

NAAS LOCAL HISTORY GROUP



CASTLE RAG

The ruins of Jigginstown Castle are a familiar sight on the Newbridge road but in a nearby field stands the remains of another building, smaller but no less important in the course of Irish history.

Castle Rag actually predates its larger neighbour by over two hundred years, most likely being built around 1400. It was what was known as a small “Tower House “ castle and was typical of fortified houses built to guard the margins of the Pale. Naas was on the periphery of these fortifications set up by the English occupiers to defend themselves from the native so-called “wild” Irish who frequently raided the settlements for livestock.

There were many of these houses all along the line of the Pale and remains of similar castles are still to be found in other parts of Kildare like Rathcoffey and Clongowes Wood. The Pale was a boundary consisting essentially of a fortified ditch and rampart built around parts of medieval Meath, Dublin, Louth and Kildare to encompass the lands in control of the English settlers and removed from the land outside occupied by the native Irish. There is still to be found one of the few remaining portions of the Pale at Clongowes Wood College in Clane. The origin of the phrase “beyond the pale” nowadays means *unacceptable or outside agreed standards*. This type of fortified house was a popular form of residence among wealthy merchant classes in medieval Ireland. They would also sometimes serve a dual purpose of a business and residential nature with the business being conducted on the ground floor and the living quarters on the upper floors.

Castle Rag affords us the chance to reflect back to when these structures were an integral part of everyday life in medieval Kildare.