



# Mount Kennedy Wood

NEWTOWNMOUNTKENNEDY, CO. WICKLOW



This pocket guide is designed to provide visitors with basic information on Mount Kennedy Wood in particular the two main walking trails:

- The Woodland Walk
- The River Walk

We ask visitors to respect the flora and fauna and to co-operate with Coillte in keeping the woodland free of litter. Please refrain from picking plants or lighting fires and observe the woodland code:



*Leave only footprints and take only memories*

## **Acknowledgements**

The Mount Kennedy Woodland trail is part of the NeighbourWood Scheme, funded by the Forest Service, Department of Agriculture and Food, and co-ordinated by Wicklow County Council in partnership with Coillte, and Newtownmountkenedy and District Tidy Towns.

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Illustrations: Courtesy of the Tree Council of Ireland

Maps: Adapted from Coillte maps and inventory records.



# Mount Kennedy Wood

Mount Kennedy is one of a number of woodlands in Ireland participating in the NeighbourWood scheme, funded by the Forest Service. The aim of the scheme is to enhance the heritage and conservation value of the wood in tandem with developing its value as a recreational and educational resource. The Mount Kennedy scheme is a partnership between Wicklow County Council, Coillte, and Newtownmountkennedy and District Tidy Towns.



As well as being used by the people of Newtownmountkennedy and surrounding areas, the wood is an important amenity that attracts specialist interest groups, walkers, tourists and school groups. In addition, part of the site has been adapted as a wheelchair friendly trail to promote access and enjoyment for all. Mount Kennedy is one of the many Coillte woodlands open to the public throughout Ireland.



Situated adjacent to the village of Newtownmountkennedy, the wood has a rich variety of native and introduced broadleaved and coniferous trees. Mount Kennedy has ready access through four entrances and has two small car parks. Some visitors leave their cars in the village and take a short walk to the small stepped entrance at the northern edge of the village. This entrance is located beside the tiny bridge which spans the Altidore River 150 metres north of the village Post Office.



Mount Kennedy is divided into two woodland trails: the River Walk and the Woodland Walk, although the Altidore River is common to both woodland trails.

*There are over 3km of walks in Mount Kennedy Wood, beginning at the entrance near the bridge spanning the Altidore River (above, right). The woodland walks traverse well maintained forest roads through species such as Norway spruce, ash and sycamore (above).*



# The Woodland Walk

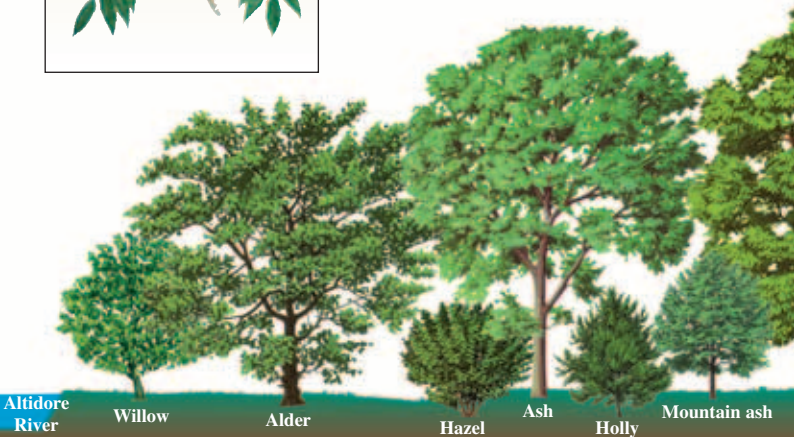
## Ash

*Oak may be the national tree of Ireland, but ash could well claim this distinction. While oak outnumbers it in place names around the country, in many respects, ash is a tree that is closer to the Irish consciousness. It resonates sound, movement, rhythm and touch, as hurley, oar or pitchfork handle. Its rootedness in Irish culture dates back to a time when it was revered as a bile or sacred tree and to its emergence as Class I in the Old Irish Tree List alongside the other nobles of the wood (airgi fedo in Irish).*



The Woodland Walk runs beside the meandering Altidore from the bridge entrance and exits at a small car park (**Map PI**) and is reached by a short series of steps (far right). It contains species typical of riverside woods such as the native alder, willow and ash. Ash grows on a variety of soils but thrives in moist conditions. Indigenous species are also plentiful in the understorey and include hazel and holly.

Mount Kennedy also contains a variety of introduced species such as beech and sycamore which may have arrived during the seventeenth century although there is also a view that they may have been introduced by the Normans. Either way, these species quickly adapted to Irish conditions and while not native they are now as much part of the landscape as indigenous species.



Altidore  
River

Willow

Alder

Hazel

Ash

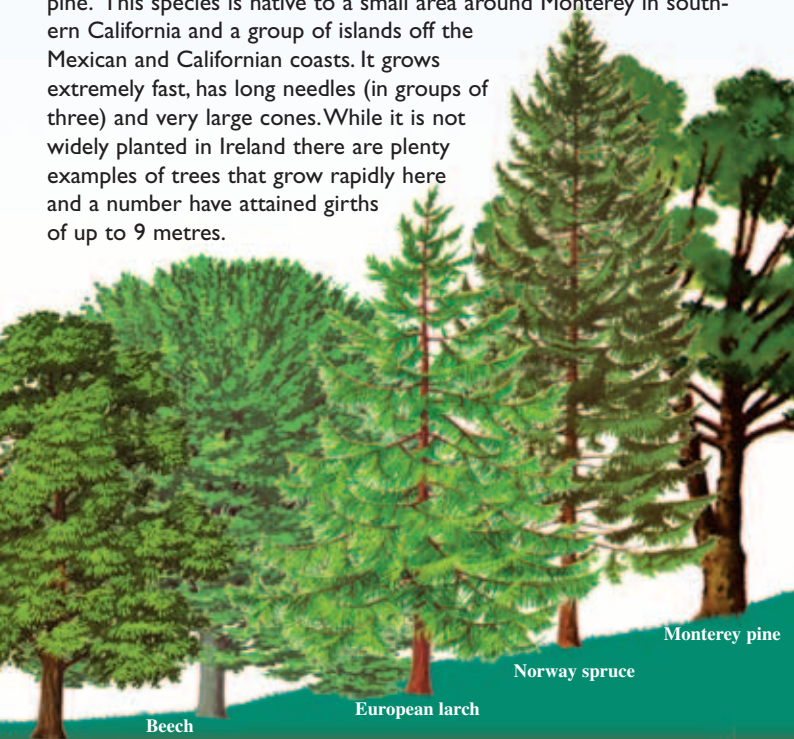
Holly

Mountain ash

As the trail moves away from the river and rises to the car park (**Map P1**) entrance, Norway spruce is the prominent species. Norway spruce is a European species and was the traditional Christmas tree although it is rarely used now as it sheds its needles shortly after felling unlike species such as noble fir. Norway spruce may have been introduced to Ireland 500 years ago but it is believed that it made a brief appearance here during the last interglacial period.



Car parking to facilitate disabled users (**Map P2**) is located 200 m further along the trail. This walk passes the Coillte research laboratory where on the left hand side – up on the bank – there are Monterey pine. This species is native to a small area around Monterey in southern California and a group of islands off the Mexican and Californian coasts. It grows extremely fast, has long needles (in groups of three) and very large cones. While it is not widely planted in Ireland there are plenty examples of trees that grow rapidly here and a number have attained girths of up to 9 metres.



Sweet chestnut

Beech

European larch

Norway spruce

Monterey pine

## TYPICAL TREE SPECIES IN MOUNT KENNEDY



## The River Walk

The River Walk is divided into three sections: the surfaced trail; a short looped walk; and a walk to the western entrance. The surfaced trail is maintained to promote access to the wood for mobility impaired visitors. There are a number of resting areas along the trail, as indicated **B** on the map.



The tree species in this area are typical of old estates and woodlands that were planted from the seventeenth century. They include beech and Spanish or sweet chestnut.

Beech has beautiful bright green foliage in spring and both species have spectacular autumnal golden and russet colours. They produce

excellent wood, ideal for furniture, flooring and turnery. The nuts of sweet chestnut are edible unlike those of horse chestnut. This is a good area to listen to the sounds of the forest. The Altidore River is the prevailing sound for most of the walk but listen out for the sound of animals at dusk or the many songbirds attracted to Mount Kennedy because of its rich variety of flora.

*Mount Kennedy Wood has a wheelchair-friendly trail beginning at the River Walk ([Map P2](#)). There are also a number of wheelchair bays and resting areas (top right).*



## Flora

*In addition to 25 species of trees and shrubs, there are over 75 species of grasses, ferns and flowering plants in Mount Kennedy Wood.*

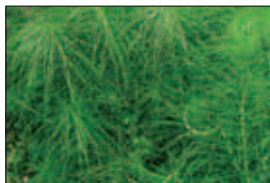
*The woodland contains six different species of fern and horsetail (right) along with an abundance of plants such as rosebay, willowherb, purple loosestrife, meadowsweet (top right), lords and ladies, herb Robert (below), dog violet and shepherd's purse.*



About 200 metres from the entrance the visitor has the option of completing the short loop walk which is about 600 metres before it rejoins the Woodland Walk near a small stand of cherry. These trees were planted by Coillte to assess the performance of different provenances of cherry tree. Cherry is a native species and produces beautiful wood which is used for high quality furniture, wood turnery and wood carving.



The surfaced trail ends 300 metres from the entrance at **P2**. The trail which continues some 800 metres west from here along the River walk, is an unsurfaced forest trail, in good condition and is relatively level.



The landscape along this part of the trail changes as natural regeneration replaces the dense forest cover prevalent in the Woodland Walk.



# The changing woodland

## Wildlife

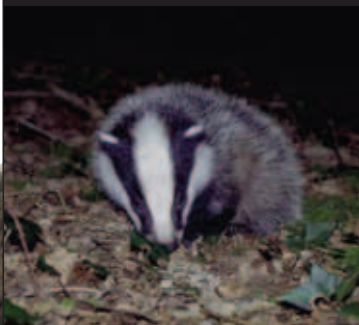
*The mixed species of flora attract a variety of wild life to Mount Kennedy. Jays, blackbirds, blue and grey tits, treecreepers, coals, wren, rooks, long eared owls and sparrow hawks are just a few of the birds that can be seen and heard in the wood.*

*Mammals include pygmy shrew, red squirrel, badger (below), stoat and foxes. The native red squirrel is also present but is in danger of being pushed out by the non-native grey squirrel which causes damage to trees by stripping the bark of mainly broadleaves such as sycamore and beech.*

*If you wish to see some of the bat species, visit the wood at dusk or early morning and you may be lucky to spot pippestrelles, lieslers, daubentons, natterers or brown long-eared bats. The river-side areas also provide refuge for a variety of butterflies such as red admiral, peacock, tortoiseshell, speckled wood, small green veined white and orange tip.*

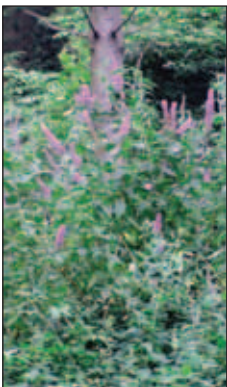
The changing face of Mount Kennedy Wood is very much in evidence in the final 800 metres of the River Walk. The wood is largely the result of past human planting, characterised by two different planting regimes: the old estate planting and the later public planting by the Forest Service and more recently by Coillte. The remnants of the old Newtownmountkenedy Estate include mixed broadleaved trees both native and naturalised such as ash, beech and sweet chestnut. Later, when the Forest Service acquired the wood, coniferous species were introduced from around the world. Many of these species were planted in the nearby Avondale arboretum and species trial plots around 1904. These grew extremely well in Irish conditions and many were planted in Mount Kennedy including Japanese larch, Norway spruce and Western North American natives such as Sitka spruce and Monterey pine.

The woodland will again change over the coming years as different species slowly colonise this area.





On the left (walking towards the western entrance) there is natural regeneration of a number of species such as ash, mountain ash (or rowan) and birch while on the right – across the river – for about 400 metres a mature plantation of Norway spruce is programmed for final or clearfelling in 2006. Clearfelling looks unsightly during and immediately after harvest-



ing but vegetation and tree species quickly encroach the area. The Norway spruce, planted originally in the 1950s was thinned at various stages from year 20 onwards. Thinning involves the regular removal of trees to improve growth and quality of remaining trees. Eventually when the forest matures, the area is clearfelled and then reforested. Very often, the replacement crop is similar to the harvested crop but the Coillte forester here has decided to replace it with a number of species that are native to the area such as ash and alder.

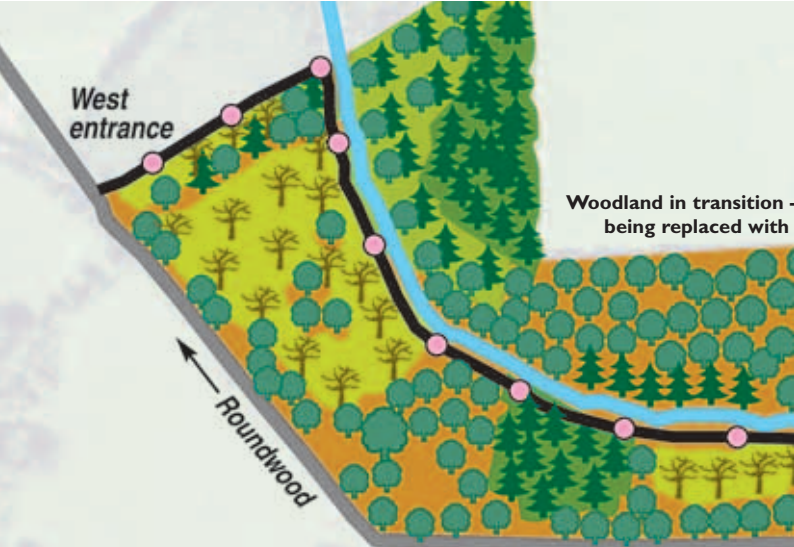


The forest road ends at the western entrance. From here, walkers may retrace their steps to the car park (**Map P2**) or follow the public road back to Newtownmountkennedy village which is about 1.5 km from here.

The total walking distance in Mount Kennedy including loop walk is 3 km and while the terrain is fairly level, walkers should wear sturdy footwear.

*Mount Kennedy has a rich woodland understorey flora such as holly and foxglove (above right) and buddleja (above left).*





Broadleaved woodland\*



Coniferous woodland



Mixed woodland



Natural regeneration and open ground



Parking



Disabled parking



Resting bays



Woodland walk



River walk



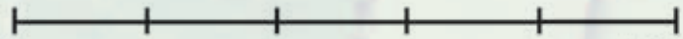
Disabled-friendly section



Looped walk



Public road



0

500m

\*includes areas currently being converted from coniferous to broadleaved woodland

# Mount Kennedy Wood

- Norway spruce  
broadleaves





Dublin →

COILLTE HQ

Wicklow/Wexford →

Bridge entrance

Post Office

NEWTOWNMOUNTKENEDY

# Shaping Mount Kennedy

Mount Kennedy Wood is adjacent to the County Wicklow village of Newtownmountkennedy. The woodland trail occupies a narrow valley between two hills, which have an altitude of between 110 and 120 m. The primary rock beneath the thin layer of soil comprises greywacke, shale and quartzite. The sediments, which make up these rocks, were laid down many millions of years ago when this area was covered with water – the Irish Sea is only 5 km from the wood. Over time the landscape was sculpted as rocks were pushed up and low-lying ground was gouged out by later glaciations. The melt water left a gravel drift which characterises the relatively free-draining soils of Mount Kennedy. These soils are primarily composed of local shale and sandstone, which were easily eroded by the force of the advancing ice sheet. The higher ground to the west and north (especially the Sugarloaf Mountain) which are largely composed of hard quartzite, were more resistant to erosion.

The village itself was established in the mid-eighteenth century by the Kennedy family. Featured in a Neville map dated 1760, the village had a turbulent early history. Agrarian and political unrest came to a head in 1798 when the village was attacked on May 30 by a group of poorly armed members of the United Irishmen. They were routed by the Yeomen and close to 100 were killed.

The Metal Spinners factory was the biggest employer from the 1950s to the 1970s. The village has retained much of its charm since it was bypassed by the N11 dual carriageway. The amenity development of Mount Kennedy Wood illustrates the importance of trees and forests in community life and the vast potential of wood as a renewable resource. The Coillte headquarters, located to the north of the village demonstrates a new confidence in Irish grown wood as a creative and versatile building material.

This project is funded by the Forest Service NeighbourWood Scheme in association with Wicklow County Council. It is managed by Coillte in co-operation with Newtownmountkennedy and District Tidy Towns Committee.



# How to get there

Mount Kennedy Wood is situated close to the village of Newtownmountkennedy just off the N11. It is 32 km south of Dublin and midway between Wicklow and Bray.

