



doonaun ~ doonane ~ dúnán

the doonaun BRONZE AGE axehead

The socketed Bronze Age axehead was found in 1925 by a ploughman (unnamed) in a field described as a pre-historic battlefield located between Dolly's Forge in Kilbeg and the present townland of Doonaun.

The axehead, approximately seven inches (17.8cm) in length, is stored at the National Museum of Ireland under reference number NM 1932, 6566, accompanied by the relevant letters from the time of discovery and it's eventual handover to the Museum. The axehead would originally have been fitted with a wooden handle.



Left: An example of a Bronze Age socketed axe with wooden handle. The handles were generally constructed from the branches of ash trees. The wood from the ash tree is known for its flexibility and durability.

The Bronze Age in Ireland dates to the years 2300 - 2500 BC. Bronze, an alloy consisting of copper and tin, became widely used by people who had previously used stone tools. The use of bronze led to a change in society and in methods of working and the increased quantities of weaponry

may indicate a rise in warfare between settler communities to control lands. Archaeological discoveries from this period include enclosures, wedge tombs, cemeteries, ringforts and other monuments.

Between the years 2500 BC and 2200 BC, wedge tombs were used for burials and this was the main burial rite for the next 1,000 years. The nearby Kilbeg Wedge Tomb, which is a recorded monument, is an excellent local example of this. The use of wedge tombs for burials was gradually replaced by smaller separate burial places or larger enclosures and Doonaun cemetery is one of those enclosures.

doonaun (dúnán) cemetery

The townland name of Doonaun (Dúnán) comes from the Gaelic word 'Dún' meaning an ancient fort. The fort is the highest point in this area with a clear view of the surrounding countryside. The cemetery site is listed as a protected structure by the National Monuments Service in the Archaeological Survey of Ireland's list of monuments. (Reference, GA072-033--- 072-/1 /5 15688/23772 Doonaun)

The archaeological description reads: *On a gentle rise in farmland. Marked on 1st edition of OS 6-inch map as a sub-rectangular enclosure (E-W c. 40m, N-S c. 30m). On 3rd ed. (1932), the words 'Burial Ground' have been appended. What survives is a subcircular area (E-W 60m) bounded by a modern stone wall, the interior of which is still in use as a graveyard. The S[South] part of the original enclosure is now occupied by a car park.*

the battle on the hill

Local folklore informs us that a battle was fought on the hill in the vicinity of Doonaun Cemetery. Why it was fought, who fought in it, who won or lost the battle remain as mysteries but the Doonaun Bronze Age Axe is recorded as being found at this ancient battlefield site.

time travel - to the unknown people

*Up the river we rowed,
slashing trees to free our path
Tall Scots pines all around,
The red sun behind us
as we camped on the bank
Tomorrow the battle on the hill begins,
we will meet our foes
We sharpen our axe heads
and spread our skins on the grassy floor
And pray to the sun and moon
that our spirits will live here forever.
(M H)*

children's BURIAL ground

Local folklore indicates the presence of a children's burial ground across the road from Doonaun cemetery. While there is no clear evidence today of such a site, it is known that the hill bordering the road at Hardiman's field was never ploughed for that reason. This information was passed down through generations of the Conneely, Keary and Hardiman families.