

THE EAST

History, lore and legend are woven together in the fabric of the Irish landscape. The East of Ireland captures many of its moods and aspects, from the atmospheric sunrises over the Irish Sea to the ever-changing skylines above the Bog of Allen, where much of the peat for the famous Irish turf fires was harvested.

The Neolithic burial ground at Newgrange, which pre-dates the pyramids in Egypt, is an intriguing place; visitors can wonder at the knowledge of its builders, whose skills allowed them to build a tomb where the sun's rays reach the inner chamber only once a year, at sunrise on the dawn of the winter solstice on 21 or 22 December. The Hill of Slane is closely associated with the dawning of Christianity in this island and with Saint Patrick, Ireland's patron saint.

Further south, evidence of the early Christian past has its own record in the sixth-century monastic settlements at Glendalough in Co. Wicklow. Glendalough is home to one of Ireland's best-preserved round towers, while this and other graveyards hold many secrets beneath the lichen-covered headstones and symbolic Celtic crosses.

Opposite left: St Mary's Church, Trim, Co. Meath.