



## THE COLUMBANUS FESTIVAL

The first Columbanian gathering took place in 1998. It was a jubilee initiative of the parish in the town of San Columbano al Lambro, Italy. Since then it has also been hosted in a variety of towns in Italy, in Luxeuil, France, and in Friedrichshafen, Germany. The annual gatherings usually include celebrations in the summer and on 23 November, Feast Day of St Columbán.

It is the privilege of the Church in Ireland to host the 2010 summer festival in Armagh and Bangor.

### BANGOR (IR. BEANNCHAR)

St Comgall, the founder of Bangor, was one of the great monastic fathers of the sixth century. The picture of an early Irish monastery is a collection of round wooden huts built around a small church and surrounded by an embankment. In Bangor the monks lived a life of great austerity. They attained a high standard of Latin learning, studied the classical authors and were deeply versed in the scriptures. Columbanus entered Bangor to become a monk and received his training there. With twelve monks from the monastery he set out from Bangor on his great mission to mainland Europe. So began, in the golden age of Ireland's saints and scholars, the links of Ireland with Europe. Columbanus' name is now forever associated with his monastic foundations in Annegray, Fontaine,

and Luxeuil in France, Bregenz, Austria, and Bobbio in Italy. His companion Gall gave his name to the monastic foundation, St Gallen, Switzerland.

Bangor is a beautiful seaside town with fine Victorian and Edwardian buildings. It attracts many visitors and is beloved by its citizens because of its early Christian associations.



### ARMAGH (IR. ARD MHACHA)

Armagh is recognized as St Patrick's special church and the saint as its first bishop. In the fifth century Armagh was already a place of note, renowned in Irish saga and history. Two miles west of the city are the extensive remains of Eamhain Macha (Navan Fort), the royal fortress that was Ulster's capital till the fourth century of the Christian era. It is Armagh's association with St Patrick, 'apostle of Ireland', that gives it the title of ecclesiastical capital of Ireland. Throughout the centuries the memory of Patrick has left a deep imprint on the history of the Armagh church. One of its major relics is the Book of Armagh, written in 807-8, which contains a copy of Patrick's wonderful spiritual testimony; his *Confessio*. Patrick built his first stone church on Druim Saileach where the Church of Ireland

Cathedral now stands. Because of Armagh's ecclesiastical primacy, Brian Bóruma, high-king, slain in the battle of Clontarf, 1014, was buried on this same hill. Armagh flourished as a centre for learning from the sixth till the ninth century. The great 12th century abbey of St Peter and St Paul replaced Armagh's early monastery.

Following Catholic Emancipation in 1829 the foundation stone of the Catholic Cathedral was laid on St Patrick's Day 1840. Its beauty dominates the city. To the right of the great entrance door is a statue of St Malachy, friend of St Bernard, the Irish Church's zealous twelfth century reformer.

A special delight to the visitor to Armagh are the narrow streets and the warm coloured buildings built of local limestone. The city of Armagh owes much to Richard Robinson (1709-94), Church of Ireland archbishop of Armagh, magnificent builder, responsible for the observatory and public library. The beautiful Georgian houses along the Mall are the work of architect Francis Johnston (1760-1829), patronized by Robinson.



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## Saturday 26th: Bangor-Armagh City

- 9.30 Mass in St Comgall's.
- 11.00 Prayer Service, Bangor Abbey.
- 12.00 Official Opening of XIII St Columbanus Festival, Bangor Castle.
- 13.00 Visit to North Down Museum and Walled Garden. Explore Bangor town and seafront. Sea Bangor Festival.
- 14.30 Bus Journey to Armagh. Visit site of Movilla Abbey, ancient ecclesiastical centre of scholarship. Views of Belfast City, including Stormont *en route*.
- 17.00 Choice of lectures in Ó Fiaich Library and St Patrick's Grammar School. \*\*
- 19.00 Civic Reception hosted by Councillor Thomas O'Hanlon, Mayor of Armagh.

## Sunday 27th: Armagh City

- 10.00 Mass in St Patrick's Catholic Cathedral.
- 11.00 Tour of Cathedral.
- 12.00 Optional tour of Church of Ireland Cathedral.
- 13.00 Lunch.
- 14.00 Optional Tour of Armagh City.
- 17.00 Choice of lectures in Ó Fiaich Library and St Patrick's Grammar School. \*\*
- 20.00 Festival Banquet in Armagh City Hotel.

\*\*Lectures: (i) Columbanus - Monastic life and education in Ireland  
(ii) Early Irish links with Europe



### Contact details

**Bangor:** Tel: +44 (0)28 9127 0069

Email Bangor: [tic@northdown.gov.uk](mailto:tic@northdown.gov.uk)

Bangor Tourist Information Centre  
Tower House  
34 Quay Street  
Bangor  
County Down  
BT20 5ED

Website: [www.northdowntourism.com](http://www.northdowntourism.com)

**Armagh:** Tel: +44 (0)28 3752 1800

Email Armagh: [tic@armagh.gov.uk](mailto:tic@armagh.gov.uk)

Armagh Tourist Information Centre  
Council Offices  
Palace Demesne  
Armagh  
County Armagh  
BT60 4EL

Website: [www.armagh.co.uk](http://www.armagh.co.uk)

# FÉILE NAOMH COLUMBÁN XIII COLUMBANUS FESTIVAL



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