

Geraldine Tralee - Birth and Destruction of a Medieval Town

- 1169 Anglo-Norman Invasion:**
Soon, Anglo-Norman adventurers begin to conquer lands in Ireland.
- 1200 Anglo-Normans arrive in Kerry via Limerick:**
In the following years virtually all of the fertile lands in North Kerry and Limerick are conquered by the powerful FitzGerald's.
- 1214-1215 Anglo-Normans build a chain of Castles from Castleisland to Killorglin:**
The southern part of the county along the River Maine stays under Irish control throughout the Middle Ages.
- 1216 Tralee is founded by John FitzThomas FitzGerald:**
The place name Trá Lí (the strand of the River Lee) is older than the Anglo-Norman town.
- 1232 FitzGerald's defeat the Irish at Tralee:**
Despite numerous attacks by the Irish, namely by the MacCarthy's, Tralee remains in the hands of the Geraldines until the end of the Medieval period.
- 1243 The Dominican Priory is founded by John FitzThomas FitzGerald:**
The arrival of this influential religious order suggests that Tralee is a well-established town by the mid-13th century.
- 1261 The Irish defeat the FitzGerald's at the Battle of Callan, near Kilgarvan:**
John FitzThomas FitzGerald and his son Maurice are killed "as well as fifteen knights, besides eight noble barons and many young squires and countless soldiers".
- 1278-1279 First Documentary Record of Dingle:**
The Anglo-Normans set up towns as centres of trade and commerce wherever they settle. Tralee and Dingle are the two principal towns and ports in Medieval Kerry.
- 1286 Tralee receives a Murage Grant to build a Town Wall:**
Remains of the foundation of the Medieval stone wall or earlier earth and timber defences are yet to be discovered.
- 1295 Nicholas Strange is charged with the theft of:**
Four ells and one mark of silver from the Abbey and also wheat from the Chapel of St Mary's. Nicholas is probably "pilloried" at the market cross as punishment.
- 1298 Tralee has 100 houses and about 600 inhabitants, typical of a small Market Town:**
Records state that towns-people pay 100 shilling annual rent to the Fitzgeralds - one shilling per property.
- 1302-1306 St John's Church is valued at 40 shillings:**
Tralee's parish church may have begun its life as a hospital held by the Knights Hospitallers.
- 1325 Diarmaid MacCarthy is assassinated in the Abbey:**
Nicholas FitzMaurice or his son William is believed to have committed the murder. Violating the sanctuary of a church is seen as a serious offence.
- 1329 Maurice FitzGerald is created the first Earl of Desmond:**
The House of Desmond (Kerry and Limerick) is one of the most powerful dynasties in Medieval Ireland.
- 1348 Black Death arrives in Ireland:**
Crowded, dirty and rat-infested Medieval towns like Tralee are the perfect environment for the plague.
- 1356 First Earl of Desmond is buried in the Abbey in Tralee:**
Maurice FitzGerald was Chief Governor of Ireland and fought in France with King Edward III in the Hundred Years War.
- 1375 Henry Peverell, a merchant from Bristol, is robbed of goods to the value of 100 marks:**
Tralee trades with Bristol, England and also with France and Spain.
- 1411 Siobhán, daughter of Gerald the third Earl is buried in the Abbey in Tralee:**
Her marriage to a MacCarthy is a typical example of a political marriage alliance between rival families.
- 1468 Eight Earl of Desmond is charged with Treason and Executed:**
Thomas FitzGerald had been loyal to England but became too powerful. His body is brought from Drogheda to Tralee and buried in the Priory.
- 1537 Reformation in Ireland:**
Church lands and properties are confiscated by King Henry VIII of England. Four years later he declares himself King of Ireland.
- 1579 Two English officials are murdered at Tralee Castle by John FitzGerald:**
Unwilling to prosecute his own brother, the Earl of Desmond, Gerald FitzGerald, is declared a traitor and forced into rebellion.
- 1579-1583 Desmond Rebellion:**
During this large-scale military conflict Munster is devastated due to a "scorched earth" policy deployed by both sides, thousands of people die.
- 1580 The Earl of Desmond orders Tralee to be burnt to the ground.**
Despite this desperate measure, Tralee is captured and the priory occupied by 300 footmen and a company of horse.
- 1583 The Earl of Desmond is killed in the woods at Glanageenty, near Tralee:**
Deserted by most of his followers, he is hunted down, killed and his head sent to Queen Elizabeth I to be impaled on London Bridge.
- 1585 The Munster Plantation:**
The Earl's death signals the end of Medieval Kerry and the beginning of Munster's colonization with English settlers.
- 1587 Tralee is granted to Edward Denny and re-built:**
Ten years later, the town is destroyed again and in 1652 Cromwell's army totally deface the abbey and "not one stone is left upon a stone" in Tralee.

This timeline is part of an exhibition on the archaeology and history of Medieval Tralee at Kerry County Museum.

A Secret Tralee Walking Trail narrated by storyteller Niall de Burca is available as a free download from www.kerrymuseum.ie and also from www.culturekerry.com.

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