

# Slí Gaeltacht Mhúscraí

## Béal Átha An Ghaorthaidh Ballingeary

## Baile Mhúirne Ballyvourney

## Sráid an Mhuilinn Millstreet

### Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare and the Beara-Breifne March



In 1602 Munster was ravaged by war. The English forces of Elizabeth I had defeated the Irish and Spanish at the Battle of Kinsale and advanced to capture the territory of Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare, Chieftain of Beara. With many Irish chiefs in submission to the English crown, his continued support for the Irish cause and loyalty to Philip II of Spain was a last barrier to English ambitions to secure crown rule in Munster.

O'Sullivan Beare's main stronghold was Dunboy Castle overlooking the harbour of Berehaven. In June 1602, after an eleven-day siege, English forces breached the walls of Dunboy, killed its last defenders and forced the local population into submission. O'Sullivan Beare and an army of supporters withdrew to the Coomerkane Valley, near Glengarriff, and launched guerrilla attacks on their enemies.

Following a siege, the English army struck a blow at O'Sullivan Beare and captured his herd of four thousand sheep, two thousand cattle and one hundred ponies. The loss of supplies of milk, butter and meat, as well as essential pack animals, made it impossible to remain in the valley.

On New Year's Eve 1602, faced with almost certain starvation, O'Sullivan Beare fled with four hundred fighting men and six hundred camp followers and women, children, servants and porters: a thousand men and women on an epic march northwards.

O'Sullivan Beare was counting on his ally, O'Rourke of Breifne, to provide refuge at Leitrim Castle three hundred kilometres to the north. Travelling through Ireland at a time of war and severe food shortages they were viewed by local chiefs as outcasts and attacked. The need to stay ahead of their enemies meant that they were often unable to bury their dead or carry off their wounded. Women carried infants and many of the camp followers could not keep up. By the time they reached the River Shannon their numbers were as low as three- to four-hundred.

With enemies on either side of the river they crossed at night in a boat made of the skins of twelve slaughtered horses, the meat almost certainly eaten by the starving in the camp. Two days later, at Aughrim, their path was blocked by English-led cavalry and infantry. O'Sullivan Beare's camp had no choice but to fight. Against all odds an exhausted army of refugees defeated greatly superior forces but were unable to rest. They had to travel a twenty mile detour during the night to escape further attack. As the Connaught mercenaries among O'Sullivan Beare's camp began to disappear and return home, the remaining refugees were continuously threatened.

On the fourteenth day O'Sullivan Beare reached Leitrim castle. Out of the original one thousand followers only thirty five remained.

### The Beara-Breifne Way and Slí Gaeltacht Mhúscraí



The Beara-Breifne Way follows the fourteen-day march taken by Donal O'Sullivan Beare and one thousand supporters in 1603. The Way, the longest in Ireland, runs almost the length of the country and takes the walker and cyclist to some of its most beautiful and least explored areas: along the coast of the Beara Peninsula, across six mountain ranges, along the banks of the River Shannon and through the lake regions of Roscommon and Leitrim. The landscape contains an extraordinary variety of heritage sites – prehistoric features, castle ruins and religious and battle sites – many of which bear witness to the march of four hundred years ago.

The Beara-Breifne Way interlinks a series of local ways. The local way in this area is called Slí Gaeltacht Mhúscraí. This one of the shortest local Ways on the Beara-Breifne route but is one of the richest in terms of Irish culture; it is the only local way that passes through a Gaeltacht, which stretches from Guagán Barra to the shoulder of Mullach an Ois. This Irish speaking district is famous for its songs and singers, saints and scribes, as well as its rich cultural and archaeological heritage. Both the Lec and Sulán rivers spring from the surrounding mountains and cascade and meander their way through the valleys until they join forces near Macroom.

Both Ways follow off-road tracks and quiet back roads. However, traffic has increased in recent years and walkers and cyclists are asked to take care, particularly on the busy roads entering and leaving towns and villages. The Beara-Breifne Way and Slí Gaeltacht Mhúscraí cross both public and private lands and dogs are not permitted on either Way. Access to private lands is by kind permission of local landowners, arranged by the local community, and special thanks are extended to both landowners and community groups for their assistance in making this venture possible.

Walkers should be aware that both Slí Gaeltacht Mhúscraí and The Beara-Breifne Way are closed to the public for one day each year, the 31st January.

### CLANS OF THE AREA



8 Drishane Castle

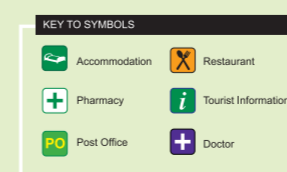


5 Hen Harrier

### Country code for Walkers

- Respect farmland and the rural environment.
- Do not interfere with livestock, crops, machinery or other property.
- Do not light any fires, especially near forests.
- Leave all farm gates as you find them.
- Always keep children in close control and supervision.
- Keep away from livestock - your presence can cause stress to livestock and even endanger your own safety.
- Do not enter farmland if you have dogs with you.
- Always use gates, stiles or other recognised access points, avoid damage to fences, hedges and walls.
- Take all litter home.
- Take special care on country roads.
- Avoid making unnecessary noise.
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees.
- Take heed of warning signs they are there for your protection.
- If following a recognised walking route keep to the waymarked route.
- Immediately report any damage caused by your actions to the farmer or landowner.
- Do not block farm entrances when parking.

Slí Gaeltacht Mhúscraí is developed by:  
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### Baile Mhúirne (Ballyvourney) to Béal Átha An Ghaorthaidh (Ballingeary) via Guagán (Gougane) Barra

#### Walking

Allow 3 - 4 hours to reach Guagán (Gougane) Barra. Taking a right from the N22 onto the road before the Abbey Hotel walkers leave Baile Mhúirne (Ballyvourney) passing the famous ancient religious complex of Saint Gobnait's and its oak woods. Walkers continue a steep climb along quiet back roads eventually meeting and following the untarred Bóthar na Réidh over the hill. The ascent towards the Mouth of the Glen (Béal a' Ghleanna), the watershed between the glaciated Lec and Sulane catchments, affords great rear views of the Derrynasaggart and Paps Mountains and the valleys below.

The second half of the route is a descent which opens up magnificent views of the Shehy Mountains. It involves crossing the Bunsheelin River (An Bun Síleann) twice to take in a number of sites of particular significance to the O'Sullivan Beare story. Walkers should pay attention to the signposts that mark the route, especially on the quiet country roads and tracks on the approach to Béal Átha An Ghaorthaidh (Ballingeary). Grading level of walk moderate. Highest point on route 320m.

#### Cycling

The length of this route is about 17 kilometres. Just outside Baile Mhúirne (Ballyvourney), cyclists leave the N22 opposite The Mills Inn and follow a quiet road to the village of Cuil Aodha (Coolea). The route climbs through forestry and negotiates a series of well signposted junctions until it comes to a junction facing the dramatic cliffs of Fail na Iomaireach. A right turn here, away from the main route, will lead you to The Top of Coom (Barr a Chuma), the highest point in Ireland at 1054 feet. The route continues uphill to Béal a' Ghleanna then a right turn will take you sailing downhill again through rolling countryside to Béal Átha An Ghaorthaidh (Ballingeary).

### Baile Mhúirne (Ballyvourney) to Millstreet

#### Walking

Walkers should allow 6 to 7 hours to complete this long section which involves a steep climb over the shoulder of Mullaghanish. There are no services between the two villages and some stretches of the route are quite lonely. The route leaves Baile Mhúirne just off the N22. It follows a tarred road for a short distance before climbing through pasture and open moorland, then enters coniferous forestry. The route affords magnificent views of the village, its oak woods, the Derrynasaggart Mountain range and the famed Paps of Dana. Crossing the road, the route enters a Coille forest and follows forestry tracks for several kilometers, crossing the county boundary into Kerry and back to Cork again! Tracks give way to open space, and the route winds its way below large windmills overlooking the plains of North Cork. Walkers descend to a mountain track and around Claragh mountain. The last kilometre of the route follows a public road, where caution should be exercised and ends in Millstreet. Grading level of walk moderate. Highest point on route 540m.

#### Cycling

The route from Baile Mhúirne (Ballyvourney) to Millstreet is about 20 kilometres and is one of the most strenuous sections on the Beara-Breifne cycle way. After leaving the village along the N22 towards Killarney it turns right at the Mills Inn along a quiet and winding country road. Cyclists will negotiate a series of junctions, all of which are well signposted, while climbing up onto the shoulder of Mullaghanish. Those who stop to rest can enjoy the views of the Derrynasaggart Mountains and the wooded Sulane valley. The route winds past a large expanse of coniferous forestry. Cyclists should look out for forestry vehicles on the road. On the Millstreet side of Mullaghanish there are extended views of the wooded valleys below and the route begins to wind downhill. It emerges to traverse the main R582 and to follow a parallel, but quieter, road for 6 kilometres before joining the R582 for the last kilometre into Millstreet.

### Along the Way

- One of the first casualties of the epic march of O'Sullivan Beare north to Leitrim in 1602 occurred in the townland of **Gortín na Coille**. Astonishingly, this detail is recorded in folk memory and locals can still identify the victim's final resting place.
- Teampaillín Eachrois (Ageris Church)** was already a ruin when it became the site of the first encampment of O'Sullivan Beare. He and his 1,000 followers camped in the area on New Year's Eve 1602. The following morning, not long after leaving the church, O'Sullivan's horse 'An Cearc' (the Hen) broke a leg in nearby boggy ground, which to this day is known as Poll na Circe (Hole of the Hen).
- The only written record of the hunger march of 1602 is that of O'Sullivan Beare's nephew, Philip O'Sullivan in his book, *The Catholic History of Ireland*. In it he records that the chieftain and his followers stopped at the village of Baile Mhúirne (Ballyvourney) on **New Year's Day 1603** to pray at the shrine of St Gobnait for a successful onward journey. Saint Gobnait lived in the fifth century and is the patron saint of beekeepers. She was venerated as a healer and tradition tells how she administered honey to cure illnesses and heal wounds. An annual pilgrimage to her shrine is still celebrated today on the 11th February, Gobnait's Pattern Day and on Whit Sunday.
- Saint Gobnait's Wood** in Baile Mhúirne (Ballyvourney), is important because of the old oak it contains. Cited as a good example of native woodland typical of the south west it is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The wood is also a rich habitat for many other tree varieties, shrubs and herbs in particular. Its sister wood Cascade Wood was also designated following the identification of old woodland and the habitat of protected species; the Kerry Slug and seven species of bat.

- Hen harriers** are among Ireland's most graceful birds of prey. The male hen harrier is noted for its dramatic courtship displays, known as 'sky dancing'. The birds' most spectacular trait is the 'food pass' from male to female - the male carries the prey in his talons, calls to the female who rises up from the nest and somersaults upside down while he drops the prey for her to catch. An area on the shoulder of Mullaghanish is designated as a Special Area of Protection for the Hen Harrier.
- As Donal O'Sullivan Beare's followers left Baile Mhúirne (Ballyvourney) they were subject to a 4 hour **attack at Uilanes** townland by the sons of Thady MacCarthy, former allies who subsequently declared loyalty to the English forces. O'Sullivan Beare's soldiers managed to repel their attackers, but another faction of MacCarthy's attacked the exhausted and starving convoy as they camped that night.
- The use of **wind farms** to convert wind power into a renewable source of energy has become a global phenomenon. While Ireland has the ideal meteorological conditions to benefit from wind power technology, the use of wind turbines remains a controversial subject.
- Drishane Castle** was built in the fifteenth century by the MacCarthys who eventually lost their land, and the castle, to Williamite forces. Drishane Castle was bought by Henry Wallis in 1709, and remained in his family until 1892. Soon after this it became the property of the Dames of Saint Maud, a teaching order of nuns. The castle was temporarily home to Kosovar asylum seekers during the 1990s. It is no longer lived in today.