

Neil Jackman & Dr. Conor Ryan
Abarta Heritage

AUDIT OF COLUMBAN HERITAGE

*Prepared for Donegal County Council,
Derry City & Strabane District Council,
Foras na Gaeilge and The Heritage Council*

November 2018





‘On the seventh-day of the mid-winter month Colum Cille was born and on the ninth-day of the mid-summer month he died. And fitting to his life was the season he came into it, for wintry was his life in respect of cold and darkness, pain and penance, and in respect of his inflicting hardship and discomfort on his own body. And, further, fitting to the life he entered from this world was the season when he died, for it is the season that is purest and warmest and brightest, and most shining of all the year.’

Manus O’Donnell *Betha Colaim Chille* (1532).

Audit of Columban Heritage

SUMMARY

This audit is part of the implementation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan prepared by Donegal County Council and the County Donegal Heritage Forum. The aims of this Heritage Plan action are to:

- Audit and map heritage sites, objects and archives associated with St. Colmcille, his life and contemporaries
- Highlight conservation works required to the archaeological and built heritage associated with St. Colmcille
- Identify historical and heritage venues associated with, or near heritage sites associated with Colmcille capable of hosting events as part of the 2020/21 commemorations
- Identify history and heritage groups and individuals, and their role in the preservation, conservation and promotion of the cultural, built and natural heritage associated with Colmcille
- Highlight links between the material culture associated with St. Colmcille and aspects of folklore, folk traditions, language, placenames and intangible cultural heritage.
- Deliver a report, database and two public presentations on the audit's findings

Saint Colmcille (also known as Columba) was born in Donegal in 520 (or 521). Before his death in Iona on the 9th June 593 A.D, Colmcille became one of the most influential figures in all Irish and British history. Colmcille is one of Ireland's patron saints, a distinction he shares with Patrick and Brigid, and he is the patron saint of Derry. Colmcille is not only an important figure for Ireland, but as the founder of monasteries in Iona and Scotland, he was a key catalyst for the Christianisation of Northern Britain.

This audit presents an opportunity for Donegal County Council, Derry City & Strabane District Council, Foras na Gaeilge, The Heritage Council and local community heritage groups to plan for the commemoration of the 1500th anniversary of the birth Colmcille which will take place in 2020/21. The audit identifies and maps heritage sites, objects and archives associated with Colmcille and his life.

This ranges from well-known heritage sites to places associated with Colmcille in local folklore and includes objects and archives in national and local repositories.

The research highlights the links between the Columban material culture and aspects of folklore, folk traditions, language, placenames and intangible cultural heritage which are considerable. The audit will identify and map the archaeological monuments and protected built heritage associated with Colmcille. It will help to highlight conservation works that may be required to Columban built and archaeological heritage, though it must be noted that any works to, or in the vicinity of, archaeological or historic monuments require prior consent from the Minister of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht. The National Monuments Service can provide advice and guidance on specific issues.

This audit is separated into a series of chapters, beginning with an overview of the key sources on Colmcille, then the audit of heritage sites associated with the saint in the study area, followed by an insight into language and placenames, the objects associated with Colmcille, and it finishes with some suggested ways to commemorate Colmcille.

From carrying out the audit, it became abundantly clear that there is tremendous potential in creating a unifying 'brand' and series of events that celebrates such a giant figure in Irish and British history. Colmcille's legacy covers spirituality and devotion, arts and literature, music and storytelling. He is an internationally renowned figure that appeals across communities and that is deserving of celebration and commemoration. It is our hope that this audit provides a foundation to help to establish a shared programme of works and events.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	6
Introduction	7
Key Sources on Colmcille	10
Audit of Heritage Sites	14
Gartan	16
Glencolmcille	27
Tory Island	52
Other Sites in Donegal	64
Derry City	77
Other Sites in the Vicinity of Derry	92
Holy Wells	101
Placenames Associated with Colmcille	103
The Irish Language and the Commemorations	109
Objects Associated with Colmcille	111
Commemorating Colmcille	124
Conclusion	133
Bibliography	134



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



This audit would have been impossible to complete without the assistance and insights of the communities in each of the areas associated with Colmcille. Throughout the process we were constantly met with kindness, enthusiasm, interest and truly fascinating insights. With communities and stakeholders such as these, the commemorations are sure to be a tremendous success. Each time we spoke with someone, they recommended another person to speak to, and it is to our great regret that we did not have the time to follow every thread. It is our hope that this report serves as a basis for further discussion and interaction about the commemorations and about the shared story of Colmcille.

We are deeply grateful to the following people for their time, insights, expertise and facilitation: Arthur Barrett, Ian Bartlett, Dr. Fiona Beglane, Patrick Boner, Bartley Burke, Fr. Neal Carlin, Caroline Carr, Ivor Doherty, Róisín Doherty, Giovanni Doran, Margaret Edwards, Martin Egan, Fiona Fagan, Dr. Joe Gallagher, Christy Gillespie, Paddy Beag Gillespie, John Kerr, Dr. Brian Lacey, Bernard Lafferty, Cllr. Michael McBride, Aeidin McCarter, Judith McCarthy, Fr. Francis McHugh, Seamus McGinley, Claire McLoughlin, Helen Meehan, Grace Meenan, Martin Melarkey, Michael Mullen, Liam Ó Cuinneagáin, Jennifer O'Donnell, Eddie O'Kane, Felicity O' Mahony, Lorcan O'Toole, Don Patterson, Oonagh Robinson, Maolcholaim Scott, Linzi Simpson, Maura Strain, and Jacqueline Whoriskey. We are also grateful to the staff of Donegal County Council, Derry City and Strabane District Council, The Tower Museum, Donegal County Museum, St. Augustine's Church - Derry, St. Patrick's Church - Coleraine, Roe Valley Hotel, St. Columb's Park House, the Churches Trust, Oideas Gael, St. Columb's Cathedral, St. Eunan's Cathedral Raphoe, the Columba Community, Colmcille Heritage Centre, Long Tower Church and Áras Cholmcille, St. Colmcille's Chapel Tory Island, Trinity College Dublin, the Office of Public Works and the Heritage Council.

All images and maps featured in this report are the copyright of Abarta Heritage unless otherwise stated.

INTRODUCTION

About Colmcille

Saint Colmcille, also known as Columba from the Latin form of his name, is undoubtedly one of the most important figures in the story of early Christianity. He had a lasting influence on the development of the church, not only in Ireland but across Europe. His significance has led to him being chosen as one of the three patron saints of Ireland alongside Patrick and Brigid. This Audit of Columban Heritage is a wonderful opportunity to create a foundation that will help people to discover and experience the story of Colmcille, and to explore some of the many evocative heritage sites across Donegal, Derry and Tyrone. The story of Colmcille permeates almost every corner of this region, from the breathtaking Western Coast of Donegal to the rolling hills of Western Tyrone and the vibrant city of Derry, Colmcille's influence and legacy can still be discovered today.

In these days where unfortunate divisions are beginning to reappear, Colmcille is a talismanic figure who unites communities and faiths. He connects Ireland to Scotland and Northern Britain. The former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, David Cameron, referenced the shared connections through Colmcille when delivering a speech to the Northern Ireland Assembly (9th June, 2011)

“...I know the calendar can have its own sensibilities in this part of the world, but it is an honour to address you on such an auspicious day, the ninth of June. This is the feast day of St. Columba, who very specially symbolises the historic linkages and deep bonds between Britain and Ireland. Born a Prince in Donegal, exiled in Iona, and honoured today in the Central Lobby of the Palace of Westminster...his monks provided not just an Irish national treasure, the Book of Kells, but also a British national treasure, the Lindisfarne Gospels.”

There are few figures in world history who have had such a lasting legacy. Colmcille's memory has been kept alive for nearly 1,500 years. The diverse ways in which he has been celebrated are testament to his polymathic nature – he was renowned not only for his spirituality and piety, but also for his love of music and poetry, literature and nature. Today he is still celebrated through a panoply of creative events, from storytelling, tours, pilgrimages, musical recitals, poetry and sculpture and historical and theological debate. This gives a wonderful opportunity for diversity in celebration during his commemorative years.

What a Difference a Year Makes

There has long been scholarly dispute as to the year of Colmcille's birth, as to whether it was in 520 or 521 A.D. Given the paucity of first-hand accounts, and discordances with the passage of time, and the different measurement of time over the centuries it may be impossible to definitively state one year or the other. Instead of causing confusion by going with 520 when others may be used to 521, this ambiguity in year presents a real opportunity for a year long celebration of the saint. Beginning on the 7th December 2020 and ending on the 7th December 2021. This allows a full programme of events to be established, meaning the different areas can all have a signature event without risk of clashing.

The Many Names of Colmcille

According to Manus O'Donnell in his great work Colmcille's birth name was Crimthann, however the text goes on to state that, as 'Crimthann means the same in Irish as 'deceitful one' or 'fox' means in Latin, that God deemed it to be an unsuitable name for one who was destined to be so holy, and He had His angels put it in the hearts and minds of the children that he played with to call him Colum Cille, meaning Dove of the Church':

*The name that the son of Fedlimid got,
Was 'Colum Cille', from the angels of Heaven;
Without error or falsehood or twisting, however,
'Crimthann' in the world he was given.
On a Thursday without more dispute,
The angels of God, King of Heaven,
Took 'Crimthann' away as his name,
And 'Colum Cille' to him then was given.*

There are a number of variants of Colmcille's name in common usage. These include Columba (the Latin form of his name), along with a number of spellings and versions of the Irish Colmcille, such as Colum Cille or Columbkille. For consistency throughout this report we will use the Irish Colmcille when speaking of the individual, and Columban when we are describing monastic foundations, traditions or objects. If a cohesive Columban 'brand' is to emerge for the commemorations, it is important to ensure consistency across all the different communities to ensure there is no confusion with the general public.

The Context and Aims of this Audit

One of the chief aims of this project is to create a shared understanding of the story of Colmcille and the places and landscapes associated with this iconic figure. This audit presents an opportunity for Donegal County Council, Derry City & Strabane District Council, Foras na Gaeilge, The Heritage Council and local community heritage groups to plan for the commemoration of the 1500th anniversary of the birth

of Colmcille which will take place in 2020/21. The audit identifies and maps heritage sites, objects and archives associated with Colmcille and his life, and identifies conservation requirements in the case of built heritage. Responsible tourism is taken into consideration, and steps should always be taken to mitigate and minimise impact from increased tourism. This audit ranges from well-known heritage sites to places associated with Colmcille in local folklore and includes objects and archives in national and local repositories. In July 2018, Abarta Heritage were awarded the contract to carry out the audit.

About Abarta Heritage

Abarta Heritage are an award-winning Tipperary-based company, and we are passionate about empowering communities and helping to tell Ireland's story to visitors. Since Abarta Heritage was founded in 2012, we have helped many national institutions, county councils, community development organisations and the private sector to identify, assess, interpret, conserve and promote their heritage. We focus on digging deep to research and discover the truly meaningful stories, and we love empowering communities to take an active role in the promotion and management of their local tourism assets. We specialise in creating positive and robust frameworks for collaboration between stakeholders, local government and national bodies. We are a team of experienced archaeologists, historians and researchers. For this project the key team members are Neil Jackman (BA, MIAI, MRSAl), Dr. Conor Ryan (Ph.D, MPhil, BA) and Róisín Burke (MA).

The Existing Columban Context

There is a wealth of wonderful resources and initiatives that already exist that celebrate and inform people about Colmcille. These include a multitude of publications, tours, educational resources (a fantastic selection of which are available through the Nerve Centre in Derry) and more. In many of the locations that are most associated with the saint, such as Gartan, Glencolmcille and Derry, there are already tours, brochures, and exhibitions that tell the story. Perhaps the most important unifying initiative that connects many of the sites associated with Colmcille is *Sli Cholmcille*.

Slí Cholmcille

Slí Cholmcille is a collaborative initiative between Foras na Gaeilge and its Scottish counterpart, Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Slí Cholmcille aims to link Ireland and Scotland with a series of trails linked to St Colmcille and other early Christian saints. There are four main strands in the Slí:

- Heritage
- Language
- Community (including Irish and Scottish Gaelic speaking communities)
- Tourism

The outputs of this initiative have created a rich resource of material to help to promote the story of Colmcille and the sites associated with him. Some of the outputs include leaflets and flyers, but perhaps the most substantial output is the website www.colmcille.org, that features maps and information on all of the sites. The website is trilingual in Irish, Scottish Gaelic and English. The website is currently being updated to add additional content and to improve user-experience. The work of Slí Cholmcille gives a fantastic foundation for a shared connection and asset between the different regions that are connected through Colmcille.

This Report

This report is broken into a series of sections for ease of use. It begins with an overview of the key sources that inform us about Colmcille and his life. This is followed by an audit of the heritage sites, broken into districts:

- Gartan
- Glencolmcille
- Tory Island
- Other sites in Donegal
- Derry
- Other sites in the vicinity of Derry

- Holy Wells associated with Colmcille

Following the audit, there are chapters on Placenames associated with Colmcille, the importance of the Irish language in the commemorations (informed by Foras na Gaeilge). There is an account of the objects and artefacts associated with Colmcille and finally a series of ideas about large events that could take place during the commemorative year (individual recommendations for events are made for each of the sites).

We hope that you find this report to be a useful and practical document that helps to form a foundation for celebrating one of the most important figures in Irish and British history.

KEY SOURCES ON COLMCILLE

Since Colmcille died in the late sixth century, people have been writing about him. However, as Brian Lacey states, even with a comparative wealth of texts about the saint, it would still not be possible to write an accurate modern biography of him. Many of the early stories concerning Colmcille were written many centuries after his death and are hagiographical in nature and full of fantastical tales.

A superb recent publication on Colmcille; *Saint Columba: His Life and Legacy* by Brian Lacey, certainly helps to bring all of the key sources on Colmcille together. It is essential reading for anyone who wishes to better understand both the story of the saint and the nature of the source materials. This section briefly introduces the main sources for Colmcille, with notes on where the texts may be accessed.

Amra Colum Cille

The earliest known surviving work that describes the life of Colmcille is believed to be a vernacular poem, the *Amra*, a praise-poetry eulogy of the saint's life that is traditionally believed to date to around 600 AD, although the date of the text is subject to debate. The poem describes the noble ancestry of its subject, and emphasises how Colmcille embodies the ideals of Christianity, piety and learning. The earliest surviving manuscript copy is part of the *Lebor na hUidre* dating to the eleventh century. Professor P L Henry has produced the latest version of the text in 2006.

Adomnán's Vita Columbae

Adomnán was the ninth abbot of Iona and lived about a century after Colmcille. He was a distant relative of Colmcille, and he was a significant historical figure in his own right, and he became venerated as a saint himself. His hagiography of Colmcille is the earliest available to us and drew upon earlier sources which are no longer extant. It contains three books, dealing with the prophecies of Colmcille, the miracles performed by Colmcille and the apparitions witnessed by Colmcille. Although it is the earliest source of information on Colmcille, it is short on biographical or narrative detail, instead it is a work that establishes Colmcille's holiness and his reputation as a saint.

The oldest surviving manuscript of *Vita Columbae* is now held in the town library of Schaffhausen, Switzerland. This copy was brought to the monastery at Reichenau in

southern Germany in the tenth century. Three incomplete manuscripts are held in the British Library. The most recent translation of this work is *Adomnán of Iona: Life of St Columba*, edited by Richard Sharpe, published by Penguin in 1995. It contains an English translation as well as an introduction and detailed notes.

The translated text can also be read online at the CELT Project. The text there is based on a translation made by William Reeves in 1857.

Betha Colaim Cille – The 12th-Century Middle Irish Life of Columba

The author of this Irish language hagiography of Columba is unknown, but it is thought to have been written in Derry around 1150. It takes the form of a sermon which was preached annually on the saint's feast day of June 9th. It provides a detailed genealogy for Colmcille and attributes the foundation of the monastery at Derry to him. It also credits him with the establishment of monasteries at Raphoe, Durrow, Swords and on Tory Island. The excellent publication: *Iona, Kells and Derry: the history and hagiography of the monastic familia of Columba* by Máire Herbert, published in 1988 contains a new edition of the *Life* in Irish, along with an English translation. Alternatively, the translated text can be read online at the CELT Project. The text is based on a translation made by Whitley Stokes in 1877.

Betha Colum Chille – Manus O'Donnell's *The Life of Colum Cille*

Manus O'Donnell was chieftain of the O'Donnell clan in the early sixteenth century. Before he became chieftain, he commissioned the compilation of all the stories and folklore about Colmcille into one document. This was written in Irish and it was completed in 1532. At over 100,000 words, it can certainly claim to be the most complete account of Colmcille's life and death. It is full of hagiography, myth and folktales about Colmcille, reflecting that it was written one-thousand years afterward the saint's death. The text can be enjoyed in English with an informative introduction in Brian Lacey's *The Life of Colum Cille by Manus O'Donnell* published in 1998 by Four Courts Press.

A manuscript copy is held in the Rawlinson Collection in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. (Ref. B.514).

The Venerable Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*

The Venerable Bede (d.735 A.D), was a Benedictine monk who resided at Jarrow Abbey in Northumbria. He became a famous Anglo-Saxon statesman and scholar, and he mentioned both Colmcille and his followers in *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum* (The Ecclesiastical History of the English People) that was completed in 731 A.D. The work contained stories of Colmcille's arrival in Scotland from Ireland, his conversion of the Picts to Christianity and his involvement in the controversy over the date of Easter.

There are several surviving manuscript copies held in different libraries, including the Bodleian, Cambridge University and the British Library. An English translation of Bede's work was edited by B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors published by Oxford University Press in 1969.

The Irish Annals

Some scholars credit Colmcille and his followers with the concept of recording historical events in the form of annals. Whatever the case, the Irish annals contain numerous references to Colmcille, his successors and his monastic foundations. The Annals of the Four Masters, the Annals of Ulster, the Annals of Tigernach contain a number of entries.

Events recorded in the Annals include the Battle of Cúl Dreimhne and Colmcille's subsequent departure to Scotland, the death of Colmcille, numerous Viking raids on Columban monasteries, and the theft of the Book of Kells. Scholarly debate continues regarding the accuracy of some of the entries contained in the Annals. To make things a little more complex, the various Annals sometimes ascribe different dates to the same events.

A manuscript of the Annals of the Four Masters is held in the Royal Irish Academy library in Dublin. The Annals of the Four Masters was edited and published in seven volumes by John O' Donovan between 1848 and 1851.

A modern translation of the Annals of Ulster was edited by Seán Mac Airt & Gearóid Mac Niocaill and published by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies in 1983. A manuscript is held in the library of Trinity College Dublin. A modern translation of the Annals of Tigernach was edited by Gearóid Mac Niocaill and published by the CELT Project. A manuscript copy is contained in the Rawlinson Collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Other Lives of the Saints

As well as the texts referred to above, there are references to Colmcille in the lives of other early Irish saints. The Life of Saint Náile, for instance, recounts how Naile was instructed by Colmcille to found a monastery at Inbhear Náile (now Inver, County Donegal).

However, as Brian Lacey warns, much of this hagiographical literature was propagandistic in nature, and informs more about the circumstances and place of its origin, or the person or institution who commissioned it, rather than its subject.

Ordnance Survey Letters

The Ordnance Survey Letters were written by John O' Donovan and Eugene O' Curry during the mapping of Ireland by the Ordnance Survey in the 1830s and '40s. They contain information on archaeological monuments, ecclesiastical sites, history and folklore. There are several references to Colmcille and to places and stories associated with him in the Letters, particularly for Counties Donegal and Derry. The story of the Bell of Ballynascreen, for instance, is recounted in the Letters for County Derry. The Ordnance Survey Letters have been edited and published on a county-by-county basis by various scholars. They are generally available in public libraries.

Schools' Folklore Collection

The Schools' Folklore Collection was an important and far-sighted cultural heritage initiative undertaken in the late 1930s. Primary school students across Ireland gathered folklore from their parents, grandparents and neighbours and wrote them down in copybooks. These have been digitised in recent years and are now available online at www.duchas.ie.

There are 267 pieces of folklore relating to Colmcille (or Columba or Colum Cille) in the Schools' Folklore Collection. The vast majority of these (172) are from schools in County Donegal, but counties Meath, Galway, Offaly and Mayo also each have numerous entries. These are a truly rich resource of tales and traditions related to Colmcille.

The easiest way to access these stories is to click on 'Topic' in the menu at the top of the www.duchas.ie homepage. This brings up a subject list. Scroll down to the 'Agents' topic and Colm Cille is one of approximately 60 subjects. After you click on Colm Cille, you can then select the stories by county. Note that many of the entries, particularly for Donegal, are in Irish and many have yet to be transcribed.

Bailiúchán Béaloideas Gaeltacht Thír Chonaill (Donegal Gaeltacht Folklore Collection)

The Donegal Gaeltacht Folklore Project was undertaken between 2006 and 2011. Researchers carried out approximately 380 hours of audio interviews with 230 residents of the Donegal Gaeltacht. Interviews covered a wide range of topics and were organised into fourteen categories. One of the categories is religious history and traditions. Within this category there are twenty separate items relating to Colmcille ranging in length from under a minute to over ten minutes. They relate various stories and folklore associated with Colmcille and are spread across Donegal, including Glencolmcille, Tory Island, Fintown and Meevagh. These audio pieces can be listened to online on the project website www.bealoideasbeo.ie. Note that the overwhelming majority of the interviews and the website itself are in Irish.

Other Useful Sources on Colmcille

Slí Cholmcille

Slí Cholmcille is a joint project of Foras na Gaeilge in Ireland and Bòrd na Gàidhlig in Scotland. It aims to explore the language and heritage of both countries through the life of Colmcille. Dr. Brian Lacey, one of the foremost experts on Colmcille, is a key consultant for the project. The trail connects sites in Ireland and Scotland associated with the saint. Forty-two sites in Ireland and thirty-two in Scotland are included on the trail. These are clustered into eight separate locations – Glencolmcille, Tullaghobegley & Tory Island, Gartan, Derry, North Sperrins & the Bann (Ireland), Argyll, Iona, Tarbat Ness and Outer Hebrides (Scotland). Detailed information on each site, including photographs and extracts from the various hagiographies of Columba, can be found on the project website www.colmcille.org.

Colm Cille: Life and Legacy

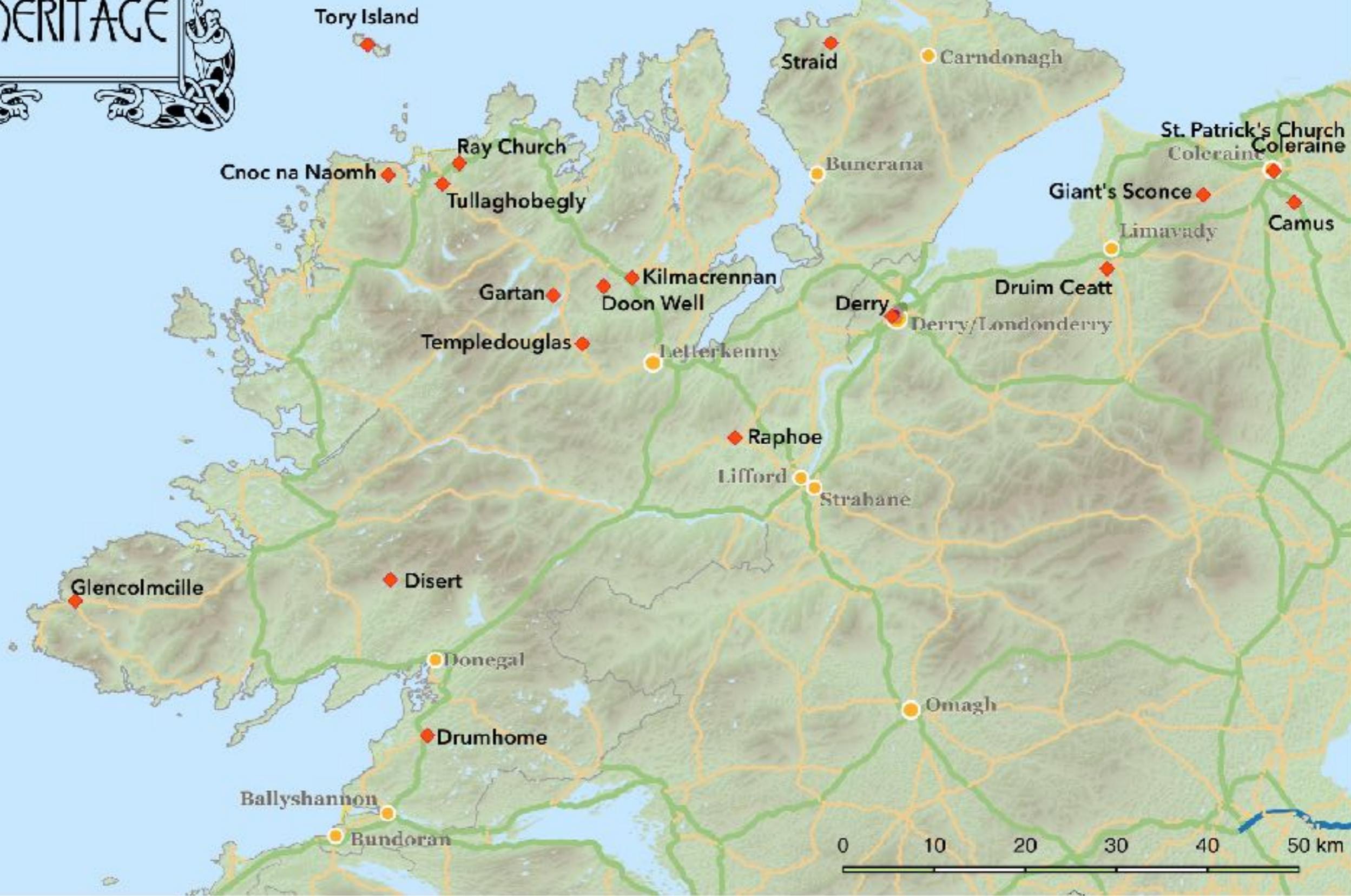
The Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, Northern Ireland produced a website about Colmcille in 2013 to mark Derry's year as UK Capital of Culture. Entitled *Colm Cille: Life and Legacy* it remains online at <http://ccea.org.uk/colmcille/index.php>.

The material on the site is aimed primarily at students and educators. There are numerous e-books, short animated videos and other resources relating stories about Colmcille and about monastic life in early medieval Ireland. A virtual museum gives information about the many objects associated with Columba and his monasteries. The website is an excellent introductory resource to Columba and his life and times.

AUDIT OF HERITAGE SITES



COLUMBAN HERITAGE



GARTAN



Gartan – where it all began. The landscape around Gartan is dominated by three lakes, Lough Akibbon, Lough Nacally and Gartan Lough. It was in the green hills around the lakes that Colmcille was said to have been born and raised. Most of the connection between Colmcille and Gartan comes through Manus O’Donnell’s *The Life of Colum Cille*, written in 1532, it dates to around a thousand years after the saint’s time, but it is comprehensive in detail and provides many locations that can be identified in the landscape today.

An important local tradition concerns the Gartan Clay. The clay was described in detail by Manus O’Donnell:

Flour isn’t whiter or finer than the clay found there and anyone who eats it or carries it with them is never burned or drowned, nor will they die without a priest. And every woman who eats it in the pangs of childbirth will be helped. And anyone that puts it on their tongue on the first day that they are seized by a fever will have no bitter taste in their mouth as long as the fever lasts. And it is its nature to heal every disease. But it must be one of the natives of Gartan that digs the clay for distribution. For it is said that once a stranger went to dig it, but it fled from him and went into the heart of a

tree or great trunk nearby, and it was not found again in its own place until holy water was sprinkled there and the place was blessed.

To this day the Friel family are hereditary keepers of Gartan Clay, and only they may distribute it for the clay to be efficacious.

Archaeologist Brian Lacey has identified a medieval pilgrimage route that once traversed the lakes in honour of Colmcille. These locations form part of the *Slí Cholmcille*, and many are individually featured in this audit below, though there are additional features in the immediate area such as Colmcille’s Footprints that are not featured here as they were inaccessible at the time of fieldwork. Though they should be considered as part of a cohesive Gartan-focused trail. In the wider hinterland, sites like Doon Well, Kilmacrennan and Temple Douglas are all imbued with the tales of the early life of Colmcille. In more recent years, the Colmcille Heritage Centre was established to interpret the story of Colmcille to visitors from far and wide. With lovely gardens and visitor facilities, Glebe House and Gallery is another valuable tourism asset in the area and its inclusion should be considered as part of a wider effort to bring visitors to the region.



R255

R251

Kilmacrennan Church

Doon Well

Rath Cnó (Churchtown)

Leac na Cumha (Lacknacoo)

Colmcille Heritage Centre

N56

R254

Templedouglas Church

R251

Letterkenny

0 1 2 3 4 5 km

R250

N13

COLMCILLE HERITAGE CENTRE



Beautifully situated on the shore of Gartan Lough, the Colmcille Heritage Centre tells the story of Colmcille's life and legacy through interpretative displays and an audio visual film. The centre provides context on the early Irish church, and houses replicas and representations of other famous sites and artefacts around Donegal. One of the centrepieces is a nineteenth century full scale plaster model of one of the High Crosses at Kells in County Meath. There is a replica of the sixth–eighth century Bell of St Colmcille which was kept in the Gartan area and passed down through successive generations of one family. According to tradition, water drunk from the bell is a cure for any illness.

Discussions were held at the centre with Martin Egan, who explained that the centre wished to develop a Heritage Park for 2020/21. The centre has three acres of land to develop, but need to secure funding to proceed with their plans.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The heritage centre is well signposted from the main road, with a large carpark and toilet facilities. There is an entry fee of €3 for adults and €2 for students and seniors.

Conservation

No conservation requirements were identified.

Recommendations

- The on-site interpretation would benefit from being refreshed with the latest information and research on Colmcille, and as an effort to create a cohesive overarching brand.
- Though there is much of interest to see, the exhibition is somewhat static and more interactive elements may be beneficial

LEAC NA CUMHA — LACKNACOO

According to tradition the flagstone at Lacknacoo is one of the places where it is claimed that Colmcille's mother Eithne gave birth to him, (the other place is perhaps more credibly identified by Manus O'Donnell as Ráth Cnó at nearby Churchtown). Another tradition recounted in Manus O'Donnell's works describes how the stone got its name:

'Once he was in a certain place called Gort na Leic [Field of the Flagstone] in Gartán, west of Rath Cnó where he was born. A local man came to him because many of his friends and family had died, and he was distraught and very sorrowful after them. The extent of his sorrow was so great that he would rather die than live after them. And when Colum Cille saw him, he had great pity for him and blessed a flagstone that was beside him and gave that man water from it to drink so that his sorrow disappeared ... And Colum Cille left as a grace on that stone that the sorrow of anyone who would drink from it would leave them ... Leac na Cumhadh [Flagstone of the Sorrows/Loneliness] is the name of that stone today, in memory of that great miracle.'

In more recent centuries, Leac na Cumha once again was relied upon to assuage sorrow and grief. It became a tradition that emigrants would spend their last night on the flagstone. As Colmcille had decided to exile himself to Scotland, they thought that sleeping here would make their sadness easier to bear.

The stone is covered with cupmarks, a form of megalithic art typical of the final Neolithic / Chalcolithic age. It appears that the mound is some form of megalithic tomb, quite possibly a wedge tomb, and as such gives further insight into the Christianisation of older sacred places.

A large stone cross was erected in the nineteenth century by the Adairs of Glenveagh to mark Colmcille's birthplace. Their link to the site provides opportunity to tell the story of Leac na Cumha at Glenveagh National Park, to help to promote the Columban Heritage Trail.





Existing Infrastructure and Access

The site is signposted from the main road, with a carpark and a stone plaques that inform visitors that this is the birthplace of Colmcille. The plaques date to the 1997 commemorations.

Conservation

The site is well kept. It is fenced off and the grass was neatly cut at the time of inspection. The megalithic tomb is of high interest, and further investigation (including geophysical survey and photogrammetry of the cupmark-covered stone would be advantageous to developing a better understanding of the monument.

Recommendations

- The on-site interpretation would benefit from being refreshed with the latest information and research on Colmcille, and as an effort to create a cohesive overarching brand.
- A geophysical survey and 3D recording of the possible tomb is highly recommended to better understand the nature of the monument.

RÁTH CNÓ — CHURCHTOWN

In Manus O'Donnell's *Life of Colum Cille* he describes how Colmcille was born at Rath Cnó (meaning *Fort of the Nuts*): '*Colum Cille was born then on the seventh of December in Gartan in Cenél Conaill, and Rath Cnó is the name of the specific place in Gartan*'. It is in O'Donnell's text that Colmcille's association with the Gartan area is given most detail, but it is also referenced in the twelfth century life of Colmcille. According to tradition, this site was an ancestral home of the Cenél Conaill, and it was gifted to Colmcille by his kinfolk to be used as a monastery. The site consists of a small stone chapel thought to have been commissioned by Manus O'Donnell in the middle sixteenth century, two poorly preserved stone crosses, the rectangular foundational remains of a building [known as the Abbey], and a holy well. The features form part of a *turas* between Colmcille's feast day on 9th June and the end of the *turas* season on 15th August, performing a series of prayers and actions at each stop. The various stations are marked with stone plaques, erected in 1997. A similar plaque provides information about the site along with a map of the key features. Brian Lacey has identified a number of other features nearby that form part of a medieval *turas* route that once led pilgrims around the Gartan lakes in praise of Colmcille.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The site is signposted from the main road, with a small carpark and a number of stone plaques that inform visitors about the site. These plaques date to the 1997 commemorations.

Conservation

Minor vegetation growth on the small chapel should be assessed and managed so that it does not become an issue. The carpark is rather close to one of the stone crosses placing it at risk of accidental damage. Donegal County Council commissioned a conservation report on St. Colmcille's Chapel, Gartan as part of the implementation of the County Donegal Heritage Plan in 2018.

Recommendations

- The on-site interpretation would benefit from being refreshed with the latest information and research on Colmcille, and as an effort to create a cohesive overarching brand.
- The carpark should be modified to create a safety buffer around key features like the stone crosses.



TOBAR AN DÚIN — DOON WELL

This holy well is in a modern landscaped setting with a large carpark and residence. The majority of the landscaping work was carried out in 2006 (according to the National Monuments Service). The well is still a popular place for people who are seeking a cure and who wish to collect holy water.

The Rock of Doon is located high on a ridge above the well. A small monument indicates that the Rock of Doon was the secular inauguration site of the O'Donnell Chieftains. Twenty five chieftains were said to have been inaugurated on this site, beginning with Eigneachan O'Donnell in 1200, and ending with Niall Garbh in 1603. The ceremony featured the head of the O'Friel family acting as the inaugurator, the Bishop of Derry (successor of Colmcille), a member of the O'Cleary family acting as the official scribe, along with their sub-chiefs, clergy and other prominent people. The prominence offers spectacular views over the landscape, and its story is certainly worth including in a Colmcille trail as it gives a powerful sense of medieval Irish society. This is particularly appropriate given the link with Manus O'Donnell who was responsible for an account of Colmcille's life which was completed in 1532. This book clearly links Colmcille to this area, although it was written almost 1,000 years after the saint's death.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The site has been subjected to extensive landscaping in recent years, and it has a large carpark, toilets and a stone path leads to the well, along with large paths to the nearby Mass Rock and the Inauguration Stone on the hills above the well. The well is clearly cared for, and a small plaque on top of the well provides some information about the site.

Conservation

No conservation requirements were identified.

Recommendations

- Consider an interpretative panel in the carpark that shows the location of the inauguration stone, mass rock and well, and provides information about medieval Donegal and the O'Donnells, and its link through Manus O'Donnell to Colmcille.



TULACH DÚGHLAISE — TEMPLEDOUGLAS

According to Manus O'Donnell's *Life of Colum Cille*, who quoted a holy man named Mura, Colmcille was believed to have been baptised here at Tulach Dubhglaise (Temple Douglas):

*'With his approval, born in Gartan,
Fostered in Kilmacrennan alone.
This child of beauty was baptised
In Temple Douglas, God's own?'*

The site currently consists of the ruins of Temple Douglas Abbey, a sixteenth century structure within a graveyard, along with the footprint of a structure known as the Abbot's House. Fragments from the buildings have been incorporated into the surrounding walls. Temple Douglas forms part of a medieval pilgrim trail around the Gartan area linking sites associated with Colmcille.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The site is still in use as a burial ground today, and it is very well kept with a large carpark and a gate. A stone plaque near the gate reads 'Tulach Dhúglaise, Temple Douglas, Sacred to Colum Cille and Cruithnechan.' A second large commemorative stone is located near the path within the enclosure of the graveyard. It was erected as part of the Turas infrastructure in 1997. The stone has a plan of the site, with a line to say that Colmcille was baptised here in 521 A.D.

Conservation

There were no obvious conservation issues identified during the inspection of the site.

Recommendations

- Consider a new interpretation panel at the gate into the site. The stone is very difficult to read, and largely inaccessible to anyone with mobility issues. A new panel will also help to reinforce an emerging brand, ensuring consistency of information and appearance.



CILL MHIC RÉANÁIN — KILMACRENNAN

The interesting complex of monuments at Kilmacrennan chiefly consists of the ruins of a Franciscan Friary said to have been founded after 1537 by Manus O'Donnell, a biographer of Colmcille, and the ruins of an early modern Church of Ireland church. According to Manus O'Donnell's *Life of Colum Cille*, Kilmacrennan is reputed to be on the site of monastery founded by Colmcille before he left Ireland for Scotland, and was also the place where he was educated by his foster father, Cruithneachán. It is believed that the site was once known as *Doire Eithne*, a reference to Colmcille's mother. Kilmacrennan is also the place where the religious aspect of the inauguration of the O'Donnell chieftains occurred. The abbey was dissolved in the sixteenth century, and the roof removed from the building in 1610. Just to the south is a ruined Protestant church which was in use from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. The site is part of a medieval pilgrim trail around the Gartan area linking sites associated with Colmcille.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

There is a small area to park, and brief information is provided on large stones at the entrance to the sites. The site is still in use as a graveyard today, and the grounds are well kept. There is restricted access to part of the abbey on health and safety grounds. The local community have created a group *Kilmacrennan Abbey Preservation Society* to raise awareness about the site. As part of their efforts they have established a heritage trail to link Kilmacrennan with Doon Rock called *Pathway of the Kings*.

Conservation

There are some substantial conservation requirements for this site. The ruins of the Franciscan church in particular are in a parlous condition, and some relatively recent collapse was apparent during the site inspection. The church is fenced off at present on health and safety grounds. The later church is heavily overgrown with ivy and vegetation. Kilmacrennan Abbey Preservation Society have engaged with the local authority and the Heritage Council to begin conservation works. As part of this, Dedalus Architecture has completed a Conservation Report on the site.





Recommendations

After discussions with Maura Strain of Kilmacrennan Abbey Preservation Society, it is clear that the society and local community have a strong interest in protecting and showcasing their local heritage. They have helped to raise awareness by having historians and experts such as Christy Gillespie to give talks and tours on the site, and they have held Heritage Week events and engaged with local schools.

- It is clear that the most urgent requirements for Kilmacrennan are to ensure the preservation of the upstanding remains. The Kilmacrennan Abbey Preservation Society have shown great commitment and resolution in their efforts. It is recommended that the group are assisted as far as possible in achieving the aims of the Conservation Report.
- Interpretative panels would help to tell the story of the site in an engaging way. The panels should feature a reconstruction illustration to show the Franciscan Friary in its heyday under the O'Donnells, and inform visitors of the links between Kilmacrennan and Doon Rock. The panel should also detail the sites traditional association with Colmcille to help to establish it as part of a unified Columban Trail brand.
- Waymarkers would help navigation.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR GARTAN

With such a pivotal role in the story of Colmcille, Gartan has much to offer in commemorating the saint in 2020/21. Not alone is the area deeply imbued with stories of Colmcille, but it is also a beautiful landscape, rich in heritage and places of interest and close to the breathtaking scenery of the Glenveagh National Park. The area is also blessed by a deeply committed and motivated community who champion the region through forums such as Gartan Development Group, Church Hill Development Group, Kilmacrennan Abbey Preservation Society and the Colmcille Heritage Centre.

Challenges

However, despite all of these assets the Gartan area faces some challenges that need to be addressed. Structurally all of the sites are in a relatively stable and accessible condition with the exception of the site at Kilmacrennan. The abbey faces significant conservation issues, and it is heartening to hear that it is currently being assessed by Dedalus Architects to establish a plan to preserve the site for future generations. The lack of accommodation may be another significant tourism challenge. There are also relatively limited options for dining. The lack of accommodation and dining options may lead to Gartan missing out on revenue as visitors may choose to stay elsewhere, making it more of a day trip experience than a base to explore the region.

Community Feedback and Incorporated Overall Recommendations

During the project discussions were held with Martin Egan (Colmcille Heritage Centre), Lorcan O'Toole (Colmcille Heritage Trust), Cllr. Michael McBride (Donegal County Council), and Maura Strain (Kilmacrennan Abbey Preservation Society) to better understand the communities wants and needs. Based on these discussions and with the impressions gleaned during fieldwork some of the key requirements highlighted include:

- To forge a stronger connection and linkages with other key areas associated with Colmcille such as Glencolmcille, Tory Island, Derry, Iona, Kells, Durrow.
- To enhance and install waymarkers and interpretation at the key locations in accordance with an overarching brand based on the story of Colmcille.
- To engage with local schools about the story of Colmcille and the significance of the Gartan region to his story.

- To liaise with experts such as Dr. Brian Lacey and Christy Gillespie to establish and waymark the traditional pilgrimage route around the region.
- To examine the possibility of further archaeological surveys and investigations to better understand the exact nature and position of the early monastery at Gartan
- To assist with the urgently required conservation needs of the friary at Kilmacrennan

Suitable Events or Celebrations for Gartan in 2020/21

- Establishing the traditional Turas route through interpretation and waymarkers will create a wonderful and meaningful heritage and tourism asset for the area. Guided tours of the Turas by experts such as Brian Lacey would make for informative and engaging events to commemorate Colmcille.
- The Colmcille Heritage Centre would be an ideal venue for talks and panel discussions on aspects of Colmcille.
- The Colmcille Heritage Centre would also be an ideal venue as a space for artists to be brought in to give workshops and classes to local schools and community members. These workshops should be inspired by Colmcille and his legacy, with events such as manuscript illustration, storytelling and similar.
- A local organisation, such as the Men's Shed, should consider commemorating the event by taking on the challenge of constructing an early medieval style currach to sail on the lakes. This could be a memorable experience and the skills learned would be a wonderful legacy for the community.
- The Colmcille Heritage Centre would also be the ideal hub to engage with a Schools Folklore Project. It could house a special exhibition of the projects and be a venue for the presentation of the results and a prize-giving evening.
- The Kilmacrennan Abbey Preservation Society have held a number of successful guided tours in the past, and the commemoration events would be an ideal opportunity to build on their fine work and to establish a local heritage trail.
- Further archaeological study would be highly worthwhile to better understand the nature of the heritage landscape. See Overall Recommendations section below.

GLEANN CHOLM CILLE GLENCOLMCILLE



A true wealth of heritage can be discovered in this scenic valley that shelters underneath Glen Head in the westernmost reaches of County Donegal. The link between Glencolmcille and the saint derives from the *Life of Colum Cille* that was commissioned by Manus O'Donnell in the sixteenth century. According to legend, this is where Saint Colmcille battled and defeated a host of devils and demons. A Turas or pilgrimage is held here every year, beginning on Colmcille's Feast Day, on the 9th June, where pilgrims visit each of the fifteen penitential stations that are set out along the valley. These penitential stations are quite varied: some have beautifully carved cross-inscribed slabs, while others are simple cairns. Some of the stations are megalithic tombs, their appropriation into a Christian pilgrimage providing a fascinating blend of ancient belief and sacred spaces with Christianity.

The Turas itself is a wonderful experience. It consists of fifteen 'Stations' and takes approximately three to four hours to complete. Most of the route is along public roads, with the majority of the stations relatively easily accessible. However some of the most

spectacular stations (such as Colmcille's Well) involve a walk cross country up a relatively steep slope without paths. The majority of the stations have minimal conservation requirements, though detailed photogrammetry/3D recording is recommended to better understand and record the detail on the cross-slabs, particularly as weathering has taken a toll on the carving.

In terms of tourism infrastructure the route requires more waymarking and interpretation as it can be difficult to navigate some of the stations at present without a local person to help guide you. There also needs to be consistency with regard to the numbering of stations. For the purposes of this report, and after consultation with Liam Ó Cuinneagáin, Seamus McGinley and Paddy Beag Gillespie, we will follow the route as outlined in the Oideas Gael printed literature. Where known, the pilgrimage ritual tradition is described at each entry. The accounts of the rituals are taken from a 1941 article by Liam Price "*Glencolumbkille, County Donegal, and its Early Christian Cross-Slabs*"



Station 6

Station 5

Station 7

Station 4

Station 3

Station 8

Station 2

Station 10

Station 9

Station 11

Station 1

Station 15

Station 12

Station 14

Station 13

R263

R230

R263



STATION 1

TUAMA CÚIRTE NA SRÁIDE

STRAID COURT TOMB

The first station on the Turas is Straid Court Tomb, a 5,000+ year old megalithic tomb that was created during the Neolithic period, some time before 3,000 BC. This reuse of an earlier sacred site is not uncommon in early Irish Christianity. The tomb is the starting point for the pilgrim's Turas, or journey. With the traditional route following a clockwise pattern around the landscape. However, the starting point isn't always strictly adhered to, it is common for local people to start at the station closest to their homes, and then follow the route around from there.

The Ritual

The pilgrim is supposed to walk clockwise around the station three times. There is a small place for the pilgrim to kneel on the western side of the ruined tomb where they pray. According to Liam Price's account from 1941, the prayers are the Creed, five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys. The pilgrim is then supposed to turn his back to the station and renounce "the world, the flesh and the devil".

Existing Infrastructure and Access

Station 1 is accessed through an unlocked steel gate into a field. Livestock are occasionally in the field. A pole still stands immediately on the station, but its sign has been removed. No other waymarker or interpretation is present.





Conservation Requirements

The tomb itself is in a rather altered state, as much of its structural form has been modified by later use in the Turas (primarily in the nineteenth century). However, little immediate structural works appear to be required, though vegetation management is advised as it could become overgrown on its eastern side. Unless the hexagonal signs are to be replaced, the redundant pole should be removed, as it has a detrimental visual impact on the monument.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 1 are to:

- Remove the redundant pole.
- Consider a stile to prevent visitors from leaving the gate open and to make it more secure for the landowner.
- Interpretative panel before you enter the field (perhaps on the gate or immediately inside).
- A waymarker to indicate this is Station 1, and point in the direction of Station 2.

STATION 2

GALLÁN CROISE

STRAID CROSS PILLAR

The second station on the Turas is a fine cross pillar that stands proudly on a rock outcrop to the west of the church. The pillar dates to the early medieval period, possibly around the eighth century. At the base of the pillar, the remains of a drystone altar (or *leacht*) can be seen. It is certainly one of the most iconic features of the Glencolmcille Turas, and it even briefly appeared in the Oscar nominated animation *Song of the Sea* by Cartoon Saloon. The pillar bears decoration on both sides, each with a different stylistic depiction of a cross.

The Ritual

The pilgrim is supposed to walk clockwise around the station three times. There is a small place for the pilgrim to kneel on the western side of the ruined tomb where they pray. According to Liam Price's account, the prayers are the Creed, five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys. The pilgrim is then supposed to turn his back to the station and renounce "the world, the flesh and the devil".

Existing Infrastructure and Access

Small stone steps act as a stile into the station. A pole stands adjacent to the steps, but it appears that the sign indicating that it is Station 2 has been removed.

Conservation Requirements

Minimal conservation works are required. The gorse on the eastern face of the rock outcrop should be kept trimmed back so as not to encroach upon the monument. Photogrammetry is also recommended to examine the detail of the carving on the cross-slab, and to accurately record the detail before weathering removes it entirely.





Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 2 are to:

- Replace Station 2 sign if it has been removed.
- Consider an interpretative panel that shows how pilgrims interacted with this station.
- A waymarker to indicate this is Station 2, and to point in the direction of Station 3.

STATION 3

ÁIT NA NGLÚN

GARVEROSS CAIRN

The third station is a small drystone cairn known as *Áit na nGlún* (The Place of the Knees). A small flat slab with a round stone is next to the cairn. The cairn is roughly oval in shape, with dimensions of 2.9m by 2.2m. It is approximately 1.2km north-west of Station 2.

The Ritual

After making the three circuits of the cairn while saying the prayers (three Our Fathers, three Hail Marys, three Glorias, and the Creed), the pilgrim then passes the round stone around their body three times, repeating, “In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.”

Existing Infrastructure and Access

A metal pole stands adjacent to the cairn, but the sign indicating that it is Station 3 has been removed.

Conservation Requirements

None apparent.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 3 are to:

- Replace Station 3 sign.
- Consider an interpretative panel adjacent to the gate that shows how pilgrims interacted with this station.
- Waymarkers recommended at the top of the road to indicate the direction of the Turas.



STATION 4

MULLACH NA CROISE

BEEFAN

The fourth station is an early medieval cross pillar known as *Mullach na Croise* (meaning the ‘Height of the Cross’). It stands on a drystone leacht or cairn, and within a drystone enclosure. The slab has a faintly incised cross on its face. The foundations of a small circular structure lie nearby, thought by Michael Herity to be the remains of a hermitage.

The Ritual

The pilgrim makes the three rounds here, while reciting five Our Fathers, five Hail Marys, five Glorias, and the Creed.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The station is accessed through a metal gate and across a field. No waymarkers are placed in the vicinity to indicate the location of the station.

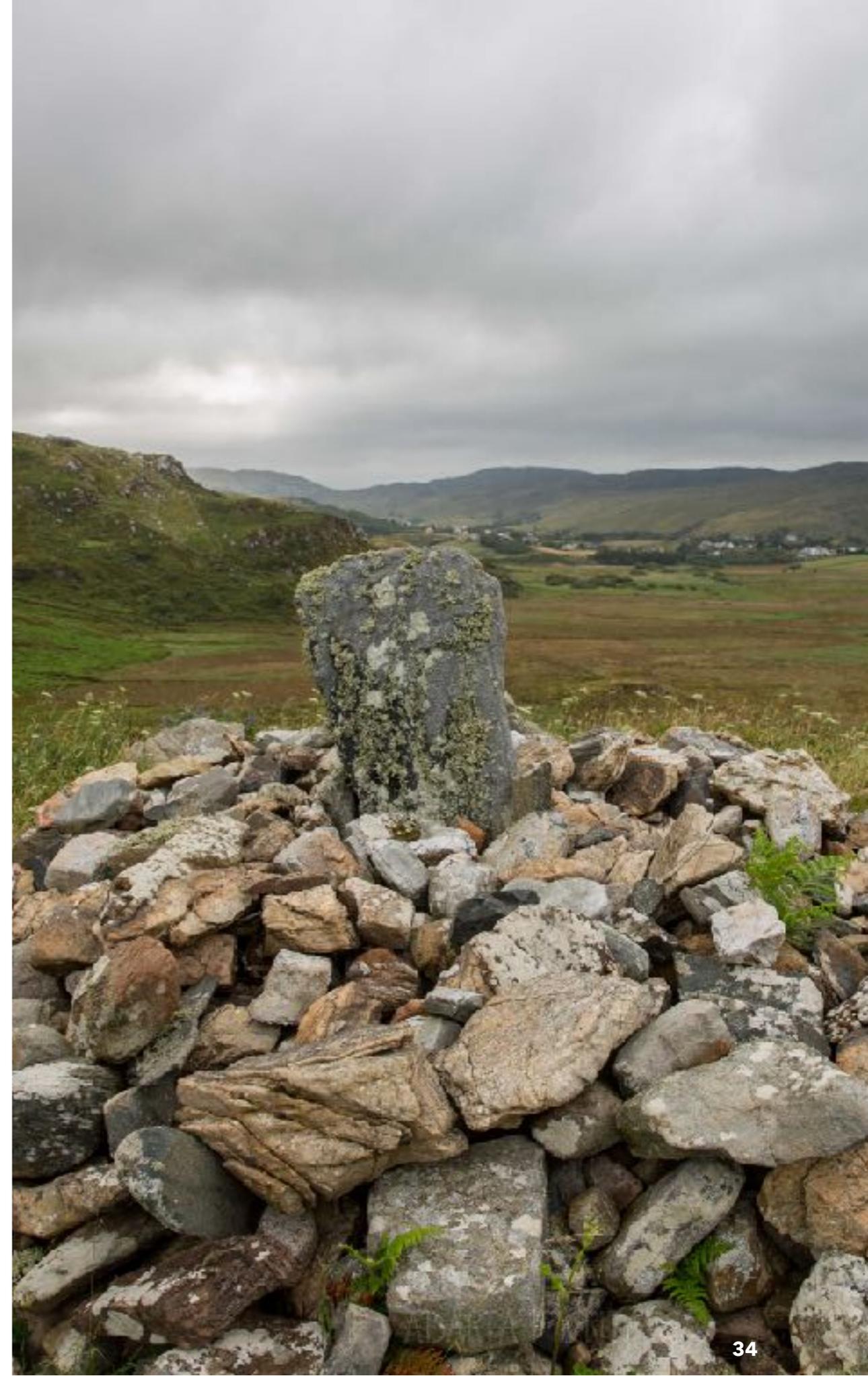
Conservation Requirements

None apparent. Though photogrammetry is recommended to examine the detail of the carving on the cross-slab, and to accurately record the detail before weathering removes it entirely.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 4 are to:

- Erect a small sign to show this is Station 4.
- Consider a small interpretative panel away from the immediate vicinity of the site to show how pilgrims would have interacted with this station.
- Waymarkers are recommended to direct visitors.



STATION 5

SÉIPEAL CHOLM CILLE

COLMCILLE'S CHAPEL

The fifth station is Colmcille's Chapel [*Séipeal Cholm Cille*] in Beefan townland. According to tradition, this was where Colmcille prayed and worked on manuscripts. From its size and appearance it is perhaps more likely that the structure represents a small chapel that may have once housed relics associated with the saint. Within the building you can see a flagstone that seals a cist-type feature. This is known as *Leaba Cholmcille* - 'the Bed of Colmcille'. Three drystone cairns or *leachtanna* stand outside the chapel. Each one is surmounted by a cross-slab. This station is one of the highlights of the Turas.

The Ritual

The pilgrim should circle the chapel three times, clockwise, while praying. After the third time the pilgrim should enter the building and lie down on Colmcille's Bed. Then the pilgrim is required to rotate their body while horizontal, always turning first onto the right side. From underneath the Bed the pilgrim may take a handful of clay, which is supposed to prevent fires in the home and provide a cure for headaches. In a little recess above the bed there were kept three stones, one with a small incised cross. The pilgrim would make the Sign of the Cross on his eyes using one of these Cloch na Súil, or "Eye Stones." These may now have gone missing, because there "is hardly a place from here to America to which they are not sent [for cures] ...people say that when Columcille used to lie down in the Bed at night he use to lay this stone over his eyes to put him asleep." Before leaving the chapel, one must pass these three stones three times round the hands, the feet, and the head, in the name of the Father, the son and the Holy Ghost.

There are also three eroded cross-topped cairns inside the circular enclosure. Each of the cairns is thrice circled during An Turas, the pilgrim saying the Creed, five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys.





To the east, just outside the enclosure, a flat boulder with a circled cross inscribed on top is called Leac na hAchainí, the “Flagstone of the Request.” This stone is said to grant the pilgrim’s wish if she walks around it three times, in prayer, and then jumps off. It is also known as Leac na mBonn, the “Flagstone of the Soles of the Feet.”

After leaving this stone, the pilgrim is supposed to proceed around the bottom of Mullach na Croise, keeping the Chapel and the cairns on the right as he proceeds to the next Station.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The station is accessed through a metal gate and across a field. No waymarkers are placed in the vicinity to indicate the location of the station.

Conservation Requirements

The church appears to be in a stable condition, and no conservation worries were evident with its ancillary cairns and cross slabs. Photogrammetry is recommended to detail and record the features.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 5 are to:

- Consider a small interpretative panel away from the immediate vicinity of the site to show how pilgrims would have interacted with this station.
- Waymarkers are recommended to direct visitors.



CATHAOIR CHOLMCILLE

COLMCILLE'S CHAIR

Though certainly a part of the Turas route, Colmcille's Chair does not appear to have been included in the original pilgrimage as an official station. According to Price (1942) *About half way between the Chapel and the Well is Columcille's chair. There is no turas made here, but people sit there to rest*. The 'chair' is a small, but noticeable, rock outcrop on the slope of the hill. Local tradition tells the tale that this is where Colmcille would sit to contemplate and meditate while enjoying the beautiful views.

The Ritual

A number of the pilgrims following the turas in Gleann Cholm Cille do so with bare feet. There is water near the rock most of the time and many people cool their feet as they sit here. Some claim that a wish made here will come true. Another tradition says that at this point, pilgrims gather three stones to place on the cairn at Colmcille's Well further up the hill.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The station is accessed via a metal gate into a field. A waymarker indicates the direction of the Turas and the Well. A metal pole stands immediately behind Colmcille's Chair, though the sign indicating it is part of the Turas has been removed.

Conservation Requirements

None evident, though increased footfall may lead to some erosion of the hillside. If more tourism is a desired outcome, a walkway or official path is recommended to lead up to Colmcille's Well (Station 6) that passes this point.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Colmcille's Chair are to:

- Remove the pole that stands adjacent to the rock outcrop.
- Consider a small interpretative panel to tell its story.
- A waymarker just after Colmcille's Chair to point towards the well may be helpful.



STATION 6

TOBAR CHOLM CILLE

COLMCILLE'S WELL

This large 'L'-Shaped penitential cairn that shelters a small holy well, *Tobar Colm Cille* – Colmcille's Well. A small cross-slab stands atop the cairn. With its spectacular views and undeniable sense of history, this is one of the most rewarding highlights of the whole Turas.

The Ritual

According to the tradition, pilgrims bring three stones with them up the hill to the well. They then must go three times around the cairn in a clockwise direction, on each circuit a stone should be placed on the cairn. After three circuits the water can then be drunk.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The station is accessed via a metal gate into a field, and the route passes Colmcille's Chair (see above). A waymarker is located at the gate. A narrow path, eroded by footfall into the hillside, leads up to the well.

Conservation Requirements

None evident, though increased footfall may lead to some erosion of the hillside. A number of pilgrims and visitors leave plastic offerings, an alternative (organic) offering should be considered and made available to visitors to reduce the amount of plastic accumulating on the site –Brigid's Crosses or similar crosses from rushes would be a good alternative.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 6 are to:

- Replace the sign indicating that this is Station 6.
- A waymarker just after Colmcille's Chair to point towards the well may be helpful. A boardwalk or established path would be highly desirable.
- An alternative offering for pilgrims would be ideal to prevent build-up of plastic.
- Photogrammetry to record the cross and key features of the cairn.





STATION 7

GARRAÍ CHOLMCILLE

COLMCILLE'S GARDEN

Colmcille's Garden, *Garraí an Turais* [the Turas Field], contains a set of three upright stones, two of which are carved with a simple cross. Each stone stands on a cairn or *leacht* and all are enclosed by a stone wall. The enclosure is also known as *Lios Cháigh* – the Holy Enclosure. A large, boat-shaped stone can be found in the boggy ground between Station 7 and 8. This is known as *Umar Ghlinne* (the Trough of the Glen), and pilgrims bathe their feet in the water that fills the depression.

The Ritual

Pilgrims circle each of the cairns three times, while reciting the Our Father and the Hail Mary each time around. At one of the cairns there was a flat stone that is said to have curative properties for a sore throat if the pilgrim raised it up to their chin.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

This station is rather difficult to access as it lies in boggy ground, and no waymarkers mean that it is a challenge to find. To access the station we asked for permission from a landowner, and crossed a wet field, and over a small stile into an enclosure of the ruins of nineteenth century houses, before entering into the field with the stations.

Conservation Requirements

The vegetation was very high during our visit, with tall bracken and ferns and a wet and uneven ground surface making conditions difficult. Vegetation management may be required, though the monuments themselves appeared to have little requirements beyond photogrammetry.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 7 are to:

- Provide waymarkers to indicate route.
- Consider a boardwalk to cross the marshy ground that leads to this station and the next.
- Photogrammetry of the cairns and crosses.



STATION 8

CLOCH AN AONAIGH

THE STONE OF THE GATHERING

The Stone of the Gathering, *Cloch an Aonaigh*, is a tall cross pillar with decoration on its north-western face, facing the direction of the pilgrims coming from the previous station. The cross pillar stands on a low cairn or leacht, and it has a small hole through the centrepoint of the crosshead. Local folklore says if you look through the hole you can catch a glimpse of paradise. However, the Schools' Folklore Collection records that a local informant in 1936 said that the visions of heaven had gone away because “*the people are no longer what they used to be, and the class that’s going around now don’t deserve to see such sights.*”

The Ritual

The pilgrim circles the cairn three times, saying five Our Fathers, five Hail Marys, five Glorias, and the Creed. Then, placing his back to the stone, renounces the World, the Flesh, and the Devil (*Diúltaim don Diabhal, don Saol, agus don Cholainn*). In a 1902 account it was reported that barren women would pray for children at this stone (Wood-Martin, 1902).

Existing Infrastructure and Access

A set of stone steps leads into this station. A small sign on a metal pole indicate that this is Station 9

Conservation Requirements

Photogrammetry is recommended to detail and record the features of the cross-pillar.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 8 are to:

- Waymarkers are recommended (perhaps consider a waymarker for the nearby Farranmacbride Court Tomb too).
- Consider a small interpretative panel away from the immediate vicinity of the site to show how pilgrims would have interacted with this station.



STATION 9

AN FHOTHAIR

This station An Fhothair consists of a small cross-slab on a drystone leacht or cairn. There are good views back towards the church from this point.

The Ritual

The pilgrim circles the cairn three times, saying five Our Fathers, five Hail Marys, five Glorias, and the Creed.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The station is accessed through a metal gate into the field. A small sign is affixed directly onto the cairn. This is rather inappropriate as the corroding metal may impact upon the fabric of the cairn. It would be better moved onto a pole where it would have less detrimental impact upon the monument.

Conservation Requirements

Photogrammetry is recommended, along with the removal of the name sign that is affixed directly to the cairn

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 9 are:

- Waymarkers are required, one leading from the crossroads on the return from Station 8 to point the direction out of Glencolmcille, another to point down laneway where Station 9 is located.
- Consider a small interpretative panel away from the immediate vicinity of the site to show how pilgrims would have interacted with this station.
- Move the name sign off the cairn and onto a pole a short distance from the Station.



STATION 10

WAYSIDE CAIRN

Station 10 of the Turas is this small roadside cairn beside a house, easily accessible from the main road. The cairn was moved for safety during the construction of the house, and reassembled on its original site.

The Ritual

The pilgrim circles the cairn three times, saying five Our Fathers, five Hail Marys, five Glorias, and the Creed.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

This station is adjacent to the road with no fencing or interpretation.

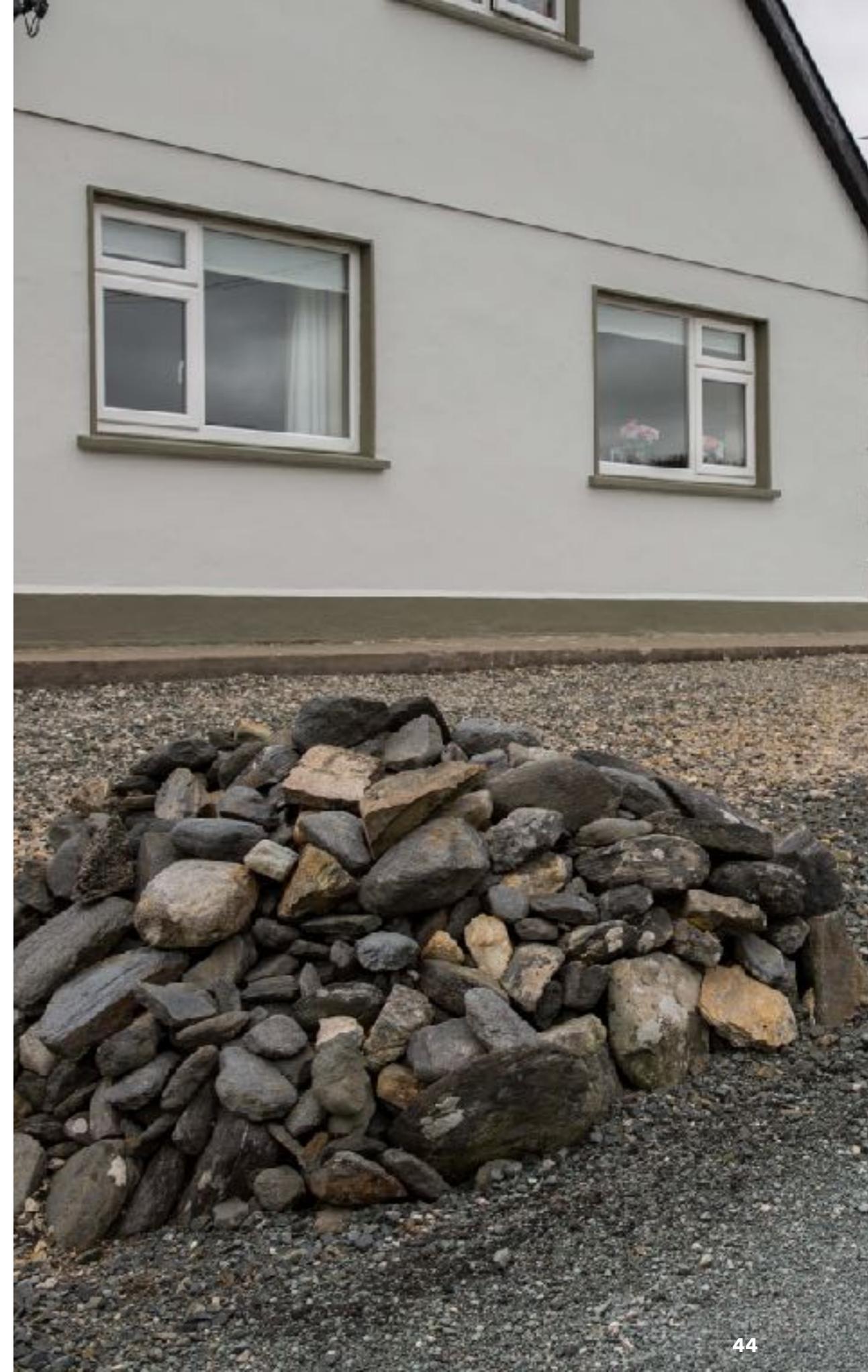
Conservation Requirements

Station 10 is in a good state of repair. However its proximity to the road leaves it somewhat vulnerable to accidental damage.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 10 are:

- A small hexagonal sign with a nameplate to indicate this is Station 10.
- Consider a small interpretative panel away from the immediate vicinity of the site to show how pilgrims would have interacted with this station.



STATION 11

AN DROIM RUA

This station is a small cairn, it has a small cross slab standing upright though a large proportion of the cairn is covered by gorse. This is the furthest point east, after this station the pilgrim turns back and heads westwards back towards the church.

The Ritual

The pilgrim circles the cairn three times, saying five Our Fathers, five Hail Marys, five Glorias, and the Creed.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

This station is accessed through a stone gate in the stone wall, a small sign is visible in the vicinity of the cairn.

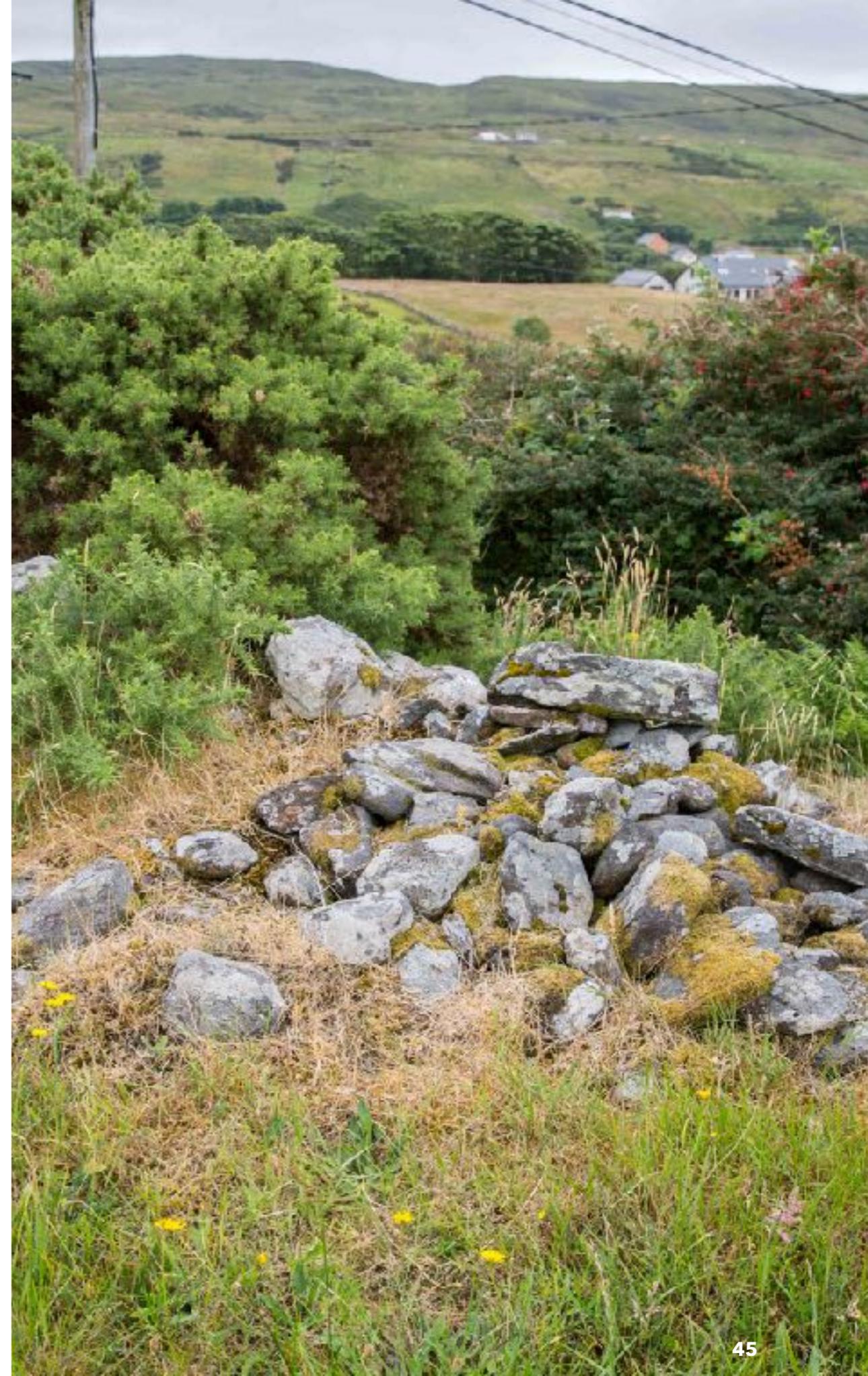
Conservation Requirements

Station 11 is has become overgrown by a gorse bush. The upright slab is no-longer visible. Vegetation management is recommended and required. Once the vegetation has been cleared photogrammetry is recommended.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 11 are to:

- Manage the gorse bush that obscures the station.
- Erect a waymarker.
- Consider a small interpretative panel away from the immediate vicinity of the site to show how pilgrims would have interacted with this station.



STATION 12

BAILE NA nDEAMHAN

This station consists of a highly decorated cross-slab in a drystone leacht. The name of this Station, *Baile na nDeamhan* (Village of the Demons) reflects the tale of Colmcille's battle with demons.

The Ritual

The pilgrim circles the cairn three times, saying five Our Fathers, five Hail Marys, five Glorias, and the Creed.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

This station is accessed through a stone gate in the stone wall.

Conservation Requirements

Photogrammetry is recommended to detail and record the features of the cross-pillar.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 12 are to:

- Erect waymarkers.
- Requires a small sign to state this is Station 12.
- Consider a small interpretative panel away from the immediate vicinity of the site to show how pilgrims would have interacted with this station.



STATION 13

AN GAINEAMH

This station consists of a stone cross-slab with a decorated face on the eastern side that greets pilgrims as they travel west along the road. This is a fibreglass replica as the original was damaged. The original can now be seen in the Folk Village nearby.

The Ritual

The pilgrim circles the cairn three times, saying five Our Fathers, five Hail Marys, five Glorias, and the Creed.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

This station is immediately adjacent to the road. A small sign indicates this is Station 13 of the Turas, and an adjacent waymarker points in the direction of the church, and is marked Turas Colmcille.

Conservation Requirements

Photogrammetry is recommended to detail and record the features of the original cross-pillar.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 13 are to:

- Consider a small interpretative panel away from the immediate vicinity of the site to show how pilgrims would have interacted with this station.
- Photogrammetry of the original cross-slab to record the features.



STATION 14

AN CAISEAL

To reach this station, the pilgrim must use stepping stones to cross the River Muirlin. The station appears as a standing cross-slab on a leacht, though the ferns and bracken obscure much of the detail of the ground features.

The Ritual

The pilgrim circles the cairn three times, saying three Our Fathers, three Hail Marys, three Glorias, and the Creed.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

This station is difficult to access from the traditional route, though it is relatively easily accessible from a new road that runs behind.

Conservation Requirements

Photogrammetry is recommended to detail and record the features of the original cross-pillar. Almost all the detail of the carving is absent or covered in lichen when compared with Liam Price's study in 1941.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 14 are to:

- Consider a small interpretative panel away from the immediate vicinity of the site to show how pilgrims would have interacted with this station.
- Photogrammetry of the original cross-slab to record the features.
- Consider a small discreet wooden bridge upstream from the stepping stones to make this station more accessible.



STATION 15

AN TSTRÁID

This station consists of a decorated cross slab, broken into two pieces. It marks the final Station of the Turas. Though not part of the traditional turas, the church itself is worthy of note as a fine example of a nineteenth century architecture. A large souterrain in the grounds of the church is an incredible feature, though perhaps too much of a health and safety concern to allow visitor access.

The Ritual

The pilgrim circles the cairn three times, saying five Our Fathers, five Hail Marys, five Glorias, and the Creed.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

This station is within the churchyard, and accessible via an iron gate.

Conservation Requirements

Photogrammetry is recommended to detail and record the features of the cross-pillar.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for Station 15 are to:

- Erect a waymarker.
- Consider a small interpretative panel (perhaps near the gate into the church) to show how pilgrims would have interacted with this station.



GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR GLENCOLMCILLE

Challenges

Glencolmcille abounds in beauty and heritage, and it is deeply imbued with stories of Colmcille. As such it has the potential to play an important role in the upcoming celebrations of 2020/21. However in terms of visitor experience and tourism, Glencolmcille does face some challenges. Perhaps most significantly, that the local community and landowners wish that the focus remains on the traditional Turas period, between 9th June – 15th August. Year-long access is not desired at present – even on a one-off basis in the celebration year – as there are concerns that doing so may form a precedent and lead to greater pressure to maintain year round access. This lack of permanent access may lead to difficulty with having the Turas added to the *Pilgrim Paths* movement, though further discussions should be undertaken to see if it would be possible to add Glencolmcille given that it is one of the finest pilgrimage experiences available in Ireland.

The lack of accommodation may be another significant tourism challenge, with the main hotel closed the bulk of accommodation is available in a budget hostel, and a number of small B&B's and guesthouses. There are also limited options for dining, with the Oideas Gael restaurant and a takeaway van the only options during our visit. The lack of accommodation and dining options may lead to Glencolmcille missing out on revenue as visitors may choose to stay elsewhere, such as Ardar.

Community Feedback and Incorporated Overall Recommendations

During the project discussions were held with Liam Ó Cuinneagáin (Oideas Gael), Seamus McGinley (archaeologist) and Paddy Beag Gillespie (local guide) to better understand the communities wants and needs. Some of the key requirements highlighted include:

- That the focus should be kept on the traditional turas period of 9th June – 15th August.
- That the Irish language is an important focus for the community and that any interpretative signage or information is bilingual.

- A general information panel placed centrally in the village to inform visitors about Glencolmcille's heritage and its connection to Saint Colmcille
- To install more waymarkers to aid visitors
- To replace the missing hexagonal signage that gives the Station number. The old-style design is very visually appealing and it is recommended that any new name plates, interpretation and waymarkers are in keeping with that style.
- Small discreet signage (bilingual) to inform people about the nature of the stations and how pilgrims should interact with each station.
- To examine the feasibility of having a walkway to allow for easier access to Station 6 (Colmcille's Well), Station 7 (Colmcille's Garden) and to cross the boggy ground between Station 7 and 8.
- To establish the feasibility of a small walkway and wooden bridge to allow easier access to Station 14 (An Caisel) as an alternative to the traditional stepping stones.
- To explore possibility of having Glencolmcille added to the Pilgrim's Paths Initiative
- To have better connections to link Glencolmcille with other Columban places such as Gartan, Derry, Durrow, Kells, Iona and Durrow.
- To carry out photogrammetry of all the stations to establish a baseline record for conservation.
- To examine the possibility of further archaeological survey and investigations to better understand the exact nature and position of the early monastery

Suitable Events or Celebrations for Glencolmcille in 2020/21

- With the existing tradition of the Turas, Glencolmcille is perfect for walking tours and communal celebration, that can be enjoyed both by the community and visitors alike.
- The Oideas Gael Centre would be an ideal venue for talks and seminars on the legacy of Colmcille.
- The Centre would also be perfect for activities and workshops, such as manuscript illustration, storytelling evenings or an exhibition on the local heritage.
- The Centre would also be an ideal hub for the Schools Folklore Project (see General Recommendations Section below).





OILEÁN THORAÍ TORY ISLAND

Over 14km off the Coast of Donegal, and surrounded by the tempestuous waters of the Atlantic Ocean, Tory Island is the most remote of Ireland's inhabited islands. The island is small, (at just 4km²), and home to a community of approximately 120 people. This vibrant community is famed for its character, its creativity and love of art and music. The island is an enchantingly beautiful place, where you can find a story around every corner. Perhaps the most famous story of Tory Island is that of Balor of the Evil-Eye. As his name suggests, Balor possessed an eye of terrible power that had the power to strike his enemies dead with a glance. A druid had prophesied that Balor would be killed by his grandson. To protect himself, Balor had his only daughter, Eithne, imprisoned on the nearly inaccessible rock of Tormór at the easternmost end of Tory Island. However even the mighty Balor could not escape fate. Eithne was visited by Balor's enemy and they fell in love. When he discovered that Eithne had given birth to three sons, Balor was full of fear and fury. He had the three infants flung into a whirlpool, but the eldest, Lugh, survived, and when he was a young man

he fulfilled fate by slaying his monstrous grandfather. To this day, Balor's Fort and Balor's Prison are names for features on the eastern side of the island. Colmcille's links to Tory comes primarily from Manus O'Donnell's *Life of Colum Cille*, where the tale of Colmcille flinging his staff onto Tory from Cnoc na Naomh to win the honour of converting the island. However, the ruler of the island, Oilill was not overly enamoured with the prospect of Colmcille as a neighbour and refused permission for him to establish a monastery on the island. Colmcille bargained with Oilill, and made the very humble request for just as much land as his cloak would cover. Not wanting to appear churlish, Oilill agreed, only to be enraged when Colmcille's cloak magically expanded to cover the entire island. In his anger at being tricked, Oilill unleashed his venomous dog on Colmcille, as the dog bounded towards the saint, venom dripping from his maw, Colmcille made the sign of the cross and commanded the dog to die on the spot, and the dog duly obliged. Seeing this, Oilill fell to his knees and was converted. He granted the island to Colmcille, who built his monastery there.



Tory Island is a wonderful visitor experience, and would certainly be a valuable addition to any overarching brand proposition that focused on Colmcille.

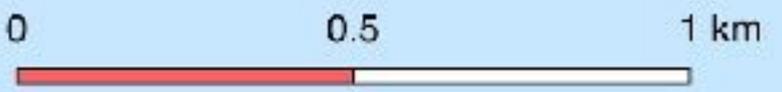
The majority of the monuments on the island have little conservation requirements, though detailed photogrammetry/3D recording is recommended to better understand and record the detail on some of the features, particularly as weathering may have negatively impacted the carving. The round tower and stained-glass windows of the church may also benefit from specialist advice.

In terms of tourism infrastructure the island requires more waymarking and interpretation as it can be difficult to navigate some of the stations at present without a local person to help guide you. There are some interpretative panels present, but these are rather weathered and would benefit from being refreshed.

Tory Island has a number of features that relate to Colmcille. Each of the monuments will be described with specific recommendations below. General recommendations for Tory Island can be found at the end of this section. number of the main points of interest around the West Town have interpretative panels that were erected as part of the *Walking Through Donegal* initiative that was funded by the Irish Government under the National Development Plan 2007–2013, Donegal County Council and Údarás na Gaeltachta.



TORY ISLAND



AN CHROS TAU

THE TAU CROSS

The Tau Cross (one of only two in Ireland, the other located at Killinaboy, Clare), is located at the head of the pier at West Town. As it is one of the first things a visitor encounters, it has become an iconic symbol of the island. The cross is thought to date to the twelfth century and it is carved from a single block of stone. Interestingly, the stone is mica slate, a rock type not found on Tory Island. As such the cross must have been transported across the Atlantic to the island, giving a tantalising glimpse into medieval shipping, transport and logistics as well as religious belief. The cross stands approximately 1.90m high, the shaft is 0.40m wide and 0.15m thick. The head of the cross is 1.10m wide and 0.35m deep. The cross stands on a mortared rectangular stone platform that is presumably not contemporary with the cross. According to tradition Tory fishermen pray before the cross before heading out to sea.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The Tau Cross is immediately accessible as it stands adjacent to the main thoroughfare at the head of the pier. A small interpretative panel (part of the *Walking Through Donegal* scheme) stands next to the cross and provides information on its history.

Conservation Requirements

Though on visual inspection the cross appears to have little need of conservation works, it may be highly worthwhile to have the cross recorded in 3D, by photogrammetry or another similar technique. Not only will this produce an accurate 3D recording of the cross, but it may also reveal if there are previously unknown weathered carvings that are imperceptible to the naked eye.

Recommendations

The key recommendations for the Tau Cross are to:

- Digitally record the cross in 3D using photogrammetry or laser scanning.
- Consider replacing the existing interpretative panel.



TEACH AN PHOBAIL ST COLMCILLE'S CHAPEL

This atmospheric and well-proportioned chapel was built in 1857. It was designed by the English architect E.W. Goodwin, and the stained glass windows are the work of Patrick Pollen. A fine statue to Colmcille stands just outside the chapel.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The chapel is still in use for the community today. On the day of the visit, the gate and chapel were unlocked and visitors certainly appeared to be welcome.

Conservation Requirements

The church has been advised that conservation repair work is required on the stained glass windows to ensure that they do not deteriorate further.

Recommendations

- Given it is named after Colmcille, and with the fine stained glass windows and statue, the chapel should be included in any Colmcille-focused trail of the island.
- An interpretative panel.



AN TSEANREILIG

THE OLD GRAVEYARD

The Old Graveyard of Tory Island is believed to be on the site of the early medieval monastery *An Teampall Bui*. At the western side of the graveyard, a small stone altar holds a number of stone carvings. These include a cross-slab that is now embedded in the graveyard wall. During a clean-up of the graveyard, islanders discovered a large stone with a slot, later identified by a National Monuments Service archaeologist as being the base of a stone cross. This perhaps provides further evidence that the graveyard lies within the boundaries of the early monastery.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The graveyard is still in use today, and it is very well kept and maintained, with a gate and paths.

Conservation Requirements

The graveyard is clearly well kept and maintained, and this should be encouraged and facilitated where possible.

Recommendations

- Photogrammetry is recommended for the cross slab and other early medieval stone fragments.
- If it hasn't already been done, consider a graveyard survey as a way to engage the local community with their heritage.
- The interpretative panels should be refreshed if Colmcille is to become a focused brand proposition. As well as information about the site and Colmcille, the panel should remind the visitor that this is the island's burial ground, and to be mindful of those paying their respects at relatives graves.
- Further archaeological survey and investigation to establish the exact location, nature and date of the monastery enclosure.



AN CLOIGTHEACH THE ROUND TOWER

Constructed from sea-rolled granite blocks, and standing at just 13m high, the round tower at Tory Island is one of the smallest in Ireland, and it is the only round tower that still stands in Donegal. *Clog Cholm Cille* - Colmcille's bell - was hung in the tower until the late-eighteenth century when it was removed after the tower was damaged by lightning. The bell has been missing since the nineteenth century. A small interpretative panel, erected as part of the *Walking Through Donegal* initiative informs visitors about the history of the tower.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The round tower is very accessible, as it is adjacent to the road in the West Town.

Conservation

Overall the tower looks to be in stable condition, though it would be advisable to have a professional conservation engineer/architect to examine the uppermost section of the tower. Closer inspection may reveal that some of the stones there may require attention. The tower appears to have been substantially repaired, perhaps in the nineteenth century.

Recommendations

- A conservation architect to carry out a detailed assessment of the upper section of the tower.
- Perhaps renew and refresh the interpretation.
- Can some of the wires and poles that surround the tower be removed or realigned? It does provide a negative visual impression of one of the island's key historical assets.
- Can an investigation as to the whereabouts of *Clog Cholm Cille* be renewed?



ULAÍ EOIN BAISTE ST. JOHN'S ALTAR

A mortared rectangular platform known as St John's Altar stands in front of the tower. The altar is dedicated to St. John the Baptist. A number of architectural fragments and early medieval stone artefacts stand on the platform. Including the top of a stone cross with similarities to St. Oran's Cross on Iona, and a circular cross-base or mill stone. The artefacts are likely to have been gathered from the immediate area that is thought to have been within the original monastic enclosure.

The altar itself appears to be of relatively recent date (almost certainly post-nineteenth century). It is recorded as a *leacht* (or drystone altar) that was possibly rebuilt when it was moved from its original position in the early twentieth century. A small interpretative panel, erected as part of the *Walking Through Donegal* initiative informs visitors about the altar and the sculptural fragments.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The altar is very accessible, as it is adjacent to the road in the West Town immediately in front of the round tower.

Conservation

The altar has no immediate conservation requirements, though photogrammetry and digital recording is strongly recommended for the sculptural fragments.

Recommendations

- Photogrammetry of the sculptural fragments will help to create a digital record and may reveal any features imperceptible to the naked eye.
- Consider refreshing the interpretation.



ULAÍ BHRÍDE

ST. BRIGID'S ORATORY

A small stone altar hidden away between the islander's houses. On top of the altar you can see three quern (or possibly bullaun) stones and what appears to be fragments of graveslabs. A hydrangea grows on one side, partially obscuring the feature.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The oratory is accessible, as it is in a narrow lane between cottages in the West Town.

Conservation Requirements

The hydrangea partially obscures the feature, but it does not seem to be causing significant deterioration of the altar. If it is to be retained, it should be kept small and neat with reasonably regular observation as to whether its roots are causing any displacement of the stonework.

Recommendations

- Should tourism be encouraged, it is highly recommended that this is discussed with the cottages that border the altar as they may have their privacy impacted by visitors given the tight proximity.
- Waymarkers and a small interpretative panel are recommended should it be chosen as part of a trail.



MÓRSHEISEAR CHURCH OF THE SEVEN

A small stone chapel located to the west of the town. In Irish this place is called *Mórsheisear* which translates as 'big number six', an old Irish word for the number seven. The name comes from a tale related in Manus ÓDonnell's *The Life of Colum Cille*. The text recounts how the story of Colmcille's piety and wisdom spread worldwide, and so inspired the children of the King of India, six boys and one girl, that they travelled from India to Tory. On coming ashore they died of exhaustion after their long voyage. Colmcille was moved by their devotion, and prayed so that they may be revived, which miraculously worked. The children told the story of their journey and their reasons for travelling. Colmcille sadly told them that they could not escape death, but that he would give them absolution. After receiving their blessing, the children all immediately died. He ordered that a stone chapel be built for them, that became known as *Teampall an Mhórsheisir*, the Church of the Seven. They were all buried in one plot, but in the morning the girl's body appeared on top of the grave so she was reburied in a separate plot. The chapel is a small rectangular foundation of rough blocks, irregularly built. Its long axis is roughly orientated WNW-ESE. Internally it varies from 3.8m to 3.4m in width. The chapel has a small stone altar at the eastern end, and a bullaun stone is near the entrance. A small walled plot is located nearby to the west. According to folklore this walled plot marks the burial place of the girl. It is said that clay from this plot banishes rats, and the sacred clay is also believed to keep seafarers safe from harm. In order for the clay to be effective, it may only be collected by the oldest member of the Duggan family living on Tory Island.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The Church of the Seven is very accessible, as it is located adjacent to the road on the western outskirts of West Town. Three small stone steps lead up from the road to allow access to the site. A decorative wooden sign with the name *Móirsheisear* is highly visible from the road.

Conservation Requirements

The chapel has been conserved in relatively recent decades by the OPW and so no conservation works are required. However ongoing grass cutting is advised to prevent the immediate area of the chapel from becoming overgrown.

Recommendations

- A small interpretative panel and a waymarker should be considered.
- A local agreement should be pursued to ensure vegetation management (grass cutting) to ensure it remains accessible. Though a sheep or goat could be an effective option.



CLOCH AN CHÚ

THE ROCK OF THE HOUND

According to Manus O'Donnell's *Life of Colum Cille*, when Colmcille first arrived on Tory Island the local king Oilill refused to grant him land. Colmcille persuaded the king to at least allow him as much land as his cloak would cover. Wishing to appear magnanimous over so small a request, King Oilill agreed however Colmcille's miraculous cloak spread to cover the entire island. Oilill was infuriated and unleashed his poisoned dog on Colmcille but the saint made the sign of the cross and the dog leapt into the sea to escape the blessing. As he leapt to his death, the dog left his footprints on one rock and split another with his tail.

Unfortunately I could not locate the rock during my visit.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

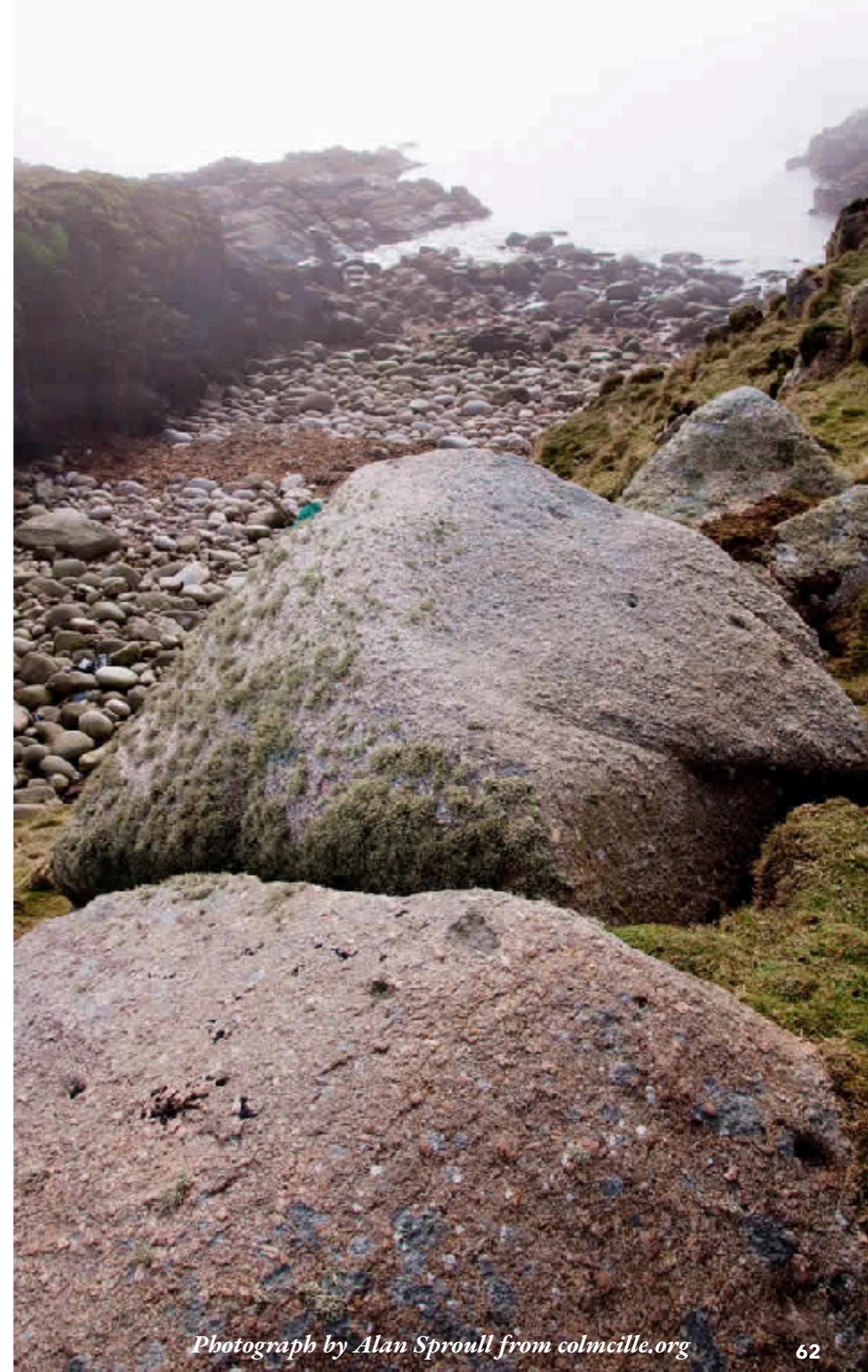
Not known

Conservation Requirements

None known.

Recommendations

- Given that I could not locate the rock, a waymarker is certainly recommended.
- A small interpretative panel that tells the folkloric tale with an artist's impression of the scene is also recommended.



GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR TORY ISLAND

Challenges

Tory Island is simply a breathtakingly beautiful place that abounds in stories and heritage, music and art and where a visitor feels welcomed and inspired. There are few places in Ireland that could compare as a place of stunning natural heritage and creativity.

Tory's unique atmosphere is partly due to its remoteness, and it is the remoteness that is a double-edged sword. The often turbulent waters of the Atlantic means that island is often difficult to access, and as such, the tourist season is very limited. It is essential for both tourism and the community, that a safe and reliable ferry service is secured for the island.

There is a feeling that the island is also cut a little adrift in terms of tourism promotion, and from discussion with the community there is a sense that the island was overlooked during the *Wild Atlantic Way* initiative. Like Glencolmcille, the Irish language is a part of every day life. Any new interpretation, waymarkers or promotional literature should be bilingual.

Community Feedback and Incorporated Overall Recommendations

During the project we had a discussion with Grace Meenan, the Church Secretary of St Colmcille's Chapel on the island. Grace highlighted importance of the story of Colmcille for the island, as well as practical issues such as the need for conservation works on the stained-glass windows in the church.

- There is a need for more tourism promotion for the island than what is currently apparent, and the island would strongly benefit from being included in a unified tourism brand focused on Colmcille.
- The island would benefit from an interpretation plan to help bring all of the key features together, with those places associated with Colmcille as part of a larger Tory Trail.
- Interpretative panels and waymarkers (bilingual) to inform people about the places of interest.

- To have better connections to link Tory Island with other Columban places such as Glencolmcille, Gartan, Derry, Durrow, Kells, Iona and Durrow.
- To carry out photogrammetry of a number of key features to establish a baseline record for conservation.
- To engage a conservation architect to assess the round tower.
- To carry out conservation works on the stained-glass windows in Colmcille's Church.
- To examine the possibility of further archaeological survey and investigations to better understand the exact nature and position of the early monastery.

Suitable Events or Celebrations for Glencolmcille in 2020/21

- Abounding in natural beauty and heritage, Tory Island would be an ideal setting for a walking tour to inform people about the island's links to Colmcille.
- The Community also expressed interest in taking part in a Schools Folklore Project.
- With such a wonderful creative community and legacy, Tory Island would be the ideal setting for musical and artistic events to celebrate Colmcille in 2020/21.



OTHER SITES IN COUNTY DONEGAL



CNOC NA NAOMH HILL OF THE SAINTS



According to legend, Colmcille stood on the summit of this hill with his companions, Saints Fionán, Dubhthach and Begley. As they took in the view from the hill, the men discussed who would have the task of converting the people of Tory Island to Christianity. To decide, they each threw their staff as far as they could. Two landed near Falcarragh, another on Inis Dubhthaigh (Inishdooney Island) and Colmcille's crozier landed on Tory, winning him the reward of converting the islanders. His crozier is said to have formed a hollow on Tory's northeast cliffs.

There is a twentieth century cross on the summit of the hill, but no archaeological remains are recorded in the Archaeological Survey of Ireland. At the time of visit (July 2018) the only access to the hill was via a private lane, permission could not be sought on this occasion. If access to the hill is deemed to be desirable for a Colmcille themed trail, the willingness of the landowners to allow access must be established.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

To be determined. A walk to the cross on the top of the hill and a mass takes place each year around Easter time.

Conservation Requirements

Unknown.

Recommendations

- To establish whether the landowner/s wishes the hill to be accessible to the general public on a year round basis.
- If it is deemed accessible, a waymarker and small carpark will be required.
- A small interpretative panel that tells the folkloric tale with an artist's impression of the scene is also recommended.

EAGLAIS RÁITHE RAY CHURCH



This post-medieval church, (also known as Raymunterdoney Old Church), is thought to stand on the site of an early medieval monastery associated with Saint Fionán, a contemporary of Colmcille. According to legend, the cross was originally intended to be erected on Tory Island, but Colmcille gifted it to Fionán after he retrieved Colmcille's lost gospel. The church that we see today is thought to date to after 1622. The church itself is rather plain, with four large round-headed windows and a pointed doorway. Inside the church is a remarkable high cross. The head of the cross is surrounded by a ring, and the cross bears a strong resemblance to Saint John's Cross on Iona, possibly a reflection of the links between the church and Colmcille's foundation there. It has been argued that this cross may be one of the earliest ringed-stone crosses in Ireland (Lacey 2016).

Ray Church also has a darker story, of a bloody massacre known as *Marfach Ráithe*, when Cromwellian soldiers slaughtered the entire congregation who were attending Mass in the church.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

There is a small area to park, and access is through a gate into the churchyard. The graveyard appears to be well maintained.

Conservation

The church and high cross are in a good condition and the graveyard is well maintained. As such, no obvious conservation requirements were apparent.

Recommendations

- An interpretative panel near to the gate on the exterior of the site. This panel should give an engaging description of the history, and include a sub-section on the folklore of Saint Fionán.
- There is opportunity to carry out further archaeological research to better understand the site and the high cross. Geophysical survey, and geological testing should be considered.



TULACHA BEIGILE TULLAGHOBEGLY



This site consists of the foundational remains of a medieval church set within a historic graveyard. The site has been established on a low mound, that in itself may have been an archaeological feature, as a second, more distinctive, mound is on the opposite slope to the church. This mound is recorded as DG025-043--- ‘Burial Ground’ in the SMR, and is known locally as *An Reilig Bheag*. From above this mound appears to be within a large enclosure, and potentially may be early medieval (or earlier) in date. This church is associated through local tradition with Saint Begley, (also known as Bigill or Beaglaoch), who was a contemporary of Colmcille. Begley features in the staff-throwing tale related to the conversion of Tory Island. According to the tale Begley’s staff landed at this spot and that’s why he founded the church here.

The medieval church at Tullaghobegly only survives a few courses high, but it is an atmospheric and interesting site, and certainly worthy of consideration as part of a broader trail.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The graveyard has good paths and appears in a well maintained condition. Parking appears to be quite limited.

Conservation

The graveyard and church ruin are well maintained with a good path. There are no obvious conservation requirements.

Recommendations

- The site could benefit from a more defined area to park.
- Interpretative panel that explains the story of the site and its important historical context with reference to the other significant sites from multiple periods in the vicinity.

RÁTH BHOTH RAPHOE



The 12th-century Life of Columba credits the saint with the foundation of Raphoe: *“Thereafter Colmccille founded Raphoe. It was there he brought back from death to life the wright who had been drowned in the millpond.*

In Raphoe, moreover, his household lacked a ploughshare, whereupon he blessed the hands of the little boy that was with him (Fergna was his name), and Fergna made the share, and he was skilful in smithwork thenceforth through Colomb’s blessing”.

Colmccille is also referenced as the founder of the monastery of Raphoe in Manus O’Donnell’s *Life of Colum Cille*, which repeats the tale of Colmccille’s restoration of the millwright. Later in Manus O’Donnell’s text, Colmccille laments his exile and mentions several places that he longs for, including *“Beloved Raphoe of the bells.”* Colmccille’s biographer Adomnán is also credited with the foundation of the monastery here, and indeed the cathedral is named St. Eunan (the Anglicised

version of Adomnán) in his honour. He is also the patron saint of the Diocese of Raphoe.

Raphoe became a Diocesan See in the twelfth century. A round tower here was demolished in 1636. The present cathedral dates from at least 1610, but with possible twelfth century elements, and has been altered numerous times since then. Two pieces of a sculpted door lintel embedded in the wall of the cathedral are the only surviving fragments of the earlier monastic foundation and are thought to date from the ninth or tenth centuries. They can be seen in the vestibule at the west end of the cathedral and in the north wall of the nave.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

St. Eunan’s Cathedral currently serves as a Church of Ireland cathedral to this day.

Conservation

The cathedral is currently planning a major renovation project for 2020. This work will include replacement of the roof and the timbers, restoration of the stonework and other renovations. There are also plans to build a new vestry which will open up a new welcome area inside the Cathedral.

Recommendations

- The sculptural elements should be recorded by photogrammetry or laser scanning
- If possible, assistance should be provided to aid with the renovation works.
- An interpretative panel and waymarkers would help to establish Raphoe within the broader Columban Trail.





DROIM THUAMA DRUMHOME

Located in the south of County Donegal, Drumhome is another Donegal site with connections to Colmcille. The visible remains at Drumhome consist of a post-medieval church and graveyard. Drumhome features in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* as a place where many Columban monks were buried, suggesting that there was an early monastery or at the very least, a consecrated Columban burial ground here. Archaeological investigations, including a geophysical survey and targeted excavation, were carried out by Mick Ó Droma of Wolfhound Archaeology at the instigation of Drumhome Historical Society. The investigations revealed that the church and graveyard are set within a large oval-shaped enclosure, characteristic of early medieval monastic sites.

In Adomnán's work, Drumhome is described in an account of the seventh century Saint Ernán, who was a nephew and follower of Colmcille. Adomnán describes how, as a young man, he was given a first-hand account of the death of Colmcille from Ernán:

Another vision also given at the same hour under a different form was related to me – Adomnán—who was a young man at the time, by one of those who had seen it; and who solemnly assured me of its truth. He was a very old man, a servant of Christ, whose name may be called Ferreol, but in the Scotie tongue Ernene, of the race of Mocuifirroide, who, as being himself a holy monk, is buried in the Ridge of Tomma (now Drumhome, county Donegal), amidst the remains of other monks of St. Columba, and awaits the resurrection with the saints; he said: 'On that night when St. Columba, by a happy and blessed death, passed from earth to heaven, while I and others with me were engaged in fishing in the valley of the river Fend (the Finn, in Donegal)—which abounds in fish—we saw the whole vault of heaven become suddenly illuminated. Struck by the suddenness of the miracle, we raised our eyes and looked towards the east, when, lo! there appeared something like an immense pillar of fire, which seemed to us, as it ascended upwards at that midnight, to illuminate the whole earth like the summer sun at noon; and after that column penetrated the heavens darkness followed, as if the sun had just set. And not only did we, who were together in ⁷¹

the same place, observe with intense surprise the brightness of this remarkable luminous pillar, but many other fishermen also, who were engaged in fishing here and there in different deep pools along the same river, were greatly terrified, as they afterwards related to us, by an appearance of the same kind.' These three miraculous visions, then, which were seen at the very hour of our venerable patron's departure, show clearly that the Lord hath conferred on him eternal honours.'

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The site is a well-managed graveyard, with good paths and benches for visitors. The site also has a large carpark and it is accessible through a gate.

Conservation

The gable of the post-medieval church is becoming overgrown with ivy, and this presents a structural threat to the building. An assessment by a conservation architect or engineer is advised, in order for a vegetation management plan to be devised that can ensure the safe removal of the ivy.

Recommendations

The following recommendations for Drumhome are based on the site visit and discussion with Piaras Feiritéir of Drumhome Historical Society.

- A conservation management plan for the upstanding remains, with a focus on the safe removal of ivy under expert guidance. If the original mortar has been washed out or degraded, some remedial conservation work may be required.
- To liaise fully with the Drumhome Historical Society regarding their plans and ideas for the site. They have commissioned a comprehensive feasibility study to look at the best strategies of promoting Drumhome. The findings of this study should be considered when incorporating Drumhome into an overarching Columban Trail brand.
- Assistance in further archaeological research may be required to develop a full understanding of the biography of the site.
- An interpretative panel is advised to help to connect Drumhome to the overarching Columban Trail and to tell the story of the site in an informative and engaging way, with information on the recent archaeological investigations and research.

DISERT



Beautifully positioned in the foothills of the Bluestack Mountains, Disert is a wonderfully atmospheric heritage site. Little is known of the early history of Disert. Colmcille association with the site derives from oral tradition. According to tradition, when Colmcille came to the area it was said that he looked through the quern stone kept as a relic on the altar and blessed all the places he could see, and was also held to have founded a church there. None of the sources from the early medieval period relate to a church at Disert or connect the saint with the area, beyond the later tradition of Colmcille's association with Saint Naule and the parish of Inver. However the name itself (sometimes appearing as *Dysert*) suggests that the site is of relatively early ecclesiastical origin. Disert is a borrowing from the Latin *desertum* – meaning 'an isolated place' or 'a place apart' and is typical to hermitages and remote early monastic sites.

Despite the lack of documentary sources connecting the saint to the site, there is a strong local tradition of Colmcille at Disert, and the site itself is certainly worth

including on any broader Columban Trail for its visual aspect, its folklore and tradition and the wealth of archaeological heritage. The visible remains today consist of a large enclosure that surrounds *leachtanna* or altars, a holy well, an old graveyard, a smaller enclosure with an unusual structure known as Colmcille's Arch and a number of penitential stations that demonstrate the importance of the site as a place of pilgrimage. The tradition took place on the 9th June, like other pilgrimages associated with Colmcille. An account of pilgrimage at Disert appears in the Schools' Folklore Collection (entered in Irish by Maighread Ní Ghállochobhair of Letterfad School): '*St. Colmcille's Well is the name of the well in Dísert... It is beside this place where there was a monastery long ago where the monks of St Francis lived... A pilgrimage is made in this area and when it is done a bottle of water is taken from the well. It is said it is a cure for toothache or other pains... On the little altar beside the well there is a round stone two inches thick and it is said that Colmcille looked through the hole and blessed the land roundabout...*'

The account also refers to ‘Disert Clay’. In a similar tale to the clay of Gartan and Tory Island, the clay at Disert is said to have magical properties, and is especially efficacious in banishing rats and rodents. Colmcille’s Arch also has a tradition of curative properties. It is said that it can cure backache if penitents crawl three times through the arch while reciting Paters and Aves and lie on the flag, pressing their back into the cavity. The existing interpretative panel on site refers to the arch as a megalith, however it is more likely to be an unusual example of a surviving gate into the stone enclosure rather than a megalithic tomb.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The site is signposted in the near vicinity with waymarkers, and accessed through a kissing-gate. Visitors must cross a number of fields to reach the site, with recently installed gates providing safe access. A wooden bridge, presumably dating to the mid-1990s allows access to the immediate area of the site, but the bridge is showing some signs of dilapidation. An interpretative panel is positioned alongside the bridge, and neat sandstone boulders were erected in 2017 to provide the names of the different features of the site. It is clear that the site is well cared for and maintained by the landowners and the local community under the auspices of Disert Heritage Group.

Conservation

A conservation assessment of the site has recently been completed (see Beglane, Meehan and Nugent 2016). As part of the ongoing efforts by Disert Heritage Group and Sligo IT, it is recommended that a Conservation Management Plan be undertaken.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are informed based on the site visit, and discussions with Dr. Fiona Beglane (IT Sligo) and Helen Meehan (Disert Heritage Group).

- The current interpretation on site would benefit from being refreshed in order to reflect the new insights gleaned by the work of Sligo IT and the Disert Heritage Group.
- The existing wooden bridge (erected in 1997) may need to be repaired or replaced, it is showing signs of wear and tear and may become unsafe in the near future.
- Assistance with funding the ongoing archaeological investigations will help to establish a fuller picture of the story of Disert.
- Consider a Conservation Management Plan to help to structure the ongoing conservation and understanding of Disert.





LEIFEAR LIFFORD

Photograph by Ruth Graham - CC BY-SA

Following discussions with Eddie O’Kane, it was decided to include Lifford in this study. Although Lifford has little direct connection to Colmcille himself, it does merit consideration for inclusion in a Columban Heritage Trail. It is possible that this was where Manus O’Donnell died in 1563, and the place where his great work *The Life of Colum Cille* was completed in 1532, though this is yet to be confirmed. Manus O’Donnell was chieftain of the O’Donnell clan in the early sixteenth century. Before he became chieftain, he commissioned the compilation of all the stories and folklore about Colmcille into one document. This was written in Irish and it was completed in 1532. The exact location of the castle of Manus O’Donnell has been the subject of much scholarly debate. Some place it across the river in Strabane, while others suggest it was located within the area of the modern town of Lifford today. Eddie O’Kane has suggested that the courthouse (designed by architect Michael Priestly and erected in 1746) may stand on the site of the castle. He identified unusually thick walls within the basement area of the building, that may be more akin to medieval castle walls than an eighteenth century prison and courthouse. This suggestion is certainly enticing and merits further investigation by experts in medieval castle architecture.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

Today, the old courthouse operates as a museum, where the public can walk through the cells and experience life as a prisoner. The building also now houses a bistro, a local library, conference rooms and acts as a venue for events.

Conservation

No conservation requirements have been identified.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are informed based on discussions with Eddie O’Kane.

- The courthouse should be examined by a suitable expert to assess the likelihood of it being the site of Manus O’Donnell’s Castle.
- If the castle is definitively identified, interpretation should be provided and the site included in a broader Columban Heritage Trail.



ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH STRAID, CLONMANY

Photograph by Joseph Gallagher, Donegal County Council

This site consists of a historic graveyard that surrounds a ruined eighteenth-century church. Approximately 15m from the south-eastern corner of the church lies a flat-surfaced stone with two small cupmarks is known as 'St. Colmcille's Knee-prints'. A souterrain was recorded nearby, hinting at the early origins of the site. Straid is associated with Colmcille through folk tradition. An account of the church in the nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey memoirs also hints at potential links with the famous Columban foundation of Iona:

'The church is said to be built on the site of a monastery founded by the saint (St. Columcille). The Roman Catholics continue to bury their dead in the churchyard and the tradition is borne out by an old tomb in the east of the building made of greenstone and of the precise appearance of those of St. Columba's era in Iona. Note: The people of Iona informed me that the greenstone slabs of which the tombs are made in that island were brought from Inishowen, and from what I have seen of the greenstone rock of Clonmany...I think their tradition is founded on truth and there is no such greenstone in Iona' (Lieutenant Lancey, Ordnance Survey Memoirs of the parish of Clonmany, 1834

as cited in McWilliams, 2001). An account in the Schools' Folklore Collection also tells the tale of how Colmcille came to choose the site for the location of a church, thanks to a white dove showing him this location.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The site is presently accessible with interpretation available.

Conservation

The local community have formed a committee St Columba's Conservation Group. With the assistance of the Heritage Council, the group have raised funds to remove vegetation and carry out conservation works to stabilise the church and to make it accessible for visitors.

Recommendations

St Columba's Conservation Group should be assisted in their efforts to conserve and interpret this important site.

DERRY



Unfortunately, we do not have any contemporary records about the foundation of the monastery at Derry. According to tradition, Colmcille founded the church here as his first monastic foundation around 545 A.D. after he was granted the land by his regal kinsman Áed mac Ainmerech. However the earliest written source detailing the foundation of Derry by Colmcille appears in a twelfth century text known as *Liber Hymnorum*. This text contains an earlier anthology, thought to date to the late tenth century, of three hymns or poems in Latin that are said to have been composed by Colmcille himself, though this is disputed by scholars today. One of these poems *Noli Pater Indulgere* contains a preface that references the foundation of Derry and it is paraphrased below:

Colum Cille once came to a meeting with the King to Derry, and there was offered to him the place with its appurtenance. At that time Colum Cille refused the place, because it had been forbidden by Saint Mobhí until Colmcille should hear of Mobhí's death. But thereafter when Colum Cille came to the gate of the place, he met three persons of the folk of Mobhí, they informed Colum Cille of the saints death and showed him Mobhí's Girdle as evidence. Colum Cille went back to the King and said "the offering thou gavest

me early this morning, give it me now". "It shall be given" said the King. Then the place was burnt with all that was in it... The fire threatened to consume the entire oak wood of Derry but Colum Cille composed this hymn to protect it, and it was saved.

According to the medieval Lives, Derry was Colmcille's first and most beloved monastery. A poem in the 12th-century Life of Columba (believed to be written in Derry) details his love of Derry.

*Is aire charaim Doire
Ar a réide, ar a gloine
Ar is lomlán aingel finn
Ón chinn co n-ice ar-oile
This is why I love Derry
It is so calm and bright
For it is full of white angels
From one end to the other.*

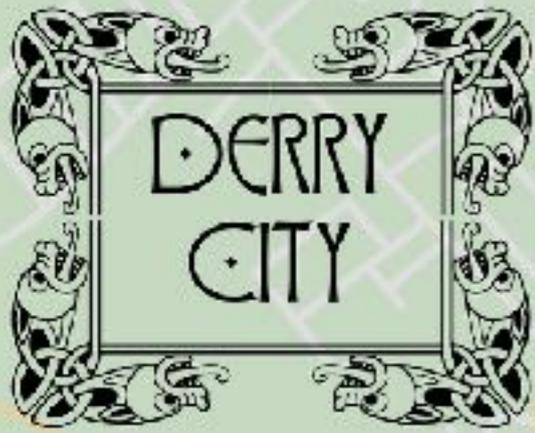
According to historical analysis by Brian Lacey, it is suggested that Derry was founded by Fiachra mac Ciaráin. He was related to Colmcille, a fellow kinsman of the Cenél Conaill, and a nephew of the King Áed mac Ainmerech. Fiachra's death in the year 620 A.D. was recorded in the Annals of the Four Masters.

In the mid-twelfth century, Derry became the headquarters of all the Columban churches in Ireland. At that time, the monastery had been transformed into a busy secular and religious settlement known as *Doire Cholmcille* in honour of the saint. The monastery continued to be a place of real significance up until the late sixteenth century, when the power of monasteries waned in the post-reformation climate.

However, despite the monasteries waning influence, Colmcille continued to be a talismanic presence in the life of Derry. Part of what makes Colmcille such an important figure in the story of Derry, is that he is truly cross-community. He is a uniting and shared figure who crosses communities, generations and even nations.

Derry is one of the most culturally creative cities in the world, with a truly astonishing alumni of musicians, writers, poets and creative people. The city has many wonderful cultural institutions, such as the Tower Museum, that could play a key role in providing real insight into the material culture of one of Ireland's greatest figures.





St. Columb's Park

Guildhall Square

Tower Museum

St. Augustine's Church

St. Columb's Well

Áras Cholmcille

St. Columb's Cathedral

Long Tower Church

GUILDHALL SQUARE

The square with its fine guildhouse is one of the most iconic and recognisable features of Derry, but it was once the harbour for the medieval city. Indeed, the square's original name is Port na Long – the Port of the Ships. It was the starting point of a medieval pilgrimage that was described in Manus O'Donnell's Life of Colum Cille:

'...the Pope gave important gifts to Colum Cille, that is, whichever of his own foundations Colum Cille would appoint as a pilgrimage destination for everyone, there should be the same indulgence there as for a pilgrimage to Rome. And, although he himself was in Scotland, the place that Colum Cille gave that honour to was Derry; and the place where he ordained that the pilgrimage should be made was from the altar at the ship quay at the east end of the settlement to the 'Righthand-wise Turn at the west end.'

The Guildhall itself is certainly worthy of inclusion as one of the most iconic architectural features of Derry. It has a stained glass window depicting Colmcille, along with a sculpture of the saint at the entrance by George MacCann. The Peace Bridge also connects the route of The Churches Trust Columba Heritage Trail that connects St. Columb's Park to the city.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

Guildhall Square is fully accessible. The Guildhall itself is open Monday–Sunday from 10:00–17:30.

Conservation

A major restoration of the Guildhall was completed in 2013. No conservation requirements were identified at the time of visit.

Recommendations

- Consider installing an interpretative panel that tells the story of the square's origins as *Port na Long* and its importance in the origins of Derry.



TOWER MUSEUM

The Tower Museum is one of Derry's finest cultural centres. The award-winning museum has exhibitions that tell the story of Derry from its earliest times through the turbulent years leading up to the modern period. The museum also details the fascinating tale of the discovery of an Armada Shipwreck – *La Trinidad Valencera*.

The starting point for visitors to the museum is the Origins section, with a detailed exhibition on the story of the early monastery and an audio-visual dedicated to Colmcille. There are few better places for a visitor to begin their immersion in the story of Colmcille and early medieval Ireland.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The Tower Museum is open daily from 10.00–17.30. An admission charge applies.

Conservation

No conservation issues apply.

Recommendations

The Tower Museum could play a crucial role in the commemorations. Recommendations regarding potential exhibition items are detailed in the Objects Chapter (see below). The Tower Museum could also be a key location for visitors to orientate and obtain information about the Columban Heritage of the region.



ST. COLUMB'S PARK

Located on the east side of the River Foyle, St. Columb's Park once formed part of the estate of the Hill family, whose former home is now the St. Columba's Park House Activity and Reconciliation Centre. The park contains the ruins of St. Breacan's, the only surviving medieval church in Derry. The upstanding remains are associated with the Bishop of Derry, Redmond O'Gallagher, and believed to date to the sixteenth century, but they are thought to be on the site of an earlier foundation that was destroyed in the late twelfth century during a raid by the Anglo-Normans. In 2013 a fine bronze statue of Colmcille was erected in the park. Designed by artist Niall Bruton, the statue depicts Colmcille standing with his arms uplifted, releasing a dove as a symbol of the holy spirit and in an appropriate reference to his name *Columb Cille* – dove of the church.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

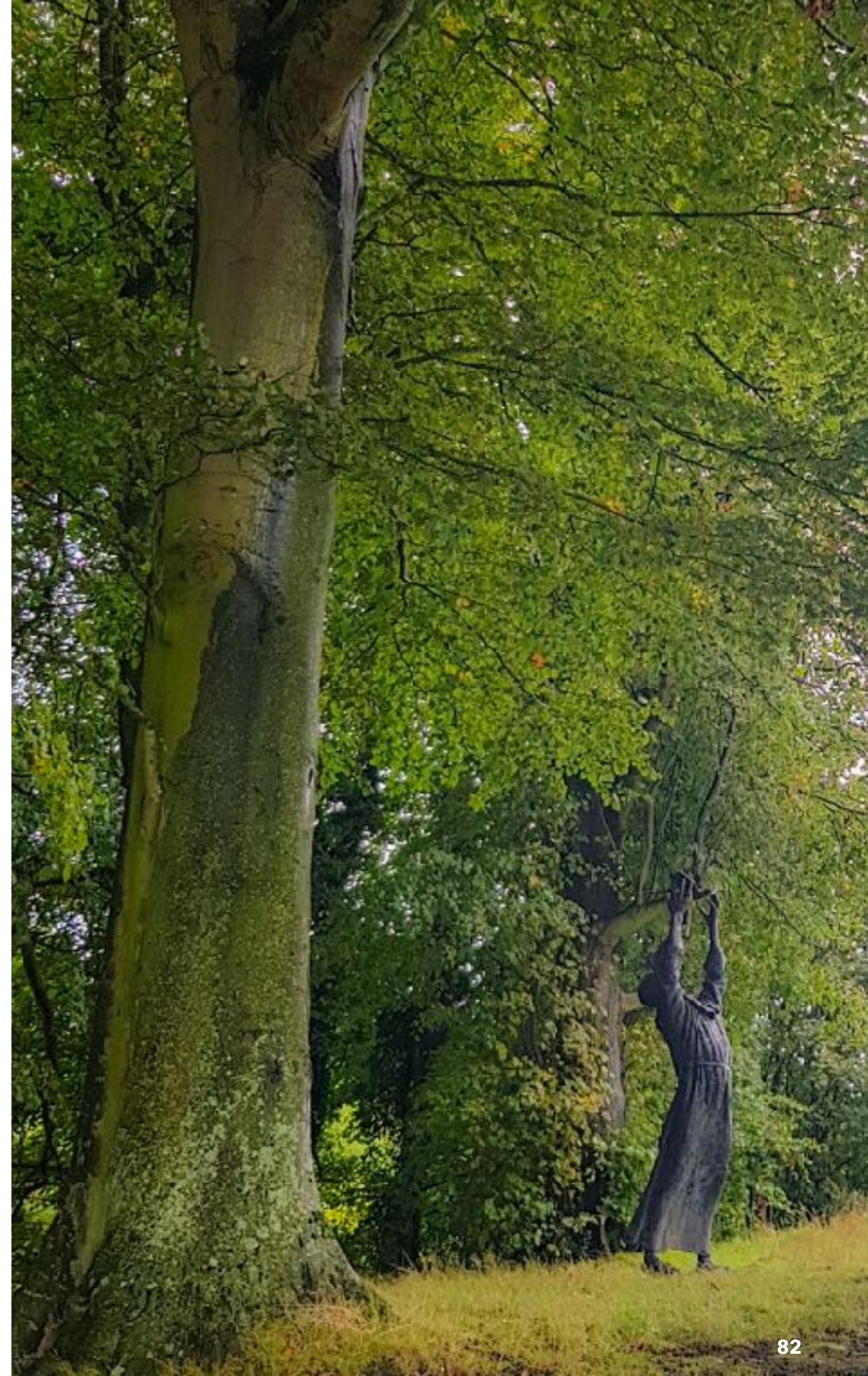
Today, the park is a popular place for the community and visitors alike. It has carparks and paths to make it accessible. The park forms part of the Churches Trust Columba Heritage Trail. A series of artistic sculptures were erected in 2013 to tell the story of Colmcille.

Conservation

No conservation requirements were identified at the time of visit, though like all historical monuments there should be ongoing monitoring of the condition of St. Breacan's. Further archaeological investigation in the form of geophysical survey and analysis might help to gain a fuller picture of the historic landscape to identify the size and nature of the earlier foundation that was said to have been destroyed in the twelfth century.

Recommendations

- As the park forms an increasingly important role in telling the story of Colmcille, an interpretative panel is recommended to tell the story of the key features of the park and the association with Colmcille.
- Further archaeological investigation is recommended to gain a better sense of the story of the cultural heritage of the park.



ST. AUGUSTINE'S CHURCH

St. Augustine's Church is a beautifully atmospheric oasis of quiet reflection on the western side of the city walls. The church that we can see today dates to the early seventeenth century, with later remodelling in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However the church is believed to be on the site of one of the early monastic churches of Derry, known as *dúreigléas / Dubreclés*, or 'Black Church'. This church is referred to in the Annals in an entry in 1166 when it was burnt in a large fire. Whether the church that was burned in the twelfth century originally dated back to the early medieval period or whether it was a relatively recent foundation on the site of the early monastery is subject to debate. The name St. Augustine's reflects the time that the Columban abbey became part of the Augustinian Order in the twelfth–thirteenth century.

The pathway to the church is lined with ceramic tiles featuring depictions of doves and oak leaves in memory of Colmcille. Inside the wonderful interior of the church, Colmcille is commemorated in a small bronze sculpture titled *Columba The Scribe* that features a dove on an open book. The book's pages are inscribed with:

*'Three hundred churches he founded;
Three hundred were close by the sea;
And Columba, as well as the churches,
Three hundred good books, wrote he.'*

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The church is a place of worship today. The church is open to visitors from April to October Monday–Saturday 10am–4pm as well as on Sundays for services. The church forms part of the Churches Trust *Columba Heritage Trail*.

Conservation

No conservation requirements were identified at the time of visit. Though it would be interesting to consider whether there is any merit in further archaeological investigation to help to understand the chronology of the site and to assess whether it is indeed on the





site of the early monastery.

Recommendations

- Consider an interpretative panel at the gate that brings together all the historical information on the site and engages the public with the story of Colmcille and his significance to Derry.
- To continue with the Churches Trust Columba Heritage Trail to help to raise awareness and to tell the story of Colmcille and Derry in a comprehensive way.
- The church would be an ideal venue for special services to commemorate Colmcille, and if willing, it would also be an atmospheric venue for musical events, storytelling and lectures on the story of the saint.
- Consider the potential of further archaeological study to better understand the biography of the site.



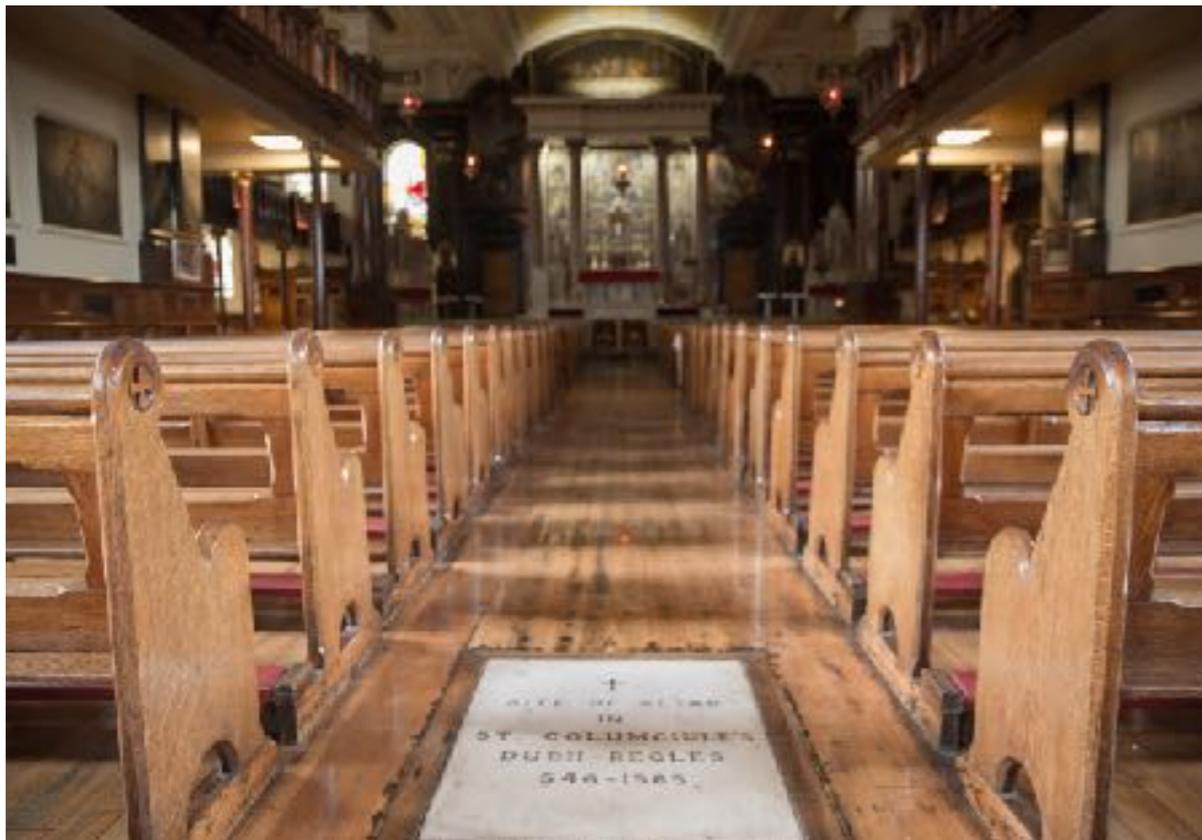
LONG TOWER CHURCH & ÁRAS CHOLMCILLE

Like St. Augustine's, Long Tower Church and Áras Cholmcille is believed to be located within the enclosure of the early monastery of Derry. In the twelfth century, the Abbot of Derry took pre-eminence over all of the Columban Churches in Ireland. It was at this time that the monastery of Teampall Mór was constructed. The Long Tower Church that we see today was first constructed in the 1780s, and it was enlarged and expanded in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its stunning architecture is inspired by the neo-Renaissance style. The connection between Long Tower Church and Colmcille can be seen in the bullaun stones on the exterior of the church, the stained glass windows inside the church, and the wonderful sculptural plaques that were erected in 2013 to depict scenes from the life of Colmcille.

Áras Cholmcille is housed within a handsome listed building that once served as a school for infants. The centre offers insights into the monastic heritage of Derry, with exhibitions and an audio-visual experience.

Thanks to some recent excellent historical analysis by Derry Tower Heritage Group (DTHG) and radiocarbon dating by Queen's University Belfast, the remains of the round tower of Teampall Mór have been identified just to the south of Long Tower Church in the grounds of Lumen Christi College, where the tower was hidden in plain sight for centuries. The tower is another wonderful asset to add to the story of Derry's monastic roots, and provides the oldest upstanding remains in the city.





Existing Infrastructure and Access

Long Tower church is a place of worship today, and it is open from 8am–8pm daily. The church forms part of the Churches Trust Columba Heritage Trail. Áras Cholmcille has a range of facilities for visitors.

It's opening hours are April–October, Monday – Friday 10am–4pm
October–April, Monday–Friday 11am–3pm.

Conservation

The stonework of the church is currently undergoing conservation with a view to it being completed before 2020. No other conservation requirements were identified at the time of visit.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are informed by a discussion with Oonagh Robinson of Long Tower Church and Ivor Doherty of Áras Cholmcille:

- The 9th June is the traditional day of celebration, and it has been marked in the past with masses, cross-community plays, parades, and musical events.
- Áras Cholmcille would be the ideal venue to host an exhibition to showcase how Colmcille has been celebrated in Derry throughout its history. The exhibition could feature historic photographs of past celebrations, along with being the central hub for a Schools Folklore Project (see Overall Recommendations section below) and it could display the gathered oral history and audio recordings.
- A cross-community play has been staged in recent years, and it has been a highly successful way of engaging children of different communities and in telling the human aspect of Colmcille's story. Helping to facilitate a play for a bigger stage may help to galvanise more of the community in Derry.

ST COLUMB'S WELL

Like his fellow patron saints, Patrick and Brigid, Colmcille has an extensive connection with wells and water, and a number of Holy Wells associated with him (see below). This well is the sole survivor of the three holy wells of Derry, as the other two (dedicated to saints Adomnán and Martin) have since been lost.

The decorative pump dates from 1897. At the time it was the main water supply for the houses which once lay on this slope under the city walls. A bullaun stone that was once located in the road adjacent to the well can be seen at the Long Tower Church. Each year on the 9th June to celebrate Colmcille, the Bishop says mass at Long Tower Church with a procession down to the well.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The well is now covered by a decorative pump, and easily accessible in amongst a row of single-storey houses called St Columb's Wells.

Conservation

No conservation requirements have been identified.

Recommendations

- The well should continue to form part of the annual commemorative mass at Long Tower Church.
- Consider a small interpretative panel to tell its story and that of the 'lost wells' of Derry.



ST COLUMB'S CATHEDRAL

St. Columb's Cathedral was constructed in 1633 after being commissioned by the City of London. Inside the western doorway, visitors can see a dedication stone that commemorates the City of London who paid for the construction of the building:

If stones could speake

Then London's prayse should sounde

Who built this church and cittie

From the grounde

St. Columb's was the first Anglican cathedral constructed in Europe following the Reformation of the mid-sixteenth century. The Cathedral was built on the site of a medieval Cistercian nunnery, and the cathedral has been extended, altered and renovated a number of times over its long history. The graveyard of the cathedral is the final resting place for many prominent citizens from successive generations. Throughout its history, the Cathedral has been a bastion of inter-community fellowship, with activities such as carol services, operatic performances, lectures and events. As it is one of the most iconic features of Derry, the cathedral welcomes over 100,000 visitors annually. Colmcille is commemorated with a mosaic illustration in the chancel and a stained glass window in the Archbishop Alexander Chapel.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

Today, the cathedral is still a place of worship for the community of Derry, and it welcomes a large number of visitors every year.

Visiting times:

March to October - Monday to Saturday 9am – 5pm

November to February (incl) Monday to Saturday 10am – 2pm

Open for Services: Sunday 8am–9am, 11am – 12.30pm

Conservation

No conservation requirements were identified at the time of visit.





Recommendations

The following recommendations are informed from a discussion of the project and the potential for commemorating Colmcille in 2020/21 with Ian Bartlett of St Columbkille's

- The cathedral would be an ideal venue for exhibitions, talks and debates, and musical events to celebrate Colmcille.
- The cathedral would especially like to focus on events with an educational aspect, such as panel discussions about the archaeology, history and legacy of Colmcille. A guest lecture from a member of the community of Iona would be especially welcomed.
- It would be very positive to put more emphasis and focus on Colmcille on the tourism marketing for Derry.

CHURCHES' TRUST

COLUMBA HERITAGE TRAIL

The Churches Trust have established the Columba Heritage Trail: Walking in the Footsteps of Pilgrims to help visitors to the city to engage with the story of Colmcille. The Trail begins at the ruins of St. Breacan's in St. Columb's Park, it continues through Ebrington Square and crosses the Peace Bridge into Guildhall Square. The Trail then leads the modern-day pilgrims through Magazine Gate into the city, to the First Derry Presbyterian Church, St. Augustine's Church, Long Tower Church and Carlisle Road Methodist Church.

The Trail links together both sides of the River Foyle, and it forges connection between the different faiths and communities who all view Colmcille as a revered and influential figure.

Recommendations

- Although they are referenced in the brochure as 'Other Sites of Interest', consider expanding the trail to fully include St. Columb's Cathedral, St. Columb's Well and Áras Cholmcille to give a visitor a full picture of Derry's Columban heritage, and to allow this excellent cross-community initiative to be further strengthened.
- Consider tour-guide training for interested members of the community. Empowering committed locals to be tour guides and ambassadors for the story of Colmcille will help to provide opportunities for connection, storytelling and employment. Such training should be a practical course that focuses on communication skills, customer service, tour management and health and safety.



CELTIC PRAYER GARDEN: COLUMBA COMMUNITY

The Columba Community in Derry was founded in 1981 as a lay organisation dedicated to the service of the marginalised and committed to working for peace, reconciliation and healing. This cross-community organisation are inspired by the teaching of Colmcille and their stated mission is to:

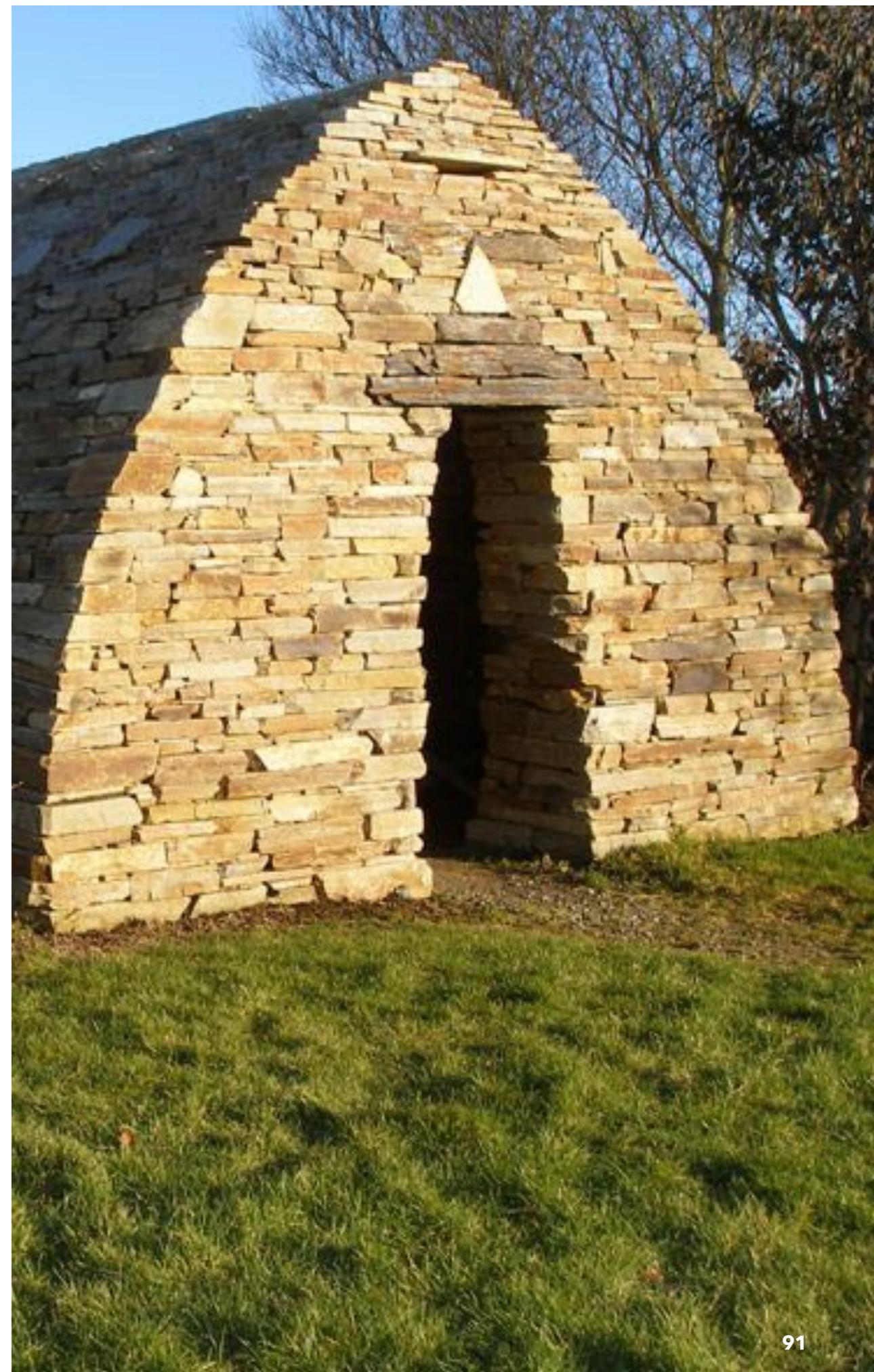
- Provide an outreach to the marginalised of society through centres of healing, prayer and reconciliation based at Columba House (Derry), White Oaks Rehabilitation Centre, St Anthony's Retreat Centre, IOSAS Centre & Celtic Peace Garden (Donegal).
- Promote the personal, social and spiritual development of young people through the YARD Project.
- Work to tackle the increasing problem of addiction and substance misuse which is laying waste to families and communities by providing education and support programmes, counselling and advice for families affected by addiction.

Through their dedication to the spiritual aspect of Colmcille and their strong focus on cross-community engagement, the Columba Community could play an important role in the celebrations of Colmcille in 2020/21.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on conversations with Claire McLoughlin and Fr. Neal Carlin of the Columba Community

- The Columba Community should be fully engaged with to discuss their ideas for commemorating Colmcille in 2020/21. With their experience they could provide invaluable insights in how best to connect different aspects of the community with the story of Colmcille.
- A play based on the Convention of Druim Ceatt was held at the Roe Park Hotel and it was a highly successful and engaging experience. It would be worth considering running a similar play for the commemoration events.





OTHER SITES IN THE VICINITY OF DERRY

COUNTY DERRY



Lough Foyle

A2

St. Patrick's Church

Coleraine

Giant's Sconce

Camus

A26

A37

A54

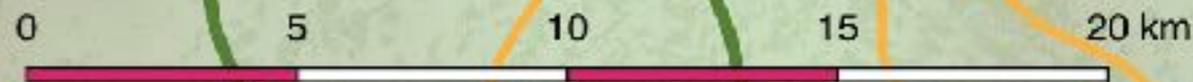
Limavady

A29

Ballymoney

Druim Ceatt (Daisy Hill / The Mullagh)

Dungiven



DRUIM CEATT



Now known as Daisy Hill, or the Mullagh, the low hill that rears up behind the Roe Park Hotel was once known as Druim Ceatt. This must have been a place of significance, because according to Adomnán (and later Annals), a great meeting was held here, that later became known as the *Convention of Druim Ceatt*. The attendees included Áed mac Ainmirech, King of the Cenél Conaill, Áedán mac Gabrán, the King of the Dál Riata in Scotland and Colmcille himself.

According to the hagiography, such as the eleventh century poem *Amrae Coluimb Chille*, three matters were discussed at the Convention:

*‘For three reasons they held the assembly:
So that Scandlan the prince could be freed;
The obligations of Scottish Dál Riata
And poets; for them, was there need?’*

This latter reason regarding the poets concerns the desire amongst some to banish poets from Ireland on account of their greed, vicious satire and impiousness. However, according to the tradition, Colmcille intervened on behalf of poets.

Tales such as this that have helped to shape the impression of Colmcille as a patron for the arts. Manus O’Donnell’s *Life of Colum Cille* provides much information on the Convention of Druim Ceatt, and describes many miracles that Colmcille performed there. Today the site is part of the golf course of the Roe Park Hotel. There is little visible on the hill itself, and it has become somewhat overgrown. However, given that the Convention of Druim Ceatt was to forge a better bond between the Irish and Scottish Kingdoms, perhaps the hotel may be a suitably appropriate venue to host a joint Irish–Scottish debate on the legacy of Colmcille.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The hill can be accessed via the Roe Park Hotel.

Conservation Requirements

None noted, though vegetation management should be considered if the hill is to become a feature on a Columban Trail. The site would certainly benefit from archaeological survey to establish whether this was indeed a likely contender for the site of Druim Ceatt.

Recommendations

- It is clear from the early historical references that Druim Ceatt must have been a place of significance, though little is known about the exact nature of the site itself. Was it a traditional place of gatherings and *óenach* or was it an important, but neutral settlement site? There is something rather artificial about the appearance of the hill, perhaps it may be an archaeological monument such as a large passage tomb that was later used as a place of inauguration. It would be highly worthwhile to endeavour to gain a better understanding of this site. Geophysical survey, coring and LiDAR may help to reveal whether it is a natural feature or the work of human hand. Geophysics may also identify any structural remains on, or around, the hill.
- The Roe Park Hotel must be consulted in any planned survey work, or if the hill is to be included in a Columban Trail.
- If agreement can be reached with the hotel, an interpretative panel should be considered for the base of the hill (adjacent to the path).
- Given the story of the Convention of Druim Ceatt, the hotel would be an ideal venue for a new Convention of Druim Ceatt, featuring a range of talks and seminars to share ideas and information on Colmcille and his legacy.



GIANT'S SCONCE



According to Adomnán's text, Colmcille was returning from the Convention of Druim Ceat (see above) with the Abbot Comgall. Colmcille prophesied to Comgall that a battle would take place here, and that a nearby well would be filled with blood. According to the Annals of Ulster, the battle of Dún Ceithirn took place in 628 A.D., and Domnall, son of Aed, was victorious over Congal Caech.

The summit of the hill offers expansive views over the landscape, with the River Bann and the sea clearly visible. There is little to see in terms of upstanding remains, but the beautiful views do merit inclusion and consideration for a broader trail focused on the story of Colmcille.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The Giant's Sconce is located on a quiet rural road, with a small area to park.

Conservation Requirements

None noted.

Recommendations

- With its expansive views and intriguing history, the site would be a good addition to a Columban Trail.
- The site may benefit from archaeological survey (LiDAR and possibly geophysical) to better understand the monument.
- An interpretive panel and waymarker are recommended.

ST PATRICK'S CHURCH, COLERAINE



Photograph by Design Pics Ltd / Alamy

Adomnán's *Life of Columba* tells the story about how Conall, Bishop of Coleraine, gave a reception for Colmcille at the plain of Eilne on the Bann as Colmcille returned from the Convention of Druim Ceatt. There is a story that Colmcille chastised one of the wealthy men who did not give generously enough for the festival. St. Patrick's Church is thought to sit on the site of the early medieval monastic settlement of Coleraine.

The handsome nineteenth century church would make a suitable venue for a service dedicated to Colmcille, lectures or musical events.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

The church is still in use as a place of worship.

Conservation Requirements

None noted.

Recommendations

- The church would make a good venue for talks, musical events or a service to commemorate Colmcille.
- Consider an interpretative panel and waymarker if the church is to be included on a Columban Trail.

CAMUS



Camus is the reputed site of the early Christian monastery of Comgall, who is mentioned in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*, in conjunction with Dún Ceithirn (see Giant's Sconce, above). According to the story, when Colmcille was returning from the Convention of Druim Ceatt (see above), he stopped at the monastery to visit Comgall. Water was brought from a spring in a bronze basin so that the saints could wash their hands. Colmcille took the bowl and prophesied to Comgall that the day would come when the spring from whence the water came would be unfit for men to use, as it will be filled with human blood. Colmcille predicted that the Uí Néill and the Cruithin will fight a terrible battle at the fort of Dún Cethirn (see above), and that one of his kinsmen would be killed in the spring and that his blood, and that of his fellows, will fill the spring.

Comgall is a famous saint in his own right, and is perhaps better known as the Abbot of Bangor. Camus overlooks a fording point on the River Bann and that is

reflected in the name 'Camus', as it is thought to derive from *'cam uisce'* or 'bend in the river'. A shaft of a sandstone high cross can be seen in the churchyard. The scenes depicted on the cross are rather difficult to make out due to weathering of the stone and the fading light conditions at the time of visit, but the depictions are thought to include New Testament scenes such as; the Adoration of the Magi; the Baptism of Christ, the Miracle of Cana and the Miracle of Loaves and Fishes.

The cross-shaft was depicted by the famous antiquarian George Petrie, who named it 'Macosquin High Cross'. The Annals record that Camus suffered raiding throughout its history; notably in 930 A.D. when it was plundered by the Danes. Despite the dangers endemic in early medieval Ireland, it is clear that Camus was once a significant monastery in Ulster. The Annals of the Four Masters recorded that in 938 A.D. Muircheartach of Camus was declared Abbot of Bangor.



As well as the shaft of the high cross, a bullaug stone can also be found in the graveyard. The water in the large hollow in this stone is believed to have holy properties and it is said to never dry out.

The remains of what appears to be a post-medieval church can also be discerned in the graveyard, along with a number of early modern gravestones and vaults. However the graveyard would benefit from a detailed survey, conservation management plan and vegetation management as well as on-site interpretation.

Existing Infrastructure and Access

There is a small area to park the car, access through a rusted iron gate into the site.

Conservation Requirements

A survey and conservation management plan is recommended to better understand the detailed conservation requirements of the site. Initial impressions suggest that the site would benefit from a vegetation management strategy to control ivy and the proliferation of trees that are beginning to take over the site. Any such vegetation management should consider the natural heritage aspect of the site and a biodiversity study would also be recommended. The high cross is a very significant feature, but as it is made of sandstone it is under threat from weathering. It is highly recommended that the cross is recorded by photogrammetry or laser-scanning to better understand the depictions and artwork and to digitally preserve the monument.

Recommendations

- To commission a conservation management plan to include biodiversity and vegetation management strategy.
- Consider an archaeological survey (by LiDAR and geophysics) to understand the nature of this important site and to identify and establish the extents of the monastic enclosure.
- An interpretative panel at the entrance to inform visitors of the significance of the site and its association with Colmcille and Comgall.
- 3D recording of the high cross shaft.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR DERRY CITY & COUNTY

There is nowhere quite like Derry, it is an absolute powerhouse of inspirational creativity and excellence in the arts, and it is a model for cross-community initiatives and engagement. There is a wonderful myriad of annual events, especially the world renowned *Samhain* festival that was declared “*best Halloween destination in the world*” by USA Today.

When Derry was awarded UK City of Culture in 2013, it seized the opportunity with both hands and hosted a tremendous array of events, parades, musical events and exhibitions that celebrated the story and creativity of the city. The story of Colmcille loomed large in the celebrations, and the *Return of Colmcille* event was a true highlight for all who were privileged to witness it. The event involved more than 800 people, and it was written by the author of the London 2012 Olympic opening ceremony, Frank Cottrell Boyce. It featured a spectacular depiction of Colmcille’s showdown with the Lough Ness Monster, and it helped to promote the story of Colmcille to an enormous audience. The Lumière Event was also a highly engaging spectacle that lit up the city.

Organisations such as the Culture Company and the Nerve Centre produced a rich resource of materials on Colmcille, many of which (including a virtual exhibition of objects associated with the saint) are still available today. They also developed a series of animation shorts with local schools, and teaching aids that are still a wonderful resource that can be utilised and enhanced today.

Community Feedback and Incorporated Overall Recommendations

During the project we had discussions with a number of people in Derry, including: Brian Lacey (archaeologist), Martin Melarkey (Nerve Centre), Don Patterson (who discussed the spiritual aspects of Colmcille) and Fr. Neal Carlin (Columban Community)

- A number of participants highlighted that they would like to see Colmcille more prominently focused on as part of the tourism promotion for the city.
- Don Patterson and Fr. Neal Carlin both wished to see an element of the spiritual aspect of Colmcille included in the celebrations.

- Collaborative cross-community initiatives should be a focus of the celebrations
- A steering committee featuring key stakeholders should be established to ensure oversight and that the commemorations are well balanced

Suitable Events or Celebrations for Glencolmcille in 2020/21

- The Tower Museum is an ideal place to hold an exhibition of objects associated with Colmcille.
- It would be great to build on the fine work of the Churches Trust in establishing the Columba Trail as a visitor experience. Waymarkers, interpretative panels and the incorporation of other key locations in the city (see above) would all be of benefit.
- With Derry’s track record in putting on a show, the commemorations of 2020/21 would be a wonderful opportunity to stage an ambitious programme of events. These could include the commissioning of a new piece of music to celebrate Colmcille, cross-community plays, a large parade (similar in ambition to the Return of Colmcille in 2013), and a Lumière-style event (see Overall Recommendations below).
- Consider holding a competition with local artists to design a new sculpture to commemorate the story of Colmcille, with the winning design installed in time for the celebrations of 2020/21.
- We recommend engaging with organisations such as Derry Tower Heritage Group and Queen’s University Belfast and individuals such as Brian Lacey to explore the potential for further archaeological investigation and survey to better understand the early medieval origins of the city.
- The Nerve Centre should be engaged with to build upon their wonderful creative materials such as the animations and virtual museum.
- Consider running the Folklore Project (see Overall Recommendations below). Áras Colmcille would be an ideal hub for the project, and the Nerve Centre may have ideas on how best to record and present the findings.
- A series of panel discussions and talks should be considered at the various venues around the city. They should focus on different aspects such as the archaeology, history, folklore and spirituality of Colmcille and his story.



HOLY WELLS

There are a number of holy wells associated with Colmcille, certainly enough to form a detailed study in its own right. Many are named after the saint, not only in his native county, but throughout Ireland. A number of the wells are maintained and venerated by local communities to this day. There are up to twenty wells in County Donegal alone named after Colmcille or after people closely associated with him, while a further half a dozen or so have associations with related figures, such as his biographer Adomnán and his disciple Saint Naile. Sadly a number of the wells have fallen victim to the ravages of time and are no longer visible, but others continue to be important places of devotion. Amongst the most significant are the following holy wells:

Columban Associated Wells in County Donegal

- **Glencolmcille** (DG080-002001) in the townland of Biofán, forms a key part of the Turas Cholmcille (see above)

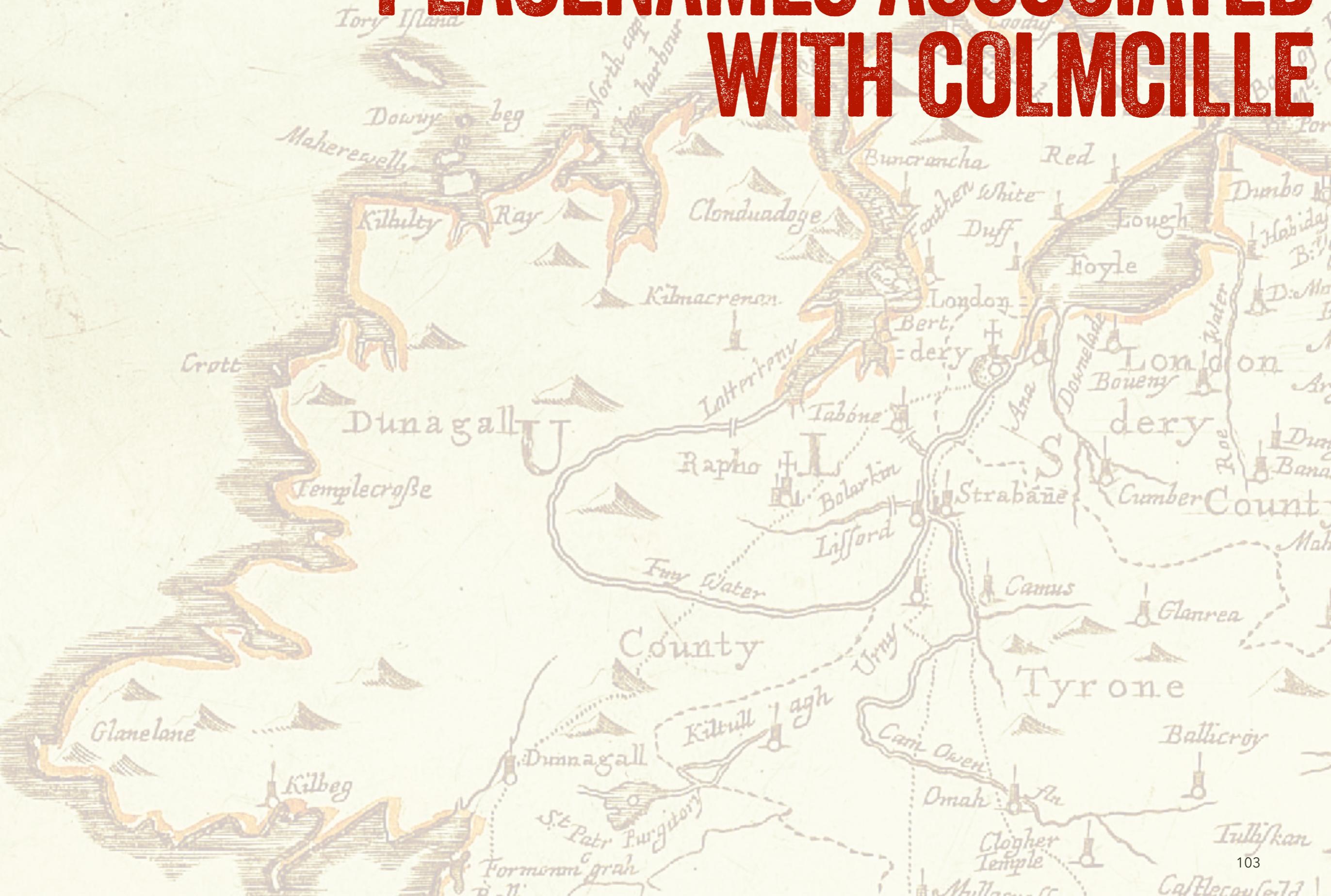
- **Disert** (DG084-001004) located in the foothills of the Blue Stack Mountains (see above)
- **Moville** (DG022-007) a holy well is situated in a public park in the town centre (townland of Ballynally) which is now a modernised water spout.
- **Churchtown, Gartan** (DG044-017004) close to the birthplace of Colmcille (see above).
- **Doon** (DG044-016) close to the inauguration place of the O'Donnell chieftains, (see above).
- **Stroove** (DG013-004001) near Inishowen Head which is said to be the place from where Columba departed to Iona.
- **Masiness** (DG026-046) just north of the village Creeslough. A turas or pilgrimage is still undertaken here.
- **Mevagh** (DG016-006) although not mentioned in any of Columba's biographies, there is a tradition that he founded a church here.

There are wells dedicated to the saint throughout the rest of Ireland. They include:

- **Saint Columb's Well** in Derry City, now a modern pump (see above).
- **Durrow**, County Offaly (OF009-005021) which is part of the ecclesiastical site which was founded by Colmcille.
- **Swords**, County Dublin (DU011-034013) where Colmcille is credited with the foundation of a monastery.
- **Kells**, County Meath (ME017-045), marked as St Columb's Well on the Ordnance Survey maps and located to the west of the ecclesiastical site founded by Columban monks.
- **Kintogher**, County Sligo (SL008-153), which is about 1km south of Drumcliff, an ecclesiastical site said to have been founded by Colmcille.



PLACENAMES ASSOCIATED WITH COLMCILLE



One of the clearest indicators of the devotion to Colmcille across Ireland is the naming of places after the saint. Churches, schools, hospitals, sports clubs and other institutions have kept Colmcille in the public mind by naming themselves in his honour. Compiling a list of all such places would constitute a major undertaking in itself, particularly as all the variant forms of his name (Colmcille, Columba, Columb, Columbkille) are found.

This chapter provides an overview of the various placenames and places associated with Colmcille. It consists of two principal sections. The first examines placenames that derive directly from Colmcille's name. A subsection of this category are the holy wells dedicated to the saint. Secondly, there are placenames which feature in the biographies of Colmcille linking him to various locations. Some of these placenames are still in use, but others are more difficult to positively ascribe to present-day locations. There is some overlap between these two sections i.e. some places named after Colmcille also feature in the hagiographies.

Places named after Colmcille

Perhaps the most well-known placename associated with Colmcille is **Glencolmcille** (also known as Gleann Cholm Cille or Glencolumbkille) in County Donegal. Manus O'Donnell's *Life of Colmcille* relates the story of how this place came to be named after the saint. The demons that Saint Patrick had banished from Croagh Patrick had taken up residence in the valley. Colmcille arrived with other saints to banish them, and ventured bravely into the enchanted fog that shrouded the valley. One of his followers, known as An Cerc, was killed in the ensuing confrontation when a demon flung a spear at him. Colmcille then hurled the spear and a bell back into the valley, clearing the fog before him. He won the day and banished the demons into the sea, transforming them into red fish. Colmcille then blessed the newly-purified land and made it into a sanctuary. The stream where his follower was killed was named *Srath na Circe* and Colmcille promised it would never be in flood (Part 132).

An earlier story is told in this biography about how the legendary warrior Fionn Mac Cumhail predicted the coming of Colmcille to this area. Fionn was hunting here one day when the area was still known as *Senglenn* (Old Valley). His hound Bran refused to

cross a river in pursuit of a deer. Fionn foretold the coming of Colmcille to his companions and explained that he would create a sanctuary in the valley. This was why the hound had refused to cross the river. *Bealach Damhain* was the name given to the place where this occurred. (Part 42).

The modern turas or pilgrimage around Glencolmcille incorporates several sites named after the saint; **Colmcille's Chapel, Colmcille's Well, Colmcille's Chair** and **Colmcille's Garden**.

Holy Waters

There are three lakes named after the saint in County Donegal. **Columbkille Lough** in the townland of Cashelard is situated in the south-east of the county in a remote upland area dotted with lakes close to the border with County Fermanagh. A holy well located on the shoreline of this lake (DG108-003), which was referred to in the Schools' Folklore Collection in the 1930s, but it can no longer be located. According to the folklore, the lake sprung up when Colmcille cursed a local chieftain after the latter refused to provide food to poor people, and that a spring emerged under his castle and formed the lake. It is believed that the castle still lies at the bottom of the lake. It is also said that anyone who tries to swim to the island on the lake will be drowned.

Lough Colmcille lies between Creeslough and Dunfanaghy in northern Donegal. This is a place of pilgrimage with a holy well (DG025-027) dedicated to the saint on the shoreline. A cairn (DG025-028) forty metres to the south of this is a penitential station. The lake itself has been associated with the story of Colmcille cursing fishermen with a left-handed blessing.

Another **Columbkille Lough** is situated about 0.5km east of the town of Milford at the southern end of the Fanad Peninsula. A site called **St Columb's Chair** is marked on the northern shore of this lake on early Ordnance Survey maps, although it is not an archaeological monument. There is a crannóg (DG036-011) in the lake.

There are at least two places along the shores of Lough Foyle that claim to be Colmcille's point of departure when he left Ireland for Iona.

Portkill/Port Cille in the townland of Stroove to the north of Moville, is one such place. This is the name of a small creek which enters the sea just north of Inishowen Head. There is a holy well named **St. Colmcille's Holy Well** here overlooking the sea (DG013-004001), with a view out towards the western isles of Scotland to the north-east. Nearby is a cross-inscribed stone (DG013-004003) and a standing stone which is said to mark a burial place (DG013-004002). The holy well is still a place of pilgrimage today. According to some accounts, when Colmcille was heading into exile, he walked along the shore to this point. It was here that he finally lost sight of his beloved Derry and so decided to commence his sea journey to Scotland.

Further north, **Port Columbkille/Port Cholm Cille** is located in the townland of Ballymagaraghy on the northern shores of the Inishowen peninsula. This small cove is named as such on the twenty-five inch Ordnance Survey maps from the late nineteenth century, but curiously is not named on the earlier six-inch maps from the 1830s. There are no archaeological sites in the vicinity nor does there appear to be any surviving folklore about this place.

Notable Placenames Outside of the Study Area

The civil parish of **Columbkille/Paróiste Cholm Cille** in County Longford takes its name from the saint. According to tradition, he founded the monastery on Inchmore in Lough Gowna which lies within this parish. A ruined church (LF006-032003) and a later-twelfth century Augustinian Abbey (LF006-032002) occupy the western side of the island. There is also an archaeological monument known as **Columbkille's Stone** (LF006-033—) which is supposed to contain impressions of the saint's knees.

Both the townland and civil parish of **Columbkille/Cill Cholm Cille** in County Kilkenny take their name from Colmcille. His precise connection with this area is unclear; there are no churches in the townland, which lies to the east of Thomastown, although there is the site of a church and graveyard in the townland of Kiljames to the north.

Moone in County Kildare, which is famed for its high crosses, was known in the Irish Annals as *Maoin Cholm Cille*. There is a village, a townland, a civil parish and a barony with this name. There are references to this name in the Annals from the eleventh century, reflecting the view that the monastery here was founded by Colmcille. It is not, however, mentioned in his biographies.

Illan Columbkille/Oileán Cholm Cille is one of a number of small islands on Lough Mask in County Mayo, and lies at the northern extremity of the lake. The island is just over one acre in extent and is home to a ruined church (MA109-012002). On the shore of the lake to the east there is a holy well named **Tobercolumbkille** (MA109-013—) which is now heavily overgrown.

Glencolmcille in Donegal is not the only place so named. There are adjacent townlands of **Glencolumbkille North and South/Gleann Cholm Cille Thuaidh agus Gleann Cholm Cille Theas** in the heart of the Burren in County Clare. The latter contains the ruins of **St. Columbkille's Church** (CL010-038002) within an ecclesiastical enclosure. A carved stone head was discovered here in 1989 during an archaeological survey of the site. Colmcille's direct connection to this place, however, is not apparent from any of his biographies.

Saint Columbkille's Altar/Altóir Cholm Cille is situated on Inishmore, the largest of the Aran Islands. This reflects the saint's association with the island, where a famous tale describes his dispute with Saint Enda. Although this is included in the Placenames database, the precise location of this site is unclear.

Saint Columbkille's burial ground (MA023-014002), known in Irish as **An tSeanreilig** (old graveyard) lies on the island of Inishkea North off the coast of Mayo and within sight of the Mullet peninsula. A ruined church here (MA023-014001) is said to have been founded by Colmcille in the sixth century but succumbed to Viking raids some centuries later. The island was inhabited until the 1930s.

His Name Lives On

All of the above placenames are of ancient origin and are at least centuries old. To these must be added modern dedications to the saint in the form of streets and housing developments named after him. Streets include **Colmcille Avenue** in Cork City, **Colmcille Drive** in Sligo town, **Colmcille Road** in Galway City, **Colmcille Villas** in Kells, County Meath and **Colmcille Street** in Fermoy, County Cork. Modern housing developments in Swords, County Dublin reflect the attribution of the monastic foundation there to the saint. They include **St. Columba's Heights**, **St. Columba's Rise**, and **St. Colmcille's Court**.

As we have seen (above), Derry City has a deep association with the saint, and his name is recognised in **St. Columb's Wells**, a block of houses which surrounds a holy well dedicated to the saint. Close by to the south is **Saint Columba's Walk**. **St. Columb's Road** and **St. Columb's Park** are on the opposite side of the River Foyle. There are also a number of schools in Derry that are named after Colmcille, including **St. Columb's College**, **Bunscoil Cholmcille** and **St. Columba's Primary School** along with sports clubs like **Doire Colmcille GAA** who play at **Pairc Colmcille**.

Placenames Mentioned in the Hagiographies of Colmcille

Numerous placenames are mentioned in the various biographies, tales and hagiographies of Colmcille. Some of these are well known and can be clearly connected to modern-day placenames. Others are no longer in use and it is not always possible to connect them to present-day locations.

Placenames in Adomnán's *Vita Columbae*

Adomnán's *Vita Columbae* is the earliest extant source available to us. However, not all of the places that are currently associated with Colmcille are mentioned in the text. The following placenames do appear:

There is an account of Colmcille's trip to the Convention of **Druim Ceatt**, when the fortress of **Dún Cethirn** (now known as the **Giant's Sconce** between Coleraine and Limavady, see above), is mentioned. It was here that Colmcille made a prophesy to Comgall about a future battle at this site (Book I, Chapter 35). Miracles performed by

Colmcille at **Druim Ceatt** (now known as **Daisy Hill/The Mullagh** outside Limavady, see above) feature in a later passage (Book II, Chapter 6). Comgall's monastery at **Cambas** (or **Camus**, see above) on the banks of the River Bann is also referred to in the same passage as the prophesy about the battle (Book I, Chapter 35).

There is an account of a feast held in Colmcille's honour by Conall, Bishop of **Culerathin** (**Coleraine**, see above) on **Magh Eilne** – the Plain of Eilne, the low-lying area along the River Bann (Book 1, Chapter 35).

The monastery at **Derry** is mentioned several times, sometimes as **Daire Calgaich** (see above).

Drumhome, County Donegal (see above), site of a Columban foundation, is referred to by Adomnán as a place where many Columban monks were buried (Book III, Chapter 23).

Many other placenames throughout Ireland are referenced, sometimes briefly or in passing, in Adomnán work. Amongst them are **Durrow** and **Clonmacnoise** County Offaly; **Erris** County Mayo; **Cul Dreimne** County Sligo (where the battle was fought which led to Colmcille's exile); **Lough Key** County Roscommon; **Delvin** County Meath, **Dublin**, **Aghaboe** County Laois, **Terryglass** County Tipperary, **Slanore** County Cavan, **Birr** County Offaly and **Teltown** County Meath. Many of these places were monastic sites of significance in early medieval Ireland associated with contemporaries of Colmcille.

Placenames in the 12th-Century Irish Life of St. Columba

The 12th-century *Irish Life of St. Columba* contains additional details on places associated with the saint. It refers to his birth at **Gortán** (**Gartan**), County Donegal. The text also tells the story of a childhood visit by Colmcille and his foster father Cruithnechán at Christmas to the home of the bishop Brugach at the ramparts of Mag Enaig in Tír Enda. The location of Mag Enaig is uncertain, but Tír Enda is thought to refer to the area of eastern Donegal around Raphoe. Colmcille's periods of study at the monasteries of Clonard and Glasnevin under Saint Finnian and Saint Mobhi respectively, are also mentioned.

Mag Enaig in **Tír Enda**. The location of *Mag Enaig* is uncertain, but Tír Enda is thought to refer to the area of eastern Donegal around **Raphoe**. Colmcille's periods of study at the monasteries of **Clonard** and **Glasnevin** under Saint Finnian and Saint Mobhi respectively, are also mentioned.

When Colmcille returned north following his time at Mobhi's monastery in Glasnevin, he crossed over the **River Biur**. He prevented the pestilence which was sweeping Ireland at that time from crossing over the river. This has been identified by Brian Lacey as the Moyola in County Derry.

The story of how he founded a monastery at **Derry** is outlined in detail. King Aed, son of Ainmire, who was King of Ireland at the time, offered the site to Colmcille for a monastery. Colmcille, however, refused as he had been ordered by Saint Mobhi not to found a monastery without the latter's permission. Two monks of Mobhi then arrived to inform Colmcille that Mobhi had died and they brought with them St. Mobhi's Girdle as a sign that Colmcille could proceed with founding the monastery.

In this text, Colmcille is also credited with the foundation of monasteries at **Raphoe** and on **Tory Island**. At Raphoe he resurrected a wright who had been drowned in the millpond there. He left an elder of his house named Ernaine on Tory.

The Life also tells how Colmcille travelled to **Brega (County Meath)** and founded many churches there, including **Kells**, and also founded a church at **Swords**, County Dublin and **Moën (Moone, County Kildare)**. He continued his travels into Connacht and established churches at **Ess Mic Eirc (Assylin, County Roscommon)** and **Druim Cliab (Drumcliff, County Sligo)**. He then crossed the falls at **Assaroe**, County Donegal, back into his home territory.

Placenames in Manus O'Donnell's *Life of Colum Cille*

Manus O'Donnell's *Life of Colmcille* from the sixteenth century is the most lengthy account and contains references to numerous places. The following list is not a comprehensive one of all places mentioned in the *Life*, (the index of places mentioned in the Life runs to six pages) but does include the key locations in present-day Counties Donegal and Derry. Some of these placenames are not identifiable today and are marked

by an asterisk*. The relevant placenames are listed below according to where they appear in the text:

- Part 13: The manuscript was written as the castle of **Port na Trí Namat (Lifford)** in 1532
- Part 26: Saint Patrick made a prophesy about Colmcille at **Domhnach Mór of Magh Hith in Cinéal Conall**. This has been identified as Donoughmore near Castlefin, County Donegal by Brian Lacey
- Part 31: Patrick also made a prophesy about the future Colmcille at **Assaroe** waterfall
- Part 42: Prophesy made by Finn MacCumhaill about the future Colmcille made while out hunting in **Senglenn (Glencolmcille)**
- Part 51: Colmcille's birth at **Gartan (Rath Cnó)** with references made to the flagstone (**Lacknacoó**) and to Gartan clay.
- Part 53: Colmcille is fostered to the monastic church of **Cill mic Nenain (Kilmacrennan)**.
- Part 54: Colmcille is baptised at **Tulach Dubhglaise (Temple Douglas)**
- Part 55: Colmcille took his first steps in the townland of **Temple Douglas**.
- Part 58: The story of the Flag of Chastity on an island in **Loch mic Ciabain (Lough Akibbon)**.
- Part 61: The story of the visit at Christmas by Colmcille and his foster father Cruithneachan to bishop Brugach at **Raith Enaigh*** in the land of Énna. (**Tír Énna** or the land of Enna is in eastern Donegal around present-day **Raphoe**)
- Part 75: Colmcille returns north from **Glasnevin** and prevents the buideach conaill plague from crossing the **River Bir***.
- Part 77: Colmcille establishes his monastery at **Derry**.
- Part 81: The story of Colmcille changing water into wine for a group of bards at a place which became known as **Raith na Fleidhe** or **Barrow of the Banquets***.
- Part 82: A story makes reference to **Carraig Eolairc*** on the banks of **Lough Foyle**.
- Part 90: Colmcille builds a church at **Cluaine*** near **Derry** on the west bank of the Foyle
- Part 91: Colmcille blessed and built **Raphoe**
- Part 93: The story of a feast held at **Both Brain*** near **Kilmacrennan** when Colmcille's father gave up the kingship of Ulaidh

- Part 109: The story of **Leac na Cumha** (**Lacknacoo** – *the Stone of Sorrow*) near **Gartan**.
- Part 110: Colmcille raises a youth from the dead at the eastern side of **Lough Bethach** (**Gartan Lough**).
- Part 111: Colmcille journeys to **Tory Island** to convert the islanders and comes into confrontation with King Oillil and his hound.
- Part 113: The story of the **Church of the Seven** on **Tory Island** where the six sons and one daughter of the King of India were buried after they travelled there to meet Colmcille.
- Part 115: The story of Colmcille cursing fishermen at **Bun Linded** in the territory of Conall Gulban and beside **Kilmacrennan**. Brian Lacey has identified Bun Linded with Bunlin, near Milford in County Donegal.
- Part 117: References to **Doire Eithne** and **Tobar Eithne** near **Kilmacrennan**, both of which were named after Colmcille's mother.
- Part 128: Colmcille makes **Termon Cumaínig*** in **Tyrone** a place of sanctuary and creates three wells by striking the ground with his staff. He prophesied that the tribe of Conall would desecrate the sanctuary and be struck down with illness as a result. The place became known as the **Well of the Conalls** (**Tobar na Conallach**)* thereafter.
- Part 132: The story of Colmcille banishing the evil spirits and demons from **Glencolmcille**. His follower, named An Cerc, was killed by the demons and the stream called **Srath na Circe** was named after him as a result.
- Part 133: Colmcille makes a passage for the fish at **Assaroe** to allow them to swim upstream.
- Part 141: **Inber Naaile** in the territory of Conall Gulban is referred to in the story of Naile, son of Aengus of Cashel who came to Colmcille looking for spiritual guidance. (This is the village of **Inver** to the west of Donegal town where there is a holy well dedicated to Saint Naul).
- Part 142: Colmcille and Comgall went to the sand dunes by the sea at **Glenn Gemin** near **Druim Ceat**.
- Part 143: Colmcille preaches at **Druim Ceat** and performs many miracles there
- Part 146: Colmcille raises a smith called Connla from the dead so that he can complete work on a shrine that he began to build for Saint Patrick. This miracle took place at **Dún Cruin*** in **Glenngeimin**.

- Part 150: Colmcille prays at **Tulach na Salm*** east of **Kilmacrennan**.
- Part 164: Colmcille is at **Tobar an Delig*** (Well of the Thorn) at the port of **Cairthe Snámha** on the eastern side of **Lough Foyle** where he cures a youth who comes with a thorn in his foot. The well is since used as a cure for thorns.
- Part 165: Colmcille's cow was stolen but was recovered near a river called the **Fochain***. A well which sprung forth at the time is known as **Tobar na Duibhe***.
- Part 186: Colmcille departs Ireland for exile from **Glais an Indluidh*** on the shores of **Lough Foyle**.
- Part 279: Quatrains written by Colmcille when he was in **Iona** express his homesickness and his longing for places in Ireland. As well as **Derry** and **Kells**, he also refers to '**Raphoe** the stainless, **Drumhome** with sweet acorns'.

THE IRISH LANGUAGE AND THE COMMEMORATIONS



The Importance of the Irish Language to the Commemorations

The following section is derived from communications with Foras na Gaeilge.

The Irish language in present-day communities associated with Colmcille

There are tens of thousands of native speakers in the county, and a range of networks, organisations and activities associated with them. Present-day Gaeltacht communities cover a significant part of the coastal and some inland areas, in the neighbourhood of many sites associated with Colmcille. There is a level of understanding and awareness of Irish in the broader community in Donegal, which is higher than in most other counties, and considerable community interest in Derry and Strabane in the Irish language.

The Heritage of the Language

Irish was the main language for more than a thousand of the 1,500 years since the birth of Colmcille, associated with Latin as an ecclesiastical language. Many of the key texts are in Irish, including the 12th-century middle Irish Life written in Derry, Manus O'Donnell's Beatha Cholm Cille of 1532, and much of the recorded folklore. This is one area which brings close links to Scotland, and much current scholarship argues for one Gaelic language in Ireland and Scotland west of the Highland mountain ridge from the early medieval period.

Sources

As outlined above, many of the key texts are in Irish, including the 12th-century middle Irish life written in Derry, Manus O'Donnell's Beatha Cholm Cille of 1532, and much of the recorded folklore.

Tourism

Irish and Scottish Gaelic brings added value to the tourist experience. Research by Visit Scotland has suggested that a third of overseas visitors are attracted by the

presence of Scottish Gaelic signage, and Visit Scotland has just launched its own Gaelic language tourism strategy.

Recommendations

During the course of planning and carrying out the commemorations the use of Irish should be encouraged by using Irish pro-actively where possible, for example:

- Providing placenames in Irish language in Gaeltacht areas, and in Irish alongside English outside Gaeltacht areas, and in a format which gives the two languages equal status.
- Carefully identifying the accurate form of placenames. The website www.logainm.ie gives authoritative forms of many placenames. Consulting with local authority Irish language officers, or Foras na Gaeilge on sourcing Irish language texts.
- Using phrases in Irish which can easily be understood or acquired and can come into common usage. 'Slí Cholmcille' has become recognised by people with little or no previous knowledge of Irish. Other words and phrases which can be easily understood include 'Colmcille na féile', Leac na Cumha, 'turas', 'cloigtheach', 'reilig', Beatha Cholmcille, tobar Cholmcille and in the use of personal names like 'Colmcille' and 'Adhamhnán'.
- Identify and encourage people within local groups who can provide spoken and other material in Irish, this could be a guided tour, or even just a taster section from a folk tale, accompanied by an English version. The solution and balance will depend on the community, but it is likely that all communities can do something, rather than using English exclusively as a default position.
- Ensure linkage with local language plans in Gaeltacht areas.

OBJECTS ASSOCIATED WITH COLMCILLE



*“He sained three hundred victorious crosses,
Three hundred wellsprings that were swift,
A hundred booksatchels,
With a hundred croziers, with a hundred wallets”.*

This extract, taken from the 12th-century *Life of Saint Columba*, indicates that Colmcille had something of a talent for making religious objects. Indeed the various hagiographies of Colmcille are full of references to objects and artefacts of all kinds. These objects reflected Colmcille’s status and power and were of significance in the creation of a cult around the saint. In many instances, objects were imbued with miraculous properties. It was said, for instance, that manuscripts produced by Colmcille would suffer no damage if immersed in water.

What is perhaps of more significance, however, is that the Columban family of churches and monasteries which were established in the centuries after Colmcille’s life produced some of the most important religious artefacts from early Christian Ireland. In particular, the manuscripts and metalwork created by Columban monks and other devotees are unsurpassed in terms of their beauty and craftsmanship. Some of these objects have survived centuries of tribulations and form the centrepieces of museums and exhibitions in the present day.

During the Columban commemorations of 1997 significant artefacts and objects associated with Colmcille were obtained for display in Derry. These included the Cathach and its shrine that were displayed in the Guildhall. The first time in centuries that the objects were brought together.

This chapter outlines the key objects and artefacts associated with Saint Colmcille. For the purposes of this report, these objects are classified into three broad categories. However, as with many aspects of the study of Colmcille, complete

certainty is absent and various interpretations and opinions exist among scholars and experts. The provenance, history and authenticity of some of the objects listed below are matters of ongoing debate. Where conflicting interpretations have been expressed in relation to any individual object, this is outlined for each object.

Category 1 objects are those which are still extant and that have a very close association with Colmcille. This includes the manuscript copies of the biographies of Colmcille, and those objects of international renown.

Category 2 objects are those which are still extant and, while they may not be directly associated with Colmcille himself, they are linked to his contemporaries or to the wider Columban family of churches and monasteries.

Category 3 objects are those which are not extant. In some cases, these objects are referred to in the texts of the various hagiographies of Colmcille and also in later texts and sources, indicating the existence of a real physical object which is now lost. In other cases, these objects are only referred to in the texts of the various lives of Colmcille; whether or not they ever existed in reality is open to interpretation.

Category 1 Objects

An Cathach / The Psalter of Columba

The Cathach is arguably the object with the strongest link to Colmcille. It is a manuscript copy of the Book of Psalms, also known as a Psalter. Written in Latin, it is thought to date from the second half of the sixth century. This makes it the oldest surviving Irish manuscript and also contemporaneous with the life of Colmcille. It should be pointed out, however, that some scholars date the manuscript to the seventh century, after Colmcille's death.

The surviving manuscript consists of fifty-eight vellum leaves measuring 270mm by 190mm. The entire original manuscript would have consisted of 110 leaves. It was only discovered in 1813 when the Cumdach (shrine – see below) was opened by Sir William Betham. It was repaired by the British Museum in 1920 and further repair work was carried out in 1980.

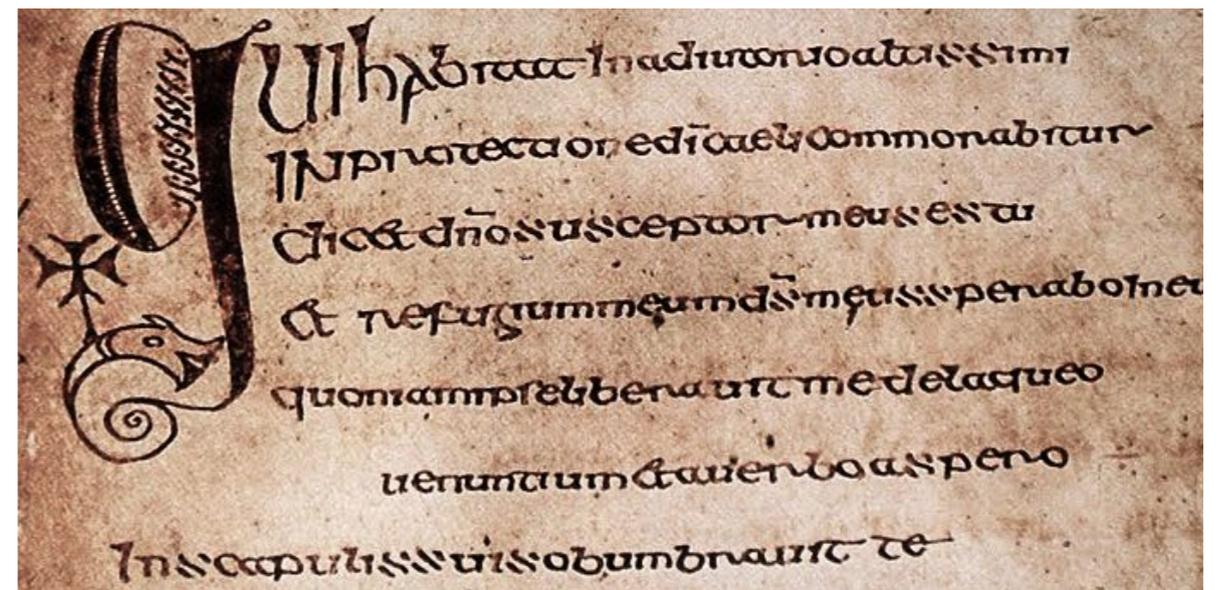
The manuscript is traditionally said to be the document that Colmcille copied in Saint Finnian's monastery at Clonard, County Meath without the latter's permission. A dispute subsequently arose between the two saints regarding the ownership of the copy. The High King of Ireland, Diarmuid Mac Cearbhaill, was called upon to issue a judgement on the matter and ruled in favour of Finnian. According to tradition, he is said to have proclaimed the phrase 'To every cow its calf, to every book its copy'. This judgement is said to have outraged Colmcille and was one of the factors which precipitated the battle of Cúil Dreimne and Colmcille's subsequent exile.

After the manuscript was enshrined in the eleventh-century Cumdach, the Cathach took on great significance for the O'Donnell clan and became their

battle standard. The following extract from Manus O'Donnell's Life of Colmcille explains its importance:

'The Cathach for a sooth is the name of that book by reason whereof the battle was fought. And it is covered with silver under gold. And to open it is not lawful. And if it is borne thrice sunwise round the host of the clan of Conall when they go into battle, they come back safe in triumph. And it is in the bosom of a successor or a cleric that is so far as may be without mortal sin, that the Cathach should be borne around the host.'

The Cathach was brought to France in 1691 but was brought back to Ireland by Sir Neal O'Donel in 1802. It was deposited in the Royal Irish Academy in 1843, where it is still held.



Extract of the Cathach housed in the Royal Irish Academy

Cumdach / Shrine of the Cathach

Closely associated with the Cathach is the Cumdach, a book shrine which was made to enclose and protect the manuscript. Although the Cathach manuscript was contained within the Cumdach for centuries, they are treated here as separate objects.

The Cumdach consists of a wooden box, now significantly decayed, covered by decorated plates of brass and silver. It measures 9 inches long, 8 inches wide and is 2 inches thick. The top plate is of silver and is divided into three arched compartments with figures shown in relief. The central compartment shows a figure seated on a throne (presumably Christ, but it may be Colmcille). To the left is the figure of a bishop with a mitre and crozier, while to the right is a crucifixion scene. The silver panel is decorated with rock crystals, gemstones and pearl and also has elaborate decorative carvings.

An inscription on the box provides details of its provenance and has been translated as:

“Pray for Cathbarr Ua Domnaill for whom this shrine was made and for Sitric son of Mac Áed who made it and for Domnall son of Robartach for whom it was made”.

Cathbarr Ua Domnaill was a king of the Síol Lugdach in north-western Donegal from whom the O'Donnell chieftains were descended. Domnall was the coarb of Kells between 1062 and his death in 1098, so the shrine can be dated to the late eleventh century. However, it appears that some of the decorative panels date from the fourteenth century or later.

The shrine became the battle standard for the O'Donnell clan in medieval times. The Magroarty clan were the hereditary keepers of the Cumdach. It would have been carried around the neck of a member of the clan as described in Manus O'Donnell's Life of Colmcille (see previous page).

It was believed that it was unlawful and bad luck to open the Cumdach and it remained sealed for centuries until it was opened by Sir William Betham in 1813. It was only then that the manuscript (Cathach) contained within the Cumdach was discovered.

The Cumdach is now held in the National Museum of Ireland.



The Shrine of the Cathach

The Monymusk Reliquary / Brecbennoch

The Monymusk Reliquary is a distinctive house-shaped reliquary and is considered to be one of the most treasured objects held in the National Museum of Scotland. Made from wood and covered in bronze and silver plates, it is decorated with animal motifs and a number of enamelled bronze mounts. The reliquary is quite small, measuring 112mm wide, 51mm deep and 89mm high. It has been dated to the early eighth century and is reputed to have held the relics of Colmcille at some point in the past, although it is now empty. Reliquaries were used to hold relics of important saints and in some instances may have stored a piece of the saint's corporeal remains. It was believed that relics had miraculous or healing properties and could keep away evil spirits. Two hinges on the reliquary allowed it to be carried around someone's neck using a strap.

The Moneymusk Reliquary takes its names from Monymusk Priory in Aberdeenshire, and was in the possession of the Grant family until the nineteenth century. It was long thought that the Moneymusk Reliquary was one and the same object as the traditional Brecbennoch of Colmcille, a battle standard used by the Scottish army in medieval times. The earliest historical reference to the Brecbennoch dates from 1211. It was said to have been carried at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314, where Scottish forces under Robert the Bruce defeated the English army of Edward II. Recent scholarship has cast doubt on whether or not the reliquary is the Brecbennoch.

Vitae Columbae / Life of St. Columba

This is the earliest biography of Colmcille and was written in Latin by Adomnán, 9th Abbot of Iona, in the late seventh century, approximately one hundred years after Colmcille's death. It consists of three books, which describe the prophecies of Colmcille, the miracles he performed and the apparitions of angels to him.

The earliest surviving manuscript copy dates from the eighth century and was taken to the monastery at Reichenau in southern Germany in the tenth century. It is currently housed in the town library in Schaffhausen, Switzerland, where it has been since the eighteenth century. It is written on goatskin parchment and has 71 pages measuring 280mm by 230mm.



The Monymusk Reliquary (© Johnbod, CC BY-SA 3.0, Creative Commons Licence)

The Life of Colum Cille / Betha Colm Cille

The Life of Colum Cille was produced in Irish for Manus O'Donnell in 1532. It collated a large amount of information, stories and folklore about Columba into one book of over 100,000 words. It also endeavoured to connect his story to the O'Donnell clan and to parts of Donegal closely associated with them. On the surface, it appears to be the most comprehensive biography of the saint, but it was written almost one thousand years after he lived and died. Much of the material, therefore, cannot be taken at face value.

The oldest surviving manuscript copy is held in the Bodleian Library, Oxford (Rawlinson Collection, B514). Richard Rawlinson was an eighteenth-century clergyman who amassed a collection of over 5,000 manuscripts which he left to the Bodleian Library. It appears that this manuscript is not on public display.

An Leabhar Breac / The Speckled Book

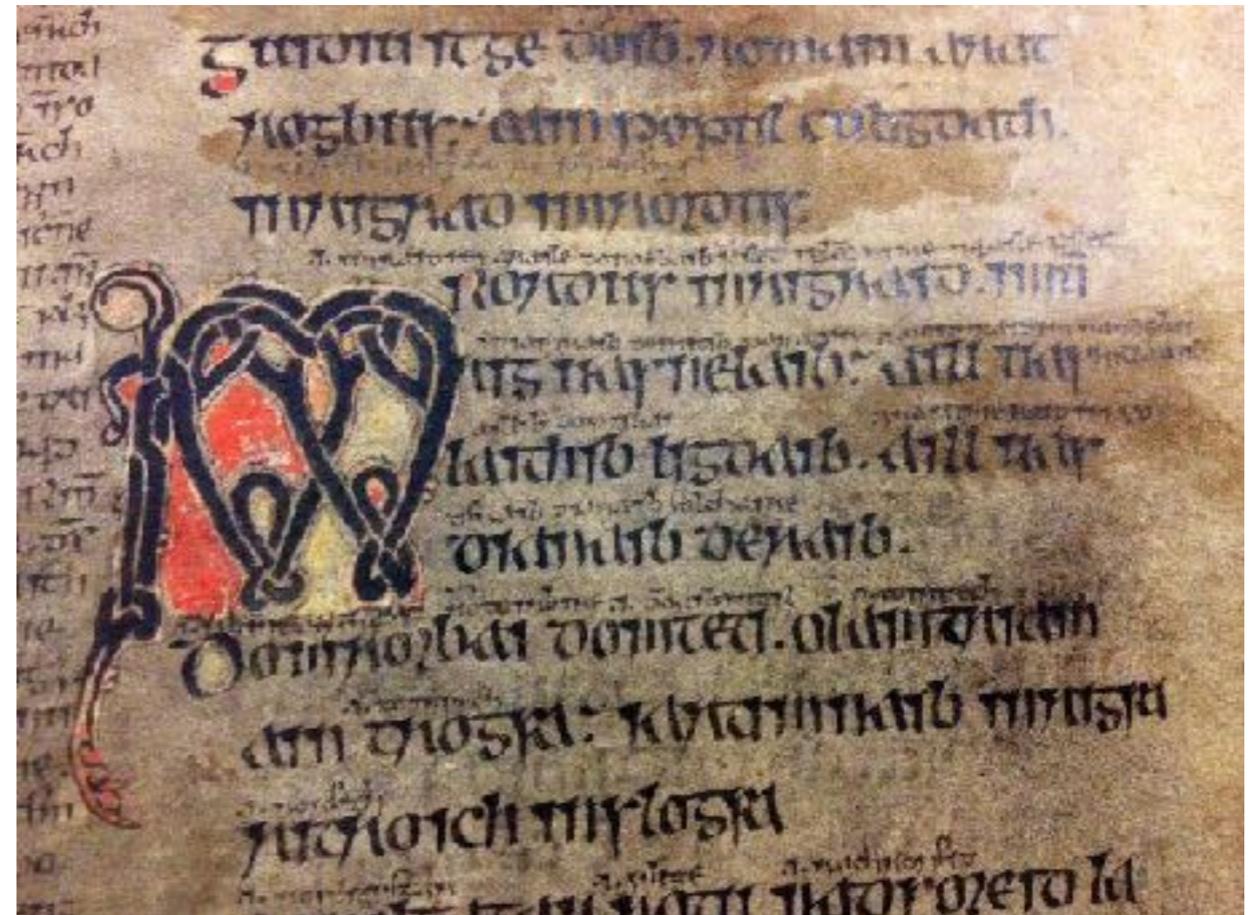
This manuscript dates from the early fifteenth century and was written by Murchadh O Cuindlis in Lorrha in North Tipperary. The manuscript contains 140 folios, measures 405mm by 280mm and is written on vellum. It contains religious and historical material, including the 12th-century Middle Irish Life of Columba, which was originally written in Derry between 1150 and 1170. This biography was in the form of a sermon that was preached annually on June 9th. It also established Colmcille's strong connections with Derry. The manuscript is currently held in the library of the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin.

St Columba's Crozier / The Durrow Crozier

A crozier is carried by a bishop as a symbol of their office. Its design is based on a shepherd's crook and it reflects the pastoral role of bishops. There are several surviving examples of beautifully decorated croziers from early medieval Ireland. St. Columba's Crozier, also known as the Durrow Crozier, came from Durrow in County Offaly, the southernmost of all the monasteries said to have been founded by Colmcille. It has been dated to the ninth-century, but was

redecorated in the twelfth-century. The entire crozier does not survive as the foot and most of the head or crook are missing. What remains of the crozier is in two pieces. Bronze and copper are the two principal components of the elaborate metalwork.

The hereditary keepers were the MacGeoghegan family, who held it until the nineteenth century. According to some traditions, the crozier would have enshrined the staff of the saint, but there is little evidence to support this in the case of the Durrow Crozier. It is now in the National Museum of Ireland.



Extract of the Leabhar Breac (housed in the National Museum of Ireland)

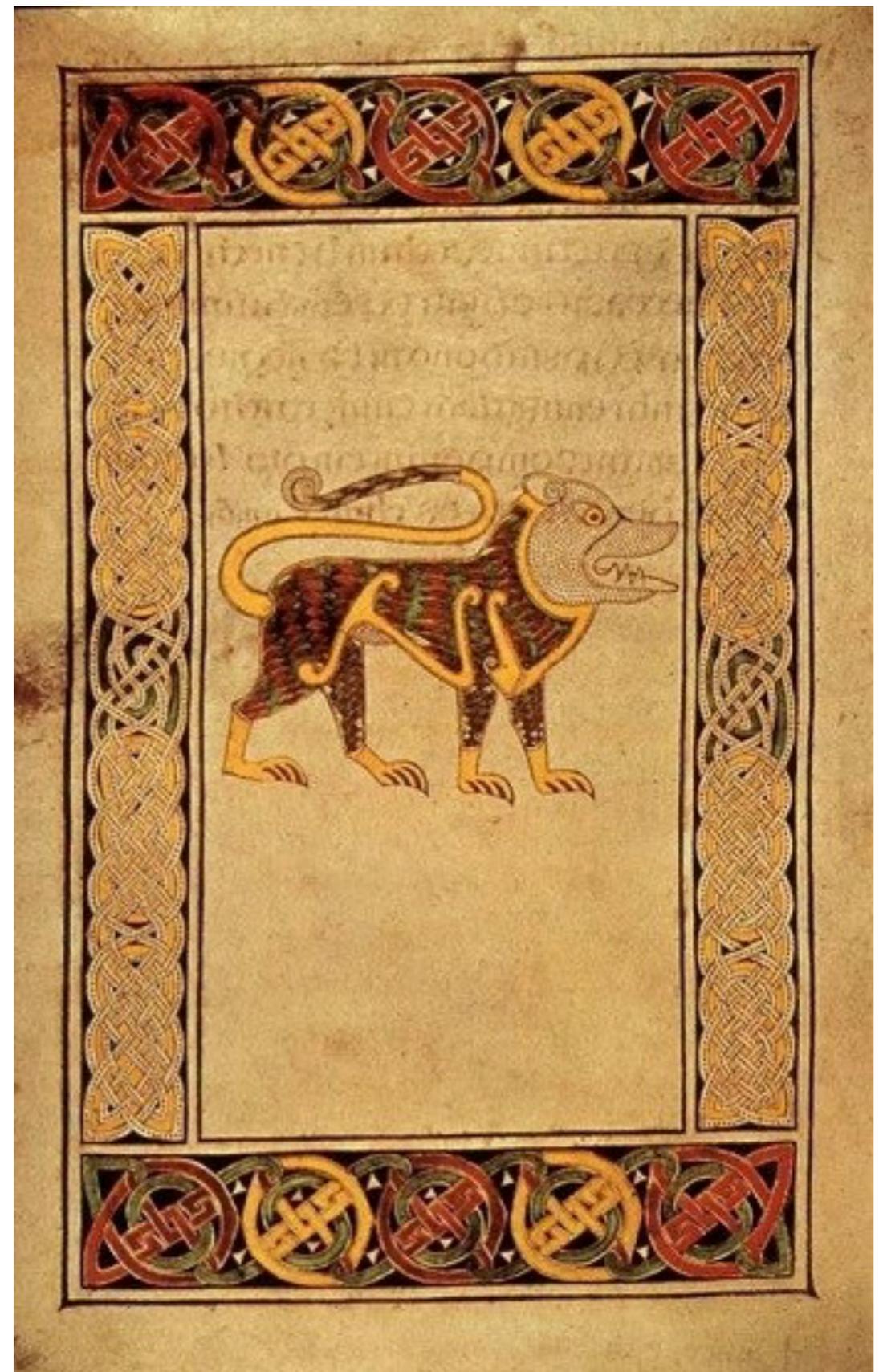
The Book of Durrow

This illuminated manuscript of the four gospels dates from the second half of the seventh century. It is the oldest surviving complete book of the four gospels in the Insular style and one of the oldest in Western Europe. Its 248 pages are made of vellum and measure 245mm by 145mm. The manuscript is known in particular for its elaborate artwork, which shows a variety of stylistic influences and is thought to have inspired the later Book of Kells.

There is debate about where the manuscript was written. It is known to have been in Durrow in the early tenth century and may have originated there, but some scholars have argued that it was written in the Columban monastery of Lindisfarne or perhaps even Iona.

According to tradition, it was written by Colmcille in twelve days. An inscription on the book which was added at an unknown date has been translated as *“I ask your blessing, holy presbyter Patrick that whoever holds in his hand this little book may remember me - Columba the writer who wrote this gospel for myself in the space of twelve days by the grace of Our Lord”*. However, modern scholarship has cast doubt on any direct link to the saint and it is almost certain that the manuscript could not have been produced in twelve days.

Following the dissolution of the monastery at Durrow in the sixteenth century, the Book of Durrow went into private ownership. It is said that around this time it was immersed in water by a farmer to cure his sick cattle, but that the manuscript was unharmed. It was donated to Trinity College Dublin in the late seventeenth century by Henry Jones, Bishop of Meath. It remains in the library of Trinity College Dublin. A *cumdach* or metalwork shrine for the book was made around 900 A.D. by order of the High King of Ireland Flann Sinna but this was lost around 1688.



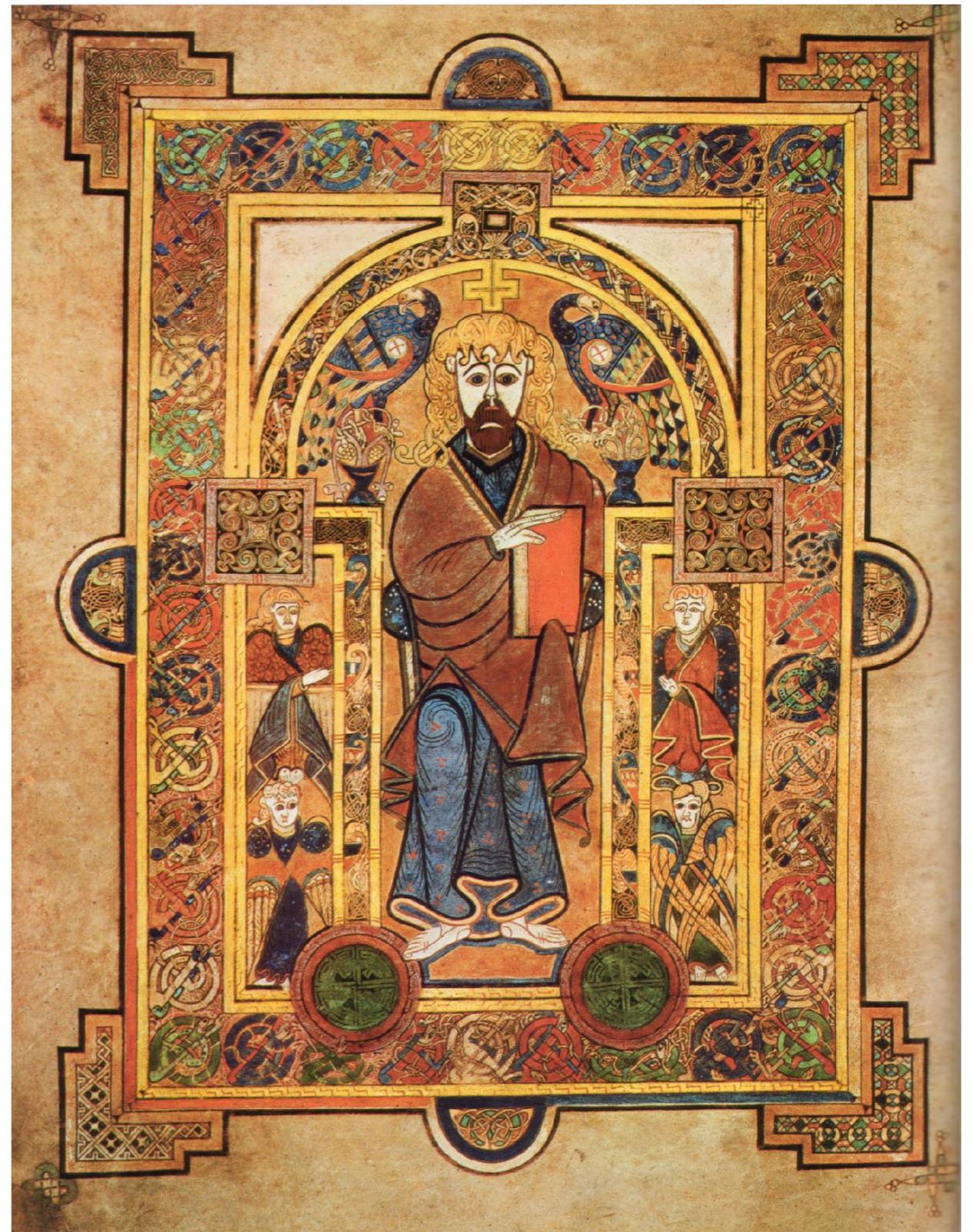
Book of Durrow (housed in Trinity College Dublin)

The Book of Kells

The Book of Kells is undoubtedly the best-known religious artefact from early medieval Ireland. It is a brilliantly illustrated manuscript of the four gospels with a highly-detailed and intricate designs that show a variety of stylistic influences. Written on vellum and measuring 330mm by 255mm and containing 340 folios, it is considered the most outstanding example of an illustrated manuscript from this period.

It is thought to have been written in the eighth century although there is debate about where the manuscript was produced. It was housed at Kells for many centuries but the monastery there was not founded until 808 A.D. Columban monks fled the monastery at Iona in 806 A.D. following a Viking raid and took refuge in Kells, so the manuscript may have been produced in Iona. However, some scholars have claimed that it came from Northumbria or eastern Scotland.

The theft of the Book of Kells in 1006 A.D. was considered significant enough to be recorded by the annalists. What is also notable is that in both the Annals of Ulster and the Annals of the Four Masters, it is referred to as *'The Great Gospel of Colum Cille'*. Indeed it continued to be referred to by this name throughout the medieval period, reflecting a belief that it was a relic of the saint. Following the turbulent years of the mid-seventeenth century, the Book of Kells was presented to Trinity College Dublin by the Bishop of Meath, Henry Jones. It has been on display there since the middle of the nineteenth century and now attracts over 500,000 visitors per annum.



Book of Kells (housed in Trinity College Dublin)

Category 2 Objects

The Shrine of the Miosach

This book shrine is thought to date from the eleventh century and is made from yew covered in metal plates. The manuscript which it contained has been lost. It is thought to date from around 1100 A.D. but was repaired in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was originally associated with Saint Cairneach of Dulane, County Meath but was later absorbed into the cult of Saint Colmcille and it was taken to Donegal. It was probably made in Kells and kept in Derry from the twelfth century. It was used as a battle standard and was kept by the O' Morrison family of Clonmany, County Donegal in the Middle Ages. It is now in the National Museum of Ireland.

The Gartan Bell

This early-medieval bronze bell is also known as St Columba's Bell and is associated with the saint's birthplace of Gartan, County Donegal. Measuring 27cm high, it is made of bronze but lined internally with iron plates. It has suffered some damage over the centuries and there are holes in the bronze exterior while the clapper is also missing. The bell was kept in the Gartan area until the height of the Great Famine and was sold to a clergyman from County Louth. The original bell is held in the National Museum of Ireland. A replica of this bell is on display in the Colmcille Heritage Centre in Gartan.

The Bell Shrine of Saint Mura

This richly-decorated hand bell is thought to date from the eleventh century. It measures 155mm high and is made from bronze and decorated with brass, silver, rock crystal and amber. It is named after St. Mura who founded a monastery at Fahan on the Inishowen peninsula. It is said that this monastery was affiliated to the Columban paruchia, but this is not universally accepted. The strength of the connection of this artefact to Colmcille is, therefore, debatable.

The bell was said to have supernatural powers and was much revered in the

locality. It was claimed that a pregnant woman who drank water from the bell would have a safe childbirth. The bell remained in local possession until the 1840s when poverty forced its keeper, a local fisherman, to sell it for six pounds. It came into the possession of Sir Richard Wallace in 1879 and is now held in the Wallace Collection in London, a privately-owned collection which is open to the public.



The Shrine of the Miosach (© National Museum of Ireland)

The Ballynascreen or Termonmaguirk Bell

A bell held in the National Museum of Scotland is said to be the Ballynascreen or Termonmaguirk Bell from south-eastern County Derry. This square-shaped bell is of cast iron and is coated with bronze (Museum Ref. No. X.KB 2). Further research is required, however, to establish the precise provenance of this bell.

The legend of the Ballynascreen Bell is recounted in the Ordnance Survey Letters and in other sources. According to legend, the church here was first founded as a college by Saint Patrick, but later converted to a church by Colmcille. While the church was being built, a monster came and pulled down the work each night. Colmcille led the locals in prayer and a bell descended from the sky to guide them to a new location for the church. The locals spread their garments on the ground to provide a landing place for the bell. The bell first landed on a cloak belonging to a member of the McGillan family, but then turned over onto a garment of the McGuirk family. The two families remained in dispute over subsequent centuries as to which family held the honour of keepers of the bell, a story which may reflect tribal rivalries within the O'Neill dynasty. The bell was used in the swearing of oaths in the locality. It is said that the bell was taken to Termonmcguirk by the McGurk family around 1604.

A description of the bell was given in the Ordnance Survey Letters

'Hence the bell is called Dia Dheultagh or "the Vengeance of God". It is long, narrow, of a square form, very curiously embossed, and fame who loves the marvellous, tells that each of its sides once held a diamond of great value. It is certain that the sockets still remain in its sides, in which some rare stones may have been set by way of ornament. The bell is now removed to Tyrone.'

Although tradition attributes the foundation of the church at Ballynascreen to Colmcille, it is not mentioned in any of his lives, so the direct link between this artefact and the saint is tenuous. A ruined church still stands here in the

townland of Moneyconey. It is said to have been at the centre of nine other churches which were also founded by Colmcille, and each of these was nine miles from Ballynascreen.

Category 3 Objects

These are objects which are now lost but which are referred to in documentary sources, hagiography and recorded oral tradition.

Saint Colmcille's Relics

It was common practice in early Christian Ireland to enshrine the relics of recently deceased saints. The remains of saints were preserved and held and became objects of devotion as well as symbols of power and ecclesiastical authority. There are several references to the relics of Colmcille in various sources. Some of them are contradictory and there is no clear understanding of what ultimately became of his relics.

The relics of a saint were often brought on circuit and the Annals contain references to this practice in relation to Saint Colmcille. The laws of Colmcille were proclaimed in Ireland in the second half of the eighth century when his relics were brought on tour to Meath. There are specific references to this practice in 753, 757 and 778 A.D. In 829, the Annals of Ulster recorded that *“Diarmait, abbot of Í, went to Scotland with the halidoms of Colum Cille”*.

Other relics of the saint were brought to Dunkeld in Scotland by the King of the Picts, Kenneth McAlpin in 849 A.D. This may have occurred due to ongoing Viking raids at Iona. In 1090 A.D. the Annals of Tigernach record that Colmcille's reliquaries were brought from Kells to Donegal. According to the Book of Armagh, some relics of Colmcille were brought to Saul in County Down in the early ninth century. They were later exhumed along with the relics of Saint Patrick and Saint Brigid in 1293 and were placed in a decorative shrine.

Saint Columba's Red Stone

Manus O'Donnell's Life of Colmcille relates the story of this object, which was connected to Colmcille's birth at Gartan:

“And his mother brought forth a round stone of the colour of blood along with him and it is called the Red Stone. And he left that stone in Gartan to work marvels and wonders ; and it doth not take a covering of gold nor of silver, albeit men have oft endeavoured to cover it, but a case of silver or of gold it suffereth”.

An inquisition which took place in Lifford in September 1609 which preceded the Plantation of Ulster gives details of a similar object. The O' Nahan clan were described as the hereditary keepers of Colmcille's 'read stone'. Lucas speculates that the object may have been used in the swearing of oath in the locality, which was a commonplace use to which relics of saints were put.

St. Columba's Fan / Cuilebadh

This object was probably a ceremonial fan or a flabellum, although it is not certain what it looked like. It is connected to a story from Manus O'Donnell's Life of Colum Cille, where two of his clerics underwent a wandering sea voyage when returning to Iona from Ireland. On one of the many islands that they visited, the following incident occurred:

“And a while after that sleep fell upon the clerics with the rapturous sweetness of the melody that those beautiful birds did sing from the boughs of the tree above them. And the birds let drop down upon them a beautiful golden leaf from that tree, and it covered them all. And like to the hide of a full-grown ox was the size of that leaf. ‘Take with you the leaf’ saith the great bird, ‘And lay it upon the altar of Columcille.”

There are also several references to this object in the Annals. In 1034 A.D. the Annals of Ulster recorded that the Lector of Kells was drowned coming from Scotland to Ireland and “Colum Cille's fan (cuilebad) and three relics of Patrick and thirty men were lost as well”. However, it is also included in a list of items taken from Donegal to Kells in 1090 A.D. indicating that it was either recovered or a replacement was found.

St. Columba's Bell

In addition to the bells discussed in Category 2 above, there are several references to bells associated with Colmcille in the various hagiographies of the saint. Manus O'Donnell's *Life of Colum Cille* tells the story of how Colmcille cast his bell, called the *Dub Duabseach*, at the demons when he was banishing them from Glencolmcille. The bell sank deep into the earth at the place where it landed. Another story in Manus O'Donnell's *Life* relates that three bells were made for Colmcille by a smith named Senach who lived at Doire Broscaidh (Derrybrusk, County Fermanagh) on the shores of Lough Erne. When Colmcille was travelling from Iona to the convention of Druim Ceatt, a monster rose up from the sea and attacked his boat. Colmcille told his monks that a smith named Senach would come to their aid. Senach flung a piece of molten iron from his forge which entered the monster's mouth and killed it. The dead beast was washed ashore at Lough Foyle and the iron was retrieved from its stomach. Senach then made three bells from the iron: the Glunan Senaigh, the Gerr an Curuigh and a third bell that was given to Saint Naile of Inver. The round tower on Tory Island is said to have contained a bell dedicated to Colmcille, known in Irish as *Clog Cholm Cille*. The bell was removed from the tower for safekeeping after a lightning strike in the eighteenth century. It has been missing since the nineteenth century.

Cochall Colm Cille

John O'Donovan, in one of his Ordnance Survey Letters for County Mayo dated June 1838, referred to an object held in Ballycroy, County Mayo which was described as a box with gems inserted into it. It was known as the *Cochall Choluim Chille* and may have been a type of shrine. The word *cochall* may be translated as a pod or capsule, but the object is now lost. The detailed account by O'Donovan is reproduced below:

“All of the old men in Ballycroy concur in affirming that about 70 years ago there was a relic in Ballycroy called Cochall Choluim Chille on which the people were in the habit of swearing, that it was in the possession of two old men of the name Clery and Freel who looked upon themselves as the hereditary keepers of it, that it was a box with some gems inserted into its cover which resembled glass eyes and that whenever anyone perjured himself these eyes were wont to turn round, to roll like human eyes and to make signs of melancholy disapprobation of the conduct of the profane perjurer; that these two men left

Ballycroy and took the Cochall (Cucullus) with them, and that no one heard of it not of any thing like it until some years ago Lady O'Donnell got a relic somewhere called the Cathach of Columbkille but there is no certainty of it being the same with the Cochall taken away by the two old men about 60 years before”. Interestingly, O'Donovan also refers to the fact that this part of Mayo was colonised by a branch of the O'Donnell clan who came to the area from Donegal about two centuries beforehand and that the Clery family of Ballycroy claimed a connection with the Clerys of Kilbarron Castle in south Donegal. Whether or not the Cochall was in fact the same object as the Cumdach for the Cathach, as suggested by the description, is another intriguing aspect of this object.

Saint Mobhi's Belt

According to the 12th-century *Life of St Columba*, which was written in Derry, Colmcille was granted land at Derry but refused to found a monastery there until he had permission from St. Mobhi of Glasnevin, under whom Colmcille had studied. Two of Mobhi's monks arrived at Derry to tell Colmcille that Mobhi had died and they gave him Mobhi's belt. Colmcille took this as a sign that he could go ahead and found the monastery. Based on stories about the belt, it was probably used in oath swearing ceremonies. A similar surviving example is the Moylough Belt Shrine in the National Museum. The extract below gives the full story.

“Then fared Colombcille to Derry, to the chief stronghold of Aed son of Ainmire, who was King of Ireland at that time. The King offered that stronghold to Colombcille, and he refuseth it, because of Mobii's command. Howbeit, on his coming forth out of the stronghold he met with two of Mobii's household, having Mobii's girdle for him and consent to take the territory, Mobii having died. So Colombcille said:—

1. Mobii's girdle

Rushes were not round ...(?)

It never was opened against surfeit:

It never closed on lies.

Colombcille thereafter settled in Aed's stronghold and founded a church there and wrought many miracles therein”.

Dunkeld Crozier / Cathbuidh

This crozier may have been similar to the Durrow Crozier (above). It was said to have been brought to Dunkeld in Perthshire from Iona around 849 A.D. by King of the Picts Kenneth McAplin, along with other relics of Columba, to protect them from Viking raids. It was used as a battle standard in a confrontation between the Scots and the Norse in 918 A.D.

Testamentary Brooch / Delg Aidechta

This brooch was said to be one of the treasures of the Abbot of Iona and according to legend, Colmcille was given the brooch as a gift by Pope Gregory the Great after a journey to Rome.

General Recommendations for a Columban Exhibition

With such a rich array of material culture, there is certainly high potential to create an engaging and informative exhibition of the objects associated with Colmcille. However, some of the key items may be difficult to acquire, even on a temporary basis. It may be somewhat difficult to persuade Trinity College Dublin to loan the Book of Kells for example, and even where such permissive agreements can be made, the necessary security for transport and display is likely to be costly.

Although it may be difficult to obtain the Book of Kells, there is still a fantastic opportunity to loan some of the other highly significant artefacts. These should include the Cathac, which has been successfully loaned to Derry during the previous commemorations in 1997, when it was displayed in the Guildhall.

It would be of real benefit to work with the other institutions to see if they would have an interest in a shared collaborative exhibition on Colmcille that can be housed in each of the major exhibition spaces (Tower Museum, Donegal County Museum, National Museum of Ireland, Trinity College Dublin and the Royal Irish Academy) for equal spells throughout the commemorative years of 2020/21. If such an accommodation proves difficult, then a collaboration with the other institutions would still be worth

seeking to cross-promote each other's offerings as they all share such strong links with Colmcille.

Donegal County Museum and the Tower Museum could also both be a vital hub in the Schools Folklore Project as an exhibition space and in providing best-practice advice in how to carry out research and establish an exhibition.

The past work on creating a digital or virtual museum of objects associated with Colmcille by the Nerve Centre and Derry City Council was a wonderful initiative that was far ahead of its time. A modernised version that contained images and interactive elements would be a great way to allow people to discover the rich cultural heritage of Colmcille and early medieval Ireland. Such a virtual museum could also contain interactive models of some of the key features of the sites associated with Colmcille – such as the high crosses at Durrow or Kells, and the stations at Glencolmcille. This could be combined with short videos where experts inform the viewer about the objects and places. Allowing people from all over the world to experience some of these magical places and to learn more about their folklore, history and archaeology.

COMMEMORATING COLMCILLE



THE COLUMBAN CAMINO



Through carrying out this process of evaluation of Columban Heritage, it became clear that each of the places visited, from the vibrant city of Derry to the otherworldly Tory Island, was a wonderful and varied visitor experience in its own right. Great efforts have been made in trying to connect together all of the key sites associated with Colmcille. Particularly notable amongst these efforts is the *Sli Cholmcille* initiative. The outputs of this initiative have created a rich resource of material to help to promote the story of Colmcille and the sites associated with him. Some of the outputs include leaflets and flyers, but perhaps the most substantial output is the website www.colmcille.org, that features maps and information on all of the sites. The website is trilingual in Irish, Scottish Gaelic and English.

The sites included in *Sli Cholmcille* include the majority of those visited during work on this report, including: Glencolmcille, Tory Island, Cnoc na Naomh, Tullaghobegley, Ray Church, Gartan, Derry, Druim Ceatt, Giant's Sconce,

St. Patrick's Church Coleraine, and Camus. Further sites associated with the story of Colmcille in Scotland are also featured, including sites around Argyll, Iona, Tarbat Ness and the Outer Hebrides.

The sites within our study area that are not currently featured on the *Sli Cholmcille* website are: Drumhome, Disert, Raphoe, and Lifford. There are a number of other sites with strong connections and traditions of Colmcille and his Columban Community across Ireland. These include Kells, County Meath; Durrow, County Offaly; Drumcliff, County Sligo and Swords, County Dublin. There are also a number of locations that are particularly relevant to the story of Colmcille – such as Trinity College Dublin where the Book of Kells is housed in a dedicated exhibition, the Royal Irish Academy home to the Cathach, or the National Museum of Ireland that houses a number of artefacts relevant to the story of Colmcille and his followers.



The Columban foundation at Durrow, County Offaly



Adam and Eve depicted on a high cross at Kells, County Meath

Combining all of the sites, across the island of Ireland along with the Scottish sites, into one great Columban ‘brand’ would be a wonderful way of telling the story. This ‘Columban Camino’ will help each of the sites to cross-promote the others, allowing the modern-day pilgrim or adventurer to deeply dive into the stories and places of Colmcille. This cross-promotion can be helped by developing a ‘Pilgrim’s Passport’, a fun document that gets stamped each time the pilgrim visits one of the sites. It would also be worth considering a sculptural trail to help to make a strong visually inspiring brand. The statues or artworks could represent particular stories of Colmcille that are relevant to the place, to help create a driving narrative as well as a striking photo opportunity. The Columban Camino can draw upon or augment the terrific work already carried out through the *Slí Cholmcille* as it helps to spread the Columban brand to all of the places associated with the saint.

Recommendations

- Establish a steering committee that includes Foras na Gaeilge and its Scottish counterpart, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, key stakeholders from all of the locations to be included community representation, local authority representatives particularly the relevant heritage officers and tourism officers, board members or representatives from institutions such as Trinity College Book of Kells exhibition, National Museum of Ireland and the Royal Irish Academy, Fáilte Ireland and their counterparts in Northern Ireland and Scotland and archaeologists, historians and individuals with a particular interest in the project.
- The steering committee should establish whether the current *Slí Cholmcille* envelops the broader Columban Camino concept or whether a new brand should be forged.
- If a new brand is to be created around the Columban Camino idea, brand guidelines should be established to ensure all sites have a consistent look and quality.
- A new website should be established if www.colmcille.org is to continue in its current format. Other outputs to consider are consistency in interpretative panels, brochures, flyers. Dedicated social media accounts. A ‘Pilgrim’s Passport’ and stamp system to encourage visitors to travel to each of the locations.
- Familiarisation trips between all the stakeholders so that each understands its counterparts in the Columban Camino. This would aid cross-promotion and the sharing of ideas.

SCHOOLS FOLKLORE PROJECT

The Schools' Folklore Collection was an important and far-sighted cultural heritage initiative undertaken by the Irish Folklore Commission between 1937 and 1939. Primary school students across Ireland gathered folklore from their parents, grandparents and neighbours and wrote them down in copybooks. The enormous task of digitising these collections was taken on by University College Dublin, and thanks to their efforts the collection is now available online at www.duchas.ie.

There are 267 pieces of folklore relating to Colmcille (or Columba or Colum Cille) in the Schools' Folklore Collection. The vast majority of these (172) are from schools in County Donegal, but counties Meath, Galway, Offaly and Mayo also each have numerous entries. These are a truly rich resource of tales and traditions. The commemorative years of 2020/21 would be a wonderful opportunity to re-run the Schools' Folklore Collection, to gather new stories about Colmcille. There are many schools named after Colmcille (and the different iterations of his name), that it would be a perfect way to engage a new generation with the saint. This would also have the additional benefits for the participating schools of promoting teamwork, inter-

generational interaction, historical and communication skills, Irish language, technology skills (in recording and uploading oral history) and presenting the work (in exhibition or poster formats).

Recommendations

- It is vital to engage with schools and the relevant bodies at the earliest stage to ensure it is compatible with the curriculum and to gain buy-in from the schools and teachers.
- Engage with the UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and National Folklore Collection to establish a methodology and to gain insights from the experts. It would also be fantastic if the new work could be housed on www.duchas.ie for accessibility
- Communicate a clear methodology to ensure consistency and quality
- Exhibitions at local hubs such as the Tower Museum, Donegal County Museum, Áras Cholmcille, Colmcille Heritage Centre and Oideas Gael to showcase the work. Also consider a prize-giving element to encourage participation.



THE COLUMBAN BIG DIG

Throughout the fieldwork aspect of the audit, and after discussions with a number of the contributors, it became clear that there is a real exciting opportunity to embark on an ambitious programme of archaeological investigation to gain a deeper understanding of early medieval Ireland, and to help to write a new chapter in the story of Colmcille.

A large number of the sites have intriguing questions that are key to understanding them. Some of the sites are currently being examined by excellent research projects that are already providing great insights into their stories. These include the Bernician Studies Group who have been carrying out research into early medieval Ireland and Northumbria, IT Sligo and Disert Heritage Group's investigations at Disert, the work at Drumhome by Drumhome Historical Society and Wolfhound Archaeology, and the recent exciting discoveries of Derry's round tower by the Derry Tower Heritage Group (DTHG) and Queen's University Belfast, not to mention the legacy of

archaeological study at Glencolmcille and by scholars such as Brian Lacey. This work has provided a deeper understanding of many of the places associated with Colmcille, but there is certainly opportunity to carry out further research. The celebrations of the 1400th anniversary of Colmcille's death in 1997 left a wonderful legacy of historical analysis, this is a thrilling opportunity to match that with an archaeological legacy to mark 2020/21. A simultaneous (or near-simultaneous) programme of excavation and survey, with community involvement where appropriate, would provide an opportunity for a television documentary to be created. Such a programme would be an exciting vehicle that allows the general public to better understand the material world of Colmcille. The programme should focus on the findings of the excavations and surveys, with a number of experts communicating how this all gives us a better understanding of the individual sites and the man himself and the world in which he lived. The Columban Big Dig would also provide the opportunity for new publications, exhibition, talks and tours.

Initial Recommendations for the Columban Big Dig

- It is recommended that a steering committee be established to examine the opportunities and to help to form a cohesive and overarching body that can help to formulate research strategies and facilitate the project. This steering committee should be reflective of the stakeholders, archaeologists and academics with a particular interest in Colmcille and early medieval Ireland, as well as community archaeologists, and the statutory authorities and county council heritage officers.
- Following discussions amongst the steering committee, a plan and methodology for the project should be developed to better understand the aims, objectives and methods to be employed at each site and how that fits into the overall picture.
- Identification and engagement with stakeholders – key stakeholders include the individual landowners, local authorities, Ireland's National Monuments Service and National Museum of Ireland, Northern Ireland's Department for Communities and Historic Environment Division, Queen's University Belfast Centre for Archaeological Fieldwork and the Young Archaeology Club based at the Tower Museum as well as the different research organisations and local communities. It would be essential to liaise with universities and organisations such as the Sligo Institute of Technology, Discovery Programme and Bernician Studies Group to assess their level of interest and recommendations for such an endeavour.
- The level of community involvement should be appropriate to each individual site and the nature of the archaeology. Ideally, it would be of great benefit if hands-on experience of archaeological survey and excavation could be provided (especially to schools), but it is not always safe or appropriate in all cases. Where appropriate, schools and the wider community should be engaged with at an early stage to inform them of plans and to better understand their needs.
- Potential outputs should be informed by the Steering Committee – suggested outputs may include a television documentary, podcasts, publications, digital media and schools workbooks.
- Initial targets for archaeological research identified during the course of this study include (in no particular order): geophysical survey and subsequent test excavation (where appropriate) at Druim Ceatt and Giant's Sconce to better understand the sites, continuation and facilitation of works at Disert and Drumhome, geophysical survey and potential targeted excavation to identify the monastic enclosures at Glencolmcille and Tory, further examination at the round tower of Derry, a large geophysical survey around St. Breacan's to try to identify the site destroyed in the twelfth century, further geophysical study at Ray Church and geological examination of the high cross to determine its origin. Geophysical survey and examination at Camus to identify the nature of the archaeology visible from the air in the surrounding fields. Examination of the nature of the megalithic tomb at Leac an Cumha – these are merely initial suggestions, an expert steering committee may have additional, or very different, objectives.



ILLUMINATED MANUSCRIPTS

What more appropriate way to celebrate the genius and creativity of Colmcille and his followers than ‘illuminating’ the walls of Derry as they once illuminated manuscripts? Lumière began in Durham in 2009 by Artichoke, an arts charity that works with artists to bring creativity and art into public spaces. Highly successful Lumière events have taken place regularly in Durham and recently in London in January 2016, where thirty installations were designed in response to the unique architecture of each location, and transformed some of London’s most iconic landmarks into dreamlike spectacles. A range of international artists produced creative displays including animated circuses, virtual pavements, a fishtank telephone box and a technicolour Westminster Abbey. Helen Marriage, Artichoke Director and curator of Lumière London, said: *“Using London’s buildings as their canvas and its streets as their auditorium, these installations are not hidden away behind the closed doors of art institutions, theatres or concert halls, but sit firmly in the public realm for everyone to enjoy.”*

A highly successful Lumière event took place in Derry as the finale of the City of Culture programme. Over 180,000 people attended the event, that saw a number of art installations that celebrated the city and its story.

“From Teenage Kicks to eyewitness tales of the Troubles, there were sparks of real drama in Derry – Londonderry’s dazzling four-night light festival”. (Rachel Cooke, The Observer, Saturday 30th November, 2013).

Such an event would be a wonderful way to close the year of Columban Celebrations. Ideally the event would culminate on the saint’s feast day on 7th December 2021. The key buildings and walls of the city could be ‘illuminated’ with images from the key manuscripts associated with the Columban tradition, particularly the Book of Kells and the Book of Durrow. This could turn the city into a giant manuscript, a living Columban treasure that would live long in the memory.



The walls of Durham Cathedral lit up with the Lindisfarne Gospels during Durham Lumière (Washington Imaging / Alamy)

Such an approach has already been highly successful in Durham where pages of the Lindisfarne Gospels have been projected onto prominent buildings.

However hosting such an event may require a sizeable budget allocation. The costs may be indicated by the overall cost of staging the 2013 Lumière event. If this is deemed to be a desirable and feasible idea, contact should be quickly made with Artichoke to liaise with their creative director and programming team to ensure that the dates can be confirmed and event planning proceed.

Recommendations

- Establish a 'Creative Steering Committee' for Derry to evaluate potential events.
- Evaluate potential costings of hosting such an event
- Liaise with Lumière as soon as possible to gauge their interest and availability in such an event

RETURN OF COLMCILLE



Return of Colmcille, Photograph by Margaret McLaughlin

This highly engaging event, designed by Frank Cottrell Boyce, saw Colmcille return to Derry. With specially composed music by Jim Sutherland, and a spectacular confrontation with a fire-breathing Nessie, this was a wonderful and uplifting event that took centre stage in the 2013 City of Culture celebrations. The public not only had the opportunity to witness the spectacle, but they also contributed their own stories. The city was also transformed into *ColmVille*, where monks roamed the streets with a performance around every corner. The event also included a parade, and a performance from the Undertones.

This event has lived long in the memory of all who witnessed it, and if it all possible, a new event that draws inspiration from the 2013 spectacle should be considered as a fitting way to celebrate the life of Colmcille.

Recommendations

- Establish a 'Creative Steering Committee' for Derry to evaluate potential events.
- Evaluate potential costings of hosting such an event
- Liaise with those involved in the 2013 event to see if they would be interested in serving on the steering committee or if they would be willing to share their ideas and insights into the organisation and execution of such a spectacle.



As you can see from this audit, there is a true wealth of places and objects associated with Colmcille, testament to his significance in the past and present. Colmcille serves as an inspiration for spirituality, but also for music, literature, history, poetry and the arts. 2020/21 presents a wonderful opportunity to really engage with his story and to create a series of memorable and meaningful events. A year-long programme gives opportunities to carry out events ranging from masses, intimate talks and storytelling evenings, to exhibitions, musical recitals, tours and pilgrimages to ambitious parades and great celebrations. Such events, and indeed any form of outreach, should keep the inspirational story of Colmcille at their heart to make them as meaningful as they are memorable. Many of the communities and organisations within the region have carried out wonderful events or celebrations in the past, or have ongoing events or programmes that highlight heritage and that may be themed with Colmcille for the commemorations, (such as the Donegal Historical Society's Annual Schools' Competition). It would be of real benefit to see those traditions and events continue so added support or facilitation should be considered where possible. A key objective of the future planning should be to help to create a sense of collaboration and inclusion amongst all of the sites and places that have a shared story, and the relevant stakeholders (such as public bodies, local government, landowners and communities). An overarching steering committee should be considered to ensure all the regions have an oversight of the overall plans, and that no region feels left behind or overlooked.

From visiting all of the sites, it is clear that there is high potential for a successful Columban Camino that could build on the fine work of the Slí Cholmcille to unify all of the areas. This should be expanded to include not only the sites in Donegal, Derry and Tyrone and the Scottish sites like Iona, but other key sites in Ireland like Durrow in Offaly, Kells in Meath, Drumcliffe in County Sligo (a Columban foundation near the site of the Battle of Cúl Dreimhne), and Swords in County Dublin. This Columban Camino should come with a 'Pilgrim's Passport' to help to create a fun way for visitors to want to visit all the places to uncover more of Colmcille's story. Responsible tourism is taken into consideration, and steps should always be taken to mitigate and minimise any negative impact from increased tourism. Another potential way to celebrate Colmcille was suggested by Patrick Boner, as Colmcille and his monks sailed to Iona, there is also a maritime aspect to his story. In 1963 his journey to Iona was recreated in a currach. That same currach is still in storage with the Museums and Visitor Service of Derry City & Strabane District Council. It would be a worthwhile endeavour to explore the possibility of restoring the currach, or indeed in constructing a new one, to recreate the voyage again in the 2020/21 celebrations.

We hope that this audit has helped the reader to better understand the sheer wealth of Columban heritage in the region, and that it forms a platform to celebrate this truly important figure.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beglane, F., Meehan, H., Nugent, L. 2016. *Conservation Management Plan for the Ecclesiastical Enclosure and Pilgrim Landscape of Disert, Inver Parish, Co. Donegal*. Unpublished Report for the Disert Heritage Project.

Betham, W. 1826. *Irish Antiquarian Researches: Part I, 1826*. Dublin: William Curry Jun. & Co.

Brennan, J. 2013. *Donegal Folk Tales*. Dublin: History Press Ireland.

Caldwell, D.H. 2001 “The Monymusk Reliquary: the Breccbennach of St. Columba?” in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, Vol. 131

Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment, Colm Cille: Life and Legacy. (Available online at <http://ccea.org.uk/colmcille/index.php>)

D’Aughton, M. 2004. The Kells Market Cross: The Epiphany Sequence Reconsidered. in *Archaeology Ireland*. Vol. 18. No. 1 (Spring).

Davies, O. “Ballynascreen Church and Legends” in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 4, 1941, pp. 57-63

De Paor, L. 1996. *Saint Patrick’s World*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.

Eeles, F.C. 1933. “The Monymusk Reliquary” in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, Vol. 68

Eposito, M. 1916. “The Cathach of St. Columba” in *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society*, Vol. 4, No. 1

Fawcett, Rev. Canon. F.W. 2009. *Columba, Pilgrim for Christ*. Donegal: Impact Print.

Gillespie, C. 1997. *St. Colm Cille. Gartan to Iona, a Life’s Journey*. Donegal: Christy Gillespie.

Given, M. 1905. The High Cross of Saint Comgall at Camus-Juxta-Bann, in the County of Derry. in: *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*. Second Series. Vol.11 No. 4.

Herbert, M. 1988. *Iona, Kells and Derry: The History and Hagiography of the Monastic Familia of Columba*. Oxford: Calarendon Press.

Herity, M. 1998. *Gleanncholmcille: A Guide to 5,000 Years of History in Stone*. Dublin: Na Clocha Breaca.

H.T.E. Consultants. 2010. *Audit of Rural Columban Sites in the Derry City Council Area*. Unpublished Report for Derry City Council.

Joynt, M. 1917. “The Cathach of St. Columba” in *The Irish Church Quarterly* Vol. 10, No. 9.

Lacey, B., Cody, E., Cotter, C., Cuppage, J., Dunne, N., Hurley, V., Ó Rahilly, C., Walsh, P., and Ó Nualláin, S. 1983. *Archaeological Survey of County Donegal. A description of the field antiquities of the County from the Mesolithic Period to the 17th century*. Lifford: Donegal County Council.

Lacey, B. 1998 (ed). *Manus O’Donnell: The Life of Colum Cille*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.

Lacey, B. 1998. “Columba, Founder of Monastic Derry? Mihi Manet Incertus” in *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 128

Lacey, B. 2013. *Medieval and Monastic Derry: Sixth Century to 1600*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.

Lacey, B. 2013. *Saint Columba: His Life and Legacy*. Dublin: The Columba Press.

Lacey, B. 2016. The ringed cross at Ray, Co. Donegal: context and date. *The Journal of Irish Archaeology*. Volume XXV. Journal of the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland.

Lucas, A.T. 1986. “The Social Role of Relics and Reliquaries in Ancient Ireland” in *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Vol. 116

Mackin, M., and Edmund, J. 2017. *Foras na Gaeilge – Slí Cholmcille Draft Outline Strategy*. Unpublished Report for Foras na Gaeilge

Marsden, J. and Gregory, J. 1991. *The Illustrated Columcille*. London: MacMillan.

McWilliams, C. 2001. *It’s Us They’re Talking About: Proceedings from the McGlinchey Summer School 2000 – Aspects of Church History in Inishowen and the Northwest*. Donegal: McGlinchey Summer School

McHugh, Fr. F. 2017. *Gleanings from Glendowan - Gartan - Glenveagh. Heritage & History*. Letterkenny: Browne Printers Ltd.

Moss, R. 2017. *The Book of Durrow: A 1,300 year old masterpiece in the Library of Trinity College Dublin*. Available online at <https://www.tcd.ie/library/exhibitions/durrow/>

Murray, G. "St. Columba's Crozier" available online at <http://www.askaboutireland.ie/reading-room/arts-literature/the-virtual-museum/digitisation-in-depth/medieval-period-shrines/st.-columbas-crosier/>

Ó Cuinneagáin, L. and Glavin, A. 2005. *Gleann Cholm Cille*. Glencolmcille: Oideas Gael.

O' Donovan, J. 1838. *Ordnance Survey Letters, County Mayo*, Vol. 1.

Ó Droma, M. 2018. *Feasibility Study; Developing Heritage in the Parish of Drumhome Co. Donegal*. Unpublished report for Drumhome Historical Society.

Ó Muirgheasa, E. 1936. The Holy Wells of Donegal. in *Béaloides*, Vol. 6, No. 2

Ó Muirí, R. 1998. "Commemorating St Colm Cille" in *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*, Vol. 17

Ó Riain, P. 2011. *A Dictionary of Irish Saints*. Dublin: Four Courts Press.

Pochin Mould, D.D.C. 1963. "In the Steps of Colmcille" in *The Furrow*. Vol. 14, No. 6

Price, L. 1941. "Glencolumbkille, County Donegal, and its Early Christian Cross-Slabs" in *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Seventh Series, Vol. 11

Rawlinson, B. 1918. *Betha Colaim Chille: Compiled by Manus O'Donnell in 1532*. Illinois: University of Illinois.

Sharpe, R. (trans.) 1995. *Adomnán of Iona: Life of St. Columba*. St. Ives: Penguin Books.

Stokes, W. (ed). 1877. *Betha Coluim Cille: On the Life of Saint Columba, Three Middle-Irish Homilies*. Calcutta. Available online at <https://celt.ucc.ie/published/T201011.html>

Wallace Collection *The Bell Shrine of St. Mura* Available online at <https://wallacelive.wallacecollection.org/>



**ABARTA
HERITAGE**

November 2018