

# The Multeen Way Bealach an Mhoiltín

## Tipperary Town Donohill Cappaghwhite

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



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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 as 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 and the Multeen Ways

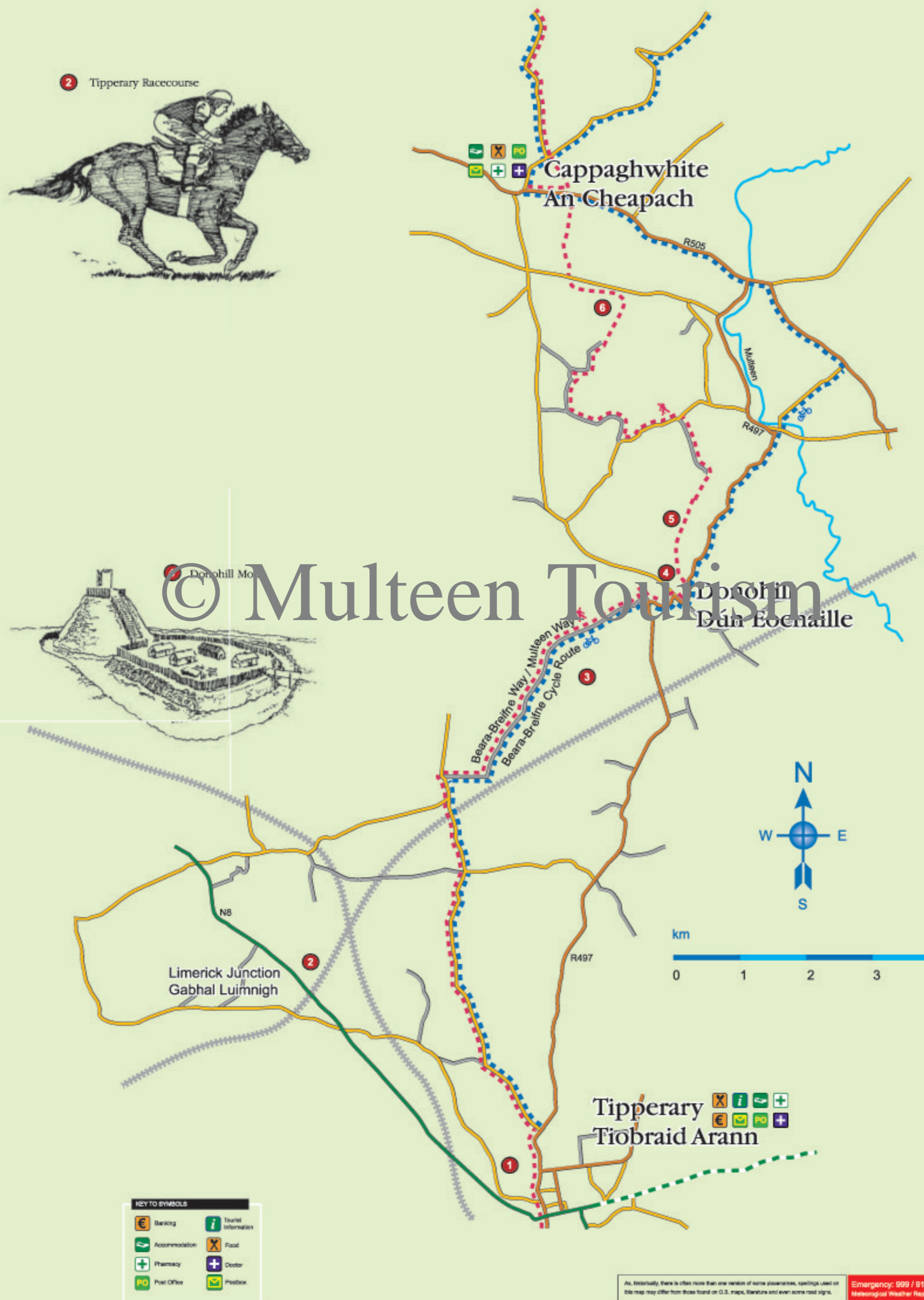
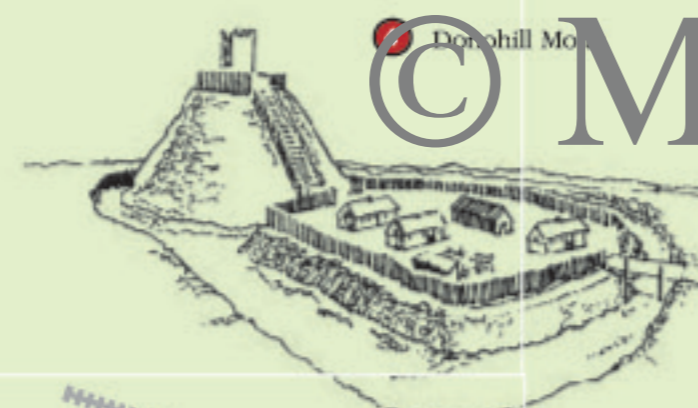
The Beara-Breifne Way follows the fourteen-day march taken by Donal O'Sullivan Beare and 1,000 supporters in 1603. The route, the longest in Ireland, runs almost the length of the country and takes the walker and cyclist to some of its most beautiful and least explored areas: along the coast of the Beara 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 here is the Multeen Way, which 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 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 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. Both routes cross both public and private lands and dogs are not permitted on either. Access to private lands is by kind permission of local landowners, arranged by the local community, and especial thanks are extended to both landowners and community groups for their assistance in making this venture possible.

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



KEY TO SYMBOLS	
	Banking
	Accommodation
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	Post Office
	Tourist Information
	Fuel
	Doctor
	Pub

### Donohill – Tipperary Town

#### Walking / Cycling

The route leaves Donohill heading southeast on old roads past the site of the Battle of Sulcoit at Solloghobeg. It then turns to the south for several kilometres before joining the R497 for the final kilometre into Tipperary Town. This section takes between 4 and 5 hours to walk and is circa 12km long.

### Donohill – Cappagh White

#### Walking

This 3 to 4 hour section of the route begins on the R497 out of Donohill towards Annacarty. Shortly after passing the Donohill Motte, the route leaves the road and crosses open country on tracks and paths, progressing north through Greenfield Nature Park and into the village of Cappagh White.

#### Cycling

The cycling route follows the R497 and then more minor roads going northwest to the village of Annacarty. There it turns left onto the R505 and continues into the village of Cappagh White, completing a journey of some 12 kilometres.

**CLANS OF THE AREA**

O'Brien	O'Dwyer	Ryan



### Along the Way

- 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'.
- 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.
- 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.
- A striking example of an early motte and bailey defensive structure, **Donohill Motte** was famously raided for food supplies by O'Sullivan Beare's forces in 1603 as they fled northwards to Leitrim. Originally there was a stone tower on the higher level (motte).
- Shandangan Fens** formed in steep-sided hollows, known as kettle-holes, created by pockets of ice left among loose material deposited by the retreating glaciers approximately 10,000 years ago. Poorly drained, and so suitable for wetland plants, the waterlogged soil means that dead plant material does not rot, but instead builds up to form fen peat over thousands of years. If undisturbed, this can lead to the formation of raised bog. Many kettle-holes and fens have been drained or filled in, so these are interesting and unusual habitats.
- The trees and woodland around **Greenfield House** are typical of the type of landscaping that was carried out around estates and demesnes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with trees such as beech or lime planted in straight rows along boundaries and avenues, and individual yew and cedar planted as specimen trees.