

**Tallaght Intercultural Centre visits Kildare, monastic home of Saint Brigid.
Tuesday 14 November, 2023**

On a lovely sunny Autumn morning, 41 students with volunteer teachers from the Intercultural Drop-In Hospitality Centre, Tallaght, set out on what was a memorable trip to Kildare, to walk in the footsteps of our great Celtic saint Brigid. Gerry, the bus driver made the journey even more special as he took the route along the Curragh plains (said to have been the land over which Brigid's cloak covered when the Chieftain granted her 'as much as your cloak will cover.')

and known to this day as Brigid's Pastures!

We had the pleasure of seeing flocks of sheep, the horses out for their morning gallop, as well as soldiers doing their routine exercises as we drove through the Army camp.

Arriving at the Market Square in Kildare town, we divided into 3 groups to swap the experiences and see all that was on offer. While one group was taken on a tour of St. Brigid's Cathedral, grounds and Round Tower the others were entertained to a 3D virtual film of the history of Kildare and the role of Brigid of the 5th century.

In St Brigid's Cathedral



At Solas Bhríde with Geraldine



Following that initial tour, next we visited at Solas Bhríde and Hermitages. We were welcomed by Phil, Rita, Geraldine and companions. Our céad míle fáilte included a sit down to hot soup and sandwiches, a delicious welcome and much appreciated. After lunch, Rita and Phil related the story of Brigid and her legends. The group were so attentive and enthralled by the many stories of the Celtic saint and her monastic foundation in Kildare. Although we

the volunteers had prepared them with some stories, it meant so much more to be present, walking in the footsteps of the saint of 1500 years' ago.

Next day, back at the Intercultural Centre the volunteers listened to interesting conversations about the visit to Kildare. It taught us 'teachers' the value of 'field studies' as an important way of understanding Irish folklore and culture in another step towards integration into the cultural norms and ways of living in Irish life. To give you a flavour of the diversity of our group who travelled to Kildare, their homelands range from Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Colombia, Sudan, Tunisia to Ukraine. Such richness of diverse cultures also enhances us, 'Irish' volunteers and our land.



At the centre, giving feedback on the trip!

All were unanimous in their praise of 'a great day out' and send a 'míle buíochas' (million thanks) to all in Kildare.

Kay Mulhall, csb



'Students' from different countries learning English at the Centre.