

# The Barrow Experience

*A story through time*



Bagenalstown. Co. Carlow





Past, present and future  
of the Barrow Valley  
brought to life.



The Barrow Experience is a wonderful and unique series of ten interconnecting gardens which bring to life the history, folklore and heritage of the beautiful Barrow Valley.

It is situated in the grounds of BEAM Services CLG, a training centre for people with intellectual disability based at Regent Street, Bagenalstown Co Carlow, on a picturesque and peaceful site that bounds the canal off the River Barrow.

Designed by John Murphy the Barrow Experience was developed with two key objectives in mind, firstly, we wanted to provide a healthy and therapeutic working environment for the members attending our service. Our second objective was to develop a beautiful water-fronted site into a major tourism driven initiative for Bagenalstown.





## *Druids Wood*

In this garden we celebrate our wonderfully rich Celtic heritage. In particular, we focus on the Druidic beliefs – the Druids were an ancient order of Celtic priests. The centrepiece of this garden is an interactive thirteen-month astrology calendar. There is also a limestone structure outlining, the ancient Ogham alphabet, the Celtic festivals and the Celtic tree of life.

## *The Convent Garden*

The design here is intended to represent the small but intimate gardens found in convents right across the country, allowing nun's to spend some time reflecting in private. It features a large central flowerbed, with rose trees. The Presentation Order gifted the site to BEAM in 2000, and this garden is a fitting thank you for their generosity and for their decades of service to Bagenalstown.

## *The French Garden*

The typical style of French garden involves a strong focus on symmetry and the principle of imposing order on nature. This very simply styled garden genuflects to the traditional form of French gardens, some of which – like the majestic gardens of Versailles – are built on a grand scale, but with simplicity at their very heart.



## *Monastic Courtyard*

This garden is surrounded by a ruined stonewall, which harks back to the rich monastic heritage of the area. In the enclosed courtyard there is a scriptorium (a room set aside for writing) built from locally quarried stone. A beautiful scaled replica of a Clochán (beehive hut) forms a centrepiece of this garden.

## *Co-operation Ireland Garden*

This garden is our homage to Co-operation Ireland, an all-island peace-building charity that promotes interaction, dialogue and practical collaboration between communities. This theme commemorates the fact that Bagenalstown won the 2012 Co-operation Ireland Pride of Place Award.

## *The Water Garden*

This is our tribute to the River Barrow, which played such a huge role in the social and commercial development of our entire hinterland. The large pool includes three carved limestone sculptures depicting the mythology of how the Barrow got its name.

## *Reflective Garden*

This garden with its limestone seating and water-feature is intended to create an environment of reflectiveness, where visitors can sit and relax and remember loved ones.





## Potager Garden

A potager garden is a traditional kitchen garden, normally separated from the rest of the residential garden. Here our members hone their gardening crafts and develop a deep appreciation of the bounty of nature and our obligations to protect our natural environment. We adopt an organic approach in this garden, conscious of how fragile our ecosystem can be.

## Dinn Righ

This symbolic garden represents Dinn Righ in nearby Leighlinbridge. Dinn Righ was the seat of the High Kings of South Leinster for over 2,000 years.

## Slí an Chroí (Pathway to the heart)

The primary concept of this design is to acknowledge the riverside location. This reflects throughout the garden by use of the “Ripple” motif. The idea of ripples in the water reflects the nearby river and its significance historically, it also reflects the impact that BEAM has on its members lives, how one intervention can have a ripple effect. The outside area contains a number of distinctive zones: the ripples radiate from the main building and from an existing landscape structure (the water garden). The meditation pavilion (Seomra Comhra) relates to the external landscaping in a way that turns it introvertly, it cocoons the area and offers it protection.





Graphic design by Under the Oak Tree Designs

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**Opening Times: June, July, August  
Weekends only 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
Other times by appointment.**

**Facilities: Toilets, wheelchair accessible,  
car park. Admission fee applies.  
Group discounts available.**

