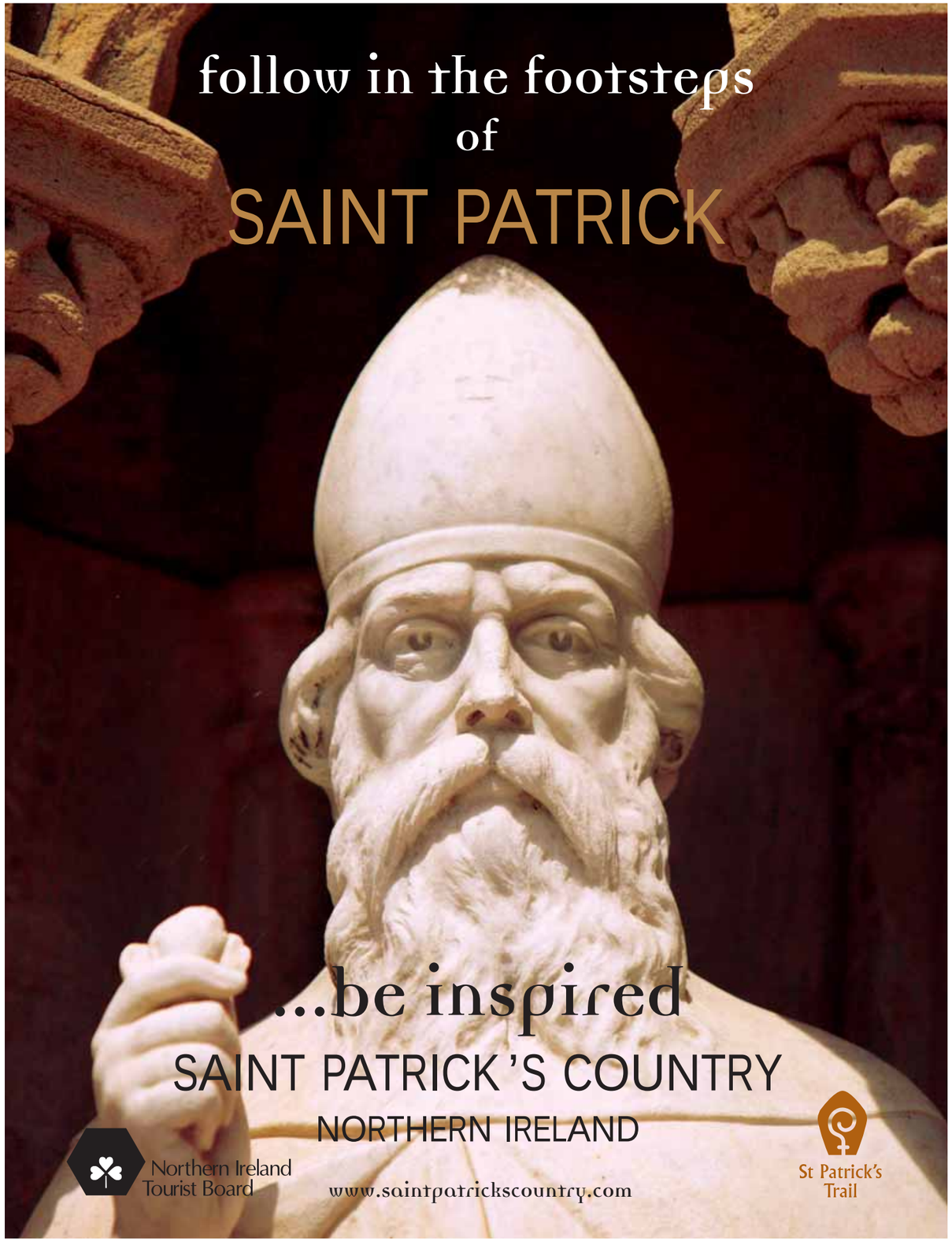
ST. Pat_Brochure pre print 9/4/08 15:35 Page 1



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Strangford Lough, County Down

If Ireland really is the land of Saints and Scholars then the cradle of Irish Christianity lies in Northern Ireland within the ancient capitals of Counties Armagh and Down.

It was here where Saint Patrick began his mission to Ireland, established his first church, created Armagh as the Spiritual Centre of the island and where he later died and was buried. Indeed in a part of the world where every stoney acre has his name, this largely undiscovered landscape is absolutely littered with ancient monuments which had a personal connection to Patrick. Many of the legends which are told around the world every March were written by the monks of this region who followed Patrick in ancient texts such as the Book of Armagh. This leaflet will outline for you the wonderful sights, sounds and landscapes you can experience when visiting Saint Patrick's Country.

Saint Patrick's Day - Down Cathedral

Interior - Saint Patrick's Catholic Cathedral, Armagh City

Saint Patrick's Story

After six years, Patrick dreamed of a message from an angel called Victoricus, who urged him to escape from his master. Patrick travelled nearly 200 miles, probably to Waterford, where he completed his escape.

Slemish Mountain

Patrick was almost certainly born before the end of Roman rule in Britain (around 400AD), probably in the southwest of England, though the north of England, as well as Wales and Scotland, have all made claims. There have been various suggestions from biographers of his given name, including Succat. All we know for sure is that he refers to himself as Patricius, a Roman name of which Patrick is the anglicised version and this may have been his baptismal name too.

Patrick's father, Calpurnius, was a deacon who was also involved in the raising of taxes and Patrick's childhood, growing up in a large Roman villa, would have been very comfortable. 'According to the world's reckoning I was a gentleman', he writes in his confession.

Then, at the age of 15, disaster struck. With the Roman influence fading, raiders from Ireland were able to develop a thriving slave trade, often demanding ransoms for those they kidnapped. Patrick was taken by such a group to Ireland, where he was forced to work as a shepherd.

Though his writings are not precise, many biographers believe it was on the slopes of the imposing Slemish Mountain in County Antrim, where Patrick tended sheep. Today, many make the pilgrimage to Slemish Mountain (near Ballymena), visiting the interpretative centre in its foothills and walking to the top to enjoy some of the most spectacular views in Ireland.

After six years, Patrick dreamed of a message from an angel called Victoricus, who urged him to escape from his master. Patrick travelled nearly 200 miles, probably to Waterford, where he completed his escape.

Back at home, he trained as a priest and within a decade had become a bishop. Then, he had another vision of Victoricus and this time the angel was carrying letters. One of these, titled 'the voice of the Irish', begged him to come to Ireland.

In 431, generally believed to be the year before Patrick arrived in Ireland, Pope Celestine had sent Palladius, 'as the first bishop to the Irish believing in Christ'. While Palladius, who may have died soon after arriving, left no trace behind him, Patrick was to make an indelible impact on his country of adoption.

Patrick landed where the Slaney River flows into Strangford Lough (now one of the most important maritime sites in the world) in Co Down. Clearly politically astute, as well as charismatic, Patrick knew the importance of making influential friends. His first conversion was Dichu, the local chieftain and brother of the High King of Ulster. In a barn donated by Dichu, Patrick preached his first sermon in Ireland. Today on this site at Saul (Sabhal, pronounced Saul, is the Irish for barn), stands a much-visited stone replica of an early church with a round tower.

Tell me more...

www.saintpatrickscountry.com

www.discovernorthernireland.com

www.armaghanddown.com

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Saint Patrick's Grave at Down Cathedral

How far Patrick travelled in Ireland and how many souls he converted can only be guessed at. In his confessions, he claims to have baptised many thousands. But Ulster was the real base of Patrick's work. And even here, it was the lovely countryside around Downpatrick, including the holy wells at Struell, plus what is now the ecclesiastical city of Armagh which seems to have been particularly important to him.

Outside of Rome, Armagh is the oldest Episcopal See in the world with an unbroken line to its foundation. However far he travelled, Patrick's was an extraordinary achievement and one fraught with danger. 'I expect daily,' he wrote, 'to be killed, betrayed, or brought back into slavery, or something of the kind.' Survival depended on his political skills and his ability to make influential friends who were often called upon to help free him from ransom-demanding kidnappers.

But what about the Saint Patrick of legend, who turned enemies into animals, rid Ireland of snakes and used the shamrock to explain the concept of the holy trinity? Ireland certainly still has the shamrock, so there may be a grain of truth in the story. As for the snakes, Ireland never had any, though possibly this refers to his banishment of Satan, perceived as a serpent by Christians of the time. As far as we can tell, none of his enemies ever took animal form either!

It is difficult to be precise about the exact year of Patrick's death, though March 17th is given as the date, but it was most probably between 460 and 490 AD. Patrick received the last rites from his friend, Tassach, at Raholp near Saul and he was buried at a monastery near the site of what is now Down Cathedral.

The legend of Saint Patrick grew quickly after his death. In 688AD, the Book of Armagh placed this city at the centre of the growing cult of Patrick and he was elevated to the status of national apostle, to intercede in heaven on behalf of the Irish. The Book of Armagh directed all monasteries and churches in Ireland to honour his memory on March 17 in what was then a largely spiritual ceremony. By 1607, the day was marked on the Irish legal calendar. Now, it had become officially Saint Patrick's Day.

It was the Norman Lord of Ulster, John De Courcy, who did most to accelerate the cult of Patrick, re-burying what were said to be his remains in the graveyard of Down Cathedral, the cathedral he built in Downpatrick (traditionally along with the relics of the two other Irish Patron saints, Columba, who brought Christianity to Scotland, and Brigid). It was De Courcy who renamed the town Downpatrick, 'the fort of Patrick.'

Newry has also strong associations with Saint Patrick. The first recorded footsteps in the Clanrye Valley were those of Saint Patrick who is reputed to have planted a 'yew tree at the head of the strand'. Translated into Irish this reads 'Iubhair Cinn Tragh' and is how the town of Newry got its name.

Saint Patrick's Trail Map

St Patrick's Trail

Attractions on Saint Patrick's Trail

1 Saint Patrick's Cathedral (Church of Ireland), Armagh
2 Saint Patrick's Cathedral (Roman Catholic), Armagh
3 Armagh County Museum
4 Armagh Public Library
5 Saint Patrick's Trian Visitor Centre
6 Bagnenal's Castle
7 Down Cathedral and Saint Patrick's Grave
8 Down County Museum
9 The Saint Patrick Centre
10 Inch Abbey
11 Saul Church
12 Struell Wells, Downpatrick
13 Grey Abbey
14 Bangor Abbey
15 North Down Museum

Other Key and Associated Sites:

A Craigavon Museum Tel: 028 3834 1635
B Holywood Priory Tel: Bangor TIC 028 91 270069
C Kilbroney Graveyard Tel: Newry TIC 028 3026 8877
D Killevy Old Churches Tel: 028 9181 1491
E Kilnasaggart Stone Tel: 028 9181 1491
F Movilla Abbey Tel: 028 9181 1491
G Nendrum Monastry Tel: 028 9181 1491
H Seagoe (Saint Gobhans) Tel: 028 3835 0583
I Donaghmore High Cross Tel: 028 8776 7039
J Dromore Cathedral Tel: 028 9269 2275
K Dromore High Cross
L Saint Patrick's Stone, Coney Island Tel: 028 3832 7573 Accessible Sundays, Apr-Oct
M Cardinal O'Fiaich Library & Archive Tel: 028 3752 2981
N Franciscan Friary Tel: 028 3725 1800

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Saint Patrick's City

Main image:
Saint Patrick's Cathedral
- Church of Ireland

Images from top to bottom:
- Saint Patrick's Cathedral - Catholic
- Saint Patrick's Trian Visitor Complex.
- Armagh Public Library
- Navan Centre and Fort
- Primate's Palace (former)

Tell me more...

www.visitarmagh.com

www.saintpatrickscountry.com

www.discovernorthernireland.com

www.armaghanddown.com

The spiritual Capital of Ireland for 1500 years and the seat of both Church of Ireland and Catholic archbishops, Armagh is the oldest and most venerated of Irish Cities and has a long Christian heritage. In Pagan times Armagh was the seat of the High Kings of Ulster who built the Royal mound at Navan which is an important stop on any local tour. Saint Patrick founded his main church on the Hill of Armagh where the Church of Ireland Cathedral now stands on a site where there was a church as early as 445 AD. On the opposite hill, two large marble archbishops, who gaze across the town, flank the twin-spired Catholic Cathedral.

No visit to Armagh is complete without a visit to both Saint Patrick's Cathedrals and Saint Patrick's Trian Visitor Complex, a major visitor centre which tells the story of the city and the Patron Saint's work here. The Palace Stables Heritage Centre exhibition with its living history characters shows what life would have been like in the household of the Archbishop of Armagh in the Georgian city and Armagh County Museum provides fascinating exhibitions and archaeological finds from the Early Christian period. Anyone with a research interest in the Irish church should visit both the Armagh Public Library and the Ó Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive.

Saint Patrick's (Church of Ireland) Cathedral 1
Saint Patrick built a church on the hill known as Druim Saileach (Sallow Ridge) in 445, so beginning the story of Armagh Cathedral. The site of one of the most celebrated of the great Irish Monastic Schools, students came here from all over Europe. Here in 1014, on the 'north side of the great church' Brian Boru, High King of Ireland was buried. Although the Church has suffered destruction on at least 17 occasions it has always been restored and represents an unbroken link back to Patrick himself.

Saint Patrick's (Catholic) Cathedral 2
After an absence of centuries the Roman Catholic Church through Archbishop William Crolly (1835-49) took up residence in Armagh and the erection of Saint Patrick's Cathedral began on the 17th March, 1840. Work was suspended during the Great Famine (1845-49) and recommenced in 1854. It was dedicated for worship in 1873 but the magnificent interior decoration was not completed until early in the 20th Century.

Armagh County Museum 3
Located in the centre of Saint Patrick's Cathedral city, a visit to Armagh County Museum is an ideal way to experience a flavour of the Orchard County. The collections include archaeological material from the tombs of Ireland's first farming communities, as well as a selection of artefacts reflecting Armagh's leading role in early Christian Ireland. The Museum also has an extensive reference library, rich in local archive material, along with photographic and map collections. With a range of changing exhibitions throughout the year, it is an ideal place to see and explore the fair County of Armagh.

Armagh Public Library 4
One of the oldest libraries in Ireland, Armagh Public Library was established in 1771 by Archbishop Robinson. In addition to the Archbishop's personal library of 17th and 18th century books, particularly in history and theology, there is archival material relating to Christian heritage in Ireland and Europe. Also a registered museum, the Library holds ancient Irish artefacts such as stone axes, flint arrowheads and bronze implements. Of more recent provenance is a collection of William Conor drawings, depicting costumes used in the pageant to commemorate the 1,500th anniversary of Patrick's arrival in Ireland.

Saint Patrick's Trian Visitor Complex 5
This exciting visitor complex is located in the heart of Armagh city, incorporating three major exhibitions - The Armagh story: traces the story of Armagh's historic Pagan monuments through to the coming of Saint Patrick and Celtic Christianity to the modern day city. Patrick's Testament: takes a closer look at our patron Saint through the writings found in the ancient manuscript "The Book of Armagh". Touch screen technology is available in French and German. The Land of Lilliput: Jonathan Swift's most famous book, "Gulliver's Travels" is narrated by a 20-ft giant.

Cardinal Ó Fiaich Library & Archive M
A unique cultural and historical resource, the Library is a free, independent public reference library, which houses important collections relating to Irish history, the Irish language, ecclesiastical history, the Irish abroad, and Irish sport.

Navan Centre and Fort
Visit the Navan Centre, which interprets one of Ireland's most important ancient monuments, Navan Fort!
This was the royal seat of the Kings of Ulster and the province's ancient capital. Start your tour in the 'Vanished World' of lost myths, travel into the 'Real World' of archaeology and then enter the 'Other World' to hear the legends of the Ulster Cycle. Visit the Iron Age/Early Christian period dwelling and, through Living History interpretation, learn about that way of life. An audio visual presentation is available in Irish, German, French, Italian and Spanish.
Finally, walk the path of history to the great Ancient Seat of Kings, Navan Fort.

Franciscan Friary N
Armagh Franciscan Friary was founded by Archbishop O'Scannail in 1263/64. It had prominent patrons in the city and the Franciscans played an important part in the city's religious life until the Friary was suppressed in 1542 with the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry V111. Some religious life continued, but the buildings were involved in warfare later in the 16th century and were ruined by 1600. Two empty graves and two tomb recesses near the east end are reminders of the important patrons buried in the Friary Church, including Gormlaith O'Donnell, wife of Domhnail O'Neill in 1353. It is the longest monastery in Ireland. The Friary is located at the south-east edge of Armagh and can be found at the entrance to the Palace Demesne.

Saint Patrick's Town

The later seat of the High Kings of Ulster, burial site of the patron saint and medieval capital of County Down, Downpatrick is an essential stop for those who are interested in saints, scholars and Irish Christian heritage. Spend some time at the Saint Patrick Centre, a major multimedia exhibition and learn about Patrick's life. Visit the ancient Down Cathedral beside Saint Patrick's Grave and then walk down the historic Georgian Mall to Down Museum which displays artefacts from Patrick's time. Take a train ride on the only narrow gauge steam railway in Ireland through Saint Patrick's Country with the Down Railway Museum to Inch Abbey where many of the legends of Patrick were written down in Medieval times.

You can visit the first church in Ireland at Saul and the holy wells at Struell with their healing waters, all within a mile of the town. Or you can climb nearby Slieve Patrick and see the largest statue of the Patron Saint in the world and trace his footsteps on Saint Patrick's Trail to the River Slaney where he began his mission in Ireland. Whatever you choose to do you will be rewarded with this hidden world which is Saint Patrick's town.

Down Cathedral and Saint Patrick's Grave 7

Down Cathedral was built on the ancient hill of Down in the 12th Century and has become a place of pilgrimage for 1500 years. The massive granite stone marks Saint Patrick's Grave and it is here that people from all traditions leave wreaths on the grave every March. Traditionally emigrants leaving Ireland took a handful of 'old sod' with them from Patrick's Grave.

Down County Museum 8

Situated in the Georgian County Gaol, Down Museum holds an important collection of Early Christian objects and artefacts from Saint Patrick's Country, including carved stone crosses. It also provides works of art, commemorative material and publications relating to the Patron Saint. Facilities include a shop, café and permanent exhibitions about the gaol and life in County Down, as well as regular temporary exhibitions.

The Saint Patrick Centre 9

Located in Downpatrick, this is the only permanent exhibition in the world dedicated to telling the story of Saint Patrick and includes an interactive exhibition and Imax presentation. The Centre offers a cafe, art gallery, craft shop, toilets, terraced gardens and Tourist Information Centre. It is a must-see stop for travellers with an interest in Christian Ireland. Guided tours of Saint Patrick's Country can be organised via the Centre.

Inch Abbey 10

Having destroyed the nearby Cistercian Abbey of Erenagh in 1177 on the grounds that it was fortified against him, John de Courcy rebuilt a monastery at Inch for this order as an act of atonement in the 1180s, inviting over Cistercians from Furness in Lancashire. It became the centre of English influence in east Ulster. Attempting to impress the local populace, de Courcy commissioned one of these monks, called Jocelin to write a life of Saint Patrick.

Saul Church 11

The first ecclesiastical site in Ireland was given to Patrick by the local ruler Díchu, one of his first converts when he landed at Inbher Slane (the Slaney River). The word Sabhall means barn in Irish and the site developed into a monastery which was restored by Saint Malachy around 1140. The two stone buildings beside the church, each with a stone roof, are from this period. The current Church and Round Tower were built in 1932at the same time as the massive statue on nearby Slieve Patrick to commemorate 1500 years since Patrick's arrival in Ireland.

Struell Wells 12

Among the first Holy wells in Ireland, and blessed by Patrick when he arrived in Down, the Wells have attracted pilgrims since at least the Middle Ages. Pilgrims have wandered down the secluded valley among the wells and have taken the waters which are claimed to have healing powers. The site also contains a ruined church and ancient Bath Houses which are unique in Ireland.

Tell me more...

Tourist Information

downpatrick.tic@downdc.gov.uk

Tell me more...

www.saintpatrickscountry.com

www.discovernorthernireland.com

www.armaghanddown.com

Main image:
Saint Patrick's Grave
Images from top to bottom:
- Saint Patrick's Centre
- Saul Church
- Struell Wells
- Down County Museum
- Inch Abbey

Saints and Scholars

Grey Abbey 13
These splendid ruins of a Cistercian Abbey are the finest example of Anglo-Norman ecclesiastical architecture in Northern Ireland.

Affreca, daughter of the King of Man and wife of John de Courcy, Anglo-Norman invader of East Ulster, founded the Abbey in 1193. The Abbey was colonised by Cistercian Monks from Cumbria. The French background of the Cistercian Order and the English origins of the builders of Grey Abbey resulted in a Gothic building with tall pointed lancet windows, the first truly Gothic structure in Ireland.

The monks had great knowledge of plants and made use of them in their practice of medicine. One of the great features of Grey Abbey today is a carefully recreated Herb Garden, containing over fifty varieties of medicinal plants and herbs that you are free to stroll through and purchase.

Bangor Abbey 14
Saint Comgall founded Bangor Abbey in 559 and it grew to become one of the most important seats of learning in Ireland, with almost 3,000 monks at the time of Comgall's death in 601.

Two of its most famous students, Columbanus and Gall, travelled throughout Europe setting up monasteries following an Irish rule in Luxeuil, Bobbio and Breganz. Relics from the earliest period of the monastery are held in North Down Heritage Centre.

Because of its vulnerability to attack from the sea, the Abbey fell into disrepair, following many Viking raids. It was partially restored by Saint Malachy in the 12th Century, when he was Abbot in Bangor. His work can be seen at what is known locally as Malachy's Wall.

North Down Museum 15
Located at Bangor Town Hall, the Museum has a number of very strong connections with the early Christian period in Ireland. The First Gallery highlights the period 550-950A.D. when Bangor Abbey was flourishing and missionaries spread throughout Europe and students flocked to Bangor to study.
The centrepiece is a model of the abbey as it was in its heyday. Also included in the collection, is the Bangor Bell, a bronze bell over 1200 years old. There is also a copy of the 7th Century Antiphonary, a Book of Service written in Bangor and carried to the monastery in Bobbio, founded by Columbanus from Bangor. The original text is now housed in the Ambrosian Library in Milan. Many pilgrims from Europe visit the site from whence Columbanus set out to rekindle Christianity during the Dark Ages.

Craigavon Museum A
The Philip B. Wilson Library includes a collection of Methodist tracts, letters from John Wesley, hymnals and general information on the history of Methodism in the area and further afield.

Also included in the Museum collections are papers relating to the Meetings of the Society of Friends, from their first meetings in Lurgan, their Quarterly meetings and information about those who left the area, following William Penn to colonise Pennsylvania and settle towns like Lurgan in Franklin County and Menallen in Fayette County in Pennsylvania.

Kilbroney Graveyard C
Cill Bhronaigh - Bronagh's Church, is located in the graveyard just outside Rostrevor on the Hilltown Road.
The graveyard contains Saint Bronagh's Cross, dating from the late 8th century and a ruined 15th century building. There is also a 'healing well' said to cure eye and throat ailments. Saint Bronagh's Bell, from the 6th century is displayed in the local Catholic Church in Rostrevor. Local folklore has it that if you pray to Bronagh and ring the bell 3 times, your prayer will be answered.

St. Monnina of Killevy
Killevy Old Churches D
Her real name was Darerca and it would appear that she came from the Donaghmore area of County Down.
As there were no convents in the area, Monnina went to the west of Ireland to join St. Ibar. When Ibar moved to Wexford, Monnina followed him, but stopped off with St. Brigid in Kildare.

This may have been the turning point in her life, as Monnina returned to Faughart, Brigid's birthplace, where she lived for some time. She then moved to Killevey, where she founded her main monastery, Cill Sleibhe Cuillinn, The Church of Slieve Gullion or Killevey, in the mountainous country of south Armagh.

The church ruins now on the site comprise two distinct churches joined lengthwise. The smaller and older is characterised by a most impressive, low lintel doorway built of three massive shaped granite stones. The more recent building, an Augustinian Convent, has a very impressive arched window with angel carvings still visible on its outside.

Closeby is a large granite slab which is reputed to mark Monnina's grave with a holy well further up the hill which is still visited by pilgrims on her feast day, July 6th.

Nendrum Monastery G
This fine example of an island monastery was founded in the 5th Century making it one of the earliest known monastic sites in Ireland. There are references from 7th Century through until 976 when the Abbot was burned in his house, likely in a Viking raid.

The monastery which was founded by Saint Machaoi was abandoned for a mainland site at Tullynakill during the 15th century.

The site was 'lost' until the mid-19th century when the eminent ecclesiastical historian William Reeves, visited the island, looking at a 'lime kiln', which he recognised as the remains of a Round Tower.

The site comprises three concentric dry-stone walled enclosures with evidence of industrial work outside, including a tidal mill and landing places. It is obvious that the Monastery was approached from the sea.

The central enclosure has a church ruin with sundial, the remains of a round tower and a graveyard.

The interpretive centre gives a useful look at the site and its role in the development of early Christianity in Ireland.

Recent archaeological work has unearthed a tidal mill developed by the monks which may have been the earliest tidal mill in Europe.

Seagoe (Saint Gobhans) H
The townland and parish of Seagoe derive their name from Suidhe Gobhan, the seat of Gobhan. Gobhan was a saintly man, who according to tradition had set up a monastery on the banks of the River Bann in Iveagh in Ulster and was leader' of a thousand monks'.

There has been a Christian tradition in the area since the 6th century. The remains of a 15th century church can be seen in the peaceful oasis, that is Seagoe Cemetery.

The 'Seagoe Bell', originally found in Scarva Parish, was used for many years during funeral services at Seagoe. It is now held in Dublin Museum. The inscription, 'Oro Tarchun Mascacham Ailello' 'Pray for Cumascach, the son of Ailill, places the bell circa 904 AD, another telling reminder of the pervasive history of Christianity in the area.

Dromore Cathedral J
The Cathedral stands on the site where Saint Colman built his first church of 'daub and wattle' around 514. The current building, known as the Cathedral Church of Christ the Redeemer, is an interesting mixture of various architectural periods, all clearly visible in its structure. Inset in one of the internal walls is an ancient stone, marked with a simple cross and known as Saint Colman's Pillow, suggesting perhaps the strict rule of Colman's monastic life.

Dromore High Cross K
Like so many High Crosses, Dromore Cross stood in the town marketplace and was a gathering point for people to listen to travelling preachers until it was broken during the 17th century. It was repaired and moved to its present position near the Cathedral in 1887.
The repair is very obvious and it may in fact be the remains of two separate ruined Crosses.

Saint Patrick and Bagenal's Castle 6
Tradition relates that Saint Patrick planted a yew tree at the head of the strand, in Irish *Na Iuir Cinn Tragh*, from which Newry derives its name. A Cistercian monastery was founded at Newry in 1153. In 1550, the abbey and its lands were acquired by Nicholas Bagenal, an English settler, who demolished the abbey and built a fortified house in the vicinity, known as Bagenal's Castle.

Bagenal's Castle now houses Newry and Mourne Museum, which has a number of exhibits from the monastery as well as a set of robes from the Order of Saint Patrick, an order of chivalry founded by King George III and limited to members of the Irish peerage. The robes belonged to the third Earl of Kilmorey, a descendant of Nicholas Bagenal.

Kilnasaggart Stone E
Cill na Saggart means the Church of the Priest. Kilnassagart Stone is regarded as being one of the oldest inscribed stones in Ireland. It stands on the ancient road which ran from Tara and through the Moyry Pass to Dunseverick Head in Antrim.
It has a total of 13 crosses on its faces and the inscription, 'This place , bequeathed by Temoc,son of Ceran Bic, under the patronage of Peter, the Apostle.'
Temoc's death was recorded around 714, which sets the stone in the 8th century.
Excavations at the site in 1966 and 1968 revealed an early Christian graveyard with graves oriented radially around the pillar and facing towards the rising sun.

Donaghmore High Cross I
One and a half miles off the main A1 between Newry and Banbridge, Donaghmore High Cross stands in the grounds of the Church of Ireland Parish Church, as a symbol of the continued Christian worship in the area for over 1500 years.
Despite weathering, there is still good detail to be seen on the 9th century Cross, including the stories of Adam and Eve, Moses and David.

Images from top to bottom:
- Bangor Abbey
- Dromore Cathedral
- Greyabbey Pageant
- (Cutout) Dromore High Cross

A calendar of world class events… arts & culture… old & new.

Main image:
Traditional Music Session
Images from top to bottom:
- Irish Step Dancing
- Magnus Barelegs Viking Festival
- Castle Ward Opera Festival - Councy Down
- Road Bowls Festival - County Armagh
- Apple Blossom Festival - County Armagh

Destinations around the world celebrate Saint Patrick's Day but where better to celebrate the life and times of the Saint than in Saint Patrick's Country. Saint Patrick's Festival, both in Armagh and Downpatrick throughout the week in which Saint Patrick's Day falls, sparks off an exhilirating events calendar organised for visitors and locals alike.

Celts had a well-developed system for dividing up the year, linked to the farming practices on which the whole society relied. There were four main festivals. Samhain, (October 31st), was the night when all souls of the dead were free to roam the earth. It has become our Hallowe'en. All Souls Day is the next day; November 1st.

Imbolg/Imbolc was Celebrated on February 1st and it heralded the start of spring and lambing season. It has become Saint Brigid's Day in Ireland, Brigid shares her name with a pre-Christian deity. After Imbolc came Beltaine, May 1st, now our May Day. The Celts would light fires and drive their cattle through them in a 'cleansing process' to increase fertility. The end of July and August was the time to celebrate Lughnasa, in honour of the god Lugh. Harvest festivals and horse fairs still celebrate this festival today.

The early Christians adopted these great pagan festivals and gave them Christian themes. We can still trace the pre-Christian roots of many of our current festivals.

Tell me more…

Saint Patrick's Festival, Armagh
www.visitarmagh.com

Saint Patrick's Day Festival, Downpatrick
www.st-patricksfestival.com

Saint Patrick's Day Festival, Newry
www.visitnewryandmourne.gov.uk

Easter Festival, Armagh
www.visitarmagh.com

Apple Blossom Festival, Armagh
www.visitarmagh.com

Armagh Comedy Festival
www.visitarmagh.com

Castle Ward Opera
www.castlewardopera.com

Opera Fringe, Down
www.operafringe.com

Armagh Festival of Traditional Song and Dance
www.visitarmagh.com

Celtic Fusion
www.celticfusion.co.uk

Royal Ascot Downpatrick
www.downdc.gov.uk

Road Bowls Festival, Armagh
www.visitarmagh.com

Festival of Fish, Kilkeel and Ardglass
www.downdc.gov.uk

The Magnus Barelegs Viking Festival
www.magnusbarelegs.co.uk

Bard of Armagh
www.visitarmagh.com

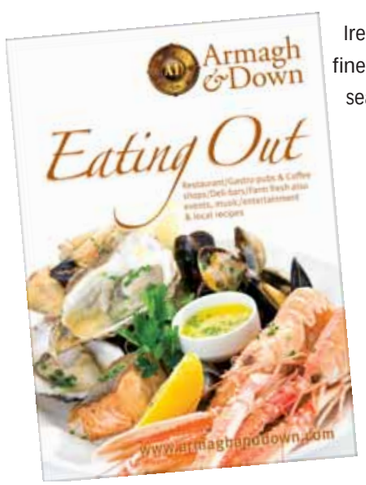
William Kennedy Piping Festival
www.visitarmagh.com

Saint Brigid's Cross - traditionally made from rushes on Saint Brigid's day.

Fine Dining

food for the body and for the soul…

Along with its breathtaking scenery and its warm hospitality Northern Ireland also has some of the freshest, finest food available. Celebrated for its seafood, tasty root vegetables, prime beef, lamb, pork and traditional baking, eating out in Northern Ireland is a unique experience.



Tell me more…

To order an Eating Out Guide for the Region 'Eat, drink & enjoy…' order online from:

www.armaghanddown.com

Saint Patrick's Country offers a choice of dining in top class restaurants, traditional pubs and atmospheric coaching inns. Local menus feature Strangford Oysters, Dundrum Bay Prawns, Mourne Lamb and a selection of home made breads - soda, wheaten and potato.

Armagh City may be the Ecclesiastical Capital of Ireland, but Armagh County is 'The Orchard of Ireland', coming alive with colour as the pink flowers of apple trees blanket much of the deep green landscape. The history books tell us that apples have been grown in Armagh for over 3000 years - Saint Patrick himself is said to have planted an apple tree at Ceangoba, an ancient settlement east of Armagh City and Saint Malachy of Armagh is represented with an apple in his hand.

superb value and variety in our accommodation.

Having explored Saint Patrick's Country and tasted the local produce, there is a variety of accommodation to rest your body and soul. Farmhouse bed and breakfast accommodation, coach inns, four and five star luxury hotel accommodation provides the welcome of all welcomes to individuals and groups alike.

Accommodation across Northern Ireland is rigorously quality assured and you can be confident that when you reach your overnight destination, you will be more than happy with what you find.

Expect to pay a minimum of £18 B&B per person to £30 or more in a top guest house. Hotels are more expensive, however special offers and group rates are often available.

You can easily book accommodation directly through:
www.armaghanddown.com
www.discovernorthernireland.com

However, a fully inclusive holiday or specially tailored programme to suit your personal taste can easily be organised by contacting network Tourist Information Centre or any of the many Irish holiday specialists. Full details are available from Tourism Ireland, www.tourismireland.com

Tell me more…

To view & book your accommodation online visit:

www.armaghanddown.com

www.discovernorthernireland.com

Further information visit:

www.armaghanddown.com

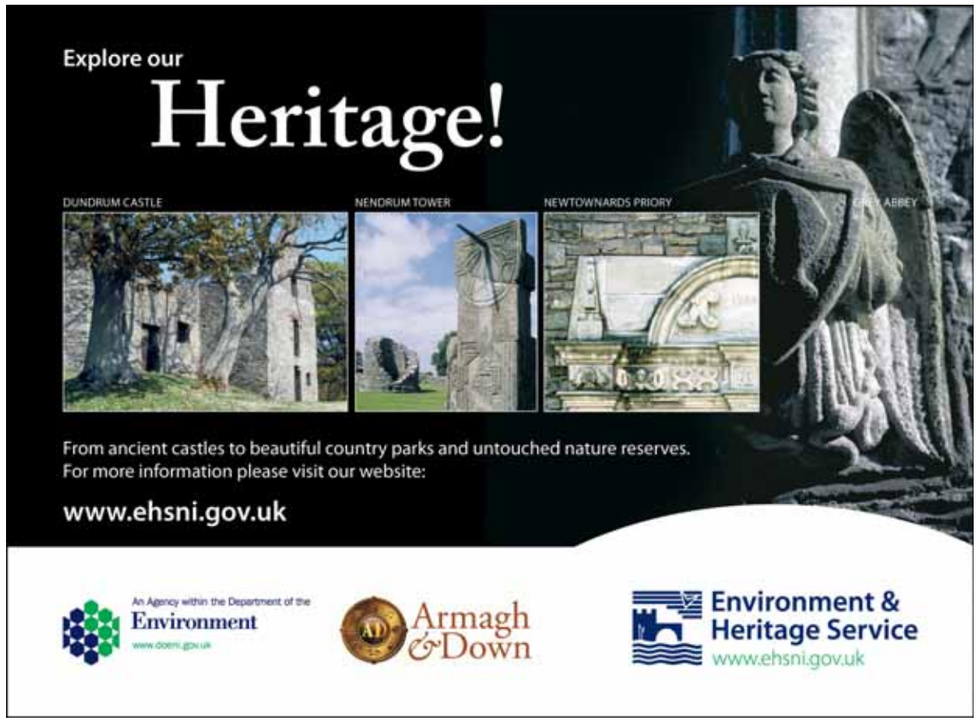
www.saintpatrickscountry.com

www.downdc.gov.uk

www.visitarmagh.com

A warm welcome guarenteed. If you stay with us you'll find it hard to go home!

ST. Pat_Brochure pre print 9/4/08 15:36 Page 16



Getting to Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is easy to get to, easy to get around. Excellent fast ferry links from England and Scotland to Belfast and Larne, 3 airports with frequent, low-cost flights from the UK and USA, plus good roads, buses and trains to take you where you want to go. Check out www.discovernorthernireland.com for ferry and airline operator details.

Alternative formats including braille, large print, disc, audio cassette are available on request.

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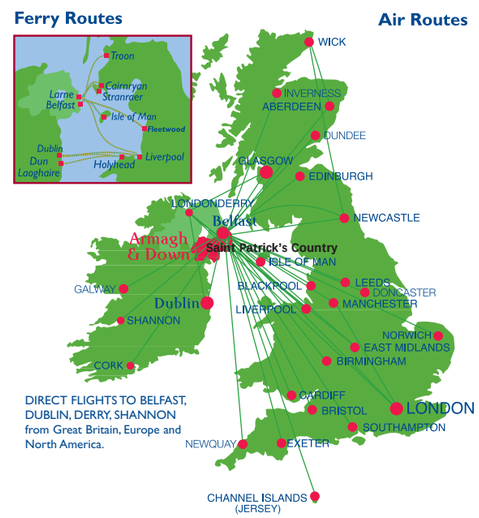
Belfast International Airport. You can fly directly from: Alicante/Amsterdam/Barcelona/Berlin/Birmingham/Blackpool/Bristol/Cardiff/Edinburgh/Faro/ Geneva/Glasgow/Inverness/ Leeds-Bradford/Liverpool/London Gatwick/London Luton/London Stansted/Malaga/Manchester/Murcia/Newcastle/ New York/Nice/Nottingham East Midlands/Palma/Paris CDG/Pisa/Prague/Rome/Southampton/Toronto/Vancouver.

George Best Belfast City Airport. You can fly directly from: Aberdeen/Birmingham/Blackpool/Cardiff/Cork/Doncaster/Dundee/ East Midlands/ Edinburgh/Exeter/Galway/Glasgow/Inverness/Isle of Man/Jersey/Leeds-Bradford/Liverpool/London Gatwick/ London Heathrow/London Stansted/London City/Manchester/Newcastle/Newquay/Rennes/Southampton.

City of Derry Airport. You can fly directly from: Dublin/Glasgow International/Liverpool/London Stansted/ Nottingham East Midlands.



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