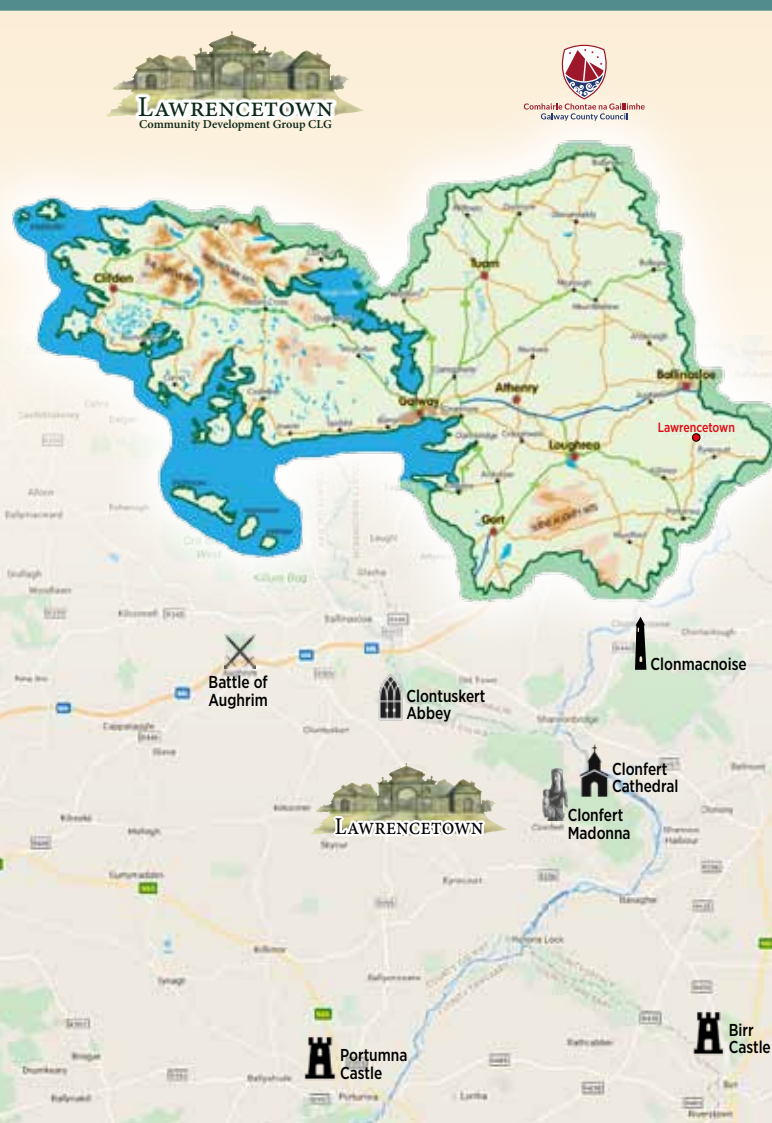


Community email:  
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## LAWRENCETOWN VILLAGE HERITAGE TRAIL



# An Baile Mór Shíol Anmchadha Lawrencetown Village

LEGEND: ROAD: BUILDING: STREAM: PATH: STATUE: WELL: RING FORT:



## An Introduction

The village of Lawrencetown was first erected by Walter Lawrence circa 1700 as an organised settlement on their estate about the townland of Ochilmore, the name Ochilmore coming from the ruins of the castle of O'Hill. It was enlarged by his son Rear Admiral Peter Lawrence in 1750 and rebuilt by his grandson Col. Walter Lawrence in 1765, to promote the linen industry in the west of Ireland. In the 1800s it was a thriving village with a penny post, a chief constabulary police station, a Catholic Church and a Wesleyan Methodist chapel and a school. It also had a market house, octagonal in shape, supported by arches, through which carts of produce could pass to be weighed. The principle seats in the vicinity were Bellevue, or Lisreaghan, (Walter Lawrence), Gortnamona, (P. Blake), Somerset House, (Simeon Seymour), Somerset Glebe, (Rev. J.

Hannigan) and Ballymore Castle (Thomas Seymour Esq.). In the 1850s a man named Allan Pollok, a progressive landowner and engineer, arrived in Ireland and between July 1853 and June 1858 paid £212,460 for 25,234 acres of land in East Galway and the Creggs area in County Roscommon. He settled in Lismany, Lawrencetown and had a huge impact on the industry and economy of the area.

Part of the O'Sullivan Beare walking route passes through Kylemore and Lismany in Lawrencetown. The section which runs from Portumna to Aughrim is called the 'Hymany Way' after the name given to this part of County Galway. Hymany stems from the Gaelic word 'Uí Máine' which was a small kingdom during the Iron Age. The walking route commemorates the heroic march of chief Donal Cam O'Sullivan and his followers from Beara peninsula in County Cork to O'Rourke's castle in County Leitrim during the winter of 1602.

## What's in a Name?

Lawrencetown is sometimes spelled 'Laurencetown', but as the village took its name from the family it would seem that the former is the more correct version. Probably even more confusing to people passing through the area is 'An Baile Mór Shíol Anmchadha', which translates as 'the big town of the descendants of Ambrose', i.e. Ambrose O'Madden, a local Chieftain and referred to a much larger area than just Lawrencetown in the past entailing what is now known as Longford Barony.

Alas, in some official circles the Irish name has been reduced to just 'An Baile Mór', a name devoid of any historical value. Síol Anmchadha would be a far better alternative, a nod to a history spanning over 1,000 years.





### 1. Bellevue Volunteer Gate

This memorial gate was erected by Col. Walter Lawrence in 1796 dedicated to the local Volunteers of 1782 and commemorates the achievement of Irish Parliamentary freedom. It consists of an arch and two Gate Houses with two Coade Stone Sphinxes on top of the gate either side of the arch. It marked the entrance to the Lawrence Demesne.



### 2. Lisreaghan Ringfort

This is a fine example of a ringfort. Ringforts were circular fortified settlements that were mostly built during the Early Middle Ages up to the year 1000. Ringforts may have been used for various purposes such as agriculture, industry, defence and aristocratic (for status). This particular ringfort is an earthen ringfort. Earthen ringforts would have been marked by a circular rampart (a bank and ditch), often with a wooden stake wall. Both stone and earthen ringforts would generally have had at least one building inside.



### 3. Bellevue Folly (Gothic Cottage)

Follies were built on estates throughout Ireland as artificial ruins mainly in the Gothic style. This particular folly, built c.1700, has a two storey house concealed behind the Gothic façade. The cottage, on the old estate of Bellevue, was placed at right angles to the road so that the folly on the gable end would disguise the dwelling, until revealed to the visitor's amazement when viewed from the side.



### 4. Walled Garden (Bellevue House)

This Walled Garden was built in front of Bellevue or Lisreaghan House, the mansion built by Col. Walter Lawrence in the mid-18th century. This stone and red brick structure was the orchard and kitchen garden for the house and had a fine array of pear, apple and other fruit trees. Bellevue estate, also called Lisreaghan, was famous for its great woodlands of ilxes and cedars of Lebanon, but little remains today and the old house with its Doric portico has long vanished. The house had a 'Glory' on the portico made from Coade stone and one of the miniature cannons still survives in private ownership today.



### 5. Bellevue Folly (Gothic Arch)

In the 18th Century at the height of the Protestant Ascendancy everybody wanted a ruin to grace the landscape of the estate and these 'eye-catchers', as they were called, helped to create agreeable scenic compositions. The estate of Bellevue has long vanished but this Gothic ruin stands incongruously in a field near a little country road, a reminder, along with the walled garden, of an era past. With flying buttresses, pointed windows and pinnacles, it is a piece of theatre scenery: the front wall of a building which never existed!



### 6. Ballymore Castle Gate Lodge

A fine example of a gate lodge. This gate lodge was built in the early 19th century and for a time was occupied by the gate keeper for the Seymour family of Ballymore Castle. It has long ceased to function as a gate lodge but has been used as a private dwelling.



### 7. Ballymore Castle

Ballymore Castle was built by John Lawrence in 1585 on land he acquired through his marriage to the daughter of an O'Madden. It was damaged in subsequent wars and repaired by his son, Walter. The castle was dispossessed by Cromwell in 1641 because the Lawrences supported the royalist cause of that time. The castle and much of the estate was given to Sir Thomas Newcomen. It eventually came into the possession of John Eyre of Eyrecourt about 1720. The Seymours settled in the castle sometime thereafter. The castle was modernised and a large house added in 1815. The Seymours eventually purchased the castle and lands outright from the Eyres around 1824 and remained in possession until the 1950s. It is now in private ownership. There was a holy well here called 'Tobar Mhuire'. It is from this well that the St Mary's church took its name. Tobar is the Irish word for a 'source', 'spring', 'well' or 'fountain'. Beside the well was a whitethorn bush. Locals with ailments would say a prayer at the holy well and hang a cloth on the whitethorn bush in order to seek a cure. It was widely accepted that the well provided a cure for sore eyes. The original settlement in Lawrencetown was on the southern side of the Lawrencetown river. It is probable, based on the existence of ring forts close by, that this well was the source of water for the original settlement.



### 8. Ballymore Avenue

This tree lined avenue is a prime example of natural history in the locality. These beautiful Beech and Oak trees flank each side of the avenue and have stood here for more than a century. The tree lined avenue acts as the Western approach into the village of Lawrencetown. The trees are especially beautiful in the autumn time when the leaves turn a golden colour.



### 9. Constabulary Barracks

This building served as a Royal Irish Constabulary (R.I.C.) Barracks from the early 1840s until Irish Independence in 1922. The building contained cells and sleeping quarters for the local RIC. It is now a private residence. The RIC was the first organised police force in Ireland established in 1836 by Sir Robert Peel (1788-1850), home secretary and a future British prime minister (the colloquial names "Bobby" and "Peeler" for police derive from his name Robert and Peel).



### 10. Lisheen Walk and Seymour Mausoleum

The word Lisheen (Lisín in Gaelic) means small Lios, which is a Ring Fort or Fairy Fort. They are mostly round although the Lawrencetown Lisheen is slightly oval. They were originally dwelling places in ancient times and the homes that were built on them were surrounded by a protective bank of earth and a shallow moat of water. Although nobody may have lived within a Lios for over 500 hundred years, the Irish people never disturbed them. They were treated as sacred places of our ancestors. The practice of burying people in them became quite common especially unbaptised children who died before or during birth. Folklore frowned on anyone who would interfere with a lios and the fear of "the Fairies" was enough to deter everyone. This Lisheen also contains a fine example of a Family Mausoleum built in the 19th Century by the Seymours of nearby Ballymore Castle.



### 11. Ochil Meadow

To the south of Lawrencetown village was a field owned by the Seymour family, and situated close to the Seymour Mausoleum and Lisheen cemetery, called 'Ochil Meadow'. The Seymours allowed locals to use the field for a variety of field sports, predominantly hurling, during the 1930s and 1940s. During this time Ochil meadow hosted many important, entertaining and well attended games of hurling between teams from Lawrencetown and other surrounding parishes such as Eyrecourt. Matches commenced with forwards congregated at midfield and backs retreated in their own halves. The square measured 7 yards square. Other sports which took place at Ochil Meadow included Cricket and Athletics. 'Flapper' Racing also took place there with local horses and jockeys pitting themselves against their neighbours and others who came from far and wide. A new Land Commission field in Kylemore saw an end to the use of Ochil Meadow for such activities.



### 12. Statue of Diarmuid and Gráinne

This bronze statue commemorates the 10th century mythological story 'Tóraíocht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne' (the pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne), Ireland's version of 'The Iliad'. Diarmuid fell in love with Gráinne, the daughter of the High King Cormac Mac Airt. Gráinne enticed Diarmuid to run away with her leading to the pursuit of Diarmuid and Gráinne by Diarmuid's warrior brothers the Fianna. On the run from the Fianna, Diarmuid and Gráinne slept in various locations known as Diarmuid and Gráinne's beds. One such bed is situated in a field on the Banagher side of Calvary cemetery.



### 13. Tin House (Dervan's Cottage)

This 18th century cottage is one of the earliest vernacular buildings in the village of Lawrencetown. It likely represents part of the original streetscape and would originally have been thatched but now has a galvanised (tin) roof. This would be typical of the evolution of these buildings and is an important architectural feature in understanding the history and settlement of the village.



### 14. Cogavin's (Police Barrack and Garden)

This building at one stage contained a police barracks in the late 19th century as well as a garden and overnight cells. A shop and pub were situated in the left hand side of the building adjacent to the private residence until c.1995.



### 15. Pardy's Store (Presbyterian Church and Schoolhouse)

At the time of the Griffith's Valuation (mid to late-19th century) a Presbyterian Church was located here in the very building which is now being used as a store house by the local publican and shop-keeping family. A schoolhouse operated in the ruins next to it.



### 16. St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church

This Roman Catholic Church was built in the early 19th century and appears in Ordnance Survey maps of that time period. An extension was later added. It now serves as the local church and it features beautiful stained glass windows by Franz Mayer & Co. of Munich. The firm was very popular during the late 19th and early 20th century and was the principal provider of stained glass to the large Roman Catholic churches that were constructed throughout the world during that period. Franz Mayer and Co. were stained glass artists to the Holy See. The remaining windows depict local and other Irish Saints. An 18th century chalice from Ochil chapel survives there.



### 17. Statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary

This beautiful statue of Mary, the mother of Jesus is made of white Carrara Marble. It was erected in the year 1961, the Patrician Year, which was marked by 12 months of religious celebration in recognition of 1,500 years of devotion to St. Patrick in Ireland.



### 18. Community Hall

The Community Hall, built in 1867, once served as the local national school. It took quite a while for the national education system to become established in Lawrencetown. After several applications (the first being in 1861) the application was accepted and permission was finally granted to build a national school in the village of Lawrencetown. This building would serve as the local national school until 1940 when it was converted into a community hall and a new national school was built on the Eastern approach road to the village. The new school celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2015.



### 19. The Ochilmore Store

This architectural gem with its beautiful symmetrical limestone facade was built in 1858 by local landlord, Allan Pollok of Lismany Estate. Pollok was a wealthy Scotsman who purchased large tracts of land in this part of County Galway after the Great Irish Famine (1846-1851). Pollok built a Model Farm (now a private residence) in an area next to Lismany called Ganaveen. He also built a Dairy in Kylemore (also now a private residence). Many of the houses that Pollok had built are still in use as family homes. The Ochilmore Store served as a General Store from 1858 until the early 20th century. It was originally known as 'Brien's Bakery & Co-Op' and later as 'Egan's Store' and had large stone ovens situated in the basement. These ovens still exist today. It is now owned and used by the Lawrencetown Community Development Group for office and meeting space and has three private residences attached to it. Close to the Store building was a fine water-operated mill also built by Pollok. It operated as a mill throughout the latter half of the 19th century and into the early 20th century. Following a fire in the 1970s, it was demolished and the site is now used for curing animal skins.



### 20. The Grand Canal

The most westerly section of the Grand Canal ran from Shannon Harbour to the Canal Basin at Ballinasloe through Kylemore and Lismany. There was a lock gate at this site and a stone bridge, much of which remain today. There was a dwelling here owned by the Grand Canal Company. The canal crosses the Ballinure river via the Lismany Aqueduct. Sadly the Canal channel from Shannon Harbour to Ballinasloe was drained in the early 1960s and has been badly damaged since. A section of the Canal Channel is used by Bord Na Móna as a train track.



### 21. Kylemore Schoolhouse and Church

Kylemore school was established by Allan Pollok of Lismany in 1865 consisting of a fine schoolhouse and a six-roomed teacher's residence as well as a Presbyterian church. The school was built to allow his Scottish labourer's children to attend school but Pollok suggested that Roman Catholic and Protestant children could also attend if the clergymen of those faiths withdrew their opposition. The school was not well attended, mainly used by the Presbyterian children whose parents worked on the estate. An evening school was established in 1880 for farm labourers and maidservants who each paid 3d (pence) weekly to attend. The school ceased to operate in 1906. The school and residence were burned during the War of Independence and in 1929 the Department of Finance awarded £750 for the reinstatement of the buildings. This was the last official record of the school. The building has been used as a private residence since.



### 22. Lismany-Kylemore Virgin Bog

This bog is accessible via a boardwalk which allows easy access to over 40 acres of virgin bog for those who wish to study the unique flora and fauna of a bog in its natural state. During the late 19th century Pollok planted trees in this area. One such plantation was called 'Old Man's Garden' on Ordnance Survey maps of that time. This bog is licenced to the Lawrencetown Community Development Group and is a rich source of biodiversity in the area. NUIG and Galway Co. Co. have conducted technical and management studies of the bog, both of which can be found on the community website.

### Further information can be found at:

[www.lawrencetown.com](http://www.lawrencetown.com)  
[www.burkeseastgalway.com](http://www.burkeseastgalway.com)  
[www.clontuskert.com](http://www.clontuskert.com)  
[www.galwaycommunityheritage.org](http://www.galwaycommunityheritage.org)  
'Echoes' by Eyrecourt Heritage Society (1988)  
'Past & Present: Lawrencetown Community Hall' by Downey, J. et al. eds. (1995)  
'The Parish of Lawrencetown and Kiltormer' by Tadhg Mac Lochlainn (1981)  
"Lawrencetown National School 1940 - 2015. 75th Anniversary Book" (2015)

### Guided Tours

To arrange a guided heritage tour contact Aron on 087 9500369

### Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all those who assisted with the compilation of this heritage brochure. Much work has gone into compiling, editing and designing it and all those who helped in any way are very much appreciated. It is hoped to further develop this concept with other brochures based on specific built, cultural or natural heritage aspects in the future. Your continued support is welcomed. Please contact [communitylawrencetown@gmail.com](mailto:communitylawrencetown@gmail.com) if you would like to get involved.

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