

## Clare River

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 tributaries itself in the Milltown area namely The Illaun, The Tonemoyle, The Dawros and The Pollaturick.

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.



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.

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 Birmingham's 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' Flahery 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 Belgey'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.

## BIRDS AND HABITATS OF THE CLARE RIVER

Both Pied and Grey Wagtail birds can be found along the riverbanks of the Clare River all year round. During the summer months, with luck, the Kingfisher might also be encountered. Common Sandpipers in spring and occasionally Green Sandpipers, at any time of the year, might be seen feeding on muddy areas. In the summer Sand Martin, House Martin and Swallow fly along the river and across fields hunting the rich insect life available.



Mute Swan and Dabchick (Little Grebe) are also present on the slower running parts of the river, as is the occasional Cormorant. If you are very lucky you may spot a Heron standing quietly in the river waiting for a tasty catch.

Habitats for wildlife along the river include the river itself, wet grassland, reed swamp and wet woodland. These wetlands are teeming with dragonflies, snails, beetles and other invertebrates in the summer, providing a rich source of food for other wildlife. Wildflowers that can be seen in and around the wetter margins of the river include Yellow Flag Iris, Orchids, Meadowsweet and Purple Loosestrife.

There are several small patches of native woodland in the parish, including stands of wet woodland (mainly Willow and Alder) along the Clare River. There are also several small conifer plantations and shelter belts of various ages around Milltown, at Curraghaderry, Drim, Knock, Carton, Burrish, Carrowntoatagh, Kilgevrin, Conagher, Stripe, Belmont and Cloondroon (about 500 acres in total in a recent survey).

Conifer plantations may appear at first glance devoid of much birdlife, but some interesting species can be encountered. Plantations host good numbers of breeding Woodpigeon, Goldcrest and Coal Tit, with both Crossbill and Siskin now probably breeding here as well. Long-eared Owls are regularly seen and heard at several local spots in Milltown and also the Sparrowhawk. In winter, these woods are the daytime roosting places for Woodcock, which winter in the area in quite good numbers thanks to our mainly mild climate.



Visitors to Milltown can avail of the many facilities and services the village has to offer including our brand-new playground, restaurants, pubs, shops, service stations, Post Office, accommodation and a Business Park.



WE HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR VISIT TO MILLTOWN AND  
REMEMBER

PLEASE KEEP OUR VILLAGE TIDY