

Snapshots of Léim, Co. Mayo



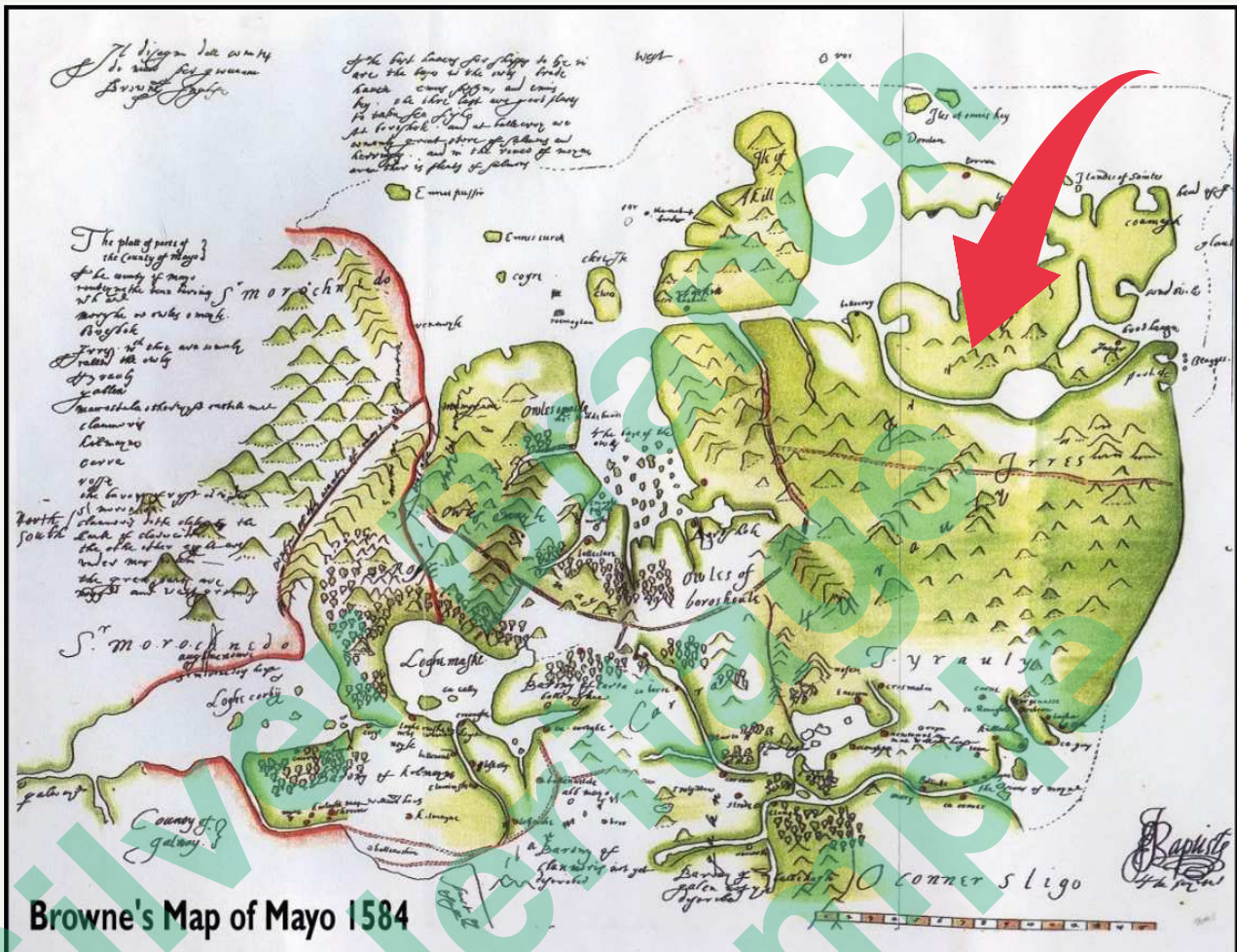
Prepared for

by
Silver Branch Heritage
Hilary Kiely



Exploring the place the
roots of your family tree
were planted

Telling the stories your ancestors knew, to connect your people to their places and add a silver branch to your family tree.



The Silver Branch is a symbol found in Irish mythology and literature. It represents entry into the Celtic Otherworld, *Tír na nÓg*, Land of the Ever-young. To enter the Otherworld, a passport is necessary, usually a silver branch of the sacred apple-tree, bearing blossoms. The branch is also associated with Manannán mac Lir, god of the sea and guardian of the Otherworld, who also has strong ties with *Emhain Abhlach* (Isle of Apple Trees), where the magical silver branch is found.

In many ancient Irish legends, a Silver Branch is given to selected mortals by the Queen of the *Sidhe*. Often, the apple-branch produces music so magical and soothing that mortals who hear it forget all troubles and even cease to grieve for those whom the fairy women take. In the ancient epics these apple-tree talismans contain a certain key which unlocks the secret of that world from which such talismans are brought.

Unlock your history and heritage with your own Silver Branch.

Fáilte go Léim!



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House at Binghamstown with roped thatch, Co. Mayo. An
Geata Mór, Co. Maigh Eo (Éire) : Coimisiún Béaloideas
Éireann (CBÉ) / Irish Folklore Commission

COUNTY

Maigh Eo/Mayo

BARONY

Iorras/Erris

CIVIL PARISH

An Chill Mhór/Kilmore

léim translates to *leap* in English

" Erris, it seems, has been distinguished in this portion of Mayo, as having produced many bright scholars, in Irish as well as English, and education has been always very much cultivated in it. Mathematics, poetry, and classical learning have thriven here a good deal; and in former times, it is said even more than now. The peculiar situation of Erris, so remote from the perils, the glories, or devastations of wars, from corrupting ambition, or the rancour of factious parties, left it leisure to cultivate the Muses with success. Almost all the people speak English and Irish, and both well. This possession of two languages must in itself strengthen the understanding. and make ideas more clear and precise. The young men go out into the world to sea, the army, or traffic, and have a genteel address very advantageous to them "

--from *Walks through Ireland in the Years 1812, 1814 and 1817; described in a Series of Letters to an English Gentleman*, by John Bernard Trotter, Esq., Private Secretary to the Late Right Hon. C. J. Fox (1)

A Story

from the Schools
Folklore Collection at
Duchas.ie



Muigh na gCon an tAinm or How the "place of the greyhound" got its name.

"There was a man living in Achill named Diarmuid Reatha Ó Máille and he was a great runner. He ran 60 miles in 5 hours from Achill to Newport. His journey was 30 miles going and 30 coming. He was one day at the fair of Augha Gowa. He sold cattle to a dealer. The dealer sent away the cattle with his drivers before he paid for them. When he thought the cattle were at a long distance away he went away himself, with out paying for the cattle. When Diarmuid found the cattle were gone and no payment he made after the cattle and he was so swift that it did not take him long to come up to them and when the drivers saw him coming they ran away and he brought the cattle back again. When all the people who were at the fair saw him coming they said it was a good work. There was a man from the Co Galway and he said that he was a strong man.

"He told Diarmuid that he had a good farm of land and one daughter, that he would give him the daughter and the farm if he liked the place. He then got married to the girl and the Galway man had bad neighbours and every beast that would cross the mearing* the next door neighbour (would) keep him. Two days after the marriage he told the herd to go and show him every beast that was taken belonging to him. He took the stick and walked into the other man's to point out the beasts that had been taken from him. He drove out all them and they were afraid to stop him so they invited him to a dinner to make peace with him.

"There was a tyrant living back at Elly bay named Barrett. He gathered a squad of men up to Achill and seized the cattle they could get. There was a cousin of Diarmuid named Geatharlach living in Achill and his cattle were taken. He went up to Galway to Diarmuid and asked him to help him to get the cattle. Diarmuid told him to follow the cattle and keep in their sights and he would follow him. The next day he took every near way and he took three grey hounds with him. He was such a runner that the three grey hounds fell dead in the race and one of them fell in Bangor and the third fell in Muigh na Gcon. The Barrett's men would have reached Elly were it not that they delayed in Binghamstown milking the cows. When they saw him coming they ran away and Diarmuid followed Barrett and he on horse-back and caught up to him. He attacked Barrett and they fought in a *sraith* and Diarmuid cut the head off him with the sword. He was so excited that he could not see his cousin Taidhg - he began to talk to himself and Taidhg said 'I am here at you' and he said he would drive the cattle home with him."

--Michael Ruddy, Rathmorgan.

"I got this story from Pat Healy who lives in Fauleens. he is eighty years of age."

The Schools' Collection, Volume 0130, Page 446-450 (2)

*mearing = boundary

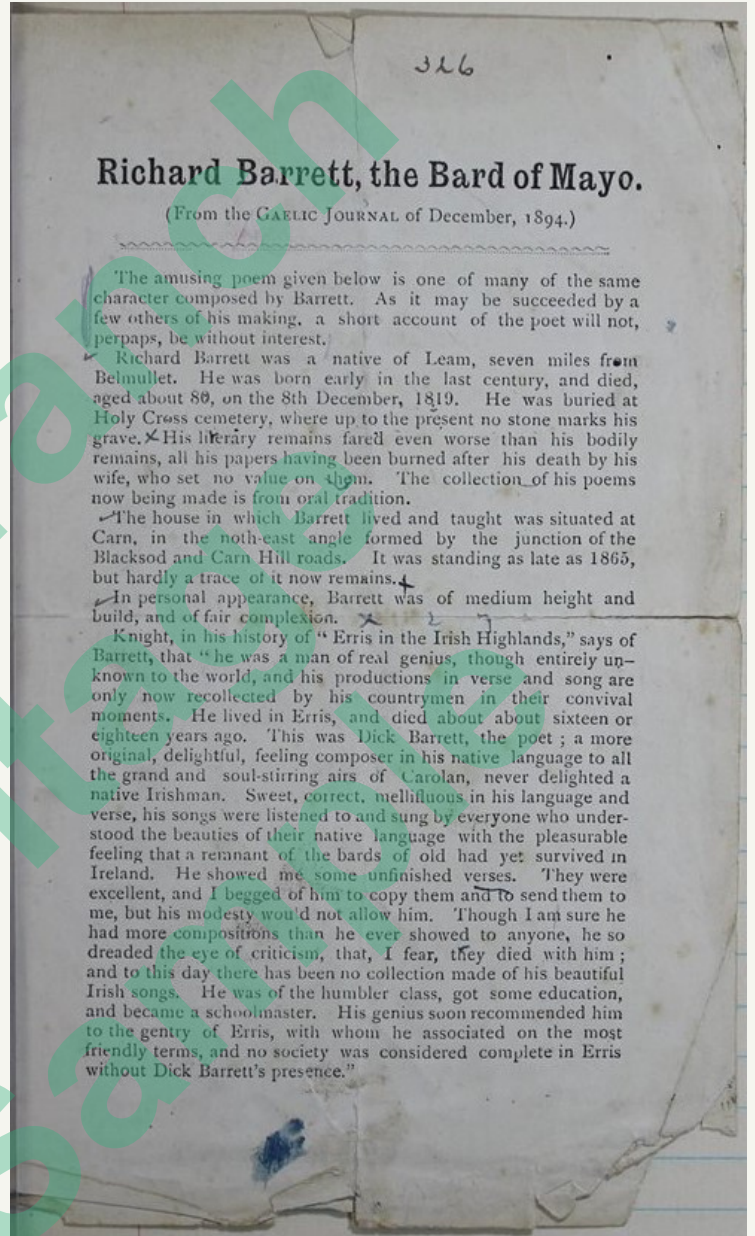
The Bard of Mayo

" Richard Barrett was a native of Leam, seven miles from Belmullet. He was born early in the last century, and died, aged about 80, on the 8th of December, 1819. He was buried at Holy Cross cemetery, where up to the present no stone marks his grave. His literary remains fared even worse than his bodily remains, all his papers having been burned after his death by his wife, who set no value on them. The collection of his poems now being made is from oral tradition.

The house in which Barrett lived and taught was situated at Carn, in the north-east angle formed by the junction of the Blacksod and Carn Hill roads. It was standing as late as 1865, but hardly a trace of it now remains."

(This is taken from the Gaelic Journal of December 1894, image is from the pages as preserved in the Schools Folklore Collection: The Schools' Collection, Volume 0134, Page 326)

Barrett was a member of the United Irishmen; and for this he was arrested and imprisoned in Castlebar gaol for three months. (3)



The Battle of Cross



Not far from the village of Leím, the shifting sands of the Cross Loop sometimes hide a secret. Folk memory holds that a pyramid-shaped cairn was raised to honour the dead of the Battle of Cross.

The King of Munster is said to have sailed into Elly Bay, and when the tide is out at times what is believed to be the remains of that fleet have sometimes been seen. The locals drove their cattle into what became known as Dunnambo (Dún na mBó – the Fort of the Cows) to safeguard their treasured cattle from the invading force.

Almost as fascinating as the tale of the battle is the ephemeral nature of its monument. The Leacht ar Iorruis (Tombs of Erris) has at times been just a memory, with folk able to point to where the monument “ought to be”, and at others, uncovered by the storm winds and swallowed again by the sands during the next. When a particularly strong storm hit in the early part of the 19th century, not alone was the cairn exposed but also the bones of countless other fallen of the Battle of Cross.

Another cairn, faced this Leacht. Inside was found the skeleton standing upright, or some say sat in a stone chair; the King of Munster, it is thought, surveying the site of the bloody battle in which he was slain. (5)

When you travel the Mullet Peninsula and walk the Cross Head Loop, will the cairns reveal themselves to you?

"The sandhills are a singularly weird and lonely tract, famous for strange apparitions such as St. Elmo's fire, and reputedly the haunt of fairies and ghosts. They abound with small circles and cists, and in the centre a perfect and conspicuous little pyramid of slabs is called the Leacht air Iorruis, or tomb of the slaughter of Erris. It is hard to find out how far the legends existed while the monuments were hidden away under the unremembering sands." (4)

Above: Cross Beach, Right: Leacht air Iorruis





Dun na mBó (Dunnamo) ©Failte Ireland

Nearby Binghamstown

Binghamstown, named for the English landlord who established the village in the 1796, is the nearest large town to Léim and is mentioned in the story given on page 3, above. A fair was held here on the first day of the month throughout the year until the end of the 19th century. The town became known locally as *An Geata Mhór* (the Big Gate) after a Bingham erected a toll gate across the main road in the 1820s to discourage people from bypassing the Binghamstown fair in favour of Belmullet town. The children of Léim attended National School there into the first half of the 20th century, and would walk three miles there and then back again.

Naomh Deirbhile

The fabled sixth century Saint Deirbhile will have traversed through Léim on her donkey in her attempt to escape the amorous advances of a young man of Tara. When the man caught up to her at Falmor, she asked him why he would not take no as an answer. Upon hearing that her eyes had entranced him, she tore them from their sockets and threw them to the ground. Her suitor, duly chastened or perhaps horrified, returned whence he came, leaving Deirbhile blind. A well sprang up where her eyes had landed she washed her face in it and her sight returned. (6)

An Tobar Deirbhille (Deirbhile's Well) is a place of pilgrimage still today and its waters still sought for eye complaints. It is near to the remains of one of Ireland's earliest Christian churches, also dedicated to Deirbhile. It is said that that if you can pass through the narrow western window three times you will never die from drowning.



Teampall Deirbhile, Fálmór



Blacksod Lighthouse

Did you know...?

...that a small post office at the end of the Mullet at Blacksod Bay was instrumental in bringing about the end of the second World War? Twenty-one year old Maureen Sweeney was the first to forecast an impending storm from the station at the Blacksod lighthouse and her report, sent secretly to London, changed the date of the D-Day Landings, ultimately ensuring Allied victory. Mrs. Sweeny was honoured for her "Laudable Actions" at age 98 in 2021 by the U.S. House of Representatives. (7)



Maureen (Flavin) Sweeney pictured here with her husband, Ted

Sources:

- (1) The National Folklore Collection of Ireland: The Schools' Collection (NFC:TSC) Volume 0129, Page 176
- (1) O'Rahilly, T.F. , "A Song by Richard Barret" . *Gadelica: A Journal of Modern Irish Studies*, 1912, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1912), p. 112
- (2)NFC:TSC - Volume 0130, Page 446-450
- (3) O'Rahilly, *op cit.* p. 119
- (4) Westropp, T. J. "Folk Lore and Legends from the Coasts of Counties Mayo and Galway" *Folklore*, Mar. 31, 1916, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Mar. 31, 1916). Taylor & Francis, Ltd. on behalf of Folklore Enterprises, Ltd., pg 104
- (5) Westropp, T.J., "The Promontory Forts and Early Remains of the Coasts of County Mayo. Part 2. The Mullet". *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Sep. 30, 1912, Sixth Series, Vol. 2, No. 3 (Sep. 30, 1912), pp. 212-215
- (6) The Schools' Collection, Volume 0136, Page 145-8 (Eachléim)
- (7) RTÉ News, "Mayo's D-Day heroine receives special US honour", 20 June 2021

Images:

Font Cover: Ordnance Survey Map, 1846,

Overleaf: Andrews, J.H., "Sir Richard Bingham and the Mapping of Western Ireland", *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy: Archaeology, Culture, History, Literature*, 2003, Vol. 103C, No. 3 , p. 94

Page 2: House at Binghamstown with roped thatch, Co. Mayo. An Geata Mór, Co. Maigh Eo (Éire) © Folklore collection 1935 / Coimisiún Béaloideasa Éireann (CBÉ) / Irish Folklore Commission

Page 3: NFC:TSC, Volume 0134, Page 326

Page 5 (left): Cross Beach, Mullet Peninsula, Christian MacLeod © Failte Ireland 2016

Page 5 (right): Leacht air Ioruiss, Westropp, T.J., "The Promontory Forts and Early Remains of the Coasts of County Mayo. Part 2. The Mullet", pp. 213

Page 6: Dún na mBo (Doonamo Point), Erris, Co Mayo. Christian MacLeod © Failte Ireland 2016

Page 7: Teampall Deirbhile, Andreas Borchert, Wiki Media Commons 2013

Page 8 (top): Blacksod Lighthouse, Peter McCabe, © Failte Ireland 2013

Page 8 (bottom): <https://www.midwestradio.ie/index.php/news/48659-mayo-woman-will-be-recognised-for-her-role-in-helping-the-allies-safely-complete-d-day>