

MÚSCRAÍ GAELTACHT CONSERVATION, MANAGEMENT AND INTERPRETATION PLAN



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CLIENT: CORK COUNTY COUNCIL AND ACADAMH FÓDHILA

RESEARCH + DIG

Conservation/Heritage/Archaeology



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

This Conservation Management and Interpretation Plan was commissioned by Cork County Council in conjunction with Acadamh Fódhla. The main aim of the project is to highlight the importance and heritage significance of the Múscraí Gaeltacht and to devise a number of heritage objectives and actions to ensure that the area is appropriately conserved, managed and maintained into the future.

The word 'Gaeltacht' is used for areas where the Irish language is, or was until the recent past, the main spoken language. Gaeltacht areas are defined by Government order. One of them is Múscraí.

1.2 Site Identification and Profile

Lying along the Cork / Kerry border, the Múscraí Gaeltacht is located 48kms to the west of Cork City (fig 1). Its population of 3,895 (CSO, 2011), represents 4% of the total number of Gaeltacht inhabitants. The Cork Gaeltacht encompasses a geographical area of 262km². This amounts to 6% of the total Gaeltacht area. The largest settlements are the villages of Baile Mhic Íre/Baile Bhuirne and Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh. Other significant settlements include Cúil Aodha, Réidh na nDoirí, and Cill na Martra.

The landscape is dominated by numerous high craggy hills and the Derrynasaggart Mountains. The tallest peak, Mullach an Ois, rises to 649m. The pattern of daily life is directed along the river valleys of the Lee and Sullane. The two principal roads that cut through the Gaeltacht (R586 and N22) follow these river valleys. Both routes meet at the market town of Macroom. The harsh nature of the landscape and the importance of the two main roads have led to a certain fracturing of the Gaeltacht. Many people in Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh have little to do with people in Baile Mhic Íre / Baile Bhuirne, and vice versa. The now ubiquitous car has led to a greater use of Macroom for services. There is no shop in Cúil Aodha. In Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh, only one survives. Recently, the post office closed. Indeed, such is the level of business closure in Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh that its ability to act as a meeting place for locals has been severely curtailed. Should the planned N22 upgrade through the Gaeltacht be completed, access to Macroom will improve, and Baile Mhic Íre / Baile Bhuirne will be bypassed. This will challenge the ability of Baile Mhic Íre / Baile Bhuirne to act as an engine of socialisation.

The 2006 census population of 3,967 marked a significant reversal in a prolonged trend of declining numbers. In 2002, the number of inhabitants was 3,401. The 2011 census figure of 3,895 was a 1.8% reduction from 2006.

In 2006, almost 87.7% of those living in the Gaeltacht were born in Ireland. By 2011, that had increased slightly to 88.3%. Due to the overall decrease in population figures this indicates that non-Irish born residents were more likely to leave the Gaeltacht than Irish residents when the recession arrived in 2008. The two most common foreign countries of birth were the UK (5.9%) and Poland (2.2%). Overall, almost one in eight people living in Múscraí were not born in Ireland. According to the *Údurás na Gaeltachta* commissioned report *A socio-economic and cultural needs analysis*, this figure 'presents an enormous opportunity / challenge as regards integration into the community, [and] recognition of diversity within the community' (2007, p.6).

According to the same document, the level of home ownership was high. Just over 90% of households were owned by the occupying family (*Údurás*, 2007). This was above than the national average. By 2011, only 82% of homes were owner occupied.

There appears to be a significant educational divide between older and younger inhabitants. Primary school and/or the Junior Certificate were the highest educational achievements for 36.5% of people

(Census, 2011). This is slightly down from the 2006 figure of 37.3% (Údurás, 2007, p.8). Anecdotaly, it would seem that the vast majority of the less formally well educated individuals are from the older generations. By contrast, the young are largely focused on gaining a third level qualification. Worryingly, it was discovered in the aforementioned Údurás report that many of the 3rd level students emerging from Múscraí tended to settle outside of the area (2007). Evidence from our interviews has suggested that one of the main reasons for the trend is the lack of quality professional jobs in the Gaeltacht. Standing in stark comparison to this, is the relatively high number of manufacturing businesses in Múscraí. In 2011, 633 people were employed in companies supported by Údurás na Gaeltachta. However, the majority of those jobs were either in skilled, semi-skilled, or unskilled roles. There are relatively few opportunities to pursue professional careers. Farming remains strong in the local economy. Despite this, for many college leavers that want to use their education, life back on the farm or working in a factory is simply not enough.

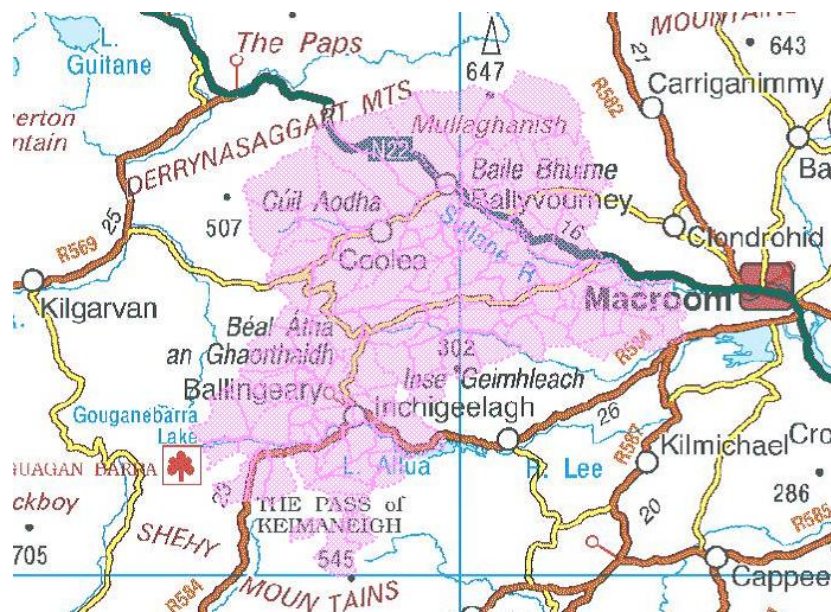
One of the key reasons for the lack of professional opportunities is the scarcity of high speed broadband. Another contributing factor is the absence of a high quality office hub where small professional firms could set-up and collaborate.

Almost fourteen percent of Gaeltacht residents have obtained a degree or higher (Census, 2011). Many of these have chosen to stay or move into Múscraí despite the lack of career opportunities. Unless they are lucky, they commute. Illustrating this is the fact that the quantity of teachers living in Múscraí (108) far exceeds the number of positions available in Gaeltacht schools (Údurás, 2007).

Almost one third of respondents to the Údurás report indicated that Irish was the primary language in their household (2007, p. 20). Nearly three quarters said it was the secondary language used. Geographically, 45-50% of residents in seven of the eight district electoral divisions that make up the Gaeltacht are daily Irish speakers (ibid, p. 23). The one outlier was Cill na Martra. There, only 23% of the people spoke Irish daily. This is despite two in every three individuals being able to speak the language. Overall, fluency across the Gaeltacht was put at 40.5% of the population. A further 34.6% had a mediocre ability in Irish. Of those who speak Irish daily, over three quarters do so in their homes. Outside of the family house, usage falls drastically.

Overall, the picture on the use of Irish from the available written material, our interviews, and observations, is a complex one. Several interviewees stated that there is a greater use Irish amongst teenagers now than there was fifteen or twenty years ago. It seems that the language has become cooler! Another person told how the adoption of Irish by a number of Eastern European children and the support from their parents has almost embarrassed indigenous parents into using Irish more in their lives. The Údurás report, *A socio-economic and cultural needs analysis*, on which much of our knowledge on the state of Irish in Múscraí comes from, is now eight years old. It is a fine document. However, it is dominated by a quantitative approach. For a truer appreciation as to state of Irish in the Gaeltacht, qualitative methods must also be used in any future study.

Fig 1.1 The extent of the Múscraí Gaeltacht is shown in pink



(Source: Cork County Council, 2014)

1.3 Statutory Context and Listings

There are eleven structures in the Múscraí Gaeltacht listed in the County Cork Record of Protected Structures (RPS). As a result, these properties are protected under the *Planning and Development Act 2000*. Should any building owner wish to make alterations that would change the character of one of these buildings planning permission must be applied for from Cork County Council. There are 28 buildings listed in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage. Ascription in this inventory does not provide legal protection. However, recording is used to inform future judgment on whether that building should be listed as a protected structure. There are no Architectural Conservation Areas in Múscraí.

The area contains 392 archeological sites listed within the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). This provides these places with protection under the *National Monuments Acts 1930-2004*. When the owner or occupier of a property, or any other person, proposes to carry out any work at, or in relation to, a recorded monument, they are required to give notice in writing to the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht two months before commencing any work. There are no national monuments. Múscraí has a number of battlefield sites. As befits the mountainous nature of the landscape, these tend to be small ambush sites. None have legal protection.

Protection to a number of species and designated landscapes are provided under the European Birds (1979) and Habitats (1992) directives, Birds and Natural Habitats Regulations 2011, the Wildlife Acts 1976 and the Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2000-2010. Where development is proposed that impacts upon a protect species or protected place, a derogation license must be sought from the National Parks and Wildlife Service. There are seven sites designated for nature conservation in Múscraí.

There is no legal protection provided for aspects of intangible heritage. There is no mention of intangible heritage in the heritage section of the current Cork Development Plan (2013). Likewise, intangible heritage is not mentioned in the *Heritage Act 1995*.

1.4 Methodology and Terminology

The report is based upon archival research, site visits, and an extensive programme of public consultation.

The land area of the Múscraí Gaeltacht is large. No document of the proposed CMIP's breath has ever been conducted on a place of such size. Combining the conservation of a place along with its interpretation in an area of 100 square miles provides challenges. However, it also presents the unique opportunity to have one coherent document guiding the care and presentation of all the area's heritage.

It was concluded that the only way a document like the Múscraí CMIP could be done economically to a high standard was for the consultants to retreat. Instead, the role of the professionals was to inform and facilitate discussions amongst those living in the Gaeltacht. Accordingly, in addition to the Steering Group meetings with Acadamh Fódhla and the County Cork Heritage Officer, an extensive series of public consultation meetings took place. The events predominately happened in Ballymakeera (Baile Mhic Íre) / Ballyvourney (Baile Bhuirne) and Ballingeary (Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh). Two public information sessions also took place in Cill na Martra (to be conducted). In conjunction with the open public sessions a series of meetings with representatives of local community organizations, schools, and businesses also occurred. These included: (to be completed in May).

The report incorporates relevant principles and processes of the *Granada charter* (1985), the *Burra charter: the Australia ICOMOS charter for places of cultural significance* (1999) and the *Ename charter, the ICOMOS charter for the interpretation and presentation of cultural heritage sites* (2008). The terminology used in this report is consistent with the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht's *Architectural heritage protection guidelines* (2004) and the *Burra charter* (1999).

1.5 Limitations

This report is a strategy document directing the management of heritage in Múscraí. Its role is to identify what is significant about the Gaeltacht's heritage and create a framework through which that significance is promoted and protected. Accordingly, an exhaustive inventory of the various monuments and heritage places is outside its scope. Similarly, an evaluation as to the health of the Irish language is outside the scope of this document. Please note, the following three chapters on the built, natural, and intangible heritage of Múscraí are only intended to provide an introduction on the profile and essence of these aspects of the Gaeltacht.

1.6 Author Identification

This conservation, management and interpretation plan has been conducted and prepared by:

- Terry Connell, Licensed Archaeologist
- Dr Janice Fuller, Ecologist
- Dr Tomás MacConmara, Folklorist
- Liam Mannix, Heritage Consultant

1.7 Acknowledgements

Research and Dig gratefully acknowledges the help of the following in the preparation of this report: (to be completed in May).

The cover photo is the view north from Beal a Ghleanna.

2.0 Historical and Archaeological Profile

2.1 Introduction

The history and archaeology of Múscraí indicates a diverse region speckled with monuments, incidents and people that weave a picture of an area steeped in places of local, regional, and national importance. This chapter will trace the area from its ancient Bronze Age beginnings right through to the twentieth century, and offer a glimpse into Múscraí's tangible archaeological and historical past.

2.2 Bronze Age Beginnings

According to the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) there are no definitive Neolithic field monuments in the Gaeltacht. However, numerous pre-bog huts have been locally identified. This would suggest that human habitation in Múscraí could possibly date back as far as the Mesolithic Period. To validate this, thorough archaeological investigation is required.

The Bronze Age in Ireland is noted as a period of extreme change within Irish Pre-historic society. This period witnessed a change in material culture from flint to bronze. The RMP maps¹ indicate a large occurrence of Bronze Age (generally dated 2400BC – 700BC) monuments on the landscape. This would fit the national profile for the Bronze Age. During this period there was a large-scale movement of people toward the south-western corner of Ireland due to the abundance of copper in the mines of West Cork and West Kerry. The monument evidence, starting with the Wedge tombs of the Neolithic/Bronze Age transition right through to the later standing stones is suggestive of this in Múscraí. O'Sullivan has suggested that – 'Wedge tombs formed an integral part of the development of the farmed landscape².' Fifty six percent of all wedge tombs occur in the south-west of Ireland³. The area fits the regional profile with numerous wedge tombs, fulacht fiadh, stone circles, and standing stones.

The enigmatic Iron Age does not definitively appear in the RMP record. The monumental record for this period is sparse with defensive forts and barrows forming the majority of Iron Age site types. This appears to fit a national profile as only c.10% of sites excavated under the auspices of the National Roads Authority produced Iron Age dates. While apparently monumentally absent it would be wrong to conclude that no Iron Age activity was present in Múscraí. It may be that the period is represented in early ringforts, ogham stones or other such field monuments generally dated to the Bronze Age or Early Medieval period.

While the RMP is clearly suggestive of a fledgling Bronze Age landscape, there are problems concerning recognition and classification. Many sites listed in the RMP are generally classified to a particular period but without scientific dating no definitive dates can be individually given.

2.3 The Early Medieval Period

There is a strong pattern of Early Christian settlement in Múscraí. The most famous saint associated with the region is St. Gobnait, the sacred abbe of the monastery at Baile Bhuirne (fig. 2.1). It is

¹ RMP stands for Record of Monuments and Place. They show the location of all classified monuments on the ordnance survey 6' inch maps of the early 1900s. Each monument is indicated by an arbitrary circle and given a classification number. This number list the county code (Cork CO) the number of the sheet that the monument is on and the number of the monument. All classified monuments are protect under law by the 1930 National Monuments Act and subsequent amendments.

² M. O'Sullivan, *Wedge Tombs, Archaeology Ireland, Winter 2010, volume 24, issue 4*, p. 38

³ IBID, p. 38

thought that her church was established here in the sixth century most likely by St. Abban, who in local legend is thought to have been Gobnait's brother.⁴ Her pattern day is still celebrated on the 11th of February, the *All – Ireland Review*⁵ of 1900 records it as:

St. Gobnet, Virgin and Abbess of Ballyvourney, Co. Cork (sixth century). It is related of her that she drove away a haughty invader by directing a swarm of bees against him. A fair and patron was held in her honour, at which the young men used to assemble on an eminence and invoke her to send them wealthy partners within the ensuing twelve months.

Fig 2.1 **St.Gobnait's hut excavated by O'Kelly in the 1950s**



(Source: Research and Dig, 2014)

The archaeological remains left by the monastic settlement at Baile Bhuirne are a testament to its importance. The breadth of this record was greatly increased by the excavations of M.J O'Kelly in the early 1950s. These include the remains of furnaces dating from the Bronze and Iron Age under what became commonly known as *St. Gobnait's house*. The site's link to fire has led Ronald Hutton to speculate⁶ that there may be a titled link with the Celtic god of fire *Goibniu*; who in Irish mythology was the smith to the *Tuatha de Dannan*. This fire based link is also something that he claims may also have been associated with the Abbess Bridget at Kildare⁷. Allied to these remains are the ogham stones generally (but not scientifically) dated to the Early Medieval period⁸. While

⁴ D. Harris, St. Gobnet Abbess of Ballyvourney, *The Journal of the Royal Society Antiquaries of Ireland Seventh Series Vol. 8*, (1938), P. 276

⁵ The National Calendar, *All Ireland Review*, Vol. 1, Number 14, (1900), p. 5

⁶ R. Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles: Their Nature and Legacy*. Oxford, Blackwell, (1991), 285.

⁷ Ibid, P.285

⁸ M. O'Sullivan, Ogham Stones, *Archaeology Ireland*, Summer 2014, volume 28, issue 2, p. 29

the presence of ringforts show us that Múscraí had a thriving secular population during this period also.

While the cult of Gobnait is an enduring tradition in Múscraí she is not the only significant saint known from there. The early monastic settlement at Gougane Barra, west of Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh is associated with Saint Finbarr from the seventh century onwards (fig 2.2). He established this settlement before becoming Bishop of Cork.

Fig 2.2 **Saint Fin Barre's Oratory**



(Source: Research and Dig, 2014)

2.4 The Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods

The archaeological record for later medieval Múscraí is greatly supplemented by documentary sources. From these a picture of internal power struggles and dispossession of lands appears. Throughout the medieval period the McCarthy's were the ruling Gaelic Irish family. The initial land grant for what was to become the barony of Múscraí dates to 1352. Lands on the Cork-Kerry border were the subject of a crown grant to Cormac McCarthy after he and Sir Thomas de Rokeby defeated Dermot MacDermot McCarthy after an internal McCarthy power struggle. By 1365 Cormac McCarthy was referring to himself as 'Captain of the Irish of Desmond'⁹. This lineage appears to have continued in various guises with McCarthy lands generally concentrated in the Múscraí area. *Carrigaphooca* castle (just outside the Múscraí Gaeltacht), built in the mid-1450s by Dermot MacCarthy was one of their strongholds.

The McCarthys sided with the crown forces during the attempted plantation of Munster in the late 1500s. They also sided with the crown forces during the Nine Years War. Following the restoration of Charles II in 1660 the McCarthys were rewarded with the title Earl of Clancarthy, this was an extension of the Earl of Clancare title instituted in 1565. Callaghan McCarthy was the main

⁹ K. Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland*, Dublin, Lilliput Press, (2003), p. 189

benefactor. He inherited land in the Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh area. The majority of this land appears to have being in the hands of the O'Learys in the pre-plantation era. McCarthy was distinguished by being a Catholic, something that was in the minority during this land transfer. Nationally, Protestant land ownership went up from 42% in 1641 to 70% in 1670.¹⁰ In County Cork land in Protestant hands rose from 23% in 1641 to 63% by 1670¹¹. The lands around in Baile Mhic Íre / Baile Bhuirne and Cúil Aodha were granted to John Colthurst who inherited c.15,000 acres of profitable land. The lands granted to Colthurst were in the main disposed from a Catholic named William Herilhy.

The primary idea of this land transfer was, as mentioned above, to repay loyalty. Consequently, these lands often passed from Catholic hands into Protestant hands. Interestingly, the surrounding area retained a higher proportion of Catholic landowners compared to the rest of the county. Nonetheless, this large scale transfer of land laid the foundations for the landed ascendancy that held the sway of power in Ireland throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The importance of the cult of St. Gobnait appears to be very much alive during this period (fig 2.3). In 1601, Pope Clement VIII offered a ten year indulgence to all those who visited her shine on her feast day. In 1602, Domhnaill Cam O'Sullivan prayed at the shrine in Baile Bhuirne after fleeing from the scene at Kinsale and en route on his march to Leitrim. The much maligned papal nuncio Rinuccini, sent over to assist the Confederates of Kilkenny, is also known to have celebrated mass at the site on her feast day in 1645. All these actions indicate the importance of St. Gobnait throughout the post-reformation period.

Fig 2.3 **Late medieval church at St. Gobnait's Shrine**



(Source: Research and Dig, 2014)

¹⁰ Downesurvey.tcd.ie, [Date accessed 20/10/2014]

¹¹ Ibid, [Date accessed, 20/10/2014]

2.5 Famine and the Age of Revolution

The Great Famine of 1845 – 1852 had a huge impact on the Ireland. Estimates of deaths coupled with emigration are in the millions. While all areas of the country were affected by an *Gorta Mór* the marginalised areas of the west of Ireland were certainly the worst affected. This national picture is confirmed in the 32.7% drop in population in Baile Bhuirne and 35.1% drop in Cill na Martra between 1841 and 1851¹².

The barony of Múscraí was within the Poor Law Union of Macroom (304sq miles). The workhouse officially opened on the 1st of October 1842. The prevailing governmental and economic idea of the time was the policy of *Laissez Faire*. This hypothesised that nobody should benefit from governmental hand-outs. Therefore, the idea of the workhouse was to ensure that those who were receiving state assistance within it were contributing to society.

Although the workhouses were places of disease, degradation and shame, the conditions outside them were worse. Nowhere is this more evident than in the numbers they contained by 1851. In 1845, the numbers in workhouses in Ireland were 38,497. This rose to 83,283 in 1847, and to 217,000 by 1851.¹³

The story of the Buckley family travelling from Macroom workhouse to Carraigastyra graveyard to mourn their two children and their ultimate death is one of the most enduring stories associated with the region.

The problems did not end with the Great Famine. Evictions were common in Múscraí during this period. An example being in Baile Bhuirne where 44 families were evicted from their homes in the post-famine period

This illustrates the unstable nature of society during this period and indicates how a struggle for landownership, equality and eventual independence came to pass.

The War of Independence period (1919-1921) was a time of extreme upheaval in Ireland and especially in Cork. The number of incidents in Cork during this period outnumber any other county. Múscraí proved no exception to this. The recently released records from the Bureau of Military Archives offer first-hand accounts of events. One such account is that of Patrick J. Lynch of Ullanes, Baile Mhic Íre¹⁴. Lynch served as a Captain of the Baile Bhuirne IRA during the War of Independence years. Rebel activity appears to have been constant throughout Múscraí; with 1920 having the greatest recorded instances. Lynch details events such as the attack on Baile Bhuirne RIC barracks on January 3rd 1920, the burning of 'The Lodge' belonging to W.G Williams on June 9th, for which he (Williams) was later awarded £10,000 in damages,¹⁵ and the fierce fight that occurred at Gattabaun on 17th July where Captain Ayrie of the Manchester Regiment was killed. The protagonists claim that this was the first attack on a military lorry in the independence period¹⁶. These events show the unstable nature of society in the Múscraí.

¹² M. Mac Suibhne, *Famine in Muskerry, An Drocsaol*, Midelton, Litho Press, (1997), p. 82

¹³ William J. Smyth, *The Province of Munster and the Great Famine*, in (eds) J. Crowley, W.J. Smyth & M. Murphy, *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine*, Cork, (2012), p. 363

¹⁴ P. Lynch, *Bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie*, [Date accessed, 15/09/2014]

¹⁵ *Skibbereen Eagle*, October 8th 1920, p. 2

¹⁶ Op. Cit Lynch p. 9

The ambush carried out at Knockanure in August 1920 typifies the activity of the IRA in Múscraí during the War of Independence. On August 17th two military lorries were returning to Macroom after delivering twenty bicycles to the military at Baile Bhuirne when the two outriders of the party ignored an IRA command to stop; instead they sped up to make their escape. The IRA, under the command of Paddy O'Sullivan and Patrick Lynch, opened fire immediately. Patrick Lynch recalls the incident:¹⁷

We opened fire, killing the officer in charge – a Lieutenant Sharman – immediately and wounding four others. The others returned our fire. Shooting continued for about half an hour when eventually the remaining members of the patrol surrendered.

This attack immediately prompted the Crown to act. The *Irish Times* reported on the 23rd of August that – About 200 men of the Manchester Regiment were drafted into Baile Bhuirne on Friday. On Friday night they surrounded the village, and effected several arrests.

The records of Cornelius Cronin a member of the Baile Bhuirne Company, 8th Battalion recalls the formation of the Irish Volunteers in the area in 1913 and the mobilization order given by Tomás McCurtain to 16 volunteers on Easter Sunday 1916. He also illustrates the anti-conscription sentiment that was gripping Ireland in early 1918 – ‘At the peak of the conscription scare our strength reached 130 men’¹⁸. Another extract recounts a crisis of conscience suffered by an RIC Sergeant (Sergeant Appleby) at his finding of Tomás McCurtain in a room at the Gougane Barra Hotel – ‘When he entered one of the rooms he saw McCurtain, O’Higgins, Hyde and a Scottish Volunteer... He spoke for a few moments to McCurtain in Irish, the turned and left the room, closing the door behind him.’¹⁹ This testimony typifies the problems faced by so many RIC members in Ireland during the independence period.

The ambush at Cul na Catharach is one of the most intense examples of fighting recorded from the War of Independence period. The battle took place on the 26th of February 1921 and comprised of a force of sixty IRA men and an Auxiliary force that numbered over a hundred. The fighting was described by Patrick J. Lynch as – “a terrible fight which lasted four hours”²⁰ The fighting that took place at Cul na Catharach lasted over four hours before a six hour running fight over the Múscraí terrain and resulted in the loss of 28 auxiliaries with the IRA not suffering a single casualty.

Along with Clonbannin and Crossbarry (both March 1921), the ambush at it is recognized as Cul na Catharach a prime example of the efficient nature of guerilla warfare carried out during the War of Independence. The British response to the ambush was for infantry, armed and air units to be called the scene, thus it has been rightly described as one of the most ambitious military attacks of the entire period. Indeed the battlefield at Cul na Catharach is the only one in the region that is marked on the ordnance survey of Ireland maps. This shows the level of resistance that existed in the Múscraí region and links to a coherent thread throughout the pre-history and history of the region. It exemplifies the region as one that was constantly aware of its regional and national identity and illustrates the sacrifices made to protect and foster its cultural heritage.

While history focuses on those who fought here, there were also 200,000 Irishmen who partook in World War 1, with 55,000 never returning. Múscraí does not appear to have had many among the fallen. John O’ Leary (Baile Bhuirne) a member of the Munster Fusiliers was killed on the 22nd of

¹⁷ Ibid, p.9

¹⁸ C. Cronin, *Bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie*, [Date accessed, 19/11/2014], p. 2

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 4

²⁰ Op. Cit. Lynch, p. 17

March 1918 in France. Originally from Baile Bhuirne he is the only definitive soldier killed in action (others found but county of origin not available) that was found from the Múscraí region.

The collective effort of the War of Independence was quickly replaced by the turmoil of the Civil War. Initially concentrated in Dublin, it quickly spread southwards and was a national affair by June 1922. By the time October 1922 comes along the National Army had advanced as far as Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh, the *Cork Examiner* of October 2nd states – ‘severe and intense fighting commenced soon after the advance on Ballingearry’ the article suggests that Baile Bhuirne will be next to fall. The *Irish Independent* dated 1st October states – ‘the irregular casualties are believed to be heavy.’ There appears to have been little let up in the fighting as 1923 commenced. The *Freemans Journal* dated 2nd March details an ambush in the Baile Bhuirne.

Much of the architectural heritage of Múscraí comes from the 19th and early 20th centuries. The main streets of the Gaeltacht’s villages are dominated by simple but elegant vernacular two storey terraced and detached houses (fig. 2.4). These are complemented by a lovely scattering of vernacular slate roofed farm buildings and their associated outbuildings. There is little of the grand houses heritage in Múscraí. An exception to this is the ruinous Glebe building adjacent to Saint Gobnait’s Shrine (fig 2.5). The 19th century was a period of greatest church building. At St. Gobnait’s Shrine there is a good example of an Anglican Board of First Fruits church. Throughout the Gaeltacht there is also a fine collection of post-emancipation Roman Catholic Churches.

Fig 2.4 Terraced shop and home in Baile Mhic Íre



(Source: Research and Dig, 2014)

Fig 2.5 The Glebe



(Source: Research and Dig, 2014)

2.6 A Cultural Renaissance

It should come as no surprise that Múscraí was an essential component in the Gaelic Revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century considering the lack of permanent incursion by the ruling British classes. The architectural footprint of Múscraí is suggestive of an area that lacked the settled village nature that dominated vast swathes of the country. Múscraí follows a more ancient style of settlement, one that bears witness to its Gaelic roots. This is a system of building in perishable materials, materials that leave no trace on the landscape. The village of Cuil Aodha perfectly illustrates this. The present village (built around the church in 1872) is the fourth incarnation of a settlement in the immediate area. This system of a moveable population very much in the Gaelic tradition and distinctly different from the English model of nucleated settlements appears endemic throughout Múscraí. Roads only came in the 19th century. Before this, movement for purposes of pilgrimage, cattle grazing and trade was done along Gaelic trackways.

The local resistance to many colonial ideas in conjunction with a fostering of a Gaelic identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries placed Múscraí at the forefront of the national cultural revolution.

The importance of place and tradition is something that is reflected in cultural work undertaken in Múscraí in the early twentieth century. This is typified by Doctur Donal O'Loinsaigh (b.1842 – d.1913). A native of Cúil Aodha, he was a pioneer of the National Cultural movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His career path was somewhat stifled by the hanging of

one of his uncles as a convicted whiteboy,²¹ thus preventing him from joining the priesthood. Instead he fought with papal armies in the Italian war of unification and on the French side in the Franco-Prussian war before returning to Baile Bhuirne to practice medicine. He was a leading light in the establishment of the first dedicated Irish language school in Baile Bhuirne in 1898, in a public house ran by the Colthurst family. He was also instrumental in founding the renowned Coláiste Na Mumhan in Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh in 1904. His expansion of feis to Killarney and Dublin from Baile Bhuirne laid the foundations for Baile Bhuirne to become recognized as one of the core centres for Gaelic culture in a new independence seeking Ireland. He represented Ireland (along with Pádraig Pearse and Douglas Hyde) at the Celtic Convention in Paris in 1900. His cultural work also included his endeavours with Conradh na Gaeilge which he promoted throughout Múscraí and beyond. The impact of Doctur O'Loinsaigh was such that scholars from Múscraí were sought countrywide to lead the teaching of Irish and its promotion at a time of great change for Ireland.

It's not often that a single person, however gifted, can alter the character of a nation's culture. O' Riada managed to do this – Thomas Kinsella

Sean O' Riada managed to intertwine numerous cultural influences throughout the 1950s and 1960s and reinvigorated Irish traditional music in the process. He is credited with changing the perception of Irish traditional music and reintroducing it to a new modern Ireland. O' Riada had many musical tastes; he played with a jazz band in Cork in the early 1950s, while also being influenced by European classical ways throughout his life. His career included spells working for Radio Éireann, composing in Paris, serving as musical director at the Abbey theatre, and lecturing in the music department at University College Cork.

His realization that Irish traditional music was something that was in grave danger led him to impose his classical training upon the corpus of traditional music. He opted to perform in a theatre setting, something more akin to the classical music of European tradition. His traditional group Ceoltóirí Chualann offered him the platform to move away from the ceili band tradition and enabled him to establish a "folk orchestra" idea.

O' Riada was commissioned to compose the score for *Mise Eire*, a programme chronicling Ireland's break from a colony to an independent nation. This was one of the seminal points in his career, further popularising his music and making the score a source of pride for the Irish nation. This left an imprint on the Irish people and pushed Irish traditional music to the forefront of Irishness.

Throughout this period O' Riada lived and worked in Dublin. His home at Galloping Green, was a mecca for traditional gatherings of music, language, poetry, song, etc. In 1962 O' Riada took up a lecturing position at University College Cork and moved to the ancestral land of his mother in Múscraí. Once resident in Cuil Aodh, he became a fervent ambassador for the people of Múscraí through his work with Ceoltóirí Chualann and the establishment of Cor Cuil Aodh.

The revolutionary Second Vatican Council established a basis for the Mass to no longer be celebrated in Latin, but rather in the vernacular of a region. Consequently, the participation of the congregation was encouraged in a greater way. O' Riada embraced this opportunity to combine the chanting of the Latin style Mass with the ancient tradition of Sean Nos singing, which became the blueprint for Masses in Irish speaking areas (and in English speaking areas offering an Irish Mass). These liturgical works were sang throughout Ireland by the Cor Cul Aodh, heightening awareness of the Irish language, and reaffirming O' Riada as a cultural ambassador for Irish language speakers

²¹ An agrarian group that fought for the rights of subsistence farmers in the eighteenth century. Given the name whiteboys due to their dress when they raided landlord estates.

throughout the country. Indeed, the O’Riada Masses is still used throughout the country to the present day.

The achievements of Sean O’Riada are not limited to what has been written. He reintroduced the harp to Irish traditional music (controversially favouring the harpiscord) and made the bodhran a central instrument in his traditional works. His collection has enriched the corpus of Irish traditional music available and he managed to link it to the people and therefore increased its identity at a time when it had decreased in popularity. Like Doctur O’Loinsaigh before him, O’Riada used his base in Múscraí to radiate a nationally recognized cultural contribution to Irish society. He managed to revitalize Irish music by blending newer traditions with the old, thus cementing his place among the greats of Irish traditional music.

The history and archaeology in Múscraí is suggestive of a region that was at the forefront of regional and national issues. The Bronze Age monuments tell us that it was a fertile landscape that was had relatively intensive occupation during pre-history. It appears to have flourished in the Early Medieval period with religion playing a hugely important role. This devotion continued throughout the medieval and post medieval periods and is still evident today. The medieval period was characterised by internal land struggles and land-grabs; none greater than the transfers in the late sixteen hundreds. The famine period once again brought Múscraí to the forefront of the national agenda. It was one of the worst affected areas during the mid-1800s, with horrendous scenes of starvation and anguish. The push for independence and the cultural reawakening of the twentieth century show how the area led the fight for both political and cultural independence within the Irish state.

3.0 The Natural Heritage of the Múscraí Gaeltacht

3.1 Introduction

The Irish landscape is a cultural landscape that has been shaped by millennia of human habitation and land-use. Likewise the landscape has shaped patterns of human settlement and the nature of human activity. The high mountains, steep hills, woodlands and fertile river valleys in the Múscraí Gaeltacht area have undoubtedly influenced life in the Múscraí area for thousands of years. The strong links between the people, the language and the landscape is evident in the place names, music and intangible heritage of the area.

Natural heritage is defined by the UNESCO World Heritage Convention²² as follows:

1. **natural features** consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;
2. **geological and physiographical formations** and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;
3. **natural sites** or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.

3.2 Geology

The Múscraí Gaeltacht is framed by the Derrynasaggart Mountains to the north and north-west, the Shehy Mountains to the south, and the Lee River valley to the east. The underlying bedrock of the Múscraí area is Devonian Old Red Sandstone²³. This is evident in outcropping rocky slopes and corries in the uplands. The highest peak is Mullaghanish (647m) at the northern edge of the Múscraí in the Derrynasaggart Mountains but there are several other high peaks on the western and southern edge of the area (Knockbwee 461m, Mweelin 487m and Coomataggart 530m), and the central part of Múscraí is also hilly with several hills c. 200m in height.

3.3 Habitats

The landscapes in this area are characterised by uplands and lowlands, peaks and valleys, rivers and wetlands. The uplands are covered in upland blanket bog and heath, coniferous forestry and rough grassland. At lower elevations productive farmland with improved pastures is more prevalent and wet grassland on more marginal land. There are a few pockets of native oak woodland and stands of wet woodland in association with river and lake edges, and small areas of lowland blanket bog. There are two important river catchments in the Múscraí area, the River Lee and the Sullane River. Both rivers rise in the uplands on the western edge of the Múscraí and flow eastwards. The Sullane River and its tributaries have a good stock of Brown Trout, and fly fishing is popular in the area²⁴. Water quality of the rivers is generally of good or high quality but there are a few water bodies with poor water qualityⁱ.

²² <http://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext/>


²³ www.gsi.ie

²⁴ <http://www.fishinginireland.info/trout/southwest/sullane.htm>

Land-use is predominantly coniferous forestry and rough grazing with sheep in the uplands, and pastoral farming with cattle in the low-lying areas of the Múscraí. Wind farms are a feature of the skyline at higher elevations.

The main natural and semi-natural habitats in the Múscraí area are in brief described below (table 1). They include several habitats of high nature conservation value that are listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive²⁵. This list of habitats is based on a limited survey of the area by Janice Fuller, the sites synopses for designated sites²⁶ and a review of the literature²⁷.

Table 1. The main natural and semi-natural habitats that occur in the Múscraí, Co. Cork. Habitats are classified according to Fossitt (2000) 'A Guide to Habitats in Ireland'²⁸


Habitat	Habitat code*	Description
Upland blanket bog	PB2	Upland blanket bog is abundant at higher elevations (>150m) often in a mosaic with wet heath. Much of this bog and heath has been planted with conifers. There are still large open and intact areas (e.g. Mullaghanish Bog SAC). The bog vegetation includes Ling Heather (<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>), Common Cotton-grass (<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>), Hare's-tail Cotton grass (<i>E. vaginatum</i>), Crowberry (<i>Empetrum nigrum</i>) and bog mosses (e.g. <i>Sphagnum papillosum</i>). Overgrazing by sheep is an issue in some places. This habitat corresponds with Annex I habitat 'Blanket Bog 7130' when actively growing.
Dry heath	HH1	Dry heath is common on steep slopes and high or rocky ground. Dwarf shrubs such as Ling Heather (<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>), Bell Heather (<i>Erica cinerea</i>) and Gorse (<i>Ulex</i> spp.). This habitat corresponds with Annex I habitat 'Dry siliceous heath 4030'. 
Wet heath	HH3	Wet heath is common, often in association with blanket bog and dry heath. It occurs on shallower peat (15-50cm) than blanket bog but has similar vegetation cover. This habitat corresponds with the Annex I habitat 'North Atlantic wet heaths with <i>Erica cinerea</i> 4010'.
Coniferous	WD4	There are extensive areas of coniferous plantation within the

²⁵ Annex I habitats are listed on Annex I of the European Union Habitats Directive. These habitats are considered to be of the highest nature conservation value within the context of the European Union. http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/environment/nature_and_biodiversity/l28076_en.htm

²⁶ www.npws.ie/protectedsites




²⁷ AOS Planning Limited. 2010. Constraints Report- Flora and Fauna. Dunmanway to Clashavoon 110kV Overhead Line Environmental Reports. Unpublished report; Dixon Brosnan. Ecology. Cleanrath Wind Farm. Unpublished report; Peppiatt, C. 2013. Chapter 5, Flora and Fauna. In 'Shehy More Wind farm- Environmental Impact Statement'. McCarthy Keville O'Sullivan. Unpublished report.




²⁸ Fossitt, J. 2000. A Guide to Habitats in Ireland. The Heritage Council, Kilkenny.

plantation		Múscraí area. Much of this forestry is managed by Coillte (e.g. Glendav and Coolea Forests ²⁹) but some is privately-owned. The primary species is Sitka Spruce (<i>Picea sitchensis</i>) and it dominates most of the plantations. Wind farms have been developed in association with the forestry in some areas. Associated with the conifer plantations are recently felled areas (WS5) and young plantations.
Rivers-upland/lowland	FW1/FW2	<p>There are many rivers and streams within the area and two important river catchments, the Sullane and the Lee. The Sullane is an important tributary of the Lee. It rises in the hills west of Ballyvourney and flows east to join the Lee near Macroom. The Lee rises in the Shehy mountains near Gougane Barra and flows east through Macroom and on to Cork City. The Freshwater Pearl Mussel (<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i>) has been widely reported in both catchments, as have Otters. Both are listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive.</p>  <p><i>Sullane River in Coolea, and associated wetlands</i></p>
Lakes	FL	There are several small and medium-sized lakes in the Múscraí area the most iconic of which is Gougane Barra Lake. Most of the upland lakes, including Gougane Barra Lake, would be classified as 'dystrophic' lakes (FL1). Those with a higher nutrient status would be classified as 'mesotrophic' (FL4) e.g. Lough Allua. Dystrophic lakes correspond with the Annex I habitat 'Natural dystrophic lakes and ponds 3160'.
Lowland blanket bog	PB3	There are small areas of lowland blanket bog in the valleys and in association with rivers. Dominant species present include Bog Myrtle (<i>Myrica gale</i>), Ling Heather (<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>), Purple Moor Grass (<i>Molinia caerulea</i>), Common Cotton Grass (<i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>), Cross-leaved Heath (<i>Erica tetralix</i>) and Bog mosses (<i>Sphagnum</i> species). This habitat also corresponds with the Annex I habitat 'Blanket Bog 7130' when actively growing.

²⁹

http://www.coillte.ie/coillteforest/plans/forest_management_plans/progress_on_revising_our_forest_management_plans/cork/?tx_r3co086forestsdb_pi1%5BshowUid%5D=CK11&cHash=f248a02ccc;
http://www.coillte.ie/coillteforest/plans/forest_management_plans/progress_on_revising_our_forest_management_plans/cork/?tx_r3co086forestsdb_pi1%5BshowUid%5D=CK29&cHash=2ba771fe72

			
Dry humid-acid grassland	GS3	<p>This type of grassland occurs in the uplands on acidic soils and much of it is grazed by sheep. This type of grassland tends to be less intensively managed but can be heavily grazed. The main grasses present are generally Bent Grasses (<i>Agrostis</i> species) and Mat Grass (<i>Nardus stricta</i>).</p> 	
Wet grassland	GS4	<p>Wet grassland is abundant through the Múscraí area in areas that are poorly drained, or in association with water bodies. It is characterised by rushy fields with Soft Rush (<i>Juncus effusus</i>), Creeping Bent Grass (<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>), Yorkshire Fog Grass (<i>Holcus lanatus</i>) and Cuckoo Flower (<i>Cardamine pratensis</i>).</p> 	
Oak-birch- holly woodland	WN1	<p>There are a few areas of Oak woodland in Múscraí. The most notable are St. Gobnet's Wood and Cascade Wood where there is a large but fragmented area of old Oak woodland. Much of the Oak woodland present is dominated by Sessile Oak (<i>Quercus petraea</i>) and Birch (<i>Betula pubescens</i>) with Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>) in the understorey. This habitat corresponds to the Annex I habitat 'Old Oak woodland 91A0'.</p>	

			
Wet woodland	WN6	Small patches of wet woodland dominated by Grey Willow (<i>Salix cinerea</i>) with some Alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>) can be found along the edges of rivers and streams, and on the edges of bogs or in boggy depressions.	
Hedgerows	WL1	A notable feature in the area is the richness of the hedgerow flora. Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>) is the dominant hedgerow shrub but but Holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>) and Hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>) are common, as well as Oak (<i>Quercus</i> spp).	
Oak-Ash-Hazel woodland	WN2	Another type of Oak woodland that is found in the Múscraí, especially on damp or flushed ground is dominated by Pedunculate Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>), Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>) with Hazel abundant in the understorey (<i>Corylus avellana</i>). This type of woodland occurs in a mosaic with WN1 (and is present in St. Gobnait's Wood and Cascade Wood).	

* Habitats are classified according to Fossitt (2000) 'A Guide to Habitats in Ireland'

3.4 Sites designated for nature conservation

There are several sites designated for nature conservation in the Múscraí area including Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) and a Special Protection Area (SPA).

They are described in brief below. Further details on all the sites are available in the sites synopses on www.npws.ie.

SACs are the prime areas for nature conservation in Ireland and the European Union. Sites are designated based on the presence species (listed on Annex II of the EU Habitat Directive) and habitats (listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive) that are considered of conservation importance in a European context.

SPAs are designated for birds of conservation concern (listed on Annex I of the EU Birds Directive) (including resident and migratory birds) in Ireland and the European Union, and their habitats.

NHAs are sites that are considered to be important for nature conservation in an Irish context. They are designated under the Wildlife Acts.

1. St. Gobnet's Wood SAC (Site Code 000106)

This SAC includes St. Gobnet's Wood and Cascade Wood. These woods are situated on hilly land on either side of the N22 in Ballyvourney with Cascade Wood to the north and St. Gobnet's to the south. They form a relatively large but fragmented stand of mature woodland. They appear to exist on the area's first edition 6" Ordnance Survey map for the area suggesting it can be considered as old woodland³⁰.

Much of the woodland consists of Oak-Birch Holly woodland (as described above) but Oak-Ash-Hazel woodland is also present particularly in flushed areas and towards the base of the slopes³¹. There are also small areas of alluvial woodland along the Sullane River, where Alder, Ash and Downy Birch are abundant. The Oak on the site includes Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*), Sessile Oak (*Q. petraea*) and their hybrid, *Q. rosacea*. Large old Beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica*) are also common within the woods. Hazel is common in the understorey of the woods and Holly is present in places. The field layer is species-rich with woodland herbs such as Bluebell, Wood Anemone, Wood Avens, Enchanter's Nightshade and Hart's Tongue Fern. Opposite-leaved Saxifrage and Bugle are abundant in the damper spots. Rocky faces and boulders are abundant throughout the site and they are draped in mosses, liverworts, and in many cases, St. Patrick's Cabbage (*Saxifraga spathularis*).

The site supports Kerry Slug (*Geomalacus maculosus*), a rare and protected species listed in Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. Parts of Cascade Wood are known to be frequented by at least seven species of bat: Soprano and Common Pipistrelle, Brown Long-eared, Leisler's, Daubenton's, Natterer's and Whiskered/Brandt's Bat³². The Lesser Horseshoe Bat (a rare species in Europe and therefore listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive) was also recorded in Cascade Wood in recent years (2007) by the Cork Bat Group. There is also an old record of the Killarney Fern growing in this Wood³³. This is an extremely rare plant and listed on the Flora Protection Order (1999)³⁴. Old Oak Woodland is an Annex I habitat in the EU Habitats Directive.

2. Mullaghanish Bog SAC (Site Code 001890)

Mullaghanish Bog is centred around the summit of Mullaghanish Mountain. The site is designated as an SAC due to the present of blanket bog (listed on Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive). This small

³⁰ <http://www.npws.ie/publications/irishwildlifemanuals/IWM46.pdf>

³¹ Perrin, P., Martin, J., Barron, S., O'Neill, F., McNutt, K., and Delaney, A. 2008. National Survey of Native Woodland. Volume 3c Site reports. National Parks and Wildlife Service.

³² <http://www.corkcountybatgroup.ie/page/the-bats-of-cascade-wood>

³³ <http://www.bsbimaps.org.uk/atlas/main.php>

³⁴ www.npws.ie/legislationandconventions

area of bog is of particular nature conservation interest because it is relatively intact (not damaged by overgrazing or erosion) with blanket bog and flush habitats.

3. Mullaghanish to Musheramore Mountains SPA (Site Code 004162)

The Mullaghanish to Musheramore Mountains SPA comprises a substantial part of the Boggeragh/Derrynasagart Mountains. A portion of this large SPA lies within the Múscraí area. The site consists of a variety of upland habitat including coniferous forestry, blanket bog, wet heath and dry heath. This site is designated as an SPA due to the presence of Hen Harriers (*Circus cyaneus*), one of our rarest birds of prey and an Annex I species on the EU Birds Directive. The site provides excellent nesting and foraging habitat for breeding Hen Harrier and is an important stronghold for the species. The site also supports a breeding population of Merlin (*Falco columbarius*), another rare bird of prey and Annex I species.

4. Prohus Wood NHA (Site code 001248)

Prohus Wood appears to have been cut in the 1950s and is now dominated by multi-stemmed Oak (*Quercus* spp.) and Birch (*Betula pubescens*) with an understory of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and Holly (*Ilex avellana*)³⁵. A number of streams flow through the wood and into the Sullane River. There are abundant rock faces and rocks with St. Patrick's Cabbage and Irish Spurge.

5. Lough Allua pNHA (Site code 00165)

Lough Allua is a ribbon lake (part of the River Lee system) surrounded by a mosaic of habitats including wet grassland, woodland, bog, and heath. The rare and protected Pale Violet (*Viola lactea*) grows along the northern shore, west of Inchigeela³⁶.

6. Gouganebarra Lake pNHA (Site code 001057)

Gouganebarra Lake is situated in an upland setting surrounded by mountains. The high level of acidity in Gouganebarra Lake, combined with the peat content of the water means that there is little aquatic vegetation. Peregrine Falcons (another bird of prey and protected species that is rare in Europe) have been known to breed on the cliffs above the lake³⁷.

7. Ballagh Bog pNHA (Site code 001886)

About one third of this site lies within the Múscraí area. The site comprises a high-level river plain and surrounding mountain slopes. It includes a series of small, slightly raised valley bogs situated in the bends of a mountain stream³⁸.

³⁵ Perrin, P., Martin, J., Barron, S., O'Neill, F., McNutt, K., and Delaney, A. 2008. National Survey of Native Woodland. Volume 3c Site reports. National Parks and Wildlife Service.

³⁶ AOS Planning Limited. 2010. Constraints Report- Flora and Fauna. Dunmanway to Clashavoon 110kV Overhead Line Environmental Reports. Unpublished report.

³⁷ Peppiatt, C. 2013. Chapter 5, Flora and Fauna. In 'Shehy More Wind farm- Environmental Impact Statement'. McCarthy Keville O'Sullivan. Unpublished report.

³⁸ Peppiatt, C. 2013. Chapter 5, Flora and Fauna. In 'Shehy More Wind farm- Environmental Impact Statement'. McCarthy Keville O'Sullivan. Unpublished report.

3.5 Species of note

Several rare and protected species have been recorded in the Múscraí area. These include several birds of prey such as Hen Harriers, Peregrine Falcon and Merlin, which occur in the Derrynasaggart and Shehy Mountains. The elusive Barn Owl and Kingfisher have also been recorded in the area, as well as wading birds such as Lapwing and Curlew³⁹.

The Múscraí is the heartland for the Kerry Slug, which has been recorded in Cascade Woods and at other sites in the area⁴⁰.

The Lee and Sullane River catchments are both known to contain Freshwater Pearl Mussel, which is a very rare species that requires water of the highest quality in which to live and breed.

The Lesser Horseshoe Bat (a rare species in Europe which has its stronghold in the west of Ireland) was recorded in Cascade Wood by the Cork Bat Group in recent years (2005- 2007). It has also been recorded in other locations including in the southern half of Múscraí near Inchigeela⁴¹.

There appears to be a record of the very rare Killarney Fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*) within the hectad in which Múscraí is located. It was recorded 1987-1999⁴².

Otters have been widely reported in the Múscraí area. Although rare in much of Europe, Otters are widely distributed in Ireland. The extensive river catchments provide excellent habitat for Otters.

Sika Deer are abundant on the landscape, especially on the edge of the forestry. They are not a native species and they can have a negative impact on woodland habitats. The native Red Deer also occur in the area and they are thought to be linked to the native Red Deer population in Killarney National Park⁴³. Red Deer also like woodland edge habitats, blanket bog and heath. They are the largest type of deer found in Ireland. Other woodland and woodland edge specialists such as Red Squirrel, Badgers and Jays are on the increase due to the extensive woodland habitat available. Pine Marten, however, have not been recorded in Múscraí to date⁴⁴.

3.6 Nature outside of the designated sites

While the Múscraí area contains some important sites designated for nature, many species and habitats of ecological interest occur outside of these sites and in the wider landscape. Many of the species of note listed above occur outside of designated areas.

The Lee catchment is hugely important as a water source and wildlife habitat. Otters, Freshwater Pearl Mussel and Kingfisher have all been reported in the River Lee and Sullane River. There are also extensive wetlands associated with these rivers and their tributaries.

³⁹ McCarthy Hyder Consultants. 2009. N22 Baile Bhuirne- Macroom. Environmental Impact Statement, Volume 1 Non-technical Summary. Report for Cork County Council.

⁴⁰ NPWS. 2010. Threat Response Plan Kerry Slug *Geomaculus maculosus*.

⁴¹ DixonBrosnan. Ecology. Cleanrath Wind Farm. Unpublished report

⁴² <http://www.bsbimaps.org.uk/atlas/main.php>

⁴³ Declan O'Donnell (National Parks and Wildlife Service) pers. comm.

⁴⁴ Ted Cook pers. comm.

Much of the upland area in the Múscraí is not designated but contains large if fragmented areas of blanket bog and heath, and habitat for birds such as Hen Harrier and Merlin.

In addition, there is small but significant area of Oak woodland within the region in the designated sites listed above and in other small sites such as the woodland at Derrylahan near Coolea. Both species of *Hymenophyllum* filmy ferns have been recorded in this wood, and Irish Spurge⁴⁵.

The extensive network of hedgerows within the Múscraí provides corridors for wildlife to move through the landscape.

The National Forest Park at Gougane Barra is a very popular amenity site with many kilometres of walking trails for people to enjoy, and picnic sites.

⁴⁵ Perrin, P., Martin, J., Barron, S., O'Neill, F., McNutt, K., and Delaney, A. 2008. National Survey of Native Woodland. Volume 3c Site reports. National Parks and Wildlife Service.

4.0 Intangible Heritage

4.1 Introduction

The *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* under the auspices of UNESCO, defines the intangible cultural heritage as the practices, representations, expressions, as well as the knowledge and skills (including instruments, objects, artefacts, cultural spaces), that communities, groups and in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.⁴⁶ It is sometimes called living cultural heritage, and is manifested in a number of cultural domains including oral traditions and expressions, language, performing arts, knowledge and practices concerning nature, and traditional craftsmanship.⁴⁷

Intangible cultural heritage is transmitted from generation to generation. It is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history.⁴⁸ This chapter has been guided by the definitions and principles of the ICOMOS *Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance (Burra Charter)*. Within the category of intangible heritage there are therefore a diverse range of values which leads to methodological challenges, including how to frame the exploration of intangible heritage in the context of Muscraí. In consideration of the latter, it is important to foreground a key dynamic, observed in the process of researching this chapter, that of the relationship between the intangible and the tangible.

Early in the research, the importance of acknowledging that intangible and tangible heritage are not mutually exclusive was determined. Public workshops and consultation has reinforced to Research and Dig the holistic way in which the people of Muscraí interpret their heritage. An excellent example of this is the role of St.Gobnait. Her church and hut are not only archaeological sites. They are also key points for any pilgrim doing the rounds. Just beside her hut is a Seamus Murphy carved statue with bees under her feet. Naomh Gobnait was believed to control bees in order to protect the area from cattle rustlers. It is in part because of the continued adoration of the saint that bee keeping is still an active tradition in the area.⁴⁹ Additionally, folklore states that Gobnait used a 'bulla' (bowling ball) to disrupt the building of castle on a high rock, 'all the better to subdue the people.' The game of road bowling that is still popular across Muscraí and County Cork today.⁵⁰

4.2 Public Consultation / Methodology

Research and analysis were carried out through desktop research and fieldwork. A wide range of historical documents was consulted to establish the history and folklore of the place. Interviews with local people informed a further understanding of the extent to which intangible heritage plays a role in the lives of people in Múscraí. The identification of heritage significance by professionals is incomplete without acknowledgment to the local ascribing of importance. The conservation of

⁴⁶ 'Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage', <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/convention> (accessed 20 October 2014)

⁴⁷ Definition of Intangible Heritage, http://www.unesco.org/services/documentation/archives/multimedia/?id_page=13&PHPSESSID=743f303zf0b2452205c4a672fde9310bc (accessed 13 October 2014)

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Eilís Uí Dháiligh, *Saint Gobnait of Ballyvourney*, (Dublin, 1983), p. 7.

⁵⁰ Uí Dháiligh, *Saint Gobnait of Ballyvourney*, p. 8. Road bowling is part of the social, cultural and sporting fabric of west Cork, one of the few counties with a documented tradition of the sport. Fintane Lane has explored the history of the sport in the area; see Fintane Lane, *Long Bullets: A History of Road Bowling in Ireland* (Cork, 2005).

heritage is a social and cultural activity and is ultimately dependent on a positive engagement from local people. In the context of Muscraí, an evident commitment and dedication to the latter presents a uniquely positive platform from which the long term conservation of the area can be achieved.

In addition to local consultation, a number of people whose parents were natives of Múscraí were contacted in order to establish the significance of Múscraí in the lives of their parents and also to themselves. Frances Madigan from Ennistymon in county Clare is connected to the area by her mother Mary Kelleher from Baile Bhuirne, who migrated to Clare in the 1930s. When asked to describe her connection to the area, Frances explained that;

‘Yes, I have gone to Baile Bhúirne for St Gobnait’s Day. Since I retired I am free to attend on the Feast Day. While others refer to February 11th as the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, in our house it was referred to as St. Gobnait’s Day. We always had a St. Gobnait’s Measure in the house ... I have visited at least once every year since I was seven or eight years old. I hope that will continue as long as I live le Cúnamh Dé. My roots are there. I feel as strong a connection there as I do with my native place, Ennistymon. Reilig Gobnatan is where generations of my ancestors are buried. It is a magical, peaceful, spiritual place. As I approach Baile Bhúirne from the Milstreet or the County Bounds I feel a deep sense of connection and I feel as if I am coming home’.⁵¹

4.3 Language

The continuing use of the Irish language across the Gaeltacht has been a critical factor in the retention of Gaelic tradition in song, poetry, dance, lore and music. Its retention as the primary language must stand as the central aim of any plan concerned with intangible heritage. According to the 2011 Census of Ireland, 3,895 people comprise the population of Muscraí, 2951 of whom were Irish speakers (4% of the national Gaeltacht population).⁵² Results of the ‘Socio-economic and Cultural Needs Analysis’ of the Múscraí Gaeltacht launched in 2008, identified the need for strategies to strengthen the foundation of Irish as the primary language.⁵³ Udarás na Gaeltachta assists strategically in the promotion of Irish in business and the community. There are four Language and Culture officers in the Muscraí Gaeltacht as well as thirty language service centres, which provide Irish learning materials for adults wishing to learn the language. In 2011, 633 people were employed in a full time capacity in Údarás client companies in the Múscraí Gaeltacht.⁵⁴ Údarás and the Arts Council have also combined to help develop the arts in the Gaeltacht and collectively fund a broad range of tradition and contemporary arts initiatives through the subsidiary company, Ealaíon na Gaeltachta.

While a gradual decrease in the use of the Irish language was noticed from the early 1990s (with the exception of Cúl Aodha), the distribution of Irish speakers across Muscraí seems to have remained

⁵¹ Correspondence, Frances Madigan to the author 21 October 2014

⁵² Udarás na Gaeltachta, <http://www.udaras.ie/en/an-ghaeilge-an-ghaeltacht/an-ghaeltacht/corcaigh> (accessed 26 November 2014).

⁵³ Results of the Socio-economic and Cultural Needs Analysis of the Múscraí Gaeltacht <http://www.udaras.ie/en/nuacht/anailis-ar-riachtanais-socheacnamaioch-agus-culturtha-ghaeltacht-mhuscraí/> (accessed 29 November, 2014)

⁵⁴ Udarás na Gaeltachta, <http://www.udaras.ie/en/an-ghaeilge-an-ghaeltacht/an-ghaeltacht/corcaigh> (accessed 26 November 2014).

relatively static since 2002.⁵⁵ There remain areas which seem stronger than others. In 2008, the area north-west of Cúl Aodha and South west of Béal Átha an gCaorthaidh, was regarded as the strongest with regard to the Irish language.⁵⁶ Contributors to this research also noted an upsurge across broader Béal Átha an gCaorthaidh in recent years. While Hindley noted a significant decrease in younger Muscraí people speaking Irish in the early 1990s, this research finds that at least anecdotally, the number of younger people speaking the language has increased. The project team met with a number of younger people throughout the process, who showed a remarkable ability with the language as well as a desire to use it as their first language. However, during research and consultation across Muscraí, it was evident that while the majority of people were able to speak the Irish language, English was the language primarily used for communication in the pubs and shops of the area.

As an inland Gaeltacht similar to the Gaeltacht in Waterford, the area of Muscraí is linguistically isolated. This adds a further importance to the preservation of the language, as a result of the area's unique linguistic form and expression. The memory and lore of Muscraí are best retained, represented and communicated in Gaelic form and through the linguistic distinctiveness of the area. Therefore, the future health of the intangible heritage is inextricably connected to the health of the Irish language in the area.

4.4 Landscape and Place

The enclosed setting of the Muscraí Gaeltacht has been a critical influence in the retention of cultural aspects peculiar to the region. In 1965, Daniel Corkery, in his foreword to Mícheál O'Suilleabháin's *Where Mountainy Men have sown*, articulated the symbiotic relationship between the people of Muscraí and the landscape. In describing O'Suilleabháin's ability to communicate a sense of place to the readers, Corkery explains;

‘His feeling for it. He is at one with it. As he makes his way towards some appointed hillside or hidden nook, the names of the rocks, the wells, the streams, the cumars he encounters seem almost to sing to him: their associations, their very dressings of moss, or holly, or basil, he almost fondles. It is obvious they always have been part of his consciousness, of the depths of it; one and all they cannot now but counterpoint the excitement that is possessing him ... such scholarship as it needs is also in the possession of his every neighbour in this Irish speaking countryside’.⁵⁷

4.5 Continuity of Tradition

A continuity of tradition and artistic expression within geographically and culturally defined frames is evident in Múscraí. The history and tradition of music and song, poetry and dance is accepted as amongst the strongest in Ireland. As an area with such a depth of tradition in language, literature and culture, it is not surprising that it has been home to many creative and artistic people. Seán Ó Riada, Seán Ó Riordain, Máire Bhuí Ní Laoighre, Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonnail, Séamus Ó Ceilleachair, An tAthair Peadar Ó Laoighre and Donal O Muláin are among those who have honed their artistic trade in Múscraí. While the area has been home to national figures, including Ó Riada and Ó Riordáin, at a

⁵⁵ For a detailed assessment of the status of the Irish language in Muscraí see, John Walsh, *Contests and Contexts: The Irish Language and Ireland's Socio-economic development* (Switzerland, 2011), pp. 232 – 243, Also see Reg Hindley, *The Death of the Irish Language*, (USA, 1990).

⁵⁶ Kendall A. King, Natalie Schilling-Estes, Lyn Fogle, Jia Jackie Lou, and Barbara Soukup, (Eds.), *Sustaining Linguistic Diversity: Endangered and Minority Languages* (USA, 2008), p. 119.

⁵⁷ O'Suilleabháin, Mícheál, *Where Mountainy men have sown, War and peace in rebel Cork in the turbulent years 1916-21*, (Kerry, 1965), pp. 8-9.

local level the traditions have continued for generations according to local practice for the primary benefit of local people and has continued to renew itself with every generation. Both poetry and music benefit from a rich creative energy in the broader Múscraí area. Acadamh Fódhla have suggested that almost 2,000 poets are buried in Baile Bhuirne graveyard alone. The area's rich hedge school and Bardic School tradition still live on in Dáimh Scoil Mhúsraí and Acadamh Fódhla.

Scríocht is a central feature of the cultural landscape. The tradition of scríocht (social visiting where songs are sung, music played and stories told) has helped to preserve both aspects of the past and also a sense of community and neighbourly interaction. A recent report by the HSE and University of Ulster, demonstrated the central place that scríocht held for older participants from county Cork.

⁵⁸

The vibrancy of tradition is potently represented by the continuing presence of Cór Chúil Aodha. The choir was established in 1963 by Seán Ó Riada (fig. 4.1). In 2013 the choir, now led by Seán Ó Riada's son Peadar, celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with a special journey to Iona in Scotland. The trip was captured by a TG4 documentary, *O Chúil Aodha go hOileán Í* (*From Coolea to Iona*).

Fig 4.1 Monument to Seán Ó Riada at Cúl Aodha Roman Catholic Church



(Source: Research and Dig, 2014)

4.6 Folklore and Oral Tradition

A particularly vibrant folklore continues to be preserved in the locality which relates to features in the landscape, both human-made and natural. Oral tradition has always been the central medium of communication and a particularly strong tradition seems to exist in Múscraí. The latter is exemplified by the way in which many poems have been transmitted orally across multiple generations. For example, Máire Bhuí Ní Laoghaire (1774-1849) who wrote *Cath Chéim an Fhia* was illiterate, resulting in a dependence on the oral folk tradition to preserve her work for generations.⁵⁹ Equally, *Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire*, written by Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonaill was primarily transmitted in oral

⁵⁸ Brendan McCormack and Elizabeth Breslin, *The Implementation of a Model of Person-Centred Practice In Older Person Settings*, (Dublin, 2010), p. 149 .

⁵⁹ The poem records a fight between Yeomen militia and Whiteboys during agrarian resistance in 1822, See Brian Brennan, *Songs of an Irish Poet, The Mary O Leary Story* (Cork, 2000), pp. 12-13.

form.⁶⁰ Fr. Pádraigh Ó Tuathaigh published *Filí an tSuláin*, which traces the intense development of Irish poetry in the Múscraí Gaeltacht.⁶¹

The area is not immune to the forces of change which have affected oral tradition in other parts of Ireland. Therefore, it must be aware of the inherent danger that aspects of oral tradition and community memory may be lost if not documented. A certain resistance to centralise oral tradition was detected in public consultation. While the appropriate retention of oral tradition in its historical cultural form is preferred, strategies to intervene in its potential loss should be considered.

During fieldwork and consultation, it was noted that a number of private audio collections exist. These should be centralised, digitized, and made publically available as soon as possible. Additionally, local school collection projects at Coláiste Ghobnait are being initiated which have been assisted by the Research and Dig team.

4.7 Preservation of Intangible - Motivation

Consistently in public consultation, the concern among the people of Múscraí that the need to connect the conservation of heritage with economic development would have an ultimately corrosive effect on the culture of the area was expressed. However, the picture is more nuanced. Certainly, mass tourism would erode the character of the area. Conversely, low/moderate volume, high quality and high spending tourism that revolves around celebrating the landscape, language, and customs of Múscraí should be welcomed. Actions associated with cultural tourism such as the provision of quality eating options can improve the livability of the area for all residents. This is particularly relevant for those who have lived outside of the Gaeltacht and now have certain expectations.

In Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh the commercial nature of the village has been significantly eroded. In turn, this has reduced the ability of the village to act as a place where locals meet and socialize. Any effort to rejuvenate the village will need support from cultural tourists. How that is accomplished is outside the scope of this document. Nonetheless, whatever is planned should ensure that the character of the area which tourists come to experience isn't undermined. Integrity and authenticity must be maintained.

4.8 Acadamh Fódhla

In 2000, the Academy of Irish heritage singing was established by Peadar Ó Riada and Máire Ní Cheocháin. Three further academies were later established around the themes of history, land, knowledge and energy. Acadamh have been critical in the documentation of Múscraí heritage and history. They have created a digital record of the layers of built, natural and cultural heritage in the area.

4.9 Saints / Devotion / Pilgrimage

Múscraí is significant in its continued devotional practices. Folklore and history associate key saints with each of the principle areas of Múscraí. In Kilnamartyra, St. Lachtín is the patron saint and his name is given to the local Gaelscoil. The settlement at Gúgán Barra, west of Ballingeary is associated

⁶⁰ Maureen O'Rourke Murphy, James MacKillop (Eds.), *An Irish Literature Reader: Poetry, Prose, Drama*, (Second Edition), (USA, 2006), pp. 45-47.

⁶¹ Pádraigh Ó Tuathaigh, *Filí an tSuláin*, (Cork, 1993), Seán Ó Muimhneacháin's *Gleanntán an Aoibhnis, Dánta agus Amhrain* also contains significant poetry and song from the Múscraí region.

with St. Finbarr (Patron Saint of Cork) who built a monastery on the island in the 6th century. The current ruins are the remains of a settlement built by Rev. Denis O'Mahony around 1700.

In Baile Bhuirne, both St. Abbán and St. Gobnait have formed a key part of the local history and folklore (fig. 4.2). Naomh Gobnait, the best known of the saints, occupies a central place in the consciousness of the people in Baile Bhuirne and surrounding district. Folklore relates that the visiting sick would be cured by Gobnait and that the saint, who had a strong relationship with bees, used the properties of honey in the treatment of illness and healing of wounds. A shrine and holy well is carefully maintained where rosary beads, holy pictures and other personal offerings testify to an enduring devotion to Gobnait at Baile Bhuirne. For centuries, Naomh Gobnait has been a reference point for historians and folklorists. For example the site was mentioned Charles Smith (1750), W.G. Wood Martin (1902), Edith M. Guest (1937) and Michael J. O'Kelly (1952).⁶² The importance of deer in the folklore of Gobnait is reflected in their adornment of gates at both Relig Gobnait and the parochial house (fig. 4.3). Local businesses have also integrated the lore into their names.

Fig. 4.2 **Statue of Naomh Gobnait at Baile Bhuirne**



(Source: Research and Dig, 2014)

⁶² Daphne D.C. Pochin Mould wrote a detailed account of the Pattern Day to Gobnait based on her research in the 1950s, see Daphne D.C. Pochin Mould, *Pattern Day*, in *The Capuchin Annual*, 1955.

Fig 4.3 Deer adorning entrance to Baile Bhuirne Parochial house



(Source: Research and Dig, 2014)

The site of St. Abbán on the south side of the River Sullane, in the townland of Shanacloon is less visited than that of Naomh Gobnait. However, Abbán plays an important role in the local folklore and lends his name to the local GAA club as well as its official playing field.

4.10 Historical Consciousness

Evidence of a continuous human presence in the area from the early Bronze Age is testimony to the rich continuous history. Local tradition suggests that a significant amount of archaeological material and sites exist that reveal an even earlier human habitation in the broader area than the considerable found archaeology indicates.⁶³ The retention of many of these sites into the broader historical landscape of Múscraí forms part of the human consciousness of the area.

The broader historical profile of Múscraí, while characterized by continuity, can be mapped chronologically using key historic and temporal landmarks. These temporal landmarks have been kept alive in folklore, poetry and song. The Irish famine (1845-51) was a key moment in the history of West Cork and of Múscraí (figures 4.4 & 4.5). *Famine in Muskerry - An Drochshaol* by Máire Mac Suibhne, profiles sixteen parishes within the Macroom Poor Law Union in the mid nineteenth century.⁶⁴

⁶³ Interview with Peadar Ó Ríada, Cúl Aodha, County Cork, 21 October 2014.

⁶⁴ Máire Mac Suibhne, *Famine in Muskerry, An Drochshaol*, (Cork, 1997), See 'Irish Famine Report from Ballyvourney' in 'Transactions of the Central Relief Committee of the Society of Friends during the Famine in Ireland'

Fig 4.4 Famine commemorative plaque outside Baile Bhuirne Roman Catholic Church



(Source: Research and Dig, 2014)

Fig 4.5 Famine Pot in Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh



(Source: Research and Dig, 2014)

4.11 Late 19th century

A very strong volunteer spirit has been identified in Muscraí. In public workshops, some contributors suggested that this could be connected to the spirit of the late 19th century in the area, which witnessed significant political and cultural activity as well as the development of co-operative societies on an unprecedented level (fig. 4.6). The period saw the evolution of the Aeríocht/Feis/Oireachtas in this area which later evolved nationally and was crystallised in the movement towards independence in the second decade of the 20th century. The Gaelic League, The Land League and the G.A.A. were all active in the area. In proposing that the life of the

contemporaneous Dr. Daniel Ó Loinsigh be incorporated into transition year curriculum for local students, Donnacha Ó Sé made the following observation.

‘It would have the twin advantages of not alone indefinitely commemorating Dr Lynch but also contributing in a major way towards the positive formation of minds and character of each successive group, thus not alone laying the foundation for a staple and responsible society but also in the process ensuring that thinking, leadership, motivation and inspiration of Dr Lynch would be perpetuated’.⁶⁵

Fig 4.6 Eviction resistance scene – Ballingeary – 1906



(Source: picture courtesy of Marian O’Leary)

4.12 Revolutionary Period

The area of west Cork has a well documented association with the Irish revolutionary period. In addition to the famed Kilmichael ambush of November 1920, the broader area was a hotbed of republican activity, particularly during the Irish War of Independence and Civil War (1919-1923).⁶⁶

On 08 July, 1918 one of the first attacks on the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) since the 1916 Easter Rising is recorded at Beal a Ghleanna, on the road between Béal Átha an gCaorthaidh and Baile Bhuirne. This occurred over six months before the Solahead Beg ambush, which is regularly recorded as the first ambush of the Irish War of Independence. The area remained intensely active over the following two years and on 25 February 1921, a major ambush was inflicted on the British forces stationed at Macroom, in an event known as the Coolnacaheragh ambush.⁶⁷ Coolnacaheragh (Cul na Cathrach) is a strong temporal landmark in the local social memory regarding the Irish War of Independence. As with other parts of Ireland, the Black and Tans as a category of memory evoke strong emotional reactions based on oral tradition and post-memory. Tensions between development and existing historical sites became evident in 2009 with the

⁶⁵ Correspondence, Donnacha Ó Sé to author 22 November 2014.

⁶⁶ Fr. Pádraigh Ó Tuathaigh has written about the Civil War in West Cork in *The Dark Secret of Béal na mBláth*.

⁶⁷ Donal Ó hÉalaithe, *Memoirs of an old warrior, Jamie Moynihan's Fight for Irish Freedom 1916-1923*, (Cork, 2014), p. 161.

proposal by the National Roads Authority (NRA) to route a new N22 dual carriageway through the Coolnacaheragh ambush site.⁶⁸ The subsequent impact on the battle site by the creation of the carriageway, functions as a reminder of the importance of local sites and encourages a clearer legislative and policy position with regard to same.

There are many mnemonic (memory preserving) sites associated with the revolutionary period across Múscraí. In many cases memory is interpreted as part of a seamless history, stretching back generations. Marian O’Leary noted the connections between different struggles in the past (See appendix III). Referring to a monument on the road between Béal Átha an gCaorthaidh and Gúgán Barra, where Volunteer Christopher Lucey (killed on 20 November 1920) and Volunteer Ian MacKenzie (killed on 08 August 1922) are commemorated, O’Leary records that (fig. 4.7);

‘The white cross marks where Criostóir Ó Luasaigh from Cork City died. (He was the great grandson of Seamus Walsh who had taken part in Cath Céim an Fhia in 1822 and who it seems was responsible for killing Smith, the only yeomanry casualty.’⁶⁹

Fig 4.7 IRA monument to Christopher Lucey and Ian MacKenzie outside Ballingearry. Note white cross in background memorialising the site of Lucey’s death.



(Source: Research and Dig, 2014)

4.11 Múscraí – Sites of Memory

As part of the research methodology, a visual inventory was taken of the overt sites of culture and history in the principal parishes of Múscraí. For the purpose of this project, these sites are referred to as *sites of memory*. These sites are critical in reflecting what the community itself seeks to

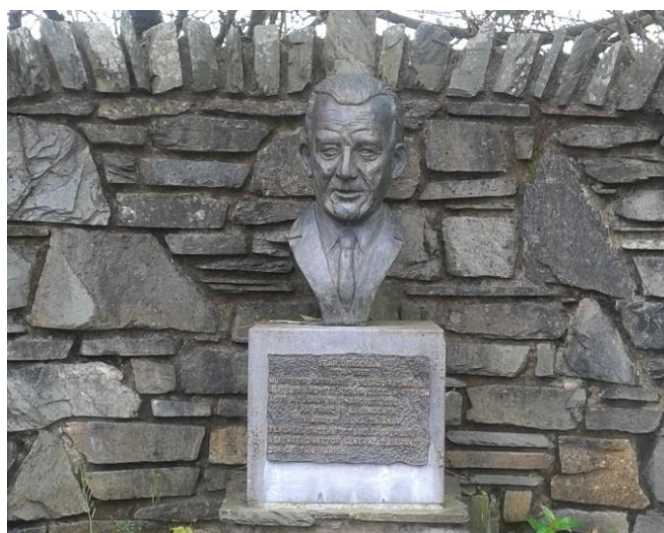
⁶⁸ Irish War of Independence: Coolnacaheragh Ambush Site & Proposed Realignment of N22 Route Macroom - Ballyvourney, <https://sites.google.com/site/coolnacaheragh/> (accessed 20 November 2014).

⁶⁹ Correspondence, Marian O’Leary to the author, 10 November 2014.

remember at a public level but also in symbolising what visitors see as representing the social memory of the area.

In each of the principal parishes, central people and events of the local area are celebrated. For example, in Cill na Martra, a bust of local sporting hero, singer and later Director General of the GAA, Seán Ó Síochán is erected in the centre of the village (fig. 4.8). In Cúl Áodha a monument to IRA figure Seamus Ó Muineacháin is integrated into the wall across from Cúl Áodha Roman Catholic Church, where a bronze figure of the musician and composer Seán Ó Riada was installed in 2008. In Baile Bhuirne, monuments to the Cul na Cathrach ambush, republican martyr Liam Hegarty, as well as the noted statue of Saint Gobnait, are among the key sites of memory. In Béal Átha an gCaorthaidh, a famine pot marks the area's suffering during the Irish Famine (1845-51). In addition, a plaque commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the 1916 rising on the site of Coláiste na Mumhan, the one hundred anniversary of which in 2004, is also marked by a monument. Finally in Gúgán Barra, the poet JJ Callanan (1795 – 1829), the Roman Catholic Cardinal Timothy Manning (1909 – 1989), and Rev. Denis O'Mahony are memorialised on the site made famous by St Finbarr.⁷⁰

Fig. 4.8 **Monument to Seán Ó Síochán in Cill na Martra**



(Source: Research and Dig, 2014)

4.12 Placenames

Placenames and fieldnames unlock key insights into the history of an area. As a Gaeltacht area steeped in tradition, the placenames of Múscraí are of significant cultural and historical value. The need to document both placenames and smaller fieldnames was emphasised at public workshops.

The website www.logainm.ie provides useful insights into the local names and toponymy of the Muscraí area, including archaeological, geographic and historic information. The Cork Placenames Survey under the stewardship of Dr. Éamon Lankford has documented 260 names across the area⁷¹.

⁷⁰ Callanan wrote 'The Outlaw of Loch Lene'. In 1918, University of Illinois published *The Poems of JJ Callanan*, (USA, 1918)

⁷¹ Correspondence, Kieran Wyse, Reference & Local Studies, Cork County Library, to author, 20 October 2014.

5.0 Assessment of Significance

5.1 Background

According to English Heritage's *Conservation principles, policies and guidance for sustainable management of the historic environment* 'conservation is the process of managing change to a significant place in its setting in ways that will best sustain its heritage values' (2008, p. 22). Conservation strategy and management is a process by which a site's significance is maintained whilst permitting continued sustainable use.

The study of the physical remains alone rarely provides sufficient understanding of a site. Its significance needs to be set in the context of the social and cultural circumstances that produced the place. This is particularly true in the case of the Múscraí Gaeltacht. For all Irish sites, significance should be assessed according to the following criteria set down in *Architectural heritage protection: guidelines for planning authorities* (Department of the Environment, Heritage and local Government, 2004):

- architectural interest
- historical interest
- archaeological interest
- artistic interest
- cultural interest
- scientific interest
- technical interest
- social interest

As the character of Múscraí is mostly rural, the additional criterion of natural interest will also be considered.

Ideally, all the identified heritage values of a place should be conserved. However, on occasion what is necessary to sustain one criterion will be in conflict with another. If this is the case, then understanding the relative contribution of each criterion to the overall significance of Múscraí as a whole and its constituent spaces and places, will be essential to objective decision making.

5.2 Existing statements of significance

While there is no preexisting plan of comparative scale that has analyzed the heritage of Múscraí, there is at least one document that has examined one place of importance in the Gaeltacht. Below is the appraisal of Saint Gobnait's shrine carried out by John Cronin and Associates in 2003:

In its present form, Saint Gobnait's Shrine is of significance for the following reasons:

- Due to the wealth and range of associative, cultural, aesthetic and economic values that the Saint Gobnait's Shrine possesses, it is considered to be of immense local, regional and national significance.
- The association of the site with Saint Gobnait. The shrine is a very rich site with an unusual density of objects and practices. This places the monastic site at Ballyvourney on par with major sites like Lough Derg and Croagh Patrick. Its resilience, its adaptability and its endless manifestations make Saint Gobnait's Shrine a brilliant palimpsest of Irish religiosity.
- It is one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Ireland; the continued tradition of people/pilgrims making the Round or Turas Ghobnatan heightens the cultural significance of the place. It is a place for worship, prayer, mediation and quiet contemplation.

- There is strong evidence for prehistoric activity in the environs of the site – the area shows evidence for settlement stretching back to the Bronze Age and the site may have been an important pagan site prior to the coming of Christianity to this area of the country.
- The surviving fabric of the structures and features on site reflect the fundamental changes and developments in Irish ecclesiastical history; the historic site also demonstrates many aspects of Christian tradition as practiced in this country over the course of 1500 years.
- The rural setting of the historic place is of high aesthetic significance and allows the modern visitor to contemplate the past.
- The presence of this important religious and heritage site within a Gaeltacht area is another facet of its cultural significance. The lands that surround the historic place have a rich diversity of local (Gaelic) place-names. In addition to the above, the following sub-set of considerations is of importance.
- As a burial place the site has special significance for the local communities of Ballyvourney, Ballymakeera and Coolea. The modern cemetery, located to the south of the former Glebe House, is in frequent use.
- There is a long tradition of community involvement in the care and maintenance of the ancient church site associated with Saint Gobnait. The old graveyard is well maintained through community initiatives and is easily accessible to locals and visitor alike.
- Individual elements ranging from the sculpture of Saint Gobnait by Seamus Murphy to individual gravestones are of cultural significance in their own right. The bridge, located on the approach to the site from the east, is an inherently attractive feature.
- St. Gobnet's Wood, located to the north of the monastic site, has been identified as a candidate Special Area of Conservation, and, as such, has been evaluated by Dúchas as being a site of international importance. However, an evaluation of this area, indicates that, while the site is of high enough quality for cSAC designation, it is at the lower end of the quality scale for cSAC sites.
- The tree-lined approach to the site is of visual and amenity significance and is critical to providing a visual backdrop to the site when viewed from the west.
- The farmyard adjoining the graveyard includes a number of buildings. Of these buildings, the farmhouse is of potential ecological interest as it is a state

5.3 Assessment of Significance

The following is an analysis of the relevance of the architectural, historical, archaeological, artistic, cultural, scientific, technical, social, and natural criteria to the significance of the Múscraí Gaeltacht.

Architectural Interest

There are relatively few buildings of architectural significance in Múscraí. An exception to this is the Church or Ireland rectory in Baile Bhuirne (the Glebe). It is the finest classical building in the Gaeltacht. Immediately to the North West is an early 19th century Board of First Fruits style church. Another building of note is the iconic oratory of St. Finn barre's in Guagán Barra. The fine Celtic revival chapel is the best physical manifestation in Múscraí of the late 19th / early 20th revival of Gaelic culture. The late 19th / early 20th century elegant vernacular buildings along the main street of Baile Mhic Íre and Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh are of local significance. These streets are complemented by the predominately late 19th century / early 20th century farm buildings and farm yards dispersed throughout the Gaeltacht.

Historical Interest

The area has a rich documented history, which is connected with many of the key landmarks in Irish history nationally. However, the historical landmarks in Múscraí, while relevant to broader national history are remembered in folklore according to their local context first. For each official historical record, there exists a rich local context, which deepens and adds to that record. For example, found

archaeology indicates a history stretching back to the early Bronze age. However, local belief and folklore suggests that this may extend to the earliest known human habitation in Ireland. In addition, each historical site and feature carries significant local lore and oral tradition, which was passed from generation to generation in Múscraí and is not always discernible within documentary sources. A particular example of this is the nationally important complex at St.Gobnait's.

In addition, a continuity of historical tradition defines Múscraí. For example, Cath Chéim an Fhia (The Battle of Keimaneigh) in 1822, made famous by the poet Máire Bhuí Ní Laoghaire, was based on agrarian resistance occurring across the country in the early 19th century. The Whiteboys were a secret agrarian society who used attacks against landlordism to defend tenant farmer's rights. The battle at Keimaneigh between Whiteboys and Yeomanry (fighting on behalf of the British establishment), resulted in the death of one Yeoman. However, the memory of 'Cath Chéim an Fhia' is understood according to a sense of continuity, with the later involvement of decedents of those Whiteboys in the Irish War of Independence in the 1920s. The traumatic local experience of the famine also has an impact on this narrative.

Topography and culture have combined to generate a history, which occurred in a peculiarly local way. This has been maintained by a strong and vibrant folklore, transmitted in predominately Gaelic form within the communities of Múscraí. While not insular, the enclosed setting of Múscraí lends itself to an intense preservation of history, which is rare in Ireland.

Archaeological Interest

Of particular interest are the high concentrations of Bronze Age and Early Medieval monuments in the Gaeltacht. The large number of remaining Bronze Age monuments fit within a wider pattern of high Bronze Age habitation in the south-west of the country. The two pilgrimage sites of St Finn barre's and St.Gobnait's are of regional and national importance respectively. The relatively high concentration of clapper bridges is of national interest.

Artistic Interest

The enclosed setting of Muscraí seems to have assisted in the generation of a creative energy and an unbroken tradition of art in its widest form. Poets, singers, musicians, and artists have testified to the rich source of creative energy in the Múscraí Gaeltacht. The history and tradition of music and song, poetry and dance is accepted as amongst the strongest in Ireland. Many artistic and cultural figures have worked locally within Muscraí and achieved national and international recognition as a result. These include Seán Ó Riada, Seán Ó Ríordain, Máire Bhuí Ní Laoighre, Eibhlín Dubh Ní Chonnail, An Suibhneach Meann (Bessie Shine), Seámus Ó Ceilleachair, An tAthair Peadar Ó Laoighre, Seán O Cuív, Donal O Muláin, and Donnacha Ó Buachalla.

The role of the dramatic landscape which encloses both the people and their culture is a key determinant in the rich artistic energy of Múscraí. It rains a lot. Historically, travel was difficult. Both these things along with the beauty of the place have led to a high level of creativity in storytelling, lore, music, and dance. The area is not impenetrable to the sometimes negative forces of globalisation and homogenisation. However, its setting has allowed it to enter the 21st century with a stronger identity and more intact cultural heritage than many areas in Ireland, bequeathing a unique platform for artistic nurturing and expression.

There are two statues of artistic interest in Múscraí. Both depict St. Gobnait. An extremely rare 13th century wooden statue of the saint by an unknown artist is currently in the care of the parish priest of Baile Bhuirne. The other statue stands at St. Gobnait's Shrine. It was carved in the 1950s by renowned sculptor Seamus Murphy RHA.

Cultural Interest

As an inland Gaeltacht, the area of Múscraí is linguistically isolated. This has resulted in a unique linguistic form and expression which reinforces cultural depth in the area. The memory and lore of Múscraí have been historically retained, represented and communicated in Gaelic form and through the linguistic distinctiveness. Therefore, the future health of the intangible heritage is inextricably connected to the health of the Irish language in the area.

On a national level Múscraí has played a significant role in the preservation of the Irish language and Irish music. Coláiste Na Mumhan in 1904 was the first dedicated language college in the country for adults. Seán Ó Riada is a figure of international importance. There is no other person more responsible for the 20th century renaissance in Irish music than he.

The area's intense historical association with saints in each of the principal areas of Múscraí, bequeaths an deep tradition of pilgrimage and devotional practices. This has direct relevance to the local folklore and cultural adherence in Múscraí, but is equally significant to decedents of Múscraí natives. In addition, the latter draws an interest from scholars and visitors from outside of the Múscraí Gaeltacht.

Scientific Interest

The archaeological excavations of two Bronze Age cookery sites (fulachtaí fia) conducted in 1952 by Prof O'Kelly were of central importance in our understanding of this site type. The experiment he carried out on site proving that meat wrapped in straw could be cooked in an open air water trough is a seminal moment in experimental archaeology in Ireland.

Technical Interest

The tuck mill in Kilmore, just outside of Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh, is of technical interest. The mill was used in the woolen industry to improve the quality of the woven fabric.

Social Interest

Across Múscraí, deference to heritage and history is manifested in monuments, memorials, placenames, and in the use of historical names for clubs, teams and buildings. For many inhabitants, Irish language, music, song and dance form a core part of their daily lives. The diminishing tradition of scríocht (social visiting) is a critical factor in the preservation of culture in Múscraí. It also performs an important social function in preserving neighborly interaction.

The pilgrimage sites of St. Finn barre and in particular St. Gobnait are of significant social importance to the people of Múscraí.

Natural Interest

The Múscraí Gaeltacht has considerable variation in topography from mountains to hills to fertile valleys. As a result, there is a wide variety of habitats in the area including. These include upland blanket bog, wet and dry heath and coniferous forestry in the uplands. In the lowlands there are improved grassland, lowland blanket bog, native Oak woodland, hedgerows, wet woodland, and wet grasslands.

A number of the natural and semi-natural habitats in the area are of high nature conservation value and are listed on Annex II of the EU Habitats Directive. In addition, there are several rare and protected species that occur in the area including Hen Harrier, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Kingfisher, Kerry Slug, Lesser Horseshoe Bat, Killarney Fern, and Otters. There are several sites that are designated for nature conservation in the Múscraí (including SACs, NHAs and a SPA), which reflects the quality and importance of the biodiversity in the area at a national and international level.

There are two significant river catchments in the area, the River Lee and the Sullane River. The Lee is an important source of water and power, as well as a valuable wildlife habitat and fishing resource.

The rich natural heritage of Múscraí is a result of climate, geology, topography and land-use history. It greatly enhances the visual and natural amenity of the Gaeltacht, and is an important resource to protect for future generations.

The natural landscape around Múscraí was something that appears to have been used very effectively as an ally for Irish forces during the War of Independence.

5.4 Statement of significance

The tangible heritage of Múscraí is inextricably connected with the intangible. Public consultation has demonstrated that the majority of people in Múscraí interpret their heritage according to a very broad and holistic understanding. Accordingly, the evaluation of one particular place's archaeological or architectural importance without considering its role as a habitat and location within the oral tradition reduces the appreciation of both the individual place, and Múscraí as a whole.

The landscape is dense. The hills and mountains surround, while the trees overlook. The clouds are usually low and heavy with incoming rain. It is a place where perceptions can easily become reality. In a simplistic way, the people living of Múscraí have shaped the landscape, and in turn have been shaped by it. However, it is the perception of the people of the character of the landscape itself that is unique. This is the core special quality of Múscraí.

There is a deep, complex, and symbiotic relationship between people and place. One is simply less without the other.

5.5 Threats to significance

To be resolved after further public consultation.
