In This Issue

Festivals and Events

Training 2023

Getting to Know Drogheda

Introducing our Newest Member Town

News and Updates
Hello everyone and welcome to the April 2023 edition of the Walled Town Crier.

It was fantastic to see such wide range of applications to both grants schemes this year, from all around the network. I'm very aware of the time and work that goes into putting together an application and it is a testament to the quality of the network that we got so many great applications from both local authorities and community groups.

We have our first training day of 2023 coming up on the 10th May in Kells, Co. Meath. More on that overleaf.

Also in this issue: we'll be getting to know Drogheda, introducing our newest member town – which brings the network total to 32 – and we have the usual round-up of news and updates to conclude.

Warmest Regards,
Eimear
Eimear O’Connell, IWTN Project Manager.
Festivals and Events consultant, Colm Croffy, will deliver a practical training day, focused on how the festivals and events landscape has changed post-Covid and how community events can adapt and thrive in the new environment.

We’re delighted to be heading to Kells, Co. Meath, for our first training day of 2023, and we’re equally delighted to welcome facilitator Colm Croffy. Colm has a wealth of experience in organising festivals and events of all shapes and sizes, both at home and abroad, and has delivered a number of excellent training days for the IWTN in previous years.

This will be a practical and informative day out. It will suit groups who already have festivals up and running as well as those who might like to organise new events in the future or to revive past events.

For those who intend to apply for events funding under the IWTN Interpretation and Events Scheme in coming years, it’s worth noting that attendance at Festivals and Events Training will count positively towards the ‘Feasibility’ section of the assessment criteria.

Catering on the day will be provided by the excellent Bookmarket Café in Kells.

Please register your attendance at the Eventbrite link HERE.

I look forward to catching up with many of you there.

### IWTN Festivals and Events Training

10 May 2023, Kells Courthouse Tourism and Cultural Hub

**Training Day Programme**

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<td>Arrival/Registration/Tea &amp; Coffee</td>
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<td>10.30-11.30</td>
<td>Getting People for Volunteer Roles and Committees - a new approach to volunteering.</td>
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<td>Group exercise: “How effective are we at positioning our volunteer ask?”</td>
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<td>11.45-13.00</td>
<td>Reaching Out To New Audiences - getting more newcomers to attend and engage with our events.</td>
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<td>Group exercise: “Building a new Marketing Reach Campaign for Your Event.”</td>
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<td>13.00-14.00</td>
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<td>14.00-15.15</td>
<td>Sponsorship: Not a Charitable Request - building commercial partnerships and new revenue streams for your event.</td>
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<td>Group exercise: “Creating a new Sponsorship Ask and Inventory for your event”.</td>
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<td>15.15-15.45</td>
<td>How Might We Do That? Questions and Answers Session</td>
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“Drogheda was, after Dublin and Waterford, the leading town in medieval Ireland and it continued to hold a position of major importance until the 19th century when regional centres further from Dublin developed at a faster rate. It was almost unique [...] in being, for over two centuries, two separate towns linked physically by a bridge (with gates) but not legally or administratively.”


When Hugh de Lacy was granted the Lordship of Meath in 1172, he quickly set about establishing Drogheda as the port for the Meath lands, building a motte-and-bailey fortification there (at Millmount Fort) before 1186. De Lacy granted a charter for the establishment of Drogheda town on the Meath side of the river in 1194.

There is little evidence of organised settlement in Drogheda before the Anglo-Norman period. The area gained increasing strategic importance as King Henry II attempted to consolidate his power in Ireland after the Norman invasion. Drogheda is located at the lowest fording point on the Boyne estuary – its Irish name Droichead Átha means the bridge at the ford - and in the late twelfth century the river Boyne formed the boundary between the Norman lordships of Meath (on the south bank of the river) and Oriel (on its north).
Meath was the largest of the Norman-held liberties in Ireland and de Lacy’s authority over it was maintained by establishing a system of feudal baronies or cantreds, in which control over parts of the province was effectively ‘sub-let’ to individual barons in return for the collection of taxes and the enforcement of the lord’s power. It is a measure of the importance of Drogheda that de Lacy – whose base was at Trim Castle – did not establish a barony at Drogheda but rather kept the town under his own direct control.

The Louth side of the river, on the other hand, fell under the control of the Oriel (or Uriel) lordship, granted by King Henry II to Bertram de Verdun in 1171. Drogheda was also strategically-important to Oriel, both for its estuarine location and as a base for expansion northward into Ulster, and de Verdun quickly established a town there.

In this way, Drogheda was founded as two separate Anglo-Norman settlements, Drogheda-in-Meath and Drogheda-in-Oriel, one on either side of the same river, linked by a bridge but organised and administered completely separately. The two towns were not formally amalgamated until 1412.

In the 13th century the towns received numerous murage grants for the creation of walls to replace their existing earthen banks and wooden palisade defences which dated from the 12th century. The earliest recorded murage grant to Drogheda dates to 1234, making it only the third town in Ireland to receive a murage grant. By 1334 the two town walls were completed. They enclosed 113 acres of land and the wall’s perimeter was an impressive 3,545m. This made Drogheda one of the largest walled towns of its time.

The stone walls were 5-7m in height, 1-2m in width, and included a battlemented and arcaded wall walk. The walls had 8 main gates and at least 4 smaller ones. One of the best surviving parts of Drogheda’s walls today
is St Laurence’s Gate. Dated to the mid-13th century, the gate was four stories high, was double-towered and had both a barbican and a portcullis. It remains an impressive monument. Avril Thomas, in The Walled Towns of Ireland (Vol.2) describes St. Laurence’s gate as “easily the finest piece of medieval town fortification surviving in Ireland”.

The walls of Drogheda held out against attacks from Edward the Bruce between 1315-1317 and Phelim O’Neill in 1641-1642. Cromwell breached the walls in 1649 and sacked the town. The walls were rebuilt in 1689 to better survive cannon fire but were never tested because the Williamite victory in 1690 at the Battle of the Boyne led directly to the town’s surrender the next day. After this, the redundant walls were gradually removed. However, surviving stretches of the wall can still be seen at Scotch Hall, Butter Gate, Featherbed Lane and Millmount.

Drogheda today has a diverse population, and its proximity to Dublin has seen it develop as a commuter town for the capital as well as a regional centre in its own right. A Business Improvement District (BID) for Drogheda was set up in 2019 and has delivered a range of initiatives for the town, including the Lú Festival of Light and DRAWDA Urban Art Project. A major urban regeneration master plan for the Westgate area of the town – Westgate Vision – is due to launch in 2023.

The town of Drogheda continued to straddle the Meath/Louth county boundary until 1898 when the entire town was incorporated into an expanded Co. Louth. As the town has continued to expand in recent decades its southern environs have again extended into County Meath and a Joint Urban Area Plan is currently being prepared by the two local authorities.
Other attractions:

In addition to its walled town heritage, Drogheda hosts a wide range of cultural institutions and visitor attractions.

**The Highlanes Municipal Art Gallery** opened in the former Franciscan Friary Church in Drogheda in 2006. In addition to showcasing works from the municipal art collection, the gallery hosts an exciting programme of modern and contemporary art exhibitions. The collection includes the ceremonial sword and mace presented to Drogheda Corporation by King William III after the Battle of the Boyne.

[www.highlanes.ie](http://www.highlanes.ie)

**Droichead Arts Centre** is a small, independently-run Arts Centre in the centre of Drogheda. It comprises two premises: a modern theatre on Stockwell Street and an 18th century Palladian style pavilion townhouse called Barlow House on West Street. Droichead is an active producer of festivals and professional theatre, annually presenting Leanbh Arts Festival for Children and Drogheda Traditional Music Weekend.

[www.droichead.com](http://www.droichead.com)

**The Tholsel** was built in 1770. It served as the centre of municipal authority in Drogheda for 130 years. The building regularly hosted sessions of the Irish Parliament and is now home to Drogheda Tourist Office.

[www.drogheda.ie](http://www.drogheda.ie)

**St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church** (1884) is well-known to the generations of Irish schoolchildren who were brought there on somewhat-macabre school tours. It houses the preserved head of St Oliver Plunkett (1625–81), the last Catholic martyr to die in England.

[www.saipntpetersdrogheda.ie](http://www.saipntpetersdrogheda.ie)

**Drogheda Museum Millmount** is based at Millmount Fort and is a community-run museum, managed by the Old Drogheda Society. Millmount itself is a fascinating site with a layered history and the museum exhibits cover aspects of the social, industrial, military and religious history of Drogheda. It is also the starting point for a number of historical walking tours of the town.

[www.droghedamuseum.ie/visit/about-us](http://www.droghedamuseum.ie/visit/about-us)

PM Note: This text has been prepared by the IWTN Project Manager based in part on text originally written by Liam Mannix. Any errors or omissions PM’s own.
We are delighted to welcome Navan to the Irish Walled Towns Network.

One of five IWTN member towns that fell within Hugh de Lacy’s lordship of Meath (the others are Drogheda, Fore, Kells and Trim), Navan is located at what would have been the centre of the Norman lordship, at the confluence of the Boyne and Blackwater rivers.

There is archaeological evidence for prehistoric and early medieval settlement in Navan, including for an extensive 9th/10th-century complex. When de Lacy was granted the lordship of Meath he chose Trim as his administrative base, and Navan was likely established as a market town by Jocelyn Nangle, his baron.

Two mottes survive outside what would have been the medieval town, and of these Navan Motte – located to the west of the town – is believed to have been Nangle’s base.

The early town defences are likely to have been constructed from earth and timber. The first known murage grant dates to 1469-70, but documentary evidence suggests that the onset of murage may have been somewhat earlier. Extensive rebuilding of the walled circuit took place in the mid-sixteenth century following an attack led by Con O’Neill and Manus O'Donnell. When the circuit was completed, it included three gates - Trim Gate, Dublin Gate and Water Gate.
Today several sections of the fifteenth-sixteenth century wall survive, some of them in the rear of sites, or built into later buildings. A substantial section can be found in the County Council depot on Abbey Road. The town also retains much of its medieval street pattern, street alignments and burgage plots.

A conservation plan for Navan’s town walls was prepared in 2021 and conservation works were subsequently carried out to the section of wall in the County Council depot on Abbey Road.

The Navan and District Historical Society has been active in raising awareness of Navan’s heritage as a walled town for many years and has organised several well-attended Heritage Week events focused on the town walls.

We very much look forward to working with Navan and District Historical Society and with Meath County Council on many successful IWTN projects in the years ahead.

PM Note: For anyone interested in reading more about medieval Navan, an excellent starting point would be Clare Ryan’s ‘The Archaeology and History of Medieval Navan, Co. Meath’ in Corlett & Potterton (eds.), The Town in Medieval Ireland in the Light of Recent Archaeological Excavations (Dublin, Wordwell, 2020).
Grants Update

All applications to the two IWTN grants schemes have now been assessed by an external panel and reviewed by the Board of the Heritage Council. Letters of Offer are due to be issued before the end of the month.

There are a number of responses still outstanding. If one of them is yours, please submit it. Your assistance is greatly appreciated!

The IWTN Project Manager (that’s me!) is currently undertaking visits to all member towns. If I haven’t already been in touch to arrange a visit, I will be soon. If there’s a particular date or event that you’d like to try and arrange a visit around then please do let me know.

IWTN Conservation Audit

There are a number of responses still outstanding. If one of them is yours, please submit it. Your assistance is greatly appreciated!

Social Media

Thanks to everyone for sending on social media content as we adjust to the new system. Please continue to use the hashtag #IWTN on all network-related posts and to tag the relevant Heritage Council account:

- @HeritageHubIRE
- TheHeritageCouncil
- @theheritagecouncil

Illustrated Map Preview

Artist Fiona Dunne has been working on an illustrated map of the IWTN member towns (sneak peek above). This will be distributed to all members shortly.
Floral display and interpretative signage at St. Laurence's Gate, Drogheda.
Image: Liam Mannix.

Contact Us:
Please do get in touch at iwtn@heritagecouncil.ie if you would like us to promote news or projects happening in your walled town over the coming months.

www.irishwalledtownsnetwork.ie

The IWTN is funded by the Heritage Council and delivered in partnership with Local Authorities and community groups.