

## Historically speaking...

### The Abbeys - Moyne, Rosserk and Rathfran

Situated in spectacular surroundings close to Killala off the Ballina Road, Moyne Abbey was built around 1455 for the Franciscan Order. It is regarded as one of the most important ecclesiastical ruins of Co. Mayo. Along with Rosserk and Rathfran, it is reputed to have been burnt down in 1590 on the orders of Sir Richard Bingham, English Governor of Connacht.

Founded on the site of an ancient oratory some time between 1400 and 1441, Rosserk Abbey was built for the Franciscan Third Order, and was a place of great learning as well as of prayer. Although smaller than Moyne, these ruins are just as impressive, with exquisite stone carvings and a graceful suspended bell tower over the chapel arch.

Dedicated to the Holy Cross, Rathfran Abbey was reputedly founded in 1274 by the deBurgh and D'Exeter families and judging from the earthen forts and "giant's graves" must have been an important settlement.

### Breastagh Ogham Stone

A short walk from Rathfran is the Breastagh Ogham stone, a standing stone engraved with Ogham characters, which originated from Druid times and was based on the Latin alphabet. The markings are still visible and while one side is unclear, the other reads "MAQCORBRIMAQAMLOITT" - The Son of Corbbri, Son of Amloitt. Local folklore states that the stone commemorates the grandson of King Amhalgaidh (possibly Killala - from Cill Amhalgaigh - The church of Amhalgaigh).

### Céide Fields, Ballycastle. Tel 096 43325

The Céide Fields are the oldest known field systems in the world, over five and a half millennia old. It is a unique Neolithic landscape of world importance. The remains of stone field walls, houses and megalithic tombs are preserved beneath a blanket of peat over several square miles. They tell a story of the everyday lives of a farming people, their organized society, their highly developed spiritual beliefs, and their struggle against a changing environment beyond their control. Visit the multi-award winning Centre, which has exhibitions, audio-visual show and tearooms and guided tour. Experience the unique ecology of the bogland, with its colourful mosses, sedges, lichens and heathers. Open 10am to 6pm, March to May, and 10am to 5pm October to November. Other times by appointment. Information on these local heritage sites - and many more besides - is contained in two books by local historian, Stephen Dunford, both available in shops locally.

### Enniscoe House, Castlehill & North Mayo Family Heritage Centre (nr. Crossmolina). Tel. 096 31809

Once described as the last great house in North Mayo, Enniscoe House is an elegant Georgian manor house on Enniscoe country estate overlooking Lough Conn. Visit the museum, research centre, forge and craft training centre or enjoy a snack in the Tea rooms. Open June to Sept 9am to 6pm (weekdays) and 2pm to 6pm weekends. October to May 9am to 4pm (weekdays).