

# The Ballyhoura Way Bealach Abhra

# The Multeen Way Bealach an Mhoiltín

# Galbally Tipperary Town Donohill

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



Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare and the Beara-Breifne March  
In 1602 Munster was ravaged by war. The English forces of Elizabeth I had defeated the Irish and Spanish at the Battle of Kinsale and advanced to capture the territory of Donal Cam O'Sullivan Beare, Chieftain of Beara. With many Irish chiefs in submission to the English crown, O'Sullivan Beare's continued support for the Irish cause and loyalty to Philip II of Spain was a last barrier to English ambitions to secure crown rule in Munster. O'Sullivan Beare's main stronghold was Dunboy Castle, overlooking the harbour of Berehaven. In June 1602, after an eleven-day siege, English forces breached the walls of Dunboy, killed its last defenders, and forced the local population into submission. O'Sullivan Beare and an army of supporters withdrew to the Coomerkane Valley, near Glengarriff, and launched guerrilla attacks on their enemies.

Following a siege, the English army struck a blow at O'Sullivan Beare and captured his herd of 4,000 sheep, 2,000 cattle, and 100 ponies. The loss of supplies of milk, butter and meat, as well as essential pack animals, made it impossible to remain in the valley.

On New Year's Eve 1602, faced with almost certain starvation, O'Sullivan Beare fled with 400 fighting men and 600 camp followers: women, children, servants, and porters. About 1,000 men and women embarked on an epic march northwards.

O'Sullivan Beare was counting on his ally, O'Rourke of Breifne, to provide refuge at Leitrim Castle, 300 kilometres to the north. Travelling through Ireland at a time of war and severe food shortages, they were often attacked by local chiefs who viewed them outcasts. The need to stay ahead of their enemies meant that they were often unable to bury their dead or carry off their wounded. Women carried infants and many of the camp followers could not keep up. By the time they reached the River Shannon, their numbers had dropped to between 300 and 400.

With enemies on either side of the river they crossed at night in a boat made of the skins of twelve slaughtered horses, the meat almost certainly eaten by the starving in the camp. Two days later, at Aughrim, their path was blocked by English-led cavalry and infantry. O'Sullivan Beare's camp had no choice but to fight. Against all odds, the exhausted army of refugees defeated greatly superior forces but were unable to rest. They had to travel a 20 mile detour during the night to escape further attack. As the Connaught mercenaries among O'Sullivan Beare's camp began to disappear and return home, the remaining refugees were continuously threatened.

On the fourteenth day, O'Sullivan Beare reached Leitrim Castle. Out of the original 1,000 followers, only thirty five remained.

## The Beara-Breifne, Ballyhoura and Multeen Ways

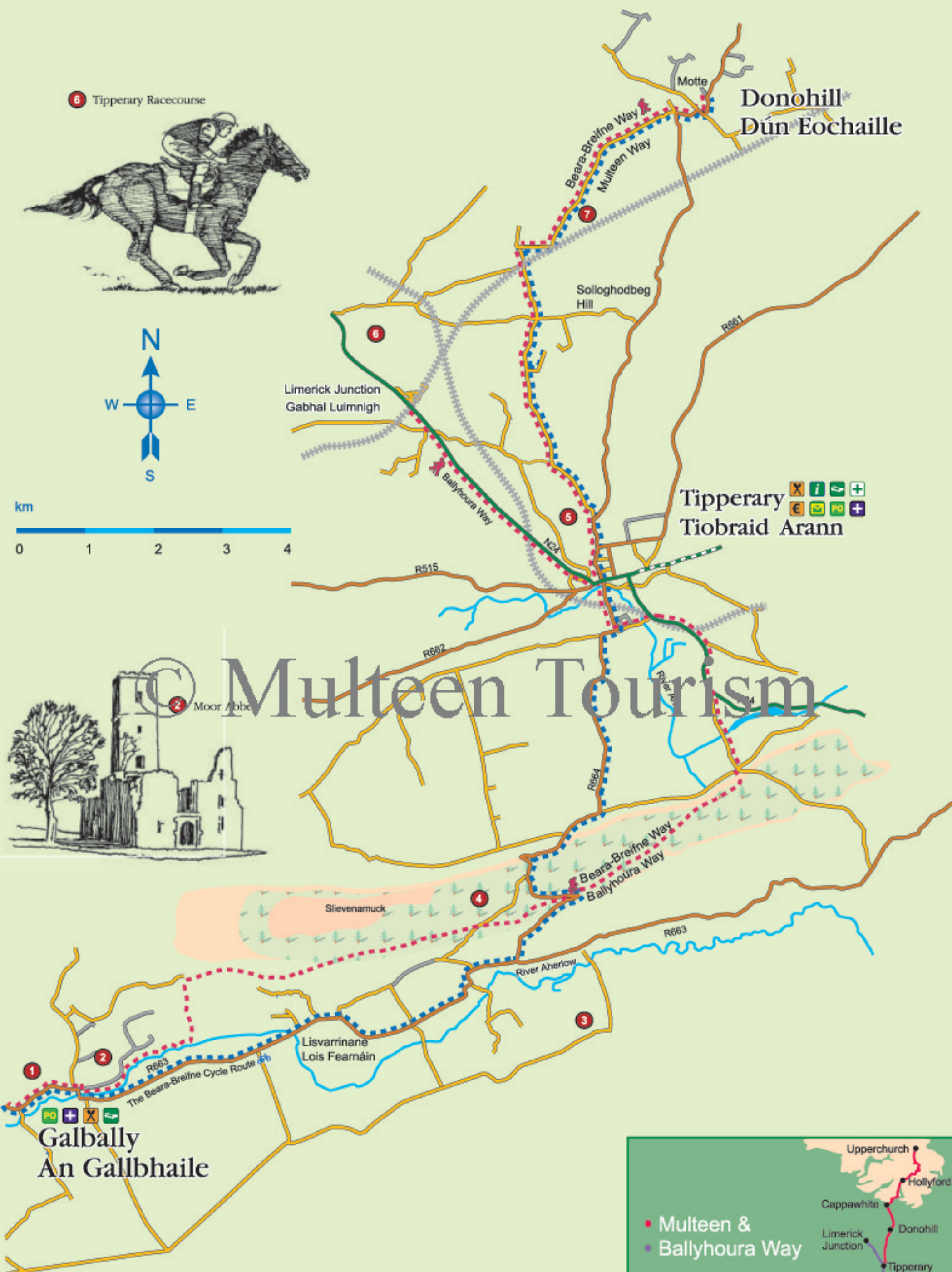


The **Beara-Breifne Way** follows the fourteen-day march taken by Donal O'Sullivan Beare and 1,000 supporters in 1603. The route, the longest in Ireland, runs almost the length of the country and takes the walker and cyclist to some of its most beautiful and least explored areas: along the coast of the Beara Peninsula, across six mountain ranges, along the banks of the River Shannon and through the lake regions of Roscommon and Leitrim. The landscape contains an extraordinary variety of heritage sites - prehistoric features, castle ruins, and religious and battle sites - many of which bear witness to the march of 400 years ago.

The **Beara-Breifne Way** interlinks a series of local ways. The local route through Ballyhoura Country - an area of undulating green pastures, woodlands, hills and mountains on the borders of counties Limerick, Tipperary and Cork - is called **The Ballyhoura Way**. It is linked to a number of local loop walks. It is approximately 90 kilometres in length and includes stretches through the lush pasturelands of the Golden Vale and beautiful Glen of Aherlow, and through wild and spectacular uplands in the Ballyhoura Mountains crossing Slievenamuck. The route leaves the Ballyhoura Way in Tipperary Town and then proceeds to link up with **The Multeen Way**. This route follows the path of O'Sullivan Beare northwards from Tipperary Town. It stretches across some of the most unspoilt rural areas in South Tipperary taking in two extremes of landscape: the fertile lowland plains of the Golden Vale around Tipperary Town; and the wilder uplands, with panoramic views extending across seven counties from the Red Hills. Much of this route is off-road and crosses beautiful landscape, providing a unique opportunity to appreciate the wildlife of this part of the county.

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

Walkers should be aware that the Ballyhoura Way, the Multeen Way, and the Beara-Breifne Way are closed to the public for one day each year, 31 January.



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## Tipperary Town - Galbally

### Walking

This section of the walk takes between 8 and 9 hours. It begins on quiet roads leading from the town towards the higher ground of the Slievenamuck Hills. The route passes through shady forests as it climbs the hillside southwards. Once the ridge is passed there are spectacular views of the Glen of Aherlow to the south, particularly from the Christ the King statue. The walk descends into the glen, joining the road to Galbally at the ruins of Moor Abbey, about 1.5 kilometres from the village.

### Cycling

The cycling route follows the R664 towards the Slievenamuck Hills. It passes through forestry plantations as it climbs the hills, where there are fine views back across the plain over Tipperary Town. The road then descends steeply into the Glen of Aherlow to the south, passing the Christ the King statue with its excellent views southwards towards the Galtee Mountains. The route turns right towards Galbally onto the busy R663 tourist road in the Glen of Aherlow. It passes through the village of Lisvarrinane and the ruined Moor Abbey with impressive views of the hills to north and south.

## Tipperary Town - Donohill

### Walking and Cycling

The route leaves Tipperary town on the R497, heading northwards into the Tipperary Hills, where it joins a minor road. Turning towards the northeast, the walk passes the site of the Battle of Sulcoit at Solloghobeg, and continues on into the village of Donohill. This section takes between 4 and 5 hours to walk and is circa 12km in length.



- 1 The route from Galbally to Tipperary Town follows **Bianconi's old coach road**. From 1815, Italian Charles Bianconi developed a nationwide network of horse-drawn passenger cars, the first public transport system in Ireland.
- 2 Approximately 1.5 kilometres to the east of Galbally are the ruins of **Moor Abbey**, founded between 1204 and 1212. It took 300 years to complete, and was burned four times during that time. Legend has it that three friars, beheaded by Cromwell's forces here in 1570, shed no blood.
- 3 The beautiful and tranquil **Glen of Aherlow**, nestling between the Galtee Mountains to the south and the Slievenamuck Ridge to the north, is a treasure trove of nature and history. A wealth of historic sites are scattered along the river, which is protected for Atlantic salmon that spawn there, and provides homes for otters, kingfishers, and Daubenton bats.
- 4 **Slievenamuck**, which translates as Slieve na Muc (Mountain of the pig) takes its name from the legendary slaying of a sow called Beo, who had devastated much of Munster. Fionn Mac Cumhaill had spears forged locally and killed the sow, taking its head as a bridal gift to Cruithne, the smith's daughter. On the ridge are two megalithic passage graves (Corderry and Shrough Dolmens) known as Diarmuid and Gráinne's beds, where the legendary lovers are said to have rested whilst fleeing the angry Fionn Mac Cumhaill.
- 5 The earthworks at **Murgasty Motte**, built on an existing hillock of glacial drift material, are an example of an early type of defensive structure dating from the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries. So that the position could be more easily defended, the top of the hillock was levelled around a central mound to make a symmetrical structure known locally as 'Mutton Pie Hill' or the 'Cup and Saucer'.
- 6 The promise of a special railway siding from the Great Southern and Western Railway Company persuaded the **Tipperary Racecourse** to relocate here in 1916. Known until 1986 as Limerick Junction, the course hosts top class flat and National Hunt racing between April and October.
- 7 The level ground at **Solloghobeg** (Solloghod) was the site of the Battle of Sulcoit in 968. It was the first in a series of victories against the Danes, who held the chief fortresses of the province at that time, by King Mahon of Munster, and his brother Brian Boru. Mahon defeated the Danes in seven other battles, until at last he became king of all Munster. O'Sullivan Beare also camped at this site on his journey northwards.

As, historically, there is often more than one version of some place names, spellings used on this map may differ from those found on O.S. maps, literature and even some road signs.

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