



LOUGH DERG
ON THE SHANNON
CULTURAL
HERITAGE TRAIL



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Introduction

Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage is an expression of the way we live, how we interact with our environment, and with each other. It encompasses mythology, folklore, traditions, oral heritage, genealogy, land use, crafts, arts, music and sport. Cultural heritage forms part of our identity and sense of place. It includes physical artefacts (e.g. industrial structures, memorials, books) and intangible attributes (e.g. stories, folklore) that are inherited from past generations, and can be passed on to future generations.

Lough Derg on the Shannon

The River Shannon has been a gateway to the heart of Ireland for thousands of years. Lough Derg is the largest lake on the Shannon and an integral part of this watery highway that has been used for generations by hunter-gatherers, settlers, raiders, explorers, monks, fishermen and farmers. There are thousands of archaeological sites and monuments scattered all around the shores of Lough Derg and the surrounding landscape, which reflect the long history of human habitation in the area from the time of the first farmers in the Neolithic, through the Bronze Age, medieval period and industrial age right up to the present day. Remnants of these societies and their activities are imprinted on the Lough Derg landscape.



View of Lough Derg from Rosmore Pier in County Galway

People have shaped the natural environment around Lough Derg and the natural landscapes have influenced the patterns of settlement and land-use in and around the lake.

Lough Derg is a relatively narrow lake for the most part (less than 5km wide for much of its length), with a long and indented

shoreline that is bounded by three counties, Galway, Clare and Tipperary. It is flanked by low mountains, the Slieve Aughty Mountains, to the west in Galway and Clare, and steeper slopes at its southern end- the Arra Mountains in Tipperary and Slieve Bernagh in Clare.

There is a noticeable difference between the gently undulating pastoral landscapes of north Tipperary on the eastern side of the Lough Derg and the more rugged terrain on the western side of the lake in Galway and Clare. Limestone underlies much of the lowlands in Tipperary and highly productive farmland (for both pastoral and arable farming) characterises these areas. Peatlands and wetlands are more extensive on the Clare and Galway side of Lough Derg on the Old Red Sandstone and Devonian bedrock that extends from the mountains and hills of the Slieve Aughty and Slieve Bernagh, to close to the lake shore. While there is still a considerable amount of productive farmland in the lowlands to the west of the lake, it is not as extensive as in Tipperary. These landscape differences have influenced how people utilised the land, the size and nature of farm holdings and patterns of land use.



View of wooded islands on Lough Derg

Lough Derg has many islands, none of which are inhabited today but in the past provided home and shelter to monks, scholars, sailors, fishermen and farmers. Many of the islands have intriguing names. Some are named after animals (e.g. Cormorant, Goose, Deer, Hare, Rabbit and Goat Islands), others reflect an ecclesiastical past (e.g. Church, Friar's, Abbey and Holy Islands), others hint at past uses (e.g. Malt, Still and Whiskey Islands) and others appear to be purely descriptive (Rushy, Sedgely and Bushy Islands).



Tipperary side of Lough Derg looking northwards from Toutinna

Lough Derg is an area of outstanding beauty and tranquillity today, a jewel of the Irish midlands that is largely undiscovered. It is perhaps surprising that the peaceful landscapes around the lake once supported industries such as slate quarries, iron extraction and smelting, mills (corn, oil and tuck), peat extraction industry and Eel fisheries that employed hundreds of people and attracted migrant workers into the area. When boating on the quiet waters of the lake today, it is hard to imagine a time when steam ships and barges chugged up and down the lake laden with goods and passengers. In the modern era, it is difficult to comprehend the power that mythology and superstition held among communities long ago, and the importance of the oral tradition of storytelling and folklore to retain historical events and beliefs among communities.



Swans on Lough Derg (Photo Velma Mercer)

Lough Derg has a particularly rich cultural heritage due to its long history of human activity, the fact that it is bounded by three counties, its importance as a water corridor and recreation centre, and its abundance of natural resources (iron, slate, turf, timber and water power). *The Lough Derg Cultural Heritage Trail* aims to provide a flavour of this rich cultural heritage and take you on a journey to discover and explore this intriguing heritage for yourself.

Cultural heritage is intimately linked with built (archaeological and architectural) and natural heritage (nature and wildlife, habitats, biodiversity) and therefore *The Lough Derg on the Shannon Cultural Heritage Trail* has many links with the existing heritage¹ and nature² trails for Lough Derg.



View of Lough Derg from the lower slopes of the Arra mountains in Tipperary

How to use this guide

The Lough Derg (on the Shannon) Cultural Heritage Trail is essentially a driving route with many stops on the way (see map on the inside cover). This beautiful area can also be explored on foot along the walking routes that run on either side of the lake, including the East Clare Way³ and the Lough Derg Way⁴, the Beara Breifne Way⁵, which runs along the north-eastern shore of the lake, or on bicycle along the Lough Derg Cycle Route⁶.

¹ <http://www.clarecoco.ie/recreation-culture/heritage/lough-derg-on-the-shannon-nature-trail-21114.pdf>

² <http://clarelibrary.blogspot.ie/2013/06/lough-derg-heritage-trail-app.html>

³ <http://www.clarewalks.com/east-clare-way-page.html>

⁴ <http://www.irishtrails.ie/Trail/Lough-Derg-Way/21/>

⁵ <http://www.bbgreenway.com/>

⁶ <http://www.discoverloughderg.ie/category/cycling-s/>

The *Lough Derg (on the Shannon) Cultural Heritage Trail* is described from Portumna in County Galway down the western shore of the lake, to Killaloe in County Clare, and back up on the eastern side to Lorrha in County Tipperary but it can be travelled in any direction. You can visit one or all of the sites listed. Points of interest are noted for each stop.

This publication provides background information that aims to give a deeper insight to the cultural heritage of the Lough Derg area and thus enhance the visitor experience.

When you are out exploring Lough Derg and environs please follow the **Leave No Trace** principles:

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Be Considerate of Others
- Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife
- Travel and Camp on Durable Ground
- Leave What You Find
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Minimise the Effects of Fire

Be conscious at all times that you may be on or close to active farmland. Keep dogs on a leash at all times in or near farms and farm animals. But above all enjoy yourself and the many delights that Lough Derg, the islands and its shoreline has to offer!

Please note, place names around the lake follow the *Placenames Database of Ireland* (www.logainm.ie), unless otherwise indicated.



Squibs racing in regatta on Lough Derg (Photo John Leech)

Spiritual heritage and traditions

There is an outstanding spiritual and ecclesiastical heritage associated with Lough Derg. There are a large number of important medieval churches, abbeys and monastic sites in the area. There are also many spiritual traditions, some of which are still practised today and many of which originated in pre-Christian times including traditions associated with pilgrimage routes and Holy Wells.

There are several early Christian monastic sites in and around the lake, at Terryglass and Lorrha in Tipperary, Tuamgraney, Killaloe and Inis Cealtra in Clare, and Abbey in Galway. It is probably no accident that many of the early monastic sites were located close to Lough Derg, an important water corridor that facilitated communication with the outer world. In many cases, towns and villages grew up around these ecclesiastical centres.

Inis Cealtra or Holy Island near Mountshannon in Clare is one of the most notable monastic sites in Ireland. The island is associated with several saints (including St. Columba who is thought to have founded the monastic settlement) but mostly with St. Caiman (c. 600- 654AD). The monastery became a great centre of learning during his lifetime, attracting many disciples. Along with other notable Irish early medieval monastic settlements such as Clonmacnoise and Kells, Inis Cealtra is thought to have played a crucial role in Europe's educational and artistic development.



Inis Cealtra

Inis Cealtra has also been a centre of pilgrimage for over a thousand years. Two shoes inscribed on a 10th century grave memorial in one of the island graveyards seem to indicate the resting place of a pilgrim.

In the early 17th century *Inis Cealtra* was deemed one of the 'Notable Shrines' in Ireland and for the following 250 years it was one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in the country attracting many thousands of pilgrims.

The pattern or pilgrimage in the early days was held on the second Sunday after Ash Wednesday (the start of Lent and forty days before Easter Sunday).

In 1609, the pattern was on the week before Easter but by 1836 it was held on Whitsunday, the seventh Sunday after Easter. A pilgrim road, which extends from the shore to the round tower and St. Caimin's church, can still be seen.

The tradition of pilgrimage on the island largely died out in the mid-19th century.

Terryglass in Tipperary was the site of an important early monastery also founded by St. Columba in 549AD. St. Columba was one of the twelve apostles of Ireland (also known as Twelve Apostles of Erin), saints of the sixth century who studied under St. Finian at his famous monastic school Clonard Abbey in County Meath.

Aed Ua Crimthainn was appointed Abbott of the monastery in Terryglass in 1152 and he is associated with the compilation of the 'Book of Leinster'. This illuminated manuscript is on display in Trinity College Dublin and is considered one of the most important sources of medieval Irish prose, verse and genealogy.

A monastery was established by St. Cronan in Tuamgraney in Clare in the 6th century. The current church, which stands on the site of the early monastery, has elements which may date back to the church built in the 10th century by Cormac Uá Cillín.

The church has direct links to Brian Ború, High King of Ireland in the 11th century, as it was repaired under his patronage. St. Cronan's is the oldest church in continuous use in Ireland and Britain.



St. Cronan's, Tuamgraney

Many saints are associated with Lough Derg and the surrounding landscape- St. Ruadhán in Lorrha, St. Caimin on *Inis Cealtra*, St. Lua in Ballina and Killaloe, St. Flannan in Killaloe, St. Cronan in Tuamgraney, St. Feichín in Abbey, and St. Columba in Terryglass. These names can still be seen and heard today in people's names, the names of schools, and clubs and associations in the area, and their Feast Days are still celebrated.



Holy Wells and cures

There are thousands of 'Holy Wells' all over the Irish countryside, over two hundred and twenty recorded in County Clare alone. While some of these Holy Wells are long forgotten, many have been preserved by the local community. Many of these wells have their origins in pagan times when the water in the well was considered to have spiritual significance and in some cases healing powers. The wells were later adopted into the Christian tradition and their curative powers attributed to the patron saint of the well. Days of special devotion were associated with the wells, usually on the Feast Day of the particular saint. These days commonly became known as the Pattern (or Patron) Day. Many Holy Wells are located near churches or graveyards. There are a myriad of cures associated with Holy Wells from curing warts to toothache, stomach problems to blindness.

'Tubberanolc Well of the Sick' at Curratober just south of Mountshannon in Clare is still visited by local people to collect well water, which is reputed to cure many ailments, particularly stomach complaints. The waters bubble up into three springs in the hillside above the well. The Patron Saint of this well is St. Caimin of *Inis Cealtra*. The well is said to have formed as a result of St. Caimin sending three of his monks to the area as a penance to draw water (hence the three springs).

The water in St Augh's Well in Terryglass, Tipperary is thought to cure eye ailments. The well was visited on Saturdays during the month of May during sunrise and sunset. The pattern involved starting on the eastern side of the well and continuing around to the other three sides reciting prayers. Once prayers were completed, the affected eyes were washed in the well water and a small offering was left nearby.



Water in this Bullaun stone at Derrainy in Clare is reputed to cure warts and skin diseases

On *Inis Cealtra* in Clare, an elaborate series of rounds began and ended at Lady's Well or the Holy Well. These walks or rounds were performed travelling with the sun in a clockwise direction. When finished pilgrims drank the well water, made an offering and if they could see their reflection, their sins were forgiven.

The Holy Well at Boleynanollag near Gorteeny in Galway is dedicated to St. Anne whose Feast Day is the 17th of July. According to local folklore, water in the well has the power to cure warts.

Ladywell is situated just north of Kilnalahan Abbey in Abbey Village, Galway. The well is thought to have been the source of water for the Abbey. Cures for toothaches, eye complaints and warts are associated with stations at this well and offerings in the forms of rags are left on the bush at the well, to indicate a detachment from worldliness. The Holy Well in Youghal Village, Tipperary also has a rag tree next to the well.



Ladywell in Abbey, Galway- reputed to cure toothache, eye diseases and warts

St. Feichín's is another Holy Well near Abbey just south of the village. Feichín was a 6th century saint who according to tradition was the first to spread the word of Christianity in the area. Over the centuries countless pilgrims from near and far have come to the Holy Well to pray and to ask St. Feichín to intercede for them.

Myth, legend and folklore

Naming the lake

There are several stories about the origin of the name 'Lough Derg' and they all are quite bloody! It is generally accepted that the name Lough Derg is an anglicised version of the Irish name *Loch Deirgeirt* meaning 'Lake of the Red Eye' or 'The Red Lake of Deirc'. One folk tale illustrates the fear of satire that prevailed long ago among Irish kings and nobility. According to this story a celebrated poet from Ulster, Aithirne, was on a journey through Ireland. He made outrageous and unreasonable demands from every King through whose lands he travelled. These demands were met due to the fear of what the poet might say about the King on his travels, and to avoid provoking the Ulster King into war. On meeting the King of South Connacht, Eochaidh mac Luchta, at his fortress near the shores of Lough Derg, Aithirne demanded the King's eye as a gift. The King had only one eye but he plucked it out at once and handed it to the troublesome poet. A servant led the blinded King to the shore of Lough Derg so that he could wash the wound. The servant remarked that the water was red from the King's blood. The King replied that from that day on the Lough should be called *Loch Derg Dheirc* (lake of the red eye).



Aithirne and the Lake of the Red Eye (painting Helen Caird)

Naming the River Shannon

The River Shannon is reputedly named after the goddess 'Sinann', granddaughter of the Sea King, Lir. She is supposed to have gone to the *Well of Connla* (a mystical fountain) to seek the Salmon that had eaten nuts from the nine sacred Hazel trees that grew

around the well, with the hope of gaining knowledge. Women were prohibited from approaching the well and so, in anger, the water in the well rose and drowned Sinann. Her body washed up on the banks of a river, which was then named after her.



Sinann and the Salmon (painting Helen Caird)

Tountinna and the Flood

Leabhar Gabhála Éireann or the 'Book of the Invasions' written in the 11th century tells how Fintan the Ancient travelled to Ireland and became the only man to survive 'The Flood', spending 200 years under the earth at the top of Tountinna overlooking the lake. Tountinna is the highest point in the Arra Mountains of North Tipperary. Fintan later underwent a series of transformations into animal shapes, eventually returning to human form in time to recount the entire history of Ireland to a monastic scribe, before dying, after being baptised. Tountinna is also known as the "Hill of the Wave" or "Hill of the Flood". According to another folk tale, the great flood drowned all the first Irish inhabitants except those survivors who took refuge on Tountinna!

Bonfire night or St. John's Eve

June 23rd is the date of an ancient fire festival. Fires were originally lit on this date as part of a Celtic celebration to honour the goddess Áine, who was associated with the sun, fertility and protecting crops and animals. As with many pagan festivals, this tradition was adopted by Christianity and linked to the birth of St. John. This tradition is still alive in many of the towns and villages around Lough Derg.

Brian Ború

Many intriguing myths and legends are associated with the era of Brian Ború and his reign as High King of Ireland in the 11th century. These are intermingled with the real story of the life of this Irish hero.

There are several stories that link Brian Ború with the 'Graves of the Leinster Men' at Tountinna, Tipperary. One version of events states that Brian's daughter was engaged to be married to a king from Leinster who came to fetch her. Brian's wife, Gormfhlaithe, did not agree with the match and sent soldiers to intercept the king on his way to Kincora. Several of his men were slain and the king was mortally wounded. He entreated his surviving men to carry him to the head of the pass so that he might die in sight of Leinster. He was laid to rest about half a kilometre from the 'Graves of the Leinstermen' (where his men were buried) on Knockaunreelyon Cnocán Rí Laighean or the Hillock of the King of Leinster. The actual 'Graves of the Leinstermen' are thought to be Bronze Age and therefore built earlier than the time of Brian Ború.



'Graves of the Leinster Men' on Tountinna in Tipperary

Tobermurragh or Murrough's well located close to the Pier Head in Killaloe, County Clare and is said to be the place where Brian's eldest son, Murrough, was baptised. Murrough led the Dalcassian forces (an Irish tribe of which Brian Ború and his family were members) at the Battle of Clontarf. The well is enclosed and covered by a red brick building erected at the end of the 19th century. Though not a 'holy' well, it is remarkable for its abundant supply of pure water.

At Cloghaneena (*Cloch an Fhiona* or the Stone of the Wine) in Ballina, Tipperary stands the ruins of an old fortified building. According to tradition, Brian Ború had a wine store here. The present building is from a later period but it could have been built on the site of an older structure. There are many reports of Brian's wine-filled cellars, to which the Vikings and others were obliged to contribute. No doubt a cellar of significant proportions would have existed near his palace in Kincora in Killaloe and perhaps it was at this location.

There are many accounts of what actually led to the infamous Battle of Clontarf in 1014. One account suggests that a game of chess at Brian's palace at Kincora in 1013 lit the fuse that led to the great conflict. The game was between Brian's son, Murrough and his cousin, Conaing. During the game, King Maolmordha of Leinster – who was visiting Kincora – suggested a move that caused Murrough to lose the game. Murrough then ridiculed Maolmordha and highly insulted he left Kincora and vowed vengeance on the clan.

Carrickeevul or Aoibheal's Rock is on the northern slope of Crag Hill above Béal Ború (a fort belonging to Brian just north of Killaloe in Clare) at a height of 275m. According to local legend, Aoibheal was the banshee or fairy goddess of the Dalcassian tribe and closely associated with Brian Ború. She reputedly lived on the rock surrounded by Oak woodland until the woods were cut down in the 17th century. Aoibheal is said to have been heard at important events such as Dalcassian inauguration ceremonies. She is reputed to have appeared to Brian the night before the Battle of Clontarf and foretold his death. Aoibheal is immortalised in the infamous poem by Brian Merriman in 'Cúirt an Mhean Oíche' or 'The Midnight Court', written in the mid-18th century.

Ghost stories!

Stories of ghosts and ghouls abound in Irish folklore and there are several from the shores of Lough Derg including a couple of examples from Tipperary. For over 500 years the spirit of Edmund Roe O'Kennedy is said to have haunted his former home at Annagh Castle in North Tipperary, near Luska Bay. Back in the 16th century, Edmond, murdered by his enemies, died without telling anyone where he had concealed his hidden treasure. Since his murder, it is said that Edmond's ghost has appeared to visitors at the site of Annagh Castle with blood flowing from a large slit in his throat.

Castle Biggs, situated further north along the banks of the lake near Terryglass, is also said to be haunted but this time by a Shuck, a fire-breathing black dog. The legend is that this abomination with cloven hooves protects a hidden hoard of treasure.

Lough Derg as a water highway

The River Shannon has been a hugely important water highway for thousands of years. The earliest boats on Lough Derg were probably dugout canoes, carved out of large tree trunks. Later rowing and sailing boats including those sailed by the Vikings plied the lake and the Shannon. The advent of steam power in the early 19th century heralded a new era on Lough Derg providing a rapid transport system. Steam power allowed for easier and faster transport of much larger and heavier cargoes than had been previously possible. Steam ships and barges chugged up and down Lough Derg carrying goods and people. Barges were initially towed by steamers and later were powered by their own engines. The development of the rail network and the arrival of the motorcar led to a decline in the importance of water transport and steam power. Today the lake is known as Ireland's 'Pleasure Lake' and it is popular with boating enthusiasts, sailors and anglers although it remains one of Ireland's best kept secrets.



Boats in Garrykenny, Tipperary

Shannon Navigation

Although transport on the Shannon was always important, works were required over the years to improve navigation for larger boats and access into smaller harbours. These works included building canals and harbours, improving the access to some of the main tributaries, dredging and drainage works. Improvements to the Shannon Navigation started in mid-18th century and have continued sporadically until the present day (now administered by Waterways Ireland⁷).

⁷<http://www.waterwaysireland.org/>

The navigation and boating infrastructure developed during the height of the steam ship era in particular left an imprint on the cultural landscape in the towns and villages around Lough Derg in the fine stone quays, harbours, navigation markers, cranes, hoists, bollards and storehouses that remain today. Harbours built during this era include the Connacht and Portland harbours in Portumna, the harbour at Williamstown near Whitegate, and quays at Scariff, Kilgarvan, Mota, Dromineer, Derrycastle and Garrykenny.



Garrykenny Quay



A cormorant resting on 'Benjamin Rocks', a navigation marker on Lough Derg



Old crane in Killaloe



Iron bollard in Dromineer

The boats

The 18' clinker punt is the main indigenous craft of Lough Derg. These small row boats were used for short journeys and everyday errands on the lake. The pronounced skag (an extension of the keel) is a common feature of these traditional boats.

The *Marquis Wellsley* appears to have been the first steam ship to arrive on the Shannon in c. 1825-6. The *Lady Lansdowne* was the world's first iron ship and is the world's oldest surviving iron paddle steamer. She was the largest steamer to work on the

Shannon system and she was capable of towing up to four barges with her two 45 horse power steam engines. The ship was constructed at the Birkenhead Iron works and was shipped to Ireland in sections before being reassembled in Killaloe in 1833. It is thought that the *Lady Lansdowne* ended her working days in 1867-1868 and was beached in the shallows on the Ballina side of the Shannon (now lying under the Derg Marina). Numerous other steam ships plied the waters of Lough Derg carrying passengers and goods up until the early 20th century.

The Phoenix, a gentleman's steam yacht, was built in 1872 for Francis Spaight of Derry Castle on Lough Derg, possibly as a wedding present for his son, William. She was based in Killaloe until 1884 and then spent some time on the Grand Canal before coming back to Lough Derg in 1903. She was used extensively for the next thirty-two years on Lough Derg. Her owner, Harry Lefroy, used the *Phoenix* as a floating office and supervised the building of jetties and quays, and for recreational trips. After Mr Lefroy's death in 1935 she spent some time in Dublin, Killaloe, Waterford and Dromineer. The boat was bought by its current owner (John Lefroy) in the late 1960s and is now based in Killaloe again.



Linquenda, a Dutch barge (Photo Velma Mercer)

Under the auspices of the Shannon Development Company, a steamer service ran from Killaloe to Carrick-on-Shannon, via Athlone, scheduled to meet passengers travelling to and from Banagher in County Offaly by rail. The *Lady Betty Balfour* and the *Countess of Cadogan* remained in service from Killaloe to Banagher and back, until 1914. With the arrival of the motorcar and development of the rail network, travel by steam boat died out. The Portumna Pleasure Boat Company tried to revive steam



Barge in Tuamgraney Harbour

boat travel on the Lake in 1927, when it launched the *Jolly Roger*, but it had to be quickly retired, as it failed to attract sufficient numbers of paying customers.

Barges carried freight and livestock and were initially towed by the steamers such as the *Lady Lansdowne* (also known as lumber boats). Barges also transported slate from the quarries in the Arra Mountains collecting it at quays in Garrykennedy and Deer Harbour. After the internal combustion engine became widely available in the early 20th century, barges were no longer dependent on steamers.

A famous barge, the 45M, sank in Lough Derg off Parker's Point between Portroe and Killaloe in 1946 in poor weather conditions and tragically with the loss of three lives. The 45M was built in Dublin in 1928 by Vickers Ireland Limited for the Grand Canal Company. She carried sugar and general goods between Carlow and Dublin during the Emergency, and also carried turf into Limerick City. The 45M was salvaged in 1975 by Donnacha Kennedy- a huge undertaking assisted by family, friends and numerous spectators. The incredible effort involved proved worthwhile as she was in good condition and continues to traverse the waters of Lough Derg today.



T82 Barge, Spera in Deo, moored at Dromineer- built in Holland in 1895



61M built in 1929, once a working boat on the Shannon, now based in Dromineer, now known as the Murrough (Photo courtesy of John Leech)



61M and 64M- barges such as these owned by the Grand Canal Company were renumbered and given the letter 'M' when engines were installed (Photo courtesy of John Leech)

Boats carrying turf from Galway and Clare over to Tipperary were once a regular site on the lake. Peatlands are more extensive on the Galway and Clare side of Lough Derg. The fuel initially used for the steamers was coal but in the 1840s peat began to be used- probably supplied from Coos Bay in Clare and Rosmore in Galway. An article in *The Nenagh Guardian* (26th November 1840) recalls a tragic incident when a boat laden with turf and manned by three people, left the Galway side of the lake bound for Killaloe. Unfortunately the weather became rough and when they were in view of safety near Derry Castle, a squall split the sail and the little vessel capsized. All three on board, including two young boys, were sadly lost.

Industrial landscapes of Lough Derg

Visitors to the Lough Derg area are often struck by the fine old industrial buildings in some of the towns and villages around the lake, and the remnants of industrial architecture. When travelling around the peaceful shores of Lough Derg today, whether by road or by boat, it is hard to imagine that there was an industrial era that shaped the landscapes in and around the lake. The biggest industries in the area were the slate quarries and the iron industry. There was also a linen mill for a time in Mountshannon, County Clare, and several corn, tuck and oil mills in a number of towns and villages. There are extensive peatlands on the Lough Derg landscape, and turf has been harvested for generations for fuel both for home and industrial purposes. Other industries revolved around transport of people and goods up and down the lake, and further afield, as discussed in the previous chapter.



Memorial at site of corn mill in Barryartella, Tipperary, adjacent to Hanly Woollen Mills (established 1893), which is still operating today

The legacy of this industrial era can be seen in the fine quays and harbours around the lake with cranes, hoists and storehouses, the ruins of iron blast furnaces, the cutover sections of bogs and the abandoned slate quarries and associated structures through the Arra Mountains.

It is also evident in place names that reflect some of the activities around the lake, and family names as migrant workers were attracted to the area during the boom years.

In more recent years, the building of the Shannon Hydro-Electric Scheme at Ardnacrusha, downstream from Killaloe on the Shannon, between 1925 and 1929 had a major impact on the Shannon navigation, businesses and communities in the Lough Derg area and beyond.

Quarrying

Deposits of good quality slate in the Arra Mountains in Tipperary led to the development of a slate quarrying industry by at least the mid-18th century. Commercial exploitation at a large scale began in the early 19th century. Quarries were developed at locations such as Corbally Hill and Killoran. It was recorded that 'about 100,000 tons are annually' were removed from these quarries at this time. By the 1840s over 700 people were employed in the numerous slate quarries in the area and entire communities grew up in the vicinity of the quarries including Portroe and Castletown.

Many migrant workers, especially from Wales, settled in the area. At one point there was a small Welsh-speaking community near Portroe.

The slate was carried by horse and cart, and by boat from the quays at Derry (near Ballina), Garrykennedy and Dromineer, while the finished slate was transported from Killaloe by means of steamers. Much of the slate quarried was for export to England and Scotland.

The slates were known as 'Killaloe slates' or 'Killaloes', because they were shipped from Killaloe. After 1863 the slate was predominantly transported by rail from Nenagh. Cheaper "Blue Bangor" slates from Wales became more popular during the late 19th century, resulting in the gradual demise of the slate quarries, in the vicinity of Lough Derg.



Old slate quarry on the slopes of Tountinna

Killaloe slates were the best known Irish produced slate and were used for roofing many private and public buildings, including St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick City, St. Flannann's College, Ennis, and the courthouse in Nenagh. It was also used at Thoor Ballylee, County Galway, summer home of the poet W.B Yeats who referred to, "sea green slates" in one of his short verses, "To be Carved on a Stone at Thoor Ballylee".

Although used primarily for roofing and for cladding walls, Killaloe slates were also used for carved gravestones, examples of which can be seen in graveyards on the Tipperary side of Lough Derg notably at Castletown, Templeachally and Youghalarra, and in Ogonelloe in County Clare. Slate sundials can be seen in the church grounds at Roscrea and in the Nenagh Heritage Centre, Tipperary, and in the Historic Science Centre at Birr Castle, Offaly. Steps, window sills, lintels, mantelpieces and gate piers made from Killaloe slate are common architectural elements still found within the Lough Derg area.



Memorial in Castletown Graveyard, Tipperary made from local slate with folk art decorations

Iron industry

An iron industry once flourished in southeast Galway and northeast Clare. Bog iron was extracted from shallow open-cast mines in the foothills of the Slieve Aughty mountains, and smelted in furnaces fuelled by charcoal. At least eight furnaces were active in the area between Tuamgraney and Feakle in Clare, and Woodford in Galway, between the early 17th century and the mid-19th century. The furnaces were large square stone buildings with a water-supply system to power the bellows. They could produce about a ton of iron a day. The dense oak woods that were present in the area at the time were exploited to provide wood for the manufacture of charcoal, which was used in the smelting process. The iron industry in the area had a lasting impact on the landscape as the furnaces required huge amounts of wood. The town of Woodford in Galway is *Graig Na Muilté Iarrainn* in Irish, which means The Village of the Iron Mills. The Woodford Heritage Centre has a display on the iron industry heritage of the area. The *Sliabh Aughty Furnace Project* aims to research, conserve and highlight the fascinating history of the iron industry in this area (www.furnaceproject.org).



An iron bar dated 1681 in Woodford, County Galway (Photo Monica Hynes)



Iron furnace in Derryoover near Woodford (Photo Paul Rondalez)

Hydro-electric power at Ardnacrusha

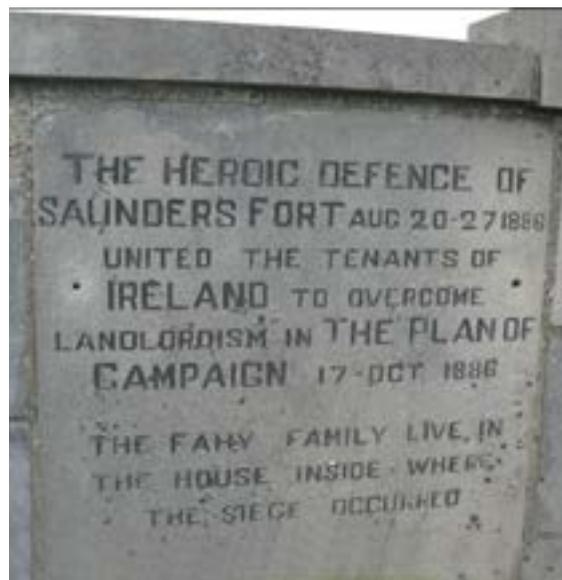
The hydro-electric power station at Ardnacrusha in County Clare is the most conspicuous landmark on the Shannon Navigation today. Building of the power station (1925-1929) was a feat of engineering and a pivotal development for the newly established Irish Republic. The dam initially provided a huge amount of the country's electricity requirements. When first built it was the largest hydroelectric station in the world.

Construction of the dam for the power station raised water levels south of Lough Derg from Killaloe, making the Killaloe Canal redundant because rapids in the area were covered and the river was now easily navigable south of the Killaloe-Ballina Bridge. The building of the dam had a huge impact on the Shannon Navigation south of Killaloe and the ecology of the river.

The Land Wars

The period known as 'The Land Wars' was a time of agrarian unrest in the late 1800s when tenant farmers and their supporters protested about the issues of land ownership, unfair rent hikes and evictions. The conflict was led by the Land League and local communities. East Galway came to prominence during the Land Wars in the late 1800's when a local group resisted the eviction policies of the local landlord, the Earl of Clanricarde. As part of their campaign of resistance, tenants blockaded themselves into houses under eviction and standoffs between the constabulary and the tenants ensued, the most famous of which was the 'Siege of Saunders Fort'.

Thomas Saunders rented a farm in Rosmore on the Clanricarde estate. He and his family were served an eviction notice despite offering to pay rent arrears plus costs. Twenty-one local men locked themselves into the house to prevent the eviction, which was supposed to take place on Friday the 20th of August 1886. This action became known as the 'Siege of Saunders Fort'. The eviction has to be postponed for several days while a battering ram was brought from Birr in Offaly. Eventually the men inside were arrested and sent to prison, including Tommy Larkin who later died in prison and was considered a martyr for the cause.



Memorial at the location of 'Saunders Fort', the house where Thomas Saunders and family lived

The campaign of agrarian protest during the Land Wars was also strong in East Clare. The notorious evictions of twenty eight tenants in 1887 in Bodyke formed one of the most dramatic episodes of the Land Wars. The Bodyke evictions provoked widespread shock and debate both in Ireland and abroad, and played a significant part in the overthrow of the prevailing land holding system in the country.



Woodford, Co. Galway

Family names around the lake

Ireland was one of the first countries to adopt hereditary surnames, many of which originated during the reign of Brian Ború in the 11th century. Old family names found on the Clare side of Lough Derg include O'Brien, Kennedy, McNamara, Hayes, Moloney, Ryan, Tuohy and Minogue.



Minogue Iron Works near Whitegate

Around the Galway side of the lake, old family names still common today include O' Madden (or Madden), Horan, Larkin, Mannion, Holohan, Kenny, Tracy, Mooney, Conroy, Cannon, Donnelly, Cunningham, Curran and Connaughton. And finally, on Tipperary side of Lough Derg names like O' Kennedy or Kennedy, Maher (also recorded as Meagher or O'Maher), Ryan, Hayes, Hogan (O'Hogan) and Dwyer are all closely associated with the lakeshore.

Travelling around Lough Derg, you may encounter some unusual surnames including several of Welsh origin. This is another legacy of the industrial era in the Lough Derg area. The iron ore extraction industry established in the Slieve Aughties in the 17th century, and the slate quarries that became active in the Arra Mountains from the mid-18th century both attracted migrant workers, particularly specialised workers from Wales. This resulted in an influx of new names to the area, many of which survive today including Felle, Kemple, Matthews, Nash, Seymour, Piggott, Robinson, Starr, Saunders and Willis.

Some of the families in the Woodford area, County Galway are descendants of the 'Ultachs', people from south Ulster (mainly Cavan and Monaghan) who sought refuge in Connacht in the early 19th century. They were Catholics fleeing persecution in Ulster and came at the invitation of Sir Thomas Burke, Marble Hill. Ultach surnames still survive in Woodford and the surrounding

area today such as O'Reily, Loughrey, Murray and Shiel. The Ultachs are remembered for their hardworking and sober ways. They reclaimed rough mountain land for agriculture, introduced flax growing, built stone houses and limekilns.

Genealogy and Heritage Centres in hinterland of Lough Derg

There are three genealogy centres in Clare, Galway and Tipperary that provide information on tracing your family roots, and other centres that provide information local heritage.

East Galway Family History Society, Woodford Heritage Centre, Woodford, County Galway

<http://www.galwayroots.com/east/woodford-heritage-centre>

North Tipperary Genealogical Centre, Nenagh, County Tipperary
<http://tipperarynorth.rootsireland.ie/>

Nenagh Heritage Centre, Nenagh, County Tipperary
<http://www.tipperarynorth.ie/heritagemuseum>

Clare Library, Ennis, County Clare
http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/library/local-studies/tracing_your_family_tree.htm

Clare Heritage and Genealogical Research Centre in Corofin, County Clare
<http://clareroots.com/>

Clare Roots Society
<http://www.clareroots.org/>

Notable people

Many people from the Lough Derg area have made a significant contribution to their local communities or their adopted homes. These notable people, some of whom are listed below, have had an impact on Irish politics, military history, community development, literature and academia.

Many of these people are remembered in their communities through the erection of commemorative plaques or memorials, or in the names of clubs and community centres. The high number of notable people from around Lough Derg is remarkable given the rural nature of much of the area. Musicians of note and sporting heroes are discussed in subsequent chapters.

Brian Ború (941 – 1014)



Statue of Brian Ború in Tuamgraney

Lough Derg's most famous son was Brian Ború, the last High King of Ireland who reigned from 1002 to 1014. He was born around 940AD in Killaloe, County Clare. He was the son of *Cinnéide*, leader of the Dalcassian tribe at the time. His mother was *Bé Binn* from Garrykennedy in Tipperary. Brian Ború emerged as a great leader and during his 12-year reign Ireland enjoyed peace and prosperity.

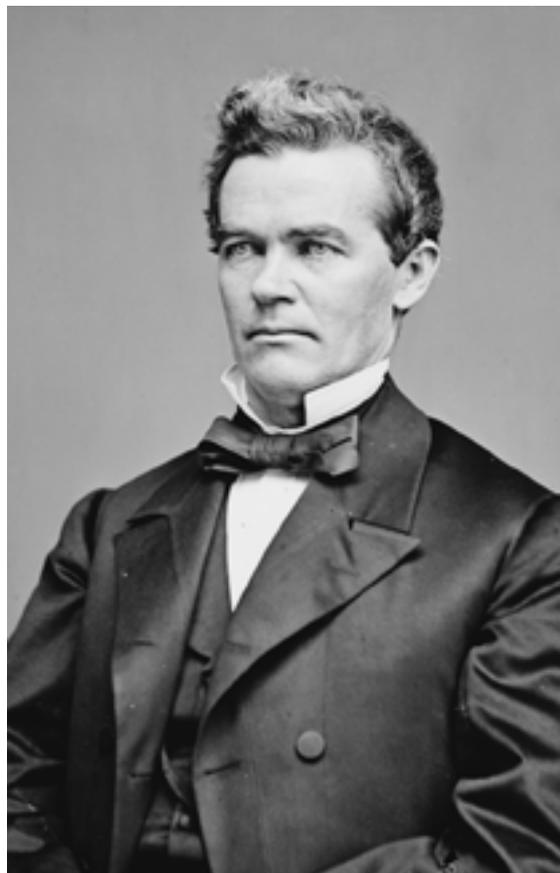
Brian Ború chose to rule over Ireland from his birthplace at Killaloe, in his great palace of Kincora. The palace became the centre of national life and the capital of Ireland under Brian's reign as High King. While there are no remains of Kincora to be seen today it is thought to have occupied the site at the top of the hill in Killaloe Village where the Roman Catholic church stands today. His rise to power started when he led a tiny band of dissident warriors against the might of the Norse in the mountains of east Clare. By the age of 35, he was leader of the Dalcassian tribe. Brian Ború recognised the power and potential of a naval force because he knew he needed to beat the Norse and other opponents on the water as well as on land. He is thought to have put together two fleets of ships – one based on Lough Derg, and the second an ocean-going fleet based below Limerick. Brian Ború had a deep Christian faith and supported or founded many churches and monasteries during his lifetime. He was killed after the Battle of Clontarf in 1014.

Honora de Burgo (1675-1698) and Patrick Sarsfield (1660-1693)

Honora De Burgo was born at Portumna Castle, Co. Galway, the youngest daughter of William de Burgo (Burke), the seventh Earl of Clanricarde. Hers was a tragically short, but colourful life. It is thought she married Patrick Sarsfield, 1st Earl of Lucan, at Portumna Abbey in 1689, at the tender age of fifteen, nearly twenty years her husband's junior. Sarsfield, from Dublin, was a legendary commander in the Jacobite cavalry who distinguished himself by successfully intercepting a Williamite siege train on its way to Limerick at Ballyneety in 1690. He also fought in the Battle of Aughrim in 1691. Following the Jacobite defeat at Aughrim, Sarsfield led his forces to Limerick via Woodford in Galway and Whitegate in Clare. Sarsfield was involved in negotiating the Treaty of Limerick after which he and his family, and other comrades known as 'The Wild Geese', were exiled in France. After Sarsfield's death on a battlefield in France, Honora married the Duke of Berwick. Her short life came to an end in 1698 when she was only 22 years old. She was said to have been beautiful and charming, and was popular in the court of Louis XIV during her short time there.

John Conness (1821- 1909)

Born in Abbey, John Conness was the youngest of fourteen children born to Walter and Mary Conness (nee Williams).



John Conness (Brady-Handy Photograph Collection 1855-1865, Wikimedia Commons)

In 1836, at the age of fifteen years he emigrated to the United States where he attended Public School in New York. He worked for many years in New York but, like many others, he was attracted by the excitement of the gold rush and moved to San Francisco, California in 1849. He worked in the mines for several years and this experience was to give him a lasting interest in the mining industry and to influence his subsequent public life.

He went on to become a successful and highly regarded public representative serving as US Senator from California. He was instrumental in the establishment of Yosemite National Park and later he was honoured by having Mount Conness and Conness Creek in the Sierra Nevada mountain range named after him. He was widely acclaimed for voting for the amendments to abolish slavery and for supporting immigration and civil rights for Chinese in California. He worked closely with President Abraham Lincoln on whose death in 1865, John Conness was honoured to be one of the pallbearers at Lincoln's funeral.

Tommy Larkin (1864 – 1887)

In 1886, during the period of agrarian unrest known as the Land Wars, Tommy Larkin was arrested and later imprisoned in Kilkenny jail following his defence of a family under threat of eviction, an event known as the 'defence of Saunders Fort'. His death in Kilkenny Jail in September 1887 due to neglect at the tender age of 22 years shocked the entire community in south Galway and beyond.

Thousands of people attended his funeral in Abbey, a reflection of the outrage felt by many at the time, and the high esteem in which Tommy Larkin was held by everyone. His name is remembered today in Tommy Larkins GAA club in Woodford (which is also named after another Tommy Larkins, a local parish priest).



Memorial for Tommy Larkin in Gurteeny, Galway, the place of his birth

Private Martin O'Meara VC (1885- 1935)

Private Martin O'Meara, a native of the parish of Lorrha in Tipperary, was a recipient a Victoria Cross, which is the highest and most prestigious award for gallantry in the face of the enemy that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces. Private O'Meara enlisted on August 19th, 1915, and was assigned to the 16th Battalion of the Australian Imperial Forces, with which he fought with distinction during World War I in the 'Killing Fields of France'.



Martin O'Meara (Photo Australian War Memorial)

It is reported that Private Martin O'Meara repeatedly went out and brought in wounded officers and men from 'No-Man's Land' under intense artillery and machine-gun fire. Sadly the impact of the war cost him his peace of mind and his last years in Australia were extremely troubled. He is remembered as a hero in his adopted homeland.

Sir William Bernard Hickie (1865 –1950)

Major General Sir William Bernard Hickie was an Irish-born senior British Army officer and an Irish nationalist politician. He was the eldest of eight children of Colonel James Francis Hickie of Slevoir, Terryglass, Tipperary and his wife, Lucila Larios y Tashara. During a long and distinguished military career, Sir William served with the Royal Fusiliers at Gibraltar, India, Egypt and the Mediterranean. He served in the second Boer War and he commanded a Brigade of the British Expeditionary Force in 1914. William Hickie retired from the army in 1921 and turned his attention to domestic Irish politics and went on to serve as a member of the Seanad between 1925 and 1936. In addition he worked tirelessly for Irish ex-servicemen, serving as president of the British Legion in Ireland for many years. He was knighted in 1918.

Edna O'Brien (1930)

Novelist, playwright and short story writer Edna O'Brien was born in Tuamgraney, County Clare, and grew up in a farmstead close to Lough Derg. County Clare was and still is a creative source for O'Brien, who has drawn on characters from her childhood and locality to populate her novels and short stories. The content of her work has also been influenced by folklore, history and the environment around Lough Derg.

In 1959 O'Brien moved to London, where she maintains residence to this day, but she often returns to Ireland and she continues to reap inspiration from her native county and the lakeside terrain that formed the backdrop of her formative years.

She has written many acclaimed novels and stories some of whose themes have proved contentious, none more so than her debut novel 'The Country Girls', published in 1960. Centred on the lives of two young women growing up in repressive Ireland, it explored the themes of sexuality and social issues. On publication the novel was met by outrage in certain quarters in Ireland. The Irish Censor banned the book and the parish priest in O'Brien's native Tuamgraney reputedly burnt copies of the book. Edna O'Brien was conferred the honour of Saoi by Ireland's president Michael D Higgins in 2015, a honour previously bestowed on Samuel Beckett and Seamus Heaney. The Saoi— literally "wise one" — is awarded for singular and sustained distinction in the creative arts.



Edna O'Brien

Donal Ryan (1976)

Author Donal Ryan grew up in the village of Newtown, Tipperary. Donal's debut novel "The Spinning Heart" was a number one bestseller in Ireland and a Boston Globe bestseller in the US. He won the "Sunday Independent Newcomer of the Year Award" at the Bord Gáis Energy Irish Book Awards on in 2012. "The Spinning Heart" was long-listed for the Booker Prize in 2013. He won the Guardian First Book Award in the same year. He was one of twelve writers to win the 2015 European Union Prize for Literature at the London Book Fair.



Donal Ryan (Photo Anthony Woods)

Donal's second novel "The Thing About December" was also a number one bestseller. It was shortlisted for Novel of the Year at the 2013 Irish Book Awards and the 2014 Kerry Group Novel of the Year, and was nominated for the 2015 IMPACT Dublin Literary Award.

Monsignor Timothy Joyce (1868–1947)

Timothy Joyce was a Roman Catholic Monsignor who as parish priest of Portumna from 1919–1947 was instrumental in bringing about an extraordinary amount of change and improvements in

the town. He was a driving force behind the building of the Town Hall in Portumna, he aided the establishment of an electricity company, a Civic League, and he renamed the town streets. His contribution to the town—recognised “as a model town and one of the neatest and tidiest in the country”, led to Pope Pius XI granting him the title of Domestic Prelate in 1928.

Joyce was involved in several other local projects, including the establishment of the town’s Vocational School in 1934, the fire service, and the successful Portumna Agricultural and Home Industries Show in the 1930s and 1940s. The visionary cleric also established the Shannon Development Association in 1945 to utilise the resources of Lough Derg for the town and its neighbours.

Edward MacLysaght (1887-1986)

Dr Edward MacLysaght was born in England but he became one of the most famous Clare men of the twentieth century and one of the foremost genealogists of his generation. His name is synonymous with standard works on Irish surnames and Irish family history.

In 1908 when he was twenty, his father bought a farm in Raheen, Tuamgraney, which was to be his home for the next sixty years. In 1943 he was appointed a full-time member of the staff of the National Library of Ireland. He then became Chief Genealogical Officer, subsequently re-named Chief Herald. In 1949, he was appointed Keeper of Manuscripts at the National Library. By the time of his retirement in 1954 the collection had grown from 894 manuscripts to 9,000.



Memorial for Edward MacLysaght in Tuamgraney

Musical tradition

There is a thriving Irish music scene in the towns and villages around Lough Derg today, a legacy of the long tradition of music in the area. East Galway and east Clare both have distinctive playing styles (the east Clare style being epitomised by Martin Hayes and his father, the late PJ Hayes).

The notable players and composers, Paddy O’Brien and Seán Ryan, both from ‘Newport’, Tipperary, are widely recognised for making a significant contribution to the traditional music repertoire and both have influenced many players.

O’Brien family

Paddy O’Brien, born in Newport near Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, is one of the legends of Irish accordion playing. His father Dinny Brien, fiddle and concertina player, was leader of *The Bridge Ceili Band*.

Paddy had a major influence on how the accordion is played in Irish traditional music by perfecting the B/C style of playing. Through his style of playing, Paddy established the accordion as an acceptable and influential instrument in the playing of Irish traditional music. Through his compositions, Paddy has left a priceless legacy to the traditional music repertoire. Since 1992 his memory has been commemorated at the annual ‘Aonach Paddy O’Brien’ which takes place in Nenagh on the August week before



Dinny, Eileen and Paddy O’Brien (Photo courtesy of Eileen O’Brien)

the annual 'Fleadh na hEireann'. Some of his most played tunes include: *The Coming of Spring*, *Dinny O'Brien's*, *The Nervous Man*, *Ormond Sound*, *The Foggy Morning* and *Hanly's Tweed*.

The O'Brien family musical tradition continues through his daughter Eileen (fiddle player), son Donnchadh (accordionist) and grand-daughter Jennifer Minogue (pianist). Eileen is an All-Ireland champion in both senior fiddle and senior fiddle slow airs. She is also a teacher, researcher and recorded artist. Eileen has published two collections of her father's compositional work, *The Compositions of Paddy O'Brien* (1991) and *The Definitive Collection of the Music of Paddy O'Brien* (2009).

Sean Ryan

A cousin of Paddy O'Brien, Seán Ryan was born in Nenagh but also grew up in Newport. He started playing the fiddle at around eleven years of age and went on to become a renowned player and composer. Seán composed several hundred tunes and made many recordings. Many of his tunes are commonly played today including 'Twilight in Portroe'.



Memorial for Seán Ryan, renowned musician and composer, in Newport, Tipperary

The Coen Brothers from Woodford- Jack and Father Charlie

The traditional style of east Galway is preserved through the playing of brothers Charlie (concertina) and Jack Coen (flute and whistle). Monsignor Charles Coen (known as 'Fr. Charlie') and his brother Jack were from Woodford, Galway. Charlie learned much of his early repertoire and technique from his brother Jack while growing up in Galway.

Living in the United States since the 1950s, the brothers continue to keep the music of their homeland alive through their playing and teaching.

Joe Madden (1938- 2008)

Born in Portumna, Galway Joe Madden, like so many of his generation emigrated to the US where he lived in the New York area from 1959 until his death in 2008. An All-Ireland champion on accordion, Joe played for a time with the Echo Ceilí Band and the Bridge Ceilí Band before emigrating. He was part of an exceptional group of Galway musicians who kept the New York City Irish traditional music scene along with the Coen Brothers (Jack and Father Charlie) and others.

In 1992 he was inducted into *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann's* Mid-Atlantic Region Hall of Fame. He was also inducted into the Galway Association's Hall of Fame for his lifelong contributions to Irish music.

The Connolly's from Killaloe

Music was a major part of everyday life in the Connolly home in Killaloe, Clare. In 2014, the second annual Kincora Music Award was presented jointly to the Connolly family.

The award recognises the Connolly family's contribution to traditional music locally, nationally and internationally. Séamus Connolly is one of the most respected traditional fiddle musicians and teachers. He lives in the States and is Director of the Irish Studies Programme in Boston College. Martin Connolly is highly respected both as accordion maker, musician and teacher.

Arts and Festivals

The Lough Derg area of Clare, Galway and Tipperary has over the years attracted many artists and creative workers, inspired by its beautiful scenery and peaceful landscapes. The area currently boasts an array of painters and ceramic artists, as well as artists working in contemporary media such as digital technologies. There is a very strong community arts presence in the area with many of the artists living in the area working in social contexts with schools, older age groups and communities of interest.

There is a plethora of highly regarded and well-established festivals in the towns and villages around the lake. Some of these festivals celebrate music, art and literature (Shorelines Arts Festival, Dromineer Literary Festival, Mountshannon Festival of Arts, Terryglass Arts Festival), others highlight local history and heritage (Brian Ború Festival), while others promote the recreational potential of the lake (Scariff Harbour Festival) or focus on traditional music (Mountshannon Traditional Music Festival). The longevity and popularity of these festivals reflect the huge interest in the dynamic cultural heritage of the area.

Sporting heritage

GAA clubs are at the heart of many of the communities around the lake. There is a proud and distinguished tradition of hurling in all three counties that bound Lough Derg- Galway, Clare and Tipperary. All three have been successful at county and club level. Portumna GAA club won the All-Ireland Senior Club Hurling Championship on a number of occasions.



Plaque remembering hurler Naoise Jordan in Whitegate who played for his county in the 1960s as well as his club

GAA handball is also popular around Lough Derg and there are several handball alleys in all three counties. In the 1800s handball was played in almost every village in Ireland but it is now a minority sport. There are however several active clubs in the towns and villages around the lake including Lahorna, Youghal, Ballina and Tuamgraney. Other villages such as Lorrha and Newport still have their old handball courts but they are no longer in use.



An old handball alley in Lorrha next to the ruins of the church of the Augustinian monastery



Mural on the outside of Lahorna handball club, Tipperary

Golf is a popular sport around Lough Derg and there are several fine golf courses around the shores of the lake in all three counties including Portumna Golf Club in Galway, Woodpark Golf Club in Mountshannon and the East Clare Golf Club, Bodyke both in Clare, and Nenagh Golf Club in Tipperary. The sweeping landscapes around the lake provide a spectacular backdrop for these golf clubs.

Walking and cycling are also popular outdoor activities in the countryside around Lough Derg. There are several long distance walking routes^{8,9,10} and shorter looped walks¹¹, and cycling routes¹² to experience and enjoy. Many walking and cycling clubs regularly use these way-marked ways, trails and routes. Canoeing is also increasingly popular and there is a canoe trail that circumnavigates the entire lake¹³.

Lough Derg has a long history of sailing. There are several sailing clubs around the lake including the Lough Derg Yacht Club, Garrykennedy Sailing Club, Iniscealtra Sailing Club and Killaloe Sailing Club. The Lough Derg Yacht Club is one of the oldest sailing clubs in the country, founded in 1835. The sailing clubs regularly hold sailing races and regattas, and offer sail training for those interested.



Sailing on Lough Derg

⁸ <http://www.irishtrails.ie/trail/east-clare-way/16/>

⁹ <http://www.irishtrails.ie/Trail/Lough-Derg-Way/21/>

¹⁰ <http://www.bbgreenway.com/>

¹¹ <http://walks.iwai.ie/derg/whitegate.shtml>

¹² <http://www.everytrail.com/guide/lough-derg-cycleway>

¹³ <http://www.everytrail.com/guide/lough-derg-canoe-trail>



Kilgarvan Quay in Tipperary (photo Velma Mercer)

One of the most successful one-design class sailing boats in Ireland is the Shannon One Design (Shannon or SOD) designed in 1922 by the famous boat designer, Morgan Giles. It is of clinker construction with a large dipping lugsail and is crewed by three people. This beautiful sailing boat can still be seen racing on Lough Derg today. The Shannon One Design boat was commissioned by various sailing clubs in 1920 in order to have a sailing boat of 'one design' for racing purposes.



Shannon One Designs sailing in Lough Derg Yacht Club annual regatta, 1955 (Photo courtesy John Leech)

Lough Derg is also a popular fishing and angling location. There are numerous quays and piers around the lake that are ideal for fishing and provide excellent access to the water¹⁴. Local angling clubs run annual competitions and events.

¹⁴ <http://fishinginireland.info/trout/shannon/derg.htm>, <http://www.discoverloughderg.ie/category/angling-and-fishing-on-lough-derg/>



Lough Derg Yacht Club

Sporting heroes

Many people have made a contribution to sport in the Lough Derg area, locally, nationally and internationally. Just a few are listed below.

Keith Wood (1972)

A native of Killaloe, Keith Wood received fifty eight caps playing rugby for Ireland (1994-2003) including thirty six as captain. He is the son of Gordon Wood who also played rugby with distinction for Ireland. Wood was renowned for his determination to succeed and his leadership qualities as a player.



Keith Wood

Joe Canning (1988)

Elevated to legend status while still a teenager, Joe Canning, a native of Portumna is widely regarded as one of the most gifted hurlers of his generation. He plays for his local club and has played many times for his county.

Pat Kirby (1936)

Pat Kirby is known throughout the world of handball for his achievements in Ireland (playing GAA handball) and abroad (playing 'world' handball). He started playing at the age of seven in went on to win an amazing sixteen Irish National championships and three world titles, dominating the game in the 1970s. He was the first player to win national titles in three different countries - Canada, USA and Ireland. Pat Kirby's brothers, John, Mick and Dan are all also Irish handball champions, a remarkable achievement for one family.



Monument celebrating the achievements of Pat Kirby erected in front of the handball club in Tuamgraney

Towns and villages

There are several towns and villages on or close to the shore of Lough Derg. These settlements established at strategic locations such as crossing points of the Shannon (e.g. Portumna and Ballina- Killaloe), in association with early monastic settlements (e.g. Terryglass, Abbey and Tuamgraney) and industrial centres (e.g. Woodford and Portroe), or important harbours for transport of goods (e.g. Garrykennedy, Dromineer and Kilgarvan). Others were important market towns (e.g. Scariff) or planned villages (e.g. Mountshannon). These towns and villages have a wealth of heritage to explore.

1 Portumna, Co. Galway

SAT NAV 53.0913 -8.2199

Portumna is located at a strategic crossing point of the River Shannon between Counties Galway and Tipperary where the river enters Lough Derg. The history of the town is intimately linked with this important waterway. Portumna has a rich built heritage with Portumna Castle and Demesne, a Dominican Priory, the Irish Workhouse Centre and two stone built harbours.



Portumna Castle

Portumna was a busy port in the 18th and 19th centuries when the Shannon system was an important trade route between Limerick and Dublin, and beyond. Two harbours, Connacht Harbour and Portland Harbour, were built to accommodate the steamers and barges that carried goods and passengers up and down the lake. Goods were loaded onto smaller steamers at Portumna for onward transport to Dublin via the upper Shannon and the canals.

Connacht Harbour still retains some of the boating infrastructure from the steam power era. It is still a hub of boating activity today. A long distance walking route, the Hymany Way (part of the Beara Breifne Way) starts at the head of the harbour. This trail runs all the way to Ballygar in North Galway¹⁵.

A third harbour, Portumna Harbour (also known as Castle Harbour because of its proximity to Portumna Castle) was built more recently in 1978. This harbour is usually busy with pleasure boats in the summer months.



Connacht Harbour

The bridge over the Shannon in Portumna is a five-span road bridge that has been re-built and modified over the years. It is a swing bridge, which opens at set times of the day to allow boat traffic to travel up or down the river.

Portumna Castle was home to the de Burgo family for several generations. According to local tradition one the de Burgo children fell from an upper window but their fall was broken by the family dog called Fury who was asleep on the grass below.

An inscription above the main doorway in the south wall of the castle commemorates the dog. Recent archaeological excavations found the skeleton of a small dog close to the castle. Honora de Burgo, daughter of the 7th Earl of Clanricarde who lived in Portumna Castle, is thought to have married Patrick Sarsfield, a commander in the Jacobite army, at Portumna Priory in 1689.

¹⁵ <http://www.irishtrails.ie/trail/Hymany-Way/382/>



Portumna Bridge

The workhouse in Portumna, which opened in 1852, has been sensitively restored and is open to the public as 'The Irish Workhouse Centre'. The centre highlights the social history of the workhouse system in Ireland. Life in the workhouse would have contrasted starkly with the life in the big house in Portumna Castle nearby. The Centre is also a tourist information point.

The workhouse in Portumna had many uses since its original function ceased in the late 19th century. It housed a hospital run by the Mercy Sisters for a time. Bord na Móna, the Board of Works/Office of Public Works, the County Council and Waterways Ireland all used some of the buildings for a period of time. Various other community-based activities were run in the grounds of the workhouse- agricultural shows, fairs, musical events etc.



The Irish Workhouse Centre in Portumna

The Portumna Arts Group runs the annual Shorelines Festival, a boutique festival celebrating art and literature. As well as nurturing local talent and providing a platform for performance and exhibition, the Shorelines Festival aims to stage the best of Irish theatre, music, art, film and literature.

2 Abbey, County Galway

SAT NAV 53.1025, -8.3907

Abbey is a small village that grew up in the shadow of Kilnalahan Abbey, a Carthusian Foundation established in the area in the 13th century (the only one in the country). The 'Great Book of Duniry' or *An Leabhar Breac* is a religious compilation written at the behest of the MacEgan family by professional scribe Murchadh O'Cuindlis in the early 15th century and was finished around 1411. It gives some insight into the kind of spirituality and theology that informed the learned Gaelic classes at that time. The manuscript was thought to have been held in the Abbey for most of the 17th century.

Patrick Sarsfield (a legendary Jacobite cavalry commander) and his surviving troops are said to have passed near Abbey following defeat in the Battle of Aughrim in 1691, en route to Limerick. Apparently there was a battle in a field near the village, which is still known today as 'Bloody Field'.



Weighing scales erected in 1969 for the weighing of cattle and other livestock in Abbey

Ladywell is a Holy Well in the village close to the Abbey. The well is beautifully maintained by the local community. According to local tradition, the well was used by the monks in the Abbey. It has attracted pilgrims since at least the 18th century. Many came bare-footed and fasting to complete the pattern that had developed for the well. The dawn Mass on Easter Sunday still attracts big crowds with people coming from far and wide.

Father Eugene Nevin, who grew up in Carrowcrin near Abbey, had

a close association with the leaders of the 1916 rising. Leading up to 1916 many of the leaders including, Pdraig Pearse and his brother, sought Fr Eugene as their regular confessor. There is an active heritage group in Abbey¹⁶ that have worked on and continue to work on several heritage projects including an interesting display in the village of farm machinery from days gone by.



Weighing scales erected in 1969 for the weighing of cattle and other livestock in Abbey

3 Woodford, County Galway

SAT NAV 53.0524, -8.4001

The village of Woodford came into existence in the late 17th century. It was not founded as a market village but as an industrial centre largely due to the abundance of bog iron in the surrounding mountains, which formed the basis of an iron industry. The Irish name of Woodford is *Gráig na Muilte Iarainn*, Village of the Iron Mills. There was an abundant source of wood in the hills surrounding Woodford, which was used to make charcoal for the smelting of the iron. The bark was stripped from the trees for use in the tanning industry. Skilled workers were brought into the area to work in the iron industry and related industries, many from Wales. Local placenames such as Upperforge and Barkhill reflect the industrial heritage of the Woodford area.

The Woodford River was dammed in the 19th century to provide water power for a corn mill. In the early 20th century this power was harnessed to produce electricity for the village.

'Sarsfield's Road' in Woodford is a local walking route that gets its name from the local folklore that Patrick Sarsfield, a Jacobite cavalry commander, rested in Derrycrag Wood as he and the remnants of

¹⁶ <http://abbey.galwaycommunityheritage.org/>

the Jacobite army retreated southwards through Clare to Limerick following the Battle of Aughrim in 1691.

There are two People's Millennium Forests close to the village at Rosturra and Derrygill, and two nature reserves, Derrycrag and Pollnacknockaun. The Millennium Forests were planted to celebrate the new millennium when an Oak tree was planted for every household in the country. All these beautiful woodlands have walking routes.



Signage at Derrygill Wood, one of the People's Millennium Forests managed by Coillte

4 Derrainy Bridge, County Clare

SAT NAV 52.9747, -8.3731

If travelling from Portumna towards Whitegate on the R352, take the backroad (L8094) between Coos South and Whitegate to reach Derrainy Bridge (known locally as Dereny or Dereney). A section of the East Clare Way¹⁷ follows this road, which is also known as 'Sarsfield's Walk' reputedly part of the route taken by Patrick Sarsfield, the Jacobite commander, and his troops as they retreated after the Battle of Aughrim 1691.

On the western side of Derrainy Bridge is a type of burial ground known as a kyle or cillín, and a site of modern-day pilgrimage known locally as 'Dereny Kyle' or An doirean oidhche, which translates to 'little Oak wood of the night'. The name derives from local tradition that says that the wood sprang up overnight!

¹⁷ <http://www.irishtrails.ie/trail/east-clare-way/16/>

Kyles were burial places for outsiders, unbaptised children and sometimes victims of the plague or Famine. The site includes several stations of worship including a bullaun stone (a large boulder with a hollow), a rustic stone cross, religious statues and artefacts, and a shrine. The water that collects in the bullaun stone is thought to have curative powers.

According to local folklore, two Ash trees sprung up there overnight. A while later one fell and floated down the Dereny River. The next day it was found by a carpenter who used it to make a coffin. It is said that he was later buried in it.



Dereny Kyle



5 Whitegate, County Clare

SAT NAV 52.9487, -8.3743

Whitegate is a small village with two small harbours, Williamstown Quay (SAT NAV 52.9460, -8.3268) and Dromann Harbour (SAT NAV 52.9436, -8.3312). The L4038 leads from the village down to the lakeshore. There are several looped walks that start in the village and highlight the beautiful landscapes in the area¹⁸.

Dromaan Harbour is a relatively new harbour managed by Waterways Ireland. This out of the way harbour is a delight for those seeking peace and quiet in a very scenic setting with woodland and wetland fringing the harbour.



Dromaan Harbour

In the 1820s *The Inland Steam Company* built a harbour in Williamstown and a hotel was constructed to the west of the harbour. This quiet corner of the lake became a popular tourist destination for a time during the steam ship era.



Old pier in Williamstown

¹⁸<http://walks.iwai.ie/derg/whitegate.shtml>



View of Lough Derg from near Williamstown Quay

6 Mountshannon, Co. Clare

SAT NAV 52.9320, -8.4288

In 1738 Alexander Woods, a Limerick linen manufacturer, leased part of the medieval parish of *Iniscealtra*. The conditions of the lease were that he establish a linen mill, build houses, a church, school and market house. By 1751, the village of Mountshannon was established and the linen business was thriving. The success of the linen industry was short-lived, however, and by 1796 the village was apparently in ruins. The landlord families of Reade and Tandy were to dominate the social and political life of the town for the next 130 years.

Mountshannon today has several attractive buildings of heritage value that are well-preserved. The village has enjoyed great success in the Tidy Towns competition over the years.



Mountshannon Market House (built c. 1740)



Sculpture by Conor Fallon to commemorate Mountshannon's success winning the Tidy Towns competition in 1981.

The village has lively traditional music scene. The Mountshannon Traditional Music Festival, which runs every autumn, showcases the best of local and national talent, as well as running free workshops for musicians. The Mountshannon Festival of Arts also runs every year in early summer. Rooted in the visual arts, the ethos of this Festival is to create access to works and exhibitions that would not be easy to find in a rural area while at the same time stimulating the creation of works and performances from within the local community.

The stone quay in Mountshannon was built in 1845 to facilitate the harvesting of the rich deposits of marl in the lake near the village. Marl was used for improving land and producing lime mortar.

Mountshannon has become famous in recent times because White-tailed Sea Eagles have taken up summer residence on an island within easy sight of the village. A community project has been established to provide information about the eagles for locals and visitors in a Birds Viewing and Information Point. Local guides have been trained to provide information and show people where the eagles are nesting.



White-tailed Sea Eagle (Photo Valerie O'Sullivan)



Millstone outside the old forge in Mountshannon



Plaque commemorating the conversion to automatic service in 1987 of the manual telephone exchange in Mountshannon, the last one in Ireland to do so



Round tower on Inis Cealtra (Photo Allan Mee)



View of Inis Cealtra taken from the water

Mountshannon has a beautiful community park, *Aistear Inis Cealtra*. The park was designed to represent a journey through time. 'Aistear' means journey or pilgrimage. *The Aistear Tourist Office* in the Park provides tourist and heritage information, and exhibition space.

7 Inis Cealtra, County Clare

SAT NAV 52.9153, -8.4503

Inis Cealtra or Holy Island is one of the most important ecclesiastical and heritage sites in the country. Boat trips leaving from Mountshannon Pier provide access to the island. There is a wealth of built heritage on the *Inis Cealtra* including bullaun stones from pagan times, a ring fort from the Iron Age, 8th century grave markers, 10th century high crosses, several churches, a round tower, a cillín and graveyards. Local historian, Ger Madden, author and guide, has written several publications and articles about the heritage of the island¹⁹. This iconic island can be seen from far and wide on the lake.

Inis Cealtra was an important destination for pilgrims for many years. From the early 17th century until the mid-19th century it was one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in Ireland attracting thousands of pilgrims. A 'pilgrim's path' is still seen on the island.

The monastic settlement on *Inis Cealtra* had strong links with Brian Ború and his brother Marcán. Brian is said to have been responsible for building the round tower on this island and repairs to St. Caimin's Church. Marcán, was appointed the Bishop-Abbott of *Inis Cealtra* until his death in 1003 AD.

There is a wealth of legend, folklore and tradition associated with the *Inis Cealtra*. In the ancient *Book of Lecan*, it is recorded that a Celtic king and bishop brought an Alder tree to the Island in about 890AD. The tree miraculously grew apples! According to local

¹⁹ <http://homepage.eircom.net/~eastclareheritage/Publications.html>

tradition there is an underground tunnel that runs between Tuamgraney and *Inis Cealtra*, and from *Inis Cealtra* to Scatterry Island (about 70 miles away near the mouth of the Shannon!). In the Saints Graveyard on the island there is a small church known as *Teampall na Bhfear nGonta* or the Church of the Wounded Men. According to an old tradition, any woman entering within its walls will be barren.

There is also a bargaining stone on the island for sealing deals from marriage settlements to land transactions, and a kissing stone, which was part of the pilgrimage tradition.

8 Scariff, County Clare

SAT NAV 52.9115, -8.5290

Scariff is a bustling market town close to Tuamgraney. The Graney River (also known as the Scariff River) is navigable up to Scariff Harbour (SAT NAV 52.9064, -8.52950), which is where Waterways Ireland has a regional office. Waterways Ireland is one of the six North/South Implementation Bodies established under the British Irish Agreement in 1999. It has responsibility for the management, maintenance, development and restoration of inland navigable waterways mainly for recreational purposes including the Shannon Navigation. The office in Scariff is one of three regional offices.

Scariff Harbour is popular boating and angling centre. The Shannon Commissioners dredged the river in the mid-nineteenth century, extending the navigation upstream and constructing a harbour. The annual Scariff Harbour Festival celebrates the amenity value of Lough Derg and the cross-border connections our inland waterways provide.

A flour mill was built in the 1830s in Scariff, which later became the workhouse, reputedly one of the worst in Ireland.



'Scariff Harbour'

The *Sliabh Aughty Furnace Project* has highlighted a fascinating link between Scariff and the American iron industry. In 1630 a group of London merchants built an iron works on the Scariff River. Two of these businessmen later went to America and started the first successful iron works in the country, modelled on the Scariff venture. The *Saugus Ironworks* just outside Boston is recognised as the birthplace of the American iron and steel industry, and is a National Historic Site.

The Irish Seed Savers Association²⁰ is based in Capparoo, which is close to Scariff. This national organisation aims to protect, conserve and utilise Irish plant genetic resources including rare heritage seeds, grains, vegetables and fruit. They promote agricultural biodiversity for food security and run a wide range of educational programmes and workshops.

²⁰ <http://www.irishseedsavers.ie/>

9 Tuamgraney, County Clare

SAT NAV 52.8984, -8.5401

Tuamgraney is supposedly the burial places of *Grian* an Irish sun goddess who tragically drowned herself in Lough Graney and washed up on the shore of Lough Derg. A burial tumulus in the grounds of the Glebe House is thought to be where she was laid to rest. Officially Tuamgraney is called 'Tomgraney' but it is widely known as 'Tuamgraney' today (according to www.logainm.ie, *The Placenames Database of Ireland*).

St. Cronan founded a monastery in Tuamgraney in the 6th century. St. Cronan's church, built originally in the 10th century, stands on the site of the monastic settlement and is thought to be the oldest church in continuous use in Ireland and Britain. The church has direct links with Brian Ború as it is said to have been repaired under his patronage in the 11th century.

Renowned author Edna O'Brien was born and raised in Tuamgraney. A plaque was erected at her home place to honour her life and work.



Drewsborough House, former home of Edna O'Brien in Tuamgraney

The Famine Memorial Park in the village recalls the horror of the Famine in this area. The workhouse in nearby Scariff, reputedly one of the worst in the country, was overflowing with inmates during the height of the Famine and graveyards were filled to capacity. An area of land that became known as the *Casaoireach* was purchased in order to accommodate the dead. Due to the scarcity of coffins at the time, coffins were rigged with a hinged bottom so that bodies could be lowered into a grave and the

coffin retrieved. The site was taken over by East Clare Heritage who sensitively developed the Park to remember those who were lost in such tragic circumstances. A three ton unused millstone fashioned by the inmates of the Workhouse has been erected as a fitting memorial.



Millstone in the Famine Memorial Park

Tuamgraney has an active and successful handball club. The club's centenary was commemorated in 2011 with a monument celebrating the playing career of the club's most famous member, Pat Kirby.

The first Steiner School in Ireland was established in 1986 in Tuamgraney. It received state recognition in 2008 but in the intervening years has attracted many to the area looking for alternative forms of education for children emphasizing a holistic approach to educating children that aims to nourish the whole child in body, mind and spirit.



Old gateway in Tuamgraney

10 Killaloe, County Clare

SAT NAV 52.8071, -8.4405

Killaloe is a market and cathedral town located on the southern end of Lough Derg where the River Shannon exits the lake. Killaloe and its twin town, Ballina, are both popular boating centres with excellent facilities.

Killaloe is steeped in history as the home of Brian Ború and centre of power when he reigned as High King from his palace in Kincora (the site of the modern Catholic Church) during the 11th century. There is a colourful folklore and mythology linked with Brian Ború, as well as several historical sites associated with him in the area including Béal Ború, Tobermurragh and Kincora²¹. The Brian Ború Heritage Centre²² in the town provides information for tourists and visitors to the area, and has an audio-visual presentation on the history of Killaloe including an account of life and times of the town's most famous son, Brian Ború.

Killaloe also has a rich ecclesiastical heritage and local traditions associated with these sites. Killaloe and Ballina are associated with St. Lua (also known as St. Molua) and St. Flannan. There are many stories about the life of Flannan. According to tradition, he joined the monastery established by St. Lua in the 6th century on Friar's Island. Apparently while Flannan was working in the bakery for thirty six hours, a heavenly light emanated from his left hand, lighting up the dark and allowing him to continue his work. When the Abbott, St. Lua, was told about this miraculous event



St Flannan's Cathedral in Killaloe with the working boat Coill-an-Eo (belonging to Waterways Ireland ship) in the foreground

²¹ <http://www.brianborumillennium.ie/>

²² <http://www.discoverkillaloe.ie/attractions-brian-boru-heritage-centre.php>

he appointed Flannan to take his place as Abbott. St. Lua's oratory was relocated from Friar's Island to the grounds of the Catholic Church. Flannan is the patron saint of Killaloe although the origin of the name 'Killaloe' comes from *Cill Da Lua*, the Church of Lua.

St. Flannan's well is situated in the front garden of the AIB Bank but was probably originally in the grounds of the Cathedral. St. Flannan's feast day in December 18th and traditionally pilgrim's travelled to the well along Aillebaun, a lane from Kincora down to the close to the lake shore.

Killaloe was a busy port during steam ship era and was the headquarters of the Inland Steam Navigation Company, which provided employment for a great number of people in the construction and repair of docks and warehouses. A canal was built in Killaloe in 1790 to facilitate the transport of larger boats downstream towards Limerick. It was one of three canals built by the Limerick Steamship Company. At that time navigation south of Killaloe was difficult due the rapids that existed on the river. The Killaloe canal became somewhat redundant after the arrival of the railway in Ballina in 1862 when steam travel declined. Once the hydro-electric dam was built in downstream in Ardnacrusha in the 1929, water levels rose considerably south of Killaloe covering the rapids and making the canal completely redundant.

In the St. Flannan's Cathedral there is a memorial to John Grantham, who was responsible for the introduction of steamers to the River Shannon. The *Marquis Wellsley* was the first steamer on Lough Derg and one of his boats.

During the 19th century, before and after the Famine, many thousands of people embarked ships at the Pier Head in Killaloe on the first leg of their journey to a new life. Remnants of the industrial and boating heritage of the area remain including the Shannon Steam Navigation Company offices, mooring rings and bollards.



View of the Killaloe canal on left and the marina



ESB dry dock building and old barge

11 Ballina, County Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.8082, -8.4376

Ballina or *Béal an Átha* (Mouth of the Ford) is a small town linked by a beautiful 13-arch bridge to its twin town in County Clare, Killaloe. The two towns developed at an important fording point on the Shannon (now submerged) that has been used for millennia. A stone memorial on the bridge commemorates four men who were executed on the bridge in 1920 by British Forces.



Memorial to men shot on Ballina-Killaloe Bridge in 1920

The arrival of the railway in 1862 in Ballina had a big impact on the town as it became an important regional transport hub. Trains served Ballina until 1944. The railway companies also ran steamer services on Lough Derg from 1858 until 1868. From the 1890s until the 1940s tourists could travel on a special round-trip routes using both train and steam ship. The path of the railway line is now forms part of the Riverside Park, a public amenity.

The Shannon Development Company was also responsible for the construction of the Lakeside Hotel on the bank of the Shannon above Ballina, which opened first in 1894.



View of Ballina-Killaloe bridge and Ballina marina

When the railway was extended in 1867 to a wharf beyond Incha Hill in Ballina (where the Lakeside Hotel is located today), a traditional access route from the town to the lake for women washing clothes was cut off. Women from the area protested at the loss of their right of way by lying down on train tracks. The 'Washer- Woman's Bridge' was eventually built in 1894 to accommodate them. This bridge still provides access to the lake and the Riverside Park.



View of the marina in Ballina and the Washer Woman's Bridge (behind small tree)

The Annual Féile Brian Ború in Ballina and Killaloe celebrates the life and legacy of this legendary figure of Irish history. A self-guiding walking tour highlights many of the heritage features in Ballina and Killaloe²³.



Lake-side residences with private marinas in Ballina

12 The Lookout, County Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.8795, -8.3941

The Lookout is a viewing point with spectacular views of Lough Derg and many of the islands, including *Inis Cealtra*. It is also a starting point for walking trails on the Lough Derg Way²⁴.



View from the Lookout

²³ <http://discoverkillaloe.ie/documents/killaloe-ballina-map-2012.pdf>

²⁴ <http://www.irishtrails.ie/Trail/Lough-Derg-Way/21/>

13 Castletown Church and Graveyard, County Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.8837, -8.3945

Castletown Church and Graveyard can be seen from The Lookout. The beautiful graveyard is worth a visit as many of the memorials are made from local slate and featuring beautiful folk art images. Just outside the church is a tomb which is reputed to hold two ancestors of Brian Ború. The graveyard is beautifully maintained by the local community.



View from Castletown Graveyard



Castletown Graveyard

14 Portroe, County Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.8850, -8.3443

Portroe is a peaceful village that was once the centre of a thriving quarrying industry in Arra Mountains from the mid-18th century until the mid-20th century. Many hundreds of people were employed in the quarries and related industries, including miners brought in from Wales to oversee the works and train local people. So many Welsh people lived in the area at one time there was a small Welsh-speaking community. During the Famine years, many skilled workers from Portroe emigrated to America to work in slate quarries there.



Old slate quarries in the Arra Mountains

15 Garrykennedy, County Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.9050, -8.3448

Garrykennedy Village has a popular harbour and marina that is thronged with boats in the summer. The local Sailing Club runs sailing races and regattas during the sailing season.

The Inland Steam Navigation Company built the quay in the village in 1829 for the purpose of shipping slate by barge and steamer from the nearby quarries in the Arra Mountains. Barges delivering turf from Galway and Clare, and barrels of stout, also used dock at the harbour.

Brian Ború's mother, *Bé Binn*, was reputedly from Garrykennedy.



The old quay at Garrykenny



Modern marina at Garrykenny



Post box in Garrykenny with the royal emblem from the Reign of King Edward VII (1901-1910) on the top, and the insignia of the Irish Free State (1922- 1937) on the door

16 Dromineer, County Tipperary

SAT NAV 52.9259, -8.2772

The medieval church and castle in Dromineer Village suggests that the village dates back to at least the 12th century. Dromineer is another popular boating and sailing centre in Tipperary. The Lough Derg Yacht Club, one of the oldest in the county, was founded in 1835. The annual Dromineer Literary Festival attracts many acclaimed writers and poets to this small corner of the lake.

Dromineer was an important port in the mid-19th century as it was a transit point for much of the commercial traffic for the area,



Canal store built by the Grand Canal Company in Dromineer in 1850

including the canal barge traffic, which was at its height at this time. The canal store on the quay was built by the Grand Canal Company in the early 1850s to accommodate this activity. Goods were brought by barge from Dublin along the Grand Canal to Shannon Harbour, transferred to steamers for onward transport down the Shannon and Lough Derg to the quay at Dromineer. Likewise, produce from the Nenagh hinterland was brought by horse and dray to Dromineer to be transported to Limerick or Dublin. The canal store was at the heart of commerce in the area for 100 years as various craft brought goods and people into and out of Dromineer until it closed in 1950. Barges continued to travel from Dublin to Limerick until the 1960s.



Heritage boat the 'Knocknagow', a tug barge



Yachts and boats in Dromineer

17 Terryglass, County Tipperary

SAT NAV 53.0547, -8.2045

Terryglass is a picturesque village and popular tourism centre on the north-eastern shore of the lake. The village grew up around an important early monastery founded by St. Columba in the 6th century. The monastic settlement had strong links with Lorrha and thrived for centuries despite several fires and attacks by Vikings and others. The Book of Leinster, an anthology of prose, verse and genealogy is thought to have been compiled by the a 12th century Abbot of Terryglass, *Áed Ua Crimthainn*. Today the book is housed in Trinity College Dublin.

There are two Holy Wells in the village, both of which are signposted and well-maintained. St. Columba's Well is thought to have the power to cure headaches whereas St. Augh's Well (known locally as the Eye Well) is believed to cure eye ailments. According to local lore, St. Patrick baptised converts at the well dedicated to St. Augh on his visit to Terryglass.

The parish has a rich folklore including the story of the headless coachman and a rider-less horse, which was used to deliver mail from one end of the parish to the other, and the tale of buried treasure from a famous outlaw who is said to have revealed its location to a local man before he was taken to the gallows.

The annual Terryglass Arts Festival attracts huge crowds every year. With events ranging from workshops, visual arts to live music throughout the village, the festival is a celebration of the arts, creativity, talent, inspiration and enjoyment.

The village has a long and successful history in the Tidy Towns competition, having twice won the overall award.



Old graveyard in Terryglass on site of early Christian monastery

18 Lorrha, County Tipperary

SAT NAV 53.0917, -8.1207

Lorrha is another small village in the Lough Derg area that is steeped in history and has a wealth of built heritage including an early medieval monastic enclosure, Dominican Priory, Augustinian Priory and medieval church. The village grew up around an early monastic settlement founded by St. Ruadhán in the 6th century. Apparently the monastery had an amazing ‘food-giving’ tree, possibly a sacred tree from pagan times. Ruadhán is famous for his curse on the High King’s residence at Tara! The king, Diarmuid Mac Cerbhaill, had apparently violated the sanctity of the church by taking a hostage from its protection. Ruadhán is credited for causing the downfall of Tara from a once thriving royal residence.



Gate into the Church of Ireland graveyard in Lorrha

Alongside the historical record are local stories and tradition that has been passed down through the generations. Cromwell and his army are reputed to have wreaked havoc in the area in c.1653. The Dominican Friary is said to have been burnt by Cromwell and so too is the nearby Redwood Castle. The former high crosses at Ruadhán’s Abbey are also believed to have been destroyed by the Cromwellians. One story claims that Cromwell set up his artillery on Moat Hill in Lorrha to blast the abbeys but needed a boot of one of his henchmen to level the uneven canon! In reality it was probably Cromwell’s son-in-law, Henry Ireton, who led his forces through the area. According to another local legend, a serpent lives beneath the dark waters of Friar’s Lough just west of the village!

Lorrha has a long history of handball in the parish. The old handball alley can still be seen adjacent to the Augustinian church. Apparently one problem with the alley was the ease with which the ball could be lost once it went over the wall. Someone was therefore appointed to sit on the top wall and watch where the ball landed if it went over. A family that lived next to the alley, the Abbots, had a spaniel called Trix and later a terrier called Spot who also helped to find the ball!



Medieval church in Lorrha with Church of Ireland to the rear



Gateway to St. Ruadhán’s Well in Lorrha

Further information

Industrial heritage

<http://www.furnaceproject.org/>

http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/heritage/pdfs/industrial_heritage_review_of_County_Clare_2008.pdf

http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Inland_Waterways/WCS2006/2006_Industrial_Heritage.pdf

Musical tradition

<http://www.paddyobrienbook.com/index.html>

General heritage

<http://www.galway.ie/en/services/more/heritage/>

<http://galwaycommunityheritage.org/>

<http://www.clarecoco.ie/recreation-culture/heritage/>

<http://www.tipperarycoco.ie/heritage>

<http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/>

http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/Inland_Waterways/WCS2006/2006_Cultural_Heritage.pdf

<http://martinomeara.weebly.com/>

<http://www.lorrhadorrha.ie/http://www.lorrhadorrha.ie/>

<http://homepage.eircom.net/~eastclareheritage/Home.html>

<http://www.killaloeballina.ie/heritage.html>

<http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/coclare/places/>

<http://www.ormondhistory.ie/>

<http://abbey.galwaycommunityheritage.org/>

<http://irishworkhousecentre.ie/portumna-story/portumna-workhouse/>

<http://www.brianborumillennium.ie/>

Genealogy

<http://clareroots.com/>

<http://www.clarememories.ie/>

<http://www.clareroots.org/>

<http://www.galwayroots.com/east/woodford-heritage-centre>

<http://tipperarynorth.rootsireland.ie/>

Walking routes

<http://walks.iwai.ie/derg/>

<http://www.irishtrails.ie/trail/east-clare-way/16/>

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Acknowledgements

The Lough Derg on the Shannon Cultural Trail project was directed by the three Heritage Officers in the region, Marie Mannion (Galway County Council), Congella McGuire (Clare County Council) and Róisín O'Grady (Tipperary County Council).

Special thanks for help with various aspects of the project are extended Brídín Feeney for GIS support (Galway County Council), Dr Christy Cunniffe (Galway County Council, Community Archaeologist), Monica Hynes (East Galway Family History Society), Francis Holohan (Abbey Heritage Group), John and Adair Leech, Colin Becker (Waterways Ireland), Helen Fox, Anne Jones, Dónal Boland, Dr Verena Commins, Neil Goodwin, Velma Mercer, Paul Rondalez, Margaret O'Brien, Marian Donoghue and Gráinne Smyth for administrative support (Galway County Council), Michael Curley, (Galway County Sports Partnership), Angela O' Sullivan for administrative support (Clare County Council), Siobhán Mulcahy (County Arts Officer, Clare County Council), Mary Quigley (Tipperary County Council), Beatrice Kelly (The Heritage Council), Eileen O'Brien, Allan Mee, Phyll Bugler and Michael Blake.

This project was funded by Galway, Tipperary and Clare County Councils, and The Heritage Council.

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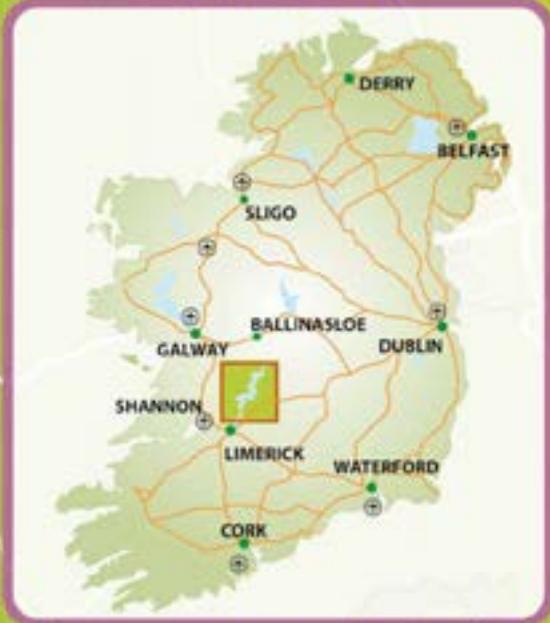
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