

## BALLYSHANNON

Ballyshannon can lay claim to the title “the oldest town in Ireland” and was created a Borough by Royal Charter on March 23, 1613. The earliest invaders of Ireland, the



Parthalonians, settled on Inis Saimer Island and they were followed by the Vikings. In 1423, the O’Donnells erected a castle overlooking the ancient crossing point. In 1597, the O’Donnells (under Red Hugh O’Donnell) defeated the English forces (under Sir Conyers Clifford) in the ‘Battle of Ballyshannon’. Since those turbulent times, Ballyshannon has been a Garrison town, an important commercial trading port and strategic crossing point over the River Erne.

Its literal translation from Irish means “Mouth of Seanach’s Ford” indicates that Ballyshannon overlooks the estuary of the River Erne which forms a natural harbour to the west of the present town. The town was a prosperous trading centre/merchant town during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when its main industries were flour and saw milling, tobacco manufacture, soap making, tanning, distilling and brewing. It was during the nineteenth century that many of the most significant buildings that characterise the town were built. William Allingham (1824-1889) described his native Ballyshannon as “the kindly spot, the friendly town”. Ballyshannon was designated as a ‘Heritage Town’ by Donegal County Council in 2000. The area of the medieval town is designated as a zone of archaeological potential by the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

“Up the airy mountain, Down the rushy glen” William Allingham

## BÉAL ÁTHA SEANAIDH

*Tá sé le maíomh ag Béal Átha Seanaidh gurb é “an baile is sine in Éirinn”. Bunaíodh an baile trí Chairt Ríoga ar an 23 Márta, 1613. Chuir an chéad dream a tháinig go hÉirinn, na Parthalonians, chuir siad fúthu ar Inis Saimer agus ba iad na Lochlannaigh an chéad dream eile a tháinig ina ndiaidh. I 1423, thóg na Dálaigh caisleán os cionn na seanáite trasnaithe. I 1597, fuair na Dálaigh (faoi Aodh Rua Ó Dónaill) an ceann is fearr ar na Gaill (faoi Sir Conyers Clifford) i gCath Bhéal Átha Seanaidh. Ón am corraitheach sin ar aghaidh baile garastúin a bhí i mBéal Átha Seanaidh, port tábhachtach tráchtála agus pointe trasnaithe don Éirne.*

*Tá Béal Átha Seanaidh suite os cionn inbhear na hÉirne, atá ina chuan nádúrtha ar an taobh thiar de bhaile mór an lae inniu. Baile rathúil tráchtála/trádála a bhí ann san ochtú agus sa naoú haois déag, agus ba iad na príomhthionscail a bhí ann ná muilte plúir agus sábhadóireachta, déanamh tobac, déanamh gallúnaigh, coirniú, driogadh agus grúid. Is i rith an naoú haois déag a tógadh cuid mhór de na foirgnimh ba shuntasai a thugann a shaintréithe don bhaile mór. Chuir William Allingham (1824-1889) síos ar a bhaile dúchais, Béal Átha Seanaidh, mar “the kindly spot, the friendly town”. D’ainmnigh Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall Béal Átha Seanaidh mar “Bhaile Oidhreachta” i 2000. Tá limistéar an bhaile mheánaoisigh sonraithe ag an Roinn Comhshaoil, Oidhreachta agus Rialtais Áitiúil mar limistéar ina bhfuil féidearthachtaí seandálaíochta.*

*“Adieu to Ballyshanny, and the winding banks of Erne!” William Allingham*

## MOVILLE

Moville is located on the western shore of Lough Foyle in the Bredagh River valley.

In Irish, Moville is known as ‘Bun an Phobail’ meaning ‘Foot of the Foyle’ or ‘Magh Bhile’ meaning ‘Plain of the Ancient Tree’. In 1768, Samuel Montgomery, merchant and Chamberlain of Derry took 800 acres on a long lease from Lord Donegall. After completing his residence, New Park House, in 1776, he began to develop the town from 1780. The house was later inherited by Bishop Sir Henry Montgomery, father of Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery or ‘Monty’.

The first steamboat service between Derry and Moville began in 1832 and in the 1860s, Moville became a regular point of departure for emigrants on the Anchor Line ships from Derry to America and Canada. By the mid-nineteenth century, Moville was a busy market town, a centre for milling and a popular tourist resort. Moville’s popularity as a fashionable bathing place is reflected in the many elegant villas and bathing lodges in the town. Moville reached its heyday during the 1930s as a port of call for trans-Atlantic liners and as a popular seaside ‘watering place’. Since World War II, Moville’s port function declined especially with the withdrawal of the ‘Scotch Boat’ in 1966 that operated between Glasgow and Derry. It has enjoyed popularity as a seaside resort since the Victorian period and it remains largely dependent on tourism to the present day. The urban morphology of Moville is the result of landlord intervention and planning with a formal layout of buildings, typically around a square or green. Moville retains its maritime connections through its traditional annual regatta. Moville was designated as a ‘Heritage Town’ by Donegal County Council in 2000.

## BUN AN PHOBAIL

*Tá Bun an Phobail suite ar an taobh thiar de Loch Feabhail. Tá ainm eile ar an cheantar chomh maith, mar atá “Magh Bhile”. I 1798, ghlac Samuel Montgomery, ceannai agus Seomairlín ar Dhoire, 800 acra ar léas fada ón Tiarna Donegall. I ndiaidh dó a theach cónaithe a chríochnú i 1776, mar atá New Park House, thosaigh sé ar an bhaile mór a fhorbairt ó 1780. Idir sin is tráthas, fuair an tEaspag Sir Henry Montgomery, athair Mharascal Machaire Bernard Montgomery nó “Monty”, an teach mar oidhreacht.*

*Cuireadh tús leis an chéad seirbhís galbháid idir Doire agus Bun an Phobail i 1832 agus i rith na 1860aidí bhíodh Bun an Phobail ina áit fágála ag eisimirceoirí ar na longa line-ancaire ó Dhoire go Meiriceá agus Ceanada. Faoi lár an naoú haois déag, bhí borradh faoi Bhun an Phobail mar bhaile mór margaidh, áit fa choinne muilleoireachta agus ráchairt mhór ag turasóirí air. Is léir ó lion mór na vili maisiúla agus na lóistí snámha ar an bhaile mór go raibh tóir ar Bhun an Phobail mar áit mhór snámha. Tháinig Bun an Phobail in ard a réime i rith na 1930aidí mar stad cuairte ag na longa móra trasatlantacha agus mar áit cois farraige a raibh an-tóir uirthi. I ndiaidh an Dara Cogadh Domhanda thosaigh port Bhun an Phobail ag dul ar meath, go háirithe nuair a tarraingíodh siar an “Scotch Boat” i 1966 a bhíodh ag feidhmiú idir Glaschú agus Doire. Bhíodh an-tóir ar an áit mar ionad saoire cois farraige ón ré Vicoiteoiriach agus tá sé ag brath go mór ar an turasóireacht go dtí an lá atá inniu ann. Bhí tionchar ag na tiarnaí talún ar dheilbhíocht uirbeach Bhun an Phobail, ina bhfuil na foirgnimh leagtha amach go foirmiúil, thart ar fhaiche nó ar chearnóg de ghnáth. Coinníonn Bun an Phobail nasc lena chúlra muiri tríd an rigeaithe traidisiúnta gach bliain. D’ainmnigh Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall Bun an Phobail mar “Bhaile Oidhreachta” i 2000.*

## RAMELTON

Situated in a rich agricultural hinterland, Ramelton was for many centuries a dominant regional centre for industry, trade and local government. From the thirteenth to the



seventeenth centuries, Ramelton was the location of an O’Donnell castle. The town was built c. 1610 by William Stewart of Ayrshire, and the former wealth of Ramelton depended on its status as the main port for this part of east Donegal occupying a strategic position at the entrance to Fanad Peninsula. Before being overshadowed by Letterkenny, Ramelton had a thriving professional, industrial and commercial community. The fine series of warehouses in the town were used for grain storage and date to the early nineteenth century when the grain trade was at its height.

The town’s growth gathered pace in the mid-1700s. The Grand Jury, the forerunner of the County Council, had its sittings in Ramelton. The increasing trade in linen for the export market was reflected in the building of impressive town houses in the late eighteenth century. During the eighteenth century, the port prospered and the town grew westward along the river. On the north side of the river, Bridge End developed associations with the linen industry. Ramelton had County Donegal’s largest linen bleaching works. There was a decline in the linen industry in the 1840s due to competition from Belfast. In the 1850s, the silting of the port and the arrival of the railway in Letterkenny contributed to the decline in industry in Ramelton. Its role as a centre for local government ended with the abolition of the Grand Jury system in 1898. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Ramelton had seven churches and was known as ‘The Holy City’ due to the religious diversity found in the town. The town retained its importance as a business and commercial centre into the twentieth century. Bord Fáilte designated Ramelton as a ‘Heritage Town’ in recognition of its distinctive historic character, built heritage and identity as a ‘Georgian Town or Port’. The area of the plantation town is designated as a zone of archaeological potential by the Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government.

## RÁTH MEALTAIN

*Tá Ráth Mealtain suite i gceantar torthúil talmhaíochta, agus bhí sé ina ionad ceannasach réigiúnda, leis na céadta bliain, ó thaobh tionsclaíochta, trádála agus rialtais áitiúil de. On tríú haois déag go dtí an seachtú haois déag, bhí caisleán de chuid na nDálach suite ann. Thóg William Stewart as Ayrshire an baile thart fa 1610, agus bhí iar-shaibhreas Ráth Mealtain ag brath ar a stádas mar príomhphort don chuid seo d’oirthear Dhún na nGall suite go sráiteiseach ar an bhealach isteach go Leithinis Fhánada. Sular tháinig Leitir Ceannainn i mbarr a réime, bhí borradh mór faoi lucht tionsclaíochta, gairmiúlachta agus gnó i Ráth Mealtain. Tá roinnt trádstóras breá sa bhaile, a úsáideadh le grán a stóráil, siar go dtí tús an naoú haois déag nuair a bhí trádáil an ghraín i mbarr a réime.*

*Tháinig borradh faoin bhaile i lár an ochtú haois déag. Shuíodh an tArd-Ghiúiré, réamhtheachtai na Comhairle Contae, i Ráth Mealtain. Tógadh títhe sonracha baile go mall sa naoú haois déag mar thoradh ar an mhéadú ar thrádáil an linéadaigh don mhargadh onnmhairíochta. I rith an ochtú haois déag, tháinig rath ar an phort agus d’fhás an baile siar cois na habhann. Ar an taobh thuaidh den abhainn, d’éirigh ceangal idir Ceann an Droichid agus an tionscal linéadach. Bhí na hoibreacha tuartha linéadaigh ba mhó de chuid Chontae Dhún na nGall le fáil i Ráth Mealtain. Tháinig meath ar thionscal an linéadaigh sna 1840aidí mar gheall ar iomaíocht ó Bhéal Feirste. Sna 1850aidí, chuir sioltadh an phoirt agus teacht an iarnróid go Leitir Ceannainn leis an mheath a bhí ag teacht ar an tionsclaíocht i Ráth Mealtain. Tháinig deireadh lena sheasamh mar ionad rialtais áitiúil nuair a cuireadh deireadh le córas an Ard-Ghiúiré i 1898. Ag tús an fichiú haois, bhí seacht n-eaglais i Ráth Mealtain, agus thugtaí “An Chathair Naofa” air as siocair go raibh an oiread sin éagsúlachta creidimh ann. Bhí tábhacht leis an bhaile mar ionad gnó agus trádála isteach san fhichiú haois. D’ainmnigh Bord Fáilte Ráth Mealtain mar “Bhaile Oidhreachta” mar gheall ar a thréithe suntasacha stairiúla, a chuid foirgneamh, agus a fheiniúlacht mar “Bhaile nó Port Seoirseach”. Tá achar an bhaile phlandála ainmnithe mar cheantar ina bhfuil féidearthachtaí seandálaíochta ag an Roinn Comhshaoil, Oidhreachta agus Rialtais Áitiúil.*

## RAPHOE

Raphoe is a small town situated on the lower slopes of Mongorry Hill in the fertile area of east Donegal known as ‘The Laggan’. The name is most likely derived from the Irish



‘lag’ or ‘lug’ which means a flat or hollow place. Raphoe derives its name from ‘Rath Bhoth’ meaning ‘Ringfort of the Huts’. The early Monks constructed their huts from clay and wattle and surrounded them with a strong fortified mound. Raphoe is regarded as ‘the smallest cathedral city in

Europe’ and this appears to date back to a petition dated July 15, 1600 to Pope Clement the Eighth from the City of Raphoe.

Although originally a monastic settlement, Raphoe is now essentially a Plantation town. The scheme for plantation placed a heavy emphasis on the importance of urban settlement. The town was a large nucleated settlement which provided service facilities such as a church, school, inn or “tap-house” and, in particular, a weekly market. Raphoe was one of 25 original sites designated to be corporate towns by the Plantation Commissioners in 1609. The focal point of the plantation town was the market-place or “diamond”. The “Diamond” does not refer to the shape of the market-place. It can follow any plan, although all occur at road intersections. A patent to hold fairs was granted to Bishop Andrew Knox in 1630. The Market House, built in 1874, with the purpose of collecting tolls from farmers on fair days once stood in the centre of The Diamond. Raphoe was designated a ‘Heritage Town’ by Donegal County Council in 2000 and contains several fine examples of ecclesiastical and Georgian architecture.

## RÁTH BHOTh

*Is baile beag é Ráth Bhoth atá suite ar fhánaí Chnoc Mongorry i gceantar torthúil de chuid oirthear Dhún na nGall a dtugtar “An Lagan” air. Is féidir go bhfuil baint ag an ainm leis an fhocal “lag” nó “lug” a chiallaíonn áit chothrom nó íseal. Thógadh na chéad mhánaigh a gcuid bothán as créafóg agus caolach, agus dhéanais clai láidir daingean a chur ina dtimpeall. Féachtar ar Ráth Bhoth mar “an chathair ard-eaglaise is lú san Eoraip” agus is cosúil go dtéann sé seo siar go dtí achainní den dáta 15 Iúil, 1600 chuig An Pápa Clement VIII ó Chathair Ráth Bhoth.*

*Cé gur lonnaíocht mhanachúil a bhí i Ráth Bhoth i dtús ama, is baile de chuid na Plandála anois é, a bheag nó a mhór. Chuir an phlandáil béim mhór ar thábhacht an uirbeachais. Lonnaíocht mhór núicléataithe a bhí sa bhaile, a chuireadh seirbhísí eaglasta, scoilaíochta, lóistín srl ar fáil, agus go háirithe an margadh seachtainiúil. Bhí Ráth Bhoth ar cheann de na chéad 25 suíomh a roghnaigh Coimisinéirí na Plandála i 1609 le bheith ina mbaile corparáideacha. Ba é an “diamant” nó an margadh lár-ionad an bhaile phlandála. Ní bhaineann “an diamant” leis an chruth ar ionad an mhargaidh. D’fheadfadh leagan amach éagsúil a bheith i gceist, ach bíonn acomhal bóthair i gceist leo ar fad. Bhronn an tEaspag Andrew Knox páitinn i 1630 chun aontai a reáchtáil. Bhí Teach Margaidh, a tógadh i 1874, i lár an Diamaint lá den tsaol. Ba as an teach seo a bhailíodh dolai ó na feirmeoirí ar lá an aonaigh. Bhronn Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall stádas “Baile Oidhreachta” ar Ráth Bhoth i 2000, agus tá samplaí d’ailtireacht eaglasta agus Seoirseach le fáil ann.*

# HERITAGE TOWNS OF COUNTY DONEGAL



# BAILTE OIÐHREACHTA i gCONTAE DHÚN NA nGALL



## THE 'HERITAGE TOWN' CONCEPT

The 'Heritage Town' concept is based on the principle that a number of towns with a strong physical character would be developed as being representative of the heritage of Ireland. This development would have the dual effect of helping to conserve the built environment of these towns and of providing a marketing tool for the tourism industry in these towns and the country at large. In County Donegal, Bord Fáilte (now Fáilte Ireland) initiated the 'Heritage Towns' scheme under the European Regional Development Fund Initiative (1995-1999). Two 'Heritage Towns' in County Donegal were designated and marketed under this initiative: Ardara (with a theme of weaving) and Ramelton (with a theme of Georgian port or town). In 2000, Donegal County Council designated Ardara, Ballyshannon, Moville, Raphoe and Ramelton as 'Heritage Towns'. These towns hold this designation to the present day under the County Donegal Development Plan (2006-2012).

## COINCHEAP AN BHAILE OIDHREACHTA

*Tá coincheap an Bhaile Oidhreachta bunaithe ar an phrionsabal go ndéanfaí roinnt bailte, a raibh tréithe láidre fisiceacha ag baint leo, a fhorbairt le bheith ionadaíoch ar oidhreacht na hÉireann. Bheadh dhá thoradh air seo; chuideodh sé le timpeallacht thógtha na mbailte seo a chaomhnú, agus sholáthródh sé uirlis mhargaíochta do thionscal na turasóireachta sna bailte seo agus ar fud an chontae. I gContae Dhún na nGall, chuir Bord Fáilte (Fáilte Ireland inniu) tús le scéim na mBailte Oidhreachta faoi Thionscnamh Chiste Forbraíochta Réigiúnaí na hEorpa (1995-1999). Ainmníodh dhá Bhaile Oidhreachta i gContae Dhún na nGall agus rinneadh margaíocht orthu faoin tionscnamh seo: Ard an Rátha (fíodóireacht) agus Ráth Mealtain (port nó baile Seoirseach). I 2000, d'ainmnigh Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall Ard an Rátha, Béal Átha Seanaidh, Bun an Phobail, Ráth Bhoth agus Ráth Mealtain mar Bhaile Oidhreachta. Tá an stádas céanna ag na bailte seo san am i láthair de réir Phlean Forbartha Chontae Dhún na nGall (2006-2012).*

### ARDARA

From its origins as a crossing point on the Owentocker River, Ardara became a world-renowned centre for the manufacture of hand-woven tweed, hand knitwear,



hand-loomed knitwear and embroidery. Ardara has a long association with the tweed and knitwear industries and was designated by Bord Fáilte as a 'Heritage Town' on the basis of this tradition of weaving and knitting. The Nesbitt family arrived in Ardara in 1669 and

exerted a strong influence on the town's development. The demise of the great fair at nearby Magheramore in the mid-nineteenth century saw the fairs in Ardara begin to prosper and confirmed Ardara's role as a commercial centre.

In the Middle Ages, the reputation of Irish cloth as that of superior quality and lower price had been well established throughout western Europe. A 1688 act that forbade the sale of Irish woollen goods to anywhere except England threatened the continued existence of the woollen industry and traditional skills associated with it. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the woollen industry existed on a small domestic scale. In the late nineteenth century, a market for homespun woollen goods was identified and the re-introduction of the art of dyeing made them a more marketable commodity. In 1893, a Congested Districts Board supported improvement scheme was started in the Ardara area and provided for the inspection of cloth and the stamping of high-quality goods. Tweed continued to be marketed on the streets of Ardara on fair days. A market house known as 'The Mart' was built in 1912 and used for the inspection, storage and sale of tweed. Despite a resurgence in the tweed industry in Ardara during the two World Wars, it declined markedly thereafter and continued on a smaller cottage-industry basis and, more recently, as a tourist attraction. Several domestic vernacular buildings, some original weavers' cottages, echo Ardara's early associations with the tweed industry.

### ARD AN RÁTHA

*Sa Mheánaois, bhí sé de chlú ar éide na hÉireann ar fud iarthar na hEorpa go raibh sí ní b'fhearr ó thaobh caighdeán de, agus ní ba shaoire chomh maith. Tháinig reachtaíocht i bhfeidhm i 1688 a chuir cosc ar earraí olla as Éirinn a dhíol le tír ar bith eile seachas le Sasana féin, rud a bhí ina bhgairt mhór do thodhchaí an tionscail olla agus do na scileanna traidisiúnta a mbíodh sé ag brath orthu. Ag tús an naoú haois déag, mhair an tionscal olla ar scála beag sa pharóiste. Go mall sa naoú haois déag, aithníodh go raibh margadh ann fá choinne earraí olla de dhéantús baile agus rinneadh tráchtearraí inmhargaidh ní b'fhearr díobh nuair a tugadh isteach ealain na ruaimneoireachta in athuair. I 1893, cuireadh tús le scéim feabhsúcháin de chuid Bhord na gCeantar Cúig in Ard an Rátha maidir le héadach a scrúdú agus earraí ardcháilíochta a stampáil. Leanadh le breidín a dhíol ar shráideanna Ard an Rátha ar gach lá aonaigh. Tógadh teach margaidh a drugtaí "The Mart" air i 1912, agus is ansin a dhéantaí an breidín a scrúdú, a choinneáil agus a dhíol. In ainneoin go raibh borradh úr faoin tionscal breidín in Ard an Rátha idir an dá Chogadh Domhanda, thosaigh sé ag dul go mór i léig ina dhiaidh sin. Lean sé ina thionscal tinteáin ar scála níos lú, agus le tamall anuas, ina áis turasóireachta. Tá roinnt foirgneamh dúchasach áitiúil ann go fóill, cuid acu ina seantíthe fíodóireachta, a bhfuil baint acu le luath-thionscal an bhréidín in Ard an Rátha.*



## HERITAGE TOWNS BAILTE OIDHREACHTA

*There are five 'Heritage Towns' in County Donegal  
Tá cúig 'Bhaile Oidhreachta' i gContae Dhún na nGall*

*Ardara | Ard an Rátha*

*Ballyshannon | Béal Átha Seanaidh*

*Moville | Bun an Phobail*

*Ramelton | Ráth Mealtain*

*Raphoe | Ráth Bhoth*

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT  
LE TUILLEADH EOLAIS A FHÁIL, DÉAN TEAGMHÁIL LE

Heritage Officer  
County Donegal Heritage Office  
Donegal County Council  
Station Island  
Lifford

Telephone: (074) 917 2576  
E-mail: heritage@donegalcoco.ie

*Oifigeach Oidhreachta  
Oifig Oidhreachta Chontae Dhún na nGall  
Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall  
Oileán an Stáisiúin,  
Leifear*

*Guthán: (074) 917 2576  
Ríomhphost: heritage@donegalcoco.ie*

*This Project has been supported by the European Union under the EU Programme for Peace & Reconciliation 2000-2004 (Peace II) and part financed by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 through the Special EU Programmes' Body. Tá an Tionscadal seo á mhaoiniú ag an Aontas Eorpach faoin Chlár Síochána agus Athmhuintearais de chuid an AE 2000-2004 (Síocháin II) agus á pháirtmhaoiniú ag Rialtas na hÉireann faoin Phlean Forbartha Náisiúnta 2000-2006 tríd an Fhoras um Chláiracha Speisialta de chuid an AE.*

*An action of the County Donegal Heritage Plan (2007-2011)  
Gníomh de chuid Phlean Oidhreachta Chontae Dhún na nGall (2007-2011)*