

Built Heritage Action Plan for Abbey Village, County Galway



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people & nature

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1.1 Introduction

Abbey (An Mhainistir) is located between the foothills of the Sliabh Aughty Mountains and Lough Derg. The village name is derived from Kilnalahan Abbey in the centre of the village and is the site most clearly associated with the village. Heritage Training was provided for interested individuals and groups in Abbey in order to raise awareness of what heritage is, why it is important, where it is, and the many benefits of this resource for people, communities and the environment.

Residents from Abbey and the surrounding area met on three occasions with Ruth Minogue, to develop the heritage plan (Appendix 1). Ruth provided the training and facilitated the production of the local heritage action plan. The objectives and actions of the plan were decided by the local community. Heritage Action Plans provide a framework for protecting, managing and/or enhancing built and cultural heritage in the area through action led by the local community. The process of producing such a plan creates an opportunity to co-ordinate action among local groups, individuals, statutory bodies, and other organisations.

In this action plan we have taken a broad interpretation of heritage to include built and cultural heritage. Essentially we have viewed heritage as what we inherit from the past. The main focus has been on built and cultural heritage and a brief description of these are provided below:

Built heritage can be considered any individual or group of buildings, structures, monuments, or installations, or remains, which are associated with architectural, cultural, social, political, economic, or military history. Heritage items are considered to be of value because they reflect something individually or collectively about our history, something that is sufficiently important to require its preservation for future generations. It is therefore an important part of an area's identity and character.

Cultural heritage includes tangible culture (such as buildings, monuments, landscapes, books, works of art, and artifacts), intangible culture (such as folklore, traditions, language, and knowledge), and natural heritage (including culturally-significant landscapes, and biodiversity).

This Heritage Action Plan is structured as follows:

- Brief History and heritage highlights of Abbey
- Community Groups in Abbey
- Heritage Action Plan for Abbey
- List of useful references, resources and contacts.

1.2 Brief history and heritage highlights of Abbey

St Feichin, a sixth century saint, was according to tradition, the first person to preach Christianity in this area. His name lives on through the national school in the village; and a graveyard located about a mile south east of Abbey. Kilnalahan (the name of the abbey) is also derived from Cinéal Feichín the tribe of Feichin who was a sixth century Gaelic chieftain. Kilnalahan Abbey has a long and distinctive history being the only Carthusian monastery in Ireland. This French order was established by St Bruno in 1084 and the local Norman Knight, John de Cogan founded a charterhouse for the order in Abbey around 1252. It is understood the remote and well forested landscape was a key attraction for the Order in establishing the monastery here. *'Kilnalahan was situated in a secluded part of Connaught, an area that was densely*

wooded and away from all beaten tracks, and there was good land to produce food and plentiful waters for fishing and domestic purposes.¹

Over the next one hundred and fifty years the Abbey changed ownership with the Knight Hospitallers of St John of Jerusalem succeeding the Carthusians by the middle of the fourteenth century. Their engagement with Abbey seems to have been somewhat removed however and it is the Franciscan Order who took possession of the Abbey in 1390 and are now most closely associated with the site. It appears that the remoteness of the monastery and its by now small landholding made it less attractive for confiscation during the Reformation; nonetheless by 1603 Franciscan friars were still at Kilnalahan but the monastery was in poor condition having suffered considerable destruction during the Elizabethan wars. The photo below shows the Abbey taken by the photographer Robert French between 1865-1914.



Kilnalahan Abbey by Robert French. National Library of Ireland.

Whilst Kilnalahan Abbey is the most visible built heritage feature in the village, Abbey contains a variety of other heritage features and elements. These include the long established holy well known as Lady's well, fine examples of built heritage including agricultural buildings, shops and houses from the nineteenth century onwards as well as folklore and fieldnames and placenames. These are summarized below:

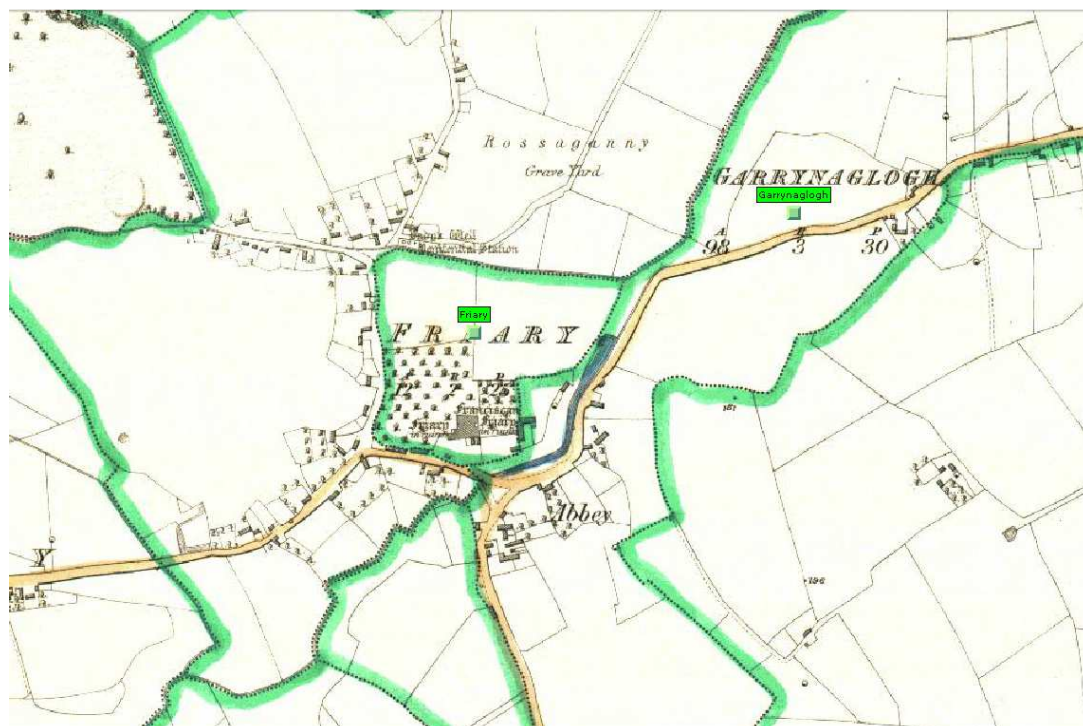
Ladywell is a holy well north of the Abbey and is thought to have been the source of water for the abbey; associated with a special devotion to Our Lady, the well was dedicated to her, hence the name Ladywell. Cures for toothaches, eye complaints and warts are associated with stations at this well and offerings in the forms of rags are left on the bush at the well, to indicate your detachment from worldliness. The particular period of worship at this well is from the Feast of the Assumption (15th August) to the 8th September (Birthday of the Blessed Virgin). The Abbey Community Development Association restored the well in the 1980s.

¹ The Abbey of Kilnalahan. Frank Burke, Abbey Community Development Association 1997



Ladywell by Robert French. National Library of Ireland.

Vernacular heritage: The village plan has changed little since the first edition of the Ordnance Survey maps carried out in County Galway between 1838-1839 (see below). It's essentially a quadrangular plan with the main services provided by a cluster of buildings south of the Abbey. Nowadays this includes a pub, shop and petrol station; however in the recent past the village also had a post office, and a wider range of services in the village. The buildings in the village are very well maintained and show the importance of agriculture to the village life. Buildings of interest include the former pub, Holohan's shop and pub, agricultural stores as well as ironworks such as the weigh bridge and waterpump. In addition, Eagle Hill is a large house and demesne north east of the village and the Church of Our Lady of Assumption are both listed on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. Together all these features contribute to a distinctive character and create a strong sense of place in Abbey village.



25" First Edition Map of Abbey, County Galway. Galway County Council and Ordnance Survey Ireland.

In addition to the built heritage that is visible and easily seen, cultural heritage is just as important and is often an easier way for people to engage in their history and heritage. The placenames, field names and customs of the area have been identified by the community as being of particular interest. Tommy Larkin a well known Land Leager from Woodford is buried in the Kilnalahan cemetery and his funeral was the largest attendance according to local history. Understanding how people lived and worked in the village as well as recording fieldnames has been highlighted as a project for this heritage action plan.

1.3 Community Groups in Abbey

Many towns and villages, like Abbey, have active community-based groups such as Tidy Towns, schools, farming organisations, anglers, scouts etc. that work tirelessly for the benefit of their members and the community. The production of a heritage action plan can help ensure that community-based projects will not have a negative impact on built and cultural heritage, and contribute to greater awareness and enhancement of the heritage resources in and around Abbey.

Abbey Community Development Association – set up with the primary focus of providing work opportunities for the unemployed in the region and at the same time improving and enhancing Abbey village. The group's initial objective was to secure approval for a Community Employment project and this was achieved in 1991 when the first project, employing sixteen people, commenced. Since then, CE projects have been a feature of the development process of Abbey village and many unemployed people who worked on these projects have been successful in securing full-time employment. In 1993 the sponsorship of schemes was taken over by Galway County Council. In recent years, Abbey Community Development Association has focused on working with Abbey Tidy Towns committee to achieve the title

of Galway's Tidiest Town in the Fáilte Ireland's Tidy Towns competition. This was first achieved in 2005 and was repeated for the following five years.

Abbey Tidy Towns – set up in the 1970s and with few exceptions Abbey has participated annually in the Tidy Towns competition. In the early years the focus was on litter, overgrown hedges and spraying whereas today the focus is very much on biodiversity and care for our environment. Much work has been done in improving landscaping in the village and in creating a greater awareness of our natural heritage. In the past year approximately 50 new Irish trees of different varieties were planted. Additional plants that attract wildlife were planted with a view to attracting further wildlife to the area and bat boxes have also been erected.

St. Feichín's National School – For the past number of years, our local school has become very involved in biodiversity projects and has been awarded the school's Green Flag for the sixth consecutive year. In 2012 the Green flag was awarded for work on Biodiversity and for 2013 the school achieved the Green Flag for projects on globalisation.

30th Galway Abbey-Duniry Scouts Group – Starting out in 2006 as a satellite group of the Portumna Scouts, Abbey-Duniry Scouts became an independent branch in 2010.

There are also a number of other groups active in the community but it is hoped that many of the actions will be supported by the above groups.

Section Two Abbey Heritage Action Plan

2.1 Introduction

In order to focus on the main areas of heritage interest as identified by the community at Abbey, we have broken the action plan into four main themes with a smaller number of subheadings underneath that give more detail to elements of the action plan.

Theme	Lead Partner	Supporting partner	Timeframe
Project/activity/action			
Interpretation of Kilnalahan Abbey.			
Develop appropriate physical and digital interpretation for Kilnalahan Abbey as follows			
1. Recreate stained glass panels from RC church as a display and interpretive feature for the church with simple interpretation of history	Frances Holohan Abbey Community Development Association	Christy Cunniffe, Fields Monuments Advisor	2013
2. Supporting Actions: Tie in the graveyard survey when it is completed with interpretation of the Abbey. Advice from Heritage Officer and Fields Monuments and National Monuments Service should be sought before placing any interpretation panels in the abbey	Graveyard survey is now completed and will be integrated with interpretation project.	Galway County Council	2013
Farm machinery and agricultural heritage.			
1. Undertake survey of farm machinery in and around the village	John Donnelly	Abbey Community Development Association	2014
2. Investigate where such machinery could be displayed safely and securely in the village	John Donnelly	Abbey Community Development	2014-2015

		Association	
Folklore research			
1. Using the Galway County Council guide to undertaking folklore research – familiarize group on approach and decide on a theme of research such as village life, agricultural practices and customs.	Algie Abberton and John Holohan	Abbey Community Development Association	2013
2. Undertake a folklore research project in Abbey	Algie Abberton and John Holohan	Abbey Community Development Association	2014
3. Undertake folklore research with primary school children interviewing grand parents/grand aunts or uncles.	St Feichín's National School and Abbey-Duniry Scouts Group	Abbey Community Development Association Galway County Council	2014-2015
Townlands and Fieldnames			
1. Using Galway County Councils guide to recording fieldnames and townlands, undertake a survey of the fieldnames and townlands in one area of Abbey- it is recommended that the Golden Mile be the first survey.	John Holohan	Abbey Community Development Association Galway County Council	2014
2. Using old editions of Ordnance Survey maps, and 1901 and 1911 census undertake research on the occupations of villagers in Abbey over the past century. This project could tie in with the schools folklore project.	Abbey Community Development Association	Galway County Council National Library and National Archives	2014-2015
Education and Interpretation			

1. Prepare script for village trail to include Kilnalahan Abbey and Ladyswell	Abbey Community Development Association		2014
2. Develop an educational package with primary school. Eg: simple trail around Abbey, spotting key features. Drawing in the windows and designing a stained glass feature	Abbey Community Development Association	St Feichín's National School	2015

Section 3 Useful Information

3.1 Introduction

This section presents information on potential funding sources and fundraising ideas. It is followed by a list of web based guides and sources of heritage information on Abbey. Finally a list of useful contacts in the county is provided.

3.2 Potential sources of funding for heritage projects

Organisation	Comment	Website
Galway Rural Development Company	This leader company offers full and part funding for a variety of community-led projects. Discuss potential projects with the Community Development Workers prior to submitting applications to determine if they meet the GRD criteria for projects.	www.grd.ie
Galway County Council Community Support Schemes	Small funding available for a range of community activities including heritage and tourism.	www.galwaycoco.ie
Heritage Council	The Heritage Council grant schemes are advertised yearly in September and cover these 3 areas - 1) Heritage Research; 2) Heritage Management and 3) Heritage Education, Community and Outreach. They were unable to provide grants for 2012 but hope to open grant scheme again in 2013.	www.heritagecouncil.ie
The Ireland Funds	The Ireland Funds support Irish culture and heritage by providing funding for programs that promote cultural awareness and understanding; preserve uniquely Irish art forms and artifacts; increase public access to a variety of art forms and collections support community arts initiatives; and ensure the protection of and access to Irish heritage sites and resources	www.theirelandfunds.org
The Arts Council	Funding can be available for architectural research and education	www.artscouncil.ie
Office of Public Works	On occasion the OPW will advertise for initiatives involving working with community groups and monuments under OPW management. Whilst this may not be direct financial assistance	www.heritageireland.ie or www.opw.ie

	they may be able to offer training and mentoring. Friends of Irish Heritage is the name of the scheme	
The Wheel	The Wheel is a national support and representative network for the community and voluntary sector which works to strengthen organisations as well as the sectoral infrastructure and environment. The Wheel provides a wide range of training, information, support and advice services to individual organizations as well as undertaking advocacy and campaigning work on cross-cutting sector development issues.	www.thewheel.ie

3.3 Web Based Resources

3.3.1 Guides to Interpretation and Heritage.

Faite Ireland has 3 guidelines available that assist in identifying and interpreting your heritage. They can all be accessed at the following link and the toolkits and exercises section are particularly useful for community groups.

- A tourism toolkit for Ireland's Built Heritage.
- A tourism toolkit for Ireland's Cultural Experiences
- Sharing our Stories Manual

Can be downloaded at the following link:

<http://www.failteireland.ie/Market-Your-Business-With-Failte-Ireland/Expand-Your-Marketing-Toolkit/Attract-Cultural-Tourists.aspx>

Archaeology in the Classroom (It's about Time) – primary curriculum has some great projects including looking at old photographs, recording old monuments, streetscapes amongst others. It could be used as the basis for education elements of projects with St Feichins NS

<http://www.itsabouttime.ie>

3.3.2 Agriculture and Farm Machinery

County Clare Audit of Farm Machinery has a survey form and background information that may be useful.

<http://www.clarecoco.ie/recreation-culture/publications/an-audit-of-antique-farm-machinery-in-county-clare-11887.pdf>

The County Galway Farm Objects is not on line but a hardcopy can be provided.

Around County Galway and Lough Derg there are a number of communities that have displayed farm machinery. Sites to visit include Whitegate (Lough Derg) and Bunratty Folk Park. Further afield are the national exhibits at the Museum of Country Life, Castlebar, County Mayo and Johnstown Castle, County Wexford.

3.3.3 Folklore Research

Collecting and Preserving Folklore and Oral History: Basic Techniques, Galway County Council, 2006
[http://www.galway.ie/en/Services/Heritage/CulturalHeritage/folklore%20publication%20english%20galway%20co%20co\[1\].pdf](http://www.galway.ie/en/Services/Heritage/CulturalHeritage/folklore%20publication%20english%20galway%20co%20co[1].pdf)

The Folklore of Ireland Council. - <http://comhairlebhéal.ie/index.html>

National Folklore Collection at UCD – you can search the national folklore collection and can request access to records.

<http://www.ucd.ie/irishfolklore/en/>

3.3.4 Townlands and Fieldnames

Census from 1901 and 1911 for Tynagh Parish – this includes the townlands of Abbey and Duniry.

<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1901/Galway/Tynagh/>

<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/pages/1911/Galway/Tynagh/>

Ordnance Survey 25" Maps – free on Galway County Council website as follows:

<http://www.galway.ie/en/Services/Library/1842OSMaps/>

Ordnance Survey Ireland has a number of pages that will be useful including an overview of the history and recording of placenames in Ireland:

<http://www.osi.ie/Education/Third-Level-Academic/History-of-Place-names.aspx>

A Field Names Research Handbook by Alan Counihan, Kilkenny Leader can be downloaded at the following link:

<http://www.townlands.net/v1/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/A-Field-Name-Research-Handbook.pdf>

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Dalton, John P.

3.4 Useful Contacts

Marie Mannion,
Heritage Officer,

Galway County Council

All matters relating to heritage including built heritage and funding.

mmannion@galwaycoco.ie
www.galwaycountyheritage.com
Tel:(091) 509198

Christy Cuniffe, Galway County Fields Monuments Advisor

Email:chriscun@eircom.net

Failte Ireland, Aras Failte, Forster Street, Co.Galway.

Tel:1800 24 24 73

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