# Kiltimagh (Coillte Magh – The wooded Plain)

Kiltimagh's past is a blend of folklore and history. According to folklore, the name derives form a Fir Bolg chieftain, Maghu, who fled the battle of Moytura and settled on Sliabh Cairn, c1000 BC. The cairn at the cliff, above Craggagh School, marks his grave. [A **cairn** is a man-made pile of stones. The word comes from the Irish 'carn' and Scotts 'càrn' (plural càirn). **Karnische Voralpen** is a German placename (one of many) with Celtic origins).]

The whole district was formerly wooded, hence the number of local place names with the prefix 'coill' ('wood') or 'coillte' ('woods'). George Browne, a local landlord, was responsible for starting a market in this part of Mayo, at the end of the 17th century. Initially the village was called Newtown Brown but, by the beginning of the 18th century, the name had changed to Kiltimagh. The town, as it is today is the product of the hard work, initiative and imagination of one **Fr Denis O'Hara, Parish Priest**.

His first achievement was to build a new Church and eight National Schools. With the help of **the St Louis Sisters**, primary and technical schools were set up, to provide instruction in household management, sewing, carpentry and horticulture and to foster a sense of **self-sufficiency**. He was responsible for the town's comprehensive circular roads, sewage and gas systems, the Town Hall, the Cottage Hospital and the 'People's Park'. He also begged on behalf of the poor - to do this he wrote to local and foreign newspapers. He stirred up considerable interest in the plight of Kiltimagh. He was a member of the Congested District Board. He defended local tenants against the tyranny of the local landlord (a Mr.Ormsby).
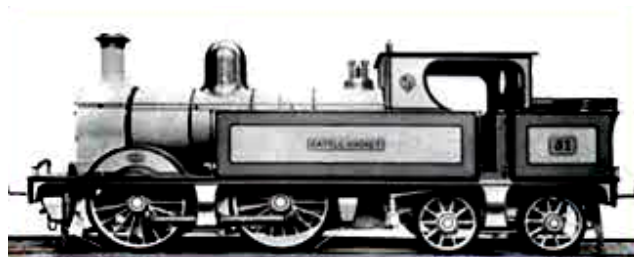
Railway Station Museum

Because of the extent of emigration from the area, since before the Famine, the Railway Station always played a central rôle in the town's fortunes. All the necessities of life were transported through the Station - sugar, flour, spirits, newspapers - even films for the local cinema - while out-goings included cattle, sheep, pigs, beet and eggs.

In 1989, the Goods Store was converted into a museum. It incorporates two railway carriages, to commemorate the thousands who had to emigrate during hard times. The former Stationmaster's House is

now an Exhibition Centre and features regular art exhibitions throughout the year. The whole station area features sculptures by national and local artists.

Lios Ard

Kiltimagh is in the parish of Killedan, which has a long and distinguished history. The High Fort (Lios Ard), is the highest of eight forts in the townland (dwellings thought to date from between 600/900 AD). The Lios forms a circle on the top of a high hill, surrounded by a row of beech trees, which make it easy to see for miles around.

Antóin Ó Raifteirí – Poet

Anthony Raftery (Ó Raifteirí) was born in Killedan, near Kiltimagh in County Mayo. His father was a weaver. He had come to Killedan from County Sligo to work for the local landlord, Frank Taaffe. Raftery's mother had nine children. Anthony was an intelligent and inquisitive child. Some time between 1785 and 1788, Anthony and the other children contracted smallpox. Within three weeks, eight had died. Anthony was struck blind.

Anthony made his living by playing the fiddle and performing his songs and poems in the mansions of the Anglo-Irish gentry. His work draws on the forms and idiom of Irish poetry. Raftery came at the end of the Gaelic literary tradition. In common with earlier poets, Antóin had a patron in the local landlord, Frank Taffe. The Taaffes were of Welsh ancestry, the name meaning 'son of David'. One night he sent a servant on an errand. The servant took Antóin with him, both going by horseback.

Antóin was responsible for an accident in which the Landlord's horse, which he was riding, fell and died. Antóin was banished and commenced the life of a wandering musician. He wrote the poem 'Cill Aodáin', in praise of the place of his birth and of his erstwhile landlord.

None of his poems were written down during his life. They were collected from local people by Douglas Hyde (the first President of Ireland), Lady Gregory and other scholars. Raftery, like a gentleman, always wore a long frieze coat and corduroy breeches.