

# The Hymany Way Slí Uí Mháine

# Portumna Meelick/Eyrecourt

## Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare and the Beara-Breifne March



In 1602 Munster was ravaged by war. The English forces of Elizabeth I had defeated the Irish and Spanish at the Battle of Kinsale and advanced to capture the territory of Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare, Chieftain of Beara. With many Irish chiefs in submission to the English crown, his continued support for the Irish cause and loyalty to Philip II of Spain was a last barrier to English ambitions to secure crown rule in Munster.

O'Sullivan Beare's main stronghold was Dunboy Castle overlooking the harbour of Berehaven. In June 1602, after an eleven-day siege, English forces breached the walls of Dunboy, killed its last defenders and forced the local population into submission. O'Sullivan Beare and an army of supporters withdrew to the Coomerkane Valley, near Glengarriff, and launched guerrilla attacks on their enemies.

Following a siege, the English army struck a blow at O'Sullivan Beare and captured his herd of four thousand sheep, two thousand cattle and one hundred ponies. The loss of supplies of milk, butter and meat, as well as essential pack animals, made it impossible to remain in the valley.

On New Year's Eve 1602, faced with almost certain starvation, O'Sullivan Beare fled with four hundred fighting men and six hundred camp followers – women, children, servants and porters: a thousand men and women on an epic march northwards.

O'Sullivan Beare was counting on his ally, O'Rourke of Breifne, to provide refuge at Leitrim Castle three hundred kilometres to the north. Travelling through Ireland at a time of war and severe food shortages they were viewed by local chiefs as outcasts and attacked. The need to stay ahead of their enemies meant that they were often unable to bury their dead or carry off their wounded. Women carried infants and many of the camp followers could not keep up. By the time they reached the River Shannon their numbers were as low as three- to four-hundred. With enemies on either side of the river they crossed at night in a boat made of the skins of twelve slaughtered horses, the meat almost certainly eaten by the starving in the camp. Two days later, at Aughrim, their path was blocked by English-led cavalry and infantry. O'Sullivan Beare's camp had no choice but to fight. Against all odds an exhausted army of refugees defeated greatly superior forces but were unable to rest. They had to travel a twenty mile detour during the night to escape further attack. As the Connaught mercenaries among O'Sullivan Beare's camp began to disappear and return home, the remaining refugees were continuously threatened.

On the fourteenth day O'Sullivan Beare reached Leitrim castle. Out of the original one thousand followers only thirty five remained.

## The Beara-Breifne and Hymany Ways

The Beara-Breifne Way follows the fourteen-day march taken by Donal O'Sullivan Beare and one thousand supporters in 1603. The Way, the longest in Ireland, runs almost the length of the country and takes the walker and cyclist to some of its most beautiful and least explored areas: along the coast of the Beara Peninsula, across six mountain ranges, along the banks of the River Shannon and through the lake regions of Roscommon and Leitrim. The landscape contains an extraordinary variety of heritage sites - prehistoric features, castle ruins and religious and battle sites – many of which bear witness to the march of four hundred years ago.



The Beara-Breifne Way interlinks a series of local ways. The local way in East Galway is called **The Hymany Way**. It traverses the plains of this area along its watercourses, including the banks of the river Shannon, through farmland and alongside the bogs for which the Irish midlands are famous.

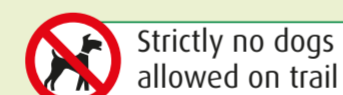
Both Ways follow off-road tracks and quiet back roads. However, traffic has increased in recent years and walkers and cyclists are asked to take care, particularly on the busy roads entering and leaving towns and villages. The Beara-Breifne and the Hymany Ways cross both public and private lands and dogs are not permitted on either Way. Access to private lands is by kind permission of local landowners, arranged by the local community, and especial thanks are extended to both landowners and community groups for their assistance in making this venture possible.

Walkers should be aware that both the The Hymany Way and The Beara-Breifne Way are closed to the public for one day each year, the 31st January.

## 6 Meelick Weir



Look out for the waymarker posts along the trail to guide you



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THE ROUTE

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## Portumna to Meelick (Walking)

This is a relatively easy and level walk – allow three to four hours to complete. The route leaves Portumna along the footpath running beside the N65 but, after a short stretch, walkers pass through a gate to join the raised bank of the harbour canal and then the River Shannon.

In summertime walkers will follow the river bank the whole way to Meelick. This stretch is popular with pleasure craft and anglers, and is particularly rich with birdlife and waterfowl.

In wintertime walkers are directed off the banks at Tiernascragh, about 8 kilometres from Portumna, onto quiet back roads for a further 7 kilometres. The reason for the seasonal rerouting of the walk is to minimise disturbance to overwintering birdlife in the protected area known as the Shannon Callows. Walkers are asked to respect this. The route rejoins the River Shannon near Meelick Church and continues along the river bank to Meelick Harbour. The route ends here but, for food, walkers can follow a number of quiet back roads into Eyrecourt which is a further 5 kilometres away.

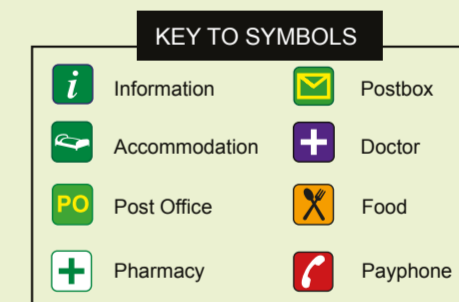
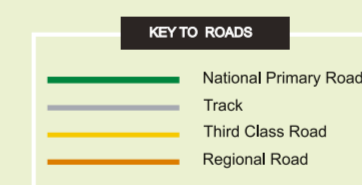
## Portumna to Eyrecourt via Meelick (Cycling 23km)

Cyclists exit Portumna northwards to join the R355 for just 2.5 kilometres before heading east / right, as signed at a forked junction. The route follows quiet, winding country roads past homesteads and the occasional large estate house. Well-signed junctions offer short detours to the Shannon banks – highly recommended if time allows. After 18 kilometres cyclists reach Meelick Harbour which offers a great vantage point over Shannon. Turn west for the last 5 kilometres to Eyrecourt.

## Country code for Walkers

- Respect farmland and the rural environment.
- Do not interfere with livestock, crops, machinery or other property.
- Do not light any fires, especially near forests.
- Leave all farm gates as you find them.
- Always keep children in close control and supervision.
- Please ensure you have good hiking footwear & rain gear.
- Keep away from livestock along the trail.
- Carry a mobile phone and inform someone about your intended itinerary.
- Do not enter farmland if you have dogs with you.
- Always use gates, stiles or other recognised access points, avoid damage to fences, hedges and walls.
- Take all litter home.
- Take special care on country roads.
- Avoid making unnecessary noise.
- Protect wildlife and plants and trees.
- Take heed of warning signs they are there for your protection.
- If following a recognised walking route keep to the waymarked route.
- Immediately report any damage caused by your actions to the farmer or landowner.
- Do not block farm entrances when parking.

Portumna to Meelick (walking)	
Grade:	Easy
Time:	4.0 hrs
Distance:	15.5 km
Total ascent:	N/A



## Along the Way

**1** The **ESB Embankment** is a flat topped, man-made bank or levee and was constructed by the Electricity Supply Board to act as a dam or dyke to control the winter water levels along the Galway side of the River Shannon and reduce flooding. Stretching from Portumna to Meelick, the embankment was completed in the 1920s, during the early years of the Irish State, and remains one of the finest pieces of working industrial archaeology in the country.

**2** **Crossing of the Shannon by O'Sullivan Beare.** On 7th January 1603, Donal O'Sullivan Beare and his followers arrived at a riverside clearing near Redwood Castle, north of Portumna, and prepared for their crossing of the River Shannon. The Shannon was a wide and dangerous waterway, particularly in winter, but it was hoped that the lands to the west of the Shannon would be less hostile to O'Sullivan Beare's camp as they marched northwards to meet his ally O'Rourke in Leitrim. In the seven days since their flight from the Beara Peninsula, O'Sullivan Beare's 1,000 followers had been reduced by a third. The marchers had endured almost continual attack from Munster Gaelic clans now loyal to English forces, and many in the camp were too exhausted, battle-weary, and hungry to keep pace. A significant number of English garrisons lay to the immediate north in King's County (Offaly). These, along with Donogh MacEgan of Redwood Castle, the newly appointed Queen's sheriff, prepared to attack the marchers. O'Sullivan Beare's exhausted and hungry camp had little option but to risk the crossing under the cover of darkness.

A small, circular boat was built in the marshy woodland but it sank, drowning ten from the camp. A second boat, almost 8 metres in length, took two days to build. Eleven horses were killed – the flesh eaten by a starving camp – and their skins used to cover the willow-framed boat. An estimated thirty people at a time were rowed across the Shannon; horses were probably tied to the poop and some of

the horseboys would have swum alongside the boat. At daybreak MacEgan's men attacked the remaining camp of women and children, but a group of forty soldiers who had been left behind to protect the camp ambushed the sheriff's band, killing MacEgan and fifteen of his men. Hopes that the marchers would encounter an easier passage on the Connacht side were quickly dispelled as the O'Maddens fired volleys of lead at the camp.

**3** The **River Shannon Callows (Special Area of Conservation)**, averaging 0.75 kilometres in width, stretches approximately 50 kilometres along the river from Athlone to Portumna. This diverse site of lowland wet grassland, alluvial deposit, and semi-natural woodlands supports a significant range of plant species and is habitat for otters, wild hares, wintering waterfowl. Sixty-six calling birds have been identified, and the Shannon Callows supports 40% of Ireland's comrakes.

**4** **Meelick Abbey** was founded in 1414 by the O'Madden family for the Order of Franciscans and is, according to local sources, the oldest church in Ireland still in use for Catholic worship. The original walls were exposed during recent restoration work and other features worth noting are the mounted mural slabs in false relief with Latin and English inscriptions, the small effigy of Saint Francis on the south wall, dating from the fifteenth century, and the single squat arch piece on the door to the sacristy. The corbelled remains of the cloister are to be found in the ruins surrounding the church.

**5** **Meelick Weir** and its adjoining rampart, was erected to control the river levels. It houses the mechanical winch used to raise and lower the sluices in winter to regulate the water flow and control flooding.



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# Portumna Meelick/Eyrecourt Clonfert/Laurencetown

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## Laurencetown An Baile Mór

PO X +

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## Eyrecourt Dún an Uchta

PO + X

<b>Meelick to Clonfert (walking)</b>
Grade: Easy
Time: 2.0 hrs
Distance: 8.0 km
Total ascent: N/A

<b>Meelick to Portumna (walking)</b>
Grade: Easy
Time: 4.0 hrs
Distance: 15.5 km
Total ascent: N/A

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### CLANS OF THE AREA



**Strictly no dogs allowed on trail**



Look out for the waymarker posts along the trail to guide you

## Meelick to Portumna (Walking)

This is a relatively easy and level walk for which 3-4 hours should be allowed. In wintertime walkers use quiet roads for 7 km before joining the banks of the River Shannon further downstream at Tiernascragh. This seasonal diversion is in place to minimise disturbance to overwintering birdlife in the protected area known as the Shannon Callows and walkers are asked to respect this. In summertime walkers follow the bank of the River Shannon and the raised bank along the harbour canal all the way to the N65 from where it is a short walk, on footpath, to the town of Portumna. The riverside stretch is popular with pleasure craft and anglers and is particularly rich with birdlife and waterfowl.

## Eyrecourt to Portumna (Cycling - 23 km)

Cyclists follow quiet roads for 5km to reach Meelick Harbour. The harbour offers a great vantage point over the River Shannon and its military past. The route onward to Portumna uses quiet, winding, country roads past homesteads and the occasional large estate house. If time allows, there are many well-signed junctions offering short detours to the Shannon banks. After approximately 15 km cyclists meet the R355 for the last 2km into the town of Portumna.

## Meelick to Clonfert (Walking)

Allow 2-3 hours for this section. From Meelick Harbour walkers follow the Shannon banks upriver for a short stretch before continuing along a combination of quiet roads and off-road tracks that avoid the Shannon flood plains. After 3-4 km the route skirts Kilnaborris bog which has been worked by locals for fuel for millennia. The walk eventually meets the Eyrecourt to Clonfert Road for the last 2km into this famous ecclesiastical settlement.

## Eyrecourt to Laurencetown via Clonfert Cross (Cycling - 14 km)

The route follows the R356 in the direction of Banagher for 2 km before turning onto the road for Clonfert. At Clonfert Cross cyclists can head straight for Clonfert with its spectacular cathedral or they may prefer to turn west for the remaining 8 km to Laurencetown. The route passes scenic open farmland and many historical ruins and buildings, most of which are on private land.

## Along the Way

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**5 Meelick Weir** and its adjoining rampart, was erected to control the river levels. It houses the mechanical winch used to raise and lower the sluices in winter to regulate the water flow and control flooding.

**6 The traditionally worked bogs** of Ireland have been a fuel source for millennia and manual methods of extraction have changed little. The sodden peat is cut with a flat spade (sleán) or hayknife and then lain flat on the grass for some weeks to allow the water to seep off before five or six of the shrunken pieces of turf are placed in a wigwam formation - 'standing it' - to let the wind dry them out. Typically turf cutting takes place during the height of the summer when the heat of the sun could best dry the turf.

**7 Brackloon Castle,** one of the many tower houses built by the O'Maddens in the region, was attacked and briefly occupied by English forces in the sixteenth century. The privately owned castle has recently been renovated and may be viewed from the road only.



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**KEY TO ROADS**

- National Primary Road
- Track
- Third Class Road
- Regional Road

**KEY TO SYMBOLS**

- Information
- Accommodation
- Post Office
- Pharmacy
- Postbox
- Doctor
- Food
- Payphone

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**Clonfert to Aughrim (walking)**

Grade: Easy  
Time: 7.5 hrs  
Distance: 26.0 km  
Total ascent: N/A

**Clonfert to Meelick (walking)**

Grade: Easy  
Time: 2.0 hrs  
Distance: 8.0 km  
Total ascent: N/A

## Clonfert to Meelick (Walking)

Allow 2-3 hours to complete this section of the route. Approximately 2 kms outside Clonfert, walkers skirt Kilnborris Bog, which has been worked by locals for fuel for millennia. The route then continues along a combination of quiet roads and off-road tracks that avoid the Shannon Flood Plains before following the Shannon Riverbanks for the last stretch to Meelick Harbour.

## Laurencetown to Eyrecourt via Clonfert Cross (Cycling)

Cyclists take the road to Banagher and pass scenic open farmland and many historical ruins and buildings, most of which are on private land. At Clonfert Cross cyclists can head for Clonfert (2 kms) to visit its famous cathedral, or opt for Eyrecourt. The route uses the R356 for the last 2 kms to Eyrecourt and cyclists should exercise caution. Length - circa 14 kms.

## Clonfert to Aughrim (Walking)

This is a very long section (8-9 hours) so walkers are offered two opportunities to exit the route early: south to Laurencetown or north to Ballinasloe.

The route leaves Clonfert along a quiet cul de sac before continuing on an off-road track. For 6 kms the route passes through farmland and forestry. On reaching a crossroads, walkers are offered the choice of turning south for Laurencetown (3-4 km away), or continuing towards Aughrim. The main route runs alongside industrially worked bogs and negotiates a series of junctions before joining the track along the Ballinasloe section of the Grand Canal (now partially filled). At a junction walkers are offered a further choice: continue northwards to Ballinasloe (a further 4 km); or continue onwards for Aughrim. This part of the route uses a mixture of off-road tracks and quiet roads - with the exception of a 1 kilometre stretch along the busy R355 where care should be taken. The route passes through the famous battle site at Aughrim Hill before crossing over the R446 and heading into Aughrim Village itself.

## Laurencetown to Aughrim (Cycling)

Cyclists use the main road between Laurencetown and Aughrim. Nonetheless this is a quiet country road through open farmland and bounded by hedgerows. Just before reaching the R446 the route passes by Aughrim Hill, site of the famous battle, and viewing is highly recommended. Cyclists should take care crossing over the R446 before reaching Aughrim Village. Length - circa 12 km.

## Along the Way

- Meelick Abbey** was founded in 1414 by the O'Madden family for the Order of Franciscans and is, according to local sources, the oldest church in Ireland still in use for Catholic worship. The original walls were exposed during recent restoration work and notable features include the mounted mural slabs in false relief with Latin and English inscriptions, the small fifteenth-century effigy of Saint Francis on the south wall, and the single squat arch piece on the door to the sacristy. The corbelled remains of the cloister are to be found in the ruins surrounding the church.
- Meelick Weir** and its adjoining rampart were erected to control the river levels. The structure houses the mechanical winch used to raise and lower the sluices in winter in order to regulate the water flow and control flooding.
- The **traditionally worked bogs** of Ireland have been a fuel source for millennia and manual methods of extraction have changed little. The sodden peat is cut with a flat spade or hayknife and laid flat on the grass for some weeks to allow the water to seep off. Then five or six of the shrunken pieces of turf are placed in a wigwam formation - 'standing it' - to let the wind dry them out. Turf cutting usually takes place in the height of summer, when the heat of the sun can best dry the turf.
- Industrially worked bogs** - Bord na Mona is the state owned body which has been industrially exploiting Irish bogs since the 1950s. A network of narrow gauge railways transports the raw peat from the outlying bog to the power station at Shannonbridge.
- The **Ballinasloe Branch of the Grand Canal** was opened in 1827, making it possible to transport goods and people between Ballinasloe and the cities of Dublin and Limerick. A large section of the 16 km canal was in-filled by Bord na Mona in the 1960s to facilitate their rail artery, but some of the towpaths still survive, as does Lismany Bridge, a dramatic humpback bridge which is itself a striking piece of industrial heritage.
- The Battle of Aughrim** (1691) - the bloodiest in Irish soil - was the decisive battle in the Williamite war in Ireland. One year after the Battle of Boyne in 1690 - in which William of Orange, the newly crowned Protestant king of England, Scotland, and Ireland defeated the deposed Catholic King James II - the Jacobites (supporters of James) still held the line of the River Shannon and the ports of Limerick and Galway; the last links to their ally Louis XIV of France.

That July, when Williamite forces breached the river Shannon, Marquis de St Ruth, the French commander of Irish Jacobites, prepared for battle on Aughrim Hill. Both armies were approximately 20,000 strong. The Jacobites had early successes over Williamite infantry and cavalry, and it appeared that the Jacobite defences would not be breached. As the Marquis de St Ruth was rallying his cavalry to attack, a cannonball decapitated him. His death demoralized his horsemen, many of whom fled the battlefield, leaving the flanks open for Williamite forces to eventually surround the Jacobite infantry on Kilmomman Hill. 4,000 Jacobites and 3,000 Williamites died on one day.

On the 10th January 1603, the day after the hazardous Shannon crossing, O'Sullivan Beare's famished and battle-weary convoy had their passage blocked at **Aughrim Hill** by two troops of cavalry and five companies of soldiers under the command of Captain Henry Malby. O'Sullivan Beare's convoy scattered at the sight of this well-organised army. However, in a remarkable battle speech, O'Sullivan Beare rallied his exhausted troops to fight, though vastly outnumbered. Henry Malby and Richard Burke, his senior officer, were killed. Demoralized, the crown forces retreated to a nearby garrison. Despite his remarkable victory, O'Sullivan Beare and his camp, many of whom were wounded, marched 20 miles into the night to avoid further attacks from surrounding garrisons.



# The Hymany Way Slí Uí Mháine

# Clonfert/Laurencetown Aughrim Killure

## Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare and the Beara-Breifne March



In 1602 Munster was ravaged by war. The English forces of Elizabeth I had defeated the Irish and Spanish at the Battle of Kinsale and advanced to capture the territory of Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare, Chieftain of Beara. With many Irish chiefs in submission to the English crown, his continued support for the Irish cause and loyalty to Philip II of Spain was a last barrier to English ambitions to secure crown rule in Munster.

O'Sullivan Beare's main stronghold was Dunboy Castle overlooking the harbour of Berehaven. In June 1602, after an eleven-day siege, English forces breached the walls of Dunboy, killed its last defenders and forced the local population into submission. O'Sullivan Beare and an army of supporters withdrew to the Coomerkane Valley, near Glengarriff, and launched guerrilla attacks on their enemies.

Following a siege, the English army struck a blow at O'Sullivan Beare and captured his herd of four thousand sheep, two thousand cattle and one hundred ponies. The loss of supplies of milk, butter and meat, as well as essential pack animals, made it impossible to remain in the valley. On New Year's Eve 1602, faced with almost certain starvation, O'Sullivan Beare fled with four hundred fighting men and six hundred camp followers - women, children, servants and porters: a thousand men and women on an epic march northwards.

O'Sullivan Beare was counting on his ally, O'Rourke of Breifne, to provide refuge at Leitrim Castle three hundred kilometres to the north. Travelling through Ireland at a time of war and severe food shortages they were viewed by local chiefs as outcasts and attacked. The need to stay ahead of their enemies meant that they were often unable to bury their dead or carry off their wounded. Women carried infants and many of the camp followers could not keep up. By the time they reached the River Shannon their numbers were as low as three- to four-hundred. With enemies on either side of the river they crossed at night in a boat made of the skins of twelve slaughtered horses, the meat almost certainly eaten by the starving in the camp. Two days later, at Aughrim, their path was blocked by English-led cavalry and infantry. O'Sullivan Beare's camp had no choice but to fight. Against all odds an exhausted army of refugees defeated greatly superior forces but were unable to rest. They had to travel a twenty mile detour during the night to escape further attack. As the Connaught mercenaries among O'Sullivan Beare's camp began to disappear and return home, the remaining refugees were continuously threatened.

On the fourteenth day O'Sullivan Beare reached Leitrim castle. Out of the original one thousand followers only thirty five remained.

## The Beara-Breifne and Hymany Ways



The Beara-Breifne Way follows the fourteen-day march taken by Donal O'Sullivan Beare and one thousand supporters in 1603. The Way, the longest in Ireland, runs almost the length of the country and takes the walker and cyclist to some of its most beautiful and least explored areas: along the coast of the Beara Peninsula, across six mountain ranges, along the banks of the River Shannon and through the lake regions of Roscommon and Leitrim. The landscape contains an extraordinary variety of heritage sites - prehistoric features, castle ruins and religious and battle sites - many of which bear witness to the march of four hundred years ago.

The Beara-Breifne Way interlinks a series of local ways. The local way in East Galway is called **The Hymany Way**. It traverses the plains of this area along its watercourses, including the banks of the river Shannon, through farmland and alongside the bogs for which the Irish midlands are famous.

Both Ways follow off-road tracks and quiet back roads. However, traffic has increased in recent years and walkers and cyclists are asked to take care, particularly on the busy roads entering and leaving towns and villages. The Beara-Breifne and the Hymany Ways cross both public and private lands and dogs are not permitted on either Way. Access to private lands is by kind permission of local landowners, arranged by the local community, and special thanks are extended to both landowners and community groups for their assistance in making this venture possible.

Walkers should be aware that both the The Hymany Way and The Beara-Breifne Way are closed to the public for one day each year, the 31st January.



### Aughrim to Clonfert (Walking)

This is a very long section (8.9 hours) so walkers are offered two opportunities to exit the route early: north to Ballinasloe or south to Laurencetown.

The route follows quiet roads and tracks for the most part. The exceptions are crossing the R446 outside Aughrim and a 1 kilometre stretch along the busy R355, where caution is needed. South of the R446 the route passes the famous battle site at Aughrim Hill which is well worth a visit. Walkers then head southeast for 12 kms to reach the, now partially filled, Grand Canal. Here, they are offered the opportunity to exit northwards to Ballinasloe (4 km away) or to continue on towards Clonfert.

Exiting the banks of the canal, walkers must negotiate a series of well-signed junctions then follow a tarred track which runs alongside the industrially worked bogs of the state-owned company, Bord na Mona. On reaching a signed crossroads walkers are again offered the option of leaving the route for Laurencetown (3-4 km to the south) or remaining on the main route for the final 6 kms which follow an off-road track through farmland and forestry before arriving into the ecclesiastical settlement of Clonfert.

**CLANS OF THE AREA**

Kelly

**Strictly no dogs allowed on trail**

### Country code for Walkers

- Respect farmland and the rural environment.
- Do not interfere with livestock, crops, machinery or other property.
- Do not light any fires, especially near forests.
- Leave all farm gates as you find them.
- Always keep children in close control and supervision.
- Please ensure you have good hiking footwear & rain gear.
- Keep away from livestock along the trail.
- Carry a mobile phone and inform someone about your intended itinerary.
- Do not enter farmland if you have dogs with you.
- Always use gates, stiles or other recognised access points, avoid damage to fences, hedges and walls.
- Take all litter home.
- Take special care on country roads.
- Avoid making unnecessary noise.
- Protect wildlife and plants and trees.
- Take heed of warning signs they are there for your protection.
- If following a recognised walking route keep to the waymarked route.
- Immediately report any damage caused by your actions to the farmer or landowner.
- Do not block farm entrances when parking.

**Aughrim to Killure (walking)**

Grade: Easy

Time: 3.5 hrs

Distance: 13.0 km

Total ascent: N/A

**Aughrim to Clonfert (walking)**

Grade: Easy

Time: 7.5 hrs

Distance: 26.0 km

Total ascent: N/A

**DON'T FORGET to collect your Hymany Way Stamps WHICH CAN BE FOUND ALONG THE ROUTE**

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT [www.bearabreifneway.ie](http://www.bearabreifneway.ie)

**KEY TO ROADS**

- National Primary Road
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**KEY TO SYMBOLS**

Information	Postbox
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### Along the Way

- 1 The Battle of Aughrim (1691)** - the bloodiest on Irish soil - was the decisive battle in the Williamite war in Ireland. One year after the Battle of Boyne in 1690 - in which William of Orange, the newly crowned Protestant king of England, Scotland, and Ireland defeated the deposed Catholic King James II - the Jacobites (supporters of James) still held the line of the River Shannon and the ports of Limerick and Galway, the last links to their ally Louis XIV of France.  
That July, when Williamite forces breached the river Shannon, Marquis de St Ruth, the French commander of Irish Jacobites, prepared for battle on Aughrim Hill. Both armies were approximately 20,000 strong. The Jacobites had early successes over Williamite infantry and cavalry, and it appeared that the Jacobite defences would not be breached. As the Marquis de St Ruth was rallying his cavalry to attack, a cannonball decapitated him. His death demoralized his horsemen, many of whom fled the battlefield, leaving the flanks open for Williamite forces to eventually surround the Jacobite infantry on Kilcommadain Hill. 4,000 Jacobites and 3,000 Williamites died on one day.
- 2** Today a whitethorn bush known as **St Ruth's Bush** marks the spot where, according to tradition, the Marquis de St Ruth is believed to have fallen.
- 3** On the 10th January 1603, the day after the hazardous Shannon crossing, **O'Sullivan Beare's** famished and battle-wary convoy had their passage blocked at **Aughrim Hill** by two troops of cavalry and five companies of soldiers under the command of Captain Henry Malby. O'Sullivan Beare's convoy scattered at the sight of this well-organised army. However, in a remarkable battle speech, O'Sullivan Beare rallied his exhausted troops to fight, though vastly outnumbered. Henry Malby and Richard Burke, his senior officer, were killed. Demoralized, the crown forces retreated to a nearby garrison. Despite his remarkable victory, O'Sullivan Beare and his camp, many of whom were wounded, marched 20 miles into the night to avoid further attacks from surrounding garrisons.
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- 5** A **standing stone** which may date back to the Bronze Age can be seen at Cappagh Bridge. It is a squat granite boulder, roughly D shaped in plan with a notable groove across the top. An "axehead" was found nearby.
- 6 Esker Riada** and its exposed face is a series of ridges stretching from Dublin to Galway across the midlands. These geological features were created at the end of the last ice-age when silt, sand and gravel were deposited by rivers of glacial melt-water under the ice. "Eiscir" is a mound or an elevation and this was the highway used by travellers going from east to west through the midland bogs of Ireland. The eskers have developed an abundance of their own species of rich flora and wild flowers.
- 7 Cloonigny Castle**, now in ruins, with its moated site, was occupied by "Shane De Moy" (O Kelly) in 1574. Close by is a ringfort containing a souterrain.
- 8 Killure bog** due to the ecological importance of its plants and animals Killure Bog was declared a Natural Heritage Area in 2003. It consists of raised bog and cut over bog and part of it is afforested. Raised bogs are valuable wetland habitats and are becoming increasingly rare in Ireland.

Trail Management: Aughrim Dev. Co. Ltd. Aughrim, Ballinasloe. Email: [hymany@gmail.com](mailto:hymany@gmail.com)  
Tourist Office, Abbey Street, Portumna, Tel: 09097 41867 Email: [iridsegalway@eircom.net](mailto:iridsegalway@eircom.net)



# Hymany Way - Slí Uí Mháine

# Ballinasloe Link to the Hymany Way

## Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare and the Beara-Breifne March



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**KEY TO ROADS**

- National Primary Road
- Track
- Third Class Road
- Regional Road

**KEY TO SYMBOLS**

- Information
- Accommodation
- Post Office
- Pharmacy
- Postbox
- Doctor
- Food
- Payphone

<b>Hymany Way to Aughrim (walking)</b>
Grade: Easy
Time: 2.0 hrs
Distance: 8.0 km
Total ascent: N/A
<b>Hymany Way to Clonfert (walking)</b>
Grade: Easy
Time: 6.5 hrs
Distance: 16.0 km
Total ascent: N/A



Look out for the waymarker posts along the trail to guide you

## Ballinasloe to Hymany Way Link

The link to the Hymany Way is almost 1.5km at Poolboy Bog. Allow 0.5 hrs for the walk. Keep left at the Grand Canal Roundabout and look out for the waymarker posts along the trail to guide you. Care needs to be taken as these are busy roads leading out of the town. It is largely a built up area with a mix of housing and industrial development. Some footpaths are provided.

On arriving at the Hymany Way link you may go right for Aughrim or continue straight ahead and then turn left for Clonfert.

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**CLANS OF THE AREA**

Kelly

## Hymany Way to Clonfert (Walking)

Although this section of the route is relatively easy and level, being 16 km long the walker should allow 6.5 hrs for this part. On your walk towards to Clonfert you can see sections of the Grand Canal now partially closed in. The route continues alongside industrially worked bogs, forestry and farmland before arriving in Clonfert.

## Hymany Way link to Aughrim (Walking)

This is quite a short hike of about 8 km and should take about 2hrs. The route follows quiet roads and tracks for the most part. The exceptions are a 1 kilometre stretch along the busy R355, and the crossing of the R446 outside Aughrim where caution is needed. South of the R446 the route passes the famous Battle of Aughrim site at Aughrim Hill which is well worth a visit.

**BEC**  
Ballinasloe Enterprise Centre  
An Initiative of Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd.

This Information Board has been sponsored by **Ballinasloe Area Community Development Ltd**  
www.ballinasloeenterprise.ie  
Tel: 090 96 46516

## Along the Way

- Ballinasloe's Branch of the **Grand Canal** opened in 1827 was fourteen and a half miles long, twelve of which were through bogland. The ruins of the harbour master's house is all that is left to remind us of what was once a busy traffic terminal and the westernmost limit of the Grand Canal.
- "**The Teampailin**" (little temple), it was used as a burial place for unbaptised children until the 1950s. The ivy-covered remains of a medieval church used in Penal times is close the Canal.
- Canal Store** in Ballinasloe was at the terminus of the Grand Canal. By the 1840's over 14,000 tons of goods were being carried annually and passenger boats were catering for a large number of travellers. Those boats could carry up to 80 people. Traffic in general merchandise on the canal ended in 1956. The town now features a public marina, close by, which was developed on the River Suck to allow traffic from the Shannon Navigation System to access the town.
- The **horse** is synonymous with Ballinasloe and the Ballinasloe Horse Fair dating back to the 18th century takes place each October. A sculpture by James Mc Carthy adorns the Town's Square. The town is twinned with Chalonnnes-sur-Loire, in Maine-et-Loire, France.
- Ballinasloe Town** developed as a crossing point on the River Suck, a tributary of the Shannon. Richard Mor de Burgh is credited with founding the town. *Beal Abha Na Shua* translates as the mouth of the ford of the hostings.



The Teampailin

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FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT [www.bearabreifneway.ie](http://www.bearabreifneway.ie)



# The Hymany Way Slí Uí Mháine

# Aughrim Killure Clonbrock

## Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare and the Beara-Breifne March



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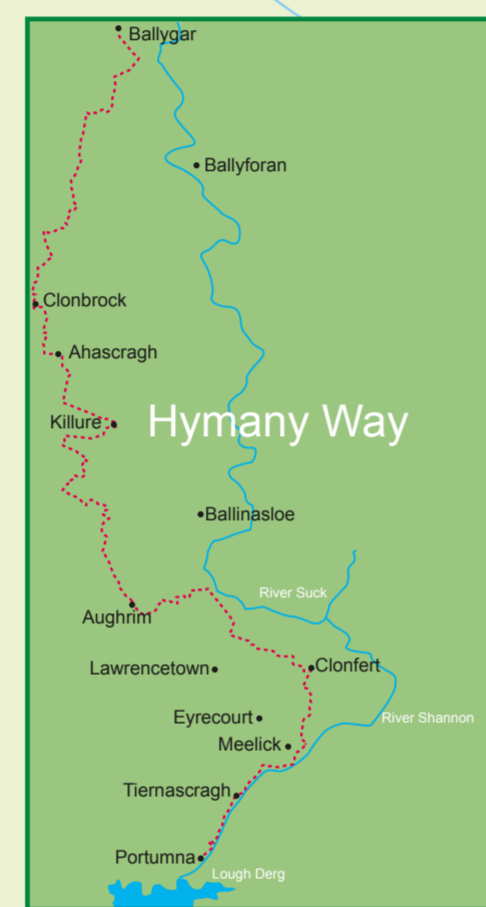
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KEY TO SYMBOLS			
	Information		Postbox
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	Post Office		Food
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**CLANS OF THE AREA**

Kelly

**Killure to Clonbrock (walking)**

Grade: Easy

Time: 2.5 hrs

Distance: 9.5 km

Total ascent: N/A

**Killure to Aughrim (walking)**

Grade: Easy

Time: 3.5 hrs

Distance: 13.0 km

Total ascent: N/A

As, historically, there is often more than one version of some place names, spellings used on this map may differ from those found on O.S. maps, literature and even some road signs.

Emergency Services: Dial 112 / 999  
Garda: (00) 9742009  
Met Eir: 112  
Met Eir: 112

Trail Management: Aughrim Dev. Co. Ltd. Aughrim, Ballinasloe. Email: [hymany@gmail.com](mailto:hymany@gmail.com)  
Tourist Office, Abbey Street, Portumna, Tel: 09097 41867 Email: [irdsegalway@eircom.net](mailto:irdsegalway@eircom.net)

### Killure to Clonbrock (Walking)

This a relatively short hike of about 2.5 hours. In inclement weather the first 500m of this section can be quite heavy going due mainly to the soil structure and lack of drainage. After a long stretch of boren, the walker arrives on a quiet country road meeting the Secondary road where care must be taken and the wide grass margins used. Turning right, the last part of this leg passes through some farmland and forest paths until it arrives on what was once the avenue into Clonbrock Estate, a local big house, that was accidentally burnt down in the 1980's. The walker has a choice of continuing on or travelling about 4 km to Athascragh village.



Look out for the waymarker posts along the trail to guide you



### Killure to Aughrim (Walking)

The walker should allow 3.5 hours for this 13 km stretch. In the first part of his journey to Aughrim the walker goes on tracks and on either side he encounters some raised bog or cut-away bog until he arrives at some rich pasture land and he can see in the distance the Esker Riada, once the path of traveller and pilgrim alike. Once again the walker travels by the banks of the Kilmalaw river and through rough pasture land followed by a quiet country road and some more pasture land until he follows a quiet contry road, past the Wade Estate and over the Motorway bridge into Aughrim.

### Killure to Clonbrock (Cycling)

Journing on from Killure, and at Athascragh village itself, the cyclist may pause for a time and browse the Information Board in the centre of the village displaying the many local gems of historical information. Leaving Athascragh behind, and at the sign for Ballyforan, the cyclist might decide to divert a little and continue on for a further 1km and ponder the Beara Breifne / Hymany Ways Trailhead Information Board where a deep sense of the historical significance of Clonbrock estate with its photographic house may be gleaned.

### Along the Way

- Killure bog** due to the ecological importance of its plants and animals Killure Bog was declared a Natural Heritage Area in 2003. It consists of raised bog and cut over bog and part of it is afforested. Raised bogs are valuable wetland habitats and are becoming increasingly rare in Ireland.
- Cloonigny Castle**, now in ruins, with its moated site, was occupied by "Shane De Moy" (O Kelly) in 1574. Close by is a ringfort containing a souterrain.
- Esker Riada** and its exposed face is a series of ridges stretching from Dublin to Galway across the midlands. These geological features were created at the end of the last ice-age when silt, sand and gravel were deposited by rivers of glacial melt-water under the ice. "Eiscir" is a mound or an elevation and this was the highway used by travellers going from east to west through the midland bogs of Ireland. The eskers have developed an abundance of their own species of rich flora and wild flowers.
- A **standing stone** which may date back to the Bronze Age can be seen at Cappagh Bridge. It is a squat granite boulder, roughly D shaped in plan with a notable groove across the top. An "axehead" was found nearby.
- Clonbrock** and the Dillon family was amongst the first of the Anglo-Norman families to

settle in Connaught in 1580 on a 3,000 acre farm and by 1870 the Clonbrock estate in Athascragh, Co. Galway amounted to 28,000 acres of land. During Famine times, the Dillons were described as one of the most considerate in the country. The estate papers were bought by the National Library in 1977 and the mansion was accidentally burned in 1983.

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# The Hymany Way Slí Uí Mháine

# Killure Clonbrock Ballygar

## Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare and the Beara-Breifne March



In 1602 Munster was ravaged by war. The English forces of Elizabeth I had defeated the Irish and Spanish at the Battle of Kinsale and advanced to capture the territory of Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare, Chief of Beara. With many Irish chiefs in submission to the English crown, his continued support for the Irish cause and loyalty to Philip II of Spain was a last barrier to English ambitions to secure crown rule in Munster.

O'Sullivan Beare's main stronghold was Dunboy Castle overlooking the harbour of Berehaven. In June 1602, after an eleven-day siege, English forces breached the walls of Dunboy, killed its last defenders and forced the local population into submission. O'Sullivan Beare and an army of supporters withdrew to the Coomerkane Valley, near Glengarriff, and launched guerrilla attacks on their enemies.

Following a siege, the English army struck a blow at O'Sullivan Beare and captured his herd of four thousand sheep, two thousand cattle and one hundred ponies. The loss of supplies of milk, butter and meat, as well as essential pack animals, made it impossible to remain in the valley. On New Year's Eve 1602, faced with almost certain starvation, O'Sullivan Beare fled with four hundred fighting men and six hundred camp followers - women, children, servants and porters: a thousand men and women on an epic march northwards.

O'Sullivan Beare was counting on his ally, O'Rourke of Breifne, to provide refuge at Leitrim Castle three hundred kilometres to the north. Travelling through Ireland at a time of war and severe food shortages they were viewed by local chiefs as outcasts and attacked. The need to stay ahead of their enemies meant that they were often unable to bury their dead or carry off their wounded. Women carried infants and many of the camp followers could not keep up. By the time they reached the River Shannon their numbers were as low as three- to four-hundred. With enemies on either side of the river they crossed at night in a boat made of the skins of twelve slaughtered horses, the meat almost certainly eaten by the starving in the camp. Two days later, at Aughrim, their path was blocked by English-led cavalry and infantry. O'Sullivan Beare's camp had no choice but to fight. Against all odds an exhausted army of refugees defeated greatly superior forces but were unable to rest. They had to travel a twenty mile detour during the night to escape further attack. As the Connaught mercenaries among O'Sullivan Beare's camp began to disappear and return home, the remaining refugees were continuously threatened.

On the fourteenth day O'Sullivan Beare reached Leitrim castle. Out of the original one thousand followers only thirty five remained.

## The Beara-Breifne and Hymany Ways

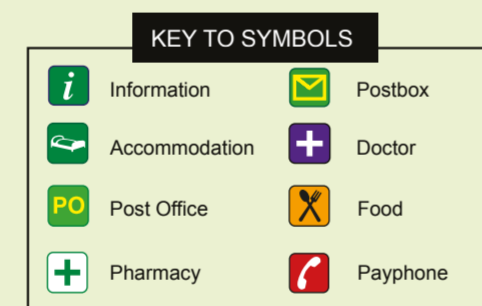
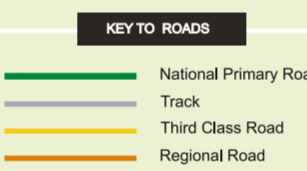
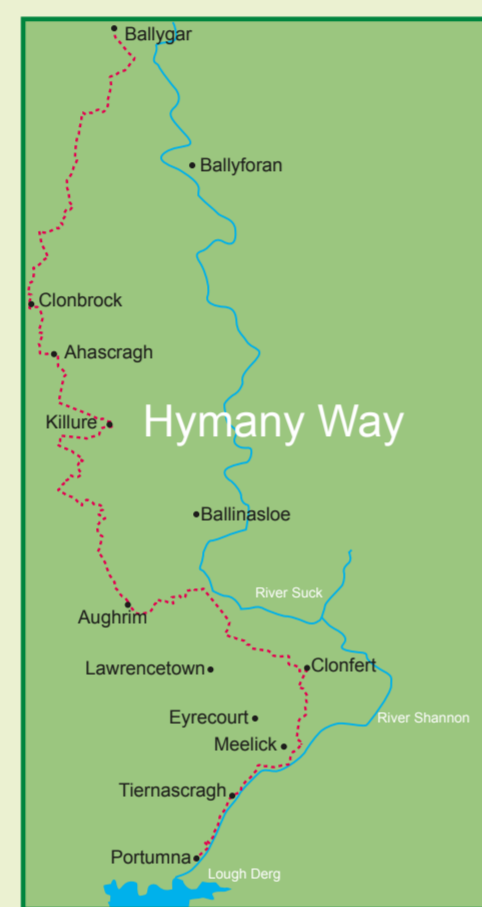
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The Beara-Breifne Way interlinks a series of local ways. The local way in East Galway is called **The Hymany Way**. It traverses the plains of this area along its watercourses, including the banks of the river Shannon, through farmland and alongside the bogs for which the Irish midlands are famous.

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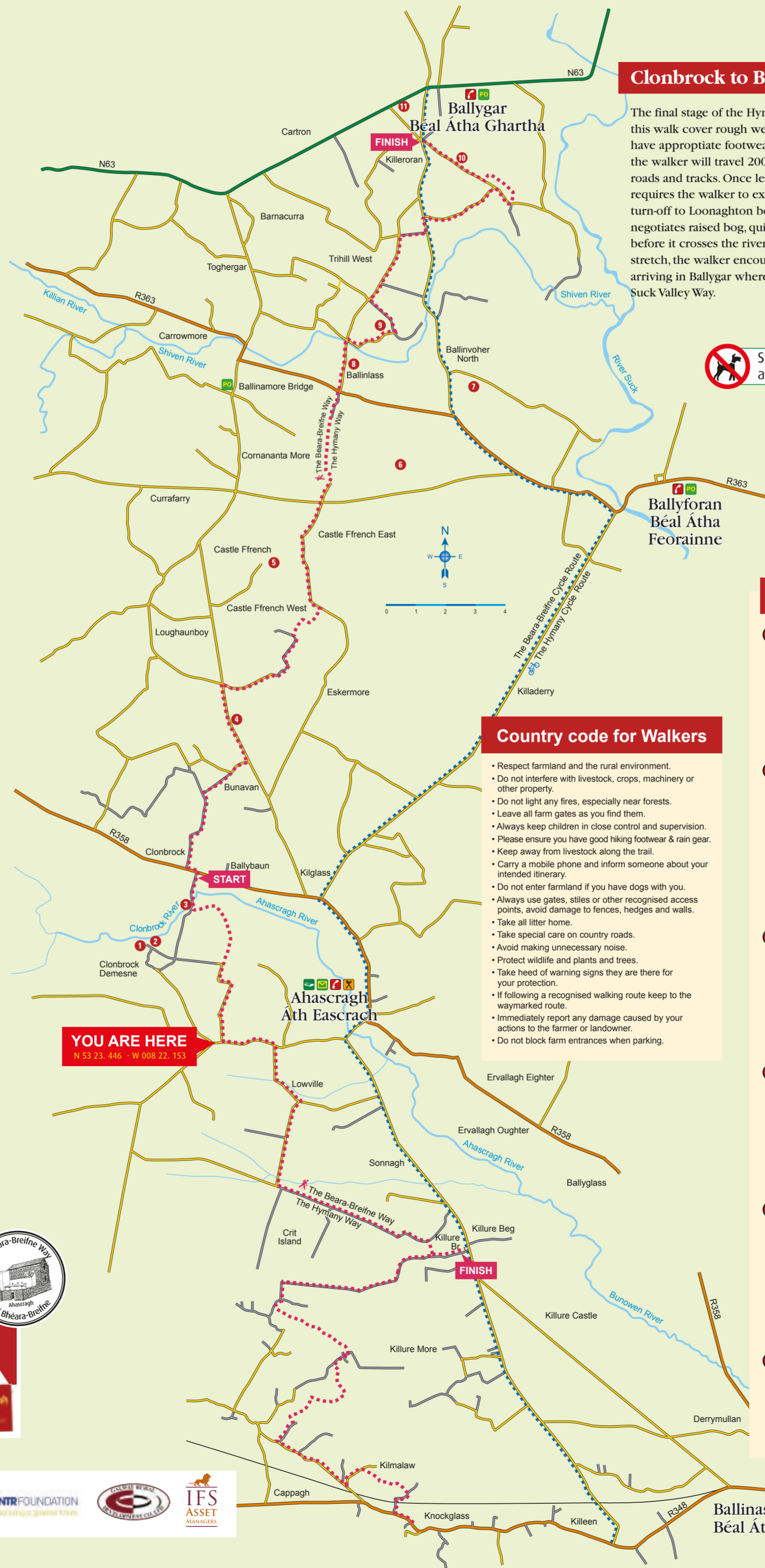


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Time: 4.5 hrs
Distance: 18.0 km
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On reverting to the route once more the cyclist passes Derryfada, one of Bord na Mona facilities where the state owned body has been exploiting Irish bogs since the 1950's. As the cyclist approaches Ballyforan he will encounter the thirteen-arch bridge spanning the river Suck built c. 1820 with its random coursed stone walls and cut limestone archings. About 5km farther on, and heading for Ballygar, the records recount that on one horrific day all the entire community of one village, Bohill, left during the famine 1845 to 1850. The cyclist should take time out to view quite a significant 93-foot stone tower built by Denis Kelly in 1860 in Killeroran Graveyard which is quite near to Ballygar town.

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Tourist Office, Abbey Street, Portumna, Tel: 09097 41867 Email: [irdsegalway@eircom.net](mailto:irdsegalway@eircom.net)





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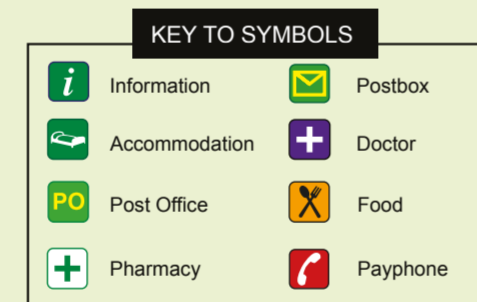
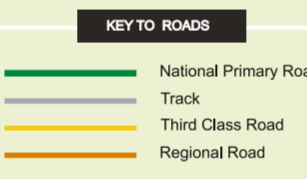
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Meteorological Weather Report: 1550123650

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Tourist Office, Abbey Street, Portumna, Tel: 09097 41867 Email: [irdselgalway@eircom.net](mailto:irdselgalway@eircom.net)

