

# THE BUTLER LEGACY

Kilkenny Castle  
today with its  
Baronial facade



Butler Castle circa  
1600 with its French  
château facade

In 1177 Theobald FitzWalter was installed as Chief Butler of Ireland and given the title of Prisage of Wine by King Henry II. Such a privilege allowed FitzWalter to claim roughly 15 percent of all wine in Ireland.

Not surprisingly, the control of alcohol made the family extremely wealthy. In 1328, the Butlers were made Earls of Ormond and in 1391 John Butler purchased the castle in Kilkenny and a significant portion of the county.

In a time when the Anglo-Normans and the Gaelic Irish were severely segregated, John Butler was very effective in managing his Irish tenants. He spoke fluent Irish and worked to eliminate the Statute of Kilkenny, which forbade Anglo-Irish marriage.

In 1811 the crown bought back the right to the Prisage of Wine for about £250 million in today's economy (\$475 million). That money was used to extensively remodel the castle from its French château appearance to its current Baronial facade.

The 17th century saw many of the Butlers emigrate to Europe and America, while others served in Continental armies and were ennobled for their services. Variations of the Butler name are evident in Spain, Sweden, France (Boutler or de Butler), Austria and Germany (Buttlar) and Russia (Butleroff).

Through the years, the decline in rent revenue, the Irish battle for independence and the exorbitant costs to maintain the castle made Kilkenny a less desirable location for the Butler family. In 1935 the contents of the castle were auctioned off, and in 1967 the castle was given to the people of Kilkenny.



The Butler family crest  
includes six goblets representing the family's  
Prisage of Wine title



## 1 The Kilkenny Design

**Centre** is housed in the castle's former stables. The stables, constructed in about 1780, feature a semicircular courtyard and curved stable block. In 1965 the stables were converted into the Kilkenny Design Workshops. Created to promote quality Irish craft and design, the Centre has established Kilkenny as the creative heart of Ireland.

The Design Centre is a popular shopping destination for Irish crafts. A café within the Design Centre serves tea, scones and light lunches. From the second courtyard visitors can gain access to the splendid gardens of the Butler House (see Stop 25). Directly across the street is the castle.



## 2 Kilkenny Castle

began as a wooden tower erected in 1172 by Richard de Clare, better known as Strongbow. His son-in-law, William Marshall, later built the stone castle with four large drum towers. In 1391 the Butler family bought the castle and continued to live there until 1935.

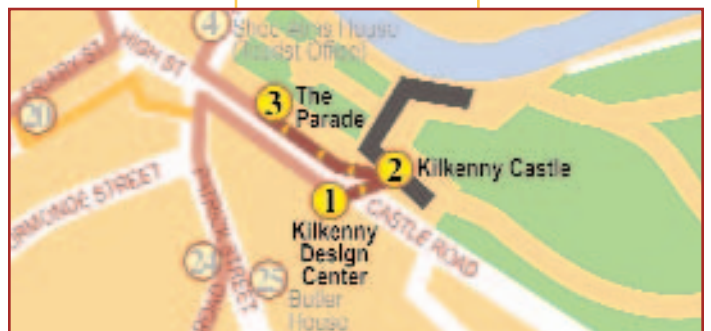
Cromwell's siege from 1650-1659 severely damaged the south wing, and one tower was lost. In 1967 the Butlers handed the castle to the city for a mere £50.

The castle interior has been refurbished to its Victorian splendor, and guided tours offer a glimpse of rooms such as the magnificent Long Gallery.



**3 The Parade** was originally a row of buildings that formed the east side of Castle Street. They were demolished by the first duke of Ormond in the early 17th century to create an area in front of the castle for military parades and assemblies.

The Parade now serves as a central location for tours, public toilets and the occasional street artist. Walk down the Parade to Rose Inn Street. Across the street you will see the grey stone front of the Shee Alms House (Tourist Information Centre). For safety, cross Rose Inn Street at the intersection.



## THE WITCH OF KILKENNY



*Driven mad by the six beatings she received to extract her confession, Petronilla of Meath did not recant her heresy charges and was paraded through the streets of Kilkenny and burned at the stake on November 2, 1324*

One of Kilkenny's most notorious characters was Dame Alice Kyteler (pronounced Kit-ler). The attractive and well-connected moneylender born in 1284 had survived at least three wealthy husbands; each dying under suspicious circumstances. When her fourth husband suffered from a mysterious illness in 1324, his children from a previous marriage suspected foul play and appealed to the Bishop to try her for heresy.

Despite being dismissed by town officials, most of whom were friends or relatives of Alice, Bishop Ledrede persisted. Alice used her influence to have him imprisoned in Kilkenny Castle for a spell. Finally, Alice and five others were tried for sorcery, consorting with demons, making potions and having intercourse with the devil.

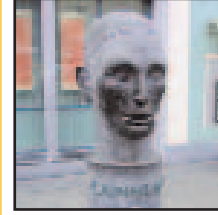
Alice was found guilty and sentenced to be burned at the stake. She escaped and fled to Scotland, but her maid Petronilla, one of her accused accomplices, was burned in her place.

The case presented the first time witchcraft and heresy were linked and the first time heretics were presented as an organized group and thus, set off the witchcraft craze in Northern Europe. Modern medicine suggests the symptoms of her dying husband, an emaciated body, devoid of body hair, match those of arsenic poisoning.

Grace's Castle



**8 Kyteler's Inn** is most commonly associated with Dame Alice Kyteler, the witch of Kilkenny. In its day, the word "inn" described a residence and it was unlikely that Dame Kyteler used it to lodge guests. It is now a popular pub and a visit to the basement restaurant reveals a vaulted stone ceiling. Some windows on the north side have been blocked in; in an era when a tax was levied on windows, many angry homeowners opted to close up windows rather than pay the tax, hence, the term "daylight robbery." Continue up Kieran Street to Parliament Street.



**9 Parliament Street** is the site where High Street meets Kieran Street. Notice the modern sculpture of Saint Cainneach (Canice). The artwork featured four streams of water for a short time, but the fountain was turned off after debris continuously clogged the drain. Continue up Parliament Street until you reach the gates of Grace's Castle.

**10 Grace's Castle** was built in 1210 for the Grace family. In 1566, the fortified home was given to the county for use as a jail until 1779 when it was rebuilt as a courthouse and the current facade was constructed. Now look directly across the street at the large stone building.



**11 Rothe House**, built in 1594, is a fine example of a wealthy Tudor merchant's home. In the mid-17th century the home and the Rothe family played an important role in the Confederation of Kilkenny, established to restore the rites of the Catholic Church. The family lived here until evicted by Cromwellian orders in 1653. The family regained the property in 1660 only to lose it again after the Battle of the Boyne in 1690. The home has been restored and houses the Kilkenny Archaeological Society and their collection of historic artifacts. The society offers tours and a gift shop with a variety of books and literature. Continue down Parliament Street.

