TOLLYMORE FOREST

TOLLYMORE'S HERITAGE

Nestling in the shadow of the Mourne Mountains with a glimpse of the sea, the beautifully situated Tollymore Park has been famous for its plantations and fine views since the 18th century. Originally created as a deer park, the walled 485 hectare (1,200 acre) park, was later transformed into a fashionable 18th century romantic-style landscape, inspired by the Duke of Arundel’s mountain estate at Dunleith in Fife. It was embellished with a range of garden buildings and fanciful follies, many clinging to the rocks above the Shesmo River, which divides the park.

This leaflet will give an insight into the Tollymore estate through its natural, built, cultural and industrial heritage.

Who is Thomas Wright?

Known as the ‘Wizard of Durham’, Thomas Wright (1711-1786) was a mathematician, astronomer, amateur architect and garden designer. In 1740s Lord Limerick invited Wright from England and, together, they pioneered the Gothic Revival in Ireland. Whilst in Ireland Wright tutored Lord Castlereagh’s son James, who was later to become Lord Clanbrassil. Whilst Wright may not have designed all of the structures in Tollymore, all were undoubtedly influenced by his style. Ad you make your way around the various sites you will come across many features such as ‘lap stones’, ‘quotafoil loopholes’ and ‘flying buttresses’ all of which are early examples of a ‘Gothic’ style developed by Thomas Wright.

Mourne Granite

You may also notice that many of the follies exhibit different rock types, a mixture of dressed granite blockwork coming from local quarries and Slarian slate. The famous Mourne granite is a young granite. The mountains were once covered in a much older sedimentary rock which was eroded away during the ice age. Tollymore Demesne sits on this older sedimentary rock. Considerable skill in stone-masonry would have been required to construct many of these features, a skill which was easily found in the Mourne area with its tradition of granite quarrying.

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Tollymore – A Brief History

After the Norman invasion of Ulster in 1177, the lands of Tollymore came into the hands of the Gaelic Magennis Clan. Ownership transferred to the O’Neills and later to the O’Hares. Anne had been married to William Clarenassil, known from 1719 as Lord Limerick and until 1725 to the Earl of Clanbrassil. During the 1720s a walled deer park with a hunting lodge was established at Tollymore by William’s grandson, James (1691-1758), known from 1719 as Lord Limerick until raised to the title of Earl of Clanbrassil in 1756. His son, also James (1730-1798), the 2nd Earl of Clanbrassil, continued his father’s landscaping work, adding extensive plantations and building many demesne buildings, including a house and ornamental structures (or follies). Consequently, from the 1750s the focus of Tollymore Park changed from a retreat for seasonal hunting to that of a residential demesne.

After Lord Clanbrassil’s death in 1798, and having no male heirs, his widowed sister, Anne Hamilton, inherited the demesne. Anne had been married to Viscount Jocelyn, the 1st Earl of Roden. Their son, Robert Jocelyn, the 2nd Earl of Roden, inherited the estate in 1810 and it remained in the ownership of the Jocelyns/Rodens until the 6th Earl sold it to the Department of Agriculture in 1941. On 2nd June 1955 Tollymore opened as a Forest Park becoming the first state forest park in Northern Ireland.

What are Follies?

Follies are architectural curiosities – often deemed to have no practical other than to enhance a landscape. In Tollymore there are many quirky and curious buildings which create attractive focal points and provide interest and delight.

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The bridge, which some believe may be the earliest of the Wright-designed Follies in Tollymore, has lived on (horn was the name given to whale bone at the time). The bridge was added by Forest Service engineers to help the related restoration project in 1955.

Clanbrassill Barn

(c. 1750 -1760)

Major influence. In 2010 they were constructed of unhewn materials to enhance a landscape. In Tollymore there are many quirky and curious buildings which create attractive focal points and provide interest and delight.

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FEATURES OF TOLLYMORE’S

(in chronological order)

Tollymore House, Bryansford, Seat of the 1st Earl of Clanbrassil

The Shimna River in Tollymore is a major influence. In 2010 they were constructed of unhewn materials to enhance a landscape. In Tollymore there are many quirky and curious buildings which create attractive focal points and provide interest and delight.

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in America it is known as the 'Tollymore spruce'. This original tree can be said to be lucky to have lived for its 250 years as it was 'in a collision' with an American military jeep in the 1940s, hence the slight incline in its trunk.

8 | Hermitage (c. 1770)
The hermitage was built by the 2nd Earl of Clanbrassil, James Hamilton, in memory of his friend John Montagu, the Marquess of Montbermar, of whom the hermitage once housed a boat in the clump behind the bench. As a rule, hermitages were built to resemble places where a hermit might live; indeed some demesnes actually employed a hermit. This particular example, which is built into the rocks dramatically above the Shanna River, was not only designed as a summer house in which to take shelter and admire the view but also commanded the access to a foot bridge across the river. Originally built from wood, this was replaced with a metal suspension bridge in the 19th century which was removed in 1936. On summer days members of the household would swim below the bridge, gaining access from steps below the hermitage.

9 | The Arboretum
The arboretum in Tollymore was started in the 18th century by the 2nd Earl of Clanbrassil who recognized that the Slivan slate and soil in Tollymore offered the ideal base in which to grow conifers. He was responsible for planting millions of European larch (Larix decidua) on the estate.

The arboretum was developed into a major collection of trees and shrubs from the 1840s, when new plants were being imported in increasing numbers from the ever-expanding British Empire. Today there are some 'champion' trees, notably sequoia, Douglas fir, beech.

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