

# The Walled Town Crier



An Irish Walled Towns Network  
bi-monthly magazine.

The IWTN is funded through



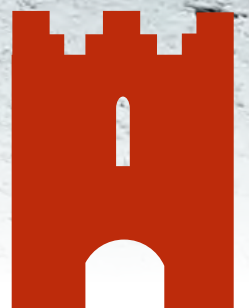
An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council

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Christmas decorations and  
Loughrea Courthouse under a  
recent snowfall. Image: Loughrea  
Community Lights via [Facebook](#).



# Project Manager's Message

## **Hello everyone and welcome to the December 2024 edition of the Walled Town Crier.**

As the year winds to a close, I'd like to thank all of our network members for your many and various contributions to the IWTN over 2024. Whether it's delivering on grant-aided conservation and interpretation projects, organising festivals, hosting IWTN events, contributing to the e-zine or the numerous other ways that you keep the network running – thank you.

A particular note of thanks to our Chair, and our Management Committee, for giving so generously of their time and expertise over the course of the year.

2025 will mark the 20th anniversary of the founding of the network – an achievement very much to be celebrated. In the meantime, I'd like to wish you all a pleasant and relaxing Christmas break. I look forward to us working together again in the new year.

Warmest Regards,

**Eimear**

**Eimear O'Connell, IWTN Project Manager**



2024 saw some really excellent festivals and events in member towns. Among these was the welcome return of Carlingford Medieval Festival. Image: Carlingford Lough Heritage Trust.



# Getting to Know Loughrea



Loughrea is unusual among Irish walled towns in retaining a town moat. A tour group is seen here at a section of moat on The Walks as part of Loughrea Medieval Festival 2023. Image: Hany Marzouk.

**One of three IWTN towns in County Galway, Loughrea's lakeside location makes it unique among our network members. Marie Mannion, Galway County Heritage Officer, has kindly put together the following text so that we can all get to know Loughrea a little better.**

## **Where is Loughrea?**

The town of Loughrea lies in the parish of Loughrea and the diocese of Clonfert in the county of Galway. It is situated on relatively low ground on the northern shores of the lake from which it derives its name, *Locha Riach* (Lough Rea), meaning the Grey Lake.

## **Loughrea 'The Gateway to Connacht'**

Loughrea was already 'on the map' or well inhabited with its lake dwellings, hillforts and enclosures by the time the Anglo-Normans arrived in Connacht. Establishing Loughrea as 'The Centre, or gateway of Connacht' was a statement of dominance and influence over the native people. Loughrea town was located centrally within the Anglo-Norman Cantre (later to become the Barony) of Loughrea, which corresponded to the early medieval Gaelic kingdom of Máenmag, a sub- kingdom of Uí Maine. Loughrea was to become one of Richard De Burgh's principal demesne cantreds and Loughrea town the chief borough, or *Caput Baroniae*, of the lordship of Connacht.





Map of Loughrea, showing sites of heritage interest.

## The Anglo-Norman Town

Loughrea was founded as a medieval Anglo-Norman town in the thirteenth century by Richard De Burgh. Through time it has lost many elements of its medieval fabric, but close examination will pay the observer well. It has one of the last working moats in Ireland, one of its original gate towers, a Carmelite abbey, and still retains identifiable elements of its medieval street pattern and the shadows of its burgage plots.

It also has a medieval church outside the town – St. Brigid's, Garrybreeda - and a field to the west of the town known as Laurencesfield, a site that is thought to represent the location of a former leper hospital. It is missing elements such as its castle, parish church, town walls, two of its gates, market cross and similar other features associated with its past.



Dunkellin Street, Loughrea.  
Image: [Galway County Heritage Office](#).





Carmelite Abbey, Loughrea. Image: Liam Mannix/IWTN.



St. Brigid's Church and Graveyard, Garrybreeda. Image: Marie Mannion/Larry Morgan.

## Primary and Secondary Sources

However, an examination of the various primary and secondary sources allows us to piece together a picture of a vibrant and functioning medieval town.

For example, the Inquisition Post Mortem held in Athenry following the murder of William DeBurgh, the Red Earl of Ulster, in 1333 provides researchers with critical material that allows them to gain an insight into Loughrea in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. It also provides information on its associated manors and their tenants and enumerates the various rentals.

A 1574 account noted in the Calendar of Carew Manuscripts states that Loughrea 'town is well ditched and trenched and fair walls begun but not finished, having three fair strong gates, made like three castles, the streets well divided and cut, and for the most part built within the walls with houses of stone work, now partly destroyed and ruined'.

This passage goes on to say that 'the compass is great and it is a very convenient place for a garrison to lie. It hath been within this 30 years a good market town but now there is none'. It also informs us that it was ruled by a portreeve since its foundation.

A later entry in the Calendar of State Paper for Ireland dated 1611 informs us that Loughrea was 'anciently a walled town and corporation'.

## Cartographic Sources

Cartographic evidence in the form of a number of old maps provides other useful information. For example, a map survives from 1657 showing the layout of the town. Cuddehy's map dated to 1793 is of great interest as it also contains a list of the town's tenants at that time. The first edition Ordnance Survey map of c.1840 is very informative as it notes the positions of the gates and gives the names of streets and other elements. It also illustrates the lines of burgage plots in the modern property boundaries.



Fifteenth-century Lattimer Gate, Loughrea. Image: Galway County Heritage Office.





Loughrea's lakeside Fair Green makes a fantastic location for the town's regular medieval festival. Image: Liam Mannix/IWTN.

## Loughrea Medieval Festival Committee

Loughrea Medieval Festival Committee was established in 2014. Its founder members were Cllr Michael Maher, Chairperson, Michelle Mitchell, Secretary, Colman Shaughnessy, Treasurer and Joe Loughnane, PRO. In addition to the Medieval Festival, over the past ten years the committee have undertaken a large number of projects and events to highlight the importance of Loughrea as a medieval town. The following is a flavour of those projects:



### Medieval Loughrea Memory Mapping project

This bi-lingual Memory Mapping Project was created by students from Gaelscoil Riabhach, Baile Locha Riach, and assisted by archaeologist Dr Christy Cuniffe, artist Teresa Ward and Garry Kelly, GK Media. [View online.](#)



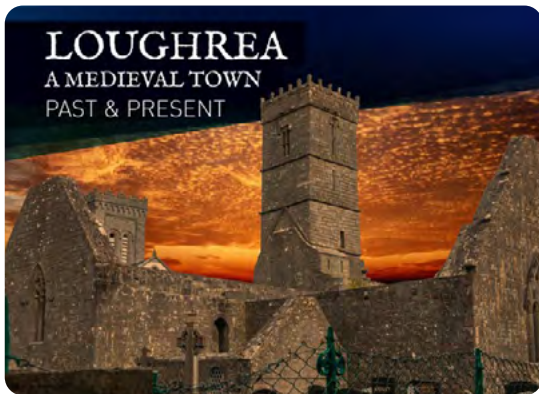
### Drawn Together ~The Loughrea Zibaldone

This project involved seven sketchers, 2 from Hungary, 2 from Spain and 3 from Ireland drawing together around the medieval town of Loughrea. The idea of the Loughrea Zibaldone was that this notebook would contain drawings, text, poetry, notes and stories captured by the sketchers over the course of the weekend. The legacy of this work, the Loughrea Zibaldone is available for all to see in Loughrea Library. [Read more.](#)



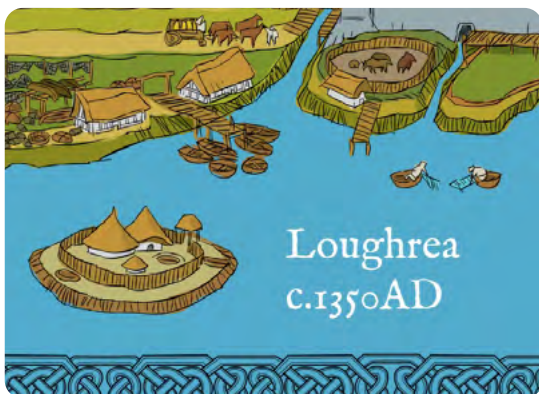
### Loughrea Heritage Trail

A heritage trail for the town was developed with the support of the Irish Walled Towns Network, and is available both online and in printed form. [View online here.](#)



### Loughrea- Past and Present

This publication outlines the rich medieval heritage of Loughrea town. [Read online here.](#)



### Bi-lingual Children's Activity Book

A bi-lingual children's activity book has also been developed, for use by schools and the library service. [Read online here.](#)



### Videos and podcasts

Videos and podcasts relating to various aspects of Loughrea's medieval past, including

- Windows of the Carmelite Abbey and St Brendan's Cathedral, Loughrea
- The Deerpark
- The Walks
- St Mary's Carmelite Abbey
- Clonfert Diocesan Museum
- St Bridget's Shoe
- Walking tour of Loughrea

can be found on the Galway County Heritage Office [YouTube channel.](#)

*Text supplied by Marie Mannion and edited for inclusion in this e-zine by the IWTN Project Manger. Any errors or omissions PM's own. Images supplied by Marie Mannion, Larry Morgan, Hany Marzouk.*



# Festive Events in Member Towns

The Port of Waterford Eye on Waterford's city quays as part of Winterval 2024. Image: Winterval.ie



**Thoughtful events programming is a great way of generating footfall and community engagement in our town centres at a time when so much of the traditional Christmas shop has moved online. Our IWTN member towns have some fantastic festive events planned**

We couldn't but start with Waterford – European City of Christmas 2024. Winterval, the city's annual Christmas festival, is now in its 12th year and includes everything from Waterford on Ice to a light show, craft workshops, funfair, music and theatre. This year, the city will host the Brno-Waterford Gateway – a digital portal featuring a livestreamed feed between Waterford and the city of Brno, in the Czech Republic.

[www.winterval.ie](http://www.winterval.ie)





In **Kilkenny**, Yulefest is an annual festival that runs from late November until Christmas Eve. This year's festival features music, street entertainment, fireworks and much more – including the much-loved Christmas Tree Festival in St. Canice's Cathedral.

[yulefestkilkenny.ie](http://yulefestkilkenny.ie)



There's also a full programme of events in **Limerick**, with ice skating, circus performances, street shows, Santa visits and pantos all featuring.

[www.limerick.ie/christmas](http://www.limerick.ie/christmas)

As well as these bigger festivals and events there are a host of smaller local events taking place in towns and villages around the network. Some of these will have already taken place by the time the e-zine is issued, and in those cases we hope the hardworking organisers are already taking a well-earned Christmas break!



In **Youghal**, Cork County Council are running two Christmas Markets at Barry's Lane on December 7th & 14th, as well as a shop local campaign.

[LivingYoughal](http://LivingYoughal)

**Athlone** Christmas Market runs from December 12th to 15th at Civic Square.

[Athlone Christmas Market](#)



In **Kilmallock**, a Christmas Craft Market took place at Coláiste Iósaeif on December 6th. And the Friar's Gate Theatre has a full programme of Christmas events, including a trad Christmas concert with Ballyhoura Comhaltas and

special guest seanchaí Paddy McAuliffe.

[Friar's Gate Theatre](#)

**Derry** Christmas is a full programme of festive events in Derry city and across the wider Derry-Strabane area.

[Derry Christmas](#)



Last but not least, RTÉ will broadcast a special Christmas Eve concert from beautiful St. Brigid's Cathedral in the heart of Kildare town. Featuring the RTÉ concert orchestra, and a host of special guests, the concert will air on

RTÉ One, RTÉ Lyric FM and the RTÉ Player at 8:40pm on December 24th.

[Christmas in Kildare](#)



# News and Updates



## IWTN Conservation/Capital Grants 2025

The Irish Walled Towns Network Conservation/Capital Works Grants Scheme 2025 is currently open for applications, closing on 14 February 2025. Full details are available [here](#).

## IWTN Seminar: New Irish Heritage Legislation

An IWTN seminar took place at the Custom House, Dublin on 9th December. Sean Kirwan, National Monuments Service, gave an introduction to the Historic and Archaeological Heritage & Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023 and Nessa Roche and Mona Hallinan, Built Heritage Service, outlined key details of the new Planning and Development Act 2024. Many thanks to all who attended and contributed to the discussion.



# heritact



## HeritACT

Members may be interested in learning more about HeritACT, a European-funded initiative dedicated to revitalising cultural heritage through participatory processes and community engagement. The project is currently running a pilot project in Ballina, Co. Mayo – along with two others in Milan and Elfesina (Greece). Find out more [here](#).



## New Interpretation Plan for Fore, Co. Westmeath

A new interpretation plan for Fore was funded under the IWTN Events & Interpretation Grants Scheme in 2024. Read it online [here](#).



Prepared by Albarta Heritage for Westmeath County Council,  
September 2024

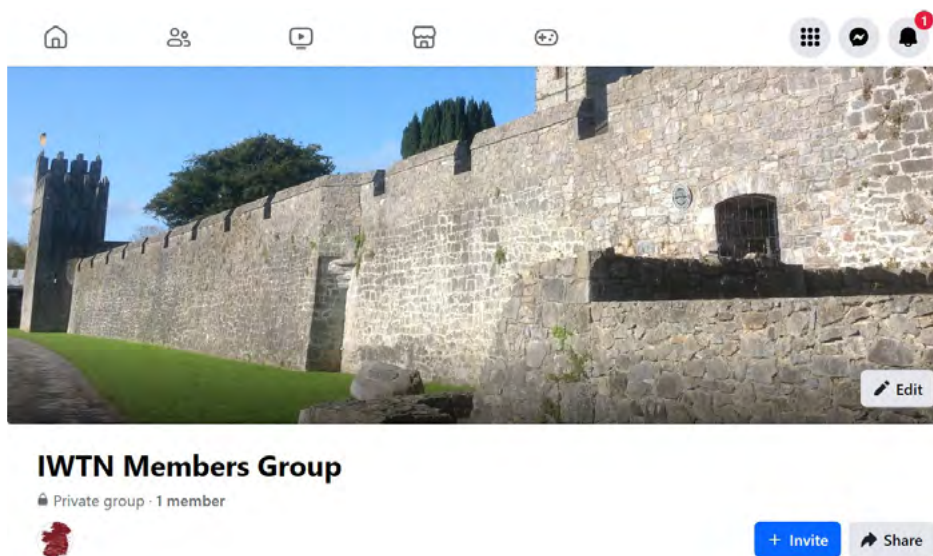
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## Red Book of Ossory

For visitors to Kilkenny: the fourteenth-century Red Book of Ossory is currently on display at [St. Canice's Cathedral](#) in the town. Written by Bishop Ledrede, the book contains an account of the events leading up to the 1324 witch trials (as well as the first known recorded recipe for whiskey!). It is on loan to St. Canice's Cathedral from the RCB Library.



## Members Facebook Group

An IWTN Members Facebook Group has now been set up and can be found [here](#). This is open to IWTN members only and is intended to make sharing social media content easier, and to function as a forum for the exchange of links and ideas that might be of interest.

## Social Media

Thanks to everyone as always for sending on social media content. Please continue to use the hashtag **#IWTN** on all network-related posts and to tag the relevant Heritage Council account:



[@HeritageHubIRE](#)



[TheHeritageCouncil](#)



[@theheritagecouncil](#)





The Lú Festival of Light took place in Drogheda in November. The programme featured a series of projected light shows on historic landmarks in the town – including St. Laurence's Gate. Image: Lú Festival of Light, Drogheda via [Facebook](#).

### Contact Us:

Please do get in touch at [iwtn@heritagecouncil.ie](mailto:iwtn@heritagecouncil.ie) if you would like us to promote news or projects happening in your walled town over the coming months.

[www.irishwalledtownsnetwork.ie](http://www.irishwalledtownsnetwork.ie)



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The IWTN is funded by the Heritage Council and delivered in partnership with Local Authorities and community groups.

