



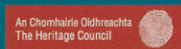
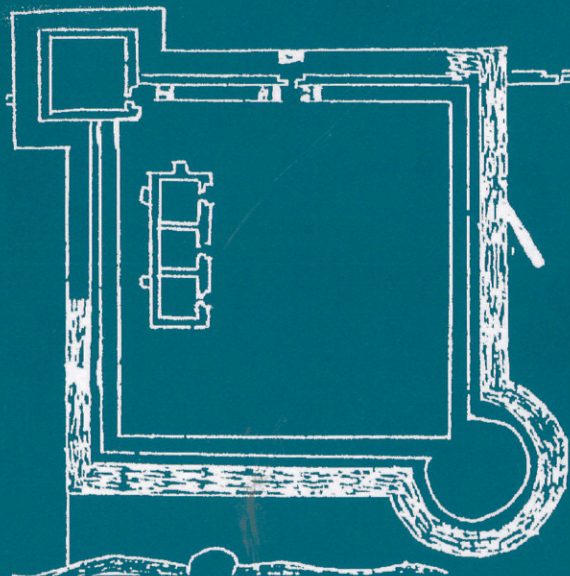
Laois Heritage Society

Cumann Sean Dailíochta Conndae Laoise

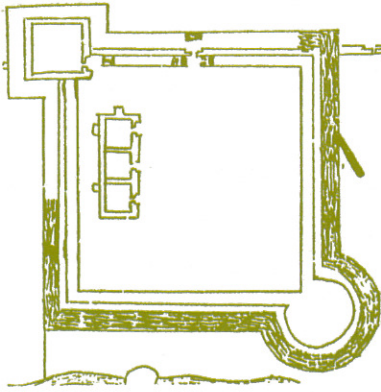


PORTLAOISE HERITAGE TRAIL

*Slí Oidhreachta
Port Laoise*



Old Fort of Maryborough



PORTLAOISE - LINKS WITH THE PAST

Portlaoise was the first planted town in the English speaking world. The town grew around the Old Fort of Maryborough, known as Fort Protector, which was established in 1547/48 by the Lord Deputy, Sir Edward Bellingham, as a military base to curb the warlike activities of the local clans, led by the O'Moores. The Fort formed an outer defence to protect settlers in the Pale, who were under constant threat of attack by the native Irish.

In 1557, in the reign of Philip and Mary, the Plantation of Laois and Offaly began. This was a policy of colonisation of the counties with the native Irish forced from their land which was then claimed by English settlers. The policy met with fierce resistance and ended in failure but further efforts at colonisation, particularly in Ulster, proved successful.

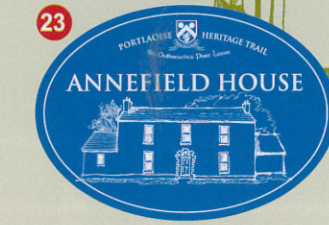
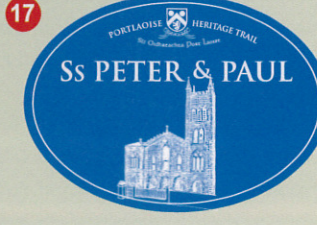
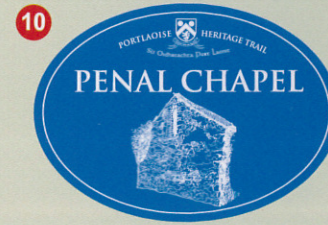
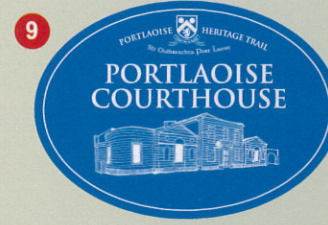
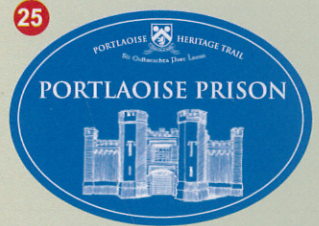
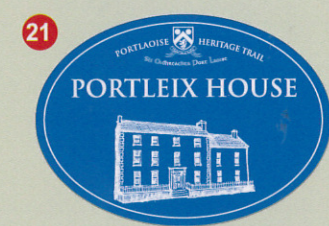
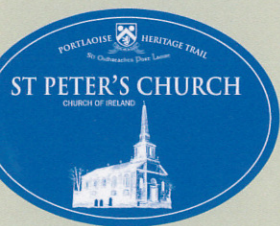
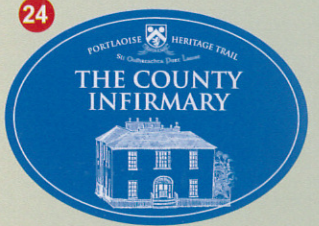
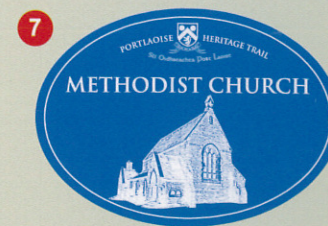
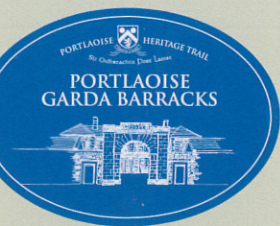
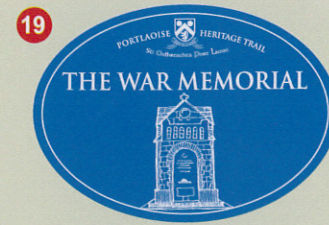
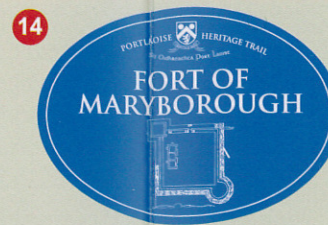
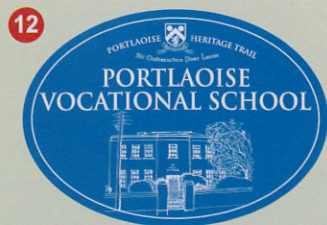
The town was named Maryborough in honour of Queen Mary, daughter of Henry VIII. Laois was named the Queen's County. In 1570, under a charter of Queen Elizabeth I, the town was raised to the rank of borough. The Corporation consisted of a burgomaster, two bailiffs, burgesses and freemen, a town clerk and a Sergeant-at-Arms. In 1635 the Corporation of Maryborough got a grant of two fairs from King Charles I.

The Old Fort came under constant attack from local clans. After the Irish insurrection of the 1640s led by Rory O'Moore, it was demolished by Cromwellian forces under Colonels Hewson and Reynolds in 1650. But out of the ashes of the Old Fort, the town grew in size and prosperity. It was the seat of the Queen's County Assizes and the headquarters of the County Constabulary force and most of the county institutions. The town returned two members to the Irish Parliament until the Act of Union in 1800 when the franchise was abolished.

Maryborough was renamed Portlaoise in 1920 by the Town Commissioners in advance of Independence in 1922. Portlaoise has experienced tremendous growth in recent years and is a busy commercial centre with a wide range of social, sporting, educational and medical facilities.

It remains today at the crossroads of Ireland in geographic and strategic terms as it was throughout its turbulent past in the historic sense. It now has its own Town Council, the chairperson of which has the title of Mayor of Portlaoise.

Among its most famous inhabitants are Bartholomew Mosse, founder of the Rotunda, the first maternity hospital in the British Empire, and the aviator, Col. James Fitzmaurice, co-pilot on the first successful east-west transatlantic flight in 1928.



The County Infirmary

1 James Fintan Lalor Memorial.

Located at County Hall. Commemorates the great agrarian reformer, whose writings inspired leaders of the Land League and the Easter Rising in 1916.

2 Portlaoise Garda Barracks.

Built in 1808 as a Military Barracks. Taken over by the Garda Síochána in the 1930s.

3 St Peter's Church.

Built in 1803. Was the first building on the Great Green of Maryborough. The obelisk spire was designed by James Gandon.

4 Market Square.

A thriving centre of open-air commerce and site of mass rallies and famous duels in the 19th century. The Town Hall was destroyed by fire in 1945.

5 The Maltings.

Established in 1866 by John Wrafter, Licensed Maltster. Site of an older malthouse dating from mid-eighteenth century.

6 Railway Station.

Designed by Sancton Wood and built with local limestone. Plaque on Platform 2 commemorates the great railway pioneer, William Dargan, a native of County Laois.

7 Methodist Church.

Built in Gothic style to the design of Morley, the architect, in 1883.

8 Old County Gaol.

On site now occupied by Dunamais Theatre and Arts Centre. Scene of many public hangings up to its closure in 1830.

9 Courthouse.

Built to the design of Morrison, the architect, in 1782. Queens (Laois) County Council held its inaugural meeting here in 1899.

10 Old St Peter's Church.

Built c. 1560. Its most famous vicar was Thomas Mosse, father of Bartholomew Mosse, founder of the Rotunda, the first maternity hospital in the English-speaking world. John Wesley preached here.

11 Portlaoise Vocational School.

First opened in 1907. It was one of the first Technical Schools in Ireland. Replaced by new college at Mountrath Road in 2006.

12 Penal Chapel.

Built in 1792 during Penal Times. Remained in use until 1804 when Old St Peter's Church became vacant and Catholic worship resumed there.

13 St Mary's C.B.S.

Established by local parish priest, Rev. Nicholas O'Connor. It was only the second Christian Brothers' School in Leinster, outside Dublin.

14 Fort of Maryborough.

Constructed between 1548-56 to underpin the Plantation of Laois and Offaly. Had a turbulent history with the occupying forces resisting numerous uprisings by native clans, led by the O'Moore's.

15 Fitzmaurice Place.

Commemorates the famous Irish aviator Col. James Fitzmaurice. Was co-pilot of the Bremen, the first aeroplane to fly the Atlantic from east to west. He was reared in Portlaoise.

16 Odlums' Mills.

This is the site of Maryborough Mill, a substantial water-powered flour mill dating from c.1827. It was operated by the Odum family from 1865. Milling ceased in 1978. Buildings were demolished in 1991.

17 Ss. Peter and Paul Church.

Opened in 1822, it was built in the gothic style by Rev. Nicholas O'Connor. Was replaced by new church at Dublin Road in 1965 and demolished in the late 1980s.

18 Presentation Convent.

Presentation Sisters came to Portlaoise in 1824 on invitation of Rev. Nicholas O'Connor. The Sisters have provided free education for girls in Portlaoise ever since.

19 The War Memorial.

Erected at Bank Place in 1928 in honour of those from the 4th Leinster Regiment who gave their lives in WW1. Now situated in the Memorial Park commemorating all Laois people killed in times of war.

20 The Stone House.

Circular tower now incorporated in the Presentation Convent. Built in 1547, also known as Captain Rogers' House, it was linked by underground passage to the Old Fort.

21 Portleix House.

Built c. 1808. Was home to the famous Jacob medical family for over 100 years. A family member Dr Arthur Jacob discovered the membrane of the eye, afterwards called 'Membrane Jacobi'.

22 Burial Ridge of Maryborough.

The Ridge running from Timahoe to beyond Tullamore was formed by an esker during the Ice Age. Was used as a burial ground from the 17th century.

23 Annefield House.

Birthplace of Bartholomew Mosse, the founder of the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin which was the first maternity hospital in the English speaking world. Its foundation stone was laid on 24 May 1751.

24 The Old Infirmary.

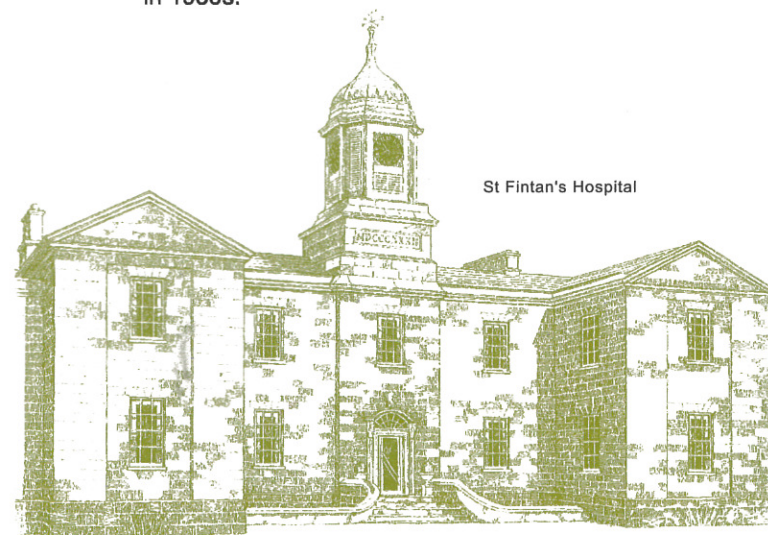
Opened in 1808 under the administration of Dr John Jacob. Four generations of the Jacob medical family were involved with the running of the hospital. Replaced by the new county hospital in 1935

25 Portlaoise Prison.

Opened in 1830 as the County Gaol. New wing added in 1911. Used during Civil War period to house republican prisoners. Became a high security prison in 1973 housing mainly those convicted of IRA activities.

26 St Fintan's Hospital.

Psychiatric hospital founded in 1832 as the District Lunatic Asylum for Queen's County, King's County, Longford and Westmeath. Red brick extension added in 1930s.





Laois Heritage Society

Cumann Sean Dúilíochán Comrúda Laois



PORTLAOISE HERITAGE TRAIL *Slí Oidhreachtá Port Laoise*

Laois Heritage Society is the umbrella body for heritage interests in County Laois. It draws its membership from all parts of the county and works in cooperation with the Laois Heritage Forum as well as local heritage and historical groups, many of whom are represented in its membership. The membership is open to anyone with an interest in the objectives of the Society which are to promote the awareness of heritage, its importance and its conservation as well as getting involved in heritage projects. The Society organizes talks, outings and other heritage related events and publishes its own journal every two years.

Further details on website: laoisheritageforum.com

The sub-committee of Laois Heritage Society involved in the Portlaoise Heritage Trail: Teddy Fennelly (Chairman), Mary Lalor, Hon. Sec. (phone: 057 86 46541), Michael Parsons, Kathleen O'Brien, T.C., and Andrias MacCuilleann.

Laois Heritage Society acknowledge the invaluable assistance for this project by Laois Leader, the Heritage Council and Catherine Casey, Heritage Officer, Laois County Council.

This brochure is kindly sponsored by Portlaoise Construction Co.

