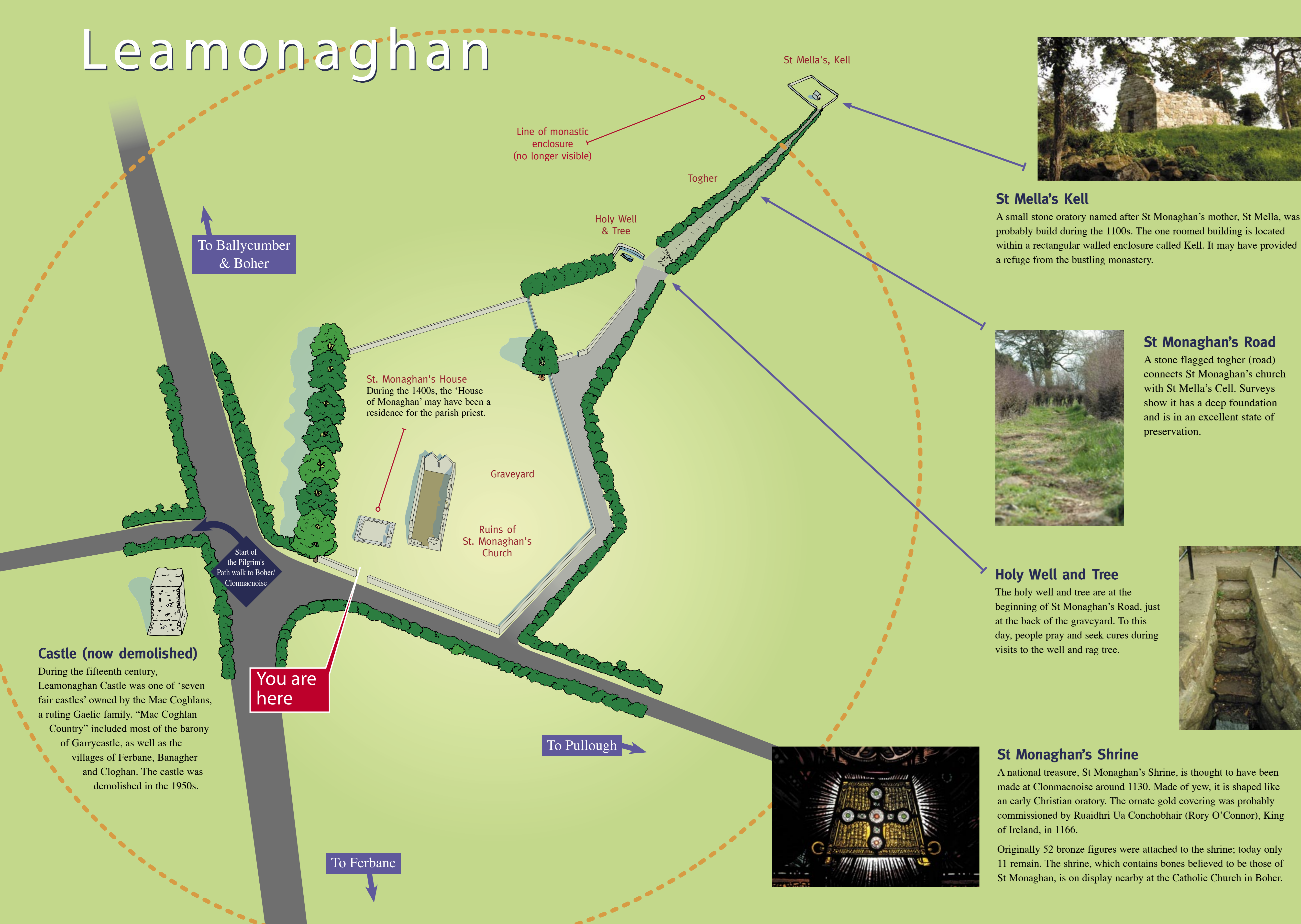


Leamonaghan



St Mella's Kell
A small stone oratory named after St Monaghan's mother, St Mella, was probably built during the 1100s. The one roomed building is located within a rectangular walled enclosure called Kell. It may have provided a refuge from the bustling monastery.



St Monaghan's Road
A stone flagged togher (road) connects St Monaghan's church with St Mella's Cell. Surveys show it has a deep foundation and is in an excellent state of preservation.



Holy Well and Tree
The holy well and tree are at the beginning of St Monaghan's Road, just at the back of the graveyard. To this day, people pray and seek cures during visits to the well and rag tree.



St Monaghan's Shrine
A national treasure, St Monaghan's Shrine, is thought to have been made at Clonmacnoise around 1130. Made of yew, it is shaped like an early Christian oratory. The ornate gold covering was probably commissioned by Ruaidhri Ua Conchobhair (Rory O'Connor), King of Ireland, in 1166.
Originally 52 bronze figures were attached to the shrine; today only 11 remain. The shrine, which contains bones believed to be those of St Monaghan, is on display nearby at the Catholic Church in Boher.

Castle (now demolished)
During the fifteenth century, Leamonaghan Castle was one of 'seven fair castles' owned by the Mac Coghlan, a ruling Gaelic family. "Mac Coghlan Country" included most of the barony of Garrycastle, as well as the villages of Ferbane, Banagher and Cloghan. The castle was demolished in the 1950s.

In 645, Diarmait, King of Ireland, granted this site to the monks of Clonmacnoise after they prayed—successfully—for his victory in battle. Not long afterwards, St Monaghan, a respected scholar, left Clonmacnoise. Journeying here, he founded a monastery at Tuaim-nEirc, an island of dry land surrounded by bogs. Monaghan perished in the Yellow Plague of 664. Since then, this area has been known as Leamonaghan: 'the grey lands of Monaghan'.

As the decades passed, the monastery grew in importance. Peat works have uncovered a network of wooden roads, or toghers, that were used by pilgrims and other travellers who crossed the bog to reach this site.

The isolated monastery experienced a golden age during the twelfth century. These years saw the building of the church with its beautiful Romanesque doorway, as well as the creation of St Monaghan's Shrine.

The war-torn thirteenth century took its toll on the church. However, its fortunes revived in the fifteenth century, when it was patronised by the Mac Coghlan, a ruling Gaelic family. For the next 200 years, the church became embroiled in the politics of this family, and was sometimes a target of its enemies.

During the Rebellion of 1641, the church was damaged. By 1682, the church was no longer used as a place of worship. However the holy well and tree continue to be a site of pilgrimage and prayer. The feast day of St Monaghan is celebrated on 24 January each year and St Monaghan's Shrine is still venerated at the Catholic Church in Boher.

