

# WONDER WANDER AN SPIDÉAL



NATIONAL INVENTORY of ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe Galway County Council

## INSTRUCTIONS

### TAKE A 'WONDER WANDER' THROUGH AN SPIDÉAL:

- Wander through the area, find the picture clues and delve into the stories that our village tells through its rich architectural heritage.
- Take ten minutes to spot the features on our scavenger hunt, or simply relax and enjoy our carefully curated self-guided tour of An Spidéal.
- Always remember to glance up, peer down, and never cease to WONDER!

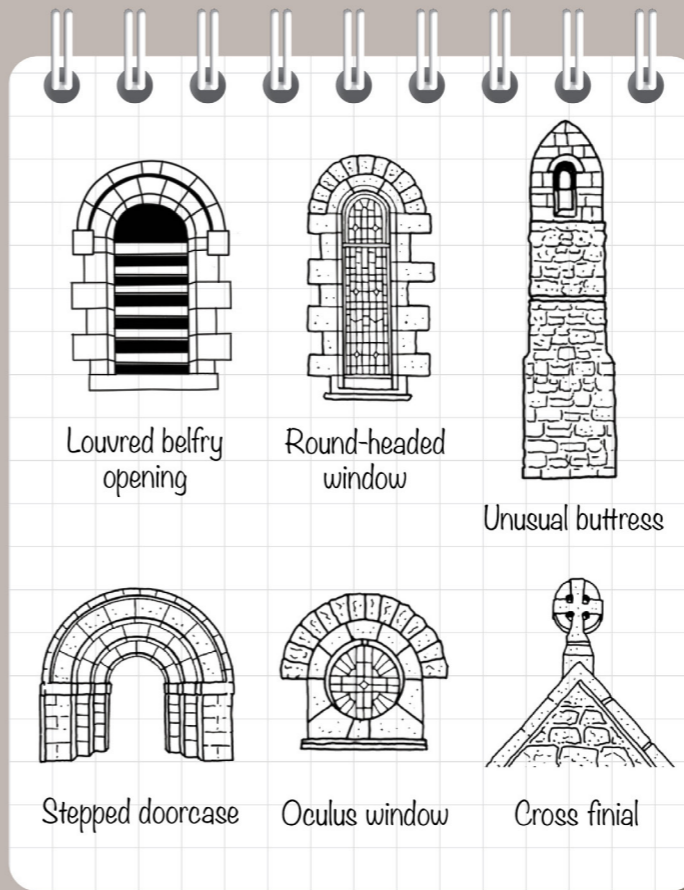


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## SCAVENGER HUNT

HOW MANY OF THESE FEATURES CAN YOU SPOT AT ST ENDA'S CHURCH?



## THE STORY OF AN SPIDÉAL

The sheltered inlet at An Spidéal has offered safe harbour on the northern shore of Galway Bay for many centuries. Local tradition holds that St Enda, patron saint of the village, stopped here on his way to the island of Inis Mór, where he established a monastery.

The current village is centred around a crossroads and evolved to meet the needs of the local agricultural and fishing community. A pier was constructed in the early 19th century to develop the harbour, and a second pier was built in the wake of the Great Famine, to offer local employment at a time of extreme hardship.

In the early 20th century the village's association with the Irish language came to prominence when Coláiste Chonnacht, one of Ireland's first Irish-language colleges, relocated to nearby Sheeanroe House.

Today it remains a proud Gaeltacht area at the gateway to Connemara, with strong literary connections and a vibrant traditional music scene.

In recognition of the special character of An Spidéal, Galway County Council has designated an Architectural Conservation Area. Together with the diligent efforts of the local community, this designation helps in the management and enhancement of its unique social history and wealth of architectural treasures. It is hoped that this much loved village will continue to be valued, cherished and enjoyed by future generations.

Want to learn more about An Spidéal Architectural Conservation Area and other Architectural Conservation Areas in the county? Contact Galway County Council's Architectural Conservation Officer.



## TICK THE BOX AS YOU WONDER

### 1. OLD MONASTERY

Behind the stone wall is the site of a 17th century parish church known locally as the 'old monastery'. It is likely that the name is associated with an earlier religious house, which is said to have stood on the site.



A small room to the western end of the church may have provided accommodation for the priest.

Along this coast, items washed ashore from shipwrecks were known as "raics". Following a storm local people would search the shoreline for useful materials cast up by the sea. After you finish the trail, why not pay a visit to An Spidéal Beach, just outside the ACA, for a spot of your own beachcombing?

### 3. MORTUARY CHAPEL

Within the graveyard is a small chapel for the laying out of the dead and where prayers were said before burial.



Dating to the late 18th century, an inscription over the now blocked doorway records the name of the 'Gentleman' who commissioned its construction.

Wander the graveyard to see memorials spanning three centuries, these include headstones, Celtic crosses and a chest tomb.

The flat stone ledgers are most numerous and have hand carved inscriptions and detailing. The cross within a rising sun is a recurring motif. Can you spot the hand of the same stonemason at work across a number of memorials?

### 4. THE BATTLE OF SPIDDAL

This fine house with arched doorway stands at the crossroads where, on 14th May 1921, the village was drawn directly into the War of Independence. Locally remembered as the Battle of Spiddal, at dawn volunteers from the East Connemara Brigade of the IRA ambushed members of the Royal Irish Constabulary. There followed a period of intense reprisals in the area by the Crown Forces, reflecting the wider violence of the conflict's final months.

It is said that bullet marks from the battle could be seen in the walls of surrounding buildings for many years after the assault.

### 5. S. MAC PROINNSÉAS

The shopfront of this former general store is influenced by the Art Nouveau, a vibrant movement in art and architecture that developed in Europe during the 1890s.

Its large display windows, with finely crafted stained glass featuring flowing nature-inspired motifs, are reminders of a time when every shopkeeper dressed their frontage to impress.

### 6. FAIR DAY

On fair days this street was thronged with livestock and people, as farmers and their families descended on the village for the trading of cattle, pigs and poultry, as well as the buying and selling of goods like eggs, butter and turf. In a rural community such as this, shaped as much by agriculture as fishing, fair days were central to the economic and social life of the village.

In addition to the old pier, Alexander Nimmo also oversaw the construction of this road, climbing the mountain to Moycullen. Nimmo was credited with opening up the west, by finding ways to traverse Connemara's rough terrain and for "making its crooked ways straight."

The archway and gate lodge, further up the hill, mark one of the entrances to Spiddal House, once the seat of the Morris family, Lords of Killanin.

### 7. TIGH HUGHES PUBLIC HOUSE

Like many coastal pubs, Tigh Hughes was once known as an 'early house'. Here, fishermen returning to harbour after a haul could partake of a customary "medium", or half-pint, during what would have been considered unsociable hours. The pub is now celebrated as a place for traditional music, where folk group De Dannan first took shape, and The Waterboys played to locals while recording their album 'Fisherman's Blues' at Spiddal House.

### 8. ST ENDA'S CHURCH

St Enda's was completed in 1907 to designs by architect William A. Scott, who also designed the former gate lodge, as well as additions to Spiddal House. An expert in the fashionable Arts and Crafts style, Scott was affectionately nicknamed "the drunken man of genius" by William Butler Yeats, reflecting his brilliance as well as his unconventional lifestyle.

Commissioned by Catholic landlord Martin Morris, the second Lord Killanin, the church is a striking example of the Hiberno-Romanesque revival style. The interior includes stained-glass windows inspired by the local landscape, as well as a memorial window by the celebrated An Túr Gloine artist, Catherine O'Brien, which commemorates George Henry Morris, who died in military service during the First World War.

Discover the wealth of architectural details from St Enda's in our Scavenger Hunt.

### 9. FORMER ST ENDA'S CONVENT

Built in 1923 for the Sisters of Mercy, the former convent is a reminder of the long tradition of education and community service that was provided by the nuns. Have you noticed that the rounded parts of the building with cone shaped roofs repeat the semi-circular apse of St Enda's Church?

### 10. TIGH LAL COTTAGE

Said to date from the 18th century, this thatched cottage has been in the care of the O'Flaherty family for generations. Lal O'Flaherty, who lived here all her life, gave the house its name.



Prior to the 1800s many buildings in towns and villages were thatched using local materials and with skills that were passed down through generations. The outbuildings at the rear are said to have served as stabling for postal riders travelling through Connemara.

The cottage is surrounded by a dry stone wall. Characteristic throughout the region, this traditional building technique has received global recognition from UNESCO.

Have you spotted the cast-iron water hydrant, neatly accommodated within the wall of the adjacent laneway?

Installed as a communal source of water for nearby homes and businesses, the hydrant is topped with an acorn-shaped finial.

### 11. LIBRARY

This is the site of the former Male National School. The female school was located just across the road, reflecting the common practice of organising national schools separately for boys and girls.



The circular openings, set high in the gable ends are believed to have served as ventilators, part of a growing emphasis on fresh air and hygiene. The building remains in community use today as a busy library.

As you venture back along the coastal path, look out for the statue of Máirtín Ó Cadhain, standing alongside a commemorative stone honouring local Irish-language writers and folklorists.



As the industry expanded, a new larger pier was built further to the west in the 1870s.

# AN SPIDÉAL

## ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVATION AREA

# WALKING TRAIL

### SPIDDAL

WANDER THE ROUTE USING THE PICTURE CLUES OR BREAK IT UP AND WONDER...



### AN SPIDÉAL SPIDDAL 10

#### Where do places get their name?

The name An Spidéal derives from the Irish word 'ospidéal' meaning hospital. It's understood that a leper hospital existed here during the medieval period, when, due to fear of contagion, people with leprosy were segregated from the general population.

In later centuries a fever hospital was established here to treat outbreaks of typhus and cholera during the Great Famine.

#### MAP LEGEND

- Architectural Conservation Area
- Walking Route, 1km
- Trail Number
- Picture Clue Number
- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Scenic View
- Library

