

# WICKLOW TOWN

## *Heritage Trail*



*Take a walk through Wicklow's past*

# Welcome to Wicklow Town

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The site which Wicklow Town now stands has been a settlement for thousands of years because of its ideal location and the abundance of food both in the sea and on the land.

Wicklow's Heritage Trail covers our town's history from the arrival of St. Patrick and his monks at Travilahawk beach in 432 until the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922.

You are welcome to join a Free Guided Group Walk outside the Failte Ireland Office in Fitzwilliam Square each Saturday morning at 11am from Easter Saturday until the last Saturday in September.

The past 1,500 years has seen the development of Wicklow from a tiny settlement in Christian times to the unique and historical town we have today with its beautiful, picturesque 19th century harbour. Find out about the earliest settlement of Inbhear Dee to the coming of Christianity with the settlements change of name to Cill Mhantain (The Church of Manntan) and ultimately, the arrival and settle here of the Vikings with the result that the town became known as Wicklow.

The influence of the Normans in the late 12th century, with the construction of the Black Castle, played a large part in the town's history during the middle ages. The constant conflict between the Anglo-Normans and the

native Wicklow clans, the O'Byrne's and the O'Toole's, led to the destruction of the castle in 1645. Following the Penal Laws, Wicklow Gaol was constructed (1702 - '10) and was a busy overcrowded place in the aftermath of the 1798 Rebellion and the Great Famine (1845 - '50).

The 19th century saw a huge growth in the development of the town we have today. During this time Wucklow's most famous son, Captain Robert Halpin, became famous worldwide for his part in laying the Trans-Atlantic telegraph cable in 1866.

The early part of the 20th century saw Ireland win its fight for political independence.

Today Wicklow Town welcomes all our visitors, with the promise that you will enjoy spending a number of hours rambling through our narrow streets, observing our historic sites and appreciating the beauty of our coastline.

We hope you will enjoy the friendliness of our people and visit our family-owned, award winning shops, hospitable cafes, restaurants and pubs as you follow Wicklow's Heritage Trail.

*John Finlay*

Chairperson  
Wicklow Historical Society

The Free Guided Wicklow Town Heritage Trail commences from outside the Tourist Office in Fitzwilliam Square at 11am each Saturday Morning from Easter Saturday to the last Saturday in September.

*Please note the QR Codes on the back page of this brochure and on each of our seven Storyboards.*

Visit [www.wicklowtown.ie](http://www.wicklowtown.ie) where you can download full details to conduct a self-guided Tour

*Proceed down Bridge Street to your first stop.*

## Stop 1

### **The Bridge Tavern – Birthplace of Robert Halpin.**

The Bridge Tavern was established in 1759, where the Stone Bridge (1691) crosses the River Vartry/Leitrim. During the 19th Century, the Bridge Tavern was known as Halpin's Bridge Hotel, owned and run by James Halpin and his wife Anne. Robert Halpin was born in 1836, the youngest of 13 children, two of whom died at birth and another in early childhood. Robert grew up listening to the sailor's stories and followed in the footsteps of his older brothers, when he went to sea in 1847, at the age of 11. His first few years at sea were traumatic - both of his parents died while he was away from home. He overcame these and other traumatic experiences and in 1857, at the age of 21 he passed the necessary examinations to qualify as a Ship's Captain.

### **Batchelor's Walk (Stone Bridge)**

See storyboard telling the story of Captain Robert Halpin and the laying of the first Trans-Atlantic cable – which was carried aboard the former luxury liner “The Great Eastern”. Because of its size, “The Great Eastern” was the ideal ship to carry the enormous spools of telegraphic cables necessary to traverse the Atlantic Ocean.

View video using the QR Code on the back panel. Nearby, see Leitrim Lodge – Halpin, his wife Jessie and their daughters lived here for almost 4 years (1876-1880), while Tinakilly House was under construction. Tinakilly House, his final home in nearby Rathnew, is now a very well-known prestigious Country House Hotel.

*Proceed across the stone bridge and turn left to your next stop.*

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## Stop 2

### **Halpin's Old Schoolhouse**

Built in 1836 this impressive building at Leitrim Place housed a private school, and it was here that Robert Halpin received his early education. How much interest he showed in formal education is difficult to gauge but throughout his life he was always keen to extend his knowledge of the world about him.

*Walk towards the Footbridge and cross the river to your next stop.*

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## Stop 3

### **Parnell Bridge**

This pedestrian bridge was constructed in 1947 and was named after Charles Stewart Parnell, Wicklow's most famous statesman who in the late 19th century became known as 'The Uncrowned King of Ireland'. Downriver is a beautiful arched stone bridge built in the early 1690s, which was later widened in the mid-19th century to carry increased port traffic across the Vartry/Leitrim River. From Parnell Bridge, walk 50 yards and turn right to go uphill to your next stop.

## Stop 4

### **Church of Ireland - Burial Place of Robert Halpin**

On January 20th, 1894, Wicklow mourned the loss of its most famous and loyal son with the passing of Robert Charles Halpin. Flags were flown at half-mast. His grave in the cemetery is marked by a tall Celtic Cross.

The main body of the church was built in 1700. The original entrance was through the graveyard until the Clock/Bell Tower was added at the bequest of the Eaton Family in 1777. Re-roofed in 1912, a chancel was added with stained glass windows in the early years of the 20th century.

*Follow route down Church Hill and turn right towards the Abbey Street Car Park to observe the colourful murals celebrating various periods of history in Wicklow Town. Leave Abbey Street Car Park at the top and turn right to go to your next stop.*

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## Stop 5

### **Ruins of the Franciscan Abbey**

See storyboard telling its history and the significance of this site. View video using the QR Code on the back panel.

*Exit this stop, turn left and immediately right to go uphill to your next stop.*

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## Stop 6

### **St. Patrick's Church, Wicklow Town**

See storyboard telling the history of its construction and its historical context. View video using the QR Code on the back panel.

*Walk back down the hill onto Abbey Street and turn right to visit your next stop*

## Stop 7

### **The Halpin Memorial, Fitzwilliam Square**

On October 23rd 1897, in recognition of his contribution to the world of telegraphy, a granite obelisk was unveiled in his memory at Fitzwilliam Square with great pomp and ceremony. The monument stands proudly today on land donated by his friend Earl Fitzwilliam as a lasting reminder to Wicklow town's most famous son, Robert Charles Halpin.

*Continue on Main Street for 100 yards and turn right at Morton's Lane.*

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## Stop 8

### **Quaker House on Bayview Road**

The Quakers made a very positive contribution to life in Wicklow in the early 19th Century and especially during the Great Famine by establishing soup kitchens and Famine relief works.

*Continue uphill onto Hillside Road to your next stop.*

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## Stop 9

### **Melancholy Lane**

The memorial erected here commemorates a massacre which took place in 1641, under the command of Sir Charles Coote, following an attack on The Black Castle by the O'Byrne Clan. On hearing of Coote's approach, the O'Byrnes retreated to the safety of their heartland in the Wicklow Mountains to continue their guerrilla campaign. The local inhabitants, led by Parish Priest Fr. O'Byrne, fled to the church on the hill, seeking sanctuary. Coote ordered his soldiers to set fire to the mud-walled thatched church as a reprisal for the attack on the castle and massacred

over 300 townspeople, mainly women and children, as they attempted to escape the inferno. The laneway leading from the church became known as Melancholy Lane (lane of great sadness) on account of the atrocity. The hill overlooking the town became known as Ballyguile, (Baile na nGol- Town of Weeping) to commemorate this event when over one third of Wicklow's inhabitants, including Fr. O'Byrne, died that fateful day.

*Turn down Convent Road to visit your next stop.*

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### Stop 10

#### **Barrow (Barrack) Green**

See storyboard telling its history & the significance of this site. View video using the QR Code on the back panel here.

*Walk towards the Market Square and on your right, visit your next stop.*

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### Stop 11

#### **Wicklow Gaol**

Construction of this Gaol began in 1702 following the passing of the Penal Laws. This prison held many historic inmates during the 1798 rebellion.

In the War of Independence, the Gaol was headquarters for the Lancashire and Cheshire regiments. The final prisoners to be held there were Republican prisoners captured during the Irish Civil War including Erskine Childers who was executed soon afterwards. It was finally closed in 1923.



Today, Wicklow Gaol is the town's main tourist attraction, with over 60,000 visitors coming annually to visit this unique attraction.

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## Stop 12

### **1798 Monument at Market Square**

See storyboard telling the history of the rebellion in 1798 together with the execution of Billy Byrne. View video using the QR Code on the back panel.

### **The Town Hall**

This is one of the oldest buildings in Wicklow and was known originally as Market House. Following the granting of the town's first charter on 30th March 1613 and second charter in 1688, records show that this building housed a free school in the early 1690s. As the town grew in importance, Council meetings were held in the Town Hall.

In the early years of the 20th century Wicklow was governed by the elected Urban Council who looked after the day to day running of the town. The building was also the site for the first electricity utility company in the town. Quarterly and Christmas Markets became a tradition in this location now known as the Market Square.

### **Quarantine Hill**

View visual image of "Prisoner Stocks" outlining the history of this location

The part of the hill nearest to the Town Hall was, in olden times, referred to as Correction Hill. The reason for the name was that the town's punishment stocks were situated there. The area of the hill closest to Castle Street was known as Quarantine Hill because it was here

that Sailors believed to be suffering from fever were quarantined to protect the local population from sometimes deadly imported diseases.

*Depart Quarantine Hill onto the South Quay and turn right walking towards the East Pier.*

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### Stop 13

#### **The Capstan – The Old Coastguard Cottage - Wicklow Harbour**

In 1880, the construction of the East (Old) Pier commenced. On completion in 1884 it was the largest concrete construction in Europe at this time. Shortly afterwards (1886) the Packet Pier was constructed allowing the loading and unloading of cargo safely in the port. The harbour was completed with the construction of the New (North) Pier between 1906 and 1909 resulting in the beautiful harbour we have today.

Shortly after the completion of the East Pier, the R.N.L.I. (Lifeboat) relocated their boathouse to the shelter of the pier. Extended over the years, this beautiful structure stands proudly in recognition of the service of so many volunteers over the last 160 years.

In recent times, local postman Pat Davis has carried out much-appreciated artwork on the East Pier depicting the shipping history of the harbour. Pat constantly updates and revitalises his paintings adding much colour to our beautiful harbour.

*Depart Wicklow Harbour and climb the footsteps to your next stop.*

## Stop 14

### **The Black Castle**

See storyboard telling of its origins, its rich history & the significance of this location. View video using the QR Code on the panel here.

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## Stop 15

### **Cannons Overlooking Harbour**

These huge guns, which date from the latter part of the 19th century, were originally mounted on gun carriages at the Murrough and the Black Castle area. However, they were never fired in anger and stood along the coast as protection against a possible French invasion.

Nearby, within view, is the famous ruins of the Black Castle and the nearby Travelahawk beach.

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## Stop 16

### **Travelahawk Beach**

See storyboard telling the story of St Patrick's arrival in Ireland on this beach in 432. View video using the QR Code on the back panel.

*Walk towards Castle Street, joining the Main Road within view of the rear of Wicklow Gaol.*

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## Stop 17

### **Orchard Park Peace Garden**

This recently erected memorial, situated outside the walls of the Wicklow Gaol, commemorates the brave Wicklow men and women who gave their lives in the fight for Irish freedom, in World War 1 and World War 2 and on UN Peace Keeping missions overseas. The carved granite

stone depicts a Celtic Cross and the rising sun casts its light through the cross onto the Gaol wall signifying a bright future for all without violence.

*Walk from here into Market Square and continue on the Main Street to your next stop - opposite Wicklow Library.*

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## Stop 18

### **The Custom & Excise Building**

The Custom and Excise building which stands on the corner of New Street and The Mall is the oldest building in the town presently occupied. It predates the Town Hall,

Wicklow Gaol and the Courthouse and was constructed in the early 17th century. The basement was even used as a jail in Penal times before the construction of Wicklow Gaol in the early 18th century.

*Walk to the Lower Mall towards your final stop*

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## Stop 19

### **Salt-house Lane**

The Salt-house Lane which joins the Lower Mall to the South Quay gained its name from the small stone house which stood for many years at the elbow in the lane and which was used by the fishermen who salted and stored their catch there.

### **The Doctors Steps**

Originally constructed as a short-cut for the dockers to gain access to the South Quay. Due to the almost daily use of the steps by Doctor George Halpin (brother of Robert) the

name of the steps changed locally from the Docker's to the Doctor's Steps. George spent practically all his spare time on board his boat which was moored nearby in the Vartry estuary. When a patient arrived at his surgery based on Main Street his wife raised a flag on a pole at the rear of his surgery which informed the doctor that his presence was required.

## The Old Post Office

This distinctive building with circular windows on the third floor features a bust of Rowland Hill over the door. In 1840 Mr. Hill designed the first stamp, the Penny Black.

For more information on what to see and do in Wicklow Town we recommend that you visit the following websites:

[www.wicklowntown.ie](http://www.wicklowntown.ie)  
and [www.visitwicklow.ie](http://www.visitwicklow.ie)

Wicklow Town is the administrative capital of County Wicklow.

We thank you for visiting our Town. We really hope that you enjoyed your time here and that you will return to visit us in the near future.

The Wicklow Town Heritage Trail is an initiative of

The logo for the Wicklow Town Team features a stylized white wave symbol to the left of the word "WICKLOW" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. Below "WICKLOW" is the text "TOWN TEAM" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

WICKLOW  
TOWN TEAM



4

LEITRIM RIVER

UPPER STRAND STREET

WEST PIER

3

2

LEITRIM PL.

CHURCH

WENTWORTH PLACE

BACHELOR'S WALK  
CHURCH ST.

1

DOCTORS STEPS

5

ABBEY ST.

7

BRIDGE ST.

MAIN STREET

18

19

MARKET SQUARE

ST. PATRICK'S ROAD

6

FITZWILLIAM ROAD

MORTONS LANE

COATES LANE

12

ST. MANTAN'S ROAD

HILLSIDE ROAD

8

NEW STREET

HIGH ST.

10

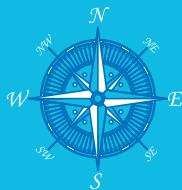
KILMANTIN HILL

# The Wicklow Town Heritage Trail



WICKLOW  
HARBOUR

EAST PIER



13

14

15

16

CASTLE STREET

QUARANTINE HILL

11

9

17

SUMMER HILL

DUNBUR ROAD

## QR Codes to view videos



Stop 1 - Bachelor's Walk



Stop 5 - Abbey Grounds



Stop 6 - St. Patrick's Church



Stop 10 - Barrow Green



Stop 12 - Market Square



Stop 14 - The Black Castle



Stop 16 - Travalahawk Beach



The European Agricultural Fund  
for Rural Development:  
Europe investing in rural areas



Rialtas  
na hÉireann  
Government  
of Ireland

Tionscadal Éireann  
Project Ireland  
2040

