



## Kilkenny's Historic Tholsel Charters Digitised and Now Publicly Accessible



**K**ilkenny's rich civic and cultural heritage took a major step forward on Tuesday, August 19th, with the official launch of the newly digitised historic Tholsel Charters. The event at the Mayfair Library, was launched by Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh and marked the beginning of a new era in heritage preservation and public accessibility.



Front Row: County Librarian Jo Coyne, Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Mayor of Kilkenny, Cllr. John Coonan, Cólín Ó'Driscóil, State Archaeologist. Back Row: Local Studies Staff of Kilkenny County Council Library Services Alicia Dunphy, Johanna Brennan, Aileen O'Reilly, Niamh O'Malley, Rachel West & Patrick Kavanagh.

The launch featured compelling insights from State Archaeologist Cólín Ó'Driscóil and County Librarian Jo Coyne, who highlighted the significance of the Kilkenny Digital Archive and the treasures it holds. Among these are Kilkenny's six historic charters ranging from 1608 to 1862, all now available online. Previously housed in the iconic Tholsel building, these fragile and invaluable records reflect the administration and daily life of Kilkenny across eight centuries. The digitised charters, featured in the late historian John Bradley's Treasures of Kilkenny, offer rare insights into how the community navigated war, pestilence, and societal change.



Senator Malcolm Noonan, Cllr. Maria Dollard, Chief Executive of the Heritage Council, Virginia Teehan, Cllr. Andrew McGuinness, Cathaoirleach Kilkenny County Council, Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh, Mayor of Kilkenny Cllr. John Coonan.

Kilkenny County Council Library Service, in collaboration with Local Studies staff, have proudly launched the first selection of digitised charters now freely accessible to the public through the Kilkenny Digital Archive. This milestone marks a significant step in preserving and sharing the county's rich historical legacy in a meaningful and accessible way.



These invaluable documents once fragile and tucked away are now available for everyone to explore and ensures Kilkenny's civic history can be experienced in a meaningful, interactive, and accessible way.

"This project is about access, inclusion, and education," said Jo Coyne. "Whether you are a student, researcher, historian, or simply curious about our past, these materials are now available 24/7 from anywhere in the world."



And this is just the beginning. The Library Service is committed to continuing this vital work and plan to conserve and digitise the truly remarkable collection of letters, petitions, and civic records. This virtual archive is a treasure trove unique to Kilkenny, offering insights into the lives, voices, and decisions that shaped our community.

The Kilkenny Digital Archive is a dynamic and growing platform. In addition to the Tholsel Archives, it hosts collections such as the Mount Juliet Archive, Kilkenny Shopfronts Through the Ages, Castlecomer Pantomime, and Graiguenamanagh Memories. Each collection has been developed in collaboration with local communities and organisations, reflecting a shared commitment to preserving cultural memory.



"This launch is not just a celebration of the past," said Cathaoirleach of Kilkenny County Council, Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh. "It is a call to continue exploring, collaborating, and innovating as we preserve Kilkenny's heritage for future generations."

The digitisation initiative aligns with national strategies, including the National Public Library Strategy 2023-2027 and the Heritage Council's Strategic Plan 2023-2028. It reflects a broader ambition to embed heritage in our identity and ensure archives are understood, resourced, and accessible.

Looking ahead, Kilkenny County Council plans to recruit a dedicated archivist to develop a long-term digitisation strategy, one that is sustainable, inclusive, and responsive to technological change. This will ensure the continued auditing, preservation, and enhancement of these collections for future generations.



Cólín Ó'Driscóil, State Archaeologist.

The project was made possible through the support of Kilkenny County Council, elected representatives, community contributors, and funding from the Heritage Council's Heritage Stewardship Scheme. Their collective efforts ensure that Kilkenny's heritage is not only preserved but celebrated.

For more information, contact [lstudies@kilkennycoco.ie](mailto:lstudies@kilkennycoco.ie). To explore the archives, visit: [digital-archive.kilkenny.ie](https://digital-archive.kilkenny.ie)