

16. Knockfierna

Ballingarry is situated on the foothills of Knockfierna (Knockfeerina, Hill of the Fairies), south west of Adare. There are panoramic views of the Golden Vale from the top. One can see most of the County from here because of its central location. Walking distance 9km round trip, Time 2.5hrs. Terrain moderate. O.S. Map 65: Start grid ref R415363



Ballingarry Town Park

Starting at the town park [Point 1], located on the Croom/Adare road, take a stroll along the circular path around the pond,

which was created recently by sluice gates. Dragonflies soon colonised the pond, and include Common Darter, Amber-winged Hawker and Spring Hawker. When the Amber-winged Hawker hunts for prey it can be seen chasing them in a loop-the-loop fashion. Spring Redtail, Common Bluetip and Azure Bluet damselfly have also been seen here. They are smaller and are weak flyers; when they land they fold their wings above the abdomen. Many of the plants are aliens but they do attract many butterflies including Red Admiral, Painted Lady, Large White and Small Tortoiseshell butterflies. Many birds also visit the garden including Bullfinch, Goldfinch, Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush. When leaving the park turn right and right again at the junction. At the T- junction turn left on the Kilmallock Road [R518] where you will pass the local National School. After leaving the village turn sharp left up a laneway just before the next road junction. This is on a bad bend known locally as Tinker's Cross, where there is a signpost for the Heritage Centre **[Point 2]**. Follow this laneway (known as the Red Road) and keep going uphill. Continue up past a house entrance and a passage on the left **[Point 3]**. Keep going up, passing a quarry on the right. Eventually you will reach a farm building and a gate. This is known locally as the Rambling House. Go through the gate, closing it after you. There is pasture on the left while Gorse covers the area uphill to the right.

The hill is treeless which allows you excellent views of the surrounding countryside. Kestrels can be seen hovering above looking for prey on the ground. Stone Chat, Meadow Pipit, Linnet and Swallow are common. There are recent reports of Hen Harrier hunting in the evenings. In autumn flocks of Curlew and Lesser Black-backed Gulls can be seen flying overhead. At the fork **[Point 4]** veer to the right. After the two red gates the path becomes steep. Soon you will see a commemorative stone **[Point 5]** with information about the area for you to read. Keep going straight on and pass the track to the right. The road dips down on to a plateau across the heath. At the Y-junction **[Point 6]** keep to the left. At the gate **[Point 7]** beside two stone buildings, turn right.



Red Admiral (Billy Stembridge)



Knockfierna



Orange-red Wax-cap



Looking towards Ballingarry from the summit

This last section is rather steep as it passes through an area of Willows. A colourful red fungus, the Orange-red Wax-cap occurs along the path in autumn. Soon you will reach the top of Knockfierna [288m]. Around the cross at the top is an area of short grassland where in summer you will find Eyebright, Lady's Bedstraw, English Stonecrop and small plants of Ribwort Plantain, as well as the yellow-flowered Mouse-ear Hawkweed. Enjoy the view from the top and retrace your way back to the start.

Option: There is alternative parking at **Point 8**, beside a yellow house with a red-slatted roof. From here follow the red track for a short distance where you will see a footpath on the right. Follow this narrow path that leads the way to the top passing a wire fence. After passing a quarry keep to the right at the Y junction **[Point 6]**.

