

Welcome to the picturesque and charming village of Royal Hillsborough, where you can discover many unspoilt secrets and immerse yourself in its unrivalled history.

Tucked away in the rolling countryside of County Down, Royal Hillsborough is a village that effortlessly marries historical grandeur with contemporary charm.

As Northern Ireland's only village with the "Royal" designation, its unique status is well-earned. At the heart of the village lies Hillsborough Castle and Gardens, the official royal residence in Northern Ireland. More than just a stately home, the castle is a living piece of British and Irish history, hosting monarchs, presidents, and peacemakers alike.

Yet Royal Hillsborough's appeal extends beyond its walls of diplomacy. Its quaint Georgian streets, artisan shops, and award-winning restaurants invite visitors to slow down and savour the moment. Whether it's enjoying a warm scone in a cosy café, relaxing in a cobblestoned beer garden on a lazy summer's day or strolling through lakeside trails in Hillsborough Forest, the village offers a refreshing escape from the busy pace of life.

Royal Hillsborough is not merely a place to visit - it's an authentic experience that leaves a lasting impression. So, turn down the tempo and immerse yourself in this stunning heritage destination.



Uncover the History

In 1573, Sir Moyses Hill, an officer in the army of Queen Elizabeth I, arrived in Ireland. He gained possession in 1611 of the village of Cromlyn which means "the crooked glen". It later became known as Hillsborough, the centre of influence in a vast estate, a place of elegance and culture and a scene of architectural beauty which is now part of our national heritage. The village takes its name from Colonel Arthur Hill who completed the building of Hillsborough Fort in 1650.

The Birthplace of America

In October 1771, Benjamin Franklin spent five days at Hillsborough Castle as the guest of Wills Hills who had taken up the position as Secretary of State for the colonies. The animosity between them is said to have led to the American War of Independence.

Royal Status

The Hill family shaped Hillsborough into what we see today, and in 2021 the village was granted royal status - the first village or town in Northern Ireland to be granted the title. The village's royal status reflects the beauty of Hillsborough as well as its unique history and close connections to the Royal Family through their home in Hillsborough Castle.



A Taste of Tradition and Innovation:

Exploring the Food Scene in Royal Hillsborough

While it may be modest in size, the food scene in Royal Hillsborough punches well above its weight, offering a blend of traditional Northern Irish fare and contemporary gastronomic innovation that appeals to both locals and visitors alike.

Cafés and bakeries also play a vital role in the food scene, offering everything from buttery scones and rich traybakes to robust, locally roasted coffees. Independently run, these spots are often gathering points for locals and visitors alike, reinforcing the village's reputation for warmth and hospitality.

The village's culinary identity is deeply rooted in local produce, with rich farmland surrounding the area, ingredients are often sourced from just down the road. This farm-to-fork ethos is reflected in many of the restaurants and cafés, where menus change with the seasons and showcase the best of what the region has to offer - from fresh game and artisanal cheeses to organic vegetables and handmade preserves.

Local events, like the Royal Hillsborough Farmers' Market, provide further insight into the village's food culture. These markets are not just about shopping - they're about community and celebration. Artisanal cheeses, handmade preserves, and organic produce highlight a slow food ethos that's gaining traction across the region.

The village's pubs and restaurants have embraced a subtle evolution in recent years, blending time-honoured Northern Irish staples with modern flair.

Royal Hillsborough may be known for its royal connections and architectural beauty, but its food scene is quickly becoming a reason to visit in its own right. So come and discover a village which offers a dining experience that is authentic, engaging and deliciously memorable.

Royal Hillsborough
Explore more...

Lisburn Visitor Information Centre
Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum,
Market Square, Lisburn BT28 1AG
Tel: 028 9244 7622
E-mail: vic.lisburn@lisburncastlereagh.gov.uk
Web: visitlisburncastlereagh.com

Seasonal Visitor Information Centre
Hillsborough Forest, Park Street BT26 6AL
April - September



For details on accommodation and events in Royal Hillsborough, please visit our website.



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Visitor Guide Map

Places of Interest



1 Hillsborough Castle & Gardens

Discover the beauty and history of Hillsborough Castle and Gardens, the official Royal residence in Northern Ireland. Explore elegant state rooms, stroll through 100 acres of serene gardens, and uncover centuries of political and royal heritage. Perfect for history lovers and nature enthusiasts alike, this stunning estate offers a memorable day out for all ages. To book tickets, visit: hrp.org.uk/hillsborough-castle



2 Hillsborough Courthouse & The Square

The Courthouse was originally a Georgian market house built before 1765. It was used as a courthouse from 1810 with the Grand Jury meeting in the Upper room. The buildings in The Square are a perfect example of early to mid-Georgian architecture. The stone and iron Milemarkers were built in 1825 and are rare survivors of the early 1800s postal service.



3 Hillsborough Fort

Built on the site of the old Magennes Stronghold, Hillsborough Fort was constructed in the 17th Century and sits nestled in picturesque parkland in the heart of the village. Built to protect the road leading from Carrickfergus to Dublin, the Fort has been a place of power, play and pleasure for more than 400 years. Only the grounds are currently open to the public.

4 Hillsborough Fort Guard

On ceremonial occasions the Hillsborough Fort Guard are a spectacular sight in their uniforms, which is said not to have changed since 1688. These men are maintaining a long tradition which dates from 1660 under a Royal Charter from Charles II, when Hillsborough Fort became a Royal Fort with Arthur Hill becoming Hereditary Constable of the Fort of Hillsborough. hillsboroughfortguard.org



5 Hillsborough Forest & Digital Sculpture Trail

A popular choice among birdwatchers, dog walkers, photographers and nature-lovers, visitors can enjoy walking trails around the lake or throughout the forest. Enjoy stunning lakeside viewpoints, picnic benches, a coffee truck and a state-of-the-art woodland-themed outdoor children's play area. Make sure to download the 'Hillsborough' App to explore the Digital Sculpture Trail which brings artworks to life!



6 Harry Ferguson

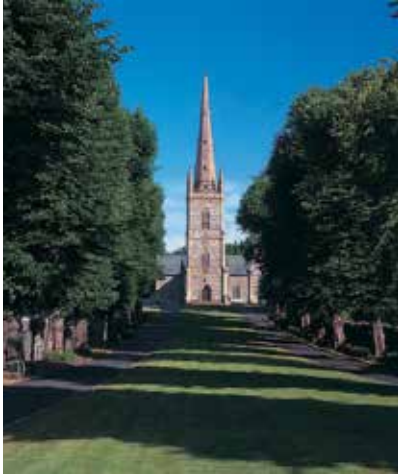
The world-famous engineering genius was born nearby at Growell. Noted for his role in the development of the modern agricultural tractor, he became the first Irishman to build and fly his own aeroplane and developed the first four-wheel drive Formula One car. A replica plane sculpture is part of the Hillsborough Forest digital sculpture trail and is close to where he took his first flight.

7 Hillsborough Quaker Meeting House

By the 18th century the Quakers were much more accepted, and a new meeting house was built in 1748 on land leased from the Marquis of Downshire. In 1830 the meeting house was moved to the current location on Park Street, yet the burial ground was retained in the grounds of Hillsborough Castle, and Friends visit it annually going through the "Quaker Gate" at the castle.

8 The Downshire Monument

A testimonial to Arthur Blundell Sandys Trumbull Hill, Third Marquis of Downshire (1788 - 1845), this tall and imposing fluted Doric column of dressed stone is located off the Old Coach Road outside the village. It is said that from this vantage point all of the land which could be seen was in the possession of the Downshires.



9 St Malachy's Church

The Church remains the same as it was when Wills Hill, who became the First Marquis of Downshire in 1789, completed the work of enlargement and restoration in 1772. He had hoped it would be accorded cathedral status, and it is still described as one of the best examples of an 18th century church in Ireland and is widely regarded as one of the finest examples of gothic revival architecture.



10 Sir Hamilton Harty

The ashes of the composer, conductor and accompanist Sir Hamilton Harty (1879-1941) are buried near the west doorway of the parish church of St Malachy marked by a bird bath carved in Limerick limestone, the work of the sculptor Rosamund Praeger. A blue plaque marks his childhood home on Ballynahinch Street.

11 Sexton's House & Parish House

Built in 1773, the Sexton's House (on the left) was originally a girl's school while the Parish Rooms (on the right) originally housed the boy's school. The Sexton, who maintained the church buildings, lived in the cottage while the church house was the medieval equivalent of a church hall. The Sexton's House houses an exhibition on local history.



12 War Memorial

This beautiful Celtic cross commemorates the names of the men from Hillsborough and district who made the ultimate sacrifice. The memorial was dedicated in April 1922 and carries the inscription: "In honour of those from this district who fell fighting for King and country in the Great War, this cross is erected by their friends and neighbours in gratitude for their loyalty and devotion".

13 Statue of Arthur, the 4th Marquis

At the end of Main Street stands a statue sculpted by Samuel Ferres Lynn of the Fourth Marquis, Arthur Hill, popularly known as 'The Big Marquis' (1812-1868). The fort was used to celebrate his marriage in 1837 to Caroline Cotton, and 3,500 tenants and 500 invited guests attended the reception where 13 people were reported to have died of overindulgence!



Restaurants & Gastropubs	
14	The Plough Inn & Vintage Rooms
15	The Hillside
16	The Parson's Nose
17	Joxer
Cafés	
18	Karibu * outdoor seating/ takeaway only
19	Little del Toro
20	Arthur's Coffee House
21	Loki's Coffee*
22	Keane's Coffee Hatch*
Bakeries & Deli's	
23	The Roundhouse
24	Kin & Folk
25	Tori's Cakes & Bakes
26	Keane's Deli
Takeaway Food	
27	Village Pizza
28	Chip Hawker
29	Royal China
30	Curry Leaf
Gift Shops	
31	Jill Graham Jewellery
32	Twigs and Twine
Boutiques	
33	elää
34	Julie Elliott
35	Pure Chic Boutique
36	Tahlia Leather



14 The Plough Inn & Vintage Rooms

Established in 1758 as a coaching inn, The Plough Inn is now an award-winning pub and restaurant, and the perfect place to enjoy a friendly pint, a hearty pub lunch or a gastronomic delight in the evening. The traditional surroundings provide the perfect backdrop to relax and dine in a welcoming environment.

15 The Hillside

This quaint gastropub has been called The Hillside all throughout its history having been established in 1752, making it Royal Hillsborough's oldest pub. This dog friendly (until 5pm) pub with its roaring open fires in winter and cobblestoned beer garden in summer is well worth a visit. You might even get the chance to meet Gladys the resident ghost!!



16 The Parson's Nose

Originally an elegant Georgian townhouse built by the Marquis of Downshire in the late 1700s, it was formally known as the Railway Bar, Porter's Pub and the Marquis of Downshire. Today it is known as The Parson's Nose which is renowned for its award-winning food with a Beer Garden overlooking the lake of Hillsborough Castle.