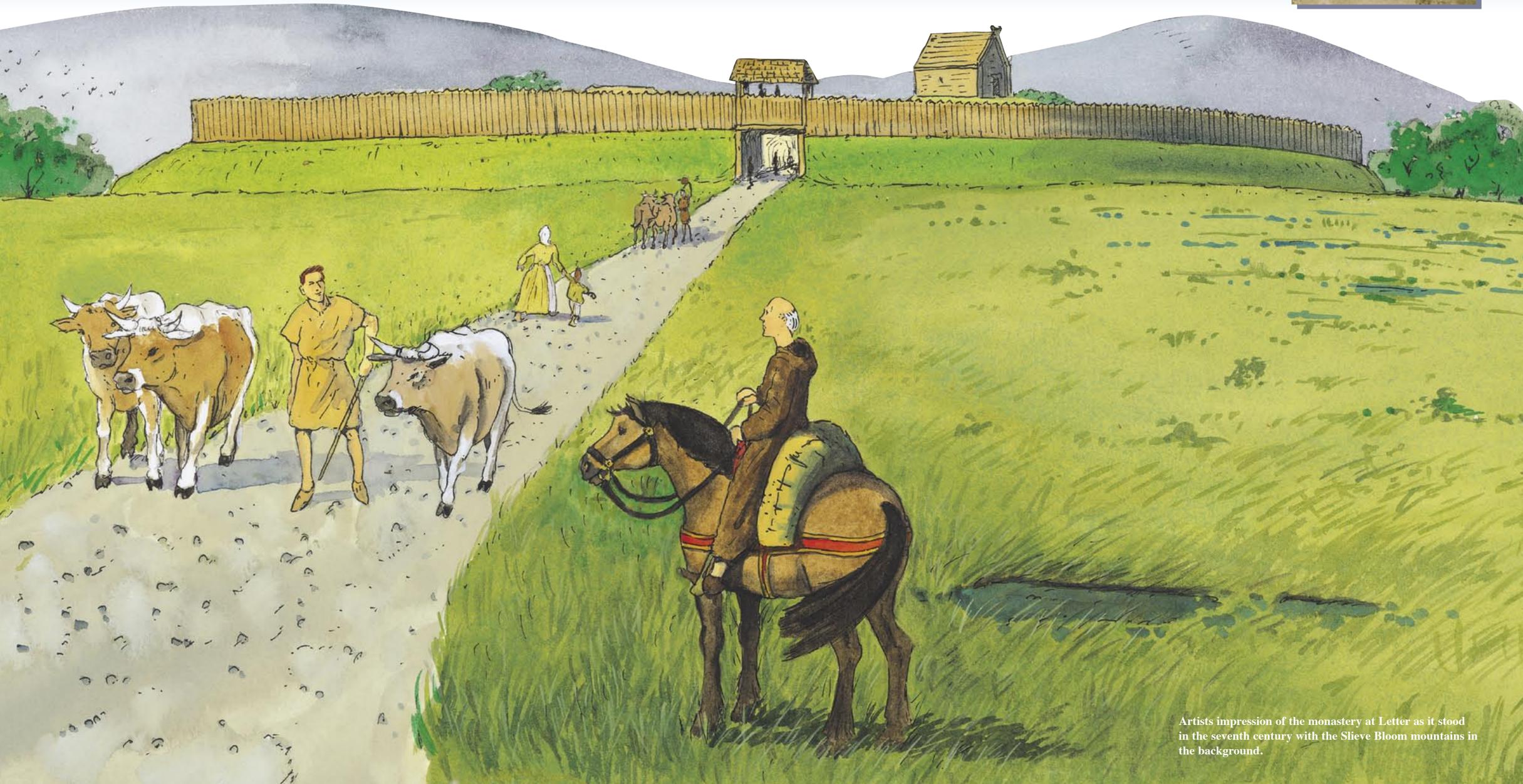


# Letter Leitir

## The stone head at Letter

Carved head of the twelfth century date, believed to be from Letter, is now located in the west gable of the Catholic church in Cadamstown.



Artists impression of the monastery at Letter as it stood in the seventh century with the Slieve Bloom mountains in the background.

A monastery was founded here by St. Lugna in the sixth century, situated at the junction between two ancient roads, the Slighe Mór and the Slighe Dála which were two of the great roads in medieval Ireland. The placename Leitir Lugna means the ‘ wet hillside of Lugna’ which aptly describes the setting for this monastery. The feast day of St Lugna was on April 27th.

All that survives today are the remains of a medieval parish church, the recently restored St. Lugna’s holy well and the outline of the monastic enclosure in the fields to the north and east of the church. An Early Christian cross-inscribed slab, a medieval human head and an ox head all of which came from Letter church can now be seen in the west gable of the Catholic church in Cadamstown village. The remains of a barrel vaulted priests chamber are all that survives of Letter church. This was the residence of Conchobhar Ó hÓgáin who in 1473 was accused of both neglecting and selling ‘the precious moveable goods’ of the church and was also accused of keeping a concubine in the ‘priests house’ with whom he later fathered a son.

Bhunaigh Naomh Lugna mainistir anseo sa séú haois, suite ag an bpointe teagmhála idir dhá sheanbóthar, an “Slighe Mór” agus an “Slighe Dála” a bhí cuid de na bóithre is mó in Éirinn sna Meánaoiseanna. Ciallaíonn an logainm Leitir Lugna “cliathán cnoic fluich de Lugna”, ainm a dhéanann cur síos maith ar shuíomh na mainistreach. Bhí Féile Naomh Lugna ar an 27ú Aibreán.

Faoi láthair níl ina seasamh ach iarsmaí séipéal paróiste meánaoiseach, tobar Naomh Lugna (atá athchóirithe le déanaí), agus imlíne an iaimh mhanachúil sna páirceanna lastuaidh agus lastoir den tséipéal. Tá sean-leac le crois Chríostaí inscríobhtha air, cloigeann duine meánaoiseach, agus cloigeann daimh le feiceáil faoi láthair i mbinn thiar an tséipéil Chaitliceach ins an mbaile beag, Baile Mhic Adáim. Tháinig na hiarsmaí sin ar fad ó shéipéal Leitir. Níl ina sheasamh de shéipéal Leitir ach seomra sagairt cruinnbhoghtach, áit inar mhair Conchobhar Ó hÓgáin, faoi a dúradh i 1473 nár thug sé aire do earraí luachmhara agus inbhogtha (“the precious moveable goods”) na séipéil agus gur dhíol sé iad. Cuireadh ina leith chomh maith gur choimeád sé “concubine” i dtéach an tsagairt lena ghin sé mac níos déanaí.

## Early Christian Monastic Sites of Offaly



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