

ORANMORE HERITAGE TRAIL

An insight into our past

Welcome to Oranmore, located seven kilometres south-east of Galway City on the edge of Oranmore Bay, an inlet of Galway Bay. The Oranmore of today is a thriving village and a hub of industry and commerce; old ways are being left behind and are for the most part forgotten. Before the folk memories vanish, let Oranmore Heritage take you on a journey down the memory-lane of our common heritage. This walk will provide you with a glimpse into the history and folklore of our village, lifting a corner of the veil that obscures much of the past.



1. ST. MARY'S CHURCH

This roughly circular walk commences in front of the deconsecrated St Mary's Roman Catholic Church. The site was acquired circa 1780, and the building was completed c. 1803. The carved limestone bellcote was added around 1885. This church was deconsecrated in 1974 and it remained boarded up and abandoned until 1992. The stained glass windows, by Mayer of Munich, and the main roof trusses required remedial work. The special architectural feature of the roof is that it is a self-supporting structure so there are no upright posts in the church. The roof was assembled on the ground and winched into place. The walls and external plaster were preserved while all other elements of the building were renewed and were completed in 2000. The church is surrounded on three sides by one of the parish graveyards; this new graveyard was opened in 1935 and was later extended into part of the *Ríasca*, or marsh, the land having been donated by the Ussher family. Beneath one of the wings of the cruciform church is the crypt of the Athy family.

To the south of the old church is an overgrown plot which was the former site of 'The BAND HALL' which served as the meeting place of the Irish Volunteers who met and trained there in the years preceding the 1916 Easter Rising. Next to it was the home of the Coen family which was burned by the Black and Tans, on the night of the 'Sack of Oranmore', during the Irish War of Independence. 'Tans raided the village and set fire to a number of premises, including the home of Commandant Joe Howley, across the road, which is now KEANES BAR. On the northern edge of the churchyard is the lane of many names which include Shell Lane, Tenants Lane, Barrel Lane and Church Lane. On the right-hand side of the lane once grew a line of Beech trees, while on the left was a row of small thatched houses.



2. MEDIEVAL GRAVEYARD

A medieval graveyard incorporating the ruins of a pre-reformation church, thought to date to the 13th century, to the west of the Main Street, is indicated by a finger-post sign. This complex also contains at least two

medieval grave-slabs, an unknown number of graves and a segregated burial area for the members of the Presentation Order of teaching sisters who established a convent in Oranmore in 1861. The last interments took place in this graveyard in the 1960s.



3. OLD POST OFFICE

An end-of-terrace house along Main Street served as the Post Office and telephone exchange for Oranmore up to the end of the 20th century. The post box aperture is still in evidence on this building.



4. THE OLD SADDLERY

The Porterhouse was formerly owned by the local saddler, Packie Costelloe. A noteworthy feature of making saddles was placing the saddle in the river in order to harden the leather. Across the street is The Old Brewery pub, formerly owned by Christopher Kerins who had the contract to deliver Guinness products by horse and cart to areas as far away as Kinvara. Mr Kerins owned large holdings of property in Oranmore, including the impressive Oran Villa next door.



5. JOE HOWLEY STATUE

The limestone statue at the corner in Oranmore commemorates Commandant Joe Howley, mentioned previously. He led the local Irish Volunteers in the 1916 Rising and was active during the War of Independence, during the course of which he lost his life while on active service in Dublin. His grave is to the rear of St Mary's Church (see point 1).



6. GLYNN'S BAR
Going eastward along Barrack Street is Glynn's pub. Up to its sale in 1922, this premises was owned by Myles King. After that, Winnie Burke and Micheal Glynn were bidding against each other when someone advised them that it would make good sense if they bought it between them. This they did and later they married.



7. ORANBEG RIVER BRIDGE
The bridge on Barrack Street crosses the canalised portion of the Oranbeg River, known as An Trinse Mór, the big trench. It was diverted by Lord FitzGerald and Vesey to drive the water wheel in his brewery adjacent to his large house, Vesey Lodge. As the local landlord he owned hundreds of acres in the surrounding townlands. No trace of either Vesey Lodge, which was demolished in the 1960s, or the brewery, remain.



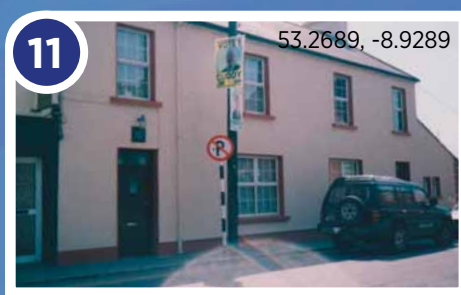
8. OLD RIC BARRACKS
Returning along Barrack Street, the old Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) barracks is the first of a terrace of three houses dating from the 19th century. The middle building was a Courthouse and the third was another location of a Post Office. Nearby was a small weighbridge which was removed in the early 2000s.



9. BANK OF IRELAND
The Bank of Ireland now occupies the former site of Lucy O'Reilly's pub. Inevitably, this became known as Lucy O'Reilly's Corner and later as Long's Corner, after subsequent owners of the bar.



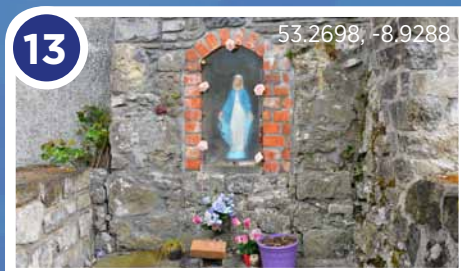
10. THATCH BAR AND FORGE
Going northwards along Main Street, on the right-hand side was Oranmore's last surviving forge, out of a known three. The blacksmith was Frank Forde. Across the street is another pub; McDonagh's Thatch bar, built in 1709. Until 1965, Guinness was bottled on the premises and it was the only newsagent's in the village until the late 1960s. The two buildings adjacent to The Thatch were home to O'Connor & Son bakery and later to a Co-Op. They were taken over by Michael Greaney who became a general merchant selling hardware and ironmongery, fertiliser and coal. He was an egg exporter who ran a travelling shop to sell groceries around the parish and to collect the eggs, on an exchange basis. He was also a tea merchant who packed his own brand of tea and owned Greaney's Bar, now The Old Brewery.



11. THE OLD FORGE
Next to the forge another brewery was operational when the Ordnance Survey map of 1837 was produced. By the time of the 1911 census it had become the new quarters for the RIC and later was the Gárda Síochána barracks up to 2007. Next to that was another location for the Post Office.



12. CONVENT SCHOOL DORMATORY
Where Armórica restaurant is, was once called St Anne's, forming a semi-detached house with St Mary's. They were a bar and grocery owned by Polly Cullinane. She bequeathed the buildings to the Presentation Sisters who used them as accommodation for the boarders attending their school. The Presentation Sisters had originally lived in the house across the road before their Convent was built. Beside St Mary's there was a lane to the river called Bothar na gCapall.



13. MARIAN SHRINE
In the Marian Year 1954, grottos, statues and shrines were erected and devoted to Our Lady in many villages in Ireland. Oranmore's Marian shrine is on the western side of Main Street.



14. DOCTORS RESIDENCE
Merville is the two-storey house beside the bridge; it was built as a Dispensary Doctor's residence in 1889/1890. The house was purchased in the 1930s by Dr Frank Davis, the last Dispensary doctor.



15. THE MILLRACE
The smaller stream passing beneath the bridge was a millrace for the corn mill that once stood beside the river. An 18th century mill was built on the site of a medieval mill here and was in use up to 1834. It was demolished in 1955. Contemporaneously, the humped crown of the bridge was altered to its present concrete form. The deck of the bridge is supported by the original 1795 piers.



16. SPRING WELL
The well beside the Claregalway road (R338) is Tobar a Chailigh Mhéara, the well of the women of the finger. This recalls a prehistoric 'giant' who sustained an injury while defeating a destructive wild boar which was causing damage in the townland of Gleann na Scál, Valley of the Shadows'. Local women brought water from this spring in the palms of their hands to wash the giant's wounds. It is also the source of the name Oranmore; derived, in chronological order, from Fúrán Mór, Úarán Mór, and Órán Mór, meaning, the big cold/fresh spring respectively.



17. ORANMORE LODGE HOTEL
On the western side of Station Road stands Oranmore Lodge, built c. 1830 and renovated in the 1870s, formerly called Thornpark and before that again, Mountvernon Cottage. Converted into a hotel in the early 1960s it has undergone extensive refurbishment and expansion under the O'Higgins family, owners since 1984.



19. RIVER FORD
Walking towards the castle, the remains of an ancient river ford can be discerned across the shallows. It is surmised that this ford was the pathway to the medieval church (point of interest 2). Further along this road, on the left-hand side, within a stone wall is the site of the afore-mentioned Church of Ireland and its graveyard.



18. ORANMORE CASTLE
Turning back towards Oranmore, the view includes Oranmore Castle. The strategic position of Oranmore, combined with its position on the eastern shore of Galway Bay, led to the construction of a tower-house in about 1206 by William de Burgh. The present owner's grandmother bought it in a ruinous condition and restored the roof and some of the grounds. The annex to the castle was, in part, built with stone rescued from the demolition of the Church of Ireland church. The castle is open by appointment, for further information see www.oranmorecastle.com.



20. PIER AND SLIPWAY
Castle Road brings one to the precincts of Oranmore Castle. The pier, built c. 1780, and the slipway were the location where boatloads of turf from Connemara were unloaded to be purchased by locals and carted home.



21. CALASANTIVUS COLLEGE
Retracing ones steps along Castle Road, on the right-hand side is the Calasantivus school complex, opened in 2006. Prior to this, the Presentation order founded their first convent in Oranmore on 23rd May 1861. Within is a neat graveyard for the deceased members of the order.

ORANMORE HERITAGE TRAIL

An insight into our past



ORANMORE HERITAGE
To Preserve the Past, to Protect the Future

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This brochure was developed by Oranmore Heritage Group in association with the Heritage Office, Galway County Council in order to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of the rich heritage and tourism assets of Oranmore.

Text: Oranmore Heritage Group

Photographs: Robert Riddell, Nicky O'Malley & Eamon Hynes

Project Steering Committee and Editorial Team:

John Grealy, Nicky O'Malley, Kathleen Cannon, Martin Byrnes, Josie Cannon, Marty O'Malley, Kieran Furey, Gráinne O'Callaghan, Oranmore Heritage Group and Marie Mannion (Heritage Officer, Galway County Council)

Mapping: Bridin Feeney, GIS Officer, Galway County Council

Proof reading: John Grealy, Nicky O' Malley, Gráinne O'Callaghan, Marie Mannion and Marianne Ten Cate.

Design & Print: KPW Design & Print

Special thanks to: Angela Quinn, Environment Section, Galway County Council, David Collins, Oughterard Heritage Group, Kathleen Davis, Bill & Alice Scanlon, Robert Riddell and Gerry Glynn, KPW.

Funding: This project has been part-funded by Galway County Council under the Local Agenda 21 (LA21) Environment Partnership Fund and the Heritage Office.

Useful websites:

www.oranmoreheritage.org

www.heritage.galwaycommunityheritage.org/content/places/towns-and-villages/oranmore

www.ww.oranmorecastle.com

Disclaimer: This booklet is merely an information guide and does not act in any way as an invitation to any person to enter onto any of the properties listed in this booklet. While every care has been taken to ensure accuracy in the compilation of this booklet, neither the writer, steering group, or owners of the properties listed in the booklets can accept responsibility for errors, omissions, or inaccuracies. All information is received and published in good faith. All liabilities for loss, disappointment, negligence or any other damage caused by the reliance on information contained in this booklet, or in the event of bankruptcy or liquidation of any organisation, company, individual or firm mentioned, or in the event of any organisation, company, individual or firm ceasing to trade, is hereby excluded.

ORANMORE HERITAGE TRAIL

For more information:
www.oranmoreheritage.org
www.heritage.galwaycommunityheritage.org/content/places/towns-and-villages/oranmore

