

ANTIQUITIES

Abbeys, Castles, Fortresses, Round Towers, Early Churches, Sculptured Crosses, Stone Circles, Ogham Stones, Cairns, Souterrams, Pillar Stones, Cromlechs, Forts, Rathes, Moats, Tumuli or ancient monuments of any kind. Exact location of each with short description, noting condition, etc. Relate local legend or tradition associated with building or object. State if in charge of Office of Public Works. Right of way to public? Admission charge (if any). Name and address of caretaker, or where key is kept.

- ① A very interesting group of antiquities lies on the southern side of Slievemore mountain, strung out along the 500' contour. They are not in charge of the O.P.W. and the visitor is welcome to approach them over all the neighbouring lands. Landmarks to guide the visitor are the east end of the old deserted village of Slievemore and Macdonnell's Hotel a little farther east. The antiquities lie between these two points a little farther up the mountain slope. They are $3\frac{1}{2}$ mls from Dooagh; $2\frac{1}{4}$ mls from Keel; $2\frac{1}{2}$ mls from Dooagont. The group consists of 4 megalithic tombs and belongs to the Early Bronze Age (2000-1500 B.C.). Three of them are very badly damaged but one remains fairly well preserved. This one consists of a circular fore-court 15' in diameter and delineated by low standing stones. Funeral rites would have been performed here - the sacrificial fire would have been lighted within its area or if the body was to be cremated, the funeral pyre. From the fore-court a short passage originally roofed with flagstones (now open to the sky) led to the tomb chamber where the body or the ashes found its last resting place. The chamber is roofed with a single flagstone 8' 6" long by 5' 6" wide and about $2\frac{1}{2}$ tons in weight. (Fig 1)
- ② Sandhill Settlement Sites - One of these is at Keel strand just west of the river from Keel Lough. The usual signs of habitation are visible - burnt stones, charcoal from the fires, bones and shells. At this site were found a spindle whorl (used in the ancient method of spinning woollen thread) a green glass bead and a round metal button of the 6th or 7th cent. A.D. A similar site is at Caher point. There are 3 sites at Cloghmone on the west side of the Sound and one on the east side at ^{GURNAHARDIA} Gurnahardia. Not in charge of O.P.W. Free entry from all sides.
- ③ Series of Hut Sites - These are situated immediately south of the road from Keel to Dooagont. They are $\frac{1}{2}$ ml from the latter & 3 mls from the former. They will be found by going 200 yds past Macdonnell's Hotel in the direction of Dooagont and then turning south 30 yds into the bog. They are not in charge of O.P.W. and can be approached from all sides across the bog commonage on which they are situated. The huts are now very ruinous but 3 rectangular chambers are still to be recognized. They are very small measuring on some 8 to 10 feet across. It is impossible to say to what period they belong without excavation. Local tradition says that this was the site of a "pagan cemetery" and on some maps of the Ordnance Survey, this name is given.
- ④ Immediately east of the last site was a large stone wall fort. This however has now been completely destroyed to provide road metal. Only the barest traces of it exist. Of no interest.

(Plain sheets of foolscap paper to be used, if necessary, for recording additional information).

⑧ Kildownet Church. This is situated on the west side of the Sound and is 3 miles south of the village of Achill Sound. It stands beside the road from Achill Sound to Cloghmore. It is very likely that this was one of the oldest church sites on the island. The present structure is in the main fairly modern but a few of the older features have been incorporated into the more recent structure. The chief feature to notice is the narrow slit window in the west gable. This window has little of interest beyond the rudeness of its construction. The church is now roofless and disused and is surrounded by a graveyard. On the gate piers leading into the latter are two very roughly made small stone crosses. Not in charge of O.P.W. Right of way from gate at roadside.

⑨ Castle of Franca Vaile - This is situated $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of the church ruin described above. Not in charge of O.P.W. Permission to enter is readily given by the owner who lives on the opposite side of the road from the castle.

The structure is typical of late 15th century Irish castle-building. Points to notice are two round headed slit windows, the projecting bartizans at the battlement level. These have openings in the floors thro' which missiles could be dropped on the heads of an attacking force. Another point to notice is the graceful batter of the walls which is carried right to the top. The main entrance doorway is defaced as are also the ground floor windows. The original arrangement of the stair was peculiar. A short straight flight in the thickness of the west wall gave access to the first floor which was of wood. From this a ladder of wood connected with a trapdoor floor and from here a short flight of steps gave access to the battlements and bartizans. The wooden 1st floor and of course, the ladder are now gone so access to the top can only be gained by a dangerous climb up the face of the castle on the outside. The ~~castle~~ ^{building} is situated on the very edge of the water and when the tide comes in thro' the sound it laps the base of the stonework. Traces remain of a boat slip which ran out from the back of the castle. Local legend holds that the castle was built by the famous frace O'Malley but from the architectural details, it would seem to be

rather earlier and would belong to the period 1450 - 1480.
It is however, quite certain that it is an O'Malley castle.

(10) Stone walled Ring fort - This is situated 300 yds west of the road thro' Cashel village from Achill Sound. It is almost directly opposite the new Technical School. It is now in a very ruinous condition but is interesting by reason of the fact that until very recently it was used as a grave yard. Sometimes still the bodies of unbaptised children are buried there. Not in charge of O.A.W. Right of way by a narrow rough roadway from the main road.

(11) Remains of Old Booby Village - This is situated at the north end of the valley between the Benmore Cliffs and Croaghann Mountain. It is 1 1/2 mls from the present village of Dooagh and is approached by following the road from Dooagh to Keem Bay and from there thro' the valley to the north. It was called Benowna and from this came the name Grouffambenowna which is applied to the little stream which flows thro' the valley. The remains there consist of 17 roofless oval houses. The walls remain to heights of 4' to 6'. They are built of stone on the corbelled principle and on plan are oval both inside and out. Each house measures 12' x 8' inside. The door was in the centre of one long side. In the wall opposite the door are two ^{NICHES} niches. Roofs were thatched. Each house nestles into a curve of the canyon-like banks of the little stream. Near the village is the remains of a rectangular cattle enclosure. The village was last occupied about 60 yrs ago and has been deserted ever since then. It was only a summer habitation of the people in the old village of Slievemore.

(12) Altar of the Penal Days - At Keem Bay immediately behind the ruins of the old coast-guard station is a heap of stones - once a built up altar. On one side of this is a large stone with a natural hollow which was used as a font. People still dip their fingers in the rain water which collects in it and cross themselves. At the cliff at the east end of the Bay is a small cave in which the priest was wont to hide when need be.

N.B. Insert here notes on Material folk culture, farming etc. 11/5/02