

An Cheathrú Rua is a peninsula in Conamara located between Casla bay and Greatman's bay, 40 km west of Galway city. An Cheathrú Rua means a red, or rugged, area. It's also known as the Parish of Cillín, because of the small chapel or church located in Barr an Doire.

The local people originally lived by the sea because that was the source of food and income for them. As roads began to be built in the area, people started to build houses beside them, which led to the building of the village as it now stands.

Places of interest and history

*The West of Ireland is well known for its beautiful beaches, both at home and abroad, and an Cheathrú Rua is no exception. Especially popular with visitors is **Trá an Dóilín/Coral Strand**, an exceptionally interesting beach. Not only can you swim in its clean waters, it is also an excellent place to snorkel or dive. During the summer there is a lifeguard on duty during the day on this Blue Flag beach. The word 'dóilín' means cove or inlet. The beach is not composed of sand, but of coral-like formations of lime which has leached out of seaweed, become hardened and then broken off, according to experts.*

***Teampall Bharr an Doire**, also known as **Teampall Inis Mhic Ádhaimh** is the oldest ruin in an Cheathrú Rua. The chapel is thought to have been built in approximately the 15th century, because of the Gothic-style door and curvilinear window. It is said that St. Smucán of Árainn built the chapel in only one night. The walls and gables are made of granite blocks, with windows and doors in limestone. The chapel measures 15.6 metres from end to end and is 5 metres wide.*

***Cnoc an Phobail** (Hill of the People) – people used come here from far and wide to celebrate special events, such as Patron's Day and St. John's Eve. **Loch na Naomh** (Lake of the Saints)– according to oral history, a group of holy men on their way to Árainn went up to Cnoc an Phobail, looking for water after stopping at **Sruthán**. The only source they found was some water which had collected in the hoofprint of a cow; but after they drank*

from it, the puddle grew to the size of a lake. The story goes that one of the men left a holy book behind, but there was such a long line of saints that they passed the request all the way back down the line until the story reached the last man, who picked up the book and brought it with him as he was leaving the lake.

An Séipéal (the Church) – The first church in more recent times was located in an Caorán Mór, with the priest's residence next to it. This is why the road leading up Cnoc an Phobail is called **Bóithrín an tSagairt (the Priest's road)**. By 1850, a new church appears on ordnance survey maps at a location currently occupied by the local primary school, Scoil Náisiúnta Mhic Dara, with the priest's residence to the rear. Father Uaitéar Mac Conbhuí built the new residence in 1889 and the current church, Séipéal Mhic Dara, was built in 1893.

Tobar na Croise (well of the Cross) – located opposite Loch an Mhuilinn on the way into an Cheathrú Rua on the left. The cross was erected in 1934 after a mission against poitín (strong home brew/moonshine) by Father Stiofán Ó Conghaile (Mission Connolly) from Árainn. The cross was put up to remind people of the negative effects of poitín.

Leic an Phátrúin (Stone of the Patron) – on the site now occupied by Tigh an Táilliúra. This was where the festival of St. Mac Dara used to be celebrated on 15th of March. The same patron saint was celebrated in different places – at the Chapel in Barr an Doire, at the Quay in Srutháin, on Cnoc an Phobail, and finally at Leic an Phátrúin. This practice stopped in the 50's.

Céibh an Dóilín (Dóilín Quay)- is also known as Céibh na Mine (Meal Quay) because cornmeal used to be landed here. **Trá na bPáistí (the Children's Beach)** – the burial ground for unbaptised children was nearby. **Cuan an Fhir Mhóir (Greatman's Bay)** or **Cuan an Inbhir Mhóir (Great Estuary Bay)** – is the bay between An Cheathrú Rua, west of an Dóilín, and Ceantar na nOileán. **Cloch Chormaic (Cormac's rock)** – a large rock thrown back and forth between two giants until it broke in two, according to legend. One half is at an Dóilín and the other is in Tír an Fhia on the opposite side of the bay.

***Páirc an Chathánaigh** – named in honour of Seán Ó Catháin or John Keane who was elected a County Councillor for the political party Fianna Fáil in 1928, 1934, 1942 and 1945. He was elected a Teachta Dála (representative to the Irish Dáil [parliament]) in 1940, the last T.D. to be elected from this area (although we currently have a Senator, Trevor Ó Clochartaigh.)*

***An Fhaithe/Diméin (The Green/Demesne)** where the smuggler Máirtín Mór Ó Máille lived with *Richard Martin* at the end of the 18th century. The Big House's foundations are still visible at Ard an Tí Mhóir. Smuggled goods were brought ashore at an **Dólainn** down at the inlet. The Máille left the area for Árainn in approximately 1830.*

***Leanna Fíon (Wine)** – Down by Trá an Dóilín, the location of another Big House where the landlord Hartnetty lived. It was said to have a cellar full of wine and rum, hence the name. This is reputed to be the first inhabited area in an Cheathrú Rua, with many ruins remaining today.*

Important historical events

*One of the most famous events in the history of the area is **Cath (battle) na Ceathrún Rua**, which took place in January of 1880. The unrest happened during the national movement against landlords known as the Land Wars. Officers of the law were not allowed to carry out an eviction from houses belonging to the landlord Kirwan. Locals fought the police with the help of people from surrounding areas, including Cois Fharraige, Ceantar na nOileán, Ros Muc, Oileán Árann and Dúiche Sheoigeach.*

***Ruaidhrí Mac Easmuinn** visited the area in 1913. He had great respect for the Irish language but was appalled at the poverty of the local people, especially the schoolchildren. He promised to help, and sent flour and flannel [fabric] to Caladh Thaidhg. The following is an excerpt from Peadar Neill Ó Domhnaill's account of his visit to the school, from the book 'Seod-Aistí as Conamara':*

Fear breá ard tanaí a b'ea é faoina chóta mór bréidín bán agus féasóg dhubh. Bhí mise sa tríú rang ag an múinteoir

lách Pádraic Ó Tiobraide, go ndéana Dia trócaire air.
D'fhiafraigh an cuairteoir dhíom cén t-ainm a bhí orm agus
d'inis mé dhó i mBéarla, agus ní raibh focal eile Béarla ag aon
ghasúr san am sin ach a n-ainm.*

*[He was a tall thin man under his white tweed coat and black
beard. I was in third class with the kind teacher Pádraic Ó
Tiobraide*, God rest him. The visitor asked my name, which I
answered in English, as no child could say anything in English
other than his name.]*

**Máistir Ó Tiobraide was an ancestor of the broadcaster Ryan
Tubridy*

Artists

*The artist **Charles Lamb** lived in an Bóthar Buí from 1933 until his
death in 1964. The people and the landscapes of the area formed the
inspiration for much of his art. The painter, sculptor and etcher
Pádraic Reaney is from Cuilleán. **Eddie Delaney** lived in an Caorán
Mór for about 30 years until he passed away in 2009. He was a
sculptor known for several famous pieces, including Wolfe Tone and
Thomas Davis, which are on display in public areas in Dublin and
elsewhere. **Dan Ó Flaithearta, Danny Wallace, Mary Conroy** and
Aoife Casby are some of the contemporary artists working in the
area.*

*The writer **Peadar Neilí Ó Domhnaill** was born in an Caorán Beag
in 1903, and published in Scéala Éireann, Ar Aghaidh, the Standard
and in Leabhar na gCeaipísíneach. His book **Seod-Aistí as
Conamara** was published in 1943. **Muiris Ó Súilleabháin**, author of
Fiche Blian ag Fás, was born on an Blascaod Mór but lived in an
Cheathrú Rua and is buried in the cemetery at Barr an Doire. His*

son **Eoin Ó Súilleabháin**, was well known as an Abbey actor; in Conamara every ear listened out for him on Saturday evenings on radio programmes such as **Colm sa mBaile**, **Colm ar Strae** and others.

Tomás Jimmy Mac Eoin, singer and composer, lives in an **Bóthar Buí**. **An Cailín Álainn** and **Bleán na Bó** are two of his best-known songs. He performed the Yeats poem **The Stolen Child** on the Waterboys album **The Fisherman's Blues**. Tomás and his sister, **Máire Uí Fhlatharta**, brought out a collection of poems, **Loscadh Sléibhe** and Máire has also written a novel **Ná gabh thar tí Stiofáin**, which was published in 2010.

As with everywhere in Conamara, there have always been sean-nós singers in an **Cheathrú Rua**, including **Máire Nic Dhonncha Cholman Johnny**, **Pádraig Ó Catháin**, **Peadar Tommy Mac Donncha**, and **Micheál Seoige**. Bands and singers play both traditional and country or rock music: **Cillín** are one of the better known groups.

The filmmaker **Bob Quinn** has been living in the area for more than 40 years. His films include **Poitín**, **Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoghaire**, and **Atlantean**. He is also well-known as a photographer of landscapes and people in this area.

The writer **Paul Mercier** has lived in this area since 1998. The plays written and produced by Mercier include **Home**, **Studs**, and **Drowning**. He also produced the television programme for teenagers, **Aifric**.

The **Pyes** also lived in an **Caorán Beag**; it is said that they came from Ennis in Co. Clare. They were successful but fell on hard times and the last of them, Pat, died in the poorhouse in 1919. One of them was a poet and a visionary, most of whose predictions are purported to have come true. There was a professor Pye in Galway university who was perhaps a relation of this same family.

Industry

Aside from agriculture and fisheries, there was little in the way of industry in the area until the 1970s. Of course, as was the case in every other area, an Cheathrú Rua had its carpenters, coopers, thatchers, hunters, tailors, blacksmiths, masons and carters (haulers with horse and cart).

Ida Yates spent time in an Cheathrú Rua teaching lacework to young women, which was highly prized at the time. At the time of the Congested Districts Board, at the end of the 19th century, a small lace factory was set up (on the site of the priest's residence today) and employed four or five women.

At approximately the same time, a knitting factory was set up next to Loch an Mhuilinn which employed many young women, some of whom used their earnings to book passage to America

An industrial estate was built on Bóthar na Tismeáine in the 70's, where up to six factories were working until 8-10 years ago.

***Learning Irish -Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge and Coláistí Gaeilge** (Irish-language courses) – there are many opportunities to learn and improve your Irish in an Cheathrú Rua: see www.acadamh.ie for adult and third-level education and view the **list** of summer colleges available for secondary students in the area on this website.*

***Tourism** – because of our clean, beautiful beaches and environment we host many tourists every year. The Irish language and courses for people of different ages also bring students and visitors throughout the year.*

Céad míle fáilte!

