

Cloondara

Cluain Dá Ráth

Meadow of the two ringforts



Follow the route and *Tick the box*

Purple Route **1.5km**
Follow **1 - 16**

FEELING COMPETITIVE?

Start time

Finish time

MAP LEGEND

- Purple Route
- Pathway
- Trail number
- Playground
- Picnic Area
- Parking



Don't forget to Tick the box

1 20th Century Post Box

This post box dates from the 1930s. *Can you see where it was made?* Postboxes of this era usually have a harp on them. This box is unusual in that it doesn't have one.

2 The Richmond Inn

This building was a flax mill before becoming a public house and general store in the early 1900s. Flax was an important commodity at the time, as its fibres were used in the production of linen. *Where might you come across flax now?*

The quayside buildings have had many different functions over their lifetime; housing for the mill workers, offices for the Royal Canal Company and canal stores. They are now in private ownership.

Have you found both plaques with the initials V.S.?

Valesius Skipton, a local magistrate and retired captain in the British army during the Napoleonic wars, lived locally and developed a number of the buildings on the quayside to facilitate trade on the Royal Canal.

3 The Harbour Master's House

How does this building differ from others found on the canal side? The Harbour Master occupied this building. The Harbour Master was responsible for the safe running of the harbour and was often provided with housing near the harbour. The ticket office for the Royal Canal was also located here.

4 Dry Dock

Do you know what a dry dock is?

A dry dock is a chamber that can be emptied so that repairs can be made to boats. This dry dock is one of two on the Royal Canal. This dry dock is the only example of its type in County Longford.

5 46th Lock & Windlass

Lock gates enable boats to travel through water levels of different heights. This allows for boats to go up or down slight inclines.

Once the boat is locked into the lock chamber, the water within the chamber is raised or lowered accordingly.

The lock keeper uses a windlass to open and close valves called paddles. The paddles let water in and out of the lock chamber.

Have you seen a boat travel through a lock gate yet?

The Royal Canal is at its highest point near Mullingar. From there, it descends through 20 locks to Richmond Harbour. There are 46 locks on the Royal Canal, 8 of which are in County Longford.

Each lock gate has a number. This lockgate is the last on the Royal Canal and connects the Shannon River to the Royal Canal via the Camlin River and the Cloondara Canal.

6 Lock Keeper's Cottage

Each lock keeper who operated a lock was accommodated with a two-room cottage. The majority of cottages were identical.

When the canal closed, those residing in the cottages were given the opportunity to purchase them. Others fell into disrepair.

7 The National Famine Way

As well as being on the Royal Canal Greenway, Cloondara is also on the National Famine Way. The National Famine Way is a 165 km walking trail from Strokestown House in County Roscommon to The Epic Museum in Dublin.

The trail follows the journey made by 1490 people in 1847 who were forced to emigrate from Strokestown in County Roscommon. Over two-thirds of these emigrants were children. *How many children walked the route?*

Their journey is marked by a series of 30 bronze markers featuring a pair of children's shoes. Six of these markers are found along the National Famine Way in County Longford.

For more information, www.nationalfamineway.ie

The building located next to the bronze markers dates to the 1800s and is the current Richmond Harbour lock house.

From here, can you spot the weir that was probably built in the 1770s to direct water from the River Camlin to the millrace at Richmond Mills? It was the flow from the millrace that drove the powerful mill wheel.

8 Richmond Mill

Milling, it would seem, has taken place on this site since the late 1700s.

Why do you think it was convenient to have a canal harbour so close to a mill?

This complex has been home to a corn mill, a distillery, possibly a flour mill and a tannery at different times. During the 1830s, John Ives and William Fleming operated a distillery here, reportedly employing 70 people and producing over 80,000 gallons of whiskey per year.

The distillery reverted to a corn mill in the 1840s, perhaps due to the Father Mathew Temperance Crusade, where Catholics were actively encouraged to abstain from alcohol.

Milling ceased in the 1960s, after which it operated for some time as a tannery. It eventually fell into disrepair. However, in recent years, it was faithfully reconstructed as apartments and townhouses.

Whilst the mill wheel is inactive, this version is a good representation of what was the driving force of this mill in the 1800s.

The bridge near the mill dates to the 1770s. Originally 5 arches, how many can you see? Two of the arches span the millrace. *Can you find them?*

9 Mill Grounds Entrance

These are the original limestone entrance piers and pedestrian entrance to the mill complex. *Can you find the fine Georgian house that the miller occupied?* It is unusual in that it is attached to the mill itself.

Some say the impressive scale of the miller's house is indicative of the success of the mill at the time.

Across the road are the ruins of the bonded warehouse where whiskey from the mill was stored before excise duty was paid. This building is known to locals as the "Bullhouse", as its most recent function was to house bulls.

10 St. Brendan's Church Graveyard

As you walk towards St. Brendan's Church, take time to read the poignant verse carved into the headstone located near the graveyard wall. It is decorated with a crucifix made of pebbles.

Who do you think might be buried beneath this 18th-century grave slab? Often headstones were decorated with clues about the people buried there, making it easier for those who could not read to find a grave.

In a nearby protected case, there is a headstone with a much harder-to-find carving of scissors. *What profession might this person have had?*

Two early Christian gravestones can also be found here.

11 Medieval Church, locally known as Cromwell's Church

From the patchwork pattern of blocks, you can tell that the old church located here has had many repairs since it was built in the Medieval period. Parts of the lower walls and foundations possibly date back to the 9th century.

This site is also believed to have been the location of a monastery.

Can you find the bullaun stones used as cornerstones? Bullaun stones have a hollow within them. Many uses have included prayer stones, holy water fonts and a place to leave offerings. They were also used domestically to grind seeds, herbs and grains.

Some say the water that gathers in bullaun stones is reputed to have healing properties. *How many bullaun stones can you find on this site?*

12 St. Brendan's Roman Catholic Church

Erected in 1835 and very much true to its original form. This building's simplicity is described as barn style and typical of church design in the post-Emancipation era. A period when churches were designed to blend in with the architecture surrounding them. *Can you find this plaque that states who erected this church?*

13 Cloondara Canal Ticket Office, locally known as Bourkes Lockhouse

The Cloondara Canal stretches one kilometre between the River Camlin and River Shannon. It predates the Royal Canal by 50 years. This building housed the ticket office with living quarters upstairs. It and the associated canal architecture found here is credited to canal engineer Thomas Omer.

Take a self-guided tour & explore Cloondara

Be the local, the historian, the artist, and become the EZexplorer...

Easy Peezy Leisurely Stroll...

- **Keep it simple**, find the picture clue locations and enjoy learning about Cloondara.

Ready Steady Go!

- **Feeling competitive?**
- Note your start and finish times and see can you beat families and friends in completing a route against the clock.
- Share your time on social media with #ezexploring and challenge like-minded ezplorers to compete!

Longford Tourism, Market Square, Longford, N39 C5F2
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14 Stile

What is this feature? Often found in the countryside, this stile was a way for people to cross boundaries without large animals following them. *Have you seen them anywhere else?*



15 Richmond Bridge

There were a total of 90 bridges built on the Royal Canal, 33 of which are in Longford. Most bridges are humpbacked with a single arch, made from local limestone and sandstone with cut-stone detailing.

The majority are over 200 years old and are of similar design except for some newer additions.

Canals were the motorways of their time. Since there were no steam-driven engines, canals and towpaths were designed for barges and cargo boats that were pulled by draught horses.

Why do you think the bridge walls are curved? By curving the walls, the ropes attached to the horses could move easily around the corner when the horse was crossing from one side of the canal to the other. They also avoided having to unhitch the horse when crossing a bridge.

This bridge is one of three found in Cloondara. Each spanning a different waterway. *Have you crossed all three of them?*

16 Harbour Wall

Have you found this pair of matching grooves cut into the walls at a bridge entrance? What do you think the function of this feature was?

The groves allowed wooden panels to be slotted into place, blocking water so necessary repairs could be carried out on different parts of the canal.



easily explore Cloondara

Cluain Dá Ráth

Find the clues and tell the tales...



Cloondara/Cloondra

The scenic village of Cloondara is surrounded by waterways, the Royal Canal, the River Shannon and the River Camlin.

All of these waterways have played a significant role in the development of the village and the surrounding regions.

Richmond Harbour at the centre of the village is the terminus or final stop on the Royal Canal. It is the 46th lock on the Royal Canal between here and Spencer Dock in Dublin. Most of the buildings and features found in Cloondara were purpose-built to cater to the business that the harbour once brought to the village. This included a lock, a dry dock, a lock keeper's cottage, a harbour master's house, administrative offices, an inn, loading areas and stables. *How many of these buildings can you identify today?*

The Royal Canal is a 200-year-old trading and passenger line between Dublin City and County Longford. At its peak, in the 1840s, the canal moved 100,000 tonnes of cargo and over 40,000 passengers per year. Many of those were emigrants looking for a brighter future elsewhere.

The canal opened up Dublin-based marketplaces and further afield to rural businesses such as mills, mines, and animal markets.

Who Richmond Harbour is named after is uncertain, but it was possibly the Duke of Richmond, who was Lord Lieutenant or royal representative here in Ireland prior to the opening of the canal.

The canal was in operation for nearly 30 years when purchased in 1845 by the Midland Great Western Railway. It planned to drain the canal and build a rail line on or near it. However, this did not happen.

The last transportation of goods was in the early 1950s, and the canal was officially closed in 1961. It fell into disrepair until local community groups campaigned to have the Royal Canal restored.

Today, **Richmond Harbour** has been restored to its former glory, making Cloondara and its surrounds an ideal destination for boating and fishing enthusiasts. Land lovers can enjoy the Royal Canal Greenway, a 130km long, off-road walking and cycling trail connecting Maynooth with Cloondara and Longford Town. The Greenway is the original towpath used by horses pulling boats on the Royal Canal. Just over 40km of the Greenway is in County Longford.

