

Patrick Pearse's Cottage

Teach an Phiarsaigh ('Pearse's Cottage'), a traditional 3 bedroom cottage set in the stunning landscape of South Conamara was built by Pádraig Mac Piarais (Patrick Pearse) in 1909 as a holiday home. Pearse is best remembered for his role as one of the leaders of the 1916 Rising, but he was also a significant journalist, poet, dramatist and teacher, and Ros Muc and its people had a huge influence on his writing. At that time Ros Muc was one of the strongest Irish-speaking areas of Ireland, and it remains so today.

Pearse first visited Ros Muc in April 1903 at the invitation of a local school teacher who was teaching adults to read and write Irish, something that was rarely taught in schools at the time. Pearse immediately fell in love with the place and the people.

Pearse purchased the plot of land on the banks of Loch Oiriúlach in 1905 and his cottage was complete by 1909. Thatched cottages were then looked down on as the dwellings of the poor and uneducated, so it was remarkable at the time that a middle-class Dubliner such as Pearse would choose to spend his holidays in such a dwelling. But Pearse had huge admiration and respect for the language and culture of the people of Ros Muc and wished to live among them as much as possible. He told a friend *'We could have here a little Gaelic kingdom of our own.'*¹

Colm Ó Gaora, a boy during Pearse's early visits, described his activities: *'Pearse didn't hold himself aloof from the people in the area. He would frequent the cabins of the poor people, talking and exchanging lore with the old-timers at their firesides, but even more often listening and observing their wisdom.'*²

Pearse visited Ros Muc at every opportunity, bringing with him friends and family. His sister Mary Brigid describes their arrival at the cottage: *'The cottage door was flung open and the red glow from the turf fire shone out into the dusky evening, in a friendly fashion. The kitchen presented a most enticing appearance with its quaint oaken dresser and chairs, the shining cups and crockery ranged on the shelves the well-spread tea table, so cosy and appetising, and the turf fire on the hearth over which hung a singing kettle. My brother Pat was in high spirits and gave us 'the freedom of his country cottage' in quite a regal manner.'*

Teach an Phiarsaigh along with several other notable buildings in the area was burnt by the Black and Tans during the War of Independence in 1921. It was later restored by the people of Ros Muc in Pearse's memory. The Cottage was declared a National Monument in 1943 and it today proudly cared for and maintained by the Office of Public Works.

¹ Seán Mac Giollarnáth, *Conmara*, 1954.

² Colm Ó Gaora, *Mise*.