

3(B) Heritage

Kerry is often referred to as the Kingdom because of its independent nature. It also can be called a kingdom in terms of heritage. Aspects of this heritage are internationally and nationally recognised such as Skellig Mhichil and Staigue Fort. However heritage can be found on a local level as well. Moreover, it can take on many shapes and forms, which are often unrecognised.

The Heritage Act, 1995, has given an interpretation of heritage as including: Archaeological Objects, monuments, heritage objects, architectural heritage, flora, fauna, wildlife, landscapes, seascapes, wrecks, geology, heritage gardens and parks and inland waterways. This definition is not concrete. Each category is open to broader interpretation.

‘Kerry and its heritage, at the western edge of Europe, have thus far escaped from intense developmental pressure. If we are to preserve the unique, distinctive and varied heritage of Co. Kerry, everyone must acknowledge, appreciate and conserve it.’

(Heritage Officer in Kerry County Council 2001)

Heritage can be defined as including: Monuments, Flora, Fauna, Landscapes, Heritage Objects, Wrecks, Architectural Heritage, Wildlife Habits, Seascapes, Inland Waterways, Geology, Archaeological Objects, Heritage Gardens and Parks.

3 (B.2) Land and Seascapes

Kerry's unique character is drawn from its unequalled diversity of land and seascapes. Nowhere else in Ireland would one find such a dramatic display of upland and lowland features combined with an impressive and lengthy coastline.

North Kerry is characterised by a low-lying rolling topography, while the south has a landscape which has many points of contrasting beauty. Kerry has 14 of Ireland's 21 highest mountains along with stretches of blanket bog as well as a diversity of lakes and water features.

The sea is very important for the county. The power and might of the Atlantic Ocean has indented our coastline into three peninsulas - Dingle, Iveragh and Beara. Seascapes vary from dramatic cliffs to sandy beaches amongst others. Many of these features are of national significance. Moreover the offshore islands add another dimension to the beauty of the coastline.

Man's interaction with land and sea is evident from the earliest of times up to the present, from archaeological remains to growing urban centres and farmland. Castles, forts and watchtowers dot the coastline. Efforts are now being made to ensure the survival of our natural land and seascapes so that future generations will enjoy them also.

Typical land and seascapes to be found in Kerry:

CATEGORIES	
Maritime	Lowland and Upland
Sea stacks and arches	Grassland
Bays and Headlands	Mountain and valley
Storm beaches	Heath and fen
Beaches	Bog and blanket bog
Sand Dunes	Woodland
Estuaries	Cultivated land
Sand spits, bars, lagoons and tombolos	Glaciated features-corries, tarns and aretes
Salt marshes and Sloblands	Lakes, rivers, springs and swamps
Maritime rocks and cliffs	Pastures and Meadows
Shingle Beaches	Built land

3 (B.3) Archaeology and Maritime Wrecks

There is a wealth of archaeological heritage spread throughout the land and sea of Kerry. This spans from the earliest of times right through the ages. New sites are being discovered all the time. Some remains loom large on the landscape. Others are harder to find such as underwater wrecks and hidden urban archaeology. Table A gives an outline of the archaeology to be found in Kerry.

Table A	Mesolithic 7,000BC -4,000BC	Neolithic 4,000BC -2,000BC	Bronze Age 2,000BC -700BC	Iron Age 700BC -700AD	Early Christian (6th AD - 11th AD)	Early Medieval (12th AD- 14th AD)	Late Medieval (15th AD - 16th AD)	Post Medieval
Middens (rubbish heaps)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Mines	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Pre Bog Field Systems	•	•	•					
Megalithic Tombs		•	•					
Fullachta Fiadh		•	•	•	•			
Cairns		•	•	•	•			
Rock Art		•	•					
Ring Barrows		•	•	•	•			
Henges		•	•					
Stone rows & Standing stones				•	•			
Stone Circles			•	•				
Inland Promontory Forts			•	•	•			
Toghers (bog causeways)			•	•	•	•	•	•
Ringforts			•	•	•	•		
Clachans				•	•	•	•	•
Ogham Stones				•	•	•		
Early Ecclesiastical Structures				•	•	•	•	•
Coastal Promontory Forts				•	•	•	•	•
Ballun Stones					•	•	•	
High Crosses					•	•	•	•
Souterrains			•	•	•	•		
Holy Wells					•	•	•	•
Round Towers					•	•	•	
Monasteries					•	•	•	•
Castles						•	•	•
Tower houses						•	•	•

(HERITAGE SECTION KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL)

Ogham Stone: Kerry is noted for the high number of Ogham Stones, standing stones and stone circles.

Wreck, one of many wrecks which litter the Kerry coastline - over 2000

Gleensck Viaduct Dingle Railway near Glenbeigh and Kells is an example of post medieval industry archaeology.

3 (B.4) Geology

The basic rock type in Kerry is sedimentary. The geological formation of these rocks took millions of years. The oldest in the county, almost 410 millions years old, are located on the Dingle peninsula. Chalk, located at only two sites in Ireland, can be found at Brennan's Glen near Killarney. Limestone can be seen in many locations including outcrops at Fenit. Sandstone appears in different colours depending on nearby materials. Therefore one can find red sandstone (iron oxide) or green (chlorite) as seen in Moll's gap.

One can expect to find many fossils in Kerry. One of the most important is the Valentia Island Tetrapod Trackway, discovered in 1993. Consisting of almost 200 foot and tail prints, it is noted as the oldest, and largest of it's kind in the world. Other fossils found in Kerry include that of a tree bark, dating back to 500 million years ago.

Kerry has a mining tradition going back 4,000 years. The oldest copper mines in Europe are in Killarney, mined from the Bronze Age intermittently until the 1800s while Valentia Island slate quarry is also internationally known.

Caves are plentiful in the county as the table shows.

TYPE	EXAMPLE	COMMENT
Sea	Pigeon's Cave, Ballybunion Ferriter's Cave, Dingle.	Both of these caves are noted for their roof formations.
Underground	Crag Cave, Castleisland.	This show cave has examples of notable underground limestone features.
Lake	Muckross Lake, Killarney.	Lake water has eroded into the limestone leaving incredible formations

3 (B.5) Flora and Fauna

The majestic combination of sea and land has resulted in a wide diversity of habitats in Kerry. Add climate, location and the Gulf Stream and one is assured of a spectacular array of flora and fauna. There are many Red Data List species in Kerry. There are some examples on the following page.

HABITAT	WOOD LAND	GRASS LAND	WATER AND WET LAND	OPEN SEA COASTAL	BOG AND LAND	MOUNTAIN	ARTIFICIAL
BIRDS							
Pintail			•				
Merlin	•	•			•		
Grey Partridge		•					
Golden Plover	•						
Little Tern				•			
Twite		•					
Barnacle Geese		•					
Storm Petrel				•			
Whooper Swan		•	•				
Greenland W-F goose					•		
Brent Geese		•		•			
Peregrine					•	•	•
Chough		•		•			
AMPHIBIANS							
Natterjack Toad			•	•			
FISH							
Sea Lamprey			•	•			
River Lamprey			•	•			
Killarney Shad			•				
Atlantic Salmon			•				
MAMMALS							
Lesser Horseshoe Bat	•						•
Pipistrelle	•		•				•
Pine Marten	•						
Badger	•	•					
Otter			•	•	•		
VASULAR PLANTS							
Sea Pea	•						
Kerry Lily	•						
Alpine Lady's Mantle						•	
Hoary Whitlowgrass						•	
Alpine Saw-Wort						•	
Blue-eyed Grass					•		
Irish lady's Tresses					•		
Slender Naiad			•				
Penny Royal			•				
Killarney Fern			•				

Kerry has many rare flora. Our climate of cool summers, high rainfall and mild winters means many sub tropical; and alpine species - flower, moss, tree, scrub or liverwort can be seen here.

- Lusitanian species normally found in Spain and Portugal thrive in the Southwest of Ireland. Common examples are Arbutus (Strawberry Tree) and St. Patrick's cabbage
- Arctic/alpine flowers can be seen at best in the Brandon range. Lady's Mantle and Hoary Whitlowgrass are just two examples.
- American tree and plant species can also be seen. e.g. firs and spruces, Fuschia from South America and Blue Eyed grass from North America.
- One can also add a long list of brophytes (mosses and liverworts) to the list. Kerry has about 75% of all such species to be found in Ireland and United Kingdom.

In terms of woodland Kerry has the largest area of native wood cover in Ireland. Oakwoods in Killarney lie alongside one of only three Yew woods in Europe. Throughout the county one is likely to find unusual trees such as Californian spruces, sequoias and even Postcard Trees from New Zealand.

Kerry's coastline and islands attract divers, dolphins and leatherback turtles. The warm waters, heated by the Gulf Stream have produced magnificent underwater vistas. A variety of sealife frequents the coast including humpback, Sperm and Fin whales, bottlenose, common and striped dolphins. The Great Blasket is a major grey seal breeding ground while Kenmare Bay shelters the common seal.

There is a large diversity of birdlife in Kerry mainly due to the many habitats here and proximity to main bird migration routes.

Many of the wildlife found in Kerry are unique. Some species are endangered, some are indigenous to Kerry.

3 (B.6) Legislation

Kerry's heritage is protected in a number of ways. There is legislation in place to conserve it. Some national legislation covering heritage includes:

LEGISLATION	FLORA	FAUNA	WILDLIFE HABITATS	LANDSCAPES	SEASCAPES	ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBJECTS	MONUMENTS	HERITAGE OBJECTS	GEOLOGY	WRECKS	HERITAGE GARDENS AND PARKS	ARCHITECTURE	INLAND WATERWAYS
National Monuments Act 1930-1994						•	•	•		•		•	
Local Government (Planning and Development) Acts 1963-2000				•	•								
Canals Act 1986													
Environmental Protection Agency Act 1992	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Heritage Act 1995	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Wildlife Act 1976	•	•	•	•	•						•		
National Cultural Institutions Act 1997						•	•	•					
Whale Fisheries Act 1937	•	•	•										
Bourn Vincent Memorial Park Act 1932				•									
Marine Institute Act 1991	•	•	•										

Ireland's entry into the EU has meant more consideration of heritage and the environment...

Various European Directives have been introduced to Ireland. Examples are:

- Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (Council Directive 85/337/EEC)
- Birds Directive (Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds)
- Habitat Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild flora and fauna).

In Kerry we have several environmental designations including Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs - habitat) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs birds). Some internationally important sites have UNESCO and Ramsaar designations

Who is in Charge of our Heritage?

Everyone has an obligation and the right to know their heritage. We all deal with heritage on a daily basis. Therefore its conservation begins with the individual. However there are various bodies and agencies that have responsibility for and interest in our diverse inheritance.

LEGISLATION

	FLORA	FAUNA	WILDLIFE HABITATS	LANDSCAPES	SEASCAPES	ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBJECTS	MONUMENTS	HERITAGE OBJECTS	GEOLOGY	WRECKS	HERITAGE GARDENS AND PARKS	ARCHITECTURE	INLAND WATERWAYS
Dept. of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Heritage council	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Duchas													
-National Monuments and Historic Properties						•	•	•		•		•	
-National Inventory in Architectural Heritage													•
-Parks and Wildlife	•	•	•	•	•								
- Inland waterways													•
-Education and Visitor Services	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Environmental Protection Agency	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Dept of Environment and Local Government													
- County Councils	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
- Town Councils	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Dept. of the Marine and Natural Resources	•	•	•						•				
Geological Survey of Ireland			•	•					•				
National Museum						•	•	•					

