

READING YOUR LOCAL

LANDSCAPE

in COUNTY GALWAY



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



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**NATIONAL
HERITAGE
WEEK 2020
15-23 AUG**



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INTRODUCTION

2004

Since 2004 Galway County Council has worked with consultant Zena Hctor and local communities in various parts of the county of Galway in the development and delivery of Local Area Heritage Audit training courses and practical applications.

They provide the participants with the skills to recognise, manage, protect and promote their local heritage resources.

aim

The aim of the training and applied heritage audits is to create a greater awareness, knowledge, understanding and pride in the rich heritage assets that are all around us and how they contribute to the character, culture and economy of a locality. The training course consists of a series of modules delivered through lectures, case studies group research, discussion and field trips to sites of interest within the local area in which the course is delivered.

training

The modules cover geology, geomorphology, map reading, biodiversity, archaeology, architecture, industrial archaeology, settlement, communication, heritage conservation and interpretation. Each participant is then mentored in a compilation of a short project on their own chosen aspect of local heritage. The results are displayed at an end of course public showcase event.



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Our Progress

2004

The first Heritage Audit training course was delivered to the Oranmore Community Group in 2004. This was quickly followed by training with Eyrecourt Heritage Task Group in 2005.

In 2006 the publication *Hector, Z. 'A Heritage Audit Technique – A Handbook for Local Community Heritage Groups'* Galway County Council (<https://heritage.galwaycommunityheritage.org/content/heritage-publications/heritage-audit>) was produced to provide a practical blueprint. Three thousand copies of this bi-lingual booklet were produced and distributed to heritage groups, primary and second level schools in the County as well as Galway County Libraries, GMIT and NUIG. Since its launch, Galway County Council has received numerous requests for the booklet from communities in other parts of the country.

Between 2006 and 2014 the original 6 week course was improved and extended to cover a 10 week period. This course was delivered in several locations including Moylough, Mountbellew, Glenamaddy and Tuam with participants coming from all over County Galway.

10 WEEK
PERIOD



online

By 2014 the number of heritage online resources had greatly increased since 2006. Commissioned by the Heritage Office, Galway County Council an updated and more comprehensive publication incorporating findings and feedback from the courses delivered since 2005 and a guide to the new online resources was produced. *Hector, Z. 'Reading Your Local Landscape – A Heritage Audit Toolkit for Local Community Heritage Groups'* a bi-lingual publication was published in 2015.

This publication is now on the recommended reading list for GMIT Heritage Studies courses. It is available online and hard copies are constantly being requested by schools and community groups throughout the county and all over the country.

2014



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Our Progress



2015

Alongside the published material, the training courses continued to evolve and grow and were rebranded 'Reading Your Local Landscape' in 2014. In 2015, a second phase of the course was developed for participants who had already completed the first course and wished to hone their skills further in the practical application of field survey. This course 'Reading Your Local Landscape – Phase II - Field Techniques' was based in different centres around the County including Tuam, Milltown, Skehana and Abbey.

2016

To support this training in 2016, a bilingual companion guide 'Reading Your Local Landscape – An illustrated guide to some archaeological features in County Galway' was published in response to identified needs of the training course participants.

<https://heritage.galwaycommunityheritage.org/content/heritage-publications/reading-your-local-landscape-leargas-ar-an-taobh-tire>

Also in this year a further 15 participants undertook a 'Reading your local landscape' course held in Woodford with a further course delivered in Mountbellew in 2019.

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Practical Applications

SINCE 2004 THE TRAINING
COURSE PARTICIPANTS
HAVE BROUGHT THEIR NEW
FOUND KNOWLEDGE BACK
TO THEIR LOCAL AREAS AND
UNDERTAKEN A VARIETY OF
HERITAGE PROJECTS.

These heritage projects included developing websites (as part of Galway Community Heritage Network <https://galwaycommunityheritage.org/>), participating in the Golden Mile of Galway Competition, Tidy Towns initiatives, heritage signage, undertaking conservation works and promoting their local heritage. The Milltown Heritage Audit was completed in 2014 and the group published the highly regarded 'Milltown Heritage Trail' booklet in 2015. Montbellew and Moylough communities have also produced heritage trails, showcasing their unique resources.



In 2017/18 Abbey Heritage Group were guided through field survey work and produced 'The Heritage Audit of Abbey and District' funded by the Heritage Council. In 2018 Ballyglunin Heritage Group commissioned 'The Heritage Trail and Audit of Ballyglunin' funded under LA21. Between 2018 and 2019 Creggs Tidy Towns Group commissioned 'The Heritage Audit of Creggs and District' funded by Galway County Council and the Heritage Council. This resulted in a printed publication which was launched in the Parnell Centre, Creggs in April 2019 to a local audience of over 150 people.

At the same time Baile Slachtmhar na Forbacha commissioned "A Heritage Audit of Na Forbacha" funded by the Community and Enterprise, Galway County Council. All of these audits have provided the communities with a focussed blueprint for the development of the heritage resources within their local areas for the purposes of conservation, education and promotion.

a focussed blueprint



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Practical Applications



ENABLING CREATIVITY IN THE COMMUNITY

Over this timeframe, other communities have undertaken conservation work in graveyards, mapping and documenting the memorial inscriptions and the production of local history books (eg. Clontuskert Heritage Book, Killimor Heritage Book, Killererin Heritage Book) genealogical research and folklore collection, interviewing older generations and producing podcasts and high quality films.

In 2019, through funding secured from the Creative Ireland Strategy and Galway County Council, 'Reading Your Local Landscape' training was delivered in Mountbellew in partnership with Mountbellew Heritage, Culture and Tourism Group and Mountbellew Teleworkers. This training complimented the aim of the Creative Ireland Strategy to enable creativity in the community. Group project work enabled citizen engagement and mainstream creativity into the conservation of local heritage.



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Something for Everyone



In essence the 'Reading Your Local Landscape' initiative is a community heritage project which involves all sectors of the community and all age groups. Each course and audit is bespoke and tailored for the needs of the community in which it is set.

Some groups are interested in documenting their heritage and safeguarding it for future generations while others want to use their heritage assets to promote tourism and economic activity in their area. Others are interested in the educational value and want to develop school based projects. Some groups are involved in Tidy Towns and concentrate on invasive species, biodiversity and pollinator plans. Others want to create an online presence to attract tourists to their area in particular the diaspora. The needs of the community are first defined and the course modules adapted so that the main focus is in line with the identified needs.

The project also promote the *meithal* mentality of helping each other and promoting the work of Galway's local communities to a world class standard, that can be used for community well-being, educational, tourism, community and heritage resource.



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What's Next?



OUR CURRENT FOCUS IN 2020

The 'Reading Your Local Landscape' project in County Galway is constantly being reviewed, evaluated and updated in partnership with the local community, course facilitators and the education, community and tourism interests in the county. The 'shop window' for the outputs of research and work is www.galwaycommunityheritage.org. This work has major spin offs for the local community as it gives a sense of pride of place, attracts the diaspora back to the county (most of the groups have had great success in attracting back the diaspora), gives people a 'can do' attitude and brings all age groups in a community together to celebrate their rich history and heritage and their local place.

Our current focus in 2020 is the production of a new publication. Due to popular demand, text and visuals are being prepared to provide an updated version of the out-of-print *Hector, Z. 2015*

'Reading Your Local Landscape – A Heritage Audit Toolkit for Local Community Heritage Groups'. Our aim is to keep evolving and adapting to the needs of our communities and to continue to deliver a high quality product.



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