CIVIC TIMES

Issue No: Two	Winter 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 the second issue of Civic Times, a seasonal broadsheet sharing stories, people and places 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 work is focused on protecting, enhancing and promoting these remarkable buildings and spaces within the Kilkenny Castle Demesne, while ensuring they continue to play a living and active role in the city.

With each season, the character of the Demesne changes. This issue invites you to explore it at a quieter time of year, when autumn colour gives way to winter light and the city takes on a different rhythm.

A visit might begin at the iconic Kilkenny Castle before crossing the road to the former stable yard, now the Castle Yard. Today, this tranquil creative quarter is synonymous with design and craft, where working studios continue a long tradition of making within these historic walls. Here, the past and present sit comfortably alongside one another, with makers and craftspeople bringing new life to an important part of Kilkenny's built heritage.

Just through the archway and beyond a modest garden gate lies another of the Demesne's quieter treasures: the walled garden at Butler House, enclosed in part by the ancient city wall. Paths lead through a peaceful oasis where visitors can pause, explore and discover stories embedded in the landscape.

As autumn settles in, the garden takes on richer tones. Climbing roses give way to fruit-laden trees, while the Virginia creeper covering Butler House gradually turns a deep, dramatic red. The changing light brings a golden quality to the garden and signals the arrival of winter.

Winter at Butler House has its own special charm. We look forward to the cosiness of the season, bright and crisp days in the garden and brisk walks through the Castle Park, followed by the simple pleasure of settling into a comfortable chair in the Garden View Room with a good book and maybe a Cream Tea, or something a little stronger.

Throughout these pages, we hope you'll meet some of the people who make this part of Kilkenny special, discover more about the buildings and gardens in our care, and find reasons to explore the Castle Demesne for yourself.

Thank you for joining us and we hope you enjoy reading Issue No. Two of Civic Times as much as we've enjoyed bringing it together.

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 Garden View Room serves visitors daily from 11am.

The Team at Butler House are celebrating our inclusion in the Irish Independent's Hot 100 Hotels. With this news hot off the press and lots of upcoming events, workshops and exhibitions, we're excited for Autumn and Winter ahead.

Hoping, we'll get to welcome you soon.

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SAVE THE DATE – WHAT'S ON

There's something special about autumn and winter at Butler House. As the seasons change, the house and garden take on a warm, atmospheric feel, with a full calendar of events, seasonal dining and welcoming hospitality right in the heart of Kilkenny. Here's a snapshot of what's coming up:

UPCOMING IN THE CASTLE YARD

Exhibition: 'Of Sand & Ash' – Glass Society of Ireland exhibition at National Design & Craft Gallery

Of Sand & Ash is an immersive exhibition which tells the story of Irish glass with chapters dedicated to a variety of glass-making disciplines practiced. Visitors to the exhibition will encounter finished artworks alongside the tools, materials, sketches and studio practices that underpin them.

Date: August 6th - October 24th Tuesday to Saturday 10am - 5.30pm
Cost: FREE

Exhibition: Irish Design Excellence Awards

The Irish Design Excellence Award (IDEA) exhibition presents a curated selection of contemporary Irish design projects nominated by Ireland's recognised design industry bodies and selected by the Design & Crafts Council Ireland and the National Museum of Ireland. IDEA is a national platform highlighting outstanding design practice and the important role that industry organisations play in supporting exceptional design excellence and cultural significance.

Date: November 7th - January 22nd (Tuesday to Saturday 10am - 5.30pm)
Cost: FREE



CASTLE YARD FEATURE: CRAFT WORKSHOPS



MY SKIN INTEGRITY WORKSHOPS

Discover the art of natural skincare with clinical aromatherapist Denise O'Connell of My Skin Integrity in one of Denise workshops where she shares her skills in a fun, informative and enlightening experience These intimate hands-on workshops explore botanical oils, butters, essential oils and natural ingredients, with groups limited to six. Choose from traditional cold-process soap making or create personalised natural skincare products to take home. See scheduled workshop dates or arrange a private experience for your own group.

Cold Process Soap Making:

Date:
Saturday 12th September 2.30pm - 5pm
Saturday 17th October 2.30pm - 5pm

Natural Skincare Product Making:

Date:
Saturday 3rd October 2.30pm - 5pm
Saturday 7th November 2.30pm - 5pm

Cost:
€85 per person for each workshop. All materials, notes, safety equipment, and light refreshments are provided, and everything you make is packaged to take home.

How to Book:
See www.myskin.ie or info@myskin.ie
Tel: 087 1315947 for further information

BUNTING FAIRY MAKES WITH MICHELLE BRADY

Get creative with beautiful fabrics, Heritage Irish linen and traditional and sustainable craft at a fun, hands-on workshops where you'll make something to cherish.

November : Sew A Christmas Door Bow

Get ready for Christmas with a gorgeous handmade door bow! In this festive adult Buntingfairy workshop, you'll learn how to sew and create a beautiful statement bow for your Christmas door. Expect plenty of fabric, stitching, creativity and Buntingfairy magic — with a finished decoration to take home and enjoy each Christmas. Glass of Prosecco and treats included.

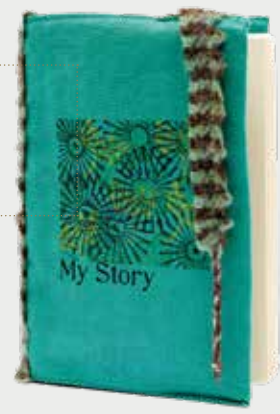
Date:
21st November 2026, 1pm - 3.30pm
Cost:
€95 per person



December : Blockprint & Stitch An Irish Linen Journal Cover

Spend a creative afternoon block printing and stitching your own Irish linen journal cover. You'll explore simple block-printing techniques before making a beautiful, personalised cover to treasure. Your workshop also includes a hand-bound journal from Duffy Bookbinders, making this a very special handmade keepsake — perfect for yourself or as a thoughtful gift. Glass of Prosecco and treats included.

Date:
12th December 2026 1pm - 3.30pm
Cost:
€95 per person



How to Book Visit https://buntingfairy.ie
instagram.com/Buntingfairy
OR **facebook.com/buntingfairy**



STEP INSIDE THE WORLD OF CARTOON SALOON'S JULIÁN

AT BUTLER GALLERY

28th Nov 2026 – 14th Feb 2027

This autumn/winter, Butler Gallery invites visitors to step behind the scenes of one of Kilkenny's most celebrated creative industries with Julián: The Exhibition, opening on 28 November 2026 and running until 14 February 2027.

Created in collaboration with Kilkenny-based animation studio Cartoon Saloon, the exhibition offers a fascinating glimpse into the creative process behind the making of the new animated feature Julián. Visitors will discover original artwork, drawings, character development and production materials, revealing how an animated story develops from an initial idea into a fully realised film.

For anyone who has ever wondered how an animated film is made, this is a chance to see the artistry, imagination and craftsmanship that happens behind the screen. It offers an inspiring opportunity to discover how drawing and storytelling can become part of a remarkable creative career for young artists and animators.

The exhibition also celebrates something very special to Kilkenny, the internationally recognised animation talent that has grown right here in the city. Cartoon Saloon has become synonymous with beautifully crafted, hand-drawn animation and has brought Irish creativity to audiences around the world.

With talks, workshops and family activities planned alongside the exhibition, there will be plenty of opportunities to get involved.

So, whether you're a lifelong fan of animation, visiting with the family, or simply curious to see how some of the world's most imaginative films are brought to life, make time to visit Butler Gallery this winter. Julián: The Exhibition promises to be a show that will delight, inspire and perhaps even make you look at animation in a whole new way!

For more details about the exhibition and the events happening during its run, **visit www.butlergallery.ie**

FOCUS ON A CRAFT MAKER

MEET THE MAKER DENISE O'CONNELL, MY SKIN INTEGRITY

Natural skincare products, handmade in Kilkenny Castle Yard

Nurture with Nature is the guiding idea behind My Skin Integrity, a small Kilkenny-based skincare studio where gentle, natural products are crafted by hand. From hydrosols and facial oils to lip balms, shampoo bars, foot balms and beautifully simple soaps, each item is made with care and a genuine love of botanicals. The range suits a wide variety of people, including those with sensitive skin and anyone seeking a bit of comfort during challenging times. There is also a selection of thoughtful gift sets, ideal for anyone who deserves something soothing, uplifting or pleasantly fragrant.

With over 25 years in clinical aromatherapy expertise, Denise O'Connell has a special interest in formulating skincare products for cancer care. As co-founder of Kilkenny's Cois Nore Cancer Support Centre, her mission is deeply personal. Every product is handcrafted by Denise in her studio in the Castle Yard, blending passion, purpose and soothing natural ingredients to create gentle, effective skincare products.

Every bar of soap, balm and botanical blend is made in small batches using carefully selected natural ingredients. Inspired by the Irish landscape, and a belief that skincare should comfort as much as it cares for the skin, each product reflects Denise's commitment to quality, sustainability and wellbeing.

Visitors are invited to step inside the studio, discover the making process and leave with a piece of Kilkenny that has been crafted with knowledge and care.





GERALDINE WALSH ART

WEEKLY AUTUMN/WINTER PAINTING CLASSES – CASTLE YARD

Weekly painting classes in Castle Yard, with demonstrations and individual guidance in a relaxed and supportive setting. Classes are suitable for beginners and improvers, with an emphasis on developing painting skills and confidence through observation, colour and individual expression.

Date:
Every Tuesday morning, 10am - 12pm, throughout Autumn/Winter
Cost:
€30 per class or €130 for six weeks

How to Book: Full details and booking: geraldinewalshart.com
Email. geraldinewalshart@gmail.com

NEW AED DEFIBRILLATOR NEAR YOU

What is an AED?

An AED is a portable device used during sudden cardiac arrest. It checks the heart's rhythm and, if needed, delivers a shock to help restore it.

What is cardiac arrest?

Cardiac arrest causes sudden collapse, unresponsiveness and abnormal breathing. Immediate CPR and defibrillation can save a life.

What to do

Call 999 or 112 and start CPR. Send someone to get the AED. Anyone can use it — simply switch it on and follow the voice and visual instructions.

Where is the AED?

Located in Butler House, accessible 24/7.
In an emergency, go directly to Reception.

Unavailable 23–27 December inclusive.

CASTLE YARD CRAFT GIFT GUIDE

Thoughtful gifts, beautifully made

Looking for a gift with a story behind it? Or perhaps a special memento to remind you of your visit to Kilkenny? Step into the studios of the Castle Yard and discover a collection of beautiful crafts, from some of Kilkenny's most talented makers.

Every piece has a story of its own. Designed and lovingly made by hand in the studios of the Castle Yard, these are gifts that celebrate creativity, skill and a genuine connection to place. From distinctive ceramics to unique pieces of jewellery, the craftsmanship of the maker is evident in every detail.

Some like Jerpoint Glass and Nicholas Mosse Pottery are made locally in Kilkenny countryside and available in Kilkenny Design, continuing a proud local tradition of making by hand.

This is sustainable shopping at its best. Rather than choosing something mass-produced, you're taking home a piece made with care, creativity and exceptional skill. A gift that feels at once personal, lasting and unmistakably Kilkenny.

Whether you're shopping for a birthday, a special occasion, a little something for someone you love, or simply a treat for yourself, the Castle Yard offers plenty of inspiration.

And if you're struggling to make a choice, gift hampers and gift vouchers are also available from the studios. Shipping can also be arranged, so your chosen piece can be delivered wherever it needs to go.

Come and discover something beautiful, locally inspired and made to be treasured.

If you're looking for inspiration for a gift or to treat yourself to a memento of your visit, then here's a selection of crafts we've chosen from the studios of the Castle Yard and Kilkenny. Each of these, created by the makers in their own studios in the Yard. Some like Jerpoint Glass and Nicholas Mosse Pottery are made locally in Kilkenny countryside. This is sustainable shopping… lovingly designed and made, the skill and craftsmanship is evident in every piece



Kilkenny Design:
Nicholas Mosse Yellow Lawn Vase €85
Jerpoint Glass Jug €60



Geraldine Walsh Art:
Original watercolours and Prints from €30



Des Byrne Silversmith:
Ogham pendant €180
Ogham Ring: €150



JMK Jewellery:
Pineapple cut citrine set in 18ct gold with a silver base on a silver chain €2,595



Rambling Rose Eclectic:
Upcycled Tobacco Tin €55



Ken Foley Leather:
Maria Handbag, vegetable tanned leather, sheepskin lined with brass fittings €175



My Skin:
Lip balm €6.50 SOS Serum €30
Hand cream €16.50 to €75 gift hamper



Wired Irish Candles:
Bamboo Soy Candle €69 Refill €50



Castle Arch Pottery:
Heritage Serving Dish (Diameter 27cm Height 6cm) €60



Patrick Joseph:
Santuko Sumingashi Black & Amber Pine Cone €1500



Bunting Fairy:
Personalised 'Name' bunting on Irish linen (in a presentation bag) from €57
Happy Christmas on Irish Linen €120

Discover beautifully crafted, locally inspired gifts from the makers of Kilkenny. Gift Hampers and Gift Vouchers are also available at the Studios and shipping can be arranged for you.

THE GARDEN VIEW ROOM

WHAT'S ON THE MENU

It's probably fair to say that Chef Ben Davis knows what we like and the Winter Garden View Room Menu is full of temptation and lots of our favourites.

The new Club Sandwich is a classic -Toasted Sourdough with Grilled Chicken, McCarren's Crispy Bacon, Garden Tomato and shredded lettuce with confit garlic mayo and of course, served with a side of fries.

Ben's Butler's Caesar Salad has a twist, an extra touch that makes it especially delicious – it's topped with a crispy hen's egg – if you haven't tried it, you really should! Enjoy the classic Caesar or add Cajun chicken & crisp streaky Bacon.

Your favourite Toasted Special and delicious homemade Soup with house baked brown bread muffins and Smithwick's battered Fish & Chips are all still on the lunch menu served daily 12pm till 3pm

As the evenings draw in, the Garden View Room has a cosy appeal and there's maybe nowhere nicer to settle in and enjoy something from the Evening Menu – frankly, sometimes it's hard to leave!

A comfy chair, a glass of wine or a pint of creamy Guinness with a Beef & Guinness Hot Pot or a Toasted Special or Cajun Chicken Toasty and if you feel like grazing, an Irish Cheese Slate or Butler's Mezze dip selection could be the perfect choice.





BUTLER HOUSE RECIPE

STICKY TOFFEE PUDDING WITH HIGHBANK ORCHARD'S SAUCE

- Chopped dates: 235g
- Water: 400mls
- Bicarbonate of soda: 7g
- Softened butter: 120g
- Caster or light brown sugar: 235g
- Eggs: 3 Medium
- Self-raising flour: 235g
- Vanilla extract: 5g

Method

1. Prep the tray: Grease a 20x30 Baking Dish tray thoroughly with butter or line it with baking parchment (I prefer to line as it saves on clean up!)
2. Soften the dates: Put the chopped dates and water into a large pan. Bring to a gentle simmer for 4 to 5 minutes until the dates are soft. Remove from the heat and stir in the bicarbonate of soda (it will fizz up). Let it cool slightly.
3. Mix the base: In a large bowl, cream the butter and sugar together until pale and fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time, mixing well after each addition.
4. Combine: Fold in the self-raising flour and vanilla extract, then gently mix in the warm date mixture until smooth.
5. Bake: Pour the batter evenly into the prepared Baking Dish. Bake at 160°C–170°C for about 40 to 50 minutes, or until a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean.
6. Make the sauce: While the sponge bakes, combine the double cream, brown sugar, Orchard Syrup, and butter in a pan. Bring to a gentle boil and simmer for 3–5 minutes until thickened.

For the Toffee Sauce:

- Double cream: 400mls
- Dark brown sugar: 135g
- Highbank Orchard Syrup or Standard Treacle: 40g
- Butter: 35g

7. Finish: Poke holes across the warm sponge and pour a portion of the hot toffee sauce evenly over the top so it absorbs deeply. Serve warm with the remaining toffee sauce and extra cream or ice cream.



SEASONAL FOOD

TAKE TEA

Enjoying afternoon tea in Ireland offers a cosy, luxurious way to experience local hospitality, history and culinary treats.

Arriving to take tea opens the door to the unique setting and atmosphere of the dower house of Kilkenny Castle.

Afternoon tea is a tradition dating back to the 1840s and has never gone out of fashion, not least because it feels like a little indulgence and the perfect way to relax and catch up with a friend.

Tea itself is part of everyday life and a true symbol of Irish hospitality. As a nation of tea drinkers, "Will you have a cup of tea?" is the welcome greeting in most homes.

Cream Tea is an experience at Butler House, served all day, every day from 11am to 9pm, because guests and visitors simply love it.

Presented on a three-tiered stand, homemade plain and fruit scones, often baked several times a day, are accompanied by delicious homemade strawberry jam and cream, with your choice of barista coffee or tea from a wide selection of traditional blends and the finest teas from world-renowned tea gardens around the globe.

AFTERNOON TEA

Afternoon Tea is served on selected dates in the Lady Eleanor Restaurant. Here are our upcoming dates...

- September 26th
- October 10th and Savour Festival 24th
- November 14th
- December Festive Afternoon Teas 5th, 12th, 19th
- Nollaig na mBan Saturday 9th January 2027



Cream Tea

EXPLORE

DISCOVER TONY O'MALLEY AT BUTLER HOUSE

Visitors to Butler House can discover a special connection to one of Ireland's most important 20th-century artists, Tony O'Malley, through Bree Church in Wexford, 1955, on display in the Garden View Room.

The painting is part of Butler Gallery's new O'Malley collection, following a recent bequest of Tony's and his wife Jane O'Malley's estates to the gallery. Jane was also a well-respected and celebrated artist and she and Tony shared a studio space for the majority of their artistic careers. Born in the nearby Callan, Co. Kilkenny, O'Malley began painting in the 1940s while recovering from illness. His early work is largely figurative and expressionist, drawing inspiration from the landscapes and everyday places around him.

Bree Church in Wexford offers a glimpse into this earlier period of O'Malley's practice, before his work developed towards the more abstract and intensely colourful paintings for which he became renowned. His move to St Ives in Cornwall in the 1960s proved an important turning point, bringing him into contact with artists including Patrick Heron and Peter Lanyon and helping shape his distinctive approach to abstraction.



Bree Church in Wexford, 1955

After enjoying O'Malley's work at Butler House, why not continue the journey? Just a short distance away, across John's Bridge, Butler Gallery offers the opportunity to explore more of the O'Malley collection and discover the remarkable evolution of an artist whose roots are firmly connected to Kilkenny. Visit www.butlergallery.ie for more information and to plan your visit. Entry to the gallery is free.

ON THE NORE VALLEY RIVER WALK

RIVER WALK

In every issue we feature a local walk, and in this edition, we focus on The Nore Valley River Walk from Kilkenny Castle Park to Bennettsbridge.

This stretch of the Nore Valley walk takes roughly 2 hours at a relaxed pace. Follow the river as it meanders through meadows, shady glades and past ancient mills; woollen, grain, paper and sawmills from where Kilkenny's famous 'black marble' was honed (Maddockstown). Rich in riverside flora and fauna – spot a swift, a heron or catch a fleeting glimpse of kingfisher or an otter emerging from the riverbank. Arrive into Bennettsbridge and pay a visit to candle maker Moth to a Flame or the legendary Nicholas Mosse Pottery and enjoy something from their café.

Described by The Irish Times as 'a delightful walk' and by The Irish Independent as 'one of the most delectable river walks in Ireland, an unfolding tale of kingfishers, otters, Sleeping Beauty castles and wicked young princelings – pure distillation of magic in the flood lands of Kilkenny'.

Directions to Trailhead

From Kilkenny: From Butler House, leave via the garden gate and cross the Castle Yard to Kilkenny Castle Park and onto the Canal Walk crossing the footbridge to the opposite side of the river and continue under Ossory Bridge following the trail markers.

Note: 2km outside Kilkenny City the trail leaves the riverbank and heads along a laneway and onto the Sion Road. Follow this road for 600m then cross a green stile, through a field and back to the riverbank.

From Bennettsbridge: Under the six arch bridge – take the steps down to the riverbank by Tynan's Butchers shop

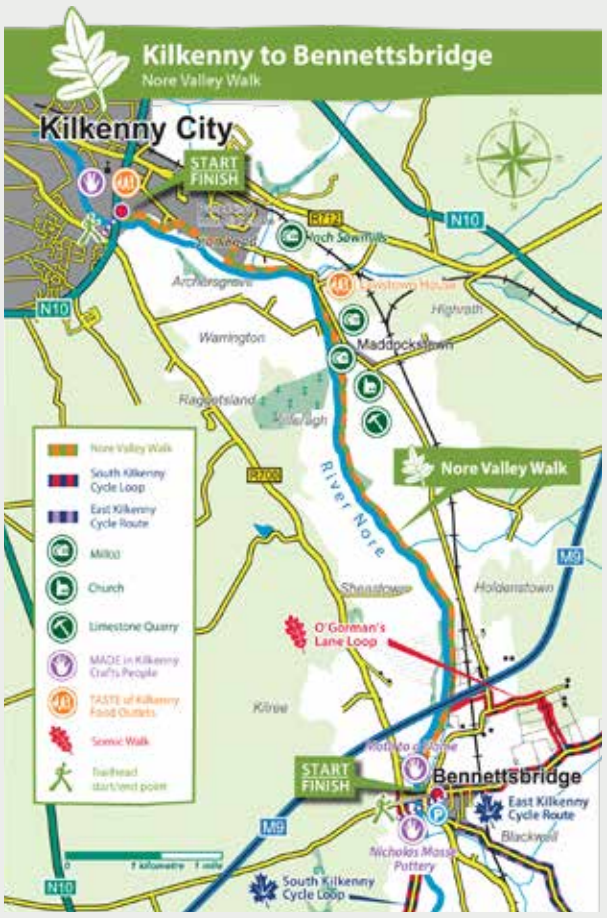
Self-Guided Bike 'N' Hike Tour

Did you know that you can hire a bike from Kilkenny Cycling Tours and enjoy the tranquility and scenery as you cycle from Kilkenny City via the "Sion Road" to the picturesque village of Bennettsbridge.

Whilst in Bennettsbridge, you may visit a café or the local craft producers - Nicholas Mosse Pottery. Just lock up your bike and leave them at the Village Pump outside Tynan's Butcher Shop and Kilkenny Cycling Tours will retrieve them.

Allow 45 – 50 minutes to cycle back to the City from Bennettsbridge, or if you opt to take the walking option, two hours and 10 minutes for the return journey along the stunningly beautiful Nore Valley River Walk.

TO BOOK www.kilkennycyclingtours.com
COST: Adult €21.20



SAVOUR FESTIVAL FOCUS

One of Ireland's favourite food festivals returns to the heart of Kilkenny in October



GEORGIAN AFTERNOON TEA

Guests are invited to relax in an elegant Georgian reception room featuring original decorative ceilings, large bow windows, and picturesque views extending beyond the walled garden to Kilkenny Castle. This exceptional atmosphere perfectly complements a delicious, carefully prepared menu of homemade sweet treats and savoury delights.

Date: Saturday 24th October
Venue: Lady Eleanor Restaurant, Butler House
Time: Tea is served 1pm - 3pm
Cost: €49 per person with a celebratory glass of bubbles included. Pre-booking is essential.

1786 LONG TABLE DINNER

Step back into 1786 and immerse yourself in the grandeur of Georgian Kilkenny with an exclusive intimate dining experience at Butler House. Built 240 years ago as the magnificent dower house for Kilkenny Castle, this historic house provides an enchanting backdrop to celebrate centuries of architectural and culinary heritage.

Guest will begin the evening in the Garden View Room with an arrival cocktail and handcrafted canapés before gathering around a long dining table in the elegant surroundings of The Lady Eleanor room, to be transported to an era of refined hospitality.

The highlight of the night is a curated five-course dinner that pays homage to the dishes favoured by Georgian high society. Drawing inspiration from authentic period menus, the meal celebrates the rich bounty of County Kilkenny and its surrounding landscapes. Guests will savour courses crafted from local game, fresh fish caught in nearby waters, regional vegetables, and sweet fruits from the garden, blending historic tradition with exceptional local flavours.

Date: Sunday 25th October
Venue: Lady Eleanor Restaurant, Butler House
Time: 7pm for arrival cocktail & canapés
Cost: €95pp includes arrival cocktail and 5 course dinner. Pre-booking is essential.



DEISE MEDIEVAL

Step back in time to explore the ancient flavours and culinary heritage of early Ireland! Déise Medieval is a living history society bringing the food, skills, crafts, and combat of the early to mid-medieval period to life. Discover how our ancestors lived and feasted with live re-enactments throughout the day in the Castle Yard



Date: Saturday 24th & Sunday 25th October
Venue: Castle Yard
Time: 10:30am - 4:30pm
Cost: FREE

To book: If you'd like to attend any Savour Kilkenny events taking place at Butler House, pre-booking is essential. Please call 056 772 2828 or email res@butler.ie.

Menus are tailored to each occasion. Please let us know about any dietary requirements when booking so we can confirm whether they can be accommodated.

BUTLER HOUSE FEATURE

240 YEAR CELEBRATIONS

Marking 240 years since Butler House was built as the dower house of Kilkenny Castle, we held a Summer Garden Party on Saturday 27th June, and it was a magical afternoon.

Attended by the Mayor Andrew McGuinness, Councillors and Cathaoirleach Joe Malone, locals and friends of Butler House and the Castle Yard, we enjoyed a very sociable afternoon over strawberry lemonade and dressed scones in a stretch tent on the lawn.

Robert Miller, garden director and Shirley Lanigan, gardener and author joined Tommy Falsey gardener at Butler House on a tour of the garden - looking at its evolution in recent years and sharing their top gardening tips with the super crowd that gathered.

Children enjoyed storytelling and a 'dotie' Teddy Bears picnic and bubbles and games in the garden.

A highlight of the day was the presentation to five members of the team of their Long Service Awards. All 5 have dedicated 25 years or more to Butler House and the Castle Yard. Liam O'Neill, wood turner who apprenticed in Kilkenny Design Workshops and had his retrospective of outdoor sculptural pieces in the garden last year, made a bowl for each as a token of all our appreciation. The wood he used was saved from an apple tree that fell in the garden during Storm Éowyn in 2025 giving them a special connection to place.









BUTLER HOUSE FEATURE

FESTIVE LUNCHES

Step into timeless Christmas magic at Butler House and join us for a festive Sunday Lunch during December …

The festive three course Menu is served in the Lady Eleanor Restaurant overlooking the garden and includes a choice of seasonal starters, main courses including Traditional Turkey & Ham or Roast Beef, and a choice of dessert Apple Crumble, Plum Pudding or Chocolate Brownie.

You may like to reserve a table at either 1pm or 2.45pm on Sunday 6th, 13th or 20th December. €49 per person

Please call 056 772 2828 or email res@butler.ie to book

We regret that this event is not suitable for children under 12 years of age.

…where festive elegance meets historic charm in the heart of Kilkenny City.



THE INSIDER

24 HOURS IN KILKENNY WITH LORRAINE KERWICK

MANAGER BUTLER HOUSE

When Lorraine was a cailín, she visited her mother who worked in Butler House and, with her friend Claire, cheekily signed the visitors' book on 31st October 1986. One evening helping at a celebration followed, and she never left!

Lorraine knows the house and city like the back of her hand and shares some of her favourite things to do here.

After a leisurely breakfast, it's nice to set yourself up for the day, with a walk through the garden and a lap of the Castle Park.

I like to remind guests to browse the works of the Basil Goulding Collection that hang throughout the house. Fascinating that many of the artists featured in the collection are now renowned but when Sir Basil acquired them, they were little known artists in recessionary Ireland. What a contribution he made as a patron of the arts - he certainly had an eye for contemporary art. Many of our guests like to follow with a visit to the Butler Gallery over the river where they'll find more works by these and many more artists.

Save time to spend in the Garden View Room – it's a room where you can 'cosy in' no matter what time of year… to read your book, play a board game from the bookcase or just take time out to enjoy the view and maybe to treat yourself to a Cream Tea.



Lorraine Kerwick, Operations Manager at Butler House



Nevin from Shenanigans Walks

ACTIVITIES

STAY & SHENANIGANS

Add a Shenanigans City Walking Tour Experience to your Stay in Butler House - a fabulously engaging way to explore the City.

Award winning Shenanigans Walks bring an exciting modern twist on traditional tours. A unique blend of history, stories, Irish colloquial sayings origins, humorous anecdotes interspersed with magic effects.

A local expert guide leads the fun on an informative and engaging adventure, tracing the footsteps of The Normans, Monks, Knights, Merchants and an infamous Witch. Weaving a path through the picturesque medieval streets, the story unfolds to revealing all Kilkenny's incredible landmarks such as Kilkenny Castle, Rothe House, St. Canice's Cathedral & 9th Century Round Tower.

Book your Stay and Shenanigans break directly with Butler House by calling 056 7722828 or emailing res@butler.ie or via our website www.butler.ie

CASTLE YARD FEATURE

CONSERVING THE CUPOLA:

RESTORING A LANDMARK AT KILKENNY'S HISTORIC CORE

High above the historic heart of Kilkenny, the cupola stands as a small but distinctive feature within one of the city's most important historic landscapes. The cupola crowns the historic 18th-century stable complex opposite Kilkenny Castle. Modest in scale, perhaps, but powerful in its visual presence, the cupola is an important part of the historic character of Kilkenny Castle, The Parade, the Castle Yard, the gardens of Butler House and Butler House itself.

The conservation work on the cupola is more significant than simply the repair of an older structure. It is about understanding its place within the historic landscape and ensuring that it continues to contribute to that landscape for generations to come.

The Kilkenny Design Shop and Craft Studios were originally the Ormonde Stables and estate workers accommodation within the Kilkenny Castle Estate. The Castle kitchen gardens, the stables, coach houses, bothys were all located here and in the immediate vicinity in the 18th and 19th centuries. This place was teeming with workers and management at this period. Timekeeping and communication were delivered by way of the Cupola.

CAREFUL CONSERVATION

The recommended maintenance and care works undertaken during Summer 2026 were designed to keep the cupola in good condition while preventing one of the greatest threats to historic buildings: water ingress. Unwanted unnoticed moisture can gradually cause serious damage to historic fabric.

An important early stage of the project was the cleaning out of accumulated debris within the previously hidden areas the interior of the Cupola.

REDISCOVERING THE CLOCK AND BELL

Perhaps the most exciting discovery of the early survey and clean out phase has been the recovery of the cupola's original mechanical clock mechanism and cast bronze bell with original hammer, the associated weights, pullies and pendulum.

The cast bronze bell dated 1682 with inscription 'James Duke of Ormonde: 1682', cast 100 years before the Ormonde Stables and Butler House which were constructed together in 1780 by Walter Butler, 16th Earl of Ormonde. Therefore, the bell came from elsewhere, possibly from the curtain wall of Kilkenny Castle itself after Walter had re-routed the Castle Road away from the Castle.

Hidden within the structure, these remarkable pieces of the building's history offer a tangible connection with the way the cupola once functioned as part of the life of the estate and the wider city.

Their rediscovery transforms the conservation project from one of preserving an architectural feature into something more significant: the recovery of a lost function. The intention is to carefully restore it so that it can once again keep time. Likewise, the cast bell can be returned to working order and allowed to peal once more. This along with the careful repair of the weather-vane has reinstated another function of the Cupola.

For Kilkenny, this has a particular resonance. The sound of the bell has been absent from the city for generations. To hear it again would be to experience the soundscape of the past, within the historic core of the City, returning to the present.

There is something uniquely evocative about such a restoration. A bell heard across the historic city can connect with people in a meaningful way, becoming part of the living environment once again, marking time and recalling the everyday rhythms of an earlier Kilkenny – giving this small landmark, the cupola, its voice once again.

RESPECTING THE HISTORIC FABRIC

With the valuable support of the Built Heritage Investment Scheme and the Conservation Office of Kilkenny County Council, the Trust embarked in May on the renovation of the cupola to the highest appropriate conservation standards. We are now at the final phase of the project with the restoration of the clock and bell mechanism by Stokes of Mac Curtain Street in Cork.

It's expected that the completed works will be handed over by November 2026.



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.









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.