

Killora Church & Graveyard

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Conservation Management Plan

October 2021



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Howley Hayes Cooney Intro

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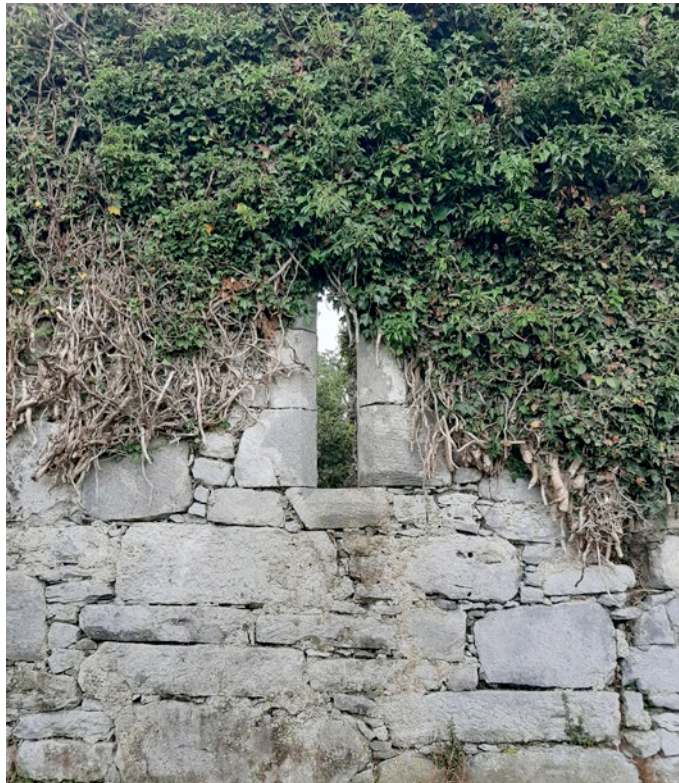
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1.0 Introduction



Aerial view of the south wall of Killora church

The ruined church and graveyard at Killora is a multi-period stone church and has long been abandoned, with a significant loss of masonry to the north wall, and a considerable amount of vegetation on the east and west gables. It stands at the end of a cul de sac in the townland of Craughwell and the graveyard is still in use and visited regularly by local parishioners. The east gable is currently concealed under a dense covering of mature ivy putting this structure clearly at risk, particularly as the ivy growth is top heavy, sitting primarily to the top of the gable, adding weight to the top of the structure. Of particular concern is the detachment of this east gable which does not appear to be structurally stitched into the chancel walls. Also of concern is the destabilisation of the ground within the church, due to the presence of so many graves, and the ongoing collapse of the north wall.

This report includes - a cartographic record of the church; sketch survey plans and elevations; a photographic survey of the structure before and after the removal of a small amount of ivy; an archaeological appraisal; a structural report; and an ecological report. Also included is a statement of significance and a conservation strategy outlining a

recommended course of action to implement much-needed repair and consolidation works. All repair recommendations are designed to be sensitive to the historic importance, cultural significance and status of the church as a scheduled national monument. The church ruin and its graveyard setting combine to create an historic place of both spiritual and archaeological significance. The surveys on which this report is based were carried out during the summer and autumn of 2021. To facilitate these surveys ivy was trimmed back from ground level. It was not possible to bring any heavy equipment on site due to the close proximity of graves to the upstanding walls.

The ivy trimming works were approved by the National Monuments Service of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Time constraints and the dense network of stems and roots of the ivy that remained after the trimming, together with the complexity of the form of the surviving ruin, made it impossible to prepare accurate surveys at this stage. The report concludes with an outline for proposed conservation and maintenance works and a summary of conclusions.

2.0 History of Killora Church and Graveyard



General view of church interior, looking East

Archaeological History

The standing ruins of the ancient Church of Killora and its attractive graveyard setting are both included in the Record of Monuments and Places, references (RMP No GA104-151001 and RMP No GA104-151003) respectively. Both are afforded legal protection under the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004). Killora is a townland in the parish of Killora in the barony of Dunkellin, Co. Galway. The townland takes its names from the Irish Cill Ortha meaning 'Church of the Prayer'. In historical records it is variously recorded as 'Killora', 'Killorha', 'Killoragh' and 'Killoran'. The church stands on the hillside in the valley of the Dunkellin river, with lovely views from the graveyard.

It is situated approximately one kilometre from the village of Craughwell, historically known as Creaghmoyle, and from the Gaelic; *Creachmhaoil*. Its translation is difficult to determine, as the word *creach* which means 'plunder,' could be in reference to herds of cattle, or alternatively the etymology could be related to *craig* and *creag*, which means rock, or even related words such as *cruach* which means mountain or hill. The second part of the name,

maol is the word for a round-shaped hill. Patrick W. Joyce, the pioneer of Irish placename studies, speculated that the name in Irish was *Creamhchoill*, ('garlic wood'). He was unaware of the local spelling and pronunciation but confirmed in a later work that the village was called *Creachmhaoil* in Irish. The word Craughwell is also a common Irish surname.

The earliest possible reference to a church at Killora occurs in 1333 when the Annals of the Four Masters record that "Florent Mac Anoglaigh, Arcdeacon of Killoran, died." However a later edition of the annals indicates that the church referred to is Killery Church in County Sligo. There are a number of late medieval documentary references to Killora. In 1586 the church was listed in Valor Beneficiorum as being taxed for the sum of £1 6s 8d (Fahy 1893, 239-40). In 1588 Killora was mentioned in a *fiant* as part of a parcel of land leased to Bryan Fitzwilliams, and in 1593 the land was leased to John Lye. As part of the church lands of Kilmacduagh it was again sold in 1661 for a period of 21 years, this time to John Eyre at an inquisition in Portunma.

Medieval Period

The Church of Killora is thought to date from two distinct phases of construction, consisting of an earlier medieval church which now forms the east end or Chancel, and dates from the late twelfth to early thirteenth century, and a later medieval alteration, when the church was remodelled and extended in the fifteenth / sixteenth century. Though no architectural features of the earlier church remain, the presence of large architectural building stones in the east end of the church indicate that a thirteenth century structure, or possibly a pre-Norman structure, once stood here.

The church appears to have been substantially rebuilt and enlarged in the late medieval period, during the fifteenth or sixteenth century, the ruins of which we now see today at Killora. The east gable was likely rebuilt at this time, using building stone from the earlier church, and the structure extended west to provide a larger nave.

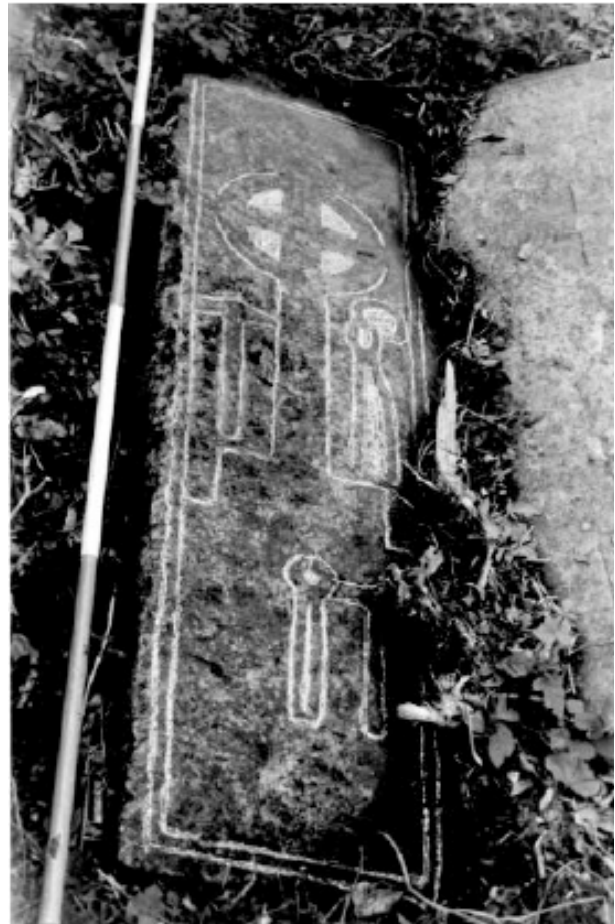
The interior of the church contains graves dating from the late medieval period to the twentieth century.

Seventeenth Century

The Down Survey undertaken by William Petty between 1656 and 1658 was a systemic mapping of Ireland for the purpose of administering the Cromwellian confiscations, and the first ever detailed land survey undertaken on a national scale in the world. It was based on the earlier civil survey and recorded land ownership and features by townland and is a very useful cartographic source for seventeenth century Ireland.

On the Galway county map 'Killora' is marked in the east of the Baronry of 'Doon Killin' (Dunkellin) but no ecclesiastical building is shown, indicating reference only to the townland. Unfortunately the barony and parish maps for Galway from this period no longer survive.

Mid seventeenth-century Civil Survey records that the area of Dysartgallen Church was in the townland of 'Aghacrosse (Aghnacross), and was owned by the Sir Charles Coote, the Earl of Mountrath. A Down Survey map depicts a settlement and church at Ballinakill, but does not include a church at Dysartgallen, although the



Seventeenth Century graveslab (Chapple)

nearby property of Sampson's Court is depicted. This suggests that the Church of Dysartgallen was in ruins and was not considered to be an edifice of note. The late sixteenth-century map of Laois by Lamb is schematic, and only records settlements and significant buildings, such as Ballinakill and Sampson's Court, but does not however record Dysartgallen (see below).



Down Survey Map (1656-58) showing 'Killora'

Nineteenth Century

During the nineteenth century, the first edition 6" to a mile Ordnance Survey map of 1838, depicts the ecclesiastical site in the south part of the semi-circular headland overlooking the low lying ground of 'Killora Turlough' to the south.



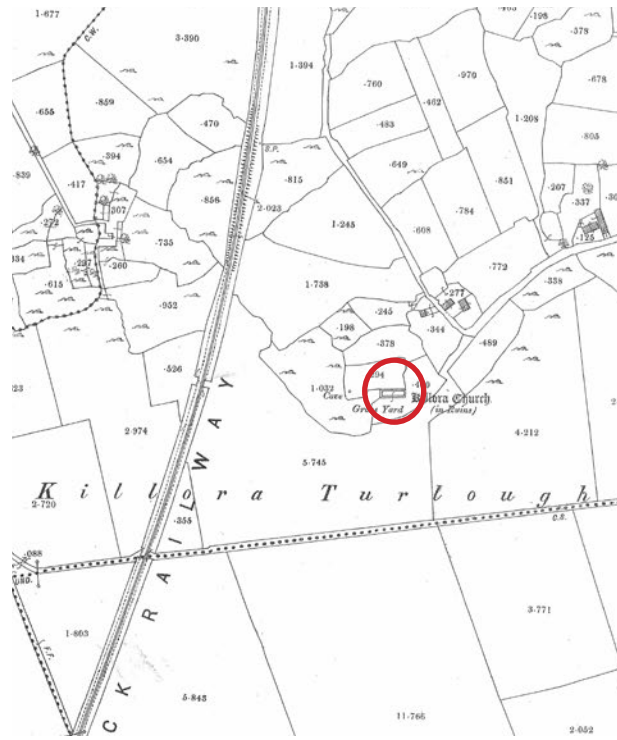
First Edition 6-inch 1838 Map

Killora Church is shown as a rectangular building, 'in ruins', northwest of a large irregular graveyard, which appears to extend further east than the existing graveyard boundary. A plot of Glebe (or church) land is cleared marked a short distance to the north of the site. A 'cave', which usually signifies a souterrain, is noted in the field west of the church. A small settlement, north east of the site is much diminished today.

These mid nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey maps were used for the compilation of the Primary Valuation of Ireland, known as Griffiths Valuation, which was an early form of property tax, organised by Sir Richard Griffith. The Griffiths Valuation from the mid nineteenth century for Dunkellin identify John H. Burke as being the landlord for the place known as 'Killora' in the townland and parish of Killora. A much greater area of land surrounding

Killora, including Craughwell was in the ownership of the Marquis of Clanricarde, also known as Lord Dunkellin, whose seat was at Portumna Castle.

The first edition of the twenty five inch map of 1895 shows the church and graveyard much as they appear in the first edition map, although the graveyard is reduced in size, and the revised east boundary corresponds with the existing graveyard

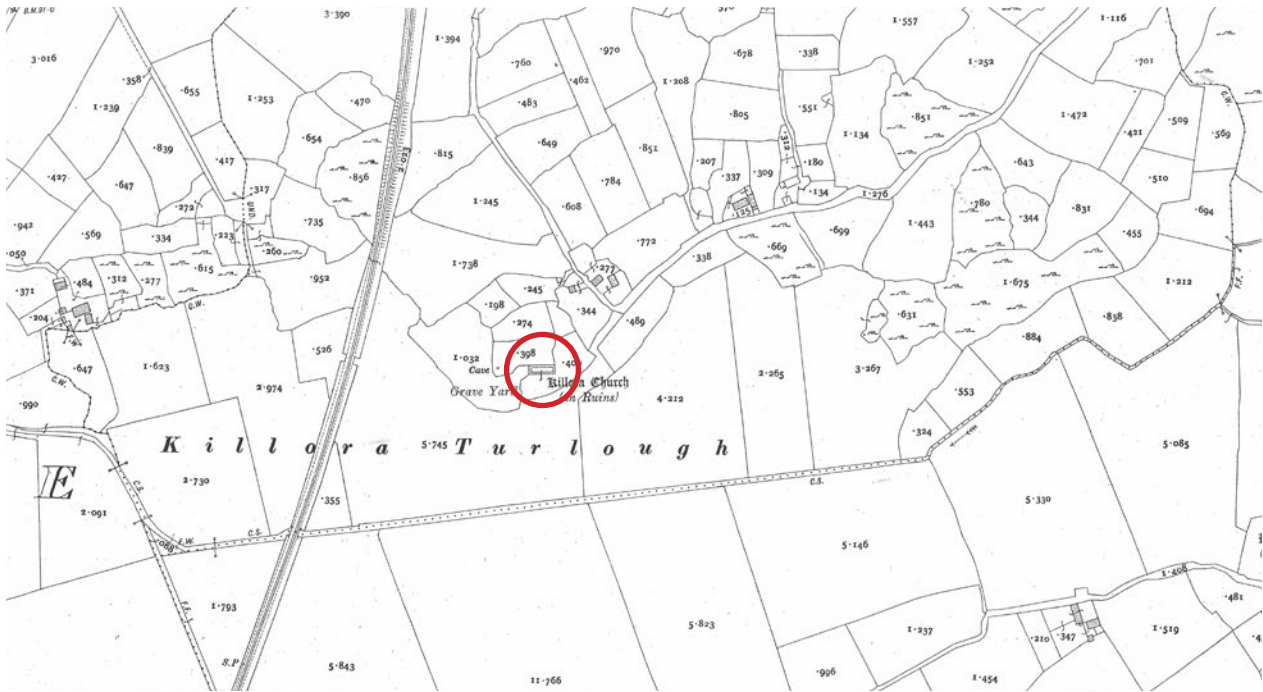


Second Edition 25-inch 1895 Map

boundary that we see today. The headland with its irregular field pattern stands out in sharp contrast to the surrounding area. The fields in the west of the headland are shown as a rocky outcrop and it is clear that this is marginal land. The land to the north is no longer identified as glebe (church) land, and is bisected by the Waterford & Limerick railway which passes a short distance to the west of the ecclesiastical site. The nearby houses remain but the clustered settlement a little further northeast has reduced considerably in size and now consists of just two buildings. The contraction, or even disappearance of settlements such of these in the latter half of the nineteenth century was not unusual given the massive depopulation of the countryside in the aftermath of the Great Famine of 1845-49.



Aerial view looking West across the site



Revised 25-inch 1919 Map

Twentieth and Twenty-first Century

The early twentieth-century Ordnance Survey map of 1919 at a scale of 25" to a mile, depicts the church at Killora as being a rectangular building and is also described as being 'in ruins.' This map shows very little change from the 1895 edition, with one field boundary change to the north of the site being the only visible difference. The church and graveyard boundaries remain unchanged.

A series of aerial images of the site from 1995 to 2018 show the extensive scrubland to the north and west with the low lying lands of Killora Turlough to the south and east. The only notable changes to the surrounding lands occurs between 2000 and 2005 when a significant dwelling was constructed a short distance to the west of the church and the field to the south east was planted with forestry.

3.0 General Description

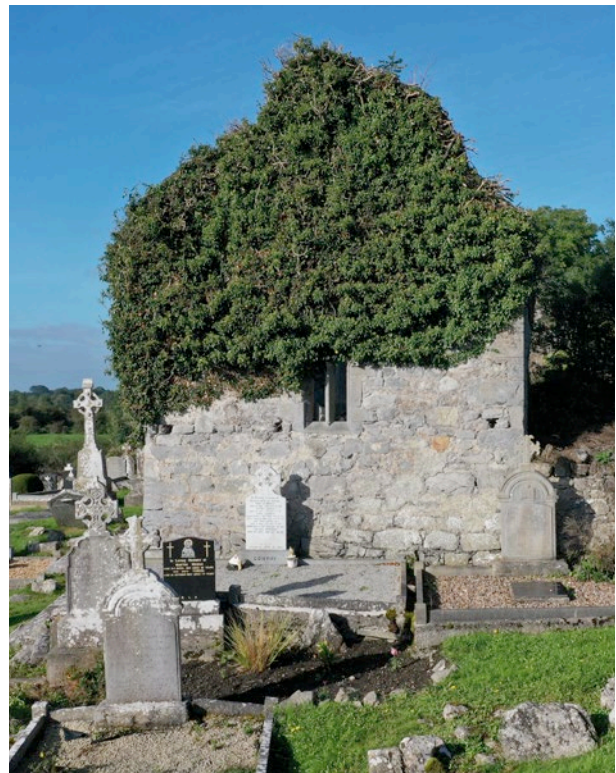


Aerial view looking directly down on the church, orientated North

Killora Church

The extant church at Killora is a rectangular building, orientated traditionally, east to west, measuring 19.4m long by 4.5m wide internally, and with wall thickness varying between 750-850mm. It is described as ‘poorly-preserved, and densely over-grown ivy’ by Chappel (2001), who noted that the earliest part of the church appears to be at the east end.

The surviving masonry includes the east and west gables, which remain largely intact, and the south wall mostly rises to below the wall plate level. The north wall is incomplete and in an ongoing state of collapse. The structure contains one open cell, but a shift in the wall plane along the south wall, approximately 6.8 metres along its length from the east end, measured externally, indicates the presence of the older medieval structure. This east portion of the south wall contains roughly-coarsed, large irregular blocks, averaging 1m by 0.5m in size, indicative of cyclopean masonry which was typically used in pre-Norman Irish stone churches.

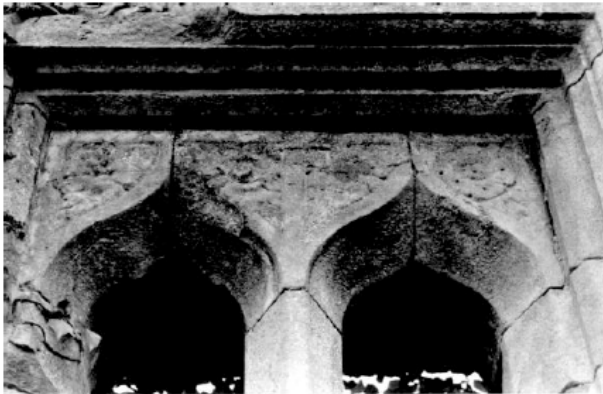


View of the East gable

East Gable

The east gable, with an external width of approx. 6 metres is mainly of late medieval date although it also contains large masonry stones in the lower courses. Chapple notes the gable stands 'to its full height of c. 9.5m,' and the wall measures approximately 0.9m in thickness at the east window. Chapple also notes the presence of a recessed shelf approximately 1m from the apex which is now hidden by ivy.

The corners of the building are built of worked and roughly- dressed limestone quoins (average dims 0.7m x 0.28m), undoubtedly of late medieval date. Quoin stones dating from the thirteenth century are evident on both corners, notable by their finely-worked surfaces and diagonal tool markings. Put-log holes are evident on the external face, and in 2001 it was noted that there were four remaining on the wall.



Decorative spandrel detail above the East window (Chapple)



View looking South-West showing corner build up at East facade



Internal view of East gable window

The east gable contains one window, a fifteenth/ sixteenth century double ogee-headed opening with a single separating mullion and an external hood mould. A spandrel above the window is hidden by ivy but is recorded as being decorated with floral designs. Chapple notes that the design of this spandrel is almost identical to one on the grounds of University College, Galway, and may be dated to the period from 1450 to 1550. Constructed with reclaimed stones, the internal embrasure or reveal is of unusual shape and the presence of curved stones on either side indicates the previous presence of a stone arch, but the opening is now capped with a lintel stone, with a relieving rubble arch above. It is possible that this later insertion replaces an earlier window.

A small plain aumbry or niche is present in the south internal face of the wall approx. half a metre by half a metre in size, with thirteenth century stones forming this opening. A single piece of sandstone has been inserted in one location within this limestone wall.

South Wall

As mentioned above the south wall contains remnants of the older church, and a notable offset along its length. It measures 21m in length externally with a thickness of about 800mm. Roughly dressed limestone quoins form this projecting shift in wall plane, which is evident both internally and externally. The wall contains four notable architectural features, the door or entrance to the church, two small windows and a stoup/font just inside the entrance. The pointed arch door, (1.95m in height and 0.95m wide) consists of finely-worked, pick-dressed and chamfered limestones. Unfortunately the base stones of the west jamb are now missing and the east jamb stones are partially dislodged. Chapple notes that the lower west jamb stones were missing previous to 1838.

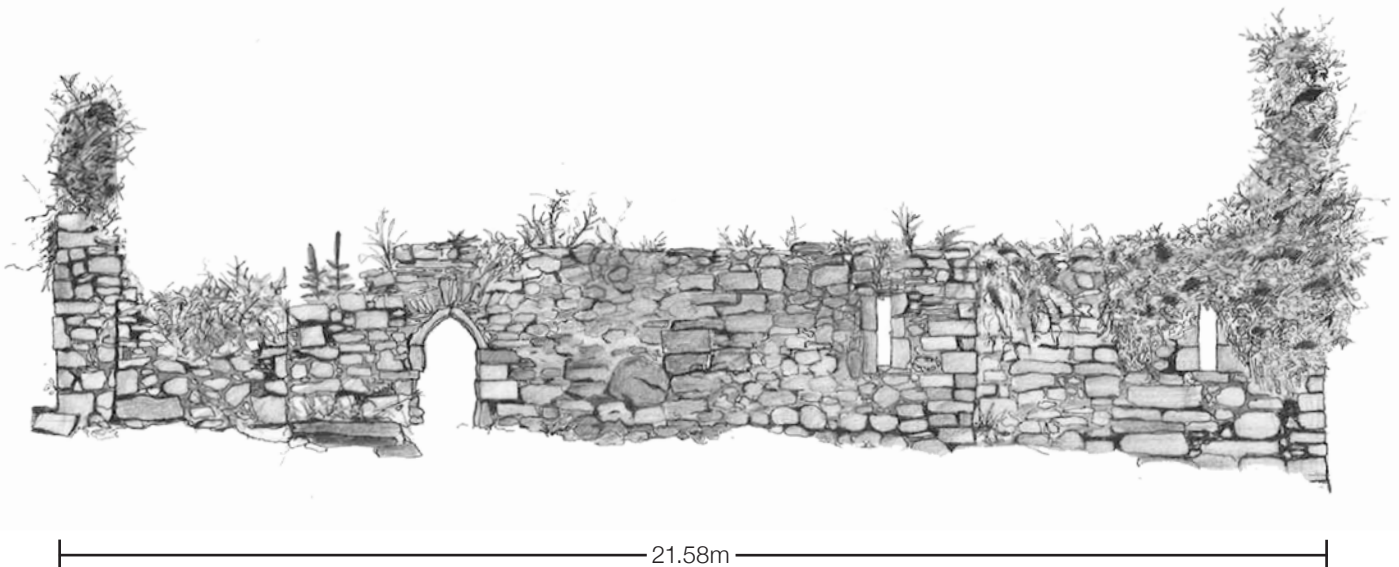
Features include a 'hanging-eye' upon which the door was hung, and draw-bar holes to accommodate the draw-bar used to secure the door. Internally the doorway has a segmental-arched head, the mortar bed of which preserves the imprint of the wickerwork used in the construction of the arch. The east jamb of the embrasure is formed of roughly-dressed limestone blocks and incorporates a partly-broken stoup/font, very similar to one at Kilboght Church approximately 15km to the east. The west jamb of the embrasure is completely missing.



General view of the entrance to the church on South Elevation

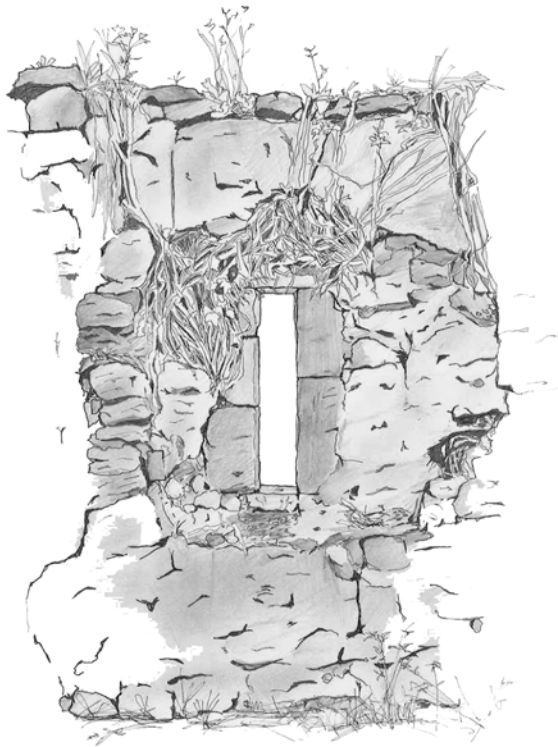
The plain single light window (0.98m high, by 0.21m wide) at the east end of the extended south wall appears to be a later insertion. The jambs are formed of roughly-worked limestone blocks and it is capped with a small flat lintel stone. Internally the much-broken embrasure (c. 1.45m²) is roughly constructed and looks like it has been broken into the wall. This window likely post-dates the fifteenth and sixteenth century phase of construction at this site.

The east end of the south wall, which incorporates the remains of the medieval church, contains a round-headed single light window (1.06 high by 0.225m wide) which is almost certainly



Survey hand drawing of South Elevation, approximately 21.58 meters in length with a wall thickness 0.8m at the door

contemporary with the later church. The opening is formed of dressed and chamfered limestone blocks with three sets of bar holes in the jambs. It appears that some of the stones have been re-dressed, with rough horizontal punch-dressing over the original finer pick-dressing. The east jamb of the internal embrasure (1.675m high by 0.675m wide) is formed of cut and dressed limestone blocks, one of which is a re-used 13th century stone with diagonal tooling. The west jamb has been modified to increase the width of the opening (original width of 0.5m). This was crudely achieved by chipping off the angles of the jamb stones, an unusual undertaking for such little gain in the width of the opening (0.175m).



Survey hand drawing of interior elevation of window at East end of the extended South wall

A large masonry buttress (H 2.35m; Wth 1.3m at base narrowing to 0.55m at top) has been added to the south at the west end, indicating previous structural instability in this area, and this wall does appear to have been rebuilt at some stage, now consisting of rubble masonry, with thirteenth century inserts. The buttress no longer appears to be functioning in a structural capacity, and is now detached from the wall and starting to collapse.



Viewing looking towards South wall, with West gable on the left

North Wall

The north wall measures 19.3m long internally and is on average 800mm thick. The upper five or six courses of the north wall were removed circa 1988, and much of the masonry from these coursing is likely contained on the north side of this wall, which is currently inaccessible. It is recorded in the Ordnance Survey Letters that the west extent of the north wall (length of circa 6.5-7m) was taken down some time prior to 1839 and roughly rebuilt in drystone masonry. A portion of this rebuilt wall has since collapsed inwards, and now partly covers one of the burial plots within the church. The upstanding east portion of the wall contains earlier medieval church stones while the central section of the wall is of late medieval date. This late medieval wall is well-built of roughly-coursed irregular limestone blocks. Unlike the south wall and the east gable there is no evidence for the reuse of stone from the earlier church in the construction of this wall. There is no access to the north side of the north wall due to the presence of scrubland.



General interior view looking West, showing condition of North wall on the right



Internal view of the window at the East end of the extended South wall



External view of the window at the East end of the extended South wall



Internal view of the window at the East end of the South wall



External view of the window at the East end of the South wall



Internal view of entrance doorway



Internal view of water font detail within the entrance opening

West Gable

The west gable, similar to the north wall, is built of roughly-coursed irregular limestone blocks (average dims 0.4m x 0.25m) and does not appear to contain earlier medieval stones. It stands at its full height to circa 7.5m height and is approximately 6.5m in width externally. The northwest corner is missing but the southwest angle survives and is composed of worked and roughly-dressed rectangular limestone blocks (average dims 0.5m x 0.275m). The dressing consists of a heavy punch-dressing applied in horizontal strokes. There is a single-light window at the top of the gable wall which is not visible on the internal wall face due to the presence of ivy. Thick scrubland outside the wall prevented full access to the external side, but a limited view of the ivy-covered window, which is squat and has a wide opening is possible from the south corner. It consists of large roughly-worked limestone, which appear similar to those used in the upper jambs of the internal embrasure in the east gable.

Church Interior

The church interior contains six burial plots, with associated headstones, and at least fifteen graveslabs. Chappel (2001) identified five of the graveslabs as being of 16th/17th date and recorded these in detail. In addition to the many graveslabs lying on the ground within the church, there are two slabs propped against the east gable, and another against the east end of the south wall.

The five graveslabs within the church which are recorded monuments are documented as follows:



Aerial view looking at exterior of West gable, showing single light window



Aerial view looking onto West gable

GA104-151005 (Graveslab)

Tapering slab (L 1.78m; Wth 0.54m tapering to 0.45m at base) decorated with an incised ringed cross calvary. The vocational symbols of a blacksmith (hammer, tongs, pincers and horseshoe) are depicted on the slab.

GA104-151006 (Graveslab)

Tapering slab (L 1.86m; Wth 0.63m tapering to 0.5m at base) decorated with an incised ringed cross calvary and bearing a crudely carved inscription along the top which reads 'Donel O Hilane'.

GA104-151007 (Graveslab)

Rectangular slab (L 2.18m; Wth 0.7m) decorated with an incised ringed cross calvary and bearing the inscription 'PRAY FOR THE / SOVLE OF / M. HILLANE.

GA104-151008 (Graveslab)

Broken rectangular slab (L 0.91m; Wth 0.58m) decorated with a panel of latticework below which are two smaller panels bearing the date '1619' and 'IHS'. Chappel suggests it may be an unfinished piece and that is likely to have been painted originally thus the outlines of the design were all that were necessary. Lying nearby is what appears to be the lower portion of the stone (L 1.14m max; Wth 0.58m), which is uninscribed and undecorated.

GA104-151009 (Graveslab)

Rectangular slab (L 1.92m; Wth 0.7m) decorated with a large incised ringed cross calvary. Lies adjacent to the south wall immediately inside the doorway.



Survey hand drawing of Killora Church and graveyard site plan

Killora Graveyard

The irregular-shaped graveyard (c. 70m NE-SW; c. 60m ENE-WSW) is enclosed by a well-built, random-coursed drystone wall (average H 1.5m) consisting of irregular limestone blocks. The graveyard boundaries are unchanged from the time of the 1895 Ordnance Survey map and, with the possible exception of the east boundary, from the time of the 1838 map. The east part of the graveyard is generally level but from the church the ground slopes to the south, gradually for the first c. 8m and then sharply down to lower section of graveyard in the south extent of the site. To the southeast of the church there is a retaining wall dividing the upper and lower levels.

The graveyard contains a large number of headstones and several recumbent graveslabs.

There are some fine broad headstones in the east extent of the graveyard, including a beautifully carved example in the northeast corner of the site. Most of the graveslabs are located in the area to the south of the church, which is clearly the oldest part

of the graveyard. There are a number of graveslabs lying immediately adjacent to the south wall of the church, including two partly hidden slabs at the base of the buttress immediately outside the south door. The graveyard is still in use for new burials in the twentieth century, the most recent of which is located just south west of the entrance to the church.

Members of the local community have been responsible for the upkeep of Killora Church and graveyard in recent years.

4.0 Conditions Survey



Aerial view looking North, across the site

General Description

The standing masonry of the church consists of un-coursed, random rubble masonry, predominantly limestone. The stone sizes range from small to medium sized units, with much larger stones integrated, primarily at lower levels. Walls are generally average 800mm in thickness, and due to the limitation of access could only be inspected from a drone survey. The wall head along the south wall should be repaired and a soft capping inserted, which the east and west gables could be rough racked following removal of vegetation. Masonry to the top north side of the east gable is visible in the drone photos which large ivy branch structures also visible at this level.

There are a number of architectural openings – two of which, the west gable window and the most easterly south window, are fully or partially shrouded with ivy and cannot be fully inspected. The east gable window appears relatively sound but the entrance opening in the south wall is in danger of further collapse and requires structural intervention.

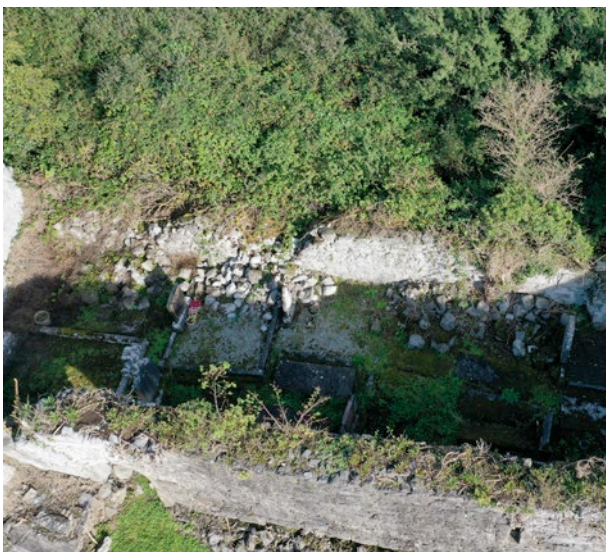
The unbonded east gable wall is a cause of considerable concern, particularly due to the presence of ivy at its top, adding weight to this wall. The east wall and south wall appear completely separate internally, though externally the quoins wrap the corner. Attempts to caulk or bond the east gable to the north wall are evident internally and this intervention should be removed to facilitate inspection of the masonry and structural condition behind.



Aerial view of top of South wall

The collapse of the north wall appears to be on-going, due to the increasing presence of vegetation to the north of it, and this will result in on-going loss of historic fabric unless the vegetation is carefully managed.

The internal ground within the church is very unstable, due to the presence of burials throughout and this movement appears to be on-going. Previous disturbance to the graveslabs is evident, and a limited amount of maintenance has been employed to attempt to keep the graves visible and legible. Loose rubble from the north wall and elsewhere is piling up inside the church and this should be sorted and removed.



Aerial viewing looking down into church interior, with the collapse of the North wall and ground conditions visible

Ivy Removal

The amount of ivy growing on the ruin is significant, with more than 50% of both gables covered with thick growth, though the west gable ivy has been killed and now needs to be removed. Thick mature stems can be seen at ground level, and from the thickness of the secondary stems it is almost certain that the ivy has developed adventitious roots that have penetrated into the masonry.

A limited amount of early trimming of the ivy was carried out as part of this project, following completion of a bat survey, and it has helped facilitate inspection and reduce the risk of damage by removing pressures caused due to wind load. Due to the presence of graves in close proximity to the walls and throughout the interior of the church, access to remove this ivy will be an issue.

If left unchecked the plant will regenerate vigorously increasing the size of the embedded roots that will eventually split the masonry and cause collapse. To remove this risk all of the ivy should be killed back using an approved biocide, with no cutting of the lead stems, so that the biocide will enter the embedded roots that will in time die and rot. These can then be removed relatively easily and the masonry pinned and pointed in lime and sand mortar.



View of window on Eastern end of South wall, showing ivy growth



Aerial view looking West, showing ivy growth at West gable

Structural Survey

To be completed by John Britton

Caption

Conclusions

To be completed after receipt of structural survey



View looking South-West with East gable in view

5.0 Ecological Report

Killora Church, a significant ruin dating from the twelfth century, stands on a hillside in the valley of the Dunkellin River, one kilometre south of the village of Craughwell, Co. Galway. The church stands in an irregularly shaped burial ground, much of which is occupied by kerb-surrounded family graves, many of them still receiving burials. The earliest monuments date to the sixteenth century. The site is reached by a narrow road of one kilometre in length, with a substantial development of detached modern houses with extensive gardens. This road is unusual in that it terminates at the entrance to the burial ground and does not connect with any other roads.



General view of the South end of the graveyard looking East

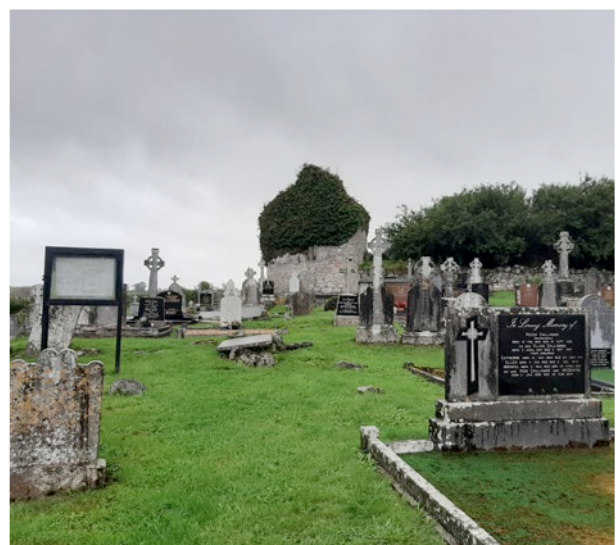
The ground is generally low-lying, the hillside rising from an un-named tributary of the Dunkellin River to the south. The bedrock is limestone of Carboniferous age, a type very widely distributed throughout Counties Galway and Clare and of the same age as the Burren. Its coating of glacial till yields a fertile soil. One feature of this region, associated with the limestone strata, is an abundance of underground tunnels which make a major contribution to the regional drainage and, of particular interest, result in the existence of the temporary lakes known as 'turloughs'. Immediately to the south of the burial ground the six-inch map marks 'Killora Turlough'.



General view looking South from the church entrance

The Environment

Environmentally, the burial ground and its surroundings may be considered in five parts, three of which are essentially man-made. These three are the church, the burial ground and the pasture. The fourth part is the scrub woodland adjoining the burial ground and the fifth is the turlough. Of the first three, the church will be subject to future maintenance work while the burial ground is a fully-controlled habitat, the two together constituting the area under direct consideration in the management plan. The pasture, scrub and turlough are outside this scope except from the important viewpoint of placing church and burial ground in context with their surroundings. In the event of the creation and inclusion of an information poster or booklet as an essential part of the management process, these will be of significance.



General view looking west towards the church from the site entrance

The Church

The most conspicuous feature of the church is the envelopment by ivy of the entire east gable above the level of the window. Remarkably, this persists as a healthy, luxuriant growth in spite of the severing some years ago of its main stem. With one exception, smaller growths of ivy on other walls, both inside and outside the building, were effectively destroyed by cutting at the same time, leaving only the dead stems and branches. Even though ivy, as a native plant, has a place in the context of biodiversity, its control when required because of its threat to the structure of a noteworthy building is fully justifiable.

The interior of the church contains several burial plots still in use, others abandoned for some time and a number of recumbent memorial slabs. Between the graves the ground is covered with moss rather than grasses. A relatively small clump of ivy on the north wall has survived the cutting of its main stem. Dandelion, hawkweed, thistle and hart's tongue fern are represented by scattered individual plants. Two notable plant species are a large clump of low-growing storksbill in the Niland grave plot and two stems of mullein on the top of the wall above the doorway.

The former is common and very widely distributed. Mullein is locally common but of some interest in its use in the past as a medicinal herb. Regenerating ivy is visible at the base of the south-facing wall of the church and is likely to appear elsewhere in the future.

The main burial ground

The greater part of the burial ground is level and the fact that it can be used for interments is evidence of a substantial depth of soil overlying the bedrock. Being derived from limestone, the soil is fertile and drains freely. The use of such soils for pasture has been established practice for centuries. When grazing is prevented, accessibility of the area over a period of centuries demands regular cutting of the grass which establishes itself in the first instance of this change of use. The grass which covers the greater part of the spaces between the graves is cut several times per year. This operation curtails the variety of wild flowers but a number of species thrive as 'weeds'. At Killora dandelion was the most plentiful and conspicuous of these. Hart's tongue fern, growing both on walls and on the ground and great willow herb, forming large clumps in some untended grave plots were other noticeable species.



Aerial view from North of the church looking South

While the general nature of the burial ground is level, the area to the south of the church and nearby has two levels, with the church standing on the higher. Between these two there is a steep, stony slope almost devoid of grass and large plants, but interesting as a habitat for mosses and also as it is out of the reach of strimmers. It is free from holly and scrub species and of interest in adding an ecosystem, however small, to the area.

The family grave plots in current use are covered with stone chips and kept completely free of vegetation of any kind. A small item of botanical interest is the presence of a number of long-disused plots in which lack of maintenance has allowed the development of a number of species of flowering plants and some mosses. While of no significance from the biodiversity viewpoint, these make striking examples of the manner in which native plants, given time, are able to establish themselves in purely man-made situations. A comparable feature of this kind is the encrustation by lichens of the limestone memorials, as well as of the stone walls. The dates on lichen-patched memorials show how much time is required for such development.



View from site entrance looking South-West

All the boundaries of the burial ground are well-built stone walls of medium height, that to the south allows for an extensive view of the turlough and pasture land. The others are backed by blackthorn scrub which effectively makes the burial ground an enclosed entity.

The surroundings

The view to the south is of pasture land, divided by stone walls with the turlough in the foreground, recognisable by its lush grass and the absence of any boundaries. While most of the field boundaries are dry stone walls, a few are hedgerows, with dominant ash trees. A good example of these hedgerows runs to the south of the burial ground gate and, behind this, the tops of the trees of a small spruce plantation appear.

Of much greater significance is the scrub woodland that has grown up on the other walls of the burial ground. Developing on un-grazed or under-grazed pasture, such scrub is the precursor of forest. The dominant species at Killora is blackthorn and it forms a virtually impenetrable border to the walled enclosure. A few hawthorn grow amongst the blackthorn and some of the bushes are heavily coated with ivy. Bramble invades open spaces in the scrub. Its branches extend over the burial ground wall and would rapidly establish ground cover if not curtailed. A small number of mature ash trees are present in the scrub and also in the hedges. Hawthorn hedge with ash and some ivy grow on the sides of the approach road.

The abundant ivy on the church walls is indeed a remarkable phenomenon, the more so in view of the fact that it has not been rooted in the ground for some years. While its berries provide some food for pigeons and other birds in winter, these are far from being essential to the survival of any species. Small birds might possibly nest in the large ivy clump on the church but in the proximity of a rich variety of bushes, farms and gardens, no species of bird could be considered dependent on its presence.

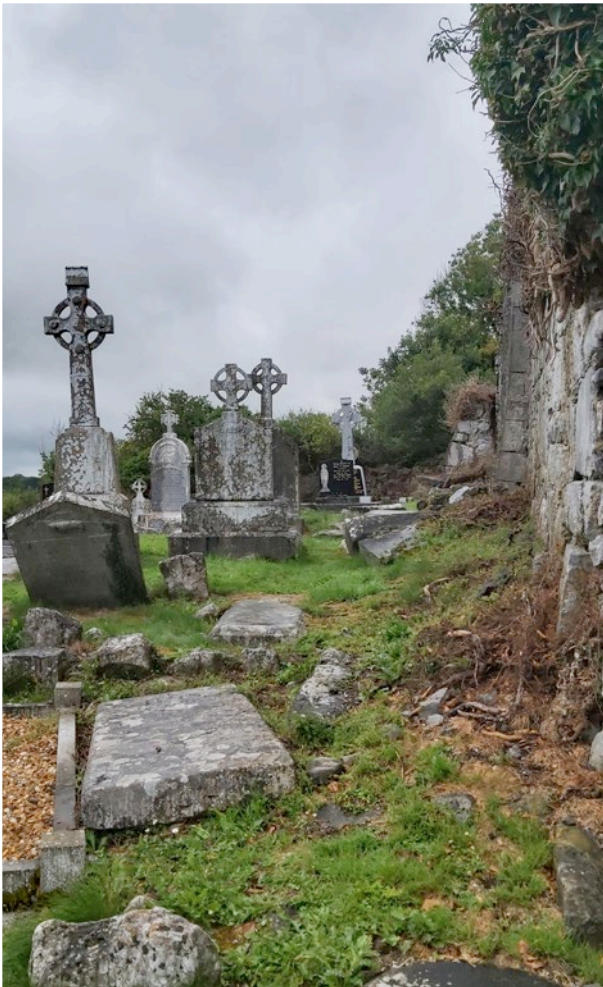


Aerial view of church entrance and walls, showing ivy growth on top

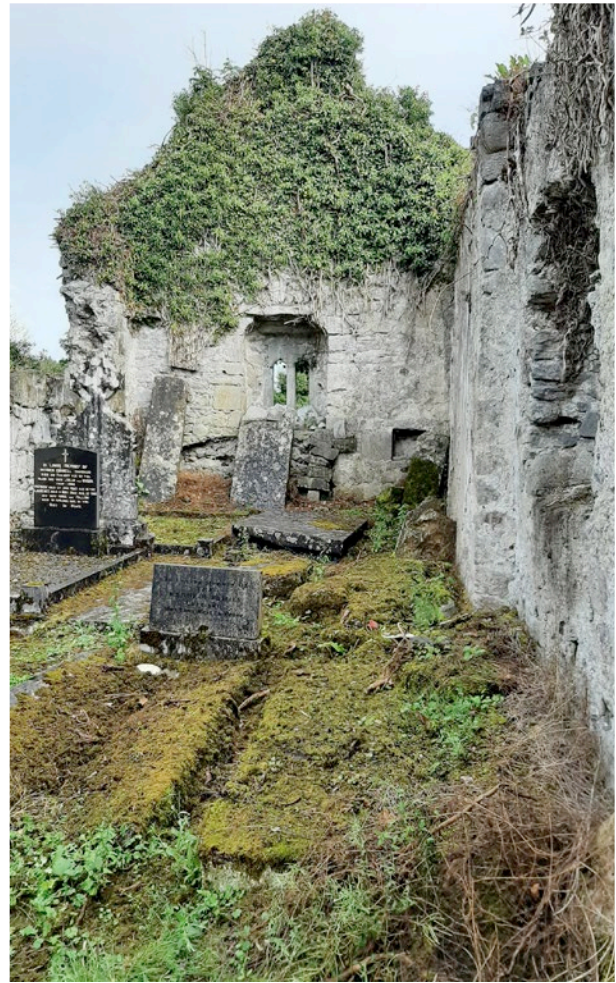
Fauna

Besides butterflies and bumble bees, no animal life was observed within the burial ground. The only bird encountered in the course of the visit was a single curlew, heard calling above the pasture. This increasingly rare species possibly breeds in the Dunkellin valley but is not associated with the site. Three species of butterfly: small tortoiseshell, speckled wood and large white were identified and at least one species of bumble bee. All were feeding on dandelion flower heads.

The absence of birds was not surprising, partly because the undisturbed soil and sparsity of seed-bearing plants within the burial ground make it a minimal source of food. The numerous houses with gardens in the vicinity would offer a very much more attractive permanent habitat to the thrushes, finches, tits and other common species. It is likely that a number of species, such as starling and chaffinch would make occasional passing, but unpredictable, visits to the site.



View looking West along South wall of church



View from interior looking East

Bats

MKO Ireland completed a bat survey at the site in August 2021 and did not record any bats emerging or roosting within the building during either the visual inspection survey undertaken or the night time bat detector survey. They did record the Common Pipistrelle and a bat of *Myotis* species foraging in the graveyard and within the old church. Overall activity levels were considered quite low. They advised that the removal of ivy and inspection of the building could proceed, following completion of the bat survey which has established there will be minimal disturbance to any bat species.

A pre-commencement survey should be undertaken in advance of any structural conservation works such as re-pointing, stabilisation etc. of the upstanding ruins. These ruins provide a suitable habitat for bat roosts and there is potential for bats to set up roosts within the walls of the building in the period between the development of the conservation management plan and the undertaking of any further works on site.



Aerial view across the site looking North-West

Overview

With its carefully managed grass, free from the thorn trees and brambles that would otherwise invade it, the burial ground provides a very attractive space for visitors, all parts of which may be inspected without great difficulty. The occasional cutting of the grass preserves this aspect, while allowing the development of a good variety of wild flowers, nearly all of small stature. The absence of birds at the time of the visit and lack of evidence of the presence of any mammals is typical of the situation over wide areas of rural Ireland, especially those which, in common with the burial ground, are devoid of open water or swamps. The neighbouring farms and houses with gardens provide very much more suitable habitats for birds.

Flora and fauna within the boundary of the burial ground are typical components of the surrounding countryside, with its open grassland, hedges and stone walls. The blackthorn-dominated scrub surrounding the burial ground is of some interest as it rarely develops in well-worked farmland. In terms of biodiversity no species were seen which are not plentiful over a wide area of the region and therefore make no call for special attention.

While the striking appearance and unusual growth of the ivy on the east gable are of some interest, the abundance of the species throughout this region and its very limited importance as a habitat or food supply for birds makes acceptable its removal to improve the preservation of the church building. The same may be said of the few species of common plants which grow in very small numbers on the walls. No threat to biodiversity would result from any restoration work on the building.

The grass-cutting and other necessary maintenance work on the burial ground results in an interesting, though far from rare, assemblage of plants which can thrive in this man-made situation. If a descriptive booklet is to be produced as part of the conservation management plan, it should include a section on the flora, making particular reference to the viability of wild plants in an essentially man-made ecosystem.

6.0 Statement of Significance



Aerial view looking directly down onto the South wall and graveyard south of the church

Cultural Significance

The Guidelines to the Burra Charter state that - “Cultural Significance is a concept, which helps in estimating the value of places. The places that are likely to be of significance are those which help an understanding of the past; or enrich the present; or which will be of value to future generations.” There are a variety of categories generally used to evaluate the level of cultural significance of an historic place. For Killora Church and Graveyard this include – the historical; architectural; archaeological; ecological; and social interest categories.

Historical Significance

The documentary and cartographical evidence that survives provide details of the long history of the site as a place of Christian worship. While the standing ruins appear to date from the fifteenth or sixteenth century, there is evidence on site that suggests an earlier foundation of a religious settlement dating back to the pre-Norman period. Small, single celled medieval churches are not uncommon in the Irish country side, and any former place of worship of this age has considerable significance.

Archaeological Significance

The above ground archaeological fabric is interesting and further architectural detail may come to light in the masonry, when the ivy is finally removed, or which might be discovered amongst the fill material following cleaning and sorting of the loose rubble in the main church. If non-invasive archaeological investigation or limited excavation reveals details of an early monastic enclosure the significance of the site will rise accordingly.

Architectural Significance

The architectural significance of Killora church lies in the age of the structure and the architectural composition or detail of features such as the entrance door, water stoup/font and east gable window. These are pleasing examples of early to later medieval architectural detailing, and in some cases, intervention within an older wall. Having stood for 500 to 800 years, makes it a relatively early example of a building type in Ireland, a single cell medieval church.



Aerial view of the church looking South-East

Ecological Significance

The ecological significance of the site is moderate, given that it is a managed man-made landscape, primarily consisting of grass, with a small number of other plant species contained within the site. Within the wider context the adjacent scrub-land, a precursor to forest, and an ancient turlough to the south, would be considered of greater significance. With minor adjustments to the grass cutting regime and some judicious planting of wild species which survive in man-made environments, the site could be even more aesthetically pleasing with an even broader biodiversity. The significant ivy cover on the masonry should be managed and removed. Its very limited importance as a habitat or food supply for birds makes acceptable its removal to improve the preservation of the church building.

Social & Spiritual Significance

The social significance of Killora is also important, providing testament to the community that once lived within the surrounding countryside and worshiped in the church. Of particular relevance is the fine collection of surviving headstones and grave markers that adorn the graveyard, telling of lives lived within the local community. The letter cutting

on many of the headstones is both beautiful and insightful into the lives of the former worshippers, capturing a sense of local distinctiveness in the stone and local names in those commemorated. A strong sense of spirituality is apparent and enriched by the secluded and almost desolate location of the graveyard, at the end of a long road or cul de sac.

Conclusion

While each individual category of significance might appear to be relatively modest when considered in isolation, the combination of history, archaeology, architecture, ecology and spirituality make Killora a place of considerable importance, and it should be considered a site of regional significance.

7.0 Conservation Strategy

Conservation Guidelines

All proposed works at Killora Church and graveyard should be carried out in accordance with the National Monuments Acts (1930-2004); the document Frameworks and Principles for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Government of Ireland 1999); the Advice Notes for Excavators; and the documents Care and Conservation of Graveyards (OPW 1995); and Guidance for the Care, Conservation and Recording of Historic Graveyards (Heritage Council of Ireland 2010).

The surviving masonry at Killora Church has been badly damaged by vegetation and weathering, and the encroaching scrubland to the north. If the ivy is not removed, and scrubland not managed, the north, east and west walls will continue to crumble and the north wall will continue to collapse. Careful treatment of this vegetation followed by appropriate masonry conservation and consolidation will protect the extant masonry, and reverse the current deterioration. Any masonry conservation work will focus first on stabilising and securing both the east gable, north wall and the entrance door.

Vegetation Management

A strategy for access to the ruin should be devised with a suitable contractor, which will establish a means to erect scaffold or platforms in order to carry out work at high level. This scaffolds and platforms will need to be very light-weight and carefully positioned to avoid graves and uneven ground. The ivy should be fully trimmed back on the east and west gables and treated with eco-plugs to kill the roots. The contractor should ensure that all significant root systems are targeted and are a number of roots now bedded within the masonry joints.

Vegetation should be removed from the wall tops of the nave and the raked wall tops of each gable, to facilitate inspection of these wall tops from scaffold or platform level. The drone survey provided has provided insight into the

The scrubland to the north requires proper management. The boundary lines of the church grounds as shown on the OS maps is to the north

and west wall of the church. Engagement with the private owner of this portion of land to the north and west should be undertaken to establish a buffer zone of approx. 2m or more, which is managed by the Council to prevent the continued encroachment of black thorn hedge growth along the north and west walls.

Structural works

The nave walls that return at right angles to the east and west gables are also important structurally, as they help to stabilise the two gables both are heavily clad in ivy, making them vulnerable. These junctions should be consolidated and the heads protected with either lime and sandy flaunching or soft topping, while any raking walls (gable wall heads) should be protected with rough racking. All works should be carried out by skilled masons with conservation experience, under the guidance of experienced architectural, engineering and archaeological consultants who specialise in work of this nature. Consultation with the National Monuments Service within the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, together with approvals from Galway County Council, will be necessary prior to commencing any repair works.

Reinstatement of support stones to the west jamb of the entrance should be considered, as although these are missing since 1838, the wall embrasure on the internal side of the door is now collapsing and the integrity of this wall has become compromised.



External view of stone detail above entrance door

Appendix A - Archaeological Report

DELETE AND ADD
APPENDIX A

ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT

Appendix B - Bat Survey

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APPENDIX B

BAT SURVEY

Appendix C - The Church of Prayers - Gravestone Inscriptions

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APPENDIX C

GRAVESTONE INSCRIPTIONS

Bibliography

*THE CHURCH OF PRAYERS GRAVESTONE
INSCRIPTIONS FROM THE GRAVEYARD OF
KILLORA, CRAUGHWELL, CO. GALWAY.*

Compiled and Edited by Robert M. Chapple.

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2001



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