

EARTHEN BANKS AND BROKEN WALLS

OUR LEGACY OF ANCIENT MONUMENTS



1 INTRODUCTION

The Irish countryside is unique in Europe in the number of upstanding ancient monuments that survive from past ages. These range from 6,000-year-old megalithic tombs to earthen ringforts, of early medieval date, to castles, churches and other buildings of more recent date. They are a wonderful link to the past and are to be found in almost every townland in the country. Often a monument has given its name to the townland and many are imbued with local history and tradition. They are important features in the cultural landscape and when a monument is destroyed part of our history and identity is destroyed with it. This valuable legacy from the past is something we should all strive to understand, cherish and protect.

The emphasis in this exhibition is on monuments likely to be found on farmland and in private ownership around the country rather than on National Monuments in state care.

All photographs by Con Brogan, Senior Photographer, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government unless otherwise indicated. Text by Con Manning, Senior Archaeologist.

Tá tuath na hÉireann éagsúil ó gach áit eile san Eoraip maidir leis an méid stádbomharthaí seasta drua a mhaireann ó aoiseanna atá imithe tharainn. Ina measc tá tuamaí meigilíotacha atá 6,000 bliain d'aois agus ráthanna cré a bhaineann leis na meánaoiseanna, caisleán, séipéil agus foirgintí eile nach bhfaíl chomh sean éanna. Is ceangal iontach iad leis an am a chuaigh thart agus tá siad le fáil i mbeagnach gach baile fearainn sa tír. Go minic, bíonn bailte fearainn ainmnithe as stádbomharthaí agus bíonn go leor de na stádbomharthaí fite fuaite sa stair agus sna traidisiúin áitiúla. Is géithe tábhartacha iad sa tírdheacht cultúrtha agus nuair a dhéantar stádbomhartha a scrios, déantar scrios ar chuid dár stair agus dár bhféiniúlacht freisin. Is oidhreacht luachmhar iad ón am atá caite agus ní mór dúinn go léir ár ndícheall a dhéanamh iad a thuisct, a chumbadhach agus a chosaint.

Sa taispeántas seo cuirtear béim ar shádbomharthaí atá ar thalamh feirmeacha agus ag áineirí príobháideacha ar fud na tíre, seachas Stádbomharthaí Náisiúnta atá faoi chosaint an stáit.

2 Megalithic Tombs

The oldest archaeological monuments in Ireland are megalithic (large-stone) tombs, in which the remains of our remote ancestors were buried together with pottery and items of flint, stone and bone. There are four main classes of megalithic tombs but the oldest two, dating mainly from c. 4000 to 3000 BC, are the portal tombs and the court tombs. Portal tombs have been so named because two tall portal stones flanked the entrance to the chamber.

Court tombs derive their name from an open court in front of the tomb entrance. These tombs were normally covered by long cairns (mounds) of stone and are mostly confined to the northern half of the country.



Some court tombs have a central open court with burial chambers opening off the narrow ends as here at Deer Park or Magheranourah, Co. Sligo. The loose stones of the long cairn have been robbed in this case, leaving only the larger structural stones of the court and rectangular burial chambers.



Portal tombs, with their large capstones, can be very striking, like this example at Kilknooney More, Co. Donegal.

Is tuamaí meigilíotacha (clocha móra) iad na stádbomharthaí seandálaíochta is sine in Éirinn. Chuirtear iontu taise ar sinsear i bhfad amach in éineacht le potaireacht agus rudaí déanta as cloch thine, cloch agus cnamha. Tá ceithre phríomhchineál tuamaí meigilíotacha ann ach is tuamaí ursanacha agus tuamaí cúirte iad an dá chineál is sine. Baiceann siad go príomha leis an tréimhse c. 4000-3000 RC. Tuamaí ursanacha a thugtar orthu mar gheall ar an dá chloch arda ursanacha a bhíonn ar dhá thaobh an bhealaí isteach chun an tseomra.

Tá tuamaí cúirte ainmnithe as an gcúirt oscailte chun tosaigh ar bhealach isteach an tuama. De ghnáth bhíodh na tuamaí seo clúdaíte le cairn fhada de chlocha agus tá siad le fáil go mór mhór ó thuaidh.

3 Megalithic Tombs

Some of our best-known megalithic tombs are passage tombs such as Newgrange and these often remain fully buried beneath circular cairns of stones, with a passage leading to the burial chamber. They are found often on hilltops and generally occur in groups, known as cemeteries. One of the oldest surviving forms of art or decoration in Ireland is found on structural stones in some of these tombs, which date from around 3500-2500 BC.

Wedge tombs get their name from the fact that the chamber is frequently wedge-shaped in both plan and profile. Excavation has shown that these tombs date from the transition period between the Stone Age and the Bronze Age in Ireland (2500-2000 BC)



This wedge tomb at Altar, Co. Cork illustrates well the wedge-shape of these monuments. The townland name in this case is derived from the tomb, referred to in the past as an altar.

4 BARROWS AND CIST BURIALS

A barrow is a burial mound and these were constructed and/or used at different times between the Neolithic and the Iron Age. Many had a ditch and external bank around them and these are known as ringbarrows. In some cases the area enclosed is flat or only slightly raised. The burials within them can be either cremated or unburnt and are found in cists (box-like constructions formed of stone flags) or pits beneath or within the mound.

Cist burials can also be found individually or in small cemeteries without any mound or enclosing element and often contain pottery vessels dating from the Early Bronze Age.



A cist discovered at Liscooley, Co. Donegal, with the capstone removed to one side. The remains of a crouched burial can be seen within the cist.



Small ringbarrows, such as this example at Cooga, Co. Tipperary, could be difficult to recognise in long grass and virtually impossible to spot from the ground if they have been ploughed over.

Is éard atá i gcéist le barra nó cairn adhlactha agus thágtai a leithéid agus nó bhainti úsáid astu ag amanta difriúla idir an Aois Neolítach agus an Aois Iarainn. Bhíodh díog agus banc cré eachtrach thart ar chuid mhór acu. Barrat fainneacha a thugtar orthu. I gcásanna áirithe tá an talamh atá timpeallaithe cotrom nó ardaithe beagáin. D'fheallfadh gur taise créamtha nó neamhdhóite atá curtha iontu agus bíonn siad i gcéist (rudaí cosúil le boscaí déanta as leacacha cloiche) nó i bpoill thíos faoi nó taobh istigh den charrn.

Bíonn adhlacthaí cisti le feiceáil ina n-aonar nó i reiligi beoga gan aon charrn nó aon rud eile timpeall orthu agus go minic bíonn sábhá postadóiríochta iontu ón gCré-Umbaois Luath.

5 Standing stones and stone circles

Single standing stones were erected for different purposes at different times in the past. Some marked burials; others marked boundaries or served some commemorative or ritual function. Some standing stones have Ogham inscriptions dating from the fourth to the seventh centuries AD, which commemorate individuals of that time. Ogham is an alphabet formed of strokes carved on the edge of a stone and these inscriptions are the oldest record of the Irish language.

Stone circles of five or more upright stones, found in certain parts of the country, were used for ritual and/or burial purposes, and were sometimes aligned on important astronomical events and date from the Bronze Age.



An Ogham-inscribed standing stone at Derrynane, Co. Kerry.

Togadh clocha seasta singil ar chúiseanna éagsúla ag amanta difriúla san am atá caite. Comharthaí adhlacthaí a bhí i gcuid acu, léirigh cinn eile teonainneacha nó bhíodh feidhm chomórtha agus dheaghnách ag baint leo. Tá Ogham greanta ar chuid de na clocha seasta a bhaineann leis an tréimse idir an ceathrú agus an seachtú haois AD, agus comórnán siad doaine áirithe ón tréimse sin. Is aibitir i Ogham de líne greanta in imcail cloiche agus is tad na scríbhinní seo an tairfid is sine den Ghraicéig.

Tá ciorcail chloiche le cáig chloch sheasta nó níos mó le fáil i gceantair áirithe sa tír. Bhainti úsáid astu do chúiseanna deaghnácha agus/nó adhlactha. Amanta dhéantait iad a ailíniú ag ócáidí tábhachtacha réaleolaíochta agus baincann siad leis an gCré-Umhaois.

A stone circle at Bohenagh, Co. Cork.

6 Stone Rows and rock art

Standing stones can also be found in pairs or in rows of three or more closely set stones. These latter are often aligned on a point such as a gap in the hills where the sun or moon rises or sets at important points in the year. Stone rows, like the stone circles, were used for ceremonial purposes during the Bronze Age.

Certain earth-fast boulders or outcrops of rock in some parts of the country were carved with cup-and-circle motifs, concentric circles and other designs. Not being part of a built structure, these are difficult to date and while they were formerly believed to belong to the Bronze Age, arguments for a Neolithic date have more recently been put forward.



Rock art on a boulder at Kealduff Upper, Co. Kerry. (Photo: C. Manning).



This stone row at Manganassilly, Co. Cork, contains five stones and was constructed around 1500 BC.

Bionn péiri cloch nó snaitheanna de thrí chloch nó níos mó le feiceáil na seasmh an-ghar dá chéile. Is minic a bhíonn na snaitheanna ailínithe in áit cosúil le bearna sna cnoic mar a n-éiríonn nó mar a dtéann an ghrian nó an ghealach faoi ag amanta tábhachtacha sa bhliain. Cosúil le ciorcail chloch, bhainti feidhm dheaghnách as snaitheanna cloch i rith na Cré-Umhaois.

I gceantair áirithe sa tír, bíonn deardh cupán- agus-ciorcail, ciorcail comhlárnacha agus dearthair eile le feiceáil greanta i mulláin atá déinnte sa talamh nó i bhfreagairtí carnageacha. As stocair nach bhfuil siad mar chuid de struchtúr tógha, bíonn sé deacair dáta a lua leo. Mheastat gur bhain siad leis an gCré-Umhaois ach tá argóintí á gur chun tsaigh le déanaí a cheanglainn leis an Aois Neoilíoch tad.

7 Fulachtaí Fia

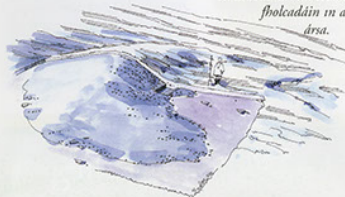
Also known as burnt mounds or ancient cooking places, these small grassed-over mounds of fire-cracked stones are very common in some counties. They are usually found in boggy land or close to a water supply. When excavated, a pit lined with wattle, timber or stone is usually found, in which water was heated by rolling in hot stones from a nearby fire. Meat could have been cooked in the boiling water and the mound was formed of shattered stones shovelled from the pit after each use. There is also some evidence that these sites were used for bathing in ancient times.



A fulacht fia close to a stream at Rathlogan, Co. Kilkenny. This is a good example of a crescent-shaped mound.

Cairn dóite nó áiteanna ársa cócaireachta is ea iad seo. Tá na cairn bheaga seo de chlocha atá scoilte ag tine an-choitianta i gceantair áirithe. Bíonn siad clúdaíte le fear. De ghnáth, bíonn siad le fáil ar thalamh portaigh nó cóngarach do sholáthar uisce. Nuair a thocháitear iad, tagtar ar pholl líniúle le caolach, adhmaid nó cloch de ghnáth. Rinneadh uisce a théamh suas trí clocha seo ó thine gar dó a chur isteach ann. D'fhéadfaí gur cócáladh feoil san uisce bruite. Dhéantait an carn trí clocha briste a ghlacadh ón bpoll gach uair a bhainti úsáid as. Tá roinnt fianaise ann freisin go mbainti úsáid as na seádhomharthaí seo mar fhólcáidín in aoiseanna ársa.

The drawing below shows a Fulacht Fia being excavated with the mound of broken stones and the trough uncovered. (Drawing: D. Pollock).



8 Linear earthworks and roadways

Linear earthworks are ancient earthen banks that can be traced sometimes for miles across the countryside and have names, reminiscent of legends, such as the Black Pig's Race or the Claidhe Dubh. They appear to have formed territorial boundaries and/or impediments to cattle raiding. Some date from the Iron Age.

Ancient roadways or trackways are most often found where they crossed bogs and consisted of timbers or branches laid down to give a firm footing. The bog in time enveloped and preserved the timber and the preserved remains of these bog roads or toghers, dating from the Stone Age up to the seventeenth century, are frequently found during turf cutting.



At Corlea, Co. Longford, a roadway formed of massive oak beams was found during peat harvesting. It was subsequently excavated and dated by dendrochronology (tree-ring dating) to 148 BC. A section of the road is now preserved in a visitor centre on the site. (Photo: B. Rafferty)

9 Hillforts

Hillforts are a relatively rare feature in the Irish countryside. They can have a single rampart or a number of ramparts, which can consist of either stone or earth, surrounding the top of a hill. Where a ditch is present it is outside the bank. Excavation has shown that many were originally constructed in the Late Bronze Age (c. 1000 BC). They were clearly for community rather than family use and while they could have served a defensive purpose, the indications are that they were used mainly for ceremonies or assemblies.



The hillfort at Rathgall, Co. Wicklow, has a number of enclosing ramparts of stone and earth. The innermost stone enclosure is a medieval addition to the Late Bronze Age hillfort.



This hillfort at Garranegra, Co. Tipperary is surrounded by a bank and external ditch.

Tá dúin chnóc réasúnta neamhchoitianta i dtuaisíe na hÉireann. D'fhéadfaidh go mbeadh rampar amháin nó roinnt rampar, déanta as cloch nó cré, ag timpealláir barr an chnóic. Nuair a bhíonn díog ann, bíonn sé lasmuigh den bhanc cré. Tá léirithe ag obair thocháilte gur tógadh cuid mhór acu sa chéad dul síos sa Chré-Umhaois Dhéanach (c. 1000 RC). Is léir gurb é an pobal, seachas teaghlaigh, a bhainti úsáid astu. Cé go bhféadfaí go raibh feidhm chosanta ag baint leo, is dóchúir go mbainti úsáid astu go príomha do shearmanais nó tróidil.

10 Promontory Forts

A more economical and effective way of making a fort was to use a cliff promontory or small headland, where the cliffs formed natural barriers on three sides and only the neck of the promontory required a rampart. As with hillforts and ringforts the defences could be either one or more large stone walls or earthen banks and ditches. These monuments are relatively common around the coast especially where suitable promontories abound. They were used between the Late Bronze Age and the medieval period and their names usually incorporate the word Dún.



The large promontory fort at Dunbrattin, Co. Waterford, was defended by a bank and fosse, though both have been largely levelled. A small subsidiary promontory fort can be seen within the main fort on the left.

Bhíodh sé ní ba shaoire agus ní ba éifeachtai dún a dhéanamh ag rinn aille nó ag iomaire beag, mar a mbíodh na bailleacha mar chos nádúrtha ar thrí thaobh. Ní raibh le déanamh ach rampar a chur ag muineál na rinne. Mar abamláidh le dún chnoic agus ráthanna, is éard a bhí i geist leis na coisintí ná balla mór cloiche amháin nó níos mó, nó bainc chré agus díoga. Tá séadchomharthaí mar seo costanta go leor thart ar an gcósta, go háirithe mar a mbionn fúilollach reann oirrínnach ann. Bhaintí úsáid astu idir an Chré-Umhaois Dhéanach agus na meánaoiseanna agus de ghnáth bíonn an focal Dún mar chuid dá n-ainm.

Dún Díochthair in Inishmore, Co. Galway has a massive drystone wall cutting off the cliff-bound promontory. The entrance was between the cliff and the wall on the left and the foundations of buildings can be seen close to the wall.

11 Crannogs

Many Irish lakes have tiny circular islands often covered in trees. Many of these are crannogs or man-made island dwellings built in shallow water using timber, stones and other material. These artificial islands were constructed from the Bronze Age to the early medieval period and the surrounding water gave their usually noble occupants a measure of defence. They can be productive sites for archaeological excavation because the water preserves organic material such as timber and leather. Some crannogs remained in use up to the seventeenth century AD.



A crannog at Tullylough, Co. Roscommon

Bionn oileáin bhídeacha chiorclacha clúdaithe le crainn i gcuid mhór locha in Éirinn. Is crannóga iad, nó áiteanna cónaithe tógtha de lámh in uisce éadóimhin le hadhmad, clocha agus ábhar eile. Thógtaí na hoileáin bhréagacha seo idir an Chré-Umhaois agus na meánaoiseanna luatha. Daoine uaisle a bhíodh ina gcónaí iontu agus thugadh an t-uisce thart timpeall orthu cosaint éigin dóibh de ghnáth. Is suibh mhaíthe iad ó thaobh na seandálaíochta de mar coimhionann uisce ábhar orgánach cosúil le hadhmad agus leathair. Bhí roinnt crannóg in úsáid suas go dtí an seachtú haois déag AD.



A crannog at Kilcorran Lough, Co. Monaghan.

12 Ringforts

A feature of many farms in the Irish countryside, ringforts or raths are roughly circular areas, some 25 to 50 metres across, defined by an earthen bank and external ditch or, in some cases, by a wide stone wall. They would have enclosed the house and other buildings of a lord or strong farmer in the early medieval period (c. 500-1100 AD). The earthen ringforts would have been made more defensive by having a timber palisade on top of the bank and a strong timber gate and would mostly have had post-and-wattle or timber structures within. Careful archaeological excavation has often recovered the remains of such structures. In recent centuries these frequently tree-covered circles were not touched because they were regarded as the abode of the fairies.



An earthen ringfort at Lixidre, Co. Roscommon, with the typical bank and external fosse.

Tá ráthanna le fáil i gcuid mháithí fermeacha i dtuaisíre na hÉireann. Tá cruth ciorclach orthu, a bhog nó a mbeir, atá 25 go 50 méadar trasa, agus bíonn bainc chéit agus díog cachtach ná, i gcásanna áirithe, balla leathán cloiche thart timpeall orthu. Bhíodh teach agus fóirginn eile tarma nó feirmanna mbeir laistigh dóibh sna meánaoiseanna luatha (c. 500-1100 AD). D'fhéadfaí na ráthanna crí a léidriú trí páilís adhlam a chur ag barr an bhainc chéit agus gasta líidriú adhlam. Bhíodh struchtúir chruaillí agus choillogh nó struchtúir adhlamáid ar an taobh istigh den chuid is mó. Go minic, tagtar ar iarnmaí na struchtúir seo trí thochailt chéimneacha seandálaíochta. Sna haoiseanna déireneacha níor baineadh de na ciorcail seo a bhíonn clúdaithe le crann na mbreidí gur dtí oibnaithe na síog ab ea iad.



The same fort at Lecanabulbin, Co. Kerry, the walls of some buildings within the fort were uncovered during archaeological excavations.

13 Souterrains

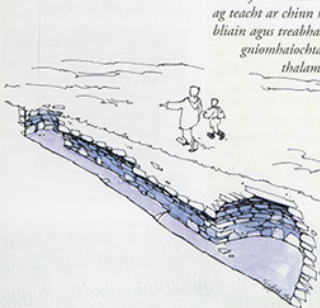
The Irish countryside abounds in tales of underground passages. The likely inspiration for most of these tales is the souterrain. These underground passages, mostly formed of dry-stone walls with lintels led into corbelled stone chambers. They were used for refuge during raids and possibly also for storage in early medieval times. They often occur under ringforts and new examples turn up every year during ploughing and other ground disturbance activities.



A souterrain at Beragh, Co. Louth, photographed from the chamber, looking out along the passage.

Tá an iliomad pasáistí foim talamh luaithe i scéaltaíocht thuitithe na hÉireann. Is cosúil gur uaimheanna talán a spreag na scéalta sin. Is pasáistí foim talamh iad déanta de bhallaí cloiche tirim le lindéir agus théidís isteach i seomraí cloiche coirbéalta. Chuathas i bhfolach iontu le linn ionsaithe agus is fíidri gur seomraí stórais ab ea iad sna meánaoiseanna luatha. Bíonn siad le fáil go minic faoi dháin fháinneacha agus bitear ag teacht ar chinn nua gach bliain agus treathadh agus gníomhaíochtaí eile faoi thalamh ar siúl.

The drawing below shows a cut-away view of a simple souterrain with a short passage and chamber. The corbelling technique is illustrated in the cross-section of the chamber. (Drawing: D. Pollock)



14 Churches / ecclesiastical enclosures

Ireland has a greater number of ruined medieval churches relative to its size than any other country in Europe. Most of these were parish churches and are in walled graveyards in Local Authority care but some are on farmland. The origins of many of these establishments go back to the early centuries of Christianity in Ireland when they were usually surrounded by large enclosures, which contained a settlement (sometimes monastic) as well as the church or churches. The study of maps and aerial photography has frequently identified the outlines of these enclosures, with the surviving graveyard forming only a small segment.



The ruined medieval parish church at Kilmelash, Co. Waterford, with its surrounding graveyard.

I gcomparáid le stóirha eile na hEorpa, tá an líon coibhneasta is mó fothracha de shéipéil ó na meánaoiseanna in Éirinn. Séipéil pharóiste a bhí sa chuid is mó acu atá lonnaithe i réitigí le ballaí thart orthu agus atá faoi chóram na nUdaráis Áitiúil, ach tá cuid acu suite i bháireanna. Bunaidh go leor de na háiteanna seo sa tréimhe is luaithe a bhí an Chriostalocht in Éirinn. Ag an am sin, bhí clai nó falla mór thart orthu agus chomb maith leis an séipéal ná na séipéil, bhíodh cineál de bhaile beag laistigh agus amanta, manaigh a bhíodh ina gcónaí iontu. Léiríonn staidéar ar mbapaí agus ar ghrianghrafanna tógtha ón aer inlíne na ráthanna sin. Ní bhíonn i geist leis an reilig atá tagtha slán ach cuid bheag díobh.



The important early monastic site on Inchcleraun in Lough Ree, Co. Longford contains a number of churches, most of which are contained within a large stone-walled enclosure.

Some of the earliest castles built by the Anglo-Normans in the late twelfth century were made of timber and many of these were motte-and-bailey castles. The motte, a large flat-topped earthen mound, would originally have had a strong wooden tower and a timber palisade around the edge of the top. There is often evidence of a lower defended enclosure attached to the motte, and this is known as a bailey. In certain areas, Anglo-Norman settlers constructed rectangular moated sites to enclose their houses and outbuildings. The ditch or fosse is wide and flat-bottomed and often formerly contained water for added defence. Some moated sites in Connacht were built by Gaelic lords around 1300 AD.



The impressive motte and bailey at Knockgraffon, Co. Tipperary.

Bhí na caisleán ba tháisce a thóg na hAngla-Normannaigh go déanach sa dara haois déag déanta d'adhmaid agus caisleáin mhóta agus bhábháin ab ea cuid mhór acu. Sa chéad dal síos bhíodh túr láidir adhmaid agus painis adhmaid thart ar imcail bharr an mhóta, carn mór cré le barr cothrom. Is minic a bhíonn fianaise ann go mbíodh imfhálú iséal cosanta ceangailte leis an móta. Bábháin a thugtar air. I gceantair áirithe, thóg na lonnaitheoirí Angla-Normannaigh láithreacha dronuilleagacha mótaíthe chun a dtíthe srl a imfhálú. Tá an díog leathán agus bun cothrom air agus bhíodh uisce istigh ann a thug cosaint sa bheirs. Tiarnaí Gaelacha a thóg cuid de na láithreacha mótaíthe i gConnachta thart ar 1300 AD.

A moated site at Ogulla, Co. Roscommon. This example was possibly built by a Gaelic lord and would have had impressive timber buildings within it.

The concept of building castles was introduced to Ireland by the Anglo-Normans in the late twelfth century and most of our early stone castles were built between then and 1300 AD. These castles took a variety of forms and shapes. A smaller version, called the hall-house, developed during the thirteenth century and may have played a part in the development of the ubiquitous tower house, a late Irish development of the castle. These were built by lords and wealthy tenants of both Gaelic and Anglo-Norman stock in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.



The hall-house at Meylough, Co. Galway. This hall-house was built soon after the Anglo-Norman conquest of Connacht in the 1230s.

B'iad na hAngla-Normannaigh a thosaigh ag tógáil caisleáin in Éirinn go déanach sa dara haois déag agus tógadh an chuid is mó d'air caisleáin choibhe ba tháisce idir sin agus 1300 AD. Bhí éagsúlacht mhíniúil agus chruthanna ar na caisleáin sin. Forbairtí leagan níos láidh, le linn an tríú haois déag, is cosúil go raibh baint aige le forbairt an túrthi choitianta a bhí mar fhorbairt dhéanach Éireannach ar an caisleán. Tiarnaí agus tionóntaí saibhe de bhunadh Gaelach agus Angla-Normannaigh a thógadh iad sa chéad haois déag agus sa séú haois déag.



A tower house at Rockstown, Co. Limerick with traces of a pear-shaped enclosure or bawn around it.

Parts of the Irish countryside, that have not been subjected to intensive tillage, can retain clear evidence of ancient fields and settlements in the form of earthworks or remains of walls. Sometimes deserted medieval villages or even towns can still be traced on the ground. Where such features have been levelled and the ground is under tillage, levelled enclosures, ancient fields, ringbarrows and other features can show up as cropmarks in aerial photographs. These show up well in cereal crops, where the subsurface archaeological features cause differences in the colour of the crop as it ripens and thus betray the existence of often long-levelled archaeological monuments.



Cropmarks showing up in a cereal field at Ballymadden, Co. Wexford. (Photo: M. Moore).



The deserted medieval town of Newtown Jerpoint, Co. Kilkenny as it was mapped by the Ordnance Survey in 1839.

I geolanna de thuaisíte na hÉireann nach bhfuil an talamh oibríte go dian, tá fianaise shoiléir de pháircanna agus lonnaitheacha ársa le feiceáil i bhfoirm chrébháilacha nó iarsmaí ballaí. Amanta is féidir iann sráidbhailte nó bailte tréighe ó na meánaoiseanna a fheiceáil ar an talamh. Áit a bhfuil iarsmaí mar sin cothromaíthe agus a bhfuil talamh curatoctha ann, bíonn timpalluithe cothromaíthe, páircanna ársa, tuláí fáimneacha agus gnéithe eile le feiceáil i ngrianghrafanna aoir mar bharrachomharthaí. Bíonn siad le feiceáil go soiléir i mbarraí arbhair mar cruthaíonn na harsmaí seandálaíochta faoin dromchla dathanna difriúla san arbhar de réir mar a théann sé in abiocht. Tugann sé sin le fios go bhfuil séadchomharthaí seandálaíochta ann a cothromaíodh i bhfad ó shin.

How to find out what monuments are in your area

There are three main official sources of information on what monuments are in the country, based on the work of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland, Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

- 1) The Record of Monuments and Places (RMP). This consists of large-scale maps with the location of all known sites and monuments shown and an accompanying list, which gives further information on location and classification. All monuments, thus recorded, are protected under the 1994 National Monuments (Amendment) Act. This should be available in your county library.
- 2) The published Archaeological Inventories. A full list of published inventories can be found on the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government's website www.enviro.nie.or or on The National Monuments Service website www.archaeology.ie under publications.
- 3) The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) Archive. This holds original field reports and other records on all sites and monuments in the country and can be consulted by appointment.

Other sources

Detailed survey volumes have been published for County Louth by the Archaeological Survey of Ireland and for County Donegal, the Dingle and Iveragh peninsulas, Co. Kerry and other smaller areas by other groups. These contain more detailed descriptions of the monuments than in the inventories and also plans and sections of selected monuments. Recent text books on Irish archaeology give a more complete picture of our present state of knowledge.

Ordnance survey maps, including the 1:50,000 Discovery Series, show many monuments and many local history publications contain further details and historical information on certain monuments. The primary sources are the monuments themselves and our understanding of them is constantly changing and developing based on the results of archaeological excavations and research.

