

Welcome to Newtownmountkenny at the foothills of the Wicklow Mountains on the main route from Dublin to Wexford. The town has the longest place name in Ireland. The Gaelic name 'Baile an Chinnéidigh' means 'Town of the Kennedys'. The town was founded in the late 17th Century by Sir Richard Kennedy, a judge and Baron of the Exchequer, later known as Lord Rossmore.

The town has grown rapidly in recent years with new housing, two hotels, several golf courses and a business park being developed. Today Newtownmountkenny is a hub for recreational activities. The river walk, adjacent woodland and the nearby East Coast Nature Reserve attract many visitors. The town is a gateway to Wicklow Mountains National Park and the Monastic City of Glendalough with many spectacular drives and walks.



Wicklow Mountains



Water Supply to Dublin City

The Varty Water Supply Scheme was constructed from 1862 - 1868 and supplies 75 million litres of potable water daily to Dublin City, North Wicklow and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown. The scheme consists of two reservoirs and a treatment plant on the Varty River near Roundwood with a 4km tunnel and two 28km cast iron pipes carrying treated water to three service reservoirs at Stillorgan, Co. Dublin. Shortly downstream from the treatment works water discharges to a tunnel, driven through rock in the side of the river valley and emerging at Callowhill above Newtownmountkenny. Two cast iron pipes run across country from Callowhill, through Newtownmountkenny Main Street and follow the N11 to Stillorgan. A valve house located in Newtownmountkenny controlled water flow through the pipes. This was occupied by waterworks staff until approximately 1960 but is now in ruins.

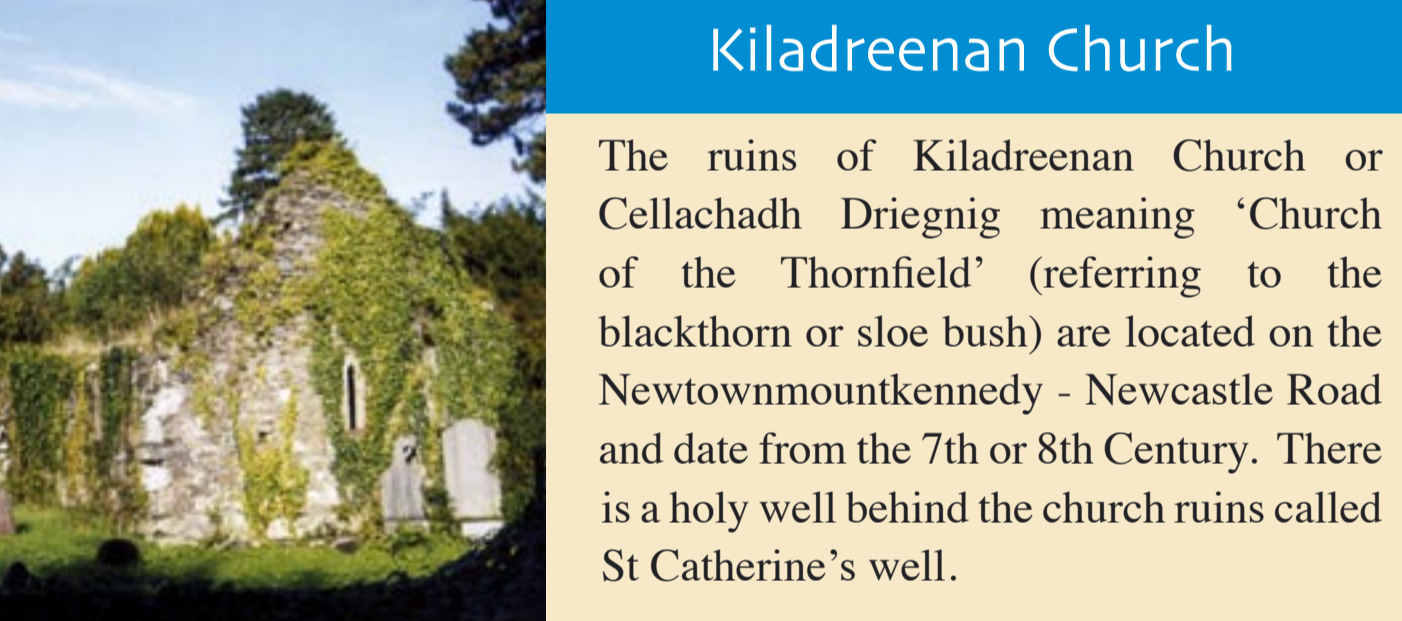
The Battle of Newtownmountkenny, 1798

This famous local battle took place on 28th May 1798. It was one of many battles fought during the 1798 Rebellion between British crown forces and the native Irish who sought independence from England. Irish rebels from the locality and neighbouring villages under their leader Michael Neil led an unsuccessful assault on the military barracks in the village. Sixty of the crown forces led by Captain Bregany set fire to houses in the square to create a smokescreen for a counteroffensive. Many of the wounded and exhausted rebels withdrew to nearby Dunran woods and the Devils Glen. Following the battle local yeomanry cavalry set fire to the woods to flush them out. Of the 1,000 rebel forces who took part about 170 perished. Michael Neil was later executed and is buried in Kiladreenan graveyard. The crown forces numbered about 100 which included the yeomanry. Captain Bregany was killed in the assault and is buried in Newcastle graveyard.



Newcastle Hospital

Newcastle Hospital opened in 1896 as the first Tuberculosis (TB) Hospital in Ireland. Then called the National Consumptive Hospital, it was designed by architect Thomas M. Dean and built by Colten Brothers of Portadown, County Armagh. Between 1871 and 1880 one in eleven deaths in Ireland was caused by TB. Many of those who died of the disease are buried in the old Kilmurray graveyard in unmarked graves. In 1965 the hospital became the District Psychiatric Hospital for County Wicklow. In 1972 a voluntary group leased part of the nurses home and grounds for St. Catherine's. From small beginnings, St. Catherine's now provides education and care for approximately 200 children with special needs in its schools and community centres. The hospital and St. Catherine's have always been a great source of employment for local people and for east Wicklow.



Kiladreenan Church

The ruins of Kiladreenan Church or Cellachadh Driengnig meaning 'Church of the Thornfield' (referring to the blackthorn or sloe bush) are located on the Newtownmountkenny - Newcastle Road and date from the 7th or 8th Century. There is a holy well behind the church ruins called St Catherine's well.

Chapel River Mass Rock

The Mass Rock was used for masses in penal times and is located at the townlands of Kiladreenan/Kiltimon close to the southbound side of the N11. In 1954 the local Parish Priest, Father Masterson, said mass here and erected a statue of Our Lady. Since the Marian year, a tradition of celebrating mass at this rock has been re-established as an annual event on the 2nd Sunday in May. This is concluded with a march of 1798 pike men and women to Kiladreenan Church where a wreath is laid on Michael Neil's grave.

Drumbaun - Carriggower Bog

This large wetland is located near the Varty River about 4km from the village of Newtownmountkenny. It is a source of the Altidore River. The site contains a rich diversity of plants associated with both bog and fen habitats (sphagnum moss, heathers, bog asphodel, sedges & rushes) and is of high importance nationally for invertebrates, supporting many species of water beetles, dragonflies and the rare Marsh Frilltail Butterfly. The bog is nationally notable for wintering Snipe and Jack Snipe. This site is a proposed Natural Heritage Area and is designated as a candidate Special Area of Conservation. Part of the site is privately owned and the rest is owned by the State and managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Woodstock House (Druids Glen)

Woodstock House was built in 1770 for the Earl of Aldborough and it was also the favourite residence of Marquis Wellesley. Later owners include Lord Tottenham, the Bishop of Clogher, the Van Den Berg Family and William Forewood. The house was sold in 1992 to create Druids Glen Hotel & Golf Resort. The original Woodstock House is used as the main clubhouse for the golf club. The resort has two championship golf courses, Druids Glen and Druids Heath. The Druids Glen Course played host to the Irish Open Golf Championship on four occasions and was voted European Golf Course of the year in 2000. Many great golf names have been associated with this club.

Gaelic Games

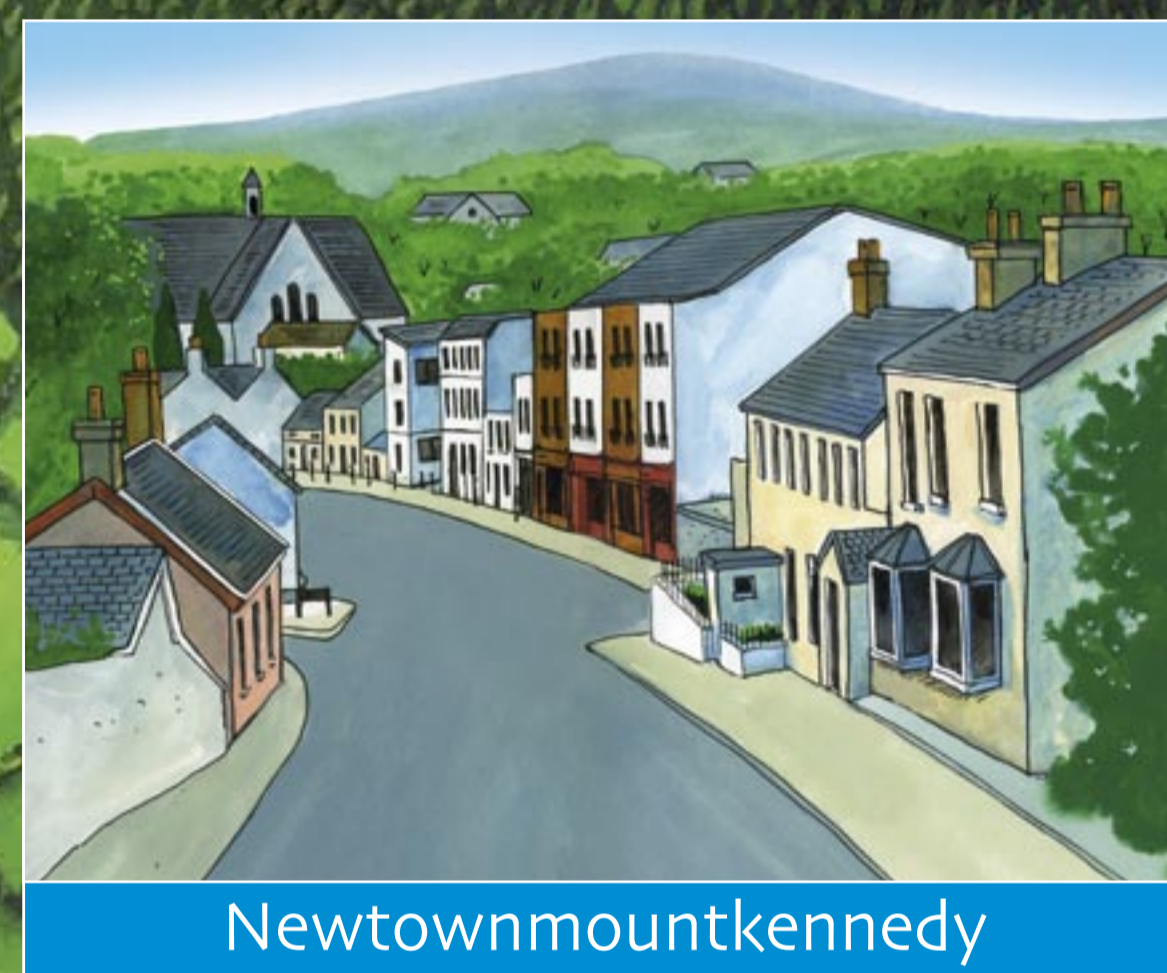
Newtown has a very proud and strong tradition of Gaelic Games. The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) club of Newtown is one of the oldest clubs in the country founded in 1887. The club has numerous county championships to its name, the most prestigious being the County Senior Championship won on two occasions by Newtown in 1964 and 1975. Newtown GAA Club plays in black and white and is proudly known as 'The Maggies', a name which they have been called for generations.

Geology of the Area

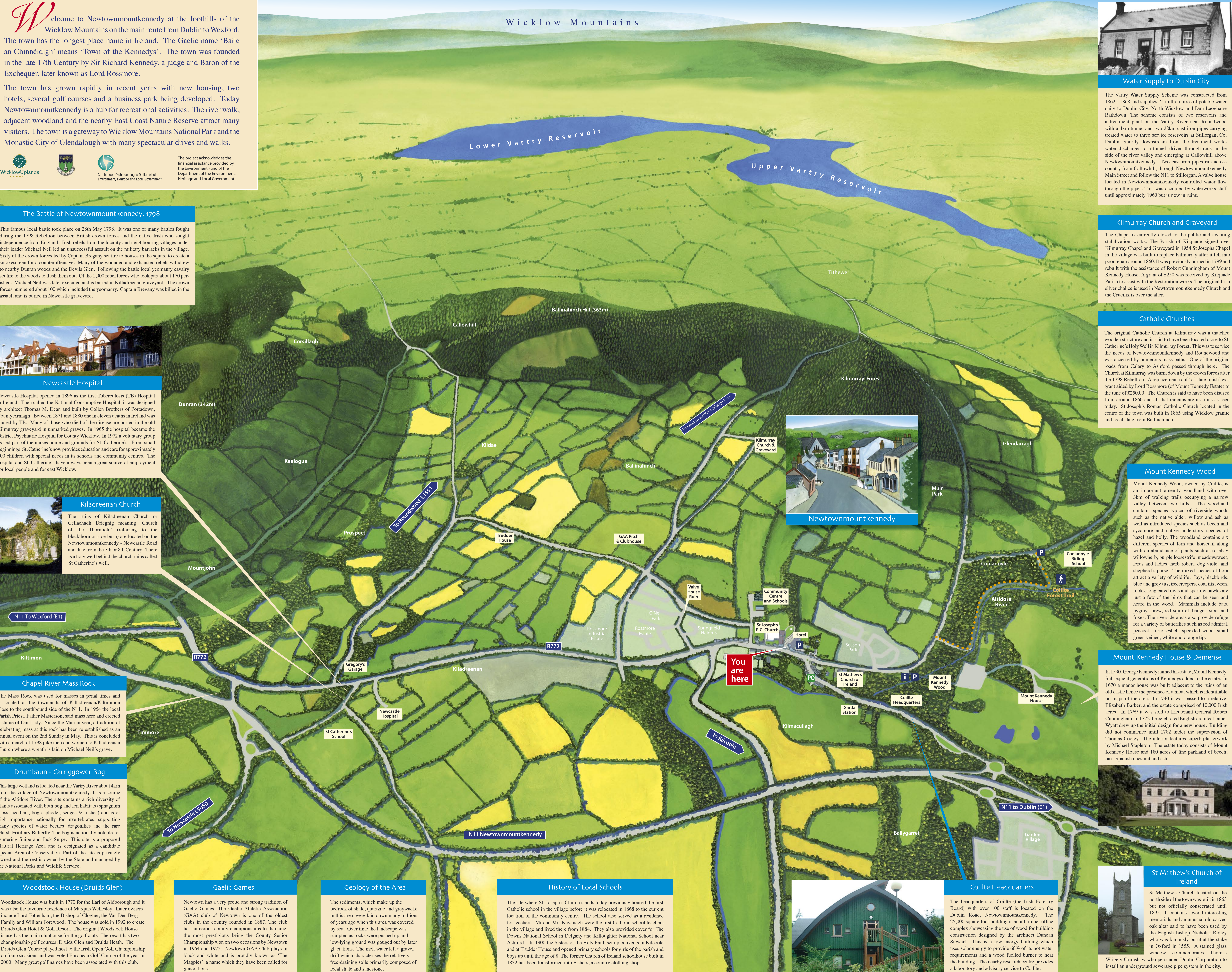
The sediments, which make up the bedrock of shale, quartzite and greywacke in this area, were laid down many millions of years ago when this area was covered by sea. Over time the landscape was sculpted as rocks were pushed up and low-lying ground was gouged out by later glaciations. The melt water left a gravel drift which characterises the relatively free-draining soils primarily composed of local shale and sandstone.

History of Local Schools

The site where St. Joseph's Church stands today previously housed the first Catholic school in the village before it was relocated in 1868 to the current location of the community centre. The school also served as a residence for teachers. Mr and Mrs Kavanagh were the first Catholic school teachers in the village and lived there from 1884. They also provided cover for The Downs National School in Delgany and Killougher National School near Ashford. In 1900 the Sisters of the Holy Faith set up convents in Killoole and at Trudder House and opened primary schools for girls of the parish and boys up until the age of 8. The former Church of Ireland schoolhouse built in 1832 has been transformed into Fishers, a country clothing shop.



Newtownmountkenny



Kilmurray Church and Graveyard

The Chapel is currently closed to the public and awaiting stabilization works. The Parish of Kilquade signed over Kilmurray Chapel and Graveyard in 1954. St. Joseph's Chapel in the village was built to replace Kilmurray after it fell into poor repair around 1860. It was previously burned in 1799 and rebuilt with the assistance of Robert Cunningham of Mount Kennedy House. A grant of £250 was received by Kilquade Parish to assist with the restoration works. The original fish silver chalice is used in Newtownmountkenny Church and the Crucifix is over the altar.

Catholic Churches

The original Catholic Church at Kilmurray was a thatched wooden structure and is said to have been located close to St. Catherine's Holy Well in Kilmurray Forest. This was to service the needs of Newtownmountkenny and Roundwood and was accessed by numerous mass paths. One of the original roads from Calary to Ashford passed through here. The Church at Kilmurray was burnt down by the crown forces after the 1798 Rebellion. A replacement roof of 'slate finish' was granted aided by Lord Rossmore (of Mount Kennedy Estate) to the tune of £250.00. The Church is said to have been disused from around 1860 and all that remains are its ruins as seen today. St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church located in the centre of the town was built in 1865 using Wicklow granite and local slate from Ballinahinch.

Mount Kennedy Wood

Mount Kennedy Wood, owned by Coillte, is an important amenity woodland with over 3km of walking trails occupying a narrow valley between two hills. The woodland contains species typical of riverside woods such as the native alder, willow and ash as well as introduced species such as beech and sycamore and native understorey species of hazel and holly. The woodland contains six different species of fern and horsetail along with an abundance of plants such as rosebay willowherb, purple loosestrife, meadowsweet, lords and ladies, herb robert, dog violet and shepherd's purse. The mixed species of flora attract a variety of wildlife. Jays, blackbirds, blue and grey tits, treecreepers, coal tits, wrens, rooks, long eared owls and sparrow hawks are just a few of the birds that can be seen and heard in the wood. Mammals include bats, pygmy shrew, red squirrel, badger, stoat and foxes. The riverside areas also provide refuge for a variety of butterflies such as red admiral, peacock, tortoiseshell, speckled wood, small green veined, white and orange tip.

Mount Kennedy House & Demense

In 1590, George Kennedy named his estate, Mount Kennedy. Subsequent generations of Kennedys added to the estate. In 1670 a manor house was built adjacent to the ruins of an old castle hence the presence of a moat which is identifiable on maps of the area. In 1740 it was passed to a relative, Elizabeth Barker, and the estate comprised of 10,000 Irish acres. In 1769 it was sold to Lieutenant General Robert Cunningham. In 1772 the celebrated English architect James Wyatt drew up the initial design for a new house. Building did not commence until 1782 under the supervision of Thomas Cooley. The interior features superb plasterwork by Michael Stapleton. The estate today consists of Mount Kennedy House and 180 acres of fine parkland of beech, oak, Spanish chestnut and ash.



Mount Kennedy House



Coillte Headquarters

The headquarters of Coillte (the Irish Forestry Board) with over 100 staff is located on the Dublin Road, Newtownmountkenny. The 25,000 square foot building is an all timber office complex showcasing the use of wood for building construction designed by the architect Duncan Stewart. This is a low energy building which uses solar energy to provide 60% of its hot water requirements and the wood fuelled burner to heat the building. The nearby research centre provides a laboratory and advisory service to Coillte.

St. Mathew's Church of Ireland

St. Mathew's Church located on the north side of the town was built in 1863 but not officially consecrated until 1895. It contains several interesting memorials and an unusual old carved oak altar said to have been used by the English bishop Nicholas Ridley who was famously burnt at the stake in Oxford in 1555. A stained glass window commemorates Thomas Wrigley Grimshaw who persuaded Dublin Corporation to install an underground sewerage pipe system in the city.