



Opening the door to Ireland's heritage:

A collection of Local Authority Heritage Officer projects



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



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Welcome from our Chairperson



I am pleased to present 'Opening the door to Ireland's heritage: A collection of Local Authority Heritage Officer projects'. This booklet impressively demonstrates the crucial role that Local Authority Heritage Officers play in the protection, conservation, promotion, and management of Ireland's heritage.

Their work is hugely varied and encompasses many different strands. Not only do they provide advice, guidance, and information on all aspects of heritage, but they also secure funding, undertake research, collect data, and develop and lead a multitude of highly impactful and engaging projects. Raising awareness locally, Heritage Officers inspire communities to value and take ownership of their important local heritage in all its forms.

What their work achieves, ultimately, is that it opens the door to our heritage for people across Ireland and further afield, so that it can be enjoyed and appreciated by everyone.

Stories highlighted in this booklet – like the 'Memories of our School Days' project in Carlow, the 'Three Castles' project in Galway city, the Holy Wells Survey in Kilkenny, or the Offaly Archives – remind us that aspects of our heritage would have been lost, left to ruins, or undocumented if it weren't for the work of the Heritage Officers.

Projects like 'Threading the Tower' in South Dublin or the 'Mummers' Join Project' in Leitrim contribute to keeping heritage skills and traditions alive; and the 'Brittas Bay Conservation Project' in Wicklow and the grazing project on Ardmore Head in Waterford are among a series of innovative Heritage Officer-led projects that help protect our rich natural heritage.

Taken collectively, the projects in this booklet paint a remarkable picture of the significant impact the work of the Heritage Officer Network has on our built, cultural and natural heritage. They also highlight each local authority area's unique beauty and many engaging stories.

Since it was founded in 1999, the Heritage Officer Network has continued to grow and evolve, and in 2021, for the first time, each local authority had its own

Heritage Officer. The programme has proven a great success, and the Heritage Council is proud to have supported and co-funded it since its beginnings.

On behalf of the Heritage Council, I would like to thank all Heritage Officers past and present for their hard work, perseverance, resilience, and their dedication to the protection of Ireland's heritage.

I would also like to express our gratitude to all local authorities and the County and City Management Association (CCMA) for their partnership and the fruitful relationship we share in running the Heritage Officer Network.

I hope everyone will enjoy reading the fascinating stories contained in these pages.

Dr Martina Moloney

Chairperson of the Heritage Council

Message from the CCMA



The collection of Local Authority Heritage Officer projects contained in this booklet gives a fantastic and very vivid insight into the incredible work carried out by Heritage Officers around the country at local authority level.

The vast range of these projects clearly demonstrates the many different aspects of heritage management. There are projects to help protect our environment, projects to restore or preserve cherished buildings and monuments, and projects to keep vernacular skills and long-standing traditions alive.

However, the Heritage Officers' work goes beyond protecting and preserving artefacts and practices of the past. It's also about engaging communities and encouraging them to play an active role in the conservation and development of their local heritage, providing opportunities for local people to reinterpret their heritage and view it from a different angle, and identifying neglected structures or areas and working together to breathe new life into them.

What projects such as these achieve, ultimately, is that they contribute to the richness of our communities and local areas, and help generate a greater sense of pride, place and belonging through increased interaction and participation.

All of this is at the heart of the Heritage Officer Network. Its foundation coincided with a new era for local Government, which is based on respect for and the appreciation of our local and national heritage, and this booklet offers us a snapshot of progress and achievements.

Heritage Officers and their work are also of huge economic importance to our counties. By preserving the historic fabric of our places, they attract sustainable tourism to our cities, towns and villages.

Imagine Cork city without Mangan's Clock, or Ballyshannon without its historic town centre, or Portlaoise without Old St. Peter's Church and Graveyard. It is the Heritage Officer Network that ensures we don't allow these priceless landmarks to fall into disrepair or to disappear.

Reading through the stories, what stands out for me is the range and number of individuals, groups and funders involved in each project. It is very difficult to keep

such a diverse range of interested parties singing off the same hymn sheet and getting the job done.

This is the silent but tireless work of the Heritage Officers at play, to whom we owe a great deal of gratitude. On behalf of the CCMA, I commend them for their dedication.

Together with the Heritage Council, we are proud to be a partner in the Local Authority Heritage Officers programme, and I hope everyone will enjoy reading about the many projects that help maintain and enhance our joint heritage.

John Mulholland

*Chair of the County and City Management Association (CCMA)
Rural Development, Community, Culture and Heritage Committee*



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta The Heritage Council

The Heritage Council is a public body whose role is to propose policies for the identification, protection, preservation and enhancement of our national heritage. We work in partnership with local communities, local authorities, voluntary groups, government departments and national cultural institutions to support projects that will have a positive and enduring social and economic impact.

The Local Authority Heritage Officer Programme is a programme which is jointly run by the Heritage Council and local authorities in partnership with the County and City Management Association (CCMA). Each local authority area in the country (31 in total) employs a dedicated Heritage Officer whose role involves advocating for heritage at local authority level.



Identify



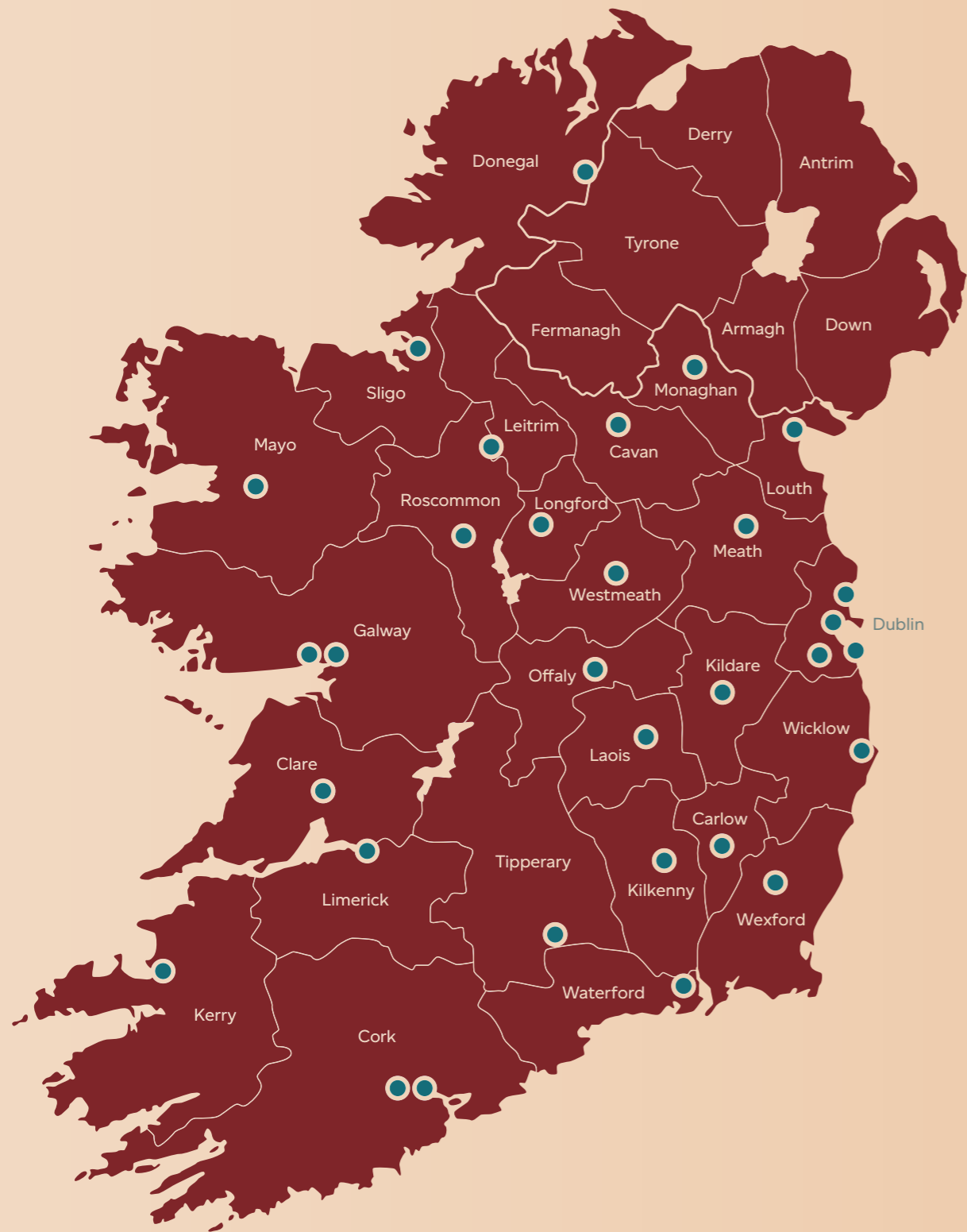
Protect



Preserve



Enhance



Heritage Officers

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Carlow County Council	Dr Eoin Sullivan	059 9129705	esullivan@carlowcoco.ie
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Rathanna National School – Memories of our School Days

CARLOW COUNTY COUNCIL

Writing on slates with chalk, lighting coal fires in the classroom to keep warm during the cold winter months, drawing buckets of water from a well in a nearby field, playing football and hurling in the water-logged bog close to the school, and getting ready for visits from the school inspector – dreaded by both pupils and teachers – are among the many memories of former pupils and teachers of Rathanna National School in south Carlow.

These memories were recorded in 2023 as part of the ‘Rathanna National School – Memories of our School Days’ project. Designed by the Rathanna Guild of the Irish Countrywomen’s Association (ICA), the oral history project was supported by the Carlow Heritage Officer, Eoin Sullivan, and received funding from the Heritage Council under the Community Heritage Grant Scheme.

The project grew from a National Heritage Week event in 2022, which brought together past teachers, pupils and their families, and other members of the local community in the old schoolhouse in Rathanna, which is now the village’s community hall. The school closed in 1968, with pupils transferring to Borris National School.

At the event, attendees reflected on their school days and shared



memories, and there was much debate and discussion about identifying faces in old photographs that had been brought along.

The excitement and enthusiasm at the event sparked the idea for the ‘Memories of our School Days’ project, which was led by ICA members and combined researching the history of the school with recording a series of video interviews. The aim of the project was to capture the stories and memories of past pupils and teachers in their own voices, and to create a digital record of local social history for future generations.

Designed as a sustainable project, the ICA group participated in specialist oral history training, which was delivered by Dr Ida Milne from Carlow College. These new skills were then put into practice, and the project group arranged and recorded video interviews with 12 past pupils and two



Rathanna school children (1954), courtesy of Rathanna ICA Guild.

former teachers. Interviews took place both in the old schoolhouse and in participants' homes.

These interviews were then edited by Patrick Bramley of Ulab Studio and compiled into a single video, which also includes scenic footage of the Rathanna area.

The video was premiered in the former Rathanna National School during National Heritage Week in 2023. A large intergenerational crowd gathered to see the much-anticipated video, to hear about the ICA's research work, to read documents relating to the school, and to meet former pupils and teachers. Musical entertainment at the event was provided by past pupils of Rathanna National School, Martin

Shannon and Paddy Ryan, who both feature in the video.

Members of the group from Rathanna ICA are planning to expand the 'Memories of our School Days' project, and to apply their new skills and experience to deliver other cultural heritage projects in south Carlow.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9lihQvy6TM>



Golden Way Communities – The Beauty in our Places

CAVAN COUNTY COUNCIL

Hidden beauty spots across rural Cavan are enjoying renewed interest since the launch of the Golden Way walks, and the subsequent collaborative art and creative project ‘Golden Way Communities – The Beauty in our Places’, which brought artists and communities together to develop a creative response to their Golden Ways.

The Golden Way project is a rural community initiative run by Cavan County Council with support from the Heritage Council.

Its aims include informing and supporting rural communities to identify and promote outstanding roadscapes and walks; to recognise and reward the efforts made by communities in conserving the heritage features of those roads and walks; to promote best practice in the recording and management of the heritage features of country roadscapes; and to strengthen the bonds of the rural community.

The project developed out of the Golden Mile Competition, which ran for a number of years in Cavan and several other counties, and, since its inception, many communities and local groups have engaged with the project. This included developing and submitting applications for Golden Way awards, which were reviewed and scored by an independent team of assessors.

The Golden Way award represents a standard of excellence that indicates an outstanding, interesting and appropriately maintained rural walk. To date, nine walks in Cavan have been designated Golden Way walks.

The communities who live alongside these Golden Ways are very proud of these walks and the accolade they have earned. Inspired by the local pride and enthusiasm for the Golden Ways, the Heritage Officer for Cavan County Council, Anne-Marie Ward, came up with the idea of the supplementary art and creative project ‘Golden Way Communities - The Beauty in our Places’ to maximise the enjoyment of the walks for those who use them.

The collaborative project revolves around working with communities and artists to develop a creative response to different aspects of heritage along the Golden Ways. Funding to make the project a reality was provided by the Heritage Council and Creative Ireland, and Cavan Heritage Office appointed two creatives, visual artist Jackie O’Neill and poet Heather Brett to work with the participating communities.

The collaboration between the communities and the creatives included several artist-led workshops and joint walks, after which Jackie O’Neill and Heather Brett developed an artistic

The finished artwork for Deerpark Golden Way.



The signage for Waterloo Golden Way.

response to each Golden Way. These responses were then discussed with each community during consultative meetings and subsequently developed into beautiful signage for the various Golden Ways.

As the project commenced during Covid-19, the initial stages were not without their challenges. Despite this, it was possible to launch the new sign for the first of the walks, Templeport Golden Way, during National Heritage Week 2020.

Since then, additional signs featuring visual art and poetry have been placed along five further Golden Ways, reflecting an aspect of heritage that is unique to each of these walks.

Each of the pieces is also being promoted by Cavan Heritage Office,



The unveiling of the new signage for Jampa Ling Golden Way.

whose aim for the project was to facilitate and to provide a platform for the creativity within each community. According to Anne-Marie, the most memorable moments of the project were when the artist's and poet's response to each of the Golden Ways was revealed to the communities, who, in many instances, were very moved by the pieces.

The feedback on the project has been very positive from all sides. Not only has it helped with the promotion and increased awareness of the Golden Ways, members of the participating communities have also enjoyed the social aspects of the project and noted positive effects on their overall health and wellbeing.



The finished artwork for Jampa Ling Golden Way.

Hastings Farmhouse

CLARE COUNTY COUNCIL

View of the thatched roof from inside Hastings Farmhouse.

Hastings Farmhouse, a vernacular structure hailing from the 19th century, stands in the Tullyvarraga townland within modern Shannon, located near the estuary end of the ancient routeway into Tullyvarraga (now Slí na Mara boreen). Its historical significance is magnified by its role during the War of Independence, serving as a safe house for General Lucas, the highest-ranking British officer captured during the conflict.

The farmhouse is a testament to the traditional Irish rural life of the 19th century. It was a simple one-storey, hip-roofed, thatched dwelling with essential living spaces. The house contained a main kitchen/living area with a fireplace, two small bedrooms, a small parlour, and a loft for additional accommodation and storage.

The Hastings family, who resided in the house until the early 1970s, lived through many years without the modern conveniences of electricity or running water, relying on kerosene lamps, candles, and well water.

John Hastings, a member of the family who lived in the house until his death in the early 1970s, is a significant figure in the farmhouse's history. Born in 1881, he was the last of the Hastings to live there. His parents, Daniel Hastings and Mary Sweeney, had raised



their family on the property, with Mary continuing after Daniel's death in 1888.

The Hastings were well-known in the locality, with community members like Mary Hanley recalling visits to the house and discussing significant historical events like the War of Independence and the Civil War with John Hastings.

The farmhouse's legacy extends beyond the family, touching the cultural and historical fabric of the area. It was a hub for community and historical narratives, with the Hastings family and visitors partaking in traditional activities like butter-making and sharing stories that kept the local heritage alive.



The house's living room/kitchen.



A Transition Year visit to the house in 2021.

Dúchas na Sionna, a local heritage group, has been instrumental in the preservation efforts of Hastings Farmhouse since 2012. In collaboration with the Shannon Archaeological & Historical Society, they have worked to protect this local landmark by securing its status as a 'Protected Structure' with Clare County Council.

The discovery that the house was partially constructed of cob, a building material rare for the region, highlighted the uniqueness of the structure. Fundraising efforts and grants facilitated the engagement of a conservation specialist to consolidate the walls of the farmhouse.

The farmhouse also had an assortment of outbuildings that served various agricultural purposes, as listed

in the 1911 census returns, including a stable, cow house, calf-houses, dairy, piggery, fowl house, barn, and shed. Today, only two small structures remain of the original nine outbuildings.

Hastings Farmhouse not only offers a glimpse into the rural Irish life of the 19th century but also serves as a monument to national history through its role in the War of Independence. The dedicated efforts of Dúchas na Sionna and the broader community in conserving and planning the restoration of the farmhouse ensure that this piece of heritage will not be forgotten but instead can be celebrated and utilised by the community.

Earthen building workshop at the house in 2022.





Restoration of Mangan's Clock

CORK CITY COUNCIL

Mangan's Clock, an iconic piece of heritage street furniture, will continue its longstanding role as a silent witness to the life of Cork city after restoration and repair works on it were completed in 2023.

The cast-iron timepiece has stood on Cork's main thoroughfare of St. Patrick Street for some 170 years, where it survived wars, the burning of Cork, the construction of Merchant's Quay Shopping Centre, and the complete redesign of the street in the 1990s.

It is named after Mangan Jewellers, a famous family business of clock makers and jewellers, whose shop stood at the site of the modern-day entrance to Merchant's Quay Shopping Centre from 1817 to the late 1980s.

Mangan Jewellers paid for the installation of the clock, which was driven originally by a mechanism inside the shop window, which ran outside, under the footpath, and up inside the pillar, until the clock mechanism was later electrified.

Incidentally, Mangan's craftsmen were also involved in the manufacture of the clock on St Anne's Church in Shandon in 1847. Affectionately referred to as the city's "four-faced liar", it was claimed to be the largest four-faced clock in the world until the installation of the clock in London's Big Ben just over a decade later.

Mangan's Clock on St. Patrick Street, by contrast, is a two-faced clock with decorative surrounds that sits atop a tapered pillar and is surmounted by a finial. Apart from its practical purpose of telling passersby the time of day, on a more romantic note, it is said that many a happy marriage started with a couple meeting for their first date under the watchful eye of Mangan's Clock.

After it was damaged and fell into disrepair in recent years, Cork City Council decided to fund its restoration and repair works in 2022. The works were managed by the Heritage Officer for Cork city, Niamh Twomey, who commissioned specialist horologist Philip Stokes of Cork-based Stokes Clocks & Watches to breathe new life into the cherished timepiece.

Fresh from restoring the famous Stokes-built Clerys Clock on Dublin's O'Connell Street, Philip Stokes turned his attention to Patrick Street to assess the damage and repair works that needed to be done to Mangan's Clock. This included refurbishing the clock hands, repairing and replacing damaged parts, including gearings and one of the dials, and cleaning and painting the supporting pillar.

But the clock also hid a surprise. When Mr Stokes opened the casing



Emma Stokes of Stokes Clocks & Watches.
Photo: Philip Stokes

of the clock, he discovered a sliotar that had been pucked through the frame and sat inside the workings of the clock. This generated some lively banter on social media around the origins of the sliotar, including a 'battle' on whether it had been hit from the city's northside or southside. One person even suggested that it was the burning sliotar that the famous Cork hurler Seán Óg Ó hAilpín hit into the river Lee to mark the start of Cork's year as City of Culture in 2005. This is, of course, untrue, but undoubtedly makes for a good story.

The works also prompted many people to tell stories of arranging to



meet under Mangan's Clock for first or subsequent dates, or for being given a "50", which is Cork slang for being stood up! Beyond the technical or built heritage value of the clock and its restoration, this also shows the cultural importance of such items and the role they play in creating a sense of place and belonging.

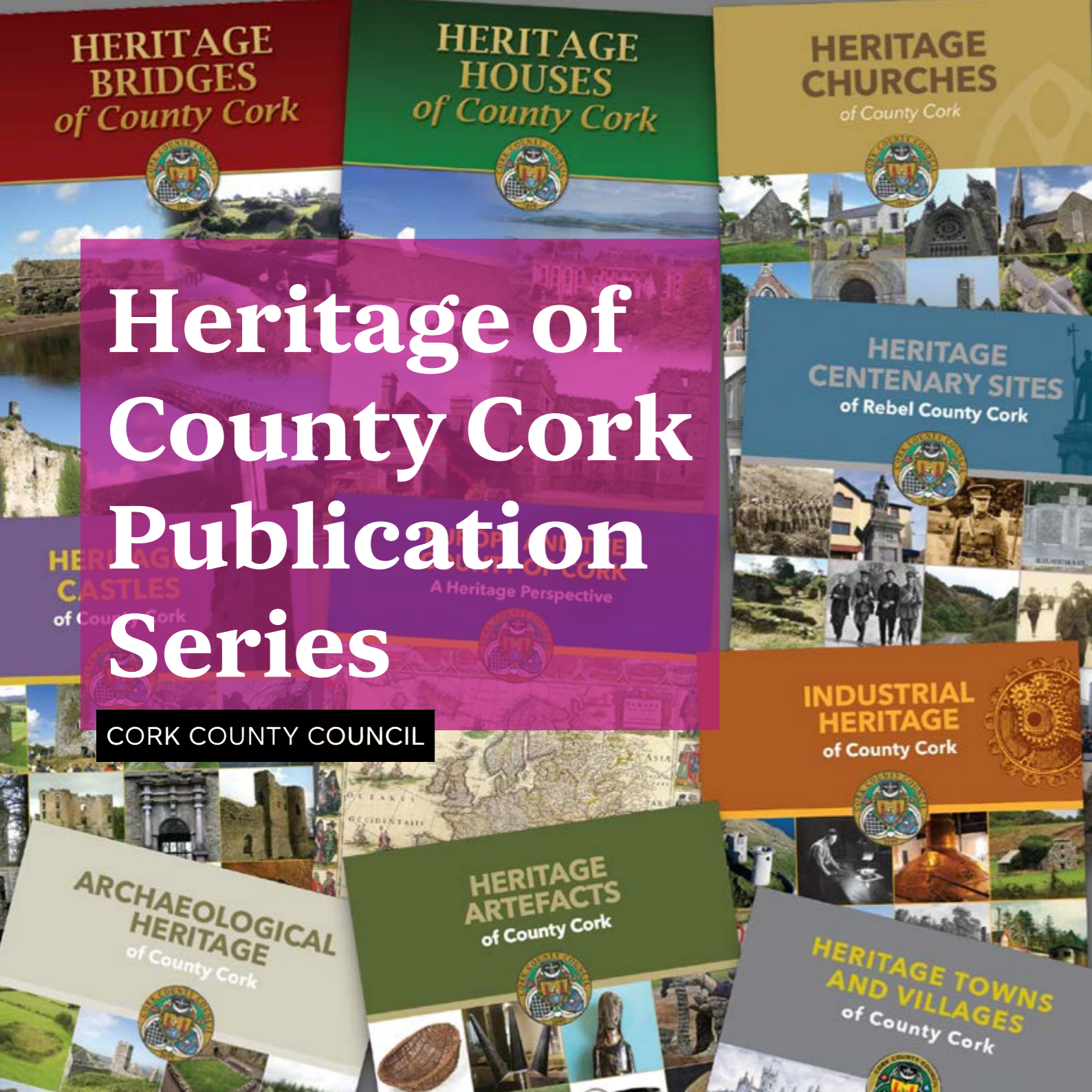
Restored to its original beauty and glory, Mangan's Clock is now back in full working order and continues to keep watch over the ebb and flow of life in Cork city.

A sliotar was found in the internal works of Mangan's Clock.
Photo: Philip Stokes



Heritage of County Cork Publication Series

CORK COUNTY COUNCIL



Did you know that a medieval bridge in the heritage town of Glanworth in North Cork is the narrowest and oldest bridge still in everyday use in Europe? That the Irish name for the foxglove plant – *Lus na mban Sí* – translates to ‘herb of the fairy folk’? Or that an amber necklace that dates back to 1,000 BC was found in Ballydehob in West Cork around 1920 when it “dropped out of a sod of turf, which was being broken for the fire”?

These fascinating stories – and many more – can be found in a series of books that have been published by Cork County Council over the past number of years. Led by the Heritage Officer for County Cork, Conor Nelligan, and supported by the Heritage Council, the ‘Heritage of County Cork’ series showcases the county’s rich and vibrant heritage.

Since 2013, a new edition of the series has been published every year. Each edition focuses on a specific strand of heritage, and promotes awareness and understanding of archaeological, architectural, cultural and natural aspects of County Cork’s heritage, while also highlighting a variety of heritage sites across the county that can be visited.

The result is a rich collection of photographs, local information,



The foxglove plant, as featured in ‘Natural Heritage of County Cork’. Photo: Jo Goodyear

stories and legends, expert analysis and historical detail. Each book has either a lead author or an authorial team, and includes submissions and contributions from both experts and members of the public.

The latest and 11th instalment of the series, published in 2023, examines the natural heritage of County Cork. Since records began, more than 400 species of birds and more than 1,200 species of plants have been recorded in the county, and the publication shares fascinating information on its wealth of natural heritage, ranging from native trees and flora to EU protected animal species, such as otters and the lesser horseshoe bat.



The medieval bridge in Glanworth. Photo: Cork County Council Heritage Unit

From bridges and houses to artefacts and centenary sites, a great variety of information is contained within each book's pages, and the publications make the different aspects of County Cork's heritage both very engaging and accessible.

Over the past decade, the series has proven very popular with readers. Many people from across the county have engaged extensively with the publications and have submitted stories, poems, photos and information for inclusion. To date, almost 8,000 book copies have been sold, and any profits generated by the sales are being reinvested into heritage projects and initiatives.

The previous 10 editions of the series comprise:

- Heritage Towns and Villages of County Cork (2022)
- Heritage Artefacts of County Cork (2021)
- Archaeological Heritage of County Cork (2020)
- Industrial Heritage of County Cork (2019)
- Europe and the County of Cork: A Heritage Perspective (2018)
- Heritage Castles of County Cork (2017)
- Heritage Centenary Sites of Rebel County Cork (2016)
- Heritage Churches of County Cork (2015)
- Heritage Houses of County Cork (2014)
- Heritage Bridges of County Cork (2013)

The books are modestly priced and available in numerous bookshops around County Cork.



All publications can also be ordered online via the Skibbreen Heritage Centre online shop: www.skibbheritage.com



The amber necklace from Ballydehob, as featured in 'Heritage Artefacts of County Cork'. Photo: Cork Public Museum

Ballyshannon Historic Towns Initiative

DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL



Enjoying a light-hearted moment in front of the Ballyshannon silhouette on the former Ballyshannon Bakery Company building on The Mall, Ballyshannon are members of the Ballyshannon Regeneration Group, Dedalus Architecture, the Heritage Council, Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage and Donegal County Council.
Photo: Karen Skelly

Our heritage buildings and historic streetscapes lend character to our towns and villages and make them attractive places in which to live, work and visit. They also reveal the historical development of our settlements and help to tell the stories of past societies.

Despite this, increasing vacancy and dereliction of our historic built environment is evident in towns across Ireland.

To tackle the deterioration of buildings in Ballyshannon, the Ballyshannon Historic Towns Initiative was set up as a partnership project in 2021. The initiative's central objective was to undertake careful conservation works on some of the town's most historic buildings in greatest need of conservation.

Over two phases in 2021 and 2022, 19 historic buildings along The Mall, Main Street and on The Diamond, Ballyshannon, benefitted under the Historic Towns Initiative.

Most of the 19 historic buildings covered by the initiative were Protected Structures or included on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage and contribute to Ballyshannon's historic streetscape. Two of the buildings were in a dangerous condition prior to the

conservation works, three of the buildings are landmark buildings, and one building is the birthplace of poet William Allingham.

The conservation works undertaken included roof and chimney repairs, addressing structural issues, installation of cast-iron rainwater goods, reinstatement of timber sash windows and doors, repair and reinstatement of historic shopfronts, including traditional hand-painted signage, and the repair of the cast-iron and wrought-iron railings.

All the repairs used traditional materials and enlisted traditional building skills. The approach protected the historic fabric and aesthetic of the building, was informed by best conservation practice and historical evidence, and was responsible in terms of economic and climate considerations. The works also revitalised three historic shopfronts, provided the opportunity for several residents to remain in their homes, and created a new family home for at least one family.

The initiative was a partnership between Donegal County Council, Ballyshannon Regeneration Group, Dedalus Architecture, local property owners, the Heritage Council and the Department of Housing,

Local Government and Heritage. Within Donegal County Council, it was co-managed by the Heritage Officer, Joseph Gallagher, and the Conservation Officer, Collette Beattie.

Funding for the conservation works was secured under the Heritage Council's Historic Towns Initiative, alongside investments from Donegal County Council and financial contributions from the property owners. The funding mechanism for the project was innovative; it took a phased approach to grant payments and removed the need for bridging loans from owners.

The project also benefitted from a strong on-the-ground working relationship between Donegal County Council, Ballyshannon Regeneration Group, Dedalus Architecture and local property owners, which was built on mutual respect, trust and understanding.

The Ballyshannon Historic Towns Initiative demonstrates that much of our historic built environment is durable, adaptable, attractive and fit-for-purpose, and showcases the potential of a heritage-led and sustainable regeneration approach. It also highlights the importance of enlisting conservation expertise and using traditional craftspeople.

Locally, the initiative was met with overwhelming goodwill and enthusiasm, with many local property owners, organisations and community groups writing letters of support.



Celebrating the Ballyshannon Historic Towns Initiative winning the Urban Regeneration & Heritage Award at the Irish Planning Institute's Irish Planning Awards at Clontarf Castle are members of the Ballyshannon Historic Towns Initiative partnership team including the Ballyshannon Regeneration Group, Dedalus Architecture and Donegal County Council. Photo: Irish Planning Institute

It was also recognised at national level; the initiative won the Urban Regeneration & Heritage Award at the Irish Planning Institute's Irish Planning Awards in 2023; received the Community & Heritage Award at the KPMG Irish Independent Property Industry Excellence Awards in 2022; and was commended in the Conservation, Adaptation & Re-use category at the Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland National Awards in 2023.



Terraced houses along The Mall (including the birthplace of poet William Allingham) that benefitted under the award-winning Ballyshannon Historic Towns Initiative. Photo: Joseph Gallagher



The early nineteenth-century Condon House along The Mall had some of its grandeur restored under the Ballyshannon Historic Towns Initiative. Photo: Donegal County Council



Memorabilia from the Ballyshannon Bakery Company have been put on display in its former shop along The Mall as part of the Historic Towns Initiative. It is one of three vacant shopfronts that have been given a meanwhile use along The Mall. Photo: Joseph Gallagher

More than Concrete Blocks

DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL



Molyneux House, Bride Street Dublin. Designed by Sam Stephenson, completed 1973. Photo Paul Tierney Photography

The National Concert Hall, Busáras, and the Poolbeg Chimneys, alongside a range of lesser-known structures, including housing schemes and city-centre schools, are among more than 100 buildings and sites that are explored in depth in *More than Concrete Blocks: Dublin City's twentieth-century buildings*.

Commissioned by Dublin City Council, *More than Concrete Blocks* is a pioneering three-volume series of architectural history books, which are richly illustrated and written for the general reader. The series considers the city as a layered and complex place. It makes links between Dublin's buildings and Dublin's political, social, cultural and economic histories.

Each book covers a period in chronological sequence and unpacks the history of Dublin's architecture during the twentieth century.

Volume 1, which was published in 2016, contains introductory historical essays of building culture in Dublin from 1900 to 1939, followed by 26 case studies and an overview, in guidebook style, of 98 sites. This volume covers the years in the run-up to – and during – the battle for Irish independence, as well as the period of the early Free State.

Much of the history touches on the roles of streets in revolution and of buildings in the construction of a new

state. The book serves as a survey of the city's buildings over the period 1900 to 1939. Rather than a 'best of', it is a representation of architectural endeavour at the time.

The original East Stand of Lansdowne Road (which has since been demolished) is among the structures that features in this volume. Built as a reinforced-concrete structure using the Hennebique system of construction to sit 4,300 spectators, the impressive structure was put to the test by the Irish Army prior to the inaugural rugby match (Ireland V Scotland) in February 1927. To test its strength, 8,000 soldiers were brought in to jump up and down in the grandstand.

Published in 2018, Volume 2 explores Dublin's architectural history from 1940 to 1972. There are 36 case studies, markedly mixed in terms of building type and public awareness, from city-centre schools to the nation's bus station (Busáras); from a suburban Catholic church and flat schemes to radical office buildings.

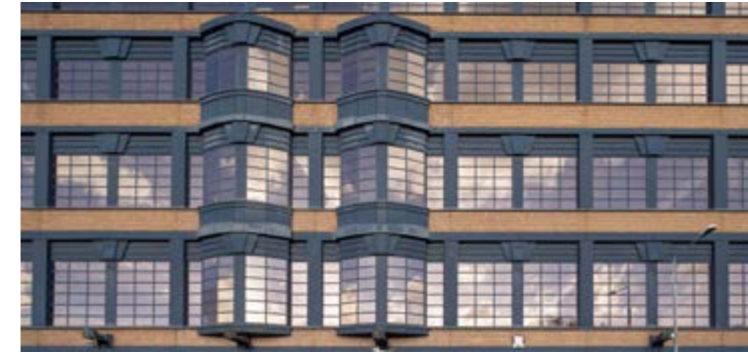
Covering the middle of the twentieth century, the book includes compelling insights into structures including the American Embassy in Dublin 4 (1964 by John M Johansen) which was, at the time, an innovative miracle in pre-cast concrete, whose design was inspired



Merrion Hall, Sandymount, designed by Arthur Gibney, Stephenson Gibney & Associates, and completed in 1973. Photo Paul Tierney Photography



The book covers.



Treasury Building, Grand Canal Street Lower, designed by Henry J Lyons, and completed in 1990. Photo Paul Tierney Photography



Church of the Holy Trinity, Donaghmede, designed by Danuta Kornaus-Wejchert, A. & D. Wejchert, completed 1978. Photo Paul Tierney Photography

by a combination of ring forts and Martello towers.

The most recent book, Volume 3, was published in November 2023 and covers the building culture in Dublin of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. It includes 31 studies ranging from iconic locations such as the Poolbeg Chimneys (1971–78) or the Central Bank (1979) on Dame Street, to lesser-known structures like the Willowfield housing scheme (1985) in Sandymount, the AnCO Training Centre (1981) in Finglas or the Donaghmede Roman Catholic parish church (1978).

The Papal Cross in Phoenix Park also features in the book. Erected in 1979 to mark the occasion when more than one million people attended an open-air mass celebrated by Pope John Paul II, the cross weighs 30 tonnes and is made up of six rolled-steel joists and required five kilometres of welding. Designed and built in just a few weeks, it was fabricated in Clondalkin and sized to the maximum height possible

within the load and reach capacity of the largest mobile crane in Ireland.

The multiannual project to create the *More than Concrete Blocks* series commenced in 2011, when Dublin City Council's Heritage Officer, Charles Duggan, devised the initial project brief. Over the following months, the project methodology was developed and refined, and Dublin City Council tendered for the expression of interest of a research team to undertake the work. Led by Dr Ellen Rowley, the Series Editor and lead author, a consortium of researchers were commissioned.

Working alongside Rowley, the research and editorial team comprised leading scholars of 20th century architecture in Ireland, including Dr Carole Pollard (author and co-editor of Volume 3), many of whom have worked on the project consistently since it commenced.

The project has proven a great success and the books have been extremely well received. Both the original print run of Volume 1 and its reprint sold out,

and Volume 2 sold out and is awaiting a reprint. Both volumes were self-published by Dublin City Council. The much-anticipated Volume 3 was published in November 2023 by UCD Press.

The project was funded by Dublin City Council and received part funding under the County Heritage Plan grant scheme. It also received Government funding under the National Policy on Architecture.

First and foremost an architectural history research project, *More than Concrete Blocks* has generated new research into more than 100 buildings in the city and identified 340 buildings in Dublin that are representative of the building typologies, architectural styles and materials and construction techniques spanning the 20th century. By adding to the historical record in such a deep and extensive way, much has been learned about the development of the city across the century.

This includes new insights into the evolution of architectural styles and new building typologies that emerged

as the decades progressed (e.g. public housing, creches, restaurants, office buildings); new building technologies (e.g. the first use of steel-framed construction, or the use of the Hennebique system of concrete construction introduced later on); and new building materials.

The research and publications will inform additions to Dublin City Council's Record of Protected Structures and encourage the adaptive reuse and upgrading of 20th century architecture, in particular office buildings from the 1960s to the 1980s in the context of a just transition to a reduced carbon future.

The methodology developed in Dublin to identify, survey, research and disseminate the information contained in the book series could also be adapted by other counties and, in time, lead to a comprehensive nationwide survey of 20th century built heritage.

Dublin Mountains Community Archaeology

DÚN LAOGHAIRE-RATHDOWN COUNTY COUNCIL

Boardwalk leading to Tibbradden Cairn with views over Dublin city.
Photo: Joe Ladrigan

A diverse range of prehistoric, historic and industrial archaeological sites and monuments survive across the Dublin Mountains. These include megalithic tombs, prehistoric earthworks, early medieval churches and medieval castles.

Raising awareness and understanding of this substantial archaeological record and encouraging better engagement with this lesser-known heritage resource on the doorstep of the capital city are the two central aims of the 'Dublin Mountains Community Archaeology' (DMCA) initiative, which has been in operation since 2021.

The wide-ranging heritage initiative is a partnership project between South Dublin County Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, and the Dublin Mountains Partnership, with core funding provided by the Heritage Council under its annual programme of support for community archaeology.

Managed jointly by the South Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown Heritage Officers and the Dublin Mountains Partnership Manager, the initiative includes training, guided walks, community talks, the development of an archaeology trail with signage, and the creation of interpretive content.

The booklet 'Dublin's Monumental Mountains' was published during the first year of the initiative's operation in 2021. It is the first comprehensive and accessibly designed publication on the archaeology of the Dublin Mountains landscape across South Dublin County and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown and is available for download or in paper copy format. Two short videos that complement the booklet have also been produced.



<https://youtu.be/Xp9GoDcKIUI>



<https://youtu.be/GR-jmardCpQ>

A comprehensive programme of online and in-person training sessions on mountain archaeology and its care is being delivered for Dublin Mountains Partnership volunteers, Public Participation Network members and hill walking and mountain biking clubs. The training programme has been designed by DMCA project archaeologists to share knowledge about the Dublin Mountains, and to encourage individuals and communities to engage in the promotion and protection of archaeology in the region.

Additionally, two interactive in-person workshops were delivered to Regional Tour Guiding students at Stillorgan College of Further Education. The Dublin Mountains formed an excellent case study for the students, as it is an extensive landscape with a diversity of topographical regions and cultural heritage sites, providing ample opportunity for the development of guided tours.

A series of archaeologist-guided public walks has also been provided free of charge as part of the initiative. The walks took in sites including the Hellfire Club and Massey's Wood, Carrickgollogan and Rathmichael, Two Rock Mountain and Ballyedmonduff, and Tibbradden and Fairy Castle, and were very popular with attendees. After taking part in the initiative's training programme, volunteers from the Dublin Mountains Partnership have also been leading archaeology walks, and further public walks are being planned for 2024.



Ballyedmonduff Wedge Tomb. Photo: Abarta Heritage

Another important output of the DMCA initiative is the development of the 'Dublin Mountains Archaeology Trail'. The trail has its origins in joint research projects between South Dublin County Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, University College Dublin, and Abarta Heritage consultants, which commenced in 2017.

These studies compiled and reported on the extent of archaeological evidence in the Dublin Mountains. An objective of these studies was to identify key sites of archaeological interest across the mountains that could offer engaging visitor experiences and act as portals to the region's archaeological story. A wide range of sites were identified and mapped, and content for interpretation and access prepared. This information has fed into the guided walks and public outreach resources of the overall DMCA initiative.



View of Dublin Bay from Ticknock. Photo: Joe Ladrigan

A shortlist of sites for on-site physical interpretation was also compiled. Sites were assessed on the ground to evaluate easy access for visitors, monument presentation/visibility, and the overall potential visitor experience, including additional landscape experiences such as scenic views. Following this assessment process, the following six sites were selected:

- Tibbradden Cairn,
- Fairy Castle Cairn,
- Seahan Passage Tombs,
- Slievethoul Passage Tombs,
- Lugg Henge, and
- Rathmichael Hillfort.

Interpretative lectern signs for these sites are now being developed. The signs will include maps and photos to locate the monuments in the wider mountain landscape (an important aspect as several monuments are visible from each other), descriptive text in Irish and English, advice on how to respect and protect the monuments, and a QR code for additional information.

Another key step of the Trail's development is the identification of signature looped walks and walks that start and end with public transport or car parks. These walks will encompass several archaeological features and other landscape experiences along the route. Walks of 1.5-2.5 hours have already been trialled as guided walks and resources for short and longer distance self-guided looped archaeology walks are currently in development.

Prior to the DMCA initiative, the extensive historic story of the Dublin Mountains had not been presented in an accessible way to visitors and local communities. The initiative's central aims, therefore, are to open the door to this story, to present the area's impressive heritage record accessibly, and to encourage the sustainable enjoyment and appreciation of the resource into the future.

Digging Drumanagh

FINGAL COUNTY COUNCIL



An aerial shot of
Drumanagh.
Photo: Gary Devlin

Drumanagh (Irish: Droim Méanach) is a headland of approximately 46 acres near the small coastal village of Loughshinny in Fingal in north County Dublin. It features an early 19th century Martello tower and a large Iron Age promontory fort.

The fortified headland is a nationally important archaeological site and is of international significance in terms of Ireland's relationship with the Roman world. The site sprang to public prominence in the mid-1990s amidst claims of its being 'a significant Roman beachhead'. Despite a series of opinion pieces and rebuttals, this resulted in a popular view that the Romans may have landed at this windswept coastal promontory.

Fingal County Council took ownership of the site in late-2016 and, following a consultative process with the local community, the community-based research project 'Digging Drumanagh' was developed. An action of the 'Drumanagh Conservation Study & Management Plan' and supported by the Heritage Council, the project was designed to fill knowledge gaps about the site, involve the local community and raise awareness of the site's archaeological, historical and ecological significance.

The excavation work at Drumanagh is

carried out under Ministerial consent, and the project's archaeological team is led by Heritage Officer and Community Archaeologist for Fingal County Council, Christine Baker. Since its inception, four seasons of excavation works have taken place as part of Digging Drumanagh.

The focus of the Season 1 excavation in 2018 was the Martello Road in the vicinity of the Martello tower, towards the eastern limit of the headland. Two trenches were excavated and showed that the building of the Martello Road disturbed Iron Age deposits. Several fragments of human bone were also recovered, including the cranial fragment of a female aged between 18 and 45 years at the time of death, which was dated to BC 170 – cal. AD 52. A long bone identified as an adult femur, which returned a date of cal. BC 49 – cal. AD 118, was also recovered, indicating at least two burials in this area. There were also extensive remains associated with the occupants of the Martello tower.

The Season 2 excavation in 2019 took place at the other end of the Martello Road, near the ramparts. Here, a prehistoric structure was identified by the post and stake holes left behind when the wood rotted. Nearby was a stone platform associated



A glass bead from the Season 3 excavation.
Photo: John Sunderland



with a weaving comb, along with numerous bone points, possible bone tools and a bone needle, indicating processing and/or craftworking and textile production was being carried out at this location. The presence of almost 80 sherds of large, rounded 'Dressel 20' amphoras from the Roman province of Baetica in Southern Spain, as well as other Romano-British material, confirms significant contact between Drumanagh and the Roman world in the 1st - 3rd centuries AD.

After a hiatus of two years due to the Covid-19 pandemic, digging returned to Drumanagh in 2022. The focus of the Season 3 excavation was to determine if a lane or roadway identified on aerial photographs and a geophysical survey was of ancient or more modern origin. The lane left little evidence indicating it was of modern date. Instead, the collapsed wall of a

structure was identified and a deposit rich with animal bone was excavated from within the structure. Sherds of at least four different types of pottery from the Roman world were also recovered, as were fragments of glass vessels and several glass beads. The Season 3 post-excavation work and specialist analysis is still ongoing.

Excavation works continued in summer 2023 with Season 4. This focused on the investigation of anomalies identified on the geophysical survey, as well as some topographic features of the site. A structure similar to those found in earlier seasons was uncovered, as was a working area of shallow pits. Two bell shaped storage pits were also uncovered, and it is thought that these represent the first examples of this kind for this period in Ireland.

The digs at Drumanagh have proven very popular and close to 100 people

have been taking part in Digging Drumanagh every season. With an age range of 18 to 80, participants include both locals and people from wider Fingal and Dublin, newcomers and people who have previously taken part in an excavation, students, and heritage professionals. Given the high level of local participation in Digging Drumanagh, the project has engendered a sense of ownership and pride in the local history.

Apart from the excavation and post-excavation work itself, community outreach activities to raise awareness

and understanding of the site's heritage value have also taken place as part of Digging Drumanagh. This has included an exhibition in the local library, talks and school visits, and the production of a video.

The findings of the ongoing excavations not only inform the Drumanagh archaeological research agenda and future remedial and conservation works, but also significantly contribute to – and even re-write – our knowledge of Ireland's relationship with the Roman world.



The Three Castles Project

GALWAY CITY COUNCIL

Conservation works at Tirellan Castle. Photo: Galway City Council

The repair, consolidation and conservation of three castles in and around Galway city is the focus of Galway City Council's 'Three Castles Project'. The three castles that are at the heart of this project are Tirellan Castle, Menlough Castle, and Merlin Castle.

Tirellan Castle (also known as Old Castle) is a fortified house of the 17th century, which is located north of Galway city centre and enjoys a riverine setting on the River Corrib with views towards the University of Galway.

During the Williamite Wars and the siege of Galway in 1691, it was burned by the Irish garrison, who were no longer able to hold it, and never rebuilt. Evidence of the burning was found during the conservation works of Tirellan, which revealed fragments of slates, melted lead, pottery tiles and glass in the upper part of its walls.

Menlough Castle (also called Menlo Castle or Blake's Castle) is a 16th century castle, which is located near Menlo village in County Galway and – like Tirellan – situated on the bank of the River Corrib.

It's a structure of many phases; sources date the original tower house to the 15th or early 16th century and it was recorded as being occupied by a Thomas Colman in 1574. In the 17th

century, a longhouse was attached to it. Later occupied by the Blake family, various modifications were made to it in the 18th century, including a square turreted structure – or belvedere – on the building's eastern end.

In July 1910, while Sir Valentine Blake (14th baronet) and Lady Blake were away in Dublin, a fire broke out in the castle. The body of their daughter Eleanor was never found, and she is presumed to have died in the fire.

Merlin Castle (also known as Doughiska Castle), a tower house of the 16th century, is an essential element of Merlin Woods and now forms the centrepiece of a large residential scheme. Architectural features date the current structure to the early 16th century, when it was in possession of the Lynch family. Over the following centuries, ownership of Merlin Castle changed repeatedly until it was eventually abandoned in the 19th century.

An interesting feature of the castle is a tiny Sheela na Gig, which is carved in the arch of one of the narrow second storey ogee windows. Only recently discovered by an archaeologist, it is believed to be the smallest in Ireland, measuring only 4.5 centimetres in length.



Merlin Castle. Photo: Jim Higgins



Pieces of original carved stonework from Tirellan Castle.



The Three Castles Project commenced in 2014, when Galway City Council and the Council's Heritage Officer, Jim Higgins, led the development of a conservation management plan for the three castles. This plan was funded by the Heritage Council.

Subsequent funding for the project was secured from both Galway City Council and the Community Monuments Fund (run by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage). This Fund is in place to support the conservation, maintenance, protection and promotion of local monuments and historic sites.

The first stage of repair and consolidation works on the castles

commenced in 2021. The works follow the principles of the Burra Charter, a document published by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), which defines the basic principles and procedures to be followed in the conservation of heritage places.

The preservation and maintenance of the built, cultural and natural heritage of each castle is a central objective of the project. As such, the project team includes a range of experts, including an archaeologist, a conservation architect, a conservation structural engineer, an ecologist, stone masons and other experts and tradespeople.

The Three Castles project is ongoing, and it is estimated that works will continue for another five years, when it

Menlough Castle.
Photo: Jim Higgins



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nXgLV7gEqY>

is hoped the castles will be conserved and fully open to visitors. Local Area Plans for the castles are also being developed by Galway City Council, which will include creating universal access and the development of walks around the castles.

A video about the project from September 2021 can be viewed using the link on the left.



Féile na gCloch

GALWAY COUNTY COUNCIL

Some of the Féile na gCloch 2023 participants building a stone wall on Inis Oírr.
Photo: Cormac Coyne

Féile na gCloch (Festival of Stone) is a festival that takes place each year in Inis Oírr, County Galway, in celebration of the craftsmanship, heritage, and the timeless beauty of stonework that can be found on the island, in various parts of Ireland, and throughout the world.

The festival's aim is also to promote the artistry of stonework and to provide opportunities to learn and enhance skills.

The idea for the project first came about in the early 2000s due to the fact that Galway County Council Heritage Office was receiving a lot of inquiries from the public with regards to running courses and workshops covering traditional crafts and skills.

In 2004, the Heritage Office in partnership with Teagasc ran a two-day event at Teagasc's Athenry centre. More than 200 people attended the conference on all aspects of stone and dry stone walling and a subsequent practical workshop, proving there was strong interest amongst people.

The community organisation Comhar Caomhán Teo got in touch to see if a similar event could be run in Inis Oírr. With the advice, help, and support of Master Mason Pat McAfee, an inaugural event on the island was held in 2005. Pat has continued to provide incredible assistance and advice to the

Galway County Heritage Officer, Marie Mannion, and the Bainisteoir of Comhar Caomhán Teo down through the years.

Féile na gCloch has expanded from an event to becoming a full-blown international festival with participants now coming from the U.S., Canada, England, Scotland, Wales, Japan, various European countries, and all parts of Ireland.

The festival's location on the smallest of the Aran Islands, Inis Oírr, is very apt, with its rich history of stone walls. They have survived as symbols of the island inhabitants' ingenuity, resourcefulness, and connection to the land for centuries. The walls, borne out of the hands of craftspeople, have shaped and defined the various landscapes seen on the island today, preserving local heritage with every carefully placed stone.

The festival is funded by Galway County Council and supported by the Heritage Council and Comhar Caomhán Teo. Festival fees are also paid by participants (at a much reduced fee).

Féile na gCloch celebrates ancient crafts and traditional practices that have been passed down through generations. Preserving these skills helps to maintain our cultural identity and connects us to our ancestors.

It also serves as an educational platform, offering workshops and



demonstrations on the techniques and artistry involved in stonemasonry in countries all over the world. Workshops include dry stone walling, letter carving, stone carving, hot lime, sketching, and learning about the use of stones. Féile na gCloch provides access to knowledge and encourages individuals to learn and understand the significance of preserving heritage skills.

The festival also has an important economic impact, playing a role in promoting local businesses and artisans involved in stonemasonry. Taking place in September each year, it brings in valuable revenue to the island community in the off tourism season.

Members of the local community, volunteers, artisans, and enthusiasts are involved in the festival's organisation and activities. There's a sense of pride in local cultural traditions and of belonging to an

international community where people come together each year.

Stonemasonry, as showcased during the festival, often involves using local, natural resources. Through everything that it does, the festival promotes responsible and sustainable use of materials, and encourages the preservation of natural habitats.

The festival is also preserving and protecting traditional skills for the younger generation of today and for the future generations to come.

The festival is managed by Chloe Ní Mháille, Bainisteoir, Comhar Caomhán Teo, Inis Oírr, and Marie Mannion, Galway County Council Heritage Officer. Inis Oírr is fortunate to have had and continues to have the calibre of dry stone walling practitioners such as Padraic and Peadar Poíll, Paraic O Conghaile (Thomas), Tomas Pheter Mhéini O Conghaile (RIP), and Mhaidchí Mhéim O Flatharta (RIP).

The quality of Féile na gCloch was recognised in 2014 when the festival won The Chambers Ireland Excellence in Local Government Award under the Supporting Tourism category.

Several members of the island community participate in the event, speaking a mixture of Irish and English. All of the festival's literature is produced bilingually and all welcomes at the start of each event are delivered in both languages. In 2023, the festival produced a listing of useful Irish phrases that attendees could use, encouraging them to try the cúpla focal with members of the island community.

The theme for the 2023 festival was 'Hands across Europe / Lámha trasna na hEorpa'. An exhibition and booklet celebrated the craftsmanship, heritage, and beauty of dry stone wall building found in Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Slovenia, and Spain.

Each year, there is excellent feedback from participants, instructors, and the island community. Many other stone wall events in Ireland and abroad have begun as a result of people making connections at Féile na gCloch. There's also plenty of media coverage and social media posts talking about each year's festival.



You can find out more about Féile na gCloch on the Galway County Heritage Office's website: heritage.galwaycommunityheritage.org/



Listowel Historic Towns Initiative

KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL

Saint John's Theatre and
Arts Centre, Listowel.
Photo: Victoria McCarthy

The beautiful market town of Listowel, Co. Kerry, has a proud record in understanding, appreciating, promoting, and celebrating its rich heritage.

The Historic Towns Initiative has supported the community in a wide range of regeneration projects in Listowel town centre, particularly focusing on Architectural Conservation Areas. The project sought to link conservation-based repair with urban rejuvenation, ensuring that the fabric of Listowel's iconic buildings was properly conserved. Its aim was also to keep the town's built heritage alive and occupied for future generations.

Much groundwork had already been done on conserving Listowel's built heritage. In 2017, former Kerry Heritage Officer, TJ Mahony, launched the 'Listowel Heritage & Community-Led Regeneration Strategy', which included 18 regeneration projects and an action plan for their delivery over the next five years.

One of these actions was the Listowel ACA Toolkit and Survey, delivered by current Built Heritage Officer for Kerry County Council, Victoria McCarthy in 2019. It raised awareness of the town's architectural heritage, promoted the community-led regeneration of the town, and provided owners and developers with clear guidelines on how to enhance the facades of their

individual properties during future renovation and restoration works.

An opportunity arose to apply for funding for conservation works through the Historic Towns Initiative, a joint undertaking by the Heritage Council and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. Funding was secured for Listowel in 2021.

As well as conserving the historic town centre for residents and tourists, the project set out to address building vacancies, identify opportunities for the re-use of historic structures, and improve streetscapes through conservation-led public works.

Seven building custodians in the town were supported through the initiative to carry out conservation works and to make upgrades to allow continuing occupation of historic structures. Five of the properties were located in The Square, which is the focal urban space of the town.

Conservation works included the repair of stained glass windows in St John's Theatre and Arts Centre (a converted Board of First Fruits Church). During National Heritage Week 2022, a demonstration workshop was organised at the centre where the local glass conservation specialist explained how stained glass is made and conserved.

During the demonstration, he mentioned in passing that he had worked on the stained glass windows in the Great Hall for the Harry Potter film. There were some Harry Potter fans in the workshop's audience so this led to a lively discussion about all things Hogwarts.

Under the Initiative, two neighbouring properties to St John's carried out chimney works, with one also carrying out lime rendering and the other also carrying out roof repairs. Another property in this area underwent repair of its historic joinery, rainwater goods, and patch repair of stucco decoration.

Three projects on Church Street also carried out repairs, including one property that had been vacant for a long time and underwent substantial renovation and repairs (roof and chimney repair, replacement of perished rainwater goods, repair of the shopfront lettering, stabilisation of the structure, and repainting).

The project has had very successful outcomes, far in excess of what was initially expected. The upgrading of the facade and roof of Number 54 Church Street and the renovation of 74 Church Street will lead to the occupation of the properties (they were both vacant buildings) and this will have a significant positive impact on the town centre.

Number 19 The Square is a prominent end of terrace building located on the main approach road into the town from Tralee. The conservation work has lifted not only the building itself but the wider streetscape and community. The roofing

works at Number 25 The Square have been completed and will now allow for occupancy of the property.

The use of skilled craftspeople and practitioners in the conservation and repair works has had a positive impact in providing local employment. The social benefits of the Historic Towns Initiative have also been huge, bringing together various individuals and groups, including the Business and Community Alliance and Tidy Towns group, who supported the process throughout.

Kerry Built Heritage Officer, Victoria McCarthy, played a key role in the project. Working with the community, she helped to support and develop the project to secure funding. Once the project was greenlit, she managed the project, liaised with the building owners, agreed and developed methodologies, and ensured that the works delivered high quality conservation outcomes, on time and on budget. She also ensured ongoing communication with the Listowel community and created awareness through outreach events including the 2022 Architecture Kerry Festival programme and National Heritage Week.

Sustaining a conservation-led methodology for all elements of this project has contributed to a deeper understanding of the specific character of Listowel's built heritage fabric. This greater understanding will be an asset for future conservation works in the town.

19 The Square, Listowel.
Photo: Victoria McCarthy





Conservation of the Maudlin Pyramid Mausolea

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL

Did you know that there are two pyramids in Naas, Co Kildare? The two structures, which are pyramid mausolea, can be found at the Maudlins Cemetery on the Dublin Road and have recently been restored as part of a two-year conservation project.

The plot of land on which the pyramid mausolea are built – Maudlins burial ground – was presented by the Earl of Mayo to the representative Church Body of the Church of Ireland in 1782. It is enclosed by a wall with an impressive entrance facing the Dublin Road.

There are many interesting tombs, both for their design and the history of the people they contain. These include some interesting graves from the early 20th century, for example that of Cecil Francis Blacker, Lieutenant of the 2nd Battalion of the Connaught Rangers, who died of wounds he received at the Battle of Mons in 1914.

Most distinctive of all the tombs and grave markers, however, are the two pyramids, which define the unique character of this historic graveyard. The two pyramids are identical in plan size and form, as well as in their distinctive design and the diagonal or ‘tumbled in’ coursing of their facing stones (as opposed to conventional horizontal coursing).

The pyramids are also of a notably

high-quality construction and their quirky design is a very rare and unusual example of a distinct form of early 19th century mausolea. Maudlins burial ground is unique in being the only graveyard in Ireland with two pyramids, and the unusual diagonal coursing is found at only a few other sites.

While little is recorded of the history of the two pyramids, it is believed that they date from the 1830s. Only one of them, the western one, has an inscription that reveals who is buried there: Elizabeth Jane Hussey Burgh, first wife of Walter Hussey Burgh. History records show that she gave birth to a son and seven daughters but died in 1834, aged only 33.

The Burgh family, later known as the De Burghs, can trace their origins back to Emperor Charlemagne in the Middle Ages. Thomas Burgh was born in 1670 and settled in Oldtown, Naas, in the early 18th century. He was one of Ireland’s great military engineers and the architect responsible for designing one of Ireland’s most highly regarded architectural interiors – the Long Room of the library at Trinity College.

His daughter, Elizabeth, married Ignatius Hussey of Donore, Caragh, and they adopted the name Hussey Burgh. Their son, Walter Hussey Burgh, was to become a prominent politician



Conservation works on the pyramid mausolea in progress.

and a passionate advocate of free trade for Ireland.

His grandson, also Walter Hussey Burgh, became the High Sheriff of County Kildare in 1839 and married Elizabeth Jane Fitzgerald from County Clare, who is interred in Maudlin burial ground's western pyramid.

As the second pyramid mausoleum has no inscription, it is not certain who lies buried there. However, since it is of a similar, though not identical design (having a brick lined, rather than a stone interior), it is likely to have been erected soon after 1834.

The conservation project commenced when Primrose Wilson of the Follies Trust, a charity that aims to encourage the appreciation and conservation of Irish follies, contacted Kildare County Council in 2019.

It brought together various groups and people, including Kildare County Council's Heritage Officer and

Architectural Conservation Officer, Bridget Loughlin and Peter Black, respectively; the Follies Trust; the Representative Church Body of the Church of Ireland; Naas Union of Parishes; the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage; and Creative Ireland.

The programme of work began with a survey and method statement for repair, which were conducted by Kevin Blackwood and Associates. Project funding was secured from different sources during the course of the project, including from Creative Ireland, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and from Kildare County Council elected members under the Local Property Tax for the Naas Municipal District.

The project proved complicated to complete. Shortly after work commenced, it became obvious that the growth of vegetation behind the

VIDEOS:

Conservation of the Maudlin's Pyramids.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqYxRuAz3_s



Pyramids in Britain and Ireland with David Winpenny
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PrcBpri8A



A History of Maudlin's Burial Ground & cemetery
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9c_Z3HvOhh8



stonework was much more extensive than envisaged. The vegetation was both damaging the structures and, at the same time, holding them together.

The work, which was undertaken by Vernacular Conservation and managed by conservation surveyor Chris McCollum, required a high degree of skill and care to ensure there was no subsidence to the structures and no alteration to their final appearance.

The project involved scaffolding both structures, removing ivy and saplings (including roots where they had penetrated the structure), raking out cement pointing from the joints and repointing in hot lime. A limited amount of unstitching of existing stonework was also required.

As the conservation of the structures took place during Covid, the Follies Trust organised an [online lecture in 2020](#) to keep the public informed of progress and to seek additional funding. The lecture included presentations by Primrose Wilson, Eoin Madigan of Vernacular Conservation and Bridget Loughlin.

The author of *Up to a Point: In Search of Pyramids in Britain and Ireland*, David Winpenny, also gave an [online presentation on pyramids in Britain and Ireland](#) to raise funds for the project. The presentation focused on the pyramids' historical perspective and told the stories of pyramidal oddities that turn up in the most unexpected places.

[A further online lecture](#) considered the history of Maudlin's burial ground.



During this lecture, local historian Brian McCabe outlined the context of the founding of the cemetery in the 18th century and provided a history of some of its notable graves.

In 2021, funding was secured under the Built Heritage Investment Scheme to conserve the cast iron doors of both pyramid mausolea. The doors were dismantled in the workshops of Bushy Park Ironworks, who retained as much as possible of the original doors and inserted mortice locks dating from c.1840.

In August 2021, the Follies Trust formally handed over the keys of the pyramids to the Reverend Philip Heak, Rector of Naas Union of Parishes.

The conservation of the Maudlin pyramid mausolea was a collaborative project that brought together different partners to preserve an important aspect of Naas' heritage that may otherwise have been lost forever.

Kilkenny Holy Wells Survey

KILKENNY COUNTY COUNCIL



Holy Wells Story Sharing event at Johnswell, Co. Kilkenny, which took place as part of National Heritage Week 2023. Photo: Róisín O'Sullivan

Holy wells are an incredibly rich source of cultural heritage and provide insight into our spiritual, archaeological, religious, folkloric and geological past. They're places that are often held dear by local people and seen as sacred locations.

But as older generations pass on, the knowledge and oral tradition surrounding holy wells are in danger of being lost forever.

With this background, the Kilkenny Heritage Forum decided that a holy wells survey in Kilkenny would be an important and valuable project. No previous systematic survey had taken place of the county's holy wells and it was clear that it should be carried out before they fell out of the public consciousness and collective memory.

Funding was provided under the Heritage Council County Heritage Plan Grant with match funding provided by Kilkenny County Council.

The Kilkenny Heritage Officer, Regina Fitzpatrick, completed an initial desktop survey to establish the extent of information available on holy wells in the county, assessed the methodology for surveying holy wells in other local authorities, and brought together a steering group of relevant expertise and knowledge to advise on the project.

Regina's role also included managing the funding application for the project to the Heritage Council, overseeing the appointment of an archaeological consultancy for the project (Shanarc Archaeology was selected) and liaising with them and communities on the project, as well as creating an awareness and engagement campaign with the public to collect their knowledge, traditions and folklore about holy wells throughout the county.

The sources identified during the desktop study included topographical files of the National Museum of Ireland, cartographic sources, aerial photos, the National Folklore Collection, the Kilkenny Fieldnames Project, toponymy sources and many more.

A thesis by Pádraig Ó Dálaigh examining four surveys pertaining to wells of County Kilkenny which stretch in time from 1837 to 1969, also proved very useful to the desktop study.

As so much of the history and knowledge around holy wells lives in oral tradition, it was crucial to consult extensively with the public. Consultation took place with heritage organisations around the county to gather local information that was often previously unrecorded. Various methods were used to engage with

members of the public, asking them to get in touch with information.

Local radio interviews on KCLR, Beat and Kilkenny Community Radio, and local newspaper articles (*Kilkenny People*, *Kilkenny Observer*) helped reach a wide audience. The Holy Wells of Kilkenny Facebook page was also helpful in generating conversations and uncovering new information.

On-site inspections carried out by Grace Fegan and Marion Sutton from Shanarc Archaeology were essential in determining the nature and extent of any surviving above-ground evidence of a cultural heritage site.

Inspections were undertaken of the 116 recorded holy well sites with known locations and, as the majority of the sites were located on private farmland, it was necessary to obtain access with the permission of the landowner.

During the inspections, a written and photographic record of the site was prepared and, where necessary, drone photography was used to understand the site in its immediate setting.

Over the course of the project and particularly following the public consultation, new information came to light about previously unknown sites (or sites where the precise location was unknown). This was hugely significant - if the project had never been undertaken, these holy wells would have, in all likelihood, remained unrecorded and lost their place in our cultural heritage.

During the project, the team was also able to bring the information collected

about one holy well into the discussion around the naming of a new housing development. This showed the value of having this data to support heritage-led decisions in localities and keeping alive the memory and importance of these places.

The survey benefited from the strong knowledge of biodiversity brought to the inspections by Marion Sutton from Shanarc Archaeology who was able to contribute these observations to the survey.

The project aims to establish an online database of heritage information on holy wells in the county. A report outlining the survey findings and providing material for the interpretation and promotion of holy wells in the county is being prepared.

A National Heritage Week outreach event – a ‘Talk and Story Sharing Session’ at John’s Well – was organised in August 2023 in consultation with the Kilkenny Heritage Officer.

This event showcased the findings to date of the Kilkenny Holy Wells Survey and people shared their own holy well stories and traditions. It was an opportunity to learn from chatting to those in attendance.

The Survey shows how important holy wells are to people in local communities and how they form part of their sense of place and identity. People visit holy wells in their locality through annual masses, they visit to find cures, they visit to be out in nature, and many other reasons.



The folklore and tradition of these places resonate across generations and the feedback received, particularly from older members of the public, is that they’re worried that people will forget about the holy wells and they’ll be lost or built over.

By recording information about the wells and mapping them, this project has ensured that there will be a record of the wells and traditions around them. It also preserves their place as

important features of our cultural and built landscape in future planning for the county.

Phase 1 of the project took place from spring to autumn 2023 and Phase 2 will take place in 2024, pending funding.



Old St. Peter's Church and Graveyard

LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL

One of the oldest surviving sites in the town of Portlaoise, Old St. Peter's Church and Graveyard, dates back to the middle of the 16th century. It plays a very significant role, being intrinsically linked with the town's origins.

Around 1547, not long after construction began on the original fort in Maryborough (which subsequently became Portlaoise), the church and graveyard were constructed. While it began as a Catholic church, Old St. Peter's changed to the Church of England and back to the Roman Catholic denomination many times over the centuries, reflecting the outcomes of various conflicts and events in Irish history.

The church was demolished in or around 1837, leaving just the square tower still seen today. The graveyard was used until the 20th century but, over the years, the entire site had sadly become derelict with overgrown vegetation, dangerous boundary walls and grave memorials, an unusable gate, and a bell tower which was in poor repair and deemed unsafe. As a result, Old St. Peter's had been closed to the public for many years.

A number of people were dedicated to restoring the site, including Portlaoise Tidy Towns who approached Laois County Council (the owner) with

a proposal to conserve the historic fabric of the site. It was hoped that a place for peaceful reflection within the busy town of Portlaoise could also be recreated.

In 2016, the Laois Heritage Officer at the time, Catherine Casey, worked with the community to develop a conservation management plan. She sourced funding for the project over five years, appointed design and construction teams, commissioned artists, installed ecological enhancements, and project managed all the conservation and enhancement works at the site.

As the project had many different elements over several years, it was funded from a variety of sources including Laois County Council, the Heritage Council, Creative Ireland, the Community Monuments Fund and the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund (the latter two are funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage).

The works were broken into phases between 2017 and 2022, including conserving the wrought iron gates, the boundary walls, and the grave memorials. Trees and other vegetation in the graveyard were maintained and managed, and the 16th century church bell tower was conserved.

Old St. Peter's after conservation works.



The wrought iron gates in the graveyard.



Conservation works in progress in the graveyard.



In 2019, a mural was commissioned for the location with artist Shane Sutton collaborating with the Transition Year class of the nearby Coláiste Dún Masc. The mural depicts Rory Óg O'Moore and his wife Margaret O'Byrne (of the famed O'Byrne clan of Wicklow).

Laois Heritage Office worked closely with Portlaoise Tidy Towns throughout the project. They were also partners in the Adopt a Monument programme, run by the Heritage Council and Abarta Heritage. Through this scheme, part of the conservation work at Old St. Peter's was funded.

The ecology of the site was also well managed with bat surveys carried out to ensure there was no harm to biodiversity at the site as a result of conservation works. Bat boxes were installed on the walls of the site and, following the discovery of a thriving swift colony in Portlaoise, swift nest boxes were also installed

(in partnership with the neighbouring Dunamais Arts Centre).

The grass on site is managed to benefit pollinators, and seats were installed to ensure this place of quiet reflection could be used by local people.

The formal opening day of the site in June 2023 was a very proud day for everyone involved with the project, and was attended by members of the community, elected representatives, Council staff, Laois Heritage Society members, the project conservation engineer, archaeologist and stonemason, along with neighbours and friends of the project.

It was an emotional day too, as those involved had included the late Councillor Jerry Lodge. Jerry had been a longstanding advocate, supporter and hands-on activist in the project before his death in 2018. All present paid tribute to his commitment.

The project is award-winning,

receiving the Heritage Council Adopt a Monument Mentor's Award in 2022. It was awarded to the Portlaoise Tidy Towns Committee in recognition of its remarkable achievement in conserving the site.

The early history of Portlaoise is that it grew up around a Tudor plantation fort with the church being built to service the fort and its soldiers. The fact that it lay derelict for so long, spoke to the way that, for many years, there was a lack of acknowledgement of the colonial elements of the town's history.

The conservation works at Old St. Peter's were part of a wider conservation project for the 16th century fort at the heart of Portlaoise.

The heritage-led regeneration of the town's historic core means it is now home to a thriving school of music, a low carbon centre of excellence, and new events space. Plans are also well advanced for social housing and a museum for the county.

To see the graveyard now fully conserved and restored to its rightful place of importance at the centre of community life in Portlaoise shows the value of heritage in helping us to understand and embrace our past, while moving forward and planning for the future.

Thomasina Connell,
Cathaoirleach
of Laois County Council,
cutting the ribbon with
guests to officially re-open
St. Peter's in June 2023.
Photo: Michael Scully

<https://laois.ie/departments/heritage/conservation-projects/old-st-peters-graveyard/>



The Mummers' Join Project

LEITRIM COUNTY COUNCIL



Mummers' Join Procession in Mohill, Co. Leitrim. Photo: Edwina Guckian

Harvesting oats, making straw hats and performing mummers' plays are just a few of the activities that took place during a successful mummers revival project in Leitrim in 2022 and 2023.

Like many communities around Ireland, Leitrim has a long-held tradition of 'mumming'. A type of folklore performance, mumming dates back several centuries. It involves disguising oneself in costume and going door to door enacting a verse play, with a range of stock characters.

In Ireland, it was most commonly performed during Christmas (many people would be familiar with 'wren boys' who are similar to but not the exact same as mummers).

The Mummers' Join Project in Leitrim aimed to engage local residents with the county's mumming heritage, which was in danger of vanishing completely. The project was funded by the Heritage Council and Leitrim County Council. The Leitrim Heritage Officer, Sarah Malone, and artist Edwina Guckian developed the project with Sarah leading on fundraising and project management, and Edwina acting as The Mummers' Join project coordinator.

Through social media and with the help of the local newspaper, The Leitrim Observer, a call went out in spring 2022, welcoming people of

all ages and all nationalities to join the project.

Bags of organic oat seed and flax seed were made available for free for people to grow on their own land in connection with the project. More than 200 people signed up to be part of the initiative and collected seed.

A Meitheal, where seed would be collectively sown so people would have it for use in mumming customs such as straw hats, was planned for April 2022 on Mount Allen Eco Farm. Owner Tommy Earley had prepared two acres of land by ploughing and harrowing and people sowed oat seed in the soil with a perimeter border of flax seed.

While many people already knew each other in the community, this event was an opportunity for new connections to be made, particularly amongst those who had just moved to the county. Take a look at this short video of the event:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bEMs0WCi90>

Several more activities took place during 2022, including a tour of the farm to see the progress of the oat crop sown during the Meitheal, straw hat making workshops, and a talk explaining the folklore of the mumming tradition at the Glens Centre, Manorhamilton.

As autumn beckoned, a Meitheal to harvest the oats was organised. Several of the older generation came to talk to the crowd about their memories of sowing and harvesting oats, and there was a demonstration on how to harvest by hand using a sickle and scythe. As the audience had their own tools with them, it was time for them to put into practice what they'd learnt!

The Meitheal was truly a community celebration with food laid on for the harvesters (including some bacon and potatoes cooked on a traditional turf fire) and musicians providing tunes.

The Carrick Camino was on the same day as the harvest Meitheal and more than 2,000 people passed by the plot of oats with many stopping to take pictures and find out how they could get involved. Check out the video of the day:



Mummers' Join Hat Making Workshop during Heritage Week 2022. Photo: Edwina Guckian

In September 2022, several people from across the county were interviewed about memories of mummers from their youth. This information played a large role in the next stage of the project – creating a new mummers' play which included newly commissioned music, song and dance relating to the mummers and to County Leitrim.

Mummers use disguise to conceal their identity and in Leitrim, the custom was to dress entirely in straw. Six community workshops were organised on how to make mummers' hats and costumes.

Twelve new mummers groups were formed across the county, with a captain in place for each group. Participants were set the challenge of rehearsing the new mummers' play and then performing it by travelling from house to house in their communities.

It wasn't only people from Leitrim who wanted to get involved – there



Harvest Meitheal, which took place in Autumn 2022. Photo: Edwina Guckian

were inquiries from people all over Ireland and also requests from as far afield as Norway, Finland, Japan, the U.S., France and Spain. Word spread so much that the Mummers' Join project was invited onto RTÉ Radio One's Ray D'Arcy Show.

There was also a strong educational aspect to the project, teaching the skills and crafts to a younger generation in the county, in primary and secondary schools.

With very strong community involvement in the project, it's hoped that the renewed interest in and active practice of mumming will continue

once the two-year project comes to an end in 2023. The project is an inspiring example of how to revive a cultural heritage practice and how best to imbue the community with a sense of collectivism and ownership.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5aloIMiSiGk>



Community Monuments Fund

LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL

Limerick is extremely rich in the quality, diversity and extent of its surviving archaeological monuments and landscapes. Throughout the county, there are more than 8,000 monuments with more sites added to the list each year.

These vary from monuments like the extensive prehistoric habitation sites at Lough Gur, to the later ringforts and the early churches and monastic foundations dispersed throughout the county; from the Viking City to the medieval chain of castles, towns, friaries and parish churches, and the later town and tower houses.

Limerick Heritage Officer Tom O'Neill works to support the county's archaeologist, Sarah McCutcheon, as part of the Community Monuments Fund programme. Funded by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the programme supports the conservation, maintenance, protection and promotion of local monuments and historic sites.

For many years, Tom and Sarah had worked together on different projects but it began to emerge, in relation to the Community Monuments Fund, that they could cooperatively work to ensure that both natural and built heritage elements could be catered for.

For each monument, Tom deals with the wildlife issues, particularly focusing

on wildlife surveys and issuing wildlife conservation recommendations. These surveys being done in-house by the Heritage Officer means that no additional funds have to be spent to secure outside expertise.

His recommendations subsequently inform the nature of the mitigation works needed to conserve the archaeological structures, the area overseen by Sarah.

Work programmes are drawn up that enable the conservation of these structures, whilst allowing for the protection of the wildlife that inhabits them.

The first stage of the project each year is examining the Community Monuments Funding list, which establishes the structures that will have work carried out on them in the coming year. They are ranked to ensure that adequate time is allocated for wildlife surveys and for equipment to be prepared accordingly.

This collaboration between the Heritage Officer and archaeologist shows how working together can help to conserve both natural and built heritage. It also allows for knowledge to be built up within the organisation, and for the development of best practices in conserving both archaeology and natural history within the one scheme.

Glenogra Church,
Co. Limerick.
Photo: Thomas O'Neill



Search Database Find a Soldier

Surname	Address	Alternative Address	Civil Parish	Rank	Regiment/Unit	Date of Death	Memorial / Burial Place
Arthur	Longford			Gunner	Royal Tank Corps; [Royal Field Artillery, "B" Battery, 210 Brigade]	09.10.1917	Coxyde Military Cemetery, Koksijde, West-Viaanderen, Belgium
Templemichael				Gunner	Royal Field Artillery, 50th Brigade, 'C' Battery	19.04.1918	Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, Poperinge, West-Viaanderen, Belgium
Joseph	Calgary, Alberta	Longford			Expeditionary Force, 50th Battalion		
Templemichael				Trooper	Household Cavalry & Cavalry of the Line, Special Cavalry Reserve 1st Battalion King Edward's Horse,	15.05.1916	Grangegorman Memorial, Blackhorse Avenue, Dublin 8 & Longford Presbyterian Cemetery (burial)
Templemichael	Edmonton, Alberta	Canada as (Richardstown), Co.		Private	Canadian Expeditionary Force, Alberta Regiment, 10th Battalion; 202 (Sportsmans) Battalion	15.08.1917	Maroc British Cemetery, Grenay, Pas de Calais, France
Allen, Charles	Little Water Street Longford			Sapper	Royal Engineers, 8th Battalion		
Allen, Joseph Jessop	Pierson, Manitoba, Longford	Carn, Carrickboy, Co. Longford		Private	222nd Overseas Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary		

The County Longford Online Database of Military Personnel

LONGFORD COUNTY COUNCIL

www.longfordatwar.ie



The County Longford Online Database of Military Personnel, which can be accessed via the website www.longfordatwar.ie, was developed as part of Longford's commemoration of the centenary of the First World War (1914-1918).

The searchable database features details of the Longford people who died in World War I, either in combat or from injuries, and includes both those who were born in the county, and those from elsewhere who lived in Longford at the time of their enlistment.

The idea for the 'Longford at War' database project was sparked by a local military historian, Hugh Farrell, who had spent many years collating names and stories of the Longford men that served in World War I.

The original objective of the project was to identify and collate the names of all of those who died as a result of World War I from Allied forces, including non-combatants, such as nurses, and those who died in the sinking of the RMS Leinster in 1918. Subsequently, the project expanded to include the 15 Longford people that participated in the Easter Rising in 1916, and in other conflicts, including, for example, the Battle of Waterloo.

Funded by Longford County Council and the Heritage Council under the County Heritage Plan fund, the project

was led by Longford Heritage Officer Máiréad Ní Chonghaile, who was also one of the researchers and editors for the online database, in partnership with the County Longford Historical Society.

The project commenced in 2013 and, at the time, the project partners had a list of 300 Longford casualties associated with World War I available to them. This had been developed by Old Soldier Committees in the 1920s and, subsequently, local historians had undertaken research into these casualties, as well as other soldiers that served in World War I, including photographing soldiers' gravesites.

To make this work available, the first project phase entailed developing the initial online database and website, which included an expandable exhibition with an overview of the Great War and the roles of people from Longford in all campaigns from the Battle of the Somme to the Palestine campaign.

As part of a National Heritage Week event, Longford County Council invited members of the public to bring items and memorabilia from World War I. As the project continued to grow and expand, more and more families felt encouraged to acknowledge and publicly remember their family members that were in the First World War.

Communities in Kenagh, Legan,



The County Longford Online Database of Military Personnel, which can be accessed via the website.

Taghshinny and Edgeworthstown came together to commemorate their local dead in public memorials in their towns and villages, which have since been proudly maintained by the communities.

Gradually, the online database was expanded from the Great War to also include local military personnel who were involved in the Boer War, the Korean War, and the Peninsular War, as well as members of other overseas military forces.

The online database and website are intended to be primarily a genealogical resource. Where possible, it links freely available online resources, such as the 1901 and 1911 Census returns. It is an ongoing project, and families and communities are encouraged to continue to provide new names, photographs and additional information.

According to Heritage Officer Máiréad Ní Chonghaile, the unveiling of the community memorials, which

were encouraged and facilitated by the project, have been among the project's standout moments.

An especially poignant moment was when Joan Sugrue, the granddaughter of postman William Henry Wakefield, who was one of the six Longford people who died on the RMS Leinster, attended the county's centenary event.

Local historian Doreen McHugh had contacted and invited her to join the event to commemorate her grandfather and her family's connection to the county. Ms Sugrue said that she was delighted to attend the commemorations, and that she found it very honouring of her grandfather that he was commemorated and spoken about as a person with a family and life, and not just a body that was never recovered.

The project has proven incredibly important in allowing families and communities to acknowledge and remember people from their local area who, in some cases, had been deliberately forgotten as they had served for the British Army.

The online database and website, and the wider project, have met with an overwhelmingly positive response, and the expansion of the original database has been welcomed not just by locals, but also by the Longford diaspora around the world, who have made submissions from as far afield as the United States and Australia.

Top row: Patrick and Thomas Cassells, brothers from Torboy, Carrickedmond. Patrick died 12 October 1918 and Thomas 13 August 1918 serving with the U.S. Army. Copyright of Connecticut State Library & Ancestry.

Middle: Sophia Violet Barrett, who lived in Lislea, Kenagh, died on the RMS Leinster on 10 October 1918. She was a nurse with the St. John's Ambulance in the JWWAD and had served in France.

Bottom left: Henry Wakefield, a mail worker born in Newtownforbes, Co. Longford who died on the sinking of the RMS Leinster with Sophia Barrett. Henry's granddaughter, Joan Sugrue attended the centenary event in County Longford.

Bottom right: Luke C. Farrell from Lisnacusha, Lanesborough, killed-in-action 1 February 1915, whilst serving with the 1st Irish Guards. His brother, Fr. Peter O'Farrell was a chaplain in WW1.





Mapping the Minor Placenames and Old Roads of the Cooley Peninsula

LOUTH COUNTY COUNCIL

At the start of the Cadger's Pad from Ravensdale.
Photo: Ken Finegan

A unique dialect of Irish was widely spoken in the uplands of the Cooley Peninsula in Louth, and in adjacent parts of south Armagh, right up until the 1940s. The last native speakers of Ardagh, above Omeath/Ó Méith Mara, lived into the 1960s or even the early 1970s.

As time passed, many of the minor placenames of the Peninsula, which are in this dialect, were no longer in wide use and were at risk of being lost.

Since 2015, several individual projects have taken place to map and preserve the placenames. These projects, taken collectively, provide an excellent example of a multi-phase heritage project with inputs from diverse groups and the production of several outputs. These include two formal studies, a video, and a hard copy map that walkers can purchase in local shops.

The original inspiration for these projects was the Louth Fieldnames Project (2012-2014), funded by LEADER. It showed the wealth of field and feature names in the now, sadly, more-or-less extinct local dialect and, particularly, in its reflection in the minor placenames that adorn the mountains and hills (which are still used, especially by local sheep farmers).

A major study, *Mapping the Minor Place Names of the Cooley Mountains*, was carried out in 2015, funded by

a bursary provided by the Mourne Cooley Gullion Geotourism Project (established by the Louth Heritage Office and Mourne Heritage Trust).

This excellent study was led by the same researcher who had led the Fieldnames Project, but it was not readily available to the local community. It was decided that a video would bring the placenames to a wider audience, as watching a well-made video is more accessible to people than reading an academic study.

In 2021, the video's production was coordinated by the Carlingford Lough Heritage Trust (and funded through a Community Heritage Grant from the Heritage Council).

The video features the most storied route of the Cooley Mountains - the footpath over the top of the hills, between Omeath and Dundalk. This path is called 'The Cadger's Pad' (Cosán na Mangairí), with cadger being a locally used, old English word for a travelling salesman. The local community wanted to raise awareness of this path and the placenames that string along it like beads.

In the days before vehicular transport, it was quicker to take the direct route up and over the top and down the other side rather than following the longer, lowland route



Mary McDonald checks the fastenings of Susan McArdle's 'herring'. Photo: Ken Finegan

taken today. Women and girls from the fishing village of Ó Méith Mara (Omeath) carried heavy baskets of fish and seaweed over the mountains, to market in Dundalk and also to Newry, the origin of the song 'Dúlamán'.

It's difficult to show a path in a video and so the solution arrived at by Séamus Murphy and the Carlingford Lough Heritage Trust was to mark it out and have large numbers of people walk it from both ends, meeting in the middle, all while being filmed by an aerial drone. The walk captured in the video was both a re-enactment and a celebration of the old route.

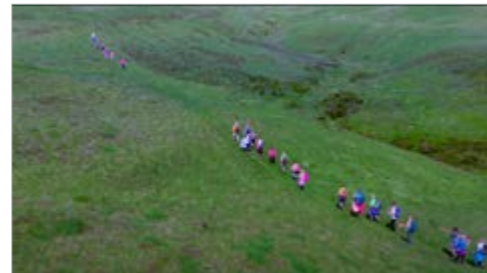
The weather was excellent on the day and everyone met at the Cloch Imirthe na gCartaí, or the rock of card-playing. This was traditionally a place where the basket-carrying women would stop to play cards until one day it was said the devil appeared, after which there was no more card-playing.



The Cadger's Pad (video still).

The crowd that day stopped to eat their picnics, chat, and listen to music played by local musicians. There was a happy carnival atmosphere during the event, which was attended by around 100 people.

The video also includes interviews with local people, including farmers, local residents and historians, experts on the local Irish dialect, and the Louth Heritage Officer, Brendan McSherry. The video is available on YouTube.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fLf6VCWqGtQ>



Seamus Murphy tells the story of the Cadger's Pad. Photo: Ken Finegan

It was most recently shown at the Hooley Booley Cooley in the Glenmore Community Hall during a National Heritage Week 2023 event, where it received an enthusiastic round of applause.

An additional aspect to the project was EastWest Mapping publishing a map for walkers, which highlights many of the placenames recorded by the 2015 survey and also old roads of the Cooley Mountains highlighted in a 2021 survey.

The latter survey was organised by Cooley Connect Well Group and grant aided by the Heritage Council. It detailed lost old roads of the district, many of which were replaced by roads built as famine relief measures.

Prior to all of these projects, the late survival of Irish as the community tongue on both sides of the main mountain ridge and its role in naming the landscape features was not widely known or fully appreciated. One example of this is the custom of women carrying baskets over the hills to market in Dundalk and then returning with their precious purchases.

There's now a much greater understanding of and pride in the previous generations who lived in the region, and of the minor placenames and old roads that were once in danger of being lost to the community.

Mayo Wetlands Survey

MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL



Swamp vegetation at edge of Lough Namucka.
Photo: Peter Foss

Mayo is renowned for its wetlands, including the vast expanses of peatland in the northwest of the county, its great lakes, and the River Moy, which is appreciated as one of Ireland's premier salmon rivers. The county is also home to many more lesser-known but also very important wetland habitats.

Mayo County Council is surveying, mapping and recording wetlands in the county through the Mayo Wetlands Survey project (with Wetlands Surveys Ireland commissioned to carry out the work on behalf of the Council).

The survey's aim is to collate and gather baseline information on the county's wetland habitats and to raise awareness of the wetland resource. The survey will assist with the long-term protection of Mayo's wetlands as it will allow for the design of targeted wetland surveys and research programmes.

Wetlands are incredibly important for a number of reasons, including offering habitats for wildlife, providing biodiversity, improving water quality, storing floodwaters, providing recreational opportunities, and acting as a vital store of carbon (thereby helping to mitigate against climate change).

The project is being managed by Mayo Heritage Officer Deirdre Cunningham, with funding provided through the Local Biodiversity Action

Fund of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, and Mayo County Council.

The survey consists of two phases. The first stage was desktop research and survey, where all available information from a variety of sources e.g. National Parks and Wildlife Services, Environmental Protection Agency, Teagasc, was collated. The sub-soils map of Ireland was used as a primary source in identifying areas of potential wetland within the county, along with aerial photographs and Geographical Information System (GIS) datasets.

Based on the analysis of sub-soil types, the total area of wetland in Mayo is estimated to cover just over 230,000 hectares or 41% of the county, which is significant.

Due to the varying topography, geology, hydrology, climate and soils, Mayo's wetland habitats include bogs (both raised, and Atlantic (or lowland) and upland blanket bog), turloughs, fens, marshes, rivers and associated floodplains, lakes, springs, wet woodlands, and various coastal wetland habitats.

Some of the better-known wetlands in the northwest of the county include the Owenduff catchment, which is part of the most extensive remaining blanket bog complex in Ireland. It

includes the Ballycroy Wild Nephin National Park.

The Céide Fields in North Mayo contain extensive neolithic field systems buried beneath the bog. The great lakes in the county include Lough Mask, Lough Conn, Lough Corrib, Carrowmore Lake, and Lough Carra.

During the first phase of the project, a GIS dataset and database was created. This contains information on the extent, distribution, and characteristics of the known wetland resource in the county, as well as information on previous studies carried out.

More than 1,100 wetland sites are identified in this database, with 85% being outside of sites designated for nature conservation. Most had not yet been surveyed and are likely to support habitats and species of conservation importance.

The Mayo Wetlands Survey is currently in its second phase, which is field survey. Due to the size of the county and the number of sites, it is being undertaken on a phased basis over three years, with year two just completed and the final field survey due to take place in 2024.

Field survey involves physically visiting sites, so firstly a selection of sites was made (using information gathered through Phase 1). Individual site reports are being prepared for each location surveyed, including a site description, a habitat map, records of flora and fauna, a conservation ranking, identification of threats and specific



Boardwalk at Ballycroy National Park, Co Mayo. Photo: Deirdre Cunningham

management issues, and recommendations for conservation.

A booklet, *Wetlands of Mayo*, has been published as part of the project. Its aim is to improve understanding and appreciation of the important role that these habitats play in the landscape and in our all our lives, as a natural asset that benefits everyone. It includes a section on wetlands to visit in Mayo and lists a series of measures we can all take to help protect our wetland habitats.

The Mayo Wetlands Survey featured in an annual series of heritage calendars produced by the Heritage Office. The calendar was widely distributed throughout the county and beyond. An interactive Mayo Wetlands StoryMap has also been produced during the project.

<https://www.mayo.ie/heritage/wetlandsofmayo>



Lapwings and whooper swans at Tawny Lough. Photo: Lynda Huxley

The survey to date has provided valuable baseline information on biodiversity, which can be used to inform wetland site management, decision making and conservation programmes, and contribute to policy formation, public awareness and education initiatives.

Crucially, from a climate change perspective, the data can assist with

designing climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. The survey also provides recommendations on priorities for future surveys, based on critical or endangered habitats, and for geographical areas within Mayo where data is particularly lacking.

Wild Teaching

MEATH COUNTY COUNCIL



Pupils from St Patrick's National School in Slane enjoying learning outdoors on the school grounds.

This project set out to address the issue that children have become increasingly detached from the natural world due to more engagement with digital devices, a lack of access to nature, and a decrease in physical activity.

Being able to access nature during schooltime is an obvious solution but teachers often struggle with lack of knowledge, and ways of integrating time spent outdoors with the primary school curriculum.

Paul O'Donnell, a primary school principal and teacher educator in the areas of history, geography and science, knew this was the experience of many of the teachers he interacted with. He was also aware that they had concerns around classroom management, health and safety, and the weather, while delivering lessons outdoors.

Paul approached the Meath Heritage Officer, Loreto Guinan, with the idea of developing a resource book for primary school teachers. From that initial conversation, the project began to take shape with Meath County Council and the Heritage Council coming on board to fund the book through the County Heritage Plan.

The aim of the book was to provide teachers with one achievable lesson per week, which could take place outdoors. By providing teachers with

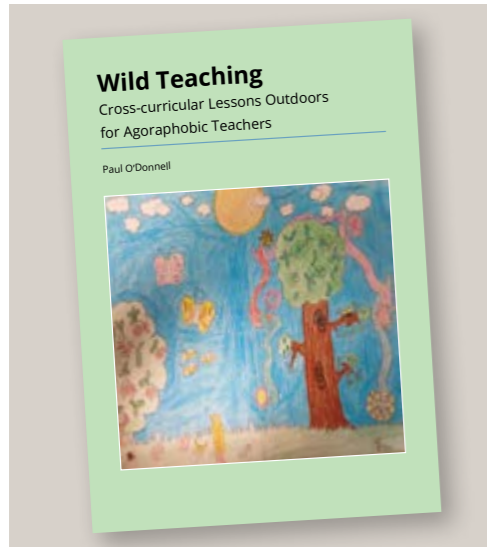
a background to the lesson, outlining each step, and providing online links to support each lesson, the hope was that teachers would be empowered to use the outdoors more often for learning and teaching.

Careful consideration was given to the types of outdoor locations that schools might have at their disposal, as not all schools have large grounds to access. Any school that has a car park and some grass can benefit from the lessons in the book.

Paul, who is the Principal of St. Patrick's National School in Slane, was the writer of the book. Meath Heritage Officer, Loreto Guinan, managed the overall publication process, which involved copy editing, design, print, launch, and distribution.

The finished book, *Wild Teaching: Cross-curricular Lessons Outdoors for Agoraphobic Teachers*, contains 36 cross-curricular lessons, laid out to be taught in tandem with the seasons, and spanning the school year (September to June).

Matching sets of pictures of birds, butterflies, 'minibeasts', wildflowers, and trees, which can be photocopied for students, were included in the book. In addition, curricular planning notes and a PowerPoint presentation were prepared by Paul as teacher aids.



The book's front cover.

Meath County Council worked with the Navan Education Centre for the launch event and also provided a free copy of the book to every primary school teacher in County Meath.

Copies were also available for purchase to teachers outside the county. The book has had appeal overseas, which was unforeseen at the project's outset. Meath County Council has posted copies to every continent apart from Antarctica!

Such was the demand for the book that it was reprinted in 2022. Articles on the book appeared in INTOUCH, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation magazine, and Paul was interviewed on local radio stations across the country. The popular RTÉ radio programme, Mooney Goes Wild, came to St. Patrick's National School to record a



Pupils engaging in play on the school grounds.

special segment with students about the book.

When it comes to standout moments of the project, Paul says that teaching the lessons with students over the years is where the magic happened for him. Loreto says it was very inspiring to create a practical resource to facilitate teachers to engage children with nature in a fun and memorable way.

The book has proved to be a vital asset to teachers, and will continue to be of service in the coming years. It shows how support can be provided for nature-based learning, which enriches a child's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development, and the importance of learning about the natural heritage all around us.

<https://www.meath.ie/council/council-services/heritage-architectural-conservation/heritage/heritage-for-younger-people/wild-teaching-cross-curricular-lessons-outdoors-for-agoraphobic-teachers>



Pupils from St. Patrick's N.S. learning about air quality outdoors as part of the GLOBE project.





Magic Under Monaghan

MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL

'Magic Under Monaghan' is a short cinematic exploration of peatlands and their vital role in carbon management. Designed for young people, the project drew its roots from the wonder of Monaghan's bogs.

The aim of the collaboration between Monaghan Heritage Office, Macalla Productions and presenter John Sharpson was to craft a captivating and enjoyable film that effectively conveyed key environmental and heritage messages, harnessing the wealth of data gathered over two decades of wetland surveys in the county.

From the outset, Monaghan Heritage Officer Shirley Clerkin had the concept of a youth-oriented film, exploring the nexus of wetlands and climate. Her role included successfully securing funding, selecting filming locations, working with the production company, developing thematic content, and overseeing the dissemination of the film.

Young people are increasingly concerned about environmental degradation, and with that can come anxiety about the effects of climate change. The entertaining and satirical approach in the film aimed to lift the worry enough for them to see practical solutions.

The preparation and post-production

phases of the project took up most of the time, including thematic selection, creating storyboards, writing the script, selecting talent, assembling a crew, adding animation and editing.

The film is locally significant while addressing the overarching global themes of climate change and biodiversity loss. It clearly illustrates the values of Sliabh Beagh, the cross-border expanse of blanket bog where filming took place over five days.

The film presents sweeping aerial vistas of the landscape, alongside intimate close-ups of plant life and mosses, all captured on-site. The script was meticulously written and subjected to scientific scrutiny to ensure both accuracy and clarity.

The goal was to strike a balance between conveying the important messages around the role that Monaghan's peatlands play in carbon capture and storage, and their role as vital habitats, without overwhelming the audience with scientific jargon.

The film also conveys the extensive restoration efforts carried out on Sliabh Beagh by Monaghan Heritage Office. The insertion of peat dams into drainage systems was made possible through funding from the Interreg CANN project, in which Monaghan County Council participated as a

Photo: Shirley Clerkin



Presenter John Sharpson being filmed for 'Magic Under Monaghan'. Photo: Shirley Clerkin

partner. Ongoing monitoring of these dams by the Heritage Office reveals their successful role in retaining water within the bog, facilitating the natural colonisation of vegetation, and aiding the rejuvenation of the bog ecosystem.

The film itself was funded through Monaghan's Creative Ireland programme and Monaghan County Council.

One of the biggest challenges for the project was finding a good weather window in which to film, and thankfully that came to pass. Finding the ideal presenter for the film was also a crucial decision, as it needed a charismatic and experienced person who was capable of connecting with and engaging young audiences.



The short film production crew out on the bog. Photo: Shirley Clerkin

The project team was delighted to secure talented children's TV presenter John Sharpson for the film. John is well known as Múinteoir John from RTÉ Home School Hub. He was joined in the film by two animated friends, Pete and Fen.

Once all the filming and post-production were finally completed, 'Magic Under Monaghan' was ready to be unveiled. It premiered at a special event at the Garage Theatre in Monaghan in March 2023.

The film was distributed to all schools in the county and further afield. It is also freely available to everyone via YouTube.



Setting up the next shot. Photo: Shirley Clerkin



Colourful bog flora on Sliabh Beagh. Photo: Shirley Clerkin

Following collaboration with the newly established Environmental Education Centre in Knocknagrave, Co. Monaghan, the film has assumed a pivotal role within their interpretation and educational resources. The endearing cartoon characters, Fen and Pete, who bring the film to life, have been shared with the Centre for incorporation into their broader educational materials.

'Magic Under Monaghan' was shortlisted in the Sustainable Environment & Biodiversity category in the Excellence in Local Government Awards 2023.

One of the standout moments for Monaghan Heritage Officer Shirley Clerkin during the entire project was observing the film crew and the presenter develop a deep affection for Sliabh Beagh's bog, despite the unpredictable weather conditions encountered over several days of filming.

This underscored the profound importance of connecting with nature and demonstrated their dedication to delivering the most impactful message for younger generations, through an entertaining and uplifting film.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ru5YBcifvDQ>



Offaly Archives

OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL

An old map of south-west Offaly (c. 1809) by the famous surveyor William Larkin, conserved and safely stored in the Offaly Archives.

When the Offaly Archives building officially opened its doors in 2021, it marked the culmination of many years of planning, hard work and collaboration between organisations, community groups and individuals.

The state-of-the-art archive in Tullamore is home to the extensive historical records of both Offaly County Library and Offaly History, and is managed by a professional archivist. The establishment of Offaly Archives was a large-scale project, which serves as an excellent model for other counties to establish their own archive services.

The idea came about due to the size of the historical collections that Offaly County Library and Offaly History had accumulated over time. The latter organisation (once known as Offaly Historical and Archaeological Society) had collected and salvaged archival material over the years, which otherwise may have been destroyed. The Society was also well known to the community as a place for the secure deposit of historical materials.

By the 1990s, the county archive in Offaly County Library had advanced in terms of cataloguing and acquisition, and the Local Government Act of 1994 made the preservation and accessibility of local authority archives mandatory,

thereby increasing the size of its collection range.

In 2014, a postgraduate survey was carried out on the state of archives in the county. It concluded that neither repository at that point had adequate storage space nor a professional archivist on staff. Further collecting and acquisition would have been difficult and because many of the collections were uncatalogued, access to the archives was hampered by the lack of finding aids and a dedicated research space.

Both organisations were aware that the storage and conditions needed to be improved and that the collections needed to be catalogued and made accessible. And so, the idea for a dedicated county archive service for Offaly was formed and work began to make it a reality.

The role of the Offaly County Heritage Officer, Amanda Pedlow, included arranging for surveys of the collections in both repositories, supporting the development of options as to how the archive service might evolve, liaising with all partners on an ongoing basis throughout the process, and accessing funding streams to assist with the different stages of the project.

Funding has come through a number of sources, including the

Heritage Council, Offaly County Council, Creative Ireland and extensive fundraising by Offaly History (which was also able to avail of Offaly LEADER funding towards the build of the project).

Over the years, visits to several archive services took place, which helped to inform the design of the building in Offaly.

Importantly, it was decided that a bespoke archive building should be developed. The archivist and design team set out exact requirements for the project's various stages, including the arrival of material to the initial sorting bay, storage in appropriate conditions, and access to the material in the visitors' reading room.

While works were taking place on the chosen building in Axis Business Park, Tullamore, planning was underway for the huge task of moving materials from both repositories along with cataloguing and storing them in their new home.

The drive and expertise brought to the project by the team, along with a positive attitude, meant that a range of challenges were navigated along the way.

The big move began in September 2019 and the first researchers were welcomed in March 2020, shortly before the doors had to be closed due to Covid-19 restrictions.

During this closure, social media presence was increased, queries were answered remotely, and a Covid-19 archive project was developed to



L:R - Chairperson of the Heritage Council, Martina Moloney, Minister Malcolm Noonan T.D., CEO of the Heritage Council, Virginia Teehan, and Archivist with Offaly Archives Service, Lisa Shortall.

document the effects of the pandemic on the community. An appointment-only service was re-established in September 2020 for physical callers to the archives and the online catalogue was enhanced with further digital resources to provide remote access to certain collections. It's hoped to increase this accessibility over time.

Offaly Archives was officially opened by the Minister of State at the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, Malcom Noonan T.D., on 18 November 2021.

The service has been welcomed as a valuable resource for the community. There are regular open days to facilitate awareness of the project, and many historical societies from across the county have visited and observed first-hand the professional standards recommended for archive management.



Offaly Archives has also welcomed a number of groups from other counties that are exploring options for how to manage their archives.

It has been a landmark project, bringing together the voluntary and public sectors. By developing a bespoke professional service, it demonstrates how both Offaly County Council (including the Heritage Officer) and Offaly History value and appreciate the archival material in the county.

And also, importantly, the archives themselves are being safely held for future generations to access.



Find out more at
www.offalyarchives.com



Farming Rathcroghan EIP Project

ROSCOMMON COUNTY COUNCIL

Lambs at Mucklagh.
Photo: Farming
Rathcroghan EIP

Rathcroghan is a well-preserved late prehistoric and medieval archaeological landscape located in rich agricultural pastures at the very heart of County Roscommon. The area forms part of the 'Royal Sites of Ireland' UNESCO World Heritage bid, having been added to Ireland's World Heritage Tentative List in 2022, in recognition of its national and international significance.

Landowners in Roscommon saw the need for a scheme to support farmers in facing the challenges of farming in such an archaeologically sensitive landscape. In 2015, Rathcroghan Resource Community was formed, in conjunction with Rathcroghan Visitor Centre, to discuss possible ways that these challenges might be addressed.

It was decided to apply for a European Innovative Partnership (EIP) project for 'Farming Rathcroghan'. Funding was granted through the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine EIP-Agri Fund, for an innovative project to address the declining socio-economic circumstances of the farming community, while addressing the need to preserve and create awareness of this unique archaeological landscape (consisting of approximately 240 identified archaeological sites and monuments).

The biggest challenge for the project was that it was starting from scratch, with no template to copy. There was no similar scheme anywhere else in the country that addressed the challenges of farming in such an archaeologically sensitive landscape.

A Community Archaeology element was not funded under the EIP-Agri funding. The Roscommon Heritage Officer, Nollaig Feeney, highlighted the need for, and importance of, such a role in the project and secured funding for it through the Heritage Council and Roscommon County Council. John Cronin & Associates were selected to fulfil the role of Community Archaeologist/Consultancy Services, with Kate Robb stepping into the position.

Her role is integral to the Farming Rathcroghan EIP project and is a multi-faceted one, which evolved as the project developed.

The project is now in its fifth and final year. The first year (beginning in 2019) largely involved a Design and Development Phase, where a range of archaeological condition issues were identified from both desk and field studies. As part of this work, dedicated farm visits and meetings with farmers took place. Farmer-led actions were identified to address key threats.



Local secondary school visit to Rathnadarve enclosure.
Photo: Farming Rathcroghan EIP



The students enjoying their visit to Rathnadarve enclosure during a snowy period.
Photo: Farming Rathcroghan EIP

All of this work provided a very robust framework from which to roll out the Project Implementation Phases (Years 2 to 5).

Amongst the works during these phases were an expansion to include 30 additional farmers in Year 2 (the first year had focused on eight farmers), and carrying out a detailed condition baseline survey at two significant archaeological national monuments (Rathnadarve enclosure and the Mucklaghs linear earthworks).

In extensive consultation with the Office of Public Works and the National Monuments Service, recommendations for conservation interventions at these sites were developed and trialled. Detailed photography and video recording of the works was undertaken for archival, educational, and promotional use.

Farmer training on archaeological, legislative, and best practice awareness

was delivered via the creation of unique individual farmer packs, and workshops were also organised (e.g. hedge-laying, dry stone wall building). Licensed archaeological on-site monitoring of farm improvement works was also provided during the project.

Community outreach took place via public presentations and an ongoing school outreach programme for local primary and secondary schools. A number of research papers were also developed as part of the project. National Heritage Week events were organised during the project's duration, including in 2022, when a promotional video was produced that gave a guided tour of Rathcroghan's historic landscape.

In the project's current and final year (May 2023-May 2024), the Community Archaeologist, Kate Robb, is providing ongoing archaeological advisory services to the project and to participating farmers. Post-works



A farmer looking over one of his fields, alongside his grandson.
Photo: Farming Rathcroghan EIP

monthly performance monitoring-logs were undertaken during the project and a detailed evaluation is now taking place. This will comprise part of the final project outputs and findings, with recommendations set out for future best practice and standards for protecting archaeological monuments in an actively farmed landscape. A full report is due by May 2024.

The 38 farmers taking part in the project are delivering actions set out in their bespoke plans. The project is a result-based payment model with participating farmers receiving financial assistance for good archaeological condition delivery. Year-on-year, these actions are proving highly successful, with scores increasing all the time.



Top: A repaired dry stone wall. Bottom: A scratching post on farming lands. Photos: Farming Rathcroghan EIP

The farmers have become inspired to consider what might offer improved archaeological conditions on their farms. They have actively contributed innovative ideas in this regard e.g. temporary fencing ideas, re-tracking livestock, and protecting access points.

This project shows what a small community can achieve within a relatively short time to dramatically improve the condition and presentation of the archaeological resource. It also shows how the Rathcroghan community values the heritage of the landscape, and their pro-activeness in taking steps to protect it. This project can also serve as a model for similar types of projects nationwide.



Rediscovering Sligo's Green Fort

SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL

The Green Fort, Sligo, after vegetation removal in Sept 2021.

The Green Fort is a 17th century earthen bastioned fort located in the heart of Sligo City. Built to defend Sligo and to control access from the north and south, it played a major role in the Williamite Wars. Unfortunately, the fort, which covers almost six acres of land, later became abandoned and hidden from view for more than 300 years.

The local community, particularly the Forthill Men's Group Art and History Society, had long campaigned for the Green Fort to be protected and conserved for all to enjoy, both locals and visitors alike. The overgrown site offered an elevated and 360 degree panorama of Sligo and the surrounding countryside, and this amenity was something well worth enhancing.

The Green Fort, which is in modern day O'Boyle Park, is in the ownership of both Sligo County Council and the Health Service Executive (HSE). In 2017, Sligo Heritage Officer Siobhán Ryan secured funding from the Heritage Council and Sligo County Council for the preparation of a Conservation Plan for the site.

The plan sought to address ongoing public concern over the level of protection of the Green Fort, a general low level of public awareness of the heritage site, and a desire to manage, interpret, and present the monument



The Green Fort prior to vegetation clearance. Photo Sam Moore

for the benefit of all. Out of the plan came the establishment of the Green Fort Working Group, supported by Sligo Heritage Office.

Works on the Green Fort began in 2021 and are being co-funded by Sligo County Council and the Community Monuments Fund.

The removal of many hundreds of years of shrubs and bramble growth, under National Monument Consent and archaeological monitoring, has allowed the monument to be visible again. Features long forgotten, such as an access ramp in the southwest corner of the monument that had been shown on a 17th century drawing, have been rediscovered.



Fence Scape Ltd. used a robotic flail to get hundreds of years of vegetation growth under control.



Capturing Sligo's Green Fort on canvas. Photo: Carl Brennan



Green Fort Working Group members with 7L Architects at Green Fort - Sept 2023.



Archaeologist Sam Moore leads a guided tour of the Green Fort for Heritage Week 2023.

Extensive surveys, including archaeological, geophysical and drone surveys, have been carried out to improve understanding of the monument and will help guide future archaeological research. Surveys have indicated that the Green Fort was remodelled from an existing rath on the site.

In 2022, a National Heritage Week event took place at the location, with 10 artists being led on a tour of the Green Fort's many vistas before deciding on their own painting location. The artists produced their own interpretations of the stunning views from the national monument and expressed keen interest in returning to paint there again.

Another successful National Heritage Week event took place in 2023. Archaeologist Sam Moore gave a guided public tour of the Green Fort



Green Fort aerial photo. Photo: ACSU Ltd.

sharing information about its rich history and its conservation, whilst participants also enjoyed spectacular views of Sligo County.

That same year, the Green Fort Access and Interpretation Plan was prepared by 7L Architects, working in conjunction with the Green Fort Working Group and Sligo Heritage Office. This plan will inform future conservation, management access and interpretation of the site from 2024 onwards.

Works in the plan include further vegetation clearance, and management on and around the monument. Once the Green Fort is conserved and in a cycle of sustainable management, increasing awareness of the monument within the local community and visitors will be key as well as allowing further access.

A challenge of the project has been the task of incorporating a

large earthen monument into an active public park setting but the collaborative aspect of the project has helped with this. Partners include the local community, Sligo County Council, the HSE, Atlantic Technological University Sligo, the Heritage Council, and the National Monuments Service (Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage).

Sligo's Green Fort project highlights the value of supporting and working with local communities in the conservation, management and custodianship of a local heritage site of national importance. The last reminder of Sligo's 17th century town defences has been made visible again, to the great pride of the local community.

Threading the Tower - Reimagining the Clondalkin Round Tower

SOUTH DUBLIN COUNTY COUNCIL



The Clondalkin Crochet
Lace Tower.

One of South Dublin's most recognisable and historic buildings, the Clondalkin Round Tower, was reimagined and recreated as a crochet lace tower in this innovative project.

'Threading the Tower' aimed to revitalise and encourage the craft of crochet lace in the local community – Clondalkin was once a centre of cottage industry supplying lace to the atelier of Irish fashion designer Sybil Connolly in the 1950s and 1960s.

A 2021 oral history project, 'Clondalkin's Tangible Threads – Irish Crochet in the World of Haute Couture', captured this previously untold story and was a joint initiative of South Dublin County Council's Heritage Office and the Irish Crochet Lace Revival (ICLR) group.

A film recorded some of the women who were involved in the cottage industry and included family descendants of some of the key crochet lace makers who lived in the cottages located beside the historic medieval Clondalkin Round Tower. You can find out more about the project in the short film, available on YouTube.

The making of the film revealed that while the practices of Irish crochet and crochet lace have declined in recent years, interest remained in the Clondalkin community for these



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aehjZfkgSc8>

traditional crafts. It was this local interest, along with ICLR's objectives to share experience, knowledge, and teach Irish crochet and crochet lace skills, that fuelled the concept of a follow-on project, 'Threading the Tower – reimagining the Clondalkin Round Tower'.

This was a collaboration, once again, between South Dublin County Council's Heritage Office and ICLR, with the participation of local crochet lace makers from Clondalkin and beyond.

Funding came from the Creative Ireland programme, as administered by the South Dublin County Council Creative Culture Team. Additional support was provided by the Council through its County Heritage Plan and via the role of the County Heritage Officer, Rosaleen Dwyer.

For generations of Clondalkin's residents, the distinctive Round Tower has been a much loved backdrop to

their day-to-day lives so it was the perfect choice for a local landmark to be recreated in crochet lace.

Between April 2022 and August 2023, under the creative direction of Irish lace artist Fiona Harrington and with the participation of crochet lace makers, a 1.5 metre high model of the round tower was designed and constructed using a base of copper wire and stainless steel, and overlaid with crochet lace squares.

A number of design ideas were worked through for the crochet lace motifs and the final selection had three different thread sizes and three different colour shades, ranging from white to ecru. Both traditional motifs and motifs newly designed by ICLR were chosen to represent the building blocks. The variety of the sizes and colours of the motifs reflects the variation in the stone blocks in the medieval tower itself.

Two public events, including a hands-on workshop, were held to promote the project and to share skills and materials for the construction of the motifs. More than 30 makers contributed motifs. They represented a widespread diaspora of crochet lace communities as they included makers from Dublin, Offaly, Westmeath, Kildare, Cork, Canada, and the UK.

Interestingly, one of the chosen motifs represents a reworking of one of the patterns which was made by local women for one of Sybil Connolly's haute couture gowns. The pattern for



this motif was kindly made available for inclusion in this project and was reworked by two Clondalkin women who are descendants of the original makers. A wonderful example of history coming full circle!

The finished motifs were collected by ICLR and sewn into the copper wire framework by Fiona Harrington.

The final reveal of the Clondalkin Crochet Lace Tower took place at a launch event in Clondalkin Library during National Heritage Week 2023. The crochet lace making part of the project had taken place in the post-Covid period when large group gatherings weren't common, so the crocheting had taken place on a more individual or small group basis.

Due to this, only a core project group was familiar with the emerging design and construction details of the crochet lace tower and there was a big wow factor when the wider group got to



see the finished tower for the first time at the launch event. An audible gasp of surprise and genuine delight came from the audience, followed by great applause.

Rosaleen Dwyer, the South Dublin Heritage Officer, coordinated the administration of the project and liaised with South Dublin County Library to organise the launch event, and to prepare a timetable for the crochet lace tower's tour in other South Dublin County libraries. It will eventually become a permanent exhibit in the Clondalkin Round Tower Visitor Centre.

The success of this project and the positive experiences expressed by many of the participants has sparked a desire for other follow-on creative projects using crochet lace and for local classes. Irish Crochet Lace Revival has responded to this interest by advertising for classes to commence in October 2023.



For the women involved in the cottage industry for Sybil Connolly's haute couture designs in the 1950s and 1960s, the patterns were communicated orally, not in a written format. They were taught to key experienced women who, in turn, taught and communicated them to other women in the lace making community. The reworking of one of these motifs and its return to the consciousness of the wider community was a standout moment from this project and will be a lasting heritage legacy.

The Glove Factory

TIPPERARY COUNTY COUNCIL



The restored Glove Factory building. Photo: Mary Margaret Ryan

For centuries, gloves were very much an essential part of people's everyday outfits. They were much more than an accessory or something worn only for warmth in winter.

Such was the demand for gloves that there was a glove making industry in Ireland, including a number of factories located in Tipperary Town, from the 1900s right up till the last one closed in the 1970s.

One such factory was located on James Street. The building dates from the 1800s and was a townhouse with a commercial premises at ground level. In the 1930s, a glove factory was established and it went on to operate there for around 40 years.

After gloves became less fashionable in the 1970s, the factory ceased business and the building has been vacant ever since.

The idea to preserve the heritage of the building came about through a few different ways. Each year, suitable projects that could benefit from the Historic Towns Initiative (HTI) are considered in the various areas of Tipperary. HTI is a joint undertaking by the Heritage Council and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, which aims to promote the heritage-led regeneration of Ireland's historic towns.

The Tipperary Town Revitalisation Taskforce had also noted that the vacancy levels in the town were exceptionally high and both the Taskforce and Tipperary County Council were looking at ways to promote change in this.

The Glove Factory building had been bought by Abercorn Construction and planning was granted for accommodation units and a ground floor retail unit. As the Historic Towns Initiative in 2022 was open to accepting applications from private individuals for adaptation/reuse of heritage buildings, it seemed like a very appropriate route to follow. It would have multiple benefits for the streetscape and the architectural heritage of the town.

There had also been renewed interest in the last number of years in the premises and its cultural history. In 2018, the interior of the building was photographed for an exhibition at the Tipperary Excel Heritage Centre and a booklet was launched with testimonies from former workers and their families.

The application to the HTI for conservation works to the building was successful. The first step was to organise a walk through with the developer and members of the Taskforce group.



Quality control at the Glove Factory.

It was discovered that the interior was in bad repair but that it contained a large number of samples, machinery, and other artefacts from the Glove Factory. The factory's upper level contained numerous documents and some additional furniture.

Items of interest were selected, boxed, and collected for temporary storage until a space for display can be found in Tipperary Town.

A programme of conservation works took place during 2022 as the building was cleared out. Interior doors, skirtings and fireplaces were removed to see what could be salvaged, and thankfully much could be conserved. The windows were all sent to a conservation specialist for repair, as was the front door.

Planning permission had been granted to plaster the exterior of the building but once the conservation team saw the brickwork when working



Before and after the works. Second photo: Mary Margaret Ryan

on the exterior, they decided to keep it and it was repointed, bringing the façade back to its former glory. The chimney was dismantled and rebuilt as part of the roof works.

One challenge during the project was that the party wall with the adjoining property was found to be very thin and unstable, so this was rebuilt providing insulation for both parties.

Throughout the process, the Tipperary Heritage Officer, Roisin O'Grady, attended site meetings with the developer and the conservation team that they'd appointed for the works.

While the overall building project was privately funded, the Historic Towns Initiative grant was allocated for the conservation element of the project and this was match funded by the developer, meaning that the amount spent on the conservation elements of the project was effectively doubled.

Most people agree that seeing the

building for the first time after the works and without the scaffolding was very memorable. A disused building has been brought back into use after almost 50 years of lying vacant.

Had there been no intervention, the building would have fallen further into disrepair and may have reached a point where many of the key architectural features would have been lost. The building enhances the streetscape and sits very naturally in its surrounds. The provision of accommodation and retail units at this location will add to community on the street and increase activity and footfall in the area.

There's been a lot of positive feedback from members of the public and interest from media outlets who've featured the good news story. There's still a lot of fondness locally for the Glove Factory and for the glove industry which was so prevalent in the town (as well as a number of factories, the glove trade also allowed for a strong cottage industry as women could work from their own homes).

This interest continued on through a project funded by the Heritage Council's Community Grant Scheme



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8Q1XQmFpsA>



Quality control at the Glove Factory 1940s

and led by the Tipperary Town Revitalisation Task Force in association with Tipperary Excel Heritage. A film about the glove industry in Tipperary Town combined documentary with a short dramatic re-enactment.

The film premiered in September 2022 to a full house at the local cinema and has been very well received. It's available to watch on YouTube.

The high regard that the people in Tipperary Town have for the glove industry and the fond memories are clear to see in the exhibition, booklet, and film produced in the past few years. The crowning jewel is the Glove Factory building on James Street, with the partnership between the local community, the Council's Heritage Office, and the developer to preserve its important heritage as it's revitalised as a thriving part of Tipperary Town.

Ardmore Head Grazing Project

WATERFORD CITY & COUNTY COUNCIL



Walkers on the picturesque Ardmore Cliff Walk in Waterford in early summer 2023 may have done a double take when they first spotted a group of goats nearby. Why had a small herd suddenly appeared in a patch of land alongside the popular loop walk?

The answer to that question is that the goats were part of a conservation grazing project organised by Ardmore Tidy Towns, with support from the Waterford Heritage Officer, Bernadette Guest.

Ardmore Head is a Special Area of Conservation due to its unique sea cliff vegetation, including the visually stunning purple bell heather and yellow western gorse that forms a coastal heath. A botanical survey in June 2022 recorded an impressive 175 plant species along the stretch of walkway. It's known that these types of habitats not only contain varied plant species but are also home to a large number and range of bird and invertebrate species.

Over recent decades, however, common gorse and bracken had invasively grown along the headland due to lack of grazing.

Something needed to be done to reduce this invasive growth and encourage favourable conditions for the return of coastal heath and to also improve the biodiversity of the site. In addition, it was known that vegetation

cover at the adjacent Ram Head was concealing a World War 2 neutrality marker, Éire 20, and there was a desire to bring this to light again (as has been happening in other locations around Ireland).

After funding was secured and with the consent of the landowner, a plan was devised for the Ardmore Head Grazing Project. A herd of goats would be brought in to graze and trample on vegetation in a targeted area over a period of six weeks from May to July 2023. This would take place in a plot of land next to the Ardmore Cliff Walk so the public could see the conservation plan in action while out for a stroll.

Funding was provided by the Heritage Council and Waterford City and County Council under the County Heritage Plan Fund.

Goat herder William Walsh of Billy's Rent a Goat supplied eight grazing goats for the 2.5 acre plot which was fenced off and powered by solar, and monitored using a fence app.

The welfare of the goats was regularly checked and their nutritional needs were met by grazing on the vegetation (supplementary feeding was not needed). The site was monitored regularly to check for signs of under grazing and/or over grazing.

William also attended on site several



Goat herder William Walsh at work on Ardmore Head. Photo: Billy Harty (Ardmore Tidy Towns)

times to deliver Question and Answer sessions about the project and the goats themselves.

The Q&As built awareness around the project, encouraging conversations about land care, biodiversity, our heritage, and our natural environment and ecosystems.

William also visited local schools to explain the project. This educational aspect was reinforced when many students visited Ardmore Head to see the goat grazing in action.

There was a noticeable rise in pedestrian activity along Ardmore Cliff Walk due to people's awareness of the goats being on site. The public learnt about the project through Ardmore Tidy Towns social media posts and from features in local media including the Dungarvan Observer, the Irish Examiner, WLR FM and Youghal Community Radio.

Messaging went out to keep a



Norwegian Ambassador to Ireland, Mari Skäre, William Walsh and Billy Harty (Ardmore Tidy Towns) during a Q&A session in Ardmore in May 2023. Photo: Bernadette Guest

respectful distance from the goats, to keep dogs on a lead, and not to feed the goats (after all, the project was centred around them eating the invasive vegetation!)

And if you're wondering why goats were chosen for conservation grazing at Ardmore Head, it's because they like to browse on woody shrubs (more so than sheep and cattle do). They also can easily handle challenging terrain and they're useful for managing scrub on open habitats, like species-rich grassland.

The benefits of having goats in the grazing plot are clear in terms of them eating vegetation, trampling on vegetation and, as an added bonus, their droppings are a valuable resource for certain invertebrates.

The increase in biodiversity of plant species has a knock-on effect for animals such as butterflies, bees, bats and birds. It creates a healthier



ecosystem not just for animals but for people too as we are all interconnected and interdependent as part of the circle of life.

2023 was the first year of the pilot scheme at Ardmore Head and it will take a number of years (likely up to five years) for conservation/biodiversity results to become clear. It is known, though, that when this headland was grazed by different animals in the past, it did help to keep the common gorse at bay.

It's also hoped that as more common gorse and bracken is cleared from the site by the goats, the Éire 20 sign will be revealed and can also be restored, which would be an important historical and cultural development. It would be the most southeastern of the Éire signs to be uncovered around the Irish coastline.

There is a recommendation for 2024 to use the goats for grazing in late summer and early autumn (this gives the habitat a resting period and allows wildflowers to grow, flower and set seed each year).

The Ardmore Head Grazing Project is a conservation project that captured people's imaginations but, interestingly, it was based on a remedy from the past. Showing that sometimes the old ways of doing things are well worth bringing back.

The project is also a really positive example of community engagement with local habitat management and of citizen science. It's hoped that it can inspire other community groups to carry out similar projects in their local areas.



Westmeath Field Names Recording Project

WESTMEATH COUNTY COUNCIL

The names of fields are a valuable part of our local heritage but many of them have not been formally recorded, often only surviving in the oral tradition. When members of older generations pass on, and when land ownership changes, field names are at risk of being lost forever.

The Westmeath Field Names Recording Project began as a pilot project in 2018, sparked by an action in the Westmeath Heritage Plan 2018 – 2023, and it has continued in the following years.

It aims to engage members of the community in recording the names of fields in their area/s of Westmeath, so that this important part of our heritage can be documented and, where appropriate, interpreted, before it is lost.

Field names can tell us much about our local areas - how people appreciated the physical landscape, its hills and hollows, streams, and bogs. It also tells us about a place's history and traditions, from holy wells to fairy forts, from old settlements to estates.

Westmeath Heritage Officer Melanie McQuade was involved in developing and championing the project from its pilot stage. At the beginning of the project, a coordinator and data manager were appointed and three community groups worked on the project.

Each group collected and documented the names of fields in their area. By early 2020, several groups across Westmeath were documenting the names of fields.

Covid-19 restrictions meant that in-person meetings, which were the main driver of the project, had to be postponed. And so the focus moved towards analysis of the names collected to date and towards further research. This included detailed analysis of the 1930s Schools' Folklore Collection and other written sources.

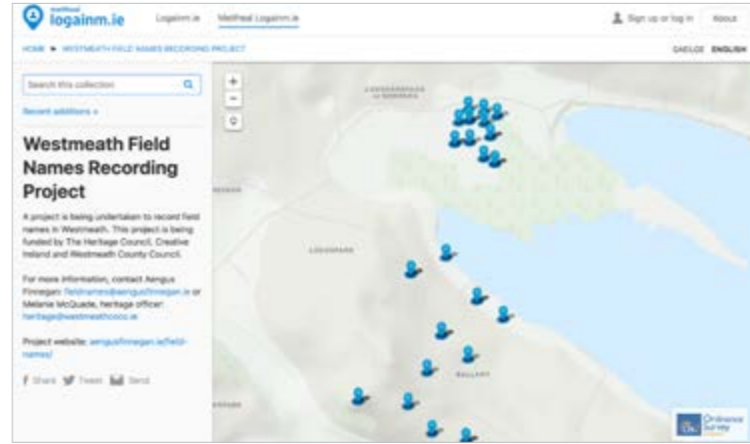
The names recorded in the Collection (many of which are still in use today) proved helpful in understanding/interpreting the names recorded by volunteers. This was especially the case in regard to historic farming practices.

For example, hops are mentioned in two field names collected during the Westmeath Field Names Recording Project and both of these names, plus a further two examples, are recorded in the Schools' Folklore Collection. This suggests that hops, a crop almost unheard of in Ireland before the upsurge in craft beer production, were quite widely grown at one stage in County Westmeath.

An Irish language aspect of the project involved analysis of names to



The Taghmon group consulting a map for the Westmeath Field Names Recording Project. Photo: Melanie McQuade



The project website: <https://meitheal.logainm.ie/westmeath-field-names/>

determine which were of Irish language derivation. This was carried out by Aengus Finnegan, an expert in this field and the project coordinator.

Around five per cent of the names collected are of Irish language derivation and these names are of particular interest, as there are relatively few records of the dialect of Irish formerly spoken in many parts of Westmeath. The survival of these names suggests that Irish was natively spoken in many parts of Westmeath until much more recently than is popularly assumed.

The Westmeath Heritage Officer was involved in promoting the project and encouraging community involvement. She also secured funding for the project and coordinated with the Geographic Information System technician in Westmeath County Council to print maps for volunteer recorders to use.

The project was mainly funded by the Heritage Council under the County Heritage Plan funding stream, with support funding from Westmeath County Council and some funding also provided by Creative Ireland.

Two booklets have been printed about the project – the first is an introduction and the second an update of the project outcomes. A number of project talks were held during National Heritage Week in 2020, 2021 and 2022 (they are all available to watch on Westmeath County Council’s YouTube channel).

The names collected to date have been uploaded to a [website resource](#). There is also a [project website](#).

There was a lot of media interest in the project, including features on TG4, RTÉ One’s John Creedon’s Atlas of Ireland and Radio Midlands 103. Articles also appeared in *The Irish Times*, *Agriland* and *The Westmeath Independent*.

Collected names website.
<https://meitheal.logainm.ie/westmeath-field-names/>



Project website.
<http://aengusfinnegan.ie/field-names/>



A meeting of the Ballymore group of the Westmeath Field Names Recording Project. Photo: Aengus Finnegan

The names collected to date have offered interesting details on past agricultural practices and changes in landscape. For example, *mónín*, meaning little bog, is often recorded. In some cases, these areas of land have been drained in recent times with no evidence of the boggy conditions for which they were named.

Field names can also tell us about the people who previously owned the land – their names may survive in the name

of the field, as may elements of local history, folklore and tradition. Overall, the project provided a valuable means to preserve a field name heritage that mainly survives in oral tradition, and it also clearly demonstrates the value of preserving our place name heritage.

Fethard Castle Conservation Works

WEXFORD COUNTY COUNCIL



Fethard Castle, following conservation works. Photo: Catherine McLoughlin

Fethard Castle, in southwest Wexford, was built in the 15th century on the site of a previous castle dating back to the 12th century. The 15th century castle, made of stone, was most probably built by the Bishop of Ferns as a summer residence.

A really important and unique medieval complex, the Castle is a national monument. Its primary structure is an L-shaped fortified house and it also features a prominent four storey round tower.

In the 17th century, Fethard Castle became the property of the Loftus family, who also owned the grand residence at Loftus Hall on the Hook Peninsula. At different points, the Castle was occupied by tenants of the Loftus estate until it was abandoned in 1922 and subsequently fell into ruin.

Conservation works were previously undertaken at the Castle during the 1990s but they were not finished. For health and safety reasons, a fence was put up and this remained in place for many years.

Wexford Heritage Officer Catherine McLoughlin saw the need for an intervention for this important monument to make it safe and bring it back to the heart of the village.

Firstly, a conservation management plan for the building, which is owned



by Wexford County Council, was carried out. This plan was funded by the Community Heritage Grant Scheme, which, in turn, is funded by the Heritage Council and the relevant local authority (in this case, Wexford County Council).

On completion of the plan, funding was sought, and secured, from the Community Monuments Fund (run by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage). This Fund is in place to support the conservation, maintenance, protection and promotion of local monuments



Minister of State for Nature, Heritage and Electoral Reform, Malcom Noonan T.D., meeting the project team and viewing the works at Fethard Castle. Photo: Liam Ryan

and historic sites. Funding was also provided by Wexford County Council.

The Wexford Heritage Officer procured the services needed to undertake the important conservation works.

The aim of these was to stabilise the remains of Fethard Castle and allow the security fence to be removed, thus facilitating public access once again. Conservation works took place in two phases during 2021 and 2022. Extensive scaffolding was added to the Castle's exterior as works got underway.

The Fethard Community Development Association was an important stakeholder throughout all parts of the process. It was clear to the Heritage Officer that Fethard Castle was extremely important to the local people and they were very eager for and supportive of access being restored to the monument.

In 2023, the works were completed and public access was restored to the exterior of the monument. Not only is this a benefit for local people but it also helps to attract visitors to the village, as Fethard is a popular place for tourists and holiday makers. The ruin was already popular with tourists who use the green areas in front and beyond of the building to picnic and rest, and it's hoped that the conservation works will draw even more people to enjoy the grounds and the views of the Castle.



Brittas Bay Conservation Project

WICKLOW COUNTY COUNCIL



Photo: Deirdre Burns

The coastal areas in Wicklow contain some of the county's most valuable habitats but are also experiencing the greatest management issues and threats due to recreational pressure and climate change.

The Brittas Bay Conservation Project is trialling a suite of actions to better manage this popular coastal amenity in County Wicklow for nature and for people.

Brittas Bay north and south beaches and dunes are key coastal properties in council ownership. It was identified that there was an information gap about the status of the species in the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a lack of an agreed vision for managing this aspect of the beach amenity. The Brittas Bay Conservation Project set out to fill in this information gap and it kicked off in 2019 with Wicklow Heritage Officer Deirdre Burns co-ordinating the drawing up of ecological management advice for the council-owned beach and dune system at Brittas Bay.

Since that time (2019-2023), an annual work programme has been co-ordinated to enhance the ecological and climate resilience of the dune system, to collate biodiversity data, and increase awareness and community engagement through a 'Behind the Beach' programme. The project is

funded by the Heritage Council and the National Biodiversity Action Plan Fund, along with in-kind support from Wicklow County Council.

Brittas Bay has an extensive sand dune system with well-developed plant communities. The area contains two legally protected plants, as well as a number of other rare or scarce plant species.

Decalcified dune health is rare in Ireland, recorded at only four sites in the country according to the Sand Dune Monitoring Project (2011). Three of the sites are in the northwest of Ireland, with Brittas Bay being the only other site. The habitat type is characterised by the presence of heather and gorse species. The main threats to decalcified dune health at Brittas have been identified as scrub encroachment and lack of grazing.

Restoring and improving the conservation status of dune grassland and decalcified dune health is being addressed by the trial mowing and trial grazing plots.

Trialled annual mowing of vegetation over the past four years has shown positive results – the dune habitat is noticeably enhanced with a reduction in bracken, an increase in floral diversity, increased rabbit activity (grazing) and more bell heather being observed.



Aerial view showing extent of Sea Buckthorn removal by volunteers. Photo: Alan Lauder

A fenced-in grazing plot was introduced in 2022 and conservation grazing using Droimeann cattle took place over several months that year and also in 2023. The Droimeann is a rare breed of small, hardy cattle that doesn't graze vegetation too close to the ground. This, combined with disturbance of the ground caused by trampling, makes the breed ideal for habitat restoration.

It's hoped that a continued grazing regime over the coming years will result in the reduction of bracken dominance in the plot, along the lines of what has happened with the mowing regime in the adjacent plot.

Biodiversity monitoring is another key work programme in the Brittas Bay Conservation Project. A rich flora and fauna have persisted on the site despite extensive amenity use and adjacent farming.

Botanical recording, butterfly



'Dawn in the Dunes' event for National Biodiversity Week (May 2022). Photo: Deirdre Burns

recording and identification workshops, and bird identification field outings have all taken place during the project, along with sea buckthorn volunteer days to record and remove what is an invasive species.

Community involvement is an important aspect of the project. In 2022, a dawn chorus walk took place as part of Biodiversity Week activities and later in the summer, 'Behind the Beach', a dedicated programme of biodiversity themed community events was launched at Brittas Bay. Recent events have included a butterfly workshop, a migrant birds field outing and workshop, a dune clean-up by volunteers, and a Dynamic Dunes workshop.

Another key aspect of the Brittas Bay Conservation Project has been the development of new branding. New interpretation and signage will soon be introduced, highlighting to visitors



Six-spot Burnet butterfly, one of the species found at Brittas Bay. Photo: Justin Ivory

the ecological significance of the coastal areas and changing behaviours over time to reduce recreational pressure on sensitive habitats. The site accommodates c.100,000 visitors a year, mostly during the peak summer season, and this leads to pressures on the dune system and natural environment, and management issues associated with litter, dumping, fires, etc.

One of the major challenges of the project has been shifting the focus of managing Brittas Bay away from purely a beach amenity to also incorporating biodiversity and wildlife. Fortunately, that shift is clearly beginning to happen due to the programme of



Grayling butterfly in dunes - spotted during Butterfly Workshop in August 2022. Photo: Justin Ivory

works in place and particularly due to the engagement and community outreach part of the project.



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