

# TRACE THE FOOTSTEPS OF BRIAN BORU & THE O'BRIENS IN COUNTY CLARE

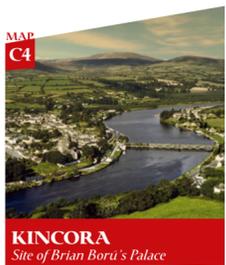
In the 10th century, Brian Boru - one of the most influential and colourful characters in Irish history - was born in Killaloe, Co. Clare. A member of a powerful Dalcassian tribe he went on to become High King of Ireland and ruled from his palace at Kincora in Killaloe. He died in 1014 after an emphatic victory over the Vikings in the Battle of Clontarf. His descendants became the mighty O'Brien clan - one of the greatest Gaelic clans whose influence extends to this day.

Trace the footsteps of Brian Boru and his descendants throughout County Clare. This map shows a selection of the important sites and buildings associated with Boru and the O'Briens. While you are here, why not visit the other important Brian Boru sites in Cashel, Clontarf and Armagh.

You can visit most of the sites, however, please note that those on private property can only be viewed from public access points unless permission is secured from the owner to visit.

## ENJOY THE JOURNEY!

### BRIAN BORU SITE O'BRIEN SITE



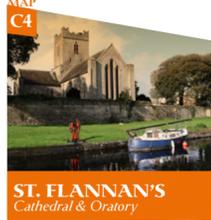
**KINCORA**  
Site of Brian Boru's Palace

Instead of taking his seat at Tara or Cashel, Brian Boru ruled over Ireland from his palace at Kincora. The site, at the top of the hill, had panoramic views of the river and surrounding countryside. The site is now occupied by St. Flannan's Church, St. Lua's oratory and The Green. No trace of the Palace remains. **KILLALOE, (52.8069, -8.4444)**  
[www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/places/kointerest.htm](http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/places/kointerest.htm)



**ST. LUA'S ORATORY**

St. Lua's oratory in the grounds of St. Flannan's Catholic Church originally stood on Inis Lua on the River Shannon just south of Killaloe. It is an early example of a nave-and-chancel church. It was likely to have been built around the 10th or 11th century. **KILLALOE, (52.8069, -8.4444)**  
[www.killaloeballina.ie/churchesandoratories.html](http://www.killaloeballina.ie/churchesandoratories.html)



**ST. FLANNAN'S**  
Cathedral & Oratory

Built in the 13th century, St. Flannan's Cathedral stands on the west bank of the Shannon. The Cathedral is home to a number of stone features including a Romanesque Doorway, an Ogham Stone thought to date back to 1000AD, a 12th century high cross, an ornately carved font and a magnificent East Window. An 11th century Romanesque oratory is adjacent to the Cathedral. **KILLALOE, (52.8063, -8.4390)**  
[www.killaloeballina.ie/churchesandoratories.html](http://www.killaloeballina.ie/churchesandoratories.html)



**BRIAN BORU HERITAGE CENTRE**

Located beside Killaloe bridge, the Brian Boru Heritage Centre serves as an information centre, tourist office, shop and community library. The centre charts the history of the town especially the life of Brian Boru. Admission applies. **KILLALOE, (52.8075, -8.4403)**  
[www.shannonheritage.com/DaytimeAttractions/BrianBoruHeritageCentre](http://www.shannonheritage.com/DaytimeAttractions/BrianBoruHeritageCentre)



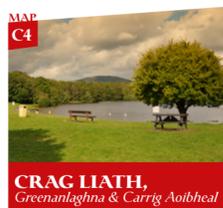
**TOBERMURRAGH**

Tobermurragh or Murrough's Well, is situated near the Pier Head in Killaloe. It is here that, according to tradition, Brian's son Murrough was baptised. The well is now enclosed and covered by a red brick building built at the end of the 19th century. **KILLALOE, (52.8090, -8.4482)**  
[www.killaloeballina.ie/brianboru.html](http://www.killaloeballina.ie/brianboru.html)



**BEAL BORU**  
Brian Boru's Fort

Overlooking the point where the River Shannon exits Lough Derg, Beal Boru is a beautiful example of a ring fort. Believed to have been occupied by the Dal Cais (Brian Boru's family tribe), who controlled access up the river from Killaloe. The fort is a massive structure but is concealed by beech and pine trees. **KILLALOE, (52.8189, -8.4516)**  
[www.killaloeballina.ie/brianboru.html](http://www.killaloeballina.ie/brianboru.html)



**CRAG LIATH,**  
Greenanlaghna & Carrig Aoihbeal

The hill of Crag Liath slopes down to the road near Beal Boru. On its south-eastern slope lies Greenanlaghna, the remains of a fort associated with Brian Boru's family. On the northern slope is a great projecting rock, 6 metres high known as Carraig Aoihbeal or Aoihbeal's Rock, home to the banshee Aoihbeal. **KILLALOE, (52.8390, -8.4672)**  
[www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/places/kointerest.htm](http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/places/kointerest.htm)



**TOUNTINNA**  
The Graves of the Leinstermen

Tountinna is the highest peak of the Arra Mountain range. On the heathery slopes, beside the road are the remains of a pre-historic chamber tomb, known as the Graves of the Leinstermen. The Graves consist of a line of small slate slabs. There is a low earthen mound to the north of the chief slab. These slabs are Bronze Age and date no later than 1000BC. **TOUNTINNA, (52.8514, -8.3992)**



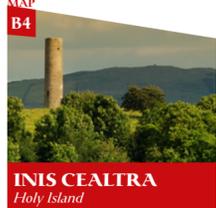
**O'BRIENSBRIDGE**

The village of O'Briensbridge in south east Clare on the Shannon River gets its name from the first bridge built over the river in 1506 by Turlough O'Brien, First Earl of Thomond, and his brother, the Bishop of Killaloe. **O'BRIEN'S BRIDGE, (52.7525, -8.4987)**  
[www.obriensbridge.com](http://www.obriensbridge.com)



**EAST CLARE HERITAGE CENTRE**

East Clare Heritage Centre is located in St. Cronan's 10th century church in Tuamgraney, reputed to be the oldest church in continuous use in Ireland. It is also a tourist information point and houses many interesting artefacts. Celtic Traditions concerts also take place here during the summer months. **TUAMGRANEY, (52.8967, -8.5395)**  
[www.eastclareheritage.com/holy-island](http://www.eastclareheritage.com/holy-island)



**INIS CEALTRA**  
Holy Island

Inis Cealtra / Holy Island on Lough Derg is one of the most famous monastic sites in Ireland. Its many attractions include a well-preserved Round Tower, the ruins of six churches, a Holy Well, a unique graveyard with slabs dating from the 8th century. Guided tours of the Island are available. Access is by way of a boat trip from the pier at Mountshannon. Brian Boru's brother Marcan was Bishop-Abbot on Inis Cealtra. **LOUGH DERG, (52.9155, -8.4483)**  
[www.eastclareheritage.com/holy-island](http://www.eastclareheritage.com/holy-island)



**LOUGH DERG/**  
River Shannon

Lough Derg is the largest and one of the most beautiful lakes on the River Shannon. During his reign Brian Boru kept one navy on the lake and a second on the Shannon estuary. Today you can drive the Lough Derg trail which starts and finishes in the twin towns of Killaloe/Ballina. **(52.8413, -8.8288)**  
[www.clare.ie](http://www.clare.ie)



**MAGH ADHAIR**

Magh Adhair was the Inauguration Place of the Kings of Thomond. It contains a large mound and other earthworks including a bullaun stone and a cairn over 3 metres high. These features are partly enclosed by an earthen bank in which stand many stones. **QUIN, (52.8413, -8.8288)**



**CLARE ABBEY**

Clare Abbey is a ruined Augustinian monastery founded in 1189 by Donal Mór O'Brien, King of Thomond. The ruins include a church and cloister with ranges of domestic buildings to the east and south of the garth, and a gateway. There is also an adjacent graveyard. **CLARECASTLE, (52.8290, -9.8689)**



**CLARE MUSEUM**

Clare County Museum features the Riches of County Clare. Enjoy an audio visual presentation on "The Powerful O'Brien's", highlighting the history and achievements of the O'Brien clan from the time of Brian Boru to the present day. It mentions many of the buildings and personalities associated with the family around the county. Free admission. **ENNIS, (52.8438, -8.9819)**  
[www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/claremuseum](http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/claremuseum)



**ENNIS FRIARY**

This 13th century Franciscan friary, founded by the O'Briens of Thomond, has numerous 15th/16th century sculptures carved in the local hard limestone. The visitor can also see the sacristy and the cloister area where part of the arcade has been reconstructed. The O'Brien Tomb, known as the Inchiquin Tomb, is situated in the friary. Admission applies. **ENNIS, (52.8459, -8.9816)**  
[www.heritageireland.ie/en/ShannonRegion/EnnisFriary](http://www.heritageireland.ie/en/ShannonRegion/EnnisFriary)



**KILLONE ABBEY & LAKE**

These extensive ruins consist of a church, crypt, and house around a cloister garth. The adjoining lake is associated in folklore with the O'Briens. There is a small carpark at the end of a minor road and then a walk of about a half mile along a rough path. **KILLONE, (52.8062, -9.0043)**



**CLARE CASTLE**

Clare Castle was built at the beginning of the 13th century by Robert de Muscegros and fell into the hands of the O'Brien's after the battle of Dysert O'Dea in 1318. It was refortified and extended in the 15th century and eventually served as a barracks. Very little of the castle remains today except for a portion of a round tower that once was one corner of a larger structure. Clare Castle and Barracks is privately owned and is being restored at present. **CLARECASTLE, (52.8160, -9.8612)**



**DROMOLAND CASTLE**

Dromoland Castle, one of the most famous baronial castles in Ireland, was the ancestral home of the O'Briens, Barons of Inchiquin. Dromoland Castle retains all the splendour of its rich and storied history. Lavish interiors, fine food and wines complement the luxurious guest rooms. With a reputation built on traditional values and warm hospitality, Dromoland Castle is now a luxury 5 Star Resort. **DROMOLAND, (52.7834, -8.9055)**  
[www.dromoland.ie](http://www.dromoland.ie)



**BUNRATTY CASTLE & FOLK PARK**

Bunratty Castle is the most complete and authentic medieval fortress in Ireland. In 1475 it became the stronghold of the O'Briens. Today Bunratty Folk Park features over thirty 19th century buildings in a 'living' village and rural setting. Meet and chat with the Bean an Ti and various street characters who give the site its sparkle. Admission applies. **BUNRATTY, (52.6964, -8.8119)**  
[www.shannonheritage.com](http://www.shannonheritage.com)



**LEMENAGH CASTLE**

The original tower house was probably built around 1480 by Toirdelbhach Donn MacTadhg Ó Briain but the manor house was erected in 1648 by Conor O'Brien and his wife Maire Rua. O'Brien was Maire Rua's second husband. There are many legends about her and one such legend has it that she actually had 25 husbands. The impressive ruins of both structures lie on private property but can be viewed from the adjacent road. **LEMENAGH, (52.9876, -9.1398)**



**O'BRIEN'S TOWER**  
& Liscannor flagstone wall  
Cliffs of Moher

O'Brien's Tower  
The gothic stone tower stands near the highest point of the fabled Cliffs of Moher and was built in 1835 by local landlord and prolific builder, Cornelius O'Brien, as a viewing point for 19th century tourists. Today it is still visited and from the top on a clear day the Kerry and Connemara mountains can be seen. Admission applies.

Slate Wall along the Cliffs of Moher  
During the Great Famine in the 1840s, Cornelius O'Brien also built a flagstone wall along the Cliffs of Moher from locally quarried slate. Remnants of the original wall remain today. **LISCANNOR, (52.9730, -9.4305)**  
[www.cliffsfmoher.ie](http://www.cliffsfmoher.ie)



**ENNISTYMON CASTLE**  
(Falls Hotel)

Nestled in its wooded vale beside the tumbling waters of the River Inagh, the distinctive building known today as the Falls Hotel & Spa is regarded as one of the finest Clare Hotels. Concealed within its walls are an 18th century mansion, a late medieval castle and a formidable history of four and a half centuries. The original 16th century castle is believed to have been built by Domhnall O'Brien. **ENNISTYMON, (52.9357, -9.3316)**  
[www.fallsotel.ie](http://www.fallsotel.ie)



**ST. BRIGID'S WELL**  
O'Brien Monument & O'Brien Vault

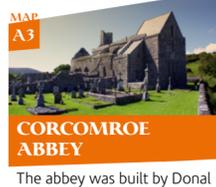
This holy well is one of many sacred to the female saint of Ireland, St. Brigid with links back to the Celtic goddess Brigit. It was enclosed by a stone wellhouse by Cornelius O'Brien in thanks for a cure by a vial of the well's holy water. The well is located in front of a graveyard that houses the O'Brien family vault.

Adjacent to St. Brigid's Well is a memorial column to the same Cornelius O'Brien which was funded by subscriptions from his tenants and friends following his death in 1857. "Corney's Column" as it is known looks down over Liscannor village and bay including the ruins of Cornelius' home, Birchfield House. **LISCANNOR, (52.9521, -9.4223)**



**BALLINALACKEN CASTLE**

The castle is believed to have been built in 1390 by Lochlan McCon of the O'Connors and relinquished to the O'Briens in the 16th century. The castle tower house is now incorporated into a country house hotel. **BALLINALACKEN, (53.0460, -9.3373)**  
[www.ballinalackencastle.com](http://www.ballinalackencastle.com)



**CORCOMROE ABBEY**

The abbey was built by Donal Mór Ua Briain for the Cistercian Order in 1194 and it continued to function over the next 400 years. The well preserved ruins lie picturesquely among the grey hills of the Burren and amongst the many interesting features is a recumbent effigy of King Conor na Siudaine Ua Briain one of the very few examples remaining of an Irish Chieftain. **ABBEY WEST, (53.1264, -9.0541)**  
[www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/places/the\\_burren/corcomroe\\_abbey.htm](http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/places/the_burren/corcomroe_abbey.htm)



**SCATTERY ISLAND**

This beautiful island has a rich built heritage and its tranquil atmosphere belies its turbulent history. St. Senan founded a monastic settlement on the island in the 6th century. It was a target for the Vikings from the 9th century on and the former King Ivar of Limerick was granted sanctuary there in the 10th century. He continued to antagonise Brian Boru who had taken Limerick and in 975, Brian attacked the island killing Ivar and his two sons. Access is by ferry from Cappa Pier, Kilrush. Ferry operator contact: +353 65 9051327 **RIVER SHANNON, (52.6122, -9.5194)**  
Facebook search Scattery Island Heritage and Development



**CARRIGAHOLT CASTLE**

Built by the McMahon Clan at the end of the 15th century, this is a relatively well preserved tower house. It was occupied by Tadhg Teige 'Caech' in 1588 but was captured by Donagh O'Brien the Fourth Earl of Thomond in 1590 and held by the O'Briens until 1690 when it was seized by the crown. The castle grounds are not accessible but the castle can be viewed from the pier. **CARRIGAHOLT, (52.5999, -9.6994)**  
[www.irelandseden.ie/explore-eden/loop-head-peninsula-co-clare/top-attractions](http://www.irelandseden.ie/explore-eden/loop-head-peninsula-co-clare/top-attractions)



**DOONBEG CASTLE**

This small castle or tower house was built in the 16th century and was first occupied by the McMahon Clan. The castle was the site of a famous battle in 1595 when the Earl of Thomond laid siege but was fiercely resisted by the McMahaons. Legend has it that on seizing the castle, the Earl, hung garrison soldiers in pairs, facing each other. The castle is surrounded by a wall and green area. There is access to the area outside the wall only. **DOONBEG, (52.7315, -9.5237)**  
[www.doonbeginfo.com](http://www.doonbeginfo.com)



**DOONMORE CASTLE**

Ruins of a tower house set close to the White Strand beach. This served as a look out post and was owned by the McMahon Clan until it was captured by the fourth Earl of Thomond, Donogh O'Brien. **DOONMORE, DOONBEG, (52.7405, -9.5375)**  
[www.doonbeginfo.com](http://www.doonbeginfo.com)

## BRIAN BORU TRAIL

KILLALOE BALLINA VISITORS CENTRE  
WWW.KILLALOEBALLINA.IE

Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this guide is correct, however the Brian Boru 2014 Steering Group cannot guarantee its accuracy and accept no responsibility for any error or misrepresentation. Some images have been provided by Clare County Council, Clare Library, Clare Tourism Forum, Scattery Island Heritage & Development & Fáilte Ireland.

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**O'BRIENS**  
IN COUNTY CLARE



