



1 Hill of Tara

A rich archaeological landscape, Tara is one of Ireland's most famous historic sites – 142 kings are said to have reigned at Tara from 200 BC until the 12th century. It has the largest complex of Celtic monuments in Europe from these periods, which are still visible today. Pre-dating these are the 5,000 year old Mound of the Hostages – a passage tomb aligned with the rising sun on the cross-quarter days (midway between the solstice and equinox) in February and November. Information is available from the Visitors' Centre, or if closed, from the Old Bookshop or Maguire's Café near the car park.

2 Hill of Tara Visitors' Centre & Cusack Stone

The centre, open from May to September, is located in the former St Patrick's Church of Ireland (1822). It contains a stained glass window by distinguished artist Evie Hone, titled The Descent of the Holy Spirit, commissioned in 1936. A memorial stone in the memory of Thomas Cusack (d.1571) is mounted on the wall. It depicts Thomas himself, his family and the Cusack coat of arms. Initially located by the Cusack tomb in Trevet graveyard near Dunshaughlin, it was relocated first to St Colmcille's Church in Skryne, and then to Tara.

3 St Columille's Church, Skryne

This is the current parish church of Skryne. It was built in 1827 and renovated in 1986 when it was extended with the addition of a transept. Further renovations were carried out in 2007. A vault under the church contains the remains of Matthew Elias Corbally (d.1870) and his wife Matilda Preston (d.1888). On the east side of the cemetery, near the road, stands a 16th-century wayside cross. The cross is believed to have been dedicated to Thomas Cusack (c.1588) and originally erected at Templekieran.

4 Plaque for Private Patrick Keogh

A plaque was unveiled after a commemoration service in 2011 for Private Patrick Keogh, a young Regular Pro-Treaty Irish Army soldier shot and killed at Oberstown on 15 August 1922. Patrick was on duty at Oberstown Cross following the escape of approx. 100 Republican prisoners from a jail in Dundalk. The prisoners reached woods at Oberstown before fire was exchanged and Patrick was fatally injured. The plaque replaces an older black metal cross originally placed at the scene by Patrick's brother John.

5 Rathfeigh Rath/Motte

This is a circular flat-topped and grass-covered mound, visible through the gate as you turn into Rathfeigh Church car park. There is no visible fosse or entrance. A bailey may have been located to the south or southwest but the mound is so large that it suggests pre-historic origins. The motte is dated to Norman times. Nearby is the location of the old Rathfeigh P.O. next to the thatched cottage, a Mass rock and holy well (not visible or accessible), and old Rathfeigh Village by the water pump on the way back to the crossroads.

6 Rathfeigh Watch House

At the wall of the old graveyard is a well preserved watch house. After a burial, an armed man stayed up all night in this house. This was necessary at a time when medical schools needed cadavers to teach anatomy, and only the bodies of those executed for murder were legally available to them. There weren't enough of these to keep the schools supplied. Body-snatchers would steal fresh cadavers from the graves and sell them to medical schools. Some even resorted to murder. This stopped after the Anatomy Act of 1832 was enacted to regulate anatomy in the medical schools.

7 Rathfeigh Church

The church at 'Rathfay' is listed in the ecclesiastical taxation (1302–06) of Pope Nicholas IV. The ruins of the medieval church are located within a neglected graveyard with headstones dating from c. 1740 to c. 1960. This church was probably a divided nave and chancel church of which only parts of the overgrown western wall and foundations of other walls survive. It was replaced by the present church, the foundation stone of which was laid by a Dr Nulty on 8 December 1872. Nearly two years later on 15 August 1874 the new church was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception.



8 Balrath Woods

Once part of the Somerville Estate, this 50-acre woodland was replanted in 1969 with both native and non-native species. Some original trees still remain, notably the Great Beech, estimated to be 200 years old. A variety of flora and fauna make the woods a popular attraction with playground and picnic areas available inside the woods.

9 Lion's Mouth

This is a roadside water fountain and trough in the shape of a lion's head which takes its source from Trinity Well. St Patrick is said to have taken a drink from this well on his way from Slane to Tara. It is said that the water supply from the well has never failed.

10 Danestown Fort

Danestown Fort is an imposing ring fort c. 45m in diameter. One of approximately 30,000 forts throughout Ireland dating from approx. 500 BC to 1500 AD, it may have been used as a Norman motte. It is the belief of historians and archaeologists alike that the ringfort is built on an earlier Bronze Age enclosure.

11 Monkstown Castle

Dating to the first half of the 16th century, Monkstown Castle is the remains of a four-storey tower house, almost certainly the capital mansion of Monketon Grange. Built for St Mary's Cistercian Abbey, the castle stood among 162 acres of arable lands, together with a chapel and a watermill. The chapel ruins are situated at nearby Mounttown Cemetery on the road to Kentstown. Only the north wall of the castle survives today. It is in a dangerous state so is best viewed from the roadside. The Historic 6" OSI map shows other outbuildings but no signs of these remain today.

12 Old Garlow Cross

This was once the main crossroad from Finglas to Navan, and Drogheda to Trim. It was originally a four crossroads, as can be seen from early maps. The original name was Garlach (or Garlach) cross, Garlach being an Irish word for a child. This suggests it may have been one of many cilíní in the country where unbaptised babies were buried in un-consecrated ground. The green was renovated by a dedicated local group who have made this a lovely place to visit. Recently an analemmatic sundial has been installed, so be sure to visit on a sunny day.

13 St Columba's Church of Ireland (ruin), Lismullin

Built 1902–1904 to replace the church of Templekieran, this church was in use for just 60 years before decommissioning in 1964. A three-light window by Harry Clarke, 'The Ascension', was installed above the altar in 1930 and remained in place until the church was decommissioned. A small number of burials are recorded in the graveyard surrounding the church, the earliest of these pre-dating the construction of the church. The church ruin remained hidden behind trees and ivy for some years before being cleared by a local group. Part of the original tiled floor is still visible.

14 St Colmcille's Church Ruin, Hill of Skryne

Originally called Achall, named after the daughter of Cairbre Nia Fer, a mythological King of Tara, an early monastery was built here. At some point the shrine of St Colmcille, or a part of his relics, was brought here from Iona for safe-keeping. As a consequence the name changed to Scrín Colum Chille, from which the name Skryne or Skreen is derived. The ruin of a 15th-century church dedicated to St Colmcille now stands on the hill. Built into the outside wall over the south door is the miniature effigy of a bishop which is dated to the 14th-century.

The Heritage Trail is a driving route that takes approx. 2 to 3 hours to complete and is not really suitable for walking. See the RDHS website for further information on the society and heritage trail plus additional sites/locations in the district (www.rathfeigh-historical-society.org).

When driving the trail, please take care of the environment and give consideration to the residents of the area.



People visit at their own risk.

Rathfeigh and District Heritage Trail



3
St Colmcille's Church Skryne



2
Tara Visitors' Centre



1
Hill of Tara



4
Patrick Keogh Memorial



5
Rathfeigh Motte



6
Rathfeigh Watch House



7
Rathfeigh Church



8
Balrath Woods



9
Lion's Mouth



10
Danestown Fort



11
Monkstown Castle



12
Old Garlow Cross



13
St Columba's Church Lismullen (ruin)



14
St Colmcille's Church Skryne (ruin)



Guide to refreshment stops on the Heritage Trail

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|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| A Hill of Tara Shop/Cafe | C Swan's Shop | E O'Connell's Pub |
| B Petrol Station/Shop | D Blacklion Stores | F Fox's Pub |

Rathfeigh and District Historical Society
www.rathfeigh-historical-society.org