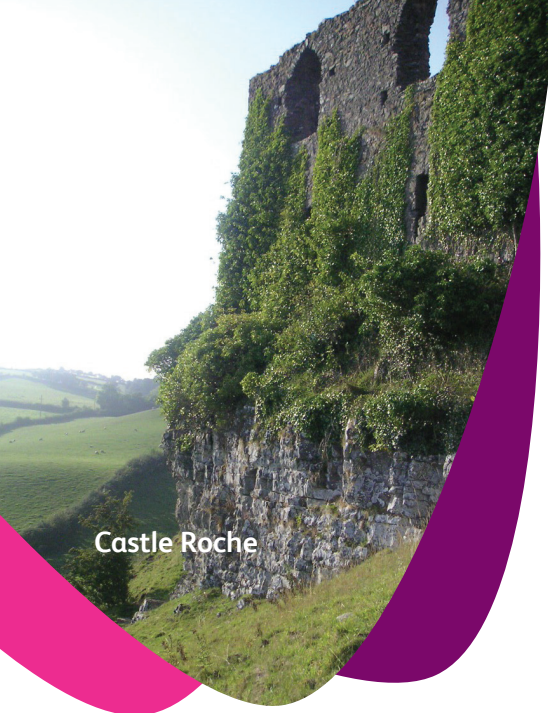
- Visitor Information
- Viewpoint
- Marina/Berthing
- Hiking Access
- Horseriding
- Adventure Park
- Golf Course
- Fishing
- Historic Building
- Ancient Monument
- Museums & Cultural Centres
- Picnic Area
- Car Parking
- St Patrick's Trail
- Newry Canal Way
- Ring of Gullion Way

Points of Interest

A Begenal's Castle	G The Dorsey	M Slieve Gullion Forest Park
B Craigmores Viaduct	H Creggan Graveyard	N Ballymacdermot Court Cairn
C Derrymore House	I Annaghmare Court Cairn	O Kilnasaggart Pillar Stone
D Bessbrook	J Castle Roche	P Moyry Castle
E Ballykeel Dolmen	K Urney Graveyard	Q Forkill
F Silverbridge	L Killeavy Old Churches	

Ring of Gullion

Landscape Partnership



Castle Roche

its type, with many of its features preserved in situ after they were first revealed during excavation in 1963-64.

Although badly disturbed before the excavation, it contained burial deposits, which included at least two cremations and the fragmentary unburnt remains of a child and an adult female. Finds included flint scrapers, a fine javelin head, numerous pieces of pottery and a canine tooth - probably from a bear! Intriguingly, the inner chamber also produced some evidence for Neolithic activity on the outcrop before the tomb was built.

Other noteworthy people buried here are Peadar Ó Doirnín of Forkhill and Séamus Dall Mac Cuarta of Omeath.

It's said that Art McCooey was rather fond of a 'tippie' and on some occasions he was known to spend the night sleeping in the O'Neill vault. It was on such a night that he had a dream in the vault which, the story goes, led to him writing the famous poem *Urchill an Chreagain*.

The church became Church of Ireland during the Reformation, and remains so to this day.

Carn Cúirte Eanach Már Annaghmare Court Cairn

The court tomb at Annaghmare is one the best preserved examples of

Dún Gall Castle Roche

An Anglo-Norman fortress, Castle Roche was built by the de Verdun family in 1236. Tradition has it that when it was complete, Lady Rohesia de Verdun had the architect thrown from one of the windows in the North Tower in order to preserve the secrets of the castle's design. This blocked up window is still known as the Murder Window. The castle was probably completed by her son, John, who died in 1274.

It's one of the most striking Anglo-Norman castles in Ireland, spectacularly positioned on a high limestone cliff on the Louth-Armagh border. It marks the northern limits of the Pale, the part of Ireland that



Forkhill

was directly under the control of the English government.

All the English forces in Ireland were hosted here in 1561, but in 1641 Castle Roche was finally laid to waste by Cromwell and left as an abandoned ruin ever since.

Reilig na hUrnaí Urney Graveyard

Urney, meaning 'prayer', is a very ancient graveyard. It's a most peaceful place and well worth a visit. Urney was only a chapel but it has a very ancient foundation. According to tradition it was established by Saint Patrick, and it bore his name.

It's said that the poet, Peadar Ó Doirnín was buried 'at the north-east wall of Urney Graveyard in the County Louth in the grave with his mother'. It was Peadar Ó Doirnín who together with Séamus Mór McMurphy, organised a rally on top of Slieve

Gullion in 1744, to support 'the king over the water', Bonnie Prince Charlie. In fact Séamus Mór McMurphy actually went to Culloden and got back safely, before he was hanged at Armagh in 1750.

Foirceal Forkhill

Forkhill is from the Irish An Foirceal, meaning 'at the hollow'. Forkhill is a planned village, laid out in the 1760s by Richard Jackson who built a schoolhouse, a church (1767) and the New Bridge. In 1760, Jackson got a patent to hold a fair here; at that time if you held a patent for a fair, the authorities were obliged to build approach roads to it. Thus, from this patent the village of Forkhill grew through the creation of the Longfield Road and the road from Dundalk.





Moyry Castle

The doorway was protected by a gun-loop to one side and by a drop-hole in the parapet above, allowing missiles to be dropped on to attackers.

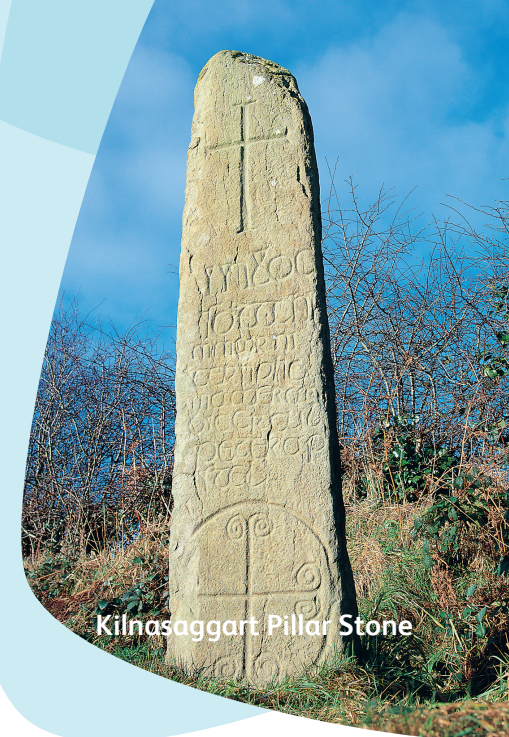
The castle was built by Lord Mountjoy to secure the pass. Mountjoy was Queen Elizabeth's most effective and ruthless general and was sent to Ulster to crush the power of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone. In May and October 1600, Mountjoy's armies advanced north into the pass through bogs, streams and dense woods. On both occasions they returned via Carlingford, the lesser of two evils.

In June 1601, they advanced north again, heading for the River Blackwater and Tyrone. This time Mountjoy cleared the Moyry Pass by cutting the woods and built this fort on the rock to secure the pass. The castle was reputedly finished 'within the month' and immediately garrisoned under the command of Captain Anthony Smith.



Seanchealla Chill Shléibhe Killeavy Old Churches

The important early convent of Killeavy was founded towards the end of the fifth century by St Moninna, also known as Darerca or Blinne. It remained a house of nuns for almost 1000 years - one of only four women's foundations in Ireland to survive as major convents.



Kilnasaggart Pillar Stone

Monastic life continued at Killeavy into the Middle Ages, with the foundation of an Augustinian convent, probably in the late twelfth century. There are frequent references in medieval documents, several of them reflecting increasing tensions between church and lay power. The end of the convent came in 1542 when the last abbess, Alicia O'Hanlon, withdrew with her companions.

The Pattern Day of St. Moninna is 6th July and there is an annual pilgrimage to St Moninna's Well on this day.



Gallán Chill na Sagart Kilnasaggart Pillar Stone

This tall granite pillar, in the Edenappa townland, marks the site of an early cemetery located on one of Ireland's five great roads, the Slighe Mhídhlaíochra. This road ran from near Drogheda in County Louth through the Moyry Pass into west Down and perhaps as far as Dunseverick in north Antrim. Standing more than two metres high, it is believed to be the earliest historically dated inscribed stone in Ireland. A long inscription on the south-east face, between two large crosses, records the dedication of the place by Ternoc, son of Ceran Bic ('the little'), under the patronage of Peter the Apostle. Ternoc's death is recorded in the annals at 714 or 716 and the pillar can therefore be dated to about AD 700.



Caisleán an Mhaighre Moyry Castle

This seventeenth century campaign fort overlooks the Moyry Pass, the valley known as the 'Gap of the North'. It has always been the main direct north-south route in eastern Ireland. In the days of the Fianna legends, the men of Ulster sallied forth through this valley to harry the tribes of Leinster.

The small square tower has unusual rounded corners and numerous gun-loops, from ground-floor level right up to the wall-walk. It is a very basic castle, with no stairs. The living quarters, with fireplaces and windows, must have been reached by ladders. The wall-walk, complete with its exposed latrine, must also have been accessed by a ladder.



Carn Cúirte Bhaile Mhic Dhiarmada Ballymacdermot Court Cairn

This fine court tomb on the south slope of Ballymacdermot Mountain dates from about 3500 BC. It has three separate burial chambers in a gallery which was accessed from the forecourt.

Funeral rites may have been performed in the forecourt before the bones or ashes of the dead were placed inside. When the site was excavated in 1962 a few fragments of cremated bone, probably human, were found together with Neolithic pottery in the forecourt and in the chambers.

In 1816, John Bell of Killeavy Castle reported in The Newry Magazine that he and the local landowner Jonathon Seaver had opened the tomb and found an urn containing pulverised bone. A thoroughly modern encounter took place during the Second World War when the tomb withstood an assault by an American tank which accidentally bumped into it during manoeuvres. Despite these disturbances, Ballymacdermot remains one of the finest, best preserved court tombs in Armagh.

We hope you have enjoyed your tour today.
Experience more of the Ring of Gullion – check out our audio tours opposite.



Clostreoracha um Fháinne Cnoc Shliabh gCuillinn Ring of Gullion Audio Guides



Head to www.ringofgullion.org to hear more about the sites with this icon next to them.

On these tours, you'll discover some of the rich cultural heritage of this region, and experience the sheer beauty of its landscape. They will take you through some well-known points of interest as well as to some more obscure places!

You may decide to stop off and explore all the locations, in which case the tour may take most of a day – it all depends on how long you spend at each location. Or you might even decide to plan your own route around the sites that interest you most. On these tours, you'll see some well-known sights, and others that are less well known, and you'll hear about the rich heritage of the Ring of Gullion and this part of South Armagh.

Visit www.ringofgullion.org or scan the code to visit the download page.



Bailte Fearainn Fháinne Cnoc Shliabh gCuillinn Ring of Gullion Townlands

The townland is a unique feature of the Irish landscape and is one of the most ancient divisions in the country. Townlands predate the Norman invasion of the twelfth century and the source of many of these townland placenames lies in our Gaelic past. The townlands are a historical source that encompass the mythology of Ireland – the Cattle raid of Cooley, Cú Chulainn, Fionn Mac Cumhaill – as well as the early Christian period. They also act as a repository of the Irish language which was spoken widely in Dromintee, Killeavy and Mullaghbane up until the 1920s. There are over 60,000 townlands in Ireland; South Armagh has about 200, and these are grouped together to form parishes. This tour takes you through many townlands of South Armagh – keep an eye out for the townland boundary markers.



Killeavy Old Churches



The Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership is part of the Heritage Lottery Fund's programme to conserve and enhance some of the regions's most treasured landscapes.

For further details about the Ring of Gullion and the locality, please see www.ringofgullion.org or email info@ringofgullion.org

For further information on general touring, accommodation, short breaks and activity breaks please contact one of the following Visitor Information Centres or visit our website.

Newry Visitor Information Centre

Bagenal's Castle
Castle Street, Newry BT34 2BY
T: 028 3031 3170

Newcastle Visitor Information Centre

10-14 Central Promenade
Newcastle BT33 0AA
T: 028 4372 2222

Kilkeel Visitor Information Centre

Nautilus Centre, Rooney Road
Kilkeel BT34 4AG
T: 028 4176 2525

Banbridge Visitor Information Centre

The Old Town Hall, 1 Scarva Street
Banbridge BT32 3DA
T: 028 4062 0232

Visitor Information Point

Crossmaglen Community Centre
T: 028 3086 1949

Visitor Information Point

Slieve Gullion Courtyard
T: 028 3084 8109

Email: info@visitmournemountains.co.uk or visit www.visitmournemountains.co.uk

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