



Out & About

Next Event: Thursday 16th February, 10.45 am

Meet at the car park outside Dundrum on the Newcastle Road before going on to Maghera. The Round Tower is in the middle of a field so wellie boots might be useful.

Past events:

- Jan 12 Dundrum – Village and shore
Nov 11 Indoor discussion event, recalling past visits, planning new ones and particularly looking at place names.
Oct 11 The Mill at Ballydugan



- Sept 11 Loughinisland Church
Aug 11 Legananny Dolmen
May 11 Clough Castle
Apr 11 Church of Ireland, Saul
Mar 11 Saul mountain

Feb. 11 History of Neilson family



- Nov. 10 Rademon non-subscribing church
Oct. 10 Discussion of options and show of photos
Sep. 10 Gowans Dolmen outside Castlewellan
July 10 Inch Abbey followed by a picnic beside the Ballynoe Stone Circle



- June 10 Dundrum Castle

May.10 A walk and the history of Struell Wells.
Apr.09 An informative walk round Newcastle
Mar.09 We were treated to a guided tour of Castlewellan when our eyes were opened to places we had previously just passed by
Jan.09 The group was fortunate to be taken round Ballynahinch by a local historian, Horace Reid, who told some of the history of Ballynahinch and pointed out significant landmarks.
Nov. 08 Ardglass: Paddy gave an informative and entertaining outline of the

- history of Ardglass
- Oct. 08 The group was guided round Castle Espie where we saw the wildlife which, at this time of year, included Brent geese. This was followed by a visit to Nendrum Abbey where there was a short film of the history of the site, followed by a guide around it.
- Apr. 08 The group enjoyed a guided tour of Friar's Bush Cemetery in Belfast.
- Feb. 08 A minibus took the group to Kilkeel where we visited a local country museum with many farm implements of yesteryear, followed by lunch in the Kilmorey Arms.
- Oct. 07 Paddy led a walk round his home area of Loughinisland combined with insight information on nits people and history
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See below:

Paddy's notes on Ardglass

ARDGLASS: PADDY KILLEN'S NOTES

Ardglass (from the Irish: '**Ard ghlais**' meaning "green high place") is a coastal village in County Down, Northern Ireland and still a relatively important fishing harbour. It is situated on the B1 Ardglass to Downpatrick road, about 11 kilometres to the south east of Downpatrick, in the Lecale peninsula on the Irish Sea. It had a population of 1,668 people in the 2001 Census. It is located within the Down District Council area.

The village is a commuter centre for workers in Downpatrick and Belfast, a seaside resort and a local service centre providing housing and a variety of shops and services largely concentrated in Castle Place, Quay Street, Kildare Street and Bath Street. A Conservation area was designated in Ardglass in 1996, focused on its early 19th century street pattern. The village has eight archaeological sites within the area and another two archaeological sites nearby. There are a number of listed properties located on Castle Place, Kildare Street and The Crescent. St Nicholas' Church, King's Castle, Ardglass Castle, Isabella Tower, the disused railway station, the North Pier and the inner Dock are also listed.

Belfast, the Capital City of Northern Ireland, is thirty miles (48km) to the North, and six miles in the same direction is the ancient and venerable County Town of Downpatrick - where lie the bones of St. Patrick, long since turned to dust - buried on a wooded hill above the Town one thousand five hundred years ago.

Twenty miles to the South the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea, and a hundred miles beyond lies Dublin, the Capital of the Republic of Ireland. Clearly visible across the Irish Sea is the Isle of Man, a fine 30-mile sail on a summer's day.

Ardglass itself has been a fishing port for over two thousand years - during a period when the Celts developed from nomadic hunting and fishing to a sound agricultural and trading economy. The sheltered deep-sea inlet of Ardglass grew into a fishing port to the point where, 150 years ago, some four or five hundred sail powered craft habitually crowded into the harbour (many from as far away as the east coast of Scotland) fishing during the summer months for herring - the 'silver darlings' of the Irish Sea - and in the winter for whiting and cod. Towards the end of the 19th century larger steam drifters replaced these tiny craft.

Today Ardglass is the home port of thirty diesel powered vessels, and is a major fish marketing and processing centre. Fish and prawns to the value of £4 or £5 million are landed in the port each year, most of it processed locally before shipping to the large cities of Europe.

Farming and fishing are still the major sources of employment in the area, but with the greatly expanding education facilities of the two major Northern Irish Universities (Queen's and the University of Ulster) and many Colleges of Further & Higher education, the population has largely grown into a highly educated and skilled workforce, seeking employment in many branches of modern engineering, technology and design - largely outside Northern Ireland

it must be said, though many people are beginning to find it possible to return, bringing developed experience to new industries.

A central aim of ADA - the Ardglass Development Association - is to ensure that these skills are properly harnessed and utilised locally. Investment in modern engineering and manufacturing has tended to be located in other parts of Northern Ireland, and ADA intends to rectify this where possible, in addition to promoting community and environmental facilities in a charming Village where the *craic* is great, the people are pleasant and well educated, the golf, water sports and sailing are fun, and the salmon, shellfish and herring good to eat. ADA recognises the need to assist in the development of a way of life that is happily productive, so that more people will enjoy living, working and relaxing in a unique and beautiful part of the world

Ardglass Harbour -- History

The natural deepwater anchorage at the foot of the green hill that gives Ardglass its name (*ard*=high, *glas*=green) was in use long before recorded history - probably for as long as 3,000 years. There is every likelihood that the great St. Patrick himself walked through the little fishing hamlet that existed in the 5th Century (well, the first church Patrick built in Ireland is only seven miles away, at Saul), and certainly by 1177 invading Anglo-Norman forces headed by John De Courcey found a well established harbour.

The port offered excellent sea communications and the fertile area of Lecale was prosperous, so de Courcey incorporated the whole as part of the Pale and rewarded his followers with grants of land. Later, Henry V111 granted the revenue of the port, amounting to £5,000, to Gerald Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare. The association of the Kildare family with Ardglass continued for three centuries.

In the early 1800's the estates were sold to William Ogilvie, tutor to the Kildare family, for the sum of £26,000. Ogilvie took a great interest in the harbour. He constructed a pier and encouraged trade. His successor, Major Aubrey William Beauclerc took little interest in Ardglass and the harbour fell into disrepair. In 1876 an Act of Parliament was passed to enable the Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland to repair the harbour on the condition that the Beauclercs relinquished all claims.

The Ministry of Commerce for Northern Ireland assumed the role of Harbour Authority in 1922.



Arriving by road from Downpatrick?

While still a mile from the village one can see the green height of Ardglass surmounted by **Isabella's Tower** (once a coastguard observation point.)



Coming by road from Strangford -on the outskirts of Ardglass the ruin of the **Old Church of Ardtole** sits on the hill on the left - and to the right, twenty miles away, looms the **Mountains of Mourne**



The Strangford and Downpatrick Roads meet at **Bath Street**, which leads into the village past the **North Dock** on the left



..... to arrive at the graceful curve of **The Crescent**, set back from the road behind fine hedges and gardens.
Traffic prevents stopping at this point.....



.... better to use the public car park just across the road from the Crescent - at the **Phennick Cove Marina** - an ideal starting point for a pleasant walk round the central area of Ardglass.



From the Marina car park it is worth having a further look at the tidal **North Dock**, built by William Ogilvie following an act of parliament in 1813. The original lighthouse was blown down in 1838 and replaced by the present fine structure in metal . The dock is a traditional refuge for fishing boats during fierce winter storms.



If you stroll past the Crescent **Kings Castle** is *on the right*, away up the hill behind a new block of flats built this year (2001). King's Castle was built on the site of an earlier 14th century tower-house in the first years of the 19th century by Charles Russell, a corn merchant from Killough. It is now a nursing home.



Approaching the harbour, **Jordan's Castle**, a 15th century defensive tower house is on the right

During the Elizabethan consolidation of English rule in Ulster, Simon Jordan held out for three years against O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, until relieved by Lord Deputy Mounjoy in 1601.

In the 18th century the castle became vacant and fell into disrepair. When it was bought by Francis Joseph Bigger in 1911 it was roofless. Bigger, a lawyer and antiquarian, saved it from oblivion, and when he died in 1926 he left it to the nation. It is now cared for by the Historic Monuments Division of the Department of the Environment.



On the left is the fine modern **Harbour** - home port to some 30 diesel engine fishing boats and landing point for fish caught by many craft of the County Down fishing fleet based in Portavogie and Kilkeel.

The natural deepwater harbour has been used in an undeveloped way for some 3,000 years, say archeologists, but it was not until the arrival of John de Courcey in 1177 that it was established as a trading port. DeCourcey had invaded north east Ireland, defeated the native Irish in several pitched battles, and set up his headquarters in Downpatrick. His rule extended over a great part of Ulster, and it was he who built the large defensive castles at Carrickfergus and Dundrum. The harbour was greatly developed by William Ogilvie, owner of Ardglass Castle, in 1850.



On going up the hill from the harbour one arrives at the appropriately named **Castle Place**, which provides access to the castles of Ardglass (*See below*).

In the square there is a fine three-storey Georgian style terrace, again built by William Ogilvie, around 1850. The terrace now houses an Italian Restaurant, the Post Office, the Village Pharmacy and a block of Flats.





At the southern end of the Castle Place is the ruin of **Margaret's Castle**, a late 15th century tower-house.

It is supposed that this fortified dwelling was connected to others in the area by a defensive wall, but no sign of the walls remain.



Opposite Margaret's Castle, at the entrance to Ardglass Golf Club is **Cowd Castle**, another remnant of a late 15th century tower-house, thought to have been part of a defensive curtain around the port.



A range of fortified warehouses at the harbour entrance, dating from the 12th century and known as the Newark (the New Works) was acquired by Lord Charles Fitzgerald in 1790. He converted the central section into **Ardglass Castle**, which he sold to William Ogilvie in 1806. The property subsequently passed to his son-in-law Charles Beauclerc, who went bankrupt in 1896. The castle and grounds were bought by a group of local men wishing to start a golf club. Ardglass Castle has been the golf clubhouse since then.



Horn Castle is to be found between the golf club and the sea. It was part of the defensive system for the port.



If you can find the energy to stroll up the Green Road, past Margaret's Castle, you can see on the right a small tower known as the **Eye of Ardglass** - a pleasant garden folly built by an adoring husband as a quiet retreat for his ailing wife, it is told..



Further along the road is **The Meadow Playing Field** - an undulating soccer and Gaelic football pitch - now largely unused for football as visiting teams found that running up and down the natural hills of a meadow gave Ardglass teams an advantage, and made the game pretty exhausting.



Isabella's Tower, above the playing fields is the landmark building first spotted from the Downpatrick Road. It marks the highest point of Ardglass. Formerly a coastguard watch tower it is now a private residence, despite the fact that it is just one tiny room on top of another.



Mourne Mountains and
Coney Island
- in Summer and in winter



It is worthwhile walking a few yards further along the Green Road to witness the fine view of **Coney Island** and the **Mountains of Mourne**.

The Mountains of Mourne have been immortalised by Percy French's tragi/humorous ballad "*Where the Mountains of Mourne Sweep Down to the Sea*", and in recent years **Coney Island** has gained fame as the spot from whence the young Belfast born singer Van Morrison went on up over the hill to Ardglass to buy some prawns "in case we got famished!" Ah yes, "... if only every day could be like this!"