

2026 Gathering Programme

Bound by Blood: The Clan McGrath and Gaelic Kingship



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Welcome / Failte..... in 2026 the Clan McGrath International Gathering returns to the beautiful medieval territory of Termonmagrath. Incorporating parts of counties Fermanagh, Donegal and Tyrone, this is the key ancestral home of the Northern McGraths. Based in Enniskillen, Co. Fermanagh, the theme of this year's Gathering is: 'Bound by blood: The Clan McGrath and Gaelic Kingship'. Our programme has been thoughtfully planned and locations selected, allowing us to step into the ancestral heart of Ulster, where the story of the Clan McGrath intersects with the great Gaelic dynasties. This gathering explores the sacred ties between ecclesiastical power, tracing the Clan McGrath's enduring role in the spiritual and political fabric of Gaelic Ireland. Through storytelling, scholarship, and symbolic reflection, we honour the bonds that shaped a kingdom - and the kinships that still echo today.

DAY 1 - Thursday 18th June



08:30 Registration Opens - Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen

09:30 Raising the Banner - Killyhevlin Hotel

09:45 Board Coach for Enniskillen Castle

10:00 Official Opening Ceremony - Enniskillen Castle

The Clan McGrath International Gathering will be official opened in the presence of specially invited guests. The ceremony will take place in the beautiful Enniskillen Castle museum, once seat of the powerful Clan Maguire and staging post for pilgrims travelling to Lough Derg and St. Patrick's Purgatory that was under the protection and oversight of the Clan McGrath from the 13th to 17th century.

11:00 Tour of Enniskillen Castle and Museum

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Guided Boat Tour of Lough Erne and Devenish Island

Following the route of medieval pilgrims, we will board the MV Kestrel for a guided tour of Lough Erne and stop on Devenish Island to visit the medieval Augustinian Abbey. Devenish (Irish: Daimhinis, meaning 'Ox Island') is associated with Saint Mo Laise, who reputedly founded the monastery in the 6th century. The Augustinian Order who settled here in the 12th century, were a closely linked with the Augustinian Monastery on Saints Island, Lough Derg. The monastic community of Devenish, who welcomed medieval pilgrims on their way to Lough Derg, were under the patronage of the Clan Cassidy, the community at Saint's Island under the patronage of the Clan McGrath.

16:00 Clan McGrath Society AGM

Following our boat tour, we will return to Enniskillen Castle for refreshments before conducting our Annual General Meeting and election of officers to the Clan Council and to hear representations from those candidates for the role of Taoiseach (Chief) of the Clan McGrath.

18:00 Drinks Reception - Enniskillen Castle

19:00 Evening BBQ - Special Guests, Live Music

21:00 Return to Killyhevlin Hotel

DAY 2 - Friday 19th June



09:00 Board Coach - Travel to Pettigo, Co. Donegal

09:30 Visit the Clan McGrath Castle, Termonmagrath

The Clan McGrath were Coarbs, hereditary overseers and patrons of the Lough Derg pilgrimage islands since the 13th century. In the 16th century, the McGrath Castle was built by Archbishop Miler McGrath, a native of Ulster. The castle was a symbol of power and position.

10:30 The Termon Centre, Pettigo

Seminar on the role of Coarbs in medieval Gaelic Ireland and Scotland and how the Clan McGrath managed politics and influence in a volatile world.

11:30 Board Coach - Travel to Lough Derg Visitor Centre

12:00 Unveiling of the Clans of Ireland Historical Sites Plaque

Clans of Ireland mark significant sites associated with Irish Clans. In 2024, Sleady Castle was marked with a Historical Sites Plaque, and in 2026 we are proud that Lough Derg Visitor's Centre will be marked with a plaque to recognise the Clan McGrath historic links and important role in the history of this great pilgrimage.

12:30 Lunch

13:30 Board Boat - Travel to Station Island, Lough Derg

Station Island, known in the medieval period as St. Patrick's Purgatory, is still a globally renowned pilgrimage site. The three-day pilgrimage is still a challenging journey for those seek spiritual renewal. The Clan McGrath is privileged to be invited to visit the island during the pilgrimage season, recognising the importance of our historic links to this deeply historic, spiritual and meaningful place in the story of our clan and of Ireland.

15:00 Board Coach - Travel to Belleek

15:30 Belleek Pottery Visitor Centre - Tour of the Pottery

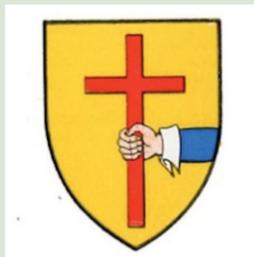
The Belleek Pottery was founded in 1849 by John Caldwell Bloomfield. Seeking to provide work for the impoverished people of the area, the mineral rich geology of this part of Fermanagh / Donegal drove Bloomfield to acquire investors and by 1865 the pottery's distribution of fine Irish crafts included the US, Canada, Australia, England and customers included Queen Victoria and royal houses of Europe. Today, the pottery still employs 600 local people and continues to produce the world's finest china.

17:00 Board Coach - Return to Enniskillen

18:00 Arrive at Killyhevlin Hotel

Free Time - Social evening at the Killyhevlin Hotel

DAY 3 - Saturday 20th June



09:00 Board Coach - Travel to Donegal Town

10:00 Donegal Friary and Red Hugh Statue

Guided Tour of the 15th Century Franciscan Friary, location of Archbishop Miler McGrath's entry into the Franciscan Order c.1540 and burial place of McGrath Chiefs. The Annals of the Four Masters, an historic text which gives us so much insight into the history of the Clan McGrath was written here. Following our tour, the Clan McGrath will lay a wreath at the statue of Red Hugh O'Donnell to remember the exiled sons and daughters of Ireland.

11:00 Assemble for the Parade of the Clan McGrath

The Clan McGrath will assemble with banners and colours to parade through Donegal town accompanied by a Pipes and Drums to Donegal Castle, once seat of the O'Donnell Chiefs, ancient Kings, Princes and Lords of Tyrconnell where we will be received by a representative of the Clan O'Donnell of Tyrconnell.

12:00 Tour of Donegal Castle

13:00 Lunch

14:00 Free Time in Donegal Town

Donegal Town is rich with history, arts and crafts. Explore the variety and richness of local products made famous across the world. Explore the flagship store of Donegal Tweed makers Magee 1866 or traditional Irish hatmaker Hanna Hats. There is also An Clachan Arts and Crafts and many other wonderful places to explore.

16:00 Board Coach - Travel to Enniskillen

17:00 Arrive at Killyhevlin Hotel

Free Time - Social evening at the Killyhevlin Hotel

DAY 4 - Sunday 21st June



09:00 Board Coach - Travel to Dungannon, Co. Tyrone

10:00 Hill of O'Neill Visitor's Centre Museum and Tour

Explore the O'Neill Kings of Ulster, Princes and Lords of Tyrone and kinship with the Northern McGraths. We'll discover the role of fosterage in Gaelic Ireland and the importance of these lifelong bonds in shaping the history of Ireland and the Clan McGrath.

11:30 Board Coach - Travel to Tullyhogue Fort

12:00 Tullyhogue Fort - Guided Tour

A guided tour of the ancient inauguration site of the O'Neill Kings of Ulster. This centre of royal power came to prominence in the 11th century when it was a dynastic centre and inaugural place for Cenel nEogain (later the O'Neills). From its hilltop position, it commands wide views over this ancient landscape and is visible for miles around. We will learn about the inauguration rites of the Gaelic Chiefs and the importance of the inauguration stone in the ceremonies carried out here.

13:00 Lunch

13:30 Board Coach - Travel to the City of Armagh

14:00 St. Patrick's Cathedral, Armagh

Founded as the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland by St. Patrick, the cathedral sits on one of prominent hills of Armagh. The city in Irish is Ard Mhaca meaning the height or hill of the Celtic goddess Mhaca and it was to this place with a strong pre-existing spirituality that St. Patrick became the first Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, a title that still exists today in both the Catholic and Anglican traditions. It is here that High King Brian Boru, the ancestor of the Clan McGrath, came to have his Kingship blessed according to the ancient right. It is here too, that upon his death at the Battle of Clontarf in 1066, that his body was taken and laid to rest. Following a guided tour of the Cathedral, the Clan McGrath will honour the memory of High-King Brian Boru and lay a wreath at the site of his grave in memory of those who have gone before us.

15:00 Board Coach - Travel to Navan Fort (Emain Macha)

15:15 Navan Fort (Emain Macha) Visitor Centre

We will receive a guided tour of this ancient seat of the Kings of Ulster, including a living history period hillfort and visitor centre with a deep dive into the epic saga of Cúchulainn, the Red Branch Knights and the Tain Bo Cúailnge (The Cattle Raid of Cooley).

17:00 Board Coach - Return to Enniskillen

18:00 Arrive at Killyhevlin Hotel

Here is the pinnacle of our tour programme and you will experience something that has never been done before. Not only will you have the freedom to explore the ancestral home of the McGrath family, it's the location of a key social event in our programme. Within the shadow of Sledy Castle a BBQ will be hosted, live music will echo from the gables of the castle as we celebrate our 2024 Gathering. Here we will unveil a plaque to mark Sledy Castle as a national Clans of Ireland Historical Site and we will pay a special tribute to our dearly departed but not forgotten Chieftain Dan McGrath.

We will be launching the Clan McGrath Society's built heritage project Sledy 400. Sledy Castle will be 400 years old in 2028 and we aim to complete our conservation plans to mark this. |You will be updated on how the Sledy Castle site is being restored. Many of you who attended previous gatherings will notice a few changes since your last visit.

19:30 Clan McGrath Gala Dinner, Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen

The 2026 Clan McGrath International Gathering is organised by The Clan McGrath Society - Cumann Chlann Mhic Craith, operated entirely by volunteers.

The Society will seek to deliver all aspects of the programme but reserves the right to make changes at short notice where necessary.

Irish weather can be unpredictable so we like to talk about it, a lot. Bring a weather friendly wardrobe, you'll need to be adaptable. Bring a sweater, even in summer; waterproofs to accompany all outdoor activities; sunglasses; comfortable walking shoes (we will be exploring some sites that are of the beaten path), and an umbrella. When the sun shines in Ireland it's quite strong, so wear a high factor and bring a sunhat.



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