



DYSERT O'DEA Geopark Heritage Trail

Location Map



Map Legend

- Heritage Trail Route
- Trail Start/End
- National Roadway
- Regional Roadway
- Other Roadway
- Buildings

Loop Overview

- Start: 12m (12m with spur to Rath Church)
- End: 1.5-2hr (2.5hr with spur)
- Route: M101 road and old roadways
- Access: Walking boots, raincoat, fluid, mobile phone



1 Dyserd O'Dea Castle Built between 1475 and 1480 by Donnchadh O'Dea, this castle was partially built over an earlier site during the Cromwellian period. Rebuilt in the 1800s by the Dyserd O'Dea Development Association, it retains many original features, including the tower of the Clare Archaeology Centre. The castle is open to visitors between May and September and at other times by appointment. An extensive collection of local history artefacts, an audio-visual presentation and well-informed tour guides enhance the visitor experience.



2 St Tola's High Cross The glorious 'Queen's Cross', named after the great place of heritage of St. Tola, who established a monastery here in the 8th century. This 12th century high cross possibly marked the boundary of the monastery. On its east side is a representation of Christ with arms outstretched, below which is the figure of a knight believed to be St. Tola. The delicate stone carving, eight feet high, was the last work done by the sculptor before his death. It was frequently used by local people on battle days. March 19th, when players were killed and interred in the ground. This tradition continued until the mid 1800s when the wall was broken up by the landlord, Edward Gange, a noted evangelist. It was re-erected in 1986 and is now surrounded by a wooden fence.



3 Holy Well In Tola's well, which may have been the water source for the ancient monastery, is located to the south of the high cross, approximately 100 metres apart. It was frequented by local people on battle days. March 19th, when players were killed and interred in the ground. This tradition continued until the mid 1800s when the wall was broken up by the landlord, Edward Gange, a noted evangelist. It was re-erected in 1986 and is now surrounded by a wooden fence.



4 A Medieval settlement Adjacent to the north exterior wall of Dyserd O'Dea Castle are the remains of a medieval house consisting of the well preserved tower, the walls and tower are a well and two towers for a curving site which may have been used for the purpose of a medieval town. To the south-east of the castle, at the edge of the park, are the remains of a second medieval house.



8 Rath Church The tower of Rath Church, built mostly in the 13th or 14th century, but incorporated in the walls are several early 13th century decorated stones inserted in the south interior wall are a window (13th cent) carved with Irish decoration and a simple head, a carving of a decorated figure known as a 'thorn' (a pig believed to have been used to ward off evil) and a stone decorated with a floral motif. Near the southern end of the remains of the exterior wall (left), lying on its side, is the face of a carved stone depicting a man reaching on a cross. Below the church, the top of Rath Castle is visible on the slope of Lough Taha.



10 Curing Eye Ailments Near the castle is a spring well which was once famous for the cure of eye ailments. Today local people still draw drinking water from this source and have other offerings on a small table. The well is the well surrounding the well.



6 Stone Forts and Bories Celtic stone forts and bories were probably built between 4000 and 4000 and were likely introduced up to the 10th century. A great battle took place here in 1242 between Donnchadh O'Dea, Earl of Thomond and his younger brother and Lady O'Dea. The O'Dea fought on the left side but were eventually defeated with great losses.



9 An Ancient Roadway This section of the road is part of an ancient road between Carlow and Dyerstown which is likely to date back to the medieval period. Several ancient paving flagstones can still be seen on the surface of the track and an early stone bridge crosses a small stream. Today this quiet roadway is lined with hedgerows which support a magnificent array of wildflowers, shrubs and trees. The view across the surrounding landscape reward you as you ascend gently to higher ground.



7 Synges Lodge A covered boat of stone crosses over the doorway of this Georgian style lodge built in the 18th century by local landowner, the Synges. Originally the family name was 'Synges' after the area in Cheshire, England, where the family originated. The name Synges was first adopted in 1644. Tradition maintains that the motto 'Sic utraque Pars' will bring to mind the fact that the family was long in the land before the name of the family was changed to Synges. The original name, when the Synges family moved here, was derived from this family.



9 Round Tower To the north of the church is the ruin of an 11th century round tower. It is said to have been erected by Donnchadh O'Dea during the church's reconstruction in the 1240s.



5 Medieval Church This stone church, built of which dates to the 12th and 13th centuries, is believed to stand on the site of St. Tola's 8th century monastery. The ruins show evidence of successive periods of rebuilding and repair. Several of the O'Dea clan are buried within its interior. The magnificent 12th century Romanesque doorway with its highly decorated arch is one of the finest examples of the type in Ireland. The water tower is decorated with twelve human and seven animal head carvings.

