

GRIANÁN OF AILEACH
Co. DONEGAL

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Preface

This Conservation Management Plan for the Grianán of Aileach was commissioned by the Office of Public Works, “in order to ensure its long-term protection through agreement and consensus, by management, and where appropriate, enhancement and interpretation.”

The Plan has been prepared by Blackwood Associates Architects, in collaboration with Claire Cotter, Archaeologist, and Jackie Hunt, of ANIAR Ecology. Following site analysis, research and consultation with stakeholders, including elected local representatives, this Plan was completed in February 2020. The Plan incorporates feedback from Donegal County Council, which was issued (to the report authors) by the OPW in September 2020. It is hoped that the Conservation Management Plan may be presented to the public when Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

The Grianán of Aileach is a National Monument in State ownership. Located at the summit of Greenan Mountain, it is a hillfort with a stone cashel within the ramparts, with a number of related archaeological features. The lands in state ownership extend to just under 12 hectares. However, some archaeological features lie outside this area, and the wider landscape setting of the Monument is central to its meaning, presentation and significance.

Objectives of the Plan

The purpose of this Conservation Management Plan is to provide the OPW, Donegal County Council and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht with a practical tool to guide and inform all decisions with regards to works to the monument. This may include any proposed works, or developments, within the site, or in the vicinity of the monument, or any changes to management and access regimes, that have the potential to impact on the preservation and integrity of the monument and its significance. To this end, Part 8 of the Conservation Management Plan provides both general and detailed policies which need to be followed by those charged with managing and developing the potential of the site.

As well as serving as a tool for the State bodies responsible for the monument and its setting, the Plan also provides clarity and essential information for non-government organisations and individuals who may be interested in applying to instigate activities, or initiatives, or providing visitor services in relation to the monument, its interpretation, and its setting.

The Conservation Management Plan is not a *fait accompli*; in order to continue to be effective the Plan needs to be reviewed and updated at regular intervals, not exceeding every 10 years.

Significance of the Monument

The Grianán of Aileach is one of only three hillforts recorded in the Donegal Record of Monuments and Places. Hillforts are usually assumed to date from the late Bronze Age (c. 1100 – 800 B.C.).

Within the inner ramparts of the hillfort is the stone cashel. This impressive structure is one of only two in Donegal and of twenty four comparable high walled stone forts in Ireland. These structures first appeared c. 800 A.D. and it has been deduced that Grianán of Aileach dates from some point in the 9th century AD.

The cashel was subject to comprehensive rebuilding in the 1870s, led by Walter Bernard of Derry City. The cashel in its current form, can be seen to embody, in its fabric, both the early Medieval period in Irish history, (which defined its location and form) and the 19th Century interpretation of that earlier history (that fixed the architectural form of the cashel as it is currently experienced). The significance of the monument may be summarised:

Regional Significance: The Grianán of Aileach was the seat of power of the Cenél nÉogain, who originated in Inishowen and extended their zone of influence over much of what are now the counties of Donegal, Derry and Tyrone. Their seat of power ultimately moved to Tulach Óg, (Tullyhogue) over 60km to the south east.

A Royal Site: The Grianán of Aileach is a royal site, likely to have been used by the Cenél nÉogain for inauguration and other royal ceremonies. Links between Grianán and Tulach Óg and Elagh (and a number of possible Cenél nÉnnai inauguration sites identified in the region) are well worth highlighting in future updates to interpretative materials, or new interpretative plans.

Records of the Monument: The Grianán of Aileach was among the earliest monuments surveyed by the Ordnance Survey of Ireland. The illustrated description of the fort was probably the first secular 'Gaelic' site to be published.

The National Archives of Ireland contain much of the original OS material relating to the recording of the site in the period 1830-1835. Included are a Fair Plan (1831-3) of the OS six-inch map, engravings of the survey plans of the entire site and cashel respectively, and pencil sketches by George Du Noyer of architectural details of the cashel. This record is significant and should be both treasured and celebrated.

Architectural Significance: Only limited lengths of the lowest parts of the masonry wall of the cashel can be confirmed as dating from the original stone fort. The form and fabric of the cashel, as currently extant, is a largely a 19th century reinterpretation and rebuild of the original stone fort. The stone structure was extensively rebuilt, reinforced and stabilised in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

In so far as it sits on the original site, footprint, and rising walls of the Early Medieval fort, and is built primarily from the original masonry elements, it is representative of an Early Medieval Irish architecture.

However, its architectural significance lies as much in its representation and embodiment of 19th century approaches to ancient history and architecture, informed by the Celtic Revival, as it does to the architectural vision, functional and cultural considerations, of those who originally conceived and constructed it.

Cultural & Social Significance: Both the completion of the rebuilding works of Walter Bernard (in 1878) and the opening of the access road (in 1955) were each celebrated by pageants. Both these events, even if based on fanciful

interpretations of the origins and early history of the place, are further layers in its history. They are also symbolic of the importance of the place, in popular memory and meaning, and the importance of its being accessible to the public.

The Grianán of Aileach continues to be used as the site of public events and performances, thus recognising and contributing to the cultural and social significance of the site.

As well as having significance in the context of Irish history and culture the Grianán of Aileach has additional layers of meaning for those for whom it is a presence on the skyline in their daily lives.

Landscape & Environmental Significance: The location of the Grianán of Aileach, is at the summit of the Greenan Mountain, overlooking Lough Swilly and Lough Foyle. This is intrinsic to all aspects of its significance. The Monument is embedded in its setting, with the natural landforms defining the location of the Ancient Road, and the ramparts settled into the hillside, such that it is hard to separate manmade features from natural topography.

As such, both the monument and its wider setting are of national significance.

Vulnerabilities and Management Issues to be addressed

The following have been identified as issues to be addressed. Existing management actions need to be continued and developed to safeguard the integrity of the site, and to improve the presentation and public experience of the Grianán of Aileach

- **Responsibility:** The site on which the Grianán of Aileach is located is in State ownership. The access road is owned by Donegal County Council. The car park has been maintained by Donegal County Council since it was

built, but remains in private ownership. The Council and the OPW need to work together in managing the site and the access to it. The roles and responsibility of each body need to be explored further and clarified..

- **Implementation Group:** It would be beneficial if a group could be formed including representatives of both State bodies with responsibility for the site. This could enable space for communication, and integrated decision making. The group could also serve as a central point of contact for local people, or businesses, who may have an interest in promoting the place, providing information or guiding services, organising events, or delivering associated servicing of the site.
- **Understanding the site:** No archaeological survey of the site has been executed since the Discovery Programme in 1995. This makes any archaeology that may survive at the site vulnerable to any revisions to access, boundaries or signage. A new geophysical survey, using current technology, such as Lidar, would provide information as to the potential for archaeology at the site. Ideally this would extend to the entire hilltop context, beyond the perimeter of the outer ramparts and include the area of the Ancient Road.
- **Natural habitats:** Lack of awareness of the value, and interest, of the natural habitats of the site, may result in a less than respectful attitude to the natural environment, flora and fauna of the site, in terms of uncontrolled access and disturbance.
- **Visitor experience:** Currently the majority of visitors arrive by car. Having maybe admired, and been drawn from a distance by the silhouette of the cashel against the sky on the summit of Greenan Mountain, the walk from car park to cashel (through the largely unnoticed lines of the ramparts) only takes minutes. The mountaintop location of the Grianán of Aileach is intrinsic to its meaning and significance. That the current road

and path access enables those with limited mobility to visit the site is good, but for those who are able bodied it can be seen to reduce the potential to experience, enjoy and understand the site.

- **Visitor numbers:** It is important to continue to record visitor numbers. Passive effects, such as wear and tear and resultant safety issues, may intensify with increased numbers of visitors to the site. Conversely, the likelihood of willful damage may decrease, the more visitors who are present. Should guided tours be offered it will be necessary to limit the size of groups, as the steps and terraces within the cashel are not suitable for large groups.
- **Site supervision:** If potentially damaging behaviour on the part of visitors is to be mitigated, or preferably avoided the current supervisory regime must be continued, entailing 365 days a year site supervision, supported by security back-up, and the closing of the barrier to the access road, outside opening hours. This level of supervision is also necessary to facilitate routine maintenance, as soon as issues requiring attention occur.
- **Servicing the site:** There are no toilets or café at the site. This is in line with standard practice for free to access sites, managed by the OPW. Permanent facilities at the current car park location would be unacceptable due to impact on the skyline. Any proposed (non-permanent, or transient) services need to comply with trading bye-laws and be located to have no negative impact on the setting of the monument.
- **Field Boundaries:** The geometry of field boundaries, and the associated strong contrasts in vegetation detract from the form of the Grianán of Aileach. Some of the field boundaries are hundreds of years old, and, as such, one of the layers of the history of the site. More recent boundaries, however, could be reviewed with both the presentation of the monument and the health and extent of its natural habitats in mind.

- **Events:** While public events, and appearances in films, raise awareness of the site, bring in new visitors and, if appropriately planned, may contribute to understanding of the site, they also have drawbacks. The density of use during events intensifies wear and tear on the ground, and the fabric of the monument, and also increases the possibility of accidents. Private events, and film shoots, impose their presence onto the experience of other visitors, and if not subject to careful planning and approval may magnify the problems and impacts associated with public events.
- **Signage:** Signage, both to the site and at the site needs to be upgraded. Information available would ideally cover the wider landscape, and natural environment, as well as the history of the hillfort, cashel and associated features.

Policies

These policies have been prepared to provide clear guidance for those responsible for making decisions that impact on the Grianán of Aileach.

Policy 1: Protection

To ensure that the conservation of the recorded monuments, the natural environment and archaeology of the Grianán of Aileach is central to all planning for, and management of the place, in order to preserve the significance of the heritage asset, and protect it for future generations.

Policy 2: Conservation and Maintenance

To implement a planned regime of repair and maintenance, based on best conservation practice, that protects all aspects of the significance of the site, its natural environment, its historic integrity and archaeology.

Policy 3: Access

To ensure public access to the site is of a scale, intensity and character that does not threaten the significance of the site.

Policy 4: Enhancement of the Place

To improve the presentation of the monument in relationship to the wider landscape and the history, meaning and significance of the place, thereby also improving visitor experience.

Policy 5: Interpretation

To encourage public understanding and enjoyment of the site.

Policy 6: Extending Knowledge and Understanding of the Place

To encourage further, informed, architectural, archaeological, scientific and historical research into the Grianán of Aileach, and ensure the resulting information is made accessible, and to promote the site as a historic and scientific resource for learning about the past and about the natural environment.

Policy 7: Management of the site

To ensure the site of the Grianán of Aileach, is effectively managed, with clarity as to responsibility, and the significance of the site acknowledged, and protected through all management actions.

Policy 8: Servicing the site

To ensure that the provision of any services to the site, and their maintenance, do not damage the setting or archaeology of the monument.

Actions

Actions have been proposed, and prioritised as critical, urgent, important or on-going.

The following actions have been identified as top priority for immediate attention. Proposed actions, detailed in the Plan, to which these prioritised actions refer are identified in brackets.

- Establish the Grianán of Aileach Implementation Group to oversee the implementation of the policies, and to regularly review and update the Conservation and Management Plan. The Implementation Group will ensure regular communication between those with responsibility and interest in the site. They will also communicate with, and act as a central point of contact for, local landowners, tourism, local history and community groups etc.
Prioritised Actions: **M1, M9, M10, U3, U4, U5.**
- Continue to close barrier and provide security support to 365 days a year site supervision.
Prioritised Actions: **M5, M6.**
- Clarify ownership and management responsibility for existing car park.
Prioritised Action: **M13.**
- Donegal County Council to make, pass and enforce byelaws to control informal trading at the site.
Prioritised Action: **M8.**
- Commission LIDAR survey of the entire mountaintop.
Prioritised Action: **U1.**
- Continue to monitor numbers of visitors to the site
Prioritised Action: **M3).**
- Continue on-going repairs and records of all works
Prioritised Actions: **C1, C2.**

Other proposed urgent and important actions can follow, in the near future.

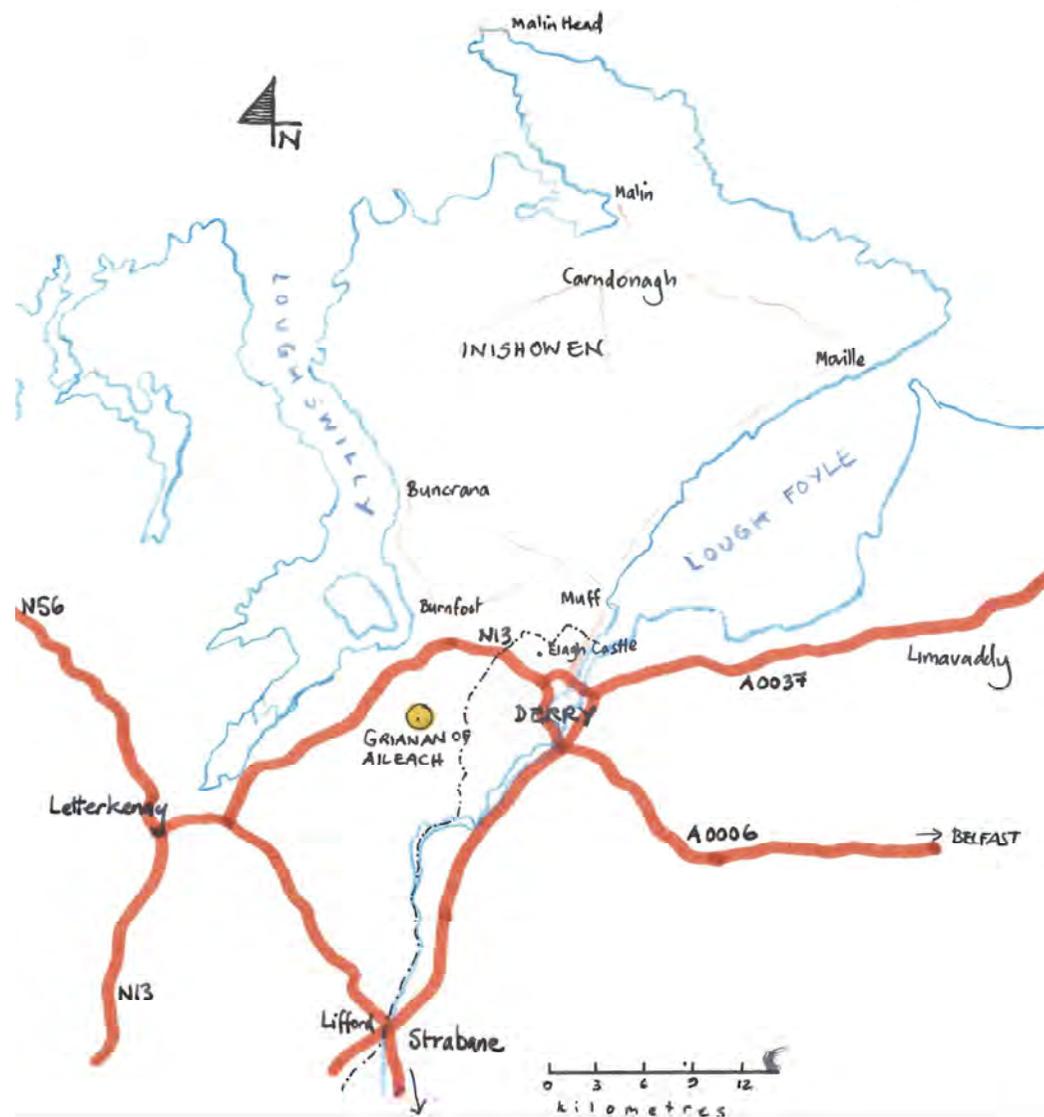


Figure 1.01 Location of The Grianán of Aileach,

PART ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the project

Blackwood Associates, with Claire Cotter, archaeologist, and Jackie Hunt, of Aniar Ecology were appointed by the OPW in 2019 to prepare this Conservation Management Plan for the Grianán of Aileach “in order to ensure its long-term protection through agreement and consensus, by management, and where appropriate, enhancement and interpretation.”

The National Monument is in State ownership, as represented by the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The lands in state ownership extend to just under 12 hectares. As well as the enclosed land around the hillfort, the state owns the fields extending down the hill to the road. (refer figure 1.12). The steep access lane from the county road up to the car park is adopted by Donegal County Council. The car park, and adjacent enclosed ground is not in state ownership, but has been maintained by Donegal County Council since it was opened in 1955. The surrounding fields, on the flanks of the mountain, that provide the immediate setting of the monument are in various private ownership. Some elements of the National Monument (i.e “The Ancient Road” RMP DG047-012004) are located outwith the lands in State ownership.

The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht is responsible for the protection of the Monument as a whole, including any archaeology. The Office of Public Works is charged with responsibility for the conservation and presentation of the monument. The development and / or enhancement of visitor experience is secondary to their responsibility for the safeguarding of the monument for future generations.

The purpose of this Conservation Management Plan is to provide the OPW, Donegal County Council and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht with a practical tool. This tool can guide and inform all decisions with regards to any proposed works, or developments, within the site, or in the vicinity, of the monument, or any changes to management and access regimes, that have the potential to impact on the preservation and integrity of the monument and its significance.

As well as serving as a tool for the State bodies responsible for the monument, and its setting, the Plan also provides clarity and essential information for non-government organisations and individuals who may be interested in applying to instigate activities, or initiatives, or providing visitor services in relation to the monument, its interpretation, and its setting.



Figure 1.02 Visitors to An Grianán

Donegal County Council would like to see the public access to the site enhanced, and promoted, in the context of other monuments in the locality, such that the local community can benefit from economic benefits associated with visitors to this area of Donegal.

The Management Plan gives clear guidance as to where opportunities exist, along with parameters for their development. The Management Plan commits to conserving the monument and safeguarding its value as a cultural asset, incidentally safeguarding its associated value as a magnet to visitors, whose spending will benefit the local economy.

In 2016 the Grianán of Aileach was recorded as having the fourth highest number of visitors of the principal sites in Donegal at 104,000 visitors.¹ Given the site of the Grianán of Aileach is only 2.5 Ha and the other sites are extensive areas (Glenveigh National Park, Sliabh Liag, Malin Head) this gives an idea of the pressure of footfall at this relatively small site. The passive foot counter at the gate into the site counted 208,000 visitors in 2016, and 166,000 in 2017. However, these figures are likely to be swelled by visitors who pass back and forth several times between car park and monument during a single visit.



Figure 1.03 View Northwest to Muckish and other mountains beyond Lough Swilly



Figure 1.04 View south: River Foyle, the plains of Mag nÍthe, and County Tyrone.

1.2 Site & location of the Grianán of Aileach

Context, location and aspect

The Grianán of Aileach is both remote in character and easily accessible due to its proximity to a large population. It is located at the top of Greenan Mountain, (240m OD) a short distance to the south of the Inishowen peninsula, Co. Donegal and c. 8km northwest of the city of Derry (population over 100,000). Greenan mountain, forms the westernmost end of a ridge of high ground that runs westwards from Derry and is separated from the Inishowen peninsula by a strip of low-lying, marshy land, sometimes known as the Pennyburn Depression. Letterkenny (population c.20,000) is located 26km to the west. Inishowen is the end of the “Wild Atlantic Way”, a successful initiative that has seen an increase in tourist visits to the west coast of Ireland.

There are extensive land and sea views from the top of Greenan Mountain. The 360° panorama was described by John O’Donovan as ‘one of the most extensive and beautifully varied panoramic prospects to be found in Ireland’.² The view to the north offers a spectacular prospect, with the Inishowen peninsula stretching away into the distance, framed by Lough Swilly on the west and Lough Foyle on the east.

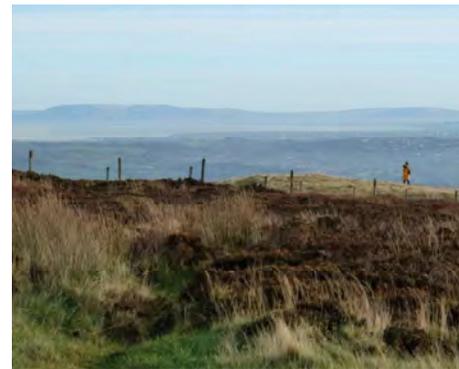


Figure 1.05 View east to the City of Derry, and Co. Derry.



Figure 1.06 View north to Inishowen

¹ Donegal County Development Plan 2018-2024, Chapter 7 Figure 9.3

² Ordnance Survey Letters [OSL] Donegal 1837, 217

The southern panorama takes in parts of counties Donegal, Derry and Tyrone and the fertile plain known in early historic times as Mag nÍthe. On the southeast, the River Foyle can be seen making its way from Derry city northwards to Lough Foyle.

Greenan mountain is itself a very prominent landmark, visible over a wide area. The silhouette of the cashel on the rounded summit is a familiar element of the skyline particularly for those living in the Lough Swilly area and the low ground stretching from the lough to Bridgend and beyond.

The association of the monument with the Inishowen peninsula and with the wider territory of the Cenél nÉogain, including what is now the city of Derry and extensive parts of the counties of Donegal, Derry and Tyrone is a marked feature of its history, politically and geographically. The link with the city of Derry is strengthened by the association with Walter Bernard (who lived and worked there) and by the long-established tradition of visitors coming out from the city to the site.



Figure 1.07 Grianán of Aileach, approached from the south. Pasture on the mountain side, ploughed fields to the west of the road



Figure 1.08 The Grianán of Aileach, seen from the farmland to the south.



Figure 1.09 The Grianán of Aileach, from the Inishowen side of the Pennyburn

Topography

The rough, heather covered slopes of Greenan Mountain rise unevenly, with outcropping rock visible in many places. The hilltop itself is boggy. Erosion of the ground cover suggests no great depth of turf survives on the rounded summit around the cashel – that area is markedly green in contrast to the rest of the summit. The soft, uneven ground encompassed by the outer banks is frequently wet or waterlogged, particularly on the eastern side, south of the line of ‘the ancient road.’ For the most part, the enclosed land slopes away unevenly before dropping off more steeply to the exterior on the south, west and north. The incline is more gradual on the eastern side. The topography of the enclosed ground is masked by heather and other heathland flora. There are many small dips and rises, some of which are probably natural features. In places, these irregularities become confused with the eroded and unevenly preserved remains of the enclosing banks.

The fields adjacent to the monument are mostly rough pasture, but some fields to the west of the road have been ploughed for cultivation. There is a sharp contrast between the vegetation of the fields both within and adjacent to the state owned lands, on the basis of current grazing. This has a major impact on the views of the Grianan of Aileach.

Site definition

The site sits within a roughly rectangular landblock defined by field boundaries on the east, west, and south, and a small roadway on the north – the roadway leads to a carpark at northeast. This landblock can be read in the aerial view in Figure 1.13 by the dark colour of the heath and the line of the road on the northern edge. Fields to the east and west are lighter, as the result of grazing.

The cashel is more or less centrally placed within this landblock – the distance between it and the north and south boundaries respectively is just over 100m. The corresponding intervals on the east and west are 75m and 40m respectively. As a result of the tighter configuration, the western and eastern flanks of the outer pair of banks (banks 3 and 4) are either truncated or have been removed during the construction of the field boundaries. See Figure 3.03.

Some remains of banks 3 and 4 may survive in the uneven ground beyond the eastern field boundary. This is particularly likely at northeast where a wire fence appears to run along the line of the banks. There are no visible traces of banks 3 and 4 in the reclaimed field beyond the western field boundary.

The fields to the west of this boundary, the lower slopes of the mountain, are in state ownership, (Figure 1.12) but leased for grazing.



Figure 1.10 Eastern field boundary



Figure 1.11 Western field boundary

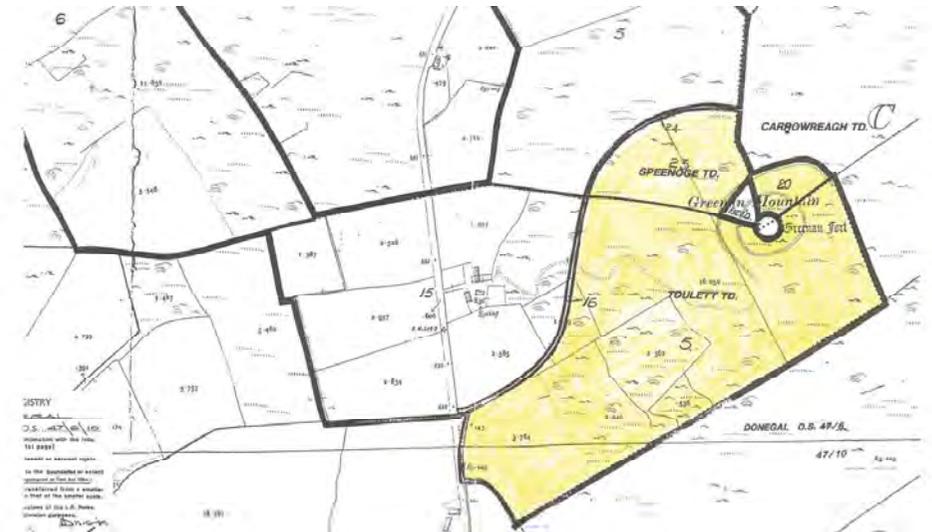


Figure 1.12 Land in State ownership

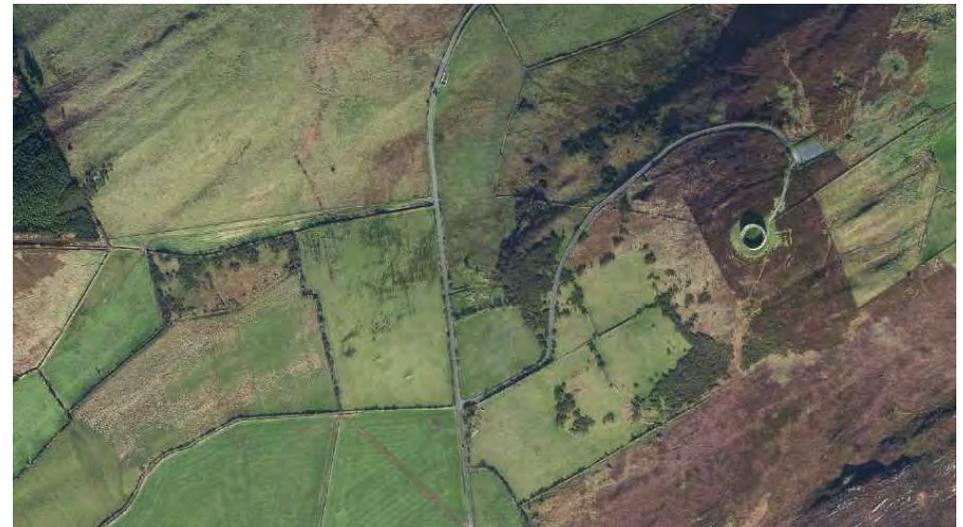


Figure 1.13 Aerial view, 2013, showing contrasting vegetation

Appendix D provides a list of all sites included in the Record of Monuments and Places, located within a 4km radius of the Grianán of Aileach, the closest being the Standing Stone in Speenoge, to the north. It can be assumed however, given the nature of the site that the entire mountaintop, including areas outside the area in state ownership, has the potential to be of archaeological importance.

Access

The steep modern access road, takes a wide loop around the northern face of the hilltop. It terminates at a carpark located to the north east of the site. There is a barrier, at the base of this access road, close to the junction with the local road. This is closed when the site is closed, preventing vehicular access to the site. Pedestrians, willing to walk up the access road can enter the site at any time.

From the car park a surfaced entrance path leads from a gate in the enclosing fence towards the door of the cashel. These amenities were added in 1955.



Figure I.14 Barrier and signage at base of access road

The current surfaces of the path date from 2005. The path passes through the line of the outer and inner ramparts, but there is no indication of where this occurs. A timber ramped and stepped structure provides universal access up the steeper part of the route to the cashel. This feature was added in 2016.



Figure I.15 Car park (to right) access path and universal access steps and ramp (to left)

1.3 Statutory Context

Any works at the site will need to comply with both national legislation, and the terms of the County Development Plan.

Archaeology

The archaeology of the Grianán of Aileach is protected under the terms of the National Monuments Acts 1930-2014. It is included in the Record of Monuments and Places for County Donegal, as established under Section 12 of the National Monuments (Amendment) Act, 1994.

The National Monument number is 140.

The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) lists the elements of the site as follows:

Cashel	DG047-012001
Tumulus / Mound	DG047-012002
Holy well	DG047-012003
Ancient road	DG047-012004
Enclosure	DG047-012005
Penal mass station	DG047-012006

- As set out under Section 14 of the National Monuments Act, and as a National Monument in State Care, any works within the site require ministerial consent.
- Any proposed works impacting on the monument, or archaeology (as recorded in the RMP), but within lands in private ownership requires two months' notice in writing must be given to the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht of any proposed works at, or in relation to the monument.
- Any archaeological investigation (excavation), and geophysical survey require to be licensed in accordance with the National Monuments Acts 1920 –2004.

- Any archaeological investigation should take into consideration published State Policy:

Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage Government Press 1999

Policy and Guidelines on Archaeological Excavation Government Press 1999

Donegal County Development Plan 2018-2024

There are a number of aims, objectives and policies of the plan that are relevant to the conservation, management of the site, and any proposed alterations to facilitate visitors or to develop tourism / visitor experience at the Grianán of Aileach.

Chapter 7: The Natural and Built Heritage

Aim:

“To conserve, protect and enhance the County’s natural, built and cultural heritage for future generations and encourage appreciation, access and enjoyment of these resources”. (Page 124)

Natural Heritage

Trees, Stone Walls and Hedgerows:

“Traditional field boundaries such as stone walls, hedgerows, tree lines, banks and ditches contribute to the regional character of rural landscapes in County Donegal and reflect historical landownership and farming practises that reinforce our sense of place.” (page 129)

Policy:

NH-P-15: It is a policy of the Council to safeguard prominent skylines and ridgelines from inappropriate development.

Archaeological Heritage

Aim:

“To conserve and protect the County’s archaeological heritage for present and future generations while encouraging appreciation and enjoyment of these valuable, non-renewable, cultural resources through sustainable management, sensitive enhancement and appropriate development”.

Policies

AH-P-1: It is a policy of the Council to protect and enhance the integrity of Archaeological Monuments and their settings and to secure the preservation in-situ of all archaeological monuments included on the Record of Monuments and Places. Preservation by record shall only be considered in exceptional circumstances where the principles of the Department of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands publication entitled, ‘Framework and Principles for the Protection of Archaeological Heritage’ can be satisfied.

AH-P-3: It is the policy of the Council to protect the character, settings of and views from National Monuments and Recorded Monuments and to manage development which would be considered to (visually or physically) intrude upon or inhibit the enjoyment of the amenities of these sites.

Chapter 9: Tourism

The Grianán of Aileach is referred to specifically in the introduction:

“Furthermore iconic attractions such as Glenveagh National Park, Sliabh Liag, Fanad Lighthouse Malin Head, and Grianan Na Aileach are capable of attracting significant visitor numbers in their own right.”

Objectives

TOU-O-2: To protect and enhance Donegal’s landscape and natural environment as a fundamental resource which underpins the county’s tourism product.

TOU-O-3: To facilitate the development of new and existing strategic tourism attractions which are capable of acting as motivational ‘must do’ signature experiences to draw visitors to the county, in a manner consistent with the brand identity of the Wild Atlantic Way.

TOU-O-6: To support the development of quality public visitor infrastructure at strategic tourism attractions and other locations throughout the county.

TOU-O-11: To protect and enhance the built and historical heritage of the county (including structures on the RPS, NIAH, recorded monuments, heritage towns and battlefield sites) as an important element of the County’s overall tourism product.

Policies

TOU-P-1: It is a policy of the Council to ensure that tourism related development proposals do not negatively impact on the natural landscape, environmental habitats and built heritage of the county.

TOU-P-6: It is a policy of the Council not to permit developments which would materially detract from the visual/scenic amenities on the approach roads to, the visual setting of, or the views to be had from, significant tourism attractions

In Chapter 2B: Cross Border

“The improvement of connectivity, including cross-border greenways is important in supporting visitor access to the region.”

I.4 Methodology

Jackie Hunt, Alice Bentley and Claire Cotter visited the Grianán of Aileach in July 2019, to familiarise with the site and meet OPW on-site staff and Eoghan Moylan, the OPW North West District Works Manager. They also visited the exhibition in the Old Church Visitor Centre and familiarised with the environs of the site.

These initial visits were followed by research on the part of each of the design team members; gathering information and data, through access to archives, OPW records, historic maps, publications, and policy documents. The statutory context was reviewed, and how this impacts on the management of the site.

Jackie Hunt gathered information on the study site and connected areas of interest through desk review (relevant websites, literature, journals), consultation (local ecologist, NPWS, Heritage Officer) and site visit (habitat survey). Habitats were assessed during a walkover survey of the fort structure and surrounding enclosed land; and were classified following Fossit (2000).

As an understanding of the site was developed, the architects contacted officers of Donegal County Council, to draw on their responsibilities, experience and understanding of the site. We also spoke to Joan Crawford, of Fáilte Ireland. On 18th November 2019 the design team, together with Michèle O’Dea, of the OPW attended a workshop in Carndonagh, for the elected members for Inishowen. This was an opportunity for the councillors to share their interest and concerns for the site, so they can be addressed in the Plan.

The draft plan was issued to Chris Corlett, District Archaeologist for the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht for review. Following further discussion his comments, observations and input were integrated into the document.

The Plan was then circulated to the Donegal Council Officials for comment and the final plan is due to be presented to the elected members in March 2020.

I.5 Consultations

During the preparation of this plan the team carried out extensive consultations with stakeholders, trying to reach a broad insight into the issues that impact on the conservation and management of the Monument, and the nature and extent of local interest in the site, its presentation and potential.

National Monuments Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Chris Corlett, District Archaeologist

Donegal County Council Officials

We spoke to the following Council officials, in order to understand their concerns and involvement in the site, from the perspective of their roles and responsibilities within the council.

Eunan Quinn - Senior Planner

Fiona Doherty - Development Officer, Community & Enterprise Inishowen District

Catherine McLaughlin - Planner and Research Officer, Research and Policy

Collette Beattie - Conservation Officer

Joe Gallagher - Heritage Officer

Eamonn Mahon - Senior Roads Engineer

Barney McLaughlin – Tourism Manager

Judith McCarthy - Donegal County Museum

Opportunities noted included:

- Willingness on the part of council officials to be part of cross agency working group.
- Willingness to consider additional parking, and possibly some services, in the area at the bottom of the access road, subject to planning, and any proposal being of a scale and design sensitive to the setting, history and natural environment.
- Opportunity to establish links with local heritage groups. Potential to develop a guiding service drawing on local enthusiasm and initiative.
- Develop links with the Donegal County Museum and Derry Museum; support for lecture series.
- Development of walking routes, in the context of the other initiatives in the area: the successful Inch Levels wetlands with 8km of trails; the proposed Derry - Buncrana Greenway, and the EU funded “Trailgazers” project which encourages development of trails as a catalyst for economic development
- Potential to develop the An Grianán Hotel as a base for accessing the monument. i.e. by mini-bus.
- Opportunity to develop interpretation of the site with emphasis on landscape and ecology, as well as history and archaeology.

Concerns raised included:

- The need to preserve long distance views of the Grianán of Aileach, and to protect adjacent skylines from development.
- Do not want to see over-development of the site.
- Limited availability of information on the site, in the form of leaflets and / or website.
- The need to create and adopt bye-laws in order to control any casual trading, and ensure it is appropriate to the site and its management regimes.
- The need to establish better communication between the OPW / Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, with regards to

maintenance and management, in order to avoid negative publicity as has occurred in the local press in the past.

- Road safety: the route from the N13 to the barrier is not ideal for coaches, or any increase in traffic, being narrow, and without passing places.
- Access road is unsuitable for coaches: no turning area at the top or passing places along the route.

Other Consultations

Joan Crawford, Fáilte Ireland Wild Atlantic Way manager, Letterkenny

The Grianán of Aileach currently features prominently in Wild Atlantic Way promotional material. Inishowen is the start / finish point of the Wild Atlantic Way. It is important that promotional material reflects the actuality of the site. Joan Crawford will be preparing the Visitor Experience Development Plan for Inishowen commencing early 2020. She is hoping that if effective, the recommended developments will encourage visitors to stay 3-5 days in the area. She will be considering the Grianán of Aileach in context of other sites in Inishowen and the surrounding area: Malin Head, Fort Dunree, St. Patrick’s High Cross, Burt Castle, Inch Levels etc.

Joan was interested in finding ways to increase dwell time at the site and was in favour of exploring the potential to increase the length of walk into the monument, providing any services or additional parking at the bottom of the access road. She is aware of increasing demand for and interest in walking routes.

Like the council officials she doesn’t want to see the site over developed, and thinks there is the potential for the An Grianán Hotel / Old Church Visitor Centre to develop their role, possibly providing the services which the OPW cannot provide at the site. There could also be the potential for mini-bus tours, or electric bike hire in order to access the monument, and reduce the pressure on existing parking space or the necessity for providing additional spaces.

I. Introduction

She identified events held in recent years at the Grianán of Aileach, and links with the Errigal Arts Festival as being effective in raising awareness of the Grianán of Aileach.

Fáilte Ireland is in strategic partnership with OPW

Workshop with Donegal County Councillors 18th November 2019

On 18th November 2019, Michèle O’Dea, Alice Bentley, Claire Cotter and Jackie Hunt attended a workshop with councillors at the Public Service Centre in Carndonagh. Joe Gallagher, Heritage Officer, and Eamon Mahon, Roads Engineer were also in attendance.

Michèle O’Dea outlined the aims, purpose and scope of the Conservation Management Plan for the Grianán of Aileach. Claire Cotter gave a summary of the site, and Jackie Hunt provided a summary of the natural habitats at the site, and connectivity to other habitats. Alice Bentley outlined the issues that have emerged during the preparation of the Plan.

The principal management issues identified included site security, opening times, and operation of the barrier; access for buses, alternative / additional parking locations, numbers of visitors, casual trading, management of habitats at the site, and connections to the wider environment; potential to develop existing exhibition, and support services.

The councillors welcomed the imminent presentation of the Conservation Management Plan, having been looking for this guidance for some time. The councillors were generally supportive of the response to issues at the site, as presented by the team.

The Councillors particular concerns included:

- Signage: current signage is seen as outdated, and limited in scope. More information about landscape and habitats required. Signage linking the site to the visitor centre and other related sites (i.e. Tullyhogue).
- It was felt there is the potential for a guiding service.
- There was general concern for safeguarding the habitats and wildlife at the site, with the presence of hares being noted.
- Lack of toilets at the site.
- Balancing increase in numbers of visitors (good) and detrimental impacts on the monument and the natural environment (bad).
- Hope that links with, signage to, and services provided by the An Grianán Hotel and Old Church Visitor Centre could be developed.
- Interest in developing links with Tullyhogue Fort in County Tyrone.
- Interest in the site being embedded in other cross border development strategies.
- A sense that the site is not fulfilling its potential. The councillors do not want to see the site overdeveloped, or commercialised, but would like to see it promoted and improved, so that it is able to support, and draw, more visitors to the region.
- Making the story of the site interesting, accessible, but also accurate.

Councillors present:

Paul Canning - Fianna Fáil

Terry Crossan - Sinn Féin

Rena Donaghey - Fianna Fáil

Bernard McGuinness - Fine Gael

Nicholas Crossan - Independent

Albert Doherty - Sinn Féin

Martin McDermott - Fianna Fáil

Jack Murray - Sinn Féin

1.6 The Team

Blackwood Associates, Conservation Architects

The Conservation Architects for the project are Kevin Blackwood, director of the practice, and Grade I accredited Conservation Architect, and Alice Bentley, the project architect, who is a Grade III accredited Conservation Architect. Alice has extensive experience in the preparation of conservation management plans, including those for Glendalough Miners' Village and Rinn Dúin Medieval Town, and conservation development studies for Dunsoghly Castle and Castle Saunderson.

Claire Cotter, Archaeologist

Claire has worked as a consultant archaeologist for over 30 years, carrying out archaeological excavations, investigations and assessments for a range of private and public clients. She worked on the archaeological surveys of Co. Donegal (1980-1) and the Dingle Peninsula (1982-4) and is a past director of the Western Stone Forts Project carried out under the auspices of the Discovery Programme (1992-2002). The project focused on the chronology and cultural context of large stone forts along the Atlantic seaboard of Ireland. The results were published in 2012, followed by a guidebook on Dún Aonghasa, Aran Islands in 2013.

In 2015 she gave a presentation on Grianán of Aileach Fort, with particular regards to its restoration in the 19th century, and the authenticity of what is now seen.

Jackie Hunt ANIAR Ecology

Jackie has considerable experience in ecological assessment, gained from working on a wide variety of projects over the last 25 years. Initially working for National Parks and Wildlife Service (SAC mapping and assessment) and then BirdWatch Ireland (planning applications in protected areas).

Jackie has since worked as an independent ecological consultant and has been

involved in a range of projects from ornithological survey, Habitats Directive Assessments, independent scientific review, project coordination and reporting.

Over the last two years she has worked on the Coillte BioClass project assessing the conservation status and appropriate management for peatland and woodland habitats across Mayo, Galway and Donegal. Jackie has worked with local groups, NGO's, Government bodies, environmental consultancies and commercial clients. She is a full member of the CIEEM and is an accredited European Seabirds at Sea (ESAS) surveyor.

Acknowledgements

The team would like to thank Sheila McGonagle and Eoghan Moylan of the OPW for their time, insights, and assistance, regarding the management and maintenance of the site. We would also like to thank Joan Crawford of Fáilte Ireland and all the officials of Donegal County Council who gave their time and perspectives regarding the site.

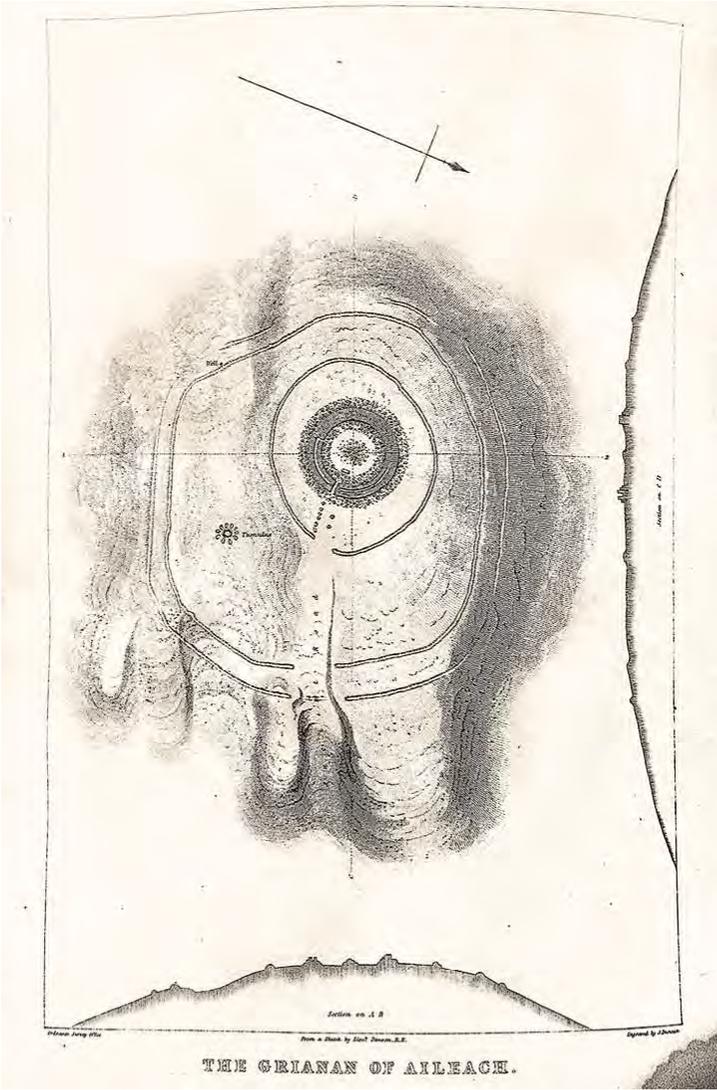


Figure 2.01 Ordnance Survey Plan 1835

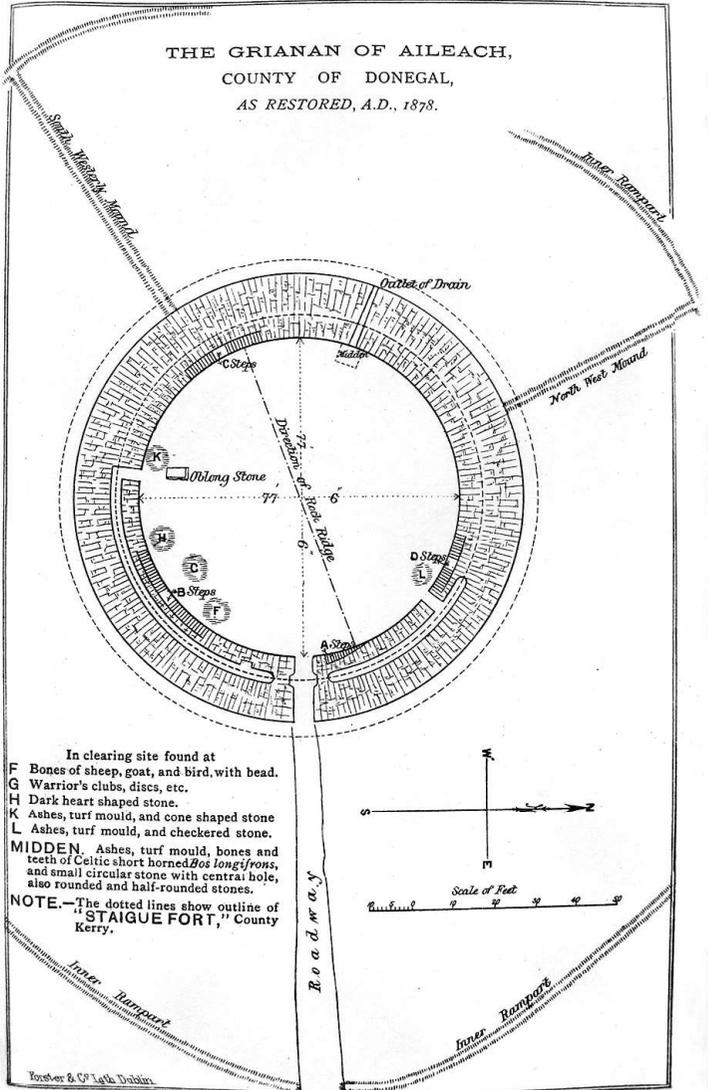


Figure 2.02 Walter Bernard's Plan of An Grianán 1878

PART TWO

Claire Cotter, Archaeologist

SITE HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY

2.1 Site Name

The official name of the site is Grianán Ailigh and in its English translation, Grianán of Aileach¹. Using early Irish manuscript sources, glossaries and commentaries, the nineteenth century scholar John O'Donovan discussed the derivation and meaning of the first element of the name (Colby 1837, 222-3). He concluded that the word 'grianán' although often topographically applied to merely beautiful localities was also generally used 'to signify a palace, a distinguished residence in a beautiful and sunny location'. Dinneen's early twentieth century dictionary offered 'a sunny chamber, a bower, summer bower, house, or palace, especially on a hill or place exposed to the sun'. *Logainm*, the Irish place names body lists twenty-five Irish townlands named An Grianán. The epithet certainly fits Greenan Mountain – in the right conditions, a spectacular view of both sunrise and sunset can be had from the summit.

The second element 'Aileach,' anglicised as Elagh or Ely, may derive from *Aill* (rock). O'Donovan (Colby 1837, 223) defers to Michael O'Cleary's seventeenth century glossary which glosses *Aileach* or *Ailtheach* as 'a name for a habitation which was given from stones'. Lacy (2001) suggests the wider meaning refers to a stony place. In the case of Grianán the 'Aileach' element of the site name is considered to derive from a rocky eminence near the base of the Inishowen peninsula where the Cenél nÉogain had their original headquarters. The rock lies ca. 3km northeast of Grianán - the location, at least, is visible from the mountain top. (Figure 1.01). A late medieval castle now stands on the rock. The name is preserved in two townlands - Elagh More (site of the castle) lying in Co. Derry, and, directly across the border in Co. Donegal, Elaghbeg townland.

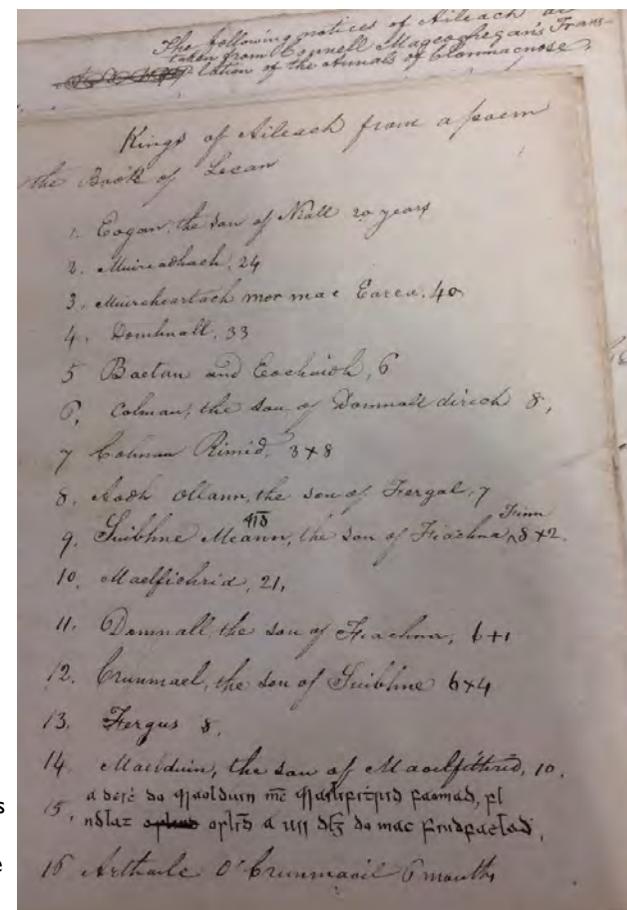


Figure 2.03 John O'Donovan's list of the Kings of Aileach transcribed from a poem in the Book of Lecan. OS archives

¹ <https://www.logainm.ie/en/s?txt=in:15092&cat=SC>

2.2 Recording history

The earliest known detailed account of the monument dates to the 1830s. It was written by George Petrie and John O'Donovan in the course of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland and published in the OS Memoir for the Parish of Templemore (Colby 1837, 217-221). The account remains the primary field record for the site and contains the fullest description of the cashel prior to its restoration in the 1870s. All the known features are highlighted; there is a full discussion of what was seen as the 'pagan' background of the fort, a theme that John O'Donovan would return to again and again as the Ordnance Survey moved down the west coast.

A more general account of the site, *A Brief Description of an Ancient Building, Supposed to Have Been a Temple of the Sun on Greenan Mountain, Donegal* by Col. Blacker appeared in the *Dublin Penny Journal* in 1835 (349-50). The account had been published for private circulation some years previously. Blacker's visit to the fort seems to have coincided with that of the OS (he noted the trigonometrical station built by the surveyors on the cashel wall) and his description of the cashel is very similar to that of the OS. The main interest of the piece now is the reference to clearance works carried out at the fort ca. 1830 under Blacker's 'directions.' He may also have been the person behind the 'recent opening' of the tumulus noted in the OS Memoir (Colby 1837, 221).

The deteriorating condition of the monument in the mid-nineteenth century was highlighted by the architect William Godwin (1872). Extensive restoration works carried out by Walter Bernard in 1874-78 represented an attempt to arrest that 'progress of destruction.' Bernard's intervention was a major one and, in many ways, acts as a watershed in the site narrative. An account of the project 'Exploration and Restoration of the Ruin of the Grianan Aileach' was published in the *Proceedings of the Irish Academy* (Bernard 1879, 415-23). Bernard outlined the progress of the works, his resolve to 'remain faithful to the original,' and the findings. The article included plans and sections of the

newly restored fort. (Figures 2.02, 3.16c).

Most of what was published in the century or so following Bernard's restoration works focused on the cashel, and the association of the site with the early medieval kingdom of *Aileach*. The brief accounts of the monument that appeared in archaeology texts, journals, and local histories etc. noted the existence of the earthen ramparts but added little to the overall understanding of the site. Indeed, following on from the Ordnance Survey, one hundred and fifty years would elapse before the publication of a second detailed field description – this was the work of the *Archaeological Survey of County Donegal* (Lacey *et al* 1983).

2.3 Development of field boundaries and access to the site

In the 1830s the Ordnance Survey noted the advancing progress of cultivation on the lower slopes of the hilltop (Colby 1837, 217). Evidence for turf cutting on the hill summit is very nebulous. The files of the Donegal Survey (1980) mention depressions that could be old turf cuttings but neither the Ordnance Survey or Walter Bernard (or his workmen who were drawn from the surrounding area) make reference to turf cutting on the mountain. The removal of 'a thick covering of turf' from the surface of the ancient road between the cashel and the inner rampart by Walter Bernard (1879) probably refers to peaty sod rather than peat.

The Ordnance Survey memoirs make no mention of any field boundaries abutting the monument but three are shown on the first edition OS six-inch map (1835). (Figure 2.04). All three are townland boundaries and are confined to the northwestern quadrant of the site. Two traverse the middle and outer defences and abut the western wall of the cashel; between them at the northwest a short stretch of the Toulett/ Speenogue boundary runs along the line of the outer rampart.

The townland boundaries between Toulett and Carrowreagh and Carrowreagh / Speenogue were still in existence when Bernard carried out his work; both are shown as ‘mounds’ on his site plan (Bernard 1879; figure 2.02). He described them as measuring ‘about 2½ feet high and 4 feet wide’ (0.75m by 1.2m). The northerly mound lay 32.6m from the entrance; the westerly was 31m ‘further round’. The third boundary may also have survived - Bernard’s plan does not include the outer defences.

By the time the 25inch map was made in 1897-1913 (Figure 2.05) the Toulett / Carrowreagh boundary had been realigned. It now ran along the southern edge of the site, turned sharply north (Figure 1.10) and then west again to run towards the cashel just north of the doorway. The line of the boundary continues into the interior but the latter section – from a point outside the door – may never have been fenced. The field boundary currently defining the western perimeter of the site seems to be a relatively late addition – this is unfortunate as it truncates part of the hillfort. (Figures 1.11, 3.5). Traces of some of the removed boundaries can be identified on aerial photographs. (Figure 1.13). Interruptions in the earthen defenses may also mark their line.



Figure 2.04 6" OS Map (1835)

Historic access routes to the site

In the 1830s the Ordnance Survey team approached the fort from the eastern or Derry side, describing the ascent to the mountain ‘for about a mile from its base’ as tolerably gradual but assuming ‘a more precipitous character’ within a few hundred feet from the top. They may have arrived via a farm track, still extant, that leads westwards from the Bridge End road; the track is marked on the first edition OS six-inch map. A small dog-leg at the western end would have led onto higher ground and the line of the ancient road (refer to Sections 3.2, 3.3 of this document.) This seems to have been the approach generally used by people walking out from Derry – probably down to the building of the new tourist road in the 1950s.

A curving track approaching the fort from the west may have been used by people coming from other directions. The track is shown on the OS 25-inch map (Figure 2.05) and on the second edition OS six-inch map. It ran uphill to within 50m of the holy well – the interval seems to have been open ground.



Figure 2.05 25" OS Map (1897-1913)

2.4 National Monument

The monument was scheduled in 1882 and vested in the Board of Works by Lord Templemore on 9th November 1904. Repairs, major and minor were undertaken intermittently over the following century or so (see Section 3.8, interventions), the most recent, and probably the most extensive programme of works taking place between 2003 and 2007. The condition of the cashel was rarely mentioned in late nineteenth / twentieth century publications, even when accompanying photographs clearly showed the interior littered with loose stones. (See Figures 2.06, 2.07.)

2.5 Drawings and photographs

The OS Memoir (1837) included a plan and section of the hillfort with the tumulus, ancient road and holy well all indicated. Also included was a larger-scale plan of the cashel with two sections, and sketches illustrating architectural details, masonry styles etc. The plans and sections were made ca. 1830-1 and formed the basis for the depiction of the site on the OS first edition six-inch map of 1837. (Figure 2.04). The sketches – originally done to scale in pencil – were by George Du Noyer. An examination of the *fair plan* drawings (early proofs of the final version) shows only one minor difference – the northern wall passage of the cashel is shorter and lacks an entrance.

Following the scheduling of the monument, a survey plan of the cashel was made by the Office of Public Works; the plan was published in *A Report of the Commissioners of the Board of Works Ireland for 1907-08* (page 15). (Figure 3.17a) A hill-shaded model of the entire site published in the *Interim Reports of The Discovery Programme* (Masterson 1999, Figure 3.04) was based on a 1996 survey carried out by the Western Stone Forts Project (Figure 3.03). In recent years, a terrestrial laser scan (TLS) of the cashel was produced as part of the 3-D ICONS project.² (Figure 3.17b, c).



Figure 2.06 Photographs by Henry Crawford illustrating an account of an outing by the Royal Society of Antiquaries in 1915, but possibly taken around 1904. The pictures highlight the poor condition of the parapet.

² <http://www.3dicons.ie/3d-content/sites/241-grianan>

Aerial photographs

Aerial photographs have made a major contribution to the recording and study of Irish hillforts. Numerous aerial photographs of Grianán exist, but, unfortunately, the heather-cover on the hilltop obscures many of the features of the hillfort. Unlike other types of vegetation, the die-back in winter is insignificant.

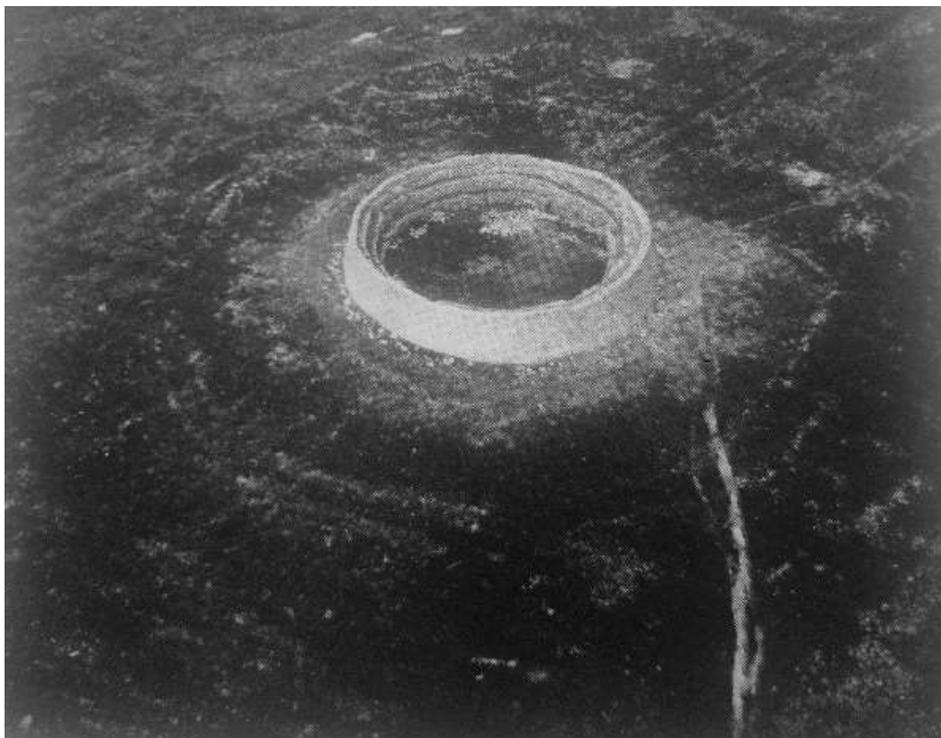


Figure 2.07 An undated black and white photograph that appeared in Estyn Evan's *Prehistoric and Early Christian Ireland* (1966, Pl. 38, credited to Aerofilm Ltd.) may be the earliest published aerial photograph of the site. The photo, looking northeast, shows the cashel and surrounding earthworks. There seems to be no trace of a formal entrance path and the photo may have been taken prior to the construction of the car park and new road in 1955. The path to the well is clearly visible (lower right).

2.6 Historical accounts

Sources

An overview of the literary references to 'Aileach' can be found in the Ordnance Survey Memoir (1837); a summary discussion of the most relevant texts can be found in the *Report on Excavations at Elagh Castle* by Cormac McSparrin (2014). The landscape and boundaries of the early Donegal kingdoms, and the origins and fate of the dynasties that ruled them, have been discussed in great detail by Lacey (2006, 2008, 2012). Succession in the kingship of the Cenél nÉogain was outlined by James Hogan (1932). MacShamhráin (2000) has looked at the relationship between the Cenél nÉogain and the Airgialla prior to the eleventh century, while Simms has examined the turbulent affairs of the Cenél nÉogain in the late medieval period.

Discussions on the location of *Aileach*, the capital of the Cenél nÉogain from around the sixth century AD until its destruction in 1101, can be found in O'Donovan (1837) and in more recent publications by Warner (1983, 160-87), Lacey (2001, 145-49), Tierney (2003, 182-6) and McSparrin (2014).

Lacey (2001) noted that in the ancient sources Aileach was used in a number of 'quite different senses' :

the name of the well-known stone fortress on Greenan mountain

from the fifth-century onward, the name of the sub-kingdom of the Inis Eoghain peninsula – the homeland territory of Cenél nÉogain

from c. 780 onwards (ie from the collapse of the power of the Cenél Conaill) the name of the over-kingdom of the Northern Uí Néill

in the form of the two townland names: Elaghmore, Co. Derry and the adjoining Elaghbeg, Co. Donegal.

Historical narrative

Throughout the early historical period, Greenan Mountain overlooked one, and frequently more than one, political frontier or boundary, linked to the rise and fall in the fortunes of various septs of the Cenél nÉogain. The earliest reliable historical sources show Cenél nÉogain established on the Inishowen peninsula by the fifth century and associated with the title kings of Aileach (or some variant of that spelling) by the following century. The seventh century saw them expand into the area east of the Foyle and southwards into Cenél Conaill / Cenél nÉannaí territory. Under the leadership of Áed Allá in the 730s, Cenél nÉogain defeated the Cenél Conaill in three successive battles (MacShamhráin 2000, 70). It was their decisive victory in 789 at the battle of Cloítech (Clady on the border of Donegal/Tyrone), however, that finally excluded the Cenél Conaill from the overkingship of the Northern Uí Néill and from the valuable plain south of Greenan mountain known in ancient times as Mag nítha. From then on, the kingdom previously referred to as in Fochla, in Tuaiscert, or Aquilonis (all meaning ‘the North’) would be increasingly, known as ‘the kingdom of Ailech’ (Hogan 1932, 201, Lacey 2001, 149).

Lacey (2001, 149) suggests that it may have been shortly after that battle that the Cenél nÉogain moved their headquarters from Elaghmore, across the wetland boundary, to the top of Greenan mountain. The construction of the cashel would have been an ideal visible symbol of the extent and power of the newly invigorated Cenél nÉogain - the actual builder may have been the victor at Cloitech, Aed Oirdnide who lived for a further thirty years (ibid).

As part of this actual physical move, the Cenél nÉogain would, as it were, have brought with them the title of their kingdom Ailech, originally named from the nearby site (actually visible from the Grianán) but which now referred, not only to that site, not only to the homeland kingdom of Inis Eoghan, but now, in its new guise, to the over-kingdom of the Northern Uí Néill (Lacey 2001).

Figure 2.08 a) Generalised politic map of Donegal ca. AD 550.

The mountainous land (shown in white) was largely uninhabited. (Lacey 2006, fig. 8).



Figure 2.08 a) Generalised political map of Donegal ca. AD 725.

The Cenél nÉogain territory (blue) has begun to expand east of the Foyle. The Cenél Conaill territory (yellow) has expanded to its maximum. (Lacey 2006, fig. 9).



Figure 2.08 c) Generalised political map of Donegal ca. AD 800 showing the continuing expansion of the Cenél Éogain at the expense of the Cénel Conaill (to the south) and the polities east of the Foyle.

(Lacey 2006, fig. 10).



From the late eight century onwards, Cenél nÉogain territorial expansion into what is now county Tyrone proceeded apace. Their victory over the Airgialla dynasties and their allies at the battle of Leth Cam, near Armagh in 827, is considered a watershed in the history of mid-Ulster (MacShamhráin 2000, 78), and assured Cenél nÉogain presence at the important ecclesiastical centre at Armagh. The dynasty continued to expand and a number of kings of Tara came from its ranks – a prime mark of success for any early Irish population group. From the 820s onwards there are records of Viking ships in Linn Sailech (Lough Swilly) and Lough Foyle. References to the sacking and plunder of Ailech in 904 (AFM 900) and 939 (AFM 937) probably refer to Inishowen rather than Greenan Mt.

By the period of the Norman conquest of Ireland, Cenél nÉogain stretched from the northern tip of Inishowen to the R. Blackwater near Armagh and was 'the most important native state of the north' (Nicholls 1972, 127). The seat of power seems to have moved away from Grianán before that, however. The demolition of the fort in AD 1101 is widely recorded in the Irish annals. The Annals of the Four Masters note that it was in retaliation for an attack on the O'Brien royal seat at Kincora, Co. Clare in 1088 by Domhnall Ua Lochlainn, King of Aileach. Lacy (pers. comm.) suggests the story might be O'Brien propaganda – *'almost certainly Domhnall Ua Lochlainn, who succeeded as king in 1083, had already moved into Derry by then. He died there in 1121. Nonetheless, as the AFM is a local text [the chronicle was compiled in south Donegal between 1632 and 1636] the account cannot be dismissed outright'*.

The early second millennium period was marked by expansionist and succession struggles. In the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries the kingship was being disputed between the families of MacLoughlin – who had held it for most of the preceding century and a half - and O'Neill. In 1241 Donnell MacLoughlin, was defeated and slain by Brian O'Neill in alliance with the O'Donnells of Tirconnell. The decisiveness of the battle – ten prospective MacLoughlin kings were also killed - led to the disappearance of

the MacLoughlins as a major political force (Hogan 1932, 217). While the power base of the MacLoughlins seems to have been centred in the Strabane area, that of the O'Neills was based in south-east Tyrone near Tullyhogue.

This shift left Inishowen vulnerable and the annals record the attempts by various dynastic lines to achieve dominance there. By 1300 the peninsula was in the possession of the earl of Ulster but after the death of the Brown Earl in 1333 it was taken over by a neighbouring chiefly family, the O'Doherty. The O'Doherty successfully exploited the fractious relationship between the O'Neill, the O'Donnell (and various internal factions of both dynasties) and the crown, and retained Inishowen until the revolt of Cahir O'Doherty. Following the flight of the Earls, the suppression of Cahir O'Doherty's revolt and his death in 1608, gave more ambitious form to colonisation projects already being mooted for the province (Farrell 2017, 5).

The county of Donegal was created or shired in 1585 out of the union of the 'whole countrye of O'Donell' and 'O'Doghertye's countrye' (MacGiolaEaspaig 1995). There were a number of later adjustments, including in 1613, the transfer of Derry and the area around it to the newly created county of Londonderry (Lacey 2006). This split the old kingdom of Aileach (cf Elaghbeg and Elagh Mor) as well as the expanded kingdom of the eight century and later, which at one time stretched across Donegal, Derry and Tyrone. The dividing line is even more strongly etched on the political map now - the border between counties Donegal and Derry is part of the international border between Ireland and the UK.

2.7 Later history

In common with a majority of Ireland's secular monuments, nothing is known of the history of the monument between its abandonment sometime around the beginning of the second millennium AD, and the visit of the Ordnance Survey some 800 years later. The fact that the fort appears on a sketch map of the area made in 1601 (Figure 2.09) shows that it remained a prominent landmark.

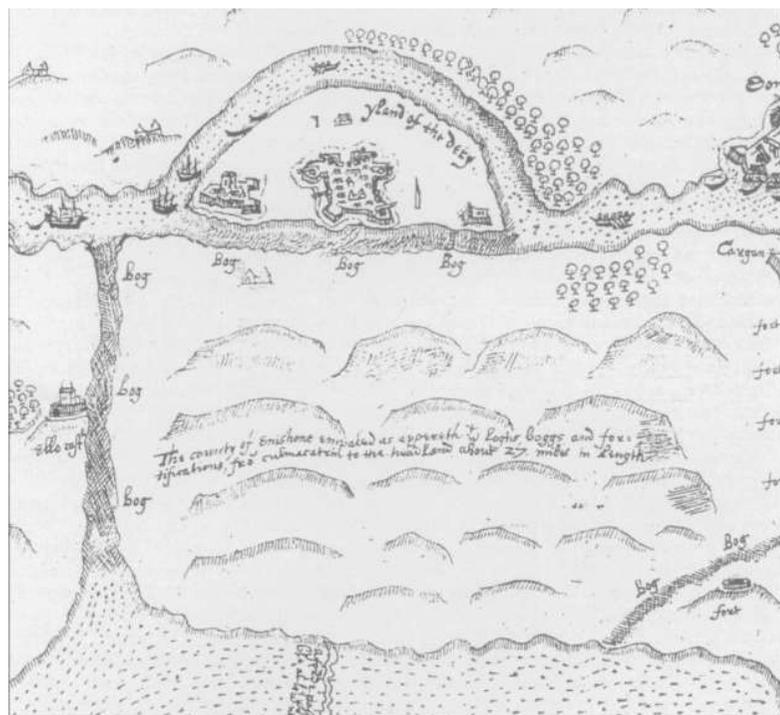


Figure 2.09 Detail of a sketch map of the Derry/ Lough swilly area, dated 15 May 1601 (PRO SP 63/208). It shows 'Ello Castle' (centre left), the adjacent line of the bog (Pennyburn Depression) and what is almost certainly the Grianán of Aileach (lower right) labelled 'fort' (Lacey 2001, fig. 25).

2.8 Pseudo history, myth and folklore

References to Aileach occur in a wide range of Irish Early Medieval and Medieval manuscript sources including the annals (entries spanning the fifth to thirteenth century), and literary texts such as the Metrical Dindshenchas (compiled in the early second millennium), and Gaelic praise poetry (late medieval period down to the sixteenth century).

There has been considerable debate about the sense(s) in which 'Aileach' is used in these sources (O'Donovan 1837, Hogan 1932, Warner 1983, Tierney 2003, Lacey 2001 and 2006, McSparron 2014), summarised by Lacey (2001) as follows: *the homeland territory of Cenél nEógain on the Inishowen peninsula; the over-kingdom of the Northern Uí Néill; the townland names of Elaghmore and Elaghbeg and the fort on Greenan Mt.*

The earliest annalistic reference to a king of Aileach is contained in the Annals of Tighernach for the year AD 489 :

*The battle of Cellosnad in Mag Fea, wherein fell Aongus son of Nadfraech and his wife, and Ethne the Horrible, daughter of Cremthann son of Éanna Cennselach. The victors were Illann son of Dungal and his brother Ailill, and Eochaidh the Wounder, and Muirheartach, son Erc, king of Aileach.*³

For the succeeding centuries, references to kings of Aileach their valorous deeds and deaths, and attacks on Aileach are recurring themes in the annals.

The Metrical Dindshenchas has been described as providing 'a kind of topomythography of Ireland in prose and verse' (Ó Corráin 1985, 86) and a mediation between 'story, landscape, and memory' (Schlüter 2017, 24). The text contains three poems explaining the origins of Aileach; the points of agreement are summarised by McSparron (2014, 9) as follows:

³ <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T100002A/index.html>. It has been suggested that the same Aongus might have given his name to the fort of Dún Aonghasa on the Aran Islands.

*'The origin of Aileach as the tomb of Aed (Tuatha de Dannan),
That it was fortified by Imchell, and sometimes called Aileach Imchell.
That the site upon which it was built was sacred to and occupied by the war gods
Neit and
Nemain and sometimes called Ailech Neit.
The use of Aileach as the fort of Frigru, the Pict, and his lover Aileac, the daughter of
the
Scottish King, in their flight from her father.*

Praise poems were written as laudatory offerings, often giving the chief and his place of residence an illustrious origin. Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn's poem written in praise of Seán Ó Dochertaigh (died 1582) addresses Aileach itself, asking the site to give an account of its history through the ages (Tierney 2003, 182). The Aileach referred to in the poem is a place rather than an idea and Tierney identifies this with the O'Doherty castle at Elaghmore. Another well-known poet, Eochaidh Ó hEoghusa, saw Aileach as one of the 'se riogh-phuirt fhoibhthe Eireann - six perfect palaces of Eire' which included Teamhair, Caiseal, Eamhain Macha, Nas, and Cruachain (Tierney 2003, 184). A sixteenth century poem by Ó hEoghusa lamenting the destruction of the Mac Diarmada stronghold on Loch Cé, compares it to the abandonment of the 'palace of smooth-sodded Aileach'.⁴

2.9 Modern history

From the time of its construction in the late first millennium AD, the cashel was undoubtedly the most prominent feature on the hilltop - notwithstanding its poor condition, this remained the case in the early nineteenth century. Walter Bernard's restoration project accentuated the contrast between the seemingly well-preserved, high-walled stone fort and the eroded and heather-covered earthen ramparts. Indeed many of those who visit the site are unaware that the latter exist at all. It is no surprise then that recent use-history and public interest have both focussed exclusively on the cashel. The connection with one of Ireland's most illustrious dynasties and the era that is popularly regarded as the *floruit* of Ireland's heroic past, has meant that a strong element of pageantry flavours public events at the fort.



Figure 2.10 Grand opening day in 1878 celebrating Walter Bernard's restoration of the cashel. (*The Londonderry Journal* July 1st 1878)

⁴ According to Ó hEoghusa, Aileach had been empty since the time of Muircheartach son of Niall, who would appear to be Muircheartach Mac Lochlainn, the fifty-fifth king of Aileach who died in 1166 (Byrne 2001, 284 quoted in Tierney 2003). Muircheartach was a grandson of the abovementioned Domhnall Ua Lochlainn. Poetic license perhaps regarding dates...

2. Site History & Archaeology

Bernard's grand opening celebrations featured a procession of druids entering the fort to the tune of Brian Boru's march. A poem (The Grianan of Aileach) written specially for the occasion opened with a striking image of the hill as 'a queen, who always wears her crown' and went on to invoke the wild marauding chiefs who once battled where 'kings perchance held court'. Following the restoration, there was increased public interest in the site - Bernard himself led many outings there. Antiquarian societies were frequent visitors. The 1915 excursionists from the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, were informed that legend ascribed the construction of the fort to 'ancient deities or to semi-divine foreigners' but that in later times 'Aileach was a seat of the kings who ruled over the northern branches of the descendants of Niall of the Nine Hostages'... the Book of Rights listing 'fifteen principalities subordinate to the King of Aileach'. (Crawford 1915).

The opening of the new tourist road in 1955 was also marked by grand ceremony. In more recent times, the Féile Grianán Áiliagh Group, have held a number of pageants at the fort.⁵ In a one-off event in 2018 ('the walk of the chieftain'), friends, family, Sinn Féinn party members and supporters, took part in a walk from Derry to Grianán to commemorate the first anniversary of the death of Martin McGuinness. (This event proceeded without permission).

In the creative arts too, the fort is seen as a portal to the past – a theatre for history, myth and legend. In Seamus Deane's autobiographical novel, *Reading in the Dark* (Vintage 1996), Grianán bridges the worlds of urban Derry and rural Donegal. It is the ancestral world out beyond the city where the warriors of old sleep. For the boy, it is also the scene of a terrible family tragedy.

Grianán Aileach featured in the 'World-Wide Walks / Between Earth and Sky / Dun na nGall' project, one of five commissioned in 2010 by Donegal County Council exploring art and climate change.⁶ The project combined elements of natural, cultural and virtual identities. Grianán was used to frame weather change sequences. This is an important facet of the fort, drawing together

the spatial and temporal aspects – the spectacular view of the setting sun in particular is a ritual much enjoyed by visitors, some of whom come specifically for that purpose.

The sculptor Eilís O'Connell whose early childhood was spent in nearby Bridgend, has described the Grianán of Aileach as her first experience of sculpture 'An Grianan had a profound effect on me because of the way it was placed in the landscape, the panoramic views, and the simple geometry of the stone rings. I thought of it recently when I saw the designs for the new Apple Headquarters in Cupertino, California' (McAvera 2017). For O'Connell, it is this 'sense of a sculpture or building's capacity for drawing its energy from its environment and returning it in some kind of distilled form' that powers her continuing interest in the whole idea of public sculpture (Ocampo-Gooding 2012).⁷



Figure 2.11 Dawn chorus at Grianán Aileach in 2015⁷

⁵ The group are an amalgamation of local development groups, local and cross-border businesses, artists, musicians, historians and tourism providers living in the border and surrounding areas of Inishowen & Derry. The events at the fort were part funded by Inishowen Development Partnership and Leader, Earagail Arts Festival, Donegal County Council, Irish Arts Council and Derry/Londonderry City of Culture 2013 (which images of An Grianán were used to promote) as well as the Donegal Gathering.

⁶ http://donegalpublicart.ie/dpa_lovelyweather.html

⁷ Charles Hall. "The Undomesticated Space." Eilís O'Connell (Dublin; London: Gandon Books in association with the Gallery at John Jones, 1993) 25. Quoted in https://spectrum.library.concordia.ca/976800/1/OcampoGooding_MA_S2013.pdf. McAvera, B. 2017. From the ground up. *Irish Arts Review* 2017, 34(2), 96-103. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26385114>

⁸ <https://donegalgathering.com/2015/06/01/feile-grianan-ailligh-dawn-chorus/>

PART THREE

Claire Cotter, Archaeologist

THE MONUMENT: DESCRIPTION, CONDITION & INTEGRITY

3.1 Summary of the place

The site known as the Grianán of Aileach is a National Monument in State care. It comprises a number of archaeological elements, the central cashel being the most prominent. The cashel stands within a multivallate hillfort or enclosure defined by middle and outer earthen defences. Other recorded features include a tumulus or mound, an ancient road and a holy well. A building that formerly existed in the interior of the cashel is thought to have been used for mass in penal times.

The footprint of the monument is ca. 2.5ha. The area enclosed by the outer ramparts is 1.6ha and by the inner ramparts is 0.4ha ; the cashel encloses an area of 430sq.m.

The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) lists the elements of the site as follows:

Cashel	DG047-012001
Tumulus / Mound	DG047-012002
Holy well	DG047-012003
Ancient road	DG047-012004
Enclosure	DG047-012005
Penal mass station	DG047-012006



Figure 3.01 Aerial photograph with archaeological features highlighted (source Bing aerial)

3.2 The Hillfort DG047-012005

The hillfort ('enclosure' in the RMP) comprises two lines of earthen ramparts (outer and middle), traditionally considered to consist of an outer pair of banks possibly with an intervening ditch, and a middle bank with traces of an external ditch. The cashel is more or less centrally placed within the middle enclosure.

In the earliest published description (*The Dublin Penny Journal* 1835), Blacker described the cashel as encircled by 'a double fosse, the first about twenty yards from the wall, the second at a like distance beyond the first.' The Ordnance Survey recorded three enclosing banks 'formed of earth mixed with uncemented stones' and in a state of 'great dilapidation.'

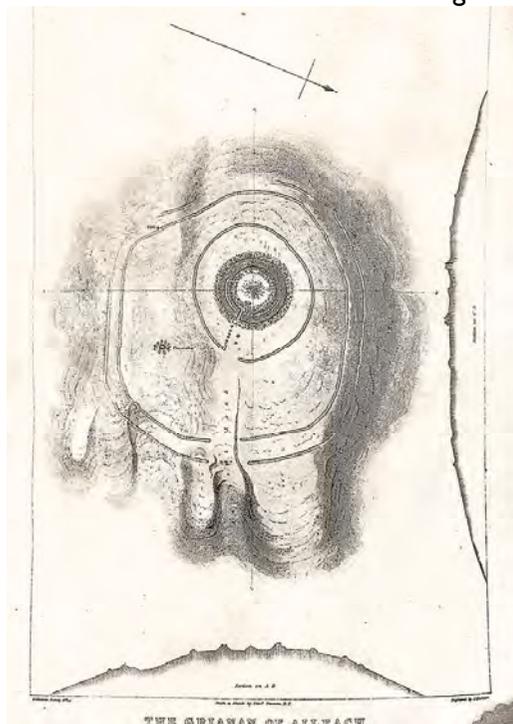


Figure 3.02 OS plan and sections of the site made in the early 1830s. The finalised version (with N facing up) was published in *OS Memoir for the Parish of Templemore* (Colby 1837, 217-221).

On the site plan (Figure 3.02) they were shown as a single rampart, more or less concentric with the cashel, and an outer pair of irregular circular outline, consequent 'to their adaptation to the form of the hill which they enclose and ascend above each other in successive steps or terraces.' Based on comparison with other Irish regal sites, it was suggested that 'the whole hill might have been enclosed by other ramparts, of which owing to the progress of cultivation no very distinct traces remain' (Colby 1837, 217).

A topographical survey carried out in 1995 (Figure 3.03) has highlighted a number of additional features suggesting that the earthen defences consist of two concentric pairs of closely spaced banks with associated ditches. That configuration forms the basis of the following description but needs to be confirmed at a future date.

The outermost ramparts (banks 3 and 4) enclose a roughly quadrilateral area 140m by 135m. The inner defences (banks 1 and 2) enclose a sub-circular area (75m by 65m) lying in the northern half of the larger enclosure. The distance between banks 2 and 3 varies from as little as 15m at north to over 50m at S.

The defences are largely confined to the hill summit (Figure 3.04) and, although the enclosed space has a slightly convex profile, most of their circuit is visible from the summit. Along the west and northwest, the outer defences exploit the natural contours of the hill and run along the upper edge of a break in slope.

Elsewhere, the two outer banks consist of a series of more or less straight flanks that often seem to take little account of the natural topography of the hilltop. The middle defences (banks 1 and 2) run around the summit of the hill, lying slightly downslope from the cashel along the south, west and north but at a similar level to it at east; the straighter south side runs along the north edge of a natural depression (site of the ancient road).

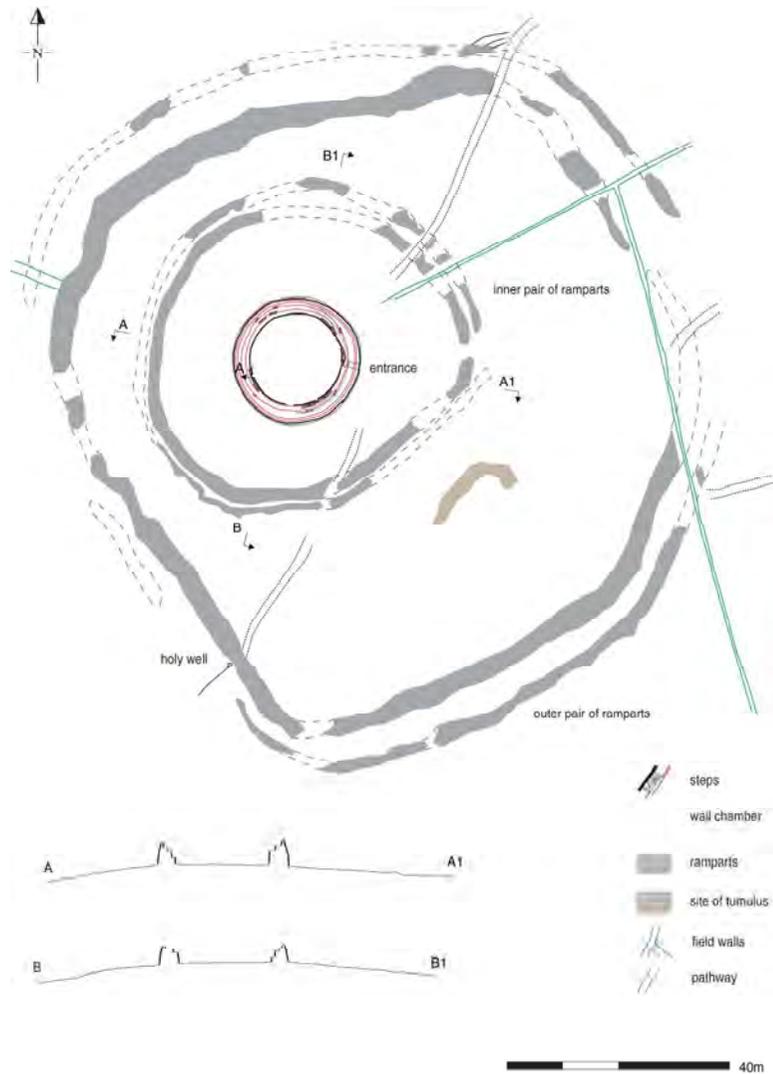


Figure 3.03 Topographical survey of the site 1996 carried out as part of The Discovery Programme's *Western Stone Forts Project*.

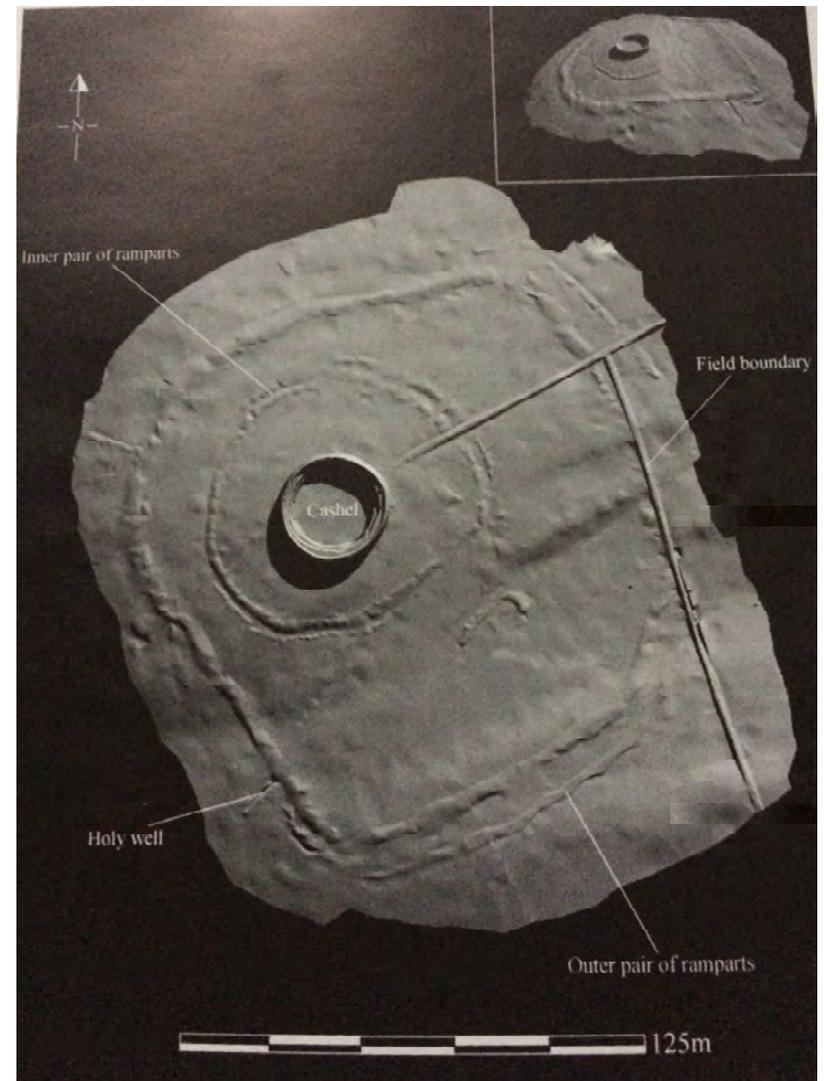


Figure 3.04 Hillshaded model based on the 1996 survey of the site (Masterson 1999)

3. The Monument: Description, Condition & Integrity

Both sets of enclosing banks are now heather-covered and rarely survive above 0.60m in height. They are made up of stony clays and appear to be very eroded. Although some loose stone is visible on the summit of the outer banks at the southeast there is no definite evidence to suggest that any of the banks was ever stone-revetted.

The two outer banks are best preserved along the south /southeast sector where they lie 4.50m apart on average; bank 3 measures up to 4m in width at the base; the less substantial bank 4 averages 2m in width. Traces of a shallow intervening ditch are evident at a number of points along the circuit. It is possible that there was also a slight external ditch immediately outside bank 4. Along the west and north sectors land improvement / enclosure and erosion have removed much of the surface outline of bank 4, but the more substantial bank 3 is clearly visible. (Figure 3.05). If bank 4 survives here at all it is in the form of gapped 'mounds' along the north facade. At the northeast, Banks 3 and 4 are both traceable but are cut by the modern path linking the car park and cashel. Along the eastern flank, bank 4 has been impacted - and possibly destroyed - by agricultural improvements; a field boundary partly overlies much of bank 3.

The middle defences appear to be less substantial than the outer; the innermost bank (bank 1) measures 2m wide and is traceable along its entire circuit. Bank 2 (1.3m wide) lies 2m outside it. It is gapped but traceable along the north and east sectors. Along the south and southwest it appears only as a slight counterscarp bank. There are traces of an intervening ditch particularly in the north and southwest sectors.

The entrance to the outer enclosure probably faced east or southeast; a field bank now obscures bank 3 along that sector. One of two featureless gaps through banks 1 and 2 at southeast probably mark the site of the entrance to the middle enclosure. Other gaps and interruptions – particularly on the western side – may result from the removal or demolition of field boundaries.



Figure 3.05 Western flanks of banks 3 and 4, looking northwest



Figure 3.06 Viewed from the southeast, banks 1 & 2 are just discernible, on the skyline, enclosing the greensward that surrounds the cashel

Condition

Ramparts

The best-preserved section of the outer defences is at southeast, where banks 3 northeast (in the rough land adjoining the south side of the car park). Further north, they have been truncated by the entrance pathway and an associated drain (Figures 3.30, 3.31) – the entrance path also cuts through banks 1 and 2. (Figure 3.03).

Construction of the east and west field boundaries (these presently define the extent of the monument) has had a strong negative impact on banks 3 and 4, either running over them (long stretches of bank 3 have superimposed field banks), cutting directly across them (at northwest, southwest northeast and southeast), or truncating them (the eastern and western flanks of bank 4 are cut off by field boundaries). It is unclear how much of bank 4 is preserved in the cleared field to the west of the hill summit, or of banks 3 and 4 in the cleared field to the east. At the very least, remnants of the ditch / ditches may survive.

The northeast field boundary (a very prominent feature on the ground) cuts across the outer and middle defences. (Figure 3.08). On the south, the path to the holy well has truncated banks 1, 2 and 3. (Figure 3.10). Long sections of bank 2 are untraceable. Bank 1 is well-preserved along much of its circuit, the main exception being at north where there is now a large gap in the rampart.

The low definition of the ramparts means that many visitors to the site are either unaware of their existence or find it difficult to identify them on the ground. Erosion has undoubtedly contributed to their present condition (particularly along the steeper north flank of the hill summit). Parts of banks 3 and 4 may have been deliberately removed, however, either to provide wall core material for the cashel, or, in much later times, to provide material to build field boundaries.



Figure 3.07 Field banks to the northwest cut directly into the outer banks



Figure 3.08 Field boundaries to the east cut off the outer flank of bank 4

The interior of the hillfort

The land immediately surrounding the cashel wall is exceptionally green and well-drained in comparison to the rest of the hilltop. The contrast was also apparent to Blacker (1835) who noted that *'the greenness of the turf between the cashel and the first fosse'* was remarkable for the *'superiority of its verdure over any portion of the surrounding mountain grass lands'*. The 'verdure' may be partly due to blown soil being trapped by the standing wall; it is also possible that organic waste was routinely dumped here during the occupation of the cashel.

Paths worn by habitual usage occur here and there on the hilltop – it is clear for example that many visitors walk around the exterior of the cashel. During a site visit (July 2019) a few other habitual paths were noted – most led eastwards from the cashel entrance but terminated fairly quickly owing to the wet ground. The route to the well is the most eroded part of the hillfort interior (Figure 3.10). The level of erosion is due in some measure to the steep slope, but the path is also heavily used as it provides the only obvious route for visitors to explore the outer part of the monument.



Figure 3.09 Lush grass in the interior of the hillfort



Figure 3.10 Eroded path leading from the cashel to the well in the interior of the hillfort

Integrity

According to Blacker (1835) the earthen defences could be 'distinctly traced throughout the entire of their extent.' On the OS plan, (Fig. 3.02) the northwest flank of bank 4 appears more intact than is the case currently. The sections of the middle and outer ramparts directly adjoining the line of the ancient road also appear better preserved. The middle bank is shown as complete, the only break being the entrance at the east. Walter Bernard (1879) made little reference to the earthen defences, noting only in the course of describing the ancient roadway that the inner rampart lay 97 feet (29.5m) from the cashel doorway.

The Archaeological Survey of County Donegal (Lacey et al 1983, 112) recorded three earthen ramparts, describing them as heather-covered and *'much worn away'*. Their condition in 1980 was similar to what it is today. The outer pair of banks (and particularly bank 4) were untraceable for long distances. There were possible traces of an intervening fosse and slight indications of a fosse on the internal side of bank 3. The middle bank was traceable for almost its entire circuit and there were possible traces of an external ditch. A gap to the east-northeast gave onto the ancient road. While some stone was visible in the banks they were predominantly of earthen construction (ibid).

The delimitation of the bounds of the monument by field boundaries and the construction of the entrance pathway have impacted on the integrity of the hillfort. Erosion of the surviving stretches of the earthen defences is due largely to weathering, the exposed location etc. The pace of erosion does not seem to have accelerated over the last 180 years or so.

Visitor traffic across the earthen banks seems to be confined to the area of the holy well, to the south of the cashel, and the entrance path at the northeast. The ground was extremely wet in July 2019, however, and visitors may be more inclined to disperse across the site in drier weather conditions.

The classification of the site as a hillfort is based on a number of factors - the commanding location, topographical relationship to the hill, the morphology and association with a possible mound. Hillforts vary widely in size (Grianán would lie at the smaller end of the scale) and in the complexity of their defences. In his hillfort classification scheme, Barry Raftery included Grianán in Class II of his classification scheme, defined as hillforts with 'widely spaced multivallate defences' (Raftery 1972, 43; 1973, 23). Some hillforts were used intermittently in later (prehistoric and early historic) periods. Raftery (1972) noted the similarities between Grianán and Rathgall hillfort, Co. Wicklow, both having 'four concentric enclosures' with the innermost in each case being a ringfort-like structure.

The possibility that the ramparts are Early Historic in date (although not necessarily contemporary with the cashel) also has to be considered. Whatever their date, they formed a visible element of the Early Historic monument. Trivallate forts (with three lines of defences) make up only a very small percentage of recorded ringforts across the country. The vast majority are raths. The number of trivallate cashels on record is less than a dozen and at six of these the outer defences consist of earthen banks.



Figure 3.11 The view to the east between the two natural ridges that frame the Ancient Road.



Figure 3.12 Rocky outcrop on the northerly ridge of the Ancient Road.

3.3 The Ancient Road DG047-012004

The line of the ancient road is generally assumed to follow the linear hollow defined by two natural rock ridges that run east-west close to the hill summit. The ridges are clearly visible in the cleared field to the east of the monument (Figure 3.01). They become less clear in the vicinity of the cashel and may have more or less petered out east of the cashel entrance. Bernard (1879) noted that the 'bare rock' in the interior of the cashel ran in a north-westerly direction.

Condition

Although the topographical location of the road can be identified, no built features are evident on the ground. One of two featureless breaks in banks 1 and 2 may mark the site of the entrance; the corresponding sections of banks 3 and 4 are either obscured by a field boundary or have been demolished. There are no visible traces of walling / set stones at the western end of the road. On the hill-shaded model (Figure 3.04), a small anomaly lying just inside the middle rampart at the east may be associated with the roadway.

Integrity

Petrie described the ancient road as diminishing considerably in breadth and diverging slightly to the right between the middle defences (i.e. banks 1 and 2) and the cashel. That section of the roadway was strengthened 'by a wall on each side, of which the foundation stones alone remain' (Colby 1837, 217). On the accompanying plan, the remains of the walling appear better preserved along the southern side of the roadway. (Figure 3.02).

Walter Bernard (1879) recorded finding 'the ancient roadway curving a little to the right' between the door of the cashel and the innermost rampart. He removed a 'thick covering of turf' from its surface but reported that 'few were the indications to show where it lay, for the wall mentioned in the Ordnance Memoir, as marking its course, is only now a record in history'.

3. The Monument: Description, Condition & Integrity

The built features associated with the ancient road are no longer visible but some vestige of their presence might be detected by targeted survey or excavation. As it survives, the road is largely a landscape feature. The line of the road clearly continues into the adjoining field to the east and the topography of that area should be protected.

A significant aspect of the ancient road at Grianán is that (whatever its date or associations) the memory of it was still preserved in the nineteenth century. The route runs through the earthen defences of the hillfort, but, on the ground, the most visible portion lies outside the monument to the east.

Processional space plays an important role in most cultures and the road could also have been used on ceremonial occasions. A linear thoroughfare allows people to process hierarchically - Late Bronze Age and Early Medieval elites were very conscious of their status. The most famous processional avenue in Ireland is the site known as the 'Banqueting Hall' at Tara, but ancient roads have also been identified at other royal sites, such as Cashel. Many of the lesser-known examples are enhanced natural features and this is also the case at Grianán.

3.4 The Mound or Tumulus DG047-012002

A low L-shaped mound marks the site of the 'tumulus' shown on the OS site plan. The mound is clearly visible on the hill-shaded survey plan (Figure 3.04) but is much more difficult to make out on the ground. The heather cover makes it difficult to say much about its morphology or makeup - there are certainly some stones in the mix.

Petrie described the tumulus as a central mound encircled by ten large stones 'laid horizontally and converging towards a centre' (Colby 1837, 221). The OS plan shows the stones laid out like the petals of a flower (Figures 3.02, 3.13).

Petrie noted that the mound had been 'recently' opened, but 'nothing was discovered in it that would throw light on the purpose of its erection' (Colby 1837, 221).

According to Bernard (1879) there was 'but a mere trace of the circular mound marked on the Ordnance drawing ... this we attempted to preserve. The ten stones surrounding it are somewhat out of place, but being well imbedded, we did not disturb them'. The Archaeological Survey of County Donegal (Lacey 1983, 112) recorded the feature as a 'low mound of broken stones.'

Condition

The feature is overgrown and difficult to identify on the ground. It is unclear if any of the features described by the OS or Walter Bernard survive.

Integrity

The feature was marked as a 'tumulus' on the first edition six-inch map.

Mounds or tumuli termed carn, cnoc, tulach are a common feature of the archaeological landscape. Many occupy prominent positions on hill summits, mountain passes or routeways etc. Mounds located within prehistoric enclosures are considered to have symbolic meaning, derived from an association – symbolic or real – with the burial place of the ancestors.

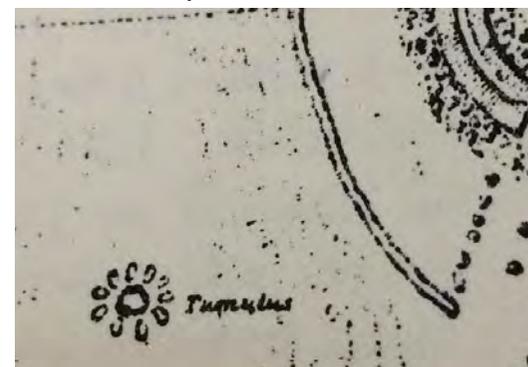


Figure 3.13 Depiction of the mound on the OS plan 1835

Two other hillforts in county Donegal, Croaghan Hill (DG047-012005) and Glasbolie (DG103-029) enclose mounds. These are more prominently sited and also significantly larger (21m in diameter by 3m high at Croaghan and 15m in diam by 1m high at Glasbolie) than the mound at Grianán.

The mound at Croaghan is considered to be a passage tomb. The date of the Glasbolie mound is unknown. Interpretation of the Grianán mound is hampered by its poor state of preservation. The morphology, as described in the OS Memoir, does not point to a particular site class. The layout of the stones is very unusual, and no parallels are known to the writer. One possibility is that it was associated with a cist grave/s. While this would fit well with the known archaeological record for the area (six cist graves have been recorded within a 5km radius of Grianán), the hilltop location would not be typical (but see Holywell Hill below). Most of the recorded cists in the area are associated with funerary vessels – there is no record of any finds being recovered during the early nineteenth century exploration of the Grianán mound.

The possibility that the mound at Grianán is a later feature is also a consideration. Tumuli or mounds were the focus of ceremonial practices in medieval Irish territories, including rites of inauguration and royal assembly. Ancestral mounds could also play a role in swearing legal contracts and even possibly in peace negotiations.

A possible parallel for the context of the Grianán tumulus is the cairn and cist on the summit of Holywell Hill, which lies about 3km SSE of Greenan Mt. - both hills are inter-visible. Rainwater that collected in the cist was believed locally to have special qualities, that is, it was the 'holy well' of the name (Lacey 1983, 2006). Lacey has highlighted the political significance of the site - the hill was formerly known as Knockena / Cnoc Énna, thus raising the possibility that it was the inauguration place of the kings of the original Donegal Cenél nÉnnai. Árd na dTaoiseach (Ardatitán Td.), located about 15km SE of Greenan Mt.,

was the inauguration place of Feidhlim Ó Dochartaig in 1601. Fitzpatrick (2004) has suggested that the site was also possibly a longstanding inauguration venue for the Cenél nÉnnai. Doon Rock, associated with the O'Donnells, is the only inauguration site listed in the RMP for Co. Donegal (Elaghmore lies in Co. Derry; Tulach Óg is in Co. Tyrone).

3.5 The Penal Station DG047-012001

There is no trace of this building evident presently. Blacker interpreted the structure as an altar. Stripping away the turf, he uncovered a flagged pathway leading from the cashel entrance to the structure (*Dublin Penny Journal* 1835, 349-50). The OS recorded the remains of an oblong building (5m by 4.3m) at the centre of the fort. The 0.6m thick mortared walls survived to a height of 0.6m (Colby 1837). On the OS plan, (Figure 3.16b) the building is orientated East - West, with the entrance in the east wall more or less lining up with that of the fort. A projecting structure on the west wall divides the interior into two narrow spaces. Based on the use of mortar, and the 'angularity' of its plan, Petrie considered that the building was of doubtful antiquity, and had probably been erected as a penal chapel. Both he and Blacker noted that it had remained in use down to around forty years previously (i.e. the 1790s), at which time a chapel was built at the bottom of the hill in Burt. A few of the foundation stones of the building still survived in the 1870s, but '*there was no standing wall left, and even its outline at the base was destroyed*' (Bernard 1879).

There is no subsequent account of the building and it is not shown on later editions of the OS six-inch map. The location of the door in the east wall would be unusual for an ecclesiastical building. There is no archaeological evidence for any buildings contemporary with the use of the fort. The evidence from other Early Medieval stone forts shows the principal residence often occupied a central location; a range of other buildings might abutt the enclosing wall in the most sheltered part of the interior.

Condition

No trace visible; the likelihood is that the building, or what remained of it, was cleared away in the 1870s.

Integrity

Although now removed, the former existence of a penal chapel and reference to its replacement by a place of worship in Burt, form part of the site narrative. The present church in Burt, designed by Liam McCormick, is modelled on the cashel at Grianán. The building won the RIAI Triennial Gold Medal in 1971, and was awarded the title of 'Building of the Century' by a national poll at the end of the twentieth century.¹

Twenty-three 'penal mass stations' are recorded in the RMP for Co. Donegal. Most of the records are based on map evidence (the designation 'altar' marked on the first or second edition OS maps) and are not associated with surviving structures. Indeed, the foci of most seems to have been a natural feature. A Report on the State of Popery compiled in 1731 recorded 892 'Mass houses' for the whole of Ireland. Many of these were in towns; rural mass houses were in 'open fields' usually in isolated areas.

The location of an eighteenth-century penal chapel in the interior of a mountain top fort is a very unusual - possibly even a unique - occurrence. The OS first edition map shows an RC chapel at the base of the hill beside Burt House – this may have been the site of the place of worship referred to by the OS and Col. Blacker in the 1830s.

The cluster of ecclesiastical remains at the base of the hill – the site of the seventeenth century meeting house, 19th century Presbyterian church and the 20th century Catholic church modelled on Grianán – is also worthy of note.

3.6 Holy Well DG047-012003 and St. Columb's Stone

The spring well is located between banks 3 and 4 at the foot of a steep slope on the S face of the hill. It is traditionally known as St. Patrick's well. The well presents as a small pool, lintelled on the upslope side and with some flat slabs at ground level on the southern end (Figure 3.14); traces of collapsed stonework (probably of no great antiquity) are evident on the western edge. The well is accessed by an eroded pathway leading downslope from the cashel.

Condition

In July 2019, the well was half hidden by vegetation, the well water was muddy with water trickling out on the downslope side.

Integrity

The OS recorded a spring well 'lying between the third and fourth walls... which when discovered a few years back was covered with a large slab' (Colby 1837, 221). The Memoir makes no mention of it being revered or visited, and it was marked only as 'well' on the site plan. Bernard (1879) likewise referred to it as a spring well, 'with its ancient stones yet unresolved, flanking its sides and lining the bottom, but the large flag which covered it sixty or seventy years ago has disappeared'.

About half a century later, the well was described as 'a shallow irregularly shaped pool... of unsightly appearance' (O Muirgheasa 1936, 156, no. 88). The few sprigs around it were 'festooned with bits of cloth left by pilgrims' who came on Sundays, said prayers and drank the waters (ibid). The well was cleaned out in the early part of the twenty-first century under the supervision of Heather King, National Monuments Service (Heather King pers. comm., 2010). There seems to be no official record of that activity - in an online publication, Bennett (2009) made reference to the well 'being brought back into good health'.

¹ <http://archiseek.com/2009/1967-st-aengus%E2%80%99-church-burt-co-donegal/>

The spring well is an authentic feature, although most of the stonework visible there presently is of doubtful antiquity. The feature is marked 'well' on the OS plan of the site. The OS described it as a spring well 'which when discovered a few years back was covered with a large slab' (Colby 1837, 221). It is unclear how long the well was venerated as a holy well. Neither Col. Blacker, the OS or Walter Bernard referred to it as a holy well. O Muirgheasa (1936) recorded the tradition that Tobar Phadraig or St. Patrick's well had been neglected and forgotten until the nineteenth century, when it was discovered and opened with much religious ceremony by clergy from Derry. While the history of the holy well is somewhat obscure, it has certainly been a place of pilgrimage since the later nineteenth century and now forms an integral part of the monument complex.



Figure 3.14 Holy Well

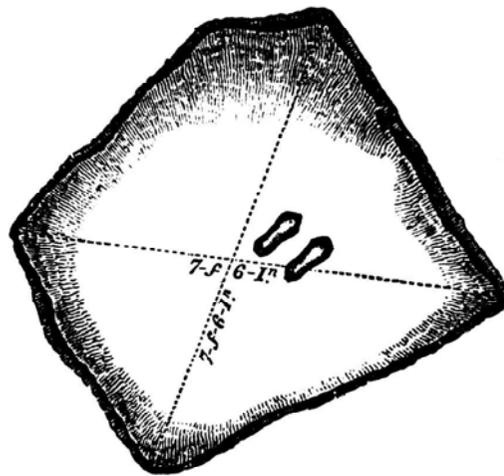


Figure 3.15 St. Columb's stone sketched by Du Noyer in the OS Memoir (Colby 1837, 233)

St. Columb's Stone

One other feature associated with *Aileach* is a footprint stone, also known as St. Columb's stone or *Leac Phádraig*. The tradition that it was blessed by St. Patrick at *Aileach* is cited in the *Vita Tripartita* (Fitzpatrick 2004). The stone featured on Neville's ca. 1690 map of the siege of Derry (Lacey 2006, 112, illus. 60). Lacey suggests the name, St. Columb's stone, reflects the dominance of the cult of that saint in the local folklore around Derry since medieval times. A description, and account of the history and folklore associated the stone were included in the OS Memoir (Colby 1837, 233). The location at the time was given as the garden of Belmont House, Greencastle Road, about a mile from Derry. The accompanying sketch showed two footprints, lying roughly off centre on the surface of a flat slab of stone (stone 2.25m by 2.25m; footprints 25cm in length). (Figure 3.15).

Condition

Belmont is now an education centre. The stone remains *in situ* in the garden; it is semi-buried but may originally have been pear-shaped.² The two footprints are clearly visible.

Integrity

The authenticity of the stone and possible parallels among Irish inauguration furniture have been discussed by Fitzpatrick (2004) and Lacey (2006). There is no evidence to link the stone directly with *Grianán Aileach*, but if it is an inauguration stone, the likelihood is that it is associated with the *Cenél nÉogain*. Based on remarks in *The Tripartite Life*, Lacey (2006, 112) suggests a possible connection with *Áed Oirdnide*, the *Cenél nÉogain* King of Tara (and possible builder of the cashel at *Grainán Aileach*), who reigned about the same time as the composition of the *Life*.

² <http://lordbelmontinnorthernireland.blogspot.com/2017/06/belmont-house.html>

3. The Monument: Description, Condition & Integrity

3.16a

Blacker 1830, published in *A Brief Description of an Ancient Building, Supposed to Have Been a Temple of the Sun on Greenan Mountain, Donegal* by Col. Blacker appeared in the Dublin Penny Journal in 1835

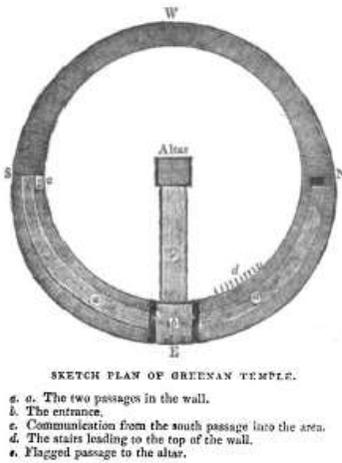
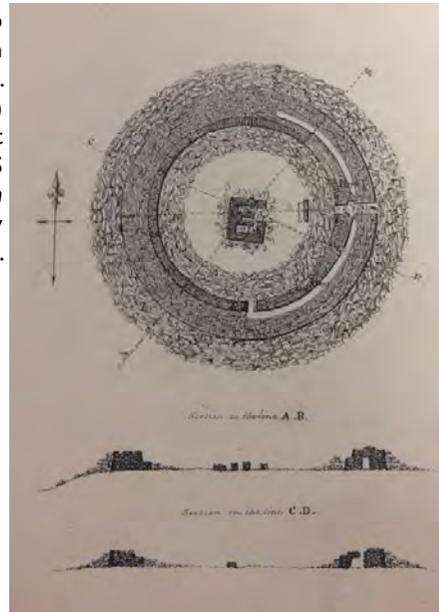


Figure 3.15 19th century drawings of the cashel

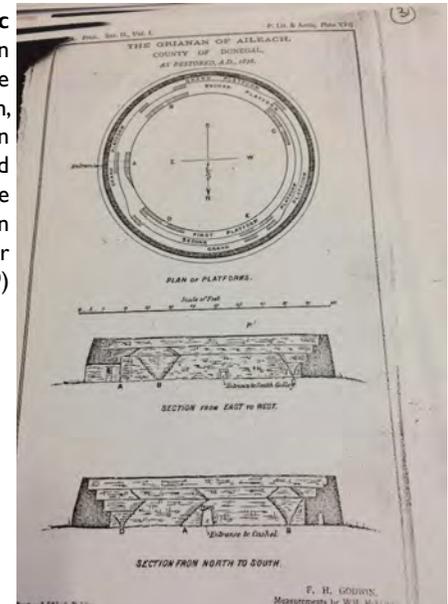
3.16b

Ordnance Survey plan and sections made ca. 1830 (OS archives,) published with slight changes in the OS *Memoir for the Parish of Templemore* (Colby 1837, 217-221).



3.16c

Post-reconstruction plan made by the architect F.H. Godwin, published in *Exploration and Restoration of the Ruin of the Grianan Ailbeach* by Walter Bernard (PRIA 1879)



3.17a

Plan at the level of the wall top and sectional elevation. Board of Works ante 1907, published in *Seventy Sixth Annual Report of the Commissioners of Public Works, Ireland (1907-8)* Appendix

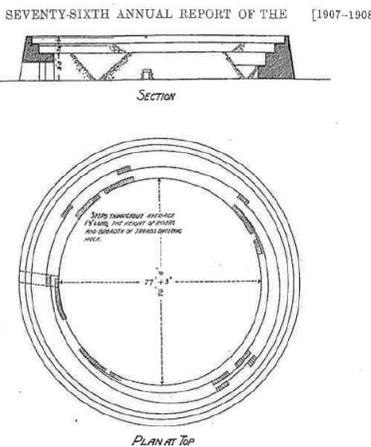


Figure 3.17b

Screengrab Images from 3D Icon project, The Discovery Programme.⁴



Figure 3.17c

Screengrab Images from 3D Icon project, The Discovery Programme.⁴



Figure 3.16 20th / 21st century drawings of the cashel

3.7 The Cashel DG047-012001

The cashel stands on the summit of the hill at a distance varying from 17m - 25m inside bank 1. (Figure 3.03). The present structure is largely a reconstruction. The enclosing wall averages 4.50m in height and has a marked external batter (1:5). The 2m high lintelled doorway at the east is slightly inclined in elevation (1.15m – 1m); two opposed, blocked-up, vertical recesses, each 0.60m wide, are evident towards the inner end of the door passage.

The inner wall face is terraced and there is a 0.55m wide parapet surmounting the wall top. Three terraces (0.9m - 1.6m wide and 0.7m - 2.8m high) occur along the north and northwest sectors and there are two terraces along the remainder of the circuit. Three sets of opposed inset sidelong steps (B, C and D), and a single flight of sidelong steps (A) lead from the ground to the lowermost terrace. A similar set of steps (E) leads from the lower to the middle terrace at the northeast side; seven flights of sidelong steps give access to the upper terrace. (Figure 3.03).

Two lintelled passages (north and south) are preserved at ground level within the thickness of the enclosing wall. Both passages lie circa 1.5m behind the inner wall face and are entered from low lintelled opes (0.5m wide by 0.6m - 1m in height) located at ground level in the interior. The north passage (ca. 1.1m long, up to 0.6m wide and 1.45m high) terminates 1m from the northern ingoing of the main entrance to the fort.

The south passage (20.40m long by 0.5m wide by 0.85m high) has a recess 0.5m wide by 1m high near its eastern terminus (Lacy et al 1983, 111); the OS and Bernard (1879) recorded a seat stone at that location.³

The interior of the fort is level with bedrock exposed towards the centre; a drain in the west sector continues under the enclosing wall to exit on the exterior.

Architectural Features: The enclosing wall

Condition

The reconstructed walls of the cashel are in good condition, due in large measure to the most recent (2003-2007) programme of repair work carried out by the OPW, and the daily presence on site of an OPW supervisor.

Integrity

At most, only the lower 1- 1.50m or so of the cashel wall was upstanding when the OS recorded the site in the 1830s. Much of it had fallen to little more than 0.5m high when Bernard commenced his restoration work in the 1870s. Bernard marked the extent of the original masonry with a tar line. Apart from being noticeably more weathered and pressure-cracked, the original stonework is less regular than the repairwork (Figure 3.18). Flat-faced boulders (average size 0.55m long by 0.20m high but with examples up to 1.10m in length) were used and there was a marked preference for polyhedral shaped stones and dovetail jointing. The batter along the best-preserved original section appears to have been circa 1:10. The bottle-like profile of Bernard's reconstruction was either erroneously modelled on the slumped external face of the enclosing wall at Staigue fort, or it may be due to subsidence of the soft core that he used in the rebuild.

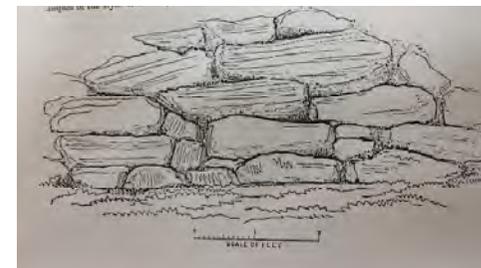


Figure 3.18a Original masonry on the external wall face, drawn by George Du Noyer, *OS Memoir* 1837



Figure 3.18b Dovetail jointing in the original masonry (lower 40cms) of the external wall face.

³ The passages were inaccessible during a recent visit. The Archaeological Survey of County Donegal described a drystone structure known as the 'seat stone' spanning the full width of the S end of the N passage. This seems to be an error as all previous commentators give the location of the seat as adjacent to the recess in the S passage.



Figure 3.19 Photo of N elevation; the white line marks the surviving extent of the original stonework (Moore 2008, Plate 3). Walter Bernard used a tar line to record how much of the original was still standing in 1874.

A detailed survey of the stonework of the cashel was undertaken by Declan Moore (Moore 2007) in advance of the major programme of works carried out by the OPW between 2003 and 2007. The survey mapped the surviving traces of Bernard's tar line – on the exterior this was evident on the northern elevation only (Figure 3.19). The southern facade, or parts of it at any rate, may have been largely reduced to foundations by 1874 - later episodes of collapse and repair could also have removed traces of the tar line. In Moore's study, the presence of lichen, and contrasts in masonry styles, were also used to differentiate between old and new work. Large sections of the wall were dismantled and rebuilt between 2003 and 2007. Examination of the wall core material confirmed that very little of the original wall was upstanding when Bernard commenced his work. (Figure 3.20).

Sections of the cashel wall, particularly the southern elevation, also collapsed at various stages in the twentieth century. Moore's study indicated that even where the original stonework of the external face appeared to survive to a height of 1.5m or so, the wall core material behind was often of the 'loose variety' (made up of small stones and sandy clays) used in Bernard's restoration and in the early repairwork carried out by OPW (OPW File 20191004130413).

The cashel wall is largely rebuilt; a survey of the external face shows the original stonework rarely survives above 0.5m in height. Much of Bernard's restored wall collapsed in the course of the last one hundred and twenty years. It would probably not be an exaggeration to say that the bulk of the wall fabric visible today is twentieth / twenty-first century repair work.



Figure 3.20 Dismantled section of north elevation of cashel wall showing loose core made up of small stones and clay (Moore 2008, Pl. 15)

Architectural Features: Steps and terraces

Condition

The reconstructed terraces and steps are in good condition

Integrity

The OS noted that the presence of a terrace on the inner wall face but did not state how much of it survived. The terrace was 2 ft 6 inches wide and began at a height of 5 feet above the base (0.75m wide, 1.5m high). On the Fair plan,

(Figure 3.16b) the terrace is shown as an uninterrupted line running from the entrance to the south passage clockwise to a point just beyond the entrance to the north passage. The accompanying sections suggest that what is shown may be a projected line and that parts of the wall did not survive to a height of 1.5m. Two sidelong flights of steps were recorded at unequal distances from the doorway.

Bernard did not include a detailed description of the condition of the fort interior in his 1879 article. As a result, it remains unclear to what extent the reconstructed features are based on evidence, surmise or analogy. What can be said with reasonable certainty is that the single flights of steps noted by the OS at each side of the entrance were still identifiable. Possible traces of terracing were evident in the west sector, although it is not clear if anything of the original terrace profile was preserved. The clearance of rubble revealed traces of a double flight of steps at the northwest; these may have led up to a second terrace.



Figure 3.21 Steps and Terraces

OPW records show that the steps and terraces were rebuilt or repaired on many occasions in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Vandalism at the site in 1972 resulted in most of the steps being pulled down (OPW record 20191004143133). The flagstones surfacing the terraces were concreted in position in the late twentieth century. (Figure 3.22)



Figure 3.22 Unlikely steps over the doorway



Figure 3.23 Cemented flags

The layout of the flight of steps immediately to the right of the entrance, in particular, is a highly unlikely arrangement. (Figure 3.22). The steps continue directly over the doorway using the lintel stone itself as a step - a set-up not seen at any other stone fort.

Steps and terraces are a feature of thick-walled Early Medieval cashels and gave quick and easy access to the wall top /wall walk. Grianán would certainly have been terraced originally, but the configuration of the present terraces and steps has very little authenticity.

Architectural Features: Entrance

Condition

The repaired entrance is in good condition but marred by the prominent and unsightly graffiti on the lintels (Figure 3.25).



Figure 3.24 External view of cashel entrance



Figure 3.25 Graffiti on internal lintel

Integrity

The entrance to the cashel survived to a height of 4 foot (1.2m) in the 1830s; the lintelled roof had collapsed, but, at least one of the lintels lay on the ground where it had fallen (Figure 3.25a). Scale drawings, sketches of the masonry and a suggested reconstruction were all included in the OS memoir (Colby 1837). The condition of the door had deteriorated significantly by the 1870s. No details were given by Bernard but the tar line he used to demarcate the original stonework suggests the ingoings of the doorway stood to a height of around 0.4m (Moore 2007, Pl. 2).

The present dimensions of the doorway tally with those of the 1870s reconstruction and with the restoration suggested in the OS memoir. The absence of a splay is unusual. Cashel entrances typically widen to the interior - this allowed more light to penetrate the passage and made operating the door easier.

The stonework surrounding the door (internally and externally) was entirely rebuilt by Bernard (Figure 3.26b) and was also dismantled and rebuilt during the 2003 – 2007 programme of repairs. The roof lintels have been replaced at least on one occasion in the twentieth century (OPW records); the ingoings of the doorway have also been extensively rebuilt. The innermost lintel also seems to have been replaced – an undated photo in the OPW records shows it graffitied with the name 'Jehovah Shannan'.



Figure 3.26a Lintel stones (top) and the S side of the entrance sketched by Du Noyer in the 1830s (OS archives).



Figure 3.26b Surviving traces of Bernard's tar line on the northern ingoing (Moore 2008, plate 2).

Architectural Features: Wall passages

Condition

The entrances to both passages are closed off with metal-grille gates. Neither passage was accessible during the site visit in July 2019.

Integrity

There is very little information about the condition of the wall passages in the

OS memoir - a cross-section of one of the passages shows some parts, at least, were in good condition. The entrances to the passages were noted but not illustrated. According to Bernard both entrances retained their lintels in the 1870s.

Bernard (1879) noted that the north passage was better preserved, with some of the roof lintels still in situ. The walls of the south passage were 'deplorably dilapidated, in many parts broken down' and only two or three roof lintels survived. He put this -and the poorer condition of the south wall façade in general - down to the steepness of the hill slope, and the fact that the southwestern side was more exposed to the weather.

Bernard repaired both passages. References to clearing out the north passage, exposing the south passage 'to view' and pinning up the sides, suggest the repairs were extensive. It is likely that most of the roof lintels were reset and some were certainly replaced. The passages were also repaired at various stages in the twentieth century. Some of the roof lintels were replaced in 1977 (OPW record 20191004142852). During the recent programme of works at the site, a rough cement slab was uncovered directly overlying the lintels of the north passage, clearly indicating that repair works had also been carried out there in the relatively recent past (Figure 3.27). The form and dimensions of the wall passages are authentic, but they have been extensively repaired.



Figure 3.27 Cement slab overlying the N intramural passageway; photo taken in 2006 during a major programme of repairwork by the OPW (Moore 2008, pl. 7)

Archaeology

Condition

The interior of the cashel is level and grass covered; apart from the drain at west, no features are evident. The volume of visitors has resulted in the almost complete disappearance of ground cover at a number of flashpoints (circa the main doorway, at the bases of the steps and entrances to the wall chambers).

Integrity

In his 1879 account, Bernard recorded that 'the floor of the interior is now entirely free from stones and debris, and nothing remains to be seen over its surface but the bare rock running in a north-westerly direction, the upper ridge being the centre, grass growing on each side of it'. From that description, it appears that the interior of the cashel was extensively cleared, in some places right down to bedrock. The thickness of the soil build-up, including the archaeological layers, was not stated by Bernard. The few features identified were shown on the site plan (Figure 2.02).

Apart from a midden and drain, these consisted mostly of discrete spreads of burnt material (referred to as 'a quantity' or 'a large heap' of ashes or turf ashes). The midden was located in the west sector of the fort. It is not clear if it presented as a mound or a stone-lined hollow – one possibility is that it was the remains of a cooking hearth. The feature was linked to a drain that ran out under the cashel wall. Bernard also made reference 'to the removal of many tons of material' on the exterior of the cashel – the only associated find mentioned is 'a sandstone, with fluted columns,' found near the foundations of the external face at the southeast.

Artefacts

Artefacts recovered in the course of Bernard's clearance work were presented to the Royal Irish Academy and later transferred to the National Museum of Ireland. Bernard (1879) mentions around a dozen objects but provided few details and even fewer measurements.

It is not clear how many items were deposited in the Royal Irish Academy or made their way to the National Museum subsequently. Some of those specifically mentioned in the 1879 article (e.g. the checkered gaming stone and spudstone) cannot now be traced.

Ten lithic items from Grianán have been identified in the National Museum of Ireland collection. Most are stone discs probably used either as gaming pieces and tokens (Figure 3.28) or pot covers. Two heavier disc-like stones may be weights. Most of the items are roughly made – it is easy to imagine them being fashioned and used by a garrison guarding the fort.

It remains unclear, what (if any) cultural layers might be preserved in situ in the interior of the cashel. Any archaeological deposits that did survive Bernard's clearance work, may not have fared too well over the years. A comparable situation at Dún Aonghasa on the Aran Islands (i.e. heavy footfall on a thin soil cover stratified directly on bedrock) has led to considerable erosion of the archaeological deposits there.



Figure 3.28 Left, polished stone gaming counter (1877:4.1) and (left) small perforated disc, possibly also a gaming piece or token (1877:4.2), from Grianán Aileach. Collection of the National Museum of Ireland.

Questions that arise regarding the integrity of the cashel are:

What was the original height of the enclosing wall?

Based on the amount of rubble present, Blacker estimated it might have been 10-12 feet high (3-3.6m); the corresponding estimate by Petrie was 12 – 24 feet (3.6 – 7.2m). None of the nineteenth century commentators made any reference to clay being a significant component of the wall core. Substantial amounts of clay were used by Bernard to bulk out the wall core – the likelihood is that much of it came from the interior of the site. Bernard also collected ca. 800 stones on the hillside and either brought in or quarried 181 ‘coping stones’ in order to complete the parapet.

It is possible that Blacker’s estimate of the original wall height may be the most accurate.

Did one or both of the intra-mural passages originally connect with the main door?

Noting the low entry points in the interior of the cashel, Petrie concluded that neither passage communicated with the door (Colby 1837, 218). The Archaeological Survey of County Donegal also considered that the passages stopped short of the door.

A previous inspection (Cotter unpublished) suggested that the sides of the northeast passage might be faced beyond their present terminus. The possibility that someone could oversee the main entrance - or possibly even operate the door closing mechanism - from the intra-mural passages (as at Dunbeg fort, Co. Kerry) could be explored.

Does any archaeological material survive in the interior?



Figure 3.29 Photographs showing the variation in the batter of the cashel wall. This may result from both settlement of the wall core and varying interpretations of the original form of the wall.

3.8 Interventions In The Cashel

3.8.1 Summary

Grianán is unique among stone forts in that there are documentary references to its demolition in AD 1101. The elaborate account given in the Annals of the Four Masters may be largely propaganda but could have some element of historical truth. Perhaps, at the very least, the story might imply that the cashel was already in poor condition by the later medieval period.

The recording of nineteenth and early twentieth century interventions at the site is probably best described as piecemeal. The clearance activities of Blacker ca. 1830 are referred to only in passing. The full scope of Bernard's large-scale restoration works (1874-8) remains unclear. Much of the repair work carried out by the OPW prior to the 1970s seems to be undocumented.

All the above interventions focussed on the cashel, but Blacker may also have turned his attention to the tumulus on the site. The OS memoir (Colby 1837, 221) noted that the mound had been recently opened, but 'nothing was discovered in it that would throw light on the purpose of its erection'.

Other interventions include the construction of field boundaries, some possibly with robbed stone, the collection and quarrying of building stone on the hilltop during Walter Bernard's restoration project, the construction of the entrance pathway in 1955 and a number of refurbishments carried out to it subsequently. Turf cutting is occasionally mentioned in the source material but there is no convincing evidence to indicate that turf was ever cut on the hilltop.

3.8.2 Clearance work by William Blacker

'Clearance of fallen stones' was carried out at the cashel circa 1830 under 'the directions' of Col. William Blacker (*The Dublin Penny Journal* 1835). Although details are scant, the clearance work seems to have been quite extensive.

The internal and external wall faces were exposed, the entrance was cleared of fallen stones; turf was stripped away to reveal a flagged pathway running from the entrance to a central building. The two intra-mural passages may also have been cleared out. Blacker noted the absence of any clearly defined entry point to the northern passage and concluded that there must have been a drop entry from above. *The Dublin Penny Journal* article included a plan of the cashel. (Figure 3.16b).

The condition of the fort seems to have deteriorated considerably between the 1830s and the 1870s. F.V. Godwin (1872), who visited the site in 1858, probably had Blacker in mind when he wrote that the masonry was in a very dilapidated condition 'owing in a great part to the labours of some gentleman, who many years ago evinced, more curiosity than care in searching after subterranean passages, &c. Godwin also noted that 'the monument had suffered deplorably at the hands of visitors - to such an extent that the drawings of the fort, taken at the time of the Ordnance Survey, had literally become matters of history, for the inclined jambs, the interior terrace with its steps, the small central building, and many other features of note which then existed are now no more'.

Dr. Walter Bernard of Derry likewise referred to the 'meddling and muddling' that had taken place at the fort, naming 'the late Col. Blacker' as one of the 'spoilators' of the monument and criticising the 'absurd account of its interior' he had given in *the Dublin Penny Journal* of 1835. Visiting the monument for the first time in 1861, Bernard painted a picture of ongoing ruin:

'I clearly saw that if something were not soon done to arrest the progress of destruction, it would be in a few years a thing of the past. Its appearance in 1873 was that of an immense circular heap of stones, with its grey fallen masonry scattered over the interior - no vestige of a wall, entrance passage, or central building' (Bernard 1879).

3.8.3 Restoration works by Walter Bernard

The Architecture

Bernard's intervention was a major one and, in many ways, acts as a watershed in the site narrative. Working seasonally with a team drawn from neighbouring farmers, he carried out extensive 'restoration' works to the cashel in the period 1874-78. An account of the project in the Proceedings of the Irish Academy (Bernard 1879, 415-23) outlined the progress of the works, his resolve to 'remain faithful to the original,' and the findings etc. It was accompanied by plans and sections of the newly restored fort.

Notwithstanding Bernard's resolve to 'remain faithful to the original' it is difficult now to piece together an accurate picture of the features that *actually* existed at the fort in 1874 and those that were subsequently constructed by him based on surmise or 'analogy.' Bernard does not give any explicit description of the condition of the stonework and, in so much as it is possible at all, a picture of the unrestored fort has to be pieced together from what are often just throwaway remarks:

'the vestige of the inner facing' (southwest sector of the wall)
'almost reduced to the foundation' (the outer wall face at southwest),
'the diminished wall...was much broken down, only a trace of it here and there (the north / northwest sector of the wall)
'some flags of its original roofing were still to be seen in situ' (north passage),
'the side walls were seen to be deplorably dilapidated, in many parts broken down, and the flagging entirely removed from the roof' (south passage).
'I had nothing to guide me as to the height of the door'

What can be said with reasonable certainty is that the enclosing wall stood to a maximum height of six feet (1.8m**) but was considerably lower in many places. The single flights of steps noted by the OS at each side of the entrance were still identifiable. Possible traces of terracing were evident in the west

sector, although it is not clear if anything of the original terrace profile was preserved. Bernard's clearance work revealed traces of a double flight of steps at the northwest and these may have led up to a second terrace. A few of the foundation stones of the penal chapel survived but *'there was no standing wall left, and even its outline at the base was destroyed'* (Bernard 1879).

When it came to the rebuilding, Bernard took his cue from remarks made by Petrie and O'Donovan regarding the likely similarities between Grianán and the much better-preserved Staigue fort in Co. Kerry. Petrie and O'Donovan considered that the original wall at Grianán must have been 'at least twice and possibly four times' higher than it stood in the early 1830s (the maximum height at the time was 1.8m). The profile of the wall batter, the layout of the terraces, the disposition of the steps and the reconstruction of the doorway are all based on Staigue. In most instances, there was little or no supporting material evidence. The main doorway is a good example - this had collapsed before the 1830s (Figure 3.30). In 1879 Bernard wrote:

In passing, it is well to mention that I had nothing to guide me as to the height of the door, except that the galleries being higher than those of Staigue, I made the doorway somewhat to correspond.

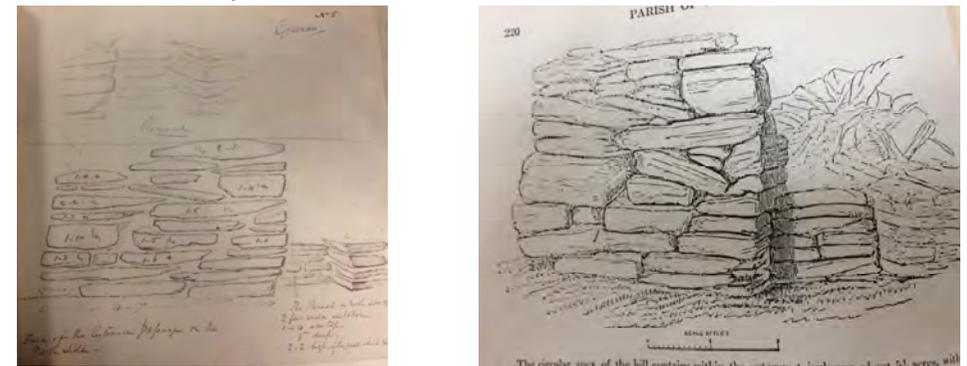


Figure 3.30 Du Noyer's sketch of the south ingoing of the doorway – the original pencil sketch (left) and on the right the inked-up version that appeared in the 1837 memoir.

3.8.4 Archaeology

In his 1879 account Bernard recorded that 'the floor of the interior is now entirely free from stones and *debris*, and nothing remains to be seen over its surface but the bare rock running in a north-westerly direction, the upper ridge being the centre, grass growing on each side of it'. From that description, it appears that the interior of the cashel was extensively cleared, in some places right down to bedrock. The thickness of the soil build-up, including the archaeological layers, is not stated. The few features identified were shown on the site plan (Figure 2.02). Apart from a midden and drain these consisted mostly of discrete spreads (referred to as 'a quantity' or 'a large heap') of burnt material.

Between the main entrance and the entrance to the south intra-mural passage, bones of sheep / goat and bird were found 'lying on the floor covered with flags'. Several stone discs and a number of other unidentified stone objects were recovered. Close to the passage entrance was 'a large heap of old turf-mould and ashes; a sugar-loaf shaped stone was recovered from that area. A 'checkered stone' was found under 'a quantity of ashes and turf-mould' near the entrance to the north intra-mural passage. An irregular perforated stone found inside the passage close to the entry was considered to be a possible sundial (but seems more likely to have been a spud stone).

The most distinctive feature uncovered was described as a midden (1.65m in diameter by 30cm deep) outlined by seemingly 'wrought' stones. It was located in the west sector of the fort and linked to a drain that ran out under the cashel wall. The midden contained ashes, turf mould, bones of cattle, sheep / goat and bird and cattle teeth. The finds consisted of 'flat, partially circular stones, one having a round hole in its centre'. It is not clear if the midden presented as a mound or a filled hollow – one possibility is that it was the remains of a cooking hearth. It would be very unusual to have a drain leading off a midden or a hearth, however. Bernard also made reference is 'to the removal of many tons of material' on the exterior of the cashel – the only find

mentioned is 'a sandstone, with fluted columns,' found near the foundations of the external face at the southeast

Artefacts recovered in the course of Bernard's clearance work were presented to the Royal Irish Academy and later transferred to the National Museum of Ireland. Bernard (1879) mentions around a dozen objects but provided few details and even fewer measurements. Some of those specifically mentioned in the 1879 article (e.g. the checkered gaming stone and spudstone) cannot now be traced unfortunately.

3.8.5 Stone Robbing

Bernard (1879) recorded that a number of stones were taken from the cashel to provide coping for Mannerstown Bridge (located about 2km to the east). Based on information from his work-crew (all local men) he reported that stone robbing was 'virtually unknown' due to the proliferation of small quarries in the district, and the difficulty of carting stone from the rough terrain. It seems unlikely that the proximity of a handy source of stone would have been overlooked by those who build the adjacent field boundaries, however. Bernard himself gathered around the hill 'about 700 or 800 loose stones... and split from the adjoining rocks, cropping up through the heather, 181 coping-stones'. He saw these as compensating for the stones carried away by Muirchertaig Ua Briain in 1001.

3.8.6 20th and 21st century interventions

The monument was scheduled in 1882 and vested in the Board of Works by Lord Templemore on 9th November 1904. *A Report of the Commissioners of the Board of Works Ireland for 1907-08* (page 13) documented repairs that had recently been carried out at the fort:

'a large portion of the walling had fallen down to within five or six feet of the ground on the south-eastern face. The wall here was sixteen to seventeen feet in height and it has been carefully rebuilt with the fallen stones in dry stones to its original height preserving the width of the steps formed in the thickness of the walling and following exactly the original lines as indicated in the adjoining work. The parapet wall at the top had been greatly injured and almost entirely thrown down by persons visiting the place'.

The construction of the car park and access roads

The modern access road takes a wide loop around the northern face of the hilltop. It terminates at a carpark. From the car park a surfaced entrance path leads to the door of the cashel. The opening of the new 'tourist' road (September 1955) was celebrated with much fanfare and reported in both local and national newspapers. *The Irish Press* (Sept 19th 1955, 7) and *The Derry Journal* (Mon Sept 19th and Wednesday Sept 21st 1955) gave it front page headlines. 'Great Day at Aileach of the Kings' was the headline in *The Derry Journal* (Sept. 19th) while *The Irish Press* ran with 'Donegal's ruined Grianan of Aileach, where Ireland's warrior kings for centuries held court, relived yesterday something of its past splendour.'

According to *The Irish Press* the attendance numbered thousands and included people drawn from Donegal, Derry city and county, and other parts of Ulster. Among the dignitaries of church and state present were Eamon DeValera (Fianna Fáil were out of office at the time) and the Fine Gael Minister for Local Government, Tom O' Donnell.

Construction of the circa 1km long road was made possible by a grant from Bord Fáilte. Bord Fáilte also defrayed the cost of a car park, a pathway to the fort entrance and repairs to the monument – the latter were carried out under the supervision of the Board of Works.

The cross-border flavour of the event was notable, with clergy and musical bands drawn from Donegal, Derry and further afield. An account of the history of Grianán by Rev. Coulter ('the historian of Derry') was fully reproduced in *The Derry Journal* (Sept 19th, page 5). Accompanying photographs showed musicians, dancers, an FCA guard of honour, cheering school children, dignitaries on a platform, a ribbon being cut by the Minister and a fort packed with spectators. A large ceremonial tricolour on the fort wall was visible for many miles around. In addition to the platform, various stalls and a large marquee for teas were erected on the summit.

Office of Public Works: Conservation and Repairs

Repairs by the Office of Public Works continued intermittently throughout the twentieth century. Some of these were necessitated by vandalism, some followed collapse of sections of the walls. Repairs to the interior - the doorway, wall passages and the steps and terracing – were often necessitated by safety factors (cracked lintels for example) or wear and tear, but vandalism was also a recurring factor.

The Derry Journal reported on vandalism at the site (14/4/1939), that 'Grianan damage' was to be repaired (16/5/1961) and that the fort had been badly damaged (29/12 /1989).⁵

The early 1970s seems to have been a particularly bad period for vandalism. Some of the damage was extensive – in 1971 for example, many of the steps, and large sections of the terraces were thrown down, and the lintels and side walls of the intra-mural passages were pulled out of place (OPW file 20191004101055 and following). Removal of stones from the bulging external

⁵ Statement by OPW to *The Donegal Democrat* 3/10/ 2006

3. The Monument: Description, Condition & Integrity

face was an ongoing problem. Repairs to the fort were also carried out prior to the opening of the new access road in 1955, but there appears to be no record of what these consisted of.

Large sections of the enclosing wall collapsed in 1989, 1990 and 2000.

A structural report on the condition of the monument (Lynham 2001) recommended major remedial works. The high proportion of clays present in the wall core was identified as the major cause of the structural instability; it was recommended that the lower one metre of the wall should have concrete backing (ibid). A major programme of works was carried out under archaeological supervision in the period 2003 – 2007 (Moore 2007). The extent of the works and the use of concrete received some unfavourable newspaper coverage. Citing Paul McMahon, OPW conservation architect for the site, the Derry Journal (03/10/2003) reported that the use of concrete practice was 'acceptable' as the repair work was not to the original ancient structure but to Dr Bernard's 1870 extensive reconstruction of the fort.

Vandalism remains an ongoing issue at the site. Unauthorised removal of stones from the cashel was reported in 2009.⁶ The wall was also damaged during a widely reported 'rampage' at the fort in July 2013.

The entrance pathway

The 'tourist' road and car park lie on the perimeter of the visible extent of the monument, but the line of the 1955 entrance path (linking the car park and cashel entrance) traverses the hillfort ramparts at the northeast. No details regarding its construction have been traced but presumably, at the very least, the ground was levelled out and surfaced.

The entrance path has been modified on a few occasions. In the late 1980s the original path was widened / extended, and an associated drain cut through the outer pair of ramparts; 'minor damage' was noted on photos included in SMR file. (Figures 3.31 - 3.33).

The current timber sleeper and gravel finish dates from 2005. In 2016 a wheelchair accessible timber ramp was added. This timber structure sits on gabions.



Figures 3.30-3.32

Photos from National Monuments File (DG047-) showing work on the access road from the car park to the cashel in the late 1980s. From L-R drain running NW from road; drain running NE; the junction of access road and car park. The drain cut through the outer pair of ramparts and 'minor damage' was noted on file.

⁶ <http://www.inishowennews.com/07GriananStones.htm>

3.9 The Grianán of Aileach in the Landscape

The Grianán of Aileach cannot be considered as an object in isolation, but as an integral element of the mountain at the summit of which it is located and of the wider landscape in which that mountain is located.

The meaning and experience of the Grianán of Aileach are embedded in the history and form of the place, and in time: from the long slow changes of geological time, and pre-history, through the changes of recorded history to the seasonal and daily changes of the natural world.

The site was chosen for both the wide views it offers (good for defence, and early visibility of potential enemy forces approaching) and also for its visibility from extensive areas of the surrounding lands. The prominent visual presence of the Grianán asserted the power of those who built and occupied it. The *raison d'être* of the place is embodied in its location.



Figure 3.33 The Grianán of Aileach, viewed, looking south from Inishowen

Visitors to the site may be drawn there by its presence in the landscape, seen from a distance, the strangeness of its distinctive man-made form, on the skyline, or by the opportunity it affords to see to the horizon in all directions.

Although landscape is sometimes interpreted as eternal, the face of the land as now seen is very different from how it would have appeared when the cashel was first constructed, at a time when Inishowen was still an island; isolated from the mainland by the wetlands of the Pennyburn Depression, and before the draining and cultivation of the Inch Levels.

There is room for further research, recording and interpretation of the landscape history, that could enhance the already rich history of the place.



Figure 3.34 The Grianán of Aileach, viewed, looking north from the farmland to the south.



Figure 3.35 Expansive views of land and sky, looking west from the summit of Greenan Mountain

4.1 Geology, soils and watercourses

The Grainán of Aileach is located on Greenan Mountain at a height of 241 m. Though a small mountain it is the highest of several smaller “summits” (e.g. Bogay Hill 190m, Drumbarnet Hill, 194m) in an upland area which rises from Inch Levels and Lough Swilly to the west, the River Skeoigh to the North; Derry, the River Foyle and Lough Foyle to the east and the Rivers Skeoige and Tonyhabhoc to the south. The Fort lies at the entrance to the Inishowen Peninsula which is dominated by the great Lough Swilly and Lough Foyle to either side.

The bedrock at the Grainán of Aileach, and in the surrounding landscape (c. 2km vicinity) is close to the surface and exposed in places. It is comprised of schist and grit with some marble (GSI, 2019). In the upland areas such as Greenan Mountain and the site of the fort, the soils are predominantly shallow, derived from non-calcareous rock or gravels with a peaty surface horizon (EPA, 2019).

Soil composition within the surrounding land is comprised of surface and ground water gley soils (poorly drained mineral soils; mainly acidic).

There are no watercourses on Greenan Mountain, though a spring and well is present. Several streams and rivers drain from the lower slopes of the mountain (Carrowreagh, Mowness and Carrowen; EPA, 2019) which drain into Lough Swilly.

From the summit of Greenan Mountain and the ancient fort, the land falls gently north to a height of just 10 - 20m above sea level where there is a flat expanse known as Inch Levels. The soils here are alluvium (river deposited). This land lies within the flood plain of the Skeoige River and Lough Swilly, but flooding is managed with the use of flood gates and the construction of a barrage at Inch Island on Lough Swilly.

To the south of the ancient fort the land undulates with a series of summits before reaching Port Lough which is a Natural Heritage Area (NHA)¹ with wet woodland and blanket bog. Following the river north from Port Lough, there is a small area of oak woodland, with origins from at least the 1830's, at Buhullion Lower.

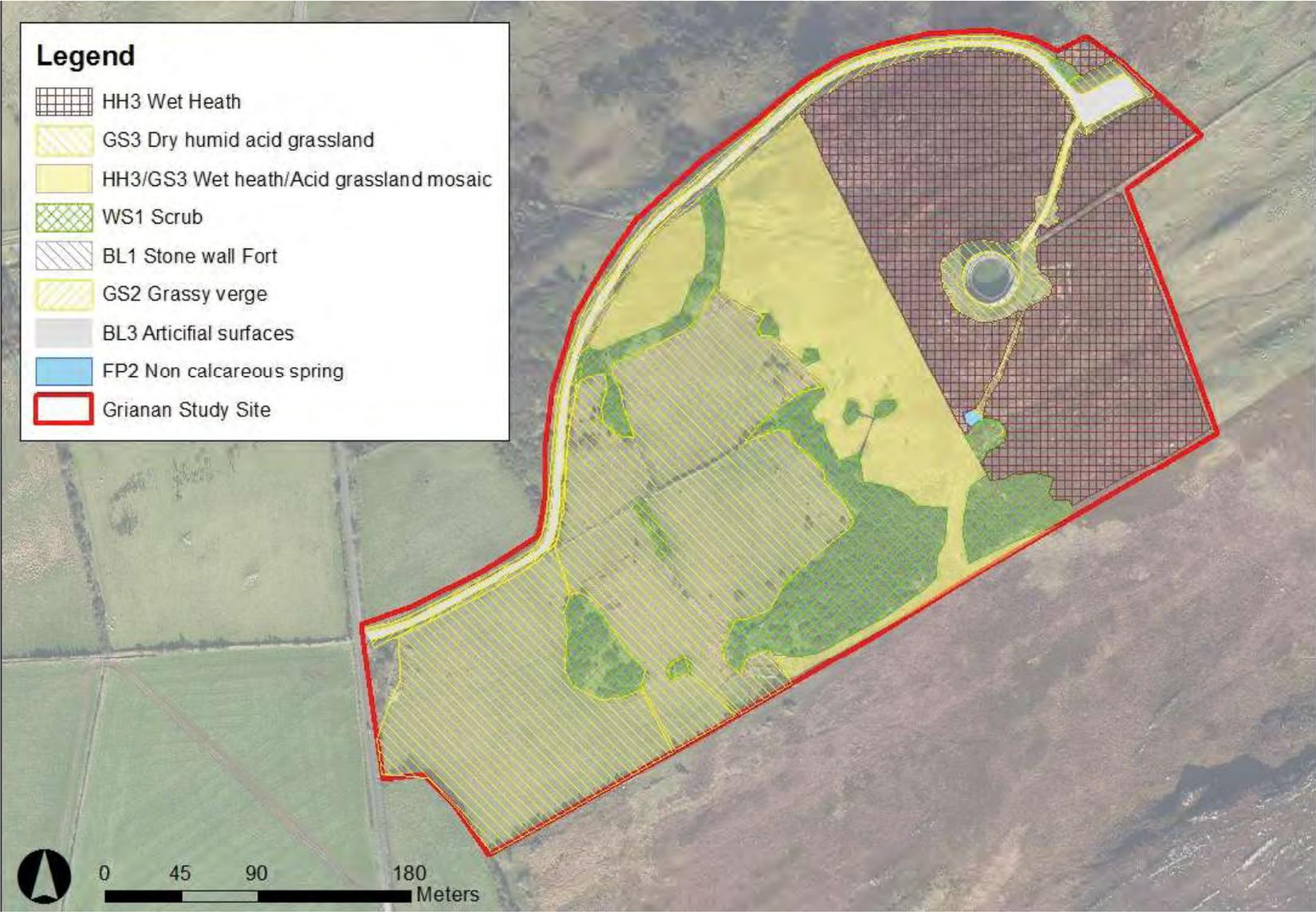
To the east the land slopes gently down to the city of Derry and the River Foyle. Within the River Foyle valley, Prehen Wood an ancient woodland owned by the Woodland Trust is another example of semi natural woodland.

4.2 Habitats – the fort and its immediate surrounds

The fort is a stone walled structure which provides habitats for plants and insects; it may also be used by birds and mammals taking shelter from the wind. The fort is surrounded by grassland, heath and scrub habitats (Figure 4.01). These habitats are described in more detail below (classification follows Fossit, 2000) with species list in Appendix A.

61 ¹ The basic designation for wildlife in Ireland is the Natural Heritage Area (NHA). They are protected under the Wildlife Amendment Act (2000).

4. Natural Environment



4.01 Habitat map for An Grianan of Aileach and adjacent habitats

BLI Stone walls and other stonework (the fort).

The Fort is a stone structure (**BLI**) which supports a range of plants including grasses, flowering herbs, mosses, ferns and lichens. (Appendix A). Similar to an old stone wall, the fort has been in situ for many years providing cracks, crevices, and open surfaces, which have become colonised over time. Inside the fort the walls provide shelter to the elements, allowing blushes of common polypody fern and *Acaena* spp to grow un-scorched by the coastal winds (Figures 4.02, 4.03).

GS3 Dry-humid acid grassland

Both inside the fort and immediately surrounding the fort the ground is dominated by a sward of grasses, along with clover, creeping buttercup and daisy. This habitat is also present next to the footpath from the car park to the fort and along the footpath down to the well. (Figures 4.04, 4.05).

Over time, grassland has most likely replaced the heath habitat present in the rest of the site, perhaps as a result of trampling.

Grassland is also present on the lower slopes of the site and within the boundaries of the old field system (as shown on 6" maps from c.1840; see Figure 2.04). These old field boundaries are still present and while semi – improved grassland habitat dominates, scrub (VSI) has developed in places.



4.02 Common polypody fern on the interior walls of the stone fort.



4.03 *Acaena* spp.² is abundant in places within the fort's walls.

HH3 Wet heath

Surrounding the fort the dominant habitat is heath, primarily wet heath, though elements of dry heath are present in places, particularly at the transition between wet heath and dry acid grassland and along the roadside verge. On the southern slope of the site the heather is well grown, most likely owing to a lack of grazing, soils and shelter.

The land surrounding the fort is generally sloping with some ridges providing flatter pockets of ground. These changes in micro topography provide variation in the wet heath community.

Maps from the 1830s (OSi, 2019) show that much more of Greenan Mountain was heath at that time, however field systems on some of its lower slopes are also present. The modern day landscape adjacent to the Grianan site has been modified by human intervention with grazing and land reclamation clearly evident (Figures 4.06, 4.07).

HH3/GS3 Wet heath and acid grassland mosaic

A field boundary separates the intact wet heath which surround the Fort from an area of degraded wet heath and developing semi improved grassland (dry-humid acid).



4.04 Dry-humid acid grassland inside the walls of the fort.



4.05 Dry-humid acid grassland outside the walls of the fort.

² Introduced plant native to New Zealand and South Africa (*Acaena ovalifolia* is listed as a medium impact invasive/non native species by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (Flynn et al, 2014))

4. Natural Environment



4.06 Habitat change evident on the land surrounding the An Grianan site (grazing replacing heath habitat with grassland).



4.07 Wet heath (foreground) on the northern slopes of the Greenan mountain



4.08 The roadside verge provides a diversity of plants from both dry grassland and heath

GS2 Dry meadows and grassy verges

The roadside verge supports a diverse range of plant species. A mosaic of habitat types are present with plants representative of wet heath, dry-humid acid grassland and dry heath communities (Figure 4.08). The mix of species present is most likely a result of habitat fragmentation and change with the road construction (introduced materials, change of slope, recolonising process).

WS1 Scrub

Patches of scrub with willow, gorse and occasional hawthorn are present on site. Scrub is mainly associated with the lower slopes of the site, with pockets present within the field system. A large area of scrub has developed along the south eastern edge of the site

BL3 Buildings and artificial surfaces

The access road and the car park are the main artificial surfaces within the site. A board walk / steps structure has recently been constructed to allow wheelchair access to the site from the gate at the carpark. A board and gravel path is also present to provide pedestrian and wheelchair access from the car park.

4.3 Fauna - the fort and its immediate surrounds

No systematic survey of the fauna (mammals, birds, invertebrates) was completed, however during the field visit several observations were made (See Appendix B).

A hare was observed in the very early morning before visitors arrived. Hares may seek shelter in the heather on Greenan Mountain; heather is also an important food source for the Irish hare (Vincent Wildlife Trust, 2019).

Meadow pipit and Skylark, common breeding birds of upland heath and grassland habitats were present and likely to be breeding. A buzzard flew from west to east across the site. Buzzards are expanding in numbers and range in Ireland and may be breeding in nearby coniferous forestry. Linnet and Lesser Redpoll were flying around the site; both likely to breed nearby and most likely looking for foraging habitat (seed heads of grasses, scrub, insects). Finally a Swift flew overhead while on site. Swift are declining in numbers in Ireland and conservation actions are underway to provide secure nest box sites for this species (Swiftconservation.ie). The swift recorded on site may have been foraging for insects or commuting to a foraging area.

While no invertebrates, molluscs, reptiles or frogs were recorded during the site visit, it is likely that this site supports a range of other fauna. Further survey work is required to establish other interesting fauna present at this site.

4.4 “Connected” habitats

From the fort Lough Swilly dominates the view and it is also possible to see Lough Foyle. To the north is the Inishowen Peninsula. When the fort was built in the early Christian period, the extensive open water habitats of Lough Swilly and Lough Foyle must have looked much as they do today (though without the flood control works present at Inch Levels). The land however is likely to have looked very different with an extensive cover of native oak woodland, much of which is long since gone. Remnants of this woodland cover are present on the Inishowen Peninsula (e.g. at Carndonagh), at Rathmullan Wood on the western shore of Lough Swilly and also at Prehens Wood in the River Foyle Valley.

Rathmullan Wood, Lough Swilly and Lough Foyle are all sites which are protected by European nature conservation designations (SAC and SPA). Rathmullan Wood is also a National Nature Reserve and Inch Levels, part of Lough Swilly, is a Wildfowl Reserve.

From the vantage point of the Grainán of Aileach there is potential to provide interpretation of this landscape and connections to these wetland and woodland habitats, ancient and current. The fort could provide a means to consider not only the rich archaeological and cultural heritage but also to consider the landscape change.



4.09 Lough Swilly, viewed from the fort. Inishowen to the right, Inch Island to the left. The fields of the Inch Levels, at the foot of the mountain, have been reclaimed from former wetlands.

4.5 Conservation value and designations

The Grainán of Aileach is not protected by any nature conservation designation. The wet heath habitat which surrounds the site is listed as an Annex I habitat under the EU Habitats Directive (Annex I habitat 4010 Northern Atlantic Wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*). Wet heath is widespread in the lowlands and uplands of Ireland's western seaboard. Around half of the wet heath habitat in Ireland is not protected by any nature conservation designation. Wet heath habitat has been assessed as decreasing in area within Special Areas of Conservation,² i.e. within protected areas and its conservation status has been assessed as deteriorating (NPWS, 2019). The decrease in the extent and the condition of this habitat outside of protected areas is likely to be more pronounced.

The wet heath at this site is of local conservation value and provides a rich diversity of interesting plants typical of a peatland habitat. Of note is the presence of the orchid Lesser Twayblade (*Neottia cordata*) recorded from this site by local BSBI recorders (Oisín Duffy pers.comm). Lesser Twayblade is a Red Listed plant categorised as being of Least Concern³. Given the pressures on wet heath habitat both in the surrounding landscape and nationally and given its contribution to local biodiversity, any loss of this habitat on at the Grainán of Aileach site should be avoided. The restoration of wet heath habitat through changes in land management practices, may also be considered. The area of wet heath and grassland mosaic in particular has restoration potential.

The fort itself provides an interesting mix of species. The influence of the shelter provided by the enclosed and high stone walls has allowed plants to grow and flourish in what would otherwise be a harsh coastal environment. The grassland habitats around the fort are typical of acid grassland and the grassland verge along the roadside provides an interesting diversity of plants with a mix of acidic and base rich substrates.

The plants present at this site have the potential to provide an additional focus for visitors to the fort. The natural environment focus could provide a link to other nearby sites with a biodiversity interest.

Rathmullan Wood National Nature Reserve

Rathmullan Wood lies across from Buncrana on the western shore of Lough Swilly. This nature reserve is an old woodland site which may have been wooded since before 1830. While the original woodland is not present on this site, where a site has remained under woodland cover for 200 years it is of considerable biodiversity value. Rathmullan is an old oak woodland with mature oak trees planted at least 200 years ago.

Lough Swilly SPA and SAC

Lough Swilly SPA and SAC includes the sea lough itself and Inch Levels which is a Wildfowl Reserve. The SAC is important for a range of coastal habitat types and species (coastal lagoon, saltmarsh, estuary, otter) and the SPA is important for wintering birds and for breeding birds. Internationally important numbers of Whooper Swan use Lough Swilly with the greatest numbers occurring at Inch Lough and Levels. Lough Swilly also supports internationally important numbers of Greenland White fronted Geese and Greylag Geese, Inch Lough and Levels and Big Isle are important sites for the Geese and can be seen from the fort. A range of other wintering birds occur in Lough Swilly in nationally important numbers. In the summer Lough Swilly supports nationally important numbers of Black-headed Gull, Sandwich Tern and Common Tern.

Lough Foyle SPA (Ireland and UK)

Lough Foyle SPA (004087) is a cross border SPA (NPWS, 2019). This wetland is important for a range of wintering birds with internationally important numbers of Light-bellied Brent Geese, Berwick's Swan, Whooper Swan, Bar-tailed Godwit and Golden Plover.

² SACs and SPAs are part of a European network of Natura 2000 sites and are protected in Ireland under the European Communities (Natural Habitats) Regulations, 2005, as amended).

³ Red List assessment provides information on the degree to which species are at risk of extinction and, by implication, those for which conservation measures need to be considered.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Liam Campbell, environmental historian with Lough Neagh Landscape Partnership for insights regarding the changing landscape in the area of the Grainán of Aileach. Thanks to Mairéad Crawford and Oisín Duffy, BSBI Vice County Recorders for East Donegal who collect records of rare plants and passed on those relating the study site and to local ecologist, Ralph Sheppard for useful references and local contacts.



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4. Natural Environment

5.1 Basis of assessment of significance

The 1988 ICOMOS Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Significance, otherwise known as the *Burra Charter*, sets down the principles for assessing the cultural significance of an historic site. This charter defines cultural significance as “*the aesthetic, historic, scientific or social values for past, present or future generations*”.

5.2 Significance of the place

5.2.1 Historic Significance

Meaning

The history of the Grianán of Aileach is outlined in Parts Two and Three of this Conservation Management Plan. The potential time span of building activity on the hill spans over two millennia (ca. 1000BC to AD1100). The earlier part of this history is represented by the hillfort; the later part by the cashel. The documentary references refer to the Early Medieval phase (ca. fifth to eleventh century AD). The appearance of the fort on a seventeenth century map, (Figure 2.09) shows it was still regarded as a prominent landmark at that time. The site and all its component features were comprehensively recorded by the Ordnance Survey in the 1830s; the cashel was reconstructed in the 1870s.

The Hillfort

The Grianán Aileach is one of only three hillforts recorded by the Record of Monuments and Places (RMP) for county Donegal, the other two being Croaghan Hill (DG047-012005) and Glasbolie (DG103-029).¹ Hillfort chronology can be complex. Following a recent programme of investigations, O’Brien (2017) suggests the first hillforts may have been large multiple enclosures built by farming communities of the Early Neolithic, c.3700–3500 BC. Smaller hillforts, like Grianán, are generally considered to be a Late Bronze Age phenomenon (built ca. 1100 - 800BC) and to have filled a wide range of functions, economic, ceremonial, ritual and domestic. The number of Bronze Age cist graves recorded in the vicinity of Greenan Mt. suggests there was already a good population density in the area by the mid-second millennium BC. The ancient road, possibly a processional space as well as an access route, may have been used over millennia. The mound or tumulus is difficult to interpret – mounds occur at all three of the Donegal hillforts, in the case of Croaghan probably predating the hillfort itself. Mounds located within prehistoric enclosures are generally considered to have been ritual foci because of their association with the burial place of the ancestors. Ancestral mounds were also the focus of ceremonial and legal practices (including rites of inauguration and royal assembly, and swearing legal contracts) in the Early Medieval / medieval period.

The Cashel

Speaking of Grianán Aileach and Doon, Co. Donegal, Alistair Rowen (1979, 23) wrote ‘*Both are splendid monuments, splendid in scale, in situation and in evocative power, and they lift Ulster architecture to an unaccustomed level of importance*’

5. Assessment of Significance

A number of hillforts / enclosures have superimposed early medieval cashels - examples include Dún Aonghasa and Rahally, Co. Galway, Mooghaun, Co. Clare and Rathgall, Co. Wicklow. The multiple lines of defences at these sites gave them additional noble status. The use of fixed points on the landscape in gaining or asserting authority over territories by early medieval population groups is a well-recognised phenomenon. The appropriation by the Cenél nÉogain of a symbolic place, that already had a long history can certainly be seen in that light.

Impressive, high-walled forts like Grianán Aileach are unusual in Donegal and only one other example (Doon or O'Boyles fort on the Loughros peninsula, DG064:011) has been recorded in the county. Other comparable examples of these 'western stone forts' occur on the Aran Islands, the Burren and the Kerry peninsulas – the overall number of prestigious examples is around twenty-four. The evidence of recent archaeological excavations (Cotter 2006, Manning 2016, Comber 2018) suggests these high status cashels may have first appeared ca. AD800 and continued to be built in the ninth- (e.g. Dún Eoghanachta, Co. Galway and Cahergal, Co. Kerry) and tenth- (e.g. Caherconnell, Co. Clare) centuries. The date of circa AD 800 suggested by Lacey (2001) for the building of the cashel at Grianán would fall at the very beginning of the chronology. The very regular circular ground plan (seen also at Cahergal and Dún Eoghanchta), and the absence of any real evidence for occupation in the interior, might indicate a later ninth century date, however.

The cashel, in its current form, can be seen to embody, in its fabric, both the early medieval period in Irish history, (which defined its location and form) and the 19th Century interpretation of that earlier history (that fixed the architectural form of the cashel as it is currently experienced). The 1870s rebuilding of the cashel, and subsequent conservation works to the stone structure, have resulted in the focus of attention at the site being on the cashel. The historic significance of the ramparts of the hillfort, the tumulus, the well, and Ancient Road, are currently eclipsed by that of the cashel, in both the

presentation of the site, and the interpretative material available to visitors. All of these elements are significant to the place.

Regional significance

The historical meaning and significance of the site cannot be restricted to the recorded monuments at the summit of Greenane Mountain but need to be considered in the context of the region, its topography, and the history of its Early Medieval rulers. The Cenél nÉogain originated in Inishowen to the north, at a time when it was an island, cut off from the mainland by the wetlands of the Pennyburn Depression.

The ruins of the late medieval castle of Elagh, near the City of Derry, stand on the site of what was probably the original capital of the Cenél nÉogain. As the dynasty expanded to the south and east, the construction of the cashel on Greenan Mt. would have been an ideal visible symbol of the extent and power of the newly invigorated Cenél nÉogain (Lacey 2001).

The seat of power ultimately moved to Tulach Óg, over 60km to the SE in what is now County Tyrone. These geographical and historic links are integral to the significance and understanding of the site.²

Royal Site

The Grianán of Aileach is a royal site, likely to have been used by the Cenél nÉogain for inauguration and other royal ceremonies. FitzPatrick (2004, 197) suggests Grianán Aileach may have been a place of inauguration down to the eleventh century, at which time the dominant Cinéal nÉogain branch moved their caput to Tulach Óg and became best known to history as the northern Ua Néill. A number of Cenél nÉogain kings rose to become Kings of Tara.

Links between Grianán and Tulach Óg and Elagh (and a number of possible Cenél nÉnnai inauguration sites identified in the region) are well worth highlighting in future interpretative plans.

² Links with an on-going project (Peace IV Cross Border Heritage Project June 2018-December 2020) which brought together history and heritage groups from Donegal County Council and Mid Ulster Council would be fruitful. The current phase of the project includes the production of a map of the heritage sites that link Donegal and Mid Ulster.

The inauguration stone known as ‘St. Columb’s stone’, (Figure 3.15) now located in Derry, may originally have come from Elagh, and is therefore associated with the Cenél nÉogain. It provides a significant link to the understanding and interpretation of Early Medieval / medieval royal inauguration ceremonies, and to better known inauguration furniture such as the stone chair of the O’Neill at Tulach Óg

19th century reconstruction

The rebuilding of the Grianán of Aileach in the late 19th century embodies an approach to history, typical of the period, combining an academic approach (studying similar sites and structures) and individual commitment, with a romantic interpretation of the past, informed by the Celtic Revival.

Walter Bernard is an important embodiment of these ideals, and approach to history. Without his intervention, the Grianán of Aileach would probably remain completely ruinous. Walter Bernard lived and practiced as a doctor in the City of Derry. His crucial contribution to the site has a resonant local significance.

Borders

The changing borders of the territories of influence of the various septs, who inhabited the lands of what is now Counties Donegal Derry and Tyrone, are described in Part Two. In the millenium or so since the Grianán of Aileach was abandoned as a seat of power, it continued to overlook changing borders of political control; the shifting frontiers of Irish dynastic powers, of English invaders and colonists and - since 1922 - the international border between Ireland the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Records of the Monument

The Grianán of Aileach was among the earliest monuments surveyed by the Ordnance Survey of Ireland. The illustrated description of the fort was probably the first secular ‘Gaelic’ site to be published; it’s inclusion in the *OS Memoir for*

the Parish of Templemore, County of Londonderry (Colby 1837) reflecting the close historic ties between Grianán and Derry.

The National Archives of Ireland contain much of the original OS material relating to the recording of the site in the period 1830-1835. Included are a Fair Plan (1831-3) of the OS six-inch map, engravings of the survey plans of the entire site and cashel respectively, and pencil sketches by George Du Noyer of architectural details of the cashel. Handwritten (and lively) letters, descriptions, manuscript transcriptions and translations by John O’Donovan and a ‘progress’ letter from George Du Noyer. Indexed field notebooks record the names of the military personnel who carried out the mapping. No Boundary remark books or Parish remark books are included for Burt (or Templemore) parish. This record is significant and should be both treasured and celebrated.

5.2.2 Archaeological Significance

As described in Part 3.8.4 of the Conservation Management Plan, the nineteenth century restoration works included clearance of the cashel interior. While the clearance work seems to have been extensive, it remains a possibility that some archaeological layers survive in the cashel interior (perhaps directly adjacent to the enclosing wall in particular).

Cultural layers within the wider hillfort are vulnerable due to erosion, foot traffic etc. A topographical survey (drone or lidar are possibilities worth considering) of the entire monument would provide invaluable information on the morphology of the site and the condition of the surviving earthwork elements. The feasibility of targeted geophysical investigation is also worth exploring. As well as potential archaeological insights, both surveys could provide a baseline map to help protect and conserve the archaeological remains.

5.2.3 Architectural Significance

Only limited lengths of the lowest parts of the masonry wall of the cashel can be confirmed as dating from the original stone fort. As described in detail in Parts 3.7 and 3.8, the form and fabric of the cashel, as currently extant, is a largely a 19th century reinterpretation and rebuild of the original stone fort, which has been further extensively rebuilt, reinforced and stabilised in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

In so far as it sits on the original site, footprint, and rising walls of the Early Medieval fort, and is built, primarily, from the original masonry elements, it is representative of an Early Medieval Irish architecture. However, its architectural significance lies as much in its representation, and embodiment of 19th century approaches to ancient history and architecture, informed by the Celtic Revival, as it does to the architectural vision and functional and cultural design considerations, of those who originally planned and constructed it.

Recent repair works to the Cashel, can be seen to embody late 20th, and early 21st century, approaches to architectural conservation, and repair, as well as a commitment to the safety of visitors, and rights to access the National Monument.

St. Aengus' Church

St. Aengus's Church in nearby Burt, built in the 1960s and designed by Frank Corr and Liam McCormick, is directly inspired by the form of the Grianán of Aileach. This church is described as “a masterpiece of design” and was awarded the title “Building of the Century” in a poll run by the Irish Times. The cluster of ecclesiastical remains at the base of the hill – the site of the seventeenth century meeting house, 19th century Presbyterian church and the 20th century Catholic church modelled on Grianán – is worthy of note and together with the Penal Chapel on the hilltop and the holy well makes for an interesting narrative.

5.2.4 Cultural & Social Significance

Early Sources

As recounted in Part 2.8, there are extensive documentary and literary references to Aileach in the Irish annals, the Metrical Dindshenchas and Gaelic praise poems. While its geography may be the subject of debate, the historical, pseudo-historical and mythical importance of Aileach is indisputable. This rich legacy makes the Grianán of Aileach unique among ‘western stone forts’.

Pageantry and interpretation

Both the completion of the rebuilding works of Walter Bernard (in 1878) and the opening of the access road (in 1955) were each celebrated by pageants involving extensive numbers of people. Both these events, even if based on fanciful interpretations of the origins and early history of the place, are further layers in its history. They are also symbolic of the importance of the place, in popular memory and meaning, and the importance of its being accessible to the public.

The Grianán of Aileach continues to be used as the site of public events and performances, thus recognising and contributing to the cultural and social significance of the site.

Local Cultural Significance

As well as having significance in the context of Irish history and culture the Grianán of Aileach has additional layers of meaning for those for whom it is a presence on the skyline in their daily lives. The ease of access, combined with the spectacular views mean it has become a place of regular visits to share the uniqueness of the place, and thereby has secured a place in the shared culture and memories of residents of this region. Lying only a few miles from the border it embodies an important link and place of shared experience for those from both sides of the border and a place of space and light for the city dwellers of the City of Derry.

5.2.5 Environmental Significance

The wet heath habitat present at the Grianán of Aileach is of local conservation or biodiversity value. Wet heath habitat is deteriorating in extent and condition within Ireland and this site provides an example of this habitat type. A diversity of plants typical of wet heath habitat were recorded from the site (mosses, lichens, grasses, sedges and heathers) and BSBI records show that one Red Listed plant is present (Lesser Twayblade).

While surveys of the fauna were not completed, the site visit found a number of bird species which are likely to forage within the wet heath habitat on Greenan Mountain and some which may nest there (Meadow Pipit and Skylark). Meadow pipit and Skylark are both of medium conservation concern. An observation of Irish Hare suggests that they are likely to forage within the area and may use the site for resting and shelter. Irish Hare is a Red Listed mammal. Dedicated surveys of plants, animals and invertebrates are likely to reveal a diversity of flora, fauna and invertebrates associated with this habitat type. While wet heath has been replaced by grassland and forestry within the surrounding landscape a sweep of this habitat type remains and extends from Greenan mountain both to the north and to the south.

Protecting the wet heath habitat at the site is important, both for the habitat and the species which it supports, but also within the context of the fort and the historical landscape from which it comes; a landscape which would have been of peatland, woodland and wetland habitats. The wet heath represents a remnant of this landscape.

Maintaining the current extent of this habitat within the study site and increasing its extent through changes in land management will protect and potentially enhance the significance of this habitat. This is important in terms of contemporary biodiversity protection and also provides a connection to a biodiversity which may have existed in a landscape of the past.

5.2.6 Landscape Significance

The location of the Grianán of Aileach, at the summit of the Greenan Mountain, overlooking Lough Swilly and Lough Foyle, is intrinsic to all aspects of its significance. It has a powerful presence in the landscape; one that can be seen from great distances. When you are at the Grianán of Aileach you can experience a unique 360° view of the surrounding landscape.

The Monument is embedded in its setting, with the natural landforms defining the location of the Ancient Road, and the ramparts settled into the hillside, such that is hard to separate manmade features from natural topography.

The field banks, although later features, have similarly embedded themselves into the landscape. Formed from materials available in-situ they express, both human work and the impact of the wind, weather, flora and fauna of the site.

As such, both the monument and its wider setting are of national significance. For some visitors it may be the view, the natural environment, the experience of a place where the earth meets the sky, that is more significant to them than the history of the hillfort, which is the location of that experience.



5.01 Former field bank / townland boundary to the north east of the cashel. This bank does not appear on the 1835 OS map



5.02 Fieldbank / townland boundary to the northeast of the cashel, both inside and outside the current site boundary. This bank was extant in the 1830s, and may be much older.

5. Assessment of Significance

5.2.7 The Place

In the Record of Monuments and Places for the Grianán of Aileach, six distinct elements are recorded. (Refer Part 1.3 of this Plan). Many visitors to the place may only be aware of the cashel as “the Monument”. The significance of the place is embedded in all six recorded and protected features, and in their relationship to each other, and their location on Greenane Mountain.

Summary: National Significance

As an impressive, and intact (albeit extensively rebuilt) example of a “western stone fort”, one of the twenty four identified in Ireland, of which only two are located in Donegal, the Grianán of Aileach is a place of national significance. It is unique among these forts, in the extent of early documentary and literary references, which establish its historic, pseudo historic and mythic significance.

This national significance is embedded in the cashel in the context of its location, the landscape setting, and all the recorded and protected features of the site and surrounding fields.

It is important to protect and respect the significance of all elements of the monument and place.

PART SIX

SUMMARY OF VULNERABILITIES

6.1 Understanding of the monument

Where understanding of the monument is limited in any way, whether on the part of those who visit it, or those responsible for its care and management, this contributes to its vulnerability.

It is noted that for many visitors to the site the cashel is the focus, and they may be unaware of the existence, and significance, of the ramparts of the hillfort, which are integral to the form, history and meaning of the monument. The campaigns of restoration and repair, beginning with that of Walter Bernard, and continuing since the monument was taken into state care, have concentrated on the structure of the cashel. The construction of field boundaries, and later public access paths have cut through and over the lines of the ramparts. Understanding and recognition of the hillfort need to be expanded, in order to safeguard the significance of the place.

Most visitors may also be unaware of the Ancient Road, Tumulus and the site of the Penal Station. Many take the path to the well, which is an original feature of the hillfort. The reference to it as a “Holy Well” however, may be a 19th century embellishment, of its purpose and meaning,

No archaeological survey of the site has been executed since the Discovery Programme in 1995. This makes any archaeology that may survive at the site vulnerable to any revisions to access, boundaries or signage.

A new geophysical survey, using current technology, such as Lidar, would provide information as to the potential for archaeology at the site. Ideally this would extend to the entire hilltop context, beyond the perimeter of the outer ramparts and include the area of the Ancient Road.

Interpretation of such a survey can be used to inform any proposed archaeological investigation, and any proposed works to paths, access, boundaries or signage that could involve disturbance of the ground.

In Part 6.6, below we discuss the negative impact of field boundaries on the presentation of the Grianán of Aileach. Some of these boundaries, may however be many hundreds of years old, possibly dating back to the formalisation of townland boundaries in the 16th century. It would be useful to clarify the age of these, as historic elements of the site.

Lack of awareness of the value, and interest, of the natural habitats of the site, may result in a less respectful attitude to the natural environment, flora and fauna of the site, in terms of uncontrolled access and disturbance.

Regular surveys to monitor species would provide a balanced view of bio-diversity at the site and help manage the land in such a way as to protect the bio-diversity.

Visitor understanding of the site, and their response to it, may be improved by well designed and informative signage, and an carefully curated on-line information.

6.2 Visitor Experience

Currently the majority of visitors arrive by car. Having maybe admired, and been drawn from a distance by, the silhouette of the cashel against the sky on the summit of Greenane Mountain, (Figures 1.07 - 1.09), the walk from car park to cashel (through the largely unnoticed lines of the ramparts) only takes minutes. (Figure 6.01).

The mountaintop location, of the Grianán of Aileach is intrinsic to its meaning and significance. That the current road and path access enables those with limited mobility to visit the site is good, but for those who are able bodied it can be seen to reduce the potential to experience, enjoy and understand the site.

The only constructed and identified paths at the site are from the car park to the entrance to the cashel. A clear footworn path leads from the cashel to the well. Although the enclosed site at the Grianán of Aileach extends to 2.5 Ha, visitors wishing to explore the area, or gain a different view of the cashel, have to cross rough heathland, much of it boggy.

The limited pedestrian routes, both through, and around, the site, risk damage to the natural environment, increase wear on the existing routes, and any underlying archaeology, and limit the richness, and extents, of the visitor experience. Both the main access path, and the footworn path to the well cut through the ramparts, both embodying damage to the hillfort, and detracting from the authenticity of the the presentation of the site.

There is currently no information at the site relating to the natural environment. Providing information about both the flora and fauna of the site, and the wider landscape and topography, could enrich the experience for visitors, as well as help safeguard the biodiversity of the site.

6.3 Vulnerabilities arising from visitors: intentional damage

Stone throwing

Since the monument was first recorded in the 1830s there are records of visitors to the cashel removing stones from the walls and throwing them down. The earliest aerial image of the cashel (Figure 2.07) shows the cashel surrounded by a ring of loose stones. It seems there may be an inherent invitation to many humans, when having access to stones, and standing at a height, to pick up and throw them. The problems of such vandalism to the cashel is recorded as having been particularly severe in the early 1970s, but incidents were also recorded from 2009 and 2013. Currently all the parapets and flags of the terraces are secured in cement mortar. This is historically inaccurate, but a modern intervention in the structure that is justified, as essential, to prevent removal of stones, and visitor safety. Deliberate damage is more likely at times when there is no supervision, or few other visitors.

Climbing

The walls of the cashel, their flanks a wealth of tiny foot and finger holes between the stones, also present an invitation to some people to climb, “because it’s there”. This presents both a danger to climbers and to the cashel, as loose stones may be dislodged.

Litter

Many visitors will bring food or drinks with them when they come to the site. Most take the containers and wrappings home with them. A few discard their waste at the site. All litter is unsightly, and detracts from the presentation of the monument. All litter harms the environment. Some litter, such as discarded needles can also be a danger to other visitors. The provision of bins is not a troublefree solution: if they are not emptied regularly waste can build up, and the overspill left to blow around the site and attract scavengers. Many people, where there is no bin will automatically take their waste home with them.

Graffiti

The most apparent graffiti is on the lintel over the entrance. (Figure 3.24). Carved, this can only have been created when there were no other visitors or supervisors present. There have also been instances of painted graffiti: easier to achieve in a brief, unobserved moment.

6.4 Vulnerabilities arising from visitors: passive effects

The land and soil is impacted on by the passing of feet. The more feet the greater the impact. The erosion of the land (and any underlying archaeology) is currently apparent around the entry to, and within the cashel, and along the route to the well.

Damage to the fabric of the cashel is increased by footfall. Over time this contributes to the wearing of the terraces and steps.



6.01 The short run from car to cashel. Attractive and exciting to children who have been confined to car and city.



6.02 Visitors are relied on to take responsibility for their safety and that of their dependents.

People, their children and dogs disturb wildlife, and may trample plants. The lack of paths around the site mean those interested to explore beyond the cashel have to walk over undisturbed ground, with the potential for erosion.

Visitor Safety

The steps and terraces of the cashel do not comply with current building regulations for stairways or protection against fall. Adapting the cashel or providing guards against fall, or supports that made the terraces more accessible would damage the fabric of the cashel and fundamentally change its form and therefore its meaning. Any visitor to the cashel is therefore expected to take responsibility for their safety and that of any children in their care. The higher the density of visitors, the higher the possibility of a visitor having a mishap, as they navigate each other as well as their environment. Visitor safety means that there must be access for emergency vehicles to the site, whatever the impact on the presentation of the monument.

Visitor Numbers

Overall the passive effects, listed above, increase with the numbers of visitors to the site. Conversely, the likelihood of willful damage may decrease, the more visitors who are present. Should guided tours be offered it will be necessary to limit the size of groups, as the steps and terraces within the cashel are not suitable for large groups, and could become more hazardous if a visitor is paying attention to commentary rather than where they are putting their feet.

Impact on habitats

Increasing visitor numbers are likely to result in more visitors wandering across the heath habitat. Where this occurs in concentrated areas the vegetation may become degraded, exposing the peat and with heavy rainfall this will become eroded. While encouraging an interest in the local natural environment is important, management will be necessary. Many visitors will have dogs, with impacts in terms of dog waste, which should be avoided (health and habitat reasons).

6.5 “Anti-social behaviour”

Such behaviour can be defined as that which detracts from the enjoyment and peace of others who are visiting, or working at the site. It may not necessarily threaten the fabric of the monument but threatens the character of the place. Problems experienced at the Grianán of Aileach include drinking parties, drug-taking, uncontrolled dogs, and boisterous behaviour on the steps and terraces of the cashel.

Unapproved gatherings of people to celebrate birthdays, or other significant events also have the potential to disturb or detract from the experience of other visitors.

Ease of Access

As already noted, the site is easily accessible by car, and close to large population in the city of Derry. The “anti-social” behaviour: vandalism, littering etc. noted here, is often the embodiment of “not caring” and frustration. The easier a place is to access, the more accessible it is to those who “don’t care”. Those who expend time and effort to visit a place are usually less likely to damage the place when they arrive there.

The closing of the barrier at the foot of the access lane, outside “opening hours” has been effective in reducing anti-social behaviour at, and damage to, the monument. This action is dependent on a security company attending the site at the closing of the barrier every day. It is therefore essential that this service continues to be funded.

Remoteness

Although the site is easy to get to, by car, it is also remote; far from settlements and houses. If any problems arise from the behaviour of visitors, any operatives trying to deal with the issue are vulnerable, particularly if they are on their own.

6.6 Enclosure of the site

The site is currently enclosed by modern post and wire fences. Some of these are of relatively recent date. Others follow the line of older fieldbanks, some of which are also townland boundaries. These banks may include stones taken from the cashel. The geometry and fabric of these fences are alien to the form and materiality of the cashel, the ramparts and the natural topography, cutting across contours and ramparts. Their visual impact is increased by the impact on the vegetation of the different grazing, or other regimes within the fields.

Some elements of the National Monument, notably the Ancient Road, and some sections of the outer ramparts lie outside the current site enclosure. This makes them vulnerable to the impacts of land management outside the control of the OPW or Donegal County Council. Whereas it is neither feasible, or appropriate, to try and re-establish the appearance of the mountain in the year 1000 AD, minor modifications to the alignment and form of some of these boundaries, combined with adjustment of land management could greatly improve the setting and presentation of the Grianán of Aileach.



6.03 Field fence enclosing the site to the west. This relatively recent boundary is defined by the change in vegetation, more stringly than by the fence enclosure. There is no fieldbank here

6.7 Events

For the last decade regular public cultural events have been held at the Grianán of Aileach; the Féile Grianán Áiligh Lughnasa Festival, Voices of the Dawn, dawn chorus gathering, performances and events associated with the Earagail Arts Festival. There are also requests, and assumptions that private groups can use the site for celebrations or events, and film makers have requested to use the cashel as a location. It is a popular location for wedding photographs.

While public events, and appearances in films, raise awareness of the site, and bring in new visitors and, if appropriately planned, may contribute to understanding of the site, they also have drawbacks. The density of use during events intensifies wear and tear on the ground, and the fabric of the monument, and also increases the possibility of accidents.

Private events, and film shoots, impose their presence onto the experience of other visitors, and if not subject to careful planning and approval may magnify the problems and impacts associated with public events. It is essential that guidance and information regarding the control of, and permissions for events at the site is readily available and accessible.

6.8 Modern elements and infrastructure.

All modern elements, whether road and carpark, bins, footpaths, fences or signage to some extent detract from the presentation and authenticity of the monument.

Any additional infrastructure, in the form of toilets or buildings provided for the comfort or convenience of visitors or staff, if located within the vicinity of the mountain top would have a major impact on the setting of the monument, and would not be acceptable. However smaller elements such as fences and

paths also have a significant impact on the visual presentation of the place, and also potentially, the archaeology and ecology of the place.

It is therefore essential that all infrastructure is designed and located, or adapted with due respect to the significance of the monument to minimise any negative impacts.

Should any new paths be proposed, careful consideration of both their appearance and structure will be required, whether in the form of boardwalks, or paths on the surface of the hillside.

6.9 Weathering and routine maintenance

As well as the impacts of visitors the site is subject to the impacts of the weather, time and gravity at this exposed location. Rain and frost action act on any mortar and the heart of the cashel walls. Catastrophic collapses during the 20th and early 21st century arose from the failure of Walter Bernard's techniques of reconstruction of the cashel, using clay and loose fill in the heart of the walls.

At this stage much of the 19th century work has been rebuilt. However the structure needs to be continually monitored for further signs of settlement and movement. The current regime of daily supervision of the monument has proved effective in ensuring any damage or degradation is observed as soon as it happens, and appropriate action can be taken on the part of the OPW. It is therefore essential that this service continues to be supported.

It is essential that any contractors or operatives employed to carry out maintenance work, however limited, are fully aware of the significance of the place, and suitably experienced and qualified in working with National Monuments.

6. Summary of vulnerabilities

Given Global Heating, it is possible, or even likely, that, in the near future, the monument may be subject to more extremes of weather conditions than has been the case for the previous century. Further guidance, in this respect can be found in the Built & Archaeological Heritage Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan 2019.

<https://www.chg.gov.ie/heritage/climate-change/the-built-and-archaeological-heritage-climate-change-sectoral-adaptation-plan/>

7.1 Introduction

The management of the site requires those responsible to control a variety of issues; the upkeep of the fabric and site of the monument; ensuring the behavior of visitors does not impact on the significance of the monument; reviewing the current presentation, definition and access to the monument and to identify ways in which this could be improved.

In a wider context, good management requires contact and co-operation between those responsible for the monument, and those responsible for planning and controlling any development and change in the adjacent area, that could have an impact on the site, or its setting.

Managers need to control both actions, and effects, of human activity at the site, as well as responding to the impact of non-human activity: the natural environment, the flora and fauna and weathering of the monument.

7.2 Responsibility

The site is a National Monument, in state ownership, and as such belongs to the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The term National Monument is defined in Section 2 of the National Monuments Act (1930) as a monument “the preservation of which is a matter of national importance by reason of the historical, architectural, traditional, artistic or archaeological interest attaching thereto...”

Taking care of the monument is the responsibility of a partnership of the Office of Public Works and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The conservation and presentation of the monument is project managed by the OPW, while overall responsibility for the protection of the Monument and its archaeology rests with the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The consent of the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. has to be sought for any proposed works at, or within close proximity of, a National Monument.

The land up to the site that is occupied by the access road is in the ownership of Donegal County Council. As there is a barrier at the bottom, this does not constitute a public road, but rather a private road that is managed by the roads authority (Donegal County Council).¹ The land at the car park is not in State, or Council, ownership, but as the road and car park have been in place since 1955, the car park is in the charge of the roads authority (Donegal County Council).

Donegal County Council are also responsible for the implementation of planning policies and objectives in relationship to the development of tourism and the economy of the area, and for management and improvements to County roads. They are responsible for decisions regarding planning applications for any proposed development in lands that provide the setting of the monument. In respect to any planning issues, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht are the statutory referral body in respect of their responsibility for the archaeology, built and natural heritage of the State.

7. Management Issues

The exhibition, at the Old Church Visitor Centre, adjoining the An Grianán Hotel is in private ownership, and was developed with the aid of grants from Inishowen Development Partnership and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government through grant aid received under The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development in Ireland 2007-2013.

If the significance of the Grianán of Aileach is to be retained and enhanced it is essential that these bodies work together within an established framework. This plan has been prepared to facilitate those responsible for the conservation, management, and any development at the site. It would be an advantage to establish a Grianán of Aileach Implementation Group, formed of a few key representatives of the OPW, the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Donegal County Council, in order to oversee and review all proposals that have an impact on the site.

It will be essential for this group to be accessible to, and to have open and regular communication with local community groups, local media, and regional and cross border development, planning and tourism initiatives, in order to encourage dialogue, and community engagement, and to ensure the accuracy of available information, and appropriate promotion of the site. Ensuring the timely issue of press releases regarding any significant events, changes or maintenance at the site can help retain and develop good relationships with local communities, government, businesses and the press.



Uaireanta Oscailte Séasúracha		Seasonal Opening Hours	
16 Márta	30 Aibreán	10.00 - 12.30	16.30
1 Bealtaine	15 Meitheamh	09.00 - 19.00	
16 Meitheamh	15 Lúnasa	09.00 - 20.30	
16 Lúnasa	30 Meán Fómhair	09.00 - 19.00	
1 Dúineadh Fómhair	31 Dúineadh Fómhair	09.00 - 12.30	16.30
1 Samhain	15 Márta	10.00 - 15.30	
• Ní féidir go bhfuil an t-am díneadh aitheithe leis an áiteil ama		• Ní féidir go bhfuil an t-am díneadh aitheithe leis an áiteil ama	

7.01 Opening hours

7.3 Management of visitors and their experience

A free site

There is no charge to visit the Grianán of Aileach. This has many advantages, in that there is no accompanying expectation to provide toilets, guides, and other facilities. It is a national asset not a private enterprise, and anyone with means to reach the site can spend time there.

There are also a few drawbacks. There may be some visitors who value a place less, and treat it with less respect if they do not have to pay for access. Supervision by a site supervisor, during the hours the site is open, supplemented with security assistance, is essential to both safeguarding the monument, and ensuring the safety of visitors. The cost of this supervision has to be covered, from other sources than admission fees.

Opening hours

Currently access to the car park for the Grianán of Aileach is controlled by a lockable barrier at the bottom of the access road. Opening hours vary during the year, opening at either 9 or 10 in the morning, with the road closing at some point before dusk. (See figure 7.01). This regime is designed to discourage easy access in the hours of darkness, when the security of the monument and the safety of visitors cannot be supervised. The barrier is also closed if there is any hazard to visitors, such as in frosty conditions. Pedestrians are free to walk up the access road at any time of the day or night. Since the barrier was introduced, instances of vandalism and anti-social behaviour have reduced significantly.

One of the many attractions of the site is the panoramic views it affords, and sunset is a particularly fine time to enjoy the prospect. Visitors, wishing to partake of this attribute of the site, have to leave their vehicle, if they have one, outside the barrier. Unlike many other sites, visitor numbers show that these may be as high on a fine day in the winter, as they are in summer, this being an

easily accessible “breathing space” for the populations of Derry, Letterkenny, and the hinterlands of these centres of population.

Although academic sources tell us this was never a “Temple of the Sun” as assumed in the early 19th century, the Grianán of Aileach is a popular location to visit for sunrises and sunsets at the solstices and equinoxes.

Movement around the site

The only constructed paths, at the Grianán of Aileach, are the timber and gravel path that leads from the car park directly to the cashel, (Figure 7.03) and the ramped timber boardwalk / step structure, installed to provide universal access. A further eroded path leads, from the greensward that surrounds the cashel, through the heath and ramparts, to the well. (Figure 7.02). There is nothing to prevent people wandering elsewhere in the site, but the rough going, arising from the wet heath habitat, makes this difficult, and unattractive to all but the more fit, inquisitive or adventurous.



7.02 Path to the well: impact on habitats and presentation

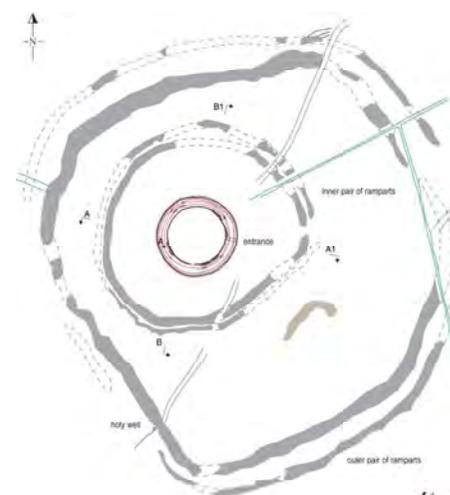


7.03 Main access path: impact on habitats and visual presentation

Paths emerging at “desire lines” may cause erosion; damaging the natural habitat, and archaeology, and detracting from the presentation of the monument. The existing paths cut through ramparts with no indication of the location of the ramparts, or their relationship to the cashel.

The very short walk from the car park to the cashel limits the experience (and “dwell time”) of most visitors to a walk within and around the cashel. Visitors may be largely unaware of the ramparts of the hillfort, and even less so the other elements of the site; the tumulus, and Ancient Road. This limited extent of roaming around the site may be disappointing for some visitors, who would enjoy a longer walk, or the opportunity to view the cashel from alternative viewpoints or to explore the ramparts of the hillfort.

Paths have a huge visual impact, as well as the potential to damage archaeology. Any proposed new paths, whether tracks or boardwalks, need to be developed with full cognisance of the potential visual, archaeological and ecological impact.



7.04, 05 Interface of the access routes within the site and the elements of the monument.

Impact on natural habitats

Increasing visitor numbers are likely to result in more visitors wandering around the heath habitat. Where this occurs in concentrated areas the vegetation may become degraded, exposing the peat, and with heavy rainfall this will become eroded. Visitors walking freely may disturb ground nesting birds, or damage delicate habitats. While encouraging an interest in the local natural environment is important, management will be necessary. Many visitors will have dogs, with impacts in terms of dog waste, which should be avoided (health and habitat reasons).

Visitor safety

Visitors enter the site, and explore the cashel, at their own risk. The hazards that visitors are to be aware of are summarised in pictogram signs, located both at the entrance to the site from the car park, and adjacent to the entrance to the cashel. Access for security vehicles to the site is through the gate at the bottom of the path, and is controlled by the OPW / Emergency services. There is no control over the number of people entering the site, except for that arising from the limited capacity of the car park.



7.06 Warning signage outside the cashel



7.07 Litter Bins

Visitor facilities

The only visitor facilities provided at the site are litter bins. These are emptied by Donegal County Council. The waste bins have lids which are important in order to prevent waste blowing around the site and to avoid attracting vermin and corvids. However, if the bins fill up, people may leave additional waste beside the bins. While on site for the habitat survey, a group of hooded crows were observed, that had raided a nest (most likely meadow pipit) and were fighting over the remains of a young bird. Given the limited amount of wet heath habitat on the mountain it would be good to protect what is left and not encourage any predators which may be attracted by waste.

There is a valid argument to not provide litter bins. Any litter at the site has been carried there by visitors, so there is no reason why they should not carry it back with them when they leave. Litter bins are not a relevant service to the conservation and presentation of a National Monument. Providing waste bins can be seen as an invitation to leave waste behind, that would otherwise be taken home by visitors. The current bins are ugly and detract from the site.

There are no toilets at the site. This has been identified as a major drawback for elderly visitors. Providing toilets at the current car park location would put unacceptable demands on the environment in terms of servicing the building, and would detract from the presentation of the site, and the skyline. The cost of maintenance and management of any toilets, would be considerable. The Office of Public Works does not provide toilet or service facilities at any of the monuments in state care that are free for entry sites. The nearest toilet facilities, associated with the bar / restaurant there, are located at the An Grianán Hotel.

Should a new car park ever be established near the base of the access lane (see Part 7.5 and Appendix C) a small toilet facility (possibly seasonal or non - permanent) may be considered, subject to planning approval and a fully developed proposal for the management and disposal of waste.

There are no refreshments facilities provided at the site. The OPW are not in a position to construct, manage, staff, or run, a refreshments facility, but would be happy for a local business to provide refreshments, if an acceptable location and servicing regime can be proposed and approved.

A location at the bottom of the access road could also be explored, subject to feasibility and approval. The nature of any refreshments available requires careful consideration in terms of control of waste and servicing the facility. No permanent structure would be permissible at the current car park, due to impacts on the setting of the monument.

In recent years a coffee cart has operated in the car park, at peak visitor times. This business is not licenced. There have been issues for the security company being unable to secure the site at the end of the day, as a result of the trader not closing and leaving before site closing time. Whereas a mobile provision for refreshments may be deemed the most appropriate response to visitor requirements and site constraints, to ensure the nature of trading at the site is controlled there need to be byelaws in place to cover trading, and commercial access. Such byelaws would need to be prepared, adopted and implemented by Donegal County Council.

7.4 Prevention of, and response to, negative behaviour

Currently there is a single site supervisor, employed to be present on the site 365 days of the year. This role has proved invaluable in ensuring the safety of visitors, discouraging damage to the monument, and identifying any maintenance issues for action. When this operative is unavailable, the role has to be fulfilled by another OPW employee, taking them away responsibilities elsewhere. It is essential that his supervisory role will need to continue to be supported and fulfilled, with the support of all interested, and responsible parties.

The site supervisor is provided with assistance, at site closing time, and in the event of any inappropriate behaviour, by a security company. This service has also proven essential, given the remoteness and scale of the site, and the distance between barrier and monument.

There are no facilities on site for staff, and the current regime is dependent on staff being prepared to work long hours, using a vehicle for shelter and the supervisor living locally and able to go home during the day.

7.5 Access to the site

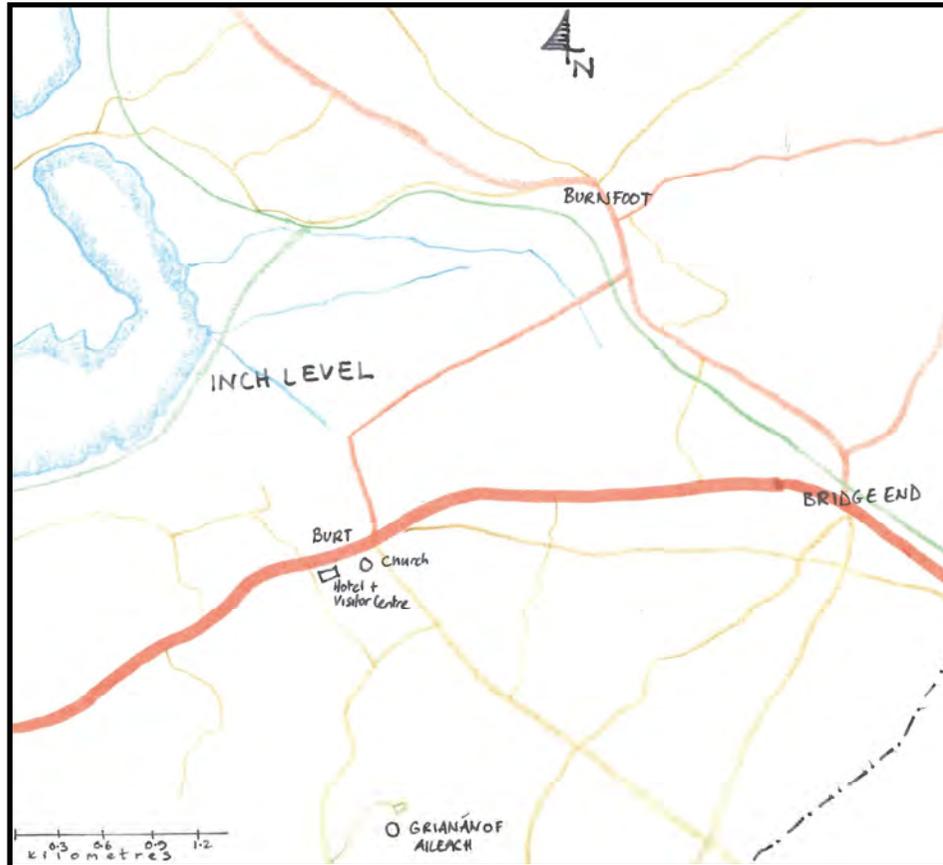
Pedestrian access to the site and public transport

Walking, for pleasure, relaxation, physical and mental health, is an increasingly popular activity, for tourists and local people alike. Where greenways have been opened up elsewhere in Ireland they have been a great success, drawing additional visitors to their locations. There are plans to develop the former railwayline between Derry and Buncrana as a greenway. This passes within about 3.5km of Burt, and even if it doesn't provide a close link to the Grianán of Aileach, it is likely to attract those with an interest in walking, to the area. The nearby Inch Levels Wildfowl Reserve, includes 8km of walking trail. Donegal County Council are currently collaborating in an EU funded project "Trailgazers". This encourages development of walking trails as a catalyst for economic development. Any promotion of walks to, and around, the Grianán of Aileach needs to be considered in this context. (Refer Figure 7.08).

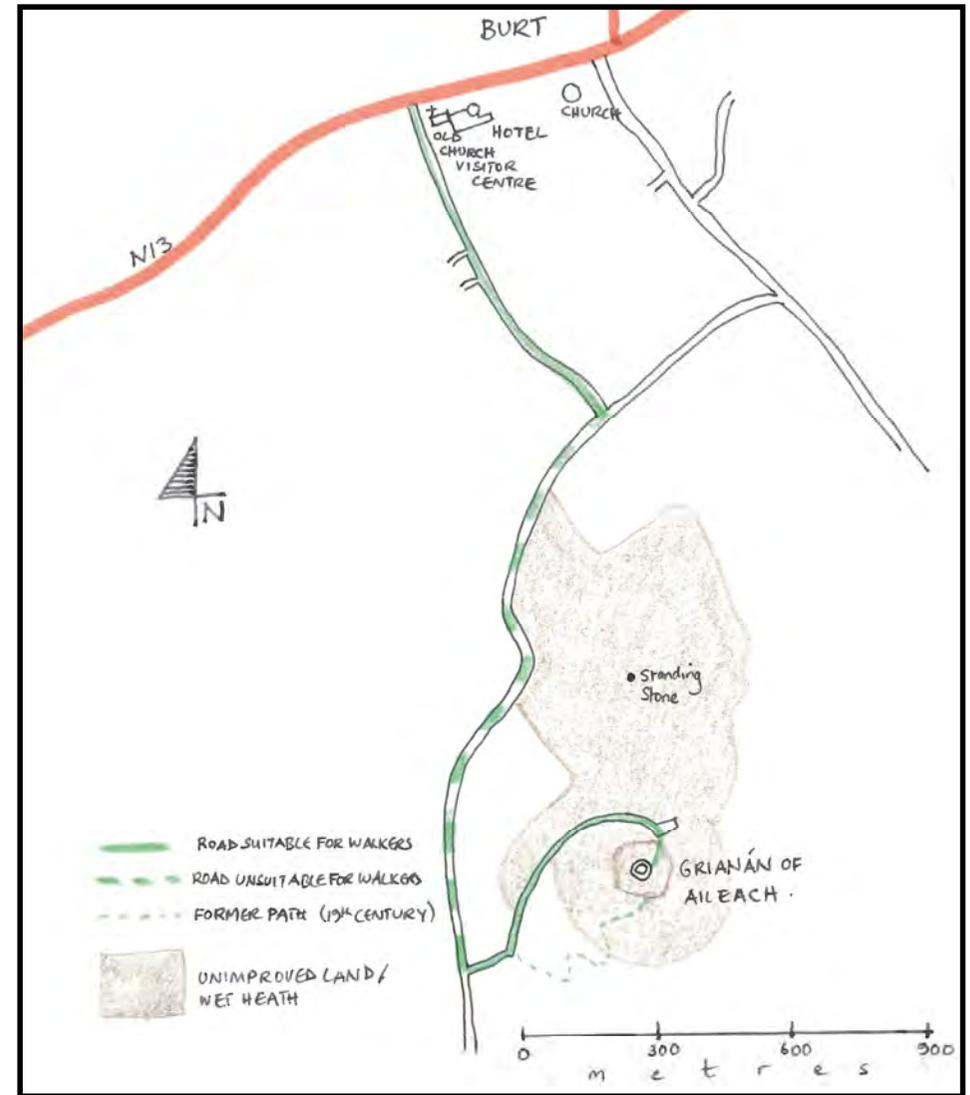
Those wishing to access the monument, who neither have a car, nor arrive as part of a bus tour, are obliged to walk along the roads, the nearest public transport stopping on the N13 at Burt. The shortest route from Burt to the Grianán of Aileach is just under 3km and includes a considerable climb of over 200m. (see Figure 7.09).

7. Management Issues

As such, it is easily achieved by those who are used to mountain walking, but could be challenging for those accustomed to walking in more level terrain. The lane that leads up, to the right hand side (south west) of the Old Church Visitor Centre is quiet, with only rare traffic, mature trees and hedgebanks, and increasingly fine views as the hill is climbed. If provided with pedestrian warning signs, it is suitable for shared pedestrian and vehicular use. (Length c. 800m).



7.08 Context of the Grianán of Aileach: proposed Greenway Derry to Buncrana shown in green



7.09 Map of walking route from the Old Church Visitor Centre to the Grianán of Aileach

However, the route from the top of this lane, to the barrier at the base of the access road (c.1,400m), although less steep, and also with fine views, is not safe for pedestrians, carrying faster and more frequent, traffic, and with bends and banks leading to poor visibility. As such, this length of the current pedestrian route, could not be promoted for walking.

The relatively slow speed of traffic on the steep access road, (the final 800m of the walk) means this part of the route could be shared by vehicular traffic and pedestrians. The provision of seats, speed bumps, signage indicating pedestrian use, and passing places would be helpful to improve the experience. Alternatively, the re establishment of the former footpath, which appears on the 25" (1897-1913) OS map (Figure 2.07) which zigzags up the hillside towards the well, could create an alternative interesting route.

If a walking route could be created, through the fields of scrub and heath, that rise from the top of the lower lane to the summit of Greenan Mountain, an interesting and exciting new way of experiencing the monument could be established, beginning and ending at the An Grianán Hotel, and omitting the dangerous length of road.



7.10, 11, 12 The lane that leads uphill from the Old Church Visitor Centre, and the fine views over the Inch Levels

The climb up could take up to an hour, depending on fitness, and how much walkers stop to admire the spectacular views. There is a standing stone in these fields., which could be included on the route. The return journey, downhill would be swifter, the spire of the Old Church Visitor Centre acting as a beacon for the route back. Such a route would greatly enrich the experience of the place for those able to complete the climb. (see Figure 7.12).

There is scope, at the Grianán, to improve pedestrian access both to, and around, the site. Subject to local consultation, and compliance with the recommendations of this Conservation Management Plan, safeguarding the significance of the monument and its setting, new, or reinstated, historic paths could greatly enhance the visitor experience and understanding of the site.

Bicycle access

Arrival at the Grianán of Aileach, by bicycle is feasible, but requires fitness. The site is in proximity to long distance cycle routes. and a pleasant distance from Derry. It would be worthwhile to explore the potential to provide electric bicycles at the An Grianán Hotel, providing a great experience, access to the views, and reducing the demands on the car park.



7.13 Views to Inch Island from county road.

Car access and parking

The current car park provides space for around 20 cars. When it was constructed a degree of levelling was carried out, subtly changing the profile of the hillside. It is not recommended that this car park be expanded, as this would detract further from the presentation of the monument and destroy further areas of heath habitat.

There are no passing places on the steep access road, but sufficient width for two ordinary cars to pass with ease. The steepness of the road requires slow speeds, which reduces any risk to walkers. The road remains closed at times of frost and snow, as to access it then would be hazardous.

In Section 6.2 above, it was identified how the ease of vehicular access, and short, direct route from the car park to the cashel undermines, to some extent, the potential experience and understanding of the mountain top site for many visitors. Parking provision at the foot of the access lane could allow for a fine walk into the site, for walkers.

Other Irish hillforts, such as Cahergal & Leacanabuaile in Kerry and Dún Aonghasa in the Aran Islands, require a considerable walk in order to visit them.

Any development of a new car park would be subject to planning permission and require a carefully considered response to environmental considerations and any impact on the setting of the Grianán of Aileach. Even if a new car park were established, access to the upper car park could still be permitted for disabled badge holders and service and emergency vehicles. This would need considered management.

In Appendix C we have summarised alternative options for parking provision and vehicular access to the site. The development of any of these ideas would have to be subject to the policies and protection of the significance identified in this Conservation Management Plan.

Coaches

The access road and car park are suitable for, and frequented by mini-buses, but unsuitable for coaches. Although coaches do currently access the car park at times, the lack of turning space at the top and lack of passing places on the access road, mean coaches should not use this road.

The roads that lead from the N13 to bottom of hill are also not ideal for coaches or an increase in traffic load. The Donegal County Council roads engineer, Eamon Mahon has identified the junctions along this road as unsuitable for coaches. This approach road from the N13 would benefit from a road safety audit.

Coach tours, and Cruise Ships (that often link with coaches) are a very popular way of visiting Ireland and its historic and scenic sites, including the Wild Atlantic Way. Ideally alternative ways of accommodating these tours, with respect to the site would be found (Refer Appendix C). The parking of coaches at the An Grianán Hotel, with connecting mini-bus service could be a viable option for a local business to offer.



7.14 The car park is suitable for mini-buses but not coaches

7.6 Information about the site

Signage

Signage is required for a combination of purposes: to provide visitors with information which helps them to understand the site, and provide insights into what they are looking at; and to give visitors the essential information regarding site safety, opening hours and access. Site signage needs to be sturdy, accurate, regularly maintained, and repaired in the case of vandalism. In the past Bord Fáilte have provided grants to provide, or improve interpretative material.

It would be useful to have more effective signs to the visitor centre guiding walkers, cyclists and motorists to the Old Church Visitor Centre.

If information could be expanded to include reference to the habitats, flora and fauna of the site, this could lead to a more respectful treatment of the place by visitors, as well as encouraging engagement in this field.

Guides

There are currently no guides available to tell people about the site. The OPW is not in a position to pay, or facilitate the provision of guides. However a number of local councillors and officials have voiced an opinion that there is a market for guides at the site. Should a local history group, or enterprise be willing to interested in providing guides, this service could be developed in consultation with the implementation group (see 7.2 above).

Although guided tours can be interesting for those participating, they can detract from the experience of the site for those visiting on their own. There are also safety concerns in this location, and numbers within a group would need to be limited to minimise risk of falls or other accidents.

7.7 Maintenance of the site

Currently the site supervisor observes the monument daily, and is able to inform the OPW District Works Manager of any damage, to either the monument, or any site infrastructure, as soon as it occurs. Thus minor repairs can occur as soon as required, reducing the likelihood of more serious damage developing. The on-going safety and conservation of the monument is dependent on the continuation of this management regime.

It is essential that any contractors, or operatives, involved in maintenance, are fully informed of the nature of the significance of the site, and suitably experienced and qualified to execute the work to the highest standards.

Natural habitats

For the health of the natural environment it is important that no weed killers are used at the site or on the verges, and that the cutting of verges is managed seasonally to encourage and facilitate biodiversity.

Should it be possible to revise any of the field boundaries, the restoration of heath habitats would need to be managed, with reference to ecologists, and suitable methodologies of management.



7.15 The Magpie Moth



7.16 Bog Asphodel

7.8 Management of boundaries, and land use

Some of the boundaries; the fences and banks that enclose the site of the cashel have a negative effect on the presentation of the monument. Some cut through the ramparts, and the eastern boundary separates the Ancient Road from the other recorded monuments. (Refer part 6.6). The boundaries also divide areas of different habitats, arising from grazing. The straight lines, and contrasting colours, of these boundaries cut across contours and contrast with the organic forms of the ramparts of the hill fort, which while not precisely following the contours, respond to the natural form of the hilltop. (See Figures **4.01, 4.06, 6.03, 7.04, 7.05**)

Some of these boundaries, however, even if they detract from the form of the hillfort, may be centuries old, and as such can be seen as elements of the history of the site.

Where boundaries are between State owned land, and land in private ownership, any alteration to them would require approach, proposal, negotiation, and agreement with neighbouring landowners. However the land on both sides of the western boundary belongs to the State, and as such a modification of this boundary, and of the grazing use to the west could be achievable, subject to negotiation with the leasee.

An ecologist could advise on the restoration of heath in the land that has been grazed.

7.9 Management of promotion of the site

It is important that references to the Grianán of Aileach in promotional material, is accurate and realistic about the nature of the site, and how to get there. It is therefore essential that communication between those responsible for the National Monument (The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Office of Public Works) and those who may be promoting tourism, and visitor attractions in the area are open and lines and fields of responsibility clear. It is also important to have open and accessible lines of communication with local community and history groups.

Given the location of the Grianán of Aileach so close to the border with Northern Ireland it is essential that communication extends across the border, and with cross border initiatives. The North West Strategic Growth Partnership could be usefully engaged with.

In the past there has been some criticism of the state bodies responsible for the Grianán of Aileach in the local press. This could be avoided by ensuring timely press releases are issued regarding any works, or modifications to management regimes at the site.

7.10 Management of events

The benefits and drawbacks of events (public and private) at the site are discussed in Part 6.7. There needs to be a clear point of contact and readily available information, with regard to restrictions and the protocol for permission being granted to hold events at the Grianán of Aileach. There need to be clear parameters and limits to the size and type of events held and how they are resourced and serviced. Similar care needs to be exercised with regards to permitting filming at the site.

8.1 Introduction

The conservation and management policies have been formulated with a view to acting as a practical tool to aid in the protection and management of the Grianán of Aileach, ensuring its survival for the enjoyment and enlightenment of future generations. This objective is to be achieved through meeting both the immediate need for action and a more long-term approach to maintaining the significance of the site.

These policies are designed to provide a checklist against which future actions be assessed prior to implementation.

Through providing a framework for decision making, the policies aim to achieve the following outcomes:

- To protect and enhance the monument, and its landscape setting in a way that retains all aspects of its significance.
- To provide an overall philosophy to inform all actions that may have an impact on the site.
- Should any development, or alteration of any nature be proposed at the site, or in the landscape setting of the monument, to provide established criteria against which a proposal may be assessed.
- To ensure that both the OPW and Donegal County Council are involved in the decision making processes that affect public access to the monument.
- To provide practical guidance for appropriate land management with respect to preserving the significance of the site.

- Establish an appropriate balance between the conservation of the monument, the site, its natural environment and biodiversity; the wider setting; and the meeting of public expectations in terms of access and information.
- Communicate to the wider public, as well as existing interested parties, an understanding of the significance of the site and promote enjoyment of the monument, its setting and meaning.
- Establish a structure to oversee the implementation of the policies and review and update the Conservation and Management Plan on a regular basis

The policies outline the governing principals and ambitions that should inform all activity and change at the Grianán of Aileach. These governing principles are summarised as policies 1 to 8 in section 8.2. In section 8.3 these general policies are expanded in more detail.

The proposed actions provided in Part Ten are specific actions, with recommended timeframes, proposed in order to fulfil the aims of the Policies.

8.2 General Conservation & Management Policies

Policy 1: Protection

To ensure that the conservation of the recorded monuments, the natural environment and archaeology of the Grianán of Aileach is central to all planning for, and management of the place, in order to preserve the significance of the heritage asset.

Policy 2: Conservation and Maintenance

To implement a planned regime of repair and maintenance, based on best conservation practice, that protects all aspects of the significance of the site, its natural environment, its historic integrity and archaeology.

Policy 3: Access

To ensure public access to the site is of a scale and character that does not threaten the significance of the site.

Policy 4: Enhancement of the Place

To improve the presentation of the monument in relationship to the wider landscape and the history, meaning and significance of the place, thereby also improving visitor experience.

Policy 5: Interpretation

To encourage public understanding and enjoyment of the site.

Policy 6: Extending Knowledge and Understanding of the Place

To encourage further, informed, architectural, archaeological, scientific and historical research into the Grianán of Aileach, and ensure the resulting information is made accessible, and to promote the site as a historic and scientific resource for learning about the past and about the natural environment.

Policy 7: Management of the site

To ensure the site of the Grianán of Aileach, is effectively managed, with clarity as to responsibility, and the significance of the site acknowledged, and protected through all management actions.

Policy 8: Servicing the site

To ensure that the provision of any services to the site, do not damage the setting or archaeology of the monument.

8.3 Detailed policies for conservation and management

8.3.1 Policies for Protection of the Place

To ensure that the conservation of the recorded monuments, the natural environment and archaeology of the Grianán of Aileach is central to all planning for, and management of the place.

Policy 1.1

To protect the historic fabric of the cashel, the archaeology, the hillfort, tumulus, ancient road and well.

- Commission a new Lidar / topographic / geophysical survey of the full extent of the ramparts and ancient road, to improve understanding of the nature and extent of what survives.
- Ensure all stakeholders, particularly potential state funding bodies, are aware of the task of preventing further erosion of the ramparts and other land features, as well as maintaining the integrity of the cashel.
- As an overarching principal, protect and preserve archaeology in-situ. Any proposed excavation should have a strong rationale, and be designed to contribute to the understanding and interpretation of the Grianán of Aileach.
- Ensure recognition of the wider landscape, and its importance to the understanding and presentation of the Grianán of Aileach.

- Ensure any new elements, in terms of signage, protection or pathways, do not detract from the integrity, presentation or interpretation of the site. Planning permission must be sought for any new elements, or alterations at the site and the Minister notified.

Policy I.2

Minimise the risk of damage to the historic fabric of the remains above and below ground, arising from visitors to and events at the site.

- Provide effective management regimes for the physical security of the monument.
- Provide physical protection, where necessary, to prevent access that could damage the monument and archaeology.
- Make a regular review of visitor numbers, in terms of protection of the site. Do not encourage increased access to the site beyond a point where density of footfall could threaten the survival of the monument.
- Manage pedestrian access routes around the site, in terms of preventing erosion of the monument.
- Provide signage clarifying access to the monument and surrounding landscape.
- Provide clear limits to the number and type of events that can be held at the site. Ensure this information is readily available to the public, and that limits are strictly applied by those responsible for management of the site.

Policy I.3

To protect the natural environment of the site.

- Develop an on-going programme monitoring the biodiversity of the site.
- Develop an on-going programme raising awareness of the local biodiversity interest at the site.
- Manage pedestrian routes around and into the site to reduce erosion of the natural vegetation.
- Ensure any removal of vegetation, carried out to protect the monument, is carried out with due consideration of ecological concerns,

and in accordance with statutory requirements.

- Do not use weedkiller on the verges, grassland or paved areas of the site.
- Engage with landowners who are grazing land within state ownership with a view to restoring wet heath habitat to its previous extent.
- Engage with landowners grazing adjacent lands with a view to maintaining existing wet heath habitat connected to the site.
- Avoid any further loss of wet heath habitat within the site.
- Ensure dogs are kept on leashes and all dog fouling is removed from the site.
- Keep the site clear of waste that may attract scavengers and predators.
- Acknowledge, and record the importance of the regional and local landscape setting of the monument.
- Provide protection to the adjacent skylines and distant views of the monument, to prevent unsuitable development that detracts from the setting and significance of the monument.

Policy I.4

To meet all statutory and legal requirements with respect to protection of the monument.

- Ensure repairs are carried out as soon as possible, and using appropriate methodology to prevent loss of historic fabric
- As the Grianán of Aileach is a National Monument in State Care, Ministerial consent must be obtained, in accordance with Section 14 of the National Monuments Acts 1930-2014, in relation to any proposal which will impact on the Recorded Monument.
- Any archaeological investigation (excavation), geophysical survey must be licensed in accordance with the National Monuments Act 1930-2014.
- Any archaeological investigation should take into consideration published State Policy: *Framework and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage*, Government Press 1999, *Policy and Guidelines on Archaeological Excavation* Government Press 1999.

8.3.2 Policies for conservation and maintenance of the place

To implement a planned regime of repair and maintenance, based on best conservation practice, that protects all aspects of the significance of the site, its historic integrity and archaeology. An outline record of 20th and 21st century interventions in the structure is provided in chapter 3.8.6 of this Plan. This is based on records provided by the OPW and currently in their archive.

Policy 2.1

To establish an effective and regular programme of inspection and repair, to prevent future deterioration of the structures and their significance.

- Establish a site maintenance archive into which records of all observations and repairs are logged.
- Establish an annual cycle of monitoring the monument, to identify any deterioration or potentially damaging vegetation growth, or erosion.
- Inspection to be executed by suitably experienced personnel.
- Establish a suitably qualified and experienced team to undergo minor works and control of vegetation using best conservation practice.

Policy 2.2

To ensure that all conservation and maintenance works are informed by a thorough and detailed understanding of the monument.

- All professionals and workers participating in conservation work to be made aware of the significance of the Grianán of Aileach, reasons behind the conservation work, and the archaeological sensitivity of the place.
- Ensure area to be maintained / repaired is fully surveyed, recorded and interpreted, prior to the commencement of works. This process to be executed by suitably experienced conservation architect, and conservation engineer and in conjunction with a suitably qualified archaeologist, with relevant experience.
- Only experienced conservation operatives to be employed for the execution of the works.
- All works to comply with statutory requirements. (Refer Policy 1.4).

Policy 2.3

To establish a regular programme of monitoring the natural environment of the site.

- Regular field checks to be carried out to monitor any change in botanical composition and impacts of the management and access programme.
- Investigate and recommend best grazing regimes to enhance biodiversity.

8.3.3 Policies for access to the site

To provide public access to the site of a scale and character that ensures a satisfying and authentic experience, while not threatening the significance of the site.

Policy 3.1

OPW to liaise on a regular basis with Donegal County Council, Fáilte Ireland, and local tourism networks, in terms of an overall tourism strategy, and the portrayal of the site in promotional and information literature.

- This policy may be implemented under the guidance of the Grianán of Aileach Implementation Group (See Policy 7)
- Ensure all parties who may be involved in promoting the site are fully aware of its significance and the importance of conserving its significance and integrity.
- Continue to keep a record of numbers of visitors to the site for interpretation purposes.
- Review visitor numbers, and plan strategies to ensure that these do not expand to a level where they may threaten the conservation of the site.
- Ensure that promotional material does not raise unrealisable visitor expectations.
- Ensure that all parties are fully aware of safety and accessibility issues at the site.
- Liaise with cross border bodies, and community bodies on a regular and formalised basis.

Policy 3.2

Ensure signage is accurate, easy to use and appropriately designed.

- Ensure signage indicates to visitors the potential dangers at the site and the visitor's own responsibility to act accordingly in the interests of their own safety and that of the monuments.

Policy 3.3

Investigate extending, or modifying the pedestrian routes into and around the monument.

- Review pedestrian routes from vehicle parking to the cashel, both for those with limited and unlimited physical ability.
- Review existing route to the well, in terms of site presentation and conservation, and visitor experience
- Review pedestrian routes around the entire site, and how these might extend the visitor experience in terms of interpretation, and understanding of the site, while avoiding damage to the monument and its presentation.
- If proposing new paths through the site these to be reviewed in terms of potential visual and physical impact on both archaeology and habitats, and visitor experience, and subject to statutory approval.
- Information to be provided to walkers at key locations.
- Investigate creating walking routes between Burt to the Grianán of Aileach.
- Liaise with other stakeholders, in respect to the development of walking infrastructure in the region.

Policy 3.4

Investigate options for alternative parking provision.

- No additional paved area to be provided at the current car park location to avoid negative impacts on the setting and environment of the monument.
- Investigate alternative locations for extending parking provision.
- Additional parking provision to only be installed following the implementation of necessary management strategies to cope with associated visitor numbers.

Policy 3.5

Vehicular access to the site

- Any road improvements to facilitate vehicular access to the site must be sensitive to the landscape quality of the setting of the Grianán of Aileach.

8.3.4 Policies for enhancement of the place

To improve the presentation of the monument, its natural habitats and biodiversity, in relationship to the wider landscape and the history, meaning and significance of the place, thereby also improving visitor experience.

Policy 4.1

Ensure any new elements necessary for the safety, information or management of visitors are designed and sited to minimise disruption of the historic interpretation and natural vegetation of the site.

- Avoid surfaced paths or boardwalks, unless essential to prevent the erosion of the land or to preserve identified habitats.
- Apply for ministerial consent for any works that could affect the National Monument.
- Communicate all proposals to the local community in a timely manner, consulting relevant bodies wherever possible.

Policy 4.2

To improve the character of enclosures at the site, and their relationship to the monument, and impact on habitats and biodiversity.

- Investigate the removal or re-alignment of fences marking field boundaries to the site.
- Where enclosures are essential ensure they have minimum impact on both the visual presentation of the monument and its archaeology.
- Where boundaries are removed or realigned, take appropriate action to reinstate habitats.

8.3.5 Policies for interpretation of the site

To encourage public understanding and enjoyment of the site.

Policy 5.1

To ensure that information about the site is readily available to all, enabling understanding of all elements of the site, and highlighting the significance of the site and the importance of its conservation.

- Ensure signage at the site, and online information is legible and accurate.
- Ensure recognition of the wider landscape, and its importance to understanding the Grianán of Aileach.
- Provide information as to where to locate off-site information.
- Establish a Grianán of Aileach website with all the essential information for prospective visitors to the site.
- Establish relationship with the Old Church Visitor Centre to ensure accuracy and appropriate enhancement of exhibits.
- Establish relationship between those responsible for managing the site and local community, wildlife and history groups who have an interest in the site.
- Develop understanding and promotion of the site as a Royal Site of Ireland.

Policy 5.2

Increase understanding of the site amongst the local community.

- Encourage involvement by local people, making links between local history, and tourism development groups, and the Grianán of Aileach Implementation Group, encouraging a sense of co-operation with regards to understanding and presentation of the place.
- Establish lines of communication with the local press.
- Encourage links with other sites relating to the Kingdom of Aileach. i.e. Tullyhogue Fort, Co. Tyrone, Elagh Castle, Co. Derry etc.

Policy 5.3

Provide well designed, robust signage for the site, which enhances the visitor

experience and understanding of the site, while being located and scaled to not detract from the presentation of the historic and natural environment.

- Ensure signage at the site is located in appropriate proximity to what it describes. Content to be checked for accuracy by historian, archaeologist and wildlife expert.
- All necessary statutory approvals to be obtained, prior to installation.

Policy 5.4

Ensure on-line and promotional material, including that provided by external stakeholders information is accurate.

- If a dedicated Grianán of Aileach site is established, content to be updated regularly.
- Grianán of Aileach Implementation Group to be given the opportunity to check on-line content regarding the site, prepared by other stakeholders (i.e. Failte Ireland, local tourism promoters, Donegal City Council etc.) prior to uploading.
- Content to be checked for accuracy by historian, archaeologist and wildlife expert.

8.3.6 Policies for extending knowledge & understanding of the place

To encourage further, informed, architectural, archaeological, ecological and historical research into the Grianán of Aileach, and ensure the resulting information is made accessible, and to promote the site as a historic and scientific resource for learning about the past and about the natural environment.

Policy 6.1

Establish archive, to maintain copies of records of all surveys (archaeological, ecological, and visitor numbers etc.) in one location

- Archive to be the responsibility of the OPW NW Area Depot, and accessible to the Grianán of Aileach Implementation Group.

Policy 6.2

Commission a Lidar / geophysical survey of the entire mountain top, to identify extents of archaeology, and improve understanding of the entire site.

Policy 6.3

Expand understanding of the landscape and ecology of the Grianán of Aileach.

- Establish regular monitoring of the flora and fauna of the site.
- Commission further research and record of the changes in the management, cultivation and form of the wider landscape through history.

8.3.7 Policies for management of the site

To develop and establish a practical and sustainable management framework for the Grianán of Aileach.

Policy 7.1

Establish a Grianán of Aileach Implementation Group, including officers of both the OPW and Donegal County Council, to oversee the implementation of the policies, and to review and update the Conservation and Management Plan on an annual basis.

- The group to meet on a twice yearly basis, at a minimum.
- All members to be informed of any works proposed at the site, or the approaches to the site.
- Group to establish regular lines of communication with relevant stakeholders, including local history groups, Bord Fáilte, and the North West Strategic Growth Partnership.
- Group to review the policies of the Conservation Management Plan, and update the plan on a regular basis. (Maximum every 10 years).

Policy 7.2

Continue to provide 365 day a year site supervision.

- Continue to provide support to the supervisor from a security company.

- Close the barrier preventing vehicular access before dusk every day.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for the security of the site.

Policy 7.3

Provide readily available advice for the landowners to answer any queries on a timely and informed basis.

- This should be provided by the Grianán of Aileach Implementation Group.

Policy 7.4

Clarify ownership and management of the existing car park.

- Investigate and formalise ownership and management of this area.

8.3.8 Policies for servicing the site

To ensure that the provision of any services to the site, do not damage the setting or archaeology of the monument.

Policy 8.1

Establish strict controls regarding the installation of services at the site.

- Avoid the installation of any services requiring excavation of the land.
- Avoid installation of any services which impinge on the skyline, or views of the Grianán of Aileach .
- As far as is practical, any infrastructure requiring the installation of such services to be located remotely from the site of the monument.

Policy 8.2

Control the nature of any trading at the site

- Donegal County Council to make, adopt and enforce a byelaw to cover trading at the site.

PART NINE

INTERPRETATION STRATEGIES

9.1 On site interpretation

On site signage should provide basic background information that enables visitors to put their experience in context. It is important to strike a balance between enhancing the visitors' experience and "telling them what to think". Now that it is possible to provide detailed information, and even guided tours, through visitors' mobile phones, site signage can be kept clear and simple to provide the basic information, and providing links to more detailed information, and related sites, should the curiosity of the visitor be inspired.

Providing an outline timeline for the history of the site, putting the place in the context of both historical developments in Ireland and other archaeological sites in the region, and the rest of Ireland, can be an effective way of helping visitors put their experience into the context of their knowledge of history.

Currently the cashel is the focus of most visitors. Finding ways to draw attention to the ramparts of the hillfort, as essential elements of the place should be a priority in any review of signage and interpretation.

Landscape and location

Given the remarkable mountain top location, with 360° views, it would be interesting to provide visitors with guidance as to what can be seen from the site; identification of landmarks, mountains, settlements. Panoramic images can be interesting, but need to be located so as not to detract from the overall setting, or presentation of the monument.

There is also the opportunity to provide interpretation of the relationship of the Grianán of Aileach to the surrounding landscape, placing the monument in the context of the evolution of the landscape, in geological and historic timeframes. This could include changes in natural vegetation and cultivation and management of the surrounding lands, over the millenia, as well as the changing extents of the Kingdom of Aileach.

Natural habitats at the site

In addition to providing historical background to the National Monument it would provide additional interest, to include interpretation of the habitats and species present on the site and in the wider landscape setting, as well as to how this may have changed since the site was first inhabited.



9.01 There is much to be interpreted in the surrounding landscape, both near and far.

Guidelines for on-site signage

Signage needs to be sturdy, and carefully placed so as to not detract from the experience of the site, particularly given its ridgetop location. Modern signage, particularly with fancy graphics, can quickly become dated looking (ironic at a historic site).

The emphasis should be on information; facts and background data on what you can't see, rather than telling you what to think about what you see. Short paragraphs of information, accompanied by images, or diagrams may be more effective to more people than lengthy essays. The challenge is to find the best balance of information, interest and accessibility, while providing accuracy. The information should whet the appetite of the uninformed, but also be satisfying for those with prior knowledge.

9.2 Additional interpretative material

Old Church Visitor Centre

There are limits to the scope of interpretative material that can be provided on site, and it is therefore a great asset to have the Old Church Visitor Centre in close proximity to the site. The Old Church Visitor Centre, adjoining the An Grianán Hotel, is in private ownership, and was developed with the aid from Inishowen Development Partnership and the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government through grant aid received under The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development in Ireland 2007-2013.

The church, which is about 3km from the Monument, has the added advantage of the spire being clearly visible, looking down from the cashel. It could be possible to develop the centre further as a base from which walking, or mini-bus visits, to the Grianán of Aileach could be established. There is much of interest at the centre, and fine models of the cashel and a site model too.

Ideally the interpretative material should cover all aspects of the significance of the site identified in Part Five of this Conservation Management Plan. This would entail providing additional information about the Kingdom of Aileach, the Cenél nÉogain, their rise and fall, and the Grianán of Aileach as their seat of power. Further background could also be provided as to what is known of the culture, literature and society of early medieval Ireland.

It would also be valuable to display more detailed information regarding the historic records of the site; notably the rich resource of the Ordnance Survey records. The exhibition includes some information on the rebuilding of the Grianán of Aileach, by Walter Bernard. It would be good to supplement this with pictures of the pageants that accompanied the opening of the rebuilt cashel in 1879 and the opening of the road and car park in 1955.

The Centre is a great starting point, but in the longer term, if the exhibition were to be expanded, the centre does have some disadvantages; the exhibition is in the upper part of the former church, and spread over five separate levels, all accessed by steep timber stairs. This makes it impractical to convert the exhibition, in its current location, in the Old Church, to provide universal access.

Links to other sites and resources

The Grianán of Aileach does not exist in isolation. Its regional significance is described in detail in Part 5.1. Interpretation of the site should ideally include the context of the origins of the Cenél nÉogain in Inishowen and the later expansion of their kingdom to the south and east. Links could be established with Elagh Castle to the northeast and Tullyhogue (Tulach Óg) to the southeast. These geographical and historic links are integral to the significance and understanding of the site.

Useful links could also be established with the City of Derry in respect of the contribution of Walter Bernard, and also the location of St. Columb's Stone in Belmont House, Greencastle Road, about a mile from Derry City.

There is considerable local interest in the site and it would be valuable to formalise relations with local history groups as well as with the Donegal County Museum in Letterkenny and the Museums and Visitor Service, Derry. There is potential for the sharing of resources, and public lecture series, to expand and promote local interest and knowledge. There is also a potential market for the provision of a small booklet containing a summary history of the Grianán of Aileach.

Telling the story

How information is communicated can be as important as the content. In order to grab and retain the listeners / reader's attention requires skill in the telling. However making the story entertaining should not undermine the authenticity of what is being told.

9.3 Additional research

No archaeological survey of the site has been executed since the Discovery Programme in 1995. A new geophysical survey, using current technology, such as Lidar, would provide information as to the potential for archaeology at the site. Ideally this would extend to the entire hilltop context, beyond the perimeter of the outer ramparts and include the area of the Ancient Road. The survey would then require interpretation by archaeologists, and the findings would inform both the management of, and any alterations to access to, the site, as well as the content of interpretative materials.

At several places in this Conservation Management Plan we have emphasised the importance of the wider landscape, and its evolution, to the setting, interpretation and meaning of the Grianán of Aileach. Liam Campbell of the Lough Neagh Partnership is an environmental historian with knowledge of the landscape around An Grainán and especially the changes to the wetland between Foyle and Swilly. It is recommended that research in this area would enrich the understanding of the monument.

9.4 Guided tours

The OPW are not in a position to employ guides at the site. However should local history groups be interested in providing a guiding service, this could be supported, subject to content, and numbers.

The Grianán of Aileach Implementation Group would be ideally placed to coordinate with local groups, or other initiatives. The content of any tours would be critical. As mentioned before, the telling of the story should be interesting, and may be entertaining, but not at the expense of the authenticity of the content.

There will need to be carefully considered restrictions on both the size of any guided tours (for safety reasons) and the number permitted to be run concurrently (to avoid overly disturbing other visitors).

ACTIONS**Grianan of Aileach Conservation Management Plan**

Legend: target for action

Critical	Urgent	Important	On-going
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Management Actions						
	Action	Policy / Policies	Who	Potential Funding	Target	Indicators
MI	Establish the Grianán of Aileach Implementation Group to oversee the implementation of the policies, and to regularly review and update the Conservation and Management Plan. Group to meet on a regular basis. County Council representative(s) to be responsible for communicating Plan and actions to the relevant council departments. Designate a person responsible for circulating all relevant information to members. Implementation Group to monitor & approve content of information and promotional material, both physical, and on-line. Representative of the group to attend liaison meetings with other bodies, as necessary. Establish cross-border links.	3.1 3.3 3.4 5.1 5.2 5.4 7.1 7.3	OPW: Architect Conservation Heritage Services OPW: NW Works Depot Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, National Monuments Service: District Archaeologist Donegal County Council: Conservation & Heritage Officers,	Donegal County Council to provide venue. OPW Architectural Conservation Heritage Services to provide co-ordinator. No further outside funding essential	Critical	Group established and meeting on a regular basis. Regular communications between members.
M2	Clarify ownership and management of existing car park.	7.4	Donegal County Council	Donegal County Council	Critical	Ownership clarified and formalised.
M3	Continue to close the barrier, when the site is not supervised and during inclement weather.	1.2	OPW / Donegal County Council	OPW / Donegal County Council	Critical	Site closed and opened on time each day.
M4	Engage with adjacent landowners and leasees to address the interface between farm management, the presentation of the monument, access and wildlife issues.	1.3 2.3 4.2 7.3	Landowners Leasees OPW Donegal County Council Implementation Group Ecological consultant	OPW / Donegal County Council	Important	Continuing good agricultural practice at the site.

	Action	Policy / Policies	Who	Potential Funding	Target	Indicators
M5	Continue to keep a record of visitors to the site. Review methodology to give information on dwell time, access method, and reduce multiple counting of individual visitors.	1.2 3.1	OPW	OPW	On-going	Records kept by Implementation Group and shared with Donegal County Council.
M6	Establish a maintenance archive.	2.1 6.1	OPW	OPW	On-going	Records kept by OPW NW Depot and available to Implementation Group when required.
M7	Continue to ensure the monument is supervised and inspected on a daily basis, with all damage or other issues affecting the conservation and maintenance of the monument reported to OPW administration and works departments.	1.2 1.4 2.1 7.2 8.2	OPW	OPW	On-going	Monument in good repair.
M8	Establish a regular programme of field checks of the flora and fauna, monitoring erosion, regeneration and access related impacts. Report to Implementation Group.	1.3 2.4 6.3	Ecological consultant Investigate potential involvement of local voluntary groups.	OPW	Urgent	Regular monitoring on-going
M9	Donegal County Council to make, pass, and enforce, new byelaws to regulate trading at the site	8.2	Donegal County Council	Donegal County Council	Critical	Law passed and enforced
M10	Establish a regular liaison between the Implementation Group, and relevant bodies to review tourism and visitor numbers and their impact on the site.	3.1	Implementation Group Fáilte Ireland Donegal County Council tourism and planning officers An Grianán Hotel.	OPW / Donegal County Council	Urgent	Good communication established.
M11	Establish good communications and relations between those responsible for the site and the local community	3.1 4.1	Grianán of Aileach Implementation Group OPW / DoCHG Donegal County Council		Critical	Conservation Management Plan presented to local community
M12	Control the number and nature of events held at the site.	1.2 3.1	OPW Implementation Group	OPW	Urgent	Information readily available on website and site signage.

	Action	Policy / Policies	Who	Potential Funding	Target	Indicators
M13	Dogs: control of dog behaviour and fouling. Dogs to be kept on leash. Owners to clear up any dog fouling. Dog waste bin to be provided.	1.3	Donegal County Council	Donegal County Council	Urgent	No dog waste. No disturbance of wildlife or visitors by dogs.

Conservation, and Repair Actions

C1	Continue on-going repairs, using only trained and experienced craftspeople, who are aware of the significance of the monument.	1.4 2.1 2.2	OPW	OPW	On-going	Monument in good condition, all works to best practice.
C2	Ensure full records are made of all conservation works.	2.1 6.1	OPW	OPW	On-going	Records kept by OPW NW depot and available to Implementation Group.
C3	Ensure no weedkillers or pesticides are used at the site, the access routes, and lands adjacent to the site. Inform relevant landowners.	1.3	OPW Donegal County Council.	OPW Donegal County Council.	Important	Healthy and diverse habitats. No use of weedkillers
C4	Ensure protection of the wider setting of the monument from unsuitable development, with particular note of skylines.	1.3 8.1	Donegal County Council. DoCHG	Donegal County Council.	On-going	Protection of skylines in County Development Plan. Proposed developments with any impact on the setting referred to DoCHG.
C6	Review route to well, and modify / improve if possible to reduce erosion.	1.1 1.2	OPW Donegal County Council Ecological consultant Implementation Group	OPW	Important	No additional erosion at pathway.
C7	Establish a regular programme of field checks of the flora and fauna, monitoring erosion, regeneration and access related impacts.	1.3 2.4 6.3	Ecological consultant Investigate potential involvement of local voluntary groups.	OPW	Urgent	Regular monitoring on-going

	Action	Policy / Policies	Who	Potential Funding	Target	Indicators
Actions for Access						
A1	Investigate alternative location for additional car parking provisions, and appropriate coach parking provision.	3.4	Implementation Group Donegal County Council Landowners An Grianán Hotel	Potential funders to be investigated: Fáilte Ireland, Donegal County Council, EU bodies, Cross border bodies	Urgent	Feasibility process underway
A2	Investigate potential to develop walking routes to the site, from nearest public transport	3.3 4.1	Implementation Group Donegal County Council Landowners An Grianán Hotel	Potential funders to be investigated: Fáilte Ireland, Donegal County Council, EU bodies, Cross border bodies	Important	Feasibility process underway
A3	Investigate extension of walking routes around the site.	1.1 1.3 3.3 4.1	Implementation Group OPW	OPW	Important	Feasibility process underway
A4	Improvements to road access, adjacent roads and junctions.	3.5	Donegal County Council	Donegal County Council		Donegal County Council internal assessment underway.
A5	Carry out a review of Signage at the site. Design and install new signage installations to provide accurate and enlightening information for visitors while ensuring no negative impact on the presentation of the historic site. Ensure signage includes interpretation of historic landscape, and links to related sites: Tullyhogue, Inishowen etc.	1.1 1.2 1.3 3.1 3.2 5.2 5.3	OPW, DoCHG: District Archaeologist Implementation Group With co-operation of Cross border bodies	OPW Donegal County Council Fáilte Ireland Cross border bodies	Urgent	New signage in place

	Action	Policy / Policies	Who	Potential Funding	Target	Indicators
A6	Review route to well, and modify / improve if possible to reduce erosion.	1.3	OPW Donegal County Council Ecological consultant Implementation Group	OPW	Important	No additional erosion at pathway.

Actions for Facilitating Research, Information, Understanding, Interpretation

U1	Commission LIDAR survey of the entire mountaintop	1.1 6.2	OPW / Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.	Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.	Critical	Survey completed and interpreted
U2	Establish Grianán of Aileach page on the OPW website providing information on opening times, byelaws, events, parking, access etc.	1.2 3.1 5.4	OPW Implementation Group	OPW	Urgent	Webpage, up and running and regularly updated.
U3	Establish communication with the An Grianán Hotel. Explore potential to develop exhibition, etc.	5.1	Implementation Group An Grianán Hotel	Fáilte Ireland Donegal County Council EU / Cross border bodies	On-going	Regular communication with Implementation Group
U4	Relationship with local history groups	5.1 5.2	Implementation Group	OPW	Important	Regular communication with Implementation Group
U5	Establish a regular programme of field checks of the flora and fauna, monitoring erosion, regeneration and access related impacts.	1.3 2.3 6.3	Ecological consultant Potential involvement of local voluntary groups.	OPW	Urgent	Regular monitoring on-going

Actions for Enhancement

E1	Review modern field boundaries, with a view to improving the presentation and biodiversity of the site.	1.3 4.2	OPW Leasees Implementation Group	OPW	Important	Feasibility process underway
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Appendix A: Species list from walkover survey for habitat classification purposes with assessment of frequency (DAFOR) (note: this list is not exhaustive).

Common name	Scientific name	Wet heath HH3	Stone Fort BL3	Grassland GS3	Scrub WS1	Grass verge GS2
Trees and scrub						
Eared willow	<i>Salix aurita</i>				F	
Gorse	<i>Ulex gallii</i>				F	
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>				O	
Herbs						
Ling heather	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	D				O
Bell heather	<i>Erica cinerea</i>	F				
Cross leaved heath	<i>Erica tetralix</i>	F				O
Bilberry	<i>Vaccinium myrtillus</i>	O				O
Tormentil	<i>Potentilla erecta</i>	F				
Bog asphodel	<i>Narthecium ossifragum</i>	O - A				
Devils bit scabious	<i>Succisa pratensis</i>	O				O
Lousewort	<i>Pedicularis sylvatica</i>	O				O
Heath milkwort	<i>Polygala serpyllifolia</i>	F				
Heath bedstraw	<i>Gallium saxatile</i>	O		O		F
Sorrel	<i>Rumex spp.</i>		F	F		O
Ribwort plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>		F	O		F
Clover	<i>Trifolium spp</i>		F	F		A
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>		F	F		O
Acaena ¹	<i>Acaena spp</i>		A			
Creeping buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>			A		
St John's wort	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>					R
Common knapweed	<i>Centaurea nigra</i>					F
Common birds foot trefoil	<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>					O
Violet	<i>Viola spp.</i>					O
Self heal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>					O
Thistle	<i>Cirsium spp.</i>					O
Wild angelica	<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>					O
Fairy flax	<i>Linum catharticum</i>					O

Common name	Scientific name	Wet heath HH3	Stone Fort BL3	Grassland GS3	Scrub WS1	Grass verge GS2
Grasses, sedges, rushes						
Purple Moor grass	<i>Molinia caerulea</i>	F				O
Wavy hair grass	<i>Deschampsia flexuosa</i>	O				
Hare's tail cotton grass	<i>Eriophorum vaginatum</i>	O				
Common cotton grass	<i>Eriophorum angustifolium</i>	O				
Deer grass	<i>Trichophorum germanicum</i>	F				
Heath Rush	<i>Juncus squarrosus</i>	O				
Green-ribbed sedge	<i>Carex binervis</i>	O				
Other carex sedges	<i>Carex spp.</i>	O				
Fescue	<i>Festuca spp</i>		F	F		
Sweet vernal	<i>Anthoxatum odoratum</i>		F	F		A
Bent grass	<i>Agrostis spp.</i>		F	F		
Meadow grass	<i>Poa spp.</i>			F		
Crested dogs tail	<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>		F	F		
Cock's foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>		F	F		F
Perennial Rye grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>		F	F		
Yorkshire fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>			F		O
Mosses, lichens						
	<i>Polytrichum spp</i>		F			
	<i>Spaghnum spp</i>	F				
Cladonia lichens	<i>Cladonia spp</i>	O				
Ferns						
Bracken	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>				O	
Common polypody	<i>Polypody vulgare</i>		A			
Hard fern	<i>Blechnum spiccant</i>	R				O

¹ Introduced plant native to New Zealand and South Africa (*Acaena ovalifolia* is listed as a medium impact invasive/non native species by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (Flynn et al, 2014))

Source: O'Flynn, C., Kelly, J. and Lysaght, L. (2014). Ireland's invasive and non-native species – trends in introductions. National Biodiversity Data Centre Series No. 2. Ireland

Appendix B: Animals recorded during walkover survey (note: a systematic survey was not undertaken)

Common Name	Scientific name	Status
Irish Hare	<i>Lepus timidus hibernicus</i>	<i>Red listed of Least Concern</i> ¹
Meadow pipit	<i>Anthus pratensis</i>	<i>Amber Listed (medium conservation concern)</i> ²
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	<i>Amber Listed (medium conservation concern)</i> ²
Lesser Redpoll	<i>Carduelis flammea cabaret</i>	<i>Green Listed (medium conservation concern)</i> ²
Linnet	<i>Carduelis cannabina</i>	<i>Amber Listed (medium conservation concern)</i> ²
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	<i>Amber Listed (medium conservation concern)</i> ²
Buzzard	<i>Buteo buteo</i>	<i>Green Listed (medium conservation concern)</i> ²

1. Marnell, F., Kingston, N. & Looney, D. (2009) Ireland Red List No. 3: Terrestrial Mammals, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Dublin, Ireland.

2. Colhoun, K. & S. Cummins. 2013. Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland 2014-2019. Irish Birds 9, 523-544.

APPENDIX C

ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO VEHICULAR ACCESS & PARKING

Alternatives for vehicular Access

A combination of the alternatives below may provide the optimum response to access

Provision	Advantages: Site management & visitor experience	Disadvantages: Site management & visitor experience	Traffic management & road safety issues	Impact on the significance & setting of the monument	Other comments
<p>I. Current provision Car park, c. 120m from the cashel. Space for c. 20 cars</p> <p>No WCs. Barrier at bottom of lane to close off site at night.</p> <p>No footpath access to the site from potential public transport routes.</p>	<p>Management: Only one car park to be managed.</p> <p>Continuation of current regime; can be tweaked with no need to assess impact or develop management of new provisions.</p> <p>The monument can be accessed by those with limited mobility and pushchairs.</p>	<p>Management: Ease of access by private car may facilitate the occurrence of littering, vandalism etc.</p> <p>Clearing the car park at dusk can be challenging with the access gate remote from the car park</p> <p>Visitor Experience: The walk to the monument is so brief that some of the impact of the location is lost.</p> <p>No opportunity for longer walks or alternative views or routes to the cashel.</p>	<p>Narrow steep access road, without passing places. Poor provision for walkers to the site.</p> <p>Road to car park unsuitable for coaches.</p> <p>Insufficient parking provision for growth in numbers of visitors.</p>	<p>Access route that bears no resemblance to original route detracts from the presentation of the monument.</p> <p>Impossible to provide toilets or refreshment facilities without an unacceptable visual impact on the setting of the monument, the natural habitats, and potentially archaeology.</p>	<p>The current provision dates from the 1950s. Much has changed since then, and it is appropriate to address access to the site in the light of current attitudes to sustainability, access to motor vehicles, interest in walking and cycling, and trends in tourism, as well as in the context of the recognised significance of the site and its environment</p>

Alternatives for vehicular Access

A combination of the alternatives below may provide the optimum response to access

Provision	Advantages: Site management & visitor experience	Disadvantages: Site management & visitor experience	Traffic management & road safety issues	Impact on the significance & setting of the monument	Other comments
<p>2. New Car Park at base of access lane. Potential for WC and tea cabin provision, without undue impact on setting of the Grianán of Aileach.</p> <p>Vehicular access up lane to upper car park for blue badge holders, staff, emergency and other authorised vehicles only. Possible new pedestrian access through OPW owned field, subject to agreement with leasees. Routes may follow the existing road (improved for shared vehicular and pedestrian use), routes of old paths indicated on historic maps, townland boundaries, historic field boundaries or establish new route, zigzagging up contours. Occasional seating to be provided along the route.</p>	<p>Management: Reduction in proximity of car park could reduce littering, vandalism etc.</p> <p>Visitor Experience: The walk to the monument becomes part of the experience. Those with limited mobility can still use car park.</p> <p>Better services can be provided without negatively impacting on the setting of the monument.</p> <p>Space could be provided for coach parking.</p>	<p>Management: How to control access to upper car park.</p> <p>Management of expectations</p> <p>Visitor Experience: The walk to the monument may be challenging for some who are not badge holders, due to the steepness of the ascent, if not the length of the walk.</p> <p>If bad weather comes in while at the site there is no speedy escape to a dry vehicle.</p> <p>Change: for those who are regular visitors such a radical change may be unpopular.</p>	<p>Review suitability of road from N13 to proposed new car park for coaches.</p>	<p>No extension of hard surface at the top of Greenane mountain.</p> <p>No major works required to existing access lane.</p> <p>Visitors who are able to walk up the hill have a more authentic experience of the site and its meaning.</p>	<p>Walk is 4-5 times the current length of walk to monument.</p> <p>Other stone forts such as Leacanabuaile and Cahergal in Kerry both involve about a 500m walk in along farm tracks. The walk from the car park to and Dún Aonghasa, in the Aran Islands is over a kilometre.</p> <p>Guided mini-bus tours could be provided by a local operator offering parking at An Grianán Hotel, entry to exhibition and transport to the site (including to the upper car park for those who cannot manage the walk.</p>

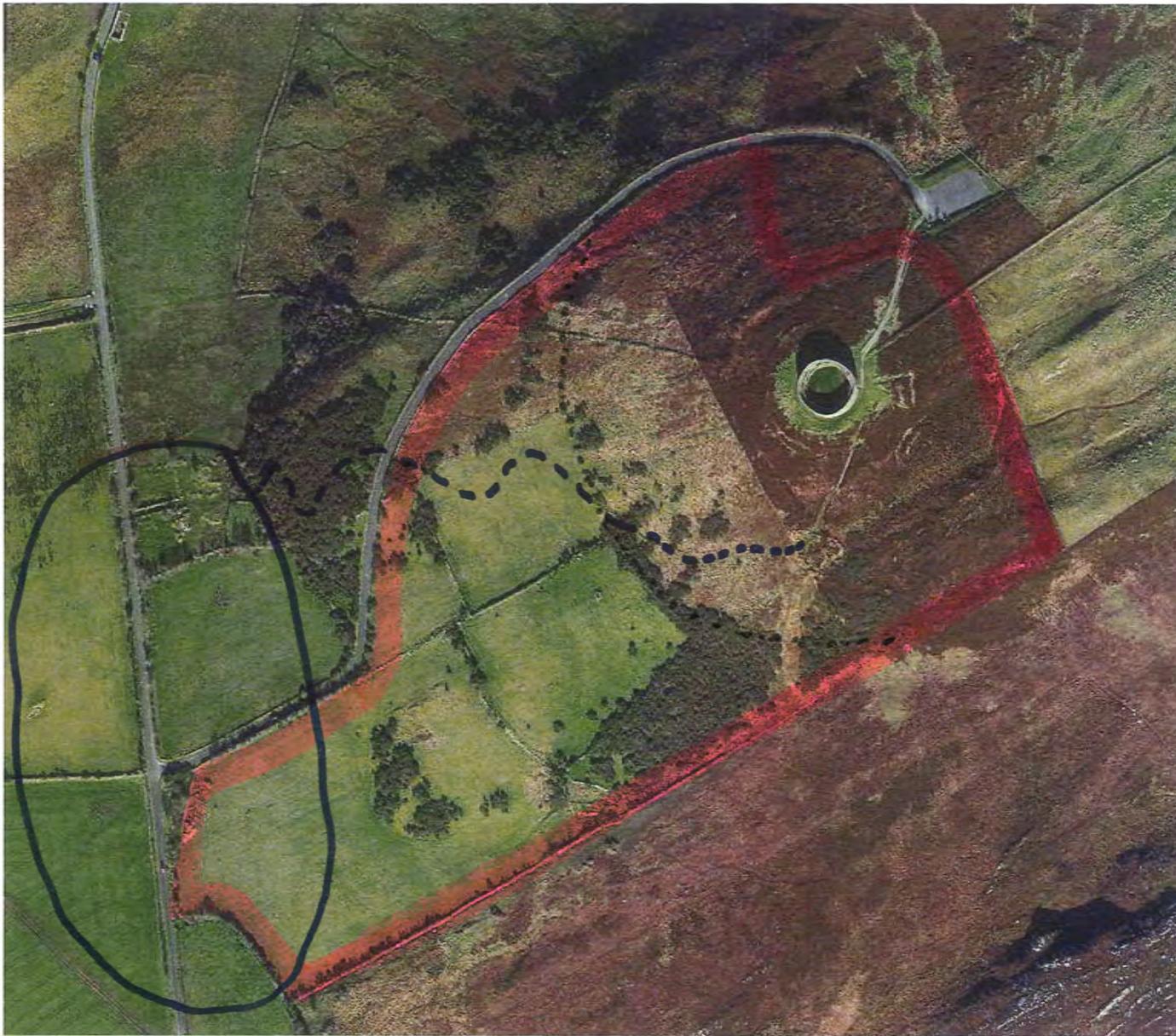
Grianán of Aileach Conservation Management Plan

Appendix C

Alternatives for vehicular Access

A combination of the alternatives below may provide the optimum response to access

Provision	Advantages: Site management & visitor experience	Disadvantages: Site management & visitor experience	Traffic management & road safety issues	Impact on the significance & setting of the monument	Other comments
<p>3. Parking at An Grianán Hotel</p> <p>Coach parking, and alternative car parking located at An Grianán Hotel, with shuttlebus / mini-bus access to the monument.</p> <p>Electric bicycles could be offered as an alternative.</p> <p>Potential for development of all-in experience including exhibition, guided tour and transport to the monument.</p>	<p>No need to increase parking provision near to the site</p>	<p>Management: Commercialisation of visitor experience</p> <p>Visitor Experience: Commercialisation of visitor experience</p>		<p>None.</p>	<p>Requires a local operator to be interested in making the investment and taking the risk on the viability of a mini-bus service link.</p> <p>If a footpath was established all the way from the hotel to the Grianán of Aileach</p>



Boundary of state ownership



Level land suitable for additional parking (Subject to planning application)



Line of historic footpath



Preferred alignment of site boundary for a more organic hill top site



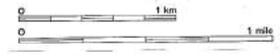
Sheet No. 3533. Revised in 1905.

Scales		Distances	
1 inch = 100 yds.	1 centimetre = 1000 yds.	1 mile = 1760 yds.	1 kilometre = 1093 yds.
1 inch = 254 centimetres	1 centimetre = 2.54 inches	1 mile = 1.609 kilometres	1 kilometre = 0.621 miles

G.P.O.
 ANTHROPOLOGICAL
 SURVEY
 OF IRELAND

Sites & Monuments Record—Archaeological Constraint Map
 The area outlined on this map is designed to give the approximate location of all archaeological sites and monuments. They are not to be taken as indicating their precise location or boundaries on the ground.

Description of map
 1905
 Date of 1st ed. etc.
 September, 1901



I. List of sites included in the RMP (Record of Monuments and Places) within a ca. 4km radius of Grianán Aileach

The table also includes a number of other sites (e.g Burt castle) mentioned in the main text. Descriptions based on the RMP data and the Archaeological Survey of County Donegal (Lacey et al 1982).

RMP no.	Townland	Site class	Description	Distance & direction from Grianán Aileach	National Grid Ref
DG047-001	Dundrean	Ringfort, unclassified	No visible trace of single-ringed 'Fort' marked on 1st ed. of OS 6-inch map. It was situated in pasture on a hill overlooking Dundrean Fort (DG047-002)	4.5 NE	236342/420005
DG047-002	Dundean	Ringfort, rath	Bivallate rath shown on 1st and 2nd editions of OS. Only inner bank survives. Fort built on adapted natural hillock. Int. Diam 31.7m. Overlooks marshland (now a nature reserve).	4.5m NE	236721/420184
DG047-003	Castlecooly	Ringfort, unclassified	No visible trace of the single-ringed 'Fort' marked on all editions of the OS six-inch maps.	2.2km to WNW	23863/41848
DG047-004001	Moness	Souterrain	Souterrain found in graveyard in 1982; investigated by OPW (NMS) staff. Consisted of two chambers set at right angles and linked by creepway. Portion of quern found in wall.	2km NW	235192/420907
DG047-005	Carrownamaddy	Souterrain	L-shaped souterrain said to have been 12ft long; roofed with flagstones Swan (1949, 120) noted that 'over a dozen' souterrains had been reported in this general area and refers to descriptions of several others located near the base of Greenan Mt.	1.5m N	236738/421257
DG047-006	Bunnamayne	Standing stone	The 'Standing Stone' marked on the OS 6-inch maps was destroyed in the late 20th century. It was situated on a slight rise close to a tributary of the R. Skeage.	3km to NE	239367/421208
DG047-007	Bunnamayne	Ringfort, rath	A circular platform, 0.5m high x 28.8m in diameter, is all that survives of the single-banked 'Fort' marked on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map. Situated on the highest point of a grazing field.	3.3km NE	24008/421097
DG047-013	Bunnamayne	Ringfort, rath	An oval area 28.8m NE-SW and 35.8m NW-SE is suggested by the outline of a bank .5m high externally but level with the interior. Situated at the highest point of a grazing field.	2.5km E	238695/419970

RMP no.	Townland	Site class	Description	Distance & direction from Grianán Aileach	National Grid Ref
DG047-014	Bunnamayne	Cist	Rectangular slab-lined cist (22in × 13in and 12in deep) contained two food vessels and cremated remains. It was located on the crest of Bunnamayne Hill.	4km ENE	239514/420494
DG047-003	Castlecooly	Ringfort, unclassified	There is no sign of the single-ringed 'Fort' marked on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map. It was situated on flat land sloping slightly N to Lough Swilly	3.2km to W	234284/420530
DG047-008	Castlecooly	Ringfort, unclassified	There is no sign of the single-ringed 'Fort' marked on the 1st edition of the OS six-inch map. It was situated on a low hillock in well cultivated land.	3.2km to W	233465/419624
DG047-009001	Toulett	Cairn, unclassified	A trigonometrical station (201m) seems to have been built from the remains of a cairn 12.4m × 13.8m, the perimeter of which is still traceable. Situated on the highest point of an E-W ridge in mountain terrain dominated to the E by Greenan mountain.	1.5km to WSW	235384/419524
DG047-009002	Toulett	Cross-inscribed stone	Stone (1m by 0.75m) inscribed with small plain cross and modern graffiti. The stone lies at the SSE side of the cairn (DG047-009001).	1.5km to WSW	235386/419516
DG047-010	Speenoge	Standing stone	There is no trace of the standing stone marked on the 1st edition of the OS six-inch map.	400m to NW	236342/420005
DG047-011	Speenoge	Standing stone	A standing stone, leaning to E, and ca. 1m high × 1.4m wide × 0.27m thick. Situated in rough terrain on the crest of a ridge on N face of Greenan Mt..	400m to NNE	236721/420184
DG047-012001	An Cheathrú Riabhach, Speenoge, Toulett	Ringfort, cashel	Central cashel at Grianán Aileach	---	236654/419754
DG047-012002	Toulett	Cairn, burial cairn	Cairn or mound at Grianán Aileach	---	236712/419713
DG047-012003	Toulett	Ritual site, holy well	St. Patrick's Well at Aileach	---	236629/419704
DG047-012004	Toulett	Road / trackway	Road leading through outer defences at Grianan Aileach	---	236725/419754

RMP no.	Townland	Site class	Description	Distance & direction from Grianán Aileach	National Grid Ref
DG047-012005	An Cheathrú Riabhach, Speenoge, Toulett	Hillfort	Hillfort: two pairs of enclosing banks each pair possibly separated by a ditch, surround the central cashel at Grianan Aileach	---	236654/419749
DG047-012006	Toulett	Penal mass station	Rectangular stone building inside the cashel at Grianan Aileach, removed in nineteenth century	---	236654/419749
DG047-018	Gortlush	Cist	A cist grave uncovered by ploughing consisted of a pit, 0.56m deep, the bottom lined with small stones and covered by a slab, 50cm × 33cm. A cordoned urn placed in the pit contained the remains of two adults and a child. The cist lay near the limit of cultivation on the SW slope of Bogay Hill (Ó Ríordáin 1935, 171-3).	3.4km to SW	234521/417332
DG047-019	Portlough	Megalithic tomb – unclass.	Named 'Standing Stones' on the Fair Plan, but marked as 'Giant's Grave' on the published OS 6-inch map (1846-8). Two upright stones over 9m apart and 1.2m in height were noted by the OS in 1846. The designation 'Giant's Grave (Site of)' on the 1905 edition of the OS six-inch map indicates that the stones had been removed by then. No trace of any features visible presently and the evidence to indicate that the monument was a megalithic tomb is slight.	3.2km to SSW	234892/416986
DG047-020001	Altaghaderry	Ritual site, holy well	See DG047-02003	4km to SSE	238553/416983
DG047-020002	Altaghaderry	Cairn, unclassified	Cairn of earth and stones 1m high, surrounded by an earth and stone bank with an overall diameter of 15m. A mound of stones on top of the cairn is probably the remains of a trigonometrical station. Situated on the summit of Holy Well Hill in mountain terrain on the border with County Derry	4km to SSE	238553/416983
DG047-020003	Altaghaderry	Cist	Slightly W of the highest point of the cairn (DG047-002003), is a stone slab-lined grave 1.5m N-S by 0.85m E-W. It is tilting inwards under pressure from the cairn. Regarded as a holy well locally.	4km to SSE	238553/416983

RMP no.	Townland	Site class	Description	Distance & direction from Grianán Aileach	National Grid Ref
DG047-021	Bohullion Upper	Cist grave	Short cist containing a cremation and two bowls uncovered by ploughing in 1984. The cremated remains of an adult and juvenile ca. five years old had been placed on the floor. The ribbed (1984:129) and constricted (1984:130) bowls were both well-preserved. A sample of carbonate produced a radiocarbon date of 2210 to 1920 cal. BC at 95% probability (GrA-1461, 3680±50BP; Cahill and Sikora 2011, Vol 1, 116-120).	3.5km to WSW	233962/418885
DG046-015001	Grange (Burt ED)	Tower House	Three-storey keep with circular towers at the NE and SW corners. The presence of multiple gun-loops suggests a date in the later 16th century. This tallies well with the historical evidence; the earliest known reference to the castle is in a grant of lands to Sir John O'Doherty in 1587. In 1601 Burt Castle was described as O'Dohertys 'chief hold, nowe in possession of one Hugh Boye.' After the revolt of Cahir O'Doherty in 1608, and the Plantation of Ulster, the castle and lands were leased to Thomas Chichester, who in 1611, 'hath rebuylded Byrte Castle, and erected a large house of stone within the bawne and two houses of timber without the bawne'. When built the castle stood on an isolated hill bounded by Lough Swilly on the W, S and E and by a bog on the N; much of the surrounding land has now been reclaimed.	5km to W	231882/419245
DG046-015002	Grange (Burt ED)	Hilltop enclosure	The hilltop at Burt Castle was enclosed by a rampart and external fosse. The fosse was of 'extraordinary dimensions' in 1833 (McLoughlin, 1833-4, 92) and could still be traced in 1938 (Davies and Swan 1939, 190). It has been almost completely ploughed out and is visible now only as a slight depression. The rampart has also been removed; a small stretch of bank may be incorporated in modern field walls. The enclosure seems likely to be associated with the late medieval castle and may be the bawn referred to in 1611.	5km to W	231882/419245
DG046-015003	Grange (Burt ED)	Bawn	Referred to but not described in early 17th century sources (see DG046-015001 and 2).	5km to W	231882/419245

RMP no.	Townland	Site class	Description	Distance & direction from Grianán Aileach	National Grid Ref
DG046-015004	Grange (Burt ED)	House 16th / 17th century	One of two houses of timber built 'without the bawne' of Burt Castle' (see DG046-015001).	5km to W	231882/419245
DG046-015005	Grange (Burt ED)	House 16th / 17th century	One of two houses of timber built 'without the bawne' of Burt Castle' (see DG046-015001).	5km to W	231882/419245
DG046-016	Grange (Burt ED)	Souterrain	Situated in a field east of the Burt Castle complex; access is now blocked. On the first edition OS six-inch map a small agglomeration of long houses lay a short distance to the west.	4.7km to W	232240/419360

2. Townlands for which a search was conducted in the Topographic files in the National Museum of Ireland.

Townland	NMI reg. no.	Class of site	Description	Find circumstances
Carrowreagh	1971:1015	-	Flint scraper of 'C' shape and roughly trapezoidal in cross section. Heavily patinated along 'back' thickness. Traces of secondary working can be seen along the more convex of the broad surfaces which leads to the 'C' shaped scraping edge. Maximum L. 3.75cm; W. 2.1cm; T. 6.25mm.	Found near St. Patrick's Well at An Grianán. Gift of Miss Anne Hamlyn, Dept. of History, University of Exeter.
Bunnamayne	PI950:19, 20 and 21	Bronze Age burial	Human bone and two Tripartite vases	See DG047-014
Bohullion Upper	1984:130, 131 and 132	Bronze Age burial	Uncovered during ploughing & investigated in 1984.	See DG047-021
Bohullion or Glack	1944:854	Unknown	Bronze dagger with horn handle	Found 'at depth of 8 feet in bog'.
Gortlush	1934:5625 & 6	Bronze Age burial	Uncovered during ploughing & investigated in 1984. See DG047-018	Found near limit of cultivation on SW slope of Bogay Hill, Gortlush
Speenogue	No results			
Toulett	No results			
Castlecooly;	No results			
Moness	No results			
Carrownamaddy	No results			
Lisfannan	No results			
Bogay Glebe	No results			
Drumbarnet	No results			

3. Excavation Licenses taken out for archaeological investigations / monitoring at Grianán Aileach

2003

License No. 03E:0996 , Christopher Read (Excavations Bulletin 2003:434)
Monitoring of demolition works required to stabilise the cashel wall prior to reconstruction. The monitoring focussed on an 8m long portion of the cashel's west-facing wall that had collapsed and included sifting through the collapse for archaeological materials or artefacts. In the course of sifting through the collapsed material and the removal of demolished portions, a considerable amount of modern debris and rubbish was recovered. This included cigarette butts and crisp bags, indicating that most of the collapsed/demolished material was part of recent repair work. This was confirmed by the OPW workers and engineer, who were very familiar with the site and the extent of recent works. In one small portion of the wall, at the centre of the collapsed section, 0.9m in from the wall's outer edge and roughly 0.5m above the external ground level, some 19th-century finds, including bottle glass and a clay-pipe stem, were retrieved. It is likely that these finds date to the original reconstruction of the cashel in the 1870s. No portion of the cashel's original construction was encountered or indeed impacted upon by either the collapse or the demolition. No archaeological features or finds were revealed during the course of the monitoring.

2004-2007

License No. 04E1281 Declan Moore (Excavations Bulletin 2004:387)
License No. 04E1281ext Declan Moore (Excavations Bulletin 2006:444)
License No. 04E1281ext Declan Moore (Excavations Bulletin 2007:349)

Full details in Report on the Supervision of Conservation Works 2004-2007, unpublished report Moore Group. 2008.

2016

2016:177 Carrowreagh. Richard Crumlish. License No. C583; E4485 Excavations Bulletin 2016:177

Monitoring of groundworks adjacent to the visitor car park was carried out on 8 November 2016. The project involved the replacement by the OPW of a field gate and stile with a new gate. The proposed works were located 12m from the southern corner of the visitor car park along an access road, which leads from the car park to the cashel. As the gate posts and stile were set in concrete a mini-digger was used in their removal. The excavation for the new bases for the replacement gate posts was carried out by hand. The two pits excavated measured 0.4m square and 0.3-0.5m deep. The excavation revealed modern disturbance associated with the existing stile and field gate, over peat and bedrock. No artefacts were recovered from either pit. Nothing of archaeological significance was in evidence.

4. Excavation Licenses taken out for archaeological investigations / monitoring in the general area of Grianán Aileach

Townland : Carrownamaddy. 236738 /421257 License no. 97E0120. R. Ó Baoill & P. Logue, . Site type :Environs of souterrain .The following summary is from Excavations Bulletin 1997:063.

An archaeological assessment was carried out at Carrownamaddy townland, Burt, Co. Donegal, on 23 April 1997, of a field containing a partially uncovered souterrain, in order that any associated archaeological remains might be brought to the attention of the planning authority prior to a decision being made on the erection of a house within the field. The souterrain is located in the south-west corner of the field, where ground level is slightly higher than elsewhere. As first observed, a small portion of the eastern passage wall was visible at the extreme south-east end of the exposed souterrain. Several courses of drystone walling, to a depth of approximately 0.4m below modern field level, were recorded. At the other side of this, part of the monuments' collapsed capstones overlay the western wall, which was not visible but could be located by hand.

Further along the souterrain to the north, two in situ lintel stones were exposed to a length of 0.8m and 0.5m respectively. Several disturbed capstones were also noted. The method of roofing appeared to be a double course of capstones set on slight corbelling. These were in turn covered with smaller stones and a gravelly soil deposit. Above this level, was an extremely thin depth of topsoil, a mixture of the gravel, turf and grass.

The souterrain seems to have a drop-creep entrance, located at the extreme north-east of the visible monument. This appeared as two substantial sidestones demarcating a roughly square depression in the souterrain mound. The passage appeared to narrow before turning and widening out towards the hedge-line

(the western limit of the development site). Where the capstones survive, in situ, the passage appeared to be approximately 1.1m wide. Further along, at the point where the walling was exposed, the passage appeared to be roughly 1.3m wide. No visible habitation structures associated with the souterrain were located and the full extent of the monument could not be clearly defined.

In the course of the assessment seven trenches, all roughly 2m wide, were excavated by a mixture of machine and manually, along the line of the proposed driveway of the house (east of the souterrain) as far as the location of the proposed garage and septic tank. Six of these were excavated parallel to each other, roughly east-west, across the southern half of the field. The trenches varied in length from 34m to 40m. The seventh trench, 20m long, was excavated along the western field boundary, north of the souterrain.

Nothing of archaeological significance was observed in any of the trenches apart from Trench 2. Here, at the western end of the cutting and some 12m east of the souterrain, were uncovered two deposits within a shallow cut. A sherd of late medieval pottery was recovered in one of the cut fills, along with burnt bone and slag. Given the presence of these, it may be that the area was used for metalworking in the late medieval period. It is unlikely that this activity was contemporary with the souterrain usage. A zone of potential archaeological sensitivity around the souterrain was recommended as a result of the assessment and was incorporated into the planning condition for the proposed development.

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