

Inis Baitlín

The Forgotten Monastery



Heritage Trail

Brittas Bay, Co. Wicklow

BALLSBRIDGE !

Below is a photo of the inscription stone for the Three Mile Water bridge. It reads;- *Thomas Ball Esquire 1763*. He married the eldest daughter of the Acton family of Kilmacurragh who farmed most of the land in the area & may have built the bridge & Brittas bridge to get their farm produce to Wicklow. We were investigating if he also built Ballsbridge, bridge in D4. However with help from Pembroke Library & Ballsbridge Historical Society we discovered that it was a Nicholas Ball who built the first stone bridge over the Dodder at Ballsbridge in 1791. Our research ended here & we were unable to trace if there was a connection between the two, but possibly.

In any event this is our Ball's Bridge.



On the north side of the bridge is the Three Mile Water handball ally which was a focal point for the area for many years & also nearby was the laundry for Magheramore House.



Three Mile Water
Furzeditch
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ST PATRICK'S LANDING SITE

Historians surmise that St Patrick landed at Three Mile Water (Inis Baithin) see below Rev. Robert Heavener's study on this:- " the old name for Three Mile Water river was the Dee (Daoil). Patrick landed in 430 or 431 and was reported to have landed at a port called Ostium Dee. There is strong evidence that the Dee is the river now known as Three Mile Water " .



St Patrick The Book of Kells

" The flat sandy nature of shores between Brittas Bay and Kilpoole made them ideal landing sites for flat-bottomed ships of those times. The Book of Armagh, which gives the life of St Patrick calls 'The Ostium Dee ' 'Opportum ' and 'Clarum', meaning 'spacious and 'famous' .

Rev. Robert Heavener was a local historian 1905 to 2005. He was the bishop of a border diocese and lived locally for a number of years.

Reference;- "Credo" by Robert Heavener

" Innisboheen is beautifully situated and tradition associates this place with St. Patricks first landing".

Ref:- The Ancient Churches of the Deanery of Wicklow, Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland 1929.

It is also said that St Palladius who was sent by Pope Celestine to convert the Irish also landed in the area a year before St. Patrick in 430AD and possibly because of the significant Celtic religious importance of nearby Castletimon hill and surrounds. The aim to convert an important religious site which may have also have been Patrick's mission.

Three Mile Water was also reported to be used by later ships including Sir Walter Raleigh who anchored here while defending Irish coasts from the Spanish in the 16th century. On one occasion he marched his troops to Dunganstown castle for dinner.

Ref:- local historian, Pat Power, " Dunganstown " .

Inis Baithin Monastic Site The Forgotten Monastery

History records a 6th century monastic site on an island (Innis Baithin) at the mouth of Three Mile Water river. Archaeologists have recently confirmed that the old Three Mile Water graveyard is the continuation of this monastic site. Its founder, St Baithin was the grandson of Ronan the King of Leinster and he spent his life in the district and is possibly buried beside his church. After Glendalough, Three Mile Water / Innis Baithin (Ennisboyne) was the most important monastic site in east Wicklow at a time even before Dublin existed and may be older than Glendalough.

Ref:- The Ancient Churches of the Deanery of Wicklow, Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland 1929.



St. Baithin was an important saint & was the cousin and successor to St. Columba who brought Christianity to Scotland & he would have continued his work. The Columban monks were renowned for the Book of Kells & other manuscripts and it is conceivably that manuscripts would have been part of the work here. There would also have been a scriptorium here for this.

The monastery would have employed farm workers to till the land to supply the monastery and even to sell produce on. The monks were usually from noble families and would have been educated and spoke Latin and Gaelic.

Although references refer to the original monastic site being on an island it is unlikely to have been on Wolf Rock which is just 200mtr offshore as sea level was slightly lower (approx. 10cm) in the 5-6th century it would still have been too low lying to be suitable.

Pilgrim Path To Glendalough

There is evidence that Inis Baithin monastery may have had a pilgrim path connecting to Glendalough. It would have followed along Cullen road to Ballymoney to Ballymurrin on to Glenealy & then on to Glendalough which is 26 miles away & could have been walked in 6 hours. It would have followed old public Rights of Way & mass\funeral paths.

You can follow the route for 5km as marked by our directional signs below.



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St. Baithin's Chapel of Ease

There are two churches in Three Mile Water, this one St Baithin's "Chapel of Ease" 1907-1959 and another much older in ruins in the graveyard which was destroyed in 770 or 774 in local feuds. "The Caple of Ease" was for the convenience of parishioners who couldn't travel easily to Dunganstown Church.

A local resident reports her great-great-great grandmother Emily Cole played the organ there and when finished would jump on her bike to cycle to Dunganstown church to play again. She had no brakes and always in such a rush she would not slow down on the steep hill down to Dunganstown & would land in the field in front of the church at high speed.

This church was originally a school C1838 hence it is not in an east-west alignment as all Christian churches are. It is said it had 70 pupils at one stage but possibly using out buildings as well, perhaps the first prefabs ! An inspectors report of 1857 states the school "is commodious & well managed by one teacher, a young female".

Holedstone C1,500BC

Have a look in the old graveyard for a Holedstone (3x2ft) a Celtic ceremonial stone C1,500BC also known as "An cloc cosanta" or "luck stone" which were thought to promote healing, fertility and seer-ship. Tradition also says that if you looked through the hole it would grant you second sight and young couples would plight their troths by clasping fingers through the hole.



The Green Linnet Café



For many years the Green Linnet was a famous café in Brittas Bay & was run by Elsie Hughes from 1964 to C1980. It was renowned for freshly baked apple & rhubarb tarts which had to be ordered by holiday makers as they arrived. The traditional Irish fry was also a speciality. Elsie also made bird Boxes which were also for sale. There was also a shop near the bridge run by the Slattery's & originally nearby by the Hughes family.



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Rockfield Hotel



Rockfield Hotel Staff C1940-50's Post Card

Inscription on back reads;- " In Remembrance of Happy & Busy Day at Rockfield" Kathleen

Rockfield was built by lord Seymour in the 18th century. It was later owned by the Rutheford's, the Wade's until 1912 and subsequently the Delahunt family. It was converted to a hotel & was run successfully for a number of years. At one time it had its own runway for light aircraft & this was even lit up at night time. The hotel was destroyed in a tragic fire 1960 & reopened in 1964, it finally closed in 1990. Rockfield has many found memories for local people & from further afield.

The Abandoned Village

We have been investigating the abandoned village on Castletimon hill & there are signs of settlement but possibly very old. Also a possible un-recorded standing stone & cairn. The whole are of Brittas Bay & Castletimon hill especially are dotted with Celtic standing stones & monuments & the hill may be of considerable Celtic ceremonial significance.

By The Pupils & Staff Of Brittas Bay National School 2015

GPS & MAP

1. Ball's Bridge:

52°55'38.7"N 6°02'28.1"W or 52.927428, -6.041130

2. St Patricks Landing site:

52°55'25.6"N 6°02'29.2"W or 52.923765, -6.041449

3. Inis Baithin The Forgotten Monastery:

- 52°55'25.6"N 6°02'29.2"W or 52.923765, -6.041449

4. St Baithin's Capel of Ease:

52°55'24.9"N 6°02'29.2"W or 52.923580, -6.041452

5. The old Green Linnet Café:

52°55'22.1"N 6°02'29.4"W or 52.922818, -6.041495

6. The old Rockfield Hotel:

52°54'45.0"N 6°02'30.3"W or 52.912513, -6.041738

