

fáilte

DOON is a site of National importance and offers delight to the Archaeologist and intrigue to the layman. It is a Lake Promontory Fort with 30 habitation sites. Archaeology is the interpretation of our past from man-made objects and monuments left behind by our Ancestors. This is a designated Area of Scientific Interest and the area around Lough Carra has been the subject of much study by eminent Botanists.

are now entering an area of great beauty, enriched by scenery, natural woodland, wild animals, birds and un-spoilt lakeshore features.

Please allow DOON to remain LITTER-FREE, DOG FREE and FLORA-FRIENDLY – do not disturb plants.

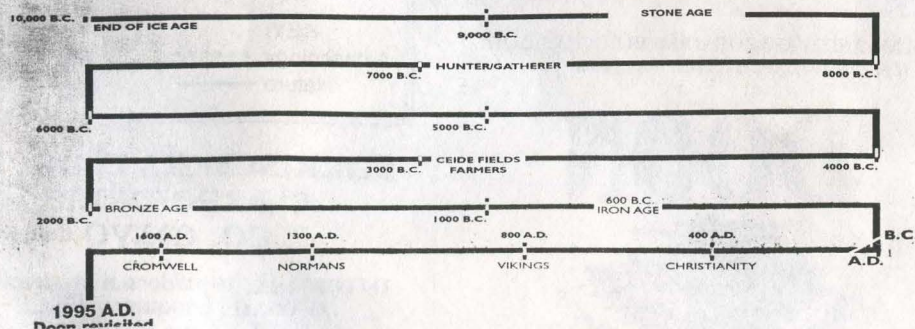
Remain on pathways and enjoy
THE DOON EXPERIENCE

STOP 1: DOON WALL

This is a Late Bronze Age Rampart or Wall of Defence. Though you are very welcome today to DOON if, you arrived here 2,000 years ago the defending troops would have endeavoured to make you feel most unwelcome. It is one of the most impressive and strongly-built ramparts existing in Ireland. It would have accommodated a timber palisade and walkway where defending troops and their equipment were sited. Measuring 130 metres across from east to west, it is one of the biggest of its type so far identified in Ireland. Prior to modern-day widening, access was stoutly guarded by a narrow wooden door. The imposing Pillar and stone wall which catch your eye are relatively recent additions by the Lord of Castlecarrá who took his carriage-borne guests into Doon Peninsula for wild-fowling and leisure pursuits, oblivious to the sacred sites of our Bronze Age and Iron Age ancestors. These precious sites have been preserved by the overgrowth of Doon Wood. It is 26 acres of secondary deciduous woodland of limestone base, which, in times of habitation was cleared for construction of 30 stone houses. Through time the site became de-populated and re-growth of hazel, ash and briar occurred.

When you return to this point after "The Doon Experience", we hope you will be informed and inspired by the evidence of our skillful, intelligent ancestors.

Follow the path to the LEFT...



STOP 2: INNER RAMPART

You have ascended onto the second defensive line. This rampart would also have accommodated a wooden fence (palisade) behind which the troops patrolled. For economy of construction, at 66 metre, this is built at the neck of the peninsula. Why did these people need two lines of defence? Towards the late Bronze Age onwards, defensive features were constructed. Tribal unrest in Ireland was augmented by the influx of Celtic speaking peoples of Europe, consequently, increasing population and increasing prosperity may, have led to increasing conflict. It is also postulated that such monuments were constructed for prestige.

Which theory do you think bears most weight?

STOP 3: CASTLECARRA

Look left across the lake. Built in 13th Century by Adam De Staundun, an Anglo-Norman from Warwickshire, a Subject of De Burgo, Chief of Connaught. It is one of five Norman Castles in this locality signifying the rich pickings available in the rich plains of south and central Mayo and taking advantage of the disarray of the native feuding Irish Tribes – the O'Murray's, O'Gormally's and O'Tierney's. Many positive aspects of the Norman legacy prevail to today. They introduced towns and centralised administration, also our coinage. They established Abbey's and Castles which dot this landscape today. The adoption of the Irish Customs and Language contributed to them "becoming more Irish than the Irish themselves". This family took on the Irish name Mac an Mhídh (MacEvilly), but local legend attributes this to a dispute that arose between De Burgo clans, and the Son of the Earl of Ulster was held captive by the De Staundun soldiers. Although a resolution had been achieved as a result of intervention by the Archbishop of Tuam, in the absence of cellular phones! communication was slow, and, the captors proceeded to drown the Earl's son off an island, now called Earl's Island. Through time Castlecarrá was granted to various "Planters" loyal to The Crown. Under the Acts of Settlement 1678 it was granted to Sir Henry Lynch, Baronet of Ireland. His descendant, Sir Henry Lynch, 5th Baronet, resided in a Bungalow close to the old Castle. He was married to Mary Moore of Brize and conformed to Protestantism.

A story which depicts the Lynches as heartless evictors recounts that a family in Partry, a local village, were evicted from their house on Christmas Eve for having killed a hare.

From the Castle, look to the right along the top of the wood to two chimneys. These are part of the shell of Moorehall House, a Georgian mansion which was burnt down in 1923 by the I.R.A. - a most regrettable act. Built in 1791, the occupants

were prominent nationally – John Moore was President of Connaught for one week (1798); George Henry Moore chartered a ship with 4,000 tons of maize with the winnings of "The Chester Cup" by his horse "Coronna" and is renowned for none of his tenants having died from the Famine; George Augustus Moore 1852 - 1933 was a prolific novelist and Art critic. His cremated remains are interred on Castle Island, Lough Carra.

STOP 4: BLACK HOLE

Lough Carra is a Marl lake, i.e. chalk base which is deleterious to aquatic plant life hence the distinctive pale pellucid green colour for which it is famous. It is 4,000 acres in area and is 6 miles in length. Although it is shallow in many parts you are now standing at its deepest point 60ft = 18 metres from which it derives its name. It is one of a chain of lakes which runs from Galway Bay to Killala Bay and in prehistoric times it is thought to have extended to Cong. It would have been regarded as a sacred place by the Druids and may have received offerings/sacrifices during ceremonies. It is thought to be one of the first three lakes to be sprung after the Ice Age. Its original name "Foinloch Ceara" = drifting snow, is descriptive of its base.

This point is also known as DOON WELL. In former times it was the meteorological station for this locality – "We heard Doon Well today" – was the forewarning of an impending storm.

STOP 5: PRIESTS HIDING HOLE

DESCEND THE STEPS WITH GREAT CARE
DO NOT ENTER THE CAVE

This is a natural cave formed in The Ice Age. Such caves provided a damp home in pre-historic times. Three hundred paintings and engravings depicting bison, bear, mammoth and woolly rhinoceroses dating to about 20,000 years ago confirm habitation in Le Chauvet cave near Avignon, France. The present inhabitants of this cave are four wild goats. Prior to that it offered refuge in Cromwellian Times (Penal Laws) and during The Irish War of Independence 1921.

Secretively, Mass continued to be said on Church Island (Stop 12) and if the people 'on lookout' sensed the local Priest Hunter – Sean na Sagairt – was approaching, the Priest was taken by boat to this cave. More recently, Patrick Quinn, Mick Staunton and other local activists in the 'Old I.R.A.' sought refuge here, when, they were sought by the Free State Army.

En route to the next stop (6), look across the lake to the small island – it is called Bonnimilish. It is thought to have acquired this name as a result of the cows grazing on a herb which transmitted a sweet taste to the milk.

Bainne = Milk Milish = Sweet

STOP 6: UPRIGHT STONE/ROCK OUTCROP

VISIBLE IN THE WINTER WOOD

Interpretation of a single Standing Stone is difficult in Archaeology. They were erected over a long period of time for different reasons: (1) Boundary markers positioned along ancient routeways; (2) Commemorative of important events; (3) As part of an alignment where metal ores were found – though more common in South of Ireland, a stone circle in Nymphsfield, Cong is indicative of Copper mines located in the surrounding hills; (4) Markers for Bronze Age Burial sites. These were the

original of our modern-day headstone. Cremation burial then was most common and consequently skeletons from this period are rare.

Trees were closely connected with the religion of the Celtic peoples, and, from Roman times there are written records of groves and individual trees sacred to their Gods. There were five sacred trees called 'Bile Tree' in Ireland, marking important inaugural sites for tribal kings, or, the meeting places of tribes. With the arrival of Christianity those sacred trees were Christianized just as the Celtic Gods were sanctified, sacred wells became Holy Wells and the mystical trees became trees planted by saints. Very old trees planted in an unremembered time by unknown hands, were held in special veneration and many of them also became associated with saints. Trees and shrubs were given protection against wilful damage by an ancient law Bretha Comaitchesa (laws of Neighbourhood) and, severe penalties could be exacted for damaging the most valuable species. The penalties for felling a 'noble' tree = 1/2 milch cows; for cutting a branch of hawthorn = one sheep. However, if you completely eliminated a neighbour's bracken, heather, bog myrtle or brambles without consent, the compensation due was a one year old heifer. In the eight century a cow represented a substantial part of the livelihood of a family. Here, obscured by the dense hazel scrub, are many upright stone projections and large pillar type structures. They incur much speculation but don't fulfil the criteria for a specified archaeological monument - maybe you are viewing a new archaeological phenomena !!

STOP 7: HUT SITE

The Stone Circle encloses a hollowed-out earthen floor, the remainder of the house would have consisted of organic material such as hazel coppice, daub and thatch, which have perished. This is one of 30 such house sites in Doon which are mainly sited along the shoreline, overlooking the lake, reinforcing the natural defences. Though they are poorly defined to the layperson's eye, they are none the less one of this site's most important archaeological discoveries. A lot of information is obtained from the central area because the skins, skeletons, peelings and seeds from their diet were dropped onto the hearth enabling preservation; if they had been set neatly aside for the Bin collection! the acidic soil would have destroyed them. Evidence of fish, wild boar, hare, and, game birds now extinct, seeds, wild berries, nuts and crab apple have been uncovered. Consider the sacredness of this house constructed by some of our earlier Mayo people, now thousands of years later survive for 'modern man' as confirmation of their skill and innate intelligence. Though these were built aerodynamically, as befitting the environment, myth attributes their circular formation to the superstition – if a corner was included it was believed the 'demon' might reside there. Remember Doon when planning your new Bungalow!

STOP 8: THREE HUT SITES

After 'The Doon Experience', we expect many conversions to Archaeology! can you identify three hut sites here. The largest is on your left, hollowed towards the lake, outlined by a 'modest' stone circle; between it and the pathway a very small one exists replicating the modern day utility room! and on your right as you face the lake the Ash tree is growing through the former circular wall disturbed by root growth.

The earliest known habitations in Ireland were Lake-shore and River Bank Dwellers about 9,000 years ago. They preceded Céide Fields Neolithic habitation, North Mayo. This cleared site would have been suitable to them for, as Hunter-Gatherer (Mesolithic) Stone Age people they had neither the skills or the tools of the Céide Field's first farmers. The Hunter-Gatherer took from their surroundings only what was surplus and by constructing their huts from organic hazel and animal hides their nomadic, environmentally-friendly lifestyle leave little 'joy' for the Archaeologist. The limited archaeological traces of their small population are mainly random finds of stone axes and flint-headed spears most noted from Lough Gara, Sligo, River Bann, Mount Sandal, Co. Antrim and Boora Bog, Co. Offaly.

Return to path and continue left, when you arrive at Y junction keep left

STOP 9: HUT SITES

When we win 'The Lotto' we intend to excavate this house and re-construct it to its former glory! It is a most extraordinary and comprehensive structure. If you explore the site you will find that this site challenges definition. Instead of an easily defined Circular or D. shape, it appears to be two oval huts encroaching on each other. A central depression - maybe a souterraine (underground passage most frequently seen in the ring forts) and a type of wall of stone uprights leading to the lakeshore. Immediately before the Larch tree are limestone slabs with designs of great intrigue. In a state of elation, what we thought was Cup Art and Rock inscription (only two such sites known in Mayo) - emerged as the curiosities of natural elements on the permeable limestone rock. Confirmation of this, by Mary Cahill - National Museum, should have induced ecstasy, as, instead of having a 5,000 year old masterpiece, here is evidence of 350 million years of deposition of fossilized shells (observe white streaks) from the ocean bed which once covered these limestone areas. Return along the pathway which takes you back to the Y junction. As you walk along on your left-hand side some more house ruins can be seen preserved beneath the trees. At junction continue left to GREEN arrow at main road. Go straight across into wooded area for next stop.

STOP 10: ANIMAL ENCLOSURE

There is little to distinguish this structure from the human habitations other than its size. The ownership of animals was the measure of wealth pre-coinage and the importance of this is evident here as, the enclosure is as substantial as the human habitations. The herdsman was assigned to observe the animals when they were taken out of the enclosure for grazing. As cattle raiding was frequent at that time, it was necessary to return the animals to the enclosure before darkness. It is thought that big losses were incurred in winter-time. Horses and all the common domesticated animals have been recognised from Irish Late Bronze Age Settlements with cattle dominant.

Return to 'main road' and turn right at GREEN arrow.

STOP 10: NANCY WALSH'S GRAVE

Descend the steps to right, to Wooden Cross. This local story originates from post-famine time. Nancy was from a local village and she wandered out from her home with her dog. When she came to the northern shores of Lough Carra, in error,

exhaustion, weakness and disorientation (Faidhín Mhairbh), she lay down here and died. Her dog returned home without her, this alerted her relatives to her disappearance but their attempts to find her were hampered, when, the dog disappeared in through the grounds of the Fitzgerald Kenny Estate. Although the dog didn't respect protocol, the 'peasant folk' compelled to adhere to 'Big House' etiquette then lost contact with the dog. However, they circumvented this obstacle by surrounding the wood and when the dog emerged they followed him to where her body lay, now in a state of decomposition. So her body was buried here.

As a result of a marriage that took place between the only sister of James Quinn - owner of the site - and the investigating R.I.C. Officer, it has been possible to establish that the death occurred in 1875.

Return to the main path and continue to your right

STOP 11: CHURCH ISLAND

Though the channel is narrow across the lake from Doon to Church Island, it is 40 feet in depth. This is of considerable importance because, the fortified Church Island and the habitation on Doon, could have controlled lake travel, and, it is a strong consideration that, a 'toll', in some form, might have been extracted from the cargo laden boats. The lake systems then, were an effective means of communication and transportation.

One of Church Island's archaeological features is just barely visible from here. If you look across to the left 1/3 of the island through the leaves, the roof of a restored 14th century Church can be seen. During excavation the ruins of a possible 6th century wooden building was discovered. As a result of studies carried out on soil from post holes, radio carbon dating has revealed dates of 3,000 B.C. It is logical to presuppose then that this site also had stone age farmers, centuries before the construction of defensive features. Church Island has a rich and varied history, changing its name according to the resident Evangelist, e.g. Finian's Island, Cummin's Island and more recently, Shrine Island. The Hermit Marbhán (Brother-in-law of King Guaire of Gort) according to "The lake" by George Moore is reputed to have been summoned home urgently from France with wolfhounds, in order to contain the menace from the wolves of Carn (the townland as you look across the lake). It is documented that the last wolves in the West of Ireland were killed in Doon Wood in 1700's. Church Island is now retained as a site of peace, prayer and pilgrimage but can also be visited by the tourist who is accompanied by a Tour Guide from Ballintubber Abbey. Another 'appealing' option is a 22 mile trek which can also be undertaken along an ancient trackway called 'Tochar Padraig'.

STOP 10: CASTLEBURKE Viewed across the lake.

Though now diminished in grandeur, much colourful history and folklore permeates from its ruins. Formerly known as Kilboynell Castle and thought to have been built by O'Flaherty's but it is the 'Burke' (MacWilliam) associations that distinguish it. Richard an Iarain (Iron Dick) and Gráinne Uaile (Pirate Queen) had one Son, Tiobhóid Na Long (Theobald of the Ships) who acquired the Castle and most of the land from the McEvilly's. He was a brilliant tactician, politician and seaman (no doubt

his childhood in the Bowen household, courtesy of 'The Crown', he emerged into adulthood with all the skills of his natural parents and an acquired understanding of the English, which, he later was able to utilise for personal gain. As a result of assisting the English at the Battle of Kinsale 1601, he was rewarded with land and later became Viscount of Mayo. Despite this, the English could not trust him, because, he continued as "An Independent" sometimes supporting what remained of gaelic Chiefs, always, with personal gain as the deciding issue. He now rests in an ornate tomb in Ballintubber Abbey. He didn't intend to get there so quickly but, en route from Castleburke to Ballintubber Abbey for spiritual reasons, he was accompanied by his brother-in-law, who killed him. That is recalled today by "The Ballintubber Curse" - Turas Tiobhóid na Long Duit = May you have Tiobhóid na Long's journey!

His descendants resided in Castleburke and in the reign of Viscount VIII, it was frequently visited by poets and bards, most notable of whom was O'Carolan "The Blind Harpist", who composed "The Lords of Mayo" here. ~~As previously mentioned, the Duke, Sir John, was a great patron of the arts and a great collector of books and manuscripts.~~

A Hangman's Tower beside the Castle is thought to have been frequently used at one time!!

STOP 14: CANOE DOCK

With the aid of aerial photography, this is thought to be a Canoe Dock. However two other sites challenge for the title. The Dugout Canoe was formed from the carved-out or burnt out centre of the felled oak tree. These vessels were used for raiding and visiting. It is also thought that skin covered boats of coracle type were widely used but have not survived. Movement around the coasts is likely to have been in larger vessels and the fine gold model of a ship with mast and oars found in Broighter, Co. Derry gives us an insight into the methods of Deep Sea Travel in Iron Age.

STOP 15: INNER RAMPART (NORTH)

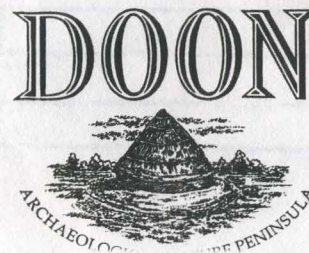
You have visited this at Stop 2 extending across the neck of the peninsula.

You can now view the wall which was your entrance point and now will be your exit.

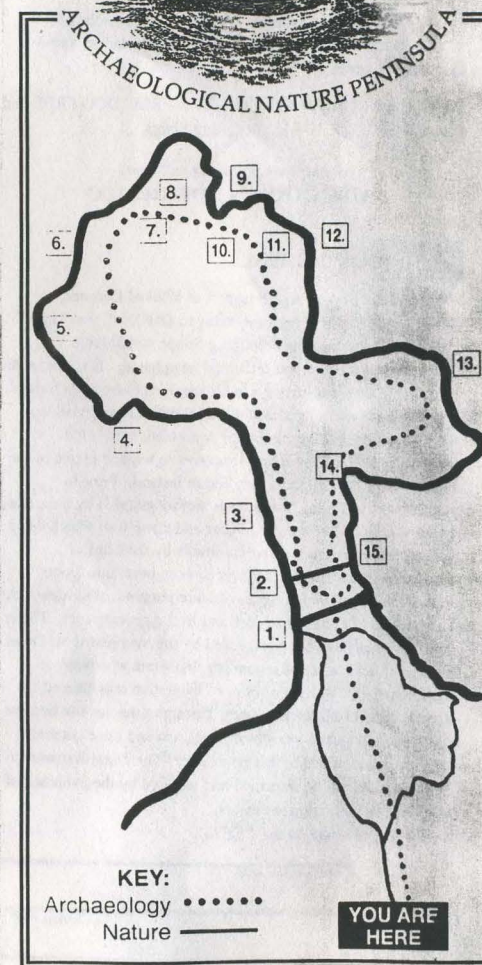
We hope you have enjoyed "The Doon Experience" and would appreciate if you should recommend it to your friends and display our promotional material. Cool drinks and light snacks are for sale at the Hut. We invite you to sign the Visitors Book with critical comments.

SLÁN ABHAILE AGUS MÍLE BUÍOCHAS DUIT.

If you have any queries contact: Tom Quinn



DOON



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