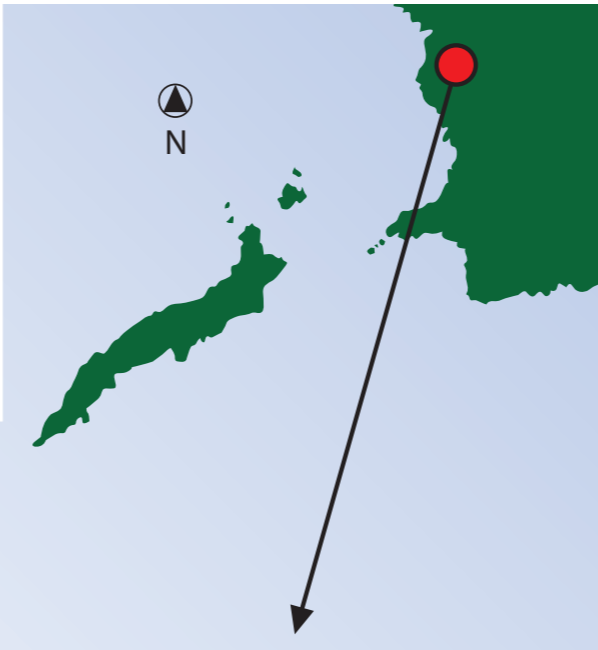
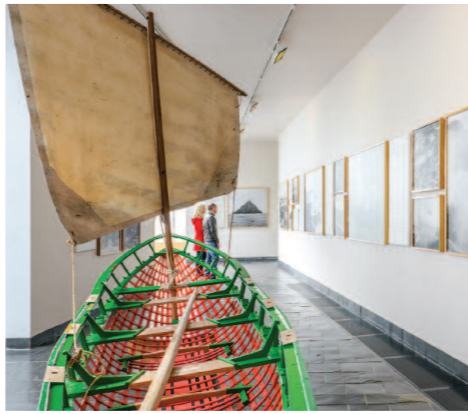


...those rugged peasants  
as soon as I learn to follow,  
electrified me.  
It was as though Homer  
had come alive.  
Its vitality was inexhaustible,  
yet it was rhythmic,  
a literature, formal, artificial,  
always on the point of  
bursting into poetry.



Na Mná ag an dTobar Women at the Well



# Ionad an Bhlascaoid Mhóir The Great Blasket Centre

## VISITORS GUIDE



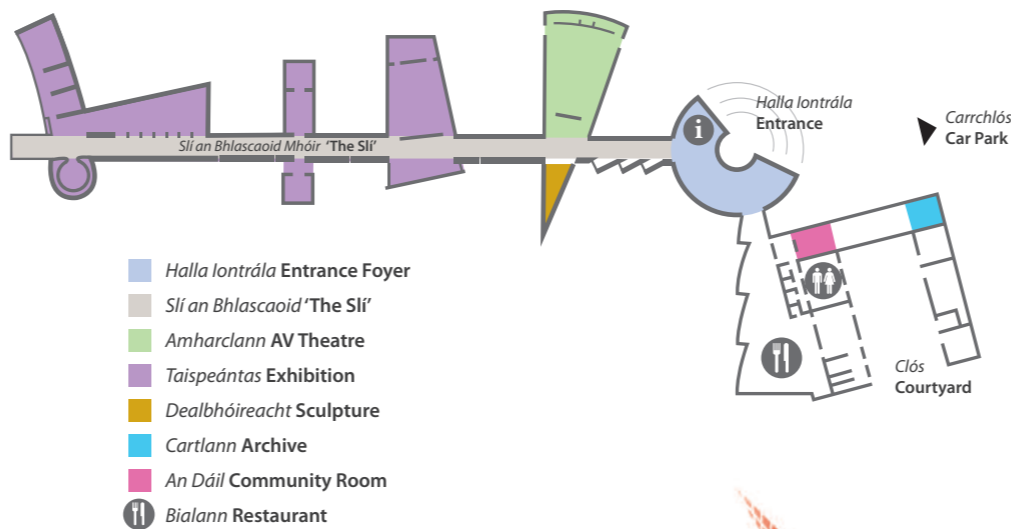
### Oibreacha Ealaíne

Mar chuid den ndearadh iomlán ailtireachta, tá oibreacha ealaíne fite fuaite leis an bhfoirgneamh agus leis an dtaispeántas. Orthu sin tá An Turas, an fhuinneog ghloine dhaite ag an bhFáiltiú, a dhear Róisín de Buitléar agus a thug Kawala's Glass Studios i mBaile Átha Cliath chun críche. Is dócha gurb é an saothar is mó dá leithéid in Éirinn. Michael Quane a dhear An tOileánach, an obair dhealbhóireachta lasmuigh den bhfoirgneamh agus tá an dealbhóireacht cré-umha Na Mná ag an dTobar le Cathy Carmen mar chuid de Thaispeántas an Oileáin. Brian King a dheim na hoibreacha phlástair sa tSlí, an pasáiste fada. Is í Patricia McKenna a dheim an obair shnite sa Bhiailann.

### Art Works

As part of the overall architectural design, art works have been incorporated as integral elements of the building and exhibition. These include *The Journey*, the glasswork window at the reception area, designed by Róisín de Buitléar and executed by Kawala's Glass Studios. It is probably the largest secular glasswork in Ireland. The life-size stone sculpture outside the building of *The Islandman* was designed by Michael Quane, while Cathy Carmen's *Women at the Well* bronze work is part of the Island Exhibition. There are plaster castings by Brian King on the right hand wall of Slí an Bhlascaoid, the long corridor. Patricia McKenna designed the woven piece in the restaurant.

### IONAD AN BHLASCAOID MHÓIR THE GREAT BLASKET CENTRE



Dún Chaoin, Dingle Peninsula, Co. Kerry  
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www.blasket.ie



An Turas The Journey



Dún Chaoin, Co. Chiarraí  
Dunquin, Co. Kerry



# Ionad an Bhlascaoid Mhóir The Basket Centre

Tógadh Ionad an Bhlascaoid Mhóir i 1993 in ómós do oidhreacht shuaithinseach an Bhlascaoid agus don dteanga dhúchais.

The Great Basket Centre, built in 1993, honours the unique heritage of the Basket Island and celebrates the native Irish language.

Do mhair daoine go leanúnach ar an mBlascaod, atá 5km amach ó Chorca Dhuibhne, ar feadh trí chéad bliain ar a laghad go dtí gur tréigeadh an t-oileán ar fad i 1953. Mar gheall ar iargúlacht an oileáin do choimeád na hoileánaigh greim ar a gcultúr agus ar a dtraidisiún féin agus go háirithe ar labhairt na Gaeilge, croilár an traidisiúin sin. Tá scéal na n-oileánach á chur i láthair san Ionad chomh maith lena mbearta litríochta.

Tógadh an tIonad mar thoradh ar chomhoibriú fiúntach idir Fhondúireacht an Bhlascaoid, eagras áitúil, agus an Rialtas. Is le Heritage Services, OPW, an tIonad anois.

## An Litríocht

I dtús na fichiú aoise do tháinig scoláirí ar cuairt go dtí an mBlascaod chun Gaeilge a fhoghlaim agus chun seanchas a bhailiú. Do spreagadar cuid de na hoileánaigh chun scéal a mbeatha a scríobh ina dteanga féin agus tá léargas suaithinseach ina saothar ar an gcrúatan a bhain lena saol ar an oileán. Is iad na trí leabhar is mó a bhfuil cáil orthu:

- An tOileánach le Tomás Ó Criomhthain,
- Peig le Peig Sayers agus
- Fiche Blian ag Fás le Muiris Ó Súilleabháin.

The Great Basket Island, lying 5km off of the West Kerry Coast, was inhabited continuously for at least three hundred years until finally abandoned in 1953. Because of its isolated location, the Basket islanders retained their own culture and tradition, at the heart of which lay their continuing use of the native language of Irish. The centre tells their story and celebrates their unique literary achievements.

The Great Basket Centre is the result of a partnership between the Basket Foundation, a local organisation, and the Irish Government. It is now managed by the Heritage Services, OPW.

## The Literature

In the early years of the 20th century scholars visited the Great Basket to learn Irish and to collect folklore. They encouraged the islanders to write their life stories in their native tongue, and the books they wrote give a unique insight into the hardship of island life. The three best known Island books are:

- An tOileánach (The Islandman) by Tomás Ó Criomhthain
- Peig by Peig Sayers and
- Fiche Blian ag Fás (Twenty Years A-Growing) by Muiris Ó Súilleabháin.

## Tomás Ó Criomhthain

Ar an mBlascaod a saolaíodh Tomás Ó Criomhthain i 1855 agus thug sé a shaol ina iascaire agus ina fheirmeoir. D'fhoghlaim sé conas léamh agus scríobh i mBéarla ar scoil, ach bhí sé daichead éigin bliain nuair a fhoghlaim sé conas scríobh as Gaeilge, rud a chur ar a chumas scéal a bheatha a insint ina theanga féin.

## Tomás Ó Criomhthain

Born on the Great Basket in 1855, Tomás spent his whole life fishing and farming. He had learned to read and write in English at school, but it was only in his forties that he learned to write in Irish, enabling him to describe his life in his own language.



## Peig Sayers

Saolaíodh Peig Sayers ar an míntír i nDún Chaoin i 1853 agus do phós sí fear ón oileán nuair a bhí sí 18 mbliana d'aois. Seanchaí den scoth ba ea í agus is í is mó de scríbhneoirí an oileáin a bhaineann úsáid as an seanchas chun a cuid scéalta a mhaisiú. Níor thug sí léamh ná scríobh na Gaeilge riamh léi agus is é a mac, Míchéal a scríobh a cuid scéalta. D'éag sí i 1958.

## Peig Sayers

Peig was born on the mainland in Dunquin in 1873 and married an Islander when she was 18. She became a masterful storyteller and of all the Island writers Peig resorts most often to traditional tales to illustrate her own observations. She never learned to read or write in Irish and it was her son Míchéal who wrote down her stories from her oral account. She died in 1958.



## Muiris Ó Súilleabháin

Sa bhliain 1904 a saolaíodh Muiris Ó Súilleabháin ar an mBlascaod Mór. Do spreag an scoláire Seoirse Mac Tomáis, a thug a chéad chuairt ar an oileán i 1923, an Súilleabhánach chun scríbhneoireachta. Tá cuntas sa leabhar Fiche Blian ag Fás ar a óige ar an oileán. D'fhag Muiris an Blascaod chun dul isteach sna Gardaí agus d'éag sé go tragóideach i 1950 is gan é ach 46 bliana d'aois.

## Muiris Ó Súilleabháin

Muiris was born on the Great Basket in 1904. The English scholar George Thompson, who visited the island for the first time in 1923, encouraged Muiris to write. His book Twenty Years A-Growing describes his early life on the Island. Muiris left the Island to join the Gardaí and was tragically drowned in 1950 at the early age of 46.



## Saol an Oileáin

Tráth bhí nach mór 200 duine ina gconaí ar an mBlascaod Mór. Saol cruaidh gan mórán áiseanna a bhí acu. Ní raibh siopa, ná dochtúir ná sagart ar an oileán is bhíodh orthu an t-aistear contúirteach a dhéanamh go minic chun na míntíre ag trial ar sheirbhísí. Do bhí bunscóil ar an oileán ach is minic a bhíodh sé deacair múinteoirí a mhealladh chun teacht chun cónaithe ann. Dúnadh an scoil i 1941 nuair ná raibh fágtha ach seisear ar an rolla. Ní raibh aon mheánscoil ar an oileán agus bhíodh a gcuid oideachais críochnaithe ag na leanaí in aois a dó dhéag nó trí dhéag.

Maircréil agus pollóga an t-iasc is mó a ithidís. B'fhearr leo an t-iasc beirthe. Is minic a bhíodh iasc saillte acu sa gheimhreadh. Bhíodh prátaí leis acu, caoireoil, arán tí, uibheacha agus bainne. Ní ró-mhinic a bhíodh feoil ar bord acu.

## Tréigean

Dála a lán pobal ar an míntír do sciob an imirce na daoine óga go Meiriceá is níor fhan ina ndiaidh ach daoine aosta nó daoine ar dhroch-shláinte. Tar éis achainíocha a fháil ó na hoileánaigh do bheartaigh an Rialtas go dtréigfí an t-oileán ar 17 Samhain 1953. D'fhág an líon tí deireannach an bhliain dar gcionn. Chuir an Rialtas tithe agus paiste beag talún ar fáil ar an míntír i nDún Chaoin do na hoileánaigh a bhí fágtha. Maireann dornán de na hoileánaigh agus a sliocht fós sa cheantar.

## Island Life

At one stage there were nearly 200 inhabitants on the Great Basket. They lived a harsh life with few facilities. There was no shop, doctor or priest on the Island so that they had to make the hazardous journey to the mainland to avail of these services. For a time there was a primary school, but it was often difficult to get teachers to stay on the Basket. The primary school closed in 1941 when only six pupils remained on the roll. As the island had no secondary school most island children completed their education by the age of twelve or thirteen.

Mackerel and Pollack were the main fish eaten. The Islanders preferred their fish boiled. Salted fish was the staple diet in the winter months. They also had potatoes, mutton, homemade bread, eggs and milk, but would have eaten meat only at certain times of the year.

## Abandonment

Like many communities on the mainland, emigration stole the young islanders away to America, leaving only the old and the infirm. The Irish Government, after considering pleas from the islanders, decided that the Island should be abandoned and 17th November 1953 was set as the official evacuation date. The last family left the following year. The Government provided the remaining Island families with a house and a few acres of land on the mainland in Dunquin, where very few of the islanders and their descendants remain today.