

The background of the cover features a photograph of two young girls in school uniforms (dark blue jackets with blue collars and cuffs) smiling at the camera. They are in a museum setting, with a large, ornate stone Celtic cross visible in the background. Other visitors can be seen in the distance. A large, semi-transparent pink triangle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title text.

# Teacher Resource Pack Primary Level



Medieval  
Mile  
Museum

## **Contents**

<b>Your journey starts here...</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>How to use this pack</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Kilkenny's Medieval Mile</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Planning your visit</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>800 years of history under one roof...</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Before Your Visit - in class preparation</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Factsheets:</b>	
<b>Rich and Poor, Rogues and Patrons - the people of the Medieval Mile</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Making A City</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Clues from the Past</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>After Your Visit - follow up activities.</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>63</b>

## **Your Journey Starts Here....**

### **Welcome from the Curator, Laura Keenan**

Welcome to the Medieval Mile Museum!

We are thrilled to extend an invitation to you and your students for an enriching and immersive educational experience. Our museum offers a journey through time, where history comes alive amidst fascinating artifacts and interactive exhibits.



We look forward to sharing the wonders of the Kilkenny medieval era with your students and fostering a love for learning together. See you soon!

### **Welcome from the Tour Guides**

Welcome to the Medieval Mile Museum!

We're excited to have you join us for your visit, and we can't wait to meet each and every one of you. Our team is excited to share stories about Kilkenny and our amazing artifacts. We're looking forward to all the fun we'll have exploring Kilkenny's history together!

We hope you have a fantastic time at the museum!



## How to use this pack

In St Mary's Medieval Mile Museum, we have developed this comprehensive Teachers' Resource Pack for you. The pack covers in-class pre-visit prep, lesson plans and factsheets that complement our guided tour, and suggested follow-up activities when you return to school.

To get the most out of the pack follow these five simple steps:

**1. Contact the Bookings Office** - we understand that schools are busy and that the school calendar is tight - be sure to book your preferred date well in advance to avoid disappointment. See the Planning Your Visit section for more information.

**2. Get prepared** - read the Before Your Visit section of this pack, here you'll find lesson plans for our guided tour, fact sheets for in class use and the history of St Mary's.

**3. Come to St Mary's and let us show you around** - now for the best bit - come see us and we'll start your journey on the Medieval Mile!

**4. Visit other locations on Kilkenny's Medieval Mile** - see our suggested Kilkenny City Itineraries for School Groups in the appendices to continue your journey along the Medieval Mile.

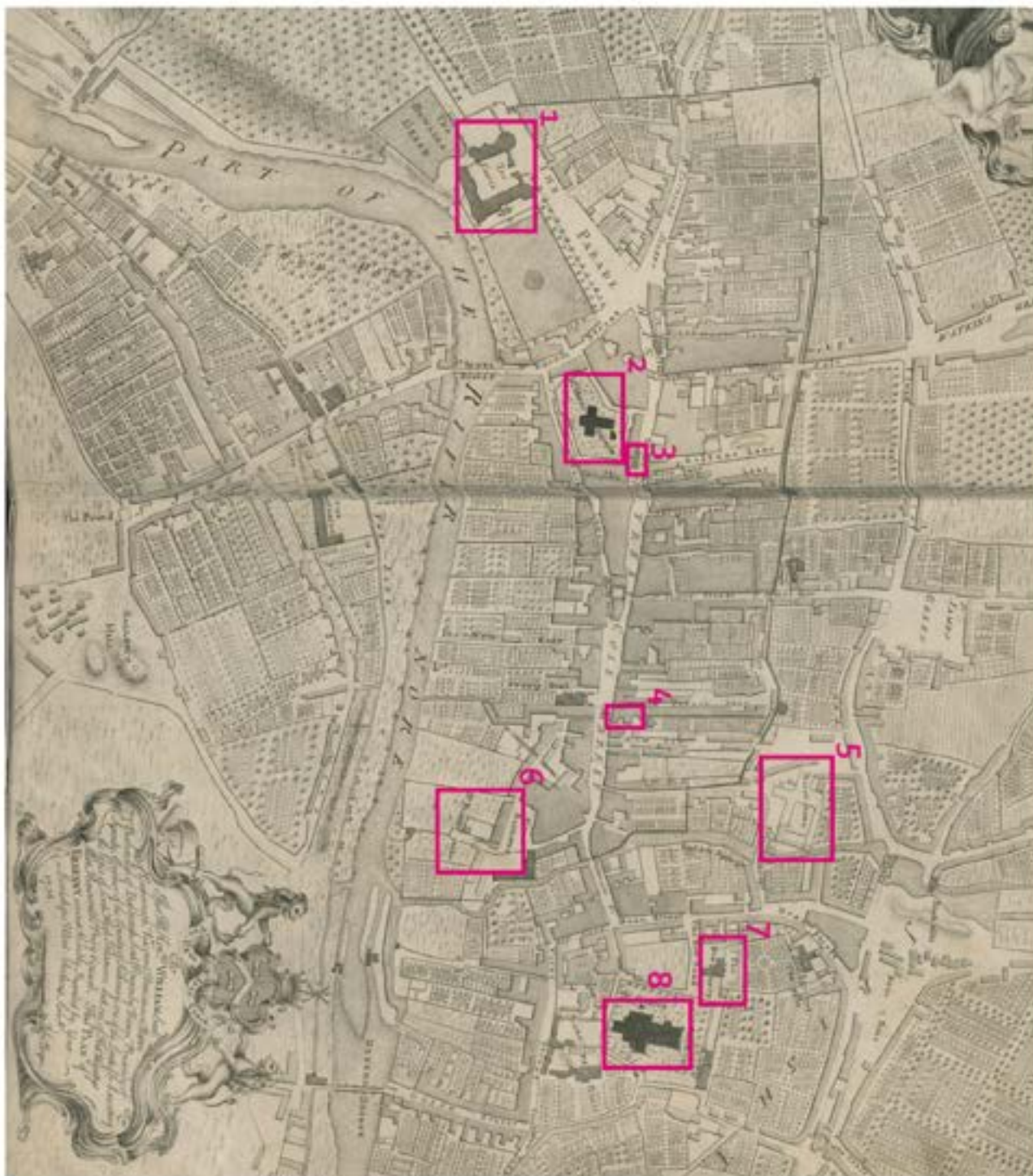
**5. Follow up on the visit back in class** - use our factsheets, worksheets and lesson plans in the appendices for follow up activities back in class to complete your Medieval Mile journey.

**We're looking forward to seeing you on the Medieval Mile!**

# Kilkenny's Medieval Mile

## John Rocque's 1758 map of Kilkenny

- |                   |                         |                    |
|-------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 Kilkenny Castle | 2 St Mary's Church      | 3 The Tholsel      |
| 4 Rothe House     | 5 The Black Abbey       | 6 St Francis Abbey |
| 7 The Deanery     | 8 St Canice's Cathedral |                    |



## Planning your visit

### Location

2 St Mary's Lane, High Street, Kilkenny R95K276  
(behind The Tholsel/ City Hall on High St)

### Opening Hours

March to October inclusive open daily  
9.30am - 4.30pm.

November to February inclusive open Thursday  
through to Monday 9.30am - 4.30pm.  
Closed on Tuesdays & Wednesdays.

### Cost

Primary School Guided School Tour

Price: €3 Per Student

Duration: 1 Hour

Capacity: 30 x Students Per Tour

Post Primary Guided School Tour

Price: €5 Per Student in Junior Cycle; €7 per student in Senior Cycle

Duration: 1 Hour

Capacity: 30 x Students Per Tour

### Getting here by road, bus & train

Located on St. Mary's Lane, just off High Street and in the heart of Ireland's Medieval Mile, we are ideally located within walking distance of many other great attractions and amenities.

### Travelling by Train

We are just 5 minutes by car from Mac Donagh Junction Train Station, and you can find the most up-to-date information on train times into Kilkenny from all major routes [here](#).

### Travelling by Bus

Many National buses, including JJ Kavanagh and the Dublin Coach also stop at Ormonde St in the City Centre, just a 5 minute walk to the Museum.



### **Travelling by Car/Private Bus**

Please note that while we don't have parking available at the Museum, there are many car parks located around the city centre.

**For coach parking information see Kilkenny County Council's website <https://kilkennycoco.ie/eng/services/traffic/parking/coach-parking>**

### **How to make a Booking**

For group bookings, you can contact our team directly by email at [info@medievalmusem.ie](mailto:info@medievalmusem.ie) or by phone on +353(0) 567817022 and they will assist you with your booking.

### **Accessibility**

The Museum is fully wheelchair accessible. If you have any queries regarding access for people with special needs please contact us directly on [info@medievalmusem.ie](mailto:info@medievalmusem.ie) or call +353(0) 567817022.

### **Is there a café or lunchroom facilities in the Museum?**

We don't have a café in the Museum, however we are ideally situated on High St. in Kilkenny City with lots of great options within walking distance.



**3rd and 4th class students from Old Leighlin Primary School Carlow visiting the museum**

## 800 years of history under one roof...

### Introduction to the Medieval Mile Museum

#### Potted history of the Museum Building

Located on the 13th-century site of St Mary's cruciform church and graveyard (considered to be the finest example of a medieval church in Ireland), The Medieval Mile Museum represents an immense treasure trove of artefacts encompassing the work and lives of Ireland and its people across more than 800 years of history.



St. Mary's Church was built as a chapel to the newly constructed Kilkenny Castle and the first version of the church was complete circa 1205. The tower was added in 1343, there was also a spire but unfortunately it was lost centuries later due to disrepair.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the church's upkeep was financed by the local merchants by collection of 4d annually from each hall and a halfpenny from each stall or shop in the town (later city). Due to its central and prominent position it became the pride of the merchant class in Kilkenny and many of its prominent members are buried there, including the Shee family, Archer family, Rothe family from Rothe House and Bishop David Rothe.

Only the wealthiest of the families could be buried within the church, giving us one of Ireland's finest collections of burial monuments. A detailed record of all of the tombs in the graveyard is available on <https://historicgraves.com/graveyard/st-mary-s/kk-stmg>.

After the Reformation it became a Protestant church, however in 1603, with James I on the throne, the church was converted back to serve the Catholic population. It was converted back again to the Church of Ireland following the failed Jacobite revolutions of the 1600s.



After falling into ruin, the church was rebuilt in the 1700's, with the medieval building integrated into the new church. The Alms Houses, located within the grounds of the graveyard, were built by the church curate in the 1840s to provide accommodation and support to the poor.

The final parish service was celebrated in the church in 1951 and it was deconsecrated in 1957. It lay in a derelict state for a number of years



until the 1960s when a committee from the Select Vestry of the Church of Ireland undertook to transform the church into a parish hall.

### **St. Mary's today - the Medieval Mile Museum**

Following an award-winning restoration by McCullough Mulvin Architects, the former St Mary's Church has been converted into a modern museum. Designed to enrich the cultural life of the city and provide a new international standard attraction for visitors the museum has several functions: as the starting point for understanding Kilkenny's medieval history, to display Kilkenny's Civic Treasures and replicas of some of Ossory High Crosses and to provide a space for temporary exhibitions and cultural events.

As the starting point of the Medieval Mile trail, it brings to life Kilkenny's history as Ireland's premier medieval city.

Through our interactive map in the nave, visitors can unlock the hidden gems that Ireland's Medieval Mile has to offer and find out why St Mary's Church Kilkenny played such an important role in Medieval Ireland.

In the St. Mary's room, we have our animated timeline and through the glass floors, you can catch a glimpse of the foundations of a massive tower that once loomed over the city. This room is also home to the amazing artefacts and human remains unearthed during the restoration of the building, including coins, toys and a moustache comb.

Our High Cross exhibition in the Southern Transcept introduces the High Kings of Ossory and the foundation of the monastery of Kilkenny by St Canice. The displays describe how Kilkenny has the finest stone sculptural tradition in Ireland extending from the Neolithic period of 5,000 years ago to the modern era. Interactives show how the plaster casts were made.

A modern addition to the church building houses the Kilkenny Room, with a magnificent glass window overlooking the city, and a view below through glass panels in the floor of tombs dedicated to wealthy Kilkenny families. The room also houses the Kilkenny City Sword and Mace, copies of the city charters and letters telling fascinating stories about daily life in a medieval city governed by wealthy merchants. Off the main room you'll find the Liber Primus - Kilkenny's extraordinary medieval town book. This vellum book bound in oak boards was written in various contemporary hands from 1230s to 1538.



## Before Your Visit – in class preparation

To gain the most from your Medieval Mile visit, it is suggested to cover some of the following areas in class before your visit:

- Trade and merchant life in Medieval Ireland
- Dermot MacMurrough, Richard de Clare/Strongbow and the Norman invasion of Ireland
- Life in Norman Ireland
- Life in mediaeval towns and countryside in Ireland and Europe
- Exploring people, culture and ideas

See the Appendix for the lesson plan for our guided tour.

### Suggested reading & research pre visit

Before your visit you might like, on your own or with your class, to look at our Rich and Poor, Rogues and Patrons and Making a City sections, which gives a potted history on some of the main historical characters and artefacts linked to the Medieval Mile including:

- Isabel de Clare
- William Marshal
- The Civic Families of Kilkenny
- Alice Kyteler
- The Liber Primus Kilkenniensis
- Royal Charters
- The Kilkenny Sword and Mace
- Whipsbeggar and handing out gunpowder - letters from Kilkenny's civic records



There is also list of further reading and online resources in the After Your Visit section of the pack. The Appendix includes suggested itineraries for school groups visiting Kilkenny, starting at the Medieval Mile Museum.

### Take a visit before you bring your class

We have various tours available for individuals and families on during the week and at weekends. Why not pay us a visit before you come with your class?

We have the following experiences for our visitors:

**Museum Interactive Audio Tour - Self Guided**

Adults €9.00

Concessions €7.50

Child €4.50

Family (2 Adults & up to 4 Children under 16) €20



**Medieval Mile Walking Trail**

Tours commence at 11am on Saturdays and Sundays, leaving from the Medieval Mile Museum on St Mary's Lane.

Adults €15.00

Concessions €13.50

Child €8

Family (2 Adults & up to 4 Children under 16) €40

**Museum & Graveyard Guided Tours**

March to October: Daily 10am and 2pm Museum Guided Tour  
3pm Graveyard Tour

November to February: Closed Tuesday & Wednesday

Monday, Thursday, Friday: 10am, 11am, 2pm, 3pm Museum Guided Tour

Saturday & Sunday:

10am and 2pm Museum Guided Tour

3pm Graveyard Tour

Adults €12

Concessions €9.60

Child €6

Family (2 Adults & up to 4 Children under 16) €30



Unfortunately these tours are not available to school groups at present.

## Why not become a member?

Would you like to become a member of the Medieval Mile Museum? We have a range of options available. To apply, please drop into the Museum and speak with a member of our Team who would be happy to help you get signed-up!

### Membership Options:

#### Individual €45

Unlimited day-time admission for one person for one year

Invitation to exhibition launches and special events

10% discount in shop

Invitation to members-only reception Dual €60

All the benefits of individual membership, plus: Unlimited day-time admission for a guest for one year

#### Family €90

All the benefits of individual membership, plus: unlimited day-time admission for two adults and up to four children for one year





# Rich and Poor, Rogues and Patrons

- the people of the  
Medieval Mile

## Factsheets



Medieval  
Mile  
Museum



# Rich and Poor, Rogues and Patrons....

## The People of Kilkenny's Medieval mile

Kilkenny has a rich history, stretching back into prehistoric times. Its development first into a busy market town and later into a city is due to the merchant and ruling classes of the Medieval period.

The 'civic' families - the powerful dynasties that ruled Kilkenny - and their ambition developed what was a monastic settlement into a cosmopolitan medieval metropolis full of characters and stories.

Luckily for us, these lawmakers and lawbreakers left behind an invaluable paper trail of letters, charters and books, giving us a unique insight into life in Norman and Medieval Ireland.

The rich, the poor, the rogues and the patrons of Kilkenny all have their place in history, and their stories are preserved in the Medieval Mile Museum.

The following factsheets cover the more famous historical people linked to Kilkenny's Medieval Mile. They can be used in class as handouts or for your own information. Their stories, along with tales of other Kilkenny citizens, will be told on our guided tour by our talented tour guides.



# Strongbow and Aoife

Strongbow and Aoife were the power couple of the 1100s in Ireland. Strongbow, (also known as Richard Fitz Gilbert and Richard de Clare) was earl of Pembroke and Strigoil, and lord of Leinster. He was the eldest son of Gilbert de Clare, earl of Pembroke, and succeeded to his earldom in 1148.

**Aoife Nic Mhurchada** (MacMurrough) was the daughter of Dermot, deposed king of Leinster. In 1168, when she was about 17, her father arranged her marriage to Strongbow. According to Brehon law, an Irish woman could not be forced into marriage, therefore it is presumed that Aoife agreed to the marriage.

**Strongbow** came to Ireland on the request of Dermot MacMurrough, king of Leinster, who wished to regain his power in Ireland after the new High King Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair deposed him. In return Dermot promised Strongbow his daughter Aoife in marriage. With the blessing of King Henry II, Strongbow landed in Ireland on 23 August 1170 and attacked Waterford with an army of over two hundred knights and one thousand troops.

Aoife and Strongbow were married at Christ Church Cathedral soon after Waterford was seized. They had a son, Gilbert, who died at about 12 years of age c.1185 and a daughter, Isabella, who became her father's only heir.

Aoife's father Dermot MacMurrough died in Ferns in May 1171, at the height of his power, leaving his kingdom to Strongbow. Strongbow died of an infection in his foot in May 1176 and was buried in Christ Church, Dublin.



## Strongbow and Aoife cont.

Aoife did not remarry after Strongbow's death but devoted her life to her children and defending their region. After their father's death King Henry II took interest in the futures of both children. He promised Isabel to William Marshal, regarded by many as the greatest knight and soldier in the kingdom. When Henry died, the new King Richard I upheld the promise and arranged their marriage in August 1189.

Little is known about Aoife's death, she died in 1188 (aged 42) in Wales and was buried in Tintern Abbey, Monmouthshire, alongside her father-in-law, Gilbert Fitz Gilbert.



Daniel Maclise (1806-1870) 'The Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife', c.1854.

© National Gallery of Ireland.



# Isabel de Clare

Isabel, born in 1172, was the daughter and only surviving heir of Strongbow and Aoife. When her father died, she was about four years old, and being the children of a great knight, she and her brother became wards of King Henry II. She became one of the wealthiest heiresses in the kingdom and one of the greatest heiresses in Wales and Ireland after her brother's death in 1185.



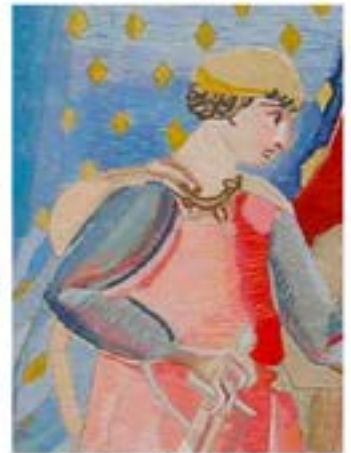
Isabel was described "the good, the fair, the wise, the courteous lady of high degree". We know she spoke French, Irish and Latin, but not much else is known about her early life. By 1188 she was a 16-year-old orphan with no siblings, and at risk of kidnap and a forced marriage. Therefore, for her protection, and the protection of her inheritance, she was transferred to the care of Ranulf de Glanville chief justiciar of England in 1189 and 11 March 1220

As a ward of the King, it was his duty to arrange a marriage for Aoife, and Henry decided to match her with William Marshal, the greatest knight and soldier in the King's army at that time. Henry passed away before the marriage could take place, so his successor Richard I completed the arrangement, and the couple were married in London in "pomp and ceremony" in August 1189.

Isabel and William had 10 children in total- five boys and five girls. The marriage is recorded to have been a happy one, although the couple spent some years apart. With lands in England and Ireland, William was often detained in England while Isabel stayed in Ireland to rule Leinster. After William's death in May 1219, Aoife travelled to England and France to successfully gather her inheritance and arrange marriages for her sons. She took ill in Pembrokeshire, Wales and died on 11 March 1220, just ten months after her husband. She was buried in Tintern Abbey beside her mother Aoife. All of her children married but her sons failed to produce legitimate heirs. Through her grandchildren Isabel is an ancestor to all the major royal European families, including all the following Kings and Queens of Scotland and five of Henry VIII's six wives, with Anne of Cleves the only one not connected to her by blood.

# William Marshal

Born in England around 1146 or 1147, William was from a minor noble family and his father John was Marshal to the King, a hereditary title. In the civil war between 1138 and 1153, known as The Anarchy, John switched sides and backed the King's daughter Empress Matilda against her first cousin Stephen of Blois who had seized the throne. During this time William, who was five years old, was held as a hostage by Stephen, who even faked William's death in a bid to force his father to give up his home Newbury Castle. William was held hostage by the crown forces until the end of the civil war.



As a younger son of a minor nobleman, William had no lands or fortune to inherit, and had to make his own fortune. At about twelve years of age, he was sent to Normandy to be brought up in the household of William de Tancarville, a great magnate and cousin of young William's mother. Here he began his training as a knight, and he was knighted on campaign in Upper Normandy in 1166 at about 20 years of age.

Early in his career William made his living as a tournament knight where he became skilled in combat and the laws of chivalry. He was very successful competitor, earning fame and fortune across Europe. He was also a brave and loyal soldier, playing a pivotal role in several battles at home and in Europe, his most famous being the Battle of Lincoln in 1217 when he was 70 years old. In his lifetime he served five English kings, from Henry II through to his grandson Henry III, and became known as the greatest knight and soldier that ever lived.

He married Isabel de Clare in London in August 1189 - this marriage elevated William Marshal from the status of military captain and knight into one of the richest men in the kingdom. As well as Lord Marshal of England, he was granted his father-in-law's title of Earl of Pembroke in 1199 and assumed overlordship of Leinster in Ireland with his wife.

Living in Wales first, the William and Isabel eventually moved to Ireland in 1200, to their lands in the Kingdom of Leinster, where they began to establish a significant power base.

## William Marshal cont.

They founded the borough of New Ross, which replaced the older Gaelic town of Ros, in Co Wexford. They spent most of their time in Kilkenny where they established a stronghold on a site where his father-in-law had previously built a motte and bailey - eventually this would become Kilkenny Castle in 1260. They used the port of New Ross to trade with their lands in Wales, and also established Hook Lighthouse, founded the Cistercian Abbey at Tintern, County Wexford and Duiske Abbey in Graiguenamanagh, County Kilkenny. It is said that he valued his wife's council, and together they made a formidable couple. On several occasions when called away by royal duty, he left Isabel to rule Leinster.

Upon the death of King John on 11 November 1216, William was named by the King's council to serve as protector of the nine-year-old King Henry III, and regent of the kingdom. By March 1219 William realised that he was dying, so called a meeting of the barons, Henry III, the Papal legate, the royal justiciar and the Bishop of Winchester (the young King's guardian) to arrange a new regent. He died peacefully on 14 May 1219 at Caversham and was buried in the Temple Church in London.

Each of William's five sons became Earl of Pembroke and Marshal of England in their , and each died without legitimate heirs. While in Ireland William had taken two manors from Albin O'Molloy, then Bishop of Ferns in Wexford. After William died, the Bishop attempted to get the manors back from the King of England, but was unsuccessful. It was said that Bishop of Ferns laid a curse on the family that William's sons would have no children, and the great Marshal estates would be scattered. With no

male heirs from his sons, William's substantial estate was eventually divided among the husbands of his five daughters.



Detail from "The Marriage of Isabel de Clare and William Marshal"  
Panel 6 of the Ros Tapestry  
©The Ros Tapestry/Mary Browne

# The Civic Families of Kilkenny

Kilkenny's foundation began with an early 6th-century ecclesiastical settlement, with a church built in honour of St. Canice, giving the settle the name Cill Chainnigh, meaning "church of Cainnech" i.e. Canice. By the time of the Anglo-Norman invasions, it was already Southeast Ireland's largest inland settlement.

With the arrival of the Normans a new walled settlement was built, referred to as High Street, and the pre-existing Gaelic settlement outside the walls was referred to as Irishtown. Both areas of the city are still known by these names today.



William Marshall chose Kilkenny as the principal town of the southern part of his lordship of Leinster. He issued a charter to the citizens, giving them certain rights and privileges. This charter was copied into the Liber Primus Kilkenniensis, in the late 14th century.

William's charter begins:

*"Know those present and to come that I, William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, by the counsel and consent of Isabella my wife, have granted to my burgesses of Kilkenny all manner of liberties which it becomes burgess to have, and which I can give, to have and hold for ever..."*

The burgesses were those people who rented burgage plots from the lord. These were long plots of ground with one end on the main street.



Liber Primus Kilkenniensis

## The Civic Families of Kilkenny cont.



The charter granted them certain rights:

**1. To have a law court in the town**

**2. To be free of tolls, lastage, passage and pontage (charge for using a bridge) in all the other towns in William Marshall's lands.**

**3. The burgesses could have a merchant guild and other guilds "with those paying scot" (a tax payable to the lord - where we get the saying "scot-free" from).**

**4. The burgesses were free to sell or rent their burgages, and were free to rent land to others who would become free tenants having equal rights with the burgesses.**

**5. Burgesses were to be allowed grind their corn in the lord's mill for a reasonable toll.**

**6. Marshall confirmed the rent that Geoffrey Fitz Robert had fixed for a burgage plot - twelve pence every year.**

Over the centuries Kilkenny became a wealthy city, and by the late 15th century there were ten "civic families". A rhyming couplet of the time names them:

*"Archdekan, Archer, Cowley, Langton, Lee,  
Knaresborough, Lawless, Ragget, Rothe and Shee."*

**The Archdekins** - this family were known as maltsters and wine merchants. They were the owners of the Maltings off James' St.

**The Archers** - The family owned numerous mills on the River Nore, also property known as Archer's Lease, Archer's Rath, Archer's Grove.

**The Cowleys** - Several members of the family were lawyers and many held political positions.



**The Langtons** - The Langtons originated in Leicestershire when John de Langton married Alice Banastre of Lancashire thus acquiring the property. They delt in property in Kilkenny and were Aldermen and Mayors.

**The Leigh/Ley/Lees** - The oldest of the civic families in Kilkenny, arriving in the 1300s, they delt in property and held political positions including Mayor.

**The Knaresboroughs** - The family took its name from the town of Knaresborough in Yorkshire. They were landowners in Kilkenny.

**The Lawlesses** - Walter Lawless was Portreeve of Irishtown in 1605, he died in 1627 and was buried in St. Canice's Cathedral. William was mayor of Kilkenny in 1622 and his wife was Margaret Rothe, of the Rothe merchant family. His will gives us an insight into their wealth, where it is listed that he left his wife bedsteads, curtains, stools, hangings, harps, carpets, a dozen silver spoons, a silver bowl, land in Tullaroan and church land within the City. His descendant William Lawless was appointed an Alderman in 1687.

**The Raggets** - Holders of the town of Ballyraggett, landowners and held political positions.



## The Civic Families of Kilkenny cont.

**The Rothes** - By far the most successful merchants in Kilkenny, the Rothes also held political and ecclesiastical positions in the city.

Robert Rothe was M.P. for Kilkenny in 1585 and Mayor in 1609, he built Rothe House between 1594 and 1610. The family also had their own chapel in St Mary's, with by far the largest monument in the chapel is that of Richard Rothe Fitz Edward, Mayor in 1627, died in 1637.



Photo ©Rothe House



Rothe Chapel in St Mary's

**The Shees** - The only one of the ten civic families that were of Gaelic origin (linked to the O'Shees and O'Sheas), they received letters of denization 1381 which gave them the right to be received among the Old English and participate in civic office. A merchant family, they founded the Shee Alms House in 1582 'to accommodate twelve poor persons' in the city of Kilkenny, Ireland. It is a nationally significant as it is one of the only remaining intact Tudor buildings in Ireland.



The Shee Alms House



# The Rothe Family and Rothe House

The Rothe Family was one of the most remarkable of the ten civic families of Kilkenny, who occupied many municipal offices from the 15th to the end of the 17th century. Merchants, politicians and clergy, they were a powerful family in medieval and Renaissance Kilkenny. There are several manuscript pedigrees of the Rotheres, the two principal ones are those drawn up by Robert Rothe, Attorney, in the Exchequer, in the year 1600, and the other by the well-known Herald, John Lodge (best known for his work *The Peerage of Ireland* in 1754).



The start of the family tree differs between the two manuscripts, not agreeing until they both reach Thomas Rothe fitz Walter, who appears to be the same Thomas Rothe who filled the office of Sovereign (Chief officer of municipal government) of Kilkenny in 1403. From this point both pedigrees in the main agree, so we're unsure as to the date the Rothe Family first came to Kilkenny.

The Rotheres come to prominence however nearly a century and a half later, when Rothe House is built on High St in the centre of Kilkenny in 1594.

Late medieval Kilkenny was a thriving financial centre with established and extensive trading links with continental Europe. Its trade was based on the export of timber, stone and agricultural goods, and the import of silk, damask, spices and wine. The elite middle class Catholic merchants in the town, later the city, rooted themselves into the civic and social divisions of Kilkenny.



Rothe House Garden ©Rothe House



## The Rothe Family cont.



At the centre of this world were the Rothes - in the 15th and 16th centuries they dominated Kilkenny's civic offices, taking the roles of magistrates, sovereigns, mayors and sheriffs on several occasions. It is said that they held so much civic power that "a member of the Rothe family... was sovereign on eighteen occasions between 1440 and 1544; the Archers held the position sixteen times between 1434 and 1544, while the Shees were sovereigns on seven occasions between 1493 and 1544". This power was kept within this social class through marriage, with the ten civic families intermarrying over the generations.

At this time, property ownership was based on plots of land called burgage plots which could be bought individually or in multiples. Road frontage was at a premium so burbage plots were long and narrow with outbuildings built behind the main home and shop front.



**Burbage plot model in Rothe House**

The Rothe House burbage plot was originally owned by the Cistercian monks of Duiske Abbey, Graiguenamanagh.

They had their townhouse there and the water well they used can still be seen in the garden at Rothe House today. The Abbey's lands were later forfeited under Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, and the land was granted to the Rothe family.

In 1594, John Rothe Fitz-Piers and his wife Rose Archer built their first house on their plot. John was a renowned merchant and held the office sovereign of Kilkenny (Chief officer of municipal government). He would go on to become the Mayor of Kilkenny four times.

The first house included a shop on the ground floor where John sold silks and fine cloths, imported from mainland Europe. The couple had 12 children and as the family grew they extended their living quarters - a second house was built on the same plot in 1604 and third house in 1610.

## The Rothe Family cont.

In 1609 Nicholas Langton was sent over to England by the borough to ask King James I to grant Kilkenny the status of 'city', which he did. John Rothe was named a member of the first Corporation of the City of Kilkenny, and he was Mayor of Kilkenny in 1613. He died in 1620 and is buried in St Mary's Church - now the Medieval Mile Museum.

Kilkenny's merchants lived in great comfort — if not in the style of their houses, then certainly within the context of their homes. The will of John Rothe records the opulence of the possessions he bequeathed to his family.

Included amongst the domestic furniture were:

*'...all my drawing tables, bedsteads, cupboards, livery cupboards, virginals, wainscot, ioynt-stools, chairs, my great cipresse chest and cipresse counter... my pewter, brass, batry, iron beddings of feathers and flocks'. Rothe also mentions a tapestry coverlet 'sey greene hangings or curtyns of both my best bedsteads, in addition to plate, diaper, Holland and linen'.*

His will provides 'an almost unique insight into the living conditions of the wealthy urban middle class in Kilkenny at this time.

John Rothe's son, Peter inherited the house and business, and was a Member of Parliament for Kilkenny in 1639. During the 1640s, a group of the leading Catholic noblemen and clergymen met to discuss the political situation of Ireland. Their meetings took place in Kilkenny and this became known as the Confederation of Kilkenny. It was very like a meeting of Parliament and that is how Parliament Street in the city got its name.



**The James I Charter of 1609**

## The Rothe Family cont.



**Holm Oaks in Rothe House Garden ©Rothe House**

Bishop David Rothe, a distant cousin of Peter's, was the Catholic Bishop of Ossory at the time and there was a tradition that he and some of the other bishops often met and discussed the important issues of the day while walking in the orchard in the Rothe House garden.

The Confederation collapsed and the houses and property of its supporters were taken over by the English Commonwealth, headed by Oliver Cromwell in 1650. In 1653, the Rothes lost their house and lands and were forced to move to Connacht. Peter died the following year, but the records are very unclear as to where he died and was buried.

When King Charles II came to the throne in 1660, it is thought that James Butler, the Duke of Ormonde, spoke on behalf of the Rothes and had the house returned to the family. None of Peter's sons were alive, so it went to his eldest daughter, Rose, who was married to Richard Shee. Their son, Marcus, owned the house in 1690. After that, it is difficult to find out what became of the family. Marcus Shee supported King James who was on the losing side at the Battle of the Boyne. As a result, he had to give up the land and houses that he owned. There is evidence that Marcus held onto some properties, but we cannot say for sure that Rothe House was one of them.

The style of Rothe House is known as 'Renaissance'. It is the only example of a building and garden of its type in Ireland today. The style of John Rothe's house was popular in Kilkenny at the time - in 1613 records show that there were forty such houses in Kilkenny alone.

# Alice Kyteler

Alice Kyteler was born Kyteler's House, Kilkenny in 1263. A wealthy Flemish family of merchants, the Kytelers settled in Kilkenny sometime during the mid thirteenth century, probably in the area known as Flemingstown. Nothing is known of Alice's childhood, but she was to become infamous as an adult.

In 1280 Alice Kyteler married William Outlaw, a wealthy merchant and moneylender from Kilkenny and they had one son, William Outlaw, who later went on to become mayor of Kilkenny in 1305. William Senior died young, and we know that by 1302, Alice is married to Adam Blund of Callan, a moneylender. Records show that in 1303 William Outlaw Junior declared he was guarding £3,000 of their money - roughly €2.5million in today's money. This is an indication of the measure of medieval trade in Kilkenny and the highly profitable nature of money lending - at the same time a day's wage for a labourer was one to one and-a-half pennies - €7 in today's money.

In 1307 Adam le Blund "quit-claimed" to his stepson William i.e. handed over all his goods, chattels, jewels, etc. and cancelled any debts owed to him by William. Adam had children of his own, so this must have been alarming to them. Adam falls ill and dies sometime after this and two years later we find Alice is already married to her third husband, Richard de Valle, in 1309.

Richard de Valle was a wealthy landholder from Tipperary, and again her son William Outlaw benefited financially from the marriage. Circa 1316 Richard de Valle dies and Alice's stepson, also called Richard de Valle, withholds her widow's dower (a common law that entitled a widow to a portion of her husband's estate in absence of a will).

Kyteler takes proceedings against Richard for the recovery of her widow's dower and this act incites the suspicion and anger of her stepchildren, who would have received the money had she not intervened. It is also in 1316 that Alice marries her fourth husband, John le Poer.



## Alice Kyteler cont.



Alice had incurred local resentment because of her vast wealth and involvement in moneylending. The fact that she had buried three husbands, and both her son and Alice had profited from the marriages and deaths, made Alice's stepchildren angry and suspicious.

Alice's fourth husband, John le Poer, falls ill in 1324, and he expresses the suspicion that he was being poisoned - not specifically by Alice, rather he believes this to be the reason behind his illness. After his death, the children of le Poer and her stepchildren from previous marriages accuse Alice of using poison and sorcery (*maleficarum*) against their fathers and of favouring her first-born son, William Outlaw. They bring their accusation of witchcraft in 1324 to Richard Ledrede, Bishop of Ossory.



A tour group outside Kyteler's Inn, Kilkenny

Richard Ledrede was keen to make a name for himself since his arrival in Ireland in 1317 as a papal appointee. He implemented reform and strict adherence to the laws of the church and clashed with the local Anglo-Irish and the merchant class. Ledrede's patron, Pope John XXII, had a fear of sorcery and claimed that his life was in danger from witchcraft, which he lists as heresy. It should be noted that before this witchcraft was a commonplace accusation and one usually treated by English law as a petty criminal offence. The pronouncement of the act of witchcraft as heresy by the Pope himself now meant that the accusation was a much more serious one, as Alice was to find out.

Ledrede claimed his diocese of Ossory was a hotbed of witchcraft, and he attempted to put into practice in the inquisitorial principles that he had learnt at Avignon, then seat of the papacy. The accusation of Alice's stepchildren was the perfect opportunity for Ledrede to exercise his new power, and to make an example of Alice.



Richard Ledrede tomb in Saint Canice's Cathedral

## Alice Kyteler cont.

Seven formal charges were brought against Alice. She was accused of:

1. Denying the power of Christ and of the Church.
2. Sacrificing animals to demons
3. Asking demons for advice on witchcraft
4. Having a sexual relationship with the incubus Robin Artisson
5. Holding coven meetings and burning candles in the church at night without permission. This group included Alice, Petronilla de Meath (her maid), Meath's daughter, Robert of Bristol, John/Ellen'Syssok Galrussyn, Annota Lange, Eva de Brownstown, William Payn de Boly, and Alice Faver.
6. Making dark magic-based powders and ointments or potions, from ingredients including but not limited to the clothes of unbaptized children, worms, spiders, chicken blood, a skull, and chicken innards. It was alleged that said potions were used to bewitch her husbands.
7. Bewitching and killing her husbands to take their money for herself and her son, William Outlaw.



When Ledrede made attempts to have Alice arrested, she used her powerful friends to delay detention. The Chancellor of Ireland, Roger Outlaw (a relative of Alice's first husband) asked the bishop to drop the case. When he refused, Rodger demanded that Alice be excommunicated for at least 40 days before the trial, which would delay in the proceedings and allowed Alice to flee to Roger. Ledrede accused Rodger of harbouring heretics, but a commission later cleared him of any wrongdoing.

The bishop then charged Alice and her son William with the crime of heresy. William was by now a powerful man and was related to many in the ruling classes.

## Alice Kyteler cont.



He called upon his friend, Sir Arnold le Poer, a Senior Official in Dublin, who had de Ledrede thrown in prison in Kilkenny Castle for seventeen days, until the day appointed for William to appear in the bishop's court had passed. This was a risky strategy as it was forbidden to lay hands on a monk or cleric, and only the pope himself could absolve such an assault.

From prison Ledrede ordered the diocese be placed on an interdict - he would not allow any religious ceremonies to occur until he was released - no baptisms, marriages or burials. For a deeply devout community this was a serious threat to their souls.

Ledrede was released and he renewed his efforts to have Alice imprisoned. However the day before the next appointed date for Alice and William to appear before the bishop, a royal writ was delivered to the bishop. It ordered him to appear in Dublin before the Justiciar of Ireland to explain why he had placed an interdict on his diocese. He also was expected to answer complaints made by Arnold le Poer against him.

Ledrede sent a proctor on his behalf explaining that he dare not travel to Dublin as he would have to pass through Arnold le Poer's lands. His excuse was not accepted and his ecclesiastical superior, the vicar of the Archbishop of Dublin, lifted the interdict.

Months of stalemate continued, Ledrede was ejected from Arnold de Poer's court, Ledrede ordered him to arrest Alice and William, Alice accused Ledrede of defamation of character, Ledrede used the same reasoning again not to travel to Dublin to face this accusation.

Eventually Ledrede appear in the Dublin court but only when he was certain that he would have support - a royal letter under the great seal of the king summoned him to appear at the parliament in Dublin before the Justiciar of Ireland and the lords temporal and spiritual i.e. his fellow bishops would be present.



**Dublin Castle**

## Alice Kyteler cont.



Ultimately the case went in Ledrede's favour, but when time came to arrest Alice she couldn't be found – she had fled, possibly to England or Flanders. Her less wealthy fellow accused, many of whom were staff, were now imprisoned in Kilkenny and the bishop examined them personally using the inquisitorial procedure allowed by the papal decree i.e. torture. Unsurprisingly they confessed. William Outlaw was accused of heresy and harbouring heretics. He confessed and submitted himself on bended knee to the bishop and was imprisoned in Kilkenny castle. His very influential friends forced Ledrede to commute the sentence to a penance and release him. William had to hear three masses every day for one year, give food to the poor and undertake to cover the roof of St Canice's cathedral with lead. Hearing that William was not carrying out his penance, Ledrede imprisoned him once again.

Alice's maid, Petronilla de Meath, was tortured and confessed to participating in witchcraft. Her confession detailed her involvement, along with Alice's, in six out of seven accusations. Her testimony was forced and unreliable, however the accusers gained most of their information from this confession.

Petronilla de Meath was flogged and burned at the stake on 3 November 1324, making her the first known case in Ireland or Great Britain of death by fire for the crime of heresy. She was about 24 years old when she died. Her death was reported by the Kilkenny Franciscan chronicler, John Clyn:

*Petronilla de Midia...was condemned for sorcery, lot taking and offering sacrifice to demons, consigned to the flames and burned. Moreover before her even in olden days it was neither seen nor heard of that anyone suffered the death penalty for heresy in Ireland.*



Petronella's daughter, Basilia, fled with Alice. Alice was never heard of again, her name doesn't appear in any more contemporary records, and there is no known year of death or burial for her. But Alice's story throws up two major questions - how many other financially successful women were there in medieval Ireland and was Alice a mass murderer or an innocent widow?





# Making a City

- Artefacts from  
Kilkenny's Civic history

## Factsheets



Medieval  
Mile  
Museum

# Making A City

## Artefacts from Kilkenny's Civic history

The ancient papers in the Kilkenny Room, upstairs in the Medieval Mile Museum, tell fascinating stories about daily life in a medieval city. Kilkenny holds a unique set of civic records, tracing the city's history right back to the 1200s.

The wealthy merchants who governed the city are buried in St Mary's and they appear often in these documents. This close link between Church and Town Hall (the Corporation) was common in medieval Ireland. Men from leading families - like the Rothes, Shees and Archers - served as mayors and burgesses over hundreds of years.



# Royal Charters

A city charter is a type of municipal charter which was common in medieval times. It is a written document, in the form of a manuscript in the Middle Ages, that establishes the organisational structure and laws of a municipality. It makes the people living within a specific boundary a corporation and body politic, and outlines their powers, privileges, and duties.

A city charter may specify how the city government is organised, who has the power to make decisions, and what laws must be followed. It outranks all conflicting ordinances, meaning that if there is a conflict between a city ordinance and the city charter, the charter takes precedence.

The most famous charter, Magna Carta ("Great Charter"), was a pact between the King John of England and his barons specifying the king's grant of certain liberties to the English people. Monarchs issued charters to towns, cities, guilds, merchant associations, universities, and religious institutions; such charters guaranteed certain privileges and immunities for those organisations while also sometimes specifying arrangements for the conduct of their internal affairs.



**Detail from the Magna Carta**

A charter of 1207 from William Marshal, 1st Earl of Pembroke, Lord of Leinster and son-in-law of Strongbow and Aoife, was given to the Norman settlement. It confirmed privileges on the town of Kilkenny and the town was extended northwards as far as the River Breaghagh by an exchange of lands with the bishop of Ossory. More charters were granted to Kilkenny in the Middle Ages, and in the Kilkenny Room we have the three important charters to the City of Kilkenny - The Charter of Edward III, The 1608 Charter of James I and the 1609 Charter of James I which grants Kilkenny the status of city.

## Charter of Edward III

This charter - written in Latin, is the oldest charter in the Kilkenny archives. It promises that local merchants will always receive a fair price for "prises". Prises were corn, hay, animals or food that collectors demanded for the royal administration or army. It had been common practice for merchants to receive less than the going rate for such provisions. It is dated the 24th September 1352.



## 1608 Charter of James I

This document makes official the Corporation practices that had evolved over the previous 200 years. Clearly Kilkenny's leaders wanted to make sure these would continue into the future. Current Corporation members are listed in the charter, including Shees, Rothes and Archers.

The Charter describes how the Corporation, markets, merchant guilds, courts and prisons should be run. The text is in Latin except for an oath to be taken by the sovereign of Kilkenny. This is written in English. The charter is dated the 16th of October 1608.

This is the most highly decorated charter in the Kilkenny archives including the symbols of James I on his throne, a Scottish thistle, an English rose and an Irish harp.



## The 1609 Charter of James I

In this charter, James I granted Kilkenny the status of city and created Kilkenny county. Among other privileges, the new status allowed Kilkenny to hold more markets and three fairs each year. The document also expands the rights and powers of the merchant guilds. The city's wealthy merchant families stood to gain the most from this charter. The ecclesiastical centres are mentioned, and a description of Kilkenny and its wishes of it to be a 'city of peace to the terror and fear of the wicked'.

The city charter in 1609 is dated the 11th April and is written on animal skin, but isn't as colourful as the 1608 charter. Nevertheless, the power of symbolism reflects in the image of the lion of England, the unicorn of Scotland and the fleur de lys of France.

Edward Shee was elected Mayor and the charter conferred on him the right to have a sword carried before him (the mace is not mentioned). The three yearly fairs were held on the holy days of St Canice (October 11th), St Patrick (March 17th) and John the Baptist (June 24th).



# The Kilkenny Sword and Mace

Originally swords and maces were used as weapons, but they came to be used as symbols of authority and jurisdiction - in Kilkenny these symbols of the Crown and are still used today by Kilkenny Council during different events including the mayor's inauguration, voting, official duties by mayors and dignitaries and when foreign dignitaries visit, for example when King Charles III of England visited Kilkenny in 2017.



Kilkenny City's Sword and Mace are housed inside the Kilkenny Room here in the museum. The sword is thought to date from 1609 and the mace is from the 1677.



Although Kilkenny was incorporated early in the thirteenth century by William Marshal, and had other charters before 1609, it was not until then that the Chief Magistrate was styled Mayor.

The 1609 Great Charter of James I conferred the right on the Mayor to have a sword carried before him (a great mace was not mentioned) and he "shall be able to constitute and have from time to time for ever, 3, 4, or 5 officers " to execute the office of sergeant-at-mace. These officers carried the smaller maces you see on display in the room. They kept order at Corporation meetings and court hearings.

They also ran errands for the mayor and the Corporation.



## Kilkenny Sword and Mace cont.



On the 6th of October 1609, following the charter a sword-bearer and serjeant-at-mace were appointed, and they, with the wife of the latter, were "to dyet on festivals at Mr. Mayor's house." In 1620 the Corporation provided a gown for the sword bearer.

In 1638 it was ordered " that the sword and 4 maces shall be carried before the Mayor at the burial of aldermen and their wives, but at the burial of every sheriff's peer, and their wives, the sword, with only two maces."

In a table of salaries of civic officials in 1658 the following appeared:

*"The sword-bearer, £8 and perquisites; great mace-bearer, £8 ; city marshal, £5 ; sheriff's sergeants, £4 each; city musicians, £5 each."*

So we see by this time a great mace bearer is provided for.



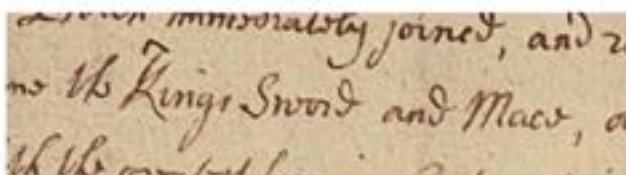
## Kilkenny Sword and Mace cont.



A sword symbolised the Corporation's freedom to punish criminals. It is engraved with the royal arms and the seal of Kilkenny. The scabbard is believed to have been added later and has the arms of the Stuart period on it.

A mace represented a city's right to govern itself. The great mace bears the Royal arms in the head and around the head are the symbols of the rose, thistle, fleur-de-lis, and harp. There is an inscription in Latin, stating that it was presented by James Duke of Ormonde to the Mayor, Francis Rowlidge, in 1677. The hallmarks on the mace tell us that it was made in London.

In 1717, a dispute broke out over the election of a new mayor. Each side accused the other of not following official procedures, using inappropriate influence and passing new voting laws to favour their own candidate. It is documented in a letter displayed with the sword and mace date July 15th 1717 - the 'King's sword and mace' is clearly mentioned at the start of the eleventh line in the letter - here the writer mentions them as symbols of the mayor's authority.



...immorally joined, and ...  
... the King's Sword and Mace, ...  
... the ...



# The Liber primus Kilkenniensis

## Kilkenny's greatest treasure



The Liber primus Kilkenniensis is Kilkenny's oldest town book. It contains entries from between 1231 and 1537. These mostly set down the rights and office holders of the Corporation over time. The oldest text is a transcription of William Marshall's charter to the people of Kilkenny from 1207.

The Liber primus is also the most important record of medieval town life to survive in Ireland outside of Dublin. In it, we can read about laws regulating everything from feasts after childbirth to bread prices to street cleaning.

Entries in the book are written in Latin, Norman-French and English. At one time, the dated sections would have been separate documents. The bound volume is thought to date to 1498 and is arranged in roughly chronological order. The earliest sections date to 1231, when a plague arrived in Kilkenny. Perhaps the writer wished to leave a record in case few survived who knew how the Corporation worked.



# Whipsbeggar and handing out gunpowder

## Letters from Kilkenny's civic records

The best window into the past of any city are the original letters that its citizens leave behind. From civic documents we find out about the peculiarities of day-to-day life - for example handing out gunpowder at a party!

## The town whipsbeggar

From this document, we learn that Kilkenny employed a 'whipsbeggar'. He had the job of driving strange - or unfamiliar - beggars out of town. Local beggars known to residents could stay. In April 1712, the Corporation paid Lot Tarroway 12 shillings and 6 pence for this work. According to this order, the amount represented a quarter of the position's annual salary.



## Idle women

*'severall idle women doe make & sell unwholesome bread halfe baked in open ovens'*

About 1700, John Garnet and John Cramer made this complaint to the mayor and aldermen of Kilkenny. They requested that such illegal trade be stopped. During this period, only members of a bakers' guild had a right to sell bread. These men may have been merchants trying to protect their trade. We don't know the women's side of the story. Perhaps they simply sought a way to support themselves and their children.



## The Bishop's ring

The Bishops of Ossory were based at St Canice's Cathedral in Kilkenny. In the late 1240s, Bishop Geoffrey de Tourville granted a request from the Dominican Friars to use his water supply.

*'[I] confirm to the Friars...a conduit of water from our well, known as the well of St Canice. The pipe conveying the water from the well is to have the circumference and size of our ring.'*

A copper replica of the Bishop's ring is attached to the grant, which is written in Latin.



## Handing out gunpowder

In April 1649, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland – James FitzThomas Butler, Marquess of Ormonde – visited Kilkenny. Mayor Robert Rothe wrote this order for gunpowder to be handed out to the musketeers, ordinance and chambers. It was to be used for *'the entertainment of his Excellency'*.

We don't know exactly what this meant, but it could have been to provide security. These were troubled times in Ireland. Later that year, the Lord Lieutenant would lead the fight against Cromwell's invasion.



SOLDIERS OF THE TRAINED BANDS OF THE 17TH CENTURY.

## St Mary's and problem pigs

There was the particular issue of pigs in St. Mary's churchyard. The animals would dig up in the churchyard, causing damage to gravestones. It is recorded that the priests complained that it impossible to say mass with the grunting and squealing of pigs outside.

The pigs even broke into the church occasionally interrupting services – a recorded incident describes how they ran up the aisle during a wedding ceremony, soiling the bride's dress before storming the altar.



To counteract these invasions of St. Mary's, the Corporation clamped down on pig owners who allowed their herds to stray, or run amok, in the churchyard. The owners were subjected to the pillory (being placed in the stocks) if found guilty. Here passers-by were free to pelt the owner with rotten fruit or vegetables.

The Corporation also ordained that any person who found a pig in St. Mary's Churchyard was entitled to take the animal and reward for this service was to keep the pig's head, which was kept and eaten or sold at market.





# Clues from the Past

- Archaeology and  
Kilkenny's Medieval Mile

## Factsheets



Medieval  
Mile  
Museum

## Clues from the Past

Archaeology is the study of things that people made, used, and left behind – sometimes including the people themselves as skeletons! In archaeology we try to understand what people of the past were like and how they lived.

How do archaeologists do that? Well, it's very like being a detective and looking for clues. When an archaeologist excavates a site – in other words when they dig in the ground – they are constantly looking for clues in the items that they find in the soil. This is why excavating a site is very slow and archaeologists must be very gentle in their work.

Before they can get to work an archaeologist needs to find a place to excavate. This can be a site that they know is historical or it could be that builders building a new building or road have found something by accident. Once an archaeologist gets to work, they have to keep their eyes peeled for clues from the past!

What sort of clues can we hope to find in an excavation? We're looking for anything that was left behind by people – this could be as small as a glass bead, or as large as the remains of a house! Items archaeologists commonly find include pottery, shells and animal bones, beads and jewellery, tools, toys and figurines. Cloth, clothing and shoes can also be found, but as these decompose quickly in comparison to other items, they are a lot rarer.



**Replicas of pins found during excavations in St Mary's Church**



**The skeletons of 3 people found during excavation on the Medieval Mile on display in the museum**

# Early Church Architecture

All churches have the same basic layout, with names given to the different parts of the church footprint. The very early Christian churches were very simple wooden structures with a rectangular shape. As the Christian church grew in Europe, churches became bigger, had more than one room, and later on we see cathedrals becoming more common in the 12th century.

A cathedral is a church that is run by a bishop - Kilkenny has two cathedrals, St Canice's Cathedral and St. Mary's Cathedral. Cathedrals and churches can have chapels - these are places of prayer or worship that has no pastor or priest and no permanent congregation. For example in the museum we have the Rothe Family chapel. It was common for rich families to have their own chapels in churches and cathedrals.

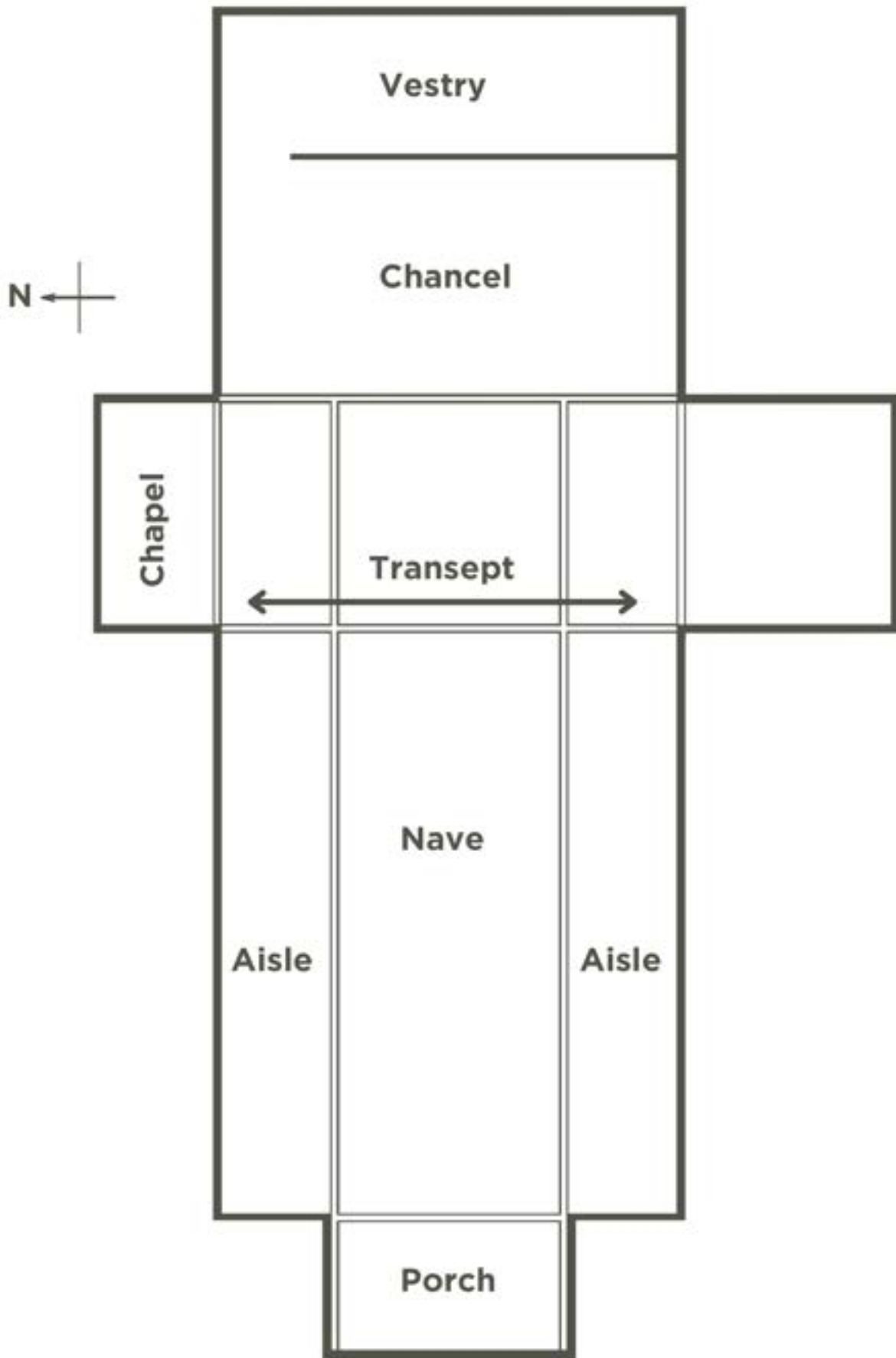
Since the 8th century most churches are oriented in a particular way i.e. places in a certain direction, usually with the altar in the east. Even in modern times, where it isn't always possible to do this, the altar end of the church is referred to as the "east end" or the liturgical east.

On tour you might have heard the guide refer to different parts of the museum e.g. the chancel or the nave. The map below gives the basic parts of a medieval church. Cathedrals are much more complicated, often containing several chapels.



The original entrance to the Rothe Family chapel in the museum

# Early Church Architecture





## Clues in the bones

Before St. Mary's Church became the Medieval Mile Museum, the church and its surrounding streets had to be excavated carefully by archaeologists. This is because, as a known graveyard, many skeletons were expected to be found.

When a skeleton is discovered during an archaeological dig, there is a set of steps that must be taken:

1. An Garda Síochána are informed and they will visit the site to confirm the remains are historic
2. The skeleton is then carefully excavated - soil around the remains is slowly and carefully brushed away by the archaeologist, while they look out for small bones or pieces of clothing, pins or jewellery that might help date the remains or give us clues about the person
3. While excavating, the remains are continually photographed - sometimes the position of the body in the ground can give clues about who this person was or how they were buried
4. The archaeologist carefully draws the find - the skeleton, the bones and anything else found with the skeleton



Excavation in Kilkenny City Centre - you can see skulls at the bottom right of the photograph.

Photograph credit: Kilkenny County Council

## Clues in the bones cont.

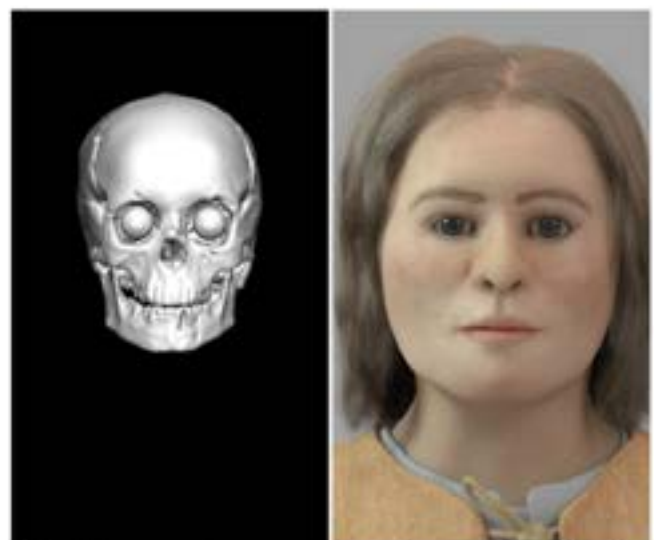
5. The location and orientation (the positioning) of the remains is recorded - again this can help date the burial and give clues as to who the person was
6. Once everything has been carefully recorded, the skeleton can be lifted. This is a very delicate and slow process, as the bones can break as they are being removed
7. The skeleton is now ready for specialist examination away from the site where it was found - this will take place in a lab in a university, a museum or a company that specialises in osteoarchaeology
8. The bones are carbon dated to age them, and an osteologist will inspect the bones to look for clues as to how old was the person when they died, how did they die, and did they have any illnesses or disease
9. Detailed photos of parts of the skeleton might be taken if there is an interesting feature e.g. evidence of disease like arthritis or a mended broken bone. Skulls are sometimes 3-D scanned to allow for craniofacial reconstruction i.e. developing an image of how the person might have looked.

The skeleton may be placed on display afterwards in a museum or kept in safe keeping in a museum store.

In 2016 skeleton was found beneath the entrance gate to St Mary's churchyard during excavations.

Recorded as Skeleton B37, it was dated between 1310 & the 1600s and they were 13 to 14 years old when they died of an infection.

As they were an adolescent, we cannot accurately say if they were a boy or a girl. Their bones bear the marks of physical labour.



**The 3D scan & reconstruction of the skull of Skelton B37**

# Heraldry and Coats of Arms

In St Mary's there are lots of coats of arms on the walls and tombs - each one unique to the Civic Families of Kilkenny. The methods used to design these arms is called heraldry.










Heraldry is about showing the world who you are - literally! Knights wore helmets that covered their faces and so they couldn't be recognised of the battlefield or the tournament grounds. So they began to paint unique combinations of colours, shapes and animals on their shields and banners called "arms". Each knight had his own unique arms, so when people saw him in a battle or a tournament, they could recognise him.

As heraldry began in Norman times, when people spoke Norman French, the terms used by expert 'heralds' even today uses this language. Different arrangements of shapes and colours have different codes.

There were 5 traditional colours:

Red = Gules      Blue = Azure      Green = Vert      Black = Sable  
Purple = Purpure      Gold or yellow = Or      Silver or white = Argent

Then you have ordinaries - simple shapes used on the background. These have their own names:

Fess = horizontal stripe across the shield 	Bordure = border round edges of shield 	Pile = downward pointing triangle 
Chief = bar across top edge of shield 	Saltire = a 'St. Andrew's cross' 	Cross = a plain cross 
Chevron = like a house gable, pointing upwards 	Bend = diagonal stripe 	Pale = vertical stripe down the shield 

## Heraldry and Coats of Arms cont.

Next you might like to add a “charge” – a symbol which could be a shape or an animal. Simple charges include crosses, stars, rings, balls, crescents, diamonds or maybe flowers.

Animals are often used, and they can have very specific meanings:

**Lions** = bravery

**Dogs** = faithfulness, reliability

**Stags** = wisdom and long life

**Eagles** = power and nobility

**Hares** = speed

**Dolphin** = affection, charity

**Snake** = wisdom

**Fish** = of regal origin

**Bear** = fierce Protection

**Wolf** = perseverance in siege or effort

**Leopard** = valiant and enduring warrior

**Horse** = readiness for duty

**Bull** = valour and magnanimity

**Rabbit** = peace-loving



The Rothe Coat of Arms, with an or shield and a passant stag and oak tree charges



A double headed eagle with displayed wings



A rampant lion with two tails

Animal charges can be shown in many different ways, for instance:

**Rearing up (rampant)** - like the lion with two tails above

**Standing (statant)** - like the dog, on all fours

**Wings outstretched (displayed)** - like the eagle

**Walking along (passant)** - like the stag on the Rothe arms above

Mythical beasts were also used – at the time people believed that they existed, or had existed at some point. Some common examples include:

**Dragon** = A brave and cunning defender of treasure.

**Griffin** = watchfulness and courage

**Cockatrice** (a cross between a cockerel and a dragon) = protection



# After your visit

- Post-visit Activity  
Sheets



Medieval  
Mile  
Museum

## After Your Visit – follow up activities

Like any other class activity, a visit to the Medieval Mile doesn't end once you've left the museum. Class based follow up activities will help close out the museum outing and reinforce the information that the visit provided.

In the Appendix is a list of suggested after visit activities for the classroom to help emphasise key information, allow your students use their newly gained knowledge and to use your visit in other areas of the curriculum apart from History. We also have printable worksheets in the appendices for you to use in class after your visit.

### Post Visit Activities – Activity Sheets

Curriculum links History & English:

Medieval Mile Word Search

A day in the life of Kilkenny – write your own entry for the Liber Primus

Design your own City Charter

Curriculum links History & Maths:

High Crosses – patterns and shapes

Curriculum links History & Art:

Design your own Family Shield

Design your own High Cross

Curriculum links History, English, Science:

3 Lives, 3 Deaths

## Medieval Mile Wordsearch

W	H	I	G	H	C	R	O	S	S	M	M
E	U	C	H	A	P	E	L	Y	X	E	M
A	M	U	S	E	U	M	Q	M	B	R	I
L	N	T	R	A	D	E	P	A	F	C	L
T	G	A	H	C	H	U	R	C	H	H	E
H	S	R	Q	C	I	X	T	E	Z	A	J
X	W	U	A	L	J	T	O	W	N	N	C
K	O	E	V	V	O	M	Y	G	R	T	L
M	R	H	Z	M	E	D	I	E	V	A	L
B	D	E	B	Q	I	E	T	R	A	D	E
L	O	Y	S	K	E	L	E	T	O	N	Z

Chapel  
Church  
City  
Grave

High cross  
Mace  
Medieval  
Mile

Merchant  
Museum  
Skeleton  
Sword

Tomb  
Town  
Trade  
Wealth

# A day in the life of Kilkenny



Write your own entry for the Liber Primus

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Design Your Own City Charter



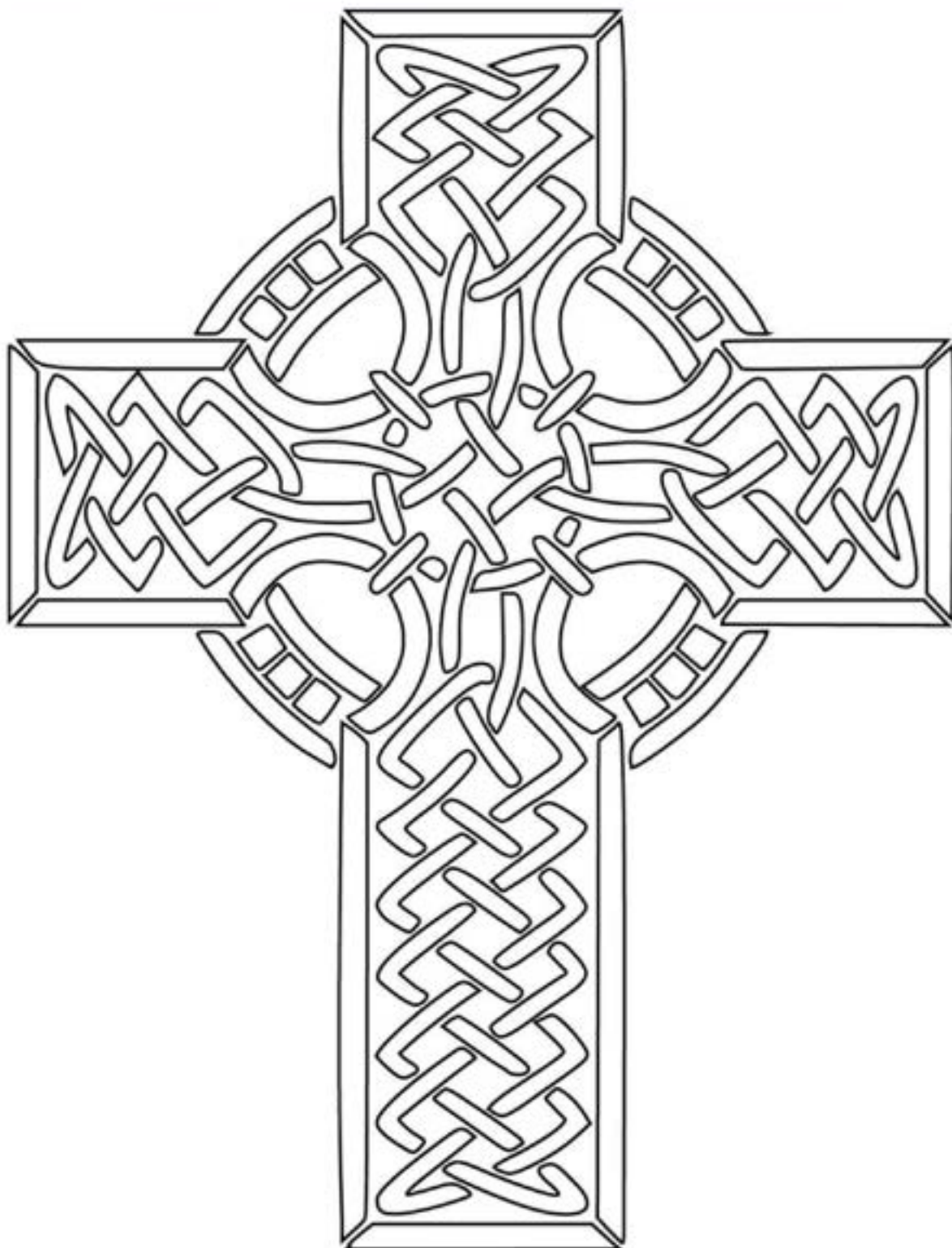
A Charter grants the citizens of a town or city certain rights e.g. permission to use a bridge for free, permission to have markets on a certain day etc. What rights would you grant your city?

**I, \_\_\_\_\_ grant the following rights to the city of \_\_\_\_\_**

A large, stylized scroll graphic with a thick black outline. The scroll is unrolled in the middle, revealing a series of horizontal lines for writing. The top and bottom edges of the scroll are curled up, and the left and right sides are also slightly curved, giving it a three-dimensional appearance.

# High Crosses - Patterns & Shapes

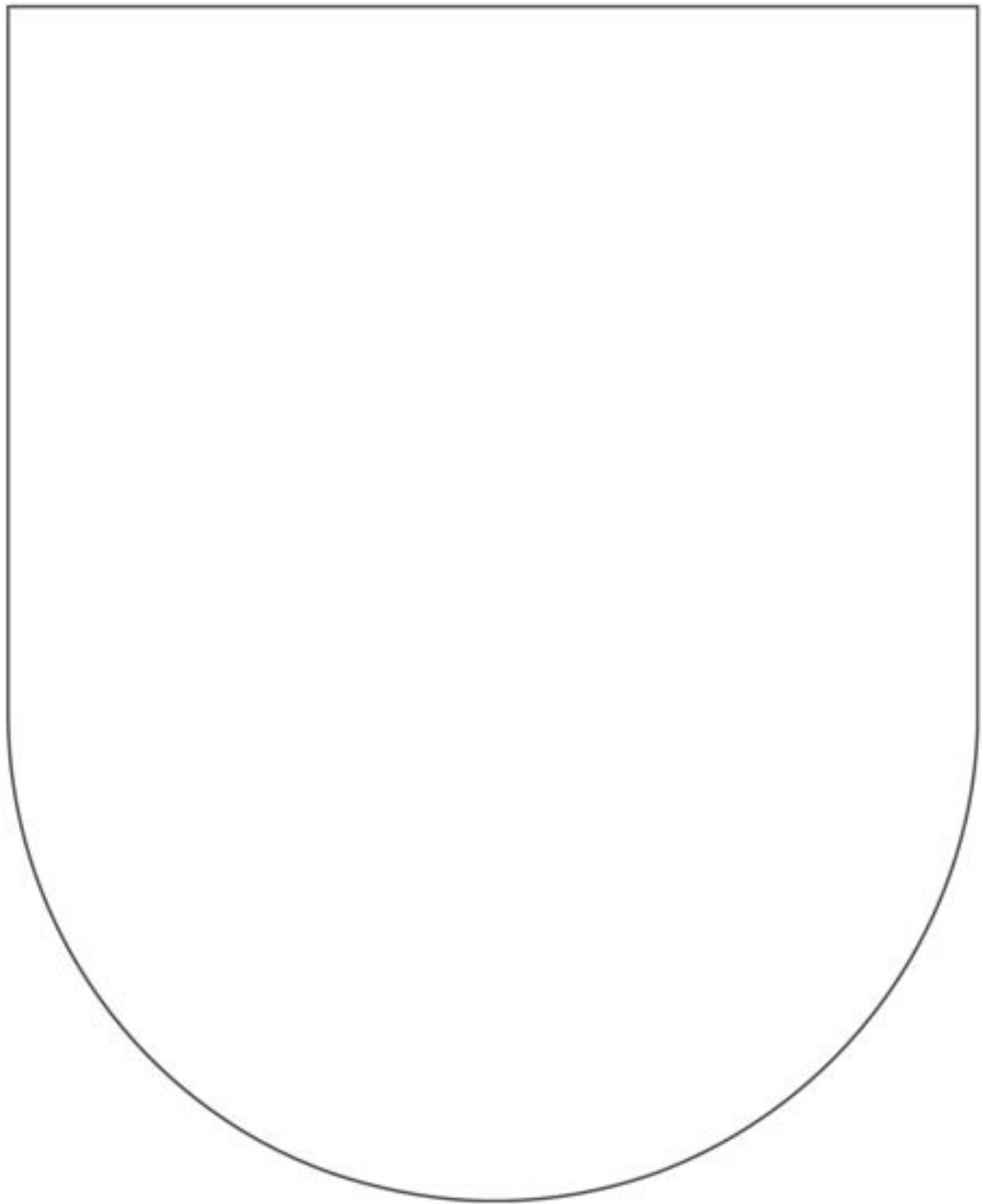
The High Crosses in the museum are covered in patterns and shapes - can you find the following on the image of the cross below? Colour each one in a different colour.



# Design Your Own Family Shield



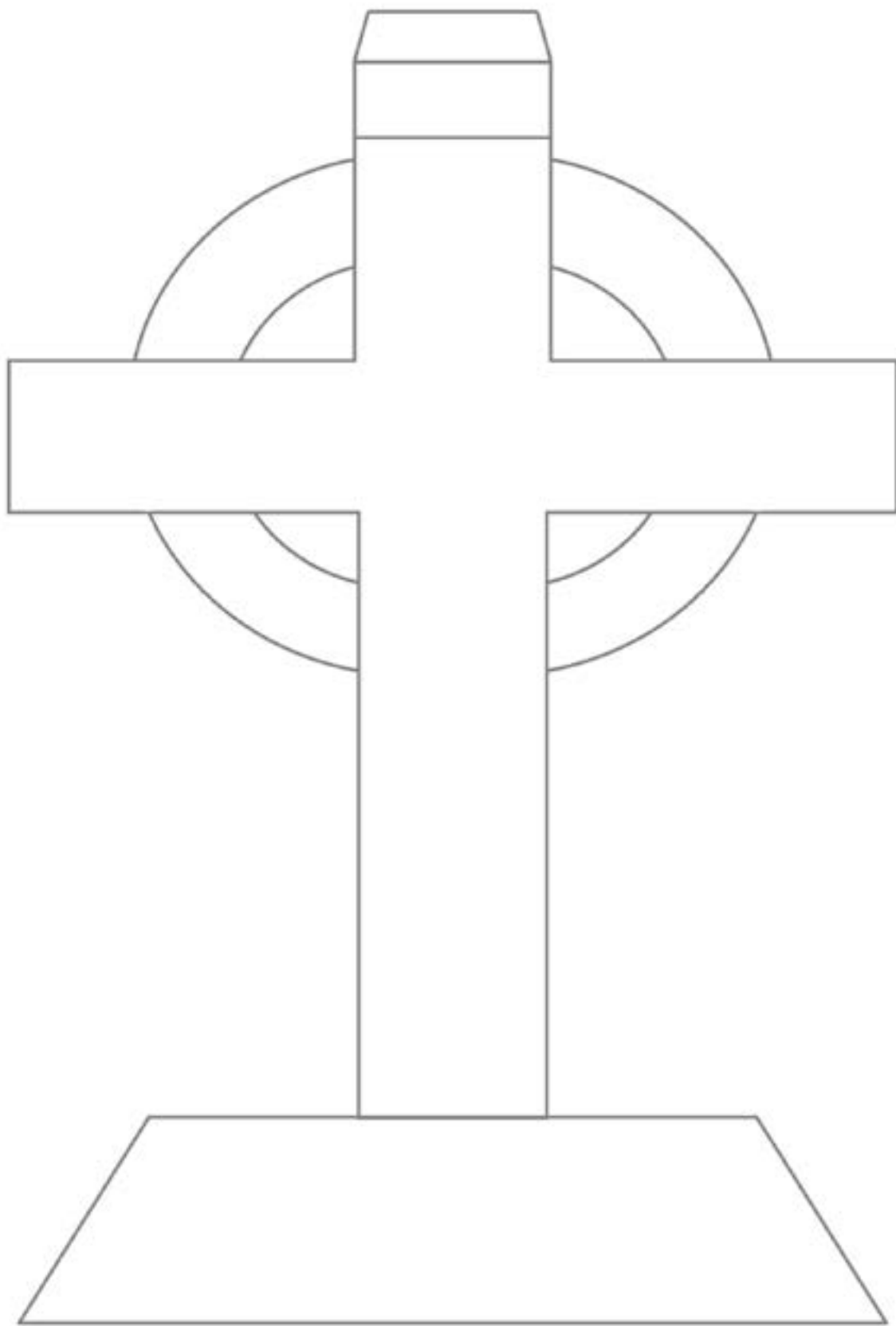
Your Family shield is about showing the world who you are - using the Heraldry Factsheet, create your own Coat of Arms!



## Design Your Own High Cross

High Crosses were used to tell stories using pictures - tell your own story below!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



## 3 lives, 3 deaths

In the museum there's the the story of three people who's skeletons were found in the church grounds. Their lives have been pieced together by archaeologists. Read their stories below and then answer the questions.

**Person 1** was 17 or 18 years old when she died. Her spine (the bones in her back) tell us that she worked very hard - so hard that there is damage to the bones. This would have caused a lot of pain when she was alive - walking and carrying thing must have been very hard for her. She also has a chipped tooth but we don't know why - did she fall? We will never know. The date from the bones tell us that she lived between the 1400 and 1600 hundreds - so it was likely she was married since the age of twelve she was practically middle-aged by the time of her death.

**Person 2** died between the 1320s and 1600, and was only 12 or 13 years old when they died. Because they died so young we can't be sure if they were a boy or a girl. Their left arm had been fractured (broken) during his or her short life. There were signs of malnutrition from a poor diet in the bones and the skull showed evidence of a constant battle with infection.

**Person 3** was 45 years or older when she died between 1470 and 1640. In medieval times 45 was very old. This woman would have been in constant pain, from joint diseases in her spine, a broken hand and defects in her neck. Her skull and jaw tell us she had mouth ulcers - could have been fatal when she was alive if they were not treated. We can also see she had gum disease - she would have teeth falling out and would have had bad breath. For an older person in the medieval period they would have worked until they died - there was no retirement.



# 3 lives, 3 deaths Questions

Q. 1

What are the three ages of the people?

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Q.2

Is it possible that all three lived at once? (Hint look at the dates of their deaths)

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Q. 3

What injury does Person 1 have that archaeologists can't explain?

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Q. 4

Was caused the damage to Person 1's spine?

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Q. 5

Is Person 2 a boy or a girl?

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Q. 6

What does Person 2's skull show evidence of?

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Q. 7

What part of Person 3's body had broken?

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Q. 8

What would gum disease have done to Person 3?

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# Appendices



Medieval  
Mile  
Museum

# Lesson plans for guided tour

## Primary Junior - Up to 2nd Class

**Curriculum Areas** Social Environmental and Scientific Education

**Subject** History

**Skills and concepts development** Working as an historian

Strand	Strand Unit
Story	Stories
Change and continuity	Continuity and change in the local environment

### Content objectives/ Learning outcomes

After the tour the child should be enabled to understand what life was like in Kilkenny in medieval times, how people lived and died, the difference between life as a rich person and life as a poor person and how life in medieval Kilkenny was different to life in other parts of medieval Ireland.

### Keywords & key phrases

Castle; cathedral; chapel; church; city; grave; high cross; Latin; mace; medieval; merchants; poor; skeleton; sword; symbol; tomb; town; trade; wealth.

### Resources and teaching methods

Learning outside the classroom, guided tour, use of visuals and objects to tell a story, use of interactive in the museum, experiential learning.



# Lesson plans for guided tour

## Primary Junior - 3rd to 6th Class

**Curriculum Areas** Social Environmental and Scientific Education

**Subject** History

**Skills and concepts development** Working as an historian

Strand	Strand Unit
Local studies	Feasts and festivals in the past Buildings, sites or ruins in my locality My locality through the ages in the past
Story	Stories from the lives of people in the past Myths and legends
Change and continuity	Communications (3rd to 6th Class) Clothes (3rd to 6th Class) Transport (3rd to 6th Class) Caring for the sick (3rd to 6th Class)  Food and farming (3rd & 4th Class) Shops and fairs (3rd & 4th Class) Homes and houses (3rd & 4th Class)  Homes, housing and urban developments (5th & 6th Class) Literature, art, crafts and culture (5th & 6th Class) Barter, trade and money (5th & 6th Class)
Life, society, work and culture in the past	Life in Norman Ireland Life in mediaeval towns and countryside in Ireland and Europe

## **Lesson plans for guided tour cont. - Primary Junior - 3rd to 6th Class**

### **Content objectives/ Learning outcomes**

After the tour the child should be enabled to understand what life was like in Kilkenny in medieval times, how people lived and died, the difference between life as a rich person and life as a poor person and how life in medieval Kilkenny was different to life in other parts of medieval Ireland.

### **Keywords & key phrases**

Anglo-Norman; archaeologist; castle; cathedral; Catholic; chantry; chapel; charter; carver; church; city; effigy; excavation; fleur-de-lis; grave; high cross; Latin; Liber primus; mace; Medieval Mile; merchants; Norman; patron; Protestant; replica; Rothe; sculpture; skeleton; sword; symbol; tomb; tomb slab; town; trade; transept.

### **Resources and teaching methods**

Learning outside the classroom, guided tour, use of visuals and objects to tell a story, use of interactive in the museum, experiential learning.

## Suggested Reading

Christiaan Corlett and Michael Potterton (Editors) (2021) *The Town in Medieval Ireland: In the Light of Recent Archaeological Excavations*. Wordwell Publications.

Gillian Kenny (2017) *The Wife's Tale: Isabel Marshal and Ireland from William Marshal and Ireland*, ed. J. Bradley, pp. 315–24. Four Courts Press.

Jane Fenlon & Sarah Maguire (2023) *Magnates and Merchants in Early Modern Kilkenny*. Four Courts Press.

John Bradley (2009) *The Kilkenny City Charter of 1609*. Kilkenny Borough Council.

Linda E. Mitchell (2019) *The Most Perfect Knight's Countess, Isabella de Clare, her daughters and women's exercise of power from Medieval Elite Women and the Exercise of Power, 1100–1400*, ed. H. Tanner, pp. 45–65. Palgrave Macmillan.

Thomas Asbridge (2015). *The Greatest Knight: The Remarkable Life of William Marshal, Power Behind Five English Thrones*. London: Simon & Schuster.

## Online Resources

**Heritage in Schools** – there are many resources based on Kilkenny and the Medieval Mile on The Heritage Council's Heritage in Schools website. These are resources by Heritage Experts on the Heritage in Schools panel, teachers or prepared by other educational organisations:  
<https://www.heritageinschools.ie/teachers-resources>

We would recommend downloading *Stepping Into Kilkenny's History: A Resource For Primary Schools*, a booklet published by Kilkenny Education Centre with support from the Heritage Council.

Other resource packs for Kilkenny City are available including:

- Kilkenny's Medieval Churches
- Around Kilkenny Castle
- The Butlers of Kilkenny
- The Confederation Of Kilkenny
- Kieran's Street Trail, Kilkenny
- Archaeology Lesson Plans
- The River Nore

**Rothe House** – the official page for Rothe House includes a timeline of city's development and the role of the Rothe Family:  
<https://rothehouse.com/history/>

**Historicgraves.com** – map and list of the grave in St Mary's Church:  
<https://historicgraves.com/graveyard/st-mary-s/kk-stmg>

**3-D scans** of some of the Coats of Arms in St Mary's graveyard:  
<https://sketchfab.com/b-unicycling/collections/coat-of-arms-843debcf519c42a4916ecf6f3d6881a0>

**The Ten Civic Families of Kilkenny** – the Kilkenny Archaeological Society's website contains many articles about Medieval Kilkenny, including this one on the Ten Civic Families and where their coats of arms can be seen around the city centre:  
<https://kilkennyarchaeologicalsociety.ie/the-ten-civic-families-of-kilkenny/>

## Online Resources cont.

**Oral Histories - “In Their Own Words”** - An Oral History of St. Mary's is a series of interviews with people closely associated with St. Mary's recorded by oral historian Regina Fitzpatrick:

<https://kilkennyheritage.ie/2020/09/st-marys-church-and-graveyard/>

**Strongbow and Aoife** - Learn more about Maclise's famous painting The Marriage of Strongbow and Aoife, including interpretation of the symbols used with the National Gallery of Ireland:

<https://www.nationalgallery.ie/explore-and-learn/conservation-and-research-projects/strongbow-aoife>

**The Ros Tapestry** - The Ros Tapestry consists of 15 large, embroidered panels telling the story of the Norman arrival in South-East Ireland. It was created by 180 volunteers over 20 years. From New Ross, it is currently on loan to Kilkenny Castle:

<https://rostapestry.ie/>

**The Infamous Medieval Witch Case of Alice Kyteler** - a YouTube video covering the story of Alice by Medieval Madness:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZndDYkA\\_qIQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZndDYkA_qIQ)

**Liber primus Kilkenniensis** - article and radio interview by Eamonn Kiely (2019) for the Kilkenny Archaeological Society:

<https://kilkennyarchaeologicalsociety.ie/liber-primus-kilkenniensis/>

**Currency Converter: 1270 - 2017** - The UK National Archives have a useful historical currency converter which allows you to calculate the purchasing power of money in the past. Sums of money can be equated to numbers of horses and cows, stone weight of wool, quarters of wheat or days of work by a skilled tradesman:

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/>

**The Historic Environment Viewer** - this on-line digital map and database gives the location of built heritage all over Ireland, including all the medieval monuments in Kilkenny City:

<https://www.archaeology.ie/archaeological-survey-ireland>

# Suggested Kilkenny City itineraries for school groups

The following are sample tour plans for school groups visiting Kilkenny city centre. Starting at the Medieval Mile Museum, the following suggestions should help you make the most of your visit to Kilkenny.

## The Merchants

- Medieval Mile Museum
- Rothe House
- Kieran's Street Trail  
(self-guided, see the Heritage in Schools link in online resources)

## The Churches

- Medieval Mile Museum
- St Canice's Cathedral
- The Black Abbey

## Civic Kilkenny

- Medieval Mile Museum
- Rothe House
- Butler Gallery
- Kilkenny Castle  
(resources available at <https://kilkennycastle.ie/education/schools>)

## Alice Kyteler

- Medieval Mile Museum
- St Canice's Cathedral
- Kieran's Street Trail  
(self-guided, see the Heritage in Schools link in online resources)
- Kilkenny Castle  
(resources available at <https://kilkennycastle.ie/education/schools>)

To arrange visits to sites other than the Medieval Mile Museum please use the contact details below. Tour guides for city walking tours can be found on the Heritage in Schools website ([Search for a Specialist | Heritage in Schools](#)).

Rothe House & Garden  
Parliament Street  
Kilkenny  
Ireland  
R95 P89C

[reception@rothehouse.com](mailto:reception@rothehouse.com)  
+353 (0)56 772 2893  
[www.rothehouse.com](http://www.rothehouse.com)

Kilkenny Castle  
The Parade  
Kilkenny  
R95 YRK1

[bookingskilkennycastle@opw.ie](mailto:bookingskilkennycastle@opw.ie)  
+353 46 942 3020  
[www.kilkennycastle.ie](http://www.kilkennycastle.ie)

Saint Canice's Cathedral  
The Close  
Coach Road  
Kilkenny City  
R95 V63H

[administrator@stcanicescathedral.com](mailto:administrator@stcanicescathedral.com)  
+353 (0)56 7764971  
[www.stcanicescathedral.ie](http://www.stcanicescathedral.ie)

The Black Abbey  
Dominican Community  
Black Abbey  
Kilkenny  
R95 TCK6

[blackabbey@dominicans.ie](mailto:blackabbey@dominicans.ie)  
+353 (0)56 7721279

Butler Gallery  
Evans' Home  
John's Quay  
Kilkenny  
R95 YX3F

[visitorexperience@butlergallery.ie](mailto:visitorexperience@butlergallery.ie)  
+353 (0)56 7761106  
[www.butlergallery.ie](http://www.butlergallery.ie)