



CIVIC TIMES

Issue No: One

Summer/Autumn 2026

Stories from Butler House & Garden and the Kilkenny Castle Yard



A SEASONAL COLLECTION OF STORIES, EVENTS AND LOCAL MOMENTS FROM THE HEART OF KILKENNY

Welcome to Civic Times, a broadsheet created to share a seasonal collection of stories from behind the walls of the heritage properties cared for by the Kilkenny Civic Trust.

The Trust is privileged to steward some of Kilkenny City's most treasured landmarks, including Butler House & Garden and the Kilkenny Castle Yard. As a not-for-profit organisation, our mission is to protect, enhance, and promote these remarkable buildings and spaces within the Kilkenny Castle Demesne, ensuring they remain vibrant parts of our living heritage.

Each season brings its own atmosphere and rhythm to the city, and we hope these pages encourage you to discover your own connection with Kilkenny as you explore the Castle Demesne.

A visit may begin at the iconic Kilkenny Castle before leading you across the road to the former stable yard, now the Castle Yard - a tranquil creative quarter synonymous with design and craft and where working craft studios continue a long tradition of making in this space.

Beyond a modest garden gate lies the secret walled garden of Butler House, enclosed in part by the ancient city wall. Here, paths open into a peaceful oasis where visitors can wander, linger, and uncover stories layered through the landscape, including the fascinating connection between the garden pond and Dublin's former Nelson's Pillar.

As summer gives way to autumn, the scenery changes with it. Blooming borders soften into richer tones, climbing roses give way to fruit-laden trees, and the first golden hues of the season begin to settle across the gardens and parkland.

We hope you will spend time with us, meet the makers and craftspeople who bring these spaces to life, and enjoy the warm welcome and hospitality that await at Butler House and throughout the wider demesne.

Thank you for joining us, and we hope you enjoy this edition of Civic Times.

Butler House & Castle Yard Team

Pictured: Butler House, the 18th century dower house of Earls of Ormonde of Kilkenny Castle. The Garden is free to visit and The Terrace serves visitors daily from 11am.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- **Save the Date**
Summer events at Butler House & Garden
- **What's on the Menu**
Afternoon Tea, Cream Tea and seasonal menus
- **Explore**
The Sir Basil Goulding Art Collection
- **The Insider**
24 hours in Kilkenny with Freda
- **Seasonal Food**
House-made Brown Bread Ice Cream
- **Walk or Run**
Kilkenny Castle Park
- **Kilkenny Arts Festival**
Blacksmith Art, sculpture and secret garden music
- **The Castle Yard**
A design & craft legacy, meet the makers and conservation





SAVE THE DATE – WHAT’S ON

Summer Events at Butler House & Garden. There’s something special about summer in the garden at Butler House, and this year promises a full calendar of events - relaxed evenings, great food, and warm hospitality right in the heart of Kilkenny. Here’s a snapshot of what’s coming up:

PAINT & PICNIC

Local artist Geraldine Walsh has her studio in the Castle Yard and is joining us in the Garden of Butler House for an ever popular Painting in the Garden. Plein Air Painting holds a special creative joy for painters and in the historic walled garden, it is a rare pleasure. You will be working outdoors for the morning, painting will be followed Miss Sarah’s Picnic Lunch in the Lady Eleanor Restaurant.

Date: 13th June 10am
Cost: €75 pp includes picnic
How to Book: via geraldinewalshart.com
Please supply your own paints and equipment



240 YEARS GARDEN PARTY

You’re invited to celebrate with us - Built in 1786, we’re celebrating 240 years of Butler House, the dower house of Kilkenny Castle demesne, with an afternoon garden party in the walled garden.

A relaxed afternoon in the Garden with a guided garden tour led by our garden director Robert Miller of Altamont Walled Garden and Shirley Lanigan, gardener and author of *The Open Gardens of Ireland* with Tommy Falsey, gardener at Butler House.

A Teddy Bear’s Picnic, for younger children and a ‘grown up’, bring your own teddy and play tea set (and a picnic rug if you wish) and let’s have a little picnic and some storytelling.

Date: Saturday 27th June 2pm – 4pm
How to Book: The Garden Party is a free but ticketed event. If you would like to join us, please email events@butler.ie with your name and contact details.

www.butler.ie/Celebrating-240-Years-of-Butler-House



A SUMMER EVENING GARDEN TOUR & CREAM TEA

A relaxing walk and talk tour through the charming walled garden of Butler House, the former dower house of Kilkenny Castle with Head Gardener, followed by Cream Tea in the Garden View Room. Enjoy a summer’s evening tour of the Georgian Walled Garden bringing you through the history of the house and the evolution of the garden.

The walled garden, restored to its former glory in 1999, is undergoing an extensive rejuvenation project, introducing year-round seasonal interest and the planting of native varieties.

Meet on The Terrace at Butler House at 5.45pm for 6pm start on

Thursday 04th June
Thursday 18th June
Thursday 02nd July

Tickets €20 per person
Pre-booking is essential by calling Tel: 056 772 2828. We expect these dates to book up quickly, so book early!





SUMMER IN THE GARDEN BBQ'S

Summer evenings just got even better with the announcement of our summer in the Garden BBQ dates. Join us if you can from 6pm till 8pm for a social gathering and a sizzling barbecue – Quite simply, is there anything nicer than the chatter of conversation over a cocktail as delicious barbecue smells waft through the garden?

This summer our dates are:

- Saturday 13th June**
- Saturday 4th July**
- Friday 14th August**

Cost: €49 per person

Good food, good company, and a laid-back atmosphere. Each evening includes an arrival cocktail and canapés, a BBQ featuring a selection of grilled favourites and salads and house made ice cream for dessert.

How to Book:

Please be aware that these are intimate gatherings and the number of tickets for each event are limited and book out quickly. So please do book as soon as possible to avoid being disappointed by email: events@butler.ie with your name, number of guests and date of BBQ you'd like to join.



KILKENNY ARTS FESTIVAL

During Kilkenny Arts Festival, Butler House and the Castle Yard will host exhibitions, sculpture and intimate garden performances in beautiful historic surroundings. Highlights include Blacksmith Art, Secret Garden Music, and work by Patrick O'Reilly and Eugene Conway.

6th–16th August 2026
www.kilkennyarts.ie



LONG TABLE DINNERS AT BUTLER HOUSE

Throughout the year, we host a number of Long Table Dinners in the Lady Eleanor Restaurant. Enjoy an elegant evening beginning with a cocktail and canapés, followed by a carefully prepared four-course menu where local produce is the hero and the menu, curated by Executive Chef Ben Davis celebrates seasonal produce, the bounty of the County of Kilkenny. These gatherings are truly memorable affairs, when guests and locals mingle together, making new friends and connecting over a shared love of good food and good company, in the exceptional surroundings of the Georgian reception rooms of the house.

Daste: Autumn date to be announced
Cost: €95 per person

If you would like to join the waitlist for our next Long Table dinner, please call Butler House 056 7722828 or email: events@butler.ie with your name and the number of guests you'd like to reserve for.





THE GARDEN VIEW ROOM

WHAT'S ON THE MENU

Served on The Terrace or in The Garden View Room.

Butler's Caesar Salad is a delightful concoction of crispy baby gem lettuce, confit garlic Caesar dressing, shaved Parmesan and pitta crisps, topped with a crispy hen's egg. Add chicken and crispy bacon, and maybe a glass of crisp white or rose.

Fish & Chips features fresh catch the day with Smithwick's crispy batter, minted pea smash, tartar sauce and delicious chips.



EVENINGS IN BUTLER HOUSE:

When you want to kick back and relax, our light evening menu is just what the doctor ordered. Enjoy Beef & Guinness Hot Pot, an Irish Cheese Slate with Hegarty's Cheddar, St Kevin Brie, Cashel Blue and Smoked Gubbeen, or Butler's Mezze with dips, pitta crisps and sourdough crostini.

EXPLORE

THE SIR BASIL GOULDING ART COLLECTION

Celebrating a legacy of artistic vision and patronage

Sir Basil Goulding: The Collector Behind the Collection (1909–1982), was a renowned Irish businessman, and visionary patron of the arts. A discreet yet powerful force in Ireland's cultural landscape, Sir Basil championed the work of emerging Irish artists at a time when modern art had few public supporters.

He collected works throughout the 1960's and 70's that spoke to him personally, and built relationships with the artists he believed in. Many of the pieces now displayed at Butler House were purchased directly from the studios of artists who would later become icons of Irish modernism.

The works from the collection are on loan from the Butler Gallery to the Kilkenny Civic Trust. Following a recent restoration and re-hanging project, the collection has been thoughtfully displayed throughout Butler House, creating an immersive art experience for guests and visitors alike.

THE TRADITION OF AFTERNOON TEA

Like lots of good things in life, Afternoon Tea arose out of necessity. It is said to have originated in the 1840s when Anna, the 7th Duchess of Bedford, needed to bridge the long gap between lunch and a late 8pm dinner. Her mid-afternoon snack soon became a social occasion, shared with friends in an elegant reception room.

Served between 1pm and 3pm on elegant three-tiered stands in the Lady Eleanor Room, enjoy savoury sandwiches, plain and mixed fruit scones with cream and strawberry jam, and delicate sweet treats and pastries.

Afternoon Tea is served on selected Saturdays throughout the year:

June: Saturday 20th

July: Saturday 18th

August: Saturday 22nd

September: Saturday 26th

Price: €45 per person

Add a flute of bubbles: €12 per glass.

Please reserve early, as dates book out quickly.

OUR LEGENDARY CREAM TEA

Cream Tea is a lighter version, with plain and fruit scones, homemade strawberry jam and your choice of barista coffee or tea. Served daily from 11am to 9pm, €10.50 per person, on the Garden Terrace in fine weather or in the Garden View Room.



SEASONAL FOOD

HOUSE MADE BROWN BREAD ICE CREAM

If you haven't tasted this yet, now's the time to indulge. This glorious invention from Chef Ben Davis is the perfect treat with ice cream churned in our kitchen, flavoured with crumbs of our own brown bread - sweet, creamy and with a hint of treacle. Sample it any time in the Garden View Room or on The Terrace.

Top Tip:

Take away a scoop and wander to the Orchard, or add an espresso and enjoy your own affogato in the stillness of the Garden.



Tim Goulding (artist and son of Sir Basil Goulding), Georgina Goulding, Anna O'Sullivan (Butler Gallery) and Ann Phelan (Kilkenny Civic Trust). Photo credit: The Kilkenny People

CAMILLE SOUTER 1929–2023

Camille Souter trained as a nurse before taking up painting in the mid 1950s. Though abstract in appearance, her paintings are based within reality and the everyday.

Souter exhibited extensively since the 1960s, including major retrospectives at The Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, in 1980, and the Ulster Museum, Belfast, in 2000. Souter received the IMMA Glen Dimplex award for contribution to visual arts in Ireland in 2000. She was a member of the RHA and winner of many prestigious awards.

She married sculptor Frank Morris and lived in Enniskerry before later moving to Achill Island where she lived a long and somewhat unconventional life to the great age of 93.

Basil Goulding was an early patron of Camille Souter's work and she went on to have a distinguished career. Her works can be seen in many public and private collections including the National Gallery of Ireland and IMMA. Two of Camille Souter works, a still life "Jam Jar and Cooking Apples" and abstract "Things on the Wall", are hanging in the Garden View Room of Butler House.



“
A collection shaped by vision, patronage and the artists who helped define Irish contemporary art.
”



THE INSIDER

24 HOURS IN KILKENNY WITH FREDA PARSONS, HEAD RECEPTIONIST

We won't embarrass Freda by telling you her age but we can say that she joined the Butler House Reception team more than 25 years ago. Freda herself will tell you that she was a mere teenager when she started work in the house! We say this only to tell you there might be no one more qualified than Freda to give you the inside story on her favourite things to do and not to be missed if you had 24 hours in Kilkenny.

After breakfast, a gentle stroll to the pond, sit on one of the stones to listen and take in the sounds, the stillness of the garden in the morning. Keep an eye out for Tommy, our gardener and he'll be only delighted to chat to you about the garden - also known to share a 'Dad joke'.

Take what we like to call 'a wander' down Patrick Street, turning left onto High Street to browse the bookshop, head down the Butterslip to visit the boutiques of Kieran Street before a visit to the Medieval Mile Museum - a guided tour is a great way to hear the best stories.

Cream Tea with a garden view is my idea of time well spent... sit out on The Terrace on a fine day or 'cosy in' in the Garden View Room if its feeling a little chilly. It always feels like a treat served on tiered stands and fresh baked scones with homemade strawberry jam and cream...what's not to love!



KILKENNY CASTLE PARK

WALK OR RUN

In every issue we will feature a local walk, and for our first issue we focus on a local favourite, Kilkenny Castle Park.

In previous centuries, the Castle was surrounded by parklands and gardens, with the demesne extending to the front door of Butler House. Today, the park is a wonderful amenity, planted with mature trees, dotted with sculpture and open spaces, and offering beautiful views of the Castle. Areas devoted to wilding show how carefully the park is managed, with flora and fauna nurtured throughout.

Features include 50 acres of parkland, woodland walks, a man-made lake, children's playgrounds and a formal rose garden. It's gorgeous for an early morning walk or run, with relatively flat Castle Park loops of 1.4km or 1.8km.

Summer Opening Hours

Entry is free, with access until 6pm via Butler House Garden Gate to the Castle Yard and across to Kilkenny Castle. After 6pm, leave via the front door of Butler House, walk down Patrick Street and turn left up The Parade to Kilkenny Castle.

May, June, July and August: 08:30–20:30 | September: 08:30–19:30



With thanks to Kilkenny Castle, OPW

THE ARTS

KILKENNY ARTS FESTIVAL

Kilkenny Arts Festival 6th to 16th August 2026

BLACKSMITH ART

Step into a world where creativity meets craftsmanship at The Blacksmith Artists Exhibition, celebrating the timeless art of Blacksmithing. This unique event in collaboration with Design & Crafts Council Ireland showcases the contemporary creativity of wonderfully talented Irish blacksmith artists, through the remarkable works displayed in the gardens of Butler House and in the Castle Yard. An intriguing collection of sculptures, functional art, and intricate designs that highlight the skill and passion of the featured artists. Each piece tells a story, reflecting the raw beauty of metal forged through heat and precision.

SECRET GARDEN MUSIC

Join us for a series featuring intimate, pop-up performances by unannounced Irish and international musicians in the iconic city garden. We're delighted and privileged to welcome back what for many is a highlight of the Kilkenny Arts Festival programme. Expect intimate short performances in a magical setting, made even more special by the fact that the performers are kept under wraps until the moment of the performance.

Butler House presents **The Road Home**, new paintings by Kilkenny-based realist Eugene Conway in collaboration with Gormleys. Conway's atmospheric landscapes capture rural Ireland's quiet beauty through shifting light, barns, byways, old walls, weather and everyday scenes, revealing the rhythms of life, bringing a gentle sense of place to Butler House during the 2026 Kilkenny Arts Festival.

Back Home, an exhibition of works by acclaimed Kilkenny born sculptor Patrick O'Reilly. Known for his playful, thought-provoking and often large-scale works. Gormleys bring pieces exploring memory, connection and human experience to the Garden of Butler House. O'Reilly's imaginative works combine emotional depth with philosophical reflection, showcasing one of Ireland's most celebrated contemporary sculptors.





EXCLUSIVELY YOURS...

HOUSE PARTIES & TAKEOVERS

Set within the historic surroundings of Butler House, every gathering feels connected to something special. The elegant reception rooms, Georgian windows and garden views offer a beautiful backdrop for milestone moments, private parties and memorable occasions.

For those who would like the luxury of calling Butler House their own, exclusive hire is available on selected dates for weddings, private parties and select corporate events. Enjoy complete privacy for your guests, with warm hospitality, beautiful spaces and a relaxed atmosphere that feels both special and wonderfully welcoming.

From milestone birthdays, engagement parties and retirement celebrations to baby showers, bridal showers, festive gatherings and private dining, our team can tailor the occasion to suit you. Whether you imagine an intimate dinner, a lively party with canapés and drinks, or a seasonal celebration surrounded by the charm of Kilkenny, Butler House offers a setting made for joy, laughter and connection.

Hospitality is at the heart of every gathering. We offer a range of catering options including canapés, finger food, artisan sandwiches, dressed scones and private afternoon tea. Celebration Lunch and Dinner and BBQ Menus are available for private parties, with capacity for up to 120 standing guests or 60–80 seated guests.

To enquire about exclusive hire or private events, call 056 7722828 or email events@butler.ie

PROTECTING, ENHANCING, PROMOTING

Kilkenny Civic Trust was established in 1989 to care for Butler House & Garden and the Castle Yard, formerly the stables of Kilkenny Castle. Today, the Trust continues to protect and bring these historic spaces to life through craft, culture, hospitality and visitor experiences.

Its vision is to create living heritage experiences in the historic properties under its care, helping Kilkenny's architectural, cultural and creative legacy continue for future generations.

CASTLE YARD FEATURE

A LEGACY OF DESIGN & CRAFT IN THE CASTLE YARD

Kilkenny Castle dates back to the 12th century, while the imposing stable yard, with its crescent-shaped building, circular windows and copper-domed tower, was built by the Duke of Ormonde in 1790.

These 18th Century buildings, known as the Castle Yard, once the coach houses, stables dairy and smithy of the Earls of Ormonde who resided in Kilkenny Castle next door, developed as a home of creative endeavour and have become the hub for Irish Craft.

In 1963, these buildings were converted to house the famed and formative Kilkenny Design Workshops - a state-sponsored design initiative aimed at improving the design of Irish products and increasing exports. Designers from across Europe were employed as lead designers and mentors, making Kilkenny a centre of design excellence, and contributing significantly to the development of contemporary craft practice in Ireland.



The Castle Yard in the 1960's





CASTLE YARD FEATURE

THE CASTLE YARD - HOME OF IRISH DESIGN AND CRAFT

The Kilkenny Design Workshops creative legacy remains strong and evident in the studios of the Castle Yard today... some of the original makers still have their workshops in the Yard to this day.

KDW officially opened in November 1965 and operated until its closure in 1988, when it was acquired by Kilkenny Civic Trust for the people of Kilkenny.

Today, the Castle Yard is managed by Kilkenny Civic Trust as a visitor experience and centre of design and craft. It is home to thriving design and craft businesses, where visitors can watch skilled craftspeople at work, including some of the original makers who stayed and established their studios here.

One such maker is JMK Goldsmiths, who creates fine jewellery and also made one of Ireland's most prized artefacts, the MacCarthy Perpetual Challenge Cup, awarded annually to the All-Ireland Senior Hurling champions.

Another resident of more than 30 years is Ray Power of Castle Arch Pottery. Visitors can watch Ray throwing and decorating his distinctive, colourful pottery range in his workshop in the inspirational shadows of Kilkenny Castle.

The working studios of the yard showcase a whole range of crafts from pottery to leather working and gold and silversmiths alongside candlemakers and soap makers. You can meet the makers and see them making in their studios from 10am till 5pm (Monday to Saturday). Their doors are open to welcome visitors!

The Castle Yard is also home to the headquarters of the Design & Crafts Council of Ireland and the National Design & Craft Gallery, the only dedicated design and craft gallery in the country. It's free year-round exhibition programme features Irish and international designers and makers pushing the boundaries of creativity.



CASTLE YARD FEATURE

HERITAGE WORKS

CASTLE YARD COBBLE

Over decades of wear and constant footfall and vagaries of Irish weather, the cobbles in the Castle Yard can come loose in patches and sometimes the material holding it all together, the pointing just simply erodes. The Kilkenny Civic Trust works closely with our Conservation Architect to plan for care and maintenance of the Castle Yard and this Spring prioritised the localised refitting of loose cobble and refreshing any area of loose pointing throughout the space.

It's a fascinating and skilled craft carried out by a traditional stonemason. Together, conservation architect and stonemason consulted with the Traditional Lime Co. to get their advice on and agree the precise mix of lime mortar needed in this case.

WINDOWS

The round windows of this wonderful 18th century crescent shaped building are quite distinctive and reflect the original use of this building as the coach houses of the stable yard – its round windows reminiscent of the wheels of the coaches that this building once housed.

The skilled team worked through last summer and autumn to restore and refresh each of the six windows, splicing in hand crafted pieces of wood to replace areas that had weathered and showed sign of water ingress and then carefully sanded and painted to bring these lovely features back to their original.



FOCUS ON A CRAFT MAKER

MEET THE MAKER RAY POWER

Ray Power set up his Castle Arch Pottery studio 33 years ago in Kilkenny's famous craft hub, the Castle Yard, under the gaze of Kilkenny Castle.

Made in the timeless tradition typical of Irish country pottery with a certain refined simplicity, each piece is made in small production batches with great attention given to decoration, inspired by Celtic patterns and traditional motifs, like the stitch pattern of Aran knitwear.

Pop over to Ray in his studio, watch the making process and take home a piece to become part of your home gatherings, a piece in your story and a memory of a treasured experience.





CASTLE YARD FEATURE

KILKENNY CASTLE AND PARKLANDS

Few buildings in Ireland can boast a longer history of continuous occupation than Kilkenny Castle. Since Strongbow first built a wooden tower on this site, soon after the Norman conquest of Ireland, the Castle has been rebuilt, extended and adapted to suit changing circumstances and uses over a period of 800 years. Today, Kilkenny Castle is open to visitors all year round and is largely a Victorian remodelling of the thirteenth-century defensive Castle.

Once the principal residence of one of the most powerful families in Ireland, Kilkenny Castle is of exceptional historical significance for its role in Irish political and cultural history. Standing on a strategic height, it was built by William Marshal, 4th Earl of Pembroke, in the 12th century to command the crossing of the River Nore.

In the 14th century, it became the principal Irish residence of the powerful Butler family, Earls, Marquesses and Dukes of Ormonde, for almost 600 years.

Today visitors can experience the exuberant spirit of the Victorian age, faithfully brought back to life in the restored Period Rooms. The Castle Park includes 21 hectares of walled demesne parkland to the south and a formal terraced Rose Garden to the north. The estate overlooks the River Nore and features mature trees and shrubs, an ornamental lake and a children's playground.

The 1911 census of Ireland records that seventeen servants resided at the Castle as part of Lord and Lady Ormonde's household, including a valet, two footmen, a chauffeur, housekeeper, cook, lady's maid, four housemaids, scullery maid, kitchen maid and two dairy maids. Additional servants were housed nearby at Nos. 8-11 The Parade, Kilkenny.

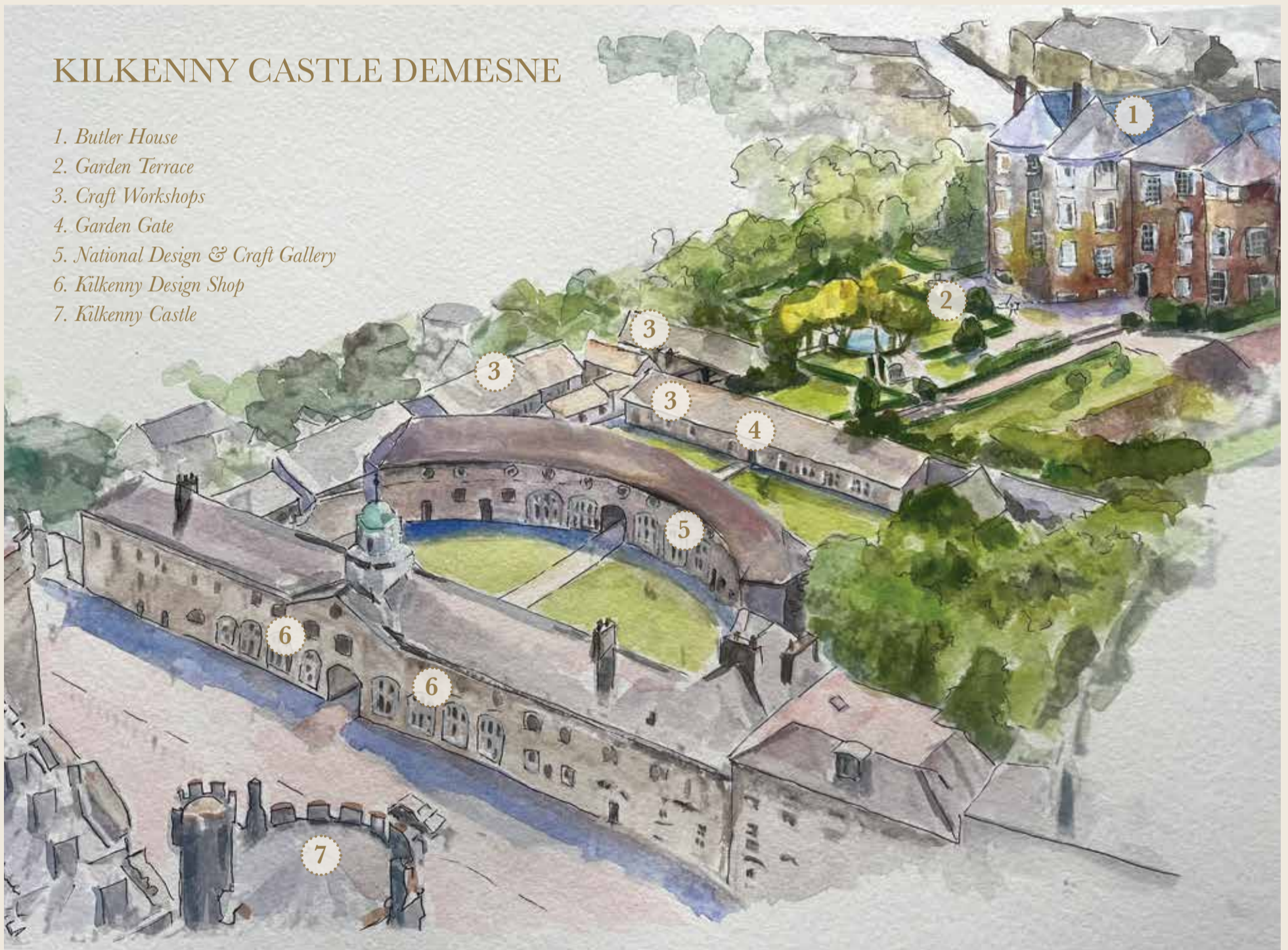
In 1967, Arthur Butler, 6th Marquess of Ormonde, sold the Castle for £50 to the Castle Restoration Committee for the people of Kilkenny.

In 1963, the Castle Yard buildings were converted to house Kilkenny Design Workshops, a state-sponsored design initiative aimed at improving Irish product design and increasing exports. Under the leadership of William H. Walsh, the buildings opened with five workshops — silver and metalwork, textile weaving, textile printing, ceramics and woodworking. Designers from across Europe were employed as lead designers and mentors, making Kilkenny a centre of design excellence and contributing significantly to contemporary craft practice in Ireland.



KILKENNY CASTLE DEMESNE

- 1. Butler House
- 2. Garden Terrace
- 3. Craft Workshops
- 4. Garden Gate
- 5. National Design & Craft Gallery
- 6. Kilkenny Design Shop
- 7. Kilkenny Castle



KILKENNY CIVIC TRUST

Butler House, Patrick Street, Kilkenny, Ireland R95 YY43
Please contact Tess Kavanagh, Events Manager
T: 056 772 2828 or E: events@butler.ie

Butler House & Garden and the Castle Yard are managed by Kilkenny Civic Trust

Scan the QR code to discover more stories, events and experiences from Butler House & Garden and Kilkenny Castle Yard.

