

# Step into Limavady's Heritage



Limavady  
Heritage Trail



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Rich in natural beauty and steeped in history and legend, Limavady Borough is a fascinating place to explore.

This booklet will introduce you to some of the highlights of our diverse heritage; while other booklets in the same series will help you explore the area in more detail. From Stone Age monuments to World War II, there is something to capture everyone's imagination.



Sampson's Tower



Limavady Railway Station



St Matthew's Graveyard, Drumsurn



Bovevagh Church



The local landscape is dotted with the remains of Neolithic megaliths - huge stone monuments built 6000 years ago as burial grounds, ritual sites and possibly territorial markers.

Early Christian communities built ring forts or raths - large circular earth works - which today are associated with local superstitions and legends. A number of monastic centres were established here during this period, some associated with St Patrick. In the 6th century St Colmcille travelled here from Iona to take part in the historic Convention of Drumceatt. Ireland's most impressive example of Celtic gold, thought to be a ritual offering to the sea god Manannán Mac Lir, was uncovered in 1896 at Broighter.



King's Fort

Dungiven Priory was founded by the Augustinians in the late 12th century and contains the magnificent tomb of Cooley-na-Gall, an O'Cahan chieftain. The O'Cahan clan controlled most of the area until the 17th century, when the Plantation of Ireland began, led by The Honourable the Irish Society and their agent Sir Thomas Phillips.

The name Limavady comes from the Irish *leim an mhadaidh*, meaning 'the dog leap', referring to the legend of an O'Cahan chieftain's dog leaping over the River Roe to warn of an enemy attack. Some of the impressive estate houses built in this period by the new landowners still survive.



Drumcovitt House



Carnanbane Tomb



St Aidan's Church



St Aidan's Church



Dungiven Priory



The baseline for the Irish Ordnance Survey, the world's first large-scale mapping of an entire country, was laid out along the eastern shore of Lough Foyle in 1831. During the 19th century the River Roe became a major centre for the linen industry – the Roe Valley Country Park in particular features the remains of a number of mills, bleach greens and watch towers.

The River Roe also powered Northern Ireland's only surviving hydro-electric power stations, built by JE Ritter in 1896. A 19th century Martello tower still guards the Lough at Magilligan Point, built to protect against the threat of a Napoleonic invasion. More recent threats of attack during World War II saw airfields built at Ballykelly and Aghanloo to protect the Atlantic convoys bringing essential supplies from America to Britain.



Carrick Mills

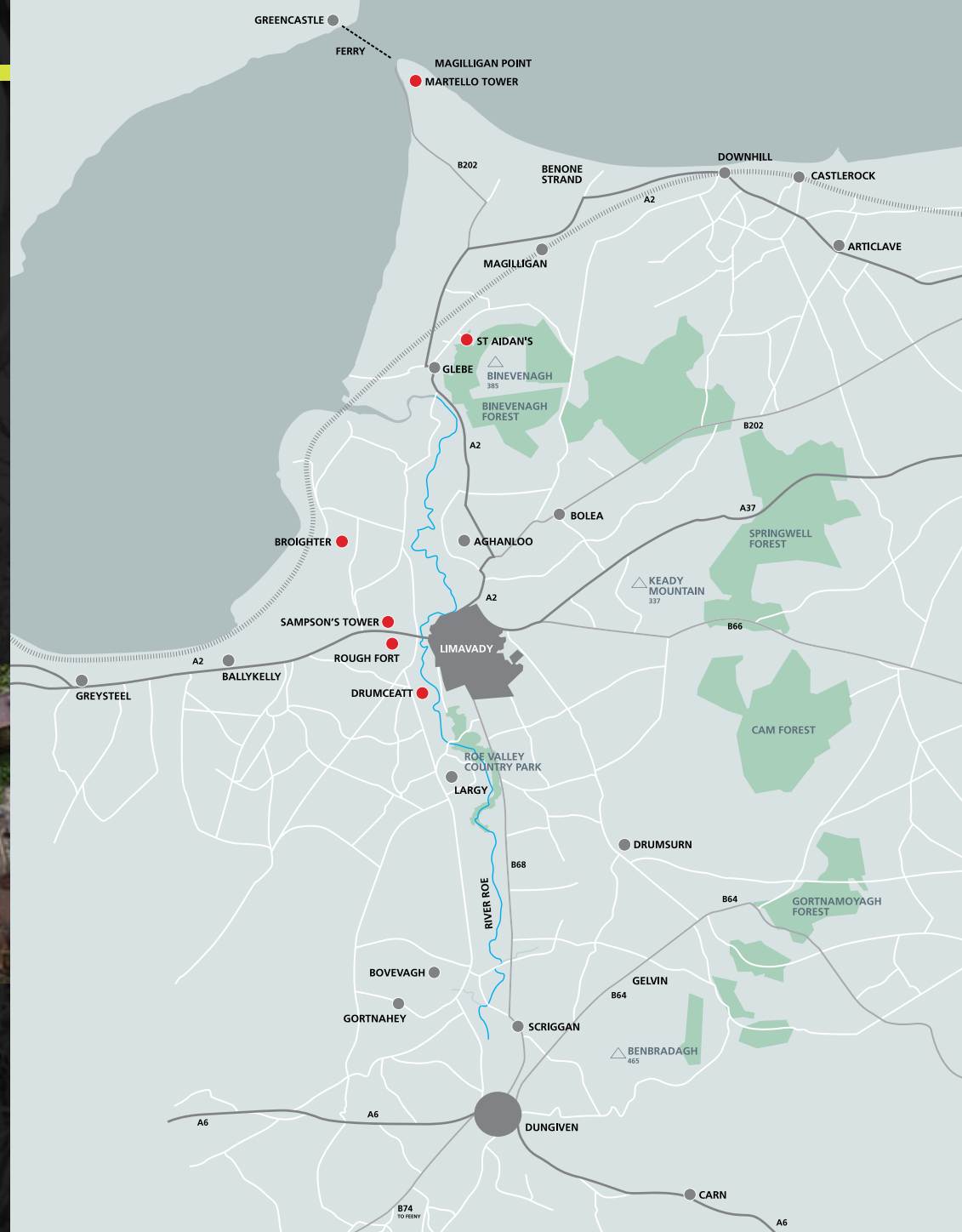


Limavady Airfield, Aghanloo



Carrick Mills

All this and more can be discovered amongst the magnificent landscape of Limavady, its rolling green hills, majestic mountains, wooded glens and spectacular coastline.



Only the sites featured in this booklet are located on this map. There are over 30 other sites included in other booklets in this series, which represent a selection of local areas and historical themes.



## Magilligan Martello Tower



This tower is one of 74 planned for the island of Ireland in anticipation of a Napoleonic invasion, of which around 40 survive. There is another on the opposite side of Lough Foyle at Greencastle.

The tower was built in 1812. Its elliptical design makes it difficult for cannon shot to make a direct impact. It stands 11m high, with 2½m thick walls built from sandstone and lime. The entrance door was 3m from the ground, originally accessed with a wooden ladder. Above the door is a large overhanging machicolation, from which stones or boiling liquids could be dropped on attackers. The gun platform on top held a 24 pounder cannon that was able to pivot and shoot through some 360 degrees. The middle floor provided living quarters for an officer and 12 men. The ground floor contains a well and two rooms to store gunpowder and food.

Around 1872, Gunner Bernard McStay was stationed there with his wife and family; local records show that 4 of their children were born in the tower. During World War II it was used as a lookout point and a number of concrete bunkers were built in the adjacent sand dunes.

**PERIOD**  
C19th

**GRID REFERENCE**  
C6607 3887

**TOWNLAND**  
Doaghs Lower

**ACCESS**  
State Care Monument

Northern Ireland  
Environment Agency

Access from  
Magilligan Point

Open by appointment

T: (028) 7772 2074

## St Aidan's Church, Magilligan



The earliest remains of a church here date to the 13th century, but an ancient holy well indicates that this has been a spiritual site since pre-Christian times. The church is said to have been founded by St Patrick, and is named after St Aidan, a follower of St Colmcille.

The remains of the medieval church can still be seen in the graveyard and was last used by the Church of Ireland community until 1772. The modern Roman Catholic Church was built in 1826, at a time when the Penal Laws against practising the Catholic faith had begun to relax.

To the east of the medieval ruins lies St Aidan's grave. For hundreds of years people have reached into a curious hole in the ground at the corner of the grave to bring out a handful of sand which is said to hold healing powers.

Buried close by is the renowned blind harpist, Dennis O'Hampsey, known as 'The Last of the Irish Bards'. He was born in 1695 near Garvagh and died at Magilligan in 1807. He is buried with his wife, who he married aged 86, and his daughter.

**PERIOD**  
C13th/19th

**GRID REFERENCE**  
C6778 3140

**TOWNLAND**  
Tamlaght

**ACCESS**  
Roman Catholic  
Church

Access from  
Duncrun Road



# Brighter Hoard



© National Museum of Ireland

The Brighter Hoard is Ireland's most impressive example of Early Iron Age goldwork. The hoard includes an exquisite model boat complete with benches, oars and mast, a richly ornamented neck torc, a bowl, two bar torcs and two twisted necklaces.

The hoard was unearthed in 1896 by Tom Nicholl and James Morrow while ploughing a field at Brighter. The two men gave the objects to their employer, and they were eventually sold to the British Museum. However, the Royal Irish Academy demanded the hoard should be declared treasure trove and returned to Ireland. After a high profile and lengthy court case, the hoard was given to the National Museum in Dublin, where it is now on display.

The hoard was deposited near the shore at the entrance to Lough Foyle and is believed to have been a votive offering to the ancient Irish sea god Manannán Mac Lir. Local tradition holds that the gold ornaments were presented to a monastery at Brighter after the Convention of Drumceatt in return for rescuing St Colmcille and his retinue from shipwreck at the mouth of the Foyle.

A holographic reproduction of the hoard is now on display at Limavady Tourist Information Centre.

**PERIOD**  
C1stBC

**GRID REFERENCE**  
C6465 2576

**TOWNLAND**  
Brighter

**ACCESS**  
Private, permission must be gained from landowner

# Drumceatt



Mullagh Hill, a low mound on the banks of the River Roe, was the site of the historic Convention of Drumceatt held in 590AD.

The Convention was summoned by Aedh, High King of Ireland, in order to deal with two problems of national importance. The first was the relationship between the High King of Ireland and the Scottish Kingdom of Dalriada. The second was the growing power and influence of the bards - the musicians, historians, poets and storytellers of ancient Ireland.

St Colmcille was invited to the Convention by the bards to act as their advocate. He travelled from Iona to present an eloquent and appealing speech that convinced King Aedh not to abolish the bards. He was asked to devise a set of laws that would reduce the bards' numbers and powers. He also drafted a treaty of friendship that settled the dispute between the High King of Ireland and the King of Dalriada.

**PERIOD**  
C5th

**GRID REFERENCE**  
C6665 2168

**TOWNLAND**  
Mullagh

**ACCESS**  
Situated within the grounds of the Radisson Roe Hotel, Limavady



# Rough Fort



There are estimated to be nearly 50,000 of these Early Christian raths in Ireland. Rough Fort is approximately one acre in size and is one of the best preserved examples in Ulster.

A rath is a circular earthwork enclosing a small settlement for an extended family group and their livestock. They were used from the Iron Age throughout the medieval period until the 12th century. They are often referred to as ring forts, though there is some debate about whether they had a defensive function.

Rough Fort is surrounded by two banks over 3m high in places with a wide ditch between. It is a prominent landmark in the landscape, and has commanding views towards Benevenagh and the Roe Valley.

**PERIOD**  
C5th/C12th  
**GRID REFERENCE**  
C6585 2303

**TOWNLAND**  
Moneyrannel

**ACCESS**  
National Trust

Access from  
Moneyrannel  
Road off A2

# Sampson's Tower



Sampson's Tower was built around 1860 by public subscription in memory of Arthur Sampson, an agent of the London Fishmongers' Company for nearly forty years.

It is a tall square tower approximately 18m high built of rubble and sandstone. The circular stairway at one side gives access to the roof, from which there are spectacular views of Benevenagh, Lough Foyle and Inishowen. There is a small derelict cottage nearby, which once housed the guardian for the tower.

**PERIOD**  
C19th  
**GRID REFERENCE**  
C6560 2345

**TOWNLAND**  
Farlow

**ACCESS**  
Private, permission  
must be gained  
from landowner



# Have you got a story to tell?

This series of booklets has been developed by the Causeway Museum Service in partnership with local community groups as part of a three year community outreach programme supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The project is designed to increase awareness and appreciation of our local heritage and draw attention to sites that have previously been overlooked.

We would like to continue to develop local heritage trails with the local community, so please contact us if your group is interested working with us to explore and promote your local heritage.

## Causeway Museum Service

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Limavady Airfield, Aghanloo



Galvin School



Loughery's Mill



# Limavady's Path Through History

Below is a timeline showing Limavady Heritage Trail sites in their historical context. Those featured in this guide are highlighted.

BC	C1st	C5th	C7/8th	C12th	C13th	C17th
CARNABANE TOMB 4500-2500BC	BROIGHTER HOARD FIND SPOT C1stBC	BLACK FORT C5th/C12th  WHITE FORT C5th/C12th  KING'S FORT C5th/C12th  TANDRAGEE FORT C5th/C12th  ROUGH FORT C5th/C12th	TAMNARIN FORT C7th/C8th	BANAGHER OLD CHURCH C12th  BOVEVAGH CHURCH C12th  DUNGIVEN PRIORY C12th	ST AIDAN'S CHURCH C13th	DUNGIVEN CASTLE C17th/C19th
	DRUMCEATT ASSEMBLY SITE C1st					
C18th	C19th					
DRUMSURN OLD CHAPEL C18th  BALLYDONEGAN SWEATHOUSE C18th  DRUMCOVITT HOUSE C18th  TANNYRANNY CHURCH C18th	THE RHELICK, KILLEEN C19th  LARGY BRIDGE C19th  LIMAVADY WORKHOUSE C19th  PAUPER'S GRAVEYARD C19th  BALLYKELLY OS BASE TOWER C19th  MAGILLIGAN MARTELLO TOWER C19th  SAMPSON'S TOWER C19th  LOUGHERY'S SCUTCHING MILL C19th  KILHOYLE LIME WORKS C19th  GALVIN SCHOOL C19th  RITTER'S GENERATOR C19th  CARRICK MILLS C19th					
C19th	C20th					
LARGY SCHOOL C19th  LARGY POET'S HOUSE C19th  LARGY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH C19th  LIMAVADY JUNCTION C19th  DRUMSURN RAILWAY STATION C19th  MAGILLIGAN RAILWAY STATION C19th  BELLARENA RAILWAY STATION C19th  OS MARK MAGILLIGAN C19th  OS MARK BENBRADAGH C19th	ST MATTHEW'S GRAVEYARD DRUMSURN C20th  LARGY ORANGE HALL C20th  LARGY PILLARS C20th  AGHANLOO AIRFIELD WW2  BALLYKELLY AIRFIELD WW2					

For more information please contact:

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The Causeway Museum Service represents a partnership between the four local authorities of Coleraine, Ballymoney, Limavady and Moyle. This project is part of a three year community outreach programme supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.



Causeway  
Museum Service



Photography by:  
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Designed by [Tandemdesign.co.uk](http://Tandemdesign.co.uk)