

River Clare

The Clare River is formed in Dalgin, Milltown, North East, Co Galway at the confluence of the Dalgin and Sinking rivers. It flows through Milltown, Kilbannon, Corofin, Turloughmore and finally Claregalway and into Lough Corrib. The Clare is the largest tributary of the Corrib / Mask catchment area and it has a number of tributaries itself in the Milltown area namely The Illaun, The Tonemoyle, The Dawros and The Pollaturick.



The River Clare

The River system is subject to winter flooding. To alleviate this problem, arterial drainage works were carried out at various times, most notably in the 1950s and 1960s. This resulted in the straightening of sections, smoothing of bends and deepening of channels. Large heaps of spoil along the river banks indicate the huge amount of material removed from the river. All this change reduced the ecological diversity of the river system. However, due to more recent successful remedial work the rivers' natural aquatic habitats have been largely restored. Milltown Angling Club, in co-operation with Inland Fisheries Ireland, the Office of Public Works, local landowners and Milltown Development Association continue to actively work on various projects to protect and enhance the wildlife, water quality and angling value of this river and its tributaries.

A Heritage Park adjoins the former site of O'Grady's mill from which the placename – Milltown, the town of the mill or Baile an Mhuilinn was derived. The mill closed in the 1950s and the buildings were demolished during the Corrib River Drainage Scheme. All that remains today is the sluice outlet and a plaque erected by The Heritage Group indicating the mill site which along with the River Clare forms the small island on which the Heritage Park is located. Developed by the local community as an outdoor museum, the artefacts in the park compliment the collection housed in the nearby Heritage Centre.

The central attraction in the park is a herdman's thatched cottage. As you wander along the paths within the park you will encounter several other memorial plaques dedicated to people who have influenced local culture and history, artefacts and implements used in the farming and cultural life of the area and architectural remnants from former buildings.

As well as interpreting the local cultural heritage and social history, the local community have enhanced the natural heritage of the park. Native trees have been planted, bird boxes erected and a

'bug hotel' constructed to encourage biodiversity. An interpretative board provides lots of information on the local wildlife.

To facilitate your enjoyment of this wonderful amenity, the local community have developed an easily accessible River Walk. All along the route you will encounter local projects in action which are increasing and enhancing the biodiversity of the river and surrounding wetlands.

The village of Milltown is located on the N17 western corridor close to the Galway-Mayo border, 48km north of Galway City. The Clare River flows east-west through the village on its journey to the Corrib and is spanned by a fine limestone bridge built in 1856 as part of a Famine Relief Scheme. The present village is essentially a Sráid-Bhaile that has developed north and south of the bridge.



Milltown Bridge

In former times the best ford crossing of the river was some fifty metres east of the present bridge and it was here that the De Berminghams built their castle to command and defend the ford.

Near the castle, the old town grew up inhabited by castle retainers, tradesmen, stone-masons, smiths, weavers, tailors, horse boys, cowboys and corn millers.

Two mills were constructed along this stretch of the Clare River – O'Grady's at Milltown and Birmingham's at Lack- hence the name, the town of the mill or Baile an Mhuilinn. Milltown was called the town of the mill for at least four hundred years. Birmingham's mill operated until the late 1800's and O'Grady's mill closed in the 1950s as a result of the Corrib Drainage Scheme.

The place we now know as Milltown made its first appearance in historical records in 1589. The eminent historian Hubert Knox points out in his History of Mayo that Sir Murrough O' Flaherty and his army came to attack Edward Birmingham; they stormed the castle, burnt half of Milltown and destroyed the castle's corn but failed to take the castle after a bloody fight. They then burnt sixteen other villages on their way back to Cong and seized three thousand cattle.

The River is popular with anglers and many of the local angling spots have colourful names including Begley's Hole, Poll a'tSagart, and the Blue Pig River.

Kayakers now frequent the river and walkers can enjoy a stroll through the award-winning Heritage Park, along the River Walk and Slí na Sláinte route. Local interest in history, archaeology and music has fuelled several heritage and cultural projects that celebrate local people, events and traditions.