

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE

CLANE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP



THE PALE

The castle at Clongowes Wood College was built around 1450 by the Eustace family. Originally it was a Pale castle built to protect the English frontier from incursions by the Irish clans in search of cattle and plunder. There are remains of the Pale in close proximity to the castle. The Pale was first proposed in 1435 as a result of a report to the English king that it was only in the area around Dublin, “that a man might safely go to answer the king’s writ and to do his commandments”. The frontier was defined by an act of parliament in 1488 and in 1494 the actual Pale rampart was ordered to be built by Poyning’s Parliament in Drogheda. The rampart was to consist of a bank, six feet high surrounded by a double ditch. The top of the bank was to be flat and wide enough to serve as a footpath, a bridle-path or even a road in some places. Parts of it were topped by a wooden palisade.

There are two well preserved stretches of the Pale boundary on Clongowes land. The first section begins at the east gate of the present farmyard and runs for nearly 500 yards to the lane at Rathcoffey. The second and best known section between Clongowes and Capdoo Commons starts in the grounds of the college just south west of the castle and runs for over half a mile from north west to south east towards the Gollymochy river, perhaps intending to make the river part of the defence.