



**OPW** Oifig na  
nOibreacha Poiblí  
Office of Public Works

## Social Guide

A visit to Athenry Castle, Athenry, Co Galway.

### Introduction

Welcome! Today we are going to explore the castle and grounds. The castle was built by an Anglo-Norman Lord called Meiler de Bermingham in the year 1235 AD. Here is a picture of the castle.



We must not climb the castle walls in case we fall.

## Reception building

As we pass through the castle gates we go into Reception, the small building before the castle itself.



At the reception desk, you will meet our friendly tour guides and view the artwork and information on display.





Here you will learn how to enter the castle and this is where we give you your ticket. You can ask any questions here or ask for a guided tour.

If you get lost from your family or group, here is the place to go to get help.

### **Toilets**

The toilets are found in a small building behind the castle, within the castle grounds.

### **Banqueting hall and tower**

Here is a picture of the Banqueting hall and tower across from the castle.



In medieval times the de Bermingham family held banquets here for their visitors. The towers were used by soldiers to protect the family. You can hear the sound of the river flowing just outside the castle walls.

Before you go into the basement of the castle look at the panel outside reception and see what the castle and grounds would have looked like when it was first built.



## Caisleán Bhaile Átha an Rí Athenry Castle

Thóg an barain Normannach Meiler de Bermingham an caisleán i mBaile Átha an Rí sa bhliain 1235.  
Athenry castle was built by the Norman baron Meiler de Bermingham in 1235.



There were five gates leading through the town walls though only one, the North Gate, still survives.

*Bhí cáig gheata i mballaí an bhaile tráth, ach níl ach aon cheann amháin fágtha anois, an Geata Thuaidh.*

The castle originally guarded the ford (crossing point) over the Clareen river and only one narrow gate from the town led into the castle. Excavations in 1989 showed no evidence for the expected gatehouse protecting the entrance to the castle, but the foundations of a small, square building to one side of the gate could be those of a guard tower. Because the only gate to the castle led from the town side, there was probably less need for a strong gatehouse. The remains of a banquet hall built against one of the castle walls were also found during the excavations.

*Bhí an caisleán ag cosaint an átha treasa abha an Chláirín ar dtús agus ní raibh ach aon gheata amháin ón mbaile isteach sa chaisleán. Nuair a dhéan seandálaithe tochtailt ar seo sa bhliain 1989 níor thánathas ar aon rian de theuchgheata chun an sli isteach a chosaint — cé go mbeifí ag siúl lena leithéid. Is é a fuarthas ná clocha bhainn a bhainn le foirgneamh beag cearnógach ar thaobh amháin den gheata. D'fhéadfaid gur tír gharda a bhí sa bhfoirgneamh seo. B'fhéidir nach raibh gá le teuchgheata láidir nuair nach raibh ann ach aon gheata amháin isteach ó thaobh an bhaile.*

*Thánathas chomh maith ar fhothrach halla feise nuair a bhí an tochtailt ar siúl. Bhí sé seo buailte suas le balla an chaisleáin.*



**Athenry — from Baile Átha an Rí**  
(the Town of the Ford of the King)

Notice — This national monument is in the care of the Commissioners of Public Works for the state under the provisions of the National Monuments Act. The public are requested to aid the Commissioners in preserving it. Injury or neglect is severely punishable by law.  
*Águs: Tá an náisiúntaíocht náisiúnta seo i dteannta Chomhairleir na nOibreacha Poiblí. Tá cead an ádh ar a dhéan sa náisiúntaíocht náisiúnta, leas nó an t-ádh náisiúnta seo sa Chomhairleir na nOibreacha Poiblí. Tá cead an ádh ar a dhéan sa náisiúntaíocht náisiúnta, leas nó an t-ádh náisiúnta seo sa Chomhairleir na nOibreacha Poiblí. Tá cead an ádh ar a dhéan sa náisiúntaíocht náisiúnta, leas nó an t-ádh náisiúnta seo sa Chomhairleir na nOibreacha Poiblí.*



In 1241 the merchants of Athenry were given permission to hold a regular market day in the town. At first a wooden cross marked the trading area, but in the 15th century, this was replaced with the present carved stone cross. The tall shaft has been lost and only the cross and base remain.

*Sa bhliain 1241 tugadh cead do cheannaitheoirí Bhaile Átha an Rí margadh a chur ar bun go rialta. Bhí cros adhmaid mar chomhartha san loc tráidála ar dtús, ach san 15ú haois cuireadh cros cloiche ina háit, an ceann greanta atá anois ann. Tá stoc na croise cailte anois, áfach, agus níl fágtha ach bun agus barr na croise inniu.*

## Basement

Here are pictures of the Basement.



Walking through a wooden door, we are now in the basement; the walls ceiling and floor are built of stone. This room was used to store food and weapons. On a wet day the room can smell damp. Sometimes we have events in the basement.

We must now go up the stairs on the outside of the castle to the Great Hall.



## Great Hall.



Here is a picture of the Great Hall.

As we slowly climb the metal stairs outside we pass through an arched doorway into the great hall.

This was the family's living room, a place where the lord lived, held court and planned battles.

Stone carvings can be found on the doorway and on windows.



## **Garderobe**



In the great hall there is a little room (with the light on at the end of the hall) which is a Garderobe, a medieval toilet. As this room is very tiny, only one or two people can enter at a time.

## **Garrison**

We now climb the wooden stair to the garrison where the soldiers lived. There is a tiny stone staircase used by the soldiers to gain access from this level, up to the battlements to defend the castle in battle.



Mural Stairs within the walls of the castle.

## Audio- visual room



Here we find a door to our audio-visual room, we have a twenty-minute film which shows the history of the castle and the coming of the Normans. This is the same experience as going to the cinema.

As the film comes on, the lights go down so it can get a little dark and the film may be loud at times.



## Attic

Here are pictures of the Attic.



Now we climb the last wooden stairs to enter the attic. You can smell the restored wooden roof built of large oak timbers. From small windows, you can see views of the castle grounds. Mind your head here as the beams are low.

## Leaving the castle

Be careful going down all the stairs to the ground floor. You must hold on to the rails and walk slowly going down each staircase. Exit the castle grounds slowly as the car park and road outside the castle gates can be very busy and noisy.

There is a beautiful park with a river outside the castle gates for you to visit.





**Events** see our Facebook page for upcoming events on site



Medieval combat!

Thank you. I hope you had an interesting visit. Do come back to visit us again soon!

