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Kildare County Development Plan



Chapter 11: Built & Cultural Heritage

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I am a secondary school history teacher in Naas. I would like to recommend that Gowran Grange and its curtilage be added to the record of protected structures.

Gowran Grange, named after Gowran, Co Kilkenny, (the seat of Lord Gowran) and was inherited by the De Robeck family in 1789 through marriage. An estate originally of 5,536 acres stretching from Kilkenny to Wicklow through to Dublin and settling in the rich agricultural landscape of Swordlestown, Kildare. It is situated within the defensive settlement of the Pale, where the Normans built ramparts against the incursions of Irish septs in this area. In the 18th and 19th centuries the Anglo-Irish (loyal to the crown) felt safer too.

I completed a thesis on 4th Baron de Robeck and from my studies understand that he commissioned the house on these lands due to his links with the hunt and Punchestown. Also, to be close to his relatives in the Great Houses of Kildare eg. The Lyons Estate (Lord Cloncurry), Eadestown House and his social circle of Palmerstown House (Earl of Mayo). The house and lands are of immense cultural significance both locally & nationally and should be added to the record of protected structures.

Pilgrims Paths

Several ecclesiastical sites were established during *Early Medieval Period* (c. 400-1160AD), in areas such as Naas, Clane, Cloncurry and Kilkea. This network of ecclesiastical sites would have undoubtedly established and maintained contact with the

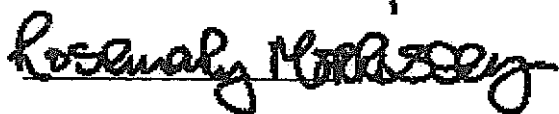
great monastic complex founded by St Kevin at Glendalough. At its foundation it became one of the most famous religious centres in Europe. This is the era of Ireland known as the land of 'Saints and Scholars'. It was restored by a group of wealthy scholars in the late 19th century. They were led by Sir William Wilde (father of Oscar) and Dr George Petrie (renowned Archaeologist) with the purpose of promoting Glendalough as the principal place of pilgrimage for Kildare and Leinster.

The connection with Glendalough (Heritage Ireland) is continuing to the present day through the *Gaisce Awards* (President's Medals). To achieve the award students (15-25 years old) must complete activities, one of which is an adventure journey. Students in Naas, begin their walk (canal graveyard), through the town to Kilshee graveyard and well. Then, walking to Punchestown and through Swordlestown (*Gowran Grange*) and walking to Sillagh, Broadleas to arrive at the start of St Kevin's Way, Hollywood. Travelling a further 30km to the ecclesiastical site of Glendalough. This is carried out in stages over several days by modern day pilgrims. They receive the gold, silver, or bronze medals, depending on the distance that they have travelled and length of time it took. It is seen as a challenge for young people to walk the many pilgrim pathways to achieving a *Gaisce Award*. It gives them an insight into their rich history as they journey to Glendalough.

This journey generates a greater awareness, respect, and interest in our local heritage in an interactive and meaningful way by place-based learning. It encourages learning in the outdoor classroom to address the increasing decline in time spent outdoors by Irish teenagers.

Therefore, I would like to recommend that these pilgrim paths be preserved from development to ensure that future generations will be able to follow the exact footsteps of their ancestors.

Yours sincerely,



Rosemary Morrissey

