

Online History Course: County Longford / An Longfort

Thursdays 6 – 7:30 pm / January 4, 11, 18 & 25, 2024



Longford has a long and varied history, stretching back about 9,000 years.

Conmac was the eldest son of the 1st century Queen Maeve and Fergus. He erected his inheritance into the Kingdom of Conmacne. Centuries later Anghaile (anglicized as Annaly) ruled part of the kingdom bounded on one side by the Shannon and on the other by the river Inny.

Anghaile's grandson Fearghail the clan leader took part in the Battle of Clontarf on the side of Brian Boru. He became so distinguished and powerful that his descendants were called O'Fearghail's, which was anglicized into O'Farrell's, the family name of the old inhabitants of Annaly to this present day.

Maine, a son of Niall of the Nine Hostages, received Saint Patrick with relatively open arms and Patrick established a monastery in Ardagh where he placed his nephew, Mel. The original Cathedral ruins are still there on the grounds of St Patrick's Church.

The territory corresponding to County Longford was a frontier colony of the Kingdom of Meath in the first millennium. Between the fifth and twelfth centuries, the territory was called the kingdom of Tethbae.

In the year AD 1070, Tethbae was conquered by the Ó Cuinns, Ó Fearghails and other Conmhaícne tribes, henceforth being known as "Muintir Annaly", so named after "Anghaile" the great-grandfather of Fearghail. Furthermore, County Longford was often called Upper Conmaicne, to distinguish it from south Leitrim, then called Lower Conmaicne, because both districts were ruled by the descendants of Conmac, son of Fergus and Queen Meadh of Connacht.

Following the Norman invasion of the 12th century, Annaly was granted to Hugh de Lacy as part of the Liberty of Meath. The town of Granard was sacked by Edward Bruce's army in 1315, and the O'Farrell's soon recovered complete control over the territory. Annaly later became Longphoirt, now Longford, after O'Farrell's fortress of this name.

The county was officially shired in 1586 in the reign of Elizabeth I from the northern portion of Westmeath, but English control was not fully established until the aftermath of the Nine Years' War. County Longford was added to Leinster by King James I in 1608 (it had previously been part of Connacht),

The county was a center of the 1798 rebellion, when the French forces led by General Humbert was defeated outside the village of Ballinamuck by a British army led by Cornwallis.

A revolutionary spirit was again woken in the county during the Irish War of Independence when the North Longford flying column, led by Seán Mac Eoin, 'The Blacksmith of Ballinalee' became one of the most active units during that war.

Course fee is \$100. To enroll email seanmurphy630@gmail.com or register at irishhistory.online