



Ards Friary

Retreat & Contemplative Ecology Centre

A Franciscan Dream for the Earth: A Laudato Si Community.

All praise be yours, my Lord,
through all you have made...



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Most High, all powerful,
good Lord, Yours are the
praises, the glory, the
honour, and all blessing.

To You alone, Most High,
do they belong,
and no one is worthy to
mention Your name.

Be praised, my Lord, through
all you have made...

About Us

Capuchin Franciscans of Ireland

The Capuchin Franciscans, in Ireland since 1615, are part of a story that goes all the way back to St. Francis of Assisi who, in 1209, having heard the call of Christ from the Cross to "Go and Rebuild my Church!", dedicated himself and his first followers to the living of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the service of the Church through a life of brotherhood, prayer and sharing the Good News with all creation. In so doing he founded what would grow to be a huge religious family of brothers and sisters who continue to spread the Franciscan message of Peace and Joy. Recognised for his holiness of life and joy-filled contemplation of creation by all people, of all spiritual traditions, since then St. Francis remains the inspiration and the model for Franciscan life to this day.

The Capuchin story is one of renewal. In the early 16th Century a new shoot of Franciscan life emerged with our brothers setting out from what they knew in trust and hope with a desire to reaffirm the contemplative dimension of our spirituality. This desire for renewal, and the courage to set out, remain central values for us, and our Laudato Si Community is one expression of this.



CAPUCHIN
FRANCISCANS
PROVINCE OF IRELAND



Ards Friary

Retreat & Contemplative Ecology Centre

...through Brother Sun,
who brings the day;
and through whom you
give us light.

How beautiful is he, how
radiant in all his splendour;
Of you, Most High,
he bears the likeness...



Ards Friary: Past & Future

'For what has been we say thanks,
for what is to be we say yes!!'

Ards Friary is a 200 acre (81 hectare) demesne of mixed land - including farm, wood, park, and beach - situated on the western shores of Sheephaven Bay on the north-west coast of Co Donegal, Ireland. It is an historic designed landscape laid out in the 18th Century, and managed by the Steward-Bam family into the beginning of the 20th Century.

The Capuchin's purchased the land in the 1930's, and up until the 1970's the Friary was the place for educating the provinces students. Following the move of the students to Dublin, the friary became a retreat and conference centre (with a vibrant Coffee Shop and much used Shop), a function it still maintains in collaboration with the Diocese of Raphoe. The Friars in the community at Ards have a long and profound relationship with the people they serve, and the sacrament of reconciliation has always been and remains a particularly significant part of our ministry here.

A new vision for Ards Friary has emerged over the last few years. We, as a province, have for some time now been engaged in a conversation regarding the renewal of our Capuchin life, and this has inevitably included questions about what our hopes and aspirations for Ards Friary might be, and also how we can answer the call of *Laudato Si*. Whilst maintaining important dimensions of our mission at Ards, the Friars are actively creating a new future for Ards Friary.



...through Sister Moon
and the stars in heaven

you formed them
clear and precious
and beautiful...



Vision & Purpose



Our vision is one of *a world that is naturally beautiful, bountiful, just and life-giving, where we are able to remember we are all interconnected and learn to live as brothers and sisters with all of creation.*

Guided by this, the call of Pope Francis in *Laudato Si*, and our own Franciscan tradition, we have begun the process of responding to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor by developing a plan for our future which integrates our contemplative spirituality, with our learning in ecology, and our renewal of fraternity. In this we have been helped by our Project Consultant Mr Kevin O'Boyle.

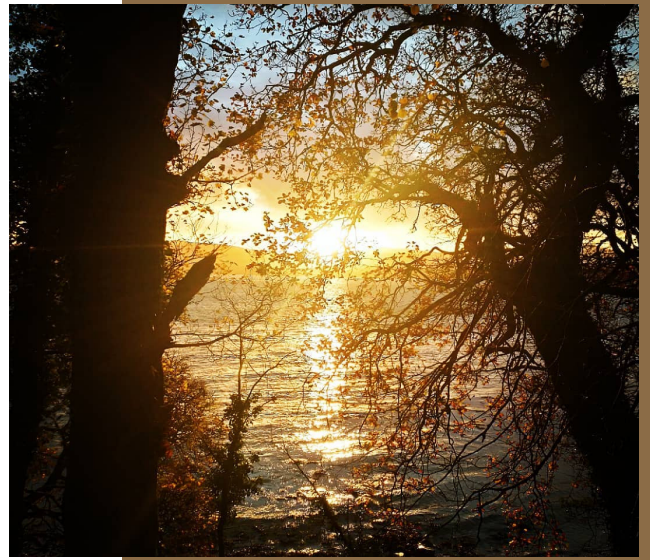
Our purpose is:

- to offer a place of religious and spiritual encounter to all in a place of wonderful natural beauty;
- and to be a community that supports nature to express itself fully, utilising the best of current ecological and environmental understanding and practice.

...through Brother Wind,
and through the air,
cloudy and serene,
and every kind of weather
through which You give
sustenance to Your
creatures...



Spirituality



A Parable For Our Spiritual Journey

A young fish swimming in the ocean heard about something called water. This young fish was curious about what water was and when she met an older fish she asked him: "what is water? Where can I find water? The elder-fish told her to travel upwards as far as she could go and to look above her, and she would eventually see water coming towards her from far away. So the young fish did this. She travelled upwards, and looked towards the sky, and there in the heavens she saw something coming towards her and discovered water. And, for a while, she was satisfied that she knew what water was.

But what if that young fish were to discover more fully that she lives all the time in an ocean of water, that this very water surrounds her. And that the currents of this water give her life. And what if she were to discover further that her body itself, as science tells us, is mainly liquid. So not only is the water all round her, but water is in her as the very core part of her nature.

Water is not just rain in a distant place far above her, nor the home in which she lives and moves and has her being, but is part of her very essence.

Similarly, in our relationship with God, we trust that were invited not just to relate as friends to a God who is external to us. We recognize that the Divine Energy is like the ocean we live in, with its currents and movements, and so our achievements, our sorrows and joys are held in God, like the fish is held in the ocean. And we gratefully acknowledge the dignity that belongs to all since all is graced with the Spirit that leads from image to likeness.



The Friars provide pastoral ministry for the people of this part of Donegal. Working closely with the clergy of the Diocese of Raphoe the friars are involved in many different forms of ministry.

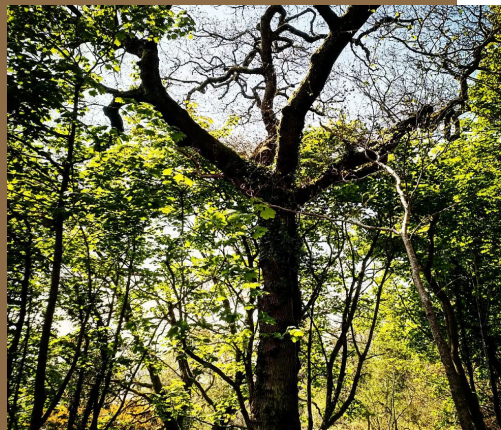
- Daily Mass.
- Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- Support of local parishes.
- Regular contact with Schools and youth groups.
- Spiritual Direction and Guidance.
- Parish visitation.
- Weekend Liturgy ministry.
- Accompaniment to Order of Secular Franciscans.

Retreats

The retreat centre at Ards Friary is very popular, and has a year round schedule of events. It is a source of vibrancy and life for the local community and for the spiritual seekers who come here from near and far.

- It is envisaged that the retreat centre will continue into the future. Contemplative Ecology retreats and workshops will provide another stream of spiritual enrichment.
- The retreat centre offers a warm welcome to a diverse range of groups contributing to the ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue in this part of the world.
- The Retreat centre programme is full and varied.
- There are opportunities for people to come for private guided or personal retreats.





By Contemplative Ecology we refer to the wisdom rooted in inner contemplative practices that moves us towards an ever-more deeply lived life, and positions us to recognise our embeddedness in creation, and to act in accordance with this in the care of our common home.

- A program of Contemplative Ecology retreats and workshops.
- Bio-Spiritual Focussing
- Contemplative walks.
- Nature resonance.
- Environmental Activism – local and global.
- Meditation and Nature.

Education & Catechesis

In collaboration with the retreat centre and local diocese the friars offer education and catechesis for people at all stages of their Christian journey.

- Baptism preparation for both children and adults.
- Retreats for first communion and confirmation groups from local schools.
- Ongoing formation for Adults.
- Scripture study.

Stewardship



Ards Friary is a mixed environment of farm, woodland, park, beach, and walled-garden. The Friars employed Ms. Kitty Scully, an Agri-Ecologist and Organic Horticulturalist, to help us draw up a Land Management plan. The aim of this was to formulate an ecologically sensitive map for the future in relation to best practices and holistic management of the land of which we have the privilege of being stewards.

The twofold response of wonder and responsibility that spending time in nature evokes is at the heart of our endeavours. To support the land to fully express itself and to continue our tradition of welcoming others to experience it are also key aspects of this plan.

Over the next few pages a summary of the present and the future of the land here will be outlined.

...through Sister Water,
which is very useful and
humble and precious
and chaste...





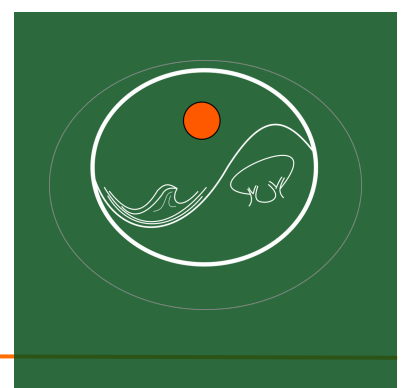
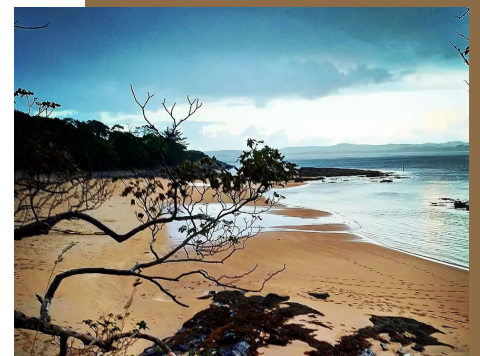
Farmland covers around 60 acres of Ards Friary. Historically this land was farmed by the friars themselves providing food for the community. More recently the land has been leased to local farmers for grazing.

- Our long term aim is to move towards organic certificated farming.
- The community is now in control of the land suitable for farming.
- Short term leases have been put in place with local farmers to manage the grass without the use of machines.
- Re-fencing work has begun.
- An Organic Farm Advisor has been employed to aide us in this venture.

Parkland

As part of the designed landscape there is much parkland at Ards Friary. This is enjoyed by a huge number of visitors each year. This includes several habitats - Marsh, beach, coastal walks.

- New trails will be established to make access easier for all and to open up previously inaccessible areas.
- A Laudato Si prayer garden.
- Updated signs and information boards (educational and inspirational) are at the design stage - these will be in Irish and English.
- Renovation of our coachyard for future educational and community projects.

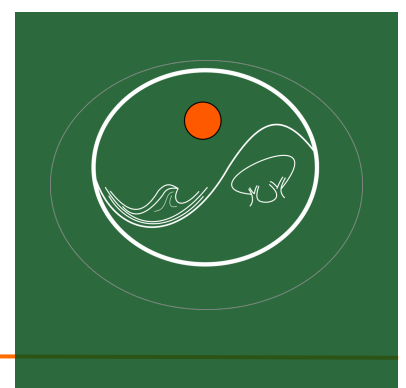




Woodland is the most abundant ecosystem at Ards Friary. It covers over half of the land. What was once an abundant native Oak forest was displaced by planting of non-native species.

There are several very old and significant trees at Ards, for instance a champion Wych Elm, and centurion Oak and Beech trees.

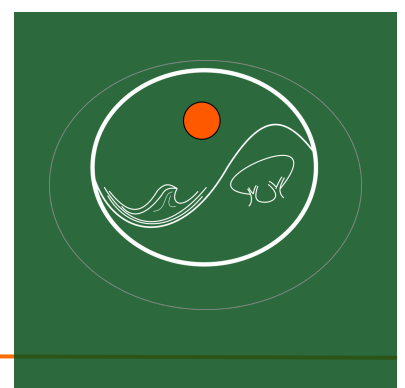
- Currently the woodlands at Ards Friary are suffering from some neglect, however there are many positive signs of potential for regeneration of the ancient Oak, Holly, Hard Fern woodlands that would have once stood here.
- Clearance of invasive species and increasing protection for ground flora and young trees from deer are the first priorities. The Invasive species *rhododendron Ponticum* is particularly prevalent, and not only diminishes the amount of flora able to flourish, but also has a detrimental effect on fauna biodiversity.
- In collaboration with a Woodland Ecology specialist we now have a plan for returning our woodland to its native structure. This will involve fencing, some thinning of non-native species, and planting Oak, Rowan, Ash, Birch and Hazel. A Tree nursery is being established.
- Care of existing specimen and champion trees is ongoing.
- This part of the regeneration of Ards Friary is the most long term, as establishing and nurturing woodlands takes time.
- Climate Change mitigation through Carbon sequestration, increased biodiversity, economic sustainability, and woodland resilience are all key impacts of our management strategy.





The Walled-Garden - Fr Matthew Memorial Garden - is an almost 5 acre garden divided into 3 sections. The walls provide an almost Mediterranean climate and it is a fabulous place for growing. There are also a mature apple tree orchard.

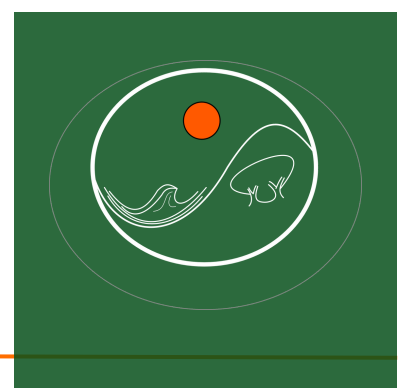
- A local Community garden group currently uses around an acre of the garden, this group has strong links with the Friary and has an educational and social program of its own which we fully endorse and support.
- There are two main areas of growth in relation to this space:
 - Organic Horticulture - the aim is for Ards Friary to become self-sufficient by growing our own food.
 - Social Therapy - there is increasing evidence and support for the provision of therapeutic activity involving gardening and forestry for those recovering from addiction and those needing support in relation to their mental well-being. The Garden will be used to offer a space for people to come to involve themselves in these kinds of activities.
- Renovation - the walls require some care and a traditional stonemason has been employed to assess and renovate the walls. This also provides opportunity for the revival of traditional stonemasonry through workshops and for engaging the groups mentioned above.





The Friary and Retreat centre was built in the 1970's. Many of our guests remark on the wonderfully homely feel of the place, however, it does require some work to create a 'greener' space. There are two main projects underway at the moment:

- Energy - We have been searching for a solution to our energy needs that also fits our ethos. Moving away from fossil fuels towards renewable sustainable energy. The initial stages of installing a geothermic heat pump and solar energy system are underway. This has also included a thorough assessment of the building in relation to insulation.
- Waste Management - it has also been necessary for us to seek a 'green' solution to our sewage needs. Our current system is not fit for purpose and this has created the opportunity to do something a little different. We now have a Reed Bed Sewage system designed for us by Alvin Morrow, a local environmental sewage engineer. This will utilise the natural processes of microbial action and evaporation to treat our waste water. With an engineered Reed Bed and Wetland comprising the treatment stages. This is an innovative move for a retreat centre like ours.



Fraternity



The cry of the earth, Pope Francis tells us, is heard alongside the cry of the poor. The response to these cries has always been an integral part of the Church's mission, and therefore of our own.

At Ards Friary, there is a long relationship with the local community and the Friars are very much part of the commitment of the Church to this area, serving the local community sacramentally, pastorally, and liturgically.

It is also very much part of our own Capuchin tradition to be with the poor - in whatever form this poverty manifests - and to be in solidarity with them as brothers.

The fraternity aspires to offer a safe space for all, and to use whatever we have to holistically support others in their healing journey.

...through Brother Fire,
through whom you light
the night

and he is beautiful
and playful and robust
and strong...



The Friars



Each friar of our Laudato Si community, strives to be open to the ecological conversion described by Pope Francis.

Contemplative prayer was the fountain spring from which our reform flowed, and this continues to be true for us. From our prayer life comes the energy and wisdom to be formed anew.

We are committed to exploring, developing, and living in such a way as to express an ever deepening relationship with God, others, and creation. We take seriously our moral responsibility towards all our brothers and sisters, and are moving in the direction of the goals set for us by Pope Francis.

...through

Sister Mother Earth,
who sustains us and
governs us and who
produces
varied fruits with coloured
flowers and herbs



Contacts



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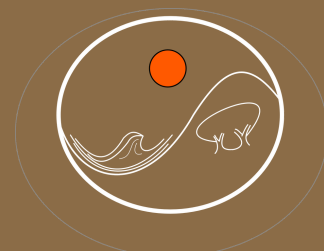


[instagram.com/ards_friary/](https://www.instagram.com/ards_friary/)

A short film on Youtube:

<https://youtu.be/xxi18BMGOMg>

*Let us
begin again...*







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**Ards Friary
2022**