

# Online History Course

## County Westmeath / Contae na hIarmhí

Thursdays 6 – 7:30 pm / February 2, 9, 16 and 23, 2023



An Iarmhí, Westmeath, translates as “*west of the middle*”. The county is nicknamed the Lake County. The county motto is “*Noble above Nobility*”.

Uisneagh Hill is an impressive hill nearly 600 feet high. It is here that King Tuathal Teachmar erected his palace in the 2<sup>nd</sup>. century CE. For two hundred years the pagan kings of Ireland ruled from there.

The King of Mide, Máel Sechnaill, drowned Turgesius, the leader of the Vikings in Ireland in 845 in Lough Owel. The island of Turgesius is on Lough Lene.

Westmeath was the north Teffia part of the ancient kingdom of Mide (Meath and Westmeath). With the Anglo-Norman conquest in the 12th century, it became part of the de Lacy earldom of Mide. In 1241 the earldom lost its unity, and, following a Gaelic resurgence, the western part of the earldom passed out of English government control. Following the 16th-century reconquest of Ireland by Henry VIII, Westmeath was separated from Meath in 1541, shired in 1543, and ultimately passed into the hands of English landlords. The town of Athlone had strategic military importance as a key to the crossing of the River Shannon.

Delvin Castle was built in 1181 by Hugh De Lacy. Athlone Castle was built in 1210 for King John of England.

The plan for the insurrection in 1641 is said to have been concerted at Multifarnham abbey. Most of the Irish or Norman landholders lost their land following the failed 1641 rebellion.

On the landing of the French in 1798 in support of the United Irishmen, there was a Rising in the county.

Tomas and Juan Farrell were among the earliest Irish settlers in Argentina, having accompanied the Spanish conquistador, Pedro de Mendoza, who founded Buenos Aires in 1536.

William O'Brien returned to Ireland to seek shepherders in 1827/28 and met with two men, Mooney and Bookey from Streamstown, who were to lead the rush to the pampas of Argentina. It is estimated that between 1830s-1870s, 30,000 people emigrated from Ireland to Argentina with 61% of these coming from the Longford, Westmeath and Offaly region, and the majority of those, coming from Westmeath.

Eilis and Emily Elliott were founding members of Cumann na mBan and were actively involved in the 1916 Easter Rising. In 2018, Westmeath County Council renamed a road in Athlone as “Elliott Road” in honor of the two local sisters.

Delvin native Laurence Ginnell’s career as a House of Commons rebel had long earned him the admiration of Irish republicans before his defection to Sinn Féin in 1917. Ginnell arrived in the US in July 1920 where he was described by some newspapers as “De Valera’s co-adjutor”.

De Valera returned to Ireland in 1922 and reassigned Laurence Ginnell to Argentina.

**Course fee is \$90. To enroll please email [seanmurphy630@gmail.com](mailto:seanmurphy630@gmail.com)**