

# Early Christian Ireland

Headings	Notes
EARLY CHRISTIAN IRELAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Christianity first came to Ireland during the time of the Celts who were <b>pagans</b>. Their “priests” or spiritual figures were the <b>Druids</b>.</li> <li>The earliest official source of Christianity in Ireland is <b>AD 431</b> with the arrival of <b>Palladius</b>.</li> <li>Between AD 432-461, <b>St. Patrick</b> worked in Ireland, converting the Pagan Celts to Christianity.</li> <li>Monasteries were built, creating religious communities of monks, (men who dedicated their lives to God as well as a life of prayer and work) which often became centres of learning.</li> <li><b>Inis Mór</b> founded by <b>St. Enda</b> on the <b>Aran Islands</b> around <b>AD 500</b> is the earliest known Irish monastery. These monks slept in small stone huts shaped like beehives (“beehive huts”)</li> <li>Other monasteries include Clonmacnoise, Skellig Michael and Glendalough.</li> </ul>
LIFE IN AN IRISH MONASTERY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An <b>oratory</b>: a building made of wood/stone where monks attended Mass or prayed.</li> <li>A <b>scriptorium</b>: where manuscripts were copied by hand and illustrated.</li> <li>A <b>refectory</b>: where monks ate their meals.</li> <li>A <b>round tower</b>: a bell tower and safe place for people and treasures if there was an attack.</li> <li>A <b>guest house</b>: accommodation for travellers or visiting tradesmen.</li> <li>A <b>cemetery</b> for the monks’ simple graves.</li> <li>An <b>external circular wall</b> for protection.</li> </ul>
THE ART OF EARLY CHRISTIAN IRELAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early Irish monasteries created works of art to honour God and show off the monastery’s importance.</li> <li><b>Manuscripts</b> (e.g Book of Kells) were books written on parchment or vellum using quills. They contained the gospels, psalms and stories of the lives of saints (and myths) written in <b>Latin</b>. They were decorated in <b>Celtic patterns</b> and bright colours, reflecting this “<b>Golden Age</b>”.</li> <li><b>Metalwork</b> included crosses, bells, broaches, belts, cups and chalices such as the <b>Ardagh Chalice</b>.</li> <li><b>High Crosses</b> were free-standing stone crosses covered in detailed carvings from the Bible as people of this time could not read or write so relied on the carvings to learn the bible. <b>The Cross of the Scriptures</b> in Clonmacnoise, Co. Offaly.</li> </ul>
Keywords	Summary
Pagans      Guesthouse Druids      Cemetery Palladius      Manuscripts St Patrick      Metalwork Monasteries      High Crosses Oratory      Clonmacnoise Scriptorium      Inis Mór Refectory      Beehive Huts Round Tower      Book of Kells	<p>Christianity arrived in Ireland at the end of the Iron Age. Bishops such as Palladius and St. Patrick are responsible for converting the <b>pagan Celts</b> to Christianity. <b>Monks</b> established monasteries on the island which became centres of learning for much of Europe. <b>Inis Mór</b> was founded on the Aran Islands by St. Enda as the first <b>monastery</b> in Ireland. It had <b>beehive huts</b> for the monks to sleep in. It was followed by monasteries such as <b>Clonmacnoise</b> and <b>Skellig Michael</b>. Early Irish monasteries had several common features such as: an <b>oratory</b>, a <b>scriptorium</b>, a <b>refectory</b>, <b>round towers</b>, a <b>guesthouse</b>, a <b>cemetery</b> and <b>walls</b>. Early Irish monasteries created many works of art to honour God and show off the monastery’s importance. <b>Manuscripts</b> such as the <b>Book of Kells</b>, <b>metalwork</b> such as the <b>Ardagh Chalice</b> and <b>high crosses</b> such <b>The Cross of the Scriptures</b> were used to teach non-reading pagans about Christianity. .</p>

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<p><b>THE IMPACT OF IRISH MONKS ABROAD</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>AD 500-1000</b> was a period of war and instability known as the <b>Dark Ages</b>.</li> <li>• Irish monks travelled abroad, founding new monasteries and centres of learning throughout Europe.</li> <li>• This period was known as the <b>Golden Age</b> of Irish monasteries.</li> <li>• <b>St Colmcille</b> founded monasteries in Ireland at <b>Durrow</b> and <b>Derry</b> before later travelling to an island off the coast of Scotland where he founded the monastery on <b>Iona</b> (where the <b>Book of Kells</b> was written).</li> </ul>
<p><b>THE VIKINGS COME TO IRELAND</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Vikings</b> were Scandinavian farmers and fishermen who had superb shipbuilding and navigation skills.</li> <li>• The Vikings built <b>longships</b> which could withstand the cold northern storms of Norway, Sweden and Denmark but also small enough to sail up rivers.</li> <li>• <b>AD 795</b> saw the arrival of the Vikings in Ireland as they carried out raids on the monasteries at <b>Lambay Island (Dublin)</b> and <b>Rathlin Island (Armagh)</b>.</li> <li>• These Viking raiders burned settlements, stole food and treasures and took captives as their slaves.</li> <li>• The Vikings established <b>longphorts</b> (camps established beside waterways which were used as bases for raids) as time continued which eventually grew into towns such as <b>Wexford</b>, <b>Waterford</b> and <b>Limerick</b>.</li> <li>• The best source for Viking life in Ireland has been found at <b>Wood Quay</b>, Dublin where evidence of a Viking settlement was found beside the River Liffey.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Keywords</b></p> <p>The Dark Ages</p> <p>The Golden Age</p> <p>St. Colmcille</p> <p>Iona</p> <p>Vikings</p> <p>Longships</p> <p>Raids</p> <p>Longphorts</p> <p>Wexford</p> <p>Wood Quay</p>	<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>Once Irish monasteries were thriving, many of their founders then travelled abroad to mainland Europe during the <b>Dark Ages</b> where they continued to spread the teachings of Christianity to the pagans on the mainland. While mainland Europe suffered war and instability, the Irish monasteries thrived in a period known as the <b>Golden Age</b> of Irish monasteries. <b>St. Colmcille</b> was responsible for the founding of the monasteries in Durrow and Derry in Ireland as well as the monastery on the island of <b>Iona</b>. This period was followed by the arrival of the <b>Vikings</b> in AD 795 which brought with them violence and brutality on the Early Irish monasteries. The Vikings used their <b>longships</b> to travel up the rivers of Ireland, allowing them to attack monasteries and steal their treasures and food. Raid bases (<b>longphorts</b>) eventually grew into towns such as Wexford, Waterford and Limerick. The most famous archaeological evidence we have of Viking settlements in Ireland was found at <b>Wood Quay</b> in Dublin.</p>

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Abbess	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The head nun in a convent.</li> </ul>
Abbot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The head monk in a monastery.</li> </ul>
Annals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A yearly record of events, written in manuscript in Early Christian Ireland</li> </ul>
Ardagh Chalice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The most famous metal artefact from Early Christian Ireland.</li> </ul>
Chalice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A large cup or goblet used in Christian ceremonies.</li> </ul>
Beehive huts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stone buildings with a curved shape often used by monks in Early Christian Ireland</li> </ul>
Book of Kells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The most famous manuscript from Early Christian Ireland; it is an illustrated copy of the four gospels.</li> </ul>
Cell	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A one-person building or hut in which a monk would sleep.</li> </ul>
Convent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A complex of buildings where nuns live, work and devote their lives to God.</li> </ul>
Diocese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The area controlled by a Christian bishop.</li> </ul>
Druid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A pagan or Celtic priest. Druids believed in many gods and had great influence over Gaelic Chieftains.</li> </ul>
Filigree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fine gold or silver wire formed into patterns on chalices and other objects</li> </ul>
High Cross	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A stone structure shaped like a cross, usually marking the centre of a monastery or an important grave. Decorated with images from the bible.</li> </ul>
Irish diaspora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All the Irish people and descendants of Irish people who live outside Ireland.</li> </ul>
Longphort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Viking camp by the water, used as a base for raids.</li> </ul>
Longship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Viking ship designed to navigate rough seas and inland rivers.</li> </ul>
Manuscript	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A book written by hand.</li> </ul>
Missionary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Someone sent to spread Christianity in a foreign place.</li> </ul>
Monastery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A complex of buildings where monks live, work and devote their lives to God.</li> </ul>
Nun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A woman dedicated to a religious order and to life in a convent.</li> </ul>
Monk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A man dedicated to a religious order and to life in a monastery.</li> </ul>
Oratory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A small church.</li> </ul>
Pagan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early Christians used this term to refer to non-Christians who worshipped many Gods.</li> </ul>
Round Tower	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A stone tower used by monks as a belfry or place to hide during attacks.</li> </ul>
Scribe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A monk who works in a scriptorium.</li> </ul>
Tonsure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Circular haircut on monk's head</li> </ul>
Scriptorium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A room where manuscripts were copied by hand and illustrated by scribes.</li> </ul>